

Affiliated

Writer Number 19-DE04-W20

A young girl, grieving from the loss of her brother to gang violence, must find a way to heal herself and the violence that plagues her neighborhood.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

ALICIA, 16, Hispanic, dressed head-to-toe in black, stands beside a fresh grave site. She is stoic, unemotional, almost to the point of being angry. Her mother and assorted aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends are also gathered. Alicia's MOM, 50, cries hard, comforted by a sister. Other attendees are in varying states of emotion. A priest delivers a message at the head of the grave. Next to the priest, a tripod draped in flowers holds a poster of a young Hispanic man. The poster reads "Beloved D'Andre."

Alicia looks up. Her eyes focus across the cemetery yard to the street. On the far side of the street, a car is parked within view of the funeral goers. Five gang members hang around the car, some standing, some leaning on the car, all focusing on the service.

As the service ends and the funeral-goers start to disperse, the gang members get into the car one-by-one. The last one to get in is the driver. Before he gets in, he catches Alicia's eye. They hold a gaze for a moment then he makes a motion to say "I'm watching you." He gets into the car, and the car speeds away.

EXT. ALICIA'S HOME, FRONT YARD - LATER THAT DAY

MEILOH, 45, dressed in a police uniform with a "Meiloh" name tag, walks down a street of run-down homes. He stops in front of Alicia's home. The front yard is enclosed with a high metal fence with spikes at the top - the kind you see in dangerous neighborhoods. There is a gathering in progress - the wake for the deceased D'Andre. People mill about, going in and out of the home. Meiloh stops just outside the gate, but does not try to enter.

Alicia opens the front door and steps onto the stoop. She looks up and sees Meiloh looking at her. She looks around nervously, then quickly walks to the front gate, opens it, and steps onto the sidewalk. She speaks with an accent and grammar indicative of someone who grew up on the streets of the inner city.

ALICIA

What you want now? My brother's dead.  
Can't you give us like two minutes to  
grieve?

MEILOH

Hello, Alicia. I'm Officer Meiloh. I  
know this is a hard time for you.

ALICIA

Look man, I already told the cops everything I know.

MEILOH

I know. I'm here for something else.

Alicia stares at Meiloh belligerently. She puts a hand on her hip and cocks a knee waiting for him to continue.

MEILOH (cont'd)

I'm starting a youth gang rescue program, and I'd like you to lead it.

ALICIA

You trippin'? No way! Uh uh! I'll be killed if I'm down with the Five-0.

She looks down the street to see if anyone is watching.

ALICIA (cont'd)

Mamma's already lost a son. She ain't gonna lose a daughter too. Go find some other sucker for your suicide mission.

She walks back into the yard and slams the gate closed. On her way up the steps, she looks back to see Meiloh still standing on the sidewalk where she left him, looking at her with a serene expression on his face.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL CAMPUS SIDEWALK - DAY

Alicia walks through the doors of her school with two school mates. She wears a light jacket and carries a backpack. The building shows signs of age and deferred maintenance, with brown grass, cracked sidewalks, broken fencing, etc.

Alicia's friends head up the street, while Alicia turns the other way and heads off alone. She waves them good bye, then turns to see Meiloh waiting just up the street. She hesitates a moment, sighs, then continues on, knowing she can't avoid talking to him.

ALICIA

You never give up, do you?

MEILOH

I brought you some information to read. I really think you can make a difference.

ALICIA

I'm just a punk kid. Who gonna listen to me?

MEILOH

Joan of Arc was 16 when she led an army.

ALICIA

Joan of Arc was burned at the stake.

MEILOH

Fair point. Look, I'm not saying it's going to be easy. Nothing worthwhile ever is. But I believe God has a bigger plan for your life.

ALICIA

God? Look around! This 'hood so bad not even God would come down here.

MEILOH

Just think about it.

Alicia hesitates while she considers his request. She looks around to see who's watching her. Still defiant, she grudgingly takes the papers, shoves them inside her jacket, and walks away. Meiloh watches her leave.

INT. ALICIA'S HOME, BEDROOM - THAT EVENING

Alicia walks into her bedroom and closes the door. Her room is decorated like any 16 year old bedroom would be - a mix of leftovers from childhood, posters of crush-worthy musicians, a stuffed unicorn on the bed, etc.

She reaches into her jacket, removes the papers, crumples them up and throws them into a trash can. She throws her backpack on the bed and deposits herself roughly onto a desk chair by a window. She tucks her legs up so her knees are under her chin and wraps her arms around her legs. On the desk between her and the window is a framed picture of D'Andre. A candle, heart stickers, notes, and other ephemera have been placed around it creating a make-shift shrine. She stares at the picture as tears threaten to fall. Her gaze travels to the window and she is lost in thought.

On impulse she gets up, walks to the trash can, and retrieves the papers. She walks back to the desk, sits down, gently un-crumple the papers, and begins to read.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Alicia and the two friends from school, MARIA, 16, and NIA, 16, sit at a picnic table at the edge of a public park bordered by high bushes. Maria sits on the picnic table, while Alicia and Nia sit on the benches on either side. They laugh loudly and gossip as teenagers do. From the street, three males, a GANG LEADER, 25, and two other GANG MEMBERS from a rival gang enter the park. They see the three girls, but the girls don't immediately see them. The guys change course and start walking toward the girls.

The girls see the guys approaching and immediately stop laughing.

ALICIA

Leave us alone, man. We're not even on your turf.

GANG LEADER

Don't worry. We don't want you. We want her.

They point to Maria who looks terrified. Alicia and Nia move in front of Maria to block her.

ALICIA

She ain't done nothin' to you.

GANG LEADER

But her brother has. And when you diss one of us, you gotta be taught a lesson.

The two gang members restrain Alicia and Nia, while the Gang Leader grabs Maria and pulls her into the bushes.

Maria screams for help. Alicia and Nia struggle to get free. The two gang members shove the girls away.

GANG MEMBER 1

Go on, get outta here.

The girls regain their balance and immediately turn around to head back toward the bushes to help Maria. They stop abruptly when one gang member pulls a knife and the other flashes a gun.

Alicia pauses, considering her options. She grabs Nia's hand and backs away.

ALICIA

Come on, let's get help.

The two girls run away while the two gang members watch them leave with proud, victorious looks on their faces.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Alicia sits next to a hospital bed. Maria lays in the bed. She has been beaten, and her face is bruised. She is unconscious and has tubes and machinery hooked up to her. Alicia stares at her friend, feeling helpless. She rocks back and forth in the chair with tears in her eyes.

Through the open door, Alicia catches a glimpse of two cops walking down the hall. She jumps up from her chair and runs to the door. From behind, the taller cop looks like Meiloh.

ALICIA

Hey!

The two cops stop and turn around. The taller cop is not Meiloh. Alicia is disappointed.

ALICIA (cont'd)

Never mind.

Alicia returns to her chair and looks at Maria again. She reaches for Maria's hand and holds it, staring at her hurting friend as tears fall from her eyes.

Alicia's face changes to a more determined look. She sits up straight, wipes the tears from her eyes, and makes a decision. She gets up and walks with determination out of the hospital room.

EXT. CITY STREET - SAME DAY

Alicia walks down the street with determination. She pauses in front of a neighborhood "cop shop" location. She hesitates just for a second, and then goes inside.

INT. COP SHOP - SAME DAY

Alicia steps inside the door and sees Meiloh sitting at a desk in a side office. He looks up and sees her. She strides confidently toward his desk, stops abruptly, and stares at him directly.

ALICIA

OK. What do I need to do?

Meiloh smiles.

INT. COP SHOP - LATER THAT DAY

Meiloh and Alicia sit behind a desk. The desk is covered with papers, maps, and notes. They are putting the final touches on the layout of a flier on Meiloh's computer. The flier advertises the first meeting of YHWH (Youth Healing With Hope).

Alicia stops, moves papers that are covering the map and draws an outline on the map. Her pen stops at a park area.

ALICIA

This is where it happened.

MEILOH

I'm sorry for your friend, Alicia.  
Had she been involved with any gang?

ALICIA

Naw, man - that's the thing! She  
ain't even affiliated. It has to  
stop.

Alicia grows silent and thoughtful for a moment. Meiloh patiently lets her think.

ALICIA (cont'd)

Meiloh? I'm scared. I don't know what  
to say or do. And if they hurt Maria  
like that, what they gonna do to me?

Meiloh gives the moment the consideration it deserves, then answers calmly.

MEILOH

I know you're scared. But I will be  
with you. I will help you with what  
to say and what to do. And if things  
get too much to handle, I will step  
in.

Meiloh takes a notepad and pen from his desk. He scrawls a note "I am always with you." He tears off the note and hands it to Alicia.

Alicia smiles at Meiloh. They exchange a look of understanding - they are in this together. She folds the note and puts it in the pocket of her jacket.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL CAMPUS YARD - DAY

Alicia passes out fliers to her classmates. She talks to a few. She gives extra fliers to some kids. Some kids look at her skeptically and walk away.

Meiloh also stands in the school yard, but goes largely unnoticed. He does not hand out fliers, nor does he talk to the kids. He simply watches over Alicia and smiles like a proud father watching his daughter excel.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

With music underscore, Alicia and Meiloh walk the streets, talking. Alicia carries a stapler and has a roll of duct tape around her wrist like a bracelet. Meiloh carries a stack of fliers.

They stop at a telephone pole. Alicia takes a flier from Meiloh and staples it to the pole. They continue walking and stop at a bus stop. Alicia takes another flier then unrolls some tape and tapes it to the bus stop shelter. They continue walking and step into a diner with a bulletin board on the wall. Alicia takes another flier from Meiloh, removes an unused pin from the bulletin board, then pins the flier to the board. They look at each other with satisfaction.

Back on the sidewalk, they continue to walk and talk and share an occasional laugh. As they turn a corner a car can be seen driving slowly down the block Alicia and Meiloh had just fliered. It is the same car from the funeral. The men inside watch Alicia walk up the block before speeding off.

INT. ALICIA'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Alicia is in a hurry. She rushes from her bedroom and slings her backpack over her shoulder. She heads toward the front door. Alicia's mom emerges from the kitchen.

MOM

Your breakfast, mija!

ALICIA

No time, ma. I'm late!

Alicia grabs a small stack of fliers and a stapler from a table near the front door and rushes out.



EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Alicia walks to school. There is a skip in her step and a lightness in her movements that had been missing. As she walks she staples fliers to telephone poles.

She is a third of the way down one block when two gang members appear at the end of the block. Alicia freezes when she sees them. She turns around to head back, but as she does two more gang members appear at the end of the block she'd just come from. She looks across the street to see another gang member there. She recognizes them as the men from the car at the funeral.

Alicia, now trapped and in a full panic, runs and turns into the alley - the only direction not blocked by a gang member. But she is not fast enough. The gang members quickly overtake her and shove her to the ground. Alicia closes her eyes and braces herself for the blows she knows are about to come. But before any hits land, she hears a mighty yell.

One by one, the gang members are pulled off her and sent running. Alicia looks up to see Meiloh standing above her. He kneels down and helps her to a sitting position.

MEILOH

Are you alright?

ALICIA

Yeah. Just shaken, not hurt.

MEILOH

Good. Do you think you can walk?

ALICIA

Yeah. Let's go. We have a revolution to start.

Meiloh smiles.

MEILOH

Good girl.

They walk out of the alley and turn down the street.

INT. MEETING SPACE - AFTERNOON

Alicia stands near the door of a meeting hall. The hall is set up with chairs, a podium at the front, a map on the wall, a table with refreshments on one side of the room, and a table with fliers and other materials behind the podium.

The clock on the wall says 4:59, but the room is empty except for Alicia.

Alicia fidgets nervously and glances at the clock. Just when she thinks her efforts will be a complete failure, a timid girl enters the door frame. Alicia smiles warmly.

ALICIA

Hi! Come on in. Sit anywhere you like. There are cookies over there, and water or soda, if you'd like.

The girl smiles shyly and makes her way inside.

Slowly, more people trickle in - mostly girls, but a few boys, too. In all, about 20 youth fill the chairs. Some know each other and talk softly. Almost all have a cookie or soda or both.

Alicia nervously steps to the front of the room, in front of the podium.

ALICIA (cont'd)

Thank you for coming. I'm not really sure where to start, so I'll just start at the beginning. A few months ago, my brother was killed in a gang fight. For weeks, I felt like I had died, too. And then I realized that unless I did something, unless we all do something, to heal the divide that is tearing our streets apart, nothing will get better. And more brothers and sister will die...

Alicia continues to talk as the camera pulls back and the scene fades.

INT. COP SHOP - LATER THAT DAY

Alicia excitedly enters the cop shop. She expects to see Meiloh sitting at his desk, and when she doesn't she looks around the lobby. Still not finding him, she approaches the DESK SERGEANT, 35. He looks up from his computer.

DESK SERGEANT

Can I help you?

ALICIA

I'm looking for Officer Meiloh.

DESK SERGEANT

Meiloh...Meiloh. Don't know any Meiloh, but I'm new. Sure he works here?

ALICIA

Yeah, I just talked to him earlier today. I wanted to tell him the first meeting was a baller success!

The desk sergeant thinks a moment.

DESK SERGEANT

Captain! Know an officer by the name of Meiloh?

The CAPTAIN, 50, emerges from his office.

CAPTAIN

Officer Meiloh. You mean that Officer Meiloh?

He points to a picture on the wall.

ALICIA

Yeah! That's him. He here?

CAPTAIN

Meiloh died two years ago. Killed in the line of duty. Gang war.

The Captain returns to his office. Alicia stares at the picture again then notices the lettering above the photo that reads "Honoring Our Fallen." She is startled when the sergeant speaks.

DESK SERGEANT

Do you need anything else?

ALICIA

No. No, I'm good.

With a final glance at the portrait, Alicia turns and walks out the door and into the sunshine. She pauses on the sidewalk, reaches into her pocket and pulls out a piece of paper. She unfolds it and sees the note written by Meiloh. "I am always with you." She smiles, re-folds the note, puts it back in her pocket, and walks off into the sunshine.