

Blackwell Ops 15: Soleada Garcia

A Time-Travel Thriller

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To give the reader more of a sample, the front matter appears at the end.

Part One: The 21st Century

Prologue: TJ Blackwell

Present Day

After I talked with Charlie Task on the phone, I had an uneasy feeling in my gut. Charlie agreed to come see me in a couple of weeks, exactly as I expected and wanted him to. But— I don't know. Something didn't feel quite right.

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Chapter 1: Solana Garcia

My name is Solana Garcia de Mendoza. My friends call me Soleada, which translates to Sunny in English. Those who are less familiar with me call me Solana or, more often, señorita Garcia. I am twenty-six years of age and have no plans to marry. What I do for a living is not conducive to marriage, or even to having a steady partner.

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Chapter 2: A Piecemeal Assignment

The tone had sounded sooner than I expected. I got up and carried the bowl back to the cabinet, then went into my bedroom to retrieve the device. I sat on the side of the bed and pressed the On button.

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Part Two: The 1950s

Chapter 3: Victoria Worth

1950s, Two Months Before the Present Day

After the lovely little señorito in that quaint little village handed me his drawing, I am afraid I embarrassed him. I didn't mean to, of course. I might have known little boys in Mexico think of themselves as men at least as much as little boys do up in Savannah. And the deeper you go into the country up there, the worse it gets.

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Chapter 4: Juan Segura

1950s, Two Weeks Before the Present Day

I did as my bro Charlie asked, not that I had a lot of choice.

For one thing, he was pointing that Beretta—a Beretta I had given him myself only an hour earlier—at my chest. Like most of us, Charlie doesn't know everything. But unlike many, he has a work ethic and true determination. Plus he knows basic biology, and specifically where the heart is located within the chest. I had no doubt if I did not do as he directed, he would kill me.

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Chapter 5: Charlie Task

1950s, A Few Days Later

When I stepped over the north line of stones, Francisco Silva's voice overlaid the sound of the idling bus engine. He spoke English, but with a thick Mexican accent. "Ah, you are back, señor!"

I turned around. "Hola, Francisco."

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Chapter 6: Charlie Task and Juan-Carlos Salazár

1950s, The Next Day

A little after noon on the second day, Francisco pulled the bus next to the boardwalk and stopped in front of the cantina in Agua Rocosa. On the previous trip, he had stopped some distance farther up the

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Part Three: From the 21st Century to the 1950s

Chapter 7: Solana Garcia—The Approach

Present Day

With my bag already packed, I opened my computer to look for photos of Charlie Task. Only one photo came up.

It was of a male, and it was only a bust. In that one his shoulders were broad, but his face was thin,
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Chapter 8: The Trip South, Day One and Two

Solana Garcia

The bus was only about one-half full, but I dropped into the seat behind the driver's seat and set my bag on the floor.

As señor Silva took his seat and pulled the lever to close the accordion door, he said, "The other seats are more comfortable, señorita Garcia."
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Chapter 9: Day Two—Juan-Carlos Salazar

I was at the center of the bar, washing and rinsing the glasses and mugs. A customer called to me and waved, then left with his friends after they had dined on Ofelia's chili and tortillas.

As the one who had waved to me held the door open for his friends, through the opening I heard and
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But then, he knows that as well as I do. Someday, perhaps, when the king resumes his seat on the hill, but not today.

I went back to the center of the bar and resumed washing and rinsing glasses and mugs. And I hoped the woman would not find señor Task.

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Solana Garcia

As I suspected, I did not find señor Task in Agua Rocosa. Most of the men I asked on the boardwalk simply shook their head, stepped past me, and kept walking.

I did glimpse a norteamericano at the dock. Only from the back at first. He was standing at the edge
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Chapter 10: Day Two Continues

Solana Garcia

When I stepped up into the bus, the accordion door closed immediately behind me. Francisco pulled away before I had even regained my seat. I grabbed for the silver pole.

He glanced around. "Sorry, señorita. Sometimes the bus leaps. I will be more careful next time."

I sat down but leaned forward. Quietly, I said, "It is all right. Sorry I made you wait. I spent too long on the dock." I smiled. "Agua Rocosa is such a pretty village."

The smile was wasted. He did not look around, but only nodded. He seemed tense.

"How far to the next village?"

"Only several miles. And then only one more village before we stay overnight in San Miguel."

"Ah." I sat back, then opened the bottom of the window so I could feel the breeze. As the man on the dock had said, it was a beautiful day.

He was a very handsome man. Nothing at all like the photo I had seen of Charlie Task.

I tried to enjoy the scenery.

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Francisco Silva

When the woman said she had spent too long on the dock, I had to force myself to remain calm.

But there had been no gunshots or other commotion, at least that I heard. So either señor Task was not there or she had not recognized him. I would have to cling to that thought until I returned on Wednesday. If something bad had happened, Juan-Carlos would know, and he would tell me.

I was relieved. I tried not to let the woman see that either.

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Juan-Carlos Salazár

After Francisco left the cantina, his heart in his hands, I remained behind the bar.

Only two customers remained. They sat on consecutive stools toward the far end of the bar. They were sharing a bottle of whiskey and talking quietly about the character of their wives in particular and the less-desirable traits of women in general.

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Chapter 11: Day Two Ends—Solana Garcia

Neither Triunfo nor the next little village, Reyes, nor even San Miguel—which is a destination for religious pilgrims because of a supposed miracle that had happened there long ago—felt as good to me as Agua Rocosa had felt. Probably from now into the future I would compare all small towns and villages with Agua Rocosa. Maybe even the cities.

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Chapter 13: Day Three Begins

Solana Garcia

In San Miguel I was well-rested and on the bus a little early the following morning. Still, it was already half-full. I reclaimed my seat directly behind the driver.

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Chapter 14: Juan Segura

When the bus slowed to a stop along the curb in San Pablo, the woman—Solana—was asleep across the aisle from me.

I, on the other hand, did not sleep at all. She had asked about my friend. Although I kept my eyes closed, I could not sleep after that. Instead, I tried to figure out why she had asked.