

Acting Edition

Man Cave

by John J. Caswell, Jr.

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|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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MAN CAVE received its world premiere with Page 73 Productions (Michael Walkup, Artistic Director; Amanda Feldman, Managing Director) in New York City on March 1, 2022. The production was directed by Taylor Reynolds, with scenic design by Adam Rigg, costume design by Hahnji Jang, lighting design by Lucrecia Briceno, sound design by Michael Costagliola, projection design by Gregg Bellón, prop design by Andrew Diaz, makeup design by Sy Bedrick, fight choreography by David Anzuelo, and Spanish language translations by Yolanda Castro. The cast was as follows:

LUPITA..... Claudia Acosta
ROSEMARY Jacqueline Guillén
IMACULADA Annie Henk
CONSUELO Socorro Santiago

MAN CAVE received its second production at Kitchen Dog Theater (Christopher Carlos & Tina Parker, Artistic Directors; Tim Johnson, Managing Director) in Dallas, Texas, and opened on February 16, 2023. The production was directed by Christie Vela, with scenic design by Jeffrey Schmidt, costume/makeup design by Isa Flores, lighting design by Aaron Johansen, sound design by Brian McDonald, projection design by Phillip Vilar, prop design by Zareen Afzaal, and Spanish language translations by Yolanda Castro. The cast was as follows:

LUPITA..... Gloria Vivica Benavides
ROSEMARY Fatima Y. Flores
IMACULADA Gigi Cervantes
CONSUELO Sheila D. Rose

CHARACTERS

LUPITA – 30–40. Latina. Butch, caring, protective.

ROSEMARY – 25–35. First generation Mexican-American.
Disassociated, hell-bent, damaged. Also plays **VERIZON GIRL**.

IMACULADA – 45–55. Latina. Cautious, motherly, unmoored.

CONSUELO – 55–65. Rosemary's mother. Undocumented Mexican immigrant living in the U.S. for many decades. Thoroughly assimilated. Stoic, stubborn, unyielding.

VERIZON GIRL – Salesperson. Voice-over. Pre-recorded.

SETTING

Sedona, Arizona.

The basement of a wealthy U.S. Congressman, converted into a dark and moody Man Cave.

TIME

Present. July. A particularly active monsoon season.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Necessary Scenic Details

A stairway with a door at the top

A light switch at the top of the stairs

An intercom box, somewhere visible

Bar area with steel dumbwaiter doors

A television

A matching washer and dryer recessed into a closet

A taxidermied elk head hanging somewhere prominent

Hopper windows lining the top of one of the basement walls

Boxes marked DONATE at the bottom of the stairs

A door leading to the Man Cave's full bathroom

Production Suggestions

Lean far away from camp and overtly comedic horror.

Lean heavily into cinematic realism.

Embrace smallness in voice. If in a larger house, consider body microphones.

Consider minimalist scenic design that relies on an all-surrounding darkness.

Consider minimal lighting using mostly practicals and keep the space dark.

Consider some live foley in the sound design.

Be wary of treating the political and cultural underpinnings of the text with any sentimentality, heavy-handedness, or self-pity.

Consider how a human might act afraid aside from screaming.

Use projections only for supertitles, scene placards, and very minimal elements in the ritual.

Production Suggestions

A / indicates the following line begins in overlap.

ACT ONE

Scene One

(In darkness, a dryer tumbles clothing. It's lit from the inside, a spinning electric eye. Plunk. Clank. Ping. A rumble of thunder.)

(Projected: THE DESCENT.)

(Projected: FRIDAY 10:17 P.M.)

*(The dryer buzzes, then slows to a stop. A door opens at the top of the stairs, light spilling down. **IMACULADA** appears in a black dress, flips the light switch. Nothing. She tries it a few more times. A thump from the wall beside her, followed by a faint scratching, like something digging, chewing. She leans in to hear it better. A loud reminder buzz from the dryer startles her. She descends, collecting clothing from the dryer, folding as she goes, humming something to herself.* An intercom near the stairs rings loudly. Thunder some seconds later. Intercom rings again. **IMACULADA** hesitates, then answers it.)*

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IMACULADA. Peterson residence.

LUPITA. *(Through intercom.)* Goddamnit, this thing isn't working. Imaculada?!

IMACULADA. Lupita?!

LUPITA. *(Through intercom.)* It's Rosemary, hurry up, let us in.

ROSEMARY. *(Through intercom.)* I'm fine, there's no rush!

LUPITA. *(Through intercom.)* She's not fine, open the fucking gate! It's an emergency!

(IMACULADA buzzes them in. Sound of a heavy gate opening outside. A horn honks as she climbs the stairs and slips out the door, leaving it open. Headlights flash through hopper windows. Truck door slams. Feet on gravel. The doorbell rings. A small dog barks deep in the house, IMACULADA shouts at it. Doorbell again.)

(A flash of lightning in hopper windows, thunder some seconds later. Sound of the front door opening upstairs. Voices are audible but distant, getting closer as they move toward the basement door. All CHARACTERS remain unseen until noted.)

IMACULADA.

(Unseen.)

Oh my God, your face. Okay let's wipe that blood off. Get inside, it's the middle of the night! Are you drunk?

ROSEMARY.

(Unseen.)

Jesus Christ, what happened, where's the rest of you? It's nothing, stop, don't you know how to pick up a phone anymore?

LUPITA.

(Unseen.)

Thanks for answering the fucking door, what took so long? I parked in the gravel if that's okay. A whole fifth of vodka.

You're perfectly capable of calling me, too. Lupita, come this way.

Who needs a house this big?

Cocktails before.

(They pass the doorway as dialogue continues without interruption. LUPITA veers away, taking a step onto the basement stairs alone. She wears a Coconino Cleaners polo.)

<i>(Unseen.)</i>	<i>(Unseen.)</i>	<i>(Calling to kitchen.)</i>
What do you need, pain meds? I got Advil.	God, you can tell a blood-red conservative sycophant did the interior design.	Hold on, I need a minute. <i>(Tries flipping switch.)</i>
Watch your mouth around here, you can't talk like that.		Hey, you got a power problem down here.
Ay, no política. I can't take it anymore. It's always something. Let me see it. I'm not. You're fine. I'm not pressing!	Have you seen that giant 2024 sign on 89A? Everything is political. Everything is war. Don't press on it. Don't press on it. Goddamn it, Lada. Where's the bathroom? I'll do it myself.	Everything is political. Everything is war.
Over that way. Lupita?!		

(IMACULADA appears at top of stairs, alone. LUPITA, a few steps below her.)

IMACULADA. (*Quietly, making sure ROSEMARY doesn't hear.*) What are you doing down here, what the hell's going on?

LUPITA. Maybe if you answered your goddamn phone sometimes.

IMACULADA. She needs a hospital.

LUPITA. It's all off-duty cops working ER security, she won't go.

IMACULADA. You could get me fired coming all the way up here, you know that?

LUPITA. Bullshit, nobody's home, you got all the lights off.

IMACULADA. The whole family's in D.C. through Monday, that's not the point!

(**ROSEMARY** *flushes the toilet upstairs as*
IMACULADA *and* **LUPITA** *speak with a new*
urgency.)

LUPITA. Listen to me. She can't go back this time, we need to borrow / some money.

IMACULADA. No money! I told her this would happen, she should've been saving.

LUPITA. Her paycheck goes through him now, direct deposit, you'd know that / if you just checked in once in a while.

IMACULADA. You can't stay here, why didn't you take her to your place?!

LUPITA. Because he knows where I live now.

IMACULADA. I told you be careful, don't get involved.

LUPITA. She's our friend, friends get involved.

IMACULADA. With friends like those.

LUPITA. Whatever, you're unbelievable! You know something, she *asked* to come see you.

IMACULADA. No she didn't.

LUPITA. Yeah, I was surprised, too. I'd have her out of town by now / but we don't have cash.

IMACULADA. I don't want a reunion! I said no money, she treats me like shit.

LUPITA. What do you expect, Imaculada? You move in here with these freaks, disappear on us. Over a year, no texts, no calls, no explanation.

IMACULADA. Things have been hard, I'm not exactly myself these days in case you hadn't noticed.

LUPITA. Yeah no shit! Even your voice sounds like it shrunk.

(ROSEMARY appears with a beer at the top of the stairs, holding ice over her face, concealing the extent of her injuries. She wears a Coconino Cleaners polo. ROSEMARY squeezes past LUPITA and IMACULADA, descending further down the steps toward the darkness.)

ROSEMARY. Who the fuck has a basement in Arizona?

IMACULADA. It's a recreation room.

ROSEMARY. Yeah, where he beats his meat and bargains with the devil.

LUPITA. Yo, thanks a lot for the visual.

ROSEMARY. I can't believe you live with these assholes. What's it like working for a scumbag Congressman anyway?

IMACULADA. You both need to leave. Now, soon, you gotta go.

ROSEMARY. The Dishonorable Gentleman from Arizona.
Or should I call him Jeff?

IMACULADA. You shouldn't be drinking, you could be
concussed.

ROSEMARY. And you shouldn't be cleaning house for
some sick fascist fuck and his evil offspring.

IMACULADA. He's serving the will of his constituents, he's
in a very difficult position.

ROSEMARY. Yeah, bent over the lectern taking all two
inches of white supremacy's smegma-covered cock.
And I'll tell you what else: he's the one who's supposed
to be working for you.

*(A thump from inside a wall, then a few
clicking sounds.)*

LUPITA. What was that?

IMACULADA. They had a fire, there's a problem with the
foundation.

ROSEMARY. You're supposed to disclose your home's
paranormal status to guests upon arrival.

IMACULADA. You aren't my guests and there's nothing
paranormal.

LUPITA. She's pretty heavy into this spooky shit lately.

ROSEMARY. Supernatural due diligence. It's the Sedona
way. I tried telling you about this place.

LUPITA. Tried telling her what?

IMACULADA. Nothing. Rodents, groundhogs, we got an
infestation. Doesn't matter, it's harmless.

ROSEMARY. *(To the room.)* Are you harmless?!

IMACULADA. Keep your voice down!

ROSEMARY. (*To the room.*) We offer up Congressman Peterson as sacrifice. Come. Feast. The soul is black but the meat is good.

(The sound of a landline phone ringing upstairs, scaring them.)

IMACULADA. Hurry up and decide where you're sleeping tonight because you can't stay here.

(LUPITA takes a large and deliberate puff from an asthma inhaler.)

ROSEMARY. She's choking on the fumes of oppression, Lada, the air is thick with it.

LUPITA. They said it's only allergies.

IMACULADA. If you don't like the oppression, go back where you came from. Lupita, come, I got some Benadryl.

(IMACULADA exits to answer the phone.)

LUPITA. Hey, come on Rosemary, handle your alcohol.

ROSEMARY. That's pretty rich coming from you.

LUPITA. We got nowhere else to go so you better start kissing some ass. Come upstairs.

(The ringing stops as IMACULADA's offstage voice is heard answering the call upstairs.)

LUPITA holds out her hand, beckoning ROSEMARY to come, but ROSEMARY ignores her. LUPITA gives up and exits, leaving ROSEMARY alone in the glow of her cellphone's screen.)

ROSEMARY. (*Calling to the WOMEN upstairs.*) It says here that any supernatural beings in this area have a high probability of being Indigenous, most likely Sinaguan given our current location. Pre-Columbian,

foragers, cultivators of corn. Wait, how close are we to Bell Rock? Hey, are you talking about me up there?!

IMACULADA. (*Offstage.*) Lupita, don't fucking touch that thing!

(The sound of a metal door sliding closed upstairs as the dumbwaiter whirs to life within the wall, the car descending toward the basement below. The dumbwaiter arrives as ROSEMARY watches its doors slide open, her purse inside. LUPITA appears at the top of the stairs with a bag of chips, crunching.)

LUPITA. I think she's coming around, I gave her a good talking to.

(ROSEMARY ignores her. LUPITA quietly closes the door behind her and meets ROSEMARY below.)

You won't believe this but they got six ovens, three refrigerators, and one little tiny elevator.

ROSEMARY. Dumbwaiter.

(LUPITA and ROSEMARY catch one another's gravity, pull in close. ROSEMARY takes a chip, chews, winces in pain, grabbing her cheek. They fall into a gentle familiar embrace that reads as possibly more than just friends. The sound of something falling in the kitchen above, IMACULADA cursing.)

What the hell's going on with her?

(The door at the top of the stairs swings open violently. It's IMACULADA with pillows and blankets. LUPITA and ROSEMARY pull apart, startled. IMACULADA notices their familiarity with disapproval.)

IMACULADA. One night, that's it. You have Lupita to thank.

LUPITA. There she is, that's family, right there.

IMACULADA. Shut up and don't make me regret this. Go, now.

LUPITA. I'm not sleeping down here, you got like ten bedrooms upstairs!

IMACULADA. I need you out of sight, staff come and go here all the time. Move your truck to the guesthouse garage, here's the fob. Mírame, this door deadbolts from the inside, nobody gets in from upstairs unless they got the key, I have the key, so lock it.

ROSEMARY. What is this, a sex dungeon?

LUPITA. Do you want it to be?

IMACULADA. And none of this lesbian shit, I don't wanna think about that.

(IMACULADA flips the switch, forgetting she already tried.)

Goddamnit, this fucking thing.

LUPITA. Yeah, what's with the lights?

IMACULADA. They're chewing through the wires, it trips the fuse.

ROSEMARY. Who's chewing through the wires?

IMACULADA. I don't know. Something with teeth.

(IMACULADA moves down the stairs, past LUPITA and ROSEMARY, then suddenly stops and grabs onto her stomach, grimacing in pain. ROSEMARY and LUPITA notice this as IMACULADA quickly recovers, then continues down the stairs toward a circuit breaker below.)

LUPITA. Necesitas Life Alert.

IMACULADA. It burns whenever I'm hungry.

ROSEMARY. You had an entire part of your digestive system removed, what do you expect?

LUPITA. Hey, you better not be starving yourself.

IMACULADA. Survival and satiety, not pleasure.

ROSEMARY. A creepy white guy pays for their live-in housekeeper's gastric bypass. Doesn't that sound fucked up when I say it out loud?

IMACULADA. I'm not having this fight with you again, it was my choice.

ROSEMARY. They practically held the knife, Lada. It's mutilation by proxy.

IMACULADA. The couch pulls out, you can sleep there, please don't do anything gross.

LUPITA. I make no promises.

ROSEMARY How much weight have you lost, what's the total? You're dying to tell us.

IMACULADA. One hundred and sixteen pounds, now leave me alone.

LUPITA. One hundred and sixteen pounds but she still got them big-ol boobs.

IMACULADA. I recently read this great book on boundaries I'll let you borrow.

LUPITA. Oh come on, are you too good for jokes now?

ROSEMARY. That's like an entire person since you turned your formerly fat back on us.

(IMACULADA flips a switch on the circuit breaker bringing up dim and moody lights.)

IMACULADA. There's extra pillows. And help yourself to those boxes. She's getting rid of everything.

ROSEMARY. Winnie Peterson: faithful wife and co-conspirator.

LUPITA. What kind of fucking name is Winnie anyway?

IMACULADA. My room's just off the kitchen upstairs if you need me, but don't need me, I've been up since four-thirty this morning.

LUPITA. You gotta help me keep her awake. You can sleep in, you're privately employed.

ROSEMARY. Yeah, this free agent cleans in style now, look at her. Nice dress, by the way.

LUPITA. (*Pulling at her polo.*) Unlike this shit. You remember, Lada? The chafing?

IMACULADA. I wore them for fifteen years. Of course I remember.

LUPITA. Yeah, man, they really rub you raw.

IMACULADA. Maybe if you wore a bra sometimes.

LUPITA. What the hell she say to me?!

IMACULADA. Oh come on, are you too good for jokes now?

ROSEMARY. One less crisply-starched stereotype of a Latinx woman walking the streets.

IMACULADA. Don't call me that Latinx shit, soy Mexicana, be specific.

ROSEMARY. One hundred Americans were asked to name the top job belonging to a chicana. / Survey says housecleaner.

LUPITA. Watch, here she goes, viva la raza, all that shit.

ROSEMARY. But you leveled up girl, you got that turd all nice and shiny.

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