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HAVE A GOOD ONE: A Writer's Search for Place

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HAVE A GOOD ONE: A Writer's Search for Place

by

Rafael Gallegos

B.U.S., Theater, UNM, 2010

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master's in Fine Art

Dramatic Writing

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

May 2020

Dedication

To my parents, Susan Schoenfeld and Joseph Gallegos.

¡Viva el teatro!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thanks to my committee members for your care, insight, and guidance. I am forever grateful to be in conversation with Gregory S. Moss, Dominika Laster, Dr. Bernadine Hernández, and Leonard Madrid.

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Special thank you to my families, given and chosen, who helped provide the elixir during my Hero's Journey.

HAVE A GOOD ONE: A WRITER'S SEARCH FOR PLACE

by Rafael Gallegos

B.U.S., Theater, University of New Mexico, 2010.

M.F.A., Dramatic Writing, University of New Mexico, 2020 (expected)

Abstract

In this personal essay I will summarize my creative journey as a writer throughout my time in the Dramatic Writing program at the University of New Mexico. I will explore how the notion of home has shaped me and my work, focusing on my childhood in Lubbock, Texas, my theatrical coming of age in New York City, and my return to Albuquerque in search of my personal voice. I will present two works that illustrate my maturation as a dramatist and my focus on community and place as thematic throughlines. *Have a Good One* is a play set in a mom and pop tourist shop in Old Town, Albuquerque. *Plan Q* is a television pilot about a failed celebrity-turned quinceñera planner. Both pieces emerged from a shift in focus during my tenure at UNM, as I looked to my own surroundings for inspiration and story. I will explore how my background as a director has helped shape my view as a dramatist. Lastly, I will examine how my Bipolar diagnosis has affected my relationship to writing and creativity as I reclaim my mental health diagnosis as my special superpower.

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INTRODUCTION/ABSTRACT

In this personal essay I will summarize my creative journey as a writer throughout my time in the Dramatic Writing program at the University of New Mexico. I will explore how the notion of home has shaped me and my work, focusing on my childhood in Lubbock, Texas, my theatrical coming of age in New York City, and my return to Albuquerque in search of my personal voice. I will present two works that illustrate my maturation as a dramatist and my focus on community and place as thematic throughlines. *Have a Good On* is a play set in a mom and pop tourist shop in Old Town, Albuquerque. *Plan Q* is a television pilot about a failed celebrity-turned quinceñera planner. Both pieces emerged from a shift in focus during my tenure at UNM, as I looked to my own surroundings for inspiration and story. I will explore how my background as a director has helped shape my view as a dramatist. Lastly, I will examine how my Bipolar diagnosis has affected my relationship to writing and creativity as I reclaim my mental health diagnosis as my special superpower.

A note on process: my writing practice has evolved greatly during the course of my graduate education. Coming in to the program I did not have a writing practice or daily routine, and much of my first year in the program was about learning how to generate work. And quickly! I will not spend much time examining the mechanics of my writing, but I will note that each project has its own methodology. I did not write one play like the next, but as I started to generate work in the program, I began to notice recurring themes and characteristics. It seemed like all of my work featured a recurring type of protagonist, someone larger than life. An “outsized” character emerged in nearly all of my pieces. It was only after hearing critical response from my peers that I realized I was writing the same person, which was a variation of myself who was undoubtedly going through some sort of emotional or circumstantial crisis.

Manic lead characters were my bag. Was I writing about my own life, my many emotional ups and downs? Probably. It was a revelation that I could not believe I did not see coming. Duh, I was writing about my own manic self. And what a relief to acknowledge that and move on. Move on I did as I shifted my focus from the manic character as my main protagonists to the community around me. Albuquerque became my muse. And so did Lubbock. And New York City. All my homes and all my stages have become characters that drive narrative.

LUBBOCK/CHILDHOOD

One of the most memorable experiences from my time in graduate school was the first day of class for Luci Tapahonso's poetry seminar. Professor Tapahonso was the National Navajo Poet Laureate and is a Southwest treasure. I was lucky to be in the class as a non-major, but I was also way in over my head being in an advanced graduate class. My previous poetry experience was limited to memorizing "Spaghetti, Spaghetti All Over My Head" for my 2nd grade poetry competition. I was nervous, a fish out of water. Then it happened. Professor Tapahonso introduced herself to the class in Diné by telling us first about her mother's side of the family, where her grandmother is from, where her great grandmother is from. I am not sure how long this went on. It was a long time. What washed over me in a language I could not understand cleansed me and opened my eyes. By telling the class exactly who her family is and in her native tongue, Tapahonso gave us more insight into her background than any biography or wikipedia page could. And so I will introduce myself by introducing my family as I pay respect to them and to Professor Tapahonso.

My name is Rafael Gallegos. I was born in Lubbock, Texas. My mother was Susan Schoenfeld. She was born in West Virginia, the oldest of four. She was an infant when the family moved to Albuquerque, where she considered herself "from." My mother was a classical

musician and teacher. Her instrument was the viola, one of the hardest and most misunderstood instruments. She graduated from Highland High School in Albuquerque and would later train at Juilliard, Mannes College of Music, and Tanglewood before graduating from the University of New Mexico. Her mother, Mary Upchurch, was born in Durham, North Carolina. She was a classically-trained singer, a soprano specializing in German repertoire. She took up guitar later in life and lived in Taos for much of my youth. My mother's father was Morton Schoenfeld, a classically-trained pianist born in Brooklyn. After receiving a not-so-kind review in the New York Times for a solo recital at Town Hall, Morton left New York and settled in New Mexico to teach piano performance at UNM. He was among the first faculty members of the School of Music. My father was Joseph Gallegos, or José, depending on who was asking. He was born in dustbowl Gallup, New Mexico in 1932 to a big Hispanic (a term they used and I heard growing up) family. He started out his working life as a paperboy, saving up enough money to buy bicycles for his friends who he recruited to take on the entire paper route. He enlisted in the Navy immediately after graduating from Grants High School and would serve in the Korean War with the rank of Petty Officer First Class. He retired from the Navy and worked for the Department of Defense as a "Quality Assurance" officer, then retired and went to work for the Federal Corrections Department as a bilingual instructor for inmates in Big Spring, Texas. My father's father was Henry Gallegos, a politician and carouser. His professional life led him to the Roundhouse in Santa Fe where he served as a State Representative and Tax Assessor for Valencia County. My father's mother was born Lucia Maldonado. I do not know much about her past, but I do know that even though most of my cousins found her frightening, she was very kind to me. Maybe it was because of my blue eyes. She always commented on my blue eyes.

I am Schoenfeld and I am Gallegos. My religious ancestry is Jewish and Catholic, and during my youth I flirted with both religions, attending both Sunday School and temple. My mom was white and my dad was brown. This oversimplification of my biography has become my shorthand for responding to people who ask, “What are you?” I usually respond, “I’m a Latino Jew.” But that is not entirely true. I am my mother and I am my father. I am my mother’s mother. My father’s father. Thank you to Professor Tapahonso for giving me a vocabulary to talk about my background while honoring my ancestors, not only my dad and mom but also all of my people who were raped and pillaged during the Spanish invasion of the Southwest, and those who were gassed and bombed during the Holocaust.

Growing up in Lubbock, Texas was a blessing and a curse for me. Lubbock is a unique town, and I am happy to say I am from there, but it took a long time to arrive at that conclusion. Located in the buckle of the Bible Belt, besides being a very conservative stronghold with more churches and restaurants per capita than any other city its size, Lubbock is also a college town, and my mother found herself as a music professor at Texas Tech University, the first place to hire her without a master’s degree. My dad was the first person in the history of the Department of Defense to request a transfer *to* Lubbock. There were hillbillies and good ole boys no doubt, but there were also professors and my friends were professors’ kids. My mother was really the best mother there was. I know that most people say that about their mothers, but mine was Wonder Woman. She enrolled me in the best public schools possible in the city, utilizing my Hispanic surname to get me into the best of the best education. My schools were minority magnets, and so I learned the lesson of integration early on. Although I present white, my mixed racial background gave me entree into a better school district. I was “gifted and talented,”

whatever that means (something I have been trying to live up to to this day!). And I was also a troublemaker.

I was a backstage baby. My first introduction to performance came in the womb. My mother started going into labor just as she was playing a concert. Mahler. Very dramatic. I don't remember my first play or performance, but I do remember being backstage while my mother was performing. I have a vague sense of pride and boredom from waiting in the wings for mom to bow and take me home. It seemed like my mother knew everybody in town and everybody knew her. Everywhere we would go we would run into one of her students or colleagues. It was insufferable. I was jealous. I did not want to be Susan's son, I wanted her to be Rafie's mom! At a very young age I decided that music was not for me. My mother and grandmother afforded me all the luxuries of a musical education, but I balked at it. I crossed my arms and refused to play my cracker jack box fashioned into a Suzuki method violin. My mom was a virtuoso, and I would always be in her shadow if I took up an instrument. So I gravitated toward sports and later toward acting. Although I had a great ear and musicality, music was not for me. I dreamt of being in the NBA. My mother's private lessons paid for my basketball and baseball and tennis camps and lessons. I should say that it was pretty early on that my mother and father split. I do not have a memory of the two of them actually being in love. Or even kissing. But I do remember them speaking in Spanish to each other when they wanted privacy.

My mother and father first met at a Country-Western bar in Albuquerque. My mother's student was playing fiddle in the band, and my dad was no doubt there to play some billiards and pick up some gals. Joe approached Susie, asking her to dance, and she replied in perfect Spanish to him. My mother learned Spanish in her youth and had a great ear for languages. During her freelance career, and when they toured to South America, she stayed. She decided to take a break

from the symphony and fell in love with both Sud America and a handsome violin player. They lived and played music in Bolivia and Costa Rica. Her Spanish was impeccable. My dad must have been floored when he first met my mother. He pulled out the moves and they danced the night away. Joe Gallegos lived up to his nickname, the Fred Astaire of Naval Air. This story has probably gone through many iterations, but in my mind, it best illustrates the idea I have of my parents in love. Who knows what really happened? My parents are both dead and gone now, so I can romanticize their meeting all I want.

In my creative life, I aim to make pieces that both my mom and dad would have appreciated. I write for them and their memories. Over the course of the MFA program, my writing progressed beyond mere remembrance and more toward writing characters inspired by them. What are their stories? I do not have anyone to ask any more so I have to rely on my memory and my imagination. So I imagine Joe and Susie cutting up a rug in 1970's New Mexico.

My parents tried and tried to have a baby with no luck. Desperate for motherhood, my mom started proceedings to adopt a little Korean girl. But something happened. I was a miracle baby, so they would tell me. They were lucky to have me, a colic baby with six fingers and six toes on each hand and foot. If only the bone on my hands had been fully formed, what a violinist or pianist I could have become, my mother often wondered. Instead, my extra digits were removed. We lived as a family unit in the same house for a few years, but my father always felt like an outsider in Lubbock and was often on the road. My mother gained a lot of weight. They were not happy. On a business trip, my dad had a heart attack on a bus going from Chihuahua to El Paso in 1985. That felt like the end of our family. My dad would return to Lubbock and build

a garage addition on the back of our house. It was his post-heart attack treatment. His way of saying he wasn't finished. But my parents were.

Being the child of divorce is one my defining characteristics. I became an angry kid with terrible mood swings. In many ways I am still that angry kid. I am trying to move past it and have been for over three decades, but childhood loss cuts deep. I channeled my feelings into acting out, both negatively and positively. It was in the aftermath of divorce that I began to become a performer. For our first grade Spring Formal, I dressed up as Pee Wee Herman, my idol at the time (and now to be frank). I had it all down to the white patent leather shoes and red bowtie. I would dress up as the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus. I liked the attention. I was becoming Rafie the performer, Rafie the entertainer. I tried out for Odyssey of the Mind, a sort of Olympics for creativity. I booked a spot when I auditioned using the script for a Pepsi-Coke blind taste test. "OM" as it was called marked the beginning of my lifelong journey into creating performance. The basic rules are this: during the course of the school year, a team of students create a solution to a long-term problem, say "Robotics" or "Vaudeville." They present a 5-7 minute long skit as well as engage in a "spontaneous" round where the team answers a simple question, like "name things that are blue." One point for an answer, three points for a creative answer. I was like really really good at OM. It became my identity. Rafie the OM'er. During my first year in OM we made a skit where I played Tennis legend Ivan Lendl in a tennis match against a robot. Totally bizarre and maybe the most experimental thing I have done in my life. And that was third grade! The acting bug had bit me. I auditioned for play after play and always booked it. School was never too overwhelming that I could not do extracurriculars. My problem was finding the time to do all the outside activities I wanted. Thankfully my Wonder Woman of a mother would take on extra Nutcracker gigs during the holidays and extra students after school

to support my whims. Somehow she always showed up to my plays and games, even in concert dress on her way to or coming back from a gig.

I was in show choir during my junior high years. I was never the best singer, but I knew how to sell a song. I sang a male POV version of Matchmaker from *Fiddler* for UIL Solo Competition. I had a sense of humor. For our year end choir concert called Swanee, named after a minstrel performance (only in Lubbock!), I created what I now know as a devised, director-driven performance based on the Brady Bunch episode “The Silver Platters.” I taped the episode from syndicated television, transcribed the text, cast myself as Greg Brady, enlisted a bunch of fellow seventh-graders, and performed interstitial entertainment during the concert. I stole the show as we performed “Keep on Movin” down to the costumes and exact choreography. This performance would seem a natural fit for any avant-garde Brooklyn theatre in the late aughts, but it came from the mind of a teenage Rafie. I might not have been a great singer, but I was a very good organizer and performer.

Sports came naturally to me. I was a good athlete as a kid and was always among the better teammates at any given sport. Basketball, baseball, softball, and tennis became my main sports. Growing up in West Texas, I would suffer ridicule for not wanting to be a football player. I was a big boy growing up, always one of the taller students, and my football coaches wanted me to be an offensive lineman. Ha! Not for Rafie. He deserves to be in the spotlight, the mainstage! So I quit football and focused on other sports, and I was called a fag and a pussy for it. That was West Texas.

Sports were also a way of connecting with my father. My mother and I had theatre and showtunes and concerts, but my dad and I had sports. We played catch. I memorized statistics about the Celtics-Lakers rivalry to impress my father. He ate it up and we got along on and off

the court. I learned one of life's lessons while playing sports: mortality. There came a time when my dad could no longer return the ball, when he could no longer post me up, when he had to just watch from the sidelines. He had me when he was in his late forties, so I knew that my dad was no spring chicken. He had children from a previous marriage who were all significantly older than me. I knew my dad wouldn't be able to play with me my whole life, but I did not know that I would witness his deterioration pitch by pitch, free-throw by free-throw. I too was getting older and my peers were catching up to me in terms of size and athletic ability. I was no longer the best or among the best on my teams. I was lucky to make the teams. There came a moment in my life when I had to decide between riding the bench or being in the musical. I chose the theatre.

Lubbock had a very competitive environment, and I had the good fortune of having a peer group that was smart and talented and challenging. If I could no longer be the best at basketball, I was going to be the best at something. The theatre was my something. My first paying job was as an actor. From 12 years old to 17 years old I was in a different show nearly back to back. I was involved in dozens of productions of plays, musicals, melodramas, Shakespeare, Christian Morality Plays. You name it, I did it. The theatre became my own version of my mother's concert hall, my dad's pool hall. The theatre was where I felt most like myself. It became my refuge during my mother's illness and death. I always knew the stage would be there for me. It was the perfect synthesis of literature and performance. Growing up I was a voracious reader, always in competition with my mother who read at more than 1,000 words a minute thanks to her Evelyn Wood Speed reading techniques. If she finished a book, I would have to start another one. I would go to the Barnes and Noble and read every single play and book about theatre I could get my hands on. I memorized Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* when I played The Boy in a storefront production. There were no wings in the theatre, and I had to sit behind

the flats waiting for my two brief scenes. To a thirteen-year old's ears, Beckett was mysterious music. I was hooked on weird dramatic literature and have been recovering ever since.

Following my mother's death from cancer the summer of my Junior year, I plunged myself into the world of theatre and plays. With the Social Security income from her death I rented a storefront theatre of my own at the age of sixteen. No longer content with making work for my closeted, evangelical directors and teachers, I set off on my own path. I was a lil' Joe Papp, making a space for all the misfits and clowns to create on their own. This did not go over very well with the various Lubbock High School Vice Presidents and Superintendents and Police Chiefs who were not too pleased that their sons and daughters were hanging out at a speakeasy-community theatre next to a Tattoo shop and bail bondsman in the red-light district of downtown Lubbock. I called it "bohemia" (lowercase b). It was my Shangri-La for a season and I have been looking for it ever since. Really my formal education in writing and the theatre has been me catching up with my precocious youth. That bohemia happened was a bit of a miracle. But it also made complete sense. It seemed like exactly what I wanted to do with my life. Run a space. Present my friends. Have a good time. I have been chasing that feeling ever since.

My time in Lubbock came to an abrupt end. I always knew I would get out, but I thought it would be on a full-ride scholarship to some Ivy or another. Having amassed a ton of credits because of AP and advanced classes, I could graduate a year early by transferring to an "alternative" school, what would later be called a charter school. By this time, I was living with friends in order to remain in Lubbock. My father was still in Big Spring, 100 miles away to the south but a world away. I made the decision to remain in Lubbock and finish school. Maybe not the best decision of my life. I would end up very alone, not knowing how to mourn my mother. I thought I was an adult, that I could handle anything. In reality I was sixteen and knew nothing.

This was around the time of my first manic episode. In the aftermath of my mother's death, I started to develop what I now know is Bipolar disorder. I was acting out, but I no longer had the captive audience of my mother. Nobody knew what to do with me. I would stay awake for days on end. I was restless. They thought I was on drugs, that I was crazy. Really, I was a depressed teen who did not know how to grieve living amongst a bunch of strangers. I had to get out. I graduated early and spent the summer with my father going to Albuquerque, my second home, and Chihuahua, Mexico, where I spent some of my childhood while my father was working between Mexico and the States. I missed all the admissions deadlines for colleges because I did not decide to graduate until Spring Break of my Junior Year when I stole a van during a delusional episode and wound up being arrested for "public intoxication" in Fort Stockton, Texas. My father and his Mexican, non-English speaking third wife had to come and get me. The drive back to Big Spring was silent. I was over Texas. I wanted to start a new life outside of the fish bowl that was Lubbock. I was always too flamboyant for West Texas, and without my mother to shield me from the ultra-conservatives, Lubbock became unaccepting of my theatrical proclivities. So I applied to UNM and moved to Albuquerque and began a new chapter of life.

ALBUQUERQUE

My time as an undergraduate at the University of New Mexico was very fruitful theatrically. Initially I began my formal studies with a focus on political science. I went to work for the Democratic Party of New Mexico during the 2000 election. In Lubbock, I was always on the fringe for having progressive politics, but I made the most of it. I was the President of the Young Democrats and campaigned for Ann Richards's unsuccessful gubernatorial race against George W. Bush in 1996. If only we had won, the world would be a much different place. Continuing in the world of politics seemed natural to me. I was equally comfortable being a

wonk and being a schmoozer. I could see myself running for office, changing the world. Entering the world of New Mexico politics after having been a young politico in Texas seemed too easy. I was in the room with state reps and city councilors. My buddies were future U.S. Senators and high-powered lobbyists. But it all seemed so fake to me. It was almost too easy. After my time at the Texas Legislature, New Mexico seemed like the minor leagues. The results of the 2000 campaign were not exactly what I hoped for, and I learned the lesson of heartbreak through politics. Shortly after 9/11 happened, one of my democratic party pals died in a horrific car crash. My peer group could not collectively mourn his death in a healthy way. I did not want to live my life being stunted emotionally in a profession that used tragedy for personal gain. I auditioned for a student production of *Macbeth* at UNM. I returned to the theatre and never looked back.

During undergrad I found my passion as a director. I had directed in High School, but it was more in the mode of Actor-Manager. College showed me that directing was a possible if not viable career path in the theatre. I took every directing class possible and found two mentors with very different styles as teachers. Denise Schulz was my first directing teacher. She was also from Texas and we had a close bond that is hard to pinpoint in retrospect. I guess it was because she believed in me. She was the first person after my mother to really indulge my theatrical dalliances and look at me like I was gifted. I watched her like a hawk during rehearsals and learned how to personalize direction for different types of actors. My other sage advice provider was Dr. David Richard Jones. He instilled in me a passion for new work, introducing me to new playwrights in his *Contemporary Drama* course. He allowed me to sit in on his graduate-level class for directors and exposed me to the history of working directors. It was in his class that I first became aware of the notion of the director as auteur with something to say in a unique

manner. Peters Brook and Sellars. Robert Wilson. Elizabeth LeCompte. These were all new names to me, but I was officially obsessed. I channeled all my geekdom that I learned from reading the back of baseball cards and became a Theatre Director scholar. My childhood heroes were Daryl Strawberry and Charles Barkley, but the Gods were now Directors with a capital D. Robert Lepage! Romeo Castellucci!

At UNM, I was able to direct several full-length plays, devise my own work that nobody should have approved, and acted in a dozen shows. The time both onstage and behind the scenes in undergrad were my 10,000 hours. I could care less for classes. My real education was in the theatre. At the end of my lengthy time as an undergrad, my father passed away, probably from long term heart disease. One of the many reasons I moved to Albuquerque was to lure my father there. I thought that if I was living there, he would no longer have a reason to live in West Texas. I wanted us to be a big family, my father and me and all my half-siblings and nieces and nephews. I wanted dad to get to know his grandkids. Despite all my protestations, my father chose to stay in Texas where he died while working on my car before one of my visits. I found his glasses buried in the bench seat of my 57 Chevy Belair, a car he bought me when I was a child. My dad and I would never live in New Mexico together, but I have continued my goal of being a legitimate part of his side of the family. New Mexico for me is family, but there came a time when I knew it was time to fly the coop. My father's death provided me with a small inheritance, enough to start a new chapter in life as I pursued as a career as a director in... New York City!

NEW YORK

I moved to NYC a few months after my father's death and on the day Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans. I hit the ground running, booking a big boy job gig in the development department

at City Opera. I was meeting so many people and experiencing so many things, but I felt tied down to the day job. I did not want to be Rafael the administrator. I was Rafie the great! I quit/got fired and embarked on the bohemian artist path that was my birthright. Various restaurant and bar gigs kept me afloat as I was an unpaid intern for The Wooster Group (the Experimental theatre equivalent of being a bat boy for the Yankees), attended the Lincoln Center Directors Lab, and assisted opera director Chuck Hudson on a couple productions. His artistic lineage included working with Marcel Marceau. I could not believe it. I was a real, working artist, taking every chance I got to meet new artists and see new work. I got a few good breaks and wound up working for a visionary artist, writer-director John Jesurun. His very cerebral text challenged me, and he challenged me. He was a literal genius, a MacArturo (Latinx recipient of the MacArthur Genius Award). He would later become my roommate and remains one of my main influences. On his recommendation, I got an interview at New York Theatre Workshop for a fellowship that changed my life. After spending a year as a directing fellow, I was invited to stay on in a full-time capacity as the Artistic Leadership fellow and apprentice to Artistic director Jim Nicola and the staff at NYTW. Jim and the workshop showed me how to be a socially-engaged and globally aware artist. My politics were always very progressive, but NYTW taught me to always approach the work as we approach life, with advocacy for the voiceless and antagonism to the establishment. I was in the room where it happened and it felt like I was meant to be there. After my time at NYTW, truly my first NYC theatrical home, I booked a Drama League fellowship for emerging directors. What incredible luck I was having as a young director! It was all too good to be true. I was expected to live in NYC off the meager salary these institutions provided. I was expected to be happy for the opportunity to live in poverty while working at some of the best cultural institutions in the world. During my time at the Metropolitan

Opera, when I was shadowing director Nicholas Hytner on a production of Verdi's *Don Carlo*, I was so broke that I would steal unbussed food from the Met cafeteria. Something had to change. It became increasingly clear that most of my successful peers were children of the wealthy and the famous. Must be nice to not have to pay exorbitant Manhattan rent while directing staged readings and bouncing from internship to assistantship. Towards the end of my Drama League fellowship, I lost it. I could not see myself navigating the world of commercial theatre as a director. I did not have what it took to be a successful freelance director, namely a trust fund and family connections. During this time, I also had a major break up. And I turned 30. I was down and out and my old nag Bipolar disorder came back rearing its mighty head against me. I could not sleep and I succumbed to my mania. Despite the interventions of close friends, I was beyond the pale. I wound up in my third mental hospital after committing a number of dumb, manic moves that alienated a lot of my friends and family. In the aftermath of that crisis, I bounced around as a temp in NYC working to just keep a roof over my head.

With the help of a dear friend, I landed a gig at the Merce Cunningham Dance Company where I worked as the registrar for the dance studio. Uncle Merce, as I like to refer to him even though we never met, decided to dissolve his company following his death. His students and company members were mortified. The decision to close the studio was very controversial in the world of modern dance. I had no emotional attachment to the company and had developed a relationship with the Executive Director when I did some art handling for him, so they felt I was a good fit for being the person in charge of closing the studio. There was an end date to the gig, an expiration date. The company would close, and I would be the last person to turn the lock on the 11th floor of the WestBeth building just off the Hudson.

During my time at MCDC, I was living with John Jesurun in the West Village. Rent control, baby! I could walk to work. What could get any better than this? It sounded nice, but I was lost. For several years I had been tasked with carrying out someone else's vision. Being with Cunningham and Jesurun taught me that I could do it on my own. I could have my own company. I could bring back bohemia. I could do it on my own terms, but it would take rigor and guts. Jesurun inspired me because he always did things in his own way. Living with him I was able to witness his routine firsthand. He lived a simple life. He got up early and made food for the day and headed to the gym every single day. He was always working, always writing, much in the way the MCDC dancers were always working. They would show up early to the studio and I would let them in. They took class and rested and took another class and then performed. There was one student who swam every day before taking three classes for the day. I have no idea how she did it, but I wanted to do it too. MCDC and Jesurun showed me the way to creative autonomy was through rigor and practice.

In the spring of 2012, as my job with Merce was coming to its prescribed ending, I got an email from an old Albuquerque collaborator. Nan Elsasser was the Executive Director of Working Classroom, an experimental Latinx youth theatre company in Albuquerque that I had worked with as an undergrad. WC had a long-term relationship with Moises Kaufman, the one-of-a-kind writer-director behind *The Laramie Project* and *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*. They reached out to the UNM Theatre program to find an assistant to Moises while he was devising a play from scratch for Working Classroom. I was the perfect candidate! I had acted in both *Laramie* and *Gross Indecency*. I was obsessed with Moises and leapt at the opportunity to learn his devising technique "Moment Work" from the maestro firsthand. Those ten days I spent with Moises and the company of Working Classroom actors changed my life. It

made me realize that I could hang. I was not out of my element. Moises and WC were major catalysts in my theatrical education, so it seemed kind of perfect that Nan would reach out to me during her search for a new Artistic Director for the Working Classroom theatre program. She asked if I knew anybody that would be suitable for the company, who wanted to move to Albuquerque and work with a young, bilingual, political theatre company. What the hell, I thought, and I offered up my name. It all happened very quickly. There was an offer and I took it. I decided to leave my peripatetic Brooklyn and West Village lifestyle and have a salary. Get out of debt. Reconnect with my nieces and nephews. Make Important Work.

THE RETURN TO ALBUQUERQUE

I packed it all up and moved back to Albuquerque. I was going to do the thing I had dreamed of: running my own company, producing work in my own space. It seemed too good to be true. It was. The prodigal son returns home to find out that, simply put, expectations did not meet reality. I thought I would be running a theatre company. What actually happened was I ended up running an after-school program. Deep disappointment set in. Enter the next major manic episode of my life, one that would end up with me in jail with serious charges against me. With no job and no home, I was forced to start all over. Again. My old friend and colleague Kevin Elder reached out to me to assess my interest in directing his thesis play for the UNM Dramatic Writing Program. I reconnected with Greg Moss, the now head of the program, who I had known from our time during the Soho Rep Writer-Director Lab. I took the gig as I began to plan for the unexpected path of being on probation in the State of New Mexico, no small task. I was able to plea down my charges, thank God, but I was faced with having to remain in New Mexico for several years. I could only travel with the approval of my probation officer. No drinking and no drugs. Whatever was I going to do with my life? As I directed Kevin's play and witnessed his

growth as a playwright, the idea of attending grad school at UNM first crossed my mind. I saw what it did for Kevin. I thought, I could do that. I could use this probationary time to learn a new skill and continue my overall goal of being a Theatre Renaissance Man. So I applied to the program and got it.

My work sample for my application to the program was a devised piece I made with an actor in New York, Sean Carvajal. *#loveislove* was essentially a found text piece from basketball star and head case Stephon Marbury. I transcribed videos from his very public mental breakdown. Steph essentially suffered from a manic episode and started to livestream his life. Having been through a shockingly similar experience around the same time, I was attracted to telling Steph's story. He was not crazy. He was misunderstood. Just like me, I thought. Somehow I got into this program with Steph's words as rearranged by me as my work sample.

The first few pieces I wrote in the program followed my Stephon Marbury pattern. I would mine the internet for source material and cut and paste and rearrange until it resembled something of my own. I was using techniques that I had observed from NYC companies like Nature Theatre of Oklahoma, The Wooster Group, Elevator Repair Service, The Debate Society, Banana, Bag and Bodice, Half Straddle. I was having fun, but I was not exactly "writing." Visiting professor Caroline Prugh beat that right out of me. Having been a commercial producer in NYC herself, she knew a lot of my reference points and encouraged me to give up that posturing and find my own voice. Her weekly prompts made me write without thinking about being cutesy and experimental because there simply was not time. I feel like my first year at UNM was a generative goldmine for me. Looking back at all the work and titles of pieces in preparation for this personal essay made me marvel at the sheer volume of pages I had crank out week by week. There was no longer room for my regurgitations. What I wrote was mine and

mine only. I survived my own inflected imposter-syndrome and grew confident in my abilities to put words on a page. Going into the program I knew I was a good director, a good producer, a good actor, but I did not know that I was a good writer. I don't think I can claim that mantle just yet, but I do know that I am a writer.

ON HAVE A GOOD ONE

My two writing samples represent two distinct worlds and characters, but they actually have a lot in common. *Have a Good One*, or *Old Town Store* as I have been calling it lately, began as a reaction to the changing face of the food co-operative I worked at for almost two years during my time on probation. My bread and butter side jobs have always been restaurants, but I was not allowed to drink or even be in an establishment that sold booze per the conditions of my probation. Even though my arrest had nothing to do with drugs or alcohol, I was prohibited from working in a place with alcohol. I took a job as a cashier at a green grocer close to my house. It was walkable. I could get free produce and flirt with customers during service. Seemed like a good fit. And it was for a time, but the wages were terrible. One of the reasons I took the job was the promise of health care. My hospital bills from my bipolar episodes were mounting, and I needed help, both financially and emotionally. During the course of my tenure at the Co-op, the workers organized to form a union. The upper-management of my beloved grocery cooperative had been overtaken by a mysterious group of middling managers from Texas. A group of turnaround specialists infiltrated the Co-op and changes started to take place. Conventional produce was introduced. Many departments budgets were cut. The whole operation was working on a shoestring, but there they were, the Texan managers and their big extended cab pickups parking in my lot next to all the Subarus with Feel The Bern stickers. Co-op members and staff were fed up with the corporate mindset that started to permeate the store. So we said enough.

I joked with a number of my cashier colleagues about making a show or movie or whatever about what was happening. The initial idea was to follow a grocery cashier who turned out to be a gigolo. That was the first draft of pages. While I was writing the play, the conflict at the co-op became more and more combative. Sides were picked. Secret meetings were held. There was a coup on the board. It looked like we might have real change. I was pissed off and so were my friends and co-workers. I started to do write about my experience and what came out was fast and furious. I wrote from a place of anger, and I truly believe that is when my personal voice emerged. *Have a Good One* began as a response to the radical changes afoot at the coop instigated from strangers from out of town. I took a page from one of the oldest stories in the book and made it my own. They say there are only a couple stories. Boy meets girl. Stranger comes to town. Everything else is a variation on those themes.

My stranger who comes to town was modeled after the then-General Manager of the co-op. He and his boy from Texas waltzed in and thought they could teach us a thing or two about how to run a store. What they neglected to realize is that our store was a reflection of the values of our community, a cooperative where members decided the course of action, not a boardroom or CEOs. These men, these Texans, had no respect for the people who were working under them. And boy was I pissed off.

When I started *HAGO*, it was an auspicious time in our country. The 2016 election happened and I wrote in the wake of Donald Trump's victory. I did not intend for the character of the Texan who comes to town to be a parody of our new president, but some affinities between the two were hard to ignore. What started out as an angry diatribe about my unsatisfactory workplace became a satire of gentrification and the state of the union. I leaned into that new path and the play became something new. Yes, there are certainly autobiographical elements to this

play, but it also represents a huge leap forward in terms of my confidence as a writer. I did not have to rely on autobiography, but rather I used it to conjure up a new world.

Old Town Albuquerque has always had a special place to me. Visiting New Mexico during winter and summer vacations to see my extended family became a regular thing, and it seems like we would always end up at the plaza in ABQ. I would convince grandma Mary to buy me a cowboy and Indian bow and arrow setup from the popular tourist trinket store *The Covered Wagon*. We would start the day at Duran's Central Pharmacy and wind up at the Museum of Natural History. Following my return to Albuquerque, I rediscovered my love for cheezy Albuquerque. My first exposure to "tourism" was as a child in Old Town, and the memories came rushing back as I revisited the spot during a Christmas vacation with my siblings. What a weird and magical spot, I always thought.

The idea of setting a play in Old Town was inspired by my reading and experience of several authors during my time in the MFA program: Annie Baker, Neil Simon, and Tanya Saracho. I knew Baker's work from my time in NYC. Her *Circle, Mirror, Transformation* was developed at NYTW while I was there. I saw two readings and went to the opening at Playwrights Horizons. Initially, I was very bored by the work in staged readings. The Workshop (NYTW) had a relationship with the director Sam Gold, and he was afforded development space because he was a "Usual Suspect," the constellation of artists supported by the Workshop. I thought that this was just another Sam Gold play, uber hip, ironic, and distant. When I actually read the play in grad school and was forced to look at it without the artifice of production, I realized what a master storyteller Annie Baker is. She is like a musical composer as she uses punctuation like cues for musical notes and rests for the performer. I was so captivated by the rediscovery of Baker's work that I went back and read everything she wrote that I could find my hands on. What I found out

was not only was Baker an extremely skilled craftsman, she also wrote about her immediate community, setting most of her plays in small town Vermont. How boring, I thought when I first heard about her Vermont-based navel gazing. Boy was I wrong. Focusing on making a play set in very defined environment seemed to really work for Baker. She made Vermont seem like Everytown, USA as she took us to dance studios, one-screen cinemas, parking lots, and bed and breakfasts. What worked for me is that I knew it was Vermont, but it very well could have been Lubbock or Albuquerque. I also re-encountered the work of Neil Simon whose writing is usually made fun of in the radical circles I ran in. *Brighton Beach Memoirs* was a revelation to me after being submerged in the post-dramatic theatre world. What a joy to rediscover a memory play that launched the career of Matthew Broderick and made me feel nostalgia for the Brooklyn of my grandfather Morton. I attempted my own memory play, *Solo Aqui*, utilizing many techniques from Simon, namely the direct address of the all-knowing protagonist and quick shifts in location. Why was Neil Simon so damn good and why did we write him off as pure schlock? I jokingly used to say that the most avant-garde thing to do would be to revive Neil Simon's work, but I actually think that notion could be very exciting.

Playwright and Portales, New Mexico native Leonard Madrid introduced me to the work of Tanya Saracho, a writer whose work I had seen and been intrigued by when I was in NYC. Tanya is a Mexican-born multi-hyphenate writer, actor, producer, etc, and Leonard showed us her play *El Nogalar*, her riff on Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard*. She reset the action to an orchard in Mexico, and my imagination came alive. I remembered my own visitations to my tio's orchard in Chimayo, New Mexico. It suddenly dawned on me that all those Chekhovian characters were basically the Gallegoses of New Mexico. I set off to write my own version of the

Saracho/Chekhov response. What came about was the beginning of my fascination with place as a main character.

Have a Good One was written in part as a response to Baker and Simon and Saracho. I was also hugely inspired by, of all things, the trilogy of Ice Cube movies *Barbershop*. I have long been fascinated by barbers and the barbershop. After shaving my head before our Sixth Grade Banquet, my classmates jokingly voted me “Most Likely to Become a Barber.” In undergrad I became enamored of Spike Lee’s work and set out to find his very first student film, *We Cut Headz*, set in a Brooklyn barbershop. I was intrigued by the notion of public spaces like the barbershop as the meeting place of a neighborhood where you catch up on the gossip while getting fresh and clean. My relationships with my own personal barbers have always been close. I am loyal. And for some reason I kept going back to Ice Cube’s *Barbershop*, a sneakily political popcorn movie about gentrification. Influenced by Cube and Baker’s highly-orchestrated environments and Saracho’s clever renderings, I decided I would make a play with one setting, a place that told as much about its inhabitants as dialogue. The co-op became my barbershop, my yoga studio, my cherry orchard.

HAGO was also influenced by my study of Chicano Literature and the work of Luis Valdez and his company, Teatro Campesino. He created theatrical *actos*, which were small sketches that usually involved current events, his version of the Living Newspaper. These were meant to be performed by and for workers. I began to be intrigued by the idea of making my own version of agit-prop, political theatre. Then I went to Los Angeles and saw Flemish director Ivo van Hove’s production of Arthur Miller’s *A View from the Bridge* and it all came together for me.

Ivo van Hove is one of the foremost provocateurs in contemporary performance, and I was able to see firsthand how he encountered a script while I was his assistant director for Lillian

Hellman's *The Little Foxes* at NYTW. Van Hove starts each new play with a very close reading of the text, and in collaboration with his design and dramaturgical partners, he conjures up a theory for approaching each production. His mind is very creative but also very in-yer-face. His *Bridge* at the Geffen in LA was a bloodbath of a play, but for me the takeaway was that Ivo van Hove made a very real statement about immigration and labor in our times by looking at Miller's text. My play *Have a Good One* would be an van Hove meets Miller with a little Baker environment and barbershop humor thrown in. Or that's how I envisioned it.

HAGO became my most fully-realized play. The characters were based on real people, real coworkers and customers at I had while working at The Co-op and other various service jobs, and I wrote the script with those people in mind as I created the world of Theresa's *One Stop Shop*. Inspired by Ivo's reading of Miller, I also set out to make *HAGO* a play about labor and the costs of working for the man.

When people ask where I'm from, I usually say Lubbock and Albuquerque. I often find that when people hear that my family is from New Mexico, there comes a moment when people try to question my authenticity. But where are you really from, they want to know. Truth is you can retrace my family origins all the way back to the Spanish invasion of the Southwest. For good reason, New Mexicans have always had a chip on their shoulders vis-a-vis outsiders. I have the ability and privilege to transgress many borders in life because of my light skin and blue eyes, coupled with my ability to understand and communicate in Spanish and genuinely empathize with people who have had their land taken away from them. I set out to make each character in *HAGO* a variation on the types of people that are from New Mexico or find themselves there. Theresa, inspired by the librarian Teresa Marquez who I met while taking *Chicana Literature*, and my own tia Theresa Semones, is the matriarch. We are in her home and she is our host. But

she mysteriously disappears during the play, leaving her shop open to invaders. Joe is the archetypal intruder, the stranger who comes to town, the interloper. The White Guy. Just look around Old Town ABQ these days and you will see many Joes building new breweries and coffee shops and shopping centers, telling themselves that they are bringing culture to a place devoid of it. Ray Ray and Sarah represent two different sides of myself: the burnout and the activist. Throughout the course of the play they switch purposes, trying to find a fit in a dead-end yet comfortable job. Ray Ray becomes less jaded about life with Joe as his new mentor just as Sarah loses all confidence in her workplace. Donald is a Native American elder who has seen it all and becomes the eye witness, the audience's proxy, to the changing nature of Old Town and Theresa's *One Stop Shop*.

I wrote this play during a time of personal transformation following my probation and mental health crises, but I couldn't help but notice all the changes occurring in my adopted city as well. Constant construction to no end, and for what? A new bus system that is dormant to this day, the result of local political infighting. I thought it was hilarious that we named the non-existent public transportation "ART," Albuquerque Rapid Transit, and that local business owners put up signs in their windows advocating for "NO ART." Only in Albuquerque, I thought. There have been many times during the last few years when I have marveled at the backwoods nature of our fair city. The things that make ABQ great are also easy to make fun of. We are sincere. We don't want anything to change but we want everything to change. This Albuquerque was the backdrop for *Have a Good One*, and I don't believe it could be set in any other place. It is both my love letter to ABQ and my scathing criticism of it. For me it is the perfect culmination to my time in the MFA program as it encapsulates all the mixed feelings I have toward ABQ (and UNM). I love Albuquerque and I hate it. Now that I have written about it, I think there is more in me. My

time in the stacks of Zimmerman Libraries Southwest Collection unearthed many gems that inspired the work and will inspire other stories. I was fortunate enough to take Dr. Bernadine Hernández's *Chicana Literature* class during the time of writing *HAGO*, which put my work in dialogue with the work of Ana Romero and Margarita Cota-Cardenas (at least in my own head). My *HAGO* (incidentally, Spanish for "I made") was my way of reclaiming my own Chicano identity. I stand on the shoulders of my ancestors and all the Chicano artists' *gritos*.

The play is sprawling and I need to do a judicious cut and tie it all together at the end. I need to resolve the character of Theresa and explain why she disappears. I hope to continue working on the play and see it produced, either by myself or some theatre someday somewhere. I am very proud of it and happy to present it as a representation of my work and voice. It came about as I was going through hell, and as are country is going to hell, but for me *Have a Good One/Old Town Store* is about the hope that our home will survive the colonialism thrust upon by outsiders and well-meaning do-gooders who condescendingly think we have "so much potential." Go back to Texas.

Albuquerque has always been about family for me, for better or worse. I have a huge family, but I am also very alone. I was raised pretty much by a single mother, and I have always been very independent, so living in Albuquerque has been a way to reconnect with my true self, Rafie Gallegos.

The second work I present is a teleplay/pilot to a television series called *Plan Q* about starting over for the umpteenth time. Yes, I am a man of the stage and always will be, but I am also a TV baby and lifelong cinephile. Cable was my babysitter. Part of the attraction of the MFA program was the screenwriting component. I have always wanted to make film and television, but I never really knew where I fit in. I have been on a few sets as an actor or Production Assistant, but I

wanted to make work for the screen on my own terms (my Achilles heel and something I need to reconcile someday). When I first took Matthew McDuffie's screenwriting class, I realized how little I knew about writing for the screen. What the heck was a production bible? What is a log-line? How do I format my script? I was more nervous in McDuffie's first few classes than any other courses I took during my entire formal education. Why was I so intimidated? In retrospect, I think it was because I knew the real economic potential of becoming a successful screenwriter. Writing for the theatre is fun and all, but I would love to someday be able to have that swimming pool in the Hollywood Hills. The path to wealth in the dramatic arts is usually through film and television. What do they say about working in the theatre? That you can make a killing but not a living. Film/tv is another beast. Writing for the screen presented the possibility of a career path that would lift me up from poverty.

My first attempts at screenwriting were very much bogged down by industry jargon and the intimidation for writing for the camera as audience, not real people as audience. I was pretty terrible. But I enjoyed writing dialogue and found the restrictions of screenwriting formats to be actually liberating. I was reminded of Anne Bogart's observation that creating a very solid and structured container affords the artist unlimited creativity inside that circumscribed box. This is not new thinking at all, but I was able to put together for myself a few theories I have been introduced to via the program. The container and the thing contained is a notion from Bert O. States that seemed relevant to all our work. What is it exactly that we are creating and how can the world it inhabits be unique? How is it at once familiar and strange? I am conflating a number of critical influences, but it is with good reason. When I started out writing for the stage, I had to learn all new rules to the game, but the core of the work remained the influence of all my theoretical background. The script was the container for the idea which became the container for

the story. As I looked at the foreign-to-me software program Final Draft, I was struck by the notion that although I was learning a new shorthand, I had everything I needed to make a good story already. Taking a cue from Aristotle's Poetics, I started to prioritize plot and characters over things like spectacle, which I had relied on earlier in my career. I was moving away from thinking like a theatre director and towards thinking like a storyteller. I could be more than just a playwright. I could be a writer. Someone who can write for any medium.

ON *PLAN Q*/LATINIDAD

Plan Q is by no means perfect, but for me it is a writing sample that shows my ability to engage in unique world-building while providing a vehicle for a Latin actor. The teleplay is very much influenced by my own experience at Working Classroom in Albuquerque. I burned out in NYC and returned home, trying to hide my tail between my legs as I embarked on a new career path. As I previously mentioned, I expected to run a theatre company when I moved back to ABQ. What the company really needed was a big brother, and after-school counselor and sometimes teacher, a mentor helping young artists with their homework as well as their acting skills. I found myself the sounding board to young people trying to navigate their way through adolescence. I had a knack for being the confidant to a group of girls going through the process of their quinceañeras. I thought I was going to be a mover and shaker theatre maker, but what my community really needed was someone to help them put on a show not on the theatrical stage but for their coming out, their big debuts to the big, wide world. I acquiesced and ended up having a lot of fun as I rehearsed the kids through their ceremonies.

I have always been a fan of backstage dramas and shows and films that are about showbiz. I have also been a big fan of plucky kids on screen. *Bad News Bears* remains one of my favorite pieces of cinema. During the writing of *Plan Q*, I was also practicing my Spanish via a number

of methods including YouTubing telenovelas. I got really into the Argentine series *Rebelde Way* about a group of private school kids who start a band in school. Each episode featured a different singer and performer. I also looked at *Rebelde*, the Mexican version of the show for variation and to hear the differences in Mexican and Argentine Spanish. Because I took Italian in college before any of my formal study of Spanish, my accent sometimes sounds Italian, and because there are a lot of Italians in Argentina, to my ear the Porteño accent is very accessible. I am very embarrassed by my lack of fluency in Spanish, and one of my big goals in life is to become fully communicative en Español. I never had to try in any of my Spanish classes in school because I grew up in a Spanish-speaking household. I could skip class and still manage to pass tests. But I lacked a formal education in the Spanish language even though it comes relatively easy to me. I am my worst critic, and my laziness with Spanish has always been a thorn in my side. I never had a fully fluent conversation in Spanish with my father or mother, but one day I will. *Plan Q* is very much about me exploring my place in the Latinx artistic community and creating a vehicle to empower and showcase other Latinx artists.

Valentina, the fallen celebrity star of *Maria Estrella*, the fictional telenovela of *Plan Q*, has trouble speaking Spanish without a script. She ends up in a situation where she has to teach kids stuff she never learned. Valentina never had a quinceañera, but now she finds herself in a weird predicament. She has to learn on the job and as she helps others achieve their goals she becomes closer to her own family as she embraces the role of caretaker for her childhood dance studio. The work as presented is in pilot form, so we do not see the whole thrust of the series, but I do envision *Plan Q* to be like *Rebelde* and *Rebelde Way* meets *Kids Incorporated/The Mickey Mouse Club* meets *Bunheads* or *Centerstage*. It will feature new songs and choreography as each episode focuses on a different student. Influenced by the web series *High Maintenance*, I wanted

to make a show where every single episode focused on a different character and serves as a showcase for a new actor every week. I initially set *Plan Q* in Denver, but that was mainly to keep it in the Southwest and make a subplot about legal marijuana viable. I plan to make a revision and reset the action to take place in Albuquerque, more specifically at a space like Working Classroom, a very Annie Baker/Merce Cunningham-like dance studio that smells of sweat and hormones. With specificity comes universality, or so I hope.

Have a Good One was the first play I wrote after probation. I was free. Now what. *Plan Q* was my attempt to reclaim my time at Working Classroom and make a youth-oriented backstage comedy. Now that I have these pieces under my belt and a work sample ready to go, I am looking towards the next stage.

I did not actively seek out writing as therapy, but it sure has helped me grieve and find balance. I started out in the program wanting to write plays that honored my deceased mother and father. Now I write for my nieces and nephews, their whole lives ahead of them, full of possibilities and missteps. I know that I needed to write trash in order to arrive at something meaningful to me. I took a lesson from each of my major works and believe I grew immensely with each new piece.

ON BIPOLARIDAD

My name is Rafael Gallegos and I am bipolar. Rather, my name is Rafael and I deal with a Bipolar diagnosis every day of my life. My goal in life is to not let my diagnosis define me. Being bipolar is a lens through which I see the world. Sometimes that world is up, sometimes it is down. Increasingly, I am aware of the high stakes of navigating my mental illness. If I am not careful and not taking care of myself, I wind up in bad places. Jails. Hospitals. Hopefully not the morgue. I have been close, and I never want to go back. I will never go back.

My artistic practice has informed my wellness practice, and vice versa. I am not always on the right path, but every day is a practice, a new chance to lead a balanced life. I am still very raw emotionally from my recent manic episodes. It is embarrassing that I am not always in control of my mental health. I hate myself for it, but each day is a new day, a new opportunity to fall back in love with myself. It is not easy to look in the mirror, but look I must, for when I ignore what is happening before my eyes, I get delusional and tend to lose myself in mania. Rereading my collection of dramatic work, it is clear to me when I am manic and when I am therapeutic. There are many time lapses between my writing, and I have had many stops and starts in the graduate program. It has taken me more than twice as long to finish the program as it usually takes a conventional student to do the work. I am not conventional nor have I ever been.

I attended a performance of *Next to Normal*, a musical about a bipolar mother and how her family dynamics were threatened by her bipolarity, on the day of a major bomb scare in Times Square. The atmosphere in the theatre was tense. At intermission we heard rumblings of a bomb threat just outside the theatre, but the show went on. Alice Ripley sang “I Miss the Mountains” about her character’s desire to remain manic, about the highest of highs that we BP’ers can’t help but succumb to. I relisten to that music and am instantly transported to an emotionally charged time in my life where all I want to do is play in the mountains, in the highs, but I forget that there must be valleys in order to have peaks. I aim to someday write something like that piece of musical theatre, something like Kay Redfield Jamison’s work *An Unquiet Mind*, which has helped me come to grips with my mental illness demons and allowed me to see examples of working artists dealing with bipolar disorder. I hope to give voice to the many bipolar people who are not as high functioning as me. I never have trouble getting out of bed like some of my peers, but I also know that the mountains are just around the bend. It frightens me to no end to

know that I will probably have another manic episode in my lifetime, but I am being ultra-precautious in my war against mania. Writing as a tool for self-examination has been instrumental in my journey to mental health. I am by no means there yet, but I am on a path.

CONCLUSION

Having spent my pre-grad school life immersed in the world of New York avant-garde and international performance, I chose to use my time in grad school to focus on writers who made compact plays. Play-plays. What I found were works that were funny and political and reached a wide audience. Populism has become more and more important to me, or making works that would resonate with my family who grew up in and never left New Mexico.

Outside of my interests in playwriting and screenwriting, I am fascinated by writing that takes place online. I not-so-jokingly refer to my twitter feed as the impetus for my formal writing. During the last few years, I have been able to witness working writers come into their own and work their ideas out in public: Eddie Huang, Cat Marnell, Julia Lockwood, Colson Whitehead, Shea Serrano. These are my internet writing heroes. I realize now that I initially found my writerly voice by running the social media streams for NYTW. I had to capture the voice of an institution, but I also had to write in real time. I had an audience and people responded. There was something welcoming about the microblog format of twitter that made it easy for me to adopt another voice. I did not take it seriously, but I had a lot of fun with it. After amassing something like 10,000 tweets, I realized that maybe I was a writer after all, and I fell in love with the sound of my own writerly voice. I will continue to look at emerging technologies as an avenue for my writing.

Why the theatre and why now? Simply put, the world is a toxic place. Making and experiencing new stories has been my escape from toxicity and a balm to soothe my soul. The theatre allows for a collective response in real time. Looking someone in the eye and really listening is a transgressive act that occurs on stages every day.

I am simultaneously a person without a home and a person with many homes. I felt at home and safe at New York Theatre Workshop. I felt at home at the Drama League. I felt at home at Merce Cunningham Dance Company. But those were all temporary homes, buildings. My real home is wherever I am, holding close with the memories of my ancestors and the possibilities for new stories.

When I was a kid doing community theatre in Lubbock, one of my first really good directors Tim McIntyre would give a speech to the cast before each opening. Tim directed me in several shows, so I saw the speech coming, but it always got me. He compared the theatre and each new play, each new family, to a rose. He gifted each actor and crew member with a rose on opening night. It was beautiful but thorny. It did not last forever. But when it bloomed, it was the one of life's most glorious blessings.

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Have a Good One

by
Rafael Gallegos

WINTER TIME

Setting: Old Town, Albuquerque, New Mexico. THERESA'S ONE STOP SHOP, a quirky Mom and Pop tourist stop just off the plaza.

Time: present.

Lights reveal RAY RAY and SARAH, two clerks, opening up shop in the fog of the early morning light. They move slowly and deliberately.

NOTE: The design of the shop should not be realistic. The cases and shelves, if there are any, should be empty.

Enter McCALL, a labor lawyer.

MCCALL

Something funny happens in the mornings around these parts. You see the way they look at me? They size me up. Am I a potential customer? Am I a regular whose name they yell when I walk through the door? McCall! Hey, McCall! No. They see my suit and assume a number of things about me, namely that I am not one of them. But when they see me with my briefcase instead of my shopping bags, they at least know that I am not a tourist. They might assume that I work around the corner in one of the many offices nestled alongside the many shops in adobe buildings. I exchange a nod of recognition with the clerks in their jeans and sneakers as we silently acknowledge our place. They are weary of me, a lawyer, for understandable reasons. Maybe they have checkered legal pasts. They definitely have checkered legal pasts. But so do I. And I am on their side. And here we are. In Old Town, Albuquerque, New Mexico at Theresa's One Stop Shop.

McCall disappears, suit and briefcase in silhouette.

Ray Ray finishes a cigarette before his shift. Sarah fixes her asymmetrical punk rock hair and puts on her work apron.

They spray the empty cases with Windex. They use windex for everything.

RAY RAY

All this construction has gotta go. It took me like 20 minutes to get here and I live right around the corner!

SARAH

Thought you were on foot these days. You can always borrow one of my bikes. If there's one that fits.

RAY RAY

I'm not going on any bicycle unless it's a lowrider bicycle.

SARAH

I absolutely do not see the point in those things.

RAY

You wouldn't understand.

SARAH

Oh no! I just had a thought. What on earth will all your cool lowrider homies do about all this construction? No more cruisin Route 66 on Sunday evenings, backing up traffic for days.

RAY RAY

Like I said. You wouldn't understand. And I'll never understand why you ride around on some ironic hipster bike when you have that fly new BMW your daddy bought you.

SARAH

Hand me down BMW. You wouldn't understand.

RAY RAY

Did you catch the game last night?

SARAH

Do I look like I own a TV?

RAY RAY

Every house has like six of them.

SARAH

Do I look like I give a shit about the Super Bowl? You smell like smoke. Use some of the refreshing neutralizer. Or maybe some essential oils.

RAY RAY

The employee handbook clearly states that "clerks are not to use any cologne or perfume or any smell that might distract the customer's shopping experience."

SARAH

You see any customers in here? Fix yourself, you're disgusting.

Enter THERESA, the store's namesake, carrying an urn of coffee.

THERESA

Coffee's up!

SARAH

Thank God! Caffeine, caffeine, caffeine! I haven't had anything all day and I'm dying. Dying! Give it to me now, Theresa!

RAY RAY

Now THAT explains your cheery disposition.

THERESA

Light Roast was on special. Seems like the price of Piñon just keeps going up and up. If we get a lot of out-of-towners today we might have to spike it with some caramel or something.

RAY RAY

Good luck with that! Looks pretty dead out there. Only the lawyers who can't afford office space closer to the court house out there. Old Town is dead. D.E.A.D. Dead.

SARAH

We get it.

RAY RAY

I thought you'd like my attempt at being emo. Goth? What is it you are again?

SARAH

I'm punk and you know it, rude boy.

RAY RAY

You weren't even born when those bands on your t-shirts were playing!

SARAH

Suck it, Ray Ray.

THERESA

Children! Watch your voices, mijitos, we're officially open.

RAY RAY

I'll hit the sign.

SARAH

(under her breath)

Punk ass bitch.

THERESA

Who wants breakfast burritos?

RAY RAY

I'm not really THAT hungry. I did have a poptart for breakfast and all, but if you were going on a breakfast burrito run then I guess I could/

THERESA

Burritos on the shop today.

SARAH

Score!

RAY RAY

Thanks, T!

SARAH

Thank you, Auntie Theresa! I'll take whatever's clever. Just no pork. And make sure the eggs are free range. And the cheese should be real cheese and not the yellow kind. How is yellow a cheese flavor?

RAY RAY

Punk rock, my ass.

THERESA

Three breakfast burritos, regular. Got it. Think you can hold it down while I'm gone?

RAY RAY

I think we'll be ok. If anyone gives us any crap we got Spike right here to regulate.

SARAH

Thanks, T. Can you get me a latte too? From the new cafe?

RAY RAY

We have coffee for free right here!

THERESA

Who says it's free!

SARAH

I'm addicted to their almond milk lattes. I don't know what they do to that coffee, but I can't drink this swill anymore. No offense to New Mexican Piñon. I just don't thnk I can go back.

THERESA

Ok little Miss Fancypants. You do know what they charge for those "third wave" lattes, whatever that means? You can get a whole pound of Piñon for one darn drink.

SARAH

Guess I'll have to go uncaffeinated then.

RAY RAY

Please, God no! Please don't let me work an entire shift with an uncaffeinated Sarah!

THERESA

We'll see what we can do. I'm off to Church Street. Hold my calls!

Theresa exits and Ray Ray and Sarah sit in silence. Ray starts to dust. Sarah wipes.

SARAH

I fucking love that woman.

RAY RAY

If ever there was a goddess...

SARAH

There is nothing I wouldn't do for that woman.

RAY RAY

Who would you kill for her?

SARAH

Sure.

RAY RAY

Would you... sell your first born for her?

SARAH

In an instant.

RAY RAY

Would you... quit your job and go to law school?

SARAH

Whoah, whoah, whoah, wait a minute, hold the phone, stop the presses, what the hell you mean law school?

RAY RAY

Then you wouldn't do anything for her, would you.

Enter DONALD, a retired veteran who's been coming to Theresa's shop since before it was Theresa's.

RAY RAY

Mornin, Donald!

DONALD

Whatdya hear whatdya say, Ray Ray?

SARAH

Don.

DONALD

My dearest Sarah. How are you this fine morning?

SARAH

Coffee's on. Light Roast.

DONALD

Whatdya hear whatdya say! I was lookin forward to a few cupsa Piñon but this'll do just fine. Gotta change it up a bit. But nothin beats New Mexican Piñon coffee.

RAY RAY

Pine nut coffee. Pine becomes Piñon. God I love the tilde!

DONALD

"Piñon".

SARAH

ñ! ñ! ñ!

DONALD

Fine, fine fine. Fine day out there. Good, fine day to go tourist trappin. Know what I'm sayin?

RAY RAY

You are the original tourist trap, Donnie.

DONALD

I tell you what. Now I been a tourist. Plenty of times. Trust me. In 'nam. In the gulf. In ghanastan. But now these little ladies are on my turf.

RAY RAY

Go and tell em, Donnie.

SARAH

Do not encourage this behavior, Raymundo.

DONALD

I see em with their sexy little totes and their fanny packs and their white faces made even whiter from their SPF 1000. I set my target in my little crosshairs.

SARAH

No one wants to hear about your little hairs.

DONALD

I track em down and squeeze the trigger and boom! Before you know it, I'm tellin em all about Theresa's One-Stop Shop. Best free coffee in Old Town.

SARAH

We're not a coffee shop, Donald! That's courtesy coffee! For customers! Last time you were a customer was... when again?

DONALD

I bought something the other day when my pension came through.

RAY RAY

Want the paper, Don?

DONALD

Just the sports section. Don't think I can bear to see what the Albuquerque Urinal, er, Journal, prints about this darn world. Me? I head straight to the sports section, cept on Sundays when they have the Living section and I can learn about free crotcheting classes. More trappin targets, nah mean? Just can't read the Albuquerque Urinal. Not unless I wanna hear about another store closing. can't let them bring you down. No sir, no way.

RAY RAY

I can't read that rag anymore. I'm strictly a Free Press kinda guy.

SARAH

Free Press? Ha. There is nothing free about the press.

RAY RAY

That's just what they call it. The Albuquerque Free Press. Or ABQ Free Press. I'm tellin you, it's a good weekly.

SARAH

If you wanna know where to score your medical Marijuana card. Or an escort! Read your horrorscope. You know. The finer things in life. Free Press. What a concept.

DONALD

Now you just wait a minute there, missy. Some of us gave our lives for this here country of ours to have freedom of the press, the right to bear arms, and all the other unalienable rights the good lord bestowed upon us when we were born here.

SARAH

Or immigrated.

RAY RAY

Emigrated.

DONALD

You know, back when I was a reporter overseas...

SARAH

I thought you were a medic?

DONALD

We had a lot of jobs back then. Unlike nowadays.

RAY RAY

Tell me about it. Now I can barely find a living wage gig, even with a Master's Degree.

SARAH

You mean "in-progress". Masters Degree in-progress.

RAY RAY

I'm on track!

DONALD

I remember when you first started here. Thought you could change the world with your book bag and Che beret. Look how far you've come.

RAY RAY

Somethin like that.

SARAH

You said it. I didn't.

RAY RAY

Whatever, man. I'm just burnt. Just tired is all. Of this.

SARAH

Washed! You are washed.

RAY RAY

I take it that means washed up or something? I can't keep up with the kiddie slang anymore.

SARAH

Washed.

DONALD

What was I saying?

SARAH

You were talking about how Ray Ray is so old. And pathetic.

DONALD

I have no idea. I was saying one thing and now I'm sitting back and thinking, I have no idea what I was talking about. Now THAT is old. When you can't even remember what you were sayin from one moment to the next. Keeps you on your toes at least.

SARAH

This is depressing. Have some more coffee!

RAY RAY

Old Town depresses me.

SARAH

Take that back. Take that back now! What's so depressing about the heartbeat of America? The backbone of exceptionalism?

RAY RAY

Sometimes I think about what it would be like to work uptown. Or even in... I don't know. Denver? Phoenix even?

DONALD

Phoenix is too darn hot. Why'd you wanna live in a place where you sweat all the damn time? Can't drive around the block without drenchin your shirt. And Denver? Don't get me started on Denver! The traffic! Can't even find parking in Denver!

SARAH

Denver's cool. All the good shows go through there. But we get some awesome, independent shows here in Albuquerque.

RAY RAY

That nobody's ever heard of!

SARAH

Yeah, sometimes I wanna see the big bands, the big shows. But they don't come here. Straight from Dallas to Denver and Phoenix. They skip New Mexico.

RAY RAY

You know what they call us? Fly over. They call us a fly over state. Actually you'd have to have flights to fly over. The airport here isn't even an airport. They call it the Sunport!

DONALD

The Sunport! Back in the day when I was a shuttle bus driver for this hotel downtown, I used to pickup passengers from the gates. Used to be able to just park outside, right outside the gates! I'd hold a big sign with the graphic of the hotel, a dancing Kokopelli Dude, and yell, welcome to the Sunport! I always got tipped.

SARAH

One day I could see myself somewhere else. In Denver. But for now? There's a real scene here. The underground shows! They're really happening like nowhere else. The art galleries poppin up! We even have a zine culture.

RAY RAY

No one wants to hear about zines. In case you haven't heard, we have this magical thing called the internet.

You don't have to go to Kinko's and cut and paste and cut and paste to make culture.

SARAH

It's called craftsmanship. You wouldn't understand.

DONALD

Didn't you used to have a zine, Ray Ray?

RAY RAY

Coffee's gettin cold.

The sound of a pickup truck. A figure in a cowboy hat emerges and scopes out the shop.

DONALD

What'd you call that thing again? Ray Ray's World?

Enter JOE, an entrepreneur from Texas.

RAY RAY

Hello and welcome to Theresa's One-Stop Shop!

JOE

Howdy!

SARAH

"Howdy."

JOE

Nice place you got here. It really is somethin else. Are you Theresa?

SARAH

Me? Nononono. Theresa's... she's indisposed at the moment.

RAY RAY

Theresa's out on a breakfast burrito run. What can we do ya for?

JOE

Oh, I'm just passin through. First time in the area. I was walkin around the plaza and couldn't help but notice your great southern exposure lighting and expansive front windows. I simply had to come in and see the inside for myself.

RAY RAY

Make yourself at home.

DONALD

There's coffee on! They're very hospitable here at Theresa's. I like to tell all my friends about the courtesy coffee. Just the right kind of touch that makes you feel at home.

JOE
Thanks. Don't mind if I do.

DONALD
Best coffee in Old Town!

JOE
What's the good news, old-timer?

DONALD
You know what they say. No news is good news.

JOE
I reckon.

DONALD
Back when I was a reporter, I'd always write somethin worth readin, whether it was about the Gallup Lady Bengals basketball team or the Grants Pirates basketball team. When you saw my byline you know you were in for something special.

SARAH
This is insufferable. I'll be out back if you need me.

Sarah gives Joe a once over as she exits.

JOE
Do the spikes signify something special? Does that mean she's the man in the relationship?

RAY RAY
She's just in a phase. She'll grow out of it.

DONALD
You sure did.

RAY RAY
What brings you to town, Mr...?

JOE
Joe. Just call me Joe.

RAY RAY
I'm Ray.

DONALD
But we all call him Ray Ray on account of his Dad was Ray Jr and his daddy's daddy was Ray Sr, so we say Ray Ray so as to differentiate. I'm Donald or Don or Donnie or as my friends call me, Big D.

SARAH

(off stage)
Nobody calls you Big D!

JOE
Pleasure to meet you, Big D. Ray. This seems like a heckuva place. Heckuva town.

DONALD
Could be worse. Could be Fallujah. Or Dallas. You're not from Dallas now, are ya Joe?

(long pause)

JOE
Fort Worth.

DONALD
Thank God!

JOE
I had ya for a minute!

DONALD
That's a good one. This guy's a-ok, Ray Ray.

RAY RAY
That spot outside's a loading zone. The meter maids don't play around. Probably the sole source of income for the city. You might want to move that rig of yours.

JOE
How bout I give you the keys and you find a good spot?

RAY RAY
Serious? That thing sure is a beaute.

JOE
You into cars?

RAY RAY
You kidding? I got an old Monte Carlo I've been workin on. You like them lifted, I like them lowered. I'm savin up for a system. Maybe some hydros. Who knows.

JOE
Every car and truck has its own beauty. And if it don't, then you can always take it to the shop.

DONALD
Chop it and drop it.

RAY RAY

I got you, Joe. We have some employee parking around the corner. My car's in the shop, so you can use mine.

DONALD

By the shop he means the morgue.

JOE

Thanks, sport. Feel free to have a little joy ride too. That is if your boss don't mind.

DONALD

Oh I'm not the boss!

JOE

You look like the commanding officer to me!

DONALD

You served?

JOE

Navy family. Grew up in the pool halls of West Texas VFWs. My dad was the commander of the American Legion. Didn't serve myself per se, but I have the utmost respect for our men in uniform.

SARAH

(off stage)

An women! Women in uniform!

Joe tosses the keys to Ray Ray.

JOE

Open her up. Go ahead. See what she can do.

RAY RAY

Yessiree! Be right back.

JOE

Take your time.

Ray Ray runs out to park Joe's truck.

DONALD

How can you be sure that boy even has a license?

JOE

I'm insured. Somethin happens to it, I'll just report it stolen.

DONALD

Yessiree. I like the cut of your jib.

JOE

You from around here, old-timer?

DONALD

Give or take a few tours here and there, been here all my life. I'm native to these parts. You could say my family has been here for centuries. We know this land. I've known Theresa since she was in my niece's kindergarten class.

JOE

That so? And how long has she owned this shop?

DONALD

Let's see here... the property has been in the family for years. Sheesh. Probably since Cortez and them Spaniards came to town!

JOE

Now that's history!

DONALD

They say it's the victors who write history.

JOE

Whatever or whoever decides, this is a historic place. This is a historic moment.

DONALD

Yessiree.

JOE

Ain't it crazy how the times change?

DONALD

You're tellin me.

Theresa enters with a takeout bag and a coffee carrier.

THERESA

Can you believe some pendejo in a big ass truck with Texas plates nearly ran me over! Can't he see I'm a pedestrian? I don't know how they do things over in Texas, but here we yield to pedestrians! Right of way, "partner"! Right of way! Ok. Mijitos. I've got burritos and seventeen dollar almond mild lattes. Nearly dropped the lattes but my reflexes are sharper these days from my pilates. Where are all my employees?

JOE

Hello, Theresa. I'm Joe. Thank you for habving me in your fine shop.

DONALD

This here's Joe. He's from... out of town! He's been askin for ya. He's here to... wait a minute... what are you here for again?

THERESA

Joe. Nice to meet you. I'm... Theresa. But you knew that?

JOE

I know a lot of things, Ms. Theresa, but I'm always open to learning new ideas.

THERESA

So you two are just sitting here in my shop with the cash register right there and all the merchandise out and all my employees are... where again?

DONALD

Sarah's out back tendin to her pink hair or whatever it is she does when she disappears to the restroom for large chunks of time, and Ray Ray's parking Joe's truck.

JOE

Your customer service here at Theresa's One-Stop Shop is truly Above and Beyond.

THERESA

I take it that's a compliment. Sarah! Burrito's getting cold! You hungry there, cowboy?

JOE

It would be rude to refuse an offer from a host, now wouldn't it. I would love to taste your burritos.

DONALD

I guess I could eat a bit...

THERESA

No one asked you, Donnie. Have some more coffee. It quells the hunger.

Theresa shares a burrito with Joe.

JOE

This is an amazing spot you have here.

DONALD

Thanks. We try.

JOE

I can tell. I've been all over the country, and you never see a place like this. The land. And the light! The light is my favorite thing about it. You can just get lost in it.

I knew I had to see how the light looked from the inside of the shop.

THERESA

I know, I know. The light. That's what they always say.

JOE

Because it's true.

THERESA

Wait til you see it in the evening rain during Monsoon season.

JOE

"Monsoon Season" in the desert? Maybe I'll stick around for the rain fall. Place like this makes me wanna stick around.

THERESA

Yes. I can tell that about you.

Ray Ray storms in with amped up energy.

RAY RAY

There he is! My main man Joe! That thing really gets goin!

JOE

Did ya use the nitrous option?

RAY RAY

You are the man. I swear to fucking God/

THERESA

Customers!

RAY RAY

Right. Sorry. But this truck is amazing. I wouldn't even call it a truck. It's like a mansion on jacked up wheels. The interior? Holy... the seat adjusts to the width of your...butt and has automatic heat all up and down your spine. Wow. Sure beats my beater.

DONALD

Thought you were rolling around with your bus pass these days?

THERESA

I'll never understand men and their cars. I just want something comfortable to take me from point a to point b that I don't have to worry about fixing all the time. Now my alignments all busted up from this construction.

JOE

I try to get a new ride every year. I make sure it's not brand brand new. A truck depreciates as soon as you drive it out of the lot.

RAY RAY

That thing still smells brand new.

DONALD

I had a new car once. 1984 Chrysler New Yorker Fifth Avenue.

THERESA

You mean that yellowish monstrosity with all the P.O.W. M.I.A. and Dukakis/Bentsen stickers? That you still drive?

DONALD

It's Champagne. Lee Iacocca and the good people at Mopar automotive company called it Champagne.

JOE

Theresa. Gentlemen. It really has been a pleasure. Thank you so much for your company and for showing me the light from inside One-Stop. I really must go.

RAY RAY

But we just parked the car! Stay a bit.

JOE

I have a feelin I'll be back.

RAY RAY

Well... can we offer you a postcard or something? Maybe a flag witht he ZIA sign on it? A dreamcatcher for your rearview mirror?

DONALD

I really shouldn't this time. But this isn't over. We will meet again.

THERESA

Thanks for stopping in.

JOE

The pleasure is all mine.

RAY RAY

Ours too!

JOE

Thanks for that burrito, Theresa.

THERESA

Any time. Have a good one.

JOE

Yes. "Have a good one."

DONALD

Have a good one.

RAY RAY

Yeah, have a good one, Joe! And be careful out there! It's a crazy world in Old Town!

JOE

Have a good one!

Joe exits and puts his hat back on.
Time seems to halt as everyone watches
Joe saunter down the street.

RAY RAY

Now there goes a real man.

DONALD

You can tell by the way he struts. That's a man who's been places.

THERESA

He's kinda handsome. If you're into that rugged, squarejaw, bass-voice kinda thing.

Sarah rushes back in with even pinker hair.

SARAH

Thought that cowpoke would never leave. Where's my burrito?

THERESA

Snooze you lose. Cowboy Joe beat you to it. But here's a cold and expensive latte.

SARAH

I hate Texans. So high and mighty with their Lonestarness. Who the hell was that guy, anyway? He just cruises in here and acts all nice and interested in us and who we are...

THERESA

Yeah, what an asshole! So kind. Going out of his way to be polite.

SARAH

You're blinded by the burrito. I swear. You haven't had any in how long and then throw yourself in front of the first guy in a Stetson.

RAY RAY

He had like three other hats in the back seat of his truck! Black, straw, white... a hat for every occassion. What a guy.

DONALD

Coffee's out.

RAY RAY

Think I could pull off a cowboy hat?

DONALD

What you need, Ray Ray, is a uniform. Something that you don't have to think about when you get up in the morning. You just put it on, go to work, and everyone goes, "Hey, That's Ray Ray." Could be overalls maybe? I could see you in overalls. Maybe even some suspenders? I once knew a guy, everyday he wore a black turtleneck, black suspenders, and black chinos. Thought he was a mime or somethin but he really sold insurance. Hell, I don't know. Whatever it is, you've got to find it for yourself.

SARAH

I see you've landed on the Deer Hunter look, Donnie. Suits you.

DONALD

At least I don't have no pink in my hair. Gonna start callin you Pinko.

THERESA

Mijitos! This is an insult free zone. Maybe I'll institute a no insult jar. Everytime you insult someone a dollar goes in the jar. Swearing too. Maybe this way we'll be able to afford those "third wave coffee" lattes they sell by the museum. What the hell is that anyway, third wave?

RAY RAY

I'll take your Piñon drip coffee any damn day of the week. Smoke break!

Ray takes a smoke break with his vape device.

SARAH

I for one love the new coffee shops and whatnots. Beats the hell out of this Hills Brothers Maxwell House nonsense.

DONALD

Don't say nothin bad about my Hills Brothers, pinko!

THERESA

One dollar please! Now you are ten percent closer to reaching your latte goal. I don't know how anyone affords that stuff. Somneday I too would like to be able to sit in a coffee shop

at 11am and internet shop while procrastinating on my novel, but life isn't like that.

SARAH

It should be though. If they are selling fair trade coffee, then surely we can get a fair wage to afford that coffee.

THERESA

Hold up, wait a minute. Let me get this straight. Are you not happy with your wage here?

SARAH

Nonononono, don't get it twisted, sister. I'm saying. If we work hard, not just us here in the shop but ALL of us, then we should be compensated justly.

THERESA

Who gives you health insurance, huh? Who lets you take a two week vacation to follow some 21 Savage Pilots band, huh? Who gives you a cash advance when you needed to take care of your little thing, huh?

SARAH

Theresa! You are the best boss in the whole wide world and there is nothing I or any of us wouldn't do for you.

THERESA

But.

SARAH

How do you know there's a but?

THERESA

There's always a but.

SARAH

But I'm just sayin. I'd like to be able to afford to shop where I work. Just sayin.

THERESA

You don't need to shop here because you always just take what you need.

DONALD

In my day we called that shopliftin!

THERESA

You do know that if you ever need anything you can just ask me, right? Go direct. Just go directly to me and we don't have to have these awkward conversations.

SARAH

There's nothing awkward about honesty. And labor. You know I'm TeamTheresa.

THERESA

I'm serious, honey. You can always talk to me. TeamTheresa.

Ray enters in a cloud of smoke.

RAY RAY

We're making teams? What's the sport? Softball? Man that'd be cool. But I don't think we have enough people to man a team.

SARAH

Wo-Man the team!

RAY RAY

How about volleyball?! That'd be wild! But I guess we'd need a net... Kickball! Yessssss! That's the ticket!

SARAH

And thank god for Theresa and allowing us to work here and get on our very generous healthcare plan so when Ray Ray's washed self breaks his ankle sliding into third he can safely get all his medical needs taken care of. Thank God.

THERESA

Just for that, you're playing outfield.

RAY RAY

Team Theresa's One-Stop Shop Kickball Squad! Yessssss! We need uniforms! And hats!

SARAH

I'll design the logo.

DONALD

Guess I'll make the coffee. If no one else is. Shoot.

Lights shift down on the shop tableaux.

McCall emerges in the dusk.

MCCALL

All day long I handle disputes. I know unfavorable conditions when I see them. You begin to recognize the signs. It usually comes about during a time of stress. And these are very stressful times. All day long these people sit in an obsolete shop while the world passes them by. These shops made of brick and mortar by real hands, hands with calluses. These shops are going extinct. But everything that was once out of style comes back in. And vice versa. And so goes the cycle. And I am there to collect my billable hours.

The workers close up shop. Donald even helps take out the coffee.

MCCALL

It really is a beautiful thing, no? A group of people working in a cooperative manner for the greater good of society. What a world.

Sarah takes off her apron and walks by.

MCCALL

Evenin'.

SARAH

Evenin?

MCCALL

Nice out.

SARAH

Yep.

MCCALL

Indeed.

SARAH

Alright. Have a good one.

Sarah exits while McCall watches her.

MCCALL

See? Wasn't that love? It still happens, two people connecting. Two people who find themselves on the same side of the street decide to greet one another and make actual eye contact instead of pretending to be on the phone, listening to their own sphere of curated buzz. Isn't it lovely? To really connect.

McCall disappears.

Theresa drops her keys as she closes up the shop. Joe swoops in to pick them up. Theresa screams!

THERESA

What in the...?!

JOE

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to frighten you.

THERESA

Albuquerque Lesson Number 1. Do not, do not run up on someone in the dark from behind. Not in this town, not in this hood.

You might get shanked. Old Town after dark is nothing to mess with.

JOE

Good to know. I'm sorry.

THERESA

And who says chivalry is dead.

JOE

I'm stalking you actually, so I don't think you can technically call me chivalrous.

THERESA

It's been so long since I had a stalker. I hope I dressed for the occasion.

JOE

I'm sure you have plenty of stalkers. How about Donald, for instance.

THERESA

Donald? He's a special case. Call em stalkers, call em regulars, call em anything you like just as long as they keep comin.

JOE

May I take you out for a drink, Theresa? Or perhaps a meal or something?

THERESA

You are direct. I like that.

JOE

We Texans are professional flirts, haven't you heard?

THERESA

Well. I don't drink. But thank you for asking. I'm all full up from that breakfast burrito. How about an ice cream?

JOE

Is there a good place around here?

THERESA

A good place? A good place! One of the only late night spots in Old Town is The Creamery. I've got a tab there. First cone's on me.

JOE

But I'm taking YOU out.

THERESA

You can get the second.

JOE
But I'm lactose intolerant!

THERESA
Really?

JOE
No, not really. We eat cow and cow biproduct with everything in Texas.

THERESA
How's about you get the cones and I'll save us a seat. I'll take a Rocky Road in a sugar cone. Tell em it's for me and they'll know what to do.

JOE
One scoop or three?

THERESA
Dealer's choice.

Joe goes off for some ice cream as Theresa takes a moment on the bench outside the shop. She closes her eyes briefly.

Lights drastically shift as the actor playing Donald walks on dressed as a Cigar Store Indian. He "tucks her in" on the bench.

CSI
It was this very place, this very place (!) in the year 1706, Governor Francisco Cuervo y Valdez made Old Town the focal point of the community. The plaza! The meeting place! A place where people can gather and be part of a bigger whole. Looming over us is San Felipe De Neri Church, the oldest building in the entire town of Albuquerque. Built in 1793! Today Old Town looks much as it did back then, with Pueblo meets Spanish style architecture, flat roofed buildings and the soft contours of adobe which mirror the Southwestern landscape...

The Cigar Store Indian wanders off into the distance and continues to recite facts about Albuquerque.

Joe returns with Ice Cream.

JOE
Good morning, sunshine.

THERESA

Did I just pass out? I think I went into dream state. I dreamt this stranger from out of town was bribing me with sweets, serenading me with spurs that jingle jangle jingle.

JOE

Poor thing, you must be tired.

THERESA

You have no idea.

JOE

Rocky Road for the lady. Mint Chocolate Chip for me.

THERESA

Predictable.

JOE

One thing you'll learn from me is that I am reliable. That's what they always say. Joe, he's reliable.

THERESA

What kind of person has ice cream in January?

JOE

A reliable one.

THERESA

It is unseasonably warm.

JOE

I brought good luck.

THERESA

I don't think I've ever used that word. Unseasonably.

JOE

First time for everything.

THERESA

Something about you has me speaking in tongues.

JOE

I only speak the Mother Tongue.

THERESA

You're not one of those types who wears shorts year around? Because if that's the case we can just stop this ice cream thing right now.

JOE

Do I strike you as a shorts kind of guy?

THERESA

Yes. And sandals. And sandals with socks. You're not one of those sandals with socks kind of guys? If you wear sandals why not go all the way and let the toes free! But men's toes? I don't want to see that. Call me old fashioned.

JOE

I keep my toes warm and hidden in my Ostrich skin Luchese's.

THERESA

Wow. Expensive.

JOE

I have very, very fine taste. But I can appreciate a good scoop. Some cute gal told me this was the best in all of Old Town.

THERESA

I don't know about all that. I said it was the only thing open late. Late being after 6.

JOE

Are you single, Theresa?

THERESA

Whoa there, partner.

JOE

No need gallopin all around the subject now, is there.

THERESA

Being single in this place at my age with my baggage? I've seen a lot of sandals with socks, put it that way.

JOE

I do own cargo pants if that's any consolation.

THERESA

Where you keep your hunting supplies. And your ammo.

JOE

Gotta have your ammo. Never know when you'll run into enemy territory.

THERESA

Wait, you're not NRA are you? Don't answer that. I don't want to know. How long are you in town?

JOE

Who knows. Maybe I'll want to settle down. Find a nice shop to work. Rent an adobe. Buy an adobe.

THERESA

Trade that big rig of yours in for a used Subaru and you'll have the down payment no problem. You'll fit right in with the other expats.

JOE

I like you. You're funny.

THERESA

And you are direct.

JOE

You ever think about up and leaving this place? Travel the world in a big rig with a handsome stranger?

THERESA

Don't tempt me.

JOE

Nothin like the open road, beef jerky, books on tape...

THERESA

Sexy. Very sexy. If I had it my way I'd turn over the key to the shop and walk away. Go down south to Mexico. Yucatan peninsula. Merida. Tulum. The water. There is no water in New Mexico. I love New Mexico, I love Albuquerque, but there is no water in Albuquerque.

JOE

We got South Padre Island in Texas. Galveston.

THERESA

I'd send the shop a postcard from time to time.

JOE

What would it take.

THERESA

Well, I don't know the going rate for a postcard stamp. Is it the same as a real stamp? I don't remember. You'd think I know that, running a business and all.

JOE

What would it take to walk away and retire from it all.

THERESA

More than just a flirty ice cream cone date. I can tell you that much.

JOE

I'm not just any tourist.

THERESA

I can see that. Let's put it this way. I'm not gonna retire anytime soon. My business is... our business is. Not great.

JOE

I'm so sorry. It seems so quaint though.

THERESA

Quaint does not pay the bills. With all this construction, a lot of stores are closing their doors. I can barely pay for our free coffee nevermind salaries. People just don't come out anymore. They'd rather sit at home and watch some show or somethin and shop from the comfort of their recliners.

JOE

But what you have is so special and unique.

THERESA

We're unique in that all our prices are higher than everybody elses! Sure, sure. We support local artists and artisans. All our stuff is organic and local yadda yadda yadda. But we are broke! Hell if it were solely up to me, I'd make it a weed dispensary or something. Then we'd at least afford rent. But it's not just up to me. Our customers are family. We are Mom and Pop.

JOE

What would it take for you to walk away.

THERESA

I would want to know that the independent spirit will continue after me. I know that sounds cheesy. But it's true. I would want to make it so the Theresa's One-Stop Shop is a meeting place at the meeting place of our city. A salon of sorts on the plaza.

JOE

Good to know.

THERESA

Good to know? Who are you?

JOE

I am looking to expand my investments and business practices.

THERESA

Aren't we all.

JOE

I'm serious.

THERESA

What is it that you do, exactly? Who are you?

JOE

I'm a consultant.

THERESA

A consultant? Is that even a real job? Consultant? Like hypothetically if I were to apply for another job and want to pad my resume with something that sounded important, I would put down "consultant." It sounds shady.

JOE

If you must know, I work for a global investment company as a consultant handling their import and export division with special attention to tourism.

THERESA

I don't know what any of that means, but it sounds like you're rich. Steak dinner tonight then?

JOE

Tonight and every night.

An offstage banda plays some Mariachi music.

THERESA

The gazebo is our greatest concert stage. Stay long enough and you will memorize all the songs, even if you don't speak Spanish.

JOE

That's real? You mean that's not a record, or cd?

THERESA

You're dating yourself, mister. Record.

JOE

Can this place get any more magical?

THERESA

What are you looking for?

JOE

It's right in front of me.

THERESA

An old, beaten down, barren place with no prospects?

JOE

Not at all, Theresa. I see A luminous, charming, inviting place with so much potential.

THERESA

Potential. That's that they all say. You think you're the first?

They all come in and talk about potential this, potential that. Why do you have to go and change it if you like it.

JOE
Oh I like it. I like it alright.

THERESA
And you want to be a part of it?

JOE
Most definitely. I want to invest. I want to consult.

THERESA
What hotel you staying at?

JOE
Don't know yet. Where's the best one?

THERESA
You don't have a hotel room and it's this late at night?
What'd you think would happen? You think you'd meet some nice
shop owner and she'd give you a private tour of her store?
Back room and all?

JOE
I promise to remove my boots.

THERESA
You Texans are trouble.

JOE
You have no idea.

THERESA
Finish that cone. Let's see what you're made of, cowboy.

Theresa drags Joe back to the shop.

As the offstage banda continues to
play, they get down all up in the shop.
On every surface.

Sarah, drunk, gets her keys out and
yells to her offstage friends.

SARAH
You guys! I have to pee! Give me a moment! NO I'm not gonna
pee in the alley that's disgusting and illegal I don't want
you to see me squat...

She tries her keys and sees that
somebody's in the shop

SARAH

That you Ray Ray?! You sleepin in the shop now! Your mom kick you out finally?

(beat)

Who's? What in the...

Sarah watches the action.

Fuckin Theresa's Don't Stop Shop.

She squats right outside the shop and pees.

Yesssssssssss.

THERESA

(inside the shop)

Yesssssssssss!!!

JOE

Yeehaw!!!

Sarah finishes peeing and goes off.

SARAH

He did not just say Yeehaw?!

Lights fade on the post-coital couple and the stream of urine.

SPRING TIME

McCall enters in his Spring time outfit, a Seersucker suit and straw fedora.

Ray Ray and Sarah clean the shop, taking down the chile ristras and making a springtime display in the window/front.

MCCALL

Springtime in Old Town. The possibilities. The snow fall on the plaza becomes flora. Fiestas de Albuquerque is right around the corner, an event that celebrates the history and traditions of our fair city. The Easter bunny has set up shop at the gazebo. This is a time of renewal, when the dormant streets and shops become alive with vibrant Folklorico colors and energies from hibernating beings ready to meet the world anew. Start fresh. Renaissance. Springtime for Theresa's One-Stop Shop is no different.

The new leaves and juniper bushes have brought on a change. For good or not is still to be determined. But for now our neighbors and friends have decided to go in a different direction.

McCall waves to the workers.

MCCALL

Have a good one.

SARAH

Have a good one!

Sarah waves back and watches him go.

SARAH

People disgust me.

RAY RAY

You need to stop listening to that negative crap. Your aura is all jacked up.

SARAH

Aura? Who the hell are you? Where's Ray Ray? Ray Ray! Come out and play! I know you're in there! Why are you wearing that awful getup! Tie-dye? Since when do you wear tie-dye?

RAY RAY

Would you stop it for one minute. Damn. We open soon and Fiestas is this weekend and we have to be on top of our game. And I like the tie-dye.

SARAH

Hippie.

Donald walks in for his usual.

DONALD

Whatdya hear, whatdya say Ray Ray!

RAY RAY

Donald!

SARAH

Don.

DONALD

Got you a uniform I see. Nice tie-dye!

RAY RAY

Thanks, Big D!

SARAH

Jeez.

DONALD

Tie-dye suits you. Says you're fun and colorful but had a psychedelic past but now you're progressive and inviting. You found your uniform!

RAY RAY

That's what I was just telling Sarah.

DONALD

You'd look good in tie-dye too, Sarah. It'd match your hair!

SARAH

No coffee this morning. New rules from management.

DONALD

Management? What in the... what you mean management? Seems like the old management was doin a fine job. I got somethin to say about that.

RAY RAY

We still have the coffee. Don't worry! But now we have even more options. We have cider. And we have tea. And if you like we can even do hot chocolate.

SARAH

Do not please do not do hot chocolate I hate doing the hot chocolate. I do not want to touch milk or milk by products thank you very much.

DONALD

Where the heck is it then, Ray Ray? Where is my Theresa's coffee?

RAY RAY

It's still free, but now we have a token system. You give me a wooden token and I retrieve your complimentary beverage of choice.

Donald

Ok then. How do I get a token?

Ray ray

You get them free with your purchase.

Donald

But I am a lifetime customer. The first day this place was open I took out the trash. Where are my wooden tokens.

Sarah

Didn't think about that one, didya Ray Ray? And isn't the whole point that people linger with their complimentary beverage and are therefore more likely to make a purchase?

RAY RAY

Yeah, I guess I'll have to ask our consultant about that.

SARAH

Consultant. Ha. I'll be out back.

Sarah exits.

DONALD

Can I just have a cup of coffee, Ray Ray? I won't tell anyone. Please, Ray Ray? On the low low?

RAY RAY

I mean. I'm really not supposed to. We weigh the beans every night now and reconcile them with the amount of tokens we receive.

DONALD

Let me see one of these tokens.

RAY RAY

They're handcrafted by local artisans and serve as a nice keepsake for tourists and Albuquerqueans alike.

DONALD

"Albuquerqueans." This one is kinda cool. I'm oddly drawn in by it. Who's this on the face?

RAY RAY

Kinda looks like you.

DONALD

Hey! Hey now! That does look like me! Where's my compensation? For using my likeness?

RAY RAY

Says, "traditional Pueblo man."

Donald hands the token back to Ray Ray.

DONALD

One complimentary beverage please. Make it a hot chocolate.

RAY RAY

Nicely played. You win this round, Big D.

(yells off)

Sarah! One hot chocolate!

SARAH

(offstage)

Booooooooo!!!

Joe enters with a takeout bag
and coffee carrier.

JOE
Who wants breakfast burritos!

DONALD
Whatdya hear, whatdya say Joe!

JOE
Big D! You take yours with red or green chile?

DONALD
I take mine any way I can get it!

JOE
Ain't that right?! What you havin, Lil Ray?

RAY RAY
Green all the way.

JOE
(yells off)
Sarah? Ya hungry? I got one with no meat?

Sarah pops back in.

SARAH
I really want to make a joke right now about how you have one
with no meat, but instead I'll say "no thanks."

DONALD
She's doin the vegan thing these days, whatever that means.

Sarah carries a hot chocolate with
plastic gloves.

SARAH
Here's your poison.

DONALD
Smells like heaven. Thanks!

JOE
Sarah dear, we are not to use words like poison in front of
customers.

SARAH
Customers? That's just Donald.

DONALD

Hey now, I'm a lifetimer, thank you very much!

JOE

We'll talk about this later, but this is your verbal warning. No talk of poison or any other negativity.

SARAH

Ok. I'll be in the back.

JOE

We need all team members to be out front, especially when the shop is not full.

SARAH

You mean empty.

RAY RAY

Hey now.

JOE

See, there you go again. Let's just reframe the way we deliver things. Then we'll get better results. That's why Theresa brought me on. We need better results.

SARAH

Oh is that the reason? I see. Joe, may I please use the restroom.

JOE

Of course! It's a free country.

SARAH

Hold my calls.

Sarah starts off.

JOE

If you're headed to the back, can you please take some of this trash with you. Never leave a room empty handed. I want us to get in the habit of always being on top of presentation.

SARAH

Sure thing, boss!

Sarah exits out back.

RAY RAY

(yells off)

Sarcasm!

JOE
It's ok. She'll find her way.

DONALD
Sure is good hot chocolate, Joe.

JOE
It's Mexican!

DONALD
I can taste it. I can taste the Mexicanness.

RAY RAY
The coins have been a great touch. People really like them,
and some people even want to buy some!

JOE
That's great. Things are lookin up. I keep sayin to anyone
who's askin, and even to those who aren't, things are lookin
up.

RAY RAY
Tokens are lookin up!

DONALD
One even looks like me! But I wasn't compensated. What's up
with that?

JOE
I really love hearing from the two of you, two people who are
deeply invested in the health of One-Stop Shop.

DONALD
Theresa's One-Stop Shop.

JOE
Yes. Right. Theresa's One-Stop Shop. T.O.S.S.

DONALD
Toss!

RAY RAY
Toss no mas.

SARAH
(offstage)
TOSS NO MAS!

JOE
This another one of your colorful phrases I just don't
understand?

RAY RAY

Toss no mas was this initiative from the State? Maybe? About curbing litter.

JOE

Don't Mess With Texas.

RAY RAY

Right. Toss no mas is our version of Don't Mess With Texas.

SARAH

(offstage)

Don't Mess With Texas is your version of Toss No Mas!

JOE

And that's Spanish for no more... toss?

DONALD

When you interrogate it, it doesn't really hold up.

RAY RAY

Click it or ticket! Nobody? Ok. This burrito sure hits the spot. Thanks, Joe.

JOE

Gracias goes to Church Street Cafe.

RAY RAY

Church St. Here we say Church St. If you say "Church Street Cafe" you sound like an outsider.

JOE

Thanks, Ray. Always lookin out for your fellow man. Gracias goes to Church St. Paco threw in extra pico de gallo, that how you pronounce it? Who knew I would love all this spicy food.

DONALD

Spice is in abundance in Albuquerque.

JOE

Donald, do you mind if maybe I talk to Ray in private?

DONALD

Suit yourself. It's a free country. Oh, you want me to leave. But I'm not done with my hot chocolate? Yeah, yeah, I can take a hint. You can find me in my usual habitat, tourist trappin! Have a good one!

Donald grabs his drink, the newspaper, and maybe some extra salsa as he heads out.

JOE
Take care!

RAY RAY
Have a good one!

DONALD
Have a good one.

Donald takes his place on the bench and reads his paper and checks out the tourists.

Donald tourist traps.

DONALD
I see you with your map. Lookin good, ma. I like your tote bag! Did you get that at the Museum? Is that a Georgia O'Keefe t-shirt? I can tell by the imagery. Let me tell you all about Georgia O'Keefe and her flowers. And cowkulls. And crosses. Would you like some hot chocolate? It's Mexican. Ok then. Have a good one!

RAY RAY
That guy cracks me up.

JOE
How long has he been around?

RAY RAY
Ever since I can remember.

JOE
Listen. Ray. I'm not gonna beat around the juniper bush.

RAY RAY
That was good. You sound like a local.

JOE
I try to adapt to my surroundings and appreciate new culture. You know that about me and my consultant practice.

RAY RAY
Sure do. If there's one thing we know about Joe, he's direct.

JOE
You are a hard worker. I've seen a real turn around in your attitude since I first came around here. You were always eager. But now I can see that you have real honest to God leadership potential.

RAY RAY
Wow. Thanks, Joe. I really appreciate that.

JOE

What I also see is untapped potential. Sky's the limit with you, boy, but you've got to make a decision. Where do you want to go?

RAY RAY

Thanks. I mean, I never really thought about it I guess. I was workin on school and all. My Masters. But then life happens. I don't know, it seems like I have so much more to go. Is all. I don't know.

JOE

Son, you need to start being a man and making decisions. I am giving you an opportunity. Right here. Right now. I would like you to be our new Store Team Leader.

RAY RAY

Store Team Leader? Me?

JOE

That's right. Store Team Leader Ray Ray.

RAY RAY

Dang. What does that mean? What would I be doing, exactly?

JOE

You would report to me. And you would let me know what's going on in the store. Who's coming in, what's moving. And you and I/

RAY RAY

And Theresa?

JOE

Absolutely Theresa. This was her idea, Ray.

RAY RAY

Serious? Me? Theresa wanted me over Sarah? But Sarah's like way more... Theresa than me.

JOE

A shop is only as strong as its team. We don't want a coookie cutter organization! You and Sarah compliment each other.

RAY RAY

Funny. Never thought of it that way.

JOE

That's what we are talkin about, Ray! Reframing the way we think! We are not different. We are complimentary!

RAY RAY

Ok. Alright. I guess I can see it that way. Yeah! You're right.

JOE

Can you handle being her boss?

RAY RAY

Her boss? Yeah, I guess I could do that. I mean, we've been together so long... working together, I hope it doesn't get weird or/

JOE

You can do it, Ray. You can ACT. A.C.T. Action. Consult. Turnaround. Just remember that. Whenever there is a conflict it is up to you, as the Store Team Leader, to ACT.

RAY RAY

Action. Consult. Turnaround.

JOE

That's right. See this back and forth? We're talking, we're listening, isn't this great?

RAY RAY

A.C.T.

JOE

First you decide on an action. Then you consult your necessary leaders, in this case me or Theresa, and then you make it turnaround. You change the course of the problem. Sound like a plan, Ray?

RAY RAY

A.C.T. Yeah, I guess! Sure! Why the hell not. I'm not doin anything else with my life. Action Consult Turnaround!

JOE

Good thing. Shake on it?

RAY RAY

Let's do it!

JOE

You'll get a slight raise, we are still negotiating the exact rate but will let you know asap. You get all the tokens you want for free drinks, and you will have a brand new title that will go on the website. And business cards too.

RAY RAY

We're getting a website? Cool.

JOE

You start now, just in time for the tourist rush! See ya, STL Ray Ray! Gotta deliver this red and green bacon breakfast burrito to President Theresa. Take care!

RAY RAY
You too, sir. Have a good one.

Joe leaves and Ray Ray is alone to take
in the shop and contemplate his new
job.

RAY RAY
Store Team Leader. STL Ray Ray. STL Ray.

(yells off)
Sarah! I need you out here for the rush!

Joe walks by Donald on the bench.

JOE
What's the good news, old-timer?

DONALD
Whatdya hear, whatdya say, Joe? Hot chocolate on the plaza!
What a time to be alive.

JOE
Mexican hot chocolate!

The lights slowly fade on the tableaux.

INTERLUDE: CONQUISTADOR-METER MAID

The actress playing Theresa trots on
dressed as a METER MAID but... with a
CONQUISTADOR helmet on.

She gives out parking tickets.

CONQUISTADOR
It's embarrassing, really it is. To rename my hometown minor-league baseball team after an episode of that beloved yet problematic animated series The Simpsons. The Albuquerque Isotopes. The Isotopes! What does that even mean? Isotopes. I guess it's a reference, an allusion if you will, to Albuquerque's rich history with the Sciences. We have the Sandia National Labs. We even have nukes stored in the mountains somewhere. Embarrassing. The Isotopes. We used to be the Dukes. Now that has a ring to it. The Albuquerque Dukes. I was proud to wear my red and yellow cap with a cute little Conquistador as the mascot. The Dukes. Named, presumably, after all the Dukes and Dutchesses from Spain who came out here to the sticks and brought baseball with them. The Albuquerque Dukes. And we had some players, let me tell ya! And coaches too! Tommy Lasorda himself used to wear a Duke hat. Orel Herscheiser. Raul Mondesi.

I was proud to be part of the Dodger organization. Now? Now the park is unrecognizable. Looks like a cheap cartoon or something. Albuquerque is The Duke City. Conquistador Power! Duke City. That has a ring to it. Isotope city? Nobody says that.

The Conquistador-MeterMaid starts hands out more parking tickets.

McCall recounts the dog days of summer while sipping an Iced Coffee.

MCCALL

Summer brings out the best and worst in us. Across the parking lot towards the mountains, Tiguex Park is in full swing with multiple birthday parties. All of our museums have daytime programs for the youth. When the office swamp cooler goes out, I go to the Museum of Natural history to get some icy air. And maybe I'll stop by the new coffee shop for a tasty beverage. Iced coffee. I always took it hot. Who knew it tastes so good with a little ice.

McCall leaves, sucking on beverage.

Joe enters with supplies to make a new sign display.

JOE

Mornin, amigos!

DONALD

Presents? You shouldn't have!

JOE

Big changes are comin. I can feel it. Just gotta put in the work and it'll come to fruition. I had a vision. That when all the tourists and locals alike come out for the dog days of summer, they'll notice us like they've never noticed us before. Let me ask y'all somethin. What's the first thing you see when you look at a shop.

RAY RAY

The first thing?

JOE

What's the first thing.

RAY RAY

That I see when I look at a shop.

JOE

Don't think about it too hard, it's not a quiz. First thing that comes to mind.

DONALD

Red!

RAY RAY

I guess, what's the address?

DONALD

Flat!

RAY RAY

The first thing I notice is

DONALD

Money!

RAY RAY

Maybe, what do they sell?

DONALD

Turquoise!

JOE

You're standing outside a shop on the plaza deciding whether or not to go in. You look and you see...

DONALD

The building!

JOE

Yes, that's right, Big D! And what's on that building? What's the first thing you notice about the building? The sign! That's right. You see the sign that tells you our brand. Our identity.

DONALD

I knew that one.

RAY RAY

And signs are so important to Old Town. They mean history.

JOE

And we are a part of that history. The One-Stop is a part of that history.

RAY RAY

The "One-Stop." I like the sound of that.

DONALD

Theresa's One-Stop Shop has been around forever, since long before I was tourist trappin. Theresa's is history.

RAY RAY

One-Stop.

DONALD

Theresa's. Everybody calls it Theresa's. Nobody don't know nothin about One-Stop.

RAY RAY

"Welcome to One-Stop, can I help you?"

DONALD

"Welcome to Theresa's, can I help you?"

RAY RAY

Thanks for shopping at One-Stop. Have a good one.

Sarah enters with a hot chocolate.

SARAH

Hot chocolate, comin through! Oh, hello Joe! Welcome to Theresa's One-Stop! Your tasty brown dairy mud, Donald.

Sarah "accidentally" spills the drink on Ray Ray.

RAY RAY

God damnit, Sarah!

JOE

Language, son. I'm so sorry, Big D, I'll make you another drink myself. We have to make sure to get it right the first time. I will make this right.

SARAH

Sorry.

DONALD

It's okay, little Sarita. I was just about to go on my rounds. The air in here is a little weird anyhow. Thick. Like that hot chocolate I wanted.

SARAH

All the cow products mused my brain so much my motor functions ceased. My bad.

RAY RAY

Sarah what in the world.

SARAH

I said I'm sorry. Spills happen.

JOE

Don't worry about it, y'all. It's just a little spill. Spilt milk. Spills happen, that's exactly right. Spills?

They just happen. And sometimes we just have to clean it up. It's actually great timing, anyhow. And somewhat symbolic that we would make a spill right now. Because it is cleaning time around here. I was looking at our little sign outside and it looks like it could use a shine. Kinda like our floors. Ray Ray, you get the mop and sort out this cocoa mess and I'll set us up with some paint for the sign.

RAY RAY

Right away!

Ray Ray goes for the mop and throws some shade at Sarah.

SARAH

Paint for the sign? The sign is practically a landmark in old town. What exactly do you mean by paint.

DONALD

The whole building is a landmark. Isn't it? Its sheer proximity to the San Felipe De Neri church must mean something.

JOE

This place has so much shine already, so much natural beauty, but we gotta make sure the public knows about our shine. Our specialness.

SARAH

Right. Specialness.

JOE

All I am trying to do is let the public know how good we are. How good you are.

Ray Ray re-enters with cleaning supplies.

RAY RAY

You got time to lean, you got time to clean!

DONALD

Look at you, Ray Ray! You're a little tie-dye sparkplug go-getter!

SARAH

And you reek of bleach! Is that the toxic cleaner? Are you using the toxic cleaner?

JOE

We are a little rough around the edges. And I don't want to change that. That's what gives us character, what makes us us. But we got to clean up our act and let One-Stop shine.

Joe takes out the gallon of paint: a very "Southwesty" hue.

DONALD
These colors are a awfully lot like pastels.

SARAH
Pastels?

DONALD
Pastels.

JOE
Thanks for your input, Donald. As one of our most loyal customers, we value what you have to say. My research has shown that when people visit Old Town, they are looking for a certain feel. A certain flavor that reads, "Southwest-y."

SARAH
And by that you mean pastels? I mean. I love a good Southwest Bling aka tourquoise... but are you sure Theresa would be into this new palette?

JOE
It was her idea.

RAY RAY
I'll wipe down the sign and prep the area! We could use these newspapers as drop cloths.

DONALD
Let me see the sports page first please and thank you.

SARAH
I've just never known Theresa to be the kind to like... that kind of thing. That's the kind of look we make fun of. We're the cool kids! The very fact that we are an authentic Mom and Pop in the Southwest makes us "Southwest-y." We don't have to put on a costume to make us more us.

JOE
Times and taste evolve. One day you'll be the one the hip crowd will make fun of.

SARAH
Maybe. And that's ok. I actually look forward to that time when I grow to be uncool. Like Ray Ray.

RAY RAY
Sarah I need you to be serious. We need you take this seriously. Let's get this place in shape.

JOE

That's the right spirit. That's can-do. How's about we get to clean this place up and make it shine? What do ya think, Sarah?

SARAH

Hand me the brush. I've got this.

Sarah goes at it and she and Ray Ray work in a team.

RAY RAY

Hey, hey, Picasso! Looks like all that time coloring your hair paid off.

SARAH

Shut up and tape me off.

DONALD

Welp, looks like you all got this painting thing covered. Don't look like you need much help. I'll just go about my tourist-trap business.

JOE

Thanks for coming in, Big D. And thanks for your service. We'll see you next time.

DONALD

Have a good one!

JOE

Have a good one.

RAY RAY

Have a good one!

DONALD

Have a good one.

Donald exits.

SARAH

This will be my masterpiece. My little corner of Old Town. You want pastel, oh you're gonna get pastel. The pasteliest sign to ever shine.

JOE

Lookin good already, lookin good.

RAY RAY

Don't drip any on my tie-dye. Please.

SARAH

Nobody'd know anyway. How many colors you have on that thing, damn?

JOE

You know, Sarah, I didn't hear you say good bye to Donald.

SARAH

He'll be back in an hour when his traps need to nap.

JOE

I've noticed y'all have a certain way of talkin and sayin goodbye to each other, and I've noticed it other places too. In Texas we say, "y'all take care." Here it's, "Have a Good One." I really like that. "Have a good one." It says so much about you, about this place.

RAY RAY

I never even thought about it that way.

JOE

I'm tellin ya! Just listen. "Have a Good One." Hear that? That's the sound of America.

RAY RAY

Have a good one.

JOE

Just. Shhhhhh. Listen.

RAY RAY

Have a good one.

SARAH

Have a... I don't know, all I hear over and over is haveagoodonehaveagoodonehaveagoodone. Say it long enough fast enough it all becomes nonsense. Language becomes... abstracted.

RAY RAY

Have a good one.

JOE

That's right, son. Have a good one!

RAY RAY

It is kind of universal. Like you are telling each and every person who passes through these doors that they are special. That they must "have a good one." They are destined to "have a good one."

SARAH

I think it's just the opposite! We say it because we really just want to move on with our lives and have like zero real interest in engaging with someone.

JOE

Now that is what I'm takin about. That's exactly right! Y'all at the One-Stop never cease to amaze me. You have the right kind of feel for customer service that can't be taught in business school or by some corporate manager.

SARAH

Thanks?

RAY RAY

Drippage! Please!

JOE

I have a proposal. And please know that this is coming from you, directly from you, from what I've observed about y'all and what I'm receiving from your special skill set.

SARAH

"Have a good one!"

JOE

I'd like to implement a new policy. Every time someone leaves our shop, hopefully after having a fulfilling experience on a number of levels, we as a staff will look them in the eye and say...

RAY RAY

Have a good one.

SARAH

Each time someone leaves we have to say

RAY RAY

Have a good one!

JOE

Now this is me responding to you. Y'all have it in you! You talked and I listened.

SARAH

I mean I get you and I want everyone to have a fulfilling experience, whatever that may be, but the whole thing just seems a bit... robotic to me. Like do we really need a script? Can't we just be ourselves and let it come out in the natural flow of dialogue.

JOE

I hear you. I really do. I hear you say that you want to be natural and the interaction with the customer to have a certain flow to it, and to that I say, I love that. I love the flow! A business needs a flow. And that's why I'm proposing we do have a script. You do know what to say at certain points in the service. That way it makes it easier to be yourself when you know what to say.

SARAH

I say what you want me to say in order to be myself.

JOE

It's all from you! That's right. I love this. You are yourself. And that's one of the many reasons someone would want to shop at One-Stop.

SARAH

Theresa's One-Stop.

RAY RAY

You know, One-Stop has a better ring. Just One-Stop. Just sayin.

JOE

I'm listening.

SARAH

Am I really hearing this?

JOE

The sign looks great, Sarah. It really does. We need to have you do all our signs. You have a real talent for craft.

SARAH

Thank you. But for real. Does Theresa know about ANY of this?

JOE

She does. And she has given me full discretion with all matters concerning operations.

RAY RAY

One-Stop. Just. Take a step back and look at the sign. With just the "One-Stop" repainted. Just take it in.

JOE

Looks like you have an eye, too, Ray.

SARAH

It's just because it's a new coat of paint and the Theresa's part doesn't have anything on it. Yet.

JOE

Let's let it be for now. I'd like Theresa to have a look. You're right, you're exactly right, Sarah. How could we overlook Theresa. Now that it was it is important to include the whole team. You. Ray Ray. Me. We need to look at this thing from all angles. Clean it up.

RAY RAY

Let it shine!

JOE

That's right. Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine!

SARAH

It actually doesn't look half bad.

JOE

Like I said. You had it in you to shine.

RAY RAY

Picasso! Let it shine!

Lights focus on the "One-Stop" sign in its new pastel glory.

Donald leads a tour. He's got his extreme tour guide outfit on.

DONALD

We are so honored to have you come to our land. On this sacred day. Happy to have so many beautiful faces and bodies join with us as we give thanks to Old Town. The land. I see that you have the double fanny pack. That's a strong statement. Says you're not afraid of a bulge and you need a place to keep your lens. You're not relying on a cell phone camera. Nope. You are a shutterbug and you are here to capture some moments. I hope we will give you some moments to believe in. To take back with you, wherever it is you may go. Now you can take me if you want? I'm cheap! A real life native of this here land and you can have me if you want me. I'm just kidding around. Or am I? Now if you look to left you will see the San Felipe De Neri Church. One of the oldest around. And I've seen em all. Thank you for joining me here today as we honor our history, a history which you are now a part of! Now thank you for your time and I hope you've enjoyed my company and I take cash tips or you can take me back to your hotel and we can get room service. Kidding, kidding. Kidding?

The One-Stop sign glows and glows and attracts a whole new crop of tourists (and locals alike!). They are inundated! *Note: the customers are not "real."

RAY RAY
Looks like we're doin something right!

JOE
That's one good lookin sign.

SARAH
Oh my god. They're coming. How's my hair look?

RAY RAY
Welcome to... One-Stop!

JOE
That's the spirit. Welcome to One-Stop!

SARAH
Welcome to Theresa's One-Stop Shop, home of the complimentary beverage. May I offer you something to quench your thirst?

JOE
Good job, good effort!

RAY RAY
We've been in Old Town since before I could vote!

SARAH
And that's sayin somethin! We've been in Old Town forever.

RAY RAY
Thanks for comin in. Have a good one!

JOE
Have a good one!

SARAH
Have a good one.

RAY RAY
Welcome to One-Stop.

SARAH
Welcome to Theresa's One-Stop Shop.

RAY RAY
Have a good one!

SARAH
Have a good one!

RAY RAY/SARAH
Have a good one!

JOE
Yes!

RAY RAY

Welcome to One-Stop.

SARAH

Welcome to One-Stop.

JOE

The people! They feel your energy!

RAY RAY/SARAH

Have a good one!

JOE

They give what they get! If you give them positivity, then they in turn will give your positivity and will be many more times likely to spend money and to return and to recommend you to their peer group and families!

RAY RAY/SARAH

Welcome to One-Stop!

JOE

The customer today has so many options. They can spend their hard earned money in so many different ways without even leaving the house. They can make an order for almost anything they could possibly dream of while they stop at a red light. Somewhere in the middle of nowhere a drone picks out the package and two days later, boom, you have it. What a world.

RAY RAY/SARAH

Have a good one!

JOE

They shop while they pick up their dry cleaning.

SARAH

Have a good one!

JOE

While they use their toilet, order at the drive-thru, watch a movie. But we, WE must give them an experience.

RAY RAY

Welcome to One-Stop!

JOE

We crave liveness as a species. Nothing will ever replace the interaction between two souls.

SARAH

Welcome to One-Stop.

JOE

We do what we do so well and that's why they come to us instead of shopping with their devices. We are their devices.

RAY RAY

Have a good one!

JOE

We here at One-Stop are selling ourselves. No certificate of authenticity needed.

SARAH

Have. A. Good one.

RAY RAY

Welcome to One-Stop, Albuquerque's premier destination for Old Town Authenticity. We are so glad you stopped in. We offer a variety of authentic Southwest goods for you and your family. We've been here forever. Our founder, Theresa, started this shop so locals and tourists alike could have a meeting place to grab the paper, have a chat, buy some handmade soap, a cow skull, really just be themselves. Please do let us know how we may be of assistance. Viva Albuquerque! And have a good one.

JOE

Ray. I think it's time we talked about moving you up.

The crowd is gone. What just happened?

SARAH

I'm fucking exhausted. That was a crazy rush. I've never, never seen anything like it.

JOE

Sarah.

SARAH

What?

RAY RAY

Do not say the f-word. While we are open. Ever. Customers or no.

JOE

Thank you, Ray.

SARAH

Fine, fine, fine, I'll put a dollar in the swear jar.

RAY RAY

I'm afraid we need to do away with that. It's a crutch. As long as we are able to get off without any real consequences then we will never truly stop our behavior.

SARAH

What the fuck.

RAY RAY

Jesus Christ I'm being serious.

SARAH

Who the hell are you and what have you done with my friend.

RAY RAY

Your actions have real consequences/

SARAH

You said that already.

RAY RAY

And you must face the music if you are going to be a part of the One-Stop team. And I am not your friend. I am your Store Team Leader.

SARAH

Some team we've assembled.

JOE

That's right. This is a heck of a team. Good job today. Here is a coupon for a free ice cream cone from the creamery. I'm partial to the Rocky Road. Treat yourselves, team. Ya done good.

SARAH

I know the spot. We've been there before. Like everyday after 6 because there's nothing else open. But they don't have any non-dairy options yet so I have to get the sorbet. Yeah, I'll take your coupon. Thank you. And thank you, "Ray", for your leadership during this difficult time. And without Theresa to boot. Thank you. I'm out.

JOE

That's the fire I've come to expect from you. That's leadership. What do you mean without your leader? You, Sarah. You are the leader.

RAY RAY

Please make yourself presentable for the weekend. No parties tonight. You need to be on your game tomorrow.

JOE

Lighten up, y'all. This is about fun and service. And it's our time to shine. Ain't it? Time to shine. Here, have an extra coupon just in case you have someone to get a cone with.

SARAH

Thanks. See ya.

JOE

Hey, this is service! We're havin a good one, right? And they're havin a good one because we're havin a good one. And if you're not havin a good one then you can go elsewhere.

RAY RAY

Have a good one.

JOE

Have a good one.

SARAH

Yeah. Be seein ya.

Sarah leaves the shop and promptly goes to the Creamery. Joe and Ray Ray lock up shop and go have beers at the new craft brewery.

McCall glides in.

MCCALL

This time of night is the magic hour. Not only is the light absolutely exquisite, you can also see all the folk make their plans for the evening. The new mentor and mentee go have a handcrafted beer at the new microbrewery. The lone worker getting a sugary pick me up after a stressful day. The newfound loves, a local and a tourist, bond over a photo slideshow. This is the agora. The meeting place. Where some of us also call home.

Sarah enters with two giant three scoop ice cream cones. She devours them on the bench, covering herself with milky goodness.

SARAH

I am gonna pay for this in the morning. Ah cows. Why do you have to taste so good? Oh how I've missed you. Nomnomnom

MCCALL

Taste good?

SARAH

Oh my god I'm a mess. Don't judge.

MCCALL

I'm a lawyer. It's not my place to judge.

SARAH

You want some?

MCCALL

It looks like you are doing perfectly okay without my help.

SARAH

Yeah, I was really just half-offering it to you because I really want it all to myself. Thanks for playing along.

MCCALL

Anytime. How's business?

SARAH

Jesus it was insane today. Some convention musta been in town, tour busses from Oklahoma and shit, New England? Hell I don't know, throngs of linen-wearing blue hairs just needing their Southwest fix. And they all found their way to Theresa's Fucking One-Stop or whatever they want to rename us. Can you believe this? We got this Texan motherfucker two-steppin his way in here changin up the color of the sign, wantin us to adhere to new methods of behavior. This is a crock of shit. I'm sorry, I'm just verbal diarrheaing on you. I must be a little sugar and dairy high is all.

MCCALL

Tell me. Is this Texan Motherfucker a part of the store now? What's his relationship?

SARAH

He's fucking Theresa so now he's a "consultant," whatever the fuck that means. I mean, I know they're fucking because I saw them fucking, but I don't think the world knows they're fucking.

MCCALL

Does this Texan Motherfucker pose a threat to you?

SARAH

He's like evil incarnate. But you wouldn't know that upon first meeting him. He'll smile at your face and stab you in the back. At least that's what I suspect.

MCCALL

Typical Texan. What does your boss think of all this?

SARAH

That's the thing! She's totally M.I.A., which is completely out of character. I'm afraid he has her locked up in some meat locker somewhere, ready to harvest her organs or some shit. Fuck I've gotta lay off this dairy.

MCCALL

What do you know about organizing?

SARAH

Uh... like... protests?

MCCALL

Yes. Kind of. What do you know about labor organization?

SARAH

That's what you do! I've never really thought about it. Now that you ask.

MCCALL

Organizing is about giving workers the rights they deserve.

SARAH

I'm totally about it in theory. The modern workforce is indebted to unions. But I thought that was like in Detroit with the motor industry. Like California and farmers. Cesar Chavez.

MCCALL

Every workforce has the right to organize, especially one such as yours that is a commercial food workplace.

SARAH

Yeah. I guess that's what we do.

MCCALL

If you ever need my help, you know where to find me.

SARAH

Actually I have no idea. You kind of just appear out of nowhere sometimes. It's a little creepy.

MCCALL

I'm in the building around the corner. By the Rotisserie Bar and Grill.

SARAH

I bike home by there everyday! Wow. I've never noticed.

MCCALL

We like to keep a low profile. We let our work speak for ourselves. Here's my card.

SARAH

McCall and Associates. Wow. Thanks. What's your name?

MCCALL

McCall.

SARAH

Nice. I've gotta run to the public restroom off the plaza real quick because this cow is running right through me, but thanks so much. Really! Thanks. Si se puede and shit!

MCCALL

Have a good one.

Sarah runs off.

SARAH

Have a good one!

MCCALL

I'm just letting people know their rights. This place would be so much better off if everybody knew their rights. For some reason we are taught that you need to acquire a kind of rarefied knowledge in order to succeed in life.

The Cigar Store Indian wanders on very slowly and goes to the bench, cleaning up after Sarah's ice cream explosion.

Ray Ray and Joe share a growler on the bench. The offstage banda serenades the drunks.

MCCALL

Everybody works. But not everybody needs to work all the time. Everybody deserves to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

McCall and CSI give each other a knowing nod.

MCCALL

In this country, at this moment, for some God-forsaken reason, we are at war between those who own and those who work. It does not need to be this way. There is another path.

McCall hands their card to CSI.

MCCALL

Have a good one.

Lights down on the tableaux.

The next morning. Sarah is the first one at the shop. Has she slept at all? She feverishly cleans her new sign.

Donald enters.

SARAH

Big D!

DONALD

Whatdya hear, whatdya say Sarita?

SARAH

No news is good news! Isn't that what they say?

DONALD

That's what I always say. Wow. Lookin good around here. You and Ray Ray been up to somethin it looks like. You get hit with that gaggle of tourists I sent your way?

SARAH

Was that your doing? We were slammed. Thank you? I guess? I don't know, it was kinda fun. To be in the zone and just go with the flow with the customer.

DONALD

I seen you. It looked like you were doin a dance or something. Is that what you get up to when you go to all those Rock shows? Punk? Metal? What you call it?

SARAH

I don't know, it's just music. But yeah, there are a ton of genres. Mostly it's about letting go.

DONALD

I sure let go last night, let me tell you! Her name was Beatrice. Get a load of that. Beatrice! She was from England. She came here with a group of girlfriends but she left with her new boyfriend. You're looking at him!

SARAH

Big D, Tourist Trap King.

DONALD

This one was easy, I could smell it a mile away, but I still went all out.

SARAH

Sucha Romantic.

DONALD

Took her to Garduño's for some Mariachi action. Luis always saves me a table up front and gives us special attention. And the chips and salsa was too hot for her so Manuel just kept the margaritas comin. Soon as I know it Beatrice was hoopin and hollerin along. Suddenly she was fluent in Spanish and knew all the words to all the songs. It was a sight.

SARAH

She take you back to her hotel?

DONALD

Who you talkin to.

SARAH

Big motherfuckin D.

Sarah looks around to see if anyone heard her cuss.

DONALD

Actually she got sick from all the tequila so we have a lunch date today. Gonna get her a stuffed sopapilla to soak up all the booze.

SARAH

You'll stuff HER sopapilla.

DONALD

Who you talkin to.

SARAH

Where are those fuckers, anyway?

DONALD

Those two corporate peas in a pod.

SARAH

Right? It's not just me, right? This place is getting pretty goddamn lame.

DONALD

It's not punk rock, that's for damn sure. You just do you.

SARAH

And where the fuck is Theresa to witness all this bullshit?

Ray Ray enters nursing a hangover.

SARAH

Ray Ray!

DONALD

Whatdya hear, whatdya say, Ray Ray?

SARAH

Welcome to One-Stop, your home for authentic Southwesternness here on Albuquerque's Old Town Plaza! Can I get you something? A hot or cold beverage? Huh, Ray Ray?

RAY RAY

Make it stop. Please. The ringing. Make it stop.

DONALD

You tie one on, Ray Ray?

RAY RAY

Somethin like that. You have any tylenol or anything for all your times of the month and all? I think I'm gonna die.

SARAH

Whatsa matter? Forget to take your party pill before you went out?

RAY RAY

I can't drink like I used to.

SARAH

You're pretty fucking ancient to be throwing back pint after pint of that heavy ass craft beer Ray Ray. That shit'll kill ya. It's got like ten percent alcohol and 900 calories in each pint and shit. I'll stick to my motherfuckin PBR and Tecate, fuck you very much.

RAY RAY

Donald, I need to have a word with Sarah.

DONALD

Don't mind me. I'll be in my office. With my paper.

Donald grabs the newspaper and heads out back.

RAY RAY

Leave the front page at least, that's disgusting.

SARAH

What the fuck, Ray Ray?

RAY RAY

Can't you take things seriously? Your generation. I swear. This is a job. You can't use that kind of language.

SARAH

Take it seriously? Says the guy coming into work smelling like a distillery.

RAY RAY

I had a business meeting. It was One-Stop related.

SARAH

Oooohhh. I see. So you and... Joe? Went on a business meeting? At the bar? To discuss business?

RAY RAY

That's right. And since it was about business then we get to write off our check.

SARAH

Since when have you filed your taxes?

RAY RAY

Now this is what I was talking with Joe about. This disrespect we get from you.

SARAH

Disrespect.

RAY RAY

It starts with the language. We told you that we will not tolerate colorful language here.

SARAH

Colorful. What the fuck.

RAY RAY

If you can't bother to obey the language rule, then what else are you disobeying?

SARAH

Do you hear yourself? I'm gonna record you. You're not gonna believe this when you snap out of whatever mindfuck you're in.

RAY RAY

No cell phones on the floor. This is your formal warning. I am documenting this conversation. You are not to use bad language in the store.

SARAH

Ok. But who's to say what qualifies as bad language?

RAY RAY

You know what I'm talking about!

SARAH

I've heard some crazy shit come out of your mouth throughout the years. Now is that bad language? What you called that one guy's mother last year? Is it bad language when you stub your toe and curse god? I don't know. Who am I to judge?

JOE

Don't be a

SARAH

Bitch? Is that what you meant? Because just a little while ago that's what you would have called me and I would have responded with "you're the punk ass bitch," "trick ass hoe," "go fuck your mother" and everything woulda been fine, we woulda done our big brother little sister thing and go on with our lives. All for the better. Because we were family.

RAY RAY

This is a business. Not family.

SARAH

I'm beginning to see that.

RAY RAY

If you use dirty language in the shop again. You will be disciplined.

SARAH

I thought this was discipline? No? Is there more discipline?

RAY RAY

You will know. Trust me.

SARAH

What is this? What are we doing? I work here because it's chill, I like my boss, and yes I even like my co-workers. Liked. At least.

RAY RAY

I don't know what you expect out of this, but I want a career. Joe, he's offering something, something bigger than just a mom and pop shop.

SARAH

This Mom and Pop was our family and it paid our bills.

Enter a "customer". They act cheerful.
Sarah acts especially cheerful.

RAY RAY

Welcome to One-Stop!

SARAH

Welcome to Theresa's One-Stop!

RAY RAY

Have a good one!

SARAH

Have a good one!

They go back to each other.

RAY RAY

Ok here's the deal. Joe sees potential in me.

SARAH

"Potential."

RAY RAY

More than anyone has ever seen in me. Not you. Certainly not Theresa. And I am going to take this opportunity. You cannot tell anyone this. But. Last night, we came up with this idea.

SARAH

By "we" you mean Joe?

RAY RAY

What we have is so unique. So authentic. When tourists come to Old Town they come to One-Stop because they know they are getting the real deal.

SARAH

Theresa's. When they come to Theresa's.

RAY RAY

Just picture this. Please just listen to me now and picture this. Ready? A One-Stop in every town. Think about it.

SARAH

What the.

RAY RAY

We are American as apple pie, video games, Starbucks. Picture Everytown, USA with its very own slice of Southwestern goodness.

SARAH

I can see it now! Navajo blankets for all the world! Dia de los Muertos all year round! Red and green chile on every plate throughout the land!

RAY RAY

Now we're talking!

SARAH

Brainwashing has erased your ability to detect sarcasm.

RAY RAY

There you go with your sarcasm. We are authentic here. And that's what we are selling. And we at One-Stop can't have you tainting our realness.

SARAH

This is as good a time as any to give you notice that I am applying to have Theresa's One-Stop be represented by the United Commercial Worker's Union. This is your official notice. Our lawyers will get a hold of you to set up a time to vote on Unionization.

RAY RAY

Sarah. You're crazy. Do you know what any of that means.

SARAH

Do not call me crazy! You know I hate it when you use that fucked up term.

RAY RAY

I know I know, I'm sorry. You're not crazy. This is crazy.

SARAH

We have a right to organize as a workforce. Beside, what's more American than Unionization? That's what we are to him, right? America?

RAY RAY

Joe is not gonna like this.

SARAH

Well he can kiss my ass.

Donald flushes the toilet and returns
with the paper.

DONALD

I've just never been a crossword guy. I stare and stare at it
thinkin the word will magically come to me, but all I get is
a buncha inky mess from all my crossings out.

SARAH

You should use a pencil.

RAY RAY

I think I'm gonna be sick.

Ray Ray goes to throw up.

SARAH

Welcome to One-Stop! Have a Good One!

Lights down on the tableaux.

FALL - THE BALLOON FIESTA

It's fall in Old Town and the workers
have started to decorate One-Stop with
a bunch of balloons of various sizes.

Ray Ray blows up a beach ball. Sarah
blows up a balloon and attempts some
balloon animals.

McCall materializes.

MCCALL

My partner and I owned this dog. I forget its name. Great
dog. It was a rescue dog and loved you to death, no matter
what you did. Best dog I ever had. Except for a few weeks in
early October when the Balloon Fiesta was in town. This angel
dog was scared to death of those howling globes in the sky.
The fiery roar from up above drove this dog nuts. Crazy. And
for a few weeks in the early Autumn I never got any sleep. I
miss that dog. But I do like to sleep in. From time to time.
Not this week though. It's Balloon Fiesta, the most
photographed event in the world. And this year, the balloons
are flying a little too low to the ground.

McCall floats away.

SARAH

Can we just get a helium tank and call it a day?

RAY RAY

Just keep blowing.

Sarah blows a raspberry sound.

SARAH

How's that?

RAY RAY

Can you just pretend to like what you're doing for one shift?
Just one?

SARAH

If we had a helium tank it would go like 900 times faster.
Plus, we could pass the time doing high pitched voices. It's
a hoot. You should try it.

RAY RAY

No more talk of huffing or blowing or

SARAH

You brought up the blowing! I wasn't even gonna go there.

RAY RAY

Where is Donnie when we need him.

SARAH

Big motherfuckin D.

Beat.

RAY RAY

Big Motherfuckin D.

SARAH

Finally! That's what I'm talkin about. I found my boy Ray Ray
right there!

RAY RAY

Sheeeeeet. I have no idea what you're talking about. Let's
start on the beach balls.

SARAH

Dude. Bro. Everyone who sees them beach balls will know
they're beach balls. No matter how many crafty wicker baskets
we attach to them, no one will think they're hot air
balloons.

RAY RAY

I'm curious. When did you lose your imagination? I'm serious.
Can you tell me this? At what point did you... become me!

SARAH

Oh my fucking lord did we do a Freaky Friday thing or what?
Is this why I have so much body hair lately and no sex drive?
Is this why you are so sparkley and with it?

RAY RAY

Just keep blowing. We need to cover the entire store with balloons. Like floor to ceiling balloons of all different sizes and shapes and colors.

SARAH

But all we have are round balloons. And they're mostly the same color.

RAY RAY

You know what I mean! Now get to blowing. Jesus fucking Christ.

Ray Ray marches off. Sarah keeps blowing. She attempts to blow up as many as possible.

Sarah manically blows up balloon after balloon. She fashions a tool to make a pump. She's in business!

Sarah covers the space with balloons. Floor to ceiling, just like Ray Ray asked.

BREAKFAST BURRITO GAL

The actress playing Theresa embodies the Breakfast Burrito Gal and serves up BBs to the audience (?).

BBG

They say that the Breakfast Burrito was invented at Tia Sophia's, just up the road in Santa Fe. Psssssssh. Yeah right. Let me let you in on a little secret. At least it's a secret now. By the time I'm done, everybody will know! The Breakfast Burrito was invented here at the Balloon Fiesta. It's true! And it was born out of necessity as well as style. You see, we New Mexicans love our hearty food. Our chiles and chorizos and huevos y todo. Everything! And the thing about the burrito is you can take a bunch of parts, like the business parts, the stuff that keeps you going, gives you the proteins and all, and, y, you know! The meat and potatoes. Then you wrap it all up in abuelita's tortillas and Eeeeeee you have a delicious hot meal. All rolled up in your hand. A hot red or green or Christmas breakfast burrito that you have bought from me. The burrito gal! At the Albuquerque international Balloon Fiesta, the most photographed event in the world! Mmmmmmm. Bueno.

Breakfast Burrito Gal exits and Ray Ray comes back with some wicker.

RAY RAY

Oh my god, Sarah, how did you do all this?

Sarah, out of breath, keeps on blowing.

RAY RAY

You can stop now. This is plenty.

SARAH

I don't know you know Ray Ray I was just blowing and blowing and I think maybe I passed out for a minute a blackout really and when I came to I had a I don't know an AHA moment a Eureka moment and I was all. I'm all

RAY RAY

Take a break or something. Jeez.

SARAH

I lost it. You're right. I lost my child. I lost my inner child.

RAY RAY

What are you talking about? And when have you ever said I was right? Where is my Sarah and what have you done with her?

SARAH

It's stupid. Sarah. My name. What is it? What does it even mean?

RAY RAY

I think it's biblical. Look. The place looks great! You've really gone Above and Beyond.

SARAH

Ray Ray. That is a name with character. You know who you are and where you come from. You come from a long line of Rays.

RAY RAY

Want some coffee? Hey! How about one of those five dollar Lattes I know you like. Huh? I'm buyin!

SARAH

Who are you? I said. Who are you?

RAY RAY

Uh... I'm Ray Ray. And you are Sarah.

SARAH

And where are you from? I said. Where are you from?

RAY RAY

You know where I'm from, what the hell, can we just get this place together before we open?

SARAH

Where you from, cuz? Eh? Where you from, ese?

RAY RAY

Albuquerque. I'm from Albuquerque. But you know that. You've known me for years.

SARAH

I don't know you, bitch ass, where you from?

RAY RAY

The fuck are you doing?

Sarah exaggerates Cholaness.

SARAH

I said, where you from, loco?

She pushes him.

SARAH

Where you from, vato?

RAY RAY

I'm from Albuquerque, New Mexico.

SARAH

What's that? Born and raised? And your family, homes?

Ray Ray plays along.

RAY RAY

Albuquerque. Burque. Old Town. Mountain Road and Montoya. I'm there since people like you came there. I'm there before any of this. If you want to know, dog. I'm from the place where the dogs ruled the streets. You had to get through them to get to me, fool. How's that? Is that what you're lookin for, baby girl? Where you from, baby girl? Oh let me guess. You are from The Heights. You are from Iowa. You are from Germany. Am I leaving anything out? Oh wait. Let me read this. You are from strip mall utopia shoppin Target pronounced Tarjay sippin on double digit drinks drivin barely hand me down luxury SUVs swipin daddy's Amex?

SARAH

You know nothing about me.

RAY RAY

Go back to wherever it is you came from, cuz I know it's not from here!

SARAH

I'd leave if I could. I'd hijack one of those hot air balloons and just keep on going til I couldn't go anymore and I'd float there and I would be at peace. But before I am at peace I would make sure to do a flyover to Mountain and Montoya and hover over all your dogs and your homies dogs and I would jack all the Breakfast Burrito Gal's shit and then I would rain breakfast burritos down on your dogs. From the sky falls a bacon egg and cheese burrito hail storm. And the dogs get sick and barf and poop all up in your precious neighborhood. Now that's where I came from, pendejo!

RAY RAY

You need some help.

SARAH

Mmmmmmm. Cheeeeeeeez. Mmmmmmmmm. Dog pooooooooooooop.

RAY RAY

I'm serious. You need some real help. Like medical help.

Sarah pops one of the balloons.

RAY RAY

What the hell!

SARAH

Pop goes the Ray Ray!

Sarah keeps popping balloons. She throws balloons at him dodgeball style.

RAY RAY

Hey now! We can't do this when anyone else comes in! I'm gonna need you to stop!

Sarah pretends to inhale one of the balloons and makes her voice high-pitched like she's on helium.

SARAH

(high pitch voice)

Make it stop, Ray Ray! Make it stop!

She laughs a fake helium laugh. She falls down as the laugh turns to a cry.

RAY RAY

Whoah whoah whoah, are you okay?

SARAH

Make it stop. Please make it stop, Ray Ray.

Joe comes back to witness Sarah's breakdown.

He stands in silence.

RAY RAY

It's ok, Sarita. Everything's gonna be ok.

Joe starts to frantically clean up all the popped balloons as Ray Ray holds Sarah.

SARAH

Pop goes the Ray Ray.

The lights fade on the tableaux.

BALLOON RIDE

Donald takes the audience on a magic balloon ride.

DONALD

Ok I want you to close your eyes. Imagine it's the crack of dawn and you drag yourself out to your truck and put on your fleece and you make it there just in time to get a good parking spot and you march to the grounds and you find the breakfast burrito table and you try to get on KRQE news and wave to your mama and then. Then! Then it happens. You decide to leave the ground. This year you are not a spectator. You are a rider. Are you a rider?? Yeah. I think you're a rider. So there you are. You see the basket, a very big basket. You approach it with caution but then, boom, you jump in. Fire it up, fire it up. Then it hits ya. Woooooosh! Boooooom! Crackle hisssssssssssss. Hisssssssssssss. Still have your eyes closed? And we're up. Up, up and away in our Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta balloon! Oh sweet lord I think I am going to be sick. Close your eyes. There's the people. There's the breakfast burrito gal. Damn I forgot to tip her. There's the truck! There's the mountains! There's the casino. The highway. The skyline. And there. There we are in Old Town. Open your eyes. Here we are in Old Town and it's the Balloon Fiesta, the most photographed event in the world! And we're coming down. Hope we don't crash land. And thank you for listening. I will also be giving a Ghost Tour this afternoon if anyone would like to hear about the many hauntings of Old Town. Muahahahahaha!

DIA DE LOS MUERTOS

Ray Ray and Sarah paint each other's faces black and white. Calaveras!

SARAH

Who knew your hand was so steady.

RAY RAY

I have a lot of practice. With my hands. Alone. Never mind that sounds terrible.

SARAH

I used to hate Dia de los muertos. All these scary skull faces running around with a buncha marigolds, which I think I'm allergic to, and then it hit me.

RAY RAY

Tell me, mija.

SARAH

I don't know what I was smoking but I remembered, duh! What is this thing all about? Remembering those who have gone before their time.

RAY RAY

You used to be punk. Now you're emo.

SARAH

I mean it. This is like my favorite holiday now. Screw Halloween. Dia de los muertos has real meaning.

Joe walks in with a bunch of piñata making material.

SARAH

Welcome to One-Stop!

JOE

What are you two wearing?

RAY RAY

Looks cool, eh? You want one?

JOE

You look like idiots.

SARAH

They're calaveras. Skulls. For the dead?

JOE

And?

RAY RAY

It's Dia de los muertos.

JOE

I thought it was Halloween.

SARAH

You wouldn't understand.

JOE

Try me. But while we're at it, I had a thought. I seem to remember that there's a tradition of piñatas around here?

RAY RAY

Piñatas? I guess we do piñatas.

JOE

I brought some supplies. And apples! Halloween always meant bobbing for apples for me. I'm kinda giddy, y'all. This is my favorite time of year.

SARAH

I'm gonna make you the bomb piñata. Just you wait.

Sarah uses her master crafting skillz to make a piñata while Joe sets up the bobbing for apples station.

JOE

This is not your first rodeo. No ma'am.

RAY RAY

She's in the zone! Don't break it.

During the following section, the actress playing Theresa plays Piñata Boy and gives a lesson in Piñata making.

PIÑATA BOY

There's no rulebook on how to make a piñata. Any way you want to make one is fine, as long as you and your partiers can safely break it open to get to the goodies inside.

JOE

Ok. I'll bite. Muertos? That how you say it? What's the deal, anyway.

PIÑATA BOY

The instructions I offer here are what works for me, but other piñateros might do things differently and you shouldn't feel limited by the methods I use — in fact, I'm always experimenting with new techniques myself in order to create new and different piñatas.

RAY RAY

Dia de los muertos is like the Day of the Dead. Actually it is the Day of the Dead.

JOE

Are we talkin like zombies? Like the walking dead?

SARAH

Yes! Zombies!

PIÑATA BOY

I most often use balloons and newspapers to make my piñatas, with a papier mâché paste made from flour and water. I find that approach to be easy and inexpensive, so that's where we'll start.

RAY RAY

It is the day of the year that we take the time to honor the people who have passed away.

JOE

That sounds depressing.

PIÑATA BOY

Begin with a picture or sketch of what I want to make. Por ejemplo, maybe you want to make a cowskull just like Georgia O'Keefe painted.

SARAH

It is depressing! Life is depressing!

PIÑATA BOY

Blow up balloons to the sizes I need and wrap them in newspaper, the tighter the better. I try to minimize the number and size of the bumps, but they can't be eliminated altogether.

SARAH

But it's beautifully depressing! Depressingly beautiful, seeing all those black and white skull faces marching in a mass of marigolds.

PIÑATA BOY

Mix up a batch of papier mâché paste. Dip strips of newspaper into the paste and lay them on the newspaper-wrapped balloons. Allow each layer to dry before applying the next one.

RAY RAY

We make ofrendas, these altars? And then we like to make a kind of offering to our dead relatives. My tio passed, and he liked the tequila, so I'll make sure I put a shot of Cuervo next to his framed photo.

PIÑATA BOY

Poke a hole in each piece, then pop and remove the balloon. To close up the hole I'll usually put on a layer of papier mâché, but sometimes I'll just cover it with masking tape and then decorate right over the masking tape.

JOE

My dad died recently.

RAY RAY

I'm so sorry.

SARAH

Did he like tequila? He can hang out with Ray Ray's uncle and get all borracho.

PIÑATA BOY

If I'm making a structured piñata, I'll assemble different pieces of the piñata using masking tape to hold them together, then apply two or sometimes three layers of papier mâché strips to cement them together, letting each layer dry before the next one is added.

JOE

He was a good man. But... we had a different idea of what success looked like. And yes, he did like the tequila.

PIÑATA BOY

Decorate the piñata when the completed papier mâché sculpture is dry.

RAY RAY

What did he do?

JOE

Rancher. Cattle.

RAY RAY

What was his name?

JOE

Joe.

PIÑATA BOY

If you've never made a piñata before, give it a try! You'll be surprised at how easy it is to get great results the first time.

Pinata boy disappears but not before giving Sarah a (premade) cowskull pinata.

SARAH

Right? Huh? Pretty badass if I do say so myself!

JOE
It looks great. Good job, Sarah.

RAY RAY
Thanks for sharing, Joe.

Donald runs in with his face smeared up
in Black and White.

DONALD
How I look? Tell the truth?

SARAH
Like you did your makeup in a cellphone camera mirror, a
cellphone that needed to be upgraded last decade.

JOE
Are we gonna do this thing or what?

SARAH
Let's do bobbing for apples first. I have a few more touches
left on the piñata.

JOE
Ladies first.

SARAH
You sure? Isn't this like... your thing?

JOE
It would give me great pleasure to see you enjoying yourself.
Having a good one.

SARAH
Gentlemen. I got this.

Sarah dips her head in the bucket of
water and bites an apples. She comes up
for air, her Black and White makeup
running everywhere.

DONALD
Holy moly! Flashback!

SARAH
How do I look?

RAY RAY
We clearly did not think this through.

JOE
Someone get a mop.

SARAH

Do I look crazy? I bet I look crazy. Boo! Boooooooooo!

DONALD

I'm next!

JOE

Let's move on. No bobbing for apples this year.

RAY RAY

You do look crazy.

JOE

Piñata time! Come on, team. Let's do this! Who's first? Ray Ray, get the Louisville Slugger from behind the counter.

RAY RAY

We could use the mop handle!

JOE

Who's first? Sarah?

SARAH

I can't make myself be the first to bring death and destruction to my handiwork.

JOE

Fair enough. Big D? I know you swing a big stick!

DONALD

Me? I don't swing no bat. No sir. No baseball for me until the Cleveland Indians get rid of their mascot, Chief Wahoo. But what kind of goodies do we have up in that Georgia O'Keefe lookin cowskull?

SARAH

(whispers to Donald)

You don't want none of that!

JOE

Ray Ray! Big Ray with the big bat! Swing Ray Ray, swiiiiiiing!

SARAH

(mouths to Ray Ray)

No! Don't do it!

RAY RAY

Why don't you go first, Joe?

SARAH

Yes! You should take the first swing! Don't you know that... we have a...tradition! Yes. A tradition!

Here on Albuquerque's Old Town Plaza, the visitor's first Halloween and Day of the Dead must be commemorated by taking the first swing at the new piñata.

JOE

I think you're all full of crap, but what the heck. I'm feeling in the spirit.

Joe takes his stance.

SARAH

Whoah, not so fast, slugger, we have to blindfold you and make you dizzyingly sick before you take a swing.

DONALD

We probably should be drunk to do this too.

RAY RAY

Don't touch the tequila! It's for Tio Jose and Daddy Joe.

Sarah blindfolds Joe. They all turn him around in many, many circles.

Joe stumbles and attempts a swing.

RAY RAY

Swing and a miss!

JOE

Gimme another! I can do it.

They set it up and...

Smack!

Unbeknownst to the entire crew, Sarah has filled the cow skull pinata with milk.

A glowing milky substance pours down on Joe.

He takes several long moments to gather his breath.

Silence.

Joe whispers something in Ray Ray's ear and leaves.

Silence.

DONALD

Where were all the goodies? I don't get it. Piñatas are supposed to have candy and coins, sometimes if it's an adult party then maybe some condoms and minis...

RAY RAY

That's it, you know.

SARAH

I know.

DONALD

That was some of the craziest stuff I've ever seen, and I've seen it all.

SARAH

What can I do?

RAY RAY

I don't know.

SARAH

I need this.

RAY RAY

Me too.

Donald starts to clean up as Ray Ray and Sarah stare out into space.

Silence.

They start to laugh. They laugh hysterically.

Joe runs in.

JOE

Why is she still here?

Lights down on the tableaux.

WINTER

Mccall, in winter overcoat, looms over the plaza.

MCCALL

Glowing brown sacks decorate the pathways of the plaza. Winter is here. The weather is never too, too harsh here in Albuquerque. But if you find yourself lost and cold at night, just look for the glowing brown sacks to guide you to the nearest shelter.

This season, the great New Mexico debate goes beyond Red or Green chile. This time of year we argue Luminarias versus Farolitos.

Donald struggles to bring in a wheelbarrow full of sand.

DONALD

We always said Luminarias. I don't know nothin about farolitos. Feel like they say farolitos more up north in Santa Fe. And I don't like to drive on the highway, so it's luminarias for me.

MCCALL

I do not like to get my hands dirty. At least not literally. Metaphorically speaking, I'm all about the dirt. But today, this season? Let's get dirty. Give me those brown sacks and I will fill them and make them glow.

Theresa enters holding a big poinsettia plant and some presents.

She hugs Donald deeply. She and McCall shake hands. They all begin filling the brown paper bags with sand.

DONALD

You. You!

THERESA

I prefer farolitos. That's the word for these things. These "glowing brown sacks." Luminarias? That actually means bonfires. We shouldn't set bonfires on the plaza. At least not on our plaza.

DONALD

Bonfires on the plaza. What a time to be alive!

MCCALL

I'll be on my way then. You two have some catching up to do.

THERESA

Nope. You're comin with us. To the shop. My shop. As soon as we finish these Faroluminarias.

DONALD

It's good to have you back.

THERESA

I never left.

Lights down on the three faroluminaria makers.

Lights up on the shop. It's festive!

Sarah puts the finishing touches on her homemade Christmas presents, sweatshirts with HAVE A GOOD ONE printed all over. She sports the prototype.

Donald enters and puts a couple brown glowing sacks next to the entrance.

DONALD

In case someone loses their way.

Sarah hugs Donald deeply.

SARAH

Big D. I have something for you.

Sarah gives him his present: the Have a Good One sweatshirt.

DONALD

For me? Really? But I come empty handed. All I have are these...

SARAH

Farolitos! It's officially Christmas!

Donald tries on his new shirt.

DONALD

"Have A Good One." Catchy. That's your uniform, Sarah! You found your uniform.

McCall enters with some more faroluminarias and lights the way for some more travelers.

SARAH

McCall! You came into the store! This is amazing. Worlds collide. Can I get you anything?

MCCALL

I came to bring you something.

SARAH

McCall! You shouldn't have! I feel bad... maybe I can offer you a hand-painted ornament with my new logo, Have a Good One?

MCCALL

No need. Close your eyes. I brought you...

Theresa enters carrying the poinsettia.

THERESA

A poinsettia tree!

SARAH

Theresa! Auntie Theresa. Saver of lost souls.

They embrace deeply.

THERESA

The perfect showcase for your handpainted ornaments, only available at Theresa's One-Stop Shop.

Sarah gives Theresa a Have a Good One sweatshirt.

SARAH

I knew you'd be back.

THERESA

This is... muy punk. I like.

Theresa tries on the sweatshirt.

SARAH

Where have you been?

THERESA

Oh you know. Around the corner. Working on my novel.

SARAH

You've got to be kidding me.

THERESA

It's true! I never had the time to get away and focus on myself. But I was given an incredible gift.

Joe walks in with a bunch of fruitcakes.

THERESA

Welcome to Theresa's.

JOE

Theresa! What a surprise! Merry Merry! I might have an extra fruitcake for you too. I didn't expect you. Merry Merry everybody!

DONALD

Mmm-hmm.

MCCALL

To commemorate my first visit into the shop, I think I need to buy something. Can you recommend a nice little holiday gift for my partner to remind us of... our history?

SARAH

How about...

Sarah and Theresa smile and conspire.

SARAH/THERESA

A storyteller doll.

MCCALL

A storyteller doll.

JOE

Ooh that's a great idea. I think we have some we can give to you at a neighborly rate.

Theresa retrieves a massive Storyteller doll and gifts it to McCall.

THERESA

Our gift to you. Vecino.

MCCALL

Neighbor. Thank you.

JOE

Don't you think that one is a little... over the top?

THERESA

Let me tell you a little story. Gather around, mijitos.

Theresa situates the crew around her, like she's the mama Storyteller doll.

THERESA

Children. I am so grateful to each of you for allowing me the time to get away. And you, Joe. New Joe. The New Joe Special. Would you like to know what I was writing over the course of the time you've been here?

JOE

Sure, I/

THERESA

You've been here a long time now. Let's see. There once was a little town nestled away from all the outsiders. The townspeople made a life for themselves. It was hard work, but they managed to make it through the day, the week, months, and years, until...one day... a White hat-wearing man came on his high horse and started to ask for things.

He wanted things his way. He came into a new town and new space and demanded they adapt to him. Well. They resisted. We resisted. We resist. Joe, I want you to have this gift. A regalito from me to you.

Theresa retrieves a huge authentic Cowskull.

THERESA

For your dashboard of that big ole truck of yours. Maybe you can hang one of your Stetsons on the horns.

JOE

Thank you, Theresa. You've been... thank you.

THERESA

I'm gonna need you to take that Cowskull and put it in your truck immediately as you mosey on outta here, partner.

JOE

I guess it is getting late.

THERESA

I'm gonna need you to Have a Good One.

SARAH

That's right, Joe Joe. Have a Good One!

JOE

Yeah, y'all too. Have a good one.

THERESA

No, I don't think you understand. You need to Have a Good One.

DONALD

Get the heck on outta here, cowpoke! Go back to where you came from. And if you're not gonna take that skull, I'd like it.

JOE

I can take a hint. Y'all just... have a good one. I'm taking the cowskull.

Joe takes his stuff. He moseys on out.

THERESA

Don't forget your fruitcake. Have a good one!

Group hug!

DONALD

They say it's the storytellers who write history.

THERESA

Who re-write history. There was once a little mom and mom shop in the center of Albuquerque's Old Town Plaza. Construction was bad, the tourists were gone, and then a stranger came to town.

SARAH

But the employees of Theresa's One-Stop Shop persevered.

DONALD

And destroyed the evil Texan Devil!

THERESA

And they lived to tell the tale.

The offstage banda plays something like La Cucaracha, announcing Ray Ray's big entrance in his new suped up Lowrider Pedicab!

RAY RAY

All aboard the Ray Ray express! Come and see the sites, hit the heights, just like the locals! Check it check it out: Ray Ray's Old Town Tours. Cruisin along the plaza!

Donald hops in.

DONALD

Ray Ray's Old Town Tours!

RAY RAY

Featuring Master of Ceremonies Extraordinario, Big D!

DONALD

It was this very place, this very place (!) in the year 1706, Governor Francisco Cuervo y Valdez made Old Town the focal point of the community. The plaza! The meeting place! A place where people can gather and be part of a bigger whole!

They cruise off as the offstage Banda blasts a mariachi-inflected seasonal tune.

RAY RAY

HAVE...

DONALD

A...

The lowrider pedicab almost runs over Joe.

JOE

(offstage)
Whatchit, partner!

RAY RAY/DONALD

GOOD ONE!

MCCALL

Thank you for spending your precious time and energy with us.
We know you have many options for your entertainment dollars.
It means a lot to us that you made your way here. We truly
wish that you Have a good one!

Lights down on the tableaux.

END OF PLAY.

PLAN Q (WORKING TITLE

Written by

Rafael Gallegos

MONTAGE

A pop-y Shakira/J-Lo song accompanies images and clips showing the Rise and Fall of VALENTINA GARCIA, a 40ish former pageant queen turned celebrity.

BABY VALENTINA on the GYMNASTICS team tumbling on mats over and over. Somersault. The works. Her PARENTS so so proud.

LIL VALENTINA in THE SCHOOL PLAY as Prancer the Reindeer, upstaging the other kiddie actors with her twirls.

YOUNG VALENTINA getting crowned MISS TEEN COLORADO. She takes a victory lap in her sequined gown and sash.

VALENTINA in a series of commercials for Lee Press On Nails, Aquanet, and Calgon (take me away!).

VALENTINA stars as her famous alter ego MARIA ESTRELLA in the popular telenovela CLANDESTINAS.

VALENTINA makes the transition to doing movies, playing the spicy love interest of much older men.

VALENTINA on POSTERS for increasingly terrible movies. "MARIA ESTRELLA in SPEEDY GONZALO: THE FAST AND THE FURRY-OUS."
VALENTINA in "SEXY STEPMOM". VALENTINA in SECOND WIVES CLUB.

Paparazzi footage of Valentina bottoming out, stealing GIRL SCOUT cookies, a snap of her not-so-beach-ready bikini body.

INT. TMZ STUDIOS - DAY

Two catty entertainment gossip personalities CATHY and PALOMA discuss Valentina during a live taping of their popular morning show BITTER BREW.

CATHY

Finally we've come to the question
of the moment:

PALOMA

Is Valentina Garcia, better known
to the world as Maria
Estrella...over?! Is Valentina a
has-been?!

CATHY

Let me save us some time. Yes!
Valentina is done-zo! Over! She
might as well be dead, just like
her box office draw!

PALOMA

Now I love me some vintage Maria Estrella. Don't get me wrong. Clandestinas was my jam!

CATHY

But when was the last time she was in anything remotely good?!

PALOMA

At least she still LOOKS good?

CATHY

Debatable! And to top it off, Valentina is a disgrace to her community, stealing from Girl Scouts...

Paparazzi shots of Valentina gorging on Thin Mints.

CATHY (CONT'D)

The shame. And she's a notorious under-tipper!

A graphic of a WAITER holding up a credit card slip from Valentina with a two dollar tip on a hundred dollar meal, signed like it was an autograph.

CATHY (CONT'D)

The question isn't whether Valentina is over. It's whether or not Valentina is the greediest bitch in show biz.

PALOMA

For someone who has made so much, what has she given back to the community?

CATHY

Valentina Garcia ...

PALOMA

Maria Estrella...

A quick shot of Maria Estrella doing her signature hair flip move from the Clandestinas opening credits.

PALOMA/CATHY

We give you the hair flip! "To the stars!"

Cathy and Paloma mock Valentina's hair flip and tag line.

INT. AUDITION ROOM - DAY

Valentina stands before her two industry types, BETH and GABRIEL, casting assistants sitting behind a long folding table stacked with headshots of young women.

VALENTINA

I'm so honored to be here. Thank you.

GABRIEL

No no no, thank YOU.

BETH

Ready, Valentina?

VALENTINA checks her hair and makeup on her camera phone.

VALENTINA

Will this be taped or skyped? I need to know how much foundation to use.

BETH

(to GABRIEL)

Not nearly enough!

GABRIEL

Honey. Darling. Don't know if you heard, but you'll be reading for us today?

VALENTINA

Oh. Is the director on his way?

BETH

Valentina. Val, baby. This is a preliminary. To see who we're going to bring in. Later.

VALENTINA

I can just tape my part... er, record my part... and I can leave it for the director. Or the actual casting agent?

GABRIEL

Honey. Darling. This is the audition. Now. You'll be reading with me today.

VALENTINA

Oh. Ok. How do I look?

BETH
 Marvelous. Shall we take it from
 the top?

VALENTINA takes her spot and prepares with a deep inhale.

VALENTINA
 I begin.

Gabriel and Beth give each other the head nod.

BETH
 And... go!

VALENTINA/GABRIEL
 What brings you here today?

BETH
 Im sorry. There must be some
 confusion. Valentina, you are
 reading for Bonnie, the great aunt
 who was lost at sea.

VALENTINA
 I thought I was Dulce? Is this not
 the audition for Dulce's Dream?

GABRIEL
 It is darling. But you're reading
 for the aunt.

VALENTINA
 The aunt? I'm the tia?

BETH
 Fraid so. Once more. With feeling.

VALENTINA
 (under her breath)
 Oh I'll give you some feelings.

VALENTINA hits her mark again and they start the reading
 over. VALENTINA beams as Bonnie the aunt.

GABRIEL
 What brings you here today?

VALENTINA
 ... why I just needed to deliver
 these scones to you. We don't need
 you fussing in the kitchen now that
 you're pregnant!

GABRIEL

Oh Aunt Bonnie, did I ever tell you
you're the best?

VALENTINA

A gal never gets tired of hearing a
thing like that! Now where's that
hubby of yours? He's got some
explaining to do!

Gabriel claps as Beth nods approvingly.

GABRIEL

Ms. Garcia. I grew up watching you,
and it was actually me who
suggested you come in. It's always
been my dream to read with you.
This is kind of embarrassing, but
can you autograph your headshot for
me?

VALENTINA

Why of course.

Beth takes out the prepared headshot of a much younger
VALENTINA and hands her a sharpie.

VALENTINA (CONT'D)

Who should I make it out to?

GABRIEL

Gabriel...a. Gabriela.

VALENTINA signs her name. She's done this a few times.

VALENTINA

"To my Gabriela, follow your heart
into the stars! Yours, Valentina
Garcia. MARIA ESTRELLA"

GABRIEL

The hair flip! Will you do the hair
flip?

VALENTINA obliges. Maybe this will get her the part?

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

(to Beth)

The hair flip was Maria Estrella's
signature move used in the ever
popular soap opera/telenovela
CLANDESTINAS!

BETH
You don't say.

VALENTINA
Thank you for having me come in,

BETH
We'll be in touch!

Air kisses and goodbyes.

INT. VALENTINA'S SUV (MOVING) - DAY

VALENTINA speeds in her year 2000 Lexus SUV weaving and out of the busy Los Angeles traffic.

VALENTINA
The aunt. The Tia! They want me to be the Tia!

VALENTINA lets out a big scream that she's been holding in.

VALENTINA (CONT'D)
They think I'm a Tia! Am I a tia?
Oh my god am I a tia?

VALENTINA puts on her bluetooth headset and calls her agent's assistant LINDSAY.

INT. GARY GARY'S TALENT AGENCY - CONTINUOUS

A Hollywood Agency with tasteful corporate decor. LINDSAY, twenties and arrogant, at her desk on her handsfree headset. Intercut.

LINDSAY
Gary Gary's office, this Lindsay

VALENTINA
Lindsay. Vallie. Give me Gary.

LINDSAY
Gary's...

Lindsay looks for GARY, a white-linen suit wearing talent agent. Gary gives her the "Im not here" look.

LINDSAY (CONT'D)
Gary's not in at the moment, may I take a message?

VALENTINA
I know he's there, Lindsay. Please
put him on.

LINDSAY
Hold please.

VALENTINA's screams become cries as she pulls up to

EXT. STARBUCKS - CONTINUOUS

VALENTINA unrolls her window to order at the drive-thru menu.
intercut this too.

BARISTA
(off)
You okay, miss?

VALENTINA
That little bitch.

BARISTA
(off)
Malp you?

VALENTINA
Excuse me?

BARISTA
May I help you?

VALENTINA
Yes. Can I get a triple mocha-hoocha
half caff non fat soy whip light on
the sprinkles and hold the straw?

BARISTA
Pull up.

VALENTINA
Thank you, pulling!

VALENTINA shouts back into her bluetooth for Lindsay.

VALENTINA (CONT'D)
You little bitch! You do not put
VALENTINA on hold! Don't forget who
made that agency!

VALENTINA pulls up to the window.

EXT. DRIVE-THRU WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

Valentina shouts at Lindsay as she gives her credit card to the BARISTA, a headset-clad pimple-faced teen happy to have their first job.

VALENTINA
Are you listening to me you little
shit?!

BARISTA
That'll be \$4.75.

The barista runs the card.

VALENTINA
I made you and I can unmake you!

BARISTA
I'm afraid there's a problem with
the card.

LINDSAY
Ms. Vallie? Keep holding, please.

VALENTINA starts to cry again.

VALENTINA
Holding.

Valentina hands the barista a five dollar bill. He hands her the mammoth drink.

VALENTINA (CONT'D)
Keep the change.

BARISTA
Thanks? Did you used to be Maria
Estrella?

VALENTINA blows a kiss and speeds off.

VALENTINA
Into the stars!

INT. VALENTINA'S SUV (MOVING) - DAY

Marisela calls her son CHRIS (20's), serial entrepreneur.

INT. CHRIS'S MARIJUANA GROW ROOM - DAY

Chris in farmer attire tending to his crop. Intercut.

CHRIS
Mamá! What's up?

VALENTINA
They think I'm a Tia!

CHRIS
Hold up. Can't hear. I'm... Say again?

VALENTINA
I had an audition and I thought I was the ingenue but I was really the aunt! I'm the Tia!

CHRIS
Well... You're about to become an abuela!

VALENTINA swerves on her way home and screams with joy!

VALENTINA
Call ya back loveya te quiero much

EXT. VALENTINA'S DRIVEWAY - DAY

VALENTINA pulls up just as the MAILMAN is leaving. He gives her an overly friendly thumbs up.

VALENTINA, distracted by the creepy mailman and news from back home, almost runs over A KID ON A HOVERBOARD.

INT. VALENTINA'S SUV - CONTINUOUS

VALENTINA spills her drink all over her lap and clothes and car.

VALENTINA
Chingado!

HOVERBOARD
Sorry ma'am!

VALENTINA
Watch where you're going next time, kid.

EXT. VALENTINA'S DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

VALENTINA gets out her car. Her white clothes now look like shit.

HOVERBOARD
Holy Shit! Maria Estrella!

The kid whips out his cellphone and snaps away.

VALENTINA
At least get my good side!

The kid rolls off on the hoverboard, shooting away.

INT. FOIRER - DAY

VALENTINA checks herself out in the floor length mirror. She crosses herself at the altar of her DAYTIME EMMY.

VALENTINA
Santa Maria!

Finally she is at home, her sanctuary.

She strips off her nasty clothes and examines her body.

VALENTINA (CONT'D)
Still got it.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

VALENTINA walks down the hallway past the framed photos of her life. Her parents. Dance class at MISS FRAN's studio. Her quinceañera. Her son CHRIS as a child dressed as a cowboy.

She tries to open the door to the garage/laundry room, but it's locked!

VALENTINA
Mi amor, you in there? I have to
get these whites in the wash
pronto!

She tries the door again. No luck. She rushes down the hallway, back outdoors.

EXT. VALENTINA'S DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

VALENTINA covers her body with the dirty clothes as she rushes to get the garage door opener from her car.

She opens the garage door to reveal BENJI, gym body ripped, caught red handed sniffing pairs of VALENTINA's dirty panties.

VALENTINA

Mi amor?

BENJI

Baby! Baby baby baby baby!

VALENTINA

What's going on?

BENJI

This is not what it looks like.

What it looks like is Benji's secret lair where he takes Valentina's underwear and sells them on the internet. Stacks of manilla envelopes and USPS packages, rolls of packing tape and bubble wrap.

A dual computer screen setup shows images of Benji's EBAY store and a photoshop screen.

Benji closes the garage door. Valentina stops it halfway.

VALENTINA

What are you doing with my dirty laundry? My sundries? My delicates?

BENJI

Baby. This is not what it's looks like. What had happened was...

VALENTINA

What's the going rate?

BENJI

Baby, I swear this is. This is kind of. This is a joke. I swear. For your birthday!

VALENTINA

You know I hate birthdays.

VALENTINA closes the door all the way.

INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

VALENTINA searches the garage.

VALENTINA

Wow. Impressive. Quite the operation. I see you've got the whole collection. Nice. I was wondering where all my Lululemons went.

BENJI
Let me explain, baby. The gym is
not doing so well.

VALENTINA
But we just remodeled.

BENJI
Can you spring for more cardio
machines?

VALENTINA
I don't see many bras?

BENJI
Panties do better. Baby. Please.
I'm telling you. The clients just
aren't coming back. They're going
to Cross Fit. Hot Yoga. Nobody
wants a personal trainer anymore.

VALENTINA
I did.

BENJI
Baby.

VALENTINA
How much do my panties go for?

BENJI

(beat)
Not as much as they used to.

She throws her coffee-drenched clothes on his computer. Whip
cream drips down the Buy It Now screen.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

VALENTINA expertly prepares her GO BAG. She takes her a few
changes of clothes, her passport, Chanel Number 5 and

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

She carefully elects which framed photos she wants to take
with her. PARENTS. MISS FRAN. HER SON. Finally and
ceremoniously she packs the Daytime Emmy.

INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Valentina steals Benji's vintage red Camaro Convertible. She opens one of the already packaged envelopes and takes out a pair of yoga pants.

EXT. VALENTINA'S DRIVEWAY

She opens the garage door and heads out, taking the top down. She puts the yoga pants on her head and cruises past the Hoverboard Kid, who keeps on shooting.

HOVERBOARD

Viral City. This is gonna get like
a million hits!

EXT. CAMARO (MOVING) - DAY

VALENTINA speeds out of town, the yoga pants on her head blowing in the wind.

END ACT ONE

INT. CAMARO (MOVING)- NIGHT -

Valentina rushes down the highway on her way to Denver, passing SIGNS of landmarks along the way. She stops for some fuel at

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Valentina fills up her tank. She checks to see if anyone is watching her. She is all alone, save for a PIMPLY FACED ATTENDANT.

ATTENDANT

Evenin, ma'am. You ok out there?

VALENTINA

You know what? I am. I am ok. At
least I'm going to be.

ATTENDANT

Anyone ever tell you you look like
that one chick on TV?

VALENTINA

You flatterer, you.

Valentina blows the attendant a kiss and cruises off.

EXT. CAMARO (MOVING) - NIGHT

Valentina sings one of her favorite tunes from childhood. As she reaches the chorus she is joined by a MYSTERIOUS VOICE, a woman's alto who harmonizes.

VALENTINA
What the...

INT. CAMARO (MOVING)- CONTINUOUS

Valentina checks the rearview mirror.

VALENTINA
This is the middle of the desert. I must be hearing things. My voice hasn't been overdubbed in years. Well, not THAT long ago! Who am I kidding. Drop the act, Valentina.

Valentina continues her song. The mysterious voice continues in harmony as they finish the musical phrase.

VALENTINA (CONT'D)
I must be going nuts! Gotta find a hotel or something...

A SIGN for a motel that reads: Motel 7, 100 miles.

VALENTINA (CONT'D)
Mierda! Ok. I can do this. We got this. Just no more singing!

Valentina nods off as she drive. She veers off the road! She checks the mirror and slaps herself in the face.

VALENTINA (CONT'D)
You are not going out like this, Val Val. Imagine the headlines: Another Fallen Celebrity Car Crash. Not gonna happen. Nope. Not this chica.

Valentina looks to the sky and asks for help.

VALENTINA (CONT'D)
I know I have been a bad, bad girl lately, but if there is anything out there that can help me get home, please! I beg of you!

The constellation of stars in the skies rearranges to form the visage of MISS FRAN.

MISS FRAN
Valentiiaiiiiina!

VALENTINA
Holy -

MISS FRAN
Valentina. The world is yours.

VALENTINA
Yes, Miss Fran! I know! The world
is mine!

MISS FRAN
And remember... follow the stars!

VALENTINA
Yes, Miss Frannie! Follow the
stars!

MISS FRAN
Say it with me one time!

VALENTINA/MISS FRAN
FOLLOW THE STARS!

MISS FRAN
Keep these words in your heart and
you will never lose the way. Come
home! We miss you! Call your son
once in a while! And remember to
stop by the studio when you're
back! For god's sake remember us!
Remember me!

VALENTINA
Of course, Miss Frannie! Who could
forget you!

MISS FRAN
You are my legacy! And remember...
follow the staaaarrrrrsssssss...

Miss Frans face disappears into the stars which light the way
for Valentina to cruise home safely.

VALENTINA
Hijo. Will I ever escape that damn
phrase. Onwards!

EXT. SUBURBAN SUBDIVISION - MORNING

Valentina searches the cookie cutter houses on the outskirts of Denver for her son's house.

VALENTINA
Every single house. Every single
damn house! Looks like every other
damn house!

As she cruises in and out of the cul-de-sacs, the SUBURBANITES go about their morning routines, getting the paper, mowing the "lawn", porch sitting.

VALENTINA (CONT'D)
Tell me this is not where the only
son of mine lives.

Valentina checks her GOOGLE MAPS for Chris's address. Turn left in 500 feet. Your destination will be on your left.

MISS FRAN (O.S.)
Your destination! Follow your...

VALENTINA
Yeah yeah yeah, I get it, Miss
Frannie. THANK you very much.

Valentina pulls up to Chris's house. A big truck with hippie bumper stickers is in the driveway, a COLORADO FLAG on the porch.

Valentina fixes her hair. She's a mess, for her standards. But, hey, this is Colorado. So she's cool.

She rings the door bell. No answer. Rings again. CLOMPING FOOT STEPS approach the door. Valentina readies herself to meet NICKY, Chris's very pregnant girlfriend.

INT. DOORWAY - CONTINUOUS

Nicky has not had her morning smoothie yet.

NICKY
Don't you know what God damn time
it is?

She opens the door to see Valentina, disheveled and in need of a restroom.

NICKY (CONT'D)

Sorry, miss. We're not buying anything. Not this morning. Not ever.

VALENTINA

Oh you must be... I can see what he sees in you.

NICKY

Can I help you with something?

VALENTINA

You must not recognize me in my current state of dress. Forgive me for the intrusion so early this morning. I'm Valentina!

NICKY

Hello... Valentina. Can I help you with something?

VALENTINA

And you must be... ?

The sound of even heavier CLOMPING FOOTSTEPS as CHRIS rushes down the staircase.

CHRIS

Nicky! This is Nicky, MOM.

Chris gives Nicky the play along with me look. Nicky returns with a what-the-hell-is-going-on look.

VALENTINA

Nicky. Cute.

CHRIS

Nicky, meet my mother, Valentina. Mamá, I didn't know you would be coming so soon.

NICKY

Your mother? Oh yes! Your mother. I can see resemblance.

VALENTINA

He gets his good looks from his mother. It's true.

NICKY

I am so sorry for being rude. It's just that CHRIS didn't tell me you were coming.

VALENTINA

If I have learned anything during my life in the business, it's how to make an entrance!

CHRIS

You always knew how to enter a room. You were even better at leaving it!

VALENTINA

Mijito, are you eating? You look as skinny. This Nicky must be eating for the three of you. You must be about to pop!

NICKY

I'm 7 months.

VALENTINA

My Chris must still be quite the cook! A man who knows how to cook will never be lonely I always say. Are you going to invite me in, or what?

INT. CHRIS'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

An upwardly mobile living room with matching recliners and but strewn with stacks of papers and workbooks, ledgers, dumbbells and various exercise equipment.

CHRIS

Mamá, are you staying?

VALENTINA

I needed to get out of town for a bit. Long story. I could think of no better place than to be with you.

CHRIS

Have you slept, ma? You look like... not yourself.

NICKY

I'll work on a sleeping situation. We can rearrange the nursery a bit.

VALENTINA

A nursery. My baby's having a baby!

NICKY

You two catch up. Nice to meet
you...Valentina.

VALENTINA

The pleasure is all mine... Nicole.

CHRIS

It's Nicky.

VALENTINA

Nicky.

NICKY

Just Nicky. Plain, ole Nicky.

VALENTINA

Thank you, sweetheart.

Valentina tries to hug and kiss her but Nicky is visibly
uncomfortable with physical affection.

NICKY

Have fun... reconnecting.

Nicky cleans up some of the living room mess on her way
upstairs.

CHRIS

I know what you're going to say

VALENTINA

She's a...

CHRIS

Hold your tongue, Maria Estrella.

VALENTINA

She's a... Have you really thought
this one out, son? I mean, it's not
too late.

CHRIS

Ma. She's "about to pop" in your
words. it's a little late. She'll
grow on you.

VALENTINA

I'm just saying. My baby deserves
the best. And besides. I don't
think she can do any more growing.

CHRIS

What are you doing here, Valentina?

VALENTINA
I'm leaving Benji.

CHRIS
Which one is he?

VALENTINA
The personal trainer.

CHRIS
Ah yes. The one with the shady gym
that you personally financed. How's
that working out?

VALENTINA
He sold my panties on ebay.

Chris stifles a laugh.

CHRIS
Oh, ma. I'm so sorry.

VALENTINA
Now that I say it out loud it
sounds pretty damn funny.

CHRIS
At least you know you're still in
the public eye! Or the public nose!

VALENTINA
Don't quit your dayjob, Mr. Funny
Pants.

CHRIS
About that dayjob.

VALENTINA
How is the "Office of The Public
Defender"? I'm so proud of you.
Have I told you how proud I am of
you? My son, the public defender!

CHRIS
Where's my sense of hospitality.
Can I get you something to drink?
One of Nicky's famous breakfast
smoothies?

VALENTINA
Is there a problem with court? I
know how stressed out you get. I
thought you were winning all your
cases?

CHRIS

We can talk about all that later. I really need to get to the office.

VALENTINA

It's like 6 in the morning. Don't you have time to sit and gossip with your hot young mother?

CHRIS

It's great to see that you're still the same Valentina.

VALENTINA

Some things never change.

CHRIS

Make yourself at home. Take a nap. Go to town and maybe we can meet for lunch or something.

VALENTINA

I guess I do have an errand to run.

Valentina gives Chris an elaborate kiss sequence on the shake as Chris grabs his smoothie to go.

CHRIS

Give her a chance. At least have one of her smoothies.

Chris hands her the bottle. She takes a whiff.

VALENTINA

Vile! Digusting! Loveya te amo ciao ciao!

EXT. MISS FRAN'S - DAY

A strip mall that has seen better days. Some vacant property surrounds a once vibrant dance/art/performance studio with a hand painted sign that reads "MISS FRANS."

Valentina gets out of her stolen Camaro, removes her slightly used Gucci sunglasses and takes it all in. She can hear the sound of Miss Fran's queenly voice surrounding her.

MISS FRAN (O.S.)

Follow the staaaaarrrrrrrrssssss...

VALENTINA

Yes, Miss Fran. I followed them and
now look where it got me. Back
where it all started.

Valentina enters the storefront studio, pictures of her
winning Miss Teen Colorado and posters from Maria Estrella
line the walls. A huge FRAMED PHOTO of Valentina and Miss
Fran sits on the desk of the severe receptionist JOANNA.

JOANNA

Class is in session!

In the adjacent studio, Beginning Intermediate Ballet class
is underway led by Miss Fran, accompanied by octogenarian
BARBARA on the almost-in-tune baby grand piano.

VALENTINA

Is Miss Fran available? Maybe I
could just pop in and say hi for a
minute.

JOANNA

Class has begun. You can wait until
the end like all the other parents.

VALENTINA

Parents? Oh I'm not a... I'm sorry.
Allow me to introduce myself. My
name is Valentina.

JOANNA

Ok.

VALENTINA

Valentina Valentina.

JOANNA

You can wait in your car if you
like.

VALENTINA

Maria Estrella. I'm Maria Estrella.

The ice is broken.

JOANNA

Get out! You are not. You are NOT!

Valentina grabs the framed photo off the desk and poses with
it, striking the same glowing smile that made her famous.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

I guess you are. Ok, Maria
Estrella. Class ends in twenty
minutes. You can talk to her then.

Valentina starts to disrobe, revealing tights. She grabs
ballet flats out of her purse and quickly does her hair up in
a bun. She hands Joanna her LIFETIME CLASS CARD.

JOANNA (CONT'D)

This is expired.

VALENTINA

Lifetime. It's good for Lifetime.

Valentina hands Joanna a twenty dollar bill.

VALENTINA (CONT'D)

And this is for you. Take a class
or three. Looks like you could use
it.

JOANNA

But this is Beginning Intermediate!
Have you even taken Beginning?

VALENTINA

Honey. I built this studio.

Valentina saunters in to

INT. DANCE STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

A mirror-lined studio with an old sprung floor. Right in time
with the accompanist, she joins the GIRLS, 7 or 8 teenagers
of varying skill level. They give each other looks like holy
shit we're dancing with Maria Estrella!

MISS FRAN

New students must take their place
at the back of class like everybody
else!

VALENTINA

I'm sorry I'm late!

MISS FRAN

You know the rules. No talking in
class. And no perfume! I can smell
you from here.

Valentina mouths "sorry" and gives MISS FRAN a friendly wave.
Fran pretends not to notice it.

MISS FRAN (CONT'D)

Let's take it up a notch, ladies.
Hit it, Barbara!

Miss Fran intensifies her class exercises to show off to Valentina.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Valentina and the girls doing back exercises, Valentina barely keeping up.

Floor exercises with leaps. Valentina slowly getting off the ground more. Some girls can really catch some air. Others, not so much.

Out of the bunch the stand out is RENEE, who comes by dance naturally. Renee does everything a little quicker and stronger than the rest, including Valentina.

MISS FRAN (CONT'D)

Not bad, ladies. Not bad. Quit showing off, Renee.

RENEE

But Miss!

All the girls give Renee a "shut the hell up" look.

One final pass through the floor and Valentina channels her inner pageant queen. She leaps and leaps and ooooof. She strains herself a bit. But she plays it off. Nothing to see.

MISS FRAN

That's enough for the day. Bring it in. Cool down. stretch it out. Thank you to most of the class for showing up on time and always bringing your best. It is important to always bring the best. Make sure your class cards are filling up. I'll check them, you know I'll check them! And don't forget to remind your family that tuition is due next week. And remember class...

ALL

Follow the stars!

The gals look around to Valentina and to each other. Are they really saying Maria Estrella's catch phrase with Maria Estrella right in front of them?!

VALENTINA
Good class!

RENEE
Good class.

The girls throw on their street clothes and head to

INT. AUDITION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The girls immediately drop their ballet class persona and become more "street." Out come the phones and headphones and hoodies. LUZ, the mouthpiece of the bunch, holds court.

LUZ
Yo yo yo did y'all see Maria Fuckin
Estrella gettin all up in our
business.

Renee checks to see if any "adults" are within earshot.

RENEE
That shit was crazy.

LUZ
All these years I just that Frannie
photoshopped all that shit.
Maria Fuckin Estrella.

JACKIE, the youngest of the bunch, beams from meeting her idol.

JACKIE
I thought she was pretty.

LUZ
She is kinda fine. If you like
cougars. Damn.

INT. DANCE STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

Miss Fran sizes up Valentina and after a long, awkward pause... she hugs Valentina like her long lost child.

Barbara plays a love tune on the piano.

MISS FRAN
Welcome home.

VALENTINA
It's good to be back.

MISS FRAN

Meet me in my office. There are
some things I'd like to discuss.
But clean up first.

INT. STUDIO RECEPTION AREA - CONTINUOUS

KRISTINA, the glue of the group of girls, enters in crying.

JACKIE

What's wrong, Kristina?

LUZ

Maria Estrella piss you off? Say
the word and I'll beat that trick.

KRISTINA

Everything's fucked. It's just
that. Invitations are late. My
dress looks like shit. I'm getting
fat. Everything's fucked.

LUZ

Who gives a shit. It's just a
quinceañera.

RENEE

Wait wait wait wait. What did you
just say?

JACKIE

Yeah, Luz. What did you just say?

RENEE

Just a quinceañera? JUST a
quinceañera?

JACKIE

Yeah, Luz. Just a quinceañera?

LUZ

There are other problems in the
world. Like who I'm gonna make out
with tonight.

KRISTINA

You guys, I'm just like freaking
out right now. Everyone says it's
my big day, I'm the girl of the
hour, blah blah blah, but it all
seems like a pain in the ass.

RENEE

Don't worry about it. You're gonna
kill it. You know your homegirls
got your back.

JACKIE

That's right, Kristina! Your
homegirls got your back!

RENEE

It'll all work out. Trust. Check
out the new sequence I've been
thinkin about.

Renee demonstrates a formal waltz dance that morphs into a
perreo/reggaeton sexy move.

LUZ

Damn, girl!

JACKIE

Wow, Renee!

KRISTINA

Okay. Okay!

RENEE

I was thinking that could kind of
be when we have the formal with the
Chamberlains? Here. Try it.

Renee demonstrates the move again and the others follow suit.
This devolves into a sexy grind session as Luz throws on a
beat.

LUZ

Yeah yeah yeah yeah. That's how we
do at Miss Fran's. Got those quince
moves for dat ass.

Valentina enters the reception and watches the girls do their
new sequence.

VALENTINA

Can I join in?

Valentina enters the circle and at first the girls resist but
then

LUZ

Maria Estrella in the house!

They jump and bounce and groove and dip. Valentina's got
moves.

LUZ (CONT'D)

Hey now.

KRISTINA

Okay. Okay!

VALENTINA

That's enough for me. I'm not quite in shape if you haven't noticed.

LUZ

Nah nah nah, you can get it.

JACKIE

I think you're pretty, Mrs. Estrella.

VALENTINA

Thank you. And you can call me Valentina.

Suddenly Renee bursts into tears and covers herself in her hoodie.

VALENTINA (CONT'D)

Oh my god, are you okay? Did I say something?

RENEE

It's not all about you.

VALENTINA

What happened?

JACKIE

Kristina is upset because it's her quinceañera coming up and she's freaking out because she has so much to do and her family is giving her no support whatsoever and her dress doesn't fit and her boyfriend is maybe cheating on her and we don't even have a dj

LUZ

Don't worry about it, Maria Estrella. We got this. Nice to meet you.

VALENTINA

I'm so sorry, Kristina.

Fighting back the tears.

KRISTINA
Follow the stars.

RENEE
Just. Let us deal with it. Thanks
for gracing us with your presence.

Valentina gathers her stuff and heads towards off towards
Miss Fran's office.

END ACT TWO

INT. CHRIS'S GROW ROOM - DAY

Chris in his farmer outfit surveys his crop of fresh
hydroponic marijuana, carefully cultivated and labeled. He
meticulously harvests a new branch of his latest hybrid.

Nicky brings him one of her famous smoothies.

CHRIS
Mi amor. Just in time to harvest
the new strain!

NICKY
You better name it after me.

CHRIS
Pain In The Ass Weed. Kinda catchy.

Nicky gives him the play stank eye.

NICKY
When are you gonna get some help?
This operation is way too big for
one person.

CHRIS
Let me check the budget. Nope.
Maybe I could probably afford to
hire an unpaid intern. Labor ain't
cheap.

Gestures to her fat belly.

NICKY
You're tellin me.

Chris kisses her tummy.

CHRIS

Can't wait for my lil farmer to arrive! My lil field hand! My lil campesino!

NICKY

Have you been ignoring the number one rule? Don't get high on your own supply!

CHRIS

Honey, I am my own supply! What do we have in this life but ourselves? No one will give us nothin.

NICKY

Yeah whatever Mr. Pinko.

CHRIS

I'm tellin you! Some day. They won't tell us nothin. We will be our own person.

NICKY

Our own person. Damn you are high.

CHRIS

No smoke! Only smoothies.

NICKY

You can get my smoothie anytime. Drink up. But I'm gonna need some more Kush for the new Very Berry Stoned Berry flavor.

CHRIS

I'll keep growin, you keep blendin.

NICKY

You just love me for my shakes.

Nicky shakes her bootie.

Chris plucks out a new bud for Nicky. She closes her eyes and takes a deep inhale.

NICKY (CONT'D)

And I love your for your sexy green thumb.

Nicky sucks his thumb and they makeout among the marijuana plants.

CHRIS
Weed Smoothies. We're gonna be
rich!

INT. MISS FRAN'S OFFICE - DAY

A dimly lit, dusty office with old posters and photos on the walls. Miss Fran packs some trophies and photos into banker's boxes.

VALENTINA
Knock knock!

MISS FRAN
You know my door is always open to
you.

VALENTINA
That's what you always said. But
the look you gave me in class!

MISS FRAN
All for show.

VALENTINA
You still know how to scare the
girls.

MISS FRAN
Better to be feared than loved.

VALENTINA
Everybody loves you, Miss Fran. I
have always loved you.

MISS FRAN
Funny way of showing it! Always in
the tabloids. Always with the new
boyfriends.

VALENTINA
Why all the boxes? What's going on
in here?

MISS FRAN
Have a seat. You remember we moved
into this space? Before we were
doing the whole thing in my living
room.

VALENTINA

Generations of young ladies shaped
into greatness by Miss Fran out of
a living room and a storefront.

MISS FRAN

I'm retiring. It's too much.

VALENTINA

Excuse me? Fran, you are an
institution. A legacy.

MISS FRAN

Lately all my efforts have gone
toward keeping the doors open. And
class is half empty. I can't keep
up with all the competition.

VALENTINA

Class was...a little sparse, I'll
give you that. But this studio!
It's important! This place made me!

MISS FRAN

And when's the last time you
visited? Besides. Nobody wants to
put the work in. Nobody knows what
it takes. Except for you.

Miss Fran takes out her portable martini shaker and expertly
makes up two cocktails.

VALENTINA

It's like four in the afternoon.

MISS FRAN

When you're my age, every hour is
happy hour.

VALENTINA

This feels kind of illegal.
Drinking at Miss Fran's.

MISS FRAN

Good to have you, home.

They have a sip and enjoy each other's company.

The sound of RAP MUSIC outside as the girls wait for their
rides.

MISS FRAN (CONT'D)

They just hang out. All they do is hang out and wait for rides. What happened to riding the bus, huh?

VALENTINA

Remember when we toured to Las Vegas and you gave us a map and said figure it out while you hit the slots?

MISS FRAN

How do you think I paid for this place?

VALENTINA

You just said figure it out! And we did. We took the map and we had our per diem and took the bus or a cab or whatever. We just figured it out.

MISS FRAN

Never underestimate the power of a young lady on a mission.

VALENTINA

They seem like good kids.

MISS FRAN

You seemed like a good kid. And now look what happened. Oh you know I'm kidding. I'm just. Valentina, I'm tired. I'm just tired. It's time for me to take that vacation.

VALENTINA

Subsaharan Africa!

MISS FRAN

Subsaharan Africa. It's my destiny.

VALENTINA

You joked about it every tour. You said you were leaving us for Subsaharan Africa.

MISS FRAN

They are good kids. Sometimes.

The rap music gets louder from outside which gives way to SCREAMS and SHOUTS.

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Kristina yells at her dad in his beat up pickup truck.

KRISTINA
(in Spanish)
Dive me the keys! You're not
driving!

LUZ
Mister Hernandez! Come on already.
We got her!

Kristina's dad forces her into his truck and speeds off.

The girls yell toward Kristina.

RENEE
Text us when you're home!

JACKIE
Text us, Kristina!!

LUZ
That motherfucker.

INT. MISS FRAN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Fran makes another martini.

MISS FRAN
I'm not gonna miss that.

VALENTINA
Poor things.

Valentina stares out the window to the girls. She looks back at Fran and her martini, all the photos and posters and boxes.

INT. CHRIS'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Valentina returns home with a new shopping bag of workout clothes, a new yoga mat and exercise ball.

VALENTINA
Anybody home? Hello?! It's meeeee!
Valentiiiiina!

Valentina puts her bags down on the couch and searches the open kitchen for a snack. She opens the fridge. Nothing looks good. She eyes the blender. What the heck.

Val takes out some mix from the Fridge labeled VERY VERY. She blends it up in the industrial Ninja blender. She looks for a clean glass.

VALENTINA (CONT'D)
What? Nobody can wash a dish
anymore?

Valentina chugs the smoothie directly from the blender.

VALENTINA (CONT'D)
Not bad.

She finished the whole thing, burps, and heads to her new room in the

INT. NURSERY - CONTINUOUS

A stoner couple's idea of a newborn's nursery with trippy cosmic wallpaper.

She unrolls her new yoga mat and does a series of stretches, becoming more and more HIGH.

Times slows way down and the room darkens. She lays down on the yoga mat and she sees a constellation of glow in the dark stars which melt into Miss Fran's face.

She passes out on the yoga mat to the sounds of

MISS FRAN (O.S.)
And remember... follow...

Valentina snores and has the best sleep she's had in a long time.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Valentina has cleaned the kitchen and living room and is ready to start her big day! Nicky and Chris come down to say good morning, still in their pajamas.

VALENTINA
Buenos dias, you magnificent
couple, you! I just had the most
glorious sleep ever!

CHRIS
Morning, ma. You were passed the
fuck out when we got home.

NICKY

Wow, Valentina. The kitchen looks amazing. Thanks.

VALENTINA

Thanks to you, actually! I broke into your smoothie supply last night and made myself up a meal. I don't know what you do to those things, but you are a genius. I've never felt better!

CHRIS

You had a smoothie?

VALENTINA

I must've had the whole blender. It was simply majestic!

Nicky smiles at Chris.

NICKY

I'm glad you like my new recipe.

VALENTINA

I recognize talent when I see it.

CHRIS

There's plenty more where that came from.

VALENTINA

Okay, mis amores, I'm off to see the talent at Miss Fran's! Gotta make the early Stretch and Strength class and try out my new mat! Loveya te amo ciao ciao.

Air kisses and goodbyes as Valentina heads off with her new gear.

CHRIS

She won't be here long. I promise.

NICKY

I don't know. She's kinda growing on me.

EXT. MISS FRAN'S - MORNING

The group of girls is gathered outside, waiting with all their backpacks and gear.

Valentina pulls up with the top down on her Camaro and hurries to the front door to see what the problem is.

JACKIE

Miss! The door is locked! We don't know what to do.

LUZ

I never seen the door locked this time of day.

VALENTINA

Where's Miss Fran?

JACKIE

I think she's gone, Miss Valentina!

RENEE

She left you a note.

Renee hands Valentina an ENVELOPE with "For Valentina" written on it in red handwriting.

Valentina opens the envelope. It contains one gold key on a gold star keychain.

VALENTINA

The stars.

Valentina goes to the front door and opens it. She turns on the lights to the studio.

VALENTINA (CONT'D)

Okay, ladies. Class in 5 minutes.
Don't be late.

The girls rush in to get ready for class. They don't know what's happening but they know it's gonna be amazing.

RENEE

What's up, Miss?

VALENTINA

New class today. I think we'll work on your routine. You gonna be ready to show us your moves?

RENEE

Yes, Miss Valentina!

Valentina finishes opening up, repositioning the framed photo of her and Miss Fran back to its position of prominence.

END OF PILOT