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Revised Network Draft

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE

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REVISED NETWORK DRAFT

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EXT. LOS ANGELES - SKYLINE - EVENING

Towers of glass and steel jut from the earth, set in STARK RELIEF to the setting sun. Glittering knives lit by BRIGHT ORANGE fire.

A helicopter ROARS BY and we -

SMASH TO:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD FOREVER CEMETERY - CONTINUOUS

Lanky PALM TREES and ICONIC GRAVES. The air pulses with the pounding of FOLK DRUMS and the sharp horn blasts of MARIACHI BANDS.

An EIGHT-FOOT TALL SKULL looms, flapping its PAPER MACHE JAW. It whirls away, revealing JUBILANT, SPRAWLING PARTY.

**SUPER: Wednesday, October 31st. First night of Día de los Muertos.**

Hundreds of revelers DANCE, DRINK and LAUGH, and the encroaching night can't dull the celebration's fiery colors: RED, BLACK, ORANGE, WHITE, YELLOW.

Our camera dives through the crowd, bombarded by SKULLS and SKELETONS, fantastic COSTUMES, and HOMEMADE ALTARS -

- emerging from the other side to find a CROOKED MAUSOLEUM lurking in the distance.

EXT. CEMETERY - MAUSOLEUM - CONTINUOUS

Cold, gray walls keep the dead IN and the living OUT. Its imposing archways are untouched by the holiday, save for a smattering of tossed flowers.

Inside, someone's SCREAMING.

INT. MAUSOLEUM - CONTINUOUS

The party sounds a MILE AWAY.

The main entrance opens into a long, dark hallway lined with CRYPTS. The WAILS are coming from behind one of the dozens of BRONZE DOORS.

VOICE (O.S.)  
HELP! HELLLLLP!

From the back. Behind dead flowers and forgotten wreathes. In the deepest, darkest corner of this forsaken place.

SLAM! SLAM! There. The door of one ancient crypt GIVES just an inch - HIT HARD from the inside. DUST puffs off the door. CLANG! It flies open, and two SNEAKERED FEET emerge.

A YOUNG MAN, late 20s, with dark eyes and obsidian curls for hair plunges to the hard floor. The fall knocks the wind out of him and he GASPS for air - but the DEEPER he inhales, the more he CHOKES.

Drizzling and wheezing, he grasps his throat and VOMITS a BRIGHT ORANGE MARIGOLD. Air rushes back into his lungs, but fear and panic still threaten to crush him -

- until he notices OTHER crypt doors HANGING WIDE OPEN. This snaps him to ATTENTION. He looks down and sees -

The floor is COVERED in MARIGOLDS.

EXT. CEMETERY - MOMENTS LATER

The man keeps a paranoid eye over his shoulder as he merges into the chaos of the carnival. Makes a beeline for a vendor selling SUGAR SKULL MASKS and snatches one off the stand.

Slipping it on, he catches a sliver of his reflection in a mirror, sculpted into the face of a SKELETAL VIRGIN MARY.

Psyching himself up, he stares into his own DARK EYES.

CLOSE ON:

A BLISTERING BURN in the center of the man's PALM. He traces over the CRUDE SUNBURST, a nervous TIC.

MAN  
(to himself)  
*Vamonos, idiota. Ahora.*

HE VANISHES INTO THE MADNESS OF THE CROWD.

INT. BARCA HOME - EVENING

**SUPER: 48 Hours Later. Friday, November 2nd. Last night of Día de los Muertos.**

Two men sit in a cluttered room. Blinds shuttered, only slivers of sun leak onto JULIAN BARCA, late 30s. Stained t-shirt. Unshaven. Focused.

He's staring at a CHESSBOARD, held in the gaze of his opponent - an unimpressed teen, MILES.

MILES  
Everyone upstairs. They never see you no more. Building thinks you're crazy.

Barca drums his fingers.

MILES (CONT'D)  
And they think I'm crazy 'cause you're crazy and I still come down here.

His opponent stays focused.

MILES (CONT'D)  
My little sister, man? She thinks you're a vampire.

Barca makes his move. Miles grins.

MILES (CONT'D)  
I keep telling her, I'm the one feeding off you.  
(beat)  
Checkmate.

Barca doesn't see it.

MILES (CONT'D)  
(pointing it out)  
Boom, boom, boom.

BARCA  
Ah, shit.

He tosses Miles the package of Ho-Hos they've set aside as a prize. The kid shoves one in his mouth immediately.

BARCA (CONT'D)  
Don't get used to it.

MILES  
(mouth full)  
Too late.

BARCA  
I've been practicing.

MILES  
Yeah, defense. You wanna know the secret to getting better?

BARCA  
Teach me, Bobby Fischer.

MILES  
Play like you wanna win.

Barca scoffs.

BARCA  
It just takes time.

Miles takes a skeptical look at the stacks of PIZZA BOXES and empty BEER BOTTLES that fill the room.

MILES  
I hope so, bro.

BARCA  
I'll show you. One more.

MILES  
Next week. Family wants me home for All Soul's.

BARCA  
That's tonight? Skip it.

Barca gets up and heads into -

INT. BARCA HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

- where he pops the fridge and pulls out two Red Bulls.

BARCA  
We got a game to play.

He turns back to the board, but Miles is gone. The door hangs wide open.

Barca puts one of the drinks back and eyes the note hanging from a magnet on the door. It's old; discolored by the sun.

CLOSE ON NOTE: "See you tonight! xoxox - Romina."

INT. BARCA HOME - BEDROOM - A BIT LATER

Barca's showered and dressed, a little handsome peeking through the melancholy.

In the mirror, he can't quite straighten his crooked tie. Close enough. He tosses on his jacket - an LAPD windbreaker - and heads for the door, CHECKING:

Keys. Phone. Wallet.

Wait.

POP TO:

INT. CLOSET - MOMENTS LATER

Boxes are stacked like a wayward Jenga tower. Barca reaches in and plucks an OLD SHOE BOX from the center. He weighs opening the lid like it's Pandora's. When he does -

- a G.I. JOE returns Barca's blank stare.

MATCH CUT:

INT. BARCA'S CAR - EVENING - MOMENTS LATER

Propped in the backseat, the G.I. Joe remains unblinking.

At the wheel, Barca nudges a CASSETTE TAPE into the dashboard player. We catch a HAND-WRITTEN LABEL, "SAY YES," before it sinks inside.

The sharp upstrokes of Sublime's "Santeria" wriggle from the speakers. Barca almost smiles, but the better days HURT.

Suddenly, the beat BENDS, the vocals PLUMMET. The song WARPS.

CRRUNCHH!

BARCA

No, no...

He tries to rescue the cassette with a frantic hand, fumbling for the EJECT button before -

EEEEEEEEEEK! Brakes SQUEAL as he halts the car inches from a STOP SIGN. A PEDESTRIAN tosses him a dirty look, but Barca doesn't catch it.

He's mourning the tape, hanging from the player by its garbled spaghetti GUTS.

Barca's eyes flick up to the rear view mirror. The G.I. Joe stares back.

BARCA (CONT'D)

Don't judge me. You live in a box.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - EVENING

Decorations, open doors, and echoing music transform stucco walls and dank hallways into a BUILDING-WIDE CELEBRATION. It seems there are no strangers here as we push into...

INT. PAYAN HOME - CONTINUOUS

...where guests, mostly CHILDREN and the ELDERLY gather. The chatter is cheerful, the kids PLAY. Everyone enjoying the company...

INT. PAYAN HOME - LIA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

...except for LIA PAYAN, 17, HOLED UP in her room. Cross legged on her bed, she giggles into her WEBCAM. The laugh is echoed by NOAM, 18, cute and pixelated on her LAPTOP SCREEN.

NOAM

It's not a surprise if I tell you!

LIA

It's not a surprise when you're Frankenstein every year.

NOAM

Frankenstein's *monster*. I gotta do my part; represent the under appreciated classics.

LIA

What about me? Devil or Angel?

Lia lifts the TWO COSTUMES, weighing them like a scale.

NOAM

I think you gotta try 'em on.

Lia GRINS and perches up on her knees. She reaches to lift the hem of her shirt overhead, REVEALING -

- a DARK FIGURE behind her on the monitor!

NOAM (CONT'D)

Lia!

She whirls around, face to face with - A SCOWLING OLD WOMAN!

Lia's cheeks FLARE with embarrassment. It's her MOTHER, ELENA PAYAN, late 50s, dressed in MOURNER'S BLACK.

LIA  
Mom! Knock!

NOAM  
Happy Halloween, Mrs. Payan!

ELENA  
Goodbye, Noam.

He DISAPPEARS as she closes the computer.

ELENA (CONT'D)  
(stern)  
*Le he estado llamado. Nuestros huéspedes están aquí.*

LIA  
I'll say hi. And then I'm going to the party.

ELENA  
Halloween was Wednesday.

LIA  
And Halloween parties are on the weekend.

ELENA  
Hershey bars and heretics. *Usted tiene la responsabilidad de estar aquí esta noche.*

LIA  
Cool. I get held to the Payan gold standard, while Victor is, where, exactly? I mean, after he skipped the funeral.

ELENA  
I pray for him. *Cada noche.*

LIA  
So you don't know.

ELENA  
Tonight's not about your brother. It's about your father and your sister.

LIA  
They're dead.

Elena grasps the GOLD CROSS that hangs from her neck.



ELENA

Tonight they come home. Don't you want to see them again?

LIA

You mean stare at a wall and huff incense? Not really.

Lia's crossed the line.

ELENA

It is the last night of Día de los Muertos. *Es sagrado*. You belong here. With your family.

Lia storms past her mother, defeated.

LIA

Yeah, what's left of us.

INT. PAYAN HOME - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Barca looks up at the PAPER SKELETON above the door, welcoming guests with WIDE OPEN ARMS. He clears his throat and HEADS inside -

INT. PAYAN HOME - LIVING ROOM - A BIT LATER

- where Lia SULKS PAST, ignoring the kids who want to play.

LIA

Julian.

BARCA

Lia, hey -

- but she vanishes into the kitchen. He looks up and realizes his arrival STOPPED the party. He nods.

BARCA (CONT'D)

Everyone.

Hard to tell if they're offput or surprised. Barca STEELS HIMSELF and pivots after Lia.

INT. PAYAN HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Lia's still sour, knifing through a fresh loaf of *pan de muerto*.

BARCA  
Did I miss something?

LIA  
The Holy Mother of Oxnard Court,  
ready for the Rapture.

BARCA  
(re: the guests)  
I mean with them.

Lia pops the bread in her mouth.

LIA  
Not to blow up your spot, but no  
one really thought you were coming.

ELENA (O.S.)  
Julian!

He turns to find Elena SPARKING with JOY. She pulls him into  
a HUG, cradling him with love.

BARCA  
Good to see you, Mama E.

Her smile FALTERS at his LAPD jacket.

ELENA  
*¿Qué es esto? ¿No te vas a quedar?*

BARCA  
Duty calls.

A WEAK EXCUSE. He changes the subject, fishing the G.I. Joe  
out of his jacket.

BARCA (CONT'D)  
I brought something for the altar.

He tries to hand it to Elena, but she REFUSES.

BARCA (CONT'D)  
Like you asked.

ELENA  
Not for me. For you.

BARCA  
I don't think -

ELENA  
Come with me.

Lia smirks, lifting a PEACE SIGN as Elena pulls him away.

INT. PAYAN HOME - ALTAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Curtains drawn, the den's a makeshift chapel.

It's unfinished - stacks of folding chairs and rows of handpoured *veladoras* against the wall - but the altar is prepared. It's home to TWO LARGE PORTRAIT PHOTOS.

On the left, an OLD MAN. EDUARDO, 70s, the Payan patriarch.

Barca only has eyes for the PHOTO on the right -

A brunette with the HAPPIEST EYES: ROMINA.

ELENA

She's been waiting.

Elena closes the door behind her -

POP TO:

- and lingers outside, LISTENING.

BACK TO:

INT. PAYAN HOME - ALTAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The altar is covered in CANDIES, BREADS and FLOWERS. He approaches like a SPOOKED GROOM.

BARCA

Hey, beautiful. Brought you something. Fella that introduced us.

He props the doll on the mantle and sits.

BARCA (CONT'D)

You loved to tell people I gave him to you.

Barca takes out the ruined tape and begins to wind it back in with his finger.

BARCA (CONT'D)

Which is cute, but not what happened. You stole him. Right outta the sandbox. Right out from under me. I didn't know what happened.

He TWISTS until the tape's teeth leave bite marks in his fingers.

BARCA (CONT'D)

I thought he was gone, but next morning, there you were...playing soldier. You wouldn't give him back, and I never actually said you could keep him.

No use. The ribbon won't coil.

BARCA (CONT'D)

But he's yours if you come home.

A wave of tears crest as he decides to leave ONE MORE THING. He places the USELESS CASSETTE on the altar.

BARCA (CONT'D)

Here. A little music for the trip.

It's TOO MUCH. Barca FLEES the room -

INT. PAYAN HOME - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

- for the front door. Elena, hovering just outside, catches him before he can escape.

ELENA

Julian, please. You need this.

He's RAW, uncomfortable with the emotions.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Día is centuries old. It endures for a reason. Just give it a chance. You might hear her.

(beat)

It's how you say goodbye.

BARCA

I can't.

ELENA

Don't you want to find peace?

BARCA

I do, and I will. When I catch the people who killed her.

EXT. STATION - EVENING

Barca's car pulls into one of the Southland's many underfunded, understaffed precincts. Framed right, it could be a SMALL TOWN POST OFFICE.

Perched on a HILL in EAST LA, the city sky-line is ANT-SIZED in the distance. The orange sky fades to a jammy purple.

Night is drawing near.

INT. STATION - LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Barca ambles in, past two drunks waiting for processing. One's old and scraggly - we'll call him BEARD, 50s - and the other's BALD, late 30s. Beard GROWLS as the cop approaches.

He unleashes two loud BARKS and Barca jumps, caught off guard. A weary DESK SERGEANT, 40s, leans out over his post.

DESK SERGEANT  
Shut it up, *bribón!*

The drunk begins to CACKLE. Barca tries to commiserate with his colleague -

BARCA  
I missed this.

- but the man barely looks up.

DESK SERGEANT  
Yeah, welcome to Wonderland.

INT. STATION - BARCA'S DESK - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON: a name plate - "DETECTIVE JULIAN BARCA." The desk is piled high with BANKER'S BOXES.

He dances his fingers through the contents - COPIES of COPIES of COPIES of paperwork.

He fires a question two desks over, to DETECTIVE MELISSA SPOKES, 30s. The dark circles under her eyes suggest she's as TIRED as Barca - but more put together. SHARPER.

BARCA  
The hell is this?

SPOKES  
Housewarming gift. Menendez left it.

BARCA  
I've been back two weeks.

SPOKES  
(friendly jab)  
Guess no one noticed.

PRECINCT CAPTAIN GUS MENENDEZ - a bull with a back brace - gallops by, files and folders clutched under his meaty arms.

MENENDEZ  
Barca! I need those warrants filed by 10 AM tomorrow.

BARCA  
They're forty years old.

MENENDEZ  
Records building is a century older than that. Roof's coming in so they gotta go somewhere.

BARCA  
Can we talk?

MENENDEZ  
I've got R&I on my ass about this. I got a briefing in four minutes. I don't have time to hold your dick tonight.

BARCA  
No sir, I got that. Just a word.

Menendez jerks his head, indicating Barca should follow. Spokes tosses Barca a travel size hand lotion from her desk.

SPOKES  
For the friction.

INT. STATION - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Barca follows the Captain through the doors of the BULL PEN and BACK OUT to the desolate entryway.

BARCA  
I can do chores at home. I came back to work.

MENENDEZ  
You know the rules. If you want off the desk, psych's gotta clear ya.

BARCA  
Captain. Those questions would keep  
Mr. Rogers on leave.

MENENDEZ  
Mr. Rogers never stalked and  
assaulted a suspect.

BARCA  
Oh, now you're a company man.

The Captain picks his words carefully.

MENENDEZ  
I wanna see you get a second  
chance. I do. But first you gotta  
get your head straight. You can do  
it here, with us, with people who  
will help you and care for you and  
hold you accountable -

Menendez points to the doors Barca came through moments ago.

MENENDEZ (CONT'D)  
- or you can do it at home, with  
the roaches.

He hands Barca the TRAVEL MUG dangling from his fingertips.

MENENDEZ (CONT'D)  
Either way. I need more coffee.

Barca bites his tongue and reaches for it as the STATION  
DOORS BURST OPEN!

The YOUNG MAN from the mausoleum CAREENS through on WEAK  
LEGS. His clothes are BURNED, his curly hair is THICK with  
grease, and the skull mask is almost cracked in TWO.

Officers draw their guns as the man plunges to his knees. He  
pulls the mask from his face and looks up.

Barca's BLOOD FREEZES. HE KNOWS THIS MAN.

VICTOR  
My name is Victor Payan, and I'm  
turning myself in.  
(beat)  
For the murder of Romina Barca.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. DRAIN PIPE - NIGHT

Sludge and rats. Moonlight and metal.

A middle aged woman, VERA, is coiled in the bend of the pipe, arms hugging her TORN UP knees. She clenches a TIRE IRON in her SLOPPILY bandaged hand and takes a breath so deep her whole body SHUDDERS.

She reaches into her flannel shirt and plucks a SCHOOL PHOTO from the edge of her bra. It's a TEN YEAR OLD BOY with a GOOFY GRIN and MISSING TEETH.

For a moment, she's racked with SOBS.

CLANG! Something moves in the dark. Instantly, Vera's a warrior. She's crouched, tire iron at the ready. CLANG! The sound gets closer. She TURNS AND RUNS.

EXT. LA RIVER - MOMENTS LATER

Vera scrambles from the mouth of the pipe and slides down the STEEP concrete incline. The river is dry except for a small TRICKLE of water cutting straight down the middle.

The Fourth Street BRIDGE in the distance offers cover. She breaks for it...too PANICKED to notice the GROUP OF MEN taking position along the top of the river behind her.

EXT. LA RIVER - UPPER PATHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Backlit by the moon, a HORDE gathers. Stone-cut torsos slathered in BLACK GREASEPAINT. Faces drawn for battle, designed like traditional SUGAR SKULLS, ghoulish and bright.

They watch Vera flee with COLD EYES. This is not a gang. These are pack hunters. Silent as ghosts, nasty as wolves.

THIS IS THE BLACK SUN -

- and tonight, they rule the shadows of Los Angeles.

Their leader steps forth - a man with a GROTESQUE YELLOW SKULL DESIGN applied to his face. He points an ORNATE, J-SHAPED BLADE at Vera's fleeing shape.

YELLOW SKULL  
Our queen hungers.



EXT. LA RIVER - BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

Vera scrambles up and under the OVERPASS. We lose sight of her as Yellow Skull and his men ADVANCE. In seconds, they've closed on her position -

EXT. LA RIVER - UNDER BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

- only to find it EMPTY. A chain link fence separates them from packed dirt and a HOMELESS MAN wrapped in a blanket.

Yellow Skull eyes the man. He's TOO STILL. TOO QUIET.

The Sugar Skulls gather around their leader, staring through the fence, threading their hungry fingers through it.

One man nods towards the wrapped figure, as if to ask, "want me to check?" Yellow Skull declines with a hand -

- and slips through the SPLIT FENCE himself. Getting the drop on the vagabond, he tosses the homeless man onto his back. The man tries to scramble away.

HOMELESS MAN

Don't hurt me, man. I got nothin'.

Yellow Skull snaps his neck anyway.

YELLOW SKULL

(to his men)

*¡Ella está aquí! ¡Encontradla!*

Yellow Skull grunts. Looks around, scanning like a BLACK-EYED HAWK. He lands on the stream of water. It's STOPPED. He follows the water a few steps UPSTREAM, to its SOURCE: a SMALL SEWER GRATE.

INT. SEWER GRATE - CONTINUOUS

Vera lays flat. TRAPPED. NOWHERE TO GO -

- as Yellow Skull's FACE appears on the other side of the grate. She holds in a scream and tries to push away...but there's only a few inches of space behind her.

Yellow Skull VANISHES. Did he see her? Was it too dark?

KER-AAANG! The grate's ripped away and -

EXT. SEWER GRATE - CONTINUOUS

- the Sugar Skulls pull Vera out, WRITHING and BEGGING FOR HER LIFE. She's pinned to the ground as one of the hunters KNEELS on her wrist, PALM UP -

- revealing the same SUNBURST DESIGN we saw on Victor's hand.

Yellow Skull pulls his knife -

- and a digital CHIRP fills the air. Yellow Skull pulls out a thin, black phone. HOPE wells in Vera's eyes.

YELLOW SKULL

*Habla.*

VOICE (O.S.)

(Spanish; on phone)

Payan turned himself in. 23rd Precinct.

CLICK. Yellow Skull turns back to Vera with a wide, DEVILISH GRIN. She SNIFFS.

VERA

Did...did I win? Is it over?

YELLOW SKULL

For you.

The gang CHANTS in SPANISH as Vera SCREAMS.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERVIEW ROOM

Spokes places a digital recorder on the table; flips it ON.

SPOKES

My name is Detective Melissa Spokes, lead investigator in the death of Romina Barca. With me is Precinct Captain Gus Menendez.

ANGLE ON: The Captain, looming over her shoulder.

SPOKES (CONT'D)

The date is Friday, November 2nd. The time is 7:50 P.M. This interview is being recorded at 207 West Jackson Boulevard.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Barca watches through two way glass.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - CONTINUOUS

SPOKES

At approximately 7:45 P.M., the suspect, Victor Payan entered the precinct and confessed to the murder of his sister, Romina Barca. Is that correct, Victor?

VICTOR

Yes.

Spokes' gaze roves over his battered body and torn clothes.

SPOKES

And you are here free of duress, of your own free will and volition?

VICTOR

I am.

SPOKES

Victor, where were you on the night of March 13th, 2016?

VICTOR

Out on my ass, at the Blackbird.

SPOKES

Were you drinking?

VICTOR

Yes.

SPOKES

To excess?

VICTOR

I owed a man some money.

SPOKES

Who?

VICTOR

Lupo Raventaña.

This name lands with the cops. It's heavy. GODFATHER heavy.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Barca tilts his head. Did he hear that right?

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Spokes gathers her thoughts.

SPOKES

How much did you owe Mr. Raventaña?

VICTOR

Lupo don't give a shit if it's five bucks.

SPOKES

Was it five bucks?

VICTOR

No. It was not.

SPOKES

How much was it?

VICTOR

Thirty grand. Gambling.

SPOKES

Did Mr. Raventaña threaten you?

Victor shows his right hand's THREE REMAINING FINGERS.

VICTOR

Twice. Now, can I say it?

SPOKES

Mr. Payan -

VICTOR

Romina had money. She was gonna help me outta the country. New name, new papers, the whole thing.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Barca's jaw clenches and he fights to keep cool, studying Victor for any sign of deception.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - CONTINUOUS

VICTOR

Around nine-thirty, I leave for the spot we picked to meet.

SPOKES

And where was that?

VICTOR

6006 Palmetto. Construction site. She ain't there. Call her, nothing. I know it's over, but I got nowhere to go. Car pulls up, they drag her out. I get two choices: bullet in her head or mine.

He sits back, SPENT.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

They made me pull the trigger.

SPOKES

Front of the head, or back?

VICTOR

Front. So I could watch her beg me not to.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

That's it. Barca SNAPS. He storms out the door -

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - CONTINUOUS

- and into the middle of the CONFESSION. Before anyone can move, he has his brother-in-law against the wall.

BARCA

You son-of-a-bitch!

Victor pulls at Barca's arm - the one crushing his windpipe.

VICTOR

I'm gonna fix it. I'm gonna make it right. You'll see.

Barca presses harder. Victor's face BLUEBERRIES.

VICTOR (CONT'D)  
 (wheezing)  
 I'm gonna win. I'm gonna bring her  
 back. For you.

Barca studies Victor's darting, frantic, PLEADING eyes...and  
 backs down. Victor collapses into a heap. Spokes and Menendez  
 pull him away.

SPOKES  
 (re: Victor)  
 Get him outta here.  
 (to Barca)  
 I'll deal with you later.

INT. PAYAN HOME - DINING ROOM

The table is stretched to its limits - enough food and  
 flowers to fill a YEAR'S WORTH of rustic cooking centerfolds.  
 A CARD TABLE has been annexed at the end, where we find the  
 kids... and Lia, eyes in a permanent HALF-ROLL.

No one's eating yet, except cousin MIMI, 5. Too hungry to  
 wait, Mimi pops black olives into her mouth, swallowing  
 before she can even chew. Lia JOINS IN.

ELENA  
*Niñas.*

Lia deliberately chews one more olive. Elena addresses the  
 REST of her guests.

ELENA (CONT'D)  
 Family, friends, neighbors. Thank  
 you for being here, for warming our  
 home. Before we enjoy this meal,  
 let's take a moment and bow our  
 heads.

Everyone looks down, and Lia sneaks a GLANCE at her phone.

ON LOCK SCREEN: "MISS YOU! Where are you?!"

ELENA (CONT'D)  
 It's been a hard year. God has  
 challenged us and our faith.

Lia texts back a FIRE EMOJI.

ELENA (CONT'D)  
 Together, we said goodbye to  
 Romina. But finally, tonight, we  
 get to say "*bienvenida.*"

ON PHONE SCREEN: A PHOTO from Noam - a ridiculous selfie.

Lia SNORTS. She covers her mouth, but it's TOO LATE. Her mother levels a Defcon 1 GLARE.

ELENA (CONT'D)  
Please. Dig in.

Eyes still boring into her daughter, she rises and heads to the kitchen. Lia trails after her like a SAD DOG.

INT. PAYAN HOME - KITCHEN

Elena corners her daughter - as far from prying ears as the small apartment can afford.

ELENA  
*Dámelo.*

LIA  
I can't have friends now?

ELENA  
You'll get it back in the morning.

She puts out an expectant hand.

ELENA (CONT'D)  
You keep telling me you're responsible; a grown woman. I see a child. *Su teléfono. Por favor.*

LIA  
I didn't mean to upset you.

The lights FLICKER; an electrical stutter.

ELENA  
It's not me I'm afraid you'll upset.

INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - NIGHT

Barca sits on the floor, head hung. Spokes re-enters.

SPOKES  
Get up.

She smacks his head.

SPOKES (CONT'D)

Stubborn's not your best look. Get up and talk to me.

Barca swats her hand away.

BARCA

Victor's lying.

SPOKES

I'll re-interview him in the morning. See if the details hold.

BARCA

They won't.

SPOKES

Timeline's right. Location's right. He knew where the bullet entered.

BARCA

He also offered to resurrect her.

SPOKES

It's Dia. People say all kinds of crazy things. Doesn't mean he didn't do it.

Spokes sinks next to him.

BARCA

Victor's made mistakes, but... If he had a choice, he woulda put that gun in his mouth.

SPOKES

So he turned himself in for what? A hilarious prank?

Spokes softens.

SPOKES (CONT'D)

You go above and beyond for him. Every time. Draw the line. You can't save everybody.

INT. PAWN SHOP - NIGHT

Knick-knacks and appliances spill from the cheap shelves. A DOUGHY RUSSIAN lords over the place, watching a WESTERN at his post behind BARS and BULLET PROOF GLASS.



His night is interrupted by a SANDY BLONDE HUSTLER in a HOODIE, 30s, JANGLING through the door. The dude's pasty skin is masked by a PERMANENT SUNBURN.

HUSTLER  
I swore I wouldn't, brah! I  
couldn't. Not this. But for you?

The Russian recognizes the weaving TWEAKER and sighs.

RUSSIAN  
Every week. How many times "no"  
must you hear?

HUSTLER  
This is straight up, my man. When  
my gram moved to Tuscon, she left  
me a few things.

He heaves a GYM BAG onto the counter and unzips it to reveal JUMBLED SILVERWARE. The Russian inspects the utensils.

RUSSIAN  
No good. You steal.

HUSTLER  
(offended)  
Even at my lowest low...

The Russian picks out a fork. Taps the "IR" monogrammed on the HILT.

RUSSIAN  
"Indigo Room." Very over-priced.  
Such tiny foods.

Desperation flops off the hustler's brow. He pulls RINGS from his fingers and slides them under the plexi-glass partition.

HUSTLER  
Whatever, alright? I just need like  
a hundred bucks. C'mon bro.

The Russian examines the rings.

RUSSIAN  
I give forty for jewelry. Your bag,  
ten. My offer. Take or leave.

The hustler gathers his things and exits with a bitter shout.

HUSTLER  
I'll make more on eBay!

The Russian shakes his head and turns back to his movie. Not five seconds later, the door JINGLES as someone enters.

RUSSIAN  
Change your mind?

But when he turns to look - no one's in his store. He peers down one AISLE, then the OTHER. Sits back down. Back to his movie, he doesn't notice the movement on the FUZZY black and white security monitor next to him...

ON MONITOR: A figure in a HOODIE is DOUSING the walls and floors in GASOLINE. Could be the man who just left.

The gas SPLASHES onto the PLEXIGLASS. The Russian leaps to his feet, stunned to discover the ARSON IN PROGRESS. He pulls a shotgun from under the counter and COCKS IT.

RUSSIAN (CONT'D)  
Drop it!

The hoodie FREEZES, and the Russian takes a second look. It's not the HUSTLER.

The figure pulls his HOOD BACK, revealing a SUGAR SKULL. He removes a FRESH ROAD FLARE from his pocket.

SUGAR SKULL  
We burn at the pleasure of Santa Muerte.

He RIPS THE CAP OFF THE FLARE, and its RED TONGUE HISSES DEATH. Smiling, he drops it -

- and becomes a GRINNING COLUMN OF FLAME at the center of an INFERNO.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. STATION - BULL PEN - CONTINUOUS

LIVE TV FOOTAGE of a MASSIVE BLAZE plays on TV. A swirl of activity engulfs the floor as officers answer phones and Menendez orchestrates his team.

MENENDEZ

All hands! Clay, McGorry, Yip -  
with Díaz. Fiore - with Porter. I  
want the perimeter locked up!

He catches Spokes with a stern finger.

MENENDEZ (CONT'D)

Spokes. You're my eyes and ears.

SPOKES

Yes, sir.

MENENDEZ

(to the room)  
While it's burning!

He heads back to his office, side-lining Barca and his boxes.

MENENDEZ (CONT'D)

Not you. You get downstairs. File.

BARCA

I think I'd be better -

MENENDEZ

If you want a job in the morning,  
you'd be better downstairs.

SPOKES

(to Barca)  
Victor's down there. Don't do  
anything stupid.

They share a promise with their eyes. Spokes holds it as she backs into the officers streaming towards the door -

- until she's swept away.

INT. PAYAN HOME - ALTAR ROOM

Barca's dark confessional is now bathed in a soft ORANGE GLOW. Lia finishes lighting one of the last candles, a massive BLUE one, illuminating Eduardo's smiling face.

MIMI (O.S.)  
What are the candles for?

Lia whips around, STARTLED by the tiny voice. Her cousin has taken her seat early, toes dangling above the floor.

LIA  
(deadpan)  
Dead people smell.

The girl's feet stop swinging.

LIA (CONT'D)  
I'm...just kidding. The candles are, uh... They're magic.

MIMI  
Really?

LIA  
Yeah, just for tonight. They help guide the spirits home. You want to see how they work?

The little girl nods.

LIA (CONT'D)  
The underworld, where they live now, it's different. It's not scary, but it can be very dark. Close your eyes.

She does.

LIA (CONT'D)  
See? Even in the darkness, you can still see the flames.

Mimi smiles. Eyes still SHUT, she points to Romina's candle.

MIMI  
You forgot one.

It's a STRANGE MOMENT. Not impossible, but...

Elena appears, lifting Eduardo's candle and using it to light Romina's. The flame attracts both girl's gazes.

ELENA  
Take a seat. The dead are almost here.

INT. STATION - HOLDING CELL - NIGHT

Victor's exhausted body hangs off the bench with all the form of a washcloth. The DRUNKS we met before - BEARD and BALD - hover over him, testing their LUCK. Bald waves his hand in front of Victor's eyes.

No RESPONSE.

Satisfied, Beard positions himself at Victor's feet and wiggles his fingers, WARMING UP. With surprising skill, he unties Victor's laces with a soft TUG.

Carefully, Beard slips the shoe from the foot and searches it. Sure enough, under the tongue - a TWENTY DOLLAR BILL.

BEARD

Toldja.

BALD grins and dives into Victor's pockets, looking for MORE. The sudden movement produces a TWITCH from Victor...

...but he slips back to sleep. The drunks sigh with relief.

But Victor's LEFT HAND has shifted. It dangles at his side - REVEALING THE SUNBURST SEARED INTO FLESH.

Fear grips Beard's throat. HE KNOWS THIS MARK.

BEARD (CONT'D)

*Dios mio...*

BALD

*¿Que pasa?*

BEARD

This man is going to die. And so are we.

INT. PAYAN HOME - ALTAR ROOM

The tiny room is at capacity, every chair filled by a solemn guest. Elena is front and center.

ELENA

We gather tonight, surrounded by warm memories of Eduardo and Romina. Their favorite foods and drinks; photos and keepsakes, spread across the altar to help guide their spirits home to us.

She SQUEEZES Lia's hand. Lia doesn't return the gesture.

ELENA (CONT'D)  
 We wait, and we pray, that they  
 will grace us with their presence.

The room falls DEAD SILENT.

To the left of the seats, the den opens into a long, dark hallway that stretches back towards Lia's room. The yawning archway seems primed to frame a supernatural visitor...

But the shadows are motionless. Everything and everyone is still. Electric. WAITING.

Mimi SQUIRMS in her seat and leans into her teenage cousin.

MIMI  
 Where's *abuelo*?

LIA  
 Shhhhh. Just pretend.

Suddenly - A GASP from the front row. A MURMUR. The candles flutter under a gentle breeze and the fervor GROWS. Reactions POP; kernels in boiling oil.

Finally:

OLDER WOMAN  
 He's here.

ELENA  
 Eduardo?

Eyes trail to the hallway, fixed on the door frame like someone has stepped inside. Even Lia sneaks a peek...

No one's there, but the majority FEELS him just the same.

Elena's hand trembles over her heart. The EMOTION is real.

ELENA (CONT'D)  
 My Eduardo...

Lia looks around the room, her relatives and mother's friends experiencing something she's not. And INTENSELY.

Goosebumps raise on arms and legs, tears TUMBLE, guests inhale deeply, as if they SMELL something familiar.

Even little Mimi seems tapped into something, her eyes flitting to every empty space that could hold a ghost.

THUMP. THUMP.

Footsteps? This time, Lia turns, FROZEN.

THUMP. THUMP. Absolutely footsteps. Far beyond the archway, in the dark. The color drains from Lia's face.

Eyes widen as the heavy steps draw near. Mimi's hand GRIPS Lia's. The older girl can't bear to look, dropping her gaze to the ground in disbelief. And FEAR.

A soft WHISPER floats to their straining ears.

VOICE (O.S.)

Lia...

A DARK SHADOW stretches down the wall. Distorted, but HUMAN.

Lia's wet eyes don't even dare to blink. The shadow SHARPENS as it grows closer. A HAND uncoiling from the darkness.

One word, pried out of her gut:

LIA

Romina?

A FIGURE steps into the candlelight. The air is sucked from the room by a CHOIR OF GASPS until the cruel realization...

The figure is NOAM, Lia's boyfriend, in full Frankenstein's Monster glory - and he's RIP-ROARING DRUNK.

NOAM

Baby? Heyyy. Your window was open.

INT. STATION - RECORDS ROOM

ENTHUSIASTIC football commentary streams from Barca's cell, plugged in on a DISTANT SHELF.

FOOTBALL COMMENTARY

Pats at fourth and goal. Brady, looking for an opening.

The detective shuffles between the MAZE of STEEL CABINETS, on AUTOPILOT. He grabs the next stack of folders. Glances at a FILING CABINET near the door. He CONSIDERS IT, TEMPTED -

- then turns away and plunges back into the labyrinth.

FOOTBALL COMMENTARY (CONT'D)

Opportunity here to lock this up!  
There's the cannon to Watson! It -

SILENCE. Barca SIGHS and weaves his way back to the phone.  
CLOSE ON: A SPINNING ICON.

He tries re-loading the app. Before it finishes, he HEARS...

"Santeria," somewhere in the silence. SLOWER than it should be. Distorted, just like ON THE TAPE.

BARCA

Hello?

He puts his phone down and creeps towards the faint MUSIC. The shadows down here suddenly feel DANGEROUS - as if something's WAITING FOR HIM.

The closer he GETS, the more the song DECAYS. Step after step, the tune becomes a BLACK MIRROR of itself, LOUDER AND LOUDER...

...droning from INSIDE the filing cabinet he eyed just moments ago. Barca creeps close, hesitant. The metal drawer VIBRATES with the force of the sound.

He reaches out and YANKS IT OPEN!

But it's just folders. No tape. No music. The HUSH returns. One tab in particular ENTRANCES him:

"BARCA, ROMINA."

Racing to the table, Barca cracks the file and drinks it in.

CLOSE ON: Notes. Sloppy handwriting. "HIT? EXECUTION?"

CLOSE ON: GLOSSY CRIME SCENE PHOTOS. MACRO images of the BULLET CASING. FOOTPRINTS in the mud. Romina DEAD IN THE DIRT, eyes WIDE.

It hits Barca hard. He closes the folder and looks away.

EXT. STATION - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

With the speed of SPECIAL OPS, a row of shadows converge from the dark. FLECKS OF WHITE reveal their PAINTED FACES - an army of SUGAR SKULLS.

All eyes turn to YELLOW SKULL as he climbs the front steps. He raises his closed fist into the air.

The Black Sun HOLDS.



INT. STATION - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Yellow Skull marches inside, straight to the DESK SERGEANT.

YELLOW SKULL

There is a man in your custody. His name is Victor Payan and I wish to arrange his release.

DESK SERGEANT

You his lawyer?

YELLOW SKULL

Release him to me. Or there will be consequences.

The sergeant pushes an ORANGE CANDY BASKET his way.

DESK SERGEANT

Trick 'r treat. Piss off.

Yellow Skull grabs the sergeant by his SCALP and pulls him over the DESK. The man YELPS and reaches for his GUN.

Yellow Skull SWATS IT away, SLAMMING the sergeant DOWN.

CR-ACK! His ribs give and the sergeant GURGLES, FLAILING HELPLESSLY. Yellow Skull lines his neck up with the desk's edge. A make-shift GUILLOTINE. He RAISES his KNIFE -

INT. STATION - RECORDS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Barca flips the folder open once more. Repulsed and energized by the photos, he spreads them out on the table. There's gotta be something they can TELL HIM.

He focuses on the MUDDY FOOTPRINTS, the RULERS laid out to measure them... Then it HITS HIM. He flips back to the paperwork. Three sets of footprints are noted.

Make, model, size. He pounds his fist on the table. Victory.

EXT. STATION - CONTINUOUS

Yellow Skull re-emerges from the front doors. He holds the DESK SERGEANT'S HEAD aloft, THICK, WET DROPS spattering to the ground.

YELLOW SKULL

Bring me the blood of Victor Payan!

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. PAYAN APARTMENT - KITCHEN

Noam lords over the leftovers like a Roman Emperor while Lia peers around the doorframe, watching her mother say curt good nights to the GUESTS.

NOAM

What I need is...bread?

Lia gets him a glass of WATER instead.

The apartment door SLAMS shut and Lia braces for what's coming. Noam's OBLIVIOUS, even when Elena's glower sweeps directly over him.

ELENA

*Vayanse de mi casa.*

LIA

He didn't mean to.

ELENA

Both of you.

LIA

Mom -

ELENA

I understand you don't believe.  
That's fine. I was your age once. I  
was foolish, too. What I can't  
accept is that you don't care.

Her daughter's phone CLATTERS as Elena tosses it back on the table. Lia WINCES.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Go to your Halloween party.

She fades back down the hallway to her room.

NOAM

Thanks, Mrs. Payan! We'll bring you  
candy!

INT. STATION - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The Sugar Skulls swarm through the front door, the DESK SERGEANT'S BLOOD splashed across the floor like a RED CARPET.

As they move, they each unsheathe an IDENTICAL, BRONZE BLADE.

The bloodthirsty crew flings open CLOSETS and scours under tables, systematically eliminating possible places TO HIDE.

With a GESTURE, one SKULL gives the ALL CLEAR. The horde splits down TWO separate hallways, a third group vaulting straight over the BLOODY FRONT DESK as they make their way DEEPER into the station.

INT. STATION - HOLDING CELL

Victor hang dogs against the bars, arms dangling out of the pen. Behind him, the drunks have reclaimed the bench. Beard is PASTY, SWEATY, tended to by Bald.

BEARD

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name -

VICTOR

Can you please shut him up?

BALD

You scared him, man.

Victor whirls back to the drunk and tries to SHOW HIM -

VICTOR

Hey, hello? It's fine. This -

He points to the FLESHY KNOT on his PALM.

BEARD

- thy will be done, on Earth as it  
is in Heaven.

VICTOR

It's a scar. It's nothing.

BEARD

Gives us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our trespasses -

BARCA (O.S.)

- as we forgive those who trespass  
against us.

Victor looks over to see his brother-in-law at the bars.

BARCA (CONT'D)

C'mon, you know this one. Even I  
remember this one.

VICTOR  
I don't think you should be here.

BARCA  
It's been a long time, *hermano*. You forget where I work?

VICTOR  
I heard you was still on leave.

BARCA  
So you figured if I was out, you could walk straight in here, tell your story - little sad, little crazy - and maybe it'd work.

VICTOR  
Ain't gotta "work." It's the truth.

BARCA  
Some of it. You owe money. That much I buy. What's the deal? Take the fall, clear the debt?

VICTOR  
No deal, bro. This is on me. What I done.

BARCA  
It rained the night Romina died. You remember that?

Victor's thrown by the sudden turn.

VICTOR  
Yeah. Yeah. I didn't have a jacket.

BARCA  
Shoes, though. You wore shoes.

VICTOR  
Sure. Probably -

BARCA  
Boots. There were three sets of boots. Two Timberlands and one unidentified.

VICTOR  
I got Tims.

BARCA  
Not in the right size. These were twelves.

VICTOR

So am I.

BARCA

You've worn my hand-me downs your whole life, *culero*, except for my shoes. They were always two sizes too big. I'm a twelve. They aren't your prints.

Barca reads Victor's face. It's TRUE.

BARCA (CONT'D)

You didn't kill her, so what the hell are you doing here?

INT. STATION - MENENDEZ'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Menendez flips through paperwork at his desk, SIGNING what needs to be signed. OFFICER KELLER, 30s, hovers at the door.

KELLER

I got phones lighting up out here.

MENENDEZ

Answer 'em.

KELLER

I only got two hands. If we fold a couple drunk driving checkpoints -

MENENDEZ

We turn off the money hose now and there won't be any trees come Christmas.

KELLER

Sure, but just a few more guys...

MENENDEZ

It's under control.

KELLER

One more guy.

MENENDEZ

Goodbye, Keller!

The officer stands down and closes the door behind him. FRUSTRATION ripples through Menendez's body.

He eyes the phone on his desk. There's a call he wants to make...

THUMP! Sounds like a rolled carpet falling to the floor.

Menendez gets to his feet and peeks through his office's blinds. Everything in its place. No Keller. An EMPTY ROOM.

REVERSE ON:

SKULLS. Crouched behind desks, pressed against cabinets.  
Menendez can't see any of them from his perspective...

...especially not the one flat against his office door,  
reaching for the KNOB.

INT. POLICE STATION - HOLDING CELL

Victor panics as his lies CRUMBLE.

VICTOR

Julian, please. You don't  
understand.

Like lightning, Barca reaches through the bars and jerks  
Victor close. The prisoner's forehead CLANGS off the metal.

BARCA

(snarling)

Your family helped me. Romina  
changed me. But remember who I used  
to be, because you're talking to  
him now.

(beat)

Why did you lie?

Victor WHIMPERS.

VICTOR

Because in here...they can't get  
me.

BANG! BANG! BANG! Three loud POPS from ABOVE.

BEARD

Oh, no, no, no.

He SLINKS AWAY, into the farthest corner of the cell.

BARCA

Victor... Who are "they"?

The drunk points at Victor.

BEARD

The Black Sun, *puerco*. They have  
come for his soul.

VICTOR

No, Julian, listen. I can explain.  
I had to. There was nowhere else to  
go!

BARCA

You're hiding here...  
(realizing)  
The fire.

His hands fly to his pockets, searching for his CELL PHONE.

VICTOR

What fire?

BARCA

Explosion a couple blocks from  
here. The whole precinct...  
Everyone left.

FOOTSTEPS THUNDER over their heads. Victor's face falls.

VICTOR

You gotta, uh, open the - Julian,  
you gotta let me outta here right  
now. Julian!

BARCA

Shh! Where's my phone?

He looks back the direction he came, to the RECORDS ROOM near  
the STAIRS.

VICTOR

Please! I'll tell you everything.  
Let me out of this goddamn cage!

INT. POLICE STATION - BASEMENT

The SUGAR SKULLS race down the stairs and file into the hall;  
OBEDIENT SOLDIERS, all. YELLOW SKULL emerges last, slinking  
towards the HOLDING CELLS; towards his prey.

He takes his time.

YELLOW SKULL

I can hear your heart, Señor Payan.  
I can hear it racing. I can smell  
your piss, running down your leg.

He arrives at the bars, nearly SALIVATING...

YELLOW SKULL (CONT'D)  
Your fear is exquisite.

...to find the two drunks COWERING ALONE. Yellow Skull ROARS and tries to throw open the cell, but it's LOCKED TIGHT.

He shakes with RAGE.

INT. POLICE STATION - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON: The door at the end - cracked JUST AN INCH. Enough to see Barca's WIDE, FRIGHTENED EYE taking it all in.

YELLOW SKULL  
Find him!

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

A WIDE LA BOULEVARD. Four lanes wide and bumper to bumper.

Hand in hand, a still BUZZED Noam guides Lia down the busy sidewalk. She's wearing her devil horns - but doesn't look ready to party.

NOAM  
She'll get over it. Right?

LIA  
You don't know my mom very well.

They stop at a crosswalk, waiting for the light. Lia's eyes wander over the pedestrians crossing the street. It's just visual noise, until she LOCKS onto a FAMILIAR FACE.

A WOMAN, 30s, her inky waves falling over soft eyes.

A DEAD RINGER FOR ROMINA. Lia GASPS. Noam's oblivious.

NOAM  
C'mon.

He pulls gently on her elbow. Lia glances BACK over her shoulder, but the other pedestrians OBSCURE her view.

LOST HER.



EXT. CITY STREET - BUS STOP - CONTINUOUS

Noam and Lia queue up behind a handful of other passengers. A BLUE CITY BUS rumbles towards them out of the dark.

NOAM  
Our chariot!

It isn't until she turns around that she spots ROMINA AGAIN -  
- coming from the same direction she just did. Lia's  
BREATHLESS as the crowd thins. She gets an UNOBSCURED VIEW -  
- of an ELDERLY WOMAN. Not even close. The bus pulls up, its  
ear grating WAIL rocking Lia from her stupor.

Noam GRABS HER HAND -

NOAM (CONT'D)  
Hey, you hear me?

LIA  
Huh? No, sorry.

NOAM  
I said you're the only one who can  
save me.

LIA  
(confused)  
What?

- and he pulls her up onto the BUS.

INT. CITY BUS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

BEEP! BEEP! Passengers file in, swiping their fare cards.

Lia plunges down her purse like an ostrich, plucks her fare  
card from its depths, pivots toward the aisle -

BEEP!

- and her knees LIQUIFY. Only her hand on the safety pole  
SAVES HER from collapse.

Every seat is TAKEN; each filled by ROMINA!

Dozens of IDENTICAL FACES, staring at her, mouths agape in  
silent screams, A BLOODY BULLET HOLE piercing each forehead.

Lia gasps like she's been STABBED and backpedals off the bus.

INT. STATION - SECURITY STATION

ON MONITORS: GRAIN and FUZZ as video is SPED UP, REWOUND and finally, SLOWED TO A CRAWL. Barca is visible, UNLOCKING the cell. He pulls Victor free.

The Sugar Skull at the controls GRINS.

SUGAR SKULL  
We got a live one.

INT. STATION - STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

The second it's LOCKED, Barca SLAMS Victor into the door.

BARCA  
Who are they? Raventañas?

VICTOR  
No.

BARCA  
*¡Explicamelo! ¡Ahora!*

VICTOR  
I didn't shoot her man, okay? Yo no maté a ella! But everything else, that's the truth. I dug my grave, and they killed her for trying to pull me out.

BARCA  
You shoulda come to me. Not Romy.

VICTOR  
You'd done too much already. I was the problem. She wanted me gone.

Barca KNEES Victor in the stomach, dropping him to the floor.

BARCA  
You shoulda come to me, on your hands and knees. We coulda fixed this.

VICTOR  
These people, Julian, they're not Raventañas. They're not a gang. They won't negotiate. They don't want money. They just want me. Dead.

BARCA

Why? What did you do?

VICTOR

There's a story. One Abuelo used to tell...

BARCA

Man told a lot of stories.

VICTOR

Santa Muerte's Wager. You remember.

BARCA

That was a long time ago.

VICTOR

He used to say that when the line between the living and the dead rotted away during Día, Santa Muerte, the Goddess of Death, would visit and offer a deal to those in mourning. All you had to do was hide. If she caught you before the sun came up on All Soul's Day, she'd drink your blood and feast on your spirit. But if you survived, she'd bring a loved one back from the dead.

(beat)

Scared the piss outta us.

BARCA

Those men aren't Santa Muerte.

Victor holds his hand out, revealing the BURN.

VICTOR

But they worship her. They're called the Black Sun. The game's real, Julian. If I make it to morning, they will bring Romina back.

Barca studies Victor with HARD EYES.

BARCA

You agreed to this? You let them...hunt you?

VICTOR

They don't care who you lost or how you lost 'em.

(MORE)

VICTOR (CONT'D)

They just need thirteen people every year, desperate enough to try and cheat death.

BARCA

And you think, if you win-

VICTOR

Romina put her life on the line for me and the Raventañas blew her brains out in the mud. I owe her this much.

BARCA

Whatever this is, tap out. Walk away. They played you.

VICTOR

No. Listen! Keep me alive until the sun comes up, and when you go home - I promise you, Romina will be waiting. Like nothing ever happened.

Barca's head spins.

VICTOR (CONT'D)

Please. Julian. Can you do that?

GGZZZHHHHHHhhhhh.

The power goes out and the station is PLUNGED into DARKNESS.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. PAYAN HOME - HALLWAY

Lia paces outside a closed bedroom door. Her face STAINED WITH TEARS. Finally, she raps the most tentative of knocks.

LIA

Mom?

No response, but there's SOFT LIGHT under the door. She tries the door knob. It's UNLOCKED.

INT. PAYAN HOME - ELENA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The older woman KNEELS beside her bed, hands clasped. She's still, finishing HER PRAYER...

LIA

Something happened.

ELENA

With that boy, I'm not surprised.

LIA

It wasn't Noam.

Elena rises, sitting on the mattress' edge. When she looks at her daughter, she realizes - LIA IS TREMBLING.

ELENA

Where is he? *¿Estás bien? ¿Qué ha pasado?*

She pats the spot beside her and Lia rushes to fill it.

LIA

I used to love Día. Before dad died - the *Pan de Muerte*, the marigolds. It was a party. And then after...I couldn't wait. To see him walk back in that door and hug him or hear him. Even just sense him. I was more excited for Día that year than my birthday. But then it came...and we prayed. And we waited. And you felt him. Everyone felt him. But I didn't.

Tears stream as she hides her face against her mother's shoulder. Elena holds her close.

LIA (CONT'D)  
 I was so ashamed. I thought there  
 was something wrong with me. And  
 then, after Romina -

The wound is TORN FRESH.

LIA (CONT'D)  
 I miss her so much.

ELENA  
*Pobrecita*. Perhaps it's best she  
 didn't come. Maybe next year.

LIA  
 But she did. I saw her.

Elena's empathy shifts to apprehension.

LIA (CONT'D)  
 She was on the bus.

ELENA  
*¿Qué quieres decir?*

LIA  
 Screaming. Bleeding. Like-

BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP! They both leap in SHOCK.

A smoke detector SHRIEKS. Lia tracks the noise out of the  
 bedroom and into -

INT. PAYAN HOME - ALTAR ROOM

- where Romina's photo is AFLAME, her beautiful face  
 CONTORTING as the image BUBBLES and BURNS.

Elena REELS in horror.

INT. STATION - BACK EXIT

Barca checks a doorknob: CHK-CHK. Locked.

Voice LOW, he tucks back to Victor.

BARCA  
 If they cut the power, this place  
 is locked down. No in, no out -  
 except through the front door.

VICTOR  
What're our options?

BARCA  
Bad and worse, unless you can see  
in the dark.  
(beat)  
End of the hall, hang left. That's  
records. We get my phone, call for  
help. Or we head up the main  
stairs, break for the front. Either  
way, we gotta get from here to  
there. Blind. How many men do you  
think they have?

VICTOR  
In the city? Dozens.

BARCA  
How many would they send for you?

VICTOR  
I'm a tough player. I think only  
half of us are still standing.  
So... all of them?

GENERATORS power on, casting the hall in the VIOLENT RED GLOW  
of emergency lights.

YELLOW SKULL (O.S.)  
(over intercom)  
Julian Barca. Welcome to the melee.

Barca mouths a bitter "fuck."

YELLOW SKULL (CONT'D)  
I'm surprised you chose to die  
here. Our preparation pegged you as  
a number of nasty things. An ally  
was not one of them.

Barca take a peak. ALL CLEAR. He weighs his options -

YELLOW SKULL (CONT'D)  
I respect the choice, but you  
should know it is foolish.

- and makes his MOVE, skulking down the hall as fast as he  
can. Victor follows.

YELLOW SKULL (CONT'D)  
Give him up and my blade will be  
kind. Or don't. This station is  
small; I'd much prefer to gut you.

The intercom system SCREECHES as Yellow Skull hangs up.

INT. STATION - RECORDS ROOM

CREAAAAAAAKKKKK. Barca eases the door open.

BARCA'S POV: The same red light - broken by the FAINT, BLUE GLOW of a phone screen. Charging. Right where he left it.

Gathering his courage, Barca steps inside, senses on HIGH ALERT. Step by step, he draws closer to salvation...

...so focused that he MISSES the TWO SKULLS WATCHING HIM like ALLIGATORS, waiting for him to get just CLOSE ENOUGH...

RRZZZZZZ! The phone BUZZES. LOUDLY. Screen brightness DOUBLES, peeling back shadows and REVEALING THE SKULLS. Barca takes a quick glance at the screen -

ON PHONE: "SPOKES."

AS THE SKULLS LUNGE!

The first OBLITERATES the phone as Barca sprints for the exit. Blades PLUNGE inches from his back as he spins and - CRUNCH! - SLAMS the door into the Skull barreling through the threshold.

The second climbs right OVER the body, knife SLASHING at Barca.

SKULL  
Here! He's here!

The fight spills into -

INT. STATION - HALLWAY

- where Victor joins in, pulling the Skull away from Barca and sending him careening into the WALL. Barca sails the other way, toppling a JANITOR'S CART and freeing a MOP.

Seeing his shot, Barca scrambles to the mop and CRACKS IT over his KNEE. Before the SKULL can get to his feet, Barca spins and drives the TOOTHY WOOD into the man's heart.

The Skull SMILES as he dies.

SKULL  
I can hear her.

The corpse slumps to the floor.



BARCA  
 Guess we're goin' out the front  
 then.

VOICE (O.S.)  
 (distant; soft)  
 Barca...?

Barca turns in the direction of the voice.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Bar...ca...

BARCA  
 Menendez?

INT. STATION - STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

The voice is coming from above. Blood slicks the stairs, and the men follow it UP to a LANDING ON THE FIRST FLOOR -

- where the CAPTAIN rests against a door, GUT GUSHING in his hands. The detective bolts to his superior's side, ready to INSPECT the wound. Menendez pushes him AWAY.

MENENDEZ  
 They're everywhere. You gotta get  
 out.

BARCA  
 Sir, we're locked down. There is no  
 way out.

Menendez pushes A KEYCARD into Barca's hand.

MENENDEZ  
 This'll override the exits.

BARCA  
 If we can get you up -

Beneath them - SHOUTS. A SKULL appears in the door window.

He spots them and unleashes a WILD WAR CRY.

MENENDEZ  
*Pendejo!* Go! To the roof!

Victor doesn't hesitate. Barca takes one last look -

BARCA  
 Thank you.

- and dashes up the stairs TWO AT A TIME. He meets Victor at the door and SWIPES the card against the blinking lock.

BEEP! Red. BEEP! Red. Below, a SCREAM.

BARCA (CONT'D)

Come on!

BEEP! Green. They PUSH THROUGH -

EXT. STATION - ROOF - CONTINUOUS

- onto the GRAVEL TOPPED ROOF. Victor scrambles to the far edge to get a sense for the drop -

- but comes face to face with MORE SKULLS racing up the fire escape. He turns back, to find Barca braced against the door, battling the ARMS that keep it from closing.

BARCA

Victor!

It's too late. The Skulls flood over the edge of the roof and TACKLE Victor from behind. Barca is OVERPOWERED and a stampede of Skulls erupt from behind the door, TRAMPLING HIM.

Fists and feet PUMMEL Victor into submission.

The Skulls HOLD HIM DOWN, just as they did Vera. They force his palm to FACE THE SKY -

- too focused to notice Barca CRAWLING around the backside of the ROOF ACCESS DOOR.

Yellow Skull steps from the darkness.

YELLOW SKULL

Victor. What spirit. What a thrill.

He stands over Victor, blocking out the MOON.

YELLOW SKULL (CONT'D)

What a disappointment for Romina.  
She was counting on you.

The Skulls begin to CHANT - the same cadence we TEASED during the attack on VERA.

SKULLS

*Santa Muerte, ofrecemos esta carne  
para su fuego.*

Yellow Skull cuts Victor's shirt open.

VICTOR

No! Stop!

But Yellow Skull brings the blade back down, drawing BLOOD from collar to sternum.

SKULLS

*Santa Muerte, ofrecemos este alma  
para su fuerza.*

Yellow Skull touches the RED and anoints Victor's PALM - right over the BURN.

The blood BOILS and turns BLACK.

SKULLS (CONT'D)

*¡Muerte Santa, Mala Madre, acepta  
nuestro sacrificio! ¡Levántese!*

EXT. STATION - ROOF ACCESS DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Barca gawks at the ritual taking place not fifty feet away. He looks for a weapon as Victor's WAILS fill the night air.

Something, ANYTHING.

SKULLS

*¡Lavantalo y arrastradlo a La Fosa!*

That's when the GRAVEL STARTS TO MOVE.

EXT. STATION - ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Victor's eyes BULGE as the rocks at his feet fall away and an ALABASTER WHITE HAND BURSTS FROM THE ROOF'S FLOOR!

YELLOW SKULL

Santa Muerte...

She PULLS herself from the stones GRACEFULLY; an undead Lady of the Lake.

As she RISES, her porcelain, expressionless FACE is revealed - the inspiration for the Black Sun's "Sugar Skull" look.

CLOSE ON: Barca - his understanding of REALITY collapsing and shifting.

EXT. STATION - ROOF - CONTINUOUS

The Skulls fall to their knees as Santa Muerte RISES to her full height, trailing WHITE ROBES that place her somewhere between an elegant Grim Reaper and an ASSASSIN.

The Skulls release Victor, who scuttles away. Santa Muerte draws a SICKLE from her side and backs him to the EDGE OF THE ROOF.

Nowhere to go, Victor CRACKS.

VICTOR

I want her back! I want to see my sister!

YELLOW SKULL

(relishing it)

Do you want to see her now? Say you do. Say you want to weep with her in the dark.

VICTOR

I want to tell her I'm sorry!

YELLOW SKULL

Say it! Say yes!

CLOSER ON: Barca's PETRIFIED FACE. That phrase. Two words. "SAY YES." He knows what he has to do.

BARCA (O.S.)

Stop!

He steps out, drawing every EVIL EYE.

BARCA (CONT'D)

Let me take his place.

YELLOW SKULL

Señor Barca. That's not how this works.

BARCA

Romina. You can bring her back?

YELLOW SKULL

That is the prize - but I'm afraid Victor has already lost.

BARCA

It's not his wager to make.

Without taking her eyes off Barca, Santa Muerte GLIDES up behind Yellow Skull.

Her lips move SILENTLY against his ear, a SNAKE-LIKE TONGUE flicks along his CHEEK.

YELLOW SKULL

Fine. Two for one. You win, you see your wife again. Victor will be spared. You lose, the lady gets you both.

He draws his KNIFE.

YELLOW SKULL (CONT'D)

Kneel.

Barca obliges, tensed for the worst. Yellow Skull produces a LIGHTER and holds the flame to the base of the knife's HANDLE.

CLOSE ON: BASE OF KNIFE. A familiar pattern, the SUNBURST from Victor's hand, glows ORANGE.

Yellow Skull grabs Barca's LEFT HAND and drives the SEARING HOT BRAND into his skin. The flesh SIZZLES and SMOKES.

When it's over, Yellow Skull steps back.

YELLOW SKULL (CONT'D)

Eleven hours until sunrise.

(beat)

Time to run, Julian.

Barca rises and bolts for the door.

YELLOW SKULL (CONT'D)

Run, Julian! RUN!

He starts to WHOOP and LAUGH; the cackle of a madman. Barca doesn't LOOK BACK.

EXT. STATION - PARKING LOT - SECONDS LATER

Barca BURSTS from the front door, running on A THOUSAND CCs of ADRENALINE. He looks LEFT, RIGHT - smoke curling away from the FIRE...

...and takes off into the night.

END OF EPISODE