

THE BREATH: COMING HOME

A Musical

Book, Music & Lyrics by Richard Ehrlich

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SYNOPSIS

In a community living under constant watch, fear shapes daily life. Alex, withdrawn and vigilant, believes safety comes from observing and controlling the space around him. Sofía, deeply connected to her neighbors, believes survival depends on gathering, visibility, and care.

When they meet, their growing connection exposes the tension between isolation and presence. As pressure increases and a trusted community member is taken, the neighborhood faces an impossible choice: disappear quietly or remain visible despite the risk.

Love does not erase the danger. Community does not guarantee safety. Instead, choosing to stay — to breathe openly together — becomes an act of resistance.

CHARACTERS

ALEX — 19, Salvadoran, the watcher

SOFÍA — 21, Dominican-American, the organizer

CARLOS — Late 20s, community anchor, Isabel's brother

EVAN — Mid-20s, white teacher, outsider learning

MIGUEL — 9 years old, Marisol's son

MARISOL — 40s, Miguel's mother, community center director

ISABEL — 50s, longtime resident, voice of memory

MARÍA, ELENA, ANITA, TOMAS, GABO — Community members

ENSEMBLE — Neighbors, families, community

MUSICAL NUMBERS

1. "We're Still Here (Morning)" — Opening Ensemble
2. "Sofia" — Alex Solo
3. "Before The Door Opens" — Alex & Sofia Duet
4. "Outsider" — Evan & Ensemble
5. "We're Both Breaking" — Alex & Sofia Duet
6. "Every Corner" — Sofia & Ensemble
7. "Something More" — Alex & Sofia (Love Song)
8. "I'll Watch" — Alex & Evan Duet
9. "Standing Here" — Isabel & Ensemble
10. "No Te Vayas (Don't Go)" — Community Ballad
11. "Home" — Alex & Sofia Duet
12. "Aquí Estamos (We Are Here)" — Full Company Showstopper
13. "The Breath" — Finale Ensemble

SCENE 1 — WE'RE STILL HERE (MORNING)

Setting: Pre-dawn transitioning to dawn. Community center exterior and surrounding street.

ALEX stands in shadow near the door, watching. He's been here a while—checking faces, reading the street, tracking every car that passes. His body language is coiled, alert.

Music underscores—quiet, tense. Heartbeat rhythm.

ALEX begins counting, barely audible.

ALEX

Forty-seven. Forty-eight.

EVAN enters from stage left, carrying a backpack. He's clearly lost—checking his phone, looking around confused. The map app has failed him. He spots the community center—a lit building in a darkening street. Relief crosses his face.

ALEX's body language shifts immediately. He steps deeper into shadow, watching.

EVAN approaches the door. Pauses to look at a flyer on the wall. Turns slightly, presenting his back.

ALEX moves. Fast. Silent.

In three steps, ALEX is behind EVAN. His arm wraps around EVAN's throat—not violently, but immobilizing. Controlled. Protective instinct, not aggression. Both freeze.

ALEX

(low, controlled)

Don't move.

EVAN's hands instinctively go up—surrender position. His phone drops.

ALEX

(tightening grip slightly)

Don't say anything.

EVAN stops struggling. Both breathing hard. Five seconds of silence—just breathing.

ALEX begins to turn EVAN slowly, keeping hold. Their eyes meet.

Recognition floods ALEX's face. Horror. This is not enforcement. This is a kid. This is someone lost.

ALEX releases immediately, stumbles backward, hands up.

They stand frozen, six feet apart. EVAN rubs his neck. Neither speaks.

SONG 1: "WE'RE STILL HERE (MORNING)"

Opening Number - Ensemble

Placement: Alex counting alone transitions to full ensemble establishing the surveillance network. The grab of Evan happens during the song.

Function: Establishes surveillance world, introduces all main characters, sets tone for entire show.

SCENE 2 — ROOFTOP / "SOFIA"

*Later that morning. The roof of Alex's building.
The city stretches out below—cluttered, loud, alive.*

*ALEX resumes his routine. Notebook in hand. Binoculars nearby.
He scans the block, focused, controlled.*

He writes.

"White sedan — 6:47."

"Delivery truck — 6:52."

"Unknown van — 6:54."

He pauses.

Across the street, a woman moves through the neighborhood—greeting people, carrying boxes, stopping to listen. She's familiar.

ALEX watches her longer than he means to.

He flips back a few pages in his notebook. Stops. There's no name there.

ALEX

(to himself)

You're here again.

*She laughs at something someone says below. It's small. Unremarkable.
Except it isn't.*

ALEX lowers the binoculars.

ALEX

I've seen you before.

He watches as she disappears inside the community center.

ALEX

(slightly unsettled)

Same time. Same place.

He checks his watch. Writes nothing.

ALEX

I don't usually miss things.

*He scans the street again, trying to reassert control.
But his attention drifts back to the community center door.*

ALEX

(frustrated, quiet)

Who are you?

He closes the notebook—harder than necessary.

A beat.

He forces himself to resume watching. Counting under his breath.

ALEX

One. Two. Three...

But his eyes keep pulling back to the door.

Lights shift.

SCENE 3 — COMMUNITY CENTER HALLWAY

Late morning. Community center hallway. Folding chairs, flyers, a bulletin board with legal clinic times.

The door to the meeting room is half-open. Sofia is inside setting up chairs. Alex appears in the hallway, hovering at the threshold. Sofia senses him and turns.

SOFÍA

Hi. Alex, right?

He nods.

ALEX

You... remember my name?

SOFÍA

I try to. Names are the first thing they take away when they start counting people.

That lands heavier than she meant it to.

SOFÍA

I'm Sofia

SONG 2: "SOFÍA"

Alex's quiet romantic falling in love song.

ALEX

I... can help with chairs. If you want.

SOFÍA

I always want help.

He walks in, a little stiff. They work in silence at first, moving chairs. A metal chair scrapes loudly in the next room. Both of them flinch in the same instinctive way. They notice the shared reflex.

SOFÍA

You always watch from outside. The corner, the roof. Does it... feel safer out there?

ALEX

It feels... controlled. If I stay at the edges, nothing surprises me.

SOFÍA

And are you happy out there?

He doesn't answer. She sets a chair down, closer to him.

SOFÍA

You could sit in here today. Just... be in the room. That might be enough.

He looks at the door, at the chairs, at her.

ALEX

I don't remember the last time I sat in a room... like this. With people.

SOFÍA

Then start now.

A gentle, fragile intimacy hangs in the air as they finish.

SONG 3: "BEFORE THE DOOR OPENS"

The song ends on a held breath. Sofia leaves the door open. Alex doesn't walk away.

Song ends with the grab released, both frozen.

SCENE 4 — CONFRONTATION

Door opens. MIGUEL appears.

MIGUEL

(seeing them, understanding immediately)

Evan?

EVAN

(voice rough)

Yeah. I... yeah.

MIGUEL

(to ALEX, calm but firm)

Alex.

ALEX

(can't look at EVAN)

I thought—

MIGUEL

I know what you thought.

MARISOL appears in doorway.

MARISOL

(to EVAN)

You're here for the program. After-school.

EVAN

(still shaken)

Yes. I'm... I'm Evan.

ALEX

(quiet, to himself)

I know.

Long silence. ALEX can't look up. EVAN can't stop staring at him.

MARISOL

(to EVAN)

Come inside. We'll talk.

EVAN follows her in. ALEX remains outside.

MIGUEL stays behind.

MIGUEL

You okay?

ALEX

I grabbed the wrong person.

MIGUEL

You were protecting us.

ALEX

I grabbed the wrong person, Miguel.

MIGUEL doesn't know what to say. Goes inside.

ALEX stands alone. Starts counting again.

ALEX

Fifty-one. Fifty-two.

Lights fade.

SONG 4: "OUTSIDER"

SCENE 5 — THE COMMUNITY GATHERS

Setting: Community center, next day. Tables, chairs, organizing visible. MARISOL and MIGUEL setting up. SOFÍA arrives with clipboards, stressed about gathering preparation.

EVAN enters, looking for address. Has backpack with teaching supplies.

ALEX notices immediately. Stands, alert.

ALEX

(to Evan)

You're back.

EVAN

I... yes. I'm looking for Teresa Gutierrez. I have a sublet listing—

ALEX

(stepping closer)

Teresa Gutierrez doesn't live here anymore.

EVAN

Oh. Do you know where—

ALEX

No.

Tension. SOFÍA enters, sees the confrontation.

SOFÍA

(to Alex)

Alex. Let me handle this.

(to Evan) Who sent you here?

EVAN

No one sent me. I found a sublet listing. Teresa Gutierrez. I thought—

SOFÍA

Teresa Gutierrez is my aunt. She moved two years ago.

EVAN

I'm sorry. I didn't know. I came all this way—

SOFÍA

What's your name?

EVAN

Evan.

SOFÍA

Evan what? Where are you from? What do you do?

EVAN

Evan Torres. From Portland. I'm... I was a teacher. I'm looking for work.

SOFÍA

We don't have jobs here. We barely have jobs for ourselves.

ALEX

(to Sofía)

See? I told you. He should leave.

SOFÍA

(ignoring Alex, to Evan)

What kind of teacher?

EVAN

Elementary. Reading, art. I worked with kids who... who struggled.

SOFÍA considers this. Looks at MIGUEL drawing in the corner.

SOFÍA

Can you teach reading?

EVAN

Yes.

SOFÍA

Can you do it for free?

EVAN

(beat)

Yes.

ALEX

Sofía, we don't know him.

SOFÍA

(to Evan)

I need someone to check on twenty families. Go door to door. Ask if they're okay. Ask if they need anything. Report back to me.

(She hands him a list)

If you do this without asking questions, without taking pictures, without telling anyone what you've seen—then maybe we'll trust you enough to let you teach.

EVAN takes the list.

EVAN

I'll do it.

ALEX

He'll take that list straight to—

SOFÍA

(cutting him off)

Alex. I said I'll handle this.

[ROMANTIC MOMENT - FIRST ATTRACTION]

ALEX watches SOFÍA. Something in how she commands the room, how she makes decisions, how she protects and leads simultaneously.

She feels his gaze, turns to look at him.

Their eyes meet for the first time in the scene.

SOFÍA

(to Alex)

What?

ALEX

(beat, something shifting)

Nothing. You're... you're right. He should do it.

SOFÍA

(surprised by his agreement, something in her softens)

Oh. Good.

They hold eye contact a beat longer than necessary. The air between them changes slightly.

EVAN notices, shifts uncomfortably with the list in his hand.

SCENE 6 — THE RETURN

Setting: Evening, several days later. Outside the community center. The sky is lowering into blue-gray. Streetlights flicker on.

EVAN exits the community center, backpack over his shoulder. He's clearly been working with the kids. He looks exhausted but satisfied.

ALEX is half-hidden near the corner—watching the street, scanning shadows.

SOFÍA comes out behind EVAN, sees ALEX. She's been inside working late.

SOFÍA

(to Alex)

You're still out here.

ALEX

Someone has to be.

SOFÍA

You've been here since this morning.

ALEX

So have you.

SOFÍA

I was inside. You were... counting.

ALEX

Same thing.

EVAN

(hesitant)

I can stay. If you want to go in.

ALEX

(sharp)

You don't know what to watch for.

SOFÍA

Alex.

ALEX

What?

SOFÍA

Come inside. Just for an hour.

ALEX

I can't.

SOFÍA

Yes, you can.

ALEX

What if something happens while I'm—

SOFÍA

(tired)

Then we deal with it. Like we always do.

Beat. Tension between them—but not hostile. Something deeper, unspoken.

EVAN

I'll... I'll go.

EVAN leaves. ALEX and SOFÍA alone.

SOFÍA

When's the last time you slept?

ALEX

I slept.

SOFÍA

More than three hours?

ALEX doesn't answer.

SOFÍA

(continuing)

When's the last time you went home?

ALEX

This is more important than—

SOFÍA

You can't protect us if you collapse.

ALEX

I'm fine.

SOFÍA

You're not fine. Neither am I. But we're both still here.

Silence. They're both exhausted. Both at the edge. Both holding on.

SONG 5: "WE'RE BOTH BREAKING"

★ ROMANTIC DUET - FALLING IN LOVE ★

Placement: Both exhausted, both breaking under impossible burdens. They begin to fall in love in this shared vulnerability.

Song ends with them standing close, not quite touching, but the connection undeniable.

Long silence. Both present, both vulnerable. The song has cracked something open.

SOFÍA

(quietly)

When did this become...

ALEX

What?

SOFÍA

When did you become the person I...

(She doesn't finish. Can't finish. Neither quite ready to name it.)

ALEX

(quiet, honest)

I don't know how to stop watching.

SOFÍA

I don't know how to stop organizing.

Beat. They're very close now.

ALEX

But when I'm with you...

(pause, vulnerable)

When I'm with you, I can breathe. Just a little.

SOFÍA

(looking at him, something breaking open in her)

Yeah. Me too.

The air between them is charged. They're drawn together but neither moves. Not yet.

SOFÍA

(breaking the moment, stepping back slightly, practical but gentle)

Go home tonight. Just tonight. Sleep in your own bed.

ALEX

Will you?

SOFÍA

No. But I'll be here when you come back.

ALEX

Promise?

SOFÍA

(soft, meaningful)

Promise.

They separate slowly. The pull between them is undeniable now. Both feel it. Neither says it yet.

ALEX finally walks away, but looks back once. SOFÍA watches him go, hand over her heart.

Lights fade.

SCENE 7 — THE WALL AROUND US

Setting: Community center, daytime.

The space is active but controlled. Tables covered with lists. Phones ringing. People moving with purpose.

SOFÍA is everywhere at once.

She moves quickly between stations—handing out papers, checking names, listening to half a conversation while starting another.

MARISOL stands near the door, greeting people quietly, directing traffic.

ISABEL is on the phone, voice low but urgent.

ISABEL

(into phone)

Yes. Today. No pictures. No names written down. Just check in.

She hangs up. Another call comes immediately.

SOFÍA

(to a community member)

If anyone asks questions, you send them to me. If you feel unsafe, you leave. No explanations.

COMMUNITY MEMBER

And if they come by?

SOFÍA

Then you're not alone.

She gestures—two other people step closer, standing beside the speaker. A quiet show of solidarity.

Across the room, EVAN is helping MIGUEL stack chairs.

MIGUEL

We should keep the door open.

EVAN

Why?

MIGUEL

So people can see who's inside.

EVAN looks toward SOFÍA. She overhears.

SOFÍA

Yes. Door stays open.

A beat. This is a choice.

Outside, a shadow passes the window. Everyone freezes for half a second.

SOFÍA

(steady, immediate)

It's okay. Just keep moving.

Movement resumes.

ISABEL crosses to SOFÍA.

ISABEL

Two families canceled.

SOFÍA

(nods)

How many still confirmed?

ISABEL

Twenty-three.

SOFÍA

Then we plan for twenty-three.

ISABEL

What if fewer come?

SOFÍA

Then we stand with whoever shows up.

She checks her list. Makes a mark.

MARISOL

(to Sofía, quietly)

You haven't eaten.

SOFÍA

Later.

MARISOL

You said that yesterday.

SOFÍA

(smiles, brief)

Then I'll eat tomorrow.

MARISOL watches her—concerned, proud.

ALEX appears in the doorway. He doesn't come in. He watches.

SOFÍA notices him.

SOFÍA

You don't have to stay out there.

ALEX

I know.

They hold eye contact for a moment.

SOFÍA

(soft, but firm)

We've got this in here.

ALEX nods. Stays where he is.

People take up positions—near doors, near windows, near phones. Not guarding. Witnessing.

The room settles into a rhythm.

A quiet system.

A human barrier.

The wall around them.

Lights shift.

SCENE 8 — MIGUEL'S WORLD

Setting: Community center. MIGUEL drawing maps at a table. EVAN teaching a small group of children nearby. This has become routine.

EVAN notices Miguel's map—detailed, with names written next to each house.

EVAN

That's incredible, Miguel.

MIGUEL

It's our neighborhood. Every house. Every family.

EVAN

You know everyone?

MIGUEL

Alex taught me. He counts cars. I count people.

EVAN sees the map more clearly—some names have been crossed out.

EVAN

What are the crossed-out names?

MIGUEL

(matter-of-fact)

People who left. Or got taken.

Beat. EVAN doesn't know what to say.

MIGUEL

(continuing)

Elena's name is still here. She's my best friend. But her mom wants to leave.

MARISOL enters, sees them.

MARISOL

Miguel, time to go home.

MIGUEL

Can I finish—

MARISOL

Now, mijo.

MIGUEL packs up quickly. MARISOL's tone is gentle but urgent. They leave.

EVAN looks at the map left on the table. So many names crossed out.

Lights fade.

SCENE 9 — SOFÍA ALONE

Setting: Community center. Late evening. Everyone has gone home. Lights dim. SOFÍA sits at table surrounded by lists, phone dead on the table, exhausted.

SOFÍA

(to empty room, voice breaking)

Mrs. Ortiz still hasn't called back. Three days now.

(She dials. Waits. Voicemail. Hangs up.)

Gone.

(Beat. She's alone. Finally lets her guard down.)

I can fight all day. I can organize. I can make calls. I can write speeches. I can keep everyone's hope alive.

But nights...

(Her voice cracks)

Nights I can't breathe.

(Beat)

Every night I go home and I lie there counting. Not cars like Alex. I count how many people I couldn't save.

The Garcias. Rosa's family. Mr. Santos. Mrs. Ortiz...

(She stops. Can't continue. Standing, pacing)

I tell everyone the gathering will change things. That being visible is worth it. That we're stronger together.

But what if I'm wrong?

(She grabs the table edge)

What if I organize this gathering and they come for all of us at once? What if I'm the reason everyone disappears?

(Sitting, head in hands)

Alex watches cars. I watch people vanish. Twenty families haven't answered. Tomorrow it might be thirty.

(Whispered)

I'm so tired of being strong. I'm so tired of holding everyone up.

(She puts her head down on the table)

What if I can't do this? What if I'm not enough?

[ALEX ENTERS]

He's been outside watching. Saw the light still on. He sees her—head down, surrounded by lists, shoulders shaking.

ALEX

(soft)

Sofia?

SOFÍA

(without looking up)

Go away, Alex.

ALEX

How long have you been here?

SOFÍA

(finally looking up, eyes wet)

Twenty families, Alex. Twenty.

ALEX

I know.

SOFÍA

What if the gathering is a mistake—

ALEX

(kneeling beside her chair)

Stop.

SOFÍA

(breaking)

You watch the streets. But who watches me? Who keeps me safe?

ALEX

(quiet, honest)

I do.

(She looks at him)

Every night when you walk home, I watch you. I count your steps. I wait until I can't see you anymore. And then I count to sixty. And if you don't text me, I walk past your building.

(Beat)

I watch the streets for everyone. But I watch you because I can't imagine this place without you.

SOFÍA

(whispered)

You do that? Every night?

ALEX

Every night.

(Beat. Something shifting between them.)

SOFÍA

I'm scared, Alex. I'm so scared I'm going to fail everyone.

ALEX

(taking her hands gently)

You're not failing anyone. You're holding us together.

SOFÍA

(breaking again, softer)

But who holds me?

ALEX

(after a long beat)

Let me.

(She looks at him. Tears finally falling.)

You've been holding everyone. Let me hold you. Just for tonight.

SOFÍA

I don't know how to let someone—

ALEX

I know. Neither do I. But maybe...

(He opens his arms slightly. An offer.)

SOFÍA

(after a moment, voice small)

Just for tonight?

ALEX

Just for tonight.

(She stands. Moves into his arms. Lets herself be held.)

(He holds her carefully. She breaks—quietly, against his chest.)

SOFÍA

(whispered into his shoulder)

I can fight all day. But nights... nights I can't breathe.

ALEX

(holding her tighter)

Then breathe now. With me.

(They stand there. Both broken. Both holding each other up.)

(Music underscores softly—quiet, intimate.)

ALEX

(after a silence)

Better?

SOFÍA

(pulling back slightly, wiping her eyes)

A little.

ALEX

Good.

SOFÍA

Thank you. For watching me. For... this.

ALEX

You don't have to thank me for that.

SOFÍA

(looking at her lists)

I should go home.

ALEX

Let me walk you.

SOFÍA

You don't have to—

ALEX

I'm walking you home.

(Beat. She smiles—small, tired, but real.)

SOFÍA

Okay.

(At the door, she stops.)

SOFÍA

Four more days.

ALEX

We'll make it.

SOFÍA

You promise?

ALEX

(taking her hand)

I promise.

(They exit together. Lights fade.)

SONG 6: "EVERY CORNER"

SCENE 10 — ROOFTOP AFTER

Setting: Sofía's apartment building. Rooftop access or front stoop. Late evening. City lights visible. Stars above. Quiet street below. The world feels still.

ALEX and SOFÍA arrive at her building. They've walked in silence most of the way. She stops at the entrance.

SOFÍA

Thank you. For walking me.

ALEX

I told you I would.

SOFÍA

You did.

(Beat. She doesn't want to go inside yet. He doesn't want to leave.)

SOFÍA

Do you want to... the roof has a good view. If you want.

ALEX

(careful)

Okay.

[TRANSITION TO ROOF]

They climb stairs or take elevator. Emerge onto rooftop. City spreads out around them—lights, buildings, the neighborhood they're fighting for. Stars above. Neither speaks at first.

SOFÍA sits on the ledge (safely back from edge) or on a bench/crate. ALEX stands nearby, then slowly sits, leaving space between them.

Long silence. Just breathing. City sounds below. Distant sirens. Life continuing.

SOFÍA

(finally, quiet)

You really do it? Every night?

ALEX

What?

SOFÍA

Count to sixty. Walk past my building.

ALEX

(honest)

Every night.

SOFÍA

Why?

ALEX

(beat, then simple truth)

Because I need to know you're safe.

(Silence. She processes this.)

SOFÍA

What if I'm not home?

ALEX

Then I count to a hundred and twenty.

(She almost laughs—not quite, but almost. A small sound.)

SOFÍA

That's... (she doesn't know what it is)

ALEX

I know.

SOFÍA

No one's ever—

ALEX

I know.

(Beat. She looks at him. He's looking out at the city, giving her space.)

SOFÍA

I don't know how to let someone watch me.

ALEX

I'm not watching you. I'm just... making sure you get home.

SOFÍA

What's the difference?

ALEX

(thinking, then)

Watching is... control. Making sure you're home is... (he can't find the word)

SOFÍA

Caring.

ALEX

(looks at her)

Yeah. Caring.

(Long silence. They sit together. The city around them. She shifts slightly closer—not much, just a few inches. He notices but doesn't move. Just lets her.)

SOFÍA

I meant what I said. Tonight. About being tired.

ALEX

I know.

SOFÍA

I meant all of it.

ALEX

I know.

(Beat)

SOFÍA

Thank you for holding me.

ALEX

(simple)

Anytime.

SOFÍA

Don't say that if you don't mean it.

ALEX

(looks at her directly)

Anytime.

(She holds his gaze. Believes him. Looks away first.)

SOFÍA

You should go. It's late.

ALEX

Yeah.

(Neither moves. Neither wants to.)

SOFÍA

Alex?

ALEX

Yeah?

SOFÍA

Tomorrow night... when you count to sixty...

ALEX

Yeah?

SOFÍA

I'll turn the light on and off. So you know I'm okay. You won't have to walk all the way up.

ALEX

(small smile—almost not there but real)

Okay.

SOFÍA

Two blinks. So you know it's me. Not just... you know, coincidence.

ALEX

Two blinks.

SOFÍA

Yeah.

(Beat. This is their secret signal now. Their connection.)

ALEX

(standing)

I should—

SOFÍA

Yeah.

(She stands. They face each other. Close but not touching. Not yet. Too much between them still. Too much weight. But something shifting.)

ALEX

Good night, Sofia.

SOFÍA

Good night, Alex.

(He turns to go. Takes a few steps. Stops. Turns back.)

ALEX

For what it's worth... you're not failing anyone. You never were.

(He leaves before she can respond.)

SOFÍA stands alone on the roof. City around her. Stars above. She wraps her arms around herself—not cold, just... holding what he gave her.

She looks out at the neighborhood. All the windows. All the lives. All the people she's trying to save.

For the first time tonight, she doesn't feel alone.

She looks at her phone. 11:47 PM. She sets an alarm: 11:50 PM. "Blink lights for Alex."

A small smile crosses her face. Tired. Real.

She heads inside.

[STAGING NOTE]

As she descends, lights fade on the rooftop. Music underscores softly—maybe a few instrumental bars from "We're Both Breaking" or a new motif for their connection.

Then:

A light in a window turns on. Off. On. Off.

Two blinks.

In the distance, ALEX (if visible) stops walking. Looks up at her window. Two blinks.

He smiles—barely there, but there.

Keeps walking. Counting under his breath: "One. Two. Three..."

Lights fade.

SCENE 11 — MORNING LIGHT

Setting: Community center. Next morning. Sunlight streaming through windows. A good day. MARISOL making coffee. MIGUEL at table drawing. SOFÍA organizing papers - calmer today. ALEX enters, helps set up chairs.

Normal routine. Peaceful. The kind of day that makes you think maybe it will be okay.

MARISOL

(to Alex)

Coffee?

ALEX

Thanks.

She pours. He takes it. Small smile. These small kindnesses matter.

MIGUEL

(showing Sofía his drawing)

I added the new playground.

SOFÍA

(looking, genuine)

That's beautiful, Miguel.

ALEX crosses to help SOFÍA with a heavy box. They work together quietly. Comfortable.

SOFÍA

(quiet)

Thank you. For last night. For the roof.

ALEX

(quiet back)

Anytime.

They share a look. Understanding. Connection growing.

MARISOL watches them, knowing smile. Pours more coffee.

Outside, morning sounds. Birds. Cars passing. Normal life.

For this moment, everything is okay.

TOMÁS enters.

TOMÁS

(to everyone, casual)

Morning.

EVERYONE

Morning.

TOMÁS gets coffee. Sits with GABO who's arrived. They talk low, easy. Community routine.

This is what they're fighting for. These quiet mornings. These small moments of peace.

Lights hold on the peaceful scene.

Then - shift. Tension building.

ALEX at window. Something catching his eye. Counting under his breath starts again.

Quiet at first.

SOFÍA notices. Concerned.

The peace is fragile. Always fragile.

Lights transition to evening.

SCENE 12 — SOMETHING'S CHANGING

Setting: Evening. Street corner. ALEX pacing, counting under his breath compulsively.

Can't stop. Shoulders up by ears. Hands in fists.

ALEX

(to himself)

Forty-seven. Forty-eight. No—forty-seven again? Forty-nine. What was I counting?

SOFÍA finds him.

SOFÍA

Alex?

ALEX

(can't stop counting)

Blue sedan. White van. What comes next? I had it. Fifty... fifty...

SOFÍA

(carefully)

When's the last time you ate?

ALEX

I'm fine.

SOFÍA

You're counting out loud. You never count out loud.

ALEX

I just need to... if I can just remember... fifty-two? Was it fifty-two?

SOFÍA reaches out slowly, touches his shoulder. He flinches but doesn't pull away.

SOFÍA

Come inside.

ALEX

I can't. Not yet.

SONG 7: "SOMETHING MORE"

Solo building to ensemble - Alex Breakdown

Song ends with Alex still broken, but community witnessing. Ensemble offers support.

(After song ends, ensemble backs away slowly, leaving space.)

SOFÍA approaches ALEX carefully. He's sitting or kneeling, shoulders collapsed.

She kneels in front of him, gently lifts his face with her hand.

SOFÍA

(soft)

Look at me.

He does. His eyes are wet.

SOFÍA

(continuing)

You're not alone in this. You understand?

He nods, barely.

She touches his face tenderly—her hand on his cheek. He leans into her hand, closing his eyes.

For a moment, they just breathe together.

SOFÍA

Come inside.

ALEX

(whispered)

Okay.

She helps him stand. Takes his hand. Holds it.

They walk together into the community center.

Lights fade on their joined hands.

SCENE 13 — THE QUESTION

Setting: Community center and street. Evening transitioning to night. The space is tense.

CARLOS has been questioned twice this week already. Everyone knows this pattern.

Everyone fears what comes next.

ISABEL enters, phone in hand, panicked.

ISABEL

They're outside. Three cars. They're asking for Carlos.

MARISOL

(standing immediately)

Where is he?

ISABEL

Walking home. He doesn't know they're waiting.

The room erupts - fear, panic, planning. SOFÍA moves to organize.

SOFÍA

Someone call him. Warn him.

TOMÁS

(trying his phone)

It's going straight to voicemail.

GABO

He turned it off. He always turns it off on the walk home.

ISABEL

(voice breaking)

He's walking straight into them.

ALEX at the window, counting cars compulsively. One. Two. Three enforcement vehicles.

His breathing accelerates.

ALEX

Three cars. Official plates. Four officers per car. Twelve total.

SOFÍA

(to Alex, firm)

We need you here. Not counting.

ALEX

(not stopping)

Twelve officers. Three cars. One Carlos.

ISABEL

(to everyone)

We have to do something. We can't just—

The door opens. CARLOS enters, unaware. Everyone freezes.

CARLOS

(reading the room)

What? What happened?

Beat. No one knows how to tell him.

ISABEL

(crossing to him)

They're outside. Waiting for you.

CARLOS

Who?

ISABEL

Enforcement. Three cars.

The words land. CARLOS goes very still. Everyone watching him process.

CARLOS

(quiet)

How long have they been there?

TOMÁS

Ten minutes. Maybe fifteen.

CARLOS

(to Isabel)

Did they say what they want?

ISABEL

They asked for you by name.

Long beat. CARLOS looks around the room. At ISABEL. At MARISOL holding MIGUEL. At ALEX still counting by the window. At SOFÍA. At his community.

CARLOS

(calm, decided)

Okay.

ISABEL

What do you mean “okay”?

CARLOS

I’ll go talk to them.

ISABEL

No. Absolutely not. We’ll—

CARLOS

What? Hide me? Where? For how long?

ISABEL

We’ll figure something out.

CARLOS

Isabel. They know I’m here. They’ve been watching. If I don’t go out, they come in. And then everyone’s at risk.

MARISOL

You don’t know what they want.

CARLOS

(meeting her eyes)

Yes I do. We all know.

Silence. Because he’s right. Everyone knows.

SOFÍA

We'll come with you. All of us. They won't take you if we're all there.

CARLOS

They will. And then you'll all be involved. I won't do that to you.

ALEX

(finally turning from window)

If you go out there alone—

CARLOS

Then it's on me. Just me. That's how it has to be.

ISABEL

(grabbing his arm)

Carlos, please.

CARLOS

(taking her hands)

Hey. Look at me.

She does. Tears streaming.

CARLOS

I need you to do something for me.

ISABEL

What?

CARLOS

Keep fighting. Keep organizing. Keep the community together.

ISABEL

I can't do this without you.

CARLOS

Yes you can. You're stronger than you think.

ISABEL

I'm not ready—

CARLOS

You're ready. You've always been ready.

He pulls her into a hug. Holds her tight. Over her shoulder, he looks at SOFÍA.

CARLOS

(to Sofía)

Take care of her. And keep doing what you're doing. The gathering - make it happen. Don't let them stop you.

SOFÍA

(voice thick)

We won't.

CARLOS looks at MIGUEL.

CARLOS

Miguel. Keep drawing. Keep mapping. Show everyone where we are. Show them we're still here.

MIGUEL nods, unable to speak.

CARLOS

(to Marisol)

Thank you. For everything. For opening your home. For keeping us together.

MARISOL

Carlos—

CARLOS

I mean it. You're the backbone of this community. Don't forget that.

He looks at ALEX, TOMÁS, GABO.

CARLOS

Watch for each other. Count each other. Make sure everyone stays safe.

Beat. He's saying goodbye. Everyone knows it.

CARLOS steps back from ISABEL. Straightens his shirt. Takes a breath.

CARLOS

Okay. I'm going out now.

ISABEL

No. Please. Just wait—

CARLOS

There's nothing to wait for.

He moves toward the door. ISABEL follows, desperate.

ISABEL

Then I'm coming with you.

CARLOS

(stopping, turning)

No. I need you to stay here. I need you to keep everyone together. Can you do that for me?

ISABEL

(barely holding it together)

I don't want to.

CARLOS

I know. But I need you to anyway.

One more look between them. Brother and sister. Then CARLOS opens the door.

Outside, through the open door, we see the three enforcement vehicles. Officers standing. Waiting.

CARLOS steps out onto the street.

ISABEL at the doorway, watching. SOFÍA beside her, holding her up. Everyone crowded behind, witnessing.

OFFICER 1

(calling to Carlos)

Carlos Mendoza?

CARLOS

That's me.

OFFICER 1

We need you to come with us. We have some questions.

CARLOS

Am I under arrest?

OFFICER 1

Not at this time. We just need to ask you some questions.

CARLOS

And if I don't come?

OFFICER 1

Then we'll have to insist.

Beat. Carlos knows what this means. No real choice.

CARLOS

(turning back to the community one more time)

Remember what I said. Keep fighting.

ISABEL

(calling out)

Carlos, don't—

But he's already walking toward the cars. Officers surrounding him. Not aggressive, but firm. Guiding him toward the vehicle.

The community watches. Powerless. Helpless. Witnessing.

CARLOS gets into the back of the middle car. Door closes.

The three vehicles start their engines.

ISABEL

(screaming)

CARLOS!

The cars pull away. Driving down the street. Red taillights disappearing around the corner.

ISABEL collapses. SOFÍA catches her, holding her as she breaks.

ISABEL

(sobbing)

They took him. They just... they took him.

SOFÍA

(holding her)

I know. I know.

MARISOL

(to Miguel, who's crying)

Come here, miyo.

She pulls him close, shielding him from the worst of ISABEL's grief.

ALEX still at the window, watching the empty street. Counting. Counting. Can't stop counting.

ALEX

(whispered)

Three cars. Twelve officers. One Carlos. Zero chance.

SOFÍA

(to Alex, sharp)

Stop.

ALEX

(louder, spiraling)

I should have counted better. I should have known they were coming. I should have—

SOFÍA

There was nothing you could have done.

ALEX

I could have warned him. I could have seen them sooner. I could have—

SOFÍA

(crossing to him, grabbing his face)

STOP. This isn't your fault.

ALEX

I count. That's my job. I count and I watch and I'm supposed to keep everyone safe and I
FAILED—

SOFÍA

You didn't fail. They're the ones who did this. Not you.

But ALEX can't hear her. He turns back to the window, counting the empty street. Looking for cars that are already gone.

ISABEL

(from the floor, quiet, broken)

He's not coming back.

SOFÍA

We don't know that.

ISABEL

(looking up at her)

Yes we do. They don't ask questions and then let people go. We all know what happens next.

The room is silent. Because she's right. They all know.

TOMÁS

Maybe... maybe this time is different.

ISABEL

(bitter laugh)

When is it ever different?

No one has an answer.

MIGUEL

(quiet, to Marisol)

Is Carlos going to die?

MARISOL

(pulling him closer)

No, mijo. He's just... he's going to be gone for a while.

MIGUEL

How long?

MARISOL has no answer. She just holds him tighter.

ISABEL

(standing slowly, wiping tears)

He said to keep fighting. He said to make the gathering happen.

SOFÍA

We will.

ISABEL

(voice hardening)

No. We WILL. He gave himself up so we could keep organizing. He sacrificed himself for this community. We're not wasting that.

SOFÍA

Isabel—

ISABEL

(fierce)

The gathering happens. We stand together. We show them they can't break us by taking us one by one. We show them we're still here.

She looks around the room. At everyone. At the community CARLOS protected with his sacrifice.

ISABEL

He's still here. Even if they took him, he's still here. In all of us. And we're going to make sure they know it.

Beat. The determination spreading through the room. Grief transforming into resolve.

SOFÍA

(nodding)

Then we plan. We organize. We gather.

ISABEL

For Carlos.

EVERYONE

For Carlos.

The community comes together, closing the door against the empty street, planning their response.

But through the window - ALEX still counting. Still watching. Still trying to protect people who are already gone.

Lights shift.

SONG 8: "I'LL WATCH"

SCENE 14 — LOOK AT ME

MUSICAL UNDERSCORE CONTINUES FROM "I'LL WATCH" — PANIC MOTIF

Several days later. Community center. Evening. Phones buzzing.

TOMÁS

Three more sweeps this week.

GABO

Rosa's family left yesterday. Didn't even say goodbye.

SOFÍA (*entering*)

How many families have gone quiet?

GABO

Twenty-three this month.

A beat. The number lands.

SOFÍA

The gathering is in five days. We need everyone there.

TOMÁS

Sofia... people are scared.

Before she can answer—

MARÍA (*bursting in, panicked*)

They're saying another sweep. Tonight.

GABO

Who's saying?

MARÍA

My cousin. From the market. They're bringing buses.

TOMÁS

I heard it's just questioning.

MARÍA

Carlos was "questioned." And now he's gone.

Phones buzz. Conflicting messages.

GABO

Rosa's cousin says it's nothing. False alarm.

ISABEL (*entering*)

So we just wait to see if it's real? Like we did with Carlos?

SOFÍA

Everyone—stop. We don't know what's true.

MARISOL (*entering with MIGUEL*)

That's the problem. We never know until it's too late.

MIGUEL (*to Marisol, scared*)

Mama... are they coming?

Marisol can't answer.

The room tightens.

ALEX

If we stop gathering, we're already gone.

ALEX (*trying to count, failing*)

How many people are here?

No one answers.

ALEX

How many?

SOFÍA (*firm*)

Alex. Stop.

He can't. Panic rising.

ALEX

You have to know. You have to—

SOFÍA

You can't count everyone.

A beat. Alex breaks.

Silence.

Then—

EVAN (*stepping forward*)

I'll watch.

They turn to him.

EVAN (*continuing*)

I'll take the corner. The roof. I'll do what Alex's been doing.

Alex looks at him. Conflicted. Relieved.

SOFÍA

You don't have to—

EVAN

I want to.

He meets Alex's eyes.

Alex nods. Small. Grateful.

SOFÍA *(to the room)*

We keep going.

She takes Miguel's hand.

Lights shift.

SCENE 15 — INSIDE

Setting: Community center, late night. SOFÍA working at table, lists spread everywhere.

Exhausted but determined.

ALEX enters. She looks up, genuinely surprised.

SOFÍA

You're inside.

ALEX

Evan's watching.

SOFÍA

(amazed, understanding the weight of this)

You let someone else watch?

ALEX

You said I couldn't protect anyone if I collapsed.

SOFÍA

I did say that.

ALEX

So I'm here. With you.

Beat. She stands slowly, comes to him.

They're in the middle of the room, but it feels like they're the only two people in the world.

SOFÍA

What made you finally...?

ALEX

You. You made me.

Silence. The air between them electric.

SOFÍA

Alex...

ALEX

I don't know how to do this. I don't know how to... be with someone when everything's falling apart.

SOFÍA

(stepping closer, touching his face gently)

Maybe that's exactly when you need to.

He looks at her—really looks at her. Sees everything she's carrying, everything she's fighting for, everything she is.

ALEX

(whispered)

I'm terrified.

SOFÍA

(soft)

Me too.

ALEX

Not of them. Of this. Of you. Of what I'm feeling.

SOFÍA

What are you feeling?

ALEX

(honest, raw)

Everything.

She moves closer. Their faces inches apart.

SOFÍA

Then feel it.

They kiss.

Finally.

Gentle at first—tentative, testing. Then deeper. Months of tension, exhaustion, shared fear, shared purpose, all of it pouring into this moment.

When they pull apart, both are breathing hard.

ALEX

I should go back outside.

SOFÍA

(holding his hand, keeping him here)

No. Stay. Just for a little while.

ALEX

(hesitating, then)

Okay.

She pulls him to sit next to her at the table. He watches her work for a moment, then takes a list to help.

They work together in comfortable silence.

She leans against him slightly. He puts his arm around her shoulders.

For a moment—just this moment—they breathe together. Easy. Natural. Right.

SOFÍA

(soft, not looking up from her work)

Tomorrow everything changes.

ALEX

I know.

SOFÍA

We gather. Fifty people. Publicly visible.

ALEX

I know.

SOFÍA

I'm scared.

ALEX

(holding her closer)

Me too. But I'll be right there. Next to you.

She turns to look at him. Touches his face.

SOFÍA

When this is over—

ALEX

It's not going to be over.

SOFÍA

I know. But after tomorrow. After the gathering. Can we...?

ALEX

(understanding what she's asking)

Yeah. We can figure out what this is. Together.

SOFÍA

I'm scared.

ALEX

(quiet)

Me too.

She turns to look at him. Touches his face.

SOFÍA

When this is over—

ALEX

It's not going to be over.

SOFÍA

I know. But after tomorrow. After the gathering. Can we...?

ALEX

Yeah. We can figure out what this is.

They kiss. Brief. Necessary.

They remain close, holding each other at arm's length.

ALEX

This makes everything harder.

SOFÍA

I know.

ALEX

Before us, I could move.

I could hide.

(a beat)

Now I can't.

SOFÍA

Neither can I.

They stay where they are.

Lights fade.

END ACT I

ACT II

★ ACT 2 OPENER ★

SONG 9: "STANDING HERE"

Solo building to ensemble - Isabel

Context: Days after Carlos (Isabel's brother) was detained. Community center, evening. Everyone expects Isabel to announce she's leaving. Instead, she makes a stand.

This is THE Act 2 opener. Isabel's moment. Sets up second act drive toward gathering.

SCENE 16 — MORNING AFTER

Early morning. The community center.

The space is active, but the energy is restrained. People move with purpose, not ease. Conversations are low. No one lingers near the doors.

SOFÍA enters with ALEX. They are together, but alert — scanning the room before stepping fully inside.

ALEX clocks exits without comment.

SOFÍA notices. She doesn't stop him.

A beat before anyone speaks.

MARISOL

(looking up)

Buenos días.

SOFÍA

Morning.

SOFÍA starts organizing papers on table. Normal routine. But she's... different. Lighter. Almost humming.

MARISOL

(watching her, knowing smile)

You're in a good mood.

SOFÍA

I'm always in a good mood.

MARISOL

Mmm. Not like this.

SOFÍA

Like what?

MARISOL

Like... *(gestures at her)* ...that.

SOFÍA

I don't know what you mean.

SOFÍA keeps organizing. Avoiding eye contact. MARISOL and MIGUEL exchange a look.

MIGUEL

You're smiling.

SOFÍA

I smile.

MIGUEL

Not at your phone.

SOFÍA realizes she's been looking at her phone. Puts it away quickly.

SOFÍA

I was just checking—

MARISOL

Mm-hmm.

Beat. SOFÍA tries to focus on work. MARISOL watches her, amused.

MARISOL

How's Alex?

SOFÍA

(too quickly)

Fine. Why?

MARISOL

Just asking.

SOFÍA

He's fine. Same as always.

MIGUEL

He was smiling this morning too.

SOFÍA

Was he?

MIGUEL

(innocent)

Yeah. At his phone.

SOFÍA blushes slightly. Caught. MARISOL grins.

MARISOL

Interesting.

SOFÍA

What's interesting?

MARISOL

Nothing. Just... interesting timing.

SOFÍA

There's no timing.

MARISOL

Of course not.

Beat. SOFÍA gives up pretending.

SOFÍA

Can we just... not do this?

MARISOL

Do what?

SOFÍA

This. The... (gestures) ...thing you're doing.

MARISOL

I'm not doing anything. I'm just happy to see you happy.

SOFÍA

I'm not—I'm just—it's the same as always.

MARISOL

(gentle, real)

Mija. You've been organizing this gathering for weeks. You've been terrified. And today, for the first time, you walked in here like maybe it's going to be okay.

Beat. SOFÍA stops. Sits. Real moment.

SOFÍA

Maybe it will be.

MARISOL

I think so too.

SOFÍA

Three more days.

MARISOL

We'll be there. All of us.

Beat. Connection between them. Then:

MARISOL

Alex will be there too.

SOFÍA

(small smile)

I know.

MARISOL

Right next to you, I imagine.

SOFÍA

(trying not to smile bigger)

Probably.

MARISOL

Good. Someone needs to make sure you eat something during all this.

ALEX enters. He sees SOFÍA. They lock eyes. Both trying to act casual. Both failing.

ALEX

Morning.

SOFÍA

Morning.

Awkward beat. Everyone watching them. They're both terrible at hiding this.

ALEX

Do you... need help with anything?

SOFÍA

Um. Yeah. Maybe. The... *(gestures at vague papers)*

ALEX

Okay.

*He crosses to her. They stand too close, realize it, step apart slightly. Still too close.
MARISOL and MIGUEL watching like it's a telenovela.*

MIGUEL

(stage whisper to Marisol)

They're being weird.

MARISOL

(stage whisper back)

They're always weird.

MIGUEL

Not like this.

TOMÁS and GABO enter, notice immediately.

GABO

(to Tomás, quiet)

Finally.

TOMÁS

About time.

GABO

We should've taken bets.

TOMÁS

I would've won.

SOFÍA

(to everyone, knowing they're all watching)

Don't you all have things to do?

MARISOL

Not really.

MIGUEL

Nope.

TOMÁS

We're good.

SOFÍA and ALEX share a look: This is what we're dealing with now.

ALEX

(to Sofía, quiet)

Want to go... check the... outside?

SOFÍA

(grateful)

Yes. Let's check the outside.

They escape together. Everyone watches them go.

MARISOL

(once they're gone, to everyone)

Fifty people at the gathering.

GABO

At least.

TOMÁS

Those two together? We'll get a hundred.

MIGUEL

Why?

MARISOL

Because hope is contagious, mijo. And right now, those two? They're full of it.

Lights fade on the community smiling.

MUSICAL UNDERSCORE (REPRISE MOTIF)

SCENE 17 — THE RUMOR / STANDING HERE

Interior. ISABEL and CARLOS. Ordinary tension. Unfinished business.

CARLOS

They haven't taken anyone from our block yet.

A beat.

ISABEL

That doesn't mean they won't.

ISABEL

Carlos, please. Just come with us. For a few months.

CARLOS

Things won't calm down. You know that.

ISABEL

Then come permanently! We have room in Seattle.

CARLOS

I can run. That's what you mean. Run somewhere else and hope they don't follow.

ISABEL

Yes! What's wrong with that?

CARLOS

(stops loading boxes)

I've been running my whole life, Isabel. When does it stop?

ISABEL

When you're alive to ask that question!

CARLOS

I'm tired of starting over. I'm tired of leaving people behind.

ISABEL

Then you'll die here? For what?

CARLOS

For the idea that maybe, if enough of us stay, if enough of us refuse to disappear—maybe something changes.

ISABEL

(crying)

That's a fantasy.

CARLOS

Maybe. But I'd rather lose here—in a place I chose—than keep running.

ISABEL

What about Mamá? What do I tell her when you're gone?

CARLOS

Tell her I stayed because someone has to.

He closes the trunk of her car gently.

CARLOS

(continuing)

Drive safe. Call me when you get there.

ISABEL

(grabbing his hands)

Come with us. Please.

CARLOS

(kissing her forehead)

I love you. But I'm staying.

ISABEL

You're an idiot.

CARLOS

I know.

She gets in the car.

ISABEL

(through window)

If anything happens to you, I'll never forgive you.

CARLOS

If anything happens to me, I'll never forgive me either.

She drives away. CARLOS watches until the car disappears.

Then he turns back to the community center.

Still here. Still standing.

Lights fade.

SCENE 18 — DON'T GO YET

Setting: Community center. Days before gathering. Empty chairs visible from people who've left. MARÍA enters with suitcase. MARISOL sees her. Knows what this means.

MARISOL

María.

MARÍA

(unable to meet her eyes)

We're leaving. Tonight.

MARISOL

Elena too?

MARÍA nods. MIGUEL overhears. His face falls.

MIGUEL

Elena's leaving?

ELENA enters with her mother. Sees Miguel. Starts crying.

SONG 10: "NO TE VAYAS (DON'T GO)"

Bilingual ballad - María/Elena/Miguel/Isabel/Ensemble

Song ends with María and Elena leaving. Miguel erasing Elena's name from his map.

MARÍA and ELENA exit with suitcases. The community watches them go—another family leaving. Another goodbye.

MIGUEL stands at the window, watching. His face pressed to glass. ELENA disappearing around the corner. His best friend. Gone.

MARISOL crosses to him. Kneels beside him.

MARISOL

Mijo?

MIGUEL doesn't respond. Just watches. Waiting to see if Elena might come back. She doesn't.

MIGUEL

(finally, voice small)

Elena's really gone.

MARISOL

Yes.

MIGUEL

Forever?

MARISOL

I don't know. Maybe not forever. But for now, yes.

MIGUEL

(turning to her, eyes wet)

Are we going too?

MARISOL looks at him. This child. This beautiful, scared child who maps the neighborhood, who counts the people who leave, who draws the world as he wants it to be.

MARISOL

(kneeling to his level)

No. We belong here. This is our home.

MIGUEL

Even without Elena?

MARISOL

Even without Elena. Even without the Garcias. Even without Carlos. This is still our home.

MIGUEL

How do you know?

MARISOL

Because home isn't just who's here. It's who we are. It's what we choose. And I choose this. This place. These people. This fight.

MIGUEL

(processing)

You choose to stay?

MARISOL

I choose to stay.

MIGUEL looks at her. Then at the community center around them. ALEX and SOFÍA watching. TOMÁS and GABO. ISABEL. Everyone who remains. Everyone who stayed.

MIGUEL

I choose to stay too.

MARISOL pulls him close. Holds him. Over his shoulder, she looks at the community.

MARISOL

(louder, to everyone)

We belong here.

SOFÍA

(responding)

We do.

ALEX

We belong here.

One by one, others echo it. A choice being made. A decision being vocalized.

ISABEL

Even after Carlos?

MARISOL

Especially after Carlos. We stay because of him. We stay because this is worth fighting for.

Beat. The resolve settling into the room. The answer to the question: Do we stay or do we go?

They stay.

SCENE 19 — BELONG

Setting: Community center. Evening before gathering. People debating whether to gather publicly tomorrow.

ISABEL's phone rings. She answers. Listens. Her face changes.

ISABEL

(to group)

That was Carlos. From detention. His hearing is tomorrow morning. He asked me one thing: "Will anyone show up?"

Silence.

SOFÍA

His hearing is tomorrow morning. We're gathering tomorrow evening.

TOMÁS

If we gather publicly, we're making ourselves targets.

MARISOL

We're already targets.

ALEX

But if we gather, we're choosing to be visible. On purpose.

EVAN

Isn't that the point?

SOFÍA

Tomorrow we gather. Fifty people. Publicly.

ALEX

I know.

SOFÍA

I'm terrified.

ALEX

Me too.

SOFÍA

But if something happens to me—

ALEX

(fierce, taking her hands)

Nothing's going to happen to you.

SOFÍA

You can't promise that.

ALEX

No. But I can promise I'll be there. Right next to you. The whole time.

SOFÍA

(gripping his hands tighter)

What happens after? After tomorrow?

ALEX

(looking directly at her)

I don't know. But whatever it is... can we figure it out together?

SOFÍA

(smiling despite her fear)

Yeah. We can.

They kiss briefly—tender, reassuring. Then rest their foreheads together.

ALEX

I'm not going anywhere.

SOFÍA

Neither am I.

They separate, but keep holding hands until they have to let go to continue organizing.

The commitment between them is clear—to each other, to this fight, to whatever comes next.

SONG 11: "HOME"

Ensemble decision song

Song ends with decision made. They will gather.

SCENE 20 — THE GATHERING / AQUÍ ESTAMOS

Setting: Community center and the street outside. Late afternoon into evening. The gathering is tonight. Everything has led to this moment.

Inside: SOFÍA, ALEX, MARISOL, MIGUEL, ISABEL, TOMÁS, GABO preparing. Setting up chairs, hanging lights, arranging the space. Nervous energy.

SOFÍA

(checking her list)

We have water stations. First aid supplies. Exit routes marked.

MARISOL

Legal observers are positioned on corners.

ISABEL

Media contacts confirmed. If anything happens, we document everything.

MIGUEL

(holding up his map)

I updated it. All the safe routes are marked in green.

*ALEX at window, as always. But different now - less compulsive, more purposeful.
Watching not just for danger, but for arrivals.*

SOFÍA

(to Alex)

See anyone yet?

ALEX

Not yet. It's still early.

SOFÍA

(checking time)

We said five o'clock. It's four-thirty.

ISABEL

People will come.

SOFÍA

What if they don't? What if we planned all this and no one—

MARISOL

(firm)

They'll come. Have faith.

But SOFÍA is scared. What if this was all for nothing? What if fear won after all?

TOMÁS

(entering from outside)

Everything's set on the street. Sound system is ready. Lights are up.

GABO

Weather's perfect. Clear sky. Warm evening.

SOFÍA

But no people yet.

GABO

Give them time.

SOFÍA paces. ALEX watches her, then returns to the window.

ALEX

Sofía.

She looks at him. He's pointing outside.

ALEX

Someone's coming.

Everyone rushes to the window. Down the street - a figure approaching. Walking slowly, carefully. Looking around.

MIGUEL

Who is it?

ALEX

Can't tell yet.

They watch. The figure gets closer. It's ROSA, the woman whose family left weeks ago. She's carrying a sign that says "STILL HERE."

SOFÍA

(breathless)

Rosa came back.

ISABEL

She came back for this.

ROSA reaches the community center. Stops outside. Looks at the building. Uncertain.

SOFÍA rushes to the door, opens it.

SOFÍA

(calling out)

Rosa!

ROSA

(tentative)

Is it... is it okay if I'm here?

SOFÍA

(crossing to her)

It's more than okay. You came back.

ROSA

I had to. For this. For all of us.

They embrace. The first arrival.

Inside, ROSA joins them. Sets down her sign. Looks around at the space.

ROSA

How many are you expecting?

SOFÍA

I don't know. Maybe twenty? Maybe fifty? I—

She can't finish. Too scared to hope.

ALEX

(from window)

Someone else.

They all turn. Another figure approaching. Then another. Then three more together.

MARISOL

(whispered)

They're coming.

One by one, people appear on the street. Some walking alone. Some in pairs. Some in families. All moving toward the community center. All heading toward the gathering.

SOFÍA

(watching, tears forming)

Oh my god.

ISABEL

They're really coming.

MIGUEL counts them as they arrive, marking his map. One. Two. Five. Eight. Ten.

The door opens. ELENA and MARÍA enter.

ELENA

(running to Miguel)

Miguel! We came back!

MIGUEL

(hugging her)

You came back!

MARÍA

(to Marisol)

We couldn't miss this. We had to be here.

MARISOL

(embracing her)

Welcome home.

More arrivals. The space beginning to fill. Faces SOFÍA recognizes. Faces she's never seen before.

A young couple with a baby. An elderly man with a cane. A group of teenagers. A single mother with three children.

Each entrance is acknowledged. Each person greeted. Each arrival witnessed.

TOMÁS

(bringing in more chairs)

We're going to need more seating.

GABO

I'll get them.

SOFÍA moving through the growing crowd. Shaking hands. Embracing people. Thanking them for coming.

SOFÍA

(to a young woman)

Thank you for being here.

YOUNG WOMAN

Thank you for organizing this. We needed this.

The room getting louder. More people. More voices. More hope.

ISABEL standing apart, watching. Thinking of CARLOS. Wishing he could see this.

SOFÍA notices, crosses to her.

SOFÍA

He'd be proud.

ISABEL

(nodding, tears in eyes)

He would.

SOFÍA

He lived for this. This is what he wanted. All of us together.

ISABEL

(looking at the crowd)

There must be forty people here.

SOFÍA

More coming. Look.

*Outside, more figures approaching. A stream of people now. Not hiding. Not skulking.
Walking openly. Visibly. Claiming their right to exist.*

ALEX

(calling out)

Fifty-two people. No, fifty-five. Fifty-eight.

MARISOL

(smiling)

Stop counting, Alex. Just feel it.

But ALEX keeps counting. This time it's joyful. Counting blessings, not threats.

ALEX

Sixty. Sixty-two.

MIGUEL

(excited)

My map wasn't big enough! I need to draw more people!

*The room is full now. People standing because there aren't enough chairs. Packed together.
Shoulder to shoulder. Community.*

An old man approaches SOFÍA.

OLD MAN

(with accent)

I've lived here forty years. Never came to one of these. Too scared. But tonight... tonight I'm here.

SOFÍA

(taking his hands)

I'm so glad. What's your name?

OLD MAN

Roberto.

SOFÍA

Roberto, thank you for being brave.

ROBERTO

You're the brave one. You organized this. You gave us a reason to stop hiding.

SOFÍA

(overwhelmed)

I just... I just wanted us to be together.

ROBERTO

And we are. Look at us. We are.

SOFÍA looks around. The space is transformed. What was a community center is now a gathering place. What was fear is now hope. What was hiding is now visibility.

TOMÁS

(to Sofía)

We're at capacity. Do we stop letting people in?

SOFÍA

No. Open the doors. Let it spill outside. Let everyone see us.

The doors open wide. The gathering expands onto the street. People filing out, filling the sidewalk, the pavement. Visible. Undeniable.

Lights strung above them. Music starting to play softly. Not organized, not planned - someone brought a guitar, someone else started singing.

ALEX and SOFÍA find each other in the crowd. Stand together.

ALEX

You did it.

SOFÍA

We did it.

ALEX

How many?

SOFÍA

I don't know. Does it matter?

ALEX

(smiling)

No. It doesn't.

For the first time ever, ALEX stops counting. Just stands in the moment. Present. Here.

ISABEL climbs onto a chair, looking out at the crowd.

ISABEL

(calling out)

Can everyone hear me?

The crowd quiets. All eyes on her.

ISABEL

My brother Carlos was taken three weeks ago. He gave himself up so we could be here tonight. So we could gather. So we could show them we're not afraid.

Murmurs of agreement. People nodding.

ISABEL

He's not here with us. But he IS here. In every person who showed up tonight. In every person who chose to stop hiding. In every person who said "I'm still here."

VOICES FROM CROWD

"Still here!" "We're here!" "¡Aquí estamos!"

ISABEL

That's right. Aquí estamos. Here we stand.

The energy building. SOFÍA climbs up beside ISABEL.

SOFÍA

(to the crowd)

Thank you. Thank you for coming. Thank you for being brave. Thank you for trusting each other. This—

She gestures to all of them, to the gathering, to the moment.

SOFÍA

—THIS is what community looks like. This is what hope looks like. This is what it looks like when we stop being afraid and start being ALIVE.

CHEERS. APPLAUSE. The energy electric.

SOFÍA

Are you ready to let them know we're here?

CROWD

YES!

SOFÍA

Are you ready to stand together?

CROWD

YES!

SOFÍA

Then let's show them!

The music swells. The crowd presses together. United. Visible. Defiant. Alive.

MIGUEL looking at his map, then at the crowd, then back at his map.

MIGUEL

(to Marisol)

Mama, my map isn't big enough for all these people.

MARISOL

(pulling him close)

Then we'll draw a bigger map. Together.

The gathering is complete. Fifty, sixty, seventy people. Maybe more. All standing together. All visible. All here.

This is what they fought for. This moment. This togetherness. This breath.

Lights bright on the crowd as music begins.

SONG 12: "AQUÍ ESTAMOS (WE ARE HERE)"

★ *SHOWSTOPPER - ROMANTIC DANCE* ★

THE gathering happens. Celebration. Defiance. Joy.

CRITICAL STAGING - ROMANTIC PAYOFF:

[During celebration, mid-song]

ALEX has been watching from the edge of the plaza—old habits.

Still protecting, still counting, but smiling now.

SOFÍA dances with MARISOL, ISABEL, others. Joyful. Free.

She sees ALEX s...

Song ends with huge celebration, full community, everyone dancing.

[ROMANTIC] TRANSITION AFTER "AQUÍ ESTAMOS":

(After final massive chorus)

The music fades. The crowd disperses slowly, heading home, still energized.

ALEX and SOFÍA remain in the plaza, still holding each other.

The lights dim around them. Just the two of them now under the streetlights.

SOFÍA

(soft, looking at him)

Remember this.

ALEX

(looking back at her, both hands on her waist)

Always.

They kiss.

Longer this time than before. Deeper. A promise. A claiming. A declaration.

When they pull apart, SOFÍA rests her head against his chest. He holds her close, one hand in her hair.

They sway slightly—still dancing, even though the music has stopped.

SOFÍA

(whispered)

I don't want this night to end.

ALEX

(holding her tighter)

It doesn't have to.

They hold each other as lights slowly fade—not black out, but transition to dawn.

Time passing. The embrace continuing through the night.

[CRITICAL

This transition makes clear that they spent the night together— not explicitly shown, but implied. When we next see them, it's dawn, and their relationship has deepened further.]

[The gathering is alive. Fifty people standing together. Celebrating. Defiant. Joyful. Visible. The song has ended but the energy continues—people talking, laughing, hugging, crying happy tears.]

[LIGHTING BEGINS TO SHIFT - late evening fading toward night]

[The celebration continues but SOFÍA and ALEX find themselves at the edge of it, apart from the crowd. Both exhausted. Both exhilarated. Both terrified. Both relieved. Both alive.]

They stand separately, catching their breath. Looking at the community they built. The gathering they made real.

Across the space, their eyes meet.

He doesn't move toward her. She doesn't move toward him. They just look.

Everything loud around them. But between them: quiet.

She nods—small, almost imperceptible. He nods back.

Then, finally, he crosses to her through the celebrating crowd. People part without realizing. He reaches her. Takes her hand.

SOFÍA

We did it.

ALEX

You did it.

SOFÍA

We.

ALEX

(nodding slowly)

We.

Beat. They stand hand in hand. Community swirling around them. But they're in their own moment.

SOFÍA

Come with me. I want to show you something.

ALEX

Where?

SOFÍA

You'll see.

She leads him to the edge of the gathering—away from the center, toward where they can see out over the neighborhood. Their community. Their home. The place they're fighting for.

[LIGHTING CONTINUES TO SHIFT - Night settling. Stars emerging. City lights around them.]

They stand at the edge, looking out. Behind them: celebration, noise, life. Before them: their neighborhood stretching out, quiet, vast, theirs.

SOFÍA

(whispered)

Listen.

ALEX

To what?

SOFÍA

Just listen.

They stand silent. Listening.

SOFÍA

No sirens. No cars. No fear. Just... breathing.

ALEX listens. She's right. For the first time in forever—quiet. Peace. Just breathing.

They stand together. Sofia's hand still in his. Both looking out at their world. Both present. Both here. Both alive.

The celebration behind them fades slightly—not gone, but background. This moment is theirs.

SOFÍA

(still looking out, not at him)

Alex?

ALEX

Yeah?

She turns to him now. Looks at him fully. Everything she feels in her eyes. Everything she's been holding. Everything she needs to say.

SOFÍA

I need to tell you something.

ALEX's breath catches. He knows. Before she says it, he knows.

[LIGHTING]

Intimate, warm, night sky above, city below, just them]

[MUSIC begins—quiet, underneath, building]

SCENE 21 — AFTER THE BREATH

Setting: Dawn. The gathering is over. Most people have gone home. The sun is rising - golden light streaming through windows. The space is quiet now, peaceful. Evidence of the gathering everywhere - chairs scattered, signs leaning against walls, the remnants of community.

ALEX and SOFÍA sit together on the floor, backs against the wall. Exhausted. Exhilarated. Neither wanting to leave this moment.

They've been sitting in comfortable silence for several minutes. Just breathing. Just being.

SOFÍA

(finally breaking silence)

The sun's coming up.

ALEX

Yeah.

SOFÍA

We did it. The whole night. The gathering. Everything.

ALEX

You did it.

SOFÍA

(leaning her head on his shoulder)

WE did it.

Beat. His arm comes around her. Holding her close.

ALEX

How many people do you think came?

SOFÍA

I don't know. Seventy? Eighty?

ALEX

I stopped counting at sixty-five.

SOFÍA

(lifting her head to look at him)

You stopped counting?

ALEX

(small smile)

You told me to stop counting and start feeling. So I did.

SOFÍA

And? What did you feel?

ALEX

(considering)

Hope. I felt hope. And... (hesitates)

SOFÍA

And what?

ALEX

You. I felt you. Next to me. With me. And it was... it was more than counting. More than watching. More than anything.

SOFÍA

(soft)

Alex.

ALEX

I know I'm not good at this. At words. At saying what I—

SOFÍA

You're doing fine.

ALEX

I'm not. I'm terrible at this. I count things because numbers make sense. But you... you don't make sense. You make me want to stop counting. You make me want to just... be. And I don't know how to do that. I've never known how to do that.

SOFÍA

You're doing it right now.

ALEX

Am I?

SOFÍA

(taking his hand)

Yes. You're here. With me. Not at the window. Not counting. Just here. That's all I want.

Long beat. They look at each other in the golden morning light.

ALEX

I was so scared last night.

SOFÍA

Me too.

ALEX

Not of them. Not of enforcement. I was scared of losing this. Losing you. Losing what we built together.

SOFÍA

You didn't lose anything. We're still here.

ALEX

But we almost weren't. At any moment, it could have gone wrong. They could have come. They could have taken people. They could have—

SOFÍA

(putting her hand on his face)

But they didn't. We did it. We gathered. We stood together. And we're still here. You and me. Still here.

ALEX

(covering her hand with his)

I need to tell you something.

SOFÍA

Okay.

ALEX

And I need to say it right now, in this moment, before I lose my nerve or start counting again or—

SOFÍA

(smiling)

Just say it.

ALEX

(taking a breath)

When you blink the light. Twice. Every night. I wait for it. I count to sixty after you get home, and then I watch for the light, and when I see it—those two blinks—it's the best part of my day. Because it means you're safe. It means you're home. It means you're still here.

SOFÍA

(tears forming)

I know you watch for it. That's why I do it.

ALEX

But last night, when we were at the gathering, I wasn't at the window. I wasn't watching. I was WITH you. And it was the first time in months that I wasn't watching for the light because I WAS the light. We both were. All of us together.

SOFÍA

(whispered)

Alex.

ALEX

What I'm trying to say is... (stops, frustrated with himself) I'm terrible at this.

SOFÍA

No. You're perfect at this. Keep going.

ALEX

I count cars because I'm afraid. I watch because I'm terrified of losing people. I've lost so many people. My family. My friends. Everyone I—

He stops. Can't finish.

SOFÍA

(gently)

Everyone you what?

ALEX

(meeting her eyes)

Everyone I love. I lose everyone I love. And I'm terrified that if I love you, I'll lose you too.

The word hangs in the air between them. Love. He said it.

SOFÍA

(barely breathing)

You love me?

ALEX

(panicking slightly)

I—yes. I do. I love you. And I know that’s scary and I know I’m not good at relationships and I know I’m probably going to mess this up by counting too much or watching too much or—

SOFÍA

Alex.

ALEX

—or being too intense or too broken or—

SOFÍA

Alex. Stop.

He stops. Looks at her. Terrified.

SOFÍA

I love you too.

The words land. Simple. True. Everything.

ALEX

(disbelieving)

You do?

SOFÍA

Yes. I do. I love you. I’ve loved you for so long. I don’t know when it started but it’s there and it’s real and it’s terrifying and it’s the best thing I’ve ever felt.

ALEX

Even though I count cars?

SOFÍA

BECAUSE you count cars. Because you care so much about keeping people safe that you stand on a corner every night watching. Because you taught Miguel that maps matter. Because you let Evan watch for me when you couldn’t. Because you showed up to a gathering even though it terrified you. Because you’re HERE.

ALEX

I’m here.

SOFÍA

You’re here.

They sit in that truth for a moment. Both present. Both real. Both in love.

ALEX

What do we do now?

SOFÍA

(smiling)

I don't know. I've never done this before.

ALEX

Me neither.

SOFÍA

So we figure it out. Together.

ALEX

Together.

SOFÍA

And maybe you stop counting quite so much.

ALEX

And maybe you stop organizing quite so much.

SOFÍA

(laughing)

I can't promise that.

ALEX

I can't promise to stop counting either.

SOFÍA

Then we just... love each other anyway. Counting and organizing and all.

ALEX

Counting and organizing and all.

They smile at each other. Then ALEX leans forward slowly, giving her time to pull away. She doesn't. She leans in too.

They kiss. Soft. Tentative. Then deeper. Real.

When they pull apart, both are crying. Happy tears. Relief tears. Love tears.

SOFÍA

(whispered)

I love you.

ALEX

(whispered back)

I love you.

They hold each other as the sun rises fully. Golden light flooding the space. The dawn after the gathering. The morning after the breath. The beginning of whatever comes next.

MARISOL enters quietly, sees them, smiles. Starts to back out.

SOFÍA

(seeing her)

It's okay. You can come in.

MARISOL

(entering)

I just wanted to check on the space. Make sure everything's okay.

ALEX

(looking at Sofía)

Everything's okay.

MARISOL

(knowing smile)

I can see that.

MIGUEL bounds in, full of energy despite the late night.

MIGUEL

Sofía! Alex! I finished the new map! Want to see?

SOFÍA

(laughing)

Yes, show us.

MIGUEL spreads out a huge piece of paper. It's his neighborhood map, but expanded - bigger, more detailed, with drawings of all the people who came to the gathering.

MIGUEL

See? I drew everyone. All seventy-eight people!

ALEX

Seventy-eight? I thought I counted sixty-five.

MIGUEL

Seventy-eight. I counted twice to make sure.

SOFÍA

(to Alex)

Looks like you have competition in the counting department.

ALEX

(ruffling Miguel's hair)

Good. He's better at it than I am anyway.

ISABEL enters with coffee for everyone.

ISABEL

Thought you might need this.

SOFÍA

(taking a cup gratefully)

Thank you.

They all gather around MIGUEL's map. Looking at what he created. All the people. All the connections. All the community drawn out in bright colors.

ISABEL

Carlos would have loved this.

MIGUEL

I drew him too. See? Right here. Because even though he's not here, he's still part of us.

ISABEL

(touching the drawing)

Yes. He is.

TOMÁS and GABO arrive, starting to clean up from the night before. More people trickle in. The community reforming even as the sun rises.

But ALEX and SOFÍA remain on the floor, holding hands, watching everyone. Together.

SOFÍA

(to Alex, quiet)

This is what we built.

ALEX

This is what you built. I just watched.

SOFÍA

No. This is what WE built. You and me and everyone. Together.

ALEX

Together.

SOFÍA

(leaning against him again)

I like that word. Together.

ALEX

Me too.

They sit in the growing morning light. Community around them. Love between them. Hope ahead of them.

The space filling with people. The day beginning. Life continuing.

ALEX

(sudden thought)

Hey.

SOFÍA

What?

ALEX

Tonight. When you get home.

SOFÍA

Yeah?

ALEX

Blink the light.

SOFÍA

(smiling)

Always.

ALEX

Twice.

SOFÍA

Twice.

ALEX

And I'll watch for it. Not because I have to. Not because I'm counting or protecting or afraid. But because I want to. Because it's our thing. Because I love you.

SOFÍA

(kissing him)

I love you too.

The community moves around them. MIGUEL showing his map to everyone. MARISOL making breakfast. ISABEL laughing at something TOMÁS said. Life happening.

But for this moment, ALEX and SOFÍA are in their own world. Just the two of them. In love. Together. Still here.

The sun fully risen now. A new day. A new beginning.

Lights hold on them - two people who found each other in the darkness and chose to stand in the light together.

Then slowly, the community song begins - soft at first, then building. Everyone joining. The finale starting.

But ALEX and SOFÍA stay on the floor a moment longer. Holding hands. Watching the sunrise. Breathing together.

SOFÍA

Ready?

ALEX

For what?

SOFÍA

Whatever comes next.

ALEX

(standing, pulling her up with him)

With you? Always.

They join the community. Together. Ready for the finale. Ready for whatever comes next.

Ready to keep breathing.

SONG 5 (REPRISE): "WE'RE BOTH BREAKING"

SCENE 22 — STILL HERE / WE'RE STILL BREATHING

Setting: Three months after the gathering. Community center. Late afternoon. The space has changed - more alive, more people, more hope. Windows open. Light streaming in.

Community members come and go. No longer hiding. No longer afraid to be visible.

MIGUEL at table with new, larger map spread out. MARISOL enters with groceries.

MARISOL

(seeing the map)

Mijo, is that...?

MIGUEL

(proud)

I added the new families. Five new houses. And look—

He points to a section.

MIGUEL

Elena's house. I kept it on the map even when they left. And now... they came back.

MARISOL

(kneeling beside him)

They came back?

MIGUEL

Last week. Elena's mom said they came back because we stayed. Because the gathering showed them it was safe. Because we made it home.

MARISOL

(touching the map)

Your map showed them the way home.

MIGUEL

We all did. Together.

MARISOL pulls him close. Looks at the map - every house, every family, every person who chose to stay or came back. This is what they built.

MARISOL

I'm so proud of you. Of all of us.

MIGUEL

(looking up at her)

Are you scared anymore, Mama?

MARISOL

(honest)

Sometimes. But not like before. Now I'm scared WITH everyone. And that's different.

MIGUEL

That's better.

MARISOL

(smiling)

Yes, mijo. That's better.

They look at the map together. Community growing.

ISABEL enters, ending phone call.

ISABEL

(into phone)

Yes, Sunday visiting hours... I'll be there at ten... Tell him I'm bringing Sofía and half the community.

She hangs up. SOFÍA approaches.

SOFÍA

Carlos?

ISABEL

(nodding, eyes bright)

They moved him to minimum security. He might be released in six months.

SOFÍA

Isabel, that's—

ISABEL

(grabbing Sofía's hands)

He's coming home. Because of you. Because of what we did. Because we didn't hide.

SOFÍA

Because we all stood together.

ISABEL

He said he heard about the gathering. Even inside, he heard. He said we gave people hope.

Not just here - everywhere.

Beat. The weight of that.

SOFÍA

We're still standing.

ISABEL

We're still here.

They embrace. Sisters in this fight.

ALEX reading a letter. SOFÍA joins him.

SOFÍA

From Evan?

ALEX

(holding up letter)

He's teaching his students about us.

SOFÍA

(reading over his shoulder)

"Tell Miguel that his scene map is now part of my curriculum. My students are making maps of their own communities."

ALEX

(continuing)

"Tell Sofía that hope is still contagious - it's spreading to my classroom."

SOFÍA

(smiling through tears)

He's teaching them.

ALEX

(reading final part)

"And tell Alex that I stopped counting cars three weeks ago. I'm counting students who believe they can make a difference instead."

Beat. ALEX folds the letter carefully.

ALEX

He learned from us.

SOFÍA

We learned from him.

ALEX

We learned from each other.

SOFÍA

(taking his hand)

That's what community means.

They stand together. The letter between them. Evan's presence felt even in absence.

TOMÁS and GABO enter with MARÍA and ELENA.

ELENA

(running to Miguel)

Miguel! Look what I brought!

She shows him colored pencils.

ELENA

For the map! So we can make it even more beautiful!

MIGUEL

(delighted)

You came back!

ELENA

We came home.

MARÍA

(to Marisol)

Thank you. For staying. For showing us we could.

MARISOL

We're family. Family doesn't leave family.

MARÍA

No. We don't.

The children return to the map, adding colors together.

Community members gathering. More arriving. The space filling with life, with people, with hope.

ALEX and SOFÍA at center, watching.

SOFÍA

(to Alex, quiet)

Look at this. Look at what we built.

ALEX

What you built. You organized the gathering.

SOFÍA

WE built. All of us. Every single person who stayed.

ALEX

Are you still scared?

SOFÍA

Every day. But also... hopeful. Every day.

ALEX

Me too.

They look at each other. Everything they've been through. Everything they've survived. Everything they've built.

SOFÍA

Ready?

ALEX

For what?

SOFÍA

(gesturing to community)

To tell them they're amazing.

ALEX

They already know.

SOFÍA

Then let's remind them anyway.

She takes his hand. They step forward together.

[EVAN SAYS GOODBYE scene can be inserted here as flashback, OR continue to finale song]

SCENE 23 — THE BREATH

Setting: Community center. Three months after gathering. Morning. EVAN has a bag packed. He's leaving - going back to his teaching position. ALEX enters.

ALEX

You're really leaving.

EVAN

Yeah.

ALEX

When?

EVAN

Train in an hour.

Beat. They stand awkwardly. Not sure how to do this.

ALEX

Thank you. For... everything. For staying. For watching when I couldn't.

EVAN

You were always watching.

ALEX

Not the same.

EVAN

No. But you figured it out.

Beat.

ALEX

Did I?

EVAN

(gestures around)

You're still here. The community's still here. Sofia's still here. Yeah, you figured it out.

ALEX

I grabbed you. That first night. I could have—

EVAN

But you didn't.

ALEX

I could have hurt you.

EVAN

(simple)

But you didn't. You let go. That's what matters.

Beat. ALEX processes this. Not sure he forgives himself yet, but maybe someday.

EVAN

You know what else changed?

ALEX

What?

EVAN

You. When I got here, you were... clenched. Like a fist. Always ready to grab, to hold, to control.

ALEX

(quiet)

I was scared.

EVAN

You were terrified. And you had every right to be. But you were also alone in it.

ALEX

And now?

EVAN

Now you're still scared. But you're not alone. And you're not a fist anymore. You're...
(searches for word) ...open.

Beat. ALEX considers this. Open. Not closed. Not controlled.

EVAN

Can I ask you something?

ALEX

Yeah.

EVAN

When's the last time you counted cars?

ALEX

(thinks)

Two weeks ago. Maybe three.

EVAN

And?

ALEX

And what?

EVAN

Did the world end when you stopped?

ALEX

(small almost-smile)

Not yet.

EVAN

Good. That's growth, Alex. Real growth.

ALEX

Because of Sofia.

EVAN

No. Because of you. Sofia gave you a reason. But you did the work. You chose to let go. You chose to trust. You chose to love without holding on.

Beat. This lands deeply.

EVAN

And watching you with her? (shakes head, smiling) That's not the same person who grabbed me in the dark. That's someone who learned that love isn't control. That's transformation.

ALEX

I still get scared.

EVAN

Good. Being scared means you care. It's what you do with the fear that matters. And you? You turn fear into action. Into organizing. Into community. That's powerful.

ALEX

We.

EVAN

What?

ALEX

Not I. We. Sofia and me. Together.

EVAN

(grinning)

See? That right there. THAT's growth.

Beat. EVAN picks up his bag. Almost time.

ALEX

Will you come back?

EVAN

Maybe. Visit. See how you're all doing.

ALEX

We'll be here.

EVAN

I know. That's the whole point.

Beat.

ALEX

Evan?

EVAN

Yeah?

ALEX

You were right. About Sofia. About... (gestures - everything)

EVAN

I know.

ALEX

(almost laughs)

You're supposed to be humble.

EVAN

I'm a teacher. We're never humble when we're right.

Beat.

EVAN

Tell Sofia I'm proud of both of you.

ALEX

You can tell her yourself. She's—

EVAN

I will. But I'm telling you first. I'm proud of you, Alex. You took every terrible thing you experienced, every loss, every fear, and you turned it into something beautiful. You built community. You found love. You stopped counting and started living.

ALEX

(voice thick)

I don't know what to—

EVAN

You don't have to say anything. Just... keep doing it. Keep living. Keep loving. Keep being here.

SOFÍA enters. Sees them. Understands immediately.

SOFÍA

You're leaving.

EVAN

Yeah.

SOFÍA

Thank you. For staying. For helping. For... (to Alex) ...for him.

EVAN

He didn't need much help. Just a little push. And maybe someone to watch the corner while he learned to be human again.

SOFÍA

(smiling, tears in eyes)

He's pretty good at being human now.

EVAN

(to Alex)

She's not wrong.

ALEX

(taking Sofía's hand)

I had a good teacher. Two good teachers.

EVAN

(to both of them)

Take care of each other.

SOFÍA

We will.

EVAN

(to Alex)

Watch for her.

ALEX

Always.

EVAN

(to Sofía)

Watch for him.

SOFÍA

Always.

EVAN

Good. (beat) And maybe stop watching so much. Try living instead. Really living.

SOFÍA

We're working on it.

ALEX

(to Sofía, squeezing her hand)

We're getting better at it every day.

EVAN sees their joined hands. Sees how they stand together—not needing each other to stand, but choosing to anyway. Smiles. This is what he wanted. Full circle.

EVAN

You know what I see when I look at you two?

ALEX

What?

EVAN

People who stopped running. People who stayed. People who chose.

SOFÍA

We didn't have a choice.

EVAN

You always have a choice. Running is a choice. Hiding is a choice. You two? You chose each other. You chose community. You chose hope. You chose to be visible. (beat) That's everything. That's the whole lesson.

Long beat. This is goodbye. EVAN picks up his bag.

EVAN

I should—

ALEX

Yeah.

EVAN extends his hand. ALEX takes it. They shake. Then ALEX pulls him into a brief hug. First hug they've shared. First physical affection since that violent grab in Scene 1. EVAN hugs back—tight, real.

ALEX

(quiet, into the hug)

Thank you. For seeing me. For staying. For... for everything.

EVAN

(quiet back)

You're welcome. And thank you. For letting me in. For trusting me. For showing me what real courage looks like.

They separate. Both have tears in their eyes. Won't acknowledge them but they're there.

SOFÍA steps forward, hugs EVAN too. Quick but fierce.

SOFÍA

(whispered)

Take care of yourself.

EVAN

(whispered back)

You too. Both of you.

EVAN turns to leave. Gets to the door. Stops. Turns back one more time.

EVAN

Alex?

ALEX

Yeah?

EVAN

You don't need me to watch anymore. You've got this. You've got her. You've got the community. You've got yourself. You don't need me.

ALEX

(smiling through tears)

I know.

EVAN

Good. Remember that.

SOFÍA

(to Evan)

You're always welcome here. This is your community too now.

EVAN

I know. And I'll come back. But right now? You don't need me here. You need me out there, teaching kids like Miguel that they can create maps of their own lives. That they can count on themselves and each other. That they can belong.

ALEX

(understanding)

Go teach them.

EVAN

I will. And I'll tell them about this place. About this community. About what happens when people stop hiding and start living.

One more nod. One more smile. Then EVAN leaves.

ALEX and SOFÍA stand together in the doorway, watching him go. Not sad exactly—grateful. Changed by him. Better because he stayed. Ready because he's leaving.

SOFÍA

You okay?

ALEX

Yeah. (beat) He was right. About everything.

SOFÍA

Usually is. Teachers.

ALEX

(turning to her)

I don't need to count anymore. I don't need to watch every corner. I just need to... be here.

SOFÍA

With me?

ALEX

With you. With everyone. Just... here. Present. Living.

SOFÍA

I like “here.”

ALEX

Me too.

They stand together. Community center around them. Their home. Their choice. Their future. The place they chose to stay. The place they chose to fight for. The place they chose to love.

Outside, somewhere, EVAN is walking to the train. Smiling. Mission accomplished.

Inside, ALEX and SOFÍA turn back to the community. Ready for whatever comes next. Together.

Lights shift to finale moment.

SONG 13: "THE BREATH"

Finale - With ALEX/SOFÍA ROMANTIC VERSE

[See REVISED LYRICS with romantic duet section below]

After Carlos’s verse, BEFORE final chorus:

ALEX & SOFÍA sing romantic duet verse about finding each other (see below)

Then full ensemble joins for massive final chorus.

Final image: ALEX and SOFÍA kiss as ensemble surrounds them. Love + community = hope.

FINAL MOMENT

(After final ensemble chorus)

ALL

We’re still breathing We’re still breathing We’re still here

(Music holds, sustained)

ALEX and SOFÍA turn to each other in the center of the community.

They kiss—not long, just present. Real. Witnessed.

The ENSEMBLE moves closer around them, not separating them, but surrounding them. Supporting them. Protecting them.

MIGUEL holds his map—no more names crossed out. New names added.

CARLOS stands with ISABEL, ankle monitor visible but standing.

MARISOL holds MIGUEL.

EVAN watches with pride—his chosen family.

ABUELA LUZ places her hands on ALEX and SOFÍA's shoulders in blessing.

The whole community—breathing, loving, resisting, together.

Lights slowly fade on the whole community—

Together. Breathing. Loving. Choosing to stay. Choosing each other. Choosing life.

Music releases.

Lights fade.

— END OF SHOW —

PRODUCTION NOTES

Running Time:

Act I: ~52 minutes (includes Scene 10B - first kiss)

Intermission: 15 minutes

Act II: ~58 minutes (includes romantic moments)

TOTAL

2:10 (10 minutes longer with romantic content)