

THE LONG COUNT
Issue 3

The Old Blood

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PAGE ONE

ROW ONE: ONE PANEL

Panel One: A Mayan warrior cleaves into a Northern tribesman. The Mayan is brandishing a long, curved blade. The steel digs deep into the shoulder of the tribesman. Blood sprays toward the sky.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

Colombiana was founded in blood.

ROW TWO: ONE PANEL

Panel One: The same Mayan warrior, staring at the viewer. His face is decorated in yellow and red pigmented patterns. A battle rages behind him. Mayan against Northerner. A Northern woman, clutching a swaddling babe, is downed with a mighty blow.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

Blood has covered every inch upon which this nation stands.

ROW THREE: TWO PANELS

Panel One: CU of a Mayan raising a dagger over a young Mayan girl. The blade is barely a foot above her naked breast. Her body is decorated for the sacrifice. Her head is to the side, eyes shut, as she braces for death.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

Blood is our history, our heritage...

MAYAN PRIEST (SPOKEN, OOF)

And we offer this, a virgin child...

Panel Two: CU of the girl's face, tears stream down her face toward the stone slab upon which she was lain.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

...and our inheritance.

MAYAN PRIEST (SPOKEN, OOF)

So that the gods will guide our warriors...

PAGE TWO

ROW ONE: ONE PANEL

Panel One: Mayans clashing with the Northern tribesmen. It is a slaughter. The Mayan are too fierce, too quick, too strong for the aboriginals.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)
Colombiana was born in blood.

ROW TWO: ONE PANEL

Panel One: Carmen clashing with a soldier, ducking a blow, connecting her left hand to his groin. She keeps her right arm out of battle.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)
And it shall die in blood.

ROW THREE: THREE PANELS

Panel One: She sweeps her hand up, clocking him across the neck.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)
They descend on me like the righteous descend upon a pariah.

Panel Two: She raises her elbow to deliver a blow between his shoulder blades.

CARMEN (SPOKEN)
Leave, *mi guía*, I will find you!

Panel Three: In the past: The dagger plunges into the Mayan girl's chest. She reacts; blood spurts from the wound.

TEXT BOX (MAYAN PRIEST, SPOKEN, OOF)
“...in their holy battles against the infidels.”

ROW FOUR: TWO PANELS

Panel One: A solid kick from Carmen sends a soldier out of the door, tumbling backward.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)
If they can kill me, they believe that the end will not come to pass.

Panel Two: Another draws a gun, points it right in her face.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)
As if I am the message and not simply the messenger.

PAGE THREE

ROW ONE: TWO PANELS

Panel One: Carmen bats the gun away with her right arm and crosses with her left. Her punch connects, knocking the soldier back.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE):

Before they came, Quetzalcoatl told me what I must do.

ROW TWO: TWO PANELS

Panel One: Minutes earlier: Quetzalcoatl's face on the screen. Carmen bowed low, her face illuminated by the glow.

QUETZALCOATL (SPOKEN):

Find the temple, *mi hija*.

Panel Two: Continuing flashback: Reverse shot of before. Same position but with the camera more from Quetzalcoatl's perspective.

QUETZALCOATL (SPOKEN):

It is the heart of our land.

ROW THREE: TWO PANELS

Panel One: In the past: A Mayan, clutching an opponent's face, smashes it into a stone. Blood spurts from the Northerner's face and mouth.

TEXT BOX (QUETZALCOATL, SPOKEN):

“It is what must be done.”

Panel Two: Now: Carmen continues the action of the past, having just lifted a soldier's face from her knee.

TEXT BOX (QUETZALCOATL, SPOKEN):

“All will become clear. I promise you.”

ROW FOUR: ONE PANEL

Panel One: Carmen stands in the aftermath. The head of her opponent drops from her hand as she surveys what she has done. The bodies of a dozen dead and dying soldiers lie at her feet.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE):

I pray he is right.

I pray my task is righteous.

PAGE FOUR

ROW ONE: ONE PANEL

Panel One: Carmen, exhausted beyond everything she has, collapses to her knees. Her clothes are spattered with blood. She is afraid, for she has been asked to do what no one should ever be asked to do.

ROW TWO: ONE PANEL

Panel One: The Mayan Warrior is victorious. His sinewy frame is drenched in the blood of battle. He is proud, for he is doing what no one is capable of doing.

ROW THREE: TWO PANELS

Panel One: Carmen allows herself to cry, just this one time. This time, and no other. She is not a weak person, tears do not mend her soul. But she must mourn this one time. Carmen's face is down.

Panel Two: Carmen's face is up. Her resolve is strengthened.

PAGE FIVE

ROW ONE: One Panel

Panel One: Carmen stands, having had her moment of doubt.

ROW TWO: Three Panels Page

Panel One: Carmen walks over to a chair that has a cloak draped over it.

Panel Two: She puts on the cloak.

Panel Three: Carmen heads toward the door.

ROW THREE: One Panel

Panel One: Carmen turns her head when a buzz erupts from a soldier's pocket.

SOUND EFFECT
BUZZ (from pocket)

ROW FOUR: Three Panels

Panel One: Carmen pulls a small cellular phone from the soldier's pocket.

Panel Two: She puts it against her ear.

PAQOK (SPOKEN, FROM PHONE)
Hello?

Panel Three: MCU of her eyes, wide.

PAQOK (SPOKEN, FROM PHONE)
Oh, Carmen...*Hello.*

PAGE SIX

ROW ONE: Four Panels

Panel One: Carmen is speaking as she walks out the main door.

CARMEN (SPOKEN)
What do you want?

Panel Two: Paqok, in the pawn store, pacing in the darkness.

PAQOK (SPOKEN)
Now, of all times, you choose to play coy?

Panel Three: Carmen turns a corner, walking past the soldier's van.

CARMEN (SPOKEN)
What do you want, Paqok?

ROW TWO: One Panel

Panel One: Paqok stares out the window at the street.

PAQOK (SPOKEN)
You know by now that you have to die, yes?

Panel Two: Carmen eyes a club in the passenger seat of the van. It's heavy, has a shocker on it. Designed for crowd control.

PAQOK (SPOKEN, FROM PHONE)
You owe me, Carmen. And I plan to get what's mine before you expire.

ROW TWO: Two Panel

Panel One: Carmen fastens the club to her waist, under her cloak.

CARMEN (SPOKEN)
You already tried to kill me, Paqok, and you failed.

Panel Two: Paqok sees a LITTLE GIRL walk past the window.

PAQOK (SPOKEN)
I tried no such thing. What I tried to do is prevent the actuation of your master's foolish task.

Panel Three: Paqok smiles at the girl. She looks at the strange man in the window of the pawn shop.

PAQOK (SPOKEN)
Now, I will kill you.

PAGE SEVEN

ROW ONE: ONE PANEL

Panel One: In the Past: Two Mayan elders stand in the aftermath of a battle with the Northerners.

MAYAN ELDER (SPOKEN)

The Northerners are weak, Chantico.

CHANTICO (SPOKEN)

Never underestimate your enemy.

ROW TWO: ONE PANEL

Panel One: Now: Carmen throws the cell phone into a trash can.

TEXT BOX (CHANTICO, SPOKEN)

“Your unpreparedness is their greatest advantage.”

ROW THREE: THREE PANELS

Panel One: The elder glares at the common warrior.

MAYAN ELDER (SPOKEN)

You will not preach to me, Chantico. It is I the gods have tasked, not you.

We will continue our conquest until we reach the impassable water.

Panel Two: The elder lowers his brow toward Chantico.

MAYAN ELDER (SPOKEN)

As the gods command.

Panel Three: Chantico looks coldly at the elder, plotting.

CHANTICO (SPOKEN)

As the gods command.

PAGE EIGHT

ROW ONE: Three Panels

Panel One: Carmen pulls the collar of the cloak up, obscuring her face.

Panel Two: She passes by a giant screen, showing a news report.

NEWS REPORTER

...down to 4 degrees by nightfall. *Brr.*

Panel Three: Stay on the screen. A well-groomed reporter sits at the news desk. An image of Carmen, taken from some promotional event for the Espadas, is in a window over his shoulder.

NEWS REPORTER

In other news, the search continues for NC Espadas driver, Carmen Sandoval.

ROW TWO: Three Panels

The screen becomes the panel, losing any “screen-like” border. The news reporter's expression and hand gestures change but otherwise the scene is static for this row. The CU in stages, getting tighter on the changing window with each panel.

Panel One: The window shows security footage of Carmen, in full gear, running.

NEWS REPORTER

Officials have yet to release details but it is now known that she was in the El Castillo section in NC's lower east side.

Panel Two: The window changes to a picture of Paolo Santiago “PS” Sanchez.

NEWS REPORTER

It is suspected by sources close to this station that Ms. Sandoval may have been involved in the murder of one Paolo Santiago Sanchez.

Panel Three: The window changes to a mugshot of PS Sanchez.

NEWS REPORTER

Mr. Sanchez, a member of the Rooks gang based inside El Castillo--

ROW THREE: Three Panels

Panel One: A homeless man shakes a cup at the passersby. He's dressed in tatters with faint outlines of familiar patterns—the same patterns that adorn Paqok's suit. The man is sitting cross legged against a brick wall. The legs of the passersby are visible: bare legs in heels, bare ankles under a power skirt, pantlegged legs that end in polished, expensive shoes. A coin falls toward the man's cup. The man, blind, stares ahead.

HOMELESS MAN

Déme la misericordia, mis amigos, en el nombre del Jesuchristo.

(NOTE: Clear with Ed.

Intended line: “Give me mercy, my friends, in the name of Jesus Christ”)

Panel Two: The man smiles. A cloaked pair of legs enters the line.

HOMELESS MAN

Su caridad me humilla, sinceramente.

(NOTE: Clear with Ed.

Intended line: “Your charity humbles me, sincerely.”)

Panel Two: The man looks up, smiling a gap tooth grin. Carmen's legs near the edge of the frame, passing him.

HOMELESS MAN (MUMBLED)

La muerte le aguarda, señorita.

(NOTE: Clear with Ed.

Intended line: “Your death awaits, señorita.”)

PAGE NINE

ROW ONE: Three Panels

Carmen passes familiar landmarks as she walks through the city streets.

Panel One: Body shot as Carmen walks by a storefront window, pulling the glove off her left hand with her teeth. Inside, totems of ancient deities sit on glass shelves, facing potential buyers.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE):

I remember these streets.

Or at least my body does.

Panel Two: Carmen's left hand touches the brickwork of the old street.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE):

I take the corners without thinking about my destination.

I took this path once before. Long ago.

Panel Three: The wind blows the collar of her cloak from her face for one brief moment.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE):

The day I vowed never to return.

ROW TWO: One Panel

Panel One: In Carmens' past: Carmen, at a press event, smooth faced and beaming. She stands in front of her new sisters, her new team: the Nueva Cempoala Espadas. A giant banner is draped in the background.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE):

All I could think about was what my future held.

The fame and the glory.

A promise.

ROW THREE: Two Panels

Panel One: In the past: Chantico stands beside the elder's slumbering form. The elder faces us, asleep beside a fire. Chantico holds a knife in his hand. Its curved blade shines in the light of the fire.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE):

That was before I learned that promises, like hearts...

...always end up broken.

PAGE TEN

ROW ONE: One Panel

Panel One: Paqok leans behind the desk of the pawn shop, shoes up. A television is on, showing some inane program.

TELEVISION VOICE (SPOKEN)
That's the silliest thing I've ever heard!

ROW TWO: Two Panels

Panel One: Tighter on Paqok.

SECOND TELEVISION VOICE (SPOKEN)
You ain't heard nuthin yet!

Panel Two: Paqok grins, enjoying how easy it is to entertain mortals. A voice from someone—something—else in the room speaks to the street demon.

VISITOR (SPOKEN, OOF)
You're awful relaxed. All things considered.

ROW THREE: One Panel

Panel One: Paqok doesn't react. He continues to watch the program.

PAQOK (SPOKEN)
When one knows an outcome, one need not fret over minor details.

PAGE ELEVEN

ROW ONE: One Panel, 3/4 Page

One Panel: Establishing shot of a bustling train station. Commuters, on their way home from work, pack the station. Ticket windows line the sides with queues spilling past the tension barriers that are set up. A banner declaring “Feliz Navidad” hangs in the distance. A train, sleek gold and red, is letting a crowd of people out of section as a swarm of people file in through another. Guards mill about; their dark blue armor obvious amongst the crowd.

ROW TWO: Three Panels

Panel One: A guard stands by a sign that reads ENTRANCE.

Panel Two: The guard, same position, stands perfectly still as Carmen walks through the frame.

Panel Three: The guards helmet turns toward the direction Carmen is headed.

PAGE TWELVE

ROW ONE: Two Panels

Panel One: Carmen stands in the queue of a ticket window.

Panel Two: A woman with her LITTLE GIRL walks by her. The same ones who passed by Paqok earlier.

ROW TWO: Three Panels

Panel One: A boy walking by points at Carmen.

BOY (SPOKEN)

Hey, aren't you--?

Panel Two: Carmen looks down at the boy, horrified.

BOY (SPOKEN)

What happened to your face?

Panel Three: Carmen looks down at the boy, horrified.

CARMEN (SPOKEN)

I--

ROW THREE: Three Panels

Panel One: The hand of the boy's mother grabs his arm.

MOTHER (SPOKEN)

Rafael, leave that woman alone!

Panel Two: Reaction shot: The boy's sour expression.

BOY (SPOKEN)

But, mom, it's--

Panel Three: The mother looking down at the child that exhausts her every waking minute.

MOTHER (SPOKEN)

I said leave her be!

PAGE THIRTEEN

ROW ONE: Three Panels

Panel One: Carmen stands at the ticket window. A few bills are folded between the fingers of her left hand.

CARMEN (WHISPERED)

One ticket, please.

Panel Two: The ticket lady's impassive response.

TICKET LADY (SPOKEN)

Transit pass, please.

Panel Three: Carmen, fumbling for words.

CARMEN (WHISPERED)

I--

ROW TWO: Two Panels

Panel One: The woman, annoyed, points at the sign behind her that reads exactly:

TICKET LADY (SPOKEN)

No passengers are allowed to board without a transit pass.

Panel Two: Carmen pushes the money toward the woman.

CARMEN (WHISPERED)

I need to be on that train.

TICKET LADY (SPOKEN)

I don't make the rules, ma'am.

ROW THREE: Three Panels

Panel One: A man behind Carmen becomes impatient.

IMPATIENT MAN (WHISPERED)

Get out of the line, lady. I got kids to see.

Panel Two: Carmen, sterner, addresses the ticket lady again. A shadow appears on the wall next to Carmen.

CARMEN (WHISPERED)

Give. Me. A.

Panel Three: The guard from before interrupts her.

GUARD (SPOKEN)

Is there a problem here, ma'am?

PAGE FOURTEEN

ROW ONE: Two Panels

Panel One: A group of dragon cultists, like those who tended to Carmen's wounds, snake their way through a patch of people.

Panel Two: At the ticket window, the guard tugs at Carmen's left arm. She narrows her eyes at him.

GUARD (SPOKEN)

Miss Sandoval, come with me.

ROW TWO: One Panel

Panel One: The guard is leading Carmen through the crowd, unaware the group of dragon cultists are about to block his path.

CARMEN (SPOKEN)

My name is Maria Consuera. I'm not--

GUARD (SPOKEN)

He told me you would lie.

Pathetic.

ROW THREE: Three Panels

Panel One: MCU of the head dragon cultist. A totem of Quetzalcoatl dangles from his neck. The item is in the same shape as the drawings that once adorned the cave walls of this city.

Panel Two: MCU of the guard's hand clutching Carmen's arm.

CARMEN (SPOKEN)

You have no idea what you're doing.

Panel Three: MCU of the head dragon cultist. His hand is raised in a fist with the index and middle fingers extended skyward. A wisp of energy—the same energy that once shone from Carmen—lilts from his fingers.

PAGE FIFTEEN

ROW ONE: One Panel

Panel One: In the past: Chantico kneels in the dirt on the outskirts of a Mayan camp, praying. A warrior is walking up behind him in the distance.

ROW TWO: Three Panels

Panel One: In the past: The warrior is close now, visible over Chantico's right shoulder. Chantico continues to kneel, eyes up toward the sun.

WARRIOR (SPOKEN)

Chantico, Kukulcan was murdered in his sleep.

Panel Two: In the present: Carmen pulls against the guard's iron grasp.

TEXT BOX (CHANTICO)

“There have been murmurs of Northerner activity here.”

Panel Three: In the past: The warrior looks at Chantico skeptically.

WARRIOR (SPOKEN)

That seems highly unlikely, Chantico.

ROW THREE: One Panel

Panel Two: In the present: The dragon cultists spread out amongst the teeming commuters. The leader is starting to glow entirely with green energy.

TEXT BOX (CHANTICO)

“Life is rich with events that may seem unlikely...”

PAGE SIXTEEN

ROW ONE: One Panel, Full Page

Panel One: 3/4 birds eye shot of the train station. The commuters scramble for the trains, exits, restrooms, anywhere but the center. Their faces are frozen in fear. Mothers grab their children, nearly lifting them off the ground. A man, taken under by the swell, is trampled by panicked citizens.

The guard who was holding Carmen has let go; he's reaching for his gun. The woman is being pulled into the swarm.

In the center, where everyone's eyes are fixed, the dragon cultists are pulling the energy of Quetzalcoatl to them. Great green and white swirls form a vortex over them.

TEXT BOX (CHANTICO)

“...but are in fact the product of careful orchestration.”

PAGE SEVENTEEN

ROW ONE: Three Panels

Panel One: Carmen rushes toward a commuter train as it is about to leave the station.

Panel Two: The lead cultist, his face alight with magical energy, addresses the panicked crowd.

LEAD CULTIST (SPOKEN):
Citizens of Nueva Cempoala, heed my call.

Panel Three: Carmen throws her right arm between the closing doors, stopping them.

ROW TWO: One Panel (with inset)

Panel One: Panoramic view, head-level, of the cultist as he addresses the fleeing citizens. The guard who was holding Carmen has burst into flames. Other guards are also in the process of being immolated.

LEAD CULTIST (SPOKEN):
The end times are nigh.

The Land of the Sun is approaching its final worship.

Repent now to the Ipalnemohuani, for they are the true path.

The one path.

The only path.

The path of the great god...

Inset Panel: Carmen's panicked face on the other side of train's closing doors.

LEAD CULTIST (SPOKEN):
...Quetzalcoatl.

PAGE EIGHTEEN

ROW ONE: ONE PANEL

Panel One: Chantico stands in the forest, kneeling above a crude map that has been drawn in the dirt. Another warrior is pointing down, laying out a plan.

WARRIOR (SPOKEN):

The Northern camp is ahead--here.

ROW TWO: THREE PANELS

Panel One: Chantico's grinning face.

CHANTICO (SPOKEN):

We will be there before the sun rises.

I want them all dead.

Panel Two: The warrior's concerned expression.

WARRIOR (SPOKEN):

The Northerners in this region are peaceful--

Panel Three: Closer on Chantico, more sinister.

CHANTICO (SPOKEN):

Every man, woman, child. I want the soil to be swollen
with their blood.

ROW THREE: ONE PANEL

Panel One: Sunrise, the Northern camp. Slumbering tribesfolks are being massacred by Chantico's men. A woman's throat is gushing blood as a mad Mayan works his knife through her collarbone. Chantico raises his large blade—the blade that killed Kukulcan—before the Northern chieftain. The chieftain is on his knees, hand up defensively. The entire field runs red.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

Colombiana was born in blood.

PAGE NINETEEN

ROW ONE: ONE PANEL

Panel One: Carmen's train pulls away from the station. The dragon cultists have taken to the crowd, attacking the commuters with sacred blades. Blood sprays toward the sky with each practiced slice.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)

And it shall die in blood.

ROW TWO: THREE PANELS

Panel One: The LITTLE GIRL is staring out her window at the mayhem at the station. A hand is resting gently on her shoulder.

LITTLE GIRL (SPOKEN):

Mami, what are they doing?

Panel Two: Follow up, same positions but the focus is on the mother.

MOTHER (SPOKEN):

I don't know, honey.

Panel Three: Keeping those position, pull back from the mother, to show Carmen making her way behind them on the train full of gawkers.

MOTHER (SPOKEN):

But don't look.

PAGE TWENTY

ROW ONE: TWO PANELS

Panel One (3/4 Row): Hunapu, the warrior seen conferring with Chantico, stands with other Mayan men by a campfire. The warrior is addressing the others, conspiring.

HUNAPU (SPOKEN)

We had received word that the Northern tribes
wished to establish trade agreements--

Panel Two (1/4 Row): A warrior across from him interjects.

ANOTHER WARRIOR (SPOKEN)

This is a righteous quest. There are no trade--

ROW TWO: THREE PANELS

Panel One: Hunapu forcibly disagrees.

HUNAPU (SPOKEN)

What happened today was a massacre. A *slaughter*.

There was nothing righteous in our actions.

Panel Two: The warrior looks at Hunapu smugly.

ANOTHER WARRIOR (SPOKEN)

Weak stomachs make for unsteady hands.

Panel Three: Hunapu leans over the fire.

HUNAPU (SPOKEN)

And dark hearts, my brother...

ROW THREE: TWO PANELS

Panel One: Carmen find an empty seat on the train.

Panel Two: She sits down, nervous.

TEXT BOX (HUNAPU, SPOKEN)

...can misguide even the steadiest hand.

PAGE TWENTY-ONE

ROW ONE: TWO PANELS

Panel One: Paqok is seated at the desk in the shop. He's leaning forward, staring at the unseen man on the other side of the desk.

VISITOR (SPOKEN, OOF)

I have concerns regarding your methods.

Panel Two: Paqok leans back, grinning, cocky.

PAQOK (SPOKEN)

My methods? Please, do explain.

Panel Three: Paqok's keeps his cocky grin as he puts his hands behind his head.

VISITOR (SPOKEN, OOF)

You're letting the bearer of the end times roam free in your jurisdiction.

ROW TWO: TWO PANELS

Panel One: Pull back on the same scene. The blackened outline of the visitor is seen—no features, just a filled outline.

VISITOR (SPOKEN)

In my day, we would have gutted her in front of any who opposed us.

That is how you handle these problems.

Panel Two: Paqok's expression loses some of its smugness. He starts to lower his arms.

PAQOK (SPOKEN)

Carmen Sandoval is the most popular person in this city.

Eviscerate her on what? Public television?

ROW TWO: THREE PANELS

Panel One: Paqok leans across the desk again.

PAQOK (SPOKEN)

Can you even comprehend the backlash that would cause on me, you, our supporters?

Panel Two: Paqok bares his teeth as he lifts himself to his height.

PAQOK (SPOKEN)

My dear man, your tactics show your age.

Panel Two: MCU on Paqok's face. His sharklike teeth gleaming.

PAQOK (SPOKEN)

You underestimate the expansiveness of my network.

PAGE TWENTY-TWO

ROW ONE: ONE PANEL

Panel One: The woman and her LITTLE GIRL walk up to Carmen's bench seat on the train.

TEXT BOX (PAQOK)

“Wherever she is. I will know of it.”

ROW TWO: THREE PANELS

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

MOTHER (SPOKEN)

Are these seats taken?

Panel Two: Carmen smiles glumly at the two.

CARMEN (SPOKEN)

No, please. Sit.

Panel Three: The LITTLE GIRL takes the middle seat between Carmen and her mother. We see a promotional poster for the NC Espadas plastered to the far wall of the train.

TEXT BOX (PAQOK)

“You worry too much, old man.”

ROW THREE: THREE PANELS

Panel One: The LITTLE GIRL reaches into her backpack.

Panel Two: The LITTLE GIRL looks at Carmen.

LITTLE GIRL (SPOKEN)

Hi.

Panel Three: Carmen smiles at the girl.

PAGE TWENTY-THREE

ROW ONE: ONE PANEL

Panel One: In the past: Chantico stands before Hunapu on the outskirts of the Mayan settlement. His blade is turned upward in his hand.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)
I remember Quetzalcoatl's words.

ROW TWO: THREE PANELS

Panel One: Now: The LITTLE GIRL reads her book on the train.

MOTHER (SPOKEN, OOF)
What are you studying, honey?

Panel Two: In the past: Chantico cleaves Hunapu's head from his shoulders in a single swipe.

TEXT BOX (NARRATIVE)
"It is what must be done."

Panel Three: Now: Carmen looks down at her hands. The right gloved; the left bare.

LITTLE GIRL (SPOKEN, OOF)
History.

ROW THREE: TWO PANELS

Panel One: A tight shot on Paqok's terrible grin. His visitor is speaking.

VISITOR (SPOKEN)
I will trust in your methods for now.

But should they fail...

Panel Two: Same shot, from Paqok's POV. The visitor with whom he has been speaking is seen—Chantico.

CHANTICO (SPOKEN)
...I will employ my own.

PAGE TWENTY-FOUR

ROW ONE: Three Panels

Panel One: The LITTLE GIRL looks up from her book, toward her mother.

LITTLE GIRL (SPOKEN)
Mami, is *abuela* coming in for Christmas?

Panel Two: The mother is reading a magazine titled INVERSIONES. Without looking up, she answers.

MOTHER (SPOKEN)
Si, honey, she will be.

Panel Three: Carmen, leaning against the glass, stares outside the window.

LITTLE GIRL (SPOKEN, OOF)
Good.

ROW TWO: ONE PANEL (1/3 Page)

Panel One: The view from the train: the wondrous skyline of Nueva Cempoala. It has begun to snow.

LITTLE GIRL (SPOKEN, OOF)
I love Christmas.