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SF PERUSALS

Lydia

by Octavio Solis

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
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LYDIA was originally commissioned, workshopped and produced at the
Denver Center Theatre Company,
A division of the Denver Center for the Performing Arts
Kent Thompson, Artistic Director

LYDIA was first produced by the Denver Center Theater Company (Kent Thompson, artistic director) at the Space Theatre in Denver, Colorado on January 24, 2008. The performance was directed by Juliette Carrillo, with sets by Antje Ellermann, costumes by Christal Weatherly, lighting by Charles R. MacLeod, original music by Chris Webb, sound by Kimberly Fuhr, and fight direction by Geoffrey Kent. The production stage manager was Lyle Raper. The cast was as follows:

CECI . . . . . Onahoua Rodriguez
MISHA . . . . . Carlo Alban
RENE . . . . . Rene Millan
ROSA . . . . . Catalina Maynard
CLAUDIO . . . . . Ricardo Guitierrez
ALVARO . . . . . Christian Barillas
LYDIA . . . . . Stephanie Beatriz

CHARACTERS

CECI – the sister, 17
MISHA – the younger brother, 16
RENE – the older brother, 19
ROSA – the mother
CLAUDIO – the father
ALVARO – the cousin, 22
LYDIA – the maid

TIME

The early 70s, in winter.

PLACE

The living room of Flores home in El Paso, Texas. Early 70s furnishings. A sofa with a coffee table, its surface scratched and stained. An old La-Z-Boy facing the TV. A stereo console with a set of headphones attached. A door to the front porch. A darkened hallway to the bedrooms. An entry to the kitchen. In the foreground by the TV, a small mattress with pillows and stuffed animals.

CECI'S CONDITION

For most of the play, Ceci lies on her mattress locked in her body in a semi-vegetative state. Her body's muscles rigid, her hands curled and fingers knuckled, she undergoes degrees of spasticity which come and go in ways that score the play. Her voice is fallen back into her throat and her eyes unfocussed, her powers of expression are utterly buried in a neurological prison.

ACT 1

*(**AT RISE:** The living room of the Flores home.* **CLAUDIO** *slumps on the La-Z-Boy watching TV. Ironing his white shirts and pants is his wife* **ROSA**. *In her mattress lies* **CECI** *in her pajamas, a long thin scar rising from her eyebrow and disappearing into her hairline. She lies very still, her eyes on the flickering light of the TV. After a moment, an awareness dawns on her and she starts.)*

CECI. She touched me and I flew. Touched my fault-line. And I flew. With her hand, laid holy water on my scar. And I flew on wings of glass. My body *como una* bird racing with the moon on a breath of air. Flying out of range of pain, purpose, this thing we call *Vida,* soaring into the blueness of memory, closing my eyes for the thud to come.

(She closes her eyes. Opens them.)

I wake to this. Life inside my life. No wings, no glass, no moon. Only *Loteria* which means Bingo which means chance which means play. So I play the cards into view.

(She looks down at her arms and legs curling under her as a light falls on her mattress.)

A card with me printed, *La Vida Cecilia*, rag doll thumbing the stitching in her head, forming the words in her vegetable tongue, what happened to me, *porque no puedo* remember, I must remember.

(The light bears down on **CLAUDIO**.*)*

There. A card called El Short-Order Cook. Broken man drowning in old *rancheras* and TV. I hear *voces antiguas* calling his name, Claudio, my poor Papi Claudio in your personal winter, drowning out the will of *Mami* saying come with me across the *rio*, give up that

lie you thought was you and live mine, live American with me. So the dish ran away with the greasy spoon and a girl jumped over the moon but you don't spikka the English, only the word No, which in Spanish means No, No at work in bed in your dreams in your *cantos perdidos.*

(The light shifts to **ROSA***, ironing clothes and muttering silent prayers to herself.)*

CECI. *(cont.) Aqui*, the Mami Rosa card, dressmaker of flying girls, sewing up my unfinished seams; a beautiful woman losing beauty by the day, see it gathered at her feet like old panty hose, *ay Ama!* You were Rosie Flores, clerk for the County, making your life here, Anglo words like lazy moths tumbling out your mouth, you were *toda* proud, but now. You're Rosa Reborn holy-rolling me to sleep with the prayers of your new church. Your prayers for us to be family which hasn't really been family since they stopped putting cork in soda bottle caps.

*(***RENE** *comes in from down the hall. He goes to the front door and retrieves the day's mail. He goes over it carefully.)*

CECI. *Ayy.* My wild card, *El Carnal Mayor*, Rene, my elder volcano, bustin' noses just by looking at 'em, both hands fulla middle fingers for the whole world, checking every day for hate mail, but always *nada.* Cars go by and honk *Puto-Puto-Rene-Puto!* but cowards, my brother is invincible.

(He throws the mail on the coffee table and stares at **CECI***.)*

The army recruiter don't want you, huh, not like those other flag-draped *Chicanos* on our block, even those that come back alive look like they gave up the ghost, that's kinda what you want, that damned ghost taken out of you. 'Cause you're all messed up with some hard-core macho shit nobody gets.

(He finally looks at **CECI** *and slowly comes to her.)*

CECI. *(cont.) Andale*, plant a kiss on my head like that saint in church with the chipped nose –

(He kisses her and leaves out the front door.)

dry-kiss and move away. *Simon*, *carnal*, Before the disgust starts to show.

*(***MISHA** *enters with his books. Flops down on the couch.)*

Misha? *¿Eres tu?* Card with the inscription Little Shit. *Carnalito* Misha bringing to my *nariz* fragrances of the street the school his body, yes, the musk of you coming of age, coming into yourself, coming all *over* yourself. I hear your little secrets like crystals of salt in the pockets of your eyes, sad-boy Misha, sad for me, for us, the things that darken the day, King and Kennedy, the killings of students, the killings of Nam –

Mi familia. All sad and wounded cause of somethin'. Somethin' that broke. I gotta read my scar for the story, it's in there, I know it! *¡Aguas!* I see her. The girl that touched me…her face in a mirror looking back… showing me her own sccc – ggghn mmm her- own – ssccrrmmgfmhm...

MISHA. Mom, what's wrong with Ceci?

ROSA. *Alomejor* she went poo-poo.

MISHA. She doesn't smell like it.

ROSA. Maybe she wants her therapy. Could you do it, Misha? I'm pressing your father's shirts for work.

*(***MISHA** *sits by* **CECI** *and runs her through a repertoire of delicate physical exercises, shifting her position from time to time.)*

MISHA. *Orale, carnala.* Let's get the blood pumping.

ROSA. *Con cariño*, okay?

MISHA. Always gentle, Ama. Hey Dad.

ROSA. He can't hear you.

MISHA. Dad!

ROSA. *¿Que te dije?* What are you doing home so early? Don't you have practice?

MISHA. *(as he rubs* **CECI***'s arms and hands)* I dropped out of the squad. Football ain't my game. You hear that, Dad? I'm a wuss and I don't understand what all those little circles and arrows mean. I can't hear the quarterback in the huddle. He grunts uhh twenty-uhhh on huuu – uuhh! But I go on huuu and Coach yells at me. At the scrimmage today, a touchdown got called back on account of I was off-sides. I told them it wasn't my fault. I told them we need enunciation in the huddle. In the showers they all towel-whipped my bare *ass.*

ROSA. Watch your language.

MISHA. So you know what, Dad, I quit. I turned in my equipment and walked. I'm sorry, Mom. I just feel I'm needed here.

ROSA. It's okay, *mijo.* I never liked you playing with those *brutos.* You're my special boy. That's why I named you Misha.

MISHA. You named me Miguel.

ROSA. But after I saw that Baryshnikov on TV, I started calling you Misha.

MISHA. I don't even like ballet.

ROSA. The point is a brown boy named Misha in El Paso is special. I got my hopes pinned all over you like dollars.

MISHA. Is there anything to eat?

ROSA. There's *albondigas* on the stove.

MISHA. Meatballs? From last night?

ROSA. They're a little dried out, but still good. You want some?

MISHA. *¿Jefita?*

*(***ROSA** *looks. He opens* **CECI***'s arms wide.)*

I *wuv* you this much.

ROSA. *Sangron.*

(She laughs and goes into the kitchen.)

CECI. Huuh onhuu-uuh.

MISHA. You sound like my quarterback.

CECI. Shhghgm.

MISHA. The truth is when I'm on the field, I don't pay attention. I watch the yellowing grass and the zip-zip-zip of the sprinklers and the clouds making ponytails in the sky.

CECI. Uhh. Ghhh. Gngngm.

MISHA. Mom. There's something different about her.

ROSA. What?

MISHA. I dunno. Something. Are you still giving her her meds?

ROSA. *(returning with a bowl of meatballs)* Of course!

MISHA. 'Cause I know you don't sometimes, Mom. I know how you "forget" sometimes.

ROSA. I don't forget, never!

MISHA. Where are they? Where're the pills? How much did you give her today? How much, Mom!

ROSA. *Oye,* it's not drugs she needs but faith! Faith! *Mijo,* the doctors said it was over, remember, she's a vegetable *para siempre,* they said. What are these pills supposed to do then?

MISHA. Give me the pills. Or I'm telling him.

ROSA. Tell him. *Andale. Dile todo.*

*(***MISHA** *turns to his father.* **CLAUDIO** *takes off his headphones and stands.)*

CLAUDIO. *Que paso, Miguel. ¿Como te va en el* football?

MISHA. Good.

ROSA. I'm almost done here. Just a few more shirts.

CLAUDIO. *¿Como?*

ROSA. *Nomas estas camisas, Viejo.*

CLAUDIO. *Miguel, una cerveza.*

*(***MISHA** *nods gravely as* **CLAUDIO** *goes down the hall to the bathroom.)*

ROSA. Praise God.

MISHA. I wish you'd keep your religion to yourself. It's not doing Ceci any good.

ROSA. *Oyeme*, Misha. When your sister got hurt, I prayed to the *Virgen Santa, la Patronesa de todos los Mexicanos. La Virgen de Guadalupe* herself. And she failed me. That's when I knew. Us *Catolicos*, we worship the wrong things. Idols can't make miracles. Only God. So I go to a church with no other gods but God.

MISHA. Has that done her any good? Has it?

ROSA. Today. While your father was sleeping. You know what I did? I took her to Our Church of the Nazarene.

MISHA. What? You took her to those holy rollers? Are you kidding me?

ROSA. Misha, she loved it. All the peoples adored her. And Pastor Lujan himself baptized her.

MISHA. What?

ROSA. He put her in this big glass tub and laid his hand on her, *mijo*. Right here where her precious brains came out, and he prayed to God for her soul. He dipped her backward in the water and her face came alive! Eyes bright as nickels and her mouth wide open, taking in the light of heaven! Pastor Lujan said very clearly: Cecilia, prepare you! Your redemption is knocking on your head. And he took her pills and poured them all into the same tub.

MISHA. Oh no…

ROSA. He said we don't need them anymore! He said it's evil in our hearts that makes her sick.

MISHA. No more saving her soul. I mean it. Leave her soul alone.

ROSA. Don't you lecture me on how I care for *mija*! Who stays home with her day and night, changing her when she needs to go, making her special food, rubbing her joints *y todo*? Who?

MISHA. I help.

ROSA. *Por favor,* Misha. You're in school all day.

MISHA. I know.

ROSA. Well, I know more. Nothing happens without me in this house. I see to our needs. That's how come we're getting a maid.

MISHA. A maid? Like to clean the house?

ROSA. To clean the house, to cook the food, to watch your sister. I asked your Tia Mirna, and she said her maid knows this *chavala* from *Jalisco* who just came over and she needs work and she's cheap.

MISHA. What about you?

ROSA. They called from the county office and told me my old position is available if I want it. Well, I want it. I'm tired of staying in this house all day. Plus we need the money.

MISHA. Is she legal?

ROSA. I don't ask about such things. I just ask her to come tomorrow.

MISHA. Tomorrow? Dammit, why didn't you tell me?

ROSA. I did. Watch your tongue. Last week. I mentioned it at dinner. But you never listen. You and your brother only hear what you want to hear.

*(***CLAUDIO** *returns from the bathroom.)*

CLAUDIO. *¿Y mi cerveza?*

MISHA. Mom *dice que* we're gonna have a maid, *una criada.*

CLAUDIO. *Asi lo quiere.*

MISHA. *¿Y tu, que quieres?*

CLAUDIO. *Mi pinche cerveza.*

(He sits and puts his headphones on again. **MISHA** *watches him.)*

ROSA. You heard him.

MISHA. What am I, his *mesero*?

(She glares at him. **MISHA** *goes off to the kitchen and reenters with a can of beer.)*

Ask yourself, Mom. Do we really want this? Do we really want a stranger coming into our house?

ROSA. What's wrong with our house? What don't you want her to see? What are you ashamed of, Misha? Your sister?

MISHA. Not her.

ROSA. I promise you. When she comes here, she will find a close, caring Mexican *familia* trying to make it in this blessed country.

CLAUDIO. *(impatiently waiting for his beer)* Miguel…

ROSA. Get over your *verguenza* and give your father his beer.

MISHA. Mom…

ROSA. Do it, Miguel.

*(***CLAUDIO** *suddenly gets up, takes the beer and slaps* **MISHA** *across the face.)*

CLAUDIO. *Tres veces te lo pedí, cabrón. Tres veces.*

(He sits, rips off the pull-tab and drops it on the floor by **CECI**. *He watches TV as* **MISHA***'s eyes well with tears.)*

ROSA. *¿Que te dije?* Pick up that pull-tab before your sister cuts herself with it.

*(***CECI** *turns to speak to* **MISHA** *as he picks up the pull-tab, his cheek reddening with the heat of the blow, and goes to his room.)*

CECI. It's okay, *carnalito*. I hear your face clapping against the way things are, and I know it hurts, 'cause I feel my face smashing against the mad will of God. I remember that, Misha, like I remember we can't let the swelling block us off, we gotta believe that it passes, bro, it passes. Sure as day passes into night.

(Suddenly, night. **CECI** *lying on her mattress. Headlights swivel across the window drapes as* **RENE** *comes in the front door. He stands and waits in the dark until his breath is even. He watches* **CECI** *with a mix of fear and contempt.* **MISHA** *enters.)*

RENE. Any mail?

MISHA. No. *(notices his bloody knuckles) Vato.*

RENE. It's nothing.

MISHA. Nothing. You're bleeding.

RENE. What's a little *molé*. You should see them.

MISHA. Are you drunk too?

RENE. It helps, don't you think? So you and me and some Buds?

MISHA. We're out. And it's too late to hit the Circle K.

RENE. I don't need no shit Circle fucking K, goddammit. I need me some *pisto. Watcha.*

(He reaches under the cushions of the La-Z-Boy. A fifth of Southern Comfort.)

MISHA. Whoa.

RENE. Papa's gotta brand new bag.

MISHA. How'd you know it was there?

RENE. *Ese*, he sits in that chair all *pinchi* day like he's incubating a fucking *huevo. Andale, tragito!*

(They slug some down.)

Nothing like a little *pisto* to smooth out the rough edges of a bad night.

MISHA. Was it a bad night?

RENE. Hell no, it was a good night. We kicked some ass.

MISHA. What did you do?

RENE. We kicked some ass.

MISHA. How about a little more detail, *ese*?

RENE. We kicked some fucking ass.

MISHA. Rene.

RENE. You're too young. You don't get the vibe. This is me, Joey and Sergio taking on the *pinchi* world.

MISHA. Joey and Sergio? Those pussies?

RENE. *No mames, guey!* These are my *camaradas*! Besides, we need Joey's van for the ceremony.

MISHA. What ceremony?

RENE. *Pos*, first we chug back some brew for a couple hours, listen to some Sabbath, toke a little *mota* for courage. Then we think of cheerleaders and whack off a little till we're nice and hard and then we hit the road.

MISHA. And kick some ass.

RENE. Fuckin' A.

MISHA. I heard it was some *cholos* last night.

RENE. Tough little fuckers in training for prison, gang tats y *toda la madre*. We kicked their ass. *Dame.*

(He drinks. Some red and white lights flash by the window.)

¡Trucha! Get down! Down!

MISHA. Shit, Rene! Is that the cops?

RENE. Just be quiet and keep your head down.

*(***RENE** *peeks through the drapes till the lights pass.)*

MISHA. What the fuck happened? You better tell me or I'm gonna wake up Mom and tell her the cops are after you.

RENE. *Calmantes montes*, narc. I'll tell you, but only as a cautionary tale for you not to put your ass where it's likely to be kicked, *me entiendes*?

*(***MISHA** *nods.)*

We took on some GI's.

MISHA. Shit. Oh shit.

RENE. Fresh outa Ft. Bliss. We went up the mountain on Scenic Drive and pulled over by these cars. And there they were, a *gringo salado* and a couple *negros*. We just approached them like some tourists up to see the sights, you know? They offered us some beers and were really nice to us. But these *fags*, Meesh, you gotta watch out for them.

MISHA. How come.

RENE. Just 'cause I say so. Anyway, the *gringo* puts his hand on my knee so I gotta cut him with a right hook that snaps his head back. Joey and Serge lay into the others and man, it's on. We lay into these jive-turkey motherfuckers with basic-training biceps. Serge is swinging this bat on their heads and Joey's got nunchucks and blood is shootin' volcanic all over the place.

MISHA. You hit 'em with bats? What if you put 'em in the hospital with like brain damage or something?

RENE. Hey, don't talk brain damage. Not in front of her. Pay your penance, fuck.

*(***RENE** *offers the bottle and* **MISHA** *drinks.)*

MISHA. I don't get it, man. Why are you doing this shit? When are you gonna go to college or get a real job?

RENE. I gotta job.

MISHA. Car detailing at Earl Scheib? You're smarter than that.

RENE. What's the pinche point, bro? I'm gonna get drafted anyway.

MISHA. Is that what you're looking for in the mail? Your draft notice? *Ese*, your birthdate's not due in the lottery till next year.

RENE. *No mames, guey.*

MISHA. If you're so anxious about it, if you wanna kill someone, go enlist like Alvaro.

RENE. I ain't that stupid.

MISHA. Neither is he. He came back with a bronze star. Gung-ho guys like him always seem to make out okay.

RENE. Varo's too hot-shit for us now. Back three months and he still hasn't come to our *chante*.

MISHA. Mom says he's been focusing on getting some steady work.

CECI. Varo. Varo Varo Varo.

MISHA. I know this much. War keeps going like it is, I'm gonna have to go to Canada.

RENE. Canada? Why truck all the way up there, Mexico's right there, you dope!

MISHA. Well, on TV, that's where they all say they're going! Canada!

RENE. 'Cause they're white, stupid! Canada! You're a trip. What are you doing up?

MISHA. I couldn't sleep. I had this dream. Hey, you know Mom's hiring some chick to take care of Ceci?

RENE. Old news, bro.

MISHA. She's coming tomorrow to cook and do the wash. Tell you one thing, she ain't touching my clothes.

RENE. You got some stains in your *chones* you don't want her to see?

MISHA. Shut up.

RENE. Haha! Is that what you had? A wet dream?

MISHA. Cut it out. It was scary as shit. We were kids, you, me Alvaro, and Ceci, all alone in this house.

RENE. What happened?

MISHA. We were playing like we used to. We put chairs all over the living room, down the hall, covered them up with sheets and we crawled under pretending we were ants in our tunnels. We scurried from chamber to chamber, touching heads lightly, making those little tee-tee sounds in ant-language. Ceci's eyes full of joy. She had those pearl earrings she got for her *Quinceañera*. We saw her go off with this shiny key in her mouth. I think it was a key. It looked like a key. Her shadow against the sheet one second, and the next, gone. We went through the tunnels looking for her, but we couldn't find her. I wanted to call out "Ceci", but you said use ant-language. I couldn't think of the words for please come back, and I went all through the tunnel, looking for her. I woke up absolutely freaked. I came out here and saw the invisible lines of the tunnels all over the floor.

RENE. I'm sackin' out before the old man comes home. You shouldn't be dreaming shit like that, Misha.

(He returns the bottle to the cushion seam and goes.)

CECI. Gghn.

*(***MISHA** *goes to* **CECI** *and looks into her eyes. He gently pries her mouth open. He looks inside. He lets her go and then walks off to bed.)*

CECI. *(cont.)* You won't find nothin' down there but spit and the words to *Cielito Lindo*. I feel it coming around again like a Mexican yoyo, little ball up on its string and plop right into the bowl of my heart.

*(***CLAUDIO** *enters from the shadows in white shirt and trousers with his paper hat.)*

It's the night of my race with the moon. He comes in his fry-cook whites to my room, wearing that white paper hat like a general. I'm at the threshold of my *senorita*-hood, pretending to sleep, feeling his raw breath in my ear singing for the last time…

(He sings softly as he opens his hands and reveals a pair of pearl earrings.)

CLAUDIO. *De la sierra morena*
Cielito lindo vienen bajando
Un par de ojitos negros
Cielito lindo de contrabando

Ese lunar que tienes
Cielito lindo junto a la boca
No se lo des a nadie
Cielito lindo que a mí me toca

Ay ay ay ay
Canta y no llores
Porque cantando se alegran
Cielito lindo los corazones

(He gets up and slowly walks off into the darkness.)

CECI. A tear from each eye turned to pearl and laid on my pillow to make the moon jealous. Oh what is this yearning inside? What does it mean?

(The next day. **ROSA** *comes in dressed for work, fussing about, straightening up the house with a minimum of noise.)*

ROSA. *¡Ay Diosito diosito!* Where is this girl? ¡*Ya son las ocho y media! ¡Ay, que nervio!*

CECI. Ghghnn.

ROSA. Okay, okay, I'm coming! *Ya ya.* I know, I know. This house smells like a *cantina*! What were these *barbaros* up to last night, Ceci?

CECI. Gghhn.

(She goes to the kitchen and quickly returns with a bowl of oatmeal. She sits and stirs the oatmeal around with a spoon.)

ROSA. *Ta bien, mija.* I know everything in this house. I know they were drinking. I know Rene was fighting again. But what can I do? He does what he does. *¿Tienes apetito por some oatmeal? Ven.*

(She holds **CECI** *as she raises a spoonful of oatmeal.)*

Oh, *espera.* We forgot grace.

(She holds **CECI***'s hands and closes her eyes.)*

Dear Lord Jesus Holy Father, we submit this meal today for your blessing that we may not want and pray for your mercy, for You made us in order to love us and as we take this meal please forgive our sins and heal us first in our *corazones* so that the body may follow. In your most precious and holy name, Amen.

(She guides the spoon into her mouth.)

Not too hot? Good.

(She continues to talk as she feeds her.)

My pretty girl. Even the accident couldn't keep this body from growing. It's my body, Ceci, the body I used to have. The hip-huggers and halter tops I would have bought you! *¡Lastima de tu quinceañera*! I made with my own Singer the whitest most beautiful dress with lace running all the way down the sleeve to the wrist. Like a Disney *Chicana* you would look! Regal and sexy, but definitely chaste. You would save that *cosita* for after your wedding. *Pero ahora, pobre mija.* It's just a dead flower on you now.

*(***CECI** *jerks and thrusts the bowl of oatmeal all over herself and her mother.)*

CECI. GGGhhhmmm!

ROSA. *¡AY! ¡¡Cecilia Rosario! ¡Que has hecho!* Look at my dress! *¡Inutil!*

*(***CECI** *flails madly about.* **LYDIA** *appears at the door, bag in hand.)*

LYDIA. *¿Señora?*

ROSA. *Oh. Si, si, si. ¿Eres la muchacha de Jalisco?*

LYDIA. Yes.

ROSA. *¿Hablas Ingles?*

LYDIA. *Si, Señora – o sea…*Yes, I would prefer. I am learning.

ROSA. *Entonces,* come in. Come in, please.

(She enters. **CECI** *is still angrily flailing her arms.)*

CECI. Ggnnhf!

LYDIA. *Perdón, pero me perdí.* I…. I….got lost…..

CECI. GGGhn!

ROSA. It's okay, okay, I understand.

LYDIA. Let me. I help. You go wash.

*(***LYDIA** *puts down her bag and goes to* **CECI**. *She cleans her with her napkin.)*

ROSA. No, no, please, she's very hard to –

LYDIA. It's okay, I can do, she's strong, your – *como se dice* – your daughter?

ROSA. Yes. Daughter. *Mija.*

LYDIA. You go change, I take care here. *Hola-hola, chica.* What is her name?

ROSA. Ceci.

LYDIA. *Hola, Ceci. Hola.* I am Lydia. How are you? Fine? I am fine too. *Que bonita te ves con la avena en la cara.* Oatmeal is very good for the skin. Here.

(She rubs more into her face. **CECI** *freezes at the feel of the warm oatmeal.* **ROSA** *is taken aback.)*

Soon you be Miss *Tejas, que no*? Soon you be Miss *Universo.*

*(***MISHA** *enters as* **CECI** *coos softly throughout the next passage.)*

MISHA. What's going on?

CECI. nnnnn…nnnnn…

ROSA. This is our maid –

LYDIA. Lydia.

ROSA. Lydia from Jalisco.

MISHA. What's she doing to her?

ROSA. She spilled the oatmeal on me and –

LYDIA. Making her skin soft. If she won't eat, then she can be beautiful. *¿Verdad, Ceci?*

CECI. Ooooh.

ROSA. I have to go change. I'm going to be late. I'm late already.

*(***ROSA** *goes.)*

LYDIA. *Asi, asi.* Feels good, no? Feels like *chocolate.*

CECI. Gggnnh.

MISHA. Are you sure this works?

LYDIA. It worked on me, *que no*?

(She looks up at **MISHA** *for the first time.)*

What is your name?

MISHA. Miguel. But they call me Misha.

LYDIA. Misha?

MISHA. My mother's called me that since I was little.

LYDIA. It's Russian.

MISHA. I know.

LYDIA. Is there Russian in your blood?

MISHA. No. Listen, I think you really should get her cleaned up before my old man sees her like this. He's not into beauty tips n'shit –

LYDIA. Speak slower. Or speak Spanish.

MISHA. I'm not that fluent in Spanish.

LYDIA. Then speak slower, Misha.

MISHA. My. Father. Will be pissed. When he sees this. Pissed as in pissed off.

LYDIA. Ceci, are you calm now? You want to clean up and eat?

CECI. Ggnnh. Ggnnhr.

MISHA. That means yes.

LYDIA. No, it means let me wear it for another minute. Are we sharing a room?

MISHA. What?

LYDIA. Me and Ceci, are we sharing a room?

MISHA. Yeah.

LYDIA. *Bueno. Asi va ser.*

MISHA. How old are you?

LYDIA. How old are you?

MISHA. No, this is a relevant question. You can't take care of my sister if you're as young as you look.

LYDIA. Speak slower.

MISHA. I said, You, Can't, Take, Care –

LYDIA. I am as young as I look.

MISHA. Mom!

*(***ROSA** *enters wearing a new dress.)*

ROSA. Shhht! *¡Tranquilo!* Don't you know your father's still sleeping! That's another thing. My husband, *mi marido*, he works nights till 6 in the morning, then sleeps most of the day. You have to be very quiet.

MISHA. You can't be serious.

ROSA. I'm going to work. *Toma*, keys to the house. And here's my number at work. She eats only food that I've marked with her name in the fridge, *con su nombre*, okay? And she wears diapers, *pero* still she has to be changed. *Si tienes tiempo.* If you don't, I'll do it when I get home.

LYDIA. I do it.

MISHA. You're gonna leave her with her.

ROSA. My husband's name is Claudio and he keeps mostly to himself. Don't bother him. Stay away from Rene too, my oldest. This is Misha here, the only one who's not trouble.

LYDIA. I understand.

ROSA. The pay is thirty dollars a week and you'll be staying in Ceci's room at the end of the hall. *¿Que mas, que mas?* Oh, dinner is at six. I should be home right around that time. Okay?

LYDIA. Okay.

ROSA. *Gracias*, Lydia. Go to school and do your homework.

MISHA. Mom –

ROSA. *¡Que Dios te cuide, mijo!*

(She goes.)

CECI. Gghght.

LYDIA. Okay, now, she says.

MISHA. What?

LYDIA. Get the bath ready with some hot water.

MISHA. I have to go to school.

LYDIA. *Pues*, go. No problem. I'll do it.

MISHA. Besides, she had a bath yesterday.

LYDIA. She needs one today.

MISHA. Plus it might wake up my dad. You don't want to wake him when he's in a mood.

LYDIA. Speak slow –

MISHA. You don't want to wake my dad.

CECI. Ggngh, Gghn. Mmmgh.

LYDIA. *Bueno.* Bring to me a towel and some water.

*(***MISHA** *goes.)*

CECI. Gghghnnnm.

LYDIA. It's not so good when it gets cold, ah? *Ay*, Ceci, you hold my hand so tight. *¿Que te pasa?* What do you want to tell me?

*(***CECI** *guides her hand into her drawers.* **LYDIA** *discovers blood.)*

LYDIA. *(cont.)* Ah. *Sangrita.* It's your time, eh? Good. I will wash you very clean*, vas a ver.*

*(***MISHA** *returns with a towel and a bowl of water.)*

Thank you.

*(***LYDIA** *begins washing the oatmeal off* **CECI***'s face.)*

MISHA. Why are you trying to speak English?

LYDIA. It's a beautiful *idioma.*

MISHA. But why do you want to learn it? You live in Jalisco.

LYDIA. I never say that. My friend, she is from Jalisco. I come from a *pueblo* outside of that. *En los montes.*

MISHA. We don't know anything about you.

LYDIA. You know my name. Are you going to school?

MISHA. What's it to you?

LYDIA. Because if no, help me with her. Hold her while I take off the wet clothes.

MISHA. What?

LYDIA. Help.

(He kneels by her as she pulls off **CECI***'s pajamas.)*

MISHA. What do you want me to do?

LYDIA. Keep her not moving.

(She unbuttons her pajama top.)

MISHA. Wait.

LYDIA. *Andale,* Ceci.

MISHA. Wait.

CECI. Gggngnh.

*(***LYDIA** *pulls off her top exposing* **CECI***'s breasts.* **MISHA** *turns away.)*

MISHA. What are you doing! What the hell! I can't see her naked!

LYDIA. Why not?

MISHA. She's my sister! Jeez! Cover her. Please.

LYDIA. *¿Que onda?* You have not ever seen *chichis*?

*(***CECI** *begins to laugh.)*

CECI. Gggngng-ghgnh-hhhah-hhgnhah.

LYDIA. Your brother.

MISHA. It's not right. I can't see her like this.

LYDIA. Then don't look.

*(***LYDIA** *washes her quietly.* **MISHA** *slowly turns his gaze toward her.)*

Your sister has beautiful tits. But no-one to see them. Too bad.

*(***MISHA** *is transfixed. Then his gaze meets* **CECI***'s.)*

MISHA. When we were kids, at the church bazaar, she loved to play *Loteria*. There was this card called *La Sirena*, the Mermaid, and in the picture, her bare breasts rose above the water. It was her favorite card.

LYDIA. *¿Ves?* English is a pretty *idioma*. Write those pretty words down.

MISHA. I have to go.

*(***MISHA** *gathers his books and rushes out.* **LYDIA** *fishes for a blouse from her own bag and puts it on* **CECI***.)*

LYDIA. *Aver*. You will like this. *Mi abuelita* made it for me. The last time I wear, I was another girl. I sat before the *espejo* brushing my hair. Wondering: who is that looking back? Hm? Now let me see your room, *palomita*.

(She takes up her bag and goes down the hall. **CECI** *feels the fabric of this new blouse.)*

CECI. Now I remember. I'm horny! I'm just horny! I want to be wanted. I want to be touched. Not just touched, groped! I want to be fondled and strummed and tickled and…I want to be fucked. I want someone to plunge their hands into my body and grab that ball of fire burning my insides and hold it super tight till the *picante* bursts through my eyes! Ohhh! It feels so good but so BAD! How could you miss this, God? How could

you take so much of my brain and still miss the part that craves the hokey pokey? Oh, who is this girl? What is she doing to me?

*(***LYDIA** *returns in a plain dress and slippers. She has been cleaning the house. Broom and dust mop. She starts straightening up in the living room.)*

CECI. *(cont.)* Hours pass like seconds. She's fast as a bird's wing. Lydia the blur. She brings me soup but I don't remember slurping nothing but blur.

*(***CLAUDIO** *enters, gruff and disoriented after a long daylight sleep. He stands in the middle of the room and stares at* **LYDIA***, who stops and stares back.)*

LYDIA. Lydia. I am your maid. *(No reply.) ¿Cuantos años tiene su hija?*

CLAUDIO. *¿Hay café?*

LYDIA. In the kitchen. What happen to her? *(No reply.)* It's okay. She'll tell me.

(He glares at her then goes to the kitchen.)

Your father, he reminds me of someone. One of my *novios*. Always mad at something.

(He returns with a cup and turns on the stereo, puts on his headphones and sits to watch TV.)

I don't comprehend your coffee machine. If it is not good, I make again some more.

CECI. GGGhhnj.

LYDIA. If it's too strong, tell me. I like it strong, but for some peoples, coffee is not good that way.

CECI. Ggnnrhg.

LYDIA. He can't hear? Why not? I'm right here, he's right there.

CECI. Ggnhnh.

LYDIA. I see.

*(***LYDIA** *dusts the TV, blocking his view. Then she dusts the stereo console. She finds the sleeve of the record album.)*

¡Ay, mira! ¡Pedro Infante! My mother's favorite!

(She raises the volume to full. **CLAUDIO** *rips off the headphones and jumps to his feet, his eyes glaring with rage.)*

CLAUDIO. HIJO DE LA CHINGADA!

LYDIA. How come she is like this.

CLAUDIO. *Un accidente. Chocó mi Pontiac.*

LYDIA. How long ago?

CLAUDIO. *Hace dos años.*

LYDIA. *¿Hace dos años?* Was it your fault?

CLAUDIO. *¿Que qué?*

LYDIA. You walk around like it's your fault. Did you crash the car with her inside?

CLAUDIO. *No.*

LYDIA. But you blame yourself.

CLAUDIO. *¿Que quieres de mi?*

LYDIA. Only this one thing: you like the coffee or not?

(He downs the cup in one gulp and throws it violently into the kitchen, shattering it.)

CLAUDIO. *No. No me gusta.*

(He goes back to his bedroom.)

LYDIA. *Pues*…I'll have to do better.

CECI. I…I see a new card, *El Pontiac Caliente*! The Pontiac in heat! Ceci in the Pontiac mad-crazy for some loco. Si, that ball of fire inside! Daddy's little girl in hip-hugger jeans, Red Keds, Carole King hair racing toward her miracle boy!

*(***LYDIA** *is cleaning up the mess as* **RENE** *comes in, sleepy.)*

RENE. What the hell was that?

LYDIA. I broke a cup.

RENE. Are you the maid?

LYDIA. Lydia. You are the other son.

RENE. Yeah. *¿Como the fuck esta?*

LYDIA. I…what?

RENE. Is she giving you any trouble?

LYDIA. Who, Ceci? No.

RENE. Slap her upside the head if she gets out of line. Kidding! Is there *café, por favor*?

LYDIA. *Si, pero* it's not good.

RENE. What do you mean it's not good? Get me a cup.

*(***LYDIA** *goes.)*

CECI. Ggghnn.

RENE. I said I was kidding. Jesus Christ.

(He stops and looks at **CECI**.*)*

Look. Every breath, every beat of my heart, every drop of my blood, is yours. You own me. So quit giving me that look or die.

*(***LYDIA** *returns with a new cup of coffee.)*

LYDIA. Here for you.

RENE. Okay, if you're talking English on account of us trans-border Mexicans, spare me the condescension. Talk Spanish in this house if you want.

LYDIA. *Bueno, si quiere que hable en mi idioma materno, asi lo prefiero también, pero primeramente, me gustaría explicarle un poco de mis deseos en este país – .*

RENE. Look, if you want to speak English here, I'm not going to stop you. Spanish sounds kinda uppity coming from you, anyway.

LYDIA. Uppit – uppit…?

RENE. It means gimme the damn coffee.

(He takes it and sips as she watches him.)

LYDIA. You don't like?

RENE. Not bad.

LYDIA. You don't go to school?

RENE. I'm done with that shit. You know, the more I look at you, the better this coffee tastes.

LYDIA. I'm glad.

RENE. What do you think of us? You find us disgusting? I know how much you Mexicans hold us in contempt.

LYDIA. Contempt…

RENE. You hate us. You hate us for coming here, for deserting the homeland for a chunk of that goddamn American dream, whatever the fuck that is. We're you watered-down and a little more well-off. So, do you like what you see?

LYDIA. I always like what I see.

RENE. So you think you're going to hold out long?

LYDIA. In this job or this country?

RENE. Both.

LYDIA. I hope yes.

RENE. I hope so too. You're easy on the eyes and hard somewhere else.

LYDIA. Your mama said you were trouble.

RENE. Better keep your door locked at night.

LYDIA. But I don't think you're trouble.

RENE. Righteous.

LYDIA. Is your coffee good now?

RENE. Best I ever tasted.

(He finishes it up and throws the empty cup into the kitchen. He goes back to his room.)

LYDIA. *Mano*…what happen to the men in this house?

CECI. Ghgngg, gghn. Ggn…teeee.

*(***LYDIA** *goes to her. She touches her scar.)*

LYDIA. *De acuerdo.*

(She touches **CECI***'s scar with tenderness.)*

Love is a big hurt. Even for fathers and brothers.

*(***CECI** *touches her chest.* **LYDIA** *is caught in a pang she hadn't acknowledged before.)*

Have we met before, *muñeca*?

*(***LYDIA** *goes. Lights change around* **CECI**.*)*

CECI. Maybe. Maybe we fell in each other's wounds one night. Into each other's mirrors. Crossed paths in our *vuelos*, said wassup with you, and then took a nap in the afterlife. Spooning in the afterlife, you and me. Or maybe we just wish we were sisters.

(The TV audio plays a mélange of everything that was on during the early 70s: news, variety shows, sitcoms, etc. **CLAUDIO**, **ROSA**, **RENE**, *and* **MISHA** *slowly enter with their TV trays of food and sit to watch TV.* **CLAUDIO** *has his headphones on.* **CECI** *lies on her mattress.)*

RENE. This pollo ain't bad.

ROSA. It's good.

MISHA. Real good.

RENE. Come to think of it, we're all eating a little better lately.

ROSA. *Que*, you don't like my cooking, *sinverguenza*?

MISHA. Mom, she makes chicken *molé* from scratch. She uses spices and stuff we don't even know how to pronounce. She's got recipes the Aztecs used on the damn pyramids.

ROSA. *Entonces* I won't cook for you no more. *Ingratos.*

RENE. Hey, a-hole, speaking of Aztecs, where's my Abraxas album?

MISHA. Oh. I was gonna ask you. I borrowed it for inspiration. I'm writing some poems for English based on the songs in Santana's album.

RENE. *¡No mames, guey!* You took my album to school?

MISHA. What's wrong with that?

RENE. *Baboso.* I had something special in the sleeve of that album.

MISHA. What?

RENE. Something very very imported.

ROSA. *¿De que estas hablando, mijo?*

RENE. Just some special papers, Mom. I appreciate your interest in poetry and art, bro, but you get that effin' album back. And stay out of my effin' room, while you're at it.

MISHA. It's my effin' room too.

RENE. Then stay out of my TOP half of it.

MISHA. Okay, then anything that falls out of the top half of your room is MINE.

RENE. And anything I step on in the bottom half is BROKE.

ROSA. *¡YA! Ay,* Praise God, sometimes I wish I had my own headphones too.

RENE. *Oye. Mira.* The *jefe* hasn't touched his supper.

MISHA. Maybe it's too spicy.

ROSA. *Oye, Viejo. ¿No tienes hambre?*

*(***CLAUDIO** *looks at her. He takes off the headphones.)*

CLAUDIO. *No. Tengo que ir temprano esta noche.*

(He shrugs and goes.)

ROSA. That's four nights in a row he's going to work early.

MISHA. I think the maid makes him nervous.

ROSA. So what do you think of her?

RENE. Besides her cooking and her perky little breasts?

ROSA. Which reminds me. I don't like the way you're looking at her. *Portate bien*. Misha? What do you think of her?

MISHA. She does all right with Ceci. She likes her, too.

ROSA. She does, doesn't she?

CECI. Gggghhhn. Ggnhnn.

ROSA. Lydia!

*(***LYDIA** *enters from down the hall. She notices that* **CLAUDIO** *has not eaten his food.)*

LYDIA. *Señora.*

ROSA. Ceci needs her diaper changed.

LYDIA. *Si, señora.*

(She goes to **CECI** *and slowly brings her to her feet.)*

ROSA. So what are these *poemas* you're writing, *mijo*?

MISHA. Ah, they're nothing special. Just some verses.

RENE. What about, bro? Oppression and *la raza unida* and our Indian roots?

MISHA. No, not like that. My first one's called Ode to a *Chanate*.

ROSA. A grackle? You wrote a poem about those nasty black birds who mess on my car every morning??

*(***LYDIA** *goes off with* **CECI**.*)*

MISHA. They're beautiful. They got these oil-slick wings and yellow eyes and their song is so complex.

(There is a light knock on the door.)

ROSA. *¡Chale!* More like a squeaky garage door, *mijo*! Don't write no poems about them *chanates*!

*(***ROSA** *opens the door and* **ALVARO** *comes in, dressed in a large overcoat.)*

ALVARO. *Tia!*

ROSA. Oh my god! Alvaro!

ALVARO. I know, huh? I hope I'm not bothering you at this hour.

ROSA. No, no, we just finished eating. Come on, you, say hello to your cousin!

MISHA. Hey Varo. What's up?

ALVARO. You're growing tall, kid.

MISHA. About effin' time, dude.

ALVARO. I know. It's just, *sabes*, I've been a little busy.

MISHA. Little busy being a damn hero! I saw your picture in the paper!

ALVARO. *Ay*, that was nothin'. Hey Rene.

ROSA. Varo, we're so proud of you! *(kisses him) Que lindo te ves!* Take off your coat, make yourself at home! *¡Andale!*

ALVARO. Thank you, *Tia*.

*(***ALVARO** *takes off his coat and reveals his Border Patrol uniform underneath.)*

MISHA. *¡Vato!* You joined the Border Patrol?

ROSA. *¡Ay, dios mio, que barbaridad!*

ALVARO. I thought you should be the first to know, being family and all. I signed up about a month ago and they fast-tracked me right into service. What do you think?

ROSA. I don't know what to say, *sobrino*!

MISHA. Are you nuts? You can't join *la Migra*!

ALVARO. Relax, cuz, I had to do it. Money, *sabes*. It was this or temp work at Manpower.

MISHA. It still doesn't make sense, Varo. You're better than this, *ese*.

ALVARO. You guys don't know what I been through. I learned some deep lessons in-country about – .

*(***LYDIA** *enters.)*

LYDIA. *Cielos…*

ROSA. Lydia! *¡Ven, ven!* Lydia's taking care of Ceci.

ALVARO. Oh, *mucho gusto*.

ROSA. *Oh,* she has her papers and everything. We made sure of that.

ALVARO. *Placer*.

LYDIA. You're the cousin. She told me about you.

ROSA. What? Oh, *Ceci* can't talk, silly! Alvaro, want to sit down and eat? Here, have this.

LYDIA. That's Don Claudio's.

ROSA. *No te apures*. He'll have a cheeseburger at work. *¡Andale, provecho!*

ALVARO. It sure looks good, *tia*.

ROSA. Just don't mess your uniform. It's so starched and clean, praise God! *(to* **LYDIA***)* Go bring her…

*(***ALVARO** *digs into* **CLAUDIO***'s plate with relish as* **LYDIA** *goes.)*

RENE. Lessons like what?

ALVARO. Lessons about what matters. Lessons about the sacrifices our mothers and fathers made for us. We fight for that every day, *primo*. Every day we protect the blessings of this life.

MISHA. And that's why you took the job?

ALVARO. We got our own DMZ right here.

MISHA. You mean the border?

ALVARO. As soon as I get back, what happens? Some *mojado* steals my mother's car. I look at the neighbor-hood kids and they're all *marijuanos* now. Everywhere I turn, there's some out-of-work alien taking up space. It doesn't matter what all I've done over there, I still have to wait in line for a job with these illegals.

MISHA. Dude, our Dad was an illegal alien.

ALVARO. But he got his papers. He became a naturalized citizen using the proper channels, didn't he, *Tia*?

ROSA. Oh yes. Yes. *Claro que si.*

MISHA. So you don't have any second thoughts about doing this to *raza*?

ALVARO. Who would you rather, the *gringos*? We take care of our own *mierda*, excuse the language, *señora.*

RENE. Is that really why you came, Varo? To show us your new uniform?

ALVARO. There was a time, cuz, when I thought I knew who I was, and what I wanted, but I just needed to grow up.

RENE. Grow up?

ALVARO. I mean wake up to the real-real. Remember when we used to play like ants in this room? That was a child's dream, Rene. We think the dream carries us all the way, but I got different expectations now.

RENE. What do you expect?

ALVARO. To come back and start my life right. This war was the best thing that happened to me. It pulled me out of the dream.

RENE. It was more than a dream to some people.

ALVARO. Then some people better wake up.

CLAUDIO. *(calling from off) ¡Rosa! ¡Papel del baño!*

ROSA. *¡Ay! ¡Este Señor! ¡Que verguenza! ¡Espera!…*

*(***ROSA** *gets a roll of toilet paper from the cabinets and goes off.)*

ALVARO. How you doing, little cuz?

MISHA. Not sure. It's hard to see that uniform in this house. But at the same time, you're family.

ALVARO. That's right.

RENE. Not one letter. Not one damn letter.

ALVARO. I was short on stamps.

*(***MISHA** *senses something between them.)*

MISHA. I'm gonna help…uh…I'm gonna…

(He takes the plates from the trays and goes into the kitchen.)

ALVARO. Pos, you're lookin' good. I heard you been in some fights.

RENE. What the hell do you think you're doing here?

ALVARO. What do you think? I came to see Ceci.

RENE. Bullshit.

ALVARO. Is that bed for her? Is that where she's sleeping now?

RENE. You got some nerve. In that uniform, too.

ALVARO. Never in my dreams did I see myself in this. But it suits me, Rene. It really does. I'm gonna be good at this.

RENE. I bet you will.

ALVARO. How is she?

RENE. Now you ask. Now it occurs to you.

ALVARO. Look, man, what do you want from me? I'm here.

RENE. I wanna know where we stand.

ALVARO. We stand by the family, Rene. We stand by Ceci.

RENE. Why didn't you come sooner?

ALVARO. I couldn't.

RENE. But why? I'm talking to you!

ALVARO. 'Cause when I come near you, everything gets so confused. Things happen way too fast for me. You move at this crazy speed 'cause you're a blaze, *ese*, you don't give a shit. But I can't be selfish now. Look what happened.

RENE. She loved you, *ese*. She believed in you.

ALVARO. That's the problem. Everyone fucking believes in me.

RENE. Is that why you ran? Is that why you didn't even stay long enough to see how she was?

ALVARO. You eat shit. Don't forget where I been for the last two years. What I went through trumps anything you throw in my face. I've moved on. So don't lay your guilt at my feet.

RENE. She was crazy for you –

ALVARO. – Yeah? –

RENE. – She waited years for some word from you. A card. Anything.

ALVARO. How do you know? How the fuck do you know? If she can't talk, how do you know she missed me?

RENE. 'Cause I stayed, fucker! I stayed and took the heat for you!

ALVARO. Poor cuz. Still picking glass off your face….

*(***ALVARO** *touches* **RENE***'s lip.* **MISHA** *enters and* **RENE** *moves away.)*

MISHA. What's going on.

ALVARO. *Nada*, Meesh.

*(***ROSA** *enters with a photo album.)*

ROSA. *Oye, sobrino. Mira.* She made a scrapbook of you. She glued all your pictures on it, Polaroids of you and her. See, your ribbons from track and wrestling.

ALVARO. Wow. I never realized.

ROSA. And the newspaper articles. When you were Homecoming King. And Student Council *y todo*. And look all your notes to her. And the songs she copied from the Hit Parade.

ALVARO. All of this for me.

ROSA. She had a big crush on you, *sobrino*. She woulda been so proud of your service.

MISHA. Mom, she ain't dead.

*(***CLAUDIO** *enters dressed in his whites. He sizes* **ALVARO** *up with a scowl.)*

ALVARO. *Buenas, Tio.*

CLAUDIO. *Sobrino. ¿Y tu Abuela Doña Yolie?*

ALVARO. *Bien, gracias. Tio*, I'm in the *Migración*.

CLAUDIO. Good. Keep them all out.

(He grabs his coat and walks out past them.)

ROSA. Well. That was easy.

ALVARO. *Pues*, I better get going too.

ROSA. But you haven't seen Cecilia! –

ALVARO. Another day, *Tia*. I go on duty in fifteen minutes. I'm on the levee just up the road. Look, if you guys decide to hate me for this, I'll understand.

ROSA. *(kissing him on the cheek)* I'm going to pray for you. I'm going to ask Jesus to make these *mojaditos* lay their souls before your badge and give up without a struggle so no-one gets hurt.

ALVARO. *Gracias, Tia Rosa.*

CECI. Ggghfnaaaalgg.

*(***MISHA** *is the first to see* **LYDIA** *ushering* **CECI** *into the room in her quinceañera dress and shoes and her hair pinned up. Everyone is stunned.)*

MISHA. Oh my god.

ALVARO. Ceci.

RENE. What do you think you're doing?

LYDIA. She wanted to wear this. She said Alvaro would have the first dance. In her *quinceañera*. First her dad, then you. Because you know her better than anyone.

ALVARO. Jesus.

ROSA. Lydia, *por favor* –

LYDIA. *A bailar, caballero.*

*(***ALVARO** *goes to* **CECI** *and takes her hands. He carefully lifts her up and dances gently around the room with her. Everyone watches except* **RENE** *who looks away. "Sabor a Mi" plays in* **CECI***'s mind.)*

CECI. Lydia, in your world the things that never happen always happen. With him. All my urges saved for him. Catching moonlight on the folds of my gown. A big corsage aflame on my heart. My pearl earrings on, dancing super-slow with Varo in the middle of the *salón* to *Sabor a mi*, body to body, cheek to cheek, his breath in my ear saying over and over –

ALVARO. Ceci…Ceci…Ceci –

(She grasps **ALVARO** *around the neck as if to hold him forever.)*

RENE. Ceci, let him go.

MISHA. Leave them alone.

LYDIA. Let her dance.

RENE. Ceci! I mean it!

(A small wet spot gathers around **CECI** *as she pees herself.)*

CECI. Gghgngg.

ROSA. *¡Ay dios mio! ¡Que desastre! ¡Mira nomas!* She's doing number one!

ALVARO. Ceci…please…my uniform…

RENE. CECI GODDAMMIT STUPID BITCH!

ROSA. RENE! NO!!

*(***RENE** *tears* **CECI** *away from* **ALVARO** *and she collapses in a heap crying aloud.)*

MISHA. See what you done? Look at her! Are you happy? Is this what you wanted? You asshole!

*(***LYDIA** *rushes to* **CECI***.)*

ALVARO. I have to go.

ROSA. *¡Perdon, sobrino!* We're so sorry about this! I wish you didn't –

ALVARO. No, I'm sorry! Thank you for the good food. I have to go!

*(***ALVARO** *rushes out.* **MISHA** *and* **LYDIA** *console* **CECI** *as she cries.)*

MISHA. It's okay, sis. It's over now. *(to* **RENE***)* You didn't have to be so rough with her.

RENE. I didn't put her in that dress.

MISHA. Still, you didn't have to push her away like that, fuckhead! What's your problem!

RENE. My problem is this maid doesn't realize what that fucking dress means in this house!

LYDIA. But she does.

RENE. Who asked you to talk?

LYDIA. She knows everyone's pain. All the time. Even yours.

RENE. Did she really ask you to put her in this dress?

LYDIA. How else would I know where to look?

ROSA. She told you?

RENE. Did she also tell you how she got her head stitched up like a baseball? Did she say who did that to her?

LYDIA. Not everything she says comes out her mouth.

RENE. What's that supposed to mean? What are these riddles? Who the fuck are you?

ROSA. *¡No hables asi, Rene!*

RENE. No! Explain to me! How do you know what she wants? As far as we can tell, the best she can do is nod when she needs to take a shit!

LYDIA. She loves you, Rene. She thinks you should be what you are, and not be sorry for it.

RENE. What??

(The sound of a car pulling up.)

MISHA. Dad.

ROSA. *(eyes landing on his wallet) ¡Dios mio!* He's coming back. Take her to bathroom! Get the dress off *de volada*!

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