

SUNDOWNING

Written by

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NOTE: Dialogue in *italics* will be spoken in Spanish.
Dialogue in [brackets] will be spoken in French.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

The decor is flowery and impersonal, like a department store display. Obviously old money, but at some point, the money ran out.

GABRIELLA DELGADO, early 30s, is willowy and dressed in scrubs. Dark eyes and hair with caramel colored skin - and acutely aware of how out of place she is. She weaves her vacuum over the rug through the furniture.

The sound of a THUD, like someone tripping on the second floor, is heard over the humming vacuum.

Startled, she clicks it off.

She listens.

Nothing.

She turns it back on, continues vacuuming.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

She wraps the cord around the vacuum and stashes it in the closet.

She turns to see the refrigerator is wide open. A rumpled bag of bread and some scattered slices on the counter. A carton of orange juice lying in it's own puddle on the floor.

She sighs.

She packs up the bread, tosses it in the fridge, closes it.

She gets down on her knees with some towels, and wipes up the orange juice.

LATER -

Gabriella neatly plates some fish sticks, broccoli and cheese cubes onto a tray.

Another THUMP from upstairs, louder this time, followed by footsteps.

Her eyes dart to the ceiling. She grabs the tray and moves a little bit faster than she normally would up the stairs.

INT. MOLLIE'S BEDROOM - EARLY EVENING

An antique vanity cluttered with black and white photos of family long since passed, drawn curtains over a bay window, and a hospice bed in the corner.

Facing the window is a rocking chair with MOLLIE RANDOLPH, late 80s, sitting perfectly still. Her face expressionless, her hands clutching rosary.

Gabriella enters with the tray of food in hand.

GABRIELLA

Good evening, Senora Mollie. I see we were eager for supper today.

Mollie perks up slightly, but continues to look past Gabriella.

She places the tray down on a table in front of Mollie, where this afternoon's sandwich still sits.

Gabriella looks at her watch, right on schedule, this all makes sense now. She busies herself sorting Mollie's evening medications.

GABRIELLA

Senora, you need to eat. Your daughter said if you want to stay here, you need your strength, okay? Otherwise, you'll need to go to a nursing home.

MOLLIE

(confused)

Of course I'm staying here. Valerie is only eight years old, I can't leave her.

GABRIELLA

(patient)

Valerie is all grown up now, Senora. She comes over once a week when she's not caring for her family, remember?

Mollie shakes her head, of course, how could she have forgotten. A beat, then -

MOLLIE

Do you think he'll take me tonight?

GABRIELLA
 (that's new)
 Who?

MOLLIE
 The man upstairs.

Gabriella gets level with Mollie's ice blue eyes and smiles sympathetically. She gently removes the rosary from Mollie's hands.

GABRIELLA
 God's not coming for you tonight,
 Senora.

MOLLIE
 (dead serious)
 [No, not God.]

GABRIELLA
 (doesn't understand)
 Okay, let's get you ready for bed,
 Senora Mollie. Tomorrow will be a
 brand new, better day for you. *And
 God willing for me too.*

She helps Mollie to her feet and they shuffle off towards the bed.

INT. GABRIELLA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Minimally furnished, lit by a small lamp and the glow from the TV on mute. A room typically reserved for guests, which Gabriella is.

She sorts through her suitcase while on the phone to her MOTHER.

GABRIELLA
*She's getting worse, mama. She's
 more confused, she reverts back to
 speaking in French...*

MOTHER
 (on phone)
*Good, maybe that means you can come
 home soon.*

GABRIELLA
*Mama, if she goes, then I stop
 getting paid.*
 (MORE)

GABRIELLA (CONT'D)

I'd have to work three jobs to make what I make now and it still won't be enough to go to nursing school and get us our own place.

MOTHER

Your son needs you here, Gabriella, not giving round the clock care to some stranger.

GABRIELLA

*(not this again)
Can I talk to Mateo?*

MOTHER

*(distant)
Mateo, come talk to your mother.*

Through the phone, we here the patter of eight-year-old MATEO's excited footsteps.

MATEO

*(on phone)
Hi mama.*

GABRIELLA

Hi baby, how are you? How's school?

MATEO

Good. We started multiplication today.

FOOTSTEPS down the hall. Gabriella casually peeks her head out the door into the --

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

GABRIELLA

Oh yeah?

Nothing.

She creeps towards Mollie's room, the light through the cracked doorway ominously illuminating the hallway.

MATEO

*It's too easy though.
(a beat/then)
Is your old lady dead yet?*

She nudges the door open - No Mollie.

GABRIELLA
(shit)
*Hey, I gotta go, I'll call you
tomorrow. Love you...*

INT. MOLLIE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

She checks the bed, the rocking chair, the bathroom...

INT. HALLWAY

Gabriella bolts down the hallway, flicking on every light,
opening every door.

GABRIELLA
Senora Mollie?

No answer.

No sign of her anywhere.

Gabriella stops to think.

She listens -

It's silent. Too silent.

Then -

The fridge door opening and closing.

Mollie MUMBLING something in French.

Gabriella sighs in relief.

She heads down the stairs into the -

INT. KITCHEN

GABRIELLA
Senora, thank God, let's get you
back to -

But Mollie isn't there.

The fridge is closed, everything is in order.

Something - or someone - BUMPS into the hallway table, glass
BREAKS.

Gabriella follows the sound to find -

A smashed vase in the middle of the floor, but no Mollie.

In the hallway mirror, she sees the curtains behind her gently bellowing in the wind and -

The front door is open.

She rushes to the door and cranes her neck out.

Mollie, in her nightgown on the front lawn, is walking away from the house.

EXT. RANDOLPH ESTATE - NIGHT

Gabriella races through the yard. She catches up to Mollie.

GABRIELLA
Senora Mollie! Senora, where are
you going?

Mollie mutters something in French, doesn't even turn around.

GABRIELLA
Senora?

Finally, Mollie turns, a puzzled look on her face.

MOLLIE
[Who are you? What are you doing
here?]

GABRIELLA
What are you doing out here?

Gabriella places a hand on her shoulder to coax her back inside. Mollie swats it away.

MOLLIE
(terrified)
[Get your hands off me!]

GABRIELLA
We need to get inside.

MOLLIE
[I'm not going anywhere with you.]

GABRIELLA
Senora, I'm sorry I don't
understand -

MOLLIE
[HELP! I don't know this woman,
she's trying to take me away!]

GABRIELLA
Senora, please, be quiet!

MOLLIE
[I said get your hands off of me!]

She SLAPS Gabriella across the face, surprisingly hard for a frail old woman, then falls to the ground.

Gabriella wipes the trickle of blood away from her lip. She lets out a frustrated sigh.

GABRIELLA
I should just leave you out here.

She turns, can't even look at her right now, really considers leaving her out there on the lawn.

Mollie wimpers, weak and fragile.

GABRIELLA
(can't do it)
Dammit...

She approaches cautiously, and lifts Mollie to her feet. She holds her up as they trudge through the grass up to the door.

MOLLIE
I just want to die.

GABRIELLA
(please)
You have a lot of living left to do, Senora.

MOLLIE
Why hasn't the man upstairs taken me yet?

GABRIELLA
Like I told you before, God isn't coming for you tonight.

MOLLIE
(just get it)
I'm not talking about God.

Gabriella looks up, notices a light on in the attic.

That's weird.

She shakes it off, must've turned it on looking for Mollie, focuses on the front door.

EXT. RANDOLPH ESTATE - PORCH - NIGHT

They slowly tread up the stairs to the open front door.

Gabriella strains her eyes looking into the darkened hallway.

Is that a shadow?

Or was that always there?

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

She coaxes Mollie over the threshold. Mollie collapses onto a chair.

Gabriella turns to close the door when -

Footsteps.

By the top of the stairs.

She looks over to Mollie, who's still there, in her chair, unbothered by the sound.

She leans in to listen.

No movement.

Nothing but the breeze.

Then -

Thumpthumpthumpthumpthumpthumpthump-

Something is running down the stairs.

It CRASHES into Gabriella, hurtling her out onto -

EXT. RANDOLPH ESTATE - PORCH - NIGHT

Knocking her violently into one of the posts.

The door SLAMS closed.

She lies there in a heap, momentarily paralyzed by fear.

She forces herself to her hands and knees, blood dripping from her forehead.

With all she can muster, she peers in the window.

Everything is still dark -

Mollie is not in the chair.

Something is in there, with Mollie.

She jostles the doorknob. It's opens with a c r e a k...

She holds her breath and the door, willing it to not make any more noise as she steps back into -

INT. FOYER - NIGHT

She needs a weapon, but everything in here costs more than her life. She grabs an umbrella by the door. Good enough.

No sign of Mollie or whatever that was down here.

She climbs the stairs, each one louder than the last, no matter how quickly or lightly she steps.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The TV is still on in Gabriella's room, casting an ominous glow into the hallway.

She whips her head around nervously, clutching the umbrella with bleach white knuckles.

GABRIELLA
(whispering)
Senora Mollie?

Another THUMP, this time from the third floor, followed by footsteps and the sound of furniture being dragged across the floor.

Fffffuuuuck...

Three jobs is starting to sound really good right about now.

Then -

Mollie yelps.

Gabriella snaps to.

She races down the hallway to the attic door and flings it open.

INT. ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

Generations of boxes and sundries stacked at various heights. A few dressmaker dummies casting creepy shadows. Among them is one that distinctly **looks like a person...**

Gabriella relaxes her grip on the umbrella, and exhales.

GABRIELLA

Senora?

She waits, but then -

Her eyes widen in horror.

The shadow **CHARGES AT HER!**

She tries to back away and is **thrown** to the ground.

Leathery hands wrap around her neck and squeeze.

She kicks, hits, flails, finger tips away from the umbrella.

She can't catch her breath.

The hands squeeze harder...

Her eyes flit around the room

She can't scream, she can't move, she can't breathe...

Then -

A horrible squelch as a thin gold crucifix sinks into it's skin, blood gurgling from an artery as it gasps and releases it's grip on Gabriella.

She grabs at her throat as a MAN - gaunt and haggard with a long stringy beard - crashes to the ground beside her.

His crazed dying eyes staring deep into hers.

But who...

She looks up to see Mollie, standing over top of them, blood dripping from her hands. She points to the man.

MOLLIE

[Not. God.]

INT. MOLLIE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Gabriella tucks Mollie into bed. She wipes what's left of the blood off Mollie's hands and she drifts to sleep.

EXT. RANDOLPH ESTATE - NIGHT

Gabriella digs, sweat and blood dripping from her forehead.

She looks over at the body, wrapped in an ugly floral blanket, half expecting it to move.

Can't believe that all this time, there really was a man upstairs. And Mollie killed him.

She keeps digging.

INT. GABRIELLA'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Gabriella examines herself in the mirror.

Dirty. Exhausted.

Mollie stirs across the hall. Time to go to work.

QUICK DETAIL SHOTS as Gabriella

- Puts on a new set of scrubs
- sorts medicine
- weaves the vacuum over the rug through the furniture
- plates some chicken nuggets, steamed carrots, cheese cubes

INT. MOLLIE'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Mollie sits perfectly still in her rocking chair, staring out the bay window at the fresh grave in the yard.

Gabriella knocks gently before entering.

GABRIELLA

Good evening Senora Mollie, time for supper.

MOLLIE

Did Valerie make it home from school yet?

GABRIELLA

(relieved)

Valerie is all grown up now. She'll come visit later this week.

Mollie nods, how could she forget. A beat, then -

MOLLIE

Do you think the man upstairs will take me tonight?

GABRIELLA

No - no, he's gone, Senora.

MOLLIE

Are you sure?

Gabriella turns, her face full of fear. She creeps over to the window and joins Mollie in staring at the freshly dug grave.

CUT TO: BLACK

THE END.