

FADE IN:

EXT. SAN GERMÁN, PUERTO RICO - NIGHT - 1965

Wind howls like a living thing. A storm swells over the old city, but it doesn't move like any weather—it pulses, like breath. Trees bend low. Something unseen stalks the air.

Lightning flashes. A palm tree splits down the middle.

INT. ABANDONED CHURCH - NIGHT

An altar stripped bare. Candlelight fights to stay alive. Sigils are scrawled in soot and blood across the stone.

On the ground: a ritual circle made from cohoba ash, red thread, and melted black wax. Inside it lies EL TESTAMENTO DEL VIENTO—a book bound in skin, thrumming like a pulse.

Three figures kneel: LÚCIA DUARTE (40s), and two espiritistas—one young, one old. All are soaked with sweat, focused, afraid.

Beside the circle: a cloth-wrapped vejigante mask, brightly painted, horned, unmistakably Puerto Rican.

LÚCIA

(low, urgent, in Taíno and Spanish)

The Portuguese mask was lost...It carried the first evil. This one carries our strength.

She unwraps the vejigante mask. Even in this broken, haunted church, it glows—a symbol of resistance, of celebration, of survival.

ESPIRITISTA 1

That mask is not his.

LÚCIA

No. It's ours. That's why it'll work.

She places it gently in the circle beside the book.

LÚCIA (CONT'D)

Not to destroy. To hold. To fight him with something he cannot understand.

The book rustles. A gust of wind punches through the shattered windows. Candles go out in a wave.

The air tightens.

ESPIRITISTA 2

The mask he brought—it shattered in the first binding. But the breath remained.

LÚCIA

Then we bind that breath with ours.

She inhales cohoba smoke, trembling. Her hands trace a spiral glyph onto the vejigante's forehead with molten wax.

LÚCIA (CONT'D)

Juracán... hold him. Guabancex... take his air.

Suddenly, the book SCREAMS OPEN. Pages flail. One tears free, burns midair.

The walls breathe inward. Wooden pews creak toward the altar. Something in the church wants to collapse in on itself.

ESPIRITISTA 1 chokes—gasping, eyes rolled, mouth stretching unnaturally wide.

A dual voice escapes him—his own and something older.

POSSESSED ESPIRITISTA

(in Portuguese and Taíno)

You took my face... Now I take yours.

LÚCIA

(screaming)

BACK!

She clutches the mask to her chest, breathes into it—a long, shaking exhale. The circle sparks. Red thread frays.

A glyph burns into her skin—a jagged spiral, pulsing.

She grabs the book, wraps it in red thread, and forces it shut. Then hurls both book and mask into a stone basin lined with ash and salt.

The wind STOPS.

Everything falls still.

The possessed espiritista collapses. The other stares, hollow-eyed.

Lúcia sinks to her knees. Her face bloodied. Her hand shaking.

She looks at the mask—now cracked. Some of its color faded, like the demon's breath stained it from the inside.

LÚCIA (CONT'D)

(softly)

This was never meant for him. One day, someone will make it beautiful again.

She rises. Takes the book in her arms.

Walks into the wind, alone.

SMASH TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: RESPIRAR

EXT. HOSPITAL PARKING LOT - MORNING

A grey sky, quiet wind that nips at your skin.

A rundown van pulls up. CALLUM (trans man, 26) climbs out of the passenger seat, adjusting his hoodie, the worn Puerto Rican flag patch on his shoulder barely holding on.

He stretches, trying to shake off the nerves with a little humor.

CALLUM

Hospitals always smell like rubber gloves and regret.

NOAH (cis man, 26) steps out from the driver's seat, calm and steady. He closes the door quietly, glances at the backseat stacked with cooler, bags, and blankets.

Callum starts toward the entrance but pauses, noticing Noah still standing there.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

You coming, or are you about to start giving pep talks to the parking lot?

NOAH

Just thinking. Feels... hopeful,  
you know?

CALLUM

Hopeful? Since when did you become  
the emotional one?

Noah smirks, then falls in step beside Callum.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - MORNING

Fluorescent lights hum overhead. Nurses pass like quiet  
ghosts. Machines beep steadily behind curtains.

Callum and Noah walk side by side.

CALLUM

You ever think it's weird how  
cutting someone open can actually  
make them more them? Like,  
surgery's the weirdest way to find  
yourself.

NOAH

I think it's more like peeling back  
the layers to get to the real  
person underneath. This surgery?  
It's a step forward.

Callum nods, a little softer now. Noah's hope is contagious.

They turn the corner.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

PAXTON (AFAB, they/them, 26) rests in bed, bandaged but  
alert. Their hand rests lightly on their stomach, steady.

Across the room, EMILY (cis woman, 26) zips a duffel bag with  
military precision. Clipboards balanced in her lap.

She looks up as Callum and Noah enter.

EMILY

Finally. If I had to read one more  
discharge paper, I was gonna check  
myself in.

CALLUM

Missed you too.

He crosses to Paxton's side, hesitates like he wants to say something deep, then shrugs and offers a fist bump.

PAXTON  
(laughs weakly)  
Seriously?

CALLUM  
What? It's a no-hug zone, isn't it?

PAXTON  
Yeah, guess you're right, but don't get too comfortable.

They fist bump – awkward, but perfect.

NOAH  
The car's warm. Blankets are ready if you need 'em.

PAXTON  
Thanks, Noah.

EMILY  
Everything's packed – meds, snacks, charts, the whole circus. I made a color-coded guide.

CALLUM  
Of course you did. You're like a walking project plan.

EMILY  
Wanna run through it? Might be a quiz after?

CALLUM  
I'd rather wrestle a bear.

They laugh quietly. The mood softens but the weight remains.

CALLUM (CONT'D)  
You sure about that cabin? Free's one thing, but old and possibly-haunted is another.

PAXTON  
Hey, it's got charm. Plus, free.

CALLUM  
Free doesn't mean stable.

PAXTON  
Sounds like my ribcage.

They share a small smile

Emily and Noah start tidying up the hospital room further, leaving Callum and Paxton.

PAXTON (CONT'D)

Callum, can you help me to the bathroom?

CALLUM

Of course.

Callum moves to Paxton's side, helping them out of bed carefully. They shuffle slowly toward the bathroom.

INT. HOSPITAL BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Callum turns his back, giving Paxton privacy as they sit down.

PAXTON

I'm nervous.

CALLUM

About what, walking? I got you.

PAXTON

No. About... this. The surgery. I haven't seen my chest yet.

CALLUM

That's normal. It's a big change.

PAXTON

The surgeon wasn't sure if they could do two separate incisions with my chest being so...big. It might just be one long cut across, which I don't want.

CALLUM

Whatever it looks like, it's still you. And it's still yours.

Paxton exhales shakily.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

You don't have to look at it until you're ready, even when the first week is over. You've made it this far. Give yourself time.

PAXTON  
Yeah. Yeah, I guess you're right.

A stretch of silence as Paxton finishes going to the bathroom.

PAXTON (CONT'D)  
(irritated)  
My chest feels so itchy.

CALLUM  
(focused)  
That's a good sign. Means you're healing.

Paxton nods, still uneasy but comforted by Callum's presence.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Paxton and Callum step out of the bathroom. Emily and Noah glance up from their conversation. Standing near the door, a NURSE (early 30s) waits with a wheelchair, ready to take Paxton downstairs.

NURSE  
All set?

Paxton takes a deep breath, nodding.

PAXTON  
Yeah. Let's go.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAYS - MORNING

The nurse pushes Paxton ahead of the group. Emily, Noah, and Callum strain behind but close to the nurse.

PAXTON  
Callum, how was the cabin last night?

CALLUM  
It was fine. Apparently too Puerto Rican for Noah, kept trembling in his tightly-whities.

NOAH  
Stop projecting yourself onto me.

PAXTON  
Well, I'm excited to see it in person anyway.

PAXTON (CONT'D)

It was nice of your grandma to let us use it. Has she visited it since your great grandma passed?

CALLUM

Nah, I don't think so. We aren't that close of a family.

Callum flashes a grin at the nurse pushing Paxton's wheelchair.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Busy morning, huh?

The nurse ignores him, focusing on maneuvering through the crowded hallway. Emily smirks.

EMILY

Smooth.

CALLUM

Didn't hear a no.

EMILY

Didn't hear anything.

They weave through the nurses, patients, and visitors. Callum groans under the weight of Paxton's bags.

CALLUM

Why did you bring so much stuff?  
You were here for one night!

PAXTON

You can never be too prepared.

Emily tries to balance Paxton's discharge papers and a duffel bag.

The automatic doors slide open—bright sunlight floods in.

EXT. HOSPITAL - MORNING

The car is sitting out front, hazards on.

EMILY

Alright, let's get out of here  
before they decide to keep us all.

They all nod in agreement, heading toward the car.

The nurse pulls Paxton next to the car.

CALLUM

Okay, first let's shove this stuff in before the nurses realize we stole half their supplies.

EMILY

It's medical-grade gauze, Callum. Not the crown jewels.

CALLUM

Still counts.

Emily and Callum haphazardly stuff the bags into the trunk, slamming it shut as Noah jogs over to Paxton and the nurse.

NOAH

M'kay, superstar, let's get you in.

PAXTON

You're gonna drop me, aren't you?

NOAH

Have a little faith.

Noah thanks the nurse and carefully helps Paxton out of the wheelchair then guides Paxton into the passenger seat.

CALLUM

I give it two minutes before Paxton regrets ever leaving the hospital.

PAXTON

And miss out on this place? Nah, no way.

Noah grins, buckling them in.

NOAH

Too late now.

Emily slides into the backseat alongside Callum.

CALLUM

Let's hit the road before Noah chickens out.

NOAH

Ha-ha, you think you're so clever. Why don't you drive?

CALLUM

In this massive thing? Hell no. My talents are better suited for the backseat.

They drive off, merging into the flow of the city.

EXT. FORESTED ROAD - MORNING

A narrow, winding road cuts through dense woods. The trees are tall and endless, their leaves shifting gently in the wind. The sunlight struggles to filter through, creating quick patterns of light and shadow. The road feels forgotten, eerily peaceful.

INT. CAR- MORNING

Folk music hums softly through the speakers, a serene melody blending with the sound of the tires on the road.

Noah is at the wheel, steady and focused, his hands relaxed but firm. His sharp profile is lit by the dappled light slipping through the trees.

CALLUM

I swear, Noah, if this road gets any narrower, we're gonna end up on the news.

Noah doesn't flinch, his eyes fixed on the road ahead.

NOAH

You're welcome to walk the rest of the way.

Callum scoffs, shifting to face him.

CALLUM

Yeah, and get eaten by a bear? No thanks. I'd rather die in this tin can with all of you.

Paxton stirs in their seat. They're leaning against the door, their hood pulled up, pale but alert.

PAXTON

(dryly)

Glad to know where we rank on your list, Cal.

Callum twists in his seat to face them, raising an eyebrow.

CALLUM

You? Top of the list. Noah? Somewhere below the bear.

Noah's lips twitch, but he stays silent, the faintest hint of amusement flickering across his face.

EMILY  
(turning to Callum)  
And where am I on this list?

Callum grins, leaning back in his seat.

CALLUM  
You're making the list, what you mean?

Paxton shifts, trying to get comfortable. Emily notices and lowers her voice.

EMILY  
You okay?

PAXTON  
Yeah. Just... stiff.

Emily nods, squeezing their knee gently before glancing out the window.

EMILY  
We're almost there, right?

Noah checks the GPS briefly, his voice even.

NOAH  
Ten minutes.

CALLUM  
(under his breath)  
Feels like we've been driving for ten hours.

NOAH  
That's because you've been whining for nine of them.

Paxton chuckles softly, the sound faint but genuine.

The music changes, another soft, lilting folk song coming through the speakers. The car rounds a bend, and the road narrows further. The forest presses closer, the trees seeming taller, the shadows longer.

Callum leans forward, squinting at the road ahead.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

The van crawls up a narrow dirt path carved into the mountainside. Pines lean in on both sides. Wind hums low through the branches.

They round a bend.

The cabin comes into view—tucked quietly into the slope, partially shaded by a towering ceiba tree. Wooden, hand-built, timeworn but sturdy. A porch with an old rocking chair, and a bright red cloth banner strung between posts—faded from sun, but clearly handmade.

A vejigante mask hangs near the doorway—its colors dulled, but untouched. Below it, rosary beads swing gently in the breeze.

EXT. CABIN DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The van comes to a stop. The group steps out slowly, each of them taking in the scene.

CALLUM

Welcome to the middle of nowhere.  
Former home of Lúcia Duarte, my  
great-grandmother, curandera,  
suspected witch, and expert  
passive-aggressive letter writer.

EMILY

It's... a vibe.

NOAH

Definitely quiet.

CALLUM

That's the idea.

They walk toward the porch, the gravel crunching beneath their feet.

PAXTON

Kinda feels like something's  
watching.

EMILY

This place does look a little—

CALLUM

—Creepy?

Emily hesitates.

CALLUM (CONT'D)  
It's not creepy. It's Puerto Rican.

They pause.

CALLUM (CONT'D)  
Everything in here meant something to her. Every plant, every carving, every candle. Just because it's not whitewashed pottery and a "Live Laugh Love" sign doesn't make it evil.

Emily lifts her hands in surrender.

EXT. CABIN PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Callum fits a key into the rusted lock. The wind chime of shells and metal by the door lets out a low, melodic clink. On the door frame, a carved petroglyph spiral.

NOAH  
Did she carve this?

CALLUM  
Don't know. Probably. My mom didn't talk about her much—just that she was "too spiritual." That usually meant "don't ask questions."

He opens the door.

INT. CABIN - ENTRYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Warm sunlight spills across wooden floors. The cabin smells like cedar and old herbs.

Walls are decorated with:

Framed family photos in black-and-white and faded color. Handwoven lace doilies on the side tables. Catholic saints, some chipped. Palm crosses, votive candles, and a small altar space with a bowl of dried petals and salt. Puerto Rican flags, one small and framed beside a rosary and a photo of Lúcia in her youth smiling, standing barefoot with a garden behind her.

Paxton steps inside, surprised.

PAXTON  
I thought you said this place was abandoned.

CALLUM

It was. But it's like she knew  
someone would come back. Nothing's  
been moved. Nothing's broken.

He picks up a small statue of La Virgen de la Providencia,  
brushes the dust from its base, then sets it back down  
gently.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

This wasn't just her house. It was  
like an extension of her...or  
something.

EMILY

It's beautiful.

CALLUM

Damn right it is.

INT. CABIN - AFTERNOON

The front door creaks closed behind them. The space is quiet,  
but not dead. Sunlight filters through faded lace curtains,  
casting soft patterns on the floor.

The group moves slowly through the cabin, carrying in bags.

INT. MONTAGE - UNPACKING

Emily immediately claims the kitchen table. She spreads out  
meds, instructions, labels, and color-coded folders. She  
opens cabinets and drawers, muttering as she inventories  
supplies.

Paxton struggles to unzip one of their bags and pulls out a  
well-worn zip up hoodie. As they stand, they subtly run a  
hand across their chest—pressing gently through the surgical  
binder. Their expression flickers—uncertain.

Noah, near the doorway, notices, then looks away quickly. He  
fidgets with Paxton's duffel, setting it down a little too  
carefully.

Callum lingers near the walls, eyes scanning the photos, the  
altar, the carved wood. His shoulders are tight.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Paxton settles into a seat near the small altar, where a vejigante mask hangs on the wall above a rosary. Its paint is chipped but vibrant: red, gold, blue, horns sharp.

PAXTON  
Is this... a veji-gante?

CALLUM  
Yeah. Vejigante, you got it.

Paxton turns toward him, curious.

PAXTON  
What's it mean?

CALLUM  
It's from Puerto Rico. It's... complicated. The vejigante shows up during festivals—Santiago Apóstol mostly. They're kind of like clowns, but way cooler. Trickster spirits, protectors. Made to scare off colonizers and bad spirits.

He walks closer, looking up at it.

CALLUM (CONT'D)  
People think they're scary, but they're resistance. They're pride.

Callum examines it.

CALLUM (CONT'D)  
This one's probably hand-painted. She must've made it herself. Or someone in the family.

PAXTON  
It's beautiful.

CALLUM  
Yeah. It is.

Callum's voice lowers. He almost doesn't say the next part.

CALLUM (CONT'D)  
...I don't really know as much as I should. About any of this.

EMILY (O.S.)  
There's a whole pantry of dried herbs and jars with no labels.

EMILY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Did your great-grandmother just  
vibe everything?

CALLUM  
She was supposedly a bruja. Vibes  
were the method.

EMILY (O.S.)  
I'm labeling them. I refuse to  
accidentally poison anyone.

CALLUM  
Suit yourself.

INT. BEDROOM HALLWAY - LATER

Noah carries in folded blankets. Callum stands in the hallway, looking at a photo of Lúcia—older, in her garden, machete in hand, smiling like she knows something you don't.

CALLUM  
You ever feel like you're wearing  
someone's last name and not earning  
it?

NOAH  
Uh, not sure what you mean.

Callum taps his chest near the Puerto Rican flag patch.

CALLUM  
I didn't grow up speaking Spanish.  
My mom barely talked about this  
side of the family. And now I'm  
standing in this house like I  
belong here and...

NOAH  
You do.

CALLUM  
You say that easy.

NOAH  
I say it like it's true.

They share a rare look. Noah nods once. Callum nods back, but doesn't smile.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Paxton adjusts in their seat again, uncomfortable. They pull at the bottom hem of their shirt, hiding the binder line. Emily notices.

EMILY  
Do you want to lie down?

PAXTON  
I'm good.

EMILY  
You're stiff.

PAXTON  
I said I'm good.

Emily pulls back slightly, stung but trying not to show it. She busies herself, stacking folded towels.

INT. KITCHEN - A BIT LATER

Everyone settles. The house seems to exhale. A candle flickers, as if someone's breath moved it.

Callum moves to a side table and opens a drawer. Inside: rosary beads, a matchbook from a church in San Germán, a bundle of red thread, and a small black wax candle stub.

He frowns. Picks up the wax.

CALLUM  
(quietly)  
Mm.

PAXTON (O.S.)  
What's up?

CALLUM  
Nothing. Just... something old.

He closes the drawer.

EXT. CABIN - AFTERNOON

Outside, the wind has picked up. Pine needles scrape across the roof. The chime on the porch clinks once, then falls silent.

INT. NARROW HALLWAY- MOMENTS LATER

Inside, warm light glows from a few scattered lamps. The group has settled for the evening. A kettle whistles softly in the background.

Emily stands in the narrow hallway, her arms crossed, facing a closed wooden door at the end. It's the only one that hasn't been opened.

Noah walks past with two mugs of tea. He glances at her.

NOAH  
You good?

EMILY  
There's a door no one's opened.

NOAH  
...That's not always a bad thing.

Emily raises her eyebrows, unimpressed. She waits for a beat, then turns and calls out:

EMILY  
Callum!

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Callum is on the floor with Paxton, digging through an old board game box, half-laughing at the pieces.

PAXTON  
Who plays Monopoly with dried  
flower petals instead of money?

CALLUM  
Brujas, apparently.

EMILY (O.S.)  
Callum!

Callum flinches.

CALLUM  
What?

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Emily gestures to the door.

EMILY  
This room's locked.

CALLUM  
Yeah...?

EMILY  
You didn't say there was a locked room.

CALLUM  
It's a hundred-year-old house, Em. I didn't think it was relevant.

EMILY  
It's a house with history—and we're sleeping in it. You said you came here once before. You didn't think to open it?

CALLUM  
No, because I'm not Veronica Mars. I was checking pipes and dodging spiders.

EMILY  
Callum...

She steps closer to the door, trying the knob again. Still locked.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Secrets make me nervous.

CALLUM  
So does this conversation.

Emily holds his gaze. Callum hesitates, visibly uncomfortable.

CALLUM (CONT'D)  
Fine. I'll look for a key.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Callum moves slowly around the room. He checks under couch cushions, inside dusty drawers, even behind a few picture frames.

Noah watches him from the kitchen, sipping his tea.

NOAH  
You sure it's not locked for a  
reason?

CALLUM  
It's just a door.

But there's no certainty in his voice.

INT. ALTAR CORNER - MOMENTS LATER

Callum crouches near the small altar beneath the vejigante mask. The rosary beads sway slightly, though there's no wind.

He opens the small drawer beneath the altar and pauses.

Inside, resting on an embroidered cloth:

A small iron key. A faded prayer card. A bundle of red thread. A small stone carved with a spiral glyph.

Callum reaches for the key. As his fingers graze it—

The wind chime outside CLANGS. Loud. Sudden.

He freezes.

From across the room, Paxton speaks softly.

PAXTON  
Don't you think your great-  
grandmother wanted that door to  
stay shut?

Callum looks down at the key. Then up at the mask.

The eyes of the vejigante catch the light—just enough to seem like it's watching.

CALLUM  
...I don't know, but Emily won't  
leave it, so...

He closes his hand around the key.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Callum walks back down the hallway, key in hand. Emily waits near the door, arms folded.

CALLUM  
Found it.

EMILY

Where?

CALLUM

Why's it matter?

She hesitates for half a second, unsure of how to respond.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

You still wanna see what's inside?

Emily looks at the door. Then at him.

EMILY

You don't?

CALLUM

I think maybe I'm scared of what's behind it.

A pause. Emily softens, just a little.

EMILY

Then I'll open it.

She takes the key from him, walks up to the lock, and—  
click.

The knob turns.

She opens the door.

INT. ALTAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door creaks open into darkness.

Emily steps in first, her phone flashlight illuminating dust particles floating like ash in the stale air. Callum follows close behind.

The room is small, maybe ten feet across, but every inch of space has been used with care. Shelves line the walls, filled with:

Bundles of dried herbs such as guava leaves, sage, and rosemary. Bowls of sea salt. Glass jars holding dark oils and faded petals. Prayer cards, some laminated, some handwritten. Wood carvings of Taíno symbols: the spiral (life and breath), the coquí (protection), and the semi-shaped faces of Zemi spirits.

On the far wall is a hand-built altar, taller than the one in the living room. Above it, a large vejigante mask—paint worn, colors muted, but the shape still proud and unyielding. Red thread runs across the beams like a web, connected to the corners of the ceiling, woven with sigils burned into the wood.

The air is cold, still, like the room has been holding its breath for decades.

EMILY

...Jesus.

She shines the light across a section of the floor—where a faint spiral glyph is burned into the wood.

CALLUM

She wasn't hiding something in here.

She was holding something in place.

EMILY

This is like... an entire containment system.

CALLUM

No. Not containment.

He looks up at the ceiling.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

It's a cell.

Emily takes a step toward the altar.

EMILY

Did you know about this?

CALLUM

No. I knew she was... spiritual. But I thought it was just Catholic guilt and candles. Not—

He gestures at everything.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

—not this.

Emily crouches beside the altar. Her flashlight catches a small wooden box, carved with spirals and marked in red wax. She reaches for it.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Careful.

EMILY

I'm just looking.

She opens the box.

Inside are:

A bundle of cohoba ash, wrapped in cloth, a rusted sewing needle, its eye threaded with red silk, a folded piece of paper—unmarked

She sets it down and looks at Callum.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Who was she?

CALLUM

A nurse. A midwife. A widow. A witch. A guardian. And apparently, a jailer.

EMILY

But of what?

The wind gusts against the cabin walls. The vejigante mask above the altar shifts, ever so slightly. Its shadow stretches longer than it should.

Callum turns to the shelf behind the altar—something catches his eye. A space between two books, barely wide enough to notice.

He leans forward, reaching—

PAXTON

(entering with Noah's help)

Hey—everything okay in there?

Callum freezes.

Emily closes the box.

CALLUM

Yeah! Just—uh—old stuff. Weird room. Lots of dust.

Emily quickly moves past him, avoiding the shelf.

INT. ALTAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She walks deeper into the space, eyes sweeping across the walls and altar, trying to catalog it, to name it—but nothing fits into a tidy definition.

EMILY

This is... unsettling.

CALLUM

It's a sealing room. I think.

EMILY

Yeah, I got that much. I just... I don't get how your great-grandma lived with this.

CALLUM

She didn't just live with it. She built it.

EMILY

That's kind of the problem.

Behind them, Noah enters with Paxton, arm firm around their waist as they limp carefully over the threshold.

NOAH

One step at a time. You good?

PAXTON

I'm fine. Just slow.

They stop near the altar.

PAXTON (CONT'D)

(quietly, to Callum)

This is... incredible.

CALLUM

It's not mine. I don't know what any of it means.

Callum stands near the edge of the spiral on the floor, unwilling to step into it.

Emily paces. She looks uncomfortable—frustrated by the lack of logic, the impossible purposefulness of the room.

EMILY

You think this is some kind of... religious ritual? A shrine?

CALLUM

It's Puerto Rican. It's Taíno. It's both.

EMILY

It feels like a horror movie set.

That lands wrong. Callum stiffens.

CALLUM

You can say "it feels unfamiliar."  
You don't have to call it creepy.

EMILY

I didn't mean it like that. I just—

CALLUM

—Don't understand it?

Emily doesn't answer.

Meanwhile, Paxton reaches out toward the altar. Their fingers brush over a red cloth, pulling it slightly aside to reveal a wooden box wedged beneath.

PAXTON

Hey... what's this?

They pull the box out—small, carved, sealed with black wax and a spiral glyph etched into the top.

They look up at Callum.

CALLUM

I— don't know. Be careful.

Paxton shifts their weight and starts to open the box—

—but their legs suddenly buckle.

PAXTON

Shit—

They begin to tumble down with Noah gently catches them.

NOAH

Hey—whoa—

PAXTON

I'm okay. I'm okay.

But their voice is thin, shaken. Their hand is still on the box.

NOAH

That's enough. You need to sit.

He gently takes the box from their hands and sets it on a nearby table, careful but direct.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Alright. We need lunch. Why don't we come back to this later?

PAXTON

I was fine.

NOAH

You're allowed to not be.

PAXTON

(quietly)

Maybe this was a bad idea.

CALLUM

Coming here?

PAXTON

All of it.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Noah helps Paxton back onto the couch. They curl into the cushions, arms around their ribs. Emily brings a blanket without a word and lays it over them.

Callum stands in the entryway, still holding the iron key, his other hand brushing across the flag patch on his shoulder.

CALLUM

I don't belong in that room.

EMILY

No one belongs in that room.

CALLUM

No. I mean... her room. Lúcia's. My family's. That mask, those carvings -I didn't grow up with that. I don't know the words. I can't explain what she built.

Callum sits on his thoughts for a second.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

But it still feels like it's mine.

EMILY  
So figure it out.

She walks into the kitchen.

Noah kneels beside the couch, watching Paxton breathe slowly, their hand subconsciously resting near their chest looking disappointed.

He wants to say something. His lips part—  
—but nothing comes out.

INT. KITCHEN - NOON

Emily stirs a pot of soup on the old gas stove, her movements efficient but tight. She opens a spice jar, hesitates, then opens another—still unable to identify what anything is.

EMILY  
(to herself)  
She couldn't label anything?

Callum steps in, pausing at the doorway.

CALLUM  
She probably didn't need to. She knew what things were. She remembered by smell and shape.

EMILY  
That's great—unless you're someone else trying to cook.

CALLUM  
So ask me.

Emily turns, skeptical.

EMILY  
Do you know?

CALLUM  
Nope. But I'll lie really confidently.

Emily smirks in spite of herself. She hands him a ladle.

## INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Paxton sits bundled on the couch, blanket pulled tight across their lap. They stare at the low flame in the stone fireplace, lost in thought.

Noah returns from the hallway, holding a stack of mismatched bowls and spoons. He sits on the armrest beside them.

NOAH  
Still feeling off?

PAXTON  
I'm fine.

NOAH  
You don't have to say that.

PAXTON  
I'm not trying to be brave, I just... I'm not used to being tired this fast. I thought the pain would be the hard part. But it's the weakness.

They shift in their blanket and wince.

PAXTON (CONT'D)  
It's like my body got what it wanted and still isn't happy.

NOAH  
You didn't do this for your body.  
You did it for you.

That lands. Paxton looks at him, expression unreadable, but softening.

## INT. KITCHEN TABLE - MOMENTS LATER

The group gathers around the small wooden table. Soup steams from mismatched bowls. There are no napkins. Everything smells herbal, earthy.

CALLUM  
Okay. It's edible. Probably.

PAXTON  
We should rate it on a scale from "dorm room disaster" to "actual meal."

EMILY

It's at least above "salt packet in boiling water," right?

CALLUM

That's my specialty.

They all laugh, the warmth fragile but real.

INT. ALTAR ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

In the sealed room, the vejigante mask above the altar shifts slightly on the wall. The red thread vibrates, just once, like a plucked string.

INT. KITCHEN TABLE - CONTINUOUS

EMILY

We still need to go back in there.

CALLUM

We will.

EMILY

There's a box. A sealed one. We're not going to ignore it, right?

CALLUM

You think I want to?

EMILY

I think you don't know what you want.

That stings. Callum sets his spoon down.

PAXTON

None of us do. That's kind of the whole thing, isn't it?

NOAH

We should take shifts watching each other tonight. Just in case.

CALLUM

You can't be serious? You really think something's going to happen?

NOAH

I think something already has.

The lights flicker, just once. Small. But noticeable.

Everyone freezes.

EMILY

Okay, that wasn't the wiring,  
right?

CALLUM

Depends. Was that the kind of  
flicker that means ghosts or the  
kind that means we're too high up  
the mountain?

They wait. Nothing happens.

PAXTON

Maybe both.

The wind outside howls again, pressing against the cabin. The chime on the porch clinks softly—just one note, clear as a bell, like a response.

INT. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Golden light filters through the windows. Outside, the wind's calmed, but the trees lean like they're listening.

Paxton sits on the couch, sketchbook open. They draw slowly, absently—rough outlines of the spiral glyph, a mask, and their own hands.

Noah sits nearby, flipping through one of Lúcia's old books. It's all in Spanish, but the illustrations hold him. Plants. Symbols. Diagrams of lungs drawn over coquí outlines.

Callum kneels in front of a half-unpacked box, lifting old photos one at a time. His jaw clenches a little tighter with each one.

Emily is at the table, typing on her phone.

PAXTON

(quietly, to Noah)  
Do you think our bodies can tell  
when something's wrong—even if we  
haven't figured it out yet?

NOAH

Yeah. All the time.

Paxton nods. Their hand rests over their chest.

CALLUM  
(holding up a photo)  
I think this is my great-  
grandmother. Or her sister. Or...  
someone. No names. Just... faces.

He sets the photo down.

CALLUM (CONT'D)  
I feel like I inherited ghosts  
instead of roots.

EMILY  
At least you inherited something.

CALLUM  
Yeah. A house no one wants and a  
book no one should probably open.

They all go quiet for a beat.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Paxton naps on the couch.

Noah watches.

INT. OUTSIDE LOCKED ROOM - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Emily walks past the altar room door.

It's shut.

She pauses.

The red thread near the doorframe vibrates.

EXT. CABIN - PORCH - SUNSET

Callum stands outside alone, hoodie pulled tight.

He looks out at the trees.

From here, the forest seems endless. Wind catches the chime  
once—it sings a soft, strange note.

He doesn't flinch. But his hand grips the railing harder.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The group gathers again.

Paxton stretches, rubbing their side.

PAXTON

Okay, I vote no more exploring  
locked rooms tonight.

CALLUM

Deal.

EMILY

...One last look at the box before  
bed?

They all glance at each other.

INT. ALTAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The book still waits. Wrapped. Resting. Like it never stopped  
breathing.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

CALLUM

Are you seriously still wanting to  
look at that?

EMILY

I'm not sleeping until I know  
what's under this roof with us.

They head back into the altar room.

INT. ALTAR ROOM - EVENING

The group stands around the table near the altar, where the  
wooden box now rests—untouched since Noah set it there.

The room is dimmer than before. The air heavier.

EMILY

We should at least see what's  
inside.

CALLUM

We don't have to. We don't even  
know what it is.

EMILY

It's in a sealed box, Callum. With symbols, thread, wax. You think your great-grandmother put her leftover recipes in here?

CALLUM

That doesn't mean we need to open it.

PAXTON

What if it explains what this room is for?

NOAH

What if it's meant to stay closed?

She reaches for the box.

CALLUM

Em—

But she's already peeled back the thread.

The wax seal cracks.

A thin whisper escapes, barely audible—but they all hear it.

Emily opens the lid.

Inside:

A book, thick and bound in what looks like cracked leather—a spiral glyph burned deep into its center.

She opens the cover.

The pages are—

—blank.

Except for a few, filled with a mix of Portuguese, Taíno petroglyphs, and handwritten notes in faded ink. It's illegible to all of them.

PAXTON

That language...

CALLUM

I don't recognize it. It's not just Spanish.

EMILY

We should take pictures. Maybe we can translate it later.

She snaps a couple of pictures then reaches to turn another page—

CALLUM

We don't know what it is.

EMILY

That's exactly why I'm turning the page.

CALLUM

It might not be meant for us.

EMILY

Then who is it for?

CALLUM

My family.

EMILY

You didn't even know this room existed.

That hits. Callum stiffens but says nothing.

Paxton shifts behind them, uneasy. Noah lingers near the doorway, arms crossed, watching everyone, mostly watching Paxton.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I'm not trying to hurt anything. But pretending this isn't here—that's dangerous too.

She turns the page.

The book inside exhales. A whisper—not sound, but pressure.

Emily reaches for another page.

CALLUM

Don't.

EMILY

Why are you so afraid of it?

CALLUM

Because this isn't a game. Because she sealed something in here.

CALLUM (CONT'D)  
Because you don't open what's been  
buried.

Emily pauses. Then, softly:

EMILY  
I'm not afraid of knowledge.

CALLUM  
You should be.

Emily squints, trying to make out a few words.

The group leans in.

PAXTON  
Some of it looks... familiar.

NOAH  
How?

PAXTON  
I don't know. It just does.

Paxton reaches out—cautiously. Their hand hovers above the  
spiral.

CALLUM  
Don't touch it.

EMILY  
What's the difference? I already  
did.

CALLUM  
I— whatever. I don't know.

Paxton's fingers lower—

—and make contact with the spiral.

A sound pierces the silence—not loud, but sharp. Like a  
string pulled taut. The spiral glows faintly beneath their  
touch, almost breathing.

PAXTON  
Ah—shit.

They jerk their hand back.

CALLUM  
What happened?

PAXTON

It burned. Just a little.

Noah steps in, more shaken than he wants to admit. His eyes flick to the spiral, then to Paxton's hand.

NOAH

Let me see.

Paxton holds out their hand. Their fingers are red—no mark, but heat lingers.

CALLUM

We need to close it. Now.

EMILY

Wait, did you see that? The glyph—  
it moved. It reacted.

CALLUM

Because it knows we shouldn't be  
here.

He grabs the cloth and slams the book shut, wrapping it again. The air thins.

NOAH

We should put it back in the box.

CALLUM

We shouldn't have touched it at  
all.

PAXTON

It felt like... like it looked at  
me.

Everyone turns to them.

PAXTON (CONT'D)

I know that sounds insane. But when  
I touched it—I felt it looking  
back.

EMILY

That's just fear. It's a  
psychological response.

CALLUM

No, Emily. That was something else.  
Something sacred. And you cracked  
it open like it was a fucking  
puzzle box.

Silence.

Emily's eyes narrow, defensive. But she doesn't speak.

Noah helps Paxton stand. They're pale, rattled.

Callum places the box back on the table, gently.

The vejigante mask above the altar turns slightly, barely perceptible—but its gaze shifts toward the group.

Something is watching now.

EMILY

We should read what the rest of it says. Maybe you can translate some of it?

Callum stands uncomfortably.

NOAH

Maybe later? We had a long day.

Emily goes to protest but Noah stands firm.

INT. ALTAR ROOM - NIGHT

The book now sits on the table, wrapped loosely in a blanket.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The group settles into their evening.

Noah helps Paxton stretch out on the couch again. Callum disappears into the kitchen, needing space. Emily scribbles notes in a small notebook—already processing what they saw.

EXT. CABIN PORCH - NIGHT

Outside, the chime rings, twice.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Inside, the fireplace breathes out smoke without a sound.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

The house is dark. Only the occasional gust of wind outside.

Somewhere, the vejigante mask clinks faintly on its hook.

INT. ALTAR ROOM - NIGHT

The blanket-covered book sits on the table in the main room—still, but present. Waiting.

INT. PAXTON'S BED - NIGHT

Paxton sleeps restlessly on their back, one hand pressed against their side.

They shift. Their chest is getting itchy.

A bead of sweat forms at their temple.

They wake up and struggle to sit up, gasping. Their hand clutches their chest.

Their fingers tremble as they undo the surgical binder, layer by layer, flinching with each movement.

They pull it open.

The incisions twitch.

Like something alive under the skin.

The thin, pink lines ripple like worms burrowing under their skin. Paxton gasps.

They try to touch it—just once.

And then—they scratch.

They scratch hard.

One incision pops slightly, bleeding at the edge. They choke back a cry.

A taut string sound whispers in the background.

They grab a piece of their sheets from the bed and press it to their chest, shivering.

Their voice cracks.

INT. EMILY'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Emily's room is a mess of notes and photos.

She's on the floor, legs crossed, back arched from hours of staring at her phone.

Images of the book's pages fill her screen, zoomed in and enhanced. Her notebook is open, filled with rough translations.

She flips to a new page, underlining a set of words.

ON HER SCREEN:

"juracuco" – unclear

EMILY

O Juracuco.

She searches. Nothing credible appears.

The power turns off on the phone.

Emily stares at the blank screen for a moment. Her hand hovers over her phone, almost as if waiting for it to light itself.

She grabs her pen again and writes down notes of different folklore, underlining fiercely.

INT. CALLUM'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Callum sits on the floor at the foot of his bed. A candle flickers in front of him.

He has a small, beat-up notebook in his lap. His fingers drum on its cover.

He tries to pray—but no words come.

Then, he whispers.

CALLUM

You gave her power. You gave her knowledge. You gave her a purpose. What did you give me?

A long silence.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

I've bled for this body too. But no one sees that. No one...

Callum gets a bit choked up.

CALLUM CONT'D

No one cuts it open for me.

The candle flickers hard—and stays tilted, like it's leaning toward him.

He looks up, startled.

CALLUM

What do you want from me?

Silence.

Then—somewhere outside his room—the sound of something sliding. Wood on wood.

Callum stands slowly.

INT. HALLWAY - SAME TIME

A soft scratching sound echoes faintly.

Is it rats?

Is it breathing?

The walls feel like they're watching.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Noah sleeps on the couch near the fire.

His face is soft. Peaceful.

He doesn't hear the chime outside stir once—then twice.

He doesn't see the shadows flicker behind the fireplace.

But his hand—resting near his side—tightens just slightly. Like a subconscious shield.

INT. PAXTON'S ROOM - NIGHT

Paxton lies back, exhausted, binder sloppily redone, sheet damping against their side.

Their eyes stay open.

INT. ALTAR ROOM - NIGHT

Emily stands alone, holding the book under the dim light of a single lamp.

The room is silent, save for the creak of the wood under her shifting weight.

The book lies open in her hands—pages turned to symbols scrawled in a blend of Portuguese, Taíno glyphs, and unfamiliar prayers.

Callum appears in the doorway, half-asleep, rubbing his eyes.

CALLUM  
You're back in here?

EMILY  
I couldn't sleep.

CALLUM  
That's not an excuse to mess with something sacred.

EMILY  
It's not sacred to you.

That hits. He steps inside, slowly.

CALLUM  
You don't know what it is.

EMILY  
Neither do you. But your great-grandmother did. She wrote it down. So read it.

CALLUM  
I'm not reading that.

EMILY  
Fine.

She picks it up.

EMILY CONT'D  
Then I'll put my high school Spanish to use.

She flips a page. Finds something that looks like a verse.

CALLUM  
Emily—

EMILY  
Taneketi, Yoba, Jura Cuco—

A loud bang of wind slams against the side of the house.

The vejigante mask above the altar jerks sideways, like it's listening.

CALLUM  
Stop.

EMILY  
abre tu lengua. Que se rompa el  
sello, que sangre la boca Del Mar

The lights flicker. The chime outside rings once. Twice. Three times.

Then, from deep within the floor—

A vibration. Like breath.

CALLUM  
Jesus Christ.

He grabs the book from her hands and slams it shut.

Outside, rain begins pounding. Thunder cracks. The storm has arrived.

EMILY  
(softly, eyes wide)  
I didn't even finish it.

CALLUM  
You finished enough.

EMILY  
I just wanted to understand.

CALLUM  
You wanted control.

They stare at each other.

A faint whisper trails across the altar. The red thread vibrates, like something plucked it from below.

INT. ALTAR ROOM - NIGHT

The storm rages outside.

Callum has just slammed the book shut.

He stares at Emily, breathing hard.

CALLUM  
We're done. Go to bed.

EMILY  
I just need a minute. I'll get a  
snack.

Callum hesitates. Then turns and walks out.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
You're welcome for the answers, by  
the way.

INT. CABIN - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Emily opens the fridge.

The storm booms outside.

She pulls out some leftovers, muttering to herself.

EMILY  
'You wanted control'—you're damn  
right I do. Somebody has to.

She grabs a fork and walks toward the counter.

She pauses.

She can see the altar room from here.

The vejigante mask is still tilted from earlier.

It looks like it's watching her.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
You want to judge me too?

She walks slowly toward the altar.

INT. ALTAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Emily steps into the room and stands beneath the mask.

Thunder rattles the walls.

She looks up at it. The spiral glyph on the altar glows faintly, pulsing beneath the cloth-wrapped book.

EMILY

Let's see how sacred you are.

She grabs the edge of the mask and yanks it off the wall.

CRACK.

The red thread snaps.

The air goes dead silent.

Then—

A SCREAMING WIND EXPLODES THROUGH THE HOUSE.

All the doors slam at once.

The book throws itself open.

Emily stumbles backward, gasping.

Emily's mouth falls open.

The air in the room thickens—like breathing through syrup.

Emily gasps, but no sound comes. Her head snaps back.

Her eyes roll white—not just blank, but flooded, ghostly. Her back arches.

The shape dives into her.

She slams against the floor. A final twitch—

Then she exhales, slow and steady.

Her eyes blink open. White again... then fade back to normal.

She smiles.

But the smile doesn't reach her eyes.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Noah jerks awake on the couch.

Cabin shaking. Dishes shatter in the kitchen.

The fire in the fireplace bursts upward like it's gasping.

He bolts upright and grabs his phone and puts the flashlight on.

INT. PAXTON'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Callum rushes into Paxton's room.

Paxton groans, sitting up fast.

PAXTON  
What was that?

CALLUM  
Stay here.

PAXTON  
Screw that. Help me up.

CALLUM  
You're still healing.

PAXTON  
I'm not sitting here while someone  
tears the place down.

Callum moves quickly, helping Paxton up—his hand supporting their ribs.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Emily is gone.

But the kitchen is a wreck—cabinets open, food rotting, glass shattered everywhere.

The fridge door is swinging open, the magnets scattered across the floor.

Noah stands frozen. He sees the altar room door wide open.

NOAH  
Emily...what did you do?

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Noah stands just outside the destroyed kitchen. Behind him, Callum and Paxton round the corner, both on edge.

CALLUM  
Jesus—

PAXTON  
Where is she?

The kitchen is a mess: cabinets open, glass littered across the floor. A pot is boiling on the stove—but it wasn't turned on.

NOAH  
I don't know. I heard—

He gulps down his fear.

NOAH CONT'D  
She was here. I swear.

A soft crunch from within the kitchen.

The three freeze.

PAXTON  
You heard that too, right?

Callum nods.

They step forward, carefully.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

They enter slowly.

The flickering kitchen light buzzes above them.

Emily is sitting on the floor, her back to them.

Her knees pulled in, her arms moving strangely—fast, repetitive.

CALLUM  
Emily?

She doesn't respond.

As they move closer—

They see it.

She's holding a broken shard of glass in one hand, and she's been shoving slivers of it beneath her fingernails.

One. After. The. Other.

Blood seeps down her fingers, pooling into the cracks in the tile.

NOAH  
Oh my god—

Emily doesn't look up.

She murmurs something. Quiet.

They lean in.

Her shoulders twitch—then she starts to laugh.

Slow. Controlled.

She finally turns her head toward them.

Her eyes now with black slits running down the middle of each one. Like a crack in porcelain.

EMILY

What?

Emily cocks her head to the side and grins.

EMILY CONT'D

I've been wanting to get my nails done.

The fire in the stove behind her flares up, orange-white, a sudden howl of heat.

The glass in her hand shatters from the heat.

Emily stands slowly, fingers still dripping.

Her expression flickers—mock innocence sliding into something cold and monstrous.

PAXTON

That's not —

CALLUM

Yeah, fuck this.

Callum lunges for the keys on the counter—snatches them, shoving them in his hoodie.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

Go. Go now.

He's already moving.

Noah pulls Paxton gently but fast, supporting their weight.

Emily doesn't follow.

She just stands there, smiling, eyes wide.

As they rush out, her laughter grows louder.

EMILY (O.S.)  
You'll come back! They always do.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Thunder rolls like it's grinding through the clouds.

The group stumbles out into the storm. Callum leads, Noah helps Paxton, who's barely able to keep upright.

PAXTON  
(panicked)  
I'm fine, I just- I need a second-

NOAH  
I've got you.

Behind them, the cabin glows like a dying eye, and inside-  
distantly-they hear EMILY'S LAUGHTER.

Lightning flashes. The sound of shattered glass follows.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

They reach the car. Callum unlocks it fast, Noah helps Paxton into the back seat.

CALLUM  
Come on, come on-

He throws himself into the driver's seat and turns the key.  
The engine roars.

He slams into reverse.

The tires spin.

Mud flies.

CALLUM (CONT'D)  
(shouting)  
Move, you piece of shit!

The wheels dig deeper.

NOAH  
We're stuck.

CALLUM  
No-No, no, no. Not now.

He slams the steering wheel.

Paxton is trembling in the backseat, clutching their chest.

PAXTON  
(quiet)  
It hurts. My stitches...

NOAH  
We should get you inside.

CALLUM  
We're not going back in there.

Thunder cracks above them like a whip.

PAXTON  
It's not just Emily anymore, is it?

Callum looks ahead. Inside the cabin, a shadow flickers in the window. Not Emily. Not any of them.

He exhales.

CALLUM  
(slowly, resigned)  
We go back in. But we don't split up.

Noah nods grimly.

They all climb out of the car, soaked, shoes sinking deeper with every step.

INT. CABIN - ALTAR ROOM - NIGHT

The house is silent—but thick.

Callum pushes the door open.

Noah is close behind, holding Paxton upright.

The book sits open on the altar. Pages fluttering. Whispering.

CALLUM  
I have to read it.

NOAH  
You sure?

CALLUM

No...But it's the only way we're getting out of here.

Callum moves to the altar and leans in.

The text glows faintly in places—ink lifted, moving.

He frantically looks through the book, trying to find anything about banishing. When he recognizes something he begins to read aloud in Spanish, slow and cautious—stumbling through ancient dialect and metaphors.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

"...el espíritu cuco no nace, no muere. Se respira. Se ata al pecho... al hueso..."

Suddenly—

EMILY (O.S.)

You sound like a tourist.

The three of them turn fast.

Emily stands in the doorway.

Blood on her shirt. Eyes like bone-white cracks—the black seam down the middle now unmistakable.

EMILY (CONT'D)

You were never one of them, Callum. Not really. Just a flag patch and broken verbs.

Callum's jaw tightens. Noah shifts beside him, adjusting his grip on Paxton.

EMILY (CONT'D)

You're not reading that because you understand it. You're reading it because you're afraid someone else might.

She steps forward.

EMILY (CONT'D)

You wanted the surgery too, right?

She's getting closer. Voice lower. Intimate.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Did you ever tell them that?

That you used to dream about carving your body open like a thank you note?

She runs a blood-slick finger down his chest.

CALLUM

Get off me.

EMILY

(whispers)

You're jealous of Paxton. You think they got your life.

Callum shoves her away-hard. She laughs like broken glass.

Emily lunges-too fast.

CALLUM

Noah!

He tosses the book. Noah catches it, but Paxton drops to the floor.

NOAH

Shit-!

Emily goes for Callum again-

Paxton moves.

They grab Emily, pinning her with what strength they have left.

PAXTON

Get away from him!

They scream in each other's faces-until-

Emily exhales black smoke into Paxton's mouth.

Everyone freezes.

Paxton jerks back. Eyes wide. Gasping.

They fall to the ground.

Their body convulses.

Their chest bulges once-then twice.

As if something inside is trying to punch its way out.

Their breath catches.

They can't breathe.

NOAH

Paxton—!

Noah drops to his knees, cradling them, unsure of how to react. Callum dives for the book and continues reading the banishment ritual.

CALLUM

(voice shaking)

Respira, demonio. Respira y  
regresa. A los huesos que no son  
tuyos. Al aire que no puedes  
sostener—

Emily's head snaps toward him, eyes widening with rage.

CALLUM CONT'D

¡Te ato a mi sangre. Te ato a mi  
voz— Regresa al silencio!

EMILY

ENOUGH!

Paxton's eyes flicker.

Something is pushing behind them.

Emily charges Callum, slamming into him and dragging him toward the exit of the altar room.

Noah moves to intercept—but Emily's strength is unnatural. She throws Noah across the room, his body hitting the wall with a thud.

Callum drops the book—but keeps screaming the words, louder now.

In the altar room, Paxton writhes on the floor, clutching their chest.

She grabs Callum by the arm and drags him, heels scraping, down the hallway.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Emily throws Callum onto the floor.

His elbows slam against tile. He tries to crawl, scraping his knees.

CALLUM

Noah—! We can still— We just have  
to—ngghh!

Emily steps on his calf.

Raises a kitchen blade she plucked from the counter.

EMILY

This house has such bad energy. You  
know what helps with that?

She slashes his leg.

Clean. Deep.

CALLUM cries out.

Blood smears the floor beneath him.

EMILY (CONT'D)

A little release.

She tilts her head.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Paxton, darling? Bring him in.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Paxton staggers into view, dragging Noah by the collar.

Noah's dazed, half-conscious, one hand limply holding his  
ribs.

Paxton's eyes match Emily's—white with a single black seam  
running down the center.

Their mouth twitches. Their steps are uneven—like the demon  
hasn't fully figured out the body yet.

They drop Noah at Callum's side.

NOAH

(groggy)  
Cal...

He touches Callum's bleeding leg.

EMILY

(grinning)  
The family's all here!

She crouches beside Callum and yanks his hoodie up—ripping the shirt and binder away.

Callum gasps, trying to resist—but he's weak.

EMILY (CONT'D)

So shy about your chest. But you wanted it to look like Paxton's, didn't you?

She pulls a cheese grater from the counter.

Holds it over his exposed chest.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Let's make it match.

Callum's eyes go wide.

CALLUM

Please—don't—

She grates—

Slowly, catching the edge—

Across one nipple. Flesh shreds. Blood pours. Callum screams. Another pass — the nipple rips free.

NOAH

Get the fuck off him!

He lunges—but Paxton grabs him, pinning him.

PAXTON

(voice layered)

You never said it. You never told me.

NOAH

(trying to push free)

Paxton, stop—

PAXTON

You stood there, stone-faced. Always watching. You thought I'd read your mind?

They force Noah to his knees.

His hands tremble.

PAXTON (CONT'D)  
 People like you don't get people  
 like me.

CALLUM  
 (sobbing)  
 Noah...

Emily crouches again, holding the cheese grater, smeared red.

EMILY  
 One more?

NOAH  
 STOP!

INT. CABIN - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Callum bleeds on the floor.

His chest torn open.

His face flushed with agony and humiliation.

Noah struggles against Paxton's grip, eyes wide with helpless rage.

Emily stands tall, arms spread like she's addressing a dinner party.

EMILY  
 Why don't we make a toast?

She walks over to the island counter

EMILY (CONT'D)  
 To not only new company...

She grins at Paxton.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
 But fresh new legs.

PAXTON  
 Ah, yes...let me dress for such an  
 occasion.

They start to undress themselves, and undo their surgical binder and pull a surgical drainage tube from their chest. Pale, pinkish fluid leaks from the end.

PAXTON (CONT'D)  
 Let's cheers to that.

They raise it like a champagne flute—  
—and slurp from the end.

The sound is wet.

Callum recoils.

Noah's stomach twists.

EMILY

Aw, boys... don't look so shocked.

You've both been dreaming about this body for years.

Paxton steps close to Noah.

So close he can see his own reflection in the black seam of their eye.

PAXTON

There it is...There's that emotion we've been begging for.

They run a finger down his face.

PAXTON (CONT'D)

We were starting to wonder if the only time you made a face... was when you were fucking something.

NOAH

(quietly, shaking)  
Stop.

PAXTON

Stone-faced Noah. All that control, and nothing to show for it.

Noah's hands ball into fists. His eyes brim—but he won't cry.

That's when Callum moves.

He SCREAMS and shoves Paxton aside.

CALLUM

Leave him alone!

He pulls Noah up, one arm around his waist—

They RUN.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

They burst out into the storm.

Rain slams them immediately. They both fall into the mud outside but quickly get back up.

Thunder cracks.

Behind them, in the kitchen window—

Emily and Paxton watch.

Smiling.

Like hosts watching their guests leave too early.

Noah quickly, without looking at Callum, takes his shirt (or flannel whatever he is wearing) off and hands it to Callum to put on.

EXT. WOODED CLEARING - NIGHT

Rain hammers down. The wind bends the trees, and thunder shakes the soaked earth.

Callum and Noah stand just beyond the cabin, panting. Callum clutches his wounded leg, blood mixing with rain.

CALLUM

(listing quickly)

We don't kill it. We seal it. My blood. The words. Breath to bind it.

NOAH

You're hurt.

CALLUM

It needs the blood anyway.

NOAH

Then you don't die for it. Whatever we do— We finish it together.

CALLUM

(looks at him)

Together.

They share a loaded look.

Unspoken understanding.

Suddenly—

The cabin door swings open with a slow creak.

Emily and Paxton emerge, barefoot in the mud.

Their heads tilted back, grinning as rain slicks their skin.

Their bodies twitch with supernatural joy, like the storm itself is speaking through them.

EMILY  
(arms wide)  
This is so much better, isn't it?

She walks forward with a drunk kind of grace.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
No more pretending.

PAXTON  
This skin, this rain— We've never  
felt more alive.

CALLUM  
You're not alive. You're borrowed.

Emily's grin fades for a second.

Noah steps forward, voice sharp, louder than we've ever heard him.

NOAH  
You want real?

He squares his shoulders.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
Your parents hated not knowing what  
to do with you. They left you to  
figure it out. So you controlled  
everything. Schedules. Friends. Us.

Emily stops.

Eyes narrow.

A growl buried in her chest.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
This isn't power, Emily. It's you  
losing control—just like they did.  
You need control.

NOAH (CONT'D)

Because if you stop managing  
everyone else's pain—you might have  
to feel your own.

EMILY

(shaking, enraged)  
You don't know me!

NOAH

I know you never wanted to be seen.  
Not really. Not for who you were.  
But, we figured you out anyway! We  
love you, for you. It's okay to let  
go. We have you!

Lightning splits the sky.

The demon inside Emily snarls.

PAXTON

(voice cracking with rage)  
SHUT UP!

Callum turns toward them—louder now.

CALLUM

Why? Because he's saying what  
you're scared of?

Callum steps forward, limping, locking eyes with Paxton.

CALLUM (CONT'D)

You still think you're broken,  
don't you?

PAXTON

You don't know anything about me!

CALLUM

I know you're wondering if the  
surgery fixed anything at all.

PAXTON

(raging)  
Shut your FUCKING mouth!

CALLUM

I know you hate how quiet it is now  
—how you thought this would solve  
everything and it didn't. You have  
to do the mental work, Pax!

CALLUM (CONT'D)  
 You have to let yourself live,  
 allow yourself to become who you  
 were always meant to be.

CALLUM (CONT'D)  
 This wasn't a fix all situation.  
 Give yourself grace!

The storm seems to freeze.

The demon is caught in their pain.

The distraction works.

Callum gives Noah a single look—

It's time.

They both charge Emily and Paxton, but only Noah bulldozes  
 through them. Emily and Paxton without thought go after Noah.

INT. ALTAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Noah rushes into the altar room, slamming the door behind  
 him, and then searches for all the items he needs.

NOAH  
 Salt, thread, black wax. Salt,  
 thread, black wax. Salt, thread,  
 black wax.

EXT. CABIN - EDGE OF THE PORCH - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Callum stares at the open doorway.

His hands shake. His chest and leg are still bleeding. His  
 breath fogs in the cold.

Then he sees it—hanging from the porch post where the wood  
 meets the wind:

A vejigante mask.

Weathered. Hand-painted. The feathers frayed.

Untouched by the demon.

Pure.

He slowly approaches the cabin. Callum reaches up slowly.  
 Brushes a finger over it like it might burn him.

CALLUM  
 (quiet, raw)  
 You were never meant for this.

He takes the mask down.

CALLUM (CONT'D)  
 They used you. Twisted you into a  
 cage. But you weren't a prison. You  
 were a protector.

He cradles it against his chest. For a moment he just stands  
 there, thunder rumbling behind him.

CALLUM (CONT'D)  
 I've spent my whole life feeling  
 like I don't belong to this.

He takes a moment to look over his surroundings before  
 looking back at the vejigante mask.

CALLUM (CONT'D)  
 I don't speak it right. I don't  
 know the stories. I was scared to  
 even claim it. But my blood  
 remembers.

He holds the mask up.

CALLUM (CONT'D)  
 Tonight, I remember too.

And he puts it on. Not as a costume. Not to hide. But to say:  
 this is mine.

Callum nods, ready to go.

INT. CABIN - FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

CRASH-

The door BURSTS open.

Callum stands there in the rain, bloodied, soaked, breath  
 heaving- Wearing the vejigante mask.

The horns glint in the lightning. His silhouette is powerful-  
 defiant.

CALLUM  
 (soft, broken Spanish)  
 Yo... yo soy Puertorriqueño.

CALLUM (CONT'D)  
 Y yo voy a terminar esto. Y yo voy  
 a terminar esto.

Emily and Paxton are hovering by the altar door but once Callum bursts through their attention is taken away from the altar door.

EMILY  
 (giggling)  
 Look who brought a costume to the  
 wrong party.

Emily and Paxton inch closer to Callum.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
 A No Sabo kid with cracked Spanish  
 and a knockoff mask. What are you  
 gonna do, Cal? Mispronounce me into  
 hell?

CALLUM  
 You took enough. You don't get this  
 too.

Callum changes to a running stance.

CALLUM (CONT'D)  
 Noah, door!

He rams them both and charges the altar door, not stopping for a second to let Noah get the door. Noah just barely gets it open when Callum is already on it.

INT. ALTAR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The book still lies on the floor—open, glowing faintly with shifting glyphs.

Callum dives for it. Grabs it.

Noah rushes in behind him, frantically finishing up with the supplies.

CALLUM  
 Circle. Fast.

Together, they start building the ritual:

- Ash from the incense bowl
- Salt poured in uneven lines

- Red curtain thread torn and tied  
 - A wax candle lit on the old spoon burner  
 A sharp, low growl echoes from the hall.

EMILY (O.S.)  
 You think a little string and sand  
 can undo what I made?

Noah is by the door, ready to let them in. Callum is waiting  
 in his proper position.

EMILY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 You think a measly door can stop  
 me?

The door bursts open, knocking Noah down.  
 Emily's fingers drip with blood. Paxton is shaking, torn.

PAXTON  
 (voice layered)  
 You are nothing. You are half  
 blood.

CALLUM  
 Maybe. But it's still mine. Just  
 like your body is your's! Nothing  
 is perfect. Things take time to get  
 used to, doesn't make it a mistake.  
 You are not a mistake, Paxton!

He drops to his knees inside the circle.  
 Presses his hand to the glyph.  
 Slices his palm with a broken shard.

CALLUM (CONT'D)  
 (in broken, fierce  
 Spanish)  
 Respira... demonio. Respira... y  
 regresa. A los huesos que... que no  
 son tuyos.

EMILY  
 NO!

She charges.

Noah grabs her, slamming her against the wall. She claws his  
 shoulder—ripping into him.

NOAH  
(screaming)  
FINISH IT!

Callum's voice rises over the chaos—

CALLUM  
Te ato... a mi sangre... ¡Te ato a  
mi voz! ¡Regresa al... al silencio!

Paxton convulses.

Black smoke pours from their mouth.

Their eyes roll back—then clear.

Emily lets out a scream not hers—deep, layered, howling—

And collapses.

The book dashes through the pages before slamming shut.

Everything goes still.

Noah slumps, bleeding.

Callum falls back, clutching his hand.

CALLUM (CONT'D)  
Mispronounce that bitch.

Noah helps Emily and carries an unconscious Paxton outside.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

Callum tiredly follows his friends outside. He removes the vejigante mask and places it carefully in the soil, far from the house.

CALLUM  
(quietly)  
You're free now.

NOAH  
Cal! Paxton isn't breathing.

Rain pelts the grass. Thunder groans.

Noah is kneeling in the mud, shirt torn, hands trembling over Paxton's body.

Emily sits beside them, dazed, head down, whispering apologies through her cracked lips.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 (breathless)  
 Come on, come on, come on—

He checks Paxton's breathing and nothing.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 Paxton. Please. Breathe.

He tilts their head, rips open their surgical binder and starts CPR.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 One... two... three...

Noah begins CPR, his hands pressing against Paxton's chest. Blood seeps through in between his fingers with each pump and then Noah's hands suddenly slide into the incisions.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 (screaming)  
 Fuck!

He pulls his hands back, drenched in blood.

Noah freezes.

His eyes well up—but he doesn't stop.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 You come back. You come back!

He breaks. The tears fall.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 You're supposed to be here. You're supposed to enjoy the weight off your chest. Come on!

The rain has slowed. Just a soft mist now.

Paxton gasps for air, but their face twists—a scream caught in their throat.

Noah leans over them.

NOAH (CONT'D)  
 Paxton? Talk to me—what's happening?

PAXTON  
 (choking)  
 What do you mean, what's happening!  
 My chest—my... it's splitting.

CALLUM

Oh my god—

The scars are opening like mouthless wounds.

NOAH

Fuck—shit. Okay—okay—

He presses his hands gently, trying to keep the skin together  
—but Paxton SCREAMS.

PAXTON

(crying out)

Stop—Noah, stop—please—!

NOAH

I don't know what else to do—

His voice breaks.

He's trembling.

Callum just stares, shocked and pale.

EMILY

We need to go. Now.

She reaches for her phone—dead.

CALLUM

The car's still stuck.

NOAH

Then unstick it.

EXT. CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Callum and Emily dig with their bare hands, pulling branches  
and wet boards from the collapsed side of the porch.

Noah lifts Paxton, cradling them against his chest as they  
scream into his shoulder. He's crying again—but moving.

They toss wood and rocks beneath the tires of van. The tires  
are deep in thick mud, but the ground's begun to dry  
slightly.

CALLUM

(quietly, to the car)

Please, just once. Work.

EXT. CABIN - ROAD - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

The van roars. Tires spin—then catch.  
It LURCHES forward, mud flinging everywhere.  
Callum is behind the wheel, teeth gritted.  
Emily in the passenger seat, guiding.  
Noah is in the back, holding Paxton tight.

PAXTON  
(struggling to breathe)  
Is it—really over?

NOAH  
Yeah. And we're still here.

CALLUM (O.S.)  
Anyone else think we owe my great-grandma a new house?

EMILY  
She'd probably haunt you if you tried.

CALLUM  
Fair.

EMILY  
Where are we going?

NOAH  
Hospital.

They drive off—into what's left of the storm.

CREDITS BEGIN

POST-CREDIT SCENE - "A YEAR LATER"

EXT. PUERTO RICAN BEACH - DAY

Warm, golden sun.  
The sea shimmers.  
The four of them walk along the shore.  
Paxton has their shirt off, scars visible, proud.

They're laughing at something Emily just said, tossing a shell into the waves.

Callum sits beneath a palm tree, flipping through a Spanish grammar book.

He mutters a word, tries it aloud, shakes his head.

Noah runs up behind Paxton.

NOAH  
Race you to the water.

PAXTON  
You'll lose.

NOAH  
Not a chance.

He starts running.

Paxton takes off after him, but stops themself and turns to Emily.

PAXTON  
We're going to swim for a bit.

Emily, lounging in a beach chair, lifts her sunglasses.

EMILY  
I don't need a play-by-play, go-  
have fun.

Callum watches them and smiles.

He turns a page.

Tries the word again, just a little better this time.

He looks out at the water.

And breathes.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE: RESPIRAR.