

We're Not Done

A 10-Minute Systemic Tragedy

Written by Conrad A. Panganiban

Synopsis:

Papers, procedures, and power collide at St. Louis Children's Hospital when a routine citizenship verification becomes a life-or-death standoff. Alexandra Perez, a Filipino American healthcare specialist, finds herself not only blocked by a glitch in the Department of Homeland Security database, but also by Susan O'Brien, a dedicated DHS officer and the aunt of Alexandra's patient.

As the clock runs out on a vital medical procedure, Susan's oath to protect the country's borders clashes with Alexandra's mission to save a child's life. *We're Not Done* is a searing look at how bureaucracy erodes compassion, forcing two women to decide which "duty" matters most when the system is designed to fail.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Alexandra Perez: 32-year-old Filipino American. Female. A pediatric cardiac perfusionist working at St. Louis Children's Hospital.

Susan O'Brien: 26-year-old. Female. Caucasian. Special Agent for the Homeland Security Investigations Unit under ICE.

P.A. Announcer: Non-seen role. The voice of an overhead Public Announcement Speaker typically heard during emergencies in a hospital.

Casting Note: Please ensure that the opportunity to play the character of Alexandra Perez is by a Filipino American, Latinx American, Asian American or an actor of color.

SETTING

Inside a Hospital Administrator's Office at St. Louis Children's Hospital with a round table between two chairs (which may or may not ever be sat in). The time is now.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

Dialogue written in italics are *suggestions* on what can be said with emphasis. For example,

ALEXANDRA

I'm brown. I'm *expected* to be ready.

Dialogue appearing side-by-side is meant to be spoken at the same time:

SUSAN
-doing my job.

ALEXANDRA
Doing your job.

Lights up in a hospital administrator's room. Inside the room stands ALEXANDRA PEREZ, a 32-year-old Filipino American pediatric cardiac perfusionist dressed in hospital scrubs. Opposite her is SUSAN O'BRIEN, a 26-year-old, Special Agent for Homeland Security Investigations (under ICE) in business attire with a badge on her belt while holding Alexandra's passport.

Between them is a round table with various documents, I.D. cards, and a cellphone on it.

ALEXANDRA

You can't deport me when you're the one holding my passport.

SUSAN

How would I know that this is even yours?

ALEXANDRA

Because that's my face on it.

ALEXANDRA scowls at Susan.

SUSAN

(looking at the passport)

This face isn't as mean looking. But, my job's to verify your identity first.

ALEXANDRA

Then you should be looking at the judge's court order saying that it *is* me. It's right there.

ALEXANDRA reaches for a paper, which
SUSAN stops.

SUSAN

I got it.

(Susan picks up the document and
compares it to her iPad.)

I'm not seeing this in the DHS Database.

ALEXANDRA

Even though you're holding it in your hands.

SUSAN

Don't get smart with me.

ALEXANDRA

Honestly, what are you going to believe? Something staring right at you or what's in a computer system thousands of miles away.

SUSAN

If it's not in the system, then we're not able to verify its validity.

ALEXANDRA

How about me? Can you verify that it's me talking to you? If you can't see me, then please check out the verified letter from the Social Security Administration, which is next to the verified Police Report which is next to the verified Identity Theft Report.

SUSAN

It's a little suspicious that you'd have all of these documents ready.

ALEXANDRA

I'm brown. I'm *expected* to be ready.

SUSAN

What's that supposed to mean?

ALEXANDRA

It means the same reason why you're asking for my papers even though I was born here.

SUSAN

I'm just doing my job.

ALEXANDRA's pager starts to beep. She looks at it.

ALEXANDRA

And I have to do mine. Now, if you don't mind.

ALEXANDRA tries to exit past Susan.

SUSAN blocks her.

SUSAN

I'm sorry, we're not done here yet.

ALEXANDRA

Are you *sorry* or are you *detaining* me?

SUSAN

Not detaining. I'm questioning you.

ALEXANDRA

And I've already answered all your questions. My documents are all here: my passport, my licenses, my birth certificate—

SUSAN

Why does your nursing license say it's from Illinois?

ALEXANDRA

Because I was a nurse in Chicago where I got my Masters from Rush University, which you'll see a copy of that right there, before working as a Pediatric Cardiac Perfusionist here.

SUSAN

St. Louis Children's Hospital requires you to have your CCP Accreditation for this state too.

ALEXANDRA moves her hospital badge on the table to point to another card.

ALEXANDRA

It's right there! Is that in your database, too?

SUSAN

It is, but our system also says that you lived in Austin, Minnesota from 2018 through 2022. The same time frame that you claim to be living in Chicago. Does Hormel Foods sound familiar to you?

ALEXANDRA

Other than they make my dad's favorite corned beef, it also the place where the person who *stole my identity* worked at. If you just look at the Social Security letter—

SUSAN's messaging notification rings from her phone.

SUSAN

Excuse me.

ALEXANDRA

Why don't you take care of that and I'll be back—

ALEXANDRA starts to move out the door again.

SUSAN

Not until you've proved that you are who you say you are.

SUSAN looks at her phone, presses a button, and places the phone in her pocket.

ALEXANDRA

Everything in front of you proves it!

SUSAN

Can you prove who Ruben Perez is?

ALEXANDRA

If he was here, he would prove it himself.

SUSAN

(reading her iPad)

Our database says that he was deported in 2016.

ALEXANDRA

I'm sure it makes you so happy to break up families.

SUSAN

I'm just-

SUSAN

-doing my job.

ALEXANDRA

Doing your job.

ALEXANDRA

Is being heartless also a part of your job?

SUSAN

Having a heart has nothing to do with the Law. It's about doing what's right.

ALEXANDRA

And you have no right bringing up my dad or his situation.

SUSAN

It is, if you are also here illegally.

Alexandra's pager goes off again. She looks at it.

ALEXANDRA

And legally, I *am* here to do my job and that's to save children. If you're going to arrest me, arrest me, but I have to go.

ALEXANDRA moves to exit. SUSAN blocks her.

SUSAN

I'm afraid I can't let you leave.

ALEXANDRA

You're preventing me from saving a life.

SUSAN

That's not what I'm doing.

ALEXANDRA

Not allowing me to pass is *exactly* what you're doing.

Susan's mobile ringer goes off. She holds up her hand to Alexandra keeping her in place.

SUSAN

(answering her cellphone)

Hey, Jess. This isn't a good time—
What? What about Emily?

Alexandra's pager goes off again. She checks it and again begins to move where SUSAN stops her.

ALEXANDRA

I'm sure we can do this later, but I have to go!

SUSAN

Hold on! You're not going anywhere!

ALEXANDRA

A LITTLE GIRL IS DYING!

SUSAN

How do I know that you're not using her as an excuse to escape?

Hospital Chimes are heard on an Overhead Public Announcement (P.A.) Speaker.

P.A. ANNOUNCER

Alexandra Perez to Pediatric ICU STAT. Alexandra Perez, PICU STAT.

ALEXANDRA

Does that sound like an excuse?!

ALEXANDRA reaches for her phone on the table and starts to dial.

ALEXANDRA (CONT.)

(on phone)

Hey Maggie. It's Alex. You need to get Stewart to Room 314. He's the only one who can cover for me.

SUSAN

(on phone)

Hold on, Jess! What?—

ALEXANDRA

(on phone)

The ICE Agent's not letting me leave—

SUSAN

(on phone)

What are you doing here?—

ALEXANDRA

(on phone)

I did tell her it's an emergency! Just get Stewart and tell her mother that I'll be there.—

SUSAN

(on phone)

Waiting for who? Who's Alex?—

ALEXANDRA

(looking at Susan)

What do you need from me now?!

SUSAN

(looks at Alexandra, but listening to her phone)

Alexandra Perez is Emily's ECMO Specialist?

ALEXANDRA

(looking at Susan while on phone)

Heart failure. Eight years old. So, you're the famous Aunt Sue? The cop her mom tells Emily to be brave as?

(beat)

I promise, I'll do everything I can to save her.

ALEXANDRA again starts to leave.

SUSAN hangs up her phone and blocks ALEXANDRA from leaving again.

SUSAN

We're not done.

ALEXANDRA

Are you serious!?

SUSAN

I took an oath to protect this country. And part of that is by verifying your identity first.

ALEXANDRA

My identity? Or humanity?... You're right, *we're* not done.

ALEXANDRA with her phone still in hand, presses a couple of buttons and holds it up to herself before turning it to Susan.

ALEXANDRA (CONT.)

My name is Alexandra Perez. I'm a Pediatric Cardiac Perfusionist at St. Louis Children's Hospital. And this is ICE Agent Susan O'Brien. She is keeping me from saving a patient's life.

Hospital Chimes are heard on an Overhead Public Announcement (P.A.) Speaker.

P.A. ANNOUNCER

Alexandra Perez to Pediatric ICU STAT. Alexandra Perez, PICU STAT.

ALEXANDRA

Did you hear that? This isn't a drill. *This* is what's happening in America right now.

SUSAN
(SUSAN tries to grab Alexandra's
phone.)

Put that down.

ALEXANDRA
(ALEXANDRA steps back)

Or what? Are you going to shoot me too?

SUSAN
You are keeping me from doing my job.

ALEXANDRA
And you are preventing me from doing mine.

SUSAN
This is my last warning to stop recording me.

ALEXANDRA
This isn't a recording. Say Hi to TikTok where...
(Alexandra looks at the phone screen)
Two... no, three thousand viewers are watching this injustice being carried out live. And based on these comments, they're not very happy with you right now.

SUSAN
Fine. Go. You're free to leave.

ALEXANDRA doesn't move.

SUSAN (CONT.)
What are you waiting for?!

ALEXANDRA
No.

SUSAN
No?!

ALEXANDRA
How do I know that after I do my job, that I won't get disappeared to the Saint Genevieve County Detention Center? Just like what you did to my father.

SUSAN
That wasn't me and I won't do that.

ALEXANDRA

Then clear my name first. There's your iPad. There's your DHS Database.

SUSAN

I don't have the power to do that.

ALEXANDRA

You've made it very clear that your power to verify my citizenship trumps my power to save a life. So, use that power.

SUSAN

And that's why I'm letting you leave.

ALEXANDRA

Then clear my name!

SUSAN

I can't!

ALEXANDRA

Can't... or won't?

Alexandra's pager goes off.

Susan's phone ringer goes off.

Both devices get louder and louder to morph into distressed calls and protests from various videos of cries for help by people getting detained.

Blackout.

END OF PLAY