

Maria Full of Grace

by

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FINAL SHOOTING SCRIPT

IN A SMALL TOWN TO THE NORTH OF BOGOTA, COLOMBIA...

EXT. HILLSIDE, BEHIND A SMALL BUILDING - DAY

The landscape is a poor neighborhood of narrow, unpaved roads etched into the side of a hill overlooking a small Colombian town. The buildings are all low - one and two-story - made of poured concrete and cinder-block with lines of laundry stretching from one to the other.

In back of a building, MARIA, 17 with black wavy hair and dark eyes, is making out with JUAN, 19 and skinny as a rail. Their lips are absolutely locked.

Juan puts one hand behind her waist and presses her up against the wall. As he moves from kissing her lips to her cheek, Maria opens her eyes - looking rather unenthusiastic. Juan buries his face in her neck, but Maria is staring up at the pattern of a TV aerial at the top of the building.

(NOTE: ALL DIALOGUE IS IN SPANISH)

JUAN

Let's go to your house.

MARIA

I don't want to go to my house.

JUAN

Where do you want to go then?

MARIA

I don't know. Someplace else.

Maria gazes up at the top of the building and smiles.

MARIA (CONT'D)

How about up there?

JUAN

(looks up)

On the roof? Why do you wanna go up there?

MARIA

Why not? ... Come on. It's not that high.

JUAN

What are you crazy?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA
(fixes him)
See how you treat me? You're a drag.

JUAN
Let's not get started with this, OK?

MARIA
If I go up there will you follow me?

JUAN
(reticent)
If I go, are we gonna do it up there?

Maria smiles. She turns and takes a good look at the back of the building. She puts her foot on a rock and pulls herself up to a first-floor window-sill. She finds a small ledge and continues to scale up.

Juan looks sure she won't make it up. Maria concentrates on what she's doing - never looking down.

She pulls herself up to a second-floor window, but then gets stuck about six feet below the roof.

JUAN (CONT'D)
Come down. We'll go to your place.

Maria places her foot on a very small protrusion and pushes up - she SLIPS but grabs the edge of the roof just in time and pulls herself up. Juan stares up in disbelief.

MARIA
(smiles, looking down)
Come on. Your turn.

JUAN
No way.

MARIA
Come up - I have something to tell you.

JUAN
Come down.

MARIA
No.

Beat. Juan looks around, at a loss for what to do.

JUAN
You know what then, I'm taking off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARIA
(exasperated)
Then go. I'm not coming down.

JUAN
Fine. You can come down the same way you
went up - alone. I'll see ya.

Juan starts to walk away down the hill.

Maria watches him go, down toward a small, isolated town
ringed by mountains.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - BEFORE DAWN

In a small bedroom with lime-green walls and two single beds,
Maria lies ASLEEP with her walkman next to her pillow. On
the wall above her are torn-out magazine pictures of various
teen idols, salsa stars, and a pink cartoon teddy-bear.

Maria's mother JUANA calls from the other room,

JUANA (OS)
Maria. Get up.

INT. BATHROOM - BEFORE DAWN

A precarious electric water-heating element mounted on the
shower-head, with wires sticking out of it, shifts into the
On position. Maria puts her head fully under the water.

INT. KITCHEN / MAIN ROOM - BEFORE DAWN

PACHO, one year old, is CRYING on his back on a tattered
couch in the main room of the small house. Maria's sister
DIANA, 19, stands over him, pressing down on his stomach.

ROSITA, Maria's grandmother, moves to and from the cramped
kitchen setting out cups of hot chocolate and rolls. JUANA,
40, is already dressed and folding laundry.

DIANA
His stomach is hard. I'm really worried.

Maria comes in combing her hair.

MARIA
What are you doing?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIANA

He hasn't shit in like two days. He's really constipated.

MARIA

Whatever. He'll go when he goes. Don't worry about it.

JUANA

Maria, don't brush your hair in the dining room please.

MARIA

He's cranky because he's got someone kneading his stomach like a ball of dough.

(tickling Pacho)

Isn't that right? Huh? Isn't that right?

Maria picks Pacho up and holds him over her head. She throws him and catches him.

DIANA

(taking him back)

You're scaring him.

JUANA

Give him to me.

ROSITA

(setting down hot chocolate)

Maria, sit.

Juana takes the baby and gives Diana a blanket.

JUANA

Mama, will you fix a tea for him?

MARIA

Those teas aren't gonna do anything for him.

ROSITA

Take him to the doctor this afternoon.

DIANA

No Grandma, I don't trust that guy.

MARIA

(gets up)

He doesn't need to go to the doctor. The kid is fine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Maria goes into the kitchen and opens the fridge.

ROSITA
What are you looking for?

MARIA
I don't know. I don't feel like bread.
I want something else.

Maria cuts a piece of pork sausage for herself.

ROSITA
That's your breakfast?

EXT. ROAD - DARK MORNING

Maria, Juana and Diana walk along a dark, dusty road before dawn. The only light comes from the windows of other houses they pass.

They turn onto a PAVED STREET and stop at an arbitrary spot on the sidewalk and wait with several other people. There's a minimum of ambient morning light; it's cold, people huddle.

A creaky, old SCHOOL BUS lumbers up and everyone files on - except for Maria. Juana kisses Maria's cheek and gets on.

JUANA
See you later, honey.

The bus pulls away and Maria continues to wait.

INT. MOVING BUS (ANOTHER) - VERY EARLY MORNING

Maria sits by the window with BLANCA, also 17 but heavier-set than Maria. The bus lurches along. The seats are full of other people (mostly women), but there is no conversation - only the sound of the driver's tinny radio.

Blanca has her head on Maria's shoulder. Maria stares out at the passing farmland and cows.

EXT. PLANTATION GATEHOUSE - LATER

Maria and Blanca get off the bus and merge into a small sea of people who funnel through a tall steel gate past a uniformed guard with steel-toed boots and a shotgun. On the other side, the grounds are landscaped and spotless.

INT. CHANGING ROOMS – CONTINUOUS

Maria, Blanca and about two dozen other women put on blue jumpsuits over their clothes, along with thick, rubber boots.

INT. EATING ROOM – CONTINUOUS

In a large room with long wooden tables and benches, about a hundred workers eat breakfast. There is a din of conversation. At one table, Blanca eats a roll as Maria interrogates her.

MARIA

So did you meet him?

BLANCA

I waited by the plaza but he never came.

MARIA

Are you kidding? He didn't show up?

BLANCA

Well it wasn't a real date. He said he might be there.

MARIA

(laughing)

How long did you wait?

BLANCA

Don't laugh.

MARIA

I'm not laughing. How long did you wait?

BLANCA

It doesn't matter. He wasn't really my type... Anyway... You see that guy over there?

They both turn and look at a GUY in a green jumpsuit sitting two tables away. He makes eye contact with Blanca and SMILES.

BLANCA (CONT'D)

He smiles at me like all the time.

The two of them GIGGLE uncontrollably.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Maria stands at the basin of the plantation bathroom. She splashes water on her face and rinses her mouth.

INT. FLOWER PLANTATION - LATER

In a vast greenhouse, rows and rows of tall pink-rose plants extend into the distance. A space-man wearing a thick rubber suit, a rubber face mask and a rubber head-covering walks through spraying a fine mist of chemical fumigants onto the flowers. Elsewhere in the same greenhouse women clip roses.

This is a high-volume flower plantation. MARIA works in the warehouse - an immense hangar with a high roof and about eighty workers all in blue jumpsuits. There are flowers everywhere - bundles of reds, yellows, oranges, and violets.

The whole place is a hive of activity: some workers guide large carts on a rail-system into the warehouse; some measure and classify the roses into bundles; some place the bundles in large boxes for shipment abroad. It is a tightly regimented operation.

Maria wears thick rubber gloves and stands in front of a splintering plywood board. Next to her is a huge bunch of 100 red roses. One by one, she takes the roses, examines the quality of the buds, measures the length, and then with a quick, violent jerk she pulls them over an open blade to strip off the thorns. It's a tedious, repetitive action. She is one in a line of twenty people doing the same work.

She catches a thorn in her thumb and stops to examine it through the hole in the tip of her glove. Her skin is dotted with thorn scars. She's sweating profusely and she wipes her forehead with her sleeve.

A SUPERVISOR walks from station to station tallying each worker's output on a clipboard.

In another aisle, about twenty feet away, Blanca has the job of bundling roses. She sets down corrugated paper and then one by one carefully arranges and wraps the flowers, staples the bundle shut and labels it - then starts all over again.

Maria stares at the supervisor, who is now several stations up. She has paused in her work again and is watching everything else in the room with a removed, critical stare. She continues to perspire and looks physically ill. She raises her hand, trying to get her supervisor's attention.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As the supervisor happens to look up he sees Maria's hand in the air, sighs and makes his way back to her.

SUPERVISOR

What is it?

MARIA

Can I go to the bathroom?

SUPERVISOR

Again?

MARIA

I don't feel well.

SUPERVISOR

You've already been twice this morning. You're under by four bins this hour, three last hour. How are you going to catch up if you keep going to the bathroom?

He stares at her expectantly.

MARIA

Please. I'll be quick.

SUPERVISOR

Do you know what it's like for me always having to look over your shoulder, Maria? You think it's fun for me? I have eighty-four workers in this section and everyone else puts their head down and does their job. But with you, it's like this constant game of tug-of-war just to get you to make quota. At this point, I...

All of the sudden Maria VOMITS directly on the flowers, splattering her supervisor slightly.

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)

What the hell is wrong with you?! This is disgusting. Look at this. What the hell?

Maria doesn't dare look up at him.

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)

Look at these flowers. What are you gonna do about these? Huh? What are you gonna do?

She just stares at the flowers blankly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)
(exasperated)
Pick those up.

Maria scoops up the bundle of flowers in her arms - vomit and all. With Blanca and the rest watching, the supervisor leads her over to a large BASIN.

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)
Set them there.

Maria sets the flowers on a cart. He picks up a HOSE with a spray nozzle and twists it until it shoots a fine mist.

SUPERVISOR (cont'd)
(passing her the hose)
Wash them off.

Maria picks up a rose and sprays it off.

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)
Be careful with the bud.

MARIA
But they're already ruined.

SUPERVISOR
I don't care. Wash them.

MARIA
I need to go to the bathroom.

SUPERVISOR
(really pissed)
You want to go to the bathroom, then you can go on your lunch break... Or you can go right now and keep walking out the door.
(he stares her down)
I want all these flowers clean. And when you're done, you're gonna go back to your station and make up the bins you owe me. Understood?

The supervisor marches off, leaving Maria there - fuming.

EXT. TOWN, STREETS - DAY

Maria sits on a park bench and picks at her lunch, as a group of kids her age, dressed in school uniforms, passes by. She makes eye contact with one but they move on past. She checks the time.

EXT. STREET — AFTERNOON

In town. Maria walks up the street.

JUANA (OS)

Maria!

Maria sees her mother at a small store buying fruits and vegetables. She crosses over to her.

Juana pays for the two bags of groceries and puts a few coins of change in her pocket. She picks up the bags and the two of them walk on in silence.

INT. PHARMACY — CONTINUOUS

It's a small place with the drugs on the wall behind the counter. Diana watches as a WOMAN removes foil-wrapped TABLETS from a box and counts them out. Juana enters, trailed by Maria.

JUANA

Is everything OK?

DIANA

It's 9,600. Do you have any money?

JUANA

(to Maria)

Lend your sister the money.

MARIA

Why do I have to pay for it?

DIANA

It's for Pacho. He started vomiting.

MARIA

So? Where's your money?

JUANA

Maria!

MARIA

I give up practically all of what I make and Diana doesn't put in any of hers. And now I'm supposed to pay for Pacho's medicine too?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JUANA

Maria don't start! Give your sister the money.

Juana glares at her daughter. Maria finally digs into her pocket and hands over the money.

JUANA (cont'd)

You can keep the extra nine-thousand six-hundred when you get paid at the end of the month. I don't know why everything always has to be so difficult with you.

Maria watches Diana pay. And then, as if trying to get back at them, she says,

MARIA

Well, there's not going to be a next paycheck... Because I quit.

JUANA

What? When?

MARIA

Today.

JUANA

What happened?

MARIA

They wouldn't let me go to the bathroom.

JUANA

At all?

MARIA

It's not just that. I don't like the way they treat me. So I quit.

JUANA

What are you going to do?

The woman behind the counter looks very uncomfortable.

DIANA

You're really fucking stupid.

MARIA

Why don't you shut up.

DIANA

Don't tell me to shut up!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARIA

You don't know how they treated me.

DIANA

You could have put up with it. You're an idiot...

MARIA

(overlapping)

Why do I have to put up with it? Why am I always the one to put up with it all?

DIANA

(overlapping)

...Why don't you think of the family for once.

JUANA

Enough! Quiet, both of you!

(beat)

Maria, you have to go back and ask for your job back.

MARIA

No. I'm not going back.

DIANA

Then what are you going to do?

MARIA

I'll find something else.

JUANA

There's nothing but flowers around here. At least it's a decent job.

MARIA

Oh please, what's decent about it?

JUANA

Maria! You have to go back!

MARIA

Didn't you hear me? I'm not going back... I'm not!

With that, Maria storms out of the pharmacy and leaves them standing there.

EXT. PLAZA - EARLY EVENING

Maria sits by the plaza fountain with Juan and Blanca and a group of about five other girls and guys crowded around. Juan's got a BOTTLE of *aguardiente* and everyone is laughing, except Maria, who hasn't shaken her bad mood.

BLANCA

(laughing)

You should have seen the look on the supervisor's face... He was completely covered in it...

JUAN

This deserves a toast.

Juan pours a shot for Maria in a little plastic cup.

JUAN (CONT'D)

To Maria! Because she kicks ass!

She sips it, winces and then swallows the rest in one gulp.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. OUTDOOR FIESTA - NIGHT

A small rocket whizzes into the air and EXPLODES. On a side-street off the plaza, there's a small fiesta going on - with a little band of a dozen local guys (in uniform) playing a slightly sloppy, but very energetic salsa - and a crowd of about forty people of all ages - some dancing, some watching.

Maria and Blanca dance up a storm together - Maria dancing lead. She's a very good dancer, very lively and quite sexy. Most of all, she just has a good time - giggling and laughing with Blanca. Juan and the guys are sitting on the curb working their way steadily through the bottle of *aguardiente*.

The music stops and all the dancers fan themselves off - Juan walks among the band members pouring each a shot of liquor.

MARIA

(to Blanca)

Hey there's your boyfriend.

Blanca follows Maria's gaze and sees the SMILING GUY from work talking with a FRIEND. Sure enough, he makes eye contact with Blanca and smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

 BLANCA
 (giggling and turning away)
Oh my god.

 MARIA
You have to dance with him.

 BLANCA
No way!

Hearing that, Maria grabs Blanca's wrist and leads her right over to the Smiling Guy and his Friend.

 MARIA
Hi.

 SMILING GUY
Hi.

 MARIA
I'm Maria. This is Blanca.

 BLANCA
 (beet red)
Oh my god.

 SMILING GUY
I'm Felipe. This is my cousin Franklin.

 FRANKLIN
Hi.

Unlike Felipe, Franklin is dressed stylishly, with a hip shirt, designer jeans and a gold chain. Next to him, Felipe looks downright meek.

 MARIA
Blanca wants you to ask her to dance.

 FRANKLIN
Go for it.

 FELIPE
 (smiling)
Do you want to dance?

 BLANCA
...OK.

Felipe leads Blanca out into the dance area as the band strikes up. Maria watches them dance and then walks over to Juan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARIA

Juan, I want to dance.

Juan is clearly too drunk to dance and more interested in his guy friends. He takes her in his arms and mock dances drunkenly in a circle, laughing. She breaks away annoyed.

MARIA (cont'd)

What's wrong with you?

JUAN

(drunk)

What... why?

She walks away and stands watching Blanca and Felipe.

FRANKLIN

(out of nowhere)

Wanna dance?

Maria considers it, glances toward Juan...

FRANKLIN (cont'd)

What do you say?

MARIA

...Sure.

Franklin leads her out and the two of them dance. The more she dances, the more into it Maria gets - looking over at Juan occasionally - as if she were dancing to spite him.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

Maria walks the dirt road down the hill and into town.

She walks by several store fronts, looking occasionally inside. Her gait is slow and not particularly determined.

INT. MUSIC SHOP - DAY

Maria steps into a small music shop - basically just a glass case with various CD's, and racks full of cassettes on either wall. A MAN catalogues boxes of music as Latin rap plays on a small stereo. He nods at Maria - they seem to recognize each other. She takes a tape off the wall and examines it.

MARIA

How much is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN
(turns the music down)
Fifteen thousand, two hundred.

Maria puts it back on the wall. She watches the man work.

MARIA
You have a lot of work.

MAN
I have to catalogue everything, keep
track of what I sold, what I didn't.

Maria contemplates asking him for a job... but the store is obviously a one-man operation.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Maria comes into the Catholic CHURCH where a couple of older women talk quietly in the pews. She kneels down, crosses herself, mutters a Hail Mary, and then adds her own, silent request.

EXT. MOTORBIKE REPAIR SHOP - LATER

Maria and Blanca walk up to an outdoor garage that is packed with mopeds and motorcycles. JUAN is squatting next to a mechanic watching him work.

MARIA
Juan.

JUAN
(looks up)
In a minute.

MARIA
Come on.
(to Blanca)
I'll see you later.

Blanca kisses Maria's cheek and leaves as Juan finally crosses to the front and gets his bicycle. He and Maria cross the street to...

EXT. SAUSAGE STAND / PARK - LATER

A small stand serving arepas across from a park. Maria and Juan each take an arepa and a Coca-cola. Juan pays and takes the change.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They walk over to the park and sit on the grass and eat. They don't have any conversation at all while they eat - they just chew in silence. At a certain point Maria stops and watches Juan take another bite - he's absorbed in chewing.

MARIA

I have something to tell you.

JUAN

What?

MARIA

...I think I'm pregnant.

He looks at her.

JUAN

You're not fucking with me, right?

MARIA

I missed my last two periods and I've been feeling sick.

JUAN

What are you going to do?

MARIA

I don't know.

JUAN

Who else knows?

MARIA

Only you.

JUAN

No-one else?

MARIA

Who else do you think I told? The whole world?

JUAN

I don't know. Maybe Blanca, since she seems to know everything before me...

MARIA

(cutting him off)

No Juan, Blanca doesn't know.

Long silence... Very long silence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JUAN

Maria... Do you want to get married?

MARIA

(laughs nervously)
Are you joking?

JUAN

Why?

MARIA

Where would we live?

JUAN

In my house. Where else?

MARIA

There are like ten people living in your house. You share your bedroom with your brother.

JUAN

What do you suggest?

MARIA

My house would be better.

JUAN

Right, a lot better! A guy living in his girlfriend's house? No way, not that Maria.

MARIA

You're really fucking stupid, you know that?

JUAN

Stupid? Your family hates me. How do you expect me to live there? We can live at my house.

(beat)

I don't see why you don't want to get married. I'm stepping up to this...

Maria takes a beat - stares at him.

MARIA

Juan, do you love me?

JUAN

(groans)
Not this again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARIA

Look me in the eye and tell me you love me... What kind of person are you? You want to marry a woman you don't love? A woman who doesn't love you? What kind of marriage is that? How long's it gonna be before you're sleeping with some other girl? A month?

JUAN

You know that's not gonna happen.

MARIA

I don't want the same thing to happen to me that happened to my sister.

JUAN

(attacking)

I hate to break it to you but your sister was a fucking idiot who slept with the first guy that walked by...

MARIA

Shut up!

JUAN

...and left her with a kid.

MARIA

You can't talk about my sister like that.

JUAN

You know I'm not going anywhere.

MARIA

That doesn't change anything. I'm not marrying you.

JUAN

Well you're gonna have to.

MARIA

No, Juan. I don't have to do anything.

JUAN

See how you are? You're stubborn.

MARIA

And you're an idiot. A loser.

(beat)

I'm not even in love with you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JUAN
...Me neither.

MARIA
(stares at him)
Perfect.

Maria gets up and walks off through the park.

INT. MARIA'S BEDROOM - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Maria sits up in bed playing with one of Pacho's stuffed animals. She rolls on her side and stares over at her sister, asleep with Pacho. Maria grips at her sheet - angry, frustrated, frightened.

EXT. STREET IN TOWN - DAY

Maria waits at a BUS STOP with three or four WOMEN.

FRANKLIN rides by - they make eye contact - he makes a U-turn and pulls up on his motorcycle.

FRANKLIN
Hi.

MARIA
Hi.

FRANKLIN
Where are you going?

MARIA
To the city.

FRANKLIN
Hop on. I'll give you a ride.

MARIA
To Bogota?

FRANKLIN
Sure.

Maria gets on and puts her arms around Franklin's waist.

EXT. MOVING MOTORCYCLE – CONTINUOUS

Maria and Franklin ride through the streets. The scenery changes as they go from the center of town and then into an expanse of open country. Taking curves faster and faster.

Maria is clearly getting a rush being on the back of Franklin's motorcycle, the wind in her face.

EXT. JUICE STAND - DAY

At a juice stand by the side of the road, the girl behind the counter scoops fruit into a blender.

FRANKLIN

I like the way you dance.

MARIA

Really? You too.

FRANKLIN

I didn't think people around here could dance. I thought they were all stiff.

MARIA

...Where are you from?

FRANKLIN

I'm from a little town called Santa Rosa de Cabal. About ten minutes from Pereira. You know it?

MARIA

No.

FRANKLIN

They have some great hot springs there. I'll take you sometime.

MARIA

Yeah?

Franklin flashes her a smile. Maria looks away, blushing.

MARIA (cont'd)

(beat)

So why are you here?

FRANKLIN

...Various reasons.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The girl sets down two glasses of juice. Franklin takes his and walks toward the little tables on the grass behind the stand. Maria follows.

FRANKLIN (cont'd)

...It was nothing. I just had to get away for a while. I had some problems and things started heating up. As soon as it all calms down I'm going back...

(beat)

...So, what are you going to Bogota for?

MARIA

I have a friend who works there. She works for this rich family, in their house. She's gonna help me out getting a job.

Franklin begins to laugh.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Don't laugh.

FRANKLIN

I'm sorry... It's just that you're way too pretty to be working as a maid. Way too cute to be getting dressed up in a hat and apron. Those people'll treat you like shit.

MARIA

(defensive)

...Anyway, I was just gonna check it out. It wasn't definite.

She moves away from him - sits at one of the little tables.

FRANKLIN

(studies her, sits)

You lost your job at the plantation, right?

MARIA

Who told you?

FRANKLIN

...Felipe...

MARIA

That's a lie. They didn't fire me.

FRANKLIN

Oh no?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARIA

You've got bad information. They didn't fire me - I walked.

FRANKLIN

(beat)

Listen, if you're looking for work I might be able to hook you up...

MARIA

Hook me up?

FRANKLIN

It just depends how bad you need the money. I know of a good job... Traveling...

MARIA

Traveling where?

FRANKLIN

To the United States.

MARIA

What's the job?

FRANKLIN

(beat)

Working as a mule... You know what a mule is, or not?

Maria looks away. She clearly knows.

FRANKLIN (cont'd)

It's a cool job. You go, hand off the stuff, get your cash. And that's it... Like winning the lottery.

MARIA

Yeah, but it's dangerous, right?

FRANKLIN

How many mules do you know?

MARIA

Me? None.

FRANKLIN

Well, I know a bunch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARIA

What about the ones on the news? The ones in prison far away. What about them?

FRANKLIN

(laughs)

Those are the ones who want to be famous. They get caught, get on TV, everyone sees them and they become famous.

MARIA

(doesn't laugh)

Well I don't want to be famous.

FRANKLIN

I know a guy who can set it all up. Takes care of the papers, makes the arrangements...

Maria looks away - nervous. Franklin reads her immediately.

FRANKLIN (cont'd)

You know what - forget about it.

(stands)

Let's go.

He starts to walk toward his motorcycle. Maria hesitates.

MARIA

Wait.

(he turns)

...How much would I get?

Hold on Maria.

EXT. BOGOTA STREETS / BAR - DAY

Bogota is loud and chaotic - buses clog the streets, horns blare, waves of people crowd the sidewalks.

With Maria's arms around his waist Franklin weaves in and out of city traffic and pulls up in front of a bar on a sidestreet in an uncertain neighborhood.

INT. BAR - DAY

It's a dimly-lit place with a pool table at the back and tables along the wall opposite the bar. It's filled almost entirely with MEN, all older. Maria looks rather uncomfortable as she follows Franklin in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANKLIN

You want something to drink...?

(to the bartender)

Give me a beer and a soda for her...

(to Maria)

I'm gonna talk to this guy. I'll just be a minute.

He leaves Maria at the bar and heads to the back table where a MAN sits with the only other WOMAN in the place. Franklin shakes the man's hand and points to Maria. Maria sips her soda.

Franklin comes back over and waits with Maria. A moment later, the woman at the far table gets up. She makes very definite eye contact with Maria as she walks out.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

Come on.

Franklin introduces Maria to JAVIER, a well-groomed man of about 60 with a gold chain, an ironed shirt and a cane leaning up against the table. He effects an incredibly paternal tone, calming but also intimidating.

JAVIER

Sit down.

Maria sits opposite him. Franklin pulls up a third chair.

JAVIER (cont'd)

So, you're a friend of Franklin's. And how do you know each other?

Maria falters - looks to Franklin.

FRANKLIN

(jumping in)

She's a friend of the family. On my cousin's side.

JAVIER

Uh huh... And you're looking for work?

MARIA

Yes, sir.

JAVIER

Since when?

MARIA

About two weeks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JAVIER

And where were you working before?

MARIA

In a flower plantation.

JAVIER

What happened?

MARIA

I didn't get along with my boss... so I left.

JAVIER

Rebellious then?

MARIA

No, sir.

JAVIER

You don't have a problem taking directions, orders?

MARIA

No.

JAVIER

Do you get scared easily?

MARIA

...No.

JAVIER

How old are you?

MARIA

Eighteen.

JAVIER

Boyfriend?

MARIA

(hesitates)

No.

JAVIER

Yes or no?

He looks at Franklin.

MARIA

No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JAVIER

And how's your system?

MARIA

My system?

JAVIER

I mean how's your stomach? Do you have problems with diarrhea, constipation, digestive problems?

MARIA

No, sir.

JAVIER

Do you eat a lot?

MARIA

Normal.

Javier takes a beat. Examines her. Maria doesn't flinch.

JAVIER

Well then... We're going to give you several rolls of film. We'll send you to New York... Actually to New Jersey - a small town next to New York. Once you go through Customs you'll be met by our people. They will take you to a safe place. We'll develop the rolls. And in five, six days you'll be back here with all your money taking care of your problems.

MARIA

How much do I get?

JAVIER

We'll give you a hundred dollars a roll. A girl your size you could make five or six thousand depending on how much you carry. Keep in mind we have to take care of your documents. Meaning that after we deduct the expenses for your passport and visa and the other papers you'll get about seven or eight million pesos.

MARIA

(hesitates)

What if I get caught?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JAVIER

And why would you get caught? Unless you get off the plane trembling like a leaf. Then they'll catch you. Obviously. But no worries. Those gringos don't know a thing.

(leans in)

But once your decision is made there's no turning back. You can't tell anyone. Understand?

Javier stares hard at Maria.

MARIA

Yes, sir.

JAVIER

Now, I know you're in a difficult situation. And I don't want you making this decision under any kind of pressure.

(reaching into his pocket)

So I want to give you this so you can take care of a few things...

He slides several BILLS across the table.

MARIA

(eyes the money)

...No, really it's not necessary.

JAVIER

(studies her)

...No, no, no. No strings attached.

Maria stares at the money on the table.

EXT. STREET / BUS STOP - LATER

Maria walks across the busy street and stops at the bus stop. Among the people waiting for the bus, Maria recognizes the WOMAN who was sitting at Javier's table in the bar. A moment later the BUS rolls up and they all get on.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Maria sees a free seat next to the WOMAN. She sits. The woman recognizes Maria but neither of them says anything.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA
You were in the bar, right?
(no response)
My name is Maria.

The woman glances at Maria, then looks away.

WOMAN
I'm Lucy.

LUCY looks to be about 24. She's dressed nicely – not fancy, just more stylish than Maria. But from the way she carries herself and talks she's clearly from the same class as Maria.

MARIA
Do you work for Javier...? Is it hard?

LUCY
(not making eye contact)
It's not easy but it's not too difficult
either... How old are you?

MARIA
Seventeen. I said eighteen, though.

LUCY
(looks at Maria)
You just have to be prepared and know how
to do it right.

Maria takes this in.

INT. MARIA'S HOUSE – DAY

Maria comes home. Diana is folding clothes at the table. Maria walks right past her toward the kitchen.

DIANA
Where have you been?

MARIA
I went to the city to ask Jessica to find
me work.

DIANA
(following Maria)
And?

MARIA
And nothing. It's none of your business.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIANA

Don't tell me it's none of my business.

MARIA

It isn't.

DIANA

You didn't find anything. You'd tell me if you found something... You have to go back to the plantation and ask for your job back.

MARIA

No, I don't.

DIANA

It's not fair to mom. You know how hard it is for her and now you're making things even worse.

MARIA

Get off my back.

DIANA

(getting emotional)

Don't tell me to get off your fucking back. Pacho got a hundred and six fever today.

MARIA

He's your kid.

DIANA

I know he's my kid. So?

MARIA

So, he's your responsibility.

DIANA

(yelling)

We're all equal in this house. We all have to pull our weight. You have to get a job.

MARIA

Well, I already got one.

DIANA

What job? Cut the shit.

Maria stares at Diana. She then reaches into her pocket and pulls out the money Javier gave her. Diana's eyes widen. Maria peels off a few bills and throws them down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARIA

At least I put in my share.

Maria storms out of the kitchen and into her room where she flops onto her bed, fuming. She SLAMS the door.

EXT. STREET, A NEARBY TOWN - DAY

Maria walks up the street in another town, slightly bigger than her own. She knocks on the door of a concrete house slightly nicer than her own. The door opens and it's LUCY.

LUCY

Hi.

INT. LUCY'S HOUSE - DAY

Lucy's house is nice - spacious though vacant-feeling with a large table and chairs, and a relatively new hi-fi. Maria sits alone. Lucy comes in from the kitchen with a small bag - full of GRAPES. She sits.

LUCY

Here.

(hands Maria a grape)

Hold it in your mouth.

Maria puts it in her mouth and holds it there.

LUCY (cont'd)

Just hold it. Let it slide to the back.

All the way. Now open your throat.

Maria gags - then bites into the grape and swallows it.

LUCY (CONT'D)

You have to practice with the grapes.

Lucy passes her the bag of grapes. Maria picks one out.

MARIA

You can swallow that?

Lucy puts a grape in her mouth and swallows it whole. Maria stares in horrified awe.

LUCY

You can't eat anything for the last twenty-four hours. Your stomach has to be totally empty. They'll lie about how many you have to swallow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

How many will it be?

LUCY

For someone your size, maybe sixty or seventy pellets.

MARIA

Oh my god.

LUCY

Be glad you're little. Big guys swallow like ninety or a hundred... Make sure they're well wrapped. If even one of them opens up inside you you'll die. Not as fast as cocaine. Cocaine will make your heart explode immediately. Heroin takes longer, but you still die unless you get the right medicine.

Maria's eyes widen.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Wear nice clothes. Nothing flashy, just something nice - so you don't look like a peasant. They may ask you questions in the airport. Javier will tell you what to say.

MARIA

How many times have you done this?

LUCY

...Two.

MARIA

And it went OK?

LUCY

...I'm still here.

(beat)

The first time I did it I thought I wanted to go see my sister. She lives in New York. I haven't seen her in four years. But then I got there and I realized, What am I going to tell her? How am I going to explain how I got here? I love her but we're really different, you know? She would kill me if she knew I was doing this. The second time I did it I went and saw where she lives but I couldn't knock on the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARIA
What is America like?

LUCY
...Straight. Everything's in perfect squares.

INT. BATHROOM - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Maria stands in front of the mirror and places a grape in her mouth. She tries to swallow it and GAGS. She tries again. She looks very nervous - almost on the verge of tears.

EXT. YARD - DAY

In the yard behind her house Maria is washing laundry by hand. Blanca sits watching her.

BLANCA
So how's that thing?

MARIA
What thing?

BLANCA
Your job? What do you have to do?

MARIA
(fixes her)
I told you not to talk about it.

Maria goes to hang a sheet. Blanca watches her a beat and then opens her purse and pulls something out.

BLANCA
Maria... Maria, look at me!

Maria finally looks over. Blanca puts a GRAPE in her mouth. Maria stares at her in shock as she tries to swallow it. She gags and spits it out.

MARIA
What the hell are you doing?

BLANCA
I'm going to be a mule. I talked to Franklin and he arranged it.

MARIA
(looks at Blanca)
You what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLANCA

You heard me. Why not?

MARIA

Because you can't... you won't make it.

BLANCA

Well, I'm doing it. I already told them.

MARIA

Blanca, what the hell...?

BLANCA

It's five thousand dollars, Maria. Do you know how much that is in pesos? I figured it out. It's like ten million. I can buy my family a house with that.

MARIA

You can't go.

BLANCA

You know what? I don't need your permission. I can do what I want.

MARIA

Do you realize what you're saying...? Blanca you have to tell them you're not going.

BLANCA

No... Anyway, I can't now. I already said yes.

Blanca looks trapped. Maria turns away, annoyed.

MARIA

...Do you know what you're going to tell your family?

BLANCA

Do you?

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM — EVENING

JUANA

I don't understand. You're going all the way to Chiquinquirá? To work as a secretary?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Juana stands in the doorway of Maria and Diana's bedroom, watching as Maria folds clothes and puts them into a small suitcase. Diana sits on her own bed.

MARIA
I already told you...

JUANA
Well tell me again.

MARIA
I got it through Blanca's aunt.

JUANA
But you don't know anything about working in an office.

MARIA
(crossing away from her mother)
What, you don't think I'm smart enough?

JUANA
I didn't say that.

Juana sits at the foot of Maria's bed. She glances to Diana, clearly distraught - then watches Maria continue to go through her clothes.

JUANA (cont'd)
I just don't understand why you have to go so far away... Maria...

Maria finally looks at her mother. They share a beat. They both clearly feel uncomfortable, but Maria buries her uncertainty with a distant resolve.

EXT. PLAZA - MID-MORNING

Her hair pulled back and her face made up, Maria is dressed in a nice blouse and skirt - clearly her nicest outfit - as she walks down into town carrying her suitcase.

She sits on a bench on the edge of the town square. She looks to the center of the plaza and sees JUAN with his bicycle standing amongst friends. He turns and they make eye contact. After a moment of hesitation, he rides over.

MARIA
(stands, awkward)
Hi.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JUAN
Hi.

MARIA
How are you doing?

JUAN
Fine. You?

MARIA
OK.

Pause.

JUAN
I need my tapes my back.

MARIA
...Sure.

She opens her walkman, ejects the tape and hands it him.
Then she goes into her bag and pulls out a handful of tapes.
She gives him all but one, which she puts back in her bag.

MARIA (cont'd)
(beat)
Do you want the walkman back?

JUAN
That was a present.

They stare at each other.

JUAN (CONT'D)
You look nice.

MARIA
Thanks.

Just then, FRANKLIN rides up on his motorcycle and stops.

Maria looks enormously uncomfortable. Juan and Franklin look
at each other but no-one makes any attempt at introductions.

JUAN
(finally)
I gotta go.

MARIA
I'll see you later.

Juan gets on his bike and rides off with the tapes in one
hand. Maria watches him go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRANKLIN
(breaking her moment)
You ready?

He gets her suitcase and puts it on the back of his motorcycle. Maria gives a final look at Juan as she climbs on.

EXT. MOVING MOTORCYCLE, COUNTRYSIDE AND CITY - CONTINUOUS

Franklin and Maria ride with Maria's suitcase strapped to the back of the bike - along the road and then into the city. He weaves in and out of traffic and finally pulls over at...

EXT. / INT. PHARMACY - CONTINUOUS

...a perfectly ordinary pharmacy in the middle of the city.

Franklin accompanies Maria inside and nods hello to the PHARMACIST behind the counter. The pharmacist disappears into the back. The two of them wait.

MARIA
And Blanca?

FRANKLIN
She's in another place.

The sliding door-display case suddenly rolls open - revealing the pharmacist standing behind it expectantly. Franklin passes him Maria's suitcase.

FRANKLIN (CONT'D)
(reading her nervousness)
Don't worry. Everything's gonna be fine.

He gives her a kiss on the cheek. She hesitates before turning away from him and follows the pharmacist into the back.

INT. PHARMACY, BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The pharmacist leads Maria into a small, stark room with a table, a few chairs, a sink and a small bed in the corner.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

At the other end of the table is a YOUNG MAN, in his 20s. He's got various paraphernalia spread out in front of him: a BOX OF SEVERAL DOZEN RUBBER SURGICAL GLOVES, a pair of SCISSORS, a ROLL OF PLASTIC WRAP, a DIGITAL SCALE, a small box of DENTAL FLOSS, a BOTTLE OF SALAD OIL, a SMALL BOWL and two bags of HEROIN.

He transfers a precise amount of heroin from the scale into the severed finger of a latex glove, which he then places into a HAND-OPERATED PRESS, pumping the lever and packing it down into a dense one-inch capsule.

The pharmacist steps out of the room as Maria sits and watches the young man, entranced...

SERIES OF JUMP CUTS:

He cuts the fingers off several of the rubber gloves. He then slides the heroin capsule into a rubber finger and packs it all the way down into the bottom.

He takes the finger full of heroin and stuffs it inside a second rubber finger - then another and another until it's been buried in SIX LAYERS of rubber fingers.

He breaks off a piece of DENTAL FLOSS and ties it shut like a rubber balloon. He then trims off the excess dental floss and the excess rubber.

He sets the "pellet" down - a snug little thumb-sized package - and begins making another.

The pharmacist re-enters the room, breaking Maria's trance. He hands her two small PILLS and a cup of water.

PHARMACIST

This will stop your bowels.

She puts the pills in her mouth and swallows them. The pharmacist then raises a bottle of RED LIQUID with a tube and an atomizer attached.

PHARMACIST (cont'd)

Open you mouth.

As he sprays the liquid into Maria's throat, JAVIER steps in and sits down at the table with her. The pharmacist finishes and leaves the room.

Javier pulls the SMALL BOWL over to him and pours it full of SALAD OIL. He takes one of the pellets and dips it in the oil, completely covering it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He passes it to Maria and she puts it in her mouth. She tries to swallow it but GAGS.

JAVIER

Relax.

She puts the pellet back in her mouth and sets it deep in her throat with her fingers.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

Don't put your fingers in so much.

Maria starts to gag again.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

Did you practice with the grapes?

MARIA

Yes.

JAVIER

If you can't do this we'll stop now.

MARIA

No, really. I can do it. Just give me a second.

Maria looks nervous. She puts the pellet in her mouth and holds it there.

JAVIER

Just let it slide down.

She tilts her head back and the pellet goes down. She looks very relieved.

MARIA

See.

JAVIER

Good.

He dips another pellet in oil and holds it out to her.

AN HOUR LATER - Maria paces around the room. The young man packs up his stuff as Maria and Javier continue to work.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

How do you feel?

MARIA

How many is it so far?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JAVIER
Twenty-three.

Maria presses her stomach.

JAVIER (CONT'D)
Here. Lay down on the bed.

She lays down. Javier places his hands on her stomach.

MARIA
What are you doing?!

JAVIER
They have to settle properly.

He massages her stomach, manipulating the pellets inside.
The door opens and the PHARMACIST brings in a bowl of SOUP.

JAVIER (CONT'D)
Have some soup.

Maria gets up and sits at the table. She takes a spoonful of soup with great trepidation. It hurts going down.

PHARMACIST
Do you want more anesthetic?

Maria shakes her head No. Javier places another pellet in her bowl. She gets it on her spoon along with some soup and stares at it.

A FEW HOURS LATER - the room is illuminated by early afternoon light. Maria sits at the table with her head down. Javier is holding out a pellet.

JAVIER
One more.

MARIA
How many?

JAVIER
Sixty-two. Come on.

She stares at him hatefully before taking the pellet. She swallows it slowly but without gagging.

JAVIER (CONT'D)
Good... I'll be right back.

He turns and leaves the room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Maria takes a beat alone. She goes to her things and removes from her purse a toothbrush and a small tube of toothpaste. She goes to the sink and brushes her teeth. She rinses and spits and then catches sight of herself in the mirror.

Javier comes back in, sits at the table, and removes from his wallet a wad of AMERICAN MONEY - 20-dollar bills. She sits.

JAVIER (CONT'D)
(hands her the money)
This is eight hundred dollars.

Maria stares at the money. Never in her life has she held this much.

JAVIER (cont'd)
When they ask you how much you're coming to America with tell them eight hundred dollars. Just say you've been saving up.
(handing her papers)
This is your ticket. Round trip - one week. This is your passport and visa.

She stares at them - fascinated. He writes something on a piece of PAPER and passes it to her.

MARIA
(reads, mispronouncing)
Motor Lodge 46.

JAVIER
That's the name and address of the hotel where you say you're staying. Do you remember why you're in America?

MARIA
I'm on vacation.

JAVIER
(testing her)
And how long are you here for?

MARIA
One week.

JAVIER
Who bought this ticket?

MARIA
A friend of mine.

JAVIER
Where?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MARIA

At a travel agency on Plaza Bolivar.

JAVIER

Where do you plan to stay in America?

MARIA

I'm going to stay in a hotel.

JAVIER

Which hotel?

MARIA

(reading)

Motor Lodge 46.

JAVIER

Good. How are you feeling?

MARIA

Like hungry but full - it's weird.

JAVIER

You can drink on the plane but don't eat or it'll make your stomach release acid. Don't talk to anyone on the plane. Even the stewardesses spy for the DEA. Once you've been passed through Customs you'll come out through an electric sliding door. On the other side of that there'll be someone there to meet you.

MARIA

How will I know who it is?

JAVIER

They'll know you. If they're not there for some reason call this number.

He takes back the paper and writes a TELEPHONE NUMBER on it.

JAVIER (CONT'D)

The key is to stay calm and act like nothing's wrong. But if you do get caught just keep quiet.

(he leans in)

If you give them any information we'll leave you to rot in there while we go to your house and have a chat with your grandmother, your mother, your sister... and little Pachito. Same thing if any of what's in your stomach disappears along the way.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

JAVIER (CONT'D)

We know exactly how much each one of those 62 pellets you've got weighs. Do I make myself clear?

He glares into her eyes. The effect is chilling.

INT. AIRPORT, X-RAY CHECK POINT - AFTERNOON

Maria puts her purse on the conveyor belt and steps through the metal detector. One guard scans her up and down with HANDHELD METAL DETECTOR and another then pats her down. As Maria stares straight ahead she suddenly sees something odd: BLANCA - dressed vampy with cleavage and lipstick - browsing perfume at the duty-free shop. They make brief eye contact.

CUT TO:

INT. AIRPLANE CABIN - LATER

Maria gazes out the window as the plane picks up speed. She crosses herself and mutters a Hail Mary. She closes her eyes as her back is pressed up against the seatback and the plane becomes airborne. For the first time in her life, she is off the surface of the planet, flying. She stares out and watches with fascination as the world shrinks away below her.

CUT TO:

The fasten seat belt sign is turned off with a soft CHIME.

The woman next to her (Carolina) undoes her seat belt and gets up.

Maria looks over at the people on the other side of the aisle. When she looks forward she is surprised to see LUCY getting up and making her way to the aisle.

Maria unbuckles her seatbelt and then approaches Lucy, who is getting a pillow and a blanket out of the overhead bin.

MARIA

(hushed)

I didn't know you were going again.

LUCY

I didn't either. It just happened.

MARIA

You know we're not the only ones.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCY

That's how it works. They send a bunch of us so if one gets stopped it makes it easier for the rest to slip through...

MARIA

Oh...

A STEWARDESS suddenly passes behind them. They are both immediately silent. Lucy moves back to her seat.

CUT TO:

Maria looks through the IN-FLIGHT MAGAZINE at all the pictures: a spread on Disneyland, a photograph of a businessman in a chic office...and then the MAP OF THE WORLD with all of the airline's flight paths indicated.

The DINNER CART is maneuvered slowly down the aisle. Carolina pulls her airplane headphones out of one ear.

CAROLINA

It's about time. I'm starved.

The stewardess approaches.

STEWARDESS

Chicken or beef?

CAROLINA

Chicken.

STEWARDESS

For you?

MARIA

...Chicken, please.

The stewardess turns to get the trays.

STEWARDESS

Here you are.

And now Maria finds herself staring at a perfectly delicious looking tray of steaming hot food. The woman next to her unwraps her fork and decides to strike up conversation.

CAROLINA

Do you go to the United States a lot?

MARIA

Well...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Maria cuts off a piece of chicken and puts it in her mouth. She chews but doesn't swallow. Her neighbor is more interested in talking than in listening.

CAROLINA

I go every year to visit my daughter. She married an American and they've got a beautiful house on Long Island. Of course, I think the children should be the ones to come to Colombia to visit their grandmother instead of the other way around...

The woman TALKS and TALKS - oblivious to whether Maria is in fact eating or not.

Maria carefully spits her food out into her napkin.

CUT TO:

LATER -

Maria is reaching up playing with the buttons and nozzles - trying to figure out how to control the air. The seats next to her are empty.

Suddenly, BLANCA is standing in the aisle. She looks over her shoulder and quickly sits down in the empty seat next to Maria.

MARIA

What the hell are you doing?

BLANCA

I saw you talking to that woman before. Who was she?

MARIA

(hesitates)
She's... you know...

BLANCA

You see that woman...

Maria leans forward and spots a woman (CONSTANZA) sitting one row back on the aisle.

BLANCA (cont'd)

I met her before, through Franklin.
(beat)
So what were you two talking about?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

She said if one of us gets stopped at Customs it creates a distraction for the others to pass.

BLANCA

So who's going to go first?

MARIA

I don't know. Whoever.

BLANCA

I don't want to go first. I'll wait and see what happens to her.

MARIA

I thought we were supposed to go right through without waiting...

Beat.

BLANCA

...I feel like when I've got my period.

MARIA

...I feel like I need to go the bathroom.

CAROLINA (O.S.)

Excuse me!

Carolina is standing in the aisle, looking annoyed.

BLANCA

(getting up)

Sorry.

As Carolina settles back into her seat Maria places her pillow under her ear and closes her eyes.

CUT TO:

LUCY - she sits in her seat dabbing her forehead with a napkin. The cabin lights are dimmed, the in-flight movie playing. Maria wakes up. Carolina has fallen asleep with her headphones on.

Maria lifts her shirt and presses her abdomen in discomfort. She unbuttons her pants trying to relieve the pressure.

She climbs over Carolina and moves to the aisle. CONSTANZA looks up at her as she passes.

INT. AIRPLANE LAVATORY - CONTINUOUS

Maria locks the LAVATORY door and the lights come on. She pulls down her pants and sits on the toilet. As she contorts her face we hear the TINKLE of urine on metal.

INT. AIRPLANE CABIN - CONTINUOUS

LUCY is sweating profusely, still dabbing herself with a napkin. She doesn't look well. She gets up and maneuvers to the aisle.

INT. LAVATORY - CONTINUOUS

Sitting on the toilet, Maria suddenly has a look of PANIC in her eyes. Desperately she grabs paper towels from the dispenser.

IN THE PLANE CABIN - Lucy walks slowly down the aisle. She sees Blanca. The two of them lock eyes, but Lucy keeps walking.

IN THE LAVATORY - Maria holds her hand under cold water in the sink. She's rinsing off TWO PELLETS.

She opens her purse and removes her tube of TOOTHPASTE.

PLANE CABIN - Lucy comes to the back of the plane and waits by the lavatory, looking sicker all the time.

LAVATORY - Maria squeezes toothpaste onto the second pellet, smears it on and takes a beat. She puts the pellet in her mouth, tilts her head back and swallows. She then looks at herself in the mirror and tries to compose herself.

PLANE CABIN - Maria comes out of the lavatory, face to face with LUCY. Lucy looks desperate - sweating, nervous.

LUCY

I don't feel well.

MARIA

What are you going to do?

Lucy has a blank, nervous look on her face.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Calm down. As soon as we arrive we're going to get you to a doctor. You're going to be fine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUCY
 (pulling it together)
 I know. I know.
 (beat)
 Thanks.

Maria heads back up the aisle - past Blanca - to her seat, casting a glance over her shoulder as she sits.

CUT TO:

The STEWARDESS works her way down the aisle with a stack of YELLOW CUSTOMS CARDS. She gives them to Maria and Carolina.

Maria reads the card and gets to a blank space for an ADDRESS where she plans to stay in the U.S. She reaches into her pocket for the paper with the name of the hotel but she can't find it. She searches all her pockets and then in her purse but the paper is nowhere.

She looks over to copy her neighbor's answer but Carolina finishes writing and tucks the card away.

Maria gets up and walks forward to the middle Emergency Exit and turns to look at Lucy. Lucy, looking still worse, notices Maria and gets concerned. She glances over her shoulder, gets up and makes her way over to Maria.

LUCY (cont'd)
 (hushed)
 I've been thinking about telling the stewardess I'm sick. They could get me a doctor.

MARIA
 But you'll end up in jail once they find out what's wrong with you.

LUCY
 But I'll be alive.

MARIA
 (hesitates)
 Don't. Just wait.

Lucy looks thankful to Maria for supporting her.

MARIA (CONT'D)
 ...I lost the name the hotel. Do you have it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LUCY

No. I always give them my sister's address.

(beat)

Do you have a pen?

Maria gives her a pen - Lucy tears off a corner of her ticket envelope.

LUCY (CONT'D)

(scribbling)

It's my sister's address in Queens, New York...

CUT TO:

NEW YORK SKYLINE AT NIGHT. Blanca looks out her window. Lucy meanwhile touches up her make-up trying to hide how sick she is. Maria looks out her window playing nervously with the crucifix on her necklace.

INT. AIRPORT CORRIDORS - NIGHT

Lucy comes off the plane amid Constanza and other passengers. Maria walks down the same corridor. Blanca follows Maria.

INT. BAGGAGE CLAIM / CUSTOMS AREA - CONTINUOUS

Maria stands by a large baggage carousel with other passengers from the plane. She spots Blanca and Constanza at various points across from her. Lucy stands about ten feet away from her - looking sick but doing her best to keep her nerves under control.

There are about FIFTEEN CUSTOMS INSPECTORS across the room - men and women - looking bored, talking among themselves as they wait for passengers to come through.

Bags tumble down the chute - some huge, some swathed in plastic wrap. They get clogged on the carousel. Three AIRPORT BAGGAGE HANDLERS unknot them. Passengers struggle to pull their luggage off and head through Customs. Blanca takes her bag off and lingers - as if waiting for a second bag.

Lucy pulls a SMALL RED SUITCASE off. She looks at Maria - and then steps to the short line by the first two inspectors.

Maria looks down but there's no sign of her suitcase.

Lucy - nervous and sick - hands her yellow card to the inspector. He gives her a quick look and waves her through.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Everyone breathes a sigh of relief.

Lucy makes eye contact with Maria from the other side – and then passes outside through a sliding electric door.

Constanza steps up to an inspector. The inspector asks her something and then points to the secondary inspection point. She looks mortified as she takes her bag over to be checked.

Blanca sees this, takes her bag and proceeds directly to Customs. Maria looks desperate for her bag to come around.

Blanca gets at the end of the line at Customs. At last, Maria grabs her bag off the carousel. She begins to move toward the line but before she even gets there she is stopped by a roaming INSPECTOR – a tall man with a buzz cut.

INSPECTOR
(in English)
Hello. May I see your passport, ticket
and declaration card?

Maria stares at him blankly.

INSPECTOR (CONT'D)
(repeating, in Spanish)
May I see your passport, ticket and
declaration card?

Maria – containing her fear – hands over her documents. The inspector looks at them.

INSPECTOR (cont'd)
Where are you coming from today?

MARIA
Colombia.

INSPECTOR
And where are you traveling to?

MARIA
New York.

INSPECTOR
Are these all your bags?

MARIA
Yes.

The inspector takes a beat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

INSPECTOR

Would you mind coming with me?

Maria follows the inspector as they go directly to the inspection counter opposite Constanza. Maria looks over and sees Blanca being waved right through.

INSPECTOR (CONT'D)

Place your suitcase on the counter...
Open it, please.

Maria does so. The inspector puts on a pair of RUBBER GLOVES, opens it up and begins to check its contents, piling up Maria's clothes.

Throughout, the inspector invokes a strangely casual, friendly tone.

INSPECTOR (CONT'D)

What's the purpose of your stay?

MARIA

Vacation.

INSPECTOR

How long will you be here?

MARIA

One week.

The inspector feels all the sides of the suitcase.

A SECOND INSPECTOR - a Latina woman - walks up and watches as the first agent continues his inspection.

INSPECTOR

Only a week? No more?

MARIA

No.

INSPECTOR

Where will you be staying?

MARIA

...With my friend.

INSPECTOR

Where does your friend live?

The inspector finds a pair of shoes and checks the soles - bending them, looking closely at the heels.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Maria looks beyond him, at the opposite counter, and watches CONSTANZA answer questions - the contents of her suitcase piled up.

INSPECTOR (CONT'D)
(looking up, repeating)
Where does your friend live?

MARIA
New York.

INSPECTOR
Is she coming to pick you up today?

MARIA
...No.

INSPECTOR
And how are you going to get there?

MARIA
Uh... In a taxi.

INSPECTOR
And this is all your luggage?

MARIA
Yes.

He finishes going through her things and takes another look at her paperwork.

INSPECTOR
Thank you very much. Sorry to bother you. Have a good stay in New York.

Maria, still nervous, re-arranges the clothes in her suitcase and is starting to shut it when the second agent speaks up.

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2
(in English)
She looks nervous.
(to Maria)
You look nervous.

INSPECTOR
(translating)
She says you look nervous.

MARIA
...No. I'm not.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2
(in Spanish)
Why do you look so nervous?

MARIA
But I'm not.

The second inspector stares at her hard. Maria shifts her gaze nervously from one to the other as if looking for help from the first inspector.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The male inspector and female inspector lead Maria into a sterile, little room - about eight by eight - bare except for the counter and a wooden BENCH. The female inspector stands behind her.

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2
Place your hands on the wall... Higher...
Open your legs... Don't take your hands
off the wall.

Maria does as she says. The inspector pats Maria down - the arms, the back, the breasts, stomach, crotch, and legs, front and back.

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2 (CONT'D)
Please, have a seat.

Maria sits down on the bench.

INSPECTOR
Give me both your shoes, please.

Maria does as he says. The inspector checks each carefully and then pierces the sole of one with a sharp awl as the Female Inspector continues questioning Maria.

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2
Maria Alvarez. Is that your name?

MARIA
Yes.

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2
How old are you?

MARIA
Eighteen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2
Is this your first time in this country?

MARIA
Yes.

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2
And where are you staying?

MARIA
...With my sister.

The Female Inspector looks at the first Inspector.

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2
But before you said you were going to stay with a friend. Which is it, with your sister or with your friend?

MARIA
...With my sister.

The male inspector sets her shoes aside.

INSPECTOR
If we call her would she confirm that you're coming to visit?

MARIA
...She doesn't know I'm coming. I was going to surprise her. We haven't seen each other in four years.

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2
And you're going to show up, just like that...? How do you know she'll be there...? What if she's not home? Where will you stay?

MARIA
...I don't know... In a hotel...

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2
And how much money do you have?

MARIA
Eight hundred dollars.

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2
Who bought this ticket?

MARIA
I did.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2
How much did it cost?

MARIA
...Like five hundred dollars.

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2
You're not sure?

The inspectors look at each other.

INSPECTOR
Tell me, Maria, what do you do in
Colombia?

MARIA
Me...? I work in a flower plantation.

INSPECTOR
Doing what exactly?

MARIA
Dethorning roses.

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2
So how did you get the money for the
ticket and the eight hundred dollars?

MARIA
I saved up.

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2
And you're here for...

MARIA
Vacation.

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2
You know what - I don't believe you're
really here on vacation. Do you have
some other reason for coming? Are you
maybe bringing something into the United
States?

MARIA
No.

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2
Do you want to know what I think? I think
you're bringing drugs into this country.

MARIA
No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2

We have seen cases of people who carry drugs inside their bodies. Are you carrying drugs in your stomach?

MARIA

No.

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2

(beat)

I want you to prove it to me. I want you to take an X-ray.

She stares at Maria but Maria doesn't flinch. She then goes to the counter and takes a sheet of paper from a stack.

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2 (CONT'D)

Please sign this document permitting us to perform an X-ray.

She gives Maria the form.

MARIA

I don't read English.

INSPECTOR

It's there in three languages.

Maria reads the form, takes a beat and then signs it (printing her name like a child). The inspectors watch her carefully.

INSPECTOR (CONT'D)

(playing the good cop)

Maria, listen, I'm going to be straight with you. If we do this X-ray and you're carrying drugs then we're going to see it immediately. In that case it would be much, much better to tell us now. That way we can tell the judge you cooperated and you'll get less time in jail.

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2

If you make us take the X-ray and you are carrying then you'll get ten years in prison. Minimum.

INSPECTOR

Please Maria, tell us the truth. We can't help you if you don't help us...

MARIA

...I'm not carrying anything.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

The two inspectors look at one another trying to decide what to do.

INT. BATHROOM – CONTINUOUS

In a tiny, white-tiled institutional bathroom the female inspector hands Maria a PLASTIC CUP.

In front of the inspector Maria hikes up her skirt, sits on the toilet and pees into the cup.

INT. MEDICAL FACILITY – MAIN AREA

Maria sits in a corridor waiting.

A door opens. CONSTANZA steps out followed by another inspector who sits her down opposite Maria.

The two of them stare at each other. Constanza's eyes are puffy and red. She's clearly been crying.

Through the open door, Maria can see in a white-coated TECHNICIAN examining an X-ray with another inspector. He takes out a pen and points to something. There are scores of pellets clearly visible in Constanza's stomach and intestines.

The inspector takes the X-ray and walks over to Constanza. He handcuffs Constanza and leads her down the hall.

Maria looks absolutely petrified. Thirty feet away the two inspectors that accompanied her are discussing something with another white-coated technician. They turn and look at Maria and shake their heads – something is wrong.

They walk toward Maria conversing with each other IN ENGLISH.

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2
(in English)
What do you think...?

INSPECTOR
(in English)
Given the circumstances...?

Maria tries to glean what they're saying. They stare at her.

INSPECTOR (CONT'D)
(to Maria, in Spanish)
Do you know that you're pregnant?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

...Yes.

(beat)

Will the X-ray hurt my baby?

INSPECTOR

We don't X-ray pregnant women.

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2

But we can detain them...

She says nothing.

INSPECTOR

Maria, it's clear you didn't buy this ticket yourself. We know you couldn't have saved up all this money. Tell us the truth - who bought this ticket?

MARIA

...The truth is a friend bought it for me.

INSPECTOR

What's your friend's name?

MARIA

Franklin... He's my boyfriend. He's the father of my baby.

INSPECTOR

And he gave you the eight hundred dollars, too?

MARIA

Yes... for the baby.

FEMALE INSPECTOR #2

(testing Maria once more)

...And does he know you swallowed drugs?

MARIA

But I didn't.

(beat)

I'm not carrying drugs. I'm just here to see my sister. I haven't seen her in four years... I swear.

The inspectors stare at each other trying to make a decision.

INT. AIRPORT ARRIVALS TERMINAL - LATER

Maria steps through the sliding door and into the waiting area with her suitcase. There are a small number of people waiting on the side of the ropes. Maria walks slowly through them, scanning the crowd for her contact. No-one approaches her.

EXT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - CONTINUOUS

Maria carries her bag out to the curb to look around. She sees a row of PAY PHONES and walks over to them. She's contemplating what to do when suddenly her elbow is grabbed from behind.

A TALL GUY (WILSON) pulls Maria along, taking her suitcase in his other hand. He drags her into the street where a VAN is waiting. He opens the sliding door, throws her inside and slams the door shut behind her.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Totally spun around, Maria finds herself sitting next to LUCY and BLANCA. There are TWO GUYS (CARLOS and WILSON) in the front - they look very YOUNG, not more than 20, and have a very nervous quality.

CARLOS
(to Maria)
What happened to the other one?

MARIA
They arrested her.

CARLOS
Fuck!

Wilson starts the engine and pulls away fast. Maria looks at Lucy, clearly ill, and then at Blanca.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

The door opens - Wilson enters and flips on the light. The room is spare - two queen-sized beds and a TV.

He sets down Lucy's suitcase and goes to shut the blinds while the girls enter. Carlos sits in a chair, sets down a PLASTIC BAG and begins emptying his pockets.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARLOS

Make yourselves comfortable. You'll be here until you shit everything out.

Maria and Lucy sit together on the edge of the bed. Blanca also sits.

MARIA

You have to get a doctor for her.

CARLOS

What are you talking about, doctor?

MARIA

She's sick.

CARLOS

It doesn't make any difference to me.

MARIA

She needs medicine.

CARLOS

(cutting her off)

Shut up!

He reaches into the bag and throws down FOIL PACKS OF TABLETS.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Take those.

Lucy grabs for one of the foil packets greedily.

BLANCA

What are they?

CARLOS

A laxative. To speed things up.

LUCY

(standing)

I have to go to the bathroom.

CARLOS

Here.

He removes a small box from the plastic sack and passes Lucy two RUBBER GLOVES.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CARLOS (cont'd)
Don't use the toilet. I don't want
anything accidentally going down the
drain. And don't forget the toothpaste -
I don't want to be smelling your shit.

She goes into the bathroom and shuts the door. Carlos moves
over to the bed and makes himself comfortable.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATER (NIGHT)

Blanca sits at the side of the bed - notices a matchbook and
picks it up.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - BATHROOM - SAME TIME (NIGHT)

In the BATHROOM, Maria squats in the bathtub. JUMP CUT:
Maria smears toothpaste on the pellets one by one and piles
them by the sink.

EXT. HOTEL - NEXT MORNING

Morning light burns through the curtains.

Blanca comes out of the bathroom with a handful of pellets,
puts them in her ziplock bag (two others on the dresser) and
counts them through the plastic. Wilson lies on the bed
watching TV. Maria lies on her bed also watching. Carlos
sits over by the window rolling himself a joint.

Lucy squats at her suitcase folding a shirt - moving slowly -
Maria keeps one eye on her, one on the TV. She glances at
Wilson.

Lucy sits on the chair and takes a deep breath.

Without blinking, Wilson clicks the remote a few times and
lands on something else: a news report (in Spanish) about
crowds of people flocking to see an apparition of the Virgin
on the side of a tree. As the news report ends, Wilson
crosses himself, kisses his crucifix and tucks it under his
shirt.

Blanca crosses the room, causing Maria to notice that Lucy
has dozed off sitting up.

MARIA
Lucy! Lucy! LUCY!!!!

INT. HOTEL ROOM - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

In the bathroom, Maria holds Lucy's head under COLD WATER in the bathtub. She turns off the water and dries Lucy's hair vigorously as a way of keeping her awake.

Maria and Lucy sit still on the edge of the tub. They have a long moment in silence. Maria strokes her hair.

INT. HOTEL BEDROOM - EVENING

Dim bed-side light. The guys sit drinking beers - Wilson watching TV while Carlos plays with a GAMEBOY.

Lucy sits up in bed with her eyes barely open, on the TV. Blanca sits up on the other side of the bed.

Maria comes out of the bathroom, makes eye contact with Lucy and then sits on the edge of the bed next to Blanca.

BLANCA

(somber)

...How are you doing?

MARIA

...OK.... You?

Blanca nods, looks at the TV. Maria looks at her then away again.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NEXT MORNING

CLOSE-UP on Maria sleeping. We hear the sound of HUSHED, AGITATED VOICES off screen, movement - there's a shaft of light as the bathroom door opens and then closes. Maria rolls over and opens her eyes a crack, slow to adjust.

In MARIA'S POV - we see the two guys - one of them appears to carry LUCY in his arms. Maria sits up a little, rubs her eyes and refocuses.

And in another snippet of MARIA'S POV - we see the two guys carrying Lucy, ARGUING in a panicked whisper as they leave the hotel room and shut the door behind them.

Maria is totally unsure of what she's seen in her half-sleeping-state. She sits up in bed. The room is strangely quiet - the two guys are gone, Lucy is gone. Only Blanca lies next to her asleep. She gets up and goes to the bathroom...

INT. HOTEL ROOM - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS (MORNING)

Maria treads cautiously into the bathroom and then stops cold in her tracks. She SHRIEKS at what she sees: there's BLOOD all over the bathtub.

MARIA
Blanca! BLANCA!

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Maria, frantically grabbing their bags of PELLETS and throwing them in her suitcase.

BLANCA
What are you doing?

MARIA
We can't stay here?

BLANCA
What do you mean?

MARIA
(glares at her)
Don't you get it? They did something to Lucy? Everything's totally fucked up. We have to get out of here before they come back.

Maria closes up her suitcase.

BLANCA
But...

MARIA
Hurry up!!

CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL ROOM / PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Blanca and Maria come out of the room - each with her small suitcase - and run across the parking lot.

EXT. STREET, GAS STATION – CONTINUOUS

Maria and Blanca continue running until they're completely out of breath - standing at the side of the road by a gas station.

EXT. STREET, GAS STATION – LATER

Maria and Blanca sit on their luggage by the gas station, watching traffic.

BLANCA

Did you finish getting all your pellets out?

Maria nods.

BLANCA (CONT'D)

Where are we? This doesn't look like New York.

(Maria doesn't answer)

What are we going to do?

MARIA

Blanca, stop. Just let me think for a minute, will you.

Maria stares at the ground between her feet. Then, without saying anything, she opens her purse and begins rummaging.

EXT. GAS STATION – MOMENTS LATER

Maria walks toward the ATTENDANT, a Filipino guy in his 20s washing the windshield of a customer's car.

MARIA

(in Spanish, miming)

Excuse me. To make a call.

She shows him the PAPER with LUCY'S SISTER'S ADDRESS and phone number.

ATTENDANT

(mocking, in English)

Me no speak Spanish.

MARIA

(holds out the paper)

A call. Telephone. I don't know how to use the telephone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ATTENDANT
No Español. Get it?

He walks away to remove the pump from the car. She follows him. The customer - a HAITIAN DRIVER in his 30s - stands at the back of the car.

MARIA
Can you tell me how to call this number?

The attendant takes the paper and reads it.

ATTENDANT
Queens, New York. You gotta go into New York. You gotta take a bus.
(as if to a child)
Bus. You know?

He hands the paper back to her. She watches the driver pay.

DRIVER
(in English)
You trying to go to New York? To Queens?
(points to the paper)
To Queens?

MARIA
(looks at the paper)
Yes.

DRIVER
You want a ride? You, with me, drive.
To Queens.

He points to his car which in fact looks like a taxi.

MARIA
No, thank you. I want to make a call.

DRIVER
I'll take you. Off the meter. No problem.
Sixty bucks. It's OK... Taxi... See?
Taxi...

Maria looks at him, at the taxi.

INT. MOVING CAR, PULASKI SKYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Maria stares out the window at New Jersey factories and refineries. It looks entirely different from her pastoral homeland - gray and dark and forbidding.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Blanca clutches her MATCHBOOK - everything about her feels guarded and angry. The driver is having a conversation in CREOLE on his cell phone (apparently talking to himself as he speaks into a headset). He finishes and looks in the rear-view mirror.

DRIVER

(in English)

You just arrive in the United States...?

This your first time here?

Maria looks at Blanca.

BLANCA

What's he saying?

MARIA

I have no idea.

DRIVER

Where are you from...? D'où venez-vous...? De donde?

MARIA

From Colombia. We're Colombian.

DRIVER

Colombia! Bueno. Yo hablo español.

BLANCA

Could you tell us how far it is to that address where we're going?

DRIVER

What?

BLANCA

(looks at Maria, at him)

Nothing. Never mind.

INT. MOVING CAR, TUNNEL - DAY

As they enter a tunnel Maria and Blanca look at each other. Out the other side Maria stares up at skyscrapers, at the yellow taxis, at the people rushing by on Manhattan sidewalks.

INT. MOVING TAXI, QUEENSBORO BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

As the cab goes over the bridge, Maria watches the skyline of Manhattan recede into the distance.

INT. MOVING TAXI, ROOSEVELT AVENUE - CONTINUOUS

Maria and Blanca look out at Roosevelt Avenue from the taxi - a Colombian restaurant catches her eye amidst the chaos of activity on the street.

EXT. TAXI, CARLA'S BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

AT THE BACK OF THE CAR, the driver opens the TRUNK and Maria takes her bag out. The driver removes Blanca's.

DRIVER
Sixty dollars. Sesenta.

BLANCA
(to Maria)
Sixty dollars?! You can use your own money - I'm not paying that.

Maria takes out her purse - the driver notices her wad of bills. Maria pays.

BLANCA (CONT'D)
Are you sure we're in the right place?

MARIA
I think so.

She spots an unimpressive apartment building.

MARIA (cont'd)
I think it's that one there. Apartment 4A.

Maria crosses to the apartment building.

BLANCA
(to the driver)
Can you wait for a minute? Wait? Un momento?

DRIVER
(looks from one to the other)
Un momento.

The driver goes and stands by his door.

Maria stares at a panel full of buttons and finds Aristizabal, 4A. She presses the buzzer. Blanca watches the driver get back in the car to wait.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Maria buzzes again but there's no answer. The driver HONKS and makes a questioning gesture to Maria.

MARIA
There's no answer.

BLANCA
Let's go back.

MARIA
No!

BLANCA
Lucy's sister doesn't even know you. You don't even know Lucy.

MARIA
She invited me to stay with her.

BLANCA
But what are you gonna say?

MARIA
I don't know. I'll figure it out.

BLANCA
I want to go back to the hotel and wait.
(holds up the matchbook)
I have the address.

MARIA
I'm not going back there.

BLANCA
Maria, this is stupid. All we have to do is hand them our pellets and get our money.

MARIA
We can't go back there.

BLANCA
But they're gonna fucking freak when they see we took off. We have to go back.

MARIA
Don't you get it? Didn't you see what they did to Lucy?

All of the sudden they're silenced by the sound of the taxi SPEEDING OFF down the street, leaving the two of them standing there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

They watch as it disappears around the corner. Maria grabs her bag and walks back over to the building, but Blanca continues to stand by the side of the street, angry.

As Maria tries the buzzer again an INDIAN WOMAN comes out of the building and she catches the door.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Blanca!

BLANCA

No.

The two of them stare each other down. Blanca folds her arms refusing to go in. Finally, Maria, exasperated, turns and goes inside.

Blanca grabs her suitcase and begins to carry it up the street.

INT. BUILDING STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Maria, alone, carries her suitcase up the staircase.

She stops at the window and stares out, then sits on the floor by her suitcase. As she stares at the door to Lucy's sister's apartment TEARS well up in her eyes. She begins to cry - BAWLING and TREMBLING like a baby - alone and abandoned at the end of the long hallway.

CUT TO:

INT. BUILDING HALLWAY - NIGHT

Maria sits next to her suitcase at the end of the hallway - ASLEEP.

Suddenly she wakes to the sound of a DOOR slamming shut. She looks up in time to hear the DEADBOLT behind the door to 4A.

She rubs the sleep out of her eyes, remembers where she is.

INT. BUILDING HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Maria stands in front of 4A, takes a beat and then KNOCKS.

PABLO (O.S.)

Who is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

Hello. I'm looking for Carla Aristizabal.

The door opens. Pablo talks through the crack leaving the chain on.

PABLO

Who's looking for her?

MARIA

Maria Alvarez. I'm a friend of her sister's.

PABLO

Of her sister's?

MARIA

Yes.

Pablo turns inside and talks to someone.

PABLO (O.S.)

She says she's a friend of your sister's... I don't know... No, come.

The door opens to reveal PABLO and CARLA, who looks so much like Lucy that Maria is startled. The major difference is that she appears to be about eight months PREGNANT.

MARIA

Hello. Are you Carla Aristizabal?

CARLA

How can I help you?

MARIA

I'm a friend of Lucy's. I just arrived from Colombia and she asked me to come and say hello for her.

CARLA

(skeptical)

Lucy did? Really?

MARIA

Yes. She wanted me to say hello.

Carla looks at Pablo.

PABLO

Come in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He opens the door for her to come in. She picks up her suitcase and goes inside.

INT. APARTMENT – CONTINUOUS

They come into a tiny one-bedroom apartment. The living room is being used as a bedroom – with a narrow mattress on the floor, a tiny table and three folding chairs.

PABLO

Sit.

Maria sits at the table. The two of them stay standing.

CARLA

What was your name again?

MARIA

Maria Alvarez.

CARLA

And how do you know Lucy?

MARIA

...From town... We live near each other...

CARLA

So tell me, how is Lucy doing? It's been months since we last spoke.

MARIA

She's doing well.

CARLA

Is she working?

MARIA

...Yes... In an office in Bogota... I think like a secretary or something.

CARLA

Lucy? A secretary?

PABLO

See. And you're always talking bad about her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

She talks about you all the time, about how you're expecting a baby, and how happy she is to become an aunt. She's always talking about coming to visit.

CARLA

(sits)

Really? And she didn't send anything with you? A letter or photos or something?

MARIA

...No... The truth is that Lucy gave me your name and told me that if I ever needed anything I could go to you, that you were really nice and sweet and that if I ever had any kind of problem... You see...

CARLA

What?

MARIA

I don't have any place to stay.

Carla looks over at Pablo.

PABLO

And where were you staying before?

MARIA

...With a friend. The thing is we just got into this really big fight and she kicked me out and now I don't have anywhere to sleep.

CARLA

And you don't have anyone else here? No other friends or family? No-one?

MARIA

No.

CARLA

And you came here all alone?

MARIA

Yes.

CARLA

And do you have a job yet?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARIA
...No, not yet.

CARLA
...How did you say you knew Lucy?

PABLO
Carla...

CARLA
Look, it's not like I'm going to throw her out on the street... It's just that this is a really small apartment. Pablo and I sleep in the other room and his cousin sleeps in here on the floor.

MARIA
I don't need a lot of space, really...

CARLA
Yeah but for how long...?

MARIA
No, just a few days, no more...

CARLA
And then what?

MARIA
No, then I'll find something else.

Carla looks at Pablo.

MARIA (CONT'D)
It's just for a few days. Really.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

Pablo blows up an INFLATABLE MATTRESS - the kind intended for a swimming pool. He positions it in the corner of the room and Carla gives him a sheet.

PABLO
My cousin works in a bakery so he comes home in the middle of the night. Just so you're not startled.

Pablo snaps open the sheet and lets it fall on the mattress.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Maria lies asleep in bed. There's a KNOCKING on the apartment door which wakes her up. She gets up and goes slowly to the front door.

MARIA
Who is it?

LUCY (OS)
It's Lucy.

MARIA
Lucy?

LUCY (OS)
Maria?

Maria quickly unbolts the door and opens it. But instead of Lucy WILSON and CARLOS from the hotel burst in and pin Maria against the wall. One of them rips at her shirt to reveal her stomach. The man opens his KNIFE and aims at Maria's belly, which suddenly appears NINE MONTHS PREGNANT. He plunges the blade into her stomach. PELLETS pour out of her by the hundreds onto the floor and inside each one is little fetus.

IN BED, Maria wakes suddenly from the NIGHTMARE to the sound of the door closing and FOOTSTEPS. She pretends to be asleep as Pablo's brother ENRIQUE comes in and turns the light on. He notices her lying there and then moves to the mattress. Maria opens one eye to see him take off his shirt and then turns away as he slips off his pants.

EXT. BUILDING - MORNING

Carla leads Maria out of the building and up the street - the neighborhood is alive and thumping. Maria glances over her shoulder looking for some sign of Blanca.

EXT. / INT. CALLING STORE, QUEENS - MORNING

The calling store has various signs in the window - "Llamadas Internacionales (International Calling)" and "Colombia 18¢/min." Inside, it's busy - everyone calling home on Sunday.

CARLA
Colombia.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CASHIER
Number seven.

Carla brings Maria into the booth. She dials a number she knows by heart. She listens. The line rings - no-one answers.

CARLA
Lucy's not there.

Carla steps out of the booth - Maria is slow to follow.

MARIA
I want to call my family. Could you help me?

CARLA
...OK.

Carla steps in with her, grabs the phone and dials the prefix and then hands her the receiver.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Now just dial the number...

Maria closes herself into the booth, dials carefully and waits for the line to ring. The muffled laughter of another conversation filters through the wall behind her.

MARIA
Hi, granny. It's me Maria.
(her relief is instant)
How are you? Is everything OK there?...
I'm fine... It's a good job. The trip was fine... I'm in a small town somewhere near Chiquinquirá... I'll be back in a few days. Are you sure everything is OK there? How's Pacho?... Is mama there?...

She watches Carla through the glass door.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Maria and Carla come out and Carla walks directly to a black Lincoln Towncar. Pablo gets out, comes around and holds the door open for her.

PABLO
(off Maria's look)
Oh the car... I work for a car service, as a driver. Get in.

He makes a show of opening the door for Maria. She gets in.

EXT. PARK - LATER

A row of about TEN CAR-SERVICE CARS are lined up along one edge of a medium-sized Queens park. There's a large field - a few families having barbecues, kids on bikes - mostly Hispanic, some Korean, some Black.

There's a big game of soccer going on across the length of the field. A few women sit in pairs in the grass. Maria and Carla watch the game.

CARLA

I used to think I'd be rich if I had two hundred dollars. Here that's nothing.

MARIA

What do you do?

CARLA

I clean offices. It's nothing glamorous but it's decent...

(beat)

Does Lucy really talk about coming to visit?

Maria's face hardens immediately.

MARIA

...Yes.

CARLA

You know, I have this fantasy she'll come to see Jorge.

MARIA

Jorge?

CARLA

(puts her hand on her stomach)
That's the name we picked out.

MARIA

What if it's a girl?

CARLA

We already know he's a boy.

MARIA

(laughs)
How do you know that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARLA

From the sonogram... I've had it done three times and each time it's amazing. You watch the baby swimming around inside. The head, the legs. They can see if the baby is healthy.

MARIA

Really?

Maria watches Carla shift her weight to get more comfortable. Carla sees her staring at her stomach and it makes her smile.

INT. HALLWAY, CARLA'S APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER

Pablo and Carla walk up the stairs to the fourth floor. Maria trails behind. As they move down the corridor toward the apartment Maria sees BLANCA sitting there, waiting.

BLANCA

Hi.

MARIA

Where were you last night?!

BLANCA

I met a woman who gave me a place...

Carla turns to see who Maria's speaking to.

CARLA

You two know each other?

BLANCA

(to Maria)

Is that Lucy's sister?

CARLA

You know Lucy?

BLANCA

Yes.

PABLO

(to Maria)

I thought you said you didn't know anyone else here.

MARIA

The thing is... I told her about Lucy on the trip here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARLA

So you're not really friends with Lucy.

BLANCA

It's just that Maria said she was going to stay with you and I don't have a place to sleep...

CARLA

You too? I don't understand. Everyone knows someone in America.

Carla looks at Maria - annoyed. Maria looks back - caught.

EXT. TRAVEL AGENCY - NEXT MORNING

Carla leads Maria and Blanca up Roosevelt Avenue and into a small storefront travel agency.

INT. TRAVEL AGENCY - CONTINUOUS

It's a tiny place with posters of Colombia on every wall. Of the two desks, one is piled with folders and papers, while the other has the computer of DON FERNANDO, a short man in his 50s, overweight - with a very friendly demeanor.

There are about 6 CUSTOMERS crammed in there including an older woman who rubs the pain out of her knees as she waits. Don Fernando is talking on the phone and examining a set of documents when Carla, Maria and Blanca enter.

CARLA

Hello.

DON FERNANDO

(looking up)

Hello, child. How are you?

CARLA

(shaking his hand)

Fine. How are you?

DON FERNANDO

(covering phone, to a customer)

This notarization is no good. They notarized the cover page but not the copy of your ID. I can tell you they won't accept it like this...

(into phone)

...yes, yes, I understand...

(to customer)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DON FERNANDO (cont'd)

Tell them I sent you back and I said not to charge you a second time. They should have done it right to begin with.

(to Carla)

How is the little one?

CARLA

(hand on her stomach)

Fine, thank you...Don Fernando it seems my sister back home sent me a little surprise...This is Maria and Blanca...

MARIA

Hello.

CARLA

They just arrived and they don't know anyone. They're staying with me but you know how small my place is. I was wondering if you could help...maybe to find some place, and some work for them...

DON FERNANDO

And you just arrived?

MARIA

Yes.

DON FERNANDO

...I can make a few calls...

(into phone)

...No, he didn't have a pay stub. I have to make one up...

CARLA

Thank you, Don Fernando.

(to Maria)

He can help you. I have to go to work. You know how to get back? It's just back down three blocks and around the corner. I'll be back tonight after work.

MARIA

Thank you.

CARLA

(trying not to interrupt)

Don Fernando, I have to go to work. I'm leaving them here.

DON FERNANDO

(covering the phone)

OK, my child. I'll see what I can do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

As she leaves, don Fernando signals the girls to take a seat.

INT. TRAVEL AGENCY - LATER

Don Fernando wheels his chair around his desk - Maria and Blanca are now sitting across from him. The activity has died down.

DON FERNANDO
Can you sew?

MARIA
A little...not much...

DON FERNANDO
What did you do back home?

MARIA
We worked in flowers.

DON FERNANDO
There's a place that sometimes needs women to sew shirts. It's not like working in flowers but when they need people they don't check papers so carefully and they pay minimum wage.

BLANCA
(suddenly)
Thank you for your help, don Fernando, but we don't need jobs. We just need a way to get back to the hotel where we arrived.

Blanca opens up her purse, removes a handful of pellets.

MARIA
(horrified)
Blanca...

BLANCA
(producing the MATCHBOOK)
...I have the address of it. We just need a ride.

MARIA
Blanca, what are you doing? I'm not going back to that hotel.

BLANCA
I don't care what you do. I'm sick of following you around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

I never asked you to follow me. I told you not to.

BLANCA

Bullshit. You were the one that made us leave before we got our money. We have to give the pellets back.

MARIA

Those guys are dangerous!

DON FERNANDO

(overpowering them)

Quiet. Quiet!... What's going on? Tell me... What hotel, what money...?

(no answer)

What have you got there?!

BLANCA

(shutting her purse quickly)

Nothing.

DON FERNANDO

Look child. I recognize what those are. Tell me.

No response.

DON FERNANDO (CONT'D)

Carla doesn't know, does she... Are you alright, physically?

MARIA

Yes.

BLANCA

But they didn't pay us. Everything went wrong and they left without paying us and we still have the pellets.

DON FERNANDO

What do you mean everything went wrong?

Blanca won't answer.

MARIA

(slowly)

Our friend who was with us got sick. I think one of the pellets broke inside her.

(tearing up)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARIA (cont'd)

I don't know what happened but I think she died or maybe they killed her. I'm worried about what they did to her. I don't know what to do...

DON FERNANDO

Where was it?

Blanca passes him the matchbook.

MARIA

Can you help find our friend?

DON FERNANDO

I'll make a few calls and see if the police in New Jersey know anything.

BLANCA

You can't call the police.

DON FERNANDO

Don't worry, I have a lot of experience in this - I have certain contacts. I know how to handle it.

MARIA

Please don't tell Carla. She doesn't know.

DON FERNANDO

(angry)

Look, I won't say anything to Carla but you have to return those pellets before these people do something to your families back home. Do you understand me?

EXT. DON FERNANDO'S, STREET - DAY

Blanca and Maria come out of the travel agency onto the street - Blanca racing ahead, angry.

MARIA

Blanca, I lost the phone number to call in case of emergency? Do you have it?

BLANCA

(turns on Maria)

What the fuck were you doing in there? I can't believe you said all that shit about Lucy. Now he's going to call the police.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA

You know what, Blanca - don't even fucking start with me. What the fuck were you doing waving those pellets in front of his face, telling him what we did.

BLANCA

What are you doing telling him you want to sew shirts?

MARIA

I'm dealing with the situation.

BLANCA

Stupidly.

MARIA

Then why the fuck are you following me around? Every fucking time I turn around you're following me.

BLANCA

I thought you knew what you were doing. Obviously I was wrong.

MARIA

I don't want you here. I don't want to be responsible for you. I'm not your fucking mother, you know.

BLANCA

I wouldn't want you as my fucking mother. I feel sorry for your baby that it's gonna have such a stupid mother. I mean, swallowing drugs when you're pregnant.

MARIA

Fuck you.

BLANCA

That's pretty fucking stupid. At least I wouldn't do that.

MARIA

Fuck you.

Maria turns and storms off, leaving Blanca there.

BLANCA

Shit.

EXT. ROOSEVELT AVENUE - LATER

Maria walks up the boulevard in an angry, confused haze. The street is full of people: Hispanic, Chinese, Indian. She peers into various shop windows: a cheap jewelry store; a laundromat; a Colombian coffee shop; a Korean manicure shop; an electronics store. She sees a Mexican guy at a corner bodega unpacking flowers from a box that says "Product of Colombia."

She buys an *oblea* from a street vendor. As she sits and eats it she looks across the street. She notices a pregnant woman coming out of a storefront with a sign - in English and in Spanish - "WOMEN'S CLINIC."

INT. MEDICAL CLINIC, WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

It's a clean, unpretentious clinic - low-income, but perfectly respectable. Maria stands at the reception window. The RECEPTIONIST herself couldn't be much older than 18, with long fake nails and big hair.

RECEPTIONIST

(in Spanish, a bit irritating)

You don't have an appointment?

MARIA

No...I just...

RECEPTIONIST

I can make you an appointment for next week.

MARIA

It has to be today.

RECEPTIONIST

(she scans the book, annoyed)

If you're not in a hurry I might be able to get you in but I can't promise. You'll just have to wait.

MARIA

Thank you.

RECEPTIONIST

(hands her a clipboard)

You need to fill this out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA SITS, waiting. She looks around the waiting room at the six or seven other women – all Black or Hispanic – some pregnant, one with a year-old baby boy on her lap.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM – DAY

It's a relatively small room – an examination table, a sink with various bottles next to it. A rack of computer monitors and electronic machines is neatly arranged. There's a single lamp pointed into the corner of the room.

Maria lies on the table wearing a paper gown. A FEMALE DOCTOR sits on a stool next to her taking her blood pressure.

DOCTOR
(in Spanish)
You're blood pressure is high. Do you have a history of high blood pressure?

MARIA
I don't know... Is it a big problem?

DOCTOR
Maybe. I don't know yet.

CUT TO:

The doctor spreads a thick jelly on Maria's stomach.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
It's important that you be very careful while you're pregnant. You must not smoke. And you can't drink alcohol. No beer. No wine. No drugs. Everything you put into your body goes directly into your baby. If you smoke it's like giving a cigarette to your baby.

She fiddles with the knobs on one of the monitors, and begins to pass the hand unit over Maria's belly.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Let's see.

A confusion of gray dots comes onto the screen.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
At this stage of the pregnancy you'll be able to see the entire fetus. That's the head. There are the feet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIA
(amazed)
That's my baby?

DOCTOR
(smiling)
These are the arms. And these are the
legs.

MARIA
Can you tell me if it's a boy or a girl?

DOCTOR
Not yet. The next time you come in we
should see it.

Maria is entranced by the image of her baby on the screen.
The doctor hits a few keys on the computer.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
There we can see the heart pumping. The
blood is flowing well. I'm just going to
take a few measurements.

MARIA
But everything's OK, right? It looks
healthy?

DOCTOR
So far... Do you want to listen...? To
the heart?

The doctor taps a few keys and readjust the handpiece. The
room fills with the sound of the baby's HEARTBEAT - Maria is
overwhelmed by it.

CUT TO:

CLOSE-UP of a 5x7 hardcopy of the sonogram coming off a
printer in the exam room. Maria sits up, buttoning her top
button. The doctor hands her the print. She stares at it
for a moment - then smiles as tears come to her eyes.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
(on her way out)
I want to see you again in three weeks.
I'm concerned about your blood pressure.
If it's still high in three weeks then
we'll talk about putting you on some
medicine. (smiles) And you'll be able to
see if it's a boy or a girl.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARIA
Thank you.

INT. RECEPTIONIST'S DESK - LATER

Maria counts out two hundred dollars in twenties.

RECEPTIONIST
(marking in her book)
How is Friday the eleventh of next month?

MARIA
...Fine.

The receptionist fills in the date on a little REMINDER CARD and hands it to Maria.

INT. TRAVEL AGENCY - LATE AFTERNOON

Maria comes into the travel agency. Don Fernando sits alone behind a pile of papers.

MARIA
Hello.

DON FERNANDO
Come in.

MARIA
I just wondered if you had any news.

DON FERNANDO
Sit down...I made a call to the Newark morgue and they had some information...

He turns to the fax machine and finds a fax in the pile.

DON FERNANDO (cont'd)
They received the body of a woman yesterday, found in an abandoned field under the expressway about two miles from that hotel.

MARIA
The body...?

DON FERNANDO
(carefully)
Her stomach was sliced open - they think she was a mule. They faxed me this information and a picture of her face...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He hesitates before showing it to her. It is indeed a poor quality, scratchy image of LUCY - her eyes closed, her jaw slack. Maria GASPS.

MARIA

Ay, dios.

DON FERNANDO

I'm sorry...

(beat)

I have an undertaker I work with. He'll go and get her and take care of everything so that she can be sent home to her family for a proper Christian burial... I need to know her name and address back home.

Maria is too choked up to speak.

DON FERNANDO (CONT'D)

(beat)

What is her name?

MARIA

...Lucy Diaz.

DON FERNANDO

Carla's sister?

MARIA

Yes, but Carla doesn't know. She doesn't even know Lucy was doing it. Lucy wanted to come visit her.

DON FERNANDO

She has to be told. It's her sister.

Maria sits staring at the fax, in shock.

INT. CARLA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Carla leans back on her bed trying to get comfortable. There's a BABY CRIB in the room which Maria admires. Pablo is in the kitchen.

MARIA

This is nice.

CARLA

He'll probably sleep with us to start but we saw it on sale.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARLA (cont'd)

(beat)

What did don Fernando tell you?

MARIA

...Well...He said maybe he could find me something sewing shirts.

CARLA

What was the name of the place?

MARIA

I don't know.

CARLA

(calling to Pablo)

Pablo, what was the name of the place where your friend worked, sewing?

PABLO (OS)

Frank and Sons, I think.

CARLA

(to Maria)

That's it. If it's Frank and Sons tell him to keep looking for something else. They treat you terribly and then they don't pay for weeks and weeks.

(beat)

I asked about a job for you where I work.

MARIA

You did?

CARLA

They can't guarantee work right off but if someone calls in sick then they call you and then eventually if someone quits they might give you a regular job.

MARIA

(starting slowly)

...Carla... I don't really need a job... I'm going back home...

Carla actually laughs. Maria is taken aback.

CARLA

You're not going back, child. I know how you feel. When I first got here believe me that was all I thought about.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CARLA (cont'd)

I remember on my grandmother's birthday I called home and I remember I could hear everyone in the background yelling and laughing and playing music and I remember I was standing there on the street holding the phone with tears streaming down my face. And my sister was asking me, 'Hey how's America? Is it wonderful? How is your job?' And she's talking about how much she wants to come and be with me. And all I wanted was to tell them how much I missed them and how hard it was here, but then I thought, Who am I to complain about how hard life is here?

But it gets better, trust me... The best moment of my life here - was when I got my first paycheck. Oh my god. I will never forget going into that office and sending money home for the first time. You have no idea. Your heart feels so big, so enormous like you can't keep it in your chest. After a whole life of not being able to do anything suddenly you're able to help, and then you know they're counting on you back home, looking up to you and that keeps you going.

Carla can't hold back tears.

But the real reason I stay is for my son. He'll have so many more opportunities here. I hate to say it but I can't imagine bringing up my baby in Colombia now - not with the situation being what it is... It pains me to say it but it's true...

Maria stares at her - not daring to say anything, tears welling up in her eyes.

There's a KNOCK on the front door.

PABLO (O.S.)

I'll get it.

CARLA

That must be your friend.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Maria and Blanca lie in bed - Blanca acts like she's ignoring Maria. Maria sees that Blanca's got GOLD EARRINGS that say "Blanca" in cursive.

MARIA

What did you do with the pellets?

BLANCA

Nothing yet... I just decided I'm at least going to enjoy the money they advanced me... I bought a dress for my mother.

(like a little girl)

I called her...

MARIA

...They found Lucy's body. I saw a picture of her...

Blanca looks at Maria, unsure what to say.

MARIA (cont'd)

It's going to cost two-thousand five-hundred dollars to send Lucy back home...

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Maria, Blanca and Carla sit at the small table eating breakfast.

CARLA

Help yourself to more arepas.

The phone RINGS. Pablo answers it.

MARIA

(stands, clearing dishes)

No, thank you.

Maria goes into the kitchen and puts the plates in the sink.

PABLO (O.S.)

It's for you. It's don Fernando.

Suddenly Maria looks up.

CARLA (O.S.)

Hello, don Fernando. How are you doing?...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARLA (O.S.) (cont'd)
 (slowly Maria's face changes)
 ...Arrangements? What arrangements?
 ...No, she didn't say anything...

Maria moves to the edge of the kitchen door, listening.

CARLA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 ...Lucy? What do you mean? Are you
 sure? Found her here?... I don't
 understand. What do you mean?

Maria comes into the main room, carefully. Carla is visibly upset.

CARLA (cont'd)
 ...They came as what?!

MARIA
 (interrupting)
 Carla, let me explain... I tried to tell
 you. But the words just wouldn't come
 out of my mouth...

CARLA
 (crying)
 What are you saying?

MARIA
 Lucy got sick. I tried to help her. I
 swear. But I didn't know what...

CARLA
 When were you going to tell me?

MARIA
 I already spoke to don Fernando. I
 arranged everything to send Lucy back to
 Colombia...

CARLA
 Arranged? Arranged what?

MARIA
 (getting emotional)
 Carla, please...

CARLA
 (standing up)
 You're not arranging anything!

PABLO
 What's going on...?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CARLA

You keep your hands off my sister.
You've done enough.

MARIA

No. You don't understand.

CARLA

(hysterical)

What have you done? You little bitches!

MARIA

Listen to me, please, Carla...

CARLA

You were never her friend! Never!

MARIA

(crying)

Don't say that. I tried to help...

CARLA

Get out! Now!

MARIA

I tried to help her. I swear.

CARLA

Get out!

BLANCA

Maria, let's go.

CARLA

(screaming)

Get them out already.

MARIA

Forgive me...

CARLA

Get out!

PABLO

Please, leave.

Pablo tries to calm his pregnant wife.

CARLA

Get out! GET OUT!!

Maria sobs, not knowing what to do.

EXT. / INT. SPANISH COFFEE SHOP, ROOSEVELT AVENUE - LATER

Maria and Blanca sit in a coffee shop by the window. Maria's eyes are puffy - she's still upset. The two of them just look out at the street without speaking.

BLANCA

What do you want to do?

Maria looks at Blanca.

INT. CALLING STORE - LATER

The two of them are squeezed into a phone booth in the calling store. Blanca goes through her purse and pulls out her card with the emergency number and holds it out for Maria to dial.

MARIA

It's ringing...Hello? This is Maria Alvarez... Yes, I'm with her...

SMASH CUT:

EXT. PARKING LOT - LATER

CARLOS

(yelling)

Where the fuck did you think you were going? Did you think you could just take off?

Carlos is yelling right into Maria's face scary as hell. They're standing next to the van in the far corner of an empty parking lot.

MARIA

No, but...

Wilson grabs Maria and throws her against the wall.

WILSON

But nothing. Where are the fucking pellets?

MARIA

In my suitcase.

WILSON

Come on. Come on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

With the guy holding her hair Maria goes to her suitcase and unzips it. As soon as she pulls out the bag of pellets he grabs it from her.

BLANCA
Let her go.

CARLOS
(in English)
Shut the fuck up.

He shoves her against the van.

CARLOS (cont'd)
(in Spanish)
Where are yours?

BLANCA
In my purse.

He grabs her purse from her. Wilson passes Carlos Maria's pellets.

WILSON
She should have sixty-two, and the other one should have fifty.

CUT TO:

SAME - LATER

Carlos has all of Blanca's pellets piled on the front seat. He stands at the open door counting them.

Wilson stands next to him, watching.

CARLOS
It's cool. They're all here.

WILSON
Good.

Wilson moves away, toward the driver side of the van.

BLANCA
What about our money?

WILSON
(stops, turns)
You think we owe you anything? You think you earned it? After you went running from the hotel?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLANCA
But we called you.

WILSON
You're lucky. I was about to call Javier
and tell him you'd made off with the
stuff.

MARIA
But you got it...

CARLOS
Exactly. We've got our stuff so now
you're not worth crap.

BLANCA
But we need that money.

WILSON
Oh, you do?
(laughs)
You really need it?

He takes a beat, playing with her - then looks over and nods
to Carlos.

WILSON (CONT'D)
(to Carlos)
Go ahead, man.

Carlos unzips a bag and reaches inside and removes TWO
ENVELOPES - checks which is which and then gives them to
Maria and Blanca. The two of them remove the cash - thick
stacks of old fives, tens and twenties

WILSON (CONT'D)
Make sure it's all there.
(beat)
Be sure to tell Javier how nice I was
when you get back. You better not make
any fucking problems like this on your
next run... You've been trained now.

Wilson turns to walk away.

MARIA
(hesitates, steps forward)
What about Lucy's money?

WILSON
(turns)
What do you mean, what about Lucy's
money?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARIA

I want to give it to her family.

WILSON

That's none of your business.

MARIA

But you have her pellets.

WILSON

You've got nothing to do with that.

MARIA

She died doing this. They found her body... I want to give her sister the money so they can send it back to Colombia.

WILSON

(hesitates)

No, no fucking way.

MARIA

She deserves a decent burial. After what you did to her... It's your responsibility.

Carlos advances on Maria aggressively.

CARLOS

(stepping in)

We don't have anything to do with that. She knew the risk she was taking. We don't have any responsibility.

MARIA

But she...

CARLOS

Shut the fuck up, bitch... Get out of here... Get out!!

They stare into each other's faces a beat. The two guys get back into the van and drive off.

INT. TRAVEL AGENCY - NIGHT

Maria and Blanca sit in Don Fernando's office next to a pile of sheets and blankets on a desk. He is packing up his BRIEFCASE and taking out his KEYS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DON FERNANDO

You should be alright here for the night.
I'll be in at seven o'clock in the
morning.

MARIA

Thank you for your help.

DON FERNANDO

I spoke to Carla again in the afternoon.

MARIA

How was she?

DON FERNANDO

...better... I'm going to lock you in...
I'll see you in the morning.

He steps out of the office and locks the door behind him.

Maria and Blanca stand awkwardly. After a moment, Blanca
picks up a blanket and unfolds it in her lap.

MARIA

You know, this isn't the end of it.
They're not gonna leave us alone after we
get back.

BLANCA

You don't know that for sure, Maria. All
I want is to get home and see my family.

MARIA

There's something I want to do tomorrow
before we leave...

INT. FUNERAL HOME FOYER - DAY

Don Fernando brings Maria and Blanca into the foyer of a
simple, non-descript funeral home.

DON FERNANDO

Wait here.

He leaves them there - looking at the space. Blanca sits
down in an over-stuffed chair.

INT. VIEWING ROOM, FUNERAL HOME - LATER

The MORTICIAN brings Maria and don Fernando into a small room with a casket. She approaches slowly. He opens the lid and then leaves her alone.

Cautiously, Maria approaches. Lucy has been made up - clearly pale and waxen, but presentable. Maria kneels and then weeps softly at her side.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - OFFICE - LATER

The office actually feels more like a living room with large table in the middle. Maria sits with don Fernando counting out several hundred dollars from her envelope. She leaves some of it on the table and hands some to don Fernando.

MARIA

And that's to send Lucy back to
Colombia... if that's what Carla wants...

The mortician comes in. Don Fernando looks over at him.

DON FERNANDO

(to Maria)
Excuse me, child.

Don Fernando and the mortician step out together, leaving Maria alone. She looks around the room at the display cases full of urns, etc. - with prices tags.

Maria collects her purse, gets up and makes her way up the hall and into the viewing room for a final look and sees...

INT. VIEWING ROOM, FUNERAL HOME - CONTINUOUS

CARLA and PABLO standing by the casket. Maria stays by the door, mute. Carla crosses herself at the casket, crying. As she turns toward Pablo, she catches sight of Maria.

MARIA

(explaining herself)
I'm sorry. I didn't mean to upset you.
I just wanted to say goodbye to Lucy.
I'm going back to Colombia...

Carla gazes back at Lucy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARLA
(slowly)
She looks beautiful.

Indeed, Carla has been laid to rest in a beautiful white dress.

CARLA (cont'd)
...I don't understand why she never said anything... We grew so far apart...

Maria watches Carla mourn. She doesn't dare to say anything.

INT. MOVING CAR - DAY

Maria sits, trancelike, in the back of a moving car-service car gazing at the Manhattan skyline in the distance. Blanca sits across from her. Maria looks down at the PRINTOUT of her sonogram and the REMINDER CARD for her next check-up.

EXT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

The driver lifts Maria's and Blanca's suitcases out of the trunk along with a large SHOPPING BAG full of Blanca's new purchases.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - WAITING AREA - CONTINUOUS

Maria sits in the waiting area by the gate. She looks at all the other people waiting - and then at Blanca who goes through the bag of gifts she's bringing home.

AT THE GATE -

Maria stands behind Blanca in line to get on the flight. They advance slowly. Blanca hands over her boarding pass and proceeds down the passageway.

The gate attendant puts out her hand for Maria's boarding pass but Maria lets the person behind her go ahead.

MARIA
Blanca...

Blanca turns.

Maria stares at her, looking for words. They share a moment of understanding.

And then Maria turns slowly away from the gate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The camera holds on her as she walks through the terminal, pensive. The sounds of the airport around her begin to drop away.

Bit by bit, a certain relief takes over. Her gaze rises as she walks - step by step leaving her past behind, looking forward.

Maria moves ahead. A subtle but undeniable flicker of determination in her eyes.

FADE OUT.