SANTES Episode 7: Talia Estrada Holguin

Chapter 1: Welcome To Episode 7

[match strikes]
[solemn acoustic guitar] ♪♪
[flame flickers] ♪♪
[long exhalation]

STORMMIGUEL (SMF): Welcome to episode 7 of Santes, a podcast for future ancestors. I'm StormMiguel Florez.

LUNA: And I'm Luna Merbruja. And guess what? It's Pride month!! Wha Wha Wah Wha!

[air horn and lively disco music]

SMF: Heeeeyyy! ♪♪

LUNA: Listeners, make me proud and do something queer and debaucherous. Give your lovers a hickey... SULTRY VOICE: Oh my!

LUNA: Femme flag at the Dyke Bar, fuck in a park. SCANDALIZED VOICE:

[Gasp!]

LUNA: Whatever it is, do it loud and proud. StormMiguel, what was your first Pride like?

Chapter 2: StormMiguel's First Pride

SMF: Oh my gosh. Yes. It wasn't like that, but...

[both laugh]
[80s synth]

because I was like, what... I was 15 or 16. Not to say that I wasn't, like, being a little monster then, but, my first Pride was in my car— it was, like, 87 or 88, I forget which. But my friend and I decided to drive along Central Avenue in Albuquerque to see if we could see the Albuquerque Pride march, which back then was like, about 50 people walking on the sidewalk with signs. And I remember we were both so scared of being seen just driving by. Like, someone would happen to see us in proximity of the march and like, clock us? I don't know. We were just like, so freaked out about it and just like, giggling. And then my friend, as we passed them, ducked and I think maybe honked my horn while I was driving, and I was mortified. I remember being mortified. Either way, I think my friend honked. Anyway, it was so funny.

Years later, you know, it was different. We took up the whole street, and I was staging a kiss-in in the intersection just so I could make out with my crush. So, you know, times change.

[80s synth music continues]
LUNA: Heeyyy. Hell, yes. I hope we can all kiss our crushes this season. Be like StormMiguel. Learn from our elder.

[both laugh]

SMF: Stage a kiss-in!

Chapter 3: Luna's First Pride

LUNA: Stage a kiss-in! Ohhh... One of my first Prides, I was a teenager and I took a Bolt Bus down from San Francisco to Long Beach to see my lil' boyfriend.

SMF: Awww...

LUNA: And we got NoH8 painted on our faces 'cause we were baby gays AND political about it.

SMF: Oh my god! I'm dying. That's just the cutest thing ever, baby Luna... It just reminds me sometimes that you're still a baby.

[Luna laughs]

LUNA: Not that baby.

[laughter]

But you know what? This guest today is definitely a baby enthusiast. And before we get into our intro for them, I did have one more question for you, StormMiguel.

SMF: MmHmm...

Chapter 4: What would StormMiguel be the patron saint of?

LUNA: On the pod, we talk about being future ancestors and a patron saint for our community. What would you be the patron saint of?

SMF (takes a breath): Mmmm... So it's hard to pick one. That's what I love about the saints is they have a bunch— there could be a whole list under them. I want to be the saint of cultivating deep self love. Like, Be. Your. Own. Main. Squeeze. And I think from there, then... that's when you can find loving relationships and partnerships. And so I also want to be the saint of helping to find and maintain loving and respectful partnerships, whether that be romantic, creative, platonic, housemates, whatever, and also the communication that comes with that.

And then I also wanna be the saint of bringing in funding and support for your art practices and projects. Yeah.

LUNA: Mmmm... So juicy! Is this why we vibe so much? Because we're just artsy lover queers?

SMF: Oh my gosh. Yes! Yes.

[Luna giggles]

We're all that and more— and a bag of... chips.

[Luna laughs]

Chapter 5: Our Favorite Chips – Lactaid Is Your Friend

SMF (laughing): I don't know... What are your favorite chips, Luna?

LUNA: Oh my god. My favorite chips... I've been burning my stomach lining with Hot Cheetos lately because I've been getting the Extra Hot and it does not matter how much Lactaid and how much milk I drink, it blows a hole through me.

SMF: Oohh, and those things have like all kinds of whey in them and whey is terrible for lactose intolerance. So people, the less fat and the more whey, that's gonna mess your stomach up if you're lactose intolerant. Lactaid is your friend. Whey is your enemy.

LUNA: Well, you put me on. I literally eat it now with Lactaid because of you. So thank you for your public service announcement.

SMF: I'm here to help.

[laughter]

I just like the plain old Fritos. I think there's just like, three ingredients in them. Mmm. Fritos. I love Fritos. Anyway,

[laughter]

Chapter 6: Welcome Talia Estrada Hoguin!

that's not why we're here. That's a whole other podcast. So I think this is kind of our first like, friend episode. And not to say that past guests haven't been friends, but I think Talia is the first person that we've had on just from like the bestie factor. So let's get into this by introducing Luna's ride-or-die and a brilliant human in their own right, Talia Estrada Holguin.

Talia comes from a family of Tongva and Mexican medicine women, artists, inventors, and teachers. Born in Hayward, they have been teaching in Oakland for over ten years are a huge child development nerd. And we're gonna talk about that. Talia's currently a library school student, a lover of karaoke, and loves to learn new languages while being fluent in nothing. They are a rogue California-native plants planter, and it's their mission to rebel against ambition.

LUNA: Mm... That's my bestie! I am so excited because in this episode, we get into my bestie's mystery of their family history and also the importance of indigenous plants and the Native way of raising children. So let's give it up. Let's celebrate my best friend on their birthday by having them on the podcast. So give it up for Talia!

[airhorn and disco music]

SMF: Happy birthday, Taliaaa! ♪♪

SMF: Hey, Talia! We're so glad you're here!

TALIA: Hi! I'm glad to be here.

LUNA: Hieee! Okay. I am so fucking excited because Talia is my bestie, my sibling, my everything who's joining the podcast.

SMF: Aww!

TALIA: Your everything? Oh my goodness.

[giggling]

Wow.

LUNA: Yeah. I'm so stoked. I love and respect you so, so much. Like, you've been such a like, day one ride-or-die for so many years, so... I'm really, really, really excited to just have this conversation with you and bring you into the Santes project and the podcast. I, for one, know how much like, ancestry, lineage, and oral history storytelling means to you. So it was just such a like, obvious choice when we're discussing bringing you on the podcast to have you here. And I would love for us to kind of like kick off today's conversation by calling in some ancestors. So Talia, is there any ancestor that— or ancestors you'd like to call in today?

Chapter 7: Calling in the Ancestors

TALIA: Yeah... I have like three main ones that are really important to me, but I feel like there is one that would really enjoy a podcast is— I'll invite my grandma Carmen 'cause she's a Libra so she probably would be into a podcast and she died before podcasts ever existed. So she'd probably be like, 'What's this?' So I wanna invite my grandma Carmen, who we called Grandma Mishka, even though we're not Russian. I'm not Russian on that side. I don't know why we did that, but we did.

[Luna and Talia laugh]

LUNA: I love that. Were there other folks you wanted to call in too? You mentioned there might be three.

TALIA: Nah. My papa would be like, 'What are you doing? I could listen to you talk anytime.'

[laughter]

LUNA: That's real. That is so real. I know, sometimes I feel like my ancestors will be bored.

TALIA: Yeah. He'll be like, 'I'm gonna go to the garage and go invent stuff.' That would be my papa. 'See you later. I'll teach you how to read in three hours.'

[laughter]

How 'bout you, StormMiguel, who would you like to call in today?

SMF: So the— I don't know when exactly we're gonna release this, but the day we are recording it is the Trans Day of Visibility. So I was thinking before, like, who do I wanna call in especially for the Trans Day of Visibility? And there's so many people that came to mind, but I decided I want to invite in the first trans person I ever knew.

And her name was Misty Blue, and she lived in Albuquerque. And I knew her since I was a teenager. Like when I was a teenager and I was starting to go to like women's events and there was this really just unbelievably sweet, kind woman named Misty Blue, who was a part of the lesbian community in Albuquerque. And I never heard anybody question her being there or why she should be there or anything like that, but that doesn't mean that she didn't. And so I wanna acknowledge that. I don't know exactly what Misty was experiencing and going through at that time, but all I know is that I always felt so welcomed when I was around her.

And I'm curious about other people, there, if they're still with us. There used to be this lesbian... like, Sunday brunch, and it happened at the Women's Center, it was just this part of this little building. And it was all of these, like very— everybody kinda went on their own. It was all these people who went on their own— older lesbians and me. And Misty was one of them who was kind of a regular. And like, you'd go and somebody had made like, scrambled eggs and put 'em on a little Styrofoam plate, and we would just sit and eat our little scrambled eggs. And it was a very awkward group of people. I don't remember what we talked about. Like, it's just very awkward. And, like, I had friends!

[laughter]

I had all kinds of fr— like, I was— I had things to do, but I— I felt compelled to like, go to this very awkward Sunday brunch with a bunch of older lesbians.

[laughter]

Who were also— we were all just very awkward there together. Anyway, Misty was always there and was just always so, so sweet and... and she was badass. And I just been thinking about her. I did get to see her many years later. I think she was in Albuquerque when we showed the MAJOR! documentary there. But I just really wanna shout out and invite you, Misty, if you wanna come hang out with us and be celebrated.

TALIA: Yes. Come meet my grandma.

LUNA: Oh, I love that. Thank you for mentioning Trans Day of Visibility today. I think that— yeah, there was some rough news today that happened, and I was thinking about just... on these like, specific trans kind of like, national days, all of us who are living— living in this moment, fighting through this moment, resisting.

And for me, I was actually inspired by something Gerard had said in one of our early podcast episodes about connecting to ancestors who may not be directly connected to your lineage. And after that, I remember how much when I was like, a late teen, I really connected with Sylvia Rivera and how much she felt so close to me and familiar and like our lives reflected each other a lot. And I think about her a lot and I think as I kind of grew up, I felt a little self conscious that I wasn't related to her and calling her in as an ancestor. And I was like, 'Maybe I can just like pay respects, but she's not mine to call in.'

But I feel really compelled lately to call her in more because if, when I become an ancestor, as we talk about being future ancestors on this podcast, like I would want other people like me, like Sylvia to feel compelled to call us in because I would wanna give that love and support in the afterlife as well. So yeah, I'm feeling her connection a lot more lately. Like she would love to be loved by people like us, by our community. She would love to be remembered and to honor— to offer her gifts to us as well, so... Yeah, I'm just wanting to bring her in this space 'cause I just I just am feeling her lately.

[laughs]

I'm feeling her presence a lot more lately.

TALIA: You know, I think she'd also really like the idea that someone like you calls her "relative."

SMF: Mmhmm.

LUNA: Mmmhm.

TALIA: I think you fit well into her— what would be her family dynamic.

LUNA: Mhmm.

[Talia laughs joyfully]

LUNA: Yeah, and I'd be like, "Can we go volunteer together? Like, do you need, Sylvia?"

[laughs]

Yeah, I think about like... I just love like that we're... I love being alive. And when I think about folks who have passed, it gives me that respect and reverence for people

who are still here to, like, really love and show up for them now because, you know, someday we may lose them in this physical form.

Chapter 8: Talia’s Family Lineages

But on that note, Talia, I'm... I wanted to ask you a bit about, like, some of your family lineages, some stories you have. I know when we hang out, we love to dish and talk about a lot of our family drama or histories or, like, you know, migration stories. But, yeah, I just wanna like give you the table to talk about like... yeah, talk about your family a little bit. Like, where are they from and, what are some stories you wanna share?

TALIA: I'll start with talking about— even though I called my grandma, and I she's like, 'No, no, no, talk about your papa.'

[laughs]

'You know that's who you wanna talk about.' And I'm like, yeah, yeah, yeah, that's who I wanna talk about. So my papa, his name is Gustavo Louis Holguin. But I didn't know his name was Gustavo most of my life. He went by Louis. And we are Tongva descendants. He was born in Topanga Canyon or Topaa'nga. And he always had these stories that like just didn't make sense about his birth. Like, he said that he was born— he was a preemie and he was in an incubator, but then he also said he was born in Topanga Canyon, which like... there were no hospitals when he was born. He always said that his mom was super scary because she did magic and witchcraft. There's also like a lot of sad parts of the story. One of the main parts from my great grandma Francis, which is his mom, is that she was 12 when she gave birth to him. And the story that we always heard was that she was taken— stolen from her family and forced to marry a man much older than her, which is why I do not call on him, Fuck you, Igenio.

[laughs bitterly]

I hate you.

LUNA: Mmhm.

TALIA: Even if you might be native too, I don't care. I don't claim your side. But... Yeah, so they had my papa, he was her firstborn when she was twelve years old and she would have three more children. I think the first two were by him and then the last one was by— potentially by somebody else. But there were just a lot of stories that didn't make sense.

So my papa's name is Gustavo Louie, right? But my mom distinctly remembers that growing up in LA, like people would approach them when they were in like La Puente and like different parts of— not East LA because it's not technically East LA but like East Of East LA is what I call it, which was like La Puente- Boyle Heights. Like people would approach him and call him Raymond or Ray, which was like, that didn't make any sense! He doesn't— that's not his name. But his youngest brother's name

was Raymond, who we didn't know or like, have connection to his entire life or my entire life either.

And after he died, I got my mom one of those 23andMe things, you know— for fun. I don't know, she wanted to try it. And you know, I wasn't really expecting anything super cool from it. Just, you know, a lot of like, 'Hmmm... here's something fun to look at.' But we actually found on, like, our relative list a person named Raymond Rivas, and that he's supposed to be her half cousin, I think, her half cousin. And we were like, that's weird because our entire lives we always heard that his name was Raymond and one of the last names that we had for her at some point was Rivas, for my great grandma was Rivas, she had a bunch of last names. So we reached out to them and we discovered that he's been alive the whole time, or that he was alive the whole time. He died maybe ten years— his brother had died maybe ten years before we had found them and that this was his son, who's also named Raymond Rivas, who was a junior. And we were like, wow, that's shocking because we also found out that while my mom and her family were growing up living in La Puente, that they were living like two hoods over in Boyle Heights the whole time.

LUNA: Whaaat?

TALIA: They never knew. Yeah. And so we always wonder like, did my papa know? So there's a lot of secrets in my family but they're— they're more secrets out of fear for safety and repercussions for safety than like shame. And as I am the youngest in my entire family, I am the baby and the only granddaughter— air quotes— I'm happily their granddaughter, but I don't want everyone to call me "granddaughter."

[laughter]

Because of that, I got to learn a lot more than I think my brother and my cousins did. There was a lot more that was confided in me being that I was so much younger and so much time had passed, times had changed, I think he was starting to open up more. So I got a lot more clues than them. So a lot of my family story is me being after the truth for my whole life. Yeah. Does that makes sense?

[laughs]

LUNA: Okay, so you have some of these clues—

SMF: Yes.

LUNA: Yeah, no, it's like a, like mystery 'cause you're like, okay... I wanna ask you, like yo, what's your— detective glasses on— like, if you're about to like, Carmen Sandiego this, like, put these pieces together, what's happening with your papa's name being a different— like his younger brother's name? Like, you have a theory—

TALIA: Yes, so through research, I believe— this is my belief, my theory, my great grandmother Francis, I believe her original last name was Verdugo. And then when she was sold and— stolen and sold and married to this man, she had her last name changed to his last name, which was Holguin, which is my papa's last name. Then she had another daughter named Esperanza whose last name was also Holguin. So

we believe that's also by the same man. And then I think maybe four or five years after she was born, Raymond was born, but his last name was Rivas. And this is some fun lore, my papa had pictures, I guess, from his youth at some point. There was like a family picture of him when he was younger with his brother, I believe, or maybe it was just his mom and the 'man' with the last name Rivas. And we never knew what he looked like because he cut his face out of all the pictures that he had of him. So we've never known what Raymond's dad looked like. All we know is my papa hated him.

[Talia chuckles]

SMF: Wow.

LUNA: Wow. Okay.

TALIA: And so I think that's why they have different last names. My great grandmother died with another different last name, which was Alvarez, which I think was the last husband that she had. She was always— she was getting married a lot back then because I think that was like her way of survival, was like finding someone to marry and support her, especially since she didn't have a lot of skills outside of that that she felt she could really survive on. And probably being an indigenous woman, then that makes a lot of sense. Yeah. So that's my theory on the last names. That's my theory on the last names.

Chapter 9: Shrouded Family History

SMF: That feels like a very common thing— in my own family, there's a lot of just kind of unknowns and things that we're never told about or that I found— I was at the cemetery with my cousin, and he was like, "Oh, that's your brother." And I was like, "I'm sorry, what?" He pointed to one of the graves, (laughing) "That's your brother." I was like, "What are you talking about?"

[incredulous laughter]

But, apparently, my dad with his first wife, they had a baby who died. But, like, I grew up to be an adult and didn't know that. And I think it's so interesting— I don't know if you've had this experience, Talia or Luna, where one day you'll hear something like, 'Nah, nothing like that ever happened.' And then the next day, from the same person, they'll talk about it very matter of factly.

LUNA: Yep.

SMF: Like, thinking that they never told you it didn't happen. Like, 'Oh, yeah! No. It's this.' Does that sound familiar? 'Cause I think about secrets and how those things— they slip.

LUNA: Yeah.

SMF: They slip out.

TALIA: Kind of. My aunt my has a lot of brain degeneration stuff going on, so she mixes up a lot of facts now. And she used to be a very trusted, reliable source of information for me to do research on and now she's kind of got things mixed up. So she'll say something didn't happen and then my mom's like, next phone call with her, I'll get on and be like, 'Remember when you said this? And she's like, 'No no it was this!' And I'm like, 'I have it written down distinctly.'

SMF: Yeah.

[laughter]

LUNA: Yes.

TALIA: But I think because there was so much, like the secrets were more around surrounding like, the perceived, like danger of the truth being out, rather than like shame or anything like that, I didn't have a lot of like—

LUNA: Mmhm...

TALIA: direct lies told to me aside from that my papa used to say we were Portuguese, which I thought was funny 'cause I grew up and I was like, I don't know where Portugal is. I don't know what language Portuguese people speak. Little did I know that Portuguese is a language. I don't know what food they eat. I cannot show you where it is on a map... Yeah. But as far as like little things slipping like that, less so of that—

LUNA: Mhmm.

TALIA: for me.

SMF: Yeah. Slipping things for me, they never felt like they were like about lying, it just felt like memory gets shrouded for whatever reason, right, for survival. And then sometimes it pops through. It shows up in ways that... like, it always— the truth will find a way or that the actual memory, the true memory might show up in a way, or it's always, like, very fragmented. Like there never seems to be a whole clear picture because of all of the little shrouded parts, the— shrouded for safety, parts.

TALIA: That makes sense. That makes sense.

TALIA: I feel like my papa and my grandma were more contradictory of each other, so my papa would be the one that would be like, "No, that didn't happen." And then like three hours later, my grandma would be like, (whispers) "Yes, it did."

[laughter]

She was the way I found out I was Tongva. My papa never told me, my grandma told me.

LUNA: Yeah. I think like, there's so much— especially with like the past few generations where we're growing up and like assimilation was such a huge thing in

like the culture that it was for safety, you know, to like really fit in and to give this narrative and to protect your children from being subjected to the same discrimination and in certain cases, like being hunted down, right, if they knew what you really were. So I can see how yeah— then it messes up the family story because it's like what you really are and like, you know, the truth of who you are and then also the protective factor of like how we have to like, you know, kind of fudge the reality of it to protect you. But I'm curious if you have any like silly stories or details. Like, I'll share one where

[laughs]

I remember I asked my dad's mom, my grandmother from my dad's side about my mom. And I was like, "Do you remember anything about her? Like, did you remember, like, her dating my dad and things like that?" And (laughing) my grandma was like, "Yeah, you know, it was very short. It wasn't very long. And after they broke up, she became like a lesbian or something.

[all bust out laughing]

SMF: Oh my god!

LUNA: I was like, "What do you mean?" She's like, "Yeah, she was fully dating women afterwards. She cut her hair and she shaved it." And the tea is, I have seen my mom with, like, a buzz cut and I always wondered, like, where did this phase of my mom's life come from? And I am like, sitting in her lap and I'm like, one or two years old. So I'm, like, my grandma's—- there's some truth to this story. You know what I mean? Like, it's not completely made up. But, of course, you know, my mom never identified as a lesbian to me or I think to anyone else, but I just think that those pieces of the family story are interesting where you're like, 'Hmmm..." Sometimes they like, you know, have a little bit of information or like a piece of the story that they share with you that maybe the other side of the family wouldn't necessarily do that. But yeah, I'm curious if you have any stories like that, Talia. Like, did you ever find out about like, oh, you know, did so and so commit petty theft

[laughter]

or was a painter in secret. You know, things like that.

TALIA: You know, what my— So my mom, in her retirement, all she does all day, her favorite thing to do, is just do genealogy for everyone and their mom's family. Our family, but like, your family too, everyone's family. Luna, you know this to a certain degree.

[laughter]

But, one of the records that we did find that we're pretty sure was for my great grandmother, because it's her name and it's the right place and the birth year is right, was a criminal record. It was like a jail record. I can't remember what she did. Oh, I wish I could remember what she did. Have it somewhere but I know that that was a

thing. But as far as like a silly thing... You know, there's a cute story. It's not— I don't know if it's like— it's not like a surprise—

LUNA: Yeah!

Chapter 10: Talia's Grandparents' Meet-Cute – "How men are supposed to act"

TALIA: But it's like a cute story and it's the way my grandparents met each other, or how my papa ended up like going out with my grandma. was, she used to work in a bakery and it was during— when my papa was in the Air Corps and they'd gone to the bakery with his friend that day and they saw her and my papa really liked her. But he's very shy, like he did not date or you know really think about like dating women. I think that probably has to do a lot with like seeing his mom be like so mistreated growing up and him having to save her. He just kind of was never really able to focus on romance that way. But when he saw my grandma, he really liked her. But he was too shy. So he asked his friend to go talk to her.

And his friend, his name's Pete, came in and he's like, 'Hey! My friend just thinks you're really beautiful and is really interested in you, he really likes you. I think he wants to ask you out to go dancing or something.' And my grandma... (sighs) oh my grandma, my wonderful Libra grandma who hates men, taught me to hate men,

[laughter]

she looked at Pete while she was folding boxes at the bakery and she looked at him and she said, "Well if he likes me so much, why didn't he tell me himself?"

[laughter]

LUNA: Yes, grandma. Tell. Him.

[laughs]

TALIA: So, Pete went back out of the bakery and told my papa. And so my papa showed up really late at night at the bakery when my grandma was still working— which you think would be scary, but it wasn't. And she was just folding these like boxes for baked goods and stuff. That was what she was doing. And he wanted to take her out, I think dancing or something like that. And, and she was like, 'Well, I have a job to do,' 'cause she did. She was like the oldest of like seven kids, and she absolutely had a job to do. So he asked if he could stay there and help her fold boxes just to spend time with her. And they did that until she left work. And so he helped her finish up early, and then they started dating after that. And I just think that's a really cute story. And I'm glad that I grew up with that story so that I always knew how men are supposed to act.

[laughter]

SMF: That's right. You're gonna ingratiate yourself— That was the right way. She's like, 'I don't like men.' He's like— and he didn't even know that. He's like, 'How— if I sit and and help you fold these boxes?'

TALIA: And he was like that the rest of their marriage. He absolutely treated her— she did a lot of work— she stayed at home, but when he was home and not like out working because he worked in the forestry, he fought forest fires, in California, which is really common for a lot of California Native men back in his generation. That's like a really common thing. His entire crew apparently was like California Native guys. But when he would come home, he was doing all the house chores. He was doing laundry, he was making food, he was cleaning the dishes, he was doing the yard work, he took care of everything when he was home and he had no gripes about doing any, like, feminized work, any gendered work, like he just didn't see it that way. So I am really grateful that I grew up with that example of, "Well, why doesn't he tell me, himself?"

[laughs]

LUNA: Oh my god. I love— I'm like taking notes. I'm applying for bakery jobs right now and I'm gonna recreate this meet cute and I'm gonna find the love of my life at a fucking bakery shop.

TALIA: You gotta find someone like my papa. He's the best.

[laughter]

SMF: Awww...

LUNA: Tals.

TALIA: Yes.

Chapter 11: StormMiguel Gushes

SMF: Tals... Wait. Hold up. I just gotta say, I am so honored to be hanging out with you two. And, like, that started way back when we were working at that organization together.

[Talia cackles]

Like, I felt like I got just brought in to this very sacred and special friendship.

TALIA: You are.

SMF: I just always felt so welcomed by the two of you.

TALIA: You are welcome.

SMF: And so, I'm sitting here having this similar dynamic of when I was just— we'd be in a work meeting, and I'd be like, 'Oh my god. You two are amazing, and I get to hang out with you.' I just needed to say that. Just need to get that off my chest.

TALIA: Thank you.

[laughter]

SMF: Carry on.

TALIA: I mean, it makes sense. That's why you went to bat for us so hard because we were so— We were so good together!

[crosstalk]

Such a balance.

LUNA: Mhmm. Two air signs.

TALIA: A Gemini and a Libra.

SMF: Anyway, carry on. I, a little bit interrupted just to gush.

TALIA: That's not an interruption. That's a contribution.

SMF: Contribution. Thank you.

[laughter]

[up-tempo electronic pop]

♪♪

Chapter 12: Calling In Talia Is High Risk, High Reward

LUNA: Talia, I wanna know, thinking of yourself as an ancestor, you know, like someday that'll happen, very long from now, what are some things that you would want people to use to call you in as an ancestor? Like what's a way that would get your attention or that you would want to be called upon?

TALIA: Hmm... I mean like a cool answer, that's like a true answer, but it's a cool answer, maybe like... strawberry leaf plants. I've always wanted to grow one, I haven't yet. But I remember my grandma growing strawberries and I love strawberries and strawberry leaf plants. They smell good and they're pretty. Their strawberries are small and they're better than the commercialized ones we have now. And I haven't tasted one that tastes like that in thousands of years. So strawberry leaf plants... I don't know, something cute and whimsical, silly, maybe like a temporary tattoo of like one of Jimin from BTS's tattoos, you know.

[laughter]

Something silly, something that's like, 'that's so Talia.'

[laughter]

SMF: Aww... Maybe just a sign that says like "Giant woman," because I've been singing that song at work a lot with my students.

[laughter]

SMF: Is there any food that would grab your attention? Any smells?

TALIA: Food... I'm really particular about this. So, like, if you could— if someone... okay, if someone found my grandma's tamale recipe and made it— the correct way—

SMF: Oh, okay.

TALIA: Where the tamales were moist... with the tamale sauce, which one of my friends who's not Mexican calls "Mexican gravy" and I think it's accurate to describe what that sauce is like. It is Mexican gravy. If someone made that, yeah, I'd come for that.

SMF: Okay.

LUNA: Okay. I'm sorry... Where do we get this recipe? Like, did she publish it online? Is she somehow this, like, famous cook I didn't know about?

SMF: So it'd have to be an act of sorcery, I think.

LUNA: I know! (laughing)

TALIA: It's a family recipe and I have it, and I've given it to... 1.5 people in my entire life.

LUNA: 1.5.

TALIA: I say 1.5

[laughter]

because I've given it to one, and then I've promised it to one other person. But I haven't actually given it to them yet.

SMF: I thought you were gonna say you left out a key ingredient or something.

[laughter]

TALIA: No. No. No. This was a coveted recipe even more than the Krabby Patty secret recipe.

[laughter]

It's that top secret. Yeah, that would bring me there. Or maybe like a really nice black sesame latte.

LUNA: Mmhmm.

TALIA: Black sesame seed latte. I'll always come for that. But it has to be a good one.

SMF (laughing): I love how particular you are.

TALIA: It can't be like jammy, like if it's like too pasty... I want it like very blended and like nice. Yeah.

LUNA: I love it. I'm gonna petition you so many times and just be like, "Do you like this one?... How about this?" Like, I'm just gonna bring options.

TALIA: Yeah. You're just gonna have to i-Tea and get like seven different bobas and be like, 'What about this?' Then lightning strikes down. You know, didn't like that one.

[laughter]

SMF: OK, so that's how you 'll show.

TALIA: How dare you.

[laughter]

LUNA: Literally striking us down.

[crosstalk]

Okay. GOD Talia. Thank you so much. Thank you so much.

SMF: So it is, yeah, basically, you have to— it's like a... it's a risk (laughing) if you're gonna be summoning Talia.

[laughter]

TALIA: Yes. Yes. Look. Low risk, low reward. So... High risk, high reward. I'm a high reward.

[laughter]

SMF: OK, so knowing that it is very... it's a risky endeavor to call on you,

[Talia giggles]

is there anything in particular you want to be available to help certain people with, from the beyond?

Chapter 13: A Source Of Comfort To Parents and Kiddos

TALIA: Yeah... I would like to be able to be a source of comfort to parents, particularly mothers, that good enough parenting is good enough parenting. A source of patience for them when they are frustrated with their little ones. For anyone who's listening that doesn't know, I am a preschool teacher and a child development nerd. And, I think I'd want to be available for that. And if any of my students, like past kids that I've worked with or helped raise, were to call upon me, I would want to be like, I think like a reminder to them that they don't need to be anything other than their perfectly them, ever evolving self to be good enough.

And for, I don't know, like, wavy curly hair advice.

[laughter]

LUNA: Yes, I love that. You are fucking amazing with kids. And like, we talk about child development all the time. And you give me such great advice on like what to do and like how we problem solve, like, you know, some of the kiddos that I have relationships with in my life. Like, I love it. I feel like you come with the most nonjudgmental approach and you're so like— I love seeing you with children. Like, it's just like seeing someone live out their life's purpose, the way that you can interact with them and care for them. So it just makes me so happy to know that, like, there would be an ancestor in the far, far future who would be that role for people. Because I honestly, like I can't think of a lot of my own personal ancestors even within my family that I'm like, 'They really love children.' I can't say that unfortunately, but like they had lots of kids.

[laughter]

LUNA: But I know. But I could definitely say that you'd be that one person— you would be taking care of my kids in the middle of the night. You know what I mean?

TALIA: Oh, yeah.

LUNA: If they're having a nightmare, you'd be around like, swaddling them and taking care of them.

TALIA: Yeah. I probably would just carry them everywhere while I do menial tasks until they fall asleep or talk them to sleep. I love to give a good lecture when talking a kid to sleep. They'll fall asleep instantly if I talk to them for too long. I think that also that is like very ancestral for me. Like, that comes from my grandma and my papa being really good parents with the resources that they had. And my mom, of course. Everyone loves my mom. My mom's the best mom.

LUNA: Mom is the best, literally.

[laughs]

TALIA: And I think one of the things with her too— and my mom is very close to becoming an ancestor if we're being real. But one of the things I love to talk with my mom about is her parenting, which I think is really rare that you get to talk to your own parent about their parenting and critique their parenting with with them... in a way that's like fairly honest 'cause you know, if you love them a lot you don't want to hurt their feelings. And if you don't like them a lot you probably don't have the relationship where you can really like dissect stuff and like be open to like hearing their reasoning for certain things. But she's very aware of the mistakes that she did make. And there's also a lot of things that I think are really cool that she did when I was young that I think a lot of parents could learn from, that I definitely learned from.

LUNA: That's incredible. What are some of the things that you learned from your mom, like about parenting?

TALIA: One of things that always stands out to me is my mom used to apologize to me from a young age when she was in a bad mood or if she was grumpy. Because I was very sensitive as you know, most children are actually. And you know, you feel your parents' mood, you feel like, 'Oh my gosh, what happened? I'm scared, I'm walking on eggshells.' And she would come over to me and tell me like, it's not my fault, she's in a bad mood because of something else that happened. She wants me to know like, didn't do anything wrong. And it very much helped me like, have this perception that like, things were not my fault when I was little, if someone was mad. And I'd move on like, (cheerfully) 'Okay!' You know, or I'd ask her like, 'Can I help you feel better?' 'Do you wanna play?' Like, you know, which is like my three year old brain being like, 'I'll cheer her up by asking her if she wants to play Barbies with me.

[laughter]

'Do you want to hear a song?' To which she was like, 'No, that's okay!'

[laughter]

That's one example I can think of that's very well. Also if there's any indigenous parenting people out there or child development people out there that listen to this, please reach out to me, I'd love to talk with you about child development from an Indigenous perspective 'cause there's not a lot written about it.

Chapter 14: Magical Fright As a Parenting Technique

But I think one thing that like really sticks out to me too that's come up at work a lot is the way that traditionally, Indigenous— and as I say traditionally... Traditionally Indigenous parents do not yell at their children or enact violence to discipline them. We use concepts like magical fright, which can be messed up in some ways but is also

[Luna and SMF chuckle knowingly]

shifty, but like but mostly harmless. Where you tell them like these stories of like, La Llorona is like a really good example again of like you tell them these scary stories like to get them to behave because of these like morals within the story. But I think one of the biggest things is that it's embarrassing to lose your temper with a child. Like, that's so embarrassing. Like, if you yell at a child, if you're so angry that you're like shaking with a child, that feels very embarrassing to me. Like how embarrassing is it that I, as a 34 year old feel the need to yell at a three year old? That just feels humiliating. Like wow, I really don't have it together.

[laughs]

Like, they're three. And I think that's one of the things that I really learned from my mom, 'cause she didn't ever yell at me as a child. She was very quiet and patient. And even when she was mad, it was very quiet anger. It's like slow to explain. And it's come up at work before with like other teachers telling me 'You know, you can like be firmer with them, like you can use your voice a little harsher with them. And, you know, when I first started, I was kind of like, 'Oh, I guess I'm too soft. I'm too soft with them.' But at some point, I was like, well, why do I need to be firmer with them if they listen to me when I'm soft?

LUNA: Right.

TALIA: If they're reacting just as well to me when I'm soft as to when I'm, you know, making firmer voice actions, why would I need to be harsher or firmer with them? They react well to the softness. So, I—

LUNA: Yeah.

TALIA: So I tend to stick with that. The only time I think you should yell at a child is when they are in danger.

LUNA: Right.

[laughter]

TALIA: You yell their name to scare them to get them to stop doing a dangerous thing. If they're about to touch an electrical outlet, yell their name please. And then if they haven't been yelled at before, it will be so jarring to them, they cannot help but freeze and turn around and go, "What is that?" But if they've been yelled at a lot, they might not— they'd be like, 'I hear my name like that all the time.' Touch the electrical socket. So... SMF (chuckling): Right.

LUNA: Yeah.

SMF: It's so interesting that you're talking about fear because like, yelling them with fear because thinking of like stories of La Llorona, those were also told to us for protection. Right? Don't go play in the arroyos. Don't go near the river unsupervised or, you know, that kind of thing. Like, those are just a lot of stories that were told to us to keep us safe.

TALIA: Yeah. Exactly.

LUNA: Yeah.

TALIA: Exactly. And especially for older generations where I mean, even now, for, like, indigenous kids being kidnapped was like, a very common thing, and it still is now. So like, we need to hear those stories as little ones to keep us safe, potentially without having to scare us to death that that's a really real problem when we're like three. You know, we can hear La Llorona, we don't have to hear scary white man working on our res.

LUNA: Yeah. I'm trying to imagine your mom because she is so sweet, and I've only ever heard her, like, super soft spoken and, like, saying the most loving things about you and to you.

[laughs]

I'm trying to imagine her telling you a scary story. Like, what kind of things would your mom tell you to, like, keep you in check as a child?

TALIA: Ahh... You know, I had this problem when I was a kid. I had a very developmentally appropriate, as we say, two year old thing I would do, which was I would just take off running. And according to child development, that actually means that I had an extremely secure attachment to my mom. Because when you have a secure attachment to your parents, you you will run away from them because you feel so safe in the world, you expect your parent to follow you no matter where you go.

The reason why this became such a big issue though is because we used to take like road trips and my mom took us to like, I don't know what it was, it was somewhere with red dirt, maybe in Utah, I'm not sure. I don't remember where it is. I feel like it was like some monument that I don't know name of. But we were on a cliff and I took off running. And my brother, thank goodness, saw me take off running and grabbed me right before I jumped off a cliff.

SMF: Oh my god!

LUNA (scoffs): Talia!

[laughter]

You don't even like the outdoors! What are you doing running off a cliff?

[laughter]

TALIA: I know! And I'm scared of hills!

[raucous laughter]

SMF: 'Cause you got yelled at for almost trying to jump off of one. Now you're afraid of them.

TALIA: But I didn't get yelled at, that was the thing. My mom scared me to death because after that, she had this talk with me that she was like, "If that had happened, you would have jumped off the cliff and you would have fell down, down, down and gone

[claps]

splat! Then you would never see me again. Is that what you want?" And I was like, (mimics crying) "Oh my god! I'd never see my mommy again? No!" And so— (laughing) also the "splat!" That helped a lot.

SMF: That's so honest.

TALIA: Yeah right?

[laughter]

SMF: See, my aunties would be like "That policeman's gonna get you!" I'm gonna— like, bullshit like that. Like, that's not— I mean... You know, that's a healthy fear to have, but not to give a kid, right? Like, that they're in danger for being bad that they're gonna get arrested. But actually, the truth, what's gonna happen is you're gonna run out on the street, get hit by a car, and you're gonna go crunch. You're gonna fall to the bottom and go splat.

[laughter]

TALIA: Crunch. Splat.

SMF: You're never gonna see me again.

TALIA: Squished. When I would do it in parking lots, she'd do 'squished' or 'squashed.' And I was, like, just imagining, like, very cartoonish me, just, like, going squash like a pumpkin.

LUNA: Oh my gosh. I love that mom's magical fright was literal truth. That's what it was.

[laughter]

TALIA: The magic of realism.

[laughter]

LUNA: Oh, Talia... I love it. I love it. I'm thinking about— I'm kind of, like, circling back to plants, about what you talked about, like, wanting, strawberry plants, right, to call you in as an ancestor.

Chapter 15: Indigenous Plants

Can you tell me a little bit about your connection to like seeds and plants? 'Cause I know they're a little important to you.

TALIA: They are.

LUNA: Yeah. Can you tell me a little bit about your connection to them?

TALIA: Yes. So growing up, my grandparents both had worked in fields when they were little, and when they grew up and had their house in La Puente, their backyard was just a garden. My grandma Carmen would wake up at like 4AM every day to tend to the garden, and I would try to wake up as early as her and I never could do it, but I tried really hard. And she was always really into her plants and everything. But it was kind of this joke in my family that we're all a bunch of Indians and I'm the only one that doesn't like nature. Like I'm afraid of hills. I don't like touching dirt. If I touched dirt and my hands were dirty, I would come up to my mom and put my hands out and go, "Aaaahhh!"

[laughter]

I'd be like, (whines) "I wanna wash my hands!" I hated touching dirt, I didn't like being dirty. I did not like playing in the mud. Like, I'm afraid of bugs that you'd find in a garden that are like wiggly and slimy. I'm terrified of them. So I was like the most like— I respect gardens, but I am the most anti garden person alive for like most of my life, very scared of them. I liked watering plants and that's about it.

Chapter 16: Learning From Nicholas Hummingbird

But my friend Kari— shout out Kari— asked me during the pandemic to come with them to this like virtual native tea class. And I was like, 'Okay, I have not a lot to do in the pandemic.' And it was online and I was like, okay, and they were— 'And it's taught by a Native California guy.' I was like, 'okay.' And in comes Nicholas Hummingbird— shout out Nicholas Hummingbird— please support him in his work. CaliforniaNativePlants on Instagram. He teaches a bunch of different classes from a California native perspective. He's also California Native. And the class was just really special. And he opened the class up saying something along the lines of like, 'If you're here to learn how to extract native plants and, you know, figure out how to get all the white sage and sell it, you know, this is not the class for you. Please leave.' And I immediately was like, Wow. I like this class.

SMF: Mmhmm.

LUNA: You're in the right place.

TALIA: Even though I have very little interest in tea and I don't garden, at that point, I was just like, (nonchalant) "I don't know. I'm here for the Native vibes." And I just fell in love with the teaching style of this, like, very matter of fact kind of stern, grumpy Native guy.

[laughter]

On the outside. He's actually very, very sweet. But... I fell in love with his teaching style and I took a bunch of classes. And he sells seeds. He has the— I think it's still the only native seed store for California-native seeds run by a Native California person. And I continuously still buy his seeds every year, or every couple seasons. And I just got started with some of the plants we had heard about in class, and I fell in love with it. And when I had my job at that organization, I made like decent enough money that I could afford to buy like seeds and like pots and like real things to like have a container garden.

And I fell in love with California-native plants. I don't grow anything but California-native plants. And my black sage is still thriving— it's from the first seed I ever planted from my first batch that I'd ever bought from him. And now I work at a garden school where I bring that to my classroom with my students. And we're in a garden mystery right now actually, I think some of our dirt or soil in our planter boxes is like really bad and condensed, so we're actually in a mystery right now. Like, 'How do we revive the soil? 'Cause every time we plant things it dies in it. But when we plant things in container they thrive.' 'Why are they dying in this?' Yeah, so I just I really take that with me everywhere I go. I will often find seeds in my pocket and throw them into the dirt wherever I'm walking. It's just like part of a way of life. But those classes really radicalized me as far as like California-native plants grow. 'Cause you know Bay Area culture is very into plants, they're very into plants. They love their Monsteras and whatever indoor plants I don't even know the names of. And they don't either, half the time and it's fine. But—

[laughter]

LUNA: Call them out. Call them out.

TALIA: Y'all don't know what you're growing. You don't know why you're growing it. You just think it's pretty, then it dies— then you're like, 'Oh my god! My plants die!' Okay, well focus on the ones that you can grow. But...

[laughter]

But, I got really into them and like I want other people to like feel empowered to work with California-native plants, especially if they have access to land, especially if they have access to a balcony where they can have a potted plant and that gets like decent sun. You could try to grow them inside. I don't know what happens. I haven't done that before but um...

[laughs]

You know, maybe. But it's just, it's interesting to me that, living in California, there's such a big Bay Area queer plant culture, but that nobody seems to be talking about— not nobody, but like a lot of people aren't really talking about like, what native plants they're growing. They're just growing whatever they find at a store, like a nursery that looks pretty— and that's fine to give yourself joy. But there's such a vast diversity of California-native plants that are local to this ecosystem that we could

be working with that would benefit the land and that would give back to the land that you live on. I don't know maybe you should take care of the land if you live on it, especially if you own it under colonial rule, please take care of it and do some restorative work. Yeah, that's kind of where... Did I — What was the question?

[laughter and crosstalk]

SMF: I mean you answered it.

LUNA: Literally you answered it. Yeah. No, shout out to you because I love that— the history of seeds and plants and like you were the one who taught me about like native California plants because I was... I'm a Bay Area queer who killed every plant that I ever try to grow, but I really was not thinking about native plants either. And now it's one thing like whenever I travel, I look around and I'm like, this native? Is this from here? Like, is this from somewhere else? And I didn't have that kind of consciousness or like lens before when I was thinking about plants and gardening.

Chapter 17: Land Restoration

LUNA: But I started volunteering with a group called Queer the Land here and they are intentional about planting native Washington plants up here in the Seattle area. And that's where I was like, oh, yeah, there are people who are doing this work, and it's done in tandem with local Native communities as well to create food banks and like, different kinds of restorative land projects so that, Native folks can have more land stewardship here.

TALIA: Yeah, you just have to find them. For the most part, they're already ongoing. Most people out here know Sogorea Te' as the one. And they do great work. I've done some of their land restoration days, and they were really fun and exhausting in the best way. And they just feel really sweet. Like, if you are going through— Also, you're going through bad mental health— and I say this as someone who had a full breakdown and needed to go on the full dose of Prozac, go do like a land restoration day. It will just make you feel like you did something purposeful. Like you actually did something good, and it will make you feel better. Like, it really does.

LUNA: I second that.

TALIA: It really does.

LUNA: Absolutely.

TALIA: There's no better medicine than feeling like you have contributed something good to the world and... and with other people that you kind of fuck with, you know? It feels good. It feels good to be around other people.

SMF: I'm curious— I'm thinking of like, Sogorea Te', do they have for land restoration, options for folks with different access needs to be working on land?

TALIA: So I don't know how like, fleshed out it is, but through the emails, I get, at least, there's always like a note in there that's like, 'We'll work with whatever abilities

you have... we can accommodate whatever abilities you you have or disabilities you have.' And really appreciate that 'cause there was a time where my knee did not work or my foot did not work very well and crouching down might not have worked for me. So you know, they are land restoration days, so they do require some kind of physical ability. But there's also like, I've also seen like, volunteer opportunities for like, going to their office and like, putting together like, packages or letters or something like that. Maybe it was thank you letters or something. So, yeah, they definitely have different opportunities to support with different, like, physical skills. They are mostly physical, but they also— I think on their form— their volunteer form, they'll note like, 'Do you have particular skills?' So if you have computer skills, you can note that. If you have seed saving skills or just knowledge, that's still valuable.

SMF: Mmhmm. Yeah. Thanks. And I can follow-up with them too. I'm very curious about that. Because I know for me, like, I would love to be able to get my hands in the dirt and really just, like, be low to the ground, but that's a hard thing for me to do physically. But, also, like I sit behind a computer all day, so (laughing) I guess, that I don't need to be doing. But, anyway, yeah, just something just curious about that, but I will I'll follow-up with them and then let folks here know what I have found.

TALIA: Yeah. Also, if you want me to come over with a packet of seeds and you have some pots and dirt, we I'm happy to do it in your yard with you if you just wanna touch dirt.

LUNA: Aww...

SMF: Yes. That would be so much fun.

TALIA: Some people just like touching dirt. I am not one of them, but I am now.

[laughs]

SMF: My partner is the gardener in the family. And (clears throat) I am so not, but anytime I touch dirt, I'm really happy. It's just rare because I am always behind the computer where I'm most kind of at home in a lot of ways. But when I do get my ass outside, it's nice.

[laughter]

TALIA: Yeah. It feels really good. I'm not taking good care of my plants right now, but that's the other great thing about California- native plants is once they're established, you don't have to really water them or worry about them 'cause they're in their home ecosystem, I guess I could describe it as. I'm not sure what the right terminology is, but... I've like not watered my black sage for like at least a month and it's thriving. In fact, think I was watering them too much because Luna, when I visited you in Seattle and I didn't water my plants for like five days, I came home and they were all thriving after I was like, "Gosh, why won't they grow?" And I left them alone. I feel like that was a metaphor for life: Sometimes you just need to leave stuff alone.

SMF: They're just like, "We just need some space."

[crosstalk]

LUNA: Literally. "Stop suffocating us!"

TALIA: And I am not good at giving space— Let's be real about that. I'm not good at it, but I did it on accident. And they were like, "Thank you" And now I'm like, okay, I've learned.

[laughter]

Good life lesson.

LUNA: Oh my god. I think I'm related to your plants.

[laughter]

I also love a lot of space.

TALIA: They are relatives.

[laughter]

Chapter 18: What should we get you from the San Jose Flea Market?

SMF: So we're gonna start winding down, but we have a couple other questions on our way out. And so thinking about— we've kinda talked about it earlier about what to put on the altar. Let's say I'm having a— or somebody, not me, because I'm not planning well in this particular situation. Okay? Neither is Luna. We're hanging out, and then we're like, Oh, wait! We have to go to this potluck for the dead. This is years from now when we're old and cranky. And we were gonna bring something for Talia's spirit, and all the stores are closed! Wait. Why are all the stores closed? That's so weird. Why is the only thing open the San Jose flea market? Okay. Well, I guess that's where we're gonna go. It's on the way.

TALIA (clapping and laughing): Yes. We only have a little bit of time, so we need to know exactly which booth to go to and what to get. What do we get at the San Jose flea market to put on the altar to honor you?

TALIA: Oh, that's such a good question. That's so fun 'cause Luna and I went to the San Jose flea market together. like a couple of trips ago.

SMF (feigns surprise): Huh.

[Talia laughs]

Wow. That's so funny. Um... Gosh, what did I really love— You know... You know... It's the thing I bought there that's kind of falling apart, but I don't care because I love it so much. I got this bag... and it's shaped like a boba tea.

[SMF and Luna laughing]

It has a little straw on top and a zipper that goes around what would be the lid of the boba tea. And it's perfectly shaped if you bought a boba and it was sealed. Just stick it inside, close it up, and you'd have a little bag of boba. So it might be that. Or there was a BTS poster there I was really excited about.

[laughter]

SMF: Okay.

LUNA: I love it.

SMF: It's good to know. So BTS poster or a boba bag. Does the bag— is it actually to carry your boba? Is that what it's for? Is it just shaped like a boba? Like... "I have a boba and a bag!

LUNA: Yeah. Have you actually carried your boba in it yet? No. Because I put other stuff in it, and then my boba doesn't fit. But I could— well, know what, I did that day. We got boba that day and I did, for fun, put it in there 'cause I didn't have a lot of stuff with me that day. Yeah. So okay. Okay. Okay. Yeah. I did use it for that. Oh, and a mangonada because they have they have yummy ones.

LUNA: Hell yeah. Excellent.

SMF: Alright.

Chapter 19: Consent and Sexuality Conversations With Youth (Content warning for discussion of sexual assault of a minor)

LUNA: Alright. So then thinking of yourself as a future ancestor, what is like one story about you that you would want people to remember you by? It could be silly, it can be epic, it can just be— like whatever you want it to be. But like, what's the story that we're like, 'Do you remember Talia? Talia used to do this one thing,' or like, 'Oh my god, there was that one day that Talia...' 'Let me tell you the story...' You know what I mean? Like, what's a moment in your life that you would want people to remember you by?

TALIA: One moment... I feel like I need to go ask my mom. Oh, okay. You know what? Is it okay if it's like actually kind of a downer and it's like serious, but it's like a really cool thing I did when I was young?

SMF: Yes.

LUNA: Go for it. Yeah.

TALIA: Okay. It's kind of a downer. Content warning for discussion of sexual assault of a minor.

When I was in high school, I was in this computer class and my teacher as like a safety day, we all just get our parents to sign this waiver to watch this movie, and I don't know what this movie was called but it was about this girl who goes online, gets

a boyfriend who's older than her and meets up with him, and she's like a teenager. And the movie is essentially about her becoming sex trafficked. And it's like terrifying. Like as a teenager watching it, I was like, oh my god, this story got me. And she's like assaulted, and it's also the story of her mom trying to come find her. And the story ends okay, she gets rescued and stuff, but it was a very intense story.

And after that my computer teacher did this activity. He did that thing where he's like, 'okay, I'm gonna make a statement, and if you agree with it, go to this side of the room and if you disagree with it, go to this side of the room.' It's like a bunch of different statements about the movie, like about like the plot and like things we believe and stuff. And then the question came up was like, "Do you think what happened to the main girl is her fault?" And I remember like, oh, I've seen Degrassi. I've talked about this with my mom. Like, I know that that's it's not your fault when things happen to you like that. That's not your fault. So I go to that side of the room. The entire other— the rest of the class, every single person is on the other side of the room. And I think, oh my god, I must not have been listening, right. Like, must have gotten the side of the room wrong, duh. Okay. And I turned to my teacher and I'm like, oh, I'm supposed to be on that side of the room for you believe it's not her fault? And he was like, (crestfallen tone) "No." And he looked really sad.

SMF: Oh my god.

TALIA: And I was like, 'Oh.' And then we had to argue our points. That was like the thing, had to like do contributions to discussion. And he looked at me and he said, "Stay strong Talia." And I was like, (nervously) 'Okay!'

[laughter]

'I will.' But I remember just like thoughts racing through my mind of like— most of the kids I went to high school with were Latino or Asian— in that class particularly. I don't think there were any white people in the class— I was looking around and like I knew statistics from like, you know, being Native and talking to my mom about like sexual assault and like, and like all those things. So I was like, thinking— there are absolutely people on that side of the room who have been sexually assaulted or who have been sexually harassed, who believe this about themselves. And so I remember thinking very strongly like, I have to be gentle and I have to make the case so that when they leave this conversation they question whether what happened to them was their fault. And I did and I stayed really strong through my moments and like, I argued with like seniors— I was a freshman, I argued with senior men, I, you know, combated a lot of just really like backwards thinking about like being a survivor.

And I think that that was like a really formative experience for me and it's kind of— that was like my most radical moment as a child that I have taken with me to adulthood of like how to advocate of like, you don't have to yell at people to advocate for things, though you can. And maybe I did when guys were speaking, but I don't remember. But I, you know, there's a certain way you can advocate that is just helping people believe in themselves.

LUNA: Mhmm.

TALIA: And.. like, just helping them process things is also like a way to advocate for them and their well-being. And so I think that was my story for what I want to leave behind as an ancestor. I hope people remember that about me.

SMF: Wow. That really feels (sighs)... like it goes hand in hand with the way you want to be remembered and called to to help with children in that you... you brought so much gentleness and care and thoughtfulness about what their experience and vulnerabilities might be, when you were talking to them. You could have gotten very defensive, very hard, very self righteous with every good reason to.

TALIA: Right.

SMF: And to hear just that in ninth grade that that was your thinking when facing off with a bunch of, like, seniors and dudes and, like yeah. That's just— that's really a beautiful story.

LUNA: Yeah.

TALIA: Thank you.

LUNA: Yeah. Thank you for sharing that. I feel empowered by younger you doing that in a room full of kids, like because to also think that if you had been on the side of everyone else, there wouldn't have even been a conversation or debate about that. So the fact that you were, like, standing up there speaking the truth and, like, empowering everyone in that moment is powerful. Like, that is absolutely a beautiful thing to be remembered by.

TALIA: Thank you. Yes. Shout out to my mom for having those conversations with me when I was young.

SMF: Yes. Shout out to your mom.

TALIA: Any parents listening, please have consent and sexuality conversations with your kids while they're young.

LUNA: Absolutely.

TALIA: It will prepare them. They're awkward as hell and nobody wants to do them, but they're necessary. And you may end up with a little Talia who makes a friend who is a survivor, as a teenager, feel like maybe something's not their fault, that they do feel like is their fault. It's a big deal.

Chapter 20: How To Find Talia

LUNA: Yeah. On that note, Talia, I know you mentioned if like, there were folks wanting to reach out to you to connect with you. What's the best way for them to get in contact with you or just, like, become your friend, you know, talk about parenting things, talk about seeds or anything else?

TALIA: You can reach me on my, like, personal regular-degular IG. It's mwaarlight, M-W-A-A-R-light, which means moonlight. Mwaar is the moon in Tongva. And I was really in tune with Sailor Moon that day when I came up with that. So yeah.

LUNA: Perfect.

Chapter 21: Wrapping Up

SMF: Oh, thank you so much. This has just been so exciting and special to get to hang out again with you— it's been a while. And to have you on the show and hear your stories that I have never heard before. Luna was, like, so excited and just, like, getting me really excited about talking with you specifically on the podcast, but I also look forward just to hanging out.

TALIA: Me too. Me freaking too. I also wanna hang out.

SMF: Let's hang.

TALIA: Thank you for having me. This is fun to do a podcast. As, I've told Luna before, I love to be a chatterbox.

LUNA: Hell, yeah.

TALIA: But I don't have the... the dedication, skill, and desire to start a podcast. So I love to just be a guest. That's perfect.

[laughter]

Thank you so much. You made a dream come true.

SMF: Well, we wanna be around long enough so we start having, like, repeat guests. So...

TALIA: Hell, yeah. Hell, yeah. I'm happy to come on, answer child development questions, talk about death and mourn— We didn't even talk about mourning. I love talking about mourning.

[excited crosstalk]

LUNA: Episode two!

SMF: It's happening. Part two. Yep.

TALIA: Mourning and child development.

[laughter]

SMF: Hey, you know what? I again, for another time, part of my child development, one of the most profound things was around learning about morning as I was a child. It's like one of the best things, best pieces of child development. You know, a broken

clock is right twice a day. So that was one of the correct things that happened for me.

[laughter]

SMF: But, anyway, I am going on a tangent and we're trying to close down for now, the podcast. Talia, thank you so much. Luna, as always, love doing this with you. And we'll see you all next time.

LUNA: Alright. Bye, everyone.

TALIA: Bye. Love you.

SMF: Mwah! Love you too.

TALIA: Mwahh!

[upbeat electronic synth pop]

♪♪

Chapter 22: StormMiguel and Luna Outro – We’re taking a little break!

SMF: Oh my god. That was so much fun. I love getting to connect with you and Talia in this way. I really love hearing Talia's ancestor wisdom and chisme.

LUNA: Oh my god.

SMF: So good.

LUNA: Right? Welcome to the family chisme, StormMiguel.

SMF: Aww.

LUNA: There's so much more where that came from.

SMF: I'm excited for that. Yeah. Next time you come to town, I just wanna kick it with you and Talia.

LUNA: Hell, yeah. Let's do it.

SMF (chuckling): Okay. So Luna, can you believe that this was our seventh episode of Santes? What does that mean in numerology? Seven?

LUNA: I've always been told it's a heaven number, but I also hear it's time for, like, quiet reflection.

SMF: Ahh. That makes a lot of sense, and it seems like a good moment to take pause and get introspective and shit. Gentle listeners, Luna and I have decided to take a few months off from the podcast. But rest assured, we will be back in the fall.

In the meantime, we will be dreaming and scheming about the larger Santes project and lining up some amazing podcast guests. We'll be back right around Dia de los Muertos in late October or early November, which will be our podcast one year anniversary. So that seems fitting. Also, just wanna say, Luna, it's been such a gift getting to work with you on this project.

LUNA: Thank you so much, StormMiguel. You have been, like, the best creative partner to work with, and I'm really, really excited for what's in store. Ahh! Our creative brains love it. Such a fan. Love what we're doing. SMF (mushy): Mmmhmm, me too!

LUNA: And it's just been so amazing to share these conversations with you, our listeners. We hope you have loved our guests of these episodes as much as we have.

SMF: Hit us up if you're interested in getting involved with Santes. Right now, it's just the two of us. Little ol' us, but we would love to build a production team for the podcast so that we can sustain it and keep it going. Maybe eventually take it to two times a month. Maybe eventually it could be a weekly podcast. Who knows? Right now we're tired. We could do once a month and we need to take a break. So if you want to get involved and help us out and be a part of this vibe, this energy, we would love to hear from you. So yeah. And, oh, by the way, we're also continuing to steward the Santes form for queer and trans BIPOC to share how we want to be remembered and interacted with once we become ancestors. So if you haven't already filled it out, find it at SantesProject.com and click on Santes Form for QTBIPOC.

LUNA: Yep. And when you're done filling out the form, let us know what you all think of this episode by commenting on our Instagram page @SantesProject. And also feel free to slide in our DMs. We'd love to chat with you. We'd love to build out our community, and we appreciate you all listening.

SMF: So much. Thank you. Thank you, Luna. Thank you, listeners. We will be back. We promise we will see you on the other side.

LUNA: And this one too.

[introspective instrumental guitar]

Chapter 23: End Credits

SMF: Santes was written and produced by Luna Merbruja and StormMiguel Florez. Editing and theme music by StormMiguel Florez. ♪♪

[acoustic guitar ends with a solemn strum]

END