

SANTUARIO

Written by

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OVER BLACK

A child prays. A young Hispanic girl, MARISOL, 8 years old. She recites the prayer in Spanish.

MARISOL (V.O.)
Padre nuestro que estás en los
cielos Santificado sea tu Nombre
Venga tu reino Hágase tu voluntad
En la tierra como en el cielo...

FADE IN: A DARKENED ROOM

Marisol kneeling before a makeshift altar, her voice fades into English. We realize she is reciting the Lord's Prayer.

MARISOL
...Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses as we
forgive those who trespass against
us, and lead us not into temptation
but deliver us....

Her prayer is interrupted as a door flings open. She turns quickly, eyes wide with fear, but then realizes it is her brother, JOSE, 15, hardened and older looking than his age.

JOSE
What are you doing? We've got to
get out of here. They're looking
for us.

MARISOL
But I'm praying for our protection.

JOSE
Yeah well, you better be praying to
me, I am the only protection you
have.

MARISOL
That isn't true, Jose. God is with
us. Mama said He would always look
over us.

JOSE
Mama hasn't seen what I've seen.
There is no "Dios aqui" only the
devil. Now come on, we've got to
get out of here.

MARISOL
(frantically)
But where's Abuelita?

JOSE
Already outside.

MARISOL
Alone? You can't leave her alone!

JOSE
It was just for a minute, you are
making it longer arguing. Now come
on, there is no time.

He grabs her arm and pulls her up and pushes her out of the door, looking around warily as they exit the house.

EXTERIOR HOUSE - NIGHT

A woman, 60s, stands huddled near the corner of the house, this is ABUELITA, the children's grandmother. Jose and Marisol rush to her. Jose takes her hand.

JOSE (CONT'D)
Come on Abuelita. Someone is coming
for us.

ABUELITA
I hope so. Are we near the church?

JOSE
Si. Yes, only a few more miles.

ABUELITA
I didn't have a chance to thank the
family here for helping us.

She looks back toward the house.

JOSE
I paid them. That is thanks enough.

ABUELITA
Is there any money left?

JOSE
A little. Enough to pay the man to
take us to the church.

HEADLIGHTS appear coming down the street.

JOSE (CONT'D)
Get down! Get down!

They pull Abuelita, and crouch behind the shrubbery

MARISOL
Is that our ride coming?

JOSE
I don't know, it could be the
patrol. They are looking for us.

A sedan pulls slowly by. A searchlight sweeps to and fro.

JOSE (CONT'D)
Be still.

Marisol, trembling clings to Abuelita.

MARISOL
Please God, don't let them see us.

Abuelita embraces her. Marisol and Jose watch the sedan slow and then proceed on out of sight. Abuelita stares straight ahead. Unseeing.

EXT.- NIGHT CONTINUOUS

Another set of headlights appear. The three remain crouched near the shrubbery. A blue pick up slows in front of the house.

JOSE
That is him. They said he would
be driving a blue truck.

Jose rises as the driver, MARCO, a 30ish male exits the truck. Jose calls out cautiously.

JOSE (CONT'D)
Are you Marco?

MARCO
Si. I am here to take you to the
church. Father Francisco is a good
man. He will help you.

Jose and Marisol each take one of Abuelita's arms and help her toward the vehicle.

MARCO (CONT'D)
I thought there were four of you.

JOSE

No, only three. They detained our mother at the border. They took us and our grandmother back across the river and let us go because she is blind and had no one to care for her except Marisol and me. When they left, we made our way back across and now we are here.

MARCO

I see. I'm sorry. But you will be safe with Father Francisco.

JOSE

That is what we are hoping. We've had a long journey. It's been hard on us, but harder on our Abuelita.

MARCO

She is blessed to have both of you.

Abuelita smiles, following his voice, she reaches out her hand and touches Marco's cheek.

ABUELITA

No, we are blessed to have you, Marco. And blessed to be here, safe.

Marco touches his hand to hers and smiles.

MARCO

Si, senora. We are all blessed.

He turns to the truck.

MARCO (CONT'D)

We need to get going. We have to drive across town and I don't want any of you to be seen. You'll have to lie down in the bed of the truck. I will cover you. Remain still and quiet...especially if we are stopped for any reason. Comprende? Do you understand?

Jose, Marisol and Abuelita nod their heads in silent agreement. Marco senses their apprehension.

MARCO (CONT'D)

It will be okay. Is Father expecting you?

JOSE

No. We had no way to contact him.
We know he is watched. Mother and
Abuelita didn't want to tip off the
patrol if they intercepted any
communication with him.

Marco nods his head.

MARCO

Okay, no problemo. The church's
door will be open to you. He is a
good man.

A beat

MARCO (CONT'D)

Just beware though, there is a
young priest there also, Father
Diego. He does not have a warm
heart for immigrants like Father
Francisco. Don't trust him. He is
not your friend.

Jose nods his head.

JOSE

Si. I understand.

Marco opens the tailgate of the pickup. Marisol scrambles in
and Marco and Jose assist Abuelita. They all lie down and
Marco covers them with a tarp and secures it before getting
into the driver's seat. The truck pulls away.

EXT. ST. IGLESIUS CATHOLIC CHURCH - NIGHT

The pickup pulls around to the back of the church and comes
to a stop. Marco gets out, looks about cautiously and then
removes the tarp from the bed of the truck. Again, Marco and
Jose assist Abuelita out of the truck bed. Marisol jumps out
effortlessly.

Angle on a sign near the sidewalk lit by a single light.
"HAVE A HAPPY AND BLESSED THANKSGIVING".

As the four make their way up the sidewalk, Marisol stops to
study the wording.

MARISOL

Abuelita, what is "Thanksgiving"?

Marco cuts in and answers before Abuelita.

MARCO
It's an American Holiday.

ABUELITA
Si. It is America's celebration of being welcomed to a foreign land by those already there, the natives. They gave the newcomers food to keep them from starving and shelter so they would not freeze.

JOSE
(sarcastically)
Hmmp. We were not welcomed, we are hunted down.

ABUELITA
Jose! No mas. No more. You must show respect.

Jose shrugs and rolls his eyes.

JOSE
Si, Abuelita. Respect.

ABUELITA
And do not roll your eyes at me, Jose.

She "sees" more than he realizes.

JOSE
Si, Abuelita. Lo siento. I'm sorry.

They approach the door to the Rectory. Marco knocks on the door.

A beat

A man, 30s, in a priest's black shirt and white collar opens the door. This is FATHER DIEGO. He looks at them sternly.

FATHER DIEGO
Yes, can I help you?

MARCO
Is Father Francisco here?

FATHER DIEGO
And who are you?

He looks behind Marco, eyeing the group suspiciously.

MARCO

These people need your help.

FATHER DIEGO

This is a church, not a homeless shelter.

His words are less than kind.

MARCO

Si, I understand. But we know that you provide help...for those who have nowhere to go...santuario.

FATHER DIEGO

Sanctuary? I believe that's illegal. Hiding fugitives, that is.

Jose stiffens at the exchange.

JOSE

We are not criminals, Father. It's just me and my sister and our grandmother. We are only children and she is blind.

FATHER DIEGO

How did you get here?

JOSE

We traveled with our mother, many miles through the desert, we had help from some "coyotes". They took most of our money, but they saw us to the border.

FATHER DIEGO

And where is your mother now?

JOSE

Detained...by the authorities.

FATHER DIEGO

And your father?

JOSE

He is dead. Killed by the cartel.

Father Diego is unmoved by the story.

FATHER DIEGO

Well we have no room here.

An older man, 60s appears behind Father Diego. Also in a priest's clothing. This is FATHER FRANCISCO.

FATHER FRANCISCO
Diego? What's going on out here?
Our dinner is almost ready.

He looks to the group standing outside the door.

FATHER FRANCISCO (CONT'D)
What's the trouble here? Can we
help you in some way?

Abuelita looks toward his voice. Her eyes moisten with recognition.

ABUELITA
Francisco?

Father Francisco looks toward her.

FATHER FRANCISCO
Yes, I'm Father Francisco.

ABUELITA
Dios mio! We have found you.

Her tears start in earnest now. Father Francisco looks at her with concern.

FATHER FRANCISCO
Please, please come in. All of you.
It's cold out.

FATHER DIEGO
You know they can not stay here. We
are being watched by the
authorities.

FATHER FRANCISCO
Quiet, Diego. It's Thanksgiving.
The least we can do is share our
meal and hear them out.

Father Diego is unhappy with this.

FATHER DIEGO
Fine.

He throws his hands up as he stalks off back inside the Rectory.

Father Francisco opens the door wider and welcomes them inside.

The children escort Abuelita, again, one on each arm as she navigates the steps to the door. Father Francisco now sees that she is blind. He takes her hand to help her. Abuelita wraps her arms around Father Francisco and hugs him tightly. He doesn't know quite what to make of it.

ABUELITA

Francisco. Do you not know? Do you not remember me?

Father Francisco knits his brow, studying her, searching his memory.

ABUELITA (CONT'D)

It is me. It's Manuela. Su hermana. Your sister.

Father Francisco's eyes fly open, now in recognition. He reaches out now and envelops her tightly.

FATHER FRANCISCO

Manuela! Oh, Manuela! It's been nearly fifty years! I never thought I would see you again. And now...here you are at my door. God has answered my prayers.

Tears stream down his cheeks, as Diego again appears studying the scene skeptically.

FATHER DIEGO

What is going on here? Do you know these people or are they just another bunch needing a hideout and a handout?

He's a real gem of a guy. Francisco turns to him.

FATHER FRANCISCO

Diego, you are a priest. How has the world hardened your heart so to those in need?

FATHER DIEGO

Because the need is never-ending, Francisco. Never. Ending.

Father Francisco studies the intense young priest.

FATHER FRANCISCO

Diego, you came to us as a baby. Years ago, as an orphan, or so we told you.

(MORE)

FATHER FRANCISCO (CONT'D)

But you were also sent here
for..."santuario"...and hope for a
better life.

Father Diego is confused, and for once nearly speechless. He almost stutters.

FATHER DIEGO

What? What do you mean?

FATHER FRANCISCO

Diego, this is Manuela, my sister.

A lingering beat

FATHER FRANCISCO (CONT'D)

Your mother.

Father Diego is stunned into silence as Abuelita holds her arms open for him.

INT. RECTORY - NIGHT. A WHILE LATER

The group is now seated preparing for Thanksgiving Dinner. Father Diego rises. His tone is much subdued, humbled now.

FATHER DIEGO

Lord, my mother is blind, yet sees
more clearly than I did. I would
like to offer a Thanksgiving prayer
before our meal, but even as a
priest, no words come to my mind
now except this one...

A beat as he looks toward Father Francisco and then to his mother. He bows his head.

FATHER DIEGO (CONT'D)

Gracias.

Abuelita's eyes are soft with tears as she looks toward his voice. She dabs her eyes and nods. Father Diego takes his seat and Father Francisco rises.

FATHER FRANCISCO

Diego, there is a beautiful quote
that says..."If the only prayer you
ever say in your entire life, is
'Thank You', it will be enough.

FADE OUT.

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