HAVANA SYNDROME - EPISODE FOUR: LAYOVERS

FADE IN:

- The ‘cicada-like’ Havana Syndrome sound clip

CUT TO: INTRO MUSIC

HAVANA SYNDROME. EPISODE FOUR: LAYOVERS.

CUT TO: DEE’S VOICE NOTE

Notification sound. DEE has sent a voice note to JUNI.

INT. DALLAS FORT WORTH AIRPORT TERMINAL.

Rumble of people and distant gate announcements.

DEE

Hey Juni. It’s just about ten in the morning. Ah…crap, I always forget the time change. It’s nine am. I have a three hour layover here in DFW.

To be honest, with everything that’s going on I was surprised I wasn’t detained at security. I guess the only flight risk in the Menendez family is you?

Well, I’ve set up shop the old way. Picked up an overpriced breakfast burrito, found a gate that just boarded so there’s a bunch of empty primo seats, spread my stuff out. All my devices are charging.

Man, I hate airports.

DEE ends the voice memo.

Notification sound. DEE has sent a voice note to JUNI.

INT. DALLAS FORT WORTH AIRPORT TERMINAL.

DEE

Remember Portugal? Maybe it’s gotten better in the fifteen years since then, but I still have nightmares of trying to run to a

gate that was about to close, feeling like I was running through molasses.

You and Lupe always loved the liminal effect of airports. *You* always said you felt at home here. Your first flight back to see us over the pandemic…you sent us like a photo of your ***Dunkin coffee***, you weirdo. Luxuriating in the process of flying across the world again.

This…this was always a source of anxiety for me. I wish I could feel the way you do, the thrill of new places and new cultures…but the only reason I'm eating this horribly underseasoned burrito, screwing up my lumbar on these stupid cramped planes, risking someone's cringe when my fat ass lands in the seat beside them, spending hundreds of dollars on my nearly maxed out credit card is for you. Plus you, my dear sister, *you* have the totally insane superpower that allows you to sleep anywhere. So. Be grateful.

Send me a sign of life, maybe?

DEE ends the voice memo.

Notification sound. DEE has sent a voice note to JUNI.

INT. DALLAS FORT WORTH AIRPORT TERMINAL.

DEE

So that's how you're gonna communicate, huh? Just…deleting my messages.

Fine. I guess that's good enough. I'm glad you're okay, Juni. Wherever you are.

Dude, can you imagine what Lupe is going to say when I tell her you're talking to me like this?

Hey, are you communicating with her, too? Don’t answer that. I’ll ask her myself.

Maybe I should tell her I’m coming. You know, at this point she can’t stop me. Not that she could stop me before, but you know how she gets. Bully me into feeling guilty for spending the money, or for jeopardizing the whole legal situation for the family.

But, like I said, no one stopped me at the gate, did they? No. They have my full government name and everything. I’m not doing anything illegal. I’m just visiting my sister and my brother in law. Where’s the crime in that?

Besides, if Lupe has more information about where you are, I deserve to know. Moreso than any creepy, shadowy government organization or their lackeys.

No offense. Well, some offense. That’s something else I want to know. What convinced you to join the CIA? It’s not like you didn’t know about all the horrible things they’ve done around the world. You’ve never been the stereotypical brainwashed patriot either. What gives?

I don’t know. Like, what if you tortured people? Does the…Company still do that? I mean, you were serving under the last president, so maybe…

Maybe I need to do more research.

[sighs heavily]

DEE ends the voice memo.

Notification sound. DEE has sent a voice note to JUNI.

So here's the plan. I'm going to call Lupe. I'm going to tell her you've been communicating with me, so obviously you want me to know stuff, which means Lupe needs to give up the goods!

Okay, I'm workshopping that bit.

Whatever she knows, if she knows where you are, then we go there. We pick up your trail before anyone else can. If they haven't already. My educated guess is that maybe you've gone to Cuba to check out the source of Havana Syndrome. That seems to be the origin of all this, after all. Even if you had picked it up in Cambodia, you said you wanted to find the source! Ergo…Cuba!

And, well, I'm sure that raises all sorts of alarms with our government, so obviously we'll have to be careful at this point. It looks like the CIA had its hands tied after that senate committee on torture, and all those other legal controversies in Guantanamo. So thankfully no more "enhanced interrogation techniques", at least not that we can expect without some serious problems, considering you're a U.S. citizen. Black ops contractors on the other hand…

I'll…I'll stop myself there. Now I'm sounding like Dad.

Let's try to keep you out of Guantanamo, that's all I'm saying.

Okay, once we figure out where you are in Cuba, Lupe can use some of her own Army backchannels, I'm sure she's got some cross connections with Dad's people, too. We charter, quietly, a boat

or a plane to smuggle us into the country.

Then we find you.

Yeah. It's not…great. But it's something.

The point is, I need to convince Lupe that we need each other. That keeping me in the dark, it's just making us drift apart even more than we already have! It's not my fault you and Lupe decided to just peace out of the country and leave me behind while you go off on adventures.

Okay, well, I don't blame you, Florida <u>is</u> an actual shithole…

Over the intercom, a boarding announcement.

Oh, fuck. That's my flight.

DEE ends the voice memo.

Notification sound. DEE has sent a voice note to JUNI.

INT. AIRPLANE.

DEE

I haven't called Lupe. I guess maybe that's one thing I'm kinda looking forward to, that's also making this trip worth putting up with.

The look on her face when I show up on their doorstep.

I'll tell you all about it in a bit. They're closing the doors now.

Love you, Juni.

DEE ends the voice memo.

FADE IN: AGENT WHITTIKER'S PERSONAL VOICE FILES.

CELIA

Agent Celia Whittiker, 2317-617

BADGE I.D. #: JTT0331614

Personal case notes.

I was right to wait and see. In the last 24 hours, we've seen and heard more than enough to make our next moves.

With the parents, the outcome was inevitable. Agent Foreman has taken point on the dad and his...unfortunate communications. Foreman thinks it might lead to more, considering the father's foreign military contacts. I personally think it is simply overprotectiveness, not a conspiracy.

But Dimitri Menendez...now that's something else entirely. He is en route to Vancouver. Thankfully, we already have the RCMP monitoring the house. I, too, am en route and have notified the JTTF of my plan to accompany the surveillance team in Canada. There's nothing that warrants a pick up. Yet.

The question is, what is the end game here? How much do either of the siblings actually know about Juniper's plans, her movements? Guadalupe, I perhaps understand being in the know based on her employment history. But Dimitri has no experience in this world. He's barely out of college, and as far as we know hasn't been a target for any kind of recruitment.

No, this whole situation seems like these two are being manipulated. But to what end? Does Juniper have something on her siblings we are unaware of?

FADE IN: LUPE'S HOUSE IN VANCOUVER, CANADA

We find our intrepid hero, DEE, sitting in LUPE and MARK'S living room, in medias res of being berated to hell and back by an incensed LUPE. Pan the sound like we're going through doors/walls, and we land in the middle of LUPE's rant.

LUPE
You have no business being here, Dee. This is not anywhere in your wheelhouse, you may think you're an adult now but this goes way beyond you trying to get your wings and fly on your own. This is way bigger than that, and the fact that Juni has set off this firestorm doesn't mean that you--

DEE
[overlap, attempting to interrupt] I don't think this is…

LUPE
[plowing forward] NO! The fact that Juni's gone crazy--

DEE
[defeated, sullen] Okay then.

LUPE
--Doesn't mean you should be dumping more gasoline over it. But no, instead of thinking like a normal person, you head right into obsession because you have nothing better to do? What about work? What, so you just decided to up and leave. That's not very adult-like, Dimitri. Your brain hasn't even fully developed, you can't begin to understand how to approach this, even if you had any training. This isn't some video game, or-or..or some kind of choose your own adventure story.

DEE
[overlap, attempting to interrupt] I don’t think this is a story.

LUPE
…This is real life, there are real people involved, and real legal issues. Are you a lawyer? A soldier? An FBI agent? A police officer? A diplomat? No. You’re an “environmentalist” who is fresh out of undergrad. And now, when Mark and I are already under surveillance because of Juni’s job, and we have foreign residency, you all of the sudden decide it’s a good idea to drop in like we’re just going to have a cup of tea and book an illegal cross-continental flight like it’s no big deal. ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND?!

DEE
But Juni’s been—

LUPE
So your iPhone is glitching on you, what’s new?

DEE
It’s not glitching, Lupe. All the evidence is lining up, why can’t you see that? She wants me to be here. To talk to you about this.

LUPE
Why? So it’s easier for the police to pick us up all at once for conspiracy or espionage?

MARK
[trying to calm the room] Lupita. Geraldo told us that even if they thought we knew anything about Juni, the government’s priority is to find her and make sure she hasn’t been picked up by the Russians or something. No one has interrogated us since Miami.

LUPE
Geraldo's a lawyer, not a CIA agent. The CIA has a larger reach around legal quandaries and know a hell of a lot more about their own priorities than we do.

DEE
Then it's all that more important that we present a united front! We can go to the press if we have to—

LUPE
Even if Juni wasn't in her right frame of mind, which I don't think she is, [laughs hollowly] I mean come on…She wouldn't make any contact and she wouldn't want us going public about this. She's paranoid. She's having some kind of mental health crisis. She needs professional help. Not you.

DEE
[challenging] Or you?

[MARK: OHP. Pause]

C'mon, you know something. What did Juni want you to tell the feds? I promise, if you tell me, we can actually have a civilized conversation about what to do.

LUPE
There's nothing else you need to know or do. You didn't have to fly thousands of miles to hear me say that. I've already told you.

DEE
[exasperated] I'm tired of being out of the loop! How would you feel if it was you, huh? How would you feel if you were the one who was pushed aside, ignored, to let the "professionals" handle it. This is JUNIPER. Our SISTER.

LUPE
You think I don't know what it feels like to be ignored?! Left

behind?! Hello, forget Havana, middle sibling syndrome right here! I'm stuck between two idiots, one who thinks they're Jason Bourne and the other who thinks they're Fox Mulder!

DEE
At least we're trying to find the truth, you're probably just happy Juniper's gone off the rails! It just proves to everyone what you've always known—that she's never been the golden child mom and dad so clearly adore and you've always been jealous of!

LUPE chokes on that.

LUPE
You…how fucking *dare* you…

LUPE throws up her hands in an incredulous huff and starts to storm off. MARK grabs her before she can continue.

MARK
Lupe. Lupita, sweetie, I know this is a really upsetting situation. For both of you. And Dee's had a long day of travel. Even if you put him on a plane back tomorrow, he's here, and he's family. Talk it out.

[to Dee]

Dee. This is our house, and you are our guest. Be kind. Please.

[pause]

LUPE lets out a long breath.

I'm gonna grab us some food from Huang's. Don't break anything. Including each other.

MARK grabs his car keys and exits the house, the door closing behind him.

There’s a long silence, where all you can hear is DEE shifting on the couch and a couple heavy sighs from LUPE as she attempts to calm down.

DEE
I’m sorry. That was mean. I...I was being mean.

LUPE
Yeah. Well. Like Mark said. Family stuff is...it’s a lot.

DEE
I know you’re worried about Juni, too. I know you love her. That’s the reason why you’re angry. You’re scared to death. Right?

LUPE
Aren’t you?

DEE
I mean, yeah. Hell yeah. I’m way out of my element here. Obviously.

[pause]

This was probably a bad idea. I was just so hyped up on the adventure, on finally realizing something no one else was talking about. On Juni, maybe trying to tell me something…I don’t know what I was thinking.

LUPE
Well, you got one thing right.

DEE
What?

LUPE
Juni was last seen on a boat heading into Havana.

DEE
A boat? How’d you know that?

LUPE
Because. Two months ago, she stayed here on supposed medical leave, and needed help to go to

Cuba undetected. And guess who helped her.

DEE
What?! How?! What did she tell you?

LUPE
That she couldn't give me a whole lot of information, but it all looked above board. She said her supervisor wanted her to use my network to quietly get her into the country. I just put together the evidence and assumed she was not, actually, working with the State Department in Cambodia.

DEE
Why did she want to go to Cuba?

LUPE
She didn't say. She just knew I'd help, and that I knew people who had boats.

DEE
So what did you tell the feds?

LUPE
What I just told you. That's probably why I'm not detained right now. I have coverage for thinking I was working with the CIA. They probably fed a decent lie to keep the Canadians from freaking out about espionage happening on their own soil.

[determined] Which is why this ends here. Any further actions will jeopardize me, Mark, and our lives here. I was stupid to help Juni in the first place, but you know. [mocking] She's my sister.

DEE
That can't be it. Juni said you needed to tell "the Company" something. Like a code.

LUPE

I honestly have no idea what the hell she meant by that.

DEE
Seriously?

LUPE
I've told you everything I know, Dee, and more than I should have. It was probably some kind of delusion. Nothing more.

DEE
Maybe, if you talk with the people who helped her to Cuba—

LUPE
No, Dee. I can't, not without drawing more focus on me than necessary.

DEE
Is that all you care about? You and your perfect life in Canada?

LUPE
You don't know a thing about my life.

DEE
Yeah, maybe because you complain about everyone else instead of talking to people. Talking to me.

LUPE
You know why I don't talk to you? You don't listen! Neither of you listen to me!

DEE
So what, you tried to stop Juni from going to Cuba because you thought you knew better or something about how she should--

LUPE
Dammit, Dee, I did not want to stop her, *I asked to go with her*!

DEE
Wait. What?

LUPE'S phone rings. LUPE huffs in impatience and picks it up.

Hey Mom. Guess which Menendez just made a very bad choice, and it isn't me.

[Mom: Baby, I'm calling because the police just stopped by the house and detained your father for questioning.]

No. No, that's—I thought you said they weren't going to be pursuing—

Long silence on LUPE's end as she listens to her MOM.

[Mom: Our lawyer is with him now, but we don't know what it is they are looking for now. They might think your dad has been in contact with Juni, or someone tipped him off about who he's been talking with to help find Juni.]

Well how did they find out? Who'd he tell?

Pause for response.

[Mom: I don't know, and even if I did I can't talk about it over the phone.]

Should Mark and I come back to Florida? If they're escalating the investigation, we should be there with you.

[Mom: No, no you and Mark are better off at home. Just stay in touch with your lawyer and let him know what happened down here. I'm about to call Dee and see if he can come down.]

…Um. About that. Dee is here, actually.

[Mom: What?!]

He's fine, just digging where he shouldn't. That's not the most urgent thing though. Mom?

[Mom: Crap, that's the lawyer calling. Tell Dee what happened, I'll call again in a sec.]

Okay, just keep us posted.

DEE
What happened? Was that Mom and Dad?

LUPE
Dad’s in jail.

DEE
What?! How, why?!

LUPE
[muttering] Apple. Tree. [pointedly to Dee] You know he’s been tapping into his network for information. The police picked him up for questioning.

DEE
But he’s not doing anything wrong. And he still has a security clearance, doesn’t he?

LUPE
That doesn’t matter if he was using that clearance for personal reasons, or if he got in touch with someone he shouldn’t.

DEE
What kind of someone would that be?

LUPE
I really don’t want to speculate. I need to call my lawyer, you should probably call yours…do they even know you’re out of the country?

[pause as Dee winces]

Great. Well. You should probably ask them about all that.

LUPE’S phone rings again.

DEE
Is it Mom?

LUPE

[confused] No. It's…someone else. [hangs up on the caller] Probably spam.

I need to call my lawyer, Dee. Go…I don't know, go do the same.

Notification sound. It's a text on LUPE'S phone. She opens it.

DEE
What am I supposed to tell her? Hey, I went to visit my sister, and now my dad's in jail. Please advise.

Silence.

Lupe? Lupita? What is it?

LUPE dials the number that just called and puts it on speaker. The phone stops ringing and it's dead air.

LUPE
Who the hell is this?

NATALIE
Am I on speaker?

[Lupe hesitates]

I'm terminally online, not stupid.

LUPE
It's just me.

NATALIE
That's a lie, but I know who's with you, so whatever. Can you move this conversation into the basement? The guest room specifically.

LUPE
Who the <u>hell</u> are you?!

NATALIE
An old friend trying to make sure you two don't get picked up. What did I just text you? No, don't say it out loud. <u>Show</u> Dee the text.

LUPE obeys.

DEE
Why—

NATALIE
What did I just say?

LUPE
Fine. C’mon, Dee.

LUPE and DEE walk out of the living room, down the hall and down the stairwell to the basement. The stairs creak as they both stomp down. The laundry is running. They pass the laundry and go into the guest room. It’s small, and windowless.

NATALIE
Good, they shouldn’t be able to pick up a signal down here. I don’t think they’ve bothered going any further than that so far. I don’t think they even know about your little DIY project down here. Close the door behind you.

LUPE closes the door behind them.

LUPE
Okay. We’re here. How do you know they’re surveilling my house?

NATALIE
Any three year old with a dial up connection could see that there’s been a white van parked across your street that definitely is not the cable guy. It’s been there so long, it’s even on Google street view now. Thankfully you had enough sense not to let them <u>inside</u>, but you know. ‘We have the technology’ and all that.

DEE
Great. So. Who are you?

NATALIE
[laughs] Wow, Dee. Didn’t recognize my voice after all these years?

DEE
Uh…

NATALIE
Lemme give you a hint. I poured chocolate milk on Derrick Brown when he told you to go back to your country.

Long pause as DEE processes this information.

DEE
NAT?!

NATALIE
I always thought that was such a stupid insult. I mean, you had just said you had moved to Boston from Japan. You don't even look ethnically Asian. Racists be racists, I guess. Unimaginative.

LUPE
You know this person?

NATALIE
Now that we won't have any eavesdroppers, allow me to introduce myself. My name is Natalie Johnson. I was your brother's pen pal in middle school. [bittersweet] For a little bit.

And clearly drama runs in your whole family because not only is half the intelligence world after your sister…so is half the internet.

FADE IN:

- End with the 'cicada-like' Havana Syndrome sound clip

FADE OUT: Outro

Hello everyone, Lisette Alvarez here. I am currently wrapping up my final week at my artist residency with Crosstown Arts, which has supported me through the production of HAVANA SYNDROME and provided logistic support as I hosted an immersive escape room experience this past weekend. If you're curious what this could possibly look

like, you can see documentation on our TikTok and Instagram. We had over a hundred people visit Juniper's office, and five of our actors attended! I will be uploading the live recorded cast and crew Q&A to the feed next week. I wanted to take a moment to shout out the Crosstown Arts staff and program, as well as my fellow artists in residence for such an amazing experience. If you want to know when we're going to pop up next, ideally in a city near you, head over to our website havanasyndromepodcast.com and subscribe to our monthly newsletter.

Dimitri (Dee) Menendez: Ralph Ruiz
Guadalupe Menendez: Adriene Arce
Mark Williams: Nic Folson
Special Agent Celia Whittiker: Whitney Johnson
Natalie "Nat" Johnson: Natalie Campos

Havana Syndrome is written by Lisette Alvarez. This is a Stormfire Productions podcast.