OPEN DOORS

INSPIRED BY TRUE EVENTS

Written by

Jerrod D. Brito

Diego Harrison
SBR MEDIA
diego@sbrmedia.com
719-242-3755

FADE IN:

INT. BOTÁNICA - BACK ROOM - 35 YEARS AGO - NIGHT

A rosary hangs from a doorknob. Paola's tiny hand snatches it and places it in a much older woman's shaking hands.

PAOLA
(whispers)
If you pray, then pray.

A TEEN GIRL SCREAMS NEARBY.

Stone walls are decorated with old framed photos -- people of all ages, some recent, some dating back a century. Shadows dance in the candlelight against jars of herbs, plants, and a Virgin Mary statue.

A CURANDERA (60s) chants a tribal prayer and shakes a ceremonial maraca as she circles the screaming teenage girl, SOPHIA (17). The healer is wrinkled from years of spiritual labor, and her hair is long, scraggly, and white as snow, but it only enhances the wisdom in her eyes.

Sophia writhes in place as her eyes dart around the room. Tears roll down her pale, gaunt cheeks from sleepless eyes. She winces as humanoid figures made of black smoke and ectoplasm seep out of the shadows. Only she sees them.

PAOLA (10) emerges near Sophia, startling her. Paola wears white robes and black and white face paint, like a grim skull made of finger prints. The silver streak in her long black hair shines in the flickering candlelight.

Paola brushes Sophia's body with basil and rose pedals from the inside of her trembling limbs outward. The Curandera splashes holy water on Sophia.

The Curandera sighs.

CURANDERA
(in Spanish, to the woman)
I cannot stop it. It has tasted
blood, and now it craves more.
Hers. Yours. Your entire bloodline.
I can only contain it for now.

The unseen older woman's hand clenches the rosary as she listens and watches the Curandera and Paola work.

CURANDERA
(to Paola, in Spanish)
The vessel.

Paola moves to a nearby table of herbs and spell components. She reaches for the stained glass bottle with symbols and a bearded man's face etched into it, but she stops when she hears a DEATH RATTLE SOUND behind her.

Paola's eyes drift toward the sound; she sees her doppelgänger, DARK PAOLA (10) in the shadows, identical to her, but with shiny black, soulless eyes. Paola gasps.

CURANDERA
(in Spanish)
Quickly!

Paola grabs the bottle. She opens it...

SOPHIA SCREAMS.

INT. ROSA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - PRESENT DAY

ROSA (80s) wakes in her bed with a start. She slowly sits up.

ROSA
Isabela?

She waits...

EXT. MOGOTE HOUSE - NIGHT

Mogote, Colorado. Population: 1,025. The modest three-bedroom ranch-style house sits alone on two acres, save the storage shed and outhouse. Though it's clearly been modernized in the past couple of decades, it shows its age.

An OWL HOOTS IN THE DISTANCE.

A light goes on in Rosa's bedroom.

INT. ROSA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rosa's hand turns the doorknob -- the rosary hangs from it -- and she steps out into the dark with a picture frame in hand.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Long hallway. Rosa pokes her head out of her room, listening.

ROSA
Isabela?

Rosa steps out and creeps down the hallway.

INT. RAUL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

RAUL (30s) snores in bed. Rosa passes his open door.

ROSA (O.S.)
Isabela?

Raul awakens. He rubs his eyes and turns to see the light streaking out of Rosa's bedroom door into the hallway.

RAUL
Grandma?

Raul checks his phone -- it's 3:53 AM.

A CRASH IS HEARD IN THE LIVING ROOM.

Raul grabs his baseball bat with urgency.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Raul pokes his head in Rosa's room. No one's there.

RAUL
Grandma?

He heads down the hall to --

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Rosa stands at the front door, silhouetted by moonlight as she stares at the cross over the doorframe. She whispers incoherently.

Raul looks around confused, then spots a picture frame on the floor. He picks it up and sets it on the nearby table. He nears the door.

RAUL
Grandma.

Rosa is shaken loose from her trance and turns around. She looks at Raul with a face of surprise.

RAUL
What's wrong, Grandma?

She stares at him for a moment.

RAUL
Come on. Let's go back to bed.

ROSA
I'm waiting for Isabela.

RAUL
Bela's not here, Grandma. She lives in Denver now. Remember?

Rosa stares at him, silently.

RAUL
Come on.

A LOUD KNOCK AT THE FRONT DOOR BREAKS THE SILENCE.

Raul heads to the door, bat at the ready, turns on the porch light, and peeks out. He sighs and unlocks/opens the door.

INT./EXT. MOGOTE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

ISABELA (30s) stands on the other side, flanked by her three children, MARIA (14), the twins, CARMEN and JAIME (11), and their golden retriever, SAMMY DOG (4). Raul spies the station wagon in the driveway, then looks back to Bela.

RAUL
Bela?

BELA
Raul. We need a place to stay for the night.

RAUL
It's almost four in the morning.

BELA
I would've called, but River took our phones. We left with the clothes on our backs, a little bit of cash, and the dog.

RAUL
Sounds like a shitty Country song.

BELA
Please, Raul. We have nowhere else to go.

RAUL
That's so convenient, Bela. When Grandma needs you -- when I need you -- you're nowhere to be found, and yet, this is always the first place you go when you're running away from something. That's what's worth the six hour drive to you --

ROSA
Cállate, both of you!

Rosa steps onto the porch and sees the family.

ROSA
(smiling)
Oh, my great grandchildren... you are so big! Look at you!

She squeezes Carmen's pudgy cheeks.

ROSA
We have food, and beds, and Raul can pull some old clothes out of the storage shed. Everything else we can figure out in the morning.
(to Bela)
¿Sí?

Bela nods.

ROSA
(to Raul)
¿Sí?

RAUL
Sure, Grandma. Never turn your back on family. Right, Bela?

Raul glares and heads back inside. Rosa ushers Bela, the kids, and Sammy Dog inside. Rosa closes the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Crystals and candles decorate the room. A breeze comes through an open window.

On the carpet, Jaime plays with four vintage Hot Wheels cars.

JAIME
Vroom vroom! Ready? Three... two... one... go!

Jaime pushes two cars in a race, but they don't go very far, and they slow to a stop at approximately the same distance.

Raul comes from the hallway in gray sweats and a tank top. He yawns and scratches his chest.

RAUL
Morning, mijo.

JAIME
Good morning, Tío.

RAUL
Where's your mama?

JAIME
Outside, I think.

Jaime nods to the front door.

Raul grabs his ball cap off the coat rack, wrangles his messy hair into it, and heads outside.

Jaime goes to collect his cars. As he crawls to them, he hears A CREAK. In his peripheral, he sees someone crouching down stand up by the window.

Jaime turns to see two legs against the wall. Sneakers, jeans, and all. The breeze blows curtains in front of it, so only the thighs and below can be seen.

JAIME
Hello?

Jaime stands and slowly creeps to the curtain with a face full of worry. His shaking hand reaches up and pulls the curtain aside to reveal --

Mexican knickknacks sitting atop a table, its base made to look like a boy's legs and shoes.

Jaime sighs in relief. He goes back to his cars.

EXT. MOGOTE HOUSE - DAY

Bela sits on a bench, knees tucked to her chest, with a southwestern blanket wrapped around her.

Raul stands beside her and puffs a cigarette.

RAUL
The twins can have my room. You and Maria take your old room. I'll sleep on the couch.

BELA
Thanks. That's very generous.

RAUL
Yeah, that's me, I guess.

BELA
What do you want me to say, Raul?

RAUL
Nothing.

He stews in silence a moment. Bela waits with a "here it comes" look on her face.

RAUL
I just think it sucks that I've had to take care of grandma all by myself so you could go shack up with River in Denver.

BELA
What can I say? It's the only thing Mom ever taught me.

RAUL
Don't pull that shit again.

He puts out his cigarette. Shakes his head. Almost goes into the house. Stops himself -- this has been a long time coming.

RAUL
It's been hard. Especially since Amber walked out on me. I can't be around here enough for Grandma. And she's getting worse.

BELA
She doesn't seem too bad.

RAUL
She has good days and bad days. Sometimes she's sharp as a nail. Other days? She doesn't know who she is. And neither do I.

Bela raises her eyebrows -- news to her. She takes a flask out of her hoodie and takes a swig. She offers it to Raul.

RAUL
No thanks. I haven't had a drink since Amber left.

Bela shrugs, takes another swig, pockets the flask.

BELA
I never believed her story. You know, I've seen you pass-out, throw-up drunk, but I've never seen you be violent.

Raul clears his throat.

RAUL
So, what's your plan now?

BELA
Well, I'm almost out of cash. So I need to get a job, find a place, and start over somewhere.

RAUL
The Mexican restaurant in town is looking for a waitress. You'd do pretty well there.

BELA
Thanks. But I don't plan on staying long.

RAUL
Figured as much.

Raul opens the door and looks at Bela through sincere eyes.

RAUL
She misses you, ya know.

Raul heads inside. Bela looks at the sky and contemplates.

INT. ROSA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Rosa plays a record on her 70s era record player. A song in the vein of "Los Comanchitos" plays. Rosa smiles.

Maria and Carmen enter. Maria stands with great posture and folds her hands in front of her like a prep school student. Carmen explores the room wide-eyed.

MARIA
Good morning, Great-Grandma.

ROSA
Good morning!

Rosa kisses Maria on the forehead. Then she runs her hand through Carmen's hair.

MARIA
What would you like for breakfast?

ROSA
You're making breakfast? Hmmm.
Maybe just some coffee and toast?

MARIA
Yes, ma'am.

Carmen passes religious decorations, paintings, and crosses, and then gravitates to a small shrine with a framed photo of 12-year-old Sophia. Carmen picks it up.

CARMEN
Who's this? She looks like me.

Rosa sees the photo and feigns a smile.

ROSA
That was your Grandma Sophia. Be
careful please, that's the only
photograph I have left of her.

Rosa carefully takes the photo and returns it to the shrine.

Carmen opens her mouth to ask more questions, but Maria grabs her by the arm and drags her to the door.

MARIA
Come on, Carmen.

CARMEN
It's toast, Maria. You don't know
how to make toast?

Alone, Rosa's sad eyes drift back to the photo.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Toast pops out of the steaming toaster. Carmen drags both slices onto a plate, careful not to burn her fingertips.

CARMEN
Why doesn't mom ever talk about
Grandma Sophia?

Maria puts a tea kettle on a burner.

MARIA
Because it makes her sad.

CARMEN
But, why?

MARIA
Because... she left Mom and Tío with Great Grandma when they were kids.

CARMEN
Why?

MARIA
I dunno. Great Grandma is really old-school superstitious. I think that’s why Mom moved away, too.

Carmen snatches a bag of shredded cheddar cheese off the counter and starts eating it by the handful.

MARIA
You’re too young to remember, but Great Grandma Rosa used to do some crazy stuff. She used to bless us all with holy water when we’d come over for Christmas. And she made us sing happy birthday to Jesus.

CARMEN
(mouthful of cheese)
Whaaat?

THE FRONT DOOR SQUEAKS OPEN IN THE DISTANCE.

MARIA
It’s true. I think she’s showing early signs of dementia. Just look around. There are crosses over the doors, crystals and statues all over the place. And she rarely leaves the house. I’ve never even seen her leave the yard. And you know what’s the worst part of all? Dementia is hereditary.
(whispering)
Sometimes I wonder if that’s where Jaime’s issues came from...

Bela enters the kitchen and crosses her arms.

BELA
Your great grandma is a little eccentric, and yes, she is set in her old ways, but none of us would be here without her kindness and generosity, so let’s do our best to respect her beliefs, even if we don’t agree with them, please.

MARIA
Yes, Mother.

BELA
(to Carmen)
Are you eating cheese straight from the bag?

CARMEN
(mouthful of cheese)
Maybe...

A face full of shame, she tilts the bag as an offering. Bela rolls her eyes and takes the bag away from her.

BELA
My grandma means well. But, you should have heard some of the old wive’s tales she used to tell your uncle and I when we were your age.

CARMEN
Tell us!

BELA
I’m going into town for groceries. Maybe we can make S’mores in the fireplace, and I can tell you then.

CARMEN
(excited)
Okay!

Bela eats a small handful of shredded cheddar.

CARMEN
Mom!

Bela laughs as Carmen tries to snatch the bag away.

EXT. MOGOTE HOUSE - DUSK

The station wagon pulls into the driveway beside a pickup truck. Bela hops out and pulls a paper bag full of groceries out of the passenger seat.

Raul exits the house and meets her in the driveway.

RAUL
Need help?

BELA
I got it, thanks. You gonna join us for S'mores?

RAUL
Nah, someone called in at work. Maybe next time.

Bela nods. She goes inside as Raul heads to his truck.

INT. DEN - NIGHT

Maria looks at the label on the marshmallow bag.

MARIA
There's no way these are ethically sourced ingredients.

Bela opens the metal fireplace door.

BELA
You'll live.
(to the twins)
Go get some paper plates, please. And a lot of napkins. And a few paper towels.

The twins scurry off to the kitchen.

BELA
I don't think this fireplace has been used in years. It certainly hasn't been cleaned.

She tries to center the uneven ash pit cover. As she moves it, she hears a SHATTERING SOUND.

BELA
Shit.

She pulls out her cell phone and shines a light inside.

MARIA
What is it?

BELA
I don't know. Something shiny.
Maybe glass. I'd better check.

The twins return with the paper products. Bela takes a paper towel and wipes soot off of her arm.

BELA
Don't eat all the chocolate.

She heads out the front door.

Jaime and Maria look at Carmen, who takes a big bite out of a chocolate bar.

CARMEN
What?

Rosa enters from the hallway with a smile. Once she sees the fireplace, her smile fades and she drops her coffee mug. It shatters on the hardwood floor.

ROSA
What are you doing?

The kids' eyes bulge in surprise.

EXT. MOGOTE HOUSE - NIGHT

Bela pulls shards of stained glass out of the chimney clean-out door. Bela winces and turns her head as though a foul stench assaults her nostrils.

Rosa turns the corner, the kids sidle up behind her.

ROSA
Isabela... what have you done?

MARIA
What's that smell?

JAIME
It smells like pee-pee.

BELA
I broke something in the fireplace.
I'm just trying to clean it out so
no one accidentally -- ouch!

Bela pulls her hand out of the compartment; she holds the intact majority of the broken bottle, which contains nails, hair, and baby teeth floating in a yellow liquid. Bela's blood drips down the glass from a fresh finger cut.

ROSA
Give it to me!

Rosa reaches for the bottle. Bela pulls it away.

BELA
Grandma, no. There's broken glass and teeth -- probably worse things.

ROSA
They're Sophia's!

BELA
What?

ROSA
Give it to me!

Rosa grasps again with incredible rage.

BELA
No, Grandma! It's gross, and I'm throwing it away.

Bela takes it to the old outhouse in the backyard and dumps it inside. Rosa cries.

ROSA
You've damned me. You've damned every one of us!

Rosa pulls away from the kids and heads back to the house.

Maria, Jaime, and Carmen stare at Bela, agape.

BELA
(sigh)
Go back to the house. You can make S'mores in the microwave.

Maria leads the twins to the house.

JAIME
The microwave?

CARMEN
What are we, white people?

Bela shakes and chokes back tears. When she's alone, she pulls out her flask and takes a big swig.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Lakewood, Colorado. Upper middle class home. The porch light is on, as are a few lights within, including one behind the large second floor window.

On the curb, NACHO (35) pulls a backpack out of her SUV. She looks tough in her black polo and cargo shorts, but her kind, compassionate eyes expose her as a real softie. She flings the bag over her shoulder, careful not to mess up her spiky black hair, and locks up.

Nacho heads toward the house and stops to stare ominously at the second floor window. She continues on to the front door.

SUSAN (O.S.)
(prelap)
It all started when we found out about that game.

INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - NIGHT

DARYL and SUSAN WHITE frown in the foyer. Daryl's long hair is tied back into a tail, and his beard is scruffy. Susan's hair is oily -- these two are a nervous wreck and haven't been taking care of themselves. Daryl places a supportive hand on his wife's shoulder.

SUSAN
That... uh... what do they call it? Creepy story?

DARYL
Creepypasta. We heard about it at a P.T.A. meeting. Kids are playing one called Knocking Charlie now. They're obsessed with it.

Nacho digs through her bag and pulls out a digital camera, a digital recorder, and two EMF meters -- one digital K2 and one with a modulating needle. She sets them on the ground and turns them all on.

SUSAN
We thought it was harmless until Adam -- our son -- had some friends over to spend the night.