

# My Mother's Severed Head

By Charles Cissel

# MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

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MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

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## CAST

**Mama (Mexican woman, ageless)**

**Dad (Mexican man, age 45, slight skinny man)**

**Robert (Son, age 25, about 6' 3", 250 pounds)**

**Gabrielle (actress, age 22)**

*Takes place in a Mexican restaurant with a tiny theatre attached to it in New York City. The restaurant looks like the inside of a pinata.*

MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

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## SCENE 1

*A low light with music playing*

*Light fade out*

*Music by Shakira. "What We Said".*

*Lights out.*

*You hear a thud.*

*Lights fade up.*

*Mother's severed head rolls across the floor. Stage right to stage left and exits.*

*Robert enters carrying a big metal serving tray with a rope attached to it. It is one of three pranks that Robert sets up throughout the play. They are to scare his father to death. He exits.*

*Dad enters carrying Mother's head and puts it back on the altar while he is mumbling to himself.*

**DAD.** Quedate alli, quedate, quedate, quedate, Maldita sea, por favor, quedate alli. *(He exits.)*

**MAMA.** A donde vas. Regresa aqui. Vuelve aqui ahora. They keep putting me back up on here. I don't want to be here, I don't want to be here. I can't feel anything. where's my body? Sitting on this altar. Am I sitting? Do you call this sitting. I'm plunked down. I'm a plunk. This goddamn boredom is making me delirious. Bore dumb. I'm a dummy. No way out. There's got to be. Me on this Day of the Dead altar. I'm alive and I'm here hanging with dead people. *(The altar is full of old pictures of dead people and skulls)*

## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

I'm alive. Estoy vivo, maldicion, maldito idiota, estay vivo, alive, where is the rest of me? Where? Quiero mi vida jodida vida de vuelta ahora. (*Lights begin to fade out. Mama starts to rock her head.*) Goddamnit, goddamnit, sacame de aqui, encuentrame, encuentra mi cuerpo. (*You hear another thud. Lights up. Robert enters stage right and sees Mother's head on the floor.*)

**ROBERT.** There you are. (*Picks up head and pulls out a brush*) Mama you can't keep on doing this. Why aren't you on your altar? Why? Where's the old man? Speak to me. Why do I have to do all the talking? I guess there's wisdom in silence if you say it loud enough. Mama! (*pulls out a hair brush*) Here, let me fix your hair. Mama, guess what? I'm going to do a Eugene O'Neill play. Goddamnit. I couldn't get the rights to "A Touch of a Poet". That would've been perfect. The killing of the horse, get Dad in there. to kill. He's an accomplice to all of this anyway. Goddamnit. Just couldn't get the rights to it. So I had to write my O'Neill play. It's about O'Neill's son, Jamie. Poor drunken sot.

**MAMA.** You're becoming a sot, too.

**ROBERT.** (*He looks around*) What? What, what. Had to re-cast. Ahh. This is not good for me. All this failure around me. On me. I'm sorry, Mama. Maldita sea, Maldita sea. Donde esta todo el mundo? Vamos, Mama. Tu cabello es un desastre. (*While Robert exits with Mother's Head, he looks at hands and shakes them*) There's always some kinda thick coating on my hands. (*This is the set up for the first prank on Dad. The pranks consist of almost killing Dad, that are set up by Robert. The first will be a loud noise from the big serving tray that might scare him to death because Dad has a bad heart. You hear a big metal tray "bang" on the floor. Dad enters quickly.*)

**DAD.** (*He reacts to the bang and is talking to himself*) Maldita sea, Maldita sea. El esta tratando de matarme. El esta tratando de matarme. No sabe que tengo unmal corazon, fucking puto. You didn't get me. Gooooooal. Robert, Robert, where are you? (*Dad exits left. Gabrielle enters right carrying the play, "The Touch of a Poet".*)

## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**GABRIELLE.** Hello, hello, Robert. Anybody here? Where is everybody? At least I'm on time and I'm an actress. Shh, they might hear you. I've got to talk this out. That's what my acting teacher told me. If you are going to talk to yourself, talk it out loud. Then it's not talking to yourself cause it gets out, out there. Yes? Yes. Shh, shut up. I am an actress. I'm a seagull. No, no. I'm doing O'Neill. Right? Right. Just because you've got some looks. Shh, shh, I don't want people to know about that, just me. You're doing a play. Yeah. Yeah. Where is everybody? I need a job. Maybe I could get a job here. I'm very strong. Jesus, where is everybody? Hello, Hello.

**ROBERT.** Hola. *(Carrying Mother's head with a brush in his back pocket. And comes up behind her)*

**GABRIELLE.** Jesus, you scared me.

**ROBERT.** I'm sorry.

**GABRIELLE.** Where is everybody?

**ROBERT.** Gone.

**GABRIELLE.** What? No. What? *(Sees head)*

**ROBERT.** Yes.

**GABRIELLE.** I can't see

**ROBERT.** I couldn't get the rights.

**GABRIELLE.** No?

**ROBERT.** But I wrote a play.

**GABRIELLE.** Who is...

**ROBERT....**yes.

**GABRIELLE.** No.

**ROBERT.** Why not?

**GABRIELLE.** No.

**ROBERT.** What's wrong?

**GABRIELLE.** No, no.

**ROBERT.** It's good. It's about Jamie and Eugene O'Neill. I'll play Jamie.

**GABRIELLE.** No, no, no.

**ROBERT.** You'll play Eugene.

**GABRIELLE.** A boy?

## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**ROBERT.** You'll be great.

**GABRIELLE.** What?

**ROBERT.** Jamie is Eugene's brother.

**GABRIELLE.** Oh, god.

**ROBERT.** Jamie killed the other brother.

**GABRIELLE.** (*yells for God*) God, God, God.

**ROBERT.** Edmond. Before Eugene was born.

**GABRIELLE.** God, am I dead.

**ROBERT.** It was a crib death.

**GABRIELLE.** My head is blowing up...

**ROBERT....**what...

**GABRIELLE....**in my head.

**ROBERT.** What?

**GABRIELLE.** You, you, you.

**ROBERT.** Jamie was sick. A crib death.

**GABRIELLE.** I'm going to scream.

**ROBERT.** Oh... (*Gabrielle screams.*) Wow, that was very good. We'll use that. (*Dad enters carrying a case of liquor.*)

**DAD.** ¿Que esta pasando? ¿Que estas haciendo? He is always making people scream. I tell him he should leave her, his mother, my wife on the altar but he doesn't listen. Son, the head. The head.

**ROBERT.** Oh. Oh, I'm sorry. Yes of course, please forgive me. I forget. I'm so used to it. My mother being with me. That I forget that she's around. It's like I have two heads. You have to forgive me. Let me pray for you to let you know how I feel for doing this to you.

**DAD.** And I will also pray because I'm also at fault. He's my son. And he is me.

**DAD.** So forgive us. We will talk together...

**GABRIELLE.** You don't have to pray for me.

**ROBERT....**and get on our knees. Let me help you Dad.

**DAD.** Thank you, my Son. So here we are bending towards you.

**DAD/ROBERT.** Ava Maria. Please forgive us. (*Robert helps Dad up.*)

**GABRIELLE.** My name is Gabrielle.



## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**DAD.** Nice to meet you. I'm Roberto.

**GABRIELLE.** Who are you apologizing to?

**ROBERT.** You.

**GABRIELLE.** Me? Well. Me. That's nice. Thank you. And does the head?

**DAD.** Mother.

**GABRIELLE.** Does Mother apologize, too?

**ROBERT.** I apologize to her every day. That's why I take care of her.

**GABRIELLE.** I'm sorry I didn't mean to have her forgive me. I'm sorry.

**ROBERT.** No. No need for that. Maybe a beer. But no reason for you to be sorry.

**GABRIELLE.** I don't know. Mother. Rehearsal. Maybe I should leave. Where is everyone?

**ROBERT.** I told you. I mean, I didn't get the rights, I wrote another play.

**GABRIELLE.** Oh, yes.

**ROBERT.** Do you want to do it?

**GABRIELLE.** Me? No.

**DAD.** Robert! Put Mother back up on the altar. Robert, the head.

**GABRIELLE.** Yes, yes, the head. The head

**ROBERT.** Oh, the head, yes.

**DAD.** Give me the head.

**ROBERT.** I can do it.

**DAD.** Give it to me.

**ROBERT.** You always have her facing the wall. *(They start to jostle with Mother's head.)*

**GABRIELLE.** Please, give him the head.

**DAD.** Give me the goddamn head, puto.

**GABRIELLE.** Huh.

**ROBERT.** *(To Dad)* What you say?

**GABRIELLE.** Robert, Robert, Robert.

## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**ROBERT.** Goddamnit, goddamnit, goddamnit. Yes. I'm sorry.  
*(gives Dad the head) It would be for the lead. (Dad exits and puts  
Mama facing the wall.)*

**GABRIELLE.** Oh.

**ROBERT.** Look you can read the play. Dad's got to get the  
restaurant open.

**GABRIELLE.** I do need a job.

**ROBERT.** Here. *(Hands her the script that he has rolled up in his  
back pocket)*

**GABRIELLE.** I've bartended, waited tables. I can do anything.  
I'm strong.

**ROBERT.** No.

**GABRIELLE.** No? no. You're right. I don't know what I was  
thinking. A head. Mother's head. It's too much. How can I think  
that I could do this? Help you out. Out of this. I'm a normal  
person. I've had some things happen to me, too. I can make my  
own decisions.

**ROBERT.** You better get out of here. I don't know what I was  
thinking. I'm always thinking of things dead.

**GABRIELLE.** But the play.

**ROBERT.** It's junk.

**GABRIELLE.** But what, where am I to go?

**ROBERT.** Anywhere. It's New York.

**GABRIELLE.** I still need a job.

**ROBERT.** You would have to no train. *(Dad enters wiping his  
hands with a beer under his arm.)*

**GABRIELLE.** No.

**ROBERT.** No?

**GABRIELLE.** Yes. No. Listen. just give me the play. I'll read it.  
If it sucks I'll tell you. But that doesn't mean we are not going to  
do it.

**ROBERT.** Are you trying to take over?

**DAD.** She's taking over. Just like your mother.

**GABRIELLE.** I want to do something.

**ROBERT.** Then go ahead.

## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**GABRIELLE.** Give me the script.

**ROBERT.** Here.

**GABRIELLE.** I can bartend.

**DAD.** That's my job, lady.

**GABRIELLE.** Why?

**DAD.** Why am I talking to you? I talk to me.

**GABRIELLE.** Don't you greet the people?

**DAD.** Me? That's Mother's job.

**ROBERT.** You won't have to get drunk behind the...

**DAD.** I only drink on the job.

**GABRIELLE.** Mom's on the shelf.

**DAD.** Mama.

**ROBERT.** That's an alter.

**GABRIELLE.** She's a head... You can talk with the regulars.

**DAD.** Talk?

**GABRIELLE.** I need a job.

**DAD.** Go get one.

**GABRIELLE.** I'm here.

**DAD.** Me, too.

**GABRIELLE.** Please.

**DAD.** You speak Mexican Spanish lady girl?

**ROBERT.** We need help around here since...

**DAD.** This is my restaurant.

**ROBERT.** And Mama's?

**DAD.** Mama, Mama, Mama. That's all I hear, Mama  
*Dad exits.*

**ROBERT.** You start tonight.

**GABRIELLE.** Tonight?

**ROBERT.** You want the job?

**GABRIELLE.** Oh, yes.

**ROBERT.** I'm in charge.

**GABRIELLE.** Yes, bye. *(Gabrielle exits.)*

**ROBERT.** I am in charge! *(All exit.)*

**MAMA.** Thank God they're gone. It seems endless. The way they go on about me like they love me. If they loved me, they

## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

wouldn't leave me here alone on wood. I don't like being this way. So heady. And I'm never hungry, never. There is something that I must have done, or do, or undo. Because this rolling around and waiting is killing me. I'm dying without dying. I need a plan. Get a plan together for The Day of the Dead. Yes, The Day of the Dead. Where's my beer. A straw. I need a bendy straw. *(Robert enters with a beer. picks up her head and puts it facing forward.)*

**ROBERT.** Fucking puto. Oh, Mama I'm sorry I forgot to give you your beer. *(Makes the cross sign)* Sometimes I forget. I want to forget, sometimes.

**MAMA.** A bendy straw.

**ROBERT.** Huh, What? *(He hear's something but doesn't know where it's coming from. Robert gets the bendy straw)* I'm sorry. I love you, I love you, I love you. *(Kisses her, puts the scarf around her and then puts her on the altar of The Day of the Dead. Lights fade. )*

### SCENE 2

*Lights fade up The next day. Robert is seen walking across the stage with a rope tied around the handle of an axe and he exits. Gabrielle enters and looks around to see if anybody is here. Goes to the altar.*

**GABRIELLE.** Hello Mother, oh, god, I don't even know your name. I wasn't properly introduced. Hi, I'm sorry. Sorry for your loss. My name is Gabrielle. My parents named me that. They thought I was going to be a boy. They wanted a boy. I'm not. May I tell you a secret? My father died when I was ten. Drug overdose. I hated and hate him for it. I didn't find out until two weeks after. I didn't get to see him dead. Not in a coffin, not ashes, not even a tombstone...

**MAMA....**horrific.

## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**GABRIELLE.** I know...I know, oh, no please don't be able to talk. I can't take it, can't.

**MAMA.** Don't talk. That's all I can do.

**GABRIELLE.** Oh, I'm sorry. I'm really sorry.

**MAMA.** Ah, esta, Jodido.

**GABRIELLE.** Pardon me.

**MAMA.** It's fucked up.

**GABRIELLE.** Esta Jodido. It's fucked up. yup.

**MAMA.** Life does that. (*Gabrielle takes out the play and looks at Mother.*)

**GABRIELLE.** It's good.

**MAMA.** What?

**GABRIELLE.** The play, this play.

**MAMA.** He writes drunk.

**GABRIELLE.** He wrote all these words?

**MAMA.** He writes all those damn words. I see him at the end of the night, sitting at the bar. He thinks he's Eugene O'Neill.

**GABRIELLE.** Drinkers?

**MAMA.** Working in bars. Eugene second generation here, Robert second generation. Drinking in liquor love.

**GABRIELLE.** But he wants me to play a boy.

**MAMA.** A boy?

**GABRIELLE.** I know.

**MAMA.** Putos gilipollas.

**GABRIELLE.** What?

**MAMA.** Tratando de hacerse cargo. Ladrones.

**GABRIELLE.** I'm sorry I don't know what you are saying.

**MAMA.** Aprender puto espanol.

**GABRIELLE.** Puto?

**MAMA.** Fucking.

**GABRIELLE.** Fucking puto.

**MAMA.** Yes, my child.

**GABRIELLE.** It's crazy here?

**MAMA.** Crazy everywhere.

**GABRIELLE.** What?

## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**MAMA.** No comprenda?

**GABRIELLE.** Oh, god.

**MAMA.** Oh, poor bambina.

**GABRIELLE.** I'm strong.

**MAMA.** Don't be.

**GABRIELLE.** Always.

**MAMA.** Be weak.

**GABRIELLE.** Never.

**MAMA.** Might be fun.

**GABRIELLE.** I can carry two cases of beer.

**MAMA.** One thing at a time.

**GABRIELLE.** What?

**MAMA.** Don't make sense of it.

**GABRIELLE.** He's big.

**MAMA.** Ah, you like him.

**GABRIELLE.** Umm.

**MAMA.** He's going to save me.

**GABRIELLE.** Save you?

**MAMA.** Save you, too.

**GABRIELLE.** Save me?

**MAMA.** You don't need saving?

**GABRIELLE.** No, no, no. When my father dumped my mother he started dating, people. Other puto people. On one of those people I threw up on her on commend. Now that is acting.

**MAMA.** You'll have to teach me that trick.

**GABRIELLE.** So I've been saving myself my whole life.

**MAMA.** A dead father?

**GABRIELLE.** Oh, shit, shit, shit.

**MAMA.** Ah, the Day of the Dead.

**GABRIELLE.** Huh?

**MAMA.** For dead people.

**GABRIELLE.** More dead people.

**MAMA.** It's a day.

**GABRIELLE.** Maybe I need to quit.

## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**MAMA.** ¿Con quien estas hablando? I can't quit. Impossible.

**GABRIELLE.** Right, how can you? You can't just walk out the door.

**MAMA.** You can go, go, go and leave me.

**GABRIELLE.** No, no, no, mother.

**MAMA.** My names Zarela.

**GABRIELLE.** Oh, hi, Zarela, my name is Gabrielle.

**MAMA.** Gabrielle.

**GABRIELLE.** I won't leave you, Zarela. (*Robert enters behind Gabrielle.*)

**ROBERT.** Hola.

**GABRIELLE.** (*Screams*) You scared me again. Don't you know how to approach people?

**ROBERT.** Oh, I'm sorry. How can I make it up to you. You can scare me. I scare easy. (*Turns his back and Gabrielle scares him and Robert yells.*) Thank you.

**GABRIELLE.** You're welcome

**ROBERT.** It helps get the scared out. Scare me anytime.

**GABRIELLE.** I guarantee it.

**ROBERT.** I thought we, if you want to. Talk, read the play.

**GABRIELLE.** Yes, I want to talk to you about that. (*Robert goes mum.*) Okay? You okay? Well...I liked it. It's fun, fun. But...I'm to play a boy. A boy.

**ROBERT.** Yes?

**GABRIELLE.** A Boy?

**ROBERT.** You'd make a nice boy.

**GABRIELLE.** You don't think I'd make a nice girl?

**ROBERT.** Oh. No. You'd make a nice girl.

**GABRIELLE.** Make?

**ROBERT.** You're made already.

**GABRIELLE.** Made?

**ROBERT.** No?

**GABRIELLE.** Made how?

**ROBERT.** Born? Born.

**GABRIELLE.** Ah, born, yes.

## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**ROBERT.** Born, you.

**GABRIELLE.** Yes, I see. Yes, I guess I could read it.

**ROBERT.** With me.

**GABRIELLE.** Yes, with you.

**ROBERT.** Out loud?

**GABRIELLE.** Yes, out loud.

**ROBERT.** Now?

**GABRIELLE.** Where?

**ROBERT.** Here.

**GABRIELLE.** Yep.

**ROBERT.** I'm Jamie.

**GABRIELLE.** And I'm the other guy?

**ROBERT.** Eugene.

**GABRIELLE.** Yeah. *(They begin to read the Jamie play.)*

**ROBERT/JAMIE.** *(Jamie is very drunk)* I came to a light and I've realized how great my life was going to be. I will let another have my path. Oh, I'm so close to greatness, my brother. I'm at the precipice of a great life. Best be ready to begin my brother, it's time for you to take over. Brother it's time to replenish. Drink?

**GABRIELLE/EUGENE.** Drink, drink, drink.

**ROBERT/JAMIE.** I like the first big gulp. Boom.

**GABRIELLE/EUGENE.** It's the smell and searing of the vocal chords when the liquor crosses them that takes me in.

**ROBERT/JAMIE.** You should be a writer.

**GABRIELLE/EUGENE.** I'm trying...

**ROBERT/JAMIE.**...no trying. You live it.

**GABRIELLE.** Me?

**ROBERT/JAMIE.** You follow me around pretending to be me. And I let you. I'm letting you stick a needle in me so you can learn.

**GABRIELLE/EUGENE.** You're my big brother.

**ROBERT/JAMIE.** I've become your daddy, because daddy is always gone.

**GABRIELLE/EUGENE.** My Daddy?



## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**ROBERT/JAMIE.** I'm teaching you how to be a man. To kill.

**GABRIELLE/EUGENE.** To kill?

**ROBERT/JAMIE.** Yes, a killer writer. you're way to glory.

The ink man.

**GABRIELLE.** *(She stops doing the play)* A man, me, a man. I don't know...

**ROBERT.** What are you doing?

**GABRIELLE.** A man?

**ROBERT.** For the play.

**ROBERT.** For the play.

**GABRIELLE.** This play is pissing me off. I don't know what you expect of me ? Play a man. A fucking man. You don't like me as a woman?

**ROBERT.** I need a beer.

**GABRIELLE.** A man. The energy of a man. The rise and the fall of the...

**ROBERT.** ...I can't talk about, it.

**GABRIELLE.** Why an it? *(Robert opens a beer.)*

**ROBERT.** Beer, beer.

**GABRIELLE.** Now

**ROBERT.** Now. To think. I'll drink it quick. You're a man. To become a man. I can't take you there.

**GABRIELLE.** Me.

**ROBERT.** Now. I can take you with me.

**GABRIELLE.** Where?

**ROBERT.** To a place.

**GABRIELLE.** Yes, what, no, where?

**ROBERT.** That men go. I have yet to see a woman there.

**GABRIELLE.** Is it safe?

**ROBERT.** In what way?

**GABRIELLE.** Will I get killed

**ROBERT.** No safer than that. Your eyes might regret it, after.

**GABRIELLE.** Regret?

**ROBERT.** Go blind.

**GABRIELLE.** Blind?

## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**ROBERT.** It doesn't last long.

**GABRIELLE.** It will make me feel like a man?

**ROBERT.** As far down as we can go.

**GABRIELLE.** It sounds crazy.

**ROBERT.** Your legs will be shake.

**GABRIELLE.** When would we go?

**ROBERT.** Available twenty-four hours a day.

**GABRIELLE.** Oh God. I haven't felt this way since I threw up on my father's girlfriend.

**GABRIELLE.** What?

**GABRIELLE.** Oh nothing. A funny time.

**ROBERT.** Oh.

**GABRIELLE.** Hell, I've already died once. What else can happen?

**ROBERT.** You died.

**GABRIELLE.** You are not the only one that's lived.

**ROBERT.** What happened.

**GABRIELLE.** I don't know you well enough.

**ROBERT.** So, you want to go to that place?

**GABRIELLE.** Now?

**ROBERT.** Yes.

**GABRIELLE.** Oh, no, yes, okay.

**ROBERT.** Okay? Okay.

**GABRIELLE.** I need to get dressed like a man.

**ROBERT.** Oh, right. Um. You know, your face is a problem.

**GABRIELLE.** What?

**ROBERT.** Well.

**GABRIELLE.** What?

**ROBERT.** I don't want to upset you. Because I know you have your heart set for being a man but that face.

**GABRIELLE.** What, tell me.

**ROBERT.** It's a touch on the beautiful side.

**GABRIELLE.** A touch?

**ROBERT.** Many touches.

**GABRIELLE.** You can break my nose.

## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**ROBERT.** I beg your pardon.

**GABRIELLE.** I beg your pardon.

**ROBERT.** Are you mimicking me?

**GABRIELLE.** It's just you're so formal for someone who's going to break my nose.

**ROBERT.** It's just a role. You'll be back being a woman.

**GABRIELLE.** It's okay. I'd like my nose to be different.

**ROBERT.** I...

**GABRIELLE.** Marlon Brando broke his for A Streetcar Named Desire.

**ROBERT.** He got paid. It will get black and blue.

**GABRIELLE.** It will be a new type of makeup.

**ROBERT.** Can I think about it?

**GABRIELLE.** It will be good for the role. Can I have a drink?

**ROBERT.** What. Beer?

**GABRIELLE.** No, a drink. Scotch

**ROBERT.** But will you be able to forgive me?

**GABRIELLE.** Yes.

**ROBERT.** You say yes now but afterwards when I've done it...

**GABRIELLE....**if you don't do it then I'll do it myself. I'll hit my own nose...

**ROBERT....**you'll make me feel inept...

**GABRIELLE....**worse...

**ROBERT....**a nothing...

**GABRIELLE....**nothing.

**ROBERT.** I can't hit you.

**GABRIELLE.** Then I'm going to hit myself.

**ROBERT.** Don't.

**GABRIELLE.** Please don't tell me what to do. I don't like that. *(She lines herself up to hit herself. Prepares and hits.)*

Ohhhhh. Oh it's bleeding that's a bloody nose. Is it broke?

**ROBERT.** Kinda.

**GABRIELLE.** Good.

**ROBERT.** Bloody.

## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**GABRIELLE.** Where's a mirror? Oh no. Is it too much?

**ROBERT.** I can straighten it.

**GABRIELLE.** You can?

**ROBERT.** I broke my nose once and a doctor fixed it. I know how he did it.

**GABRIELLE.** Do it. Oh my God what have I done to myself. I hear music in my nose.

**ROBERT.** You have to lie down on the ground. Here put this under your head.

**GABRIELLE.** Are you getting on top of me?

**ROBERT.** I have to get on top of you and to use my leverage. That's what this doctor did.

**GABRIELLE.** It's barbaric.

**ROBERT.** But it worked.

**GABRIELLE.** Will it hurt?

**ROBERT.** Doesn't it hurt, now?

**GABRIELLE.** Yes.

**ROBERT.** Then it will be just a sound.

**GABRIELLE.** Okay. *(Robert resets the nose.)* Oh, Oh, Ahhh.

**ROBERT.** You okay?

**GABRIELLE.** Yes. Better?

**ROBERT.** Yes.

**GABRIELLE.** Let me look. Yes it is.

**ROBERT.** You should maybe go to a real doctor.

**GABRIELLE.** No. I want to see how this turns out.

**ROBERT.** Oh, okay.

**GABRIELLE.** Let's go.

**ROBERT.** Let's clean the blood up first then go.

**GABRIELLE.** Oh, yes, okay. *(Dad from off stage yells and enters carrying a hatchet.)*

**DAD.** Maldita sea. Maldita sea. Que estas tratando de hacer. ¿Estas tratando de matarme? No lo hizo. Goooooal. *(Dad sees Gabrielle's nose.)*

**DAD.** What the hell have you done the to the white girl.

**GABRIELLE.** No,no. It was me. I did it.

## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**DAD.** Will you tell

**GABRIELLE.** Tell who.

**DAD.** The police.

**GABRIELLE.** Oh, no, no, no, I'm not even going to tell my mother.

**DAD.** Oh, Good, then good. *(Gabrielle exits.)*

**ROBERT.** I didn't do it.

**DAD.** *(holding a hatchet)* This could've killed me.

**ROBERT.** How?

**DAD.** Somebody is trying to kill me.

**ROBERT.** Not me.

**DAD.** You?

**ROBERT.** I didn't do it.

**DAD.** I'm your Papa.

**ROBERT.** When?

**DAD.** You are my boy.

**ROBERT.** Boy. I am not your boy.

**DAD.** *(Sees blood.)* I've got to go. *(looks at Mother)* Why aren't you doing something about this? Don't look at me that way. Don't. *(Dad turns to go and Mama makes a sound. Dad turns around)* Yes, beer, I know. you want beer, beer, beer. Where does it go, huh. Usted senora borracha. *(Dad exits. Gabrielle passes Dad.)*

**GABRIELLE.** Okay, I'm ready.

**ROBERT.** Let me see. Maybe you should put ice on it.

**GABRIELLE.** Let's get it on the way.

**ROBERT.** Then let's go.

**GABRIELLE.** How do I look.

**ROBERT.** Here, put this on. *(Gives her a baseball hat)*

**GABRIELLE.** Do I look like a man?

**ROBERT.** Nope.

**GABRIELLE.** You've been there before.

**ROBERT.** Yes.

**GABRIELLE.** How did you find out about it?

**ROBERT.** I walk around a lot.

## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**GABRIELLE.** Why?

**ROBERT.** I'm lonely.

**GABRIELLE.** Yes.

**ROBERT.** (*yells to Dad*) Dad, Dad, Dad.

**DAD.** Yes, yes, yes.

**ROBERT.** Can you watch Mama for a while? We're going out.

**DAD.** No, no, no. She's always watching me.

**ROBERT.** Be a man.

**DAD.** I'm your Dad.

**ROBERT.** We're going out, Pops.

**DAD.** Where?

**ROBERT.** With Gabrielle.

**DAD.** I don't think that's a good idea.

**ROBERT.** Puto. (*Gabrielle and Robert exit.*)

**DAD.** What? What did you say? Wait. Stop. You stop. A quie'n le estas diciendo joder. Soy tu padre. Vete a la mierda. Soy to jodido padre. (*Dad goes and grabs two beers a goes over to talk to Mama.*) You don't suppose that one day you can get lost? Roll off to someplace? You're dead, don't you know that yet. What am I going to do? What am I going to do? I can't go back to Mexico.

**MAMA.** Don't come over here, killer.

**DAD.** I didn't stick my head out the window.

**MAMA.** Give me my beer.

**DAD.** Here.

**MAMA.** I need my straw. Get me my bendy straw?

**DAD.** Open your mouth.

**MAMA.** Charytins', "Mosquita Muerta." (*Sings and moves with it*) I was so happy.

**DAD.** You became a dead ball.

**MAMA.** I am not a football, puto.

**DAD.** ¿Puto? I could use you as a football.

**MAMA.** Did you ever love me?

**DAD.** (*Mimicking Mama*) "Don't drink too much. Just drink cerveza, not Tequila."

## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**MAMA.** Answer me.

**ROBERT.** Get up, get to work. My drunken head.

**MAMA.** Your head, my head. Look at my head, Mr Cerveza.

**DAD.** Like a dog sticking it's head out the window.

**MAMA.** Why didn't you swerve?

**DAD.** I was driving.

**MAMA.** Me.

**DAD.** I was thinking that we were about to run out of lemonex.

**MAMA.** I told you to use fresh lime juice.

**DAD.** It's cheaper.

**MAMA.** Jodido...

**DAD....**you told me, you told me, you told me. You still have your mouth.

**MAMA.** Get out. Get out.

**DAD.** I wish I was dead.

**MAMA.** You are alive, you idiot.

**DAD.** Please be dead.

**MAMA.** Get out of my puto sight.

**DAD.** Enjoy your view.

**MAMA.** You didn't swerve. *(Dad goes and turns Mother's head to face the wall as she tries and bites him. Dad exits.)* No, no. Not the wall. No, la pared, por favor. No la maldit pared. Por favor, por favor. *(Lights fade.)*

### SCENE 3

*Later in the day, outside the sex shop.*

**GABRIELLE.** Did you?

**ROBERT.** What?

**GABRIELLE.** When you were in the closet, did you?

**ROBERT.** What do you think you're supposed to do in there?

**GABRIELLE.** But did you?

**ROBERT.** I wasn't suppose to?

## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**GABRIELLE.** I'm not a man.

**ROBERT.** I did.

**GABRIELLE.** Where does everything go?

**ROBERT.** On the floor.

**GABRIELLE.** Oh God, the floor.

**ROBERT.** Yes.

**GABRIELLE.** It's depressing.

**ROBERT.** It's depressing afterwards.

**GABRIELLE.** No, the whole thing. You go in there. The smell of fruit gone bad. Did yours smile?

**ROBERT.** In the booth?

**GABRIELLE.** My girl was sweet.

**ROBERT.** Yes.

**GABRIELLE.** She smiled.

**ROBERT.** A real smile.

**GABRIELLE.** I think she was happy to see me.

**ROBERT.** You might be her first girl.

**GABRIELLE.** Really? Wow. What was yours like?

**ROBERT.** I don't want to talk about it.

**GABRIELLE.** We go in there and now you don't want to talk about it. You better talk.

**ROBERT.** I'm happy to be there, okay, okay. With someone.

**GABRIELLE.** You've already told me you came.

**ROBERT.** That's one part.

**GABRIELLE.** Huh.

**ROBERT.** We kinda know we are in it together.

**GABRIELLE.** Between the scratched up plexiglass?

**ROBERT.** Yes.

**GABRIELLE.** With sperm dying on the ground.

**ROBERT.** I stepped on it once.

**GABRIELLE.** You killed them. I don't want to be a man.

**ROBERT.** I don't talk to them.

**GABRIELLE.** You could've used the phone.

**ROBERT.** I don't touch the phone.

**GABRIELLE.** Oh God, I've got to wash my hands.



## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**ROBERT.** We'll go to a deli and get some handy wipes.

**GABRIELLE.** It was so dirty.

**ROBERT.** They mop up after you leave.

**GABRIELLE.** That poor mop.

**ROBERT.** They say, "there's a mess in number one."

**GABRIELLE.** I need handy wipes fast.

**ROBERT.** And a beer. The bubbles in the beer clean the mouth out of the dead fruit smell taste.

**GABRIELLE.** Yes, yes, yes. She said "You know what this room is, sweetheart?" "No." "It's a jerk off booth." Goddamnit, why didn't you tell me?

**ROBERT.** You wanted to be a man.

**GABRIELLE.** It was that plastic glass, all scratched up. And there she was. She saw me and smiled, sweet. I smiled back. Then she took off what was left of her clothes. My eyes hurt, staring. I lowered my pants and came. It didn't go on the floor. I thanked her.

**ROBERT.** I thank them, too.

**GABRIELLE.** She smiled, big. Then that thing Screeched down.

**ROBERT.** Over the scratched plastic.

**GABRIELLE.** Makes you feel unwanted.

**ROBERT.** Yeah, it's saying get out.

**GABRIELLE.** Yeah.

**ROBERT.** Oh, thank God, here's a deli. I'll go in.

**GABRIELLE.** What the hell did I just do? It feels like Time Square is in slow motion. Am I still here. *(She sings. "Easy to be Hard" from the musical Hair.)* "How can people be so heartless. How can people be so cruel, easy, easy to be hard, easy to be cold."

**ROBERT.** Here you go. *(Hands her the Handy Wipes. He holds her beer while she wipes)*

**GABRIELLE.** Thank you.

**ROBERT.** Do you want a beer?

**GABRIELLE.** Yeah. Just give me a sec.

## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**ROBERT.** You're not allowed to brown bag it anymore. It's the law.

**GABRIELLE.** You're drinking that fast.

**ROBERT.** Yep.

**GABRIELLE.** You don't want to get caught.

**ROBERT.** Getting the fruit taste out of my mouth.

**GABRIELLE.** Why, why, why, did we do it?

**ROBERT.** It gives you the whole feeling of being a man.

**GABRIELLE.** Aaah. No, no, no, no, no. (*Gabrielle starts to exit.*)

**ROBERT.** Where are you going?

**GABRIELLE.** Fucking man. Puto men.

**ROBERT.** You wanted to be a man.

**GABRIELLE.** Not that kind of man.

**ROBERT.** It's playing a role.

**GABRIELLE.** (*moves away*) Is this what I have to do. To become an actor. What am I giving up. Am I giving up. Do I have to die to live.

**ROBERT.** Gabrielle, I'm sorry.

**GABRIELLE.** You only get one of those.

**ROBERT.** Si.

**GABRIELLE.** Robert, am I selling myself off. To be actor. And what do I get back after, after...

**ROBERT.** ...Gabrielle, where are going?

**GABRIELLE.** Work. Don't be late, puto. (*Fades out.*)

### SCENE 4

*Gabrielle and Robert enter from different directions. Gabrielle and Robert are talking over ever other and not listening to each other. Robert is carrying a beer*

**GABRIELLE.** What have I done? I've crucified my mind.

**ROBERT.** I am the stupidest guy. Stupidest. Stupid.

## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**GABRIELLE.** My hands. Oh, god my hands. Will they ever be the same. Ever.

**ROBERT.** Is that how you go about it? Me. Me. Me.

**GABRIELLE.** I'm so damn desperate.

**ROBERT.** What a mess.

**GABRIELLE.** Big mess.

**ROBERT.** I'm big.

**GABRIELLE.** He's so big.

**ROBERT.** She's so beautiful.

**GABRIELLE.** He can protect...

**ROBERT....**I can't protect myself from...

**GABRIELLE.** ...me.

**ROBERT....**me.

**GABRIELLE.** I'm so weak. I have to keep going.

**ROBERT.** How do I keep going?

**GABRIELLE.** He drinks a lot.

**ROBERT.** I'm glad she drinks.

**GABRIELLE.** I drink a bit.

**ROBERT.** To keep a steady drip.

**GABRIELLE.** I've got to work things out in my head.

**ROBERT.** I can't move.

**GABRIELLE.** Dig it out. Dig it out and then beat it up and bury that piece of my brain.

**ROBERT.** My mother. Blood on my hands. Have you ever tried to get blood off your hands. You can't.

**GABRIELLE.** My mother thinks I'm a suitcase. Mom says, "Go get your bag and through it in the car." "Why." "We're moving." "Again? Again." She didn't care. I did. I do. We moved seventeen times. And we weren't in the goddamn army. How can I have a brain if you move seventeen times. Where is my Mother now?

**ROBERT.** The blood, felt like I was putting on a pair of blood gloves. I didn't do it. He was driving. Why. Give the blood to him. She put her head out...

## MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**GABRIELLE.** At least he has part of his mother. (*She calls out to him sounding scared*) ...Robert, Robert, Robert.

**ROBERT.** Yes. (*They take a second to look at each to see where they're at.*)

**GABRIELLE.** I...I'm going to set up the bar.

**ROBERT.** Okay.

**GABRIELLE.** And Robert?

**ROBERT.** Yes.

**GABRIELLE.** Go talk to your mother.

**ROBERT.** Huh.

**GABRIELLE.** Go talk to your Mama. (*Robert goes to the bar and gets a drink and goes over to talk with his Mother.*)

**ROBERT.** Don't, don't look at me that way. Stop. Don't you see what you did to me. I don't know how to function anymore. I've got blood on my hands because of you. Blood. Why did you do it? Tell me. Ah. It's not easy. It's not easy. I had no choice, I had to, had to get your severed head, dad told me too. I can't function.

**MAMA.** My son, my son, my son. I didn't do it on purpose. It was a beautiful day. I wanted to feel it. Be a girl again. For a second...can't you remember that I loved you before that. Just before that.

**ROBERT.** Did you love me? Did you? If you did you wouldn't of stuck your head out the window.

**MAMA.** I love you.

**ROBERT.** That ended it.

**MAMA.** Then why are you talking to me?

**ROBERT.** Gabrielle told me to.

**MAMA.** You've learned to listen.

**ROBERT.** Listen, listen. All I do is feel, feel it. Feel numb, feel drunk. See these hands? See them? Dripping, sticky thick with your...

**MAMA.** I'm sorry.

**ROBERT.** Sorry?

**MAMA.** Yes.

MY MOTHER'S SEVERED HEAD

**ROBERT.** What does that give me.

**MAMA.** Nothing?

**ROBERT.** Yeah...I like her and can't function.

**MAMA.** Why like.

**ROBERT.** Oh, god. You're tormenting me.

**MAMA.** I'm on a piece of wood.

**ROBERT.** Like too much.

**MAMA.** Too much.

**ROBERT.** Then I fucked up.

**MAMA.** Unfuck it.

**ROBERT.** Unfuck it. Um. I've got to go Mama. *(Robert exits.)*

**MAMA.** No, don't leave me, here. Robert! Robert! My baby. I wanted to feel the wind. It made me happy. What could happen? I didn't know. Do you think I wanted this to happen. Robert! *(Lights fade.)*

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