

THE LONG COUNT
Issue 2

The Silence Inside Her Heart
Part Two

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PAGE ONE

ROW ONE: ONE PANEL 2/3 Page

Panel One: Carmen lays, collapsed, on the ground before a wall of screens. The image of her master and guide, Quetzalcoatl, remains burned on the screen, an afterimage, a digital ghost.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE) Multiple boxes:
There was a time, long ago, that I remember in my dreams.

When I was a child, I would dream every night.

I would dream back then because I *could* dream back then.

ROW TWO: ONE PANEL

Panel One: MCU of Carmen's face, battered, bloody. Her hair obscures her face.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE) Multiple boxes:
Now, when I close my eyes, all I see are nightmares.

PAGE TWO

ROW ONE; ONE PANEL

Panel One: CU of Carmen's bloody, blackened eye. A thick, copper blood oozes from the wound.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

I can feel Paqok's presence inside me.

It stirs up memories, old pain, of my life before.

ROW TWO; ONE PANEL

Panel One: Carmen as a teenager, 13 maybe 14. Only her face is visible. There is no tattoo over her eye. She seems older than years. Sweat runs down her face, making clean trails through the grime on her cheeks. Her eyelids are heavily pigmented like a young girl just learning how to apply make-up. She's laughing.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

My life here, on the streets of Nueva Cempoala.

ROW THREE; ONE PANEL

Panel One: Pulling back on Carmen shows that she is running in the streets. Two friends, near her age, trail just behind her. One is of the old blood like Carmen; one has much darker skin, African skin. They are dressed in ratty clothes, have dirty faces with big Cheshire grins. Carmen's hair is short, unbraided. She's clutching a bag in her hands.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

I wonder how much of that self I still am.

CARMEN (Spoken, to the other girls)

Run, bitches, run! He's gaining!

PAGE THREE

ROW ONE: TWO PANELS

Panel One: Forward shot of a portly man in his forties. He's balding with a thick mustache. He's dressed like a butcher. He's waving his hand, screaming.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE):

Like everyone I knew, I thought I was immortal.

Panel Two: CU of Carmen's face, looking back. The grin is still plastered on her face.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE):

That no one could ever catch me.

ROW TWO: ONE PANEL

Panel One: The man stops to catch his breath. He's leaning forward, his hands on his knees. He's far too out of shape to catch these girls.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE):

My friends worshiped me.

ROW THREE: ONE PANEL

The three girls take a corner, leaving the old man well behind them.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE):

I was the pretty one, the strong one,
their bright and shining star in an abyss of poverty,
perversion, and pettiness.

But I had secrets they never knew.

PAGE FOUR

ROW ONE: One Panel

Panel One: The girls are leaning against the wall while Carmen digs into the bag.

DARK-SKINNED GIRL (SPOKEN, Catching her breath):
So what'd we score?

ROW TWO: Three Panels

Panel One: CU of Carmen's hand, holding a matured *teonanácatl*, the “god mushroom” that is a powerful hallucinogen.

Panel Two: Split shot of the girls on the wall. This panel shows the Mayan girl. Her eyes are big, in awe.

OTHER MAYAN GIRL (SPOKEN):
Mi dios, girl.

Panel Two: Second half of the split shot of the girls on the wall. This shows the dark-skinned girl.

DARK-SKINNED GIRL (SPOKEN):
What is that thing?

ROW THREE: Two Panels

Panel One, 2/3 of the row: Extended shot of all three girls. The shadow of some older boy is cast over them.

OLDER BOY (SPOKEN, OOF):
What are you little girls doing with that, eh?

Panel Two: CU of Carmen's good eye in the present, on the street. It's struggling to open.

TEXT BOX (CARMEN, Screaming):
Let her go! Leave us alone!

PAGE FIVE

ROW ONE: One Panel

Panel One: The wall of screens; the image of Quetzalcoatl has faded, replaced by insipid advertisements for natural cure-alls. One screen shows a missing poster—of Carmen. Carmen is oblivious to it as her left arm tries to push her body from the ground.

ROW TWO: Three Panels, 1/2 Page

Panel One: In the past: A boy has a hold of the dark-skinned girl's shirt, pulling at it, threatening to tear it. The girl is clawing at the boy.

Panel Two: Carmen grabs the boy's arm, brandishing a crude stone knife.

CARMEN (SPOKEN)

Leave us alone!

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

I was the strong one.

Panel Three: Reaction shot of the boy's face, stunned.

ROW THREE: One Panel

Panel One: Carmen slashes at the boy's face but misses, connecting with his throat instead. Blood sprays from the boy's jugular. His face is contorted, a caricature.

PAGE SIX

ROW ONE: Four Panels

Panel One: Direct shot of her face: Carmen, young but not a child—not anymore. Her face is smooth, unscarred, dotted with the boy's blood. She shows no emotion, no reaction to what she's done.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

All I wanted to do was survive.

Panel Two: The boy's face, throat slit, tongue lolling from his lips.

Panel Three: The same shot of Carmen but of her now, beaten to a pulp. Her left eye is missing, just a black hole. The blood spatter eerily mimics the previous picture.

Panel Four: Shot of the dark-skinned girl, horrified.

ROW TWO: One Panel

Panel One: Young Carmen stands before the fallen boy, who has rolled to his side. The other girls stand, stunned. The Mayan girl has her hands over her mouth. She can't take her eyes off the body of the boy. The dark-skinned girl is staring at Carmen, now screaming.

DARK-SKINNED GIRL (SCREAMING)

Carmen, what did you do?

ROW TWO: Two Panel

Panel One: Carmen pockets her shiv, calmly, as if nothing happened.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

I didn't mean to kill that boy.

Panel One: Carmen walks past the other girls. The Mayan girl is still transfixed; the dark-skinned girl's face follows Carmen.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

But I don't regret it.

PAGE SEVEN

ROW ONE: One Panel, 1/4 page

Panel One: In the present, Carmen is standing and for the first time you can see the full brunt of the damage. Her right arm is snapped; she's bracing it in her left. She is looking down the road, down from the wall of screens.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE) Continued over multiple boxes:
Most people cannot see the dragon.

They haven't the heart, or the eyes.

ROW TWO: Two Panels

Panel One: Stumbling, but keeping her balance, she starts along her path.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)
Those of us who have received his blessing...

Panel Two: Long shot of the road with Carmen on the far left. The tunnel ends near an abandoned warehouse. An impression of Quetzalcoatl faintly glows from within.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)
...do not need our eyes to see him.

ROW TWO: Three Panels

Panel One (1/2 of the row): Carmen walking down the path, passing posters and advertisements.

ENVIRONMENT (POSTERS)

Espadas: ¡A la Victoria!
(sports poster)
(Espadas: To Victory!)

(Find Christ Today)
Accompanied by the faith's stylized cross.

CURFEW: 8p Weekdays/9p Weekends

ENVIRONMENT (GRAFFITI)

(The End is Near!)

Panel Two: She stumbles, catching herself on the door of the warehouse. Some black smoke trails from her mouth. She is pained, and not simply from the physical damage she has endured.

Panel Three: CU of Carmen, sideview. Her eye is shut; her lips tightened by pain.

QUETZALCOATL (SPOKEN, WEAKLY, OOF)

Come in, *mi hija*.

PAGE EIGHT

ROW ONE: Three Panels

Panel One: MCU of the front door of a small shop. The wood is inset with stone patterns that match those from Paqok's attire. The handle is gold and covered in a detailed Mayan pattern.

Panel Two: A black cloud manifests in front of the door.

Panel Three: CU of a hand turning the intricately carved handle of the door.

ROW TWO: One Panel

The interior of the shop. The walls are decorated with various ornamental masks, staves, feathered wreaths. In the foreground, a rotund man is sitting behind a desk. He is dressed in a brown suit with a pale yellow shirt. A red robe is draped over his body. He is seated in front of a flat screen. On the screen, an Asian man is speaking; the words coming from a small speaker on the desk, next to a stack of files, folders.

ASIAN MAN (SPOKEN, AGGRAVATED)

What I am asking is not impossible, Señor.

ROW THREE: Three Panels

Panel One: MCU of the rotund man, lighting a hashish cigarette with a small, gold, dragon-shaped lighter.

ROTUND MAN (SPOKEN, CASUAL)

If that were the case, Yokohama-san, you would not need my services.

Panel Two: The screen shows Yokohama is even more flustered. In the background, the door to the shop is opening. A shadowed figure enters. His features are obscured by the harsh back lighting.

YOKOHAMA (SPOKEN)

What I need are results, Señor Rios. Something you're failing to deliver.

Panel Three: A shot of the man who entered; it is Paqok's face. His tall visage is split by a devilish grin.

PAQOK (SPOKEN)

Tell him everything's going according to plan.

PAGE NINE

ROW ONE: Four Panels

Panel One: A hand sets down a bucket of water on the floor.

Panel Two: A shot of Carmen's shoulders and head. She's lying on her side.

Panel Three: A hand removes the remaining piece of the scoop from her right arm.

Panel Four: A hand dunks a rag into the bucket of water.

ROW TWO: One Panel

Panel One: Carmen, at a game, catches a head-sized leather ball in the scoop of her arm. She's smiling; she's in her element.

ROW THREE: Two Panels

Panel One: With a cracking snap, two hands set Carmen's broken forearm into place. The arm is covered in purple and yellow bruises.

Panel Two: The hand with the rag wipes the arm clean.

PAGE TEN

ROW ONE: One Panel

Panel One: Back to Carmen at the game. She launches the ball at a team mate, right over the head of an opponent who is lunging at her.

ANNOUNCER (SPOKEN, OOF)

Sandoval lobs it to Rodriguez who catches it off the wind.

ROW TWO: One Panel

Panel One: The opposing player connects with Carmen, tackling her to the ground. The smile leaves Carmen's face.

COLOR COMMENTATOR (SPOKEN)

Suarez isn't too pleased about that pass, Don.

ROW THREE: One Panel

Panel One: Hands strip off Carmen's shirt. Her torso is covered in bruises. The symbol of the Espadas, a small stylized sword, runs vertically between her breasts. Her upper torso is outlined by a deep cut from where her armor broke the skin. The hand with the rag cleans the laceration.

TEXT BOX (ANNOUNCER, SPOKEN, OOF)

Carmen doesn't look too happy either, Eddy.

ROW THREE: One Panel

Panel One: A pair of hands cradles Carmen's head while the hand with the rag wipes the blood-soaked hair from Carmen's eye socket. Carmen's face is pale, her muscles lax. An ether-soaked rag covers her mouth and nose. Her right eye is open, unresponsive, glassy.

TEXT BOX (COLOR COMMENTATOR, SPOKEN, OOF)

She certainly doesn't.

PAGE ELEVEN

ROW ONE: Three Panels

A row of soldiers don their gear. They are faceless, of uniform build or at least they appear that way.

Panel One: A soldier tightens an armor-plated vest with gloved hands.

Panel Two: A soldier tightens the straps on his boot.

Panel Three: A soldier dons a large helmet with an opaque, smoky visor.

ROW TWO: Two Panels

Panel One: Carmen's face is clean; the make-up and grime were scrubbed away. Her hair is pulled back from her face. A stone is being set into her eye. It's black and glossy, like volcanic glass. It's imperfectly almond-shaped.

Panel Two: CU of the stone being set into her eye. A single finger is pushing it into place.

Panel Three: The stone is sucked into the socket. A faint blue light shoots out as it does so. The finger hovers an inch above it.

ROW THREE: Two Panels

Panel One: The soldiers are filing into a large black van outside a waterfront property.

Panel Two: A gloved hand slides the sidedoor into place. Soldiers and their guns are visible within.

PAGE TWELVE

ROW ONE: Two Panels

Panel One: Paqok sits across from Manuel Rios, the proprietor of the shop. Manuel is sweating, nervous. The screen he was previously speaking toward is black.

MANUEL RIOS (SPOKEN)

Senor Paqok, I was not expecting you.

Panel Two: MCU of Paqok, flashing his shark teeth in a grin.

PAQOK (SPOKEN, SINISTER)

I suspected you were not.

ROW TWO: Two Panels

Panel One: Manuel's left hand is fumbling with his tie. His right hand is gesticulating toward Paqok.

MANUEL RIOS (SPOKEN)

You have to understand, people are nervous. We have investors--

Panel Two: Paqok is standing now, leaning over the desk.

PAQOK (SPOKEN, Yelling)

You have no one to whom you answer that is above me, **(you shit)**.

ROW THREE: Two Panels

Panel One: Paqok has one long finger aimed at Manuel's heart. His eyes are black flame.

PAQOK (SPOKEN)

I have done my part. Now unless you wish your family dead...

Panel Two: MCU of Manuel's terrified face.

PAQOK (SPOKEN, OOF)

You will do yours.

PAGE THIRTEEN

ROW ONE: One Panel

Panel One: Hands dress Carmen. She is completely limp, vulnerable. Hands dress her in black pants. A feathered snake tattoo courses around her left leg. The tail starts at the crease of her inner thigh and spirals down toward the head on her left foot.

DRESSER (WHISPERED)
(The blue-eyed devil.) So beautiful.

ROWS TWO & THREE: Multiple Panels

Boots are placed on her feet. An oversized black shirt is draped over her body. Her long braids are bound into a loose bun. You can see that the stone in her left eye has been bandaged with a yellowed cloth. Gloves are placed on her hands. A hand touches her cheek, gently.

DRESSER (WHISPERED)
Of all the Swords, she's my favorite, y'know.

ROW FOUR: Two Panels

Panel One: Arms hold her aloft, tucked under her arms.

Panel Two: A pair of hands put a black bag over her head.

SECOND DRESSER (WHISPERED)
Si. She's mine too.

PAGE FOURTEEN

ROW ONE: Two Panels

Panel One: Manuel butts out his hash cigarette with one hand as his other puts a fresh one in his mouth.

Panel Two: He torches the cigarette with his dragon lighter.

MANUEL RIOS (SPOKEN)

Señor Paqok, the signal has been given.

ROW TWO: One Panel

Panel One: The black van, full of armored soldiers, rumbles down the road. It passes a familiar road, the same road Carmen took to enter the barrio.

TEXT BOX (PAQOK, SPOKEN, OOF)

If you fail me, Manuel Rios, you will pray to all
the gods in the rain and the sand,
that you had heeded my warnings.

ROW THREE: Three Panels

Panel One: Carmen, draped in black, is carried by the two who dressed her. Only their torsos and arms are visible. The rest is out of frame.

Panel Two: The van passes the wall of screens; the bulk of which are still occupied by random nonsense.

Panel Three: Carmen's body is carried out a back door, toward a simple blue ground vehicle.

ROW FOUR: One Panel

Panel One: The soldiers flank each side of the warehouse door. Two of them are coming up the center, carrying a battering ram.

PAGE FIFTEEN

ROW ONE: One Panel

Panel One: CU of Carmen in the backseat. She is laying on her back.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

I knew the danger my return would draw.

ROW TWO: One Panel

Panel One: Shot from inside the warehouse. In the background, the door bursts inward. In the foreground is a large, rusted box. It has some wires connecting it to a battery cell. A green light flashes on the side.

ROW THREE: One Panel

Panel Two: The two dressers get into the front of the car and tear off. A stream of dust and smoke erupts from under the car's tires.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

What I did not know...

ROW THREE: One Panel

Panel One: Shot from inside the warehouse. MCU on the rusted box. A soldier's boots are visible next to it.

SOLDIER (SPOKEN, SCREAMING, OOF)

(Goddammit!) Everybody out!

PAGE SIXTEEN

ROW ONE: One Panel, Full Page

Panel One: Bird's eye shot of the warehouse exploding. Debris and fire shoot out of every door, every window. A few soldiers made it back to the van. A couple lie facedown on the ground. Blood forms in pools under them. The car carrying Carmen is seen in the upper right, peeling away from the carnage.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

...was that my salvation would be here as well.

PAGE SEVENTEEN

ROW ONE: One Panel

Panel One: Shot of the warehouse aftermath. One of the soldiers is leaning into the van, speaking into a CB mouthpiece.

SOLDIER (SPOKEN):

Someone tipped the cell, sir. They had the place rigged to go.

ROW TWO: Two Panels

Panel One: Manuel Rios, holding a phone to his cheek. His pasty face is beaded with flop sweat.

MANUEL RIOS (SPOKEN, Nervous):

Oh (dear Lord).

Panel Two: Paqok is standing, back to the desk. The fingernails on his right hand are extending in foot-long claws. He is tired of the incompetence shown by those under him and the feeling is apparent on his face.

MANUEL RIOS (SPOKEN, Nervous):

Is she...was she inside?

ROW THREE: One Panel

Panel One: Shot of the soldier beside the van. The coiled cable is stretched so it's almost straight. He's peering at another soldier who is given him a thumbs-down.

SOLDIER (SPOKEN):

Negative, sir. No one was inside.

Or, rather, if they were, the light made them powder.

ROW FOUR: Three Panels

Panel One: Paqok slits Manuel's throat with a single swipe of his claw. Manuel looks like a stuck pig. The phone falls onto the desk.

Panel Two: Paqok picks up the phone, gingerly.

Panel Three: MCU of Paqok's face as he speaks into the phone.

PAQOK (SPOKEN)

She is not dead.

Find her.

PAGE EIGHTEEN

ROW ONE: ONE PANEL (1/2 Page)

Panel One: Carmen is seated in a chair in front of a small flat screen. The room is dark, sparsely furnished or decorated. There are no windows. Her head is still bagged, limp on her neck like a flower too heavy for its stem.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE) Single box:
I needn't be conscious to feel his presence.

We are connected, a soul split between two bodies.

He is the Dragon and I am him.

ROW TWO: THREE PANELS

Panel One: A front shot of Carmen's face as a hand removes the bag. Carmen's face and the hand are spotlit but the rest is darkness.

Panel Two: Carmen's face, clean but bruised. The bandage over her left eye has a half-circle of blood around the socket.

Panel Three: Same shot but now a faint glow illuminates it. Carmen's right eye opens just a crack.

CARMEN (SPOKEN, Weakly)
Mi guía...

ROW THREE: ONE PANEL

Panel One: The screen is alive now, with the face of Quetzalcoatl. The room is better lit because of the front screen causing more screens to become visible. Each has a segment of the Dragon's body. Carmen is seated to the right of the panel, her back visible.

QUETZALCOATL (SPOKEN)
Oh, *mi hija*, how I have missed you.

PAGE NINETEEN

ROW ONE: TWO PANELS

Panel One: Carmen edges to the front of the seat, still weak. She places her gloved left hand on the screen.

CARMEN (SPOKEN, Weakly)
I ran, *mi guía*. I ran, but Paqok--

Panel Two: Quetzalcoatl's face, sympathetic.

QUETZALCOATL (SPOKEN)
I know, *mi hija*. I can feel his taint inside you.

ROW TWO: THREE PANELS

Panel One: Carmen removes her hand from the screen.

CARMEN (SPOKEN, Weakly)
He summoned devils. He tried to kill me.

Panel Two: Quetzalcoatl's screen turn to static.

QUETZALCOATL (SPOKEN)
No, *mi hija*.

Paqok's intention was never to kill you with those idols.

Panel Two: Reaction shot of Carmen, confused.

QUETZALCOATL (SPOKEN, OOF)
They are weak, and he is much more powerful than that.

ROW THREE: TWO PANELS

Panel One: Carmen sits upright in her chair.

CARMEN (SPOKEN, Unsure)
But--why did he summon them?

Panel Two: Quetzalcoatl's face turns down, forlorn.

QUETZALCOATL (SPOKEN)
The darkness inside those idols is a poison, *mi hija*.

As I am, you too are now dying.

PAGE TWENTY

CONVERSATION PANELS

The following is a straight dialogue exchange between Carmen and Quetzalcoatl. The panels should be organic, not on a grid.

Panel One: A shot of Carmen's face, perplexed.

CARMEN (SPOKEN, Unsure)
You're...?

Panel Two: Quetzalcoatl's face turns serious.

QUETZALCOATL (SPOKEN)
Our time is ending. We are dying, as is the world.

Panel Three: Carmen shakes her head, stands up from her chair.

CARMEN (SPOKEN, Unsure)
Mi guía, you're not making sense.

Panel Four: Quetzalcoatl's face turns down, forlorn.

QUETZALCOATL (SPOKEN)
The time of the long count draws near. This world is ending.

My dear, that is why I called you back here.
It is your duty to end this cycle and begin the next.

That is the true gift I gave to you five years past.

Panel Five: Carmen looks aghast.

CARMEN (SPOKEN, Stunned)
End the world? But all these people, all we've built.

What of everything mankind has created?

Panel Six: Quetzalcoatl is unfazed.

QUETZALCOATL (SPOKEN)
What concerns the gods is simply what must be done.

That was my duty and now that duty is yours.

Panel Seven: Carmen is pissed, meandering, throwing her arms up.

CARMEN (SPOKEN, Stunned)
No—I...

Panel Seven: Quetzalcoatl looks at Carmen, in an almost patronizing manner.

QUETZALCOATL (SPOKEN)

Resistance is natural, *mi hija*, but ultimately useless.

PAGE TWENTY-ONE

ROW ONE: TWO PANELS

Panel One: Carmen is standing before Quetzalcoatl, uncertain. An uneasy silence hangs in the air.

Panel Two: Carmen looks around her. Something is familiar about the place.

ROW TWO: THREE PANELS

Panel One: Carmen looks down at herself, as if it just occurred to her to do so.

Panel Two: Carmen raises her right arm, wincing with the motion.

QUETZALCOATL (SPOKEN)

Careful, *mi hija*, the bones are set but will take some time to heal.

ROW TWO: THREE PANELS

Panel One: Carmen looks at Quetzalcoatl, horrified, shaken.

CARMEN (SPOKEN, Stunned)

I love you, Dragon.

I thought you loved me too.

Panel Two: Quetzalcoatl looks down, ashamed.

QUETZALCOATL (SPOKEN)

I would not entrust this task to someone
I did not love with all I am.

ROW FOUR: ONE PANEL

Panel One: Carmen, disgusted, walks away from Quetzalcoatl. The two dressers come into the light to either side of the screens.

QUETZALCOATL (SPOKEN)

Let her be.

PAGE TWENTY-TWO

ROW ONE: ONE PANEL

Panel One: Carmen walks down a hallway and passes an open door. Inside, trash is strewn about. It looks like squatters lived here but suddenly evacuated.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

I know the place like a recent memory.

I did not know how but I knew my return would lead me here.

ROW TWO: THREE PANELS

Panel One: A split shot as Carmen winds her way through the space.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

He's the only reason I'd come back to the *barrio*.

Panel Two: Carmen passes a bathroom, lit by the sun's rays pushing through the cracks in a busted, blackened window.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

He called to me, and I have answered.

But what has my allegiance wrought?

Panel Three: She enters the bathroom, leans on the sink.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

What has my loyalty cost me?

ROW THREE: THREE PANELS

Panel One: Carmen wretches in the sink.

Panel Two: Her reflection in the mirror as she wipes the spittle from her lip.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

Deep inside, I am not surprised at his request.

I believe in my master's word. I believe in his duty.

ROW FOUR: FOUR PANELS

Panel One: Carmen looks down at a piece of the broken window pane. It's shaped like a fractured half-moon.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

There was a time, long ago, that I remember in my dreams.

Panel Two: Carmen grabs the shard in her left hand.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

When I was a child, I would dream every night.

Panel Three: Carmen's reflection in the glass.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

Now, when I close my eyes, all I see are nightmares.

PAGE TWENTY-THREE

ROW ONE: Four Panels

Panel One: Carmen looks intently at herself in the mirror.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

I can feel Paqok's presence inside me.

Panel Two: A shot of Carmen at a game, soaking in the adulation of the crowd. A wide carefree grin on her face, confetti floating down around her.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

It stirs up memories, old pain, of my life before.

Panel Two: Carmen, now, lifting the blade of the glass up to the side of her face.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

My life here, in the house I was raised.

ROW TWO: ONE PANEL

Panel One: In the other room, Quetzalcoatl and his charges wait.

DRESSER (SPOKEN)

Will she do it, Lord?

QUETZALCOATL (SPOKEN)

I trust that woman more than any being I have ever known.

Whatever decision she makes is the right decision.

ROW THREE: THREE PANELS

Panel One: Carmen grabs the bundle of hair on the back of her head and lops it off with the shard.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

I wonder how much of that self I still am.

Panel Two: Carmen drops the wad of matted hair into the sink.

Panel Three: Carmen scrapes the blade of glass along the side of her head, shaving off a strip of hair.

ROW FOUR: TWO PANELS

Panel One: Carmen looks at herself, down her nose at what her once-beautiful face has become. The shard is held upward in her hand.

Panel Two: A mimic shot of Carmen as a teenager, her innocence lost on the streets of Nueva Cempoala. The blood spatter dots her face. Her shiv is held upward in her hand.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

But I know the answer to that question.

PAGE TWENTY-FOUR

ROW ONE: Three Panels

Panel One: A shot outside the busted glass of the bathroom. Carmen is visible inside it. She's leaving the room.

Panel Two: Same shot from further back. A reticle is centered on the window.

Panel Three: A soldier speaks into a CB mouthpiece.

SOLDIER (SPOKEN)

She's there.

ROW TWO: TWO PANELS

Panel One: Inside the van, soldiers fill the seats that line the inside.

SOLDIER (SPOKEN)

Should we move in, sir?

Panel Two: CU of Paqok's grin, nestled against the phone.

PAQOK (SPOKEN)

By all means. And, sergeant?

ROW THREE: TWO PANELS

Panel One: Carmen walks into the main room, her hair roughly chopped. No one reacts.

TEXT BOX (SOLDIER, SPOKEN)

Yes, sir?

Panel Two: Carmen kneels before the main screen.

TEXT BOX (PAQOK, SPOKEN)

Kill anyone that's with her.