THE TAMALERA'S DAUGHTER

Or The Mesquite Tree: an American Tragedy

By
David Davila

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for all the women in my family who have had to be strong

THE TAMALERA'S DAUGHTER

The Tamalera's Daughter, or The Mesquite Tree: an American Tragedy was originally produced by Teatro Audaz at the San Pedro Playhouse in San Antonio, TX in July of 2022 *(Laura T. Garza, Artistic Director)*. The production was directed by Vanessa Rae Lerma with set design by Esther Burton and Celeste Lozano, lighting design by Larry Martinez, costume design by Celeste Lozano, sound design by Axa Soria, and dramaturgy by Lexi Silva. The original cast was as follows:

Manuela……..Cindy Rodriguez-Martinez
Fatima…….Elise Lopez
Blanca……..…Laura T. Garza
Carmel…..…….Anastacia Islas
Suzy……..…..Elizabeth Raquel Ramirez
Destiny……...Alejandra Wagnon

The Tamalera's Daughter was developed through The PlayGround Experiment in Manhattan *(Mike Lesser, Artistic Director)* and Indiana University in Bloomington *(developmental workshops directed by Lauren Diesch, dramaturgy by Lexi Silva)*.

CAST: 6 Women

MANUELA	80, Latina
FATIMA	63, Latina, Manuela's daughter
BLANCA	47, Latina, Fatima's daughter
CARMEL	31, Latina, Blanca's eldest daughter
SUZY	19, Latina, Blanca's youngest daughter
DESTINY	15, Carmel's daughter
LILLY	a newborn, Suzy's daughter *(not played by an actual baby)*

TIME: The 2020's, or possibly today.
PLACE: The Rio Grande Valley in South Texas.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: The dialogue should be hyper-real, chaotic, and fast, until it is not; until the women cannot bear to speak about the things they have spent their lives avoiding. In those moments, the silences become caverns they cannot cross.

THE TAMALERA'S DAUGHTER

ACT 1
SCENE 1

South Texas. A cluttered, claustrophobic, yet clean kitchen / living room of a poor Chicana family. Linoleum floor's peeling. Walls need painting. A small table serves as both a kitchen island and a place to eat. None of the chairs match. The couch and the recliner have seen better days. Dozens of crucifixes and a framed holographic poster of "The Last Supper" hang proudly on the wall. A busted screen door leads to a drive-way. A Spanish-language reality competition blasts as FATIMA, a Latina woman, sixty-three, cooks rice and beans on the stove. She heats up a tortilla on the comal, all while trying to see what's happening on TV. MANUELA, an eighty year old Chicana woman with advanced type 2 diabetes who recently survived a stroke and pneumonia, sits motionless on the recliner breathing from an oxygen tank. DESTINY, a fifteen year old girl who looks twenty-two, sits on the couch texting. She seems terribly concerned about something... but what?

FATIMA. What did he say? *(Destiny ignores her, distracted.)* ¿Qué dijo? *(Destiny continues to text.)* Mijita! Hello! ¿Qué dijo? Destiny Ramirez!
DESTINY. *(Half-heartedly.)* What?
FATIMA. What did he say? I can't see from here?
DESTINY. Who?!
FATIMA. Ay!! Miguelito! What did he say about their polka?
DESTINY. What?
FATIMA. Selma and Victor's polka!
DESTINY. Huh?
FATIMA. Cabróna! The show!
DESTINY. Uh, I dunno. I'm not watching.

FATIMA. Turn it up!
DESTINY. Huh?
FATIMA. Sùbe! *(Destiny begrudgingly gets up off the couch and turns up the volume till it is obnoxiously loud. It's funky dance show music interspersed with Spanish language reality TV banter and commercials. She crosses over to Fatima and kisses her on the cheek, trying to hide what's troubling her. She can't really.)*
DESTINY. *(Disgusted.)* Mamatima!! Aros con pollo again? *(She crosses to the cupboard.)*
FATIMA. With the left-over carne guisada. Are you hungry? *(She puts a tortilla on the comal.)*
DESTINY. Who ate all the hot cheetos?
FATIMA. Your grandmother! I swear her skin is gonna turn red!
DESTINY. She's not supposed to be eating those.
FATIMA. You just want them all to yourself.
DESTINY. Didn't the doctor say?
FATIMA. Hiatal hernia. Same as me. You'll prob'ly get it too one day, way you eat. Have a tortilla! *(She hands Destiny a tortilla which she devours while texting nervously.)* M'ija! Don't you want any butter? Ay dios, you're going to choke. And you wonder why you're so fat! Chingao! What did he tell them? Were they good or bad?
DESTINY. I dunno.
FATIMA. Ay he's sooo handsome!
DESTINY. I'm going to Criselda's. *(Destiny exits to her bedroom.)*
FATIMA. Sit down Gorda, you need a real meal.
DESTINY. *(Off-stage.)* I'll eat at Cris'!
FATIMA. What?
DESTINY. *(Off-stage.)* Chriselda's! *(Fatima moves to see the TV up-close, while simultaneously watching the tortilla.)*
FATIMA. Talk to me over here! *(Beat.)* Ah the slow-motion replay! Andale Victor! Andale! Ay Victor! Come on! Come on! Damn he can move! That one! Perfecto! What?! That should have been all tens!
MANUELA. [Groaning.]
DESTINY. *(Returning, wearing something too sexy for a fifteen-year-old that she's not comfortable in at all. Her body has grown faster than her*

self-esteem.) You need a hearing aid. I'll eat at Criselda's. *(She grabs another tortilla.)*
FATIMA. Otra vez? Your grandma's not going to like that chica.
DESTINY. Mom said I could.
FATIMA. *(Calling for someone in another room.)* Carmel! Carmel!
DESTINY. She's on the phone.
FATIMA. Carmel!!! *(To Destiny.)* Get some butter m'ija.
DESTINY. I like mayo. *(She opens the fridge and grabs a jar of mayo, then spreads some on her tortilla.)*
FATIMA. Victor's gonna win the whole thing I'm sure of it! Carmel!!!!
CARMEL. *(Off-stage.)* I'm on the phone!
FATIMA. Your daughter is leaving again!
DESTINY. She's on the phone!
FATIMA. Carmel! Carmel! *(To Destiny.)* M'ija that's disgusting!
DESTINY. Ma'huela used to eat it like this.
FATIMA. That's why she's got diabetes. Ah chingatho I almost forgot, it's time for her shot and your grandmother's still not home. *(A baby begins to cry from off-stage.)* Ah no! The baby's awake already!
DESTINY. *(Annoyed.)* Suzy, shut her up!
FATIMA. What time is it?
DESTINY. Seven thirty-something.
FATIMA. And Blanca still hasn't called?
DESTINY. No.
FATIMA. ¿No hago lo suficiente? I'm too tired to be giving Mom her shots. She better have brought the avocados she promised me.
DESTINY. Ten bucks says she didn't.
FATIMA. Còme m'ija. Còme! You're not eating at Criselda's. They can't even pay the rent over there. *(She lowers the temperature on the stove tops, takes all the tortillas off the comal, wipes her hands on her apron and takes it off, then fixes Destiny a plate of food and puts it on the table. Destiny sits and eats.)* Hey! Did you say grace? *(Destiny prays silently. Fatima opens the cabinets and takes out a plastic bag filled with pills, bottles, and syringes. She begins to prepare an insulin shot as she shouts off.)* Dinner's ready! Carmel! Suzy! Dinner! *(CARMEL, a gorgeous Latina woman, thirty-one years old, enters dressed to kill. She is putting on*

earrings, lipstick, eye-liner, and shoes in a rush while talking on her cell phone.)
CARMEL. *(Into phone.)* Uh huh. No, he'll be here any minute. I know I said I could, but it's too late. No, Saturday I have a date; girl.
FATIMA. Your daughter's leaving!
CARMEL. *(Into phone.)* I can work your Monday if you take my Thursday. *(To Destiny.)* Where are you going?
DESTINY. /Just to Criselda's.
CARMEL. *(Into phone.)* /I can't be there that early. No. I really can't. No, on Sundays I have to take the bus, and the bus doesn't start until nine on Sundays. *(To Fatima.)* Can she go to Criselda's?
FATIMA. She's your daughter.
CARMEL. *(Into phone.)* No. No Tony's busy. I can switch for Monday but that's it girl. Please. *(To Fatima.)* Where's mom? *(Into phone.)* /No. You're gonna make me late.
FATIMA. /She was stopping at the store.
CARMEL. *(To Destiny.)* Are you spending the night?
DESTINY. Probably.
CARMEL. Take your tooth brush. *(Into phone.)* I gotta go girl. No. No, I can't do it. It's too late girl bye. *(Destiny runs to get her toothbrush. Carmel hangs up.)*
FATIMA. Dinner Baby.
CARMEL. Aros con pollo again?
FATIMA. Your favorite.
CARMEL. Used to be.
FATIMA. Wanna plate?
CARMEL. Mamatima! I've got a date. *(Destiny returns.)*
DESTINY. Tony?
FATIMA. Ay no! I don't like that guy.
CARMEL. Toothbrush? *(Destiny shows Carmel her toothbrush.)*
FATIMA. He doesn't even go to church.
CARMEL. He makes up for it in other ways grandma! Not everyone has to go to church to be a good person you know!
FATIMA. Bueno, but you been missing church too.
CARMEL. I have the brunch shifts now.

FATIMA. Then you need to go on Saturday nights. *(She holds a loaded syringe and crosses towards Manuela, then gives her her shot.)*
CARMEL. Okay grandma. I will.
FATIMA. No excuses.
CARMEL. I will.
FATIMA. Mamà! ¿Estás despierta?
MANUELA. [Groaning.]
DESTINY. Are you going to marry him?
CARMEL. Excuse me if I want to have a little fun now that you're all grown up. *(Carmel motions to Destiny's body. Destiny covers herself. The baby off-stage continues to cry. Destiny has lost her appetite and puts her plate on the counter.)* You were never as fussy as that brat though. How do I look?
DESTINY. Easy.
CARMEL. Don't get smart with me.
FATIMA. Okay Mom, let's go to bed.
MANUELA. [Groaning.]
CARMEL. Oh, shit. Where did I leave my keys? *(Carmel exits to her room. Fatima gets Manuela out of the recliner. She's having a hard time.)*
FATIMA. Destiny?! *(Destiny begrudgingly helps her great-grandmother lift her great-great grandmother.)*
MANUELA. [Groaning.]
FATIMA. Yo sé Mamá, yo se. Come on. *(She helps Manuela to her bedroom with a walker. They exit.)*
DESTINY. Okay, I'm going then. Bye Mom. *(She heads towards the screen door just as BLANCA, Latina, forty-six, enters in scrubs.)*
BLANCA. Where do you think you're going young lady, it's eight o'clock?
DESTINY. To Criselda's.
BLANCA. On a school night?
DESTINY. Mom said I could.
BLANCA. I don't think so. You should have asked me.
DESTINY. *(Rolling her eyes.)* Tsk...
BLANCA. Don't give me that. Not with that progress report. Help me with these groceries. *(Destiny unwillingly helps with the groceries. Blanca puts grocery bags on the counter and starts unpacking them. When Destiny is*

done she exits quickly while Blanca isn't looking.) It was too crowded at H-E-B, I swear we need one on this side of town. Ever since Vasquez Supermarket closed I have to go all the way to Trenton Road. It's just not right. And the traffic over there is terrible. *(She notices Destiny is gone and runs out the screen door after her. Off-stage.)* Destiny! Destiny! *(She re-enters just as Carmel does.)*

CARMEL. Did you get any sour cream?

BLANCA. What is she doing?

CARMEL. Who?

BLANCA. Your daughter.

CARMEL. She's just going to Criselda's.

BLANCA. It's eight o'clock.

CARMEL. It's seven thirty, and it's just down the street.

BLANCA. *(Sternly.)* She's fifteen! You can't just let her go out on a school night Carmel.

CARMEL. Cállate! It's not a big deal Mom. Why are you freaking out?

BLANCA. Because we need to keep this from escalating into something that we can't undo.

CARMEL. Like what?

BLANCA. You know like what. Turn down the TV.

CARMEL. Oh please, like you ever cared about where we were at that age.

BLANCA. Exactly, you should learn from my mistakes. She's failing almost every class.

CARMEL. God, would you drop it with the stupid grades! Nobody cares about her stupid grades. School is a waste of time anyway.

BLANCA. You better not be talking like that around her. Do you understand me?!

CARMEL. That's the secret no one tells you you know? You spend your whole life learning all this pinche math and chemistry. Chemistry! Nobody needs chemistry, what do we learn that shit for?

BLANCA. I'm gonna wash your mouth out, cabróna.

CARMEL. What do we need it for?

BLANCA. How do you think they make medicine; vaccines?!

CARMEL. You think Destiny is gonna make vaccines?

BLANCA. She could!
CARMEL. Oh my God. Don't be so naive Mom.
BLANCA. I'm not. I'm serious. She could be a pharmacist if she wants. They have one at every H-E-B and every Walgreens too. Somebody's gotta do that.
CARMEL. Destiny?
BLANCA. Why not?
CARMEL. The pharmacists don't even make those medicines, they just put them in little bottles.
BLANCA. School is important.
CARMEL. School is just public babysitting.
BLANCA. One way or another she's gotta be able to support herself in the real world and that means making some kind of living.
CARMEL. But what's a *living* though? If I hadn't been wasting away my years at school *I could have been* living you know? All of us could have been living!
BLANCA. What, walking the streets getting in trouble?
CARMEL. Well school didn't do me any better!
BLANCA. Obviously.
CARMEL. I could have climbed that mesquite tree in the back lot out there!
BLANCA. You're scared of heights!
CARMEL. I should have! Why didn't I ever climb that pinche tree?
BLANCA. Mesquite trees have spinas.
CARMEL. God, you're such a buzz kill.
BLANCA. No one climbs mesquite trees Carmel.
CARMEL. They make you waste your young years to teach you shit no one needs to know!
BLANCA. Watch your mouth!
CARMEL. Damn. I should have climbed that tree.
BLANCA. The TV is too loud!
CARMEL. No one needs that stuff.
BLANCA. People use that stuff Carmel! That's how they invent computers and um... microwaves! Some people do something with their lives you know! Grades matter when you need a job.

CARMEL. *(Laughing.)* Not a god damn/
BLANCA. /Don't you use the Lord's name in vain!
CARMEL. /single manager has ever asked me what my grades were in school.
BLANCA. She won't graduate if she's failing!
CARMEL. Who /cares?
BLANCA. /Mamà! I'm home.
CARMEL. Stupidity is actually an advantage in the food service industry, you know?
BLANCA. Where's your grandmother?
CARMEL. Managers are always the stupidest.
BLANCA. *(Calling off.)* Mamà!
CARMEL. She was helping Ma'huela to bed.
BLANCA. You mean I don't have to do it for once?
CARMEL. Surprise, surprise.
BLANCA. She used to be such a good student. What happened to her? God. *(She finishes with the groceries and turns off the TV, then stares into space, intently. It is suddenly very quiet in the house.)* What happened?
CARMEL. *(Snapping her compact shut to break the silence.)* She got smart.
BLANCA. She was always smart!
CARMEL. She's sharing a room with a dying old woman/
BLANCA. /My Ma'huela is not dying! Okay? Have some respect.
CARMEL. /and she babysits her little cousin half of the week. What do you think happened to her?
BLANCA. *(Crossing to the stove and making herself a plate.)* Well maybe she should switch rooms with Mom. I can look after her better if she's with me.
CARMEL. Good luck getting Mamatima to switch.
BLANCA. She used to sing. Remember when she used to sing?
CARMEL. Thank God she doesn't sing anymore.
BLANCA. She was such a good singer. Ugh. What was that song she used to sing?
CARMEL. I don't know.

BLANCA. Ugh. It was so beautiful. What happened? *(Beat.)* You don't think we should put her on birth control do you?
CARMEL. Jesus Mom. You never put me on no birth control. Oooofff... if Matima found them? Ay no! Get a grip.
BLANCA. We don't know what she's doing out there.
CARMEL. At Criseldas?
BLANCA. That whole family is a bad influence. *(She sits to eat.)*
CARMEL. They could say the same about us.
BLANCA. *(Noticing that Carmel is dressed to kill.)* And where the hell are you going?
CARMEL. Out.
BLANCA. And who is going to watch your daughter?
CARMEL. She's spending the night down the street!
BLANCA. And if she wasn't? You just expect that we're all going to raise your child while you live it up /around town?
CARMEL. /She's fifteen! She can take care of herself!
BLANCA. She practically does /you go out every night.
CARMEL. /Cállate! I do everything for my /daughter, don't give me that.
BLANCA. /No wonder her grades are sinking. You need to shape up and help her Carmel!
CARMEL. Oh, cause you helped me so much, calm down! *(SUZY, a nineteen-year-old Latina, enters in sweat-pants holding her infant daughter, LILLY, under a blanket.)*
SUZY. Can y'all shut up? I just got the baby to sleep!
CARMEL. And I do help her. I make more at the restaurant than you'll ever make at that Nursing Home, Mom, so there's no way you can win this argument. *(Blanca is defeated.)*
SUZY. You better have gotten hot cheetos!
BLANCA. In the cupboard.
SUZY. Make me a plate.
BLANCA. Give me a second will you?
SUZY. I've got the baby!
BLANCA. I said give me a second!
SUZY. *(Suzy and Carmel look at each other.)* Fine. I need to pee anyway. *(Seeing Carmel.)* Where are *you* going?

CARMEL. Tony's taking me to Blackbeard's.
SUZY. Oh /shit.
BLANCA. /All the way on the island?
SUZY. Someone's getting lucky tonight.
BLANCA. Carmel Maria Gonzales you better not get in the car with any drunk drivers do you understand me?
CARMEL. Mom, Tony's not like that.
FATIMA. *(Re-entering.)* Ay no. Mother's having a rough day today. Did you bring me aguacate?
BLANCA. Ah chingao, se me olvido.
FATIMA. ¿Otra vez?
SUZY. Grandma, can you hold Lilly for me for a second? I need to pee. *(She gives Lilly to Fatima and exits in a hurry. A horn honks.)*
FATIMA. Ay /que chula mijita!
CARMEL. /That's my ride. How do I look?
FATIMA. Perfecto!
CARMEL. Thanks!
FATIMA. Not you!
CARMEL. Come on, he's waiting!
BLANCA. You look slutty.
CARMEL. I was going for divine, pero like... I'll take it.
BLANCA. He can't even get off the car? What a gentleman.
CARMEL. Don't wait up!
BLANCA. We need to talk about your daughter!
CARMEL. My daughter will be fine. She has her whole future ahead of her. I'm the one that needs to live a little for a change. My life is slipping away. Don't wait up. *(She exits excitedly.)*
FATIMA. Ay Dios, I haven't been to the island since Carmel was still a baby. Remember your Kevin took us and she made those sandcastles?
BLANCA. I don't want her to end up like Carmel... or Suzy... or any of us. I almost got Suzy *out* of it.
FATIMA. Mi'ja there was no hope for Suzy.
BLANCA. ... almost.
FATIMA. We're lucky she got her G.E.D.
BLANCA. She was never good in school, but I *almost* got her out though.

FATIMA. Out of what? Your daughters are strong women mijita. We raised 'em good.
BLANCA. Hm. They're strong as hell, but I don't know if they're good.
FATIMA. What a beautiful baby you are!
BLANCA. You know, I ran into Yvette Escamilla the other day.
FATIMA. Your friend from school?
BLANCA. She's vice president of some big company up in Dallas.
FATIMA. Ay, que fancy! Is she rich?
BLANCA. I don't know Mom, but she's definitely not struggling. Destiny is smart though. She could be a radiologist.
FATIMA. I told you to go back to school Blanca!
BLANCA. It's too late for me.
FATIMA. N'ombre m'ija.
BLANCA. And who would buy the groceries?
FATIMA. She sort of looks like you, I guess. Like you, and a little bit like your Papà.
BLANCA. I hope not, cause he was ugly.
FATIMA. Good for nothing but *not* ugly. Hijole, I don't know what it is, I just can't seem to bond with this baby.
BLANCA. Ay Mamà! Don't say that, she's your great-grand-daughter!
FATIMA. Pos maybe it loses something as the generations go on.
BLANCA. You connected with Destiny just fine.
FATIMA. Ah si. Pos maybe I'm just getting old. But at least I have you all here. That's all I want!
BLANCA. I could have been a radiologist.
FATIMA. *(Turning to the television and noticing it's off.)* Òrale, why'd you turn off my show?
BLANCA. Gimme a break. I just wanna relax Ma.
FATIMA. Then you shouldn't have had daughters. I cook and clean so I get to watch what I wanna watch!
BLANCA. Ay Dios, you're such a baby! *(Fatima walks over to the television and turns it back on. The noise is shockingly loud. Lilly wakes up and starts crying.)* Jesùs y Marìa, turn it down!

FATIMA. Chingao! I missed the dance-off! (*She doesn't turn down the TV, but the volume lowers anyway... as lights begin to change on stage to signify that Blanca is traveling deep into her thoughts.)*
BLANCA. *(Beat.)* I don't want Destiny to end up like us. She's gotta be the one who gets out of here Mom... *(Fatima ignores her.)* Mamà!
FATIMA. You need to learn to be content with what you have. Talking like this is sinful.
BLANCA. Sure Mom.
FATIMA. Ah no; she's spitting up. Suzy! Suzy! Where *is* this girl?
BLANCA. It's in her name! Destiny! She's made for something bigger than just this. I know she is. *(As the big finale of the dance competition begins, the sound becomes hypnotic and transforms into something melancholy and nostalgic. Blanca's in a daze.)* I almost got Suzy out. Almost. Almost. I almost got her out. *(In an instant the entire stage is flooded with purple light.* ***We are in the past.)*** Almost… *(Fatima gets up and starts moving about the stage in beautifully choreographed devised movements, while still holding Lilly. Suzy enters.)*
SUZY. So then stupid Thomas with the nasty tooth raises his hand and Mrs. Perales is like, pissed right?
BLANCA. Don't say pissed.
SUZY. What am I supposed to say? Pee'd?
BLANCA. Don't say anything that sounds dirty, Ma'huela has a cow.
SUZY. So Thomas said 'Are you wearing a bra under there?'
BLANCA. He did not! That is so rude.
SUZY. Yeah, now he gets to see Mrs. Reyes twice a week. It's not fair. I love seeing Mrs. Reyes.
BLANCA. She's the guidance counselor?
SUZY. Yeah her office always smells like apples and she always has that rich-people candy you know, not the shitty kind.
BLANCA. Stop cussing.
SUZY. Sorry.
BLANCA. Maybe you should be a guidance counselor then.
SUZY. Like Mrs. Reyes? And like, talk to kids?
BLANCA. I don't see why not.
SUZY. Nah güey, I ain't smart like that.

BLANCA. I think one day you could be an amazing counselor. Maybe even get a Phd, and really help people.
SUZY. Yeah right.
BLANCA. I think so, Suze. I think you could.
SUZY. We can't afford all that.
BLANCA. So what? They have loans and stuff, and grants, right?
SUZY. For the smart kids Mom. Ya. Stop it already.
BLANCA. You're smart. You are. I believe it. *(In a daze again.)* I believe it. I do, I believe it. *(The stage is suddenly flooded in green light.* ***We are further into the past.*** *Suzy joins Fatima in the beautifully choreographed movements, as Manuela enters.)*
MANUELA. You're pregnant again?
BLANCA. He's a good man.
MANUELA. That's cause you don't see the way he acts when you're not around.
BLANCA. He's good with Carmel.
MANUELA. She doesn't even talk when he's around.
BLANCA. This is a blessing, this is a chance to start over.
MANUELA. ¡Cállate niña! She's turning into a woman. Why do you think a man wants to be around here?
BLANCA. Ma'huela, no. Don't go there. He treats us well. He's...
MANUELA. Does your mother know? *(Beat.)* Does your mother know she's going to be raising another baby? Does she know? *(The stage is suddenly flooded in blue light.* ***We are even further into the past.*** *Blanca watches as Manuela crosses towards Fatima who holds up the baby in her hands.)*
FATIMA. I'm too young to be an abuelita.
MANUELA. Ay, que bonita, como un prickly pear en the racho.
FATIMA. Carmel. That's too sexy for a baby.
MANUELA. Maybe she'll be a nun. We could use the blessings in this house. St. Jude, *por favor* hear my prayer, por favor make her a nun!
FATIMA. Maybe she will be. Maybe she will. Sister Carmel. *(They do the sign of the cross.* ***The stage is green once again.*** *Fatima continues the choreographed movements. Manuela turns to Blanca.)*

MANUELA. Does your mother know yet? *(Long pause. Blanca shakes her head in disappointment. Blanca dreams.)* Does your mother know? Does she know? Does she? (***The stage is purple once again.*** *Manuela and Suzy exit in their stylized choreography.)*
BLANCA. I believe it. I do. I believe it. I do. *(The lights go back to normal. Lilly cries, the TV is loud and Blanca looks around; her daze broken by a painful wail of an old woman. It's Manuela in the other room.)* Mom, Ma'huela's calling. *(Fatima sits with the baby on the couch, ignoring the wailing. Blanca shakes it off and goes back to putting away groceries. The wailing continues.)* Mom! *(Beat.)* Ma'huela! Ya voy! ¡Cálmate! *(She pauses on the groceries and exits to the bedroom as Fatima raises the volume again. Something happens on the TV and she cheers!)*
FATIMA. ¡Hijole! *(Blackout.)*

SCENE 2

The middle of the night. The kitchen is empty. Darkness except for perhaps a Maria Guadalupe night-light by the sink. After a few moments Suzy enters carrying Lilly who cries loudly.

SUZY. Shhhh! Shhh! *(Suzy coddles Lilly and tries to get her to sleep.)* Shut. Up! *(Lilly continues crying. She smells her diaper region. All clear.)* What do you want? Huh? Food? *(She sits at the table facing upstage and tries to breastfeed her. Lilly is not hungry.)* Jesus! ¿Que quires? Why are you doing this to me?!? *(She pats Lilly on the back and rocks her back and forth for a moment. Lilly stops. She continues rocking.)* Finally! *(She goes to the fridge and pulls out a Dr. Pepper and some hot cheetos. She sits at the table and starts eating. She gets out her phone and starts scrolling. She types all while continuously rocking Lilly.)* Is... anyone... up? *(Silence, then the sound of a car in the driveway. Headlights outside. Suzy notices and looks out the window.)* It's okay baby just sleep! *(The screen door opens and Destiny walks in. She's been crying.)*
DESTINY. *(Screaming.)* Agh/gh!
SUZY. /Shhhh! *(Lilly awakens again and cries even louder.)*
DESTINY. Oh my god!!

SUZY. Destiny you scared the shit out of me! / Shhhh. Shhh. Shhh.
DESTINY. *(Trying to calm down.)* I hate your fucking guts!
SUZY. Fine, you're not my favorite niece anymore.
DESTINY. Can you shut that baby up?
SUZY. Shhhhh. Shhhhhh. You could help me, you know.
DESTINY. It's your stupid baby.
SUZY. *(She notices that Destiny's been crying.)* What the hell happened to you?
DESTINY. What? Nothing.
SUZY. Aren't you supposed to be at your friends or something?
DESTINY. No.
SUZY. You guys have a fight?
DESTINY. It's none of your business.
SUZY. I always knew that girl was a bitch.
DESTINY. Criselda's not a bitch, okay?
SUZY. She kissed the boy you like?
DESTINY. Shut up, you don't know anything.
SUZY. She did, didn't she? The bitch.
DESTINY. She didn't do anything okay?
SUZY. Whatever. Tomorrow I'm gonna go down there and make that bitch sorry.
DESTINY. No you're not!
SUZY. What got into you?
DESTINY. Nothing. I'm going to sleep okay? *(Destiny crosses to the couch in the living room. Suzy continues to try to silence the baby.)*
SUZY. Without brushing your teeth?
DESTINY. I'm tired.
SUZY. Cochina!
DESTINY. I brushed already.
SUZY. Sure. Come on Lilly. Shhhhh. *(To Destiny.)* Hey! I'm gonna need you to watch Lilly tomorrow.
DESTINY. What? No.
SUZY. I wasn't asking. I need to get out of here. I'm suffocating. My friends are going to Noche Caliente!
DESTINY. So?

SUZY. So?! I'm gonna put on a slutty dress and find this baby a new daddy. And make Jacob jealous when he sees the posts.
DESTINY. Can you shut her up?!
SUZY. I'm trying!
DESTINY. Jesus Suzy!
SUZY. What the fuck? Just tell me what the fuck happened already so I can go kick some ass.
DESTINY. Nothing you can fix.
SUZY. You've never seen me in action.
DESTINY. ¡Cállate! She's gonna wake up Grandma Blanca.
SUZY. Lilly. Shhhh. God.
DESTINY. I fucked up.
SUZY. With Criselda? *(Beat.)* I'm sure she'll be fine.
DESTINY. Not with Criselda. With a guy.
SUZY. I knew there was a guy. There's always a guy. Is he cute?
DESTINY. Doesn't matter. He don't wanna see me no more.
SUZY. Fuck him. My new philosophy is that men are easy to come by. Just enjoy 'em while you can and move on. Shhhh.
DESTINY. Jesus Lilly.
SUZY. No woman in this house can keep a man anyway.
DESTINY. Yeah. When I get out of here I'm never coming back.
SUZY. Shhhh!
DESTINY. You gotta sing to her.
SUZY. You sing then.
DESTINY. Give her here. *(Suzy gives her the baby, and sings to her sweetly. Lilly immediately stops crying.)*
SUZY. Freedom! *(Blanca enters in the darkness in a half-sleep state and does seem to notice Destiny as Destiny hands the baby over to her and moves to the couch.)*
BLANCA. Some of us have to work in the morning, you know.
SUZY. God. Why did I even have her?
BLANCA. Don't say that.
SUZY. I don't even want her, Mom.
BLANCA. Don't you dare say that ever again. *(Beat.)* Do you hear me?
SUZY. I'm joking. Jesus.

BLANCA. Don't take the Lord's name in vain. *(Blanca finally notices Destiny.)* What are you doing here?
SUZY. She's trying to sleep.
BLANCA. Destiny! I'm talking to you.
DESTINY. What?
BLANCA. What are you doing here?
DESTINY. Nothing.
BLANCA. What happened?
DESTINY. Nothing happened.
BLANCA. Something happened or you wouldn't have come home.
DESTINY. Can you just leave me alone?
BLANCA. No!
SUZY. Just leave her alone Mom.
BLANCA. What happened to her? She told you?
SUZY. Nothing happened!
BLANCA. Did someone touch you?
SUZY. Mom! Don't talk like that!
BLANCA. Destiny! Did someone touch you?
DESTINY. ¡No abuela! Oh my God. I just wanna sleep. Okay?
SUZY. She didn't brush her teeth though.
BLANCA. Cochina! Get up right now and brush your teeth!
DESTINY. *(She gets up in frustration and exits to the bathroom.)* Ugh!
BLANCA. It's the middle of the night. What is she doing coming home in the middle of the night?
SUZY. High school drama.
BLANCA. What did she tell you?
SUZY. Literally nothing.
BLANCA. *(Handing Lilly over to Suzy.)* Put her to bed. I'm going back to sleep.
SUZY. *(She begrudgingly takes Lilly and sighs as she looks at her. Destiny reenters.)* I gotta get out of here.
DESTINY. Do you think it'll work?
SUZY. What?
DESTINY. Making Jacob jealous?
SUZY. Enough to want me in his bed again? Of course.

DESTINY. Enough to want Lilly though?
SUZY. *(Beat.)* No. *(Beat.)* You don't wanna go to your bed?
DESTINY. Ma'huela moans all night.
SUZY. Get a colcha or something.
DESTINY. I'm fine.
SUZY. I just want him to look at me that way again. Like he used to. *(Beat.)* Night. *(Suzy exits to the bedroom. In the quietness Destiny goes to a hallway closet and pulls out a pillow and blanket. She takes them to the couch and makes herself a bed. She gets in. She looks at her phone and cries. She wipes away her tears but continues to cry. She texts someone something and stares at the screen. Nothing. She stares. Nothing. Lights fade.)*

SCENE 3

The next morning. Lights up on Destiny staring at her phone. She stares and stares and stares. Nothing. Fatima is cooking breakfast.

FATIMA. ¿Cuantos quieres m'ija?
DESTINY. Just one.
FATIMA. No, no, you need to eat m'ija.
DESTINY. I don't feel like it.
FATIMA. You're gonna get hungry at school.
DESTINY. I'm not going to school.
FATIMA. ¿Por qué?!
DESTINY. I feel sick.
FATIMA. Oh no! Mi baby! *(She puts her hand on Destiny's forehead.)* Do you want soup?
DESTINY. I don't want anything. I don't feel good.
FATIMA. Ay pobrecita.
BLANCA. *(Entering.)* Who is pobrecita?
FATIMA. Destiny's sick.
BLANCA. Bull*shit*. She is not.
DESTINY. I'm not going to school.

BLANCA. I don't care if your arm was falling off, you *will* be getting dressed and going to school.
DESTINY. No I'm not.
FATIMA. She feels sick Blanca.
BLANCA. You don't get to decide whether you go to school or not. You will not waste away your education like your mother and your tia Suzy did.
DESTINY. I don't feel good.
FATIMA. How many tacos *you* want?
BLANCA. Are they small?
FATIMA. Po'si.
BLANCA. Three. Is this about last night? You don't wanna see Criselda or something?
DESTINY. No. I just don't feel good, okay? I just don't feel good.
BLANCA. If you had straight A's then maybe I would let you stay home, but you don't. You see how that works?
DESTINY. I'm doing fine at school. School is easy.
BLANCA. If it's so easy then why did Mrs. De la Garza call here last week about your progress report?
DESTINY. Because she's a bitch.
FATIMA. *(Bringing the tacos to the table.)* Mi'ja no digas eso.
BLANCA. You're upsetting my mother.
FATIMA. I'm not upset mi'ja. Eat Blanca. Eat.
DESTINY. I don't feel good.
BLANCA. Okay 'Feel-Good,' come over here. *(Destiny goes towards Blanca.)* You feel fine. No temperature.
DESTINY. My stomach hurts.
BLANCA. *(Looking long and hard at Destiny.)* What's going on? This is not like you. You're turning into someone who - ugh...
DESTINY. Who what?
BLANCA. What do you *want* mi'ja?
DESTINY. I just wanna lay down.
BLANCA. No. What do you want out of life?
FATIMA. Ay dejala.
BLANCA. I'm serious. I wanna know what you want out of life.

DESTINY. What do you mean?
BLANCA. When you dream about things. Don't you dream about things?
DESTINY. Pizza.
BLANCA. You wanna work at the restaurant with your mom? You wanna work at the nursing home? McDonalds? Whataburger? You wanna clean toilets and fryers? Taco Bell? You wanna be a cleaning lady? A baby sitter? A single mom like the rest of us? What do you want out of life Destiny? What do you want?! *(Fatima stops cooking.)*
DESTINY. I wanna lay down.
BLANCA. I'm not gonna let you waste your life, like the rest of us.
DESTINY. How can you say that Grandma? Omigod! Mamatima worked at the Whataburger for I-dunno-how-long, right? How long Mamatima?
FATIMA. Pues, twenty years or so.
DESTINY. What's so wrong with working at the Whataburger? That's an honest living isn't it?
BLANCA. That's not what I'm trying to say! God Destiny, you could have more than that! You know? There's nothing wrong with it. But it's hard. It's hard labor mi'ja. Your mother comes home from work exhausted. I come home exhausted. We lift, we clean, we follow orders. You could work in an office, and wear cute little outfits and listen to your headphones while you type. You could have such an easier life than this because you're special. You're smart!
DESTINY. I'm nothing okay. I'm nothing. *(She exits to the restroom and slams the door. Blanca follows and talks through the door.)*
BLANCA. That's not true! You are special! And you're not sick! You are going to school today young lady! You are gonna start picking up your grades/
FATIMA. Dejala already!
BLANCA. And you're going to study. And you're going to stop going out on school nights. Do you hear me? *(Silence. Carmel enters from the screen door. It is obvious that she had a wild night.)* Do you hear me? Hello? Do you hear me?!?!
CARMEL. Chingao Mom, the whole neighborhood hears you.
BLANCA. You're just now getting home?
FATIMA. Morning mi'ja.

CARMEL. It was a good night.
BLANCA. Your daughter wants to skip school.
CARMEL. Give me a break okay? Can I at least have coffee?
FATIMA. I've got chorizo con huevos.
CARMEL. Oh thank the Lord. I have to open the restaurant this morning.
BLANCA. And you know she came home in the middle of the night?
CARMEL. From Criselda's?
BLANCA. I doubt she ever even went to Criselda's. She's out roaming the streets all night like a regular slut. Your daughter! And you know it's because you're never around.
CARMEL. Oh cause you were around so much when I was in school.
BLANCA. That's not what we're talking about. I had to work.
CARMEL. Okay sure, we'll call it that.
BLANCA. Fine. You know what? I'll take that. But look what happened to you!
CARMEL. What happened to me mom?
BLANCA. Pregnant at fifteen.
CARMEL. Suzy was pregnant at eighteen. You were pregnant at sixteen. Grandma was pregnant at fifteen. What's the difference? What did you think would happen to me? What happens to any of us living in this shit hole?!
FATIMA. Hey! I like it here!
BLANCA. I don't want that for her. I don't want two screaming babies in this house. She can get out. She can work in an office. Have her own apartment. Host dinner parties.
CARMEL. You wanna have pinche dinner parties? *(She exits to her bedroom.)*
BLANCA. Ay. You're not listening. *(To Destiny.)* Destiny open this door and get dressed! *(Manuela wails loudly from the bedroom.)*
MANUELA. *(Off-stage.)* [Groaning.]
FATIMA. Mom's having a morning.
BLANCA. She needs her insulin.
FATIMA. I'm busy.
BLANCA. Jesus y Maria I have to do everything around here.
FATIMA. Oh you cook breakfast too?

BLANCA. You know what I mean Mom. *(To Destiny.)* You've got twenty minutes to be dressed young lady. I mean it. *(She goes to the cupboard to grab the insulin shots and starts preparing them.)*
FATIMA. Còme mi'ja, your food's getting cold.
BLANCA. Not now mom. Can you pack it to go?
FATIMA. Do I get a tip?
BLANCA. Yeah fifteen percent.
FATIMA. Fifteen percent of nothing is what? Mentirosa.
BLANCA. It smells good. I'll eat 'em at work. *(She exits. Fatima packs up the tacos in a portable lunch bag then sighs. There is a moment of stillness on the stage. Then Fatima turns down the stovetop and pours herself some coffee. She adds nondairy creamer and generic pink stuff and grabs the remote control. Univision's morning news comes on. We can hear it, but we can't make out what they're saying. She sits on the couch and watches. Destiny enters looking scared out of her mind. She sits by her great-grandmother who takes her in her arms and runs her fingers through her hair as she watches the news.)*
FATIMA. Que paso mi'ja? *(Silence.)* Still feeling bad? *(We hear more groaning from off-stage. Carmel enters in her waitress uniform: black slacks, white shirt, and a black tie. She dresses.)*
CARMEL. Well does anyone wanna know about my night?
FATIMA. I'm watching the news.
CARMEL. The breeze on the island. Oh my god! The breeze as the sun was setting. And the colors; all red and purple and orange and peach and cerulean and gold like *The Last Supper* all iridescent and shiny in 3D! Jesus and the disciples – knowing it would end, makes the moment more special or something. We just sipped our margaritas – top shelf – with the chile chamoy rims and my God; we talked about things, you know?
BLANCA. *(Enters looking extra tired. She puts away the insulin kit.)* Mom, can you get Ma'huela out of that bed today, walk her around?
CARMEL. Like, did you know cats were domesticated, did I say that right, domesticated, like thirteen thousand years ago or something?
BLANCA. Are you drunk?
CARMEL. Cats!
DESTINY. Who cares about stupid cats?

CARMEL. I mean, I didn't know I did, but... I do.
BLANCA. You're drunk. You need to sleep.
CARMEL. The waitress told us congratulations. I'm not drunk. She said 'you two are so cute together.' She saw us holding hands, and she told us that, and congratulated us. Can you believe that? She said 'congratulations!'
BLANCA. Go to sleep.
CARMEL. I have to work. We *are* cute though! We're perfect together.
BLANCA. He's old enough to be your father!
CARMEL. He wants to buy a house out by a seventeen-mile-and-a-half road. Over by that small lake.
FATIMA. There ain't no lake in Edinburg.
CARMEL. There's a lake out there apparently. I never knew either. It's for rich people I guess, but he's been there before.
FATIMA. I'm trying to watch the news!
CARMEL. He wants to take me, maybe buy a boat. Imagine me on a boat! He wants to buy a house. He wants to live happily ever after in a brick house in the boondocks. With me! Can you imagine me living in a brick house? In the boondocks?
BLANCA. Well congratulations to you.
FATIMA. There's chorizo on the stove.
CARMEL. *(Going to the stovetop and makes herself a taco.)* I'd decorate the dining room table with different centerpieces every holiday like they do in those corny movies with the white people. You know? I'd have all of these different decorations that I'd keep in storage in our big garage. We could probably fit two cars in there so we wouldn't have to park on the lawn, and I wouldn't ever have to take the bus again cause he'd drive me everywhere. Can you imagine?
FATIMA. No.
CARMEL. We want the same things. He wants to settle down and start a family, you know; have children someday.
BLANCA. You already have a child.
CARMEL. Shut up Mom! This is different! And we could even have a maid you know?
FATIMA. A maid?

CARMEL. From Mexico.
FATIMA. So I can't apply?
DESTINY. If he has all this money why does he like you?
CARMEL. Shut the hell up! Why am I even telling y'all this? I knew you'd be jealous!
BLANCA. Destiny. Get up.
DESTINY. I'm sick.
BLANCA. I don't care if you're bleeding from your ears. You will get up and you will learn something today.
CARMEL. Do you have cramps mi'ja? I have Midol. *(She goes to her purse and pulls out a bottle. She crosses to Destiny and for the first time in the play actually looks at her. She stares. She examines. She signals for Destiny to get off the couch and Destiny does. She turns her around and examines thoroughly.)* No.
BLANCA. What?
CARMEL. No. You better not be. *(Blanca crosses towards them.)* Chingao! You slut.
FATIMA. Mi'ja!
BLANCA. Hey! Don't you call her that! *(Destiny is silent. Tears down her face.)*
CARMEL. Tell me I'm not right. Tell me. Tell me. Tell me!
DESTINY. I'm sorry.
BLANCA. No. Destiny?
CARMEL. Who is he? Who's the fucking puto!?! Who is he?
DESTINY. No one.
CARMEL. *(Grabbing Destiny by the shoulders forcefully.)* Who is he!?!?!
BLANCA. Carmel! *(She pulls Carmel away. To Destiny.)* You're pregnant? *(Beat.)* Are. You. Pregnant? *(Silence. Destiny nods.)*
FATIMA. Ay dios mio.
BLANCA. God damn it!
CARMEL. You pinche slut. Who's the pendejo?
BLANCA. You better tell us who he is before we murder the whole neighborhood.
DESTINY. It's no one!

CARMEL. Destiny Yolanda Ramirez. This is your last chance to tell us who did this to you.
DESTINY. I did it to myself okay? I wanted to.
BLANCA. You wanted this?
DESTINY. I wanted it.
CARMEL. With this pendejo? Who is he?
BLANCA. Okay we're calling the school. You don't think we'll find out who he is? Just tell us.
DESTINY. I can't.
FATIMA. Ay Dios mio.
BLANCA. You better little girl.
DESTINY. You don't know him.
CARMEL. Oh we're going to know him. No doubt.
BLANCA. Who is he?
DESTINY. He doesn't go to my school.
CARMEL. Where does he go?
BLANCA. Economedes?
CARMEL. South?
BLANCA. PSJA?
CARMEL. Mercedes?
BLANCA. Mission?
FATIMA. Falfurrias?
CARMEL. Nobody goes to Falfurrias.
DESTINY. He's done with school. *(Silence.)*
BLANCA. How old is he? *(More silence.)* How old is he Destiny?
DESTINY. *(Beat.)* Twenty-four. *(Silence. Longer. A car honks outside.)*
CARMEL. I've gotta get to work. I'm gonna be late.
BLANCA. You can't leave right now Carmel, we need to talk about this.
CARMEL. What's to talk about? Ugh, I didn't even get to eat my taco.
FATIMA. Hay bolsas in the drawer m'ija.
BLANCA. Carmel.
CARMEL. Thanks Mamatima.
BLANCA. *(Sternly.)* Carmel. *(The car honks again.)*
CARMEL. Kathy's waiting. *(She exits.)*
BLANCA. Carmel! *(The screen door slams. Silence.)* Get dressed.

DESTINY. Why?
BLANCA. Get dressed. You're going to school. I don't care if you're throwing up all over your friends and your books and the gym teacher and the lockers and the principal's office. I don't care. You're going. You're going, and you're going to finish school. I don't care.
DESTINY. Grandma!
BLANCA. I don't care!! Get dressed. Now! *(Destiny exits to her bedroom. We hear Manuela groaning when she opens her door.)*
MANUELA. *(Off-stage.)* [Groaning.]
FATIMA. Otra vez.
BLANCA. Chingao!
FATIMA. Pos, she can share rooms with Suzy, with the baby.
BLANCA. No Mom, this is not how it's supposed to be.
FATIMA. Everything turns out the way it's supposed to be. God's sending us another soul to take care of. *(She does the sign of the cross and sits on the couch concerned.)*
BLANCA. God? That's funny. She's fifteen.
FATIMA. We need to pray about it. You still believe in God right?
BLANCA. Of course I believe in God, Mom.
FATIMA. We just need to pray.
BLANCA. Cause that's just going to fix all of our problems?
FATIMA. We've always managed. We've never gone hungry, have we?
BLANCA. What if I want more for this family than not going hungry? What about comfort? Happiness? Self-fulfillment? The freedom of doing things for me, simply because I want to do them?
FATIMA. Don't be selfish.
BLANCA. That's not selfish!
FATIMA. It's a sin.
BLANCA. Is statutory rape a sin?
FATIMA. Sex without marriage is a sin.
BLANCA. Oh so God doesn't care about the difference I guess.
FATIMA. Did I ever complain about working overtime every week? Picking up extra shifts, y extra work, y babysitting?
BLANCA. I haven't complained about anything!

FATIMA. Or having to take care of mother and this whole house when she had her stroke.
BLANCA. *(Sarcastically.)* Yes Mom, yes, you're a saint.
FATIMA. Suddenly all you care about is yourself, y no!
BLANCA. It's the opposite of that Mamá! I don't want her to have to work as hard as you did!
FATIMA. It sounds selfish to me.
BLANCA. And *you've* never wanted anything else?
FATIMA. All I want is peace and love. Entiendes? Peace and love!
BLANCA. Sure you do Ma.
FATIMA. I want my family to be safe and healthy. And I want us together. We should always be together.
BLANCA. Oh, we're together alright.
FATIMA. At least we have the crib. *(Beat.)* We'll just pray it's a girl so it can wear Lilly's hand-me-downs.
BLANCA. *(She sits at the table; upset.)* Gosh *darn* it. Man!
FATIMA. M'ija it's almost eight.
BLANCA. *(After collecting herself.)* Destiny! *(Beat.)* Destiny, let's go. I'm gonna be late! *(She goes to the hallway and pounds on Destiny's door.)* Come on, let's go! *(Destiny opens the door. We hear Manuela groaning.)*
MANUELA. *(Off-stage.)* [Groaning.] Quueeepasoo---?
BLANCA. Come on.
DESTINY. You didn't have to pound.
MANUELA *(Off-stage.)* [Groaning.] Blaaancitaa--?
BLANCA. Nada, nada. Ya! Get some sleep Ma'huela.
MANUELA. *(Off-stage)* [Groaning.] Vvveennn Blanciiiita… *(They close the door to the bedroom. Destiny is dressed and doesn't know how to act now. She looks down nervously.)*
BLANCA. Get your booty to the car.
FATIMA. Have a good day mijita! *(Destiny exits to the driveway.)*
BLANCA. We can't baby her anymore. She's not a baby.
FATIMA. Dejala! Let her enjoy her life for a little longer. *(Blanca crosses to the screen door.)* And don't forget your tacos.
BLANCA. Thanks Mom. *(She grabs the tacos and exits. Fatima finally has a moment of peace. She sips her coffee. She raises the volume on the*

TV. She enjoys her alone time. Eventually... the baby starts crying. She sighs. Lights shift)

SCENE 4

*Red lights flood the stage as Manuela enters and sits at the table making tamales. She is wearing a wig and dress that shows **we are even farther into the past.** She takes a corn husk and spreads a glob of masa across it, then grabs a spoon and picks up a bit of meat filling and puts it in a line along the masa before rolling it up and folding the extra husk over and placing it in on an old tray. She repeats. 20th Century Norteño music plays softly.*

MANUELA. Fatima! Fatima! ¡Apurale! Get your nalgas over here!
(Fatima enters. She's dressed as a teenager and is visibly pregnant. Very pregnant.)
FATIMA. ¡Espérate!
MANUELA. Andale, you're going to be a wife, you have to know how to make tamales. Yo no hago las reglas.
FATIMA. She's gonna be beautiful, a güerra como Ramon.
MANUELA. Blancita.
FATIMA. He's so handsome, verdad? Su hermosa sonrisa.
MANUELA. He's a cabrón.
FATIMA. We're going to have a beautiful baby. *(She puts on her apron and gets to work.)*
MANUELA. Andale, what good is a beautiful baby if you can't cook for it? *(Silent anger.)* Cabrón! *(They make tamales together. It is a beautiful choreography. Eventually something is off.)* You're doing it wrong.
FATIMA. That's how you said...
MANUELA. It should be fast. One swoop or it clumps. You're gonna get them all clumpy. *(She watches.)* No, that's too much. That's too thick, tan gordas. No. *(She demonstrates.)* Go.
FATIMA. *(She tries.)* It keeps sticking. No puedo evitarlo.

MANUELA. Listen to me niña. He's old enough to be your grandfather, and he's not gonna marry some little girl who can't make him dinner. You're a woman now. Es serio. Otra vez.
FATIMA. *(She tries again. She feels her baby kick.)* Oh.
MANUELA. ¿Qué paso?
FATIMA. She's kicking.
MANUELA. *(She touches Fatima's stomach. They share a moment.)* Well? Andale. *(Fatima gets back to rolling.* ***The lights shift abruptly.*** *The stage is flooded with blue light. Manuela gets up and begins to dance. It is a stoic, devised dance reminiscent of their tamale making. Fatima moves over one chair. Blanca enters and sits down. She's visibly pregnant.)*
FATIMA. You're doing it wrong!
BLANCA. Mamà! Stop yelling! I'm trying.
FATIMA. Try harder. That's too fat. N'ombre.
BLANCA. I'm trying, it's sticking. Ugh! I don't feel good, can we do this another time?
FATIMA. You can't have a baby without knowing how to make tamales. You think the baby is gonna care when you feel good?
BLANCA. I don't need to make tamales.
FATIMA. My mother taught me before I had you, and I'm gonna teach you. *(Manuela joins them. She is having a separate conversation with Fatima that Blanca cannot hear.)*
MANUELA. So now you suddenly wanna be a good mother?
FATIMA. I'm trying my best.
MANUELA. What did you expect to happen? She grew up without a father.
FATIMA. So did I.
MANUELA. I didn't chase your father away and open my legs to everyone in town.
FATIMA. You know what they say about *you* all around town!? ¡La Puta grande! Veinticinco para cojer.
MANUELA. Cabróna ingrata. ¡Cállate la boca!
FATIMA. Is it true?!
MANUELA. People will say what people will say.
FATIMA. Entonces, es verdad. ¿No?

MANUELA. I don't have to answer or validate anything to you. Ungrateful! If it was true then you should thank me, de rodillas, for keeping you fed. And if it's not, shame on you for believing it.
BLANCA. I'm trying, okay? It's not sticking. (*Manuela dances.)*
FATIMA. One swoop. Get a big chunk and smear it across in one swoop. *(She demonstrates.)* Make sure it's the smooth side of the husk. *(She watches. Silence. They make tamales.)* You have to do it with one stroke, or it doesn't work. *(She watches.)* Andale, that's better. *(They make tamales together. It is a beautiful choreography.* ***The lights shift abruptly.*** *The stage is flooded with green light. Fatima gets up and joins the dance. Blanca moves over one chair. Carmel enters and sits down. She is visibly pregnant.)*
CARMEL. We can just buy tamales at H-E-B.
BLANCA. We will not.
CARMEL. They're pretty good though.
BLANCA. Stop it!
CARMEL. Or Delia's tamales.
BLANCA. Those are expensive Carmel. Tamales are supposed to be cheap. A little masa, some left over meat and we can fill the entire freezer with dozens of meals. This is how you feed your family.
CARMEL. Okay, but I'm just saying I can get a job at H-E-B or something, and bring them home anyway.
BLANCA. Ya! ¡Cállate!
CARMEL. I'm just saying. It could be a good job, and I could get a discount on groceries. Right?
BLANCA. If you finish school you can be a supervisor at the H-E-B.
CARMEL. A supervisor? Like bossing people around and shit?
BLANCA. You're too young to be out of school. I can look after the baby at least until Suzy starts kinder. Mom's had crazy hours at the Whataburger. Maybe I can watch a few other kids, like a mini-daycare.
CARMEL. Yeah right.
BLANCA. I might as well.
CARMEL. You? Starting a day care?
BLANCA. Too fat.
CARMEL. Excuse me?

BLANCA. The tamal! You're putting too much meat, and the masa is all wrong. You have to do it in one stroke. Mira. *(She demonstrates. She watches.)* Voila!
CARMEL. I think that H-E-B is a pretty good plan.
BLANCA. Maybe in the summer, but you need to finish school. You need to Carmel. You need to. *(They make tamales together. It is a beautiful choreography. Manuela sits on the couch, Fatima sits on the recliner, after a while Blanca gets up and exits as Carmel moves over one chair.* ***The lights shift abruptly. We are in present day once more.*** *The TV plays loudly. Manuela is breathing through her oxygen mask. She does not look well.)*
CARMEL. Destiny!!!
MANUELA. [Groaning.]
FATIMA. *(To Carmel.)* Shhhh! I can't hear the TV.
CARMEL. *(Calling off.)* Destiny, get in here! Ugh. I hate making tamales. This is so dumb.
FATIMA. I didn't tell you to make 'em.
CARMEL. It's a tradition, or whatever. *(Suzy enters staring at her phone. We continuously hear little dings as she gets messages from her friends.)*
SUZY. You're making tamales?
CARMEL. Nothing gets past you.
SUZY. Oh god. I never wanna see another tamale in my life.
CARMEL. Too bad that's what we're having for dinner.
SUZY. *(To Fatima.)* You're not cooking grandma?
FATIMA. She said she was making dinner.
SUZY. *(To Carmel.)* Do you have to though? *(She looks in the fridge for some kind of snack.)*
CARMEL. *(Calling off.)* Destiny! *(To Suzy.)* Can you get your niece out here?
SUZY. Give her a break, she's got morning sickness.
CARMEL. Hell no, she ain't getting no break, she's big enough to get dick, she's big enough to make tamales.
FATIMA. ¿Qué dijiste?
CARMEL. Nothing Mamatima! Watch your show.
MANUELA. [Groaning.] Timaa... Timaa...

CARMEL. *(Calling off.)* Destiny!
DESTINY. *(Off-stage.)* What?!
CARMEL. Come on! I'm waiting.
DESTINY. *(Off-stage.)* I'm busy!
CARMEL. *(Calling off.)* Get out here, now!
FATIMA. ¡Càlmate!
SUZY. Oh my god, you're so loud sister.
CARMEL. Destiny!
DESTINY. *(Entering.)* Fine. What?
SUZY. Ew, this cheese has mold on it.
CARMEL. *(To Destiny.)* Sit down.
FATIMA. Just cut it off mi'jita.
SUZY. Ew.
CARMEL. *(To Suzy.)* Cheese *is* mold. People like that shit.
SUZY. Since when?
CARMEL. At the restaurant, people live for moldy cheese. *You* need to live a little. *(To Destiny.)* Put on an apron.
SUZY. I'm trying to live but I'm not eating that.
DESTINY. An apron?
CARMEL. Fine, you wanna get your clothes dirty, that is up to you.
(Destiny puts on an apron she grabs from a drawer and sits down.)
SUZY. People really eat moldy cheese?
CARMEL. With expensive wine. Like girl, they pay like forty dollars a bottle.
SUZY. Are you kidding me?
CARMEL. *(To Destiny.)* You can't have a baby until you know how to make tamales.
DESTINY. Really?
MANUELA. [Groaning.]
SUZY. Ma'huela doesn't sound good.
CARMEL. Okay, so pay attention. Once you grab the husk and you feel it up. Feel it. See how one side has ridges, and the other side is smooth?
DESTINY. Both sides feel like ridges.
CARMEL. Yeah, but one side is like smoother, and the other is like coarse.

DESTINY. I can't tell the difference.
SUZY. *(Eating olives.)* One side is shiny.
CARMEL. I think those olives went bad.
SUZY. They taste okay.
CARMEL. They had dots on them though. *(Suzy spits out the olive.)*
FATIMA. Mijita, did you say grace?
CARMEL. *(To Destiny.)* Can you feel it?
DESTINY. No.
CARMEL. Damn it! You're just being difficult.
DESTINY. Am not.
CARMEL. Yes you are. It's obvious that one side is more shiny.
DESTINY. So what?
CARMEL. That's the side you're gonna smear the masa on.
SUZY. God, the TV better not wake up the baby.
CARMEL. See, this is what you have to look forward to.
DESTINY. At least she'll have a cousin her age.
SUZY. Awwww, they'll be in high school together.
CARMEL. No, okay, you're already doing it wrong.
DESTINY. Tsk.
CARMEL. Don't gimme lip.
SUZY. Yes!
DESTINY. What?
SUZY. Jacob's definitely going to be out tonight. I have to look sooooo good. He gonna wish he could get me pregnant again.
CARMEL. Ooooo you're going out? Yes! Wait, who's taking care of the baby?
SUZY. Destiny, duh.
DESTINY. No, I'm not.
SUZY. She has to learn anyway.
CARMEL. She's right, you do. Now, watch me, you have to do the masa in like one swoop. *(She demonstrates.)*
DESTINY. I have to go to Criselda's.
CARMEL. ¡Mentirosa! You were never even going to Criselda's, so don't give me that lie now. One swoop. *(She watches.)* Yeah like that.
SUZY. Shit, what am I gonna wear?

FATIMA. Ya, stop cussing! I'm gonna sew your mouth shut!
SUZY. Sorry!
FATIMA. I mean it!
SUZY. Okay!
CARMEL. Maybe Mom has something from her 'ho' days. *(Blanca enters through the screen door.)* Speak of the devil.
SUZY. *(Too affectionately.)* Hey Mom, how was your day?
BLANCA. Oh Lord, what do you want from me now? Mom, turn that down!
FATIMA. I can't hear it mi'jita.
BLANCA. But you can hear me just fine? *(She crosses towards Manuela, and kisses her on the forehead.)* Hi Grandma.
FATIMA. Who wouldn't hear you?
SUZY. Do you have any dresses I can borrow?
BLANCA. You're going out?
CARMEL. Destiny's babysitting.
BLANCA. You're going too?
CARMEL. No.
BLANCA. *(She sees Carmel and Destiny rolling tamales and freezes.)* You're showing her how to make tamales?
DESTINY. Unfortunately.
BLANCA. *(Filled with anger.)* No.
DESTINY. I tried to tell her I didn't want to.
BLANCA. Carmel, no.
CARMEL. What? She has to learn.
BLANCA. No she doesn't.
CARMEL. It's a tradition.
BLANCA. No, **it's not!** *(She crosses to the table and grabs the bowl of masa and throws it in the trash can. Carmel and Destiny are stunned.)*
CARMEL. What the fuck are you doing Mom?
FATIMA. Hey!
MANUELA. [Groaning.]
BLANCA. She is not going to learn to make tamales so we can just go about our business as usual in this house.
CARMEL. Oh my God.

BLANCA. Your daughter is pregnant Carmel.
CARMEL. Yeah, your granddaughter.
BLANCA. I know that.
CARMEL. And I'm the only one who is taking it seriously.
BLANCA. This is not taking it seriously. This is throwing a rug over it.
SUZY. What does that mean?
BLANCA. Ignoring the problem Suzy.
CARMEL. She's an adult now, so somebody has to teach her how to act like an adult.
BLANCA. And that's you? You're the one out every night. If you're teaching her anything, it's how to be a slut.
FATIMA. Hey! Cállate already. I don't like this talk.
CARMEL. And who taught me?
BLANCA. I'm trying to teach you something right now.
CARMEL. Oh shut up already.
DESTINY. It's okay Mom.
BLANCA. Don't tell me to shut up. I warned you. I warned you this would happen to her.
CARMEL. Yeah, you warn me the day that my daughter is already pregnant. Real good warning Mom. I had a whole negative however long to do something about it.
BLANCA. If you had been around at all you would have noticed.
CARMEL. Look in the fucking mirror.
FATIMA. Ah no. *(She gets up; upset.)*
BLANCA. This isn't right.
CARMEL. Yeah? Well that's just life.
BLANCA. It shouldn't be.
CARMEL. But it is.
BLANCA. But it shouldn't be! Okay? *(Beat.)* I think, that… *(Long beat.)* We should discuss the options. *(Silence.)*
CARMEL. The options?
DESTINY. What options? *(Silence. Longer. Longer still.)*
BLANCA. *(Long pause.)* She doesn't have to have it.
FATIMA. ¿Que dija?
BLANCA. What if she doesn't have it?

FATIMA. ¡Ah nó!
CARMEL. Excuse me? You can't be serious.
SUZY. She's not.
BLANCA. What if I am?
CARMEL. She's not gonna abort this baby.
BLANCA. Your grandchild?
CARMEL. Don't say that.
BLANCA. This child would be your grandchild though.
CARMEL. Okay... ?
BLANCA. What about the second chance at a childhood you keep chattering on about? Huh? You're too young to be a grandma and all that?
CARMEL. I'm not any older than y'all were.
FATIMA. *(Doing the sign of the cross.)* We will not murder a member of this family. N'ombre. You'll go to hell. We'll all go to hell!
SUZY. Is that even legal?
BLANCA. It's legal in Reynosa.
SUZY. O-M-G, you want her to go to Mexico?!
BLANCA. We can walk across the bridge Suzy.
CARMEL. Destiny doesn't have a passport!
BLANCA. They accept birth certificates. I already looked into it!
CARMEL. This is one of us we're talking about.
SUZY. Lilly's cousin.
BLANCA. One of us who gets to spend, what, fifteen years of their life doing as they please in a crowded house with all of their abuelas until the moment they get knocked up too?
FATIMA. N'ombre! No digas esas cosas.
BLANCA. Mom. We have to stop this.
CARMEL. I can't believe you're even suggesting this.
BLANCA. You don't even realize what this means for you yet. *I'm* not quitting my job; this one's gonna be on you. Thirty year old grandma. Explain that to the man who wants to buy you a boat. You think he's gonna get off by calling you grandma in bed?
FATIMA. Abuelas are sexy too!
SUZY. Ew!
FATIMA. No digas "ew," look at Daniela Romo!

BLANCA. You think he's gonna buy you a house to have a little family? Him and you and your granddaughter?
MANUELA. [Groaning.] Blanciiiita...
CARMEL. *(Ignoring Manuela.)* We do not abort babies. We do not do that. Would you abort Suzy or Lilly or me?
BLANCA. That's not the same thing.
SUZY. It's totally the same thing.
CARMEL. We were all accidents, but we're people now Mom.
BLANCA. It's not a person yet.
CARMEL. Yes it is.
SUZY. Mom, you need to stop.
FATIMA. You better go to confession this week Blanca.
BLANCA. No, *this* has to stop. This clump of cells is not a person yet, and it's not too late for us to save Destiny's future.
CARMEL. Oh this is gonna magically save her future?
BLANCA. Yes!
CARMEL. She'll just turn around and become a fucking surgeon or something?
FATIMA. Stop with that word mi'jita!
CARMEL. Sorry Mamatima!
BLANCA. She'll be something!
CARMEL. Yeah, she'll be pregnant again.
SUZY. Ouch.
BLANCA. She'll go on the pill. Should've been on it already. I should have been on the pill. Why didn't I go on the pill? *(To Suzy.)* Sorry.
CARMEL. Wow.
SUZY. Yeah, thanks for that.
FATIMA. The pill is para mujeres malas!
BLANCA. I made an appointment for Tuesday.
DESTINY. *(Beat.)* For what? *(Silence. Blanca's face tells them.)*
CARMEL. No. How can you even suggest this? Oh my god. I would never be able to forgive myself, or you.
DESTINY. I don't want... an… *(She can't say abortion.)*

BLANCA. Destiny made a mistake. We all did. We weren't paying attention, and she ended up pregnant. So what? She doesn't have to be. Why are we gonna let this cycle continue? It ends today.
SUZY. Technically it ends Tuesday... right?
CARMEL. That's my granddaughter you wanna kill.
BLANCA. So you're ready to raise it? The way mother raised you, the way I raised Destiny.
CARMEL. So you admit it right there, this is your fault, not mine.
BLANCA. Maybe I am at fault here, because I really thought I could get Destiny out.
CARMEL. Out of what though?
BLANCA. Out of this life.
CARMEL. There's no out of this life Mom. That's for white people on TV.
BLANCA. No, you can get out of this life!
SUZY. Stop saying "this life."
CARMEL. Mom, I'm a waitress. I'm just a waitress. Get over it.
BLANCA. Sure, but you could run the restaurant if you wanted.
CARMEL. *(Fed-up.)* Oh, my God.
BLANCA. You could start your own even. Or you could go back to school; fix air-conditions, be a court reporter!
CARMEL. I don't wanna be a stupid court reporter.
SUZY. Don't forget the rich guy. She could be a house wife.
BLANCA. Exactly. You could be a real housewife of the Rio Grande Valley.
FATIMA. What about adoption? *(Silence. Longer.)*
CARMEL. We're not giving this baby away.
BLANCA. This isn't a baby yet. Not yet.
DESTINY. What about what I want?
BLANCA. That doesn't even matter right now, okay?
DESTINY. I wanna be a mom. I want to have a baby.
CARMEL. See!?
BLANCA. The fact that she wants a baby, makes it clear that she is incapable of making long-term decisions.
CARMEL. Oh but you are!?

DESTINY. Ismael and me can get married, and we can raise this baby together.
BLANCA. *(Beat.)* Ismael? You're not going with any Ismael.
DESTINY. I want my baby to have a father.
BLANCA. Absolutely not.
DESTINY. You're not my mom.
BLANCA. Carmel?
CARMEL. What?
BLANCA. She's not moving in with some older man.
CARMEL. That's the baby's father.
BLANCA. No, that is a sick pedophile who took advantage of a fifteen year old girl.
SUZY. Wow, and with that, I should go get ready.
CARMEL. Don't start with that.
DESTINY. We're in love.
BLANCA. *You* might be in love, but *he* is manipulating you.
SUZY. Mom!
BLANCA. Trust me I know all about that. That's what they do, these predators. They know instinctually which little girls didn't have fathers, and which little girls are insecure, and which little girls have been abused. They can smell it on them and they swoop in, they groom them, turn them into their little play things. It ends now.
SUZY. No it ends/ Tuesday.
BLANCA. /Fine, it ends Tuesday!
DESTINY. Ismael's not like that.
BLANCA. I promise you, he is, or he'd be with a girl his own age.
SUZY. Don't be so mean.
BLANCA. You're getting that procedure on Tuesday, and we're reporting this man to the police.
DESTINY. No!
CARMEL. That's unnecessary.
DESTINY. You can't!
BLANCA. Watch me.
DESTINY. He'll go to jail!
FATIMA. Blanca, is that a good idea?

BLANCA. That's where he belongs.
MANUELA. *(In pain.)* [Groaning.]
DESTINY. You can't do this!
CARMEL. She's not going to.
BLANCA. I sure as hell am!
SUZY. Tsk. That's puro extreme.
CARMEL. How is he going to pay child support from jail?
BLANCA. There won't be a child Carmel.
DESTINY. This is my baby! /This is my decision.
BLANCA. /I'm reporting him regardless.
DESTINY. You can't. I'll kill myself! I will!
BLANCA. Oh, I'd like to see you try mi'jita.
FATIMA. Blanca!
CARMEL & SUZY. *(Overlapping.)* Mom!
BLANCA. She's not serious!
DESTINY. I am too!
BLANCA. *(This is final.)* You're not. *(Destiny exits to her bedroom in a huff, slamming the door. Fatima is upset.)*
MANUELA. *(She groans breathlessly; trying to speak. She is breathing harder and harder. Is she having an attack? No one notices if she is.)* [Groaning.]
CARMEL. This is not your decision to make! She is an adult and it is her body!
BLANCA. She is not an adult.
CARMEL. Her body, and her choice!
BLANCA. This was not her choice. She is the victim of child abuse by a sick predator.
SUZY. You guys; stop it already!
CARMEL. Oh so now you care about predators all of a sudden.
SUZY. Stop it!
BLANCA. I have always cared.
FATIMA. Ya Blanca!
BLANCA. I have always cared about you girls.
CARMEL. You need to give it a rest because you sound so fucking hypocritical right now.

FATIMA. *(Screaming.)* ¡¡¡Callate!!!!
MANUELA. *(In pain.)* [Groaning.] Ah! Agh! Arghgh! *(Manuela slides off the couch onto the floor. She's having another stroke. The women finally take notice. The next few lines overlap in chaos.)*
FATIMA. Mamá!
CARMEL. *(Overlapping.)* Oh my God.
SUZY. *(Overlapping.)* Ma'huela!
CARMEL. *(Overlapping.)* Is she okay? Shit.
BLANCA. Call 911.
FATIMA. Mamà!
BLANCA. Carmel, call 911!
CARMEL. Okay, okay, okay. *(Destiny comes out of her room and just watches as Carmel calls 911.)* Hello?! /My great-grandmother is having an attack. *(Beat.)* No, I don't think so. *(Beat.)* She's had a stroke before, she has bad lungs. Yeah I think it's a stroke, we're on 1920 Efrain St. Yes. Yes. Okay. Okay.
BLANCA. *(Overlapping.)* /We have to keep her awake. Keep her awake mom.
FATIMA. Mamà! Mamà! Hey!
SUZY. Is she okay? Is she breathing?
BLANCA. She's having a stroke.
FATIMA. *(Praying.)* Jesus y Maria! / Dios te salve, Maria. Llena eres de gracia: El Seńor es contigo. Bendita tú eres entre todas las mujeres. Y bendito es el fruto de tu vientre: Jesús. Santa María, Madre de Dios, ruega por nosotros pecadores, ahora y en la hora de nuestra muerte. Amén.
SUZY. *(Overlapping.)* /Is she breathing?
BLANCA. Just try to keep her awake.
SUZY. How?
BLANCA. Talk to her okay?
SUZY. Um... Um... Ma'huela? Ma'huela? It's me Suzy. Um... can you hear me?
BLANCA. Help me lift her. Where's that ambulance?!?! ***(The lights change abruptly back to red.*** *Fatima, Suzy, and Blanca hover around Manuela. Manuela gets up gracefully as the women's movements become a stylized, devised choreography once again. Manuela exits as the women*

repeat their stylized dance reminiscent of their tamale making. They exit one by one through the screen door; all except Destiny. Lights shift.)

SCENE 5

Destiny is alone in the house for the first time she can remember. She carries a duffle bag and raids the fridge. She puts things in her duffle bag; a bag of cheetos, a jar of peanut butter, a dozen tamales from the freezer. She makes a phone call and waits for someone to pick up. She looks out the screen door. She's very nervous. No one answers. She calls again. She waits. Finally…

DESTINY. Are you close? *(Beat.)* I know, but hurry. They could be back any second. *(Beat.)* I don't know, not good. I just need to get out of here. *(Beat.)* No, it's okay. My mom said it's okay, I promise. Yeah... *(Beat.)* Where are you? *(Beat.)* You promise? Thank God. *(Beat.)* Yeah. Okay, see you soon babe. *(Destiny looks out the screen door for a moment longer waiting with heavy anticipation. She is still very nervous. Manuela enters from the bedroom and looks at her. They stare at each other. After a moment headlights shine through the screen door. Destiny exits in a hurry and closes the door behind her. Ma'huela stares at the door as lights fade.)*

END OF ACT ONE

THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
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