

"The Mourning After"

Written by

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Logline: A hungover marketing exec just wanted to survive her aunt's funeral, but between family drama, buried guilt, and a letter from the dead, she's forced into an emotional reckoning she can't Uber away from.

FADE IN:

EXT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - SOUTH SIDE CHICAGO - MORNING

A grey morning. Cars line the curb. Black suits from Men's Warehouse and purple dresses from ROSS to match the funeral theme. Crumpled tissues. The faint sound of Spanish prayer leaking through the stained glass.

INT. CHURCH - PEWS - CONTINUOUS

Dark wood. Candlelight. The ROSARY is being recited - a soft, rhythmic murmur in Spanish:

CONGREGATION (O.S.)
Dios te salve María, llena eres de
gracia...

KNEELING in a pew is SOLEDAD "SOL" De Silva (28, queer, Mexican-Italian-American, stunning in a black designer pantsuit). Her knees are wobbly. Her makeup is working overtime to hide her oil build-up. She's trying to hold it together. One of the Tias rubs her back.

TÍA (O.S.)
Ay, pobrecita. Mira cómo llora...

People glance over, murmuring their condolences in her direction. Soledad is not crying. She is sweating, nauseous, and still slightly drunk.

Extreme close-up on her Sol's face as she kneels, stands up, then sits down throughout the prayer.

INT. MEADOW'S BAR - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Sol and her cousins are rolling at a crowded bar.

Close-up on her cheers-ing her cousins.

SOL
SALUD!

BACK TO PRESENT

Sol's cousin LASSARO (late 20s) a classic Latino gym bro with diamond stud earrings.

LASSARO
(leans in, whispering)
You're not even saying the rosary.

Lock in!

SOL
(whispers back)
You bought the second round!

LASSARO
And you kept drinking, you're not the
only one with a hangover right now!

ARIANA (mid 20s) grounded but impulsive, Ariana is the cousin who means well but never thinks things through. The kind of ride-or-die who'll get you in trouble *and* yell at you for it.

ARIANA
Sh! Los dos!

Ariana passes a dirty look to Lassaro.

ARIANA
(to SOL)
I love you but you gotta pull it
together! We got like at least three
more kneels left!

SOLEDAD forces a reverent pose. Her stomach gurgles. Her phone vibrates.

INSERT - PHONE SCREEN: "LUCA (HALF-BROTHER): Yo, your fine ahh cousin left her phone."

She cringes. Wrong time.

FATHER
Let us pray.

Everyone starts to bend down. CU on Sol's face as she prepares herself to kneel down again.

INT. CHURCH BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

SOLEDAD throws up violently in a stall. Fluorescents buzz overhead.

There's a knock on the door.

LASSARO(O.S.)
Hurry up. They're lining up the cars.
Don't make this about you.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Sol busts out of the bathroom to a caught off-guard Lassaro
She grabs onto his lapels. He cringes at her stank breath.

SOL

I want you to know you're whole L.A.
cholo aesthetic is mad corny, and we
all think so.

He raises his hands in submission.

SOL (CONT'D)

Our abuelos are from a pueblo and you
grew up in Illinois.

LASSARO

Ok, ok, my bad I'm sorry bro.

Sol nods apologetically at the scared look on his face.

Sol lets go of his suit and starts smoothing it out.

SOL

This is nice.

LASSARO

Men's warehouse.

Sol nods approvingly before turning around.

They walk out together.

INT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

The funeral procession is already moving. Sol stumbles out of
the church, wiping her mouth. Everyone is gone.

Ariana slides into view and hands her a water bottle.

ARIANA (LATE 20S)

Ok, so I would drive but I also left
my Labubu wallet with my ID in your
brother's car.

Sol groans.

INT. SOL'S CAR - DRIVING - MINUTES LATER

Sol weaves through side streets, GPS buffering. She dry

heaves again and stops the car at a red light -- opens the door, throws up. A breeze catches her ponytail. She revels in it the sensation for a moment.

Ariana leans over from the passenger to pat her shoulder.

ARIANA

You're doing so great prima!

Sol wipes her mouth then slams the car door shut.

SOL (ROLLING DOWN THE WINDOWS)

Please, lower the volume of your voice.

The car jets fowards.

EXT. CEMETERY - JUST BEFORE THE SERVICE

Sol arrives before the procession of car, barely. She vomits discreetly behind a tombstone. Stands, recomposes. Slaps on sunglasses.

ARIANA

Nice, I'm sure lil Anna, 'our precious daughter' from 1886-1888 isn't gonna haunt your ass like Annabelle.

A kid walks by them with their parents and eyes Sol suspiciously.

KID (WHISPERS)

Why she look like that?

ARIANA (SMACKING TEETH)

Mind your business!

They wait for the kid and their parents to pass.

ARIANA

So, can you call your brother and ask him to bring the phone and wallet to the luncheon?

SOL

Bro, I can't even look at my phone light right now without wanting to yak, take it, please.

She hands the phone to Ariana.

EXT. CEMETERY - TENTED GRAVESITE - MOMENTS LATER

The hearse door opens. The coffin is slowly unloaded by PALLBEARERS. Sol watches silently, hands clenched, breaths shallow.

Her cousin REFUGIO (30s, strong, stoic) one of the pallbearers, comes to stand underneath the green burial tent next to her. His waist length hair is in a neat braid down his back.

As soon as he stops moving, Sol steps forward and GRABS his shoulder from behind - suddenly, tightly. Her sunglasses slip slightly. Refugio turns, surprised.

REFUGIO

Hi Soledad.

SOL

Please don't move Fugi.

He nods. Sol keeps her eye fixed on his braid -- it steadies her.

SOL (CONT'D)

Oh I love you so much, I ever tell you that.

REFUGIO

No, you actually avoid saying that, are you ok?

SOL

Yeah... just sad.

She doesn't say anything else. Just grips him like she might collapse. He steadies her with his free hand. They don't speak during the prayer.

EXT. AFTER FUNERAL SERVICE

Sol talks to a couple, extended family friends.

WIFE

Oh my god you look so flaquita.

SOL

Really?

HUSBAND

Yeah!

Ariana awkwardly edges into the conversation

ARIANA

Oh my god, Tía I love your lashes,
they look great, pero me presta mi
primita, porfis?

WIFE

Of course, mijita!

Ariana snatches her away.

ARIANA

So how are you feeling?

SOL

Better! I'm sooo skinny now! I think
I'll be perfect once I get some
babracoa in me.

ARIANA

Hey, no, so you're gonna hate me but I
need us to get the phone now.

SOL

Now? Before the luncheon?

ARIANA

But if we get there and my mom asks
where my phone is what am I gonna say?

SOL

What do you mean, what are you gonna
say?

They stand there a minute.

ARIANA

No. Uh-uh. She'll be mad.

SOL

You're 26, tell her you left it at the
house!

ARIANA

I know you're half-white, and like
moved out early to go to a big fancy
school or whatever, but it's not gonna
work like that at *any* age for me.

Sol rolls her eyes.

Ariana gives her the Gen Z stare.

SOL
Oh. my. god.

Sol throws her arms down. Ariana hands her back her phone.

ARIANA
The good thing is I called your
brother, he said left it at Gianluca's
mom's house.

SOL
Oh my Nana's?

EXT. NANA'S HOUSE - 20 MINUTES LATER

Sol and Ariana knock. Sol's Nana (80s), a tiny Italian woman
with a shock of red hair, opens the door.

NANA
Soley baby!

SOL
Hi Nana!

They hug.

NANA
Oh my god, I missed you, stinker!
Who's this?

SOL
My cousin from San Francisco, Ariana.

Ariana waves timidly.

ARIANA
Hi...

NANA
Well come in, come in! I baked a
lasagna just now!

SOL
Oh I don't know if we have ti--

Sol looks to Ariana for help. Ariana looks away.

Nana waves her arm dismissively.

NANA
Hurry! It's gonna get cold.

Nana turns around and heads inside.

SOL
(under her breath)
Fuck!

ARIANA
What do we do?

SOL
Just go inside. We'll figure it out.

Medium shot from their waist as they step into the door's threshold.

INT. NANA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Nana's house is decorated like a typical Italian grandmother's, for the most part. There's fanfare and flags on the hand towels. Pictures of Sol and Luca as a baby. Sepia photos of their father, who looks like a paler version of Luca. A pin-up statue of a woman on a moped rests on the mantle. A tray of lasagna is on the counter.

Nana cuts it up and places it on some paper plates.

Sol and Ariana sit at the kitchen counter. Sol's bouncing her leg.

Sol pulls back and runs a hand through her hair nervously.

NANA
So what brings you here?

SOL
I'm just visiting, um surprise!

NANA
Oh how nice, how long are you staying?

Nana brings over the plates and sets them down.

SOL
Just through the weekend, Nana, then I'm back to Atlanta.

SOL
Did Luca happen to come by and drop

off a phone or a wallet here, by chance?

Nana pulls forks from a SQUEAKY kitchen drawer.

NANA
No, why?

SOL
Nothing just wondering.

Nana sets down the forks on the table. Ariana digs in.

ARIANA
This is amazing!

Sol's stomach gives a disapproving growl as her Nana sits down.

NANA
Well take a bite, Soley.

Her grandma gestures to the plate, one of her pepto bismol pink acrylics taps against the table.

SOL
I'm sorry, I'm not super hungry Nana.

NANA
Did you guys eat already?

Pan to Ariana grabbing Sol's slice.

SOL
No?

NANA
Well, why are you dressed in all black?

A beat.

ARIANA
(wiping her face)
Our aunt passed.

NANA
Who died?

Sol kicks Ariana under the table. Ari winces.

SOL
My mom's sister.

NANA
Oh my god your mother Ariana?

ARIANA
No our aunt Arabelle.

NANA
Arabelle died and you didn't tell me?
I knew she was sick, but I didn't know
it was that bad.

SOL
I, uh,

NANA
When?

ARIANA
Last month.

Sol puts her head in her hands.

SOL
I'm sorry.

NANA
I would've liked to go! She was always
so nice!

ARIANA
Did you know her?

NANA
Yes she brought me flowers every
Mother's Day? Why didn't no one tell
me?

SOL
To be honest, I didn't think you would
wanna go?

Ariana's head ping pongs between them.

NANA
Why?

SOL
Because... you didn't go to

Gianluca's.

Close-up on Nana's face, distraught.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE OF NANA'S HOUSE

The screen door slams behind Sol and Ariana as they walk down the stoop's steps.

SOL
Hey what did my brother say exactly?

ARIANA
He said Gianluca's mom's.

The realization dawns on Sol's face.

SOL
Which Gianluca?

ARIANA
What do you mean?

SOL
There's three Gianluca's Ari!

ARIANA
What?

SOL
Give me the phone.

Ariana pulls Sol's phone out of a pocket in her dress.

ARIANA
I thought your brother was just Luca,
or the only Luca?

Sol squints at the too bright screen.

INSERT - PHONE SCREEN: "LUCA: heyyy, here's addy to rachel's"

SOL
Pendeja, he was talking about his baby
mama, they're all named Gianluca!

ARIANA
Your nephew, your half-brother, and
your damn dad, god rest his sitty

soul?

SOL

He's just 'my brother' and let's just go.

INT. RACHEL'S HOUSE SOMEWHERE IN THE BURBS - CONTINUOUS

Close-up on Sol's hand as she scoops Ariana's phone and wallet out of a vanity tray. The house is the WASPier version of Nana's. Digitally printed photos of Sol's nephew, GIANLUCA III (12) line the walls.

ARIANA

This is your sister-in-law's house?

Sol hands Ariana her stuff as they walk through a hallway.

SOL

Yeah she works in Hospital admin and is on the board for Boy's Town fundraising or something, I don't know.

ARIANA

Wow, and it didn't work out between them?

They come upon the living room. The furniture is newer and the living room looks like a Target ad.

SOL

Yeah, I don't know didn't work out between them.

She gestures to an outlet with a charger dangling from it.

Ariana plugs her phone into walls and lets her phone rest on the floor.

SOL

(continued)

To be honest, the older we get the more I feel like he's turning into our dad.

Sol lays down on a circular rug in the middle of the living room.

She takes an inhale and enjoys the cool A/C on her skin.

ARIANA

Well if it makes you feel better, I
don't think he's that hot.

Ariana joins her on the rug.

Medium close-up shot of them laying on the ground.

SOL

(scoffs)

Ew

ARIANA

I'm serious.

SOL

No it's not that.

ARIANA

Is it that he's like 11 years older?

SOL

15, he might not be related to you,
but he is to me so double yuck, and
yeah's that's weird but also it's like
he never grew up.

Ariana turns her head in the direction of Sol.

ARIANA

What? And you did because you went
away to college and make TikTok
stories for some diet soda brand?

SOL

Hey! It's called Bubblr and I'm the
head of the Social Discovery and our
Marketing Coordination team.

ARIANA

Girl, what?

They laugh.

ARIANA

Fake ass job, but I'm serious though.

SOL

Me too, we're a probiotic health soda
dedicated to expanding our reach via
fan-brand interactions. Gwyneth

Paltrow has a collab with us.

ARIANA

Sure, but what I'm saying is there's more ways to life than just checking off boxes and project management.

SOL

I mean what was I gonna do? Stay in Pilsen forever? Have a kid at 20?

ARIANA

No, but you could've stayed closer to home.

SOL

You and your fam live in the Bay, your mom didn't join the tios here in the Chi. It's suffocating to be around all of them.

ARIANA

Or I guess we both could've visited more often, shit. But I also went to college, you're the not the only 1 you know, and I'm not a disappearing asshole. I still make it work.

SOL

True...

ARIANA

What are you running from?

Ariana's phone lights up and starts BUZZING.

She groans, reaches over, and squints at it.

ARIANA

(sighs)

It's my mom.

ARIANA

(sighs)

"¿Dónde están? El pan se quedó en el carro, cabronas."

SOL

(eyes wide)

Shit! I forgot your mom put it in the trunk this morning.

They both scramble up from the rug like guilty kids, tripping over themselves to grab keys and shoes.

ARIANA

We've been out here bonding and shit
and the star of the show is sweating
in the trunk.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

They run toward the car like it's on fire.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - POST-FUNERAL LUNCHEON - LATER

Sol and Ariana walk in through the barrel gym doors. The sounds of styrofoam plates shifting and metal chair scraping can be heard as they enter. Everyone is eating without them.

UNCLE JORGE (late 40s) the baby of the tios who has the confidence of a self-unaware improv comedian.

TÍO JORGE

(tío final boss mode)

Mira quién llegó. Miss Northwestern.

Everyone stares. Sol sets down the giant tupperware of pan dulce on a table where the tios are sitting, she tries to smile through the embarrassment.

SOL

Brought the carbs, buen provecho!

Sol's mom ESMERALDA (mid-50s, distracted) frowns as she walks by frantically with a giant picture frame wrapped in paper.

ESMERALDA

You're late.

Sol opens her mouth but Esmeralda walks off before she can respond. Ariana's mom OFELIA (mid-50s) is nursing a beer and wearing her permanent frown.

OFELIA

Here comes Jesus with the bread for
the last supper.

SOL

Had to stop for gas...

Sol wanders O.S.

OFELIA (TO ARIANA)

Ay, Lassaro said you were out drinking
last night.

ARIANA

I wasn't shotgunning. I was—

OFELIA

Aht. You lied to me! What would your
Tia say?

Ofelia nods to the framed picture.

ARIANA

I don't know, she'd probably ask for
one!

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

A blur of cousins, folding chairs, and a Bluetooth speaker
blasting sad Juan Gabriel songs.

Sol drops into a seat beside Tío Jorge and ABUELA MARÍA (80s)
who sports in a boxy black dress with two braids draped over
her lap, an aloof disposition.

Sol slams down a paper plate full of mole and too much rice.
She wipes sweat from her upper lip and exhales.

SOL

Finally. I almost tripped over like,
six kids.

TÍO JORGE

Hey, you're getting to that age where
they could be yours.

He hands her a bottle opener.

SOL

Not in this decade.

Her hands shake as she cracks open a Topo Chico, just as—

LUCA DE SILVA (40s, friendly, jacked, stud earrings glinting)
approaches the table, holding a plate stacked with enchiladas
like he belongs here. He's wearing none of the hangover his
sister is.

SOL
Are you fucking shitting me?

LUCA
(tipping his snapback to Abuela)
I thought I'd come give my
condolences.

Abuela María looks up slowly, her eyes narrowing under the rim of her sun hat. She shields her forehead from the sun and blinks at him. She takes in his brown skin and swagger.

ABUELA MARÍA
¿Gianluca?

Luca sets down the plate.

LUCA
I'm Luca nice to meet you

He reaches out a hand.

ABUELA MARÍA
(más fuerte)
¿QUÉ?

SOL
(shouting from beside her)
¡ES MI HERMANO, ABUELA! ¡DEL OTRO
LADO!

Abuela María nods with little recognition.

LUCA
She thinks I'm dad doesn't she.

Abuela María turns to Jorge.

TÍO JORGE
Yeah, Ma. You met him. Mayita's
baptism. He brought the fancy deviled
eggs.

ABUELA MARÍA
No me acuerdo.

He grins easing into the seat across from her.

LUCA
It's okay. I'm hard to forget once you
know me.

Abuela María eyes him up and down. Takes her time. Sips from a styrofoam cup.

ABUELA MARÍA
No te pareces a él.

LUCA
Gracias a Dios, ¿no?

ABUELA MARÍA
Exactamente. Mejor así.

SOL
She means that. You're in the vetting zone now.

LUCA
Let me know when I hit approved.

TÍO JORGE
¿Qué pasó? Te ves muy viejo ahora.

LUCA
What'd he say?

SOL
He's saying you look old as hell now.

LUCA
I'm young at heart.

He beats on his chest, Sol cringes.

SOL
So what took you so long? Couldn't bring Ari's stuff now?

LUCA
Golf tournament ended early, I didn't think I'd make it.

Sol rolls her eyes and takes an obnoxious bite of a tortilla.

SOL
Bro, I was on a Looney Tunes chase trying to get that stuff, I went to Nana's first.

Sol eyes him.

LUCA

Yikes, I thought about telling her but thought it would be better coming from you.

SOL

Man you set me up, I was so hungover.

LUCA

Don't give me that shit, I'm a Gen Xer, and I was fighting for my life to hit a swing for a charity event in this heat.

SOL

Try yaking between tombstones, Tiger Woods.

LUCA

Whatever, where's your mom?

SOL

I don't know probaly playing Miss Universe by talking up everyone.

Ariana walks up.

LUCA

(in a cholo accent)

My future hyna!

Sol groans.

Ari does a little hair flip.

SOL

Don't start, please.

ARIANA

Hey, you're mom wants us to start taking pics with the frame.

Sol salutes Ariana and gets up from the table.

LUCA

You were fun last night.

ARIANA

Calm down, last night was fun but you're 40 and even if we're not related, age gaps that big are for

Mormons.

LUCA

Ouch.

Ariana glides off.

ABUELA MARÍA

Uyyyyyy.

TÍO JORGE

You know maybe try someone your own
age coyote.

The pair snicker at Luca.

CUT TO:

INT. FUNERAL LUNCHEON - CONTINUOUS

Sol, Esmeralda, and Abuela María stand beside a large
portrait of TIA ARABELLE (mid 50s) who's smiling brightly in
the picture. Butterflies and roses line the frame.

A phone camera CLICKS. A moment frozen.

ESMERALDA

You look like her. When she was your
age.

A beat.

Her and Esmeralda crack up.

SOL

Let's be real I'm like if someone
filled a taza will all leche and added
a drop of cafecito.

ESMERALDA

Sorry mija, we ran out of ink with
you.

Another click.

SOL

I'm sorry I was sick all day.

ESMERALDA

It's ok, I'm just glad you're here
now.

Sol's eyes water. Her mom takes her hand. The photo flashes again.

SOL (QUIETLY)
I should've been there.

ESMERALDA
She loved you. We all do. Even when you're not here.

They hold the pose a moment longer.

Abuelita María smacks her teeth.

ABUELITA MARÍA
¿Ya terminamos con las fotos guey?

SOL
Ok, yeah she's done.

ESMERALDA
(clearing her throat)
Yeah, I think we have 10 seconds before she makes this about her.

Sol puts the portrait to the side.

SOL
Gotta love her attitude.

UNCLE PEPE (50s), red-eyed and sentimental-drunk, rises with a Solo cup.

TÍO PEPE
Ahem. Y'all.

The room hushes. Wide shot of Uncle Leo standing in front of everyone.

TÍO PEPE
Can we—can we get a second? I wanna say something.

Kids shuffle. Someone turns down the stereo.

TÍO PEPE (CONT'D)
To my sister. To Arabelle . Who loved loud. Who worked harder than any of us. Who—Lord help her—kept receipts on *everything*.

Soft laughter. Sol manages a small smile. He burps.

TÍO PEPE (CONT'D)
 And to the ones who stayed. Who showed
 up. Who carried her when she couldn't
 carry herself.

Pepe's eyes land on Sol like a missile.

TÍO PEPE (CONT'D)
 And to the ones who left... and only
 come back when... when...

His voice cracks. A cousin pats his back.

TÍO PEPE (CONT'D)
 —when someone's gone.

A silence you can hear your heartbeat in.

Sol freezes, cheeks burning, pretending this isn't about her.

ARIANA
 Oh shit.

Esmeralda winces.

LUCA
 What the fuck?

TÍO PEPE (CONT'D)
 Family is family. Even when they
 forget.

Pepe raises his cup. Some murmur "amen" and follow out of
 embarrassment.

TÍO JORGE
 And drunks are drunks even when they
 forget this is their 5th drink!

The room bursts into laughter. Grateful to ease the tension.

TÍO PEPE
 Huh?

COUSIN LASSARO
 Okay bro, let's sit you down.

Lassaro guides Pepe away from the group's attention.

SOL
I need air.

Sol walks off screen. Tío Jorge and Esmeralda share a look.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - AFTERNOON

Sol is leaning against her crying silently. Luca joins her silently. He pulls out a vape and passes it to her.

SOL
Really?

He gestures again and she takes it. They pass it back and forth.

A few beats.

LUCA
You look like my Mom used to after a night out... A mess and pretending not to be.

Sol exhales the truth for the first time all day:

SOL
I thought today would... feel different.

SOL (CONT'D)
Like somewhere between a homecoming and catharsis. I didn't expect to feel so guilty, and not just for being hungover.

Luca nods.

LUCA
(inhaling)
Yeah. Same thing happened at Dad's funeral. I felt... nothing. Then six hours later I was in a Target crying next to the Gillette razors.

Sol snorts, then tears up. Luca hands her a paper napkin from his pocket (one of the church ones with the cross printed on them).

LUCA
Give it time, kid. Grief hits like Chicago potholes. You never see it, but it'll fuck your suspension up.

Sol laughs through tears.

He pulls her in for a side hug and gives her a pat on the head.

LUCA
You'll be ok.

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! The panic alarms to one of the cars sounds.
Startled they pull away.

ARIANA (O.S.)
LASSARO, YOU BLOCKED IN THE CATERERS.

LUCA
Damn that kid cannot catch a break today.

SOL
His mom yelled at him earlier because he tried to bring a Starbucks frappuccino into the church.

LUCA
Jesus--

SOL
Would appreciate some caffeine at 8am I feel like personally.

Luca gives her a look.

CUT TO:

INT. AUNT ARABELLE'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sol slips inside and shuts the door softly. She leans against it, exhaling like shes been holding her breath for days.

She sits on the tub edge. Regaining control. Failing.

In the corner: Aunt Arabelle's hair rollers in a basket. A smell of her perfume (White Diamonds, unmistakable).

Sol picks up a roller, turning it in her fingers.

A VOICEMAIL ALERT pings.

Sol checks her phone:

BOSS
"We really needed those captions
today. Call me."

She deletes it immediately.

Then, impulsively, they start recording a voice text to her boss:

SOL
(into phone)
Hey, sorry, I'm at a family-
(stops, deletes)

Sol tries again.

SOL
I'll get it to you tomorrow. End of
day.

She sends it. Immediately regret its. Puts the phone face down on the tub ledge. She turns on the shower head and starts a Maria India playlist.

INT. SHOWER - CONTINUOUS

Sol lets the day sluice off her back and sings the worst rendition of *mi mayor venganza*.

SOL
MI MEJOR BENGANSA

EXT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ofelia, Esmeralda, Maria, and Ariana sit in the living room watching a K-Drama with subtitles on. Sol's voice echoes from the shower.

OFELIA
Esta bien?

ARIANA
Yeah she's just in her white girl
feels.

ESMERALDA
The ESL classes were overkill, looking
back.

INT. SOL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Lights off. Just the blue glow of a laptop screen. Sol sits on her couch in sweats, eating a bowl of cereal. The glow of the TV reflects in her glasses – some prestige show she’s not paying attention to.

Her phone rings.

PHONE

(English pronunciation)

TEA-UH AR-I-BELLE IS FACETIMING YOU

Sol rolls her eyes, puts her cereal aside, and answers.

She puts on an upbeat tone.

SOL

Hola, Tía! You’re up late.

TÍA ARABELLE (O.S.)

Ay, mija. I couldn’t sleep. Just wanted to see your face. You look skinny. Are you eating?

Sol flips the camera to the cereal.

SOL

Four food groups right here. Sugar, milk, grains, and... ceramic.

Tía Arabelle chuckles, coughs a little.

TÍA ARABELLE (O.S.)

I saw you posted some commercial on the Facebook. The one with the... dancing soda?

SOL

Bubblr. It’s probiotic, it fizzes, it heals.

TÍA ARABELLE (O.S.)

¿De veras? It heals? You think it could cure me?

Sol’s smile dims just slightly.

SOL

I mean, maybe. It cured me of drinking actual soda, which is... something.

Beat.

TÍA ARABELLE (O.S.)
I miss you, Sol. When are you coming
to visit?

Sol looks away from the phone.

SOL
Ugh, I know. It's been... crazy. I've
been pulling like ten-hour days and my
roommate just adopted a cat who
doesn't like me. And I'm kind of
dating this girl who—

TÍA ARABELLE (O.S.)
Ay, qué bueno. Una novia! See, I'm
glad I called.

SOL
No, she's not a girlfriend. It's
like... trauma bonding with benefits.

She checks the time.

SOL (CONT'D)
Tía, I actually have a meeting at 9
a.m. Can I call you later this week?

A long pause.

TÍA ARABELLE (O.S.)
Of course. Go rest. Just... don't wait
too long, m'ija. Old ladies like me
have expiration dates.

Sol forces a smile.

SOL
You're not a carton of milk, Tía.
You're like... recalentados after
navidad. Eternal, we can never get rid
of you.

TÍA ARABELLE (O.S.)
Ay, qué grosera.

They both laugh.

SOL
Te quiero, Tía.

TÍA ARABELLE (O.S.)
Yo también, mi Sol. And call your mom
sometime!

SOL
I'll... consider it.

TÍA ARABELLE
Don't be too hard on her, she's doing
her best.

SOL
For sure, well get some rest.

TÍA ARABELLE
Adíos.

SOL
Byeeee.

She hangs up. The FaceTime screen closes.

Sol sits for a beat. The laugh fades. She presses her thumb
against the edge of the phone, like she wants to call back –
but doesn't.

The TV continues, but she's no longer watching.

INT. BATHROOM - PRESENT DAY

A small decorative scripture card taped to the sink mirror
catches Sol's eye:

"God will not give you more than you can bear."

SOL
Oh my god, all this Jesus bullshit.

She pulls the card down.

She gets up and stares at her reflection: eyes glossy, jaw
tight.

A single tear falls before she can stop it. She wipes it away
fast, almost angrily.

A knock at the door.

ARIANA (O.S.)
You almost done?

Sol inhales sharply, composes themselves, and unlocks the door.

CUT TO:

INT. AUNT ARABELLE'S BEDROOM - LATER

The door opens to Aunt Arabelle's room. Sol slips inside. The room is quiet, dust-lit, preserved exactly as she left it. A dried rose in a vase sits on the dresser next to a photo of Aunt Arabelle laughing. A half-full prescription bottle. A stack of mail tied in a rubber band.

She sits on the edge of the bed. It dips the way they remember. Sol's eyes catch something under the pillow. A corner of an envelope. She pulls it out, inscribed: Sol.

The handwriting shaky. She hesitates. *Open it.*

Inside: A small sheet of lined paper. Handwritten.

AUNT ARABELLE (V.O.)

Mija, If you're reading this... I didn't get to say what I meant to.

Sol's eyes fill.

AUNT ARABELLE (V.O.)

You don't owe this family a version of yourself that hurts you. But don't run so far you forget who loves you. Come home when you can. I believe in you. Even when others don't.

Sol clutches the letter. Shoulders shaking silently.

FADE OUT.

The lights from the hallway spill in. Sol sits on the floor, back against the bed, knees pulled up. Her aunt's letter is still in their hand, crumpled from how tightly she's been holding it.

A soft knock.

ESMERALDA (O.S.)

Can I come in?

Sol wipes her face quickly – not fast enough – then nods.

SOL

Yeah.

Esmeralda slips inside, closing the door behind her. She sees the tears, the shaking hands.

ESMERALDA

Ay, miija... Ven acá.

She sits beside them on the floor, knees cracking. She opens her arms.

Sol doesn't move at first. Her jaw tightens, eyes glassy.

MOM

Don't be strong right now. You don't have to be strong for me.

That breaks something.

Sol collapses into her, forehead against her shoulder.

A guttural, childlike sob escapes – the kind you only let a parent hear.

Mom holds them, rubbing small circles on their back like she did when Sol was little.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

I know. I know. She was like another mother to you.

SOL

(muffled)

I wasn't here. I should've— I should've come sooner.

ESMERALDA

Arabelle

Sol pulls back a little, eyes searching.

SOL

She said that?

ESMERALDA (NODS)

She said you had your own life. And she was proud. "Your baby's doing things we never got to do," she said.

Tears spill again. Mom wipes them with her thumbs, the way

she used to when they scraped a knee.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

You think she wanted you trapped here,
pretending everything was okay? No.
She wanted you to fly.

SOL (VOICE BREAKING)

But everyone thinks— They think I left
because I didn't care.

ESMERALDA (HONEST, GENTLE)

Some people only know how to love by
you needing them. And when you grow...
they take it personal.

She brushes hair out of the Sol's face.

ESMERALDA (CONT'D)

You didn't stop loving us. You just...
left the neighborhood. That's not a
crime.

A long beat. Sol leans her head on her mom's shoulder again.

SOL

I miss her.

ESMERALDA

(voice breaking slightly)
Me too, mija. Me too.

They sit there like that. Mother holding child, grief finally
having space to soften instead of stab.