

The Fabulous Fernandez Sisters

By

Josefina Lopez

January 15, 2015
Second Network Draft

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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. MEXICAN KITCHEN - NIGHT

CRISTAL FERNANDEZ, 50s, is busy cooking. On the kitchen table is a feast of the best Mexican food. Cristal takes off her apron.

TINA FERNANDEZ, 21, Mexican-American, light complexion, very cute, walks into the kitchen. Her eyes widen with delight at all the delicious food and deserts. (CRISTAL ONLY SPEAKS IN SPANISH.)

CRISTAL

I left you all you need. I am ready
to go now.

Cristal picks up a suitcase and makes for the door. Tina runs up to her and pulls on her suitcase so she won't go.

CRISTAL (CONT'D)

Don't worry, it's your turn now.
Take care of the family.

Tina pulls on Cristal's hand and then it turns into a skeleton's hand. Cristal's face turns into a skull and transforms into "la muerte" (death) and then turns to black dust. Tina screams. Her scream blends into a high-pitched alarm clock.

INT. DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Tina wakes up from her nightmare.

ALARM BLARES

Tina turns off the alarm and remains in bed calming her nerves.

Her cellphone rings and she jumps up startled. Tina looks at her cell phone and on the screen reads "BIG SIS". She answers.

TINA

Hi... Yes, yes, I'm coming to the
party.

(MORE)

TINA (CONT'D)

Yes, I'll stop at the store and pick up the Margarita mix and the cake for Rudy. Yeah, I'm leaving right now.

EXT. BOYLE HEIGHTS, MARIACHI PLAZA - ESTABLISHING SHOT - MAGIC HOUR

The sun sets on Mariachi Plaza with the skyscrapers of Downtown L.A. in the background.

EXT. THE FERNANDEZ HOUSE - ESTABLISHING SHOT - NIGHT

The house is a humble two bedroom house with a green lawn and several blooming rose bushes. MUSIC can be heard coming from the house and LOUD NOISES from PARTY GOERS.

INT. FERNANDEZ FAMILY HOUSE, BATHROOM - SAME

RODOLFO FERNANDEZ, SR, 50s, a handsome man with strong features befitting a "Latin Lover" movie star, steps in front of a mirror. He combs his hair back using TRES FLORES (three flowers) brilliantine and grooms himself with sensuality.

Cristal steps into the bathroom and hands him a newly pressed white guayabera shirt. He takes it from her, closes the door, and dresses himself lovingly finishing his ritual. He EXITS.

INT. FERNANDEZ FAMILY HOUSE, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Rodolfo steps out of the bathroom making an entrance to welcome the GUESTS at the fiesta.

On the walls of the hallway are SEVERAL PICTURES and TROPHIES of the Fernandez Sisters in pink Mariachi outfits.

INT. FERNANDEZ FAMILY HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rodolfo walks up to his brother and sister, UNCLE PEPE, 50s, dark skin, big moustache, and TIA SOFIA, 50s, a real woman and a gossip queen, already dancing, and hugs them.

TIA SOFIA

Tu estas bueno para traer la muerte; porque te tomas tu tiempo.
(Spanish expression: You are a good one to bring death because you take your time.)

RODOLFO

(jokingly)

Pues todo lo bueno y guapo toma su tiempo. (Well all that is good and good looking takes it's time.)

They laugh and go to a make shift bar where CONNIE FERNANDEZ, 31, Mexican-American, dark skin, sexy an Immigration Attorney, is serving up tequila shots to all the HAPPY GUESTS and making Margaritas.

CONNIE

Where's the extra Margarita mix?

Councilwoman Fernandez, MARTHA FERNANDEZ, 36, (Mexican-American, full figured, beautiful), is carrying a tray with appetizers.

MARTHA

Tina is bringing it.

CONNIE

What's taking her so long?

Just then Tina comes into the house carrying two grocery bags with the Margarita mix and a birthday cake. She walks up to Martha and Connie.

TINA

Look, I even bought the candles.

Tina shows them two candles in the shape of a "1" and a "3".

MARTHA

Can't believe he's going to be thirteen already. Hope he doesn't get moody like when we were teenagers.

TINA

That only happens to girls when they get P.M.S.

CONNIE

Are you kidding me? Boys and men get moody too! They get H.M.T. Hyper male testosterone syndrome. All the lawyers I work with get it at the end of the month.

The sisters LAUGH and drink a tequila shot.

EXT. THE FERNANDEZ HOUSE - SAME

MARY ELLEN HOUSTON (BORN MARIA ELENA FERNANDEZ), 31, light skin, plain, with the perfect blonde highlights, out fit and designer purse, and her husband JERRY HOUSTON, 33, white, tall and stiff, walk up to the house. Mary Ellen touches the doorknob and freezes.

QUICK FLASHBACK

RODOLFO SR. PUSHING MARY ELLEN OUT THE DOOR - THE SISTERS AND CRISTAL BEGGING HIM NOT TO KICK HER OUT - HE YELLS "SHE'S A WHORE" AND SLAMS THE DOOR ON MARY ELLEN WHO IS ONLY 15

BACK TO THE PRESENT

JERRY

Mary Ellen, what's wrong?

MARY ELLEN

I don't know if I can do this. I haven't been back here since--

JERRY

Then let's just go home.

MARY ELLEN

No, I want to do this. I want to say goodbye to my parents... I want to show them I don't need them.

JERRY

OK, let's just make an appearance, wish Rudy a happy birthday and your parents a safe trip to Mexico.

MARY ELLEN

All right.

INT. THE FERNANDEZ HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mary Ellen and Jerry walk in. Cristal immediately hugs Mary Ellen.

CRISTAL

Maria Elena!

MARY ELLEN

Mom, please call me Mary Ellen.

CRISTAL

Oh, si (yes) I forget. Mary Ellen, m'ija I'm so happy to see you! You never come to our parties. Rodolfo, look who is here.

Rodolfo walks over and hugs Mary Ellen who squirms with a fake smile.

Cristal takes Mary Ellen's hand and takes her to the kitchen where her sisters are chatting.

CRISTAL

(joyfully)

Look who finally came...

They stare at her in an awkward silence, not sure what to say.

MARTHA

Mary Ellen...

Martha hugs Mary Ellen who is not comfortable being with them. Tina hugs her as well.

Connie busies herself making drinks to avoid hugging Mary Ellen.

CONNIE

Do you want a drink?

MARY ELLEN

I don't drink.

RUDY FERNANDEZ, JR., 13, Mexican-American the spitting image of his father, walks in with a Spanish guitar and walks up to Rodolfo.

RUDY

Apa (Dad), I'm ready if you are.

Rodolfo, already drunk, nods joyfully, and turns off the music. Rudy sits on a chair and positions himself to play the guitar.

RODOLFO SR.

(in Spanish)

Welcome friends and family. Tonight my Rudy junior turns 13 and because he is now a man he wants to show you he too has the Fernandez fire. Come on Rudy, show them what I taught you.

Everyone surrounds Rudy who plays a short but challenging Spanish guitar piece. His fingers move elegantly with fluidity and he smiles as though it is effortless. He finishes and stands up to take a bow.

LOUD APPLAUSE

Connie, Martha, Tina, and Mary Ellen come out of the kitchen holding his birthday cake with lit "13" candles. They sing Happy Birthday in Spanish sounding in perfect harmony. Rudy blows out the candles. His sisters and parents surround him with hugs.

TIA SOFIA

Everybody get together so I can
take a picture!

The Fernandez Family squeezes together for a family picture. Everyone is smiling and for this second everything is perfect and they are the perfect family.

The flash goes off.

RODOLFO SR.

Martha, get your sisters together
and sing your brother a song for
his birthday.

MARTHA

We already did.

RODOLFO

No, sing him a real Mariachi song!
I want everyone to hear "The
Fabulous Fernandez Sisters" one
more time! Come on! Do it!

MARTHA

I think Rudy would prefer to play
another song on his guitar, don't
you agree Rudy?

MARY ELLEN

No Dad, I'm not in the mood.

CONNIE

We're too old to be doing this--

RODOLFO SR.

(insisting)
Do it!

TINA

Okay, let's do it for Rudy.

The sisters look at one another and half-heartedly agree.

RODOLFO SR.

Sing my favorite one. Martha, you sing the lead because you're the prettiest and have the best voice.

MARTHA

No, Papa, Connie's voice is stronger.

QUICK FLASHBACK

RODOLFO SR. SCREAMING AT CONNIE IN FRONT OF HER SISTERS AT REHEARSAL WHEN THEY WERE YOUNG GIRLS - "NO, DON'T CRY - YOU CAN'T CRY! THE FERNANDEZ SISTERS DON'T CRY!" - "STOP BEING AN IDIOT CONNIE!"

BACK TO THE PRESENT

CONNIE

(mockingly)

Yeah, Martha, you "have the best voice."

MARY ELLEN

Yeah, Martha, you're the prettiest.

All the GUESTS and RELATIVES stare at Martha waiting for her to agree.

BEAT

Martha nods.

MARTHA

All right. On three. One, two, three.

They sing their father's favorite song with Martha leading. They dance to a choreography befitting young girls, not grown women.

Cristal puts her arm around Rodolfo and they listen to their daughters with pride on their faces.

Connie, Mary Ellen and Tina suffer through the dance and song. Martha sings her song directing all her love to Rudy.

Rudy applauds and so do the rest of the party guests.

MONTAGE

A SERIES OF SHOTS SHOWING THE PARTY GETTING WILDER

Rudy break dances on the dance floor. He has amazing dance moves, he is lit up with joy, sparks practically fly off of him.

Connie, drunk, walks up to Jerry.

CONNIE

Jerry, you look miserable. Let's go dance.

Connie grabs his hand and drags him to the dance floor to dance salsa. Jerry turns red, embarrassed.

JERRY

No, no, I'm not a good dancer!

CONNIE

So learn!

Connie leads him in some hot salsa moves. Jerry gets the swing of it and gets his groove. He dances with Connie passionately finally feeling confident in a room full of salsa kings and queens.

Mary Ellen comes out of the bathroom and sees Jerry doing seductive dance moves with Connie. She marches up to him.

MARY ELLEN

Let's go!

JERRY

But I just started having fun--

MARY ELLEN

I'm not comfortable with this.

CONNIE

Maria Elena, please! Yeah, I called you by your real name. You need to take Jerry out of the suburbs and take him downtown more often if you know what I mean.

MARY ELLEN

You are so vulgar.

CONNIE

And you are such a vendida.

JERRY

What's a "vendida"?

CONNIE

A sell out, a self-hating Latina
who needs to get back in touch with
her brown roots, and I don't mean
her fake blonde hair, so she can
teach you how to dance salsa like a
real Mexican.

MARY ELLEN

And you're a puta (whore) for
dancing with my husband like that!

CONNIE

See, she does speak Spanish!

MARY ELLEN

Jerry, I'll see you in the car!

Mary Ellen makes for the door. Martha catches up to her.

MARTHA

Don't leave before saying goodbye
to Mama and Papa. They leave in the
morning.

Mary Ellen goes up to her parents and hugs them.

MARY ELLEN

Goodbye.

CRISTAL

(in English)
Are you okay?

MARY ELLEN

No... But it doesn't matter. Have a
safe trip.

Mary Ellen leaves. Jerry follows after her. Martha yells out
to Mary Ellen.

MARTHA

I'll call you so we can have a get
together with all the sisters,
okay?

DISSOLVE TO:

The house is a mess and Tia Sofia and Uncle Pepe are the last
guests to leave along with Connie, Martha and Tina.

TIA SOFIA

Good night. I have to put this
borracho (drunk) to bed.

Uncle Pepe sings a bad ranchera song with Rodolfo. They are drunk and singing dramatically. Tia Sofia tries to drag Uncle Pepe to the door, but he can't leave a song unfinished.

Connie, Tina, and Martha hug their father and say their informal goodbye. They walk up to Cristal who is sober and dutifully cleaning the house. (THE SISTERS SPEAK TO CRISTAL IN SPANISH.)

CONNIE

I'll stay and clean.

CRISTAL

No, go home. It will give me something to do. Your father will be up for hours singing and lamenting he didn't become famous like Vicente Fernandez. You know how he gets when he drinks too much.

Connie hugs Cristal and they say their goodbye.

Cristal walks up to Martha who is sweeping the floor and picking up trash.

CRISTAL

M'ija (my dear daughter), thank you for agreeing to sing your Papa's favorite song. When he hears you sing, it makes him a little less bitter. It's not easy being his favorite daughter. I am so proud of you. We never dreamed that someday you would become a Councilwoman and represent our people. All of our sacrifices were worth it because of you... and your sisters. I love seeing all of you together.

Martha hugs her mother, her father and Tina, then leaves.

Tina walks up to her mother and hugs her tightly not wanting to let her go.

CRISTAL

What's wrong?

TINA

Nothing.

Tina hugs her mother tightly again.

TINA
Adios (Goodbye), Mama.

CRISTAL
No, no digas adios. Di hasta pronto, hasta que nos veamos devuelta. We'll be back in two months. (No, don't say goodbye. Say until later, until we see each other again.

DISSOLVE TO:

TITLE CARD: TWO MONTHS LATER

EXT. COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ FIELD OFFICE, ESTABLISHING SHOT - DAY

INT. FIELD OFFICE, MARTHA'S PRIVATE OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Martha, dressed in a professional business suit that makes her look frumpy, sits across from TWO CONSULTANTS, 40s, dressed impeccably exuding over-confidence, already seated.

MARTHA
Thank you for meeting with me.

IMAGE CONSULTANT
Councilwoman Fernandez we are excited that you are considering working with us. After careful analysis we have concluded that you have a great chance of becoming Mayor of Los Angeles... if you do the following... And may I be frank with you?

MARTHA
Yes, that's why I'm considering hiring you, I heard you're the best and you don't waste people's time.

IMAGE CONSULTANT
You need to lose weight. Fat candidates don't have a chance. You don't have a husband or children;
(MORE)

IMAGE CONSULTANT (CONT'D)

you need to get married, people don't trust a single woman your age, especially you being so young and running for Mayor. We will also help you reduce your Mexican accent and polish you so that you can be "accessible" to all Angelenos.

Martha smiles, keeping a cool head not missing a beat.

MARTHA

Oh... I see. So you're saying I'm too fat, too Mexican, too young, and too single? How about selling me as a real woman with extraordinary talents who wants to bring about real change?

IMAGE CONSULTANT

Hmmm. That would be a hard sell--

MARTHA

I also want to be public about the fact that I was undocumented for many years before I became a U.S. Citizen along with two of my sisters--

POLITICAL CONSULTANT

Oh, no, I don't think that would be a good idea--

MARTHA

I think it would show that I am the embodiment of the American Dream. I know this city is ready to be led by a person who really represents the people; don't you think?

POLITICAL CONSULTANT

That depends... Can you get an endorsement from the Mayor?

MARTHA'S CELL PHONE RINGS

Martha looks at the number and knows it's important.

MARTHA

Excuse me. I have to take this.

She steps away and answers.

MARTHA

Hello? Hello? (in Spanish) Yes, yes, this is Martha... Oh, my God...! No, no, no! It can't be... When? How?... I'll be there as soon as I can. Goodbye.

Martha takes a deep breath and hangs up. Her sorrow is hard to hide, but she puts on a brave face.

MARTHA

I'm sorry, I have to cut this meeting short. I will contact you when I am ready. Thank you.

The Consultants try to hide their frowns and puzzled looks as they walk out.

Martha picks up her purse and walks up to her ASSISTANT, (CORA LUNARES), 20s, Latina with glasses and lots of curves.

MARTHA

I have a family emergency. Cancel all my meetings for the next two days.

ASSISTANT LUNARES

Are you okay?

MARTHA

No, I'm not okay, but the people didn't elect me to bring my personal problems to this office. Please keep this confidential, I don't want anyone worrying about me.

ASSISTANT LUNARES

If you need to talk you know I'm good at keeping chisme (gossip) to myself.

MARTHA

I have to go to Mexico right now so I'm afraid I can't take you up on your offer. But when I get back I just might need a shoulder to cry on and lots of churros with chocolate.

ASSISTANT LUNARES

(concerned, to herself:)
Churros with chocolate? Oh, it must be serious.

Martha makes a call on her cell.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - ESTABLISHING SHOT - SAME

EXT. LOS ANGELES IMMIGRATION COURT BUILDING, COURT ROOM

Connie argues her case. ANALISA GUTIERREZ, late 20s, Honduran, the defendant, listens intently as Connie points to her.

CONNIE

Analisa Gutierrez did not break the law. She felt compelled to stand in front of the I.C.E. bus to prevent her own mother, who was in that bus, from being deported. It was an act of love not a reckless criminal act. My defendant is a mother of three U.S. born children and has proven to be an outstanding member of her community. Deporting Analisa back to Honduras would be cruel and unjust. In this folder are over ten letters from community leaders pleading for Mrs. Guitierrez to remain in the country.

Connie puts the file with letters on the Judge's desk.

IMMIGRATION JUDGE

Let's take a ten minute recess.

Connie takes a seat next to Analisa looking exhausted. JESUS BUENAFORTUNA, 30s, a Paralegal Assistant to Connie, hands her some files.

JESUS

Here are the files you requested. Chica, you look like you need to get--

Just then Connie's CELL PHONE RINGS.

ON THE SCREEN

"Martha"

Jesus hands the cell phone to Connie.

JESUS

It's your big sister.

CONNIE

Ay, aughhh... She probably wants
all the sisters to get together...

Connie shakes her head and throws the phone in her brief case.

EXT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - A LITTLE LATER

Martha gets out of a taxi with her carry on suitcase. She makes another call on her cell.

EXT. MARY ELLEN'S HOUSE, ESTABLISHING SHOT - SAME

INT. MARY ELLEN'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM

Mary Ellen sees the call coming in from Martha. She stares at the phone.

JERRY

Pick up.

MARY ELLEN

It's Martha. She probably wants to
organize a get together and I don't
want to talk to Connie.

JERRY

Nothing happened! It was just
dancing. I can't believe you're
jealous of your own sister!

INT. LAX AIRPORT, GATE - A LITTLE LATER

P.A. (V.O.)

All passengers on flight 110 to
Mexico City must now board.

Martha is about to board, but she makes one more call.

EXT. UCLA DORMITORY, ESTABLISHING SHOT - DAY

INT. TINA'S UCLA DORM ROOM

Tina sleeps, surrounded by science books. A huge Biology textbook covers her face.

CELL PHONE RINGS

Tina wakes up and reaches for her cell phone on the table next to her bed and it falls on the floor. She misses the call.

Tina reaches for cell phone and listens to her sister's message.

ALTERNATE BETWEEN THE THREE SISTERS AS THEY HEAR THE MESSAGE AND THE IMPACT IT HAS ON THEIR FACES - THEY ALL CLENCH THEIR MOUTHS REFUSING TO CRY

MARTHA

(stumbling, awkward,
uncomfortable)

It's Martha, your sister... There was a car accident in San Angel. Our parents were driving through a dangerous road in the Sierra and they fell into a ditch and... they're dead... Rudy was in the car with them, but he is alive! I'm on my way to Mexico. I'll call you when I get there and know more. Bye.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

TITLE CARD: TWO DAYS LATER

EXT. BOYLE HEIGHTS, MARIACHI PLAZA - MAGIC HOUR

Connie drives past the LARGE GAZEBO in her navy blue BMW, she turns at the corner.

EXT. FERNANDEZ FAMILY HOME - SECONDS LATER

Connie's car parks in front of the house. She walks up to the front porch and almost loses it when she sees the dead roses. Connie shakes it off and rather than cry, waters the dying plants with a hose. She hears a commotion and looks up.

A HOMELESS LATINA WOMAN, 60s, a lost soul, sits on the sidewalk in front of the house next door with several bags full of her belongings.

BRADLEY MILES, 30s, tall, natural good looks, and CHIP JOHNSON, 30s, a boy in a hairy man's body, approach her cautiously.

CHIP

Ma'am, you have to move. You can't camp out here.

BRADLEY

(broken Spanish)

Por favor. No aqui. (Please. Not here.)

The woman remains lost in her world and does not reply. Bradley grabs her things to encourage her to keep moving. She snatches them back from him and yells for help.

HOMELESS LATINA WOMAN

(in Spanish)

Help me! Somebody help me!! I'm being mugged!!!

Chip touches her shoulder to calm her down, but it only makes her scream louder. Connie comes to her rescue. She walks up to Bradley.

CONNIE

Hey, tell your boyfriend to get his hand off of her or I'll tear it off!

Bradley and Chip look at one another and have an awkward

moment not sure how to respond. Chip removes his hand off of Homeless Latina woman.

BRADLEY

We're not trying to hurt her, we just want her to move off our sidewalk and keep moving.

CONNIE

(confused)
Your sidewalk?

Connie walks up to the Homeless Latina woman and puts a loving hand on her shoulder to comfort her.

CONNIE

(in Spanish)
Are you all right?

HOMELESS LATINA WOMAN

(in Spanish)
Have you seen my son?

CONNIE

(lying, in Spanish)
Yes, yes, I saw him. He just left.
I think he went to the corner store to buy some candy.

HOMELESS LATINA WOMAN

(in Spanish)
Thank you so much.

She collects her belongings and hurries off to find her son.

CHIP

Thank you for your help.

CONNIE

So let me get this straight. You live here now?

They nod.

CONNIE

That lady used to live in "your" house. Her son got killed in a drive-by on this spot. She lost it after that happened. (to herself) I guess she lost her house too.

Bradley and Chip look at each other, another awkward moment.

BRADLEY

He's... not my boyfriend...

Connie looks him up and down still upset at them. Bradley tries to smooth things over.

BRADLEY

...but thank you for your help...neighbor.

Connie stares at him, full of disgust and lust in her eyes.

CONNIE

I'm not your neighbor.

Mary Ellen drives up in her red Mercedes. Connie walks over to her parents' house and continues watering the plants. Mary Ellen gets out of her car and walks up to Connie who sees her, but doesn't say anything. Mary Ellen stops in front of her.

MARY ELLEN

Well, aren't you going to at least say 'Hi' and hug me?

CONNIE

I'm not a hypocrite who insults people and then pretends everything is okay. I'm not like you.

Mary Ellen takes a deep breath.

MARY ELLEN

You're right, I don't hold grudges like you. I already forgave you for calling me a whore at Rudy's birthday party.

CONNIE

No, I called you a vendida, which is like a whore, but you don't sell your crotch you sell your dignity.

MARY ELLEN

Okay, then I guess that makes you the only whore in the family.

Connie gets up and walks up to her and gets in her face.

CONNIE

What I do with my body is nobody's business.

(MORE)

CONNIE (CONT'D)

You're just jealous because I am single, sexy, successful and don't have to drag around a bunch of kids and a husband who only does me "Missionary" style with the lights off.

Mary Ellen is about to insult Connie when the bright lights of a car shine on them.

Tina steps out of her car as well as Tia Sofia and Martha. They help out Rudy, who's exhausted and has bandages on his face. His right hand is broken and his fingers are curled up. He looks like he lost a fight and can barely walk. Aunt Sofia hugs Connie and Mary Ellen and they all exchange hugs.

CONNIE/MARY ELLEN

Rudy! We're so glad you're alive.

Connie and Mary Ellen try to hug Rudy but it hurts too much for him to hug them back.

CONNIE

Your poor hand. Is it just your wrist that is broken or your fingers?

RUDY

(barely audible)
Both.

MARY ELLEN

Oh, no. You want to lean on me so I can help you walk?

Rudy leans on Mary Ellen and they walk together.

RUDY

I'm so glad to be back! Two months in Mexico was enough.

They go inside the house.

INT. FERNANDEZ FAMILY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Spiderwebs adorn the entrance of the door. The sisters walk Rudy to his bedroom. He shuts the door behind him.

The sisters get busy moving some things around and cleaning the cobwebs; they don't really want to talk. It's awkward and no one wants to take the lead.

TIA SOFIA

Muchachas, (young ladies) come
gather around the table.

They sit around the table, but no one says anything; they're
at a loss for words, overwhelmed with pain and confusion.

TIA SOFIA

It was a nice funeral, simple but
nice.

MARY ELLEN

So you had the funeral over there?

CONNIE

So that's it? We won't get to see
them again...

MARY ELLEN

Why didn't you bring them back?

MARTHA

By the time I got there the funeral
was already planned and all our
relatives were not going to allow
me to bring them back to the U.S.!

MARY ELLEN

(snaps)

You cheated us out of a funeral!

MARTHA

I called you and told you where I
was going. If you really wanted a
funeral you could have gotten on a
plane to Mexico like I did!

TIA SOFIA

Miren (look), if it makes you feel
any better, my brother wanted to
die as a Mexican. His wishes were
to be buried back in Mexico.

The sisters remain quiet, taking it in.

MARTHA

Maybe we can plan a memorial for us
and our relatives who couldn't go
to San Angel.

The sisters half-heartedly agree.

MARTHA

But I need all of you to help me with the memorial. I can't do it all by myself. We can have it at my house.

TINA

I can help with the catering.

CONNIE

I'll contact everyone.

Everyone turns to Mary Ellen who turns away.

TIA SOFIA

So what's going to happen to Rudy? Who's going to take care of him?

They all look at each other not knowing how to respond.

MARTHA

I want to take care of him, I just don't know how I can fulfill my duties and take care of Rudy; I'm never home.

Pause. They all look at each other again waiting for someone to say something. Finally Connie speaks.

CONNIE

I wish I could take care of him but I work eighty hours a week, I have so many cases... I can't even take care of a cactus plant.

Pause. They keep looking at one another waiting again for someone else to offer a solution. Tina finally speaks.

TINA

Gosh, I want to help, but I have so much homework... I don't know how I could take care of him, I'd have to move out of the dorms and I don't have the money to do that--

Aunt Sofia turns to Mary Ellen.

TIA SOFIA

Don't you have a big four bedroom house in the suburbs you've never invited me to?

Mary Ellen doesn't want to respond. The three sisters and Aunt Sofia turn to look at Mary Ellen. Mary Ellen shakes her

head.

MARY ELLEN

Wait a minute, just because I have
an extra bedroom- -

CONNIE/TINA/MARTHA

Come on you're a mother with a
regular schedule and you can afford
to care for him in an environment
where Rudy will stay out of
trouble.

BEAT

MARY ELLEN

All right! I'll do it. I'll be
Rudy's guardian; I'll care for him.

INT. MARTHA'S CAR - NIGHT - LATER

Martha drives Rudy to Mary Ellen's house.

MARTHA

I'm really sorry I can't keep you.
I really think this is going to be
for the best. You're going to like
the room Mary Ellen set up for you.
It even has cable and wifi...

Rudy looks away unmoved.

MARTHA

You're going to like living out
here in the suburbs. It's great
that you'll get to grow up with
your cousin Bella and Justin.

INT. MARY ELLEN'S HOUSE

Martha and Rudy enter Mary Ellen's house, straight out of a
Martha Stewart, catalogue. She takes Rudy's suitcase from
Martha's hands.

MARTHA

What a beautiful house you have
here. I'm so glad that despite what
Papa did to you, you managed to
make a beautiful life for yourself.

MARY ELLEN

(proudly)

Yes, yes I did... Rudy, meet your
cousins, Justin and Bella.

Mary Ellen's children, JUSTIN HOUSTON, 9, and BELLA HOUSTON,
5, all dressed in pajamas, hug Rudy gently.

Jerry, in police uniform, arrives from work. Martha and Jerry
hug.

JERRY

Martha! Ah, I haven't seen you
since Rudy's party.

MARTHA

Yes, it's been awhile. You have a
very lovely house. So glad I
finally got to see it.

JERRY

Thanks...

Martha remains silent. They stare at each other waiting for
Mary Ellen to say something.

JERRY

Ah... Why the visit tonight?

MARTHA

Oh... Mary Ellen didn't tell you?

JERRY

Tell me what?

MARY ELLEN

I was going to leave you a message,
but I wanted to tell you in person
and I thought you were going to get
here before Martha--

JERRY

Tell me what?

MARY ELLEN

Rudy is moving in with us.

Awkward silence. Jerry looks at Rudy rolling his eyes then
facing the floor dejected. Jerry tries to cover up his shock,
plays it off like it's no big deal.

JERRY

Rudy, welcome to my house. Mi casa
es su casa.

(MORE)

JERRY (CONT'D)

As long as you live by our rules
you are welcomed in my house.

RUDY

Where's my room?

MARY ELLEN

The last one at the end of the
hallway. I'll show you.

RUDY

I'm not a little kid anymore. I can
find it myself.

Rudy goes to his room.

MARTHA

So here are all his documents. I
called the junior high school
closest to you and you can bring
him in at 7 am to register --

MARY ELLEN

I took care of a kid on my own at
16 without any help from you or the
family. I know what I have to do.

MARTHA

I'm just trying to make this easier
for you.

MARY ELLEN

Just be grateful I'm taking him!...
Like I had a choice. Like I ever
had a choice!

EXT. LOS ANGELES CITY HALL - ESTABLISHING SHOT - DAY

INT. LOS ANGELES CITY HALL, MAYOR'S OFFICE - A LITTLE LATER

Martha runs into the Mayor's Office. She is brought in to
meet with the CHIEF OF STAFF, (white), male, 50s, who shakes
her hand warmly.

CHIEF OF STAFF

Councilwoman Fernandez, so nice to
see you.

MARTHA

I'm sorry I'm late. My parents just passed and all the details for the memorial - well I lost track of time.

CHIEF OF STAFF

My condolences to you. Are you all right?

MARTHA

Thank you. Yes, it was shocking, but I'm all right... I know you only have a few minutes so I'll get to the point. I want to run for Mayor and I want to get the Mayor's endorsement. Can I count on you to speak to him and help me get his support?

CHIEF OF STAFF

I know the Mayor has been paying close attention to all the progress you've made with your District and how you've turned around one of the most violent neighborhoods into an up and coming neighborhood... At first he was concerned about you being so young, but you're quite mature and wise for your age. I think I can get you his endorsement... I'll see what I can do.

INT. TINA'S UCLA DORM ROOM - MORNING

Tina, depressed and unmotivated, can barely get out of bed. Cristal, wearing an apron, cooks chorizo.

CRISTAL

M'ija, ya levantate. (Darling wake up.)

Tina wakes up, startled by her mother. She shakes her head to snap out of her "dream". She gets up and looks around for her mother, but can't find her.

TINA

(to herself)

No, no, no, it can't be her. It's not possible,

INT. MARY ELLEN'S HOUSE, BATHROOM, SHOWER - A LITTLE LATER

Rudy cries in the shower, in frustration, anger, and loneliness. If he could scream without being heard he would.

DISSOLVE TO:

Rudy puts Tres Flores brilliantine on his hair and combs it back proudly.

INT. BATHROOM/HALLWAY - NIGHT

Rudy comes out of the bathroom with his hair slicked back wearing a sleeveless white shirt. He passes Mary Ellen on the way to his room. She stops him. Jerry is within earshot of them.

MARY ELLEN

Rudy why did you put that stuff on your hair? You're going to bed like in an hour, you're just going to get it all over my nice pillow cases.

RUDY

(coldly)
'Cause I like it.

MARY ELLEN

Rudy, maybe you shouldn't wear your hair slicked back like that... It will make you look "different" around here.

RUDY

I like wearing it like that. That's how Papa used to wear it.

MARY ELLEN

Yes, but he was... different.

BEAT

RUDY

Oh, you mean he was a "wet back"--

Jerry joins their conversation to help out Mary Ellen.

JERRY

Rudy, can I give you some advice? I know at your age you want to look tough, but if you dress like you do it's gonna make everyone around here think you're a "cholo". You don't want the police stopping you and thinking you're some kind of criminal do you?

RUDY

They already stopped me on my way home from school for being Mexican, I guess that automatically makes me a criminal in this white-ass hood.

MARY ELLEN

Did that really happen?

RUDY

They stopped me because my backpack was full of books and they were all suspicious. I did nothing wrong and they were looking for an excuse to arrest me. I don't belong here.

Rudy gives Jerry a dirty look and goes to his room.

MARY ELLEN

(whispers)

You shouldn't have said he looks like a "cholo".

JERRY

(whispers)

I didn't say he looks like a cholo. I said other people might think - -

MARY ELLEN

Rudy is a good kid. You should tell your buddies at the precinct he's your brother-in-law so nobody harasses him.

JERRY

No one harassed him, he's just making that up.

INT. MARY ELLEN'S HOUSE, RUDY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Rudy sneaks out with his backpack and duffle bag in tow.

INT. LOS ANGELES IMMIGRATION COURT BUILDING, CAFETERIA -
LATER

ON TV MONITOR

A drug raid shows Rudy in handcuffs. Connie looks up.

EXT. FIELD OFFICE OF COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ - SAME

Assistant Lunares rushes in and turns the TV on.

ON THE TV SCREEN

The drug raid news story shows Rudy being escorted into a police car. Martha's jaw drops. She grabs her purse and calls her sister Mary Ellen on her cell.

MARTHA

Mary Ellen - Why didn't you tell me
Rudy ran away?!

TV REPORTER (V.O.)

Councilman Fernandez's brother was
apprehended this morning...

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. JUVENILE HALL FACILITY - ESTABLISHING SHOT - DAY

INT. JUVENILE HALL FACILITY, RECEPTION AREA

Martha arrives at Juvenile Hall to find Connie dealing with a mountain of paperwork to petition for Rudy's release.

CONNIE

I'm on it.

Martha walks up to the RECEPTIONIST.

MARTHA

Hi. I'm Councilwoman Martha Fernandez and I want to speak to your Supervisor--

DETECTIVE JAMES RAMOS, 30s, muscular with rugged good looks, is EXITING when he sees Martha.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Councilwoman Fernandez, it's me James Ramos. We were in Homeroom at Roosevelt High School.

Martha recognizes him and they embrace.

MARTHA

So good to see you! It's too bad it has to be under these circumstances. I'm sure you heard.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Yes. Poor Rudy. Wrong place at the wrong time.

MARTHA

What do you mean?

DETECTIVE RAMOS

He was just sleeping at his friend's house when the raid happened. There are no charges against him.

MARTHA

What a relief. I'm glad he wasn't involved in doing drugs or selling drugs.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Yes, but it's only a matter of time if his friends are involved.

MARTHA

Yes, but Rudy's a real good boy. My parents just died and he's just in shock, he's not his normal self.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Martha, a lot of these boys have no fathers to look after them and they go on the wrong path because they don't have a male figure to guide them. You need to do whatever it takes to keep him out of the gangs or you're going to lose him.

MARTHA

Yes, I'm going to do what it takes to keep him out of trouble.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

I'll check and see how I can expedite things for you.

MARTHA

Thank you so much. If there is anything I can do--

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Let's get lunch some time.

MARTHA

Ah, yes, let's get lunch some time.

Detective Ramos exits. Connie comes up to Martha.

CONNIE

Why didn't you introduce me?

MARTHA

He's not your type.

CONNIE

Like you know what my type is?

MARTHA

Trust me, he's not your type. He talks back and won't put up with crap. He's not afraid of your fangs.

CONNIE

I like that in a guy.

Detective Ramos returns with Rudy. Martha and Connie hug Rudy. Connie turns to Detective Ramos.

CONNIE

Hi, I'm Connie, Martha's younger, single sister.

DETECTIVE RAMOS

Wow, all you Fernandez sisters are impressive. I can't believe you're both single.

MARTHA

Thank you Detective Ramos. Connie, don't you have to get going?

CONNIE

Oh, yeah. Excuse me, gotta be in court like now. (flirting) Nice to... see you.

INT. MARTHA'S CAR - A LITTLE LATER

Martha and Rudy drive off.

MARTHA

How did you end up in a drug dealer's house?

RUDY

I ran away back to our parents house, but the hipster next door threatened to call the police on me so I slept on a bus bench and then "Smiley" invited me to sleep on his couch - that's all that happened.

MARTHA

I'm concerned about you and your friends--

RUDY

Where you taking me to?

MARTHA

Back to Mary Ellen's--

RUDY

Hell no, I'm not going back! It's so boring and even if I don't cause trouble I'm gonna get arrested over there. Jerry thinks I'm a "cholo" and he doesn't like me living with them - for reals.

MARTHA

I'll talk to him and he'll stop calling you that.

RUDY

No, but you know how snobby Mary Ellen is! I can't even sit on her sofa without her dusting under me and fixing her stupid pillows if I move them. It's like I live in a department store and they're just waiting for me to steal something so they can kick me out.

MARTHA

Rudy, right now we have no other options. I have to take you back!

RUDY

If you take me back I'm just going to run away!

BEAT

MARTHA

Okay, got it. You can come home with me, but we have to figure out what's best for you.

RUDY

Take me back to my house so I can go to my old school with my friends and continue with my life.

MARTHA

You can't live by yourself. Someone has to look after you.

RUDY

I don't need nobody. I can take care of myself.

MARTHA

No, you can't. You need a family. And we are your family.

(MORE)

MARTHA (CONT'D)

We're gonna take care of you. After the memorial we'll figure it out.

RUDY

(dramatically)

My life sucks.

Rudy lowers his head.

MARTHA

Not as much as mine!

EXT. LOS ANGELES CITY HALL - DAY

INT. CITY HALL, MAYOR'S OFFICE, CHIEF OF STAFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Martha ENTERS and catches the Chief of Staff exiting.

CHIEF OF STAFF

Martha. Ah... I was just leaving--

MARTHA

Did you get a chance to speak to the Mayor?

CHIEF OF STAFF

No, I did not... I wanted to, but I had to reconsider when I saw the story about your little brother getting arrested on the five o'clock news.

MARTHA

I can explain that.

CHIEF OF STAFF

I'm sure you can, but don't you think that maybe with the recent events of your parents passing and your brother being arrested you should wait until your life is not so... "messy". I would recommend waiting four more years until your family situation has stabilized and you get more experience, besides you're young... don't you agree?

BEAT

MARTHA

I understand your hesitation.
However, my parents dying and my
brother getting arrested say
nothing about my character and the
tough choices I have to make--

CHIEF OF STAFF

I'm sorry, I have to get going.

MARTHA

Thank you for your time and your
advice.

INT. CITY HALL, WOMEN'S BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

Martha walks into the bathroom and goes into a bathroom
stall.

INT. CITY HALL, WOMEN'S BATHROOM, STALL - CONTINUOUS

Martha's eyes get watery, but she fights her tears. She takes
out a picture of her family taken on the night of Rudy's
birthday party from her purse and cries. She finally allows
herself to feel the loss of her parents, the damn bursts, and
she can't stop her crying anymore. She sits on the toilet and
let herself cry. She makes a call on her cell phone.

EXT. DOWNTOWN, ETERNITY NIGHTCLUB, ESTABLISHING SHOT - LATER

INT. ETERNITY NIGHTCLUB, BAR AREA

Connie, half drunk, and Jesus down tequila shots.

CONNIE

I'm so angry at Papa for dying
before he could admit he was wrong.
I always thought he was going to be
around and that one day he would
tell me he was sorry for being a
jerk to me. He was going to tell me
how proud he was of me. Now I feel
so alone, like I don't have a
family anymore.

Connie finally lets herself cry for the loss of her parents.
Jesus pats her on the back to comfort her.

JESUS

Of course you have a family. You are so lucky you still have your three sisters and your brother... Now, if you only put as much passion fighting for your family as you do fighting for undocumented immigrants, you wouldn't feel like an orphan... Girl, what did he do to you that you can't forgive him now that he's dead?

CONNIE

Aside from constantly telling me that Martha was better than me, he would also call me a "Prieta" (dark skin one).

JESUS

Well you are a prieta, but "Prieta" can be pretty.

CONNIE

Yeah, but he did it to remind me I wasn't good enough like my other sisters.

JESUS

I know why he did that! It's because he probably thought your mother had a fling with a "Prieto" behind his back and you weren't his child.

CONNIE

My mother was a saint. She got married as a virgin and only had sex with one man; my Papa. She was always so proud of that fact.

INT. EL MERCADITO - LATER THAT DAY

El Mercadito is a giant indoor Mexican market full of shops and boutiques carrying traditional decorations, clothes, food and candies.

Martha sits at a table wearing sun glasses and a scarf around her head, disguised so no one witnesses her taking part in her favorite sin.

Assistant Lunares walks in carrying a paper bag full of churros. She tears open the bag and they both devour churros covered in sugar and cinnamon.

They dip them in a chocolate cream and put them in their mouth, savoring them like it were sex. Martha stops eating and gets embarrassed.

MARTHA

I'm sorry I called you to join me.
I just really needed someone to
talk to and a break--

ASSISTANT LUNARES

No, no, hey, it's better than
drinking alcohol...I think.

MARTHA

I just have so much pressure. I
made a promise to Mama to keep my
family together and... I also made
a promise to my voters that I would
do my best... I just don't know how
I can do both.

ASSISTANT LUNARES

That's what's so unfair about being
a professional woman. You need a
"wife", that's all.

Assistant Lunares grabs a churro dipped in chocolate cream.

ASSISTANT LUNARES

When you're single...this is the
highlight of my day.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. MARTHA'S HOUSE, ESTABLISHING SHOT - NIGHT

SEVERAL FAMILY MEMBERS wearing black enter.

INT. MARTHA'S HOUSE

Martha's remodeled three bedroom house is packed with FAMILY and FRIENDS. Martha busies herself making sure there is plenty of food. She stops and looks at several tequila bottles. Tia Sofia is busy making fresh guacamole with Tio Pepe.

MARTHA

Who brought the tequila? I said I wanted no alcohol.

TIA SOFIA

Your Tios brought them as gifts.
It's very good tequila.

TIO PEPE

What kind of memorial would it be without tequila por favor (please). We gotta let the soul sing when it's in pain, que no Sofia? (isn't that right)

TIA SOFIA

Pos si. (That's right.)

Tio Pepe drinks another shot, Martha fakes a smile knowing you can't argue with a drunk man.

Tina brings out a tray with photos of her parents, candles, marigolds, and other personal items from her parents. She stacks some small boxes on top of each other to create a small three step pyramid. She covers it with a colorful shawl and places all the items on the different layers. At the top of the altar she places a black and white photo of her parents on their wedding day.

Mary Ellen and Jerry ENTER as Connie passes by. They stare at each other, not sure how to react to one another.

CONNIE

Hi Jerry.

MARY ELLEN

Jerry, could you be so nice and get me something to drink?

Jerry leaves quickly avoiding eye contact with Connie.

CONNIE

Look, it was just dancing. I just wanted to make sure he was having fun. That's all.

Mary Ellen rolls her eyes at her and walks away.

MARY ELLEN

Whatever.

Mary Ellen sneaks in a tequila shot when no one is looking. Mary Ellen then walks up to Rudy sitting in a corner.

MARY ELLEN

I'm sorry about Jerry. He didn't mean to call you a "cholo"--

RUDY

Yeah, whatever.

Rudy walks away and bumps into Tina. She is adding the last touches on the beautiful altar honoring her parents.

TINA

Hey, what do you think? Should I add more photos?

RUDY

Nah, looks good.

TINA

Hey, Rudy. Sorry I've been a stranger. Been so busy with school. How are your fingers healing?

RUDY

Not good. I can't even flip off the cops.

Rudy shows her his hand and him attempting to raise his middle finger. His hand has a long way to go.

TINA

(concerned)

Why do you need to flip off the cops? Were they racially profiling you again?

RUDY

It was just a bad joke.

TINA

Oh, you're making a joke, that's good, that's progress... Hey, if you ever need to talk; you know you can tell me anything.

RUDY

Like what?

TINA

Anything, whatever you want to get off your chest.

RUDY

Well there is something... Nah, forget it.

Rudy walks trying to avoid talking to anyone. He goes to a corner and puts on his headsets and listens to music to escape. Connie walks up to him and surprises him with a gift card.

CONNIE

Here, so you can buy some more music to be miserable to until your hand heals.

Rudy smiles.

CONNIE

Rudy, at least you're alive.

LOLI FERNANDEZ, 25, a cousin, chubby and cute with wild highlights on her hair, comes up to Tina and hugs her.

LOLI

Tina! I haven't seen you in a long time. What you been up to?

TINA

Been living in the dorms at UCLA. Finishing college, trying to get into Med school.

LOLI

You should come check out my new hair salon "Beauty and the Beat". I'll give you a free make-over, it'll cheer you up.

TINA

You opened a salon? Around here?

LOLI

Yeah, I'm my own boss... How are you doing?

TINA

Not good. I'm still in shock. You're not going to believe this, but the other day I swear I saw Mama making chorizo in my own kitchen. I could even smell it.

LOLI

For reals? Orale. (Cool.)

TINA

Then the day before my parents left to Mexico I had a dream that my mom made me all this delicious food and said she had to leave. She picked up her suitcase and when I tried to stop her she turned into "La Muerte" (death) and then turned to dust.

LOLI

Ay, she was trying to tell you-- Wow! You had a premonition of her death.

TINA

A premonition?

LOLI

Yes, when someone close to us is going to pass sometimes we get a message before - a premonition.

TINA

So you don't think I'm crazy?

LOLI

No. It makes sense.

TINA

I miss living in the barrio. If I tell a white person back in my dorm room what I just told you, they'll just think I'm crazy.

LOLI

I know a Curandera (shaman) who can tell you if you're imagining things or if it's really your mom.

(MORE)

LOLI (CONT'D)

Let me know if you ever want to talk to her.

TINA

Really? You believe in that? You trust her?

LOLI

She's the real thing. She cured me of mal ojo (evil eye) when I was a little girl, that's how come I know. We should hang out some time and I'll take you to her.

DIVINA PEREZ, 40s, an attractive woman, ENTERS. Mary Ellen gasps and pulls Connie to the side and points to Divina.

MARY ELLEN

Connie, look at her. That was Papa's mistress.

CONNIE

What? Are you serious?

MARY ELLEN

(whispering)

I swear I saw them together with my own eyes... Tell her to leave.

CONNIE

(whispering)

I can't tell her to leave. I don't have evidence.

Martha overhears and jumps into their conversation.

MARTHA

(whispers)

Don't even think about making a scene. We don't know who she is. Those are just rumors.

Tia Sofia pulls Martha to the side.

TIA SOFIA

M'ija (darling), everything is ready so please get on with the eulogy because I need to get home soon to watch my telenovela. Just make it short and sweet and to the point.

Connie drinks a shot of tequila when nobody is looking.

Martha coughs loudly to get everyone's attention.

MARTHA

Everyone thank you for being here.
Please gather around the altar so
we can start.

All the guests gather in the living room around the large and beautiful tribute altar that Tina has created.

As Martha says her Eulogy

INSERT

PHOTO OF RODOLFO SR. AND CRISTAL FERNANDEZ WEDDING PICTURE

PHOTO OF RODOFLO SR. AS A BRACERO

PHOTO OF RODOLFO SR. AS A MARIACHI

PHOTO OF THE FERNANDEZ FAMILY WHEN THE SISTERS WERE YOUNG

PHOTO OF THE SISTERS IN PINK MARIACHI OUTFITS WITH A BANNER THAT SAYS "THE FABULOUS FERNANDEZ SISTERS" AS THEY PLAY INSTRUMENTS AND SING

MARTHA

Our father Rodolfo Fernandez came to this country as a Bracero. He was a talented musician and singer who dreamt of having his daughters follow in his footsteps by being the most successful Girl Mariachi Band called "The Fabulous Fernandez Sisters". He was an ambitious and hard working man who always wanted the best for his family. He was a loving father and the protector and head of our family who wanted to make sure all his daughters got an education so they could accomplish their "American Dreams". All of my sisters have become strong and successful women thanks to Mama and Papa.

CONNIE

Tell the truth! He was a mean jerk!
He really was!

MARTHA

Connie, please let me finish... Our parents wanted us to have all the opportunities--

MARY ELLEN

You were his favorite; of course you thought he was a great father!

QUICK FLASHBACK

RODOLFO SR. SCREAMING AT CONNIE IN FRONT OF HER SISTERS "STOP BEING AN IDIOT CONNIE!" HE DRAGS HER TO THE MIRROR AND MAKES HER LOOK AT HERSELF - "YOU SEE HOW UGLY YOU ARE! YOU HAVE TO WORK HARDER BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT PRETTY LIKE YOUR SISTERS! YOU CAN'T ACT LIKE AN IDIOT!"

BACK TO THE PRESENT

CONNIE

I resented him for forcing us to be in that stupid Mariachi girl band called "The Fabulous Fernandez Sisters" and always telling me I would never amount to anything. What kind of father does that?! We were just his little puppets and did he ever bother to ask if we wanted to live his stupid dream? No!

QUICK FLASHBACK

RODOLFO SR. PUSHING MARY ELLEN OUT THE DOOR - THE SISTERS AND CRISTAL BEGGING HIM NOT TO KICK HER OUT - HE YELLS "SHE'S A WHORE" AND SLAMS THE DOOR ON MARY ELLEN WHO IS ONLY 15

BACK TO THE PRESENT

MARY ELLEN

I hated him. After he kicked me out when I got pregnant I hated him. My father is a hypocrite. You see that woman. She was my father's whore!

Mary Ellen points to Divina. Everyone gasps.

MARY ELLEN (CONT'D)

He called me a whore while he was having an affair with her!

DIVINA

You don't know the truth!

Divina gets up and EXITS muttering in Spanish.

The COMADRES sitting next to Tia Sofia look to her with shock on their faces.

TIA SOFIA

(whispers)

This is better than my telenovela!

TINA

Stop! Stop being bitter and grow up! Get over it! They did the best they could.

MARY ELLEN

I'm sorry that I'm not a "Sweet Princess" like you who was spoiled by our parents--

CONNIE

God, Tina you sound like such a white girl when you complain you know that.

MARTHA

Hermanas (sisters), por favor, please, rise above this and be "Bigger".

MARY ELLEN

Yeah, you're always the sister who is "Big" - You're so "Big" you're fat!

BEAT

MARTHA

Mary Ellen, I may be fat, but you're the ugly sister. I can lose weight! But you can't get a face transplant!

Everyone gasps. Then Connie turns on Mary Ellen.

CONNIE

Our father probably had sex with a turtle and had you - cause our mother was beautiful and you must be adopted.

MARY ELLEN

You're the adopted one because you're a prieta (dark skinned).

(MORE)

MARY ELLEN (CONT'D)

My parents probably stole you from
an dirty india (indigenous woman)
begging on the street!

Connie is about to punch Mary Ellen when Uncle Pepe grabs her. Tina jumps in between them.

TINA

Stop acting stupid! You've had too
much to drink. So what if our
father was a jerk, he was still our
father!

RUDY

Stop disrespecting mi Papa! (my
father) You didn't get to see the
good side, the father I got to
know! All I wanted was to come home
to my family, but that doesn't
exist anymore. I'd rather live on
the street than get stuck with any
of you!

Rudy leaves.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DOWNTOWN APARTMENT BUILDING, ESTABLISHING SHOT - LATER
THAT NIGHT

INT. CONNIE'S LOFT, LIVING ROOM

Connie's place has incredible views of the downtown skyline.
A real bachelorette pad with stylish furniture and paintings
to match her successful career.

Jesus brings a tall glass of water and puts it on the coffee
table in front of Connie.

JESUS

Chica, drink more water or you're
gonna wake up feeling like life
took a piss on you. I can't believe
you're still angry at your father.

Connie drinks water.

CONNIE

He forbid us to attend the birth of
Mary Ellen's baby.

(MORE)

CONNIE (CONT'D)

I promised her I would be there and I couldn't go and she felt like we betrayed her, like we didn't love her anymore. We stopped talking after that, things were never the same.

Connie cries. Jesus hugs her and rubs her back.

JESUS

(lovingly)

Oh, come here chica... You should forgive your father... Look, even I forgave my own father and he kicked me out of the house for being gay when I was 16 and he even told me I should die... Now he's so happy to see me because I'm the only one who visits him at his nursing home.

CONNIE

You're right... I'm tired of being so angry for so long. I need to forgive him and move on.

JESUS

(lovingly)

Just remember you're fabulous and you're hot, this is just a tiny bump on the road of life.

CONNIE

Yes, I'm successful and have everything I always wanted: a kick ass condo, car, career... But it's not enough.

INT. LOLI' JEEP - NIGHT

Loli and Tina drive through a dirty alley in the middle of nowhere. The kind of alley heroine addicts die on.

TINA

(concerned)

The Curandera lives here?

LOLI

Don't worry about it. I got your back prima (cousin).

Loli parks next to a garbage dumpster with alley cats.

EXT. LOLI'S JEEP/ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

They exit the Jeep and make their way to a nondescript dirty door. Loli does a special knock and makes the sound of an owl.

The door opens and DONA PASIENCIA, 70s, a curandera (shaman/healer) a tiny grey haired indigenous woman peeks her head out.

LOLI

Dona Pasiencia, forgive me for coming so late, but you said to come anytime I had an emergency.

She waves them in.

INT. DONA PASIENCIA'S HOUSE - SECONDS LATER

Dona Pasiencia's house is surrounded with candles, religious statues, and herbs hanging from the ceiling. Tina and Loli walk in and they sit on a chair surrounding a basin with water in it.

LOLI

Dona Pasiencia, you know why we are here. Tina needs your help. Tell her what she needs to know.

Dona Pasiencia takes Tina's hand and dips it into the water. Tina pulls her hand away after a few seconds. Dona Pasiencia looks in the water and sees things invisible to Loli and Tina.

DONA PASIENCIA

(in Spanish)

Yes, yes. Your mother is visiting you. She's telling me that you must help your brother. His secret is too heavy for him to bear. You must help him put the pieces of his soul back together or she won't cross into the light.

Tina finally allows herself to cry and feel the loss of her parents.

DONA PASIENCIA

(in Spanish)

Yes, yes, cry. It's good to cry. Like they say, that's just the ice melting around your heart.

INT. MARY ELLEN'S BEDROOM - LATER

Mary Ellen cries in bed. Jerry walks in and sees her crying.

JERRY

We don't ever have to go visit them
if you don't want to. It's terrible
the way your family has treated
you.

MARY ELLEN

I'm crying because I miss my
parents. I miss my sisters. I miss
my family.

JERRY

I thought you never wanted to be a
part of that family.

MARY ELLEN

I was wrong.

Jerry gives her a shoulder to cry on. Martha Ellen finally
allows herself to cry and mourn her parents.

INT. MARTHA'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - SAME

Martha tries to take the altar apart. She picks up the photo
of her family at Rudy's birthday party on the altar and
stares at it. She picks up another photo of her mother.

MARTHA

Mama, I don't how to keep this
family together.

She puts the photo close to her heart.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. MARTHA'S HOUSE - MORNING

Martha's walks over to a bedroom door and knocks.

MARTHA

Rudy, it's time to get up or you'll
be late for school.

No answer. Martha knocks again. Martha walks into the
bedroom. The bed is made and no Rudy in sight. Martha walks
around looking for Rudy.

MARTHA

Rudy! Rudy where are you?

DISSOLVE TO:

The four Fernandez sisters are now gathered around the living
room pacing back and forth, worry all over their faces.

CONNIE

Did you call Detective Ramos to
check the house where the drug raid
happen?

MARTHA

Yes, he's not there.

TINA

So we called all of his friends and
he's not at Tia Sofia's.

MARY ELLEN

Did you check our parent's house?

MARTHA

Of course. I checked there first
and there's no sign of him there.

TINA

Excuse me, I have to use the
bathroom.

Tina walks to the bathroom.

INT. MARTHA'S HOUSE, BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tina goes to the bathroom and prays.

TINA

Mom, if you can hear me, please help us find Rudy. I don't want anything bad to happen to him. I want to help him. Help me help him. Where is Rudy? Rudy, where are you?

INT. MARTHA'S HOUSE, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Tina EXITS the bathroom.

WIND CHIMES ARE HEARD

As well as the barely audible word "basement". Tina looks around to find the source of the sound and walks up to Martha.

TINA

Did you say "basement"?

MARTHA

No, but I already checked my basement, he's not there.

Tina hears "basement" whispered again and looks around. She stops to think and eureka!

TINA

He's in the basement of mom and dad's house!

MARY ELLEN

There's no basement--

CONNIE

Yes, there is-- That's where I made out with my first boyfriend.

TINA

And where I played with the Ouija board when Mom and Dad were in church.

MARTHA

The house has a basement?

TINA

He's in the basement. Follow me.

They all look at Tina not quite believing her, but they follow her.

EXT. FERNANDEZ FAMILY HOUSE, BACKYARD - MINUTES LATER

The sisters make their way to the back of the house to the basement. Tina is about to walk in when the door SLAMS on her. The sisters jump up startled.

TINA

Rudy, are you in there? Please come out.

No answer.

MARTHA

Are you going to keep running away? We want to help you.

CONNIE

Please come out so we can talk to you, for reals bro.

MARY ELLEN

Rudy, I'm sorry we haven't been there for you. We're trying. Please give us another chance.

RUDY

Go away! I don't need anybody to care for me. I'm a man, I don't need my sisters to tell me what to do. I already know what to do! I can do it by myself - go away!

The sisters turn to one another and together they charge the door and pound on it with their bodies. They keep trying and Connie slips and falls to the ground. Connie laughs.

MARTHA

What's so funny?

CONNIE

He's a stubborn mule like Papa.

MARTHA

Reminds me of how he kept insisting that if we practiced a lot we could be like the Jackson Five! We could be the Fernandez Four.

The sisters laugh.

MARY ELLEN

Or when we were in Mexico and Papa tried taming a wild stallion.

The sisters laugh again.

CONNIE

Or when he was determined to drive
35 hours non-stop from San Angel to
Los Angeles and almost killed us
when he fell asleep and drove off
the road.

They laugh out loud.

RUDY (O.S.)

Estan locas! (You are all crazy!)

CONNIE

(shouting)

Of course we're crazy! It's the
Fernandez's way!

RUDY

Just give up!

Martha and Mary Ellen join Connie on the floor.

MARTHA

I give up. I had this crazy idea of
running for Mayor of Los Angeles,
but I can barely keep it together.
I don't know how I'm going to
continue being a Councilwoman and
keep Rudy out of trouble.

Martha wipes the tears from her eyes.

BEAT

CONNIE

Martha, I will adopt Rudy and move
back into Mama and Papa's house.

Martha, Mary Ellen and Tina's eyes widen in disbelief.

MARY ELLEN/TINA/MARTHA

Are you serious?/For reals?

CONNIE

Yes. I'll do it.

MARTHA

That's really big of you. Thank you
for committing to do that.

CONNIE

Yeah, but now you have to run for Mayor. I know it's your dream!

PAUSE

MARTHA

It's a big decision... Look, I will seriously consider it.

INT. FERNANDEZ FAMILY HOUSE, BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Tina walks in and catches Rudy crying.

TINA

Were you crying?

RUDY

Nah, I wasn't crying! It's all the dust in here - got in my eyes.

TINA

Rudy believe it or not I understand what you're going through. Mama has been visiting me and she told me she doesn't want you to bear the secret alone.

RUDY

I can't tell you the secret. Don't make me tell you.

Tina hugs him.

TINA (CONT'D)

I just want to let you know you are not alone. I'm here for you.

EXT. FERNANDEZ FAMILY HOUSE, BACKYARD - SAME

CONNIE

You know as much as I've criticized Papa I realize that he wasn't all bad. He couldn't be that bad father that I thought he was and raise four fabulous daughters and one stubborn son.

MARTHA

But you know it was his stubbornness which made him not give up when he was deported back to Mexico five times.

MARY ELLEN

It was his hard headed determination to get a "Greencard" so Martha, Connie and I could be legal and all his children could live their American Dream.

MARTHA

I wish they were still alive.

CONNIE

(to herself)

Como quiciera que tu vivieras...
(How I wish that you were still alive.)

Martha hums a tune which begins with those same words. Mary Ellen joins her. Rudy and Tina come out of the basement. Connie stands up and sings. Martha and Mary Ellen and Tina join her in singing "Amor Eterno" (Eternal Love).

Martha takes out the photo of the family from her bra and their singing becomes an impromptu memorial to their parents. It's an authentic moment that inspires them to hold hands in a circle.

Bradley comes out of his house through his back door talking on his cell phone.

BRADLEY

Can you please keep it down, I'm on an important call.

CONNIE

Look hipster, if you don't like it loud, get your ass back to the Westside.

He rolls his eyes at her so Connie sings louder. Rudy and his sisters sing their hearts out.

FADE OUT.

END OF PILOT STORY