MAY THE HEAVENS TAKE HER
OR
QUE SE LA LLEVE EL CIELO

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts
in English

By

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Dedication

For you

who picked up the phone when I needed you.
Many people have helped me through this arduous process: Dr. Mitchell, without whose guidance and support this would have not been created; Dr. Haake, who reinforced my desire to write; Dr. Wightman, who taught me to push myself past my comfort zone; Marjie Seagoe, who provided the positive attitude and support that I often needed; Susana Marcelo, who listened to my rants without judgment; and fellow classmates and co-workers, who always offered good wishes in the midst of this madness.

My parents, Alfredo Lucero Montaño and Erika Alejandra Canaán, who were always there, through joys and sadness; my siblings, Alfredo and Andrea Lucero, who joked with me until I cried with laughter; and to my dearest Eulma Devera, who stood by me while my world crumbled and helped me rebuild it.
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ABSTRACT

MAY THE HEAVENS TAKE HER

OR

QUE SE LA LLEVE EL CIELO

By

Alejandra Lucero-Canaan

Master of Arts in English

May The Heavens Take Her is a one-act play that explores the conflicts of consciousness experienced by Mexican immigrants belonging to both sides of the U.S./Mexico Border. In the play, characters struggle to maintain a balance between both aspects of their identities and try to reconcile who they are with who they want to be. Often being privy to two worlds simultaneously, the audience is able to experience alongside the characters what it means to be someone stuck in the middle of two worlds. Additionally, the play relies on the use of, both, English and Spanish in order to underscore the flexibility of identity that an immigrant lifestyle demands. The bilingualism also serves to include audiences from either side of the U.S./Mexico Border in order to create a safe space for the discussion of the topic. This and other aspects and issues of the Border culture and immigration debate are present in the play in order to produce a dramatic work meant to continue exploring immigrant issues in the U.S./Mexico Border.
Characters (In Order of Appearance)

COYOTE
TIBURCIA
DOLORES
ESTELA
POLICE OFFICER 1
POLICE OFFICER 2
CITLALI
COMADRE
ERNESTO
CHORUS

Words in Spanish are italicized and have the definition in parentheses after the dialogue line for benefit of readers and actors.

On accents: They need not exist unless the actors have natural accents. Characters such as ESTELA and COYOTE are fluent speakers, having grown up in America. Characters such as COMADRE, CITLALI and ERNESTO are supposed to be speaking in Spanish but, in this world, we are all wearing a Babel fish in our ears and are able to understand them in fluent English (except when they code switch).
SCENE 1

Stage is black. Huapango Huasteco should be heard, as if on a radio, and then be abruptly shut off once TIBURCIA speaks. We hear the voices offstage. Eventually, ESTELA will enter from either side and a dim light will follow her. ESTELA is in her early 20s, dressed as a studious college student, carrying a small purse.

TIBURCIA

ESTELA? WHERE ARE YOU?

DOLORES

She’s lost again, isn’t she?

TIBURCIA

I think we lost her right around the corner—

DOLORES

When she was too busy looking at her phone—Hurry up, slow poke!

ESTELA

Sorry Dolores. I was trying to finish my homework when my cousin called from Mexico. She’s gonna have her baby soon!

TIBURCIA

That’s great news, Estela.

DOLORES

Yeah! But don’t go and get inspired yourself, okay?

Lights up. ESTELA enters.

ESTELA

I’d rather not do that, thanks.

DOLORES

What’s one more thing lost in the long list of displaced objects?

DOLORES laughs.

TIBURCIA

Easy on the philosophizing, Dolores!

ESTELA

What are you talking about?
TIBURCIA
Let it go, girl. Will you join us for dinner tonight?

ESTELA
What did she mean by that?

TIBURCIA
Nothing. It’s all good.

ESTELA
Sometimes I don’t even know why we’re friends. (PAUSE) So where are we eating?

DOLORES
WOO-EEY! Ain’t that the question of the century?

TIBURCIA
Dolores…

ESTELA rummages through her purse and pulls out her cell phone, sighing.

DOLORES
Our guest of honor is a bit picky, ain’t you Estela?

ESTELA
What? Sorry. My phone battery is low. What were you saying?

DOLORES
A Estela no le gusta ni la comida Mexicana, ni la comida Dominicana, ni la comida Salvadoreña, ni… (Estela doesn’t like Mexican food nor Dominican nor…)

TIBURCIA
¡A CALLAR DOLORES! ¡Me estás volviendo loca! (Cut it out, Dolores. You’re driving me nuts.)

DOLORES
Sorry, Tiburcia.

DOLORES giggles.

TIBURCIA
She’s right, though.

ESTELA pulls out some makeup from her bag and starts applying it.

ESTELA
Don’t blame me for having good taste.
Excuse me?

First world, first-class taste!

I see. So what would you propose we have for dinner tonight?

Doesn’t she always get to pick?

How is Persian for everyone?

ESTELA pulls out her cell phone and starts playing with it. She tunes the girls out.

Arabic tortilla and lamb steak tacos?

Perfect.

We can order some delicious rice, too! (PAUSE) Rice para la First Worlder de Chilpancingo. (for the First World citizen)

Don’t fall behind, amiga.

I won’t.

ESTELA falls into a dreamy/dazed state as she begins to recollect her past.

Chilpancingo. I never really met my grandparents. I mean, my mother’s parents. My dad—Not sure where he went but—but my mom’s parents, my grandparents. I heard their voices once over the phone all the way from Texcoco, Chilpancingo, when I was ten years old. All I remember them telling me went like this: No veas atrás, jovencita. Don’t look back. No has dejado nada atrás. You haven’t left anything behind. I haven’t. I hardly even think of my pregnant cousin, Citlali. Why should I feel obligated to please people like my friends? If they’re so stuck on the past then so be it for them. For me? For
me, well… myths and legends like Aztlan and Nezahualcoyotl don’t exist. It’s all long gone now. *(Don’t look back, young one. You haven’t left anything behind)*

ESTELA awakens from her reverie and notices she’s alone.

ESTELA (CONT.)

Guys? Guys! Wait for me!

She exits in a hurry. Fade to black.

SCENE 2

The sound of boots heavily hitting the pavement is heard. It stops. Lights rise to give the stage the feeling of 1AM in an abandoned part of a Downtown somewhere. The back of the stage should not be seen very clearly and neither should the sides, if possible. Almost like a dream.

Note on COYOTE’s accent: when it is clearly thick in the text, it should be thick. Otherwise, he should speak with only a subtle hint of a Spanish accent. Likewise, ESTELA and other characters that are revealed as bilingual should all titter-totter between almost-no accent to some very clear but unimportant mistakes or mispronunciations.

ESTELA

Guys! Where are you? Guys?

ESTELA enters. The stage is bare except for a street lamp downstage with COYOTE sitting against it, arms around his legs and his head down. He is dressed like a dirty farm hand but is wearing a very expensive watch and a crucifix necklace. Additionally, he is carrying a feather crown. His hat, a dirty off-white, is covering his face.

ESTELA (CONT.)

Shit.

ESTELA looks around, then pulls out her cell phone but is unable to make a phone call. She mutters more curses. Finally, she notices COYOTE. There is a long, awkward pause as she measures him up from a distance before deciding to seek help elsewhere.

ESTELA (CONT.)

Rather by myself than with that.

A police siren is heard in the near distance.
ESTELA (CONT.)

¡La poli! Wait! Wait for me! (The cops)

She runs off stage, waving her hand to catch the eye of the cops driving by. After a quick pause, she comes back, feeling defeated.

ESTELA (CONT.)

Damn. It. I shouldn’t have trusted those self-centered girls to wait for me. Now I’m lost in the middle of nowhere because of them! Oh, when I get home… ¡Lo juro, they won’t hear the end of it. (I swear)

COYOTE

(Sneaking up behind her)
Ey, do you wanna baya gun? For, you know, protection?

ESTELA is clearly disturbed.

COYOTE (CONT.)

Do ya?

ESTELA

NO! No. No, thanks. Thank you.

COYOTE

Okay.

ESTELA


COYOTE

Sorry. No phone.

COYOTE’S cell phone rings. Beat.

ESTELA

No phone, huh?

COYOTE

No phone. (He answers) ¿Bueno? Sí. Muy bien. No, no. ¿Para qué se pierdan en Yuma? Olvídate. (Hello? Yes. All right. No, no. So that they get lost in Yuma? Forget it.)

ESTELA

Excuse me, could you let me use your phone after you’re done? Excuse me.
COYOTE

ESTELA
What do you mean it no work? I just saw you use it!

COYOTE
No speak-o English.

ESTELA
Gimme a break, man! I just want to go home.

COYOTE
Tram station only five box.

ESTELA
Five blocks? Which way? Up? Left?

COYOTE
No. Five box.

ESTELA
Oh.

COYOTE
Eh, tram station? ¿Güerita? I take you. Only five. (Blondie)

ESTELA
Whatever. Here.

When ESTELA pulls her wallet out, it’s clear she has a lot of money.

COYOTE
(He pauses and chuckles)
Tram ten buck.

ESTELA
What? You said it was five.

COYOTE
I wrong. Ten.

ESTELA
This is exactly why I don’t hang around barrio hoodlums.
COYOTE
Do you wanna tram or no?

ESTELA
Maybe I could just walk home or—

Gun shots are heard in the distance and ESTELA jumps, scared.

COYOTE
So wazzap? Do you wanna?

ESTELA
(Looking around, getting nervous, she hands off some money.)

COYOTE
Thank you.

You thief.

COYOTE
Tram no work. Tram out of service. Bye!

The hell?

COYOTE
Good night!

COYOTE exits, laughing. ESTELA is left alone. Cop lights flash, car doors are heard open and close before POLICE OFFICER 1 and POLICE OFFICER 2 enter, strolling as if they are carrying the entire weight of their power and law in between their legs. They are both white and proud, speaking with a hint of a Texan accent.

POLICE OFFICER 1
Check this out partner. We’ve got a fresh Avocado fallen off the truck.

POLICE OFFICER 2
Fresh indeed.

ESTELA
Oh, officers! You have no idea how much I’ve been through! Could you help me get home? I’ve got no cell phone, no car and my friends left without me! Please?
So alone and no car?  

POLICE OFFICER 2

No cell phone? Sure, we can ride—I mean, we can give you a ride.

POLICE OFFICER 1

You don’t mind?

POLICE OFFICER 2

She’s fresh.

ESTELA

What are you talking about?

POLICE OFFICER 1 and 2 laugh at a quiet inside joke.

ESTELA

I just need a ride home.

POLICE OFFICER 1

Absolutely. I understand, ma’am. Why don’t we walk over here, I have to ask you some questions. Routine, you get it.

They slowly begin to exit.

ESTELA

What questions? Isn’t your car that way?

POLICE OFFICER 1

You’re absolutely certain you’re alone?

ESTELA

Yes…

POLICE OFFICER 2

And, just to confirm the facts, your cell phone is lost?

ESTELA

No, it’s out of—

POLICE OFFICER 2

That’ll be fine.

POLICE OFFICER 1

And you said you were a virgin?
The cops chuckle.

ESTELA
What the hell, I never said—

POLICE OFFICER 1
Sorry. Uhm. How do you wetbacks say it?

POLICE OFFICER 2
I think it’s beer-gen.

POLICE OFFICER 1
No… it’s veal. Veal-ger.

They both laugh. ESTELA begins to panic and tries to get away but is restrained by both cops.

ESTELA
No! Get your hands off me! Stop!

POLICE OFFICER 2
She’s loud, partner.

POLICE OFFICER 1
She’s gonna be a fun ride is what I think!

POLICE OFFICER 2
Let’s serve her.

POLICE OFFICER 1
It IS our duty.

ESTELA
No! Your car’s the other way! NO! STOP!

Both laugh and exit, dragging ESTELA with them. It is imperative that they leave by the same side COYOTE did. ESTELA should struggle and scream for help while the officers should be left unfazed.

POLICE OFFICER 2
Bet she’s not even a citizen.

POLICE OFFICER 1
Who cares?
ESTELA

Help! HELP!

A scuffle is heard. The men groan in pain as they are shot and killed by COYOTE with a handgun. ESTELA is heard crying. COYOTE enters holding ESTELA from one arm while putting away his pistol with the other. The feather crown COYOTE held earlier is, now, over his hat. Both stained with blood. He is alert, looking around. Both are breathing heavily.

COYOTE

It’ll be alright. No te preocupes, pollita. I got this. Here, have my jacket. Let’s get out of here. (Don’t worry, sweetie)

Lights fade to black.

SCENE 3

It’s early morning. The stage should be divided in two. One side will correspond to the kitchen of ESTELA’S cousin, CITLALI, in a U.S./Mexico Border town similar to Tijuana or Juaréz, Mexico by the name of Yucca. The kitchen should have a distinct Mexican feel with a Mexican flag, a picture of the Virgin of Guadalupe, etc, as décor. The other side should resemble a college student’s living room (a couch is necessary). Each location should have its own door and a small table with chairs. The tables should be positioned relatively close to one another but apart enough to be clearly distinguished as belonging to their particular locations. There need not be special light cues to signify shifts between locations but different light hues may be used to help differentiate the spaces as different and separated (rather than as one). Additionally, a squiggly line can be literally drawn on the floor through the middle of the stage to denote the border that separates both sides of the stage. CITLALI is about ESTELA’s age and of similar physical look. She’s wearing feminine but worn-down clothes and, additionally, she’s nearly through her first pregnancy.

ESTELA is sitting on the couch. There’s no light on her until she speaks. Lights up on CITLALI’s side of the stage as she enters, carrying a mesh grocery bag. She struggles to walk since her feet are swollen. She sits on one side of the table, tired.

CITLALI

What a beautiful day today.

ESTELA, a nervous wreck, gets up and moves to the table.

ESTELA

It’s been a week.
CITLALI
I’ll make some delicious enchiladas for my *gordito*.* (Hubby)*

ESTELA
I’ve barely been able to eat or sleep.

CITLALI
Ah…

ESTELA
Or live.

CITLALI
I’ll start on that soon.

ESTELA
Every noise, loud or not...

CITLALI
I’m happy I was able to save enough

ESTELA
I think it’s them coming for me.

CITLALI
A little treat for myself.

CITLALI pulls a Mexican gossip magazine out of her bag and looks through it.

ESTELA
The worst was seeing it on the newspapers.

ESTELA picks up a newspaper from the floor.

CITLALI
It’ll be easier when I get a TV.

ESTELA
ENTIRE DEPARTMENT LOOKING FOR COP-MURDERERS.

CITLALI
I’ll be able to tell Comadre what’s up when I go to Church!

CITLALI giggles.
ESTELA
Oh, what did my damn friends get me into.

CITLALI
I’m sure that’s slightly frowned upon.

ESTELA
*Peor aún, I haven’t even heard from any of them all this time.* (Worse yet)

A doorbell rings and a loud, aggressive knock is heard. Beat.

CITLALI and ESTELA speak simultaneously.

Who is it?

¿Quién es?

TIBURCIA and COMADRE respond at the same time as well.

TIBURCIA
It’s me.

COMADRE
*Soy yo.*

ESTELA silently freaks out, not knowing who “me” is and tries to look for a household weapon to use in case it’s an unwanted guest.

CITLALI
¡Comadre! Come on in, the door should be open. How are you?

COMADRE enters. Knocking is continuously heard from the other door.

COMADRE
Oh, good. Running errands, keeping tabs on the husband. How is that little ragamuffin of yours? Aw, let me touch… You are so blessed, mi niña.

CITLALI
I know I am Comadre. Soon I’ll be just like you, running around Yucca and getting the new household in order.

More knocks are heard on the door. ESTELA tries to hide somewhere.
Estela?

Yes, work hard at that.

Estela!

Without a good family…

Open up!

We’ve got nothing to our names.

It’s me!

Yes, yes…

Who’s me?

I suppose you’re right.

COMADRE and CITLALI begin put groceries away.

Tiburcia, *tu amiga. (Your friend)*

Who’s with you?

Uh, no one.

Did anyone follow you here?
TIBURCIA
Not to my knowledge. Are you gonna open up or what?

ESTELA
Fine.

ESTELA goes to the door and unlocks it, letting TIBURCIA in and then suspiciously closing the door.

CITLALI
You know, Comadre, I was thinking…

ESTELA
Long time no hear, amiga. (friend)

CITLALI
I should take a class on something.

TIBURCIA
So I’d thought I’d come visit.

COMADRE
What for?

ESTELA
It only took you a week.

CITLALI
It’d be good.

ESTELA
How kind of you.

CITLALI
Something practical. Driving, maybe? Or-or computers?

TIBURCIA
If you paid more attention to what’s around you than to your phone—

TIBURCIA gets too frustrated to speak.

CITLALI
I want to learn things.

TIBURCIA
We’ve been trying to reach you but you’re not at school—
CITLALI
Get a career.

ESTELA
I’m taking some time off from that life.

TIBURCIA scoffs.

CITLALI
You never thought about it?

TIBURCIA
We looked for you but…

COMADRE
No…

TIBURCIA
Things got overwhelming after we stumbled upon the dead cops.

COMADRE
Those thoughts don’t ever cross my mind.

ESTELA
You saw that?!

COMADRE
I like it when Gregorio takes care of such things.

TIBURCIA
Wish I hadn’t.

ESTELA begins to hyperventilate.

CITLALI
I disagree.

ESTELA
Oh my god.

CITLALI
Uno siempre debe de estar bien informado, Comadre. (One should always be well-informed)
You found them…

COMADRE

You’re talking like a crazy person.

TIBURCIA

Thought I was hallucinating for a second.

CITLALI

It’s how I keep tabs on reality.

ESTELA

Did you ever call 911?

COMADRE

I call upon God and the Bible for the knowledge I need.

TIBURCIA

Dolores did.

COMADRE

You should join me for daily Rosary.

ESTELA

Did you tell anyone you were looking for me?

COMADRE

It’ll do you good.

ESTELA

That I was missing?

CITLALI

Maybe, Comadre…

TIBURCIA

(With a quick pause)

No, not really.

COMADRE

You’re a good wife, Citlali.

ESTELA

Why?
I want to be…

CITLALI slows down to look longingly at her magazine.

TIBURCIA

You wouldn’t understand.

ESTELA

What’s that supposed to mean?

CITLALI

Ernesto can be a little hard to please sometimes.

TIBURCIA

We don’t trust pigs and they don’t trust us.

CITLALI

*A veces* I wonder if he really loves me (*Sometimes*)

CITLALI slowly walks away from COMADRE, pensive.

ESTELA

What?

TIBURCIA shrugs.

CITLALI

*De pronto* he gets mad and… (*Suddenly*)

ESTELA

Fine.

COMADRE

Nonsense.

ESTELA

I don’t want to be found, anyway.

COMADRE

That’s just a typical man mood.

ESTELA

I want to take some time for myself.
TIBURCIA
You okay?

ESTELA nods emphatically and pretends to relax on her couch (reading, stretching, doing yoga), but is clearly far from relaxed.

COMADRE
When Gregorio, mi dulzura, comes home from work—*(sweetie)*

ESTELA
Yes.

COMADRE
Sometimes he doesn’t have the patience to even breathe, Citlali.

ESTELA
I’m fine.

COMADRE
*Creeme.* It’s normal. *(Believe me)*

ESTELA
I just need a vacation, somewhere exotic.

COMADRE
Even when you don’t think it is. It’s normal for men to be men.

ESTELA
I’ll be fine.

COMADRE
Animalistic.

TIBURCIA
Hey, is that someone at your window?

TIBURCIA points off stage.

COMADRE
Passionate.

ESTELA
What? OH MY GOD! IT’S HIM!

COMADRE
Don’t ever be afraid, mija.
COMADRE fixes CITLALI’s hair.

Him?

TIBURCIA

ESTELA
Tiburcia! You have to go. I gotta see this guy. I’m sorry.

COMADRE

Men love in masculine ways.

TIBURCIA

Who is he? Why is he creeping by your window?

CITLALI

(Pushing COMADRE’s hand from her head)

Pero no cree que— (but don’t you think that—)

ESTELA
It’s just a friend, don’t worry.

COMADRE
No, no, no.

ESTELA
You should go now, though.

COMADRE

Para nada. (Not at all)

They fall into a betrayed silence. CITLALI shuffles silently with some cheese she cuts with a sharp knife while COMADRE looks over the magazine.

TIBURCIA
A guy? Is that why you’ve been desaparecida all this time? (M.I.A.)

ESTELA
We’ll talk more later. I promise.

TIBURCIA
I’ll tell the girls not to worry.

CITLALI
I should start dinner before Ernesto gets home.
Don’t be mad, Tiburcia.

COMADRE

You’re right.

TIBURCIA

Don’t even bother.

COMADRE

I must pick up my granddaughter from daycare.

TIBURCIA

See you around, Estela.

TIBURCIA exits.

COMADRE

And feed my hubby so he’s strong for the fields!

COMADRE begins to get her stuff together, CITLALI helps.

ESTELA

(Looking off stage)

You! Get in here, for crying out loud.

ESTELA exits to where there would be a window.

CITLALI

Take care.

COMADRE

You too, Citlali.

ESTELA

Get in. Come on.

Sound of window being opened and then shut. COMADRE exits.

ESTELA

Thank God, I was wondering if I was going to ever see you again.

CITLALI sits on the table and sighs. She reads her magazine.

CITLALI

To be a good wife, eh? To be a good wife.
Lights dim on her side of the stage.

COYOTE

Thanks for letting me in.

COYOTE and ESTELA enter. She is visibly a nervous wreck.

ESTELA

The cops haven’t caught you.

COYOTE

(Setting down his feather crown somewhere)

They ain’t going to.

ESTELA

You’re so damn sure, aren’t you.

COYOTE

(Proud and flirty)

I popped them with another cop’s gun.

ESTELA

Are you here to kill me too?

COYOTE

Sit down. (PAUSE) Sit down, carajo! I won’t hurt you. (Damn it)

They both sit at the table. She is still terrified.

ESTELA

What now?

COYOTE

Not much.

ESTELA

Are we both in hiding?

COYOTE

(He looks at her in disbelief)

Mira, pollita. If you want me to stay quiet about this, then you’re gonna hafta buy my silence. (Sweetie)

ESTELA

Excuse me?
COYOTE
The cops don’t have leads, but I could always call them…

ESTELA
You serious?

COYOTE
Se la vi. (C’est la vie—That is life)

ESTELA
How did you even know where I lived?

COYOTE
Oh…I have your cell phone. Here.

ESTELA
YOU HAVE IT?!

ESTELA takes the phone and examines it. She’s glad it’s still in one piece.

COYOTE
Calm down. So how much for my silence?

ESTELA
This could ruin me. This could ruin my life. It’s already ruined my life. And you! You, you bastard, I never wanted to be an accomplice to murder. I just wanted to borrow a goddamn cell phone to get home. I just wanted to get home.

COYOTE
Estás loca. (You’re crazy.)

ESTELA
I haven’t eaten. Slept.

COYOTE
I can see you’re a mess.

ESTELA
I hate you. I hate you so much!

COYOTE
You should only worry about me. I made sure to leave no evidence.

ESTELA
Why would I believe you?
COYOTE
I had my friends swing by.

ESTELA
What?! Some of your gangsters went around to—to just “clean” the bodies or some crazy sh—

COYOTE
Stop freaking out. It’s so unseemly for a cute girl like yourself. You can trust me, everything is gonna be fine. Come on.

ESTELA breaks down in his arms.

COYOTE
It’ll take some green, but you can trust me, pollita. *(Sweetie)*

Lights fade to black.

SCENE 4

Lights up. Same split stage as before. ESTELA is on the couch, holding a trashcan and dry heaving into it while COYOTE is making some food in the kitchen.

COYOTE
If you keep that up I’m going to start thinking you’re pregnant.

ESTELA gives him an angry look and continues to heave.

COYOTE (CONT.)
Just joking. Jeez. I’m making something that’s gonna make you feel better.

ESTELA
I don’t want any.

COYOTE
You have to eat something.

ESTELA
I don’t want anything.

COYOTE
This is behavior from a 7-year-old.

ESTELA
I’m really sick!
COYOTE: You just want attention.

COYOTE walks over to her.

ESTELA: I’m capable of understanding things—

COYOTE: Here.

ESTELA: What is it?

COYOTE: Un moyete.

ESTELA: What’s that?

COYOTE: Beans, cheese and bread. It’s like…an American grilled cheese sandwich.

ESTELA: I don’t see the grilled part.

COYOTE: I said it was like the grilled sandwich—

ESTELA: I don’t like beans.

COYOTE: You vegetarian?

ESTELA: I don’t eat them.

COYOTE: Is there a problem with my cooking?

ESTELA: It’s no five-star dish.
COYOTE
Tough shit. This is all I could find in your kitchen, honey, so eat up.

ESTELA
It looks gross.

COYOTE
Santa Virgen de Guadalupe. ¿Sabes que, you spoiled gringa? (You know what?)

ESTELA
Don’t call me that!

COYOTE
I’m not going to baby you. Starve for all I care!

COYOTE
Eres un gringa necia! (Stubborn American)

CITLALI enters and turns on a radio to a Spanish music station which introduces a Huapango Huasteco song that begins to play. She dances to it before sitting at the table.

ESTELA
Stop it!

COYOTE
Eat.

ESTELA
Whatever!

CITLALI
Bueno, the laundry is done. Let’s cook dinner for the hubby, little one! (Well)

COYOTE
Any good?

CITLALI
Something extra delicious!

CITLALI thinks what to make.

ESTELA
It’s okay.

26
No pleasing you.

Ahah! Moyetes!

Whatever.

You look better.

Least I ate some.

Oh, this is gonna be so good!

CITLALI begins preparing dinner.

You look better.

He picks up his feather crown and puts it on but immediately takes it off.

I’m gonna get going.

What? Why?

You gave me my money.

And?!

Mmhmm! ¡Que rico! (Delicious)

CITLALI continues to work in the kitchen, cooking and cleaning.

(He shrugs)

And what else—
ESTELA pouts dramatically and begins to cry. CITLALI picks up a knife and accidentally cuts herself.

CITLALI

Sharp!

CITLALI cleans up her small cut and continues to work.

ESTELA

I can’t believe you’re leaving me! Oh my god! I can’t believe you!

COYOTE visibly uncomfortable.

COYOTE

What? What? Why are you crying?

ESTELA

You. Are. Leaving.

COYOTE

So? You need to get a hold of yourself.

ESTELA

I know. But—but. I’m still scared.

COYOTE

(Aside)

These mujeres… ¡Me vuelven loco! (Women… they drive me crazy!)

ESTELA

I’ve never been a crime accomplice. Why can’t you be kind to me? It’s like you don’t even have a heart.

COYOTE

What do you want me to do? Stay another day?

ESTELA

That would be nice.

COYOTE

How—I don’t understand you. How can you feel safer with me here… Aren’t I—

ESTELA

You are just not that bad of a guy.
COYOTE
Fine. Here. Let’s just—let’s just watch a movie or something.

ESTELA
Perfect! I love Rita Hayworth! Let’s watch something with her!

ESTELA gets a couple of DVD boxes and sorts through them.

COYOTE
¿Por qué una película gringa? (Why an American movie?)

ESTELA
I only speak English.

COYOTE
¿Qué? (What?)

ESTELA
This is a love story between a young, southern belle and a dangerous outlaw! I think you’ll like it.

She opens the case but does not find the DVD in it.

COYOTE
Do you even care about what I like?

ESTELA is so busy opening and closing DVD cases that she does not take time to acknowledge that COYOTE spoke.

ESTELA
Maybe I put it in the wrong box.

COYOTE
Chamaca babosa. ¿En serio me estás ignorando? (Dumb child, are you really ignoring me)

ESTELA
I don’t understand you.

COYOTE
Mentirosa. Ay, gringa pendeja. (Liar. Oh, you stupid American.)

ESTELA
Hold on, how dare you refer to me like that?
COYOTE

¿Ahora sí me entiendes? (Now you understand me.)

ESTELA

Stop calling me names, cabrón. (asshole)

She is more aghast at having spoken Spanish than she is about the curse.

I knew it.

Whatever.

ERNESTO enters through CITLALI’s door. He wears an old, discolored T-shirt with jeans and shoes covered with paint and dirt stains. He is drunk but pretending to be sober.

¡Buenas tardes, mujer mía! (Good afternoon, my wife.)

I really don’t want to watch this movie.

Good afternoon, my love!

COYOTE gets off the couch and walks away. CITLALI sniffs the alcohol on ERNESTO’s breath.

Oh.

What?

Nothing, sweetie. I just remembered that I need to buy oranges.

Not too fast!

ESTELA walks to COYOTE seductively.
ERNESTO
Remember I can swing by anytime, Citlatli, and check up on you.

COYOTE
(Smiling)
You are an interesting one.

ESTELA laughs and walks him back to the couch.

CITLALI
Amor, you would never find anything wrong with our home. (Love)

ESTELA
(Flirty)
Wonder why?

CITLALI
No matter the time.

Más te vale. (Better not.)

ERNESTO
You can’t ignore the fact—

COYOTE

CITLALI
Claro, amor. (Of course, love)

COYOTE
That I…

ERNESTO
What’s for dinner, sweetie?

COYOTE
—killed two cops.

CITLALI
Moyetes for my king.

ESTELA
You’re not that scary.

ERNESTO
WHAT!
Is something wrong?

CITLALI

Clearly—

COYOTE

Moyetes. Fucking moyetes.

ERNESTO

I’ve done something very wrong if—

COYOTE

Is something wrong with dinner?

CITLALI

If I’m not scary to you.

COYOTE

You want to know what I had for breakfast? Moyetes.

ERNESTO

If I’m not—

COYOTE

You…

ESTELA

ESTELA puts her hands over his mouth to quiet him.

ERNESTO

You want to know what I had for lunch?

ESTELA

You’re fine.

ERNESTO

Moyetes.

ERNESTO menacingly advances towards CITLALI and pins her to a wall, whispering angrily to her.

COYOTE

This is bad rep. Back at work they call me “El Hungry Coyote.” Like a more aggressive, *mas macho*, Nezahualcóyotl. *(manlier)*
And now, for dinner! MOYETES!

What?

Mi amor, how was I supposed to know—you didn’t come home last night. (My love)

I’m a bad ass that’s what!

Are you accusing me of infidelity, mujer? (woman)

How you’ve treated me makes me feel like—

No! My love—

Like you’re just a big, huge mushball.

I was just saying that how could I know—

I have a soft spot for…

Don’t make me madder—

ERNESTO slams his fist on the table.

Yeah?

Than I already am, Citlali.

ERNESTO physically imposes himself on CITLALI, using his physical strength to push her away from the food she is cooking. She begins to cry.
COYOTE

Nothing. I just don’t like mujeres crying. (women)

ERNESTO

Your crying doesn’t faze me.

ESTELA

I figured.

CITLALI

(Pleading)

Please stop…

COYOTE

And I don’t even know how…

COYOTE looks at ESTELA with a mixture of amazement and curiosity.

ESTELA

Don’t stare.

ERNESTO

I’m sick and tired of you.

COYOTE

Sorry.

ERNESTO

Ya no te aguanto. (I can’t stand you)

ESTELA

I’m cold. Get over here.

ESTELA motions for him to get closer to her on the couch.

ERNESTO

I’m leaving.

COYOTE

Here?

CITLALI

No—stay.

ESTELA

Here!
That’s too close—

Forget about it.

Amor… (My love…)

ESTELA leans against him and sighs.

You’re always nagging, fucking up the food.

No—no. Mi amor. (My love)

Fine.

I beg you!

Good night.

Shut up!

ERNESTO hits her.

You’re useless.

Good night… pollita. (Sweetie)

COYOTE, after putting on his feather crown, places his head on top of hers and closes his eyes.

No…Please.

Shut your mouth, whore.
CITLALI cries.

Fade to black.

SCENE 5

In this scene, light shifts should be used to convey the passage of time. Musical accompaniment should be a mix between huapango and other indigenous musical sounds and play through the scene. ESTELA and COYOTE are sitting together in the couch; COYOTE plays with his feather hat but then sets it down. CITLALI is sitting at the table and is looking off into the distance, dejected.

ESTELA
Remember what I said about staring?

COYOTE
(Flirty)

Hardly…My bad.

ESTELA
Stop. It.

COYOTE
Okay. (PAUSE) Do you want to dance?

ESTELA
I don’t really dance to this music—

COYOTE
It’ll be fun!

They get up and, with some giggling and awkwardness, begin to dance. ERNESTO enters, temporarily humbled and ashamed.

ERNESTO
Mi amor, I’m sorry. (PAUSE) Listen to me. Don’t—don’t be mad. I love you. Listen, I’m sorry, okay? I should’ve treated you better. You deserve only to receive the most gentle touches. It won’t happen again. My love, please forgive me?

CITLALI nods.

COYOTE
You are so beautiful.
COYOTE leans in for a kiss. She doesn’t fight it.

ERNESTO (CONT.)

Thank you sweetie. It won’t happen again. (PAUSE). Say, are you at all hungry, too, mi amor? I sure am. Why don’t you make us some celebratory dinner, hm? Now that we’ve reconciled we should celebrate!

CITLALI, mindlessly, begins to cook while ERNESTO drinks very quickly. COYOTE and ESTELA continue to giggle and dance.

ESTELA

You are staring again…

COYOTE laughs. They continue to dance.

ERNESTO

CITLALI! QUÉ HACES? TENGO HAMBRE. (PAUSE) TENGO HAMBRE CITLALI! HAMBRE, MUJER! LADRO DE HAMBRE! (What are you doing? I’m hungry. I’m hungry, Citlali! Hungry, woman! I am starving!)

COYOTE is caught once staring once again.

COYOTE

Sorry, I can’t help it.

CITLALI

It’s coming dear.

ESTELA

You’re cute.

ERNESTO

Don’t talk to me like that. Show some respect!

COYOTE

I’d say the same to you.

CITLALI

I apologize. Dinner is almost done.

ESTELA

Staring, though, should go…

ERNESTO

You are such a fuckin’ liar. I can’t stand you, Citlali!
COYOTE

I’ll try.

He steals a kiss from ESTELA. She is pleased but surprised.

CITLALI

I am doing the best I can!

ERNESTO

That’s not good enough!

ERNESTO pushes her hard. She is hurt, bending over in pain. COYOTE and ESTELA kiss with more confidence.

CITLALI

Ernesto, the baby.

ERNESTO

What?

CITLALI

My water broke! I need a doctor!

ERNESTO

Dios mio. Ven. ¡Muevete! Let’s head to the hospital. Hurry, mujer! (Oh my god. Come. Move it!)

CITLALI and ERNESTO exit. COYOTE’s cell phone rings. The music’s volume is lowered. He checks it secretively.

ESTELA

Who is it?

COYOTE

No one important. Here let’s continue—

ESTELA

Why won’t you tell me?

COYOTE

It’s no one.

ESTELA

Are you hiding something from me?
COYOTE

No, I’m not. Come on and dance with me, pollita. No te enojes. (Sweetie...Don’t get mad.)

ESTELA reluctantly agrees. He kisses her but she’s not very interested. Blackout.

After a pause, a baby’s first cries are heard and the lights go up. CITLALI and ERNESTO re-enter their kitchen with a baby in CITLALI’s arms. The music resumes and then gets louder. ESTELA and COYOTE resume dancing, but with less enthusiasm.

ERNESTO

To celebrate!

ERNESTO toasts and dances with a beer bottle. CITLALI sits at the table, cuddling her baby. COYOTE’s cell phone rings again.

COYOTE

I have to take this.

The music is abruptly cut off. Lights fade to black.

SCENE 6

Lights up. All characters essentially in the same locations except ERNESTO. CITLALI, with her baby, should be sitting sideways, downstage of the table. Her dialogue should be said sing-songy, like a lullaby. The eye not seen by the audience should be a black eye. CITLALI’s lullaby lines should be slightly overlapped by ESTELA and COYOTE’S conversation.

ESTELA

So who was that?

CITLALI

Arrorró mi niño... (Sleep well my baby)

COYOTE

Eh?

CITLALI

Arrorró mi sol. (Sleep well my sun)

ESTELA

On the phone.
CITLALI
_Arrorro pedazo...(Sleep well piece)_

COYOTE
No one.

CITLALI
_De mi corazón. (Of my heart)_

ESTELA
Don’t lie to me.

CITLALI
_Este niño lindo ya quiere dormir. (This baby already wants to sleep.)_

COYOTE
It’s just work asking where I am.

ESTELA
And?

CITLALI
_Háganle la cuna de rosa y jazmín. (Make him a crib of roses and jasmine)_

COYOTE
And nothing.

CITLALI
_Háganle la cama en el toronjil. (Make him a crib of Lemon balm)_

COYOTE
I have to go to work tomorrow.

CITLALI
_You’re leaving me?_

ESTELA
You’re leaving me?

CITLALI
_Pónganle un jazmín. (Place some jasmine)_

COYOTE
The hell? I can’t go make a living? We’re not all filthy rich Americans—
CITLALI

Que con su fragancia... (with its scent)

I’m not either I just—

ESTELA

Me lo haga dormir. (Make him go to sleep)

COYOTE

You sure act spoiled enough—

ESTELA

I just have standards—

CITLALI

Arrorró mi niño. (Sleep well my child)

COYOTE

Of course. Gabacho standards—

CITLALI

Arrorró mi sol. (Sleep well my sun)

ESTELA

You can’t judge me for trying to better myself.

COYOTE

It’s not just the food. It’s the damn movies and—

ESTELA

You don’t know anything.

CITLALI

Arrorró pedazo... (Sleep well piece...)

COYOTE

You think those American Eagle jeans lift you up above the brown masses. Estás tan arriba que ya ni te veo. (You’re so high up that I can’t even see you.)

CITLALI

De mi corazón. (Of my heart.)

CITLALI will gently cuddle the baby as it gets a little restless.
I can’t stand you.

Yeah, good.

What do you even do for a living? (PAUSE)

None of your business. What do you do at. Uh. University?

I study.

Study what?

What do you do at. Uh. Work?

You don’t really seem to study much.

I am a straight-A student, I’ll have you know.

You’re lying.

I’m a mostly A’s student.

What do you study?

Relax, little one.

Nothing important.

I’ll feed you soon.
ESTELA
Where do you work? What do you do?

COYOTE
If I had gotten a chance to go to university, I might’ve.

CITLALI
When you’re big and tall, my love—

COYOTE
But now I don’t know. I’m a little old for that.

CITLALI
I’m sure you’ll do great things for us.

ESTELA
How old are you?

CITLALI
I dreamt about it.

COYOTE
Older than you.

CITLALI
Mi pequeño Cesár. (My little Cesar)

ESTELA
By how much?

CITLALI
Te quiero. (I love you.)

CITLALI cuddles her baby and shushes his cries.

COYOTE
(He puts his feather crown on)

Centuries.

ESTELA
Will you tell me where you work, now?

COYOTE
(Taking his crown off)

This is not for a lady.
CITLALI

Hare cualquier cosa por ti. (I’ll do anything for you.)

Maybe I could help.

ESTELA

Be stronger than a man.

CITLALI

I get good grades.

ESTELA

And more cunning than a fox.

CITLALI

Congratulations.

COYOTE

Just for you, my son.

COYOTE

In high school, I remember—wait. No, I don’t really remember high school.

CITLALI

I’ll endure it all.

ESTELA

Everyone has a bad experience in school. I remember once being called a wetback…told I spoke funny…

ESTELA faces the audience and goes into a sort of trance, a dreamlike state. Lights dim slightly.

ESTELA (CONT.)

People in my class would—they would literally run away from me. I would walk up to them to say hi and to—to sit with them. I mean, how sad is it to have lunch by yourself when you’re twelve, right? So I would walk up to them, hoping just to sit quietly and—and have lunch. Just lunch. But they’d get up and run across to the other end of the school. I remember running after them. I’ve always been a good runner, I had no problem catching up but—they never stopped running anyway. At some point I lost sight of them and I walked back to get my lunch box and—and theirs. I remember thinking that someone needed to make sure their lunch boxes didn’t get stolen. They all came back and took them without a word. Then, the last girl. When there was only that one girl left. She looked me straight in the eye and said, “Don’t you get it? We don’t want to hang out with you.” I—I never had lunch with them again.
CITLALI
Arroró mi niño. (Sleep well my child.)

ESTELA’s trance is broken when he speaks.

COYOTE
It was nothing like that for me. I just never went.

CITLALI
Arroró mi sol. (Sleep well my sun)

Oh.

ESTELA

CITLALI
Arroró pedazo. (Sleep well piece...)

COYOTE
You’re not at all hungry?

CITLALI
De mi corazón. (Of my heart.)

ESTELA
Not really.

COMADRE knocks on CITLALI’s door. ESTELA freezes.

ESTELA
Did you hear that?

CITLALI
Who is it?

COMADRE
It’s me!

COYOTE
I’ll go check.

COYOTE goes off stage to check the window. The sound of a window being open and shut is heard.

CITLALI
Come in!
COMADRE enters. COYOTE re-enters and checks ESTELA’s door.

COYOTE

No one.

COMADRE

Look at what joy the Lord has blessed us with.

COYOTE

Are you expecting anyone?

CITLALI

How are you today?

ESTELA

No.

COYOTE walks back to the couch as he begins to look around the room for his stuff.

COMADRE

Better than a *colibrí* in a field of flowers, mujer. Guess what Father Tomás said—mija, what is that on your face? (*hummingbird*)

COYOTE

It was probably nothing.

CITLALI

Nothing, Comadre. Go on, what about Father Tomás?

COMADRE

Did Ernesto do this to you, niña?

ESTELA

Hey, what are you doing?

CITLALI

It was an accident. Nothing serious—

ESTELA

Are you packing up to go?

COMADRE

An accident?
COYOTE
I already told you, I have work.

COMADRE
Did his fist accidentally coincide with your face, Citlali?

ESTELA
But I didn’t know you had to go right away.

CITLALI
You don’t have to worry.

CITLALI tries to move away from COMADRE and busy herself cooking.

ESTELA
When will you be back?

COYOTE
A few days, maybe.

CITLALI
It was a slip of the hand.

ESTELA
Where are you going?

CITLALI
(Sighing)

He was a little drunk…

COYOTE
Can’t tell you.

ESTELA
Why?

CITLALI
…and I made him mad.

COYOTE
I can’t tell you.

COMADRE
That is not right.
ESTELA
I don’t understand what’s the big deal!

COMADRE
Not right at all.

ESTELA
Oh, are you some sort of wandering strawberry and orange picker?

CITLALI
That’s just him on a bad day.

ESTELA
Is that why you don’t want to tell me.

COMADRE
He’s hit you before?

ESTELA
Are you ashamed of being a farm hand?

COMADRE
My Lord…

COYOTE
Ashamed. There’s no Mexican on either side of the border—

CITLALI
There’s nothing to worry about.

COYOTE
That should be ashamed of a hard day’s work.

CITLALI
I’m fine.

COYOTE
Dolce and Gabbana don’t make the man.

COMADRE
Be honest with me.

COYOTE
But as if you would know about those things.
COMADRE
Is that what triggered the early delivery?

ESTELA
I know about life!

ESTELA tries to face him but COYOTE is busy finding his things and getting ready to go.

CITLALI
I was overdue, already. He didn’t do anything—

COMADRE
¡No mientas, Citlali! (Don’t lie)

ESTELA
Is that what you think of me?

COMADRE
Did he or did he not?

ESTELA
That I’m some culture-less American?

CITLALI
He didn’t.

COYOTE
You said that, not me.

CITLALI
Really, he didn’t do anything wrong.

ESTELA
Pues no soy, fíjate. (Well I’m not, just so you know.)

COYOTE
Right. How do you say “whatever”.

CITLALI
He’s a great husband.

ESTELA
Don’t “whatever” me.
COMADRE

Is he, Citlali?

CITLALI tries to clean up the kitchen, cook, etc. COMADRE follows after her, trying to stop her and get her attention.

COYOTE

Estela, you couldn’t survive a second in Mexico even if you wanted to. As “Mexican” as you think you may be, you’re just not…

ESTELA

Not what? Hm? Not what?

COMADRE

Citlali.

COYOTE

Not really Mexican.

COMADRE

Is he?

ESTELA

How dare you.

COMADRE

Don’t be in denial, Citlali.

COYOTE

Anyway, I have to go.

ESTELA

Don’t. I don’t know what to do without you.

CITLALI

Would you care for a snack, Comadre?

CITLALI returns to her cooking.

COYOTE

You’ll figure it out.

COMADRE

I care for justice, Citlali.
ESTELA
I just have a bad feeling.

CITLALI
Even after the baby was born, I’m still eating for two!

COYOTE
You’ll get over it.

COMADRE
No seas así. (Don’t be that way)

COYOTE
You’ll be fine without me.

COMADRE
Where’s the progressive woman from the other day?

COYOTE
You should probably start going back to class now…

CITLALI
This is just different.

COYOTE
I can contact you if—when I get back…

COMADRE
Shush.

COYOTE
If you’d like.

CITLALI
He’s a good man, my husband.

ESTELA
I don’t know.

COMADRE
(Founded)
He’s a dirtbag.

COYOTE
Try to live happy.
COYOTE moves to leave. CITLALI shrugs, frustrating COMADRE even more.

ESTELA
Wait! I…I…I think… I think I lo-lo…Ehm.

COYOTE (Chuckles)
You’re bad at this.

COMADRE
Maybe you should consider talking to my nephew, Jesus.

ESTELA
I should come with you!

COMADRE
This is an extreme solution but—

COYOTE
I don’t think so.

COMADRE
It’s your best move.

ESTELA
I’ve just never felt this way before…

COMADRE
You can’t stay.

ESTELA
And I don’t want to lose you now.

COYOTE shrugs and exits. ESTELA sighs and walks to the table to sit and sulk.

COMADRE
You need to look for a better life.

CITLALI
You’re not suggesting what I think you’re suggesting…

COMADRE
You want him to hit you again. To hit your baby boy one day?

CITLALI
He wouldn’t touch Cesar.
COMADRE
I know the type. (PAUSE) I will ask Jesus to swing by later when Ernesto is at work. You'll be in good hands.

CITLALI
Who will take care of us?

COMADRE
You will. You think that you’re incapable? Just look around you. We built this country, mujeres, carrying our children wrapped around our chests and backs. (Women)

ESTELA begins to pack a small purse with things like sun glasses, makeup, etc.

CITLALI
I don’t think I could.

COMADRE
Plus, you’ve got a cousin up North.

CITLALI
Estela.

COMADRE
She could help you out.

CITLALI
We hardly talk.

COMADRE
Blood helps blood.

CITLALI
I couldn’t bother her.

COMADRE
Fine, then. You just stay here and suffer like many others. I will pray for you.

ESTELA
He won’t be alone anymore.

CITLALI
Don’t—I don’t need you to.

COMADRE
Oh you need something—
CITLALI
Isn’t it time to pick up your granddaughter?

COMADRE
I have no doubt you need—

CITLALI
You need to leave.

COMADRE
You too. Good evening.

COMADRE exits.

CITLALI
I need to stay.

ESTELA
I need to go.

CITLALI sits at the table. ESTELA exits. Lights fade to black.

SCENE 7
The stage is bare, similar to the first scene. ESTELA runs in and looks around nervously. She is carrying a purse.

ESTELA
I won’t let you go so easy, mi amor. (My love)

Briefly, she looks around for COYOTE’S truck.

ESTELA
That looks like his truck.

ESTELA looks around to make sure no one else is watching her.

ESTELA
I’ll show him Rita Hayworth-style how much I care for him!

ESTELA runs off stage.

ESTELA
Great! A blanket on the back of the truck. I’ll just lie down under it.
COYOTE walks across the stage and half-way stops to release a deep sigh.

COYOTE

My land calls to me.

He pulls out his car keys and the beep of a car unlocking is heard.

COYOTE

I just have to drive back to Mexico!

He exits and the sound of a truck door opening and slamming to a close is heard. Then we hear an engine and a car radio. We hear the truck drive away. Lights fade to black. Lights rise. Voices are heard off stage.

MEXICAN BORDER AGENT

¿Tiene algo que declarar? (Anything to declare?)

COYOTE

Nada. (Nothing)

MEXICAN BORDER AGENT

And the back of the truck?

COYOTE

Trash and a blanket.

MEXICAN BORDER AGENT

Welcome to Mexico. Next!

SCENE 8

It’s morning.

Gang graffiti shares walls with murals of Aztec warriors and princesses. Nightclub lights lazily signal an entrance. There’s a convenience store across from the club’s entrance. The scene feels a little dusty and dry. Once again, cop lights will flash or sirens will be heard intermittently, with the addition of gun fire at appropriate moments. Car honks, birds and children, too, are heard.

ESTELA and COYOTE, though more worn out, are wearing the same clothes as in the previous scene. Needless to say, he’s beyond infuriated. They enter.

COYOTE

I. I am without words.
ESTELA

I know. I know. Me too.

COYOTE

You irresponsible, immature, incorrigible gringa brat! What have you done?

ESTELA

Listen, I just wanted to see what you did for work. I never thought—

COYOTE

You listen! This is not a game! Not thinking gets people killed!

ESTELA

I know but—

COYOTE

You know nothing. You know absolutely nothing. So much for your books and your fancy college education. Can’t they teach you not to jump into strangers’ vehicles?

ESTELA

They—they. I just wanted to be with you!

COYOTE

With me? What for? Look at you now. LOOK! Where are you? Yucca, Mexico. Bienvenida, gringa desgraciada. (Welcome, unfortunate American.)

ESTELA

Oh shit.

COYOTE

Oh shit is right. (PAUSE) Let me think…What kind of ID do you have with you?

ESTELA

My—my. I have a school ID.

COYOTE

I don’t know if it’ll be enough to cross you back legally or…chingada madre. I’ll figure it out. (God damn it)

ESTELA

Oh, okay.

COYOTE

In the meantime, just shut up and follow me. I need to get some errands done.
Okay.

Good.


You know what? Stay here.

COYOTE exits through the nightclub’s door.

I don’t want to stay here. In Mexico? Even if I knew where my cousin lived…

COMADRE enters pushing a stroller, she’s going to the convenience store. COYOTE re-appears in a corner, inside the nightclub, and sits facing the audience. He wears his feather crown. TIBURCIA enters, dressed provocatively and hands him a drink. Nortec music (a mix between norteño and techno) is heard softly.

¿Estás perdida? (You lost?)

Uhm…

You speak Spanish?

A little.

Are you lost?

I don’t think so.

Want a lap dance?

COYOTE grunts.
COMADRE
As you wish. Come on, Tonkitl.

TIBURCIA
Cómo quieras, guapo. (As you wish, handsome.)

COMDARE starts walking away, toward the store.

ESTELA
Tonk-eat?

COYOTE
Goddamnit.

ESTELA
That’s—that’s a beautiful name. Where’s it from?

COMADRE stops and turns around.

COMADRE
It means estrella de la mañana in Nahuatl. (Morning star)

ESTELA
Beautiful.

COYOTE
Nevermind.

ESTELA
My—my name also means estrella. (star)

COYOTE
Never mind. Leave me alone.

TIBURCIA exits. COYOTE is left to struggle with his thoughts, getting drunker by the minute.

COMADRE
Come on, mija.

ESTELA
Ma’am! Is she okay? She’s shaking!

COYOTE
What am I going to do with this girl?
COMADRE
Tonkitl! Tonkitl!

ESTELA
Is she having a seizure?

COMADRE
Tonkitl. It’s okay, darling. It’s okay. Ya pasó. (It’s over)

COYOTE
I should just leave her here.

ESTELA
Oh my god. Is she okay now?

COMADRE
Looks like it.

COYOTE
Que conozca Mexico. (So she gets to know México)

COMADRE
Buenos días, pollita. (Good morning, sweetie)

ESTELA
What did you call her?

COMADRE
My son’s, her father’s, nickname. He’s not always around. But isn’t he always working hard to make sure you get the things you need, sweetie? Yes, he is.

ESTELA
What does he do?

COMADRE
(To the baby)
Don’t forget, you should never talk to strangers, mija.

ESTELA
Oh, I’m sorry. I’m Estela.

COMADRE
Nice to meet you, Estela. Not from here?

ESTELA
Not really.
COMADRE
Tonkitl, say goodbye to Estela. And again, nice to meet you.

Once again, COMADRE starts walking away to the store.

ESTELA
Likewise. *(PAUSE)* Wait! What—what’s wrong with her?

COMADRE
What?

ESTELA
That shaking?

COMADRE
Epilepsy.

ESTELA
Has she seen a doctor about it?

COMADRE
One or two.

ESTELA
Isn’t there medication that prevents seizures?

COYOTE
*El viaje* is going to cost her. *(The trip)*

COMADRE
I’m sure you don’t have trouble paying even for…for recreational drugs.

COMADRE starts to leave.

COYOTE
I’m not going to do a thing for free…

ESTELA
I…I didn’t mean anything like that. Things are supposed to be cheaper here.

COMADRE
Workers are cheaper, too.

ESTELA
*(PAUSE)*

I guess I forgot.
COMADRE

Forgot what?

ESTELA

Where I was. I’m sorry I didn’t—

COMADRE

I didn’t expect you to know anything.

COMADRE exits.

COYOTE

My pollita…(Sweetie)

ESTELA

(Sad and distraught)

I have to get out of here.

COYOTE

I’ll make another trip tonight and take her with me.

ESTELA

But how?

Blackout.

SCENE 9

It’s night and they are in the Arizona desert. Sounds of strange animals are heard, as are chilling winds cutting through desert rock. The group’s tummies growl with hunger and throats are hoarse due to thirst. ESTELA, COYOTE and other walkers (CHORUS). Only the moon light guides their steps.

COYOTE

Okay, so by starting now we should be by the pickup location in about two days. We’ll rest during the day and walk all night.

ESTELA prays fervently. Very soft mumbles are heard from the CHORUS, sounding like Nahuatl prayers.

COYOTE

Ya callaté y camina. Ni que fueras religiosa. (Shut up and walk. As if you were that religious.)
I’ll do what I want.

COYOTE

Don’t you want to be back in your comfy American living room?

ESTELA

Yes!

She prays again, more fervently, holding COYOTE back.

Waste of time.

COYOTE

You didn’t use to be this way.

ESTELA

Then was then.

COYOTE

Be kind to me!

ESTELA

Shut up and walk! You are burning moonlight.

ESTELA sobs.

COYOTE

God… When this is all over, I will be kind.

ESTELA

I don’t want to die.

COYOTE

You won’t.

ESTELA

I am going to die.

COYOTE

You aren’t.

ESTELA

Is that a snake?
COYOTE
(Stomping, spitting, kicking it)
It was more like a lizard. Let’s go.

The CHORUS’s mumbles get louder.

ESTELA
Have you seen people die?

COYOTE
I would watch out for hyperthermia. One of the signs is hallucinations. Hey, you wouldn’t believe the sort of stuff—

ESTELA
Have you caused deaths?

COYOTE
(Annoyed)
Walk faster. Once we land on the other side of those hills then, we’ll be home free.

ESTELA
Y la migra? (And the border patrol?)

COYOTE
They could show up around the corner. Be quiet.

ESTELA
What if we get caught?

COYOTE
(Pauses and covers her mouth, coyly)
Nothing. They greet us with water and then drive us back to Mexico.

ESTELA
(Whispers)
Nos matan. (They kill us.)

COYOTE
Los otros nos matan. La migra, not so bad. Maybe 3 stars. (The other guys would kill us)

ESTELA
Me violan. Te matan. (They rape me. They kill you.)

What?
I’m thirsty.

Y tu agua? (And your water?)

Here.

ESTELA shows him her empty water gallon.

No good. Gotta watch out for—

For a brief second, COYOTE spasms as the CHORUS’ mumbles get louder. Just as quickly, the CHORUS’ volume gets lower and COYOTE returns to normal.

ESTELA does not notice anything.

Hallucinations.

When we’re home, what are you gonna do?

Sorry?

What are—

No. Don’t forget where my home is.

Not aquí? (here)

She points to her heart.

This is funny. Is it going to rain?

Oh god. Is that the Border Patrol?
Shush. 

My god. 

Shut up. It'll pass.

They crouch. A light beam crosses the stage, slowly.

Okay. Let’s move. Hurry.

They’re going to find us and…

Let’s quicken the pace.

I’m so thirsty.

ESTELA gets lightheaded, slows down her pace. Light dim. COYOTE begins to mumble, softly, behind her with the CHORUS.

Anyone there?

In the semi-darkness, sounds of rain and Huapango Huasteco are heard. The music is interrupted by thunder and lightning and then it stops. A pause of darkness and total silence. ESTELA is alone, in a daze and stuck in a dream.

¿Dónde estoy? (Where am I?)

The CHORUS heard, thunderous.

Nezahualcóyotl, show yourself.

Where am I?

Open the doors of Tonatiuhichan, Nezahualcóyotl, with your words. (Aztec heaven)
ESTELA
It’s like the ancient legends—

COYOTE transforms into Nezahualcóyotl by placing a crown of feathers over his head. His speech should have a thicker accent for his role as a leader of pre-Columbian Mexico.

COYOTE
I, Fasting Coyote, have appeared. (PAUSE) In vain I’ve been born! In vain I’ve come out from the house of the god of Earth. Hopeless am I. If I had only not come out, not set foot on this land. What shall I do? Oh princes of times past that have travelled across these lands. What is my destiny? I am but a miserable fool and my heart suffers, poisoned with love.

ESTELA
What’s going on? Where are we? I’m so thirsty… My head. What is this? Why am I being haunted by the very things I left behind?! Nezahualcóyotl, amor de mi vida, stop scaring me… (love of my life)

Dehydrated and lightheaded, ESTELA falls into a deep trance and absentmindedly repeats parts of COYOTE’s following dialogue.

COYOTE
In vain I’ve been born! In vain I’ve come out from the house of the god of Earth. Hopeless am I. If I had only not come out, not set foot on this land. I won’t say it out loud but what shall I do? What is my destiny?

ESTELA
Maybe this is only a nightmare.

The sound of rain and Huapango incrementally invade the stage. Blackout. COYOTE is heard in the darkness.

COYOTE

ESTELA
Where is home?!
SCENE 10

Once again, the stage is divided in two: Estela’s living room, in the United States, on one end and Citlali’s kitchen, in Mexico, on the other. Estela is laying down on the couch, Coyote is sitting at one table. Citlali, at the other table, is cuddling her baby while Comadre is cutting some cheese with a large knife. The radio in Citlali’s kitchen plays Spanish music softly.

Coyote
Are you okay?

Estela just groans as Citlali speaks.

Citlali
Thank you for your help, Comadre.

Coyote
It’ll get better.

Comadre
You know I’m here for you.

Coyote
I’m gonna have to go soon.

Coyote starts walking around, trying to collect his things.

Citlali
Are you staying for dinner?

Coyote
You’ve had plenty of time to recover from the trip.

Comadre
Yes, I can’t go home right now.

Coyote
The rest of the group is already working 20-hour days in the fields.

Comadre
To think of my own Gregorio not home anymore…

Comadre, dramatically, sighs and pretends to tear up. Citlali quickly approaches and comforts her.
And you are still lying on that couch, sleeping.

Yes, please stay.

Count your lucky stars, Estela.

He looked so anxious, you know, as I saw him leave with the rest. *Hambriento.* *(Hungry)*

Lazy.

COYOTE pulls out and plays with his phone, silently.

Of course, he was making a dangerous trip.

*Que Dios bendiga a mi esposo en el otro lado!* *(May God bless my husband on the other side!)*

You’re not dying, *pollita.* *(Sweetie)*

May our Virgen de Guadalupe watch over him.

It feels like I died and was brought back.

La Virgen should keep taking care of us.

*Me das pena.* *(I’m ashamed of you.)*

You say you have a decent husband in your hands.

I’ve seen people die with more grace.
Don’t you?

And there you are, “sick,” from a quick trip South.

I guess—

The journey has sickened me.

CITLALI cuddles and plays with her baby. COYOTE’s cell phone rings. He steps to a corner and quietly but quickly answers the phone. When done, he quickly turns to ESTELA. COMADRE busies herself with the kitchen, cleaning a knife and some plates.

Bueno, ya me voy. (Well, gotta go.)

If I could only be a snail.

It was good doing business with you.

He motions to leave.

And always carry home with me.

What would I do without you, Comadre…

Wait. Don’t.

Don’t mention it, honey.

What?

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Everything’s different than before.

I need you.

My life is now my little angel’s.

¿De qué hablas, loca? (What are you saying, crazy?)

They are a blessing, like my granddaughter Tonkitl—

To keep me company.

In these times of desolation—

ERNESTO enters.

Mujer. (Woman)

You’re not the only one in need of company.

(Mujeres. (Women)

Hola, compa. ¿Cómo se encuentra hoy? (Hello, compa. How are you today?)

I need it—

Fine. What’s for dinner, Citlali?

Bad.
CITLALI
I—I haven’t started.

COYOTE
No te creas tanto, Estela. (Don’t think so highly of yourself.)

You don’t understand.

ESTELA
You don’t understand.

ERNesto
Goddamit, Citlali!

COYOTE
I more than understand!

ERNesto
Why can’t you do your job like you’re supposed to?

COYOTE
You can’t even begin to fathom.

CITLALI
I’m sorry my love!

ESTELA
Now I do! I swear, I get it.

ERNesto
What kind of shit is this?

COYOTE
Then act like it…

COYOTE tries to get close to her, slightly controlling yet apologetic.

COMADRE
Ernesto, it’s okay.

ERNesto
What kind of wife are you turning into because of your friends?

COYOTE
It’s not attractive.

ESTELA, offended, rejects COYOTE and walks away.
COMADRE
I had already offered to cook dinner—

ESTELA
I used to be conflicted about what to do, you know?

ERNESTO
I come here after a full day’s work to what’s supposed to be dinner on my table.

Really?

ERNESTO
And do I get that?

Not anymore.

ERNESTO
Do I?

ESTELA
I’m done letting others tell me who I am or who I need to be.

I—I’m sorry—

ERNESTO
I don’t care that you are!

He slaps CITLALI.

ESTELA
I don’t want to choose between borders anymore.

No! How could you.

COYOTE’s phone rings. He checks his phone but does not answer. He checks his watch and walks to ESTELA for a kiss.

ERNESTO
(To Comadre)

Don’t make me hit you, too.
You’re so beautiful, pollita.

COMADRE grabs a knife.

Get out.

Estela, before I go we should settle one last thing—

What do you think you’re doing—

I still owe you money.

I said get out before I stick this in your cowardly stomach.

ERNESTO is speechless at COMADRE’s courage.

That’s not it…entirely.

You are not going to do this to me. In my HOUSE!

You should leave.

ESTELA goes to hand him money.

This is for Citlali and the baby.

Leave?

COYOTE’S phone rings. He doesn’t answer it.

Citlali doesn’t want me to go: Do you, baby?

CITLALI is silent.
ESTELA
You don’t have a choice.

ERNESTO
Citlali, tell this whore you want HER out.

COYOTE
You know, I—

ESTELA and CITLALI
Leave.

ERNESTO
This is my house. I’m not gonna let you get away with this.

ERNESTO exits in a huff. CITLALI is crying. COMADRE, shaking, she drops the knife and goes to comfort CITLALI.

COYOTE
Listen, uh. *(PAUSE)*

ESTELA
Don’t even.

COYOTE
I—

ESTELA
I get it.

COYOTE
Do you?

ESTELA
I don’t have a choice.

COYOTE
Neither do I.

COYOTE picks up his crown and puts his on his head. The living room side of the stage, where COYOTE and ESTELA are, goes dark.

COMADRE
Citlali, you can’t stay here.
CITLALI
But—my baby. Where could I—

COMADRE
Look. Gregorio…he left me some money.

CITLALI
No, I can’t.

COMADRE
In case I needed it.

CITLALI
I couldn’t.

COMADRE
You need to use it. We’ll pay Coyote to cross you over.

CITLALI
(Quick Pause)
I don’t know—

COMADRE
For a new life. For Cesar.

CITLALI
For my baby…Okay.

COMADRE
Before you know it, the nightmare will be over.

Fade to black.

SCENE 11

With a similar feeling to the first scene of the play, COYOTE, CITLALI and her baby meet in semi-darkness in a corner of the stage. CITLALI gives COYOTE money to cross her across the border. He accepts and they begin walking across the Arizona desert. Sounds may replicate the feeling of Scene IX with a tinge of Huapango music.

ESTELA is illuminated, straddling the white line that divides the stage. She’s on the phone.
ESTELA
Citlali is heading my way? (PAUSE) I see. I’ll keep an eye out for her. They’ll drive her all the way up here? Okay. Mmmmmmm. I’ll be waiting for my poor cousin. I hope she and her baby make it safely across. I wonder if—I wonder if… I wonder if he’s—no puede ser… No, nothing. Adiós. (It can’t be...Goodbye)

Her light goes out.

After some walking, they grow tired and sit down. Sounds subside, except for the gentle sound of a snake. It’s a Western Diamondback Rattlesnake circling the baby. COYOTE notices.

COYOTE
We’re almost done. Once we get past—

CITLALI
The baby!

COYOTE
Hold on. We can’t scare it.

CITLALI
Do something! I can’t lose my baby!

COYOTE
Hold on!

CITLALI
Watch it—it’s after us. Those enchanting eyes and tongue…

COYOTE
Stay back, Citlali! Don’t move! You’ll scare her and she’ll attack.

COYOTE
Beautiful snake, where are you calling me to? Don’t be mean. Don’t trick me with your music. Have mercy.

CITLALI
¿Qué pasa? (What is it?)

COYOTE
Plumed serpent, don’t punish me. I beg you.

He is bitten and the snake retreats.
COYOTE (CONT.)
It is only right that I meet this fate. Así de cruel es la vida. Citlali, if you keep down this path at a good pace, in a few hours you’ll find yourself a van. They will do the rest. (Life is cruel.)

CITLALI
Understood. Coyote desgraciado, taking our money and sometimes our lives…You’ve saved my baby’s life. I’ll stay with you until you die. (bastard)

COYOTE
Forget me, the end is near. Just keep walking.

A coyote yaps in the distance. CITLALI picks up her stuff and her baby and carries on. Lights fade to black, for a moment, and then dimly back up. ESTELA and CITLALI enter.

CITLALI
Estela. It’s over.

ESTELA
You’re finally here. I’m so glad.

They embrace.

Our new home.

ESTELA
Are you okay, Citlali? How’s the baby?

CITLALI
Everything is okay.

ESTELA
How was your trip?

CITLALI
Tiresome but I’m happy to be in the US away from...

She shakes her head.

ESTELA
This is a new beginning.
I know. I’m looking forward to it.

Tell me about your trip.

I’m tired. That’s a story for another day.

Speaking of stories I’ve got—

Could we talk later?

You wouldn’t believe what I’ve—

Later?

Of course. Do you know who took you—

¿Mande? (What’s that?)

Nada. Forget about it. (Nothing)

Would you babysit Cesar for me?

Sure, hand him over. Go rest, cousin.

I will. Tomorrow, I’ll look for work.

You won’t be alone in this.

Thank you.
I’m here for you.

**CITLALI**

(With a small smile)

You don’t mind it if me and the baby stay with you for a while?

**ESTELA**

Not at all.

**CITLALI**

Thank you, Estela.

**ESTELA**

Anytime, Citlali.

CITLALI hands ESTELA her baby and exits. ESTELA lovingly looks at the baby and sighs.

**ESTELA**

(In a final trance)

A new life begins now. Things have changed for you and I. Dearest baby, many adventures await you in this new land of dreams. I promise to be right there to watch over you…

She kisses the baby.

Huapango music with Spanish Rock undertones (similar to Café Tacuba’s “Flores” or “Ojalá Que Llueva Café” (Flowers…Hopefully it’ll rain coffee)) is heard. ESTELA dances with the baby.

**BLACKOUT**

Fin.