

*Acting Edition*

# **I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter**

by Isaac Gómez

Based on the novel by  
Erika L. Sánchez

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|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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*I AM NOT YOUR PERFECT MEXICAN DAUGHTER* was commissioned by and received its world premiere at Steppenwolf Theatre Company (Anna D. Shapiro, Artistic Director; David Schmitz, Executive Director) in Chicago, IL, produced by Steppenwolf for Young Adults, on February 29, 2020. The production was directed by ensemble member Sandra Marquez, featuring ensemble member Karen Rodriguez, with scenic design by Arnel Sancianco, costume design by Uriel Gómez, lighting design by Heather Sparling, sound design by Matthew Chapman, dramaturgy by Polly Hubbard, and movement and quince choreography by Isaac Gómez. The fight and intimacy director was Rachel Lee Flesher. The casting director was JC Clementz and the artistic producer was Hallie Gordon. The production stage manager was Michelle Medvin and the assistant stage manager was Jacqueline Saldana. The cast was as follows:

**JÚLIA** ..... Karen Rodriguez  
**OLGA** ..... Dyllan Rodrigues-Miller  
**AMÁ** ..... Charín Álvarez  
**APÁ** ..... Eddie Martinez  
**LORENA** ..... Leslie Sophia Pérez  
**JUANGA** ..... Robert Quintanilla  
**CONNOR** ..... Harrison Weger  
**MR. INGMAN** ..... Peter Moore

*I AM NOT YOUR PERFECT MEXICAN DAUGHTER* received its second production and West Coast premiere at Seattle Rep (Braden Abraham, Artistic Director; Jeffrey Herrmann, Managing Director) in Seattle, WA, on January 13, 2023. The production was directed by Juliette Carrillo, with scenic design by Efren Delgadillo Jr., costume design by Danielle Nieves, lighting design by Robert J. Aguilar, associate lighting design by Vada Briceño, sound design and original composition by John Nobori, intimacy direction by Jess K. Smith, vocal coaching by Kate Myre, dialect coaching by Michelle Lopez-Rios, and movement and quince choreography by Isaac Gómez. The casting was by Kaytlin McIntyre and Shawna Grajek, with additional casting by Victor Vazquez of X Casting. The stage manager was Stina Lotti and the assistant stage manager was Stefania Giron Zuluaga. The Seattle Rep directing apprentice for this production was Daira Rodriguez and the stage management apprentice was Rosemary Lisa Jones. The cast was as follows:

|                   |                            |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>JÚLIA</b>      | ..... Karen Rodriguez      |
| <b>OLGA</b>       | ..... Sofía Raquel Sánchez |
| <b>AMÁ</b>        | ..... Jazmín Corona        |
| <b>APÁ</b>        | ..... Eddie Martinez       |
| <b>LORENA</b>     | ..... Leslie Sophia Pérez  |
| <b>JUANGA</b>     | ..... Marco Antonio Tzunux |
| <b>CONNOR</b>     | ..... Michael Monicatti    |
| <b>MR. INGMAN</b> | ..... Aaron Blakely        |

*I AM NOT YOUR PERFECT MEXICAN DAUGHTER* received its third production at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts Theatre Company (Chris Coleman, Artistic Director) in Denver, CO, on September 27, 2024. The production was directed by Laura Alcalá Baker; with scenic design by Arnel Sancianco; costume design by Izumi Inaba; lighting design by Lonnie Rafael Alcaraz; original music & sound design by Noel Nichols, Daniela Hart, Bailey Trierweiler & UptownWorks; dramaturgy by Hannah Herrera Greenspan; intimacy and fight direction by Maya Vinice Prentiss; and movement and quince choreography by Isaac Gómez. Casting was by Grady Soapes, CSA and Gama Valle of Bass/Valle Casting. The artistic producer was Grady Soapes. The stage manager was Rebecca RD Hamlin and the assistant stage manager was Corin Davidson. The assistant director was Maria Arreola. The cast was as follows:

|                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>JÚLIA</b> .....      | Rosa Isabella Salvatierra |
| <b>OLGA</b> .....       | Heather Lee Echeverría    |
| <b>AMÁ</b> .....        | Nicole Betancourt         |
| <b>APÁ</b> .....        | Alex Alpharaoh            |
| <b>LORENA</b> .....     | Leslie Sophia Pérez       |
| <b>JUANGA</b> .....     | Brandon Rivera            |
| <b>CONNOR</b> .....     | Daniel Clark              |
| <b>MR. INGMAN</b> ..... | John Plumpis              |

## CHARACTERS

**JÚLIA** – Fifteen through eighteen years old. Thicc/Chubby/Fat/Plus Size. Mexican American. *Morena* or *morena clara*, just like her dad. Glasses. Chewed-up nails. Surly. Thinks she's better than everyone to hide her loneliness. Wants more than anything to be a writer. The odd daughter out. Not your perfect Mexican daughter. *She/Her/Hers*.

**OLGA** – Permanently twenty-two, but never looked or acted like a normal twenty-two-year-old. Tall, thin, and *very* light-skinned. Almost *guera*. All she ever did was go to work, sit at home with her parents, and take one class at the local community college. The perfect Mexican daughter. Except...maybe not. Oh. And she's Júlia's sister. And she's dead. Also plays **PATTY, ANGIE, JAZMYN, NIGHTMARE OLGA, SHADOW OLGA, ICE SKATER**. When Olga doubles as other characters, she's less different people, and more like Olga-versions of them; she's a lot like what Júlia sees (or wants to see) in the wake of Olga's absence. *She/Her/Hers*.

**AMÁ** – Forties/fifties probably, but more attractive than most people half her age. Mexican. Also known as Amparo Montenegro Reyes. *Very* light-skinned, almost *guera*. Has had a tough life and gives tough love to show for it. She cleans the houses of rich white people in Chicago and has been doing that for like thirty years. Júlia and Olga's mother. Well. I guess just Júlia's now. Also plays **MAMÁ JACINTA, DR. COOKE**. *She/Her/Hers*.

**APÁ** – Forties/fifties probably, but very handsome with a dark mustache that quivers when he tries to hold back emotions. Mexican. Also known as Rafael Reyes. Definitely rounder. *Moreno* or darker. Has lived to see more than most and keeps to himself, so you'd never know it. Works for a candy factory, and has been there since he immigrated to Chicago with Amá back in the 1990s. A softy at heart. Also plays **TÍO BIGOTES, TÍO CHUCHO, JOSÉ LUIS, JUANGA'S DAD**. *He/Him/His*.

**LORENA** – Mid-to-late teens. Mexican American. The craziest bitch in the entire school. Some might call her a ho, but she doesn't give a fuck what the haters think. *Morena* or *morena clara*. Has been through more than most teens her age and so her tough ass puta persona is a manifestation of that. No one is more loyal than her. Chola energy 100%. Aspires to be a nurse and is Júlia's bestest friend in the entire world. Also plays **BELÉN**. *She/Her/Hers*.

**JUANGA** – Mid-to-late teens. Mexican American or Puerto Rican. The newest member of the Lorena/Júlia group. They see him and he sees them. His real name is Juan Garcia but everyone calls him Juanga. Femme as fuck and couldn't be more proud of it. *Moreno/e* or *Moreno/e claro*. He can be kind of a bitch, but really just wants to be seen and loved. Makes his own identity so others will like him. Also plays **ESTÉBAN**. *He/Him/His and/or They/Them/Theirs*.

**CONNOR** – Mid-to-late teens. White. The dreamiest white boy in all of Evanston. Yes, that's right. Evanston. The richest, whitest, most colonialist suburb of the Chicagoland area. It's okay though 'cause he reads a lot so he kind of knows what's up. Total book nerd, video game nerd, movie nerd – just a total nerd. No one could be more enamored by Júlia than Connor. *He/Him/His*.

**MR. INGMAN** – Forties/fifties. White. Júlia's high school English teacher. More passionate about teaching than most. He is one of those teachers you can't help but fall in love with while learning from them. But he's not a creep, and never abuses his relationships with his students. He just simply has a way of making them feel like they're actual humans with thoughts, desires, dreams, passions, fears, and so on. *He/Him/His*.

## SETTING

Chicago, IL.

## TIME

Present day.

## AUTHOR'S NOTES

### A Note on Language

A “/” dictates the start place for the following line. Spanish in the play is indicated with *italics*. It is not an indication of emphasis. CAPS and underlines do that.

### A Note on Doublings

Character doublings are intentionally curated to reflect oppositions within these figures in Júlia's life. For example, where Amá is typically cold, Mamá Jacinta is warm.

### A Note on Life

This is Júlia's world. People and places are fleeting and come quickly sometimes, and other times, they last longer than they probably did in real life. That's life as a teen.

### A Note on Asides

Throughout the play, you'll notice asides specified in a parenthetical for Júlia labeled: (*To the audience; in her notebook.*) This doesn't mean she's literally writing in her composition notebook during these asides (maybe she is, sometimes), but they function as more dives into her psyche – her experience of the experience as articulated by her and only her. The audience is her confidant. She turns to us for affirmation, for clarity, for guidance. But more importantly, she turns to us to feel seen.

### A Note on Act Breaks

There should be a fifteen-minute intermission between Acts One and Two. There should not be an intermission between Acts Two and Three. The run time for the show should be approximately one hour for Act One, and one hour for Acts Two and Three combined.

### A Note on Scene Transitions

Júlia's interior life is in constant negotiation with the exterior realities being thrown at her every second of every day – the scene transitions need to embody that. Although the publication of this play includes page breaks between one scene and the next, the transitions themselves should be fast and furious. Characters and/or scenery for the next scene should be finding their way onstage as characters and/or scenery from the previous scene disappear into the shadows. Trust the moments of stillness when indicated in the script. Otherwise, buckle in and enjoy the ride. The train moves fast once it starts.

“Happiness is a dandelion wisp floating through the air that I can’t catch. No matter how hard I try, no matter how fast I run, I just can’t reach it. Even when I think I grasp it, I open my hand and it’s empty.”

– **Erika L. Sánchez,**  
*I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*

For Erika – thank you for your trust.  
My heart and my hands are yours.

For Karen – thank you for breathing life into her.  
She endures in me, because she endures in you.

And for every perfectly imperfect Mexican daughter:  
this story has always, and will always, belong to you.



## ACT ONE

### A Funeral Home in Chicago, IL. Early October.

*(Little Village. As Mexican as it gets when it comes to neighborhoods in Chicago.)*

*(Music is playing. A staple in many Mexican Catholic funerals in the United States. Something like, “Pescador de hombres.”\*)*

*(Somewhere onstage is a casket, with dramatic lights beaming down on it as if it were a saint-like statue in a cathedral.)*

*(It’s adorned with various petals of white flowers. It’s open. A young Mexican American in her twenties lies inside it looking both peaceful and disturbed all at once, wearing a bright yellow dress with pink flowers.)*

*(It almost looks like she could be sleeping. Except...she’s not.)*

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*(She looks like La Virgencita if she were memorialized in a wax museum but smirking.)*

*(This is **OLGA**.)*

*(Beat. A moment.)*

*(Then, **JÚLIA**, a fifteen-year-old Mexican American teen with a worn-down composition notebook tucked tightly at her side, enters and stares at the **OLGA** in her casket, her eyes wide behind her glasses.)*

*(Watching. Noticing. Her thoughts racing.)*

*(She watches the girl in the casket for a moment. But she does not dare take a step closer. Then -)*

**JÚLIA.** *(Observant; scientific almost; to the audience; in her notebook.)* What surprises me most about seeing my sister dead...is the lingering smirk on her face.

*(Beat. A moment.)*

*(To the audience; in her notebook.)* Her pale lips are turned up ever so slightly, and...did someone fill in her patchy eyebrows? Damn.

*(Beat. A moment. Then -)*

*(She talks to **OLGA**, as if she were still alive.)*

You can't really see the bruises or gashes on your cheeks, though. So that's good. Even if you do look a little sick. That's a lot of foundation...where'd they find your mortician, the flea market?

*(She takes notes in her composition notebook. Her eyes make their way down from her face and onto her body.)*

(To **OLGA**, in the casket.) You know how much I hate that dress. I told Amá to pick the purple one but she chose this caca. I guess it is more you, though. So... busy. So classically Olga.

(Beat. A moment.)

(To **OLGA**, in the casket.) I don't know why you never looked or acted like a normal twenty-two-year-old. Like, all you'd do is go to work, sit at home with Amá y Apá, and take your one little class each semester at community. Didn't you ever want something...more?

(With pride; a confession; to the audience.) Like, ever since I could pick up a pen, I knew I was destined to be a famous writer. Like, people are gonna stop me in the middle of the street one day and ask, "Oh my God, are you Júlia Reyes, the greatest writer who has ever lived?" And I'm just gonna look at them, bags packed, and be like, "Peace out, muthafuckas!"

(Reality setting in; back to **OLGA**.) But not you. Not Olga. Saint Olga.

(Beat. **AMÁ** appears from the shadows.)

**AMÁ.** What are you doing?

**JÚLIA.** Taking some notes...

**AMÁ.** This is a funeral, not a homework session.

**JÚLIA.** I'm not doing homework, I'm taking notes.

**AMÁ.** What's there to take notes on, *euuh*? She's dead, your sister is dead, and you wanna stand around all day and take notes?!

**JÚLIA.** I don't wanna forget –

**AMÁ.** Forget? Forget?!

(**AMÁ** starts to lose her footing. **APÁ** catches her just in time.)

**JÚLIA.** No, that's not what I –.

You know what I –.

*(Beat.)*

She's my sister.

**AMÁ.** Have you even gone up to pay your respects yet?

**JÚLIA.** / No.

**AMÁ.** No. Of course not.

*Qué malcriada, Júlia. Como te gusta la mala vida.*

*(AMÁ slowly makes her way towards the casket. APÁ stays behind.)*

*(As AMÁ gets closer to the casket, she starts to wail. Loudly. Elongated.)*

*(The soundscape of a Mexican funeral.)*

*(Throwing herself on the casket.) Mija! Mija!*

*(Beat. A moment. Then –)*

She's with Jesus now.

**JÚLIA.** *(To the audience; in her notebook.)* That's a load of crap and she knows it. Once you're dead, you're dead. Olga's body will turn to dirt, which will grow into trees, and then someone in the future will step on her leaves.

*(AMÁ wails again, even louder.)*

*(To the audience; in her notebook.)* I would give anything to go back to the day she died and –

*(Vroom! OLGA in the casket opens her eyes and mouth wide, but instead of a scream, the sound of a semi-truck rushing by, honking, and crashing into something heavy like a large animal running across the street or*

*a young woman on her phone at a busy intersection can be heard.)*

*(JÚLIA turns her back to the casket, covering her ears. The people around her are unfazed, as this is all in JÚLIA's head.)*

*(As the memory fades back into place, JÚLIA turns back to face OLGA again, to see her still smirking, peaceful in her casket.)*

*(To the audience; in her notebook.)* Whenever I think of my sister's crushed organs, I want to scream. I've replayed that day over and over in my head so many times and have written down every single detail. I keep trying to figure out why it happened the way that it happened, who she was texting while she was crossing the street, but all I keep coming back to is that it's my fault that she's dead. It's my fault that she's dead. It's my fault that she's dead.

*(LORENA enters the funeral home.)*

**LORENA.** *(Quiet, kind.)* Hey bitch.

*(She embraces JÚLIA so tightly, it nearly cracks her ribs. A hug between sisters who are sisters by choice.)*

**JÚLIA.** Lorena. Thank you for being here.

**LORENA.** You're my best friend.

**JÚLIA.** And you're mine.

**LORENA.** You doing okay?

**JÚLIA.** *(To LORENA.)* Mhmm.

*(To the audience; in her notebook.)* I'm not okay.

**LORENA.** Good.

*(Beat.)*

**LORENA.** (*Spotting someone.*) Woah, who's that?

**JÚLIA.** Probably one of my uncles or something. There are like a million people here I've never met.

**LORENA.** He's cute.

**JÚLIA.** Don't.

**LORENA.** What?

**JÚLIA.** Lorena –

**LORENA.** Is he single?

**JÚLIA.** Please don't flirt with random members of my family at my sister's funeral.

**LORENA.** It's called window shopping.

**JÚLIA.** Mhmm.

**LORENA.** You look, but you don't buy.

**JÚLIA.** Okay, that's enough.

(*Beat. A moment.*)

**LORENA.** Wait. Where's Angie?

(**JÚLIA** *looks around.*)

**JÚLIA.** She's not here. / Wow.

**LORENA.** Couldn't take it. *Pobresita*, dude. She knew Olga better than anyone.

(*Beat. A moment.*)

**JÚLIA.** Yeah. She did.

(*More howling from AMÁ.*)

**LORENA.** Mexican funerals are the worst.

(*Lights shift.*)

**Júlia's Home. Two weeks later.**

**JÚLIA.** *(To the audience; in her notebook.)* After the funeral... Amá crawls into bed and stays there. I don't blame her. This is tough for all of us. I haven't taken a crap in almost four days, but I'm not about to tell Amá in the state she's in. I'll just let it build. Until I explode like a *piñata*.

*(The sound of the TV nearby can be heard as APÁ sits on the couch with a bottle of beer. AMÁ is asleep in her bed.)*

*(They don't notice JÚLIA standing there, watching them, watching the world as the days pass them by.)*

*(To the audience; in her notebook.)* Is she even alive in there?

It's been so long since I've seen her.

One day. Two days. Two weeks.

*(Night time. APÁ watches TV. Soccer.)*

Apá?

**APÁ.** Hm.

**JÚLIA.** I'm hungry.

**APÁ.** *(Big sigh.)* What about the food your tías brought over?

**JÚLIA.** We ate it.

**APÁ.** Well what happened to the Chihuahua cheese I brought you the other day, *ehh?* And all those *tortillas*, / go make yourself a *quesadilla*.

**JÚLIA.** I already made all the *quesadillas* I could make, there's no more cheese.

*(Beat. A moment.)*

*(Nothing.)*

**JÚLIA.** Please *Apá* / I'm starving.

**APÁ.** Go ask your mom.

**JÚLIA.** I don't wanna go in there.

**APÁ.** Go ask her.

**JÚLIA.** But *Apá* –

**APÁ.** Shh. My game is on.

*(He raises the volume.)*

*(Beat. A moment. Then –)*

*(JÚLIA walks inside Amá's bedroom.)*

**JÚLIA.** *(Low voice.)* Amá?

*(To the audience; in her notebook; gagging.)* It smells like rotten eggs in here.

**AMÁ.** *(Quiet; slow.)* What do you want?

**JÚLIA.** You don't need to be at work or anything? The rich white people aren't gonna fire you / for not cleaning their houses?

**AMÁ.** What? No, no it's. It's fine Júlia. Go to bed.

**JÚLIA.** You haven't eaten or / taken a shower in like a really long time.

**AMÁ.** Your Tío Bigotes came by and gave me soup yesterday, I'm fine.

**JÚLIA.** It smells terrible in here.

**AMÁ.** Wow. Now all of a sudden my slob of a daughter is concerned with cleanliness? When have you ever cared about that? Olga was the clean one.

**JÚLIA.** (*Impulsive.*) Olga's gone now, all you have is me, sorry.

(*Beat. A moment.*)

(**AMÁ** turns her back to **JÚLIA**, and goes back to sleep.)

(*Lights shift.*)

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