

The Ortiz Twins Are Coming Home

An Adventure Play

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CHARACTERS

Unless otherwise noted, all characters should be cast Latinx.

ANDREA	One half of the Ortiz Duo, 13, Female
MATEO	The other half of the Ortiz Duo, 13, Male
ABUELO	The patriarch of the Ortiz family, late 50s, male.
THE PITÁO	An ancient, nameless Zapotec god.
PITÁO COCIJO	God of Rain.
EL JAGUAR	Wished for strength.
LA MARIPOSA	Wished for freedom.
EL COCODRILO	A memory of Abuelo's past.
GUILLERMO	A Mexican Revolutionary ghost.
ALEJANDRO	A Mexican Revolutionary ghost.

ASSORTED EL PASOANS, PUPPETS, GHOULS, AND CROCODILES.

SETTING

El Paso / The Underworld / Oaxaca

NOTES

“—”	At the end of a line indicates a character being cut off by the next line.
“...”	At the end of a line indicates a stillness, whether in thought or staging.
“/”	Indicates that the next line should start while this line continues.
“[]”	Lines in brackets are physically performed rather than spoken.

ACT ONE

Scene 1 | Storytime

The stage is dark and bare, but we can hear ANDREA and MATEO arguing. They run on stage, laughing. In the dark:

ANDREA

Come on slowpoke!

MATEO

Who you calling slow?

ANDREA

You, gordo!

MATEO

You're the gorda!

ANDREA

Grandpa! Mateo called me fat!

MATEO

No I— okay I did, but she said it first!

Lightning strikes and thunder cracks. The twins scream. ANDREA and MATEO hold each other as ABUELO enters holding a small lantern, its glow is dim, but warm.

ABUELO

Cálmate, both of you, it's just a storm. No need to be scared.

ANDREA

It sounded so close!

MATEO

Like it was right on top of us!

ABUELO

You're safe here, mijitos.

Lightning and thunder. The two scream again.

Okay, how about I tell you a story, will that make you feel better?

ANDREA y MATEO

Yeah!

ABUELO

A long, long time ago, when the Earth was still young, there were two Gods, siblings, just like yourselves.

(Thunder rumbles and a dim light reveals two pitáos¹, ancient gods with wooden masks, on either side of the stage.)

A brother and a sister who shared a special, magical bond.

(The two pitáos begin to dance in unison.)

One day, the parents of these ancient gods disappeared, leaving them to watch over the village and its many people. It was hard work for the two young gods, but they did their best to make sure all the villagers were fed and cared for and—

(MATEO snores loudly.)

Mateo!

MATEO

What? Huh?

The two pitáos fade away into the darkness.

ABUELO

Did you fall asleep in the middle of my story?

MATEO

I'm sorry abue, but can you tell a different story, I promise I won't fall asleep this time.

ANDREA

Mateo wait, I want to hear this one—

¹ The Zapotec word for God or Diety.

MATEO

But it's boringggg.

ABUELO

Fine fine, what story do you want to hear?

MATEO

The one about you and the crocodiles—

ABUELO

Alright, alright. Let's see here... Many years ago, long before you two were born, your abuelo was known across the country as—

MATEO

El Cocodrilo!

ABUELO

Ay, who's telling the story?

MATEO

You, abuelo...

ABUELO

Mhm. Your abuelo was known far and wide as—

EL COCODRILO

(The stage finally bursts to light.)

El Cocodrilo!

Center stage, brightly lit, is EL COCODRILO. He is a young, strong man. Bare chested and wearing gold and green tights and a brilliant mask detailed with beautiful scales. He is flexing as the cheering of a distant crowd echoes. The faint chanting of, "Lucha, Lucha, Lucha," can be heard.

EL COCODRILO

I was not expecting such a warm welcome here in Los Estados Unidos!

(The crowd cheers.)

I look out at all of you, surviving in the wilds of Aztlán, and I can't help, but think of home, Oaxaca.

(The crowd gives a sad, but supportive, "awe.")

Fond memories of tending to my family's milpa² where we grew corn, beans, and squash for the village. One of my earliest memories is learning how to tell when the strawberries were at their sweetest. It was hard work for a little kid, sure, but it made me strong. It made me who I am today!

(The crowd cheers and chants his name, "Cocodrilo, Cocodrilo, Cocodrilo.")

Aha! You pronounce my name well enough, but do you know how I got it?

(The crowd cheers once more as three large crocodile puppets slither on stage.)

By the time I was a young man, I had worked so hard for so long that I was strong enough to wrestle crocodiles!

(The crowd cheers.)

MATEO

No way! That can't be true!

ABUELO

It's true! In fact, I used to wrestle them for fun! Not just one, not just two, but three at a time!

The puppet crocodiles pounce onto EL COCODRILO. They wrestle in a way that is rough, but playful, almost a dance.

EL COCODRILO

One morning, my abuelo came out past the milpa and found me there in the mud, legs and arms wrapped around a crocodile and he yelled, "Ay, dios mío, el cocodrilo tiene a mi nieto!"

(He gives out a hardy laugh as he raises one of the puppets into the air.)

But I wrestled the beast into the mud until it was the one crying out for help. From the crocs in the mud, to the best fighters in the city, I worked my way up the ladder, fighting champions— no, legends, to get to where I am today! El Cocodrilo de Oaxaca!

ANDREA

² A crop growing system used throughout Mesoamerica. The word milpa is derived from the Nahuatl phrase mil-pa, which translates to maize field.

El Cocodrilo de Oaxaca!

MATEO

Did you really do all that?

ABUELO

Of course I did!

MATEO

Pos, prove it!

ABUELO

Well, I do have a scar from a particularly nasty bite... But it's on my nalgas!

MATEO play pukes. They all laugh. ABUELO begins to cough. He starts gesturing with one hand towards off stage. The lights begin to fade on EL COCODRILO as he wrestles the crocodiles. His movements slowing as the lights fade.

ABUELO

Mijita, bring me my chair, will you?

ANDREA

Sí, abue.

ANDREA quickly exits the stage and comes back with a wheelchair. ABUELO thanks her with a nod.

ABUELO

Thank you, mijita.

MATEO

Are you okay?

ABUELO

Of course! I'm fine! Just a cough.

(He begins coughing again, but as the twins move closer to them, he waves them off.)

I'm fine, seriously, I am. Besides, it's time you two get going, que no? Go grab the bags, mijita.

Hesitates, but then runs off stage again and comes back with a few brown paper bags, stuffed with sweet bread, and two empty backpacks. She places them down before ABUELO and begins putting the paper bags in the backpacks.

ANDREA

Who are we delivering to today?

ABUELO

Monica wanted some tamales, Chanco ordered some conchas, Lucy ordered some bread for her menudo, and the marranitos³ are for Lorenzo, not you Mateo.

(MATEO groans. ABUELO reaches into his pockets and pulls out a few gold dollar coins. He hands them each two coins.)

Here, two gold coins, don't lose these.

MATEO

Real gold?

ABUELO

As if. You think I'd hand your butt real gold? No, just dollar coins, in case you need anything. You've got a big order today, so it's best you get going so you're back before sundown.

ANDREA y MATEO

Yes, abuelo!

(They each run up to him and give him a kiss on the cheek.)

ABUELO

I'm serious about those marranitos, Mateo, don't eat them, not even one!

MATEO

(As he exits with his backpack full of sweets:)

No promises!

³ Gingerbread pigs.

ANDREA

I'll make sure he doesn't eat any, abue.

ABUELO

Mijita, wait. Take care of your brother, okay? Make sure he doesn't get into trouble.

ANDREA

Yeah, I know.

ABUELO

You're his older sister.

ANDREA

By like a few minutes.

ABUELO

A whole twenty minutes, mijita. Boys are trouble makers. It's up to you to set him straight. Okay?

ANDREA

Yeah, okay.

ABUELO

Your parents would be proud, Andrea. Now go, your brother is probably stuffing his face as we speak.

ANDREA exits. When she does, ABUELO begins coughing. He's been holding this fit back. It hurts.

Lights fade.

Scene 2 | The Fountain

MATEO is playing with one of his gold dollar coins, throwing it into the air and catching, once, twice, then a third time, this one going a little too far away, almost making him fall over. ANDREA enters with her bike in tow.

ANDREA

Hey, careful tonto.

MATEO

Who you calling tonto, tonta?

ANDREA

Let's just get going.

MATEO

What crawled up your butt?

ANDREA

Nothing.

The two begin to ride their bikes on stage, drawing large circles and, as they do this, the citizens of El Paso⁴ begin to build a fountain. Piece by piece it is brought on stage as the twins weave their way through the crowd. It should resemble the "Pile o'Gators" statue from the real life plaza in El Paso, with the puppet crocodiles at its center.

MATEO

One day, I'm going to be just as strong as abuelo. In fact, I'm gonna start running and stuff, and maybe get a jump rope or something like in that movie, Rocky.

ANDREA

That was boxing.

⁴ This play's ensemble and puppeteers. They can be in plain clothes and can interact with each other and the twins.

MATEO

Same thing. Gotta be fit for both, right?

ANDREA

Sure / I guess.

MATEO

Do you really think he did it though?

ANDREA

Did what?

MATEO

Wrestle with crocodiles?

ANDREA

Yeah, I think so.

MATEO

Yeah. Me too. Do you think abuelo ever fought anyone we know? Like Rocky Balboa?

ANDREA

Rocky isn't real, menso. That was a movie.

MATEO

A movie based on true events. Duh.

(He comes to a stop at the now completed fountain.)

Hold up, I want to make a wish.

(He reaches into his pocket and pulls out one of the gold coins.)

ANDREA

Hey, abuelo gave you that money for emergencies.

MATEO

I just want to make one wish.

(He looks at the crocodile puppets perched in the fountain.)

These guys are big. And to think abuelo used to wrestle them.

MATEO holds the coin tight in his hands. He closes his eyes for a moment, whispers something into his closed hands, and then tosses the coin into the fountain. Plop.

ANDREA

What did you wish for?

MATEO

A new sister.

(ANDREA quickly punches him in the arm.)

Ow! I was kidding! You know I can't tell you the wish, it wouldn't come true!

ANDREA

Well, good.

(The crocodiles in the fountain begin to stir. The twins do not notice, but the ground begins to rumble.)

Whoa, did you feel that?

The twins look to the fountain and its three stone crocodiles. They begin to move, clumsily at first, as if waking up from a long sleep, but soon they begin to slither and crawl over one another, snapping and snarling. From the sky is the sound of trumpets, an almost twisted grito.

THE CROCODILES

(Chomping at the air:)

From the valleys of Oaxaca,
Master of the nahual,
The uncreated lord with no beginning and no end,
From the realm of storms and fog, comes...a GOD.

Rising from the writhing mass of stone crocodiles is THE PITÁO in his human form. He is dressed in a mix of Aztec style wartime garb and zoot suit pants. Dark green feathers, jaguar prints, gold trim. Never a full headdress, only a gold band holding back thick dark hair. His face covered in

simple war paint. He stands before the twins and stretches, his arms reaching out to the sky, his yawn replaced with the sound of a crocodile's snarl. He looks to the twins:

THE PITÁO

Hola niños.

ANDREA & MATEO

(Stuttering.)

Who—who are you?

THE PITÁO

You could say I'm a...friend of the family.

ANDREA

What do you mean—

THE PITÁO

Andrea, relax.

MATEO

How do you know my sister's name?

THE PITÁO

I know your name too, Mateo.

(MATEO gasps.)

I've known you both since you were just figments of your parent's wildest dreams. And look at you two, all grown up. A little worse for wear, but what can you do?

MATEO

What are you?

THE PITÁO

Something ancient, something old. A God.

MATEO

Whoa, that's cool...

ANDREA

I don't care what you are—

(To MATEO:)

We need to go.

THE PITÁO

Go? We've only just begun getting to know each other.

ANDREA

I don't make it a habit talking to strangers.

THE PITÁO

Andrea, mijita, where's your sense of adventure?

ANDREA

(To MATEO, hushed:)

We should go, now.

MATEO

My sister is right, we should—

THE PITÁO

But Mateo, don't you want your wish?

MATEO

What?

THE PITÁO

Your wish Mateo, don't you want it? You threw your coin in after all.

ANDREA

Ignore him, let's go.

THE PITÁO

Your abuelo made the same wish. Back when I first met him, down in that muddy valley picking corn and squash. You look just like him, mijo.

MATEO

He made the same wish?

THE PITÁO

He sure did. And you want to know what else? I made it come true.

ANDREA

Mateo, don't listen to him. Let's go.

MATEO

What was he like?

THE PITÁO

Your abuelo? He was weak. Could barely pull weeds from the dirt. Could barely lift a hatchet over his head.

ANDREA

Enough.

THE PITÁO

But I changed that. I made him strong.

MATEO

How?

THE PITÁO

(He claps and the sky darkens.)

When I found your abuelo, he was young, still a boy.

(Lights up on EL COCODRILO. No mask. No outfit. Only muddy pants. He is humming a song as he is kneeling down, pulling at weeds.)

He was pulling weeds when it came, the crocodile.

(A large crocodile from the fountain comes to life, a puppet that slithers across the stage, closing in on EL COCODRILO.)

It was monstrous. More teeth than it could fit in its mouth. Scales as dark as the night. A roar that shook the trees. Your abuelo never stood a chance.

(The puppet raises its huge jaw and clamps down on EL COCODRILO.)

EL COCODRILO

¡Ayúdame! Help me!

THE PITÁO

And I did.

THE PITÁO enters the scene, his body standing tall above the trapped boy and the hungry crocodile. He leans down to whisper into EL COCODRILO's ear and, after a moment:

EL COCODRILO

Yes, yes, anything! I'll do anything!

EL COCODRILO raises his hand into the air and THE PITÁO takes it. There is a flash of lightning and EL COCODRILO screams out as something in him is awoken. A deep strength long forgotten. A heart of fire. EL COCODRILO grabs the crocodile by its head and, with all his strength, flips the crocodile over his shoulder, throwing it down onto its back before him. He stands and, panting, looks at his hands.

EL COCODRILO

(Triumphantly:)

Yes!

(Lights shift back as he and the memory of the crocodile fades.)

THE PITÁO

I saved your abuelo's life, chamaco. Which means I saved yours.

ANDREA

That's not the story we heard.

THE PITÁO

Of course it wasn't. You were told he worked hard, right? That he became strong on his own. That he—

MATEO

I want it.

ANDREA

Mateo—

MATEO

I want my wish.

THE PITÁO

That's the spirit, chamaco. Let's talk payment.

MATEO

But the gold coin?

THE PITÁO

This?

(He pulls the dollar coin from his pocket.)

Mijo, I know real gold when I see it and this is a far cry from the offerings people used to make to me.

(He thinks. Looks from MATEO to ANDREA, then:)

No, what I deal in... is memories.

ANDREA y MATEO

Memories?

THE PITÁO

The good ones, the bad ones, they all hold value.

MATEO

That's it? A memory for—

THE PITÁO

For a gift from a god.

ANDREA

Mateo, stop.

MATEO

Don't tell me what to do.

ANDREA

Abuelo said—

MATEO

Abuelo says a lot of things. And apparently not all of them are true. You have a deal.

THE PITÁO

Any memory?

MATEO

They fade away anyway, right?

THE PITÁO

Right, chamaco. Now close your eyes, and think. Think of... Saturday mornings. Cartoons. Cereal. Your sister. When you were little, what show did you watch together?

MATEO

We used to watch Power Rangers a lot.

THE PITÁO

Good, good, and did you ever play any games? Did you ever pretend you were the Power Rangers?

Two puppets that look vaguely like MATEO and ANDREA appear downstage. They perform the memory that MATEO shares.

MATEO

Oh, all the time! We'd watch a new episode and then run out to the backyard and reenact the whole thing! We pretended to know all their fight moves and we even once made a little city out of a bunch of cardboard boxes and sometimes our abuelo would be the giant monster that we had to defeat or we'd each take turns being the monster—

THE PITÁO

Slow down, chamaco! Live in it, remember every detail. The laughs. The scrapes.

Lights focus on the puppet twins, everything else fades as MATEO remembers. The puppets are dressed in clothes matching what the twins are wearing now. They are fighting, punching and kicking each other, playfully, when suddenly the

ANDREA PUPPET pushes the MATEO PUPPET down with a shove. The MATEO PUPPET wipes at his face, as if he's crying, when the ANDREA PUPPET walks to him, standing over him. They look at each other and, after a moment, the ANDREA PUPPET extends her hand and helps MATEO up.

THE PITÁO

Give me your hand.

(MATEO raises his hand.)

ANDREA

Mateo, stop!

The puppet twins fade away right as THE PITÁO takes the MATEO's hand. The statue of crocodiles burst to life. They slither to THE PITÁO and crawl all over him until they burst apart. Legs and tails and heads twist and turn until they become a giant face obscuring the human form of THE PITÁO. Monstrous and deep green, all shining scales and teeth.

THE PITÁO

(More monster than man.)

Mateo Ortiz, I give you strength!

(MATEO screams out as the mouth clamps down on his arm.)

I give you the same strength I gave your abuelo. The same strength I gave your ancestors long ago in a time when I was still worshipped. In a time before the world you know. I give you this all to begin your quest, chamaco.

MATEO

Quest?

THE PITÁO

The same quest I sent your abuelo on all those years ago. Do you accept?

(The giant mouth clamps down again.)

MATEO

(THE PITÁO's grip tightens, the mouth almost twisting around the boy's arm, MATEO screams out.)

Yes, yes, anything! I'll do anything!

ANDREA

Stop, you're hurting him!

ANDREA reaches out and grabs MATEO's free hand to try and pull him away, but as soon as she grabs him she also screams out, THE PITÁO's magic coursing through her as well.

THE PITÁO

Then strength is yours, chamaco! It's time your family fulfilled its promises!

The face falls away and THE PITÁO is left in his human form. The crocodiles return to the statue. He lets go of the boy's hand and the twins crumple to the ground panting.

MATEO

I don't feel any different.

THE PITÁO

Give it time, mijo. You'll see.

(Looking to ANDREA, curious.)

You too, mija. Now, to business!

ANDREA

What do you want?

THE PITÁO

Your abuelo made a deal with me, but he never paid his end of the bargain. Normally I'd just swoop in and take his soul, but I've got a bit of a soft spot for your little cocodrilo and I think you two might be able to pick up where he left off.

MATEO

Take his soul?

THE PITÁO

Kid, do you want to know my price or what? I haven't got all day.

ANDREA

Yes, just tell us what you want.

THE PITÁO

My name.

ANDREA

What?

THE PITÁO

My name. I've forgotten it. That's the problem when people stop worshipping their gods. Gets a little hard to remember who you are.

MATEO

Rudolfo.

THE PITÁO

(Confused.)

What?

MATEO

Juan Pedro.

THE PITÁO

No. Look, your task is—

MATEO

Francisco.

THE PITÁO

Kid! I need you both to—

MATEO

Jeff.

THE PITÁO

Enough!

(He snaps. MATEO's mouth is stuck shut. He mumbles in surprise and turns to ANDREA, pointing to his shut lips.)

I need you both to travel back to your abuelo's hometown and pick up where he left off.

ANDREA

My abuelo's hometown? In Mexico?

THE PITÁO

(Waving his hand across the fourth wall. The sounds of wind rushing through trees and birds chirping fills the stage.)

The beautiful San Pablo Villa de Mitla, nestled in the heart of Oaxaca.

ANDREA

And how are we supposed to do that?

THE PITÁO

(Thinks for a moment.)

How many of those coins have you got?

(ANDREA and MATEO look at each other. MATEO reaches into his pocket and pulls one more coin out, ANDREA pulls out two.)

ANDREA

Three.

THE PITÁO

Alright, cough them up.

(They think.)

Come on, come on.

They quickly hand him the coins. THE PITÁO rubs them between his hands, whispers something into his palms and holds them in the air. There is the sound of a symbol crash, maybe a light flashes, a crocodile definitely yawns. He hands the coins to ANDREA.

THE PITÁO

I give you three lies. Anyone you give a coin to will believe any lie you tell them. But you only get one lie a person. Understood?

ANDREA

(Taking the coins from him.)

Any lie?

THE PITÁO

Any.

MATEO begins to mumble loudly, pointing to his mouth, trying to say something.

THE PITÁO

(Looking at the boy, he sighs.)

Alright, what is it?

(He snaps—)

MATEO

(Rapid fire.)

Julio, Carlos, Vicente, Moisés, Diego, Luís—

THE PITÁO

Wait, wait! That's it! Go back!

MATEO

Carlos, Vicente—

THE PITÁO

Vicente! That's it! You solved it! You found my name!

MATEO

Really?!

THE PITÁO

No.

(He snaps his fingers again, MATEO's lips shut. To ANDREA:)

Andrea, hija, come here. Come, come.

(She is hesitant, but moves closer to him. He kneels down next to her.)

I'm gonna level with you, he's an idiot, but you mija, I know you have what it takes. Do you have any questions?

ANDREA

Just so we're clear... You want my brother and I to go to Mexico to find your name and if we don't you'll...

THE PITÁO

Devour your abuelo's soul. Yes. That's correct.

ANDREA

I think I've got it.

THE PITÁO

And, last thing, I'm gonna need you to get this done in, oh let's see...

(He looks at his wrist, there is no watch.)

Three days?

ANDREA & MATEO

(ANDREA yelps, MATEO mumbles a yelp.)

Three days?

THE PITÁO

What good is an adventure without a deadline? The magic keeping your abuelo alive is wearing off, mijita. By sundown on the third day, if you aren't back here in El Paso with my name, then your abuelo is mine. Deal?

ANDREA

Do we have a choice?

THE PITÁO

Not at all.

(Pause.)

Well, what are you standing around here for? Get going!

ANDREA and MATEO bolt off stage. THE PITÁO watches them, his arms crossed, he is tapping his foot. After a moment he reaches into his pocket and pulls out a wooden whistle resembling a conch

shell or vertebrae. He holds it up to his mouth and blows, a beautiful sound comes out, but quickly fades.

A single butterfly puppet flies on stage and lands on THE PITÁO's outstretched hand. COCIJO also appears onstage pushing an elote cart. Her face and upper body is obscured by a sun faded umbrella. THE PITÁO does not notice her as she begins to push her cart slowly towards him.

THE PITÁO

Mariposa, I've got a little job for you. Those twins, keep an eye on them. Keep them safe. We've got one last chance to get this right, or else we're done for. Got it?

(The butterfly flutters its wings.)

Alright, go on now.

(The butterfly flies away. THE PITÁO watches.)

COCIJO

(Playing an old woman. Her cart hits XICALA in the back of his shin.)

Elotes, elotes!—

THE PITÁO

Ay!

COCIJO

Mijo, discúlpame /

THE PITÁO

Watch where you're going!

COCIJO

Elote?

THE PITÁO

No, gracias.

(He exits, limping away briskly.)

When THE PITÁO exits COCIJO closes the umbrella and reveals herself. Her face is obscured by a roughly painted turquoise mask. It's hard to define the face it depicts. It looks like you are trying to see a face hiding behind a stream of water. It's distorted, but familiar. Two long, thick braids of dark hair flow down over her shoulders.

She opens her cart and also pulls out a similar whistle to THE PITÁO's. She blows on it and the sound is much louder and more beautiful. It is followed by a roar.

EL JAGUAR enters. He is a young man dressed in a badly sun bleached t-shirt and torn up shorts. He is an animal, movements quick and sharp. He is wearing a jaguar mask that covers the top half of his face. It is also old, wooden, distinctly Oaxacan. Faded bright colors. He comes to COCIJO and waits patiently at her feet.

COCIJO

Follow the twins. Stop them from completing their quest.

(EL JAGUAR snarls.)

Watch yourself, Jaguar. Don't forget the debt you owe me.

(EL JAGUAR huffs and then bows his head.)

Good. Do this, and we can talk about releasing you from your bonds. Now go.

*EL JAGUAR bolts in the direction of the kids.
COCIJO looks on and then opens the cart umbrella up.*

COCIJO

Elotes, elotes!

Lights fade.

Scene 3 | Welcome to the Underworld

ANDREA and MATEO run on stage, panting. They both take a moment to catch their breath. On a nearby bench sleep two weary ghosts, GUILLERMO and ALEJANDRO, softly snoring.

MATEO

What...the heck...was that?

(ANDREA walks over to him and punches him in the arm.)

Ow! Stop! Doing that!

ANDREA

After what you just did? You deserve it! I can't believe you just made a deal with that...with that ...thing!

MATEO

Well it's too late now! Besides, we're on a quest now, Andrea! A real life quest!

ANDREA

Oh yeah? Well, what's the next step on this quest, hmm?

MATEO

Well... We go to Mexico!

ANDREA

And how do we do that?

MATEO

Umm...uhh...

(He is thinking very hard.)

UHHHH—

ANDREA

See! We don't know the first thing about traveling, let alone getting to abue's hometown! Abue! He's going to be so worried. We should go back—

MATEO

We can't. You heard what he said. Three days and abuelo's goners. We have to do this.

ANDREA

Oh, Mateo. What have you done?

Suddenly, the butterfly puppet flies on stage and right between the twins. They're startled by it, but watch as it flits around the stage, coming to a stop on the nose of a sleeping ghost. GUILLERMO snores deeply and the butterfly is almost pulled in when he sneezes so hard he bolts upright, his arms and legs kicking out and hitting ALEJANDRO, the other sleeping ghost. They are Mexican Revolutionaries. Their wartime clothes touched with hues of blue and silver.

ALEJANDRO

Hey! Watch it, menso!

GUILLERMO

(Through a yawn:)

Menso? Who you callin' menso?

(MATEO laughs.)

ALEJANDRO

And now you're laughing at me?

GUILLERMO

It wasn't me it was the kid—

GUILLERMO y ALEJANDRO

The kid!

GUILLERMO

Can you two see me?

ANDREA

What...what are you?

GUILLERMO

Did you hear that? They can see us! This is great news!

MATEO

Is it?

ALEJANDRO

Nothing bad ever happened from seeing a ghost, mijo!

MATEO

I can literally name five movies where—

GUILLERMO

My name is Guillermo and this is my compa Alejandro.

ANDREA

I'm Andrea, and this is my brother Mateo.

MATEO

I've never met a real ghost before!

ALEJANDRO

And we've never met real psychics before.

MATEO

Psychics?

GUILLERMO

Sorry, is that rude? Should we say paranormally inclined?

ANDREA

No, no, we aren't psychics, we're just—

MATEO

The Chosen Ones!

GUILLERMO y ALEJANDRO y ANDREA

The what?

MATEO

The Chosen Ones! We're on a quest, me and my sister! Right?

ANDREA

Umm, yes, right!

GUILLERMO

A quest? What kind of quest?

MATEO

A secret one! But it's very important!

ANDREA

Very important!

GUILLERMO

Well, we're on a quest too! Very important! And maybe what we need is you, people who can see us. Maybe we could...help each other out?

MATEO

Maybe we could, but...

(To ANDREA:)

Do you think we can pause our quest to help them out?

ANDREA

I don't know, Mateo. It might be a waste of our time.

GUILLERMO

Waste of your—! No! We can help you, with whatever you need, you name it!

ANDREA

We want to cross over, to Mexico.

ALEJANDRO

Easy. Consider it done.

ANDREA

How?

GUILLERMO

You help us, we get you over to the other side. Deal?

ANDREA looks to MATEO, he nods, she takes the ghost's hand.

ANDREA

Deal! What do you need?

GUILLERMO

We're looking for our relatives, the not yet dearly departed. But we have no idea where to look for them.

ANDREA

Wait, how are we supposed to—

MATEO

(To ANDREA:)

Oh, this will be easy for us, Andrea.

(To the ghosts:)

We just need a few, umm, details first! First, what's your name? Full name?

GUILLERMO

Guillermo Santos Santos.

MATEO

And your child's name?

GUILLERMO

Maria Santos Santos.

MATEO

And did you have a grandchild?

GUILLERMO

Yes, she was born before I left for the revolution, her name was Rosita.

MATEO

Okay, that should be all I need. Let me work some magic while you talk to my sister.

ANDREA

What?

MATEO

Buy me some time.

MATEO pushes her into the ghosts. MATEO pulls out his phone and begins typing away. The ghosts all look at ANDREA, expecting something.

ANDREA

So, umm, which revolution?

ALEJANDRO

The Mexican one..

GUILLERMO

We came up with Pancho Villa and took over Juárez. Those were the good days.

ALEJANDRO

You should've seen us. A bunch of untrained misfits, but we won!

GUILLERMO

And that victory helped kick that dictator Porfirio Díaz out of power.

ALEJANDRO

You would've been able to watch the battle from here! A lot of El Pasoans did that. Sat on their roofs and watched the battle play out. All the screaming, all the explosions. Ahh, you should've heard the children cheering us on!

GUILLERMO

Speaking of children, aren't you two a little young to be on a quest?

ANDREA

Weren't you a little old to fight a revolution.

GUILLERMO

I was. That's why I died.

ANDREA

Right. Mateo! You work out that magic yet?

MATEO

I did! Guillermo Santos Santos, after referring to the ancient texts, I have found your great great grandchild.

GUILLERMO y ANDREA

You did?

MATEO

She lives in Chicago!

GUILLERMO

Chicago? Orale. Does she have a family? Is she married?

MATEO

Yes! She's married, and might have a child on the way!

GUILLERMO

A...child!

MATEO

Congratulations Guillermo Santos Santos, you're gonna be a great great great grandfather!

ALEJANDRO

(Giving GUILLERMO a hearty pat on the back.)

Congrats compa!

GUILLERMO

Ay, this is great news! Do Alejandro next!

MATEO

No no, first you take us to the other side! Take us, and I will teach you the magic I used to find your relatives.

The ghosts grumble and they huddle together, deliberating.

ANDREA

How did you do that?

MATEO

Ancestry.com. And Facebook.

GUILLERMO

(GUILLERMO breaks from the huddle.)

You have a deal! We'll take you to the other side, but you need to understand that it's a one way trip.

ANDREA

What?

GUILLERMO

Us ghosts, we've got some tricks up our sleeves.

ALEJANDRO

Tunnels, in between the realms of the living and the dead.

GUILLERMO

We can get you in. But not out.

ALEJANDRO

You're gonna have to find another way back yourselves.

GUILLERMO

If you're planning on coming back that is.

MATEO

We are!

ALEJANDRO

Just know this isn't a round trip. After this, you're on your own.

ANDREA

We understand.

GUILLERMO

Are you ready?

ANDREA y MATEO

We're ready.

GUILLERMO

Then let's do this.

ALEJANDRO

Do you know El Paso's full name, kids? El Paso del Norte.

GUILLERMO

The Northern Pass.

ALEJANDRO

A Spaniard gave it its name. He saw something special in it.

GUILLERMO

And could feel it's deepest, darkest secret. Under these sands—

ALEJANDRO

Is a door... Uno—

GUILLERMO

Dos—

GUILLERMO y ALEJANDRO

Tres! Abre la puerta!

The ghosts take ANDREA and MATEO by the hand as the stage begins to shake. The warm light from the sun fades into a light blue as the door is opened. The twins are still in El Paso, but an octave lower.

The ghosts and ghouls and all creatures passing through appear. Spirit guides, spirit animals, lost souls, and monsters. The stage is flooded by

*dancers and puppets. A parade of fantastic beings
where the marvelous meets the uncanny.*

GUILLERMO

Welcome...to the Underworld.

ALEJANDRO

Now, I know this must be a lot to take in, but please, it's very important that you stay together.

MATEO

This is amazing! Andrea, it's like the mercado on Sunday mornings!
(Slowly drifting away from the group.)

ANDREA

What's going on? Is it always like this?

GUILLERMO

That's what I'm trying to tell you, today is el festival de los recuerdos!

ANDREA

That sounds amazing!

ALEJANDRO

Oh, it's not.

ANDREA

Wait— what?

GUILLERMO

It's actually one of the most dangerous days of the year!

ANDREA

Why?

ALEJANDRO

Memories are a powerful thing, mijita. The festival is dedicated to them, but no one is here just to remember things.

GUILLERMO

They're all here to eat.

ANDREA

Mateo, I don't think this was a good idea.

(She turns to where MATEO was, but he's since disappeared into the crowd of ghosts and ghouls.)

Mateo? Mateo!

(Turning to the ghosts.)

Where did he go?

(The ghosts shrug.)

GUILLERMO

I don't know, he's your responsibility, isn't he?

ANDREA

Why does everyone keep saying that!

(Turning to the crowd.)

Mateo!

ALEJANDRO

Now, the important thing is that under no circumstances—

(ANDREA runs into the crowd, disappearing, calling out for MATEO.)

—should you run off into the crowd. Okay.

GUILLERMO

We've got a problem.

ALEJANDRO

Yeah, I know, the twins—

GUILLERMO

No, no, look.

The ghosts turn and see EL JAGUAR weaving through the crowd, searching for the twins.

GUILLERMO

He's been tailing us for a bit now.

ALEJANDRO

I thought I was imagining it.

GUILLERMO

I think he's after the twins.

ALEJANDRO

Whatever, not our problem.

GUILLERMO

I'm surprised at you.

ALEJANDRO

Why?

GUILLERMO

They promised us magic, remember? No twins, no magic!

ALEJANDRO

Alright! You go after the girl, I'll find the boy.

(They nod.)

Lights fade.

Scene 4 | The First Sunset

ABUELO enters, he begins pacing in a tight dim light center stage, he has a flip phone held up to his ear.

ABUELO

¿Hola, Monica? Yes, hi, I was wondering if the kids brought over your bread today?

A light appears above THE PITÁO dressed as MONICA, a large poofy wig on his head. His back is turned to us. In a very fake, shrill voice:

THE PITÁO

What? The twins? No, they never came by.

ABUELO

No? Chanco either. Thank you anyway—

THE PITÁO

Is something wrong?

ABUELO

No, no, everything's okay, you know kids, they get distracted. Cuídate—

THE PITÁO

Wait, wait. There's something I want to tell you.

ABUELO

Oh, what is it?

THE PITÁO

It's just, well, señor...I've always found you to be terribly attractive—

ABUELO

Excuse me!—

THE PITÁO

It's true! Oh, I'm so embarrassed to say it, but it's true. I've always loved you!

ABUELO

I don't know what to say, I—

THE PITÁO

Just, just once, could you...say my name...

ABUELO

Your...your name—

THE PITÁO

My name! Say it!

ABUELO

Monica! It's Monica!

THE PITÁO

(THE PITÁO turns to face ABUELO. He tears off his MONICA wig.)

No, Cocodrilo! Say MY name!

ABUELO

(Seeing THE PITÁO for the first time in decades.)

You.

THE PITÁO

So you do remember me? How long has it been?

ABUELO

Not long enough.

THE PITÁO

Is that any way to treat an old friend?

ABUELO

The twins, where are they?

THE PITÁO

Twins? I don't know what you're talking about?

ABUELO

Andrea and Mateo go missing the same night you show up and that's supposed to be a coincidence?

THE PITÁO

Or your good fortune? What if I was here to help my poor old friend in his hour of need?

ABUELO

Don't call me that.

THE PITÁO

What, old?

ABUELO

Your friend. We aren't friends.

THE PITÁO

Fine. Give me what I want and I'm gone.

ABUELO

You still don't have it? Even after all this time.

(THE PITÁO is silent.)

What good is a Pitáo without a name? A God without a purpose.

THE PITÁO

Enough.

ABUELO

I guess we have something in common.

THE PITÁO

And what is that?

ABUELO

We're both failures.

THE PITÁO snaps his fingers and ABUELO freezes and raises his hands to his throat. He can't breathe.

THE PITÁO

I'm sorry, can you repeat that? I didn't quite catch it?

(ABUELO continues to struggle.)

Oh, what? Cat got your tongue?

ABUELO stops clawing at his throat and instead drops his hands down to his sides. He balls his hands up into fists. We begin to hear a rumbling sound, the house is shaking. THE PITÁO looks surprised, the rumbling intensifies and he almost stumbles, he looks to ABUELO, smiles, and snaps his fingers. ABUELO can breathe again, he falls to the ground, coughing.

THE PITÁO

(Impressed.)

You've still got a little magic in you. But it's fading..Isn't it?

ABUELO

Every day.

THE PITÁO

I know what that feels like—

(ABUELO spits in THE PITÁO's face.)

While I appreciate your warm welcome, I'm here on business. My name, do you have it or not?

ABUELO

You're fading away. That's why my strength is—

THE PITÁO

Bingo. You're as sharp as ever. Give me my name.

(ABUELO laughs.)

Time's running out, for both of us.

ABUELO

I don't have it. Never did.

THE PITÁO

I really thought that, just maybe, I'd be wrong about you. That, after all this time, that you—

ABUELO

That I could save you?

THE PITÁO

That you were still my friend. That you hadn't just run away with the gift I gave you. That you... hadn't forgotten about me. Like everyone else in that sad excuse for a village.

(Genuine.)

You were supposed to be different.

ABUELO

(Taken aback.)

I looked, but I couldn't find anything. It's like you never existed.

THE PITÁO

But I did! I do! I'm right here in front of you! Where's my story! I needed you and you ran!

ABUELO

I'm sorry.

THE PITÁO

It doesn't matter. Nothing matters if my little back up plan doesn't work, we'll both be done for.

ABUELO

The twins...you didn't—

THE PITÁO

I did. Our lives are in their hands now. Hopefully they'll succeed where you failed...friend.

Lights fade.

Scene 5 | El Festival de los Recuerdos

A small group of ghouls enter and slowly make their way across the stage, ANDREA pushing herself through them. She falls onto the floor as the ghouls exit. She is alone in the Underworld. She calls out:

ANDREA

Mateo? Guillermo? Alejandro? Guys?

A puppet version of MATEO enters and walks across the stage to tap ANDREA on the shoulders. She is startled, but then looks relieved when she sees the puppet. It speaks with MATEO's voice.

ANDREA

Mateo! Thank God, I thought I lost you.

PUPPET MATEO

Remember when we got separated from Abuelo at the horse races and we were screaming and screaming to try and find him in that crowd?

ANDREA

Yeah! That was so long ago! Where are the ghosts? Did we lose them?

PUPPET MATEO

Remember how drunk everyone was? How the floor was sticky and gross?

ANDREA

Yeah? I remember. Where are the ghosts, Mateo?

PUPPET MATEO

Remember how relieved abuelo was when he found us? How he bought us ice cream and let us bet on any horse we wanted?

ANDREA

Yeah. I remember that. You have a really good memory, Mateo.

(Starting to back away.)

I'm gonna go look for the ghosts, okay? How about you stay here and—

The puppet suddenly reaches out and grabs her hand and pulls her in close.

PUPPET MATEO

No. Stay and remember.

The puppet puts ANDREA in a trance. You can barely make out what they are saying to each other, but they laugh at the same time, cry at the same time, yell at the same time. The puppet is putting her through an emotional rollercoaster of memories so it can feed.

Lights fade on ANDREA and the puppet.

MATEO and ALEJANDRO enter.

MATEO

Andrea!

ALEJANDRO

Andrea!

MATEO

Andrea where are you!

ALEJANDRO

This is not good. This is not good at all.

MATEO

We'll find her. How big can the underworld be?

ALEJANDRO

You're joking, right?

MATEO

(Laughs nervously:)

Andrea!

ALEJANDRO

You know, I've been thinking. You two, you really shouldn't be out here. I don't know what I was thinking bringing you down into the underworld.

MATEO

Well, when you say it out loud like that yeah, you're super irresponsible.

ALEJANDRO

Hey!

MATEO

It's true though. Andrea!

ALEJANDRO

Don't you think your parents are going to be worried about you?

MATEO

Our parents aren't really around anymore.

ALEJANDRO

Oh. I see. Andrea!

(Deep breath:)

It's just been Guillermo and me for a long time now. We both got done in by the same piece of dynamite. It caused quite a mess, but we've been friends ever since. So I know a little something about, you know, sticking together, and stuff.

MATEO

You're not good at this.

ALEJANDRO

Yeah, I know. Andrea!

(GUILLERMO runs on stage.)

Guillermo! Any luck finding the girl?

GUILLERMO

No, big crowd, I keep getting turned around. I see you found Mateo. We should keep moving, it's dangerous—

The snarl of a jaguar can be heard off stage. A crowd of ghosts cry out, some run on stage and then off, trying to get away from the beast man.

GUILLERMO

That's not good.

EL JAGUAR enters. He carries himself confidently, like an animal about to pounce. He looks from GUILLERMO to ALEJANDRO.

EL JAGUAR

Who are you two?

GUILLERMO

No one important.

ALEJANDRO

Just showing our little friend around.

(He places his hands on MATEO's shoulders, and moves him further back to protect him.)

EL JAGUAR

(To MATEO:)

You should never trust ghosts, chamaco. No good can come from them.

ALEJANDRO

We're right here.

EL JAGUAR walks up to ALEJANDRO. He is massive compared to the thin ghost. EL JAGUAR lets out a small laugh before he grabs the ghost by the collar and lifts him into the air.

ALEJANDRO

Hey! Put me down!

EL JAGUAR

Whatever you say.

He throws the ghost across the room and turns to face GUILLERMO.

EL JAGUAR

Leave now or—

MATEO

(Tapping on EL JAGUAR's back. He turns around and looks down at the boy.)

Hey, mister. You're pretty strong. But guess what? So. Am. I.

MATEO wraps his arms around EL JAGUAR's waist and makes an effort to flip him over, like he's seen in wrestling, but he struggles to even get the man to budge. He tries. And tries. And EL JAGUAR laughs. MATEO stops and steps back, looking at his hands, disappointed.

MATEO

But he said—

EL JAGUAR

That's what happens when you trust a god, mijito. They never deliver.

MATEO

How do you know about that?

EL JAGUAR

It's a small world. Let's just say I've got a friend who wants to make sure you and your sister never make it out of here. Now, where *is* your sister?

A puppet version of ANDREA enters. It walks over to EL JAGUAR and taps on his back.

PUPPET ANDREA

Remember me?

EL JAGUAR

There you are, you need to come with me.

PUPPET ANDREA

Remember teaching me how to swim?

EL JAGUAR

What?

PUPPET ANDREA

Remember how nervous you were, how you wouldn't take your eyes off me?

EL JAGUAR

I don't...remember... Get out of my head!

PUPPET ANDREA

(The puppet grabs him, and pulls him down.)

No. Remember.

EL JAGUAR is caught in a trance, same as ANDREA's. GUILLERMO and ALEJANDRO run over to MATEO.

GUILLERMO

We need to go, now.

MATEO

What is that thing?

ALEJANDRO

A leech.

GUILLERMO

And if what that big cat said is true, it means we've got someone bigger to worry about.

MATEO

Who?

ALEJANDRO

We need to find your sister and get you out of here. Let's go.

The three run off stage, leaving EL JAGUAR caught in the puppets snare. We see them laugh. Then cry. Then yell. Then— EL JAGUAR snaps out of it, pulling himself free. He looks at the puppet and then around at the empty stage. He snarls and picks up the puppet and throws her off stage. He exits.

Lights up on ANDREA and the puppet MATEO. She is still caught in a trance. GUILLERMO, ALEJANDRO, and MATEO enter.

ALEJANDRO

Oh no.

He kneels down beside her and waves his hand between her and the puppet. She isn't fazed. The cycle of laughing, crying, and yelling continues.

GUILLERMO

This isn't good.

MATEO

How do we get her out of it?

ALEJANDRO

I don't know.

(Turning to GUILLERMO.)

GUILLERMO

Don't look at me!

(A jaguar snarls off stage.)

ALEJANDRO

We need to do something, quick.

From off stage enters a puppet of a monarch butterfly. No one notices it except for MATEO. He watches it as it glides around the room.

MATEO

Hey, you're back...

The butterfly puppet turns and flies towards him. It lands on his head for a moment and then hops off, gliding over to ANDREA. It glows. She takes a deep breath and breaks free from the trance. She crawls away backwards, very quickly trying to get away. The butterfly flies over to the puppet and lands on its head. It goes dormant.

ANDREA

(Running to MATEO and hugging him.)

Mateo! It was horrible!

MATEO

We have to leave.

ANDREA

Yeah, no kidding.

MATEO

No, there's someone—

EL JAGUAR enters. He looks at MATEO and then ANDREA.

EL JAGUAR

Oh good, you found your sister.

ANDREA

Who are you?

EL JAGUAR

I've been looking for you.

(He steps closer to her.)

MATEO

Get away from us.

ANDREA looks at her brother, then to EL JAGUAR. She reaches a hand into her pocket and then steps towards him.

MATEO

What are you doing?

ANDREA

I don't think we've met.

(She offers her hand to EL JAGUAR.)

I'm Andrea.

EL JAGUAR

(He laughs a deep, throaty laugh.)

Finally, someone with manners. You could learn something from your sister, chamaco.

(He takes her hand.)

I'm El Jaguar and I'm here to—

ANDREA

It's good to meet you El Jaguar, but there's just one little problem.

EL JAGUAR

And what's that?

ANDREA

We aren't the kids you're looking for.

A sound ripples across the stage and the stars above seem to churn and writhe. The smile fades from EL JAGUAR's mouth. After a moment, he looks down at their hands, and then at the others on stage. He lets go.

EL JAGUAR

I'm looking for two kids, twins, have you seen them?

ANDREA

Twins? No, we haven't seen anyone, have you?

MATEO

(Confused.)

No...no I haven't. How about you guys?

GUILLERMO

I thought I saw some by the mercado?

ALEJANDRO

No, it was by the fountains.

GUILLERMO

Or was it over by the mariachi spiders?

EL JAGUAR

(Snarls.)

You're no help. Get out of my way.

(He cuts through the twins and the ghosts and exits.)

MATEO

(To ANDREA:)

What did you do?

ANDREA

(Pulling out the remaining two gold coins.)

Just told a little lie. I guess these things actually work.

A loud snarling can be heard off stage and people scream. The ghosts turn towards the sound.

GUILLERMO

That's some powerful stuff there, mijita.

The butterfly puppet starts flying around the room, circling the twins.

ALEJANDRO

Looks like you've made a friend.

The butterfly puppet begins to nudge at the twins, trying to lead them off stage.

GUILLERMO

I've heard of things like this. Spirit guides. But I've never seen one...

ALEJANDRO

You should follow it.

(Another snarl from off stage.)

We'll keep an eye on the big guy, keep him distracted if that magic of yours wears off.

ANDREA

Thank you for your help guys.

Another snarl and the sounds of something breaking.

GUILLERMO

Go, go! We'll cross paths again, I'm sure of it!

MATEO

Wait! Take this!

(MATEO pulls out his cell phone and hands it to the ghost.)

That magic we promised you, it's this. Press this little leaf icon to find the rest of your family.

ALEJANDRO

Thank you for this, mijito.

GUILLERMO

Stay safe, the both of you.

The ghosts exit, following the commotion and the twins follow the butterfly off stage.

Lights fade.

Scene 6 | Awakening

EL JAGUAR enters. He is tired and frustrated. Then, there is the sound of footsteps, running. Then a giggling. He looks around. The stage grows darker. More giggling. He turns and turns, looking for the sound and then, suddenly, the two child puppets jump out from the darkness and latch onto him, latching onto his arms and pulling him down onto his knees. He screams out.

PUPPET MATEO

Remember that bike I wanted? Remember how hard you worked to save up for it?

PUPPET ANDREA

Remember abuelo's menudo? Remember the taste? Remember how the smell would fill the house on Christmas mornings?

PUPPET MATEO

Remember how you would drive me around in your car and we'd take sharp turns in empty parking lots?

PUPPET ANDREA

Remember fourth of July and those fireworks you bought us?

PUPPET MATEO

Remember—

PUPPET ANDREA

Remember—

EL JAGUAR

No! No, I don't remember!

COCIJO

Oh, now isn't that just sad.

COCIJO enters. Her face still obscured by her wooden mask. She claps and the twin puppets run away. She walks over to the panting EL JAGUAR.

COCIJO

(Tsk tsk tsk.)

I give you the simplest task I possibly could and you got yourself tricked by a little girl.

(She places her hand on his head and quickly pulls it away.)

That is some powerful memory magic. Looks like I'm going to have to wipe your slate clean again.

(She rubs her hands together and begins to hum.)

EL JAGUAR

Wait...don't...

COCIJO

It's sad really. A father with no memories of his children.

EL JAGUAR

What are you talking about?

COCIJO

I do love these little chats, right before I shake that etcha-sketch of a head of yours.

EL JAGUAR

Wait, wait...I'm starting to remember! Mateo, Andrea—

COCIJO

That's the problem, hun. We can't have that.

(She takes a deep breath and places her hands on his head.)

EL JAGUAR

(Crying out.)

Let me go, please!

(Thunder rumbles and EL JAGUAR cries out in pain, but something is different. COCIJO looks confused. She looks down at the panting EL JAGUAR.)

I...still remember.

(Thunder rumbles once more as COCIJO tries to wipe his memory again, but this time there is no effect. EL JAGUAR laughs.)

Those kids, that coin... they broke your curse.

(COCIJO steps away as EL JAGUAR laughs.)

COCIJO

Well, this is unfortunate.

EL JAGUAR

(Standing up and ready to pounce.)

I've been waiting a long time to do this.

(He greets ready to leap at her when she snaps. He freezes.)

COCIJO

Somehow my brother still finds ways to break my toys.

(She walks over to the frozen EL JAGUAR and places her hand on his wooden mask.)

El Jaguar, a long time ago you made a deal with me. You wanted to be a guardian. A protector. A better father. I gave you strength and now you're just a broken pawn. Useless.

EL JAGUAR

What are you doing?

COCIJO

I can't afford having a beast man running around with his memories. Not with all the powers I've given him.

(She begins to pull away his mask. EL JAGUAR screams out.)

El Jaguar. Welcome back to mortality.

EL JAGUAR screams.

Lights fade.

Scene 7 | The Sanctuary & The Storm

The butterfly puppet enters, followed quickly by MATEO and ANDREA. As they enter, the sound of birds and wind in the trees can be heard.

ANDREA

Where are we?

MATEO

I've...never been in a forest before. These are...tall trees...

The butterfly puppet continues to flit around the stage when LA MARIPOSA enters. She is a tall woman with long dark hair and a flowing dress of greens and oranges.

LA MARIPOSA

Oh, there you are! You made it back safely!

ANDREA

Are you talking to us?

LA MARIPOSA

No, no. I was talking to our little friend here.

The butterfly puppet flies to LA MARIPOSA and lands on her outstretched hand. She brings it up to her face and it nuzzles her cheek.

LA MARIPOSA

We've been worried sick.

MATEO

We?

LA MARIPOSA

Well, myself, and the rest of her family of course.

Dozens of butterfly puppets begin to enter. They flutter around the room, first circling all around LA MARIPOSA and then the twins, like flocks of birds flying in unison.

ANDREA

What's going on?

MATEO

What are they doing?

LA MARIPOSA

Don't be afraid. They just want to get to know you, that's all.

(To the puppets.)

Alright, that's enough! Give them some room to breathe!

The puppets fly off in all directions, leaving the twins with LA MARIPOSA.

LA MARIPOSA

I'm La Mariposa. It's nice to finally meet you both. Andrea. Mateo.

MATEO

Okay, cool. Another person that knows our names. That's not creepy at all.

ANDREA

Are you a god?

LA MARIPOSA

Oh no, mijita. Not me. Our mutual friend, that Pitáo, asked me to help you on your journey.

MATEO

Where are we?

LA MARIPOSA

Michoacan.

ANDREA

Michoacan, like, the Michoacan in Mexico?

LA MARIPOSA

Is there another one I don't know about?

MATEO

But that means—

ANDREA

We're almost halfway there!

MATEO

But how is that possible?

LA MARIPOSA

Space works differently in the underworld. Tricking those ghosts into helping you was a smart idea.

ANDREA

We didn't trick them.

LA MARIPOSA

Whatever you want to call it, it was smart.

MATEO

We need to get to Oaxaca, do you know how to get there?

LA MARIPOSA

Of course, it's quite a long journey though.

MATEO

How long?

LA MARIPOSA

Days, at least—

ANDREA

Days! We don't have that kind of time.

LA MARIPOSA

Oh, I know. That's why I'm here to help. Did you already forget what my name was?

(Suddenly, her own set of monarch wings open.)

La Mariposa, guardian of this kaleidoscope of butterflies.

ANDREA y MATEO

Whoa.

ANDREA

You can fly?

LA MARIPOSA

Of course, how else would I be able to follow my friends here?

MATEO

(Walking up to her and touching her wings.)

So, could you, like, fly us there.

LA MARIPOSA

(Slapping his hand away.)

First of all, rude. Second of all, that's the plan.

The rustling of bushes can be heard. A twig snaps.

They all turn to face the direction of the noise.

ANDREA

Do you think—

MATEO

Maybe the magic wore off?

LA MARIPOSA

Come here, both of you.

The twins run to her sides and her wings seems to wrap around them, guarding them from the noise as it intensifies. Finally, EL JAGUAR, or rather, the man that was once EL JAGUAR, enters. He looks exhausted. He is thin, still wearing the same clothes as before, but maskless.

EL JAGUAR

(Raising his hands in the air.)

I'm not here to hurt you, I promise.

LA MARIPOSA

Who are you?

EL JAGUAR

I am...I was El Jaguar, but now...I don't know who I am.

ANDREA

Why should we trust you?

EL JAGUAR

I've broken free from that god's curse.

LA MARIPOSA

The wish granter?

EL JAGUAR

No, the woman. But you've met the wish granter, haven't you?

MATEO

What's his name?

LA MARIPOSA

No one knows his name, not anymore.

ANDREA

We need his name.

MATEO

It's the only way to save our Abuelo.

EL JAGUAR

What?

ANDREA

He's after his soul. He'll spare abue in return for his name.

EL JAGUAR

Let me help. I...I think I've lost someone too. It's coming back to me in pieces. But...I think we're on the same side. Please.

COCIJO appears up stage and, in her arms, is a large rainstick. She raises it over her head and, as the beads cascade, lightning flashes and thunder cracks. She is brewing a storm. They all look up at the trees. Suddenly, a swarm of puppet butterflies enter and exit the stage. They are scared.

LA MARIPOSA

A storm? Where did that come from?

Wind begins to roar and we can hear branches snapping.

EL JAGUAR

We need to leave, now. It's not safe here. Trust me.

Finally the twins break away from LA MARIPOSA and run towards EL JAGUAR. He grabs them and holds them as the wind intensifies. Everyone on stage is buffeted by the winds. LA MARIPOSA almost collapse.

ANDREA

Come with us!

LA MARIPOSA

I can't, not in this storm!

MATEO

It's not safe here!

EL JAGUAR

This is no normal storm, can't you see that.

The wind hits again, more branches snap and they all fall to the ground.

LA MARIPOSA

I can't fly in this!

EL JAGUAR

Fine.

He grabs the twins and tries to stand, but the wind forces him back down. The storm is too strong. MATEO whispers something in ANDREA's ear.

ANDREA

No, we can't do that—

MATEO

It might be our only chance—

ANDREA

Mateo, no—

MATEO pulls something from ANDREA's hand and breaks away from her. He pushes his way towards LA MARIPOSA, the wind buffeting him, almost knocking him over. He finally reaches her, she's crumpled over and scared. He takes her hands.

MATEO

Mariposa, look at me.

(She looks up at him and meets his eyes.)

Everything is going to be okay if you fly us out of here.

There is a booming sound from the sky as the stars churn and writhe. LA MARIPOSA's face grows calm. She looks at MATEO and then to ANDREA and EL JAGUAR.

LA MARIPOSA

(To MATEO:)

Okay. Let's go.

(Her wings burst open and she grabs MATEO by the hand. She cuts through the wind with ease and grabs ANDREA and EL JAGUAR.)

Hold on tight!

Her wings burst open fully, their bright orange almost blinding. The wind is loud and almost deafening.

Blackout.

END OF ACT ONE.

INTERMISSION

Lights up on THE PITÁO and ABUELO sitting on a couch watching tv, a faint cold light flickering in front of them. We can't see what they're watching, but we can hear it. It's the bus fight scene from the 1997 film, Selena⁵. The audio of the scene can start at any point before the following lines. This moment should happen either early on during the intermission, or right in the middle.

THE PITÁO as SELENA

(Mouthing along with her words:)

Dad, I don't care what you say, it doesn't matter, I love him and that's it!

EDWARD JAMES OLMOS (V.O.)

What did you say?

THE PITÁO as SELENA

I said I love him, and he loves me too.

EDWARD JAMES OLMOS (V.O.)

Of course he does! You're young and you're beautiful and you're rich!

THE PITÁO as SELENA

You would say that! It's not like that! He cares about me. The real me. Inside. And there is no way I'm gonna let you take that away.

(THE PITÁO raises a remote and pauses the film.)

This scene always gets me...I want a snack, do you want anything?

ABUELO

No, I'm good, I'm gonna run to the bathroom.

THE PITÁO

That's the third time—

ABUELO

⁵ Go watch it, even if you've already seen it, watch it again, for la cultura.

Shut up.

They both exit.

ACT TWO

Scene 1 | The Crash

We hear the twins screaming, distant at first, but growing louder as they fall from the sky. We can hear them as they crash through tree branches. One after another ANDREA, MATEO, EL JAGUAR, and LA MARIPOSA tumble onto the stage. They each stand up and gather themselves, stretching and cleaning themselves off.

ANDREA

Owww.

MATEO

Oh, that's gonna bruise.

EL JAGUAR helps LA MARIPOSA to her feet, but she flinches. She's in pain. She spreads her wings, but one is limp and torn.

LA MARIPOSA

Oh no.

EL JAGUAR

It'll be okay.

LA MARIPOSA looks at EL JAGUAR. There is a moment of stillness as she holds him, but then she breaks away.

LA MARIPOSA

Are you okay?

EL JAGUAR

I'm fine.

MATEO

We're good! The kids. The *children*. They're fine.

ANDREA

(Punching him in his arm.)

Quit it. Mariposa, are you okay?

LA MARIPOSA

I'll be fine, thank you.

(Looking at the sky.)

Storm's gone, at least.

ANDREA

Where are we?

EL JAGUAR.

I recognize these mountains. We're in Oaxaca.

MATEO

Oaxaca? That's good! Let's get a move on!

LA MARIPOSA tries to stand, but she falters.

EL JAGUAR

We should rest. Besides, the sun is going down.

MATEO

The sun— How many days has it been?

EL JAGUAR

Since your journey started? Two.

MATEO

Two?! We can't waste anymore time, we have to go, now.

ANDREA

Mateo, enough.

MATEO

What?

ANDREA

Look at her. She's hurt and it's because of you.

MATEO

I...I had to.

ANDREA

No, you didn't. We could've figured something out.

MATEO

You don't know that.

ANDREA

What I know is that you ignored me and someone got hurt.

MATEO

Ignored you? You don't give me orders. I saved us and look at where we are. Oaxaca!

ANDREA

Enough.

LA MARIPOSA

Is everything okay?

ANDREA

Yes. Everything's fine. Let's make camp, or whatever. Try and get some rest.

MATEO

Who put you in charge?

ANDREA

Abue did, Mateo. I'm supposed to protect you.

MATEO

I don't need protecting.

ANDREA

Yeah? Really? Who's the one that made a deal with a God that crawled out of a fountain? Who's the one that called themselves the Chosen One? Who's the one who got lost in the Underworld! The Underworld, Mateo!

MATEO

I did what I had to do.

LA MARIPOSA

What are you talking about?

MATEO

I lied to you. I used a magic coin to convince you to fly us out here.

The stars churn as the magic of the lie is broken.

LA MARIPOSA

Wait, I remember. You said...you said everything would be fine, but— It wasn't!

(She stands quickly and immediately falls over.)

God, the others. My butterflies. The storm. I need to get back to them.

(She extends her wings as best she can and tries to take off, but fails.)

EL JAGUAR

You need to rest.

LA MARIPOSA

I need to go back.

MATEO

We can't. None of us can. We're stuck out here, just like you.

ANDREA

Enough, Mateo. You're being mean.

MATEO

Back off.

ANDREA

Excuse me?

MATEO

Have you forgotten why we're out here? Who we're doing this for? Because I haven't.

ANDREA

Of course I haven't, but we need to rest.

MATEO

Give me the coin.

ANDREA

What?

MATEO

The last coin. Give it to me. I'm finishing this with or without you.

ANDREA

No, you clearly can't be trusted with it.

MATEO

Give it to me, Andrea.

ANDREA

No!—

MATEO

Andrea—

ANDREA

Enough!

Her voice is loud, beyond human abilities. It echoes through the forest. It slams MATEO into the ground. He's dumbfounded. As she speaks, the ground begins to rumble.

ANDREA

Magic, Quests, Gods, I am exhausted! I thought, maybe, just maybe, this would be my chance to prove myself, to show everyone what I am capable of, but even with magic and monsters and gifts, I am still cleaning up after you!

(The rumbling slows and dissipates.)

EL JAGUAR

I knew it.

ANDREA

What?

EL JAGUAR

Magic, I knew I could smell it on you.

MATEO

The ritual. My wish— when you grabbed me you— That was for me! You're why I didn't get my wish!

ANDREA

Mateo, I didn't mean to. I was trying to save you.

MATEO

You stole what was mine!

ANDREA

It's not like that!

MATEO

Screw this.

*MATEO gets up and runs off stage, into the woods.
ANDREA stares off stage at the space her brother
has left. She begins to walk in the other direction,
off stage.*

LA MARIPOSA

Where are you going?

ANDREA

Firewood, that's what we need. We need firewood.

LA MARIPOSA

Mijita, it's going to be okay.

ANDREA

No. We need firewood. That's what people do in these situations, right? Firewood. I can do this. I can do this.

ANDREA exits. EL JAGUAR and LA MARIPOSA turn to each other, sitting awkwardly in the silence.

EL JAGUAR

I'll, umm, I'll go talk to the boy. Have you got—

LA MARIPOSA

Yeah. Good luck.

EL JAGUAR

You too.

EL JAGUAR exits. LA MARIPOSA turns, but a rustling in the bushes makes her freeze. After a moment, a long snake puppet slithers on stage. It is THE PITÁO.

LA MARIPOSA

You, again. Already checking in on me?

THE PITÁO

(The head of the puppet rises to meet her eyes.)

What happened?

LA MARIPOSA

There was a storm. We crashed. I'm—

THE PITÁO

Hurt. There's nothing sadder than a butterfly with a broken wing.

LA MARIPOSA

I'll recover.

THE PITÁO

Of course you will. How is the journey going?

LA MARIPOSA

Did you send that storm?

THE PITÁO

No, but I have an idea of who did, and it's not good for us. The kids are running out of time.

LA MARIPOSA

There's something else. The Jaguar. He's not under her spell anymore. He says he remembers things.

THE PITÁO

I'll deal with the cat. You get the twins to the village, get them to my temple.

LA MARIPOSA

They're fighting.

THE PITÁO

Fighting?

LA MARIPOSA

The girl, she has powers, magic. The boy got mad and he—

THE PITÁO

He's more trouble than he's worth.

LA MARIPOSA

What do you want me to do about it?

THE PITÁO

You could leave him.

LA MARIPOSA

He's just a kid.

THE PITÁO

Summer was hot this year, wasn't it?

LA MARIPOSA

What?

THE PITÁO

And this past winter? When was the last time you'd seen that much snow? That much ice?

LA MARIPOSA

I lost a lot of friends this winter. My mariposas, we used to number in the thousands, but now...

THE PITÁO

It's only going to get worse.

LA MARIPOSA

You were always one to kick a dog while it's down.

THE PITÁO

What if I said I could make all these problems go away?

LA MARIPOSA

I...don't understand.

THE PITÁO

It's getting harder to make the journey every year. Winters are getting harsher, summers are getting hotter.

LA MARIPOSA

The world's changing, I can feel it.

THE PITÁO

And you're—

LA MARIPOSA

Afraid. Yes.

THE PITÁO

Do you remember the way it felt when I first changed you, gave you the gift of flight?

LA MARIPOSA

I was so young then.

THE PITÁO

Itching to see the world. And I let you do just that.

LA MARIPOSA

God, the wind through my hair. Mountains beneath my feet. But, I had a family, didn't I?

THE PITÁO

They've moved on. Your husband, your children. What's left for you there is nothing, but dirt and rocks, and you know that, don't you? You can feel it?

LA MARIPOSA

I do, but...I want to be sure—

THE PITÁO

I'll tell you what, let's make a deal. Your wing is hurt. You're stranded here, and summer is almost up. I could mend that wing for you. Maybe even make them a little stronger, you a little younger. Both these things for...

LA MARIPOSA

For what?

THE PITÁO

The boy. Get rid of him. The girl, she's resourceful. Smart. She'll get the job done.

LA MARIPOSA

How could I even—

THE PITÁO

Convince her. She has to make this choice. No looking back from here on forward. It would only slow her down. You're close to my temple, close to my name, I can feel it.

LA MARIPOSA

But the boy—

THE PITÁO

Is weak. He'll only get hurt if he continues. Or worse. He'll continue to get those around him hurt.

LA MARIPOSA

Okay. I'll do it.

THE PITÁO

Say it.

LA MARIPOSA

I'll get rid of the boy, and you'll mend my wing.

THE PITÁO

So we have a deal?

LA MARIPOSA

Yes.

Lights fade.

Scene 2 | Skipping Stones

MATEO sits in the moonlight, on a log, throwing stones into a pond. We hear a skip, skip, plop. The sound of buzzing dragonflies. A chorus of frogs. EL JAGUAR enters and sits next to the boy. He picks up a stone and throws it, skip, skip, skip, skip, skip, plop.

MATEO

Wow, how many times was that, four?

EL JAGUAR

Five. But who's counting?

(MATEO throws another, skip, skip, plop. He sighs.)

Hey, not bad.

MATEO

Not good either.

(He throws another, plop.)

EL JAGUAR

(He picks up another stone.)

Watch. Hold it with your thumb and forefinger, like a disk, keep it low, and match the surface of the water. Bring it back and throw with your wrist.

(He throws the rock, skip, skip, skip, skip, skip, plop.)

Easy. You try.

MATEO

Easy, he says.

He picks up a stone, lifts it into the air, brings it back, nice and low, and tosses it. Skip, skip, skip, skip, plop.

EL JAGUAR

There you go! See, easy.

(They sit in silence for a moment, dragonflies buzz around them.)

I think it was my mamá who taught me how to skip stones.

MATEO

Your mom?

EL JAGUAR

My father wasn't around much. I mean, I don't have many memories of him, so he must not have been around.

MATEO

Yeah.

(He throws a stone.)

Mine too. Well, my mom and dad. Both left, but people leave all the time.

EL JAGUAR

Yeah, people leave.

(He throws a stone.)

I remember being out in the creeks, muddy water up to my knees, poking around in the mud for crawfish. That's where my mamá taught me to skip stones. She said it'd spook them out of the mud, make them easier to catch.

MATEO

Creeks? Where did you grow up?

EL JAGUAR

In...well...to be honest, I don't remember.

MATEO

You don't—

EL JAGUAR

The gifts that these pitáos give us, they come with a price, mijito. Your memories. You spend enough time making deals with them and all of a sudden your memories get slippery, harder to hold onto. If you have memories you want to keep, match them with what's around you. The mud, the water, the dragonflies. Memories fade, but nature is strong. Share a memory with me, mijito.

MATEO

Well, my sister and I, we used to play Pokemon Go out in the Big Lots parking lot—

EL JAGUAR

No, no, something earthy.

MATEO

We...we used to try and feed the geese at Ascarate?

EL JAGUAR

That's better, tell me more.

MATEO

They were big and scary and Andrea kept trying to take selfies with them—

EL JAGUAR

Selfies?

MATEO

Yeah, like with your phone—

EL JAGUAR

Mateo, mijo, have you ever been camping?

(The boy shakes his head.)

Hiking?

(No.)

What about swimming in a lake or something?

MATEO

No, just pools.

(EL JAGUAR scoffs.)

Well what do you expect? For my abuelo to take us camping? Mountain climbing with his wheelchair?

EL JAGUAR

I didn't mean—

MATEO

It's not easy you know.

EL JAGUAR

I'm sorry.

MATEO

I've wanted those things. Camping. Hiking. Being surrounded by nature, but it took this—this stupid adventure to get me out here. You want me to make memories? Well all I'm going to remember is being stuck at the side of a pond, throwing stones with an overgrown cat while my sister is out saving abue and doing it all...without me.

EL JAGUAR

Is that what you think?

MATEO

She got the gift. Not me. That god took my hand and she...she got in the way.

EL JAGUAR

Mateo.

MATEO

I don't really believe that, but I think it. It hurts to think it, but the thought is there, pinching me, all the time now. I just want us to be a team again.

(He sighs.)

There's a little canal behind my abuelo's house, right past the train tracks. It's mostly a trickle now, especially in the summers, but he says when he was younger my father used to swim in it, and wave at the train conductor when it came through the neighborhood. But that's his memory, not mine.

EL JAGUAR

A train? Sounds dangerous.

MATEO

Kids do dangerous things you know.

He throws a rock, hard this time, skip, skip, skip, skip, skip, plop.

EL JAGUAR

You're getting better at—

MATEO

This place reminds me of that. Andrea and I, we never played in that canal, but I wish we did. I wish we had those kinds of memories. Memories that left muddy tracks in the house, grass stains on our clothes, cuts and bruises and...I wish we had a chance.

(He throws another rock, hard, skip, skip, skip—)

I wish we had a chance to grow up normal, but no, our parents left us and we got stuck picking up the pieces. Taking care of each other, taking care of abuelo and the house—

9He throws another rock with force, skip, skip, skip—)

I wish I was like you, strong, fast, brave, maybe then it would've been worth it. Worth them leaving—

EL JAGUAR

Don't say that—

MATEO throws a stone hard and fast, every skip loud and ringing, skip, skip, skip, skip, skip, skip, skip, skip, then a bang, a tree cracks in half and falls, scattering birds in every direction. MATEO is unfazed, but EL JAGUAR is stunned.

MATEO

At least before, it was both Andrea and I that were left behind, but now it's just me.

EL JAGUAR

Mateo...

MATEO

What?

EL JAGUAR

Look...

El JAGUAR points out across the pond, at the great tree that MATEO broke in two. MATEO follows the jaguar's gaze and finally understands. He looks at his hands, then back at the tree.

MATEO

I did that?

EL JAGUAR

Yes, mijo.

MATEO

So that means...

EL JAGUAR

Your wish came true after all.

MATEO

I need to go tell, Andrea!

MATEO does not wait for EL JAGUAR. He runs offstage, crying out Andrea's name. EL JAGUAR watches as the boy runs. He looks sad. He sighs. A large toad puppet leaps to his feet, letting out a deep croak. EL JAGUAR suddenly kicks the puppet off stage.

THE PITÁO

(From off stage.)

OW!

(He enters.)

Rude! Do you know how hard it is to manifest myself as a toad! I worked hard on those warts!

EL JAGUAR

I've had enough of you Gods and your games.

THE PITÁO

Alright, calm down. I just want to talk. The spell she had on you is wearing off. I can tell. How much do you remember?

EL JAGUAR

I...I don't know. There are flashes, but—

THE PITÁO

I see. And the boy. Got what he wanted.

EL JAGUAR

He doesn't know what he wants.

THE PITÁO

I gave him a gift.

EL JAGUAR

You gave him a curse.

THE PITÁO

Only if he fails. Like you did.

EL JAGUAR

He needs to know the truth. What the two of you have done to his family—

THE PITÁO

Do you even know the truth? Do you even remember who you were? Who he really is?

EL JAGUAR

I remember enough.

THE PITÁO

Tell him then. Tell him the gift he's yearned for all his life is a lie and that you are a sham. He sees you as, how did he put it, brave? Would he feel that way if he knew the truth?

EL JAGUAR

It...doesn't matter. He deserves to know.

THE PITÁO

Then go, tell him. But you better hurry.

EL JAGUAR

Why? What are you up to?

THE PITÁO

I only need one of them to finish the quest, what difference does it make which one it is.

EL JAGUAR

(Turning to where MATEO ran, under his breath:)

Mateo.

(He runs offstage.)

There is a loud buzzing coming from a dragonfly hovering near THE PITÁO. He croaks and opens his mouth, his tongue darts out to catch and eat it.

Lights fade.

Scene 3 | Siblings

ANDREA is standing center stage, her hands holding onto something tight. She's staring down at it in her cupped hands when MATEO runs in.

MATEO

Andrea, guess what!

ANDREA

Hey, I wanted to apologize for earlier.

MATEO

Don't sweat it, it happens, listen, I was out skipping rocks with—

ANDREA

No, I'm your sister and I shouldn't have said those things.

(She turns to face him.)

We're in this together.

MATEO

(Sensing how serious she is.)

Yeah, of course we are. I know that. That's why I wanted to tell you that—

ANDREA

Mateo. Things have been hard for a long time and I feel like we've had to hold a lot on our shoulders.

MATEO

Yeah, I know that—

ANDREA

But can I tell you the truth?

MATEO

Of course you can.

ANDREA

I've always been jealous of you.

MATEO

What?

ANDREA

You get to dream of being a star like abuelo, but I don't get to dream about those things. But look at us now. Out here on this quest. So far from home. I never thought I'd leave El Paso. I never thought that I could be a hero.

MATEO

But now we can be. We can both save abue. I did get—

ANDREA

That's the thing, Mateo. I want to do this on my own.

MATEO

(MATEO takes a step back.)

What?

ANDREA

I can do this, I know I can, and...you've only been getting in the way. That god, whoever they are, they believe in me. That's why I got this gift and you—

MATEO

That's the thing, you're not the only one with a gift anymore, I—

ANDREA

(She grabs his hands and holds them tight.)

I just need you to know that I love you, okay?

MATEO

Andrea, I know that, of course I do, but you have to listen to me—

ANDREA

I love you.

(The stars above begin to flicker as a magic gathers in her palms.)

But Mateo... You don't remember who you are.

(Wind blows through the surrounding trees like a great sigh.)

El JAGUAR runs on stage, but it is too late.

EL JAGUAR

Mateo! Mateo, are you okay?

He grabs the boy by his shoulders and spins him around, kneeling in front of him, trying to get his attention.

MATEO

Who are you?

El JAGUAR looks down at MATEO's hands. He is holding something.

EL JAGUAR

What are you holding? What is in your hands, Mateo?

MATEO

Hey, get your hands off me!

EL JAGUAR

What is in your hands!

MATEO

Nothing, it's just a coin, see!

(MATEO holds up a single gold coin. It shines in the moonlight. EL JAGUAR's arms fall beside him.)

Now, who are you? And where am I?

EL JAGUAR

(To ANDREA:)

What have you done?

ANDREA

What I had to do.

EL JAGUAR

No, this is wrong. He's your brother!

ANDREA

I don't know what you're talking about.

EL JAGUAR

(To LA MARIPOSA:)

And you? Did you have a hand in this?

LA MARIPOSA

Andrea, we should go.

ANDREA

Right. I have a quest to finish. Goodbye Jaguar. You too, kid.

ANDREA and LA MARIPOSA exit.

MATEO

(After a moment:)

Wow, you could *cut* the tension with a knife.

(Motions with his hand, "shunk.")

EL JAGUAR

Oh, Mateo.

MATEO

Are you going to tell me where I am, or what?

EL JAGUAR

Oaxaca, mijo. Mexico.

MATEO

MEXICO? How did I—

EL JAGUAR

It's a long story. Let's...let's try and get you home, okay? Come on.

EL JAGUAR offers his hand and MATEO takes it. They exit. After a moment, the stage brightens, as if the moon itself were being drawn closer. Wind

begins to rustle as a large crocodile puppet crawls on stage. Opposite it, COCIJO enters with a trickle of fog at her feet. At the sight of her, the crocodile seems to wheeze and cough and finally opens its gaping mouth as THE PITÁO crawls out of it. The two pitáos face each other for the first time in centuries.

Sister. THE PITÁO

Brother. COCIJO

You've gained weight. THE PITÁO

Was your forehead always that big or is your hairline receding. COCIJO

My forehead has always been this big and you know that. THE PITÁO

Give up. COCIJO

You know I won't. THE PITÁO

You're going to fail. COCIJO

I have to keep trying. THE PITÁO

You're fading away. I can feel it. COCIJO

THE PITÁO

Why are you doing this?

COCIJO

You left.

THE PITÁO

To do what I was meant to do!

COCIJO

Which is what, exactly?

THE PITÁO

I...I don't remember.

COCIJO

Funny. See, what I remember is being left alone to care for a tribe, an entire country and its people, while you ran off.

THE PITÁO

I'm sorry.

COCIJO

I don't care.

THE PITÁO

Please. Sister I—

COCIJO

No. You don't get to call me that anymore. You call me by my name.

THE PITÁO

Don't—

COCIJO

Say it.

THE PITÁO

Cocijo.

COCIJO

That's right. Cocijo. No one forgot my name, because I stayed. I did my job.

THE PITÁO

I'll come back. I'll help. I'll—

COCIJO

I'm going to enjoy this. Watching you fade away.

THE PITÁO

I've still got a day left in me. And the girl—

COCIJO

Right. Little Andrea and that toy of yours, la mariposa. That reminds me. You broke one of my toys, el jaguar. I had a good run with him. Made a great enforcer. Reminded a great many spirits of why they should fear me. But now he's just a man again. Maybe, I should return the favor.

Thunder rumbles. COCIJO raises her hands towards the sky and spreads her fingers.

THE PITÁO

Stop. What are you doing?

COCIJO

Whipping up a little personal raincloud for our little mariposa.

Downstage from the pitáos, ANDREA and LA MARIPOSA enter. They cross center stage and stop.

ANDREA

You're sure this is the right way?

LA MARIPOSA

Yes, we're close, it's just beyond this next hill.

(Thunder cracks. She looks to the sky.)

Not another storm.

The sky tears open and rains on both ANDREA and LA MARIPOSA, but this rain isn't natural. The two are washed in a bright blue glow. As COCIJO speaks, her voice booms like thunder.

COCIJO

Mariposa, I break you from your curse, the memory bonds the shapeshifter god held over you.

ANDREA

Who is that?

COCIJO

I return to you your name, Magdalena Ortiz.

LA MARIPOSA

Magda—

COCIJO

But for you Andrea. I return to you your mother.

Thunder cracks and rumbles as the spell is broken. COCIJO and THE PITÁO fade into the darkness as the rain stops, leaving only LA MARIPOSA and ANDREA on stage, soaking wet.

LA MARIPOSA

(Looking at her hands.)

Magdalena Ortiz.

ANDREA

Mom?

LA MARIPOSA

Andrea, I—

(She reaches out, but ANDREA takes a step back.)

ANDREA

You—

LA MARIPOSA

Mijita, please, come here—

ANDREA

You've been gone all these years. I thought they took you!

LA MARIPOSA

No one took me, mija.

ANDREA

I thought you were deported.

LA MARIPOSA

Mija.

ANDREA

I thought you were dead!

LA MARIPOSA

I'm sorry that I left, but I'm here now—

ANDREA

All this time—

LA MARIPOSA

I can explain—

ANDREA

Explain what? That you made a wish, right? For what, your wings?

LA MARIPOSA

Is not that simple!

ANDREA

What did he ask for? What memory did you give him?

LA MARIPOSA

He wanted my memories of home. And I thought, sure, it's just a place. A door with a number. A street in a neighborhood I grew up in too long ago to remember. But after having you and your brother...you became home. Wherever you two were, that's where I wanted to be. Where my heart was. And I didn't realize that until it was too late. I'm sorry.

ANDREA

No. That's not good enough. You don't just get to wipe away a decade without you, because you made a bad deal.

LA MARIPOSA

Andrea, please, you have to understand—

ANDREA

All I have to understand is that you gave up my brother and I for a pair of wings.

LA MARIPOSA

Wait, Mateo. Your brother. The lie. Mija, what did you do—

ANDREA

No! Do not pin that on me. You told me I had to.

LA MARIPOSA

You should know better! He's just a boy, Andrea—

ANDREA

And I'm just a girl! We were just kids when you left. We were just kids when we got sent on this quest! I'm just a kid. I— I have to finish this, for abue.

LA MARIPOSA

Mijita, wait—

ANDREA

No!

(She snaps and LA MARIPOSA freezes.)

I haven't needed you for the past ten years, I don't need you now. I have a quest to finish.

ANDREA exits leaving LA MARIPOSA frozen. After a few moments of silence, the spell fades and LA MARIPOSA collapses. She begins to cry.

Lights fade.

Scene 4 | The Offer

ANDREA enters the chamber from a small entryway upstage. The chamber is dark, only lit by the thin slit of moonlight coming in from the entryway where we can see the forest outside the temple. She fumbles around in the dark before she pulls out her phone and flicks on the flashlight.

She uses it to scan the stage illuminating small portions of the temple wall. Her light continues to scan the stage when it suddenly illuminates
COCIJO:

COCIJO

What are you looking for?

COCIJO is not wearing her mask. She is a woman, middle aged, dressed like a park ranger. A light polo with dark cargo shorts and a matching jacket vest. She has long dark hair tied in two long braids coming down over her shoulders.

ANDREA

Sorry, I, umm, got lost in the storm, and I was just looking for a place to get out of the rain.

COCIJA

What were you doing out there in the first place? It doesn't look like you're from around here.

ANDREA

I really meant no harm. I was just out, umm, hiking— I'm here on a mission trip, you know, for like, God?

COCIJO snaps and standing lights in the corners of the temple turn on, illuminating the entirety of the chamber. Around the room are museum amenities. Velvet rope, informational plaques, a fire escape plan.

COCIJO

A mission trip? That's the best lie you can think of. It's creative, I'll give you that.

ANDREA

(Surprised:)

What are you?

COCIJO

What am I? A person with feelings, don't be rude.

ANDREA

I'm sorry, I didn't mean—

COCIJO

What brings you to our little temple?

ANDREA

A— a—

COCIJO

Out with it.

ANDREA

A name—

COCIJO

Ay, mijita. What is with your family?

ANDREA

What...what do you mean?

COCIJO

Your whole bloodline, always willing to just jump into the storm.

(Gesturing outside.)

Literally, jumped into the storm! You and your parents before you. My brother will never tire of his games.

ANDREA

Wait—

COCIJO

And your— Wasn't there another one of you, a boy—

ANDREA

Stop, wait! Your brother?

COCIJO

Sorry, sorry, yes, let me explain.

(Gesturing to the temple around them.)

This is my little slice of home. Or, what's left of it.

ANDREA

It's... nice.

COCIJO

That's sweet of you, I appreciate it, but it's nothing like it used to be. The flowers. The offerings. The dances, god you should've seen the dances, they were fabulous.

ANDREA

...who are you?

COCIJO

Who I *was*, was the God of Rain. They called me Cocijo, but you can call me Cuca.

ANDREA

Hello Cuca. I'm Andrea.

COCIJO

Pleasure. So, you're here for a name?

ANDREA

Yes.

COCIJO

Well, here it is.

(She gestures to the walls.)

Everything you're looking for is here.

ANDREA scans the room, but the walls only depict figures dancing, and what words there are, are in a language she can't read.

ANDREA

I...I don't understand.

COCIJO

You don't? This is your history, Andrea. Right here, written on these walls. Can't you see?

(COCIJO shakes her head.)

I don't know what my brother was thinking. Sending a child.

ANDREA

Is your brother—

COCIJO

Yes, the god who sent you on this journey, he's my brother. Younger brother in fact.

ANDREA

So then you can tell us his name!

COCIJO

I could. But I won't.

ANDREA

But I came all this way—

COCIJO

My brother is a spoiled brat. It's true. Spoiled. He left his duties and to do what? Become something forgotten? I should've seen it coming, I suppose. God of Dreams and all that. Ran away to chase his own. And praying on your family to do his bidding.

ANDREA

Why us?

COCIJO

Because of the village, San Pablo Villa de Mitla. It's our home too. My brother grew fond of your grandfather. How hard he worked, how potent his dreams were. Same with your parents, and now you.

ANDREA

God of Dreams?

COCIJO

Lame, right? But, the thing about dreams, is that they can become overwhelming. Small ones, big ones, you pay them enough attention and they can redefine you. Sometimes for better, sometimes for worse. You can convince yourself of a great many things, for a dream. There's a thin line between a dream, and a lie we tell ourselves. My brother, in all is infinite wisdom, can't tell the difference.

ANDREA

This has to stop. Your brother took away my mother. My grandfather has spent his whole life running from him, and now my brother.

COCIJO

You're better off without him

ANDREA

Don't you dare say that.

COCIJO

My brother was just like him. Reckless. Full hardy. Rash. You know I'm right.

ANDREA

You're not! My brother would never hurt anyone. Would never do what your brother has done. They are nothing alike.

COCIJO

Maybe not. But we are.

(Beat.)

No father. No mother. Just you and your brother and which of you has to do all the work? Which of you has to know better. Which of you has to clean up the mess. We were both burdened by our parents absence. By our own brother. And that's not fair. I know you.

ANDREA

You don't know me—

COCIJO

I know who you are and what you'll become. Jaded. And that's a waste of your potential.

(Beat.)

I want to make you a deal.

ANDREA

No, I'm done with deals—

COCIJO

Leave all of this behind. Your family. Your home. And stay here. Rebuild this with me.

ANDREA

The temple?

COCIJO

No, our civilization! I want to be a God again! I want worshipers and offerings and festivals and I want...you. Right beside me. A new God for a new age.

(Beat.)

What do you say?

ANDREA

(Taking a step back. She turns to face the temple wall.)

Is this all that's left?

COCIJO

This temple? Yes. You should of seen it. Centuries ago it sprawled across the hill sides. People gathered from all across the country to pay tribute.

ANDREA

An empire.

COCIJO

With you at the top, mija.

ANDREA

What would I be the god of? Dreams?

COCIJO

No, we can do better than that. God of the Earth, of Fire, the Wind itself, mijita.

ANDREA

That does sound nice.

COCIJO

You never forget the first festival thrown in your honor. The first offering of gold, of blood.

ANDREA

What happened? Why aren't you worshipped anymore?

COCIJO

Our stories were burned. My people were killed. First the Spaniards. Then the Americans. And now themselves.

ANDREA

But you're still remembered?

COCIJO

More than my brother at least. Unlike him, I never stopped being the God of Rain. And this temple still carries my name.

ANDREA

So your name is still up here too?

(She places her hand on the wall. Suddenly, there is a great rumbling.)

COCIJO

Mijita, what are you doing?

(The rumbling continues, and stone begins to crack.)

Andrea, stop!

ANDREA

I'm tired of these games, Pitáo. I'm tired of quests and deals and sacrifices.

(A great long crack appears on the temple wall.)

Part of me thinks it would be better if you both were forgotten.

COCIJO

Mijita, you don't understand what you're doing—

ANDREA

Maybe I don't. But what I do understand is that you and your brother, you both have a lot in common with Mateo and I, save for one little detail.

(Another crack appears.)

COCIJO

Mijita!

ANDREA

I never stopped loving my brother. Even when I lied to him, I thought I was doing it to protect him. I'd still do anything for him. For my family.

(Another crack appears.)

Even if it means giving up my chance at being a God.

COCIJO

Mijita, please, stop!

ANDREA

Tell me his name.

COCIJO

Stop!

ANDREA

His name!

COCIJO

Xicala!

(The rumbling softens.)

His name is Xicala.

A bright light shines through the cracks in the temple wall to reveal the pitáo's long forgotten name. The rumbling stops and the name fades.

ANDREA

Xicala, God of Dreams. It does have a ring to it, doesn't it?

COCIJO

You win, mijita. You got his name.

ANDREA

I did it.

COCIJO

You did.

(COCIJO stands and starts to walk backwards, into the dark, fading away. Her voice begins to echo in the temple.)

You won. Good luck, Andrea.

ANDREA

What?

COCIJO

Good luck getting back home with no one left to help you.

COCIJO fades away into the darkness leaving ANDREA alone in a dimly lit temple. She looks around, the silence setting in.

ANDREA

Oh no.

Lights fade.

Scene 5 | Fortune Teller

On stage is a small round table with a red velvet tablecloth. Seated at the table is ABUELO who looks very unamused. On the upstage side of the table sits THE PITÁO dressed in a bright, purple blazer with gold trim. He spins around and reveals that he is wearing heavy makeup along with a blonde wig. He places his hands on the table, his fingers adorned with sparkling rings and long lace sleeves. THE PITÁO is dressed as astrologer Walter Mercado.

THE PITÁO

Saludos y bendiciones.

ABUELO

You said we were going to play poker.

THE PITÁO

No, no. I said we were going to play cards. I never said what kind.

(He pulls a stack of tarot cards from his sleeve and places them on the table.)

ABUELO

No manches.

THE PITÁO

Come on, cut the deck. Anyway you want. Stop when you feel like it's the time to stop. Let the cards speak to you.

ABUELO

(He splits the cards once.)

There. Done.

THE PITÁO

(Taking the cards.)

Hey, it's your fortune. We're just going to do a simple three card spread, what that means is—

ABUELO

Just get on with it.

THE PITÁO

(He places three cards down on the table. He flips the first:)

The Emperor, ooh! That must be you. He just exudes parental energy. And he's old.

ABUELO

It's upside down, does that mean anything?

THE PITÁO

Loss of control. Usually for having not taken action. Like when you, I don't know, betray your childhood friend.

ABUELO

Okay, okay I get it. What's the next one?

THE PITÁO

(Flipping the middle card. He frowns.)

The Fool.

ABUELO

Oh! So it's you!

THE PITÁO

Ha Ha. Very funny. The infant represents someone who is underdeveloped, childlike, impractical—

ABUELO

So you. It even looks like you.

THE PITÁO

Next card is!

He flips the third card. They both lean in for a closer look, then slowly back away when they see what it is.

ABUELO

Is that—

THE PITÁO

Yup. Death. It means, well. You know.

ABUELO

Right.

(They both cough nervously to fill the silence.)

So. Poker?

THE PITÁO

Oh, God yes.

Lights fade.

Scene 6 | Reunion in the Underworld

The sun is beginning to rise as ANDREA enters, cold and shivering. She's made her way back into the forest. The trees creak all around her. She is whisper singing:

ANDREA

Bidi bidi bom bom

Bidi bidi bom bom

(She sniffles.)

Bidi bidi bidi bidi bom bom

(She sneezes.)

A butterfly puppet flies on stage. It glows faintly as it flies over to ANDREA, landing on her outstretched hand.

ANDREA

Oh, hey there little guy. It's good to see you again.

(The puppet nuzzles her and then take off, beginning to fly away.)

Hey, wait!

ANDREA chases after it, through the trees, through the morning twilight, until the butterfly brings her back to LA MARIPOSA who is sitting on a tree trunk, several butterflies fluttering about her. As ANDREA enters, LA MARIPOSA stands.

LA MARIPOSA

Andrea.

ANDREA

(Beat:)

Oh, Mom!

(ANDREA runs into her mother's arms, crashing into her for an embrace.)

LA MARIPOSA

Andrea, I'm so sorry—

ANDREA

No, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have yelled at you, I—

LA MARIPOSA

No, I deserved it, I—

ANDREA

No. You're back and that's all that matters.

LA MARIPOSA

Oh, *mija*. I love you.

ANDREA

I love you too, mom.

(They hold on tightly. Then:)

I have his name! The shapeshifter!

LA MARIPOSA

You have it!

ANDREA

Yes!

LA MARIPOSA

You did it! Oh, that's wonderful! That means—

ANDREA

We have to get back to abuelo, we're running out of time.

(The sun has risen and the stage is warm.)

We have until sunset to get back. Can you fly us there?

LA MARIPOSA

The rain did more than give me back my memories, *mija*.

(LA MARIPOSA reveals her wings, folded neatly in her arms.)

I've lost all my magic. No more wings.

ANDREA

But then, how are we going to—

The butterfly puppets suddenly fly up and begin to circle ANDREA and LA MARIPOSA. They glow softly.

LA MARIPOSA

Of course.

ANDREA

What are they doing?

LA MARIPOSA

I may not have my magic anymore, but they do. They're spirit guides, which means we can use the tunnels.

ANDREA

The Underworld?

LA MARIPOSA

The Underworld. Let's go, there's no time to lose! Mariposas, show us the way.

The butterfly puppets begin to fly off stage and LA MARIPOSA and ANDREA follow.

THE PITÁO enters, dressed in pastel purple scrubs, pushing ABUELO on stage in his wheelchair. They come to a stop downstage at a park bench, sitting beneath the shade of a tree. ABUELO begins to cough.

THE PITÁO

How are you doing?

ABUELO

I'm fine. So, what day is it?

THE PITÁO

The third.

ABUELO

And they have until—

THE PITÁO

Sundown.

ABUELO

I see. Can you check on them?

THE PITÁO nods. He steps aside and rolls up his sleeves and concentrates.

THE PITÁO

I think it'll be an iguana this time. They're my favorite.

(He scrunches his face. Then looks at his hands.)

Huh.

ABUELO

Performance problems?

THE PITÁO

Shut up. It's nothing. I'll try again.

(He closes his eyes and concentrates.)

I can't...

(To ABUELO:)

I can't transform anymore.

ABUELO

What does that mean?

THE PITÁO

No more juice. It's up to them now.

(THE PITÁO sits on the bench next to ABUELO.)

El Cocodrilo, it's been—

ABUELO

No, no. Not yet. They'll make it.

THE PITÁO

Of course. We'll wait.

Lights fade on ABUELO and THE PITÁO as the lights shift to the blue of the underworld and the stage is filled with a crowd of ghouls. From the crowd appears ALEJANDRO and GUILLERMO.

ALEJANDRO

Watch it, watch it!

GUILLERMO

Move out of the way!

ALEJANDRO

I liked it better when the underworld was all doom and gloom. And quiet!

GUILLERMO

Do you have the phone, I want to look up my Tío Ignacio.

ALEJANDRO

No, I don't have it, I thought you had it?

GUILLERMO

No, you had it last?

ALEJANDRO

One of those damn ghouls must've nicked it.

(Rolling up his sleeves and turning to the crowd.)

Alright, now you've done it. You'll all be sacks of bones when I'm done with you.

(Suddenly, the butterfly puppet enters and flies past ALEJANDRO.)

Hey, it's the mariposa.

ANDREA and LA MARIPOSA enter.

ANDREA

Guillermo! Alejandro! Oh, I am so glad to see you!

GUILLERMO

Mijita! You're back!

ALEJANDRO

And you made a friend!

(To LA MARIPOSA:)

Hola, mi nombre es Guillermo, and you just stole my breath away.

ANDREA

Whoa, Alejandro, Guillermo. This is...my mom.

GUILLERMO

It's a pleasure to meet you!

(ALEJANDRO growls seductively.)

Alejandro!

ANDREA

We need to get through, what's going on here?

GUILLERMO

Oh, mija, there's something you need to know.

ALEJANDRO

It's about your brother, he's—

The crowd of ghouls cheer once more and begin to separate, each of them bringing on stage tables and chairs, revealing an underworld cantina. Ghouls around tables, laughing and drinking. In the center, standing on a table, is MATEO, lifting a large beer mug in the air filled with green liquid. He is dressed in ghoulish rags and he is wearing a crown of bones.

MATEO

And then, I told that beast that it's, "all ogre now!" Get it, because he was an ogre!

(The crowd cackles.)

Man, you all are the best. You laugh at anything.

(Seeing ANDREA from across the stage.)

Hey! I know you! You're the girl from the forest!

ANDREA

Mateo? What are you wearing?

MATEO

Mateo? You keep calling me that, but I don't know. It doesn't feel right to me. And these? Oh, you know, just trying to blend in. These guys are great. Freaky looking, but great.

ANDREA

And the crown?

MATEO

Oh! The crown, yeah, I think I'm their king now.

ANDREA

Their what?

MATEO

Yeah, it's wild. I don't have any memories of who I am, so I just started making things up, and they believe it all. To them, I'm a dragon slayer and a bank robber and a retired sheriff—

ANDREA

Mateo, that's insane. You're not any of those things.

MATEO

Well, who knows, maybe I am? I can be anything I want to be.

ANDREA

Mateo, you're my—

MATEO

No, no. You don't tell me what to do down here. I'm King of the Underworld baby!

(A phone chime:)

Oh! We got another one!

(MATEO pulls out his phone and turns to the crowd of ghouls.)

Hector? Where's Hector?

(A gangly ghoul steps out of the crowd.)

The phone found your great great nephew! He owns a flower shop in San Diego! Get going!

(The crowd cheers.)

ANDREA

Mateo, enough of this, we're running out of time.

MATEO

That's weird.

ANDREA

What is?

MATEO

You're bossing me around and I don't even know you.

ANDREA

Mateo, I'm your—

MATEO snaps his fingers and she is frozen.

MATEO

Oh, I forgot to mention. Ya boi has magic and it feels so good.

(Turning to the crowd of ghouls:)

Tie her up! We have a party to finish!

The ghouls quickly grab the frozen ANDREA and tie her up, sitting her on a bar stool. During the commotion, GUILLERMO and ALEJANDRO bring LA MARIPOSA downstage.

LA MARIPOSA

This isn't good.

GUILLERMO

That's what we were trying to tell you.

ALEJANDRO

Kids been running this place since he got here.

LA MARIPOSA

The jaguar, is he here?

GUILLERMO

The cat? He's here, but—

EL JAGUAR appears on stage, swerving through the crowd, drunk.

EL JAGUAR

(Drunk singing:)

Querida

Cada momento de mi vida

Yo pienso en ti más cada día—

(Seeing the ghosts:)

Hey! It's you guys! How's it going?

(Seeing LA MARIPOSA, he bows:)

Señora.

(He hiccups.)

LA MARIPOSA looks at the drunken EL JAGUAR and it dawns on her.

LA MARIPOSA

Benny? Benny is that you?

EL JAGUAR

Benny? Who's Benny? No, I'm El Jaguar.

LA MARIPOSA

Oh no, no no. Benny, look at me, it's Magdalena.

EL JAGUAR

Magda...

LA MARIPOSA

Focus Benny. Focus on me.

EL JAGUAR

Do I know you?

LA MARIPOSA

Yes, Benny, it's me, it's—

EL JAGUAR

Querida
Cada momento de—

LA MARIPOSA

Oh, I'm sorry for this.

(She slaps EL JAGUAR.)

EL JAGUAR

Ow! Why would—

(Looking at LA MARIPOSA.)

Magdalena? Is that really you?

LA MARIPOSA

Yes, Benny! It's me!

(They kiss.)

EL JAGUAR

Mi amor, it's been too long! The wish granter, did he—

LA MARIPOSA

Yes, and you, how did you—

EL JAGUAR

It was Cocijo. After you left I wished to be a better father, to be able to take care of the kids, but she tricked me. Made me into her plaything, but now—

LA MARIPOSA

We're free.

EL JAGUAR

The kids, where are they?

The crowd cheers as MATEO lifts a table in the air with one hand and drinking with the other. ANDREA sits frozen on a bar stool.

EL JAGUAR

This is not good.

ALEJANDRO

Seriously, he definitely isn't old enough to be drinking.

GUILLERMO

Is there anything we can do to help?

LA MARIPOSA

Andrea told the lie, we need her to tell Mateo the truth to break the spell.

GUILLERMO

But she's frozen.

EL JAGUAR

(Walking into the crowd.)

Then we need to convince, Mateo to unfreeze her.

LA MARIPOSA

What are you doing?

EL JAGUAR

I've got an idea.

(In the middle of the crowd, with a roar:)

Mateo Ortiz! Go to your room!

(The crowd goes silent:)

MATEO

Excuse me? Did you just tell, and I can't stress this enough, did you just tell the King of the Underworld to go to his room? I don't even know who you are.

(The crowd laughs and turns their backs to EL JAGUAR. He returns to the group.)

LA MARIPOSA

That was your idea?

GUILLERMO

You tried to ground him?

EL JAGUAR

I don't see you coming up with anything.

LA MARIPOSA

He's not going to listen to us, but maybe...

(Taking EL JAGUAR by his hand.)

If we have enough magic left between us—

EL JAGUAR

What are you thinking?

LA MARIPOSA

Boys like games right? And what does a boy with super strength have to fear?

ALEJANDRO

Nothing. I would fear nothing.

LA MARIPOSA

No, someone else with super strength. The Underworld is a realm of memories, right? And with enough magic—

EL JAGUAR

Magdalena, do you really think?

LA MARIPOSA

Yeah, I do.

EL JAGUAR

It won't last long.

LA MARIPOSA

It's our best chance. Take my hand.

The two hold each other's hands. They faintly glow as three puppet butterflies come on stage and fly around the three of them, faster and faster, the stage shakes and there is a rumbling.

MATEO

Hey, what's going on!

Bursting from the crowd, all gold and scales and muscle, is a living memory, a shadow of EL COCODRILO.

EL COCODRILO

It is I, El Cocodrilo de Oaxaca, and I challenge you to an arm wrestling match!

MATEO

Oh, a challenger! I like the sound of this.

(Spitting on his hands and rubbing them together.)

This is going to be fun.

The two stand across from each other at a table, MATEO facing the spectre of his abuelo's past.

EL COCODRILO

Winner takes all?

MATEO

What are your terms?

EL COCODRILO

I win, you let the girl go. You win—

MATEO

I win, and you all leave here, never to return. Deal?

EL COCODRILO

Deal.

They place their arms on the table and take each other's hand. The game begins.

ALEJANDRO

In this corner, spectre of the past, shadow of a legend, El Cocodrilo de Oaxaca!
(The ghouls boo.)

GUILLERMO

And in this corner, the great and terrible King of the Underworld!
(The ghouls cheer.)

ALEJANDRO y GUILLERMO

Uno, dos, tres!

(A match bell rings.)

EL COCODRILO

You're strong for a little guy.

MATEO

And you're strong for an old guy.

EL COCODRILO

When I was your age, I was wrestling crocodiles three times your size.

MATEO

Psh, easy. That's child play. I could lift a truckload for crocodiles and not even break a sweat.

EL COCODRILO

Oh, you mean like the sweat that's breaking right now?

MATEO

That's nothing. It's just, uhh, hot in here.

EL COCODRILO

Ha! This is nothing. Nowhere near as hot as it was tending to the milpa in the summers.

MATEO

Oh yeah? Back in your day? I bet it was uphill both ways too, right?

EL COCODRILO

It was! And we had to pray that the jaguars didn't try to eat us on the way to school!

MATEO

El Cocodrilo, this has been fun, really great, but here's the thing. I've got an Underworld to run!

(MATEO suddenly slams EL COCODRILO's arm into the table, winning the game. The ghouls cheer.)

LA MARIPOSA

Oh no.

EL JAGUAR

He lost.

MATEO

Come on, announce it!

ALEJANDRO

The winner is, the King of the Underworld.

MATEO

Come on, you can do better than that! King of the Underworld!

(Taking his phone out:)

I want to remember this. Come on, let's take a selfie. Everyone group up.

LA MARIPOSA and EL JAGUAR are forced into the picture by the ghouls, MATEO holds the phone out with a peace sign. There is a flash of light.

MATEO

Oh, that's a keeper! We look so cute. Now, you all better get a move on, okay?

(The ghouls begin to take hold of the others and drag them off stage.)

Don't let the door hit you on the way out!

(Starting to type on the phone.)

LA MARIPOSA

Mateo, wait!

EL JAGUAR

You don't know what you're doing!

ALEJANDRO is dragging GUILLERMO out.

GUILLERMO

Alejandro, what are you doing, let go of me!

ALEJANDRO

I'm just going with the flow, be cool.

LA MARIPOSA

Please Mateo, you have to listen to us!

MATEO sees something on the phone that catches his attention.

MATEO

What the... How is this possible?

On the back wall is projected a series of photos as MATEO scrolls through the phone's camera roll. They are photos of ANDREA and MATEO, pictures of them playing in the park, in their backyard, in their living room. There's a selfie of them together eating ice cream, smiling. Then another, the two of them dressed as Power Rangers playing with their ABUELO.

MATEO

What is this?

EL JAGUAR

(Gesturing to the frozen ANDREA.)

Ask her.

MATEO faces ANDREA and, after a moment, snaps his fingers.

MATEO

(Serious, showing her the phone.)

What is this?

(Beat.)

Who are you?

ANDREA

Mateo, I'm your sister.

The stars churn as the magic of the lie is broken.

MATEO

(Taking a step back, then rubbing his eyes.)

Andrea? I... You lied to me...

ANDREA

I know, and I'm sorry. I never should've done that to you. Can you ever forgive me?

MATEO

(Looking around the room. At the ghouls and ghosts.)

You came back?

ANDREA

Yeah. And mom did too.

LA MARIPOSA steps forward, holding EL JAGUAR's hand.

LA MARIPOSA

And your dad, Mateo.

MATEO

Mom? Dad?

(He runs into the two of them, holding them both tight.)

How did you— You were both animals— Mom, you were flying— And Dad you were super strong— And you— Andrea, you...

ANDREA

Do you forgive me?

MATEO

(Taking a moment:)

Of course I do, tonta. You're my sister.

MATEO and ANDREA run to each other and hug.

MATEO

Wait, abue! Do you have—

ANDREA

Yes, I got the pitáo's name, but we're running out of time!

MATEO

Well what are we waiting for! Let's get moving, come on, come on!

(MATEO grabs his family member's hands and begins to pull them along.

To the ghouls as they exit:)

I'm keeping the crown!

Lights fade.

Scene 7 | A Name for a Pitáo

El Paso, sunset. THE PITÁO and ABUELO sit by the crocodile fountain.

Sun's setting.

ABUELO

Yes it is.

THE PITÁO

I really thought they could do it.

ABUELO

I'm sure they did their best.

THE PITÁO

No thanks to you.

ABUELO

No, I suppose not. Cocodrilo, it's been..

THE PITÁO

Fun. Despite it all, you were my closest friend. You believed in me when no one else would. Thank you for that. I'm sorry I left.

ABUELO

I wasn't a good friend either.

THE PITÁO

No, I suppose not.

ABUELO

(They both give a weak laugh. ABUELO offers his hand.)

Will you...

THE PITÁO

(He takes it.)

Of course.

They wait for the end when suddenly the crocodiles in the fountain churn, fog begins spilling out as ANDREA, MATEO, LA MARIPOSA, and EL JAGUAR rise out of it.

ABUELO

Andrea, Mateo!

ANDREA y MATEO

Abue!

THE PITÁO

(Stunned.)

You made it, did you—

ANDREA

(Taking THE PITÁO's hands.)

Shapeshifter, wish granter, master of the nahual, your real name is Xicala. God of Dreams.

XICALA

(Soft:)

Xicala.

(Then triumphant:)

Xicala! That's my name! You found my name!

MATEO

We did more than just that.

The stage shakes as ghouls of the underworld begin to climb out of the fountain followed by GUILLERMO and ALEJANDRO.

ANDREA

We spread the word and—

LA MARIPOSA y EL JAGUAR

We remember you.

GUILLERMO y ALEJANDRO

And we remember you.

THE CROWD OF GHOULS

We all remember you.

XICALA

(Almost glowing:)

Mijitos. Thank you. But after everything I've done.

ABUELO

Your gift changed me. Let me start a better life.

LA MARIPOSA

Your quest split us apart.

EL JAGUAR

But it also brought us back together.

MATEO

Don't get me wrong, we're not your biggest fans.

ANDREA

You've done some messed up things.

MATEO

But with your name back, we figure, you can get to work on fixing things.

ANDREA

One dream at a time.

XICALA

Kids... I don't know how to thank you... I—

Thunder and lighting as COCIJO enters, cutting through the crowd.

COCIJO

Brother.

XICALA

Sister.

COCIJO

So, you have your name back.

XICALA

Xicala. Feels good to be able to say it again.

COCIJO

After all these centuries. All of our games.

XICALA

You lost.

COCIJO

Yes. But I lost a long time ago, Xicala. I lost the moment I gave up on you. I'm sorry.

XICALA

Cocijo, God of Rain, my older, older, *older* sister.

(He offers his outstretched arms:)

Come here.

(They hug.)

I forgive you.

The crowd cheers as the pitáo's embrace.

XICALA

(Breaking away, crying:)

Oh, I promised myself I wouldn't cry. Ortiz Twins, no, Ortiz *Family!* Welcome back to the land of the living. Welcome home. I say this is cause for a celebration. What do you say?

The crowd cheers. XICALA claps his hands and Selena's "Bidi Bidi Bom Bom" begins to play. Reunited, the Ortiz Family and the pitáo siblings dance.

END OF PLAY.