

A/N Thanks to all who are only just starting to read it now, and to those who have come here from the original. I really hope you enjoy it.

Chapter 1, Iara POV: Memories

The darkness is fading into something. I can't tell what it is. I squint my eyes, hoping for a better view. I suddenly see something familiar. There's a big tractor, and many like it, decimating a rainforest. Men are collecting the trees. Why would they cut down a life force? It makes no sense. Suddenly I see my father, who pulls what appears to be my mother and younger versions of my siblings and I away from the sight. Many other familiar families from what once was our tribe follow.

The scene shifts again. This one makes my head feel heavier, and there's more pain in my heart. The young version of my family is here again, although the background has changed quite a bit. It's now in a poorly built house. Out the broken windows, one can see all of a polluted city. Rio de Janeiro is polluted with things that hurt the world, and some of the more desperate people have polluted minds. My father sits at a rickety table's head.

"We must assimilate, or at least appear to. It is necessary to succeed here, so that we may pass down the traditions of our tribe from the past millennia. Do you understand, Yaritza?" The beautiful woman, my mother, nodded silently, though teardrops slid down her face. My father held her close for a minute, softened by her sadness, then turned to the children, "And you, Thiago? Iara? Do the two of you understand this?" My older brother and I both nod. Chel, our younger sister, wasn't asked. We couldn't try to explain this to a nine year old. Papai crushes us all in his embrace. One could never find a stronger person than him, both in terms of physical and emotional.

The dark colors of the shack fade into another location, a big barge boat. My family is there again, as these are all memories. My memories. It's about a year after those scenes. My siblings and I are kneeling over big language books, writing as fast as we can. My brother leans back on his heels to look up at Papai in his eyes.

"Papai, must we learn English? We already know Tupi, and Portuguese, and Spanish. We could do fine in America with those, couldn't we?" Thiago knew Papai's answer without their being any speaking. Mamãe gives my brother a disapproving glance.

"Thiago, none of those languages are an official language there. It would be very difficult to find a job without English, so you must learn as much as you can before we arrive there." She tells him, giving us the explanation for our increased studies.

"Mamãe, why are we even going to America, then? Our lives were, *are*, in Brazil." I ask the question that has been hanging in the tense atmosphere since we left. She exchanges a long look with Papai before replying.

"Iara, Papai lost his job. America has freedom, and many open jobs for capable people. We can get a home there. It may take some time before you can get back to school. We'll have to work off the price of the travel fare first, but then life will become better than it was. You'll see."

The memory fades into a montage. I see when my entire family began to work at a slaughterhouse. We all received labour intensive jobs, where we were surrounded by the dangerous instruments of murder. My family receives injuries many times. Then it stops briefly

on an important scene. A group of drunk, American men. They shout racist comments at us. They come over and hurt my parents, who are already ill with the diseases they are not used to. The men hit Mamãe and Papai. One of the men holds back Papai while another does disgusting things to Mamãe. Finally, the men leave. But only after they believe my parents are about to die. My siblings and I had been hiding during this, thanks to our parents' warnings. We carry them as best we can back to our tiny apartment. Chel treats their injuries, while Thiago and I work against the illness. But Mamãe stops us. She and Papai say they'll die no matter what, and we should save the medicine for a more critical time. They die at exactly the same time.

Chel, with ten and a half years to her name, is crushed. Same with Thiago, though he is sixteen and rarely showed emotions before. I feel so dejected that I can barely move. After one more week, I run.

I don't need the flashback to see myself running. I ran from Mississippi and left behind my parents, my brother and sister, the slaughterhouse, and the group of drunks. My family had always wanted to go to New Orleans. Once we had made enough money--like that would have ever happened at the slaughterhouse--we would've moved there, into Louisiana. Now seemed like the perfect time to go. I slept under trees and near highways. I had always loved the outside, and the struggle of succeeding. I would win in the end this time. I had a goal.

The space is suddenly filled with white. It fades straight into the next recollection. It's in a darkened museum room. The place is closed and all that's left is a big, golden idol. And me. I grab my spray can and let loose with it throughout the room. It reveals all of the laser beams for the artifact's protection. After a quick surveillance of the room, it's easy to realize that the museum isn't very good at protecting its stuff. I back up into the doorway, then leap. Being naturally as flexible as a dancer has benefits. I've been stretching more and trying to expand so that I'm as flexible as a circus performer. I'm also amazingly skinny from never being able to eat, so getting through the room is a cinch. I grab the idol and tuck it into my jacket.

The scene changes to a big room, filled with desperate looking people. I, or at least a teenaged version of myself, stand in the center. Everyone wears all black and dark colors, their hair tied tight against their heads if it's long. Most people's hair was just chopped off near the scalp. I open my mouth to speak.

"I don't understand why people gravitated themselves toward me. I am, but a humble thief. I do tend to steal the more...expensive items. But I don't keep them the way most thieves would and sell them for money. I'm not a thief that's going to favor those who keep things for their own, selfish desires. If any of you do that, you're not going to be in this gang anymore. And you won't be a free thief anymore. You will be sent to the police station with evidence of at least one of your crimes." My generally bored face changes to a glare, "If you betray a fellow gang member, it will be the same. *I will not tolerate someone who is untrustworthy.*"

One of the men, with auburn hair that appears light in comparison to his deeply tanned face, steps forward, "I agree. If we can't trust each other, we can't trust anyone." I see myself turn and smile at him. But he's a liar. He's a damn liar. I know those dark green eyes, that they always give the appearance of sincerity, when it's really a lie. He always lies...

I suddenly wake up in a cold sweat. I feel like I'm about to scream. I'm in my body now, I'm not reliving it again. At least it wasn't *that* dream. The terror I feel then is beyond what I can stand. I always wake up paralyzed by fear. I look around the small bedroom. My sister is still fast

asleep. I smile. At least Chel doesn't have to feel the awful terror. It would be unbearable to see my little sister be so terrified she would be unable to move, like me. I look at our clock and see that it's three in the morning. If I leave now, then she will never know that I left. She hates it when I go out on the streets. But I don't know what else I'm supposed to do.

I never do anymore.