

# Life is Blood

a *Warrior* (2019) fanfic

by Rodo

THE FIRST THING that went was her sense of sight. Rosalita Vega hadn't closed them, but the faces of Ah Sahn and Marisol vanished behind an impenetrable darkness. She could still feel their hands, until that went too. The last thing she heard was her sister's sobbing. But even in her last moment of consciousness, she could smell the dusty earth she had longed for most of her life. All she could sense was home, and she took comfort in it while she died.

Only she didn't die. When she awoke, every breath was pain. In fact, it was the pain that woke her, and the pain that didn't make her doubt for even one moment that she was still alive. It radiated from her lower left whenever she took a breath, so she tried to flatten her breathing, but to no avail – one wrong move, and her eyes flew open with a wordless cry. Above her hovered an unfamiliar face. Then a small bottle was tipped against her lips and Rosalita swallowed on instinct. Laudanum. The knowledge calmed her before the opium did, and she slipped back into oblivion soon enough. Just before, she noticed the smell again, the smell of home.

Rosalita didn't know how long it took for her to come around for longer than a few moments, but when she did, it was in the morning – she knew instinctively that it was morning, even though the gauzy curtains didn't allow her to see outside. Maybe it was the smell again, or the vague memory of sounds that had ingrained themselves in her a long time ago. Next to the bed sat Marisol, staring at the wall.

“Marisol,” Rosalita croaked. Her sister's attention focused on her instantly.

“You’re finally awake,” Marisol whispered. “No, don’t try to move,” she added when Rosalita tried to sit up. “The wound hasn’t healed enough yet.”

Rosalita had realized as much when she had flexed her back muscles, so she laid back and looked at her sister, who still stared at her as if she couldn’t quite believe that Rosalita existed.

“Is it very bad?” she asked. It must be. She had been so sure she’d die.

Marisol took Rosalita’s hand in hers, then smiled crookedly. “It could have been worse,” she explained. “The bullet is still in your body. The doctor said it would be too dangerous to remove it. But you didn’t bleed out, and you didn’t get an infection.”

So it had been bad. “How long?”

Marisol took a deep breath. “Two weeks.”

That surprised Rosalita. In her trade, she’d seen her fair share of wounds, even the odd bullet wound. People either lived or died within a week. But she’d hovered between both for weeks. Marisol must have been out of her mind with worry.

“Don’t worry,” her sister said, squeezing her hand a little. “I have everything taken care of. Just focus on getting better.”

“Ah Sahm?”

“Back in San Francisco. He left after your funeral.”

“Funeral?”

At that, Marisol grinned, as if all those years of hardships finally fell off her shoulders. “Later,” she promised. “Now, it’s time for you to take your medicine.”

As it turned out, Rosalita Vega was dead. While she’d been lying in a backroom of the local doctor’s home, fighting for her life, her sister had had an idea. She’d blamed Rosalita for the murder she had actually committed, and since the only other witnesses who were still alive were Ah Sahm and Marisol, nobody could contradict her when she said that Ah Sahm and his friends had had no part in it. When the marshals finally arrived, there was a fresh grave next to her parents’, and Marisol had some of the servants swear that it was her body in the grave, not Smits’. Most of the servants were Mexicans just like they were, and they had hated Rooker almost as much as Rosalita and Marisol.

Later, when she was able to walk again without being in too much pain, Marisol took her to her grave. There was a headstone now, making her “death” strangely real. Rosalita Vega was dead. Her boat was probably owned by someone else by now. For a moment, she

wondered where Ah Sahm would fight now, and whether he was getting himself into more trouble than he could handle. A part of her longed for him, wished that he had stayed, but it was a faint twinge compared to the contentment she felt when she walked back to town, arm in arm with her sister, who wore mourning and looked like the merriest widow the world had ever seen. The dusty dirt under their feet, the children playing, the adults going about their work... in barely any time, the town was doing its best to forget Rooker. It was home again.

“I’ll need a new name,” Rosalita said.

Marisol nodded in agreement. “The town does too, I think.”

And finally, after a brief pause, Rosalita asked. “What do you think mamá and papá would think?”

Marisol sighed. “I think they would be glad to see us home.”

Rosalita agreed. But what they would think about their daughter becoming a murderer (not that she regretted it one bit – she didn’t) or about the years of hardship they had endured, she couldn’t fathom. Maybe it was because she wasn’t a parent. She had never even thought about becoming one before. Her life had been her mission, her’s and Marisol’s. Her family had bled for this earth, her parents, Rosalita, and Marisol too, in a less literal way. But it was home, it always had been and always would be and in the end, it had all been worth it.

*Fin*