Planeta Solitario: Dramatizing Autobiography

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PLANETA SOLITARIO: DRAMATIZING AUTOBIOGRAPHY

by

DIEGO MIGUEL GOMEZ

B.A., English, University of New Mexico, 2013

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts
Dramatic Writing

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

May, 2018
Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family and friends who have supported me on this journey. Especially, my father Richard J. Gomez, mother Carla L. Gomez, and brother James P.R. Gomez. You all inspire me, and I write to share my life with you. Con amor.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my cohort who are a talented group of writers and creatives and are unique and beautiful people, especially my fellow third years: Mónica Sánchez and Caroline Graham, you guys helped me push through.

Thank you to Greg Moss for your inspiration, mentorship, and talents. Your Breaking from Realism class is what finally allowed me to get out of my own way, find the fun, and write for the stage. Your assistance in helping me realize Planeta Solitario will always be a powerful learning moment for me and my writing.

Thank you to Matthew McDuffie for your mentorship and never letting me off the hook. You push me more than any other. I am proud to be your student and look forward to working with you in the future. Thank you for helping me find and realize the emotion I want from my stories and putting it on the page.

A very special and infinite thank you to Dan Rogers (Director), Anelisa Montoya (Alicia), Russell Casados (Pablo), and Nicol Leticia Couch (Stage Manager), and the rest of the crew who helped me develop and bring this story to life. This experience will be with me the rest of my life and I am so proud and unbelievably lucky to have worked with you.
Planeta Solitario: Dramatizing Autobiography

by

Diego Miguel Gomez

B.A. English

MFA Dramatic Writing

Abstract (Prologue)

Hola. Me llamo Diego Miguel Gomez. I am a Chicano from Santa Fe, New Mexico, a screenwriter, an athlete, and now a playwright. Through this dissertation, I guide you through my personal and artistic journey leading up to this point. In the abstract, I reflect the process of production for my thesis play, Planeta Solitario, along with my aspirations beyond the Master of Fine Arts in Dramatic Writing program at the University of New Mexico. Throughout this essay I switch languages and employ slang from different cultures and sub-cultures because I don’t speak in one language or tongue, I speak in many. I use New Mexican Spanglish along with sports and travel terminology. Where it is crucial, I use parenthesis to explain the meaning. Thank you for humoring me.

I have realized many aspects and interests of my life revolve around one thing, story. I understand story to be a three-act structure and view much of my life through this lens. I use Syd Field’s three-act structure model for screenwriting that he built off of Aristotle’s Poetics, along with Joseph Campbell’s Hero’s Journey from his book, The Hero with a Thousand Faces. My journey through this program has been a transition from writing for the screen to learning technique and writing for the stage. It has also provided a reconnection from the impersonal to the personal and learning how to dramatize
autobiography which led to my two best plays to date: Silent Youth and Planeta Solitario.

Here is how my life, my story, my writing process can be broken down into three acts.
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ACT I

Journey to the MFA in Dramatic Writing Program

As an example of how my interests can unite within the structure of story: Sports, if not all, contain a three-act structure – beginning, middle, end. Hockey has two intermissions, but the action is divided into three periods, again fitting the structure, which completes the story for that moment. In David Mamet’s Three Uses of the Knife, he writes, “We wish for a closely fought match that contains many satisfying reversals, but which can be seen, retroactively, to have always tended toward an inevitable conclusion. We wish, in effect, for a three-act structure” (9). I feel we desire this because it can be a direct correlation to our own lives in that we have our worlds, something happens to and challenges the routine, and we hope to find a satisfying resolution.

In Syd Field’s book, Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting, his model for the three-act structure is: Act I is the beginning. Act II is the confrontation. Act III is the resolution (90). Sporting competitions follow this model superbly. I searched for sports that do not support this, and I could not find any. Boxing has twelve rounds, but still predicates on the beginning, middle, and end. An individual or a team want something, but they must pass through obstacles to finally attain it. By achieving or not, they learn and move onto the next game or chapter or story or plot. My journey up to this point, personal and as a writer, follow a similar track and breakdown.

I decided to be a writer while sitting in a cold, dry, dusty dugout of an El Paso high school baseball field after trying out for a Major League Baseball (MLB) team, the Montreal Expos. It was in that dugout I realized, “If I can’t beat ‘em, I’ll write about ‘em.” I was a good player, a centerfielder, the commander of the outfield. I was fast. I
had a strong arm. I had good instincts, foresight, and sharp reflexes. I could catch the ball before it hit the ground or steal second without much of a challenge. My fielding and base stealing percentages were high, but my hitting was lacking. It was 1999, and I was 19 years old, and everything I had worked for up to that point fell short of the big home run. I did not make the team and had to come to terms with myself in understanding my aspirations to play in the big leagues (MLB) were over. I had to let go of that dream and figure out what to pursue next. Up to that point, I had a passion for nothing but playing baseball.

I was attending Santa Fe Community College (SFCC) during this time, taking basic courses. In high school, I had been a terrible student, and it was for lack of trying. Playing sports, being as good an athlete as I could be, was my focus. I wasn’t doing much better in community college, aside from this one class, English Review, where I earned an “A.” It was a pre-college course, a minor league of sorts where we wrote short non-fiction stories, and I found that I enjoyed it. It provided an escape and an outlet. It allowed me to relive moments in my life and express my desires and disappointments of failure.

I would spend hours upon hours at Borders bookstore, walking the aisles and flipping through random books. I wanted to express myself the way the writers did in those books. I knew I wanted to but felt I didn't know how. One night, I purchased a journal, went into my truck, threw on some Pearl Jam, who is a huge inspiration in my life, listened to the lyrics, and tried to write them, not Eddie Vedder's exact words, but the ideas in my own words. That started everything. However, I was afraid of not being accepted by my friends and sports world. Not to mention I’d get my ass kicked if my jock
friends knew I was going to bookstores and WRITING in a journal, but I did it anyway, in total secrecy. My journal writing was made up of observations of myself and the world around me, sprinkled with some poetry.

That journal was my escape, my way of writing down what I felt I could share with anyone else. However, I was (and am) still madly in love with sports, in particular, baseball, and I wasn't ready to move on from that world entirely. I had a burning desire to remain a part of the fabric of the game, and I wanted to impart my knowledge to others. Coaching felt like the right move. A friend and former teammate asked if I would co-coach the Santa Fe High School freshman team with him, I immediately volunteered. It was a beautiful mixture of teaching, learning, and playing.

I enjoyed teaching others how to win and learn from a loss. When I joined the team, they were sitting at .500. That season we went on to win eighteen games, losing only four. Teaching became an art form to me in helping others to grow and realize their potential was where my love for baseball and desire to help others ultimately met. It felt immensely gratifying to know I was a part of it. Through the MFA program, I have acquired skills and approaches to teaching story and how to compose it for different mediums. I will pursue teaching, hopefully at the high school or University level, to pass on what I have learned and to help others tell their own stories.

In 2006, I dislocated my shoulder in a freak accident by slipping on ice, thus ending my baseball playing life. It was what Joseph Campbell refers to in his book, The Hero with a Thousand Faces and its Hero’s Journey, my “Call to Adventure” (41), or Syd Field’s definition of the “inciting incident” (129). Within an instant, my world changed. Campbell writes, “As Freud has shown, blunders are not the merest chance. They are the
result of suppressed desires and conflicts. They are ripples on the surface of life, produced by unsuspected springs. And these may be very deep—as deep as the soul itself. The blunder may amount to the opening of a destiny” (pg. 42). My injury forced a self-investigation. I felt lost and hopeless. What this blunder led to, though, was a discovery of my sincere desire to write.

I was given a question of: what do I do, now? This moment is what Campbell calls, the "Crossing of the First Threshold," or Field's "Dramatic Question" (125). Campbell offers, "The usual person is more than content, he is even proud, to remain within the indicated bounds, and popular belief gives him every reason to fear so much as the first step into the unexplored" (64). The answer to this was relatively simple in that since I could no longer use my arm to play sports, I could use my hand/s to write. Fractally, I had made it through this inciting incident, and dramatic question, leading to my next steps in my pursuit of writing. However, in the much larger picture, I was still in Act I of my writing life, attempting to get to Act II.

Three years prior I had purchased a house in Albuquerque, but the housing boom had reached its peak and I knew the crash was imminent. I sold the house and fled to Los Angeles with whatever little money I made from the sale. The plan was to learn to surf and write a ton about my experiences out there. Only one of those plans panned out. I surfed nearly every day for four months. The ocean was where I found comfort, challenge, peace, and escape. The rest of Los Angeles swallowed me up, and I became paralyzed by the size of the city, the number of people, and my feeling of insignificance in the art world. I wrote a handful of times during those four months, mostly dark, lost and anxiety driven journaling. That was my first time living outside of New Mexico. For
two months I lived in my truck with my pitbull Thrasher. Terrifying name but a sweetheart of a being. I spent another two months in an old fruit warehouse in Los Angeles’ downtown Warehouse District, which was just a couple of blocks from Skid Row. I could no longer live the way I was. I became utterly depressed, and knew I had to move on, which meant moving back to Santa Fe.

While in Santa Fe in 2007, I happened to run into an old crush while I was working at a restaurant. We rekindled our high school friendship, which rapidly turned into a romantic relationship. Several months later, after saving money together, we flew east to backpack through Southeast Asia. I began journaling again, documenting my experiences and our travels, and it felt great. The United States was in a massive recession when we took off, Obama was just elected, and the world seemed to be licking its wounds after the Bush administration. Leaving the United States felt like a natural and exciting decision.

Throughout our travels, my writing was inconsistent in that I would get lazy or be too tired from a long day's journey from one place to the next. However, there were several key moments that I did document. Our scuba diving adventures. Our trek to Mount Everest Base Camp. The Great Wall of China. There was a ton of inspiration. Cultures, food, language, traditions, religions, and music. The beauties and difficulties of traveling with a partner without a break for space every single day. We had become dependent on each other, and I felt like I was allowing my identity to be consumed and defined by the relationship. Though I did not write as much as I would have liked, I still did my best to maintain my journal, writing the memories down on paper felt like a self-developed custom that always provided levity and a level permanent documentation. This
part of my life is the inspiration for writing Planeta Solitario. Through the MFA program, I learned how to take my journeys and experiences, and dramatize them. For the first year and a half in the program, I was writing stories that were impersonal, which is excellent, but I did feel a lack of personal investment. So, for the second half of the three-year program, my writing switched from the impersonal to the personal.

Thus far in my journey leading to the MFA program, I had been an athlete, a Los Angeles drifter, and world traveler. All of these experiences would come back to one thing, story. How did I get there? What happened there? And, what was/is the takeaway? And, how can I tell these stories?

My partner, who I had traveled to Southeast Asia with, already had her bachelor’s degree, and understood the demands of higher education. She recognized my eagerness to learn and to pursue writing, so she encouraged me to go to a university upon our return. In Spring 2011, I began studying at The University of New Mexico (UNM) with a focus on Sports Journalism. That lasted about a year. I quickly recognized that as much as I wanted to be a sports reporter, it wasn’t the type of writing I was meant to do. I needed more freedom. I wanted the ability to tell any kind of story in whatever way I chose. I transferred to creative writing and a friend in the program recommended I take screenwriting. He recognized my passion for movies and saw that my writing style was highly visual and might be a good fit for screenwriting – he was right. Beyond the prose of fiction and non-fiction, the technical and rigid requirements of journalism, writing for the screen felt natural. I knew I had finally found the medium that matched the way I think, and the way I want to tell my stories. Screenwriting offered me a great combination of prose, concrete formatting, and flexibility in its story-telling.
During undergrad, I co-founded a screenwriting group called Burque Bastards. We encouraged others to bring their scripts and pitch their ideas - novels, poetry, anything and everything were welcome. We met once a week at a local brewery where we would read pages aloud, listen to pitches, and discuss movies, literature, and music. It was a nurturing, teaching, and collective learning experience. We offered accountability to each other in that we would expect pages, new ideas, and further progress in our respective projects. If we didn't see these things happen, we would discuss why, of course, give a playful, hard time to those not producing, and brainstorm as to how we could make each other better and more productive. Mostly, it was a safe space. It was a space where we could discuss our insecurities, hang-ups, blockages, desires, and fears. Mostly, we talked about story. We all gave to each other. We offered ourselves on those nights for the greater good of the other individual, and for the group as a whole. We cheered each other on and gracefully beat up on each other, all out of love, of course.

After graduating from UNM with a Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing, I felt prepared and confident in my writing abilities. I felt ready to take on the professional world. My goal was to be a self-sufficient screenwriter, writing TV pilots, full-length features, and being a part of a writer’s room working toward a collective goal. I planned to have at least three fully polished scripts with the idea I would return to Los Angeles and try to break into the business.

For a short time after graduation, I was inspired and writing with dedication, but it quickly disappeared. Even with the accountability of the Burque Bastards, I found myself lacking ideas, direction, and motivation. A once a week meeting was great, but for me, it was not enough. I needed more structure and accountability, but I did not know where to
turn. I never finished the first draft of any script which was crushing. It would be a recurring theme beyond undergrad, and I knew I direly needed and wanted to remedy the situation if I was to be a professional writer.

Throughout my several undergraduate screenwriting courses, the central element I took away and will always be crucial to my writing is the three-act structure and the story beats that make it happen, developed by Aristotle in his Poetics. It was then furthered by Joseph Campbell's The Hero's Journey and broken down even further for screenwriting by Syd Field. These approaches to story were also ingrained into my life by my screenwriting professor Matthew McDuffie. He broke down the Poetics into nine beats through three acts, each beat springing forward to the other. Act I: Inciting incident (something that changes or challenges the world and character/s) – Dramatic Question (what they will do about it) – Act II: Emotional Hook (connect the audience to the character/s) – Public/Private (a private secret is made public or vice versa) – Discovery (within the character and/or antagonist) – Act III: Crisis (catastrophe ensues) – Climax (peak of action) – Resolution or Denouement (what is learned or attained or gotten rid of). These beats are a direct parallel with Campbell's Hero's Journey and all are a reliable guide to a structure in my storytelling.

Along with my desire to tell my stories, it is imperative that I evoke emotion. That is why I began writing in the first place. I strive for this not only for myself, but for friends, family, and audiences. I enjoy attempting to get on the page what I feel in my heart and think in my head. It is my way of sharing who I am with others. The Poetics, McDuffie's beats, and the twelve-step program that is the Hero's Journey have all contributed to me telling these stories and offering this emotion. I write this here as it is
not only a model for structured storytelling, but it has been a model for my life as well. A sort of, self-help guide through my personal and artistic journeys.

As demonstrated above, each of our lives is composed of micro (or fractal) and macro forms of the Hero's Journey, the nine beats, and a three-act structure. Fractally, after undergrad, my journey as a writer concerning the Hero's Journey began with the "Call to Adventure" (41), or the inciting incident. I was no longer in school, that part of my life was over, and it sprung me forth into a new adventure, a new destiny, to be a self-sufficient writer in the professional world. Writing and participating in Burque Bastards, I felt I had crossed a threshold in that I was pursuing what I wanted, leaving my "Ordinary World" behind. Campbell refers to "The Belly of the Whale" (74), as, "…instead of passing outward, beyond the confines of the visible world, the hero goes inward, to be born again" (77), this is where my journey stalled, yet again. The Belly of the Whale might be better known as tests, allies, and enemies. This moment is where my fears, my inward journey beyond the outside world was defeated. Campbell states, "Any trifling cause then—the break of a twig, the flutter of a leaf—would flood the mind with imagined danger, and in the frantic effort to escape from his own aroused unconscious the victim expired in a flight of dread" (66). The break of a twig or flutter of a leaf represent my fears of not being a good enough writer, fear of having to move back to Los Angeles to find representation, and the feeling my ideas and talents were not good enough.

For a year and a half post-undergrad, I let the fear of failure, and voices within myself defeat me. Through this period, though, I was able to recognize that the depression I was feeling was a good thing. Meaning, I wasn't writing but knew I wanted
to. Along with sports and baseball, writing and creating felt like an insatiable passion. I knew that if I was going to reach my goals, get out of my way and persevere, I again, required further guidance. I needed outside accountability and extended training in the rigors of writing. That is when I decided to enroll in the MFA in Dramatic Writing Program at UNM.
ACT II

Grad school – Learning to write for the stage

The MFA program has much to offer and a unique attractiveness: culture, location, traditions, language, history, and lineage. As a native New Mexican, location and culture were critical to my decision. Throughout my work, I strive to integrate culture, geography, and family history. UNM felt like a great fit. Influencing my choice was the opportunity to work with and study under Gregory S. Moss (Playwright/Professor) and Matthew McDuffie (Screenwriter/Professor). As working artists, they can provide industry-based trends, tactics, and demands for these progressive and fluid fields. Their experience and expertise have proven invaluable.

Through my creative writing undergrad, and my several semesters of screenwriting, I found and decided to take a playwriting class. Previous to that, I had very little knowledge about the theatre world. It was fascinating to me as to how much can work on a single stage, the similarities and differences to screenwriting, and it piqued my interest, which was another contributing factor in applying for the program. I wanted discipline. I wanted to acquire skills necessary for teaching. And, I wanted to learn to write for a new medium while honing my skills as a screenwriter.

I found writing for the stage to be a different kind of challenge than screenwriting. Through The Hero’s Journey, Poetics, and McDuffie’s nine beats, I had story structure engrained into my skills and psyche as a writer. Playwriting offered new approaches to story and the production of it.

Through my first year in the program, I moved through several elements and traditions of playwriting. We read broadly, from Shakespeare to German Expressionism.
Classic and contemporary works. We examined techniques for crafting and dramatizing story. I learned about structure, staging, language, time, character, and plot, all leading to the common goal of story. I was the only person who came from a background other than theatre, and it was intimidating. But, through the patience, guidance, and support of my cohort and professors, I was caught up to speed. I learned how the stage works differently from the screen. The theatre is live, present, in your face, distant while being intimate, and above all else, ephemeral. TV and Film move through several takes in a scene, and then cut and edited, producing a permanent record.

As a writer, the difference in theatre is that a story progresses in one singular gesture, from beginning to end – some have intermissions, but it is still a single gesture. Transitions should be thought of and written if precisely and necessary to the story. However, the transitions can also be left up to the director. Theatre also does not have to be literal, regarding setting, action, props, and costume. A film, on the other hand, might not have to worry about transitions as much within a single time frame. The scenes can be blended or broken apart during editing. A film can also be quite literal, though it does not have to be.

In Planeta Solitario, there is a scuba diving scene where the characters, Pablo and Alicia, are to exchange hand signals signifying there is a problem and they need to go to the top. In a film, this could be under water. In theatre, they do not have to be underwater but can find ways to mimic as if underwater and the staging and setting can produce a similar effect. During workshop sessions, I would state my concerns for staging such scenes to which my professors and cohorts would always reply: do not worry about that. That is someone else's problem. Write the story. So, I did. And, now, staging these
underwater and Mount Everest elements in the play have been passed off to the responsibility of my talented and fearless director, Dan Rogers. Toward the end of this essay, I will reflect on the process and result of this approach after the productions, which begin a week from, today.

My first goal in the program was to break through the self-inflicted barrier of not finishing scripts and to develop discipline. I am a master procrastinator which is not due to a lack of desire to write. I have the urge, it is the fear of the unknown and the physical, emotional, and spiritual energy it can take to go into my soul and emerge with a story.

In my Practice as Research class, taught by Amanda Hamp, she offered that we read Twyla Tharp’s, The Creative Habit: Learn it and Use it for Life. Tharp is a dancer, choreographer, and writer. She illustrates, “Some people find this moment—the moment before creativity begins—so painful that they simply cannot deal with it. They get up and walk away from the computer, the canvas, the keyboard; they take a nap or go shopping or fix lunch or do chores around the house. They procrastinate. In its most extreme form, this terror totally paralyzes people” (pg. 5). This fear is going into “The Belly of the Whale,” and can be terrifying, making it easier to give up and walk away. She offers her remedy, “The blank space can be humbling, but I’ve faced it my whole professional life. It’s my job. It’s also my calling. Bottom line: Filling this empty space constitutes my identity” (pg. 5). I appreciate this mindset and understand how it can influence one’s approach to their work. However, I do not and will not think this way concerning writing as my destiny. Instead, I will think of it as an opportunity for a never-ending journey into the unknown. A quote from my play Planeta Solitario, spoken by the character, Pablo, in the opening monologue, might best sum up how I feel about destiny in that it
“[Everything] feels finite, I want inFINITE” (2). Destiny feels like an end, so instead, I do treat the blank page as a sort of humbling, a new beginning into the unknown, and it excites me to journey through it.

This element is one of the walls I was hoping to break through in the program, and I feel I have, though I do understand it will always be a struggle. I learned to move past my impulse for "perfectionism." I put this in quotes because I am not sure what it means, nor do I wish ever to find out. However, striving to achieve this "perfection," especially in a first draft, is still this ominous cloud that can reside within me.

Through the program, I have learned techniques and found solidarity through artists to inspire me through these barriers. In novelist Anne Lamott’s book, Bird by Bird, she has a chapter titled "Shitty First Drafts." She writes, "The first draft is the child's draft, where you let it all pour out and then let it romp all over the place, knowing that no one is going to see it and that you can shape it later. You just let this childlike part of you channel whatever voices and visions come through and onto the page" (2). This approach is similar to the exercises and teachings in several of Moss' classes throughout the program. Often, he would open class with a sort of guided meditation, giving us writing prompts throughout that allowed a stream of consciousness without constraint or judgment. Similarly, McDuffie offers an exercise where he plays different music for about half an hour, and he encourages us to write what comes up, no going back, just keep the pen moving. Through these exercises, I found some of my most honest and fearless writing. It took me back to my earlier journaling days where I did not care what anyone thought or how “perfect” it was. I wrote for the pleasure of putting my thoughts
and emotions on paper. I knew that I wanted yet again, to tell my stories, but this time, by fictionalizing and dramatizing them. I wanted to create a marriage of fact with fiction.

I am proud to say I am leaving the program with four full plays – Dark Eyed Dreams, Make It-Take It, Silent Youth, and Planeta Solitario. Each play built off the other and became more and more theatrical and written directly for the stage, whereas my earlier plays still felt like screenplays. I also began a TV pilot titled West Mesa Girls (working title), which I succumbed to my first draft blockage and did not complete. This story will be the first that I return to and finish after graduation. However, the following semester in my final year, I completed an hour-long TV pilot, Bumps, and Beats (working title). This pilot has elements of actual experiences with my life but is mostly fictional. I stole from myself, as it were.

Dark Eyed Dreams is about a former university professor, Manuel, turned alcoholic hobo, who runs into his daughter that his former wife forbade him ever to contact, again. He has a best friend, Juancho, also homeless, who eventually dies on a university campus bench during the cold of a winter night. This moment inspires Manuel to clean up to reconnect with his daughter, which he ultimately does. The only personal element to this story was the brief time I spent in Los Angeles as a drifter. I cared about the story, but it was not personal, and I was slowly learning that I wanted to reconnect with my own stories.

What I did infuse into this story was language. It is imperative not only to me but my culture. This was the first play where I used slangs and Spanglish. Here is an exchange between Manuel and Juancho as they sit on a curb in front of their favorite gas station market:
MANUEL: Starve? Mentiroso! If our livers could talk, these people would know the truth.

JUANCHO Órale, Manuel. What the fuck has gotten into you, esé? I’m just trying to hustle some money, and you're getting all emo on me. Chingao, man.

(Gomez 2)

Here, Manuel calls Juancho a liar in Spanish. Juancho is straight Spanglish, infused with New Mexican slangs. It is a dialect that I speak in, think in, and am exposed to on a daily basis. My stories are not necessarily about being Chicano. Instead, they are about Chicano's in the world.

My second play, Make It-Take It, is when I began to apply what I was learning about theatre into my work as a playwright. This story follows a star high school basketball player, Raúl, who finds himself questioning his passion for the game, so he flees to a marijuana farm in hopes of finding himself or at least a purpose beyond the expectations of others. This play, concerning sports on stage, was inspired after one of my first classes in the program, Dramatic Writing I, taught by playwright Leonard Madrid. He had us read a play titled, The Royale, by Marco Ramirez. It was the first play to capture my attention and show me what can be done on the stage and how.

It is about a Black prizefighter, Jay “The Sport” Jackson, set in the early 20th century that takes us through his journey leading up to the biggest fight he and the world have ever seen, which ultimately is a matter of life and death for his friends and family. Jackson wants nothing more than to fight Bernard “The Champ” Bixby, in hopes of becoming the first ever Black champion of the world. Through this, he fights the toughest match of his life, with his sister. Of course, the sports junkie that I am, I immediately
connected with it. Also, the writer is of the Latin/x community, providing yet another connection. Aside from those elements, it is the storytelling that captivates me.

A particular component of this story that drew me is the action, the boxing, where there is almost no human to human contact, aside from a short training session Jay goes through with his trainer Wynton. The fights are performed by the two fighters standing on opposite sides of the ring under their spotlights, facing the crowd. They speak aloud their inner dialogues that move them through the action along with the actual punches they are throwing. In the opening fight, Jackson fights a young amateur named Fish, who would eventually become Jackson’s sparring partner. Here is their exchange:

JAY: Come on, now,
FISH: Watch out for that hook, You seen him fight, you know that,
JAY: Come on, Break-a-Sweat,
FISH: Watch out –
JAY: That's your new name, "Break-a-Sweat," That's trademarked, ya heard?
FISH: Stand strong, knees bent,
JAY: If it catches on, write me a check,
FISH: Don’t lock, knees bent,
JAY: (to the crowd) Look at that face, huh?
(Ramirez 12-13)

This element was an enlightening moment. It showed me how an action presents itself in different ways. Here, we are learning about their characters and the histories. Fish is young but ambitious, and he has seen Jackson fight. Jackson is arrogant, and he’s
been through this several times, even possessing the ability to talk to the audience while fighting.

First thing I learned is that theatre is heavily dialogue-driven (but does not have to be). I learned how to drive story through what is being said on stage which can dictate action. Barney Lopez, a graduate of the MFA program, taught me my first lesson in that undergrad playwriting class mentioned above: directors will most likely scribble out any and all of your stage directions. Instead of relying on stage directions, dictate action through dialogue. In Make It-Take It, father, and son exchange dialogue on a basketball court:

RAÚL Whatever, dude. Just give me the ball. DAD Here you go, dude. RAÚL Thanks, bro.

(Gomez 2)

This exchange, without any stage directions, clearly indicates that a specific action needs to take place here, “passing the ball.” It is also driving the story through their reactions. There is jockeying for position, of sorts, in that we see there is a rich history between them, increasing the tension. Techniques like this, though simple, have changed the way I look at dialogue, action, and story. It is a small yet sufficient example, and it is a technique I have applied throughout my graduate work.

Make It-Take It has a quality similar to The Wizard of Oz in that it uses dual-role, or double casting. As an example, Dorothy’s uncles in Kansas land, are different characters in Oz, meaning, the actors are playing multiple roles – Scarecrow, Tinman, and the Cowardly Lion. In Make It-Take It, Raúl meets the owners of the farm where the characters played multiple roles: the laid-back El Mero Guero was also his overwhelming
father in the basketball world. The actor playing his aggressive and selfish agent, then
dplayed the nurturing and philosophizing mother of the farm, G Momma. The entire cast
from the basketball world doubled as someone else in the marijuana farm world. First,
this made casting much easier. Second, by splitting their roles, I was able to split their
personalities which gave Raúl elements of distant similarity and refreshing new takes on
life. For the stage, the musical Hamilton is another excellent example where four of the
actors are double cast. As an example, one of the characters plays Lafayette in Act I, then
plays Thomas Jefferson in Act II. It is exciting not only for the actor to play multiple
roles, but also for the audience to track who the actor is at different times throughout the
story, and why. The similarities and differences with the dual-role of characters, offer a
psychological and enchanting way to view the play. It can drive story while entertaining
and invites the characters and audience to solve a puzzle.

I must also add when well-known superstars played multiple sports, Bo Jackson
and Deion Sanders who played football and baseball, Michael Jordan who played
basketball and baseball, I could not help but feel the intrigue of their role switch. Even if
they were terrible, which Bo Jackson was not, Deion Sanders and Michael Jordan going
from their respective sports in which they excelled, to baseball where they were
mediocre, I, along with a broader audience, could not help but be captivated. The intrigue
in seeing their multiple personalities and skill sets was an addition to their already
illustrious careers.

Dual-role is an exciting new way to look at story, theatre, and film. Make It-Take
It was fun and exciting to write where I learned new techniques through the process. The
story, though, still has a minor personal connection which was basketball. I again found
myself wanting to go from writing these impersonal stories to the personal while impersonalizing the personal. I must note, I genuinely enjoy fiction, making stuff up, going to worlds and writing characters I've never seen or experienced. There is a thrilling element to fiction, and it can possess a less precious personal narrative than autobiography. More than anything, I want to share with others what I might have felt through my experiences, hoping to evoke their emotional connections or disconnections to the stories. By writing autobiographically, I can re-experience those moments, and hopefully see them through a different lens, and maybe gain a different perspective on the experiences throughout my life.
Silent Youth: Writing for the Stage

In my second year of the program, Silent Youth was my first significant breakthrough in writing for the stage. It possesses visual elements that tell the story, language (diction), and dramatizes autobiography by making it a work of fiction. Autobiography presents a new set of challenges. The stories are personal, and the facts can be precious. Through technique, I found ways to dramatize my own stories.

Silent Youth is the story of Older Santiago, the narrator of the story who is a Chicano in his late thirties and returns to the home he grew up in after the death of his parents. He goes into his memory and relives a time when he had just moved into the neighborhood. He became friends with his neighbor who is Deaf, Gerald. He also becomes friends with a couple of other kids from the block who called him Santi. Santi eventually betrays Gerald, fracturing several friendships, and learning a great lesson within himself as well. The story returns to present time where Older Santiago steps out of the narrator's role and can apologize and rekindle the friendship with Gerald. It is a memory play and fish out of water story.

The primary visual elements of the story are language and setting as a metaphor. The set is two houses, side by side, throughout the play. We can see into one of the garages, where the walls are barebones, just rows of two-by-sixes and plywood. Santiago stands on top of this roof throughout the play. It remains this one location throughout the play which is its own character and contributes to the story. In both theatre and screenwriting, single or minimal locations can be a significant challenge to write for, but also a high reward. They reward by having to make potentially fewer transitions in theatre, and fewer locations to scout and lockdown for in a film. Also, they pay by
becoming a more crucial element contributing to the story. Second, this was my first play where I use a single location. Most importantly, I learned how to use setting and location, and make it theatrical.

Like the story itself, as well as the characters, the garage is given a three-act structure. Here, in the story, is where the visual meets language to SHOW the story. Santi does not know sign language, so he and Gerald communicate by writing on the walls of that garage – this would adhere to Field's, "beginning" (90), for the garage. The walls and thus, the writings, are progressively covered with sheetrock as the memory gets heavier and more difficult for Santiago to live through – this would be an illustration of Field's "confrontation" (90). At the end of the play, we return to present time where Santiago sees older Gerald. They go to the covered garage where Santiago apologizes for betraying him and not being a better friend. They break through the sheetrock and go through the history of their young friendship. The lights fade out on them writing on the walls, again, sharing their present lives – this is Field's "resolution" (90).

The garage is theatrical in that it becomes part of the moving action. It tells its own story while contributing to the bigger story. Writing on the walls, witnessing the covering up of the walls, and eventually breaking down the walls, are theatrical, active, and story.

Another glaring element of the play is language. Santi is a minority not only in the United States but also in his new surroundings. Gerald, above all, represents an underrepresented community. Together, through their innocence, they know no difference. Language is what binds them and breaks them apart, and ultimately brings them back together.
The play starts with Santiago’s very contemporary way of speaking:

Facebook. Facebook. Facebook. I hate this shit. What's the point? So distant. People say it's how they stay connected. I don't know about that. It makes me feel more isolated, more disconnected. (Gomez 2)

Here, language is to serve the purpose of giving character and time. We are in the era of Facebook. The character illuminates when Santiago talks about how he wants connection without directly saying it.

The communication with Gerald is much different. Gerald uses bodily gestures and his audible language to speak. The distinct nature is his replication of what he has learned in school and at home and in the world. Sometimes the audible words are similar to that of the non-Hard of Hearing (HoH) community and can be understood without interpretation. Sometimes they are sounds to mimic objects and activities. Another aspect of Gerald's language is he is a master lip reader.

In this scene, it is the first time Santi and Gerald talk to each other without other’s interpreting:

SANTI (waving) Hi.

LONG silence. Gerald puts his arms in front of him and murmurs...

GERALD Brbrbrbrbrbr.

SANTI Uhhh. Huh?
Gerald makes the same motion...

GERALD Brrrrrrrrrr.

Santiago nodding his head...

SANTI What?

GERALD (frustrated) Ndaaahhh. (Nah!)

Gerald again puts his arms in front of him as if holding onto something and sort of runs in place...

GERALD Brbrbrbrbrbrbr! Brbrbrbrbrbr! Brbrbrbrbrbr!

SANTI (nodding no) Sorry.

(Gomez 11-12)

Gerald finally motions to Santi to go the garage where he finds a pencil and writes, "bike." This moment for both is an introduction as to how they're communication will work, both through writing, gesture, and audible language. It is also an introduction of a convention to the audience. The characters will have to figure out what is said, though sometimes it is exact when written on the walls or paper, other times it is one or
two words where both character and audience can put the rest of the pieces together. As
the play progresses, the language becomes more understood and more crucial to the story.

Regarding ethics, I have gone several different ways with this play. Going from
whether or not I would have the actor playing Gerald do nothing but American Sign
Language, or audibly speaking, or both. Another consideration is having two interpreters
on stage – one for the HoH community, and one for the non-HoH community. I
consulted with the New Mexico School for the Deaf and received support and ideas as to
how to treat this story. I must also add, which I did explain to those I consulted with,
Gerald's audible speak is delivered the way I hear it. Though Gerald does not speak in
conventional, non-HoH English, it does not mean he has nothing to say. In fact, some of
the actions are more powerful than any of the words spoken aloud.

This moment leads us to autobiography. I did move to this neighborhood. I did
become good friends with my neighbor who is Deaf, and there were the kids in the
neighborhood and the bully kids from the basketball team, but I managed to fictionalize
through dramatization. Santi makes friends with the neighborhood kids as well as with
his new basketball team. The basketball friends eventually force Santi to hit Gerald,
forcing a moment of betrayal. It is the climax of the play. Did this happen in real life?
Absolutely not. However, I needed a moment of dramatic betrayal to force the action and
lead to the resolution – moving through Act III.

As the characters Older Santiago and Santi are adaptations from my life in that
neighborhood, I had to find a way to combine these unique characters, this unique setting,
and the single moment in time, and fictionalize it. Of course, some elements are true, but
the fighting and relationships are mostly fiction. Referring back to the ethics and how
Gerald speaks on stage, I wrote him the way I heard him. The way others heard him. It is how he talks, and I wanted to represent it while treating it with sensitivity, deliberateness, and dignity.

To dramatize autobiography, I took the truth and disbursed it to other characters and moments within the play, thus, fictionalizing it. As an example, in real life, I was the person who was beaten up and picked on by my basketball teammates. Unfortunately, for Gerald, he took the brunt of this. Because it is a memory play, not only for Santiago but me as the writer, I was able to empower Santiago with the role of narrator and re-experience these moments in my life through him within a single story. By changing the names of the actual people to different names for the characters, I gave myself the opportunity to distance myself and insert different personalities. As the writer, I had to defamiliarize myself from the actual people and events to see and represent them in a new, exciting, and dramatized way.

Beyond the MFA program and through more revisions of Silent Youth, I hope to illuminate further and represent the power of visual story-telling and language – how emotions, actions, desires, and betrayals can still be delivered without two characters able to speak the same language. Language is what binds them.
ACT III

Planeta Solitario: Dramatizing Autobiography

In honor of the three-act structure, let us start at the beginning with the inciting incident. In Screenplay, Field writes, “I've learned there are two or three times during a lifetime when something happens that alters the course of that life. We meet someone, go somewhere, or do something we've never done before, and those moments are the possibilities that guide us to where we're supposed to go and what we're supposed to do with our lives” (5). In the autobiography portion of this story, this where I rekindled an old friendship that quickly turned romantic. About six months after that, we decided to backpack through Southeast Asia – something neither of us had done before – and it altered the course of our lives. However, I must contest Field in that I do not believe that any such occurrences take us to where we are “supposed” to go or what we are “supposed” to do with our lives. Instead, I offer that these moments offer possibilities into what can be done, where and how.

I was encouraged by Moss and my cohort to have Planeta Solitario be my thesis play. At first, I was resistant as it is an autobiography. A memoir about an immensely impactful time of my life. The story manifested during one of Moss’ opening writing exercises. Like the other classes, it was a free-write. Afterward, we would share our musings. I read mine, and immediately after, Moss said, “That’s a play!” During the semester in that same class, I wrote the first draft of Planeta Solitario.

The first step in this process was to write down the “actual” events of the story, the autobiographical version, the first draft to get the characters and settings and tone on the page. As discussed earlier in this essay, I had developed techniques and approaches for
the first draft, and they paid off. There were barriers in trying to get all the facts while not trying to be too precious about it, but I was able to complete the draft.

The next step, as McDuffie likes to say, “autobiography is a pig to be butchered,” so it is my job to not be afraid to tear it apart in order to put it back together as something new. This story will always be a difficult challenge for me to step aside and remove myself from while allowing myself to go there emotionally. Through this play, I strive to evoke the emotion that was felt during the actual events and allow the audience to experience and examine their own emotions within the story and themselves. By putting it on paper for the stage, I have gained a new understanding and appreciation for this critical time in my life.

The blurb for this play is: Two lovers (Alicia and Pablo) trek through the familiar and unfamiliar territories of their relationship while seeking adventure in exotic lands, survival in high elevations, and air beneath water.

Like Silent Youth, this is a memory play. There are differences, though, in that this is a romantic memory play. Within that, it is a dual-memory play where I go through both character’s memories, perspectives, and desires. For writers, we are to play every single role we write, and having to do it with this content presented yet another challenge. I had to be subjective while being objective to the story and characters. Both, needed to be honored.

During the trip, Alicia gets pregnant, though she never outwardly confirms it until the climax of the story. Pablo has an idea she is, but never outwardly acknowledges it until the climax as well. They struggle to find a way to keep themselves and the relationship together, but as the story moves forward, they begin to feel it is doomed. The play is
written to feel very claustrophobic for the actors and audience. It is a two-hander, meaning, two characters, that’s it. Up to this point, I have never written a two-person play. On one hand, I only had to worry about two characters. On the other hand, I had to find multiple ways for them to interact with each other that felt stuffy, like they were in a bubble with no escape, while also portraying their love.

Dramatizing autobiography does not necessarily mean fictionalizing it. For this story, it does. I needed to acknowledge the facts but required a distancing from them to see the events in a new way, to find the story.

Through several drafts and workshop sessions, my instructors and cohort offered insight as to how I might tell this story. In earlier drafts, there were other characters in the story: Pablo’s Dad, Alicia’s Mother and Sister, and a Bartender, all to be played by different actors. It was recommended that, in order to fulfill the claustrophobic tone, the actors for Pablo and Alicia play these other roles. A multiplication of characters which is part of defamiliarization. This convention has offered a multitude of insights in finding how the characters are giving information to each other and the audience. It has also informed how I can get inside both of their heads, expose them, and express their vulnerabilities. This was yet another major step for me as this convention was deliberately and specifically written for the stage. It also establishes the form of the play which lends itself to meaning of the story.

The multiplication of characters is where one actor is to play multiple roles. However, this was cut, sort of. Dad, Mother, Sister, and Bartender all were cut from the story. It then manifested that Pablo and Alicia would play each other in certain scenes. Again, this provided new insight to their psyches. However, that was also cut. I felt the
story needed more. Through a Revisions class taught by Moss, he had me write scenes where the actors spoke to inanimate objects. Alicia spoke to her Backpack, and Pablo spoke to his Scooter. Backpack and Scooter are capitalized because they are not characters in the story. The actors will be Pablo and Alicia, while assuming the roles of other objects and animals.

In the program I had a class called, Breaking from Realism, which blew open my mind and eyes as to what can be done not only on the stage, but with story. Two key components that stuck out to me were defamiliarization and abstraction. Defamiliarization refers to taking a concept of something and blurring it in such a way that it can be viewed in another way. Let us take the talking Backpack as an example. The audience might question why this inanimate object is talking, but that is not what is important. What is important is what it is saying, and who is actually saying it. Alicia talks to this Backpack without questioning it. She hears what it has to say as it offers profound advice to her life. As the audience, we are to figure out that this is her subconscious manifested through something else. Inevitably, it is Alicia. This voice is within her and is projected onto something else. Pablo voices for the Backpack, as yet another way to show the claustrophobia in that she cannot rid herself of Pablo’s voice, and vice versa.

Through defamiliarization and multiplication, I was able to say what the characters were thinking without having them directly say it to each other which creates dramatic irony and tension for the audience and characters. It also offers a puzzle for others to piece together themselves.
As the writer, it created a necessary distance that allowed me to get inside the character’s heads and say what needed to be said without directly addressing each other until the most crucial moment where they eventually had to confront each other. If I had Alicia tell Pablo she was pregnant, then had Pablo tell her how much he wanted the child, then had her rebuttal they aren’t ready, eventually leading to their breakup, the story could be over in one page. By holding on to their secrets and showing people struggle with truth and self-investigation, it then turns into a drama, leading to the climax of the confrontation and taking the story to its end.

The characters assume roles of a Scooter, a Bodhisattva statue, a Backpack, and an Orangutan. They represent the claustrophobia and inner voices, thoughts, and actions of Alicia and Pablo. By having them play other characters or objects also lends insight into themselves and helps me find their personalities and desires. I found that Alicia is not ready for children. Instead, she wants to seek out her desires as an individual, either within a relationship or otherwise. She wants space, or at the very least, someone who is on her level in the point she is in her life. I learned that Pablo was lost, searching for meaning, and was ready to assign that meaning to whomever or whatever might come his way. He was not active in this regard, and the most crucial element I discovered is that he did not know himself. Pablo eventually learns this about himself, as well as Alicia discovering her own truths as well. These discoveries lead to a culmination of their eventual breakup. Sad, sad, sad.

This play does not take place in a single location, in fact it goes as far as scuba diving in the Gulf of Thailand to Mount Everest. Keeping what I was told, “let others worry about the staging and just write the story,” so that is what I did. What emerged, and through
another element in Breaking from Realism was abstraction. When we go into Alicia and Pablo’s memories, we go to a place called, The Magical Theatre Space. This is an empty space. Just the actors. They take us through their meeting at the restaurant, a phone call where they agree to go on the trip, and with four chairs side by side on stage, to a Thai Airport. The pieces are to be put together by the audience. There is no need for literal or realism, here. Some are memories, some represent a place they do not wish to be in physically, mentally, and emotionally, while others represent their ideas of “paradise.” Again, through this theatrical technique, I was able to create a distance not only for myself, but for the characters reliving this memory, and for the audience observing it.

The play begins in a Thai Airport (or The Magical Theatre Space) and ends in the same place. Here, they are not yet in their memories. Instead, they lead us to it and take us on their journey of the trip and their relationship, which finally brings us back to the airport where they are exhausted, somber, and heartbroken – hopefully so is the audience. A major source of inspiration for this play is Charlie Kaufman’s movie, Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind. This is also a story about memory where we go into Joel Barish’s (Jim Carrey) memory. The movie begins post memory, and ends in post memory, completing a circle, but then continues on to a new chapter from there. Planeta Solitario has a similar time tracking. It is episodic in nature. Any of the scenes can be shifted around and the same story would be told, at least the essence and emotion. Memories are scattered, one thing leading to the next in a mishmash array of vignettes. This is how Planeta Solitario functions.

The episodic nature of the play gave me the freedom to go through my own memories as they occurred in my retracing of my story and allowed me to write the same for Pablo
and Alicia. I am also reminded of the movie Inception, where a person is in a dream, but within it, fifty years pass. When the person awakes, only a couple of hours have gone by. Planeta Solitario is similar in that Pablo and Alicia are waiting for a flight, meanwhile, they relive the last year of their relationship, taking the audience with them. The memory ends, and they are back in the airport. To them, in real time, maybe only an hour or even few minutes have passed. To us and their memories, we go through an enormous amount of time.

Because it is episodic, the action still needs to move forward, each vignette pointing to the other. This is not only for episodic time stories, but for most stories. No matter the time sequence, the story must move forward. In Backwards and Forwards, David Ball offers his version of the “inciting incident” or “call to adventure” fractally. It happens throughout a story. He posits, “Dramatic stasis occurs when things would go on the same forever if something didn’t come along and happen. Dramatic intrusion is the thing that comes along and happens, setting free the irresistible forces that run a play from that point” (23). In my play, there is a major event that shakes their world, takes them out of the stasis of travel and their relationship, thrusting them into action.

ALICIA --Pablo, I want a -- will you -- I just need to make sure. Beat.

PABLO Oh, shit. Seriously? I mean, we’ve been careful and-- ALICIA --no we are not, and you know that. PABLO Shit.

(Gomez 15)

Pablo realizes Alicia is asking for a pregnancy test. This changes their stasis, his stasis, forcing the dramatic action to happen. Ball further explains, “A play is like a series of dominoes: one event triggers the next, and so on” (13). He also offers that once the
dominoes are down, only then can you go back and discover what piece had to fall to force the other into action. A memory play is similar. A rough draft is similar. Build the dominoes, knock them down, and discover how the action moved forward. This was yet another great approach to dramatizing autobiography in that I could not let myself get attached or stuck in the memories of the actual events. I had to discover what action would spring forth, knocking the next sequence into action, and so on.

The language, or diction, in the play is used through Spanglish, scuba diving signals, silence, and an exchange of monologues addressed to nobody in particular. The Spanglish gives character and backstory. They use New Mexican language to reflect where they are from. It is also used to show their personalities:

PABLO (fanning his tongue) WHOA! I will say though, they got some spicy ass chile out here A LA VEH! ALICIA Oh, don’t be such a wuss. If you can handle my Grandma’s chile, you can handle anything.

(Gomez 25)

In this small exchange, we are shown they have an established history. Pablo has eaten with Alicia’s family. They have a different dialect than traditional English which places them in a certain geography. Alicia seems to be able to handle the chile (New Mexican spelling) more than Pablo. These types of changes and uses of language continue throughout. It is important to me that this be established as this, again, is not a play about being Chicano, instead it is a story about Chicano’s in the world, experiencing it like everyone else, taking with them their culture.

Another language element is the scuba diving scene which is similar to that of Silent Youth, where they use hand signals to communicate. It is a beautiful moment that
does not need words, however, the scene happens twice within the play. It is used in the beginning through gestures and words spoken aloud to depict the actions, which establishes a story and convention that will be used later in the play. At the end, the scene happens, again, this time without words. The moment brings Pablo and Alicia together in their final memory of their journey before returning to present time in the airport. In the final scuba scene, the final words of the play are spoken by Alicia as she helps Pablo to the surface, “We’re okay. We’re okay. Look into my eyes” (Gomez 63).

The final language element are the monologue exchanges at the beginning of the play where Pablo and Alicia try to outdo each other through their own fantastical places they would like to live in. They are both avoiding the inevitable end to their relationship, the end of their journey and their memory of it. Through these monologues, they address each other and the audience without ever making it blatant or an acknowledged interaction, it just happens – much like the Magical Theatre Space. This allowed me to discover the character’s desires, their happy place, their escape, their uniqueness, but also their shared interests and passions. Essentially, it is a relationship. Perhaps that is why several times I reference the movie Little Monsters. Growing up watching that movie, it seemed magical and like anything was possible without worrying about the mundane, and real-life problems. The monologues, along with Pablo and Alicia, are my happy places, too.

Finally, in dramatizing autobiography, especially with such a heavy story, I had to find the fun it. The Scooter, the Bodhisattva, the Orangutan, and Backpack all provided levity while dropping some heavy knowledge and reality to the characters. I was able to make these things quirky, absurd, and poignant without question. It allowed me to relive
a complicated time of my life through a fun, exciting, and profound way. I gained new insights to the relationship, and most importantly, myself.

Throughout my journey in this program, I have acquired a multitude of tools for writing and teaching story. I have learned conventions in writing for the stage and screen. Through story, neither are separate and both can offer value to the other. I entered the program as a screenwriter and am leaving as one with a new arsenal to attack my stories with. I am also leaving the program and proud to now call myself… a playwright.

Planeta Solitario has changed my life. It has changed my relationship to my personal story of the actual events. It has opened my eyes to the possibility of theatre, screenwriting, and story. Mostly, it has opened the possibilities of me.
Conclusion

Through the production process I have gained several new insights into the story and how it is interpreted to others. The Director, actors, lighting, sound, costumes, set design, and myself all collaborated toward bringing the story to life through a collective vision. I learned most from the Director, Dan Rogers, and two actors, Russell Casados II, and Anelisa Montoya. Roger’s vision for the story is a combination of minimalist, abstraction, and realism. Through the story, we are to feel their claustrophobia, a result of their traveling. In order to support this, Rogers had set design create a twelve-by-twelve platform for the actors when they are in the “real” spaces of their respective hostels. Within the theatre, this platform provided a narrative in that this is their space, it is non-negotiable and unmistakable they have no escape, no space to themselves. I am happy to say this was conveyed, beautifully. The actors felt it, I felt it, and so did the audience.

There are two aspects to the play that piqued my curiosity: scuba diving and Mount Everest. Rogers idea for the scuba diving was two-fold, one scene where they speak aloud and perform hand gestures, and the final scene where they have goggles with lights in them, their backpacks are to express a scuba tank, and they do not speak until the last three lines of the play. I found this to be incredibly affective as the first scene would introduce the convention to the audience, the final scene was the payoff. The actors executed it beautifully and evoked the emotion I had hoped for. Their slow-moving gestures and heaving breathing put us in the water with them.

Before our first rehearsal, I had a phone conversation with Rogers about his ideas for Mount Everest, he simply said, “a white sheet.” My reaction was one of confusion and wonderment as to how this would work. He had a giant white fabric
hanging from the theater catwalk and draped over the furniture in the hostel from the scene before. The total transition took no more than a minute, and once it was being hoisted up, it became a powerful image not only depicting mountain peaks, but as a metaphor for their relationship. With lighting on the fabric, it proved to be a wonderful execution of place and emotion. When the final scuba scene ends, and just before we get to the final airport scene, the cloth falls behind them as do their memories, placing them in present time. We feel what the characters feel. A sense of memory fading away into the present and unknown. Their relationship was over, along with the memories. The fabric falling behind hit me emotionally as that part of my life was over, a parallel to my entire process in the three years of this program. It was magnificent and simple.

Yet another brilliant choice from Rogers was for The Magical Theatre Space, opening monologue exchanges, scuba, and inanimate objects scenes, where he gave handheld microphones to the actors. This immediately tells us that there is a break from realism. It is unconventional and takes us to a magical space, a flashback within their memories, and is playful. The convention is introduced immediately and accurately conveys they are not in real time or a space of realism. The actor’s voices coming through the speaker system in theatre offered the echo of memory, performance, and boldness for emotion. Tracking the microphones through rehearsal was the difficult part, but the actors pulled it fantastically.

Finally, I needed a way to convey this is a memory play without blatantly saying it, so starting and finishing it at the airport was the best way to show this. To emphasize the characters sitting in silence before their flight, we had them sitting in their chairs just before the house opened. The audience would enter the theater and the play had already
begun. An important element of this claustrophobia is to never have the actors leave the stage throughout the entire play, especially I did not want them walking in at the beginning. Instead, I wanted to convey this story had already started long before people sit down to see it. In this last scene, there is a Thai airport sound cue alerting them their flight to Los Angeles is boarding. They do not look at each other, they somberly grab their backpacks and walk off the stage. It was yet another emotional moment to finally see them leave the space in which they just lived and re-lived their experiences and joined them for the journey.

The biggest and most powerful experience I am taking away from this production is the family that was created in our rehearsal room. There were only seven of us through the five weeks of rehearsal, but it was an open, honest, collaborative, and fun environment between all of us. We learned from each other and taught each other a great deal, not just about theatre, but life. We bonded professionally and personally for which I will be forever grateful.

This moment has been bittersweet. The sweet is the final product and the friendships that have been forged. The bitter, it will be, soon. Onto the next project for all of us. However, we can take this experience with us for the rest of our lives. I know I will. My writing is better because of these people. I have grown as an artist. And, now I feel a part of the theatre community and I am excited for what is to come next. To everyone in that rehearsal room, thank you. You gave life to my words.
Works Cited


Appendix

Planeta Solitario

by

Diego Miguel Gomez
Diego Miguel Gomez
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Alicia (Ah-lee-see-uh) - mid-late20s. New Mexican Chicana. Stoic but playful. Deliberate thinker. Adventure seeker.

Double dashes(--) indicate an interruption.

Lines with little to no punctuation are meant to be anxious rants.

Because of travel, the characters wear the same clothes often.

Pablo doesn’t use product in his hair, it’s pretty unkempt, getting long, beard is scruffy if not full on.

Alicia RARELY wears makeup, if ever. Her hair should be done in whatever fashion the actor feels is best: up, pony tail, shaved, pig tails -- either way, no hair product, no curling, just a basic comb through, if even that. Also, she should have a couple of yarn thread braids.

They try their best to not look like vagrants, but they’re traveling! A LOT. Make them rugged.

Also, they wear little trinket necklaces and a collection of colorful “traveler” bracelets, it’s a thing.

They carry a couple of New Mexico Zia symbol bandanas/handkerchiefs, either around their necks, back pockets, or ESPECIALLY in Thailand and Malaysia, they should use them to wipe the sweat from their faces and necks, and constantly SWATTING MOSQUITOS like a cow’s tail.

Throughout the play they travel through Southeast Asia, but none of these places have to be literal, aside from Mount Everest. They can be in the real world or in THE MAGICAL THEATER SPACE.
A MAGICAL THEATER SPACE in a Thai Airport. Alicia and Pablo wait... and wait... and wait... for their flight.

ALICIA
What is this? What is anything? Why is it all so distorted? Just once, just one time I'd like to be in a place where everything is equal. Where women aren't women and men aren't men, we'd all just be human without the pressures of being human. I want to move through the world as though invisible.

PABLO
How'd I get here? What's the point of any of this? Why is it all so... smashed? Everything feels finite. I want inFINITE. I want to be in a place where I could stay young forever! Where I'm as quick as a mongoose and flexible as a... I don't know... downward dog. I want a place where we could all be equal and free to be ourselves without judgment or pressure from anyone else. Maybe I've already lived it and that's as good as anything will ever be.

ALICIA
Maybe there's a place where simply existing is enough. I'd build a place where people are kind to each other. A place where candy falls from the sky, all day, every day. And, animals would run around everywhere, playing and loving each other, and they wouldn't eat humans and we wouldn't eat them. Maybe erasing foresight would be a healthy thing. Just experience the NOW, not worry about the past or future. My family could be in this place, and whenever I wish... POOF! I could turn them off.

PABLO
I want a place where my friends and family could all be happy and free and at peace... but when they'd piss me off, POOF! I could turn them off at any time.

ALICIA
I'd want a time-warp where I could go back to childhood and the happy times in life. Childhood was much simpler, I think? It would be a place where everyone and everything can speak in their own languages, but somehow, we'd understand each other.

PABLO
I wonder about a place where I could jump off a bridge and just before hitting the ground I'd feel that feeling of wanting to live, and then I'd hit it, and I'd get up, dust myself off and live with that euphoria. Maybe the clouds would be nugs of the kindest herb and the scent would never go away and it would be oh so glorious. A brick from any building would be the most delicious chocolate ever. Maybe, a place where I could be hard core buzzed all day. Oh! And, no getting all bloaty, and NO hangovers!

ALICIA
I'd LOVE a beer right now, a waterfall of my favorite beer, a
never ending tap. It would be great to be in a place where I could not be sober, but also not get all bloaty while not being sober. Oh! And, NO hangovers. And, I could eat anything in the world I want with the snap of my fingers while lying in a hammock with a bright blue ocean on one side, and it's waves crashing against the New Mexico mountains on the other side.

PABLO
Maybe I could surf in the bluest oceans that are fed by the crystal clearest rivers of New Mexico where I could fish all day with the most beautiful trout in the world and they wouldn't even get hurt. In fact, they'd want to be caught to see our world, and we'd become friends.

PABLO
All I'd really want in this place is...

ALICIA
Would Pablo be there? In this place?

PABLO
...Alicia.

ALICIA
Yeah. I think so. He's always going to be there, just not sure in what capacity.

PABLO
We could have forever. We'd stay in our best moments and never have the bad.

ALICIA
But, in this place, I wouldn't have to decide. He'd be there, and I'd be there, and we'd be there, just existing.

PABLO
I could be a better person in this place and not be afraid to make mistakes, because they wouldn't exist. I'd be a better version of me.

ALICIA
It would be so cool if I could travel the way they do in that movie "Little Monsters" where in a matter of seconds I could run through their world which is beneath our world and from one block to the other poof! I'm in Peru! Another block, poof! I'm in Scotland. Another block, POOF! I could be back home, in New Mexico.

PABLO
There would definitely be a place where I could play baseball in any house I'd want wherever I'd want, full teams, and we'd destroy everything in it just like in that movie "Little Monsters!"

ALICIA
I'd like to be in a place that feels like an escape, but also
feels like home.

PABLO
I want to be in a place where I can hide, but also be seen.

ALICIA AND PABLO
I want to be in a place where I feel love everywhere. I want to be in a place where I wouldn't feel alone, anymore.

ALICIA
But, that's not where I am.

PABLO
I am not in that place.

ALICIA
I'm here.

PABLO
I'm here.

THE MAGICAL THEATER SPACE in a Thai Airport turns into an ocean where Pablo and Alicia are scuba diving. We are now in their memories.

It's beautiful down here. Tons of colorful fish and coral reefs. The water is a beautifully crisp blue.

They have to use hand signals and body language to communicate, in this scene, they will speak along with their hand signals.

They're still descending down the anchor ROPE, Alicia is ahead of Pablo already seeing the ocean life. He keeps turning his head side to side, opening his mouth, and thumping his chest, he's having difficulty clearing his ears.

Alicia is buoyant and looking around. She sees something!

ALICIA
(points)
Look!

She points! She looks up to Pablo and points beneath her. Then she does a...

ALICIA
("big" sign)
She's beautiful!
There's a baby!

You okay?

PABLO

Okay.

She turns back and starts to move toward the giant Whale Shark with her pup.

She turns back to check on Pablo. He's really struggling, now.

She swims up to him. They're eye to eye.

ALICIA

You sure?

PABLO

I'm not okay.

My ears aren't clearing.

She places her hand on his chest, and grabs his hand putting it onto hers.

ALICIA

Look into my eyes.

Breathe.

Slow.

In........ Out.

ALICIA

In...... Out. In..... Out.

PABLO

In...... Out. In..... Out.
PABLO

("okay" sign while nodding his head)
Okay.

ALICIA

("okay" sign)
Okay.

("up" sign)
We're going up.

PABLO

("okay" and "up" sign)
Okay. Up.

ALICIA

("slow" sign)
Slowly.

He nods his head yes.

Their eyes never leave one another, and their hands on each other's hearts, never stop.

...
KO TAO, THAILAND. NIGHT.

A tropical rainstorm smashes into the tiny island.

Lightning strikes! Thunder CRASHES!

LIGHTS UP ON:

Pablo, in a one-room bamboo hut, soaking wet and shivering in his boxers, rings out his soaked clothes.

The curved walls in the room are barren, aside from a couple stock posters of exotic birds and random islands. There's an oscillating fan in the upper corner of the room, blowing air from side to side. A small window shows the beating down of rain and violently swaying plants and trees outside.

A couple plastic bottled waters and a small plastic bag sit on top of a night stand next to the bed. The bed is surrounded by a bug net, draped around it.

Two 80 LITER BACKPACKS lean against the wall next to a potted tropical plant. Rolled up clothes and books and other travel supplies are scattered about the room.

Pablo scavenges for dry, warm clothing. One by one he finds them, and quickly throws them on trying to warm up.

Lightning strikes! Thunder CRASHES!

He hangs the wet clothes over anything he can find, a chair, the bed post, a door hook. He moves about the room trying to get settled.

He finds a book, Lonely Planet: Thailand, and flips through it while pacing the room.

Alicia, in the bathroom, on her knees over a toilet...

...simultaneously thunder CRASHES while Alicia throws up.

Pablo turns his head toward the
bathroom -- did he hear that?

He grabs the plastic bag off the night stand, sits on the bed, and digs into it. He pulls out a chicken skewer and a container of peanut sauce. He dips, he eats.

Pablo stops, mid-bite, and looks toward the closed bathroom door.

Toilet flushes, faucet runs...

PABLO
You doing okay in there--

--Alicia bolts through the door.

She runs over to the fan in relief and follows the air, breathing it in. She tries her best to hide her sickness throughout the scene.

PABLO
That good, huh.

ALICIA
I just need to cool off. I'm feeling a little light-headed.

PABLO
Uh oh. Can I get you anything--

ALICIA
--God that was amazing wasn't it?!

PABLO
Hell yeah! Wait. Which part? What're you talking about is this another trap?

ALICIA
Trap? I don't do that... wait. Do I?

PABLO
Eeeeee I'm not saying nothing about nada.

ALICIA
That's what I thought.

PABLO
Oh, I know better.

ALICIA
Have we really become one of those couples? You know, our identities are this relationship... like eating the same things and wearing each other's things and finishing--

ALICIA AND PABLO
Each others sentences.
ALICIA

Rolls her eyes.

We can't already be at this stage! We still have like, FIFTY years, or something--

PABLO

--FIFTY?!

ALICIA

I mean...

PABLO

I was thinking more like, an eternity.

ALICIA

That's my point!

Dramatically placing back of hand on forehead (Delsarte).

We're too young to die so early!

PABLO

Rolls his eyes. We're not dying--I mean, we are, every millisecond of every day since we were yanked out of the safety and comfort of our RESPECTIVE mother's, but, think of it as every day we're growing together, not dying.

ALICIA

I don't know if it's your sweet talk or the fact I never fully understand what you're saying.

PABLO

It's the sweet talk. I am, ROMÁNTIO.

ALICIA

You're, ROMÁNTIloco.

PABLO

That doesn't make sense.

ALICIA

Now, you know how I feel.

PABLO

Rolls his eyes.

ALICIA

Rolls her eyes.

PABLO

ANYway. What was going on in there? You feeling alright because I thought I heard--

ALICIA

--please tell me you saw the whale shark with her little baby before I had to go back for you--
PABLO
--hell yeah I did! But, I don't think they're called babies?

ALICIA
What would you call them, then?

PABLO
I think they're called pups.

ALICIA
Oh! Look at you, Seor Bill Nye the Science Guy.

PABLO
Actually, I would be Jaques Cousteau.

ALICIA
Get out. Just get the fuck out.

PABLO
What? I've been reading. And, not just the sports sections, thank you.

Lightning strikes! Thunder CRASHES!
Whale Shark Pups, though...

She attacks him on the bed and wrestles and tickles him while he holds onto his food...

ALICIA
You think you're so smart, don't you?!

Suddenly she stops and slaps her hand onto her mouth.

Pause.

PABLO
(shielding his face)
Oh! You alright?

A moment goes by while she calmly lets it pass.

ALICIA
I'm not sure. Maybe I... swallowed too much salt water today, or something.

PABLO
You did do most of the work getting us out of there.

ALICIA
I just did what I had to, we needed to get back to the surface.
PABLO
Sorry I couldn't handle the pressure.

ALICIA
You and I both know you're good under pressure.

PABLO
Well. When the going gets tough, the tough gets Pablo!

ALICIA
I think you might've lost too much oxygen in that "brain" of yours.

PABLO
Thanks to you, this "brain" of mine, is still functioning, for the most part.

Rubs his temples.

Beat.
It was intense down there, today. It felt like a vice grip was squeezing the inside of my face and like my ear drums were going to burst at any moment.

Beat.
Sorry I ruined everything.

ALICIA
The conditions were perfect. The visibility was super clear. And, the instructors said we'd see tons of fish and coral and turtles and sting rays and--

PABLO
--okay okay!
You didn't have to come back for me, you know. I would've made it eventually--

ALICIA
--it's fine! We saw some ocean life for a bit, AND we did get to see a Whale Shark with her... PUP. I'm just bummed it was our last dive. But, we made it out safe, and that's what matters. You scared me a little bit.

PABLO
You were my knight in rubbery armor.

ALICIA
Oh, stop.

PABLO
As soon as I looked into your eyes, I knew I'd be okay.

ALICIA
Just, take it slower next time. Pace yourself.

PABLO
I was rushing because I wanted to experience it with you.
ALICIA
You were. You are. That's what we're doing here, right.

PABLO
Yeah. Me and you...

ALICIA
...you and me.

They stare into each other’s eyes, leaning in for a kiss when--

--suddenly she slaps her hand to her mouth and runs to the bathroom!

PABLO
Oh shit, dude!

Lightning strikes! Thunder CRASHES! Alicia throws up.

ALICIA
(spitting vomit)
I'm good!

(to herself)
All good.

PABLO
Okay!

(to himself)
I don't believe you, but...

(to her)
Okay!

Alicia sits on the floor, leaning against the toilet hugging her knees.

He bags up the food. Then, stirs about the room, rummaging through his stuff. He finds a soda and goes to the bathroom door, and knocks.

PABLO
Hey. Here's a ginger ale. My abuela used to tell me it settles the stomach.

ALICIA
Thanks. Just leave it by the door.

PABLO
Okay. Do you need anything else?
ALICIA
Pablo, I'm fine.

PABLO
Okay okay. I'll just uh, look through the Lonely Planet some more and see what we might want to do tomorrow.

He grabs the book and flips through it while pacing the room.

PABLO
(to himself)
Why is it called the Lonely Planet, anyway?
Hm.

(to Alicia)
I hope it wasn't the scooter ride, again. I tried but it was such a windy road!

Beat.
You still want to go to Everest, right?

ALICIA
Jesus, Pablo. I don't know. I can't even think about that right now.

PABLO
Oh. My bad!

The door cracks open. Pablo takes his eyes from the book and looks to the bathroom.

ALICIA
Will you come here?

He does.

PABLO
What's up?

ALICIA
(hates to ask)
I need you to get something.

PABLO
Okay. What do you need?

... 

ALICIA

What?

PABLO

ALICIA
I need you to, go out... and get something.

PABLO

Like, out out?

ALICIA

Yeah.

PABLO

In this shit storm?

ALICIA

I'm sorry.

PABLO

You want me to go out and get you something? In this?

ALICIA

I know. I hate asking, but, fuck -- it might help, okay?

PABLO

Alicia, what's going on?

ALICIA

I don't know. I'm not sure.

... I need you to do this. Please.

PABLO

I know running to the toilet every five minutes isn't the most exciting thing, but it passes. You know this.

He goes to his bag and digs into it. Here. You know these usually stop the... stomach stuff, and drink this soda, maybe take a shower or something. And, try to chill out.

ALICIA

Chill out? Oh, I've been trying to chill out for over a week, now. I didn't want you to worry.

PABLO

Yeah, but, now I am worried. Let's just sleep on it. I really don't want to go back out in this--

--Alicia runs to the toilet and pukes.

He goes to her and pulls her hair out of her face, and rubs her back.

PABLO

You want some crackers or, I'm not really sure what to do, here--

ALICIA

--Pablo, I want a -- will you -- I just need to make sure.
Beat.

PABLO
Oh, shit. Seriously? I mean, we've been careful and--

ALICIA
--no we are not, and you know that.

PABLO
Shit.

ALICIA
Pablo! Just. Now you know, okay. I know it's probably just traveler's tummy or something, but... you know I wouldn't ask, otherwise. This, just feels different.

PABLO
Okay. But, not like going out right now is going to solve anything. It is what it is if it is.

ALICIA
You're not the one going through this shit!

A terribly anxious beat.

PABLO
You're right. I'm sorry. I'll go.

ALICIA
Thank you.

PABLO
It'll be okay. I'll be back.

ALICIA
Okay.

She closes the door unaware of him reaching out for her. She leans her hands and forehead against her side of the door, as does he on his side. Together, they're alone.

Pablo grabs his gear and opens the door.

PABLO
Shit. Where the hell am I even supposed to go?

He goes off into the stormy madness.

Alicia sits against the door, curled into a ball holding herself.

Lightning strikes and thunder CRASHES!
THE MAGICAL THEATER SPACE that will eventually fade into a CHINESE HOSTEL.

Slightly younger Pablo runs around waiting tables. It's a bar and grill, so, casual attire, is fine: jeans, shorts, T-shirt, whatever. A white bar towel hangs from his back pocket. He's balancing an empty tray or holding a server's book or both, whichever's easier to locate and whatever the director feels is best.

Slightly younger Alicia -- in shorts or summer dress -- sneaks in and sits at an open spot. Pablo, oblivious, rushes by her.

ALICIA

Excuse me sir!

He stops dead in his tracks and slowly turns, balancing the tray.

PABLO

Whoa! What the fuuuuuuck?

ALICIA

Nice to see you, too.

PABLO

I'll say.

ALICIA

I've been here for like, ten minutes, watching you run around.

PABLO

Watching me?

ALICIA

Yeah. It's pretty entertaining.

PABLO

In a good or bad way--

ALICIA

--It's a compliment.

PABLO

O-kay. What the heck you doing here?

ALICIA

My family still lives here. You know that. What? Am I not allowed?

PABLO
You know what I mean.

ALICIA

Good! So how's your summer?

PABLO

Okay.

ALICIA

Have any plans?

PABLO

You're looking at it.

ALICIA

You still playing sports?

PABLO

Not as much as I used to.

ALICIA

That good or bad?

PABLO

Not sure.

ALICIA

How's your family?

PABLO

Good?

ALICIA

You like it here?

PABLO

Santa Fe?

Sure.

ALICIA

It's whatever.

PABLO

That's sad.

ALICIA

Why?

PABLO

You happy here?

ALICIA

The restaurant?
Sure.

It's okay.

Any kids?

No?

Married?

Haha. No--

--girlfriend?

Uh. No.

Pause.

Wait, did I pass? What's the score here?

ALICIA

You're a funny fellow.

PABLO

Fellow?

ALICIA


PABLO

Oh. What about you? How's life? Where were you what's new how long has it been why are you here alone... gal?

ALICIA

Gal?

PABLO

Yeah. Female. Girl. Dudette... vat--a. You know, gal.

ALICIA

How long have you worked here?

PABLO

Guess I'm not getting any answers.

ALICIA

Maybe just not the answers you're looking for.

PABLO

You always did dodge the questions.
ALICIA
You always did want a lot of answers.

Beat.

PABLO
Some things never change.

ALICIA
And, maybe some things do.

PABLO
I'm gonna get back to work.

He turns to walk away--

ALICIA
--I'm here for the summer!

He turns back to her and crash! The trey hits the ground.

PABLO
--Oh shit. Sorry sorry! Did it hit you?

She leans over to grab it.

PABLO
No no! I got it I got it.

He can't help but stop, and look at her legs.

PABLO
Nice... bipedal limbs.

Pause.

ALICIA
What? Seriously, that's your line?

PABLO
Anthropology class.

ALICIA
I guess it's a compliment--

PABLO
--It's a compliment.

ALICIA
Well then, thank you? I've been doing a lot of hiking for the past couple months. They're pretty solid. Here, feel.

PABLO
Uhhh. What?
ALICIA

Feel my legs.

...

Feel 'em!!

He nervously and very quickly pokes her leg with his pointer finger.

Oh. Yeah. Not bad.

ALICIA

You're blushing.

PABLO

What?! Impossible! Brown boys can't blush.

ALICIA

You sure about that?

PABLO

Would you like a drink or something?

ALICIA

Draft. Light. Local.

PABLO

Okay. No problem. I'll be back with your beer, gal.

ALICIA

Okay, fellow.

He turns to walk away--

ALICIA

--about my bipedal limbs.

He quickly turns around almost dropping everything, again.

PABLO

Sorry. That was stupid, I shouldn't have said that it was a stupid thing to say--

ALICIA

--would you like to take a walk with them, sometime?

PABLO

Yeah. Sure. But, if we did, then, that would make us a quadruped.

ALICIA

Depends on our position--

LIGHTS SLOWLY FADE UP, illuminating a CHINESE HOSTEL.
Oh, it's on. But, Pablo is still nervous as shit and unsure what to do--

ALICIA

--so it's a date, then!

They slowly start to make their way toward each other, meeting halfway on the bed.

PABLO

A date?

ALICIA

Yeah? You said we should hangout sometime.

PABLO


ALICIA

I can't wait.

He launches his tray and bar towel. They curl into each other, and fall in love all over again.

He jumps off her and runs to his backpack.

PABLO

Shit.

ALICIA

Like it's ever stopped us before.

They look at each other for a moment. ALICIA AND PABLO

Fuck it.

He runs back to the bed and jumps on top of her.

LIGHTS FADE.
TONSAI, THAILAND. A BEACH-SIDE FOOD MARKET.
Alicia and Pablo are sitting under the eminent glow of a full moon that peaks through the giant palm trees above them.

The sky transitions from blue to black.

PABLO
Daammmn this is the shit!

ALICIA
Best we've had so far!

PABLO
How do they do it?

ALICIA
They invented it.

PABLO
Órale.

ALICIA
Óraleh-xactly.

PABLO
Whatever. Point being, this is the ultimate, absolute best Pad Thai on the planet! We could have this back home, but not like this.

ALICIA
Everything is so fresh. The shrimp was like, just caught a couple minutes ago.

She feeds him.

PABLO
The sprouts are crunchy, the carrots are sweet, the noodles are PERFECT.

He feeds her. She gazes at him.

ALICIA
The atmosphere is pretty nice, too.

PABLO
It sure is. Such a pretty night.

ALICIA
We're so far away, but, back home, they see the same moon we do, except, it's freezing ass winter there!

PABLO
Ha! Suckers.
ALICIA
I never thought I'd be here. I love New Mexico, but it's all I've ever known. I thought I'd be there forever.

PABLO
Right! I never knew places could have so much color! Back home, it's puro brown everywhere! The buildings.

The land.

ALICIA
The people.

PABLO
The men...

ALICIA
Yup.

PABLO
He looks at her like, "wait what?"

ALICIA
It's so colorful here. So lush. So, alive! God, I forgot how much I miss being near the water.

PABLO
And, I am loving this humidity. I can breathe!!

He takes in a giant whiff of the thick, humid air.

ALICIA
Right.

They breathe together, in and out, in... and out.

PABLO
(fanning his tongue)
WHOA! I will say though, they got some spicy ass chile out here A LA VEH!

ALICIA
Oh, don't be such a wuss. If you can handle my Grandma's chile, you can handle anything.

PABLO
Yeah but that's different!

ALICIA
How?

PABLO
Back home we have margaritas to put out the fire.
ALICIA
Here, we can pluck the sweetest mangos and papayas and coconuts from anywhere you look. This place is a giant juice bar.

PABLO
You're a giant juice bar--

ALICIA
...

PABLO
...

ALICIA
You're so... sweet.

PABLO

Still?

ALICIA
Yeah. I--

PABLO
Drank most of the bottle.

ALICIA
Drank most of the bottle. I know. I remember.

PABLO
It was a pretty glorious night, though, nuh. Well worth it, for me anyway. Didn't you enjoy it?

ALICIA
You mean... drinking rum surrounded by a droopy-ass mosquito net in a bamboo hut that had monkeys playing chase on the roof all night?

PABLO
Owe--Me duele la cabeza.

ALICIA
You've been hungover a lot, lately.

PABLO
You're always so quick to point that out.

ALICIA
I'm not the one all "Me duele la cabeza" all the time. You said things are changing since we've been out here.

PABLO
Things will be different. I'm not going back to that party life. I'm going back for a purpose, you know. Like, something bigger.
ALICIA
Like what?

PABLO
I don't know. Something will come my way. And, when it does, I'll take care of it, then.

ALICIA
It's just, you have so much to offer and, I--

ALICIA
Just don't want to see you squander it.

PABLO
Just don't want to see me squander it. I know. Not like you're perfect.

ALICIA
Perfect?! Nobody ever said anything about being perfect. Partying and all that was fine in college, but I'm making changes, Pablo. That's a huge part of this trip. And, it would be nice to see you do the same.

PABLO
But, every day is a vacation. We're on "holiday!"

ALICIA
Not really, dude! This is a lot of work. Lugging our shit around from place to place almost every day. Finding new hostels, different towns, different cultures. Other backpackers. Putting up with you.

PABLO
Ha! That's the easy part of your day, don't lie.

ALICIA
Rolls her eyes. Why were you drinking so much last night, anyway?

PABLO
Special occasion.

ALICIA
What special occasion?

PABLO
We made it to another island! I'm here. You're here. We're here. The best mother fucking Pad Thai is here! It's great, here!

ALICIA
So, you're going to celebrate every single time we go to a new location?

PABLO
I haven't really thought of that yet, but that is a CHING idea!
ALICIA
Ay-ay-ay. What am I gonna do with you?
Just, take it easy, alright. I like you when you're you.

PABLO
Come here.

He leans over and pulls Alicia into him and smashes a smooch right into her cheek.

PABLO
Show me the way to love you.

You already know how.

ALICIA
Sometimes I get lost.

And, I'll always be here to pull you back.

Smoochfest!

... 

... 

... 

... 

... 

... 

... 

They stop kissing and grab their respective chopsticks and get back to their dinner under the full moon piercing through the palm trees.

ALICIA
You know what they should call this place?

PABLO
What?

ALICIA
To Thai For...

They stare at each other for while trying to keep a straight face. Then,
they laugh? Is it too dumb to even go there?

Pablo lovingly feeds her from his plate. They stare into each other’s eyes. A whole world away, there they are together.
KO TAO, THAILAND or THE MAGICAL THEATER SPACE.

We're in the same thunderstorm from the first scene. Pablo is on a scooter, navigating the slippery streets. His Scooter, aka Alicia, might want to use a Sorority Valley Girl Sex Bunny voice, or something.

PABLO
Shit shit shit! Everything is closed. I have to do this for her. I have to.
It's okay. Don't panic. It'll be alright. Just keep going.
WHOA! That was close!

ALICIA AS SCOOTER
Hey pump the breaks, dude!

PABLO
What? Who said that?

ALICIA AS SCOOTER
Down here.

PABLO
Uhh. What?

ALICIA AS SCOOTER
Keep your eyes on the road!

PABLO
Okay okay!

ALICIA AS SCOOTER
We wouldn't be out here if it wasn't for what's between your legs, and I'm NOT talking about me!

PABLO
Oh. Yeah I don't want to talk about that.

ALICIA AS SCOOTER
Good. This is boring. Let's get out of here!

PABLO
NO! Damnit! I shouldn't be thinking about that right now. This is some serious, shit and I'm afraid that she is preg---

PABLO
Look out!

ALICIA AS SCOOTER
Look out!

ALICIA AS SCOOTER
Let's just ditch her. How much money do you have on you right now? Because, we could just like, keep driving.

PABLO
I mean, I did... fill you up, earlier. NO! STOP IT! YOU IDIOT! FOCUS!

ALICIA AS SCOOTER
You need to change gears man and I don't mean that literally. Do you really want to be stuck with her? Because, if you do, you'll never get to ride me or my friends ever, again!

PABLO
Shit. This is really happening.

ALICIA AS SCOOTER
This might not be happening.

PABLO
It's not just another false alarm.

ALICIA AS SCOOTER
It might be a false alarm, dude.

PABLO
But, what if it's not?

ALICIA AS SCOOTER
Then it is what it is if it is.

PABLO
Well, then I'll have to be ready.

ALICIA AS SCOOTER
I mean, she loves you, which makes me "ukh," but, what if she's not ready?

PABLO
We can do anything, together.

ALICIA AS SCOOTER
But, she feels alone.

PABLO
Maybe this is a great thing!

ALICIA AS SCOOTER
You guys really fucked up this time.

PABLO
No! We can do this! We're ready. I'm going to tell her when I get back!

ALICIA AS SCOOTER
Whoa! Stop! Uhk. I can't believe I'm going to say this because you really rev my engine, but if things are going good, WHATeverrrr. But, if they're not, and IF she is... and if you guys decide not to... you can't ever tell her how much you want this. You can't do that to her. That's a burden you cannot and should not ever put on her or anyone else. I know. I've been left on the side of the road plenty, and it hurts.
PABLO
(consoling the Scooter)
Aw.
Okay. I get it. Thanks. You really... SPOKE the truth, there.

ALICIA AS SCOOTER
Oh my God you are such a loser.
Okay. Like, dale gas so we can get the hell out of this rain
and you can go back to your precious little girlfriend.

He twists the throttle and they pull away.
PENANG, MALAYSIA. STREET MARKET.

Pablo and Alicia walking around a bustling market. The air is thick and hot. They continuously wipe the sweat from their faces and swat mosquitos with their bandanas.

PABLO
Doesn't it feel good to be out and about?

ALICIA
We should've stayed where we were.

PABLO
But, it was so expensive.

ALICIA
I just could've used some alone time.

PABLO
You should've told me.

ALICIA
I did.

PABLO
But, this hostel is so cool! It's an old theater.

ALICIA
I don't care, right now! We can't even find the fucking place!

Beat.

I'm sorry. It's... I'm still not feeling well and that took a lot out of me--

PABLO
--I know I know. But, you've been cooped up for days.

Beat.

It's gotta be right around this corner.

She's getting really annoyed.

Hey. What if it was positive?

ALICIA
Are you still even attracted to me?

PABLO
Of course I am!

ALICIA
Then, why haven't we made love since China?!

PABLO
I don't know. I thought you weren't feeling well.
ALICIA
That's just been this week. I mean, before that. Like, you would barely even touch me.

PABLO
It's... I don't know. Sometimes I guess it's kind of difficult having that desire for you all the time.

ALICIA
Oh! Because you're Mr. Desirable all the time.

PABLO
I'm not saying that. It's a little suffocating and you know that.

ALICIA
Doesn't mean I want you any less.

PABLO
Doesn't mean I want you any less, either.

PABLO
You still haven't answered my question. What if it was positive? Then what?

ALICIA
It wasn't.

PABLO
That's not the question.

ALICIA
A ton of things went through my head, okay! We've been fighting a lot, lately and I do feel like I've lost my own identity a little. What's waiting for us when we get home? What're we gonna do?

PABLO
We're not home. We're here. In this fantastic place where I can breathe and there's fruit on every tree and mosquitos eating the fuck out of me EVERY SECOND OF EVERY DAY!

ALICIA
We're so far away from everything, but everything is still right here.

PABLO
Yeah. And, I'm okay with that. Some things change, Alicia. People change.

ALICIA
Some don't.

PABLO
What's that supposed to mean?
ALICIA
Where the fuck is this place?!  

PABLO
Guess when the going gets tough, the tough gets Pablo, and Alicia gives up.

ALICIA
You have no idea what you're talking about.

PABLO
I guess some things don't change.

ALICIA
Fuck you, Pablo.

Beat.

PABLO
Look. We're stressed. We're tired. Do you just want to stay at this place?

ALICIA
Yes. Please.

PABLO
Okay. How about I meet you tomorrow, night?

ALICIA
Really?

PABLO
Yeah. You need some space. And, some good sleep without my snoring for once.

ALICIA
Heh. You sure?

PABLO
Yeah. Tomorrow night, it's a date.

She's taken aback by this. But, is relieved to finally get some alone time, but knows he's hiding his hurt. She kisses him on the cheek, it's sweet but sad, and they go their separate ways.

LIGHTS DIM.
A BUDDHIST TEMPLE or THE MAGICAL THEATER SPACE.

Alicia is a Bodhisattva statue sitting in Lotus, holding a... lotus.

Pablo enters with his day pack, he stops and looks around in awe. He takes off his shoes and goes to the alter. He knows he's supposed to bow, so he does but is sort of awkward about it -- he doesn't know what the hell he's doing, but he tries. He admires the statue.

PABLO

Cool.

He goes to a cushion, or mat, or rug, and sits facing the statue, doing his best to copy the its pose. He tries to be still. He looks around. He's fidgety.

He tries to keep his eyes closed and calm as best he can throughout, getting better and better.

...
I wonder how my football team is doing? I haven't really been keeping up because I've been reading about where we're going where we've been about religions about relationships. And, this is the first time we've spent more than a day apart and it's sort of freaking me out and I miss her and I'm feeling lonely and I wish she were here to see me meditating... that is what I'm doing right?

ALICIA AS BODHISATTVA
Sshhhhh.

PABLO
You're right. That's what she would tell you. Sshhh.

ALICIA AS BODHISATTVA
Breathe.

PABLO
Yeah. In... out.

ALICIA AS BODHISATTVA
In... out. In... out.

He breathes through her guided meditation.

ALICIA AS BODHISATTVA
You forgot to light the incense.

He looks around, notices the statue, it looks at him.

PABLO
Ah!!

The statue gestures to the incense in front of her. He nervously, lights it and returns to his posture.

ALICIA AS BODHISATTVA
That is better. Now, we can proceed. Close your eyes. Let your mind go. Let it wander. Let your thoughts come and go as they please--

PABLO
Oh they do trust me. It's like when you've just smoked a--

ALICIA AS BODHISATTVA
--a bowl? Yeah. C-ohmmm yourself down.

PABLO
Haha. Sounds like one of my jokes.

ALICIA AS BODHISATTVA

I know.

PABLO

Okay okay. Calm.

...

...

...

You know what would be cool is if I could be in that magical world of Little Monsters and--

ALICIA AS BODHISATTVA

--Ohhhmmmm. Let your thoughts come and go. Like waves in the ocean. Your waves are your thoughts, your body is the ocean, and you are the... surfer.

PABLO

Right. I'm the surfer, brah. I do love surfing and--

ALICIA AS BODHISATTVA

--SSSSHHHHH. Be still. Be silent. Do not hold on to these thoughts, these waves, these... relationships? They just come and go. Each one is unique, ride it until it curls away into the sand. Be grateful for it. And, then, repeat, until you feel you're ready to move on.

PABLO

...

...

...

...

...

...

...

PABLO

I hope Alicia's okay. I wonder what she's doing. Oh no I hope she's feeling okay I shouldn't have left her how the hell do you guys even do this--

ALICIA AS BODHISATTVA

--would you be quiet?!

PABLO

But, I want others to know what I'm thinking and feeling and I'm afraid if I don't say it then they won't know what I'm feeling and thinking and it might be a missed opportunity and--

ALICIA AS BODHISATTVA

--that might not be such a bad thing! Nobody else feels what you feel, or thinks what you think. You cannot know what to do with others, until you know what to do with yourself.
PABLO
Okay. I like that. Keep talking.

ALICIA AS BODHISATTVA
Do not put expectation on these things, on people. Do for you. Not for them.

PABLO
But, doing things for others IS what makes me happy.

ALICIA AS BODHISATTVA
This one wave you are riding, now, might be fading into the sand. Do not hold onto it. Ride it until--

PABLO
--but, I want this wave, forever.

ALICIA AS BODHISATTVA
You cannot surf on the sand. When the ride is over, be grateful for it, but let it go. And, seek your next wave.

PABLO
What if I don't want to surf, alone?

ALICIA AS BODHISATTVA
With yourself, you are never alone. You are ONE. Once you find this inner peace and SILENCE, only then, can you fully give to others.

PABLO
Right. Kind of like how the quarterback knows he has the ball and he's okay with that and then he offers it to others!

ALICIA AS BODHISATTVA
Sure. Like a quarterback. Right.

PABLO
Okay. I'll pretend I'm surfing, and I'll find my... self.

ALICIA AS BODHISATTVA
It all starts with you.

PABLO
Me? ME. Me?

The Bodhisattva fades until it's just Pablo.

ALICIA AS BUDDHA
You... you... you...

PABLO
Me... me... me...

ALICIA AS BUDDHA
You... you... you...

PABLO
Me... me... me...

PABLO
Me... me... me...

Pablo continues this and goes into a full bow, face first Prostration.
Alicia appears, this time with her daypack, not the Giant Backpack.

She is on a BEACH or in THE MAGICAL THEATER SPACE. There's the sound of waves crashing against the beach and seagulls flying above.

Pablo is now a nasty, cat-calling vato Orangutan. Alicia hears a LOUD BOOMING "LONG CALL." She looks around, nothing.

PABLO AS ORANGUTAN

Hey there, baby.

ALICIA

Oh shit!

PABLO AS ORANGUTAN

Wanna take a rumble in the jungle, or what?

ALICIA

Uh. I'm good, thanks.

PABLO AS ORANGUTAN

See these flanged cheeks. Means I'm ready, sugar.

ALICIA

Good for you.

PABLO AS ORANGUTAN

Aww. Some other primate already take you behind the bushes?

ALICIA

Something like that.

PABLO AS ORANGUTAN

Tss. If he's orange like me, then he'll just knock you up and leave the nurturing to you. Then, you'll be all motherhood for the rest of your life, nuh.

ALICIA

Uh. No. That's the furthest thing from my mind right now.

PABLO AS ORANGUTAN

I could be a good partner for you, jaina. Look at these giant hairy arms, I could pull you in, hold you, keep you safe, and squeeze the life out of you.

ALICIA

Uhk. No wonder you're alone.

PABLO AS ORANGUTAN

Doesn't sound too far off from your situation right now, anyway. I say you ditch that puny vato and come hang with me in the trees.
ALICIA
You're just like every other shitty guy--

PABLO AS ORANGUTAN
--but, I'm not. I can be all romntico if I really want to, eh. Watcha.

(mocking Pablo)
"Show me the way to love you -- nice bi-pedal limbs -- rolls his eyes--

ALICIA
--go fuck yourself!

PABLO AS ORANGUTAN
I see look at you all feisty and shit. I'm just telling you how it is, chica. He'll bail on you once his fun time is over. Besides, I fucked myself in a tree, earlier, nuh.

ALICIA
First of all, gross. Second of all, Pablo isn't like that. Right?

PABLO AS ORANGUTAN
Sounds like he has you right where he wants you.

ALICIA
No. He's a good person. And, he takes care of me. It's just, things have sort of changed and I don't know if we're--

PABLO AS ORANGUTAN
--EEEE this is all boring! I'm the mero mero of this jungle and I don't do the "talky-talk," so if we're doing this then let's do this because if not I need to find some other female to hump and dump.

ALICIA
You're a piece of shit!

PABLO AS ORANGUTAN
Actually, I'm an orangutan, but to each their own.

ALICIA
Will you just get the hell out of here!

PABLO
Bueno, pues. Don't say I didn't warn you, though.

Pablo as Orangutan exits while shouting...
Jorge! Save some papayas for me, jodido!

ALICIA
Hump and dump.
She sits as the sound of the ocean crashes against the beach and seagulls fly.
THE MAGICAL THEATER SPACE.

ALICIA
Pablo, there's something I need to tell you.

PABLO
What, Alicia?

ALICIA
Something I've been thinking about for a long time, and I think you should know.

PABLO
Okay?

ALICIA
You know how I've been saving money all summer for "whatever might come."

PABLO
Yeah. And?

ALICIA
I don't know how to say this.

PABLO
Just say it. I'm a big boy. I'll survive.

ALICIA
I'm...

PABLO
--into some other dude, right?

ALICIA
I'm... taking a trip.

PABLO
Oh. Okay. Where? To like, Colorado or something?

ALICIA
More like, Southeast Asia.

I'd just like to see that part of the world and maybe go scuba diving and hiking and experience life somewhere else.

PABLO
See that part of the world? I don't even know where that part of the world is!?

ALICIA
Well. I can show you--

PABLO
--I'm going with you!
ALICIA

Oh. Is that right?

PABLO

That's right. I'm in too deep, already.

ALICIA

Yeah. Me, too.

PABLO

Holy shit this is gonna be epic!

ALICIA

I mean, it's kind of scary and makes me nervous, but I don't want be without you, and if I'm going to see the world, I'd like for it to be with you.

PABLO

Oh my god! Hell to the YES! You're definitely not getting rid of me, now. I'm gonna be with you all the time! And, we're going to do the things and see the things and -- It could be like, our honeymoon, or something!

ALICIA

Whoa whoa whoa whoa! Slow down there, dude. One thing at a time.

PABLO

I am SO stoked!

ALICIA

Me too. I think?

PABLO

I've already been thinking about how I can have you in my life for... ever.

ALICIA

This isn't forever. This is a, one day at a time, far away trip together, which might lead to forever, but we don't know that.

PABLO

I know I know. I'm just saying. This is a big step! Some adult shit.

Yeah. It is.

PABLO

Me and you...

ALICIA

You and me...

ALICIA AND PABLO
... alone... alone in a big planet.

Two pin spots on Pablo and Alicia. The song "All the Small Things" by blink 182 plays, no lyrics, it's karaoke.

ALICIA
Holy shit! We're up!

PABLO
Ah yeah! Let's do this!

During the set change, they sing until the second chorus lyrics: "turn the lights off"--

LIGHTS OUT.

ALICIA and PABLO
(slow fade)

Carry me home...
KATMANDU, NEPAL. A CHILLY NIGHT.

Buildings that were never finished and are slowly decaying can be seen through their hostel window. This hostel is block. Block walls, block ceiling, block floor, no bathroom in this one. Just a bed, a night stand with a lamp, four walls, and one window.

They're sleeping when Pablo wakes with a start--

PABLO

(gasping for air)
Kuhhh!!

ALICIA

Pablo. You okay? Pablo?

Alicia sits up and flicks on a lamp and puts her hand on his chest.

He breathes heavily as if he was just being suffocated.

ALICIA

Pablo breathe with me... in... out... in... out... that's right. Slow it down. Good. Come back. Come back. I'm here. Slow.

They breathe in unison for a second.

PABLO

Fuck. What happened?

ALICIA

Ha. I was hoping you could tell me. You okay?

PABLO

Yeah. I think.

ALICIA

Were you dreaming?

PABLO

Oh. Wait. Yeah. I was. I was dreaming we were high up on a mountain and then, and then the weird thing was that water started flooding everywhere and then I became submerged and I couldn't breathe and I was calling out for you but you were gone and I started to panic--

ALICIA

okay okay. You're here now. You're safe.
PABLO
Whoof. Sorry about that.

ALICIA
You don't ever have to be sorry about that. You were reading before you passed out, right?

PABLO
Oh, yeah. I was reading about more scuba diving in Thailand. I was thinking, after this we could go back and get you some more dives. I guess it got in my head a little and I'm probably just nervous about tomorrow. What, elevation are we at here, anyway?

She grabs the Lonely Planet off the night stand.

ALICIA
Let's see. Oh. Geez I didn't even realize this. We're at forty-five hundred feet. Here. You need water. We're both going to need to drink a ton of water from here on out, okay?

PABLO
Totally. Let's get back to sleep. Our flight is in a couple hours.

ALICIA
So early.

PABLO
Are you nervous?

ALICIA
Not really. I'm excited, but, it's going to be a lot of hiking.

PABLO
And, a lot of thin air.

ALICIA
You mean, lack of air. You can't have a lot of thin air, because then it would just mean there's a bunch of air, which is different from lack of air. Which is what this will be.

PABLO
Okay, Ms. Bill Nye the Science... guy.

ALICIA
I'm just worried about your breathing. You didn't do so good beneath the earth, I wonder how you'll be on top of it?

PABLO
With you, I'm always on top of the earth.

ALICIA
Rolls her eyes.

She smacks him!

PABLO
I'm sorry. It'll be fine. I'll just have to pay attention, keep monitoring.

ALICIA
It's going to be fucking freezing up there!

PABLO
I know. That's going to suck. And, we'll have to leave at five in the dark ass freezing morning!

ALICIA
To see the peak of Mt. Everest we do. Isn't that the whole point?

PABLO
Ugh. Fine. As long as you hold me and keep me warm, then it'll be alright.

ALICIA
Ha! Wuss. You better be the one holding me.

PABLO
You know I will.

ALICIA
Are you feeling better?

PABLO
I'm good.
Goodnight.

Pablo goes to sleep. Alicia stays sitting up, thinking for a bit. She cries.

Until...
...
...
...
...

Alicia's GIANT BACKPACK starts to talk.

The Backpack is her confidant, perhaps her sister or best friend from back home, but she hears this voice.

...
...

PABLO AS GIANT BACKPACK
You need to LEAVE his ass is what you need to do.
ALICIA
And, what the hell do you know?

PABLO AS GIANT BACKPACK
I know a ton! I've seen just as much as you, from behind, of course. And, it all seems so obvious.

ALICIA
What, so all of a sudden you're like, the bag of wisdom, or something?

PABLO AS GIANT BACKPACK
Damn right I am. And, I, for one, am sick of this, already! This is supposed to be fun! Instead, it's all fucking Somerville.

ALICIA
Well. I'm sorry I can't be all fucking Perkyville for you, or Pablo or fucking anyone!

PABLO AS GIANT BACKPACK
Look. When I'm overloaded, things need to be gotten rid of, and I know how you can lose two-hundred pounds.

ALICIA
This decision will change everything. My whole world. And, there are other people involved, it's not just about me!

PABLO AS GIANT BACKPACK
If you make a decision based on someone else, do you think they'll really be happy knowing you're unhappy?

ALICIA
You're really annoying, you know that.

PABLO AS GIANT BACKPACK
You know what you need to do. His ass will be fine, and your ass will be fine.

ALICIA
What if I hate myself for making the wrong decision?! I don't think I could live with that. I can't be wrong about this.

PABLO AS GIANT BACKPACK
Only one way to find out, sugar. But, you gotta tell him, soon, or I'll tell his brown ass, myself! Hey, Pablo!

ALICIA
Sssshh! No! No. I will. I know what I need to do, it just, fucking sucks, man. I mean, look at him.

PABLO AS GIANT BACKPACK
Oh, don't you do that, uh uh. You take care of yourself, first, for a change. You know this ain't the time for you to be having babies and all that mess. Go after what you really
want, girl! Shit.

ALICIA
You're right. You're right. I know.
Thanks. I needed this.

PABLO AS GIANT BACKPACK
Don't even trip. You know I got your back, girl!

Alicia turns off the lamp, and goes to sleep.
KALA PATAR, NEPAL.

It's early morning and FREEZING as they ascend the mountain in hopes of catching a glimpse of MOUNT EVEREST. The sound of yak bells can be heard in the distance.

They slowly make their way up, as does the sun.

PABLO
This is beautiful, isn't it?

ALICIA
...

PABLO
Like, holy shit we're really doing this.

ALICIA
...

PABLO
Come on come on! Catch up! You just gotta keep trucking along. You'll warm up.

ALICIA
...

PABLO
It's so sad all the stuff people leave behind up here, what do you think Mr. Yak?

ALICIA
...

PABLO
We have to keep going, though. Push through. There's just that small window of time before Everest gets covered up by the clouds.

ALICIA
...

PABLO
It's so rocky and... desolate. Like, we're on the moon or something.

ALICIA
...

PABLO
This air hurts. It's like breathing in a bunch of tiny shards of glass.

ALICIA
... 

PABLO
I know this isn't easy, but we've been working toward this, we're ready.

ALICIA

...

PABLO
You're way stronger than me at this shit, I can't believe you're the one struggling.

ALICIA

...

PABLO
Everything is so beautiful. We've been through jungles and oceans and orangutan sanctuaries and temples and--

ALICIA
--Pablo, I'm pregnant.

He stops totally still.
Doesn't look at her.

His breathing increases. It takes everything he has to not blow up.

PABLO

...

ALICIA
Aren't you going to say anything?

PABLO

...

ALICIA
Pablo, please!

PABLO

...

ALICIA
I didn't plan it this way!

PABLO

...

ALICIA
I just, didn't know what to do. I panicked. I was scared. I felt alone. I just didn't know--

PABLO

...
ALICIA
Pablo, this hasn't been easy. I wasn't keeping it from you to hurt you. I just needed to think, my body is being weird, my brain is scrambled, I'm so fucking lost!

PABLO
...

ALICIA
I know I should've told you but--

PABLO
--don't. You didn't.

Beat.
This isn't exactly the worst thing ever, right?

ALICIA
...

PABLO
Right?

ALICIA
It's not exactly the best, either.

PABLO
Things happen for a reason, you know. We can do this. We can do anything.

ALICIA
I don't know, Pablo.

PABLO
We're not that bad.

ALICIA
We're not that good, either.

PABLO
...

ALICIA
...

PABLO
...

ALICIA
...

PABLO
...

ALICIA
...

PABLO
...

ALICIA
...

PABLO
...

ALICIA
...
PABLO
You know, I've already been thinking of names for her.

ALICIA
Her? A girl, huh. Heh.

They move closer together. For warmth. For comfort. For understanding.

PABLO
Yeah. I mean, of course she'll be an athlete, the first female to play baseball in the Major Leagues.

ALICIA
And, beautiful artist.

PABLO
Psh. Of course, duh!

... This is what I'm talking about! She'll give us a purpose. A reason to stay together and work things out, and a reason to change and make things different and--

ALICIA
--that's not how this is supposed to work.

PABLO
Nothing is how it's supposed to work.

ALICIA
But, you think having a child is what will give you purpose? Us, purpose?

PABLO
Yeah. Right?

... ALICIA

...

PABLO

...

ALICIA

...

PABLO

...

ALICIA

...

PABLO

It's over isn't?

...
... It's all over.

... ALICIA

... PABLO

... ALICIA

... PABLO

... ALICIA

... PABLO

... ALICIA

... PABLO

... ALICIA

Shit. It's happening.

My God. It's so...

Yeah.

The sun and snow...

...and the clouds and the wind...

...it's so pink and...

...orange and...

...so high and...

...so, magnificent...

... ALICIA

... PABLO
... ALICIA

... PABLO

... ALICIA

Pablo, I didn't mean to--

--ssshhh. PABLO

... ALICIA

... PABLO

... ALICIA

... PABLO

... ALICIA

... PABLO

... ALICIA

... PABLO

... ALICIA

... PABLO

... ALICIA

... PABLO

... ALICIA

I love you, Pablo.

... ALICIA

I love you, too, Alicia.

... PABLO
The mountain is only visible for a couple minutes, it then starts to fade into the clouds, transitioning to water.

It's beautiful down here. Tons of colorful fish and coral reefs. The water is a beautifully crisp blue.

They're now scuba diving.

They have to use hand signals and body language to communicate. This time, they only use hand signals, no speaking until the final line.

They're still descending down the anchor ROPE, Alicia is ahead of Pablo already seeing the ocean life. He keeps turning his head side to side, opening his mouth, and thumping his chest, he's having difficulty clearing his ears.

Alicia is buoyant and looking around. She sees something!

ALICIA

(points)

Look!

She points! She looks up to Pablo and points beneath her. Then she does a...
ALICIA

("big" sign)
She's beautiful!

("infant" sign)
There's a baby!

("okay" sign)
You okay?

He's still struggling, holding onto the rope, but gives her an...

PABLO

("okay" sign)
Okay.

She turns back and starts to move toward the giant Whale Shark with her pup.

She turns back to check on Pablo. He's really struggling, now.

She swims up to him. They're eye to eye.

ALICIA

(giving an "okay" sign)
You sure?

PABLO

("not okay" sign)
I'm not okay.

("ears not clearing" sign)
My ears aren't clearing.

She places her hand on his chest, and grabs his hand putting it onto hers.

ALICIA

("watch me" sign)
Look into my eyes.

("breathe" sign)
Breathe.

("slow" sign)
Slow.
In........ Out.
ALICIA
In...... Out. In..... Out.

He breathes with her guidance.

PABLO
("okay" sign while nodding his head)
Okay.

ALICIA
("okay" sign)
Okay.

("up" sign)
We're going up.

PABLO
("okay" and "up" sign)
Okay. Up.

ALICIA
("slow" sign)
Slowly.

(spoken aloud)
We're okay. We're okay. Look into my eyes.

Their eyes never leave one another, and their hands on each other's hearts, never stop.

...  
...  
...
We are back in THE MAGICAL THEATER SPACE in a Thai Airport.

Pablo and Alicia resume their seats from the opening as they wait... and wait... and wait... for their flight announcement.

The end is approaching. THEIR, end is near.
They grab their backpacks, strap in, and walk away from what was. Together, they are separate.

LIGHTS FADE.

END OF PLAY