

# EL GRITO DEL BRONX

(formerly known as **CRY OF THE BRONX**)

## Cast Of Characters

### 1977:

JESÚS COLÓN—14, a boy nurtured by rage

MAGDALENA COLÓN—12, his sister, tense & nervous. She walks with a cast on her right leg.

MARIA COLÓN—40, their mother, very tired.

JOSÉ COLÓN—45, their father, very hungry.

Voice of a MALE TV NEWSCASTER

Voice of a FEMALE TV NEWSCASTER

Voice of a PUERTO RICAN MAN on TV

### 1991:

PAPO—28, an inmate on death row. He is gaunt and pale. The adult JESÚS.

LULU—26, a poet; the adult MAGDALENA. She has a slight limp when she walks.

The GUY NEXT DOOR—PAPO's neighbor on death row; a shadowy figure. All we see of him is his hands which change from scene to scene, sometimes black sometimes white, sometimes old, etc.

MARIA— PAPO & LULU's MOTHER—54, in mourning.

\*FIRST GAS STATION ATTENDANT—a white man in his 20s.

\*LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT—a white man in his 20s.

\*AND ALL OTHER GAS STATION ATTENDANTS—white men in their 20s.

\*All played by the same actor, his voice sometimes amplified and altered.

ELIZABETH the LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT'S MOTHER—a white woman from rural Kentucky, in her 40s in mourning.

ED—28, a journalist. Jewish-american.

SARAH, ELECTROCUTED BOY's MOTHER—a woman in mourning, African-american, 30s.

**TIME:** On LULU's October wedding day in 1991, with some moments from the past also revisited between the years 1977 & 1991.

**PLACE:** The Bronx, New York—in a 1st floor apartment in a five-story walk-up, and in a rubble-filled alley behind the building;  
 Death Row in an Ohio Federal Prison—PAPO's cell;  
 Darien, CT—in ED & LULU's studio apartment, and a park;  
 and Lorain, Ohio—in a SOHIO gas station store, and a hospital room.

On the set, PAPO's jail cell shares the stage with LULU's full-length dressing room mirror. All the scenes move within or around these set pieces. Behind them the background reflects a starless, night sky. By the end of the play, the night sky should be filled with stars.

**ACT ONE/SCENE 1**

A Saturday in October, 1991.

In a shared space, including PAPO's Cell on death row and LULU's dressing room moments before her wedding.

LULU stands in front of a full-length mirror, wearing a wedding dress. SHE studies her image with disbelief.

PAPO stands in the shadows of his cell dressed in his prison garb.

LULU

White is a funny color. It's so light it can blind the world to who you really are. Gets caught in your eyes. Reflects an emptiness—some say it's a way to begin again—a clean slate. I say, it erases what used to be there. And that's your soul.

(Pause)

But maybe that's what it is to me only. For my Brother, it could different.

For my Brother...I hope it is.

(Speaking to her brother, PAPO.)

I wish you could be here.

(Pause)

That's a fucking lie. I mean, it wouldn't be, if you were somebody else. Like you used to be when we were kids. Before...everything.

(Pause, as SHE lifts up her dress and examines her scarred right leg. It is the leg that was once in a cast. SHE traces the outline of the scar with her fingers.)

A bride needs somebody to give her away. I remember the last time I held your hand—how the bones of your fingers were so sharp they felt like they would cut right through my skin. There's too much blood between us already, I thought—but I didn't pull my hand away. I held your fingers even tighter, hoping to see some of that color that locks us in. A transfusion of love. Didn't need a white dress then, did I?

(Pause)

PAPO

Tell me the story, Lulu.

LULU

I forget big chunks of it. Those must be the important parts. They're the ones that scare me.

(WE hear an oboe and a cello begin to play.)

Sounds like they're starting without me.

PAPO

Is that what you want?

LULU

Tell me again how you ain't me, Papo.

(PAPO comes forward out of the shadows and dances with LULU. THEY both watch their reflection in the mirror as the music plays.)

(Lights cross to the COLON living room, 1977.)

**ACT ONE/SCENE 2**

In the Colón apartment in the Bronx, 1977.

A dog is in the alley singing a la mexicana, which is a high-pitched howling.

MARIA is decorating all the bathroom fixtures with adhesive paper dots—orange and black for Halloween.

JOSÉ is playing the harmonica so the dog has musical accompaniment. HE raises his hand and the dog howls at a higher pitch.

JOSÉ

Canta, perra. Canta, Papito. Canta para los ángeles.

MARIA

I love when Halloween comes, because then they all come—Thanksgiving, Christmas, Trés Reyes—one after another—like pum-pum-pum.

JOSÉ

What about Labor Day? Why can't it start there? The pum-pum-pum? September gives you even more time to celebrate.

MARIA

Don't make fun of me, José.

(Making a pattern on the wall with the colored dots)

Where's Jesús? I need him to bring me the ladder.

JOSÉ

He's acting out the war for independence with his sister.

MARIA

The what??

JOSÉ

El Grito De Lares. They've been talking about this being like that all over again. On the news. Because of those kids who took over the statue. Even the English stations.

MARIA

I haven't put the tv on yet. Doña Clara said I should try to watch only at night because it's better for my nerves. Things that aren't true make you calmer. You always gotta go to sleep with some lies you know are lies so you don't get nightmares.

JOSÉ

Have you seen my hammer?

MARIA

I threw it out.

JOSÉ

Again?! You know I'll just go buy a new one.

(JOSÉ walks out slamming the door, but then opens the door and throws a shoe at MARIA, exiting again.)

MARIA

NIÑOS!!

(No response)

Coño! I'm always alone.

(In JESÚS's bedroom. JESÚS plays "Don Cheo" and MAGDALENA plays "Don Aurelio" in the play *El Grito De Lares* by Luis Lloréns Torres. THEY both wear their father's clothes as costumes. MAGDALENA hobbles around on her cast. JESÚS pulls her up onto the bed as they continue reading their play out loud from the same tattered book. JESÚS holds the book and shows a page to MAGDALENA when it's her turn to speak.)

JESÚS as DON CHEO

So, once more.

MAGDALENA as DON AURELIO

Again. And what's new? How are things?

JESÚS as DON CHEO

Vegetating. We only vegetate. Before, at least, one conspired—today one emotion, tomorrow another. But now, the most unbearable monotony.

MAGDALENA as DON AURELIO

Are there no longer secret societies? Nothing is plotted?

JESÚS as DON CHEO

If there are, I'm not aware. I already know you never had full confidence in me. Who doesn't see that! Because of my relationship with Frasquito...

MAGDALENA

Who's Frasquito? I never heard that name before.

JESÚS

Just keep reading.

MAGDALENA

If I don't understand what I'm talking about how can I be a good actor?

JESÚS

You'll be a good actor because I'm a good actor. I raise you up. Stop worrying.

MAGDALENA

You're not so good neither. I'm tired of this game. My leg hurts.

(MAGDALENA goes to the TV and turns it on, sitting herself right in front of it)

JESÚS

Come on, Maggie. It's like dreaming awake.

MAGDALENA

I don't like to dream.

JESÚS

Why'd you jump out that window anyway?

MAGDALENA

I'm gonna get outta here. As soon as I can.

JESÚS

What d'you mean?

MAGDALENA

I mean I got to get outta this house.

JESÚS

Papi better—

MAGDALENA

You know what I dream about? That I wake up and he ain't here no more.

(Turning up the volume)

Listen.

VOICE of female TV NEWSCASTER

We are now on hour four of the occupation by Puerto Rican Nationalists of the Statue of Liberty. They demand that the United States end Puerto Rico's commonwealth status and allow it to become independent. Bill Stover is live from Battery Park. Bill?

VOICE of male TV NEWSCASTER

Thank you, Jenny. I'm here across the river from one of the most controversial takeovers in the history of Lady Liberty. The Puerto Ricans are not the first to take over her copper crown but they are the most vocal. In fact, you can hear the shouting from here. Let's see how some Puerto Rican New Yorkers are reacting to this takeover:  
Sir? Sir, how does this political action make you feel?

VOICE of PUERTO RICAN MAN on TV

Beautiful. I never seen the bandera like that—so high. With Miss Liberty and everything. I think it should stay like that. Beautiful. Then I'd have something to look at.

MAGDALENA

You see? You see how important it is to be free?

JESÚS

Yeah. Now I see.

(MAGDALENA & JESÚS look at each other. JESÚS reaches out to touch her wounded leg as the lights cross to PAPO's prison cell.)



**ACT ONE/SCENE 3**

In PAPO's cell on death row, in an Ohio penitentiary 1991.  
PAPO kneels by the toilet, like he's praying into it.  
HE speaks to something in the toilet, as if he is speaking to LULU.

PAPO

I saw God today. The left side of his face was dead—I mean, it din't move or nuffin. Hanging all loose like that, He wasn't all stupid like I thought. Like I thought He'd look at me too hard and point, you know how people point when they don't respect you—right in your face—and you just want to cut their fucking fingers off and stick 'em up their ass? Not like that. He din't use his fingers at all—he din't have fingers. They were more like paws, like a dog or somefin. And that was cool wif me. Dogs are better than most people. They only eat when they're hungry. They only bite to protect themselves. And they kiss you just for being there. So I told him, “Hey, I'm like a dog too. Especially my hands. Sometimes when I look at my fingers I see the nails turn hard and brown. They fold under themselves so I can walk on them.” And after I tole him that. Then I could. So I did. My back arched up and all the hair on the back of my neck stood up like I was real scared of somefin. But I'm never scared.

(Pause, as HE looks at his hands. ELIZABETH, the LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT'S MOTHER enters and stares at PAPO.)

I guess you know that.

(Lights up on the GUY NEXT DOOR. All we can see of him are his hands hanging loosely outside of the cell bars. When GUY speaks, ELIZABETH exits.)

GUY NEXT DOOR

Mhmm. Some things can't be secrets.

PAPO

How long you been there?

GUY NEXT DOOR

It ain't how long but how much longer—around here.

PAPO

How long you been fuckin'nosing me up, motherfucker? Fuckin'faggot motherfucker. You got nuffin fuckin'better to fuckin'do? Smell this.

(HE pulls down his pants and presses his buttocks against the bars.)

GUY NEXT DOOR

Mmmm...something smells good over there. Can you pass me some?

PAPO

(Pulling his pants back up)

Not today.

(Silence. PAPO hangs his hands loosely outside the bars of his cell like GUY's.)

PAPO

Where you from?

GUY NEXT DOOR

The Bronx.

PAPO

And what about that...Me too. That's fucked up.

GUY NEXT DOOR

Yeah. That's like fate.

PAPO

Fuckin' fate. Naahh. What the fuck is that?

GUY NEXT DOOR

Open up your hands and look. It's all right there.

(THEY each open their hands and examine their own palms, as lights cross to ED & LULU in their apartment.)

**ACT ONE/SCENE 4**

ED & LULU's apartment in Darien, CT, 1991.

ED & LULU are seated at a folding table eating breakfast.  
LULU finishes reading to ED something she wrote for her mother.

LULU

(Reading the last line of her poem)

What color was that dream you made for me?  
I wish I had saved it in the folds of my hands,  
so I could feel you in the places I hold on to.

(LULU stares at ED waiting for a reaction. Finally, he speaks.)

ED

Your mother would have loved that poem.

LULU

So you hate it?

ED

I didn't say that.

LULU

No. You just didn't say anything. Come on. What?

ED

Why do you ask for my opinion? We write different kinds of things.

(She stares at him still waiting for a real opinion.)

Alright. I thought it was a little sentimental.

LULU

That is the meanest thing you ever said to me.

ED

What? There's good sentimental and bad sentimental. I think it would be impossible to write about your mother who recently passed without being sentimental.

LULU

So I shouldn't write about her?

ED

No. But maybe you should wait a little. Until you have some objectivity.

LULU

Hmmm...what else could you say.

ED

What's that supposed to mean?

LULU

I mean you're just a wannabe science writer working as a planning and zoning reporter on a lousy suburban newspaper. Why would I ask you about poetry?

ED

I've written poetry.

LULU

Yeah.

ED

Yeah. Most of it to you.

LULU

Yeah.

(Smiling despite herself)

So...you did write some good poems.

(Pause)

Maybe I'm just not good enough to write about my mother. Or anybody.

ED

Stop that bullshit. Nobody ever thinks they're good enough. But that's what we all fight every day, because the world tells you the same thing—like me, I can't write what I want to write. Not till I prove myself writing stupid stories about rich developers who want to buy a little piece of land and build twenty really ugly and expensive houses on it.

Wow, I'm on the cutting edge, huh? Real important stuff.

LULU

How do you do it? I woulda killed somebody by now.

ED

It's not in my nature, I guess. I try to focus on the long-range plan, which doesn't include jail-time for killing a rich asshole or a self-important editor.

LULU

Right. The long-range plan. What if you don't got any of those?

ED

You find one. You make one. You pray for one.

(Pause)

LULU

I still can't believe Mami's gone.

(ED nods. A pause, as THEY both reflect on MARIA's passing.)

ED

I thought a lot about her today. This woman I went to interview had a look in her eyes just like your Ma's. I had to go to her house because her son got electrocuted.

LULU

The one on the Metro-North tracks? I heard about it on the radio.

ED

Yeah. But it wasn't the tracks. It was the overhead wires. He was trying to climb one of the utility poles. Four of them tried it, but he was the one who got to the top.

LULU

And you went to that poor woman's house?! You people are ruthless.

ED

I brought her flowers.

LULU

That was thoughtful.

ED

I was the only reporter there with flowers, so she let me in. Still didn't get the interview. She thanked me for the flowers. Said I was the only person who brought her any. She was going to put them in a vase and then she dropped to the floor—like someone had hit her on the back of the knees with a sledgehammer.

(Lights cross to the SARAH, the ELECTROCUTED BOY'S MOTHER, on her knees, holding a bouquet of flowers.)

SARAH

I remember the first time he woke up without crying. I heard him in his crib talking to this old bear I had bought him at the Salvation Army. It had only one eye because I couldn't find two the same to put on there and I thought a one-eyed bear would be interesting. I put it right in the middle of his forehead because did you ever see that movie "Jason and the Astronauts?" Where there was this giant with just one eye and it tried to eat everybody. I don't know...I felt sorry for that giant. It's kinda nice—I think—that you could have one of something. Because then it's that much more important. It's so important to see.

(Pause)

Teenagers don't think.

(Pause)

Why did they have to say that—in the papers? Over and over how I was out of work. He didn't die because we were poor, did he? He just didn't think.

(SHE sings a song.)

"There was one little boy...little boy...who could see through the clouds.

There was one little boy who could see through the clouds.

And his tears...and my...and his tears...kissed the sores on my arms

And placed a prayer there:  
Only wings...only wings can make a man because...his dreams must fly.”

(Lights grow to include ED & LULU as SARAH opens her mouth in a silent scream.)

LULU

Did she faint?

ED

No. I went over to help her up. But when I pulled on her arm, she didn't budge. It was creepy. Like she went into a trance—rocking with her mouth open. I wanted to get the hell outta there, but I couldn't leave her like that.

So I just waited.

(Pause)

Finally, she turned to me—

SARAH

(To ED)

Can you get me a double with cheese no onions at Wendy's? I'll give you money. It's just across the street.

(Lights go down on SARAH.)

LULU

Bendito! She was probably weak from not eating. You didn't take her money, did you?

ED

Why do you always assume I'll do the wrong thing?? She lost her son for fuckssakes. I'm not an asshole.

LULU

You went to look into this woman's face and ask her how it feels to have her son turned into a french fry so you could write a stupid fucking story about it and you're sensitive, right? Fuck you.

(LULU runs out of the house slamming the door behind her. ED pushes his food away and puts his head on the table.)

ED

And I was gonna ask her to marry me. What is my problem?

(Pause)

I'm just so tired.

(Lights cross to PAPO who is pacing in his cell.)

**ACT ONE/SCENE 5**

In PAPO's cell, 1991.

PAPO is walking in the shadows of the bars of his cell like HE is walking a series of balance beams.

HE does this in silence for a while, then we hear the GUY NEXT DOOR's footsteps which mirror PAPO's.

PAPO doesn't notice at first, but then HE does. And HE stops. So does GUY NEXT DOOR. PAPO listens, then starts again. So does GUY NEXT DOOR. PAPO starts to hop from one beam of light to the next. So does GUY NEXT DOOR. Then PAPO begins to hum a slow Latin dance song and begins to slow dance. GUY NEXT DOOR begins to dance too as the lights come up on him dimly. WE can only see GUY's back and hands—never his face. It is as if they are dancing with each other—a tight romantic dance.

PAPO

(Singing)

“No quiero vivir sin ti, sin tus labios tan preciosos, sin tus ojos tan brillosos.  
No puedo vivir...no, no puedo vivir sin tu alma en mis brazos tan bella, tan gloriosa.  
Quedas conmigo hasta la muerte...hasta la muerte dulce, mi amor.”

(THEY finish their dance with PAPO humming his song. Then PAPO moves to sit in his chair, as GUY NEXT DOOR moves to his own. THEY unzipper their pants in unison.)

PAPO

I follow the veins on my arm with my tongue. A long slow wet kiss. Smelling my hot spit, letting it melt into my blood. Feeling my dick fill up. My dick gets so hard when I do that. With my tongue. That's the only time. Like I'm getting inside myself and my blood is my come. There's blood in my spit now. And when I pee there's red. But that's my love showing. Everything about me is red now.

(PAPO places his tongue on his left wrist and begins to slowly move up his arm while his other hand reaches into his pants. GUY NEXT DOOR moves to the wall separating their cells and presses his body against it as if trying to melt through it. The lights cross to the COLÓN apartment in the Bronx.)

**ACT ONE/SCENE 6**

In the Colón apartment, Evening, 1977.

MAGDALENA, walking with difficulty because of her wounded leg, is turning on all the lights in the apartment. SHE sings the same song PAPO was singing in the previous scene as SHE does this. JOSÉ bursts through the door, falling on the floor. MAGDALENA tries to run out of the room, but turns back when she hears the sound of her father's voice.

JOSÉ

Help me, niña.

(MAGDALENA helps her father drag himself to the sofa and backs away quickly.)

MAGDALENA

Ay, Dios mio, Papi! What happened?

(JOSÉ's feet are bleeding profusely. They are almost completely severed.)

MAGDALENA

What happened to your feet??!

(Pause)

Did somebody cut them up??!

(Pause)

You're gonna bleed to death, Pa! We gotta call an ambulance.

JOSÉ

No.

MAGDALENA

But you—

JOSÉ

I SAID NO, MAGDALENA!

MAGDALENA

(Moving away)

I'm going to tell, Jesús!

JOSÉ

(Grabbing MAGDALENA by the hair)

NO!!

(HE suddenly lets go of MAGDALENA and she falls to the floor.)

I'm just gonna close my eyes and wait.



(JOSÉ slumps forward in his chair. JESÚS enters holding a blood-soaked paper bag and goes quietly over to JOSÉ. HE closely inspects JOSÉ's feet and the blood-soaked carpet around him.)

JESÚS

Damn, that's a lot of blood.

(HE dips his finger into the blood and puts it in his mouth.)

Damn...that's sweet.

(MAGDALENA stays down on the floor crying softly.)

MAGDALENA

Oh, shit! Is he dead?!

JESÚS

Maybe.

MAGDALENA

Shouldn't we get somebody?!

JESÚS

We should—get somebody.

(Pause; HE tosses the bag at JOSÉ. It contains a blood-soaked hammer.)

Here's your hammer, Pop.

(Pause)

He won't hurt you no more, Maggie.

MAGDALENA

Oh, my God, Jesús! I didn't mean—Oh, my God!

(JESÚS begins to move to MAGDALENA who pulls herself quickly away from him. THEY both stop moving as the lights cross to LULU & MARIA in the Visitors' Sign-In room at the prison.)

**ACT ONE/SCENE 7**

1987.

LULU & MARIA in the visitors' sign-in room at the prison.

MARIA hums the song "There Was One Little Boy..." sung earlier by SARAH, the ELECTROCUTED BOY'S MOTHER.

LULU

I don't like you going in there alone, Ma.

MARIA

(Touching her rosary beads which are strung around her neck.)  
I'm not alone.

LULU

Right. They won't even let you wear those in there, Ma. Give them to me.

(MARIA hands her the rosary.)

MARIA

How come you don't go to church anymore, mi'ja?

LULU

Look around, Ma. You see God here?

MARIA

Sure.

(Pause)

The virgin appeared to me once. In a flowerpot.

LULU

That's the plant I gave you. That's not real.

MARIA

No. I know. The outside was a statue of the Virgin, but the real Virgin's face came on top of the fake Virgin's face and told me to take the dirt out of her belly and just have it like that in the house like a statue.

LULU

Is that all she said? Isn't she supposed to say important things?

MARIA

If your belly was filled with dirt, wouldn't you think it was a 'mergency?

LULU

They're calling you to go in.

(Kissing MARIA on the cheek)  
Be careful.

MARIA  
I'm not esscared of my own boy. He's your brother, Magdalena.

LULU  
I know. And please call me Lulu. I hate that name. Nobody can ever spell it.

MARIA  
God knows the name of the Magdalene. Why don't you say a prayer for your brother?  
I'll tell him you're doing that.

LULU  
Don't lie to him, Ma. I'll be waiting right here.

MARIA  
This could be your last chance to see him, Magdalena. You're gonna feel sorry, you ain't never seen him before—before you move back to New York.

LULU  
No, Ma. I ain't feeling sorry about that.

(MARIA throws her another kiss and joins the other women lined up to enter the main part of the prison.)

LULU  
(To herself)  
She thinks I remember how to pray.

(Lights cross to PAPO's cell.)

**ACT ONE/SCENE 8**

In PAPO's cell.

JOSÉ has a father/son talk with JESÚS.

JOSÉ wears red rubber boots and a fireman's hat.

PAPO is holding his hands over his ears like he is trying to block out sound. PAPO looks like he's been crying.

JOSÉ

You don't listen too good, m'ijo. I tole you not to cry in front of her. Women do not like a weak man. If you act like a ma-mau in front of your mother she will have no respect for you. And you don't got nothing else left. To get from her I mean. She tried to not respect me, but I showed her respect with the back of my hand and my clenched fists. All those new teeth she got look good on her, but she knows she wouldn't look that good, if I hadn't broken all her teeth. You know that, right? She knows it too.

PAPO

Get outta here. Mami's gonna be here soon.

JOSÉ

Maybe she ain't coming today...maybe she missed the bus. You gonna cry if she don't come. Pobrecito. You wanna cry on Papi's shoulder? Come here.

PAPO

Leave me alone. When are you going to leave me alone?

JOSÉ

I ain't going nowhere. I'll be right here—waiting for you. You hear that blood racing to the back of your head, pounding it like a bitch in heat. That's me. That sound won't ever go away.

(JOSÉ laughs softly moves to the back of the cell, as PAPO begins to chant with his eyes closed. JOSÉ will remain in the shadows of PAPO's cell until LULU's visit in ACT TWO.)

PAPO

I pray. I pray. I pray. I pray. I pray. I pray. I pray. I pray. I pray. I pray.  
I pray. I pray. I pray. I pray. I pray. I pray. I pray. I pray.

(Pause; HE opens his eyes.)

One day, my eyes won't open. That will be a good day.

(Lights cross to ED & LULU in the park.)

**ACT ONE/ SCENE 9**

In a park. 1991.

ED has his head resting in LULU's lap.

THEY lounge on a red picnic blanket.

ED

A park is the one place where all children look happy. Even if they're terrified coming down a slide. Or you swing them too hard.

(pointing)

Look at that little girl.

LULU

Mmhmm. Look at her smile. She looks—

(Pause; with a sad smile)

My brother used to smile like that. He used to say that the shadows of the leaves on his face—made him feel like a tree. We'd go to the park all the time. Just to feel those shadows.

(Pause)

Then he'd always make me tell him a story.

(We see PAPO in his cell caught in the dark shadows of the bars of his cell.)

ED

Tell me a story.

(SHE rubs ED's head gently as SHE begins to tell ED a story. PAPO seems to be listening too, as if HE is recalling this story from the past.)

LULU

Once upon a time, a long, long, long time ago, there was a beautiful Princess named Antonia. Her father ruled the Earth and her mother ruled the Sky. This left the Princess to care for all the animals of the kingdom. She fed them sweet blossoms from an ancient tree called the Flamboyant that cried when his red blossoms fell from his branches. But the Flamboyant sighed with contentment when Princess Antonia touched his limbs, because her hands could heal him with their gentle power to make things grow more beautiful in an empty place.

(Pause)

One day, an evil Chupacabra put a spell on her father, and he began to chop down all the trees in the kingdom. With an axe stained with his own blood, her father severed all the limbs of the Flamboyant, and with his spit he made a poison to kill the roots. Soon there were no trees alive in the Princess' garden. She could no longer feed the creatures that depended on the blossoms to stay alive. They knew no other food, so they grew weak.

(Pause)

Her mother tried to help by making the wind blow fiercely so that fruit from other kingdoms flew into the Princess' garden. Princess Antonia tried to feed them the fruit of ripe mangoes and papayas, but they would choke when they tried to swallow it because everything turned into a bitter paste in their throats and would make their tongues burn. Animals fell to the ground all around her, slowly melting into the soil and becoming a part of the Earth. She decided to try one last meal for her friends. Sobbing she cut into the soft flesh of the palms of her hands and let the blood drip into the mouth of the youngest one, the Coquí, a small frog whose song was like the cry of angels. Suddenly, the Coquí opened her eyes. So the Princess squeezed more blood from

her torn flesh and fed it to the dying animal. Slowly, the frog began to sing. It was a song that reached into Heaven.

(Pause)

LULU, cont'd

This song let her mother whisper of her own sadness to the clouds that soon broke open, raining the Earth with the mother's tears. The power of the mother's water and the daughter's blood seeped life back into the earth. And trees began to grow again.

The Flamboyán grew the fastest and his limbs lifted the bewitched father into the sky, while his roots buried the axe where no one would ever find it again.

ED

That's the freakiest story I've ever heard. But so beautiful.

No wonder Jesús loved to hear them.

(Pause)

Wow...Hon'?

LULU

Yeah?

ED

Are you gonna tell our children stories like that?

LULU

Maybe.

(Pause)

Maybe I'll leave out the blood and flesh stuff though.

ED

Okay.

(HE snuggles more deeply into her lap and settles in for a nap.)

The sound of your voice is like a pillow.

(Lights cross to PAPO's cell.)

**ACT ONE/SCENE 10**

In PAPO's cell, 1991.

PAPO is pricking his fingers with the stone-sharpened end of a spoon. HE draws a map of Puerto Rico on the stone wall with his blood. Lights change to include GUY NEXT DOOR, who is leaning against the bars of his cell, listening to PAPO, but we can only see his shadow.

PAPO

(As HE mentions the towns, HE draws a star on the map where they would be.)  
I never been to P.R. but I know that my Ma was from Cabo Rojo, by the ocean, and Papi was from the mountains in San Sebastian. I never seen no mountains. But Ma would take us to Orchard Beach every Saturday in the summer. I miss how she smelled—with all that oil she put on—like burning salt—all crispy like that too.

GUY NEXT DOOR

Don't you miss the ocean?

PAPO

Nah...I just cover my ears and scream and when the sound comes back to me—that's like the ocean. But I don't do it for too long. I start to choke when I listen to that inside my head. Like I'm drowning.

(Pause)

If you wanted them to, would they drown you here?

GUY NEXT DOOR

I don't think so. I don't think they'll let you choose anything where somebody has to hold you down or touch you to do it.

PAPO

But somebody has to put the needle in.

GUY NEXT DOOR

But that's a doctor. They're used to putting needles in. You don't need any strength to put in a needle. Not strength in your arms anyway.

PAPO

I used to have really strong arms.

GUY NEXT DOOR

You can still have them, Papo. In your head, you can lift almost anything.

PAPO

That's how I did it the first time. With my fists. My fist went right through that fucking hillibilly faggot trash. It felt so good. I couldn't stop. On and on, I tore into his face with my fingers. I almost took his face all the way off. He was bleeding from every hole. Then I looked down at my shoes and I thought: those niggers used to be white. But they looked sweet now—

sorta like firemen's boots, but like the hats they wear, you know. On my feet I had protection. His blood made my feet fireproof.

(Pause; HE moves to the wall separating him from GUY.)

I held him in my arms until he died. I wanted to be real close. To smell the death on him. I needed to smell that—right on my skin. So that even when his soul left him, it still had to pass through me. That's what I wanted. It was like a hot wire. His soul went through my mouth. And that was so sweet.

(The FIRST GAS STATION ATTENDANT enters. His clothes and face are bloodied. PAPO kisses the FIRST GAS STATION ATTENDANT.)

#### FIRST GAS STATION ATTENDANT

(With a stutter)

Took me bah-by sssurprise. The whole thing. I hate ssselling things to those pah-people, bah-but I try not to let them know it. It's their sssmell that bothers me mah-most. Like bloody water, like when you ccut open a piece of sssteak done rare—ssso wet it can make you gag, but take that first taste and you cannot not eat it. You and the animal become one. And once it's inssside you, the taste sstays in your mah-mind like the first sssong you ever sang. Good or bad, it's there forever. I wah-was his first. But he was sstill hungry. Even the sssteak has to eat sssometime.

(MARIA, ELIZABETH & SARAH enter each carrying a baby and humming the song that SARAH sang earlier as THEY rock the baby in their arms asleep.)

(The lights cross to ED & LULU.)



**ACT ONE/SCENE 11**

In LULU & ED's apartment, 1991.  
LULU is frantically going through her purse.  
ED watches her.

ED

You're sure they were in there?

LULU

Yes, Ed. I'm sure. I'm sure those mother-sucking sonsofbitches took them.

ED

We should call—

LULU

Who?? The fucking cops!

ED

The paper. I could have them write a story—

LULU

Just shut-up with your fucking stories. Journalism is part of the fucking problem. Newspapers are too scared to say the truth about anything. So stupid shit-face pigfucking cops get away with shit like this.

ED

Did you get his badge number?

LULU

No.

ED

Lulu...

LULU

I tried to. But you know how I get. I got all nervous. They were treating me like such a fucking spick. And I'm so fucking stupid. Why didn't I get his freaking badge number?! I don't think of shit like that. I'm not like you. Always with the details. I just yelled at him and then he frisked me, went through my purse and said I had to get in his car. And then I couldn't see his fucking badge. And then—

(She starts to scream. ED holds her and SHE begins to calm down.)

ED

Okay. Start again. Close your eyes and think. Is that all they took?

LULU

Yeah. Fucking wannabe macho shithead dildos. They just wanted to humiliate me.

ED

And they picked you out as a suspect because you were walking? That makes no sense, honey.

LULU

Because I was walking and was the darkest person around. Obviously, I'm a shoplifter waiting to happen. Steal from that pink and green nightmare?! I wouldn't even set foot in that ugly-ass dress shop for rich-bitches who wear tennis skirts because they want people to smell their pussies through white, gauzy material because they're too fucking cultureless to have a taste and smell of their fucking own. I hate this fucking town.

ED

I going down to that station and file a complaint. You stay here in case we need to call a lawyer.

LULU

You're gonna get yourself hurt, sweetie. Didn't you ever see "Gentleman's Agreement?" They like your people almost as much as they like mine here.

ED

No one is going to hurt me, Lulu.

LULU

Please don't go. It's not even that important. I'm really over it now. I was just—

ED

We have to do something, Lulu.

LULU

They were just birth control pills. It's kinda funny really...when you think about it.

ED

Yeah...I'm real tickled.

LULU

Listen, these people don't care about us, Ed. This isn't our place.

ED

That's why we can't let them off the hook. You gotta make your own place. If you give it up to them, then nothing changes.

LULU

Some things don't change. Everybody's not my family. Everywhere isn't home.

(Lights cross to PAPO in his cell.)

**ACT ONE/SCENE 12**

In PAPO's cell, 1991.

PAPO is trying to melt a slice of cheese on a piece of bread with a match. HE speaks to GUY NEXT DOOR, who sits in his own cell with his back to the bars.

PAPO

I love grilled cheese sandwiches. That's all I ever ate when I was home. I'd say "Ma, make me your speciality of the casa." And she would. My sister wrote me that I—that Mami's heart was always hurting with me locked up in here. Maybe that's why—can you die from that? A broken heart?

(PAPO remembers his mother, MARIA's last visit. HE moves into the memory as lights come up on his mother.)

MARIA

We never shoulda left the Bronx. But your father knew—

PAPO

He was Papi's brother.

MARIA

Yeah, he was that too—but he loves you like a father.

PAPO

Ma, he loves you. He brought us out here and kicked me out as soon as he could. He didn't even let me come to the house and see you.

MARIA

I went to see you anyway. You always make things worse than they was. You exhaderate too much, mi'jo.

PAPO

Exaggerate, Ma.

MARIA

Yeah. I been here 32 years and imagine. I understand everything real good though... Anyway, Timo knew there was jobs out here. And as long as he had to work in a factory it might as well be a car factory because my husband, he likes cars.

PAPO

He still alive?

MARIA

Papo! You know he's the one brings me here to see you—

PAPO

You take the bus. You get here the same time each time with all the other bus ladies.

MARIA

Anyway, Timo said it would be nice—like moving to the country. And I came from the country. So I thought it would be good for you. You was getting into so many fights after your father—God rest his soul.

PAPO

Don't start, Ma.

MARIA

And then I found those needles...I got scared you might not come home one day. So we moved to Ohio. I thought we'd have a little house with a yard so I could grow some tomatoes and some flowers—but it wasn't no damn house. The projects were in shorter buildings at least. At least I didn't have to climb too many stairs when the elevator broke. But it smelled the same. Why do people do pipí in the hallway where they live? Even the concrete walls turn yellow after all that pipí. And there was still roaches. They were just a little bigger. And people said they was waterbugs—that sounded so nice. Like they were more like fish or something. But they sure looked just like big ole roaches to me.

(Pause)

Why did you kill all those people, mi'jo? I know you ain't no monster—like they saying.

PAPO

I don't know, Ma.

MARIA

(Taking his hands and kissing them)

Your hands still smell like they did when you was a baby. That's gotta be the best smell there is. Like fresh bread dipped in warm milk with sugar.

You smelled like sweet bread pudding to me, Papito.

(SHE smells his hands again.)

But they so skinny baby. Don't they give you nothing to eat? Here.

(SHE reaches into her purse and pulls out a grilled cheese sandwich.)

I made it before I came, so it's not so hot anymore like it should be. But it's all I could think to bring you. They don't let you bring a lot of stuff in here. They don't let you do nothing like a mother needs to do for her son.

(SHE takes his hands again and puts them on her chest.)

You're always inside here, mi'jo. I want you to remember that, okay? And don't believe nothing your sister says. She's full of shit. She's walking better now. They gave her some special shoes that make her walk better. "It's like having new feet, Ma," she said to me. I think it must be so nice to have new feet when you still got places to go.

(SHE smiles, lets go of his hands and exits.)

(PAPO holds his cheese sandwich to his chest as lights cross to ED & LULU's apartment.)

**ACT ONE/SCENE 13**

In ED & LULU's apartment, 1991.

LULU is packing a suitcase in a fury as ED watches. On the radio, the song "Chupacabra Mix" by Megamix plays as a commuter train rumbles by making everything in the apartment shake.

ED

That's the last train to the City. It's too late to go anywhere.

(HE tries to unpack her bag as SHE continues to put stuff in it.)

Come on now. Stop it.

LULU

You've known me for two years now and you still don't know me. You know how sad that makes me. I only moved to this fucked-up place to be with you. I left school to be with you. You told me it would give us more time together and I never fucking see you. You're always working and I'm stuck in this Connecticut wasteland. People here think I'm somebody's maid. The other day some stupid woman saw me coming out of the coffee shop and asked me if I was a nanny, because she needed somebody special to watch her twins. And what do you do think that meant?!

ED

What do you want me to say?

(Turning off the radio)

You wanna get married or something?

LULU

(Imitating him)

"You wanna get married or something." That's real fucking romantic.

ED

You make me smile in my stomach, Lulu. Will you marry me?

LULU

Right. You ask me when I'm half out the door and I'm supposed to take it seriously. No, Ed. I won't marry you. You're just afraid of being alone. That's not love.

(ED starts to cry quietly.)

I don't believe you.

ED

Why not? What do I have to do? I come home sometimes and you're so angry and I don't know why. And you won't tell me. I gotta tiptoe around you. Like I did something wrong. This is supposed to be my house too, but you make me feel like I'm a bad guest who just won't leave.

LULU

I'm leaving. I'm the one who's leaving.

ED

(Placing himself in front of the door)  
You're gonna have to kill me to get through this door.

LULU

Let's not do this. I can't tell you what's wrong because I don't know. I just know it's wrong.

ED

So you don't trust me?

LULU

I don't even trust myself.

ED

Because I'm white.

LULU

You ain't white. White is a state of mind. Jews can't be white no matter how much they try. It's not in their blood. They care too much. They cry too easily. They have issues with their mothers.

ED

And what's a white state of mind?

LULU

It's when you don't care because you think you don't need to, because there's no one else in the world more important than you. That's white.

ED

I love you so much I can't breathe sometimes when you're in the same room with me and I can't touch you. Will you marry me?

LULU

(With a reluctant smile)  
Maybe.

ED

Maybe that's the last time I'll ask.

LULU

You don't let me leave. Nobody else ever did that.

ED

Maybe you never missed the train before.

LULU

Is that your theory?

ED

More of an hypothesis.

LULU

I love you because you sleep with a dictionary by the bed instead of porno.

ED

What do you think's inside the dictionary?

(Lights cross to PAPO's cell.)

**ACT ONE/SCENE 14**

In PAPO's cell, 1991.

PAPO speaks into the toilet.

GUY NEXT DOOR listens.

PAPO

Yeah! He wanted to marry me. You know like they have these weird ass things. Like with two men. But I couldn't hang with that. It didn't make no sense to me. So what, then I have to have a maid of honor or something? I didn't understand. You don't gotta marry people you fuck, especially if they're men. No. That don't make no kind of sense. And it was so faggoty. I mean you gotta fuck. But a wedding ring. Fuckin' weird.

(Pause)

Are you still in there?

GUY NEXT DOOR

I'm here.

PAPO

You stay quiet so much. Don't you like to talk?

GUY NEXT DOOR

I don't need to talk.

PAPO

What else is there to do in this fuckin' place? Talk and jerk off. I can't even do that anymore. But the good thing is that since I'm dying they're not gonna kill me. I'm helping them out.

(Pause)

Are you White? Sometimes you sound White. Sometimes Black. You change a lot for somebody who don't talk.

GUY NEXT DOOR

Yeah? Maybe I'm both.

(Pause)

Sounds like he loved you.

PAPO

I guess.

(Pause)

He was both. Had real pretty green eyes. I'm a sucker for pretty eyes. He got his sister to bring him a ring to give me.

(Pulls the ring out from under his bed sheet)

I play with it when I'm in bed at night. I put it on my finger and I think I could be married with like five kids. And they would all be beautiful and smile with their whole face. You know how kids can do that? Just become a whole fuckin' smile. It's too much, man, how they can do that. I wish I could remember doing that. I wish I could go back in time.



(Lights cross to a store in a Sohio Gas Station. PAPO moves into this memory as it unfolds. JOHN, the LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT is counting cash at closing time. As HE counts, we see PAPO enter checking the scene out.)

We're closed.  
JOHN, the LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT

Cigarettes?  
PAPO

We're closed.  
LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT  
(Starts motioning with his hands like PAPO is deaf.)  
Closed, amigo.

Amigo? Do I know you?  
PAPO

Get out of my fuckin' store.  
LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT

Newports. Two packs.  
PAPO

Come back tomorrow...amigo.  
LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT

No.  
PAPO

So what are we gonna do here?  
LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT

It's up to you.  
PAPO

LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT  
(Pulling a rifle out from behind the counter.)  
Get the fuck outta my store you fuckin' spick trash.

You got bullets in that?  
PAPO

One way to find out.  
LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT

(PAPO slowly approaches the LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT.)

PAPO

Go ahead. I been waiting for this. Go ahead. It's time. What you waiting for?

LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT

You people are animals. Nobody would blame me. It would be so easy.

(PAPO faces down the barrel, takes the gun away from the LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT and sits on the counter his back to the ATTENDANT.)

PAPO

You're so afraid of me and you don't even know me. This is the part I like. Where I get to make you shit in your pants. People don't like to shit in front of other people. But I don't mind it.

You know where shit comes from? From inside your head. If you kept all those things inside there your mouth would fill up and it would pour from you. And forget about kissing anybody. Shitting keeps you from being lonely. What's your name?

LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT

John. We don't got any Newports.

PAPO

That's okay, John.

LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT

You're him, ain't you?

PAPO

I waited my whole life to be a "him." You know any? I want to hear a song. In my head, I hear them all the time. Like I make a mass for myself except I'm on the cross too. I wish I could remember all the words to that Lamb of God song. You know that one?

JOSÉ & LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT

(Singing)

"Glory, glory, glory...Lord God almighty, Heaven and earth are filled with your sweet mercy."

PAPO

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. That's about the prettiest thing anybody ever said. I never touched no lamb until we moved to Ohio. You can go right up to them and put your arms around'em and let your fingers get lost in all those warm curls.

(Jumping off the counter and swinging the gun in the ATTENDANT's face.)

FUHWAHCATA!

(PAPO kisses the LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT.)

PAPO

(Moving back to his cell)

That was the last one. They caught me because I started taking my time. I started to enjoy it too much—so God made sure I got caught.

(Pause)

I have sores on my dick now. That's where I was bit by God.

(Lights grow to include MAGDALENA. MARIA runs in screaming.)

MARIA

Your father is covered with—

MAGDALENA & PAPO

(In unison)

I know.

**(Blackout)**

**END OF ACT ONE**

**ACT TWO/SCENE 1**

In the COLON Apartment, 1977.

MARIA sits on a chair trying to avoid putting her feet down on the blood-stained rug.

SHE is eating from a take-out dish of Chicken Delight.

MARIA

Niños? Don't you want any chicken?

(No response from MAGDALENA & JESÚS)

Niños?

(SHE tries to get up but can't.)

I had to go all the way to the Grand Concourse, because the Delight over here closes early because they was getting robbed all the time. That's a long walk. The hardware store is closer than the Delight. That's why I don't understand. Where all the blood came from. Somebody musta busted his feet with that hammer. They're gonna have to cut them off. They was hanging off anyway.

(Pause)

And you know, my husband never liked walking. I don't know why he didn't take his car. He probably stopped to play a number and somebody followed him. They probably tried to rob him and he wouldn't give them anything. He's stupid like that. You don't argue with junkies. They'll just take an ice pick and slice it through your head. Or a hammer.

(Pause)

Niños! Help me get off this chair!

(MARIA stands on the chair as the lights cross to JESÚS & MAGDALENA watching the tv. We hear the theme song to "Happy Days". JESÚS turns off the tv.)

JESÚS

You know what? I'm always gonna be your brother.

MAGDALENA

Even when you're dead?

JESÚS

What do you mean?

MAGDALENA

I mean when your soul goes to wherever it goes to, do you think you'll remember who you were? Or do you get to be somebody else? Maybe you as my brother is just a body and your soul belongs to God, so once you're gone I've got no right to claim you.

JESÚS

Don't worry. Family's always got a claim.

MAGDALENA

That's what I thought.

(Lights cross to the jail cell.)

**ACT TWO/SCENE 2**

In 1991, PAPO's jail cell. A dream.

In the semi-darkness, we hear the whispered names of PAPO's victims spoken by different women's voices, a CHORUS of MOTHERS, WIVES, & DAUGHTERS

**CHORUS OF MOTHERS, WIVES & DAUGHTERS**

(sometimes overlapping, sometimes in unison; once each name has been said three times there is silence)

David—father; Alan—brother; Michael—son; Kevin—son/father; Bob—brother/son; Roger—husband; Lawrence—husband; Roy—father/son; Craig—husband/father; Joseph—brother/son; Len—son; Peter—son; Owen—son; Kirk—son; Jake—son; Ronnie—son; Eli—son; John—son.

(Silence; as lights come up dimly on PAPO who is leaning against the cell wall with his eyes closed as if HE is sleeping in this position. ELIZABETH, the LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT'S MOTHER enters, carrying her murdered son and places him in PAPO's bed. The bed gets soaked in the corpse's blood. Blood even flows from underneath the bed. After a long silence, ELIZABETH begins to speak to her dead son as if he is lying before her in a coffin. PAPO's eyes slowly open.)

**ELIZABETH**

What do you think of that wood?

(No response)

I thought it was pretty. Matched your hair sort of. Cherrywood. Smells like cherries too.

(SHE sniffs at the edge of PAPO's bed like it is her son's coffin.)

Sold your truck to buy it. Couldn't bury you in the truck. Though you mighta liked that. You used to drive it all the way down to Kentucky to see me. I'll miss that truck.

(Pause)

I'll miss you driving that truck too.

(Pause)

You wasn't a very good driver though...always running into things on the road. I wondered why you never could avoid any of those poor little souls. Wheels always covered with bits of flesh and feathers or fur. Sticky thing—a dead animal. A dead animal's smell can stay on the chrome of your car forever—metal grinds it in. I tried cleaning out those wheels with tomato juice once but I guess that only takes out skunk smell on a living thing. Didn't do nothing for the car.

(Pause)

I loved how you kept the tails of the pretty ones you hit. That was something. Flew them from your CB antenna like a flag. Prettier than the flag though. Softer. Had a sense of style. I always admired that about you. My son, John, knew how to do things right. First one in our town with a CB and an eight-track tape player. Even bought me a Perry Como tape to listen to when I was in your car. You worked so hard to make things nice for me.

(Pause)

Went North to make a good living with the car factories there and all. But couldn't get no job. Some stupid immigrant or maybe a nigger got it first. That's what he told me anyway. "Those people are like fire ants," he told me. "They come to your picnic and burn the skin off your knees." I try not to think badly of other people but Christ is gonna have to help me out of this one. Why did you send him to my son's gas station. Lord? That's what I want to know.

(Turning to look directly at PAPO)

ELIZABETH, cont'd.

(Addressing PAPO directly; HE shrinks to a squatting position as SHE speaks to him.)  
I pray for your death. Every day. When I wake up. Every night. When I go to bed. "Hurry up and kill him, Jesus." I say to myself. "Kill him like he killed my boy." And I get the same answer back. "Save your own soul with forgiveness, Elizabeth. Your boy's not ever coming back." Not really a satisfactory answer from above. But that doesn't keep me from believing—even though he don't bring me any Perry Como tapes—God is all I have left. And you know there's some people He don't talk to at all so I appreciate the attention.

(Takes out a comb and begins to comb her son's hair which is matted thick with blood.)  
They did okay with the make-up, but the hair is bad. You never used gel in your hair. I tried to put some Dippity-Doo on you once to get the cowlicks down, but you said other kids would make fun of you if you smelled like a girl. There's nothing worse for a young man, I suppose than smelling like he cares too much about his daily grooming.

(Pause)

Almost nothing worse anyway.

(Pause)

That's better. And a cowlick. Your hair never could be tamed. Need to go as you really were, so God knows what he's in for when you walk into those gates. Oh—and I brought you this.

(Places a note in the corpse's breast pocket)

Just in case. It's your fourth grade report card. It has Miss Clark's comments about you having such potential. She was the only one who got that right. Your other teachers were morons. God will want to see that card.

(Softly sings the same song as SARAH, the MOTHER of the ELECTROCUTED BOY did in ACT ONE as the lights begin to crossfade.)

"There was one little boy, little boy...who could see through the clouds..."

(The lights cross to LULU in her apartment in 1991.)



**ACT TWO/SCENE 3**

In ED & LULU's apartment. 1991.

LULU is cutting articles out of the newspaper.

ED enters quietly with a bouquet of flowers.

HE tiptoes behind her and places the flowers in front of her making her jump.

ED

Surprise!

LULU

Shit! You almost gave me a heart attack.

ED

You left the door unlocked.

LULU

I did? I never do that.

ED

I know. You think a raccoon is going to get in here with you.

LULU

Hey, it could definitely happen. You know I saw that big fat one on the back steps last week going through our garbage.

ED

We got better cans now. The kind that lock. It should be okay.

LULU

(Putting the flowers in a vase)

What's the occasion?

ED

You needed some flowers.

LULU

Needed?

ED

I wanted to give you some flowers.

LULU

Oh. Okay. Whatever.

ED

(Referring to the article she was cutting out of the paper)

What's that?

LULU

Research. A couple of articles I want to keep.

ED

I did some research myself today. We can rent a hall at my alma mater for only \$300 for 8 hours. For the reception. The wedding? Remember? Why are you looking at me like that?

LULU

City Hall. What do we need a party for?

ED

So we can invite family.

LULU

I don't have any family.

ED

What about that uncle who gave you money for college?

LULU

He's dead.

ED

When?

LULU

Recently.

ED

Why didn't you tell me?

LULU

Well, he was my uncle.

ED

I'd tell you if my uncle died.

LULU

Yeah. But you like your uncle.

ED

Why do you need that article?

LULU

You ask a lot of questions.

ED  
I'm a reporter.

LULU  
City Hall.

ED  
Don't you think we deserve a celebration?

LULU  
Whatever.

ED  
Don't whatever me.

LULU  
I'm a whatever type. If you don't like whatever, why do you want to marry me? I can just be your Catholic 'ho and you can marry a nice Jewish girl.

ED  
Did my grandmother call today?

LULU  
She calls every Sunday, Ed. She thinks I'm a lowlife, doesn't she?

ED  
She's just old.

LULU  
I didn't say yes. You can't rent a hall until I say yes.

ED  
Whatever. What are you going to do with those articles?

LULU  
I don't know. I just wanted to keep them. To re-read them. Understand them. I think they're about love.  
(Pause)  
One was about the Chupacabra in Mexico, on vacation with the coquí. "Monster leaves its Puerto Rican Paradise to Cruise the Gulf of Mexico with its little frog friend, the Coquí." Latino Urban myths, they call it. I believe in the Chupacabra though. How else can you explain all those cows and goats drained dry of their blood? And some people too. There's gotta be something out there doing that. Like Dracula or something, but more selective. Only happens when you don't pay attention to it. Act like it can't touch you and it touches you—big time. Sucks you right down its throat.  
(Pause)  
I started writing again today.

ED

That's great.

LULU

Is it? I don't know anymore. Did you know I was never who I wanted to be? Did you know I wanted to be President?

ED

Did you know I wanted to be the first president who was also an astronaut?

LULU

Did you know I wanted to be President so I could help my brother?

(Picking up the paper again)

There was something else in the paper. About that Latin King who was supposedly ordering murders from his prison cell. They gave him the most severe Life Imprisonment sentence ever. He can't see his sister and mother again for forty-five years.

ED

Yeah. I heard about it. He'll be in isolation for all that time. Wasn't he a murderer before he went to prison? So you feel sorry for him?

LULU

I feel sorry for his sister and his mother.

(Pause)

I can't. Not yet.

ED

You're right. You do have to say yes first.

(The lights cross to MARIA sitting in a spotlight talking to a judge.)

**ACT TWO/SCENE 4**

In a judge's chamber in Ohio, 1991.

MARIA, in a tight spotlight, is questioned about her son.

MARIA

No, sir. I never tole him that. He learned it by himself.

(Pause)

I don't know if it's true. I only believe my son is a good man in his heart.

(Pause)

He didn't think they were. I don't know why.

(Pause)

Yes, Judge. I know what human means. He does too. But he didn't see it in them, I guess.

He's a sensitive boy that way.

(Pause)

I'm not saying that he was right. I'm saying he thinks he was right. He's not thinking clear. His father died when he was young and you know a boy needs his father or there's no one for the man he'll become to be like. No footprints to follow.

(Pause)

I know that. But for him it's true. He don't know who he is. He's never known.

(Pause)

I was born in Puerto Rico. He was born here. In the Bronx, I mean.

(Pause)

I don't know. If we still lived in Puerto Rico, he wouldn't have found as many people not to like, I think. But who knows? Maybe he woulda found more. Everywhere is changing.

It used to be so safe there and now everybody got their gates and security guards.

Everywhere there's things to be scared of.

(Pause)

I know there's people scared of my son, but not me. If you could let him live—

(Pause)

No, he din't. No mercy. Mercy is changing too. His dying won't change anything, Judge.

(Pause)

Then I hope this makes them very happy. Let them watch his soul get set free. And I'll be right there next to them. I'm sure they'll like seeing me there too.

(SHE is fighting back tears.)

I'll be singing. He liked my singing. Whenever my baby boy would cry, I could rub the space between his forehead, just over his eyes and sing to him real close so he could feel my breath on him. And he'd get so quiet—just lookin'at me, his eyes wide and soft on me. That boy could kiss wif his eyes, wif the look he give you.

(Lights grow to include PAPO in his cell listening to his mother sing. The other Mothers [SARAH, ELECTROCUTED BOY's and ELIZABETH, the LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT's] appear and sing with MARIA.)

THE MOTHERS

Why can't a boy's warm breath be the air?

Be the wind? So his tears turn to rain.

Why can't a mother's love be the ocean?  
Be the sea? That his sadness fills again and again.  
Un niño que vuela con sus lagrimas, puede llenar el mar.  
A boy who flies with tears can fill a sea.

(Each MOTHER is captured in a spotlight. THEY begin to speak.)

SARAH

There was this playground I used to take him to. It had a globe of the world, that kids could sit on and spin.

ELIZABETH

He would sit on that world and spin and it was a movie or something. A little boy on top of the world—turning it at his own pace, making it move with the power of his laughter.

MARIA

He would go so fast sometimes, I got scared for him—that he was gonna fall. One time he did. Right on his face.

SARAH

But he just got right back up on it. A big smile on his face.

ELIZABETH

"I wanna go faster this time, Momma," he said to me his face full of mud and his hair covered in leaves.

ALL THREE MOTHERS

But that smile.

MARIA

I would help him get back on. And the spinning would start again.

SARAH

I thought all boys must want to go too fast like that.

ELIZABETH

I thought there was no better place on earth to be. His hair would stick straight up like a bolt of lightning from all that spinning.

MARIA

His face would get all red like he was on fire. I would tell him it was enough. I was assured with all that red on his face, that he would explode or something.

ELIZABETH

Shoot! I'd help him spin faster. If that's what he wanted then I said do it. Spin till you fall, boy, if that's what you want.

ALL THREE MOTHERS

Never seen him that happy again.

(Lights cross with MARIA to her hospital bed. SHE gets into her bed as the lights come up on her and ED.)

**ACT TWO/SCENE 5**

In the hospital.

ED visits MARIA.

He strums on a guitar as MARIA listens with her eyes closed.

MARIA

I wish I had learned to play an instrument.

ED

Which one?

MARIA

Piano would be nice.

ED

It would be.

MARIA

So what happened to my daughter?

ED

She went to get us some coffee—

MARIA

No. I mean, what happened to her, that she's so much calmer these days. And nicer. It must be you.

ED

Calmer?! I don't know—

MARIA

Yes. It's you. You take good care of her, okay. And don't mind the bullshit she talks. It don't mean nothing.

ED

That's what I keep telling myself.

MARIA

You know what? I'm dying and I don't feel so bad. It's funny, huh? I know I don't got a lot of time, but I'm ready. How did that happen? I don't want nobody crying for me. Tell Lulu, "Mami said no crying," okay?

ED

Okay. Can I get you anything? A blanket? Some water.

MARIA



It's good just you and me sitting here. You don't gotta do nothing else.

(Pause)

Maybe play some more. Helps me sleep.

(ED strums on the guitar as MARIA falls asleep and lights cross to PAPO's cell.)

**ACT TWO/ SCENE 6**

In PAPO's cell, 1991.

PAPO examines his hands in the florescent light of his cell.

PAPO

They got bad soap in this place. My hands are never real clean. You know the skin around my nails looks so dark—like it belongs to somebody else—somebody who bleeds from there. I used to help my Ma cut up vegetables sometimes. She hated cutting vegetables. She said she din't like their smell on her. That the smell of peppers would get into her blood and then when she peed or shit you could smell it—the peppers. But I thought, damn that sounds better than shit-smelling shit—You know what I mean? So me I loved to cut up those things. But it din't work on me like that. I guess you know that.

(PAPO moves his hands into the shadows outside his cell. GUY NEXT DOOR takes his hand and begins to file PAPO's nails with an emery board.)

PAPO

I thought they wouldn't let you have a nail file in a prison.

GUY

A file, no. But an emery board won't get you through any doors—even though it is an essential tool. Never underestimate the power of good grooming.

(As HE continues to file PAPO's nails, GUY begins to sing,

“The Bare Necessities” from Disney's “The Jungle Book” a la Louis Armstrong.)

“Look for the bare necessities, the simple, bare necessities,  
forget about your worries and your strife.

I mean, the bare necessities, mother nature's recipes,  
grin and bare necessities of life.”

PAPO

That was a good movie.

GUY

Yeah. But I liked “Cinderella” better. More magic. There.

(HE tries to give PAPO his hand back, but PAPO doesn't let go.)

All done.

PAPO

The only thing better than having your nails filed is having your hair washed. My sister used to wash mines. Maggie had great hands. The kind that feel every knot and unknot it. Like yours.

(PAPO holds GUY's hand in a tight handshake.)

Thanks, man.

GUY

Sure. Anytime. The sound of the nail file filing away always mellows me out.

PAPO

I like that sound because it cuts the silence. And you know something real is happening. Something you can touch.

(HE gives GUY's hand one last squeeze and pulls away.)

When's your date?

GUY

In the Spring.

PAPO

You got some time then. I was set for this month, but it got delayed because I got sick. So it'll probably be November or December now. My lawyer gave me the date, but I keep forgetting it.

GUY

Some things are better that way.

PAPO

Nah. Always better to remember...

(Pause; HE lets his hand wander down to his crotch and holds it there between his legs.) And you know what? Especially in the case of pussy, because women remember so much more about dick than we do about pussy that if you don't remember any little detail, like—it was yay deep, or yay wet, or she came yay many times. And yo, she likes the horizontal flick not the vertical thrust. And yay, and yo, on and on like that. Don't you think?

GUY

Women are complicated that way. They have expectations.

PAPO

Yeah. Guys don't have that. Expectations.

(Pause)

I thought they would let me have some books at least.

(Pause)

Maggie used to tell me stories. Right from her head. Always cooled me out.

GUY

(As HE tells his story the sound of a solo alto sax plays in the background.) Once upon a time, a long time ago, there was a dinosaur named Jo-Jo, who played the alto sax in an all dinosaur band. He was a hip cat Bronto-dino who only hung with other leaf-eaters until he fell for Gladys and her liquid chocolate eyes. Like all of the other T-Rexes, she had real bad eyesight and only ate meat. They made an instant electric connection when their frames touched.

He wore shades because he played jazz and the ladies coming to his club expected him to wear the night on his eyes. Gladys wore light blue horn-rimmed glasses with little sparkly jewels at the tips that made her eyes shimmer and shake like morning sunbeams.

(As GUY continues to tell his story, PAPO curls up on his bed and listens.)

He would never kill anything that was alive and Gladys thought everything alive was hers to eat.

Until she met Jo-Jo and it was love at first note. When she heard the sound of his saxophone, it made her forget all about meat. But in the beginning, Jo-Jo wasn't too sure about Gladys. He thought she might have eaten some of his relatives, but still there was something special about this girl. Oh, yeah!

(LULU enters wearing the horn-rimmed glasses and sits at the edge of PAPO's bed. SHE gently rubs his head like she is washing his hair.)

GUY, cont'd.

He couldn't get Gladys out of his mind so he decided to drop his juice on her egg sac. And Gladys, being a Latin dinosaur, got pregnant the first time they made sweet delicious prehistoric jam. A family! It was something Jo-Jo dreamed about, but it gave Gladys nightmares. What if she couldn't control herself and ate the baby she and Jo-Jo conjured from their magic love?? Every night Gladys lay awake staring at the egg about to hatch and thought about not eating it. Was it possible? Could she change the way of her tribe? The fate of her happiness lay in the life of one little dino-babe. And what if her baby was more like her than him and ate her father? Those questions would soon be answered for the ripe egg began to quake and slowly crack...

(PAPO sighs deeply and continues to sleep. LULU exits.)

I wish I could fall asleep like that. But I'm the type that needs to stay up and watch the egg.

(Lights cross to ED & LULU's apartment.)

**ACT TWO/SCENE 7**

In ED & LULU's apartment in Darien, CT, 1991.

THEY are watching TV and eating popcorn.

On the TV is the sound of a music video, "Let's Talk About Sex" by Salt N Pepa. THEY watch in silence for a moment, exchanging amused glances.

LULU

(Moving to sit closer to ED)

I like this song.

ED

Uh, huh.

(Pause)

Isn't Star Trek on now?

LULU

Dance with me.

ED

Uhnuhn.

(SHE pulls him up off the couch.)

Man!

(ED starts to do his one dance step, a modified twist.)

LULU

You are the only person I know who actually still does the twist.

ED

If you want me to dance with you then you better be nice.

LULU

I think it's adorable.

ED

(Pulling her to the couch onto his lap)

That's enough.

LULU

When I was a little girl, I had this recurring dream that I was a featured dancer on Soul Train. I'd be dancing down the line and do some amazing moves that defied gravity and then some handsome boy would start dancing with me and we would be in perfect sync. Like we were twins or something, and then he would go to kiss me and then I would see me brother's face.

ED

Kind of a spell breaker, huh?

LULU

My brother always knew where I was. It sounds weird now. But it never felt weird then. Like we shared the same mental space. If I wanted to see the sunset over in Crotona Park, he would meet me there, and we never said anything about going. I would be in the library and he would be hanging out with his boys down the street and suddenly we'd both find ourselves in the park, watching the sun disappear. Don't you think that's weird?

ED

Define weird. Eerie? Strange? Otherworldly?

LULU

It is really hard living with a dictionary.

ED

I'm serious. How do you define it? How did it make you feel when he showed up in the park?

LULU

Safe.

ED

Sounds like he loved you. He probably still does. There's nothing weird about love.

LULU

You never met my brother.

(Lights cross to PAPO's cell.)

**ACT TWO/SCENE 8**

In PAPO's cell.

PAPO is trying to teach the GAS STATION ATTENDANTS how to shoot a gun.

The actor, who plays all the GAS STATION ATTENDANTS, sits behind him.

When PAPO changes which ATTENDANT HE is speaking to HE shifts position. The ATTENDANT stays in one place, but his voice changes each time he speaks. Perhaps it is amplified or distorted each time with a microphone. In PAPO's head all the GAS STATION ATTENDANTS are in the room with him. HE cannot distinguish one from the other except by voice. PAPO never makes eye contact.

PAPO

With shotguns, it's important to hold it close to your body so that it don't jump when you pull the trigger. This keeps it more balanced and easier to hold for longer periods of time. If you wanna be ready to shoot, you have to keep it locked into your body—like another arm. And then you don't get no surprises.

FIRST GAS STATION ATTENDANT

(With a stutter)

I preferred handguns. Ssshottguns are so ha-hard to load and not as accurate a ssshoot.

PAPO

But the good thing about shotguns is that you will hit the target—maybe not exactly where you planned to, but you will hit it.

(JOSÉ enters from the shadows to stand beside the GAS STATION ATTENDANT.)

JOHN, the LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT

Yeah. You hit it alright. But the smell stays on your hands—of the gunpowder.

JOSÉ

I like clean hands.

JOHN, the LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT

That's why I never liked working in a gas station. Always had the smell of work on me. Hands that smell like gasoline give people headaches. The ladies don't like it at all, amigo.

PAPO

It's like a high for me. That smell takes me places. Places I could only go in my dreams. There was no place I could really go.

JOSÉ

But that's what I gave you.



PAPO

A chance to go on a trip to my own island. This island was surrounded by gasoline and I could light a match and make it all burn—anytime...anytime I wanted.

JOSÉ

I had the match.

PAPO

I controlled the flame.

SECOND GAS STATION ATTENDANT

But you can't really have power over fire, Mister.

JOSÉ

That's where you were wrong.

ALL the GAS STATION ATTENDANTS & JOSÉ

Fire is stronger than everything.

PAPO

I tried—I was trying—

THIRD GAS STATION ATTENDANT

Yeah. You tried, pal. But you couldn't get close to the fire.

JOSÉ

You were already burning up.

PAPO

All I saw was white.

FOURTH GAS STATION ATTENDANT

But fire doesn't have any color.

JOSÉ

It just burns.

PAPO

That's how I saw you all.

FIFTH GAS STATION ATTENDANT

They talk about red-hot and white-hot, but most fire is kinda blue.

JOSÉ

And it's still real hot.

PAPO

I tried to erase you.

JOSÉ

You can't make all that color go away.

SIXTH GAS STATION ATTENDANT

There's too much history behind it. Too much already burned.

PAPO

You're not real.

JOSÉ

I can only speak for myself.

SEVENTH GAS STATION ATTENDANT

I sure the fuck was real. I had tickets to see AC/DC in concert that Friday at the Agora in Cleveland. I was gonna take my girlfriend, Tina. She likes that stuff more than I do. I think she was planning to break up with me—until I got those tickets.

PAPO

You have to do things for women.

JOSÉ

That's the truth.

EIGHTH GAS STATION ATTENDANT

I gave Melody so much free gas until she married me.

PAPO

I don't need to know that.

NINTH GAS STATION ATTENDANT

I was real too. And I had a kid. My baby boy had the biggest smile on his face all the time. I thought he was retarded the way he smiled so much. But the doctor said he was just happy.

PAPO

It's hard to believe that kids can be that happy.

TENTH GAS STATION ATTENDANT

My kid is a terror—

JOSÉ

—just like his Pa.

TENTH GAS STATION ATTENDANT

He's only four but he has about five girlfriends already. Women fall for those bad boys.

PAPO

Some bad boys. I was never that lucky.

ELEVENTH GAS STATION ATTENDANT

You probably scared them away with all that darkness.

PAPO

What do you mean?

TWELFTH GAS STATION ATTENDANT

He means you look like one scary mother-fucker.

PAPO

I like that look.

THIRTEENTH GAS STATION ATTENDANT

Yup. I shoulda seen you coming.

PAPO

But you didn't.

JOSÉ

Uhnuhn. Me neither.

FOURTEENTH GAS STATION ATTENDANT

And I was so hungry. You got me right at closing time. So I was getting ready to go have me some big-ass dinner. My mother is a great cook. She makes this chicken thing, that is out of this world.

PAPO

If I had let you eat something—

FIFTHTEENTH GAS STATION ATTENDANT

Better to go hungry. Then there's still a hope for something.

PAPO

What kind of something?

SIXTEENTH GAS STATION ATTENDANT

What he means is that it hurts less when you still think you got plans.

PAPO

Like if—

SEVENTEENTH GAS STATION ATTENDANT

What he means is that you weren't the last thing on his mind.

PAPO

So then—

LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT

What he means is that you couldn't take that last memory away, amigo. And that's like hope.

PAPO

I'm not sorry.

ALL THE GAS STATION ATTENDANTS & JOSÉ

We know.

(JOSÉ lies down in front of PAPO.)

PAPO

My father—

(A light comes up on JOSÉ lying in a pool of blood.)

ALL THE GAS STATION ATTENDANTS

We know.

(The light slowly fades on JOSÉ.)

History.

(Lights cross to LULU & ED in bed.)

**ACT TWO/SCENE 9**

LULU &amp; ED in bed.

ED sleeps, LULU stares at the ceiling.

SHE is silent for a time and then SHE speaks.

LULU

What does it mean when they say that the Universe is expanding?

ED

All the matter of the Universe was one and then it became unstable sending all of its pieces out.

LULU

The big bang.

ED

Since then all these pieces have been pointing away from this explosion—expanding outward. Eventually it will come together again, imploding the Universe. Then, maybe, the process will begin again.

(Pause)

LULU

Can you hear music in Space?

ED

Probably not. I mean, you might hear a natural music—like air rushing through your ears—

LULU

Like listening to a seashell. But people cut themselves on seashells.

(Pause)

Can there be a rip in the Universe?

ED

Yeah. They're called black holes.

LULU

How do they work?

ED

They pull the stars around them into their magnetic field and then suck them in.

LULU

They eat stars? That's like eating light. They sound like serial killers—walking around preying on the innocent, sucking them into their darkness—are black holes really black?

ED

Yeah. Because they're so dense that no light escapes them.

LULU  
Yeah. It's exactly like that.

ED  
What?

LULU  
My brother. And me.  
(Pause)  
If I stay with you, I'm gonna pull you in too.

ED  
I don't go anywhere I don't want to go.  
(Taking her hand and pulling her to him)

LULU  
People have magnetic fields too.  
(Pause)  
When things on Earth die, I wonder what happens to the Universe. Like does the order of things change and so the balance gets messed up, bringing us closer to the time when things reverse? We could explode like tomorrow. Maybe that's what they mean by light year, because as we get lighter we get closer to exploding.

ED  
Light means fast. I was taught that it was like going around the equator seven times in a second. That's a light year.

LULU  
That's fast.  
(Pause)  
How do we know that we're not on the end of that last rotation? This could be it. So long, pal.  
(SHE puts out her hand and HE takes it and shakes it.)

ED  
(HE takes her hand and tucks it under his cheek and closes his eyes.)  
We better get married soon. Before the explosion.

LULU  
I'm going away for a few days.

ED  
When?

LULU  
Saturday.

ED

Today's Thursday.

LULU

I know. I just decided.

ED

Are you going to tell me where?

LULU

To see my brother.

ED

Oh. Good.

(Pause)

Shouldn't I come—

LULU

No. I gotta do this alone.

ED

Okay. For how long?

(Silence)

LULU

I'm hoping for a light year.

ED

That's one hundred and eighty-six thousand miles per second times the number of seconds in a year—just in case you were gonna ask.

LULU

(Pause as SHE looks out the window)

I like how we can sit in our bed and see stars.

ED

(Taking her hand and pulling her to him)

Yes.

(THEY hold each other as THEY stare out the window at the stars.)

(Lights cross to PAPO's cell.)



**ACT TWO/SCENE 10**

In PAPO's cell, 1991.

LULU visits PAPO.

It is her first and last visit.

PAPO is on his bed looking very sick.

LULU is dressed in upscale chic.

SHE examines all of PAPO's drawings, a Puerto Rican flag with a Rheingold beer can in the star, and the large picture window where PAPO has drawn palm trees and beaches and sleek convertibles.

LULU

I like your paintings, Jesús.

PAPO

Yeah. I go by Papo now.

LULU

That was Papi's dog's name—the one he always made sing to us. The one you hated.

PAPO

I didn't hate that dog. I was the one who fed it.

LULU

Okay. Whatever. Are they going to starve you to death? You look like a stick.

PAPO

They give me food—I just can't eat it.

(HE fingers the material of her suit.)

Nice. You look so different now. Like a woman. Like you work in a bank or something.

LULU

I do work in a bank. I'm saving up to go back to school.

PAPO

What for?

LULU

To learn about poetry. I always wanted to and now I can.

PAPO

Wow...That's crazy.

LULU

Poetry is crazy? I guess you would know.

PAPO

I mean crazy good.

LULU

Oh.

(PAPO has a coughing fit. LULU wipes the blood HE coughed up off his lips and chin.)

PAPO

Some people are scared to touch me. Especially if there's blood.

LULU

Whatever. Don't worry about it, Je(sus)—Papo. Papo. What an ugly name. People call me Lulu now.

PAPO

Yeah? That's an ugly name too. Thank you for coming out.

LULU

Whatever. You know I've been meaning to. And they won't let you have more than one visitor a month and Ma always wanted to come...Anyway...Now I can see you.

PAPO

You almost missed out.

(Pause)

How was the funeral? I begged them to let me go.

LULU

It was beautiful. And really sad.

(Pause)

I gotta ask you something. Did you—

PAPO

You don't want to know that.

LULU

I was there. That first time. When you first got the idea. I helped, didn't I?

PAPO

No. It's all mine.

(Pause)

Do you remember how one Halloween Papi painted a jack o'lantern face on that big lamp in the living room?

LULU

Man, that was so embarrassing. And then the ink didn't come off and we had it staring at us through Thanksgiving, Christmas. All the way until Easter, when I managed to break it.

PAPO

I thought I broke it.

LULU

Yeah? Maybe. Maybe we did it together.

PAPO

Like we did most things.

LULU

We wanted to be the Prince and Princess of Puerto Rico. Taino warriors back from the ashes.

PAPO

Stupid. We were such stupid kids.

LULU

I don't believe you did all that.

PAPO

I do. When they stop my heart, I'll believe it even more.

(Pause)

What was Mami wearing?

LULU

I put her in that low-cut green silk dress. The one she bought and Papi never let her wear.

PAPO

She liked that I bet.

LULU

Can I—can I bring you something from home?

PAPO

From home? Where's that? No. Nothing. They won't let you put anything nice on me anyway.

LULU

Right.

PAPO

You can go if you want to.

LULU

I don't want to go.

PAPO

Yeah, you do. You started looking at your watch.

LULU

Since you left home, I always look at my watch.

PAPO

Oh.

(Pause)

Are you married now? Mami said you was gonna—

LULU

No.

PAPO

Don't you love him?

LULU

Yeah. Maybe. I don't wanna talk about it.

PAPO

We gotta talk about something. Why'd you come? After all these years, you ain't come. What you need? To tell me you hate me. I know that already.

LULU

I don't hate you, Papo.

PAPO

Why'd you come? Did Mami make you promise or something?

LULU

I came because my brother was a sweet, gentle boy. And I wanted to find out what happened to him.

PAPO

Can't change the facts, Maggie.

LULU

You scared of dying?

PAPO

No. I'm scared of not dying. I need the rest.

LULU

You always was hard to keep up with.

PAPO

Yeah. But you managed. You could always slow me down with your words. You put them together so pretty. Making pictures with them. Like your tongue was a paintbrush and your spit the paint.

LULU

That mess sounds nasty.

PAPO

Not to me.

LULU

Were you sick before—

PAPO

I don't know. But they tested me in here. That's when I found out. It didn't make no difference really...since I was already gonna die. Except I miss tasting things. I lost that first. I don't understand it but it goes like that sometimes. Weird, the things you lose, huh?

LULU

Real weird.

(LULU takes PAPO's hand, noticing the torn flesh around his fingers.)

PAPO

I tear at my fingernails until I bleed so I can draw on the walls. Sometimes I draw you. The other day, I put you right there, standing under those trees looking at the moon.

LULU

You did?

(PAPO nods and THEY continue to hold hands in silence.)

I'm sorry. That I never came before.

PAPO

Yeah...But I knew you was gonna come.

LULU

How did you know?

(PAPO takes four envelopes from under his bed, and spreads them on the floor in front of LULU.)

PAPO

(Referring to each letter by year and reading what he wrote on each envelope.

They are quotes from LULU's letters.)

Nineteen eighty-seven: "You're not my brother anymore."

Nineteen eighty-eight: "I missed these subways. They smell like lechon."

Nineteen eighty-nine: "I just met a guy who loves me for me. Must be retarded."

Nineteen ninety: "You're breaking Mami's heart."

LULU

You saved those?

PAPO

Been waiting for nineteen ninety-one. I ask the guard everyday.

LULU

I'm sorry—

ED

No. Don't be. It's good to wait for something. Keeps you...going. You was always like that for me.

(Taking LULU's hands.)

You were always my hope. Like you were gonna be somebody and I was gonna get to say, "Yup that's my sister." Everything good that I coulda been, you are. You had to come. So I could see something good that was a part of me. That's the only way to find peace.

LULU

I can't do nothing for you.

PAPO

Sure you can. Letting me look at you. Feeling your voice on my skin, instead of just inside my head. Just keep talking. That's all I want.

(PAPO closes his eyes. JOSÉ exits from the shadows of PAPO's cell.)

LULU

There's gonna be a full moon tonight.

PAPO

That's just what I wanted. Tell me a story about the moon.

LULU

I can't.

PAPO

You used to be able to tell a story about anything.

LULU

Moon stories always have monsters in them.

PAPO

So?

LULU

I don't want to tell those stories anymore.

PAPO

Maybe the monster can die in this one.

LULU

But they come back. They always come back.

PAPO

Not if you let them do what they want to do.

I think Monsters like to lay under a tree and taste Summer rain pouring through those sweet leaves. Takes their minds off the hunger.

LULU

I want you back the way you used to be.

PAPO

Inside my head, I'm on the loose. All out there and gone. There ain't no goin' back for me, Lulu. What do I got to go back to?

(LULU takes out a marker and begins to write the following words on the wall:  
"There was a little boy, who could see through the clouds...)

(THEY each turn to look at the wall where PAPO has painted a window, facing a cloud-filled sky, with his own blood. THEY silently listen to the sound of each other's breath. LULU begins to daydream as PAPO drifts off to sleep. WE see her dream.)

SHE sees words appear on the wall in front of her: "It's a war. A cry for freedom."

(Lights grow to include all the following images.)

The LAST GAS STATION ATTENDANT takes out a container of Chicken Delight and eats while a mystified PAPO slowly pulls a hammer out of his toilet bowl.

MARIA & ELIZABETH enter, face each other, and start to scream—  
both in agony, a strange duet.

PAPO runs the back claw of the hammer through his own hair.

SARAH, the ELECTROCUTED BOY's MOTHER enters and places the one-eyed teddy bear on PAPO's lap.

ED goes to PAPO's bed and pulls a ring from under it.

The screaming stops. LULU begins to cry.

PAPO

Don't be stupid. I was trying to keep us free, Maggie. Nothing to cry about. It was the only way the world could make sense again. That's the only way I could see it making sense. For you anyway.

(Lights cross to ED in the apartment in Darien.)



**ACT TWO/SCENE 11**

In the apartment in Darien, CT.

Late night.

ED is practicing opening and closing a small velvet jewelry box which contains an engagement ring.

There is the sound of someone showering.

Finally, LULU steps out of the bathroom wrapped in a towel.

You still up? LULU

Yeah. ED

How come? LULU

Waiting for you. ED

How come? LULU

They say three's the charm. ED

(HE whips out the jewelry box and accidentally tosses the ring out the window.

THEY both run to the window and look out.)

Oh, shit!  
(THEY pull back from the window.)

I think that raccoon got it.

Yes. LULU

Do you mean it? ED

Yes, except... LULU

What? ED

LULU  
My brother murdered eighteen people and is dying of AIDS on Death Row. Maybe it was twenty people. I'm not sure. I'm not sure I'm not my brother.

ED

I know. Your mother told me. Will you marry me already?

(Lights come up on PAPO's cell, and LULU's mirror.)

**ACT TWO/SCENE 12**

In PAPO's cell, and LULU's apartment.

GUY plays the clave.

PAPO's eyes are closed.

HE opens his eyes when GUY speaks.

GUY

Time.

(GUY plays the clave as PAPO opens his eyes, gets up from his death bed and begins to dance. LULU enters in her wedding dress and dances with him. SHE wears the horn-rimmed glasses. GUY stops playing. PAPO loses all energy and LULU leads him to his bed, and lays him down. SHE removes her glasses, then SHE speaks.)

LULU

Once upon a time, my brother, who could never reach the moon, turned into a Chupacabra, filling himself up with the liquid rage—that he knew before he could even speak. Its broken glass edges finally sliced through him and burst from his fingertips turning him into electricity. He burned souls into the night, hoping it would make him one with the moon. He shines now in all that light.

(Silence. PAPO dies. LULU places her hands over his mouth checking for breath. There is none. GUY carries PAPO off. LULU crosses back to the mirror and studies her image. LULU adjusts her veil and her dress. SHE traces the scar on her leg with her fingertips. We hear an oboe and a cello play the music from “Chupacabra Mix.”)

LULU

Almost time.

(LULU checks her own breath against the glass of the mirror, as the night sky in the background fills with something like the Northern Lights. LULU turns to watch the light show of stars and then turns to look at the door out of her dressing room.)

**(Lights fade to black.)**

**THE END**