

# Rough Magic

A Ruminatiion on Shakespeare's  
The Tempest

Andrew Siañez-De La O  
ajsianez@gmail.com

10 Monarch Ct, Apt B  
Cockeysville, MD 21030  
[www.andrewsianezdelao.com]

## CHARACTERS

MIRANDA	Early Teens, She/Her. Go-Getter Mexican-American.
FERNIE	Early Teens, He/Him. Scaredy-Cat Afro-Latinx.
PAOLA	Late 40s, She/her. Brujeria Mexican-American.
IGNACIO	Early 50s, He/Him. Old School Mexican.
LÚCIO	Early 20s, He/Him. Soccer Mexican-American.
TONI	Late 30s, She/Her. Done-with-it Mexican-American.
ALESSANDRA	Late 30s, She/Her. "It's Complicated" Afro-Latinx

## SETTING

Eye of the Storm  
San Jacinto High School Gymnasium  
Houston, Texas

## NOTES

"—"	Indicates a character being cut off by the next line.
"..."	Indicates a stillness, whether in thought or staging.
" / "	Indicates that the next line should start while this line continues.

*A storm rages outside of San Jacinto High School's gymnasium. It is dimly lit. Water is dripping somewhere.*

*The majority of the play-space should resemble a high school gymnasium. Hardwood floors with basketball court lines. Painted cinderblock walls with padded wall mats in the school's color. A set of red double doors with a flickering EXIT sign above it.*

*The gymnasium is filled with storage bins and stacks of chairs and folding tables. These tables should be used to imply and create spaces on stage within the gym itself.*

*Thunder cracks as lights come up on ALESSANDRA in a rain slick with a news station microphone.*

ALESSANDRA

*(Fighting against rain and wind.)*

Flash flood and extreme weather warnings are in effect as Harvey continues to make its way towards Houston. Officials urge residents to stay inside!

*Lightning cracks and gives way to the sound of a walkie talkie beeping on. Two children appear on either side of the stage on top of opened folding tables. They each have a blanket and walkie talkie.*

*MIRANDA, fourteen, is wearing a raincoat over a cartoon themed t-shirt, jeans, and rain boots.*

MIRANDA

Fernie! Fernie, you better be awake!

FERNIE

How could I possibly sleep through this!

*He yelps as lightning cracks. FERNIE, fourteen, is wearing sneakers and Spider-Man pajamas. He's wrapped himself in his blanket.*

ALESSANDRA

It's important that residents do not take this situation lightly. While Houston is no stranger to hurricanes, Harvey is looking to be the most powerful storm of the past decade.

FERNIE

I don't know about this, Mira.

MIRANDA

You cannot chicken out on me now!

FERNIE

There's literally a hurricane outside.

MIRANDA

There's barely a—

*(Thunder cracks loudly.)*

It's more of a tropical—

*(Rain beats loudly against an unseen window.)*

Okay, it's *ugly* out, BUT if we hurry—

FERNIE

Mira, seriously?

ALESSANDRA

To emphasize my point, we are no longer measuring rain in inches. We are measuring in *feet*.

MIRANDA

It's now or never Fernie, you know that. You said it yourself—

ALESSANDRA

There's still time to make your way to a shelter.

MIRANDA

When was the last time they were happy?

ALESSANDRA

There's still time to charge your phones.

MIRANDA

We can fix that Fernie.

ALESSANDRA

There's still time...

*ALESSANDRA exits.*

MIRANDA

We can help them.

TONI

*(From offstage.)*

Miranda?

MIRANDA

Shit, it's my mom—

FERNIE

I thought she was working tonight?!

MIRANDA

Call you back—

*MIRANDA hastily shuts off her walkie talkie and covers herself in her blanket as TONI enters. She's still in her work clothes, a red polo, khakis, and a Target name badge.*

TONI

*(Entering.)*

Miranda, is someone with you?

MIRANDA

*(Pretending to have been asleep.)*

Mami?

TONI

I thought I heard you talking to someone?

MIRANDA

Maybe I was just talking in my sleep.

TONI

*(Suspicious.)*

Uhuh.

MIRANDA

I thought you were working tonight?

TONI

In this? Hell no. The second I saw them hauling out sandbags I was outta there. No way in hell I'm helping sandbag the store for minimum wage.

*(Looking MIRANDA over.)*

You feeling okay?

MIRANDA

Yeah, just a little tired.

TONI

*(Beat.)*

You know, since I'm not working tonight, I thought maybe we could watch a movie?

MIRANDA

*(Thinking about it.)*

I don't know...

TONI

We could watch something scary?

MIRANDA

Could Fernie come over? Maybe...with his mom?

TONI

Oh. Um.

MIRANDA

That could be a lot of fun—

TONI

I don't know, Mira. I think she's working—

MIRANDA

It's been a while since you and her have hung out, right?

TONI

I was just hoping it could be you and me tonight. You know?

MIRANDA

*(Deflated.)*

I...I'm kind of tired.

TONI

Okay, yeah. Of course. Get your rest.

*(Starting to leave.)*

You know, Mira. It's your dad's—

MIRANDA

Ten years. Right?

TONI

*(Taken aback.)*

Oh. Yeah. Right. I didn't think you'd forgotten or anything, it's just.

*(Beat, not sure whether she wants to ask.)*

I don't know how much you remember of him—

MIRANDA

His laugh. How he felt when he hugged me.

*(Beat. Not wanting to go down this route.)*

We've talked about this—

TONI

*(Hurt a bit by her frankness.)*

I know. It's just. . .

*(Trying to laugh it off.)*

You'd think it'd get easier! Barely liked him when he was alive.

*(She tries to laugh, but it doesn't help. She sighs.)*

Bad joke, I know.

MIRANDA

Are you okay?

TONI

Yeah. I'm fine.

*(Thunder cracks.)*

If you get scared, I'm right down the hall, 'kay?

MIRANDA

Okay.

*TONI takes a moment to look back at MIRANDA. She's sad. She exits.*

*MIRANDA waits a moment before throwing the blanket off and launching herself off of her table bed. She clicks on her walkie talkie.*

MIRANDA

Fernie, you there?

FERNIE

Everything okay with your mom?

MIRANDA

She's...

*(Looking to where TONI exited.)*

She's gonna be fine.

FERNIE

Mira... Are you sure you want to do this?

MIRANDA

*(Thinking for a moment, she just might change her mind, but then, with a newfound determination.)*

This is the only way. If they won't talk to each other then we'll just have to make them. You still in?

FERNIE

Mira...

MIRANDA

Please, Fernie.

FERNIE

Okay. I'm in.

PAOLA

Me too.

FERNIE & MIRANDA

Ahhhh!

*PAOLA stands center stage between MIRANDA and FERNIE. She's wearing a purple or burgundy dress and matching blazer, an outfit she'd likely wear to church.*

MIRANDA

Grandma, is that you?

FERNIE

Have you been listening this whole time?

PAOLA

You told me to be on at seven, I was on at seven? Are we still doing this?

MIRANDA

Yes. We're ready.

PAOLA

Alright, mijitos. Take out your candles and repeat after me.

*PAOLA, MIRANDA, and FERNIE each take out a novena and light it. They hold it in their hands as PAOLA leads them in a prayer.*

PAOLA

Dios te salve Maria, llena eres de gracia, el señor is contigo.

FERNIE & MIRANDA

Dios te salve Maria, llena eres de gracia, el señor is contigo.

PAOLA

We light these candles to rekindle a union.

FERNIE & MIRANDA

We light these candles to rekindle a union.

PAOLA

To forge a bond between two dwindling flames.

FERNIE & MIRANDA

To forge a bond between two dwindling flames.

PAOLA

With our love and the storm above, we pray.

FERNIE & MIRANDA

With our love and the storm above, we pray.

PAOLA

Now, place your candles somewhere safe, *away from curtains*, and you're good to go!

MIRANDA

That's it?

PAOLA

Magic isn't as flashy as the movies, mija. Were you expecting fireworks? Butterflies?

MIRANDA

No, it's just...

FERNIE

I feel warm, is that a good thing?

PAOLA

It doesn't sound bad?

MIRANDA

Thank you, grandma.

PAOLA

De nada, mijita. Just stay safe out there, okay?

*The light softly dims over PAOLA, but she doesn't leave, she remains and listens to the children.*

MIRANDA

Phase two?

FERNIE

Phase two. I'll bring my bike and meet you at your place.

MIRANDA

Wait, go around back, I'm gonna hop the backyard fence. Don't need your squeaky bike giving us away.

FERNIE

Smart! Leaving now, over and out!

*As FERNIE and MIRANDA exit the stage lights come back up on PAOLA who has been listening over the walkie talkie. Once the kids have left she raises her novena back up to her lips and continues her spell.*

PAOLA

With thunder strike and hurricane's bite I weave this spell into the night.

*The lights of the gymnasium begin to flicker.*

PAOLA

With a mother's kiss and a grandchild's wish I bring back a father sorely missed.

*PAOLA raises the candle into the air. Lightning cracks and thunder booms.*

PAOLA

From beneath gravestone and muddy earth, let him return through brief rebirth.

*Lights cut out over PAOLA. She exits as the lights of the gymnasium begin to flash wildly.*

*All lights focus on San Jacinto High School's gymnasium. It is filled with folded tables and plastic storage tubs. The lights seem to pulse with a musical rhythm.*

*Suddenly, LÚCIO appears, gasping and rising from behind a folding table like he is coming up for air. Lights burst to life as he stretches and slowly dim as his arms relax.*

*LÚCIO is wearing heelys and a large, brightly colored raincoat. He is listening to music on an old portable CD player. He is singing Selena's, "Amor Prohibido," as he glides out from behind the folded tables and chairs. As he sings he opens up a large plastic bin and begins tossing its contents out and across the space. They are tropical dance themed decorations.*

LÚCIO

Con unas ansias locas quiero verte hoy  
Espero ese momento en que escuche tu voz  
Y cuando al fin estemos juntos los dos  
Qué importa qué dirán, tu padre y tu mamá  
Aquí sólo importa nuestro amor, te quiero

*(Going big.)*

Amor prohibido—

*(Seeing the audience, a forced whisper.)*

Ay! No manches, you shouldn't be here! Who let you in?

*A flash of light followed by a loud crack of thunder. A storm rages just outside.*

LÚCIO

*(Shaking his head and fixing his hair.)*

Well, looks like things are starting. There's no sense in asking you all to leave now. Just, do your ebst not to touch anything. Great care has been taken in, well. . .

*(Looking around the gym.)*

Cultivating this mess.

*The gymnasium double doors creak open as IGNACIO enters, his flashlight scanning the stage. He is in his early 50s and is wearing a janitor's uniform, one hand holding a flashlight, the other a walkie talkie. LÚCIO hides beneath a table.*

*IGNACIO comes up to the opened decorations bin. He places his walkie talkie down as he spins the bin around to face him. In a heavy Mexican accent he sounds out the label.*

IGNACIO

Tro-pi-cal Dance.

*(He laughs and shakes his head.)*

*IGNACIO leaves the box, and the walkie talkie, and exits.*

LÚCIO

Whew. That was a close one.

*(To the audience.)*

Not that we shouldn't be here! It's perfectly okay that we're here. I mean, with Harvey on our doorstep it's not entirely advisable, or safe really, but that's neither here nor there.

*(Like something dawned on him.)*

Oh! Are you also here on afterlife business? You'd think after joining the great bright light I'd be a little less self centered. I guess you can take the spirit out of the mamón, but you can't take the— Eh, you get it.

*Static crackles from the abandoned walkie talkie. LÚCIO perks up and goes to it, gingerly picking it up and slowly dialing through channels. After a moment we hear FERNIE and MIRANDA.*

FERNIE

Make sure your helmet is on tight, I'm not taking any chances.

MIRANDA

Fernie, we're riding your bike through a hurricane.

FERNIE

And whose fault is that!

*LÚCIO squeals, but quickly realizes they may have heard him. He freezes.*

MIRANDA

Did you hear that?

FERNIE

Is your walkie still on?

MIRANDA

Dang, it is. Must've been interference, I'll—

*Her voice cuts out as she shuts off her walkie. The channel is just static. LÚCIO unfreezes and shuts off the walkie, clipping it to his waist. He returns to scattering decorations and haphazardly trying to decorate a handful of center stage tables.*

LÚCIO

It's happening! It's actually happening! I mean, I knew it would, such is the way of things, but seeing it all come together is making my hair stand on end!

*Thunder cracks and lights flash briefly.*

LÚCIO

Well, okay, it might be the storm doing that, but still. How magnificent, huh? Mother Nature cracking her joints. The biggest storms happen when she gets restless. . . Or was it when we get complacent? I'll have to ask her.

*The double doors swing open again as IGNACIO enters, his flashlight wildly crossing the stage.*

IGNACIO

Hola? ¿Quién está ahí?

*Suddenly, the walkie on LÚCIO's belt squawks to life, a burst of static and barely audible Selena. LÚCIO yelps and slides the walkie across the floor.*

IGNACIO

Estamos cerrados! No deberías estar aquí.

*(Under his breath.)*

Pinche cabrones.

*(Louder, in choppy English.)*

You can't be in here, es trespassing!

*The walkie squawks again, this time with the staticy laughter of MIRANDA and FERNIE.*

IGNACIO

Oye, I'm not playing! Last chance, okay? Uno. . . Dos. . .

*Suddenly, PAOLA appears from behind a folded table. She is hiding something behind her back.*

PAOLA

It's just me! It's just me.

*(She raises one hand to her eyes to block the beam of IGNACIO's flashlight.)*

Sorry.

IGNACIO

Ay, Paola. ¿Qué estás haciendo aquí?

*(Like he just remembered.)*

Hijo de— There's a storm, Paola!

PAOLA

I know, I know! It's just, it's a special night.

IGNACIO

Special night or no, you can't—

PAOLA

It's been ten years.

IGNACIO

*(A heavy nod.)*

Sí, sí.

*(A deep breath.)*

Ay, diez años.

PAOLA

Right? See. That's why I had to come. I miss him. This place, this school. It reminds me of him. Feels like him.

IGNACIO

Bueno. Pero Paola. . .

PAOLA

I know, you don't have to keep telling me. I'll go. Just, give me a minute? Un momento.

IGNACIO

*(He thinks for a second, then nods.)*

Okay. Just a few more minutes, and then I'm kicking you out myself, okay?

PAOLA

Sí. Of course.

*IGNACIO starts to exit.*

IGNACIO

You know, they never did find a good replacement for you. All those other librarians lacked that especial touch. You know?

*Almost out the door.*

IGNACIO

I say it's because they aren't as sneaky as you. You always were. . .

*(He stops in his tracks. He slowly turns.)*

Paola.

PAOLA

*(Knowing she's been caught.)*

Sí?

IGNACIO

What are you hiding?

PAOLA

Hiding? I'm not hiding anything—

IGNACIO

Paola, show me. What's behind your back.

PAOLA

Nothing—

IGNACIO

*(Stern.)*

Paola—

PAOLA

Okay, okay! You caught me.

*From behind her back PAOLA reveals her still lit novena.*

IGNACIO

Ay, güey! An open flame!

PAOLA

Don't be that way! It's a novena!

IGNACIO

Blow it out—

PAOLA

No!

*IGNACIO moves to blow it out himself, but she steps back, covering the flame with her free hand.*

PAOLA

You can't just blow it out! You'll upset the spirits!

IGNACIO

No manches, what spirits?

*LÚCIO slowly creeps out from his hiding place and cups his hands around his mouth. He makes spooky ghost noises.*

PAOLA

Ay, did you hear that?

IGNACIO

Stop it, Paola. I'm not listening to any of your brujeria bull—

PAOLA

No. Don't you dare.

IGNACIO

Este es crap.

*PAOLA gasps.*

*LÚCIO begins to rattle tables and chares as he slowly crawls around the stage. Now IGNACIO is scared, and hiding it poorly.*

PAOLA

See, this is what happens when you bad mouth el espíritu.

IGNACIO

I'm not bad mouthing—

*LÚCIO claps and the lights of the gymnasium start to turn on and off, illuminating areas of the stage with intermittent bursts of light.*

PAOLA

See!

IGNACIO

See nothing, it's just a breaker problem because of *the storm!* Siéntate y no te muevas, I'll go fix this.

*(Under his breath as he exits.)*

Of course everything goes to chet when you're here.

PAOLA

I heard that!

IGNACIO

Good!

*IGNACIO exits.*

*LÚCIO stands and glides to PAOLA.*

LÚCIO

Was that too much?

PAOLA

No, no. A little pep in his step won't hurt him. How are things? Everything okay?

LÚCIO

Sí, the kdisa re on their way!

PAOLA

How exciting! Keep an eye on them, I don't want them getting hurt by the storm.

LÚCIO

Then why do all this during—

PAOLA

It's not everyday the veil gets as thins as it is right now. If we don't do this now, who knows when—

LÚCIO

Fine, fine. You're right.

PAOLA

Mijo, if you don't want to do this. . .

LÚCIO

No, no. I do.

PAOLA

Bueno.

*(A sudden sadness.)*

Ay, mijito—

*Double doors opening in the distance can be heard, shortly after, the sound of shushing and whispers from MIRANDA and FERNIE.*

PAOLA

They're here! Hide! Hide!

*LÚCIO and PAOLA quickly disappear into the darkness.*

*FERNIE and MONICA enter, both in drenched rain coats. They shush each other as their sneakers squeak and their raincoats loudly crinkle as they take them off and hang them on a folding table.*

MIRANDA

*(A strained whisper.)*

Shh, you're making so much noise.

FERNIE

It's not my fault! I'm soaking wet!

*The walls groan under the pressure of the storm. They freeze for a moment.*

FERNIE

This place isn't going to collapse on us, right?

MIRANDA

Mami said this place was built to be a bomb shelter so—

*Wind beats against the walls. FERNIE gulps.*

MIRANDA

*(Very unsure.)*

Probably not?

FERNIE

Okay, so what's the plan?

MIRANDA

Well, my mom said she fell in love at her homecoming dance, right?

FERNIE

Uhuh.

MIRANDA

So I figure if we can find where they keep all the decorations then we can—  
*(Stumbling upon the decorations  
haphazardly thrown about.)*

Oh. That's weird.

FERNIE

Geez, this place is a mess.

MIRANDA

*(Picking up a folding pineapple.)*

This is the same theme as. . .

*LÚCIO and PAOLA's heads peak out from behind one of  
the folding tables. They disappear as FERNIE speaks.*

FERNIE

Hey, looks like there's a couple more boxes here too.  
*(Gesturing to a couple more tropical theme  
decoration boxes.)*

Are we going to be able to get all this set up in time?

MIRANDA

We better work quick. My mom's nosy, not sure how long it'll take her to check on me.

*(Beat.)*

Oh, your mom's out working in the storm right now, huh?

FERNIE

*(A little nervous, he's been trying not to  
think about it.)*

Uh, yeah. Out there giving folks updates on the storm. She's really good at it though, and I don't think they'd let her stay out if it got really bad.

*Thunder cracks and the building groans. Lights fade on  
FERNIE and MIRANDA as they continue to unpack the  
tropical decorations and dress up a portion of the gym.*

*Lights up on ALESSANDRA who stands on one end of the  
stage, windswept and storm beaten. A bright beam of  
light on her face from a camera's spotlight.*

ALESSANDRA

Hurricane Harvey may have only just made landfall, but we are already seeing reports of power outages and water rescues along the coast. If you are in a flood prone area, the city recommends you make your way to a shelter if you are still safely able to do so. More tonight at 10p.

*The bright camera light on her face shuts off.  
ALESSANDRA lets the façade go. She wipes at her face  
and spits out water.*

ALESSANDRA

*(Shouting against the buffeting wind.)*

This is looking rough man, not sure how much longer we should be out here. I'm gonna call the station, let them know we need to pull back or something.

*She steps aside and pulls out her phone. She does her  
best to shield it from the rain when a call comes in. We  
briefly hear the personalized ringtone. It's the opening to  
Selena's "Amor Prohibido."*

*She answers the phone.*

ALESSANDRA

Toni?

*Lights up on TONI on the opposite side of the stage. She  
sits splayed out on a folding table like it's a couch, a  
large woven blanket thrown over it. A glass of wine in  
her hand.*

TONI

That's real good reporting you're doing out there.

ALESSANDRA

*(A bit biting, but also a little flirting.)*

I can barely get a text out of you, but here you are calling me while I'm, I'm—

*(Trying to find the words, gesturing to the  
storm around her.)*

At work?

TONI

I text!

ALESSANDRA

Uhuh. What's going on?

*(Beat, a little more concerned.)*

You and Mira safe?

TONI

Oh yeah, no, we're all set. Thanks again for all those videos on how to board up our windows.

ALESSANDRA

I could've come over and helped you know.

TONI

It was no biggie. Mira and I took care of it. Argued the whole time, but we got it done.

*(Beat.)*

Listen—

ALESSANDRA

Hey I—

TONI

Oh—

ALESSANDRA

Sorry, you—

TONI

No, no—

ALESSANDRA

Seriously, you go.

TONI

I was just.

*(A deep breath.)*

Mira's keeping to herself tonight.

ALESSANDRA

Uhuh.

TONI

And I know you're busy right now, I mean I just watched you talk to all of Houston, but... if you're off soon, I was thinking of watching something spooky. And the first rule of watching scary movies is don't watch them alone—

*Thunder booms.*

TONI

Holy shit, that sounded like it was close.

ALESSANDRA

Did you forget I'm out in the storm?

TONI

God. Right. Yeah. Am I being selfish?

ALESSANDRA

A little bit.

TONI

Ughh.

ALESSANDRA

But in an almost endearing way.

TONI

So...

ALESSANDRA

*(Leading TONI on.)*

I was just about to call into the station, let them know we're getting out of the storm's way.

TONI

*(Leaning into the playfulness.)*

You've done your duty. Informed the masses.

ALESSANDRA

Your home is on the way back.

TONI

Oh, what's this? An open bottle of wine?

ALESSANDRA

And Fernie can handle the storm for a bit.

TONI

I'm pretty sure Mira's already asleep.

ALESSANDRA

I've just got one question...

TONI

*(Absolutely flirting hard.)*

Ask away.

ALESSANDRA

Is this a date?

TONI

Oh.

ALESSANDRA

Right.

TONI

Ale...

*Thunder rumbles.*

TONI

It's not that—

ALESSANDRA

No, I get it.

TONI

Today's just... It's been ten years.

ALESSANDRA

Wow.

TONI

Yeah.

*(Beat.)*

You know, it was actually Mira's idea to invite you.

*(Sudden.)*

Not that I didn't want to—Or wouldn't want to! It's just...

*(A sigh.)*

I think, she knows.

ALESSANDRA

Kids are perceptive like that.

TONI

Listen, I'm sorry.

ALESSANDRA

You don't need to apologize. I shouldn't have pressed.

TONI

No, no. I'm glad you did. I don't want to keep dancing around. . . *This.*

*(Beat.)*

But, maybe for tonight, dance with me?

*ALESSANDRA thinks. Frustrated. Giddy. Sad.*

ALESSANDRA

Fine.

TONI

*(Like a kid again.)*

Yes!

ALESSANDRA

But one movie, then I'm outta there!

TONI

Maybe!

ALESSANDRA

One movie!

TONI

We'll see!

*They both hang up, each smiling at their phone. Lights out.*

*Lights up on FERNIE who is putting the final touches on a tropical island made of folding tables, chairs, and assorted cheap decorations. He stands with his back to the audience, taking in his hard work.*

FERNIE

I still think it's missing something.

*LÚCIO crawls out from beneath a set of folding tables. He stands next to FERNIE who doesn't notice.*

FERNIE

Do we have anymore of those fake coconuts?

*LÚCIO looks inside a nearby bin and produces two fake coconuts. He hands them to FERNIE who takes them without looking.*

FERNIE

Thanks.

*(He places them on the display.)*

Hmm. I still feel like it's missing something.

*LÚCIO pulls from a bin a handful of leis and hands them to FERNIE.*

*FERNIE considers them and then tosses them onto the table in a kids attempt at artful flourish. While he does this, LÚCIO slinks away, hiding behind a stack of chairs.*

FERNIE

Oh yeah, now that's perfect. Don't you think?

LÚCIO

Not too shabby, Fernie.

*FERNIE whips around and comes face to face with LÚCIO.*

FERNIE

Wh-who are you?

LÚCIO

*(Puzzled.)*

You can see me?

FERNIE

Umm. Yeah.

LÚCIO

Weird. Most folks can't see ghosts.

FERNIE

G-g-ghost?

LÚCIO

Let's just keep this between you and me, yeah?

*FERNIE screams.*

*MIRANDA's head pops out from behind a table on the opposite side of the stage.*

MIRANDA

Fernie? Are you okay?

*FERNIE swivles to see MIRANDA than spins back to look at LÚCIO, but he's gone. MIRANDA comes around to see the display.*

MIRANDA

Oh! That looks amazing, Fernie!

*(She runs around the tables to marvel at the display.)*

This is perfect!

FERNIE

*(Confused, looking around the space.)*

Uhh, thanks. Mira, you didn't hear anybody else just now?

*FERNIE begins to warily look around the gym, under tables and behind stacks of chairs.*

MIRANDA

*(Not listening.)*

It's all coming together, Fernie. We'll just push some of these tables aside and then we can text our moms to come here and— Oh! Fernie I'm just buzzing with energy!

*(Finally noticing FERNIE.)*

Hey, you okay?

FERNIE

*(Brushing it off.)*

Yeah, yeah. Sorry, it just. . . I think there's someone else here with us.

MIRANDA

Come on, we're not supposed to be afraid of monsters anymore.

FERNIE

Monsters aren't real, Mira.

*(Using his phone like a flashlight to suddenly scan corners of the stage, trying to catch a ghost off guard.)*

But ghosts. . .

*As FERNIE's light searches the stage, LÚCIO does his best to always stay out of its beam.*

MIRANDA

You can't be serious.

FERNIE

You don't believe in ghosts? Like, at all?

MIRANDA

You've got to be kidding me—

FERNIE

*(Still looking around the stage.)*

There's so much proof ghosts are out there!

MIRANDA

*(Keeping herself busy by poking at the display.)*

You're worse than my mom, Fernie. I swear.

FERNIE

I'm not talking about horror movies—

MIRANDA

*(Not really paying attention.)*

Every week she watches some scary movie and then she's up all night checking closets for monsters.

FERNIE

Orbs in photos and voices in static are just the tip of the iceberg, Mira! Once you start digging it all unravels. Ll Llorona, the Cucuy—

MIRANDA

Or, or! She tries to act like I'm the one that's scared and makes a whole thing out of sleeping in the same room.

FERNIE

And then the granddaddy of them all, Bigfoot!

MIRANDA

*(This gets her attention.)*

What.

FERNIE

Bigfoot is totally a ghost! Think about it! Why else would there be so many stories of sightings and people hearing him roar, but like rarely any hair or footprints or anything?

MIRANDA

Because it's fake—

FERNIE

People believe in ghosts of people and stuff—

MIRANDA

I don't—

FERNIE

*(Shining the phone's light in MIRANDA's face.)*

So why not ghosts of animals? Why not prehistoric creatures, right?

MIRANDA

Get that light out of my face!

FERNIE

Bigfoot's just some lonely caveman ghost just roaming around the woods. It's sad if you think about it. Him being out there, all alone, no idea how much the world has changed or how much time has passed. Just howling into the night searching for his family—

MIRANDA

*(Frustrated.)*

Fernie! Ghosts aren't real!

*(Words she's wanted to say for a long time pour out of her.)*

When someone is gone, they're just gone okay. It's stupid acting like they're still here, like they'd still care about what you do.

*Lightning cracks and thunder booms. Silence. LÚCIO peaks out from behind a stack of tables, wanting to reach out, but PAOLA gently pulls him back.*

FERNIE

Mira, I'm sorry, I didn't mean—

MIRANDA

Ghosts are stupid and I'm tired of him holding her back. I... Let's just stick to the plan. Okay?

FERNIE

Yeah. Sure.

*They both take out their phones, each typing a text. They recite their rehearsed message as they type.*

MIRANDA

Mami, I know this was stupid.

FERNIE

But I don't want to see you sad anymore.

MIRANDA

There's something I want to show you.

FERNIE

And I know doing this during the storm was stupid.

MIRANDA

And dangerous.

FERNIE

But I promise there wasn't any other way.

MIRANDA

You told me love is like magic.

FERNIE

And that finding it again felt like something out of a fairytale.

MIRANDA

So I decided to help by casting a spell of my own.

FERNIE

Come to San Jacinto's gym.

MIRANDA

Be ready to dance.

*(Beat. Looking to FERNIE.)*

Ready?

*(On FERNIE nodding nervously.)*

Okay. 3... 2... —

*Suddenly, the double doors to the gym burst open as IGNACIO enters, his beam of light crashing through the tables and chairs.*

IGNACIO

Times up! Es time to go!

*FERNIE and MIRANDA yelp, both instinctively crouching behind tables.*

FERNIE

Dang it! I knew someone would catch us—

IGNACIO

Oye? You still in here?

*IGNACIO starts to make his way around the tables, searching for PAOLA.*

MIRANDA

It's okay, just stay quite.

IGNACIO

*(Noticing the decorations.)*

Ay, what's all this? I have to clean this you know!

*Starting to pull apart some of the decorations.*

MIRANDA

*(Nearly jumping out to stop him.)*

Don't—

*FERNIE clumsily grabs MIRANDA and pulls her behind chairs.*

IGNACIO

Hey! Who's there?

*The beam of his flashlight scans the audience. He slowly makes his way towards the kids.*

FERNIE

*(Forced whisper.)*

What happened to stay quite?

MIRANDA

*(Forced whisper.)*

He's going to ruin everything!

IGNACIO

This is no place for playing! Come out now! Vamanos!

FERNIE

None of it matters if we get caught—

MIRANDA

Stop being so scared of everything!

*FERNIE is stung by this, but before he can say anything, IGNACIO shoves aside the stack of chairs they were hiding behind.*

IGNACIO

*(Under his breath.)*

Mierda.

*(Stern.)*

What are you doing here?

*MIRANDA and FERNIE try to make a run for it, but IGNACIO grabs MIRANDA by the arm.*

IGNACIO

Where are your parents?

MIRANDA

Let go of me!

*FERNIE launches himself at IGNACIO pushing into and beating his gut. It doesn't phase IGNACIO.*

FERNIE

Let her go!

IGNACIO

Playtime is over, okay? We're calling your parents—

*MIRANDA bites IGNACIO's hand.*

IGNACIO

¡Ay, güey!

*MIRANDA breaks free of IGNACIO. FERNIE and MIRANDA make a break for it, but IGNACIO is able to grab FERNIE by the back of his shirt. MIRANDA, not noticing, dives under a set of folding tables, leaving FERNIE behind.*

FERNIE

Mira! Mira!

IGNACIO

That's enough! You're coming with me.

*(Out towards the darkness of the gym.)*

And I'll be back for you too, mijita!

*IGNACIO drags the struggling FERNIE away and out through the big double doors. The gym is still save for the dripping of water. After a moment, MIRA crawls out from under the tables.*

MIRANDA

Fernie? Fernie!

*(Beat. Realizing what's happened. Frustrated.)*

Dammit, dammit, dammit.

*PAOLA comes out from behind a set of tables, appearing almost like a specter.*

PAOLA

It's okay, Mira.

MIRANDA

*(Startled.)*

Grandma?

PAOLA

Did you send the text?

MIRANDA

Grandma, someone took Fernie! I don't know who he was, but you've gotta help—

PAOLA

Mijita, did you send the text.

MIRANDA

What?

PAOLA

*(Getting in close. Not quite a command, but not far off either.)*

Did you send the text to your mom?

*MIRANDA is stunned, almost like she's in a trance. She checks her phone and then looks to PAOLA. She shakes her head.*

MIRANDA

No.

*PAOLA takes the phone from MIRANDA who puts up no resistance.*

*She hits send. Lights out.*

*Lights up on TONI walking into the space with a rain drenched ALESSANDRA. She takes off her raincoat and drapes it over a stack of chairs.*

TONI

Holy shit, you weren't kidding. It's a mess out there.

ALESSANDRA

You think this is bad? Harvey's still a few hours away. This might as well be the calm before the storm.

TONI

If you want to head home, it's all good—

ALESSANDRA

You're a couple blocks away. If it gets to looking real bad I'll be able to get home in no time.

TONI

Fernie'll be okay?

ALESSANDRA

He knows to call me if he needs anything. Fernie might be grown, but that boy still gets the shakes with these big storms.

TONI

He's a good kid.

ALESSANDRA

You say that like Mira isn't.

TONI

She has her moments. A blessing of a baby, quietest newborn on the block. Thought I'd won the lottery, but, turns out she was just saving it all up for her teenage years.

ALESSANDRA

Can't imagine where she gets it from. You two get in a fight or something.

TONI

No, no. Nothing like that. It's just, I don't know. She's grown when she shouldn't be grown.

ALESSANDRA

You and her have been through a lot.

TONI

Yeah. I know.

*(Beat.)*

I mean, I don't think she sees it that way. I mentioned what today was and she was unphased. Didn't blink in eye.

ALESSANDRA

How old was she when, he, uhh. . .

TONI

Four.

ALESSANDRA

So she was young.

TONI

Yeah, I know. I know.

ALESSANDRA

Do you want her to still be grieving?

TONI

No, I just don't know if she ever really did. Fuck, that sounds so shitty.

ALESSANDRA

No, no, it's okay, no judgement.

TONI

Like, I'm certain she grieved him, she was inconsolable, but now, nothing.

ALESSANDRA

Kids don't grieve the same way we do.

TONI

I know, I know. It's just, it's been eating at me. Don't know why. Just has.

*The storm grumbles.*

ALESSANDRA

Did you know that Fernie hasn't asked about his dad?

TONI

Really?

ALESSANDRA

Yeah. Not once. Even when he was little. Never asked where his dad was or why other kids had one and he didn't. Kept waiting for it like it was a jump scare in one of your movies.

TONI

And that doesn't make you sad?

ALESSANDRA

To be honest, there isn't much to share. He was someone in my life that isn't a part of it anymore. No drama, no big reveals. Just, ships passing in the night. And sure, it used to. There's a whole part of him he'll never get to know, but I trust Fernie. When he's ready to talk about it, he'll ask. Until then, all I can be is his mom.

*(Beat.)*

If Miranda isn't asking about him, maybe she just isn't ready. *Or.* She's got a kickass mom who is doing her best.

TONI

That's a very kind thing to say to someone who keeps talking about their dead husband while on a date.

ALESSANDRA

Oh, so this is a date?

TONI

I just decided.

ALESSANDRA

You weren't thinking of updating me?

TONI

I figured it'd come up.

*ALESSANDRA comes in close, like she's going in for a kiss, but at the last second she swerves and walks past TONI.*

ALESSANDRA

Did you say husband? I didn't think you two ever got married?

TONI

Oh, I don't remember.

ALESSANDRA

You don't remember—

TONI

We were young, who knows what I signed!

ALESSANDRA

Toni!

TONI

It's just one of life's great mysteries!

ALESSANDRA

You're a mess, you know that?

TONI

Oh, yeah, 100%. Storm's pretty calm. Now's your chance to run.

ALESSANDRA

I'm still weighing my options.

*(Beat.)*

But I think I'll stay. Besides, you owe me a dance.

TONI

Excuse me?

ALESSANDRA

You asked me to dance, remember?

TONI

That was more of a figure of speech—

ALESSANDRA

No, no. You specifically asked me to dance with you and that's what I fully intend to do.

TONI

*(Unsure at first, but eventually giving in.)*

Well. . . If you insist. But! I'm pouring us some wine. Deal?

ALESSANDRA

Deal.

TONI

*(Starting to exit, but stops to hand  
ALESSANDRA her phone.)*

Here, put on something nice.

*ALESSANDRA takes the phone, there's a moment  
between them. A spark as their fingertips touch. TONI  
leaves to get wine.*

ALESSANDRA

What are you in the mood for?

TONI

*(Off stage.)*

Depends on what kind of dancing you're trying to do. You trying to wear me out or warm me up?

ALESSANDRA

*(Shaking her head.)*

How many glasses of wine have you had?

TONI

*(Off stage.)*

I'll never tell!

ALESSANDRA

*(Beat. A notification.)*

Oh, Mira just texted you!

TONI

*(Off stage. More to herself.)*

Amazing timing, Mira.

*(Louder.)*

She's probably asking if Fernie came with you.

ALESSANDRA

*(Reading to herself at first then out loud.)*

"Mami, I know this was stupid. . . But I don't want to see you sad anymore." Toni, you gotta read this!

TONI

*(Entering with a bottle of wine and two  
glasses.)*

(MORE)

TONI (CONT'D)

She's right upstairs—

*(ALESSANDRA shows her the message.)*

"I know doing this during the storm was stupid and dangerous, but I promise there wasn't any other way."

*(She quickly runs to the opposite side of the stage, leaving the phone in ALESSANDRA's hand.)*

Mira! Mira!

*ALESSANDRA also takes out her own phone and calls FERNIE while she continues to read.*

ALESSANDRA

"You told me love is like magic and that finding it again felt like something out of a fairytale.

*Lights up on TONI on the other side of the stage in "MIRA's room." There's nothing but a single novena standing on a table, softly flickering.*

TONI

Mira, where the hell are you!

ALESSANDRA

"So I decided to help by casting a spell of my one."

*ALESSANDRA crosses to join TONI.*

TONI

Ale, she isn't here! She isn't—

*(Turning to face ALESSANDRA who is showing her the final part of the message.)*

"Come to San Jacinto's gym. Be ready to dance."

ALESSANDRA

Fernie's not picking up.

TONI

I thought she was up here this whole time—

ALESSANDRA

You don't think she roped Fernie into this?

TONI

I don't know what *this* is!

ALESSANDRA

Hey, focus on me. Take a deep breath.

TONI

*(Taking a deep breath.)*

Okay. Okay. What do we do?

ALESSANDRA

Get a coat on. We'll see if Fernie knows what's going on or if... Or if he's with her. Then, well, we go to the high school and find them.

*Thunder booms.*

ALESSANDRA

Come one, we don't have long. Let's go.

*ALESSANDRA exits. TONI starts to follow when she suddenly stops and faces the flickering novena. She blows it out.*

*Lights out on TONI.*

*Lights up on San Jacinto's gym as the pairs, PAOLA with MIRANDA and IGNACIO with FERNIE, circle and weave through the stacks of chairs and tables as if they are wandering through different parts of the school. LÚCIO periodically appears.*

IGNACIO

You think you kids can just play around in here? It's dangerous!

MIRANDA

Grandma what's going on, what are you doing here?

FERNIE

We weren't playing.

PAOLA

I'm just doing my part, Mira. That's all.

IGNACIO

What do you call it then, hmm? You two trying to smooch?

FERNIE

No!

MIRANDA

Who was that man? Is he going to hurt Fernie?

PAOLA

Iggy is a big softy, Fernie will be fine.

IGNACIO

There's a storm you know—

FERNIE

We know—

IGNACIO

But still you come in here while it thunders!

FERNIE

We're not trying to cause any trouble—

IGNACIO

You're causing nothing but trouble tonight! You jovenes and that vieja.

*LÚCIO appears and startles FERNIE.*

FERNIE

Ahh!

LÚCIO

So you can see me!

IGNACIO

What are you screaming about?

LÚCIO

How can you see me?

FERNIE

Y-y-you can't see him?

IGNACIO

See who?

LÚCIO

Crazy to think Iggy's still cleaning this place.

FERNIE

There's a, umm, *guy* here. I think he might be a ghost.

IGNACIO

*(Stopping in his tracks.)*

A ghost?

LÚCIO

He was the janitor when I went to school here.

FERNIE

He says that you were the janitor when he went to school here.

IGNACIO

Are you trying to scare me?

FERNIE

No, I'm just repeating what he says.

IGNACIO

There are no ghosts here, mijito. Believe me, even when I die I'm getting the hell out of this place.

LÚCIO

Call him Iggy—

FERNIE

No, I'm not going to call him that—

IGNACIO

Call me what?

LÚCIO

Do it, do it, do it—

FERNIE

He said to call you. . . Iggy?

*IGNACIO whips out his flashlight and suddenly scans every dark corner of the stage.*

IGNACIO

No one calls me Iggy except. . .

*(To FERNIE.)*

Do you know Paola?

FERNIE

Paola?

*IGNACIO considers this and relents.*

IGNACIO

You can tell that ghost to chut the hell up.

*IGNACIO and FERNIE disappear behind the stacks.*

PAOLA

Now, Mira, I have a really important question for you.

MIRANDA

What is it?

*LÚCIO reveals himself, stepping out and standing in the open.*

PAOLA

Do you see anyone else here with us?

MIRANDA

What do you mean—

PAOLA

Just look around. Do you see anyone?

*MIRANDA looks around but sees nothing. She shakes her head. LÚCIO deflates a little.*

LÚCIO

So she really doesn't miss me.

MIRANDA

Am I supposed to—

PAOLA

No. No. It's nothing.

LÚCIO

Was I really that bad of a dad?

PAOLA

Don't worry about it, mijita. Just old superstitions. Now come on, your mother should be here soon.

MIRANDA

But Fernie—

PAOLA

Don't worry. He'll be okay. Now lets go.

*PAOLA and MIRANDA exit.*

*Lights up on TONI and ALESSANDRA as they enter "Fernie's room." Their coats are drenched and dripping, the two of them panting. A lone novena sits flickering on a table.*

ALESSANDRA

Fernie— Shit, he's gone too.

TONI

What the hell are these kids thinking—

ALESSANDRA

Mira didn't say anything? Mention anything?

TONI

If you were planning on sneaking out would you—

ALESSANDRA

She wasn't acting—

TONI

She's always acting weird, Ale!

*(Beat.)*

Sorry. I Just...

ALESSANDRA

It's okay. We know where they are.

*ALESSANDRA blows out the novena. Lights out on TONI and ALESSANDRA.*

*Lights up on IGNACIO and FERNIE enter. The folded table they linger in front of is made to look like a trophy case. A trophy on each seat and framed photos of teams hang on its surface.*

FERNIE

Where are we going? Are you going to call the cops? Is this going to go on my permanent record? Are you going to kill me?

IGNACIO

Ay, enough with all the questions. Talk talk talk.

FERNIE

Sorry.

IGNACIO

You're going to drive me crazy.

FERNIE

Like... Normal crazy or slasher movie crazy?

IGNACIO

Sla-sheer?

FERNIE

Yeah, like Friday the 13th? Michael Meyers?

IGNACIO

Do I look like I'm going to kill you?

FERNIE

*(Beat.)*

Is this a test?

IGNACIO

Ay, mijito. No, I'm not going to hurt you. But I might call the cops.

FERNIE

No! You can't!

IGNACIO

I can do whatever I want, mijo! You're in my school!

FERNIE

It's my school too, I go here!

IGNACIO

Oh so you are here for class?

FERNIE

Well, no.

IGNACIO

No, I didn't think so. You're *breaking* and *entering*. You know what that means?

FERNIE

Yeah—

IGNACIO

It means you broke the law and just for smooches—

FERNIE

We weren't smooching! We were—

IGNACIO

No, I don't want any details! You can tell it all to the cops and your parents when they get here!

FERNIE

Wait, please, you can't call the cops, not until—

*Thunder booms. The walls shake. IGNACIO is startled. FERNIE yelps and lunges towards IGNACIO, hugging him tightly. The rumble subsides and they look at each other awkwardly. FERNIE lets go.*

FERNIE

Sorry. Storms scare me.

*IGNACIO looks the boy over and then sighs.*

IGNACIO

I've been up on my feet too long.

*(He sits down and motions for FERNIE to join him.)*

Sit, sit.

*(On FERNIE sitting.)*

Storms scare me too.

FERNIE

Really?

IGNACIO

Never grew out of it.

FERNIE

But, you're here though, working while there's a storm outside.

IGNACIO

Yeah.

FERNIE

Isn't that scary?

IGNACIO

Very.

FERNIE

So how do you do it? Deal with being scared?

IGNACIO

That's a good question. If I answer it, will you tell me what you and your little friend were doing?

FERNIE

Are you still going to call the cops?

IGNACIO

I'm thinking about it.

FERNIE

*(Thinking it over.)*

Okay. Deal.

IGNACIO

I pretty much grew up in these halls. When I was a kid it was primary to high school. Learned how to speak English. Learned my numbers. My first kiss. My first heartbreak. Todo. Mi viejo said that an American school would put hair on my chest so when I was getting bullied he didn't do anything about it. And, when that didn't work. When I was still crying about the storms. He sent me off to fight. But I just came home with more things to be afraid of.

*(Beat.)*

I spent so long waiting for someone to teach me how to be brave. Spent years hoping I'd read the right book or hear the right song. Maybe someone I loved would make it all make sense. But no. Nada.

*(Beat.)*

Then one day, I'm mopping the floors, and I see a kid getting bullied. Looked just like me when I was young. Chunky. Quiet. Sad. And I didn't do anything. I just watched. And when they were done pushing him. After they said all the things they wanted to say. I watched this little boy stand up. Wipe away the tears. Tuck in his shirt. And go to class. The next day he was back wearing an extra shirt so the shoving wouldn't hurt so much.

*(Beat.)*

See, mijo. Being brave isn't the same thing as not being afraid. It's showing up the next day despite the fear. It's facing the fight head on, even when you know you'll lose. Just like that little kid, I'd been showing up to a losing fight everyday of my life. I was already brave.

(MORE)

IGNACIO (CONT'D)

*(Beat.)*

So I'm willing to bet you are too. Because you came out here even though you're afraid of the storm. Right?

FERNIE

Yeah. You're right.

*(Beat.)*

That kid. . . Did he ever win a fight?

IGNACIO

*(Matter of fact.)*

No. But. . . those bullies liked to run out of class so one day I waxed the floors extra well and sent them sliding right into a trash bin.

*The two laugh. Thunder booms. Neither of them jump.*

IGNACIO

See. You're a little braver already, no?

FERNIE

Thanks. I guess I am.

*FERNIE turns to look at the trophy case.*

IGNACIO

*(Standing.)*

Now, you're turn.

FERNIE

Wait, is that. . .

IGNACIO

I want to know why you and that little girl are here.

FERNIE

*(Pointing at a face in a photo.)*

Wait, that's him! That's the ghost!

IGNACIO

Don't try to change the subject, mijo—

FERNIE

No, I mean it, look!

*IGNACIO humors him, bending at the waist and squinting at a photo.*

Which one?  
IGNACIO

There, right there! The one smiling—  
FERNIE

They're all smiling pendejo—  
IGNACIO

No, the one smirking—  
FERNIE

*IGNACIO gasps and nearly stumbles backward trying to get away from the photo.*

Mijo, are you sure?  
IGNACIO

Yes! Why? Who is he?  
FERNIE

*IGNACIO gathers himself, pulling his pants up tight and starts to exit.*

That no good, vieja—  
IGNACIO  
*(Under his breath.)*

Who are you talking about—  
FERNIE

*IGNACIO shouts as they exit.*

Paola!!!  
IGNACIO

*Lights fade.*

*Lights up on PAOLA and MIRANDA as they come up to the tables with tropical decorations. The display has grown, spreading to more tables.*

*At the center of the display sits PAOLA's novena, still lit and flickering.*

MIRANDA

Whoa.

PAOLA

You and Fernie did a good job. I just made a few changes. Spruced it up a little.

*MIRANDA rushes off to inspect the display. LÚCIO appears at approaches PAOLA.*

LÚCIO

I thought the spell would work.

PAOLA

It did. You're here.

LÚCIO

But we did all of this—

PAOLA

For Toni, mijo. We did all of this for Toni.

LÚCIO

I . . . I just thought that while I was here—

PAOLA

I know it's hard, mijo. But we have to stay focused. This was her wish.

LÚCIO

Of course. Of course.

MIRANDA

I didn't know you were gonna be here.

PAOLA

You think I'd let you run off into a storm without your abuela?

MIRANDA

Why didn't you say so from the beginning?

PAOLA

Your mother will be here soon, we should make sure everything is—

MIRANDA

Why aren't you answering me?

PAOLA

We just have to stay on task, mija. This storm is far more powerful than I was expecting. It's got the spirits on edge.

MIRANDA

What are you talking about?

PAOLA

Conjuring a spell isn't just praying to la virgen, it's calling on all those that have prayed before you. All of that magic, all of that prayer, it's coursing through the storm right over our heads.

MIRANDA

I thought it was just a wish—

PAOLA

It is! The most powerful wish of all is one from the heart, mija. And you and Fernie made the purest wish you could. That's a special thing.

MIRANDA

So, this is going to work? We're going to help them?

PAOLA

We're going to do our best. And we're not alone either, mijita. You have the spirits of your family here with you, more than you realize.

*The sound of double doors opening and shutting as TONI and ALESSANDRA enter the gym off stage.*

TONI

*(Off stage.)*

Mira! Mira! Where are you?

ALESSANDRA

*(Off stage.)*

Fernie! Explain yourself mister!

PAOLA

Perfect! Right on time!

*TONI and ALESSANDRA enter drenched from the rain. MIRANDA runs into TONI's arms.*

MIRANDA

You came!

TONI

Mira, what were you thinking?

*(Looking up and seeing PAOLA.)*

Paola? What are you doing here?

ALESSANDRA

Paola?

TONI

My mother-in-law.

PAOLA

I hope the storm wasn't too much trouble?

ALESSANDRA

*(To MIRANDA.)*

Mira, where's, Fernie? Is he okay?

PAOLA

He's okay. He's just with a friend of mine. They should be here soon.

TONI

Did you know about this? They could've gotten hurt, Paola.

PAOLA

No, impossible. I had help looking over them.

TONI

What are you talking about?

PAOLA

Actually, he should be ready, right mijo?

*Suddenly, the lights of the gym turn on, filling the gym with the light of a dance hall. Music plays softly, slow and full of static at first until it speeds up like a tape deck hitting its stride. An undercurrent hiding the growing storm.*

*Then, a spotlight on LÚCIO. He sheepishly raises a hand and waves at TONI.*

TONI

Lúcio? Is that really you?

LÚCIO

Hey, Toni. It's been a while.

*TONI crosses to LÚCIO, brushing past MIRANDA and ALESSANDRA. TONI takes his face in her hands. Then she hugs him. Tight.*

TONI

*(With a chuckle.)*

You're scrawnier than I remember.

LÚCIO

*(Reciprocating.)*

Sorry, what was that? I was too busy counting your gray hairs.

TONI

How is this possible?

LÚCIO

You're gonna hate this, but it's kinda thanks to my mom.

TONI

If I'd known she could do this maybe I would've kept in touch better.

LÚCIO

She had a little help.

MIRANDA

Mami. . . Who are you talking to?

*TONI turns to face the others.*

TONI

What?

ALESSANDRA

We don't see anyone, Toni.

TONI

*(To PAOLA.)*

They can't—

PAOLA

This spell can bring him back, but it can't make someone miss him.

TONI

She doesn't. . . Miss him?—

MIRANDA

The spell? Our spell?

TONI

*Our* spell?

MIRANDA

Fernie and I just wanted to help.

ALESSANDRA

You and Fernie cast a spell?

PAOLA

Well, part of one. I added to it, mijita. Just a little fix.

MIRANDA

What did you do?

PAOLA

Mija, you have to understand. Your mom has mourned your father for ten years. Even I don't have the power to wipe that much pain away.

MIRANDA

Then what is this? What did you do?

PAOLA

Only one person could help heal her. My son.

MIRANDA

This wasn't the plan.

*Thunder booms.*

TONI

Mira, what was your plan?

MIRANDA

I just. . . We. . . We know you two love each other.

TONI

*(Taken aback.)*

Mira, I—

MIRANDA

It's okay. We've known for a long time. Fernie and I, we were rooting for you. But mom. . . We got tired of you hurting Ale.

ALESSANDRA

Mira, you can't force someone to—

MIRANDA

I'm not trying to force anything! I thought if you just had a chance to dance together, dance in the same place where mom fell in love, then she'd realize what was right here in front of her.

ALESSANDRA

*(Trying to help.)*

Your mom has just been through a lot—

TONI

No, Ale. She's right. I've hurt you. I know I have. Even tonight, I was being selfish. I wanted Mira to miss him. I wanted you to take care of me. And I wasn't giving anything in return. You're a saint for sticking around this long.

*(Beat. To MIRANDA.)*

Mija, I miss your father. He was the love of my life. The first person to ever make me feel safe. Feel loved.

*(She grabs LÚCIO's hand.)*

That's not the kind of bond you can just move on from—

MIRANDA

Why?!

TONI

Because he's everywhere! Every place we got into a fight. Every place we went on a date. He's in the songs we used to sing. He's in your eyes, mija—

MIRANDA

But he's gone! He's been gone!

TONI

He's right here!

MIRANDA

No he's not!

*Lightning cracks and thunder booms. The entire gym shakes.*

MIRANDA

I don't get it! He's gone! He's not here anymore! Why can't you just move on and be happy!

*The walls groan as winds beat against them.*

LÚCIO

Mijita please understand—

PAOLA

She can't hear you, Lúcio—

TONI

*(Trying to yell over the storm.)*

Why don't you understand, mija? Don't you miss him—

MIRANDA

No! Why would I?! He left! He left us all alone, why would I miss someone who did that to us?!

TONI

Mira—

*MIRANDA runs to the decorations and grabs the novena. She climbs on top of the tables with the candle held high over her head.*

MIRANDA

Dios te salve Maria—

PAOLA

Mija, stop!

MIRANDA

Llena eres de gracia, el señor is contigo!

*Thunder explodes. MIRANDA climbs onto a high stack of chairs and tables, bringing herself far above everyone else.*

PAOLA

You don't know what you're doing!

MIRANDA

By stars above and candle's light I call upon this storm's full might.

*Wind beats against the walls of the gym. The ground shakes and nearly brings everyone to their knees.*

PAOLA

Mija, stop! You're feeding the storm!

MIRANDA

Let skies tear open and water pour I send my father back through the door!

TONI

Mira, please, come down from there!

MIRANDA

With beating winds and freezing rain I wish away my mothers pain!

*An eerie spotlight on MIRANDA as Hurricane Harvey enters. Water bursts in from every corner of the stage. Water crashes against walls and tables. It sprays high into the air and brings a rush of freezing wind into the gym.*

*Some actors leap onto rolling tables while others shift and spin and move the tables around the space like they are being carried by the rushing waters.*

TONI

Paola, what's happening?

PAOLA

Not even a storm has enough power to cast this spell, but that won't stop it from trying—

TONI

What does that mean—

PAOLA

It's going to draw on her lifeforce to cast it. We have to stop her!

*Water bursts through the double doors. IGNACIO and FERNIE ride a table through the rushing waters and crash against the others.*

ALESSANDRA

Fernie!

Mom!

FERNIE

What the fuck is happening??

IGNACIO

It's Miranda, Fernie. She's casting a spell!

TONI

A spell! Is this your doing, Paola?!

IGNACIO

Nice of you to join us, Ignacio—

PAOLA

What do we do?

FERNIE

We have to reach her. Only she can stop the spell.

PAOLA

How do we get to her—

TONI

The waters are rising, we have to get out of here—

ALESSANDRA

We can't leave until the spell is stopped, if we don't. . .

PAOLA

What will happen Paola? What happens if we don't stop her?

TONI

She'll take all of Houston with her!

PAOLA

*Thunder booms.*

Toni!

LÚCIO

What?

TONI

If we don't make it out of here—

LÚCIO

TONI

Don't you dare—

LÚCIO

Listen!

*(Getting serious.)*

If we don't get out of this, I just want you to know that I like Ale.

TONI

Is now really the time?

LÚCIO

I didn't crossover just so you could shut me up, hear me out!

*(Beat.)*

I think she's great. I can see why Mira likes her.

*As LÚCIO talks TONI looks to ALESSANDRA who is holding tightly onto FERNIE as the tables churn.*

LÚCIO

She's strong and she loves you, even I can see that. And believe me, you don't do a very good job of hiding the way you look at her. It's okay that you're moving on. It's healthy. You're still young—

TONI

Careful!—

LÚCIO

And you have so much time to be happy. Don't spend it being sad over your highschool sweetheart.

TONI

Is that all you think you were?

LÚCIO

No way, I was hot shit, I know exactly why you fell in love with me! But I'm also dead, Toni. My mom and our daughter needed a hurricane to bring me back. This isn't permanent. When I'm gone, I want to know that you'll be happy.

TONI

I don't know what to say.

LÚCIO

Just promise me you'll try.

TONI

*(Beat.)*

I promise.

*Lightning cracks, sending a burst of light through the gym.*

*IGNACIO spins and moves the table that PAOLA is on.*

PAOLA

You know, Iggy—

IGNACIO

Don't call me that—

PAOLA

In any other situation this might be considered romantic!

IGNACIO

I could never love a bruja!

PAOLA

That's very narrow minded of you!

IGNACIO

I trusted you—

PAOLA

This had to be done—

IGNACIO

Bullchet!

PAOLA

When all this is over you should give me a call.

IGNACIO

Vieja, when all this is over you're helping me clean this mess up and after that I never want to see you again!

*Thunder booms and walls shake.*

FERNIE

I'm sorry I ran away—

ALESSANDRA

It was a stupid thing to do that you are absolutely going to get punished for if we make it out of here alive.

FERNIE

I just, I think you two would be a great couple—

ALESSANDRA

This is not the time, Fernie.

FERNIE

Mira doesn't like talking about her feelings. She keeps them bottled up until she has some crazy plan to fix everything.

ALESSANDRA

No kidding—

FERNIE

But at least she tries. I'm trying to learn that from her. I get so scared that I just freeze up and hope that whatever is scaring me just disappears. I don't want to be scared anymore.

ALESSANDRA

Fernie—

FERNIE

*(Looking to MIRANDA.)*

If I can get to her—

ALESSANDRA

It's too dangerous, Fernie!

FERNIE

I can help her, I know I can!

ALESSANDRA

We can't risk it, you could get hurt!

FERNIE

Trust me! Please.

*ALESSANDRA and FERNIE have a moment. She nods and helps him stand.*

ALESSANDRA

Help him get to Miranda!

*FERNIE is helped from one table to the next, slowly making his way to MIRANDA. At the base of her table tower is LÚCIO who helps FERNIE make the climb up to MIRANDA.*

FERNIE

Mira, please! Please stop this!

*(She doesn't respond.)*

This isn't what we wanted!

*(Beat. To LÚCIO. Shouting over the storm.)*

She can't hear me!

LÚCIO

Take my hand, mijo!

FERNIE

What?

LÚCIO

My hand, make a connection with her!

FERNIE

*(Still wary of him.)*

But—

LÚCIO

It's okay! Trust me!

*FERNIE steadies himself on the tower and takes LÚCIO's hand. With his free hand he reaches out and grabs MIRANDA's ankle. LÚCIO speaks to FERNIE and FERNIE repeats, shouting over the storm.*

FERNIE & LÚCIO

You used to be scared of lightning.

*(Beat.)*

Grandma told you a story about how it came from a crocodile's mouth. Every time it thundered you'd cry about the big crocodile in the sky.

*(Beat.)*

Do you remember that?

*Something in MIRANDA shifts, she starts to lower the novena.*

PAOLA

It's working, don't stop!

FERNIE & LÚCIO

One night, you were crying so bad, I pulled my dad's old crocodile boots out of the closet.

*LÚCIO takes over the storytelling.*

LÚCIO

I told you that my father had gone up into the sky and fought that crocodile himself. That he'd taken the tip of its enormous tail and made a pair of boots out of them. So next time it rained we went outside and you wore those big boots and stomped them as loudly as you could. And we shouted at that big crocodile in the sky.

FERNIE & LÚCIO

And do you remember what we shouted?

*MIRANDA lowers the novena even further, nearly out of her trance.*

FERNIE & LÚCIO

We shouted—

FERNIE & LÚCIO & MIRANDA

If you don't stop right now we're gonna go up there and take the rest of your tail!

LÚCIO

Miranda!

MIRANDA

*(Looking to FERNIE.)*

My dad's really here?

FERNIE

Yes, Mira. He's right here with us.

*Thunder booms and the table tower shakes, nearly toppling.*

MIRANDA

Grandma, how do I stop it!

PAOLA

You have to apologize to the candle, mijita!

MIRANDA

What?

PAOLA

You forced the spirit's hand, you have to apologize! And whatever you do, don't let the candle go out!

*Thunder booms and the walls groan. More water rushes in and the tables below shift and churn. MIRANDA holds the candle tight and prays.*

MIRANDA

Dios te salve Maria, llena eres de gracia, el señor es contigo.

*Waves crash and wood creaks.*

MIRANDA

I'm sorry! I'm sorry for the spell and running away and not seeing how much my mom was hurting.

*The storm starts to calm.*

MIRANDA

I'm sorry for being afraid. For hiding from how I felt. I thought if I could fix my mom's pain then maybe mine would go away.

*A deep rumble as the storm recedes.*

MIRANDA

I'm sorry. I just... I miss my dad and I wish we could just be happy again.

*The storm grows quiet. TONI uses this moment to run and help MIRANDA down from the tower.*

MIRANDA

I'm sorry mom—

TONI

Shh, shh. It's okay, Mira. It's okay.

PAOLA

You did it, mijita. The storm is calm. The spirits have left.

ALESSANDRA

Fernie, come here!

*(Embracing her son.)*

I didn't realize you were so brave.

FERNIE

Me either.

MIRANDA

Is he . . . Is he still here?

TONI

He is.

*(Turning to LÚCIO who still stands on a table near the tower.)*

You . . . still can't see him?

*MIRANDA looks, but she shakes her head.*

MIRANDA

*(Fighting back tears.)*

No.

*(To PAOLA.)*

Why can't I see him?

PAOLA

It's the candle, we've put so much strain on it. Hold it tight. Keep it close to your chest and just focus on your memory of him. Just feel the candle's warmth and—

*Then.*

*A drop of water.*

*It drips from the ceiling with a clarity that shouldn't be possible. As if the world has grown quiet so we can listen to this drop of water make its descent down, down, down. . . And into the novena.*

*The flame dies with a whimper. LÚCIO stands on a far off table. Lights above him flicker out. He disappears.*

MIRANDA

*(Looking at the candle in her hands.)*

No, no, no, no! I was ready!

PAOLA

Mijita, I'm sorry—

MIRANDA

I wanted to see him! Please, I want to see him!

TONI

Paola?

PAOLA

The candle is out. There's nothing we can do.

MIRANDA

*(Pleading with the candle.)*

No, no, no. Please. Come back. I just want to hold you again. I want to hear your voice. I want to hear your laugh. Please. I miss you. I'm sorry about everything I said.

PAOLA

He can't hear you.

MIRANDA

I'm sorry I was mad. It wasn't your fault, I know that. Please. Please come back.

*Silence. MIRANDA sobs.*

TONI

Mira. It's okay.

*(Holding her tightly.)*

It's okay, mija. I'm here.

MIRANDA

I'm sorry, mom. I'm sorry.

TONI

Shh, shh. It's okay.

*Suddenly, LÚCIO flickers atop another table. He stands, waiving his arms trying to get their attention. When the light flickers off, he disappears.*

FERNIE

Wait! I still see him!

*Again, another table. A light flickers and LÚCIO is revealed briefly.*

FERNIE

There! See! He's still here!

TONI

Fernie's right! He's here! He's still here!

PAOLA

That isn't possible, the candle. . .

*LÚCIO appears atop the tropical decorations, he is able to shout briefly.*

LÚCIO

Ale!— Altar!—

*The light goes out and he disappears.*

TONI

Ale? Altar?

*(To ALESSANDRA.)*

What is he talking about?

ALESSANDRA

I . . . I think I know what he's trying to say. Come on, we have to go to my house—

TONI

What are you talking about—

ALESSANDRA

Just trust me. Let's go.

*Everyone exits San Jacinto gym, except for IGNACIO. Rising suddenly from beneath a table, a lei around his neck. He is drenched in water. He spits out a mouthful of water like he's just been pulled out of the ocean.*

IGNACIO

*(Shouting to the gods, wiping water from his face.)*

Vieja! I want you and your family out of here! I'm tired of your pinche spells and your pinche candles and your—

*He finally sees that everyone has left. He looks at the destroyed gym. The soaked decorations. The leaking roof. Then, at the lei around his neck. He tears it off and throws it out into the debris.*

*IGNACIO screams in frustration as the lights fade.*

*Lights up on "ALESSANDRA's home." Atop a table sits a homemade altar. It's well kept, but cluttered. Long dead flowers mixed with fresh ones.*

*A small clay pot burnt dark from past smudgings. A mason jar of cedar or sage. Beaded necklaces, prayer beads, pieces of colorful cloth. And, most importantly, several novenas, each lit.*

*The group gathers around the small altar.*

ALESSANDRA

I started doing this a few years ago.

TONI

*(Marveling at the altar.)*

Ale. . .

ALESSANDRA

*(With the speed of someone nervous, embarrassed.)*

Some video online got me thinking about things my mom and grandma used to do. Little daily rituals. Got me remembering all the things they'd have stashed around the house. Prayer beads in jacket pockets, dead flowers poking out of books, candles on every open surface.

*PAOLA inspects the table with a gentleness. Touching each flower. Letting her fingers follow the beaded jewelry.*

ALESSANDRA

So I put this together. Started as just a way to remember them, but then it just sort of grew. This candle here. This one is for Lúcio.

*PAOLA and TONI both instinctively reach out, but, on noticing each other, they stop. ALESSANDRA instead grabs the candle. She offers it to PAOLA and MIRANDA who both carefully take it.*

ALESSANDRA

I keep it lit as often as I can. Or, at least. . .

*(Looking to TONI.)*

When I know you need it.

PAOLA

A tether as fragile as a wisp of smoke, but a tether nonetheless. This is the magic that's keeping him here.

ALESSANDRA

Magic? No, this isn't—

PAOLA

It is, mija. All of this is. Remembrance is a powerful spell. It's one of the first spells we learn. Whether we realize it or not.

*Thunder rumbles.*

TONI

*(Asking a question that doesn't need to be spoken.)*

Paola. . .

PAOLA

You won't have long.

TONI

How long?

PAOLA

Till sunrise.

TONI

*(Beat.)*

We'll make it count.

*They all look to MIRANDA.*

MIRANDA

Are you saying we're—

TONI

Let's bring him back. Just for today. He can see how much you've grown. He can meet Fernie and Ale. Then. . . We can say goodbye. Together.

MIRANDA

I. . .

TONI

Only if you want to, Miranda.

MIRANDA

*(Looking to PAOLA.)*

What if. . . Could another storm—

PAOLA

No. Just this one. Waiting for another could take years. Decades.

MIRANDA

I just...

*FERNIE reaches out and places a hand on MIRANDA's shoulder.*

FERNIE

You can do this.

*MIRANDA looks to FERNIE and smiles. Then she looks at ALESSANDRA as she places a hand on TONI's shoulder. The two leaning into each other for support. MIRANDA takes a deep breath.*

MIRANDA

Okay. Let's do this.

TONI

*(With urgency.)*

Okay, Paola. What do we need to do?

*Everyone follows PAOLA's instructions without hesitation.*

PAOLA

*(Taking charge.)*

Everyone, give them space. Toni, Miranda, take the candle and kneel down. Hold it between yourselves. With both hands keep one on the bottom of the candle and one on the side. Hold it steady.

*Thunder rumbles.*

PAOLA

¿Están listos?

TONI

Are you ready?

MIRANDA

I'm ready.

*PAOLA raises her hands to the sky. MIRANDA closes her eyes. As PAOLA prays, LÚCIO slowly reenters. He takes his place beside MIRANDA, completing a triangle.*

PAOLA

Dios te salve Maria, llena eres de gracia, el señor es contigo.  
We light this candle to rekindle a union.  
To reforge a bond between two dwindling flames.  
With our love and the storm above we pray.

*Thunder booms, startling MIRANDA. She slowly opens her eyes, first looking at TONI. Then, slowly, she faces LÚCIO.*

*TONI takes the candle and stands, stepping away from MIRANDA and LÚCIO.*

MIRANDA

Dad?

LÚCIO

Hey, mijita. Long time no see.

*MIRANDA kneels frozen. LÚCIO offers a hug. She nods, but doesn't move. LÚCIO comes in close and tightly hugs her.*

*Slowly, she melts. Her arms wrap around him.*

*They hug tightly. MIRANDA cries.*

**END OF PLAY.**