

One Apt. Down

By

Natalya Galarza and  
Glorianne Rivera-Casanova

Story by  
Glorianne Rivera-Casanova

ACT 1

INT. LIVING ROOM - VITO'S APARTMENT - MIAMI - AFTERNOON

VITO (22) drives to her mother, ANNA, in her wheelchair. She's flustered and exhausted.

VITO  
Ma, this is our last interview. Try to behave. This one time.

ANNA  
Vito, I'm only asking questions.

VITO  
Yeah, Ma. But all your questions are racially insensitive.

ANNA  
Are you calling me a racist?  
Antonio, did you hear what your daughter called me?

VITO  
No. Not just racist, but intrusive.

ANNA  
Ay, nena.

VITO  
If the resume says married you can't ask what kind of married.

MARTHA ties Vito's hair.

VITO  
And you. Stop flirting with the men.

MARTHA  
He was into me. Don't deny it. Oh, he was edible.

VITO  
I'm sure his husband thinks too.

MARTHA  
I have your hair in my hand.

Vito takes it back.

VITO  
Marry the man.

ANNA  
Antonio! Are you going to say  
anything? Your daughter wants to  
leave us.

ANTONIO looks at a resume with intention to annoy Vito.

ANTONIO  
This next one worked at a KFC. I  
wonder what that means?

VITO  
Okay. Let me be clear. I am getting  
my fourth assistant and I am moving  
one flippin' apartment down. This  
is happening.

ANTONIO  
You bet your ass. This apartment's  
paid for.

VITO  
Then why is this such an issue?

SHAE enters with a stack of boxes.

ANTONIO  
Is that the last of them?

SHAE  
Yes. Now I just have to go and get  
my stuff.

MARTHA  
They have more toys than I do.

VITO  
So those eight boxes were for Diego  
and Laura?

SHAE  
Yes, I spoil them.

VITO  
If I were you I'd make them carry  
them.

SHAE  
No. Remember I told you, Diego has  
a bad back.

Vito and Martha exchange confused glances.

Shae exits to her room when there is a knock on the door.

Vito speeds to the door. She stops and turns.

VITO

Shit. Someone get that.

Anna takes a step.

VITO

No, no. You.

Martha opens the door to TAMMARA (32, African-American).

TAMMARA

Hi. I'm Tammara.

VITO

Hello, Tammara. I'm Vito and this one of my assistants, Martha. Come right this way.

When Vito turns she mouths to Anna "behave".

VITO

Tell us a little about yourself.

TAMMARA

I've worked at a senior citizen home for three years and-

ANNA

Ay, que nice. Which home was it? Maybe you know Beatriz. Her daughter put her in there-

VITO

Ma!

ANNA

Que?

ANTONIO

So you quit the senior citizen home to study nursing?

Anna motions to continue speaking.

VITO

What are you doing?

ANNA

Mija, let me talk. I'm a doctor, so I know these things.

VITO

No... you're not.

ANNA

I should be. I've been taking care of you and changing your diapers for...

VITO

Ma!

Anna smacks Vito's arm and laughs. Vito stares back at her, questioning her sanity.

INT. SHAE'S ROOM - VITO'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Martha is on Shae's bed filing her nails. Shae sits across from her, removing clothing that's too small for a baby. Surrounding them are small toys, small toothbrushes, small combs... small everything.

MARTHA

Is this all for those *things*?

SHAE

Yep! Oh look at these.  
(holds mini sunglasses)

MARTHA

Adorable.

SHAE

Diego kept taking them off, so I tape them to his cute, pink nose.

MARTHA

You're a model mother.

SHAE

And I found shoes for Laura too!

Shae holds up shoes the size of Martha's pinkie nail.

MARTHA

They look like something from a Polly Pocket set.

SHAE  
What's a Polly Pocket?

MARTHA  
You can't be serious.

Shae blinks at her.

MARTHA  
You know those small plastic toys  
with rubber outfits?

Shae is still confused.

MARTHA  
What did you play with?

SHAE  
Paper dolls.

MARTHA  
How old are you?

SHAE  
Old enough.

Behind Shae the door to a cage opens.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Antonio and Vito appear mentally exhausted. Anna has taken full control of the interview.

ANNA  
So, which college are you going to?  
The one in Kendall?

Vito stares hard at Antonio--begging him to do something. Antonio shrugs and sighs with defeat.

TAMMARA  
Yes, since it's closer to where I  
live and the drive isn't so bad  
from here to there.

ANTONIO  
What experiences can you bring with  
helping my daughter?

TAMMARA  
I'm a single mother raising two  
teenagers and one is preparing for  
college, already. So, I understand-

ANNA

Do you support both of them on your own?

Vito rolls her eyes and mouths "oh my God".

ANNA (CONT'D)

I mean, it's not like I'm asking about the father--I have friends who are single mothers--but, you look so young and I was just wondering.

When Tammara is just about to speak Shae enters, out of breath.

SHAE

Nobody move! Diego is missing!  
(to Vito)  
Especially you.

VITO

(offended)  
Dang. Ok.

Shae searches the floor and pulls out a piece of lettuce from her jacket pocket.

SHAE

Diego. Come here Diego.

VITO

If only Diego were a dog.

Shae shoots her a death glare. Vito averts her eyes.

SHAE

Martha!

Martha enters.

MARTHA

Yes?

SHAE

Help me find Diego.

MARTHA

I'm not touching that thing.

ANNA

We can help.

VITO  
No, no! Just stay where you are.

SHAE  
Aw. Thank you Anna.

VITO  
This is going to be a disaster.  
(to Tammara)  
I'm so sorry about this. This  
doesn't usually happen.

TAMMARA  
It's alright. I'll help too.

VITO  
Oh, no. You don't have to.

Tammara crawls on the floor along with Anna and Shae.

Martha snickers at the sight.

SHAE  
If you help, my cousin can give you  
a free facial.

MARTHA  
You don't have family here.

SHAE  
We all have cousins.

Martha sets down the nail filer and gets on her hands and  
knees.

ANTONIO  
I'm going to make coffee.

VITO  
Don't leave me here! Traitor!

Antonio retreats to the kitchen.

Anna bumps into Tammara underneath the living room table.

ANNA  
So, were you married?

TAMMARA  
Once. I'm divorced now.

ANNA

Oh, wow. You must have had kids  
when you were 15 or 16, no?

TAMMARA

Yup. Unplanned, but love them all  
the same.

ANNA

Pero, of course! Why did you  
divorce?

SHAE

Hey! We're looking for Diego not  
chatting.

ANNA

(to herself)

Que pesao.

(to Shae)

Yes, yes. We're looking.

Martha's hand presses down on a small brown ball. She stares  
at with pure disgust.

MARTHA

What the heck?

TAMMARA

I wasn't treated with respect.

Anna nods her head in understanding--eyes wide with craze  
from the juicy information.

ANNA

Ahh... You don't need to answer,  
but was it, you know, an abusive  
relationship?

TAMMARA

(as a matter of fact)

Yeah.

ANNA

What did you do to get out? I can  
imagine how hard it must have been.

Vito turns slowly to see what's happening behind her.

Shae from behind the couch.

SHAE  
Don't. Move.

VITO  
I can't see!

SHAE  
We're looking.

VITO  
Yeah, but. I hear Ma talking with  
Tammara.

SHAE  
She's just asking questions about  
her marriage.

VITO  
Stop. Stop her. Stop her now.

Tammara, unperturbed by Anna's question, continues.

TAMMARA  
Actually-

Shae taps Tammara's shoulder.

SHAE  
Help me look over on the other end  
of the room.

Anna begins to follow.

MARTHA  
Eh, I'm not looking here on my own.

SHAE  
Better if you help her out.

Anna crawls the other way, disappointed.

SHAE  
Vito, can you move next to the door  
so we have more space to move?

VITO  
You just told me not to move.

SHAE  
Now I'm saying it's ok to. I'll  
direct you.

Vito sighs and turns to the door. Shae walks backwards in front of her and directs her like an air traffic controller while keeping a watchful eye on the ground.

VITO

I can see where I'm going, thanks.

SHAE

I know.

VITO

Then why? Nevermind. I give up.

Once Vito gets to the door she turns forward and there is a loud *splat*. Vito stops, eyes wide. They go to Shae.

Shae stares at Vito, refusing to look at the ground.

END ACT 1

## ACT 2

INT. LIVING ROOM - VITO'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Martha approaches Shae and Vito.

MARTHA

What was that sound?

Antonio comes in with a cup of coffee in hand and looks at the ground below Vito's wheel.

ANTONIO

Ay, Dios mio.

SHAE

What? Why are you saying that? What happened?

Martha looks to where Antonio is looking. She gasps with half surprise and half disgust. She gags a little.

MARTHA

Sweetie. Better look now 'cause you're the one cleaning this up.

Shae shakes her head.

Anna comes in.

ANNA

The carpet!

VITO

Ma! What the frick!?

ANTONIO

Anna, por favor!

Shae finally looks down. She falls to her knees. When she raises her hands there's red liquid on them.

SHAE

(crying)  
Diegooo!!

VITO

Shae. I'm so sorry. I don't- What should I do? Oh my God.

MARTHA

(disgusted)  
Wait a minute. Shae move.

SHAE

No! Diego...

MARTHA

Muevate!

Taken aback from the sudden peak of anger, Shae complies.

MARTHA

You too. Move.

ANNA

No, no! She's going to leave a trail of sangre.

Martha waves a hand at her and *tsks* very loudly.

Anna is deeply offended.

Antonio gives her his coffee as self-defense.

VITO

But. But what about the guts? And brains? And bones?

Shae cries more from the graphic descriptions.

Martha raises an eyebrow at Vito, begging her to ask her one more question.

VITO

(scared)

Ok.

When Vito moves, *squishy* sounds erupt from beneath the carpet. Each sound pushes Shae more over the edge.

Martha lifts the carpet and pulls out a ruptured plastic bag stained with the red liquid. She sniffs it.

MARTHA

Chicken's blood. Petra.

VITO

God dammit, Petra.

ANNA

I didn't raise you to speak like that!

VITO

Yes, you did.

ANNA

Cursing in Spanish doesn't count.

Tammara lifts a guinea pig from behind a cabinet.

TAMMARA

Is this what you're looking for?

Shae screams with joy and runs to her child.

SHAE

My son!

She takes him into her arms and hugs and kisses him.

VITO

Oh, thank God.

TAMMARA

Who's Petra?

MARTHA

The nighttime assistant who practices santeria--witchcraft.

VITO

She's really not as scary as she sounds... much.

ANNA

How long was that under the carpet?

VITO

Probably, since she was hired...  
Oh! She did say she wanted to  
cleanse the apartment of evil  
spirits.

SHAE

You knew it was there?

Vito concentrates on a memory coming to mind.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - PARENT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Anna and Antonio snore loudly. A digital clock reads 3:15am.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - PARENT'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

A novela is playing on the television on low volume.

On the couch is the back of PETRA's curly, head of hair and a shawl over her shoulders.

Brujeria by El Gran Combo plays. She answers her cell without looking at the caller in a low, raspy voice.

PETRA

Pepe.

INT. VITO'S BEDROOM - PARENT'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Outside the bedroom is Petra speaking in Spanish. Vito opens her eyes wide. She listens intently to the conversation.

PETRA O.S.

Si. Si. Carajo, chico. Sangre!  
Sangre de Ramón... No, no, el pollo  
Ramón... Para el nuevo apartamento  
de esta niñita.

VITO

Chicken blood?

Vito is concerned for a moment, but shrugs it off.

VITO

Wonder what she's going to cook.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. LIVING ROOM - VITO'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Martha is mortified.

MARTHA

What can you make with chicken's  
blood?

SHAE

Blood rice. Some Thai food too.

MARTHA

Ugh.

ANNA

She has late night calls often?

VITO

Yeah.

SHAE

(intrigued)

What other things does she say?

VITO

Things that cannot be shared with people who keep food as pets.

Shae hides Diego away deeper into her arms.

ANTONIO

Well. Thank you, Tammara, for having tremendous patience in this interview.

VITO

I completely forgot.

TAMMARA

No problem at all. It's been an eventful day.

VITO

So, you don't mind the craziness? I mean. Ok I lied. I can't guarantee that this won't happen often. My assistants aren't normal.

MARTHA

Excuse me?

SHAE

It's true.

VITO

And you seem like a civilized person, which I will be more than happy to get know if you decide to take the job.

Tammara takes in her surroundings. A hippie woman with guinea pigs. A busty woman with attitude. A nosy mother with a complacent husband. And blood at the front door.

ANNA

(whispers)

Say no.

ANTONIO

Sh!

TAMMARA

Of course I will.

ANNA

We still have to finish the interview!

VITO

Ma. Look at me. I'm 25 years old. You and Pa are not going to be here forever and I need to learn how to take care of myself. Ok?

ANNA

I know, mama. I know. It's just hard to let you go know, you know?

VITO

I know. Just think of it as a vacation for you and Pa. Both of you deserve one after all these years.

ANTONIO

Lord knows I can't stand you.

VITO

Good to know you'll miss me, Pa.

Antonio kisses her head.

ANTONIO

Of course I will. After we come back from that vacation.

VITO

Welcome to the family, Tammara.

TAMMARA

Happy to be a part of it. When do we start our schedule?

VITO

The sooner the better.

TAMMARA

Now, then.

VITO  
I like you already.

MARTHA  
So, I'm with Vito in the mornings  
to late afternoon.

FLASHBACK MONTAGE:

INT. VITO'S BEDROOM - PARENT'S APARTMENT - DAY

Martha plucks Vito's eyebrows without any delicacy.

VITO  
Ow!

MARTHA  
Stop complaining.

INT. DINING ROOM - PARENT'S APARTMENT - DAY

Martha is feeding Vito while watching television. The spoon  
jabs against Vito's nose.

VITO  
Ow!

MARTHA  
Be quiet. I'm watching something.

INT. LIVING ROOM - PARENT'S APARTMENT - DAY

At the front door, Martha is holding up two different hats  
to Vito. Vito sctutinizes the two.

VITO  
The red one.

Martha shoves it onto her head.

VITO  
Ow!

MARTHA  
Should I put the other one on you?

END FLASHBACK MONTAGE.

INT. LIVING ROOM - VITO'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Martha pats Vito's hand.

MARTHA

I make you look good.

VITO

(to herself)

Pretty sure it's the other way  
around.

SHAE

I'm usually with her when she has  
appointments with clients.

FLASHBACK MONTAGE:

INT. LIVING ROOM - PARENT'S APARTMENT - DAY

Shae holds Diego and Laura in a carry-on bag.

VITO

We're not taking them.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CLIENT'S HOME - DAY

Vito and Shae sit across from a fashionably dressed OLD  
WOMAN. On her lap is a teacup yorky.

OLD WOMAN

I just don't feel comfortable with  
what I wear anymore. It's been  
affecting my daily life. I've even  
started taking antidepressants.

SHAE

Maybe you should start wearing  
things more your age.

The Old Woman is taken aback. Vito's eyes fly wide open.

VITO

What she means is, you shouldn't  
try to be something you're not.

SHAE

Young.

VITO

NO!

The Old Woman looks down at her outfit. She takes Shae's words under consideration.

INT. LIVING ROOM - PARENT'S APARTMENT - DAY

Vito is staring down, utterly and completely unamused.

On her table are Laura and Diego dressed like Buzz Lightyear and Jessie. Shae finishes Laura's outfit with the hat.

SHAE

Oh my goodness!! They're precious!

Vito rolls her eyes.

END FLASHBACK MONTAGE.

INT. LIVING ROOM - VITO'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Shae pets Diego.

SHAE

Wait 'til you see the Minions outfit, Diego.

Martha scoffs--totally weirded out.

VITO

And we all know when Petra works.

TAMMARA

Does the schedule change when you have special events?

VITO

Anyone can come with me when they're available. Except Martha.

MARTHA

It was just that one time.

FLASHBACK:

INT. DINING HALL - APARTMENT - EVENING

A party filled with exquisitely dressed guests, and tables stacked with champagne glasses and hors d'oeuvres.

Vito is in one one of the bathroom stalls. Martha is on the floor, holding the toilet.

Martha vomits.

Vito sighs.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. LIVING ROOM - VITO'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Everyone around Martha judge her in silence.

MARTHA

It was my first champagne tower.

VITO

Yeah. Anyways. Ma, you're going to write the schedule?

Anna, crying, takes out a pen and paper and begins writing for Tammara's schedule.

ANNA

Esa puta.

Anna sobs loudly. Antonio pats her back and rubs his forehead.

Everyone else looks to Vito with concern.

VITO

(assured)

Let her cry it out.

ANNA

She doesn't love me.

They all stand around in awkward silence as Anna cries.

END ACT 2

## ACT 3

INT. LIVING ROOM - VITO'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

VITO

Alright. Ma, come here. Come here.

Anna sits and is at eye level with Vito.

VITO

What's bothering you? Really.

ANNA

It's just...

Anna turns her head back to glare at the assistants, then returns to Vito with pitying eyes.

The assistants look to each other--weirded out.

VITO

Something wrong with my assistants?

ANNA

There's nothing they can do that I've been doing for years. All of them are unsuitable.

VITO

Based on what?

ANNA

None of them can cook like me.

MARTHA

You're right. I'm better.

ANNA

Bring it, puta.

VITO

Ma!

MARTHA

It's okay. I know what I am.

Martha puts on a smug look, prepared to demolish Anna.

Antonio rubs his forehead.

INT. KITCHEN - VITO'S APARTMENT - LATER

Dirty pots are piled into the sink and food is splattered over the stove and counter.

Martha and Anna stand beside each other, preparing the plates. Both their dishes look exquisitely delicious.

ANNA

Not bad for a yal.

MARTHA

Same to you, abuela.

Behind them in a tidy, clean corner of the kitchen is Shae preparing her own dish while humming a tune.

INT. DINING ROOM - VITO'S APARTMENT - LATER

The plates are scraped clean. Antonio leans back in the chair and pats his stomach.

Martha and Anna loom over Vito with arms crossed.

VITO

They were... all good?

ANNA

What have I told you about being indecisive?

MARTHA

Better listen to your mother.

Their stare gets more intense.

VITO

(reverses away from them)

Uh. Uh. Shae's. I liked Shae's.

SHAE

Yay! I win.

MARTHA

What?!

ANNA

What?!

MARTHA

You don't even know what you ate.

SHAE  
 Braised eggplant with tofu in  
 garlic sauce.

ANNA  
 You won't be eating real meat!  
 Martha, only you cook for her.

VITO  
 So, you're okay with them now?

ANNA  
 Of course not! Have you seen the  
 kitchen? Who's going to clean that?

SHAE  
 Me!

INT. KITCHEN - VITO'S APARTMENT - LATER

The place sparkles with cleanliness.

VITO  
 Wow.

ANNA  
 Whatever.

INT. LIVING ROOM - VITO'S APARTMENT - LATER

Everyone gathers. Anna still doesn't appear convinced.

VITO  
 What else can there possibly be?

ANNA  
 Who's going to do the heavy lifting  
 around here? Your papà is not going  
 to keep going up and down to help  
 them. Right, Antonio?

ANTONIO  
 I mean-

ANNA  
 Right.

VITO  
 Yeah... you're right.

TAMMARA  
Lift what sort of things?

ANNA  
The wheelchair, for one, and other  
machines she uses.

TAMMARA  
Hold her.

Shae and Martha hold Vito in place, confused.

Tammara lifts the wheelchair from one side with one hand.  
Then sets it back down nicely.

VITO  
(amazed)  
Wonder Woman.

Anna, although impressed, is severely disappointed.

VITO  
Ma. No one can replace you. What  
one woman did for me, I have four  
to accomplish everything you've  
done. Don't think I'm not going to  
miss you, because I will.

Anna's tears are of happiness. She hugs Vito.

ANNA  
Okay. You're right. You've got a  
good bunch. I leave her in your  
hands, ladies.

TAMMARA  
You can count on us.

MARTHA  
Yup.

Shae is crying, holding Diego close to her.

SHAE  
So, beautiful!

Everyone rolls their eyes.

END

## EXTRA SCENE

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

All the assistants--minus Petra--and Vito are gathered around the dining room table having breakfast.

Shae is feeding Diego and Laura vegetables on the table.

Tammara stares at a coffee table.

VITO

You keep looking at that table.

TAMMARA

No. It just looks a lot like a table I threw at my ex-husband.

Silence amongst the assistants.

MARTHA

So you killed him.

TAMMARA

No, he lived.

VITO

So, you tried to kill him?

TAMMARA

Legally, I need to say no.

Vito suppresses her shock and disappointment; Tammara is by far the least normal of them all.

VITO

Cool. Cool, cool.

Shae slowly moves Diego and Laura away from Tammara.

They continue eating in silence.