

BLACK IN BEAUTY

Written by

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A chess prodigy evades his captors and with the aid of a homeless man, he tries to rescue his parents from human traffickers without alerting police out of fear of deportation.

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INT. NY. LONG ISLAND - CHESS CLUB - CHESSBOARD - DAY

Knights leap, intersect in midair and thud determined. Pawns move up, down, quick and deliberate. Pouncing on a chance.

TOMÁS ALFREDO, age 12 $\frac{1}{2}$, shifts Black king one square down.

STEVE HAYDEN(14), aggressively moves White queen up.

Brother SAVIO ALFREDO, age 8, watches Black knight leap to center square. Black king gets checked by White queen.

BENICIO ALFREDO, a Mexican, age 37 (Tomás's father), chews over Black's position and watches Black king move with aplomb one square up.

White queen impatiently eliminates Black Rook. Black queen speeds off to square g5, initiating a sacrifice. Tomás's eyes dart to White knight taking the bait. Black knight thuds victoriously on square e2.

TOMÁS
Checkmate.

EXT. LONG ISLAND - CHESS CLUB PARKING LOT - DAY

Tomás jauntily paces with Benicio and Savio to a parked 4x4.

BENICIO
Beautiful sacrifice. No? That was well-planned. Perfecto. Who said it, "You have to have the fighting spirit. You have to force moves and take chances."

TOMÁS
Bobby Fisher.

SAVIO
Bobby Fisher!

BENICIO
Play it like you just did and you will bring the cup home.

TOMÁS
I... think so, Papi.

BENICIO
(opens the 4x4 door)
No, no. No think. Believe you can do it.

TOMÁS
Yes, Papi. I can.
(eagerly)
Can I, Papi?

BENICIO
Alright, but you have to go --

Tomás jumps posthaste behind the wheel.

EXT/INT. 4X4 / DIRT ROAD / LONG ISLAND - DAY

Tires brake and skid. The 4x4 veers off. Tomás grips the steering wheel. A cushion supports his back. Benicio sits closely in standby mode.

BENICIO
Go-o s-slow.

TOMÁS
I am.

Tomás peeks out the side mirror. In the backseat, Savio zigzags with the 4x4. The speedometer surpasses 25 MPH.

BENICIO
S-slow down! Watch out! Okay stop.
Stop... now!

Tires rolls over a rock. The 4x4 jolts to a stop. Benicio switches seats.

BENICIO
You don't want to do that to a car.

TOMÁS
It's not a car, Papi.

BENICIO
A brake's a brake, give it a slow
press, like this.
(foot on brake)
See the difference?

The 4x4 picks up speed. Savio shuffles through the CDs in the center console. One is "The Doors."

SAVIO
Papi, play this one.

BENICIO
Keep an eye on the speedometer.

Benicio points, Tomás pays attention as music blares and Savio rocks out on his baseball bat's invisible strings.

The 4x4 brakes and comes to a full stop. Three heads turn toward a Mazda parked roadside with a flat tire.

EXT. LONG ISLAND - BASEBALL FIELD - DUSK

The 4x4 pulls into the parking lot. Tomás and Savio jump out with their baseball bats and dash off to the entrance gate.

BENICIO

(gets out, on the phone)
That's mom's money. No, no, you touch that and I'll beat the crap out of your slutty ass, manito.

DON JUAN V.O.

You're here when she needs you? No. Five years you've been telling her your green card fairy-tale and that lil bit of money you give her, but look at you, with that big house y two cars, and what do I hear now, you're getting two housekeepers for that, what is it, twelve? Thirteen years you sleep with that same Irish --

INGA V.O.

(smacking sound)
Go wash your filthy mouth!

BENICIO

Don't let him get to you, Mami. If this sponsorship doesn't come true, we're gonna move back.

INGA V.O.

No, mi hijo. I'm old and this cancer isn't going away. You must do it for the kids.

BENICIO

Here you have a better chance.

INGA V.O.

You're giving me hope, mi amor. Have you found the housekeepers?

BENICIO

Tomorrow at three we're interviewing a couple.

INGA V.O.

Oh, good. It will work out. How 're my darlings?

BENICIO

(watches the boys warm up)
They just made a hundred bucks fixing a flat tire and unlocking this guy's car door. They're getting ready to hit some balls.
(heads toward the field)
Tomás won the match, Mami, he made an incredible move.

BENICIO (CONT'D)

He still shies away, but you know,
once he puts something in his head,
he won't let it go.

INGA V.O.

That's you, no? He got in him.

EXT. LONG ISLAND - BASEBALL FIELD - DUSK

Tomás prepares a pitch and throws the ball, precisely. Savio hits it, pang! The ball whooshes across. Benicio makes a Dan Marino run for it.

Savio shoots for a home run just as Benicio throws the ball. Tomás watches it come. He leaps and makes a vibrant catch.

EXT/INT. VAN/RANDY'S SIDE ENTRANCE/BROOKLYN HOUSE - NIGHT

A VAN backs up to the side entrance. Three figures jump out.

Inside the van, restrained JULIO (7), JULIA (5), and their Colombian parents, THE MARTINS stare at the rear door handle. It's turning. The doors fly open.

The abductees flinch at MACHO HIERRO, a Mexican child trafficker (38). Macho pulls Julio out the van.

Behind him, in the front driveway, next to a parked PICKUP TRUCK, RANDY, a child trafficker (60), hands out stacks of money. JOSÉ DIAZ, a Cuban hustler (35), counts them avariciously.

Moments later, Macho and José hop back in the van. Macho turns at the corner with tires squealing followed by a message beeping on José's phone. José is reading.

MACHO

Got the interview?

JOSÉ

(texting)

Tomorrow at three. The bastard's a chess master.

MACHO

He can't be as good as you. How many kids?

José gives Macho a three fingers-up sign while texting.

EXT. LONG ISLAND - LI HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

CARLA DIAZ, (Cuban, 26), striding in her high heels, sways her hips to the front door with husband, José. He carries with him his swagger in a conniving go-get-the-job attire.

INT. LI HOUSE - KITCHEN-LVRM OPEN FLOOR - DAY

The doorbell rings. DANA ALFREDO, an Irish, age 34 (Tomás's mother), walks to the front door and opens it. Sister ELLA ALFREDO, age 41/2, follows behind.

DANA
Come in. I'm Dana.

JOSÉ
Nice to meet you, I'm José and this is my wife, Carla.

DANA
It's a pleasure. Ella, say hello to Carla and José. They might come and stay with us.

CARLA
Hi Ella.
(Ella shies away)
You are so pretty.

DANA
She'll warm up, it takes a little while.

José bluffs mirth while quickly assessing the valuables.

JOSÉ
How long have you all been here?

DANA O.S.
We moved to the states when Ella was three months old.

José eyeballs the chess trophies lined up on a shelf with a framed photograph of Grandmaster Marcel Sisniega Campbell.

His greedy eyes roll at a Staunton King's HAND CHESSBOARD on a chess table. The pieces stand out tall and daring.

Benicio enters. Tomás shyly follows with Savio. José shakes hands with Benicio and shoots his mouth off.

JOSÉ
I've played big matches myself.

BENICIO
(gestures at Tomás)
Give it a shot?
(turns to José)
My boy wants to challenge you. You both should have a match.

JOSÉ
(brushes off too quickly)
Nah, I only play the masters.

JOSÉ (CONT'D)

But I could give him a few lessons.
 (at Tomás shying away)
 All right, show me your best move.

Carla takes her pride on the couch next to Dana and Benicio.

José proclaims the chair in front of Black. Tomás politely takes his seat across. José taps a finger, nonchalantly.

Tomás initiates White pawn up. José casually moves his down. Tomás releases his Knight. José develops his Bishop. Tomás throws a Knight attack and puts José in check. José saves his King with a queen attack. Tomás butchers Black bishop. José leans forward, dances his Queen down and ends the game.

JOSÉ

Checkmate.
 (sits down next to Carla)
 He's getting there, made couple of good attacks. You know, I was only eleven when I won my first match. Knew nothing about chess until Castro's men threw me and my friends in jail for talking back. This long time prisoner, Alberto Gustavo, nobody could beat him. He saw I was curious and he taught me the game. This politician, Miguel Perez was visiting the jail one day and saw me beat Gustavo. He took me out of prison, hired Arencibia -- you must know him?

Tomás and Savio linger around the finished game.

DANA

When did you both leave Cuba?

JOSÉ

Four years ago. After that chess game, Miguel took me under his wing. Later on, I ran his whole financial department. My wife was his children's governess. Things got sour for him, he got on the wrong track with Raúl and had to get out of the country. He brought us here. He's gone back.

INT. LI HOUSE - KITCHEN-LVRM OPEN FLOOR - DAY

Benicio is disassembling an old iPad. Dana is on the phone.

DANA

Thank you, Martha. You too.
 (hangs up)

DANA (CONT'D)

Their fingerprints checked out positive and the agent confirmed all their references.

BENICIO

You want to give them the job?

DANA

We could try for a week before I start work, see how comfortable the kids are.

Benicio is scrolling through his cell phone's calendar. His phone rings. The screen shows, "Tomás calling."

BENICIO

¿Sí, Tomáshijo? I can't hear you, Tomás? Who's screaming? Okay, calm down, I'm coming.

(runs to the back door)

I'm on my way.

DANA

(goes after him)

What's happening?

BENICIO

(through the garage)

Cops handcuffed Isaac, his sister and Marco. They're taking them away. I'll call you.

The garage door closes behind Benicio.

INT. LI HOUSE - KITCHEN-LVRM OPEN FLOOR - DUSK

Benicio sits down in front of the disassembled iPad. Dana comforts Tomás to the staircase and watches him climb up.

A wisp of melancholy accompanies Tomás. He halts in the middle, his backpack slips.

TOMÁS

Mami, I don't know if I want to go to school tomorrow.

DANA

It's okay, darling. When you wake up, see how you feel.

Tomás nods and continues up the gloomy stairs.

BENICIO

He'll be different in the morning.

DANA

Had you stayed with Royal Mehico
we'd have our papers by now.

BENICIO

I'll call the lawyer, see if she
got anything. He's gonna be fine.
We'll get our papers and he'll move
on. He'll make new friends.

DANA

What will happen to Marco's wife
and the baby?

BENICIO

They gave him three months to leave
the country.

DANA

Could they have... arrested Tomás?

BENICIO

(grinning)
He ran out the back door.

DANA

(turns white)
I'm gonna go check on him.

INT. LI HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - DUSK

The backpack drops, Tomás sinks down on the bed, head in
hands, with GARRY KASPAROV emerging from a large wall poster
playing Black knight.

INT. HOUSE - KITCHEN-LVRM OPEN FLOOR - DUSK

"ONE MONTH LATER"

Dana is reading to Ella on the couch.

At the chess table, Tomás waits for Savio to move his Pawn.
Headlights illuminate the backyard.

TOMÁS

Papi's home.

Ella scampers to the back door and into Benicio's arms. He's
wearing a grey business suit with a striped blue and white
shirt under it.

BENICIO

(waves an USCIS notice)
Got the receipt notice. One month
max I should get approved.

TOMÁS

We're no longer illegal, Papi?

BENICIO

You are, but once I get my visa,
we'll file the H4 for you guys.

(sits down with Ella)

In the meantime, don't get into
fights on the street cause they
don't give candy in jail.

SAVIO

Not even ice-cream?

BENICIO

You've got to bribe them for that.

(folds the notice)

Mami told you guys, Carla and José
are coming to work for us. Starting
Monday, José's taking you to school
and picking you both up.

Tomás and Savio nod while busy attacking each other.

BENICIO

Grandma might be coming sooner.

TOMÁS

When, Papi?

BENICIO

I'm talking to the hospital.

The TV NEWS shows headlines of Julio, Julia, and the Martins.

TV NEWS

The siblings and their parents have
been missing for a month.

SAVIO

Why do kids go missing, Papi?

BENICIO

Because there are bad people out
there who want to hurt them.

DANA

(preparing dinner)

Remember what we've taught you, not
to talk to strangers?

SAVIO

(busy moving his Bishop)

Yes, Mami.

Tomás's eyes hover on the picture of Julio.

TV NEWS

If you have any information on them
please call the hotline.

TOMÁS

(picks up his Knight)
Yes, Mami.

Benicio presses on Ella's personal emergency necklace alert
PENDANT push-button device.

Savio grabs his necklace alert pendant while moving his King.

SAVIO

Papi, you tickled us.

Tomás rubs his chest underneath his necklace alert pendant.

Benicio starts de novo. Ella giggles. While Savio considers
his next move.

SAVIO

Papi, you are distracting me! I'm
trying to concentrate.

DANA

Make sure you text them, honey, let
them know that was a false alarm?

BENICIO

(messaging from his phone)
I am. Batteries 're still good. How
long ago we got them?

TOMÁS

Two years, Papi! After I got lost
in Central Park, remember?

Benicio grins with lips pressed while texting away.

INT. LI HOUSE - UPSTAIRS OFFICE - DAY

"ANOTHER MONTH GOES BY"

Carla stoops in front of the file cabinet, putting away
documents. José prances through the door and grabs her.

JOSÉ

I'm gonna add another five grand on
top these two kids but no less than
ten for the smart ass.

CARLA

Randy will never agree. He'll blow
it.

JOSÉ

How much you think he's gonna make
on the smart ass with that age?
(sits down at the desk)
No less than fifty.

José props his feet up, takes out his electronic Chess
WIZARD, and starts a game. Carla stoops, shaking her head.

JOSÉ

(ponders on Pawn)
We could be out of this damn place.
That'll be it for the hotshot. He
thinks I'm just a carpet cleaner.

CARLA

(putting files away)
He browsed you off again?

JOSÉ

Yesterday, I said to him let's have
a match. He walked away. Half hour
later he comes down with the smart
ass and they have a match.
(phone buzzes, grabs it)
Felipe, what's going on, man?

FELIPE V.O.

Rosa got another job for you guys.
It's ready if you can finish Long
Island in the next 48 hours.

José lays his avaricious eyes on Benicio hugging Dana in a
framed photograph. Vengeance darkens his eyes, while Carla
bores hers into his, inquiring. The wizard peeps.

JOSÉ

'Ill be done. No doubt.

FELIPE V.O.

The Robles wanna interview you at
seven, can you find an excuse?

JOSÉ

We'll be out of here by six. How
many kids?

FELIPE V.O.

One, but the house is huge.
(José nods disappointed)
Rosa needs all papers by Friday.
The owners must sign them, not you.

JOSÉ

What if we have no choice, remember
that one bank approved everything?

FELIPE V.O.

That bank was about to go bankrupt
and we got lucky. But not Chase,
they got fraud protection with
original signatures in their system
and they'll run it.

(José nods, pondering on
Queen)

The Robles wanna you to have your
CPR certification. Tell them you'll
get it done.

INT. LI HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Benicio tucks Savio in.

SAVIO

Again she yelled at us today. I
don't think she's nice.

BENICIO

She was having a bad day.

SAVIO

José was so grumpy again.

BENICIO

He's got a toothache.

SAVIO

He does? He had ice-cream with us.

BENICIO

That's why he's going to the
dentist tomorrow. But maybe you
(tickles Savio)
are becoming one little grumpy man.

SAVIO

(giggling)
No, Papi!

BENICIO

(heads for the door)
I gotta get your brother ready for
his big game tomorrow.

SAVIO

Can we go to Tire King after the
game, Papi?

BENICIO

Mami and I are going out tomorrow
evening, remember? We'll go this
weekend and get you some nice chewy
burgers.

SAVIO
 (laughing)
 Oh! I forgot.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - ZUCCOTTI PARK - CANTINA - DAY

TONY DONATELLI, a stock broker, age 33, pays for his freshly brewed coffee. He receives the change, turns, and looks straight into MULLIE, An African-American homeless man.

MULLIE
 (pointing)
 Whaa ya got in dere, Al Pacino?

TONY
 No cappuccino today, just coffee, I
 can get you a cup?

MULLIE
 Dat's gwyne turn my piz to brown.

TONY
 Tea?

MULLIE
 I's not dat old!

TONY
 Here,
 (hands the change)
 get yourself happy.

MULLIE
 (watches Tony brisk off)
 Huh. Gemme dat hot chocolate, eyn
 pour a whole lotta cream on top.
 Eyn make dat double sweet.

Mullie grabs the hot cup with a brown bag and walks away. Half of a corn bread disappears inside his mouth. He sips loudly from his cup while heading south on Broadway.

INT. NYC - WALL STREET - SCHILDSON OFFICE - DAY

Benicio is at the desk, staring at his screen. Tony walks in, sipping from his cup.

TONY
 GOOG's still sliding?

BENICIO
 (view of ticker symbol)
 Putting on their goggles for a
 plunge they're predicting by
 closing. Think I'll start snapping
 up a few shares.

TONY
 (sits down)
 I'll hold on, see what happens
 after Google Plus relaunches. Like
 your office?

BENICIO
 Yes, it's comfortable. Thank you.

TONY
 Watching the playoffs this weekend?

BENICIO
 Oh, I don't know. I got three kids,
 we keep busy with them. My oldest
 got his chess game this afternoon.

TONY
 Oh yeah! How old is he?

BENICIO
 Almost thirteen. He wants to win
 this cup badly. The winner 's gonna
 shake hands with Kasparov and have
 a match with him next month.

TONY
 Who's he facing?

BENICIO
 A senior. It's gonna be a tough
 match. He's lost three times and
 won twice against him. In their
 last match, he won.

TONY
 He's got a good chance. Bring him
 over, we'll have a match in the
 park.

BENICIO
 I'll tell him. He's gonna be
 excited.

INT. LI SCHOOL - GYM STAGE - CHESS GAME - DAY

Sounds of chess pieces moving rapidly. Tomás moves Black queen diagonally. Steve plays his Queen and forces Tomás to move his King down. Steve takes away a Pawn. Tomás stops in front of his Queen in a second's hesitation, then picks up his Bishop and attacks White rook. Steve sacrifices a Pawn to Black rook, then moves his Rook up and checkmates Black king.

Tomás shakes Steve's hand and heads down the stage. Benicio waits with Dana and gives him an encouraging thumbs-up.

Garry Kasparov walks up the stage, waves at Benicio, and nods a smile as Tomás shyly passes him.

BENICIO
(rushes over with Dana)
You did great!

TOMÁS
(disheartened)
Not so, Papi.

BENICIO
Just keep playing and next year,
you'll be shaking his hand.

Tomás watches Garry Kasparov shake hands with Steve.

Dana takes a drawstring CHESS BAG out of her green purse, that matches her green scarf.

DANA
We had them made for you in Mexico.

TOMÁS
But I didn't win, Mami.

DANA
Yes you did. You've gained
strength, that makes you better and
stronger.

Tomás picks out the hand-made Black knight. He turns it in his palm and traces its detail.

EXT. LI SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - PRE-DUSK

Carla walks ahead toward the parked 4x4.

Ella bounces on Benicio's shoulders. Dana has her arms wrapped around Savio and Tomás.

Tomás is gazing into the distance, pensively. He looks up at the dark clouds moving in.

Dana tousles his hair. He relaxes, then goes back and lingers on the foreboding clouds. He tucks the chess bag deep inside his jacket pocket and pulls up the zipper.

Dana and Benicio help Savio and Ella into the 4x4.

DANA
(kissing)
We won't be too late.

EXT/INT. 4X4 / LI SCHOOL/STREET - PRE-DUSK

The 4x4 pulls out of the parking lot and the children wave at Benicio and Dana.

The white van is parked curbside. Carla steals a peek at Macho behind the wheel.

Benicio's truck enters the street and passes the van. Macho waits, then pulls away from the curb.

INT. LI HOUSE - KITCHEN-LVRM OPEN FLOOR - NIGHT

Carla glances at the children playing on the patio. The house phone rings. She jumps and answers.

DANA VOICE

Carla, it's Dana. What are the children doing?

CARLA

They're on the patio, playing.

DANA VOICE

Ella needs to take her cough medication. Make sure she has a sweater under her jacket. We'll see you in an --

Noises cut off Dana's voice. Carla holds the phone coldly while listening to Dana's screaming.

EXT. LI DESERTED ROAD - NIGHT

José and Macho with their faces covered, thrust Diana and Benicio forward at gunpoint to the rear of the van.

BENICIO

What do you want?

José pushes Dana into the van. Benicio jumps Macho.

BENICIO

Son of bitches! Take your hands off her!

MACHO

(pushing Benicio)
In there!

Benicio falls face down on the bumper. Macho and José shove him inside. José hops in. Macho closes the rear doors.

EXT/INT. VAN / LI DESERTED ROAD - NIGHT

The van speeds off. Sounds of wrestling follow by a gunshot. José's gun smokes next to Benicio's bleeding ankle.

INT. LI HOUSE - KITCHEN-LVRM OPEN FLOOR - NIGHT

Carla firmly presses the receiver onto the phone base, then hurries over, locks the front door and removes the key. She walks back and snatches the two kids' cell phones from the countertop.

INT. LI HOUSE - KITCHEN-LVRM OPEN FLOOR - NIGHT

The RC helicopter lifts up and hovers in mid air.

Tomás is reading to Ella. He stops to watch Savio chase the helicopter up the stairs.

At the kitchen counter, Carla swipes her phone's screen, edgy. The back door opens. José appears and disappears into the laundry room. Carla slides off her stool and slips away.

TOMÁS

(reading)

One day, when Daisy was so tired --

ELLA

I'm thirsty, Tomás.

INT. LI HOUSE - LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

José steps on a towel, stoops down, and unties his bloody shoelaces. Next to him, Carla opens a BLUE FOLDER and flips through documents.

CARLA

(view of a deed)

Nothing is signed! What happened?

INT. LI HOUSE - KITCHEN-LVRM OPEN FLOOR - NIGHT

Tomás opens the refrigerator, reaches for the juice box and overhears Carla scrutinize.

INTERCUT BETWEEN KITCHEN-LVRM OPEN FLOOR AND LAUNDRY ROOM

JOSÉ

(fussing with shoelaces)

Bastard refused, wanna play hard to get.

CARLA

But we must send the emergency
absence letter to Benicio's office
by tomorrow morning!

Tomás's grip freezes on the juice box.

JOSÉ

I'm gonna forge that. They're not
gonna check.

CARLA

What about the bank documents?
We've only three days, we got to
have them signed!

Tomás slowly pours the juice into the cup, distracted.

JOSÉ

We're gonna get it done, Randy's
gonna work on it. Where's the smart
ass?

CARLA

On the couch with Ella.

Tomás stops pouring, nervously taken aback.

JOSÉ

The li'l ass?

CARLA

Upstairs. I'll get him soon.

Tomás swallows. Juice pours to the brim.

JOSÉ

Start packing them up. They're
gonna be here in 15 minutes. I want
them out of here.

Juice spills over. Dismay shadows Tomás's face.

Carla grabs a folded shirt and pants from the rack.

CARLA

Throw your bloody pants in the
machine and those bloody shoes in
the sink and wipe off the floor --

JOSÉ

Why, you keep telling me what to
do? Go, take the folder with you.
And don't forget the wires.

Tomás presses the refrigerator door shut and leans against
it, nerve-racking. High heels click-clack down the basement
staircase.

Tomás darts out of the kitchen and plants the cup in Ella's hand. While he presses relentlessly on his pendant, he gets hold of Ella's pendant. It blinks red. The battery is low.

Tomás digs into his pockets and scans the kitchen counter. He runs to the front door and pulls the handle. It's locked.

INT. LI HOUSE - STAIRCASE, UPSTAIRS OFFICE

Tomás frantically bounds upstairs, into the office, and grabs the phone.

He auto dials a number. There is no answer. He auto dials a second number. Silence. Dread creeps across his face.

INT. LI HOUSE - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Carla hip walks over and opens the telephone encasement box: view of telephone wires. Carla unplugs a wire.

INT. LI HOUSE - UPSTAIRS OFFICE - NIGHT

Tomás stares at the label printed, "Mrs. O'Donnell." He hesitates for a second, then hits the auto dial key.

The phone rings, then goes dead. Tomás pushes the key again. A chilling silence hits him back as he stands, befuddled.

INT. LI HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - NIGHT

Savio looks on apprehensively as Tomás grabs a wrench and a pick from inside a small TOOL KIT and hurries out the door.

CARLA O.S.

Tomás?

Tomás stiffens and steps back. Fear crosses Savio's face.

TOMÁS

You must go to Mrs. O'Donnell.

Savio shakes his head, petrified.

TOMÁS

Tell her Mami and Papi didn't come home, they're not answering and the phones aren't working!

SAVIO

I'm scared, Tomás!

INT. LI HOUSE - KITCHEN-LVRM OPEN FLOOR - NIGHT

Carla stops at the bottom of the staircase and watches Ella play with her juice.

CARLA

Tomás?

INT. LI HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - NIGHT

Tomás has his hands on Savio's shoulders.

TOMÁS

Coming! Savio, you must go. We can't leave Ella alone.

Savio nods courageously while watching Tomás shove the tool kit in his pocket.

INT. LI HOUSE - KITCHEN-LVRM OPEN FLOOR - NIGHT

Carla starts to climb up the staircase. Ella spills the juice all over and starts to cry. Carla looks up the staircase.

CARLA

What were you doing up there?

Tomás looks down without blinking. His eyes bore vigilantly into Carla's back as he takes the stairs down.

CARLA

(exiting)
Change her!

ELLA

(weeps)
Tomás, I want Mami.

Tomás's eyes dart around suspicious and come to fall on José strutting into the room. Tomás stares at his attire.

Carla walks in with a box of wipes, a shirt and pants, and throws them next to Ella.

CARLA

Put those on her.

Tomás's eyes remain glued on José, in disbelief.

JOSÉ

You've got a problem?

TOMÁS

Why 're you wearing my dad's clothes?

JOSÉ
 (models)
 I don't see his name, do you?

José's phone rings, he grabs it.

CARLA
 You're going for a ride. Get your
 sister ready.

TOMÁS
 Where are we going?

Carla listens into José's phone conversation.

JOSÉ
 (in Spanish)
 What's taking you so long, man?

TOMÁS
 Where are my parents?

CARLA
 They went into hiding.

Why? TOMÁS JOSÉ
 (in Spanish)
 Why?

Carla follows José to the sliding doors.

JOSÉ
 (in Spanish)
 He was gonna send the plates for
 both trucks?

TOMÁS
 (trails behind Carla)
 Where are our cell phones? And why
 aren't our phones working?

CARLA
 Because your parents don't want the
 police to find you all.

TOMÁS
 But why?

CARLA
 'Cause your dad's visa was denied
 and he must leave the country. Now
 get Ella ready and stop asking
 questions, we don't have all night.

TOMÁS
 But --

Headlights illuminate the backyard. Tomás's face lights up.
 The van pulls in. Tomás's face dims. A fraught silence.

CARLA
Get your sister ready!

TOMÁS
(swallows the dread)
E-ella needs her cough medicine.

Carla grabs the cough syrup from the cabinet and bangs it down in front of Tomás's confused face, startling him.

Tomás shudders in confusion as he sits down next to Ella. He inattentively fills the cough syrup cup to the rim and watches José end his phone call.

TOMÁS
Here drink, Ella. We're going to get Mami and Papi.

ELLA
(hugs her backpack)
Can I bring my backpack?

José stops short on his way to the back door.

CARLA
It'll keep them quiet.

JOSÉ
Don't be a pussycat.

Tomás winces at the back door, slamming shut.

INT. LI HOUSE - UPSTAIRS BATHROOM - NIGHT

An emergency ladder hangs down out the window. Savio stares outside (POV): The van sits idle with its headlights on. Randy is in the passenger seat, smoking. Macho steps outside with two license plates. José comes out the house, carrying a toolbox.

INT. LI HOUSE - KITCHEN-LVRM OPEN FLOOR - NIGHT

Tomás absently pours another round of cough syrup into the cup and looks away from Ella overdosing it to Carla peering out the sliding door.

CARLA
Where 're you going?

TOMÁS
(moves forward valiantly)
Ella needs her blanket.

Carla prowls behind him. Tomás grabs a blanket from the laundry rack. Carla follows him and goes back to the sliding doors.

Tomás looks on from behind Carla with a new uncertainty (POV): José and Macho take off the 4x4's license plate. Macho inserts a screw and mounts the plate. José gets up and disappears into the house.

Dread creeps over Tomás's face. He turns around and gets shoved aside by Carla, hurrying to the staircase.

CARLA

Savio?

JOSÉ

(walks in)

Why, he's still up there?

CARLA

(nods)

Savio? Where are you?

SAVIO O.S.

Doing number two!

Tomás turns pale. José shoves Carla aside and runs up the stairs. Tomás cripples down on the couch and watches Ella struggle to stay awake.

EXT. LI HOUSE - PATIO - NIGHT

Savio pulls his body out the bathroom window.

Macho tramps the stairs up, carrying the toolbox.

Savio moves his small body down the emergency ladder.

Macho slides the door open and puts the toolbox down.

Savio's legs dangle from the bottom of the ladder. He watches Macho pass from underneath and tramp down the steps. He jumps.

INT. LI HOUSE - KITCHEN-LVRM OPEN FLOOR - NIGHT

JOSÉ O.S.

I'm gonna count to three.

Tomás sits frozen, listening to José's chilling voice. The sliding door opens. Tomás turns. Macho shoves Savio inside.

Tomás clutches Ella's backpack and turns frantically to watch José bound down the stairs, grab Savio, and push him. Savio bumps into Carla. Tomás flinches.

JOSÉ

(points a finger at Carla)

You've got five minutes, get them outside!

José storms out the sliding door with Macho.

CARLA
(exiting)
Put on your jackets.

SAVIO
(quivering)
They took off Papi's plate.

Tomás shudders to his feet. He stops on top of the basement staircase and watches Carla disappear into the basement.

INT. LI HOUSE - LAUNDRY ROOM

Tomás frowns at José's bloody shoes in the sink and pants in the washing machine. High heels click-clack up the staircase.

Carla rocks her hips up and into the laundry room and pours bleach in the machine. Water rushes in. She steps outside and bumps into Tomás.

CARLA
(shoving Tomás aside)
Let's go. Your parents are waiting.

Tomás recoils and warily follows Carla into the living room.

EXT. LI HOUSE - PATIO - NIGHT

Tomás and Savio step outside, wearing their backpacks. Tomás is carrying Ella's backpack. He hurries down the patio steps and slows down.

The van's headlights shine on José and Randy, engaged in a vigorous argument.

Carla totes a sleeping Ella. José walks over, spewing fumes.

JOSÉ
Wait inside the truck.

INT/EXT. 4X4 / BACKYARD / LI HOUSE - NIGHT

Carla tunes in through the side mirror to José and Randy's muted argument.

Behind her, Ella sleeps next to Savio. Tomás peers out the rear window (POV): Randy curses as he shoves stacks of bills into José's hand and the rest back in his pockets.

TOMÁS
(watches José count)
Carla, are we going to get my
parents? Carla?

TOMÁS (CONT'D)
 (pulls on Carla's sleeve)
 Are you taking us to my parents?

José approaches the 4x4. Carla pushes Tomás's arm aside and jumps out. The back door opens. José grabs Tomás.

JOSÉ
 Get out! Get in the van!

Tomás breaks free. José grabs him by the back of his neck.

TOMÁS
 Let go of me!

Carla snatches Ella. Ella's blanket drags on the ground. Her backpack falls down.

Savio scuffles with Macho. Macho pulls out his gun.

Tomás elbows José. José strikes back. Tomás hits the ground and stares at José's gun.

EXT/INT. VAN / BACKYARD / LI HOUSE - NIGHT

Randy blows out smoke rings while leaning against the van. José pushes Tomás into the van next to Savio.

Macho picks up Ella's backpack as Carla tosses Ella on top of Tomás. Macho flings the backpack at Savio.

TOMÁS
 Where 're my parents?

Carla is about to answer, when José shoves her aside and throws Ella's blanket into Tomás's face.

JOSÉ
 Did you know today was gonna be the last game you'll ever play, smart ass? And you lost.
 (bursts out laughing)
 You couldn't save your King. But I'm giving you a new one.
 (points at Randy)
 This man's gonna take care of you.
 (about to slam the doors)
 And don't think of running away, cause the police gonna send you straight back to Mehico.

The doors slam shut onto complete darkness. Tomás stares at it, bewildered.

SAVIO
 Tomás?

Tomás shudders and hugs Ella tight. They listen to the van's front doors closing.

SAVIO
Where are they taking us?
(pulls out his pendant)
Papi was going to change the
batteries!

TOMÁS
Papi?

Tomás listens: the van is backing out of the driveway. He wipes away his tears and hurries Ella into Savio's lap. He digs into his backpack and pulls out a notepad and pencil.

TOMÁS
(dots down an X)
They turned left.

Savio nods. Tomás scribbles down an arrow next to the X.

SAVIO
Another left!

Tomás presses the pencil down and draws the arrow thicker.

EXT/INT. VAN/RANDY'S SIDE ENTRANCE/BROOKLYN HOUSE - NIGHT

The van backs up. The rear doors fly open. Macho grabs a sleeping Ella.

EXT. BROOKLYN HOUSE - RANDY'S FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Randy struggles with the front door keys and double locks. Tomás glances around while he waits next to Savio and Macho.

Randy's pickup truck is parked in the driveway. A motorcycle is parked in front of it. The van is parked at the side entrance hidden by dense bushes and pine trees.

Headlights emerge from the dark looming streets of a deserted industrial section.

Startled, Tomás watches the 4x4 turn left, pull over behind the van, and José jump out.

INT. BROOKLYN HOUSE - RANDY'S HALLWAY-LVRM - NIGHT

Randy slams the front door shut. He locks it, removes the top key, and stomps off. José follows, inching closer to him.

Randy walks in his office, shutting the door, but José pushes his way through.

Macho walks over and drops Ella on the couch. Julio and Julia are asleep on the adjacent couch.

MACHO
 (to the boys)
 In here and lie down!

Savio shrinks back next to Tomás on the couch.

Macho tramps off. He stops, looks back at the boys reassuringly, then disappears inside the office.

Tomás peers over and looks straight into Julio's face. His eyes grow wide.

Julio looks at him wearily and falls back to sleep. Tomás gazes at him, wildly --

INT. LI HOUSE - KITCHEN-LVRM OPEN FLOOR - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Tomás's eyes hover on the picture of Julio.

BACK TO PRESENT

Tomás jumps to his feet, aghast. The men's voices thunder through the open door.

José storms out into the hallway and pulls on the front door handle. Randy is right behind him. He shoves José aside and unlocks the door.

RANDY
 Been taking your bee-ass for years.

JOSÉ
 Why, I take the big risk and you get for less, did I ever complain?

RANDY
 (pushes José outside)
 Keep your cheap excuses and get your ugly face out of here.

Macho runs over, coming in between the men.

JOSÉ
 Without me you're nothing.

Tomás stares out the open front door at the men push and pull and Macho try to intervene.

RANDY O.S.
 You're threatening me. Lemme tell you, he's tough, he's not gonna sign. You need the kids.

Tomás looks around into a hallway and gestures. Savio gets up trembling and grabs Ella's blanket and backpack. The men are occupied outside the front door.

INT. BROOKLYN HOUSE - RANDY'S HALLWAY-KITCHEN - NIGHT

Their voices rise and rage as Tomás takes a sharp turn into the hallway, carrying Ella. Randy's scornful voice buzzes loud. The boys freeze, then hasten in the opposite direction.

Tomás passes a basement door with a padlock attached to it. He heads straight for the back door. It's locked.

Tomás settles Savio into a chair and lowers Ella in his lap.

He digs out his tool kit, takes out the wrench and pick, and works on the back door lock. A loud shout freezes his hand. He continues and jiggles the pick. The lock clicks.

Tomás turns and grabs Ella.

EXT. BROOKLYN HOUSE - RANDY'S PATIO - NIGHT

Savio sits down on the step. Tomás lowers Ella onto his lap. Savio's eyes dart around, terrified. He hugs Ella tight.

Tomás hurries his foot inside the back door. He digs out the wrench from his pocket and inserts it into the lock.

RANDY O.S.

Cuban sleazebag, got the guts to
show up in my face. You're leaving
as soon the trailer gets fixed,
with the kids.

Sound of a door slamming shut. Tomás freezes with his hand on the lock.

SAVIO

Tomás!?

RANDY O.S.

Where are they?

MACHO O.S.

Right there on the couch.

RANDY O.S.

(thundering voice)
Where?

Tomás fumbles with the pick inside the lock's bottom hole.

SAVIO

Hurry, Tomás!

MACHO O.S.

I told them, go to sleep.

The pick turns. The deadbolt clicks back into its locked position. Tomás grabs Ella. Savio gets up with Ella's backpack and blanket. The children disappear into the dark.

INT. BROOKLYN HOUSE - RANDY'S LVRM - NIGHT

Randy shakes Julio. Macho runs into the kitchen and gets hold of the back door knob. Randy stops behind him, hesitating.

MACHO

Locked.

RANDY

Always is, so 's my house.
(inspects the padlock)
Look underneath the beds.

Macho disappears inside a bedroom, while Randy tugs at the iron bars guarding the windows of the living room.

EXT. BROOKLYN HOUSE - RANDY'S FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Randy and Macho burst out of the front door.

RANDY

(unlocks the pickup truck)
Go left, I'll take east.

Randy hops in. He shoves empty bottles aside, grabs a briefcase and opens it. It is loaded with stacks of money. He fills it with new stacks and throws it on the backseat floor.

MACHO O.S.

Something's on the street!

Randy inserts the key into the ignition and watches Macho step out of the van in the middle of the street.

RANDY

What is it?

Randy hastens out. The door slams shut behind him. The key dangles from the ignition. Randy joins Macho.

MACHO

The girl's backpack.
(points left)
They went that way.

RANDY

(hurries back)
Turn your high beams on.

Randy flings the backpack into the open cargo bed and mounts his motorcycle. He pulls out onto the street behind the van.

From a low ground level, headlights slowly disappear and the street fades into darkness.

Underneath the pickup truck, bodies lie snuggled. Arms wrap around one another. Tomás and Savio crawl out. Tomás drags the blanket Ella's sleeping on.

He peeks inside the pickup truck and stares at the key in the ignition.

INT/EXT. PICKUP TRUCK/RANDY'S FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Tomás lowers Ella onto the backseat and bumps into the briefcase.

He jumps behind the wheel and pulls the seat forward. His foot won't reach the gas pedal. Savio aligns his backpack behind Tomás's.

The foot is still short. Tomás turns and grabs the briefcase.

Tires skid and run over the lawn. The pickup truck sharply turns right onto the street with its headlights off.

EXT. BROOKLYN HOUSE - RANDY'S SIDE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The van pulls into the side entrance. Randy dismounts the motorcycle. Macho gets out of the van.

MACHO

What we do?

RANDY

When that sleazebag was leaving,
was the front door left open?

MACHO

Yeah, but we were right there.

RANDY

(eyes roll over empty
driveway)

W-what!?

MACHO

What?

Macho's eyes open wide. He crouches down and hits the ground. Randy shoves his gun in his pocket and dials his phone, wild.