

Homeward Bound

by

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DESCRIPTION

Homeward Bound distills into a theatrical form the stories of many women who have experienced abuse in their lives. The play begins in Mexico at the “quinceañera” of Juanita, a rite of passage into adulthood, where her father spells out her proper place as a woman in the world. She then meets a charming man from the United States, Hank Armstrong, who promises to marry her and sponsor her to become a citizen after bringing her back to his home in the mid-West. But when they arrive, he states his expectations for a wife, isolates her from her family and friends, and prevents her from learning the language that will allow her to make new connections with the outside world.

As Juanita begins to confront Hank’s actions, he becomes more abusive, exercising his power over her life by threatening to have her deported and to hurt her family if she does not do what he says. Finally, Juanita escapes, and with help from Asistencia, Inc., run by Cristina Lefcadia, she is able to find the support to change her life.

Homeward Bound examines how domestic violence is not simply a problem of dangerous relationships between individuals but is also an expression of larger conflicts about power, gender, and politics. The play uses elements like the “quinceañera,” the tango (a dance in which seduction and aggression have blurred boundaries), vacuously dangerous speeches by politicians, dreams, and symbols of Mexican culture to dramatize Juanita’s journey of self-discovery and healing.

CHARACTERS

JUANITA—An undocumented immigrant—she represents all women in this condition, regardless of national origin; she speaks in a delicate Mexican accent, though a specific nationality is not the main issue. She will wear a blue shawl.

MAN 1—This actor performs two roles: JUANITA’s FATHER at the Quinceañera celebration and REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAM BARTLETT. He must be able to speak in a Mexican and an American Mid-Western accent. If needed, this role can be split into two, but for symbolic purposes every effort should be made to have one actor play both roles.

MAN 2— This actor will play several roles: PETER SCHIST, a journalist; a spokesperson for WILLIAM BARTLETT; the talk show host IÑIGO QUIROGA. Must be able to speak in a Spanish and American accent.

HANK ARMSTRONG—He will play JUANITA’s “Dream Man,” then boyfriend, and her eventual husband. “American-looking,” charming.

MOTHER—JUANITA’s mother, who wears a white shawl. Must be able to speak in a Spanish accent.

CRISTINA LEFCADIA—Executive director of Asistencia, Inc., an organization helping battered immigrant women. Must be able to pronounce Spanish well. She will wear a red shawl.

(TOTAL: 3 women, 3 men)

SETTING

Mexico; mid-West; dream time

TIME

Fluid

NOTES

Note 1: All the actors must have some dance/movement experience.

Note 2: There are no scene changes, per se. All action is continuous and without intermission. Props, clothing, etc. must be placed on stage for easy access, and the actors will make all changes in sight of the audience. In addition, the actors never leave the stage—when not in a scene, they will sit upstage.

Note 3: A color scheme runs throughout the play of pink, purple, and white (lilac is also used as an intermediate color between pink and purple). This scheme follows the dominant colors in the *Los Dias de Los Muertos*: pink = celebration; purple = pain; white = hope. The colors are used in this way:

Scene 1—HANK, as the “Dream Man,” should wear a pink scarf around his throat, tied as a cravat, and the chambergo, the classic hat for male tango dancers (like a fedora, with a soft, broad brim). JUANITA should wear a triangle of pink material wrapped around her waist to match.

Scene 2—A pink tablecloth should drape JUANITA’s “vanity.”

Scene 3—HANK, as the “Dream Man,” should now wear a lilac scarf and the chambergo; JUANITA wears a lilac triangle wrapped around her waist.

Scene 4—A purple tablecloth should drape the table where JUANITA and MOTHER sit to talk about HANK.

Scene 5—HANK now wears simple street clothes; JUANITA wears a purple triangle wrapped around her waist.

Scene 9—Where possible, purple should be used in this scene. One suggestion is to consider each sub-scene as a different place in the house: if a scene takes place in the bedroom, then JUANITA could be wearing a purple bathrobe (or with a dominant color of purple).

Note 4: There are eight tango sequences, five with music: Scene 1, Scene 3, Scene 4 (as JUANITA speaks about HANK, they do a duplicate of the tango done in Scene 1 but without the

music), Scene 5, Scene 7 (two: the “proposition” and “elopement” tangos), and Scene 9 (the “abuse” tango, done without music). As a recurring action throughout the play, each tango (except for the brief reprise in Scene 4) should shift the balance from seduction to aggression. It will document, in movement, the arc of the abuse.

Suggested music:

- La Cumparsita (a traditional and well-known tango tune)—for Scene 1
- Selections from Astor Piazzolla’s Libertango: “Verano Porteño” (for Scene 3); “Milonga de Angel” (for Scene 9, the “marriage” tango).
- “Mi Buenos Aires Querido” by Carlos Gardel (for Scene 5).
- Anything by Piazzolla (for Scene 7).

The dances last as long as needed (though 1 to 2 minutes should suffice).

Note 5: Each scene change will need either music or some kind of sound effect. This especially needs to be done in Scene 9, between each of the sub-scenes.

COSTUME LIST

It is suggested that there be on stage a clothes rack for hanging clothes as well as a clothes tree for hanging the tango scarves for HANK and the colored triangles for JUANITA.

It is suggested that JUANITA wear a black dress over which she can put her other costumes and materials. She will also need to change shoes between the tango sequences and her scenes as JUANITA.

HANK and MAN 2 will need to make slight changes as they move through the play.

MOTHER will add an apron in Scene 4.

Scene 1

- HANK: As “Dream Man,” a pink neck scarf and a chambergo; a basic white shirt; basic black pants and shoes.
- JUANITA: A pink triangle wrapped around her waist; basic black dress; shoes with heels for tango.

Scene 2

- JUANITA: Quinceañera dress.

Scene 3

- HANK: As “Dream Man,” a lilac neck scarf and a chambergo; same pants, shirt, and shoes.
- JUANITA: A lilac triangle wrapped around her waist; basic black dress; shoes with heels for tango.

Scene 4

- JUANITA: A long skirt over the basic black dress; flat shoes.
- MOTHER: An apron.

Scene 5

- HANK: White shirt, black pants and shoes.

- JUANITA: A purple triangle wrapped around her waist; basic black dress; shoes with heels for tango.

Scene 6

- MAN 2: White shirt, tie, jacket—looks like an aide.
- BARTLETT: Simple suit, white shirt, red tie.

Scene 7

- HANK: Same as Scene 5.
- JUANITA: Same as Scene 4, but without the shoes.

Scene 8

- MAN 2 (Peter Schist): No tie; can wear a suit coat, but rumpled.
- CRISTINA: Business suit; red shawl.

Scene 9a: "Marriage" tango

- JUANITA: White triangle wrapped around her waist; black dress; shoes with heels for tango.
- HANK: White shirt, black pants and shoes.

Scene 9b - in the living room

- JUANITA: Same as Scene 4.
- HANK: White shirt, black pants and shoes.

Scene 9c - in the dining room

- JUANITA: Basic black dress without skirt, apron.
- HANK: White shirt, black pants and shoes.

Scene 9d - in the bedroom

- JUANITA: Purple bathrobe; no shoes.
- HANK: White shirt, black pants and shoes.

Scene 9e - somewhere in the house

- JUANITA: Same as 9d.
- HANK: White shirt, black pants and shoes.

Scene 10

- JUANITA: Continues wearing the purple bathrobe.
- MOTHER: Basic clothing and JUANITA's blue shawl.

Scene 11

- JUANITA: Same as Scene 4 and her blue shawl.
- CRISTINA: Same as Scene 8.

Scene 12

- BARTLETT: Same as Scene 6.
- IÑIGO: Same white shirt and pants, some kind of colorful or embroidered vest.
- CRISTINA: Same as Scene 8.

- JUANITA: Same as Scene 11.
- MOTHER: Basic clothing and her own white shawl.

PROP LIST

Scene 2

- Table (also used in Scenes 4, 8, 11, & 12)
- Pink tablecloth (see Note 3)
- Hairbrush
- Something to gather up JUANITA's hair
- Chair

Scene 4

- Table
- Lilac tablecloth (see Note 3)
- Coffee set: 2 cups, saucers, spoons, coffee pot
- 2 chairs

Scene 6

- Folder for MAN 2 with press releases, papers, etc. in it.
- Copy of prepared statement that MAN 2 hands to BARTLETT.

Scene 8

- Table
- Blotter with pens, papers, etc. on it (should be easy to pick up as one piece)
- Briefcase for CRISTINA
- Bound manuscript in briefcase
- Phone
- 2 chairs
- Steno pad, pen for MAN 2: *Scene 9a*
- Wedding ring

Scene 9b

- Chair

Scene 9c

- Two chairs (add one to the chair in 9b)
- Apron for JUANITA, with a purple napkin in it

Scene 9d

- Second hairbrush in bathrobe pocket (pre-set)

Scene 9e

- Letter with picture for HANK

Scene 10

- Four marigolds

Scene 11

- Same as Scene 8
- Manila file folder for CRISTINA
- Waist-high white table for the “visual monologue”—this is the only scene in which the table is used
- Stainless steel bowl
- Cleaver
- Paring knife
- Cutting board (preferably wood)
- Large ripe tomato
- White kitchen towel

Scene 12

- Table draped with black cloth
- Copy of CRISTINA’s report and BARTLETT’s press release.

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SCENE 1: THE TANGO

As the lights rise, we see JUANITA and HANK, as the “Dream Man,” dance the first tango, a dance of initial contact and mutual attraction. It ends in a final pose. Lights out, then to ghost for scene change, with music to cover it.

SCENE 2: THE QUINCEAÑERA (SWEET FIFTEEN)

JUANITA’s quinceañera, the celebration of her fifteenth birthday and the ritual that announces her change from a child into a woman. During the scene transition, JUANITA will change into the quinceañera dress with the help of MOTHER. JUANITA sits at the table, which is draped with a pink tablecloth, as if in front of a mirror. MOTHER will help brush her hair and pull it back. The banter is playful.

NOTE: It is very important in this scene that the FATHER play the scene with a mix of tenderness and firmness in his voice, the iron fist in the velvet glove. Do not overplay the sternness. There is no need for him to be overly authoritarian because he knows he has complete power in the situation; however, when challenged, he is swift to remind those around him who holds the power and the consequences of challenging it. He is not without his charm, and it should be clear why MOTHER would have fallen for him as a young man.

MOTHER: You look so beautiful, Juanita.

JUANITA: Do you really think so?

MOTHER: Claro, claro! A beautiful child—

JUANITA: I think so, too!

MOTHER: —and a beautiful woman.

FATHER: This is an important day for you, niña.

MOTHER: M'hijita, so, so happy for you.

FATHER: This day is very important.

JUANITA: Yes, Papá.

FATHER: Your quinceañera is an important day for all of us. You are getting older—

JUANITA: (*aside to MOTHER*) Fifteen is sooo old!

FATHER: —and you must now think—

MOTHER: Listen to your father.

FATHER: —seriously of your future—

JUANITA: (*makes a long face, a funny face*) Like this, Papá? Serious?

MOTHER: Juanita!

JUANITA: Oh, I understand—an important day. Today I am—a woman! See? (*vamps playfully*)
So mature? Heh? (*slumps*) But I am fifteen just this once, Papá—

FATHER: You are supposed to think seriously—

JUANITA: Seriously, yes, Papá—

FATHER: —about what you are going to do with your life.

JUANITA: (*flippantly, but not too much*) My life, yes. Yes, my life—

FATHER: That is what today is for—

JUANITA: Sí, sí, Papá.

FATHER: It is not about your enjoyment, your fun.

JUANITA: Yes, Papá, my life -

MOTHER: (*softly*) Papá—Papá—

FATHER: But from today on, you must remember that people will look at you differently—

JUANITA: Men will, you mean.

MOTHER: (*mock shock*) Nena!

JUANITA: They already do.

FATHER: People will look at you differently—

MOTHER: (*conspiratorial*) Los ojos, eh?

FATHER: —people will treat you differently—

MOTHER: (*making a grabbing motion*) Los manos—

FATHER: —after today— Don't distract her!

MOTHER: Yes, Papá.

FATHER: And you must learn how to behave so that you bring no shame on yourself or on us.
No shame.

MOTHER: Let her enjoy her quince, Papá—

JUANITA: I agree!

MOTHER: —without all the lessons. There will be plenty of time later—plenty of time—for the lessons.

JUANITA: (laughs) I can barely wait to dance the vals with padrino Pedro—all that hair curling around in his old ears! The high point of the day!

Pulls MOTHER to her feet and uses her to mimic "Pedro." JUANITA "leads" MOTHER, as a man would.

JUANITA: He will tell me his stories—again—of the old times, when he was a gran bailarín, dancing with the famous so-and-so and so-and-so until dawn. (He never uses the same name twice) Then he'll do one-two-three once on top of my feet, give me over to somebody else, and go back to his whiskey.

MOTHER and JUANITA dance a parody of Pedro.

FATHER: (*claps his hands*) Vamos! Vamos!

They stop dancing.

FATHER: (*to JUANITA*) If you are to dance the vals, as you must, then you must do it correctly.

JUANITA: I already know, Papá.

FATHER: I doubt it. Come here. Your first lesson—a woman should never lead.

JUANITA: And the second, Papá?

FATHER: Let me.

FATHER faces JUANITA.

FATHER: Mamá, show her.

MOTHER, with some reluctance, comes up behind JUANITA and makes physical adjustments as FATHER speaks.

FATHER: Your hand, like this. (*MOTHER adjusts*) Receptive. Open. Pliable. Your hand in my hand. (*MOTHER joins their hands*) Feel which way it moves—feel how it steers you, like the wind in a sail.

Places his other hand against the small of her back. MOTHER presses it firmly against JUANITA.

FATHER: This hand—like a rudder—let it escort you. Arms like so—the ribs of the boat that keep it strong yet supple. Then we move out. (*in rhythm*) One-two-three, follow me—

They take their first steps; FATHER stops.

FATHER: Looser—let the captain guide you. Mamá, tell her.

They continue dancing.

MOTHER: (*with mixed feelings*) Feel how he slips you this way, then that. Sense him. Anticipate him. Look into his face—go ahead—read it so that he can tell you, “Move here,” “go there,” “turn now,” “pause.” You are the boat in the hands of the captain.

FATHER: And not only dancing with your padrino. There will be others—

MOTHER: (*mischievously*) And if they let their hands wander—

FATHER: Cállate, mujer!

MOTHER: Or hold you too close—

FATHER: This can be discussed in private.

MOTHER: Just push them gently away—they’ll understand.

JUANITA stops the dance and, playfully looking at MOTHER, then at FATHER, pushes him gently away.

JUANITA: Like this, Mamá?

FATHER: (*indicating JUANITA’s face*) Mamá, what is this?

MOTHER: It is not much.

JUANITA: Papá!

FATHER: It makes you look provocativa!

MOTHER: It’s not that much.

FATHER: (*ignoring MOTHER*) That’s not a word a señorita should have said of her.

JUANITA: But, Papá—

FATHER: (*to MOTHER*) Why did you allow this?

JUANITA: It’s not her fault. All my friends are using some— I just wanted a little—

NOTE: The following speech should be said with affection for JUANITA—go against the impulse to make a lecture.

FATHER: (*takes JUANITA's chin in his hands*) Do you understand what I am saying?

FATHER looks at MOTHER as he says the word.

FATHER: Provocativa—do you understand?

JUANITA shakes her head no.

FATHER: I did not think so. Because you do not yet understand your true calling in life. Do you know what your true calling is?

JUANITA shakes her head no.

FATHER: Someone has not been teaching you well. Listen closely, niña. Today you will give a prayer to Our Blessed Mother Mary—do you know why? Because your true life is a holy one—holy, Juanita, holy. You must follow Mary's example in keeping the home sacred. That is your true calling in life. You see, Juanita, there are two kinds of women in the world: those a man will "visit" because of certain needs in life—but they are not women he will ever take into his home.

FATHER touches her face.

FATHER: Not what a man wants in his home. No, men desire a woman who will keep a home as Blessed Mary kept herself: clean and modest, quiet and chaste. That is why you offer up the prayer, so that you can find the humility to bring peace to your husband and command obedience from your children. A man honor such a woman all the days of his life. It is— It is as if you are a lighthouse, niña, your goodness guiding us. If you paint over the light with this, if you lose your place, then we lose ours. You provoke chaos—and then the world becomes full of beasts.

MOTHER: Is that what the rouge on my lips and cheeks did to you? Is it?

FATHER: Not to me. Not in my house.

MOTHER: You didn't listen to my first "no," then—

FATHER: Cheep, cheep, cheep—

MOTHER: —did you?

FATHER: —like a little hen.

MOTHER: And I did not say the second “no” to myself—

FATHER: (*mockingly*) Yo confieso ante Dios—

MOTHER: —that I should have. That I should have!

FATHER: You made your choice. (*to JUANITA*) She made her choice.

JUANITA: Don't.

MOTHER: I made your choice.

FATHER: You said yes all on your own.

MOTHER: And it has not bothered you—

FATHER: No one moved your lips for you.

MOTHER: —not bothered you one bit—

FATHER: Lower your voice.

MOTHER: —to give me “no”—no!—all the rest of your life.

FATHER: Para ti—No. You don't know your own luck here. I have made you honorable. I have done the duty I was taught to do.

MOTHER: And made everyone pay.

JUANITA: Don't.

MOTHER: My life is my life—

FATHER: Such a horrible life for you--

MOTHER: No reason to make it hers.

FATHER: (*to JUANITA*) Save yourself trouble and do not listen—

JUANITA: (*to them both but looking straight ahead*) Don't.

MOTHER: Don't spoil her day.

JUANITA: (*with no emotion, straight ahead*) I am only fifteen.

FATHER: Your mother had you at seventeen.

MOTHER: Things are different now.

FATHER: They may be. But they shouldn't be.

MOTHER: Que Dios nos libre. God save us all, then.

FATHER: Enough.

MOTHER: Never enough for you.

FATHER: Enough!

MOTHER: I have things to do.

JUANITA: Mamá, you don't have to leave.

MOTHER walks upstage and sits. FATHER stands behind JUANITA for a moment, looking at her.

FATHER: (*tenderly but firmly*) You have grown up so fast, niña—but still so much to learn.

FATHER puts his hands on JUANITA's shoulders, near her throat, in a gesture that is both affectionate and threatening. She involuntarily flinches. He either does not notice or does not care because he does not remove his hands.

FATHER: (*again, affectionately, but with power*) You carry a powerful name, Juanita, the name of my grandmother, Juana Maria. She had ten children—all lived, drawing life from her strength, from her grace. She kept a firm and peaceful house where my grandfather could come away from the world. After today, the spirit of her name will become your spirit. And I will be here mi pequeñita, and teach you how to honor her name by living your life in the proper ways. It is a very special day. And you are very special to me.

Lights to ghost for scene change, with music.

SCENE 3: THE TANGO

The next segment of the dance between JUANITA and HANK as the “Dream Man”: forceful but not dangerous—still a seduction. At the end, lights down, then to ghost for scene change with music.

SCENE 4: THE INSTRUCTION

JUANITA and MOTHER are at the table, draped in a lilac tablecloth. Coffee cups, saucers, spoons, coffee pot. JUANITA is now 17.

JUANITA: Mamá, I think I've met him. I really think I have.

MOTHER: I can tell by your voice that you have found something.

JUANITA: Do you want me to tell you about him?

MOTHER: Tell me, niña, tell me everything.

JUANITA: All right.

JUANITA: Well, come on.

MOTHER: Qué?

JUANITA: Ask me questions!

MOTHER: (*tenderly*) Just tell me the tale, chiquilla tonta.

JUANITA: No, you have to ask me questions.

MOTHER: I'm very tired.

JUANITA: Come on.

MOTHER: Por donde do I start?

JUANITA: Where did I meet him.

MOTHER: Where did you meet him?

Now just HANK and no longer the “Dream Man,” HANK rises and walks towards JUANITA, and as she speaks, they do a reprise of the tango movements in Scene 1. It is all MOTHER can do to stay in her place because she can see what is unfolding.

JUANITA: In the park. After school. A week ago. I was sitting, reading, like I like to do. And he just sat next to me. I acted as if I didn't notice him—but I noticed him. I noticed him. He was feeding the pigeons, and he speaks to me in this Spanish that had an accent I couldn't catch—

MAN 1: *(in a Mid-Western drawl)* Comó está usted? Qué libro está leyendo?

JUANITA: The Mid-West, he said. Breadbasket, he called it. Family values. Hogs. Chanchos, Mamá. Illinois and Nebraska and Missouri —such strange-sounding words! He seemed nice.

They stop dancing, and JUANITA sits down. HANK moves his chair to listen to the conversation.

JUANITA: But you know me—not giving away too much—

MOTHER: What is too much these days?

JUANITA: Very discreet. I say this, I say that—but I like him. Gringo, yes, but nice, not pushy—good Spanish. We've met every day—the pigeons are getting to know us. He's so gentle that they even eat out of his hands.

MOTHER is staring out.

JUANITA: Mamá, pay attention!

MOTHER: So he wants to catch pigeons.

JUANITA: No! Just feed them.

MOTHER: It amounts to the same thing.

JUANITA: You can be so oblique, Mamá. Next question.

MOTHER: So he's American?

JUANITA: Yes.

MOTHER: What is his name?

JUANITA: Hank.

JUANITA pronounces the “a” as an “ah”: Hahnk.

MOTHER: Hank?

MOTHER pronounces the word with a heavy emphasis on the “h” and an open “a.”

MOTHER: What sort of name is Hank?

JUANITA: Es un sobrenombre for Henry.

MOTHER: Henry?

JUANITA: Enrique.

MOTHER: So why doesn't he use Henry?

JUANITA: Gringos like things short and quick.

MOTHER: A syllable is all that important? Caramba. Y su apellido?

JUANITA: Armstrong. Hank Armstrong.

The last name is a real mouthful.

MOTHER: You can barely get it out of your mouth. Why is he in Mexico?

JUANITA: Working here—“NAFTA'd”, he called it. Something about—oh, I don't remember. Something technical. I didn't pay attention—how could I with that Mid-West Spanish accent! (*trying to imitate*) Vaya con Dios. The way he would spread the crumbs, the way his gentle hands—

MOTHER: Did he touch you?

JUANITA: (*playfully*) Mamá, no! I was just looking at him—the way you taught me to inspect the vegetables at the market! I wouldn't want to bring anything rotten home. He wants to see me, again.

MOTHER: Cuantos años tiene?

JUANITA: He's twenty-six.

MOTHER: Is it a stable job he has?

JUANITA: I didn't ask him that!

MOTHER: What do you know about his family?

JUANITA: Both his parents are alive and still married to each other.

MOTHER: Is he married?

JUANITA: (*holding up her fingers*) When I inspected his "carrots," I didn't notice a ring.

MOTHER: (*dismissive gesture*) Many men don't wear a wedding ring; your abuelo didn't wear a ring. What does that tell you about them?

JUANITA: (*tenderly*) You are always seeing the worst, viejita.

MOTHER: Because I have seen so much, jovencita.

JUANITA: Isn't it true that we see what we want to see?

MOTHER: It is not always a matter of what we want. So you want to see him again?

JUANITA: He wants to see me as well.

MOTHER: Ah!

JUANITA: This does not make you happy?

MOTHER: Happy—eh. You meet a stranger, you feed some pigeons, they fly up and away like visions, there is this cloud of love—and you're going to live in—Nebraska.

JUANITA: I'm not going to Nebraska!

MOTHER: How do you know? Palomita, how can you know anything at your age?

JUANITA: At my age, you had me. Isn't this a little better than that?

MOTHER: What do you mean?

JUANITA: We sit. We talk. He doesn't push—he hasn't touched me—

MOTHER: You cannot trust—

JUANITA: We talk books—

MOTHER: Do not trust--

JUANITA: He buys me ices—

MOTHER: Stop it!

JUANITA: Why? Just because you—

MOTHER: Because I what?

JUANITA: Nothing, Mamá.

MOTHER: Because I what?

JUANITA: Lo siento, Mamá, perdóname.

MOTHER: Say it—because I what? Because I—was with your father and had to go to my wedding day swelled up like a melon? So I am what?

JUANITA: I'm sorry.

MOTHER: Say it!

JUANITA: There is nothing to say.

MOTHER: He made me do that. Your father.

JUANITA: You have told me this.

MOTHER: No, listen to me. He waited, he made the day wait until I was como un globo, and then he marched me into the church with that look on his face, to say to all, "Mine." Others, they changed the date on the birth certificates, saved face—not your father. "Mine." Save face? Not him. His face right out there, in everyone's! He did his duty, all right—he has always done his duty.

They look at one another, unsure how to proceed.

JUANITA: (*tenderly*) I'm not going to marry him, Mamá.

MOTHER: Well, that is a comfort—

JUANITA: He hasn't even asked me! Not even a whisper! I just want to—see him again. You know—just a little— (*makes a gesture of flirtation*) Mamá?

MOTHER: Your abuela used to say—

JUANITA: You always do this!

MOTHER: What?

JUANITA: When you don't want to say something directly, out comes mi abuelita.

MOTHER: Your abuela used to say—

JUANITA: Yes, yes, abuela—

MOTHER: Remember that the serpent is always trying to get the woman to bite his apple.

JUANITA: I am not going to “bite” his apple, Mamá.

MOTHER: You say—

JUANITA: Just—look over the fruit. And I am going to show you that it is possible to have a happy time, Mamá. With a man.

MOTHER: Anything is possible.

JUANITA: We're not stuck the way you were.

MOTHER: Too many telenovelas.

JUANITA: I don't watch them.

MOTHER: But they watch you. They're in the air.

MOTHER begins collecting cups, plates, etc.

MOTHER: If you see him, you see him. You must tell your father.

JUANITA: El Señor Toro.

MOTHER: Respect.

JUANITA: For him, I will probably have to count Hank's teeth.

MOTHER: Your father has the heart of an accountant.

They exchange a look, the MOTHER brings the props upstage and sits. JUANITA looks out at the audience.

JUANITA: *(in the Mid-West accent)* Vaya con Díos!

Lights come down, then up to ghost for scene change. NOTE: If you use Gardel's "Mi Buenos Aires Querido," the first thirty seconds or so can be used for scene change music. JUANITA joins HANK, and they dance.

SCENE 5: THE TANGO LESSON

A little more seduction, a little more edge and danger. In this scene, MOTHER will interact with the dance of JUANITA and HANK in an effort to break them apart, but as she does, she is either displaced or put aside until it is clear she has no more control over the situation. Lights go to black.

SCENE 6: THE POLITICIAN

In the darkness, a crowd murmur, as if at a press conference. Lights up. MAN 2, dressed as WILLIAM BARTLETT's spokesperson, steps forward with a folder. He shades his eyes, as if looking into a glaring light, points as if he is pointing at people he knows, gives a thumbs up, etc. Then begins to speak. The crowd sounds fade out.

MAN 2: Good afternoon. Excuse me. Excuse me. Your attention, please? Good, good. Great. Thank you all for coming. Thanks. You all look so prepared! That's great. We'll have a Q & A after the Representative gives you a short prepared statement, which you all have in your press packets and which I am sure you will all find very interesting.

MAN 2 looks for BARTLETT, then continues.

MAN 2: Seems the Representative is a little late coming from his important committee work, but I know he's on his way—yes, he surely is. Um, well, just to give you a little background to start with. As you know, among the issues nearest to the Representative's heart is his concern that all American citizens get a fair deal. But just as—just as important to the

Representative is determining who really is an American citizen, and thus deserving of the country's protection and appreciation—

BARTLETT enters, flusters MAN 2 momentarily.

MAN 2: Representative Bartlett.

As BARTLETT begins speaking, MAN 2 changes into the reporter PETER SCHIST. He moves two of the chairs stage right and sits—this is where he will interview BARTLETT. He holds one of the press releases as well as the folder; also, a pad of paper and pen.

BARTLETT: Thank you. Over the past few weeks I have been putting the finishing edges on what one columnist has mis-named “a massive gutting of the Immigration and Naturalization Service.” He was not entirely accurate. I don't want to dissolve just the INS—penny-ante stuff, only “half-vast,” as my grandson might say. No, I want to dissolve it and then the whole immigration regime based on it. That is the real focus of my initiative, what I am calling “The America for Americans/Americans for America Campaign,” or, as we call it around the office, the “4-A Campaign.” Over the next five years, I want to end all unwanted immigration into the United States. I want to nullify any immigration services that use direct grants, loans, matching funds, or any other combination of federal money. In other words, no more handouts. It is time for all illegal immigrants either to become full citizens and pay their dues or be deported. No “green card,” no amnesty. Either here or there, but not both. And, as some of the more—emphatic immigrant rights organizations have been endlessly pointing out, “4-A” would eliminate certain sections of the Violence Against Women Act. Some—maybe even some of you—might consider all of this harsh, but we consider it a matter of simple justice. We will always continue to welcome those who want to contribute. But illegal aliens cost taxpayers billion of dollars a year while our own citizens go wanting. It is time for this to stop, and I am going to stop it because the federal government and the state governments have failed to control our borders. America must be made safe for Americans. Thank you.

BARTLETT moves seamlessly from the press conference to the interview with SCHIST.

BARTLETT: Peter Schist?

They shake hands.

SCHIST: I appreciate your taking—

BARTLETT: Schist, Schist—

SCHIST: —the time to meet with me.

BARTLETT: —isn't that a geological term?

SCHIST: Yes. (*as if he has said this before*) "Any of various medium- to coarse-grained metamorphic rocks—"

BARTLETT: Fissile—

SCHIST: What?

BARTLETT: Fissile—that's the term, right?

SCHIST: Easily split, yes—fissile.

BARTLETT: I suppose "fissile" 'snot a bad quality for a journalist.

SCHIST: I prefer to think I have a rock's more—enduring qualities.

BARTLETT: And so should we all. And so we shall. Like your newspaper—it's been very—important to have your paper's "unfissiled" support in my efforts.

SCHIST: But what you're proposing here— (*indicating the press release*) —is pretty—steep.

BARTLETT: (*indicating the press release*) You mean that? That's for them out there—for those "media outlets" who think cutting and pasting press releases into column inches equals journalism. For them, it's got to be flat—middle of the strike zone. In here—between us—we can go through the complexities.

SCHIST: To be honest, Representative—and I don't mean to be impolite here—but I don't see many of what you call "complexities"—

BARTLETT: In effect—but in reasons why, in philosophy, very rich.

SCHIST: Detentions, deportations, denial of appeals—and deleting the Violence Against Woman Act—

BARTLETT: I'm going to hear your litany spoken in a tone of—what?—scholarly inquisition, probing the roots of my philosophy. Should I go ahead and assume that?

SCHIST: Yes, of course.

BARTLETT: I think assuming that will make this interview flow much more smoothly. Now, where would you like to begin?

SCHIST: How would you like to begin, Representative?

BARTLETT: I would never encroach on the freedom of the press to ask its own questions in its own way.

SCHIST: In a sentence or two, how would you summarize your "4-A Campaign"?

BARTLETT: Good pitch—inside the strike zone—

BARTLETT chuckles.

SCHIST: What?

BARTLETT: Fissile—doesn't that word just roll off the tongue?

Beat—then lights out.

SCENE 7: THE PROPOSITION

JUANITA uses her shawl as a cape to play the bullfighter with him.

NOTE 1: Throughout the scene, HANK should be played as charming and engaging; we should see why JUANITA would risk so much for him. But there is a disconnect between what he says and the way he says it.

NOTE 2: The use of the shawl as a connective device in this scene is very important. At all times it should be a "character" in the scene.

JUANITA: Olé, olé, toro!

HANK goes after the shawl. JUANITA spins and sets up for another pass.

JUANITA: Olé, torito, olé! I am not afraid of you.

HANK makes another pass, and as he does so, he grabs one end of the shawl.

JUANITA: Oh, now like a fish on the line. Hooked.

HANK: A willing fish.

She pulls him close.

JUANITA: Landed.

HANK: Breathless.

They kiss. He takes the shawl and puts it around her to hold her to him.

HANK: Have you thought about it?

JUANITA: Thought and thought.

HANK: And?

JUANITA tries to move away, but HANK has her in the shawl, and he pulls her against him.

HANK: And?

JUANITA: It's not that simple.

HANK: What's not that simple?

JUANITA: What you ask.

HANK: And what am I asking, querida? I am only asking for you.

JUANITA: That is what is not so simple.

HANK: Sure it is.

JUANITA: That American breeze—

HANK: I ask—you smile at my asking—go ahead, smile!

JUANITA makes a funny face.

HANK: I will take that as a smile—you answer "yes"—

HANK playfully tries to get her to answer “yes,” but JUANITA, equally playful, refuses, just like a little child.

HANK: (*in JUANITA’s “voice.”*) “Yes, Hank.”

JUANITA: Is that how I sound?

HANK: And when you say “yes,” we go to—let’s see—Nebraska!—simple!—and we become married. Which is what I really want to become with you. Now, isn’t that the simplest, the sweetest thing you have ever heard in your life?

JUANITA: We cannot just do it that way.

JUANITA slips out of the shawl.

HANK: That way—or any way it seems.

JUANITA: Don’t be angry.

HANK: But the idea of marriage—with me—a life—yes, no?—or should I just fold up my tent now?

JUANITA hesitates.

HANK: (*folds the shawl*) I can start folding.

JUANITA shakes her head “no.”

HANK: (*relieved*) It’s a bear to get that tent back in the bag.

JUANITA: I have these—doors—

HANK: You’ve said that—

JUANITA: —that must be opened and walked through.

HANK: And I’ve said that if you trust this—

JUANITA: I do trust you!

HANK: Then you don’t need to worry about all those doors. We just—go around. (*makes a funny gesture to indicate “go around.”*) Outflank ‘em.

HANK takes the shawl and wraps it around her hands.

HANK: I will take care of you, linda. You will be safe with me. (*child-like voice*) I love you, you know. Yes? Huh? That has to count for something, yes?

She walks away from him, unwrapping her hands.

JUANITA: For me, yes, of course, you count, but for my family—

HANK: Come back, palomita.

JUANITA: Different loves, Enrique—divided—

HANK: Come, come—

JUANITA: (*drawing a line down her body*) This is the border where I am split. Do you see? What passport do you have for me?

HANK: Your poetry— Let's pretend—for the moment—that we don't tell them.

JUANITA: That's not possible.

HANK: Just wait— I can arrange all the paperwork—

JUANITA: Enrique—

HANK: Imagine—

JUANITA: Listen to me.

HANK: Listen to me.

JUANITA: (*she puts the shawl around her shoulders*) You are asking me to deny my family. No, no, wait—please. You are asking me to change my heart completely.

HANK: I am not asking you to change your heart.

JUANITA: You are.

HANK: I wouldn't want that heart because that would not be the heart I love. I want something very different: I want you to see that there is so much new to be known—our own life—that's your passport—

JUANITA: The rules are strong—

HANK: We can be stronger.

JUANITA: They are carved into my bones—

HANK takes her hand into his and “carves” his next lines.

HANK: Then let me carve one more, like we used do to on a tree back home to declare to the world: “Hank loves Juanita.”

It tickles JUANITA delightfully.

JUANITA: I can feel that in my bones—

HANK: Good bones. Haven’t you ever—naw—

JUANITA: What?

HANK: Haven’t you ever just once—just one little once—wanted to—break free?

JUANITA: Claro.

HANK: (*soft mimic*) Claro.

JUANITA: But “wanting” is not the same as “doing” in my life.

HANK: But why should the pleasure be guilty—to just let go?

He comes up behind her and, taking the shawl, slides it down to her waist and pulls her to him. It also pins her arms to her side.

HANK: Let go of all the rules? To have them let go of you? Finally free. Think how—good—how—right—that would feel. With me.

JUANITA melts but does not give in—she will not show him that yet. She slides through the shawl to sit on the floor.

JUANITA: No.

HANK: No?

JUANITA: No.

HANK: Oh?

JUANITA: You are so American—

HANK sits on the floor as well.

HANK: Is that not part of my charm?

JUANITA: My exotic blossom del norte—

HANK: Can't resist the bouquet—

JUANITA: My hothouse bloom—

HANK: You cannot resist the power of the exotic—

JUANITA: It's true—that mid-West Spanish accent!

HANK: Qué libro está leyendo?

JUANITA: Vengan, palomitas! (trying to say it in English) Come here, my pee-jons [pigeons].

HANK: Eating out of my hand—

JUANITA: And that—that! The eating out of your hands! As if, American, you can have whatever you want.

HANK: And why not, mi pequeño Mejico?

JUANITA: (*mimicking*) And why not?

HANK: That's how we acquired Texas to California.

JUANITA: Stole.

HANK: Liberated.

JUANITA: And I am to be one more conquered territory?

He tosses her one end of the shawl.

HANK: (*speaking playfully*) Yield, woman, to the superior force of Yankee imperialism.

He pulls on the shawl.

JUANITA: (*also playfully*) Only as “superior” as you think so.

She pulls back on the shawl. It becomes a gentle but determined tug of war.

HANK: Oh, but it is. I don’t see a whole lot of Mexican businesses going north—

JUANITA: To Grindgolandia—

HANK: —but I sure do see a lot of American businesses coming south of the Rio.

JUANITA: But we have siestas.

HANK: And that’s your crucial geopolitical mistake—we get all our conquering done in the afternoon.

JUANITA: But siestas can be very—collaborative.

HANK: Is that an invitation?

She stands up, holding onto one end of the shawl.

JUANITA: As mi abuelita said—never invite the charming leopard inside the house for dinner.

HANK: Then come outside—ven, palomita.

He pulls on the shawl, and she falls forward and rests her hands on his shoulders. They kiss, and then she sits on him, forcing him to lean back.

HANK: When you come to my home, you’ll see how the American values of hard work and fair play—

JUANITA: And the woman under the thumb of the man—

HANK: Well, under the man, at least!

JUANITA: Stop it! I read about that. About your churches.

HANK: Not always—though not a bad scheme.

JUANITA: Do you believe that?

HANK: I'm not much of a church-goer.

JUANITA: But do you believe that?

JUANITA stands; HANK continues to sit.

HANK: Makes sense of a kind—someone to take care of the kids, someone to win the bread. Made sense to my parents. Makes sense to me. A natural division of labor.

JUANITA: You make it sound like a factory.

HANK: Come down my assembly line!

JUANITA: Enrique, my heart does not do well in a factory.

HANK holds out the shawl like a toreador's cape.

HANK: Then we won't even crack the spine of a Bible.

JUANITA and HANK start the "proposition tango" here—simple, without music; this tango will be echoed at the end of Scene 9. HANK speaks as they dance.

HANK: If you agree to marry me—if—you will have someone who will protect you always. My father brought me up right: be strong in the sight of your woman, provide well for her, honor her all the days of your life. Imagine the future, Juanita; don't just look at what you know. The future will be good. It will be good for us.

Tango ends. HANK slips his hands to her shoulders, reminiscent of FATHER's hands in Scene 2.

HANK: A new kind of life, a new start, in a new place. It will just be you and I, sailing off for our brave new world.

HANK, JUANITA, MOTHER, and FATHER move into the "elopement tango," which has the core story of HANK taking JUANITA away from FATHER and MOTHER and all the "rules." The tango has all possible combinations of the four characters dancing.

SCENE 8: ASISTENCIA, INC.

The offices of Asistencia, Inc.: desk, with blotter and other articles; two chairs, one behind the desk. In the office, seated, is PETER SCHIST, with his pad of paper and pen.

The phone rings—6 times altogether. SCHIST is undecided about whether to pick it up, but just as he decides, it stops ringing. He sits—there is a ten-second delay, then another round of rings. As they begin, CRISTINA enters, carrying a briefcase.

CRISTINA: I'll get it. Don't get up.

CRISTINA answers the phone, but no one is on the other end.

CRISTINA: (*very softly*) Damn! (*to SCHIST*) Sorry. We hope and pray for the new phone system. Care to add a prayer?

SCHIST: I can take one out of my deep freeze.

CRISTINA: Spare two while you're down there?

SCHIST: Done.

CRISTINA: Then we're that much farther along.

CRISTINA shakes SCHIST's hand.

CRISTINA: Peter Schist?

SCHIST: Like the rock. Cristina Lefcadia?

CRISTINA: When I woke up this morning. Thank you for waiting for me—an hour behind!—did my secretary give you the message—

SCHIST: Yes, she did.

CRISTINA: —about being late?

SCHIST: Yes, she did. Thank you for calling.

CRISTINA: I'm tempted to apologize—

SCHIST: No need—

CRISTINA: —I hate to be kept waiting—

SCHIST: It's okay—

CRISTINA: —but I'm sure you can imagine—

SCHIST: I can imagine. This Luisa Ortiz story must be running you ragged—

CRISTINA: (*makes a pulling motion with her hands*) Four horses in five directions at once.

SCHIST: Painful—

CRISTINA: But unavoidable.

SCHIST: I'm sure.

CRISTINA: Every time—we'll—interview in a minute, Mr. Schist, but before we slip on our roles—reporter, executive director—I want to share something with you. Every time a Luisa Ortiz—what? happens? bursts?—whatever the word—those of us out here get cut three ways.

SCHIST asks by holding up his pad and pen if he should write.

CRISTINA: No, don't write yet—just listen. A—prelude, of sorts. Luisa Ortiz loses her life to a batterer: a bad cut. Especially at the hands of someone who brought her here and made her believe she'd be safe. But then lots of people suddenly discover this “hidden” problem of battered immigrant women, and that's a good cut. That's good. And that's why you've come.

SCHIST: Take a “good cut” at the story.

CRISTINA: And I appreciate that—it's an important story.

SCHIST: Yes, it is.

CRISTINA: And I'm glad you agree. But in here— (*tapping her breastbone*) —in here—the cut that cuts the deepest, Mr. Schist, and this is the title it carries: We lost another one. And that sticks. Right. Here.

SCHIST: I can understand.

CRISTINA: I confess sometimes I still can't. But life marches on, which is what has made me late getting to you—two other interviews and a phone-in show already this morning—that's three horses, I think—

SCHIST: Lost count already—

CRISTINA: —squeezed in between a meeting with some of our funders, and this afternoon's calendar—well, enough horses.

SCHIST: A whole stable.

CRISTINA: But I'm glad you waited because you are someone I wanted to talk to.

SCHIST: Me.

CRISTINA: Yes, because you are a person who does important stories—I read your interview with Representative Bartlett.

SCHIST: Ah.

CRISTINA: I thought it was good—

SCHIST: You did.

CRISTINA: I thought you treated him squarely enough, gave him room for his world-view to spread out.

SCHIST: Even though you dis[agree]—

CRISTINA: Even though Asistencia, Inc. disagrees pretty completely with him, yes—I still thought you did a good job.

SCHIST: We all like such good reviews.

CRISTINA: Now, Mr. Schist—and this, I think, is the moment where we put the roles on—you need something from me about Luisa Ortiz because Luisa had been working with Asistencia before what—happened—to her. And I could do that very easily for both of us—something like this: "Cristina Lefcadia, Executive Director of Asistencia, Inc., an organization dedicated to helping battered women, especially immigrants, deeply regrets that Luisa Ortiz lost her life at the hands of a U.S. citizen." There—complete, contained—

SCHIST: Not to mention dry—

CRISTINA: Yes.

SCHIST: Not to mention short—

CRISTINA: Not to mention not useful to someone who writes important stories. Something longer, then.

SCHIST: Of course.

CRISTINA: Because important stories need more room—good, we are agreed there. But “the story”—the story—the story is not going to be what you think it is: the story is not going to be Luisa Ortiz.

SCHIST: No.

CRISTINA: No.

SCHIST: Not Luisa Ortiz.

CRISTINA: No.

SCHIST: I don’t understand.

CRISTINA: She is not the important story.

SCHIST: She’s not.

CRISTINA: No.

SCHIST: Then what is?

CRISTINA: Then what, indeed? Have you ever covered anything like this?

SCHIST shakes his head no.

CRISTINA: There’s an importance to this “important story” you may have missed—

SCHIST: Really—

CRISTINA: —because of your industry’s insistence—mind, I’m not blaming you personally—but there’s a pressure that “if it bleeds, it leads”—you’ve heard of that?

SCHIST: "If it dies, it flies."

CRISTINA: And if a story like Luisa Ortiz leads, there usually isn't much that follows up the bleeding. Yes? No post-funeral interviews, no six-month re-visit, not even covering the trial—you see my point?

SCHIST: Not all "importance" is equal to an editor—that's true.

CRISTINA: And your editor, to you—I'll guess, but something like this? "You talk to Lefcadia since Bartlett said the Violence Against Women Act stuff, so there's a hook—get a good pull quote—mix the police reports with some boilerplate about Asistencia, spice it if you can get some of the, uh, backstory about Luisa's life, but don't push that—chop, puree, bake—and then let's move to the next." Is that far off?

SCHIST: Mostly on.

CRISTINA: Representative Bartlett, on the other hand—

SCHIST: On the other hand.

CRISTINA: He gets—

SCHIST: Headline—

CRISTINA: By-line for you—

SCHIST: Above the fold—

CRISTINA: Jump-head to full page inside. Luisa Ortiz—a brush-stroke.

SCHIST: Representative Bartlett—

CRISTINA: A landscape. Wall-wide.

SCHIST: And you want—

CRISTINA: Don't jump ahead of me, Mr. Schist. This is not about Lefcadia or Asistencia—Luisa needs something more than another churned-out communique about "those people" and what they do to each other.

CRISTINA takes a manuscript out of her briefcase.

SCHIST: I have a deadline.

CRISTINA: We all have a deadline, Mr. Schist.

CRISTINA hands him the report.

CRISTINA: Here's the best way to meet yours.

SCHIST: Which would be how?

CRISTINA: As always.

SCHIST: Which is?

CRISTINA: The truth.

SCHIST: This—

CRISTINA: Our latest—

SCHIST: A report.

CRISTINA: Your real story—analyzing the text of the new bill from Representative Bartlett that would, with what sounds like the soundest of reasons, de-activate the Violence Against Women Act. You have all the background from your interview—here's the "hook."

SCHIST: I know, I know—but possibly shorter?

CRISTINA: You wanted longer.

SCHIST: Deadline mercy?

CRISTINA: Aren't you fellows supposed to have grace under pressure?

SCHIST: Should the through-line be, "There will be more Luisa Ortizes if—"

CRISTINA: No. I told you, Luisa is not the story. She got murdered because someone's dark heart exploded. The law couldn't have prevented that.

SCHIST: The point, then—

CRISTINA: Mr. Schist, you should have understood by now—our exchange—our dance is not going to be about my giving you a point to carry away. A point, a single point, is so small, almost weightless—put my ten-second single point in ten-point newspaper type, and it will evaporate. Yes? Become point-less. What I want you, the writer—no, what Luisa needs you, the writer, to do—is connect points, multiples with multiple lines, like those “connect the dot” games for children. Dot to dot to dot to dot until you’ve created—Created what, Mr. Schist? What did you and your newspaper create for Representative Bartlett?

SCHIST: An atmosphere.

CRISTINA: An atmosphere—yes—good word—a bigger picture, right?

SCHIST: Right—

CRISTINA: With its own gravity and air supply. You’ve done that before—you did it well with Representative Bartlett, so I know you can do it.

SCHIST: An atmosphere.

CRISTINA: (*pointing to the report*) That— that— having the Act in place that Representative Bartlett wants to take away couldn’t have saved Luisa—but if he takes it away—for no better logic that I can see except meanness—I’m sorry, I don’t want to be harsh, but that’s what it sounds like to us—it creates an atmosphere that, around here at least, reeks of—well, I might as well say it—of “open season.”

SCHIST: That’s a little strong—

CRISTINA: One of the dots, Mr. Schist—if that goes, then the Luisas will have no barricades if they can get away. If they can—one more point. Eliminate it—another point—and the batterers have one more tool to cut the Luisas down.

SCHIST: So where am I with all these points?

CRISTINA considers him.

SCHIST: Deadline mercy?

CRISTINA: I am going to take a risk with you, Mr. Schist. Perhaps I shouldn’t do this, but I am going to trust you with some inside thoughts—as part of the atmosphere—and I hope you won’t dishonor them. Can I trust you?

SCHIST: I can be trusted, but—

Schist holds out his watch.

CRISTINA: When you run Representative Bartlett down Column A and me down Column B—the story looks equal, doesn't it—two sides. But all the power is here, and then there's us—we are allowed to politely and rationally propose while he—and it's not even him, really, but the atmosphere—disposes. And when power disposes of something—another point, Mr. Schist—someone will have a disposal problem—and that's us—that's our job—emptying the—well, I might as well say it because it's true—emptying the piss pot. Waste management. That's our atmosphere. Yes, there is the Act—

SCHIST: And it does say—

CRISTINA: For now—

SCHIST: Yes, for now, but it does say that— (*checking his notes*) —battered immigrant women married to U.S. citizens or permanent residents or “qualified aliens” can apply on their own for protection.

CRISTINA: Yes, but, again—the atmosphere, Mr. Schist. To apply is not benign, like registering to vote. A hint, a whiff to their “politicians” at home and—power disposeth—they are “deported”—a *lá* Luisa Ortiz. What's in the Act is just a beginning, minimal—take it away—well, I don't know what words you would use for “less than minimal,” but I would use “Luisa Ortiz” and in the plural. In the atmosphere of the “4-A Campaign,” Luisa Ortiz becomes just the latest unfortunate “waste”—p[issed]—placed—in the pot to keep our borders pure.

CRISTINA taps her watch.

CRISTINA: Deadline mercy is now in effect. I trust you have enough points. Read that—and connect, connect, connect.

SCHIST: I do need to check something.

CRISTINA: I like a person who does his job. The spelling of Luisa's name is—

SCHIST: No, not that.

CRISTINA: Then what?

SCHIST: She was—

CRISTINA: What?

SCHIST: Well—

CRISTINA: What, Mr. Schist?

SCHIST: She was illegal, right?

CRISTINA: Illegal.

SCHIST: Yes.

CRISTINA: Was I wrong to trust you?

SCHIST: It's not my personal—

CRISTINA: But it's your newspaper's angle, so you have to ask, don't you?

SCHIST: She was—

CRISTINA: So?

SCHIST: So—

CRISTINA: So that made her deserve it?

SCHIST: No—

CRISTINA: Your point, then?

SCHIST: I'm just checking—

CRISTINA: And if you had bothered to check other facts, you'd know that she didn't wetback it here through the Rio Grande. She came as a wife. A wife. She had every right to expect safety.

SCHIST: But she was still—

CRISTINA makes some sort of physical gesture and/or movement that shows SCHIST that she wants to curse him but disciplines herself to hold it back—it is the first time CRISTINA looks as if she is going to lose her control. SCHIST looks at her, a little abashed, and then looks at his watch again and stands.

SCHIST: Look, I do have to get going—

CRISTINA: Wait.

SCHIST: Do you want me to go with what—little—I have?

CRISTINA: Wait.

SCHIST: What?

CRISTINA: I don't want to think my trust was misplaced.

SCHIST: It wasn't.

CRISTINA: And, remember, four horses in five directions—

SCHIST: I said I can understand that.

CRISTINA: So, please, just sit, a few moments more—just a few. I do want to show you something.

SCHIST: Another report?

CRISTINA: In a way, yes. It's not my first choice, but—yes.

SCHIST sits down reluctantly.

CRISTINA: (holding out her scarf) You wanted it short—for deadline mercy.

CRISTINA puts her shawl around his shoulders. He is not sure how to respond.

CRISTINA: Relax—don't worry about your objectivity—you're in a safe place. Stare out there—the middle distance, okay? Go blurry. Breathe. And listen.

She moves behind him and speaks to him; she can move from ear to ear, hover, etc.

NOTE: If anything, these lines should be underplayed—let the tension come out by restraint.

CRISTINA: Querida, querida, if only you hadn't shown me disrespect, I wouldn't have hit you. I didn't hit you hard, anyway—but that disrespect—no, no, no. If you tell anyone, I won't file the papers. I'll report you, and you'll have to go home in shame—they can't do anything to me. It is your duty, palomita, to stay here and make a home for me—feed me, make sure I'm happy—and by law you have to have sex with me. Yes, it's the law. You can only talk to the people I tell you to talk to—and I don't want you talking to anyone. No more magazines or newspapers. And if I hear beep, boop, boop—nueve

uno uno—well, I will just have to teach you more respect. If you leave me and go back home—I will find you there. I will find your whole family there. I will even go after your dogs. Someone, some thing, will pay for your disrespect. There's more if you want to hear it—

SCHIST: No. No.

CRISTINA: (takes back her shawl) That fear every day, that atmosphere? Prisoned by the hand, the fist, the foot, the belt, the knife. All while the power over there—

SCHIST: It must have been terrible.

CRISTINA: That's your starting point, Mr. Schist.

SCHIST: That's the story.

CRISTINA: What?

SCHIST: That's the story.

CRISTINA: I have told you—that's not the story. That's—

SCHIST: You just gave it to me, so now it's out here to be used. A good story—in the mind of—how she feared—photographs— What? Wouldn't you want people to know that? to feel that? Isn't that why you gave me that "report"?

CRISTINA: I want people to know the whole story— I want you—

SCHIST: I don't mean to be impolite, Ms. Lefcadia—but you were an hour late for the interview, and my chops feel pretty well busted by now, so let me just say this before I get the quote you need to give me. You truly know your business—and I truly know mine. I will read the report, believe me—all of them—I do my homework. And I do argue with my editor about atmosphere and "big picture" up to where I don't lose my job. You weren't wrong to trust me—but, trust me, I can't change the way the business makes nice with the Bartletts of the world.

CRISTINA: And makes lessons out of Luisa.

SCHIST: A good cut, you said wanted—then you put Bartlett here and Luisa Ortiz here—not you, not this— (*indicating the report*) —but that — (*indicating the shawl*) —Luisa Ortiz dead can be very much alive in this business— (*again, indicating the report*) —but this? just "dead" dead, talking head dead— That is how "the common folks" make news that gets past page 29 to page 1. People will remember if it wears Luisa Ortiz's face, not a title page—

CRISTINA: And forget everything with tomorrow's lottery winner—

SCHIST: You could have sent me home with my toys—you know why we come around. You tried your best, but the leopard's spots won't change.

CRISTINA: You will not get Luisa's story.

SCHIST: Then what do I get sent home with?

CRISTINA: You will not feed—

SCHIST: Then what?

CRISTINA: Waste management.

In a "quoting" voice; SCHIST writes.

CRISTINA: "The staff at Asistencia, Inc. works with all private and public groups to prevent violence against women, whether they are immigrants or not. The government, through ill-framed laws, should not put people like Luisa Ortiz in jeopardy. The batterer here was not just her husband but a system that could not, and would not, hear her cries for help." Make the pull quote large.

SCHIST: I'll try to bump it up.

The phone rings.

CRISTINA: The fourth horse, the fifth direction. Excuse me. (*into the phone*) Hello? Can you hold for a moment, please? (*to SCHIST*) I have to take this. Above the fold at least?

SCHIST shrugs.

SCHIST: There is much that is out of my hands.

CRISTINA: We share that much at least. (*pointing to the report*) At least don't let it leave without a good thumbing. The duller parts poison the hardest. I have to take this. (*into the phone*) Yes, yes, how are you?

CRISTINA motions goodbye; SCHIST exits.

CRISTINA: Yes, he's gone—thanks for the buzz— I have never learned well how to dance with the hyenas. Gracias.

She hangs up the phone.

CRISTINA: Luisa, Luisa. He never, never, never did bother to double-check your name.

Lights come down, then up to ghost for scene change.

SCENE 9: THE ABUSE

NOTE: The scene will be composed of several smaller scenes, each indicated by a change in light, music/sound, and place.

SCENE 9A—THE “MARRIAGE” TANGO

Tango music comes up: the “marriage” tango; in the dance, HANK will give JUANITA a ring. The Tango ends, and they are somewhere in the Mid-West, HANK’s territory.

SCENE 9B—IN THE LIVING ROOM

NOTE: The assumption here is that they are speaking together in Spanish. At times it will be indicated that JUANITA is saying words in English, and her accent should change to indicate this.

HANK: Well, here you are—home sweet home.

JUANITA: *(in English)* Home sweet home. Where am I exactly again?

HANK: In the great American mid-West.

JUANITA: And where in that greatness am I?

HANK: In the “mid” of the mid-West.

JUANITA: Between?

HANK: Between the east coast and the left coast.

JUANITA: Don’t make jokes with me—just tell me where.

HANK: *(lightly)* In the heartland. In the breadbasket.

JUANITA: Why won't you tell me?

HANK: Because you're here—"mid"— (*takes her in his arms*) —feel this east coast and then this left coast around you?— (*gives her a playful squeeze*) —the "mid"—and that's all that matters.

JUANITA: "All that matters" has been so—unusual. It's been such a—hard journey for me, Enrique.

HANK: Coming to Nebraska—that's where we are, palomita, Nebraska—can you say it?

JUANITA: (*in English*) Nebraska.

HANK: You'll get that mid-West accent yet! (*with emphasis*) Nebraska. (*holding her closer*) Settle in my "mid" here—let me tell you something true. Coming to Nebraska has always been about making a hard journey. That's how my people built this place—one hard journey after another. And it is good to be back home to that.

JUANITA: So you don't like Mexico as much as you said you did?

HANK: Honey, it certainly produced you, and for that I am as grateful as dry corn for wet rain—but it doesn't have the—kick. You know? It's old. Old! Here you are going to find the new. The dynamic. The solid. Out here, Juanita, you'll see we have the best; out here the important values haven't died off.

JUANITA: The important values—

HANK: Yes—

JUANITA: Help me understand them, Enrique.

HANK: Okay—here's one, maybe the most important one—this is what my father taught me, and his father taught him, going all the way back to all the fathers: In this land, if a man works hard and keeps himself independent, that man can stand tall and feel respect for himself.

JUANITA: (*repeating it, slight emphasis on "man."*) If a "man" works hard—

HANK: (*slight mockery of her emphasis*) If a "man" works hard—

JUANITA: What did I say wrong?

HANK: See—

JUANITA: See what?

HANK: You're already making fun— (*sees her confusion*) "Man"—you're thinking that "man" doesn't include women—

JUANITA: No, no, no, no—I was t[rying]—

HANK: Don't worry, Juanita, our women work hard—they wear their share of the pants.

JUANITA: (*confused by the phrase*) Pants?

HANK: Wear the pants in the family—it means you can't get any serious work done in a dress.

JUANITA: That's—well, that's just silly. My mother—

HANK: (*lightly but without humor*) Now we're silly in— (*using her accent*) —Nebraska?

JUANITA: Enrique, wait—

JUANITA waves her hands around her head.

JUANITA: —too many words buzzing. Let's let them go. Shush—gone. Gone. Aire dulce—now sweet air—each of us a breath, deep—go ahead.

JUANITA takes a deep breath; HANK does not.

JUANITA: It is not in me to make fun of what I do not understand. All of it slowly to me—slow-ly.

HANK: Are you sure it's not too silly for you?

JUANITA: Remember me—Juanita, new immigrant? Tin ears— (*taps her ears*) —chin-chin. You have to help me make them ring. You tell me to understand this "man" and this "hard" that you say he works, and I am trying to do that because this "man" is you, no?

HANK: This man is me, yes.

JUANITA: You see—

HANK: But not just me—

JUANITA: Yes, your father, your abuelo, your bisabuelo, your antepasados—

HANK: And not just them—

JUANITA: And Nebraska—

HANK: Nebraska, yes, but—

JUANITA: But what?

HANK: This—

JUANITA: (*lost again*) This what?

HANK: This, the world—the men I came from, these men—they made this land! They made it produce! The muscle—vision—man, the thrust forward, right into the ocean and beyond. Emptiness into gold, Juanita—emptiness into gold, a whole line of them—

JUANITA: Enrique, do not confuse—

HANK: And there are things, people, every day—

JUANITA: I am not trying to make you angry—

HANK: —every day in this country that try to tear us down—that we did something wrong—

JUANITA: I know they're w[rong]—

HANK: —turn everything upside down—

JUANITA: Enrique—

HANK: Why, even my job—my job!—making sure American jobs get sent—

JUANITA: Enrique—

HANK: NAFTA'd!

JUANITA: Look at me!

HANK calms a bit.

JUANITA: Enrique—

HANK: I'm not angry—

JUANITA: No, no—

HANK: I'm not angry! I'm not. It's just that the way—the way you said it— I heard it— I may work in an office, Juanita—

JUANITA: That does not matter to me—

HANK: —I'm not working the land like my father and his—

JUANITA: That does not matter.

HANK: —but the blood still runs—

JUANITA: Enrique—Enrique—slowly, please. (*emphasizing as before*) Slow-ly. Please.

JUANITA faces HANK; she takes one of his hands and places it on her hip. In English.

JUANITA: Left coast—right? (*takes the other one, does the same. In English*) East coast—eh? (*pats her stomach. In English*) Breadbasket. (*pats his stomach*) La canasta de pan. Ooh! (*puts her hand on his heart. In English*) Heartland. La tierra del corazon. Say it, Enrique. Say it.

HANK: La tierra del corazon.

JUANITA: Again—in that mid-West Spanish accent!

HANK: (*laughing*) La tierra del corazon.

JUANITA: The land of the heart. In that honey Spanish you once used, with pigeons flying all around us, the language you said had poetry for its bones. Do you remember those soft words?

HANK: I do.

JUANITA: Do you?

HANK: Yes.

JUANITA: Those sweet moments in the park?

HANK: I do.

JUANITA: (*as if at the wedding ceremony*) I do.

JUANITIA holds his left hand, puts her hand on his wedding ring.

JUANITA: Amándote y respetándote—

HANK: (*takes her ring finger as well*) Amándote y respetándote durante toda mi vida.

JUANITA: Durante toda mi vida. Amen.

HANK: Amen.

JUANITA: You seem very proud, Enrique. Very proud.

HANK: Because I am.

JUANITA: You have made me see that.

HANK: I'm proud to be a man in this country.

JUANITA: And that makes me proud of you.

HANK: Come here, my palomita from old Mejico.

JUANITA: Old picante Mejico!

HANKS takes her in his arms.

HANK: Say it.

JUANITA: What, Enrique?

HANK: Nope, nope—from now on it is Hank—

JUANITA: To me you are—

HANK: "Hank"—say it—

JUANITA: You know how it sounds.

HANK: (*laughingly*) I love how it sounds! Say it.

JUANITA: (*pause, self-consciously, in English*) Hank—

HANK: “Honk”—I love it. “Honk, honk”—it’s so funny—

JUANITA: Why can’t I call you Enrique?

HANK: Because in the great American mid-West my name is Hank Armstrong—go on, say it—

JUANITA: (*as before, a mouthful for her*) Hank Armstrong—

HANK: And you are Mrs.—Miss-us—

JUANITA: Miss-us. Enrique, at least señora—

HANK: Not señora Armstrong but “miss-us” Hank Armstrong—

JUANITA: (*again, a mouthful for her*) Miss-us Hank Armstrong—

HANK: (*laughingly*) Mrs. Hank Armstrong—

JUANITA: Mrs. Hank Armstrong.

HANK: On your way to full American!

JUANITA: (*bravely*) Yes, full-time American.

HANK: What? (*softer*) What? What?

JUANITA: Don’t forget—

JUANITA makes a gesture to indicate herself.

JUANITA: Don’t forget—

HANK: You?

JUANITA: Some—already.

HANK: You don’t need to—

JUANITA: Already, Enrique—already. Remember everything—everything!

HANK: I do—

JUANITA: Then remember to give me time.

HANK: How does a whole life sound?

JUANITA: (*facing him, with a brave smile*) Well, Señor Toda Mi Vida—

HANK: Well, Missus All My Life—

JUANITA: (*as she pronounces it, HANK says it along with her*) Well, Mister—Mister Hank—

HANK: Excellent, Miss-us Juanita—see, you aren't forgotten—

JUANITA: What do I do now in my new world?

HANK: Not a thing, my pioneer—this man Hank knows his duty, learned from his daddy: P.H.P.
Provide. Honor. Protect.

JUANITA: And what will I do while you are doing all these wonderful things for me?

HANK: You have the house—

JUANITA: Start my English classes—

HANK: I know.

JUANITA: Like you promised.

HANK: I agreed.

JUANITA: And the papers.

HANK: I will fill them out—scout's honor.

JUANITA: Whatever that means.

HANK: It means— Come here. It means all in good time, honey. All in good time. Breathe—
deep—deep, all the way down from your canasta de pan! Here, lean against my tierra

del corazon and look out there, the big Nebraska sky: you have your whole life in front of you. And you have me right behind you.

Lights down, with music for change, then up for the next small scene.

SCENE 9C—THE DINING ROOM

Lights up. JUANITA, wearing an apron, takes a second chair and slams it down angrily. HANK is sitting, as if for dinner. Through all of this, HANK never raises his voice much—he is completely in command.

JUANITA: (*throwing a purple napkin on his lap*) Why can't I start the class? Why?

HANK: (*picking up the handkerchief*) That is not necessary.

JUANITA: Why?

HANK: Is dinner ready? Is it?

JUANITA: I called the school today—

HANK: I guess it's not. You called the school?

JUANITA: Yes.

HANK: You did?

JUANITA: Yes. A class starts tomorrow.

HANK: You used the phone?

JUANITA: Yes. I did. I know what you said—but I did.

HANK: You shouldn't put yourself in danger.

JUANITA: I wouldn't be in "danger" if you would file the papers, as you promised! Scout's honor!

HANK: There is no need to shout. I filed them.

JUANITA: You did?

HANK: Yes.

JUANITA: Then why did I find them thrown away? In the garage?

HANK: The garage.

JUANITA: Yes.

HANK: And what were you doing in there?

JUANITA: How much do you think—

HANK: Your voice—

JUANITA: How clean can this house be before there's no smell of anyone living here?

HANK: You were cleaning the garage.

JUANITA: Why are you shaking your head—my father used to do that—

HANK: You are making things difficult—

JUANITA: It is difficult to clean this house until it has no soul—

HANK: So you decided to clean the garage.

JUANITA: I decided to “strike out” on my own—

HANK: On your own—

JUANITA: —like your pioneers— (*gives it an Spanish pronunciation: “peeoneers”*) —why are you laughing?

HANK: Pee-oneers—

JUANITA: Why were the papers there? Why were the papers there?

HANK: They weren't filled out right.

JUANITA: What was wrong with them?

HANK: You missed some information.

JUANITA: You could have brought them back to me.

HANK: I got busy.

JUANITA: So, you have new ones, then, right?

HANK: I've been trying to get them.

JUANITA: It's been a month!

HANK: And what a month it has been.

JUANITA: What do you want me to do?

HANK: Stop making things complicated and be my wife.

JUANITA: I am already your wife. What is so complicated about what I am d[oin]g--

HANK: What is so complicated is— I'm surprised that I even have to explain this to you. You have your space—I have mine.

HANK indicates the garage.

HANK: That is my place.

JUANITA: I thought this was our home.

HANK: It is—but that is my place in our home. If you want me to honor you, palomita, you have to act in an honorable way.

JUANITA: Honorable?

HANK: And there are things—

JUANITA: Honorable?

HANK: —you have to understand—

JUANITA: It dishonors you to ask you to keep your promises?

HANK: You see, you see—look at me—

JUANITA: What is in your face?

HANK: Look at me. Good.

JUANITA: Your face—

HANK: This is what I am talking about. You are pushing, Juanita, my little “pee-oneer,” just like a little boat against the wind—pushing and pushing and just being selfish—

JUANITA: You said you’d fill out the papers—

HANK: —just wanting what you want whenever you want it—

JUANITA: My English classes!

HANK: Listen carefully—listen: The wind will beat you back. Don’t make things complicated, Juanita—they are not very complicated at all, I’m not a complicated man: in here, your place, and, out there, my place. Very simple. I want to honor you, Juanita—you me want me to do that too, don’t you?

JUANITA: (*more to herself*) I want you to love me—

HANK: Don’t you want that? Look at me.

JUANITA: Yes, of course—honor me—

HANK: Of course you do.

JUANITA: But—

HANK: No, no—come here: a lesson about that word.

JUANITA: (*unclear*) Which word?

HANK: This word: “But.”

JUANITA: I cannot say “but”?

HANK: (*imitating the converstaion*) I go, “Of course you do”—referring to honoring you, which I assume you would want me to do. And instead of supporting me on that point—instead, you go, “But”—“But”—“But” changes the conversation, querida, it changes the point I

was making for your own good. “But” is a word that crosses lines, crosses them out—don’t answer me with “but.”

JUANITA: But Enrique— sorry—

HANK: Why do you insist—

JUANITA: Sorry—

HANK: —on making it hard for me? “But” just comes rolling out naturally for you, doesn’t it—you can’t resist going your own way. You can’t resist crossing those lines. Don’t cross the lines.

JUANITA: (*faintly*) You promised—

HANK: Yes, I promised—but—see, I can use the word—“but,” palomita, you have to earn back your right to the papers—you crossed the lines by going into the garage—

JUANITA: I didn’t know—

HANK: It’s up to you.

JUANITA: Are there other borders I shouldn’t cross?

HANK: You can cross into that kitchen and get my dinner.

JUANITA: And are there other words I cannot have?

HANK: “Dinner” is one you can own completely.

They look at each other as the lights come down. Music for scene change.

SCENE 9D—IN THE BEDROOM

JUANITA puts on the purple bathrobe and stands in front of a “mirror,” brushing her hair with the comb in her bathrobe pocket.

NOTE: At no point in the scene does HANK ever touch JUANITA; all power and violence is implied.

JUANITA: Teach me to drive.

HANK: I take the car each day.

JUANITA: Let's buy another. We have the money.

HANK: How do you know that?

JUANITA: I looked at the check book. I can't read English, but I can read numbers. I know that much about American money! We can afford a car. I see them on television all the time. You could teach me.

HANK: And you would do what?

JUANITA: What would I do? What wouldn't I do? We need milk, toilet paper—I could go to the store instead of waiting for you to go to the store. I could get a newspaper in Spanish, for God's sake!—

HANK: They don't sell those around here.

JUANITA: Yes, they do. Yes, they do.

HANK: Where?

JUANITA: I know where.

HANK: Where?

JUANITA: I looked in the Yellow Pages until I recognized something in Spanish, and I called it. I found a bodega—I call it every day—just to hear—

HANK: So you want a car to go out and do things on your own—

JUANITA: It gets lonely here!

HANK: I don't provide enough, is that it? You call up strange men to talk with them—

JUANITA: It is a woman!

HANK: How do I know that's true?

JUANITA: Why would you doubt me?

HANK: Your family would be ashamed of you, you know.

JUANITA: For what?

HANK: For betraying me—

JUANITA: Betraying you—

HANK: Yes—

JUANITA: —with a toothless campesina who chews her words—

HANK: I should write to them—

JUANITA: About what?

HANK: This and that.

JUANITA: That you keep me like a prisoner?

HANK laughs.

JUANITA: That you won't fill out the papers?

HANK: Your father would understand.

JUANITA moves toward him, trying to calm the situation.

JUANITA: I am not asking for so very much—

HANK: Stay away from me. You betray me. I work hard, I give you a house, I give you food, I do what I am supposed to do—all I ask is that you do what a wife is supposed to do—and you don't even do that, lately.

JUANITA: If you would touch me rather than run over me, I would open like a flower. But no—in, out—thrusting!

HANK: Don't. Don't.

JUANITA: I'm sorry.

HANK: Don't insult me again.

JUANITA: I won't.

HANK: Don't ever talk like that again.

JUANITA: I won't—I won't.

HANK: You will not take over this house.

JUANITA: All I want—

HANK: Sshhh. Sshhh.

HANK gestures for her to move away.

HANK: Why are you doing this?

JUANITA: I am just trying—

HANK: You have a lot to learn. I don't even know who you are.

Lights down and almost up immediately.

SCENE 9E—SOMEWHERE IN THE HOUSE

HANK: No more phone. And I keep the cellular. I've already told your little Guatemalan bruja at the store never to call you again.

JUANITA: You're not going to fill out the papers, are you?

HANK: Not until you behave. Not until you are proper.

JUANITA: Oh, Mamá.

HANK: Speaking of—I hear your mother is sick.

JUANITA: You hear—

Takes a letter out of his pocket.

JUANITA: When did that come?

HANK: It came.

JUANITA tries to grab it, but HANK easily keeps it out of her reach. As she tries to get it, their struggles become a parody of the Tango steps they had done earlier. Finally, he lets her have the letter.

JUANITA: A month ago? Why didn't you—

HANK: You haven't earned it.

JUANITA: It's my mother! (*reads*) This is not good. This is not good. I have to go.

HANK: She could be dead.

Beat.

HANK: She could be.

JUANITA: I have to go.

HANK: And how will you do that? I have all of your life.

HANK takes a photograph out of his shirt pocket.

HANK: This was in the letter.

JUANITA goes to grab it, but HANK plays with her by keeping it out of her reach; it is as if JUANITA is a puppet.

HANK: Ah, ah—don't do that. You are very grabby tonight.

HANK finally gestures for her to stop and he shows her the photo.

HANK: Take a long last look at your family.

HANK very deliberately tears the photograph in half, and then in half again until it is confetti. HANK drizzles it over JUANITA. JUANITA falls to her knees to gather the pieces.

HANK: Like the snows of yesteryear.

HANK kneels down to talk with JUANITA.

HANK: Querida, querida. You have no place to go.

JUANITA: Yo no entiendo.

HANK: Is it my English?

JUANITA: Habla español.

HANK: You have no place to go.

JUANITA: Habla español!

HANK: You are here to stay. You have shown great disrespect.

JUANITA: Yo no entiendo.

HANK: You're still a little girl. You need to be led very carefully. You will learn.

HANK stands and pulls JUANITA to her feet, and they begin the "abuse tango," done without music, very physical, with grunts and out-breaths for punctuation—it should include and parody steps from the previous tangos. When they finish, HANK goes upstage to sit. JUANITA kneels until the next scene starts.

SCENE 10: THE DECISION

Music begins, something meditative. Tight bright light on JUANITA. She collects the torn pieces of photograph and tries to piece them back together. MOTHER stands just outside the light, watching. She is carrying JUANITA's blue shawl. JUANITA senses that she is there.

JUANITA: Mamá?

MOTHER enters and stands behind JUANITA.

JUANITA: Are you there?

MOTHER: Yes.

JUANITA: (*startled but happy*) Oh, Mamá!

MOTHER: I have never left you, querida.

JUANITA lets the pieces of the photo cascade from one hand into the other.

JUANITA: So true. It is I who left you—piece by piece by piece—

MOTHER comes and takes them out of her hands, places them in the pocket of her dress.

MOTHER: You never fell from my heart.

MOTHER helps her rise.

MOTHER: But this heart—piece by piece by piece—until only pieces, little one. No shelter from the storm.

JUANITA: Mamá—

MOTHER: I left you at the mercy of your father, and all his fathers— I left you with no shelter. But now—

MOTHER gestures expansively, and there is a change of lights, something meditative.

MOTHER: Shelter—

JUANITA: Why do I know this?

MOTHER: It is time.

JUANITA begins to move around, as if she is touching particular objects, trying to recall a memory. As JUANITA moves, MOTHER “echoes” her movements.

JUANITA: Candles, papel picado, candy skulls—sí, sí, Los Dias de Los Muertos! I remember—I can remember all of it!

MOTHER: Such a happy time for you.

JUANITA: Cempazuchil, the marigolds—the flower of four hundred lives! Rosquete. La ofrenda. Of course, of course! Look, look, look, look, Mamá—pan de muerto! (*takes a bite*) Such sweetness—right to the roof of my brain that sweetness would go.

JUANITA crows like a rooster.

JUANITA: Look, look, look at it all—

MOTHER: Look at it all very hard—

JUANITA: —oh, it all floods back into me—

They both take a deep breath.

JUANITA: The incense, the copal, in the sahumerio.

JUANITA makes the motions of placing things; MOTHER does the same gestures.

JUANITA: The singing, the decorating—almost too painful, Mamá—but, let me carry it, more and more of it—

JUANITA turns to MOTHER.

JUANITA: Why so painful?

MOTHER: Because it is time. We will travel this together. (*indicating*) La ofrenda—the altar. I place three candles. Purple—

JUANITA: —for pain. White—

MOTHER: —for hope. Pink—

JUANITA: —for celebration.

MOTHER: Their shivering flames—

JUANITA: —las llamas titilantes—

MOTHER: —lighting the dark night of tired souls.

JUANITA: I see flowers—

MOTHER: Food, liquor—

JUANITA: Water for the ghosts to wash their hands—

MOTHER: Crosses of wood, of ash—

JUANITA: (*making the sign of the Cross*) Of air—

MOTHER: Four compass points—

JUANITA: Four voices of prayer—but one thing—missing.

MOTHER: You noticed.

JUANITA: The most important—missing.

MOTHER: Tell me.

JUANITA: Whose picture—

MOTHER: Yes.

JUANITA: Whose picture is here?

MOTHER: For whom have we done all this—yes.

JUANITA: (*gesturing*) Only an empty frame.

MOTHER: It could be yours.

JUANITA: Could be mine?

MOTHER: Could be.

JUANITA: Am I dead?

MOTHER: What do you feel?

JUANITA: Have you come to tell me that?

MOTHER: I only echo you.

JUANITA: Then you echo me what I feel already—

MOTHER: And you feel—

JUANITA: I feel so— I have felt so—

MOTHER: Dead, yes?

JUANITA: Yes.

MOTHER: Say it.

JUANITA: Dead.

MOTHER: Spirit crushed—

JUANITA: Yes.

MOTHER: Soul scarred—

JUANITA: Yes.

MOTHER: There are more deaths you have not yet died.

JUANITA: More?

MOTHER: Cells in your body—that is how many more. And that is just the beginning.

MOTHER takes her by the face, as FATHER did in Scene 2.

MOTHER: Yes, that could be your picture.

JUANITA: What am I to do? What should I do?

*MOTHER stands. She reaches into her pocket and takes out four marigolds.
MOTHER hands them to JUANITA.*

MOTHER: Compass. Cross. The four directions of your life.

MOTHER takes two flowers from JUANITA, shows one.

MOTHER: You can stay and be killed. (*shows the other*) Or you can stay and be dead in life. By degrees or explosion, it doesn't matter.

MOTHER crushes the heads of the marigolds and puts them in her pocket.

MOTHER: The anger—

JUANITA: The anger—

MOTHER: —will wither your heart completely.

JUANITA: Is that what happened to you?

MOTHER takes a third flower from JUANITA.

MOTHER: You can kill. Vengeance.

JUANITA: Kill—

MOTHER presses the marigold into the palm of her hand.

MOTHER: A hot iron—ssssss!—that scars the wound closed. Sssss! And done.

JUANITA: More death.

MOTHER: Possibly justice.

JUANITA: I couldn't. I have one more left.

MOTHER: Las mariposas. Las mariposas—do you remember the one time we went for Los Dias to El Rosario, the sanctuary for the monarchs from the north? Delicate, fragile. Millions, orange and black—the trees flaming with their restless wings.

JUANITA: I remember.

MOTHER: On their wings return the souls of our dead—

JUANITA: Every soul—

MOTHER: In that air burning with monarchs, in the land of our ancient blood, nuestras raices, we discovered that death can give us wings.

MOTHER indicates the remaining flower.

MOTHER: There is one more choice.

JUANITA: What?

MOTHER takes the blue shawl and wraps around JUANITA.

MOTHER: You can fly—

JUANITA: I am so tired.

MOTHER: —even with your legs like ice, your feet like iron—

JUANITA: So tired—

MOTHER: —your skin strangling every breath—you can fly.

MOTHER takes the last flower.

MOTHER: Cempazuchil.

JUANITA: The flower with four hundred lives.

MOTHER: One of them will lead you to the sanctuary.

There is a pause as MOTHER embraces JUANITA tenderly from behind, as if to say, "I cannot make this choice for you—but I am here." MOTHER exits.

SCENE 11: TOWARDS RESOLUTION

Lights go to black, then up to ghost as music from Scene 10 plays through for the scene change. The office of Asistencia, Inc. is set. JUANITA takes off the robe, puts on her shirt and shawl, and sits in one of the chairs. As the music fades out and the phone rings, lights come up, and at the same moment, CRISTINA enters carrying her bag and a manila file folder. She sees JUANITA and she pauses. The phone rings two times more, then stops, for a total of four rings.

CRISTINA: The peaceful wonders of the new voice mail system.

JUANITA turns slightly away from her, so that when CRISTINA sits, she will not be able to see JUANITA's face directly. CRISTINA opens the folder. She reads through it as she speaks. She will also change out of her suit jacket and put on her red shawl.

CRISTINA: Bienvenida a Asistencia, Juanita. Me llamo Cristina. Usted está a salvo aquí. Qué puedo servirle? Agua? Jugo? Comida?

JUANITA shakes her head no.

CRISTINA: If there is anything you need, don't hesitate to ask.

JUANITA turns even more slightly away from CRISTINA.

CRISTINA: It says here on the intake form that you wanted to talk only to me, that I was the only name you had. How did you get my name? That's all right—we'll get to that. I know you're feeling many confusing things right now—I understand. I just want to tell you again, Juanita, that you are welcome, and you are safe. You are not alone here.

JUANITA remains silent.

CRISTINA: I know what you are feeling. Not all of it, but some. The worry. The self-doubt. The shame—the shame. How you think your family will hate you. How everything you thought was correct has become dangerous, how your “protectors” now hunt you down. Juanita—you are safe to feel that here. That is a lovely shawl—I noticed it when I came in. Mexican, eh?

JUANITA nods.

CRISTINA: Do you come from Mexico?

JUANITA nods again.

CRISTINA: Ah! A gift?

JUANITA nods.

CRISTINA: From your mother, sí?

JUANITA nods again.

CRISTINA: Yes, a gift a mother would give a daughter she loves. Part of my own background is Mexican—can't be born in the American Southwest—in old Mejjico, eh?—without a little sangre Mejjicana turning up. My people went far back. The stories they all tell, eh? I'm sure you have heard all of them. But sometimes too many stories, no? Too many. A person can get bribed by those stories, misled, fooled; they can make you forget too much.

CRISTINA uses her own shawl. JUANITA has now turned enough to see CRISTINA and can respond to her movements as feels natural.

CRISTINA: My mother gave me a shawl, when I was eleven. Blue, with a white thread pattern. A blue like yours. A shawl is an amazing thing, no? I never wanted to lose its warm sheltering weight off my shoulders. The way it draped over my arms, tapped my young spine as I walked. So many things in a shawl, no? It made me feel wise. I remember a long line of women, hair pulled into tight knots, all firm in their shawls, tough women,

survivors. You are in that line, Juanita. What would your blue and patient shawl tell me if I were to ask it politely and con respeto to speak to me?

The lights change, creating a very bright pool of light for JUANITA. CRISTINA sits. This is a “visual monologue” by JUANITA. JUANITA stands in the pool of light. MOTHER brings out a white table, on which rest a stainless steel bowl, a cleaver, a paring knife, a cutting board (preferably wood), and one large, very ripe tomato. A clean white kitchen towel is draped over MOTHER’s arm, and she hands JUANITA the towel. MOTHER then stands behind CRISTINA, her hands on CRISTINA’s shoulders. HANK comes into the scene and stands behind and to the left of MOTHER, dimly seen.

Very slowly and precisely, and without words, JUANITA dissects the tomato, slicing it neatly, gouging it out, and squeezing the contents into the bowl. It must look and feel like surgery on the human heart.

When she’s done, she wipes her hands, the cleaver, and the knife on the towel. MOTHER returns to get the table, then moves back upstage, as does HANK. JUANITA moves her chair back to its original position.

CRISTINA: The old stories never die, do they? Do they? We need to set some things right away, Juanita, and give you choices. Will you answer some questions for me?

JUANITA nods.

CRISTINA: Bueno. How did you find us?

JUANITA: An old campesina at a bodega.

CRISTINA: A little louder.

JUANITA: An old campesina at a bodega. (*with only slight irony*) I found her through the Yellow Pages. I would read until I came across something in Spanish, and then I would call.

CRISTINA: He never let you learn English.

JUANITA: I kept calling until I found a voice I could trust. She had friends who sent me here and told me to look specifically for you. Asistencia—the name is known among las olvidadas.

CRISTINA: The forgotten ones.

JUANITA: There are so many.

CRISTINA: Does Hank know how to find you?

JUANITA: I walked out. After he left for work. I had the phone number and the address of the campesina and some coins I found in the couch. A few dollars I had stolen from his wallet.

CRISTINA: When was this?

JUANITA: Yesterday.

CRISTINA: Where did you sleep last night?

JUANITA: I couldn't sleep at her house because he knew about her. She moved me in with some cousins.

CRISTINA: Are you there now?

JUANITA: I didn't want to put anyone into danger.

CRISTINA: So you have no place to go?

JUANITA: I have no place to go. I am here.

CRISTINA: We have many more things we need to do, Juanita. Doing these things means talking with strangers about what is most private in your life. It means setting a machine in motion that has as much pain as kindness built into it. Is this what you want to do?

JUANITA: I have no place to go. I am here.

CRISTINA: Then "here" is where it starts.

CRISTINA gently touches JUANITA's shawl. JUANITA and CRISTINA look at each other. Lights out., then up to ghost for scene change, with music for the talk show.

SCENE 12: THE COURT OF PUBLIC OPINION

SCHIST, now as IÑIGO QUIROGA, a talk show host. CRISTINA's desk contents are struck and the black table cloth used to cover the table. Three chairs. CRISTINA sits stage left of the table, BARTLETT stage right. Lights and music come up as if in a TV studio. A copy of CRISTINA's report and BARTLETT's press conference statement are on the table.

QUIROGA: Hello and welcome to La Vida, Hoy. I'm Iñigo Quiroga, your host, your coyote, and tonight, we continue with La Migración: Whose Frontera Is It?, our on-going look at the border issues America has with the Latino world. As you know, Latinos are the "greyhound" in American society—moving up fast on the outside. And this "hot dog" worries some people because now it's not should we have some influence but of how much and when. And this fear often triggers calls for tighter and tighter limits on who gets in. But I'm here, not going anywhere, and we're going to have ourselves a lively exchange tonight because our two guests are, to put it politely, on opposite sides of the fence on this one. On my left—

The lights change slightly to indicate a camera shift to CRISTINA.

QUIROGA: —is Cristina Lefcacia, Executive Director of Asistencia, Inc., an organization that helps immigrant women suffering domestic abuse, especially married to or involved with U.S. citizens or permanent residents. Welcome, Cristina.

CRISTINA: Gracias. Just a quick correction, Iñigo: we help all women involved in domestic abuse.

QUIROGA: Duly noted, and my apologies. On my right is Congressman William Bartlett, who represents this district. He just introduced legislation to cut back sharply on all aspects of immigration—which will have the effect—and here's an important point—of also eliminating protections for the very women you want to protect. Welcome, Representative Bartlett.

BARTLETT: Glad to be here.

QUIROGA: Now, some ground rules, because I will bet there will be no eye-to-eye on any of this. Let the person finish speaking before jumping in with a response. And, for the benefit of the Congressman, everything in English. Congressman, let me start with you. Summarize for us why you want to restrict immigration as drastically as you do, especially when it will hurt people in your district? Aren't you supposed to protect your constituents?

BARTLETT: Of course I am—and I'd like to think I've represented them well over the years. But "represent" is a delicate issue, Mr. Quiroga—it really means, to whom do I owe my allegiance as a public servant? And I think that the answer is fairly clear: I owe it to those people who play by the rules of being an American citizen. I have to protect their interests—they pay me to protect their interests—that's my work—wouldn't you agree?

QUIROGA: But there are many who play by the rules even if they aren't citizens—

BARTLETT: I know that.

QUIROGA: So why not include them?

BARTLETT: I see them every day in my district, and my heart is touched by their stories—how could it not? But my oath—my oath of office—requires of me a harder duty: to protect the values that keep us free, which I try to do as best—as best—I can every day. America will always welcome those who want to work and produce and contribute. But we should discourage those who come here without, let us say, the best of intentions, even if they work hard—

QUIROGA: The “best of intentions” being citizenship—

BARTLETT: The “best of intentions” being to be an American.

QUIROGA: But as I understand it, if I have a million dollars to invest in an American business—

BARTLETT: Mr. Quiroga, that’s a little crass—

QUIROGA: But it’s true, isn’t it?

BARTLETT: You make it sound like citizenship for sale. If you have resources to contribute, resources that we need, then I don’t see any problem looking favorably on that.

QUIROGA: Technical skills—

BARTLETT: Same consideration, if we can use them.

QUIROGA: Guest worker programs, farm labor—

BARTLETT: Resources we need for the moment—

QUIROGA: But when the crops are in—

BARTLETT: When the need passes—

QUIROGA: No more huddled masses—

BARTLETT: Not if we want to preserve what makes us unique and strong.

QUIROGA: Let me shift the focus a little off the economics: if I’m a woman married to a U.S. citizen, brought here and abused—

BARTLETT: Is that a segue, Mr. Quiroga?

QUIROGA: I think it's a natural progression—

BARTLETT: You're sure it's not an ambush?

QUIROGA: (*picking up release*) I am sure it's one of the objects of your "4-A" campaign—
revoking the parts of the Violence Against Women Act that would help abused women,
undocumented—abused by American citizens—

BARTLETT: Or resident aliens—

QUIROGA: Well, yes—

BARTLETT: Important to get the terms straight.

QUIROGA: Even if that means putting—I'm looking at Ms. Lefcadia's report—

BARTLETT: I've read that, yes.

QUIROGA: Then you know that these are not low numbers.

BARTLETT: If they're true—counting people who don't want to be counted can be tricky.

QUIROGA: But even if it's only one, the "4-A" campaign would jeopardize—

BARTLETT: Yes—unfortunate, but yes.

QUIROGA: How do you justify that?

CRISTINA: (*to QUIROGA*) May I?

QUIROGA: Of course.

CRISTINA: Representative, you mentioned "heart"—

BARTLETT: Yes, I did.

CRISTINA: Wouldn't you say that heart also makes us unique and strong as a people? Not just
duty, or principle, or logic.

BARTLETT: Many things make Americans strong—certainly their "heart" is one. Certainly a
desire for simple justice is another.

CRISTINA: Simple—

BARTLETT: Yes, a very simple contract: the law protects you if you agree to live your life in a certain way. That agreement is called “citizenship,” and simple justice draws a simple line: on this side, yes; this side, no.

CRISTINA: Luisa Ortiz hardly had that choice—

BARTLETT: My heart feels for her death, just as yours does—what that man did to her was brutal, and he should be punished. But we can’t base policy on the heart—our own actions, yes, we can move ourselves however we want—but not policy—otherwise, that simple line goes. My duty has to move me in a different direction, towards a greater good, even while my heart grieves for one single person.

CRISTINA: There was no greater good for Luisa Ortiz.

BARTLETT: But not as a matter of policy.

QUIROGA: Ms. Lefcadia? Ms. Lefcadia?

CRISTINA: I have to say, Representative, I’m a little thrown by your—style of compassion. Heartfelt for certain people, not for others, based on—what is, after all—an accident of landscape, really.

BARTLETT: Citizenship is not accidental.

CRISTINA: In your world, no, no, of course not—it’s a policy matter—but in mine, in ours—well, we just can’t tally things up your way, abstractly—dutifully. People’s lives, textures, densities—it’s all too messy, all too rich for policy. Your life included, Representative—you have a classic background.

BARTLETT: My background.

CRISTINA: Irish, isn’t it?

BARTLETT: Is this where you want to take the discussion?

CRISTINA: Representative, it’s in all your press materials—

BARTLETT: All right. Irish, yes. By way of the potato famine.

CRISTINA: Through the port of—

BARTLETT: Boston.

CRISTINA: Third generation?

BARTLETT: Fifth, actually.

CRISTINA: Four prior generations made their way to Nebraska?

BARTLETT: Yes.

CRISTINA: And is five generations the tipping point, Representative?

BARTLETT: I don't understand the term.

CRISTINA: The point where an immigrant "tips" into being a native—certified—a constituent?

BARTLETT: I don't think it's about math.

CRISTINA: But I'm looking at your life trying to grasp your calculus, Representative—because you do have a math, an obvious one.

BARTLETT: I do?

CRISTINA: Time, generations—say, five of them—and a person acquires some kind of—protection. Shelter. Acquires your representation.

QUIROGA: Ms. Lefcadia, we have to move on—

CRISTINA: But if a protected one—say, a young American man—betrays a young non-American woman—no protection for her because she is "non."

BARTLETT: As I said—

CRISTINA: Heartfelt regret, yes, you've said that—but then comes policy and duty—and constituents—so many calculations about three small letters—"n-o-n." I am just trying to figure out how that adds up.

They overlap on the next lines.

BARTLETT: You make it sound—

CRISTINA: For instance—pardon me for interrupting—

BARTLETT: That's all right—go ahead—

CRISTINA: I just had this thought about the math of it all—my blood has been in this country since Spain arrived—actually, before—mestiza—more than five—so should that give me even more protection? Or to try to figure it out another way: why do the sheltered people have problems with unsheltered people wanting to do what all our families did, yours and mine and— (*indicating QUIROGA*) —yours? I have to confess, Representative, one more time, that all this calculating confuses me very, very much.

BARTLETT: Then let me explain once again—

CRISTINA: I wish you would clear it up, Representative because—

QUIROGA: Let him get his word in—

CRISTINA: (*ignoring him*) —because we could never seem to get the calculations right to see you to talk about it. We were in your office day after day trying to get an interview with you before you introduced the legislation. You were out, you were in a meeting, you were—

BARTLETT: I was out doing the work—

CRISTINA: Which meant that we had to be out preparing for the next Luisa Ortiz.

BARTLETT: (*softly, condescendingly*)

Then we were both doing our jobs, weren't we?

QUIROGA: Ms. Lefcadia—Ms. Lefcadia—why don't you talk a little about your organization?

CRISTINA: What?

QUIROGA: Why don't you talk about the work you do?

CRISTINA: The work?

QUIROGA: Yes.

BARTLETT: Yes, I would like to hear about your work.

CRISTINA: Waste m[anage]—

CRISTINA stops herself.

QUIROGA: The work?

CRISTINA: Yes. Yes. Ah—Asistencia, Inc. is an organization which—

Lights change to downstage center; CRISTINA continues to talk as she steps into the light. MOTHER and MAN 2 take the desk. BARTLETT takes the chairs. They then sit upstage.

CRISTINA: —which helps battered women, whether citizens, documented, or illegal, find the resources to get themselves out of— Juanita, I talked. I got my mouth around the official language and spit it out. Bile at first, but I did it. I talked and the passion spilled back into my words, the passion that keeps me in this fight. Played the game out to the end so that the barbarians—that barbarian—would not win again. I did it for you. For Luisa Ortiz. For the campesina. For all of us.

CRISTINA puts her shawl over head, as if in mourning. As she speaks, MOTHER joins her, also wearing her shawl as if in mourning.

CRISTINA: As I spoke, I saw him lift his smiling face up to the light, and it struck me that death wears such a fashionable smile as it grinds all our souls—all our souls, all of us—into an obedient dust.

As MOTHER begins to talk, JUANITA joins them, also wearing her shawl as if in mourning.

MOTHER: Because the barbarian is not a man even if it wears a man's face.

JUANITA: The barbarian is the anger and shame woven through all our hearts.

CRISTINA: From doubt and violation—

JUANITA: From unhappiness and vast oppression—

MOTHER: From dreams denied and truth dismembered—

JUANITA: From our mortal flesh as brief and cheap as morning dew.

CRISTINA: *(she brings her shawl to her shoulders)* No more must any of us—

MOTHER: *(she brings her shawl to her shoulders)* Man, woman, or child—

JUANITA: *(she brings her shawl to her shoulders)* Walk the dry road of fear with a voiceless heart.

ALL: Because only we can turn the burden into song.

JUANITA: It can be now.

CRISTINA: It can be here.

MOTHER: It can be us.

ALL: Yes.

As each says her line, she will take off her shawl and hold it out in front of her. They will link hands while holding the shawls.

MOTHER: Because love—

JUANITA: Because love—

CRISTINA: Rises to life—

MOTHER: Rises to life—

JUANITA: Over the dry bones of death.

MOTHER: Over the dry bones of death.

ALL: El amor sube a la vida sobre los huesos secos de la muerte.

In one coordinated movement, they wrap the shawls around their shoulders and present a line of strong women. The light remains on the three of them, then bumps to black.