

GALLO

Written by

Ricardo Mulhia

60 W 23rd Ave.
Vancouver, BC
V5Y 2G7
ricardoiswriting@gmail.com
+52 (722) 114-85-03

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GALLO - PILOT

TEASER

OVER BLACK

INSERT TITLE CARD: In Mexico, you are guilty until proven innocent.

INSERT TITLE CARD: Mexico City, 1999

FADE IN:

EXT. HACIENDA DEL VALLE - DAY

The final strands of sunlight for the day gleam on the dozens of arched windows facing the estate. They bathe the stone fountain of two angels spewing a stream of water from one mouth into the other's.

At the end of a long row of pines lining up half a mile of brick wall enclosing the fortress, a wooden treehouse overlooks the property.

INT. TREEHOUSE - DAY

BETO (10) hoists a boom box onto the table. An adult would need to hunch to fit in the cramped space, but pre-teen Beto does anyway, even if he hasn't quite hit his growth spurt. He blows the sawdust off from the CD in his hand, and rubs it onto his white polo courtesy of the school uniform.

ILEANA (O.C.)

You're not supposed to do that.

ILEANA (10) sports a matching polo but pairs it with a chequered skirt and a white bow tying her dark curls in place. She approaches Beto and holds out her hand.

BETO

How come?

ILEANA

They get all scratched up, and then you can't play them anymore.

Embarrassed, Beto hands her the CD.

She has a gentle smile. She fogs up the underside of the disk with her warm breathe and wipes it down with a soft cloth she carries in her pocket.

ILEANA
Not just for glasses.

BETO
I didn't think those had pockets.

ILEANA
They don't. I put one there.

She hands it back, and Beto reaches for it, a bit too slowly. Their index fingers touch as they transfer the CD from one hand to the other. Beto places it in the disk tray.

ILEANA
Careful with the sensor. My sister broke my dad's stereo just by touching it. He was furious.

BETO
(unconvinced)
Yeah, I know.

Beto eyes Ileana's bare arms, one long scar slashed against her olive skin.

Beto presses play, and a pop ballad plays in English. Ileana grins and bops her head to the rhythm. Beto smiles.

BETO
You like it?

ILEANA
It's good.

BETO
What does it say?

ILEANA
It's a love song.

JUAN (O.C.)
Aw, Beto, are you in love?

JUAN (10) stands under the doorframe, a wide smirk on his face. He wears a tie with a matching chequered pattern, the knot the size of his clenched fist, both ends facing away.

BETO
Ew, gross. No.

Beto looks away from them both.

JUAN
Hmm I think you are.

ILEANA
Stop it, Juan.

JUAN
No, no. We're all friends here.
You're not lying to us, are you?

BETO
No, I don't like anyone. All the
girls in school are ugly.

JUAN
All the girls? Ouch, Ileana, that
hurts.

Ileana frowns.

BETO
I mean, no, like, just -- I don't
like anyone.

JUAN
What are you doing listening to
love songs then? What are you, gay?

ILEANA
That's not funny, Juan.

BETO
Yeah, shut up.

Juan approaches them, pacing across the room.

JUAN
Oh, I see, mystery solved! Beto
doesn't like any girls. Of course,
that makes perfect sense.

BETO
I don't like boys, and I don't like
any of the girls, okay?

JUAN
Then you're a weirdo. Choose, are
you a liar or a weirdo?

BETO
You're the liar! You're the one who
likes someone.

Juan stops, and mumbles, lost for words.

ILEANA

You do? That's great, Juan!

Juan shakes his head.

BETO

Should I say who?

Juan's eyes widen in horror and fury.

BETO

Not such a big man anymore.

Beto and Juan share a death stare.

Ileana stands between them.

ILEANA

Okay, let's talk about something else. Did you get the thing?

Juan takes a second to register what she just said. He nods, and takes out of his pocket a single cigarette and a lighter. It's tattered from rumbling in his pants.

JUAN

I just took one so she wouldn't notice.

The three gather around it, eying it as if expecting it to move or light up on its own.

BETO

Do you know how to light it?

JUAN

Yeah, of course I do.

He takes it between his outstretched fingers.

JUAN

This is how my mum holds it. My dad holds it like this.

He switches his grasp to hold it with with thumb and index finger. Ileana rolls her eyes.

ILEANA

Very manly. Let's step outside so the smoke can air.

EXT. TREEHOUSE - DAY

The trio lean over the makeshift balcony. Under their feet, a long ladder reaches the grass about fifteen feet below them. The sun has now hidden under the horizon.

Juan settles the cigarette on his lips, and fires up the lighter. He cranes his neck forward, and draws the flame towards him, but not close enough. Ileana chuckles.

ILEANA

I thought you said you knew how to do this?

Juan mumbles something inaudible with the cigarette on his lips. Ileana takes it from him and lights it in a matter of seconds.

BETO

Yeah, well, he says a lot of things. Don't believe anything that liar says.

Ileana sighs, but before she realises it, Juan lunges at Beto, knocking Ileana to the side.

Fist fly, or more like arms wobble and flail. Juan pins Beto on the floor while Beto tries pushing him off to no avail.

JUAN

What were you saying?

Juan pushes down on Beto's neck.

JUAN

Can't hear you. Who's the liar?

ILEANA

Jesus, stop it, you idiots!

Ileana approaches them to pull them apart when Beto manages to yank Juan's tie and bring him closer to the ground. This knocks Ileana to the ground.

Ileana screams.

The boys instantly stop wrestling and scramble to Ileana's aid. They attempt to flip her face up, but she resists, hands covering her face.

BETO

Are you okay?

ILEANA
Leave me alone.

Beto and Juan share a concerned look.

JUAN
Ileana...

Ileana turns to face them, furious, panting. A red slash across her cheekbone glimmers back at them. Ileana jolts down the ladder, jumping down the last few steps, and runs back towards the estate, her cries echoing across the vast lawn.

Beto finds the cigarette on the floor, still burning red. He picks it up.

JUAN
Don't be stupid.

Juan knocks it out of his hand, and steps on it.

JUAN
This is your fault. You pulled my tie, like a girl. Now she'll never, ever love you.

Beto takes one exasperated look at Juan, and crawls down the treehouse after Ileana.

Fade out.

INSERT TITLE CARD: GALLO

END OF TEASER.

ACT ONE

OVER BLACK

INSERT TITLE CARD: Nineteen years later.

FADE IN:

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

The sun blazes through a single stained glass window perched above a crucifix in the otherwise modest hall. Beside the altar, a clay molded statue of the Virgin Mary, chipped paint across her pale face, looms over a lit candle, flickering shadows under her eyes.

One man kneels on the floor in the second row of benches lining up the rest of the room. Eyes closed, the chained beads rest over his closed fist.

BETO

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

BETO (33) lifts his chin and opens his eyes. More than a few day's scruff, is at least six months overdue a haircut.

BETO

Look out for her, please.

He rises, throwing the rosary ceremoniously around his neck. He approaches the candle and stares at the flame as it waves back and forth. He kills it with his fingers.

EXT. PRISON YARD - DAY

Beto exits the humble, quiet place of worship to what can only be described as a bustling market. The central square is a dirt patch enclosed by rows of shops: restaurants, mechanics, cleaners. Adult men and women go about their business, laughter booming on one side, and on the other, a band of mariachi entertains a small crowd.

Beto weaves his way through folks going every other direction, narrowly avoiding a cart of goods speeding past him. An ALARM rings across the yard.

ANNOUNCER

(muffled over speakers)

Thirty minutes until closing time.
Visitors, make your way to the exit
for inspection. Stragglers will be
fined.

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Beto walks past the cells, none of which have any door or bars. He turns into one, where a mouldy mattress is plopped to one corner of the damp, dingy room. To Beto's surprise, someone lays there all ready.

ROTO

Welcome back, your sainthood.

BETO

Get off, Roto. Not in the mood for
your games.

ROTO

Aw, c'mon, isn't the whole point of
church to 'help the needy'? I
happen to be 'needing' to rest by
back.

ROTO (55) stretches out his back. Jeans and a washed off, battered tee on him, he works on a sowing project for an ornate craft piece, now off to the side.

ROTO (CONT'D)

Ah, see? D'ya hear it crack? I'm
old, Beto, respect your elders.

Roto rolls his eyes, and lays down with Roto.

BETO

I've already told you I'll pay for
your bed. Don't be so damn proud
and take it.

ROTO

Ha! No, no. I ain't taking no
debts, not with none. That's how
they's get you, see? Before you
knows it, they's lose patience and
thinks they's rather takes your
kidney or something.

(MORE)

ROTO (CONT'D)

Nah, I need mine if I be a
functioning alcoholic to cope with
this life of comforts.

Roto stretches his arms and rests his head under his hands.

BETO

Then pay me some other way. I've
got no use for money anyway.

Roto cackles hysterically.

ROTO

Don't go saying that round here,
lest you be liking a beating.

Roto squints.

ROTO (CONT'D)

Yer not them weird type who're into
that kinda thing, are ya?

Beto frowns and side-eyes Roto.

BETO

Pay me with information.

ROTO

Whatcha looking for, mister
sanctity? Nothing sinful, I hope?

BETO

I've never seen the warden, not
once in six months. Is there even
one?

ROTO

Ah, yes, that. On paper, there's
always a warden. But they don't do
nothing except take a slice outta
that sweet sweet pie.

BETO

Who pays them off?
(lowers voice)
The cartels?

ROTO

Ha! CARTELS HE SAYS! No, none of
that. This here's more a city than
a prison, see? We pay our own taxes
and all! You wanna eat? Fifteen a
week. You wanna sleep? That's two
for a piece o' floor.

BETO

But where does it all go?

ROTO

They say it's put back into the businesses that keep the machine running. But we ain't ones to sleep in, ya know? It's all a nice big pie for friends of the creme de la creme.

BETO

Who's that?

ROTO

C'mon, Beto, you can't be that naive. Yer here, after all! No one ends up in here of all places if not fer pissing off the big guy himself.

Beto reflects on this.

BETO

Is this even a real prison?

ROTO

Yes, and no. Do you knows anything to be real in this country? The system. Ha! What system? It's all a show, partner. It's a dog eat dog world out here. This prison is real all right, just not for people breaking the law.

Chatter builds louder and a group of men enter the room, each taking a different corner of the room. No one gives them a second look while they settle for the night.

With his back towards Roto, Beto takes off his rosary and intertwines the chain around his fingers, with the cross sticking out between his fingers. He clinches his fist.

An ALARM rings. Lights out.

INT. SCHOOL CHAPEL - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The BELL rings. BETO (10) has his eyes averted to the crucifix towering over the altar. He observes the feet on the cross, a thick nail pierced through them --

AHEM.

Beto looks at the priest, arms outstretched. PADRE MIGUEL (33) wears an ornate purple gown. He cranes his neck, telling Beto to get on with it.

Beto fumbles with the guitar in his hands. It slips from his hands and stumbles on the floor, a loud thud with the strings ringing and echoing.

Some of the schoolchildren laugh, while teachers shush and threaten the students with menacing eyes. Amongst them, JUAN (10) is gleeful. He sits with the rest of the boys, on the left side of the aisle.

Beto picks up the guitar and begins strumming. The chant is picked up by the attendees. Beto looks at Padre Miguel apologetically, and the priest sighs.

Juan looks across the aisle to see ILEANA (10), her burn far less noticeable. She looks ahead, unamused.