Lucia

A Full-Length Play

By Margaret O’Donnell

LUCIA

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Cast Breakdown

Four women/four open gender

Lucia: female, late 30s, Latina

Santa Lucia: female, late teens-early 20s, Latina

Star Spangle: female, 30s, white

Boss/PattyCake: female, 40s-60s, Latina

Referee/Chorus One/ Dancer / Female Voice: open gender, 20-40s, any race

Chorus Two/ Jennifer/ Dancer/ Police Chief: open gender, 20s-40s, any race

Dancer One /HomeTown Boy/: open gender, 20s - 40s, any race

Richer Than Thou/ Dancer Two / Announcer/ Male Voice: open gender, 20s - 40s, any race

Time and Place: 2004-2019, state of Veracruz, Mexico; the Sonoran Desert; and a mid-size, northern US city.

LUCIA

Note to the Director:

A few chairs, benches, tables, and props make up the set. Consider embodying all but Lucia, Santa Lucia, Star Spangle, and Boss as puppets, perhaps the giant puppets popular since medieval times in Spain, with huge papier mâché heads and frames draped with clothing. The Chorus and Dancers might manipulate the puppets, or other actors can hold the giant puppet heads on poles from beneath the draped clothing. I suggest projecting images of Mexican migrant votive retablos of petition and thanksgiving, particularly those to the la Virgen de San Juan de los Lagos, on the sides and rear of the stage.

I suggest using John Philip Souza's *Stars and Stripes Forever* for the Star Spangle motif, dance music from the early Italian Renaissance for Santa Lucia's motif, and traditional danzón music, lively at times and more inward at others, for Lucia. There's plenty of great danzón music in the public domain to use throughout the play in dance scenes and for transitions.

When Lucia's lines are written in verse form, they may be sung.

LUCIA

PROLOGUE

A shadow boxing ring is behind a translucent screen. REFEREE is business-like and rather jaded, rote. He uses a whistle for attention before he speaks. Santa Lucia and Star Spangle motifs announce their entries, exits. The fight looks more like a lucha libre match than a standard US boxing match. Both fighters put on a veneer of bravado, but their uncertainty about their either-or matchup is clear – each hesitate, pull some punches, and falter at times. REFEREE enters, rushed, a few seconds after lights go up on stage in front of the screen. He checks his watch, then addresses the audience.

REFEREE. Good evening, folks! Welcome to what promises to be a classic matchup. Tonight's fight is for the soul of— (*he checks his notes)*— Maria Lucia Beltran Ayala! And there she is, folks. (*He points towards the audience*.) Maria Lucia Beltran Ayala of Tuxpan, Veracruz, Mexico! And new citizen of the US of A! *(Spotlight picks up Lucia in the audience. She blinks and shields her eyes from the light, then rises slowly and stands for a few beats. Sound of applause.)* The stakes are high, folks. A soul! (*belting it out, reading from notes*) That essential essence, the irreducible is-ness of a person which creates their uniqueness. A soul, existing beyond consciousness, is the identity and the inner, deepest self of each human being. And that's the soul at stake tonight. Maria Lucia Beltran Ayala— her past, her future, her whole damn self. And now, our contestants! *(SANTA LUCIA enters: Her motif swells. Santa Lucia jogs in place, swinging air punches. Facing the audience, she warms up throughout the Referee's patter. Sound of passionate cheering.)* Santa Lucia! Fourth-century Christian martyr, originally from Rome, Italy. She resisted defilement for her beliefs and was tortured to death by Roman authorities. But she lives on in the hearts of girls and women everywhere who stand up for their integrity. Tonight, she fights for Lucia! *(Cheering as Santa Lucia*

takes a bow and returns to her corner. STAR SPANGLE enters. Her motif swells. She jogs in place, facing the audience. Sound of cheering.)
And her opponent—Star Spangle! (*reading from notes)* Heavyweight champion of cultural dominion. A century and a half of winning ninety-eight percent of her matches, and a thousand years of victorious ancestral techniques to draw upon. *(Star Spangle steps forward, punching her gloves and striking power poses.)*
STAR SPANGLE. Listen up. You don't get anywhere in this world by staying soft. You gotta fight for it. That's all I've ever done. That's all I know. *(She looks directly at Lucia in the audience.)*
STAR SPANGLE. Lesson number one! Bend, or break. Survive, or disappear. I'm fighting for you, Laura! *(She ties a U.S.-flag printed bandanna on her head. Cheering. Santa Lucia steps forward.)*
SANTA LUCIA. Es Lucia. Su nombre es Lucia.
STAR SPANGLE. What? What did she say?
SANTA LUCIA. Es un gran privilegio luchar por la integridad del alma contra aquellos que buscan destruirla—especialmente para mujeres que enfrentan persecución.
STAR SPANGLE. Oh, cut the poetry, sweetheart. You think integrity's gonna save her? You think dignity pays rent?
SANTA LUCIA. Lucia will decide who she becomes. Not you. Not me.
REFEREE. All right! That's it for contestant statements. Tonight's rules: One! Ten rounds! Two! Maria Lucia Beltran Ayala may declare the victor, or a draw, at any time. Ready Santa Lucia? *(Santa Lucia indicates her yes.)* Ready Star Spangle? *(Star Spangle indicates her yes.)* Let the fight begin!

Lights down on stage as REF, Santa Lucia, and Star Spangle exit behind the screen. The fighters approach each other and square off before lights down. Spotlight on Lucia as she stands up from her seat in the audience, and walks onto the stage. She wears a Santa Lucia medal on a chain around her neck, always. She stands hesitantly to the side. Then she gets ready for the next scene, as an actor about to go on stage. The CHORUS dresses her in cheap, run-down heels and a shawl.

LUCIA

SCENE 1

It's 2018, a shabby city street at night. Sounds of a city in summer. There's paper and plastic litter on the sidewalk. PattyCake, in a stylish suit, enters quickly and stands waiting by a street curb. She's impatient.

LUCIA. Ms. PattyCake! Hello! Ms. PattyCake!
PATTYCAKE. *(She turns her head.)* Yes?
LUCIA. Remember me? Lucia Beltran?
PATTYCAKE. Um/
LUCIA. *(a bit breathless)* I was just at the meeting on your campaign platform. I noticed you didn't include low-income housing. I tried to ask a question, but you never called on me. ¿Te importa si hablamos español? Para mi es mejor en español. Leí que vienes de una familia de trabajadores agrícolas en el valle, ¿de veras? Naciste en Mexico /
PATTYCAKE. (*frigidly*) I don't speak Spanish professionally.
LUCIA. Oh. (*beat*) Well, anyway, I just wanted to follow up with you on the housing proposal for the big empty block here in our neighborhood/
PATTYCAKE. Are you somebody? You don't look like somebody.
LUCIA. I've been contacting the community suggestion line all year. I'm the one at the community meetings, don't you remember? You told me to send you a detailed proposal from my organization Power for People. And I did/
PATTYCAKE. *(turns to walk a few paces away)* I'm sure it's far too boring to read.
LUCIA. *(quickly moves closer to PattyCake)* I sent it to you six months ago, and I haven't heard anything. At the last city council meeting, you didn't mention it, and you voted to table the discussion on what to do with the land/
PATTYCAKE. Really? I can't remember. (*She punches in a number on her cell phone.)* Bruiser, did you get my texts? I'm ready for pick up.
LUCIA. I'm with Power for People. We're mostly interested in low-income housing, and services/ (*RICHER THAN THOU enters and steps in front of Lucia.)*

RICHER THAN THOU. Love your platform, PattyCake. And you're looking good! Mmm, mmm! (*kisses her cheek*) I think I can drop a good chunk into that campaign fund of yours/
PATTYCAKE. Why, Mr. Richer! (*she hugs him*) How nice to see you!
RICHER. My pleasure, sweetie. Let's have lunch and take a look at your platform in detail. Hmm? Just give me a call and Kitten will set it up for us/
PATTYCAKE. I will! Thank you/ *(Lucia shoulders Richer aside.)*
LUCIA. (*she touches her medal*) Power for People focuses on recent immigrants and a lot of them don't have papers, so nobody wants to talk about housing for them/ *(Richer shoulders Lucia aside*.)
RICHER. Illegals? Please. (*to Lucia)* Radical socialist!
LUCIA. But their *kids* are US citizens! Power for People wants to get people into housing no matter what their immigration status/
PATTYCAKE. Undocumented people? Political death! *(Lucia and Richer talk at the same time, in counterpoint:)*
LUCIA. We can use private funds from contractors who get city contracts! That's the beauty of my plan! That's what so many people, even city council members like you, don't know. The city has complete power to dedicate a portion of each new building to low-income people who don't otherwise qualify/
RICHER. Who are you? You don't have any power. Look at you. Talking like you have a right to be heard! Your plan! Upstanding citizens like me are the backbone of this city. You want to give away everything we have, that we earned, to illegals?
PATTYCAKE. Mr. Richer, so sorry you have to go through this with this…this/
LUCIA. Lucia Beltran, Ms. PattyCake.
PATTYCAKE. My driver is late/
LUCIA. I haven't found another way to talk to you. I've tried them all.
RICHER. I'll give you a ride in my new Tesla. I love showing it off.
LUCIA. Ms. PattyCake, I'd like to explain the contractor set-aside option for city contracts/
PATTYCAKE. Of course I know about the set-aside option! I don't need you to tell me about it.

LUCIA. What? You know about it, but you're not using it? You're the chair of the housing committee! Why not? That's unbelievable!
RICHER. That's enough. One more word outta you/
PATTYCAKE. I'd love a ride, Mr. Richer.
Richer and PattyCake start to exit, as Lucia runs after them.
LUCIA. I'll be at your office first thing tomorrow with the proposal. Together we can make this work! Think what this will do for your platform. Finally, some real housing policy/
(Lucia approaches PattyCake as if to take her by the hand.)
PATTYCAKE. Don't touch me!
RICHER. Whoa, stand back!
LUCIA. I just wanted to shake hands.
PATTYCAKE. Don't let her near me. *(Richer casually pushes Lucia aside and she falls. DRIVER and PattyCake don't see her fall as they exit. Sound of car accelerating and fading. Lucia lies on the ground for a few beats, then pushes herself up and brushes herself off. She limps slowly and stiffly to the bus stop and sits on the bench. Enter CHORUS, who alternate lines. They circle Lucia as they speak.)*
CHORUS.
1-Oh Lucia, poor Lucia
2-This is what happens when she tries so hard
1-She didn't deserve this
2-Dreaming too big
1-No one deserves this
2-She snuck over the border
1-She's a citizen now
2-But surely second-class
1-She's as good as any other citizen.

2-This is what happens when she sticks out
1-She's got to stand up for herself
2-She should stop trying
1-Punch back!
2-Forget these crazy dreams
1-It's not crazy to want a better world

2-Forget, forget, forget
1-Never give up
2-She just got here
1-Time enough to know what's broken
2-This is what happens
1-Only if she doesn't fight back
2-What can she expect
1-Oh Lucia, poor poor Lucia.
(Lucia curls up on the bench and puts her arm over her face. CHORUS exits. Santa Lucia and Star Spangle enter behind a translucent screen at stage rear, the starting bell dings; they shadow box. Star Spangle knocks Santa Lucia down. A round-ending bell dings. Santa Lucia struggles to her feet as Referee enters at the side of the stage, and calls out:)
REFEREE. Round One to Star Spangle! *(The shadow ring fades. Lucia flinches and writhes, and sits up, gasping. She puts her head in her hands. Santa Lucia enters, limping and bedraggled.)*
SANTA LUCIA. Lucia! (*she jostles Lucia's arm*) Lucia!
LUCIA. (*she sits up*) What? Oh. It's you.
SANTA LUCIA. ¡Buen trabajo! Tenías todos los hechos. ¡Ella no tenía nada! Nada más que fuerza bruta y /
LUCIA. Fat lot of good that does me! My patron! I don't know why I bother wearing this (*she holds up the medal on its chain)*
SANTA LUCIA. Porque te ayuda a recordar lo fuerte que eres. Siempre te levantas. ¡Levántate más fuerte! Mira hasta donde hemos llegado /
LUCIA. We? You were martyred for your beliefs. After all these years, I'm finally starting to get it. My mother should've named me Jennifer, like my father wanted. With Jennifer, I could fit in. Nobody would knock me down in the street/ *(JENNIFER, a pale simpering woman, enters as Lucia speaks, looking coquettish and lady-like.)*
SANTA LUCIA. Jennifer! Pah! Shoo! *(Jennifer takes fright and exits.)* No me hagas reír. ¡Jennifer nunca sería lo suficientemente fuerte para hacer lo que tú has hecho! Viniendo aquí, aprendiendo un nuevo idioma, enfrentándote a una nueva cultura, sin familia que te apoye. Jennifer es un sueño pálido. Lucía. Ese es un nombre con poder /
LUCIA. Please.

Can you talk with me in English?
I know you can speak any language you choose.
I've got to improve.
You see how I'm treated.
SANTA LUCIA. ¡Qué! Podrías declamar a Shakespeare y ellos encontrarían fallas. Encontrarán otra razón para despreciarte. Siempre lo harán. Tienes que defenderte a ti misma. Te hablo en español para recordarte quién eres.
LUCIA.
But I'm tired of who I am!
Thirty-eight years old
Getting knocked down in the street.
Somebody always takes care
Of Jennifer.
And you're no help
You're never around
When I'm ground down
Go help another Lucia
Someone more likely to succeed.
Anyway
You're just a painted picture on a holy card.
All those years of prayer
Just a waste of time.
Martyr, you're a martyr.
What should a Lucia expect?
Punches! Punches! Punches!
SANTA LUCIA. (*air punching and jumping*) ¡Vuelve atrás, Lucía! ¡No dejes que los cabrones te noqueen!
(Star Spangle enters, looking fresh.)
STAR SPANGLE.
What did she say? (*beat*) Did she say something about me? Say it to my face, you wimp.
SANTA LUCIA. ¡Cuidado, matón! Yo vengo por ti.
STAR SPANGLE. In English!

SANTA LUCIA. Te voy a bombardear con un chorro de español! ¡Nunca sabrás lo que te pegó!
STAR SPANGLE. I can't understand a word you're saying. But you understand me. It's not fair! (to Lucia) Tell her to speak in English, or/
LUCIA. Or what? Is it her fault you can't keep up?
STAR SPANGLE. Me not keep up?! Who won that round, huh? Me! Star Spangle of the U.S. of A.! No wonder you keep getting beat up. You and your crazy saint. You're snarky. (leans in, voice lowering, almost conspiratorial) Here's some advice. Just go with the flow. Be what people want you to be. Smile. Won't hurt to flutter your eyelids. Like this. See? That's what we like in the U.S. of A.
And you, Santa! Quit with the Spanish! Consarnit!
LUCIA. I'm so sick of this constant war! Will you both please just be quiet?
(*Silence for a few beats. Santa Lucia and Star Spangle circle each other suspiciously.*)
SANTA LUCIA. Ella va a correr para el puesto en el concejo municipal de PattyCake.
LUCIA. I am?
STAR SPANGLE.
What did she say?
LUCIA. She said I'm going to run for PattyCake's city council seat.
STAR SPANGLE. *(laughing maniacally)* Crazy! Just like all your lamebrain ideas, Santa! I get a hoot outta callin' you Santa. You and that old North Pole fairy belong together. (*to Lucia*) PattyCake's gonna win. Hands down. Look at her. Perfect hair. Great clothes. Shiny white teeth. Body like a model. And she's got Richer Than Thou on her side—
SANTA LUCIA. Y eso es todo lo que tiene—
STAR SPANGLE. Dad blame it! There you go with the Spanish again! PattyCake's got what we want. And what's our gal Lucia got? An accent—
SANTA LUCIA. Demuestra su increíble habilidad para aprender un idioma extranjero como adulta—
STAR SPANGLE. What's she saying? She's driving me crazy.
SANTA LUCIA. ¡Bien! ¿No lo entiendes, Spangle? No pasa nada. Entonces uso el español.

STAR SPANGLE. Forget you, Santa! (*Turns back to Lucia like a weary teacher.)* Look, Lucia, you wanna get anywhere, you gotta lose the accent, smarten up your clothes, do something with your hair, fix your teeth. You listen to Santa here, and you'll stay in the gutter—
SANTA LUCIA. ¡Decoración de ventanillas! Los votantes ven a través de todo eso.
STAR SPANGLE. Aargh! What did she say? Never mind (*to Lucia*) You got a missing tooth. You think you can run for office with that?
SANTA LUCIA. Solo muestra que no es rica.
STAR SPANGLE. Horse hockey! I don't give a flippin' toot what you say. I won that last round. And if she tries to run for office (*laughing*) I can just see her up on the candidate platform trying to explain her sad story/
SANTA LUCIA. ¡Sí! Su inspiradora historia de resiliencia, esperanza y fortaleza—
STAR SPANGLE. Tarnation! Whatever you said. (*lowering voice, measuredand cold*) You only got your papers because the ex hit you. But here's the real kicker. You crossed the border—(*whispering, leaning in)* illegal. (*beat*) We don't like people who break the law. You committed a crime. You got away with it. That's what we can't forget.
SANTA LUCIA. Ahora es ciudadana, tonta. Su forma de entrada es conocida por el gobierno. Y perdonado.
LUCIA. Stop! I need time to think.
(Santa Lucia and Star Spangle speak in counterpoint.)
SANTA LUCIA.
¡Fuerza, Lucía!
Todo lo que necesitas,
Tú tienes.
Eres capaz.
Más capaz.
Recuerda.
STAR SPANGLE.
What a joke.
City council!
Your clothes.

Your hair.
That accent.
SANTA LUCIA.
¡Recuerda!
Has sido fuerte tantas veces
Antes.
Recuerda.
(Santa Lucia and Star Spangle exit, flipping each other off, shoving, etc.)
LUCIA.
Recuerda.
Recuerdo.
(CHORUS, DANCERS, and Santa Lucia enter. It's 2004 in Tuxpan, a small town in Estado de Veracruz, Mexico. Danzon music begins to play. Lighting warms to that of a dance studio with a big wall mirror along stage rear. CHORUS, dressed for dancing, dresses Lucia in a red silky dress, and red high heels. They pin a red rose behind her ear, and arrange chairs along one side of the stage. Lucia dances with Santa Lucia, to demonstrate how it's done. DANCERS in white danzon suits, hats, and shoes dance with CHORUS. Lucia walks around each pair, observing and correcting moves.)
LUCIA. Bueno. Bueno. Tu brazo debe estar un poco más alto. Como esto. Bueno. Da un paso atrás un poco más para que tu compañero tenga espacio para el giro. Bueno. Uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco, seis. Bueno. ¡Qué bueno practicar! Uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco, seis. Ahora cambie de compañero.
(Lucia dances to demonstrate as she observes and comments in time with the six-beat rhythm of the danzon.)
LUCIA.
Andele! Que camino tan cansado, ¿de veras?
Aprendiendo los pasos cuidadosos.
Contando los latidos, mirando tus pies.
Práctica práctica práctica
Tuerces el giro, tu compañero te pisa los dedos de los pies.
¡Espera! La magia esta esperando
Los pasos se funden con la música
Con tu alma

LUCIA

Pronto bailarás libremente
Uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco, seis.

Me encanta el danzon.
Tan formal. Tan preciso
Tu cuerpo moviéndose
Convertirse en la musica
Convertirse en oración
Uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco, seis.
(DANCER ONE and Lucia dance while the others watch.)
SANTA LUCIA. Van a la competicion! La pareja danzon de Veracruz!
(DANCERS and CHORUS exit. Referee, Santa Lucia, and Star Spangle enter the shadow ring. Santa Lucia knocks Star Spangle down. All exit but Lucia.)
REFEREE. Round two to Santa Lucia!

SCENE 2

It's 2007, an early winter evening on a trash-strewn city street. CHORUS enters, takes off Lucia's red dress and shoes and hangs a laminated name tag on a lanyard around Lucia's neck with the words Palace Hotel Housekeeping. They help her put on old running shoes. She walks briskly to the curb. She looks up and down the street. She checks her watch for the time. She paces. She's waiting for the bus after her shift. Sound of a car driving up off-stage and slowing to a stop.

MAN'S VOICE. Hey, baby. Over here.
(Lucia turns her back.)
Man's Voice. Hey, I'm talking to you! (*pause)* What's wrong? My money ain't good enough for you? (*pause)* Fuckin' whore!
(Sound of car accelerating and tires squealing, then fading. Lucia continues to pace. Star Spangle overhears the driver as she enters.)
STAR SPANGLE. Laura? It's Laura, isn't it? Part of our housekeeping staff?

LUCIA. Lucia.
STAR SPANGLE. Right, right. I'm from corporate. Star Spangle. I've heard some fine things about your work!
LUCIA. Really? I'm just one of the cleaners.
STAR SPANGLE. Such an important part of the team! We couldn't do it without you. (*beat*) Why are you standing on the street? It's dangerous out here.
LUCIA. I'm waiting for the bus. It's late a lot.
STAR SPANGLE. Don't you have a car?
LUCIA. No.
STAR SPANGLE. Strange. You should get one. Do you have anyone who can pick you up?
LUCIA. No.
STAR SPANGLE. Hmm. Well, let me give you a ride home tonight. Where do you live?
LUCIA. It's far. I've gotta take two buses and walk. Really, the bus should be here any minute.
STAR SPANGLE. Well, at least I can wait with you, scare off the bad guys. They won't dare bother you with me here. So, what's your story?
LUCIA. My story?
STAR SPANGLE. I love hearing immigrant stories! Like, where you're from and why you came here. How long you've been here, and what your life is like.
LUCIA. I don't think/ We just met.
STAR SPANGLE. Oh, I already know lots about you Laura.
LUCIA. Lucia..
STAR SPANGLE. Yes of course! I have your personnel file. (*In a confidential tone, after looking to see if anyone else is around)* I know you're illegal. (*beat*) But don't worry. We're not going to fire you. We like your work. And I know the law isn't going to bite us on this one.
LUCIA. Really?
STAR SPANGLE. You showed us a fake social security card. But, the feds would have to prove I know it's false, and I'll say that it looked okay to me. If it comes to that. Which it won't.
LUCIA. Oh.

STAR SPANGLE. No need to thank me! I love helping! (*a few beats*) But can you tell me what your dreams are? Your hopes? I'm pretty good at connecting people to resources.
LUCIA. My dreams? You really want to know?
STAR SPANGLE. How else can help you? Get you away from (*beat while she gestures*) all this.
LUCIA.
There's so much I want to do!
Every time I look around
I see more.
Even here in el norte dorado.
Especially here in the golden north
Where they say it's supposed to be different
Where they think, if they close their eyes
It is different.
Women despised.
People in poverty they'll never escape.
The rich walled up in their mansions,
afraid of the mob.
The homeless asleep in their cars.
The Earth burning, the seas dripping acid.
Immigrants and refugees in camps
People destroyed
For the color of their skin.
I know there is something I can do.
I want to learn how.
I want to start now.
STAR SPANGLE. No, no, no! I'm asking about *your* dreams. Not all that pie in the sky stuff. Better job? Maybe better English? A nice apartment? How about a car? Step by step, Laura! Step by step! Then maybe you can start to dream.
LUCIA. I see.
(Sound of another car pulling up.)
MAN'S VOICE. Hey. Over here.
(Lucia. turns her head away.)

Man's Voice. (*wheedling*) Won't take long. Right here in the car. Twenty-five bucks for five minutes. Just suck me off, okay? Come on/
STAR SPANGLE. Get out of here, asshole! I got your license plate. I'm calling the cops/
(Sound of car accelerating away, tires squealing.)
LUCIA. Thanks.
STAR SPANGLE. See what I mean? You're going to need me on your side. That's what you're going to get when you don't look polished.
LUCIA. Polished?
STAR SPANGLE. Polished. Take Jennifer.
(Jennifer enters, and stands preening and fluffing her hair.)
STAR SPANGLE. One of my success stories. Right, Jennifer?
Jennifer. Yes, Ms. Spangle. Thank you.
STAR SPANGLE. Jennifer here started out in housekeeping just like you. And now, after hard work and years of grooming, she's made it all the way up to concierge! Isn't she sweet? And pretty?
LUCIA. Umm/ *(Jennifer exits, waving kittenishly.)*
STAR SPANGLE. You can't do this anymore, Laura. I mean Lucia. We've got to get you another job. In a safer part of town. You're making minimum wage here, anyway. No need to take two buses and deal with this sleaziness. And danger.
LUCIA. I've tried.
STAR SPANGLE. Well, now you have me on your side. What you need is a mentor.
LUCIA. A mentor?
STAR SPANGLE. Yes. A bright young woman like you? You could go far with just a little bit of guidance. So, what do you think? I could be your mentor.
LUCIA. Well…it sounds okay.
STAR SPANGLE. Super! (*beat)* Are you pregnant?
LUCIA. Yes. I'm due in two months.
STAR SPANGLE. No problem! We can deal with that. Does your boyfriend work? Or husband? Sorry, I shouldn't presume.
LUCIA. *(shrugs)* I have an ex. I'm on my own.

STAR SPANGLE. Well, I came around just in time! Here's my card. And my cell phone number. I'm a certified mentor with Women Rising. Such a great group. We'll have our first meeting at the office, and get it set up officially. Okay? This is thrilling! So much to do, such heights to climb!
LUCIA. Thank you.
STAR SPANGLE. A couple of pointers, Lucia. It's time to cut your hair. And spiff up your clothes. We don't want you looking like you just walked over the border, do we? You probably speak Spanish at work. Time to stop. And take up some American thing. Meet a nice American crowd. What do you like to do for fun?
LUCIA. I like to dance. Danzon.
STAR SPANGLE. What in Sam Hill is that?
LUCIA. It's lovely. It's a dance we do in Veracruz. With partners. Here, I'll demonstrate/
(Danzon music plays and Lucia dances for a few beats.)
STAR SPANGLE. Whoa! It looks very *(beat*) foreign. Maybe you can take up something a bit more American? Learn about our culture. Swing dance!
LUCIA. I see.
STAR SPANGLE. We'll work on your hair, and your accent, and your clothes! Classes in English, practice in workplace behavior. Birth control, and our own charm school! Sit, stand, laugh, and small talk. Call me. Tootles for now!
(Referee, Santa Lucia and Star Spangle enter the shadow ring and circle. CHORUS enters.)
CHORUS.
2-Oh how exciting!
1-It's mind-control
2-How many girls would just swoon
1-Being tied into a strait jacket
2-For a chance like this
1-It's soul killing
2-Nice, decent clothes
1-Window dressing
2-A new do

1-Wasting her precious time
2-Elocution lessons
1-She talks just fine
2-And charming manners
1-Just to keep her in her place
2-She'll go far
1-She won't know who she is
2-They'll take the Mexican out of her
1-And leave an empty shell
2-What a lucky girl
1-What abuse
2-A nice good girl
1-Frozen in girlhood.
(Star Spangle knocks Santa Lucia down. Lucia staggers, slumps, and sags, clutching her medal. All exit but Lucia.)
REFEREE. Round three to Star Spangle!

SCENE 3

It's 2011. Light changes to daylight. CHORUS enters as women experiencing homelessness. One lies on the bus stop bench and the other sits on the ground, leaning against the bench. Lucia enters with a 'polished' look, her hair up. She stops walking when she sees them. The CHORUS sitting on the ground scrabbles for a cardboard sign and an empty paper coffee cup, and holds up the sign for Lucia to see. 'Anything helps. God Bless.' CHORUS stares mutely at Lucia, who fishes in her pocket for a bill and puts it in the cup CHORUS holds out. The CHORUS on the bench wakes, stretches, and sits up to look at Lucia. Lucia stands waiting for the bus, looking away from CHORUS.

CHORUS.
(alternating lines)
(to each other) She's afraid she's just like us.
Even though she got herself a new suit.

Put her hair up.
But she's still the same woman.
She's still worried about her options.
For when she can't pay the rent.
Where will she go?
She'll come here. With us.
She has no money saved.
Better with us than alone
On the street.
(as Sirens) Come dear, come with us.
No more expectations.
The new clothes won't help.
We can see right through you.
The desperation, the stink of fear.
Come with us.
We just are.
Just be.
Just be.
You'll see.
You'll end with us.
You'll see.
We're waiting.
(CHORUS holds out their arms toward Lucia, who turns away. CHORUS exits, ominously singing 'Pop Goes the Weasel' twice or three times.)
CHORUS.
All around the mulberry bush,
The monkey chased the weasel.
The monkey stopped to pull up his sock,
Pop! goes the weasel.
(Light becomes office morning. Lucia stands near the visitor's chair in front of a desk. BOSS enters with a laptop. They shake hands.)
BOSS. Hello, Ms. Beltran! Welcome! I'm Boss, the housing advocacy supervisor. Please, have a seat.
LUCIA. Thank you so much for changing the time for the interview, Ms. Boss. I don't have childcare yet.

BOSS. Perfectly fine! We have childcare here for our employees, if you get the job, that is.
LUCIA. Oh, that's wonderful! I hope I do. Get it.
BOSS. We'll see! So, about us. We get women, children, and families into stable housing. The people who are our 'boots on the ground' as we call them, are the housing advocates. That would be your position. You'll work with your assigned number of families to get them into their own apartments, and do what it takes to keep them there. Finding jobs, getting medical or mental health treatment, finding childcare, getting their child support payments, signing up for health insurance, making arrangements to pay off debt, whatever it is.
LUCIA. What a great program.
BOSS. Yes, it is. We have an outstanding track record. Most of our women get jobs, and go to school, and get childcare, and graduate from our program in under two years. They pay for their own apartments then. Stability. That's what we promote here.
LUCIA. Stability.
BOSS. Now, what about you? Why did you apply for this job?
LUCIA. It's because of the people I see living on the street. They're everywhere. And at the hotel where I clean. Sometimes homeless people stay there for a few nights, at the beginning of the month when they get their social security checks. Just to have a safe place to sleep for a while. But they never have enough for more than a few nights. They can't save for an apartment. Then they go back to the streets. And because, I've been homeless too.
BOSS. Great! That's what we're looking for! Women with a personal experience of homelessness, who fought back and won! And that's what our donors want to see in our employees. People who have overcome adversity. So, what's your story?
(Star Spangle and Santa Lucia enter and begin circling Lucia, speaking in counterpoint.)
STAR SPANGLE. Now's your chance! Go heavy on all the pitiful stuff. The bad boyfriend. The times he hit you. The illegitimate child. The terrible jobs. The greedy landlords. *(leans in, coaxing, almost persuasive)* Let her be your savior. That's what works. That's what people want.

SANTA LUCIA. ¡Muestra tu fuerza, Lucía! Se necesita tener valor para ser inmigrante. Cuéntale tus sueños y sobre el consejo vecinal.
(Lucia exhales, her voice steady.)
LUCIA. *(to Boss)* I lived with my boyfriend until he beat me. *(beat)* I slept in my car for a while. Then I lived in a shelter with my baby until I could rent a room. *(Star Spangle and Santa Lucia exit. Star Spangle punches the air in victory.)*
BOSS. You show real grit, Ms. Beltran. Congratulations! You've got the job. Come in tomorrow at nine and we'll introduce you at our board meeting. Work on fleshing out your homeless story, lots more detail. And your bootstrap recovery. Make it a real down and outer, okay? Then a soaring conclusion. They'll love it. We'll get our PR person on your story, too. News releases! Newsletter! Donor appeal!
LUCIA. (*jumps up in excitement*) Really! Thank you so much! I'm going to be a good housing advocate! I'll work hard.
BOSS. That's the spirit! Now that you've accepted the job, I can ask. (*in a stage whisper*) Do you have papers?
LUCIA. Um (*beat*) I applied for the U visa, but it takes a long time/
BOSS. No worries! I'm sure you will, one of these days. We've got health insurance for our employees, and for their dependents. Paid time off. Help with tuition if you decide to go to school. A savings plan. Well, that's it. Until tomorrow, Ms. Beltran. And welcome to our team!
LUCIA. Thank you! One other thing. You're Latina, right?
BOSS. Yes. Why do you want to know?
LUCIA. Can we speak Spanish together?
BOSS. No. I'm sure you'd like to improve your English, right? Besides, we don't want to shut out the others, now do we? *(Boss shakes hands with Lucia, and exits.)*
LUCIA.
I got the job! Now everything can begin.
An apartment of my own. And childcare for Angelica!
Doctor visits, better clothes, and maybe school at last.
I'll study politics! And economics/
(Danzón music begins to play. Santa Lucia enters. She dances with Lucia. Star Spangle enters. The music grinds to a halt.)

STAR SPANGLE. Whoa! Not so fast! Let's focus on the task at hand, Laura—I mean, Lucia! (*she smacks her gloves together)* A night class or two to improve your English—that's the way to go. (*leaning in*)
And now you see what fixing yourself up can do? I'm not angling for credit, but boy oh boy, I think it did the trick. (*looking at Lucia with approval*) That and charm school—to polish up your presentation.
SANTA LUCIA. ¡Qué! Se trata de tu mérito. (*inserting herself between Lucia and Star Spangle)*
Escuchaste al jefe. Admira tu determinación y tu deseo de ayudar a las personas a encontrar una vivienda.
STAR SPANGLE. What did she say? Never mind! Whatever she said, bull snot! *(to Lucia*) You look the part. Pure and simple. Next—swing dance classes! We'll have you looking and moving like an American.
SANTA LUCIA. Entraste en el consejo vecinal. Puedes ser presidente del comité de vivienda. Se acerca una vacante.
STAR SPANGLE. Did I hear her say 'president'? *(snorts*) Horse pitooty! You've got to earn your place! You've got dues to pay, Laura—I mean Lucia. (*stepping closer, imparting a confidence*) This politics stuff is a waste of time.
SANTA LUCIA. ¡Concéntrate en lo importante, Lucía! Tus sueños.
LUCIA. Argg! (*clutches her head*) I can't think with all this noise. Just go! *(Star Spangle and Santa Lucia both shrug, and exit to the shadow boxing ring. Referee enters. The fighters box—it's a stand-off.)*
REFEREE. Round four. A draw.

SCENE 4

Danzon music begins softly, then swells. It's 2005. Lucia listens. CHORUS enters and dresses her in the red dress and heels. DANCER ONE enters, in the white pants, white shoes, white hat, and white overshirt of a danzon dancer in Veracruz. Lucia dances a complete danzon with him, then they bow to the audience. Off stage, a male announcer speaks.
ANNOUNCER. (*off stage)* Y los ganadores de la competencia bailarina de 2005 *son* (*drum roll*) Lucia Beltran y Mario Delgado!

(Applause and cheers. DANCER TWO enters and presents Lucia with a sheaf of red roses, bows, and exits. Lucia and DANCER ONE bow again to the audience.)
LUCIA. ¡Muchísimas gracias a todos! Gracias.
ANNOUNCER. ¡Y ahora, a la competencia estatal en Veracruz!
(Applause and cheers. DANCER ONE exits. POLICE CHIEF enters, swaggering.)
POLICE CHIEF. Baila bien, senorita.
LUCIA. Gracias, senor jefe.
POLICE CHIEF. (*taking her hand*) Bailamos?
(Lucia nods, but she's uncertain. A danzon plays as the Police Chief leads. After a while, he's dancing far too close for traditional danzon, and he's roughly pulling her into the moves. She resists as he nuzzles her neck, she pushes him away, and slaps him. The music grinds to a stop. The CHIEF stands with his hand to his cheek.)
POLICE CHIEF. Pagaras por eso, zorra.
(Police Chief exits. Star Spangle and Santa Lucia shadow box; it's a stand-off. They exit.)
REFEREE. Round five. Draw!
(CHORUS enters and circles Lucia as they speak.)
CHORUS. (alternating lines)
Our beautiful Lucia
Pride of the whole town
But she shamed him
He deserved it!
In front of everybody
If we had any courage
Which we don't!
We would have stood up for her
But we don't know how
We are cowards
We are afraid
She could bring a complaint
HaHaHaHa!
HaHaHaHa!

LUCIA

That's crazy
We could demonstrate
But we'd be targeted
She should have let him kiss her
And rape her too?
He is the jefe
He's in control
She could have played along
She could pretend nothing had happened
Like we all do
But she didn't
She shamed him
What's she going to do?
Her future here is over
She could move to the big city
But her school is here
No one will come to it now
She has no money
No work
No friends
A mother to support
What will she do?
(Lucia shooes the CHORUS away. They run off the stage. Lucia touches her medal. She lifts a plastic jug with water. She walks in place, and as she walks, she gets visibly more tired. We hear the hissing of snakes disturbed in the stillness of the desert at noon, a hot wind, and the shifting of sand. Lighting creates the desert around her: bare but for the movement of snakes at her feet, the sand on which she stands, and the stark bright bare mountains behind her. She drinks from the jug. When the water is gone, she tries for a few last drops, then lets the jug drop from her hands. She keeps walking. It's clearly very hot and the sun blinds her. She walks. She seems to weave. She stands facing the audience, swaying, with an unseeing look. She is mute. Her internal dialogue is spoken by a woman's voice, off stage.)

WOMAN'S VOICE. *(off stage)*
He estado caminando tanto tiempo.
No hay sombra.
Ni agua.
Incluso mis pensamientos estan secos.
Camino hacia el norte.
De veras?
No estoy segura ahora.
Que deje atras?
No recuerdo.
A donde voy?
No se.
Soy una criatura como otras criaturas, aqui en el desierto.
Aqui.
Ahora. *(Lucia faints. The CHORUS enters and circles, then ministers to Lucia, shading her and giving her water.)*
CHORUS.
2-Should we save her?
1-Of course we should
2-Why should we?
1-She's a creature, like other creatures.
2-She's got so much suffering ahead
1-You never know
2-She's illegal
1-She's a human being
2-She'll be poor and despised
1-She's got stamina
2-Why does she matter?
1-You never know
2-She's got so much suffering ahead
1-You never know
2-She'll be poor and despised
1-She's got stamina
2-All right then
1-All right then

(CHORUS picks up and carries Lucia to a bench and deposit her there. They exit. A few beats, then Santa Lucia enters with a gallon jug of water. She sits on the bench with Lucia. Lucia lies still for a few beats, then slowly stirs. Santa Lucia helps her sit up and drink from the jug.)
LUCIA. Estás aquí. No pensé que pudieras seguirme hasta aquí.
SANTA LUCIA. No importa a dónde vayas, yo estaré contigo.
LUCIA. (a few beats) Pero voy a tener una nueva vida/
SANTA LUCIA. La vieja vida siempre viaja contigo.
LUCIA. Eso es lo que temo. ¡Lo dejé atrás!
(Lucia then gets up and trudges on. Star Spangle enters. She sits on another bench and waves, brightly.)
STAR SPANGLE. Well, hello there! Boy, have we got some work for you, little lady! Come on in! *(Lucia walks towards Star Spangle, as Star Spangle retreats, backwards, and exits. Lucia stops walking. Glaring desert noon changes to office florescent.)*

THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—ORDER A COPY AT WWW.NEXTSTAGEPRESS.COM