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Spring 2018

Shoe

Marisela Treviño Orta
University of Iowa

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SHOE

by

Marisela Treviño Orta

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Master of Fine Arts
degree in Theatre Arts in the
Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

May 2018

Thesis Supervisor: Associate Professor Art Borreca

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Graduate College
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

MASTER'S THESIS

This is to certify that the Master's thesis of

Marisela Treviño Orta

has been approved by the Examining Committee for
the thesis requirement for the Master of Fine Arts degree
in Theatre Arts at the May 2018 graduation.

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Dare Clubb

Megan Gogerty

Lisa Schlesinger

For my family.

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Playwriting is such a unique art form. It requires collaborators. Only with other artists can a play fully come to life on stage. And in the process of writing, other artists can provide a playwright with illuminating information and feedback to support the writing process.

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PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Shoe examines the family dynamics and gender roles within a dysfunctional Mexican American family led by a matriarch who manipulates her grown children to remain under her roof as a way to deal with the enormous grief created when her spouse abandoned her and her children sixteen years ago. Drawing inspiration from the nursery rhyme *There Was an Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe*, the play creates an atmosphere of confinement and constriction as the protagonist Marta yearns for a life outside of the family's double-wide trailer in Texas. The play calls for an all-Latinx cast. While the characters are all Mexican American, the roles are open to any Latinx actor. It should be acknowledged that the script is still in progress. Rewrites and minor edits will likely occur when the play undergoes a rehearsal process for its world premiere.

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PREFACE

I began writing *Shoe* with the desire to create a character who was a truly horrible individual. It was writing as therapy. I was looking to put my emotions—anger, despair, frustration—into a play. And so I began with the character Renata—a woman who was abandoned by her husband years ago and therefore cruelly manipulates her children in order to prevent them from moving out of the family home.

While *Shoe* began with Renata, I knew quickly she wouldn't be the protagonist of the play. Rather, it would be Marta—the eldest daughter who bears the brunt of her mother's ire. I wanted to give Marta the happy ending I couldn't give a loved one in real life. I gave Marta the ability to escape her oppressive home life and I reignited her dreams which had laid dormant for the twelve years prior to the opening of the play.

I chose *Shoe* as my thesis play because it is emblematic of my work thus far as a playwright and offers hints for the direction my work is now headed.

I began my playwriting career focusing on social justice issues that affect the Latinx community such as the femicide in Ciudad Juarez, deaths of immigrants along the Mexican border, and how immigration policies tear mixed-status families apart. These early plays—*Braided Sorrow*, *American Triage*, and *Woman on Fire*—established my playwriting voice, with my personal poetics—an attention to lyricism, imagery, repetition, and metaphor—very present in my work.

I think it is the poet in me that likes triptychs—there's something satisfying about the rhythm of three's. I think of my first three plays as an unofficial cycle of plays—my border cycle. A few years ago, I began another cycle which I call grim Latinx fairy tales.

Like most in my generation, I grew up on fairy tales. This was well before the sanitized versions produced by Disney cornered the movie market for children. When I was a child there were only 3 Disney princesses: Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty. While I was familiar with those movies, I was also aware that the original tales those films were based on were much darker, more dangerous. The stories collected by the Brothers Grimm in the early 1800's were often very violent—they were cautionary tales for children to help them navigate and overcome a dark and dangerous world.

My grim Latinx fairy tales are a hybrid—much like I am the product of cultural hybridization. The plays in this cycle are inspired by Latinx mythology and folklore, but use Western fairy tale conventions to inform their narrative structure. *The River Bride* is a tragic love story that demonstrates how fear and hesitation can cost a couple their shot at true love, *Wolf at the Door* is story of a woman in an abusive relationship regaining her agency, and *Alcira* is a heroine's journey. Lastly, my fairy tale plays are specifically for adults, created to help adults navigate their emotional lives.

In this cycle of fairy tales I continued to incorporate my poetics. *The River Bride* demonstrates my most heightened use of poetic language, *Wolf at the Door* had both lyrical language and imagery, and *Alcira* uses powerful imagery in its storytelling.

As I reflect on this growing body of work it becomes clear that, in addition to my personal poetics, my plays also incorporate a mythic quality—reworking, reconstructing myths and folklore. In my earlier plays I used Greek mythology which I was introduced to as a child, in my newer plays I am exploring Latinx mythology.

In *Shoe* all these threads coalesce. Like all my plays, *Shoe* features Latinas at the center of the narrative. Additionally, *Shoe* continues my focus on my cultural community by exploring gender roles, the use of food to create community, and the challenges of being the first in a family to leave home for college.

While this play marks my foray into Realism, it is my own brand of Realism that includes a heightened theatricality. Like the fairy tale cycle that preceded it, *Shoe* draws inspiration from the Western canon. However, instead of looking to fairy tales, this play takes some inspiration from the Mother Goose nursery rhyme *The Was An Old Woman Who Lived In A Shoe*.

Like my other plays, I've drawn from my own life while crafting *Shoe*. The play is set in my parents' hometown of Poteet, Texas—a small town half an hour south of San Antonio. And I've pulled details from members of my extended family and exaggerated them in the play.

Shoe follows Marta, a thirty-year-old woman who gave up her dreams of college and photography to stay home and care for her mother Renata, a pseudo hypochondriac. Sixteen years prior, Renata's husband abandoned the family which made her extremely bitter and hell-bent on preventing her children from leaving home. Over the course of the play we learn that when Mara was accepted to college, Renata feigned illness to guilt her daughter into staying home.

Marta became the main caretaker for her mother and her siblings. She cooks, cleans, and even rears her youngest sibling Ileana. In fact, Marta has poured all her aspirations into Ileana and is doing everything she can to help her sister go to college.

As a result of abandoning her own dreams, Marta rarely leaves the trailer alone. We get a hint that she may hide behind the idea of agoraphobia, however her brother Diego reminds her that she has no real symptoms that would confirm such a diagnosis.

It is the introduction of a laptop and an Internet connection provided by Ileana at the top of the play that give Marta access to a new kind of freedom. Through a new online friendship, Mara begins to reconnect with her deferred dreams and curiosity about the world outside the trailer.

By Act 2, the trailer becomes crowded and Marta's confidence is on the rise. It is also in this Act that Ileana emerges as an equally manipulative and cruel force as Renata. And in the final moments of the play, Marta decides to seize an opportunity to escape the increasingly toxic environment of her family home.

As I was writing the ending to the play I realized that while not a direct inspiration, I do feel that *Shoe* is most definitely in conversation with *La Casa de Bernalda Alba* (*The House of Bernalda Alba*) by Spanish poet and playwright Federico García Lorca. Both plays have a matriarchal tyrant and feature grown children who sabotage one another's efforts to leave the home.

Lorca's play ends with a suicide to underscore the tragic situation, while my play ends with a complicated decision to abandon the home. Ultimately, I do believe Marta's escape is a happy ending of sorts, however, I do recognize how difficult her departure will be for her siblings. Another difference between the plays is the context of Lorca's life—a gay man living in fascist Spain he was assassinated by Franco's regime. Many of Lorca's plays focus oppression and his most famous plays include oppression intersecting with forbidden love.

Other artists have also pointed out that Marta's departure has echoes of *A Doll House* by Henrik Ibsen. Nora's departure at the end of the play was a shock—"the door slam heard round the world." While not as shocking, Marta's exit is complicated. She leaves to pursue her own dreams, but at the cost of leaving her siblings and ailing mother behind. Audiences may find

Marta leaving very satisfying, but then must contend with the fallout in the house that will doubt follow.

With *Shoe* I believe I am beginning a new cycle of plays—family dramas that use a heightened Realism. But despite moving into new dramatic territory, my plays at their core remain fixed within my cultural identity and cultural community. As with all my plays, I see how I am contributing to the theatrical cannon especially in terms of roles for Latinx actors and in terms of diversifying the type of Latinx stories we see on stage. This is the legacy I hope to leave as a theatre artist. And as I graduate, I leave the Iowa Playwrights Workshop a more confident and focused playwright ready to take the next step in my career's trajectory.

DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

The first draft of *Shoe* was written while I was a Playwright Observer at the 2016 National Playwrights Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center. The first draft was first presented at the Iowa Playwrights Workshop in the fall of 2016. Over the summer of 2017 the play was developed at the National New Play Network's Playwrights Week at The Kennedy Center. In the fall of 2017, *Shoe* was presented at Milagro Theatre in Portland as part of their inaugural INGENIO Play Fest. In my final semester in the Iowa Playwrights Workshop, a production of *Shoe* was presented at the 2018 New Play Festival. *Shoe* is a finalist for the 2019 Alliance/Keneda National Graduate Playwriting Competition and will be presented as a reading at the Alliance Theatre in February 2019.

The cast and creative team of the New Play Festival production of *Shoe* is as follows:

Erica Vannon	Director
Adam Koob	Stage Manager
Paige German	Assistant Stage Manager
Lindsey Kuhn	Scenic Designer
Zamora Simmons	Costume Designer
Courtney Gaston	Lighting Designer
Cristina Goyeneche	Marta
Cristina Ranslem	Ileana
Ana Merino	Renata
Ethan Jones	Diego
Yannik Encarnação	Tomás
Elyse Fisher	Veronica

LIST OF CHARACTERS

- MARTA 30 years old. Plain in every sense of the word and always barefoot.
- ILEANA 18 years old. High School senior. Young, beautiful, and full of promise.
- RENATA 50. A mother who refuses to let go of her children.
- TOMÁS 33 years old. The eldest of his siblings. Works in construction. In a relationship with VERONICA.
- DIEGO 28 years old. Works in construction.
- VERONICA Early 30s. Works at a grocery store. In a relationship with TOMÁS.

SETTING AND TIME

Shoe is set in a double-wide trailer in a small town in Central Texas, about half an hour south of San Antonio, TX.

The time is the present.

PUNCTUATION

When the “/” appears, the actor who has the next line of dialogue should begin speaking.

The “...” at the end of a line of dialogue is for trailing off, i.e. lost in thought, unable to finish thought.

The “...” at the beginning of a line of dialogue suggests hesitation of some sort, i.e. thinking, a realization, uncertainty.

The “...” alone as dialogue suggests a non-response, i.e. speechless

PRONUNCIATION

While the Spanish should be pronounced correctly. Only RENATA has an accent when speaking English. Her children are third generation Mexican Americans and while they have a mastery over both languages, they speak primarily in English.

UTSA: University of Texas at San Antonio. Each letter is pronounced.

TRANSLATIONS

<i>amá</i>	ma (informal “mom”)
<i>cabrón</i>	bastard
<i>café, también</i>	coffee, too
<i>caldo de res</i>	a beef stew
<i>chalupas compuestas</i>	a corn tostada topped with refried beans and taco toppings
<i>cuna de lobos</i>	cradle of wolves
<i>enchiladas</i>	we all know what enchiladas are, right?
<i>esa</i>	that one (female)
<i>fideo</i>	a soup with vermicelli pasta and ground beef
<i>güey</i>	dipshit
<i>hermana</i>	sister
<i>hermanita</i>	little sister
<i>hija</i>	daughter
<i>hijo</i>	son
<i>la llorona</i>	the weeping/crying woman
<i>macho</i>	tough guy
<i>manteca</i>	shortening, lard
<i>¿me entiendes?</i>	do you understand me?
<i>mensa</i>	dummy
<i>mierda</i>	shit
<i>no más</i>	no more
<i>no seas sucia</i>	don’t be dirty (as in a filthy mouth)

<i>nos vemos</i>	see ya soon
<i>novelas</i>	soap operas
<i>pan loco</i>	crazy bread (a sweet bread my grandmother made)
<i>pendeja/o</i>	stupid, idiot
<i>que Dios les bendiga</i>	may God bless you
<i>queque</i>	(slang for) cake
<i>sabes que</i>	you know what
<i>sí, amá</i>	yes, mom
<i>sí, amor</i>	yes, my love
<i>sin vergüenza</i>	no shame
<i>sopa</i>	soup
<i>también</i>	as well
<i>tortillas</i>	we all know what tortillas are, right?
<i>vengan pa'ca, hijos</i>	come here, sons
<i>y la sinvergüenza</i>	and that shameful woman
<i>ya</i>	all right (enough)

Act 1, Scene 1

Spotlight up on MARTA. She's barefoot in a pair of old shorts and a faded t-shirt.

MARTA sits on a mattress that lies on a carpeted floor—propped up against the wall, an old laptop in her lap.

MARTA:

Hello.

I've never done anything like this before. Kinda feels like writing into the void. But if anyone here is interested in a back and forth correspondence—I'm here.

I'm not sure where to start...Maybe...Maybe if I told you who I am and where I'm from, you'd understand me. And if you understood me, then maybe—someday—you'd see me. Really see me. And you'd wonder why I never got out. What I'm still doing here living in my parents' home. You'd understand why nobody ever gets out. And then maybe if you could see me, really see me, then I'd know if she was wrong. If she was just lying.

I'll tell you. I'll tell you everything.

There once was an old woman...

Lights out quickly on MARTA.

Lights up on the interior of a double-wide trailer: the living room and kitchen. Stage left is a door to the outside world. Next to this door—on a laminate threshold—is a simple shoe bench. Stage right is a hallway that leads to the rest of the trailer.

The windows—instead of curtains—are covered by faded and dull bedsheets held up by metal tacks. This window dressing completely covers the window as if to hide the world outside.

In the living room there is a makeshift bed/sofa—MARTA's mattress— on the floor, next to it a cordless phone and an old television on a small cube of a TV stand. Perched on top of the TV is a small picture frame. The picture is of RENATA and her grown children—clearly the photo was taken inside the trailer.

In the living room RENATA is asleep in an old La-Z-Boy recliner. DIEGO and TÓMAS have just finished eating dinner. They sit at the kitchen table and sip their beers. TÓMAS looks at his cell phone reading through texts and responding.

MARTA is in the kitchen. She eats standing up. When she sees that her brothers are done eating she takes their bowls from the table to the sink.

MARTA:

Amá, do you want to eat?

TOMÁS:

(Hissing) Let her sleep.

*Too late. RENATA stirs. She surveys the room.
MARTA prepares a bowl for her mother and sets it
on a TV tray in front of RENATA.*

RENATA:

Where is Ileana?

MARTA:

She's still at school.

RENATA:

School ends at four. It is almost six. She better not be messing around with any boys.

MARTA:

She has a class officer meeting. She'll be home soon.

RENATA:

What is this?

MARTA:

Fideo.

RENATA:

You make it too soupy.

RENATA tastes her food. MARTA watches.

RENATA:

Did you put salt in it?

MARTA:

Yes.

RENATA tastes the soup again.

RENATA:

You put too much.

MARTA:

I put the same amount of salt that I always put.

RENATA:

And it is always too salty. I know what I am talking about. I was a great cook. I could have had my own restaurant if I didn't have children. I could have done anything. You don't believe me?

MARTA:

I believe you.

RENATA eats a bit more soup.

RENATA:

How many times have I told you? Feeding a family is an important responsibility. It's more than just nourishment. It is sustenance.

MARTA:

I know.

RENATA eats a bit more soup to confirm her dissatisfied taste buds.

RENATA:

“You know.” Oh, how I tried to teach you how to cook. But you were never paying attention. Your head was always in some book. Maybe if you had listened you would have found someone nice to take care of you. Now all you have is me. All you have—

DIEGO and TOMÁS finish their beers and head to the shoe bench. Before they reach the bench RENATA spots them.

RENATA:

Where are you going?

TOMÁS:

Out.

RENATA:

Vengan pa'ca, hijos.

DIEGO and TOMÁS go to their mother. RENATA takes each son by the hand.

RENATA:

(Lachrymose) Be careful. Be safe. There is so much trouble out there in the world.

TOMÁS:

We'll be all right.

RENATA:

I worry about you. Both of you. Are you sure you have to go out?

TOMÁS:

We're sure.

DIEGO and TOMÁS each kiss their mother on the forehead and go to the bench to put on their shoes. RENATA makes the sign of the cross in the direction of her sons.

RENATA:

Que Dios les bendiga.

DIEGO and TOMÁS exit out the front door.

BEAT.

RENATA:

Tómas is running around with that Garcia girl. What is her name?

MARTA:

...

RENATA:

Marta! Are you listening to me? What is the name of that Garcia girl?

MARTA:

...Veronica?

RENATA:

Esa. Those two are always looking at one another in church. Sin vergüenza.

Why doesn't he bring her over to meet me? Doesn't a mother's approval count for anything?

MARTA:

Maybe if things get serious, he will.

RENATA:

¿*Cómo que* serious? What do you know about getting serious, eh? And he should introduce her to me before they get serious. What if I don't like her?

MARTA:

(Quietly) You wouldn't be the one marrying her.

RENATA:

And where do you think those two lovebirds are going to live? Here, *pendeja*. You know how much Tomás makes? *Y la sinvergüenza*—she's not raking it in at the grocery store. No. Mark my words, those two are gonna end up here with all their brats running around. And guess who is going to take care of them?

MARTA:

Me?

RENATA:

That's right. Me.

Back when I was a girl people knew how to court. There were rules. You sent over your parents to meet her parents. That is what your father did. You had to get their consent. None of this running around at night doing God-knows-what God-knows-where.

Do you know what used to happen to a girl who ran around without a chaperone? She got a reputation.

MARTA:

And the boy?

RENATA:

(Frustrated) You aren't listening to me, Marta. The girl would get a reputation. And her whole family would suffer.

MARTA:

(Realization) Ileana isn't running around.

RENATA:

You sure about that?

MARTA:

I'm sure. It's class officer stuff. That's all.

RENATA:

I don't know why she always volunteers. Why work for free? Is she trying to get away from us?

MARTA:

It's what high school kids do now.

RENATA:

It comes to nothing. Nothing good anyway.

RENATA pushes her bowl of food away.

RENATA:

No más. I just want to lie down.

MARTA moves the TV tray out of the way and helps RENATA to her feet and toward the hallway.

RENATA:

When Ileana comes in, tell her to come see me.

MARTA:

I will.

RENATA:

And if she isn't home by seven, you call the police station and tell them she is missing.

MARTA:

Don't worry.

RENATA:

Don't tell me not to worry. My baby is out there.

MARTA:

When she gets in, I'll have her come see you.

*MARTA and RENATA both exit down the hallway.
The sound of a bedroom door opening and closing.*

*A moment later ILEANA quietly enters the front
door. Along with her backpack she carries a tote
bag. She sits on the shoe bench to take off her shoes
and surveys the living room/kitchen.*

*MARTA enters from the hallway and goes over to
her sister.*

MARTA:

You're late.

ILEANA:

Thank you for stating the obvious. Is Mom still up?

MARTA:

She is and she wants you to go in and see her.

ILEANA:

Now?

MARTA:

“As soon as you got in.”

ILEANA:

How ‘bout we speak softly and pretend I get home later.

ILEANA walks toward the hallway, puts her ear to the wall and listens.

MARTA:

Don’t worry. She won’t be leaving her room.

ILEANA:

Good.

MARTA:

Seriously, Ileana. Why are you so late? I had to cover for you.

ILEANA:

So I’m late.

MARTA:

No, you're really late. Mom thinks you're running around. You're not running around, are you?

ILEANA:

Define "running around."

MARTA:

Ileana, I'm serious. You can't begin your senior year goofing off.

ILEANA:

Who's goofing off? I'm taking three AP courses this year.

MARTA:

Taking them doesn't mean you'll pass them.

ILEANA:

Duh.

MARTA:

Be serious. It's gonna mean a lot more homework.

ILEANA:

Precisely. That's why I had to stay after school, greasing the wheel of fortune.

ILEANA presents the tote bag.

MARTA:

What's this?

ILEANA:

Open it.

MARTA takes the tote, opens it, and pulls out an old laptop.

MARTA:

Where'd you get this?

ILEANA:

Ms. Esparza, the guidance counselor. It's a loaner. But don't let anyone else see it. Last thing we want is the boys downloading porn.

MARTA:

How long do you have it?

ILEANA:

All school year. I told Ms. Esparza that with my course load and applying to college I really need my own computer. I mean, using the public library for my homework is for the birds. And voilà.

MARTA:

Just like that. She gave it to you?

ILEANA:

I think I cried or something.

MARTA:

Ileana!

ILEANA:

What? You're always saying I have to make the most of every opportunity. They were gonna donate it to somebody. Well, I swooped in and made my case. Single parent household. Check. All A student. Check. First in my family to go to college.

MARTA:

You have to be accepted to college before you can have that title.

ILEANA:

Exactly. And this laptop is going to help me do just that. I bet they'll give it to me by the end of the year. Ya know, a sort of graduation gift.

MARTA shakes her head with disapproval.

ILEANA:

What?

MARTA:

Sometimes it's scary how much you're like Mom.

ILEANA:

(Offended) Don't say that. Take it back.

MARTA:

Fine. Forget it.

ILEANA:

Would Mom ever share the spoils of her hard-earned labor with you?

MARTA:

What spoils?

ILEANA:

Marta, you aren't listening to me. Once we get online—

MARTA:

We don't have Internet.

ILEANA:

Oh, but we do.

ILEANA opens her backpack and produces a wifi modem.

ILEANA:

Guess who called Time Warner.

MARTA:

You didn't.

ILEANA:

I did. And I got this old modem from a friend.

MARTA:

What friend?

ILEANA:

Not important.

MARTA:

Ileana. We can't afford Internet.

ILEANA:

We can for six months. Look, they were having some sort of deal. Don't worry. I got Mom twenty new channels to distract her. There's even a channel that's all *novelas* all the time, plus the wifi—and the bill stays the same.

MARTA:

(Incredulous) The same?

ILEANA:

That's the deal. We try out the new channels and get six months of free wifi. After that, we'll cancel it. Mom will be none the wiser.

MARTA:

Except now she has twenty new channels. How do I explain that? And I say "I" because we both know I'll be the one she asks.

ILEANA:

Tell her the extra channels are part of some customer appreciation campaign or something. Besides, you do the bills. She won't even know what the bill says. Imagine—there's an entire online world out there. And it will all be at your fingertips. All you have to do is hook this up to the cable box.

MARTA:

...I can use it?

ILEANA:

What have we been talking about for the past five minutes? Of course, you can use it. You get the laptop during the day while I'm at school and I'll have it at night.

MARTA:

For your homework.

ILEANA:

Right.

ILEANA goes to the bed/sofa mattress and hides the laptop under it.

ILEANA:

See. No one will know it's here.

MARTA:

Unless they sit on it and break it.

ILEANA:

Nah. It's old. Practically a brick. And you're the only one who uses the mattress.

MARTA sighs out her uncertainty.

ILEANA:

Come on, Marta. Don't make me go to the Public Library. Not when I can have a laptop here. For free!

MARTA:

...Promise you'll use it to apply to college.

ILEANA:

I promise.

ILEANA exits down the hallway. MARTA considers the laptop and then goes to sleep. Lights shift.

Act 1, Scene 2

The following morning. MARTA is in the kitchen cooking. The coffee is percolating.

MARTA:

Diego, Tomás, Ileana—breakfast!

She retrieves three coffee mugs from the cupboard and fills them with coffee from the coffee pot. She retrieves a glass from the cupboard and fills it with orange juice from the fridge.

Enter DIEGO and TOMÁS. They sit at the table. MARTA puts a plate in front her brothers—chorizo and eggs with refried beans.

DIEGO:

What's for breakfast?

MARTA:

Chorizo and eggs.

DIEGO:

Where's the *tortillas*?

MARTA puts the tortillas wrapped in a kitchen towel in the center of the table. DIEGO and TOMÁS grab tortillas and eat their breakfast.

DIEGO:

No salsa?

MARTA:

We finished it the other day.

TOMÁS:

You need to do the laundry. I only had one clean shirt left.

MARTA:

I'm washing clothes today.

DIEGO:

Whattya gonna make for dinner?

MARTA:

I'll think about dinner when I have to make it.

DIEGO stops eating and stares at his sister. She caves.

MARTA:

Something with the ground meat in the freezer.

TOMÁS:

Don't just do clothes. We're almost out of towels.

MARTA:

I know how to do laundry.

TOMÁS:

Oh yeah? When's the last time you changed that shirt?

MARTA looks down at her t-shirt and becomes self-conscious. She walks half-way into the living room.

MARTA:

Ileana! You're gonna be late.

DIEGO:

You could make *enchiladas*.

MARTA:

No cheese.

(To TOMÁS) She knows about you and Veronica.

DIEGO:

Meatloaf?

MARTA:

I have to look at what we have in the pantry.

TOMÁS:

Whattya mean she knows about me and Vero? Did you tell her?

MARTA:

I didn't tell her anything. The woman is psychic. She thinks you two are messing around.

TOMÁS:

That's none of her business. Or yours.

DIEGO:

What about spaghetti and meatballs? We have pasta.

MARTA:

No sauce.

(To TOMÁS) She's right about one thing though. You and Vero are always looking at one another in church. If you didn't want Mom to find out, then you should've been more discreet.

TOMÁS:

"Discreet." You and your vocabulary. Is that the word of the day?

Sabes que, I have plans. Plans that none of you know about. So keep your nose outta my business.

DIEGO:

Just whatever you do, don't make sloppy joe's. I hate sloppy joe's.

MARTA:

(Frustrated) Diego, please. I'll make whatever I make.

Ileana!

DIEGO:

Well, we're the ones paying for the food. You could at least make what we like.

MARTA:

Then buy me more groceries. We're almost out of milk and—

TOMÁS finishes his breakfast and stands.

TOMÁS:

(To DIEGO) Come on.

DIEGO makes a quick taco of the last of his eggs and follows TOMÁS out the door. MARTA grabs the lunches she made. The brothers stop at the bench by the door to put on their work boots.

MARTA:

Wait.

She hands the lunches to her brothers. They leave without thanking her. The energy in the room shifts.

She returns to the kitchen and looks at the dishes on the table. She notices a piece of egg on the floor. She picks it up and tosses it into the sink. She collects the dirty dishes from the table.

Enter ILEANA carrying her backpack. She drinks her orange juice and grabs her lunch.

MARTA:

Is Mom up?

ILEANA:

She will be soon. She'd sleep in if you didn't yell.

MARTA:

She doesn't like to sleep in.

ILEANA:

But you'd like it. Think of it—an extra hour all to yourself before you have to wait on her hand and foot. Before she begins the day's work of picking away at everything you do.

MARTA:

You're gonna miss the bus.

ILEANA:

Not a chance. I've got Mr. Johnson wrapped around my little finger. All it takes is a smile and a few bats of my well-mascara'ed eyes.

MARTA:

He's an idiot then.

MARTA takes a folded down TV tray and assembles it. She begins to put RENATA's breakfast on the tray. ILEANA watches.

ILEANA:

He's not the only one.

MARTA:

I'm not wrapped around her finger, if that's what you're trying to say.

ILEANA:

Then make her come out here to eat. She's not an invalid, she just likes to play one.

MARTA:

Her ankle—

ILEANA:

Was never really twisted. And before that she supposedly had crippling vertigo. And before that sciatic nerve pain.

I hear her at night. She walks around in there just fine.

MARTA:

Don't you wanna eat something?

ILEANA:

Nah.

MARTA:

Then you get to school and leave her to me.

ILEANA:

That's exactly what she wants. Don't you see that?

MARTA:

You're gonna miss the bus.

ILEANA:

How come we never talk about you? It's always me.

MARTA:

'Cause you're getting outta here. You're gonna make something of yourself. All you have to do is get through this last year of high school.

ILEANA:

And you? When is your last year? Are you ever getting outta here?

MARTA:

Ileana, the bus.

ILEANA:

She's been bedridden since I was two. Always something new to keep you here.

MARTA:

Do me a favor, don't forget to go to the library.

ILEANA:

For what?

MARTA:

The latest issue of National Geographic.

ILEANA:

Mensa. Use the laptop.

MARTA:

Oh. Right.

MARTA goes back to the TV tray and picks it up.

ILEANA:

Not talking about something doesn't make it go away.

MARTA:

No, it doesn't.

From outside the sound of a bus horn bleating.

ILEANA:

See. He's waiting for me.

ILEANA sits on the bench and puts on her shoes.

MARTA:

Is that really his name? Mr. Johnson?

ILEANA:

(Playfully) Nope.

ILEANA hops up and exits out the front door.

MARTA:

Stay outta trouble!

*From a room down the hallway the sound of
RENATA banging against the wall.*

RENATA (offstage):

Marta! Marta! Where's my breakfast?

*MARTA exits down the hallway with the TV tray of
food. Lights shift.*

Act 1, Scene 3

Spotlight on MARTA with the laptop. She finishes typing. She looks up and out.

MARTA:

She was happy once. Once. Before us kids. We're the stones tied around her neck that dragged her down. That made her life ordinary.

At least that's what she tells us.

She never used to say that before Dad left. Only after. I look at the old pictures and she's always smiling. Beautiful. No. Radiant. A star shimmering in the nighttime sky. But now...

Sixteen years ago—when my father left—the star died, collapsed in on itself, and became a black hole. A gravitational anomaly that pulls all of us into her orbit.

There I go again with my fancy vocabulary.

But that's what it feels like. A black hole. A gravitational field that even affects Time itself. So that years pass on the outside. But everything in here somehow stays the same.

BEAT.

MARTA:

Thanks for listening—reading—whatever. It's comforting to know you're out there. Ready and willing to listen. But enough about me. Tell me about where you live. Describe everything. The trees. The way the air smells at dawn. The sounds. I want to be able to close my eyes and be there.

MARTA (cont'):

Everything. I want to know everything.

Lights shift.

Act 1, Scene 4

MARTA gets ready for sleep. She lies down on the bed/sofa mattress and turns off the light.

A long BEAT. It appears that MARTA has fallen asleep.

ILEANA enters from the hallway. She's dressed to go out, carrying high heel shoes in her hands. She quietly and quickly goes to the shoe bench where she sits to put on her shoes.

She stands and turns toward the door.

MARTA:

Where are you going?

ILEANA:

Out?

MARTA:

Out where?

ILEANA:

Out and about. Come on—there's more to this world than the inside of this tin can.

MARTA:

You're not very good at sneaking out.

ILEANA:

Haven't been caught yet. What? You don't count.

MARTA:

And what happens if Mom asks where you are?

ILEANA:

If she asks, lie.

MARTA:

I'm not lying for you. If she asks me, I'll tell her.

ILEANA:

But you'll lie about the cable and Internet, is that it?

MARTA:

Sneaking out at night isn't going to help you academically.

ILEANA:

Fine. Jeez. Then don't let her ask you.

MARTA:

You should be staying in and working on your homework. Or on your college applications.

ILEANA:

I'll do it tomorrow night.

MARTA:

You're gonna miss the deadlines if you aren't careful. You need to take time to write your essay. You don't wanna rush yourself.

ILEANA:

If you're so concerned then you write my essays.

MARTA:

I can't do that. It's not right.

ILEANA:

Then enough already. I'll get them done.

MARTA:

Well, it might help if you take the laptop. It's been two weeks and you still haven't used it.

ILEANA:

Come on, Marta. When have I ever been irresponsible? Never. I've had straight A's since the third grade. I've earned this.

MARTA:

Where are you going?

ILEANA:

Don't you want to plead ignorance? Otherwise you're an accomplice.

MARTA:

I'm already an accomplice.

ILEANA:

Honestly, I haven't a clue. Tonight, I'm running with scissors. I'm not wearing a seatbelt. Yellow means go and red means go faster.

MARTA:

Promise you'll obey traffic laws.

ILEANA:

(Exuberant) I promise nothing!

ILEANA blows MARTA a kiss. ILEANA exits out front door. MARTA goes to sleep. Lights shift.

Act 1, Scene 5

The sound of the clothes dryer buzzing. MARTA enters with a pile of laundry and dumps it on the floor next to the bed/sofa mattress. She sits down, turns on the TV, and begins to fold clothes. The TV glows, but the sound is turned down.

The cordless phone rings. MARTA pounces on the receiver, trying to catch it before it rings again.

MARTA:

(Whispering) Hello?...Yes, we're very happy with our new cable package...No. No, I don't want to hear about your other services. Thank you.

She ends the call and resumes folding laundry.

A moment passes before the sound of RENATA moving around off stage is heard. MARTA quickly turns off the TV and folds the laundry faster.

RENATA (Off-Stage):

Marta! Who was that? Who called?

MARTA:

Telemarketer!

RENATA enters. She uses a medical cane with a four-point base to steady herself as she walks. MARTA springs up to help her mother to the La-Z-Boy where RENATA sits.

MARTA:

Amá, you shouldn't be up and around by yourself.

RENATA:

Who was on the phone?

MARTA:

A telemarketer.

RENATA:

You didn't buy anything, did you?

MARTA:

No.

RENATA:

That is just what I need—you telling strangers your social security number.

MARTA:

I didn't.

RENATA:

That would be just like you.

MARTA:

I hung up on them.

RENATA:

They read from scripts. Pretend to be friendly so you buy whatever crap they are peddling.

MARTA:

I know.

RENATA:

What?

MARTA:

I said, "I know."

RENATA:

Of course, you do. I told you how to handle them. If it wasn't for me you would not have enough sense to—what's burning?

MARTA:

Nothing's burning.

RENATA:

I smell something.

MARTA:

I'm baking *pan loco*.

RENATA:

You are burning it.

MARTA goes to the kitchen and opens the oven.

MARTA:

It's fine.

RENATA:

Doesn't smell fine. How did you make it?

MARTA:

The same way you do. Flour, sugar, eggs, *manteca*, and milk.

RENATA:

"The same way I do." You are half the cook I am.

MARTA takes the an 8x8 glass baking dish with sweet bread out of the oven and puts it on the counter under a pot holder or trivet to cool.

RENATA:

What are you doing?

MARTA:

It's done.

RENATA:

See—If I had not told you to check on it, you would have burned it. I bet you didn't set a timer.

MARTA returns to folding clothes. A BEAT while RENATA watches her with scrutiny.

RENATA:

Turn on the TV.

MARTA turns on the TV and hands the remote to RENATA. BEAT as RENATA channel surfs.

RENATA:

(Eventually) Marta.

MARTA:

Sí, amá.

RENATA:

We have more channels on the TV.

MARTA:

I know.

RENATA:

You know?

MARTA:

We've had new channels for about a month now.

RENATA:

(Alarmed) What is going on? What haven't you told me?

MARTA:

It's nothing, *amá*. We got a notice from Time Warner. They have some sort of customer appreciation preview.

RENATA:

What does that mean?

MARTA:

It means we're getting more channels for about five more months.

RENATA:

We don't need more channels. We can't afford that.

MARTA:

It's free.

RENATA:

You tell them we don't want them.

MARTA:

It won't cost us anything.

RENATA:

Everything has a cost. You just don't always see it right away.

MARTA:

It'll go away in five months. I promise.

RENATA:

Call. Them.

MARTA:

It doesn't hurt anything.

RENATA:

Give me the phone.

MARTA:

Amá, you're not listening to me.

RENATA:

You are the one who is not listening. Give me the phone, Marta.

MARTA hands RENATA the phone.

RENATA:

You really are good for nothing.

RENATA puts it to her ear and then stops.

RENATA:

What is the number?

MARTA:

I don't know. I'll have to look for it.

RENATA:

Then look for it.

MARTA gets up and slowly looks through a pile of mail on the kitchen counter.

RENATA:

Come on, come on. I don't have all day.

MARTA:

... You're probably right.

RENATA:

I am always right.

MARTA:

I mean, that channel that plays *novelas* all day long—it's too much. Even for someone with willpower. We'd be watching TV 24/7.

RENATA considers the idea of novelas all day long.

RENATA:

...A channel with just *telenovelas*?

MARTA:

Uh-huh.

RENATA:

All day long?

MARTA:

Yeah, they rerun the old ones during the day and show the new ones at night.

RENATA:

What "old ones?"

MARTA:

Cuna de Lobos.

RENATA gasps. MARTA pretends not to notice.

MARTA:

...Found it.

MARTA gives RENATA an old Time Warner bill.

MARTA:

The number's there in the top corner.

MARTA returns to folding clothes. RENATA thinks.

RENATA:

(Eventually) Marta.

MARTA:

Sí, amá.

RENATA:

Go get me a piece of that *pan loco*. I want to eat it in my room. And make me a cup of *café*, *también*.

MARTA goes to the kitchen and cuts a piece of sweet bread from the baking pan. She puts it on a plate.

RENATA:

I think I should go lie down.

RENATA gives MARTA the cordless phone.

RENATA:

I love *pan loco*. It reminds me of my childhood. My grandmother taught me how to bake it.

RENATA rises from her chair and uses her cane to walk toward the hallway. MARTA follows her mother with a piece of pan loco.

RENATA:

I will be resting, so do not disturb me.

MARTA:

I won't.

RENATA:

You might hear the TV on, but I just like to have something on when I sleep.

MARTA:

I won't disturb you.

RENATA:

Good.

And where is your sister? She should be home by now.

MARTA and RENATA exit down the hallway.

TOMÁS and DIEGO enter through the front door. TOMÁS is talking on his cell phone. DIEGO removes his shoes at the shoe bench and goes straight to the pan loco. DIEGO eats as he fiddles with his cell phone.

TOMÁS paces, his shoes still on.

DIEGO:

I think I wanna upgrade this phone.

TOMÁS:

(On phone) I know it's a long time to wait.

DIEGO:

Nothing's really wrong with this one, it's just—this is the 7 and the 9 just came out. So I figure it's time to buy the 8 at a discount. Smart, huh? Whattya think?

TOMÁS swats at DIEGO to be quiet.

TOMÁS:

(On phone) Vero, don't worry...I can handle her.

DIEGO:

No, you can't.

TOMÁS:

(To DIEGO) Shut up.

(On phone) No baby, I promise...Soon...

Look, if you want us to move in sooner we'll have to share a place with Diego...

DIEGO:

Don't I get a say in who lives with me?

TOMÁS swats at his brother.

TOMÁS:

(On phone) Well, if you want us to have our own place then you have to be patient. We gotta save more money for the deposit...Okay then...See ya tonight.

TOMÁS ends the call.

MARTA enters from the hallway. She hangs back and observes her brothers.

DIEGO:

I don't wanna share a bathroom with Vero.

TOMÁS:

We aren't gonna share a place. I just said that so she'd chill. She doesn't wanna share a place with you either.

DIEGO:

Oh.

TOMÁS:

You gotta understand how women think if you want to outmaneuver them.

DIEGO:

(Incredulous) Is that what you were doing?

MARTA:

Doing what?

TOMÁS:

Nothing. We weren't doing anything.

DIEGO:

Man, this *pan loco* is good.

MARTA:

(To TOMÁS) Hey! Shoes!

TOMÁS looks at his feet.

MARTA:

You're on the carpet. If Mom sees you tracking in all the *mierda* of the world she'll blow her top.

TOMÁS removes his shoes and tosses them in the direction of the shoe bench.

MARTA:

(Voice raising) Don't. Throw.

TOMÁS:

Don't talk to me like I'm a child.

MARTA:

Then quit acting like one.

DIEGO:

Chill, guys. Chill.

Now Marta—what did you make for dinner?

MARTA:

I haven't started.

DIEGO:

(Whining) You haven't started?

MARTA points out the grocery list posted to the fridge with a magnet.

MARTA:

See this? If there's a grocery list on the fridge you're supposed to buy groceries. How can I make dinner if you guys don't buy the food?

DIEGO:

Why didn't you go? It's within walking distance.

MARTA:

You know why.

DIEGO:

That's all in your head.

MARTA:

No, it's not.

DIEGO:

Come here. Lemme show you something.

DIEGO brings MARTA to the front door and opens it.

DIEGO:

Go on. Stand in the doorway.

MARTA stands tentatively in the door's frame looking outside.

DIEGO:

Is your heart racing? Are you dizzy? Does it feel like you're going to die?

MARTA:

No. Not exactly.

DIEGO:

Either you have it or you don't, *hermana*. That's how Science works.

MARTA:

But I'm still nervous.

DIEGO:

That's not a real symptom. And considering that you stay in here almost all the time that sounds normal. Besides you go out with us all the time.

MARTA:

Exactly, with you guys.

DIEGO:

Well, who's gonna buy the groceries when Tomás and I move out?

TOMÁS:

(*To DIEGO*) ¡Pendejo!

MARTA:

(*To TOMÁS*)... You're moving out?

TOMÁS:

What if we are?

MARTA:

What about us? Me, Ileana, and Mom? How are we supposed to pay bills?

DIEGO:

Me and Tomás got part-time jobs.

MARTA:

On top of your other jobs?

DIEGO:

It's just a couple of hours stocking the shelves at Super S. That and our construction work—it'll be enough. Don't worry, we'll be able to cover it all.

MARTA:

(*To TOMÁS*) You'd work two jobs?

TOMÁS:

That's the deal. We'll work two jobs. You and Ileana take care of Mom.

MARTA:

Does Mom know?

TOMÁS:

No. And no one tells her but me, *¿Me entiendes?*

MARTA:

When are you gonna tell her?

TOMÁS:

In my own time.

TOMÁS (cont’):

Don’t look at me like that. I have my own life I wanna live. Ever since Dad left my life has been on hold. Well, now I wanna do something for myself. For me and Vero. End of story.

Diego, come on.

DIEGO:

Where are we going?

TOMÁS:

To the store, güey.

TOMÁS hurriedly puts on his shoes. DIEGO follows suit. MARTA grabs the grocery list that’s on the fridge.

MARTA:

Here.

TOMÁS exits out the front door. DIEGO takes the grocery list.

DIEGO:

You not mad, are you? That we’re gonna leave.

MARTA:

Not mad.

DIEGO:

At least you’ll have Ileana to keep you company.

DIEGO exits. MARTA turns on the coffeemaker and then goes to the bed/sofa mattress and takes out the laptop. Lights shift.

Act 1, Scene 6

Spotlight on MARTA on the laptop.

MARTA:

What would I put in a go bag? Is that like some sort of ice breaker? Like what's your bucket list?

I dunno. I haven't thought about going anywhere for a long time. It's been twelve years, in fact. I had a scholarship. A full ride. It felt like the world was opening up for me.

She said if I left it would kill her. And I believed her. Or it was just easier to believe her. So I closed that door. Maybe I've convinced myself that it's easier to just stay inside this trailer. If I never go outside, then I never have to see what I'm missing out on.

When I was little I wanted to be a photographer for National Geographic. My dad and I used to go to the library and flip through the latest issue. The colors in those photos were so vibrant. And I mean vibrant. Humming with the frequencies of another country's sounds and smells.

When I was ten my dad bought me a camera from a pawn shop. It was old. You had to wind the film when you finished the roll. He taught me how to adjust the focus so I could take my own pictures. But it was National Geographic that taught me about composition. How objects fill the frame. How you can tell a story with a moment frozen in time.

BEAT.

MARTA:

A compass. Definitely a compass. I mean, how can you get anywhere if you don't know if you're actually moving away from where you started? How do you know if you're just going in circles?

Lights shift.

Act 1, Scene 7

MARTA is still on the laptop typing. Enter ILEANA through the front door. She takes her shoes off at the shoe bench.

ILEANA:

You better put that away before someone sees you.

MARTA finishes typing. ILEANA comes up and spies what her sister is doing.

ILEANA:

Who you talking to?

MARTA:

No one.

MARTA closes the laptop and hands it to ILEANA. MARTA goes to the kitchen to pour a cup of coffee. ILEANA puts the laptop under MARTA's mattress.

ILEANA:

No one always means someone. And not just any someone—are you talking to a boy?! Hey, no judgment. I mean, you've been cooped up in this trailer since you were my age.

MARTA:

You make me sound old. I'm only thirty.

ILEANA:

Yeah, and pretty soon you'll have spent half your life inside this trailer. Only going out for church.

MARTA:

That's not true.

ILEANA:

Tell me then—when was the last time you went out alone?

MARTA:

Do you want some *queque*? I made *pan loco*.

ILEANA:

Don't change the subject. Look, I think it's great. You need to have someone besides our family to talk to. I'd go insane if I had to stay here like that.

Live a little. Whatever gets your rocks off.

MARTA:

Don't be crude.

ILEANA:

Sorry.

So are you gonna tell me about him?

MARTA:

No.

ILEANA:

Really?

MARTA:

Don't you have something better to do with your time?

ILEANA:

Nah. I got all night.

MARTA:

Don't you have homework? College applications? October is almost over and Stanford's deadline is the first of November. You gotta buckle down.

ILEANA:

(Hissing) Keep your voice down! She'll hear you.

MARTA:

She's gonna find out eventually.

ILEANA:

I'd prefer she finds out after I've moved into the dorms.

MARTA:

Yeah, like that'd go over well.

ILEANA:

Well, it's better than the alternative. Come on, Marta. You remember. When your college acceptance letter arrived, she flipped. What did Diego call it? A conniption fit?

MARTA:

She wasn't well.

ILEANA:

Yeah, she hasn't been well since Dad left, selfish bastard.

MARTA:

Don't call him that. He was a good guy.

ILEANA:

(Sour) I wouldn't know.

And how can you call him a "good guy." He left his family. He ditched us. Why? None of us know. Except Mom. And whatever the reason was it festered in her.

Really, it's his fault. He left and the rest of us are suffering for it.

MARTA:

You were two. You don't remember what happened.

ILEANA:

I remember. I remember everything. Before he left she never complained about being sick. It's in her head, Marta. It's how she keeps us all here. It's how she kept you here.

MARTA:

She was really ill.

ILEANA:

Yeah. Your college acceptance letter was laced with abandonment issues.

She's not gonna keep me here like that.

BEAT while MARTA thinks.

MARTA:

This place will be so empty without you... Without Tomás and Diego.

ILEANA:

Whattya mean “without Tomás and Diego?”

MARTA:

They’re leaving, too.

ILEANA:

When?

MARTA:

I dunno. As soon as they save up the money. They’ve been working partial shifts at the grocery store. Tomás wants to get a place for him and Vero.

ILEANA:

But not before I leave, right?

MARTA:

I don’t know when they’re planning to move out.

ILEANA:

They can’t. I have to go first.

MARTA:

What does it matter who goes first?

ILEANA:

It matters. She’ll tighten her grip.

MARTA:

Then ask the guys to wait.

ILEANA:

Oh, yeah right. Like Tomás isn't one foot out the door already. He's just looking for something to distract her long enough so he can escape.

MARTA:

I guess you won't know unless you ask.

MARTA takes the cup of coffee and heads towards RENATA's room.

ILEANA:

Is that for Mom?

MARTA:

Yep. She knows about the *novela* channel now.

ILEANA:

Here. Let me.

ILEANA takes the coffee mug from MARTA.

ILEANA:

You shouldn't have to always be the one waiting on her.

MARTA:

Okay. But get in and get out. You have homework and applications to start and finish. Remember?

ILEANA:

Don't worry. I've got it all under control.

ILEANA goes down the hallway.

Lights shift as time passes.

Act 1, Scene 8

MARTA cleans up the kitchen: puts the pan loco away, washes any stray dishes, and sweeps.

After a while DIEGO enters with grocery bags.

DIEGO:

We're back!

ILEANA enters from the hallway with an empty coffee mug and plate. She gives them to MARTA.

ILEANA:

What did ya buy me?

DIEGO:

A lump of coal. Gangway!

DIEGO puts grocery bags on the table. Enter TOMÁS with more groceries. Before he can take off his shoes, ILEANA whispers something in his ear. TOMÁS quickly strides across the living room and exits down the hallway. MARTA calls after him, but to no avail.

MARTA:

(To TOMÁS) Hey! Shoes!

MARTA begins to unpack groceries.

DIEGO:

(*To ILEANA*) What did you say to him?

ILEANA:

Nothing. Mom just wants to talk to him.

Seriously, what did ya buy me?

DIEGO hides something in each of his hands and puts them both behind his back.

DIEGO:

Pick a hand.

ILEANA selects a hand. DIEGO reveals a blow pop.

DIEGO:

Cherry!

ILEANA:

Blow Pops are for kids.

DIEGO:

If you don't want it, I'll keep it.

ILEANA:

I didn't say that. Give it to me!

DIEGO makes it difficult, but ILEANA eventually grabs her lollipop.

DIEGO:

“For kids.” What do you expect? “What did ya buy me”—that’s something a kid asks.

ILEANA:

I’m still your little sister.

DIEGO:

Not so little. You’re almost as tall as Marta.

ILEANA:

Am I?

ILEANA runs over to MARTA to try and do a side by side comparison.

MARTA:

Not now, Ileana. I’m making dinner.

ILEANA:

What are we eating?

DIEGO:

Chalupas compuestas.

ILEANA:

Oooh, did you bring cucumbers? I love ‘em with cucumbers.

Shouting from RENATA’s bedroom.

RENATA (off stage):

¡No juegues conmigo! You think I don’t know? I forbid you! ¡Ven pa’ca!

TOMÁS enters from the hallway. He heads straight to MARTA.

TOMÁS:

You. / You did this.

RENATA (off stage):

¡Tomás!

MARTA:

Did what?

TOMÁS:

You told her.

MARTA:

I didn't. / I swear.

RENATA (off stage):

¡Tomás! Come back!

TOMÁS:

Then who?

RENATA (off stage):

¡Tomás!

MARTA looks at ILEANA.

MARTA:

Ileana? Did you tell her about the boys?

ILEANA:

What? You never said I couldn't tell Mom. I didn't know—

TOMÁS:

You knew exactly what you were doing.

RENATA enters from the hallway.

RENATA:

¡Tomás!

RENATA falters and falls into the wall, sinking to the ground. DIEGO, MARTA, and ILEANA run to help her. TOMÁS watches from a distance.

DIEGO and MARTA help RENATA exit down the hallway. ILEANA looks back at TOMÁS and gives him a smile-shrug.

Lights shift.

Act 1, Scene 9

Lights up. DIEGO and ILEANA sit at the table.

TOMÁS sits apart, head hung low. MARTA enters from the hallway.

MARTA:

She's resting now.

DIEGO:

Did she say anything? Like if she's in pain or can't breathe?

MARTA:

She's tired.

DIEGO:

Does her chest hurt? Do you think she had a heart attack?

ILEANA:

I thought that was your arm.

DIEGO:

That's the symptom for men. Women get chest pains.

ILEANA:

How do you know that?

DIEGO:

Just 'cuz I didn't get good grades doesn't mean I wasn't paying attention in Health class.

Whattya think, Marta? Should we take her to the clinic?

ILEANA:

But you guys, how do we know it's real—whatever this is? She cries wolf all the time.

DIEGO:

I dunno man, she looks pretty bad.

MARTA:

If we do nothing and she gets worse...I don't want to look back on this moment and think we did nothing. That we're responsible.

TOMÁS stands.

TOMÁS:

Diego, come on.

We're taking her to the clinic.

TOMÁS and DIEGO exit down the hallway.

MARTA and ILEANA watch them exit.

MARTA:

(Eventually) Why did you do that?

ILEANA:

Do what?

MARTA:

You told Mom about Tomás and Diego moving out. Why?

ILEANA:

It's like you said, she'll find out eventually.

MARTA:

It wasn't your place to tell her. Why did you do that, Ileana?

ILEANA:

If I leave...If Tomás and Diego leave. It'd be you alone with her. I wouldn't wish that on anyone.

MARTA:

Don't make this about me. You didn't do this for me.

You can be really selfish sometimes.

ILEANA:

So the boys don't move out right now. They'll do it later. It's one thing for me to leave when she's got the rest of you guys here to distract her. But if the boys were already gone—it wouldn't have worked. You have to see that.

MARTA:

It was wrong, Ileana. You have to see that.

TOMÁS enters from the hallway carrying RENATA in his arms. DIEGO follows and quickly gets in front of his brother to open the door.

TOMÁS:

Diego, get the door.

We'll call you from the clinic.

TOMÁS, RENATA, and DIEGO exit out the front door. ILEANA goes to the door and opens it to watch them drive off.

ILEANA takes out her cell phone and texts a message to someone. She then grabs her purse and goes to the shoe bench to put on her shoes.

MARTA:

Where are you going?

ILEANA:

Out?

MARTA:

Out where?

ILEANA:

Somewhere.

MARTA:

Somewhere with someone?

ILEANA:

It's none of your business.

MARTA:

Is "someone" why you never come straight home from school? Is "someone" who you sneak out to see in the middle of the night?

ILEANA:

So what. We both have boyfriends—hooray!

MARTA:

Ileana, you should be staying home. You should be waiting to hear how Mom is doing.

ILEANA:

Why? Do you want me to stay and pray rosaries with you? There's nothing we can do for her here. All we can do is wait. You wanna wait here? Knock yourself out. But I'm going.

MARTA:

Then what about your homework? Or do you plan to fail your AP classes?

ILEANA:

I'll pass them.

MARTA:

How? You never ask for the laptop. You're supposed to be using it for homework, remember?

ILEANA:

Jeez, can you lay off? I've got it under control.

MARTA:

All evidence to the contrary.

ILEANA:

How would you know?

You don't know everything about me, Marta.

MARTA:

Are you kidding? I know everything that happens under this roof. I know when you get up. When you go to sleep. And I definitely know that you haven't started on your college applications. Why are you procrastinating? This is about your future.

ILEANA:

Don't you think I know that?!

Look, a lot happened tonight. I just need to get out of here for a while. And stop worrying about my applications, I've got them taken care of.

MARTA:

What does that mean?

ILEANA:

We'll talk about it later.

ILEANA exits out the front door. MARTA goes to the front door and calls after her.

MARTA:

It's always "later!"

After a moment, MARTA goes to her bed/sofa mattress. She realizes the laptop is under the mattress and takes it out. She looks at it, disappointed. Lights shift.

Act 1, Scene 10

Spotlight on MARTA on the laptop.

MARTA:

Do you think we can ever escape our parents? How they imprint us with their hopes and forgotten dreams.

They say trauma can be passed down genetically. Spliced into our DNA. So I am and always will be the child of both my parents.

My dad... I'm a lot like him. Quiet. He was the only person who understood me. Maybe that's why I can forgive him. For leaving.

He used to say we both like to live inside our head. In the world of our thoughts. That we could close our eyes and go anywhere we wanted. That's why he loved National Geographic. We'd pour over those photographs and then close our eyes and pretend we weren't inside this trailer but had somehow projected ourselves through sheer will power to the other side of the planet.

It was a game.

But then he really did it. One day he had had enough of playing house. That's what he called it. As if we were toys that needed to be put away. Something he was tired of doing.

"One day you'll understand." That's the last thing he ever said to me. And then he was gone. Leaving only traces of his existence in our family photographs, in the features on the faces of my brothers and sister.

That day. The world cracked open. Or fell in on us. And my mother grabbed each one of us holding us tightly to her breast. As if we were a creature with five beating hearts.

MARTA (cont’):

I know it was wrong. To run away from responsibility. From four kids. From a wife and a promise of ‘til death do us part. But maybe that’s what he was afraid of. That staying here would kill some part of him. A part he desperately needed—that he couldn’t live without.

Lights shift.

Act 1, Scene 11

MARTA alone in the dark.

*A car pulls up outside. MARTA pries back the
bedsheet curtain to peek outside.
She quickly lies down to sleep.*

*MARTA lies down just as ILEANA enters through
the front door of the trailer.*

MARTA feigns sleep.

*ILEANA takes off her shoes and looks over at
MARTA.*

ILEANA goes and stands over her sister.

ILEANA:

Marta, are you awake?

Marta, I need to talk to you.

MARTA:

I'm sleeping.

ILEANA:

No, you're not.

MARTA:

It's late, Ileana. Go to bed. We can talk in the morning.

ILEANA:

I need to talk now.

MARTA:

Well, too bad. I need to sleep now. I've been up worrying about my little sister—wondering where she is and what she's doing. And all that wondering and worrying has made me tired.

You wanna be selfish and stay out all night making me worry? Fine. But then I get to be selfish, too. And right now, I wanna sleep and that's what I'm doing. So let me be.

And in case you were wondering they had to admit Mom to the hospital. But that's all I'm telling you tonight because if you wanted to know you should've stayed. Now good night.

ILEANA turns on the light. MARTA sits up.

MARTA:

Damn it, Ileana. I told you I don't wanna talk right now. I just wanna sleep so will you please go—

ILEANA:

I'm pregnant, Marta.

MARTA:

...What?

ILEANA:

I'm pregnant.

Lights shift. End of Act 1.

Act 2, Scene 1

Seven months later: June of the following year.

The living room has the remnants of a baby shower: pink balloons, a banner—the silvery kind you can find at a grocery store—that reads “Baby Shower,” unwrapped gifts piled on the kitchen table, a pink, half-eaten cake on the counter.

MARTA is cleaning the kitchen—putting Tupperware containers of food into the fridge, washing dishes, etc.

Enter ILEANA from the hallway. She is eight and a half months pregnant. She sits at the kitchen table and watches MARTA.

A long BEAT passes as neither one of them says anything to the other.

ILEANA:

Can I have another piece of cake?

MARTA:

Help yourself.

ILEANA remains seated. Eventually MARTA realizes her sister isn't getting up. MARTA cuts a piece of cake for ILEANA and puts it in front of her sister.

ILEANA:

...Milk?

MARTA:

You walked all the way from your room to the kitchen but can't walk two more steps to the fridge?

ILEANA:

I expended all my energy getting here. I gotta fuel up so I can make it back to my bed and to the bathroom every five minutes.

MARTA pours a glass of milk and puts it in front of her sister.

ILEANA picks at her food. MARTA notices.

MARTA:

What's wrong?

ILEANA:

My feet hurt.

MARTA:

No, with your food. What's wrong with your food?

ILEANA:

When my feet hurt that's the only thing I can think about.

They're swollen. Look at 'em.

ILEANA (cont’):

Gawd, I hope they shrink after the baby comes. I do not wanna be a size nine forever. My feet look like skis.

MARTA:

...I’m a size nine.

ILEANA:

Good, you can have my shoes after the baby comes.

MARTA:

Usually hand-me-downs go from older to younger siblings.

ILEANA:

I guess we’re no longer following the laws of nature. But seriously, you can have them. When’s the last time you had a pair of shoes other than your church shoes?

*Raised voices from a room down the hall, muffled
but discernable as a man and woman argue.*

VERONICA (Off Stage):

What the hell, Tomás!

TOMÁS (Off Stage):

Vero, please.

ILEANA:

Sounds like Vero is pissed.

I can’t believe they’re living here.

MARTA:

Thanks to you.

ILEANA:

Yeah. Guess Mom got her wish. All her children under one roof forever and ever, amen.

From down the hallway the sound of a door slamming and then quickly opening. VERONICA enters from the hallway and crosses the stage. TOMÁS follows her.

TOMÁS:

Vero, wait. I'm sorry I didn't tell you sooner.

VERONICA:

You don't get to do that, Tomás. I'm in this relationship, too. You don't get to make all the decisions about our future. We're supposed to do it together.

TOMÁS:

I know.

VERONICA:

Then act like it.

VERONICA goes to the shoe bench and slips on a pair of sandals.

TOMÁS:

Where are you going?

VERONICA:

Out.

*VERONICA exits out the front door. TOMÁS
scrambles at the shoe bench to put on his shoes.*

ILEANA:

What's eating Vero?

TOMÁS:

None of your business.

ILEANA:

I wish it wasn't.

TOMÁS:

What's that mean?

ILEANA:

It means you two owe me a pair of noise cancelling headphones. If you guys aren't fighting, you're fucking.

TOMÁS:

Watch your mouth.

ILEANA:

Or what? You're gonna pop me one? Go for it, Ike.

TOMÁS:

Ever since you got knocked up you've been shooting your mouth off every chance you get.

ILEANA:

I've always been like this. You've just never spent this much time with me.

TOMÁS:

No, you're different. Bitter 'cuz you're stuck here with the rest of us. Serves you right.

TOMÁS exits out the front door.

Sullen, ILEANA returns her attention to the cake she's eating.

MARTA:

They have to postpone the wedding.

ILEANA:

What wedding? They're already married.

MARTA:

By the Justice of the Peace. Vero's mom wants a church wedding. And church weddings cost money.

ILEANA:

Then let her family pay for it. That's what White people do.

MARTA:

But that's not what we do. Everyone chips in a little bit. But with Mom's medical bills there's nothing to spare.

ILEANA:

Oh.

MARTA:

Vero and Tomás will just have to wait a little bit longer.

BEAT.

ILEANA:

(Eventually) Do you believe in karma?

MARTA:

As in karmic retribution.

ILEANA:

Yeah.

MARTA:

Am I trying to make you feel better?

ILEANA:

Something like that.

I fucked everything up.

MARTA:

I wouldn't say you fucked up *everything*.

ILEANA:

Yes, I did. You know what it says under my photo in the year book? "Most Likely to Succeed." Everyone was expecting me to do great things. I was poised for greatness. No really. That's what Ms. Esparza said once...Once. But now. Now I'm just another statistic. I blew it. I blew my one chance to get outta here. And everyone knows it. I walked across that graduation stage seven

ILEANA (cont’):

months pregnant with everyone looking at me. And they knew. They knew I had blown it. That all my talk about getting out of this town was just talk. That I’m never going anywhere.

ILEANA cries softly.

MARTA:

(Eventually) Did I ever tell you about the Century Plant?

ILEANA:

Wha--?

MARTA:

The Century Plant. There’s one at the entrance of the trailer park.

ILEANA:

That big agave?

MARTA:

Yeah. It’s called a Century Plant ‘cause it takes a long time for it to finally flower. The blossoms can reach up to twenty-five feet. It’s massive. It doesn’t really take a hundred years for the plant to finally flower. More like ten to thirty years, but that’s a long time for flora. But here’s the interesting thing: it only blooms once. It blooms and then dies.

ILEANA:

Is this you making me feel better?

MARTA:

You’re not listening to me. A plant can’t help but follow its physical destiny. You’re not a plant, Ileana. There’s nothing in your DNA that’s going to force your life down any particular path. High School isn’t going to be the best years of your life. There’s better years ahead. I promise.

ILEANA:

You think so?

MARTA:

I do. After the baby comes you're gonna start community college. Then you'll transfer to UTSA. It won't be easy. But it can be done. You can do this. And in those moments when you feel like you can't do it, I'll be here to prop you up.

ILEANA:

You mean it?

MARTA:

Absolutely.

ILEANA:

Good. I can't do this without you.

MARTA:

You don't have to.

Come on. It's late. You should be resting.

ILEANA:

Yeah, I know. I'm resting for two.

MARTA:

Only two more weeks.

ILEANA:

Then nobody will be resting.

ILEANA (cont'):

Actually. I do hope she's a screamer. Give Tomás and Vero a taste of their own medicine. I've had enough of her side eye.

MARTA:

Vero's not so bad. She just wishes she wasn't living here.

ILEANA:

She's not the only one.

ILEANA rises and waddles across the living room and exits down the hallway. MARTA finishes cleaning the dishes. She goes to her bed/sofa mattress and takes out the laptop. Lights shift.

Act 2, Scene 2

Spotlight on MARTA on the laptop.

MARTA:

Hey, it's me. Sorry for the radio silence. Thanks for being patient and for understanding just how crazy it is over here. I can't tell you how comforting it is to know you're here. Or there.

Did you ever try to make a telephone out of plastic cups and a string? That's what this feels like. As if you're just around the corner or in the next room. Close by, I mean. And that imaginary string that connects us, I can feel it vibrate with your voice. Your frequency attuned to mine.

The past seven months have been... Well, they haven't been easy. Everyone here is so wound up. Another month another turn, turn, turn. I'm not sure what we're all winding up for. But there's a lot of energy building. Pretty soon someone is going to blow and when it happens it'll be Mt. Vesuvius.

I got the care package you sent. Thank you. I wasn't expecting it. And I don't know if I can accept what you sent. I mean the goofy gifts are one thing, but—I didn't ask for you to send me anything. It's too much. You're too generous and I'm not used to handouts.

But since you asked me to keep it I will. For a rainy day. For an emergency. But nothing else. Don't worry about me. Life has pretty much returned to normal. Or as normal as it can be considering everything that's happened.

I don't know how to answer your question. Eventually? It'll happen. I promise. I just don't know when.

Remember when I said I hadn't thought about going anywhere for a long time? Now I think about it all the time. And my destination—it's not a where, but a who.

MARTA puts the laptop away. Lights shift.

Act 2, Scene 3

The next day. MARTA is in the kitchen prepping lunch: stirring a stew in a pot on the stove.

MARTA:

Lunch!

TOMÁS enters carrying RENATA. DIEGO, VERONICA, and ILEANA follow. TOMÁS sits his mother in the recliner. RENATA appears older, frailer—like a child in her son’s arms. TOMÁS sits himself down at the kitchen table. DIEGO stays with his mother, making her comfortable.

VERONICA joins MARTA in the kitchen to help pour stew into bowls.

DIEGO:

Ileana, put on her *novela*.

ILEANA sits down on the bed/sofa mattress and turns on the TV.

DIEGO:

(To MARTA) What’s for lunch?

MARTA:

Leftovers. *Caldo de res*.

DIEGO:

(To RENATA) Doesn't that sound delicious?

RENATA speaks with a slight slur.

RENATA:

I'm not that hungry, *hijo*.

DIEGO:

You have to eat, *amá*. You need your strength.

DIEGO looks at the TV.

DIEGO:

Ileana, I said to put on Mom's *novela*.

ILEANA rolls her eyes and complies. She then takes out her cell phone and begins to text.

DIEGO:

Amá, can I get you anything? Another pillow maybe?

RENATA:

Oh no, *hijo*. I'm fine.

DIEGO sets up a TV tray in front of RENATA.

RENATA:

What's that smell?

MARTA:

Lunch. It's some of that *sopa* from the other day.

MARTA brings a bowl to RENATA. VERONICA serves a bowl to TOMÁS and one for herself.

MARTA:

Here you go.

RENATA:

Thank you, *hija*.

RENATA eats. Out of habit, MARTA waits to see if RENATA will say anything. When she doesn't MARTA returns to the kitchen and serves stew into bowls for herself, DIEGO, and ILEANA.

MARTA:

Come eat you two.

DIEGO goes to the kitchen table. ILEANA remains on the floor, texting. MARTA notices.

MARTA:

Ileana, come eat.

ILEANA puts away her phone and begins to try and get up off the bed/sofa mattress. She has difficulty getting up, she's like a turtle on her back—unable to get up on her own.

Uh! You guys! I need help.

ILEANA:

DIEGO returns to the living room and starts to laugh at the sight of ILEANA.

Don't laugh!

ILEANA:

DIEGO laughs more. His laughter makes ILEANA angry which makes her try harder to get up, but to no avail.

Help me up!

ILEANA:

You guys gotta see this.

DIEGO:

Diego don't!

ILEANA:

What?

TOMÁS:

She can't get up. Ileana's stuck on the floor.

DIEGO:

This isn't funny!

ILEANA:

MARTA, VERONICA, and TOMÁS come into the living room and start to laugh at ILEANA's predicament. Even RENATA seems tickled. In fact, laughing seems to revive RENATA.

TOMÁS:

How's the air down there?

Everyone but ILEANA laughs.

VERONICA:

Help, I've fallen and I can't get up.

Everyone but ILEANA laughs.

ILEANA:

Cut it out!

DIEGO:

We're not laughing with you, *hermanita*. We're laughing at you.

ILEANA:

Argh!! Help me up!!

DIEGO helps her stand up. Once on her feet ILEANA pushes her brother away.

ILEANA:

Asshole.

RENATA:

No seas sucia. Do you want me to wash out your mouth with soap?

ILEANA:

(*To MARTA*) Why didn't you do anything?

MARTA:

I'm sorry. I couldn't help myself.

VERONICA:

It was funny, Ileana.

DIEGO, MARTA, TOMÁS, and VERONICA return to the table to eat. ILEANA sulks in the living room.

MARTA:

Ileana, come eat.

ILEANA:

No. Not 'til you guys apologize.

DIEGO:

For what? I think we all needed a good laugh.

DIEGO, VERONICA, TOMÁS, and MARTA start laughing again.

ILEANA:

It wasn't funny.

MARTA:

(To others) Ya, enough.

Ileana, come eat.

ILEANA:

No.

(To MARTA) I thought you were on my side.

MARTA:

Of course, I am. That's why I'm trying to get you to eat. Come on, you shouldn't skip meals.

ILEANA sulks over to the kitchen table and plops herself down shaking the table a bit. They all try to eat.

MARTA starts to shake with laughter.

MARTA:

The bigger they are, the harder they fall.

DIEGO, TOMÁS, and VERONICA lose it—they're laughing uncontrollably. Diego practically spits out his food and that makes MARTA and VERONICA laugh even harder. ILEANA gets up and storms across the living room to exit down the hallway.

MARTA:

Ileana! Ileana, come back!

VERONICA:

Oh my gawd. When she sat down she made waves in my *caldo*.

DIEGO:

I believe that's called an impact tremor.

They all laugh again.

The laughter subsides. RENATA is falling asleep in the recliner.

VERONICA:

She's pissed.

TOMÁS:

What else is new? She's always mad about something.

MARTA:

I'll talk to her.

VERONICA:

Don't apologize to her. She's being a brat.

MARTA:

She needs to eat.

VERONICA:

And when she's hungry enough she will. Don't baby her. She needs to grow up and grow up fast.

BEAT while they all eat.

VERONICA:

Has she told you who the father is?

MARTA:

No. I don't think she's going to.

TOMÁS:

If we knew who that *cabrón* was, we'd make him take responsibility for his actions.

MARTA:

What—force two kids to get married? That won't solve anything.

TOMÁS:

So she has to raise that kid by herself?

MARTA:

She has us.

TOMÁS:

We already have our hands full.

TOMÁS nods in the direction of RENATA.

MARTA:

One way or another that baby is coming in less than two weeks.

VERONICA:

Ugh. It's getting crowded in here.

VERONICA sighs.

MARTA:

What's wrong?

VERONICA:

I can't believe this is my life.

MARTA:

You mean living here? With all of us?

VERONICA looks over to confirm that RENATA has indeed fallen asleep. VERONICA elbows TOMÁS.

DIEGO retrieves RENATA's half eaten lunch, puts away her TV tray. TOMÁS picks up his mother and exits down the hallway. DIEGO follows.

VERONICA:

I get it. It's hard to leave home. When my brother went away to college, my mother cried herself to sleep every night—for a month. None of us had ever been away from home before.

And he had a hard time, too. He was homesick. But he stuck it out 'cuz that's what he needed to do.

Sometimes you gotta pull yourself out by the roots and plant yourself some place new. It's just...when is that gonna happen for Tomás? He feels responsible for you guys. Being the eldest comes with a lot of baggage.

BEAT.

MARTA:

I'm sorry you had to postpone the wedding.

VERONICA:

Me, too. My mom's really disappointed. I didn't have a *quinciñera*. Too many sisters—we couldn't afford it. That's why she pinned so much on the idea of a church wedding. She wants to see me all in white. And I just want my mom to be happy.

MARTA:

What about you?

VERONICA:

Me? I'm happy as long as Tomás and I can build a life together.

He wants to buy a little bit of land. Just enough to build a home. Nothing fancy. Just a place of our own. One way or another it'll happen. I've never met a more determined man than your brother. He never gives up. Did you know it took three months of him asking before I agreed to go on a date with him?

MARTA:

Really?

VERONICA:

That's how I knew he was serious. That he was gonna stick around. Well, so am I. I knew what I was getting into when I started dating your brother.

MARTA:

You mean the family with all the grown-up kids still living at home? Or, our mother?

VERONICA:

Both.

TOMÁS (off stage):

Vero! You coming?

VERONICA:

Sí, amor. I'm coming.

*VERONICA exits the hallway leaving MARTA
alone.*

Lights shift.

Act 2, Scene 4

MARTA takes out the laptop and begins to type.

ILEANA enters from the hallway and watches her sister for a moment.

ILEANA:

What are you doing?

MARTA:

Nothing.

MARTA closes the laptop.

ILEANA:

Didn't seem like nothing.

(Realization) Wait, are you still talking to that guy?

MARTA:

...Yes.

ILEANA:

Why?

MARTA:

He's a friend.

ILEANA:

(Scoffs) Whom you've never met in person.

MARTA:

That doesn't matter.

ILEANA:

Sure it does. People online aren't real. They lie all the time about who they are.

MARTA:

I don't think he's lying.

ILEANA:

Then what's he look like?

MARTA:

I dunno.

ILEANA:

No photo? Yikes.

MARTA:

Why does that matter? I don't use a photo.

ILEANA:

And why is that?

MARTA:

Because I want people to know who I am without judging me by my appearance. My mind is me.

ILEANA:

Wow. For someone so old/ you sure are stupid.

MARTA:

I'm only thirty.

...What did you call me?

ILEANA:

Or naïve. Whatever.

MARTA:

No, not whatever. You can't talk to me like that.

ILEANA:

I'm eighteen not twelve. Legally I'm a grown up.

MARTA:

That's no excuse for being disrespectful.

ILEANA:

Oh so now you're my elder. / *(Mimicking)* "I'm only thirty."

MARTA:

I'm your older sister.

Are you making fun of me?

ILEANA laughs and starts to walk out of the room toward the hallway. MARTA blocks her.

MARTA:

What's so funny?

ILEANA:

You are. My sad older sister. Spinster in training. All she does is keep house for everyone else. Like Cinderella. Except there's no ball. Never leaving this trailer. Like Rapunzel. Except there's no prince coming to the rescue.

You may be older than me, but I'm the one who knows the world outside. How it is now and not how it was twelve years ago.

That guy you're talking to is playing you. He's a catfish. You know what that means? He's pretending to be everything you want and need for a joke. You're a joke and he's laughing at you. He's sharing your messages with his friends and they're laughing, too. Laughing at the pathetic loser who's lapping up his messages because she's some poor love-starved girl.

MARTA:

That's not true.

ILEANA:

Has he given you his name? Have you Googled him?

MARTA:

I trust him.

ILEANA:

Oh my gawd! Are you serious?

MARTA:

You don't know him.

ILEANA:

Neither do you!

ILEANA (cont’):

Men prey on women like you all the time. They do it for fun or they do it to get money out of them.

Has he asked you for money yet? They all do. They all find a way to work it into the conversation.

Tell me, Marta. Are you giving him money?

MARTA:

...

ILEANA:

(Firmly) Are you giving him money?

MARTA:

No.

ILEANA:

No?

MARTA:

Where would I get money, Ileana? How would I earn money to give away? I’m here in this trailer all day, almost every day. Tell me—what money? What money am I giving away?

ILEANA:

Our money. What Tomás and Diego earn. The money for bills, for the baby. That money. Are you sending him any of that money?

MARTA:

No!

ILEANA:

‘Cause that’s like stealing food outta my baby’s mouth.

MARTA:

I’d never do that.

ILEANA:

But you’re still paying for the wifi. It’s not free anymore is it, Marta?

MARTA:

We can afford it.

ILEANA:

How would any of us know unless we saw the bill. Maybe it’s time for someone else to be in charge of the checkbook.

MARTA:

Who—You?

ILEANA:

Why not? It’s not that hard. It’s simple math. And I’m responsible.

MARTA:

Said the pregnant teen.

ILEANA:

...Said the virgin.

MARTA is abashed. She retreats to the kitchen.

ILEANA follows her.

ILEANA:

What? Have I struck a nerve? I mean, that was just a guess considering you've spent half your life in this trailer hermetically sealed off from the world...like your hymen.

MARTA:

Stop it.

ILEANA:

Oh no. Are you gonna cry? Don't cry, Marta. We already have one baby on the way, we can't possibly take care of two.

MARTA:

Why are you doing this? It's...it's mean.

ILEANA:

Am I hurting your feelings? I'm sorry. It's just that I don't give a shit. And neither does anyone else. Not about you. Not about us. Not about anything.

The world outside is shit. Did you know that, Marta? It's nothing like the pictures in National Geographic. It's cold and harsh.

MARTA:

(Voice raising) No. That's you. You're the one who's cold, who's harsh. You can't handle that life isn't turning out the way you expected it to. Well, nobody said it would. No one promised you anything.

ILEANA:

(Exploding) You promised me!! You said I was gonna get out of here!

MARTA:

That was before you got pregnant!

ILEANA:

...Give me the laptop.

MARTA:

No.

ILEANA:

Technically it's mine.

MARTA:

Technically you never used it. Not for homework. Not for your college applications.

ILEANA:

You don't know that.

MARTA:

Yes, I do. I called the schools, Ileana. Their admission offices. To see if maybe somehow you could defer your acceptance. All five schools. None of them had an application from you.

What exactly were you planning to do, Ileana?

ILEANA:

I was planning to have you fill out my applications.

For someone who was valedictorian you aren't very smart, are you?

ILEANA exits down the hallway and slams the door to her room. MARTA opens the laptop.

Lights shift.

Act 2, Scene 5

Spotlight. MARTA on the laptop.

MARTA:

I need to ask you something. And I can't do it online. I want to talk in person. On the phone.

Something's happened here. Something that's made me question everything I thought I knew. About my family. About me...And about you.

I know when we first started whatever this is we had rules. No photos. No phone calls. I used to think that was my idea.

Was it?

And you've always been so kind. So generous. You've been everything I needed. But right now, I need something else. I need to know if the person I've been... I've been pouring out my heart and soul to you. I need to know you're real. That you're flesh and blood and not just some conjured up dream.

BEAT.

MARTA:

Are you there?

Hello?

Lights shift.

Act 2, Scene 6

MARTA is typing on the laptop. DIEGO enters from the hallway and watches his sister.

DIEGO:

How's your friend?

MARTA freezes.

MARTA:

How did you—

DIEGO:

Give me some credit. Every time I walk inside my phone asks if I want to connect to “Marta’s wifi.” Besides, there aren’t many secrets in this double wide. The walls are pretty much decorative.

MARTA:

You heard me and Ileana.

DIEGO:

Yeah.

What she said to you—it wasn’t right. After Dad left things got, well... We all put our lives on hold. Some more than others. I never really had the head for school, but you did. You still do. You should’ve gone to college. You should’ve been the first to leave here and do something great.

You deserve to be happy, Marta. And you do so much for this family and no one really says “thank you.”

DIEGO (cont’):

Thank you, *hermana*.

MARTA:

Thanks, Diego.

DIEGO:

Don’t thank me for thanking you, Marta.

MARTA:

Sorry.

DIEGO:

Or apologize. Don’t say anything. Just know I care. Know that I see all you do and appreciate you. That’s all.

MARTA nods and puts the laptop away.

BEAT.

MARTA:

Do you still think about moving out?

DIEGO:

Nah. I was only gonna move out ‘cuz Tomás was gonna do it. Safety in numbers, right? Only now he’s firmly planted here helping Mom.

MARTA:

Guilt is a powerful adhesive.

DIEGO:

That's kinda messed up, don't ya think? It shouldn't be guilt that keeps us together.

DIEGO goes to the shoe bench to put on his shoes.

MARTA:

Where are you going?

DIEGO:

San Antonio. I'm finally gonna upgrade my phone.

MARTA:

What will you do with the old one?

DIEGO:

I dunno. Why? You want it?

MARTA:

Maybe.

DIEGO:

You can have it. It's crazy that you don't have one.

MARTA:

Didn't have anyone to call before.

DIEGO:

Don't worry, I'll take care of it. I'll get a second line for you.

MARTA:

Will you show me how to use it?

DIEGO:

Of course!

¡Nos vemos!

DIEGO exits out the front door. MARTA watches him leave. She stands looking out at the world and puts one tentative toe out the door.

The cordless phone rings. MARTA quickly closes the door and picks up the phone.

MARTA:

Hello?...*(Realization)* Hi... Yes, it's me. It's good to finally hear your voice.

Lights shift as time passes.

Act 2, Scene 7

Twenty minutes later. MARTA ends her telephone conversation and puts the phone back on the receiver.

She walks over to the shoe bench and pulls out the shoes under the bench that are hiding her go bag. She opens her go bag and takes out a gold compass necklace.

She stands up and tries to orient herself to North.

TOMÁS (off stage):

Diego!

Quickly MARTA puts the compass necklace back in her go bag and hides it under the bench, putting all the shoes back in their places.

TOMÁS enters.

TOMÁS:

Diego!

(To MARTA) What are you doing?

MARTA:

Nothing. Just cleaning.

VERONICA enters.

VERONICA:

I'm telling you I can pick up another shift.

TOMÁS:

No, you'll wear yourself out.

VERONICA:

Oh, so you're the only one who gets to do that?

MARTA:

What's going on?

TOMÁS:

Have you seen Diego?

MARTA:

He went to San Antonio.

TOMÁS:

When?

MARTA:

About twenty minutes ago. He's getting a new cell phone.

TOMÁS:

Damn it, I told him not to make any new purchases.

VERONICA:

I'll call him.

*VERONICA takes out her cell phone and dials
DIEGO's cell phone number.*

MARTA:

It's just an upgrade. He has to renew his contract anyway.

TOMÁS:

But they'll still charge him something. We need to be saving all we can.

MARTA:

We are saving.

VERONICA:

He's not answering.

TOMÁS:

Great, another useless expense.

Marta, we need to figure out what we can cut. Any extra expenses.

MARTA:

...You mean like the cable?

VERONICA and TOMÁS exchange a knowing look.

VERONICA:

No, your mom needs it. We can't expect her to stay in bed all day without something to entertain her.

MARTA:

What then?

TOMÁS:

I don't know. Just I need you to look at all that we're spending and figure out what we can cut.

VERONICA:

With the baby coming soon we need to start saving more if we want to feed another mouth.

MARTA:

Babies don't eat that much.

VERONICA:

But six adults do and only three of us have jobs.

MARTA is abashed. She goes to the kitchen to clean. VERONICA registers this.

VERONICA:

Marta, I didn't mean anything by that.

MARTA:

But it's true. I eat food that I don't pay for. I stay home while you three go to work.

VERONICA:

You may not buy the food, but you cook it. And you do work, you're just not paid for it. Cleaning, laundry, taking care of your mom—You're the one who keeps this place together.

MARTA:

But I'm still a financial drain.

TOMÁS:

It is what it is. Let's just focus on a solution to our situation. There's gonna be six of us and a baby.

VERONICA:

And diapers aren't cheap. That'll be our biggest expense. You wouldn't believe how many diapers we sell at the store.

MARTA:

What about our old cloth diapers? We could use them instead of disposable.

VERONICA:

Do they still sell those?

TOMÁS:

No more spending money.

MARTA:

We don't have to. Mom saved all that stuff. I just gotta find 'em.

VERONICA:

Cloth diapers. This is what it's come to.

MARTA:

You don't have to deal with it, Vero. Besides, I'm the one who does the laundry around here.

VERONICA:

You'd be willing to wash cloth diapers?

MARTA:

Yeah, if it'll help.

TOMÁS:

Good. Keep thinking like that.

VERONICA:

Pinching pennies isn't enough, Tomás. Not if we want to save money. We barely make it paycheck to paycheck as it is. If we want to save money for emergencies and for the future, we'll have to do more. Face it, Tomás, I need to take a few extra shifts.

TOMÁS:

I don't like it.

VERONICA:

If this is some *macho* bullshit—

TOMÁS:

No, that's not it.

VERONICA:

What then? Why won't you let me do this?

TOMÁS:

Because this isn't your responsibility.

VERONICA:

If I'm gonna be a part of this family, you gotta let me be a part of it. That means I get a say in what happens and I get to help out. So I'm picking up more shifts. *¿Me entiendes?*

TOMÁS nods.

TOMÁS:

All right.

VERONICA kisses TOMÁS.

VERONICA:

Now see, that wasn't so hard. And look—your manhood is still intact.

VERONICA exits down the hallway. TOMÁS watches her leave.

TOMÁS:

I don't deserve her. Or at least she doesn't deserve this situation.

MARTA:

Neither do you.

TOMÁS:

Yeah. So much for moving out.

MARTA:

It'll happen. Just not the way you planned.

TOMÁS:

That's the story of my life.

MARTA:

All our lives.

TOMÁS:

Yeah. Sucks to be us.

MARTA:

Don't say that.

TOMÁS:

What am I supposed to say?

MARTA:

Don't say anything. Just don't give up.

TOMÁS:

Easier said than done. I get so sick of these walls. Get so sick of always scrimping and saving. I can't breathe sometimes.

MARTA:

I know.

TOMÁS:

Of course, you do. We all do.

I never should have tried to move out like that. I should've known this would happen—that she would really get sick.

MARTA:

Don't feel guilty about wanting more—about wanting a life outside these walls. We aren't meant to live cooped up like this. Sooner or later something gives. I mean, even Dad couldn't stay. It's the same thing.

TOMÁS:

(Aggressive) What did you say?

MARTA:

I said, I get why you wanted to leave.

TOMÁS:

No, about Dad.

MARTA:

That you're like Dad. That you have this need to get out.

TOMÁS:

I am nothing like our father. Do you even hear what you're saying, Marta? He abandoned us. His family—his children. Maybe it's hard to accept that 'cuz you were his favorite.

MARTA:

That's not true.

TOMÁS:

Yes, it is. You're a daydreamer. Like him. You've got your head in the clouds instead of focusing on what's real, what's in front of you. Maybe that's helped you cope. Maybe it's how he managed to stay with us as long as he did. But I don't care if you two had a special connection, you can't pretend that what he did to us isn't fucked up. 'Cuz it is. And me trying to leave has nothing to do with him.

I'm trying to live my life. He left his behind.

BEAT.

MARTA:

You hate him.

TOMÁS:

I moved beyond hate a long time ago. When I dropped out of high school to get a job—I hated him. When I had to work seven days a week to put food on our table—I hated him. When I saw

TOMÁS (cont’):

how his absence changed our mother. How she forced you to give up college—you better believe I hated him.

But now...now he doesn't deserve it. I won't waste any more energy on that man. But I'll tell you this: I hope his last thoughts are of us. I hope he thinks about every single one of us. I hope he sees our faces and wonders what we look like now. I hope he thinks about every birthday and Christmas he missed. About all the good times and all the bad that he chose to miss out on.

I hope he chokes on his regrets.

TOMÁS exits. MARTA watches him. She goes to her mattress/sofa bed and settles down for sleep. Lights shift.

Act 2, Scene 8

A week later. Morning. MARTA is making pancakes. DIEGO, VERONICA, and TOMÁS sit at the table and eat. RENATA sits in her La-Z-Boy recliner watching the TV on low. A cup of coffee on the TV tray next to her and a metal walker leans against the back of the La-Z-Boy. There are cardboard boxes in the living room partially unpacked. On the floor are piles of baby stuff: shoes, outfits, diapers. Near MARTA's bed/sofa is a basket of folded towels and other laundry.

DIEGO:

I never thought I'd say this, but I am getting tired of pancakes.

TOMÁS:

Food is food.

DIEGO:

I'm gonna pretend I didn't hear you say that.

Am I the only one getting tired of eating them? We've had pancakes every morning this week.

VERONICA:

Get over it, Diego. Pancakes are cost effective.

DIEGO:

Yeah, that's exactly how they're beginning to taste.

TOMÁS stands up.

TOMÁS:

Time to go.

VERONICA rises. DIEGO eats the last of his pancake and rises. The three go to the shoe bench and put their shoes on. MARTA gives each one of them a packed lunch. TOMÁS and DIEGO exit followed by VERONICA.

VERONICA:

Thank you, Marta.

MARTA:

Have a good day.

BEAT.

MARTA:

Amá, do you want to go back to your room?

RENATA:

No. I am tired of that room. The same walls every day.

MARTA:

There are walls out here.

RENATA:

But you are out here.

MARTA cleans in the kitchen.

RENATA:

(Eventually) Marta.

MARTA:

Sí, amá.

RENATA:

Hagame un favorcito.

MARTA:

Whattya need?

RENATA:

Comb my hair.

MARTA exits down the hallway to fetch a comb.

RENATA undoes her braided hair. MARTA returns with a small spray bottle filled with water and a comb. She spritzes her mother's hair and combs it out. RENATA closes her eyes and relaxes.

RENATA:

This is how I used to comb your hair. *¿Te acuerdas?*

MARTA:

I remember.

RENATA:

You would sit on the floor in front of me and I would comb out the tangles. I was very gentle. You never cried once. Not like your grandmother. She pulled my hair so tight.

RENATA (cont’):

She wanted my *trenza* to be nice and neat. I never wanted to be that way. The scalp of a child can be so tender.

As MARTA combs through the ends of some of RENATA’s hair, RENATA takes hold of her daughter’s hand.

RENATA:

You have his hands. He had such beautiful hands.

RENATA brings MARTA’s hand to her cheek and closes her eyes. MARTA takes in the moment of tenderness.

RENATA:

How did the son of a farmer have such beautiful hands?

We seemed made for each other. He was an only son. I was an only daughter. He said, together we could make a family. That we could see the world. He had so many dreams.

He was my whole world. But I...I wasn’t enough. He wanted to go. For both of us to go. To build our lives some place new. But I wanted us to stay. Where it was familiar. Where it was safe. And I thought I could keep him here. That we could keep him here.

But that imagined life, the one he gave up, gnawed at him. Making him bitter. He told me he had to know what he was missing out on. That he could not live with regret. So he traded one pain for another. He loved me so much. He said so. And still, he left me behind. I wasn’t enough. I could never be enough.

RENATA buries her face in MARTA's stomach and cries softly.

MARTA consoles her by singing the opening stanza/s of "El Sol Que Tú Eres" by Daniel Valdez.*

Eventually RENATA leans back in her La-Z-Boy and falls asleep. MARTA arranges a blanket over her mother, turns off the TV and takes the coffee cup to the kitchen.

When MARTA returns to get the TV tray she looks at her mother and then takes out the cell phone DIEGO gave her. MARTA takes a few photos of her mother. ILEANA enters and watches from a distance. MARTA eventually notices her.

ILEANA:

Where's everyone else?

MARTA:

Work. They just left.

There's pancakes if you're hungry.

ILEANA goes to the kitchen and grabs a pancake from a plate on the counter. She eats it without a plate and watches MARTA go through the boxes.

Out of the box with her name on it, MARTA pulls out an old diary. She flips through it, reads.

Eventually, ILEANA speaks.

ILEANA:

What's all that?

MARTA:

Things we've packed away.

ILEANA:

What are you looking for?

MARTA:

Baby stuff. Cloth diapers.

ILEANA:

Is that what we're gonna use?

MARTA:

Yep.

ILEANA:

Won't that be messy?

MARTA:

Diapers usually are.

BEAT.

ILEANA:

Were you taking Mom's picture?

MARTA:

... Yeah. Diego gave me his old phone. It has a pretty good camera on it. Not quite SLR quality. But good enough.

ILEANA:

They still have some of your prints up at school, ya know.

MARTA:

They do?

ILEANA:

Yeah, Mr. Campos—the English teacher—he has them in his room.

MARTA:

He was the advisor for the Photography Club.

ILEANA:

Can I see? The pictures you took.

MARTA takes a moment to decide and then goes and unlocks her phone, handing it to ILEANA. ILEANA looks at several photos.

ILEANA:

These are good. Really good.

ILEANA looks through more photos.

ILEANA:

How did you take these? Of the trailer park.

MARTA:

I opened the door. Peeled back the sheet on the window.

ILEANA:

You make this place actually look beautiful.

ILEANA hands the phone back to MARTA.

MARTA:

Thanks.

MARTA returns to unpacking the boxes on the floor.

ILEANA brings a chair from the kitchen to the living room and sits near MARTA, looking inside boxes. ILEANA pulls out a Childcraft encyclopedia—volume I: Poems and Rhymes.

ILEANA:

Oh, my gawd. I haven't seen this in ages.

She opens the book.

ILEANA:

Look! The Owl and the Pussycat!

MARTA:

Shhhh!

*MARTA nods towards the sleeping RENATA.
RENATA stirs, but doesn't awaken.*

*ILEANA nods that she understands and then shows
the illustrated poem to MARTA.*

ILEANA:

(Loud whisper) The Owl and the Pussycat!

MARTA:

I see it.

ILEANA reads the poem.

ILEANA:

The owl and the pussycat went to sea.
In a beautiful pea-green boat.
They took some honey, and plenty of money...

MARTA:

Wrapped in a five-pound note.

ILEANA turns to another poem.

ILEANA:

Georgie Porgie, pudding and pie.
Kissed the girls and made them cry.
When the boys came out to play...

MARTA:

Georgie Porgie ran away.

A moment as ILEANA reflects on the poem.

ILEANA:

Georgie Porgie was kind of a jerk.

MARTA can't help but laugh. ILEANA continues to flip through the pages of the volume—stopping to read and admire the illustrations.

ILEANA:

This used to be my favorite book.

MARTA:

Mine, too.

ILEANA:

You used to read these poems to me every night.

MARTA:

And throughout the day.

ILEANA reviews the volume's table of contents.

ILEANA:

Volume 1: Poems and Rhymes. I don't remember any other volumes.

MARTA:

It was an encyclopedia set for kids. Dad bought it at a garage sale.

ILEANA:

What were the other volumes like?

MARTA:

Oh...there was one with brain teasers and puzzles. One about biology. An arts and crafts volume...

ILEANA:

What happened to them?

MARTA:

Mom threw out the others after he left. Part of her Great Purge. I saved that one. He used to read the poems to me. Over and over again until I could recite them from memory.

ILEANA hands the volume to MARTA.

ILEANA:

Read one.

MARTA:

Which one?

ILEANA:

Doesn't matter. Just read.

MARTA turns the pages until she stops. Her recitation of the poem begins playfully and ends somberly.

MARTA:

There was an old woman who lived in a shoe.
She had so many children, she didn't know what to do.
She gave them some broth without any bread;
And spanked them all soundly and sent them to bed.

*MARTA closes the volume as the poem sinks in.
MARTA hands back the volume to ILEANA and then
stands up. MARTA goes to retrieve her glass of
water from the counter. ILEANA follows.*

ILEANA:

Marta?

MARTA:

Yes?

ILEANA:

About the other day. I'm sorry.

MARTA:

Are you?

ILEANA:

Yes. Very.

It was the hormones. One minute I'm Godzilla, the next I'm *la llorona*.

But that's no excuse. I shouldn't have said those things. Those horrible things. And I'm sure your friend is exactly who he says he is.

MARTA:

You think so?

ILEANA:

Yeah.

A small BEAT.

ILEANA:

Look, I want things between us to be right again. Not talking to you for a week—even with all these people under one roof it's been the loneliest place on earth. I need you. I'd go insane in this place if I didn't have at least one person I could talk to and count on.

You've always been there for me. Always pushing me to study hard, to go after my dreams. You're more than just a big sister. You practically raised me.

I love you.

ILEANA hugs MARTA. After a moment, MARTA returns the hug.

MARTA:

...I love you, too.

The baby kicks. Both ILEANA and MARTA feel it.

MARTA:

Whoa!

ILEANA:

Did you feel that?

ILEANA puts MARTA's hands on her belly.

ILEANA:

She's turning somersaults.

MARTA:

If she's anything like her mother she's gonna be a handful.

ILEANA:

Just a few more days. I mean, that's if she comes on time. And I can hardly wait til Baby is out. Mama is ready to hit the town.

MARTA:

Whattya mean "hit the town?"

ILEANA:

Cut a rug. Paint the town red. Your preferred idiom insert here.

MARTA:

Ileana, newborns need to stay home.

ILEANA:

I know that.

MARTA:

Then you know you won't be hitting the town any time soon.

ILEANA:

That's where you come in, *hermana*.

MARTA:

Whattya mean?

ILEANA:

You'll take care of the baby. I mean, it's not like you have anywhere to go anyway. And you never leave the trailer, right?

MARTA:

...

ILEANA:

Right?

MARTA:

...Right.

ILEANA:

So I don't have to be home with the baby. I mean, you said it yourself. You're here to prop me up and I'm not gonna let my life get derailed by this baby. And with you here I can do all the things we talked about.

Oh shit.

MARTA:

What?

ILEANA:

I think she just hit the bladder button. Excuse me.

ILEANA exits down the hallway quickly which awakens RENATA.

RENATA:

What's going on?

MARTA:

(Resigned) Nothing, *amá*. Absolutely nothing.

MARTA (cont'):

Come on, let's get you into bed.

RENATA doesn't resist as MARTA puts the metal walker in front of her. MARTA helps RENATA exit down the hallway. Lights shift.

Act 2, Scene 9

Continued from previous scene. MARTA returns. She picks up the diary she found earlier. She reads a few pages and wipes the tears from her eyes. She then takes out the laptop. Spotlight on MARTA at the laptop.

MARTA:

Today I found one of my old diaries. I used to write an entry every day. Used to. I haven't kept a journal in a long time. There just hasn't been anything to write about. Same trailer. Same chores. The days all blend together until you can't tell them apart.

But they weren't all the same. I just can't remember the differences.

It was subtle. How change crept in and time passed. But they did. And that girl who kept a diary feels so far away from who I am now. Is it too late to get back to her? You always say it's never too late. I want to believe that. But I'm afraid that there really is a threshold you cross, a point of no return. Have I crossed it already?

The last entry in my diary was so painfully optimistic. I was looking forward to college. To leaving this small town. I was gonna travel. See the world. I was gonna visit destinations I had only seen in the pages of magazines.

I gave up so much. Not just my dreams of travel. Not just my college education. I gave up pieces of myself. Little by little. Day by day and inch by inch I let it fall to the wayside.

Twelve years. Where did the time go? I told you this place was a black hole. It swallows up entire existences.

MARTA (cont’):

You’re right. It is possible to escape that kind of gravity. But it takes an enormous amount of force. And I just don’t know if any of us have the energy needed to escape.

Maybe...maybe it would be better if we stopped doing this. Maybe it’s time to say good-bye.

MARTA puts away the laptop. Lights shift.

Act 2, Scene 10

MARTA repacks and puts away the boxes, leaving the baby clothes and diapers set aside.

MARTA realizes her cell phone is vibrating. She takes it out, looks at it, and eventually rejects the call.

She puts her cell phone away.

A moment later the house phone begins to ring. She knows who it is. The phone rings several times as she watches it.

ILEANA (*off stage*):

Marta, are you gonna answer that or what?!

MARTA picks up the phone and immediately hangs it up. She doesn't return it to the phone cradle.

A moment later ILEANA enters. She's holding her belly and breathing sharply.

ILEANA:

Marta.

MARTA:

What's wrong?

ILEANA:

My water broke.

MARTA goes to her sister.

MARTA:

Do you wanna sit?

ILEANA:

Yeah, okay.

MARTA grabs a towel from the laundry basket and puts it on Renata's La-Z-Boy, ILEANA sits on the towel. MARTA uses her cell phone to make a call.

ILEANA:

What are you doing?

MARTA:

We need to call Vero.

ILEANA:

Why?

MARTA:

That's the plan.

(To phone) Vero?...Ileana's water just broke...

(To ILEANA) Any contractions?

ILEANA:

Not yet. I mean, I'd know if I had one, right?

MARTA:

(To phone) Not yet...Okay...See you soon.

ILEANA:

Is Vero on her way?

MARTA:

She'll be here soon.

Come on, let's put some shoes on you.

ILEANA:

Nah, I gotta change out of this first.

MARTA:

Why?

ILEANA:

I'm not walking into the hospital looking like this.

MARTA:

Nobody cares.

ILEANA:

I do.

ILEANA begins to rise from the La-Z-Boy. She experiences a contraction—the pain makes her cling to the La-Z-boy.

ILEANA:

Ooooooooooo!

MARTA:

What's wrong?

ILEANA:

I think that was definitely a contraction. Lemme just sit for a bit.

Don't worry about me, you go put something else on.

MARTA:

Why?

ILEANA:

For the hospital photos. Is that what you want to be wearing in the first photos you take with your *sobrina*?

MARTA:

I'm not going with you.

ILEANA:

Whattya mean? Of course, you're going with me.

MARTA:

No. Remember, Vero's gonna take you to the hospital and I'm staying to watch Mom.

ILEANA:

What about me? I need you at the hospital.

MARTA:

We can't leave Mom alone.

ILEANA:

What's she gonna do? Die?

MARTA:

Ileana!

ILEANA:

(Impatient) She'll be fine. I'm the one having a baby.

MARTA:

Someone has to stay.

ILEANA:

Well, it isn't gonna be you. Tell Vero to watch Mom. You're driving me to the hospital—you know how to drive, right?

MARTA:

Of course, I do. I just don't ever do it.

ILEANA:

Great. That's just perfect.

MARTA:

I said I can drive.

ILEANA:

And if you crash into something it'll just add to the story. I'll tell my daughter all about the day she was born. About her crazy aunt who hardly ever went outside and how we all cheated death during the drive to the hospital. It'll be a laugh.

MARTA:

That's not funny.

ILEANA:

What?...Oh my gawd! Don't be so sensitive. It's like walking around on eggshells with you. I can't say anything right. And all I'm doing is stating the obvious.

Get over yourself, Marta. This moment right now is about me.

MARTA:

It always is.

ILEANA:

Is this what you're gonna be like from now on?

MARTA:

Like what?

The sound of a car arriving outside.

RENATA (off stage):

Marta! Marta!

ILEANA:

It doesn't matter.

MARTA:

No, tell me. What am I being like?

ILEANA:

A victim.

You know what your problem is, Marta? You're a secondary character in your own story. You're a footstool. Here to prop us up and that's your only real purpose in life. I mean, if you had a life to live you would have lived it by now, right? Not easy to hear, I know. But it's the truth, big sister. So suck it up. Some of us are put on this planet to help others and others help themselves. Guess which one you are.

VERONICA enters through the front door while ILEANA is talking and immediately picks up the vibe of their fight.

VERONICA:

(To ILEANA) You ready to go?

ILEANA:

Almost. I just need to change and put on some make-up. Unlike Marta, I don't want to look like a total schlump.

(To MARTA) Give Vero the baby bag. It's by the shoe bench.

RENATA (off stage):

Marta!

ILEANA sees that MARTA hasn't moved.

ILEANA:

Marta! I said get the baby bag.

On autopilot MARTA picks up the baby bag quickly. It disrupts the shoe bench—the bench almost topples over, shoes fly.

ILEANA:

Careful! You're making a mess.

You really are good for nothing.

ILEANA rises from the La-Z-Boy and exits down the hallway.

RENATA (off stage):

Marta!

MARTA is barely holding it together. She heads towards the hallway. VERONICA stops her.

VERONICA:

I got it. You put the bag in the car.

MARTA:

Thank you, Vero.

VERONICA hands MARTA her keys. VERONICA exits down the hallway. MARTA stands on the brink of tears. In a fit of despair she throws the baby bag

at the shoe bench, disturbing the shoes and revealing her go bag.

MARTA goes to the bench, pulls out the go bag, and opens it. From inside her go-bag she takes out her compass necklace.

MARTA looks at the two bags. She puts on the compass necklace.

MARTA spots ILEANA's slip-on tennis shoes. She wipes her tears and then picks up a tennis shoe and puts it against her foot to verify it will fit. It does. MARTA puts the tennis shoes on.

MARTA takes out her cell phone and dials.

MARTA:

(To phone) It's me...No. Wait. I need you to listen. I'm going to the bus station... I'll call you when I get there...I'm sure...See you soon.

MARTA ends her call. She grabs her go-bag and takes one last look around. She strides over to pick up the family picture that sits on top of the TV. She shoves it into her go bag. She takes one last look around the trailer.

MARTA:

(Toward hallway) Good-bye.

MARTA exits out the front door of the trailer. The sound of a car leaving.

ILEANA enters from her bedroom.

ILEANA:

Marta, have you seen my—

ILEANA sees that the front room is empty.

ILEANA:

Marta?

ILEANA goes to the front door and opens it. She searches for her sister. VERONICA enters supporting a frail RENATA. They stand in the hallway watching ILEANA.

ILEANA:

Marta!

End of play.