

PLACEMENT

Written by

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EXT. LINCOLN HEIGHTS HOUSE - DAY

DENISE MARKS, 54, worn pantsuit, knocks on the door. Paint peels from the siding, cigarette butts litter the front porch, and weeds sprout across a brown lawn.

The door swings open to reveal SALOMÉ, 17. A girl with shrewd eyes, who grew into an adult years ago.

ÁNGEL, 13, her tender-hearted brother, stands from a couch in the background. His shoulders slump with disappointment.

Two tattered backpacks and a skateboard sit by the door.

A MAN and WOMAN'S MUFFLED FIGHT sounds through the walls.

DENISE

Again?

Salomé helps Ángel's arms through the backpack's straps.

ÁNGEL

You didn't have to tell her.

SALOMÉ

She deserved to know.

Salomé grabs the other backpack and skateboard and follows Denise and Ángel to a four-door sedan that has seen better days.

ÁNGEL

I liked her PB and Js.

Ángel climbs into the car.

SALOMÉ

Eight months, Ángel. I'll make you all the PB and Js you want.

Salomé climbs into the car. The door closes.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY

Manicured hedges and a pristine lawn enwrap a contemporary French home.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Salomé stares at a document. An old phone presses between her ear and shoulder with crushing intensity.

SUPER: "Eight Months Later"

SALOMÉ
What the fuck, Denise.

INSERT - THE DOCUMENT, which reads:

"ADOPT-200: Adoption Request

Adopting parent(s): Lillian Allen

Child name: Ángel Torres"

BACK IN THE KITCHEN

SALOMÉ (CONT'D)
Call me back. Today.

The phone CLICKS. She stuffs the document into a manila folder beneath a large designer purse on a dining table.

Her head cocks toward a WOMAN'S LAUGH in another room.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Salomé approaches a glass door. The WOMAN'S VOICE grows louder.

LILLIAN ALLEN, 42, perky, sits behind a computer monitor in a sleek office. She chats into a headset.

Salomé tiptoes past, unnoticed. She stops at a closed door at the end of the hall. Her hand hovers on the knob.

Lillian LAUGHS. Salomé's fingers firmly twist the knob.

INT. LILLIAN'S BEDROOM - DAY

An ornate four-poster bed sits center, framed by tables adorned with candles and landscape photos.

Salomé stands within an expanse of pristine white -- a dark blot against near showroom-purity. She scours the room with militant focus and fixates on a wooden cabinet.

Scuffed sneakers traipse across a white rug.

She opens the cabinet. Rows of self-help books greet her. She tosses a stack to the floor.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Lillian tugs the headset off and strolls out.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Lillian enters and stops next to the table with the manila folder.

LILLIAN'S BEDROOM

Books litter the floor in a trail from the empty cabinet to a bedside table where Salomé sits, surrounded by more books, phone chargers, and essential oil bottles.

She tugs a photo album from the back of a drawer.

KITCHEN

Manicured hands touch the manila folder. Its corner juts ever-so-slightly off the table.

LILLIAN'S BEDROOM

Salomé opens the photo album to a photo of Lillian, mid-20s, smiling with a HANDSOME MAN, mid 20s. Wedding rings adorn their clasped hands.

KITCHEN

Lillian picks up the manila folder and flicks it open. Her eyes focus on a crease across the paper. She glances around.

LILLIAN

Kids?

LILLIAN'S BEDROOM

Salomé flips the page. Numerous photos of Lillian and the Handsome Man in wedding attire stare up at her.

HALLWAY

Lillian advances toward a closed door.

LILLIAN'S BEDROOM

Salomé flips the page. It lands on a photo of the couple cupping Lillian's bulging belly.

HALLWAY

Lillian lightly knocks on the door.

LILLIAN
Salomé? Can I come in?

LILLIAN'S BEDROOM

Salomé flips to the last page.

SALOMÉ
What the hell?

A blank page with small holes where photos have been removed stares up at Salomé.

HALLWAY

Lillian twists the doorknob.

LILLIAN'S BEDROOM

Salomé's head whips to the door as it swings open.

Ángel stands in the doorway.

ÁNGEL
Lillian? Do you have --

He spots Salomé.

ÁNGEL (CONT'D)
Hey. What's going --

His eyes catch on the carnage around her.

SALOMÉ'S BEDROOM

Lillian stands in the doorway. Her eyes fix on a backpack and skateboard strewn across a messy bed.

LILLIAN
Sal?

LILLIAN'S BEDROOM

Ángel shoves books onto cabinet shelves and speaks in a harsh whisper.

ÁNGEL

You said this time it'd be different!

Salomé tugs open another drawer on the bedside table.

SALOMÉ

They're never different.

ÁNGEL

Not Lillian. You!

She tears through the drawer.

ÁNGEL (CONT'D)

I'm tired of constantly moving.

SALOMÉ

Last time. I promise.

She upends a drawer. A toiletry kit rattles as it falls.

ÁNGEL

That's what you said last time, when you told Mrs. S her husband was a cheater.

SALOMÉ

He was.

Ángel conceals messy rows of books behind cabinet doors and rushes to the debris around Salomé.

ÁNGEL

Before that, you told the Butlers Kenny touched me.

SALOMÉ

He did.

ÁNGEL

Accidentally.

SALOMÉ

It counts.

Salomé picks up the toiletry kit.

ÁNGEL

I like Lillian.

SALOMÉ

You shouldn't.

ÁNGEL

Just give her a chance. You've never even tried. We can trust her.

Salomé upends the toiletry kit. Prescription bottles pour onto the floor alongside a photo.

Ángel freezes.

SALOMÉ

Holy shit.

She picks up a bottle. The label reads: "Xanax."

She grabs another. It reads: "Vicodin."

A third reads: "Oxycontin."

ÁNGEL

Sal.

Ángel clutches a photo of Lillian, mid 30s, hugging a BOY, 8, smiling behind a birthday cake.

Silence permeates the room as they stare.

LILLIAN (O.S.)

What the hell is going on?

Salomé and Ángel startle toward the door, where Lillian stands, frozen.

SALOMÉ

(with forced bravado)

We could ask you the same.

LILLIAN

You went through my drawers?

Salomé drops the prescription bottles on the bed.

SALOMÉ

Care to explain --

She startles back as Lillian rushes at her and Ángel.

Lillian stops at the edge of the mess. She grabs the toiletry kit and shoves the prescription bottles into it.

LILLIAN

You had no right.

SALOMÉ
We had every right.

Lillian searches through the debris.

SALOMÉ (CONT'D)
I think Denise would care that our
resource parent is --

LILLIAN
-- Where's the --

SALOMÉ
-- a pill junkie.

LILLIAN
(angrily)
I'm not a junkie.

SALOMÉ
You're not getting my brother.

They stare at one another -- a swirl of pain and anger.
Ángel stands, speechless.

Lillian's eyes fall on the photo in his hands.

LILLIAN
May I have that, please?

Ángel hands her the photo.

She sags with sudden exhaustion. Her voice bears the
caution of a zookeeper approaching a frightened tiger.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)
Okay. Let's all just take a deep breath?
Maybe come sit?

Neither of the children budge.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)
I'm not an addict. Or a "pill junkie".

SALOMÉ
You've got Oxycontin stashed in the back
of a drawer.

LILLIAN
I know... Let me...

She flips the photo around for Salomé and Ángel to see.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

This is my son. Jack. He would've been about your age.

A moment passes, before Ángel takes the bait.

ÁNGEL

Why isn't he...

LILLIAN

Here? We were in an accident. A bad one... The medications were prescribed to me afterward.

She zips the toiletry kit closed.

SALOMÉ

Are you hooked on them?

LILLIAN

No, I've only ever taken a few. But I'd be lying if I said I wasn't comforted by the knowledge that they're there.

Ángel inches closer to Lillian. Salomé holds her ground.

SALOMÉ

Does Denise know?

LILLIAN

We discussed it during my interview.

SALOMÉ

For Ángel?

LILLIAN

For both of you, before you came into my care. But yes, a judge will look at everything, including my health, if we move forward with adoption.

SALOMÉ

If?

ÁNGEL

Adoption?

LILLIAN

(gently)
Come, sit.

Ángel sits. Salomé sits slower.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

Well, buddy, I was going to ask you and your sister how you'd feel about staying?

ÁNGEL

Here?

Lillian nods.

ÁNGEL (CONT'D)

Both of us?

LILLIAN

Of course.

SALOMÉ

The form only had Ángel's name.

LILLIAN

Since you're aging out of the program, adoption doesn't make much of a difference for you. I assumed you wouldn't want it. You haven't exactly...

ÁNGEL

Been nice?

LILLIAN

I wouldn't say that.

SALOMÉ

No, that's fair.

LILLIAN

I'd never try to separate the two of you, Salomé. Adoption is something we can still pursue if you want it.

SALOMÉ

I don't know.

LILLIAN

That's fine. I'm not asking either of you to decide now.

SALOMÉ

I went through your stuff.

LILLIAN

Yeah, that wasn't great. Let's not make it a habit.

ÁNGEL

That's kinda her thing.

Lillian laughs.

LILLIAN

For now, how about we clean this up?

Lillian helps Ángel sort some of the clutter in a drawer.

Salomé holds the toiletry kit.

SALOMÉ

What about this?

Lillian looks at it, conflicted.

LILLIAN

It's probably time.

Salomé hands it to her.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)

Jack would've liked both of you.

Toiletry kit in hand, she disappears into an attached bathroom.

Ángel picks up the photo of Jack.

SALOMÉ

I'm sorry for dragging you into this.
I'll do better.

ÁNGEL

This time, I'm kinda glad you did.

A toilet FLUSHES as they clean away the mess.