

American Dream

El sueño del otro lado

By

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AMERICAN DREAM, el sueño del otro lado

The Characters:

Tom	42, an architect
Cara	40's, his ex-wife, an executive with Sempra Energy
Julie	16, their daughter
Richard	40's, an attorney, Cara's boyfriend
Salvador	25, a Mexican national, teaches Spanish in San Miguel de Allende
Dan	Late 50's, fit, an ecologist at UC San Diego, a Minute Man
BUDDY	Early 20's, Dan's nephew, a Minute Man

Time: About 2009

Place: San Diego (SD); San Miguel de Allende (SMA), Mexico; the California-Mexico border (Border)

Note: Dialogue shown in brackets [like this] indicates characters speaking over on another.

Scene Breakdown:

Scenes should flow quickly from one to the next. Locales may be indicated by playing areas.

“Temo que la verdadera frontera la trae cada uno adentro.”

“Gringo Viejo”

Carlos Fuentes

Prologue:

Stage is dark. We hear TWO VOICES.

MAN 1 (DAN)

Fuck! You're not supposed to shoot 'em!

MAN 2 (BUDDY)

Goddamn wetbacks. Why can't they just stay on their own fuckin' side of the border?

End of scene.

Act I. Scene 1.

San Diego. Tom's home.

CARA
He calls you what?

TOM
Rey.

CARA
Ray?

TOM
Rey.

CARA
Why would he call you that? You didn't tell him your name was Tom?

TOM
Not "Ray." *Rey. (He rolls the "r.")*

CARA
(Tries to mimic)
Rrrrraayy.

TOM
Very lightly. Just flick the "r." Like this. *(demonstrates)* *Rey.*

CARA
(She tries, fails.)

TOM
Almost like there's a little "h" in front of it. *(demonstrates)* h-ray, h-ray,-h-ray.

CARA
(No improvement)
Huh-ray, huh-ray, huh-ray.

TOM
Rey, rey, rey.

CARA
Mi, mi, mi. Fa, fa, fa. So, so, so. *(sings from "Do, Re, Mi")* *And it [all comes back to...]*

TOM
[*Rey*. R-E-Y.] Meaning “king.”

CARA
He calls you “King?”

TOM
Mi Rey.

CARA
That is so wrong on so many levels.

TOM
It’s sweet, Cara. You never called me “*Rey*.”

CARA
You better believe I never called you *Rey*. And what do you call him?

TOM
Principe. Meaning—

CARA
I get it.

TOM
Principe Marco.

CARA
So, he’s a boy, your Little Prince.

TOM
Young man.

CARA
How young?

TOM
28.

CARA
Oh, brother. And where did you meet this “Prince Marco?”

Online. TOM

A sex site. CARA

A social networking site. TOM

Uh, huh. I bet it's *very* social. So, he's Hispanic. CARA

Mexican. TOM

So, you're into that now? CARA

I'm not "into that." It's what he is. TOM

Mexican-American. CARA

Mexican-Mexican. TOM

Mexican-Mex— CARA

He's in Mexico. TOM

On vacation? CARA

He lives there. TOM

Your online, hitting on guys in Mexico? Yeah, that has a future. CARA

Mexico is only 30 minutes away. TOM

CARA

Oh, he's in Tijuana. Well, that's—still not very practical.

TOM

Not Tijuana. San Miguel.

CARA

Where's that? Near Ensenada or something?

TOM

Three hours north of Mexico City.

CARA

(Bemused)

Oh, that's *really* not practical. Why are you bothering me with this?

TOM

You asked me if there was anyone new.

CARA

So how do you converse, by the way?

TOM

In English, mainly. I throw in a few Spanish words.

CARA

Very few, I'd imagine.

TOM

I had Spanish in college! *Estoy practicando.*

CARA

Uh, huh. Hey, I need you to take care of Julie.

TOM

When?

CARA

Next week. Monday to Thursday. Do you have a problem?

TOM

I don't think so.

CARA

Do you need to get your Blackberry?

TOM
iPhone. Four. Brand new.

CARA
Of course. I've got travel.

TOM
Where are you going?

CARA
Baja.

TOM
How nice for you.

CARA
Mexicali.

TOM
Mexicali?

CARA
It's business.

TOM
What business do you have in Mexicali?

CARA
There's no need to sneer.

TOM
I'm not sneering.

CARA
You so definitely are. It's quite exciting, actually. You would very much approve. I've gotten the execs to green light the largest clean energy installation *in the hemisphere*. Giant solar panels covering the Laguna Salida.

TOM
Really.

CARA
Yes, even Sempra Energy is going solar, snothead.

TOM

Snothead?

CARA

Now I've got to convince the state of Baja to sign off. We're in negotiations with the governor's office. I need you to look after Julie.

TOM

Why Baja?

CARA

That's where the Laguna Salida is. Just across the border?

TOM

I'm aware. Why not build the solar installation in California, or Arizona?

CARA

Why are you picking a fight? We want to build an enormous solar energy installation, big enough to power a million homes, and you're picking a fight?

TOM

Isn't there just as much sun in the US desert?

CARA

I don't know. Research crunches all that data.

TOM

And Richard crunches the legal.

CARA

What's your point?

TOM

The real distinguishing factor between the Mexican and the American desert is the Environmental Protection Agency. Am I right?

CARA

Mexico has environmental laws as well. Thousands of pages. We've got teams poring through them.

TOM

Of course it does. The difference is...

CARA

What?

TOM

(Rubs his fingers together, gesturing "money")

CARA

I wouldn't know.

TOM

But Richard would. I bet he knows quite well.

CARA

There is no reason for you to be hateful about Richard. It's not like I was the one who was cheating on you.

TOM

So you have to retaliate by dating a neo-con, corporate lawyer?

CARA

I'm corporate, remember? You didn't seem to mind Richard's politics when you were designing his home and he was paying you truckloads of money.

TOM

That's business.

CARA

Well, if it wasn't for your business I never would have met him.

TOM

So, Richard is my fault?

CARA

Darling, everything is your fault. Now, will you or won't you look after Julie while I'm away?

TOM

Of course I will. She's my daughter.

CARA

I would have thought you would have been excited by this project. Solar energy? Millions of megawatts for both sides of the border? Hundreds, maybe thousands, of jobs on both sides?

TOM

And what about the Laguna Salada?

CARA
What about it?

TOM
Exactly. You don't know.

CARA
It's just a salt flat.

TOM
If you could build your giant solar panels in this country, you would. But the EPA won't let you.

CARA
Just because the bureaucracy in this country is so calcified they can't tell the difference between solar panels and strip mines, should we let the project be held up for years? Or scrapped entirely? We want to produce clean energy. Mexico appreciates that. The state government in Baja is open, if we can make a deal. The economies on both sides would get a boost. What's wrong with that?

TOM
And Sempra will make millions.

CARA
We'd benefit. Of course. So would your daughter.

TOM
And so would Richard. It's just win-win all the way around.

CARA
Yes.

TOM
Except for the desert in Baja.

CARA
Nothing lives there.

TOM
Then build your panels in Death Valley.

CARA
It's a national park!

TOM
So?

CARA
You can't do that. Your Sierra Club would be very unhappy.

TOM
So... Maybe your panels aren't so environmentally neutral after all?

CARA
Ugh! Just take care of Julie.

TOM
I told you I would.

CARA
I'll be back Thursday night.

TOM
Cara.

CARA
What?

TOM
Solar's good.

CARA
(With fondness)
You're a prick.

TOM
What would you say if I went to Mexico for a vacation?

CARA
Why would I care if you went on vacation?

TOM
I can't watch Julie.

CARA
Just don't go when I'm in Mexicali. How long will you be gone?

TOM
Three weeks.

CARA
Three weeks?

TOM
What's wrong?

CARA
Nothing. Three weeks. We never took three weeks. Where to? PV?

TOM
Why Puerto Vallarta?

CARA
Isn't that where—

TOM
All the gay boys go?

CARA
Boys?

TOM
Men.

CARA
Isn't it?

TOM
I'm thinking of studying Spanish. In San Miguel de Allende.

CARA
San Miguel. This doesn't have anything to do with Little Lord Principe?

TOM
It does. He runs a gallery there. Antiques.

CARA
Uh, huh. Furniture?

TOM
And art... ceramics... textiles...

CARA

Well, you're a grown-up. If you want to travel a thousand miles to be part of some Mexican kid's collection of aging trophies...

TOM

San Miguel's a beautiful colonial city. Lots of history. Tons of art. Wonderful architecture.

CARA

You don't have to justify it to me. Take a vacation. Do whatever you want. Just wait till I get back from Baja.

TOM

I leave in two weeks.

CARA

Perfect. I'll be harnessing the Mexican sun, and you'll be harnessing the Mexican... sons.

TOM

(Amused)

Shut up.

CARA

You better get going.

TOM

Why?

CARA

Julie?

TOM

What about her?

CARA

You need to pick her up.

TOM

Me?

CARA

I told you yesterday. I've got to meet Richard downtown. He's got a fundraiser.

TOM

Attila the Hun for Mayor of San Diego?

CARA

No, your favorite Congressman.

TOM

Oh, Christ. How can you associate with these—

CARA

Julie!

TOM

Once she finishes drivers' ed, I think it's time we get her a car of her own.

CARA

Just go get Julie. I don't like her shivering in the cold after surf class.

End of scene.

Act I. Scene 2.

That afternoon. The US-Mexican border. A desert area.

DAN
Where?

BUDDY
Over there!

DAN
Where?

BUDDY
In the canyon. Two of 'em. Gotta be.

DAN
I don't see anything.

BUDDY
I'm callin' this in.

DAN
Are those your illegals?

BUDDY
Where?

DAN
Over there. In the washout.

BUDDY
Yeah. Yeah, that's them. I'm callin' headquarters.

DAN
You're callin' 'em in?

BUDDY
That's what it says in the manual.

DAN
Them?

BUDDY
Yeah. Fuck. Yes.

DAN

You mean the doe and the fawn?

BUDDY

What?

DAN

Two deer, Buddy. A momma and her baby. Christ.

BUDDY

Fuck. Goddamn wetbacks. Why can't they just stay on their own fuckin' side of the border?

End of scene.

Act I. Scene 3.

That night. TOM and JULIE sit in Tom's living room. Both type into laptops.

JULIE
Which one?

TOM
Which one what?

JULIE
The picture. For your website. Thomas Zeller, Architect.

TOM
Thomas? What's wrong with Tom?

JULIE
It sounds more—I don't know—more professional, or something.

TOM
Tom. I've always gone by Tom.

JULIE
Thomas is way better.

TOM
Tom.

JULIE
Alright... *(With a huff)* Tom Zeller, Architect. *(She makes the change.)* So, which pic should I use? You've got like a million in here.

TOM
Not a million.

JULIE
A lot.

TOM
Well, something recent.

JULIE
Duh.

TOM

You pick. You're more objective.

JULIE

Okay. Our house.

TOM

Not ours.

JULIE

Why not?

TOM

It's just—odd. My own house. On the front of my website? No. I'd say Richard's.

JULIE

Dick's? No way. What about the Aspen one? Or Cabo? The one in Carmel? That one's cool.

TOM

Richard's.

JULIE

Why?

TOM

I'm the architect.

JULIE

I thought you said I was more objective.

TOM

Richard's.

JULIE

I say ours.

TOM

I'm the customer. I could stick with my regular Web designer. They do what I say.

JULIE

Come on. Let me try.

TOM

If I get my way.

JULIE

Alright. Dick's it is. Which photo?

TOM

(He knows this photo exactly)

Rear of the house. Showing the terrace cantilevered over the cliff. A bit of the view.
The wall lit at sunset.

JULIE

Got it. Yeah, okay, it's nice. I still like ours better. *(Something pops up on her screen.)*
Oh, my God!

TOM

What?

JULIE

Nothing.

TOM

What is it?

JULIE

Oh, it's just... Michael. His band just got a gig at Zeitgeist.

TOM

How do you know?

JULIE

Facebook.

TOM

I thought you were building my new website.

JULIE

Multi-tasking.

TOM

Zeitgeist. Isn't that a biker bar, in Ocean Beach?

JULIE

Yeah.

TOM
How old is Michael anyway?

JULIE
He's a senior.

TOM
A senior?

JULIE
What?

TOM
You're just a sophomore.

JULIE
So?

TOM
I just don't want to see you taken advantage of.

JULIE
You don't want me drinking beer in a biker bar is what you mean.

TOM
I don't want to have to bail you out of jail.

JULIE
Whatever.

TOM's attention is pulled to his laptop. He types.

JULIE
What are *you* doing?

TOM
Chatting.

JULIE
Chatting? I'm working on your website, and you're chatting.

TOM
I'm multi-tasking.

JULIE
Right. That's so weird, you know.

TOM
What?

JULIE
You chatting.

TOM
Why? You chat on line.

JULIE
I'm 16, you're...

TOM
42.

JULIE
People your age don't chat online.

TOM
Well... I'm chatting.

JULIE
With who?

TOM
Whom.

JULIE
Shut up.

TOM
A friend.

JULIE
Uh, huh.

TOM
A friend friend.

JULIE
A friend friend. Right. What's his name?

Why he? TOM

Dad. JULIE

Marco. TOM

Foreign? JULIE

A Mexican. In Mexico. TOM

Oh. JULIE

I'm going there on vacation. TOM

Mexico. Just you? JULIE

Yes, just me. You've got school. TOM

That's not fair. Where are you going? Like Cabo? JULIE

San Miguel de Allende. TOM

Never heard of it. JULIE

To study Spanish. TOM

Why? JULIE

For fun. TOM

JULIE
I hate Spanish!

TOM
What's wrong with Spanish? You're making an "A."

JULIE
Oh, it's Mr. Brewster. He's so... God. He's just so, like... condescending. Ech.

TOM
Well, the teacher makes all the difference.

JULIE
(She observes him, then, affectionately, with admiration)
So, you're going to Mexico, to study Spanish, for fun. You're weird, you know.

TOM
Am I?

JULIE
Yeah. You're definitely weird.

There is an affectionate moment.

JULIE
Dad?

TOM
Yeah.

JULIE
Are you going to get married again?

TOM
I can't, sweetie.

JULIE
Yeah, you could. New York, right? Boston. DC?

TOM
Not here.

JULIE
That sucks.

TOM

Yeah, well. It's not a worry. First I'd have to have a boyfriend.

JULIE

Marco.

TOM

Shut up.

JULIE

Just sayin'.

End of scene.

Act I. Scene 4.

Two weeks later. Night. U.S.-Mexican border. LIGHTS up on MINUTE MEN.

BUDDY

I swear that was the same guy we saw last week.

DAN

Didn't the captain say he caught one guy four times in one night.

BUDDY

See, that's just it. We're out here sweating our asses off and the feds just dump these wetbacks across the border and all they do is come right back again. What's the point? The government is like totally inept. Can't they shoot 'em or something? That would stop 'em.

DAN

You can't shoot people for crossing the border.

BUDDY

Why not? It's not like they don't know it's illegal. They're breaking the law.

He pulls out a pistol.

DAN

What the hell is that?

BUDDY

Jesse's dad gave it to me.

DAN

Buddy. That is completely against regulations. You know that.

BUDDY

His dad thought we ought to have it, you know, considering what happened. I mean, we're out here, alone, on the fucking border. Those narco-traffickers are just like feet away from here. We need some protection, right?

DAN

I'm calling you in.

BUDDY

You're not callin' me in. I'm your nephew.

End of scene.

Act I. Scene 5.

San Miguel de Allende. That night. TOM on his cell phone in the courtyard bar of the Hotel Sierra Madre. CARA, at home, answers hers.

CARA
Hello?

TOM
Greetings from sunny Mexico!

CARA
Tom?

TOM
Well, it's pitch black right now, [of course.]

CARA
[Isn't it] like midnight there?

TOM
But it was sunny earlier.

CARA
It was sunny here. How is everything?

TOM
Oh, San Miguel is lovely. Really wonderful. The hotel is charming. Gorgeous. Seventeenth century. *(With exaggerated relish)* La Casona de la Sierra Madre.

CARA
Have you been drinking?

TOM
Just tequila. Remember that posada?

CARA
The what?

TOM
In Spain. Where we stayed. Outside of Granada. It's sort of like that, this place.

CARA

Wonderful. This call must be costing you a fortune.

TOM

I got global service before I left. You should do that.

CARA

I don't go global.

TOM

Mexicali.

CARA

Is hardly global.

TOM

You were right.

CARA

I'm always right.

TOM

About Marco. He never showed for drinks this afternoon. I waited for two hours. The view was great—this terrific little rooftop bar, very stylish—all these rich Mexicans from Mexico City—looks out over the churches and cupolas and in the distance these mountains with huge clouds in the sunset, like a John Huston movie.

CARA

You can show me the pictures when you get back.

TOM

Two hours. Fortunately the Margaritas were strong, but... Two *hours*. So that was humiliating. Then, not leaving well enough alone, I had to search out the gallery where he works. Where he *said* he works. Not there. No one's heard of him.

CARA

I could have told you. I *did* tell you.

TOM

So, I come back to the hotel, I see him online, and I think, what the hell, I'll say hello. I am such an idiot.

CARA

Tom...

TOM

No answer. Of course. *Nada.*

CARA

I need to [get to bed.]

TOM

[So, here I am] in this expensive hotel, chasing someone—who obviously wants nothing to do with me.

CARA is silent. This is difficult for her to hear.

TOM

Cara?

CARA

I'm here.

TOM

I don't know what I'm doing down here. I'm 45 years old and I don't know how to date. I certainly don't know how to date men. In a foreign country.

CARA

Well, I—I'm afraid I can't help you there.

TOM

We never really dated, you and I, did we?

CARA

We dated. What are you talking about?

TOM

No. Not really. We hung out, in grad school. I practically moved into that little bungalow of yours. Like immediately.

CARA

That was your idea.

TOM

But... dating? Not really.

CARA

Tom, I've got a meeting in the morning. I'm glad you're having a lovely time in [Mexico—]

TOM

[I knew] you were in love with me. It scared the shit out of me. At first. And then...

CARA

Let's not do this now.

TOM

It was like... like your love was plenty for both of us. And it was. For a long time.

CARA

I'm not discussing this on the phone. From Mexico.

TOM

I'm so sorry, Cara. I am so, so sorry. Half of our lives are gone. And it's my fault.

CARA

You're getting maudlin. I'm hanging up. No more tequila.

She shuts off her phone. LIGHTS down on CARA. TOM sits at a table holding his laptop. He pauses for a moment, then types.

TOM

Hey Julie,
Greetings from South of the Border! San Miguel is beautiful. The hotel is gorgeous.
Like a palace practically. My Spanish classes start tomorrow. Hope I don't have Mr.
Brewster.
Love,
Dad

Sends the email and flips the laptop shut.

End of scene.

Act I. Scene 6.

*U.S.-Mexican border. LIGHTS up on MINUTE MEN
Action is continuous from previous scene.*

BUDDY

You're not callin' in your own flesh and blood.

DAN

Look. I know you're upset about Jesse.

BUDDY

It's not that.

DAN

Yes, it is.

BUDDY

It is not.

DAN

Buddy, your best friend was killed in an incredibly gruesome way, then had his head rolled onto a disco floor in Tijuana. You have a right to be upset. You're grieving.

BUDDY

I want revenge.

DAN

Understandably. But you can't just go shooting at illegal immigrants. They're not the ones who killed Jesse.

BUDDY

How do you know?

DAN

And you'll get yourself thrown in jail.

BUDDY

The whole system sucks.

DAN

Yes, it's true. It sucks. But we're doing what we can, you and I, right now. Now, just put the gun away. I don't want to be a casualty of "friendly fire," you know what I mean?

BUDDY

You think I don't know how to handle a gun?

DAN

I think you're excitable. You're wrought up. Just stay calm and watch the border. And put that gun away.

BUDDY hesitates.

DAN

Put it away or I'll call you in, nephew or not. I mean it.

Reluctantly BUDDY puts the gun away.

End of scene.

Act I. Scene 7.

San Miguel de Allende. The next evening. Stylish rooftop bar, just before sunset. TOM sits with two drinks. SALVADOR, unseen by TOM, approaches his table.

SALVADOR
Tom?

TOM
Salvador. You came.

SALVADOR
Claro que si. Yo vengo.

TOM
Are we speaking Spanish now?

SALVADOR
Class is over.

TOM
Good, or I won't have much to say.

TOM stares at SALVADOR. Awkward pause.

SALVADOR
Umm... May I sit?

TOM
(Removes his shoulder bag from the one free chair.)
Oh, sorry! Here.

SALVADOR
(Sits)
Are you thirsty?

TOM
Thirsty?

SALVADOR
Tienes sed?

TOM looks at him quizzically.

SALVADOR

Or are you—how do you call it—a double-handed drinker?

TOM

What? Oh! No, this—this is for you. A Margarita. Do you like Margaritas?

SALVADOR

Gringos like Margaritas.

TOM

Right. Sorry. What would you like?

SALVADOR

Esta bien.

TOM

You're sure?

SALVADOR

I'm sure.

TOM

So... Salvador.

SALVADOR

Tom.

TOM

Hi.

SALVADOR

Hi. *(Beat.)* How do you like class?

TOM

Oh. It's great!

SALVADOR

It's full of old ladies.

TOM

Just three.

SALVADOR

And you.

TOM

And *you*.

SALVADOR

(After a beat.)

Is San Miguel what you thought it would be?

TOM

It's beautiful. The architecture's fantastic. The mix of styles, centuries-worth. Like the dome over there. What's the name of that church?

SALVADOR

La Purisima Concepcion. The church of the Sinless Conceiving.

TOM

Right. So, you've got that, neoclassical. And the baroque. That wild Mexican style... *churr... churre...*

SALVADOR

Churregueresco.

TOM

Churregue...

SALVADOR

Churregueresco.

TOM

That. Amazing. The church that looks like a shell for instance.

SALVADOR

San Felipe de Neri.

TOM

Juxtapose that with those Renaissance buildings, so wonderfully severe, around the main square.

SALVADOR

The *Jardin*.

TOM

The *Jardin*, right.

SALVADOR

They were private homes, you know.

TOM

The Canal family—I was reading. And altogether you've got the entire history of Western architecture, from the Renaissance to beaux art—or how do you call it? Por... what?

SALVADOR

Porfirian. For Porfirio Diaz, the dictator.

TOM

So you've got the Renaissance to beaux art within ten square blocks. On this continent! Not to mention the neo-gothic fantasy of the ParOchia (*mispronounces it*).

SALVADOR

ParoKEEa. You've done your homework.

TOM

Well I've had plenty of time wandering around town the past couple of days. Just me and the guidebook.

SALVADOR

Solito?

TOM looks at him questioningly.

SALVADOR

Alone?

TOM

I've never really taken a vacation by myself before. Not since college anyway. Before I met—when I was single. I went to Europe a couple of times. And Asia. For the architecture.

SALVADOR

Of course.

TOM

And the history. You know. Have you been?

SALVADOR.

To Europe? *Es un poco caro para nosotros*. It's a little expensive. For us.

Beat.

TOM
Do you want another drink?

SALVADOR
(Indicates his nearly full drink.)
No, thank you.

SALVADOR examines TOM.

TOM
What are you thinking about?

SALVADOR
You.

TOM
What about me?

SALVADOR
Tienes mucho animo.

TOM
Animal?

SALVADOR
Entusiasmo. Eres pasionante.

TOM
Passionate? Really?

SALVADOR
Y un poco... Inocente.

TOM
Innocent?

SALVADOR
Like a boy.

TOM
Oh, great.

SALVADOR
You're nervous.

TOM

You seem very—experienced.

SALVADOR

Oh?

TOM

I don't mean *that*—Just—that you know what you're doing.

SALVADOR

What *are* we doing?

TOM

Having a drink.

SALVADOR

El profesor y su estudiante.

TOM

El profesor. That sounds so—professional. And you came.

SALVADOR

Claro que si.

TOM

Clear of yes?

SALVADOR

You Americans are so literal. It means, “of course.” *Me invitaste. Yo vine.* You invited me, I came. Is that surprising?

TOM

Well... Yes, frankly.

SALVADOR

Because you invited me, or because I came?

TOM

Both.

SALVADOR

So you are often—how do you say it? You are often stand up? No, that is comedy.

TOM

Stood up. It happens.

TOM stares at him.

SALVADOR

You are staring...

TOM

Am I?

SALVADOR

Si.

TOM

You're different than you are in class.

SALVADOR

In what way?

TOM

You're... sassy.

SALVADOR

Sassy?

TOM

That's the wrong word. "Sarcastic."

SALVADOR

Sarcastico. A veces. And...? Que mas? What else?

TOM

See? Kind of like that—bossy.

SALVADOR

Dominante.

TOM

How did you become so confident? I'm not used to this.

SALVADOR

Used to what?

TOM

This. I'm married.

SALVADOR
You're married? I thought [you said—]

TOM
[Was married!] Sorry. I'm divorced.

SALVADOR
You're sure?

TOM
Of course I'm sure.

SALVADOR
How long?

TOM
Two years. About.

SALVADOR
Estas bromeando conmigo? Are you playing with me?

TOM
I'm single. See? No ring. I just... I never do this. If I were at home... If I were at home, no.

SALVADOR
Ah... el subjuntivo.

TOM
Sorry?

SALVADOR
The subjunctive. We will be studying it. "If I were at home," you said. But you are not.

TOM
No.

SALVADOR
In Spanish, and especially here in Mexico, the subjunctive *es muy importante*.

TOM
You said class was over.

SALVADOR

This is not for class. This is... Well, *vamos a ver*. You see, the subjunctive, for us, is not so much a form of conjugation, a verb tense, but a—a mood—of doubt, of uncertainty. You Americans are very sure of the future. “I *will* do this,” you say. “I *will* do that.” No doubt. The future, for you, is a certainty. In Mexico, no. The future is a dream. *Un sueño*. The present, for us is what is real. The past is real. The future? *No se. Si Dios quiere*. If God wants. *Entiendes?* Do you understand?

TOM

I’m not sure.

SALVADOR

When I was a child, my mother slapped me for not using the subjunctive. If I said, “We will go to the beach next week,” she would say, “*No!*” And slap me. “*Ojala que vayamos a la playa.*” Maybe we will go to the beach, if God permits. Not using the subjunctive—it is blasphemy.

TOM

Blasphemy.

SALVADOR

Hubris. *Cuidate*. Remember. During the Inquisition, San Miguel was the headquarters of Mexico’s Grand Inquisitor. The subjunctive is very important, Tom. And not just for class.

End of scene.

Act I. Scene 8.

San Diego. Same evening. The terrace of RICHARD's home, overlooking the Pacific. CARA and RICHARD drink Margaritas.

RICHARD

How's your Margarita?

CARA

Perfect. Give up law, and you could always be a bartender.

RICHARD

I wouldn't be able to afford this view.

CARA

There is that.

RICHARD

You know what I was thinking? We've never been away together.

CARA

Mexicali.

RICHARD

Besides that. Let's go somewhere. Hawaii. Cabo. Just the two of us.

CARA

I've got too much work.

RICHARD

A long weekend even. I know this wonderful little hotel north of Ensenada...

CARA

It's too dangerous there now.

RICHARD

Cabo then.

CARA

There's Julie...

RICHARD

Have her stay with Tom. It's been almost a year now, Cara, you haven't even spent the night.

I have. CARA

Not once. RICHARD

Part of the night, yes I have. CARA

I need more. RICHARD

I can't. There's— CARA

Julie's old enough to spend a night by herself now and then. Or she can stay with Tom. RICHARD

I just can't. Really, Richard, please. I need time. CARA

A year, Cara. That's— RICHARD

Let's watch the sunset. Out here by the hearth. And afterwards... *(she means sex)* It's been a week. CARA

Has it? RICHARD

It definitely has. CARA

RICHARD

(Hunggrily)

Hmnn....

CARA

But then... I need to go home.

RICHARD

Cara... A year.

CARA

I know.

RICHARD

We've got to move forward. Or backwards. Something.

CARA

Just give me some more time, Richard. Please.

Silence. They look at the Pacific.

RICHARD

I know you loved him. Tom. Somehow you never think it's going to happen to you. I didn't. You think you're different. That your love is more real, I guess. And then... You're not different. You're not different at all. Sylvia and I weren't anyway.

CARA

Eighteen years of marriage. A daughter in high school. A house. A whole life.

RICHARD

It's not easy. Infidelity.

CARA

I suppose. I wouldn't know.

RICHARD

What [do you—]

CARA

[Tom never] had an affair.

RICHARD

Well... Technically, maybe...

CARA

He didn't. Ever. And I was watching. He just kept coming to bed, later and later. One, two, maybe three in the morning. Every night, for a couple of years. Every night, till two in the morning, on his computer.

RICHARD

The pornography.

CARA

I've told you. Pictures. Websites. Chat rooms. Tom had this whole virtual life going on, every night, and I had no part of it. Couldn't have any part of it. A gay virtual life. People always think you'll see it coming. And maybe I should have. I mean, there were signs, I suppose, but—I didn't. Truly. As stupid as that sounds, I didn't.

RICHARD

It's not stupid.

CARA

Well, I think it's pretty damn stupid now. I should have figured it out in grad school, when we met.

RICHARD

How would you have known? Tom's not exactly—

CARA

I don't know. I should have. *He* should have known. Most people come out when they're in college, for God sake. It would have saved everybody a lot of pain.

RICHARD

There wouldn't have been Julie.

CARA is silent.

RICHARD

And we would never have met.

CARA

You never know. Life is funny.

Beat.

RICHARD

I burned the bed.

CARA

What bed?

RICHARD

When I found out. About Sylvia. I burned our bed. Took it out back. Hacked it up. Threw it in the hearth. A little lighter fluid... Up in flames.

CARA

(With new admiration)

Aren't you dramatic. For a Republican.

RICHARD

Then I sold the house, and had Tom build this one. It hurt like hell, but you have to move on.

CARA

That's what they say.

RICHARD

(He holds her.)

It's not just letting go, you know. You've got something to hold on to, Cara. You've got me.

CARA stares out at the sea.

End of scene.

Act I. Scene 9.

*The border. Same evening. LIGHTS up on the
MINUTE MEN.*

BUDDY

I still don't see why I can't have a gun. We've got a Constitutional right to bear arms, right?

DAN

According to some.

BUDDY

What?

DAN

Right, right. Apparently we do. But not here.

BUDDY

Why? That's fucked.

DAN

We keep having this conversation! Because it's against regulations. Besides you might actually use it.

BUDDY

Stupidest rules I've ever heard of. Like these gang-banger Mexicans and their fucking, drug-running Mexican Mafia—

DAN

The cartels.

BUDDY

Like they aren't carrying machine guns, and machetes, and fucking automatic rifles. There's mass graves down there with like hundreds of people in them.

DAN

Not hundreds.

BUDDY

It's out of control. And we're out here like a couple of pussies.

DAN

We're not a vigilante, Buddy. We're aiding law enforcement.

BUDDY

They don't do a fucking thing, these cops, the border patrol. You said yourself the feds just transport these wetbacks across the border and they come right back again. The government needs to do one thing—and one thing only—protect this country. And they can't even do that!

DAN

Which is why we need to finish the wall. All the way from the Pacific to the Gulf of Mexico. No gaps big enough to drive half a state through. Write your Congressman, tell him to wake the hell up.

BUDDY

Even so, these goddamn wetbacks will crawl over it, like monkeys, or under it, like snakes. You know they will. They're fucking animals.

DAN

Buddy. I really object to that kind of language.

BUDDY

What language?

DAN

This is not about racism.

BUDDY

Are you callin' me a racist?

DAN

Just watch the border.

BUDDY

This is about national security, pure and simple. Those drug-runners are like an army down there. They're ruthless. Look at what happened to Jesse.

DAN

I know you don't want to hear this, but Jesse was partly responsible. He was dealing, Buddy, you know that.

BUDDY

He didn't deserve to have his head chopped off. Like a fucking rat!

DAN

No. No he did not.

BUDDY

We've gotta keep that shit out of this country. All of 'em. All of those fucking, murdering wetbacks. That's why we're out here. That's what this is about.

*DAN is uncertain what to make of this response.
He parries.*

DAN

This is about trying to keep some kind of limit on immigration. We don't have unlimited resources in this country, or unlimited space. If our population grows like the Third World... Have you ever been to Mexico City?

BUDDY

Fuck, no. Been to Tijuana. And it's fucking dump. Always has been. Now it's a fucking war zone.

DAN

Well, Mexico City is an ecological disaster. The air looks like mud, and it's as noxious as a toxic waste dump. Millions of kids have asthma. The elderly have skin diseases, lung cancer.

BUDDY

Sounds like LA.

DAN

It's worse than LA by multiples. Every spring—at the end of the dry season, when the smog is worst—they put a canary in the middle of the Paseo de la Reforma and within hours the bird is dead. Just a hundred years ago the Valley of Mexico was still a kind of garden. And today there are 40 million people crammed into the city, half of them living on top of garbage dumps. We can't let that happen here.

BUDDY

(Contemptuous)

My uncle, the fucking tree-hugger. Professor of ecology, UC San Diego.

DAN

It's a job. A job I happen to like. Which is more than you have.

BUDDY

Why are you always riding my ass?

DAN

Because you're breaking your mother's heart. And you've got such potential.

BUDDY

You're just a couple of old hippies. Both of you.

DAN

A couple of old hippies who grew up and found work. What about you?

BUDDY

I'm not a hippy. I'm a Libertarian.

DAN

An unemployed Libertarian.

BUDDY

God [damn!]

DAN

[Just] watch the border.

End of scene.

Act I. Scene 10.

San Miguel de Allende. Hotel Sierra Madre. The next evening. TOM sits at a courtyard table, again with two Margaritas in front of him. After a moment SALVADOR enters.

TOM

There you are.

SALVADOR

Aqui estoy.

TOM

Two nights in a row. I'm on some sort of lucky streak. There must be something in the water.

SALVADOR

Luck is not what most Americans think is in the water here.

TOM

Seems like luck to me.

SALVADOR

And yet you have two drinks again, so I think maybe you also have faith, no? Or are you just thirsty, again?

TOM

This is for you.

SALVADOR

Then faith.

TOM

Faith, well... Hope maybe. I've never had much in the way of faith.

SALVADOR

No? You are agnostic? Atheist?

TOM

Umm... Uninterested? Religion doesn't speak to me. Except for the architecture. *A veces*. I was in a church this afternoon—which one was it... There's a little square out front.

SALVADOR

Tom. They all have a little square out front.

TOM

They sort of do, don't they? This one had another church next door. And an old convent, a garden...

SALVADOR

El Templo de San Francisco.

TOM

That's it. I felt like was being physically pulled up, like the Gothic naves of Europe. So. I believe in that.

SALVADOR

In architecture?

TOM

In the human capacity to... To be drawn up. To be taken out of ourselves. To express grandeur. And mystery. And beauty. That's what I believe in. I'm sorry. That sounds pretentious.

SALVADOR

It sounds *pasionante*.

TOM

Did I tell you about this place? Seven different colonial mansions, now one hotel. This particular building used to be the home of the archbishop—built circa 1580. And the art in the porticos—originals, 1700's. Museum quality, really. They say it's the finest hotel in Mexico.

SALVADOR

One of the finest. Guero. I used to work here.

TOM

You—worked here?

SALVADOR

As a waiter. When I got back from la UNAM.

TOM

La UNAM?

SALVADOR

La Universidad Nacional Autonama de Mexico.

TOM

[Ah.]

SALVADOR

[In Mexico] City. The best rated school in the Spanish speaking world.

TOM

And after you graduated, you had to wait tables?

SALVADOR

The pay is good. For Mexico. Look at the prices. And there are so many Americans. The New Yorkers are very good tippers. Californians, too.

TOM

Thank you.

SALVADOR

Texans, no. Maybe 15 percent. And the Mexicans—ay! You're lucky to get 10. But the Europeans are the worst. They think the tip is included.

TOM

They should know better.

SALVADOR

They do. They pretend they don't. And they leave nothing.

TOM

What about teaching school?

SALVADOR

What about it?

TOM

When you graduated—why didn't you?

SALVADOR

The money. My mom was alone. My little brothers were still in primary school. Somebody had to help when my father left. I became the head of the house.

TOM

But you were just a kid yourself.

SALVADOR

I had graduated from la UNAM.

TOM

You couldn't teach school in San Miguel?

SALVADOR

Oh, I could—for \$10 a day. Or I could work here, as a waiter, and make 50. That's 10 times the average daily wage. And I was only 21. My mother wanted me to teach, but she liked the money.

TOM

And your father?

SALVADOR

He moved to Guadalajara with his lady friend.

TOM

So, your parents are divorced?

SALVADOR

Oh, no. *Somos catolicos*. We're Catholics. We don't divorce in Mexico. It may be that one of every two babies in this country is born to a single mother, but we don't divorce.

TOM

We do.

SALVADOR

Yes. Because Americans are not Catholics.

TOM

We have Catholics. Lots of them.

SALVADOR

No. In Mexico, *somos catolicos*. In the United States. Protestants. Even the Catholics are Protestants.

TOM

You've never been to the United States.

SALVADOR

Even your Catholics divorce, no?

TOM

Sometimes.

SALVADOR

See? And do you have *peregrinos*?

TOM

Peregrinos? As in falcons?

SALVADOR

Pilgrims.

TOM

Pilgrims? (*joking*) Well, at Thanksgiving.

SALVADOR

Peregrinos. Thousands and thousands of people who walk for days, weeks even, bringing nothing—no bedding, no food, just a few pesos—making their pilgrimage to pray before the image of the *Virgen* at San Juan de los Lagos, not far from here. Do you have pilgrims like that?

TOM

No.

SALVADOR

Or *peregrinos* like the millions who crawl on their knees to worship the Virgin of Guadalupe at her basilica in Mexico City? So many the Church has installed moving sidewalks, four of them, conveyor belts running back and forth, to keep the worshipers moving past the image. Do you have pilgrims like this?

TOM

No, nothing like that.

SALVADOR

Then you have no Catholics. We Mexicans, whether we believe or no, *somos catolicos*.

TOM

My wife is Catholic.

SALVADOR

Your ex-wife.

TOM

Yes.

SALVADOR

No. Not like us.

TOM

And you believe?

SALVADOR

Believe. That is like asking if I believe I am Mexican. Or if I believe I am a man. Or if I believe I am brown-eyed. *El catolicismo* is embedded inside our language, it's in the way we think and move and are. Believing has nothing to do with it. *Yo soy*. I am. *Has notado*—Have you noticed on the houses around town little plaques on the door—“*Somos catolicos?*”

TOM

Oddly, yes. They're everywhere.

SALVADOR

Remember *ser y estar*? We studied this yesterday, *recuerdas?*, the two forms of the verb “to be.” What form is being used in the plaques, *ser o estar?*

TOM

Ser. Somos. “We are Catholics.”

SALVADOR

Exactamente. Somos catolicos. Immutable. *No dicimos*—We don't say, *Estamos catolicos*—using *estar*—Today we are Catholics, tomorrow... who knows? Presbyterians, Buddhists. No. *Somos.* Our essence, our identity. *Entiendes?*

TOM

(Warmly, impressed)

Each time you promise we're not in Spanish class, and yet...

SALVADOR

Perdon. Now you tell me more about your work.

TOM

Yo soy arquitecto.

SALVADOR

“*Soy,*” see? “I am an architect.”

TOM

But I could change my job. It's not immutable.

SALVADOR

But it is essential to who you are, no?

TOM

Yes.

SALVADOR

Por eso. You are an architect. And you design houses, no?

TOM

Yes.

SALVADOR

Que tipo? Like this?

TOM

Not like this. Modern.

SALVADOR

All glass and steel with chairs of white plastic?

TOM

I have pictures on my computer, in my room. I could show you.

SALVADOR

No. I cannot see the pictures in your room.

TOM

Why not?

SALVADOR

We are at the Sierra Madre. I cannot go to your room.

TOM

I don't understand.

SALVADOR

My cousin works here. My mother's friend is at the front desk.

TOM

Because they would think you're gay?

SALVADOR

They know that.

TOM

Then... what?

SALVADOR

Because—because they would think that I am a whore.

TOM

(Silent. Then,)

I could bring the computer out here.

SALVADOR

I have already stayed too long. Come with me. To *El Mirador*.

TOM

Where is that?

SALVADOR

Up the hill. With a view of the city. Along the way the street, *la calle*, becomes very narrow and steep—a staircase—*una escalera*. They call it, “*El Beso*.”

TOM

El beso? I should know that.

SALVADOR

You should.

TOM

What does it mean?

SALVADOR

The kiss.

End of scene.

Act I. Scene 11.

On the border. That evening. LIGHTS up on Minute Men.

DAN
What are you doing?

BUDDY
Smoking.

DAN
Roll your own?

BUDDY
Want a drag?

DAN
What the hell? You cannot get high when we're on a patrol.

BUDDY
I am not high. I'm just—stayin' chill. Want some?

DAN
You're lucky you're here with me and not with anybody else in this whole operation, or you'd have been out on your ass the very first night.

BUDDY
Then why did you bring me out here?

DAN
Because your mother begged me to. She thought it might help—channel your anger. Into something useful.

BUDDY
So you're baby-sitting me?

DAN
We're watching out for you, Buddy.

BUDDY
I don't need anyone to watch out for me. I'm fine.

DAN
Really. *(Beat.)* I'm also paying you.

Fuck.

BUDDY

You're welcome.

DAN

End of scene.

Act I. Scene 12.

San Miguel, Callejon El Beso. Shortly after the earlier scene. A dark, narrow staircase of an alley, bordered by high stone walls draped by bougainvillea. Some light spills through the foliage from an electric light somewhere. TOM and SALVADOR kiss ravenously, grasping each other with an urgent need. A NOISE.

TOM

What was that?

SALVADOR

What?

TOM

Someone's coming.

(They listen.)

SALVADOR

Kids. Now they are going the other way.

TOM

(TOM holds SALVADOR's face)

Oh, Salvador...

He kisses him hard. Another NOISE.

TOM

Fuck! Straighten up!

SALVADOR

It's nothing.

TOM

We should go.

SALVADOR

Do not worry.

TOM

No, really.

SALVADOR

One?

TOM

One?

SALVADOR

Beso mas.

Again, they kiss, losing themselves. NOISE.

TOM

We've got to go.

End of scene.

Act I. Scene 13.

The border. Action is continuous from previous scene.

BUDDY

It's fucking boring out here. Nothing ever happens.

DAN

Sometimes you've got to stick with things through the boring parts. That's why they call it work.

BUDDY

Yeah, but they're not paying us. That isn't work. That's like pansy-assed nonprofit shit.

DAN

I'm paying you. Now, put out that joint.

BUDDY

Everything's fucked. It's all rigged.

DAN

Yeah, rigged for those who actually apply themselves. Put out the joint.

BUDDY

What the hell? You're sober enough for the both of us.

DAN

Put it out.

BUDDY takes another drag from the joint, then puts it out.

DAN

Now, just watch—

BUDDY

Just watch the border.

End of scene.

Act I. Scene 14.

The next morning. TOM sits with coffee and studies his Spanish in the courtyard of the Sierra Madre.

TOM

(Writes into a workbook, composing in Spanish, and speaking softly)

*Cuando era mas joven...um... Cuando era mas joven sueño—no—suene—irregular?
Cuando era mas joven—*

CARA on another part of the stage calls from her cell phone. TOM's phone rings. He answers.

TOM

Hello?

CARA

We got it!

TOM

Cara?

CARA

The deal! We landed the deal. In Baja. I just got an email from the governor's office in Mexicali—at this hour of the morning!

TOM

The project.

CARA

We got the rights to 200 square kilometers of the Laguna Salida! Like 125 square miles! The largest solar energy site in the Western Hemisphere! *My* project!

TOM

Cara, that's—that's fantastic.

CARA

It's fucking awesome. Oh, my God, I was getting nervous. The last couple days have been hell. We were practically there, and suddenly the Mexicans were coming up with all these objections I thought we'd taken care of weeks ago. And doing all of this in two languages, back and forth. Not easy. But Richard—Richard was amazing. He was very smooth.

TOM

He is that.

CARA

And here we are! We did it! Oh, my God.

TOM

Congratulations. You're making the world a better place.

CARA

Shut up.

TOM

I mean it. Does Julie know?

CARA

She's already off to school. I've got to get ready. I've got a meeting with the COO at 9 to go over all this.

TOM

That's amazing news, Cara. *Felicidades*.

CARA

Gracias. Expect a lot more trips to Mexicali.

TOM

I can be your translator.

CARA

How are classes?

TOM

So far so good. Tiny class. Just three old ladies and me—or, three old ladies and *I*. And the teacher, of course. The *profesor*—as they're called down here.

CARA

Profesor.

TOM

Sounds so serious, huh? He's young, but—very knowledgeable.

CARA

(Suspects there's more)

Uh, huh.

TOM

Hey, just to let you know, I'm going to be looking for another place to stay, an apartment or something.

CARA

What's wrong with the hotel? I thought you loved it.

TOM

Oh... it's expensive, and... I could use something a little more—*comodo*—"roomier."

CARA

What for?

TOM

Oh, just... you know. Spread out. Make breakfast at home. There's lots of places here. So, anyway, I'll let you know.

CARA knows there is more. Pauses a beat.

CARA

Well, send me an email or something.

TOM

I'll call.

CARA

I gotta run.

TOM

Congrats. And give Julie a *beso* for me. That's "kiss," I learned last night.

CARA

I see. Bye.

*CARA closes the call. She considers the conversation for a beat, then hurries off.
TOM returns to his Spanish.*

End of scene.

Act I. Scene 15.

TOM's living room. Two weeks later. JULIE sits dejectedly. Offstage CARA calls for her.

CARA

Julie? Julie! Julie are you in here? Julie!

CARA enters, sees her.

CARA

What are you doing here? Your father's in Mexico for another week still. You know that. Julie? Julie. Now you're not talking to me? I've been calling you for the past two hours. Julie!

JULIE

What?

CARA

You scared me to death. You weren't at dance class. I couldn't find you anywhere. How did you get all the way over here?

JULIE

Bus.

CARA

Well, you could have at least left a message. Or answered your phone.

JULIE

It's not working?

CARA

Why not?

JULIE

It's just not.

CARA

It's brand new.

JULIE

It's just not working, okay?

CARA

We've got a warranty. We'll take it back.

JULIE

I threw it against the wall, and it broke.

CARA

You...

JULIE

So I couldn't answer your calls. Sorry.

CARA

You did what?

JULIE

I threw it against the wall.

CARA

Would you like to explain why?

JULIE

No.

CARA

Young lady. That phone cost a good deal of—

JULIE

Dad gave it to me, not you.

CARA

Yes, for your 16th birthday, because you're so grown up now. But you're acting more like 6 than 16.

JULIE

Just leave me alone!

JULIE cries.

CARA

Oh, for heaven's sake. Snap out of it. It's not that big of a deal.

JULIE turns away from her, she is still crying.

CARA

Julie. Julie?

Leave me—

JULIE

It's just a phone.

CARA

It's not that.

JULIE
(Through tears)

Well, what is it? Julie? Julie.

CARA

Michael.

JULIE

Michael?

CARA

JULIE is silent.

What about Michael? What?

CARA

He—he...

JULIE

What did he do to you?

CARA

He didn't even tell me. He just—He didn't even call me or anything. He just—right on his wall. God, now the whole world knows.

JULIE

Knows what?

CARA

I just want to die.

JULIE

What is it?

CARA

He's got this new girl up there, and I'm—totally... I'm not even on his friends list.

CARA

Oh, baby...

JULIE

And now my phone is wrecked. My good new phone that Dad just gave me...

She breaks down.

CARA

Sweetie. We can get you a new phone.

JULIE

It's expensive!

CARA

I'll buy it. Your father will never know. Now, let's go pick up some dinner. We can get Thai food, how's that? And then head home.

JULIE

I am home.

CARA

Julie.

JULIE

Why did we ever move anyway? You and Dad could have [stayed together.]

CARA

[Julie.]

JULIE

[You're the one] who wanted to move out. We could have just stayed right here, at home, all of us, like before.

CARA

You know why your father and I are not together.

JULIE

It was your fault. *You* wanted the divorce.

CARA

Julie.

JULIE

So Dad likes other guys, so what? It's not like he has a boyfriend or anything. I asked. Couldn't he just have, I don't know, gone out or something? [Why not?]

CARA

[I don't want] a life like that. Would you?

JULIE

I just want to be in my own house. Don't you miss being at home?

CARA

Of course I do.

JULIE

Then why?

CARA

I can't live here. Everything about this house is your father. He designed it. He furnished it. It's all about him.

JULIE

Not just him, all of us. We designed it together. Every single room. Like we were Dad's clients. What about your writing loft?

CARA

I don't write any more.

JULIE

You used to. Poetry. You used to read me your poetry.

CARA

Stop.

JULIE

Why don't you write anymore, Mom? Why not?

CARA

Stop.

JULIE

Our whole lives were here.

CARA

Not any more.

JULIE

I can live here if I want, you know. I've got the right. When I turn 17, I can live with whoever I want to. That's the law.

CARA

Julie.

JULIE

I wanna live here, with Dad, in my own home. I want my life back. Like before.

CARA

Don't dwell on things that are gone.

JULIE

Why not? You do.

End of scene.

Act I. Scene 16.

San Miguel de Allende. That afternoon. A handsome apartment with a terrace. TOM and SALVADOR are naked—or as close to naked as possible; they should remain in a state of intimate undress or semi-dress throughout the scene. Just now they are tangled in sheets and bedclothes—the obvious wake of extended love-making. TOM rolls on top of SALVADOR.

TOM

Y finalmente...

SALVADOR

Finalmente? Are we finished?

TOM

Una pausa. Por ahora. Finalmente... (Kisses him with each word) Uno – mas – beso.

SALVADOR

Beso. You learn very well.

TOM

You're a good teacher.

SALVADOR

Of Spanish?

TOM

Of many things. I'm still a novice, you know.

SALVADOR

With Spanish?

TOM

With many things. It seems silly at my age.

SALVADOR

Tell me, *por favor*, I am not the first.

TOM

No. But... almost.

SALVADOR

Dios mio. Pues... You would never know.

TOM

My life feels so strange to me. Foreign. Like I'm crossing a border.

SALVADOR

(Joking)

You have, Guero. You are in Mexico.

TOM

I mean, metaphorically. For 40 years I thought I was straight. Now I'm—not. For almost 20 years I was married, now I'm—not. Single now, and wishing I was—not. I feel like I'm moving from one—sort of identity—to another. That's a kind of border, isn't it?

SALVADOR

Una frontera espiritual.

TOM

Spiritual. Some of it's pretty carnal.

SALVADOR

Gracias a Dios.

TOM

Dios? How do you jibe all this, anyway?

SALVADOR

“Jibe?”

TOM

Reconciliar. You're a Catholic...

SALVADOR

[Si.]

TOM

[And you're—]

SALVADOR

Gay?

TOM

Si. Claro que si.

SALVADOR

What is to reconcile?

TOM

Did I miss a papal pronouncement or something?

SALVADOR

Yo soy gay. It is God who creates your essence. *Soy not estoy. Ser y estar.* Remember? Essence versus a transitory state. *Yo soy gay. Yo soy catolico. Yo soy mexicano. Yo soy hombre.* My essence. Immutable. *Entiendes?*

TOM

(affectionately)

Mi profesor.

SALVADOR

I'm sorry.

TOM

No, it is what you are. *Tu eres profesor.*

SALVADOR

Como tu eres arquitecto.

TOM

Verdad. (Beat.) So, what do you think of my houses?

SALVADOR

Your houses?

TOM

On the website. What's your favorite?

SALVADOR

They are beautiful, Guero, all of them. But I think I like your own the best.

TOM

Mine? Really? Not Richard's? That's *my* favorite.

SALVADOR

No, *prefiero la tuya.* It's more... *de ti.* You designed it for yourself, no?

TOM

And my whole family.

SALVADOR

And now you live there alone. *Pobrecito...*

TOM

I never expected divorce. I never expected—any of this. I put Cara and Julie both through God knows what kind of hell—just because—I mean, most people don't take till they're in their mid-40s, before they figure it out. Most people know. *You* knew. But me, I wait until I'm married—with a teenage daughter, before I get a handle on something as basic as...which way my dick was pointing. I mean, that's pretty elementary. I wanted to be faithful. As a husband. And I *was*—technically, I guess. No affair.

Beat. Notices SALVADOR is smiling.

TOM

Why are you smiling?

SALVADOR

In Mexico it is expected.

TOM

What is?

SALVADOR

That men will have... *aventuras*.

TOM

Adventures?

SALVADOR

Affairs.

TOM

Like your father?

SALVADOR

And my grandfather, my uncles. *Todo el mundo*.

TOM

Everyone?

SALVADOR

Mostly, yes.

TOM

What do the women think?

SALVADOR

They don't like it. But it's the way. *Es costumbre.*

TOM

But no divorce.

SALVADOR

Mostly no. *Somos—*

TOM

I know. And you? *Aventuras?*

SALVADOR

Yo? Yo soy romantico.

TOM

Romantic.

SALVADOR

And I am looking for... *fidelidad.*

TOM

Fidel...

SALVADOR

Someone who is... faithful. Not like—*pues...* Not like the men I know here. But a man who is—*como tu. Fidel.* It's a dream. *No se.*

TOM

What else do you dream about? I mean, for instance... Are you going to teach Spanish in San Miguel and live with your mother forever?

SALVADOR

What is wrong with that?

TOM

Nothing. I just—wonder if you ever dream about another kind of life. Like me.

SALVADOR

(Correcting)

“Like I do.”

TOM

Si. Como yo hazo.

SALVADOR

(Corrects him.)

Como yo hago. Irregular. I told you, I want to teach in the university. But it is difficult. I need to go back to school [and]—

TOM

[For your] master's?

SALVADOR

Or doctorate. But there is no money, so...

TOM

So you teach Spanish to—

SALVADOR

Extranjeros. There are benefits. (Meaning Tom.)

TOM

Oh, si? Like?

SALVADOR

Como...

SALVADOR works on TOM, seducing him playfully, but seriously, hungrily. TOM struggles to continue his line of inquiry.

TOM

So. You dream of *fidelidad*.

SALVADOR

(Does not stop)

Si.

TOM

And the university.

SALVADOR

(Keeps at it)

Si.

TOM

Uh, huh...And... What else?

SALVADOR continues.

TOM

Que mas? Salvador?

SALVADOR
(Still at it)

Como que?

TOM

I don't know. For instance, maybe... Will you fall in love?

SALVADOR stops abruptly.

SALVADOR

Will I?

TOM

Yes.

SALVADOR

Will I...? Fall in love. Is that what you ask me?

TOM

Si.

SALVADOR

Why the conditional?

TOM

The conditional?

SALVADOR

You are using the conditional tense, Guero.

TOM

No entiendo.

SALVADOR

You are not being a very good student right now. The conditional signifies a possibility in the future. Why do you speak of a possible future, when... *Ya estoy enamorado de ti.*

TOM

Enamorado? Enamored?

SALVADOR
Already I am in love. *De ti.* With you.

TOM
You are?

SALVADOR
Claro que si.

TOM
(Takes this in)
Me too. I think.

SALVADOR
You *think*?

TOM
Well, I—I’ve never been in love before.

SALVADOR
You’ve never—?

TOM
Not like this. I—I guess I’m suffering from arrested development, huh?

SALVADOR
(Almost overcome with affection)
Guero...

TOM
What does “guero” mean, anyway?

SALVADOR
Uh...Gringo.

TOM
Gringo?

SALVADOR
Un gringo amable. Muy amable.

TOM
Loveable?

SALVADOR

Si. Muy, muy, muy amable.

TOM now moves on SALVADOR who surrenders with abandon.

End of scene.

Act I. Scene 17.

A few days later. CARA sits on one side of the stage, TOM and SALVADOR in TOM's San Miguel apartment.

CARA

First of all, I should tell you I don't really believe in psychiatrists—therapists—whatever. Not that there's anything wrong with them—you—you all. It's just that I prefer to work things out on my own. I mean, no one cares more about me than me, right? Especially these days. But I came here because... Well, I need advice.

TOM stands and paces, like a lawyer in court. SALVADOR sits, listens attentively, like a jury.

TOM

Alright, we're going to think this through. Here's what I think. I believe I'm falling in love with this kid. Not kid. Man. Young man. Salvador. (*Relishes this*) Salvador Antonio Ortega Zevallos. Logically, it's ridiculous, I know that. I'm 45, he's 25. He lives here. I live in San Diego—*los Estados Unidos*. We've known each other for not even three weeks, and... And any sensible person would buy him a box of chocolates and call it a day.

CARA

Two years ago my husband and I divorced. Two *years* ago. And I can't seem to get over it. never wanted divorce. I'm Catholic. Is that normal? Not being Catholic, but... Some people I know get divorced, six months later, they're remarried. Did their lives before mean so little that in *six months*...? Maybe so. Not me. And I *am* dating. A perfectly nice man. A lawyer. I hate his politics, but, so what. We've been seeing each other for—God—nearly a year now. And I've never spent the night. Oh, we've had sex. Great sex, actually. But I've never even stayed the entire night. That's fucked up. It means something. I know that. But I don't want to—stay. I just—I say I've got to get home to my daughter, Julie, but really I just want to get home to my own bed. (*Wryly*.) It's a single. It was my daughter's when she was a child. I just want to crawl inside and wait for morning. When I can go back to work. And feel in control. Like myself.

TOM

I don't know what I was expecting. Why did I invite you for drinks in the first place? Well, that's pretty obvious, actually, but—but after that, why? Even after we'd—you know—and more than once. Why? I was hoping I guess. Hoping for something like this, if I'm honest. Not an *aventura*, as you would say, but, what? The Real McCoy? Lifelong love? On vacation? That's—crazy. Cara will think I've completely lost my mind. But, yes, in fact, that's what I wanted. *This* is exactly what I wanted.

CARA

I don't like this. This session. It's not you... it's me. God. Isn't that what they all say? It's what—It's what Tom said. "It's not you, it's me." Of course it was fucking him! Was I the one

CARA (cont'd)

who suddenly realized I was gay when I was 40-something years old?! And now he's... off in Mexico, schtooping his Spanish teacher, from what I can gather. And here I am... Here I am. Talking to a shrink. At a hundred and fifty dollars an hour. Not even an hour. Fifty minutes. And my insurance doesn't cover this, I'll have you know. Here I am.

TOM

This *is* exactly what I wanted. And it should feel great, right? I should feel—I don't know Great. Feels scary as hell. Scary as fucking hell. So. So, if this is what I've been dreaming about... then why am I so nervous? Why am I afraid I'm going to wake up in San Diego and... and it will all be gone? Because you can't lose what you don't have, can you? If what you're looking for is always just a dream, then... then it's always yours, in a certain way. But if you find it, if you actually have it, what you're dreaming about, you can lose it. It's funny. People here believe in miracles. And we—we Americans—we believe in dreams. There's a difference, I think. I'm not sure what exactly. But I am certain about one thing. I love you (*very deliberately*) Salvador Antonio Ortega Zevallos.

CARA

My daughter thinks I can't let go. She's wrong. I don't *want* to let go. Here's what I want. And this is what I came to ask you. I want to move back in with Tom, with my ex-husband. Back to our house. To the home we built. Together. I know that sounds crazy. Anybody would say it's crazy. But... that's what I want. Tom can have his—adventures. I know he's gay. I'm not kidding myself. Maybe I'll keep Richard. On the side. I could use that. But... There's a lot more to marriage than sex, God knows. Surely you know that. Companionship, am I right? A family. A life. A life together. A home. I love him. And I know he loves me. So what's wrong with being together? (*Smiles ironically.*) Even if we're divorced.

Pause. SALVADOR looks deeply at TOM, gets up, and starts to exit.

TOM

Salvador?

SALVADOR

I'll be back.

TOM

Where are you going?

No response. SALVADOR keeps walking.

TOM

Salvador?

To pray.

SALVADOR

End of scene.

Act I, Scene 18

SALVADOR in the Parroquia church, stands or kneels before the life-sized crucifix of El Señor de la Conquista (The Lord of the Conquest). He prays.

SALVADOR

Señor Jesus. Quisiera orar, pero... (Looks about)... I need to pray, but I'm going to pray in English, if You don't mind. (Looks around again.) Hay mucha gente. There's a... lot of people... in here. (Crosses himself.) Señor Jesus—Lord Jesus—I am in love. You know this. With a gringo. Lo siento. Not even a Catholic. And a gringo. I am sorry. But a good man. An architect. A great architect. I think. He says he loves me. I do not know if he knows what love is, but he says this. Divorciado. Lo siento. But it was not my fault, the divorce. And a good father, creo. Inocente. That is the word. That is what he is, Tom. Tomas. Inocente. Mas que yo, Tu sabes. So much more innocent than I. Y tiene... diecisiete? anos mas que yo. You know that. Seventeen years older than I. Pero esta bien, no? (He notices someone is looking.) To have someone who loves me. For once. It is good, no? O Señor... que debo hacer? You know I cannot go with him, and he will not come here, I do not believe so. Señor, que debo hacer? What am I going to do? Y que quisieras que haga yo con mi mamacita, mi hermano? What about them? My mother, my brother? Mi familia. Señor, tell me. Por favor. What now?

End of scene.

Act I. Scene 19.

On the border. That day. LIGHTS up on MINUTE MEN.

BUDDY

Man, this is tedious. I could really use a joint right now.

DAN

You smoke too much.

BUDDY

You never smoked pot?

DAN

Of course I've smoked pot. I was in Vietnam, remember?

BUDDY

I bet you got good shit over there. Not like the crap we get here. Mexico, though... Mexico's got some mighty fine weed, gotta say that. Some of the best.

DAN

That so?

BUDDY

Hell yeah. That's where this stuff's from.

DAN

You get your stuff from Mexico? And you don't think you're contributing to the narco-trafficking?

BUDDY

What do you mean?

DAN

You're smoking pot from Mexico. How do you think it got here, like a load of tomatoes? In a semi truck at Otay Mesa?

BUDDY

Who knows? Maybe.

DAN

Where do you get it?

BUDDY

Where do I get what?

DAN
Your pot.

BUDDY
You know.

DAN
I don't.

BUDDY
Friends, connections. Why do you wanna know?

DAN
Just curious. I pick up my vices at the grocery store.

BUDDY
That's what's so fucked up. Isn't this supposed to be legal in California? Medicinal marijuana, right?

DAN
Yeah, well, the feds don't like it. And federal law trumps state and local law.

BUDDY
What about states' rights?

DAN
Re-read the Constitution.

BUDDY
We should just legalize it. That would put an end to all this shit, right? No gangs. No cartels. Nobody getting murdered just for delivering what people want. Just commerce, right? Like tomatoes.

DAN
Buddy. You're sure you're not selling it again.

BUDDY
What are you talkin' about?

DAN
Just checking.

BUDDY
This is for me. Unless you want some.

DAN

Here. Take my binoculars. I've got to take a piss.

End of scene.

Act I. Scene 20.

TOM's apartment in San Miguel. A couple days later. The moment is post-sex. SALVADOR, in underwear or bathrobe, stands on the terrace and sullenly takes in the view. TOM, also in underwear or bathrobe, approaches and embraces him seductively from behind.

TOM
(With relish)

Enamorado. En-am-o-ra-do. What a wonderful-sounding word. *En-am-o-ra-do.* The rhythm. *En-am-o-ra-do de ti.*

SALVADOR

Por que?

TOM

Por que? Because you are beyond—

SALVADOR
(Explodes)

Por que? Por que, por que, por que!?

TOM

Salvador?

SALVADOR

Por que!?

TOM

Por que what?

SALVADOR

Tomorrow you leave, no?

TOM

I have to. I've got work—

SALVADOR

Why? Why do I fall for American men? *Yanquis.* Who leave the next day. Older men. *Ricos.* (Notices TOM's reaction) Yes, Tom, you are not the first. Why do I not fall in love with *jovenes* my own age? *Mis propios paisanos?* *No muchachos como yo?* *Nunca.* *Por que prefiero un sueño irreal en vez de—*

TOM
(Angry and concerned)

I can't understand you.

SALVADOR
 Why do I want something completely unreal instead of—something... Why? Always men, like you, who go home in a few weeks, or months, to their real lives, and I am left—alone, *con un sueño completamente irreal. Por que?* Do I hate myself so much? Do I despise my own history? *Odio la realidad del presente* so much that I prefer to dream of a future *con nuestros enemigos?*

TOM
 Enemies?

SALVADOR
 Read our history, Tom. *Enemigos.*

TOM
 I haven't fallen for someone like me either. My own age. My own country.

SALVADOR
 No. You have chosen a younger man from a poorer country. *Colonial.* Like the Spanish.

TOM
 You don't really believe that.

SALVADOR
Mira. Es verdad, no? Why don't you just fuck me again, *Senor Conquistador!* Once more before you go!

TOM
 Salvador.

SALVADOR does not respond.

TOM
 "Savior." *Es verdad. Mi Salvador.*

SALVADOR
 You don't need me to save you, Tom. You are rich and handsome and live in the most powerful country in the world. You do not need me.

TOM
 Except I do.

SALVADOR

See how you feel tomorrow, after you get home.

TOM

Estoy enamorado—de ti.

SALVADOR

Are you? Truly? *Enamorado de mi?* Or are you in love with me like how you're in love with San Miguel. Enamored of some, I don't know, some romantic idea. The exotic foreigner, who will make your life different, and interesting. The younger man who will make you feel *joven* again, like you are starting over. It's an old story, Tom.

TOM

It's new for me.

SALVADOR

Go home and read some books.

TOM

I want you to come with me.

SALVADOR

Come where?

TOM

Home. To my real life.

SALVADOR

Home. With you.

TOM

Yes, to the United States.

SALVADOR

I can't.

TOM

Don't you ever think of leaving?

SALVADOR

I did, *lo recuerdas?* For college.

TOM

I mean, do you ever think of going to the United States?

SALVADOR

Every Mexican thinks of going to the United States. And we are ashamed. But we go. I tried to cross.

TOM

You did?

SALVADOR

With my uncle, *mi tío*. When I was a kid—16. We went to Tijuana.

TOM

Tijuana?

SALVADOR

I know. So close to you.

TOM

And what happened?

SALVADOR

My uncle's sister, my Tia Dolores, had moved there. And from her house we could see the lights of San Diego County—and the fence along the border. My *tío* had been across before, several times. He didn't need *coyotes*, anyone to help, except a neighbor of my *tía*, who drove us out of the city and to the border.

TOM

Did you make it across?

SALVADOR

Si. We crawled up an arroyo until my uncle said, "*Aquí estamos.*" We'd crossed. It was totally black. We just kept walking, in the dark—there were six of us altogether—to get as far inside as we could. When the sun came up, we should have stopped and hidden, I guess, but we kept walking, along a little road. And I was thinking, doesn't anyone live here? Where are all the houses? Just boulders. Boulders and brush. It was hot. One of the kids, a little girl from Michoacan, started crying. Then around a curve came a white truck, with a seal on the side, and lights on the top.

TOM

The border patrol.

SALVADOR

La Migra. They took us back to Otay Mesa. The Mexican police seemed bored. It was so strange—We took a bus to my *tía*'s house, like nothing was out of the ordinary. Like we were coming back from the mall. My *tío* wanted to try again. Three nights later we

SALVADOR (cont'd)

went to another place, closer to Tijuana. He made it through. I couldn't run fast enough. So, you see, the United States for me, it is impossible.

TOM

This time you'll be with me. I'll take you across.

SALVADOR

(Exasperated)

Ay! Tu sentido del poder! Como un rey!

TOM

(Becoming irritated)

I didn't get that.

SALVADOR

Do you think you can just wave us through like you're some sort of king? I cannot get a visa.

TOM

A visa?

SALVADOR

I need a visa, Tom, to enter the United States. Legally. All Mexicans do.

TOM

I didn't need a visa to come here.

SALVADOR

Of course not. But those are your laws. I must have a visa. And I cannot get one.

TOM

Why not? Lots of Mexicans come to the United States. They must have visas.

SALVADOR

Because I tried to cross, not once but twice before, and I was caught. So your government will not issue me a visa.

TOM

Ever?

SALVADOR

Not for many years.

TOM

But—you were just a kid.

SALVADOR

I broke the law, Tom. *Si yo no hubiera tratado cruzar la frontera cuando era mas joven...*

TOM

I'm not following.

SALVADOR

The subjunctive. In the past. "If I had not tried to cross the border when I was younger..." But I did...

TOM

You could come with me now.

SALVADOR

Podria obtener una visa. I could get a visa now. And things would be different. But they are not. Do you see? The past is certain: I tried to cross and I was caught. The present is certain: I cannot go to the United States.

TOM

There must be something we can do.

SALVADOR

It is not possible.

TOM

But if you could...

SALVADOR

Si yo pudiera. Of course. *Pero es un sueño,* Tom. It's impossible. *Completamente.*

TOM

I don't accept that.

SALVADOR

No, Gringo, of course you don't.

TOM

[Salvador.]

SALVADOR

[You are such] an American! You cannot accept it—*que tu puedes fracasar*, that you could fail—because you have never been defeated. You or your *gente*. Well. *Bienvenido a Mexico*.

End of Act I

INTERMISSION

ACT TWO

Act II. Scene 1.

Stage is dark. We hear TWO VOICES.

MAN 1 (DAN)

Fuck! You're not supposed to shoot 'em!

MAN 2 (BUDDY)

Goddamn wetbacks. Why can't they just stay on their own fuckin' side of the border?

MAN 1 (DAN)

Here's what we do. It was self-defense. He tried to fight. You had to shoot him. We'll be alright. They won't ask any questions.

End of scene.

Act II. Scene 2.

San Diego. TOM's home. He has just returned from Mexico.

CARA

You've got to be joking.

TOM

No estoy bromeando.

CARA

Stop that.

TOM

I'm not joking.

CARA

You're bringing this kid here.

TOM

He's not a kid.

CARA

How old is he?

TOM

Twenty-five.

CARA

How old are you? Let's do the math. [That would be...]

TOM

[I'm aware of the] age difference.

CARA

Look, I understand going on vacation, to an exotic locale, having a little adventure—I hope you were safe—like a shipboard romance. Great. But you leave a shipboard romance on the ship. You don't bring them back home with you.

TOM

Why do *you* care?

CARA

Because—why do you think?—I do care about you, even after everything. And because you happen to be the father of my daughter. So, yes, I have an interest in who you're—"with."

TOM

Thank you for your concern.

CARA

And now he's moving up here—with you? I hate to tell you, but this kid is using you. You're a successful American, he's a—

TOM

Well-educated professional.

CARA

Who makes squat. Am I right?

TOM

Teachers in Mexico are grossly underpaid.

CARA

Just like here. And so, like millions of others South of the Border, he finds a ticket North. Only instead of having to sneak across the border and work as a busboy, Principe—your new one—walks right into a palace, of sorts, beautifully designed—by you—and with a view of the Pacific. Smart kid.

TOM

This is not about economics.

CARA

Oh, no?

TOM

It's about—I don't know why this is hard to say to you—This is about—

CARA

Love? In three weeks? You're acting like a love-sick, or lust-sick, adolescent. Which is perfectly understandable in him—a 22 [year old.]

TOM

[25.]

CARA

[But which] is certifiably insane for someone who's the father of a sophomore in high school.

TOM

People our age don't fall in love, is that what you're saying?

CARA

In three weeks? [And move in together?]

TOM

[If it's a mistake,] it's my mistake to make.

CARA

Am I going to have to meet him? And Julie?

TOM

Cara. It's hard. We both have new people in our lives. We knew that would happen. We wanted it to.

CARA

You wanted it.

TOM

You did too. You did. You wanted the divorce.

CARA

After. After I knew—about you. What alternative did I have? *(Beat.)* When is he coming?

TOM

Not sure. Here's the thing. He doesn't have papers.

CARA

What kind of papers?

TOM

A visa. He can't get a visa to come into this country.

CARA

Why not?

TOM

He just can't.

CARA

People get visas all the time. The Wal-Mart in San Ysidro is jammed with Mexicans who go back and forth across the border every day. They have visas of some sort or other. Why can't what's his [name—]

TOM

[Salvador.]

CARA

...get one?

TOM

I need your help.

CARA

My help?

TOM

So Salvador can—get everything in order.

CARA

What am I supposed to do?

TOM

Talk to Richard. He's a lawyer. He's got political connections.

CARA

[Oh, now you appreciate his politics!]

TOM

[Knowing Richard, I'm sure] he could work something out.

CARA

What exactly needs to be worked out?

TOM

We need to get Salvador a visa.

CARA

Why doesn't he just apply, like everybody else?

TOM

He's tried. He's been refused.

CARA

Any particular reason? Drug running? Murder? What kind of criminal have [you gotten yourself involved with?]

TOM

[He's not a criminal for God's sake.]

CARA

Then why can't he get a visa?

TOM

He can't get a visa because he crossed before—illegally—and he got caught. Twice. Now, he's on the government's records, and he can't get a visa. Of any kind.

CARA

Uh, huh. And how's Richard supposed to help?

TOM

He specializes in international transactions, [right?]

CARA

[Why would he?] He's not exactly a supporter of illegal immigration. As you know.

TOM

Because he loves you. *(Beat.)* Doesn't he? [If you ask him—]

CARA

[That's a personal] question. I don't trust this kid. You know nothing about him. And now he's using you to get him into this country. And you want me to *help?*

TOM

Just ask Richard if he could—I don't know, pull some strings, talk to someone, whatever it is he does.

CARA

What makes you think this guy's not going to drop you the minute he gets here? I'm sorry, but this has disaster written all over it.

TOM

That's *my* risk.

CARA

Yours, Richard's, mine, Julie's. Absolutely not.

TOM

[Cara...]

CARA

[I feel for you,] Tom, I really do. You're infatuated or something. Fine. But there is no way I'm going to ask Richard to help smuggle into this country some guy whom you've known for only three weeks. That's crazy.

TOM

Cara.

CARA

Just who *is* this person? I'm sure he's cute. He's probably a good Spanish teacher—and God knows what else—but—No. [No.]

TOM

[I'm asking] you.

CARA

No.

TOM

Then I'll ask Richard myself. I'm going to get Salvador up here. With or without a visa.

CARA

If you do—I swear I'll go to court to get an injunction to keep you from seeing Julie.

TOM

Under what pretext?

CARA

Harboring a criminal.

TOM

He's [not a—]

CARA

[Illegal aliens] are criminals, Tom. Look it up. And I've got "connections."

TOM

You wouldn't do that.

CARA

Try me. And I'm not exactly familiar with how this works, but I'm sure we could let the right authorities know the whereabouts of this guy, and have him packing across the border. In a matter of [minutes.]

TOM

[You're a] complete—

CARA

Mother. And I will protect my daughter. Even from you. *Comprende?*

TOM

This isn't about Julie. You know that. It's about *me*.

CARA

[What are you—?]

TOM

[You don't] want me with someone else. No matter who it is.

CARA

That's not true. You've told me all about your—dates. And I've listened.

TOM

Oh, for a night maybe, you don't mind. But... You can't let go. You said so yourself.

CARA

I'm leaving.

She exits. He calls after her.

TOM

Cara! I'm already gone!

End of scene.

Act II. Scene 3.

San Diego. The terrace of RICHARD's home, overlooking the Pacific. Towards sunset, the following day. JULIE sits on a recliner, texting into her cell phone. RICHARD and CARA, a little ways off, kiss. JULIE looks up.

JULIE

Oh, God.

RICHARD

(Breaking away slowly from the kiss)

Okay, who wants Margaritas?

JULIE

(Does not look up from her cell phone)

I do.

RICHARD

That's one. Cara?

CARA

She is not having a Margarita.

JULIE

Why not?

CARA

You're 16. You are not having a Margarita. Richard, why are you provoking her?

RICHARD

I'm just being hospitable.

JULIE

Yeah. It's polite.

CARA

(To Julie)

What are you doing?

JULIE

Facebook.

CARA

Can't you just be right here with us?

JULIE

What am I supposed to do? You guys are making out.

RICHARD

We're celebrating.

JULIE

Celebrating what?

RICHARD

Your mother's and my first anniversary.

JULIE

First anniversary of what?

RICHARD

Our first date. Margarita for you, Cara?

CARA

Sure. Was it really a year today?

RICHARD

(Slyly)

You don't remember? Right here, next to the hearth, the sun going down...

CARA

Of course I remember.

RICHARD

I would hope so.

There is a sly exchange as they remember epic sex. JULIE takes note.

JULIE

What?

CARA

(Covering)

Richard was all upset because he couldn't find his Margarita salt.

RICHARD

I wanted it to be perfect. Was it perfect?

CARA
(Enough)

Richard.

RICHARD
Well, no problem with salt tonight. Alright, here we go. Margarita for you... *(Hands one to CARA.)* Margarita for me. Margari-ti-ta for you. *(Hands to JULIE.)*

JULIE
A what?

RICHARD
Margaritita. I just invented it. No tequila.

JULIE
Oh.

RICHARD
(Whispers to her)
There's a shot. Don't tell your mom.

JULIE
Thanks.

CARA
What are you two doing?

RICHARD
Bonding.

JULIE
Bonding.

JULIE texts into her phone. Another exchange.

RICHARD
To your mother. And... *(meaningfully)* one memorable sunset.

CARA
Richard, enough.

They drink.

RICHARD

My God, look at that view. It always amazes me how Tom managed to catch the angle of the setting sun just—fantastic. And the way the light changes on these walls. He's got quite an eye, Tom.

CARA

Yes, he's very good.

RICHARD

Understandably, I guess.

CARA

Understandably?

RICHARD

Well, he's naturally good at that sort of thing.

CARA

What do you mean?

RICHARD

It's in his genes. Isn't that what they're saying now?

CARA

Architecture?

JULIE

(Not looking up from her phone)

He means cuz Dad's gay.

RICHARD

No offense. But it seems to help.

CARA

Stop while you're ahead.

JULIE

Dad's so lucky. Why can't *I* just go on vacation for three weeks?

CARA

You go on vacation. We took you to Hawaii just last year.

JULIE

That was the year before. Ever since you and Dad split up we haven't gone anywhere.

RICHARD

Well then, all three of us should get away. Where would you like to go?

JULIE

Nowhere.

CARA

Richard and I have to go back to Mexicali. You could go with us there.

JULIE

What's in Mexicali?

CARA

Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

RICHARD

There's San Felipe. That's not too far from Mexicali.

CARA

She's not going to like San Felipe.

RICHARD

There's a beach.

CARA

There's a beach here.

RICHARD

And you can drink there at 18. I remember that.

JULIE

San Felipe sounds cool.

CARA

She's just 16.

JULIE

San Felipe sounds awesome. Let's go.

RICHARD

A mini vacation.

CARA

You're going to hate it.

JULIE texts.

JULIE

Can I take Michael with me?

CARA

Michael? I thought you broke up.

JULIE

We got back together.

CARA

We're not going to San Felipe.

JULIE

You said.

CARA

(To RICHARD)

Look what you've done.

RICHARD

Why can't Michael come?

JULIE

Yeah? Why not?

CARA

Where is he going to stay?

RICHARD

We'll get another room.

CARA

I am not taking somebody else's minor across the border.

JULIE

Michael's 18.

CARA

He is?

JULIE

(She receives a text message.)

Oh my God!

CARA

What?

JULIE

Michael just posted a video to YouTube. The Zeitgeist gig.

CARA

Would you please take that inside?

JULIE gets up.

JULIE

I'm telling Michael about San Felipe. Maybe he can get a gig down there.

She exits.

CARA

Why do you egg her on?

RICHARD

She's a good kid.

CARA

I know she is.

RICHARD

I always wanted a daughter. Any child, really. But a daughter especially. Most men want boys, I think, but—I don't know, I always imagined a daughter. Sylvia and I, we were waiting for the right time. That's what we said. For me to get through law school, to get established in the firm. For Sylvia's business to take off. Till we had enough money. And then, when that all actually happened... Well. You know.

CARA

Sylvia was a fool.

RICHARD

We could have fun in San Felipe. All of us.

CARA

We'll see.

Beat.

RICHARD
I got a call from Tom.

CARA
Tom?

RICHARD
This afternoon. He said he needed a favor.

CARA
Oh, Christ. He called you?

RICHARD
What do you know about this kid?

CARA
What kid?

RICHARD
This Mexican kid Tom wants to bring across the border.

CARA
He told you about that?

RICHARD
He told me needed a favor.

CARA
And you're going to help him? He could be a criminal, Richard, this "kid," as you call him.

RICHARD
He's a Spanish teacher.

CARA
He's an illegal.

RICHARD
Illegal? He's in his home country.

CARA
Why are you defending this guy?

RICHARD

I like Tom. I've always liked him. I know he's queer, but he's practically family. Now he's fallen for this kid. Good for Tom.

CARA

What is wrong with you? An undocumented—gay—Mexican—who wants to enter this country illegally. How many more points of objection could you possibly have to this scenario?

RICHARD

I know what you think of my politics, Cara, but I'm not a monster.

CARA

What else?

RICHARD

What do you mean?

CARA

The bargain you made with Tom. Don't play dumb.

RICHARD

Cara...

CARA

I know you. Both.

RICHARD

It's all above board.

CARA

Bribery?

RICHARD

Cara! I'm an attorney!

CARA

What then?

RICHARD

A deal. That's what I do, right? Mediate deals.

CARA

Uh, huh...?

RICHARD

I help Tom, he helps me. You love this house don't you? Well, imagine what Tom could design for that property in Cabo. And all I have to do is get one Mexican kid across the border. Not so difficult. Hopefully with a visa. A bit more difficult. If I do, we get the custom-designed furniture along with the floor-plans. But so long as this kid gets safely into this country, we get the designs for the house in Cabo.

CARA

How are you going to swing that?

RICHARD

Trade secrets, my dear.

CARA

I hate you both.

RICHARD

And it's easier now. With the Supreme Court decision.

CARA

What decision?

RICHARD

DOMA. Gay marriage.

CARA

I'm leaving.

RICHARD

You need more tequila.

CARA

Julie!

RICHARD

There's no deal.

CARA

We're going home!

RICHARD

I'm joking!

CARA

I don't believe you.

RICHARD

Tom offered, actually. But I told him this one's on me.

CARA

And why is that? You're working pro bono?

RICHARD

To make you happy.

CARA

Happy?

RICHARD

I'm helping to get your ex hooked up and out of your hair.

CARA

Julie! *(To RICHARD)* What is wrong with you? *(To JULIE)* Let's go!

RICHARD

You're too connected, Cara. You're still too connected to Tom. It's not good for you. Or him. It's certainly not good for us.

CARA

You're a therapist now?

RICHARD

You never wanted the divorce with Tom.

CARA

What are you—Of course I wanted the divorce. It was my idea.

RICHARD

I mean if he hadn't been gay.

CARA

That's a pretty big if. And not the way it turned out. I'm a big girl, Richard. I can deal with reality.

That doesn't take away the sting.

RICHARD

Sting.

CARA

She is pulled inside of herself. A beat.

I love you, Cara.

RICHARD
(This is big. First time ever.)

You've got a peculiar sense of timing.

CARA
She doesn't know how to respond

Just finish your Margarita. And watch the sunset.

RICHARD

CARA
(Decides to flee)

I've got to go. *(Shouting.)* Julie! I'm going to the car! *(Back to RICHARD)* Don't help Tom with this. Please.

She starts to exit.

Cara!

RICHARD

Julie!

CARA

It's our anniversary!

RICHARD

End of scene.

Act II. Scene 4.

A few days later. RICHARD's terrace.

TOM

Ten years?

RICHARD

That's the norm, in his situation.

TOM

You mean when you've been—

RICHARD

Have you thought of getting married?

TOM

Married? No. How could we? No. He's not in California.

RICHARD

In Mexico. You could get married in Mexico.

TOM

Mexico?

RICHARD

Yes, Tom. Mexico City. You really are new to this, aren't you?

TOM

Mexico City. You've done your research.

RICHARD

And with the Defense of Marriage Act overturned, the feds have to recognize any legitimate marriage, gay or straight, performed anywhere in the world.

TOM

Really?

RICHARD

Really.

TOM

Well, that's it! My God! It's so simple! Thank you! You want those drawings?

RICHARD

Hold on. It's not... that simple. He was apprehended, right?—your friend—for crossing illegally? That complicates things. Considerably.

TOM

I see.

RICHARD

But being married... to a U.S. citizen... would help. And we'll be working with the Congressman and his office to mitigate things. But even so, we're talking three to five.

TOM

Three to five what?

RICHARD

Years, Tom. This according to the best immigration lawyer I know.

TOM

[Christ.]

RICHARD

[Is there] any way you guys can do a sort of... long distance thing?

TOM

Fifteen hundred miles, two times zones and a border—for five years—that's pretty long distance.

RICHARD

There is another—possibility. If he was already here.

TOM

Here?

RICHARD

In the district.

TOM

The district? Well, then he would already be in this country, and that's the whole problem.

RICHARD

Is that the problem, or is getting a visa the problem? Because crossing the border is one thing, and getting a visa is another.

TOM

Talk me through this?

RICHARD

Just say that—what is his name again?

TOM

Salvador.

RICHARD

Just say that Salvador is here in San Diego—we won't worry about how he got here for the moment. But if he were...

TOM

(Under his breath)

Subjunctive.

RICHARD

What?

TOM

Nothing.

RICHARD

But if he were, and we could show a respectable history of work, and, say, study—maybe he's going to school...

TOM

Grad school. He wants to get a PhD.

RICHARD

Perfect.

TOM

Don't you need a Social Security number or something?

RICHARD

Tom. People – find – a way.

TOM

Right.

RICHARD

And if you were married, all the better. So, say Salvador is here, and we appeal on his behalf, showing he works and studies and has financial support—you, his husband—then we go to the Congressman...

TOM

I thought this guy opposes immigration.

RICHARD

Every Congressional office provides constituent services. Especially when this particular constituent... (*indicates himself*) *me*, has provided services to the *Congressman*.

TOM

So, you're saying that first we have to somehow smuggle Salvador across the border. Illegally.

RICHARD

Tom. I'm an attorney-at-law. I'm simply saying that *if* Salvador were in fact already here, in San Diego—we're not asking how—then...

TOM

Got it.

RICHARD

There's somebody you might want to meet. He's—he's involved with immigration matters. And if the two of you can work something out, then... Then everyone stands to benefit.

TOM

Who is this guy?

RICHARD

A professor. Ecology of all things.

TOM

How's that going to—

RICHARD

He's a Minute Man.

TOM

A what?

RICHARD

You know, these guys on the border.

TOM

Why in the world would I want to talk to [one of those—]

RICHARD

[Because you] both need something. That's how deals are made. You want to get your friend into this country. The professor wants the Congressman to author a bill.

TOM

For what?

RICHARD

For a wall.

TOM

A wall?

RICHARD

Along the border. All the way from San Diego to Brownsville.

TOM

Why doesn't he just do it, the Congressman? I thought that would be right up his alley.

RICHARD

There are political considerations. The Congressman is a conservative, after all, and he doesn't want to appear to be colluding with the Administration for a solution—to immigration.

TOM

That is so fucked.

RICHARD

So authoring the bill would require a certain expenditure of political capital on the Congressman's part. And the expenditure of political capital generally requires a bit of...

TOM

Actual capital.

RICHARD

Persuasion.

TOM

And the professor has capital? I'm not getting this.

RICHARD

I have capital. Or rather I can raise it. Politics is expensive.

TOM

I'm still not sure I'm following.

RICHARD

If the professor agrees to help you—with Salvador—and he's in a position to do so—then I will make sure the Congressman does everything in his power to push this damn wall all the way from Imperial Beach to the Gulf of Mexico. Clear enough? So, talk to the professor. And if you guys can—come to an agreement—then...

TOM

"Everyone benefits." You like this sort of thing, don't you? (*Beat.*) How do I get a hold of this guy?

RICHARD

He's on his way. Should be here any minute.

TOM

You're good. You sure you don't want the designs for that house in Cabo?

RICHARD

No need. If this works out, I benefit too.

TOM

You benefit?

RICHARD

Cara—she needs a little help—getting over you, to be frank. Nothing puts out the flame you've been carrying than seeing your ex—day after day—married to somebody else. I know. And the fact that, in your case, it's another guy... well. You see, I never work *pro bono*. Unless I really, really, believe in the cause. Can I freshen your drink?

TOM

You got any coffee?

LIGHTS DOWN. Moments later LIGHTS UP. RICHARD has gone, and TOM has been joined on the terrace by DAN.

DAN

What I'm saying is that Mexicans should stay in Mexico and fix the country's problems. It only exacerbates the situation when the brightest and most industrious pick up and leave. It is the Mexican government that is to blame for unemployment, for lack of services, for environmental disaster. Mexico is a rich nation in terms of natural

DAN (cont'd)

resources. Oil, tourism, agriculture... Did you know the wealthiest man in the world is a Mexican? Taxes aren't collected. Not on the wealthy. The oil revenues go into the hands of the politicians and their friends. It's corruption that keeps the country poor—and that keeps driving immigrants across our border.

TOM

Maybe they just want a better life.

DAN

Why not demand a better life right where they are? Because the government of Mexico, like Cuba, uses emigration to siphon away the malcontents, the most motivated, and so stave off real change that could transform the whole nation. And the money the emigrants, the illegals working in this country, send back keeps the whole country afloat. It's Mexico's second largest industry, so to speak. A wall, would not only benefit the United States, it would instigate transformational change inside Mexico itself, because it would cut off the escape valve, you see. Let the pressure build up and who knows, maybe another revolution could finally address the root cause of Mexico's problems—which is endemic corruption. I'm not a reactionary, I'm a progressive. Environmentally, economically, and politically. I just believe in cutting off immigration.

TOM

And you think that's possible?

DAN

With a wall, very nearly. We're almost half way there. Did you know that? Over a thousand miles already in place, and the results are undeniable. But we've got fifteen hundred more to go. And now the Senate's getting close to approval.

TOM

Twenty-five billion dollars. Isn't that what they're saying? Double the border patrol. Build the fence. Bring out the drones.

DAN

We don't need all that. An electrified wall would do the trick. And a lot more economically. Without it, we will lose every inch we have won to keep this country from environmental catastrophe—with some semblance of the open space and wilderness that shaped this country's character—all of that will be undone unless we stop this flood of illegal immigration *now*.

TOM

One more Mexican arrival really wouldn't make a difference, would it?

DAN

Your friend.

TOM

He's well educated. He won't be an economic burden. I'll make sure of that.

DAN

And he certainly won't reproduce, so that's not a concern. He sounds like a promising young man, your friend. In fact, he sounds exactly like the kind of person who ought to stay in Mexico and work for change.

TOM

He just wants to live his life.

DAN

In this country. It's indicative, I suppose, of the cynicism and self-centeredness that corruption breeds.

TOM

I despise your politics.

DAN

And you aren't informed enough to have an opinion. I just need Richard to get the Congressman to author the bill.

TOM

For your goddamn wall. So Salvador makes it across, but thousands of others never do.

DAN

Millions, actually. But we work together, you and I, and your friend gets through.

TOM darkly considers his choices.

End of scene.

Act II. Scene 5.

San Miguel de Allende. A few days later. TOM's past accommodations.

SALVADOR

What are you saying? *Como puedes—?* How can you ask me to leave my mother and little brothers forever.

TOM

Not forever. Once you're across, we'll get you a visa, and you can come back.

SALVADOR

In three to five years? *Years*, Tom?

TOM

I want you to be with me.

SALVADOR

Then come to San Miguel.

TOM

I'm here right now.

SALVADOR

I mean to live.

TOM

I can't.

SALVADOR

Porque no?

TOM

Julie, for one.

SALVADOR

You can cross the border. You could see her whenever you want.

TOM

Whenever I want if I'm living in Mexico? I'm her father.

SALVADOR

And I am a brother, [a son.]

[I know you—]
TOM

[How can I] give that up?
SALVADOR

I'm not asking [you—]
TOM

[For] three to five years?
SALVADOR

TOM
I would love to live in San Miguel, if I could. Truly. I've thought about it. Very seriously. But I don't see how it could work. I've checked it out. Your work visas are as difficult to get as ours are.

SALVADOR
Many Americans live here.

TOM
Many Americans are *retired* here.

SALVADOR
Many work, too.

TOM
Painting. Puttering. Pretending to write novels.

SALVADOR
And running hotels, galleries. Real estate.

TOM
Selling houses rather than building them. I can't do that. I'm an—

SALVADOR
Because *tu eres arquitecto*.

TOM
Yes.

SALVADOR
Eres. Immutable.

TOM

And I can't practice architecture in San Miguel. Not very conceivably.

SALVADOR

What about me? *Yo soy muchas cosas, tambien. Yo soy hijo de mi madre. Yo soy hermano de mis hermanitos. Yo soy mexicano. Yo soy.* I am. How do I keep that—immutable—in San Diego?

TOM

[I don't know.]

SALVADOR

[When I cannot] return to my home?

TOM

I don't know. I don't know!

Silence.

TOM

Of course you are many things. Immutable. That I love.

SALVADOR is silent.

TOM

Come to America. And you can go back to school. I'll pay for it. Get your PhD. Become a *profesor* in a university. It's what you dream [about.]

SALVADOR

(With some humor)

[You are] tempting me.

TOM

(With humor)

I am *trying* to! Oh, Salvador... I am so—*enamorado*—

SALVADOR

Don't say it.

TOM

One thing I've wondered. In Spanish, why is it "*estoy enamorado*"—I am in love—using *estar*, the transitory form and not *ser*?

SALVADOR

Why do you think? Is it not usually transitory, to be in love?

TOM

Is that the way it is for you? Just for a while?

SALVADOR

I am speaking of language, Tom.

TOM

Odd. Because right now, it feels immutable to me. I don't care if it's wrong. I'm going to say "soy." Unchanging. *Yo soy enamorado. De ti. (Beat)* I want to make a new home, Salvador. With you. *Juntos.* I want to build a life with you. *Como dos arquitectos.*

SALVADOR

Dos arquitectos.

TOM

Dos arquitectos casados.

SALVADOR

Casados.

TOM

I want to marry you, Salvador.

SALVADOR

Tom...

SALVADOR is silent, uncertain. TOM goes to his bag. He takes out an architectural drawing and rolls it out.

TOM

I wanted to show you this.

SALVADOR

What is it?

TOM

A design.

SALVADOR

I can see that.

TOM

It's a home. For us. A stab at it, anyway. *Mis pensamientos.* I need to know what you'd want, what you'd imagine for—

SALVADOR

Dream.

TOM

Dream—for it to be, but... Well.

SALVADOR considers the plans.

SALVADOR

What about your current house?

TOM

I'd sell it.

SALVADOR

It's so beautiful, your house.

TOM

It wasn't designed for us.

SALVADOR

I did not think you would leave your home for me.

TOM

I built my home for another life. You design houses for the people inside of it. To hold them, to provide a kind of stage for them to play out their lives together. That's what a home is, ideally—a sort of physical expression of the lives inside of it.

SALVADOR

Como un sacramento. The visible sign of an unseen reality. In *catolicismo* we call it—

TOM

A sacrament.

SALVADOR

Like marriage.

TOM

(Smiles)

All right. Anyway... *Una casa nueva por una vida nueva. Juntos y casados.*

SALVADOR

Together and married. *Como un sueño.*

TOM

So we would need a new home.

SALVADOR

So we *will* need.

TOM is confused.

SALVADOR

Why the subjunctive? We *will* need a new home. *Sin duda.* No doubt.

End of scene.

Act II. Scene 6.

TOM's home. A week later. Stage is dark. We hear TWO VOICES.

DAN

Fuck! You're not supposed to shoot 'em!

BUDDY

Goddamn wetbacks. Why can't they just stay on their own fuckin' side of the border?

DAN

Fuck. Okay. Here's what we do. It was self-defense. We caught him. He tried to fight. You had to shoot him. Here, put this knife in his hand. We'll be alright. They won't ask any questions.

TOM, in his living room, fully dressed, but asleep on his sofa, awakes with a start.

TOM

Salvador? Salvador!

He realizes he's been dreaming.

Fuck. What are we doing?

End of scene.

Act II. Scene 7.

*On the border. The next evening. Dusk. LIGHTS up on
MINUTE MEN.*

BUDDY
What are you doing?

DAN
Texting.

BUDDY
(Amused)
Shit.

DAN
What?

BUDDY
I didn't think dudes your age knew how to do that.

DAN
It's just spelling. On a phone.

BUDDY
Who are you texting?

DAN
None of your business.

BUDDY
Fuck you.

DAN
You're in a lousy mood tonight.

BUDDY
So are you.

DAN
Why didn't you just stay home like I asked you to? Take a night off?

BUDDY
This is my gig, right? My job, like you've been tellin' me.

DAN continues texting. BUDDY notices something.

BUDDY

Fuck. Fuck! Over there! Uncle Dan!

DAN

It's nothing.

BUDDY

Down in the wash.

DAN

It's nothing. One of your deer again.

BUDDY

There. There! That is not a deer.

DAN

It's almost dark. You can't see.

BUDDY

That is a fucking wetback. I'm calling this in.

BUDDY reaches for his phone in his knapsack. Dials, all the while keeping an eye on the wash.

BUDDY

Don't you fucking see him? He's not a hundred yards away! What is wrong with this fucking phone?

DAN

Battery dead?

BUDDY

I just charged it. Goddamn! You call. Call this in! Goddamn, he's right over—he's already on this side.

DAN

I don't see anything.

BUDDY

Fuck! I'm getting my gun.

BUDDY goes for his bag. DAN reveals the gun.

DAN
 You mean this?

BUDDY
 What the—

DAN
 Salvador!

BUDDY
 How did you get my fucking gun?

DAN
 I served in Vietnam. That's how. *(To offstage.)* Salvador! *Esta bien!*

BUDDY
 Who are you—

DAN
 Salvador! We're over here! By the big rock. Over here!

BUDDY
 Who the hell are you—

DAN
 Shut up, Buddy! And just stay calm. We've got a visitor.

SALVADOR enters. He sees the gun and is startled.

SALVADOR
Que paso!

SALVADOR puts his hands up.

SALVADOR
 [What is happening?]

DAN
 [What are you]—oh, put your hands down, this isn't for you. It's his. Hi there. I'm Dan. This is Buddy. Buddy, say *bienvenidos* to Salvador.

BUDDY
 What the hell is going on here?

DAN
(To SALVADOR)

Are you okay? Where's your friend?

SALVADOR

He's in a Jeep.

DAN

Call him.

SALVADOR pulls out his cell phone, dials.

BUDDY
(To DAN)

What the fuck are you up to?

SALVADOR

Tom. *Estoy aqui.* I made it across.

BUDDY lunges for SALVADOR, tackles him and pins him to the ground.

BUDDY

You goddamn wetback!

SALVADOR

What is—Help!

DAN

[Let him go!] Let him go, Buddy!

BUDDY

I'll kill you, you bastard.

SALVADOR

[Get off of me!]

DAN

[I mean it, let him go!]

BUDDY

You're helpin' a goddamn wetback! I'm gonna kill him!

[Get off!]

SALVADOR

[I swear to God!]

BUDDY

BUDDY starts beating SALVADOR.

[*Santa Maria,*] *ayudame!*

SALVADOR

[You motherfucking] wetback!

BUDDY

Ayudame!

SALVADOR

Lay off of him!

DAN

I'm gonna kill you, [you fucking, murderers!]

BUDDY

[Tom!]

SALVADOR

[Lay off] of him!

DAN

DAN fires the gun into the air. BUDDY is startled. SALVADOR scrambles out from under him. He is bleeding and bruised.

[What the—!]

BUDDY

[*Santa Maria!*]

SALVADOR

DAN
(*To BUDDY*)

I told you to lay off. Now just stand back and put your hands up.

BUDDY

You're a fucking traitor to this country.

SALVADOR

[Que paso?!]

DAN

[One more Mexican] isn't going to make a difference, but a wall that goes from here to the Gulf of Mexico... You've got to be strategic.

SALVADOR

Que paso! Me dijo que estuviera seguro. Completamente seguro!

DAN

(To SALVADOR)

You look pretty beat up, there.

SALVADOR

I was told I would be safe, [and I'm—]

BUDDY

[You're a fucking] traitor to this country!

DAN

[There's some] water over there to wash up, and a first-aid kit in my bag.

SALVADOR

And ... *habia peleado brutalmente! [Mentiras!]*

DAN

[Sorry] about my nephew. [He's] a little excitable.

SALVADOR

Tu sobrino?

BUDDY

You think you're so [goddamn smart...]

DAN

Better call your friend back. Tell him where we are.

SALVADOR hesitates for a moment, then places a call on his cell phone.

BUDDY

I'm gonna turn you in.

DAN

For what?

BUDDY

Assault with a deadly weapon. Helping a wetback. I know that's fucking illegal!

DAN

And who are they going to believe, you or me? Just keep your mouth shut and maybe I won't say anything about this, alright?

DAN produces a large bag of marijuana.

DAN

This stuff is all for you, I suppose? Commerce, is that it? Like a load of tomatoes. Your mom's going to be disappointed, Buddy.

BUDDY

Fuck.

DAN

(To SALVADOR)

You get your friend?

SALVADOR

He's coming.

DAN

Welcome to the United States.

End of scene.

Act II. Scene 8.

*RICHARD's terrace. Late afternoon, the next day.
RICHARD works on a laptop. CARA enters in a rush.
RICHARD starts to get up.*

CARA

There you are.

RICHARD

Cara—[I didn't know you were—]

CARA

[Don't get up.] I just need some information. How do you have an illegal alien deported?

RICHARD

What?

CARA

How do you have someone deported?

RICHARD

Who?

CARA

That kid. Tom's—you know. That kid from Mexico.

RICHARD

He got across?

CARA

I don't know how, but apparently, yes, he's here.

RICHARD

How did you find out—

CARA

Julie told me. He got a little beat up, I guess, in the process.

RICHARD

Beat up?

CARA

How do we have him sent back? Isn't there an agency? ICE or something, is that it? What does that stand for? Do we just tell them where he is?

RICHARD

And Salvador's with Tom?

CARA

How do you know his name?

RICHARD

Tom told me. Remember? He asked for my help.

CARA

You didn't have anything to do with—

RICHARD

I did.

CARA

(Coldly furious)

I asked you not to.

She starts to leave.

RICHARD

Where are you going?

CARA

To call the police.

RICHARD

Cara...

CARA

How dare you interfere with my life?

RICHARD

I did what I thought was best for you and for—

CARA

For *me*? This is a private matter between me and my husband, not—

RICHARD

Ex. Ex-husband, [Cara.]

CARA

I'm aware of my [marital status.]

RICHARD

[Your *gay* ex-husband,] who happens to be in love with another [man.]

CARA

I don't [believe—]

RICHARD

[In love with] another man, Cara, not *you*.

CARA turns to go. RICHARD catches her arm and holds it tightly.

RICHARD

Tom is not in love with you, Cara. But I am. I don't know why sometimes, but I am.

CARA

Let me go.

RICHARD

I love you.

CARA

Let me *go!*

RICHARD

Not until *you* [let go.]

CARA

[Leave hold] of me or I will report you to the police.

RICHARD

Let—Tom—[go!]

CARA

[I'm serious.] NOW.

RICHARD releases her.

RICHARD

I'm trying to help you, Cara.

CARA

I don't need your help. I'm a grown woman. I manage projects worth millions and millions of dollars. I don't need *you* to run my life.

RICHARD

You need somebody, Cara. We all do.

CARA

Well, it won't be you.

RICHARD

Cara.

CARA

Good night.

RICHARD

I've got a proposal.

CARA

I have nothing to say to you.

RICHARD

What if I invite Tom and Salvador here. Right now.

CARA

I have no intention of ever laying eyes on that person.

RICHARD

What if I invite them over here. You meet him. And then *you* decide. Whatever you say goes.

CARA

There's nothing that can sway me. I'm going to protect my family.

RICHARD

Protect them from what? Your marriage is over, Cara. You and Tom are divorced. And for a very good reason. Your ex-husband is gay and has found someone new. You can't change that.

CARA

I can send this kid back. That I *can* do.

RICHARD

Or are you trying to protect yourself. From the future. You can't do that either.

CARA

You should really stick to law.

RICHARD

Fine. Then, let this kid have his day in court.

CARA

Right here. And I'm what, judge, jury, and prosecutor? What does that make you? Counsel for the defense? You enjoy playing with people's lives, don't you?

RICHARD

That's what lawyers do.

CARA

And you are fucking arrogant.

RICHARD

Confident.

CARA

Do whatever you want. I'm going to call the police one way or the other. They can either go to Tom's house to get this guy, or they can come here, it doesn't make any difference to me.

RICHARD

Then I'll call Tom.

CARA

Julie's here. She's waiting in the car.

RICHARD

Tell her to come in. We'll have the whole family.

LIGHTS change, then up. JULIE sips from a drink.

CARA

What are you drinking?

JULIE

A Margari-ti-ta.

CARA

Let me taste.

JULIE

It's mine. Dick gave it to me.

CARA

His name is Richard.

JULIE

I like to call him Dick.

CARA

If that's alcohol...

JULIE

Where is Dick, anyway?

CARA

He's on the telephone. Get your feet off the white pillow. Why do I have to—

JULIE

Why are you in such a bad mood?

CARA

I'm not.

JULIE

Right. You need a drink.

CARA

This is difficult for me.

JULIE

Why?

CARA

Why do you think?

JULIE

I think you're still in love with Dad, and you need to get over it. Let him be happy, for God's sake, Mom.

CARA

I have nothing against your father being happy. This—person—he's brought—

JULIE

He's a nice guy. You'll like him.

CARA

You actually met this—when?

JULIE

When Dad picked me up from dance. He's very nice. And cute. Though his face is kinda messed up right now.

CARA

I can't believe your father introduced you to this person without letting me know.

JULIE

Get over it, Mom. Move on. Dad has.

CARA

Your father doesn't know what he wants.

JULIE

Looks like he does to me. They got married, for God's sake.

CARA

Married.

JULIE

Yep. In Mexico.

CARA

(A beat, she doesn't know what to do with this information.)

I don't care. I don't trust this kid. I don't care what everyone else says, I just—I don't trust him.

JULIE

He's in love with Dad. Why is that so hard to believe? You are.

CARA

Would you please stop saying that? Your father is a gay man. I am not masochistic enough to stay in love with a man who's—

JULIE

Married to another guy.

CARA

Why didn't anyone tell me?

JULIE

I just did. *(Beat.)* Dick likes you, you know.

CARA

What are you talking about?

JULIE

He likes you. You've gotta know that. I mean, I know you don't like his politics, but, so what?

CARA

I don't need you weighing in on Richard and me.

JULIE

Why not? You weigh in on my life all the time.

CARA

I'm your mother.

JULIE

Yeah, and...?

CARA

That's my job. I care about you.

JULIE

You don't think it's mutual? God, Mom. Let Dad be happy. Maybe then you can be happy, too. Not to mention me.

CARA stares at the ocean. RICHARD enters from inside the house. He notices the tense silence.

RICHARD

Am I disturbing something?

JULIE

Girl talk. Mom's harping at me about Michael again.

RICHARD

You do need to watch out for older men. They'll take advantage.

JULIE

Yeah, right.

RICHARD
Cara, can I get you something?

JULIE
She needs a drink.

RICHARD
Margarita?

CARA
I'm fine. Julie, can you... go do something on your phone... inside?

JULIE
God...

CARA
Please.

JULIE
They're gonna be here any minute, you know.

CARA
I'm aware. *Please.*

JULIE exits.

CARA
Tom married that—young man.

RICHARD
So they did it.

CARA
You knew.

RICHARD
I advised them to.

CARA
You...

RICHARD
As an attorney.

CARA
(Matter-of-factly)

I've never hated you more.

RICHARD

You still have control, Cara. You could send Salvador packing, if you want to. It's up to you. Whatever you decide, it's fine. The worst they'll do is send him home.

Silence. CARA is at a loss.

CARA

I want to go away.

RICHARD

Away?

CARA

For a week, five days. Alone. Together.

RICHARD
(Joking)

Mexicali?

CARA

Not Mexicali.

RICHARD

Cabo?

CARA

Wherever. Can we do that?

RICHARD

When?

CARA

Right away. This week?

RICHARD

This week? This week is not—Any particular reason?

JULIE
(From offstage)

They're here!

CARA straightens her appearance.

CARA

How do I look?

RICHARD

You look ready.

CARA

Ready to meet my—What do you call it, anyway?

RICHARD

Your ex-husband's new—husband.

CARA

Perfect.

RICHARD

You look ready. And gorgeous. I swear.

CARA

Don't perjure yourself.

JULIE

(From offstage)

They're out on the deck!

RICHARD looks offstage to inside of home.

RICHARD

Here they are.

TOM, JULIE and SALVADOR enter. SALVADOR's face is bruised and bandaged. RICHARD, playing the host, goes to them.

RICHARD

Tom! And... You're Salvador, I'm guessing. I'm Richard.

SALVADOR

Nice to meet you.

RICHARD

You know Julie, of course. And this is—

CARA

I think it's obvious who I am.

TOM

Cara.

SALVADOR extends his hand. CARA does not reciprocate.

SALVADOR

Con mucho gusto. With pleasure.

CARA does not respond.

RICHARD

Can I get you guys something? Wine, beer, Margarita, water...?

JULIE

Dick makes great Margaritas.

TOM

[How would you know?]

CARA

[This isn't a cocktail party, Richard.]

TOM

We're fine.

RICHARD

(To SALVADOR)

Great view, isn't it?

SALVADOR

Beautiful.

RICHARD

Tom designed the house, you know.

SALVADOR

Yes. I've seen the pictures.

CARA

You've—Can we get on with this?

RICHARD

Cara...

CARA

We're not here for chit-chat. I'd like to know why I shouldn't have this young man deported immediately. *(To SALVADOR)* I'm sorry, but you're here illegally, and I have no intention of letting you stay here with my family. *(To all.)* Was that clear?

TOM

[Cara.]

JULIE

[Mom!]

CARA
(To TOM)

What can you possibly say to me?

TOM

You're angry.

CARA

No shit.

TOM

What do you gain by having Salvador sent back to Mexico?

CARA

I get this criminal away from my daughter.

TOM

He's not a [criminal!]

CARA

[He's here illegally!]

RICHARD

[You're right.] You could have him deported. But...

TOM

Salvador and I are married, Cara.

CARA

Yes, so I hear.

TOM

Sending Salvador away doesn't change that. It doesn't change anything. For you and me. You know it doesn't. This has nothing to do with you.

CARA

Nothing to do with me? Nothing to do with *me*? (*Beat. Then, with cold control.*) What is it that you want?

TOM

I want—Maybe this is ridiculous—I want you—I want you to accept Salvador, in my life. I want—I want your blessing, Cara.

CARA

[My—]

TOM

[For a] new life.

CARA

My “blessing.” I don't think I can do that.

TOM

Cara...

CARA

Twenty years. Nearly twenty years of a life together—from grad school, for God's sake. Our families. Holidays. Vacations. Dreams for the future. Silly things. A cottage in the mountains. Retiring in the desert. I'm not a fool. I know none of this is meant to be, but—it's not easy. Letting it all just go. How can it be so easy for you? Does twenty years of marriage mean nothing to you? Am I that easy to discard? Is it so easy for you to walk away, never to return? And now—now you want me to, what? To throw my arms around this person, this young *man*, you've brought back to take my place? I'm sorry. That is just—it's beyond my ability. My dreams, my life was taken from me—and I had no say in the matter. Everything I knew is receding in a rear-view mirror. It's like I've been taken across some border. No one asked if I wanted to go, but here I am. I'm like some sort of refugee. And now everyone—you, Richard, Julie—is telling me to build a new life. I don't want a new life. I want my old life. And I can't have it. You took it from me. You get a new life, with a new—whatever—and I'm left with, what, memories? It's not fair! And now, you want me to *bless* your new future? Why? Why should I? One reason.

TOM tries to find an answer.

TOM

Those twenty years. For the sake of those [twenty years.]

CARA

[Which you threw] away! They're gone!

SALVADOR

No. *Senora*, those twenty years *son tuyas*. You have the past. That is certain. No one can change it, or take it from you. Tom and I, we have only the future.

CARA

I'd trade you.

SALVADOR

Senora, what you have is real. Your memories. Your family. What we have is—*un sueño*.

CARA

Un sueño?

TOM

A dream.

CARA

We believe in dreams in this country. Perhaps it's hubris. Perhaps it's naiveté. But—

TOM

Cara. The dream we had, it ended. It's over.

CARA

And now I have no dream at all. Nothing.

SALVADOR

Senora, you will find a new dream. You are American.

CARA

Sometimes that isn't enough.

TOM

Cara...

CARA turns away from him. Silence.

RICHARD

I think you're right. I think we need to get away.

After a moment.

CARA

I want to go to San Felipe.

RICHARD

San Felipe?

CARA

I want to drive across the Laguna Salida—before it's covered with solar processors. I want to feel the sun—that's going power a million homes—I want to feel it on my skin, feel it soaking into me, radiating inside of me. I want to float, just float, in the Sea of Cortez, with the salt and the sun and the heat crackling all around me. Like electricity.

JULIE

Mom. That's like a poem.

RICHARD

San Felipe then. We can take the Range Rover.

CARA

(To RICHARD)

You are staying here on your deck.

RICHARD

Cara...

JULIE

Then who's going to make us Margaritas?

CARA

(To JULIE)

And *you* are staying at home.

JULIE

Why? San Felipe sounds awesome.

CARA

You are staying here. With your father.

JULIE

(With importance)

And Salvador.

Beat. This is big. CARA realizes the implications.

CARA

And— Yes. And with... *(She has never spoken his name before.)* Salvador.

TOM

Cara, I know this is [difficult.]

CARA

[I need] to be alone. I need the desert. I need an international border between what's left of my old life—and... and I don't know what.

SALVADOR

Tus sueños?

CARA

My...

JULIE

Your dreams, Mom.

CARA

My dreams? Maybe so. If I can remember how. My dreams.

End of play.