

# ***Not Cake***

**An Angeleno play about privilege and class, appropriation and agency  
by Jennie Webb**

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## **Not Cake**

### **Characters:**

THE WHITE WOMAN WITH A TAIL: White female 50-something – contemplative, dramatic

ALICIA/ADELITA (who speaks Spanish): Latinx female 30s/early 40s – passionate, animated

IVY/INA (who speaks with a Japanese accent): Japanese American female 30s/early 40s – pragmatic, maybe sardonic

EL/ESTHER (who speaks with a Yiddish accent): White female\* late teens/20s – certain, somewhat naive

JESS (who speaks with a Chicano accent) /JUAN: Latinx female to play female\* and male late teens/20s – eager, curious

DESIREE/DAVIS: Black female to play female and male 40s/early 50s – strong presence, self-protected

### **Setting:**

An ever-changing neighborhood east of Downtown Los Angeles

### **Time:**

2024 & 1924\*\*

### *Casting:*

*The dialogue of the mariachis can be recorded or voiced live by any of the actors.*

*\*The characters of El and Jess in 2024 could be female or nonbinary, played by female or nonbinary actors.*

### *Dialogue:*

*— Indicates a character's dialogue is interrupted, by another character speaking, an event or a character abruptly shifting gears within a line of dialogue.*

*... Indicates a character is searching for words, does not complete a thought or leaves a line of dialogue open.*

*Characters talking over one another is indicated by columns within the script, with some suggested staggering of overlap and emphasis.*

*1924 dialogue (particularly non-accented English) is written to be stylized and bright with an emphasis on specific rhythms—think 1920s radio programs and Mid-Atlantic accents. 2024 dialogue is more realistic but still heightened.*

*Spanish dialogue is spoken entirely in Spanish. English translation of certain passages are included in the written script solely for the reader. A few Yiddish phrases are used.*

*\*\*HISTORICAL NOTES are included at end of script.*

## ***Not Cake***

### **SYNOPSIS**

Set in 1924 and 2024, *Not Cake* is the story of a singular woman in a multi-cultural Los Angeles neighborhood who's determined to use her gifts to help other women. But after 100+ years of fighting for change, doesn't she deserve a break? *Not Cake* is a new play about privilege and class, appropriation and agency, what we hide and what we reveal.

### **SPECIAL THANKS**

to the following artists and advocates  
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***for Cari***

## **Not Cake Prelude**

*From black, we hear sounds of a river, the wind and rustling of trees. And we begin to see a warm glow, flickering as if from a campfire, underscored by songs of the Tongva Indigenous Peoples. The glow fades and is pixelated into small dots of light. First the lights appear as if they're candles or lanterns, accompanied by sound of movement which may be wagons and wheels along rutted roads through the hills.*

*We see more individual lights and start to hear sounds of construction; hammers and saws. Men's voices speaking Spanish. Some Japanese. Chinese. Women laughing. Music, reminiscent of mariachis. We see ladders and construction crews adding layers. Maybe the image or outline reminds us of a birthday cake with candles. And we hear bits of the Mexican birthday song, "Las Mañanitas."*

*The individual lights change in quality to become electric and the movement and noise that accompanies it is that of trains, then automobiles. Trucks. There are sparks from electric saws, neon signs, snippets of varied music and shouting in many languages. We see and hear cranes and oil rigs and big machinery. More and more layers building up and up and spreading out and lights of different shapes and sizes and energies, filling the entire space.*

*On top or beneath or in back of this are sounds of progress, whatever that means. Growth. Vibrancy. An edge of violence, even. Voices expanding and multiplying.*

*Then, suddenly, silence. Followed by darkness. Until...*

## Not Cake

*Impossibly expansive curtains are opened and we are looking out of a huge picture window at the lights of a city, Los Angeles. Looking at City Hall and Downtown from the hills, a bit east.*

*The year is 2024. The skyline is familiar to Angelenos, but today something about it is a bit faded. Muted. Covered by a veil.*

*In a large room that is almost bare of furniture—drawing attention to the architecture—we see three women, all looking out the window. One is white, appearing to be in her 50s, wearing a comfortably loose skirt or pants. Yet we get the sense that she's not comfortable hosting this gathering. The other two are in their 30s or early 40s. Alicia is Latina, haphazardly dressed for impact; Ivy is Japanese American, dressed for efficiency. They might have an almost manic energy—the last push before the crash.*

ALICIA:

How could you ever get tired of this view? It's fantastic!

THE WHITE WOMAN WITH A TAIL:

I've been looking at it a very long time.

IVY:

But I was here? I mean, not recently. When I was a kid?

ALICIA:

This house? Of course you were. Lily always took us up here when I was little.  
(to WWWT) With a bunch of other kids?

WWWT:

My practice, I worked with women; your sister worked for the rec center and kids followed her anywhere. It's always been very hard to refuse her.

ALICIA:

But you were like the only white lady around, back then.

WWWT:

Not the only one.

IVY:

Early 90s? You people were pretty scarce in this part of town. I just came over to visit my grandparents.

WWWT:

That all seems like so long ago.

ALICIA:

It was! For some of us, at least.

WWWT:

*(with a look to Alicia)* It has been a while since I've had... guests.

IVY:

You've got this whole house all to yourself?

WWWT:

I... stay close to home. The last few years I've become a bit of a recluse.

ALICIA:

And why is that? What happened?

WWWT:

Nothing happened. Time, happened.

ALICIA:

I mean, I'd already moved away, but Lily always told me about you going to her photo shows and fancy Latinx lectures... Didn't you take Spanish class together?

WWWT:

For all the good it did, either of us. She never could roll her "r"s.

ALICIA:

Ha ha. And she got you all involved in that activista art center, right? I remember the OG Women's March in '17; you two were all fired up, out in the hood.

WWWT:

It was incredible. And the next year, and the next, and the year after that, until...

IVY:

Until...?

WWWT:

Until it finally occurred to me that if this country couldn't take itself seriously, why should I? I decided to retire, is all.

IVY:

Hah. "Life's too short?"

ALICIA:

Ha ha.

WWWT:

*(another look to Alicia)* Not exactly.

IVY:

You were a shrink?

WWWT:

Most recently.

IVY:

That's not a growth industry? In my world, everyone's going crazy looking for—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* For me, it was time.

*Short pause.*

ALICIA:

Well. All the better for us.

IVY:

Who's us?

ALICIA:

Our family! *(re WWWT)* She's been able to be there, for Lily. All the doctors—the past year, it's been almost every week, and now... *(to WWWT)* Sorry. I know you hate hospitals.

WWWT:

It's fine. Your sister's been such an important part of my life. Without her, I...

*Very short pause.*

IVY:

Okay. So I do remember you from when I was a kid—you look exactly the same. But still: If I was in this house...

ALICIA:

You were! I brought you here. Like, many times. You seriously—

IVY:

*(interrupting)* Okay! Yeah, there's definitely something about it. But I do not remember *(turning back to the view)*... that. It's spectacular!

WWWT:

I changed it.

IVY:

The view?

WWWT:

I made it so it's the whole wall.

ALICIA:

That's right! It was... bookshelves?

WWWT:

And the window was much smaller.

ALICIA:

There was an arch.

IVY:

That makes sense. It's Spanish. The house. Built in 1920s?

WWWT:

Twenty-four. So I opened it up. But the view's changed, regardless. Torn down, built up. Sometimes I look out and it seems... worn out.

ALICIA:

Where we were, the view from my grandparents' house was the freeway. Or the wall along the freeway.

IVY:

Who do you get to wash them? The windows?

WWWT:

Oh. It's hard.

ALICIA:

We didn't know what we didn't have until we started coming up here.

IVY:

Wait. Your family used to be down by the interchange—I'd forgotten!

ALICIA:

Now it's condos. But back then, my grandparents had to fight to keep their house from being demolished. When they built it.

IVY:

When they built what?

ALICIA:

The freeway! Freeways. So there the house sat, smack up against the 5. At night—where we were, in the back—my parents told us to pretend it was a river.

IVY:

Seriously?

ALICIA:

The traffic sounds. Not the LA river, a real river. They told us to—

IVY:

*(interrupting)* No, I mean you seriously think they fought?



ALICIA:  
What?

IVY:  
That's what you think, that they—

ALICIA:  
*(interrupting)* Of course they fought. To save their home? Why wouldn't they?

IVY:  
No, I mean I'm sure they fought. Or rather, did what they could.

ALICIA:  
So what are you saying?

IVY:  
I'm saying that it's highly unlikely anything positive would have resulted from it, in terms of the house.

ALICIA:  
What are you talking about? They kept the house! We all practically grew up in that house.

IVY:  
Didn't you live in the garage?

ALICIA:  
I said "practically."

IVY:  
Okay. But we're talking 1930s.

WWWT:  
Forties.

IVY:  
Fine, and here's my point: Some eighty years ago, the fact that your beloved family hacienda escaped the wrecking ball to make room for a 6-lane highway would not have had anything to do with a couple of Mexicans raising a ruckus.

ALICIA:  
That is terrible!

IVY:  
It is. Absolutely terrible. But if it makes you feel any better, it was the same for my grandparents, tucked away, Little Tokyo-adjacent, over by the river. Especially after the camps, they were deathly afraid to raise their ancient Japanese voices lest they be mowed down into the asphalt! That's how it was.

*Silence.*

WWWT:

So do you know anyone?

*Short pause.*

IVY:

Anyone...?

WWWT:

Who does windows?

IVY:

No. I don't. *(to Alicia)* I'm sorry. Work stuff—our project. We keep running into walls and I'm super frustrated.

ALICIA:

Why don't we go out and grab something to eat? I took off today and got to the hospital early, so I missed lunch.

IVY:

You were there all day?

ALICIA:

Most of it. Lily was restless. And I'm starving.

IVY:

I could have met you earlier.

WWWT:

I probably have something to eat, here.

ALICIA:

*(to Ivy)* I thought later would be better for you.

IVY:

Why would you think that?

ALICIA:

Last time we talked, you were all busy busy "I have plans." Or let's get something delivered. *(to WWWT)* Do any of the old places deliver now?

IVY:

I should get a train; I have to be up early tomorrow.

ALICIA:

I miss it over here! *(to WWWT)* I can't convince you to have a sleepover, can I?

*We begin to hear faint mariachi music, perhaps “Volver, Volver.”*

ALICIA:

Whoa! Is that from the Plaza?

IVY:

They’ve really fixed up the Metro station, down there.

ALICIA:

The mariachis! What time is it? I thought they had to stop playing by—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* It’s not live. It’s piped in. A service. For everyone, up here. I can turn it off, if—

ALICIA:

*(interrupting)* No, it’s fantastic! My sister looooves those mariachis! Remember her pictures? She did a whole series?

IVY:

It’s what: ambiance?

WWWT:

Well, yes. And...

*She gestures with her hand and the music stops. We hear a police helicopter overhead.*

There’s a noise cancellation feature.

*The sounds get louder; we feel the vibrations, see the searchlight through the window.*

IVY:

*(shouting over the noise)* So the neighborhood’s changed, but it hasn’t changed?

ALICIA:

That is crazy!

*The white woman again waves her hand; the helicopter noise abruptly stops and music resumes—an extended high note as the helicopter lights fade. The women look out at the view and the music fades, as well. After a moment,*

WWWT:

She has mariachis in her room, you know.

IVY:

Who does?

WWWT:

Lily.

ALICIA:

Her hospital room? They visited?

IVY:

From her photos?

ALICIA:

What?

IVY:

The mariachis. You said Lily took—

ALICIA:

*(interrupting)* I don't— It wasn't like she *knew* them. *(to WWWT)* Did my sister ask for mariachis?

WWWT:

I got the feeling it was kind of a secret.

IVY:

Mariachis??

ALICIA:

A secret from me?

IVY:

How can a band of mariachis be a secret?

WWWT:

I shouldn't have said anything.

ALICIA:

Fine. You and Lily keep your secrets. I should get going.

WWWT:

I'm sorry. I didn't mean—

ALICIA:

*(interrupting, to Ivy)* I'll give you a lift to the station?

IVY:

Hang on. I need more information, here.

ALICIA:

And I need to go home!

IVY:

*(to WWWT)* What: Were they like Cancer Ward Candy Stripers?

WWWT:

I wouldn't say that.

ALICIA:

This is insane! What are you talking about?

WWWT:

I think it was when you were down getting coffee. Before Ivy got there. I was sitting by her bed, reading, and I thought she was asleep. Finally getting some sleep. But I looked over at her and her eyes were open. She was smiling. This sweet, sweet smile. Kind of mischievous, actually. She was looking straight ahead of her—at first I thought it was the TV, but she was looking down, to the right, at the little case where they keep the rubber gloves?

ALICIA:

Yeah.

WWWT:

And then she saw me looking, and kind of giggled. "Isn't that nice? They're back."

ALICIA:

Who was back?

WWWT:

This is what I asked her. "The mariachis," she said.

IVY:

Where?

WWWT:

"Right there," she said. "On top of the box." I looked, and she waited. Then, "You don't see them, do you?" I told her, no. And she said, "Maybe you could try. They're very small but they're very good."

She requested a song, and I did try. And after a bit, she turned back to me. She said, "No?" I shook my head. "But you can hear them, can't you?" I shook my head again. "Really? Not even you?"

And I was going to tell her that I had tried, I really had, but she looked again at the box with a glove sticking out and she smiled again as she listened, sort of patting my hand with her now ridiculous hand—all bloated and discolored and full of needles and attached to tubes going who knows where... which was somehow, in that moment, unbelievably comforting.

So suddenly I thought, okay! Maybe everything was going to be all right. And I started to say something. I think I was going to apologize, for not being able to see or hear or do anything that really mattered... not even me.

WWWT:

Then she put one finger to her lips. And she said, very quietly, “Shhhhhhh. Just because you can’t see them, doesn’t mean they aren’t there.”

*As a reflection on the window, we see a portrait of very small mariachis, formally posed.*

IVY:

Steroid psychosis.

ALICIA:

What?

IVY:

That’s probably what’s going on. Or some chemo drugs cause hallucinations. It’s very disturbing.

ALICIA:

*(to WWWT)* Did she seem disturbed? When she was talking about—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* No. Not at all.

ALICIA:

No...

WWWT:

I mean, maybe disappointed? Or maybe that was me.

*She turns to the audience.*

*(giving a command to unseen forces)* “Hay Unos Ojos!”

*We begin to hear a mariachi tune again; this time, a woman sings “There Are Some Eyes” and the mariachis in the portrait come alive, playing along. They’re very small, but they’re very good. The white woman speaks directly to the audience.*

That was Lily’s request.

*As she turns back to look out at the window, her tail breaks free of a pocket or enclosure in her pants or skirt. It’s a long and attractive tail, not unlike a cat’s.*

*There is a blast of blindingly bright light that washes out the setting, then we only see a night sky. A broad vista full of stars. Lights start to pop up from the ground, and our vista telescopes in.*

*The year is 1924, and the lights are sharp and focused, emitting hope and an almost musical energy. We make out the room from the previous scene, only the window is much smaller—an arch surrounded by bare bookcases. The room is still fairly empty, with a few pieces of furniture covered by brightly colored throws.*

*We see a young white woman—Esther—and a young Latino man—Juan, who is played by a female actor. Although Juan has no accent, Esther has a slight Yiddish accent. Both are in their late teens or early 20s, dressed plainly, although Juan might affect more style. Both are holding boxes, parcels and bags. In the background, we hear a recording of a woman singing a popular song: maybe “There’ll Be Some Changes Made.” Esther takes in the view.*

ESTHER:

Will you look at that?

JUAN:

Happy to, after you tell me what I’m supposed to do with all of this. (*re boxes, etc.*) She must be a pretty swell high hat—these are some upstage items!

ESTHER:

It is just the start, I think. She is bringing more in a car. The trucks arrive tomorrow.

*Esther sets down her load and starts going through items.*

JUAN:

*Trucks?* You’re telling me there’s more than one truck?

ESTHER:

Yes. This is a big house!

JUAN:

I’ll say! Where was she living before?

ESTHER:

She was living in Beverly Hills.

JUAN:

She had a big, fancy house in Beverly Hills and moved here. How do you like that?

ESTHER:

I like it fine.

JUAN:

So how long you been working for her?

ESTHER:

I am studying medicine, and with her just starting.

JUAN:

You’re from... New York?

ESTHER:

My family has lived here for two years, now. We live down on—

JUAN:

*(interrupting)* Over the butcher's shop. I've seen you.

ESTHER:

And I have definitely seen you.

JUAN:

Oh, you have, have you?

ESTHER:

Your mother, she comes by our shop almost every day. She cooks for many people.

JUAN:

Ah. Sure. She did, anyhoo! Now, she'll only be here.

ESTHER:

Yes.

JUAN:

But don't worry, doll: I'll be around, too.

ESTHER

That her house was large, or fancy, I don't know.

*Short pause.*

JUAN:

Oh! Her Beverly Hills house?

ESTHER:

And there, they are not real hills. This is what she says.

JUAN:

I guess they can call things whatever they want! After all, that's where the real cabbage is. *(off her look)* Kale? Dough? Money? It's with the movie types. They're the big shots, ya know.

ESTHER:

I know, of course I know.

JUAN:

And the oil people. They're also big.

ESTHER:

Yes.



JUAN:

And there's a whole lot of big shots down at the Port. They're maybe even—

ESTHER:

*(interrupting)* I know!

JUAN:

Oh, yeah? So who would want to move here from Beverly Hills?

ESTHER:

Here is the Orphan's Home. The Young Women's Asylum, International House...

JUAN:

And the Mexicans, Jews, Orientals—the little people in “the foreign districts.”  
What's she want with us?

ESTHER:

Here is the place she needs to be, she says. And close to the hospital. But she does not work there, anymore.

JUAN:

The charity hospital? What happened, they give her the bum's rush?

ESTHER:

No! She— *(pointing to the boxes, etc. in Juan's arms)* You must put that down.  
Set it please... *(pointing to a covered table)* there.

JUAN:

Yes, miss.

ESTHER:

Miss?

JUAN:

It's Missus?

ESTHER:

Certainly not!

JUAN:

You're the one giving the orders!

ESTHER:

I'm not—! Put them wherever you think best.

JUAN:

Is there a best place for this?

*He holds up a large, mysterious 1920s cooking implement.*

ESTHER:

The kitchen. It's a... I believe it is used for...

JUAN:

Not sure I want to know. She's got quite the arsenal, doesn't she?

*He's retrieved other frightening-looking tools. We begin to hear a soft hum from outside.*

ESTHER:

Instructions are somewhere.

JUAN:

Instructions for cooking?

ESTHER:

Your mother is set to be here, when?

JUAN:

Not until tomorrow. You hungry?

ESTHER:

I thought perhaps she'd want something when she arrived.

JUAN:

You mean the *lady* of the house?

ESTHER:

But she and the man who— her architect. They went to a restaurant Downtown, I should think.

JUAN:

Or she's out on a toot down in some hidden basement, catch my drift?

*He drinks from an imaginary bottle, and the noise grows louder—a car is approaching.*

ESTHER:

Genug shoy'n! Enough! This is them, coming.

JUAN:

Ha ha ha. Never enough for me! Although the likes of us wouldn't be welcomed in the swanky juice joints she visits.

ESTHER:

This is... terrible. Your talk.

JUAN:

Terrible? You think that's terrible? You'd better hold onto your hat, from what I've been hearing. They say she has a—

ESTHER:

*(interrupting)* When you are done with the kitchen, those books go there.  
*(pointing toward the bookcases by the window)* You'd best hurry.

JUAN:

Atta girl! You'll be the boss around here in no time!

ESTHER:

Ach...

*Juan picks up kitchen items and leaves, just as the music in the other room stops.*

*(raising her voice, to Juan offstage)* But do you mind—?

*She's interrupted by the music coming back on. A different song, a bit jazzier.*

Thank you!

DAVIS:

You're welcome!

*Esther is somewhat surprised to see Davis, a Black man in his 40s or early 50s with an easy air. He's a sharp dresser. He's played by a female actor.*

ESTHER:

Oh, hello!

DAVIS:

Hello! *(gesturing at the room, particularly the view)* What do you think? Turned out well, didn't it?

ESTHER:

It's beautiful!

DAVIS:

Mission Revival.

*Very short pause.*

That's what it's called, the style. Mission Revival.

ESTHER:

Oh! I didn't—

DAVIS:

*(interrupting)* There's no reason you would! It's not something I would ordinarily design, but it's very popular now. It's what she wanted.

*We hear a car's horn and a woman's voice in the distance.*

WWWT:

*(offstage)* Hallo! Hallo there!

DAVIS:

And here she is!

*Juan hurries in, gesturing outside.*

JUAN:

Didja get a load of that breezer, quite the—! *(seeing Davis)* Oh!

DAVIS:

Yes, she drove up in her own car. *(offering his hand)* I'm Davis...

JUAN:

Sure! I gotta... Oh, yeah.

*He hurries out towards the voice.*

ESTHER:

That is Juan. His mother—

DAVIS:

*(interrupting)* Yes! Adelita. She's a wonderful cook, bakes the most marvelous Mexican pastries: "Sweet Breads." She didn't by any chance...?

ESTHER:

Tomorrow, she comes.

DAVIS:

I might just stick around, then!

*And with that, the white woman with a tail makes a rather striking entrance. She is much more animated than in the last scene. Dressed in fashionable clothes of the period, her tail trails proudly behind her.*

WWWT:

So! What do you say? Does it all meet with your approval?!

ESTHER:

Yes! It's—

*She stops herself upon seeing the white woman with a tail giving Davis a very enthusiastic kiss. Davis is receptive but a bit taken aback.*

DAVIS:

Um...

WWWT:

It's all right. She's all right. *(to Esther)* Aren't you, darling?

*Juan comes back in, carrying way too many boxes and parcels, piled high above his head pretty much like a cartoon.*

ESTHER:

Perfectly all right! I just didn't... Well. I just didn't know.

WWWT:

Remember that. It'll serve you well in life.

ESTHER:

What will?

*The white woman with a tail includes the audience in her response.*

WWWT:

"I just didn't know."

*Juan is about to collide with an architectural feature with disastrous results.*

DAVIS:

Whoa! Hey! Let me...

*He steadies Juan and relieves him of some parcels for an unobstructed view.*

JUAN:

Thanks.

*Juan can't take his eyes off of the white woman's tail.*

WWWT:

Bedroom, please!

JUAN:

Huh?

ESTHER:

Those boxes, in the bedroom. *(to WWWT)* Which one?

JUAN:

How many are there?

DAVIS:

Four bedrooms. And three bathrooms.

WWWT:

One's just a powder room.

JUAN:

But there's only one of you, right?

DAVIS:

You are correct. There is only one of her.

WWWT:

Hah!

ESTHER:

*(to WWWT)* Back bedroom?

WWWT:

No, the master.

DAVIS:

*(to Juan)* That's the "master bedroom."

WWWT:

*(to Juan)* The large one, with the sitting area.

JUAN:

And you would be the "master?"

WWWT:

In this house, I am.

JUAN:

Well, then! That's what I'd call hotsy totsy!

*He leaves with the boxes.*

WWWT:

Ha ha ha. *(to Davis)* Is that what you'd call it?

DAVIS:

For want of another phrase. And you certainly put me through my paces! Ten years ago, if someone would've asked for a house with a garage I would have called them crazy.

WWWT:

Thank you for indulging me, then.

DAVIS:

You'd have a hard time selling a house anymore without one; I've heard the same from colleagues all across the country.

WWWT:

I suppose I'll have to expand my horizons if I want to set trends, then!

DAVIS:

I suppose you will!

*Short, steamy pause.*

ESTHER:

Antshuldigt mir...

*She picks up some parcels.*

WWWT:

Those, in back bedroom.

*Esther starts out, then turns back.*

ESTHER:

This is a beautiful house.

WWWT:

Thank you!

DAVIS:

Thank you!

*Esther leaves the room.*

DAVIS:

Ha ha ha. I'm sorry if I'm a bit... attached to this house.

WWWT:

Oh, don't apologize! I'm quite attached to the man who built it for me.

DAVIS:

I can't take full credit for the actual building. Or, construction, I ought to say.

WWWT:

*(moving close to him again)* Why ever not? If you don't, somebody else will. The times we're living in.

DAVIS:

Well, some of us have to be more careful than others. And the Mexicans did a bang up job. They're hard workers.

*The white woman wraps her tail around him, pulling him close.*

WWWT:

I'll give you credit for anything you'd like. Have you thought about building a nice little place for yourself, over here?

DAVIS:

I could. It is one of the spots they've set aside for the "alien races."

WWWT:

That's not a very nice way to put it!

DAVIS:

Yet it's right there in the zoning codes. In black and white, so to speak.

WWWT:

Oh, you needn't pay that any attention!

DAVIS:

Oh, but I do! And you: Even in this neighborhood, it's one thing for you to have hired me for my services, and quite another for me to...

WWWT:

I realize that. Of course! But we're safe here and I'm happy to take advantage of your... services any way I can get them.

DAVIS:

That's good to know.

WWWT:

I just thought it would be nice to have you closer, is what I was saying.

DAVIS:

For the time being, I'm fine down on Central Avenue. I hope you'll not mind, however, if I say this: You, madam, have got a very attractive tail!

WWWT:

Ha ha ha. You ought to do so more frequently!

*She looks to the audience again before they both move in for another kiss, interrupted by Juan.*

JUAN:

*(hurrying in)* Miss! Missus! Maam! Uh, sorry, but—

*He's interrupted by Esther and Ina, dressed in "Western" clothing of the period; she has a soft Japanese accent.*

ESTHER:

*(following Ina in, to WWWT)* I tried to tell her you were—

JUAN:

*(interrupting)* That's what I was—

INA:

*(interrupting)* So sorry. I—



ESTHER:

*(interrupting, to WWWT)* She was at the kitchen door.

INA:

I do not want to—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* Have we met?

INA:

I— No. I am Ina. We live over by river. My family.

ESTHER:

I'm sorry, but we cannot—

INA:

*(interrupting, to WWWT)* I know who you are. We hear this house is to be yours. Tonight, I see cars drive up. Then I see lights. And music.

*The music has stopped.*

WWWT:

Juan? Leave us, please.

*He does, somewhat reluctantly.*

So! Ina: You were telling me that you saw the music?

INA:

Oh. No, I am meaning—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* Ha ha ha, I know. But I quite like the idea!

ESTHER:

*(to Ina)* And now it is late, so—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* No. No, it's perfectly fine. We're all friends, here.

*She shoots a look to Davis.*

DAVIS:

I'll be in the kitchen.

*He leaves and the white woman motions for Esther to draw the curtains. As she does, the room takes on a warm, comforting energy. The curves in the arches are more pronounced; the walls appear softer. We hear a solo piano recording from the other room. After a satisfied look at the audience, the white woman turns her attention to Ina.*

WWWT:

Apologies, Ina: I've just arrived and it's a wonder I have a chair to sit in! But please do, won't you?

*She watches carefully as Ina tentatively sits.*

Yes. Looks like you're still far from quickening, so there's no hurry. The clinic isn't quite open yet, but we can make an appointment. Esther?

ESTHER:

Of course. We will be—

INA:

*(interrupting)* No!

WWWT:

No?

ESTHER:

You are not pregnant?

INA:

I... *(with her hands on her belly)* am not so sure.

WWWT:

Seven or eight weeks, I'd say.

ESTHER:

Then we will find a date to take care of everything, and... you won't be. We'll set things to right.

INA:

But this cannot wait!

ESTHER:

If you are only—

INA:

*(interrupting)* No! I am here for— My sister. She go to a man. First he give her pills. Expensive pills. Pills do nothing. She go to him, again. He say she must wait longer.

ESTHER:

Oh! Yes! *(to WWWT)* I told you there was a notice posted by the—

WWWT:

*(interrupting, nodding to Ina to continue)* Yes...

INA:

So we wait. Still nothing. She go back. Now he say she wait too long. She now need "procedure." But because she is not— Because she is Japanese, procedure more complicated.

ESTHER:

He said what?

INA:

So for more money he do this procedure. And after, there will be blood, he say. He say blood is natural.

WWWT:

These men aren't even doctors. The whole lot of them: the worst kind of opportunists.

INA:

But then, there is fever. Horrible fever. This for two days, before tonight. Only she is not right shade of color for fever. She is pale. Not natural.

WWWT:

She still has a fever?

INA:

No. Fever is gone but she is not herself. She is making sounds are not her sounds. Is saying words I do not know. I do not recognize. Words from another place, if even they are words.

WWWT:

I am so sorry, Ina. These men, they belong in jail, every one of them.

ESTHER:

*(to Ina)* We'll go to see your sister tomorrow, first thing.

INA:

No! Tomorrow is tomorrow, and now she is growing cold. Now she is silent. And still there is blood. Still too much blood, for still too long.

*For a moment maybe we see the blood. Or feel it.*

WWWT:

Esther, please get my bag.

ESTHER:

But look at the time!

WWWT:

And I just hope we're not too late! This, you see, is why I moved here. Her sister would not be in this pretty situation if she lived in Beverly Hills, or Pasadena or Glendale or any one of the fine neighborhoods that would never, in a million years, welcome—

INA:

*(interrupting)* People like me.

*The white woman with a tail again includes the audience.*

WWWT:

Exactly!

*(to the women)* I'll drive.

*As they leave, Juan comes back into the room—he's overheard at least part of the conversation. We hear a car's engine starting and he opens the curtains to peer out. We see the band of small mariachis from the portrait on the other side of the window. They come to life and begin to play a song, perhaps "El Son de la Negra." Juan takes no notice and soon the lights of a car move away, leaving the mariachis in darkness.*

*Then we are in 2024. The window again dominates the room and it's early morning, gray and flat. We see Desiree, wearing something that makes a populist statement, and Alicia, wearing a new assortment of mismatched clothing. They are both drinking coffee.*

ALICIA:

I hope it's okay. She's still asleep, and I wasn't sure how to— She does not have a normal coffee maker, let's just say that much.

DESIREE:

Normal's overrated. Y'all crashed here, last night?

ALICIA:

We met at the hospital and it got late.

DESIREE:

I'm sorry about your sister.

ALICIA:

Thanks. I mean, she's not dead.

DESIREE:

Oh, no. I didn't mean—

ALICIA:

*(interrupting)* I don't know why I said that. About her being dead.

DESIREE:

Being not dead.

ALICIA:

Right. Not. I don't— These are very strange times.

DESIREE:

You got that right.

ALICIA:

I meant— Yeah.

DESIREE:

How's your sister doin'?

ALICIA:

Okay? That's what Lily would tell you, anyway.

*The white woman comes in wearing loose pajamas, her tail hidden, with a coffee cup.*

WWWT:

I thought I heard life out here. And...?

ALICIA:

This is Ivy's friend, Des.

DESIREE:

*(to WWWT)* Hey! I gotta tell you, this place is very special. You can feel the history. And when I say feel, I mean *feel*. The energy—beyond inspirational.

*Very short pause.*

WWWT:

Thank you. *(to Alicia)* So you decrypted the coffee machine?

ALICIA:

Where did that thing come from? It's ridiculous.

WWWT:

But the coffee...?

DESIREE:

The coffee is absolutely delicious. Incredible. The best I ever had. I feel blessed!

*Very short pause.*

WWWT:

You're welcome.

DESIREE:

And I was checking out the view—gratitude, right? Can I ask how'd you find it?  
The house?

WWWT:

I've been here a long time.

DESIREE:

Wait. You didn't grow up in this part of town...

ALICIA:

*(interceding)* Sort of. She's my sister Lily's best—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* I was a friend of the family.

ALICIA:

You still are. And Ivy's grandparents lived over here, so me and Ivy met her when we were kids. Lily was older.

DESIREE:

*(to WWWT)* Does that mean you and Lily went to school together? Back then, that must've been pretty—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* I probably have something for breakfast if that interests anyone?

ALICIA:

Breakfast! Yes! Or we could go out. There's an amazing panaderia that used to be by the Plaza.

*Ivy comes in, wearing her clothes from the previous scene but with a new, positive vibe.*

IVY:

*(to Desiree)* Hey! You got here fast!

DESIREE:

No traffic.

IVY:

That's hard to believe, at any hour!

*With a quick kiss, she pulls Desiree aside.*

*(lowering her voice)* So?

DESIREE:

*(also lowering her voice)* It's great! And yeah, it looks exactly like—

IVY:

*(interrupting)* Isn't that insane? Last night when we got here there was something about it I just couldn't figure out. And then I woke up at, like, two in the morning. And it hit me.

WWWT:

*(overhearing)* What hit you?

IVY:

Oh. This house.

ALICIA:

The house hit you?

DESIREE:

Like... synchronistically.

IVY:

Right! *(to WWWT)* Okay, I am so glad about Lily. I mean, not— You know, but if you think about it, she made this happen! So let's set up a time where we can really talk?

WWWT:

Why not now?

IVY:

I need to get Des up to speed. All I can say is that we've been looking for a place for forever; I'll give you more details later. Soon. Maybe we can get you out of your whole recluse thing? I just— I'd forgotten about this house, is all.

ALICIA:

How can you forget about this house?

DESIREE:

And even that's meaningful! A memory that re-emerges when everything's aligning!

WWWT:

I don't—

IVY:

*(interrupting)* Again, thanks for the bed. I— Yeah. This could be really good! *(to Alicia)* And I'm really glad I got to see your sister.

ALICIA:

Me, too.

IVY:

Okay!

DESIREE:

*(setting the cup down)* Thank you so much for the coffee!

ALICIA:

You're welcome.

WWWT:

You're welcome.

*Desiree turns to Ivy but she has already left the room.*

DESIREE:

Okay! *(to WWWT)* This *is* good. All good. Truly! Bye, Alicia!

*They are both gone and we hear a very solid door slam.*

ALICIA:

Maybe that's my cue, as well! What time is it?

WWWT:

You are not leaving here until you explain that to me.

*The white woman frees her tail.*

ALICIA:

Explain...

WWWT:

They've "been looking for a place" and "everything's aligning?"

ALICIA:

Yeah! I don't know what that was. I didn't think they were together like, together together. Ivy told me she was dating this guy in the Southbay.

WWWT:

No. I'm talking about—

ALICIA:

*(interrupting)* I mean, I'm not judging. I'm a good Catholic girl, but I can roll with the sex-positive poly-whateverness of it...

WWWT:

Sure, but—

ALICIA:

*(interrupting)* And it's not like any of us can afford to live over here. Not anymore.

WWWT:

It don't think that's what they—



ALICIA:

*(interrupting)* Except you, of course. Because you already live here.

WWWT:

I got in at a good time! Is that my fault?

ALICIA:

Okay.

WWWT:

What I want to know is what “this” is and why they want to get me out of my “recluse thing!”

ALICIA:

You’d rather stay in it?

WWWT:

What does Ivy do? You said she was working for some human rights organization?

ALICIA:

And that’s where she met Desiree. Women’s healthcare. But I don’t think she’s there, anymore.

WWWT:

The way they were talking, it sounded to me like they had some sort of... scheme.

ALICIA:

“Scheme?”

WWWT:

What did she say last night? Something about a project—she’s not an artist now, is she? Or a filmmaker?

ALICIA:

Since when is a having a project a bad thing?

WWWT:

When your project involves designs on someone else’s—

ALICIA:

*(interrupting)* Hold on, there! I mean, I know Ivy can be— I think she was just glad to be here, to spend time together. I know I am. Aren’t you glad to have “guests,” again?

WWWT:

She said, “I need to get Des up to speed?” Ivy doesn’t really know...

*Short pause.*

ALICIA:

Know what? How old you are?

WWWT:

If you want to put it that way.

ALICIA:

I didn't tell her. And I thought you said you don't keep track, anymore.

WWWT:

I said I stopped celebrating birthdays.

ALICIA:

Right. No one ever remembers mine, either. *(finding her phone or device)* Oh. Shit. How'd it get that late. I should go.

WWWT:

You're working today?

ALICIA:

Yeah! Some of us have to.

*Very short pause.*

I didn't mean it like that.

WWWT:

I know.

ALICIA:

Well, I kind of did. But not... You know.

WWWT:

I do. I do know.

*The white woman with a tail suddenly begins to cry.*

ALICIA:

Ummmmmm... Are you all right?

WWWT:

*(through her tears)* Yes. No. I don't...

*Alicia awkwardly goes to hold her. They both juggle their coffee cups.*

ALICIA:

Heeeeeey. What's the matter?

WWWT:

*(still crying)* Besides two activist filmmakers planning to take over my house for a polyamorous porn shoot and watching the world going to hell while I've become irrelevant and my best friend is dying in the hospital, you mean?

ALICIA:

Uh huh. All of that.

WWWT:

*(still crying)* I'm sorry. I didn't mean dying.

ALICIA:

I know.

WWWT:

*(still crying)* Your sister is not dying. I won't let her.

*These words catch them both off guard and stop the tears.*

ALICIA:

So... That's not something you can actually do, is it? Keep her from...

WWWT:

No.

ALICIA:

No? You're certain.

WWWT:

Yes.

ALICIA:

That means you've tried? I mean, before?

WWWT:

Many, many years ago.

ALICIA:

Yeah, well. Just our luck, your special powers have their limitations.

WWWT:

I don't have any—

ALICIA:

*(interrupting)* You know what I mean. Us Mexicans are big on miracles; you're a white woman with a tail. My family always put you up there with Our Lady.

WWWT:

You know it's not like that—

ALICIA:

*(interrupting)* Actually, I don't know. What is it like?

WWWT:

What?

ALICIA:

Being you. I've known you almost my whole life and I don't really know anything about you. When I was a kid, my big sister introduced you as a doctor, but not *that* kind of doctor...

WWWT:

I don't like to—

ALICIA:

*(interrupting)* But she said you helped people and was totally devoted to you and when we started to ask questions about... things, all she told me was, "It's just how it is."

WWWT:

Because that's pretty much it.

ALICIA:

And for years you two were so tight, but then, before she got sick, she said you wouldn't even—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* I told you, I'm retired. I worked very hard for a very long time.

ALICIA:

Okay. But it's just me, now. Don't you think I deserve an explanation?

WWWT:

There's nothing to explain!

ALICIA:

Really! Not the tail? Not the ageless beauty thing?

WWWT:

Now you're just trying to—

ALICIA:

*(interrupting)* Not you living forever?

WWWT:

I don't know that I'm—

ALICIA:

*(interrupting)* But who's to say you won't?

WWWT:

I don't know that I want to! Do you have any idea how many horrible things I've lived through, how many people I've loved and lost?

ALICIA:

Except Lily is going to be all right! The doctor keeps saying how strong she is. How well she's doing, how fantastic she looks!

*Very short pause.*

WWWT:

Yes.

ALICIA:

Yes...?

WWWT:

The doctor keeps saying that.

*A moment, then she turns to the window; the band of small mariachis is gathering outside, tuning and warming up their instruments. Alicia takes no notice of them.*

ALICIA:

So. How do you think a polyamorous porn shoot is different from a regular porn shoot?

WWWT:

What? Oh. Probably not much.

ALICIA:

*(picking up her bag)* Listen, you don't have to go to the hospital today. One of my brothers is going over, with his girls.

*One of the mariachis signals to the white woman—they're set to begin. Is she ready?*

WWWT:

Then... maybe I won't.

ALICIA:

I do gotta get to work, though. You're sure you don't mind me borrowing these clothes?

WWWT:

Not at all.

ALICIA:

I'll bring 'em back.

WWWT:  
Okay...

*Alicia surprises her by giving her a heartfelt hug. The mariachis see this and break into wild applause.*

ALICIA:  
Ohhhhhh. Can we do this again? Like, soon?

WWWT:  
Uh huh...

ALICIA:  
Really?! Great! And we'll let you know if anything...

WWWT:  
Thanks. I'll... go on Friday.

ALICIA:  
Good. And thanks, again.

*She leaves. The mariachis feel it's time to wave goodbye, as well.*

WWWT:  
But wait: Lily...?

*We hear the door slam and the white woman moves to the now empty window. She may look to the audience—were the mariachis really there? She looks back at the window and takes a sip of her coffee, which is now cold.*

Ach!

*As she heads toward the kitchen she's met by El, wearing PJs and carrying a coffee cup.*

EL:  
Morning...

*The white woman quickly exchanges her cold coffee for El's hot.*

Hey! That's not—

*El is interrupted by a longer than expected good morning kiss.*

WWWT:  
You know something? I *really* needed a heater.

EL:  
I guess so! Everyone gone? It's safe? I'm still your best kept secret?

WWWT:

You know *that's* not true!

EL:

Ha ha. But... May I say, I'm very glad you did this.

WWWT:

This being?

EL:

Having people over. Bringing new energy into the house, opening it up. Opening you up! I think it's good for you. For us.

WWWT:

Oh you do?

EL:

Absolutely. Who knows what we'll discover?!

WWWT:

Sounds like a reason to keep the door shut.

EL:

Hah! And it's about time I met Lily's sister! Next time you'll introduce me.

WWWT:

Yes. I will. Ahhhhhhhh! What a morning! Can we get some breakfast? Go out and grab something?

EL:

You are just full of surprises! Do I need to change?

WWWT:

Nah. We'll stay local.

*She reaches out to El with her tail.*

I love you, you know.

EL:

And I, you. But you'd better tuck that thing in if you want to get out of the house!

WWWT:

Hmmm, if I wasn't so hungry...

EL:

Right...

*With a smile, the white woman tucks her tail back into her pants. El grabs sunglasses as they head out.*

EL:

¡Venga, me muero por unos huevos rancheros!

*The white woman gestures with her hand and they are gone. We hear a very modern version of a mariachi song.*

*The sky outside of the window turns to a brilliant blue and as the vista transforms and is framed by the arch from 1924. It's a gorgeous, smog-free LA morning accompanied by the sound of birds.*

*Then we see Juan, ill-at-ease, heading toward a bedroom. Adelita, wearing simple clothing, comes in and startles him.*

ADELITA:

¡A ver! ¿Juan? Las cajas— (*Now, Juan? The boxes—*)

JUAN:

*(interrupting)* Mother! What are you—?

ADELITA:

*(interrupting)* ¿Qué haces tú? ¡Pareces gato nervioso! (*What are you? You look like a nervous cat.*)

JUAN:

I— Have you seen what's going on in the bedroom?

ADELITA:

Oyeme. ¿Te andas asomando a recámaras ajenas? (*Listen, are you peeking in other people's bedrooms?*)

JUAN:

No! I didn't peek—

ADELITA:

*(interrupting)* ¡Yo no te enseñé a portarte así! (*I didn't raise you like that!*)

JUAN:

No, that's not what I—

ADELITA:

*(interrupting)* ¡Ven conmigo! Ah. ¿Los camiones? (*Then come here! Oh, the trucks?*)

JUAN:

The trucks should be here soon. But there's a woman back there—



ADELITA:

*(interrupting)* Tú no te metas a su recámara, hijo! *(Stay out of her bedroom!)*

JUAN:

No! It's the *other* bedroom!

ADELITA:

¿Cuál otra recámara? *(Which other bedroom?)*

JUAN:

I was here when they brought her, late last night.

ADELITA:

¿Quién? ¿Quién trajo a quién? *(Who? Who brought whom?)*

JUAN:

The Missus. And the girl, the Jew. The colored man was gone by then. But they came in with an Oriental woman who...

ADELITA:

¿Que qué? *(Who what?)*

JUAN:

I don't know. I mean, I it was awful. So I was wondering if she was...

ADELITA:

¿Qué?

JUAN:

Dead.

ADELITA:

¡Díos mio!

JUAN:

Now do you see why I'm—?

ADELITA:

*(interrupting)* Espérame. ¿Cómo que "dead?"

*Short pause.*

JUAN:

I mean, dead, dead.

ADELITA:

¿Muerta? ¿Por qué muerta?

JUAN:

Something's going on, here. I thought it was just a story, but the Missus really does have a tail. And last night that woman looked...

INA:

Hello?

*The arrival of Ina takes both Adelita and Juan by surprise.*

ADELITA:

¡Ay!

INA:

I am sorry! Sorry to bother you...

ADELITA:

¡Hijo! ¡Esa mujer no parece muerta! (*That woman does not look dead!*)

JUAN:

A different Oriental woman, Mama. This is another one.

ADELITA:

¿Hay más de una China? (*There's more than one?*)

INA:

May I have tea? Is this possible?

*Very short pause.*

ADELITA:

Por supuesto. ¿Con leche? ¿azúcar? ¿limón?

JUAN:

She says—

INA:

(*interrupting, to Adelita*) No. Only tea. Thank you.

ADELITA:

Enseguida.

*She leaves the room.*

INA:

Hello, again.

JUAN:

Hi, there.

*Ina takes a look around the room, for the first time in daylight; her gaze stops at the window and she moves toward it. Juan joins her.*

JUAN:

It's something, isn't it? (*pointing*) The plaza and the main street, there. The Jews? That's their big temple, to your right. You can see downtown past that. And there, get a slant of the river, winding all the way from beyond Little Tokyo. Then over that way, the Mexican quarter.

INA:

All so beautiful.

JUAN:

From here it is. But between you and me and the lamppost, don't look too closely. It'll spoil your nice view.

*He turns and points to the bedroom.*

Is that your...?

INA:

Sister. My younger sister.

JUAN:

What's wrong with her? If you don't mind me asking.

WWWT:

We do.

*The white woman has appeared, looking almost as tired as Ina. She absent-mindedly grooms her tail.*

JUAN:

Sorry. I was just—

WWWT:

(*interrupting*) Can you ask your mother to bring me a coffee?

JUAN:

Sure thing.

*But he takes his time leaving the room.*

WWWT:

(*to Ina*) We'll have some coffee. I don't usually eat in the mornings, but if you care for anything?

INA:

No. Tea is fine. Please.

WWWT:  
(to Juan) And tea for our guest, please?

INA:  
No, I...

WWWT:  
No?

INA:  
I... Yes. Thank you.

WWWT:  
(to Juan) Thank you!

JUAN:  
Got it.

*At the door, he bends down to tie a shoe, perhaps.*

WWWT:  
You'll have to forgive me. We're all at sixes and sevens here, still moving in.

INA:  
Yes.

WWWT:  
But we've been through all that, haven't we? Last night. I apologize, I am *desperate* for coffee.

*Very short pause, then she turns to a still stalling Juan.*

Juan?

JUAN:  
Yes! Coffee! Pos-i-lute-ly!

*He leaves the room.*

WWWT:  
Poor little bunny. He doesn't know what to make of us!

INA:  
Thank you. For helping.

WWWT:  
Of course! No one should have to endure what your sister went through. It's unjust and inhumane but we will put stop to it, once and for all!

*She might shoot a look to the audience before moving to the window to join Ina.*

WWWT:

You should know, your sister is doing very well, under the circumstances.

INA:

She is strong. She is strongest woman I know. And she will make wonderful mother to many children. But this moment she cannot be mother. This, she is deciding.

WWWT:

Yes. That was her decision to make, no matter what happens.

*Very short pause.*

INA:

Yes.

WWWT:

So tell me something, Ina: *(looking out the window)* Out there, what do you see?

INA:

From here? City look very... different.

WWWT:

It gives you a new perspective, doesn't it? The first time I came up here, I felt like my world was about to burst wide open.

INA:

And for me? What I see is—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* Possibility.

INA:

Possibility?

WWWT:

For all of us. But especially, in this day and age, for women. Where we can go, what we can do and who we can be... We fought for our right to vote, but that's only the beginning. We must be in charge of our own fortunes, and that means our own bodies. We must be able to safely choose who we share them with, and when and if it's time to bring children into the world. And this world, our world, right here... It's all just wild with possibility. You'll see.

INA:

I am saying what I see: It is like for children.

WWWT:  
What is?

INA:  
*(re the view)* This. There. What I see, is like beautiful houses for dolls. Like not real; we are only pretending.

WWWT:  
Oh. I don't—

*She's interrupted by a loud clatter of dishes as Adelita and Juan come into the room with a coffee and tea service, and a large platter of pan dulce.*

Hallo! What's all this?

JUAN:  
My mother says no coffee on an empty stomach.

*Adelita pours a cup of tea for Ina.*

INA:  
Thank you.

ADELITA:  
De nada.

WWWT:  
*(taking in the spread)* Well, it certainly looks wonderful. But it really is too much. You oughtn't have!

ADELITA:  
*(to Ina)* Y para tu hermana? *(And for your sister?)*

INA:  
Tea? I do not know...

*She turns to the white woman with a tail.*

WWWT:  
It's all right, isn't it? Your tea? I'm not hungry, but maybe I could eat just a bit of something. *(to Adelita)* You worked so hard; wouldn't want it to go to waste.

INA:  
No, I am asking tea for my—

WWWT:  
*(interrupting, re pink pan dulce)* Oh! What are these?

JUAN:

Conchas: they are like sea shells.

INA:

(to WWWT) May my sister have tea?

JUAN:

And next to them, Ojos de Buey y Orejas. Eyes and ears. Nothin' gets past us around here, ha ha ha.

WWWT:

Whatever they're called, they all look delicious!

*Adelita pours her a cup of coffee as she makes her selection.*

(to Ina) You will join me, won't you?

INA:

But for my sister.

WWWT:

Oh. No solid food, I'm afraid.

INA:

Tea!

WWWT:

Tea! Yes. We can certainly see if she'll take any.

JUAN:

(moving toward the bedroom) I'll go and—

WWWT:

(interrupting) No. Adelita? (to Juan) Can you ask your mother to please—?

ADELITA:

(interrupting, to Ina) ¿Para ella, tè solo? ¿Sin leche? (Black tea, for her?)

INA:

Yes. Thank you.

*Adelita pours a cup of black tea.*

WWWT:

(to Adelita) But no milk. Black. (to Juan) Can you tell her—?

ADELITA:

(interrupting) Enseguida.

*As Adelita leaves with the tea, we see that one of the mariachis is outside the window, hungrily peering in at the overflowing tray of pan dulce. The white woman takes no notice.*

WWWT:

Mmmm. The coffee is delicious. This is turning out to be quite the morning!

*Davis comes in and she turns to include the audience.*

And here's the only thing I need to make it that much better!

DAVIS:

Make what better?

WWWT:

Wouldn't you like to know?

DAVIS:

Hang on. *(spying the pan dulce)* Are those Adelita's?

WWWT:

They are, indeed.

DAVIS:

I arrived not one minute too late!

WWWT:

Well, perhaps *one* minute...

*She takes a very big bite to taunt him.*

DAVIS:

Then I'll try to catch up.

*Another mariachi appears outside the window.*

WWWT:

*(picking up a pastry)* Oh, look at these! Little horns!

JUAN:

Cuernitos! Good enough for the devil!

WWWT:

"The devil!" Is that so?

*The mariachis are getting excited by the feast inside; more join them.*

JUAN:

*(turning to Davis, offering a pastry)* And for you, sir, un payaso.



DAVIS:

Why, thank you!

JUAN:

“A clown.”

*One of the new mariachis tries to smash through the glass of the window with his guitar. They try to get the attention of the white woman, but to no avail.*

WWWT:

Ina! If you don't come and help yourself, we'll have completely ravaged this platter.

DAVIS:

*(to Ina)* Oh! Please excuse me, I didn't even see you there!

INA:

Hello.

WWWT:

*(to Davis)* Darling, you've a perfectly good excuse to forget your manners:

*She includes the audience.*

“You just didn't know!” Ha ha ha.

DAVIS:

Ha ha, no.

*The mariachis are very busy, trying to find a way inside.*

WWWT:

*(to Ina)* Don't tell me you're not at all hungry. In your condition.

INA:

*(holding her belly)* Perhaps one piece of cake?

WWWT:

This is not cake. It's not remotely cake. These are— What's the proper name for them?

DAVIS:

Mexican Sweet Breads.

JUAN:

Pan Dulce.

WWWT:

Sweet Breads. Exactly. I used to get these in Sonoratown.

*We start to hear a rumbling sound from outside, too close for the mariachis' comfort.*

DAVIS:

*(to Ina)* We didn't officially meet, last night. I'm Davis.

INA:

I am Ina.

DAVIS:

Well, Ina. You're looking very well, this morning. I hope everything—

INA:

*(interrupting)* It is not me. It is my sister.

DAVIS:

Your sister?

WWWT:

Yes. Ina's younger sister. And she's going to be just fine.

DAVIS:

Glad to hear it.

*The rumbling gets louder and the mariachis make a reluctant get-away.*

WWWT:

*(re the rumbling)* What on earth is—?

DAVIS:

I meant to tell you. They rang me a bit ago, that's why I'm—

JUAN:

*(interrupting)* Los Camio— The trucks!

*He is at the window; Davis joins him.*

DAVIS:

Whoa! There are a few more than I'd thought. We should go out and lend a hand.

WWWT:

Oh, please do. Those are some very large trucks; you boys have got your work cut out for you, today!

*She gives Davis a substantial kiss, then smiles at Juan.*

JUAN:

All right, then!

*Perhaps the white woman gives the audience a wink as Juan follows Davis out. We hear and feel the movement of the trucks as they get nearer. Unconsciously, Ina again moves one hand to her belly.*

WWWT:

Do you already have a family, Ina? Children?

INA:

I have sons.

WWWT:

And a husband?

INA:

Yes. My sister, too.

WWWT:

Of course. She lives with—

INA:

*(interrupting)* No. Yes. Now, we live together. But I am saying my sister have husband.

WWWT:

She's married! I should know better than to assume, but she's so young.

INA:

Her husband, he is gone.

WWWT:

Ah! I understand. My condolences.

INA:

You do not understand. He is in Japan.

WWWT:

Did he desert her?

INA:

No!

WWWT:

It's an arranged marriage?

INA:

No! He is good man. They marry only 6 months.

WWWT:

Then what in the world is he doing abroad, with a young wife who's—? I'm afraid I *don't* understand.

INA:

He is Japanese, but he—like my sister—is Nisei. Born here. He is traveling to Japan for business. He does not know she is pregnant. And now, new Immigration Act. This mean he cannot return.

WWWT:

Oh, no, the law is to restrict new immigrants *from* Asia. If he was born here...

INA:

They only see Japanese, not U.S.

WWWT:

If they've made a mistake, then I'm sure something can be—!

INA:

*(interrupting)* Perhaps something can. By some people. But my sister... she say she cannot be mother alone until that something. She must work and not be burden to our family. And if there is no something and he cannot return? If she must find new husband, she cannot do this with child. Child with father caught in land he does not know. Who may never find home, again.

*Short pause.*

WWWT:

The people who make those laws, they don't understand this city, this neighborhood, where people of all walks of life and all colors are working together, hand in hand. Even the Indians are citizens, now! Did you know little Esther and her family are Socialists? We can and will change things. I promise you.

*She looks earnestly at the audience as Ina moves to the window.*

INA:

"Possibility."

WWWT:

Yes! Now do you see what I mean?

INA:

And for you, this is good?

WWWT:

Of course it's good. More than good!

INA:

But this possibility... this can also be bad.

WWWT:

Oh. Of course.

INA:

Sometimes—many times—for many of us, possibility can be very bad, indeed.

*Ina looks away from the window back at the bedroom. The white woman's gaze follows. Her tail moves abruptly. Involuntarily.*

*Over or under the noise of the trucks, we begin to hear radio static and a recording of 1920s mariachis, perhaps playing "Cielito Lindo." The volume and levels are distorted—with emphasis on the static and mechanical gramophone sound—as the blue sky colors the room with a hue that's electric.*

*The window opens up and we are again in 2024. We see El, alone in the room on a call. Prominent in the room is a large, box-like object, covered by a white cloth.*

EL:

No, just Desiree. Right. She's Ivy's—

She just got here. Ivy was supposed to have left you a message? No?

Well, maybe you—

Ha ha. Not surprised at all. Apparently Alicia filled them in: the complete story of EI!

Ha ha. Right. See you then. Love you, too.

*El disconnects and takes in the covered object. El looks out of the room, then moves toward it but is caught short by Desiree coming in with a somewhat smaller box.*

DESIREE:

Sorry about this.

EL:

Oh! Not a problem for me!

DESIREE:

Ivy told me she was—

EL:

*(interrupting)* I didn't have classes today; I was here!

*Short pause, then Desiree puts the box down.*

DESIREE:

Where you go to school?

EL:

I don't. I'm a teacher.

DESIREE:

Oh! Sorry!

EL:

It's okay! I look young. And the age difference doesn't help much, either.

DESIREE:

Ha ha. I'm a lot older than Ivy, too.

EL:

I think we've got you beat.

DESIREE:

Not by much!

EL:

Ha ha! Anyway... My main interest is Cultural History; I teach at the people's primary. It's an independent co-op, in the warehouse district?

DESIREE:

Yeah! I've heard of it. Good things!

EL:

Good to hear! It's a challenge. Even the youngest kids have seen a lot. And... You and Ivy? You have some sort of... something you're working on?

DESIREE:

We do! It's been an uphill battle—sounds like you get it—but this... (*looking around the room*) is so incredible. The possibility, lord willing! I know it's not a done deal, and I'd never take anything for granted.

EL:

That's probably wise.

DESIREE:

What all'd Ivy tell you, then?

EL:

Ivy didn't tell us a thing.

DESIREE:

No? Oh. Man. I wish— (*looking at the covered object*) I'm sorry for all the secrecy. I think it's bullshit, but Ivy has these trust issues that are so crazy to get around.

EL:

I can relate. My girlfriend is... very complicated.

DESIREE:

And very imposing. I'm a little scared.

EL:

She'll be very pleased to hear that.

DESIREE:

Ha ha. What grade you teach?

EL:

First.

DESIREE:

Yeah? Okay. I bet you'll love these.

*She opens up the smaller box to reveal handmade dolls and toys.*

EL:

Oh, I do! Did you make them?

DESIREE:

Me? No. A local artist gave them to us. She makes dolls, toys, puppets...

EL:

They're beautiful. And you're telling me they're part of this... whatever it is?

DESIREE:

They are. It's a sort of dispensary. Our pitch. For this space.

EL:

Your— Oh! Wait. Like a dispensary... for toys?

DESIREE:

Oh. No. Sorry. Lemme just— I'll come back—with Ivy!—when your girlfriend's here.

EL:

You're safer telling me. She's very proprietary about this house; you may not get another invitation.

DESIREE:

I am so grateful to have—

EL:

*(interrupting)* Hold that: I forgot, you were never actually invited.

DESIREE:

I— Okay. This is a space you share and I wanna respect that.

EL:

Good. Because the past few months have been especially tough on her.

DESIREE:

Her friend Lily, I know. But Ivy said that Lily's on board with this.

EL:

She said what?

DESIREE:

That Lily would want your girlfriend to be involved. Share her privilege. Something about her past: She was a doctor? Worked with hospitals?

EL:

Not a medical doctor and certainly not with—

DESIREE:

*(interrupting)* Then I don't know what the deal is, but Ivy started doing research after she came over here with Alicia. Then she met with Lily and boom! The pieces all fell into place. There's a Higher Power at work here, and you just can't walk away from that kind of connection.

EL:

What kind is that?

*Desiree looks over to the large object, then moves toward it and takes off the cloth. It's a large dollhouse. It looks very much like the house we're in, circa 1924.*

Wow! That's this house.

DESIREE:

I know!

*There's movement in the box of dolls. The kind of movement that you decide you didn't see once you look twice.*

EL:

What— Where did you get it? Did Ivy have someone—



DESIREE:

*(interrupting)* No, it's like an antique, I think maybe from an old architect's office. Some guys cleaning out a building Downtown dropped it off—they knew we were collecting stuff for kids.

EL:

That is... quite the connection.

*We hear the sound of a door opening.*

WWWT:

*(offstage)* Hello?

EL:

Hey! We're in here.

WWWT:

*(offstage)* We? Is she still...

*The white woman, her tail tucked under a coat, makes an entrance, followed by Alicia and Jess, who wears hospital scrubs. Jess moves straight to the window to take in the view. When Jess speaks, it's with a Chicano accent.*

*(to Desiree)* I didn't see a car. I thought you had left.

ALICIA:

Hi, Des!

DESIREE:

Hey there. I did a rideshare. And seriously, I can't apologize enough. I mean, not for that, but... Ivy said she left you a message, and I only just now learned from El that you never actually had the conversation she told me you'd—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* What in the world?

*She's seen the dollhouse.*

Where did this come from?

DESIREE:

Me. I brought it.

ALICIA:

*(moving to the dollhouse)* Oh look! How cute is that!

EL:

*(to WWWT)* Pretty unbelievable, huh?

DESIREE:

Yeah! Someone just—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* It is, indeed, unbelievable. *(to Desiree)* Especially the “just” part. Where did you get this? Is Ivy on her way?

DESIREE:

*(pulling out her phone or device)* I thought so.

EL:

*(to WWWT)* Have you seen this before? It’s old, so maybe—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* What, I have a personal relationship with anything old in this city?

EL:

Stop it. I mean, look! It’s this house!

ALICIA:

Hah! It is! It’s exactly the same!

JESS:

No, not exactly.

ALICIA:

No?

JESS:

See there, the window. It’s different.

ALICIA:

You’re right! Look: there. There used to be that arch... How crazy!

JESS:

And you were right, this house is something very special. *(to WWWT)* What a magnificent view!

EL:

Hi. I’m El.

WWWT:

Sorry. This is Jess. One of Lily’s nurses.

JESS:

No, her favorite nurse.

ALICIA:

Ours, too!

JESS:

And you're El! I've heard so much about you!

EL:

You have?

WWWT:

Now that we're all met: We were going to go grab some lunch, but really, what the fuck?

DESIREE:

I'm trying to reach Ivy.

WWWT:

And these? Did you bring these, too?

*She's pulled out a doll from the other box.*

EL:

Someone local makes them.

ALICIA:

Cool!

JESS:

Very much so. I know this artist. Our families are close; they got this business for generations. Beautiful stuff.

ALICIA:

I didn't know you had kids.

JESS:

I have a daughter. She's five.

EL:

Five's a great age.

JESS:

I think so, too. She's the love of my life. Only... is it just me, (*re the dolls and dollhouse*) or are we a little surprised to see these things, here?

WWWT:

Why, yes! As a matter of fact, we are all pretty damn surprised.

JESS:

I'm sorry: I mean you're not a mother.

WWWT:

Nothing to be sorry about on that front.

JESS:

No, but I'm saying I would not have thought you had a home with things for little ones, you know?

WWWT:

Me, neither. Or, wait: Is this not my home anymore?

DESIREE:

Of course it's your home! Nothing about what we—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* Then why does it look like a fucking child care center?

ALICIA:

You've got something against children, all the sudden?

EL:

*(to Desiree)* All right! Desiree: Time to bring us all up to speed, Ivy or no Ivy...

*El takes the doll from the white woman and they all look to Desiree.*

DESIREE:

Yes! Right. Okay. We—Ivy and I—have been working on this, our project, for a very long time now. We've got funding and resources in place—nearly in place—but the one thing that we haven't got our hands around is...

WWWT:

My house?

DESIREE:

The right space. To launch. Our plans are to open a new dispensary for women, women plus, serving families in Black and brown communities.

WWWT:

Good for you.

EL:

And you want to dispense...

DESIREE:

There's a new, extended, emergency contraceptive available. Like a morning-after pill, but it can be used up to 8 weeks into a pregnancy. This'd be sort of a Sanctuary State gathering spot for people with unwanted pregnancies, and they'd bring their kids.

ALICIA:

So... an abortion-clinic-slash-day-care-center?

DESIREE:

No, these aren't technically abortion pills. Which means no one has to go on a website that'll track 'em, or put 'em at risk across state lines. And we'll make sure there are no barriers for people who are undocumented, living in poverty... Anyone—women, transgender, gender non-conforming people—can come here and have access to a different kind of choice that's "family friendly."

WWWT:

Well! Nothing like a few dolls to wash the dirty off of abortion!

DESIREE:

In a sense! This is all about reinforcing that choices around a pregnancy don't need to be contemplated alone, or in a traditional medical setting if that's even an option. Why not make and realize that choice in the company of partners, allies and children? It's part of re-framing reproductive rights for future generations. Choice is a blessing and should never be shrouded in shame or secrecy!

WWWT:

Except that it is. Otherwise, why would you be looking to set up camp in my living room?

DESIREE:

It's not legal here. Not yet. We just need somewhere to start. The pills are already being used in Asia and in parts of Europe. Latin America.

JESS:

I've been hearing a lot about this pill.

ALICIA:

You have?

JESS:

Oh, yes. I mean, the U.S. is always last to the party, but I think this is very important. It will change many lives.

WWWT:

It works exactly, how?

JESS:

It... *(to Desiree)* May I?

DESIREE:

Please!

JESS:

It's somewhat like hormonal contraception. This pill prevents the egg from fertilizing; it stops implantation in early stages. But if the egg is already developing, this can reverse it. So growth that's new—like fetal cells, tissue—is not eliminated, actually. Because the body is now able to re-absorb the cells.

EL:

So it's like a do-over.

DESIREE:

No. Because everything that happened, happened. It doesn't un-do that. It un-  
does the unwanted effects.

ALICIA:

The baby?

JESS:

Being forced to give birth to a baby. Look: The word abortion, it divides us, even  
here in California. This is an option we need right now.

DESIREE:

What we're doing here is erasing the semantics of the "other" before a pregnancy  
progresses. There is only one life. Nothing needs to be aborted because the  
process can continue in a different direction, back inside one's own body that is  
*truly* one's own. No one else has a say: not the patriarchy, not the church, not the  
courts and not politicians!

*Short pause.*

WWWT:

In early stages. 8 weeks. And after that?

DESIREE:que

We can make referrals, medical and surgical. Even before the abortion bans we  
developed a network in communities of color. Providers united for universal  
reproductive rights.

WWWT:

Yet no one gave a thought to my personal property rights?

EL:

Did Lily tell you Ivy met with her?

WWWT:

She met with Lily?

EL:

That's what—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* They had a "project meeting" in Critical Care?

DESIREE:

Ivy is—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* Yes, she is, isn't she! Well, whatever she thinks she knows, about me or anyone else, I know far more than you can imagine about the choices that have been taken away from women and the options we were told we had, only to find out that any life that grows inside of us isn't ours any more than our own lives are. Lily knows that better than anyone. Over and over again I've seen it and it makes me very tired and very sad but the truth is we have as much of a say in how we live as how we die, so we might as well just close our eyes and take a long fucking nap until it's all over. I'm not hungry, anymore. You can all find your way home?

EL:

Honey...!

*But the white woman is gone. After a moment,*

I'm sorry.

ALICIA:

No! We should go. I'll call a ride...

DESIREE:

I haven't been able to reach Ivy. Should I just take everything?

*She starts to cover the dollhouse.*

JESS:

Let me help you.

EL:

No. Leave it. Tell Ivy we'll find her. We'll figure this out.

*El is still holding the doll.*

"Unwanted effects."

DESIREE:

Maybe we should work on that phrase.

EL:

No. It's... apt, I think. Just let me know when you find a pill that does a little more.

ALICIA:

More?

EL:

Un-does unwanted acts.

*As El turns to follow the white woman, a large bird flies into the window. It's sudden and shocking and after a violent thud, it's gone. But in the motion, the box of toys tips over and dolls spill out onto the ground, prominent among them a band of familiar-looking mariachis. Darkness. Silence.*

### ***Intermission***

*The playing area is darkened. Outside of or apart from it, the white woman appears, dressed in her 1924 attire with her tail fully on display. She speaks to the audience.*

WWWT:

So. Here we are. I hope you've not been too inconvenienced by the jostling back and forth and up and down on our little journey together. But that's life in Los Angeles, isn't it?

And now, before we go any further, what you've all undoubtedly been waiting for:

*She cues and receives a spotlight.*

The Story of My Tail!

It was a few years prior to the turn of the Century—the last Century—and there I was, altogether dreading the thought of my 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. (This was when I still kept track of them, ha ha ha.) I had recently fallen for someone who was, shall we say, precisely the wrong person to fall for. So when I received the unwelcome news that I was pregnant—at 49—I, like so many women before me, decided *not* to become a mother.

It was a rather straight-forward decision: I'd been in Los Angeles for over a decade, made smart investments in real estate and was already well past the age where women were expected to raise a family. In my position, it was no trouble obtaining the services of a “respected” male physician. Yet, as I was physically recovering from the procedure, I unexpectedly found myself emotionally... bereft. It was not the loss of a child, but rather the sudden realization that when it came to motherhood, I had just given up “my last chance.”

So I decided to re-locate to a little shack on the ocean in Santa Monica. Fresh air. A change of scenery. I started taking long walks on the beach, making regular visits to the Japanese fishing village nearby. And I began noticing something different, and quite extraordinary, going on underneath my skirts.

It started as a small lump, of sorts. A protrusion of bone covered by flesh, and after a while, a thin coating of soft fur.

I thought about seeing a doctor. Not because I was in any distress; on the contrary, I was strangely energized! But there were no hospitals at that time on the Coast; the only practitioners at hand were men who made their living in undeniably shady ways.



WWWT:

I did enter into a casual conversation with one such “professional,” giving him details about a theoretical patient with a... curious appendage. “I would cut that right off!” he said.

And so, I let my tail grow.

*As the lights shift, she begins to put on a white coat, not unlike a doctor’s.*

I’ll admit, I wondered: Was this new anatomical addition was a consequence of terminating my pregnancy? Was it a curse? Or was it something else, entirely, compensating me for... what I would never become?

At first I hid it underneath my skirts. But as it became longer and fuller, I felt as if I was growing happier, stronger, sharper and—yes, I’ll say it—more complete than I ever had been in my life. More myself.

I began to follow a rigorous path to become adept in the medical field, devoting all my time to work and study. Only at a certain juncture, something else quite remarkable happened: I realized that for all intents and purposes, I had completely stopped aging!

It was then, that I discovered my true calling: to help other women live full lives on their own terms. And by the time I decided to move again—to this house—I had had entirely enough of hiding my extraordinary gifts.

*She steps toward the playing area, then turns back.*

Although at one point, I did stop counting birthdays.

*It is 1924, and in dim light we see the window’s curtains are again drawn. Adelita and Ina are surveying a large mound of strange objects obscured by shadows. Ina carries a small traveling case. The white woman with a tail joins them.*

Why... for goodness sakes. How can you see anything at all in here!

*She quickly moves to the window and opens the curtains; metal and glass from mechanical devices reflect the afternoon light streaming in the window. The objects are odd kitchen implements of different shapes and sizes, including those previously seen.*

ADELITA:

¡Ja! Creo que se veía mejor a oscuras. (*It was better in the dark.*)

INA:

Ha ha ha!

WWWT:

What?

INA:

She say her view is better before.

WWWT:

In the dark? That's— Oh. Well. I don't agree with that, at all. And why in the world did Juan bring all of these out here?

ADELITA:

Creo que les tiene miedo. (*I think he's scared of them.*)

INA:

He have fear?

WWWT:

He's frightened? Of these?

ADELITA:

¡Estas máquinas son como monstros! Juan se cree muy macho. Pero la verdad es que un chiquillo. (*These machines are like little monsters! Juan thinks he's very brave. But the truth is he's just a kid.*)

INA:

Oh, this is true of all boys.

WWWT:

What are you two—? These are the most modern conveniences!

ADELITA:

Qué desperdicio de dinero. ¡Podría fincar una casa entera en mi barrio! (*What a waste of money. I could build a whole house in my neighborhood!*)

INA:

Ha ha ha!

ADELITA:

¡Ja ja ja!

WWWT:

I'm glad you're both so amused by progress.

*Esther comes out carrying papers and booklets, dressed in a nurse's uniform.*

ESTHER:

Here it is! I found it!

*She picks up the item she and Juan discussed initially.*

This... is a cake mixer!

WWWT:

Aha! A cake mixer!

ADELITA:

¿Qué es un “cake mixer?”

ESTHER:

To mix the batter. For cakes. This is used.

WWWT:

Isn't that marvelous!

ADELITA:

¿Por qué usar eso? (*Why use that?*)

INA:

I do not know.

ADELITA:

Una cuchara y un ból. Es lo único que necesito. (*A spoon and a bowl. That's all I need.*)

INA:

She say if she is making cake—

WWWT:

(*interrupting*) This would be the perfect labor saving device!

ADELITA:

¿Labor de quién? (*Whose labor?*)

WWWT:

Believe me, all of these implements will make life so much easier.

ADELITA:

¿La vida de quién? (*Whose life?*)

ESTHER:

(*reading instructions*) “A cake mixer is similar in construction to a bread mixer.”

ADELITA:

¿“Bread mixer?”

WWWT:

Oh. Do we have a bread mixer?

ADELITA:

¡Sí! ¡Mis manos! (*Yes! My hands!*)

ESTHER:

Here it is!

*She's found a somewhat similar instrument.*

WWWT:

Yes, that's certainly it. A stunning bread mixer!

ESTHER:

"But the cake mixer has sharp mixing prongs specially designed for its deeper well, attached to a powerful shaft and a gearwheel turned by an elongated handle which aides in extraction."

*Adelita and Ina break out into laughter.*

ADELITA:

¡Magnífico! Ahorita mismo voy a echar todas mis cucharas a la basura.  
*(Fantastic! I'll throw away all my spoons, now.)*

INA:

Ha ha. She is not needing spoon now.

WWWT:

Laugh all you want, my friends. But don't tell me you're not absolutely in love with your gas range, Adelita.

ADELITA:

¿Mí estufa de gas?

ESTHER:

The electric toasting machine I do like. That is very handy.

ADELITA:

¡O, sí! Ahora ustedes se pueden hacer su propio pan tostado. Qué maravilla. ¡Pan tostado como magia! *(You're all able to make your own toast, now. Wonderful. Toast! Like magic!)*

*Adelita starts back to the kitchen and Ina hides her laughter.*

INA:

I think I will be going.

WWWT:

Yes. I'm sorry to keep you, Ina. And Esther, could you get to the bottom of this with Juan?

ESTHER:

I will talk to him.

ADELITA:

Mucha suerta con ése. (*Good luck with that.*)

*She leaves the room.*

INA:

(*to WWWT and Esther*) I thank you, again.

ESTHER:

Ina, it may not seem so, but your sister is on the mend. We expect to send her home in a day or two.

INA:

You think so? That is wonderful!

WWWT:

Happy to help.

*The sun has begun to set through the window, reflecting against the objects onstage.*

Esther: When you talk to Juan, please tell him all of this needs to go back into the kitchen before dinner.

ESTHER:

Is Davis joining you? I am sure dinner can be cooked without—

WWWT:

(*interrupting*) No. Davis is— He's apparently been busy, lately. I shall be going out to dine, on my own. That ought to turn some heads!

ESTHER:

Oh! I'll... be heading home, then?

WWWT:

Thank you. I really don't know how I'd get by without you.

ESTHER:

Anyone would be glad to be here.

WWWT:

Not just anyone. You should know that.

*Ina has started toward the door.*

ESTHER:

Ina! Before you go...

INA:

Yes?

ESTHER:

Would you like to make an appointment?

WWWT:

Ah. Esther is wondering whether we will see you again? In terms of your own situation. Whether or not you are in the right position to add to your family right now.

INA:

Oh. *(putting her hands to her belly)*

ESTHER:

It is completely operational now, the clinic. And most clients who come to us are, like yourself, already mothers.

INA:

This is true?

WWWT:

It is. And that's because the laws now in place have also "prohibited" access to information about contraception. Do you know the real reason surgical procedures are banned? Trained women have stepped back up to take care of one another, the way it should be, and men are angry they've been left out in the cold!

ESTHER:

We've only just opened and our days are completely filled. I am thinking we might need to hire more staff.

WWWT:

Ohhhh let's not get ahead of ourselves. But that's what happens when you're in the right place at the right time! And Ina, the services we perform are a world apart from what your sister experienced. I can guarantee that.

INA:

I think the world does not have guarantees.

WWWT:

That was before you met me, wasn't it? I really must dress for dinner, now.

*She includes the audience.*

Our friend Davis won't know what he's missing, will he?!

*And the white woman with a tail is gone. The sunset has taken on otherworldly hues.*

ESTHER:

*(looking out the window)* Ah! And look at that! All of those brilliant colors. Suddenly, out of nowhere. Then they will be gone.

*Both women take this in.*

INA:  
May I ask question of you, Esther?

ESTHER:  
Of me? Certainly!

INA:  
How are you “glad to be here?”

ESTHER:  
Glad to...? Oh. My parents she knew from before we moved here; they told her I was studying medicine, and now I am learning from her.

INA:  
Your parents do not mind this kind of medicine?

ESTHER:  
My mother was a suffragette.

INA:  
She is not a Jew?

ESTHER:  
And these should not go together?

INA:  
But these women: Their “women” is not all women. Do they... Does your mother not see I cannot... Many women cannot yet vote because of our color?

ESTHER:  
Oh. I... I know my mother believes in this country. She believes that, yes, all women can truly be equal here. In time. This is her hope. But with hope there must also be action. We must do what we can. When we can.

*Very short pause.*

Let me have a word with Adelita, and I’ll walk out with you.

*Esther leaves and Ina moves to collect her bag as Juan comes into the room.*

JUAN:  
Hello, there!

INA:  
Hello. I am just leaving.

JUAN:

Yeah, you'd best be getting out while the going's good.

INA:

What do you mean?

JUAN:

That for your sister, it might just be too late!

INA:

No. Not too late. She is better.

JUAN:

They're feeding you that line? You know what that woman's business is, right?

INA:

I... Yes. She is doctor, doing what she must do.

JUAN:

That's a whole lot of hooley. She's got a tail! You know who else has got a tail?

INA:

Who?

JUAN:

Are you—? Am I the only God-fearing American around here? The devil, that's who!

*The setting sun continues to play with the glittering objects onstage; maybe we start to feel a sense of movement.*

INA:

I do not believe— You cannot be meaning what you say.

JUAN:

Just look at all this! (*gesturing toward the equipment*) If she's got these contraptions in her house, I don't even want to go near her so-called clinic!

INA:

These are tools for cooking!

JUAN:

What kind of a sap do you think I am?

*A phone begins to ring offstage.*

You know as well as I do, if I drop a dime to the coppers they'll raid this place, right as rain.



*Esther comes in and heads towards the sound of the phone.*

ESTHER:

Oh! Juan!

JUAN:

You, I'll vouch for, Esther. I'll say you're on the up and up and don't know nothing about nothing.

ESTHER:

What do you mean?

*The phone rings louder.*

Ach! I'll be back.

*She hurries out.*

INA:

I have family. I must be going.

JUAN:

And what about your sister?

*The ringing stops.*

Listen, all they need is someone to testify. A woman who's willing to spill what all's been done to her, ya follow?

INA:

What? No!

JUAN:

Don't tell me she's got you under her spell, too—everything's just Jake and nothin' bad can happen? Baloney!

INA:

You do not understand!

*Esther hurries back into the room.*

ESTHER:

That was the hospital. There is an outbreak. It might be... Influenza.

INA:

What?

JUAN:

Who told you that?

ESTHER:

A friend who is a nurse.

JUAN:

Influenza! Is she on the level?

ESTHER:

She is fairly certain. This is what the doctors are saying.

JUAN:

No, they gotta be wrong. Last time, they shut down half the town. For months and months. It was over a year before—

ESTHER:

*(interrupting)* In New York, as well. So many deaths...

INA:

In San Francisco and this city, thousands and thousands!

ESTHER:

That's why they've isolated patients. *(to Juan)* It's in the Mexican District.

JUAN:

What?

ESTHER:

And they're expecting us. I need to let her know; my friend has asked for our help.

JUAN:

We still have family down there. I'll go with you.

ESTHER:

No! You must stay here; tell your mother what is happening. Stay here. You will be safe.

*She runs out.*

JUAN:

Safe? In this house? If you believe that sort of applesauce, you'll believe anything!

*Juan leaves and Ina is alone in the room, holding her travelling case. She looks out of the window and we start to hear "Las Golandrinas," played in the style of 1920s mariachis. Then our band of mariachis emerges from beneath the kitchen objects, serenading Ina as she stares out at the darkening, starless sky.*

*With a flash of light, the window expands and the vista tells us it's 2024, early evening. We see Alicia and the white woman, her tail tucked away in a robe.*

*The music changes in tone, begins to sound tinnier. The box of toys and dollhouse are again onstage. The mariachis are still playing and singing the same tune but their movements are now mechanical as they begin to move about the room.*

WWWT:

All right. That's enough. Will you please turn those things off?

ALICIA:

I kind of love them.

WWWT:

They make my head hurt.

ALICIA:

They make my heart hurt. The song they're playing: "Las Golindrinas?"

WWWT:

"The Swallows."

ALICIA:

We play it at funerals. It's about a swallow who is lost, and just wants to go home. One verse talks about letting her rest, hoping she'll be able to fly away soon. But us? We're lost, too. Only we don't have wings.

WWWT:

That's cheery.

ALICIA:

It's a goodbye song. You've never heard it? Hard to believe, around here.

WWWT:

I don't go to funerals anymore.

ALICIA:

Never?

WWWT:

Do I need to remind you how many—? Ah! Is there a remote in the box?

*The white woman waves her hand towards the box and we hear piped-in mariachis over the tune that the small mariachis are already playing.*

No, no that's not...

*She gestures again to stop the piped-in music. Alicia shuts off the mariachis, one by one.*

ALICIA:

Ivy and Des brought these?

WWWT:

Either them or your sister.

ALICIA:

What?

WWWT:

Never mind. Yes. They were in the box that was donated to their... project.

ALICIA:

So how are you feeling about that? El said that Des said Ivy—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* Oh, my god. Round and around. Here's how I feel: that my home has been violated.

ALICIA:

Nothing is going to happen without your permission.

WWWT:

You mean like no daycare deliveries?

ALICIA:

Come on. El was—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* This is my house! No one but me is going to tell me what goes on in my house. Not even El.

ALICIA:

Not Lily? Because I was talking to her about—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* No! She knows this is my sanctuary. And whatever Ivy says, Lily did not tell her anything.

ALICIA:

Okay.

WWWT:

And what does that mean?

ALICIA:

What does "okay" mean?

WWWT:

I want to be left alone. Is that so hard to understand?

ALICIA:  
Okay!

*The mariachis are all silent, back in the box.*

When I was a kid, I thought of this house as a sanctuary. When Lily brought us up here, we could forget about what was going on. A lot of times, it was pretty bad, back then.

WWWT:  
I know it was. I'm glad I could be there for you.

ALICIA:  
But you also know my sister left home as soon as she could, right?

WWWT:  
I do. She waited until she thought you were safe.

ALICIA:  
Safe?

WWWT:  
Yes.

ALICIA:  
Lily is not someone I thought ever cared about "safe."

WWWT:  
She always cared about you.

ALICIA:  
But she was kinda reckless for a while there. Doing the coolest, wildest things. Or at least I thought so. Remember when she lived in Hollywood, back in the day?

WWWT:  
Of course.

ALICIA:  
And Downtown. Echo Park. She worked in restaurants and bars and went to concerts and clubs and every once in a while, brought home these crazy friends and they all laughed all the fucking time. Mom and dad didn't know what to think. Me? I ended up in the Valley, working at a bank.

WWWT:  
She was very proud of you.

ALICIA:  
For playing it safe?

WWWT:  
No!

ALICIA:  
But all those friends from her 20s, and 30s? None of them are around, anymore. And I'm realizing maybe I didn't really know my sister that well. That there are probably a lot of not-so-pretty stories behind all the photos she showed us!

WWWT:  
She was wrestling with a lot, back then.

ALICIA:  
So how come she didn't—? She's always kept so much to herself. Do you know, I *just* found out how you met.

WWWT:  
What did she say?

ALICIA:  
That she was in trouble, in high school.

WWWT:  
Right. It was the '80s. Legal clinics were easy to find, but she was under age. In my practice, I knew people.

ALICIA:  
She could not have told our parents.

WWWT:  
I wanted her to.

ALICIA:  
Jesus, why?

WWWT:  
I... It's complicated. But she stayed with me, here, for a bit. She was so young and so frightened. But full of so much good. And hope, and trust, and *light*, even after what she'd been through.

ALICIA:  
Did you two...?

*Short pause.*

WWWT:  
No! She was 15!

ALICIA:  
I mean, after.

WWWT:

She was my friend.

ALICIA:

I was very jealous of you for a while. After she moved back over here, the two of you? She doubled down on the whole Latin culture thing; seemed like you were into it as much as she was.

WWWT:

Ha ha. Even after living here a looong time, your sister introduced me up to new places, new possibilities. New people. She's how I met EI! Her photography work with the schools.

ALICIA:

Yeah?

WWWT:

I never thought I would feel safe enough to be with someone again. Your sister gave me a reason to keep going.

ALICIA:

But you get that most of us don't need a reason. It's what we mortals do. Keep going.

WWWT:

What I meant was—

ALICIA:

*(interrupting)* Did Lily ever have a real relationship? With anyone?

WWWT:

I—

ALICIA:

*(interrupting)* I mean, I know she had things for lots of guys who weren't into her. But did she... Did she ever want to have kids?

*Short pause.*

WWWT:

How old were you, when you moved?

ALICIA:

To the Valley? I was out of school, so that would be—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* No, your family. From behind your grandparents' house to the one down by the packing plant.

ALICIA:

Three? No four. My dad got that job after my sister started high school.

WWWT:

And your uncle. He lived in the house.

ALICIA:

With my grandma. Only she was kinda like his servant. My grandpa died when Lily was a baby.

WWWT:

How much time did you spend there—in the house—if you were so young?

ALICIA:

My sister and brothers more than me, but after we left we visited. I still think about how crazy that was. All of us—my mom and dad and brothers and sister and little me—in that tiny garage, and only the two of them in the house. I mean, it didn't seem weird to me, then.

WWWT:

You were four.

ALICIA:

Right. But even after, when the garage was all full of paint cans and hoses and shit it never struck me as, like: "Hey: There were seven of us living in there!"

WWWT:

Then your grandma died.

ALICIA:

We never went there again. Then they tore the house down. Or I guess somewhere in there my uncle died. Unless he was just plowed down inside it, sitting in front of the TV in that big, scary chair. That would be...

WWWT:

What?

*Short pause.*

ALICIA:

I don't know. No one ever talks about my uncle.

WWWT:

You should ask Lily about him.

ALICIA:

Okay! I'll put it on the list!

*Very short pause.*



ALICIA:

Lily put me in charge of everything, did she tell you that? Not my brothers, not you, but me. All of the decisions. Her decisions. Not that I mind being that person, I just wish she would have... She deserved to have someone love her. To be with her. Why couldn't she have that?

WWWT:

That's not my story to tell.

ALICIA:

Fuck that! There are too many fucking secrets around here! Here's what my sister doesn't deserve: She doesn't deserve to be lying there, pumped full of drugs with sores all over and holes cut where they shouldn't be to drain whatever it is and now a fucking breathing tube! That's never going to come out. She's a Mexican on Medicaid being eaten away by cancer and she's still smiling like she's the luckiest person on the planet, like there's still something good to take from this life even with all the crap she's gone through!

WWWT:

Because she's not ready to give up, yet!

ALICIA:

But can you say the same about her body? Her poor, swollen, ravaged body?

*Pause.*

Fuck.

*After a moment, El comes into the room with a large bakery box.*

EL:

Hey! Am I interrupting?

WWWT:

Hi. No. We're just...

EL:

Sorry. Hard day at the hospital?

ALICIA:

Yeah.

WWWT:

I might go to bed early.

EL:

This is like... early early.

WWWT:  
I'm tired.

ALICIA:  
Me, too.

EL:  
*(holding up the bakery box)* But look what I've brought. From the deli bakery.  
Cake! Hah!

WWWT:  
Sweetie, I am so not in the mood.

ALICIA:  
How can you not be in the mood for cake?

WWWT:  
It's not cake.

EL:  
It's a joke. They're pastries. The guy in the deli always says, "Bubala! You're taking cake home to your girlfriend?"

ALICIA:  
But they're pastries?

EL:  
I think it's a translation thing. It drives her crazy.

WWWT:  
Because it's not cake.

*An unabashed Ivy joins them.*

IVY:  
Hey there!

EL:  
Oh! And you'll never guess who I ran into...!

*Very short pause.*

ALICIA:  
Heeeeeey... *(to El)* You gonna open that box?

*El does and perhaps she and Alicia look for sanctuary inside of it.*

WWWT:  
*(to Ivy)* What are you doing here?

IVY:

I wanted to explain—

WWWT:

*(interrupting) Explain?* That's an interesting choice of words! You need to stop bothering Lily. Stay away from her.

ALICIA:

Hang on, that's not really your—

IVY:

*(interrupting)* I don't think I was bothering her. Not at all. I really think she'd want everyone to know what I found out.

ALICIA:

Found out about what?

IVY:

*(re WWWT)* About her.

EL:

What about her?

IVY:

*(to WWWT)* I found out what you did here, for women in this neighborhood, some 50 years before we were born.

ALICIA:

*(to WWWT)* What is she talking about?

IVY:

I mean, as kids, we completely accepted you. Didn't ask questions, then.

EL:

Kids don't ask questions?

IVY:

We just thought, "Oh! Here's this nice white woman with a tail and we're so special and isn't it fun to keep this secret." Of course that was before the internet. Before kids learned that adults telling them to keep secrets because they were special was maybe not a good thing.

WWWT:

I want you to leave now.

IVY:

Nothing bad happened, I'm not saying that.

EL:

Then what are you saying?

IVY:

I'm saying that even before this, it's something I've kept thinking about. Like a "Did that really happen?" thing. I stayed in touch with Alicia, so I knew it did. But after seeing you again, and coming here, I started digging a little deeper and guess what I found.

ALICIA:

What?

EL:

What?

IVY:

Stories of a mysterious abortionist working in this area, starting in the 1920s. A folk hero, of sorts. Ageless. Lived in a beautiful house in the hills. Worked incognito with the area hospitals until the '70s, when Roe passed. A fierce champion for women. They called her "La Gata Blanca." I could never find the origins of the name, but I took a leap.

*Pause.*

EL:

*(to WWWT)* Is this true?

WWWT:

It was, literally, a lifetime ago.

ALICIA:

Did Lily know?

WWWT:

Yes. She knew. She knows.

ALICIA:

All this time? And she never—

IVY:

*(interrupting)* But here's what I want to know: Where is that woman? The woman in the story who wanted to share what she had with others because of what had been shared with her. That woman who knew she had to help because she *could* help. You can't tell me *that* woman wouldn't step up when she's needed, again. But maybe this time she can be part of something bigger than she is, and let someone else take charge in a new reality. Because she is still capable of learning. That amazing, larger-than-life woman who lived in this amazing house...

*Pause.*

WWWT:

Okay. Now it's my turn. I have worked since the day I was born. And I have earned everything I have; nothing was given to me. I nursed soldiers during the Civil War, fought to give women the right to vote and control of their bodies, *(to Ivy)* stood next to your grandparents when they were taken away to the camps, marched for civil rights in the 60s, *(to Alicia)* was protesting in the streets with your family when gangs were taking over the neighborhood, spent decades with a target on my back for refusing to move out of my home then put everything on the line again marching for women, for murdered Black men, against Asian hate and the criminal actions of a stacked Supreme Court! I have spent over a century trying to help and hang onto hope while we're hit with catastrophe after catastrophe and now, I am really, really tired!

*Pause.*

ALICIA:

So that's it, then? After all that you're just... giving up?

WWWT:

Ha ha ha. Does it even matter?

ALICIA:

Okay. Nice chatting with you. I'll let my sister know.

WWWT:

Fine. You do that. I need you to go, now.

EL:

Stop it.

WWWT:

*(to El)* All of you.

EL:

Is that really what you want?

WWWT:

Haven't you listened to anything I've said?

EL:

I have! And that's why I'm asking. I love you. I am 100% invested in a future with you, whatever that's going to look like; I realize that's a huge question mark, for so many reasons. And I love that you have led an incredible life—obviously I don't know the half of it. But there is a lot more ahead for both of us, and it's very wrong that what I've seen these last months is less and less of you.

WWWT:

I've been at the hospital!

EL:

I know that. And Lily may very well be dying but we're not!

WWWT:

It's only a matter of time, isn't it? Even for me. So why don't we just cut to the chase and say our farewells, huh?

EL:

You can't—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* Yes. I. Can. So! It's been a whole lot of fun. Now... Good bye.

*After a moment, Alicia puts her arm around El; Ivy joins them and they leave. We hear a door slamming. The white woman releases her tail. She moves to look at the dollhouse, but then the lead singer of the mariachis pops his head back out of the box.*

MARIACHI #1:

You know something? That could be a song.

*The white woman takes this in stride. Is she too tired to be surprised, too vulnerable to turn to the audience?*

WWWT:

What could?

MARIACHI #1:

"La Gata Blanca."

*The other mariachis emerge, perhaps trying out chords.*

WWWT:

What do you want from me?

MARIACHI #1:

Nada! We are only here to tell you... Lo siento mucho.

*Short pause.*

WWWT:

Lily...?

MARIACHI #1:

Sí. Mi más sentido pésame.

*The white woman is empty, past the point of tears.*

WWWT:

Thank you. Was she alone?

MARIACHI #1:

Oh, no. Her favorite nurse was with her.

MARIACHI #2:

And we were there. Naturalmente.

WWWT:

Good. That's good.

*Short pause.*

Thank you.

*The mariachis start to leave. Then,*

MARIACHI #1:

But I must also tell you, this song? "La Gata Blanca?"

WWWT:

Yes?

MARIACHI #1:

No one can write it until we know how it ends.

WWWT:

It's already ended. That's not who I am anymore.

MARIACHI #1:

Por qué no?

WWWT:

It was just me and it just got too hard.

MARIACHI #2:

Mujer, this is not just about you. You must know, you are not alone!

MARIACHI #3:

Sí, there are many, many more gente contigo.

WWWT:

Then it's their turn.

MARIACHI #2:

But it will always be easier for you...

MARIACHI #3:

And others like you...

MARIACHI #2:

O, sí! Than for these others.

WWWT:

I don't understand.

MARIACHI #3:

En serio? Blanca. Look around you. At the faces around you.

WWWT:

Yes?

MARIACHI #1:

The people in this picture, they will always pay a price for what they do.

MARIACHI #2:

And in in the end, chances are you and your people will be the ones landing on your feet.

MARIACHI #3:

And this is not because you're a cat, either!

*The lights shift and the white woman with a tail is alone, illuminated in a pale light.*

*It is 1924. It's dark outside the window and we hear the distant sound of sirens. Shouting.*

*Davis comes into the room, but stands apart from the white woman, the dollhouse between them. The kitchen tools are nowhere to be seen.*

WWWT:

Could you possibly have worse timing?

DAVIS:

*(re the dollhouse)* I thought you would like it. It's something that we used when we were building—to get a different perspective.

WWWT:

Then you should keep it.

DAVIS:

No, it's yours. Seeing it now, it's a magical thing I created. For a spectacular lady. But the reality is, I'm on the outside, looking in.

WWWT:

Your point?

DAVIS:

That for a while, I'd better keep my distance.



WWWT:

Distance! Probably a good idea. I'll let you in on a secret, which won't be a secret for long: They've just declared the Plague in Los Angeles!

DAVIS:

What?

WWWT:

You thought it was Influenza? I'll do you one better! It's the Plague! I just took the call! I just found out that this is what we're facing and this is when you choose to tell me that—

DAVIS:

*(interrupting)* I'm sorry! I didn't—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* No. You couldn't have...

*She looks out the window again, then takes in the dollhouse.*

So. You're leaving me?

DAVIS:

It's now what I want...

WWWT:

Then don't!

DAVIS:

It's not that easy!

WWWT:

For me it is!

DAVIS:

Exactly! Look: Perhaps someday, you and I'd be able to make this work. But right now, I can't be— The truth is that we can't be.

WWWT:

So you've just decided?

DAVIS:

It's not a decision! It's reality!

WWWT:

*(re the dollhouse)* And you wanted to give me a toy as your little parting shot?

DAVIS:

Are you all right?

*He moves toward her.*

WWWT:

No! I am not! How can I be all right? It's the Plague! A reoccurrence of the Plague in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, in the City of the Angels where the sun always shines and there are opportunities around every corner! It could very well be none of us will ever be all right again!

DAVIS:

I... I don't know what to say.

*Very short pause.*

WWWT:

They've quarantined the whole Mexican District.

DAVIS:

Does that mean—?

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* Until they can find out more, it's the right thing to do, but...

*She bursts into tears and Davis starts to move to her, again.*

I'm sorry. But is this some sort of message? I've been in the house just over a week, you're leaving me and, seriously, the Plague?

DAVIS:

It sounds like you're taking this personally!

WWWT:

It feels personal—like I'm being punished! I came to this neighborhood because this is where I thought I belonged. Where I can do some good and everything can be out in the open!

DAVIS:

To varying degrees.

WWWT:

What does that mean?

DAVIS:

Even here, you have more freedom than I do.

WWWT:

I'm a single woman in 1924. Do you really believe that?

DAVIS:

Do you really believe that I can truly be myself, here? Every day I leave my house and I do what I have to do to earn my place in your world.

WWWT:

*My world?*

DAVIS:

Yes! I put on this suit and use the words you want to hear—

WWWT:

*(interrupting)* I never asked—

DAVIS:

*(interrupting)* “You” in a larger sense.

WWWT:

What? A black and white sense?

DAVIS:

Yes. But honestly, you, too, my dear! You just can’t see it.

WWWT:

Can’t see it, or can’t hear it?

DAVIS:

Perhaps neither! Or perhaps you can. Perhaps you know full well what I’m talking about and you’d just rather play your role!

*Faint shouting from outside again, and perhaps some moving lights in the distance.*

WWWT:

All right. Now you’ve had your say; I’ve worked through the night and most of today and don’t know if I—

*She’s interrupted by Adelita coming into the room.*

ADELITA:

Permítame. ¿Señora? Me tiene que acompañar.

WWWT:

What? I don’t—

DAVIS:

*(interrupting)* She needs you to—

ADELITA:

*(interrupting)* La chinita. Está...

DAVIS:

It's Ina's sister.

WWWT:

I'll be right back. Davis... please don't go yet.

*The women leave. Davis reluctantly sits, then pours himself a drink as Juan comes into the room and moves toward the window.*

DAVIS:

Hello, Juan.

JUAN:

Oh!

DAVIS:

I didn't mean to startle you. I thought you would be— Isn't your family...?

JUAN:

Down in the quarantined area, yes. Many of them. But we can't reach anyone. Is it true? It's Influenza?

DAVIS:

Oh. No... I don't think they believe it is, anymore.

JUAN:

No? That's a relief! With everything moving so fast, there, I couldn't catch up.

*Very short pause.*

DAVIS:

Would you like a drink?

JUAN:

Sure. A little giggle water couldn't hurt at a time like this.

DAVIS:

I agree!

*He pours a glass for Juan, who takes a swig then grimaces.*

JUAN:

Woof! That's the good stuff!

DAVIS:

I should tell you, Juan, things aren't looking at all good. The girls were down at the hospital since last night; they just got back.

JUAN:

Where is Esther, now?

DAVIS:

In the other room, asleep.

JUAN:

Listen: You seem like a regular fella, so be straight with me. You knew all about this? What she does?

DAVIS:

Esther?

JUAN:

No. I mean, yes. But your lady friend. This... business of theirs.

DAVIS:

Saving women's lives?

JUAN:

Is that what you people call it?

DAVIS:

Us people?

*The white woman comes back into the room with Adelita, who is visibly stricken.*

JUAN:

Mama?

WWWT:

She took a turn for the worse.

JUAN:

Who did?

DAVIS:

Ina's sister?

WWWT:

I'm afraid I can't... We're going to lose her.

DAVIS:

What happened?

WWWT:

She can't fight the infection. I tried everything I could. I tried... and I believed! I believed with every bone of my body!

ESTHER:

What did you believe?

*Esther has joined them.*

WWWT:

That I was capable of something I'm not. I'm afraid Ina's sister won't make it through the night.

*Very short pause.*

ESTHER:

So you were wrong.

WWWT:

Yes.

ESTHER:

Then... the next woman, we must save. And more women after that.

WWWT:

Yes, but Esther with everything else, why couldn't I just... I might as well tell you all: They've confirmed it. We're facing the Plague!

*And the tears begin again.*

JUAN:

The Plague?

ADELITA:

Ave María Purísima.

WWWT:

I should never have moved here!

JUAN:

Mama! ¿Estás bien?

ADELITA:

Sí. Pero dile que ella no causó la peste. (*Yes, but tell her she didn't cause the plague.*)

JUAN:

Why would she think she caused the plague?

WWWT:

Stranger things have happened!

*She moves to the window and the phone begins to ring again.*

ESTHER:  
I'll go...

ADELITA:  
Sí.

*Esther leaves the room.*

JUAN:  
This is— I don't— What are we going to do?

ADELITA:  
Mijo. Vamos a pasar por esto. (*We'll get through this.*)

JUAN:  
But none of it seems real. It's like a motion picture! A balled up story somebody invented!

WWWWT:  
In which I should not have lost that poor woman...

ADELITA:  
(*to Juan*) Ay. Dile que ni que fuera Dios mismo. (*Tell her it's not like she's God, himself.*)

JUAN:  
Oh, that's for certain!

ADELITA:  
Ella hizo todo lo posible por esa muchacha. (*She did everything she could for that girl.*)

JUAN:  
"Everything she could?" I don't know what she did for her, or to her!

ADELITA:  
Estas mujeres están aquí haciendo lo que pueden. Están haciendo el bien. (*These women here are doing what they can. It is good work.*)

JUAN:  
Does the church think it's good work they're doing?

ADELITA:  
Que piense lo que quiera la iglesia. Aquí, las que nos apoyamos somos las mujeres... no la iglesia. (*Let the church think what it wants. Here, it's the women who are there for each other... not the church.*)

*Juan takes in the white woman with a tail, alone at the window. Esther comes back in.*

ESTHER:

That was the police.

DAVIS:

The police?

JUAN:

Oh! What did they want?

ESTHER:

They've given the go-ahead to burn the quarantined area.

DAVIS:

What?

JUAN:

No!

ADELITA:

¿Que?

ESTHER:

They're destroying the buildings. They say it's because of the rats.

DAVIS:

Rats, indeed. I have an idea of which rats are to blame.

ADELITA:

Ratas de dos patas. (*Two-legged rats.*)

JUAN:

That's one way to get rid of the Mexican problem.

DAVIS:

Free up some prime real estate, while they're at it.

ADELITA:

Juan: Tú ve, a ver qué está pasando. (*You go, see what's going on.*)

JUAN:

Yes, I'll go.

WWWT:

And Juan! Your family. Get them. Bring everyone you can, back here.

*Short pause.*

ADELITA:

Lo harás. (*You'll do it.*)

JUAN:

Okay. I won't be long.

*Juan leaves.*



ADELITA:

Que Dios nos ampare. (*May God have mercy on us.*)

*We begin to see the light from flames through the window.*

WWWT:

Look at that. Why would they do that?

DAVIS:

Because they can.

WWWT:

Was this all a mistake? Is this all a mistake?

ESTHER:

I think they are mistaken in burning these buildings, yes. Even with a Plague, I think there are other motives. My family, we are Russian Jews. We know about these things. The desire to destroy, to erase people who are different.

WWWT:

I... Yes.

*Short pause.*

ESTHER:

We need to find Ina. Tell her about her sister.

ADELITA:

Se llama Shinju.

*Very short pause.*

ESTHER:

The name of Ina's sister.

WWWT:

Shinju.

ADELITA:

Significa "pearl."

*Very short pause.*

DAVIS:

I'll go.

*He moves toward the door.*

WWWT:  
Davis?

DAVIS:  
Yes?

WWWT:  
I... I wanted to tell you: Truly. "I just didn't know."

*After a moment, Davis and Adelita leave. The white woman with a tail and Esther look out of the window at the burning city.*

ESTHER:  
Juan was right. None of this seems real.

WWWT:  
And from here the flames are almost beautiful. One could almost forget.

ESTHER:  
But we cannot. We cannot forget who we are and why we are here.

WWWT:  
But Esther: Should I even be here?

ESTHER:  
To be here—to be anywhere—I think anyone must earn that right. By recognizing what we have and working for what we want.

WWWT:  
And what is it that you want?

ESTHER:  
To learn. To make things better. To always have the strength to go on. And even amidst all of the bad, to allow happiness in. This may not happen today, but... yenna veld, as we say. "In the next world..."

*Short pause.*

WWWT:  
Then we must get this house ready.

ESTHER:  
For...?

WWWT:  
Whatever lies ahead. And whomever. We'll do whatever it takes, for as long as it takes, because I'd very much like to see that world, wouldn't you?

*We might see a faint light coming from within the dollhouse.*

*Then, it's as if we can feel everything opening up and we are in 2024. It's evening and the lights of the city are, somehow, quite brilliant through the expansive window.*

*Alone in the room, Ivy sits in front of the dollhouse. Modern music is playing in the background, a female vocal. Around the room are a few more toys, furniture. It's a space that's transformed from stark to welcoming. Hopeful. Jess comes in with Alicia.*

JESS:

So really, there will be a great deal of privacy. The idea is it will always be a home—inviting, positive, filled with love.

IVY:

*(to Alicia)* Hey, when'd you get here?

ALICIA:

Just now. Getting the official tour!

IVY:

You've got a great tour guide.

ALICIA:

Yeah, lucky you, Lily was all done with Jess, huh?

IVY:

Riiiiight.

JESS:

I was very fortunate to have known her.

ALICIA:

You were.

IVY:

We all were.

JESS:

*(to Ivy)* And now, to be working with you, here.

ALICIA:

And props to me, please, for bringing the bank on board?

IVY:

Thank you. You are a force to be reckoned with.

ALICIA:

A wild and dangerous woman, that's what I am! Watch out, world!

IVY:

Ha ha ha.

*Desiree and El join them; Des is holding floorplans.*

EL:  
It's going to be fantastic!

DESIREE:  
We just gotta get it all moving in the right direction.

EL:  
It's perfect how she'll still have space that's *hers*.

IVY:  
Oh we made sure of that! But tell me: How did you manage to finally convince her?

EL:  
I really can't take the credit. Alicia?

ALICIA:  
It wasn't me!

EL:  
Then maybe you sister had something to do with it?

ALICIA:  
Hah. I wouldn't doubt it.

WWWT:  
Wouldn't doubt what?

*The white woman has appeared, her tail in full view.*

ALICIA:  
That there are more forces at work here than we can truly see.

WWWT:  
I agree with you, completely.

EL:  
So. Can we live with this?

DESIREE:  
We'll keep our eyes open for another place in case... well, you never know.

EL:  
No, you don't, but we'll enjoy it as long as it lasts.

WWWT:  
Enjoy? That's a bit over the top, isn't it?

EL:

Stop. This feels really right to me. And you look really... you look really you. For the first time in a long time.

WWWT:

I hope that's a compliment.

EL:

Oh, it is.

JESS:

May I say, I'm very glad to see your tail. It's quite a beautiful tail.

WWWT:

Thank you.

EL:

I'm very fond of it, too.

IVY:

The kids will love it.

EL:

Oh, my god. They really will!

WWWT:

*(gesturing off)* Can you come with me for a minute?

ALICIA:

Ooooooh! Time for a little privacy?

EL:

Ha ha. We'll be right back.

*El and the white woman leave the room.*

IVY:

Hey. How come only some of us got to see the tail when we were little?

ALICIA:

We all make choices about what to hide, I guess. What's safe to reveal. And when.

DESIREE:

There's a Japanese proverb: Atama kakushite, shiri kakusazu.

*Very short pause.*

IVY:

Don't look at me.

DESIREE:

It's about hiding your head, but not your tail. We let ourselves believe we're protected but our ass is still hanging out there.

IVY:

Ah. Right. Just when you thought you had it all covered...

JESS:

And in Spanish, we say: No tengo cola que me pisen.

ALICIA:

I don't have a tail you can step on?

JESS:

I am who I am. Transparent. I don't have bad things I'm dragging behind me.

ALICIA:

*(gesturing off)* Uh, it might take a little more digging to find out if *that's* true!

*The lights suddenly go out.*

IVY:

What's going on?

ALICIA:

I don't know!

DESIREE:

It could be a short.

Is it an earthquake?

I didn't feel anything.

A small one?

*El and the white woman with a tail come back into the room, carrying a birthday cake lit with candles. As they sing and move toward Alicia, the others join in.*

EL & WWWT:

Estas son las mañanitas,  
que cantaba el Rey David.  
Hoy por ser día de tu santo,  
te las cantamos aquí!

ALICIA:

Ohhhhhh! Thank you! I thought you didn't do birthdays!

WWWT:

I'm learning.

IVY:

Yum!

DESIREE:

That is one awesome cake!

JESS:

Beautiful!

EL:

And most definitely a cake!

ALICIA:

I'd ask you how you knew, but... *(a thank you to Lily, then to WWWT)* So when's yours?

WWWT:

You can't expect me to give up all my secrets.

*Laughter as they gather around the cake, their faces lit by the candles. We hear mariachis starting to play in the background.*

What are you waiting for? Make a wish!

*For a very brief moment, we are suspended in time. Then, from the other side of the window, we see Lily's mariachis. They start to play "Hay Unos Ojos" against the lights of Los Angeles. Alicia blows out the candles. Darkness.*

***End of Play***

## HISTORICAL NOTES: 1924 LOS ANGELES

- In the 1920s, a booming, modern Los Angeles found white Angelenos successfully Americanizing the City's "Spanish" past, embracing architecture, culture and traditions, while pushing Mexicans to the sidelines.
- By 1924, restrictive covenants legally barred people of color from purchasing or living in most of Los Angeles. Industrialized neighborhoods along and east of the LA River were mixed, with Black, Asian and Latino populations along with disparaged ethnic groups like Jews and Italians.
- There were no laws restricting Mexican immigration until 1929, as employers were heavily dependent on Mexican workers.
- An act of Congress in 1924 gave Native Americans born in the U.S. certificates of citizenship for the first time.
- The Asian Exclusion Act of 1924 targeted Japanese immigrants in Los Angeles, many of whom had relocated after the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906.
- Marriage between whites and Blacks or Asians was illegal in California until State law was overturned in 1948.
- Los Angeles health officials established separate clinics for whites and Mexicans during the 1920s, although there were no segregation laws in place (such as those affecting Blacks, Asians and Native Americans).
- Following the 1918 Spanish Flu which decimated the City, a pneumonic Plague struck Los Angeles in October, 1924. At first thought to be Influenza, the outbreak originated in a low-income, Mexican neighborhood northeast of Downtown. Officials quickly quarantined the area, burning homes and structures. Thirty-seven people died, 90% of whom were Mexican.
- As a result of the Plague, around 2,500 buildings in adjoining neighborhoods were declared to be health menaces and destroyed, clearing the way for urban renewal. The owners were not compensated.
- Countless Mexican workers lost jobs, as the 1924 Los Angeles Plague was stigmatized as part of the "Mexican problem."
- After decades of lobbying by the American Medical Association, by the early 1900s abortions were illegal except to save a woman's life; this was an exclusive, "physicians-only" practice in which a catheter and wire was generally used. Infections were common, and Penicillin was not yet discovered
- During this time, disseminating information about birth control was also against the law. Women regularly turned to illegal abortions, performed in non-medical settings; women practitioners were not uncommon.
- In the late 1920s, around 15,000 women a year died from abortions in the U.S.
- It wasn't until the 1930s, during the Depression, that contraceptive devices and condoms became socially acceptable and commonly available. At the same time, several underground abortion clinics were established on the West Coast.