

THE RIVER RISES

A Play in Three Acts

By

John Espinal

*"Like a fluttering Sparrow or a darting swallow, an undeserved  
curse does not come to rest." Proverbs 26:2*

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CHARACTERS

MOM/MARGO: mid-fifties

DAD/RAYMOND: mid-fifties

JESSIE: early thirties, Margo and Raymond's only daughter

MANNY: late teens, Margo and Raymond's youngest son

LOUIS: mid-thirties, Margo and Raymond's middle son

JAVIER: early forties, Margo and Raymond's eldest son

RACHEL: late thirties, Javier's live-in girlfriend

MARCELLO: late thirties, medium build, an acquaintance of Luey's

SUB-CHARACTERS

VANESSA: early thirties, Jessie's best friend

YOUNG WOMAN: late teens, beach-goer

FATHER FRANK SANTANA: early sixties

## PRELUDE TO ACT ONE:

*Dim stage lights open on the blurred silhouette of a couple violently arguing. A MAN can be seen grabbing a WOMAN from behind the transparent curtain. She slaps him hard. He stifles her shouts with the palm of his hand and presses her hard against the wall. She slaps him again. He overpowers her and raises her nightgown. The silhouette of their bodies fades to dark.*

*A soft white spotlight traces THE MAN walking across the stage. The man stops to adjust the lens of the camera around his neck. He stares at the audience in silence. He looks back down and notices he is missing the top button of his white dress shirt. The main stage light comes up to reveal that he is covered in blood from the waist up. He grabs at the side of his neck.*

*Confused, he tries to turn his head and falls to his knees, protecting the camera from hitting the ground. The man struggles to make it to his feet. He manages to place the camera over his face. The main stage light begins to fade out, leaving the man in the dark. In complete darkness... a camera flash goes off.*

SCENE

Downtown Manhattan

TIME

Late June 1990

ACT I

Scene 1

SETTING:

*The hallway interior of 2211 Chrystie Street, in the Bowery section of Manhattan. The cracked yellow wall paint is original. A folded up wheel chair, two strollers, and a silver mountain bike are chained to the black banister. Police lights and sirens engulf the entire stage.*

AT RISE:

*MANNY walks out onto the stage. He wears a white T-shirt and dark blue jeans.. Manny's older sister JESSIE is already in the hallway. She's been crying. She wears an oversized dress shirt over her tight black jeans. Her jet black hair falls perfectly over her shoulders. The police lights and sirens fade out.*

MANNY:

Hey, Jess. You okay?

*(long pause, then  
sets his backpack  
down)*

Jessie?

JESSIE:

*(wiping her tears)*

I don't know anymore.

MANNY:

One of those days huh?

*(JESSIE does not respond.)*

MANNY:

You hear what happened?

JESSIE:

No. Cops are not telling anyone anything. I don't care either. Hate it here... I always have.

*(catching her breath)*

Wanting to kill yourself... never goes away.

*(MORE)*

JESSIE: (CONT'D)

*(Grabbing her crotch)*

I can feel it in between my legs. The brush fires...  
*(exhaling deeply)*  
burning inside of my eyes.

MANNY:

Shouldn't talk like that, Jess. It's no good for you.

JESSIE:

I have no control over it. It seduces me. Whispers in my ear, kisses me up my neck. You begin to notice the veins in your wrist... under any glimpse of light.

*(her hands tremble)*

It happens whenever I find myself all alone. When no one is watching.

*(beat)*

... All it takes, Manny, is a glimpse of light.

*(Beat. JESSIE clenches both her fist by her sides and stares straight up.)*

JESSIE:

I dream of sunflowers floating up into the sky, into the vanishing clouds, into other worlds. The grounds are hollow ... nothing is stable. The dirt underneath my nails never comes out.

*(staring at her hands)*

You ever thought about it?

MANNY:

What?

JESSIE:

Killing yourself?

MANNY:

*(staring at his feet)*

I don't think so, Jess.

JESSIE:

Everyone does at least once. It's inside in all of us. The desire for death. To lean over... and jump.

MANNY:

What's going on with you, Jessie?

JESSIE:

Everything.

*(she exhales deeply)*

Found Mom in the shower with her raincoat on.

(MORE)

JESSIE: (CONT'D)

*(Her voice cracks)*

She had a rosary inside of her mouth.

*(A spotlight comes up to the left of the stage to reveal MOM running frantically into her bedroom, ransacking everything in sight. She sets her eyes on one of her dolls. She attacks the doll, grabbing it by the neck and slamming it down on the floor. She pins the doll down with one of her legs and begins to sew the doll's mouth shut. JESSIE runs over.)*

JESSIE:

Mom! What are you doing?!

*(yelling back at  
Manny)*

She was sewing the mouth of one of her dolls shut!

*(To Mom)*

Momma! Look at me! Look at me, Momma!

MOM:

*(stops suddenly and  
turns to Jessie)*

The dead can't sing anymore if they can't open their mouths.

*(MOM stands and starts ripping the sheets off the bed.)*

MOM:

Help me! Hurry up!

*(tearing the sheets  
and pillowcases  
apart with her  
hands)*

We need to cover their eyes! Before the storm blinds them forever! Help me!

JESSIE:

Momma what are you doing?!

MOM:

*(screaming, falling  
to her knees)*

Help me-please! Please help me!

*(JESSIE starts ripping the bed sheets.)*

MOM:

Turn on the lights, hurry!

*(JESSIE turns on the bedroom light. Four human-sized saints are now visible in the room. They all have swords and armour-plated chests.)*

MOM:

Help me cover their eyes!

*(MOM begins to blindfold one of the saints with the torn sheets.)*

MOM:

Hurry! Cover St. Michael's eyes! Cover his eyes!

*(A violent sandstorm envelopes the stage in the background. MOM and JESSIE run out of the bedroom, slamming the door behind them.)*

JESSIE:

Momma? ...Momma?

*(MOM takes a few steps back, disappearing into the dark on stage. JESSIE walks back over to MANNY. She can't breathe. She grabs at her chest, wheezing. She is having an asthma attack. She fumbles through her purse for her pump.)*

MANNY:

*(digging in Jessie's bag)*

I don't see it, hold on-

*(handing Jessie her asthma pump)*

I got it, here-

*(JESSIE pumps the medication into her lungs.)*

MANNY:

You need another one?

*(JESSIE nods yes.)*

MANNY:  
(*helping her*)  
One, two, three, four, good. Inhale, that's it, breathe-

JESSIE:  
(*on her knees,  
hysterical*)  
Goddamn my life! Every ounce of it!  
(*repeatedly slamming  
her bag on the  
ground*)  
I can't do it anymore!

JESSIE:  
(*trying to calm her  
self down, crying*)  
Who puts a rosary in their mouth? Huh, Manny? Who? I'm  
trying to make sense of it all.  
(*looking at Manny*)  
But, I can't do it anymore. I can't take care of her for  
the rest of my life. I need to heal myself before I bleed  
to death from the inside out.

(*A long beat. JESSIE takes a  
series of deep breaths.*)

JESSIE:  
(*placing items back  
into her purse*)  
You gonna help? Or stand there until Christmas?

MANNY:  
I was going to wait until Christmas.

(*JESSIE pinches MANNY on the  
arm.*)

MANNY:  
(*placing the items  
in her bag*)  
How does all this crap fit in your bag?

JESSIE:  
I make it work.

MANNY:  
You going to eat those M&M's?

JESSIE:  
(*handing package of  
candy to Manny*)  
You can have 'em.



MANNY:  
(opening M&M's)  
I like to guess the colors before I eat them.

JESSIE:  
Because you're a freak. Blue-

MANNY:  
(taking out an M&M)  
Red-  
(handing her the  
M&M)  
Blue it is.

JESSIE:  
(chewing)  
Christ what a day.  
(placing her hair  
in a bun)  
I'm so sick of this life. Wish I could just go up to God's  
counter and order a new one.

MANNY:  
(sitting down)  
Not too late yet.

JESSIE:  
It's not. Green-

MANNY:  
We got another winner, folks, green it is.

JESSIE:  
You hungry?

MANNY:  
I'm starving.

JESSIE:  
I made some lemon chicken.

MANNY:  
You had time to cook?

JESSIE:  
Cooking always manages its way into my life. Don't make a  
mess. I cleaned up already.

MANNY:  
I don't make a mess.

JESSIE:  
Yes, you do. You leave crumbs everywhere. I Left you and  
Louis a plate in the fridge in case he stops by.

(Beat)

JESSIE:  
You think he'll stop by?

MANNY:  
I don't know.

JESSIE:  
You seen him?

MANNY:  
No. You?

JESSIE:  
He was supposed to pick me up from work and come over for dinner. That was last week.

MANNY:  
He'll swing by. He always does.

JESSIE:  
You think he's okay?

MANNY:  
I know he is. Did Mom eat?

JESSIE:  
No. She didn't touch a thing.  
*(going into her bag, taking out money)*

Here-

MANNY:  
What's this for?

JESSIE:  
A haircut.

MANNY:  
I get paid after my show on Saturday.

JESSIE:  
You can't go in looking like that.

MANNY:  
Like what?

JESSIE:  
Without a haircut. Girls need to see your face. Get yourself laid.

MANNY:

I get laid anyway.

JESSIE:

Yeah, but at least look decent when you do.

MANNY:

*(putting the twenty  
in his pocket)*

You coming?

JESSIE:

Wouldn't miss it. I'm proud of you, I mean it.

MANNY:

I know.

*(beat)*

They called me to come back.

JESSIE:

That's amazing.

MANNY:

I'm pretty pumped up. It's all I think about.

JESSIE:

*(hugs Manny)*

Makes me happy. Let me get inside, I have to get up early tomorrow.

MANNY:

Thought you were off?

JESSIE:

Need the hours. I always need the hours.

*(The stage lights come up to  
the right on MOM in the kitchen.  
She holds a robe, hair towel,  
and hairbrush in her arms.  
MANNY and JESSIE walk into the  
apartment towards the kitchen.)*

*(JESSIE looks over at MANNY.)*

JESSIE:

*(to Manny)*

She knew... she knew I needed to be held in her arms.

MOM:

You want me to help you dry your hair?

JESSIE:

I can do it in the morning, Mom.

MOM:

I have some time now.

*(MOM helps JESSIE put on her robe. JESSIE sits on one of the kitchen chairs. MANNY is completely still.)*

MOM:

*(brushing Jessie's hair)*

Winter will surprise everyone early this year. Give us all a fever.

JESSIE:

You cold, Momma?

MOM:

My ears are always cold.

JESSIE:

Momma...

MOM:

Yes?

JESSIE:

I'm nervous inside all of the time. It never goes away.

MOM:

It won't. Do you hear echoes in your prayers?

JESSIE:

No.

MOM:

You need to pray when the skies are clear. Clouds absorb the echoes.

*(Mom holds Jessie's face.)*

MOM:

Look at me.

*(caressing Jessie's face)*

Promise me you will.

JESSIE:

I promise, Momma.

*(MOM wraps her arms around JESSIE, holding her tight. Beat. MOM drops the hairbrush.)*

*A spotlight to the far right of the stage reveals the same man from the opening scene. He is on the floor, lying in small pool of his own blood. MOM covers her eyes.)*

JESSIE:  
*(looking over her shoulder)*

Momma what's wrong? You're scaring me-

*(MOM lets out a bloodcurdling scream and takes a few steps back into the dark on stage, out of sight.)*

JESSIE:  
*(screaming)*

Mom! Tell me what's wrong! Please tell me what's wrong, I'm begging you, Momma! Please!

*(The entire stage goes black. Except for a soft spotlight on the man on the ground. The man manages to make it to his feet. Still disoriented, he stares at the blood on his hands. He traces his index finger over the bullet lodged in his neck. He takes out his keys. The stage goes black. Keys can be heard opening a door. In complete darkness, we can hear JESSIE'S voice in the background.)*

JESSIE:

She died in my arms.

*(Beat.)*

JESSIE:

I was drinking a lot- swollen from it. I could see it in my face, under my eyes. I could even smell it in my pee. I could never console her. I was angry at everyone, everything... the world.

*(The main stage lights come back up. JESSIE still sits in the same chair. We are no longer in the kitchen. The background has changed.)*

We are in JESSIE'S childhood bedroom. A white crib, a twin bed, baby clothes, and other newborn items are scattered all over. JESSIE drinks Vodka straight out of the bottle. She stares at the crib. MANNY hasn't moved. Baby cries can be heard coming from the crib. She wraps her pillow over her face, covering her ears. She takes down another gulp of Vodka.)

JESSIE:

She would cry all the time. I could never make her feel safe in my arms.

(rubbing her belly)

I'm hollow.

(she inhales and  
exhales very deeply)

God has punished me. Poisoned my lungs.

(The baby starts crying again.  
JESSIE walks over and picks  
her up.)

JESSIE:

Don't cry, don't cry-

(swaying back and  
forth)

Shh, shh, Mommy is here.

(The baby continues crying.  
JESSIE becomes very angry.  
She stomps her left foot on  
the ground and presses the  
baby's face into her chest,  
muffling her cries. After a  
few moments, the crying stops.  
MOM appears, startling JESSIE.  
MOM storms over and takes the  
baby from her arms. MOM stares  
at the motionless baby. With  
her free hand MOM grabs JESSIE  
by the hair and slaps her hard  
in the face twice. MOM places  
the baby back in the crib  
facedown. MOM grabs JESSIE by  
the neck and violently forces  
her onto the bed.)

MOM:

Goddamn you!

(MORE)

MOM: (CONT'D)  
*(grabbing Jessie by  
the hair)*

You call the police in the morning and tell them you found  
her like that! You found her just like that!

*(Choking Jessie)*

God will close the gates of heaven on you!

*(MOM lets JESSIE go and exits  
the bedroom slamming the door  
behind her. JESSIE sits up  
gasping for air.)*

JESSIE:

*(to Manny)*

She died in her sleep! Right, Manny? I know that's what  
happened!

*(The lights fade.)*

(END OF ACT)

ACT IScene 2

SETTING:

*THE MAN with the gun wound is in a kitchen listening to the early morning 1010 WINS news on the radio. He pours himself a black cup of coffee. He holds film negatives under the light. As he's viewing them, each image takes up the backdrop on stage. THE MAN takes his camera off the table and walks over to the center of the stage facing the audience. We can see his face clearly now. A .380 caliber bullet is lodged in his neck. His white shirt is covered in blood from the waist up. The stage quickly goes black. A camera flash goes off.*

AT RISE:

*Later, back alley. MANNY is taking out the trash.*

MANNY

*(flinching)*

Christ, Luey! You scared the shit out of me- what are you doing here?

LOUIS

I can't be alone.

MANNY

You want to come upstairs?

LOUIS

Can't be alone anymore. I don't like it.

MANNY

Your face looks swollen. What happened?

LOUIS:

...Shadows make faces.

MANNY:

Shadows?



LOUIS:

You know, the ones that watch you while you sleep. They don't wait around until I close my eyes anymore.

*(blood gushes out  
of his nose)*

Fuck me! It's so damn hot. Heat- wave is going to suffocate us all-

*(annoyed, pinching  
his nose)*

What is it a hundred out?

MANNY:

Almost. You need some tissue?

LOUIS:

*(placing tissue  
over his nose and  
holding his head  
back)*

I got it. You know what it means if it goes over a hundred?

MANNY:

What's that?

LOUIS:

Devil comes out to play. He thinks no one is watching. But I see him. I don't blink, you know. Got my eyes on him all the time.

*(looking over his  
shoulder, whispering)*

I'm going to kill him.

MANNY:

Kill who?

LOUIS:

The devil.

*(smiling)*

It's in the cards... my destiny. The hand I was dealt.

*(Beat.)*

LOUIS:

I have a plan.

MANNY:

You have a plan?

LOUIS:

I sure do. Can't tell anyone.

MANNY:

I won't.

LOUIS:  
You didn't cross your heart.

MANNY:  
*(crossing his heart)*  
Cross my heart.

LOUIS:  
Do it with your left hand. Double seal it.

*(MANNY slowly crosses his heart  
with his left hand.)*

MANNY:  
Cross my heart, double-sealed.

LOUIS:  
*(leans in close to  
Manny, whispering,  
not to be overheard)*  
I'll pretend I'm asleep, close my eyes long enough. Let him  
get close... and when he does...

*(laughing, placing  
a knife to his own  
neck)*

I'll cut his throat.  
*(looking over his  
shoulder again,  
placing his index  
finger over his  
lips)*

It's going to work. You just can't tell anyone.

*(A holographic shadow with  
horns on its head creeps up  
behind LOUIS. As MANNY looks  
over, it disappears. )*

LOUIS:  
*(taking Manny's  
hand, placing it  
over his heart)*  
...My heart is going to explode.  
*(Closing his eyes)*  
Can never get it to slow down, no matter what I do.

MANNY:  
It's not going to explode.

LOUIS:  
*(rolling his eyes)*  
Yes it is! Why doesn't anyone ever believe me?  
*(MORE)*

LOUIS: (CONT'D)  
(*Louis takes both  
of Manny's hands  
and places them  
over his heart*)

Press hard, don't let it come out. The devil wants it, I know he does.

MANNY:  
(*placing his arm  
over Louis's  
shoulders*)

The devil doesn't want your heart. I promise you, Luey-

LOUIS:  
I can't look, is it coming out?

MANNY:  
No. It's right where it belongs-  
(*placing his ear on  
Louis's chest*)  
Where it's supposed to be.

LOUIS:  
You sure?

MANNY:  
(*listening*)  
I hear it, sounds fine. Sound's perfectly fine.

(*LOUIS places his arms around  
MANNY, holding him tight.*)

LOUIS:  
I missed you.  
(*grunts*)

MANNY:  
What's wrong?

LOUIS:  
(*picking up his  
shirt*)  
It's nothing.

MANNY:  
What happened? Let me see.

LOUIS:  
(*smacking Manny's  
hand away*)  
Don't touch it.

MANNY:

I wasn't going to. Let me see.

LOUIS:

Got into a bar fight. Son of a bitch almost got me.

MANNY:

Christ- Luey, you could of been killed.

LOUIS:

*(shadow boxing)*

Not with these hands.

MANNY:

You were supposed to come over last week, what happened?  
Where you been? Jessie's worried.

LOUIS:

I forgot. Tell her to stop worrying about me.

MANNY:

Look what happened.

LOUIS:

I'm fine, I told you. It was a small knife.

MANNY:

You went to the hospital?

LOUIS:

*(showing wound to  
Manny)*

Four stitches, I think.

MANNY:

Supposed to look like that?

LOUIS:

I don't know. Never been stabbed before.

MANNY:

How am I not going to tell Jessie?

LOUIS:

Just don't. I got it.

*(reassuring, placing  
his arm around  
Manny)*

She's a worry wart.

*(taking out a wad  
of cash from inside  
his pants)*

Take this. Give it to Jessie. She'll know what to do with  
it. Pay some bills, get her hair done.

(MORE)

LOUIS: (CONT'D)  
*(placing cash into  
 Manny's front pocket)*  
 Take this too. Get yourself some sneakers, a few shirts.  
 Solid colors, no stripes. Girls don't like stripes.

MANNY:  
*(starts to separate  
 bills, then claps  
 his hand over was  
 of cash)*  
 Where you get it?

LOUIS:  
*(ignoring the  
 question, staring  
 into space, digging  
 into his pockets)*  
 Been taking these-  
*(shows Manny pills)*  
 My new doctor gave 'em to me. Said they may help.  
*(staring intently  
 at pills, rubbing  
 them in between  
 his thumb and middle  
 finger)*  
 Found out they prescribe these to blind people. When they  
 can't tell day from night anymore. Supposed to help instill  
 a sense of reality. A distinct... distinction between the  
 sun and the stars.

LOUIS:  
*(laughing  
 uncontrollably)*  
 Can you believe that? I can't tell day from night anymore.

*(MANNY doesn't move. LOUIS  
 faces the audience. A  
 holographic landscape takes up  
 the entire backdrop of the  
 stage.)*

*(A blinding ice fog surrounds  
 the entire stage settling in  
 over the cracked horizon.  
 LOUIS hangs empty clear colored  
 glass bottles on a willow tree  
 just to the right of old  
 abandoned railroad tracks.  
 Grey coated wolves can be seen  
 running over the tracks,  
 following the moon.)*

We are in LOUIS'S dream. The birth of the star constellation Orion engulfs the stage and slowly expands across entire auditorium. Turbulent waves of rust colored gas clouds collide with the remains of an exploded star. The Moon can be seen to the upper right of the stage. It falls slowly out of the night sky. Another pack of wolves run across the tracks, howling into the night. The background begins to dissolve out, except for the Moon which magnifies in size. A playground swing appears in the center of the stage. LOUIS runs over and hops on the swing.)

LOUIS:  
(speaking to the audience)

Our conceptualized, conception of reality... is based on what our eyes can see.

(touching his eyes with his middle and index finger.)

In here, without a visual, you can't convince yourself of what is real. Your mind is left on its own, to defend for itself. It is why we dream... to compensate and cope for the lost light spectrum of time.

(He leans over and picks up one of the empty glass bottles on the ground. He holds it close to his eyes.)

LOUIS:  
(swinging himself)

You should be able to see your reflection, from time to time. It should surprise you. Like a good fuck should come... unannounced.

(The background opens up to reveal LOUIS'S old elementary school yard playground. It is time for recess. Kids can be seen running, laughing, jumping, and playing tag.

*But it is dark outside and the projected moving images of all the children in the schoolyard, move in slow motion and are slightly blurred.)*

LOUIS:

We all have it in common. The "falling out of the sky" dream. It is what connects us to one another. Some of us never wake from it. Sometimes, we are all sharing the same dream with someone else at the exact same time. We could all be in each other's dream, right now. Most of our beliefs and thoughts about this world are formed between the ages of two and seven. When most of our learning and processing is absorbed. Nightmares disrupt that process and some of us become nocturnal... unable to form sleeping habits.

*(The recess bell rings. LOUIS ignores it and keeps swinging himself.)*

LOUIS:

*(staring back into the audience)*

Your subconscious mind can reveal to you anything you need to know. It can even tell you the day you're going to die.

*(walking over to the moon, staring at his reflection)*

If I get close enough to it, I can see my eyes. The way God gave them to me.

*(touching the moon)*

It's warm. Hollow on the inside. All of our childhood dreams that we can no longer remember... are trapped inside.

*(He sits back on the swing and wraps a shoelace around his arm, popping his veins. He takes out a lighter, a small clear bag and prepares his brown sugar cougar candy. The process is ritualistic. He is patient and poised as he sways back and forth on the swing. He cooks his heroin and takes out a needle from a zip lock bag.)*

LOUIS:

Dreams are immune to temperature. To its physical quantity... relative to our disturbed existence. The forecasted thunderstorms in your imagination allow your conscious mind to believe...

(MORE)

LOUIS: (CONT'D)  
*(laughing)*  
 that the storm has passed.

*(The "rush" as we know it,  
 kisses Louis on the lips. He  
 almost falls backwards off the  
 swing, but doesn't.)*

LOUIS:  
*(kneeling on the  
 floor)*  
 Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.

MANNY:  
 Go on my son.

LOUIS:  
 I have never been to confession.

MANNY:  
 Neither, have I.

LOUIS:  
 Jesus has spoken to me.

MANNY:  
 What did Jesus say?

LOUIS:  
 Days before he was betrayed by Judas, uncharted shadows  
 taunted him, making faces.  
*(making the sign of  
 the cross)*  
 We are all capable of the worst of sin. If we think  
 otherwise, we are deluded and have no idea how much we owe  
 it to the grace of God. To his forth-coming...

*(MANNY kneels down.)*

LOUIS:  
 ...Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle- be our  
 protector against the-

MANNY/LOUIS:  
*(speaking  
 simultaneously)*  
 -Wickedness and snares of the devil- May God rebuke him, we  
 humbly pray...and do thou, O prince of the heavenly host,  
 the power of God, cast into hell Satan... and all evil spirits  
 who wander through the world seeking the ruin of souls- amen.

*(The background on stage  
 dissolves out.)*



*We are back in the hallway,  
just outside of the apartment.)*

MANNY:  
*(helping Louis stand  
up)*

You should eat something. You want to come in? Jessie fixed you a plate.

LOUIS:  
Not right now... don't want Momma to see me like this.

MANNY:  
Yeah, maybe you're right. You want to take it with you?

LOUIS:  
Yeah, I can do that.

MANNY:  
I'll be right back.

*(He enters the kitchen to the  
left of the stage.)*

JESSIE:  
What are you doing?

MANNY:  
What does it look like I'm doing? I'm in the fridge.

JESSIE:  
Keep it down sassy ass. I just got Mom to sleep.

MANNY:  
*(rummaging through  
the fridge)*  
Where's Louis's plate?

JESSIE:  
He's here?

MANNY:  
He's outside.

JESSIE:  
Why doesn't he come in?

MANNY:  
*(whispering)*  
Somebody stabbed him.

JESSIE:  
(*keeping her voice  
down*)

My God, is he okay?

MANNY:

I think so.

JESSIE:  
(*taking over*)

Hold on, I have Tupperware.

MANNY:

Let me get him some water.

JESSIE:

You think this is enough?

MANNY:

That's good-

JESSIE:  
(*her hands tremble*)

Hold on, put it in here. Get me some napkins. I'll go out with you, I want to see him, hold this-

(*Kitchen lights come on.*)

MOM:

What are you two doing?

MANNY:

Nothing, Mom.

MOM:

Who is that for?

(*raising her voice*)

Answer me!

JESSIE:

It's for me, I'm taking it to work tomorrow.

MOM:  
(*raising her voice*)

Don't you lie to me! Is that for your Goddamned junkie brother!

JESSIE:

Mom, no-

(*MOM pushes Jessie out of the way and grabs a kitchen knife, as MANNY approaches, MOM slaps his face.*)

MANNY:

Mom! What the hell is wrong with you!

*(MOM knocks the Tupperware out of JESSIE'S hands.)*

JESSIE:

*(screaming)*

Mom! Stop!

MOM:

*(pointing the knife)*

Get back! I told you! I don't want him around you or any of us! He is poison! He is not my son! He's a Goddamned junkie! He is damned to the dark!

*(MANNY overpowers MOM, bending her arm back until she drops the knife.)*

MANNY:

*(slamming his fist on the stove)*

He is not a junkie, Ma! Look at this fucking mess! What did you go and do that for! Dammit!

MOM:

Don't you damn me! Don't you dare!

MANNY:

Fuck, Ma!

*(He pushes her out of the way and takes a tall glass of water with him. He slams the door shut behind him.)*

*(LOUIS is gone. MANNY walks back into the apartment and pours the water down the sink, slamming the glass down on the counter.)*

MOM:

*(crying)*

You damned me-

MANNY:

I didn't damn you, Mom! I didn't mean to say that.

*(MOM runs into MANNY'S arms.)*

MOM:  
(*clutching her chest*)  
Bring him to me! I need to see him! Bring him to my arms!  
(*Pushing Manny  
towards the door*)

MANNY:  
He's gone Ma-

MOM:  
(*quivering*)  
I can make him something to eat-  
(*taking out a skillet  
and some eggs from  
the refrigerator*)  
Some eggs the way he likes-

(*MANNY opens the apartment  
door.*)

MANNY:  
He's gone, Ma! Look, he's fucking gone! You made him go  
away!

MOM:  
Don't say that!

(*MOM starts cleaning up the  
mess, crying hysterically.  
JESSIE starts to help. MOM  
stands up and throws her arms  
around MANNY, squeezing him.*)

MOM:  
Don't you leave me!

MANNY:  
I'm not going to leave you Ma, c'mon. I'll tuck you in.

(*MOM'S bedroom appears to the  
right of the stage. MANNY  
tucks MOM into bed. JESSIE  
continues cleaning up in the  
kitchen.*)

MOM:  
You don't hug me anymore.

MANNY:  
(*hugs Mom*)  
I will, Mom.

MOM:

*(stokes Manny's  
hair)*

You're my youngest, my baby boy.

MANNY:

Here Ma, pillow for your feet.

MOM:

A baby sparrow landed on my hand once... saved me from crossing the river. I would of drowned. Sparrows are omens of death.

*(MANNY walks out of the bedroom,  
turning off the lights, and  
closing the door behind him.)*

MANNY:

Get some sleep, Ma. Goodnight.

*(He walks back into the  
kitchen.)*

JESSIE:

You put her feet up?

MANNY:

Yeah.

JESSIE:

Want some ice for your face?

MANNY:

*(sitting down)*

No.

JESSIE:

*(placing a tea kettle  
on the stove)*

What's this?

MANNY:

Louis gave it to me, for you.

JESSIE:

*(counting the cash)*

This is two thousand dollars. Where did he get it from?

MANNY:

I don't know.

JESSIE:

I don't like the way this feels.

MANNY:  
I don't either. But, we could use it.  
*(taking more cash  
out of his pockets,  
handing it to Jessie)*  
Here, take this too.

*(JESSIE takes the money and  
hides it under the  
refrigerator.)*

JESSIE:  
You want some tea?

MANNY:  
It's too hot for tea.

JESSIE:  
It will make me feel better.

MANNY:  
I'll take some then.

JESSIE:  
*(handing Manny a  
card)*  
This is for you.

MANNY:  
What is it?

JESSIE:  
Open it.

MANNY:  
From Javi?  
*(reading invitation)*  
Birthday party?

JESSIE:  
His fortieth.

*(Beat.)*

JESSIE:  
He's been home a few months.

MANNY:  
You tell me now?

JESSIE:  
He wanted to settle his feet, buy some furniture. Wants us  
all together, for his birthday.

MANNY:  
Forty? Wow, I remember the police knocking on the door.

JESSIE:  
You remember that?

MANNY:  
I do.

JESSIE:  
Turned himself in a few days later. It was in the papers.

MANNY:  
What happened?

JESSIE:  
I don't really know.

*(The tea kettle goes off.)*

MANNY:  
Tea is done.

*(JESSIE lets the kettle whistle for a few.)*

JESSIE:  
I love that sound. Reminds me of a stolen train.  
*(taking down two mugs)*  
You want a sugar cookie?

MANNY:  
Do I? Hello, yes.  
*(chewing)*  
You made 'em?

JESSIE:  
Did I? Hello, yes. Baking helps me relax.

MANNY:  
Hmm, sugar.

JESSIE:  
*(pouring tea into mugs)*  
He would write to you, you know. Mom would burn the letter in the sink, cry her eyes out.  
*(she pours honey into Manny's tea)*  
She didn't want any distractions for you.

MANNY:  
I can't wait to see him.  
*(MORE)*

MANNY: (CONT'D)  
(*reading address on  
invitation*)

104 Ridge? That's a few blocks away.

JESSIE:  
He moved in with his lawyer assistant. She's his girlfriend  
now. She helped get him out early.

MANNY:  
How'd she do that?

JESSIE:  
Don't know, but she did.

MANNY:  
Louis going?

JESSIE:  
Told him already.

MANNY:  
Think he'll show?

JESSIE:  
He will.

(*Beat.*)

MANNY:  
I can bring one of my mixes.

JESSIE:  
He'd like that. Told him you DJ- make music. Listen to me-

MANNY:  
What?

JESSIE:  
You listening?

MANNY:  
Yeah, what?

JESSIE:  
Your music, that's your one-way greyhound ticket out of here.  
You hear me?

(*Manny nods yes.*)

JESSIE:  
I'm serious Manny. When you get on the bus, just buy a one-  
way ticket. Never come back.



MANNY:

Okay.

JESSIE:

Never.

MANNY:

Okay.

JESSIE:

All you can do in this world is follow your heart. It won't betray you. When you don't, you end up lost, asking for directions for the rest of your life.

*(beat)*

Dad would say that.

MANNY:

Follow your heart?

JESSIE:

That's it.

*(handing Manny  
another cookie)*

Let me put these away. Save a few for Mom, she likes them with her coffee in the morning. Don't eat 'em.

MANNY:

I won't.

JESSIE:

I'm serious.

MANNY:

I'm not.

JESSIE:

You like the tea?

MANNY:

No.

JESSIE:

So why you drinking it?

MANNY:

'Cause you like it.

JESSIE:

*(smiling)*

It's chamomile. Supposed to help you sleep.

*(Beat.)*

MANNY:  
You still with that guy?

JESSIE:  
Why you asking?

MANNY:  
Serious?

JESSIE:  
No. Passing time.

MANNY:  
You passing it around now?

JESSIE:  
Shut up.

MANNY:  
You ever think about getting married?

JESSIE:  
Where did that come from?

MANNY:  
Grown up talk.

JESSIE:  
Now we're having grown up talk?

MANNY:  
You like that one huh?

JESSIE:  
I do.

*(Beat.)*

JESSIE:  
I don't know anymore. Not every girl falls in love or wants to. I still haven't fallen in love with myself, or found my way out of this forest for that fact.

*(A long beat.)*

JESSIE:  
...I'm leaving soon.

MANNY:  
How soon?

JESSIE:  
Sooner than later. I need to quench the thirst inside me for a distance.

MANNY:

Where you gonna go?

JESSIE:

Not sure yet. As long as I can face east and far away enough,  
to where my memories can't find me...

*(rubbing her neck)*

I'll be okay.

MANNY:

You going to say goodbye before you leave?

JESSE:

Already started.

MANNY:

I'm going to miss you, girl. What are you going to do when  
you get to wherever you're going?

JESSIE:

Plant some lavender and movie star roses. Get a dog, call  
him Bubbles.

MANNY:

*(laughing)*

Bubbles?

JESSIE:

What's wrong with 'Bubbles'?

MANNY:

He's going be a sissy dog.

JESSIE:

No, he's not.

MANNY:

Yes, he is. He's going to bark like a sissy too.

JESSIE:

No, he's not. He's going to love his momma and protect her.

MANNY:

Don't cut his balls.

JESSIE:

I'm not going to cut his balls.

MANNY:

Good, don't. Can't have a dog with no balls.

*(beat. looking around)*

Why have we never left this place?

JESSIE:

Too many broken pieces to pick up. Mom tried to keep us glued together. She didn't know anything else.

*(gets up and places the mugs  
in the sink.)*

JESSIE:

I can't find mom's sleeping pills.

*(The lights fade.)*

(END OF ACT)

ACT IScene 3

SETTING:

*LOUIS is asleep on the same schoolyard swing. He has his pajamas on and is covered in a light-colored blue blanket. It is deep Montana cold in his dream. Everything is frozen. Louis tries to keep warm. A rusted white with navy blue lighthouse can be seen in the far distance. A sudden catastrophic ocean wave as high as the clouds engulfs the stage, crashing into the lighthouse and knocking it over into the ocean.*

AT RISE:

LOUIS is waking up.

LOUIS:  
*(coming out of it,  
frightened)*

Mom! Mom where are you!

*(MOM runs out onto the stage.)*

MOM:  
I'm right here baby! What's wrong?  
*(wrapping her arms  
around Louis)*  
Honey you're shaking-

LOUIS:  
I had a bad dream.

MOM:  
Come here, it's okay, Momma is here with you. Nothing to be afraid of.

LOUIS:  
A huge wave crashed into the lighthouse, knocked it over. It was scary Mom. I saw footprints leading into the ocean, like a ghost Momma. Everything was cold, frozen to the touch. I could not find the moon in the sky... no matter how hard I tried.

(MORE)

LOUIS: (CONT'D)  
(*staring into Mom's  
eyes*)

It was gone.

MOM:  
It was just a dream. Nothing at all to be afraid of.

LOUIS:  
Do I have to go to school tomorrow, Mom?

MOM:  
(*hesitant at first*)  
No.

LOUIS:  
Can I play jacks?

MOM:  
Just one game okay?

LOUIS:  
(*excited*)  
Okay, Momma.

(*He jumps off the swing and  
sits on the floor taking out  
his jacks. He meticulously  
places each one on the floor.*)

LOUIS:  
(*having a tantrum*)  
Mom!

MOM:  
What is it? What's wrong?

LOUIS:  
I lost my ball! I can't find it! I just had it in my hand!  
It was right here!

MOM:  
I'll help you look for it.

LOUIS:  
No! No! He took it! I know he did!

MOM:  
(*grabbing the blanket  
off the swing and  
covering Louis.*)  
No one took it, you're still dreaming-

LOUIS:  
I'm not dreaming Momma! I'm awake right? Can't you tell Momma?

MOM:  
Come here, my baby-

LOUIS:  
Tell him to give it back!  
*(pointing to the ground)*  
It's not his, it's mine!

MOM:  
Come sit with me- Shh...it's okay, it's okay.

*(Louis sits on her lap. Mom hold him in her arms.)*

MOM:  
Shh, that's it, go to sleep.

LOUIS:  
Am I awake right now momma?

MOM:  
You are.

LOUIS:  
It doesn't feel that way?

MOM:  
Sometimes, when we wake up from our dreams, it can feel as if you are still in the dream. They feel real, but they are not.

LOUIS:  
How can that be?

MOM:  
Can you hear my voice?

LOUIS:  
Yes, Momma.

MOM:  
*(taking Louis' hand)*  
Can you feel my hand?

LOUIS:  
Yes, Momma.

MOM:  
Does all of this feel real?

LOUIS:  
No Momma. Your face is blurry.

*(Dark on stage. A spotlight comes up on MANNY in the kitchen, who is studying. MOM walks in. She opens the refrigerator and pours a glass of milk, placing it on the table. MOM kisses MANNY on the forehead.)*

MANNY:  
Can't sleep?

MOM:  
*(holding Manny's face)*  
Not anymore.

MANNY:  
I have trouble falling asleep too.

MOM:  
*(pressing Manny to her stomach)*  
I knew you were going to be a morning baby.  
*(she stares into Manny's eyes.)*  
You remind me of your father. Dark in the eyes. Uninviting.  
Keep a woman guessing of your desires for her.

*(Beat.)*

MOM:  
He would hold you in his arms all day.  
*(caressing Manny's face)*  
Watch you sleep.

MANNY:  
I remember his voice. Running to wherever it was coming from.

MOM:  
So would I.

MANNY:  
What's empty inside Momma?

MOM:  
My dollhouse. Lost the key in the flood... rains swept them all away.



(MOM pushes the glass of milk closer to MANNY and he finishes it off. MOM takes the glass to the sink and disappears into the dark on stage.)

(The THE MAN with the bloody wound to his neck walks into the kitchen. He sits down on one of the chairs beside MANNY. THE MAN pours himself a cup of coffee and turns on the morning radio news. He takes out the ironing board from behind the refrigerator and presses his dress shirt, placing his coffee cup on the end of the ironing board. MANNY takes the invitation and walks off stage. THE MAN sips his coffee and stares directly into the audience. He continues pressing his shirt. Stage goes black.)

(END OF ACT)

ACT IIScene 1

SETTING:

*Later. 11:33 pm. Same Tenement  
back alley walkway.*

AT RISE:

*MANNY is suddenly surrounded  
by two men. Two more men stand  
at each of the street corners  
as look outs. MARCELLO  
RODRIGUEZ, mid-thirties, walks  
out onto the stage. He has a  
slight limp and wears dark  
aviators.*

MARCELLO RODRIGUEZ:  
Permission needs to be granted to cross through here. You  
have a hall pass?

MANNY:  
I didn't know, I needed one.

MARCELLO RODRIGUEZ:  
It's an honest mistake. We all make mistakes. Makes us  
vulnerable.

*(He walks over to one of his  
guys. They whisper into each  
other's ear. MARCELLO walks  
back over to MANNY.)*

MARCELLO RODRIGUEZ:  
You, Louis's brother?

MANNY:  
Yeah.

MARCELLO RODRIGUEZ:  
I've seen you around. You have a sister, Jessie right?

*(MANNY does not respond.)*

MARCELLO RODRIGUEZ:  
You brother Louis, he around?

MANNY:  
No.

MARCELLO RODRIGUEZ:

At all?

MANNY:

Haven't see him in a few days.

MARCELLO RODRIGUEZ:

Makes two of us.

MARCELLO RODRIGUEZ:

*(taking out some  
gum, offering MANNY  
a piece)*

Gum?

*(Manny shakes his head "no".)*

MARCELLO RODRIGUEZ:

Can I buy you a soda or something?

MANNY:

I don't drink soda.

MARCELLO RODRIGUEZ:

Good. Neither do I.

*(taking out another  
piece of gum)*

The American Indians chewed resin made from the sap of spruce trees, what we call gum today. Government would lace the gum they'd give to soldiers with cocaine. Increase their heart rates, blood flow to the brain. Keep 'em up for hours.

*(taking the gum out  
of his mouth  
spreading it open  
on his hand and  
sprinkling cocaine  
into the gum,  
placing it back in  
his mouth.)*

Your sister leaves pretty early for work in the mornings. She should be careful. It's dangerous out.

*(Beat.)*

MARCELLO RODRIGUEZ:

Tell your brother he needs to come see me.

*(The stage goes dark, except  
for the soft spotlight that  
stays on MANNY who does not  
move.)*

*(The right side of the stage  
opens up.)*

We are in one of the newly renovated original tenement buildings along Ridge Street. RACHEL, in her early thirties, stands with her arms crossed. Her natural curves make all her jeans look good. JAVIER, with his back to the stage, is running on a treadmill.) (A large tattoo that reads "Salvation" covers his entire back, with two wings over his shoulders. The basement storage room has been converted into a man cave. Weights and boxing gear are scattered all over. In the background a large French painting easel and paint supplies are strewn about. A mural painting of the beach by sunset covers the entire wall. Two New York Yankee beach chairs rest side by side, and a small CD radio sets on one of the chairs. The spotlight on MANNY goes dark.)

RACHEL:  
(turning off the  
radio)

This is how it works? Every time, I try to talk to you- you ignore me? Shut me out!

JAVIER:  
(getting off the  
treadmill)

Don't do that. The radio was on when you came in correct? No one told you to turn it off! I'm ignoring you? That's what it feels like?

RACHEL:  
Yes! That's what it feels like!

JAVIER:  
Good! Then, that's what I'm doing! Ignoring you!  
(turning the radio  
back on)

Go upstairs!

RACHEL:  
*(she waits until  
Javier gets back  
on the treadmill,  
and turns the radio  
off again)*

Don't you shut me out!

*(JAVIER jumps off the treadmill,  
and kicks the CD radio player  
off the chair.)*

JAVIER:  
Didn't I tell you to go upstairs?

RACHEL:  
*(not backing down)*  
You're not telling me what to do!

JAVIER  
This is your problem!  
*(forcefully, grabbing  
Rachel's arm)*  
You don't know when to shut the fuck up!

RACHEL:  
I should get used to being alone?!

JAVIER  
Did I say that?  
*(walking away from  
Rachel)*  
I don't want to talk to you right now!

RACHEL:  
*(loud)*  
You never want to talk to me!

JAVIER  
Maybe, you're just someone I can't talk to!

RACHEL:  
Leave then!

*(JAVIER walks away from RACHEL,  
giving her his back. JAVIER  
starts jumping rope. RACHEL  
sticks her hand out and grabs  
the jump rope.)*

JAVIER  
*(slamming the jump  
rope on the ground)*  
I am!

*(RACHEL runs and grabs his keys and sticks them in her pants and blocks the door.)*

RACHEL:  
I'll tell you when you can leave!

JAVIER:  
*(lowering his voice)*  
Rachel, give me the keys-

RACHEL:  
You want to walk out! Huh?  
*(throwing the keys at Javier, hitting him in the chest)*  
Is that what you want!

*(JAVIER looses it and grabs her by the throat, picking her up and slamming her on the couch.)*

RACHEL:  
*(fighting back)*  
You want to kill me! Is that it!

JAVIER:  
Don't push it Rachel! 'Cause I'll do it! I'll fucking kill you!

RACHEL:  
Stop calling me by my name! I fucking hate it!

JAVIER:  
*(pushing Rachel back down)*  
Everything with you is a Goddamned fight!

RACHEL:  
Take your keys and leave! Go ahead! Walk out on me and our baby!

*(This stops JAVIER cold in his tracks.)*

RACHEL:  
I'm not having another abortion... I'm too far along, not to have it.

*(The lights fade.)*

(END OF ACT)

ACT IIScene 2

SETTING:

*Later. JAVIER has his arms  
around RACHEL, holding her  
tight.*

AT RISE:

*A knock on the door. The  
spotlight come back up on MANNY.*

JAVIER:  
*(placing his index  
finger over his  
lips, backing RACHEL  
away from the door)*

Come here.

*(taking his gun out  
from under the  
sofa)*

Don't move.

*(cautiously walking  
towards the door)*

Who is it?

MANNY:  
It's me Manny. I'm looking for my brother Javi-

JAVIER:  
*(running back to  
the couch, placing  
the gun back under  
the sofa)*

Open the door, it's my kid brother Manny-

RACHEL:  
*(straightening up a  
bit)*

Put on a shirt.

*(opening the door)*

Hi-

MANNY:  
Hey-

RACHEL:  
I'm Rachel, come in.

JAVIER:  
(*overcome with emotion*)  
Christ all mighty himself-  
(*covering his eyes with his thumb and index finger*)  
He's a grown man Rachel. Look at him.

(*A short pause, while JAVIER gathers himself.*)

JAVIER:  
(*tearful*)  
Jesus, look at you- Come here!  
(*hugging Manny, picking him up off the ground*)  
It's my kid brother!

RACHEL:  
He looks like you.

JAVIER:  
He does, doesn't he?  
(*to Manny*)  
Look at you boy!  
(*picking Manny up in a bear hug*)  
A grown man!

RACHEL:  
I'm going to go see my mother's. Let you boys catch up.

MANNY:  
(*choked up*)  
I can come back?

RACHEL:  
No, no, you stay here. You boys have some catching up to do. My mother's is a few minutes away.

JAVIER:  
You staying over?

RACHEL:  
Not sure yet.

JAVIER:  
I'll pick you up.

RACHEL:  
(*to Manny*)  
You coming to the party Saturday?



MANNY:

I'll be here.

RACHEL:

You better. He didn't want a party, but I made sure he was having one.

JAVIER:

Call me when you get to your mother's.

RACHEL:

I will.

JAVIER:

Don't forget.

RACHEL:

I won't. He's so bossy. You're not going to kiss me in front of your brother?

*(JAVIER kisses RACHEL hard.)*

RACHEL:

You better.

*(to Manny)*

It was nice meeting you. See you Saturday?

MANNY:

See you Saturday.

JAVIER

Don't forget to call me.

RACHEL:

I won't.

*(JAVIER closes the door behind her.)*

JAVIER

Come in, come in. Make yourself at home.

MANNY:

I didn't mean to just show up- Jessie gave me the invitation.

JAVIER:

*(hugging again)*

No worries man, I can't believe it's you. Can I get you something to drink? Some water? How about a beer?

MANNY:

A beer sounds good.

JAVIER:

I only drink Heineken.

MANNY:

Heineken it is. This is cool down here. Invitation said basement- but this no basement.

JAVIER:

It is pretty cool, huh? This used to be the coal room, before they converted the building to heating oil. Rachel's father owns the building. We're on the fourth floor. He has a couple of buildings in the neighborhood. I was able to take this space over. Look over here, this is where the coal shaft used to be.

*(pointing up)*

And this back door over here, leads to this old beer prohibition warehouse, that was once connected to the building.

*(handing Manny a beer)*

Pretty high-level cool huh?

MANNY:

That is pretty-high level. Thank you.

JAVIER:

You got it. You lift weights?

MANNY:

I do a lot of push-ups.

JAVIER:

That's all you need. The basics. Push-ups, chin ups and a jump rope.

*(showing Manny around)*

I have a weight bench in here, heavy bag, any time you want to stop by get a work out in, you let me know. Better yet, I'll make you a copy of the key.

MANNY:

Okay, cool.

JAVIER:

Sit down, tell me what's going on? Jessie, says you make music?

MANNY:

I mix a little bit. Dance tracks to samba, merengue and salsa to club beats. Get people to dance.

JAVIER:

She said you done a few clubs?

MANNY:

Three so far. Trying to get my name out there. Got my fourth show this Saturday night. The one to three am time slot.

JAVIER:

One to three in the morning?

MANNY:

Yeah, it's perfect. It's when the crowd is in a frenzy. Boozed up, sweating, music pumping. You have to come down one night. Watch me spin, set the crowd of fire. They know me as "The Witch Doctor".

JAVIER:

Witch Doctor?

MANNY:

My DJ name. Get 'em in a trance to dance and romance. You have to come to one of my shows.

JAVIER:

They let forty-year olds in?

MANNY:

I have a few connections, I'll see what I can do.

*(They share a good laugh.)*

JAVIER:

I'm trying to get into this CD thing. I've got these old tapes lying around. Got a few CD's

*(picking up his  
radio CD player)*

What's left of it. When you move in with a girl, takes a while before you learn to navigate around one another, you know what I mean?

MANNY:

Yeah.

JAVIER:

Got a girlfriend?

MANNY:

A have few girls that are friendly.

JAVIER:

*(smiling, impressed)*

Good. Keep it free and friendly. Don't pay for what's free.

MANNY:

I know.

JAVIER:  
(*shuffling through  
some CD's*)  
Good. Got a Run D.M.C- CD-

MANNY:  
That's so eighties.

JAVIER:  
What's wrong with Run D.M.C?

MANNY:  
It's so eighties.

JAVIER:  
Eighties music is the best, got some Michael Jackson, the  
Allman Brothers-

MANNY:  
Allman Brothers?

JAVIER:  
Southern boys on the inside, would play it all the time.  
Found myself singing along after a while.

MANNY:  
(*sipping*)  
Beer is nice and cold.

JAVIER:  
You bet. Got 'em in this 1950's Coca Cola cooler. Check  
her out.

(*showing Manny*)  
You can pop the beers right off this bad girl. Cap opener  
built right in. Keeps 'em cold for a week. She a little  
rusty, maybe I'll sand her down get her a new coat of  
lipstick.

MANNY:  
Where'd you get it?

JAVIER:  
(*pouring two shots  
of bourbon*)  
Missouri. Ex con, Kansas, gave it to me.

MANNY:  
Missouri- Kansas?

JAVIER:  
Con's name was Kansas from Missouri. Raised in Oklahoma.

MANNY:  
And they named him Kansas?

JAVIER:  
(*talking fast*)

Yup. Kansas Black. Tall skinny cat. You'd mistaken him for a cop in a heartbeat. We'd play chess, sit around, smoke cigarettes, play cards. Never beat him once. He did thirty years. Killed his old man, point blank range. His father used to hog tie his mother up, beat her unconscious. You know, robbed a few liquor stores, fucked for life. He was paroled two years before I got out. Said if I ever was in Missouri, to stop by. So, I stopped by. Stayed two weeks.

(*taking a pull of  
his beer*)

Had cancer. Was dying, didn't give a fuck. No family, nothing. All he cared about was this picture he had in his wallet of his mother and a sister he had somewhere in the Dakota's I think. Gave me the ice box. He was quiet most of his days. Thanked me for the company. Said I was his best friend in the whole world. He would randomly blurt out these life hacks that would pretty much sum it all right up- you know-

MANNY:

Like what?

JAVIER:

"Take what life gives you, 'cause it may not have much to give."

MANNY:

"Take what life give you, 'cause it might may not have much to give."

JAVIER:

That's right. Never thought of it like that, till someone said it.

(*Beat. They tap beer bottles.*)

JAVIER:

To Kansas.

MANNY:

To Kansas.

JAVIER:

Another?

MANNY:

Yeah, I'm in.

JAVIER:

Been drinking, a bit more these days.

(*showing Manny*)

Got this wine jug full of beer caps.

MANNY:

That's a lot of beer caps.

JAVIER:

I could maybe squeeze a few more in.  
*(holding up the jar  
to the light)*

Think, I'm going to need a new jug.

MANNY:

I think so.

JAVIER:

I'm a light weight these days.

MANNY:

Me too.

JAVIER:

*(smiling)*

You too? You know, Louis, he'll drink us both under the table  
in a heartbeat.

MANNY:

I believe it.

JAVIER:

*(walking over to  
phone)*

You see, she hasn't called. She said she would call me as  
soon as she got in. She drives me fucking crazy. So, now I  
have to worry about her and she probably sitting by the phone  
waiting for me to call her. If you don't ever think of  
killing your girlfriend at least once, then you don't really  
love her.

MANNY:

So you're in love huh?

JAVIER

Don't say it so loud.

MANNY:

Oh, oh, your in love.

JAVIER:

I won't ever tell her.

MANNY:

Never?

JAVIER:

Never. Under any circumstances.

(MORE)

JAVIER: (CONT'D)

(on phone)

You didn't call me. You forgot. If I'd forget, you'd have a pussy tantrum. Oh, 'cause you can? You staying over? Okay, let me know.

(hangs up)

That's right. Never tell a woman you love her. All your bargaining chips get flushed down the toilet, and then you can't cash them in.

MANNY:

So never?

JAVIER:

Never, ever. If you do, she'll know it. If you don't, she'll ask.

MANNY:

Copy that.

(JAVIER pours two more shots.  
Beat.)

JAVIER:

I didn't mean to take so long to reach out to you.

MANNY:

No sweat. I understand.

JAVIER:

You do?

MANNY:

Yeah.

JAVIER:

I just wanted to say it.

MANNY:

How long you been home?

JAVIER:

September, be a year.

MANNY:

You seen Ma?

JAVIER:

I stopped by.

(JAVIER places his beer down  
and walks to the left of the  
stage.)

*A softspot light comes up on MOM to the left of the stage in the kitchen. JAVIER has white tulips flowers, a large brown bag and a few groceries. He paces back and forth a few times, combing his hair before knocking on the door. MANNY doesn't move.)*

JAVIER:

Hey Ma.

*(A long beat.)*

JAVIER:

*(handing Mom flowers)*

These are for you. I was in the neighborhood, wanted to say hello.

MOM:

You said hello.

JAVIER:

Can I come in?

MOM:

Door is open.

JAVIER:

*(walking inside)*

Smells good in here.

MOM:

You had breakfast?

JAVIER:

Not yet. I got some milk, juice, eggs, some wheat bread.

*(He places the groceries into the refrigerator.)*

MOM:

You haven't shaved.

JAVIER:

*(rubbing his beard)*

Started letting my beard grown in.

MOM:

Means you're not working.

JAVIER:

I have a job Momma. Pays okay.



MOM:  
Don't smoke.

JAVIER:  
I don't.

MOM:  
Your father smoked. Made him quit.

JAVIER:  
I remember.

MOM:  
You look thin. You need a woman. Get yourself a belly.

JAVIER:  
I got a girl.

MOM:  
What's her name?

JAVIER:  
Rachel.

MOM:  
She has a middle name?

JAVIER:  
Lynn.

MOM:  
Good. Can't marry a woman without a middle name.

JAVIER:  
I won't.

MOM:  
Visit your father's grave?

JAVIER:  
I will.

MOM:  
You haven't yet. So you won't.

JAVIER:  
I'll go this weekend.

MOM:  
Promise?

JAVIER:  
I will.

MOM:  
Say it.

JAVIER:  
Promise. You want to come with me?

MOM:  
Something you should do on your own. Coffee?

JAVIER:  
Please.

MOM:  
Sit down. No need to stand guard.

JAVIER:  
We ever talked about it?

MOM:  
You feel we should?

JAVIER:  
I still have nightmares about it.

MOM:  
Nightmares you'll remember. Dreams you'll forget.

*(MOM walks off stage. JAVIER  
sips his coffee. Beat.)*

MOM:  
*(walking back into  
the kitchen)*  
Think, you should have these.

*(She hands Javier an old black  
shoebox.)*

JAVIER:  
*(going through the  
shoebox)*  
How long have you had 'em?

MOM:  
A few lifetimes.

JAVIER:  
I had no idea.

MOM:  
Neither did I. Grown men should not cry.

JAVIER:  
Even if it hurts.

MOM:  
*(breaking up)*  
 Especially... when it hurts.

*(Mom places her arms around  
 Javier's neck and pulls him  
 into her. Squeezing him hard.)*

MOM:  
 I'll make you some eggs.

JAVIER:  
*(wiping his face)*  
 I'd love some eggs.

*(Mom opens the cupboard, takes  
 out a pot.)*

MOM:  
*(taking eggs out of  
 the refrigerator)*  
 You're eyes are silent.

JAVIER:  
 Don't mean to be.

MOM:  
 You can't help it when the silence is from within.

JAVIER:  
 I'm trying Momma.

MOM:  
 I know you are.

JAVIER:  
 Sat in the park this morning. Watched the sun come up.

MOM:  
*(placing ketchup on  
 table)*  
 You would ride your bicycle for hours.

JAVIER:  
 Into the clouds.

MOM:  
 I made you a cape. You would never take it off.

JAVIER:  
 I never should have.

MOM:  
 God come looking for you?

JAVIER:  
Think he's been trying to find his way in.

MOM:  
He never left.

*(Mom goes in the shoebox and takes out a small porcelain saint. She cuts a kitchen towel in half and blindfolds the saint's eyes with the towel.)*

JAVIER:  
You kept him all these years.

MOM:  
You need to keep the sand out of his eyes... and yours.  
*(placing the saint in both of Javier's hands.)*  
He waited for you.

*(She pours Javier a little more coffee.)*

JAVIER:  
You're not having any?

MOM:  
Maybe a little more.

JAVIER:  
Wish, I had someone to talk to sometimes, Momma.

MOM:  
*(pointing to the porcelain saint)*  
Talk to him.

JAVIER:  
He doesn't say much.

MOM:  
He'll get around to it.

JAVIER:  
It's been a long time, don't think he will.

MOM:  
He's a good listener.

JAVIER:  
Wouldn't know where to begin.

MOM:

There's never a beginning. We always wander into the middle and never could really see the end.

*(JAVIER picks up the saint and places it in his pocket.)*

MOM:

You stole him from the church.

JAVIER:

No, I did not.

MOM:

Yes you did. You were four.

JAVIER:

*(smiling)*

I sure did.

*(Beat.)*

MOM:

Don't leave him behind this time.

JAVIER:

I won't.

MOM:

You didn't promise. If you don't make promises, you can't keep 'em.

JAVIER:

I promise Momma.

MOM:

You looking after your brother?

JAVIER:

Yeah.

MOM:

You're not making eye contact with me.

JAVIER:

I am, Momma.

MOM:

No, you were not.

*(She pours a little more coffee for herself.)*

MOM:  
You guys talk?

JAVIER:  
Not like we used to.

MOM:  
When you don't make eye contact, your soul can't be heard.

JAVIER:  
This is for you.

MOM:  
What is it?

JAVIER:  
Home. Open it up.

*(MOM takes off the string and  
rips the brown paper off.)*

JAVIER:  
I painted it for you. Grandpa's farm. What I imagined it  
would look like at least. You would tell us about it all  
the time, before the flood washed it away. Look the creek  
bridge, where you would spend your summers, the purple trees.

*(MOM stares into the painting.)*

JAVIER:  
I should get going.  
*(taking his coffee  
cup into the sink  
and starts to wash  
the dishes)*

MOM:  
You're not going to eat?

JAVIER:  
I should get going. You need me to get anything for you?

MOM:  
No.

JAVIER:  
Can I get a hug?

MOM:  
You should never ask. I expect you to.

*(JAVIER hugs MOM and she  
freezes. The lights in the  
kitchen dim to dark.)*

*JAVIER walks back over to MANNY  
and picks up his beer.)*

JAVIER

She made me coffee.

*(notices Manny  
staring at the  
Mural)*

Apartment still looks the same.

*(Beat.)*

JAVIER:

Almost done with this one.

MANNY:

Didn't know you painted.

JAVIER:

Forgot, for a long time, that I did. Once junior high school hit, it was gone. Rachel's been trying to get me to sell them.

*(The backdrop changes to show  
Javier's upside down painted  
mural of the beach. A door in  
the middle of the painting  
keeps the ocean from spilling  
down onto the sky.)*

MANNY:

You should.

JAVIER:

I don't know, we'll see.

MANNY:

What do the doors mean?

JAVIER:

What do the doors mean? That's a good question. Not sure. Always sketched these doors without hinges. Portals, I guess.

MANNY:

Passageways?

JAVIER:

You could say that.

MANNY:

I feel buzzed.

JAVIER:

Me too. Let me show you something.

*(He pulls the black shoebox out from under the couch, handing it to Manny.)*

MANNY:  
*(opening shoebox)*

What are these?

JAVIER:  
Hold them up to the light. Dads negatives. Mom kept them all these years. Never knew she had 'em.

MANNY:  
No way.

JAVIER:  
I know.

*(He takes out a large black photo album from under the couch and hands it to Manny.)*

JAVIER:  
Started developing a few. Got two album going so far.

*(As MANNY opens the photo album, the black and white photographs appear, superimposed behind them onstage as the mural fades to dark.)*

JAVIER:  
Dad would be gone for hours. Mom couldn't stand it. They'd fight all the time. It bothered her I guess. He'd stay up all night, staring at the negatives with this loop thing he had.

MANNY:  
How was Dad?

JAVIER:  
Worked a lot. Sometimes, fifty-sixty hours a week. Suffocated what was left of his spirit. He had a dance to everything. Always joking around you know. Until he was unable to dance through it anymore.

MANNY:  
*(staring at photo)*  
This is that old abandoned school building on Montgomery?

JAVIER:  
It's been sealed off for years.



MANNY:

There was a fire.

JAVIER:

In the fifties. All the kids on the top floor died.

MANNY:

I heard stories about it.

JAVIER:

Me too.

*(tapping the photo  
with his index  
finger)*

This is one was one of my favorites.

*(The black and white photograph  
comes to light onstage. It is  
of the old abandoned school  
from the inside out. Looking  
out through a broken window.)*

MANNY:

Looks like trapped soul looking out.

JAVIER:

Maybe, that's how he felt.

*(MANNY gets lost in the next  
photograph. It comes into  
focus behind them, taking up  
the entire stage and auditorium.  
The colors of this one  
photograph, begin to come into  
focus. It is a photographed  
from the ground up, looking up  
into the night's sky.)*

MANNY:

*(flipping the photo  
album over)*

What's this one?

JAVIER:

This is the last photograph in the negatives. Last photo,  
Dad ever took... before he died.

*(A very long beat. As MANNY  
stares at the photograph, a  
time lapse of the photograph's  
night sky behind them dissolves  
from night to day.)*

JAVIER:

Cops found him in the morning. Gun got pulled. Dad got hit in the neck, just below his right ear. They found him face up, in a pool of his own blood.

*(Beat.)*

JAVIER:

Camera was still around his neck.

MANNY:

They ever caught who did it?

JAVIER

No.

*(Beat.)*

JAVIER

...Nobody cares.

*(The door opens.)*

LOUIS:

Family reunion without me?

MANNY:

Hey Louis-

LOUIS:

*(to Manny)*

Long time, no see.

MANNY:

Long time.

LOUIS:

*(placing his arms  
around Manny)*

What are we drinking?

JAVIER

Help yourself.

*(walking over to  
Louis)*

You all right?

LOUIS:

I'm good. You okay?

JAVIER:

You sure?

LOUIS:  
(*defensive*)  
I said, I'm sure.  
(*fixing himself a drink*)  
What is this? Good cop, bad cop night?

JAVIER:  
What are you on?

LOUIS:  
I'm not on anything.

JAVIER:  
What are you getting all worked up for?

LOUIS:  
I'm worked up? Looks like, you're the one who's worked up.  
Told you nothing. What business is it of yours anyway?  
(*to Manny*)  
Can't walk in here without getting interrogated.

JAVIER:  
No one's interrogating you. Haven't seen you in a few weeks  
is all and your eyeballs are shot up.

LOUIS:  
I have to tell you where I am all of the time?

JAVIER:  
Don't do it.

LOUIS:  
You come back here, acting like you give two shits- Where  
the fuck did you go? You think about us? About me, Mom,  
Jessie, Manny, huh? Before, you decided to abandon us all?

JAVIER:  
(*in Louis's face*)  
I didn't abandon anyone!

LOUIS:  
(*yelling*)  
You were my big brother! You were supposed to look out for  
me!  
(*Poking Javier in the chest with his index finger- hard*)  
That was your fucking Job! I would wait up for you and you  
never came back!  
(*clapping*)  
Great job Javi! Leaving us all! Real nice work!

JAVIER:  
(*grabbing Louis by  
the shirt*)  
I didn't abandon you! Take it back!

LOUIS:  
Why don't you tell Manny, what really happened?

JAVIER:  
Shut your mouth!

LOUIS:  
(*slamming his drink  
on the floor*)  
No! I'm not scared of you!

JAVIER:  
Pick that up!

LOUIS:  
No!

JAVIER:  
Pick it up!

LOUIS:  
You pick it up!

(*JAVIER punches LOUIS in the  
stomach and grabs him by the  
mouth. MANNY jumps in between  
them.*)

LOUIS:  
Get off of me! Don't you hit me, Javi! I'm not your white  
bitch girlfriend!

JAVIER:  
I didn't abandon anyone!

LOUIS:  
I can take care of myself!  
(*opening the door*)  
I don't need you!

JAVIER:  
Louis! Get over here! Where you going?

LOUIS:  
Fuck you! Fuck you in your ass!

(*The door slams shut.*)

JAVIER:

*(to Manny)*

Christ! What just happened! Fuck me two times!

*(Repeatedly punching  
the door)*

Goddammit

*(He opens the door and slams  
it shut. He does it again.  
He pours himself a shot and  
drops and does ten push-ups.)*

JAVIER:

*(looking over at  
Manny)*

Ten push-ups for every shot.

MANNY:

I'm in.

*(JAVIER pours another two shots.  
They each slam the shot then  
drop and do ten push-ups each.  
When they stand up, JAVIER  
hugs MANNY.)*

JAVIER:

I'm sorry. I didn't mean for you to see that.

MANNY:

It happens.

JAVIER:

All we do is fight. Wasn't always like that between us.

*(pours himself  
another and does  
ten more pushups)*

Can't get him to listen to me anymore. I had to be strong.  
Couldn't let anyone see that I was, hurting too.

*(driving his thumb  
into his chest)*

That my compass was broken! I was supposed to step up to  
the plate. Take care of the family and I didn't. That's  
what I was supposed to do... be the man of the house!

*(Beat.)*

JAVIER:

Should of never came back.

*(repeatedly pounding  
his thumb into his  
chest)*

What about me! Huh? I got fucking burned!

*(MANNY starts to pick up the glass LOUIS had thrown on the.)*

JAVIER:

Hey, hey, I got that.

MANNY:

I got it.

*(JAVIER pours another shot and gives it to MANNY. Then, MANNY does his ten push-ups and sits back on one of the beach chairs.)*

MANNY:

My head's spinning.

JAVIER:

You and me both.

*(He joins Manny on the other beach chair.)*

JAVIER:

We were inseparable, Louis and me. We'd stay up for hours, knocking each over doing cartwheels, talking about girls.

*(A Long beat.)*

JAVIER:

Things changed one day.

*(The memories of that day play out on the stage in moving images behind them on stage. Kids wearing red Satan masks can be seen running all around the neighborhood. They all move at a slower pace, coming in and out of focus. JAVIER gets up and puts on his New York Yankees jacket and walks to the center of the stage facing the audience. He takes bamboo rolling paper out of his back pocket.)*

JAVIER:

*(talking to the audience, rolling himself a joint)*

Halloween fell on a Friday that year.

(MORE)

JAVIER: (CONT'D)

All I could see were these kids, all over the neighborhood... all wearing the same red devil costume masks. I was supposed to pick Louis up after school, walk him home. But, I got caught up with this black girl named Desiree. Never been with a black girl you know. I wanted her bad. Been walking her home, picking her up after school, hanging out. She whispered into my ear "My Mom is going to be working late today." That's all I needed to hear. I got her high and took her straight to her bed.

*(smoking his joint)*

When I was leaving, got one of those real bad feelings- soon as I stepped outside.

*(snapping his fingers)*

That feeling you get, forces you to stop cold in your tracks. Freezes the hairs on your arms.

*(pulls hard and long)*

My eyes were still stormed, still high... couldn't tell if I was hallucinating or not. Could not separate the clouds. All I could see, were these damned kids, all wearing the same Satan masks all over the neighborhood. All these little red masked devils running rampant.

*(Six to eight kids in red devil masks run out onstage. They are chasing each other around playing freeze tag.)*

JAVIER

Some kids from Cherry Hill came down... beat Louis up. They jumped him behind the school.

*(beat)*

I left him alone in the woods, fed him to the wolves.

*(A spotlight comes up on LOUIS. He is standing in front of the junior high school. Louis is impatient, looking around from side to side. THE KIDS in the red devil mask take notice of LOUIS and stop playing tag. The kids begin to surround him. LOUIS takes out a knife. THE KIDS don't back off. LOUIS swings his knife which makes THE KIDS more aggressive. One of them jumps on LOUIS'S back, causing him to drop the knife. LOUIS attempts to run as the rest of THE KIDS give chase. They manage to knock LOUIS to the ground.)*

*It is a vicious attack as LOUIS gets beaten to a pulp. The stage goes black, except for the spotlights on JAVIER and MANNY.)*

JAVIER:

*(choking up)*

I was at the hospital every day. Mom blamed me for what happened. She was right. All, I had to do was pick him up after school. Couldn't look at him in the eye anymore.

*(A soft light to the right of the stage comes up. A bunk bed, full of baseball stickers appears on the back wall. LOUIS is on the top bunk. JAVIER walks over and sits on the bottom bunk.)*

JAVIER:

*(basketball in his hands)*

Hey, you wanna go outside?

*(dribbling the basketball)*

Play some ball?

*(No response for LOUIS.)*

JAVIER:

Ride our bikes, maybe? It's nice out. I fixed the brakes on your bike. She's good as new.

LOUIS:

Leave me alone.

JAVIER:

*(basketball in hand)*

I'll be by the Norfolk courts. In case you change your mind.

*(JAVIER walks back to the center of the stage. LOUIS jumps off the top bunk and takes out a gun from under his bed. He tucks the gun in his pants and opens the bedroom window, then climbs out the fire escape)*

JAVIER:

One night... he comes back in. Blood all over his shirt. Had this look in his eyes... you know the look, because... you've never encountered it before.



*(LOUIS walks back out onstage,  
up to JAVIER.)*

LOUIS:  
I got 'em Javi... guys who beat me up.

JAVIER:  
What are you talking about?

LOUIS:  
Guys, that beat me up.  
*(trembling)*  
I got 'em. Thought, they'd get away with it, huh? I showed  
'em Javi, I showed 'em-

*(JAVIER takes the gun out of  
LOUIS'S waistband and removes  
a pillow case from one of the  
pillows.)*

JAVIER:  
Take your clothes off.

*(Louis takes off his clothes  
and throws places into the  
pillow bag.)*

JAVIER:  
I need your sneakers too.

*(LOUIS places his sneakers  
into the pillow bag and climbs  
back into the top bunk. He  
covers himself with his  
blanket.)*

JAVIER:  
*(to Manny)*  
Found out years later... he got it wrong. He killed the  
wrong cats.

*(MANNY walks over to JAVIER.)*

MANNY:  
*(hesitant)*  
I got stopped on the way here. Some guys were looking for  
Louis.

*(JAVIER punches the inside of  
his own palm. Stage goes black.)*

(END OF ACT)

ACT IIScene 3

SETTING:

6:45 am. JAVIER is passed out on one of the beach chairs. Ocean waves ambient sounds come out go the CD player. The ocean waves in the mural painting can be seen coming into the shore. DAD walks in and sits on the couch. His bloodied shirt is clearly visible. He thumbs through one of the photo albums.

*DAD picks up his camera and walks to the center of the stage, facing the audience. The camera flash goes off. Then another and another. DAD places his hand under his left ear. He tries to takes the bullet out of his neck, but he is unable to do so. BOOM! A gun goes off.*

AT RISE:

*JAVIER wakes from his nightmare.*

JAVIER:

Dad!

*(A series of camera flashes go off. DAD stumbles a few steps, before losing his balance. He takes a few steps to the right of the stage, falling to the ground out of sight. JAVIER starts to come out of it. RACHEL walks in.)*

JAVIER:

Hey, you didn't call me.

RACHEL:

I don't chase you. You chase me.

JAVIER:  
Come over here.

RACHEL:  
Wanted to let you boys catch up.

JAVIER:  
What time is it?

RACHEL:  
Time for you to take me to breakfast.

JAVIER:  
Didn't I tell you to come here?

RACHEL:  
*(sitting on him,  
running her hands  
through his beard)*  
You going to shave this thing?

JAVIER:  
You don't like it?

RACHEL:  
No.

JAVIER:  
Good, 'cause I'm not going get rid of it.

RACHEL:  
Yes, you will.

JAVIER:  
No, I won't.

RACHEL:  
I'll punish you.

JAVIER:  
No, you won't. You can't hold out.

RACHEL:  
You shut your mouth.

JAVIER:  
*(wrapping his arms  
around her tight)*  
I'm glad you're here right now.

RACHEL:  
I can tell.

JAVIER:  
He has a mind of his own.  
(*rubbing her booty*)  
You can't blame him.

RACHEL:  
You have to stop drinking.

JAVIER:  
I know.

RACHEL:  
I'm serious- it scares me.

JAVIER:  
I will.

(*Beat.*)

JAVIER:  
How long is Mom in town?

RACHEL:  
Two more weeks. Dad's surgery is on Monday.

JAVIER:  
How long they been together?

RACHEL:  
Together, together? Forty years.

JAVIER:  
Forty years? Jesus-

RACHEL:  
They've had their ups and downs.

JAVIER:  
Highs don't come without the lows.

RACHEL:  
Why don't you talk to me?

JAVIER:  
This going to turn into a fight?

RACHEL:  
No. You think I like to fight?

JAVIER:  
I don't know. You're good at it.

RACHEL:  
Oh, I'm good at it, huh?

JAVIER:

I agree.

RACHEL:

Very funny. You shouldn't keep things inside. It's not good for you.

JAVIER:

Inside is all I got.

*(rubbing her booty)*

Never felt rooted into the earth. My piece of the puzzle doesn't fit. Numb from it. All of it.

RACHEL:

You need to keep painting. Occupy your mind, follow the map to your soul.

JAVIER:

*(staring into her eyes)*

The map to finding my soul?

RACHEL:

It's a treasure hunt.

JAVIER:

Being with you is a treasure hunt.

RACHEL:

Did you just say you love me?

JAVIER:

Not at all.

RACHEL:

I think you did-

*(tickling him)*

You sure did-

JAVIER:

Stop, stop- I didn't say it.

RACHEL:

You will.

JAVIER:

Thank you, for the CD Walkman.

RACHEL:

I knew you'd like it.

JAVIER:

You know me so well.

RACHEL:

I do, don't I?

*(massaging his face)*

I'm going to spend the day with my mother. We can meet here around seven? I'll pick up the tickets? We can hold hands and smooch.

JAVIER:

*(kissing her softly)*

I like smooching with you. You know, you can't see the third Godfather if you haven't seen the second one?

RACHEL:

So.

JAVIER:

So? You can't jump from the first to the third. Doesn't work that way. I'm going to have to explain everything to you and you're going to talk through the whole movie.

RACHEL:

I promise, I wont.

*(doing her Marlon  
Brando impression)*

"Tattaglis is a pimp. He could of never out fought Santino. But I didn't know until this day that it was Barzini all along."

JAVIER:

*(laughing)*

That was pretty good.

RACHEL:

I Know. I know, and the Oscar goes to-  
*(smacking his hand)*  
Get your hand out of there.

JAVIER:

C'mon, time is running out before, I lose my mind.

RACHEL:

*(playfully smacking  
his face)*

Stop being fresh.

JAVIER:

Me?

RACHEL:

Yes, you.

JAVIER:

It's your fault.

Mine? You started.

RACHEL:

(Beat.)

Can I ask you something?

RACHEL:

You may.

JAVIER:

Your mother know about me?

RACHEL:

Told her I have a girl.

JAVIER:

A girl?

RACHEL:

Said a little more than that.

JAVIER:

What'd you say?

RACHEL:

I lied. Told her you were a good girl.

JAVIER:

RACHEL:  
(punching him on  
the arm)

You jerk.

JAVIER:

I don't bring girls around my ma.

RACHEL:

I'm not any girl. I'm the girl who's going to have your baby.

JAVIER:

I did hear a rumor?

RACHEL:

A rumor huh?

JAVIER:

I guess we can swing by.

RACHEL:

We can have her over. I can cook something.

JAVIER:  
Cook something?

RACHEL:  
That's right.

JAVIER:  
Maybe, we'll just stop by.

RACHEL:  
What are you trying to say?

JAVIER:  
Men are better cooks.

RACHEL:  
*(irish accent)*  
You're looking for a fight aren't ya?

JAVIER:  
Yup, I said it. Truth must be told.

RACHEL:  
Very funny mister.

JAVIER:  
*(getting up)*  
You want some water?

RACHEL:  
I'm okay.

*(JAVIER opens the icebox and  
stick his hands in the cold  
ice water for a few moments  
and pats his face a few times.)*

JAVIER:  
*(keeping his hands  
in the icebox)*  
Feels good.

*(Beat.)*

JAVIER:  
My ma is not doing too good. She hasn't in a long time.  
*(splashing more ice  
water on his face)*  
A very long time. She is silent. It's where I get it from.  
Her kid brother died when she was twelve. The river rose  
quickly, current swept him away. They found him a few days  
later. Back of his head was crushed.



RACHEL:

My God.

JAVIER:

His pockets were full of rocks. They used to collect 'em. Share them with one another. She has 'em in an old medicine box in her room under her bed. Showed them to me once. She even cries in silence. Just tears.

*(He sticks his face in the ice water.)*

JAVIER:

She loses her brother, my dad, her oldest two boys, one is an ex-con and the other a drug addict. Bunch of royal fuck ups.

RACHEL:

You're not a fuck up.

JAVIER:

Sure as hell, itself... feels that way.

*(A deep blue wooded door comes into the light, center stage. It stands vertical to the audience, slightly above the ground. JAVIER pushes the door open and steps into the other side.)*

*(To the right of the door, the forest at night takes the entire backdrop on stage. Northern red oak trees can be seen upside down, held by the clouds. A recently sanded down sail boat rests in the center of the stage. JAVIER sits on his Mongoose bicycle and peddles around a bit. He has a flat. RACHEL can still be seen, to the left of the stage. A light frontal rain mist, falls only on Javier's side of the stage. The projected rain mist twinkle, suspended in mid air.)*

RACHEL:

Are the doors in your paintings always open?

JAVIER:

All the time. I still have to knock. Be polite.

RACHEL:

Anyone answer?

JAVIER:

I answered a few times. I keep waking up before I can ever see myself on either side.

RACHEL:

Your birth sign holds true. Two personalities in one. And you will never know which one you will face. Geminis are also very guarded and reluctant to open up. Falling rain in your dreams could mean a cleansing of your troubles. Maybe you need a good cry.

JAVIER:

That's what you girls do? Cry it out?

RACHEL:

When we need to. Keeps us from killing you. Go on.

JAVIER:

Go on what?

RACHEL:

Talking.

JAVIER:

About what?

RACHEL:

Whatever comes to mind. The cleansing of your troubles. This is how it's done. How couples do it.

JAVIER:

*(teasing)*

Oh, I get it. You open your mouth and words come out. All this time, I had no idea.

RACHEL:

I'm going to punch you again.

*(Beat.)*

JAVIER:

The silence, is the cleansing... the comfort it provides.

RACHEL:

Solace behind your eyes can be comforting.

JAVIER:

Counting stars provided warmth.

*(looking up)*

Making a wish.

RACHEL:

What you'd wish for?

JAVIER:

A house. Backyard, with a big white fence. Where we'd all, could grow up in.

*(DAD walks out onstage. He has a gallon bucket of white paint in each hand. He places them inside the paddle sail boat. JAVIER goes into the boat and takes out his kite. He waits for the perfect updrift. DAD flips Javier's bike over and walks offstage.)*

RACHEL:

*(rubbing her belly)*

We won't make it here.

JAVIER:

*(standing inside the boat, flying his kite)*

Why you say that?

RACHEL:

You've left a long time ago. You just need to take me with you. Some don't want to be saved. They want to burn. You can't keep coming to the rescue of an arsonist.

JAVIER:

I'm not going to walk into a fire.

RACHEL:

You can't even look at me. That's what scares me the most. He's beyond your help.

JAVIER:

I'll get him cleaned up. Clear his eyes.

RACHEL:

How are you going to do that?

JAVIER:

With God's love.

RACHEL:

God doesn't love everybody.

JAVIER:

God loves my brother.

RACHEL:

I didn't mean it like that. God doesn't have time for everyone.

*(DAD walks back out onstage. He has a new inner tube for the bike and takes off the back tire.)*

RACHEL:

We can't stay here. Besides, I don't want to raise a child in the city.

JAVIER:

You're a city girl.

RACHEL:

Hated it.

JAVIER:

What am I going to do for work?

RACHEL:

You can paint.

JAVIER:

I could. I need a paycheck every week. Remind me that I am alive.

RACHEL:

We'll find a way.

JAVIER:

You and I?

RACHEL:

That's right, me and you. We'll leave in the middle of the night like two bandits.

JAVIER:

Like Bonnie and Clyde? Running from the law?

RACHEL:

I may have to bring you in for questioning, beat it out of you.

JAVIER:

Fuck it. In the middle of the night it is. Like two bandits-

RACHEL:

Pinkie swear?

*(JAVIER walks back through the door, to Rachel's side.)*

JAVIER:  
(locking pinkies)  
Pinkie swear.

RACHEL:  
Kiss my belly.

JAVIER:  
(wrapping his arms  
around RACHEL'S  
waist, kissing her  
stomach)  
Like this?

RACHEL:  
Yes. Every day.

JAVIER:  
Everyday...I promise.

RACHEL:  
I have a doctor's appointment Monday. You want to come?

JAVIER:  
I'll go.  
(beat)  
Kid loves music. He DJ's, makes dance tracks.

RACHEL:  
He looks like he has a good head on his shoulders.

JAVIER:  
He's a good kid. Said, he was going to make me a CD. I  
need to spend time with him.

RACHEL:  
You will.

JAVIER:  
(taking off her  
tights)  
I need my medicine.

RACHEL:  
Oh, that's your medicine?

JAVIER:  
Going through withdrawal.

(The stage lights on them slowly  
begin to fade out.)

RACHEL:  
(*moaning*)

Not so hard...

(*The stage lights to the right of the stage are still on. DAD continues, sanding down his boat. Sneaking himself a cigarette. He stares over at LOUIS on his favorite playground swing. BOOM!*)

*The same exact gunshot we heard earlier, goes off again. DAD falls forward into the boat.)*

LOUIS:  
(*singing to himself*)

...I don't know my name...I don't know, I don't know, got no one, my Lord to blame...lord of mine, lord of mine, I don't know my name...

(*The backdrops dissolves out as a hologram of empty glass bottles in all colors, hang from the burning stars onstage. The Sombrero Galaxy begins to take form, fusing the entire stage and auditorium. The stars in the galaxy begin to explode. He covers his ears as more stars in the constellation continue to explode and shatter. LOUIS has a heroin needle stuck in his arm. He comes in and out of consciousness. Stars continue to explode behind Louis.*)

LOUIS:  
(*pulling the needle out of his arm*)

Son of a...

(*A catastrophic explosion. The Sombrero Galaxy completely collapses within itself. LOUIS gets a euphoric nose bleed. He falls to his knees in laughter. The lights fade.*)

(END OF ACT)

ACT IIIScene 1

SETTING:

*The next day. Friday evening.  
7:22 pm. We are in Jessie's  
bedroom.*

AT RISE:

*JESSIE is in her panties, trying  
on a couple of outfits. A  
knock on her door.*

JESSIE:  
*(turning down the  
radio, putting  
shorts on)*

Come in.

*(cowboy voice)*  
Well, howdy partna'.

MANNY:  
*(with a cup of coffee  
in hand)*

Howdy ma'am.

JESSIE:  
You out rustlin' some chickens?

MANNY:  
*(John Wayne voice)*  
I be rustlin' me some chicken ma'am.

JESSIE:  
You planning on sleeping in all day?

MANNY:  
*(sitting on her bed)*  
Stayed up working on my spins.

JESSIE:  
You're going to be great tomorrow. Kick some ass.

MANNY:  
Thanks. I have to let them know, that "the Witch Doctor is  
going to will fill your prescription."  
*(sips)*  
Got a hangover.

JESSIE:  
Oh, do you?

MANNY:

Went to see Javi. Had some shots, talked, talked some more, had more shots, a few beers-

JESSIE:

Hard liquor and black coffee.

MANNY:

That's right. Big boy stuff. Louis came over, they got into a fight.

JESSIE:

They can't be around one another for too long.

MANNY:

Why is that?

JESSIE:

Wish, I knew.

*(Beat.)*

JESSIE:

What time you go on tomorrow?

MANNY:

One.

JESSIE:

We'll meet here at eight?

MANNY:

Eight works.

JESSIE:

We'll walk over to Javi's, then take a cab to your show.

MANNY:

Sounds like a plan.

JESSIE:

I can't stay for your entire set. Picked up a Sunday morning shift.

MANNY:

Sunday?

JESSIE:

Don't remind me. I need to be in at seven.

MANNY:

You don't have to go.



JESSIE:

I want to.

*(taking a shopping  
bag out from behind  
her bed)*

Check this out. Got him a New York Yankees sweater.

MANNY:

It's June.

JESSIE:

I know genius. For when it gets cold out. Think he'll like it?

MANNY:

Don Mattingly, number 23, Mr. Donnie Baseball. He's going to love it.

JESSIE:

All I remember is that he liked Mattingly.

MANNY:

He'll love it.

JESSIE:

Got him an extra-large.

*(placing sweater  
back in the box)*

Hope it fits.

MANNY:

It will.

JESSIE:

Dad's funeral-

MANNY:

What?

JESSIE:

Last time we were all together.

*(sitting on the bed)*

It would not stop raining. It was clear in the morning, not a cloud in the sky. Then it started coming down. Storm drains were backed up, sidewalks were flooded. Water started pouring down into the funeral home. All the men started rolling up their pants. Everyone's shoes and socks were soaked. Never saw anything like it. All the women were standing on top of chairs to keep from getting wet, holding their children. Momma was having a breakdown, freaking out. She got on top of one of the chairs and started praying. Father Frank Santana began to panic with all the water that started coming in.

*(A black and white photograph of the funeral takes the entire background of the stage. Mourners can be seen huddled together, in knee deep waters. Some standing on chairs and tables. A spotlight comes up. Dad's actual casket rests in the center of the stage. FATHER FRANK SANTANA runs out onto the stage.)*

FATHER FRANK SANTANA:

*(yelling)*

The river rises! Jesus calls your name! Be baptized! Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand! Salvation! Salvation! Salvation! Is within the depths of the deepest, darkest of oceans. Come before me said the Lord! I've been watching you! A flood is coming from the north to overflow the land and everything in it! Cities and people alike! People will scream in terror and everyone in the land will wail! Jeremiah 24th verse!

*(The back drop fills with rising waters. MOM walks onto the stage, terrified. She is in waist deep. FATHER FRANK runs to her and picks her up to keep her from drowning as the waters continue to rise.)*

MOM:

I wasn't supposed to walk this far down the creek! Momma is going to be mad! I can't find Max!

*(Stages goes black. Except for the spotlight on Dad's coffin. Another spotlight sets on MOM. She opens the cover to the record player and skims through a few albums. She found what she was looking for. She places the needle on the record and begins to sway and dance to the music. The coffin opens, from the inside out. DAD sits up. He stares directly at the audience, before getting out.)*

*(DAD walks over to MOM and takes her hand. She takes his other hand and places it on her hip.)*

MOM:

Why don't we dance like this anymore? You and me... me and you. Hold me Raymond, love me in your arms, hold me in your eyes... don't let me go.

RAYMOND:

I will wait for you... I will forever be in your heart. The ways your are eternally locked in mine.

*(The spotlight on MOM and DAD begin to fade out. We can still see the silhouettes of their bodies dancing. The main stage lights come back up on Jessie's room.)*

MANNY:

*(noticing the plane ticket on her dresser)*

American Airlines?

JESSIE:

*(staring at herself in the mirror)*

Put in my two weeks.

MANNY:

Where you gonna go?

JESSIE:

*(cowboy voice)*

South for the winter Partna'- West Palm beach.

MANNY:

*(not playing along)*

You know anyone down there?

JESSIE:

Don't be worried.

MANNY:

Always, will be.

JESSIE:

Got a job lined up. I can take some classes at night.

MANNY:

Where you gonna' stay?

JESSIE:

You remember Belinda?

MANNY:  
Big booty Belinda?

JESSIE:  
Stop. She's holding a room for me, in the house where she stays. We've always kept in touch.

MANNY:  
Hmm... Belinda booty.

JESSIE:  
Don't get any ideas. She has a boyfriend.

MANNY:  
You'll be happy. I know it.

JESSIE:  
My time is due.

MANNY:  
Your time is due.

JESSIE:  
She says there's a little garden area in the back, that could use some TLC.

MANNY:  
You can get your green thumb going.

JESSIE:  
I sure will. You can come down, fool around with some of my girlfriends, hang out.

MANNY:  
You don't have to tell me twice.  
(*finishing his coffee*)  
You need to be careful.  
(*serious*)  
At all times.

JESSIE:  
(*hugging Manny*)  
I will.

MANNY:  
You going out?

JESSIE:  
Who says I'm going out?

MANNY:  
The clothes on your bed. You're playing your "Girls night out mix", and you're checking out you're "Big booty Judy", in the mirror.

JESSIE:

You hush. I need a night out with the girls, forget a little.  
How does this look?

MANNY:

Good. I like it.

JESSIE:

I'm not wearing it.

MANNY:

It looks good.

JESSIE:

I don't like it.

MANNY:

So, why'd you buy it?

JESSIE:

Cause, I'm a girl.

*(The lights fade. A spotlight stays on MANNY. He walks over to his turntables. The music coming out of his headphones, and rumbles the entire auditorium.) MANNY bops his head. Another spotlight to the left of the stage comes up on MOM. She pours a handful of prescription pills into her mouth and swallows. She flushes them down with a tall glass of water. She does it again. The lights fade.)*

(END OF ACT)

ACT IIIScene 2

SETTING:

Later. 10:50 pm. LOUIS is in  
same schoolyard, on swing.  
Still getting high.

AT RISE:

A soft spotlight light comes  
up on LOUIS. He sits back on  
the same schoolyard swing from  
one of his previous dreams.  
The moon sits just above the  
Atlantic Ocean behind him.  
The moon's mirrored reflection  
can be seen above the water.

A white lighthouse comes into  
focus, beaming a radiant blue  
light over the ocean. LOUIS  
swings himself back and forth  
just above the ocean. He  
tightly wraps a sock around  
the bend of his arm, around  
his elbow. He smiles at the  
color of his veins. he taps  
the heroin needle with his  
index finger. The color in  
his arms changes to a deep red  
as he pushed down on the needle.  
He laugh uncontrollably.

LOUIS:

(dancing, snapping  
his fingers)

"Hey Diddle Diddle, The cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped  
over the moon. The little dog laughed, to see such a sight,  
and the dish ran away with the spoon."

(whispering to the  
audience, placing  
his index finger  
over his lips)

The dish and the spoon were having an affair, don't tell  
anybody.

(Main stage lights up JAVIER  
is sitting back on a beach  
chair, listening to his favorite  
Luther Allison blues album.  
He is pretty whiskie'd up.)

*(LOUIS walks in and sits down  
on the other beach chair.)*

LOUIS:

What are you up to?

JAVIER:

Nothing. Sipping scotch, listening to some blues.

LOUIS:

You depressed?

JAVIER:

No.

LOUIS:

Well, sitting around all day drinking scotch and listening to blues is pretty depressing. You need a girlfriend.

JAVIER:

I have a girlfriend.

LOUIS:

You need another one.

JAVIER:

I'm retired. I can't even keep up with the one I got.

LOUIS:

She's a firecracker. You like 'em wild.

JAVIER:

I do like 'em wild.

LOUIS:

*(picking up the  
camera)*

You got it fixed?

JAVIER:

Found a place downtown.

LOUIS:

You going to use it?

JAVIER:

Don't think so.

LOUIS:

What'd you fix it for then?

JAVIER:

Felt, I should.

LOUIS:  
You should use it.

JAVIER:  
I'll think about it.

LOUIS:L  
*(leaning in hugging  
Javier)*  
Glad you're home.

JAVIER:  
*(leaning in hugging  
Louis back)*  
Me, too.

LOUIS:  
You need to get out more.

JAVIER:  
I get out enough.

LOUIS:  
I mean you need to meet people. Socialize, have a martini.

JAVIER:  
I like to be alone.

LOUIS:  
Reflect on life? The heavens, the stars?

JAVIER:  
Yeah... life.

LOUIS:  
A motherfucker.

JAVIER:  
A real son of a bitch. Been getting these headaches, left side of my head.

LOUIS:  
Maybe you need glasses?

JAVIER:  
I don't need glasses. I can see just fine.

LOUIS:  
*(holding up his  
middle finger)*  
How many fingers am I holding up?



JAVIER:  
(*smiling*)

Fuck you-

LOUIS:  
(*opening his back  
pack, handing Javier  
a white envelope*)

Happy Birthday.

JAVIER:  
What's this?

LOUIS:  
Allman Brother tickets. Beacon theater. You and me - me  
and you, buddy. Front row, next week, saturday.

Allman Brother tickets. Beacon  
Theater. You and me - me and  
you, buddy. Front row, next  
week, Saturday.

JAVIER:  
(*opening envelope*)  
Are you serious? Get the hell out outta' here. What you  
know about the Allman Brothers?

LOUIS:  
Just that you like 'em.

JAVIER:  
Thank you, really-

LOUIS:  
All I know is "The Midnight Rider" song.  
(*singing*)  
Well, I've got to run-

LOUIS/JAVIER:  
(*singing together*)  
-To keep from hiding, And I'm bound do to keep on riding-  
And I've got one more silver dollar- But I'm not gonna let  
them catch me no- Not gonna let them catch the midnight rider-

(*The boys share a much needed  
high five.*)

LOUIS:  
Love that song.

JAVIER:  
Me, too.

LOUIS:  
What happened to us, Javi?

JAVIER:  
No batting coach, to show us how to hit curve balls. Got hit with too many pitches.

LOUIS:  
Think we'll see each other in the next one?

JAVIER:  
It's the way it's supposed to be.

LOUIS:  
Sounds like a deal. Maybe, things will be different?

JAVIER:  
Sure will.

LOUIS:  
How do we make up for it?

JAVIER:  
You don't. You just try to get what you can. A few laughs, some memories and a lot whole lot of pain, in the morning.

LOUIS:  
Life's a motherfucker.

JAVIER:  
A real son of a bitch.

LOUIS:  
Heard a rumor.

JAVIER:  
A rumor? Sounds juicy?

LOUIS:  
It is. Rumor has it, you're having a baby?

JAVIER:  
Could be a rumor.

LOUIS:  
Could be. Girls talk. Rachel may have mentioned it to Jessie. Jessie may have mentioned it to me.

JAVIER:  
Just found out myself.

LOUIS:  
No clues? She's cranky, moody, bitchy-

JAVIER:  
That's her normal.

LOUIS:  
(*laughing*)  
So you're pretty damn clueless-

JAVIER:  
(*laughing*)  
No clue.

(*beat*)  
JAVIER:  
She says I'm cold.

LOUIS:  
Not every home, comes with built in fireplace.

JAVIER:  
Cold is comforting.

LOUIS:  
The further the distance.

JAVIER:  
The greater the silence.

LOUIS:  
You been to Dad's grave yet?

JAVIER:  
Getting around to it.

LOUIS:  
Want me to go with you?

JAVIER:  
If you want to come.

LOUIS:  
I can go.

JAVIER:  
Tomorrow?

LOUIS:  
I can make it.

JAVIER:  
How many stitches ya get?

LOUIS  
Four.  
(MORE)

LOUIS (CONT'D)  
(*sitting up. Running  
his right hand  
through his hair  
repeatedly*)

You ever panic inside?

JAVIER:

Doesn't everybody?

LOUIS:

Not everyone.

JAVIER:

I think they do. Some just filter it better than others.

LOUIS:

Earth has a hum. Can usually be heard between three and four in the morning. Babies can hear it.

JAVIER:  
(*showing Louis  
photograph*)

Remember this one?

LOUIS:  
(*staring at photo*)

Day... Dad took us to the beach.

JAVIER:

Mom was in the hospital. She just gave birth to Manny.

LOUIS:

We stayed until dark.

JAVIER:

Watching the sun go down was the best.

LOUIS:

I remember Dad, jumping into the ocean in the pitch dark. I was scared.

JAVIER:

He made us go in. Jump the waves... it was exhilarating and scary at the same time. He was trying to teach us what life was.

LOUIS:

How did we screw it all up? Huh, Javi?

JAVIER:

Wish I knew.

LOUIS:  
(*picking up the  
camera*)  
Hey, smile for the camera.

JAVIER:  
Stop, put it down.

LOUIS:  
One picture? For Dad. He'd like that.

JAVIER:  
Think so?

LOUIS:  
I know so.

(*JAVIER complies and sets down  
his drink.*)

JAVIER:  
Hold on. Here, in front of one of my paintings. For our  
old man.

(*FLASH! JAVIER freezes. The  
artificial flash of light  
brightens the entire stage.  
It doesn't dissolve. A few  
moments go by, before the door  
in Javier's painting opens.  
DAD steps through it onto the  
stage. He has had a long day  
at work. He walks into the  
kitchen and places his newspaper  
down on the table. He starts  
to wash his hands. JAVIER  
walks over to the kitchen and  
sits down on the table. The  
kitchen light shows Dad's blood  
shirt dress shirt.*)

LOUIS:  
Ready?

JAVIER:  
(*posing*)  
Yeah, I think this is my good side.

LOUIS:  
On three. One, two, three-

(*FLASH! JAVIER freezes. The  
artificial flash of light  
brightens the entire stage.*)

*It doesn't dissolve. A few moments go by, before the door in Javier's painting opens. DAD steps through it onto the stage. He has had a long day at work. He walks into the kitchen and places his newspaper down on the table. He starts to wash his hands. JAVIER walks over to the kitchen and sits down on one of the chairs. The kitchen light shows Dad's bloodied white dress shirt.*

DAD:

Hey, you.

JAVIER:

Hi Dad.

DAD:

How was your day?

JAVIER:

It was okay.

DAD:

Just okay? How'd you do on the test?

JAVIER:

Not too good. Ms. Frey said she'd let me take it over again.

DAD:

I like that teacher.

JAVIER:

She said, the junior high school has art classes.

DAD:

You'd like that?

JAVIER:

Can't wait. Pretty cool, I guess.

DAD:

Junior high school next year. I can't believe it.

JAVIER:

Me either. Where's Mom?

DAD:

Doctor's appointment. Should be back soon.

JAVIER:  
You got out early?

DAD:  
Went in early. Want coffee?

JAVIER:  
Mom says, I shouldn't be drinking coffee.

DAD:  
I'll make you a cup.

JAVIER:  
Okay, with sugar and milk.

DAD:  
Sugar and milk? Men don't take sugar and milk in their  
coffee.

(*handing Javier a  
bag*)  
Got you something.

JAVIER:  
What is it?

DAD:  
You need to open it.

(*JAVIER rips open the package.*)

JAVIER:  
(*hugging Dad*)  
This is awesome!

DAD:  
It has a few paint brushes and a few colors. Maybe next  
week, I can get you one of those art books.

JAVIER:  
This is so cool, Dad!

DAD:  
I like it when you paint. Apply it to the world and it will  
take care of you. Don't end up like me hollow inside with a  
broken clock.

JAVIER:  
(*staring at his art  
kit*)  
I promise.

DAD:  
Good. Look at this, but you have to keep it quiet. Our  
secret for now.  
(MORE)

DAD: (CONT'D)  
(*taking camera out  
of a bag*)  
Got it at the used camera shop on Essex.

JAVIER:  
It's a camera.

DAD:  
Yes it is.

JAVIER:  
Mom is going to be mad.

DAD:  
I don't care.

JAVIER:  
Where'd you get the money for it?

DAD:  
I don't know who's worse about money, you or your mother.  
Worked for it.

(*daydreaming for a  
moment*)  
Maybe, I can get to a dark room someday. Develop some  
pictures.

JAVIER:  
(*holding camera*)  
This is real nice. You're going to have to hide it from  
Mom.

DAD:  
I'm going to have to before she has a fit. It's used, shopped  
around a bit. Got best price for it, I think.

JAVIER:  
Why do you and Momma always fight?

DAD:  
We don't know how to do anything else anymore. Can't  
remember, the last time we took a walk together.

JAVIER:  
That's what happens when you get married?

DAD:  
That's exactly what happens when you get married.  
(*pouring Javier a  
cup of coffee*)  
When you don't take time for your own life, how are you going  
to share it with someone else?  
(MORE)



DAD: (CONT'D)

You end up playing catch up, with whatever is left. Like, I said. Love yourself, first. Then, everything else falls into place. You got it?

JAVIER:

I got it.

DAD:

Good.

*(laughing)*

You don't like it?

JAVIER:

Yeah, I like it.

DAD:

*(pouring sugar)*

This one time. Just a little, not too much. You learn to love it and then can't go without it. Like a woman's ass.

*(Dad hugs Javier)*

DAD:

I love you, very much. Sorry, I don't spend time with you boys. All I do is work. Try to keep this shack over our heads.

JAVIER:

I know Pop.

DAD:

You work, never borrow a dollar from anyone. Never depend on anyone, never ask anyone for any favors. You need anything, you do it yourself.

JAVIER:

Got it.

DAD:

Good.

*(placing Javier in  
a headlock)*

Let me help your mother in this kitchen, before she gets home and World War III erupts.

*(enjoying the moment)*

This is good. I make good coffee.

*(Beat.)*

DAD:

*(picking up camera)*

Hey, let me take a picture of my boy. Who'll be starting junior high school soon.

JAVIER:  
(*excited, holding  
up his paint kit*)

Okay-

DAD:

Ready?

JAVIER:

I'm ready.

DAD:

On three. One, two, three-

*FLASH! The camera goes off and  
brightens the entire stage.  
The flash light does not  
dissolve as JAVIER walks into  
the light, back over to LOUIS  
with his paint kit in hand.  
The camera flash slowly  
dissolves out. JAVIER picks up  
his drink.*

LOUIS:

Neighborhood is changing. A lot of white people moving in.  
Remember when we would only see white people out here buying  
drugs?

JAVIER:

Now they're moving in.

LOUIS:

Never thought I'd see the day.

*A Long beat. He rolls a joint  
and lights it. He takes two  
totes and passes it to JAVIER.*

JAVIER:

Do you remember that kid they found shot dead in our building?

LOUIS:

Sure I do. On the roof.

JAVIER:  
(*passing the joint  
back*)

It was Dad.

LOUIS:

It was dad what?

JAVIER:  
Who killed that black kid.

LOUIS:  
You serious?

JAVIER:  
Yeah, I'm serious. You remember how dad used to sneak up to the roof to smoke?

LOUIS:  
I remember.

JAVIER:  
Well, this one night. Kid came out of nowhere. Maybe, he was already up there waiting. The kid pulls out a knife on Dad real, quick. Dad popped him twice. I saw the whole thing. Kid was dead before he hit the ground. I was supposed to be in bed.

*(taking the joint  
back)*  
Dad warned the kid, but he kept coming forward. So he had it coming.

*(looking over at  
Louis)*  
I didn't even feel bad. Could of been Dad who got hurt, you know.

LOUIS:  
Did Dad know you saw him?

JAVIER:  
No. I crept down the stairs and went right to bed.

*(Beat)*

LOUIS:  
*(laying a cocaine  
line on the table)*  
You in?

JAVIER:  
Not this time.

LOUIS:  
*(snorting a line,  
holding his nose)*  
Ooh, baby, christ himself.

JAVIER:  
You're bleeding.

LOUIS:  
It'll pass.

JAVIER:  
One day, it won't. It's going to kill you.

LOUIS:  
Not, if you're already dead.

JAVIER:  
Worries me, Luey. It gets dark.

*(Beat. He looks away, sipping  
quietly.)*

LOUIS:  
Think God has a plan for us?

*(A long pause.)*

JAVIER  
He may have written something down, keeps it in his back  
pocket.

LOUIS:  
Some of us have to pay for the sins of the world.

JAVIER  
Somebody has to.

*(LOUIS snorts another line.)*

JAVIER:  
Easy-

LOUIS:  
It's always been easy. I got it, Javi.

JAVIER  
Where's the money?

LOUIS:  
Under Jessie's bed. The gun, too.  
*(beat)*  
I did it for us.

JAVIER  
I know.

LOUIS:  
I didn't want anyone to get hurt.

JAVIER  
Someone always gets hurt.  
*(handing Louis some  
tissue)*

Anyone see you?

LOUIS:

I don't think so.

JAVIER:

Sure?

LOUIS:

*(looking over at  
Javier)*

I'm sure of it. All we have to do is... take the money and ride into the sunset.

JAVIER

Can't just run. There is no sunset.

LOUIS:

*(injecting himself)*

Why not?

JAVIER

I don't run.

*(exhaling deeply)*

I'm going to have to clean this up. The way I always do.

LOUIS:

Can't come this far without something in the tank. It just can't all be this endless pain and suffering. It just can't be.

*(He slumps over, almost passing out.)*

LOUIS:

...This some real good thunder Javi-

*(He slumps over even more and passes.)*

JAVIER

*(covering Louis  
with a blanket)*

Sleep if off here.

*(JAVIER picks up his drink and walks over to the center of the stage. He is motionless. He stares directly into the audience. A long beat. He walks back over to LOUIS and takes out a small hidden brown bag from under the sofa. Javier takes out a needle and holds it up to the light. Tapping it twice with his index finger.*

*He takes Louis's left arm and injects him in his veins. Javier takes out another needle from the same bag and injects Louis again, presses down on the needle.)*

LOUIS:  
*(coming out of it)*  
 Javi...what are you doing?

JAVIER  
 Saving you-

LOUIS:  
*(trying to get up)*  
 I... I can't breathe Javi-

JAVIER:  
 It'll be over soon.  
*(pinning Louis back down)*  
 I did ten fucking years for you!  
*(pushing hard down on the needle)*  
 Ten Goddamned years!

LOUIS:  
 I'm sorry, it's burning Javi... I can't breathe...

JAVIER:  
*(crying)*  
 I will save you! You will see God's eyes in heaven! God brought me back to save you! And save you I will!

*(JAVIER applies more pressure. LOUIS'S legs stop moving. Javier kneels before Louis, praying in silence. The tattoo wings on Javier's back extend in flight. He closes Louis's eyes, makes the sign of the cross and walks over to the telephone.)*

JAVIER:  
*(practicing on the phone)*  
 I need an ambulance! Send me an ambulance! My brother is not breathing!

(MORE)

JAVIER: (CONT'D)

*(placing the phone  
back down and  
picking it back up)*

I think my brother is not breathing! He doesn't wake up! I think he overdosed!

*(slamming the phone  
back down, picking  
the phone back up,  
holding it to his  
ear, sobbing)*

Hello-

*(calm)*

My brother is dead... he's not going to wake up...

*(A knock on the door. The sound startles JAVIER. He places the phone down, jumps over the sofa and takes out his Smith & Wesson 640 revolver from under the sofa. He cautiously walks over to the door, looking through the peephole. No one. He opens the door, cautiously stepping outside. BOOM! A gun goes off-off stage. JAVIER stumbles back into the basement apartment, falling to the ground.)*

*(MARCELLO walks in. He walks over to LOUIS and presses the gun into Louis's stomach. MARCELLO checks for a pulse. Then, MARCELLO walks over to JAVIER and stands over him.)*

MARCELLO RODRIGUEZ:

Where's my money Javi Boy?

JAVIER:

How the hell should I know, you fuck. You got me good-

MARCELLO RODRIGUEZ:

I sure did. Where's the money?

JAVIER:

Why don't you get yourself a fuck you sandwich.

MARCELLO RODRIGUEZ:

Maybe, I will.

JAVIER:  
You do that.

MARCELLO walks out. A full minute goes by, *before we can see JAVIER struggling to make it to his feet. He can't. He drags himself over to where LOUIS is and leans his back on the couch.*

MANNY:  
Hey, the door was open- what happened?!

JAVIER:  
Come in, close the door.

*(MANNY goes for the telephone.)*

JAVIER:  
No, no, no, put the phone down, come here. I need you to hold my hand.

*(MANNY runs over to JAVIER.)*

JAVIER:  
Louis overdosed...

*(MANNY lowers his head.)*

JAVIER:  
There's some money and a gun under Jessie's bed. You need to get it and go as far away as you can go. Jessie will know where to go. Where's Jessie?

MANNY:  
I don't know, she went out.

JAVIER:  
Find her. That dude that stopped you, he's gonna' come for you, but you have to get him first. You understand?

*(MANNY holds JAVIER up.)*

JAVIER:  
Say it!

MANNY:  
I understand-

JAVIER:  
... We're all killers Manny. It's in our blood... pumps in our veins.



(Beat)

JAVIER:

*(grunts in pain)*

There's something else you should know.

*(taking Manny's  
other hand)*

It was Mom... it was Mom who killed Dad...

*The main lights on JAVIER and  
MANNY dim out. The silhouette  
from the opening scene unfolds  
on stage. More light filters  
through and we can now clearly  
see Mom and Dad.*

MOM:

*(screaming)*

Where were you!

DAD:

Lower your voice Margo. Calm yourself down.

MOM:

I am not going to calm myself down! I am far from it! Where the hell were you?! I should not have to ask!

DAD:

Margo, calm yourself down, I said. I was at work.

MARGO:

I called, they said you left hours ago!

DAD:

That's right! Who the fuck needs to come home to you! To this! I took a walk! Forget it! I am tired of having to explain myself to you for every single Goddamned thing! Can't even fucking breathe! You suffocate everything in sight!

MARGO:

*(jumping at him)*

Don't lie to me Raymond! It hurts inside when you do!

RAYMOND:

*(grabbing her by  
the arms)*

Margo! You're going to wake the kids!

MARGO:

*(taking his hand)*

Get off of me! I don't care! I can smell her on you!

RAYMOND:

Your losing your mind- are you crazy?

*(MARGO falls to her knees,  
ripping at her clothes.)*

MARGO:

*(hysterical)*

You ignore me! I know it! I am not losing my Goddamned mind!

*(RAYMOND tries to pick MARGO  
up off the ground.)*

MARGO:

Get off of me!

*(She gets on her feet and gets  
in close to RAYMOND.)*

MARGO:

*(taking off her  
panties)*

Fuck me! The way you fuck her! The way you desire that  
bitch!

RAYMOND:

Margo stop!

MARGO:

*(taking Raymond's  
hand and placing  
it between her  
legs)*

The way you fuck her! Do it!

RAYMOND:

*(grabbing Margo  
violently by the  
arms)*

I told you to stop!

*(MARGO breaks free and slaps  
RAYMOND hard in the face.)*

MARGO:

I'll kill myself in front of the children! Raymond! I'll  
do it in front of you! I swear to you I will!

RAYMOND:

You're fucking crazy!

MARGO:  
*(she slaps Raymond  
 again)*

Yes! I'm fucking crazy! Fuck me the way you fuck her!

RAYMOND grabs MARGO by the throat and unzips his pants. He closes the apartment door and pins her against it. MARGO scratches at RAYMOND'S face and his back. RAYMOND takes MARGO'S hands and pins them behind her head, thrusting inside her hard.

The stage lights go black as we can hear them both going at it. As the lights come back up, RAYMOND is zipping up. He is facing the audience. MARGO puts her panties back on and walks into the apartment, slamming the door. A few moments go by. MARGO reappears.

RAYMOND:  
*(facing the audience)*  
 Christ lord...I can't do this anymore-

BOOM! The gun goes off!

RAYMOND grabs at his neck as the blood pours down his shoulder. He momentarily staggers, falling to the ground, unconscious. MARGO drops the gun and runs back into the apartment. She throws up into the sink, shaking uncontrollably.

MARGO:  
 Oh God! Oh God!

RAYMOND slowly gets up. He knows something is wrong but can't put it all together. He walks into the apartment. MARGO screams in horror! A spotlight comes up on JAVIER and MANNY.

JAVIER:

... Dad, didn't die right away. The bullet hit him just below the ear. His brain went into shock... he was still alive.

*(Beat)*

JAVIER:

... He walked back into the apartment and made himself a cup of coffee. There was blood everywhere. On the cabinets, in the sink, all over the dishes. I helped Mom clean it up.

*RAYMOND sips his coffee and looks at his watch. He is late for his morning shift. He takes the camera from the table and rushes out the door. The background changes to show, the final moments of Raymond's life, as he walked the city streets at dawn.*

JAVIER:

Dad was conscious for about, thirty to forty minutes before the police found him.

*RAYMOND walks to the center of the stage. He is losing strength. He stares at the audience in silence. He places the camera to his face. A flash goes off. He falls to the ground on his back. The morning sky light opens up on stage. Another flash goes off. RAYMOND takes his last photograph. His arms and camera fall to his side.*

JAVIER:

...Sorry, I wasn't there for you. Watch you grow up. I couldn't stay. Had nowhere to go either... looks like I still got nowhere to go.

*(JAVIER takes MANNY'S hands.)*

JAVIER:

Tell Rachel, I love her. Say it to her... so she knows.

MANNY:

Javi...

*(The lights fade. The phone rings.)*

*(A single spotlight comes up  
on the phone. The answering  
machine picks up.)*

ANSWERING MACHINE:

*(Javi's voice)*

Leave your message.

RACHEL:

*(over phone)*

Hey baby, you haven't called me. I ordered your cake. I can't wait for you to see it. I'll pick it up tomorrow around noon. I'm leaving my mother's now. Meet me outside in 20 minutes. Me and the baby love you. I was going to wait to see you to tell you... but, I can't wait. We're having a boy. See you soon.

*(The spotlight fades.)*

(END OF ACT)

ACT III

Scene 3

SETTING:

*Later. 1:44 am. The corner of  
Crystie street. The crosswalk  
is superimposed on stage.*

AT RISE:

*Jessie getting out cab.*

JESSIE:  
*(getting out of cab)*  
Which way are you going?

VANESSA:  
This way.

JESSIE:  
*(pointing)*  
You live two blocks that way.  
*(smiling)*  
You're going to see that guy!

VANESSA:  
We been talking a few months now, and its Saturday night  
girl-

JESSIE:  
Ok, be careful.

VANESSA:  
*(hugging Jessie)*  
You too.

JESSIE:  
I had a blast.

VANESSA:  
Me too. Call me tomorrow. You want me to wait until you  
get upstairs?

JESSIE:  
No. You go.

VANESSA:  
Okay, be careful.

JESSIE:  
*(hugging again)*  
See you girl.

JESSIE enters the building. She abruptly stops, taking out her asthma pump. As she closes the door behind her, she is hit over the head, hard. She falls to the ground. She tries to fight MARCELLO off, but he hits her again and gets on top of her, opening her legs. MARCELLO, hits JESSIE across the mouth, knocking her unconscious. He rips at her skirt. The main stage lights begin to dim quickly.)

Stage lights slowly begin to come back up. Sunflowers can be seen floating from the ground up into the night sky. The stage light continues to brighten. JESSIE stands on top of the rooftop's ledge. Her mascara is a mess. Her skirt is ripped and her face is swollen. The downtown Manhattan skyline can be seen behind her. She leans over and falls to her death.

Hundreds and hundreds of sunflowers can now be seen floating up into the night's sky. The entire stage goes black. The following sequence of events come in and out of the light on stage, one dissolving right after another.

A spotlight comes up on MARGO in the kitchen. She is holding her stomach and throwing up in the sink. A mouthful of pills drop from her mouth. She falls to the floor and begins crawling towards her bedroom. More pills fall out of her mouth. The spotlight on MARGO fades out.

Main stage lights come up on the old abandoned basketball, and handball courts off Elridge Street.

MARCELLLO holds court with a few of his men, smoking a cigarette. MARCELLO'S CREW begin to back away. MANNY appears behind MARCELLO. MANNY points a gun to the back of MARCELLO'S head. The lights fade.

Main stage lights come back up. We are in the kitchen. MANNY is visibly shaken and sweating. He wipes his forehead with a kitchen towel and drinks water straight out the gallon. He notices Mom's porcelain saints in the middle of the kitchen table.

MANNY:  
 (stepping on  
 prescription pills)  
 Ma! Where's Jessie!

(No answer.)

MANNY:  
 (walking into  
 Jessie's room)  
 Mom? We need to get out of here! Ma! Where's Jessie?  
 Where the fuck is she! Ma!  
 (yelling)

Mom!

(walking into Mom's  
 bedroom)

Mom!

(MARGO is face down on the  
 bed. MANNY picks up MOM'S  
 head and opens her mouth.)

MANNY:  
 Fuck Ma!  
 (taking the pill  
 out of Mom's mouth)  
 Goddamn it! Ma!

(MOM'S not breathing.)

MANNY:  
 Wake up!  
 (feeling for a pulse)  
 Wake the fuck up Ma!

(MORE)



MANNY: (CONT'D)  
*(crying, placing  
 his ear on her  
 chest)*

Wake the fuck up! Mom! Mom!

*(MANNY gently lies MOM back  
 down on the bed, keeping his  
 head on her chest.)*

MANNY  
 Goddamn Mom! Goddamn you!

*(A long beat.)*

*(MANNY places MOM'S hands over  
 her chest, a pillow under her  
 head and covers her with the  
 blanket. He sits on the edge  
 of the bed, facing the audience)*

*(MARGO'S dead body props up.)*

MOM:  
 ...I used to play with the rocks in the creek by our farm.  
 I would wet my feet in the mornings... when the water was  
 the coldest.

*The memory of her Margo's  
 childhood farm appears on stage.  
 A beautiful horizon and a marsh  
 deer can be seen in the  
 backdrop. A few trees and a  
 small bridge that leads over  
 the creek to a brown barn are  
 also visible. MANNY steps  
 away from the bed. He walks  
 over to MOM and takes the  
 blanket off her head.*

MOM:  
 Could always tell when a storm was coming, days in advance.  
 I would pick strawberries... hide them in my pockets. Momma  
 would get so mad.

MANNY:  
*(sitting back at  
 the edge of the  
 bed, facing the  
 audience)*

Going home Mama?

MOM:  
 ...Before it gets dark.

(Beat)

MOM:

Dreamed of you in my belly. All of you. All four of you at the same time. I would sing to you. Had your name picked out before you were even born.

(A long beat.)

MOM:

I can't hear the dead singing anymore. Can you?

MANNY:

No, Mama, I can't.

MOM:

Can I take my slippers off? Feel the grass in between my toes.

MANNY:

Sure, Momma.

MOM:

(looking over at  
Manny)

Snow is coming. I should go inside and get my coat. You going to hug me before I go?

*Manny walks over, hugs Mom.*

MOM:

(rubbing her belly)

I'll carry you inside here... always.

*(She starts to walk into the farm in Javier's painting. Baseball size snowflakes begin to fall.)*

MANNY:

Momma...

*(He picks up the porcelain saints off the bed and hand them to Mom.)*

MOM:

(pointing)

I found them in the creek, just up ahead. Saved them from drowning.

*(MARGO starts to walk towards the road up ahead. She begins to disappear into the painting.)*

*(Police lights and sirens take over. MANNY runs into Jessie's room and checks under the bed and finds the money, neatly stacked into two Nike shoeboxes. He grabs them and runs into his room locking the door. He places the money and gun on his bed. Six heavily armed police officers, wearing bullet proof vests, are outside the apartment door.)*

POLICE:

Police! Open the door! Open the fucking door!

*(MANNY turns the volume all the way up on his DJ turntables. The Police take out a battering ram. MANNY raises the music even louder, bopping to his tunes.)*

POLICE:

*(breaking the door  
down)*

Hands up! Now! Hands behind your head! Down on the floor!  
Drop the fucking gun! Drop it!

*(MANNY stares at the audience, crying. His chest heaves in and out.)*

POLICE:

Drop the gun! Now!

*(MANNY presses the gun to his temple and pulls the trigger.) Everything freezes. So does Manny's music. Stage goes black.*

*In the dark, we can hear people talking in the background, kids laughing, running, chasing one another. Sea gulls can also be heard along with the ocean waves.)*

LOUIS:

I was open-

*(Stage lights come back up.  
Saturday afternoon at the shore  
by the boardwalk. The boys  
are throwing the football  
around.)*

JAVIER:

I had you covered-

LOUIS:

No you didn't- I had you beat-

JAVIER:

Not on my clock-

LOUIS:

Dad! Throw it again, let me show Javi how it's done-

RAYMOND:

Manny, you're on defense on this one. Ready-

MANNY:

Yeah-

RAYMOND:

Twenty-two blue-twenty-two blue- red striker- hike!

*(JESSIE and MARGO are sitting  
on one of the benches, drinking  
Coca Colas and laughing.  
Everyone is having a great  
time. The entire family is  
together.)*

RAYMOND:

It's an audible, run Manny!

JAVIER:

Watch the fake!

LOUIS:

I got it!

*(RAYMOND fakes the hand off to  
MANNY. Then MANNY runs, wide  
open- Touchdown!)*

MANNY:

Touchdown!

RAYMOND:

Game over folks! The crowd goes wild!

JAVIER:  
Good game- good game!

LOUIS:  
I told you to watch the fake!

JAVIER:  
Come here, before you earn yourself a knuckle sandwich-

RAYMOND:  
Colas?

JAVIER:  
Yes!

MANNY:  
Sounds good!

LOUIS:  
I want a cherry cola!

RAYMOND:  
You got it. All together now- I want to get a picture of us. What are you girls doing?

MARGO:  
Talking girl stuff.

RAYMOND:  
*(kissing Margo on  
the mouth)*  
Oh, is that what you girls are doing?

MARGO:  
That's right.

JAVIER:  
They were talking about boys.

JESSIE:  
No, we were not.

LOUIS:  
Ooh! Manny, your Momma and Dad were kissing.

MARGO:  
Leave him alone. Come here.

MANNY:  
*(sitting by Mom)*  
Any fruit left?

MARGO:  
In the cooler we have more strawberries.

RAYMOND:

Hey, let's take this picture.

JESSIE:

My hair is a mess.

*(A young couple, walking their dog are passing by.)*

RAYMOND:

*(to couple)*

Hey, can I trouble you to take a picture of my family and I?

YOUNG WOMAN:

Of course, sure.

RAYMOND:

Thank you. Manny you sit by your mother and sister. Louis, Javi, here stand with me.

*He stands behind Margo, placing his hand over her shoulder. JAVIER and LOUIS have their arms around one another. MANNY sits in between JESSIE and MARGO, holding the football.*

RAYMOND:

All together now, get in close.

*The YOUNG WOMAN, with her back to the audience, sets up to take the picture. She raises her index finger. One...two...three. Flash! RAYMOND, MARGO, JAVIER, LOUIS, MANNY, and JESSIE all freeze and become completely still. The YOUNG WOMAN who took the picture places the camera by JESSIE'S lap.*

*We stay with the entire family. Frozen in the same pose. The sun descends over the ocean into the turquoise horizon. The lights fade.*

*(END OF PLAY)*