

A Tile on the Street

written by

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INT. CLASSROOM - DAY. BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA, DECEMBER 1976.

VERO, PEDRO, DANIEL & LYDIA (17) all sit around TWO WOODEN DESKS, haphazardly thrown close together. They sit at the back of a small classroom in a circle, bantering.

The kids move from topic to topic with a consistent flow, Daniel sits next to Vero, setting up his FILM CAMERA.

Vero leans against the window, looking down at the street below as she loosely sketches Pedro, seated in front of her on top of a desk.

The SCHOOL TEACHER tries to get their attention, going back and forth between the class and the blackboard.

They begin to speak of the graduation party that night.

LYDIA
(interjecting)
¿Hablaste con Guada?

Daniel smiles awkwardly at the mention, sharing a glance with Vero, who continues sketching Pedro as he's jostled by Lydia. Pedro is red in the face.

PEDRO
Me mataste. Pero si...

Pedro continues to talk about his new love interest. The group interjects, joining in on the fun. Veronica continues sketching as Pedro talks animatedly.

The teacher addresses Pedro.

TEACHER
Pedro, bájate por favor del asiento. Dale.

Pedro turns to acknowledge him, waiving them off. He still gets down from the desk, pulls a chair up and sits in it.

VERO
¿Vienen Mari y la hermana?

PEDRO
Eh, puede ser-

VERO (CONT'D)
...porque no las vi hoy.

DANIEL
¿A que hora tenemos que llegar?

LYDIA
¿Vero, vos venis?

Vero looks at them bashfully, intending not to go. Everyone cajoles her jokingly.

LYDIA (CONT'D)
Dale, no me dejes sola.

DANIEL
Es la última juntada del año, dale.

VERO
Bueno, bueno, okay. Me sumo. Un rato. Dos horas. Una.

The BELL rings, the kids keep talking, the teacher gives up, dropping his chalk.

Vero stuffs her NOTEBOOK into her BAG -

Daniel wraps an arm around her shoulders, the group gathers their BACKPACKS, NOTEBOOKS and PENCILS. Pedro hastens quicker than them, leaving the classroom faster than the rest.

PEDRO
¡Eu, hoy a las diez!

He bumps into a fellow classmate, bends down to pick it up, handing it over quickly, apologetically, then disappears through the doorway. The rest filter out.

EXT. PEDRO'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Vero, Lydia and Daniel walk up the stairs to the front door of a middle class, two story house. The gathering is in full swing. 70S ARGENTINIAN MUSIC and light spill out the open doorway.

INT. PEDRO'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM, NIGHT

The group is immediately greeted by hello's from all sides - a couple classmates are already inside, lounging in the living room while talking and listening to music.

Pedro comes over with open arms - the perfect host. Everyone exchanges friendly hello's and begin filtering slowly into the living room.

PEDRO
Hola, hola... Todo bien, tanto tiempo, ah...

They all exchange conversation, laughing, filtering into the room.

INT. PEDRO'S HOUSE - KITCHEN, NIGHT

PEDRO'S PARENTS sit on chairs in the kitchen, relaxing and talking between themselves. A GLASS OF WINE sits in front of the mother, a CIGARETTE and an ASH TRAY sits in front of the father. A BUENOS AIRES HERALD NEWSPAPER sits on the table, abandoned in conversation.

Headline reads: PRIMEROS MESES DEL GOBIERNO MILITAR: La reorganización nacional.

Vero and Daniel head over to Pedro's parents. His mother plants a big red kiss on Vero's cheek, which she bashfully wipes off. Vero watches as she does the same to Daniel.

MRS FERNANDEZ
Dani...futuro ingeniero. Vero,
hermosa, ¿cómo estas?

She turns to both of them, stealing her husband's cigarette.

MRS FERNANDEZ
Felicitaciones, chicos. ¿Adónde van
a ir a estudiar? ¿Algún lugar cerca
uno del otro?

Daniel and Vero immediately begin to talk over one another awkwardly, expecting these questions about their futures.

DANIEL	VERO
Eh...no estamos seguros-	Tenía pensando ir a Bellas Artes pero-

DANIEL (CONT'D)	VERO (CONT'D)
Seguramente - no se - vemos que onda después...	El tema del arte igual en Argentina - no se que voy hacer...

Pedro's father interjects, bemused. He grabs back the cigarette - takes a puff - puts it out.

MR. FERNANDEZ
Dejálos que respiren un poco.

MRS. FERNANDEZ
¿Que hay de malo en preguntar?
Chicos tan educados, esta bueno tener un plan de acción...

Vero and Daniel try to agree, trailing off and looking at each other awkwardly. Pedro saunters up to the fridge.

PEDRO
Ma, ¿Hay algo de comer?

MRS. FERNANDEZ
¿Les dijiste a tus amigos que
entraste a la UBA? Arquitecto. Como
el papá.

Pedro groans, the Dad chuckles. This has happened before.

Vero laughs at the interaction, Daniel fiddles with his camera. They're both bashfully ignoring the fact that their future plans have not been talked through as a couple.

Lydia saunters over, bumping Daniel playfully.

LYDIA
Eu, foto, foto.

Daniel turns, snaps a candid photo of Lydia, Pedro and Vero, who stands there almost comically with a boyish smile on her face, relieved the interaction is over.

They're pulled out of the room, leaving the parents to their conversation once more.

CUT TO: MONTAGE

INT. PEDRO'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The record player being put on - 70s ARGENTINIAN MUSIC begins to play. The friends during the night, playing card games, laughing in corners, speaking passionately. The core four, dancing to the beat. Daniel, pulling Vero into the circle.

EXT. PEDRO'S DECK - NIGHT

Pedro, heading off to the deck for a quick cigarette. Pedro, on the deck, smoking secretly, joined by Lydia.

INT. PEDRO'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Vero splits off from the crowd, toward the hallway leading to the bathroom.

She is about to push open the door to the bathroom when she spots a sliver of a face through the open doorway of the next room.

She heads toward the door, pushes it open lightly, and stands there, taking in the huge POSTER of CHE GUEVARA right above Pedro's bed. Imposing and impossible to miss.

INT. PEDRO'S ROOM - NIGHT

His personality is apparent in the countless BOOKS strewn about, his abandoned backpack in the corner filled with PAPERS, the messy unmade bed and the different MUSIC POSTERS tacked up on the walls.

Her eyes are riveted to the poster of EL CHE, the prominent photo of him staring off into the distance taking up a big chunk of the wall in front of her.

SLOW ZOOM into Vero's face. The light around her darkens slightly as she takes in the poster.

CUT TO: Handheld, shaky close ups of different parts of CHE's face - the cheekbones, the hair, the chin, and his eyes.

BACK TO VERO. ZOOM continues inwards, closer and closer to her face. Her eyes do not move from the poster.

DANIEL

Vero.

VERO snaps out of it, turning toward DANIEL, who is standing at the doorway, staring at her. He comes up beside her. His eyes move up to the poster as well, and though he doesn't have as visceral a reaction, his unease is apparent.

Neither of them say a word for a minute as VERO turns back toward the poster.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

¿Estás bien?

VERO

(Lowly)

Es... ¿Es un poco jugado, no? O soy yo...

Daniel hesitates.

DANIEL

(Uneasy)

Tranquila...no significa nada. Che, mírame, no te preocupes.

VERO

No, no se. Tenia la puerta abierta, cualquiera puede entrar, pensar algo.

DANIEL

Dale. Salgamos de acá.

VERO
 (Pauses)
 Dani-

DANIEL puts a hand on her shoulder, pulling her into him.

DANIEL
 Ei. Mirame. No lo sobrepienses.
 Vayamos a disfrutar.

VERO
 Ok. Dale.

A CAR DOOR SLAMS outside the window next to them.

Both of them turn toward the window, and then are redirected back to the living room as they hear Lydia's voice.

LYDIA
 ¿Y ellos?

VERO moves past DANIEL back into the living room. She joins the rest of her friends, Daniel right behind. People have begun to stir uneasily.

INT. PEDRO'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A KNOCK on the door.

The noise dies down but the VIBRANT MUSIC CONTINUES as MR. FERNANDEZ gets up languidly, waving off the unease.

MR. FERNANDEZ
 Un segundo, un segundo.

He opens the door and is greeted by the towering presence of two MILITARY OFFICERS, dressed as civilians, all in black.

MILITARY MAN
 ¿Acá vive Pedro Fernandez?

He surveys the kids and parents with an aura of superiority, turning slightly to his comrade.

MR. FERNANDEZ
 Soy el padre, ¿quién pregunta?

MRS. FERNANDEZ
 ¿Hay algún problema?

She's gotten up, wrapped her robe around her like a chill had come into the house.

The MEN step into the living room, forcing Mr. Fernandez to take a step back.

MILITARY MAN

Eh...vamos a tener qué llevar a tu hijo a la comisaría. Le vamos hacer un par de preguntas nomas.

He nods to his comrade, who steps inside confidently. He begins to herd some students, including Lydia, into a corner, asking for their DNI's.

MR. FERNANDEZ

¿Perdón? ¿Para qué?

MILITARY MAN

Su hijo está acá me imagino.

MRS. FERNANDEZ

Pedro no hizo nada, no entiendo porqué tienen que entrar a la casa de tal manera-

MILITARY MAN (CONT'D)

Señor...su hijo...¿Dónde está?

The tension has risen in the room. Vero is watching, almost in a daze, as one of them comes up to her, asking for her DNI. She pats herself down, watches Daniel hand his over tensely out the corner of her eye.

She finds hers, takes it out, and as she's handing it over - he's looking between her face and her photo - the back door shuts with a distinct thud.

She turns to see Pedro, smelling vaguely of a clandestine cigarette, standing there, taking in the matter at hand.

His brow furrows as the men take in the sight of him, and begin to stir.

The MAN closer to Mr. FERNANDEZ addresses him immediately.

MILITARY MAN (CONT'D)

¿Pedro Fernandez?

PEDRO

(confused)

Si. ¿Porque?

MRS. FERNANDEZ

¿Perdona, para que quieren a mi hijo? No pueden entrar así-

MILITARY MAN
Tenemos entendido que ha colaborado
en contra del gobierno nacional-

MR. FERNANDEZ
Ei, mi hijo ni hizo nada.

MILITARY MAN
-Lo cual significa que le vamos
hacer un par de preguntas.

MRS. FERNANDEZ
Pedro recién se graduó del
secundario, no tiene nada que ver
con todo eso-

MILITARY MAN
(To Pedro)
El DNI, por favor.

Pedro's eyes flit between his parents, his friends being
shaken down, and then his eyes connect with Vero's, directly
to his left, who has realized what is happening.

They lock eyes for a second, she nods her head - no - almost
imperceptibly, and he turns back to them, uneasy, beginning
to shift uneasily.

PEDRO
No...no tengo mi DNI.

MRS. FERNANDEZ
Lo busco yo. Quédate ahí.

She begins to rifle through a nearby drawer almost
frantically.

MRS. FERNANDEZ (CONT'D)
Un segundo. Acá, acá. ¿Ves?

She hands it over to the military man, he looks at it almost
offhandedly, languidly hands it back.

MILITARY MAN
Te vamos a hacer un par de
preguntas en la comisaria. Te
llevamos y te devolvemos.

PEDRO
(skittish)
No hice nada. Se equivocaron. No se
a quien buscan pero yo no soy. Ma.
Eu.

MR. FERNANDEZ
 Esto no puede ser, me están
 cargando-

The man takes a step forward, imperceptibly close to Pedro, who reacts by jumping back. He stares for a second, almost as if deliberating, before he begins to move back toward the door.

PEDRO
 No hice nada.

He takes a step back with every step they take forward, highly tense.

MR. FERNANDEZ
 Hasta este momento no me han dado
 ningún tipo de información, no
 tienen ningún derecho entrar así,
 querer llevarse a mi hijo así nomas
 -

MRS. FERNANDEZ
 (Uneasy, tense)
 Pedro, quédate ahí -

MILITARY MAN
 No lo compliques. Dale, vamos.

The men become more forceful, moving forward, trying to grab his arm.

PEDRO
 No, pará, ¡no me toquen!

MILITARY MAN
 Dale wacho-

Pedro reacts, bolting through the door. The men immediately follow, moving quickly down the steps of the outside deck after him.

MRS. FERNANDEZ
 ¡Pedro! ¡Paren! ¿Que hacen?

His parents follow, chasing after them. Vero hesitates - everyone is in a daze - then follows them into the night.

EXT. PEDRO'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Pedro bolts through the door outside, the men follow close behind, intercepting him at the stairs. They drag him down the stairs as he fights their grip.

Vero walks out onto the deck, holding onto the railing, taking in the sight of a 1973 FORD FALCON idling on the street. Another MAN is in the driver's seat, smoking a cigarette with the window down.

The men continue to drag Pedro closer to the car, blindfolding him as they get nearer. His confused indignation has turned into full blown fear.

Pedro's parents move down the stairs. One of the men lets go of Pedro, moving toward the parents as they try to get closer. He brings out his BATON, holding his hand up to stop them.

MR FERNANDEZ

¡Esto es ilegal! Es mi hijo, no hay chance, no pueden llevárselo de esta manera...

MRS. FERNANDEZ

Te estoy diciendo que tienen a la persona equivocada-

MILITARY MAN

Señor, venga mañana a buscarlo a la Comisaría... 23.

He says it almost distastefully, as if he can't be inconvenienced by the lie as he pushes against Mr. Fernandez' weight.

MRS. FERNANDEZ

Tiene 17 años, te estoy diciendo que no es el al que buscan -
¡Pedro!

They both struggle to get past the military man, watching as Pedro is shoved forcefully into the back of the car.

The ENGINE ROARS as Pedro's hoarse SCREAMS are muffled by the sound.

PEDRO

¡Ma, MA!

Vero has reached the driveway, running toward the man shoving Pedro into the car.

VERO

¡Déjenlo, dale! Tienen a la persona equivocada, te juro...

Vero's intercepted by the man, who barely moves as she struggles against his grip. He lands a well rounded punch to her stomach.

MILITARY MAN #2
No seas boluda.

Vero tries to reach over him, toward the car handle, and is shoved back aggressively onto the grass.

Daniel's arms encircles, pulling her away from the car, halfway down the back garden.

DANIEL
Vero, vero. ¿Estás bien?

Pedro BANGS against the window, YELLING out hoarsely as the car backs out of the driveway and into the night.

CUT TO:

Vero, her knees buckle as she tries to get up - Daniel hauls her up - and she leans against him.

She watches as Mrs. Fernandez chases it down the road, sobbing - Mr. Fernandez turns around, dazed, so dazed his knees almost buckle too.

Vero stares at the empty space where the car had been. Where Pedro had been. All she can hear are her mother's sobs and the bloody silence pumping in her ears.

EXT. DECK - NIGHT

The car drives off, screeching, and disappears around the corner.

The VOICEOVER begins.

EXT. VERO'S HIGH-SCHOOL - DAY

MATCH CUT: 65 year old Vero stands in front of a TILE ON THE STREET, created in memory of all the classmates that disappeared from her school during the dictatorship.

CUT to Pedro's name on the tile. Vero stands there, almost unbearably long, as the names of her classmates are listed out.

VERO (V.O.)
Maria Zimmerman, Leonora Zimmerman,
Pablo Fernandez Meijide, Francisco
Montaner, Ana Abad, Horacio
Abeledo...

She walks away, off frame.

CUT TO BLACK.