

FAMILIA

"Chapter One"
(pilot)

Written by

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ACT ONE

EXT. HOUSE - DAY - 1959

A modest home with a flat roof. Front door leads right to the street where VICENTE CORTEZ, 17, scrubs a 1951 FORD VICTORIA.

Sweat drips from his brow. He grabs an open Coca-Cola bottle perched atop the car's roof, gulps it down and places the empty bottle at his feet next to a portable radio.

MARIA CORTEZ, 37, sweeps the immediate sidewalk.

An UPBEAT SONG comes on the radio. Vicente places the radio on the hood and turns the volume up.

Maria holds her broom like a partner, dancing her way inside.

MARIA

Come wash the dishes instead.

Vicente spots MARIBEL SUAREZ, 17, as she rounds the corner.

He turns off the radio and crouches behind the car. His foot knocks over the Coca-Cola bottle: CLINK.

Maribel stops, gets on her hands and knees, and from across the residential two-lane street, looks beneath Vicente's car.

MARIBEL

You're really bad at hide-and-seek.

Vicente chuckles, peeks beneath his car.

MARIBEL (CONT'D)

Did you finally fix it?

VICENTE

Not yet.

MARIBEL

So why bother washing a broken car?

VICENTE

You sound like my mother.

ELIAS CORTEZ, 38, sneaks up behind Vicente.

ELIAS

I'll let her know.

Vicente jolts up. Maribel follows.

MARIBEL
Hello, Mr. Cortez.

Elias smiles and waves.

MARIBEL (CONT'D)
See you later, Vicente.

Vicente admires Maribel as she walks away. Elias pats him on the back.

ELIAS
You're in the clouds, son.
(then)
Go get your brother when you're
done floating.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Vicente watches MIGUEL CORTEZ, 12, and a GROUP OF BOYS play soccer in the middle of a dead end street. Miguel maneuvers the ball like a pro.

A BOY kicks the ball from down the street toward Miguel.

MIGUEL
I got it.

Miguel sprints backward. He loses his footing and falls. His head THUDS against the fender of a parked car.

Vicente runs to Miguel's side, who's dizzy from the impact.

VICENTE
Are you okay, Miguel? Look at me.
How many fingers am I holding up?

Vicente holds up four fingers.

MIGUEL
Four.

Miguel touches his head, looks at his blood-spotted fingers.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)
I'm bleeding!

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mismatched furniture fills the room. Miguel lies on the couch as Maria applies an ice pack. Vicente and Elias sit across from him in wooden chairs.

MIGUEL
Am I going to be okay?

MARIA
It's a tiny cut. You'll be fine.

ELIAS
You're lucky you didn't crack your
head wide open.

VICENTE
The car wasn't so lucky.

Miguel laughs.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Family photos share the walls with a large, framed photo of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The dining room adjoins the KITCHEN, where Maria is seen making tortillas.

Elias, Vicente and Miguel are seated around a circular table.

Elias eyes Miguel's full dinner plate.

ELIAS
Why aren't you eating?

MIGUEL
I'm not hungry.

ELIAS
You need some meat on your bones.

Maria walks over to Miguel, touches his forehead.

MARIA
Go get some rest.

Miguel heads to his room as Maria clears his plate.

Vicente, lost in thought, shifts rice from one side of his plate to the other, then back again.

ELIAS
Stop playing with your food.

Maria returns to her seat, placing tortillas on Elias' plate.

MARIA
Something wrong with the rice?

ELIAS
It's Maribel, isn't it?

Vicente doesn't respond.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
The longer you wait, the more it's
going to hurt if she says no.

Elias drags his chair close to Vicente.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
You think she's pretty, right?
And you get butterflies in your
stomach every time you see her?

Elias reaches for Maria's hands and stares into her eyes.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
That's how I felt when I fell in
love with your mother.

Maria smiles and slaps her tortillas down on Elias' hands.

MARIA
Do you love me enough to reheat my
tortillas?

ELIAS
These tortillas cannot be saved.

Maria snatches the tortillas and heads to the kitchen.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
(to Vicente)
What was I saying?

MARIA (O.S.)
Nothing.

ELIAS
I didn't ask what your tortillas
taste like.

Without warning, two tortillas fly into the dining room from
the kitchen and smack Elias in the back of the head.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
Are you crazy?
(to Vicente)
Did you see that?

He gathers the tortillas, uses them to emphasize his point.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
What I'm trying to say is, don't
let your tortillas get cold, son.

Elias tussles Vicente's hair and darts into the kitchen.
Vicente grabs the tortillas and ponders his dad's wisdom.

ELIAS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Come here.

MARIA (O.S.)
(tickled laughter)
No, no. Stop.

INT. VICENTE AND MIGUEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Miguel's in a bed near the window, nose deep in a comic book.
Vicente lies in a bed near the door, COLLEGE PAMPHLET in hand
-- one of many on his nightstand.
Miguel peeks over at Vicente.

MIGUEL
Did you pick one?

VICENTE
Not yet.

MIGUEL
How come?

VICENTE
It's a big decision.

MIGUEL
Why don't you go see them in
person? You can borrow my bike if
you want.

VICENTE
It's too far for a bike ride.

MIGUEL
So I can't come visit you?

Maria knocks as she enters the room.

MARIA
Can I come in?

VICENTE
You're already inside.

MARIA
(playful)
Careful with that tone.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Don't think I won't spank a 17-year-old.

(to Miguel)

Are you feeling better?

MIGUEL

A little bit.

MARIA

Time for bed.

She takes his comic book and places it on his nightstand.

MIGUEL

Can you tuck me in?

VICENTE

Aren't you too old for that?

MARIA

Are you jealous?

She walks over to Vicente's bed and tries to tuck him in.

VICENTE

Mom, stop.

MARIA

Does my love embarrass you?

VICENTE

Men don't get tucked in.

MARIA

Men also don't share rooms with their little brothers.

Miguel laughs. Maria returns to Miguel, kisses his forehead.

MARIA (CONT'D)

(whispers)

I love you.

(to Vicente)

Good night. Keep an eye on your brother, okay?

INT. VICENTE AND MIGUEL'S BEDROOM - LATER

Miguel tosses and turns and writhes in pain.

MIGUEL

(struggling)

Vicente. I don't feel good.

Vicente stirs in bed but still very much deep in slumber.

VICENTE
(mutters)
Uhh... go to sleep.

Miguel clenches the side of his head.

MIGUEL
(strained)
Vicente.

Tears flow down his cheeks.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Vicente and Elias at the table. Maria serves breakfast.

ELIAS
Go get your brother.

MARIA
I'll get him.

She takes off her apron and drapes it over her chair.

MARIA (CONT'D)
Kid thinks he's royalty.

INT. VICENTE AND MIGUEL'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Maria enters, opens the curtain and taps his blanketed feet.

MARIA
Time for school, Miguel.

She taps his feet again, harder.

MARIA (CONT'D)
Hurry up.

She lowers his blanket. Her eyes widen. She shakes him.

MARIA (CONT'D)
Miguel, wake up!

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAY

Wood dominates the interior of this humble church. Its walls in need of fresh paint. A crucifix hangs front and center.

Vicente, Elias and Maria sit in the front pew. Maribel sits behind Vicente. TOWNSFOLK fill the other spots.

FATHER EMANUEL GALLARDO, 70, stands beside a casket near the altar, surrounded by flowers.

FATHER EMANUEL

The loss of a loved one is always painful. The unexpected loss of a child, even more so. But we must remember that God has a plan for each and every one of us.

The townsfolk nod in agreement.

FATHER EMANUEL (CONT'D)

Do not cry. Instead, celebrate the twelve years in which Miguel made us laugh and smile. Keep those memories in your hearts forever. Now let us bow our heads and pray.

The townsfolk do so without hesitation.

FATHER EMANUEL (CONT'D)

Dear Lord, we come before you to say goodbye to Miguel Cortez. We ask you to welcome him with open arms into your kingdom. And we ask that you give his family the strength they need to understand and overcome this great loss. Amen.

TOWNSFOLK

Amen.

FATHER EMANUEL

Would anyone like to say a few words?

Father Emanuel locks eyes with Vicente. He hesitates but makes his way to the altar. With his back to the crowd, Vicente fights back tears and hugs the casket.

VICENTE

(whispers)

I'm sorry.

Vicente walks out the side door. The townsfolk stare and whisper as he exits the church.

EXT. HILLS - DAY

Vicente stomps through dirt and weeds, long stick in hand.

He comes upon a lone tree and attacks it: THWACK! THWACK!

He drops to his knees, balls his bloodied and blistered hands into fists and looks skyward with rage in his eyes.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Maria darts toward Vicente and hugs him as he enters.

Elias points to Vicente's blood-stained shirt.

VICENTE

I'm fine.

MARIA

Why did you leave?

VICENTE

I'm sorry.

ELIAS

Are you?

VICENTE

You don't believe me?

ELIAS

You walked out of your brother's funeral.

MARIA

It's okay, Elias.

ELIAS

No, it's not. He missed the burial.

VICENTE

You think I wanted to see my brother lowered into the ground?

ELIAS

You think it was any easier for me?

VICENTE

I'm not as strong as you, okay?

ELIAS

Well then man up.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO**INT. VICENTE'S BEDROOM - DAY**

Vicente makes his bed and sweeps the room.

He spots Miguel's backpack in the corner.

SUPER: One Month Later

Vicente plops down on his bed, zips open the backpack and goes through the items: assignments, drawings, notes.

A colored pencil drawing of two boys titled *Me And My Brother* catches Vicente's attention.

He smiles, folds the drawing and slides it into his wallet.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Vicente paces near the entrance.

He pulls out the drawing and caresses Miguel's cartoon face with his thumb.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY - FLASHBACK

Seven-year-old Miguel and twelve-year-old Vicente scurry through a dense morning fog. Miguel lags behind.

VICENTE

Hurry up, we're going to be late.

Their backpacks bounce against their backs with each step.

MIGUEL

I'm going, I'm going.

Up ahead, Miguel spots a SHADOWY FIGURE. His shoes screech as he comes to an abrupt stop.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)

Did you see that?

VICENTE

Hurry up. Stop playing around.

A SECOND SHADOWY FIGURE drifts through the fog.

MIGUEL

There!

Vicente grabs Miguel's arm, pulls him forward.

VICENTE

I don't have time for this.

Miguel resists.

MIGUEL

No! The monsters are gonna get me.

VICENTE

You've been reading too many comic books. There's no such thing as monsters. Now let's go.

Miguel takes cover behind his brother as they continue their walk through the shifting fog. A THIRD SHADOWY FIGURE appears and disappears. Vicente comes to a full and sudden stop.

MIGUEL

I told you.

VICENTE

There has to be an explanation.

MIGUEL

I wanna go home.

VICENTE

No. The Cortez brothers never run away, remember?

Miguel gains confidence, emerges from behind his brother.

MIGUEL

Okay. Let's go.

They tread forward, eyes peeled. At this point the fog begins to dissipate, revealing an explanation... NUNS! They're outside the church, preparing for some sort of celebration.

VICENTE

Told you they weren't monsters.
Case closed.

MIGUEL

We make a good team.

They high five.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT DAY

Vicente pockets the drawing and steps toward the gate but hesitates before the threshold. After a few indecisive seconds he decides to go home.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Elias lies beneath the Ford Victoria.

Vicente squats on the sidewalk, rummages through a toolbox.

VICENTE
I don't see it.

ELIAS
It has to be there. Keep looking.

VICENTE
I'm not good at car stuff.

ELIAS
Well you'd better unless you want
to walk to college.

Elias slips out from below, finds the missing wrench and slithers back beneath the car.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
I just need to tighten--

CLANK. The wrench hits the ground.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
Damn it!

Elias slides out, wincing and shaking his right hand.

VICENTE
Are you okay?

ELIAS
Yeah. Start the car.

Vicente hops in, turns the key. The car struggles to start. Elias peeks at the fuel gauge through the passenger's window.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
Needs gas.

VICENTE
I can go get some.

ELIAS
Let's eat first.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Vicente, Elias and Maria at the table for lunch.

MARIA

Before you finish, there's something I need to tell you.

ELIAS

What is it?

MARIA

I thought about it a lot and I decided I want to go back to work.

ELIAS

What for? I make enough money.

MARIA

It's not about money.

ELIAS

I've always provided for this family. And now you want to take that away from me?

MARIA

This isn't about you.

ELIAS

You're wrong. What if the neighbors find out?

MARIA

Who cares what the neighbors think?

ELIAS

I do. They'll think I'm some loser who can't feed his family.

MARIA

Can I tell you why I want a job?

Elias rolls his eyes, shrugs his shoulders.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Don't do that. Whatever's going on in your head, whatever you're dealing with, don't take it out on me. Please. I lost a son too.

EXT. MARIBEL'S HOUSE - DAY

Vicente knocks on the front door of a house similar in style to his own, only smaller. No answer. He picks up a filled-up gas can at his feet and goes on his way.

MARIBEL (O.S.)
What's up?

Vicente turns back.

VICENTE
I was, um, wondering if...

He shows her a bag of M&Ms.

VICENTE (CONT'D)
...you wanted some?

MARIBEL
You came here just for that?

VICENTE
(hesitant)
Wanna go for a walk?

MARIBEL
Was that your plan? Lure me away
with chocolate?

VICENTE
Is it working?

She snatches the M&Ms from Vicente's hand.

MARIBEL
Yes.

EXT. VICENTE'S HOUSE - DAY

Maribel and Vicente approach the car.

MARIBEL
So all it needs is gas?

VICENTE
Fingers crossed.

Elias nods off in the driver's seat.

VICENTE (CONT'D)
I'm back.

Vicente empties the gas can into the car.

MARIBEL
Hello, Mr. Cortez.

ELIAS
Hi, Maribel. How's your mother?

MARIBEL
She's gotten better.

ELIAS
That's good. Tell her I said hello.

Vicente finishes and replaces Elias in the driver's seat. He turns the key. A hint of life. Tries again. The car roars.

Elias pumps his fist, hands Vicente a celebratory dollar.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
Go get some milkshakes, or whatever
it is you kids do these days.

VICENTE
Thanks, dad.
(to Maribel)
Hop in.

Maribel settles into the passenger's seat. They drive away.

EXT./INT. CAR - DAY - TRAVELING

The Ford Victoria cruises down various street.

MARIBEL
You missed the turn.

VICENTE
Change of plans.

EXT. LAKEFRONT - DAY

Maribel and Vicente admire a small, peaceful lake.

VICENTE
(pointing)
Remember when you broke your arm
trying to climb that tree?

MARIBEL
Didn't even make it halfway.

Vicente grabs her arm and leads her toward the tree.

VICENTE
Let's do it.

MARIBEL
It's a lot taller than I remember.

VICENTE
Don't back out on me, Maribel.

MARIBEL
I'm not. I just haven't climbed
anything in a while.

VICENTE
Don't worry. I won't let you fall.

EXT. TREE - DAY

They climb up and settle on a large branch with a clear view.
A butterfly hovers nearby.

MARIBEL
So pretty.

Vicente gazes at Maribel, pulls a twig from her hair.

VICENTE
Yeah.

EXT. TREE - LATER

Vicente and Maribel at ground level, mid-conversation.

VICENTE
Did she write back?

MARIBEL
Still waiting.

VICENTE
You think she'll send it?

MARIBEL
All I'm asking for is a photograph.
(beat)
I think I deserve to know what my
father looks like.

INT./EXT. CAR - DAY

Vicente turns the ignition key. Click. Once more. Dead.

VICENTE
Great.

Vicente lifts the hood and inspects the engine.

MARIBEL
Do you know what you're doing?

Vicente slams the hood shut. A frustrated "no."

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Vicente and Maribel trudge down a dirt road.

MARIBEL
How's everything at home?

VICENTE
Fine.

MARIBEL
And you?

VICENTE
Fine.

MARIBEL
What's wrong?

VICENTE
What do you mean?

MARIBEL
I've known you long enough to know
when something's on your mind.

VICENTE
Everything's fine.

MARIBEL
You know it's okay to be upset,
right? It's only been a month since
he died. It's okay to be sad. Or
confused. But don't be fine.

VICENTE
What do you want me to say?

MARIBEL
I can't help you unless you tell me
what's going on.

VICENTE
I'm lost. I don't know what to do
now that Miguel's gone. Do I go to
college or do I stick around to
help my parents?

MARIBEL
That's a tough one. But I have a
feeling you already have the
answer. You just need to find it.

VICENTE
Where do I look?

Maribel places her hand on her heart, taps it a couple taps.

MARIBEL
Milkshakes also help.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Vicente and Maribel enter a mom-and-pop restaurant. They settle in at a table near a large window.

ANDREA RAMIREZ, 35, takes their order.

ANDREA
Hi kids, what can I get you?

VICENTE
Vanilla milkshake, please.

MARIBEL
I'll go with chocolate.

ANDREA
Be right back.

Maribel looks out the window. The sun highlights her face.

VICENTE
Are you okay? You look a bit pale.

MARIBEL
Really?

VICENTE
Did you take your medicine?

MARIBEL
Yeah, this morning.

VICENTE
I can order some food if you want.

MARIBEL
No, that's okay. Excuse me.

She heads to the restroom.

Andrea returns with the milkshakes.

VICENTE
Thank you.

ANDREA
Sure thing, kiddo.

She turns to walk away.

VICENTE
Wait.

ANDREA
Yes?

VICENTE
Did Maribel look different to you?

ANDREA
Different how?

VICENTE
She looks pale.

ANDREA
Maybe it's just the way the sun's
hitting her.

Andrea returns to her work, leaving Vicente deep in thought.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE**EXT. MARIBEL'S HOUSE - DAY**

Maribel sits on the curb, eyes closed. Vicente's next to her.

VICENTE
Still dizzy?

Maribel nods.

VICENTE (CONT'D)
Anything I can do?

MARIBEL
Tell me something good.

VICENTE
You're the strongest girl I know.

Maribel smiles.

MARIBEL
I eat large amounts of spinach.

Vicente laughs. Maribel opens her eyes. Deep breath.

VICENTE
Next time drink a 7-UP.

MARIBEL
Right? Forget medicine, drink this
bottle of citrus. Doctor's orders.

A shared laugh followed by a beat. Maribel faces Vicente.

MARIBEL (CONT'D)
Can I ask you something and you
won't get mad?

VICENTE
Um, sure. I guess.

MARIBEL
Why do you hide?

Vicente furrows his brow, unsure of the question.

MARIBEL (CONT'D)
You hid behind your car. And it
wasn't the first time. I don't
understand why you hide from me.

VICENTE
It's hard to explain.

MARIBEL
Did I do something wrong?

VICENTE
No, not at all.

MARIBEL
I worry because we used to be close
and now it seems we hardly talk.
Did you wake up one day and decide
you no longer wanted to be friends?

VICENTE
You don't think we're friends?

MARIBEL
You haven't acted like one these
past few months.

VICENTE
Maybe now's not the best time.

MARIBEL
I may not be here tomorrow.

VICENTE
Are you going somewhere?

MARIBEL
I mean you should say what's on
your mind while you have the
chance.

VICENTE
I already told you I was fine.

MARIBEL
That was a different conversation.
So tell me, why do you hide?

A beat.

VICENTE
Because I'm afraid.

MARIBEL
Afraid of what?

VICENTE
I'm afraid the fantasies in my head
won't ever come true.

MARIBEL
I don't understand.

He grabs Maribel's hand.

VICENTE
Don't worry, Maribel. I'll be fine.
I just get a bit sad sometimes,
that's all.

MARIBEL
Well then let's be sad together.
And promise me you'll stop hiding.

VICENTE
I'll try.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Elias reads a newspaper on the couch, while Maria, seated next to him, reads a magazine. Vicente enters.

ELIAS
How's the car?

VICENTE
It broke down.

MARIA
I told you that thing was no good.

ELIAS
Where is it?

VICENTE
At the lake.

ELIAS
They don't sell milkshakes there.

VICENTE
You said I could use it.

ELIAS
For a quick drive, not a trip to
the lake.

VICENTE
It's my car.

MARIA
Don't talk back to your father.

VICENTE
Weren't you fighting earlier?

Elias and Maria glance at each other.

ELIAS
Don't worry about that.
(then)
And the car's not yours till you go
to college.

Elias sets his newspaper down.

ELIAS (CONT'D)
I'll get the truck.

EXT. TRUCK - DAY - TRAVELING

Elias and Maria ride up front. Vicente rides in the truck bed, taking in the sights, when he spots TERESA, 74, sweeping the outside of her store. He waves at her.

VICENTE
Hi, Mrs. Teresa.

She waves back as the truck makes a turn.

EXT. LAKEFRONT - DAY

Elias is seen off in the background, fixing the car, while Maria watches Vicente skip stones across the lake.

VICENTE
Try one.

Maria picks up a stone and sends it flying across the lake.

One skip, two skips, three... seven... ten...

VICENTE (CONT'D)
No way. Where did you learn that?

MARIA
There's lots of things you don't
know about me. Like that tree--

Maria points to the tree that Vicente and Maribel climbed.

MARIA (CONT'D)
That's where your father and I had
our first kiss. He thought he was
so smooth. Told me he wanted to
show me something.

MARIA (CONT'D)

But there's only one reason a teenager climbs a tree, and it's not sightseeing.

Vicente laughs.

MARIA (CONT'D)

It's also where we broke up.

VICENTE

What?

MARIA

Maybe I shouldn't tell you this.

Vicente plops down on the ground.

VICENTE

I'm not going anywhere until you tell me.

Maria takes a seat next to him, looking out at the lake.

MARIA

Long story short, your father did something I didn't appreciate. Something that hurt both of us.

VICENTE

He didn't cheat on you, did he?

MARIA

No, never. Your father may be a bit unpredictable and prideful at times, but one thing he's always been is loyal.

Maria fidgets with a stone.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Your father used to drink. A lot. I put up with it as long as I could, but I finally realized the best thing for me to do was to break up with him.

VICENTE

How long were you apart?

MARIA

A few months.

VICENTE

What made you change your mind?

MARIA

He came over one night and poured his heart out. Said he would change, that he loved me and wanted me back. And before I could say anything, he got down on one knee, pulled out a ring and asked me to be his wife.

VICENTE

You got an apology *and* a proposal.

Maria chuckles.

VICENTE (CONT'D)

He quit drinking after that?

MARIA

He quit nine months later.

Maria smiles.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Vicente helps Maria set the table.

MARIA

Go get your father.

Vicente walks toward the front door.

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Vicente joins Elias on the curb as he watches the same group of boys from before play soccer in the middle of the street.

The Ford Victoria is back in its usual spot.

VICENTE

Dinner's ready.

ELIAS

I'll be in soon.

They enjoy the game for a bit. The soccer ball rolls toward them. Elias holds it for a few seconds with both hands, like a newborn, then rolls it back.

ELIAS (CONT'D)

Did I ever tell you the story of how I almost got arrested when you were born?

VICENTE

You're kidding.

ELIAS

Hours had gone by and the nurses wouldn't tell me anything. And then I see this lady walk by pushing a cart of hospital laundry.

VICENTE

You jumped in the cart?

MARIA (O.S.)

Even better.

Maria joins them on the curb.

ELIAS

I borrowed a doctor's coat when she wasn't looking. And a clipboard from the nurse's station.

VICENTE

No way that worked.

ELIAS

It did. For about twenty seconds.

VICENTE

How did you get caught?

ELIAS

There was an officer keeping guard inside. Turns out somebody tried to steal a baby the week before.

MARIA

You're lucky you didn't get arrested.

ELIAS

The officer let me go when I explained everything. Said he didn't want me to miss seeing my child for the first time.

MARIA

He was so nervous when he held you.

ELIAS

The nerves went away as soon as I saw your tiny face looking up at me. And then I held you close and whispered in your ear.

VICENTE

Do you remember what you said?

ELIAS

"With you as my light, we'll never
get lost."

Maria smiles and heads back inside.

MARIA

Food's getting cold.

Elias and Vicente sit in silence.

VICENTE

Are you okay?

ELIAS

Yeah. I'm fine...

(There's that word again.) Vicente doesn't pry any further.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Vicente lies on the couch, surrounded by college pamphlets.

He hears odd sounds coming from his parents' bedroom.

He inches toward the room, peers through the door left ajar.

Elias, at the edge of his bed, cries into his hands.

Maria, at Elias' side, hugs him and kisses his forehead.

Vicente returns to the couch and gathers the pamphlets.

He stares at them, then at his parents' door.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR**INT. VICENTE'S BEDROOM - DAY**

Elias walks in and shakes Vicente.

ELIAS

Wake up.

VICENTE

(half-asleep)

Why?

Vicente shields his eyes when Elias opens the curtains.

ELIAS

(exiting the room)

Get dressed.

Vicente sits up in bed and yawns.

EXT. BUS STATION - DAY

Just enough space for the buses, some benches and a ticket booth in the middle with a large clock on its front wall.

Elias and Vicente wait for their bus.

VICENTE

It's freezing.

ELIAS

Don't exaggerate.

Vicente yawns.

VICENTE

So why are we going to the city?

ELIAS

I'm buying a color television.

VICENTE

Really?

ELIAS

It's the one thing Miguel wanted for Christmas. I was going to surprise him.

A bus pulls up.

VICENTE

That's us.

INT. BUS - DAY - TRAVELING

Vicente and Elias sit near the middle of the bus.

Vicente examines the passengers:

- An ELDERLY WOMAN prays with a ROSARY
- A MOTHER lulls an INFANT to sleep
- A MAN IN A SUIT sleeps against a window
- A DRUNK MAN cries and talks to himself

ELIAS
It's not polite to stare.

VICENTE
He looks lonely.

ELIAS
Maybe that's why he's crying.

VICENTE
I should talk to him.

ELIAS
No, leave him alone. Sometimes a
man just needs to cry.
(beat)
And that's okay.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

Vicente and Elias enter a medium-sized store that sells televisions, record players, clothes, jewelry, and more.

VICENTE
It's not as big as I remember.

ELIAS
It never is.

Something catches Vicente's attention.

VICENTE
Is it okay if I look around?

ELIAS
Sure. I'll meet you by the
televisions.

JEWELRY SECTION

Vicente browses the jewelry on display: necklaces, rings, bracelets, earrings, watches.

He grabs a BUTTERFLY CHARM NECKLACE and takes it to the SALESWOMAN, late 40s.

VICENTE
Excuse me, how much is this?

SALESWOMAN
That's \$5.00.

VICENTE
I'll take it.

TELEVISION SECTION

Vicente folds a SMALL PAPER BAG and slips it in his pocket as he approaches the TV section with a smile on his face.

Elias speaks with a SALESMAN, early 30s. Vicente hangs back, out of sight, but close enough to listen in.

Elias points to a television blocked by the salesman's body.

ELIAS
What about that one?

The salesman steps aside.

SALESMAN
This one's a beauty. Brand new model, only four weeks old. Seventeen-inch screen, great picture, great sound.

ELIAS
How much?

The salesman hesitates.

SALESMAN
You probably want one of these.

He points to a few televisions covered in sale signs.

SALESMAN (CONT'D)
The RCA is very expensive.

Elias looks him dead in the eyes.

ELIAS
What's my name?

SALESMAN
We've never met before.

Elias pulls out a WAD OF CASH and slams it atop the RCA.

ELIAS
Elias Cortez. Remember that.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Vicente hovers outside the entrance, drawing in hand.

SUPER: One Week Later

He hesitates, turns around and crosses the street.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

The crucifix looms over Vicente.

VICENTE
You let me down.

FATHER EMANUEL (O.S.)
Don't give up on him, Vicente.

VICENTE
He gave up on me first.

Father Emanuel approaches Vicente.

FATHER EMANUEL
God has a plan for each of us.

VICENTE
Stop saying that. There is no plan.
It's all a big lie.

FATHER EMANUEL
There's doubt in your heart.

Father Emanuel sits down in the front pew.

VICENTE
I want answers.

FATHER EMANUEL
Perhaps I can provide some.

Vicente shows the drawing to Father Emanuel.

VICENTE
Go ahead. Tell me why he's not
playing soccer with his friends.
Tell me why his chair at the dinner
table is empty.

VICENTE (CONT'D)

Tell me what a sweet twelve-year-old boy did to deserve this.

Vicente hangs his head and sits next to Father Emanuel.

VICENTE (CONT'D)

Please help me understand.

FATHER EMANUEL

The truth is, I don't know. Some of us live to be ninety-five and some of us only get twelve years. And I don't know the reason why.

VICENTE

What about the plan you mentioned?

FATHER EMANUEL

You can choose to believe that life ends when you die, or you can choose to believe there's a heaven. That one day you'll get to see your brother again. When given those two options, people tend to have faith.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Vicente, Maria and Elias watch television.

MARIA

I don't like being alone.

This sudden admission catches Elias and Vicente off guard.

Vicente turns the TV volume down.

MARIA (CONT'D)

You go off to work and Vicente's going to college soon and I'm left all alone in this house with my thoughts and I don't like it.

ELIAS

A job would help the pain go away.

Maria nods.

ELIAS (CONT'D)

Okay. We'll find you a job.

MARIA

Believe it or not, I already have a job offer.

VICENTE

Where?

MARIA

At Teresa's store. She's visiting family for the holidays and asked me to fill in.

ELIAS

When do you start?

MARIA

Tomorrow.

ELIAS

So soon?

MARIA

I'll be fine. It's only for a couple months.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Everyone in their usual dinner spots. Elias squeezes lime into his bowl of *pozole*, then reaches for a fried taco.

MARIA

Careful, they're hot.

Elias bites the taco.

ELIAS

Damn it!

He drops the taco onto his plate.

MARIA

Are you okay?

Elias chugs his bottle of Coke.

MARIA (CONT'D)

I told you they were hot.

ELIAS

I flew too close to the sun.

The doorbell rings. Vicente gets up to answer.

INT. FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Vicente opens the door to find Maribel.

MARIA (O.S.)
Who is it?

VICENTE
It's Maribel.

MARIBEL
Is this a bad time?

Vicente notices Maribel's puffy eyes.

VICENTE
Have you been crying?

MARIA (O.S.)
Don't be rude, invite her in.

VICENTE
Do you want to stay for dinner?

MARIBEL
(eager)
I'd love to.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Maribel helps Maria clear the table.

On her way to the kitchen with the last few dirty dishes,
Maria stops and kisses the top of Elias' head.

Maribel then sits in Miguel's chair. Nobody minds.

MARIA
Now for the best part.

Maria pours them each a cup of *atole*.

MARIBEL
Thank you.

ELIAS
Smells delicious.

MARIA
And we can't forget the *pan dulce*.

They each get a warm piece of sweet bread.

Elias checks his watch.

ELIAS
The show's about to start.

MARIA
Which one?

ELIAS
A new western.

Elias grabs his cup and bread and hurries to the living room.

ELIAS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You coming?

MARIA
In a minute.

MARIBEL
What's going on?

VICENTE
My dad bought a new television.

Maribel takes a peep at the new color TV.

MARIBEL
Fancy.

MARIA
You're welcome to stay and watch.

MARIBEL
Thank you.

Maria joins Elias.

VICENTE
Are you staying?

MARIBEL
Do you wanna do something else?

VICENTE
Like what?

MARIBEL
I don't know. Anything, really. I
just don't wanna go home right now.

VICENTE
Yeah, okay. Meet me up on the roof.

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT

Vicente climbs up a ladder, paper bag in hand, and sits next to Maribel near the edge of the roof.

VICENTE
I got you a birthday gift.

MARIBEL
You didn't have to get me anything.

VICENTE
I know. I wanted to.

Vicente retrieves the necklace from the bag and holds it up.

VICENTE (CONT'D)
It reminded me of you.

She admires the butterfly charm.

VICENTE (CONT'D)
Do you like it?

MARIBEL
I love it. Help me put it on.

Maribel turns around and holds her hair up.

Vicente fumbles a bit as he clasps the chain.

Maribel fixes her hair, looks at the necklace and smiles.

EXT. ROOF - LATER

Vicente and Maribel on their backs, eyes locked on the stars.

VICENTE
I wish Miguel were here.

MARIBEL
He is. He's everywhere. Up there in
the stars, looking down on you.

Vicente smiles.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Vicente and Miguel stand over a small mound of dirt.

MIGUEL
Do you think he felt any pain?

VICENTE
No, I don't think so. He wasn't
sick, he was just old.

MIGUEL
Twelve years isn't enough.

VICENTE

You're right. But it was a good twelve years. We had fun.

MIGUEL

He was there when I was born.

VICENTE

Same week. Mom was so mad.

MIGUEL

I didn't know that.

VICENTE

She didn't mind once he got older. She just didn't want to take care of a baby *and* a puppy.

MIGUEL

Who took care of him?

VICENTE

I did. I was young, but I tried my best.

MIGUEL

You did a good job.

Miguel kneels and pats the dirt with a red brick.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)

I wish I had more time with him.

VICENTE

Me too, Miguel. Me too.

Vicente searches the area and finds two small sticks.

VICENTE (CONT'D)

I think these are okay. Did you bring the string?

Miguel retrieves a small piece of string from his pocket.

Vicente creates a cross and installs it in the dirt.

MIGUEL

What happens when we die?

Vicente ponders the question, not wanting to scare Miguel.

VICENTE

What do you think happens?

MIGUEL

Mom says we go heaven. She says it's really nice. It's like a vacation and there's lots of fun things to do and all our friends and family will be there, and our pets, too!

VICENTE

That does sound really nice.

MIGUEL

I'm not scared to die.

Vicente doesn't know what to say. Instead, he puts his arm around Miguel's shoulder as the stars shine down on them.

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT DAY

Vicente sits up, faces Maribel.

VICENTE

Will you go with me to see him?

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Vicente and Maribel approach the cemetery entrance.

MARIBEL

Should we be here this late?

VICENTE

It's only eight o'clock.

Vicente tries the gate. It's locked.

MARIBEL

They're closed.

VICENTE

Maybe there's another way in.

They walk to the rear of the cemetery. A small brick wall is all that stands in their way.

MARIBEL

I guess there's only one way in.

VICENTE

Right. We have to jump.

MARIBEL

What? No, that's not what I meant.

VICENTE
It's the only way.

MARIBEL
Can't you come back in the morning?

VICENTE
I really need to see him.

A beat.

MARIBEL
Gimme a boost.

Vicente helps Maribel over the wall. Vicente follows.

VICENTE
See? No big deal.

MARIBEL
What if we get caught?

VICENTE
We didn't break into a bank. Stop
worrying so much.

A sudden TWIG SNAP frightens Maribel.

MARIBEL
What was that?

Vicente laughs.

MARIBEL (CONT'D)
It's not funny. Stop laughing.

Maribel examines her surroundings.

VICENTE
You're afraid of cemeteries?

MARIBEL
Only at night.

VICENTE
I promise nothing bad will happen.

MARIBEL
As long as we don't run into
La Llorona.

VICENTE
The what?

MARIBEL
You've never heard of *La Llorona*?

Vicente shakes his head.

MARIBEL (CONT'D)
My mother says a woman dressed in white appears in cemeteries after midnight looking for her children.

VICENTE
Her kids died?

MARIBEL
She threw them in a river.

VICENTE
Why would she do that?

MARIBEL
Nobody knows. But she felt so guilty she drowned herself. And when she got to the gates of heaven, she wasn't allowed in because of what she had done. She was told the only way to be forgiven was to find her children. So she wanders, looking for them.

VICENTE
You're saying she's a ghost?

MARIBEL
Yes. A lost soul.

Vicente rolls his eyes.

VICENTE
There's no such thing as--

Maribel lets out a bloodcurdling SCREAM.

MARIBEL
Behind you!

A startled Vicente dashes forward and trips over himself.

MARIBEL (CONT'D)
Run!

Vicente runs until he hears LAUGHTER.

MARIBEL (CONT'D)
Who's laughing now?

Vicente thunders his way back to Maribel.

VICENTE
What are you doing?

MARIBEL
I was just messing with you.

VICENTE
I'm not here to play games,
Maribel. I'm here to see my
brother. He's dead, remember?

A beat.

MARIBEL
I'm sorry. Please don't be upset.

Vicente storms off without saying anything.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE**EXT. CEMETERY - LATER**

Vicente at his brother's headstone. MIGUEL CORTEZ, 1947-1959.

Deep breath. He wipes his hands on his pants and kneels down. His fingers caress Miguel's name.

VICENTE

Hey little brother. I'm sorry I didn't come sooner. It's not that I didn't want to, I just wasn't ready.

His eyes begin to water.

VICENTE (CONT'D)

I keep wishing this is all a dream. That I'll wake up and you'll be at the dinner table reading a comic book and eating your favorite cereal. And me and mom and dad are there and everything is okay.

He wipes his eyes with his sleeve.

VICENTE (CONT'D)

(whispers)

I could have saved you.

(beat)

I could have saved you.

Maribel approaches, having hung back to give him privacy.

VICENTE (CONT'D)

I was supposed to look after him.

Maribel embraces Vicente, rocking him as he weeps.

VICENTE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Miguel. I'm so sorry.

MARIBEL

It's okay. Let it out.

VICENTE

I miss him so much.

EXT. MARIBEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Vicente walks Maribel to her front door.

MARIBEL

Are you okay? You didn't say anything the whole way here.

VICENTE

Yeah. I'm sorry about what happened back there.

MARIBEL

I should be the one apologizing.

VICENTE

It's okay, don't worry about it.

MARIBEL

No, it's not. You went to see your brother for the first time and I ruined it.

VICENTE

You didn't ruin anything. I couldn't have done it without you.

MARIBEL

You always give me more credit than I deserve.

VICENTE

But if you do want to make it up to me, you can tell me why you were crying earlier.

MARIBEL

I don't want you to worry.

VICENTE

You show up with puffy eyes and say you don't want to go home and you expect me not to worry?

MARIBEL

Remember the letter I wrote to my dad's wife? She finally wrote back.

VICENTE

That's great. What did she say?

MARIBEL

She said my dad wants to see me.

VICENTE

So why were you crying?

MARIBEL

My mom got really angry with me.
She doesn't want me to see my dad.

VICENTE

But you do.

MARIBEL

Of course. It's not every day a
father comes back into his
daughter's life.

VICENTE

When are you leaving?

MARIBEL

10:00 a.m. Bus number twelve.

VICENTE

And when are you coming back?

MARIBEL

You miss me already?

INT. VICENTE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Elias shakes Vicente.

ELIAS

Wake up.

VICENTE

Not again.

ELIAS

Hurry up and get dressed. We don't
want to be late.

Vicente sits up in bed.

VICENTE

Late for what?

EXT. TERESA'S CORNER STORE - DAY

Elias and Vicente arrive as Teresa and Maria open the store.

ELIAS

Good morning, Teresa.

TERESA

Good morning you two.

MARIA
Is everything okay?

ELIAS
Yeah, everything's fine. We wanted
to be your first customers.

Maria smiles.

TERESA
That's adorable. Come on in.

INT. TERESA'S STORE - CONTINUOUS

They enter the store.

TERESA
I just need to go over some things
I forgot to mention last night and
I'll be on my way.

Teresa grabs a "Be Back Soon" sign.

TERESA (CONT'D)
During lunch time I usually leave
the store open, but if you want,
you can go home and eat. Just
remember to hang up the sign.

A car HONKS outside.

TERESA (CONT'D)
And if someone's short by a small
amount, go ahead and finish ringing
them up. They almost always come
back the next day with the rest of
the money.

Teresa grabs a DONATION JAR from the counter.

TERESA (CONT'D)
When the day's over, take all the
nickels from the register and put
them in this jar. When it's filled
up, take it to the church and ask
for Sister Mary. She'll know what
to do.

The car HONKS again.

TERESA (CONT'D)
That's my ride.

Teresa stops at the door.

TERESA (CONT'D)
Take care of each other.

EXT. TERESA'S STORE - LATER

Vicente sweeps the sidewalk out front.

A SLOW SONG plays on the radio inside the store.

Vicente peeks inside and spots Maria and Elias in a warm embrace, their bodies swaying to the music.

Vicente smiles.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Vicente sits on the curb outside his home, lost in thought.

A smile reveals a happy memory, or perhaps a fantasy...

INT. CHURCH - DAY - DAYDREAM

A few years into the future.

The entire town is there for a celebration. ADULTS and CHILDREN all dressed in their finest clothes.

BACKROOM

Vicente paces. Elias fixes his tie in a mirror.

ELIAS
Why don't you sit down?

VICENTE
Too nervous.

ELIAS
You're going to sweat through your suit. Have a seat.

Vicente sits in a nearby chair for a few seconds before changing his mind.

VICENTE
Am I doing the right thing?

ELIAS
What do you mean?

VICENTE
All this. Maybe it's too soon.

ELIAS
There's a church full of people
waiting for you.

VICENTE
Maybe we could reschedule.

ELIAS
I thought you loved her.

VICENTE
I do.

ELIAS
Then why are you doubting yourself?

VICENTE
I don't know. Is that a bad sign?

ELIAS
No, it's normal. I was really
nervous when I married your mom.

VICENTE
I love her a lot.

ELIAS
I know, son.

VICENTE
I just don't want to let her down.
That's all. Of course I want to
marry her. I've dreamed of this day
for a long time.

ELIAS
So get out there and show her how
much you love her.

Vicente stops pacing.

VICENTE
I wish Miguel could be here. He
really liked Maribel.

ELIAS
I like her, too. Why do you think I
kept giving you pep talks?

VICENTE
I hope we can be a good couple like
you and mom.

ELIAS

You'll be better. Trust me. You'll be a better husband and a better father because you have something that I don't, Vicente.

VICENTE

What do I have?

ELIAS

A kind heart.

VICENTE

You're kind, too.

ELIAS

I try to be. But that's the difference. I have to make the effort. But you're kind no matter what. Even when people aren't kind to you, you always find the good in everyone. At first I was worried that people would walk all over you because you were too nice, but now I know your kindness is what makes you special.

VICENTE

You think I'm special?

ELIAS

I know I don't say things like that as often as I should. But even though I don't always say I love you, I hope you know that I do, and that I'm proud of you. And I hope you're proud of me.

At this point they're both on the verge of crying. They stand there and enjoy the moment, because it's okay to cry.

CHURCH ALTAR

Vicente waits at the altar with Father Emmanuel.

MUSIC CUE: "Here Comes the Bride" played on an organ.

Everyone stands and faces the rear of the church.

The doors open, revealing Maribel in her beautiful gown.

Elias walks her down the aisle.

She smiles as people wave to her.

The world's biggest smile stretches across Vicente's face.

Maribel joins Vicente at the altar, a sense of pure love emanating from their intense and honest gaze.

FATHER EMANUEL

Please be seated.

The townsfolk do as their told.

FATHER EMANUEL (CONT'D)

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to witness the union of Vicente and Maribel in holy matrimony. If there is anyone here who believes they should not be united, speak now or forever hold your peace.

Vicente and Maribel sneak a peek at the guests. Silence.

FATHER EMANUEL (CONT'D)

Very well. Vicente, take Maribel's ring and place it on her finger after the following question. Do you, Vicente, take Maribel to be your wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do you part?

VICENTE

I do.

He slips the ring on Maribel's finger.

FATHER EMANUEL

And do you, Maribel, take Vicente to be your husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do you part?

Maribel stares at Vicente, her smile fading with each second.

Her eyelids close and head droops, as if she's fallen asleep.

VICENTE

Maribel? Are you okay?

Vicente grabs her shoulders, tries to wake her up.

ELIAS (PRE-LAP)
What are you doing?

EXT. HOUSE - DAY - BACK TO REALITY

Elias walks up to Vicente, snapping him out of his daydream.

VICENTE
What?

ELIAS
What are you doing outside?

VICENTE
I forgot my keys.

Elias unlocks the door and waits for Vicente.

ELIAS
You coming?

VICENTE
In a minute.

Elias picks up on Vicente's dejected tone.

ELIAS
What's on your mind, son?

VICENTE
It's nothing.

Elias sits down next to Vicente.

ELIAS
You've been quiet all morning. Did something happen with Maribel?

VICENTE
I don't think I fit into her plans.

ELIAS
What makes you say that?

VICENTE
I can feel it in my gut.

ELIAS
Did you tell her how you feel?

VICENTE
No. I'm not sure if I should.

ELIAS

You'll never know unless you tell her. Trust me, regret hurts a lot more than rejection. And before you know it, it'll be too late. Think about it, what if she says yes?

Elias heads inside leaving Vicente to ponder his advice.

EXT. STREET - DAY - TRAVELING

Vicente whizzes by on Miguel's RED BICYCLE. He pedals with an intense determination. Turn after turn until he arrives at:

EXT. BUS STATION - CONTINUOUS

The large clock by the cashier's booth reads: 09:52 a.m.

He spots Maribel on a bench and takes a seat next to her, trying to catch his breath.

MARIBEL

I was beginning to think you weren't going to show up.

VICENTE

We need to talk.

MARIBEL

What's wrong?

VICENTE

This might not be the best time for me to do this, but I can't let you leave without telling you.

(beat)

I'm in love with you.

Maribel averts her gaze.

MARIBEL

That word scares me.

VICENTE

Why?

MARIBEL

Because it can mean everything, or nothing at all.

VICENTE

Which one am I?

A beat.

MARIBEL
You don't want this.

VICENTE
Of course I do.

Vicente grabs Maribel's hand.

VICENTE (CONT'D)
I want to grow old with you. I want
to fall in love with you every day
for the rest of my life.

MARIBEL
This isn't a fairy tale. I don't
want you to love me just because
you want to save me.

Maribel pulls her hand away.

MARIBEL (CONT'D)
I don't need saving.
(then)
We're only seventeen. We shouldn't
be worried about this stuff.

VICENTE
I just wanted to tell you how I
felt before my tortillas got cold.

Vicente chuckles at Maribel's confused expression.

VICENTE (CONT'D)
I'll explain it when you get back.

EXT. BUS - DAY

Maribel and Vicente admire each other. Their eyes speak volumes, but their mouths say nothing. They hug.

Maribel boards the bus and sits in a window seat.

The bus begins its trek. They maintain eye contact as long as possible. Her face becomes a blur as the bus rounds a corner.

EXT. VARIOUS STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Vicente zips past cars and pedestrians. He pedals like his life depends on it, because it does.

Street after street until he catches up to the bus.

Vicente locks the bicycle to a tree and waves the bus down.

INT. BUS - DAY - TRAVELING

Vicente hurries into the bus and hands the driver some money.

MUSIC CUE: "Put Your Head On My Shoulder" by Paul Anka.

He sneaks over to Maribel who's resting her eyes.

Vicente takes the seat next to her.

VICENTE

Hi.

Maribel smiles, then opens her eyes.

MARIBEL

Hi.

They stare into each other's eyes, then ride in silence.

As the bus continues its journey, both Maribel and Vicente steal glances at each other.

Maribel rests her head on Vicente's shoulder and plays with her butterfly necklace as Paul Anka sings the following line:

"Maybe you and I will fall in love."

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE