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Last breath

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LAST BREATH

A Thesis

by

Marshall James Saenz

Submitted to the Graduate School of
The University of Texas-Pan American
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

May 2014

Major Subject: Creative Writing

LAST BREATH

A Thesis
by
Marshall James Saenz

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May 2014

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ABSTRACT

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Last Breath is a Gothic Web Series about a girl who recreates her identity while recovering her lost memory. She discovers dark family secrets and a rigid society that is as equally imprisoning as her room. Ultimately, she engages in a game of intrigue, putting her family name and soul at stake.

The story incorporates traditional Gothic and Southern Gothic influences described by Bailey, De Vore et al., Radcliffe, and others. The issue of format is analyzed using insights by Felicia Day, Syd Field, Tennessee Williams, and Robert McKee.

The Web Series remains a pioneering medium. Shows such as *The Spot*, *The Guild*, and *House of Cards* embraces innovations in the webisode, as I attempt to do with the genre and formatting of *Last Breath*. Much in the same way Tennessee Williams transcended mediums, *Last Breath* recognizes classical traditions which may be applied in defining and refining the web series.

DEDICATION

South Texas has been a home and source of inspiration to me since childhood. In 1985, I took a leave of absence for seventeen years to live in Missouri, but inevitably found my way back in 2001. No matter where my travels take me, the region's culture and geography will forever remain in my heart and beat out a rhythm that syncs with my pulse.

Last Breath embraces the reality that many of the vast ranches in South Texas originally belonged to Mexican-Americans who fought hard for their land grants. While intentionally dramatized, the De La Cruz family is but a snapshot of how 'progress' and the acquisition of minerals muddled these landowners history. Similar to Hope's amnesia, the descendants of these lands struggle to restore lost portions of their historical identity. Unlike my story, South Texas is home to some of the most hospitable and kind hearted people I have ever known-for their support, I am humbly thankful.

I would also like to dedicate this work to my parents, Mario and Diana Saenz for their support in all my endeavors as an aspiring writer. They worked so very hard to give their children the opportunity to acquire a college education, a choice they never had. None-the-less, through this work, their names will grace collegiate halls now and forever. Despite whatever degree I may possess, their wisdom is always appreciated. Finally, I thank everyone else who has encouraged, coached, or thought I was crazy for wanting to write. You all are in my thoughts every time I put pen to paper.

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Thanks to Dr. Ed Cameron and Dr. Jerrold E. Hogle for helping me to better understand the Gothic. Many of the characters and themes in *Last Breath* would not have been possible without their knowledge. Dr. Cameron's Studies in Genre course and analytical expertise in film greatly improved my outlook on how to approach such a story as mine. In a similar fashion, Dr. Hogle helped me reimagine the possibilities of Gothic heroes in both literature and film.

Finally, I thank you, Dr. Philip Zwerling and Mr. David Carren for imparting your wealth of knowledge to help me grow as a writer. Your teachings have inspired me to dig deeper and push my limits in the eternal struggle we writers face to tell our stories. No amount of words can express the privilege it has been to learn from the both of you. I can only hope to utilize such teachings in my writing, and pass these traditions down to future writers.

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CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

Media content written specifically for episodic release on the Internet serves as a subcategory of the screenwriting discipline. The product of such writing is called a *webisode*, logically fitting into a collection of other *webisodes* to create a *web series*. As a Master of Fine Arts student focusing on screenwriting, I developed an interest in television writing and how these techniques apply to the evolving nature of the *web series*. In order to accomplish this task, one must investigate the origins of the *webisode*, why it is a worthwhile medium, and a consideration of unique script choices involved.

Terms such as *New Media* often apply to this form, and while 'new' is a relative term, the genesis of the *webisode* in the late 1980s demonstrates it has staying power and adaptability to the advancing internet environment. The first documented *webisode* dates back to Tracy Reed's *Quantum Serial Link* in 1988 (Swaine, 2013). Due to the Internet's limited capabilities at the time, Reed used written narrative along with email and chat rooms to play out weekly episodes on his website. Reed found a niche between traditionally written text and well-established television by allowing fans to respond between each episode. Based on fan input, the story's plot evolved. While interactivity is rarely employed in today's *webisodes*, Reed took advantage of the Internet by developing storytelling that did not quite fit the mold of a novel or that of a television show, but rather a new web medium. Thus, the *webisode* concept was born despite the lack of a standard screenwriting format or an infrastructure to support visual content.

Technological advances soon allowed for more visual capabilities on the Internet, and hints that a screenplay such as *Last Breath* could exist online became a reality. Notably, the first visuals appeared in Scott Zakarin's 1995 *The Spot* (Krantz, 1997). As with Reed, this story interacted with fans via the character's diaries; however, enhanced web capabilities allowed Zakarin to incorporate pictures and short videos (Spotfan 1995). The form continued to see gradual improvements.

Five years later, Stan Lee's *The 7th Portal* emerged in 2000 as the first recognizable high concept show slated for Internet release (Poniewozik, 2000). Though many mainstream television viewers may not have heard of this show, an undeniable web audience began to emerge. Unfortunately, a host of corporate and legal issues eventually led to the website's bankruptcy during the first season (Slager 2012). Perhaps major entities within the Hollywood system seemed skeptical because the web presented an obscure environment where only a niche of small companies and tech savvy hobbyists dared to explore visual storytelling- I saw myself as growing up alongside the Internet, but I cannot ever recall hearing about any web-based show.

Indeed, *webisode* remained a term used by fans of this subculture until earning official recognition by Merriam-Webster's dictionary in 2009. At the time of this writing, the general public has become well aware of web video through such providers as YouTube, Netflix, and Vimeo; however, the nomenclature used and idea of structured television shows produced for the web is still met with a fair amount of curiosity. I want to tease out such curiosity while exploring the evolution of screenwriting for the web. Consequently, stories such as *Last Breath* reflect my interpretation of the current state in which the *web series* serves as a viable format for screenwriters.

The *webseries* screenwriter is not bound to the traditional methods most studios follow. Writers must successfully pitch scripts to the right people and negotiate deals if their work does not first get lost or disqualified amongst a sea of other hopeful screenplays. Bork's "Scripts that Sold in 2012: What are the Common Elements?" references The Scroggins Report that reveals only 132 spec scripts out of tens of thousands were picked up in 2012, and this seemingly dismal number matches a fifteen-year high for sales (para. 1). While numbers will vary, only a fraction of proposed scripts will ever get made. Interestingly, savvy writers can produce their own material with little investment. Computers, editing software, and high-resolution camera options are now relatively affordable. Writers can also reach out through social media to connect with those who have equipment and other needed resources. Likewise, videos and websites such as Video Copilot offer technical visual editing advice for higher production value (Video Copilot). Once the project is complete, the writer can forego the middlemen in the studio system and launch the series on YouTube or a number of other free to low cost services. As my screenwriting professor made clear, screenplays are property owned by the writer unless sold.

The *webisode* writer can take full advantage of this wisdom. Much of *Last Breath* intentionally takes place near my home in South Texas, utilizing easy to find locations. I made writing choices conducive to the fact that I could realistically produce the show myself. No expensive pyrotechnics or massive sets were written into the script. For example, tricky scenes such as the car crash in the pilot episode can be 'cheated' to look believable and stock footage with careful editing can simulate snowy terrain. This is but one of many ways to 'cheat' the shot. Locally, I can reach out through personal contacts or social media for locations, props, or equipment that I may not have. Certainly, I am not the

first to consider this approach or explore its plausibility. *Wired* interviewed Felicia Day in 2007, revealing how she used her knowledge of online gaming and a camcorder to create *The Guild*, a project largely funded through fan donations to perpetuate the series (Mastrapa).

The plausibility that anyone with a camera can make a film creates great avenues to reach a massive, borderless audience. Too many sites exist to name them all, but YouTube and Vimeo stand out as two of the largest, and work as a good reference point for this examination. One can create and manage their *web series* through YouTube, a channel that will run the series everyday, all day, free of charge (YouTube). As an added bonus, this process can be repeated on other online locations so the show is continuously accessible on multiple sites. Most writers will be hard pressed to find the same deal with traditional studio networks. Social media has blossomed to the point where self-advertising can help a show go viral. On the Internet, the term viral means the content quickly spreads in popularity to a mass audience. *The Guild*, now in its sixth season, represents a viral show with great success.

Some believe sites like YouTube and Vimeo will lead to a combination of oversaturation and poor quality, indefinitely diluting or perhaps ruining the web-based medium, while others openly embrace the freedom to publish as one wishes. This debate becomes problematic as it largely involves personal opinion. With this in mind, I offer my perspective on the conundrum. First, a distinction should be made between those who obviously post video as a hobbyist from those who wish to seriously pursue a *web series*. Secondly, traditional knowledge of structure and story development is an asset to serious writers seeking a career in this, or any other medium.

Talented screenwriters can find a marketable and potentially profitable niche in today's web television environment. While screenwriting is an art and should be driven by a passion to write, monetary compensation helps keep shows alive and can literally buy the writer more time to focus on content. As one of my professors alludes- screenwriters are always looking for career continuity, and television is usually where they find it. Perhaps web-based television can also offer some of the same continuity, with marketing and the ability to get paid steadily growing.

Aside from social media such as Facebook or Twitter for publicity, Independent writer/producers can use advertisement banners, short commercials, donate buttons, corporate sponsorship or absorption, or even sell their material outright. Felicia Day's *The Guild* stands out as one of the most popular examples for combining two of these methods. She wrote and produced her own show through online donations until eventually signing a contract with Microsoft (Manstrapa 2). Ryan Connolly wrote the YouTube show *Making the Film*, a success that eventually spurred a deal to join Revision3 network in 2009 (Atkinson). The show, now titled *Film Riot*, gained a much larger budget and rapidly expanded its fan base (Revision3). Connolly now works fulltime writing the show and has spun off several others in the process.

Notably, the Internet does not just showcase small, independent *web series* projects. Creative individuals have found ways to cleverly market their material online. To some extent, fan films pave the way for connecting with the seemingly cautious Hollywood system. A clear example lies with the roughly eight-minute short film, *Mortal Kombat: Rebirth* released on YouTube in 2010. Written by Oren Uziel and directed by Kevin Tancharoen, the video re-envisioned the *Mortal Kombat* world and ultimately served as a

feature film pitch to Warner Brothers Studios. In 2011, Warner Brothers decided to green light the project, but as a *web series*, renamed *Mortal Kombat: Legacy* (McColl). The series is now in its second season on YouTube (Machinima Prime).

Likewise, prominent Hollywood figures began to see opportunities in the *Web Series* format. *Burning Love* cast Jennifer Aniston and Ben Stiller to name a few. Kiefer Sutherland played in *The Confession* on Hulu. Celebrities not only starred in these shows, but also created their own *web series*. Examples include Tom Hanks' *Electric City* and Joseph Gordon-Levitt's co-created show, *Songify This*. Additionally, *30 Days of Night* launched a *web series* to supplement the movie, as did *The Walking Dead* with its network series.

Blurring the lines even more, Netflix, The Webby Awards, and traditional television awards shifted to recognize shows produced for the Internet. Screenwriters looking to validate a *Web Series* now have multiple outlets to present their material, collaborating, competing, and gaining recognition alongside novices and industry professionals.

Netflix started to pick up made for Netflix television shows like *House of Cards* and *Orange is the New Black*. Some may have a difficult time accepting Netflix as a place for the *Web Series* amidst the available selection of Hollywood blockbusters and major network television shows; however, these shows are indeed classified as web series because they directly premiere in a streaming format requiring internet access. Standard broadcast television shows first appear on their respective network, then port over to Netflix.

The Webby Awards began in 1996 as a way to honor those achieving excellence on the Internet. Categories include websites, applications, social, advertising and media, and online film and video (The Webby Awards). Originally ran from a rented space in a hotel,

The Webby Awards have become a major awards show. Bright, but relatively unknown names accept awards beside well know figures such as *House of Card's* Kevin Spacey.

Some might perceive the inclusion of Hollywood figures winning awards in a venue once catering to a web only subculture as a takeover of sorts, a notion worth reconsidering when looking at the web's influence on traditional Hollywood awards. *House of Cards*, *Guidestones*, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, and *Backstage Drama* all won an Emmy Award. In 2013, Netflix *web series'* grabbed four Golden Globe nominations. Television made for the web may still seem fickle to many traditional television viewers, but the *web series* has recently mounted accolades, that in my view, make the medium quite reasonable for any screenwriter to consider.

One particular consideration when writing a *web series* lies with formatting the screenplay itself-an intriguing endeavor I toiled with when creating *Last Breath*. At the time of this writing, no formal structure for the *webisode* exists. Day's interview corroborates this notion and fuels the crux of my exploration into screenwriting for the web when she answers, " The format of the web series is still being invented. There's no, this is how you do it. I feel like there's still a format issue — people are open to experiment, but at the same time the sheer power that you have to have on the internet to get the word out about something is something that even huge studios with millions of dollars in marketing have [not] figured out" (para. 23). Even so, the content and structure for *Last Breath* builds upon both the tradition of Gothic literary elements and television script format.

At its surface, the traditional Gothic Novel utilizes a combination of fear, gloom, morbidity, mystery, violence, isolationism, and the sublime and supernatural (Harris). However, Morris alludes that the juxtaposition of these elements touches on underlying truths that reach

deeper into exploring the intricate underpinnings of human nature through symbol and character (qtd. in De Vore et al.). Albeit fascinating, this examination will forego an extensive historical examination of the Gothic Novel as it has inevitably been documented in great detail elsewhere. Rather, my design is to demonstrate why I chose the Gothic, and in some cases, parody the genre for its thematic and practical use in *Last Breath*.

Traditionally, Gothic stories tend to take place in remote, exotic, southern regions, steeped in superstition. Indeed, the American South has seemingly spun off its own subcategory of the genre, the Southern Gothic. These stories incorporate traditional Gothic elements, placing emphasis on deviant behavior, loss of dignity and hope, and the grotesque in rural or plantation locations with strict social and religious codes (MacKethan). Some may note the Southern Gothic's tendency to lean away from the supernatural in favor of the grotesque, but works by Anne Rice and Charlene Harris have recently proved there is a place for such material (Bailey). Moreover, *Last Breath* attempts to adhere to Bailey's following statement:

The Southern Gothic is fueled by the need to explain and/or understand foundational trauma, the violation or loss of that which is essential to identity and survival but often irretrievable. Southern Gothic is characterized by preoccupations-with blood, family, and inheritance; racial, gender, and/or class identities; the Christian religion (typically in its most "fundamentalist" forms); and home- and a compulsion to talk (or write) about these preoccupations.

(p.271)

Additionally, Tennessee Williams wrote Gothic plays including *Orpheus Descending*, *The Two Character Play*, and *The Purification*, proving the modern use of the genre can thrive and

function outside the classic novel. Indeed, Williams work in literature, drama, and film provides a functioning example of adaptability to both genre and format. *Last Breath* attempts to demonstrate the *web series* as another bridgeable medium to consider, and perhaps the Gothic itself can be revived in some way through this new medium.

Although the Rio Grande Valley I know is far removed from the malevolent factors of the Southern Gothic, it becomes a practical choice due its large plantation-like ranches, superstition, southern setting, and my proximity to the area. As for Hope, the protagonist of my series, one can imagine how the Valley's weather, population, language, and culture are very different from Michigan. The Gothic uses these characteristics to create mood and curiosity, but also to instill a sense of isolation and entrapment, usually within a castle or large house. Bone Creek Mansion checks this box, adapting the paradigm to a ranch house, similar to William's *The Purification*, but set in a once elegant South Texas rancho (Williams). As with other Gothic tales, Bone Creek Mansion has an underlying story to tell, and in essence, functions like a character.

The characters themselves become an interesting exploration into the Gothic. I chose to combine several aspects of the Gothic character. *Last Breath* presents victims, Byronic heroes, physical and emotional wanderers, and an introduction to the grotesque. Some characters, particularly the villainous Thelma, tend to parody the genre. Indeed, women in the Gothic usually seem a bit weak, often relying on their male counterparts. Nearly all the women in *Last Breath* are intelligent, if not crafty, and strong-willed. Within such considerations, I chose to center the story on Hope and the story of her Mexican-American family in the lower Rio Grande Valley.

Hope can be examined from two different perspectives within the Gothic that allude to the complexity of the character. On one end, she may fit the classic female victim. Hope acts as a 'pure' character, originally oblivious to her imprisonment. The initial naivety of the character leads her to believe others mean her well or that she can be won over by pleasantries. For example, Hope offers everything from prayer in episode one to compassion in episode three to escape Candelario's advances. Hope's situation praises traditional Gothic literature as described by Kate Ellis' statement, "the imprisonment and vulnerability of women within structures purportedly designed for their safety, especially the family home. Within this domestic and supposedly sacred space, women may live with the omnipresent threat of violence, if not the reality of horrific abuse" (qtd. in Bailey). This inevitably creates a sympathy for Hope, that at first glance, seems to make her a logical 'prize' for heroic characters such as Gabriel, Miguel, Officer Tillis, or Summer.

The turn is that Hope also encompasses many aspects of the Gothic Hero herself. She is wise beyond her years, resilient, prone to ingenuity, and has an uncertain past to name a few qualities. A conscience choice was made to utilize Hope's amnesia as a character builder and hint to the mystery within the story. Hope's 'blank slate' allows for a constant evolution of the character. Originally, Hope only wishes to flee from Thelma, a trait Bertand Evans notes as typical of the traditional Gothic Hero (qtd in De Vore et al.). However, suppressed skills such as Hope's draw to dance and uncanny ability in chess begin to surface. Ironically, one can sense that Hope steadily begins to use these talents for more insidious purposes such as deception and manipulation. In fact, the "Gothic Hero: The Darker Reflection of Self" sheds light on the Gothic Hero as one who pivots between being self critical and cynical, remaining in flux between the

boundaries of good and evil, and often associating with what some consider dark forces (Cavale). Hope certainly falls into this category, especially when considering her pact with Seba.

Under Seba's guidance, Hope becomes more psychologically and physically proactive, engaging in both moral and amoral actions. Notably, Seba cannot be deemed as the puppet master because Hope argues and often outright defies Seba's recommendations. As the episodes progress, Hope creeps towards becoming the anti-hero. Joyce Carol Oates notes that repressed emotions enslave characters, as well as how the seductive nature of mystery breeds attraction (qtd. in De Vore et al). Hope desires to regain her past, but as secrets and memories surface, she begins to rebuild her character around the world she has come to know. Before long, the audience may begin to notice Hope's methods transcend necessity as a survival tool to act as a form of empowerment and advantage.

Thelma De La Cruz stands out as a dark and mysterious antagonist, traditionally powerful as a Gothic villain, and parody in the fact that such strength derives from a female character using her gender itself as a weapon. Thelma clearly demonstrates influence over various males within the story. In some ways, I envision Thelma as a Dracula of sorts. She has a certain grace, a civilized monster, her malicious intent covered only by a thin veneer of restraint and false charm. All the while, she imprisons Hope in a way similar to how Dracula handles Harker. Astute observation will also note Hope's homework is akin to Harker's letters, both being used as a diversionary tool to the villain's advantage (Stoker). Where as Dracula has a harem, Thelma has influence over Candelario, Aston, Sheriff Leal, and most of the other men she encounters.

Supernatural events are a staple of the Gothic and *Last Breath* follows this tradition. The Gothic handles this in two distinct ways. One deals with supernatural monstrosities and direct physical harm. The other presents the threat of harm, often coming through a supernatural figure

that turns out to be an explainable natural phenomenon. Ann Radcliffe preferred the second method, calling it terror, and going so far as to interject her interpretation on the difference between horror and terror in *On the Supernatural in Poetry*. My story attempts to blur the two, especially with the enigmatic Seba Character.

Based on Radcliffe's assessment of the genre, *Last Breath* leans more towards terror. The threat of harm far outweighs physical violence, and Seba does not directly attack anyone save for her captors during the flashback in the *Soul Sister* episode. Even so, some might wonder if Seba is real or imagined as a physiological backlash during the accident. Only Hope can see Seba, and there is a symbolic irony that she would align with an agent of death. One may also suspect Hope has materialized Seba from repressed memories of her childhood visits with her grandmother. The candles Hope finds indicate her grandmother paid tribute to Seba, and such a discovery may have triggered a repressed memory. Indeed, Hope can be accused of leaning on past memories, like chess, as a comfortable way to process situations in her life. When Hope suddenly lulls into dance or marks up her room like a chessboard, the state of her mental health becomes questionable and gives room for observers to develop physiological reasons for Seba's appearance.

However, a counter argument to this assertion can be made. Seba, short for Lady Sebastienne, and commonly known as Santa Muerte (Saint Death), is an actual figure in many sectors of Hispanic culture. The Catholic Church does not recognize Santa Muerte as holy, even condemning her, but many devout Catholics believe and worship her as a real saint (Thompson). Campbell's "A Saint for Lost Souls" states, "It has become a full fledged mainstream cult with 2 million to 5 million followers" (para. 3). The modern view of Santa Muerte is often related to criminals, but this is an unfair assessment, as she traditionally is known for serving the poor and

weak (Thompson). Some go so far to say she is a fallen angel who assists humans in order to win back God's grace. Others contend she has associations with Aztec culture. Campbell reveals, "...Santa Muerte, or Holy Death, a hybrid of religion that merges Catholic symbolism with pre-Hispanic worship of the skeletal Mictlantecuhtli and Mictlancihuatl, Lord and Lady of the Dead" (para. 1).

I also chose to hybridize several of these stories in creating Seba as a unique character. Gruzinski provides one particularly chilling account from 1797 describing "Indians" [Native Americans] performing a ritual where a figure of Santa Muerte is bound and threatened unless miracles are performed (Thompson). The *Soul Sister* episode begins with a similar account, reconstituting it to fit Seba's backstory in *Last Breath*. Seba originally helped guide the dead into the afterlife. She fails the little boy, whose soul wanders off after she is captured. In turn, she murders her captors out of revenge and falls from grace. Unfortunately, Seba is bound by otherworldly rules, and among them, forgiveness for sin or failure is more generously extended to humans than supernatural beings in this story. Hope simply believes the offer of her last breath attracts Seba because she wants to feel human, an experience beyond her capability or wisdom to understand. However, Seba may very well rationalize taking a human breath will make her human in some way, and in doing so, redemption will become attainable. As a result, Seba will do whatever it takes to fulfill her end of the contract, even if it means luring Hope into risky situations.

As debated in reality, Santa Muerte's intentions as good, bad, or in the middle remain a point of interest in *Last Breath*. A key characteristic in *Last Breath* is that Seba appears as an odd humanlike figure rather than a skeleton. For me, Seba's past struggles bring her closer to the human condition and merit her image to liken the human form. Personally, I find this character

organically fits within the story because her inclusion not only nods to the Gothic, but is also culturally perplexing. The namesake of this character crosses back and forth between fiction and reality, inevitably blurring the lines between the two worlds and triggering debate much in the same way as other theological figures.

Without becoming exhaustive, I point to various other characters and themes present within *Last Breath*. Candelario is a failed man, blinded by his inability to win over Thelma and unredeemable acts against Hope. Violation of purity through rape, violence, and incest are seeded in the Gothic (De Vore et al). However difficult, I chose to include these as a terror Hope must endure. Candelario is also a wanderer of sorts, unable to fit into society and exiled from ever truly gaining Thelma's affection. Gabriel and Miguel can also be classified as wanderers in a much more physical sense. With many of these tropes and idioms in mind, I wanted to play with social viewpoints. Outsiders who look at the surface of these characters may be inclined to view Thelma and her associates as good, while Hope's and her allies would be deemed as deviants or criminals. The audience, however, is privy to inside information and challenged to side with these otherwise outcast individuals.

I also wanted to create an odd, divergent world where the old status quo ways clash with progress. Two interesting examples include the Sheriff's Office and the Clinic. The city police work their way into county territory, literally dividing the Sheriff's office into two separate, and adverse operations. The Clinic incorporates a hospital setting with a psychological ward, thematically placing Hope in an institution fluctuating between mind and body. Nonetheless, Hope always lands in a situation of confinement.

The contrast between the locations and characters works to metaphorically set up this sort of dangerous chess game between Hope and Thelma, splitting the board and the pieces

controlled by each. In some ways, Hope can be considered progress and change, a sort of peasant uprising into a new southern regime, whereas Thelma represents old and often decadent traditions. However, each character in *Last Breath* seems to have ulterior motives driven by their past, and revealed by some misstep or forced confession. In this sense, the audience begins to understand there is unreliability that adds to the story's mystery.

Last Breath builds upon many traditional Gothic geographical elements, character traits, themes, and motifs; Furthermore, this piece builds upon that tradition as the first *web series* modifying such Gothic themes to the Rio Grand Valley.

The second major tradition *Last Breath* builds upon concerns script formatting for episodic material. Many format decisions were made to determine the most appropriate way to develop the script for *Last Breath*. Screenwriters invariably consider the length, act structure, and format elements to tell their story. I had to make these same choices, relying on traditional television writing formats as a guide to the barely explored frontier of the *webisode*.

Episode length becomes one of the first and most obvious considerations when formatting a script. Network television usually has thirty minute or one-hour shows based on the time slot, and often genre. Generally, sitcoms dominate the thirty-minute slot, with dramas an hour. The web does not have such a rigid structure for length. However, two key limitations exist with regard to file size of uploaded material and the streaming ability of viewers. Each individual site places its own requirements. For instance, Vimeo allows video to be of any length so long as it fits within two gigabytes (Vimeo). YouTube lets users freely post videos up to fifteen minutes in length. Longer videos of more than an hour can be uploaded but require verification and good standing (YouTube). Even with this flexibility, one should consider that longer video requires the viewer to have faster streaming capabilities, or the willingness to wait for the video to load. I

chose fifteen minutes to maximize *Last Breath* as a drama, allowing a wide audience to tune in and work within the show's act structure.

Standard network television has anywhere between three to seven acts and sometimes a teaser. Traditionally, acts break up the action at key points of interest, primarily to give the audience an intermission while maintaining interest in the story. Act breaks in television often occur at these points of interest to retain the audience through commercials. Network requirements may play a key role in the number of acts for any given piece due to such advertisements. I chose the simpler three act structure with a teaser because it breaks up the story at relatively even intervals and allows me to more closely follow the tried and true three act method for the set up, confrontation, and resolution in storytelling.

Television uses what is commonly known as the 'cold open' or 'teaser' to attract the audience's attention. This technique launches into the story, revealing intriguing information that will usually be detailed later in the episode. The Latin poet, Horace, is given credit for observing Homer's effective use of this technique in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by opening at dramatic points, calling it "*in medias res*," literally meaning "in the midst of things" (Encyclopaedia Britannica). For example, the *Odyssey* begins with Odysseus blown off course at sea on his return home (Homer). Homer implores the reader to become instantly engaged in the action, questioning Odysseus' past and future within the story. This device carries over well in modern stories, and is particularly suitable when modified into the modern teaser.

Last Breath uses the flashback and flash-forward for story augmentation in the form of a teaser. One example occurs in the pilot episode, *Life and Death*, beginning with the car crash that ultimately leads Hope to Bone Creek Mansion in the opening of the first act. I wanted to convey information about Hope's situation without spending a great deal of time to lay it all out. The

teaser offered me the opportunity to manipulate time and space without slowing the story down. Additionally, I do not typically like to use flashbacks as an exposition tool within the main acts of a story because I believe they tend to draw the audience away from the current action. Information about the past can surface while the story moves forward without detours into exposition- a lesson my playwriting professor teaches creative writers from the onset. Though used sparingly, I also played with different possibilities the flashback offers. In *Soul Sisters*, I split the flashback to both begin and end the episode. Seba's past may encourage sympathy for the character during the teaser, but the conclusion of the episode reveals she is not entirely vulnerable and raises Hope's stakes by her becoming involved with a potentially dangerous ally.

The flash forward teaser reveals information occurring later in the episode or series. Many modern successful television shows, such as *Lost* and *Breaking Bad* employ this technique. Often, the point of intrigue revolves around how characters came into the situations shown in the teaser. The *Friends in Low Places* and *Hard Time* episodes are two such examples in my *web series*. I attempt to maximize the teaser in *Friends in Low Places* by presenting Candelario and Hope as affectionate towards one another, a curious situation because audience members keeping up with the series knows the two characters' normal appearance and attitudes diametrically differ from this scene.

The first act can help build upon the teaser by presenting opportunities for the inciting incident, first plot point, and introduction of key figures and motifs within the episodes. Often acclaimed as a screenwriting "guru," Syd Field provides a three-act structure "paradigm" for writers to follow (Ward). As mentioned before, the *web series* script format remains open for exploration, but I feel Field's paradigm for the first act connected well with the teaser in my story and propelled the action forward. *Last Breath* generally averages fifteen pages from the

opening teaser to the end of the episode, omitting blank space for act breaks; therefore, each episode needed to take care of first act elements in approximately three or four pages. My experience with writing *Last Breath* demonstrated that shorter pieces require great care for structure, especially with the first act being the foundation for how the episode will progress.

The second, and longest, act of a screenplay can present daunting challenges for writers even though it deals with confrontation as Field's paradigm demonstrates (Ward). I have had my fair share of second act difficulties in the past because it feels as though the story can drag on despite whatever obstacles or clashes take place. Viewers who become uninterested can simply click away from the episode much in the same way as someone who changes the channel on a television program. When approaching episodes for *Last Breath*, I realized the second act may be physically shorter, but that the danger of the story stalling remained just as present here as in any piece.

Attempting to create a successful second act in *Last Breath* revolved around consulting Field's paradigm and my basic knowledge of one act and ten-minute plays. Field demonstrates the protagonist strives to achieve their goal, only to hit a setback from which they must go beyond a turning back point to finally reach their objective (Field). In my *web series*, Hope attempts to achieve her goals amidst a series of obstacles. At some point, she becomes committed and either fails, succeeds, or is re-directed on her way to the climax. For example, Act II of *The Gambit* places Hope in a position of trying to evade Candelario's attempted rape. She escapes with Gabriel and discovers information about her family at the graveyard and fort, only to be captured by the Border Patrol. This sets Hope up for a new direction in gaining Miguel as an ally and revealing her skill in chess, a tool she will use in the future. Candelario is also captured by the police as part of the reversal.

My experience with One Act and ten-minute plays became an invaluable asset in *Last Breath* because they relatively match the time frame of the second act and provide good foundations for consolidating information into a structure. Ten-minute plays must flow cohesively, quickly conveying information, often relying on character and crisp dialogue. Indeed, showing rather than telling remains a staple of the form, but *Last Breath* attempts to use relatively short chunks of dialogue with a great deal of subtext. William's *The Purification* is a One Act play that accomplishes these elements within a short period of time, incorporating verse as a tool to better drive the story. Similarly, I endeavored to use intercuts, montages, and cuts as tools to assist with pacing and aesthetics. I made sure to show all parties involved in telephone calls rather than a single character talking to a handset or cell phone. Characters do not talk to themselves or engage in page long monologues. Many times the character's words either hide or reveal what their true feelings may be- all characteristics I explored in playwriting and brought to my *web series*.

The third act generally involves the climax, tying up loose ends, and falling action when observing Field's paradigm (Ward). However, a series such as *Last Breath* needs to withhold some information that will carry on throughout the season, and the entire series. I found this subject one of the most challenging elements of writing the series. Ultimately, I decided what I wanted Hope to achieve for the season and worked backwards in outlining her progression. In doing so, I determined the major and minor plot points to reveal. For example, a clue about her family was awarded every other show or so to help piece together her past. An ally or skill, such as chess, is a more accessible tool in influencing her current situation, and thus came with less frequency. The big payoff, discovering Thelma's intention and her sister, Lilly, will reshape who

Hope becomes as a person and presents questions as to her next move. These endings result from using cliffhangers.

The cliffhanger keeps the audience in suspense about what the next episode or season will bring and how it may affect the entire story. Robert McKee explains, “start a scene of high action, cut in the middle, put the audience into high suspense, then finish the action in the head of the next episode” (qtd. in Margolis). *Last Breath* often employs McKee’s advice as a method to keep the audience’s attention and quickly re-engage them to make of for time delays between the releases of new episodes. As McKee points out with climaxes, “The whole reality of the story is instantly reconfigured” (qtd. in Margolis). The conclusion of *Last Breath’s* first season aims to leave both Hope and the audience with new insights, emotions, understandings, and questions through a captivating *web series*.

The *web series* may still be in its infancy as an artistic form, but the interest and accessibility to explore the medium continues to steadily rise. Currently, the approach to formatting remains an area of curiosity for those who seek a structured way in presenting their stories. Answering such questions will almost certainly require more pioneers to embrace the form. My study into this territory reveals great promise and opportunity, but also suggests the freedoms involved find roots in traditional storytelling methods. *Last Breath* may be a *web series*, but it is written through the study and acknowledgment of classical literature, playwriting, and screenwriting forms.

Last Breath is an attempt at a Gothic based *web series* that the general public and academics can appreciate for its storytelling qualities. The piece honors various Gothic traditions, building upon them by incorporating the Rio Grande Valley and Santa Muerte as a Gothic character in a *web series*. Within these parameters, and based upon researched

screenwriting traditions, I add my structural considerations to the still undefined *web series* format. My hope is that others will continue to explore and add to the medium-until and beyond my last breath.

LAST BREATH

Episode 1: Life and Death

*Screenplays are always written in Courier New font, sized 12, with page numbers located in the upper right corner. Due to thesis formatting requirements, this screenplay has been altered throughout in Times New Roman. Additionally, scene headings, dialogue, and descriptions may immediately carry over onto subsequent pages without following the usual screenplay format requirements.

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. DANCE STUDIO-NIGHT

Open on an empty room, pitch black for the moment. A beam of light illuminates the wooden floor as Tartini's Devil's Trill begins to play.

We get our first look at HOPE, 17, dancing in front of a mirror. Eyes closed, into the music, she's graceful, angelic. Her long hair floats out to the tips of her outstretched arms as if gravity does not exist.

The reflection of a pale face emerges deep in the background. We only see it for a split second because...

The mirror shatters into a spray of tiny glimmering diamonds that float out all around her. One of these twinkling shards brushes against her cheek leaving a bloody, streaming teardrop.

Hope's serene expression turns to horror as her eyes fly wide open.

EXT. MICHIGAN ROAD-NIGHT

Seized by an arctic blast. Empty, except...

The mid-size sedan zooming across the frozen stretch of road, carving a path towards the bend.

A set of high beams from a semi truck round the corner skidding towards the car.

INT. SEDAN-NIGHT

Everyone inside braces, the interior whited out by oncoming headlights.

Then, swerving, spinning, impact. Hope is now fully awake in the backseat next to her sister, Lilly, as the car flips. Glass from the exploded windshield peppers everything. The upended car grinds to a halt across the pavement.

Hope unbuckles herself, dazed. Her mother, TAMARA, stares her straight in the eye as she fades away.

HOPE

Mom?

TAMARA

Lillypad.

And these are the last words Hope will ever hear from her.

The crunching of footsteps on broken glass from outside capture her attention.

Hope crawls from the wreckage to the front of the car where a robed female figure reaches for Lilly.

HOPE

Hello? Help me.

The TRUCK DRIVER rushes over.

TRUCK DRIVER

Jesus, are you okay? Hey...

Hope glances at him then back to the car, but the woman is gone.

Sirens fill the air. We move out to see our girl standing in the headlights of the demolished car. She wipes the bloody drop from her cheek.

The shattered glass lays at her feet, sparkling like a million diamonds as she sways and passes out.

Roll opening credits.

END TEASER

ACT I

EXT. BONE CREEK ESTATE-DAY

Located deep in the Rio Grande Valley. Hot. Dry. Everything on this property is neglected, broken, or decaying.

A black Tahoe tears down the long, winding dirt road. We bump to a stop at old Bone Creek Mansion. CANDELARIO, 40s, a scruffy bearish man pops out and throws open the passenger door.

Hope emerges from the vehicle with a small bag. She's somber, healing cuts visible, recovering inside and out.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-ENTRY WAY-DAY

Large, spacious, in utter disarray. The inside is filled with animal trophies, old furniture, and Gothic artwork.

THELMA DE LA CRUZ, 40ish, glides into the room. She's lanky, dark-skinned, hawk-nosed, well dressed with a ruby broach. She wears a slight grin but has all the charm of a black mamba.

THELMA

Welcome to Bone Creek. You seem to have recovered well.

HOPE

It hurts to move. It hurts to think sometimes.

THELMA

The doctor said you took quite a bump. Very lucky girl.

HOPE

Yeah, lucky.

Hope's eyes well up with tears as she rubs her head.

THELMA

Candelario, can't you see the girl is hurting? Fetch her some aspirin?

HOPE

It's not that. I can't remember my parents, my sister, you, Uncle Candelario. I don't even know who I am.

Emotionless, Thelma embraces Hope. Pats her head like a sorry puppy.

THELMA

In good time, dear. We'll help you get through this. That's what family does.

CANDELARIO

Way that car looked, just be glad you still have a head to remember with.

Thelma instantly quiets him with her glare. Pulling Hope's chin into her palm.

THELMA

Then, let us work together on this problem. I'll tell you what I know and if you begin to remember anything, you tell me. It's very important for your recovery, understand?

HOPE

Thank you. Aunt Thelma, when can I see my family?

THELMA

I understand your anxiety, but one thing at a time, dear. Candelario will take your bags, while I acquaint you with the house.

With a condescending nod he marches up the staircase...

CANDELARIO

As the lady wishes.

THELMA

This way.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-KITCHEN-DAY

A disaster area of tools, rubble and half built counters.

Thelma leads Hope on a winding path to the counter.

HOPE

So, why is this place called
Bone Creek?

THELMA

Tradition runs deep here. The name
dates back a hundred years or better.
A creek ran through the back part of
the property until the draught. Used
to be a lot of deer and javelina. Now,
there's only dirt, mesquites and
bones.

HOPE

This house has been in the family for
quite a while? No offense, but it
looks deserted.

Candelario enters and begins to measure boards along the sawhorse.

THELMA

Again, tradition. I didn't want to
touch anything after your
grandmother left it to me, but times
change I suppose.

HOPE

We are going to be living here?

THELMA

My apologies. The renovations were
supposed to be done weeks ago. You
will also find this is manana country.

Candelario sighs.

HOPE

Manana?

THELMA

Means tomorrow. Tomorrow this,
tomorrow that. The whole house is a
wreck, a nail short of a deathtrap.
This is why I must ask you to endure
your room. Come.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-ATTIC-DAY

The structure is stripped down to the studs save the exterior walls. Cloth tarps drape the pile of contents that bisect the room.

Thelma ushers Hope to the only finished room...

INT. HOPE'S ROOM-NIGHT

A walk-in six by eight closet in the attic. The small bed and bookshelf crowd the room. An adjacent space is tiled with a toilet and tiny shower.

THELMA

Bear with us, but we are going to
have to ask you to stay here until
your room is finished. You will be
content to know your school books
are here.

HOPE

What school will I be going to?

THELMA

Considering your condition, home
study is the only choice for now. I'll
collect the work daily.

HOPE

What about college? I have to do
paperwork and take tests.

THELMA

My, you ask a lot of questions. One step at a time.

HOPE

That reminds me. The viewing?

THELMA

Stubborn one like your mother, rest her soul. Dear, there wasn't a viewing. Your parents had little means. There was a few words and then we spread their ashes like they wanted. There isn't much more to say...

Thelma closes the door, sliding the bolt into place. Hope listens as the footsteps creak down the stairs. She realizes she's locked inside.

HOPE

Hey, did you lock the door? Thelma?

The mechanical whining of a saw drowns her out.

She turns to her unzipped bag, puzzled as she unpacks the clothes. She plucks a picture of her sister. Lilly's name is scrawled on the back. She throws the books from her shelf and falls onto the bed in sobs.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

INT. HOPE'S ROOM-DAY

TITLE CARD: TWO WEEKS LATER

Hope's wounds have healed but she looks worse for wear in her dungeon of a room. She works at several pages of homework. A tray of uneaten soup sits off to the side.

Thelma enters and collects her homework.

THELMA

Are these all of them? You need to write neater.

HOPE

When can I go outside? I've been stuck here for days. I don't care what any doctor says.

THELMA

As soon as the construction is complete.

HOPE

I feel like I'm in prison. I just want out of this room. It's too hot.

THELMA

Young lady, you should see how your uncle and I are making do. Sorry this isn't the Ritz.

(then)

Since we're on the subject, Candelario wanted me to ask what color paint you want?

HOPE

I don't care. I've been thinking a lot about my parents.

THELMA

We've been over this. I told you what I know.

HOPE

It seems so basic, like they were caricatures. I seem to remember...

Thelma towers over her, tense, coiled, alert.

THELMA

What? What do you remember?

HOPE

Well, nothing important.

Backing her against the wall.

THELMA

Let me decide what's important. Go on.

HOPE

I...I...

Hope freezes at the intensity in Thelma's face. Thelma catches herself and backs off. She strokes Hope's cheek.

THELMA

Sorry, dear. I just want there to be a breakthrough.

HOPE

My sister. The last thing I remember is us fighting in the car.

THELMA

About what? Think.

Hope can see the anxiousness creeping back into Thelma's voice.

HOPE

Silly stuff. Probably something about boys.

Thelma eyes Hope with disapproval.

THELMA

Boys are the last thing two girls should squabble over. Most men out there offer nothing but shame and lifelong servitude. Now, why haven't you eaten your food?

HOPE

I've eaten oatmeal and soup every day for the last two weeks.

THELMA

You don't like soup?

HOPE

I like soup, but...

THELMA

Not my soup. I get it. Very well, no more soup. Anything else?

HOPE

My clothes...some of them are missing.

Thelma sighs, composing herself...

THELMA

I'll check the hamper.
(then)
Candelario will attend to you this week while I'm out. If you'll excuse me...

Thelma takes the papers and gives the soup a hard look before plucking it up and slamming the door shut.

The smashing of the glass soup bowl echos from downstairs. Thelma and Candelario exchange heated words we can't make out. Moments later the saw chimes in. Hope eyes the dingy light bulb casting a ray upon the floor.

She begins to dance around the room in a world all unto her own. No more saws, there is only the Devil's Trill. Her toe catches a protruding nail sending her face first to the floor and out of her trance. Hope watches the crimson stream of blood roll down her scraped palm onto her white shirt, marveling at it through the pain.

HOPE

Tears of blood in the snow. Tears of
blood?

She snaps back and eyes the nail. She pulls it out of the floor, removing a plank. In the hollow space is a tiny key. The bolt slides open. Hope quickly replaces the board as Candelario stumbles in with rice and a liter of whiskey.

CANDELARIO

She said you didn't like the soup.
Don't blame you.

HOPE

Did she leave already?

CANDELARIO

A couple of hours ago.

HOPE

When will the work be done? I can't
stand the saw anymore.

CANDELARIO

Soon enough. I get it, this whole
place just has a lonely feeling to it.
You need someone to confide in,
help you out, relieve the tension.

He sits next to her on the bed. Runs his hand through her hair and down her back.
Hope shivers as Candelario takes a pull from bottle. He sits it on the floor.

Hope kneels and clasps her hands, but Candelario isn't deterred.

HOPE

Like prayer maybe? Let's pray.

CANDELARIO

You like fairy tales, huh? I mean,
you really need a friend. Never
noticed how pretty you are from this
angle.

She slides back to the bed, placing her pillow against her as a shield. She tries to calm the rising dread slipping through her voice.

HOPE

Friends? I don't think I'm ready for that.

CANDELARIO

Loosen up. Here.

Hands her the bottle. She takes a chug and coughs.

CANDELARIO (CONT'D)

Bites, don't it? But, it makes everything okay. How old are you?

HOPE

Seventeen.

CANDELARIO

About right. You looked just like her in that hospital bed. Just put your hair up in a bun.

Hope takes a long chug to ease what's coming as Candelario lifts her hair up into a bun. He pulls her close as she heaves and throws up on the bed and his sleeve.

HOPE

Oh God, I feel so sick.

Candelario backs away.

CANDELARIO

Damn girl, you make light weights look like sailors. Shit.

He certainly isn't in the mood anymore as he leaves the room.

Shaken, angry...she goes for the whiskey instead, forcing down long chugs until the bottle is drained. The room warps as Hope slips in and out of consciousness.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

INT. HOPE'S ROOM-NIGHT

Hope leans against the corner of the bed, clutching the empty whiskey bottle. Her face is blue, slowly wheezing, eyes flutter.

The familiar figure emerges from the shadows. Her eyes match those we saw in the reflection. Meet SEBA. She slides around, face to face with Hope. She's pale but darkly beautiful and young, eerily perfect. Her hand emerges from the purple and yellow robe, releasing the bottle from Hope's hand.

HOPE

You're not aunt Thelma.

SEBA

No.

HOPE

Who are you?

Taking Hope's hand...

SEBA

Come, Hope.

HOPE

How do you know me?

SEBA

Let's dance.

HOPE

I don't want to. I feel sick.

SEBA

Take my hand and you won't be sick anymore.

HOPE

Wait. I've seen you before. You're
Death. I don't want to go with you.

SEBA

The Angel of Death, the Grim
Reaper? Is that what you mean? If I
am Death, tell me, who is Life?

HOPE

What?

SEBA

If Death be an individual, then
shouldn't life be?

HOPE

I don't understand.

SEBA

Thousands upon thousands of people
die everyday. Death, like life, is a
thing rather than a who. Therefore,
no, I am not Death. It is rather the
agents of each that should concern
you.

HOPE

Then, you are an angel who has
come to collect me?

SEBA

In a sense.

HOPE

You never told me your name.

Hope struggles to breathe...

SEBA

Seba. Call me Seba. We can talk on
the way.

HOPE

Not like this. Please. I don't want to go without remembering, without knowing.

SEBA

Does it all matter?

HOPE

My life and everyone in it has been taken from me, no, erased. Do you really understand what it means to let go of life? Can you tell me what it feels like, what that last breath means?

Seba curiously stares at Hope, her mind working at the question.

SEBA

Why waste it on these questions?

HOPE

Because if you let me get back what's mine, I promise you my precious last breath to take as your own.

After some contemplation Seba places a hand on her chest. Hope takes in a deep breath.

SEBA

I accept your offer, but you truly don't know what you asked for.

HOPE

Anything besides this prison.

SEBA

It's a tomb.

Hope trembles, crawls to the tiled shower and passes out as Seba backs away into the shadows.

Roll credits.

FADE OUT:

END EPISODE

Episode 2: Hide and Seek

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM-NIGHT

Small, furnished with the basics save for a large recliner. Freshly showered, Candelario exits the adjoining bathroom. He drops down on the recliner, clicking on a monitor sitting beside the television. We see the surveillance screen filled with Hope. She sits upright in bed talking to herself.

CANDELARIO

Crazy little bitch, what are you
doing?

Moments later she crawls over to the tiled shower. Candelario snatches several articles of Hope's missing clothing from a paper bag. Feeling them, breathing them in...

CANDELARIO (CONT'D)

That's it, good girl. Get nice and
clean.

His excitement screeches to a halt as she passes out. Candelario leans in to see the empty whiskey bottle. 'Oh shit' fills his face as he scrambles to get dressed.

Roll opening credits

END TEASER

ACT I

INT. HOPE'S ROOM-NIGHT

Open on the shower nook with Hope, who is a wobbling, trembling mess from purging the alcohol. She pulls herself up, taking two stumbling shoulder rams at the door, getting the worse end of the deal both times.

Hope removes a bobby pin from her hair, going to work at the lock until it breaks in two. Several moments of moping, then she spots the loose nail in the floorboard. She dives for the plank, ripping the key from its hiding place. It slides right into the lock. A sigh of relief. Turns the key, but no go. Dejected, weak, nauseated, she crashes to the floor.

Pounding footsteps rush to the door. Candelario enters, immediately dragging her to the shower. Full bore, the ice cold water puts defibrillators to shame. She flops around like a caught fish, gasping while he shakes her.

CANDELARIO

You okay? Hey, you hear me?

HOPE

Stop. Leave me alone.

She blinks at him wide eyed and soaked. He cranks off the water then catches his breath.

CANDELARIO

I'm trying to save your damn life.
What were you thinking?

HOPE

I was scared.

CANDELARIO

So you go try an kill yourself. That
don't make no sense.

HOPE

Why do you look at me like you do,
uncle Candelario?

CANDELARIO

Candelario. Hell, you don't even
really know me as your uncle
anyway. What's in a name, right?
(then)
I think you were more scared of
yourself than anything. Letting go of
your folks, the changes in your life.

HOPE

My life? All I know of my life
started two weeks ago. Each day
filled with misery.

CANDELARIO

You're drunk so I'm going to give
you a few free pointers. It can get
better if we start making friends.
Way I see it, we can help each other.
You might be surprised how well it
works.

HOPE

You honestly want to be my friend?
Get me out of here.

CANDELARIO

Give an take, that's friendship. In the
meantime, just let me know you need
a little nip of painkiller. Our secret,
but don't go pulling this stunt again.

He plucks up the empty bottle and turns off the light as he exits the room.

INT. HOPE'S ROOM-DAY

The next afternoon.

Hope is demolished. The grinding saw and morning heat do her no favors. A clumpy bowl of oatmeal sits beside the bed. She takes two bites and slides it away. She lies down, palms pressed against her eyes as tears stream down the side of her cheek.

Seba emerges from the shadows clad in a purple robe. She runs a finger down the bridge of Hope's nose. Hope springs upright, retreating to the back of the bed.

HOPE

I remember you from my dream.

SEBA

You can be assured I am very much a part of your reality.

HOPE

Why have you come to me?

SEBA

You forgot our agreement already?

HOPE

No, but I don't know what to do. I'm kept here day and night. And my head, it just hurts all the time.

SEBA

You're blinded by those useless tears. Let them flow until the end of time and see if that fixes the problem.

HOPE

I can't do anything. I already told you.

SEBA

Everything has a design, Hope. Visualize through it. You can forget a great many things but cleverness is a trait, not a memory.

HOPE

Let's see, I'm trapped in an old decaying house with my pervert uncle. Unlike you, I can't walk through walls.

Hope rattles the doorknob.

SEBA

A drunk who isn't in his senses half
the time and a decaying room
fastened only by a new door. Look at
what's right in front of your face and
you'll live a life of disappointment.
(then)
See the light.

Seba glances up. A speck of light filters in from a rotted support above the door frame. Hope lifts herself up jiggles the wobbly board. She looks back but Seba is gone. She plucks a fat textbook from the shelf. Two hard blows and the board splits and falls to the ground. Our girl squeezes up through the gap.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-ATTIC-DAY

Hope drops down into the attic. The staircase is immediately to her right, the windows and wall of clutter sit to her left. Hope works her way into the center where the two windows face each other. It's hellishly hot but she pays no mind.

Hope peers out the window facing the front of the house. A steep roof and long drop. Below is the black Tahoe and construction materials. The window to the back reveals the barn and a pasture all the way to where the treeline meets the creek.

For the first time in a long time, she bathes in the light.

EXT. BONE CREEK MANSION-BACK PASTURE-DAY

A YOUNG MAN, handsome but worn from the brush, emerges from the creek along the dense clutter of mesquite trees lining the back pasture. He takes a knee, scanning the property. Hope's ghostly figure in the window takes him by surprise. He wipes his brow, looks again, but sees nothing this time. The Young Man shakes it off and follows the creek out of the property.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-ATTIC-DAY

Hope lays across the floor in the quiet, peaceful light. No time to dwell on it because here comes Candelario's heavy boots up the stairs. Hope scrambles to lift herself back into her room. Candelario rounds the corner

INT. HOPE'S ROOM-DAY

Hope lays on the floor, book open with pencil in hand.

CANDELARIO

Lunch. That your homework?

HOPE

Yeah, not much done though. My head really hurts.

He slides the rice to her and snatches up the paper. Hope eyes the broken beam.

CANDELARIO

You need to write bigger and neater.

HOPE

Sure. Hey uncle, does anyone else live around here?

She scoots the board under the bed with her foot. Candelario focuses on her.

CANDELARIO

Candelario, and no. Why?

HOPE

Just seems strange to be out here all by ourselves. Why did you move out here anyway?

CANDELARIO

Couldn't pass up the price.

HOPE

What do you know about my parents and sister?

CANDELARIO

Thelma knew them better. Look, I have to get back to work.

(then)

Any clothes for the wash? Why you sweating so much.

Hope hands him a plastic bag full of clothes.

HOPE

The heat is unbearable up here. Think you could open a window or turn on the air?

He eyes her with a smile.

CANDELARIO

Take a rinse off whenever it gets too hot. As many as you want.

He eyes the contents of her laundry bag as he closes the door.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-KITCHEN-DAY

Candelario eats a sandwich and saunters around the room taking measurements. Creaking comes from above. He listens a moment then...

Back to work. He saws a couple of boards. About to go for another then a louder creak and a crash. Candelario bolts out of the room.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-ATTIC-DAY

The dusty old attic.

Hope stretches for the right side window seal, half of her hanging through the broken floor.

We INTERCUT back and forth between Candelario and Hope.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-ENTRY WAY-DAY

The entryway. This time a little more finished. Candelario powers through the room and rattles up the stairs.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-ATTIC-DAY

Back in the attic with Hope who is swallowed up to her arms by the floor near the backyard window. She claws against the dusty boards, but the floor chews her up more.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-SECOND FLOOR HALL-CONTINUOUS

Candelario charges down the long, narrow hall, picking up speed like a bull out of the chute. He reaches for the doorknob.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-OFFICE-DAY

Candelario flings open the door, canvassing the room. Nothing but a desk and chairs. We go to Hope and stay with her in...

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-ATTIC-DAY

Hope sinks lower through the floor. She winces in pain. Seba is there when she opens her eyes.

SEBA

If you let go it will all be over. No more room, no more migraines.

HOPE

You'd like that, wouldn't you?
Finally get what you came for.

The thundering boots close in from the floor below.

SEBA

You best think about your predicament. Imagine what he'll do when he finds you.

HOPE

All the more for your entertainment.

SEBA

Maybe.

Seba nonchalantly points to a gap between two floor boards. Hope grips it, pulling herself up. Hope huddles next to the hole, peering down into a bedroom. We can only make out a small bed.

Candelario comes into view below the hole.

Hope eyes a dresser under a nearby tarp. She slowly scoots it toward the hole. It teeters until the weight carries it through the attic floor. Candelario looks up as it speeds towards his face.

CANDELARIO (O.S.)

Oh, shit.

He dives out of the way as the dresser crashes to the floor.

SEBA

(under her breath)
Better.

The bedroom door downstairs slam shut. Hope ducks under a covered table as Candelario stomps up the stairs. We inch up the tarp to see his boots walk around the hole. He kicks at a rotted out board, almost losing his balance. A long, heavy sigh and he plods back down the stairs. Hope emerges but Seba is gone.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-SECOND FLOOR HALL-DAY

The landing splits into a long corridor with a short perpendicular hall behind us. We hear Candelario hammer away at some project on the first floor. Hope goes right, choosing the first door.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-MAID'S ROOM-DAY

Furnished only by a bed and chest of drawers. This is the room we almost fell through. A single maid uniform hangs in the open closet. Otherwise, only dust, floorboards, and the broken chest fill the room. Hope checks the windows facing the front of the house. Nailed shut. She rifles through the chest of drawers but finds nothing. We're about to leave until she notices the corner of an old album poking out from the edge of the mattress..

She quickly flips through the pages.

INSERT: A page with black and white pictures of a rancher and his wife, a page of them with two happy babies, another with the rancher and two little girls. Some have the maid and a suited man here and there. We flip more to find the girls grow up into teenagers. They look somewhat like Hope. Many pictures of them hugging, fun times. Flip again but the two girls are a little farther apart. More pages show one happy young woman. The other sits off to the side with a frown, resentful eyes. The second to last page is of tombstones in a small cemetery. The last page shows the normally happy girl, now deeply sad. The other girl holds a devilish smirk.

She looks right at us. Those eyes are so familiar. We push in as hope runs a finger over the ruby broach on her lapel.

FADE OUT:

END EPISODE

Episode 3: Family Dynamics

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. HOUSTON, TEXAS-THE PALACE CLUB-DAY

Open on the wolf head etched into THELMA'S ruby pendant. Looking around, we immediately know this place caters to the elite. She mingles with several suits, all power players of some sort.

The men at her table eat up Thelma's southern belle charm. The women are far less amused.

WESTON sits to Thelma's right. He's young, nice jeans and a classy sports coat gives him a certain Texas elegance.

WESTON

Ms. De La Cruz, I beg your pardon in advance for my crassness, but I simply must know your thoughts on our proposal.

THELMA

Well, sir, business generally makes for a poor first course.

All eyes on Weston who covers his big mouth with a napkin.

THELMA (CONT'D)

Thankfully, I find the offer intriguing.

WESTON

Intriguing? Well, that's good.

Taking a sip from her mint iced tea...

THELMA

You know, Texas grows sugar cane and sugar beets. There's Texas sweet
(MORE)

THELMA

tea and even a Sugar Land right near these parts. I'm just of the mind that this particular deal could benefit from some sugar.

WESTON

Sugar? What do you propose?

THELMA

You're either too humble, sir, or my hints too subtle. How's this? Maybe after dinner I can tell you how Texas is also known for its green.

Weston knows exactly what kind of green she's talking about. A few chuckles rise from the table.

They ease down as Thelma plucks up a fork and carefully pokes at her salad. One of the businesswomen cracks a grin and rolls her eyes.

ASTON ALCOTT notices Thelma's mistake. He stops the waiter, HENRY, who already approaches.

HENRY

Mr. Alcott?

ASTON

I believe Ms. De La Cruz's salad and dessert fork were switched.

Not likely, but Henry is a master of covering for the patrons. He collects the fork from Thelma.

HENRY

My sincerest apologies for this mishap, madam.

Thelma's cell phone rings. She covers the incident behind a forced smile and excuses herself with a slight curtsy...

INT. THE PALACE LOBBY-DAY

Fancy and spacious with plenty of room for Thelma to pace.

INTERCUT with CANDELARIO.

INT. SPANKY'S BAR-DAY

Through the smoke and shoddy lighting we can tell this is a dive in every sense. Candelario leans over a beer can, empty shot glasses line up like tombstones in front of him.

CANDELARIO

Knock knock.

THELMA

I'm kind of occupied, Candelario.

CANDELARIO

And what exactly is keeping you so busy that you can't call me back?

THELMA

Meeting in Barne's dreadful office. You should thank God I spared you from coming.

CANDELARIO

Well, don't rush all at once to tell me what he had to say, Sabelo Todo?

THELMA

This better not be the tone of a drunk man.

CANDELARIO

More like an overworked, unappreciated man.

THELMA

Please. How is Hope?

CANDELARIO

Like most teenage girls, endlessly complaining and questioning me.

Aston's hands slip over Thelma's shoulders, gently massaging.

THELMA

Don't say anything to her until I get back. Are we clear?

CANDELARIO

Crystal. I'm going to need more material for the second floor. A dresser fell through the attic and almost killed me.

THELMA

More material? Just finish the first floor. The rest can wait.

She leans back and warmly eyes Aston, motioning him to give her a minute. Aston runs his hands down Thelma's side, tightly gripping her waist. He kisses her neck.

CANDELARIO

You did hear me? I was almost killed today.

THELMA

We can talk about it later. I have some pressing business right now, but I'll be there in the morning.

CANDELARIO

Love you.

THELMA

Mhmm...

We stay with Thelma as she kills the call.

ASTON

Everything okay?

THELMA

Fine. Just my contractor. Shall we?

Thelma composes herself, getting back into the southern belle persona.

Roll opening credits.

END TEASER

ACT I

INT. HOPE'S ROOM-NIGHT

The dank room. HOPE transcribes information from the picture album to a list. Faces, places, details. She's trying to put it all together.

Chopping and smashing somewhere outside catches her attention.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-ATTIC-NIGHT

Flickers of light penetrate the dark attic from the windows, painting cruel shadows against the wall.

Hope drops to the floor from the broken truss above her door. She peeks out of the window facing the pasture.

We watch Candelario drag items from the barn to a roaring bonfire below. He works at the larger pieces with a sledgehammer, stopping between strokes to take swigs from a brown paper bag.

Seba leans over her shoulder. Hope recoils.

HOPE

You scared me.

SEBA

It's not me you should be concerned about. What do you suppose he's up to?

HOPE

Maybe spring cleaning. I don't know or care as long as he leaves me alone.

SEBA

You should care if you want to remember. He's erasing. All that ash
(MORE)

SEBA

used to be some family relic of yours.

HOPE

All these cryptic clues and idioms. Who are you, really? Why do you come to me? What makes me worth your time? If it's to torment me, I've already had my fill.

SEBA

Let's just say I'm a family friend and this started long before you, Hope. Question me any way you see fit, but I always keep my promises. I should hope you do the same?

HOPE

I don't see how I can break what I promised you.

SEBA

I'm talking about your family.

HOPE

None of that makes sense. At this point, I just want to go back to Michigan.

SEBA

Go back to what? Everything you had there ended on a frozen highway.

HOPE

If you know so much, then why don't you fix it?

SEBA

It's not mine to fix and I am bound by rules that you are not.

Seba hands her Lilly's picture. Hope begins to sob.

HOPE

Look at me. What can I do? I'm
nobody.

Seba snaps back, leering, almost nose to nose. Poking at Hope's chest while she lays it out. Hope slides down the wall as Seba presses on.

SEBA

Silence. So coddled by life that you
throw aside the greatest gift you have
like some forgotten toy.

(then)

Every morning you can decide to
change, to do something about your
situation. Your mind, Hope, can get
your body out of a great many
situations.

Hope sits dumbfounded. She wipes her tears and looks at the picture.

HOPE

Okay. Help me, then. Point me in the
right direction.

SEBA

This place is in your blood. It speaks.
Not in words, but it speaks all the
same. Every stroke of the saw and
hammer attempt to silence it.

(then)

Sometimes it's hidden, other times in
plain sight.

Seba runs her hand across the tarp as she walks into the shadows.

Hope carefully pulls at the tarps, causing a chain reaction of boxes to pour down on her.

She sits up, her head beginning to ache. The flickering fire and soft moonlight hint at studs partitioning the attic into two rooms. We follow the studs up to a rafter where a thick, frayed rope dangles.

She clutches her throbbing head, swallowing the pain as she slides into...

INT. WORKROOM-NIGHT

Dark. Only hints of a dangling cord appear between the flickers coming from the window. Click. Dirty yellow light spills in from a hanging light. The room is sooty, blackened by fire damage. A large stuffed wolf head on the workbench faces her.

The opposite wall holds a rusty M1842 rifle. The inscription below it reads Captain De La Cruz.

Hope plucks a screwdriver from the workbench as the crashing of Candelario's sledgehammer filters into the room.

Another whack, then another, as Hope clutches onto her head. Slowly, this is replaced by a violin playing the Trill.

Seba enters, tussling the wolf's ears as Hope begins to dance.

A few moments of this, then Hope's eyes open, focused on the flat, sharp tip of the screwdriver.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

EXT. BONE CREEK-NIGHT

A winding river bank dressed with mud cracks. Dusty rocks mingled with bleached animal bones preserve the namesake of this place. Gnarled brush and cacti are the only life here, except for...

The YOUNG MAN who bolts across the stones to the line of tangled mesquite trees.

EXT. BONE CREEK MANSION-BACK PASTURE-NIGHT

Barbed wire stretched across decaying fence posts outline an overgrown field leading to the manor. Candelario's bonfire throws sparks high into the air by the barn.

The Young Man slides through the fence, crossing the property to the corner of the barn.

EXT. BONE CREEK MANSION-BARN-NIGHT

An old wooden A-Frame, twice as long as it is wide. We stick with the Young Man hunkered down by the corner.

Candelario takes pulls from a whiskey bottle in the paper sack between busting apart an old piece of furniture.

Hope's face appears in the attic window. We admire the haunting figure for just a few moments, then...

CANDELARIO

Answer your phone.

Candelario is drunk and pissed. He stuffs the cell away and punches through the exterior kitchen window. He powers to the back door, slamming it hard behind him as he enters.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-ATTIC-NIGHT

Back to the attic.

Hope moves away from the window as Candelario's heavy boots pound up the stairs. She scrambles to get back into her room. The footsteps hit the second floor and are on the move toward the attic.

Hope climbs up to the truss. The boots only feet away

Candelario's face appears of the tops of the stairs as Hope slides back into her room.

INT. HOPE'S ROOM-NIGHT

The room is a mess, Hope's papers lay scattered about.

HOPE drops to the floor as the door swings open. Candelario yanks her up to her feet.

CANDELARIO
You're going to pay me back for
helping you out. Come on.

Hope tucks away the screwdriver in her waistband as he escorts her out.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-KITCHEN-NIGHT

A set of work lights illuminate the unfinished kitchen. Broken glass scatters the floor. Candelario shoves Hope towards the counter, pressing up against her.

HOPE
Why are we down here?

Candelario eyes her a long moment. Whatever he's thinking fades away as he hands her a broom.

CANDELARIO
Sweep.

HOPE
What happened?

CANDELARIO
Why do you ask so many questions?

HOPE
Sorry.

CANDELARIO

You're going to become just like your aunt, aren't you? You need to relax. Here.

He hands her the bottle.

HOPE

No, thank you.

CANDELARIO

I wasn't asking.

She takes a baby sip. He takes the bottle, motioning for her to keep sweeping as he guzzles away.

HOPE

So, aunt Thelma said you asked what color I wanted my room?

CANDELARIO

Your aunt Thelma says a lot.

HOPE

Tough day? The whiskey numbs the pain, right?

Hope doesn't push the issue. She quietly sweeps.

CANDELARIO

Why do you talk to yourself up there? That bump make you crazy?

Hope perks up, blind-sided that he knows. Candelario takes a swig then hands her the bottle.

HOPE

People think out loud, don't they? You never mumbled to yourself?

CANDELARIO

Sure, but there's a difference. You look like you're really talking to somebody.

HOPE

The other day you said I looked like her. Who were you talking about?

CANDELARIO

I don't remember saying that.

HOPE

I thought drinking buddies share
their mind.

CANDELARIO

Drinking buddies? You?

HOPE

You're drinking, I'm drinking.
Doesn't it look like it to you?

She feigns a gulp, passing him the bottle. Slowly, she slides out the screwdriver, inching closer to Candelario. Hope eyes his neck as Candelario tilts back the bottle.

He looks her dead in the eyes as she flips around the screwdriver behind her back. Ready to strike, then...

Candelario sniffs.

CANDELARIO

You know, Thelma was different
then. Gentle, pretty. That's what I
was thinking when I said that to you.

HOPE

You think I'm like she was? Is that
it?

CANDELARIO

Nope. You've been a pain in my ass
the whole time. But we both have
one thing in common.

HOPE

Neither one of us can seem to get
back what we lost.

She eases the screwdriver onto the counter, taking the bottle from Candelario.

CANDELARIO

We can do our best to replace them.

HOPE

What do you mean?

CANDELARIO

I mean the tension here between us.

We need to work it out.

The screwdriver fumbles through Hopes fingers as Candelario escorts her out of the room.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

EXT. FANCY HOTEL-NIGHT

Five star all the way. The doorman helps Thelma out of the passenger seat.

THELMA

I look forward to our next visit,
Aston.

ASTON

I always count the days. You know,
mixing business with pleasure isn't
half as bad as they say.

THELMA

You villain. Tell Weston to send the
paperwork at the first possible
moment.

ASTON

I'll have the champagne ready when
it comes in.

Thelma strides over to the door, pausing to check her makeup in the hotel window. We know she's just buying time. She peeks over her shoulder to see Aston's car round the corner before scurries into a nearby cab.

INT. CAB-NIGHT

The CABBIE leans back, eyeing the overdressed Thelma.

THELMA

Motel on sixth.

CABBIE

That dive ain't no place for a lady.

THELMA
Just hurry.

The cabbie shakes his head and spins off.

INT. HOPE'S ROOM-NIGHT

The door flies open, Hope tripping backwards onto the bed. Candelario moves in on our girl.

CANDELARIO
Put up your hair. Do it.

HOPE
I don't want to, please. Please. Just
leave me alone.

CANDELARIO
Aren't we buddies? I promise you'll
be begging for it after the first time.

Candelario fumbles around his pockets. Checks his wallet.

CANDLERIO
Damn. Forgot the glove. Wouldn't
want any accidents. Keep the bed
warm until I get back.

Candelario steps out, sliding the bolt shut. Hope pulls up the loose plank, pocketing the key along the way.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-ATTIC-NIGHT

Hope drops down into the attic. Seba waits by the staircase.

SEBA
What do you think he see's in you?

HOPE
He's an old pervert.

SEBA
A simple answer to a complex
question.

HOPE

Whatever. I have to get out of here.

SEBA

Too late.

Hope bolts for the stairs but is halted by quickly ascending footsteps. Hope clutches onto the plank, taking up a position in a blind spot by the stairs.

She's a nervous wreck as the footsteps near the top. Seba's eyes gleam in anticipation. The top step squeaks. He's here. Now or never. She turns and swings, smashing the old board in two across her assailant.

She falls to the floor trying to contain her sniffles.

HOPE

Why? I told you to leave me alone,
you creeper.

SEBA

Well, you never fail to make things
all the more interesting.

Seba descends down the stairs. No time to worry about her for now.

Hope gathers herself to look at Candelario's body. Except...it's not Candelario. Hope's face fills with terror as the Young Man lies motionless on the moonlit floor.

Roll credits.

FADE OUT:

END EPISODE

Episode 4: The Gambit

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. PARKING LOT-NIGHT

Open on a building illuminated by several halogen light poles. We get our first look at the SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT.

A taxi bumps to a stop. Out steps an annoyed THELMA.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT RECEPTION-NIGHT

The DESK CLERK sips coffee, playing solitaire on the computer. We can tell this is how most nights go here.

Thelma pushes through the door, never breaking stride on her way to the desk.

DESK CLERK

Can I help you, Ma'am?

THELMA

Sheriff Leal, please.

The clerk dials the number.

DESK CLERK

Ms. De la Cruz to see you, sir.

SHERIFF LEAL steps into the room. He looks straight out of the Old West with his boots and cowboy hat.

Thelma smiles, extending her hand.

THELMA

Good to see you again, Sheriff Leal.
I understand there's some
unfortunate misunderstanding we
need to clear up?

SHERIFF LEAL

If you'll follow me, we keep the
unfortunate misunderstandings this
way, Ms. De la Cruz.

She drops the smile, fury building behind her eyes as she trails Leal out of the room.

INT. HOLDING CELL-NIGHT

Several Mexican illegals sit on benches along the wall. A square bench in the center hosts a fierce game.

A dirty faced boy outfitted with a lowered baseball cap and mechanic's shirt sits across from a DETAINEE.

The detainee places his pawn on a square. The boy instantly responds. The Detainee shakes his head, pondering. He finally moves his Knight, instantly losing it to the boy's bishop. Checkmate.

DETAINEE

(in Spanish)

You embarrass me again.

Another THIN DETAINEE rips at him.

THIN DETAINEE

You almost lasted ten minutes this
time. Too bad eight of those was you
sitting and thinking.

MIGUEL cuts in, taking Juan's seat. He may be wearing flannel and ripped jeans but we can see the cleverness in his eyes.

MIGUEL

May I?

They reset the board. The boy plays WHITE, going first. Miguel slides a pawn out in response.

The boy is automatic with each move. This continues a few more times. Miguel seizes a piece, only to have one of his taken in return. He grins, knowing he's just been trapped.

MIGUEL (CONT'D)

Tricky. The Queen's Gambit. Ever
heard of Sun Tzu?

(at the boy's shrug)

(MORE)

MIGUEL

Sixth century strategist. He said all war is based on deception.

The two players continue with the game.

Miguel toils between his options, one bad, the other worse. He decides only to have the boy scoop up the queen. Checkmate.

The boy lifts off the hat, hand pressed against his head. Under the short frazzled hair we discover this chess prodigy is really our HOPE.

She drops the captured queen on the board as she's seized by the migraine.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT CELL BLOCK-NIGHT

Simple. Practical. Local riffraff fills the dozen cells lining the block.

Thelma powers into the room. She grinds her teeth, eyes hawking across the room. We follow her quick steps to the end of the Cell Block. She turns and faces the bars.

Roll opening credits.

END TEASER

ACT I

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-ATTIC-NIGHT

HOPE stands over the YOUNG MAN'S body in a panic. She shakes him, but nothing. Only a moment of this, then she's looking for a place to stash the body.

Straining, she pulls him towards the workroom but can't fit between the studs. She covers him with the tarp. No time to dwell on it anymore. Hope makes for the stairs.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-ENTRY WAY-NIGHT

Hope round the banister into the spacious entryway. She races to the door but it's locked tight. We try a window only to find it screwed down.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-KITCHEN-NIGHT

The kitchen turned workshop.

Hope bolts into the rooms, recovering her screwdriver on the floor. She uses it to clean the glass shards from the broken window, plucking up a large shard of glass before bolting out the back door.

MANSION-BACK PASTURE-NIGHT

Dark except for glowing remnants of the fire.

Hope skids to the edge of the house. She peeks around the corner to the front yard. We see the road, freedom. She's about to make a run for it until a heavy hand spins her around.

The Young Man sternly eyes us, bloody, nostrils flaring.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-ATTIC-NIGHT

Back in the attic where Candelario appears at the top of the staircase. He unbolts the lock to Hope's door.

INT. HOPE'S ROOM-NIGHT

Candelario's smile quickly fades as he discovers he's all alone.

He shuffles through the room, checking the bathroom, under the bed where he finds the broken block of wood. His eyes immediately zoom in on the broken spot in the truss.

The condom wrapper drops to the floor as he races out the door.

EXT. BONE CREEK MANSION-BACK PASTURE-NIGHT

The Young Man cups Hope's mouth, pressing her against the side of the house. Up close and personal, we're about to meet GABRIEL.

GABRIEL

Shhh. If you want away from him,
you're going to have to trust me right
now.

(to her nod)

This way.

They rush through the pasture towards the back fence.

EXT. BONE CREEK-NIGHT

Hope and Gabriel stop to take a breather behind the gnarled treeline.

CANDELARIO (O.S.)

Where are you? Get back here.

GABRIEL

Who is that?

HOPE

My uncle.

CANDELARIO (O.S.)

Come on back. I was just playing.
I'm sorry. Hope?

GABRIEL

You're going to tell me what this is
all about once we get out of here.
Come on.

Gabriel leads her down the creek bed, around a bend to...

EXT. BONE CREEK COVE-NIGHT

A small fire illuminates a flat rocky campsite. We can tell Gabriel's been here a while.

Gabriel drops down by the fire and takes a long swallow from a water jug.

HOPE

How long have you been here?

GABRIEL

A week, maybe. Making my way
down to Reynosa.

HOPE

Where are you from and why did
you come?

GABRIEL

That way.

Pointing behind him.

HOPE

You know what I meant. I'm trying
to figure out which way gets me out
of here.

GABRIEL

A smashed head and an
interrogation. This is the thanks I get
for helping you out?

HOPE

Forgive me if I have trust issues at
the moment.

GABRIEL

You were in that window up in that
attic a couple of days ago. I thought I
saw a damn ghost.

HOPE

They keep me up there.

GABRIEL

I thought my family was messed up.

HOPE

He's not my family.

GABRIEL

So, where do you go from here?

HOPE

I don't know. Maybe the police
station, or I'll catch a bus back to
Michigan, and just disappear.

GABRIEL

I can tell you, disappearing isn't that
easy. Besides, you got money for a
ticket? You have someone to meet
when you get there? What the hell
you doing?

Gabriel chokes on his water as Hope whips out the jagged glass shard and hacks away at her
hair.

HOPE

Maybe I'll just become someone
else.

GABRIEL

It's working.

HOPE

Which way is the road?

GABRIEL

You could always go down to Reynosa. I wouldn't mind the company and there's a place that gives real haircuts.

HOPE

Funny. Look, I have all the friends I need at the moment.

GABRIEL

Okay. You'll get spotted if you take the road. Follow the creek bed down to the county line. You'll know it by the fence. Once you cross, take the train tracks into town. Here, Dillinger. Keep your head down and blend in.

He tosses her a flashlight, mechanics shirt and a baseball cap from his backpack.

She nods in appreciation and powers away. Gabriel returns the gesture but his eyes want her to reconsider.

INT./EXT. COUNTRY ROAD-NIGHT

The black Tahoe slowly rolls down the dark road.

Candelario pulls a spotlight from the pile of empty beer cans on the floorboard. He swathes the light back and forth across the brush.

EXT. GRAVEYARD-NIGHT

A tiny cemetery. Weeds overtake the few worn grave markers.

Hope moves in for a better look. She bounces the light from headstone to headstone. Aurelio De La Cruz. Sophia De La Cruz. Lobo. The light comes to a sudden stop on Seba. Hope recoils. Catching her breath...

HOPE

Thanks a lot for helping me back there.

SEBA

You needed my help? You never took it before.

(then)

Do you know where you are?

HOPE

A graveyard. What is it doing here?

SEBA

Many years ago, family plots were set on or near the property. You're abuelo and abuelita De La Cruz.

HOPE

My what?

SEBA

Grandfather and Grandmother. He was a good rancher and family man. Orchards and vegetable gardens ran all the way back to the creek. Sophia did much for the community earlier in life. In many ways, the pulse of the land faded with their own.

HOPE

What about that one? Lobo.

SEBA

Lobo means wolf in Spanish. This one certainly lived up to the name. You'll see.

HOPE

Yeah, well I don't get all this cryptic stuff or why any of it, including you, involves me. I just want to go home.

SEBA

It's always a battle between what we want and what we need, isn't it?

HOPE

I'm sorry, but I don't need any of this.

Hope backs out of the graveyard and scurries into the brush.

SEBA

Let us see, Hope. Let us just see.

EXT. FORT VEGA-NIGHT

Hope emerges from the thicket into a clearing with a rundown tree house built upon a large stump. FORT VEGA is crudely painted above the door. The door is secured by a small padlock.

EXT. CITY LIMITS-NIGHT

The Tahoe rolls to a stop by an underpass where the road connects to the city limits.

Candelario jumps out, pacing back and forth. He plucks out the cell phone, contemplates, then stuffs it away. He bangs his fist against the hood. Turns and sees the street sign. Food, hotels, bus station. He jumps back into the truck and roars off towards town.

EXT. BUS STATION-NIGHT

The Tahoe speeds down the road to the bus station. Candelario rolls through the stop sign as he scans the crowd waiting to board a large bus. Suddenly, the cab is filled with red and blue flashing lights. Candelario pulls over, eyeing the squad car in his rearview mirror.

DEPUTY HERNANDEZ steps up to the window. The officer scans the interior with his flashlight. Empty booze bottles and beer cans scatter the floorboard.

CANDELARIO

Can I help you, officer?

DEPUTY HERNANDEZ

Do you know why I pulled you over tonight?

CANDELARIO

My tags? I got them in the mail. I just haven't put them on.

DEPUTY HERNANDEZ

Actually, you ran that stop sign back there. Sir, have you had anything to drink tonight?

CANDELARIO

No. Hey, I'm kind of in a hurry.

DEPUTY HERNANDEZ

Okay, sir. Can you please exit the vehicle?

Candelario jumps out, throwing his hands in the air acting like a fool. We know where this is going as Hernandez spins him around.

EXT. BRUSH-NIGHT

Hope bangs away at the lock with a small log. Finally, it hits her. She takes the key from her pocket. Perfect match. The lock snaps open. She swings open the door, but it's all for naught. Hope turns to find two border patrol agents pushing through the brush.

She runs but only gets about two steps before they have her face down in the dirt.

ACT III

EXT. AIRPORT-NIGHT

Thelma stands in front with her bags repeatedly dialing Candelario. No answer. She hails a waiting cab.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-ENTRY WAY-NIGHT

Thelma pushes through the door into the dark entryway.

She inches toward the kitchen. The work light shines on the scattered broken glass. Her cell rings. We take a look at the screen.

INSERT: POLICE DEPARTMENT

INT. HOLDING CELL-NIGHT

Back to where we started. Others play chess in the center. Hope and Miguel are now off at one of the side benches. She sits with a hand on her head while Miguel leans over to comfort her.

MIGUEL

Take deep breathes. It's just a migraine. How often do they come?

HOPE

Depends. You a doctor or something?

MIGUEL

Yes, but not that kind of doctor. I am a professor of history and political science. Miguel Rendon.

Breathing deeply, the headache subsides.

HOPE

Hope De La Cruz or Lobo or Vega,
maybe.

MIGUEL

You don't know or won't say.

HOPE

I don't know. Wish I did.

MIGUEL

You are American, so why do they
have you here?

HOPE

According to them, I have no I.D,
committed a breaking and entering,
can't answer any of their questions,
and tried to evade them.

MIGUEL

Oh, well you are the hardened
criminal then. We just came over
here to pick up the classified ads.
Does your family know you are
here?

HOPE

I hope not.

MIGUEL

You ran away, then?

HOPE

It's not that simple.

MIGUEL

Is it ever?

HOPE

I was in a bad crash. My family died
and I can't remember things, even
about me. I stay with my aunt and
uncle, but they're real jerks.

MIGUEL

How so?

HOPE

I'd rather not talk about it.

MIGUEL

Just a moment.

Miguel moves over to the group leaving the chess board.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT CELL BLOCK-NIGHT

Thelma eyes Candelario. He moves over to the bars like a dog with his tail between his legs.

THELMA

Does he have to stay the night,
Sheriff?

SHERIFF LEAL

That's the usual policy.

THELMA

Surely my name has a little more
reach than that?

SHERIFF LEAL

You trying to bribe me, Ms. De La
Cruz?

THELMA

Of course not.

SHERIFF LEAL

I'll start the paperwork and from
there it'll be up to the judge.

THELMA

I see. By the way Sheriff, isn't there
an upcoming election for your
position? It's going to be a tough
race I understand.

SHERIFF LEAL

I suppose they're all strong candidates, but it'll be no tougher than before.

THELMA

That all depends on who's backing you, Sheriff. Reputation and deep pockets determine who wears that badge over their heart. These are two qualities I have at the ready.

He eyes Thelma a moment. Unlocking the cell...

SHERIFF LEAL

I suppose everyone deserves a second chance now and then. Just put a leash on him, will you?

THELMA

A very short one, I assure you.

SHERIFF LEAL

Go on and get him out of here. Make sure he doesn't come back.

THELMA

I must say that I feel safer in a town with a sheriff like yourself, who exercises common sense and compassion alongside the law.

Candelario walks out, eyes on his boots as Thelma escorts him down the hall.

INT. HOLDING CELL-NIGHT

Back in the holding tank.

Miguel returns to Hope.

HOPE

Miguel, you don't seem to fit in with this group. You said you have a job, so why are you here?

MIGUEL

I help them because it's better than the coyotes, I can tell you this much. These are dangerous times right now. Most of those you see here just want to be able to sleep at night. Even this place, with its bars, is better than home in many cases.

HOPE

Teach by day, smuggle by night. Not exactly the good shepard.

MIGUEL

Deception, but for a noble cause. Like your disguise or say, the Queen's Gambit. Only, those who use the gambit know there really is no sacrifice, right?

HOPE

What are you getting at?

MIGUEL

I do what I do with intent, a small price for a greater purpose. Same is true for you, no? You, that silly outfit, all didn't happen by accident.

HOPE

I wish it were so complex and under my control.

MIGUEL

Those names you gave me, De La Cruz, Lobo, and Vega. I think I recall some history about them around the turn of the century.

HOPE

I saw De La Cruz and Lobo together in a cemetery behind the property.

MIGUEL

They came into contact following the Mexican-American War.

HOPE

I saw an old rifle at the house. Its label read Captain De La Cruz.

Miguel stands up. Paces, waving his finger.

MIGUEL

Yes, yes. Check the archives. A lot of honor, but much bad blood too. You know...

A burly GUARD swings open the door and comes to collect Hope.

GUARD

Your family is here to pick you up.

Hope begins to panic, the dread sets in by the second. Miguel tries to comfort Hope, but the guard pushes him away.

HOPE

I want to stay. Take me wherever they are going.

GUARD

Let's go.

She punches the guard in the shoulder. He isn't even phased.

HOPE

I assaulted you. You have to lock me up.

MIGUEL

It will be okay. Be strong.

HOPE

You don't understand what these people are like.

Miguel hands her the white queen from the chessboard.

MIGUEL

Play the Gambit. You will get through it. Until we meet again.

The Guard steps in between and pushes Miguel back a second time before escorting her out.

Hope clutches onto the queen, tears streaming down her face as she leaves. The heavy bars shut and she disappears through a door with the guard.

Roll credits.

FADE OUT:

END EPISODE

Episode 5: Friends In Low Places

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-KITCHEN-DAY

Open on a steaming apple pie cooling on the window seal. Moving back we see the much improved kitchen. Appliances, furniture, the whole nine yards is in place. A few final touches and this room could make some home magazine cover.

Thelma is busy setting the table for five. Her apron betrays the stuffy, proper woman we have come to know.

Clasping her hands with a smile...

THELMA

Candelario.

We slide into...

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-ENTRYWAY-CONTINUOUS

Another fine testament to Candelario's carpentry skills. The animal trophies sit straight on the painted walls, nicely contrasting the polished floor. A giant red carpet extends all way to the door.

Around the banister and up the stairs we go to...

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALL-CONTINUOUS

Still as crappy and glum as ever. Off the landing, we drift past several rooms to the guest room.

INT. GUEST ROOM-CONTINUOUS

Fit for a southern lady. The walls are pink, accented with whites and yellows. Vibrant, beautiful, blemished only by the discolored patch where Hope fell through the ceiling.

Hope sits facing the vanity. She's clean, radiant, dressed to the nines. She elegantly styles her short hair.

A knock at the door.

HOPE

Come in.

CANDELARIO enters. Combed hair, pressed blue jeans and a nice shirt replace the normally sweaty sawdust look.

He moves over behind Hope, handing her a brush.

CANDELARIO

Thelma's calling.

HOPE

Be right down.

Candelario pats her shoulder. Hope squeezes his hand and smiles. Hope stands and faces a tall mirror. The satin dress glitters with gold and fits her like a glove. A moment to pick our jaws up from the floor, then...

Candelario nods and leaves. Hope fluffs her hair and winks.

Roll opening credit.

END TEASER

ACT I

INT. TRUCK-FARM ROAD 15-NIGHT

The dark highway lays out in front of us through the windshield. Hope sits in the passenger seat with her head against the window.

GABRIEL works the wheel, calm, but we can tell his mind is working overtime.

HOPE

How did you find me?

GABRIEL

I have a scanner. I also saw the lights from the Border Patrol truck. Figured it was you they nabbed. Getting you out, now that was mostly luck.

HOPE

You asked and they just let me out?

GABRIEL

I know one of the agents. Saves them from getting deeper into paperwork anyway.

A police car zooms past. Gabriel checks his mirrors.

HOPE

Do you know what the Queen's Gambit is?

GABRIEL

The queen's what?

HOPE

Me either, but through my amnesia, it turns out I'm a master chess player
(MORE)

HOPE

and dancer. I just sort of do things without knowing how. Think it's a miracle?

GABRIEL

I don't think it's a miracle, you are just remembering it all bit by bit. You got any other family besides your aunt and uncle?

HOPE

Not alive. You?

GABRIEL

Here's some interesting trivia. My dad used to be the sheriff many years ago before Leal came in.

HOPE

The Sheriff's son? Don't take this the wrong way, but I don't exactly associate you with the law.

GABRIEL

First, Ex-Sheriff, and you're not the only one with family issues. Second, don't confuse the law around here with justice.

HOPE

Are you on the run?
(to his stare)
Great. Let me out. The last thing I need is for the cops to grab me again and call my aunt or uncle.

GABRIEL

It isn't what you think.

HOPE

Every time you help me, I end up worse than before.

GABRIEL

Now look here.

HOPE

Watch out.

Gabriel turns to see the flash of someone step in front of the truck.

EXT. FARM ROAD 15- MILE MARKER 7-CONTINUOUS

A stretch of pavement divides fenced brushland on both sides. Seba stands in the middle of the road.

The truck swerves to miss her, skidding all the way into a tree.

Officer RAY TILLIS sees the crash from his hiding spot behind a road sign. He pulls behind the truck, popping out to inspect the crash. On his radio...

OFFICER TILLIS

Dispatch, we have a 10-50 on Farm Road 15, mile marker seven. Plates are 168DTR, late model white Ford pickup.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)

Copy unit two.

OFFICER TILLIS

Request medical assistance.

Ray opens the door, helping Hope exit the vehicle. Gabriel slides out of the driver's seat.

HOPE

I'm fine. We're good.

OFFICER TILLIS

Sir, have a seat over here. An ambulance should be arriving shortly. Any injuries?

GABRIEL

No, we're fine.

OFFICER TILLIS

What happened back there? It looked you just veered off into that tree.

HOPE

We saw someone in the road.

RAY TILLIS

I'm sorry?

GABRIEL

Probably just a deer.

OFFICER TILLIS

You two on any kind of controlled substance? Maybe stopped to have a drink or two?

GABRIEL

No.

OFFICER TILLIS

Okay. Let me take down your information.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)

Unit two?

OFFICER TILLIS

Unit two, go ahead.

DISPATCHER (V.O.)

Vehicle comes back to a Raphael Cantu. Reported stolen about an hour ago.

OFFICER TILLIS

Don't move.

Tillis draws down on them with his GLOCK.

We move back to see Seba taking it all in. The slightest hint of a smirk appears on her face as she strolls away down the dark highway.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-DEN-NIGHT

Half restored and styled in eighteenth century furnishings. Candelario slouches in an old chair, Hope sits on the adjacent couch. Both are silent, no eye contact.

Thelma enters, standing front and center.

THELMA

I go away on a short business trip
and this is what greets me when I
return. The Sheriff; city police;
hospital; even Border Patrol; I'm
half expecting to hear from the Texas
Rangers or F.B.I. Is there any agency
either one of you didn't get into
trouble with?

(then)

And what did I tell you about boys?
Running around with that delinquent
put everything in jeopardy.

HOPE

Aunt Thelma...

THELMA

Quiet.

CANDELARIO

She...

THELMA

Both of you. This all comes back to
me, you know. I'm the one doing all
the explaining, risking my
reputation.

She steps up to Candelario.

THELMA (CONT'D)

The drinking was supposed to stop long ago. Do you see what it does? Not a drop will cross your lips from this point on. Are there any objections?

CANDELARIO

No.

THELMA

I don't care what it takes, this floor will be done within two weeks. Yes?

CANDELARIO

Yeah.

Thelma moves over to Hope.

THELMA

I understand you have been through a lot. The room might seem like a prison; you might hate the food; I don't like grading homework as much as you don't like doing it. There are too sides to every story, and I ask you to understand that I am doing my best to get everything in order amidst all this chaos. Don't forget I lost Tamara in that crash too. I'm not going let you wander around and break your neck in this house.
(then)
I'm a fair woman, so this is your chance, anything you would like to address at this time?

Candelario glances over at Hope. She eyes him back, the queen chess piece twirling around her fingers as she decides how to lay it out.

HOPE

Yes, I have a concern about uncle Candelario.

CANDELARIO

Thelma...

THELMA

You had your turn. Go ahead, Hope.

Candelario is on the edge of his seat, pale, about to shit himself.

HOPE

I can also tell the drinking makes him a different person. I think it's the pressure and other distractions. Maybe he needs an assistant. Like me.

THELMA

Absolutely not. Did you not hear what I just said?

HOPE

The house would go quicker. I could make sure he doesn't drink on the job, and gets me out of the room for a while so I wouldn't feel like running away. Besides, Uncle Candelario knows what he's doing. I'm sure he'd make certain nothing gets on top of me or tries to poke me, right Uncle?

Hope smiles at Candelario. He glares, trying to figure her out. Thelma chews at her lip.

CANDELARIO

Reckon so.

THELMA

Hope, this is hard work. It takes...

HOPE

I already talked to Uncle Candelario. He said I would be begging for it after I try it the first time. Isn't that what you said?

THELMA

You did?

CANDELARIO

Reckon I did.

He turns ten shades of red, squirming about his chair.

HOPE

We all get what we want. Put the rest behind us. Wouldn't you like to erase the past and move on, Uncle Candelario?

CANDELARIO

Very much.

HOPE

That's two votes. It's all on you, Aunt Thelma.

Thelma paces. Judging by her expression, her head might implode at any moment.

THELMA

Only under Candelario's supervision. I mean strict, unobstructed supervision. You understand, Candelario?

CANDELARIO

Are we done here?

THELMA

Hope, you're going to do all of your homework every day, neatly written and readable, yes?

HOPE

Yes.

THELMA

No more running away?

HOPE

No. In fact, Uncle Candelario said my room should be done soon so I should be a lot more bearable.

Thelma gives Candelario the evil eye. He'd disappear if he could.

THELMA

We'll see how all this goes. I will be keeping a keen eye on both of you.

HOPE

Great. We'll start tomorrow. I'm sorry for all the trouble, but maybe this is just what we needed.

Hope nearly squeezes the life out of Thelma with a giant hug. She runs over and kisses Candelario on the cheek.

THELMA

Where are you going?

HOPE

My room to do homework.

Hope bolts out of the room. Thelma and Candelario look like deer caught in the high beams.

INT. HOPE'S ROOM-NIGHT

Hope enters, pulling down textbooks, arranging her notes on the bed.

She takes a deep breath, closes her eyes and begins to sway. A subtle dance ensues. Her outstretched hand is taken by Seba. Seba gently spins her around to the bed, sitting her down on the floor. Hope's eyes open with a mile wide grin.

SEBA

How did it go?

HOPE

It went pretty much like you said. Why won't you just let me make another run for it? I don't really like the idea of being around either one of them.

SEBA

Let me put this in a way you can visualize. Think of this house as their rook and the law as their knights. They control these and many other pieces. Running will get you nowhere but trapped.

HOPE

You didn't have to cause us to crash
into a tree.

SEBA

A person often meets his destiny on
the road he took to avoid it.

HOPE

Clever.

SEBA

Jean de La Fontaine. Your kind has
incredible ability, the problem lies
with realizing such potential.

HOPE

And Gabriel? I feel bad.

SEBA

Not now. He's fine and that's all you
need to know.

HOPE

He's in jail because of you.

SEBA

Thank me later. Now, concentrate on
what I told you.

HOPE

Seems like I'm only a pawn.

SEBA

What happens when a pawn reaches
the other side of the board? We'll
find or take pieces as we go. How
well did you position yourself with
Candelario?

She slides the queen to the center of the floor.

SEBA (CONT'D)

Good. Now you are starting to see.

HOPE

Control the center. Candelario knows
he's in trouble. Attack at angles.

Thelma doesn't see what's going on.

SEBA

Good girl. Let us see if you can
further put that theory to practice.

We focus in on the queen as the scene fades.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

MONTAGE

- Hope measures boards while Candelario saws. He's on his best behavior but neither speak to one another as they work.
- Another day of the pair working, starting to find a rhythm. Thelma doesn't like it but can see positive results. Hope pockets a small tool, a scrap here and there when nobody is looking.
- Hope doing pages of homework in her room. The stash of nails, tools and scraps grow in the hidden space under the plank. Seba converses with Hope, no doubt planning away.
- The kitchen is almost done. Hope and Candelario seem like a team. Thelma remains suspicious but more approving as the days go by.
- The entryway looks picture perfect. Hope and Candelario roll out the red carpet on the beautiful stained floor. Thelma still plays the foreman, never letting either out of her sight for very long.
- Candelario patches the guest room ceiling. Paint goes up. Out with the bed, in with new furniture.

We END MONTAGE inside...

INT. GUEST ROOM-DAY

The familiar room fit for a princess. Hope and Candelario adjust the vanity.

CANDELARIO

Well?

HOPE

It's perfect. Everything.

CANDELARIO

Of course, I did it.

(at Hope's look)

We did it.

HOPE

Could use a little fresh air to get rid
of the paint smell.

Hope goes to the window. Candelario moves in to demonstrate.

CANDELARIO

Screwed and glued down. The
window is rigid plexiglass,
shatterproof. Sorry, but Thelma still
thinks you might be a flight risk.

HOPE

Seriously?

CANDELARIO

Orders are orders. I've known her for
years and can tell you, everything
works in baby steps with that one.

HOPE

Apparently.

CANDELARIO

Which brings me to you. What's
with the sudden change in attitude?
Why didn't you tell Thelma about...

HOPE

We agreed to put that in the past.
Maybe it was the booze or maybe
you were just a lonely man in a
broken marriage. Aunt Thelma will
see the beautiful work and care you
put into this house. I think once the
house is finished, whatever is
between you two will go away.

CANDELARIO

Maybe. Plumbing should be good in
the bathroom. Get cleaned up, we're
going to have a guest tonight. You'll
find what you need in the closet.

Candelario leaves. Hope opens the closet to find the stunning evening dress.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-GUEST BATHROOM-DAY

A full bath, practical, sterile in design. Towels, toiletries and essentials garnish the room, nothing more.

Hope exits the shower wrapped in towels. Seba appears behind her through the cloud of steam.

INT. HOPE'S ROOM-NIGHT

Back to where we started. Hope's a knockout in her dress. Seba helps make sure everything is in place.

SEBA

This is your opportunity to look around.

HOPE

We've been working around the house. I didn't see anything unusual. I'm beginning to think I'm the paranoid one.

SEBA

That is because your eyes are closed even when they are open. How many rooms are on this floor?

HOPE

Four or five, I'm not sure.

SEBA

What's in the room right next door?

HOPE

I don't know.

SEBA

How many squares are on a chessboard?

HOPE

What? Chess again?

SEBA

I'm making a point. How many?

HOPE

Eight rows and eight columns. Sixty four total. What does that have to do with anything?

SEBA

Sixty four?

Hope thinks a moment.

HOPE

If you literally count every square, there are two-hundred and four.

SEBA

Very good. A design inside of a design. Study the squares before you make conclusions. Take advantage to do so when he leaves.

HOPE

Who?

Two knocks at the door.

HOPE (CONT'D)

Come in.

Candelario enters with the brush and we know the rest from here.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY-DAY

Candelario strides out of the guest room. Hope creeps along the narrow wall as Candelario descends the stairs.

She stops at the first room near the banister. Locked. Hope produces a small screwdriver, quickly spinning out the two screws. Sliding the door open.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-OFFICE-DAY

The orange rays of the setting sun illuminate several chairs and a desk. Stacks of papers litter the desk and floor. We remember this as the room Candelario entered before.

Hope moves over to check the window. Nailed shut. She clicks on the desk lamp. Hope scoops up a picture frame laying face down.

INSERT: Young Thelma posing with someone but the picture is folded to cut out the other person.

Hope opens the frame to reveal the rancher on the other side. The back reads 'Aurelio and Thelma at the garden.'

She puts the picture back just as it was. A quick check of the drawers. Locked.

CANDELARIO (O.S.)

Hope, Dinner is ready.

Hope scans the papers on the desk. One stack is her homework, pages and pages of it, words here and there highlighted in yellow.

The papers next to it are filled with the name 'Hope Vega' written over and over again in another's handwriting, each line getting closer to Hope's.

We find another stack with the highlighted words repeated until they begin to match the originals.

THELMA (O.S.)

Hope?

Hope flinches, the color draining from her face as we pull away to see the piles and piles of forged words.

Roll credits.

END EPISODE

Episode 6: In the Darkest Hour

TEASER

EXT. BONE CREEK MANSION-BACK PASTURE-DAY

Lush. Green. We can almost smell the blooming orange trees in the orchards and vegetables crowding the garden plots.

SOPHIA DE LA CRUZ scatters chicken feed nearby.

Two goats bolt from the side of the house as AURELIO DE LA CRUZ gives chase in suspenders and a wide brimmed hat.

Little TAMARA DE LA CRUZ follows, rope in hand. She hasn't got a chance in the world but she gives it her best.

AURELIO

Get him, mi hija. The little one is turning.

TAMARA

Nope. I'm gonna get the big one.

AURELIO

Okay, I'll get the little one.

Aurelio tries to cut off the big one. Left, right, up, down, they tumble to catch the crafty goats.

A girl lumbers an old washtub out of the house. We know this is THELMA DE LA CRUZ by the tight bun in her hair.

Sophia puts her arm around Thelma, both chuckle at the antics of our out-matched pair of wranglers.

Aurelio slips, Tamara tumbling down on top of him. He hugs her, all laughs and giggles. The goats trot away as an old pickup truck loaded down with lumber backs into the yard.

A leathery man, FRANK, exits the driver's seat. Aurelio plops his big hat on Tamara's head and goes over to greet Frank.

FRANK

Where you want it?

AURELIO

Can we put it towards the back of the pasture.

FRANK

Reckon we could, but it won't be good if the creek floods. A lot of moisture there anyway. Your livestock might get hoof rot.

AURELIO

You're the professional. Where do you think?

FRANK

Unless you're going to cut down that citrus, I figure this spot is about as dry and level as you got.

Aurelio eyes the large honeysuckle right in the middle of the plot.

AURELIO

Nowhere else?

FRANK

Wherever, but I won't guarantee the work if you don't take my advise.

AURELIO

Okay, go ahead.

Frank whistles and a familiar SMALL BOY with a shiner under his eye jumps out and starts unloading the boards.

Aurelio moves over to Thelma, his head down. We know they're talking about the honeysuckle tree. Thelma explodes in tears, rushing over to hold, defend her tree.

The boy watches Thelma while Frank chugs down a beer. Frank swats the boy on the back of the head. Frank grabs an axe.

FRANK

Hurry up. I don't want any of that crying, girly shit rubbing off.

We move over to Thelma who buries herself in Sophia's arms as Aurelio enters the house. Thelma flinches at each whack of the axe.

THELMA

It's not fair. I raised it from a seed. I touched its first leaf.

SOPHIA

Come on Thelma, let's go inside.

THELMA

No. I love it. I won't leave it.

The honeysuckle falls to the ground. He drags it away. Thelma breaks free, pouncing on the tree.

FRANK

Hey, lady.

SOPHIA

Where are you taking it?

FRANK

Gonna burn it. Look, you want this barn or not?

SOPHIA

We'll grow another one.

THELMA

That's my tree. I don't want another one.

Sophia takes hold of Thelma, stopped by a tug on her dress.

The boy presents Thelma with a honeysuckle clipping. Frank chases after him. We're about to realize this is...

FRANK

Candelario.

CANDELARIO

Here, your tree needs you to take care of her baby.

Frank nearly jerks him off his feet.

SOPHIA

How did you get the black eye?

FRANK

It's because you're clumsy as an ox,
isn't that right?

CANDELARIO

Yes, sir.

We begin to ease away from this memory as little Candelario keeps his eyes to the ground.

Roll opening credits.

END TEASE

ACT I

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-DINING ROOM-NIGHT

A giant carved brisket sits in the center of the table surrounded by containers of beans, corn and tortillas.

Hope eyes Thelma and Candelario as she enters. These people have gone from suspicious to plain spooky.

CANDELARIO

Have a seat.

THELMA

Won't you say hello to our guest,
Hope?

She didn't even notice Weston sitting off to the side, but he is certainly engaged. He stands, arm extended like a southern gentleman.

WESTON

Very nice to make your
acquaintance, Hope. I heard a lot
about you.

Hope forces a smile and sits quietly. He stares at her a long moment.

CANDELARIO

I'm just going to get some of this
before it gets cold.

THELMA

This might not be quite as elegant as
what they serve at the palace club,
but South Texas barbecue has a
certain flair to it.

WESTON

I'm sure it will be a treat. Ms. Del La Cruz, I must say you have quite a nice place here.

CANDELARIO

Thank you.

THELMA

It's a work in progress.

WESTON

How far does the estate go back?

THELMA

My grandfather was the original grantee of the property. My parents inherited it thereafter.

HOPE

What was grandpa's and grandma's name?

THELMA

Your grandfather's name was Aurelio and your grandmother's was Sophia.

WESTON

You didn't know them, Hope?

HOPE

So much is a mystery to me. I lived most of my life in Michigan. Were you close to grandpa, Aunt Thelma?

THELMA

Very. Well, are we going to eat or chat about ancient history?

(then)

You are all family here, so feel free to serve yourself.

Everyone digs in. Hope gorges, slowing only at Thelma's frown.

WESTON

I can safely assume this is your favorite dish?

HOPE

I usually eat oatmeal.

WESTON

You have more discipline than I do. That's good though, you certainly keep in shape.

CANDELARIO

So Wesley, what's the word from Barnes' office?

WESTON

It's Weston. Who is Barnes, mister..?

THELMA

Candelario.

Weston's confusion is replaced by a sly grin.

WESTON

No business at dinner. She got me for that one too. So, where do you work, Hope?

HOPE

I'm in school.

WESTON

What's your major?

HOPE

High School.

WESTON

Oh...a senior? You're about eighteen or so, right?

HOPE

Seventeen. I hope to go to college soon.

WESTON

How's your grades?

HOPE

Good question. How are my grades, Aunt Thelma? I'm still waiting to get my homework back.

THELMA

I send all your work off to the state once I grade it.

(then)

Speaking of which, it's about time you crack those books. Remember, write so I can read it. Candelario, if Weston and I could have a moment as well?

CANDELARIO

Sure.

He reluctantly leaves. Weston helps Hope from her seat as she steps out.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-ENTRY WAY-NIGHT

The grand entryway. Hope walks the red carpet toward the banister. We see Candelario standing on the front porch through the window.

Hope clacks her heels halfway up the stairs, slipping them off and scrambling to the corner outside the kitchen.

THELMA (O.S.)

Where are we at on the deal?

WESTON (O.S.)

I'd like to have some guys check it out for both our benefit. Of course we'll pay you a fee for your time. There's just a little trouble with the paperwork.

THELMA (O.S.)

What kind of trouble?

WESTON (O.S.)
Probably just some small oversight.
There's a discrepancy between our
Houston and Michigan office.

HOPE
Michigan?

END ACT I

ACT II

EXT. BONE CREEK MANSION-NIGHT

Somewhere between rustic and refined. We are on a large wooden deck outfitted with two chairs.

Thelma and Candelario see Weston off from the front porch. They stand in silence until his headlight disappear around the corner.

CANDELARIO

So?

THELMA

There's a problem, but nothing that can't be remedied.

CANDELARIO

What kind of problem?

THELMA

Paperwork. It's minor.

CANDELARIO

How minor?

THELMA

Good God, enough with the questions. You are beginning to remind me of her.

CANDELARIO

I'd like to be included in these meetings.

THELMA

I already told you, these issues have to do with my family.

CANDELARIO

Thelma, we've been together since we were little kids.

She looks at him a long moment, then hugs him with a sob.

THELMA

It's hard. You know what this has done to me. My sister, all these new responsibilities. I didn't ask for any of it.

CANDELARIO

It's okay. You got me. See, look at the house. It's going to be the best in town. We'll have big barbecues, maybe invite the who's who around town.

He takes her hand as we can see her daydreaming. She pulls it back, reality crashing back in. She's suddenly as rigid as ever.

THELMA

It's fine work, Candelario. I promised to take care of you, and I will once this is all resolved.

CANDELARIO

You don't understand. I'm not interested in...

THELMA

Not another word about it. You're getting too caught up right now.

CANDELARIO

It's not going to be a big deal. Everything is pretty much done. The house, the deal, it's going to happen. And it's because we did it together.

He takes her hands, kneeling. She pulls him up.

THELMA

We are a lot farther away than you think. We'll see how committed you are once this is all finished.

CANDELARIO

More committed than Luis.

This outburst officially starts round two. The argument drifts up, filtering into...
INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-GUEST ROOM-NIGHT

Back in her plain clothes, Hope stands by the window watching Thelma and Candelario carry on below. Reveal Seba pacing the room. This time she wears green.

HOPE

Look at them carry on. I bet it has to do with that man, Weston. He mentioned Michigan. They're planning on using my name, but for what?

SEBA

Why you were invited to dinner in the first place is the better question.

HOPE

Strange. I never paid attention before Weston called Aunt Thelma Ms. De La Cruz. Those papers in the office have me down as Hope Vega.

SEBA

Indeed. A whisper from the house, I would say.

HOPE

That tree house said Fort Vega. But, there were no Vega's in the cemetery.

SEBA

That's because no Vega has ever lived here.

HOPE

I don't get it. Aunt Thelma and Uncle Candelario are family. I saw my mother and aunt there with my grandparents in the pictures.

SEBA

Maybe you should start with what you don't see.

HOPE

Cryptic puzzles. Can't you actually do anything for me?

SEBA

When you were very little, you and I often played in your grandmother's room while she quilted. Sometimes we talked, other times it was games. A little candle lit the floor where we sat. I wonder where it is now?

Hope turns to find the room empty. She lets go of a deep breath.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-SECOND FLOOR HALL-NIGHT

Hope slinks into the hallways, scurrying past the office and staircase to the room at the end of the hall.

She checks the knob. Locked tight like every other room in the house. Hope has become a pro with the screw driver, making quick work of the lock.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-THELMA'S ROOM-NIGHT

The master bedroom in the house. The scant furniture makes the room look cavernous.

Hope checks the vanity. Make up, perfumes and jewelry. Moving on to the dresser. Each drawer is neatly categorized and in order. We get to the bottom, lifting out an old shoebox. Inside we find old past due bills and debts. Putting it back in place...

We check one of the closets. Thelma's clothes run from one end to the other, hanging in perfect order. Matching shoes sit directly underneath each outfit.

On to the next closet. We swing the door open to find it stuffed with boxes. We pull a few out. Dated clothes. The next contains old papers, mostly junk, except a few odd sealed envelopes with stenciled hearts labeled 'L.V.'

Hope tucks these away. She opens the next box to find a thick layer of sage mixed with other herbs. She digs down until several candles begin to appear. She takes one out.

The downstairs door slams. We race to put everything back except for the one candle. Hope scrambles to replace the lock screws as light footsteps rattle up the stairs.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-SECOND FLOOR HALL-NIGHT

Hope barely tucks into the shadows down the hall as Thelma reaches her room.

Thelma unlocks the door, pausing as the knob rattles. Hope winces, bracing, praying that Thelma doesn't inspect the knob closer.

Thelma sighs and closes the door behind her. Close call. Hope exhales but only for a moment because...

Thelma's door opens. Hope barely makes it inside her room.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-HOPE'S ROOM-NIGHT

Hope dives into bed. We hear Thelma's footsteps stop outside the door. The lock turns shut, then footsteps again until we hear Thelma's door close down the hall. Seba waits by the window.

HOPE

I thought she busted me.

SEBA

She won't be back tonight. Come here.

Hope digs out the letters and candle.

HOPE

Aunt Thelma is weirder than I thought. I found these love letters and the candle you talked about. It was under a bunch of weeds.

SEBA

I really don't like that woman.

HOPE

Am I supposed to light this candle?

SEBA

I can't answer that question. Come here for a moment.

Hope steps up to see Candelario pile tools into the back of the Tahoe.

HOPE

What's he working on so late?

SEBA

Between what you found in the office and dinner, I'd say they made their move. Wouldn't it be your turn.

HOPE

Let's find out where he's taking us.

She produces the screwdriver.

END ACT II

ACT III

EXT. BONE CREEK MANSION-NIGHT

The Tahoe is backed up near the porch, all door open as Candelario stuffs sawdust covered plastic drop clothes in the back seat.

He goes to wrap up a large extension cord. Hope dashes from the side of the house to the Tahoe. She slides in under the drop clothes as the extension cord lands in the back.

Candelario pushes a miter saw in and slams the rear door.

INT. TAHOE-NIGHT

We lay tightly wedged in the backseat, the rumble of the engine taking us to some unknown location.

EXT. OLD TRAILOR-NIGHT

The Tahoe bumps to a stop in front of an old single wide. The trailer has a lot of 'character' and the lattice around the porch does little to improve the property value.

Candelario pops open the rear door, unloading his tools. He lugs a large tool box up the porch stairs.

Hope eases out of the vehicle as Candelario enters the trailer. She races around the porch, taking cover behind the lattice.

Candelario emerges, going for another load of tools. Hope waits him out. We pull ourselves up to the window to see Candelario roam into the kitchen. He rummages through the fridge, slamming it shut empty handed.

Hope drops down as Candelario exits. He locks the door, jumps into the truck and rolls off into the night.

Hope tries the door, but this time the screwdriver is no match for the dead bolt. We go back to the window.

INT. CANDELARIO'S TRAILER-KITCHEN-NIGHT

The window pops up, Hope entering the modest trailer. Everything in here looks like a throwback to the 80s.

INT. CANDELARIO'S TRAILER-HALL-CONTINUOUS

Down the narrow hall into...

INT. CANDELARIO'S TRAILER-BEDROOM-NIGHT

The cozy room with the big chair and monitor. Hope quickly searches the room. Clothes, knickknacks, junk. We pull down a black bag from the open closet. Hope produces her missing undergarments and a videotape. Her attention immediately turns to the small monitor by the television.

She clicks them on. Hope's attic room appears. This hits her like a ton of bricks. Hope slides in the tape. The shower running. Hope closes her eyes in disgust. We get the idea of what this tape is all about. Enough. click.

Hope is about to destroy the tape when Seba enters the room.

SEBA

Do you really want him to know you were here?

HOPE

Candelario never fails to find new ways to sicken me. He has his porn pad here, getting his rocks off on me, because Aunt Thelma won't give him any. Wait until I tell her about this.

SEBA

Information is a weapon best concealed until needed.

HOPE

I should have seen it. Why else would he think I was talking to myself? I'm not sure I can even pretend to get along with him now.

SEBA

Swallow it for now.

Hope reluctantly puts everything back. She finds a cigar box. Inside are several coins, a picture of the man we know as Frank with his eyes poked out by a pen, and dried out honeysuckle leaves.

HOPE

Weird.

SEBA

A man who deals with the past by
false substitution of the present.

Hope doesn't get it, nor does she care to. She flips through a stack of bills.

HOPE

Oh my God.

INSERT: CANDELARIO LOPEZ

HOPE (CONT'D)

Candelario Lopez. Weston called
aunt Thelma by her maiden name.
There's none of uncle Candelario's
stuff at the house. Who is this man?

The front door opens, Candelario's boots thump their way inside the trailer.

Roll credits.

FADE OUT:

END EPISODE

Episode 7: Soul Sister

TEASER

EXT. AZTEC CITY-ALLEY-NIGHT

The dead of night. Torches here and there light the way to the main road. A LITTLE BOY, no more than five years of age, lies motionless in the center. A trickle of blood rolls from his mouth into a small pool of vomit.

A Xoloitzcuintle nimbly trots over to the boy. The dog stands over the boy, sniffing at his face.

Seba enters from the shadows, making her way toward the child. The dog circles back and jogs beside her until she kneels before the boy. She wipes the blood from the corner of the boy's mouth.

SEBA

(in Nahuatl)

Time to wake up.

The boy blinks his eyes open and rises. Seba cups her hands over the boy's cheeks, comforting him. The dog licks his face. The boy's little hand follows Seba's as she pets the dog.

SEBA (CONT'D)

Do you like him?

(then)

I am here to take you someplace safe, where you can play and never be hungry or afraid again.

LITTLE BOY

Can he play with me?

SEBA

You will see many like him when you get there.

LITTLE BOY

I like this one.

The boy hugs the dog.

SEBA

He helps me find others who need help. But he will remember you, and one day you will be able to play together for as long as you both like. Take my hand.

The boy reaches for her, but a plume of smoke spews onto Seba from the darkness. CUALLI blows another puff onto her from a smoking torch.

Two other men, OHTLI and YARETZI pin her against the wall. She struggles to reach for the little boy who screams in terror.

The men quickly bind her to a torch holder on the wall with thickly woven rope made from sage and weed.

Seba struggles to free herself but cannot break the bonds.

SEBA (CONT'D)

Let me go.

CUALLI

Be quiet.

She turns to the little boy.

SEBA

Wait there, do you hear me?

CUALLI

Cover her mouth.

The other two men slap her into compliance. The little boy panics and bolts into the darkness. Seba drops her head, crushed, pain and sadness creeping across her face.

OHTLI

Are you sure this will hold?

CUALLI

It will hold. Hurry, get rid of the boy. And you, keep the smoke on her.

Ohtli runs to the center of the road where the little boy's body lays. He drags the boy out of view. Yaretzi fans the smoke at Seba.

YARETZI

When do we ask?

CUALLI

Hear me now, taker of spirits. We call you through sacrifice and tie you into our world. Grant our wishes if you want to return. Or prepare for the end of you now.

SEBA

You poisoned that boy to bait me?

OHTLI

The son of a slave and a commoner. We spared him a bad life.

SEBA

Do your fathers know of these plans you spring upon me?

CUALLI

Old fools with old ways.

SEBA

What can I give you?

Cuallie moves in close to Seba, blowing the smoke in her face.

CUALLIE

It's what you take. You must promise to never come for our spirits or our youth. Agree?

She writhes in pain as Ohtli and Yaretzi cinch a sage woven rope around her neck. Seba bows her head and sinks.

Roll opening credits.

END TEASER

ACT I

INT. CANDELARIO'S TRAILER-BEDROOM-NIGHT

Hope takes it all in, her clothes, the tape, all the creepy items in the cigar box, the pounding boots.

She lets out a half cry, half laugh before the migraine consumes her. She braces her head against the wall.

INT. CANDELARIO'S TRAILER-KITCHEN-NIGHT

Candelario saunters to the cluttered table with a take out bag.

He's about the stuff the first bite in his mouth when the whimpering drifts into the room. He scoops up an empty beer bottle by the neck.

INT. CANDELARIO'S TRAILER-HALLWAY-CONTINUOUS

Candelario creeps down the hall towards his bedroom, beer bottle ready to do some damage. He reaches the corner, peeking inside. No people, no whimpers, dead silent.

INT. CANDELARIO'S TRAILER-CLOSET-CONTINUOUS

We see Candelario's room through the cheap closet door. Hope sits on the floor with her knees to her chest, eyes on Seba.

SEBA

(whispering)

Focus.

Hope nods as Seba pulls her index finger from Hope's lips.

Candelario moves deeper into the room. He checks the window, peeks in the bathroom, but nothing. His footsteps stop just short of exiting the room. We see his hand reach down and pluck up the tiny honeysuckle leaf. All quiet for a moment, then...

The door flies open. Hope springs out, pushing Candelario on the bed. Hope goes for the screwdriver in her waistband, but Candelario knocks it out of her hand.

He swings the bottle, crashing it against the headboard. He rises but Hope puts him back down with a knee to the crotch.

INT. CANDELARIO'S TRAILER-HALLWAY-CONTINUOUS

Hope races down the hall.

Halfway down she is thrown against the wall by Candelario's big paw. His fist destroys a section of the wall by her head. Another strike comes barreling towards her face, Hope wiggling free just in time.

INT. CANDELARIO'S TRAILER-KITCHEN-CONTINUOUS

The ruckus carries on into the small kitchen. Dishes fly, tables overturn, windows shattered as all hell breaks loose.

Hope pulls up a frying pan in front of Candelario oncoming haymaker. She stumbles surprised by the large dent in the pan. No matter, she rings his bell with it as he advances. This is her moment.

She races to the door, throwing it open.

EXT. CANDELARIO'S TRAILER-NIGHT

The front porch, illuminated by a single sconce.

Hope is about to step off the porch when Candelario snatches her by the nape of her neck. He throws her against the wall underneath the sconce.

CANDELARIO

Hope?

HOPE

Who are you?

CANDELARIO

How the hell did you get here?

HOPE

You're not my Uncle. Let me go.

CANDELARIO
Shut up and listen to me.

HOPE
Let me go.

She takes a swing at him. He catches her wrist, easily holding both of her arms above her head with one hand.

CANDELARIO
You crazy bitch.

Hope stands under the light, choking. We catch a glimpse of Seba approaching from the sidewalk.

The torch like sconce, glowing haze, Hope pinned up, gagging. Memories rush back to Seba. A cold gust of wind blasts across the porch, distant thunder rolling in behind. Seba's eyes narrow, locked onto Candelario.

Officer Tillis' voice breaks Candelario's lock on Hope's throat. Seba steps aside, never looking away from Candelario.

OFFICER TILLIS
Hold it right there. Freeze.

CANDELARIO
Whatever you say, officer.

Candelario backs away. Hope rushes down the steps into Officer Tillis' arms.

OFFICER TILLIS
You okay, ma'am?
(then)
Oh, You. Just stand right there.
Come on down here, sir.

Candelario makes his way down the stairs.

CANDELARIO
Look officer, she broke into my
house. I was just defending myself.

OFFICER TILLIS
Defending yourself? From her? She
must be tougher than she looks.
(MORE)

OFFICER TILLIS

(then)
Hope was it? Did you break into his
house?

She says nothing. A light rain begins to fall.

HOPE

This creep has been pretending to be
my uncle.

CANDELARIO

I don't know what she's talking
about.

OFFICER TILLIS

She steal anything from you?

CANDELARIO

I caught her before she did.

HOPE

Liar.

OFFICER TILLIS

Okay. You wait right here. Come on
ma'am.

Sheriff Leal pulls up. He steps out of the car and nods to the 80 year old next door neighbor with the phone in her hand.

SHERIFF LEAL

Thank you, we'll take it from here.
Go on inside.

Officer Tillis handcuffs Hope and tucks her into the back of the squad car. They have a brief inaudible conversation.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT-CELL BLOCK-NIGHT

Officer Tillis leads Hope down the hall to an empty cell.

OFFICER TILLIS

This time you going to learn your
lesson?

HOPE

You have to believe me. Check his room, you'll see.

OFFICER TILLIS

Just sit there and behave.

HOPE

Do you really think I was going to rob him? You're supposed to check all leads. I'd say this is a lead.

OFFICER TILLIS

I'm not a detective.

He closes the cell and leaves. The clinking of the next cell captures our attention. We see Gabriel standing with a cup in hand.

GABRIEL

Just when I thought I was public enemy number one. How you been, Dillinger?

END ACT I

ACT II

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT-HOPE'S CELL-NIGHT

Hope sits face to face with Gabriel, separated only by the bars. Gabriel has a collection of drawings on the wall.

HOPE

You been here the whole time?

GABRIEL

I don't have an aunt to bail me out.

HOPE

Feel lucky. Are all those yours?

GABRIEL

I draw from time to time. It kind of lets me get away.

HOPE

Who's that?

We eye a sketch of a happy, short haired girl with a flower in her hair. We all know it's Hope.

Fumbling a bit with his words.

GABRIEL

I don't know, just a picture. Doesn't matter. What did you do to get thrown in her, anyway?

HOPE

Attempted robbery and assault. I broke in someone's house and hit them with a frying pan.

GABRIEL

Damn.

HOPE

Yeah, well he held me captive for weeks, tried to feel me up, and nearly choked me to death. But that was apparently self defense.

GABRIEL

Makes sense. I warned you about the law down here.

HOPE

What are you in for?

GABRIEL

Crashed into a tree with a stolen truck. You don't remember?

HOPE

I'm not from around here, but my stay with Border Patrol taught me people generally run away from Mexico, not to it.

GABRIEL

I allegedly stole a hundred and thirty eight thousand dollars.
(then)
And a pick up truck.

HOPE

Can they prove you did it?

GABRIEL

Oh trust me, it's not going to matter.

HOPE

I feel bad about leaving you hanging last time. Anything I can do?

GABRIEL

Are you a world class lawyer by any chance? Guess I'm out of luck.
Incoming.

Officer Tillis arrives, pulling Hope from her Cell.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT-CELLBLOCK-NIGHT

The row of cells, mostly quiet at this hour.

Officer Tillis escorts Hope to the door.

OFFICER TILLIS

Your aunt is here to pick you up.

HOPE

Figures.

OFFICER TILLIS

Stop. I have something for you but, I need to know I can trust you?

HOPE

I'm running low on trust.

OFFICER TILLIS

Look, something doesn't jive here. I want to check into your story.

She sees the sincerity in his eyes.

HOPE

Why?

OFFICER TILLIS

Because you're a troubled minor, I insisted on Juvenile services becoming involved. I expected your aunt to throw a fit, but Mr. Lopez and the Sheriff also went through the roof.

HOPE

What does that mean?

OFFICER TILLIS

I been doing this long enough to know that when everybody just wants to drop an issue, there's something more to it.

HOPE

You're going to help me, then?

OFFICER TILLIS

I can't stop them from releasing you.
However, there will be a lady
coming to see you tomorrow. She's a
good person.

Sheriff Leal comes through the door.

SHERIFF LEAL

Come on, Hope. You're one very
lucky young lady to have an aunt
who cares so much about you.

Leal frowns at Officer Tillis as he leads Hope through the door.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-SECOND FLOOR HALL-NIGHT

Thelma and Sheriff Leal fill the narrow hallway just outside Hope's room.

Sheriff Leal closes Hope's door. Thelma locks it. We're about to get a dose of Thelma's best heartbroken, concerned parent shtick.

THELMA

I just hate doing that, locking her up
like some kind of animal.

SHERIFF LEAL

Might not hurt for just one night.

THELMA

I don't know why she does these
things. I'm doing the best I can,
Sheriff.

SHERIFF LEAL

She's been through quite a bit.

THELMA

This whole thing with her parents.
She's been very paranoid, erratic.

SHERIFF LEAL

Is she on any kind of medications.

THELMA

No. I was hoping she would just be
able to eventually cope on her own. I
really don't want this woman coming
over.

SHERIFF LEAL

I tried, but once it's entered into the
system...

THELMA

Ten thousand for your campaign.
Just delete it.

SHERIFF LEAL

Ms. De La Cruz, there's no erasing it
once it's logged in.
(then)
Maybe it's all for the best if the girl
gets some professional help.

Thelma fumes a few moments.

THELMA

Maybe your right. She has been a
little depressed and delusional.

SHERIFF LEAL

I'll keep an eye on it and make sure
your name doesn't come out.

THELMA

Thank you, Sheriff.

He puts his cowboy hat on as he shuffles down the stairs.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-GUEST ROOM-NIGHT

Thelma enters the room. Hope sits at the vanity with a hair straightener.

THELMA

You enjoy creating problems for me,
don't you? Do you have fun with
this?

HOPE

I just want to be left alone.

THELMA

Are you so paranoid that you think
there is some plot against you? We
are very worried about you, Hope.

HOPE

Who, you and Uncle Candelario?
Why doesn't he live here?

THELMA

It's true we have had some problems
as of late. We are trying to work
them out best we can.

Hope thinks her approach over a moment.

HOPE

Do you know how I got to his house?

THELMA

It's been on my mind.

HOPE

It's not my fault. He took me there.

THELMA

Candelario?

HOPE

I was locked in here, remember?
Do you know he's been taking my
underwear and watching me?
There's a camera upstairs. He'd
watch me, try to do things to me.
That's why he took me to his place.

Thelma is caught completely off guard.

THELMA

Well, I don't know what to think.
Hope, this better not be some kind of
game.

HOPE

Look for yourself.

THELMA

As much as it hurts me to have failed
my sister, I will make arrangements
for you to stay with someone else.
Just wait a few days, okay?

HOPE

Fine.

Thelma exits the room, locking the door. Hope places a scrap of paper on the hot pad of the straightener.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-DEN-DAY

Thelma zips back and forth across the room, chewing on her nails. She stops to flip through a magazine for about three seconds before the pacing resumes.

The phone rings. She's right on top of it, pausing only to get into character.

BEGIN INTERCUT:

INT. WESTON'S OFFICE-DAY

A corporate office fit for a junior executive. Weston leans over a spread of paperwork. Aston and an uptight suit named HENRIKSON sit across from him.

WESTON

Ms. De la Cruz, how are you doing today?

THELMA

Why, very well. Yourself?

WESTON

I'm doing okay. Ms. De La Cruz...

THELMA

Thelma. I do hope you have brought me some good news.

Weston waves to Henrikson who pushes a contract over. Hope's name appears just below Thelma's.

WESTON

Mostly good. I got the deal sheet you faxed over. That all looks fine, but there are just a couple of bumps we need to iron out.

THELMA

Bumps? I'm sure it's nothing Mr. Wilcott can't remedy. He's been working on the contract.

WESTON

Aston is here right now. It's not the contract itself. See, our attorney needs Hope to come down and sign it in person because she's a minor. Then, there's some forms...

HENRIKSON

Release and packet from an interested party by the name of Polichev in Michigan.

WESTON

Did you catch that?

THELMA

Well, the girl has been rather off lately in a depression. That's why I faxed it in the first place.

WESTON

I completely understand, but it's just one of those legal hoops we have to jump through.

THELMA

I see. Is there any other way?

WESTON

Afraid not.

THELMA

Okay. I'll take care of it. Thank you for the call.

WESTON

Take care, now.

Weston kills the call. Aston walks out disgusted. We move over to Thelma and stay with her. Thelma hangs up. Boiling with frustration, she slings the phone across the room as she tears out of the room.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-GUEST ROOM-DAY

The door flies open. Hope scrambles to her feet from the other side of the bed. Thelma powers in, seizing Hope by the hair. Hope's eyes widen. We see Thelma step back with a syringe in hand.

Hope stumbles a few steps before falling to the floor. Thelma cracks Hope's vanity, snatching a shard of glass.

Hope lays on the floor with labored breath. Thelma bends down, slashing Hope's wrist with the glass. She places the glass in Hope's hand and drops a paper on top of her. Satisfied, she charges out of the room.

Blood begins to pool out next to the letter forged in Hope's handwriting.

Hope looks at the small candle she has hidden on the other side of the bed.

The paper scrap on the straighter pad catches fire and falls into the candle. We see a skull faced women in a robe illuminate.

Our last blink is of the beautiful flickering flame.

EXT. AZTEC ALLEY-NIGHT

Back we go to the beaten down Seba tied up under the torch. The men choke her with the woven rope until...

The dog comes flying in to seize Yaretzi's arm, making him drop the smoke. He snaps and tears at the men until they take the dog down.

Against the wall, we see the silhouette of Cualli's knife coming down on the dog. It ends with a last yelp.

The men recover only to discover a piece of sage rope in the dog's mouth. In an instant they all know she's free.

Seba eyes them, intensely, coldly.

EXT. AZTEC CITY-EDGE OF TOWN-NIGHT

Three mounds of fire we vaguely recognize as her captors burn in the far background.

Seba walks towards us, into the darkness where she kneels, closes her eyes.

Total blackout until the flicker of a candle light appears. We begin to see the flickering flame dancing across Seba's face. Her eyes blink open, the corners of her mouth turning up into a faint smile.

Roll credits.

FADE OUT:

END EPISODE

Episode 8: The Phoenix

TEASER

INT. CLINIC-HALL-DAY

EMTs burst through the door, racing a young woman on a stretcher down the hall. They round the corner, blood leaving a dotted trail all the way into the E.R.

We look in through the window where the doctors are suited up, instruments at the ready. They immediately go to work.

Our attention turns to the sloshing of a mop down the hall. A long haired JANITOR with thick black framed glasses mops up the blood trail. He stops at the E.R door, pausing to look in through the window.

E.R Staff frantically work to stabilize the girl. From here, the girl very much looks like our Hope, and she's in big trouble. The doctors give their all but it's out of their hands. The head doctor pulls down his mask while the nurse takes down the time of death.

A sheet is pulled over the girls face. He produces a note pad, scribbles a few lines, then folds it back into his pocket.

We look down into the crimson mop water as the bucket is wheeled off.

Roll opening credits.

END TEASER

ACT I

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-DEN-DAY

Thelma clutches onto the phone, a pacing, nervous wreck trying to calm herself to make the call. A pounding comes from the front door. She snatches up a cup and saucer on her way out.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION ENTRYWAY-DAY

Thelma enters. Her calm facade betrayed only by the slight tremble of her hands as she opens the door.

Officer Tillis steps inside, pressing a document into Thelma's hand.

THELMA
Officer? Can I help you?

OFFICER TILLIS
Ma'am. We have a court order to see
Hope.

THELMA
What? We?

DR. SUMMER RODRIGUEZ charges into the room. Her all business expression matches the pinstripe suit.

SUMMER
Where is Hope, Ms. De La Cruz?

THELMA
Her room, I think.

SUMMER
You think? Where do you think her
room is?

OFFICER TILLIS
Ms. De La Cruz?

Thelma is stunned. All she can do is point. Summer is off and going before anyone can say anything.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-SECOND FLOOR-DAY

Thelma pushes on trapped behind Tillis as Summer tears down the hall.

SUMMER
Which room?

THELMA
Well, uh, the last.

Summer tries the knob. Locked.

SUMMER
Why is this door locked?

THELMA
The Sheriff said it was a good idea.

SUMMER
It wasn't. Open it.

THELMA
I don't have the key on me, but...

SUMMER
Officer, kick down this door.

THELMA
Wait.

SUMMER
It's obstruction to prevent me from seeing the child. Officer.

Tillis is more than happy to put his foot through the door.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-GUEST ROOM-DAY

Everyone is frozen as they enter. Even Summer isn't prepared for this.

Thelma pushes between them, dropping the saucer in horror.

We look over to see HOPE slumped against the wall, her sheet half pulled from the bed and knotted around her wrist. A pool of blood all around her, the burning candle flickers in her hands.

INT. CLINIC-WAITING ROOM-DAY

A small, sterile waiting room. Tillis stands against the wall, arms folded. Sheriff Leal and Summer sit across from Thelma and Candelario.

Sheriff Leal scratches notes on a tablet.

SHERIFF LEAL

What reasons do you think Hope might have had to commit suicide?

THELMA

Besides the letter she left? I don't know.

Summer crowds Leal's interview space. Leal shuffles around uncomfortably as she scribbles notes along side him.

SHERIFF LEAL

Ms. De La Cruz, did you notice any suicidal behavior before this incident?

THELMA

She was always depressed, running away, acting out. Of course, you have those incidents on file.

SUMMER

Any idea why she might have tied a tourniquet around her wrist?

THELMA

Maybe she changed her mind. You know, the girl went a little crazy after her family died.

SUMMER

I'll be able to make that determination.

THELMA

Of course. How is she doing?

SHERIFF LEAL

We don't know yet.

SUMMER

Did Hope believe her life was in danger?

THELMA

I should hope not, but she was paranoid. Sheriff, I'm afraid my mind's not right at the moment.

SHERIFF LEAL

Of course. I think we have everything we need.

THELMA

Thank you both. Let me know if there is anything else I can do.

SUMMER

You both decided the best course of action was to lock a potentially suicidal girl's cries for help behind a locked door instead of immediately seeking psychological help. I think you did enough already.

Summer springs up, blazing out of the room. Sheriff Leal signals Tillis, leaving Thelma alone with Candelario.

THELMA

This is all your fault.

CANDELARIO

My fault. Look what she did to me.

THELMA

You tried to have your way with that girl.

CANDELARIO

She's a liar.

Thelma shoots him a 'yeah right' look as the janitor enters to arrange the magazines on the coffee table. As he leaves...

THELMA

I hired you to fix the house and play a small part. That's all you had to do.

CANDELARIO

Thelma, I didn't do any of this for the money.

THELMA

Would you just let go of it already?

CANDELARIO

Aurelio, Tamara, Luis. Like you're anyone to give speeches about letting go. Why did you involve me in the first place?

THELMA

Like a puppy, I knew you would do whatever I asked.

CANDELARIO

We were only supposed to carry this on until we got her signature down. Then turn her loose. That was the deal.

THELMA

You know why you never had a chance? Because I'm not looking for drunks or sad little boys with flowers.

CANDELARIO

You cold bitch.

THELMA

I need a man who can rise to the occasion. Someone who can take care of me by doing what needs to be done.

CANDELARIO

Thelma, I'm trying to take care of
you, but...

Here comes Thelma frustrated with well timed tears. Launching into another grand
performance...

THELMA

But? Always a but. You call this
protecting me? If you loved me,
you'd take care of it.

(then)

Look, I'm just really stressed and I
need this to go away. Please.

CANDELARIO

I always take care of you.

She tucks her head into Candelario's shoulder, rubs his chest as she forces sobs. He's sold.

END ACT I

ACT II

INT. DANCE STUDIO-NIGHT

The Devil's Trill plays as Hope spins into the center of the floor, lit only by her candle. Her eyes close, she's one with the music.

Seba appears in the mirror, watching Hope perform the complicated dance.

Hope switches feet, about to fall until Seba reaches through the mirror to catch her by the hands. Pulling Hope to her feet...

SEBA

Up.

HOPE

I can't do this. I feel so weak.

SEBA

The dance will come when the time is right.

HOPE

It's everything. This is all too much for me to handle.

SEBA

You are only as weak as you allow yourself to be.

HOPE

I'm alone, out-matched, suffocated. They seem to know everything and everyone. And they want me dead.

SEBA

Give them what they want, but embrace death like the phoenix. Think over your namesake. If there is one thing in your world that is perpetual, it is...

HOPE

Hope.

SEBA

Up.

Hope eyes her bloody hands, clenching them into fists.

INT. CLINIC-RECOVERY ROOM-NIGHT

Hope opens her eyes to the bright lights of the small curtained recovery room cubicle. Her wrists are bandaged, machines still monitoring her vitals.

We take in the scene for a moment. It's quiet, serene, except for the squeaking of a window. The curtain opens. Dr. SCOTT steps up with a clipboard, Summer hot on his heels.

SUMMER

How you feeling, Hope?

DR. SCOTT

Ms. Rodriguez.

SUMMER

Pardon.

DR. SCOTT

How you feeling, Hope?

HOPE

Okay. What happened?

SUMMER

That's what we're here to find out.

DR. SCOTT

If you wouldn't mind, Ms. Rodriguez? Hope, you're very lucky.

(then)

Sir, I think the window is clean enough.

We look past the doctor to see our curious janitor tuck away his cleaning rag. Dr. Scott takes a deep breath, Hope breaking in.

HOPE

I'm feeling okay.

DR. SCOTT

We're going to keep you here for a few days just to monitor your condition. When you're feeling a little better...and only when you're feeling better... Ms. Rodriguez would like to talk to you.

HOPE

Where's my Aunt?

At the same time...

DR. SCOTT

Nearby.

SUMMER

Far away.

Hope sits up in bed.

HOPE

I want to go with her.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-ENTRYWAY-NIGHT

Thelma opens the door for Sheriff Leal and Officer Tillis.

SHERIFF LEAL

Ms. De La Cruz, may we?

THELMA

Sheriff Leal, so good to see you.
Please come in.

She reluctantly steps out of the way so Tillis can enter behind Leal.

SHERIFF LEAL

We are just doing a follow up to the incident.

OFFICER TILLIS

What's that smell?

THELMA

Sage and herbs. I've been praying for Hope. How is she?

OFFICER TILLIS

Recovering.

THELMA

Oh, well that's wonderful news.

SHERIFF LEAL

There's actually another reason we stopped by.

OFFICER TILLIS

Ms. Rodriguez filed an injunction to keep Hope there at the clinic for a few days.

THELMA

Sheriff, what's going on here? I thought you were in charge.

OFFICER TILLIS

City and county currently share the same jail, but we are two separate departments.

SHERIFF LEAL

We are still trying to work out some jurisdictional concerns. In the meantime, stay close to the house and refrain from trying to contact Hope.

THELMA

Yes, whatever is best for the girl. Just be careful. She's not all there, and manipulative to boot.

OFFICER TILLIS

We'll keep that in mind. Ms. De La Cruz.

Tillis lets himself out. Leal pats Thelma on the shoulder before exiting behind him.

She closes the door. Candelario enters from the other room.

THELMA

I hate that man. I hate that woman even more.

CANDELARIO

Forget them. Just get Barnes to put the contract through.

THELMA

It's not that easy. She won't sign on her own. They'll probably question her.

CANDELARIO

Why all this trouble?

THELMA

Because my parents had the poor judgement to choose my whore sister.

CANDELARIO

What can we do now?

THELMA

A long time ago you clipped me a honeysuckle branch. Prune this little branch from my family tree and you'll have what you always wanted. I promise.

She moves in close to Candelario, giving him a slight kiss, just a taste.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

INT. CLINIC-OBSERVATION ROOM-NIGHT

A plain room outfitted with a bed and table. A camera above monitors everything.

Summer enters with a binder. She takes a seat across from Hope.

SUMMER

Hope, I have a question and I need you to be completely honest with me.

(then)

Candy bar or chips?

She hold up both. Hope and Summer chuckle at the same time. Hope takes the chips.

HOPE

Thanks.

SUMMER

I have connections with the cafeteria. Actually Hope, I wanted to pick up where we left off yesterday.

HOPE

I don't know why they are doing this to me.

SUMMER

It's just that we have a letter in your handwriting and I walked in there on you.

HOPE

We've already been over that.

SUMMER

I know and I want your story to check out, but we haven't found these homework assignments or forgeries you're talking about.

HOPE

I'm sure they got rid of them by now.

SUMMER

Okay, Hope. We'll keep looking. How about this candle?

Summer sits the Santa Muerta candle on the table.

HOPE

What about it?

SUMMER

You were on the brink of death, and yet you would not let go of that candle. What does it mean to you?

HOPE

Can I have it back?

SUMMER

Do you know who's on this candle?

Hope hesitates.

HOPE

Not really.

SUMMER

You shouldn't mess with things you don't know about.

HOPE

I guess when you're in my situation you look to anybody or anything for help.

SUMMER

You mumbled a name in the back of
the ambulance. Who is Seba?

HOPE

I don't remember.

Summer passes Hope a pack of crayons and a sheet of paper.

SUMMER

Are you sure? Maybe you can draw
the person.
(at Hope's look)
They won't let you have pencil's
right now.

HOPE

I'm not crazy. I told you I don't
know what you're talking about.

SUMMER

Nobody is saying you are but you
did have a conversation with
someone in the back of that
ambulance.

HOPE

What did I say?

SUMMER

It was inaudible at times, gibberish at
others.

HOPE

Maybe I was delirious.

SUMMER

Yeah, maybe. Well, let me know if
you think of anything else.

Summer snatches up the candle.

HOPE

That's mine.

SUMMER

We'll talk more about this tomorrow.

Hope settles down, reassessing the situation. With a smile...

HOPE

Can I keep these in case something
comes to me?

SUMMER

Sure. See you in the morning.

Hope takes the crayons and a piece of paper back to her bed as Summer kills the lights.

INT. CLINIC-MONITOR ROOM-NIGHT

A small room furnished with a desk and monitor. We can see Hope's room in night vision green.

Summer enters, tacking Seba's picture to a cork board on the wall. She takes a long look at Seba's intense eyes.

Back to work she goes, scrawling notes, listening to Hope's conversations on a tape.

Summer nods trying to stay awake as time flies by. She lays her head on the table a moment and drifts to sleep.

The curious janitor reaches into the room, quietly scooping up the trash can.

We peek at the monitor as he slips out. Hope stands in the center of the room, turning to look right at the camera as if she sees us.

The unmistakable white flicker of a flame appears on the floor.

INT. CLINIC-OBSERVATION ROOM-NIGHT

Dark, except for a slice of light coming through the threshold of the door and a small candle sized cone of flame in the center of the room.

Hope huddles next to the cone of flame. The squeaking of wheels stops in front of the room. A slip of paper slides under the door. We INTERCUT as Hope brings the paper to the light.

INT. CLINIC-HALLWAY-NIGHT

The janitor wheels the cart down the empty hall, passing room 180, 179, 178, and so on.

Hope unfolds the paper.

INSERT: Care for another game? Play the Queen's Gambit. White. Your move.

We go back to the janitor, staying with him as he reaches room C.4 between 174 and 172.

He takes off his thick black glasses. Long hair aside, we begin to look past the disguise into the wise eyes and clever smile. Say hello again to Miguel. He enters the janitor's closet and closes the door as we fade out.

Roll credits.

FADE OUT:

END EPISODE

Episode 9: Hard Time

TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. CANDELARIO'S TRAILER-NIGHT

We open on the front yard with Candelario tending an old barbecue pit. Distant thunder rolls in.

He opens the lid, stoking the fire a few times. The lid comes down as BOB, the annoying neighbor strolls over.

BOB

Hey neighbor, what's cooking
buddy?

Candelario slams down the lid as Bob goes to take a peek.

CANDELARIO

It aint ready.

BOB

I get it, secret recipe. Kind of
gloomy for a barbecue, isn't it?

CANDELARIO

My stove is out of propane.

BOB

Anyway, I was talking to a couple of
people in the neighborhood about
that incident with the cops the other
day...

CANDELARIO

That girl broke into my house.

BOB

Easy there. We were just thinking of putting together a neighborhood watch and was wondering...

CANDELARIO

Look....?

BOB

Bob.

Candelario loads several logs into the firebox, then makes his way up the porch.

CANDELARIO

Bob, I'm kind of busy right now.

BOB

Okay, tell you what, I'll swing by tomorrow.

CANDELARIO

Sure, whatever.

As Candelario enters...

BOB

I wouldn't add anymore heat to that. Smells like something's burning.

CANDELARIO

Thanks, Bob. Hate to run you off, but I have things to do around the house.

BOB

Sure...

Bob gets the hint, then eyes the thick black smoke rolling out of the pit as he leaves.

Candelario comes out with a trash bag. He takes a peek to make sure the coast is clear before racing over to the pit. A roaring fire flares up as the lid is thrown open. He dumps the contents of the bag inside.

This is our first real look as flames consume Hope's undergarments and several video tapes.

We stay with this image as the Tahoe tears out of the driveway.

Roll opening credits.

END TEASER

ACT I

INT. CLINIC-MONITOR ROOM-NIGHT

Summer is still crashed out on the table.

Her cell rings. Summer springs up, scrambling for the phone. She shakes the sleep off, INTERCUTTING with Ray Tillis as she answers.

INT. TILLIS' OFFICE-NIGHT

Tillis hunkers over his desk in the cramped office.

OFFICER TILLIS

Ms. Rodriguez?

SUMMER

Yeah, hello. I'm here.

OFFICER TILLIS

You seemed like the night owl type to me.

SUMMER

I'm not hopped up on coffee and donuts all the time.

OFFICER TILLIS

A cop joke? Original.

SUMMER

Work with me, it's early. What do I owe the pleasure, Officer Tillis?

OFFICER TILLIS

You can call me Ray. I just had the opportunity to interview a Gabriel
(MORE)

OFFICER TILLIS

Bray about the incident involving Hope. Apparently, he says the contractor tried to violate the girl.

SUMMER

The contractor? Candelario? You're just now finding this out?

OFFICER TILLIS

Sheriff Leal lays claims to him so this is a bit under the radar. I'd appreciate it if we could keep it that way.

SUMMER

You think he took her to his house that night?

OFFICER TILLIS

I don't know yet. Is she being cooperative?

SUMMER

She's being careful. I'd like to get a look inside Candelario's house.

OFFICER TILLIS

The request has already been sent.

SUMMER

Make it happen, Ray.

We stay with Summer as she kills the call. Summer pops a smoke in her mouth, reaching for her lighter. She pads around. Nothing. Summer drops the cigarette and stares at the monitor. Hope lies in bed.

INT. CLINIC-HALLWAY-NIGHT

Summer exits the room, pushing through the exterior doors leading into the parking lot.

We move down the hall to the observation room. The door cracks open. Nothing for a moment, then Hope emerges. She slides a tiny key into her pocket. Hope flips open the paper, eyeing Miguel's riddle.

Hope glances around the hall, taking in every number she sees. She trails along, looking for the right clue, any clue. We come to a stop in front of the janitor's closet. A label C.4 covers the original number.

INT. ROOM C.4-NIGHT

Hope slips inside the narrow room. A sink and shelves line the walls.

HOPE

Hello?

A small door obscured by supply boxes opens. Out comes Miguel. He rushes to greet Hope.

MIGUEL

You got my message?

HOPE

Professor Rendon?

MIGUEL

Anyone who can beat me at chess gets to call me Miguel.

HOPE

What are you doing here?

MIGUEL

My new cover. Nobody ever pays attention to the janitor, but they give them all the keys and leave them alone in the place after hours.

Strange, no?

(then)

Besides, there is food and medicine right here. They also provide me with a van, so it works out well.

HOPE

How did you know I was here?

MIGUEL

I saw you come in a few days ago. Another girl came in not long after that looked a lot like you. When she

(MORE)

MIGUEL

didn't make it, I remembered the look on your face when you left the holding cell. I kept an eye on you since you arrived.

HOPE

Thanks. Believe me, I would have rather been deported.

MIGUEL

Rarely would I agree, but there is reason to be concerned. The police talked with a man and woman about you. Did you try to hurt yourself?

HOPE

My aunt did it. She tried to kill me.

MIGUEL

She didn't seem too happy for sure. Why would she want you dead?

HOPE

I don't know. I'm just biding my time here until I figure out what to do.

MIGUEL

I'm running a group up north tomorrow. I can try to sneak you out.

HOPE

Would there be room?

MIGUEL

There's always room.

HOPE

What time?

MIGUEL

The woman who watches you from behind your room goes home at about midnight or one.

HOPE

So, there is a camera. I need to grab
a few things, but I'll be here at one.

Miguel nods, both hushing as voices pass by the other side of the door. She gives him a hug, then slips out.

EXT. CLINIC-PARKING LOT-NIGHT

Summer powers towards her car in the small parking lot. She pulls out her keys, about to slide them into the lock.

She pauses a moment before focusing in on the keys. There is a tiny clip on the ring where a key should be. Summer frowns. No lighter, now no key. It hits her, then she's off and running back to the clinic.

INT. SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT-HOLDING CELL-DAY

Gabriel sorts through a mix of drawings and court documents on his bunk.

Sheriff Leal appears at the cell.

GABRIEL

Sheriff?

SHERIFF LEAL

How you doing Gabriel?

GABRIEL

I'm feeling good, thank you.

SHERIFF LEAL

We'll see tomorrow when we get in
front of the judge.

GABRIEL

I've got nothing to hide.

SHERIFF LEAL

You really thought you were going
to slip me out in that brush?
(then)
Chasing tail will get you in trouble
every time.

GABRIEL

I'm beginning to feel like you didn't come to wish me luck.

SHERIFF LEAL

Oh, you got lucky. Had it been one of my deputies instead of that city cop, things would be very different.

(then)

Gabriel, I know you talked to officer goodie two shoes today. What did you say?

GABRIEL

I told him how good you would look on the other side of those bars.

Maybe we can be cell mates and catch up on old times.

Leal leans in.

SHERIFF LEAL

Look, I know you didn't spend it, you little shit. Where is my money?

GABRIEL

If your campaign funds are missing, shouldn't you report it?

Leal waves a couple of deputies over.

SHERIFF LEAL

This prisoner is resisting his room check.

The deputies grin as if they live for this sort of thing. They open the cell, batons coming out.

GABRIEL

Bastard.

SHERIFF LEAL

Not the face boys, he's gotta have a pretty smile for court tomorrow.

We float away from this scene, the screams of pain are enough for us to get the picture.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

INT. TILLIS' OFFICE-NIGHT

A CLERK drops an envelope on the crowded desk as she passes. This is what he's been waiting for.

He takes a quick peek, then...

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE-NIGHT

Tillis barrels down the hallway, backup from his department filing in behind him.

Leal enters the front door as Tillis' entourage approaches.

SHERIFF LEAL

You boys heading somewhere?
Happy hour ended three hours ago.

OFFICER TILLIS

Don't worry Sheriff, we're not
stepping on your side of the hall.

SHERIFF LEAL

No, you're stepping all over my
county.

Tillis whips out the envelope.

OFFICER TILLIS

Judge signed off on the search
warrant for Candelario Lopez. My
department will fax you a copy.
Expect another one for that woman.
Problem Sheriff?
(then)
Let's go gentlemen.

Tillis and his boys leave Sheriff Leal stewing as they pass. Leal pushes through the doors.

Moments later, his car speeds away.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-DEN-NIGHT

Several documents are spread across the coffee table. Incense burns at various spots within the room. We move in to get a look at these. Deeds. Account numbers. Medical forms. Highlighted sections of law books.

Our attention goes to Thelma as she enters with Sheriff Leal.

THELMA

Please have a seat, Sheriff.

SHERIFF LEAL

Thank you. Ms. De La Cruz, I have really tried to handle this as clean as possible, but Mr. Tillis insists on taking matters into his own hands. They're going to search Candelario's residence.

Here we go again, calm and cool Thelma is cuing herself up for the damsel in distress...

THELMA

I can't believe this. Are they really taking the word of a troubled girl?

SHERIFF LEAL

I don't know. Should I have any reason to regret siding with you on this one?

THELMA

Poor girl. Poor, poor girl. Truth be told, I made a mistake hiring Candelario. You see, Hope was very interested in helping out. I thought it a good idea to take her mind off the problems in her life, and so I allowed her to assist him. However, it soon became apparent Candelario had a drinking problem and I suspect he offered alcohol to Hope while outside my supervision. Under the influence, one can only guess what

(MORE)

THELMA

he may have tried. Indeed, that suspicion is part of the reason I sought to keep her under lock and key. Likewise, you'll notice Candelario has not been invited back to work.

SHERIFF LEAL

You didn't find it important to tell me this earlier?

THELMA

I had no definite proof, Sheriff. Who's going to believe a simple woman like me? Ladies like myself are not equipped to deal with these sophisticated, and often ugly matters. I'd just come off as the aloof, overprotective aunt.

SHERIFF LEAL

Now Ms. De La Cruz, you can't beat yourself up over this, but you at least have to tell somebody.

Thelma moves over to a desk. She slides out an envelope from the drawer.

THELMA

I know this is a poorly chosen moment, but you simply must remain Sheriff. We need a defender like yourself...
(pulling back so as not to overdo it)
Mr. Leal, this is but one of several contributions acknowledging my generosity. Take care of this matter permanently and you will have my full backing.

SHERIFF LEAL

Permanently?

THELMA

You know the city police will never do anything. It's all about loopholes and rehab for these criminals nowadays. That's why the world is like it is. We're both old fashioned Southerners. I'd like to be backing a southern Sheriff who does right by traditional southern law.

She hands Leal the envelope. He peeks inside, raising his brow at the stack of greenbacks. He plops the cowboy hat on top of his head. Tipping it...

SHERIFF LEAL

Well now Ms. De la Cruz, no need to stress. The Sheriff's Department is going to take care of this.

Leal strides out of the room.

INT. CANDELARIO'S TRAILER-KITCHEN-NIGHT

Candelario takes a swallow from a liter of rotgut whiskey. He twirls a dried up honeysuckle blossom in the other hand. A knife, baseball bat, old revolver, and a mattock sit across from him on the table.

The phone rings. Answering, we INTERCUT with Thelma.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-DEN-NIGHT

Thelma gives the carpet a workout as she paces the room.

THELMA

Candelario?

CANDELARIO

My little owl.

THELMA

We don't have time for that. What have you done about the girl?

He stares at the pile in front of him.

CANDELARIO

Well, I'm looking at a lot of choices here. Not sure if any would look like an accident.

THELMA

Are you kidding? You need to figure it out quickly. I just found out the city police are on their way to search your place.

CANDELARIO

What?

THELMA

Listen. If you ever cared about me, you'll get it done now. She's going to tell on you, then you'll be rotting in jail for the next twenty years. No more freedom, no more booze, and you can forget about ever seeing me again. Comprende?

Click. We stay with Candelario who goes into a manic fit. He sputters off whimpering obscenities as he fumbles to hide anything he considers clues.

He eyes a bottle of lighter fluid on the counter, then peeks out the window at the barbecue pit.

END ACT II

ACT III

INT. CLINIC-MONITOR ROOM-NIGHT

Hope slips into the room, momentarily taken aback by all the data collected on her. Seba appears in the corner by a large box.

HOPE

She's been studying me like some research project.

SEBA

Everyone has an angle, does it not surprise you?

HOPE

I'm beginning to understand.

SEBA

No matter. She only has what you have allowed her.

HOPE

I'm more concerned about what she took.

Hope moves over to the box and plucks out the candle. She pauses a moment, then snags up the 'L.V' labeled envelopes, and the photo album.

She flips through the album.

HOPE (CONT'D)

My grandfather, Aurelio. My grandmother. Aunt Thelma and my mother, Tamara.

SEBA

The pieces to the puzzle come together.

HOPE

I should have read between the lines earlier. Candelario isn't anywhere in here.

SEBA

Neither is your father.

HOPE

I know, but I can't help remembering the tree house, Fort Vega. Why is it there? What happened to all these people? I know she's a bitch, but why does Aunt Thelma always look so angry?

SEBA

Questions you will need to address in discovering your identity. We need to go back to the house.

HOPE

It's getting too dangerous. This isn't some game anymore. They tried to kill me. I need to step back.

SEBA

You plan to leave with that man, Miguel? I cannot allow it.

HOPE

Why? Don't you see...

SEBA

Many years ago, I allowed someone to slip through my fingers. I will not let another wander off.

HOPE

Is that why you wouldn't help me when I ran away? Why you caused Gabriel and I to crash? All that to keep me here?

SEBA

You have learned much, but you need to realize these problems won't go away no matter how far you run.

HOPE

Everyone has an angle, you say. What's yours? I might have avoided this position if I had not listened to you in the first place.

(then)

Whatever you are, whatever ability you have, I have the power to choose. Free will.

SEBA

So you do. Let us see how you exercise it.

Seba points to the monitor of the Observation Room. We see Summer enter.

Our focus goes to the monitor as Seba backs away.

INT. CLINIC-OBSERVATION ROOM-DAY

Summer enters, clicking on the lights.

SUMMER

Hope?

The room is empty. Summer looks around for a long moment, finally zeroing in on the multicolored wax drippings leading to the bed.

Summer scoots the bed away. A chess board is drawn on a floor tile in crayon. At the queen's position is a candle made of melted crayons. She inspects it to see a rough skull wearing a robe is etched into the surface.

Summer is confused, freaked, and it's about to get worse. She takes a long look at the room as we get an overhead look at the floor. Every other floor tile is outlined in crayon, a little puddle of wax at the center. Summer stands like a piece in this larger chessboard.

The booming of thunder, then...

SERIES OF SHOTS

-Shots of the lights going out in every room.

In the dark we hear heavy footsteps and the scraping of something metallic across the floor.

EXT. CLINIC-PARKING LOT-NIGHT

Thunder crashes and rain pours down in sheets. We see Candelario's empty Tahoe parked at the rear door.

Roll credits.

FADE OUT.

END EPISODE

Episode 10: Bittersweet

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-DEN-DAY

We open on a large glass chessboard sitting on the table. Hold for a beat on the pieces in mid game, then go to...

Thelma pouring coffee at a nearby table. Aston sits at the chess board fiddling with a pawn.

THELMA

You didn't have to come.

ASTON

Are you kidding? I took the first flight out of Houston.

(then)

Thelma, I really don't think we should just sit here and play games.

THELMA

Afraid of a little girl?

ASTON

You're not? You sounded shaken over the telephone.

THELMA

I'm just cautious.

ASTON

You've been burning this incense since I arrived. You can't tell me she hasn't spooked you.

Thelma hands Aston a cup and saucer.

THELMA

The incense isn't for her. Now, I appreciate you coming but I have the situation in hand.

ASTON

We can drop the act, Thelma. If that girl doesn't sign Weston is going to want his advance back.

THELMA

Which is being put to good use.

ASTON

You spent it?

THELMA

Invested.

ASTON

Oh, my God.

Thelma sits down. We see her reflection across the glass chess board.

THELMA

The important pieces control the game from behind the scenes. See, Hope is not the only one who knows how to play games. It runs in the family, and I've been around a lot longer than her.

Thelma taps the Queen. We push into it as we go to...

INT. CLINIC- SHORT HALLWAY-NIGHT

Hope's face appears in a flashlight beam as the scraping draws nearer. The generator kicks on the dingy yellow lights. Candelario stands, obviously drunk with a mattock in hand.

Roll opening credits.

END TEASER

ACT I

EXT. CANDELARIO'S TRAILOR-NIGHT

Officer Tillis' squad has the place locked down. A couple of city policemen exit with boxes and papers.

Tillis throws open the smoldering barbecue pit. He peeks inside, pulling out a melted cassette tape. An OFFICER approaches from behind.

TILLIS

What do you got?

OFFICER

No sign of the suspect, but he's definitely a creeper. We found a female pair of underwear and closed circuit television.

TILLIS

Hope?

OFFICER

Could be. Or this woman.

He hands Tillis a picture of Thelma.

TILLIS

That's Thelma De La Cruz. Put out an APB on Lopez. I'm going to run down a lead at the station.

INT. CLINIC-SHORT HALLWAY-NIGHT

Back in the hall with Hope. She turns to run, Candelario races after her.

INT. CLINIC-LONG HALLWAY-CONTINUOUS

Hope skids around the corner, running directly into Summer. She seizes Hope by the arms. Grabs the candle from her hand.

SUMMER

There you are.

HOPE

Give it back.

SUMMER

Do you know what this is? Who this is?

HOPE

Let go of me.

SUMMER

Not until you tell me how you stole my keys and my lighter.

HOPE

He's coming.

SUMMER

Who's coming?

Candelario throws Summer against the wall. Hope scoops up the candle, bolting down the hall.

CANDELARIO

Stop. Get back here.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE-GABRIEL'S CELL-NIGHT

Gabriel lays across his bunk as Tillis approaches the bars. The DEPUTY on duty cuts in.

DEPUTY

Aint no one supposed to visit this prisoner.

GABRIEL

Officer Tillis, was it? Now city police is visiting. I feel like a celebrity tonight.

OFFICER TILLIS

We need to talk.

DEPUTY

Hey city cop, go patrol a martini bar on the other side of town. This here belongs to the Sheriff.

OFFICER TILLIS

Sure. Let me wake the judge up and tell him how you're interfering with a state case. There's a code six violation, a code twenty four, a code nine. Do you really want a code nine?

DEPUTY

A code nine? No, I don't reckon I want any codes to my name. Just make it quick.

The Deputy backs away. Gabriel stands, wincing as he approaches the bars. Tillis presents Thelma's picture to Gabriel.

OFFICER TILLIS

You're a local boy. I have a few questions. Do you know this woman?

GABRIEL

Saw her a couple of times. She's new in town, but I don't care to know her.

OFFICER TILLIS

I thought you country folk were a hospitable bunch?

GABRIEL

She's a friend of the Sheriff. Makes her an enemy of mine.

OFFICER TILLIS

I understand you stole a bunch of money, and I know you stole someone's truck, so forgive me if I don't sympathize.

GABRIEL

Not someone. The District Attorney.
And his truck belongs to the
taxpayers. You obviously don't
know how the county works. Why
we playing twenty questions,
anyway?

OFFICER TILLIS

Let's make it twenty two. Tell me
what you know about Candelario
Lopez?

GABRIEL

A local drunk. Hell of a carpenter,
but has a temper.

OFFICER TILLIS

He has been working on Ms. De La
Cruz's property and may have had
some inappropriate contact with that
girl you were riding around with.

GABRIEL

Is she okay? What did he do to her?

OFFICER TILLIS

She's safe. Why do you care so
much?

GABRIEL

Doesn't add up.

OFFICER TILLIS

Sure it does. Lopez assaults the girl
then leaves town when the property
owner finds out.

GABRIEL

Sheriff Leal on board with that?

OFFICER TILLIS

He's worked the scene.

GABRIEL

Look, I've been by Bone Creek dozens of times and nobody lived in that house until a few weeks ago. I walk by and all of a sudden Hope appears in the attic.

OFFICER TILLIS

Is that where you initially made contact with her?

GABRIEL

I pull her out and she tells me that Candelario is her uncle. Seems a little odd to me.

OFFICER TILLIS

If Candelario were to flee, where would he go?

GABRIEL

He's not that smart. Like a dog that's got a scent. He won't quit pawing around until he gets what he's after. If his mind is on Hope, that's where he'll be.

The dispatcher crackles over Tillis' radio...

DISPATCHER

We have a hit on a black Tahoe registered to Candelario Lopez. Spotted over at the clinic.

OFFICER TILLIS

Ten four. Send all my units.

DISPATCHER

All available units are dispatched to an emergency at Macomb Junction out in county.

Tillis turns to see the Deputy running down the hall.

GABRIEL

Macomb Junction, huh? Is Boo at it again?

OFFICER TILLIS

What the hell are you talking about?

GABRIEL

It isn't obvious? The good Sheriff knows everything that goes on out here and he's a step ahead of you. Seems like you might need a guide.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

INT. CLINIC-MORGUE-NIGHT

Hope shuts the door behind her as she enters. We turn to see two bodies. One is the girl that looks similar to Hope. A clock on the wall reads 12:45.

We hear doors opening down the hall. Hope falls into a panic attack, pausing to close her eyes. The Devil's Trill begins to play as Hope dances around the room. All the while, the banging of the doors closes in.

A door across the hall opens. Seba places her hand over Hope's shoulders, pulling her from the trance. The candle sits lit in the middle of the floor. Hope drops the hot lighter.

SEBA

Not now. Focus.

HOPE

What happened?

SEBA

You called.

HOPE

I have to find Miguel before he leaves.

SEBA

In good time. Right now, I need you to trust me.

HOPE

Why should I? If he finds me, you get what you want.

SEBA

It's so easy for you to assume, to make mistakes. I came to take away
(MORE)

SEBA

the pain, the fears, to walk you
people through the end of your days
to a place where you are safe.

(then)

I lost a little boy and did something
unforgivable to those I swore to
protect. I felt sad and angry when I
am supposed to feel nothing.
Emotions that you people drown
yourself in.

HOPE

Why take this out on me?

SEBA

I've tried to win back my grace by
helping your kind with matters
others would not dare, but nothing. I
was going to take you that night in
the attic, but you offered me
something I couldn't refuse.

HOPE

A human breath? Well, let me tell
you it isn't all that great.

SEBA

You're wrong, Hope. To breathe a
human breath is to be human, if even
for a second. You have the ability to
change, exercise opportunity...or to
ask for forgiveness.

(then)

Even in the very precious last breath.

We see the pain in Seba's normally solemn eyes. If she could cry, this would be the time. Hope looks at her with sympathy, if even for just a moment.

HOPE

Is Seba your real name?

SEBA

For you, yes. It's short for Lady
Sebastienne.

HOPE

I trust you.

Hope exhales a deep breath. The candle glows brighter. A shadow quashes the light coming from the bottom of the threshold.

Seba snaps back to her normal self, re-engaging the task at hand.

SEBA

If it is death he wants, let him meet it
face to face.

EXT. CLINIC-MORGUE-NIGHT

Candelario hoists the mattock over his shoulder as he reaches for the handle.

He swings open the door and the Hope look alike body falls into his arms. Candelario stumbles backwards in terror.

SEBA

Down the hall, go left into the
psychological services. Summer's
office.

Hope blows past Candelario as he wrangles the corpse out of his face.

EXT. CLINIC-NIGHT

The rain and thunder pound away as Tillis' car bumps to a stop next to Candelario's Tahoe.

Tillis and Gabriel rush out, peeking into the Tahoe before finding shelter under the door canopy.

OFFICER TILLIS

How much am I going to regret
bringing you along?

GABRIEL

Probably a lot, but what can you do
about an escape artist like me.
Besides, both of us have bigger
problems inside.

Gabriel points to the empty Sheriff's car parked at the side of the building.

INT. CLINIC-ER-NIGHT

Sheriff Leal strides down the hall filled with empty benches.

SHERIFF LEAL
Hello? Candelario?

He reaches the corner, peeking around to see the dead Hope look alike by the open Morgue door. Leal slides out his pistol.

EXT. PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES-NIGHT

Hope skims the door tags as she sprints down the hall. We stop at Dr. Holt's office. Below in smaller letters, Summer Rodriguez.

INT. CLINIC-SUMMER'S OFFICE-NIGHT

We step inside to see two desks. The large oak one has Dr. Holt's name on it. The other is a small, cheap one scattered with Summer's file folders. A large bay window sits on one side of the room, the other has an attached room with an observation window.

Hope eyes her name in an open file on Summer's desk. We trail up to see Summer's degree, the graduation date only a few months past.

Candelario plows into the room, tackling Hope.

INT. CLINIC-LONG HALLWAY-NIGHT

Tillis and Gabriel round the corner to find Summer sprawled out on the floor.

GABRIEL
Is she?

OFFICER TILLIS
She's breathing. Summer?

GABRIEL
Stay with her in case he comes back.

OFFICER TILLIS
No.

GABRIEL

Not much of a choice. She can't walk and we don't have a lot of time.

OFFICER TILLIS

Hurry back.

Gabriel bolts down the hall.

INT. CLINIC-SUMMER'S OFFICE-NIGHT

The fight rages on.

Candelario tries to seize Hope's arms, but she slashes his face with Summer's keys. He finally pins her down, putting the sharp tip of the mattock at her throat.

CANDELARIO

This is your fault. All you had to do was stay put and write your name nice and neat.

HOPE

Is this about the house? You people did this to me over that junk pile?

CANDELARIO

House? Nobody cares about that.

HOPE

There's nothing else but dirt and weeds. You have no reason to keep me...

CANDELARIO

Oh, there's barrels and barrels of reasons under that dirt.

HOPE

Give me the papers. I'll sign whatever you want. Just let me go.

Hope heaves as Candelario grips the wedge to drive the spike through Hope's throat.

CANDELARIO

We're a little past that don't you think. The cops are looking for me.

(then)

I have to do it. Or, maybe I'll just crush your throat so you can't talk and ruin your life like you did mine.

HOPE

You could, but we can make it right.

Fix the past.

Hope stares him right in the eyes. She runs a finger down the spike.

CANDELARIO

You lost your damn mind?

She slowly pulls her hair up into a bun and unhooks her top button just enough to tease Candelario.

HOPE

Is this the way you remember her?

Did she look at you the way I do?

CANDELARIO

What are you doing?

HOPE

Maybe I see what she never did. You can go back and get what you lost. I can be her. I am her. Would you like that?

CANDELARIO

Thelma?

HOPE

Yes.

CANDELARIO

I love you. I always did. Why wasn't I good enough?

HOPE

I needed to know how far you'd go. I am here, Candelario. Just for you.

Candelario sobs, fumbling a bottle out of his pocket. Hope uses the distraction, pushing the mattock up into Candelario's face.

Hope unloads on him with a desk lamp. Candelario flies back through the bay window into the parking lot.

INT. CLINIC-OFFICE-NIGHT

A dark office adjacent to Summer's.

We hear the crash of glass and peek out the window to see Candelario pulling himself up.

Raising the window...

CANDELARIO

Thelma?

The clock ticks 1:05 a.m, then a van sideswipes Candelario. He squirms on the ground as Miguel steps out to check on him.

A hand raises a pistol, finishing off Candelario with a well aimed shot. Miguel scrambles back into the van and speeds off.

We pull back to see Sheriff Leal holster his weapon and put his cowboy hat on as he leaves.

INT. CLINIC-SUMMER'S OFFICE-NIGHT

Back in the room with Hope.

Seba enters, cupping Hope's face into her palms as she stares directly into her eyes. Seba points to the observation room. Hope opens the door and enters.

INT. BONE CREEK MANSION-DEN-NIGHT

Thelma hangs up the phone and sits back down across from Aston.

ASTON

Well?

THELMA

Good news, that was the Sheriff.

She moves a piece. Aston takes it with a knight.

ASTON

Apparently not. You must be
distracted if you'd let me take a
piece that easily.

Thelma scoots the queen across the board.

THELMA

Necessary losses, Aston. Sometimes
getting rid of one opens up room for
another. Check. Your move.

Hold on her deviously piercing eyes a moment before we go to...

INT. CLINIC-HOLT'S OBSERVATION ROOM-NIGHT

We see Gabriel enter Summer's office through the observation window. He pauses as Hope
breaks into sobs.

Seba comes up behind her.

HOPE

I'm going to Candelario's funeral.

SEBA

Why?

HOPE

I want Thelma to see me there. I'll
wear a dress and stand in the front
row right across from her.

SEBA

They will wear white. You don't
have a white dress.

HOPE

No, I'm quite done with white.
Maybe something in red. Yes,
crimson red.

We focus on a small heart shaped charm with 'Lilly Pad' inscribed across front.

Move out to see a girl sitting upright, her hands curled around the armchair. She steady breathes,
Eyes locked open.
Her unmistakable face is fixed in a slightly contorted but expressionless position.

For now, we give Hope her space as she gently strokes Lilly's hair.

Roll Credits.

END SEASON

FADE OUT:

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Marshall James Saenz was born in Corpus Christi, Texas in 1980 but moved to Springfield, Missouri at the age of five. He became interested in writing at an early in childhood, drafting a mix of action and spooky mystery stories. Regularly moving, often adapting to unfamiliar locations and people may have led to his, then, unbeknownst interest in the Gothic. Indeed, he found the peculiar, unexplained, and ‘other’ of interest. He later enrolled in Texas A&M University-Kingsville, eventually earning a Bachelor’s degree in Geology in 2009. Physical science gave him a better understanding about the world around him and would later inspire his emphasis in attempting to ascertain logical complexities within writing.

In 2011, he entered the University of Texas-Pan American with an interest in screenwriting. Since, he has become eternally grateful for the opportunity to explore literature, theater, and film. Each has invariably given him insight into form, structure, and theme. His devotion to this study is reflected by an unblemished 4.0 in English, an accolade that derives from passion rather than pride. Along the way, he has written several pieces, including four produced plays and two produced screenplays.

He currently works to help fellow writers achieve their goals while continually writing his own material for academic and commercial release. He can be contacted via email at marshall.saenz@yahoo.com.