

Hopscotch  
by  
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FADE IN ON:

**EXT. OUTDOOR MARKET - DAY**

SUPER: 2014 - Laventille, Trinidad.

LAFEE, 30s, lumbers across a dusty field - a sack slung across his wide shoulders. A man festooned with scars. Pure innocence in his eyes.

He wanders past shuttered booths towards a twisted hut. Intricate patterns cover the door.

The sign reads: *Nickolus' Magick Shoppe*.

**INT. NICKOLUS' MAGICK SHOPPE - FRONT ROOM**

Lafee squeezes through the entrance. The sack slips in his grip. He catches it.

SOMETHING squirms inside.

Lafee hugs the bag to his chest, past counters filled with trinkets. Floral vases with bright patterns tremble with each step he takes.

He pushes open a back door. A RICH HUMMING fills the air.

**INT. NICKOLUS' MAGICK SHOPPE - BACK ROOM**

The source of the melody: NICKOLUS. 40s, short and sinewy limbs; a black "spider" glistening with sweat.

Nickolus crouches over a hole in the dirt floor. He flashes a grin at Lafee. It's an almost perfect smile: only one tooth missing. In the front, at least.

LAFEE

I brought the package, Nickolas.

NICKOLUS

Is it in one piece?

LAFEE

I didn't drop it. This time.

NICKOLUS

Prepare it for me. I'm busy.

Nickolus waves dismissively, turns to his work. He polishes the edges of the hole with long fingers.

Lafee dumps his parcel on the floor and slides the contents free from the bag (OS).

Nickolus pulls a TARNISHED GOLD AMULET from his pocket. Ornate designs swirl on front and back.

LAFEE

Is that it?

NICKOLUS

You do your job. I'll do mine.

Lafee's meaty hands grab a metal stake.

He stabs down into SOMETHING on the floor. Selects another stake, and STRIKES again.

Nickolus doodles patterns in the dust with a knife; the same design as the amulet's cover. He HUMS as he draws. Truth be told, he has a wondrous voice.

Another STAB from Lafee.

NICKOLUS

Not deep enough. Again.

Lafee yanks the stake out. RAMS it down.

NICKOLUS

Better. Now bring it here.

Lafee scoops the sack's contents off the floor:

A GOAT. Mutilated, but alive. Stakes jut from the animal. Both eyes. Nose. Testicles.

The goat KICKS at Lafee. He lugs the animal to the side.

LAFEE

Why we gotta kill another one?

NICKOLUS

The same reason you eat. Every day.

Nickolus grabs a metal hook tied to a rope. He spears the business end through the goat's spine, and tosses the rope over a ceiling beam.

LAFEE

I get hungry.

NICKOLUS

So does Magick. All the time.

LAFEE

My cousin in New York says Magick's ignorant. In the city, they make money easy ways...

NICKOLUS

Shut up, Lafee.

He hands him the rope.

NICKOLUS

And pull.

Lafee tugs mightily. The goat rises into the air.

Nickolus SLASHES its throat. Its blood rains down into the hole, submerging the amulet in gore.

NICKOLUS

(chants)

...fill my hands with silver and gold.  
All you give, my bag will hold.

Blood soaks into the amulet like a sponge.

NICKOLUS

We quench your thirst. Rain down your bounty!

In an instant, the blood disappears. In its place: the amulet. Strangely shiny. Suddenly new. Nickolus pockets his gold souvenir.

NICKOLUS

(to Lafee)

Good. The gods are pleased. Now, we can afford your next meal.

He RIPS a metal rod from the dead goat's eye.

NICKOLUS

Though for now, this will do.

The goat dangles on the rope. Dinner's served.

# **INT. MS. OFELIA'S SHACK - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON**

TRINKETS dangle from the ceiling: NECKLACES with cheap designs. FIGURINES woven from straw.

A HANDMADE WANGA DOLL "looks" down on bare walls.

Only meager furnishings here. A bookcase filled with dusty jars.

MS. OFELIA (70s) shuffles across the room, a wicker basket over her arm. A large woman, with skin as tough as leather. Lines etched in her face by time.

MICHAELA (5) clings to her leg. Big round eyes. Her body as spindly as a lamb.

Ms. Ofelia shakes her granddaughter off. Michaela reattaches instantly. Ofelia "drags" the child across the room, conducts a worried search of the shelves.

OFELIA  
Where the devil did it go?

MICHAELA  
Nani! Buy me sweets!

OFELIA  
Hush. Nani's busy.

She brushes past the Wanga doll. It twirls on its string.

OFELIA  
Ah Payap. There it is!

She tosses a jar into her basket. Michaela grabs Ofelia's skirt, and tugs hard.

MICHAELA  
Nani. You promised!

OFELIA  
A girl don't get much for begging.

Ofelia pushes her away.

Resulting in an angry TSSSSKKK! across the room.

THANDI (30s) stands in the doorway, twelve year old JEREN at her side. The boy's as thin as his sister. Nappy hair. A mischievous twinkle in his eye.

OFELIA  
You promising the children sweets again?

THANDI  
No, Mamma. You did. Before your trip to market last week. Not to mention, the trip before.

OFELIA

I needed that potion. My ingredients are -

THANDI

...expensive. I know. Other things are expensive, too. Clothes for growing children. Food. Things you can't conjure with spells!

Michaela reaches for a trinket. Thandi yanks her away.

THANDI

Don't bother your Nani. She's preparing toys for market. You shouldn't play with nasty things.

She fixes Ofelia with an evil eye.

THANDI

No one should, you ask me. They say Magick is a dangerous game. Nanis should play with babies. Not old country spells.

Ofelia packs more items away.

OFELIA

They *also* say men should stay with their women, provide for the babies they make. And *good* women keep their legs closed...

Thandi covers Jeren and Michaela's ears. Michaela stares up at her Nani with confused eyes. The old woman's scowl melts. She reaches down, ruffles Michaela's hair.

OFELIA

Though these results. Not so bad.

Thandi whispers in her ear.

THANDI

I saw you take money from the jar. Please. We need it for the children!

OFELIA

That money comes from what I sell. I need it for ingredients. You think I trade at market on my looks? I'm just an old woman who peddles love potions. So her daughter can be picky with which man she choose.

(beat)

And so her granddaughter can have sweets.

Ms. Ofelia grabs a book labelled "Spells" and bustles towards the door.

THANDI

Be back for dinner this time?

OFELIA

I'm old. And slow. But I'll try.

THANDI

That man at market. The one with the missing tooth -

OFELIA

Mr. Nickolus?

THANDI

Don't trade with him. Ms. Panzie, down the way... she told me things.

The scowl returns to Ofelia's face.

OFELIA

Take care of your babies, daughter. You do your job. And I'll do mine.

She SLAMS the door. Leaves Thandi and the kids behind.

#### **EXT. MS. OFELIA'S SHACK - CONTINUOUS**

Ofelia wanders down a garden path.

She looks back. Three faces peer out the window. Thandi's worried grimace looms large over the rest.

#### **EXT. NICKOLUS' MAGICK SHOPPE - PORCH**

THUGS (20s) loiter; each scruffier than the last. Ms. Ofelia bustles by. They roll their eyes, let her pass.

#### **INT. NICKOLUS' MAGICK SHOPPE - FRONT ROOM**

The entrance bell RINGS; the door opens. CLATTER from the market flows inside.

Ms. Ofelia glances around at the cluttered store. TOURISTS fill every corner in sight.

An anorexic WHITE WOMAN (30s) with a silk scarf examines vases on a shelf. Lafee looms over the socialite's shoulder. Too close for comfort.

LAFEE

It's pretty, ain't it? We gots lots of pretty things.

SCARF WOMAN

I'm... looking for something for my sister. She collects local artifacts.

LAFEE

Where you from?

SCARF WOMAN

(uncomfortable)

USA. New York.

A wide smile splits Lafee's face.

LAFEE

I got a cousin there! Maybe you know him?

SCARF WOMAN

I doubt it. I live in Tribeca. Downtown.

LAFEE

That the same as The Bronx?

The woman inches away.

Ms. Ofelia browses the aisles, her "spell book" open in her hand. She peers at pages, and compares them to ingredients on shelves.

Nickolus holds court at the counter, hawking jewelry to a YOUNG COUPLE. He dangles a pendant in front of the GIRL.

NICKOLUS

This charm makes one beautiful.

(charming smile)

But I see you have one already.

MALE TOURIST

You're saying it's magical?

NICKOLUS

Did you not read the sign outside?

MALE TOURIST

Seriously. Talkin' man to man. We're supposed to believe this bullshit's real?

Nickolus' smile freezes. Anger blazes in his eyes.



NICKOLUS

Whether you believe does not matter. The  
Magick and I do not care.

He lays out a bracelet for display.

NICKOLUS

You should consider this one. It makes a  
man more... virile.

The man opens his mouth. Nickolus spots Ofelia.

NICKOLUS

Excuse me. I will be back.

#### **OFELIA'S SIDE OF THE SHOPPE**

Ms. Ofelia reaches for a crude CRYSTAL NECKLACE high on a  
shelf. Nickolus pulls it down.

NICKOLUS

Back again? Already?

OFELIA

I sold out. I need more.

Nickolus smirks at the necklace in her hand.

NICKOLUS

A protective charm. The people in your  
town buy anything. I should start a  
Shoppe out there myself. My business is  
due to expand.

OFELIA

Again? So quickly?

Sudden desperation on Ofelia's face. She whispers in  
Nickolus' ear.

OFELIA

My family - we need money. The babies  
don't have enough to eat. My daughter's  
husband left us alone. Tell me your  
secret. I will work for you! Do anything!

NICKOLUS

(sneers)

True Magick requires Knowledge. Power.  
Some have that. Others despair.

The girl tourist waves a bracelet in the air.

GIRL TOURIST  
I want this one! How much?

Nickolus guides Ofelia to the counter. He collects the tourist's cash and counts it in Ofelia's face.

Then smiles as the couple walks away. Eyes glued to the girl's ass.

NICKOLUS  
(to Ofelia)  
You should sell jewelry. Americans buy that constantly.

Ofelia stares at a second glass case, behind Nickolus' counter. The trinkets there are older, more mysterious.

She reaches for one. Nickolus SNAPS the lid on her hand.

NICKOLUS  
Obeah masters. Only.

OFELIA  
But I...

Lafee's voice BOOMS across the room.

LAFEE  
(to the anorexic tourist)  
My cousin says The Bronx is best. You can go anywhere, buy anything. Drugs. Women. Cars. And everyone leaves you alone.

Nickolus hurries to the nervous tourist's side.

NICKOLUS  
Can I help you?

SCARF WOMAN  
I think I'll be going now...

NICKOLUS  
But you haven't seen our earrings. They will perfectly match your blue eyes!

The woman rushes out the door. Nickolus aims his displeasure at Lafee.

NICKOLUS  
What did I tell you about talking?!

Ofelia's embarrassed gaze drifts back to the hidden case. She spots the gold amulet, tucked away.

She flips pages in her Magick book, and stops at a similar drawing. Written underneath: "Money Spells."

She picks up the amulet. It shines. Inviting...

...like Michaela's desperate eyes. Ofelia peeks towards Nickolus. He's shoving Lafee out the door.

NICKOLUS

Go waste time outside. Away from paying customers!

He storms back to Ofelia. She stuffs the amulet in a pocket. Nickolus looks her up and down.

The old woman holds her breath. *Did he see?*

NICKOLUS

Are you paying? Or stealing?

Ofelia freezes. Nickolus gestures at the protection charm in her bag. Ofelia relaxes, digs in her purse for change.

OFELIA

One more thing. Do you sell sweets?

#### **EXT. NICKOLUS' MAGICK SHOPPE - PORCH**

Ofelia wanders off the porch. Past Lafee, and the gang.

Lafee picks his teeth, doesn't look Ofelia in the eyes.

#### **EXT. MARKET - CONTINUOUS**

Ofelia ducks behind a booth. She pulls out the amulet, marvels at how it glows in the sun.

Lafee watches from afar. Ofelia doesn't notice. She tucks the bauble back in her pocket, and hurries away.

#### **INT. OFELIA'S SHACK - KITCHEN**

Thandi digs through the icebox. Most of the food's rotted; there's not enough for even one meal.

She glances towards the living room. Michaela and Jeren GIGGLE, play games.

Thandi switches to the cupboard and digs through CANS OF FOOD. She checks the labels. Expired. Burrows past them towards the back.

Her hand GRAZES the sidewall. THUNK.

The wood sounds hollow. Thandi KNOCKS again. Pries a board loose with her fingernails.

Revealing: a hiding place. A LARGE RUSTY TIN BOX inside.

**EXT. OFELIA'S SHACK - EVENING**

Ofelia trudges up the garden path. She clutches a stick of candy in her hand. Her joints creak with every step.

OFELIA

(mutters)

Stealing from Nickolus, old woman? What crazy things live in your head?

She reaches the porch. Thandi throws open the door.

THANDI

You'll never guess what I found!

**INT. OFELIA'S SHACK - DINING ROOM**

Broken dishware covers the table, piled high with curry.

Ofelia and the children wait in wobbly seats. Thandi darts back and forth, adding food to each plate.

THANDI

Deren must have forgotten to take it!  
There was so much money inside. Enough  
for food. And shoes...

She ruffles Jeren's hair. Points a spoon at Ofelia.

THANDI

Your Nani spends so much time on Obeah,  
she forgot the power of prayer.

Ofelia takes a bite. Hides her smile.

**INT. NICKOLUS' MAGICK SHOPPE - FRONT ROOM**

Nickolus isn't smiling.

He rages like a hurricane, destroying everything in his wake. He RIPS open a drawer. SMASHES it at Lafée's feet.

NICKOLUS

Where IS it?

LAFEE

What are you talking about?

NICKOLUS

The amulet, you oaf!

Lafee cowers, and looks around the shoppe.

LAFEE

Aren't the goats enough?

NICKOLUS

Do you see customers here? We haven't had any since this morning. You were supposed to be watching for thieves! If you aren't of use to me...

He takes a threatening step towards Lafee.

LAFEE

I've been good, Nickolus. I followed that old lady!

Nickolus freezes. Listens carefully.

#### **INT. OFELIA'S SHACK - KITCHEN**

Thandi muses at the table.

THANDI

There's so much money. Maybe we can move!

OFELIA

Move? What are you jabbing about, girl?

THANDI

We could go to a better town. One where Michaela and Jeren could be safe!

#### **EXT. NICKOLUS' MAGICK SHOPPE - PORCH - EVENING**

GANG MEMBERS surround Nickolus. Despite their coarse exteriors, he looks far more dangerous.

NICKOLUS

Go to the old woman, take what's mine!  
Burn down the house, and bring her to me.

A THUG with a SCARRED CHEEK raises a hand.

"SCAR"

What about the family?

NICKOLUS

Let them burn. She dares to steal from me? Then that is the price she shall pay.

Gang members head towards cars. Lafee doesn't join in.

NICKOLUS

Why aren't you moving?

LAFEE

They don't need me.

NICKOLUS

If you had done your job, *they* would not be needed.

He steps towards Lafee.

NICKOLUS

You can go, and make amends. Or stay - as replacement for the goats.

Lafee's eyes grow wide. He hurries off the porch.

**INT. OFELIA'S SHACK - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Thandi putters in the kitchen.

Ofelia's shopping basket sits on a table next to a flower vase, and a photo of Thandi with the kids.

Michaela plays in Ofelia's lap on the floor. Jeren sprawls out nearby, over a half-filled dinner plate.

JEREN

Is it true what Mama says? We'll move?

OFELIA

Your Mama's a dreamer. But sometimes, dreams do come true.

MICHAELA

Did you get candy for me?

Ofelia holds out a sweet to the girl.

OFELIA

What do you think?

Car engines ROAR outside. A rock SMASHES through a window. There's a dead RAT tied to it. Glass flies everywhere. Ofelia shields Michaela's head.

More GLASS SHATTERS in the kitchen. Thandi SCREAMS. SPLINTERS fly. Something large hits the front door.

A MACHETE blade pries it open.

Gang members flood into the room. An awkward Lafee lingers at the entrance.

Ofelia grabs the children and backs away.

TWO THUGS burst from the kitchen and block her escape. Thandi dangles between them, the thugs hold her tight by the wrists.

Ofelia grabs Jeren's knife.

OFELIA

Let her go!

The scarred thug rips it from her hand. He grabs Ofelia by the throat and SLAMS her into a wall.

THANDI

Momma, no!

(to the scarred thug)

What do you want?

The thug on her left cups her breast.

LEERING THUG

You, Little Momma. On the floor.

"Scar" presses the kitchen knife to Thandi's neck.

"SCAR"

Something your Momma took from Nickolus.

Ofelia gasps. She buries Michaela's face in her dress.

THANDI

Momma? You took something?

"SCAR"

The amulet. Where is it?

He pulls the knife across Thandi's throat, leaving a thin red trail. Ofelia races to her basket, and holds the amulet out to him.

OFELIA

Please, take it. Leave my family in peace!

A wicked smile on Scar's face.

"SCAR"

Thank you, old woman.

He hands the kitchen knife to the leering thug.

"SCAR"

"Pieces", I think she said?

Scar grabs the machete, and yanks Ofelia to his side.  
Thugs at the door light the curtains ablaze.

OFELIA

I gave you what you want!

"SCAR"

And Nickolus is giving you a free lesson.

The leering thug RIPS Thandi's shirt to her waist. Jeren  
races towards his mother.

The thug backhands him into a wall. Thandi spits in the  
man's face.

The thug SLASHES her throat, ear to ear. Thandi crumples  
to the ground, blood spurting.

Ofelia grabs the machete, swings at Scar. Scar HOWLS as  
his severed hand hits the floor.

The amulet skitters under a table.

Ofelia reaches for Thandi. A pool of blood blossoms under  
her daughter's neck.

Scar grabs Ofelia with his remaining hand. She swings  
blindly - buries the machete in his head. She tries to  
wiggle the blade free. It's stuck. She can't.

Michaela SCREAMS as a THUG grabs for her. A burning beam  
falls, and blocks his way.

Ofelia scoops Jeren off the floor, and races to  
Michaela's side. Fire CRACKLES. Chaos everywhere.

The ceiling trinkets burn like torches. The Wanga doll  
twirls on its rope, ablaze.

Ofelia fumbles for the door. Thick smoke makes it  
impossible to see.

Her hand touches a knob. Ofelia tears it open. It's a  
closet. She tries to pull Jeren inside. But the boy is  
too afraid.



JEREN

No, Nani. We'll burn in there!

A light skinned THUG (STEFAN) melts out of the smoke.  
Tears stream from his reddened eyes. He yanks Jeren away.

OFELIA

No!

But Jeren's gone. And Stefan doesn't return.

Ofelia pulls Michaela into the closet, SLAMS the door. A  
chunk falls away, leaves a hole. Thick smoke bellows in.

MICHAELA

Momma!

OFELIA

Shhhh. Be quiet. And very still.

She looks towards the door. Freezes. Lafee's eye blinks  
back at her. He sees the two. And turns away.

LAFEE (O.S.)

I can't find them!

LEERING THUG (O.S.)

Nickolus wants the old woman!

STEFAN (O.S.)

The house is burning. We must go!

Michaela gasps. Ofelia lays a hand over her mouth. She  
fumbles in her pocket for the protective charm from  
Nickolas' shoppe.

OFELIA

Close your eyes. Do not fear. This Magick  
will keep you safe.

She raises the necklace to Michaela's face...

SOMETHING CREAKS overhead. Ofelia looks up. The ceiling  
buckles down onto their heads.

### **LATER**

Ofelia groans. Her eyes closed, face caked with soot. She  
tries to sit up. A beam CRUMBLES under her hand.

She grabs for something solid. It CRACKLES. Ofelia  
freezes at the feel.

Then she opens her eyes. And SCREAMS.

...she's holding Michaela's charred arm. The protective charm CLINKS against exposed bone. Tangled around Ofelia's wrist.

**EXT. CHARRED REMAINS OF OFELIA'S SHACK - MORNING**

The thugs are gone. As is everything in her world.

Ofelia stacks the bodies of Thandi, Michaela and Jeren neatly in the garden. Wanders through rubble in a daze.

She spots the burned family photo, picks it up. Uncovers the cracked vase with flowers, as well.

She spots Deren's box of "Found Money", and opens it. Bundles of cash sit inside, unscathed.

Something TWINKLES nearby. Ofelia investigates.

The gold amulet. It looks brand new. Ofelia holds it again in her hand.

OFELIA

This is your fault. And mine. We deserve each other. Don't we?

She pockets the trinket, and carries the vase over to her family. She lays a flower on Thandi's chest. The burned petals crumble away.

**INT. AIRPORT - DAY**

A COLORFUL MAP covers one wall. All the world's countries, on display.

A disoriented Ofelia stands at the counter. Tattered dress, spell book tucked under her arm. One flimsy purse. No bags.

TWO TICKET VENDORS eye her suspiciously.

MALE TICKET VENDOR

Want something, old woman?

OFELIA

One ticket. Please.

FEMALE TICKET VENDOR

Anywhere particular?

OFELIA

Away.

The female vendor whispers in her coworker's ear.

FEMALE TICKET VENDOR  
She's crazy. Get security.

The male nods to a GUARD. The man reaches for his gun.

FEMALE TICKET VENDOR  
Lady - tell us where you want to go.

Ofelia blinks at the map. Lafee's voice in her head.

LAFEE (O.S.)  
The Bronx is the best. You can go  
anywhere. And everyone leaves you alone.

OFELIA  
I want a ticket to New York.

She upends her purse; money spills across the counter.  
The ticket vendors look surprised.

MALE TICKET VENDOR  
Is anyone coming with you?

OFELIA  
No. Just me.

FEMALE TICKET VENDOR  
So what do we do with the rest of it?

OFELIA  
Convert it to American money. Please.

#### **INT. NICKOLUS' MAGICK SHOPPE - DAY**

Lafee shrinks before Nickolus. Burned GANG MEMBERS  
(including Stefan) cower behind him.

LAFEE  
We had to get away. Stefan got burned. He  
needs a doctor.

Stefan nods. Nickolus GROWLS.

LAFEE  
But we went back. The family - they all  
are dead.

NICKOLUS  
The old woman?

STEFAN

We didn't find her body.

LAFEE

The heat was terrible. She couldn't have survived.

NICKOLUS

What about the amulet?

Stefan shrugs. Lafee looks guilty, but shakes his head.

**EXT. AIRPORT - DAY**

A PLANE ROARS into the air, drowns out Nickolus' SCREAM. Followed by the BUSTLE of city streets.

**INT. DECATUR AVENUE - BRONX, NEW YORK - DAY**

**SUPER: ONE MONTH LATER**

RAP music POUNDS from car windows. CHILDREN play outside of derelict homes, and run barefoot in the street.

KESIA (7) and TRICIA (8) play Hopscotch on the sidewalk, kick MINI BOOZE BOTTLES out of the way. Carmel skin, Beyonce tees and pigtails. Both hip - in an innocent way.

ROBBIE (14) perches on an electrical box. Urban clothes, gentle eyes. One eye trained on sister Kesia.

The other on CARLOS (15), a few feet away.

The wiry Hispanic chats with AARON (14), a scruffy punk. A not-so-subtle drug deal.

TREVOR (20s) leans against a post nearby. Dark, suave and handsome. Supervising - in a casual way.

Carlos nods at Robbie. Robbie frowns; throws hand signals Carlos' way.

The girls don't notice the exchange. They're focused on a STRAY CAT down the street. It slinks along; a matted mass of black and white fur. Battle scars on its face.

KESIA

Look! Ain't she pretty?

TRICIA

I bet she old and rabid. And got fleas.

KESIA  
I'm gonna take home Lazer someday.

TRICIA  
You named her Lazer?

KESIA  
Yeah. Look in her eyes. Don't they shine bright?

A curtain FLUTTERS at a window.

TRICIA  
Speakin' of old. That lady's watchin' us again.

Kesia looks: and catches a glance of Ms. Ofelia, partially hidden behind the pane. Tricia nods towards the protective charm around Ofelia's neck.

TRICIA  
My mom says she's from the old country. Really weird and into spells. Ain't you seen her? She's on your floor.

KESIA  
She moved in a month ago. She don't talk to anyone. Even when she brings trash out to the hall.

TRICIA  
I hear her apartment smells. Like medicine and dead things.

She whispers in Kesia's ear.

TRICIA  
And she's a witch. Who ate her family!

Ofelia overhears, and snaps the curtains shut. She continues to peek out - just a bit.

KESIA  
I dunno. She seems okay.

What's *not* okay is the drug deal. Carlos slips money into Aaron's palm. The punk pays him back with an icy stare.

AARON  
That's it? You had five deliveries.

CARLOS  
Yeah, but one's payin' Wednesday. That's when he gets his Pension check.

AARON

We ain't runnin' a loan service! Everyone pays, *before* they play. Especially when you ain't givin' names.

He thrusts a hand in Carlos' face.

AARON

Hand it over. Two gee.

CARLOS

I don't got it.

AARON

Get it!

CARLOS

Wednesday.

Aaron pulls a razor... Robbie bolts off the box, and leaps into Aaron's face. Trevor remains at his station.

ROBBIE

(to Aaron)

You crazy? There's kids here!

AARON

Get outta my face. You'll give me AIDS!

Aaron shoves him away. The teens stare each other down.

ROBBIE

Carlos ain't lyin', but you gotta wait. The guy's good for all of it.

AARON

Really? What's his name?

ROBBIE

You'll get paid. With interest. You and Trevor know that's more than fair. We're getting next to *nothing* on our cut.

AARON

Funny. You don't look like your daddy. Don't sound like him, neither.

Aaron raises the razor to Robbie's neck.

Ofelia jerks back from the window.

FLASHBACK: Scar's knife at Thandi's windpipe. Leaving a thin red trail...

AARON  
(to Robbie)  
Go hang with the girls. Leave the men to  
their business.

Robbie's body tenses. Trevor slips from the post,  
saunters casually his way.

CARLOS  
Robbie, please. I got this.

Kesia and Tricia stop playing Hopscotch, and stare.

Trevor slides the razor from Aaron's hands.

TREVOR  
Chill, Aaron. Robbie said we'll get paid.  
He's just taking care of business. For  
his family.  
(directed at Robbie)  
He wouldn't do anything stupid. That'd  
leave his sister all alone...

Tricia's mother MAUREEN (30s) bursts from the building: a  
bundle of gaudy neurosis. Chunky jewelry. Too high heels.  
She swoops down on her daughter like a hawk.

TRICIA'S MOM  
Come on baby. Let's go.

TRICIA  
But Kesia and I -

TRICIA'S MOM  
I don't care! I told you not to play...

She averts her eyes from Trevor.

TRICIA'S MOM  
...in the street.

She hauls Tricia towards the doors, hisses in her ear.

TRICIA'S MOM  
Why can't you play with Robin? Her  
mother's a teacher. Her family's nice!

The front entrance SLAMS shut. Tricia's gone. Kesia  
stands on the sidewalk, alone. Hurt blossoms on her face.

Robbie races towards his sister. Aaron yells after him.

AARON  
I'm warnin' you. You got three days!

**INT. OFELIA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM**

The decor screams "old lady." The singed photo of Thandi and the children rests on the mantelpiece, next to an urn and candles. Dried herbs decorate tables on the side.

A footlocker's tucked in one corner. The burned Wanga doll from Ofelia's shack sits on top.

Ofelia peeks out the window again.

**INTERCUT BETWEEN APARTMENT AND STREET**

Trevor puts a hand on Aaron, guides him away.

Robbie hugs his sister. Kesia BAWLS. Carlos hovers awkwardly over the pair.

CARLOS

Rob, we gotta go.

Ofelia glances at the photo of her family, then back at Robbie and Kesia. There's a faint resemblance there.

Robbie, Kesia and Carlos walk past the window.

Ofelia blinks back a tear.

**EXT. ROBBIE AND KESIA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

Robbie fumbles with keys. A pouting Kesia and nervous Carlos at his side.

CARLOS

Show some discretion. Aaron wasn't playin'.

Robbie swings open the door. Setting off panicked movement inside.

**INT. ROBBIE AND KESIA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM**

A proverbial shit-hole. Salvation Army furniture. Empty bottles and takeout cartons on the floor.

A light skinned man, MIKE (30s) jumps to his feet.

TONYA WILLIAMS (30s) lies on the sofa next to him - beer bottle in her hand. A too-stoned-to-care look in her eye.

Kesia darts inside. Mike fumbles with his pants. ZIIIIIP.



ROBBIE  
Who the fuck are you?

MIKE  
Name's Mike. I'm a friend of your  
mother's.

He extends a hand. Mrs. Williams grabs his sleeve.

TONYA  
I wanna hit. You got more?

ROBBIE  
Mom, you said you wouldn't!

Mrs. Williams tugs Mike's arm again.

TONYA  
Come on, sugar. For me?

Carlos and Kesia stand frozen. Robbie turns on Mike.

ROBBIE  
Get the fuck out of my house!

MIKE  
It ain't yours. You payin' rent?

ROBBIE  
You think I'm not? You're the one that  
don't belong!

Mrs. William's fingers trail down Mike's sleeve, caress  
his pant leg. Robbie shoves Mike away.

ROBBIE  
I said out!

The older man bristles. Considers Carlos, and retreats.

MIKE  
I'll be back later, Tonya. When we have  
privacy.

TONYA  
Baby - don't go away...

MIKE  
I'll be back. When your rug-rats are  
asleep.

Mike reaches for the door. SLAM. He's gone.

Robbie grabs for his mother's beer bottle. She SMASHES it at his feet.

ROBBIE

You shouldn't let people like that in here!

TONYA

Why you gotta be a shit? Just like your Daddy. I deserve to have one man in this house! And he ain't getting out no time soon.

Kesia starts to tremble. Robbie takes an angry step. Carlos pulls him away.

CARLOS

Come on. We gotta talk.

Robbie swings Kesia around 180.

ROBBIE

Keys, go to your room.

#### **INT. KESIA'S BEDROOM**

Plaster flakes onto stained carpet. A huge crack over an unmade bed. Robbie pushes Kesia inside.

ROBBIE

Stay here 'til I say.

KESIA

I don't wanna...

ROBBIE

Play with your dolls. Or something.

He walks off with Carlos, but leaves the door ajar.

Kesia stares at scuffed WHITE BARBIES on the floor. She picks up one with tangled hair.

#### **INT. ROBBIE'S BEDROOM**

Surprisingly clean. Magazines on the floor: *Hip Hop Rockz*. *Sports Illustrated*. A bare chested male model on each cover.

Robbie kicks them quickly under the bed. Carlos pretends not to see.

Robbie digs under his mattress. Carlos paces the floor.

ROBBIE

Why you pacin'? Settle down.

CARLOS

You almost fucked up the deal!

ROBBIE

You were the one losing it. All I did was get your back.

CARLOS

I *told* you to stay out of negotiations. Did you see Trevor's face? We gotta earn his respect.

ROBBIE

You sayin' I don't deserve respect?

CARLOS

All I'm saying is, we new. We push too hard - Trevor and his sources walk.

Robbie extracts a tattered notebook from the mattress.

ROBBIE

(grins)

No, he won't. We got this. All the references we need. Shit goes back twenty years.

#### **INT. KESIA'S BEDROOM**

Kesia SNIFFLES, and runs a comb through Barbie hair. The comb hits a tangled snag.

A frustrated Kesia YANKS. The comb SNAPS in two. The halves stick out at comical angles from Barbie's head.

Kesia SCREAMS and throws the doll against a wall. It bounces off, hits the floor. Plaster rains down on its naked torso.

#### **INT. ROBBIE'S BEDROOM**

The argument continues. Carlos isn't swayed.

CARLOS

Big deal. You got your Daddy's book. That ain't gonna give us juice.

ROBBIE

Trevor gotta sell to someone. And we got the market locked up. Tight!

CARLOS

Think he can't make his own contacts?

ROBBIE

That takes time. And time is money, right? Which makes this - and us - valuable.

CARLOS

You think he don't suspect? He's gonna come and take it away.

He waves the notebook in the air. Robbie fishes in the mattress again. This time, he pulls out a GUN.

ROBBIE

Let him try.

CARLOS

What the fuck? Where'd you get a piece?

ROBBIE

(shrugs)

I know a guy.

CARLOS

I ain't lettin' you pack heat -

Carlos grabs for the weapon. Robbie shoves him away.

#### **INT. KESIA'S BEDROOM**

Robbie and Carlos' RAISED VOICES filter through thin walls. Kesia's eyes widen as she listens.

ROBBIE (O.S.)

Git off me!

CARLOS (O.S.)

You trying to get us killed?

ROBBIE (O.S.)

No. I'm getting us paid!

CARLOS (O.S.)

Don't make a difference if we're dead.  
Who'll take care of Kesia then?

Dead silence on Robbie's end.

**INT. ROBBIE'S BEDROOM**

Robbie stares at Carlos. A scratch oozes on his friend's cheek. Carlos drops his voice.

CARLOS

I'm just lookin' out for you. As a friend. Try not to get in over your head.

ROBBIE

I know. I'm sorry. For everything.

He reaches out to Carlos' face. Carlos slaps him away.

CARLOS

Don't do that. I ain't no fag!

He throws a wad of cash on the bed.

CARLOS

Your half. I'm outta here.

Carlos storms out the door, past a red-eyed Kesia. The wacked-out Barbie dangles from her hand.

Robbie scoops up the cash, and runs to her side.

ROBBIE

Key - do me a favor. Get Chinese food for Momma. Dragon Garden. You know what she likes.

He eyes Barbie's terminal case of bed head.

ROBBIE

Go to Katz', too. Git yourself a fly Barbie this time. Those white bitches don't know how to do their hair.

Kesia nods and shuffles towards the door.

ROBBIE

Stay clear from Momma. She's in a mood.

**INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Tonya slumps on the sofa. Kesia slips towards the exit. Her mother's eyes track her way.

TONYA

Where you going?

KESIA  
Out. For food.

TONYA  
Without giving your Momma a kiss?

Kesia wrinkles her face, but grants her mother a peck on the cheek. Then inches towards the door again.

TONYA  
(slurred)  
You don't like me. Do you?

KESIA  
Robbie, he told me to go...

TONYA  
You kids. Always judging me.

She glares at her mortified daughter.

TONYA  
I see you, hanging around outside all hours. You just wait 'til you're my age. You'll be just like me. You'll see!

A terrified Kesia runs out the door. Past Door 2C. Ms. Ofelia's apartment.

# **INTERCUT BETWEEN OFELIA'S APARTMENT AND THE STREET**

Kesia darts down the sidewalk. Ms. Ofelia watches from her window.

The little girl dodges a car in the street. Ofelia shakes her head, and frowns.

# **INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - LATER**

Chinese calendars hang on greasy walls. Kesia stands at the counter, on tiptoe.

LINDA CHU (50s) stares down at the girl. A work hardened face. But gentle eyes.

LINDA CHU  
Hey short stuff. Long time, no see.

Kesia drops money at the register.

KESIA

Chicken Dinner Combination. And one Won  
Ton Soup.

LINDA CHU

This is for your Momma, right?

Kesia doesn't say anything.

LINDA CHU

She in a state again?

Kesia nods. Linda turns and yells towards the kitchen.

LINDA CHU

Number 5. And Two Won Ton Soups!  
(to Kesia)  
The extra's on me.

**INT. TREVOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Opulence mixed with squalor. Leather furniture. Huge flat  
screen. It almost makes up for the clutter elsewhere.

Two PITBULLS lie chained in one corner. A blue bruiser  
named SOLDIER. And a brindle puppy - PRINCESS.

TEEN PUNKS lounge on the couch and watch sports. Some  
look West Indian. Others home-grown, like Aaron.

Trevor sits at a table; e-cig between slim fingers. He  
peers thoughtfully into his drink.

TREVOR

Williams lived in this hood all his life.  
Been runnin' it for twenty years.

A voice across the table replies:

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Twenty years a usin' too. That's what put  
him away. Fucker couldn't think straight.

TREVOR

Which means he wrote shit down. And gave  
it to his woman before they took him  
away.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Or shoved it up his ass. Think he gave it  
to his kid?

TREVOR

Nah. If Robbie and Carlos had that list,  
they'd be doin' more than the crap-ass  
assignments I give them.

Trevor takes a puff. E-cig sparkle shines in his eyes.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Can't believe you're smoking that shit,  
Trev. We got better stuff, right here.

TREVOR

I ain't pollutin' my body. Leave that for  
the losers.

He nods towards the gang bangers, who CHEER at the TV  
screen. Trevor leans across the table to *Mike*.

TREVOR

Like that bitch, Tonya. Keep pumpin' her  
for information.

MIKE

And whatever else.

TREVOR

It's your dick. Don't cry to me when it  
rots off.

Aaron approaches, teen attitude oozing from every pore.

Skinny Jamaican JERRY (20s) trails behind. Mike's grin  
fades away at the sight.

AARON

Yo, Trev! We should fuck up her boy.  
What's his name... Robbie?

TREVOR

You should know. He put you in your  
place.

A West Indian TEEN snorts from the couch.

LAUGHING THUG

Busted by a Batty-Boy! Pussy.

AARON

(bristles)

You shoulda let me cut him. He won't play  
tough when he bleeds!



TREVOR

In the open? With kids around? You dumber than you look, Aaron.

Aaron doesn't take the hint, puffs up his muscles more.

AARON

I don't take shit from a fag!

Trevor nods to Jerry. In a flash, Jerry pins Aaron's arms behind his back.

Trevor unfolds from the table. He plucks Aaron's razor from his jacket with one smooth move.

...and SLASHES Aaron across the cheek. Aaron goes down SCREAMING. Mike laughs; a nervous sound.

Soldier the Pitt lunges towards the action. He's SNAPPED BACK violently by his chain.

Aaron curls into a ball, cups his face. Blood jets between his fingers as he tries to crawl away. Trevor towers over him.

AARON

Please. Why you doin' this?

TREVOR

Don't test me, bitch. I'd rather deal with a smart fag, then a stupid shit.

Trevor takes a final puff and kicks the teen in the ribs.

TREVOR

Git up. And wipe your blood off my floor.

#### **EXT. DECATUR AVENUE - NIGHT**

Cars with THUMPING BASE race down the street. GIRLS practice flirting. DRUNK LOCALS shuffle by.

Streetlights fade into day... The unwashed nightlife recedes. Replaced by the CHATTER of KIDS.

#### **EXT. DECATUR AVENUE - DAY**

Kesia races out of the building with Tricia. A new Barbie peeks from her backpack.

The girls sketch a Hopscotch grid on the sidewalk with chalk, and quickly start to play.

Wobbly wheels RATTLE against asphalt, announcing the approach of Linda Chu. Her cart filled with recyclable bottles and cans.

Tricia's mother runs out of apartment complex, and yanks her daughter away.

Kesia stares as her friend is "removed". Again.

She shrugs. Turns to face the board, all by herself.

Linda reaches the entrance, stops to catch her breath. She rests against the graffiti covered wall.

She watches Kesia hop square to square. The backpack flops against her small back.

The flutter of curtains at a window. Linda spies Ofelia behind the pane.

LINDA CHU  
(to Ms. Ofelia)  
That's some sad shit there, ain't it?  
Mrs. Jackson's one stuck up bitch.

She flashes a grin. No response. Ofelia's expression set in stone.

LINDA CHU  
That little girl? Her name is Kesia. I  
been watchin' her grow up since she was  
born. Sweet little thing, but she got  
some fucked up parents. Sometimes life  
just ain't fair.

Silence again from Ofelia. Linda rolls her eyes, and goes back to watching Kesia play.

LINDA CHU  
Don't wanna be social? Pardon me.

Kesia hops and scans the street for playmates. She wobbles precariously on one leg.

Stray cat Lazer wanders by and rubs against Kesia. The girl bends down to pet the feline.

KESIA  
Hey, Lazer! Wanna play?

The RUMBLE of wheels fills the air. Lazer YOWLS and leaps away.

Skateboards ZIP toward Kesia; manned by Aaron and several FRIENDS. Trevor's "warning" still raw on his face.

Aaron shoves Kesia. And laughs as she tumbles forward - a rough landing on her hands and knees.

Her Barbie goes flying. A skateboard rolls over it. CRACK.

LINDA CHU

Hey!

AARON

Tell your brother to stick with stuff he good at. Like sucking his boyfriend's cock!

Linda chucks a bottle at Aaron. But he's gone. Kesia curls into a little ball. Scrapes on her knees bleed.

LINDA CHU

Short stuff! You okay?

She looks towards Ofelia's window for assistance. The old lady's disappeared.

LINDA CHU

No-one good in this neighborhood no more...

She turns back towards Kesia.

Ms. Ofelia's at the building's door. The old lady SLAMS it open with her cane. She hobbles quickly across the sidewalk, and bends down at Kesia's side.

OFELIA

Child, where's your big brother?

KESIA

(sobs)

I dunno. He went away.

Ofelia scoops up shattered pieces of Barbie, and reaches out to the girl.

OFELIA

Come, little one. Let's go inside.

#### **INT. STAIRWELL**

Ofelia helps Kesia up the stairs. The girl limps with each step - slower than the old woman with the cane.

**INT. STAIRWELL AND SECOND FLOOR LANDING**

Ofelia steps into the hallway first.

She stops dead at the sight of Mike. He leans against a wall; outside the William's apartment. The door's open a crack. Mike coos to Tonya on the other side.

MIKE

The brats gone away?

TONYA

That depends. You brought a kit?

MIKE

Packed and ready to party. In more ways than one, baby.

His hand slides through the door opening, and finds a home between Tonya's thighs.

In the stairwell, Kesia tugs on Ms. Ofelia's skirt. The old woman blocks her view. Kesia holds up a scraped palm.

KESIA

It stings! I wanna go home.

Ms. Ofelia glances at her own hand. It's smeared with Kesia's blood, as well.

Mike slips into the apartment. The door shuts softly behind him. But fails to block out Tonya's moans.

OFELIA

(to Kesia)

Honey, that scrape looks nasty. Let's go to my place. I got the medicine you need.

**INT. OFELIA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM**

Ms. Ofelia guides Kesia inside. The little girl wrinkles her nose.

KESIA

Tricia says your place smells like medicine.

OFELIA

Well, that's a good thing. Ain't it now?

She hobbles to the bathroom. Unseen bottles CLINK on shelves. Kesia fidgets and waits.

Two candles flicker on the mantelpiece, lend the room a spooky vibe. Between them: the burned picture of Thandi, Michaela and Jeren.

The girl glances at the burned Wanga doll on Ofelia's foot locker. She shivers, and looks away.

Ms. Ofelia returns, carrying Peroxide and gauze. Kesia points at the picture.

KESIA  
Is that your family?

OFELIA  
They were.

KESIA  
They're not now?

OFELIA  
Well, they had to go away.

She positions Kesia on a plastic covered sofa, and dabs the girl's injured knee.

KESIA  
Ow!

OFELIA  
Shhh. That's just to kill the germs. Now let's do something for the pain.

She picks up the burned doll, and sets it down at Kesia's side. Then rummages through locker contents.

Kesia stares at the doll, creeped out by its face. She focuses on the contents of the locker instead:

Dried herbs and potions. A metal box with *lots* of cash. Kesia gasps in surprise.

OFELIA  
Patience. It'll only hurt a while longer.

Ofelia unscrews the lid from a small jar, and dips her finger in dark blue liquid.

She massages it into Kesia's knee. Ofelia covers the wound with one hand. Closes her own eyes tightly.

OFELIA  
(whispers)  
Bringer of wisdom and light. Heal this one's hurts with thy might.

A moment of concentration. Ofelia slides her hand away. Blood glistens on Kesia's knee. But the skin underneath: new and pink.

OFELIA

Better?

KESIA

A bit.

OFELIA

Good. Then give me your hand.

She repeats the procedure on Kesia's palm. The same quiet spell. Same results. Kesia sobs. Ofelia studies her face.

OFELIA

Still hurt?

KESIA

No.

She points at the floor.

KESIA

He broke my doll.

"New Barbie" lies on the carpet. Half her pretty face is ripped away.

KESIA

Can you fix her, too?

OFELIA

My medicines only work with *living* things. And even then - just sometimes. Do you like my doll?

Kesia quickly shakes her head "no."

OFELIA

(chuckles)

Just as well. My Wanga doll, he's special. Not so good for little girls.

Ofelia muses over broken Barbie. She digs in the footlocker again, and lays dollar bills in Kesia's hand.

OFELIA

Here. Buy yourself a new one.

The little girl hesitates.

OFELIA

It's okay. I'm old. I don't need money much anymore.

KESIA

Robbie says don't take money from strangers.

OFELIA

My name is Ms. Ofelia. And they call you Kesia. Now we're not strangers anymore.

Kesia thinks it over. The old lady's words make sense. She stands up - unsure what to do next.

Ofelia digs in the locker one more time, and pulls out a fistful of candy. Hard sugar sweets, past their prime. She hands one to Kesia.

OFELIA

Have a sweet. And get to the store before it gets dark. Nasty people come out at night.

KESIA

Thank you... Ms. Ofelia.

Kesia's face crumples at the candy's taste. But she does what she can to look polite.

OFELIA

Thank you, child. Now - go on.

She shoos Kesia towards the door.

#### **INT. HALLWAY**

Ofelia stands between the two apartments. She watches Kesia like a hawk -

- until the little girl heads down the stairs.

Tonya's moans filter through the wall. Ofelia glances at the door and frowns.

#### **INT. OFELIA'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER**

Kesia runs out of the building. Her wounds almost completely healed.

She spits the candy into the bushes, and skips down the street. Ms. Ofelia watches from her window.

OFELIA

Old lady candy don't taste so good. I  
don't blame you, young one. Not one bit.

**EXT. DECATUR AVENUE - BRONX, NEW YORK - NIGHT**

Ms. Ofelia pauses in the entrance, and peers out through glass doors.

The street's pitch black. Half the lamp-posts are burned out. A COUPLE make out against a tree.

Ofelia ventures out into the night. A DRUNK staggers by. He vomits on the curb. Keeps going.

Ms. Ofelia pokes trash out of the way with her cane, a handbag slung over one arm. Her eyes stay glued to the sidewalk, until she finds...

...Kesia and Tricia's Hopscotch grid.

Ofelia bends down to it. Old knees creak. She removes chalk and a jar from her bag.

She leans across the sidewalk and scribbles STRANGE DESIGNS. Avoids the puke puddle as best she can.

The GIRL at the tree stops in mid-hand job, and eyes Ofelia's drawings.

TREE GIRL

What she doin'?

The boy pulls her hand back into place.

TREE BOY

Who cares? She's old and crazy.

Ofelia finishes drawing, unscrews the jar. It's filled with black powder. She sprinkles some over the grid.

OFELIA

(prays)

Watch over the vulnerable. Make this spot  
a place of joy, not of pain...

An EVIL HISS in the dark. Ofelia startles and looks up. ...into the eyes of Lazer.

The cat perches on the electrical box. Its yellow eyes glare. Ofelia looks back. A stare-down between ancient souls. But it's Ofelia who breaks first.



OFELIA

I do look crazy. Don't I?

Lazer twitches her tail.

OFELIA

They are good kids. Who need a grown-up to watch over them. But why am I talking to you? A nasty, dirty animal.

Lazer YOWLS, insulted. Stalks away.

Ofelia watches the stray go. She sprinkles more black powder on the Hopscotch grid. Then she smooths out her skirt, and wanders back towards the lobby.

The boy near the tree watches, amused.

TREE BOY

Told you. She stone cold insane.

#### **INT. OFELIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Even darker than outside.

Ofelia sits on the floor, the jar of powder in her hand. The protective charm dangles from her neck.

The family urn rests in her lap, her family photo inches away. Candles burn on either side. Thandi and the children are all smiles.

Ofelia's in a dismal mood.

#### **INT. NICKOLUS' MAGICK SHOPPE - NIGHT**

Dusty. Abandoned. Two thirds of the shelves are bare.

Nickolus sits on the floor as well. A GOLD BOWL at his feet. He delicately lights two candles.

Lafee watches from his corner, worried. Nickolus binds SOMETHING with tape.

#### **EXT. DECATUR AVENUE - BRONX, NEW YORK**

Lazer slinks across the street. She spots an open can of cat food in a yard, and heads over to investigate.

**INT. OFELIA'S APARTMENT**

Ofelia places the urn on the floor and removes the lid. She sprinkles black powder onto both candles. They FLARE with eerie light.

**INT. NICKOLUS' MAGICK SHOPPE**

Nickolus gestures to Lafee, who lumbers over.

LAFEE

We gotta do this again?

NICKOLUS

Open your blind eyes for once. You see any business here?

LAFEE

If it didn't work the last four times...

NICKOLUS

We change the spell. And try again.

LAFEE

Nickolus, I'm hungry.

NICKOLUS

Shut up. And give me the knife.

Lafee hands over a wicked looking blade.

NICKOLUS

Make yourself useful. Hold this still.

Lafee pins a squirming bundle to the ground. Nickolus raises the blade, chanting.

NICKOLUS

A gift of blood from us to thee...

**EXT. DECATUR AVENUE**

Lazer finishes the cat-food scraps. Not nearly enough for her needs. She looks around, hungry.

**INT. OFELIA'S APARTMENT**

The glow from Ofelia's candles intensifies. Light envelops the family photo. Tendrils penetrate the urn.

FAINT IMAGES shimmer in the air. Thandi. Jeren. Michaela. Ethereal, and moving. Tears stream down Ofelia's face.

**INT. NICKOLUS' MAGICK SHOPPE**

Nickolus lays his knife across a furry throat. This sacrifice: a black cat. Dirty. Starving. Terrified.

NICKOLUS

As blood overflows, fill our bowl. With wealth. Gold. Eternal jewels...

**INT. OFELIA'S APARTMENT**

Ofelia sobs; bathed in ghostly light.

OFELIA

I couldn't protect you. My own flesh and blood! Why care for a stranger's girl?

She reaches out to touch "Michaela's" cheek. Her hand passes through the image, like mist.

**INTERCUT BETWEEN OFELIA, NICKOLUS AND LAZER**

Lazer makes a bee-line for the teen girl and boy - still hot and heavy against the tree.

Nickolus SLASHES the black cat's throat. Blood JETS like a fountain, soaks his clothes. Nickolus doesn't care.

The boy KICKS Lazer. The cat HISSES and jumps away. She races across the street, dodges cars. Brakes SCREECH. Horns BLARE.

Nickolus' candles snuff out. He peeks in the bowl, finds nothing. Lafée shrugs.

LAFEE

Maybe next time?

Nickolus HOWLS in frustration. He stabs through the dead cat's chest, pinning it to the ground.

Candles blink out in Ofelia's apartment. Her family's ghosts fade away.

OFELIA

Thandi, please forgive me?

She waits - but there is no reply.

**INT. NICKOLUS' MAGICK SHOPPE - CONTINUOUS**

Nickolus stares around his empty shop, fury on his face.

NICKOLUS

Damn that old woman. May she burn in Hell.

LAFEE

She already burned, Nickolus. I saw it all myself!

Nickolus wipes off his knife on the dead cat's fur.

NICKOLUS

Too bad. She'd make a proper sacrifice. These animals are not enough. We need something... bigger.

His expression grows thoughtful. His eyes slide to Lafee. The big man fidgets. He may be slow, but he's not stupid.

LAFEE

The old lady? Maybe she survived.

**START MONTAGE**

- Nickolus SCREAMS at Lafee (MOS.) He SLASHES the big man's face with the blade.

- Nickolus runs to the cat and rips out entrails with his hands. He arranges them on the floor in a complex array. He burns a candle. Rocks. Prays.

NICKOLUS

Reveal the witch!

The candle flickers, forms an image...

**INT. OFELIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Ofelia gently packs away her things. Herbs in the footlocker. The urn just-so on the mantelpiece.

The protective charm around her neck pulses dimly. Then the light fades away.

**INT. NICKOLUS' MAGICK SHOPPE - CONTINUOUS**

The vague image formed by Nickolus' candle scatters.

NICKOLUS

No!

Lafee cowers in a corner. Nickolus throws the dead cat. It sticks against the wall.

**EXT. DECATUR AVENUE - BRONX, NEW YORK - MORNING**

A sunny morning. Illuminating trash in the street.

Ms. Ofelia sits at her window. A cup of tea steams in her hand, a blank expression on her face.

Kesia and Tricia dart out of the building. Tricia pulls her friend behind a bush to hide.

Tricia's mother CLACKS by on six inch heels. The girls hold their breath 'til she's far away.

Then they run to the Hopscotch grid, and start to play.

Ms. Ofelia squints at their sparkle backpacks. BOTH of them sport new Barbies.

Someone chuckles to her left. Ofelia spots Linda Chu outside the window - a bag of groceries in her arms.

LINDA CHU

Smart little suckers. Ain't they?

She nods towards Tricia's mother in the distance.

LINDA CHU

Little Miss Head-Up-Her-Ass goes to Price Buster every morning to get a fresh pack a' smokes. You know, that place on the corner, five blocks away? They got six bodegas between here and there. But Buster's got her brand. Extra cheap.

Linda consults her watch.

LINDA CHU

The way she walks on them high heels, the girls got fifteen minutes. At least.

Ofelia watches Kesia hop. One. Two. Three.

Kesia's foot comes down on a mini bottle of vodka. She tumbles to the ground. The bottle CRACKS under her knee.

Ofelia jumps up. Her tea splashes Linda in the face.

Kesia lies on the sidewalk, stunned. She stands up on wobbly legs. Tricia assesses the damage to her friend.

There isn't any. Bits of glass stick to Kesia's skin. But no scrapes or cuts. At all.

Kesia giggles at Tricia.

KESIA

Your turn!

Ofelia glances at her impromptu chalk designs, and hides a smile behind her empty cup of tea.

LINDA CHU

(sighs)

These kids. They take whoopings, but they okay.

She looks towards Tricia's mother in the distance.

LINDA CHU

It's the parents we gotta worry about.

Ofelia's smile fades away.

# **INT. ROBBIE AND KESIA'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON**

A flurry of KNOCKS. Tonya throws open the door. Her hair sticks up at wild angles. A robe hangs off one shoulder.

Ms. Ofelia stands in the doorway. A black bag of trash shoved to one side.

OFELIA

Mrs. Williams?

TONYA

Yeah, that's me.

OFELIA

I'd like to talk with you. A bit.

TONYA

You from St. Brendan's? I told you, I ain't interested. Go peddle Jesus somewheres else.

She shoves the door. Ofelia blocks it with her cane.

OFELIA

I'm not from the church. I'm your neighbor. I live next door.

Tonya squints. Then blinks at the trash bag on the floor.

TONYA

That ain't my fault. Robbie was supposed to take it downstairs. I ain't gonna leave that shit inside. Makes the whole apartment smell.

OFELIA

I'm not here for the trash. It's about Robbie. And Kesia.

Tonya tenses up. Dead silence.

OFELIA

Mrs. Williams, I mean no offense. You have a beautiful son and daughter.

TONYA

So?

OFELIA

I don't know if you're aware. But the company they're keeping. Well, I'm concerned.

TONYA

What are you, a fuckin' social worker?

OFELIA

Just an old lady who understands the importance of family.

TONYA

You wanna understand something? I told Social Services last week. Those kids are mine. I'm a good mother. A whole lot better than their daddy!

OFELIA

I just think you might not be aware. The other day, Kesia fell -

TONYA

Mind your business, you shriveled crone! Stick to your own family.

OFELIA

That's what I'm trying to say. They're gone. You don't want to know what that's like.

TONYA

Gone? No fuckin' surprise. You probably nagged them away...

She kicks Ofelia's cane, and grabs the doorknob.

TONYA

Get outta my apartment. Out of my face.  
And away from my family. Bitch!

She SLAMS the door on Ofelia. Hobbles away.

TONYA

Ain't nothing wrong with my kids. They fine.

#### **INT. ROBBIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

A duffle bag yawns open on the floor.

Robbie huddles at a desk. A filter mask covers half his face; two bowls of white powder by his side.

Carlos tops off one bowl with Talcum powder. Robbie scoops powder from each container and pours them in a Ziploc bag.

CARLOS

Don't cut too much. You'll poison the customers.

Carlos grabs the Ziploc. He aims at the duffle bag: shoots and scores. Robbie grabs a baggie. Fills more.

CARLOS

You sure we doing this right?

Robbie mutters something; words muffled.

CARLOS

Yo, Bane. Once more. Lose the mask.

Robbie pulls off the filter, coughs from dust in the air.

ROBBIE

I Googled it. We're good.

CARLOS

Not if Trevor finds out we stiffin' him.

ROBBIE

We ain't stiffin' him. Just... expanding our market. A bit.



He throws the Ziploc bag in the duffle.

ROBBIE

Relax. We're just spreadin' the joy  
around. We're entrepreneurs, Son. You  
wanna make bank, you gotta take risk.

**EXT. CITY STREET - MORNING**

Herds of CHILDREN head towards school. Robbie tags  
behind, holds Kesia's hand.

ROBBIE

I gotta do stuff tonight. When you get  
outta school, you come straight home. No  
playin' outside. Right to your room.

KESIA

But Tricia -

ROBBIE

I don't give a shit what Tricia does. You  
gotta have someone watchin' over you.

Kesia's face brightens. She's got the perfect loophole.

KESIA

I got someone. Ms. Ofelia!

ROBBIE

Who?

KESIA

You know - the lady in Apartment 2C?

ROBBIE

That crazy old lady always lookin' out  
the window?

He spots Carlos in the distance, and waves.

KESIA

The other day, I was playing. And fell.  
Ms. Ofelia took me to her apartment. And  
she fixed me up, real good.

Robbie stops in his tracks.

ROBBIE

You went in her apartment?

KESIA

Yeah. She gave me money. And candy. But it didn't taste so good...

Robbie turns ashen. He swings his sister around.

ROBBIE

Don't you trust no strangers! All you got is me. Don't you listen to Tricia. Momma. Nobody. And not "Ms. Ofelia." Some dried up old lady who stares at kids. Listen to me, Keys. I'm your brother. I'm the one who's got your back.

He bends down to Kesia's level.

ROBBIE

I'll protect you. Trust me.

Carlos arrives. Robbie stands up. Wipes all emotion from his face.

ROBBIE

Yo. Arrangements made?

CARLOS

I'm makin' rounds today. Hookin' up with Aaron this afternoon.

ROBBIE

Aaron? And you don't need back-up?

CARLOS

Nah. I'm fine. You just get your ass to school. I'll text if I need anything.

He bumps fists with Robbie, walks away.

KESIA

(to Robbie)

What was that?

ROBBIE

Nothing to concern yourself about.

He grabs Kesia's hand, and drags her towards school.

ROBBIE

Carlos and me - we got things under control.

**INT. ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM - LATER**

Kesia sits at a desk, bored to tears.

Tricia doodles a cartoon of the TEACHER, and slides it to her friend across the floor. Kesia giggles merrily.

**INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON**

Robbie checks his phone under his desk. No texts from Carlos. He's concerned.

Someone snickers a few seats away. Robbie glances up - TWO PUNKS stare right at him.

One points at Robbie and makes "blow job" gestures. Robbie frowns, and looks away.

**EXT. CITY STREET - AFTERNOON**

Carlos moves swiftly block to block - the dufflebag on his arm.

He hands over Ziploc bags. Takes cash. Makes multiple "deliveries." To an ice cream truck. GUYS on the street.

And approaches a particularly nasty house. Broken furniture decorates the yard.

Carlos KNOCKS on the door. It opens with a CREAK.

A hand emerges, and points a GUN at his head. A stunned Carlos is pulled inside.

**EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - AFTERNOON**

A river of TEENS spill out the doors. Robbie trails along in back. The punks from class shove him out of the way.

Robbie's too preoccupied to care. He checks his phone and scans the crowd. Can't find Carlos anywhere.

**EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - AFTERNOON**

Kesia skips out the door backward, facing Tricia.

Tricia strips her new Barbie to the waist, and tosses it like a dart to her friend. Kesia catches it mid-air.

TRICIA

You touched Barbie's titties. That makes you a lesbian!

KESIA

I am not.

TRICIA

Yes, you are!

KESIA

What does that make you then?

TRICIA

My momma says your brother's gay. An' he's raisin' you to be queer...

Kesia flips her friend the finger.

Robbie's hand grabs her arm. He whips her around. Kesia stares at him, stunned.

KESIA

I didn't -

ROBBIE

We got to go. Right now.

**EXT. CITY STREETS - LATER**

Robbie storms down the street, an iron grip on Kesia's wrist. He peeks in stores. Down alleys.

He queries NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS (MOS). But no-one's seen Carlos. He's disappeared.

**EXT. DECATUR AVENUE - BRONX, NEW YORK - EVENING**

The sun sinks low in the sky. Ms. Ofelia sits primly on the stoop, skirt tucked under her legs. Linda Chu leans against the garden fence.

LINDA CHU

Guess that settles it. You ain't no vampire, after all.

OFELIA

What in the blazes you mean by that?

LINDA CHU

Well, you're sittin' outside. In the sun.

OFELIA

(smiles)

Thought I'd get out for a change. There's a whole big world out here. I should visit it sometime.

Robbie approaches, towing Kesia. The girl looks about to cry. She spots Ofelia. Her face lights up.

Ofelia smiles back, and digs into a pocket. She struggles to her feet, and reaches out towards the girl.

OFELIA

Missus Williams, you're home. I bought new cookies for you to try...

Robbie rushes past with his sister. Throws a nasty look Ofelia's way.

ROBBIE

We don't talk to strangers. Yo, Kesia. Stay with me.

Kesia looks apologetically over her shoulder. Robbie SLAMS the door in Ofelia's face. Ofelia glances at Linda, crestfallen.

LINDA CHU

You thought makin' friends would be easy? You are new to this neighborhood.

**INT. ROBBIE AND KESIA'S APARTMENT - EVENING**

Robbie tears open the door. Tonya greets him there.

TONYA

Where you been? I texted you twice. Said you should call before you came home.

ROBBIE

Not now.

He takes a step. Tonya blocks his way.

ROBBIE

What? You got "visitors"?

TONYA

Who you think you're talking to? I'm your mother. You're gonna listen to me.

Robbie tries to slip by. Tonya shoves him back.

ROBBIE

Hey!

TONYA

Yeah, I pushed you. Watcha gonna do? Get in a fight, like your punk-ass friends?

Robbie's fist curls in anger. He looks towards Kesia. Then back at his mother again.

ROBBIE

Something's happened. Please. Just let me go inside.

TONYA

Always something happening 'round you!

She steps aside. Revealing: a *battered Carlos* on the couch. Carlos glances up at his friend.

CARLOS

Rob, I got real bad news.

**INT. ROBBIE'S BEDROOM - LATER**

Robbie sits on the bed. Carlos paces the room.

CARLOS

They got the bag. The money!

ROBBIE

All of Trevor's supply?

CARLOS

What do you fucking think?

Robbie's eyes flit to Kesia in the doorway.

ROBBIE

Go to your room.

KESIA

But -

ROBBIE

I mean it, Key. This instant!

Kesia runs away. Robbie waits until she SLAMS her door.

ROBBIE

We'll figure this out. Get it back.

CARLOS

How?

ROBBIE

Well, we know where they live.

CARLOS

What you gonna do, knock on their door?  
Ask them to give it back - pretty please?  
We're meeting with Trevor tonight. No way  
we can blow him off!

Robbie stares at Carlos' bloody face. He reaches for his friend. Carlos steps away.

ROBBIE

Easy. We're gonna go to Whalen, and tell  
Trevor payment's been delayed. Let me do  
the talking this time.

CARLOS

We're fuckin' dead. You know that, right?

**INT. ROBBIE AND KESIA'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER**

Carlos and Robbie head for the exit. Robbie's gun in his hand. Kesia sits on the floor, plays with Tricia's stripped Barbie.

ROBBIE

Key, lock the door.

**EXT. DECATUR AVENUE - BRONX, NEW YORK - NIGHT**

Ms. Ofelia and Linda sit on the stoop. Lazer the cat grooms herself in the street.

Carlos and Robbie storm out the door. Ms. Ofelia raises a hand to the boy.

OFELIA

Tell your sister...

Robbie doesn't turn around. He and Carlos reach the corner, disappear.

Ofelia droops. Linda pats her shoulder.

LINDA CHU

Kids. You can't stop them. They're always  
getting into trouble. Somewhere.

OFELIA

We're the adults. We're *supposed* to watch over them.

LINDA CHU

Can't protect them all the time.

OFELIA

No. But we should try.

LINDA CHU

But bad things happen anyway.

Lazer YOWLS from the curb. She agrees.

**EXT. WHALEN PARK - NIGHT**

A litter strewn playground. All but one light broken. The remaining street lamp flickers.

The sign on the gate reads: "Whalen." Written underneath in spray paint: "Prostitute Park."

Trevor relaxes at a checkerboard table, leather gloves on his hands. He places beer bottle caps in squares.

His entourage stand guard. Aaron. The Jamaicans. Jerry. Pitbulls Soldier and Princess strain against chains.

Aaron leans towards a pimply TEEN, and hisses in his ear.

AARON

I hear Carlos got robbed, lost all his shit. Some apartment over by Perry.

PIMPLE FACED TEEN

Shut up, man. The boss'll hear. You wanna matching scar on the other cheek?

Trevor doesn't look up from his board.

TREVOR

You think I don't already know?

He performs a triple beer-cap jump. Corona wins over Budweiser.

TREVOR

Bet someone arranged that jack. Just to make Carlos lose face.

Aaron freezes.



TREVOR  
Impressive move.

Another checker maneuver from Trevor.

TREVOR  
If whoever did it wants to keep his ass  
in one piece, my shit better resurface.  
Fast. Tomorrow night.

Trevor spots Robbie and Carlos down the street. Aaron  
looks nervously from face to face.

AARON  
If... you think it was a setup, why we  
meetin' them at all?

Trevor stands up - brushes caps off the table. CLINK.

TREVOR  
An example's got to be made. They  
should've been more careful.

Robbie and Carlos open the park gate. Robbie approaches  
Trevor. Carlos hangs back and eyes the crowd.

ROBBIE  
Thought it was gonna be four of us.

TREVOR  
I changed a few... arrangements. You  
brought the money?  
(smirks)  
With interest?

Robbie fidgets, but stands his ground.

ROBBIE  
We're asking for an extension.

AARON  
An extension's what you got last week!

Aaron steps forward. Jerry shoves him back in line.

ROBBIE  
Please, just a few more days. We'll make  
everything okay.

Trevor smiles. Oh, so gentle.

TREVOR  
You lost it all. I heard.

Carlos rushes forward.

CARLOS

It ain't our fault. They had a gun!

Jerry cold-cocks him. Carlos crumples to the ground. Trevor looks down, unimpressed.

TREVOR

See? That's your problem. One pussy punch knocks you out? And you pissed your pants over a gun? You in the wrong business, boy. Guess we gotta help you... out.

He turns to Aaron.

TREVOR

You wanted to beat him? Go ahead.

Aaron steps forward eagerly. Robbie whips out his gun, and waves it in Aaron's face.

He swings it back and forth, between targets. But the aim's irrelevant; he's outnumbered.

Weapons appear in several hands. Guns. Military knives.

ROBBIE

(to Trevor)

Please. You and my Dad - you were tight!

TREVOR

You ain't your Daddy. No way.

Trevor yanks the gun from Robbie's hand. He points at Robbie's chest. And fires...

...at Carlos. The bullet rips a hole through the boy's side. Trevor's entourage swarms both teens.

**EXT. DECATUR AVENUE - BRONX, NEW YORK - CONTINUOUS**

Lazer sits in the street, grooms herself carefully.

Ofelia and Linda watch from the stoop. Two respectable ladies, taking in fresh night air.

A car SCREECHES around the corner. Music BOOMS. Headlights stab the night.

**INTERCUT BETWEEN WHALEN AND DECATUR**

A blur of fists descend on Robbie. He SCREAMS, and covers his face. The lamppost flickers overhead, a disco strobe straight from Hell.

Aaron kicks Carlos in the ribs.

AARON

Faggot lover. Suck this!

The car barrels towards Lazer.

Robbie struggles to his feet. Aaron SLASHES his shoulder with a knife.

The car hits Lazer. The feline goes flying. The driver doesn't even slow down.

Linda and Ofelia dart towards the street. Their eyes on a furry, mangled mess.

Jerry levels a gun at Robbie. Trevor grabs his wrist.

TREVOR

He can't send a message, he ain't alive.

Robbie looks for Carlos. Can't find him in the blur of fists and feet. Trevor cocks Robbie's gun.

TREVOR

(softly)

Go.

Robbie runs for his life as Trevor laughs.

TREVOR

Go tell your momma what you seen. She got something to give me. I'm coming after your sister next!

Ofelia reaches Lazer. Recoils. Linda peeks over her shoulder and gasps.

Robbie races down the street; his heart POUNDS in his chest.

Aaron stomps Carlos' arm. A sickening CRACK. Jerry KICKS Carlos in the head.

Ofelia lifts Lazer's limp body from the pavement. The animal's blood soaks her shirt.

LINDA CHU  
 (whispers)  
 See what I mean? Bad things happen. All  
 the time.

OFELIA  
 It's not dignified. We should get her out  
 of the street.

Ofelia wanders with the cat to the curb.

OFELIA  
 This was Kesia's friend. How can I tell  
 her?

LINDA CHU  
 There was nothing we could do.

Ofelia stands in a daze; a jumble of images in her mind.

#### **BEGIN FLASHBACKS**

Thandi scowls at the doorstep.

THANDI  
 Magick is a dangerous game!

Kesia plays Hopscotch and pets Lazer.

KESIA  
 I'm gonna take you home someday.

#### **END FLASHBACKS**

Ofelia hugs the mangled feline to her chest. She mumbles.  
 The protective charm around her neck FLARES.

Carlos' beating continues. Trevor holds up a hand. His  
 men part like the Red Sea.

Revealing: a broken Carlos. Disfigured. But breathing.

Trevor raises Robbie's gun. He aims at Carlos and smiles.

TREVOR  
 Nothin' personal. A man's gotta maintain  
 standards. Your *boyfriend* did this shit  
 to you. Him and his crazy Momma.  
 (shrugs)  
 Nice of him to lend me a gun...

He fires. Carlos' brains SPLATTER the sidewalk.

Trevor nods to his entourage, and walks away.

Ofelia hugs Lazer to her chest and rocks. Linda stares at her like she's insane.

Lazer HACKS. Spits up blood. She's not pretty...

...but alive. Linda's eyes bug out of her head.

LINDA CHU

What the *hell* did you do?

A SHOUT from the street. Linda and Ofelia look up. Robbie races towards them. Blood and terror on his face.

OFELIA

Mister Williams!

Robbie races past them through the entrance door. Across the lobby. Towards the stairs.

#### **INT. STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS**

Ofelia hobbles after Robbie.

Lazer SQUIRMS against her chest. The animal HISSES, tries to scratch.

Robbie trips on a step. Ofelia reaches his side.

OFELIA

Boy, you're bleeding. Tell me what happened. This instant!

ROBBIE

None of your business!

He jumps up and bounds away.

#### **EXT. ROBBIE AND KESIA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

Robbie fumbles with the keys. Ofelia grabs his shoulder. Leaves a gore-streaked handprint on his shirt.

OFELIA

Calm down. Everything will be okay -

The door opens.

Kesia peeks outside. She sees Ofelia, Lazer and Robbie - a trifecta of gore.

Kesia SCREAMS. Robbie shoves Ofelia away. He runs into the apartment, and SLAMS the door in her face.

**INT. ROBBIE AND KESIA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM**

Tonya's nowhere to be found. Sounds of clumsy lovemaking emanate from her room. Kesia's in hysterics.

KESIA

Lazer! She looked funny. So do you!

She claws Robbie's shirt, searching for wounds.

KESIA

What happened?

ROBBIE

Bad things. Carlos... he's not coming 'round no more. But you can't tell anyone what you saw. Or those bags we packed in my room.

He looks around frantically.

ROBBIE

We gotta go somewhere safe. Maybe we could call Uncle Carl. Where's he live?

KESIA

Brooklyn. I think.

Ofelia KNOCKS on the door. Kesia hesitates.

KESIA

I bet Ms. Ofelia could help.

ROBBIE

No! What the fuck I tell you, Keys? Stay away from her. She's crazy!

Kesia eyes the cut on Robbie's shoulder.

KESIA

Why isn't Carlos coming 'around anymore?

ROBBIE

He... we owed someone stuff.

He roams the room. Looks under cushions. In drawers.

ROBBIE

If I get Trevor money now, maybe it'll be okay. Uncle Carl - he have a job?

Ofelia KNOCKS harder. Robbie jumps.

ROBBIE

The cops! Trevor shot Carlos with *my* gun!

Ofelia stops KNOCKING. Her cane TAPS as she walks away. Kesia looks at her brother, confused.

KESIA

Why not ask Ms. Ofelia? She has *lots* of money.

Robbie freezes.

ROBBIE

Tell me more.

### **INT. VAN - NIGHT**

Trevor rests in back, pets Soldier while he waits.

Aaron and Jerry drag Carlos' body inside. They wave the other thugs away. The floor's lined with tarp.

Trevor puffs an e-cig. Aaron closes the door, and rolls Carlos on his back.

TREVOR

You know what to do.

Jerry pulls out a knife. He picks up Carlos' left arm. Starts to saw away.

Blood pools quickly, rivulets run into corners of the van. Aaron gulps, looks pale.

AARON

You gonna get DNA shit everywhere!

TREVOR

Who cares? We stole this, anyway.

RIIPPP. Carlos' arm separates from his body. Jerry tosses the limb to Soldier. The dog lunges for the tasty treat.

Jerry tosses Aaron an extra knife.

JERRY

Prove you got some balls. You gonna stare, or help?

He points at Carlos' neck. A nauseated Aaron starts sawing. Jerry goes to work on the body's other arm, keeps an eye on Trevor as he works.

JERRY

You know that boy's gonna run.

AARON

Not if he wants to keep his sister safe.

JERRY

I'm just sayin' - why not hold onto the little bitch as insurance? Get what you want from Tonya. Then kill them all, anyway.

Trevor takes an e-cig puff, and nods.

TREVOR

Now *that's* leadership thinking.

Jerry grins and throws a sly look Aaron's way. Trevor whips out a cell phone, and dials.

TREVOR

(into the phone)

Mike? It's me. You in the apartment? Seen the kids yet? Well, get dressed and look around! I got an assignment for you.

He whispers into the phone, then hangs up. Aaron rips Carlos' head free.

TREVOR

Don't give that to Soldier. I got plans for that piece.

He turns to Jerry.

TREVOR

You - call the others. Tell them to meet Mike at Apartment 2D.

#### **INT. OFELIA'S BATHROOM - NIGHT**

The door's closed. Lights out. Candles flicker on the sink. A basket of herbs sits on the floor. Water ROARS in the tub.

Ofelia fusses over Lazer, scrubbing blood from her fur. The cat fidgets. Pink water circles the drain.



OFELIA  
Shhhh. I'll have you cleaned up. Don't  
fret. Keep breathing in the pretty smoke.  
That'll keep you calm.

She eyes a scratch on her forearm.

OFELIA  
Wish I'd thought of that earlier.

She squints at Lazer. Signs of injury remain. A caved in  
cheekbone. Swaths of missing fur.

OFELIA  
That won't do. Little Ms. Williams  
deserves a proper pet.

Ofelia digs in the basket. She pulls out powder and blows  
it in Lazer's face.

The air SHIMMERS. Lazer's skin distorts. In seconds, the  
scars are gone. Lazer MEOWS plaintively.

OFELIA  
(grins)  
Just a simple beauty spell. Used it  
myself, in my younger days.

A door CREAKS outside. Ofelia hears, holds her breath.

**INT. OFELIA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Robbie sneaks into the dark room, screwdriver and  
flashlight in his hands. A nervous Kesia trails behind.

KESIA  
She's asleep. We should go.

ROBBIE  
Shhhh! Don't say anything!

KESIA  
Why don't we just ask her?

Robbie clamps a hand over her mouth.

ROBBIE  
Quiet. Follow me.

**INT. OFELIA'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM**

Ofelia peaks through the keyhole. Doesn't say a word.

**INTERCUT BETWEEN BATHROOM AND LIVING ROOM**

Robbie sweeps the flashlight around. It casts creepy shadows on the walls.

ROBBIE

What *is* this shit?

KESIA

Stuff from her country.

ROBBIE

What country's that? Romania?

The flashlight passes over the burned picture of Thandi and the kids. Kesia points it out to her brother.

KESIA

See? She ain't a crazy old lady. Ms. Ofelia has a family.

Robbie ignores his sister. Keeps searching.

Kesia spots a bowl of cookies on the coffee table. She takes a bite. And beams.

KESIA

She bought these for me!

Kesia stuffs more cookies in her pocket. Ms. Ofelia smiles from her hiding place.

Robbie's flashlight lands on the Wanga doll, sitting sentinel on the footlocker. It stares at him. He shivers.

ROBBIE

Creepy ass doll.

KESIA

That's where Ms. Ofelia keeps her money.

Robbie shoves the doll aside, and uses the screwdriver to pry open the footlocker. His face lights up like Christmas Eve.

Nickolus' gold "wealth amulet" shines inside... next to stacks of money. Not sufficient to repay Trevor. But enough to make a dent.

Robbie reaches for the cash.

KESIA

We can't. That's stealing.

ROBBIE

Key, you don't know what they did to  
Carlos! What they'll do to you and me!

He reaches in again.

KESIA

No. It ain't fair!

She launches herself at her brother. Scratching. Kicking.

Lazer leaps out of the tub, into the sink. A hairbrush  
CLATTERS to the floor. Robbie looks up, terrified.

ROBBIE

Look what you did. She's awake!

He pulls Kesia towards the door. The defiant girl digs in  
her heels.

KESIA

I don't care about money. Ms. Ofelia was  
nice to me!

The children slip out of the apartment - just as quiet as  
they came.

Ms. Ofelia emerges from the bathroom, and heads for the  
front door. Lazer weaves between her feet.

Ofelia peers out the peephole. Into the...

**INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

Robbie pushes Kesia towards their apartment.

ROBBIE

You have no idea what you just done. You  
screwed up everything!

The door swings open. Mike's standing there. Jerry, Aaron  
and a FAT THUG at his side. On Aaron's shoulder: a black  
Nike duffle bag.

Robbie yanks Kesia back.

ROBBIE

What the fuck you doin' here?

MIKE

Thought we'd pay you a visit.

Robbie peeks over Mike's shoulder.

Tonya's slumped on the couch. Robbie pushes Mike away, and races to his mother's side.

**INT. ROBBIE AND KESIA'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM**

He shakes Tonya. She's unresponsive. Foam dribbles from her mouth.

ROBBIE  
What did you do?

MIKE  
Your Momma? She's fine. Just likes the heavy stuff, is all.

Robbie presses an ear to Tonya's chest. Her HEARTBEAT barely registers.

MIKE  
By the way, Trevor says 'hi'.  
(to the others)  
Grab the girl.

The Fat Thug bear-hugs Kesia, lifts her off her feet.

Robbie darts toward him. Aaron trips Robbie and laughs. Robbie SMACKS his head on the coffee table. He goes down hard - bleeding.

Kesia kicks. The Fat Thug LAUGHS.

OFELIA (O.S.)  
Put her down!

The men look up. Ofelia's at the entrance, her herb basket in hand. Mike's lip curls sarcastically.

MIKE  
You got the wrong apartment, Golden Girl.

Ofelia advances. Her cane TAPS against the floor.

OFELIA  
I'll warn you once. Go away.

AARON  
Or what? You'll crap your Depends?

OFELIA  
I called the cops.

Jerry pulls a knife. The one that sawed off Carlos' arm.

JERRY

Lady, turn around. Walk away.

Robbie GROANS on the ground. Aaron kicks him in the ribs.

AARON

Stay down, mother fucker!

Ofelia moves - lightning quick. Blows powder into the Fat Thug's face.

He drops Kesia. SCREAMS and falls to his knees.

Ofelia mutters under her breath. The air shimmers and distorts. As does the Fat Thug's face.

His cheek caves in - mirroring Lazars' injuries. Skin bubbles. Puffs. Morphs between a cat and piggish face.

FAT THUG

Fuck... my face!

Mike and Aaron stare, horrified.

Kesia bolts towards the door. Jerry grabs her before she can escape.

JERRY

She called the cops. We got to go!

Ofelia grabs more powder, prepares to blow. Mike snatches her cane and knocks her to the floor.

Jerry, Mike and Aaron race with Kesia out the door. The Fat Thug stumbles along behind - his face bubbles in grotesque ways.

FAT THUG

Someone. Please. Help me!

Kesia struggles against Jerry's iron grip.

KESIA

Ms. Ofelia... you okay?

Jerry points his knife at Robbie.

JERRY

You wanna see your sister again, don't say shit to anyone. Bring us money. Tomorrow night!

Aaron unzips the backpack, and pulls out..

Carlos' severed head.

He throws it into the apartment. It rolls against Robbie's chest.

AARON

Here. Your boyfriend left a souvenir.

Ofelia gasps, and faints away.

**LATER**

Ofelia opens her eyes. NOSEY NEIGHBORS crowd the entrance. PARAMEDICS and COPS swarm the place.

TWO MEDICS tend to Tonya. A HISPANIC COP sits with Robbie on the couch. Aaron's back-pack at Robbie's feet.

ROBBIE

(to the cop)

I came home. My mom was lying there.

HISPANIC COP

Was she assaulted in any way? Did you see any intruders?

ROBBIE

No, she's like this lots of times. I ran to her. I tripped and fell...

HISPANIC COP

Your neighbors say you have a sister. Where is she?

ROBBIE

Out with her friends. Playing.

A RED HAIRED MEDIC bends over Ofelia and aims a flashlight in her eyes.

RED HAIRED MEDIC

Looks okay. You hit your head?

OFELIA

No. I fell too. I lost my cane.

A FEMALE COP wanders over. Big. Muscled. Hardened eyes.

FEMALE COP

You're Ms. Ofelia Morris - from 2C? You called and reported a break-in?

Ofelia steals a glance at Robbie. His eyes widen. He shakes his head "no" subtly.

OFELIA

I *thought* I heard something. A thud. So I called 911 and came over. Don't remember much after that.

RED HAIRE MEDIC

Memory loss. Sure you didn't hit your head?

OFELIA

No. I'm an old lady. I get "spells".

The female cop shoots her a suspicious look.

FEMALE COP

You saw nothing unusual?

OFELIA

Nothing unusual. To me.

The paramedics load Tonya on a stretcher, and push it out to the hall. One turns to the cop.

PARAMEDIC

Overdose. We're bringing her to Monte.

The crowd of neighbors part. Ofelia staggers to her feet as the stretcher rolls away. The red headed medic grabs her arm.

RED HAIRE MEDIC

You should get an MRI.

OFELIA

Let go of me. I'll be fine!

The female cop shrugs, and hands Ofelia a card.

FEMALE COP

Give us a call if you remember anything.

(whispers)

We know this neighborhood is dangerous. But I promise, we can help.

The cop turns to the curious neighbors.

FEMALE COP

Show's over. Everyone - out of the way!

**LATER**

Only Ofelia and Robbie remain. They sit on opposite love seats. Stare across the empty space with frightened eyes.

Ofelia breaks the silence first. Nickolus' gold amulet in her hand.

OFELIA

What happened? No poppycock this time.  
Tell me the whole truth, boy.

ROBBIE

It was a drug deal, okay? I was moving merchandise for a guy. *Someone* had to pay the bills!

OFELIA

And your friend, Carlos?

ROBBIE

He lost the goods. We thought we had it under control...

He sobs, then catches his breath.

OFELIA

Carlos. Where's his head?

Robbie unzips Aaron's bag, and shows her the grim remains. Next to the head - stacks of grisly green padding. MONEY.

OFELIA

You took that out of my apartment? Before the police came?

ROBBIE

I had to! If Trevor don't get paid, you know what they'll do to Kesia?

OFELIA

The cops were here. You could've told them.

ROBBIE

Think they'd find her? In time?

Ofelia hesitates, but knows he's right. Robbie unloads his frustration on her.

ROBBIE

Now it's my turn for questions. What did you do to that guy? Voodoo?



A grim smile from Ofelia.

OFELIA

We call that Obeah. A beauty spell, in reverse. Petty magick, which fades away.

ROBBIE

You do magic. For reals? Then you got to help me. Use your Obe.. Voodoo. Kill those fuckers before they hurt my sister!

OFELIA

I can't. I'm just an old lady. One that's seen enough violence in her life.

ROBBIE

Then make more money. I'll pay Trevor back. Then everything will be just fine!

Ofelia shakes her head. Studies the amulet in her hand.

OFELIA

My herbs and talimans... they're like mirrors. They have no power of their own. They reflect a magick user's strength, feed on sacrificial blood. I have no heart for such dark things. I just did parlor tricks for my family.

ROBBIE

Kesia. She's family to you. Ain't she?

Ofelia's face crumples. The words sting.

OFELIA

Maybe... I can do something small. But I'd need new supplies. If only I knew someone who could get me herbs...

**INT. TREVOR'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAWN**

GANG BANGERS surround the Fat Thug. His cheek still ripples - though most of the effect's faded away.

A SKINNY THUG reaches out to touch his cheek.

FAT THUG

That nasty old bitch did this!

SKINNY THUG

Looks like a pimple to me.

The chubby man's face blows up like a balloon animal. The skinny thug jumps away. Mike looks around, excited.

MIKE

The witch dosed us with LSD!

AARON

It was like magic. I swear!

**INT. TREVOR'S APARTMENT - DOG ROOM**

Hooks embedded in walls. Wee-wee pads on the floor. A wire crate's stuffed in one corner. Pitbull Princess cowers inside.

Jerry shoves Kesia into the room and clips Soldier's leash to the wall. Soldier SNARLS at the girl.

Trevor leans in the doorway, amused.

TREVOR

(to Jerry)

What took so long?

JERRY

Someone... unexpected arrived.

Trevor cocks his head, and listens to CHATTER outside.

TREVOR

They say an old lady fucked you up. What happened?

JERRY

I think it was Obeah. Dark magic.

TREVOR

Bullshit. Tell me the truth!

JERRY

No. Back in my country, these things are real. And that old lady's name: Ofelia. It sounds familiar to me.

Jerry thinks for a minute. He whips out a cell phone and dials. An international number CHIMES.

JERRY

Lafee? It's your cousin, Jerry. Does the name "Ofelia" mean anything to you?

**INT. NICKOLUS' MAGICK SHOPPE - MORNING**

All the shelves - completely bare. A few stray bits of jewelry remain.

Nickolas stands over a goat. A ratty jacket hangs from his thin frame.

The animal's ribs are cracked open - organs exposed. It thrashes in agony. Ropes bind it to the ground.

Nickolas plunges his hand into the cavity and rips out a still beating heart.

Light shines through a hole in the roof. Nickolus holds up the muscle, and chants.

NICKOLUS

Give to me your bounty!

Lafee bounds in the door; excitement on his face.

LAFEE

Nickolus. The woman - they found her! My cousin says Ofelia's in the Bronx!

Nickolas looks down at the goat. It BLEATS weakly, its life bleeds away.

Nickolas crushes the organ in his hand. Lumps of tissue drop to the floor. He snaps his fingers at Lafee.

NICKOLUS

Bring me my finest clothes. And pray your cousin's not mistaken. I feel the sudden urge to see New York...

**INT. AIRPORT - AFTERNOON**

Two ticker vendors man the counter. One woman. One man.

Nickolas preens before them, dressed in an old, flashy suit. He dumps jewelry on the counter.

NICKOLUS

The next flight to New York. Please.

MALE TICKET VENDOR

You want to pay with this?

NICKOLUS

It's worth quite a bit of money. More than both your salaries.

The woman eyes Nickolus, unsure.

FEMALE TICKET VENDOR  
All this... for one ticket?

NICKOLUS  
No. I've brought company.

Lafee steps forward, with Stefan.

**INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - MORNING**

WORKERS bustle and SCREAM orders. Steam and sizzle everywhere. Linda huddles in a corner with Ofelia and Robbie. She yells to be heard over the crowd.

LINDA CHU  
They did what?

OFELIA  
Took the girl! They'll kill her, if we don't bring money.

Linda glances at the register.

LINDA CHU  
How much?

ROBBIE  
One hundred thousand. Plus interest.

LINDA CHU  
When do they need it?

ROBBIE  
Tomorrow night.

LINDA CHU  
Boy, you certifiably crazy. I ain't got that much green!

A COOK wanders by. Linda waits until he moves away.

OFELIA  
We don't want your money. Just your help.  
And a safe place for Robbie hide.

ROBBIE  
That's my sister they got. Don't tell me to stay in no corner!

OFELIA  
Just for awhile. We must prepare.

LINDA CHU

I've got a room upstairs. The boy's  
welcome to stay.

Ofelia's eyes roam kitchen shelves, chock full of  
ingredients.

OFELIA

I'll need a few herbs. Roots. Do you know  
any places that sell rare things?

LINDA CHU

Do I know a place? You shittin' me?

She shoves a notebook into Ofelia's hand.

LINDA CHU

Write down what you need.

**INT. ELIZABETH STREET SHOP - CHINATOWN - DAY**

A cramped little store. Every sign in Chinese. Linda  
picks up a jar; squints at the ingredients.

She wanders over to an OLD SHOPKEEPER, and shows him  
Ofelia's list. He argues (MOS). Linda puffs out her chest  
and bitches back.

The man sighs and heads to a basement trap door. He pulls  
it open and disappears.

Minutes later, he emerges: a box of spices and roots in  
his arms.

**EXT. ELIZABETH STREET - CHINATOWN - CONTINUOUS**

Linda steps into the street. Stray DOGS BARK outside.

**INT. TREVOR'S APARTMENT - DOG ROOM - DAY**

Kesia cowers against a wall, her Barbie forgotten on the  
floor. Aaron struts into the room, a freshly walked  
Soldier on a leash.

Soldier spots Kesia, and SNARLS. The little girl hides  
her face.

AARON

Yo, what's the problem? He wants to play.

KESIA  
Where's Robbie?

AARON  
Gettin' our money. If he cares about you,  
that is.

Aaron clips Soldier's chain to the wall, and scoops  
Kesia's doll off the floor. He tosses the toy to Soldier.

The Pitt CHOMPS down on Barbie's head.

AARON  
Or Soldier's gonna chew you next!

Kesia jumps back and bumps Princess' crate. Princess  
BARKS. Kesia recoils.

Aaron laughs and walks outside.

Kesia looks from Princess to Soldier. Trapped between a  
rock and a hard place, she scootches towards the crate.

Princess regards her with sad puppy eyes.

Kesia pulls one of Ms. Ofelia's cookies from her pocket,  
and pokes between the crate's bars.

Princess scarfs it down. Kesia holds out another.

The puppy gobbles it up. Wags her tail and WHINES.

#### **INT. LAGUARDIA AIRPORT - DAY**

COMMUTERS bustle everywhere.

Nickolus crosses the lobby, Lafée and Stephan at his  
side. He looks out of his element. His gaudy clothes  
stick out like a tacky beacon.

Pride masks confusion on Nickolas' face. He looks around,  
spots Trevor's crew. Spots the leader instantly.

Rivalry CRACKLES. The two alpha males stand face to face.

TREVOR  
Nickolas?

NICKOLUS  
"Trevor", I presume?

TREVOR  
My boy says you have certain... powers.

Lafee waves over Nickolas' shoulder at Jerry. Nickolas slaps his hand away.

NICKOLUS

Oh yes. That I do.

TREVOR

That a fact? I ain't convinced. If you're all that powerful, why can't you find the old lady yourself?

NICKOLUS

Something... is blocking me.

TREVOR

(sneers)

Ain't that always the way?

Nickolas regards Trevor. He doesn't like him. One bit.

NICKOLUS

Bring me to the woman, and I'll show you what I can do. And make it worth your while.

TREVOR

Fine. We're parked outside. Follow me.

Trevor turns on his heel. Mutters under his breath.

TREVOR

Stay back 'til you change those clothes. You're in *my* territory now, Magic Boy. Can't run with me, 'til you dress with style.

Nickolus hears - and bristles. Dislike turns to hate.

#### **INT. HALLWAY - OUTSIDE APARTMENTS 2B AND 2C - EVENING**

It looks like a gangbanger's convention. Nickolas and Trevor's men crowd the hall.

Mike unlocks the William's apartment, and saunters in.

Jerry SMASHES the lock on Ofelia's door. Nickolas savors the moment - slips inside.

#### **INT. OFELIA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

Trevor's thugs swarm the place. Lafee and Stefan step forward. Nickolas holds them both at bay.

NICKOLUS

This is their *territory*. Let them bring her to me.

Gangbangers yank out drawers, search for valuables.

The Fat Thug sweeps Thandi and the children's urn off the mantelpiece. Ashes spill across the floor.

A fully healed Lazer launches from a curtain rod. She SCREECHES and SLASHES the thug's face.

FAT THUG

Ow!!

He kicks at the feline. Lazer darts under the couch.

FAT THUG

You wanna fuck with my face too? I'll fuck you up - and this place!

He SMASHES a vase on the floor, then lumbers towards the bedroom. Ofelia's Wanga doll catches Nickolas' eye.

NICKOLUS

Of course. X marks the spot.

He flips the locker open.

...finds only roots and herbs inside. Nickolas SLAMS the lid shut and SNARLS. Trevor strolls to his side.

TREVOR

Didn't find what you were looking for?

The Fat Thug emerges from the bedroom.

FAT THUG

The old lady and boy; they ain't here!

Nickolas' lips curl into a smile.

NICKOLUS

(to Trevor)

Neither did you, I see.

Mike rushes in - Robbie's address book in his hand.

MIKE

Look at what I found!



**INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - UPSTAIRS ROOM**

Ms. Ofelia and Linda peek between curtains, at the building across the street.

LINDA CHU

I saw strange men go in there. Don't look like any neighbors *I* know.

**INTERCUT BETWEEN STREET AND ROOM**

The doors open. Trevor, Nickolas and the others stride into the street. Ofelia spots Nickolas. Freezes.

OFELIA

Lord have mercy. The Devil has come to stay.

Nickolas steps off the curb - hesitates. He's sensing... something. He looks up at buildings. Sniffs the air.

The protective charm PULSES at Ofelia's neck. She covers it with her hand, starts to pray.

Nickolas concentrates... The signal's gone. He grabs Lafee and Stefan and walks away.

Ofelia sighs, relieved.

LINDA CHU

Someone you know?

OFELIA

Unfortunately.

Trevor, Mike and their entourage walk toward cars.

TREVOR

You got the boy's number?

MIKE

On speed dial.

Nickolas hangs back. An excited Lafee points at buildings. Stefan scowls.

STEFAN

This man: Trevor. He's a petty drug dealer. Why are we bargaining with him? He can't even find one woman - in his own neighborhood!

NICKOLUS

One does not enter the home of another,  
and fail to pay respect. This drug dealer  
will get us what we want. Then - I'll  
decide if he's useful enough to live.

Nickolas smiles at Lafee.

NICKOLUS

You like this "Bronx", my friend? How  
would you and your cousin like to own a  
piece?

**INT. TREVOR'S APARTMENT - EVENING**

The room's filled. The two groups at separate ends.

Aaron guards a tied-up Kesia on the couch. Lafee sits  
with Stephan.

Kesia sniffles. Lafee looks concerned.

Nickolas roams the apartment. He eyes electronic  
equipment, amazed. He reaches out to touch the T.V.

MIKE

Don't! Trevor don't like smudges on the  
screen.

Nickolas stares daggers at Mike. Trevor grabs his phone  
and dials...

**INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - UPSTAIRS ROOM**

A frightened Ofelia paces. Robbie watches, annoyed.

ROBBIE

They've got Kesia! What are we waitin'  
for!

OFELIA

You don't know this man. He's worse than  
five of your "Trevor's" combined!

Robbie scoffs. His phone RINGS. The teen hesitates...  
then picks up.

**INTERCUT BETWEEN TREVOR'S APARTMENT AND ROBBIE**

Trevor's voice oozes from the other end.

TREVOR

Robbie, my man. Remember our date? We stopped by your place. You weren't there. But Mike, he still found your book. You shouldn't leave stuff lying around. Confidential information could fall into... the wrong hands.

ROBBIE

Kesia - she okay?

TREVOR

As long as you bring that money tonight. But this ain't no courtesy call. That old lady - she around?

Robbie looks towards Ofelia. Doesn't say a word.

TREVOR

(chuckles)

I'll assume that's "yes". Put her on.

Robbie hands the smart phone to Ofelia. She stares at it, confused. Robbie puts it on "speaker."

TREVOR

Ofelia? A friend wants to talk to you.

CLATTER on the other end. Trevor's phone switches hands.

OFELIA

Hello?

NICKOLUS

Ofelia. So *nice* to hear that name. It has a certain music to it - don't you think?

Ofelia's hand shakes wildly.

NICKOLUS

I've been trying to find you. You disappeared so suddenly. And you have something that's mine. Come tonight, with the boy. Bring the money for Trevor, and the amulet for me. Or I'll do things to that pretty girl that'll make your grand babies' death look like mercy...

Ofelia gasps and drops the phone. Robbie scoops it up.

ROBBIE

You stupid ass country punk. I'll rip off your fucking micro dick!

Ofelia grabs the phone.

OFELIA  
Please, Nickolus. Ignore the boy.

NICKOLUS  
Certainly. He's upset.

OFELIA  
I'll bring the charm. Just don't hurt the girl.

NICKOLUS  
Eleven thirty at Whalen. Don't be late.

He hangs up. CLICK. Trevor looks at Nickolas, impressed.

Robbie tries to redial. Linda slaps his hand away. Robbie throws the phone - it SHATTERS to pieces on the floor.

He collapses in a chair.

ROBBIE  
This is my fault! I tried to be so fuckin' smart, and screwed it up for everyone. You. Carlos. Kesia. My mom was right. I *am* a waste...

He sobs. Ofelia kneels and takes his hand.

OFELIA  
A real man doesn't define himself by mistakes. It's what you *attempt* to do that makes you a good person. All you did was try to protect your family.

Ms. Ofelia stops. Realizes she's talking about herself.

OFELIA  
Stay here. There's things I must do.

She reaches for the backpack containing Carlos' head. Robbie grabs the strap. Ofelia yank it away.

OFELIA  
I'm sorry, boy. I need this.

ROBBIE  
What for?

OFELIA  
It's best you never know.

She picks up Linda's box of roots and herbs, and lugs it with the backpack towards the door.

OFELIA  
(to Linda)  
Don't let him take a step. He ain't suited to go outside.

**EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT**

Ofelia wanders down filthy streets - backpack on her shoulders. Vulnerable. Alone. She winces at every shadow.

She passes a group of MEN and steals a glance at their faces. Are they part of Trevor's gang? There's no way to know. So she passes by.

**INT. LINDA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

Linda sits across the table from Robbie. Pins him with an evil eye.

LINDA CHU  
I got drinks. You want something?

ROBBIE  
Yeah. Outta this place.

LINDA CHU  
Ain't on the menu. How about tea?

ROBBIE  
Nah. You got some beer?

LINDA CHU  
How old are you anyway? Fifteen?

ROBBIE  
Almost. My birthday's one month away.

Linda walks to the sink and pours a glass of water. She slaps it down in front of the teen.

LINDA CHU  
Here. New York's finest. You want a beer?  
Try again when you're twenty one.

Robbie scowls, but takes a sip.

**INT. OFELIA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS**

Ofelia slips inside. The door CREAKS on its broken hinge. Light from the hallway penetrates the room...

...illuminating damage wreaked by Trevor's crew.

Ofelia spots the broken urn and gasps. Everything on the mantelpiece is smashed to bits.

Her family's photo. Ashes. Shards of glass.

Ofelia runs towards the mess.

A candle ROLLS - bumps her foot. Lazer rubs against her leg and PURRS.

Ofelia pets the feline, and does her best not to cry.

She bends over, and sweeps up ashes with both hands. A shard of glass SLASHES her palm. Blood DRIPS from the wound, into the pile.

Light shimmers above it, in the air.

OFELIA

Ah. Hungry for blood? Wait awhile. I'll whip you up a proper feast.

**INTERCUT BETWEEN OFELIA AND LINDA'S APARTMENT**

Linda continues her vigil with Robbie. Neither one willing to back down.

LINDA CHU

You hungry?

ROBBIE

No. Stop staring at me. It's creepy.

LINDA CHU

It's my job to keep you here.

ROBBIE

What you gonna do when I take a leak?

Linda pushes the glass of water over.

LINDA CHU

Go ahead. I own a restaurant. I got more.

Robbie cracks a smile.

ROBBIE

Fine. You win. Can I please have tea?

Linda stands up, relieved. She lights a fire under a kettle, and makes a beeline towards the cupboard.

LINDA CHU

You want green or black?

ROBBIE (O.S.)

You got anything that's herbal? I read some good shit 'bout Chai.

LINDA CHU

You're in my house. Watch your language. And don't be a pain in my ass...

She buries her head in a closet, rummages through.

LINDA CHU

I found Camomile. That okay?

No response. Linda look towards the table. Robbie's gone.

The front door's open. RAPID FOOTSTEPS on the stairs.

Linda runs to the window; just in time to catch Robbie as he dashes out the door. She sticks her head out.

LINDA CHU

Motherfucker. Get back here!

Robbie flips her the finger. Keeps on going.

#### **INT. OFELIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Ofelia sits on the floor, crushes roots in a bowl.

Her family's ashes are swept into a neat pile. Candles burn like torches on either side.

A spellbound Lazer watches the old woman's every move.

The family photo leans against Ofelia's open spell book. Thandi and the kids smile through shattered glass.

Ofelia blows powder into the bowl. Some drifts onto the picture, as well. The photo deepens subtly.

The faces seem... almost alive.

Ofelia picks up a kitchen knife and SLASHES her palm. Blood DRIP-DRIPS into the bowl.

The images of Michaela and Jeren squirm.

OFELIA

Hush, Children. Close your eyes.

She squeezes more blood from the wound. Michaela's image stretches out a worried hand...

Ofelia reaches for her granddaughter. Her fingers pass through empty air.

OFELIA

Forgive me, Michaela. But I can't let it happen. Not again.

She scoops up a handful of urn ashes, sprinkles them in the bowl as well.

Michaela's image fades away.

Ofelia unzips the backpack, and takes out Carlos' head.

OFELIA

Boy, I'm sorry for this, too.

She places the head in her lap. RIPS out an eye.

She drops the organ in the bowl, and pounds it to pulp. Bloody tissue mixes with herbs, into a gooey paint.

#### **INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER**

Tubes invade Tonya's nose and throat. I.V.'s bristle in her arm.

Robbie sneaks in, and stares down at the bed. Tonya GROANS, eyes shut tight.

TONYA

(weak)

Doctor? More medicine. Please.

Robbie shivers and turns away. He spots Tonya's purse.

He rummages through, finds her phone.

He scrolls through Tonya's contacts. She doesn't have many. So he quickly finds...

Mike's address. Robbie writes the number on a napkin.

TONYA

Robbie. Is that you?



Robbie glances over. Tonya reaches for him - awake.

TONYA  
You came to see me!

She glides her hand down his face.

ROBBIE  
I did, Momma. But I got to go...

Tonya grabs his arm; strong for one so frail.

TONYA  
All those things I said. About you not  
being a man. You know I didn't mean them.

ROBBIE  
I know, Momma. Let me go.

TONYA  
When I get outta here, things are gonna  
change. I know I said that before. But  
you believe me. Don't you?

Robbie doesn't. But Tonya seems so hopeful. So he looks  
into her face and lies.

ROBBIE  
Of course, Momma. We'll get through this.

TONYA  
Another thing. I was wrong 'bout that old  
lady. She okay. Stick with her 'til I get  
home. I know she'll keep my babies safe.

Robbie pulls away and heads for the door.

TONYA  
Robbie, I love you.

ROBBIE  
Yeah. You too.

The door whispers shut. Tonya's left alone.

#### **EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT**

Ofelia strolls down the darkened street, wicker basket at  
her side. With her dress, she almost looks like "Dorothy"  
- other differences aside.

She passes Kesia and Tricia's Hopscotch grid.

The lines are smudged from foot traffic. Someone's doodled pornographic images on top.

**EXT. WHALEN PARK - LATER**

A DRUNK lies passed out on the bench. Pools of vomit on the cement.

Ofelia walks to the center of the park. Kicks bottles out of the way.

She lays out the basket neatly, an old lady preparing for her picnic.

She opens the lid: revealing chalk and a mason jar filled with night-black liquid.

Ofelia unscrews the lid. Dips the chalk inside.

Then - carefully - she starts to draw.

**EXT. DOORWAY - 4888 PERRY AVENUE - NIGHT**

Robbie hides in the shadows. He checks his watch: Nine PM. He KNOCKS on the door. Loud - won't stop.

A hung-over Mike answers. He sees Robbie, tries to close the door in his face.

Robbie grabs the handle. The two lock eyes over the knob.

MIKE

You're early. The meet's at Whalen.  
Eleven o'clock.

ROBBIE

I wanna talk. Privately.

Mike scans the alley. Robbie's alone.

MIKE

If this is 'bout Tonya, I ain't gonna  
apologize. She took that junk herself.  
(beat)  
She okay?

ROBBIE

Nurses say she's gonna be fine.

MIKE

She ask for me?

ROBBIE

Not really.

Disappointment on Mike's face. Robbie rolls his eyes.

ROBBIE

That's not why I'm here. The rendezvous tonight: you going?

MIKE

I'm Trevor's soldier. What do you think?

ROBBIE

You know it ain't gonna end well.

MIKE

No shit, fancy boy. You think you quick, like your Dad. Well - news flash: he's in jail. If you don't cough up money soon, you'll be lucky to keep breathing.

ROBBIE

I ain't the one getting in too deep.

Robbie's serious. Mike stops laughing; studies his face.

MIKE

You threatening me, boy?

ROBBIE

Nah. Just givin' you a heads up. You know that man Nickolas? I heard stuff about him. He ain't the type that's happy with sloppy seconds. Or being someone else's "soldier." Trevor better get smart, or he's gonna get hurt.

MIKE

Says who?

ROBBIE

That old lady, Ofelia. He killed her whole family. Including little kids. Just imagine what he'll do to you. Some stranger he don't give two shits about. And if you don't survive, you think Trevor's gonna care? You already found my book. You good for anything else?

Robbie's got Mike's attention now.

ROBBIE

Trevor better take out Nickolas while he can.

Bring Kesia back, and we'll teach him how to use that amulet. Give him more money than he'll ever need.

MIKE

And if we don't?

ROBBIE

Then Nickolas'll take everything. And leave you on the sidewalk to bleed.

Robbie stalks off down the street. Mike watches from his door. He slips out, goes the other way.

**INT. TREVOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Both camps keep to themselves. Tension fills the air.

Aaron keeps watch over Kesia; Soldier and Princess act as "guards". Soldier SNARLS at the girl. Aaron KICKS the dog in the ribs.

Nickolas watches quietly. Lafee fidgets at his side.

LAFEE

I don't like these people, Nickolas.

NICKOLUS

They're business partners. Not friends.

LAFEE

I seen how they treat that girl. I'm tellin' you. They're dangerous.

NICKOLUS

(chuckles)

So's a mad bull. That's why you rip out its throat.

Mike bursts in the door. The fat thug defensively pulls a gun. Mike freezes. Trevor laughs, and takes the gun away.

TREVOR

(to Mike)

Where you been? You're late.

MIKE

I gotta talk to you.

He pulls Trevor aside.

MIKE

Robbie showed up, and tried to negotiate.

TREVOR

He have anything to say?

MIKE

That man, Nickolas... The kid says he's got a nasty rep back home. He's gonna stab you in the back.

TREVOR

How's he gonna pull that off? We got the guns. And more men.

MIKE

That amulet he wants; the kid swears it's real. They'll teach us to use it. That's if we take their side.

Trevor eyes Nickolas warily.

TREVOR

The old lady *would* be easier to control. If the boy can be believed.

Princess inches towards Kesia, sniffs for cookies. Aaron yanks her chain. Princess YELPS.

KESIA

Hey!

Kesia grabs the leash. Aaron's backhand KNOCKS the girl to the ground.

AARON

I told you. Keep quiet!

Lafee jumps to Kesia's aid. He looms over Aaron; an angry, hulking wall of flesh.

LAFEE

Don't touch her.

AARON

Says who?

LAFEE

Me!

A switchblade slides into Aaron's hand.

AARON

Go ahead, Retard. About time someone cut you down to size.

Nickolas and Trevor gather silently behind their men. Alpha males poised for battle. The two lock eyes, calculate odds. Trevor pulls Aaron away.

TREVOR  
That's no way to treat our guest.  
(to Nickolas)  
My apologies. To you, and your large friend.

The two head to separate corners. Trevor turns to Mike with newfound respect.

TREVOR  
Thanks for the warning. I got room for loyal men.

**INT. LINDA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Ofelia sits at the table - tea and chalk in her hand. Linda paces the floor.

LINDA CHU  
That little shit walked out on me!

OFELIA  
It's just ten thirty. He'll be back.

Robbie slips into the room. Both women turn and stare. Linda hurls a teacup. It SHATTERS over Robbie's head.

LINDA CHU  
Asshole!

ROBBIE  
Thought you didn't like that language?

LINDA CHU  
You've been gone an hour. Where you been?

ROBBIE  
Out. Walking. Thinking.

LINDA CHU  
You coulda done that here. What else you been up to? Sneaky shit.

ROBBIE  
It's best you don't know.

Linda grabs him by the collar. Pint-sized, but furious.

LINDA CHU

We risked our lives to keep you safe!

Ofelia pulls Linda away.

OFELIA

He's back now. That's what matters.

ROBBIE

Yeah. What she said. What's the plan?

OFELIA

We go to the meeting. Bring my money, and the amulet.

ROBBIE

We're gonna just *give* it to them?

OFELIA

You might say that. But I've made plans.

Ofelia removes her protective charm, and drapes it over Robbie's neck.

OFELIA

Promise: if things get bad, you'll grab your sister, tun away.

ROBBIE

What about you?

OFELIA

Trust me. I'll be fine.

The charm glows briefly. Safe against Robbie's chest.

#### **INT. TREVOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Trevor's crew CHEER the TV screen. Stefan and Lafée look bored. Nickolas perks up, and sniffs the air.

NICKOLUS

That woman. I know where she is.

He stands up.

NICKOLUS

We don't need these fools. Let's go.

LAFÉE

(hesitates)

The girl - we can't leave her. Please.

He points towards Kesia, who cowers in the corner. Eyes big and pleading.

Nickolas assesses Trevor's crew. Counting Jerry, the odds are four to ten. Possible. But real risky.

NICKOLUS

Fine. We wait. You may have your toy.

He sits down, and pats Lafee's hand.

NICKOLUS

We have traveled far, and I'm tired. Let them bring Ofelia to me.

**INT. WHALEN PARK - NIGHT - 11:30 PM**

Dark. The calm before the storm.

Ofelia's new Hopscotch board glows on the pavement; half covered with debris.

Trevor waits with his entourage. Mike and Aaron stand guard on either end. Trevor pets Soldier. The glow of his e-cig adds a touch of sparkle to the night.

TREVOR

The boy's late. Bad start to a relationship.

Nickolas and his men stand to one side. Jerry whispers in Lafee's ear.

JERRY

You ever watch Magick Man do his spells?  
Back in the old country?

LAFEE

Nickolas is smart. He knows many words.

JERRY

Could you do them?

LAFEE

His spells? Why?

JERRY

I dunno. Just asking.

He shoots a nervous look at Nickolas, and pulls his cousin away.



JERRY

I want you to stand over here.

The gate CREAKS. Trevor and the others turn towards the sound. Robbie's arrived. All alone.

Robbie strolls into the park casually, and stops a safe distance away. He lays Ofelia's backpack at his feet.

ROBBIE

Okay. I'm here to make a deal.

He UNZIPS the bag. Revealing: cash stuffed inside.

TREVOR

That everything?

ROBBIE

It's a down payment.

KESIA (O.S.)

Robbie!

Robbie pivots toward her voice. Kesia out of sight - buried somewhere between Trevor's men.

ROBBIE

She okay?

TREVOR

She will be.

Trevor steps towards the backpack. Nickolas frowns, displeased.

NICKOLUS

I sense the amulet. Where's the woman?

ROBBIE

On her way. Once I say everything's safe.  
We wouldn't want Ofelia hurt. Would we?

He shoots a meaningful look at Trevor, who bends down to take the bag. Trevor whispers in the boy's ear.

TREVOR

I spoke with Mike. It's a deal. Bring the amulet and the woman to me. Then I'll give you your sister. In one piece.

ROBBIE

Prove it - let me see her!

The fat thug drags Kesia forward. Bruises from Aaron's hand stand out on her face. Robbie reaches for her...

Nickolas steps in the way.

NICKOLUS

First the woman. Then we trade.

A quick nod from Trevor. His men surround Nickolas.

TREVOR

Bad news, Magic Man. We don't need you no more.

Nickolas' face darkens. He's been betrayed.

He darts at Kesia; knocking Aaron aside. The teen drops both dog leashes.

Trevor's men scramble for weapons.

Kesia SCREAMS. Nickolas drags her back by her hair.

Princess SNARLS - leaps. She sinks her teeth into Nickolas' arm.

Fury flares on Nickolas' face. He SLAMS his arm against a checker table. A stunned Princess YELPS and lets go.

A hundred pounds of grey fury collides with Nickolas' chest. He falls on his back. Soldier's bared teeth spray saliva in his face.

Kesia dives for cover. The Fat Thug pulls her back.

Lafee grabs Soldier's collar, and tries to yank the dog away. Nickolas grabs the pitbull by the throat; rises smoothly to his feet.

Fire CRACKLES from his fingertips. He makes a TWISTING gesture. Soldier's neck CRACKS.

Nickolas throws Soldier's carcass at Trevor's feet. Trevor takes just one look - goes insane.

TREVOR

(to his men)

Kill that motherfucker. Now!

Robbie weaves through fists and bullets, searches for his sister. Aaron pulls a gun - draws a bead on Robbie's head. He fires...

The bullet RIPS through Robbie's shoulder. Robbie HOWLS and ducks behind a tree.

Lafee lumbers into Aaron's line of sight. The teen grins.

AARON

Just my luck. Two in one day...

He points the gun at Lafee.

Jerry plunges a knife into Aaron's back. The teen sinks to his knees. Jerry looks in his eyes - twists the blade.

JERRY

That's my cousin. You little bitch.

Kesia CHOMPS the Fat Thug's hand. She stomps his foot and runs away. The Fat Thug HOWLS, holds his crushed fingers.

Nickolas and Stefan tear a swath through the crowd. Heading straight for Trevor.

...passing Mike along the way. Nickolas pulls a sacrificial knife, and plunges it into Mike's belly. Mike doubles over. Nickolas HISSES in his ear.

NICKOLUS

You wanted to be a soldier? Then die proudly for your leader...

Mike crumples to the ground. A GANGBANGER steps in Nickolas' way. This one has a gun.

Stefan grabs the Fat Thug, uses him as a shield for Nickolas. The gangbanger shoots. The Fat Thug SCREAMS. His body jiggles as bullets RIP through his skin.

Stefan smiles - his master's safe.

Metal FLASHES behind Stefan. A razor at his throat. Trevor SLASHES. Stefan's blood sprays everywhere...

It coats Nickolas, head to toe. The Magick Man stops, licks a drop from his face.

NICKOLUS

(to Trevor)

Thank you for the sacrifice. That will make this easier.

His hand shoots towards Trevor's chest.

Nickolas' fist phases *through* skin and bone... wraps around the dealer's heart. Trevor freezes in terror.

NICKOLUS

Thank you for the introduction to this world. I think I'll take it from here.

He SQUEEZES, and rips the organ free. Trevor SCREAMS as skin runs from his face and neck, sucked toward the black hole in his chest. His body rots. Crumbles. Chunks of tissue THUD to the ground.

Robbie runs to Kesia, holds her tight.

Nickolas stands between them - and freedom.

The Magick Man looks around. Trevor's men stand frozen in their tracks. Nickolas flicks bits of flesh off his hand.

NICKOLUS

Now, you may join me... or die.

The TAP of a cane on pavement.

Ofelia melts from the darkness, the gold amulet in her hand. She studies Nickolas, unafraid.

OFELIA

I choose neither.

NICKOLUS

(sneers)

Brave words, from an old woman who ran away.

He gestures towards Robbie and Kesia.

NICKOLUS

This looks familiar, don't you think?  
What were their names? Michaela? Jeren?

He runs a bloody hand down Kesia's face.

NICKOLUS

A pretty little girl. Do you think her life will end the same?

Ofelia steps forward. Lafee moves to meet her. Nickolas waves him away.

OFELIA

This time, I will sacrifice. My life. For these children.

Nickolas shakes his head.

NICKOLUS

I'll take your life as a bonus. But it's  
the amulet I need.

The Hopscotch grid is inches from Nickolas' feet. Ofelia  
shuffles closer. The amulet GLOWS between her fingers.

OFELIA

You can have it with my blessings. A  
bauble that's caused me too much grief.  
It was no use to me, anyway. It needs  
blood to really work.

Nickolas steps between the Hopscotch lines. The amulet  
FLARES brightly. Ofelia beckons him forward.

OFELIA

I was never good at much. Just trinkets  
and protective spells. You were the one  
with the real power. The mirror that  
makes Magick like this complete...

Nickolas snatches the amulet. He drapes it over his head  
and laughs.

He raises a gore encrusted hand. Fire CRACKLES from his  
fingertips. Ofelia mutters under her breath.

OFELIA

Drag him down, to the worms of Earth...

Nickolas stares at Ofelia.

NICKOLUS

You think to threaten me with spells?  
You said it yourself. I'm the one who  
paints in blood...

OFELIA

(smiles)

It's been a long time, Nickolas. I've  
been practicing. A bit.

The Hopscotch grid turns to fire. Air shimmers. Distorts.

Dark shadows reach up from the lines. Tortured fun-house  
mirror images of Thandi. The children. Carlos. Animals.

Nickolas is trapped in the center of the grid, bordered  
by flame on all sides.

Lafee and Jerry stare dumbfounded. Trevor's men run away.

Shadows clutch at Nickolas with skeletal hands. He whirls around in panic.

OFELIA

Children. Please forgive me.

Nickolas grabs the amulet, and mutters a spell. The gold **MELTS** the flesh off his hand.

Nickolas **HOWLS**. The sound is silenced as shadow-fingers cover his face. Others grab his fancy clothes.

Nickolas **SCREAMS** as they drag him down.

The pavement closes over Nickolas' head. Blood bubbles at the surface. It **SIZZLES**, then scabs over.

Then the **SCREAMING** stops. Nickolas is gone.

Jerry grabs Lafee, and pulls him away. Leaving Ofelia, Robbie and Kesia behind.

Ofelia runs to the children, covers their eyes.

Sirens **WAIL** in the night. Robbie grabs Princess's leash, and marches Kesia towards the gate.

He scoops up the backpack of money. Doesn't look back.

The amulet lies in a pool of blood. A wrinkled hand picks up the trinket. Brushes off gore. Tucks it away.

### **SERIES OF SHOTS**

Emergency lights fill the streets. A swarm of **COPS**. An ambulance.

The red headed paramedic bends over the Fat Thug, Mike and Stefan.

RED HAired MEDIC

Don't bother. These guys are gone.

His **PARTNER** scrapes chunks of flesh off the sidewalk. It's Trevor... or what's left. She picks up a hand. The e-cig still clutched in his fist.

PARAMEDIC

I'd love to fucking know how *this* happened.

**EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT**

Another cop car races by. Ofelia tucks Robbie and Kesia under her shoulders. Casually, she walks away.

**EXT. DECATUR AVENUE - BRONX, NEW YORK - MORNING****SUPER: SIX MONTHS LATER**

Birds CHIRP above a summer sidewalk.

Kesia and Tricia play Hopscotch. Ofelia keeps a watchful eye from the stoop. Lazer PURRS in her lap.

Linda Chu sits down, and watches the children play.

LINDA CHU

They ever get tired?

OFELIA

Don't think so. They have so much energy.  
It tires me out - just watching them.

LINDA CHU

You should play Hopscotch sometime.

OFELIA

Me? I barely walk with this cane.

She pokes a soda cup out of the way with her stick.

OFELIA

Damn litter.

LAFEE (O.S.)

Ms. Ofelia. I'll get that!

Lafee bends down - snatches away the offending trash. A superintendant's uniform stretches across his huge chest. Latex gloves on his hands.

OFELIA

Thank you, Lafee. You're too kind.

LAFEE

Any time, Ms. Ofelia.

He looks towards Jerry, across the street. His cousin frowns and waves.

LAFEE

(to Ofelia)

I gotta go. Tell Robbie "hi" for me?

He lumbers away. Linda looks impressed.

LINDA CHU

Now that's service. You paying him on the side?

OFELIA

Oh, the "boys" do things for me. Little favors, here and there.

She smiles a secretive grin.

A PATTERN of feet. Robbie races toward Ofelia with Princess, an excited look on his face. Kesia stops playing and joins her brother.

ROBBIE

I got the internship. At Rutgers!

He waves a letter in Ofelia's face.

OFELIA

That a fact?

ROBBIE

They say if I do well, they'll recommend me for scholarship!

He thinks it over. His face falls.

ROBBIE

But it's only seventy percent. We'd have to pay the difference.

Ofelia touches the gold amulet around her neck.

OFELIA

Oh, that can be arranged.

She waves Robbie over, and lays a protective charm in his hand.

OFELIA

Wear that when you go out. I don't want to be worrying all the time.

She kisses Robbie and Kesia's cheeks. Power CRACKLES in her eyes.

OFELIA

You're my sweet little babies. I'm gonna make *damned* sure you stay safe.

FINAL FADE OUT: