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GOLDENROD REVISIONS 3/17/21
2ND WHITE REVISIONS 3/22/21

POSE

"SERIES FINALE"

3WBFO7

WRITTEN BY

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BRAD FALCHUK
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JANET MOCK
& OUR LADY J

DIRECTED BY

STEVEN CANALS

REVISED PAGES: TITLE PAGE

RYAN MURPHY TELEVISION

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CAST LIST

Pray Tell	Kiki Pendavis	David Doom*
Blanca	B. Hawk	Lala Doom*
Elektra	Gay Men’s Chorus	Riot Rouge*
Angel	Safaree*	Rhonda Rouge*
Papi	Waiter*	Rough Rouge*
Lulu	Teena*	Rally Rouge*
Ricky	Justice*	Fresca Rouge*
Nurse Judy	Dessa*	Michael Johnson*
Lemar	Dionne*	Jeffrey Stewart*
Manhattan	Janitor*	Larry Kramer*
Castle	Swan*	Peter Hughes*
Jack	Paulo Pendavis*	Sarah Soundress*
Tyrone	Chanel Pendavis*	Daniel Trial*
Christopher	Marco Pendavis*	Steven Marcus*
Beto*	Chicken Little Pendavis*	Ben Johnson
Charlene	Mother Mugler*	Hunnicut*
Troy	Mabel Mugler*	Sven Andress*
Vanessa	Michael Mugler*	Marla Cones*
Syd	Moses Mugler*	Jones Gill*
Janelle	Jaybird Mugler*	Charles Honey*
Jon	Teflon Mugler*	Brian Landress*
Police Officer #1	Mother Yvette YSL*	Lars Templeton*
Police Officer #2	Vindication YSL*	Sally Stone*
Pharmaceutical Rep	Malice YSL*	Nate Nichols*
Pretentia Khan	Sally YSL*	Jones McGill*
Wrath Khan	Fever YSL*	Steven Cross*
Shadow Khan	Rage YSL*	Michael Rivers*
Nefertiti Khan	Karen YSL*	Peter Path*
Florida	Chic YSL*	Sullivan Post*
Sherilyn	Lipstick YSL*	Sarah Bridges*
Wanda	Darla Doom*	Mark Harris*
Veronica	Daniel Doom*	Brad Fall*
Aphrodite	Donda Doom*	

LOCATION LIST

House of Evangelista

- Front Door
- Dining Room
- Bathroom
- Living Room
- Kitchen

Hall

- EXT. Hall
- Greenroom
- Main Floor
- 2nd Floor Balcony
- Hallway

Roosevelt Hospital

- EXT. Roosevelt Hospital
- Patient Room
- Hallway
- Pray Tell’s Room
- Administrative Office
- Cafeteria
- Nurse’s Station
- Fourth Floor

EXT. NYC Street

EXT. NYC Stoop

EXT. Gracie Mansion

EXT. Auditorium (omit)*

EXT. Manhattan Office Building

INT. Auditorium

INT. Pray Tell’s Apartment

INT. Pray Tell’s Apartment -- Bathroom

INT. Ambulance

INT. Morgue

INT. LGBT Center

INT. Gay Men’s Health Clinic -- Hallway

INT. Gay Men’s Health Clinic -- Room

INT. Fancy Restaurant

BLANCA enters to find TROY, 22, white, reading POZ MAGAZINE. He's thin, pale, and scared. Blanca reads his chart.

BLANCA

How are you feeling, baby?

TROY

Like a bee stung my tongue.

BLANCA

It's just thrush. Probably feels worse than it is. We're sending you home with some steroids and anti-fungals. It's important that you don't smoke while you're taking these meds.

TROY

I've been reading about other drugs that are out there. The protease inhibitors? Do you think I qualify to get on them?

BLANCA

Unless you got a connection to the black market, those meds are still being held up by the FDA.

(off his disappointment)

I've been watching you come in here for how long?

TROY

A year.

BLANCA

You're still a baby on this journey. I've been positive for seven years now, and look at me. You're gonna be okay.

TROY

But I read it moves fast in some people, and they still don't understand why.

BLANCA

Your T cells and red blood cells are low, but everything else seems to be stable. Other than your tongue, how are you feeling?

(CONTINUED)

1

TROY

Not horrible. Mostly just scared.

BLANCA

Then hold onto that. "Not horrible"
is a lot better than most people
who come in here.

TROY

Thank you, Blanca. I'm so proud of
you moving up in this world. I told
them when they checked me in that I
only wanted Nurse Blanca to take
care of me.

BLANCA

I ain't a nurse yet, honey, but I'm
getting there one day at a time.

JUDY enters, trying to conceal her panic.

JUDY

You got a minute?

BLANCA

(to Troy)

I'll be right back, Troy. Keep
reading up on this virus. The more
you know!

Blanca follows Judy out into --

2

INT. ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL -- HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

2

Judy rushes down the hallway as Blanca follows.

JUDY

It's not like him to show up
without calling.

*
*

BLANCA

Who? Where are we going?

JUDY

Pray. He checked himself in and
didn't let any of us know.

BLANCA

What?

They come to --

3

INT. ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL -- PRAY'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

3

PRAY lies in bed, hooked up to machinery, wearing his glasses. Judy and Blanca enter.

BLANCA

Are you okay? Why didn't you call?

PRAY TELL

(weak)

You know how many times I rushed to the hospital to be with Costas? And for what? We all die alone.

JUDY

Don't talk like that.

PRAY TELL

Oh hush. I knew you bitches would sniff around and find me sooner or later.

BLANCA

What is it this time?

PRAY TELL

PCP. Pneumonia again. Only this time, the doctor said I have no immune system left to fight it. This is it. It's the end.

*
*
*

JUDY

No, no, no. We still haven't exhausted all of our options yet. We'll get you a second opinion. Let me ask Doctor Williams who he'd recommend. In the meantime, let's get some deoxyuridine pumping into that IV. Blanca, check to make sure the drip is running smoothly?

*
*

Judy leaves. Blanca checks the IV. She looks at Pray, knowing that he's nearing the end, but she doesn't cry.

PRAY TELL

Don't you go giving me one of them pep talks now. We've been on this road too long to get all sentimental.

BLANCA

I won't bullshit you. The blindness always comes at the end. Have you prepared a will?

(CONTINUED)

PRAY TELL

Yes. My aunt has it. She knows to call you.

BLANCA

Is there anything I can do to help make you more comfortable?

PRAY TELL

Just lay down with me, please.

Blanca gets in bed with Pray, as Pray once did with Costas.

PRAY TELL (CONT'D)

How come I've been so sick, with the low platelets, pneumonia, my eye, yet you haven't had anything in over a year?

*
*

BLANCA

Your guess is as good as mine. This disease don't make no sense.

PRAY TELL

I don't want people to pity me. I want them to know that I died happy. Satisfied. But there is one thing that I still need to finish.

BLANCA

What's that?

PRAY TELL

My panel for the AIDS Quilt. I want to finish it with you. My sewing kit and all the trimmings are in the bag on that chair.

Blanca reaches for Pray's bag, overflowing with sequined fabrics and glittering notions.

BLANCA

You got one of Liberace's capes in here?

PRAY TELL

I decided that my panel needed to be gaudier and gayer than Sylvester's, so that when they unfold it on the national lawn, all those government people who did nothing to help us will be blinded by its fabulosity.

(CONTINUED)

BLANCA

Let's see what we got here.

Blanca unfolds the blanket on the bed. CLOSE ON the blanket, where we see "Live, Werk, POSE!" beautifully embroidered. Pray Tell's name is outlined in sewing chalk. The reality of the moment hits her and she begins to cry.

BLANCA (CONT'D)

I'm not ready to lose you, Pray.
I'm not ready to let you go.

PULL OUT on Pray, emotionless, ready to finally let go.

TITLE SEQUENCE.

INT. ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL -- PATIENT ROOM -- MORNING

Troy sits on his hospital bed, looking healthier and refreshed. Blanca enters.

BLANCA

Hi there, I'm Blanca -- your nurse's aide.

TROY

Blanca, it's me. Troy.

BLANCA

Troy?? Look at you, all healthy and glowing!

Troy opens his mouth and sticks out his tongue.

TROY

The thrush is gone.

BLANCA

I can see those anti-fungals worked!

TROY

That, and I got into the trial -- the one where they give us multiple drugs at once.

BLANCA

The cocktail.

TROY

Yes. And it's working! Within two weeks, my thrush was completely gone. No more swollen glands.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

4

CONTINUED:

4

TROY (CONT'D)

I have an appetite again, I've gained weight. I feel great.

PUSH-IN on Blanca.

BLANCA

Who in the hospital got you into the trial?

CUT TO:

5

INT. ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL -- ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE -- LATER 5

Blanca heatedly debates with VANESSA, 40's, white, the hospital's director.

BLANCA

What do you mean protocol? This white boy has only been positive for a year and he gets in. Pray Tell is on his last limb! He needs this new drug therapy now!

VANESSA

I'm sorry, Blanca, but my hands are tied. You can have your friend fill out an inquiry, but beyond that, the selection of who gets into the trial is completely random.

PUSH IN on Blanca, steaming.

SMASHCUT TO:

6

INT. ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL -- CAFETERIA -- DAY

6

Judy, Blanca and CHRISTOPHER sit at a table in the mostly-empty cafeteria.

JUDY

It's bullshit.

CHRISTOPHER

I have never had an AIDS patient who was black or latin who was offered a spot in those trials.

JUDY

Any trials, sweetheart. Who do you think runs pharmaceutical companies? The same old, white, impotent men that run the government.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JUDY (CONT'D)

Sure they'll do the right thing to save some little, white twink -- after being forced to under enormous public pressure. But no way they are going to stand in the way of a good ol' black and brown genocide.

Christopher stands. Furious.

CHRISTOPHER

Nothing changes until we make it change. I'm getting Pray on those drugs.

BLANCA

Baby, how you gonna do that?

CHRISTOPHER

The only way you can ever get white people to do anything -- scare them. You coming?

Off Blanca's smile...

INT. ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL -- ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE -- LATER 7

Blanca, Judy and Christopher meet with Vanessa.

VANESSA

I told you, this is out of my hands. The protocols for who gets in the study are determined by the drug companies and the CDC. I know the optics are bad...

BLANCA

Optics? A pile of dead people is bad optics?

CHRISTOPHER

A pile of dead black people is bad optics. A pile of dead white people is a national tragedy.

VANESSA

Race is not the only factor that determines who is getting these drugs.

JUDY

How many people are in this study?

(CONTINUED)

VANESSA

I can't tell you that.

CHRISTOPHER

I can. I asked the doctors who are administering it. Eighty.

JUDY

And how many of those eighty are black or latin?

VANESSA

I can't tell you that either.

CHRISTOPHER

Two. *Two!!!*

VANESSA

Doctor, calm down.

CHRISTOPHER

You're telling a doctor to calm down because he wants to keep people from dying?

VANESSA

I like all of you. You're excellent employees, but my advice to you is to take a breath and not cause trouble. Not just because you could be terminated but because these drugs appear to be working. Why would you want to interrupt the scientists and possibly delay the results of their study?

CHRISTOPHER

Because their study is flawed if it's only including white people! It's not only biased -- it's not scientifically sound!

BLANCA

Look, Vanessa, I know ACT UP was slow in building a rainbow coalition to fight this disease, but they caught up now. And they are going to be all kinds of fired up when they hear that only two out of eighty people in this specific study are people of color. It won't take three hours to get a crowd of angry folks down here to protest.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BLANCA (CONT'D)

Bring some of their TV and newspaper friends to chronicle the whole thing. Now I'm just a nurse's aide but I can tell you for sure that for this hospital, that is some *bad optics*.

Vanessa is clearly shaken by the possibility of this.

JUDY

I like the look of terror in your eyes. It tells me that you're actually going to do something.

Vanessa thinks, then --

VANESSA

I don't like to be threatened. But I also don't disagree with you. I'll make some calls and get your friend in the trial.

CHRISTOPHER

Not enough. We need two slots. One for Pray Tell and one for Blanca.

Blanca is stunned. CUT TO:

8 EXT. ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL -- DAY 8

Blanca is smoking. Pacing. Christopher enters. THRILLED. He HUGS her.

CHRISTOPHER

We did it! You and Pray are in!

She doesn't seem totally pleased.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

What?

BLANCA

I'm happy for Pray -- he's in so much worse shape than I am. But I don't think I need it. Shouldn't we find someone who is sicker?

CHRISTOPHER

This new idea of combination therapy stops HIV from multiplying in different stages, which in turn prevents it from attacking your immune system.

(MORE)

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(CONTINUED)

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

Waiting until you're sick means
that the damage has already been
done. If they work, it could mean a
normal, healthy life. Don't you
want that?

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(CONTINUED)

BLANCA

Ain't you ever heard of the
Tuskegee study?

CHRISTOPHER

Of course I have.

BLANCA

They let six hundred black men die
of syphilis all in the name of
science. In Puerto Rico they used
local women as guinea pigs to test
birth control pills. A bunch of
them died.

CHRISTOPHER

This isn't either of those
situations. This is a genuine,
robust, scientific trial of a drug
by a publicly traded pharmaceutical
company in conjunction with the
CDC. And it's working.

She still isn't sure.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

Sweetheart, I love you. And I don't
want to lose you. You don't have to
trust the drug company or the
government, you just have to trust
me.

He kisses her. She smiles. Off her look...

INT. ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL -- PRAY'S ROOM -- DAY

Pray, Blanca, Judy, Christopher and Vanessa. Pray and Blanca
sign some forms.

VANESSA

Those are confidentiality
agreements. You are now known as
patients 00643 and 00644. These are
log books.

She hands them notebooks.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

This particular trial is to test
the efficacy of combining protease
inhibitors with non-nucleoside
reverse transcriptase inhibitors.
You need to take the pills on a
very specific schedule.

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(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

VANESSA (CONT'D)

You're to mark down the date and time you take them and then bring these books to your weekly blood tests. There's also a section on each page for taking notes on how you're feeling, if any symptoms have come or gone, that kind of thing.

*

BLANCA

Are there any side effects?

*

PRAY TELL

Besides living? I don't care. Just give me the pills.

VANESSA

We are still unsure of the toxicity of this particular dosing. Along with you're weekly blood tests, we need you to come in once a month for a thorough examination. If you develop a fever or feel any body aches, it's important that you call this number immediately.

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Vanessa points to a phone number on the form. Blanca and Pray exchange looks, nervous. Judy hands Pray a DIXIE CUP with PILLS. Christopher hands one to Blanca. They all look at each other.

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PRAY TELL

(breaking the tension)

Here's to being so old they start to call me grandma. And champagne toasts in the year 2000.

*

They muster a laugh. Then, a dramatic beat and they DOWN THE PILLS as we --

*

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

10 EXT. NYC STREET -- DAY 10

REAR VIEW: Pray bounds down the street with an extra pep in his step. His cane is a fashion choice, not a necessity. He smiles at several PASSERSBY. We circle around to find Pray, now glowing with good health. His eyes are clear!

And then those eyes go wide as he clocks a familiar face. It's RICKY. Pray's smile is erased, he becomes serious.

Both men stop. Their eyes locked. A frozen stunned Ricky watches as Pray struts toward him. A beat before Pray's smile creeps back onto his face. He flings his arms around Ricky. Ricky receives Pray. Hugs him back so hard.

11 EXT. NYC STOOP -- LATER 11

Pray and Ricky relax, sharing a pretzel.

PRAY TELL

You look like you saw a ghost earlier.

RICKY

A ghost from dating past. It's been, what? Two months?

PRAY TELL

Since Angel and Papi's wedding. I really thought it was over for me. And then I got into a clinical trial at the hospital.

RICKY

What's this trial?

PRAY TELL

I'm taking a cocktail of meds.

RICKY

You know drugs are lethal. Remember what they did to Blanca?

PRAY TELL

I'm not taking AZT. This is some new stuff. And it works. Look at me. My t-cells are climbing. I got a new lease on life. I feel like a twenty-something. And now that I know I'm going to live, I don't want to have a single regret.

(MORE)

*

(CONTINUED)

11

CONTINUED:

11

PRAY TELL (CONT'D)

Life was just passing me by, and there's so much living I've missed.

RICKY

I feel you.

PRAY TELL

Oh really? What've you missed?

RICKY

You.

Pray smiles, reaches for Ricky. They sit hand in hand.

PRAY TELL

I missed you too. But don't let it get to your head! I also missed performing. I gotta get back on a stage but my ass is too old for ballroom.

RICKY

I feel the same way.

PRAY TELL

Bitch, you are too young to be feeling too old. But I think I know what might help.

Off a curious Ricky --

12

INT. AUDITORIUM -- AFTERNOON

12

WE SEE a CHOIR -- gay men of all hues -- on a makeshift riser rehearsing. SHERILYN is at the piano. Pray and Ricky enter, watch and listen.

PRAY TELL

After rehab I spent some time searching for community. And a way to use my voice in protest of all the injustice I've witnessed.

RICKY

What about ACT UP?

PRAY TELL

I'm still involved but I was worried I'd be a liability. I couldn't see, could barely walk. So I had to find another outlet. Another form of protest. And then I stumbled upon the Gay Men's Choir. Join us.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PRAY TELL (CONT'D)

You need a place to release all
that pent up energy you're
carrying. We both do.

As the rehearsal ends, JON, the Choir Director waves at Pray.

JON

Hey Pray, you joining us?

PRAY TELL

Yes. And I bought a new voice. This
is Ricky.

JON

Oh, is this THE Ricky?

Jon and Pray share a look.

PRAY TELL

This is him.

JON

Cute. Nice to meet you, Ricky.
We're rehearsing Love Lives On. You
know it?

RICKY

I do.

Sherilyn hands Ricky sheet music, he joins Pray on stage,
joining the choir on risers. There are 25 Choir MEMBERS in
BLACK. 4 are wearing WHITE.

JON

Okay gentleman. Our spring gala is
in a week and this song has to be
perfect. Let's get in formation
please.

The 25 members in black turn their backs to Jon. A confused
Ricky doesn't move. Pray motions for Ricky to also turn.

RICKY

(whispering)

Why are we singing with our back
toward the audience?

PRAY TELL

The men wearing white facing
forward represent original founding
members of this group who have
survived the plague. And the men in
black are all the souls in this
group lost too soon.

(CONTINUED)

13

PRAY TELL (CONT'D)

Took the express-lane through the five stages of dying -- an hour or two on denial, a few days on anger, skipped right over bargaining to depression then after a week I'd found acceptance.

BLANCA

What's that like now, getting to that place and then getting another chance at living?

A beat. SLOW PUSH IN on Pray as his face and spirit softens.

PRAY TELL

It's the most beautiful feeling in the world. It's...it feels like bliss. Because it means we can go to Paris for Christmas and dine out at the Twenty-one Club and sit in the park watching the birds return in Spring, or I could die tomorrow and there's joy in all of it. Today could be filled with a sweaty ballroom or some laziness on the couch in front of General Hospital or a drink with a friend, it don't matter. Because today feels like enough.

BLANCA

That's beautiful, Pray. You know what I want to do more than anything? Make plans. Any plans. Don't matter what, I just want to know that we can. That the future is still something that we allowed to have.

PRAY TELL

The first plan we need to make is to never work on this damn quilt again.

BLANCA

Deal.

14

INT. PRAY TELL'S APARTMENT -- EVENING

14

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We see remnants of a party -- a charcuterie platter, empty glasses. Pray and Ricky hug Jon, and several choir members goodbye.

*

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*

(CONTINUED)

PRAY TELL

This was fun! I'll see ya'll at the
next rehearsal.

RICKY

Goodnight!

Pray shuts the front door. Ricky grabs his jacket.

RICKY (CONT'D)

Thanks for inviting me. We gotta do
it again.

PRAY TELL

Excuse me, your ass ain't going
nowhere until you help me clean up
this mess!

RICKY

You always trynna put someone to
work!

Pray picks up a platter, passes it to him. They laugh as they
begin to clean up.

RICKY (CONT'D)

I'm really shocked how much I'm
enjoying being part of the gay
men's choir. Honestly I thought it
was gonna be a bunch of soulless
white boys singing show tunes. But
we're pretty good.

PRAY TELL

Told you so! Singing with the choir
has been healing. It's even got me
thinking about my fashion line
again. Which gives me the perfect
excuse to travel around the world
seeking inspiration. I might want
to learn French. I want to run the
NY marathon. I want to go scuba
diving. I want to fall in love
again. There are endless
possibilities.

RICKY

That all sounds great.

PRAY TELL

And how about you? You touring
soon?

(CONTINUED)

RICKY

Nah. I dunno if that life is for me
anymore. I'm tired, Pray. Tired of
hustling, tired of auditioning,
tired of hopping between
houses...and beds. I'm almost 30
and I ain't done shit with my life--

*
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PRAY TELL

Stop selling yourself short. You
ain't giving up on your dream.
Listen, we've been through a lot
together. I know you. You need to
be up on a stage. That's where
you're happiest. That's where
you're at your best. That's why I
invited you to be part of the
choir. Don't give up on yourself.
You hear me?

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The tears that fall from Ricky's face aren't from gratitude.
Pray tell can see that.

PRAY TELL (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

Ricky unbuttons his shirt, moves the front of the shirt to
the side. Pray's eyes widen. And then we see what he sees. On
Ricky's exposed left pec is a purple lesion. Kaposi Sarcoma.

RICKY

This is it for me. There's no more
living. No more plans --

*

PRAY TELL

No! Don't you say that. I got you.
I got you, you hear me?

Pray pulls an inconsolable Ricky for a long, protective hug.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

15 INT. ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL -- CAFETERIA -- DAY

15

Pray and Judy having coffee. In great spirits.

PRAY TELL

Don't it make sense that the food
in a hospital should be the finest
gourmet shit in the world?

(off her look)

I'm serious. For a lot of people
it's their last meal. Maybe put a
little effort into it?

She laughs.

JUDY

If the food was too good, people
would stay longer.

PRAY TELL

I have been in this hospital,
darling -- they could have been
serving a sixteen course meal from
Le Cirque every day and I would
STILL have been gone by the time
they served the salad if I had felt
well enough.

More cackling. A beat, she looks at him. Shakes her head.
Gets emotional. Her eyes fill with tears. He grabs her hand.

PRAY TELL (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

JUDY

Pray...I'm just so happy you're
well. It's been hell working here,
watching young men die for
years...you know? No hope. I
trained to make people better,
saving them...and that's not what
I've been doing. But now, with this
cocktail you're on...there's a
light. There's hope. And it came in
time for you. I just think I'm
feeling a lot of things that I
haven't let myself feel for a long
time. If I cried over every dead
gay man I lost I'd have never
stopped crying.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JUDY (CONT'D)

I have a feeling that if these drugs really work, I'm going to need to take a little time off to get my sanity back.

PRAY TELL

You've been an angel to our community, Judy.

They share teary smiles. Lots of gratitude, and pain. Christopher and Blanca enter. Pissed off.

BLANCA

They ain't gonna let any more people of color into the trials.

CHRISTOPHER

We just met with Vanessa again. She spoke to the drug company.

BLANCA

They gave her some bullshit about the study being too far down the line and the cost of adding new patients.

JUDY

Cost? Hundreds of thousands of people are going to die without the drugs. Who gives a fuck about costs?

PRAY TELL

(exploding)

No! It shouldn't just be us that are lucky enough!

Everyone stops and stares at him. He takes a beat.

PRAY TELL (CONT'D)

We're no better than anyone else, our lives have no more meaning than our friends who we've lost and are losing! They're asking us to do nothing while we live and watch them die? To find proof of why we're deserving but they're not? They give us life and charge us the price of survivor's guilt!

BLANCA

Pray's right. How could I live with myself if I let this go on this way without a fight.

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTOPHER

So what are we gonna do about it?

Pray and Blanca share a look. They know what they have to do.

16 EXT. MANHATTAN OFFICE BUILDING -- DAY 16

Hundreds of PROTESTERS gather outside the headquarters of A PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY. Gauntly ill AID PATIENTS and ACT-UP MEMBERS wear t-shirts and hold signs that read "TREATMENT OR RIOT," "MEDS WILL SET US FREE." Blanca, Pray Tell, Christopher and Judy lead Elektra, Angel, Ricky, Papi, WANDA, SYD, VERONICA, APHRODITE, LEMAR, PRETENTIA, WRATH, SHADOW, NEFERTITI, KIKI PENDAVIS, B. HAWK, FLORIDA, JACK, MANHATTAN, CASTLE, TYRONE and the ballroom community in chanting --

PROTESTERS

HEALTHCARE IS A RIGHT! HEALTHCARE
IS A RIGHT!

PRAY TELL

(on a megaphone)

It takes nine months to test a drug
in Europe, but in the U-S-of-A it
is takes years. We are not asking
that you release unsafe meds to us.
We are simply asking you to speed
up the process!

A group of protestors scuffle with a few COPS. The cops push them back, and an ELDERLY WOMAN falls to the ground.

RICKY

Get your hands off of her!

POLICE OFFICER #1

Go home, faggot.

BLANCA

This is our home! How dare you
treat us this way!

POLICE OFFICER #2

You're fighting a lost cause.

ANGEL

We either fight, or we die!

The protestors push back against the police, who start beating people with batons. The crowd gets louder and angrier. An ACT-UP FLAG flies up a pole.

(CONTINUED)

PROTESTERS
A-Z-T IS NOT ENOUGH! GIVE US ALL
THE OTHER STUFF!

The protestors line up, arm and arm, and push their way past the police. They approach the steps of the building.

PROTESTERS (CONT'D)
SEIZE CONTROL! SEIZE CONTROL! SEIZE
CONTROL!

A YOUNG PROTESTOR scales the side of the building and hangs a GIANT ACT-UP BANNER from the awning. The crowd cheers him on. Office workers peer out of their windows in horror. A PHARMACEUTICAL REP comes out of the building and approaches Pray Tell.

PHARMACEUTICAL REP
Can I speak to the person in charge
of this?

PRAY TELL
You're speaking to him.

PHARMACEUTICAL REP
This is all getting out of hand. We
don't want anyone getting hurt.

PRAY TELL
Too late for that. We're out here
because we're dying.

PHARMACEUTICAL REP
And we are doing everything we can
to stop that from happening. Can
you please just ask everyone to go
home?

BLANCA
Send us home with the new meds,
enough for everybody that needs
them, and we'll gladly be on our
way.

PHARMACEUTICAL REP
I can't do that.

PRAY TELL
Then what can you do?

Off the representative, uncertain --

CUT TO:

17

INT. HALL -- GREENROOM -- NIGHT

17

Blanca and Pray are seated side-by-side, fixing their faces in the mirror. They're wearing shiny patent trench coats. A wig is on a mannequin head next to Pray, who wears a stocking cap. Blanca is downright giddy from the protest --

BLANCA

I knew what needed to be done was going right to the source and scaring their asses to do the right thing.

PRAY TELL

How is their refusal to add more people -- people of color, poor people, our people -- into the trial doing the right thing?

BLANCA

Pray. They lowering the costs because we took action. The next step --

PRAY TELL

THAT! AIN'T! ENOUGH! Everybody ain't got time to be waiting for these white people to do what's right. We not the only ones who been smacked with an expiration date. And even at a lower cost, these drugs won't be available to the public for over a year! It's fucking outrageous how they're playing God.

Everyone turns to them. Blanca reaches out to him.

BLANCA

(whispering)

Pray, I know...

He looks to her, calming down.

PRAY TELL

I'm sorry. It's just...we can't be the only lucky ones. I don't want to lose no more of our people.

BLANCA

I don't either.

(then)

You sure you wanna do this?

(CONTINUED)

He pauses, looks in the mirror, continues putting on his face.

PRAY TELL

Uh-uh. You ain't using my rage and gift for tantruming to chicken out. We doing this.

She turns back to doing her makeup, insecure now.

BLANCA

Boy, there was still leaves in Central Park the last time we walked a ball. It's been -- what? At least 5, 6 months.

PRAY TELL

And I was a drunk hot-ass mess then. That's why I need to earn back my glory, get my name in ballroom's good graces again. I can't have these children dragging me for all eternity.

She looks at him, proud. He's his old self again.

BLANCA

Gotta let them know what a real legend looks like, huh?

PRAY TELL

You mean, *legends*...
(off her smile)
Candy would be gagged seeing us performing *together* in her sweet honor.

BLANCA

Now I know the medication's gotten to your head. Candy ain't never been sweet to your ass!

They cackle.

PRAY TELL

Word on the street is Dr. Christopher is out there tonight, his first ball...

BLANCA

I never been this nervous at a ball since I appeared the first time in that sad Shake-N-Go wig. Thank god I won't be doing this alone.

(CONTINUED)

PRAY TELL

It's cute seeing you like this, all
in love, wanting to impress your
maaaaaaan.

BLANCA

I do love that man. He pushes me --
tells me everyday that I'm
beautiful, that I'm smart, that I
deserve...

She catches herself. Pray reaches out to her --

BLANCA (CONT'D)

That I deserve to be here.

PRAY TELL

I'm glad you found him. He's a lil
too clean cut for my taste -- but
he's cute, you know, for you.

BLANCA

Stop hatin' -- you know my man is
FINE.

PRAY TELL

Are wedding bells on your bucket
list?

BLANCA

Sloooow down. Ain't nobody trynna
get married. But, sharing a life,
one that I actually now know I'll
get to live, now that is on my
list.

(a beat)

He's moving in when his lease is up
at the end of the month. I'm so
happy, Pray. I'm a lucky girl.

PRAY TELL

(emotional)

No, he's the lucky one cause he got
a real one. The best one. Never
forget that.

BLANCA

What's next on your bucket list?
You start learning French so you
can set up your *a-teller* -- that
how you say it?

(CONTINUED)

PRAY TELL

Atelier, darling! Nah, girl. I realized I've done almost everything I ever set out to do when I left my mama's house. I got to *live* my truth without apology. I got to *werk* the most treacherous of runways on that ballroom floor. I got to *poooooose* with the best of them, including you -- my most precious sister. My name may not be on labels across the Atlantic, but my impact has been felt here.

He puts his hand to Blanca's heart

PRAY TELL (CONT'D)

I've left a lasting mark...I know that now. I've lived a life, Blanca.

BLANCA

You sure have, Pray.

They are a mess now as they take one another in --

PRAY TELL

Whew chile. Okay. Everybody in place?

BLANCA

Yeah, Ricky and Papi just waiting on us.

PRAY TELL

It is almost 2am!

BLANCA

We the grand finale! You know they all stunt queens at heart so they don't mind the wait.

She winks as Pray snatches the wig off the mannequin head.

PRAY TELL

Alright. Let's get this pinned on real tight and give these children a show they'll never forget!

Manhattan is at the mic. The other MC -- Castle -- sits at the judges' table.

*

(CONTINUED)

MANHATTAN

To remind y'all do-gooders this evening's admission fee as well as all cash prizes will be donated to the Ballroom Fund to benefit our brothers and sisters struggling with HIV/AIDS.

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

Elektra, Lulu, Angel, sit at the Evangelista table, across the way from Lemar and the House of Khan. All the people we love stayed late for this special event --

*

STAIRWAY -- SAME

MANHATAN (V.O.)

NOW! It's the moment you all have been waiting for: The final category of the night -- Candy's Sweet Refrain!

*
*
*
*
*

We follow RAIN BOOTS -- belonging to PAPI and Ricky as they pull Christopher -- up to the balcony for the show...

*
*

MAIN FLOOR -- RESUME

MANHATTAN

TONIGHT paying tribute to the grandest Diva herself -- Miss Diana Ross -- who proved in her ICONIC 1983 Live in Central Park performance that "no wind, no rain" can ever stop her -- we've got a special appearance from two of our own Divas to cap off our Winter Ball Fundraiser...

*
*
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*

The lights go down and the crowd murmurs as the opening notes of Diana Ross' "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" begins. A pool of light flashes and there's --

MANHATTAN (CONT'D)

Blanca Evangelista and the godfatha himself Pray Tell!

*
*

Pray and Blanca slither out, ooohing and ahhhhing for their lives. Pray sings the lead as his hero Diana Ross.

PRAY TELL

If you need me, call me. No matter where you are, no matter how far. Just call my name, I'll be there in a hurry. On that, you can depend and never worry.

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED: (2) 18

No wind... BLANCA PRAY TELL (CONT'D)
No wind...

No rain... BLANCA (CONT'D) PRAY TELL (CONT'D)
No rain...

(CONTINUED)

PRAY TELL (CONT'D)
Nor winter's cold...

BLANCA PRAY TELL (CONT'D)
Can stop me babe... Oh babe...

BLANCA (CONT'D) PRAY TELL (CONT'D)
Baby... Baby...

BLANCA (CONT'D)
If you're my goal...

They continue on like this, until the first verse which Blanca starts in the lead. She slinks her way toward ballroom virgin Christopher who looks as if he's at Disney World.

BLANCA (CONT'D)
I know, I know you must follow the sun. Wherever it leads. But remember if you should fall short of your desires. Remember life holds for you one guarantee. You'll always have me.

Pray takes the next part of the verse and he sings to the room, especially his beloved Blanca.

PRAY TELL
And if you should miss my love one of these old days...if you should ever miss the arms that used to hold you so close, or the lips that used to touch yours so tenderly. Just remember what I told you the day I set you free...

As the chorus kicks in, they are gloriously giddy as they hold hands in the center of the ballroom floor -- RAIN FLOWS on Pray and Blanca. The crowd GASPS! It's coming from the balcony -- Papi and Ricky beam as they spray shower hoses in tribute to Miss Ross and her storms in Central Park.

BLANCA PRAY TELL (CONT'D)
Ain't no mountain high enough. Ahhh...

BLANCA (CONT'D) PRAY TELL (CONT'D)
Ain't no valley low enough... Oooohhh...

BLANCA (CONT'D) PRAY TELL (CONT'D)
Ain't no river wide enough... Ahhh-ohhhh...

(CONTINUED)

BLANCA (CONT'D) PRAY TELL (CONT'D)
*To keep me from you. Ain't no Owww...
mountain high enough.*

BLANCA (CONT'D) PRAY TELL (CONT'D)
Ain't no valley low enough... Say it again.

BLANCA (CONT'D) PRAY TELL (CONT'D)
Ain't no river wide enough... Hey hey.

BLANCA/PRAY TELL
*Ain't no mountain high enough.
Nothing can keep me, keep me from
you...*

They spin and twirl as the music continues on. They are having the time of their lives. The entire ballroom is on their feet! As the song ends --

MANHATTAN

Talk about a return to the ballroom floor! It'd be sacrilege to judge what we just witnessed. This will go down as ballroom legend!

*
*

Castle and Manhattan rush down and give them both TROPHIES. Off our duo, clutching their trophies in victory!

19 EXT. HALL -- LATER 19

Ricky and Pray sit. Pray smokes.

RICKY
I don't think I've ever seen anything sexier in my life.

PRAY TELL
Uhm-hmmm...you know how wet you get me.

RICKY
I can't stand you.

Blanca and Christopher exit --

BLANCA
You know damn well you shouldn't be smoking!

CHRISTOPHER
I concur.

(CONTINUED)

PRAY TELL

Leave me be. I don't drink. I don't
drug. One cigarette after giving my
all to ballroom ain't gone kill me.

(off their nods)

So Christopher, what you think of
our humble abode?

CHRISTOPHER

I love it. At first I was scared
because I didn't know what to
expect but ballroom is basically
like going to church. A lot of
costumes and theatrics and
worshipping -- and I'm into it.

RICKY

So when you walking, my man?

They laugh at the thought --

CHRISTOPHER

Nah, that ain't my ministry but how
about I cook for the four of us --
next Friday -- at Blanca's...

BLANCA

(correcting)

At *ours*.

CHRISTOPHER

Yes, *ours*.

RICKY

Sounds like a plan.

Pray offers a sweet smile. Then, Ricky shakes Christopher's
hand, kisses Blanca and hugs Pray --

RICKY (CONT'D)

(to Pray)

See you tomorrow?

Pray nods. Ricky exits. Christopher shakes Pray's hand.
Blanca kisses Pray. Suddenly, he pulls her in tight, close.

PRAY TELL

(whispering)

Ain't no mountain high enough...

He looks at her, face to face, and they take one another in.
She squints, studying him a flash of a thought that she wipes
away with a smile. He watches her as she walks away, hand-in-
hand, with Christopher.

(CONTINUED)

PRAY TELL (CONT'D)

Christopher! --
(off his turn)
You keep her safe now.

Christopher nods. Blanca blows a kiss to Pray. He catches it. Pray takes in the night, a deep breath, and walks in the opposite direction --

20 INT. PRAY TELL'S APARTMENT -- LATER 20

The lights are low. The light of a candle flickers on the vanity where Pray sits. Aretha Franklin's "I Say A Little Prayer for You" plays lowly. Pray wears a robe and boxers.

He pulls off his layers -- starting with each lash. He smears his lipstick off. Hot towels and cold cream is used. It's meditative, purposeful, full of intent -- like his life.

His face is now bare. He closes his eyes, sways as he listens to Aretha say, "Answer my prayer..." The music stops as the record spins and crackles...He opens his eyes and takes himself in. He smiles -- moved. Proud.

Pray blows out the candle.

21 INT. PRAY TELL'S APARTMENT -- DAY 21

Ricky approaches Pray Tell's apartment door. Attempts to open the door. It's locked. Ricky digs into his pocket, pulls a key. He opens the door. The apartment is silent.

RICKY
Pray? You here?

Ricky enters the bedroom. Pray is laying down, eyes open. Peaceful. Ricky studies Pray. He isn't breathing!

RICKY (CONT'D)
Pray? Pray Tell! Oh my god. No, no, no, no, no. Pray, I need you to breath. Pray!

Ricky picks up the phone beside Pray's bed. He dials 9-1-1.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
9-1-1. What's your emergency?

RICKY
My friend. He isn't breathing. I need an ambulance here. Please send someone quickly!

(CONTINUED)

21

OPERATOR

How long has it been since he
hasn't been breathing --

RICKY

I don't know! Send someone over
now. I'm at (Address).

Ricky drops the phone, places his mouth over Pray's gives
several breaths. He begins chest compressions.

RICKY (CONT'D)

C'mon Pray. I need you to breath.

CUT TO:

22

INT. AMBULANCE -- LATER

22

An ambulance barrels down a busy NYC street. Ricky watches as
two EMT's continue to do chest compressions and give oxygen
to Pray Tell. Ricky sinks to his knees, begins to sob.

23

INT. ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL -- NURSE'S STATION -- DAY

23

Blanca approaches the nurse's station, files away several
folders. Judy sprints down the hallway, approaches.

JUDY

BLANCA!

Off Blanca, clocking Judy's concern --

24

INT. ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL -- HALLWAY -- DAY

24

The sole of REEBOKS slap against tile. We PULL BACK to see a
panicked Blanca dart down the hallway, Judy in tow. She's
flushed, out of breath. But doesn't stop.

Blanca turns down a familiar hall, finds Ricky sitting on a
chair alone.

BLANCA

Ricky! How's Pray?

Ricky's face drops. His face a fountain of tears.

RICKY

They tried everything --

BLANCA

No!

An inconsolable Blanca falls into Ricky's arms.

25 INT. MORGUE -- LATER 25

Blanca stands before a large steel bed. A body, Pray's body, beneath a white sheet. A MEDICAL EXAMINER lifts the blanket revealing Pray's face. His eyes still open.

The room goes silent. Blanca doesn't try to fight the tears. She approaches his still body. She places her fingers on his lids. Closes them. Exits.

DISSOLVE TO:

26 INT. HOUSE OF EVANGELISTA -- DINING ROOM -- EVENING 26

Elektra, Angel, Lulu, Ricky, Papi, Judy and Christopher are gathered around the table. A numb Blanca serves a lasagna casserole, but nobody touches it. They just sit there, in shock.

BLANCA

Come on, y'all. Pray Tell wouldn't want you going hungry.

ANGEL

I just don't understand how it happened so fast. I thought them meds was helping him.

JUDY

This is the thing with clinical trials. Sometimes they give you a placebo, and you never know it.

PAPI

That's fucked up. You think he was feeling better cuz it was all in his head?

JUDY

Maybe. Or it's possible that his organs had already suffered too much, even though his immune system started coming back.

BLANCA

The coroner said that inflammation of the heart is what brought on the attack. Something like that doesn't just happen over night. Who knows how long his poor body had been struggling for.

Ricky starts to cry.

(CONTINUED)

RICKY

I don't want this to happen to you, Blanca. I don't want this to happen to me. I don't want this to happen to anyone else in our family.

BLANCA

We're gonna be okay, baby. They been checkin my levels in that trial and they said the meds are working. And look at you, you look healthier than ever, and you ain't taking the pills.

Off Ricky's guilt --

BLANCA (CONT'D)

What is it?

RICKY

I been taking the same pills Pray was taking.

LULU

How is that possible?

RICKY

I found a lesion...what's it called? Kaposi's sarcoma.

Blanca, in shock, grabs Ricky's hand.

CUT TO:

INT. PRAY TELL'S APARTMENT -- NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Pray Tell leads Ricky into his bathroom. Opens the medicine cabinet. Retrieves a bottle of pills. Counts them out and into a baggie.

RICKY (V.O.)

Pray told me that I didn't need to worry, that he had some new medication for me. He said he had a hookup from the doctor's in the trial. I came over to his place every week for two months, and he always had more for me. It didn't make sense that the doctor would've just given him more pills, but the spot went away and I felt strong again, so I didn't say anything.

CUT TO:

28

INT. HOUSE OF EVANGELISTA -- DINING ROOM -- RESUME

28

RICKY

I thought maybe he was swiping them
from the trial.

JUDY

Those trials are guarded better
than The Hope Diamond. There's no
way he could've swiped them, and
the doctor's there sure as hell
aren't giving out extra doses.

RICKY

(realizing)

Oh my God. No. Pray! Why would you
do this?

He breaks down. Elektra comforts him.

ELEKTRA

What, Ricky? What is it?

RICKY

He was giving me his own pills. He
sacrificed his life so that I could
live.

Looks around the room, in disbelief. EVERYONE breaks down,
crying. PULL OUT on a grieving family.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

29

INT. LGBT CENTER -- NIGHT

29

An ACT-UP meeting. Crowded room. Old radiators over-pump heat, creating a sweaty fatigue across the room. Several people wave themselves with pamphlets, etc. Ricky holds back tears as Syd, Blanca, Judy, Wanda stand in front of a microphone and passionately organize an upcoming protest.

BLANCA

These protease inhibitors are a miracle. I'm watching my patients make a full recovery from something that would've otherwise sent them to the grave. We're calling it "The Lazarus Effect."

JUDY

The question is no longer "what do we do," but rather, "how do we do it?"

BLANCA

Exactly. Some of us are lucky to get into the trials, but what about those who can't afford ten thousand dollars a year for meds?

WANDA

It's the same fucking problem we've always had. Politicians and big pharma are dragging their asses because our lives mean nothing to them. That's why we've got to take this next protest a step further.

BLANCA

Many of you are thinking to yourself -- how are we gonna do that? We've tried every non-violent act there is. We must think of a new way. And we're working on that.

Lots of claps and roars of support. Then --

SYD

Here's an idea. It's a radical step, but it's a necessary one to get these motherfucker's attention because we will never have their empathy, or compassion.

Syd pauses.

(CONTINUED)

SYD (CONT'D)

We are going to release the ashes of those we've lost onto the mayor's fucking front lawn. That way he won't just see the dead as just a number anymore.

Murmurs around the room. Blanca and Judy exchange a look -- is Syd serious?

RICKY

You're asking us to dump our loved ones out for a protest?

SYD

I don't see any other option.

BLANCA

What if we stage a die-in on his lawn instead?

WANDA

We've done a hundred die-in's, and do they ever listen?

PROTESTERS

NO!!!

WANDA

Who here is willing to make this kind of sacrifice?

A scattering of hands raise. JANELLE, an older black woman speaks up --

JANELLE

Before my son died two days ago, he asked me to drop his body on the doorsteps of the FDA, but I think this could be even more powerful. Count me in.

A few others speak up --

PROTESTERS

Me too! / Let's do it! / Fuck it, we got nothing to lose!

SYD

Let's vote on it -- who here thinks their loved ones would want their ashes to be a part history?

A few more hands raise.

(CONTINUED)

SYD (CONT'D)

We have thousands and thousands of loved ones, sitting in urns, moribund and inactive. Well if you ask me, they were revolutionaries who died for a cause, who beyond the grave call out to be in service. And they would want to be active in our final fight! Who's willing to send one more message out into the world, to demand access to life-saving meds, to stop this endless death?

More hands raise. A roar of unity. Blanca looks to Ricky, uncertain --

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE OF EVANGELISTA -- DAY

Blanca alone. Crying over Pray. Looking at old PHOTOS. A KNOCK at the door. She answers -- it's CHARLENE -- Pray Tell's MOTHER -- though Blanca doesn't know that.

BLANCA

Can I help you?

CHARLENE

Blanca?

(off Blanca's confusion)

I'm Charlene. Pray Tell's mother. May I come in and talk? Mother to mother.

BLANCA

Of course. I'm sorry. Now I see the resemblance. Please, come in.

Charlene enters. A little nervous. She's carrying a LITTLE BOX along with a VELVET BAG. Blanca leads her to the LIVING ROOM. *

BLANCA (CONT'D)

I got some ice tea brewed, you want some?

CHARLENE

That would be lovely.

Blanca notices how nervous Charlene seems. She makes her a glass of tea, then grabs a BOTTLE OF WHISKEY.

(CONTINUED)

BLANCA

You want a little something adult
in there?

CHARLENE

Oh, I couldn't.

BLANCA

Honey, you look like you gonna
faint if I drop a pin in here.

Charlene surrenders and Blanca spikes her tea. Notices the
box. Realizes what it is.

BLANCA (CONT'D)

Is that...?

CHARLENE

He wanted to be cremated.

BLANCA

No pine box on Hart Island for him.

Charlene doesn't understand but Blanca doesn't notice. She's
too focused on the box. She touches it.

CHARLENE

I'm not nervous. I'm ashamed. I
know who you were to my son. A
sister, a best friend, a real
mother. And the first time we ever
laid eyes on each other was when I
knocked on that door. What would
Pray Tell have said if he was here
to see us having grown up tea
together?

BLANCA

I think it may have been the only
thing that might have ever made him
speechless.

They laugh lightly. Almost cry.

BLANCA (CONT'D)

Best you put any regret about you
and Pray away right now -- or else
that's all you gonna think about
him for the rest of your life.

CHARLENE

I know -- but what I wouldn't give
for one more minute with him.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CHARLENE (CONT'D)

I don't even know what I'd do with it. But I'd give anything for it.

Blanca takes her hand. Starts to cry.

BLANCA

We had all the minutes we gonna get.

CHARLENE

I came here to ask you for something -- I want to be a mother to my son. I brought him into the world and now I want to be the one who gives him what he wanted on his way out of it. He made a will, with my sister Jada. She had power of attorney to fulfill his last wishes. I begged her -- on my knees to let me be the one to do it, though. Thank the lord she agreed but I can't make those wishes come true without your help.

BLANCA

Anything. Just tell me what to do.

CHARLENE

These are only half of Pray's ashes. I kept the rest for myself. I hope that's okay. Do you think he would want that?

Blanca nods kindly.

BLANCA

I think he would want that you want that.

CHARLENE

Pray left heart shaped locket along with necklaces.

*
*

From under her sweater, Charlene REVEALS a necklace and a HEART SHAPED LOCKET.

CHARLENE (CONT'D)

These were for my sisters and I. He wants you to put a little of him in each one and to give the locket to the ones most precious to him. That should use up about half of the ashes you have here. You can do as you please with the rest.

*

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

30

CHARLENE (CONT'D)

Scatter them, keep them, you've got
a mother's rights too, Blanca.

From the bag, Charlene reveals a jewelry box with Blanca's
name on it. She hands it to Blanca. Blanca opens the box.
Sees the necklace and locket Pray left her.

CHARLENE (CONT'D)

May I?

Blanca quietly nods. Charlene places the necklace around
Blanca's neck.

CHARLENE (CONT'D)

It's beautiful.

Blanca holds back the tears.

BLANCA

I'll take care of everything.

Charlene stands.

CHARLENE

Thank you. And thank you for the
tea.

She starts out.

BLANCA

Charlene, wait.

Blanca goes to her.

BLANCA (CONT'D)

I can't have any more minutes with
Pray, but I'm so glad I got to have
these few minutes with you.

A beat, then Charlene grabs Blanca in a hug. Blanca hugs her
back and they hold each other in silence. DISSOLVE TO:

31 INT. PRAY TELL'S APARTMENT -- DAY 31

Blanca stands in Pray Tell's bedroom. She looks at his
vanity, untouched. Papi enters.

PAPI

You okay, Ma?

BLANCA

Yeah, baby.

(CONTINUED)

PAPI

Everyone's here.

Papi leads Blanca to the living room where we find Elektra, Ricky, Lulu, Angel, Beto, Judy, Jack, Manhattan, and Castle.

BLANCA

You're probably wondering why you're here. This was Pray's sanctuary. His home. We had some good times here. And I couldn't think of a more fitting place to carry out Pray's final wish.

Everyone looks at one another. Blanca digs into her bag.

BLANCA (CONT'D)

Ya'll were the most precious to him. You gave him so much. And he wanted to be sure that each of you have a little bit of him.

Blanca hands out the LOCKETS. Elektra is last -- as Blanca hands her hers --

BLANCA (CONT'D)

Originally Pray gave instructions not to give one of these to you -- but he was just playing. He sent his aunt a note about you just to be sure she knew.

(reading off a paper)

He said "*Elektra fights every day to get what's hers -- and maybe that looks like a selfish act -- but the truth is -- every time Elektra gets herself something, she shows all of us and the world how much we capable of. How much we deserve.*"

Blanca helps Elektra put on the locket. Both of them are crying.

BLANCA (CONT'D)

He wrote down a little something to say about all of you, I guess back when he was sure he didn't have too long left. Lulu -- he said you got a real strength in you.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BLANCA (CONT'D)

That sometimes when he was feeling like he couldn't fight no more he would think of you and how you never took any shit off no one and he would laugh and it would get him through the night. Judy -- he said you actually made him believe in the goodness of white people.

Everyone laughs through their tears.

BLANCA (CONT'D)

Angel and Papi -- he never thought that so close to home, in our neighborhood, in our community, he would ever see the kind of romance and love that he saw in the movies. Real, true love. In these darkest times, your love gave him hope for the future. Ricky -- to you he wrote -- *"I was never old with you, I was never sick with you, I didn't have to be the MC up on stage or a father. In the best moments we shared, there was no performance, I could be just me."*

They comfort Ricky as he breaks down.

BLANCA (CONT'D)

To Castle, Manhattan and Jack -- the great Council -- *"Fellas, we held our crazy world together. The tribal chiefs, the four pillars of the Ballroom. Whatever legacy I leave behind, I owe it to your friendship and your commitment to the magic of the Balls."*

ANGEL

What did he write to you, Blanca?

BLANCA

Nothing.

They don't understand.

BLANCA (CONT'D)

There was nothing left unsaid between us.

They get that.

(CONTINUED)

31

BLANCA (CONT'D)

There's one more thing we gotta do.
Something Pray never asked for but
I know he would want. I didn't use
up all of the ashes in them
loquets. The rest left over we
gonna put someplace special.

PRE-LAP -- THE SOUNDS of a LOUD PROTEST.

32

EXT. GRACIE MANSION -- AFTERNOON

32

Wanda, Syd, Veronica, Aphrodite, Lemar, Pretentia, Wrath,
Shadow, Nefertiti, Kiki, B. Hawk, Florida, Jack, Manhattan,
Castle, Tyrone along with dozens of PROTESTORS gather outside
the Mayor's house, holding political signs and boxes of
ashes. Police ride horses, trying to contain the crowd. The
protesters chant the ACT-UP slogan as they slowly march
towards the mansion, in motion, as THREE DRUMMERS play a
funeral tap. *

PROTESTERS *

ACT UP! FIGHT BACK! FIGHT AIDS! *

Included in this protest are members of ACT UP -- MICHAEL
JOHNSON, JEFFREY STEWART, LARRY KRAMER, PETER HUGHES, SARAH
SOUNDRESS, DANIEL TRIAL, STEVEN MARCUS, BEN JOHNSON HUNNICUT,
SVEN ANDRESS, MARLA CONES, JONES GILL, CHARLES HONEY, BRIAN
LANDRESS, LARS TEMPLETON, SALLY STONE, NATE NICHOLS. *

We see a MUSLIN wrapped body, held aloft by SIX MEN. Behind
the body marches the gay man's mother Janelle, who we met in
the Act Up meeting. She is stoic, but clearly fighting
emotion. BEHIND Janelle are members of the STONEWALL
REVOLUTION, another protest group. Included here are members
JONES MCGILL, STEVEN CROSS, MICHAEL RIVERS, PETER PATH,
SULLIVAN POST, SARAH BRIDGES, MARK HARRIS, BRAD FALL. They
chant the slogan again and again, faces contorted in pain and
years of pent up anger. *

Just as the crowd's fury reaches a fever pitch, our SOUND
CUTS OUT and a string orchestra begins to play an ACHINGLY
EMOTIONAL PIECE. A YOUNG GAY MAN opens his box and empties
the ashes out over the fence. We watch the ashes fall in SLOW
MOTION. The young man breaks into tears and hugs his NEARBY
FRIENDS. As the music swells, more and more protestors empty
their ashes out onto the lawn. SLOW MOTION SHOT AFTER SLOW
MOTION shot...as the air and sky fills with clouds of human
remains...shocking and yet oddly beautiful. *

We find Janelle and the men holding her wrapped son aloft.
The men become angry and energized and kick a metal gate. It
is old and breaks open and they rush the body towards the
front steps of the mansion and place it there. *

(CONTINUED)

OVERWHELMED SECURITY rush over, but it's too late. Janelle screams at the house, at the heavens, at the callous authorities that be. *

JANELLE
(tears finally coming)
You did this! You didn't help us!
You helped kill my son! *

We RESERVE ACTION through the gates to a quieter scene: we see OUR FAMILY -- Blanca, Angel, Elektra, Lulu, Papi, Ricky, Judy and Christopher appear, holding Pray Tell's ashes. From their POV, we watch the crowd's anger turn to sadness. What was meant to be an act of collective rage is now a mass funeral for the dead. *

Our family reaches the lawn and they tearfully say goodbye to Pray Tell. *

JUDY
All those funerals, and still I
never thought we'd lose you.
Goodbye, sweet friend.

Judy kisses the box of ashes.

LULU
I would give anything to see you up
at that mic, reading me to filth
just one last time. I'm gonna miss
you, Pray.

Lulu kisses the box.

ELEKTRA
For once, I'm lost for words.

Elektra kisses the box.

PAPI
I don't know what I woulda done if
I didn't have you to look up to,
Pray Tell. More than my father,
more than my brothers -- you showed
me how to be a man.

Papi kisses the box.

ANGEL
I'm gonna need you to watch over
our family from heaven, Pray. We
ain't ever been nothing without you
holdin us up. Stick around til we
get back on our feet? Keep us safe?

(CONTINUED)

Angel kisses the box.

RICKY

Thank you for loving me. Thank you for showing me what love was. I know I wasn't always perfect, but I gave it my all.

(breaking down)

I don't know why you gave your life for mine, but I promise you, I'll live it with your passion, your fire, and your endless love. I love you, Pray Tell.

Ricky kisses the box.

The group turns to Blanca, but she isn't ready to say goodbye just yet. She kisses the box, removes the bag of ashes, and empties the ashes onto the lawn. The music comes to a dramatic climax and we --

CUT TO:

INT. HOUSE OF EVANGELISTA -- BATHROOM -- NIGHT

CLOSE ON a weary Blanca standing at the sink washing her hands. She quietly dries them. She enters the kitchen where Christopher places a tray of food into the stove.

CHRISTOPHER

You hungry? I'm putting leftovers in the oven.

(off Blanca's nod)

You were quiet on the drive back. What's on your mind?

Blanca opens the fridge, pours herself a glass of juice.

BLANCA

Nothing. Just thinking about Pray.

CHRISTOPHER

He'd be proud of what was accomplished today. He'd be proud of you.

BLANCA

It's Friday. We always did dinner together on Fridays. For ten years we never missed a Friday dinner. Except for those couple of months we stopped speaking. Friday night was our time to catch up.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BLANCA (CONT'D)

To laugh, to cry, to talk about hope and dreams and fears. To hash shit out. What am I supposed to do without my best friend?

CHRISTOPHER

Hey, I'll be your new dinner date.

BLANCA

I know. But it's not the same.

Christopher attempts to offer her a hug. She stops him.

BLANCA (CONT'D)

I -- I need some alone time.

Christopher nods. He plants a kiss on Blanca's cheek, exits.

Blanca heads into the living room, sets up her sewing kit. She unfolds a large piece of fabric. A quilt. Pray's quilt.

CLOSE ON a needle pulling thread. PULL BACK to REVEAL Blanca sewing the year of Pray's death. 1995.

INT. AUDITORIUM -- EVENING

It's a packed house. There's an audible HUM from the AUDIENCE. The house lights FLASH twice and we see Blanca, Angel, Elektra, Papi, Lulu, Lemar and Christopher along with the rest of the audience find their seats as the HUM quiets. The house lights lower.

We hear APPLAUSE as the CHOIR, dressed in all black, step onto the risers. Their backs are toward the audience. We never see their faces. There is no single person in white shirts -- everyone has died.

WE SEE Sherilyn play the opening piano keys of "The Man I Love."

CHOIR

*Someday he'll come along. The man I
love. And he'll be big and strong.
The man I love. And when he comes
my way. I'll do my best to make him
stay. He'll look at me and smile.
I'll understand. Then in a little
while, he'll take my hand. And
though it seems absurd, I know we
both won't say a word.*

We PAN ACROSS the Choir's back, PAN AROUND to their faces. And then we see him. Ricky. There he stands, with tear stained eyes, singing. And weeping.

(CONTINUED)

CHOIR (CONT'D)

*Maybe I shall meet him. Sunday
maybe Monday, maybe not. Still I'm
sure to meet him one day. Maybe
Tuesday will be my good news day.
He'll build a little home that's
meant for two from which I'll never
roam. Who would, would you. And so
all else above I'm dreaming of the
man I love. Maybe I shall meet him.*

The audience is moved to tears. The song ends. There is
mournful silence.

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

*

OVER BLACK:

A CHYRON informs us it is now 1998. FADE UP ON:

35

INT. ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL -- CAFETERIA -- DAY

35

Blanca, now with LONG HAIR, stares into the glow of a candle planted in the center of a CUPCAKE. She's glowing herself, pretty, confident, healthy. Christopher looks on, proud.

BLANCA

Candles are for birthdays. Why you gotta be so silly?

CHRISTOPHER

This is more important than a birthday -- as of today, you're officially a nurse, and on top of that goodness it's our four-year anniversary. Now, blow that candle out before it drips all over the place.

BLANCA

Carrot cake and cream cheese?

CHRISTOPHER

Your favorite.

Blanca looks around, embarrassed, but happy. She makes a wish, then blows out the candle.

BLANCA

Thanks for understanding about Saturday.

CHRISTOPHER

Of course, you gotta do your thing. We'll celebrate our anniversary next weekend. In the meantime, I'll think of some ways you can make it up to me.

He winks, dirty.

BLANCA

You so nasty.

CHRISTOPHER

You know you love it.
(she does)
Have you been to see Judy yet?

(CONTINUED)

BLANCA

No. Ever since the funeral, it feels like we ain't got nothing to talk about besides Pray.

CHRISTOPHER

That's natural, all a part of grieving. She asks about you all the time. She misses you.

BLANCA

Is she still working up on the fourth floor?

CHRISTOPHER

Same place, different gig though. Go say hi to her, and check out what they've done to the place after you left us for Saint Vincent's.

BLANCA

Okay baby. Have a great day at work. I'll see you later tonight.

Blanca leans across the table and kisses him.

CHRISTOPHER

I love you.

BLANCA

I love you too.

What was once the AIDS ward has now been transformed into a Natal Care Unit. Proud PARENTS and GRANDPARENTS visit their newborn children with BALLOONS and FLOWERS. Blanca walks down the hallway with Judy, who is almost unrecognizable in a short bob and colorful scrubs.

JUDY

Remember when I told you I didn't become a nurse to help people die? Look at me now. Look at this place now. It's nice to come into work and know that life awaits me. And the smell of babies? It's my new happy place.

They look into room after room with MOTHERS and BABIES. Blanca is so moved.

(CONTINUED)

BLANCA

I don't even recognize this place anymore. They got all this brand new equipment, and they finally painted these nasty-ass walls.

JUDY

The hospital magically came up with a budget for all sorts of things once AIDS patients stopped coming in so often. These new drugs are a fucking miracle.

BLANCA

They sure are. I've never felt better.

JUDY

I know surviving this disease isn't something that we can just choose, but I'm proud of you for not giving up. You're healthy, you've got a hot man, a new job down at Saint Vincent's...you're going to live a very long and happy life, Blanca.

BLANCA

I didn't believe that for the longest time, but now I think you may be right. That's why I volunteer. I gotta give back what was once freely given to me.

JUDY

I know Pray Tell is looking down at you, smiling.

BLANCA

I hear him all the time. I do.

They both break. Look at each other. So much pain.

BLANCA (CONT'D)

Sometimes he gives me advice, sometimes he tells me a joke, but most times he just reassures me that I'm being taken care of, that everything is going to be okay.

JUDY

Keep listening to him. I do.

37 INT. GAY MEN'S HEALTH CLINIC -- LATER 37

A long hallway, one we recognize from the Pilot. Two gay men sit on a wooden bench, flipping through LGBT magazines. SAFAREE, 21, trans, bounces her leg up and down, nervous. She's stealth and beautiful, yet there's a lostness in her eyes. She's a girl who is deeply alone in the world. Blanca appears.

BLANCA
Patient three-five-one-one-seven?

Safaree looks up, scared.

38 INT. CLINIC ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER 38

Blanca sits behind a desk across from Safaree. Blanca looks inside the folder, then closes it. She has been here. She has heard these words.

BLANCA
Safaree, may I hold your hand?

Safaree, nervous, offers it. Blanca looks deeply into her eyes.

BLANCA (CONT'D)
Safaree, you are positive for HIV.

Safaree pauses, then lowers her head, cries.

BLANCA (CONT'D)
Don't let go of my hand, I've got you. Is there anyone you can call? Family? Friends?

SAFAREE
I just moved here six months ago. My parents don't speak to me no more. I ain't got no one.

BLANCA
Have you been working at the pier?
(off Safaree's nod)
I know it well.

Blanca grabs a box of tissues, holds it up. Safaree takes one.

SAFAREE
You do?

(CONTINUED)

BLANCA

I used to work there myself, when I was your age. Back then, there were six piers. Now there's only the one, and I hear they're turning it into a goddamned strip mall.

(off Safaree's confusion)

Times change. When I found out I was positive, there weren't any drugs available and AIDS was a death sentence. But now, folks are living long and healthy lives, as long as they keep taking their meds and doing what the doctor says.

SAFAREE

You're HIV positive?

BLANCA

I am. I am proof you can be okay, if you follow the protocols.

SAFAREE

I can't afford all that.

Blanca pulls a folder out of her desk and hands it to her.

BLANCA

That's what I'm here for. I'll help you get signed up for ADAP, the AIDS Drug Assistance Program. Depending on your income, you might not have to pay a penny for your healthcare. A lot of people fought for a long time to get these kind of programs in place.

SAFAREE

You. You fought...didn't you?

BLANCA

I did.

(then)

I'm going to tell you something -- You're going to be okay.

Blanca writes something down on a post-it.

BLANCA (CONT'D)

Tell you what -- there's a function happening Saturday night that you might really enjoy. It's where I found my community, and it's also where I found my hope.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BLANCA (CONT'D)

Wanna meet me there? I can
introduce you to other girls who
are just like you.

Safaree looks at the note, unsure --

39 EXT. NYC STREET -- DAY 39

Blanca, all dressed up, STRUTS down the street. Elektra --
looking amazing as usual, folds in next to her. Followed by
Angel and Lulu -- also done up for a LADIES LUNCH. It's a
full on SEX AND THE CITY moment. We might even hear the theme
song.

40 INT. FANCY RESTURAUNT -- DAY 40

The four girls sit down for lunch. Elektra looks around the
room. All of the tables are filled with groups of
girlfriends. All dressed up, too.

ELEKTRA

Looks like we're not the only ones
who had the idea for a ladies'
lunch.

LULU

It's the Sex and the City effect.

ELEKTRA

These women all came into the city
to have sex?

The other women laugh. Elektra doesn't.

ANGEL

You don't know what Sex in the City
is?

BLANCA

Ain't you got Home Box Office?

LULU

You loaded, I figured you would
have splurged for the premium movie
package -- Showtime, HBO, Cinemax.

*

ELEKTRA

I don't have televisions in my
penthouse. They rot your brain and
turn it to Cream of Wheat.

(CONTINUED)

BLANCA

I gotta be honest, I tried watching that show and -- first of all I never seen women talk about sex as much as they do. And second, they should rename it "Being White In the City". Those girls ain't got one Black or Latina friend.

*

ANGEL

Not one -- like not even a side-kick.

*

*

They all nod. That's true. A WAITER comes up.

WAITER

Let me guess, Cosmopolitan?

Elektra smiles. Assumes he's flirting.

ELEKTRA

Why, yes I am, thank you.

Everyone but Elektra starts laughing hysterically.

LULU

Bitch, a Cosmo is a drink that the Sex and the City ladies love.

She points around the room -- everyone is drinking them.

ELEKTRA

Looks like watered down Pepto. I'll have a real drink -- Johnny Walker on the rocks -- Blue Label if you have it. Bring four, actually -- I refuse to allow some TV show about white girls to define how we eat drink or gather as girlfriends. We have always made our own rules and we ain't stopping now.

They all agree. DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT -- LATER

A few drinks and appetizers in. Mid-conversation.

ELEKTRA

I told those mafia gentlemen -- I know men, I know what turns them on -- men are visual.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ELEKTRA (CONT'D)

Yes, phone sex was lucrative, but only because there wasn't a better option. Now there is -- the internet. Webcam interactions remove the need for imagination and you can charge twice the price! That alone is paying for my new condo in Boca Raton. I was rich before, but now if I drop a thousand dollars on the street I don't even bother wasting my time to pick it up.

*
*
*
*

BLANCA

You talk tough Elektra, but I know you been quietly giving money to the hospital and those drug treatment facilities that help the girls.

LULU

And paying for hormones and surgeries.

ANGEL

A regular transexual Robin Hood.

ELEKTRA

Don't talk too loud, ladies -- I have a reputation as a cold bitch to uphold.

*

They all laugh.

LULU

Well if you ever decide you need a new accountant to deal with the money you actually declare to the government, give me a call -- First Manhattan just moved me over to their tax department. I help people do their taxes now.

BLANCA

Lulu, that's incredible.

ANGEL

Yeah, so bougie -- in a good way.

(CONTINUED)

More laughs.

BLANCA

What about you Angel, what's your update?

ANGEL

Beto is starting third grade. Being a full time mother to him has been like, the craziest, most beautiful thing in the world. I make him breakfast every morning -- it's just cereal and milk but I put it out for him with a napkin and everything.

*

BLANCA

You wake up before noon?

ANGEL

Every day -- except Sunday, that's momma's morning to sleep in.

(off their laughs)

And Papi is getting me back in the game -- they putting me on a bottle of this new hairspray that's like specially made for afro-latin hair.

*

BLANCA

Oh, I forgot to tell you all about Damon. He sent me a letter -- he's in Chicago, living with a real nice man who owns three dance studios. Damon is teaching in them. He sends his love to everyone.

*

That makes everyone smile. Elektra raises her glass --

ELEKTRA

And we know what's up with you, Mother Blanca -- a real, official nurse -- educated, graduated and certified by the state. Who would have guessed that you would have found a way to monetize your annoyingly endless kindness and love for your fellow man.

(with emotion)

I am so so proud of you.

*

Everyone tears up, then --

(CONTINUED)

BLANCA

Stop. Happy endings are for the movies, we seen too much pain to fool ourselves into thinking all the bad is in the past -- but I do believe in happy moments. Sometimes they last a minute, sometimes a year, but when they come, you got to recognize and celebrate.

(as the tears come)

Here's to this happy moment we all sharing together. Not only did we survive...we are thriving.

*

*

Another toast. Then, Blanca checks her watch.

BLANCA (CONT'D)

Oh, shit, I got to run. I gotta get the kids ready for the Ball tonight.

ANGEL

Mother Blanca and her children.

BLANCA

These kids are trophy winning machines -- a far cry from the little ragamuffins that skulked up a few years ago. Please, you all gotta come.

ELEKTRA

Why do you insist on returning to that sweaty windowless airless room? Can't you see we have all grown out of it?

(CONTINUED)

BLANCA

You can't grow out of your family. Besides, you gotta remember why the balls started in the first place. They were a place we could be all them things we weren't allowed to be out in the world. How many times did we walk businesswoman -- and now you a real one Elektra. Or Runway -- and now you actually walk those real runways, Angel. We wasn't pretending when we walked those categories, we were *preparing*. Faking it until we made it. More than that, we were making a statement -- that we deserve to dream and to have those dreams fulfilled. In those Balls we bear witness to each other's *possibility*. We say to each other, yeah, I see you. I see who you are and who you can be. The outside world tells us to hide, the balls tell us to strut, to flaunt, to never ask permission to be recognized. Yeah it's the 1990s and yeah, things are getting better but you all crazy if you think we don't need a place to keep reminding each other of our value. A place for the newcomers to learn how much they worth. A place that's safe and protected. A place that is *ours*. We always gonna need the Balls.

*

*

They are all moved. They share a look amongst each other. But...

LULU

That's beautiful, Blanca -- and I promise to come by soon but I can't tonight. I got too much work to do. Tax season is coming up.

*

ANGEL

I can't either. Beto had a sniffle this morning.

*

*

Blanca gets up. Disappointed in them, but not angry.

(CONTINUED)

BLANCA

I understand. We all got busy lives now. Please let's do this again soon, I love you all -- even you Mother Elektra.

ELEKTRA

Especially me!

They all laugh and she kisses them and rushes out. Off the girls, all looking at each other mischievously --

42 INT. HALL -- NIGHT 42

CLOSE ON the DISCO BALL. Our familiar, shiny, orb sparkles. All the pageantry and spectacle we are used to on full display. Deborah Cox's "Nobody's Supposed To Be Here (Dance Mix)" BLARES through the speakers. The CROWD is going ape shit as Lemar PUMPS down the runway. He twirls, poses, and shows the children what it means to be legendary! He sings every word, and it is the ICONIC performance of the year.

As the score cards fly up, ALL 10's predictably -- GLITTER falls from the ceiling as Lemar basks in the glory of being an icon. Children watch from the sidelines, mouths agape.

Legendary HOUSE MEMBERS watch and applaud: KIKI PENDAVIS with her members PAULO PENDAVIS, CHANEL PENDAVIS, MARCO PENDAVIS and CHICKEN LITTLE PENDAVIS; across from them we see MOTHER MUGLER and her children: MABEL MUGLER, MICHAEL MUGLER, MOSES MUGLER, JAYBIRD MUGLER and the always glamorous TEFLON MUGLER.

LEMAR proudly struts by the House of YSL. MOTHER YVETTE nods politely, the only kindness shown him by this snobby house of couture. VINDICATION YSL, MALICE YSL, SALLY YSL, FEVER YSL, RAGE YSL, KAREN YSL, CHIC YSL and LIPSTICK YSL are cold. ANOTHER HOUSE -- THE HOUSE OF DOOM -- claps politely. DARLA DOOM, DANIEL DOOM, DONDA DOOM, DAVID DOOM and LALA DOOM at least show some ballroom spirit.

We snake through the crowd and out into --

43 INT. HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS 43

We see the chaos of new HOUSE CHILDREN and BALLGOERS getting ready for the next category. WE FOLLOW a BLACK TEEN past the HOUSE of ROUGE doing some preening. Mother RIOT ROUGE helps her children RHONDA ROUGE, ROUGH ROUGE, RALLY ROUGE, FRESCA ROUGE as the BLACK TEEN checks them out and moves into the--

44

INT. GREENROOM -- CONTINUOUS

44

We find Ricky and Blanca, matured by life and loss, holding court with a TRIO of pretty young things -- TEENA, JUSTICE, and DESSA. The Black Teen, DIONNE, approaches.

RICKY

Dionne, you're late! If you're gonna be an Evangelista, you gotta follow my rules. Early is on time --

DIONNE

And on time is late. I know. I'm sorry, Father.

Father? Yup, Ricky is a House Father. THIS is the new era of the HOUSE OF EVANGELISTA!

RICKY

I don't need words. I want action. If father can leave his rehearsal with Destiny's Child early you all got no excuses.

TEENA

...but Grandma Blanca was late too...

BLANCA

Uhm, excuse me Miss Thing. I got all my finery in tact in my cab ride, thankyouverymuch. And since when is it okay to call out your grandmother?

JUSTICE

You know what they say? Snitches get stitches.

Ricky and Blanca hold in their laughter.

BLANCA

(to Ricky)

You better talk to these children.

Ricky steps forward, unbuttons his cuff and pulls back his sleeve. On his forearm -- EVANGELISTA -- tattooed.

RICKY

Look at this. LOOK. You all are Evangelistas. And this house is known for more than just slaying a category. We -- all of us -- are a family. What's my number one rule?

(CONTINUED)

DIONNE
Evangelista's always show up...

TEENA/DESSA
...for each other.

JUSTICE
No questions asked.

RICKY
Exactly. And what's my second rule?

JUSTICE
Leave them white boys alone. Right,
Grandma?

Blanca cracks up.

DESSA
Oh my god. That's racist.

TEENA
Ain't nothing wrong with the swirl.

DIONNE
Unless you lactose intolerant like
me.

TEENA
You so stupid.

The youngins CACKLE. Ricky flashes Blanca a look that says,
"were we this ridiculous back in the day?"

BLANCA
These are your kids.

RICKY
Rule number two. You show up for
yourself!

BLANCA
All right y'all. Come here. I got
something to say.

The house forms a circle, they all take each other's hands.

BLANCA (CONT'D)
Each one of you came to this city
trying to find yourself and you
found each other. You're part of a
legacy. A chosen family rooted in
love, loyalty, and support.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

44

BLANCA (CONT'D)

Don't ever forget that if you lose
your way, love will lead you back.
To your house. So get out there and
show ballroom the glory that is
being an...

EVERYONE

EVANGELISTA!

RICKY

And please let my future man be out
there watching. In Jesus' name.
Amen.

Off the family's LAUGHTER --

CUT TO:

45

INT. HALL -- LATER

45

We see Tyrone up at the mic.

TYRONE

I hope ya'll are ready, cause the
category is --

We see QUICK POPS of:

Dionne's flawless skin walking --

TYRONE (V.O.)

FACE!

Dessa pumps up to the judges showing her flawless --

TYRONE (V.O.)

FEMME QUEEN REALNESS!

In an ALIEN inspired get up, Justice looks --

TYRONE (V.O.)

BIZARRE!

Teena pops, dips, and shows these hoes exactly how to --

TYRONE (V.O.)

VOGUE!

The judges throw up their cards. All 10's. Ricky watches like
a proud father. The Evangelistas CHEER as Teena joins them
excitedly holding her trophy!

BLANCA

Congratulations, baby girl.

(CONTINUED)

Blanca scans the ballroom, she's distracted, remembering Safaree, her pain. How lost she was. Her gaze lands on the main doors.

LATER --

TYRONE

Now we have come to our very special presentation. And we have someone special here to hand out this very important award. Please give it up for the Icon...the Legend...the sickening beauty...the mogul of lust and luxury herself... Elektra Abundance Evangelista!

Elektra emerges from the crowd in HEAD TO TOE CHANEL -- right fresh from couture. The crowd is in a ROAR. Blanca can't believe it. Elektra heads to the podium, TAPS the mic.

ELEKTRA

Thank you for that warm greeting. Ballroom is home. Ballroom is family. Ballroom is love. And if it weren't for this community I wouldn't be here. I wouldn't be who I am if it weren't for the many women, my sisters, who have lifted me up when I couldn't do it myself. As Tyrone observed correctly, I am an icon. But that didn't happen overnight. I was born a star and I worked hard to leave an indelible statement. I know the work and sacrifice it takes to become a legend. However, to be a legend isn't simply about competing and collecting trophies. It's about how you represent this community. And I've seen this woman work tirelessly not only for her family, but for all of us. I am proud to call her my daughter and to finally bestow legendary status on the one, the only Blanca Evangelista. Blanca, please move forward in the ballroom and collect what is yours. Blanca...legendary 90s woman. Legendary ICON for the ages.

A shocked Blanca steps out onto the ballroom floor. The CROWD CHEERS as she receives a plaque from Elektra. With tears in her eyes, Blanca turns to see the new House of Evangelista standing next to Angel, Papi, and Lulu.

(CONTINUED)

They rush toward Blanca offering hugs and kisses. Evangelistas new and old surround Blanca, lead the crowd in a chant of *EVANGE! LISTA!*

As Blanca scans the room her eyes land on a familiar face who has just entered. Safaree. They share a warm smile. Blanca approaches.

SAFAREE

I -- I didn't have anything special to wear.

BLANCA

Don't worry. We gotchu.

Blanca embraces her and ushers her toward the Evangelistas.

BLANCA (CONT'D)

Listen up, ya'll. This is your new sister, Safaree.

SAFAREE

That's Safaree with two Es.

They all love the sass.

BLANCA

We need to take her backstage quickly. Dionne get this head together, Justice dust this mug, and Teena pull something sickening from the rack --

SAFAREE

Wait, what's going on --

BLANCA

You're walking your first ball. Welcome to the House of Evangelista.

Off Blanca, looking happily into the face of the future --

FADE TO BLACK.

The hall is empty. The lights have been turned on. The disco ball is still. Blanca sits in silence, takes the space in.

We suddenly hear a familiar voice --

(CONTINUED)

PRAY TELL (V.O.)
Gurl, what are you still doing
here?

Blanca turns. It's a JANITOR, holding a broom.

JANITOR
You planning on spending the night?

BLANCA
Sorry, I was just...Have a good
night.

Blanca heads out as the lights in the ballroom go OUT.

EXT. HALL -- NIGHT

A group of four YOUNGSTERS smoke cigarettes. They don't have
any trophies among them. Blanca exits the hall with her
Legend Award in hand.

SWAN
The judges definitely was on some
bullshit tonight. There's no way we
shoulda lost every category.

Blanca smiles as she creeps past them.

SWAN (CONT'D)
Hey Blanca! I got a question for
the legend. This is the third ball
we leaving empty handed. What we
gotta do to snag some trophies?

BLANCA
You're not the first to lose and
you won't be the last. Ain't no
secret or shortcut to success. You
just...keep trying.

SWAN
What if you wanna give up though?
And you feel ain't no reason to
keep going?

Blanca looks at her plaque and then at the desperate faces of
Swan and the other youngsters.

BLANCA
You think this would've ever
happened for me if I gave up?
(off their confusion)
You the house mother?
(off Swan's nod)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BLANCA (CONT'D)

Look around you. You want a reason to continue? It's standing right in front of you.

Swan takes in her children -- rough and tough, a tenderness and vulnerability pulsing through them.

BLANCA (CONT'D)

Houses are homes for all the boys and girls, the children, who never had one. And they're gonna keep coming here. To New York City. Sure as the sunrise. So what you gotta do babies is work harder. Reach higher. Dream bigger until you...*triumph*. It ain't gonna happen today, but one day. And when you do, cause I know a strong determined woman with a fighter's spirit, that day will come...and I'll be *in there* cheering you on.

Swan nods, emboldened to work harder.

Blanca smiles to herself as she turns away, and bounds down the street, disappearing into the night.

END SERIES