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New York:
8th Avenue
Apt. 3B
New York, NY 10030

Florida:
San Antonio Avenue
Coral Gables, FL 33146

chzmena@gmail.com
www.chazmena.com

Ascended

By Chaz Mena

There is no end, but addition...

-T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets,
"II. The Dry Salvages."

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THE CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE:

- CARLOS: 80 years' old. A south Florida resident, native of Cuba. Married to carmen for over 50 years.
- CHARLIE: CARMEN & CARLOS' son. 45 years old, a musician and composer. He came to the U.S. at age three.
- LIMA: Early 40s. A bank executive for over 5 years, top executive in a mid-sized bank. Born and raised in Miami. English is her first language.
- A NURSE: Double cast as CARMEN. She is a dedicated hospice nurse, professional and perceptive to patients' and families' needs. May speak with a slight, southern drawl.
- OSTROFF: Double cast as LIMA. Eastern European who immigrated to Cuba. May speak with a slight, polish accent.
- CARMEN: 76 years old. A native of Cuba, immigrated to the U.S. with her husband CARLOS and son charlie in the late 60's. Suffers from moderate to severe Alzheimer's. She has been married to CARLOS for over 50 years.

THE TIME

Now. Span of 3 days.

THE SET

A hospice room near downtown Miami. Bare minimum. Needed: a hospital bed,* side table with telephone, IV tree, a small wastebasket, a recliner for patients' family to rest or sleep on. Two other, simple chair. Two fluorescent lights over the playing space that are usually on.

There is a screen above the playing area upon which scene titles, medical reports & subtitles in english are occasionally flashed.

SPECIAL NOTES

[] Text in brackets are the english translations to dialogue spoken in Spanish.

(/) Cues actors to come in with their next line, sorry.

MUSIC

Music is intrinsic both to the story and to the staged action.

Title on the Screen:

Prologue: Una Pesadilla / A Nightmare.

*A column of hot white **light** appears shining down on a man, CARLOS, lying in a hospital bed, * dust is rising and falling in the light as:*

***Music** filters in with strands of music, tonal & atonal, popular and traditional, Cuban Danzón, '60s TV jingles, show themes, voices, rising and falling from memory (Similar to John Zorn's "Forbidden Fruit").*

*CARLOS is awakened by the light and slowly comes to kneeling in bed. The point is he's pulled, involuntarily. This continues until the **music** and **light** fade to:*

A pin light on CHARLIE, d.s., holding his laptop. CARLOS is still visible kneeling in bed, u.s.

CHARLIE

(as if in a lecture) Hey, let's listen: here's an edited, digital copy from a 1956 recording. Sorry if it's still a little grainy.

He presses a key cued on the laptop and we slam into listening to "Santa Isabel de las Lajas" by Beny Moré (1953, RCA Victor).*

(To Charlie. The following scene is directed entirely to his son.)

CARLOS

You're sleeping, middle of the night, when suddenly someone is kicking down your door. You open it. You're told by the soldiers to come with them. You respectfully decline.

CHARLIE

It's "Santa Isabel de las Lájas" by Cuban, Beny Moré. Tribute song to his hometown. Moré is famous for moving the percussion section to the forefront—racist critics decried it as "Africanization." Which is stupid as Cuban music is practically rooted in African, *tresillo* syncopation:

CARLOS

They walk behind you, guns drawn.

CHARLIE

With stress on the 3rd beat.

CARLOS

You are told to kneel.

CHARLIE

Lájas also happens to be my hometown--my father its only math teacher!

CARLOS

"I won't blame you...I blame what made you do this." The words come out of your mouth. You wish they hadn't.

CHARLIE

It became a run-away hit and became El Beny's signature song. He always opened with it.

CARLOS

One soldier recognizes you, he comes running, he says that you're "OK."

CHARLIE

Which is funny because--

CARLOS

"It's a mistake." "No mistake," say the soldiers, "he's on the list." "He was my teacher, I say he's OK"--there's a scuffle.

CHARLIE

All Beny ever wanted to do was to get out of that miserable, one-horse town.

CARLOS

A fight. But they're drunk, so they don't fight for long.

CHARLIE

Lájas: A hamlet with one dirt road.

CARLOS

They begin to laugh--

CHARLIE

A brothel on one end a bodega on the other, a palm-thatched school in the middle.

CARLOS

They'll go down the list to another house. When they've gone your legs buckle and you fall on your face, on the porch.

LIMA

(entering, barely lit) Is there anywhere I could sit?

Beny Moré song ends.

CARLOS

(lying back into bed) Your wife who's seen everything, slides down the door onto a pool of blood coming out from inside her.

*Opening **TRANSITION**-- to a hospice room.*

***Lights** open up to stark, white Fluorescents on brightening every corner of the small room. Spartan.*

CHARLIE

(waking) That ought to have been me.

LIMA

What?

CHARLIE

I was asleep when you came in.

LIMA takes in the room.

They stare at each other for a bit. Been a while. Then:

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Anywhere you'd like.

LIMA

Seems like you've been sleeping in this room for a while.

CHARLIE

.....

LIMA

You were ignoring my calls—

CHARLIE

I was. Not only yours but the "how are ya doin' crown. People too stressed by their own lives. "I'm fine..." and then they can tick you off a to-do list held up by a magnet on the fridge just below the note to buy more plums--

LIMA

Look. I'd like to focus / on your mom and dad.

CHARLIE

They feel better for calling people like me whose cars break down or run out of gas racing to and from doctor appointments, hospitals, nursing homes, the social security office.

(Beat)

I'm not taking calls these days.

LIMA

So... Charlie, I'd like to help, here.

CHARLIE

So help. I'm past caring. When did you arrive?

LIMA

Just now, my bags are outside. May I look at him?

CHARLIE, turns his back to her to arrange his stuff into some order. LIMA walks over to CARLOS who is fully covered by the blanket. She touches his face. No response. Some moments later, she goes out to bring her bags into the room.

LIMA (CONT'D)

You knew I'd want to be with him, is that why you didn't tell me he was like this?

CHARLIE

It's simple. We weren't talking.

LIMA

I stopped what I was doing the minute my mother texted me--

CHARLIE

We weren't talking.

LIMA

...You know mom. Busy-bodying. Has she / tried you?

CHARLIE

We weren't talking--

LIMA

I looked at her text--

CHARLIE

We weren't / talking.

LIMA

(enough) LET ME finish!

(beat.)

"He has cancer, just so you know. Mom." Like I'm forcing her to be brief so as not to interrupt my fucking...busy day... Passive aggressive.

CHARLIE

I remember what's it's like dealing with that...

LIMA

And are you still as vindictive as I remember?

(beat. It's tense)

LIMA (CONT'D)

Are you scared?

CHARLIE

Scared of who?!? Of what? / I'm dealing.

LIMA

Scared, Charlie--

CHARLIE

(indignantly) I'm not scared of *anything*!

LIMA

Hey. Remember who you're talking to?

CHARLIE

Ohhhh, I do...

LIMA

I don't know how to respond. You're offended by everything I say--I mean I know what I want to say.

CHARLIE

No one's stopping you.

LIMA

(finds it funny) You are, every time...
(beat)

LIMA (CONT'D)

I've killed myself coming here.

CHARLIE

OK, you wanna help?

LIMA

Yes. / I do.

CHARLIE

(turns his head to the side at her) Get inside my head and turn off the voice saying that it would make no difference if my mother's toenails were left curling and uncut, or my dad's ass caked in dried shit. That no one is taking down my credits or demerits and that I could go back to making music! *(beat)* I can hardly sit down with enough time to listen to anything--can't sleep, or eat or piss or take a *shit* without that niggling voice telling me to run out the door and never look fucking BACK.
(a slight crack.)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

How long since we last spoke!?

LIMA

How long since you've answered my calls?

CHARLIE

Where would you stay and for how long?

LIMA

I can work here today, stay with Carlos tonight and get back on a plane tomorrow. Or I can stay the week. Up to you.

CHARLIE

“Up to me.”

LIMA

Up to you, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I don't know what's appropriate anymore.

LIMA

Understanding why I came and appreciating it, for one thing.

CHARLIE

(softening)

.....

LIMA

Are we good, then?

CHARLIE

No, we're not "good." We're dirty we're living out of a car we're going days without a shower we're beat. We're not "good" no.

(she won't indulge him.)

LIMA

I could offer you some respite. But again, your call.

CHARLIE

You can stay at the house. I never go there except for fresh clothes. I sleep here.

LIMA

Thank you.

CHARLIE

I'm just...It's a lot.

LIMA

I know. I get it. When did this all of this / happen?

CHARLIE

He fell. At home. You knew he fell, right?

(Lima nods, "yes.")

LIMA

But when was he diagnosed?

CHARLIE

After he broke his hip. I brought mami from the nursing home to cook for her, she was in the kitchen with me thinking it was 1958, saying something about shoes she'd ordered from Havana. *(does her)* "Givenchy, imagine" when I heard a thud.

LIMA

(gesturing that he hasn't answered her question.)

CHARLIE

Melanoma was diagnosed soon after.

LIMA goes to CARLOS and lifts his blanket to take him fully in.

LIMA

Why is he tied to the bed?!?!

CHARLIE

Nurse says that protocol--

LIMA

What???

CHARLIE

He shifts and tugs on his IVs. He can tear them off and hurt himself.

LIMA

He's not moving--

CHARLIE

He moves a lot!

LIMA

Right...*but he's not brain dead.*

CHARLIE

He's not brain dead.

LIMA

(careful) Right. OK. *(beat)* So he's aware. More of a reason.
(Charlie not following)

LIMA (CONT'D)

He's has to know he's tied up...!

CHARLIE

He may fall off and the hip'll never--the surgery was months ago and it hasn't healed, Lima.

LIMA

I'll make sure he won't.

LIMA begins untying the bed restraints.

CHARLIE

Don't...

She does.

Two days later.

CHARLIE with headphones on with one ear out in case of anything. They're plugged to a small keyboard USB-ed to his laptop.

LIMA massages CARLOS with moisturizer.

LIMA

I want to see her.

CHARLIE

(gauging her motives)

.....

LIMA

(gesturing in case he can't hear)

Sorry, I meant see Carmen. Here.

CHARLIE

Sure you would.

LIMA

Well. waddya think?--can you hear me?

CHARLIE

Yes. There could be repercussions. *(off her look)* And it'd be cruel.

LIMA

Why cruel?

CHARLIE

She won't understand. It won't get past the plaque in her brain.

CARLOS starts to shift in bed. CHARLIE takes headphones off.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

She has no mirrors in her room, they were taken down after she started screaming for "Mamá!" at her own reflection. You want to remind'er her husband's dying every five minutes?

LIMA

We can handle it.

(changing the subject)

LIMA (CONT'D)

Why don't you play some of what you're working on?

CHARLIE

It's not ready yet, sorry. But...thank you, Lima.

LIMA

You're welcome, Charlie.

*Quick **TRANSITION**--to three years ago, summer. A New York City rooftop.*

***Lights:** crossfade to only special d.s. of bed. It is bright and sunny. CHARLIE enters. Looking back for LIMA.*

CHARLIE

Careful up the stairs, I've killed myself on'em.

LIMA

(entering)

Why up here though?

CHARLIE

Nothing to box it in. I want to listen this time like when you let balloons go free...

LIMA

Well, I can tan while you do. I'm turning into a *blanquita* here.

CHARLIE

I like you *blanquita*, all white with toenails raven black. Freaky.

LIMA

Don't turn goth on me. *Dale* play.

LIMA lays down on the roof floor opens her shirt a bit.

CHARLIE

Ok, remember when I said these were inverted chords I'm working with? Expanding chords scaling up and down but very, very fast. I called them "strings".

LIMA

Yeah, like rubber bands do.

CHARLIE

Had I said that?

LIMA

No, I did, just now. *(beat)* I can deduce--

CHARLIE

(demonstrating)

Each inverted chord stretched like rubber bands-- *I love that*, Lima! --out as far as they can--

LIMA

(adding) without breaking them--

CHARLIE

Without breaking them, then letting go and listening how they bounce back into shape-- its root chord, musically.

(beat)

You know what? You're better at this than you lead on.

LIMA

(flattered) Oh ya?

CHARLIE

Yeah, you can see the big picture while I keep futzing with minutiae.

LIMA

You sweat the small stuff.

(beat)

So how can I help?

CHARLIE

I may use the roof as a contextual setting for the entire piece. Recording what it sounds like up here then laying it under the original track.

Music: CHARLIE hits a key on his computer which plays his latest piece. Contemporary, minimalistic, rudimentary (think Marcos Balter's "Wicker Park," 2009).

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Close your eyes

LIMA

Why what are you going to.

CHARLIE

Close them and listen .

LIMA

Don't tickle me that pisses me off.

CHARLIE

Shhh. Listen to see if the rubber bands unify to--

LIMA

Gotcha--

CHARLIE

To become of a piece--

(She listens for a bit. Struggles, it's hot.)

LIMA

Dude this is too heady.

CHARLIE

I need you to help me and listen, Li.

LIMA

It's hot, man...

CHARLIE

Shhhhh...

She listens.

Music plays for a while. It begins hyperactively, with rapid-fire percussion tapping in the background, later scores of fibrillating notes expanding & retracting to root chords in clusters.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Can you make out a melody / sneaking in--?

Lima is soon affected.

LIMA

Shhhh...

(She begins clucking her tongue, in time to the piece. Then it spreads to her fingers, then her feet mimic the piece's frantic beat. She starts humming along to the chords' elasticity, picking up a melody almost by accident, a by-product. This lasts for several moments. She is possessed, bodily, with her husband's music. Then after a highpoint, she winces, releases and slowly relaxes.)

Charlie stops the music. She opens her eyes.

LIMA (CONT'D)

Wow...

He walks over to her on the floor of the roof.

CHARLIE

Thank you, Lima.

She slowly stands, faces him, closely.

LIMA

(Fully in love.)

You're welcome, Charlie.

Lights: fluorescents flickering on, and crossfade back to:

Hospice. The same moment before their flashback.

Thank you, Lima. CHARLIE

You're welcome, Charlie. LIMA

Beat to adjust as if both had gone there, respectively.

You threw me for a loop showing up like that. A ghost. CHARLIE

Why "a ghost..." ? LIMA

Manifesting. CHARLIE

You're the one who disappeared into thin air. I thought you had found someone. I was happy for you. *(off his look)* What?
(Beat.) LIMA

Then when I heard from mom how papi was in hospice and I decided to act. LIMA (CONT'D)

How's "Victor?"-- CHARLIE

We're great friends. LIMA

"Friends." CHARLIE

Uh-huh. LIMA

"Friends" like us? CHARLIE

LIMA

Sorta.

CHARLIE

"Great friends like us, sorta" *(then:)* I like him even *if* he tries to pass as something else.

LIMA

As what, White?

CHARLIE

Yeah!

(They both remember Victor and share a chuckle.)

LIMA

Like Carmen.

(They may laugh even harder at this.)

LIMA (CONT'D)

"That's a lie: Blacks in Cuba weren't discriminated! They had their beaches and we had ours!"

CHARLIE

Oh my God, I forget she'd say shit like that!

LIMA

"I had Black friends--"

CHARLIE

(enjoying this) Right, right--

LIMA

"They'd come over and even sit with us at table! They had their own glass we set aside for them."

CHARLIE

Ya, and whenever anyone said she wasn't White, she'd rub a finger over the back of her hand: *(does it)* "my father is Spanish so I am officially white!" Rubbing so hard I thought she'd set herself on fire.*(Only Lima laughs. He quietly puts away his keyboard/computer, gathers his things.)*

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Let's stop-- I have to help feed her now. She's forgetting what a fork is.

LIMA

Chuck, really?

CHARLIE

Yeah she's-- it's getting far worse, quicker than I expected. You're good?

LIMA

Yup.

CHARLIE

Please make sure he doesn't tug on his IVs. I wish you hadn't untied / him...

LIMA

He'll be fine, man!

CARLOS now mouths a heated conversation, in crisis. They watch this.

CHARLIE

He's working things out...it's all so specific, ya know? I'd give anything to know where he goes.

LIMA

Chuck, may we discuss having Carmen visit when you get back?

CHARLIE

(testy) Yes. Just don't push, OK?

LIMA

When was the last time she saw him?

CHARLIE

The night he fell when I was making dinner, like I told you.

LIMA

How did she react, you didn't tell me.

CHARLIE

Bedlam. Dad writhing on the floor, mom screaming and running all over the house tripping over things. I'm dealing with paramedics and getting mom into the car to drive her back to the nursing home. Screaming I had kidnaped her, that I had arrested her fiancé. Pleading for his life. Then wishing me dead when I dropped her off.

LIMA
Oh, Chuck--

CHARLIE
My world.

LIMA
Doesn't she ask for Carlos when you visit?

CHARLIE
Less and less.

LIMA
How often do you go?

CHARLIE
I go there for breakfast or lunch, feed her, make sure that she's well-stocked with Jean Naté and baby powder, skin cream for chafing--it can lead to eczema.

LIMA
And then you come back here.

CHARLIE
Then I come back here.

LIMA
(Beat.)
I'd better get to my conference calls.

CHARLIE
Lima...?--

LIMA
Ya?— *(interrupting him)* You'll have to bring her, right, I mean, eventually?

No response from CHARLIE who exits with his keys.

A moment later NURSE enters and a text flashes on the screen:

Nurse's Status Update #1

NURSE

(to audience) Patient comatose, failure to thrive, suffering general dementia ("unspecified"). Observations relatable to terminal illness and conform to hospice claim.

LIMA dials & waits for dial tone.

LIMA

Yep I'm in. Lima here. Can everybody else check in please? *(to Nurse)* Am I in the way, here?

NURSE

(pleasantly busy) Not at all.

LIMA

(listens into phone) Need to keep one foot in my office while I'm away. If I get too loud / please...

NURSE

Oh, it's no bother, believe me it's a nice change-- the son is none too chatty!

LIMA

(impishly) Charlie's a musician.

NURSE

Sits in the same position for hours. Other times I find him asleep with headphones on, connected to *(points to his computer keyboard)* that... keyboard.

LIMA

It's where he composes—writes music.

NURSE

I'm not knocking him, mind...I know about mom.

LIMA

You've never met her, have you?

NURSE

NAWW. No one else /comes--

LIMA

(abruptly, re: conference) Oh, excuse me!

NURSE signals to her that she's just outside if needed, Lima acknowledges.

NURSE Exits.

LIMA (CONT'D)

Hi... Everyone! Hello?? Hel--UGH!!!

CARLOS is now frantic in bed.

*Slow **TRANSITION**--to Lájás, Provincial Cuba, 1958.*

***Lights:** noir-ish. **Music:** A saccharine bolero this continues throughout the scene. LIMA is now OSTROFF.*

***Note:** They are speaking in Spanish. English subtitles flash on the screen.*

OSTROFF

(into phone) ¿Compañero? [**"Comrade?"**]

CARLOS

(raspy voice, barely audible))

Ya, oigo. [**I'm here.**]

OSTROFF

HALO??? *(to herself, fuming)* Imposible organizar a esta gente...! [**You try and try to get these people organized-- and nothing!**]

CARLOS slowly sits up in bed and picks up the telephone on an adjacent table.

CARLOS

(stronger voice now) Que estoy aqui! [**I'm here I say.**]

OSTROFF

Nunca mas me hagas esperar. [**Don't keep me waiting ever again.**]

CARLOS

Disculpe túve que cubrir mi aula. *(toce)* El auto esta "roto" y había que "dejarlo" donde acordamos previamente. Copias? [**Sorry, I had to get my class covered. (clears his throat)** The car is "broken" and it is "abandoned" as prearranged. Copy?]

OSTROFF

Deja eso chico, que atraes mas atencion. [**Drop the code it only attracts attention.**]

CARLOS

La Copio. [**ROGER THAT.**]

OSTROFF

Idiota.

CARLOS

No subestimes la eficiencia del SIM,* compañera. [**Don't undervalue SIM's efficiency, comrade.**]

OSTROFF

¡El mayor abrio su maletí abierto para mí y me enteré de todo! ¡Y Con su cámara! Algunas de las imágenes son comprometedoras, siendo un hombre de familia: era un perfecto inmundo. [**The major unlocked his briefcase for me and I got all of it! With his camera, too! Some of the negatives are compromising, seeing he's a family man—he was perfectly filthy.**]

CARLOS

En qué piensas cuando estás con él? [**Where does your mind go when you're with him?**]

OSTROFF

Con el? Donde? [**With him where?**]

CARLOS

Bueno...al estar ahí...sabes?...con el. [**Well... when you're there...(silence on other end) you know... / with him.**]

OSTROFF

Las mujeres saben gozar como igual que los hombres, guajiro, o no te lo a dicho tu novia? [**Women enjoy themselves just like men do, hayseed. Or hasn't your girlfriend told you?**]

CARLOS

Prefiero no hablar de mi vida íntima. [**I prefer not talking about my love life.**]

OSTROFF

Tú te lo buscaste con tu curiosidad morbosa --o es que ya te has cansado de ella? [**You started it and your banal curiosity--are you bored with her already--?**]

CARLOS

Ella no tiene nada que ver con esto. [**She has nothing to do with this--**]

OSTROFF

Ah, sí? Y por qué? Será porque está preñada? [**Oh yes? Why? Because she's knocked up?**]

CARLOS

Eso no le interesa a nadie / sólo a noso--[**This is no one's business but / my own--**]

OSTROFF

Eso lo decido yo. [**I'll be the judge of that.**]

CARLOS

Basta ya, maldita Ju----. Mire yo tengo que regresar a mi aula ahora. Quien mas sabe de esto? [**That's enough of that, you goddamned k_____ (stops himself!) I have to get back to class now. Who else knows about this-- ?**]

OSTROFF

Cómo me llamaste? DILO! Casi todos me lo dice--no en mi cara, por supuesto, no se atreven. [**What were you about to call me? (in control) SAY it. Everyone else does—not to my face, of course, they know better than that.**]

Music swells, femme fatale underscore.

OSTROFF (CONT'D)

Se le puede preguntar a su majestad cuando se piensan casar? [**May I ask when his lordship plans to marry?**]

CARLOS

No me voy a florear mas con una boda en Lajas, ellos me han abierto mis correspondencia estoy seguro... [**I won't draw any more attention to myself with a wedding in Lajas. They've opened my mail at school, I'm certain of it...**]

OSTROFF

Se le reconocerá su sacrificio por la Revolución, pero que te hace pensar que te están investigando, guajiro? [**I'm proud of your revolutionary sacrifice. (Then:) What makes you think you're being investigated, hayseed?**]

CARLOS

(backpedaling) Mira...Polaca...para de llamarme guajiro... [**Stop calling me a hayseed... Polaca!***]

OSTROFF

Aaaa, pero así no me ibas a llamar ahorita...! [**Oh, that's not what you were about to call me, earlier ...!**]

Music turns sincere, poignant.

OSTROFF (CONT'D)

Nuestra revolución puede volverse xenófoba. Yo lo veo venir. Una mañana en Gdansk, papá salió para la Academia Médica como cirujano, pero regresó a casa golpeado, con un letrero colgado a su cuello: "Yid." Ésto se acaba ya! Aquí mismo y ahora! [**Our Revolution could become xenophobic. I should know. In Gdansk, one morning, papá left for the medical academy a surgeon but came home beat up with a sign around his neck: "Yid." It ends now. Right here and now.**]

CARLOS

Sip, "Si ahora no, cuando?!" [**Yup, "If not now, when!"**]

OSTROFF

Uy...Hillel? O eso fue una casualidad, porque estabas al llamarme una "maldita Judía," no, Carlos? [**Hillel? Or was that an accident? Seeing how you were about to say "Kike" just now, Carlos...**]

Music climaxes. CARLOS Falls back into bed, terrified. Closes his eyes.

CARLOS

Dijeste mi nombre?! No podemos usar nombres! [**You said my name?! We can't use our names...!**]

Fast TRANSITION-- to Hospice room. The present.

Lights crossfade back to bright fluorescents.

LIMA has been conferencing for a while. CHARLIE returns with two coffees. CARLOS is increasingly fidgety.

LIMA

(still conferencing) Charlie! Your father is very agitated.

CHARLIE

Still on the phone?

LIMA

How was Carmen?? Shhh, sorry. *(Ending conference call)* Team, I've got to see to my family now...

CHARLIE sees that his dad has moved too close to the edge of the bed.

CHARLIE

He's about to fall off! / Did you keep an eye on him?

LIMA

SHHH *(back to phone)* that's right--thanks team--I promise to check back in later. OKAAAAAY!!

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(reaches for them under the bed) Jesus! -- that's why he had bindings on.

LIMA

NO please. I've massaged him, he'll tense up.

CHARLIE

This is my father and I am not going to risk another fall!

LIMA

He's responding very well to my touch, he's more present.

CHARLIE

You're going to make me say it, aren't you?

LIMA

What?

CHARLIE

(binding Carlos to the bed railing)

.....

LIMA

He wouldn't want it / Look how tense he'd getting now? Look!

CARLOS pulls on his bindings.

CHARLIE

It's MY final say not yours!

LIMA

I'm not undermining you. / You're doing great!

CHARLIE

Oh Please. Cut the shit. Who else *would* do this?

LIMA

ME! (*with compassion*) Me. That's who. Why are you so threatened by me?

CHARLIE

Lima, why exactly have you come?

LIMA

I think that's clear, Charlie. / I love them!

CHARLIE

Sure you're not a little curious how I'm getting on?

LIMA

What?... Curious about / you??

CHARLIE

Not romantically. (*finishes tying up Carlos*) Are you here to watch a train wreck happen?

LIMA

What the fuck are you talking about?

CHARLIE

I don't blame you it's hard not to look at train wrecks: the blood, the gore, people crushed paper-thin. Made see-through.

LIMA

You are *not* why I came back!

*Instant **TRANSITION**--to two years ago in their New York studio apartment.*

***Music:** CHARLIE plays Steve Reich's "Tehillim" (Score for four voices, 1981) on his computer.*

CHARLIE

Really? Not even a morbid curiosity of seeing me at my most needy?

LIMA

This isn't about you!

(Beat.)

Turn off that goddamned music. Do you *have* to underscore all of our fights?

CHARLIE

It helps drown you out!

LIMA

Whoever wrote that shit didn't do it for that reason!

CHARLIE

Why *should* I listen to you? You don't even touch me anymore.

LIMA

You're the one I needed to fuck me!

CHARLIE

(disgusted) SO, so crass!

LIMA

We agreed on children, you were onboard, we were on meds... and then you checked out on me like a lobotomy patient!

CHARLIE

I don't want children!

LIMA

Then why not say *that* from the start?

LIMA waits for a response.

LIMA (CONT'D)

So what *do* you want???

CHARLIE

I want to move back to Cuba.

LIMA

Again with this shit? I want nothing to do with Cuba!

CHARLIE

Let's vacation there at least, get to know one another again.

LIMA

You're bored, Chuck. Cuba is just the next, new thing! What are you running away from?!

CHARLIE

You can't ignore your culture, Li.

LIMA

I haven't. I make money, that's my culture. I wake up and work out and eat paleo. At the office I let slide all the leering sidelong glances, the paternalism, the low expectations for my Latina ass--and *then?* I EXCEL. I move UP! THAT is my culture. What have you got going on?

CHARLIE

You're only in the U.S. by historical accident..

LIMA

You have no idea what's going on, do you?

CHARLIE

(go on...)

.....

LIMA

It's Victor.

CHARLIE

What is "Victor?"

LIMA

.....

CHARLIE

Victor...From work?

LIMA

(like a torrent) I wish I could say "I'm sorry" but I can't bring myself to. We live apart--two separate lives in one studio apartment. Roommates—

CHARLIE

Fifty-something-year-old / Victor?

LIMA

You know how many times I've found you wearing the same shorts you went to sleep with when I come back from work? You won't see someone with me-- which you can, my insurance plan cover it--

CHARLIE

I know I promised to / you're right.

LIMA

You don't shave. You've stopped writing music! You play standards for subway fair in coffee houses, *(lacking descriptive ability)* super...small...CD labels--

CHARLIE

I've tried Li / no one's commissioning anymore--

LIMA

You're "stuck," you're "scared," you're "boxed in." "Enslaved by this terrible woman whose can-do attitude gives you flatulence" like you said in those shamelessly self-centered, tell-all online chats with other out-of-work loafers!

(Beat.)

You don't even know how to press "delete forever" on your history.

CHARLIE

(lacking a comeback)

Victor?!?

LIMA

He cares, Charlie.

CHARLIE

(appalled) He wears gold, linked wrist chains and looks like a pelican!!

LIMA

Stop it--

CHARLIE

Fucking VICTOR!?

LIMA

I AM, YA!

(Beat. Confesses.)

I have Chuck. Ya he's older but he has Purpose. Confidence. Decorum. And he CRAVES me!--he has minimalist furniture in a West New York apartment overlooking the Hudson!

(Longer beat.)

I am willing to see someone if you are.

CHARLIE

No. I think we're passed that, right?

(Smaller beat.)

I'm staying here Lima. You can go to West New York.

LIMA

Fine. I'll come back for my shit later.

CHARLIE

(at a loss) Lima, I'm your husband...

LIMA

That's clearly not enough anymore. I need to step out for some air.

CHARLIE

Don't come back.

LIMA

I won't! I promise!

CHARLIE

(Suddenly aggressive, possessive) No fucking way, Lima. YOU'RE MY WIFE!

CHARLIE blocks her. She pushes pass him.

CHARLIE grabs her arm as she frees herself and turns to face him. She is unafraid.

LIMA

Thanks for making this a lot easier.

CHARLIE let's go of her.

*Immediate **TRANSITION**-- To **music** fading while **lights** crossfade to: *The Present*. Moments after we left them in Hospice.*

LIMA

Charlie, you've never scared me.

CHARLIE

(means it) Get outta here--

LIMA

I will not! They would want me here! You know it.

LIMA starts to free CARLOS.

CHARLIE

Leave them on, Lima, goddamnit--!

*Stopping LIMA from loosening the bindings.
Hand scuffle between them over the knots.*

LIMA

(Primally) CARLOS!!!!

CARLOS

(startlingly) WHO TOLD YOU MY NAME!

*CARLOS wakes from coma, as if resurrected.
He is still in his flashback with OSTROFF.*

LIMA

(after a moment, calmly) And now, Charlie? We can bring Carmen.

Same day, night time. Hospice.

*CARLOS' eyes are open but he doesn't speak.
Starts coughing.*

LIMA (CONT'D)

(scoops up some ice from tray) Your throat's dry. Let me get you some ice to suck on.

CARLOS looks at LIMA, not sure who she is.

LIMA (CONT'D)

I'll talk. You can listen. Can you hear me?

CARLOS blinks at her.

LIMA (CONT'D)

Sorry, I just can't tell if you understand.

(Beat)

LIMA (CONT'D)

Chuck—Charlie—has been taking care of you for months, now. Do you know where you are?

No response from CARLOS.

LIMA (CONT'D)

You're in hospice. They brought here from the hospital. Can you blink once again and let me know you understand?

CARLOS blinks once.

LIMA (CONT'D)

Bien! Would you like us to bring Carmen in to see you?

More Blinking.

LIMA (CONT'D)

Si, papi...!?! *(to herself)* I knew it! How about tonight?!

CARLOS

(raspy, with difficulty) Caaaaarmen...

Sound: *shots are heard small arms fire, some people screaming far off.*

LIMA

Si, Carmen, papi... you'll see her tonight, I promise!

Sound: *small arms fire is coming nearer. CARLOS becomes agitated in bed.*

LIMA (CONT'D)

OK? Relax, what are you doing?...Hey! Carmen viene pronto!

Sound: *Men's voices coming nearer, cursing, in Spanish.*

CARLOS

(Blinking rapidly now, he is unsettled.)

(clearer) Carmen.

Quick TRANSITION-- *into the climactic battle of the Revolution.**

LIMA is now OSTROFF. She gets under the bed for cover.

***Sound:** Tanks are wheeling just outside in the street. WHAAMM! A tank fires into a house. Shouts of delight as a house crumbles.*

***Note:** They are speaking in Spanish. English subtitles flash on the screen.*

CARLOS (CONT'D)

(getting out of bed) CARMEN!

OSTROFF

(grabs hold of Carlos, forces him under the bed) Para! Que coño haces? Quédate quieto!
[**Stop it! What the fuck are you doing? Stay down here!**]

CARLOS is frantic, panicking. He's half-out from under the bed.

CARLOS

Nos van a enterrar! [**We'll be buried!**]

OSTROFF

Tranquilo que ya se van. [**Be still. They're passing us.**]

***Sound:** Crescendo of automatic fire as the soldiers are on top of them, shooting into homes indiscriminately. Shouts, wallops, these are drunk and undisciplined men shooting up the town, coming up behind the tanks.*

Panicking, CARLOS gets out from under bed. OSTROFF trips CARLOS from behind, pulls him under the bed with her, again.

CARLOS

Ayyy! Mi cabeza...estoy herido-- [**Ayyy! My head! Stop...I'm hurt--**]

OSTROFF

CÁLLATE! [**SHUT IT!**]

***Sound:** Automatic fire is subsiding, the soldiers have moved on, up the block. Voices can still be heard but farther away.*

Long Beat.

OSTROFF pokes her head out from under the bed. CARLOS copies her, with all his attention on her for orders. He is bleeding slightly from his head.

CARLOS

Se habrán olvidado de nosotros? [**Have they forgotten about us?**]

OSTROFF

No el teléfono sonó 3 veces y después una vez más. Los compañeros saben que estamos embarcados aquí por ahora. [**NO! The phone rang 3 times, then once again. Dispatch knows we're stuck here for now.**]

CARLOS

Estoy sangrando. Dije estoy sangrando. [**I'm bleeding. (no response) I said I'm bleeding--**]

OSTROFF

(viciously) Pues LIMPIATE! [**Then CLEAN it!**]

CARLOS

(sheepishly looks under the bed) No queda agua. [**There's no water left.**]

OSTROFF

Usa tu oríne! [**Then use piss.**]

Both listening, still only half out from under the bed.

CARLOS

Creés que debíamos irnos ya? [**Think we should get out now?**]

OSTROFF

No, ya no. Ahora rvan a regresar para limpiar lo que queda. Así es. Casa por casa. Mejor nos quedamos quietecito. [**Too late. They'll sweep back through and mop up, it's standard. (concerned) Every house. Better to stay put.**]

Beat. Accepting their fate

CARLOS

Entonces...nos escondemos? [**So we hide...?**]

OSTROFF

O tal vez salir advirtiendo: "Oigan, aquí estamos!"--mira a quien me asignaron!--**[Or come out saying "here we are!"—of all people to be assigned with!--]**

CARLOS

Pero si tu me escogiste--**[You chose me.--]**

OSTROFF

Para nada. Ellos lo decidieron. Después que me contaste que te habían abierto tu correspondencia. Bocaza! **[I did not. They did. After you told me your mail was being opened. Big mouth.]**

CARLOS

Pensaban que me vendí? **[They thought I had turned?]**

OSTROFF

Y? Lo hicistes? **[Have you?]**

(Beat.)

Bobalicón. **[ASS.]**

It is quiet now like the eye of a hurricane. They warily emerge from under the bed, and sit. Hushed tones. Vigilant.

CARLOS

Era así La Guerra? Escondiéndose? **[Is this what The War was like? Hiding?]**

OSTROFF

(barely nodding, responding.)

.....

CARLOS

A Dios gracias que tenías familia en Cuba. **[Thank God you had family in Cuba.]**

OSTROFF

(Beat)

A Dios? **[God?]**

CARLOS

Bueno, sí, que ellos te reclamaron. **[I mean, that they brought you here...]**

OSTROFF

Ay, SÍ! Mira que rico la estoy pasando. **[YEAH, just look at me I'm having a ball.]**

CARLOS

Gracias por protegerme-- [**Thank you for protecting me—**]

OSTROFF

CALLATE POR FAVOR-- pudieras cerrar esa singada boca de mierda que tienes???
[**Be QUIET, WILL YOU?! Just for once, won't you shut your fucking trap?**]

She stands over him menacingly. CARLOS cowers, panicking. Then sits back down, some distance from him. Both are thinking, hard. Some beats later:

OSTROFF (CONT'D)

(burlando) "Dios?!?!?" La Revolución será condenada por el Catolicismo como se ahoga a alguien con una almohada. [*(scoffs)* "**God?!?" The Revolution is doomed to fail, choked on Catholicism like a pillow over a sleeping victim.**]

(Indulgently)

Oye. Oye Carlos! Ven acá [**Hey. Hey, Carlos! (indicates space next to her) Come here.**]

CARLOS

En un ratico. [*In a moment.*]

OSTROFF

Lo siento pero por poco nos traicionas gritando así. Están ametrallando hacia adentro de las casas por las ventanas, Oká? [**I'm sorry but you almost betrayed our position. They're spraying into homes at anything that moves from the windows. (reading him) OK?]**

CARLOS

(indignantly) Oká--!! [**OK--!!**]

LIMA

Guajiro...-- [**Hayseed... --**]

CARLOS

Para! [**Stop it!**]

OSTROFF

(Beat.)

Cyryl.

CARLOS

Quien? [**Who?**]

OSTROFF

Así es tu nombre en "Polski." [**Your name. In "Polski."**]

CARLOS

Dímelo de nuevo. [**Say it again.**]

OSTROFF

"Cyril." Por Carlos el Magno. Quien restauró el aprendizaje en Europa, profe. [**After Charlemagne. Who brought learning back to Europe, prof.**]

(Beat)

OSTROFF (CONT'D)

Yo me llamo. [**I am Ruza Ostroff.**]

She offers her hand. He comes over and holds it throughout what follows.

OSTROFF (CONT'D)

(apologizing in Polish) Przepraszam, że cie zranilem.*

CARLOS

Disculpada. [**Apology accepted.**]

OSTROFF

AH... Bravo, Cyril-- !

CARLOS

Y "Ruza" significa algo? [**What does "Ruza" mean?**]

OSTROFF

"Rosa" por mi madre. Ahora olvídalo, recuerda. [**"Rose," after my mother. Now remember to forget it.**]

CARLOS

Y ella donde está? Tu madre? [**Where is she? Your mother.**]

OSTROFF

(loss for words) Olvidada...me preguntabas como era La Guerra? [**Forgotten...had you asked me what the war was like?**]

CARLOS

Si. Perdón. [**Yes, I did. Sorry--**]

OSTROFF

Déja de disculparte y te lo diré. [**First, stop apologizing and I will tell you.**]

(Beat.)

La esperé en casa de una vecina al lado del bosque que rodeaba mi pueblo por mas de dos años. Ella sólo pudo esconder a uno de nosotras, nos dijo. "¿Dónde está mamá?", preguntaba yo constantemente, "¿por qué no ha venido por mí? ¿Me dejó contigo, aquí, para siempre?" No. "¿Ha escrito?" Sí. Escribió que estaba bien y que tan pronto como termine su trabajo, volverá a buscarte, me dijo la vecina. Y entonces me puse a esperar. Esperé. Y esperé ... hasta que, aprendí a olvidar. La Guerra me enseñó a esperar ... y a olvidar.

[I waited for her in a neighbor's house near the wood-line at the edge of our town like I was told to for over 2 years. She could only take one of us in, the neighbor said. "Where's mama," I kept asking, "why hasn't she come for me? Has she left me here with you forever?" No. "Has she written?" Yes. She says that she's fine and that as soon as her work was finished, she'll come back to get you. And so I waited. I waited. And I waited...until I learned to forget. The War taught me how to wait ...and to forget.]

CARLOS

Yo nunca me olvidaré de tí. [**I won't forget you.**]

OSTROFF

Así dices tu ahora, pero si logramos salir de esto, te pasaras toda una vida tratando de olvidar lo que nos pasó hoy. Si salimos de ésto. [**That's what you think...you'll spend the rest of your life trying to forget today. IF we make it out.**]

OSTROFF and CARLOS stare at each other still holding hands.

Ay, Caryl. Al final no importa cuan bueno o malos seamos, nos olvidaran. [**Oh, Caryl. In the End, no matter how good or bad we are, we will be forgotten.**]

Slow TRANSITION-- back to the Hospice just where we left the two. Fluorescents lights blaring: To CARLOS, LIMA is still OSTROFF, hiding with him.

LIMA

Forget who? You've scraped your head, *(tending to it)* here...

CARLOS

Ruza I won't forget you. *(breath)* Won't forget my students have no shoes. *(breath)*
 Mothers whoring, fathers begging...the poor hated...always hated.
(gasping)

LIMA

Papi soy Lima--

CARLOS

I'm starving.

LIMA

(referring to the food tray) But you won't touch your food—

CARLOS

(reaching for her) Let me? Please. Let me hold you.

LIMA

(gently pulling away) Papi...rest—

CARLOS

They forgot us Ruza...

(CARLOS turns away, defeated, crying.)

LIMA

Shhhh, papi...no one forgot you! Yes you can hold me! Come. You are safe. You are loved. Shhhhhhhhhhh.

She kisses him softly.

*CARLOS closes his eyes, sleeps, exhausted.
 NURSE enters with hospital toiletries.*

NURSE

OK, mister Carlos, high time for a shave--*(sensing she walked in on something)*...
 Everything alright?

LIMA

Thank you, Nurse. He was very anxious but resting now. May I help?

Hospice, Next day. Afternoon.

LIMA on the phone. CHARLIE with headphones on, trying to work.

CARLOS is underneath the bed sheet singing "The Internationale" in Spanish. He s manically delirious with energy.

Title on the Screen reads:

Nurse's Status update #2: Very unruly. Cognitive impairment resulting in disruptive aggression. Peripatetic movement. May Lead to injury.

CARLOS

"El hombre del hombre es hermano
Derechos iguales tendrán
La Tierra será el paraíso,
Patria de la Humanidad.
Agrupémonos todos en la Lucha final..."

LIMA

He really needs to stop...

CHARLIE

PAPI, POR FAVOR...!

LIMA

I'm talking to my team at the BANK...!

LIMA exits into the hallway to finish her business call.

LIMA (OFFSTAGE) (CONT'D)

But we said we had to diversify our marketing options...This is a great vehicle for our high-yield clients—!

CARLOS

(singing) Y se alzan los Pueblos CON VALOR—"

CHARLIE

Papi—

CARLOS

(big finish) POR LA INTERNACIONAL!!"

NURSE brings in a food tray and takes the sheet off of CARLOS. Exits. LIMA enters, phone off, having abruptly ended her conference call.

CHARLIE

(off her look) What? --

(brings his tray over to him in bed.)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Papi, basta! Let's eat.

LIMA

I had to hang up, I told them I had an emergency.

CHARLIE

We did!

LIMA

You know why he's like this, right?

CHARLIE

.....

LIMA

YOU PROMISED!

CHARLIE

You promised him! I did not. And I'm not getting her today either, look at him!

LIMA

OK: first of all you would "bring" her not "get" her. She's your mother not livestock.

CARLOS

THAT'S RIGHT, ASSHOLE!--

CHARLIE

Wow--

CARLOS

No more bullshit. (*suspicious*) Where is Carmen?

LIMA

Your son decided not to bring her today.

CARLOS

Charlie?

CHARLIE

Dime papi.

CARLOS

Where is my wife?

CHARLIE

Papi, pleeease be quiet for a little while.

CARLOS

Stop saying "pleeeeeease" like that. I'M NOT CRAZY!

CHARLIE

OK,OK,OK... let's just—let's just be still.

CARLOS

Bring her! / Traémela!

CHARLIE

(with unprecedented rage)

That's it: SHUT UP AND GET INTO BED YOU SONOFABITCH!

He does. CARLOS is frightened.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

...YOU'RE NOT GONNA KILL ME...!

LIMA

Charlie!

CHARLIE

He shouldn't move, his hip is healing ...I know he's having a bad day...but...just...let's all settle down!

CARLOS

(in bed) You don't know everything. You don't know ANYTHING.

(Beat)

I'm sorry I am ill. I know that I have been very, very confused. I know that I have made you suffer...so much...always. I'm so sorry that I took you from our country, our language, our history, our music.

NURSE enters with a syringe. CARLOS resists her.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Charlie, *(genuinely remorseful)* forgive me. I didn't tell you. I couldn't. We promised her-

NURSE

Somebody hold him steady.

CHARLIE expertly overwhelms his father's resistance.

CARLOS

Disculpame mi santo-- [*Forgive me my saint.*]

CHARLIE

What is that you're giving / him?

NURSE administers the dose, then checks CARLOS' vitals, pulse, blood pressure, irises, etc.

LIMA

Let her do her job, Chuck.

CARLOS

(opiate slowly taking effect, looking at his son throughout) In a blue blanket she gave you to me. I took it off and put you under my shirt. For days. My boy. Ven Charlie dame un beso. *(Charlie gives his father a kiss)* Ha! *(transported by meds)* Our last week in Varadero!* Hey, what if we hide? In the hammock: mami, you and me. Shhhhh!-- be quiet so no one will find us! Look, loook...the three of us make one.

...And CARLOS is out.

NURSE

(to Charlie) It's a muscle relaxant. Your father was going to hurt himself.

NURSE settles him into bed.

LIMA

Thank you, Nurse.

CHARLIE

(insisting) What's it called?

NURSE

Galamantine actually, why, do you know it?

CHARLIE

(sotto voce) May have scored some uptown once, yeah--

NURSE

(to Charlie) I need to tell you that it's time, I'm sorry. Do what you have to do.

NURSE turns and exits.

CHARLIE

What time is it?

LIMA

(checks on her phone) Wow, it's A quarter to seven.

CHARLIE

What "time" is it?

LIMA

Think you know...

CHARLIE gets up and turns on his computer, searching for a specific selection from a playlist. LIMA watches this.

LIMA (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

CHARLIE

(Not answering until he finds the piece he's looking for)

I just need to listen to this now...I'll get going in a minute.

LIMA

You're running out of time, Chuck.

Music: We hear John Adam's "My Father Knew Charles Ives," (2006, Hendon Music.) Charlie remains standing. Listening. This piece plays through most of what follows.

CHARLIE

I think in two languages.

LIMA

We all do in Miami.

CHARLIE

We don't have an inherent culture.

LIMA

Sure we do. / We're from all over here.

CHARLIE

No. We don't. Especially now. We're reminded we are "Other" all the time now.

LIMA

Finish listening and go bring your mom, Chuck.

CHARLIE

The piece is *My Father Knew Charles Ives* by John Adams.

LIMA

(sighs) Who the President?

CHARLIE

Spelled the same.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

He commissioned for a piece after 9/11.

LIMA

Oh God Charlie, don't....!

CHARLIE

On the Transmigration of Souls--

LIMA

Isn't it still rush hour?

CHARLIE

Tapering off, we've time.-- In this piece Adams conflates his father Carl, who was also a musician with composer Charles Ives. Both families were from New England.

LIMA

Uh-huh...!

CHARLIE

Adam quotes from hymnals and popular music--the kind of stuff his father liked listening to--like that! That! Hear those trombones, now?

LIMA

Oh boy--

CHARLIE

The work is an homage to Charles Ives who was an early 20th-Century / innovator...

LIMA

I know who the fuck Charles Ives was, I lived with you for ten fucking years.

CHARLIE

So then you'll remember that for Ives, the ultimate reductionist, any sound was, potentially, music. Train doors opening and closing, drunks singing from afar, glass jars breaking--

LIMA

(sits, but with increasing anxiety)

Imma let you finish 'cause you not leaving 'til you do, right?

CHARLIE

Right. *My* problem with the piece is how Adams reduces his father Carl to just playing *one* role in his son's life. Engendering "the genius, wunderkind" who'd grow up to become "the new Charles Ives." So Carl seems to become trivialized, exploited--in a way, erased.

He turns the music off, then sits.

LIMA

Yeah, well, I don't know what music my father listened to--

CHARLIE

Ah, I could never forgive your mother for what she did--!

LIMA

He was erased from my life.

CHARLIE

And I spent my life with three pairs of eyes and ears. Translating TV shows for my parents, the news, mail-- everything!

(beat)

It was never just about me.

LIMA

It was *always* about you, that's why you are the way you are.

CHARLIE

Why have you come, Lima? Really.

LIMA

Again with this now?--*To help!*

CHARLIE

And what else...?

LIMA

(indignantly) To say "goodbye!"

(beat.)

He stood at the school gate, watching us practice with only eyes for me. We call the police. "A pedo!" The cop and this man walk over to us. "You girls are excused except Lima."

CHARLIE

Spooky.

LIMA

Lima, this is your dad.--Yeah, A Spook!-- He had been exchanged for a Cuban spy he said. "Great." "Mom said you had died." I know he said, it's standard procedure. To protect us--

CHARLIE

Bullshit.

LIMA

Tells me there's a college fund for me and there would be no problem "we take care of our own." Then went into the back of a black SUV and I never saw him again.

(beat)

I never said goodbye to my own father, Chuck. *That's* why I came. Now get going.

CHARLIE doesn't move from his chair.

CHARLIE

I can't fucking do this. Bringing Carmen so that Carlos can die.

LIMA

Get up!

CHARLIE

(ignoring)

She's sundowning now which means she'll take me for him. She'll move towards me in the car while I'm driving and say how handsome I am and complain how I don't touch her anymore. She'll make a pass. Then I have to pull over and tell her I'm her son. She'll turn away from me, devastated...a moment later she'll dream up another scenario where I'm a bus driver or the man on the moon--!

LIMA

Her behavior is beyond your control, so what?

CHARLIE

How will she process what'll happen tonight?

LIMA

Not your concern-- besides, I'll be here to help.

CHARLIE

I'm not going to make it tonight.

LIMA

You're not going to make it?! What about your father? Look at him, you scared him Chuck! He may have been delirious but he'll remember that.

CHARLIE

(utterly ashamed) Don't please.

LIMA

You wanted to kill him.

CHARLIE

Yes I did.

LIMA

(wanting to say much more)

.....

CHARLIE

What?! I DID!

LIMA

You may be his son but you're not entitled to act that way, no one is.

(then:)

LIMA (CONT'D)

GET UP, I said!

CHARLIE

I physically cannot move.

LIMA

*(out of her core, wanting to throttle him.
Could manifest physically.)*

ARRRGHHH!

It takes a while to recover, then:

LIMA (CONT'D)

Charlie: you're not the only one losing a father tonight.

CHARLIE

Lima, I'm sorry I've made it hard for you to have access. I *am* grateful you're here.

LIMA

'Kay... thank you..

(She's worn out.)

This is your turf, I get that-- I get it!-- but *(breath)* I just wanna say goodbye to the closest I had for a dad...

LIMA may break down here.

CHARLIE

Remember that piece I was working on yesterday?

LIMA

What...?

CHARLIE

Yesterday. You asked me to share what I was working on.

LIMA

Yeah.

CHARLIE

I've finished it.

LIMA

That's great.

CARLOS

You gave me some respite and I've used it.

LIMA

What time is it? How late can you pick up Carmen?

CHARLIE
8:30pm is last check-out.

LIMA
Just want to make sure.

CHARLIE
May I play you the piece now?

LIMA
Charlie I'd like some quiet, if you don't mind.

She sits.

CHARLIE brings LIMA his headphones and computer.

CHARLIE
It's cued up if you want to listen later. Let me tidy up for mom, then I'll leave.

He begins tidying up.

Unable to resist, LIMA puts on headphones, hits the start button on keyboard. She listens for a bit and closes her eyes and is soothed.

CHARLIE soon has his keys and is walking out the door to fetch CARMEN.

LIMA
(shifting headphones half on) Want me to come with?

CHARLIE
Do you mind staying? Nurse has gone home

Turns to leave.

LIMA
Wait!

CHARLIE
Yep?

LIMA
Charlie this is as good as you've ever written / what's it called?

(grateful) Thank you. CHARLIE

The piece, is it titled? LIMA

Yes. "Lima's Home." CHARLIE

LIMA is surprised, touched. CHARLIE exits.

She begins listening to CHARLIE's piece again, invigorated.

All is still for a bit.

She walks over to CARLOS, putting the H.P. on him. He reacts, but is still out.

LIMA strokes the back of her hand on CARLOS' cheek. CARLOS mouths words as if in a quiet and secretive conversation.

TRANSITION--entirely to CARLOS' perspective. **Lights** crossfade to a special isolating CARLOS in bed. LIMA enters as OSTROFF coming to visit CARLOS at Hospice, in the present.

Music: Charlie's piece, "Lima's Home" plays very quietly underscoring the scene.

Note: They speak in English--as if Ostroff learned it but with a marked, Latin-American accent.

(her hand on Carlos' cheek) Cyryl? OSTROFF

Coronel! [**Colonel!**] CARLOS

OSTROFF
At ease. Are you ready? Do you anything else to report?

CARLOS

(Take a moment to adjust.)

You can speak in English now?

OSTROFF

You're surprised?

CARLOS

Well, yes! Speaking the enemy's language? The Revolution was in Spanish.

OSTROFF

The Revolution belongs to the world now not just to Cuba. We speak in many tongues.

CARLOS

I see--

OSTROFF

Besides we had to learn your language to be ever-vigilant by better understanding you.

CARLOS

"Know your enemy."

(Beat.)

OSTROFF

Still have a thing for clichés I see...

CARLOS

We have kept our word.

OSTROFF

You better have.

CARLOS

Colonel it's the least we can do. You made everything possible.

OSTROFF

It's "General" now. Soon after you left, the FAR* co-opted all revolutionary cells to defend the first, free territory in Latin America against Yankee invasion.

CARLOS

Didn't your views ever change?

OSTROFF

Never. I was a soldier. I followed orders. If I had my own views, I kept them to myself.

CARLOS

We heard so much about Cuba, some of it was hard to believe.

OSTROFF

Well at least we had no Vietnams, inflicted no Gulf Wars...

CARLOS

You had Angola, Ethiopia, Sudan...

OSTROFF

Wars of Liberation! Wars to combat *your* aggression!

CARLOS

But I was only a salesman for Frito Lay...

OSTROFF

You were born to be a teacher! What happened to you?

CARLOS

Bills have to be paid. I wanted Carmen home with our boy—

OSTROFF

Our?

CARLOS

Mine and Carmen's.

OSTROFF

(Beat.)

Good answer.

CARLOS

Why have you come?

OSTROFF

I'll get to that in a minute. I'm here to ask you if there is anything left to do.

CARLOS

Why?

OSTROFF

Because if not, I'm to collect you and lead you right away.

CARLOS

(terrified) Arrested? In Miami, you have no jurisdiction— but wait, haven't you died?!

OSTROFF

Affirmative, hayseed.

CARLOS

(under his breath) Again, with the "hayseed...!"

OSTROFF

I often worried about you. You were weak. Carmen however...the nice bourgeois girly with pink toes and saffron and those repulsively frivolous high-heels, an affront to revolutionary Womanhood...

CARLOS

(speaking as a comrade) Nice legs, though...

OSTROFF

I'll give you that, yes. But in spite of her insouciance, Carmen has a hard core. Those were the ones we never won over...She could excel anywhere—

CARLOS

I did OK, also...

OSTROFF

Do you forget who you're talking to? I've seen you at your worse. The best thing you did was grovel back to her—

CARLOS

I had no other choice.

OSTROFF

You always have another choice. Always. You could have stayed in the forces. I'd have made sure you had a career. I like you hayseed, you're needy. But Carmen is independent...

CARLOS

Yes, and very proud.

OSTROFF

The Revolution is proud, too, hayseed! We have defeated solipsism. We have erased all marginalization. We're a solid column! The ones who feel left out didn't take advantage of what was offered to them.

CARLOS

(sighs, he's heard enough) General how can I help you?

OSTROFF

Is there anything left for you to do?

CARLOS

There is. I need to see Carmen one last time.

OSTROFF

Understood. But remember what you both promised me.

CARLOS

Your secret is safe.

OSTROFF

I have a legacy to li—well I can't say "live" up to—but even the dead must defend their honor. *Especially* the dead. Even we've heard about "fake news!"

CARLOS

Of course, Colo—err, General Ostroff.

OSTROFF

Alright hayseed, we'll give you more time, I'll use my influence. I empathize: I was also pinched by the "ole crab."

CARLOS

Cancer? Sorry to hear that.

OSTROFF

It's alright. I died a soldier. I knew precisely what was happening, I was fully briefed every step of the way.

CARLOS

What's it like, dying?

OSTROFF

Different for everyone, I'm sure.

CARLOS

Based on--what?--one's Belief?

OSTROFF

Liken it to an "after-dinner's sleep" as the poet said-- I forget which. One thing I can tell you: you will rest easy if you have lived well.

CARLOS

Ahhhh...but that's my point: what is meant by "rest?"

OSTROFF

(She places the back of her hand on Carlos' cheek) Same old Hayseed... You'll find out soon enough.

*A moment after LIMA had touched CARLOS. The fluorescent **lights** flicker in time with CARLOS' blinking.*

Music goes out. Back to Hospice, bit later.

LIMA takes the H.P.s off of CARLOS.

She sits and puts them back on to listen to her namesake piece once more. Closes her eyes.

NURSE wheels in a small oxygen tank, places an oxygen mask on CARLOS. LIMA is unaware, dozing. NURSE exits quietly.

Then, on the screen:

Nurse's Status Update #3: Severe shortness of breath. Arterial saturation to below 80%. Roxynol (3mg) administered with oxygen therapy. Discontinue as pulse diminishes.

CHARLIE enters. CARMEN trailing behind, half of her in the hallway--she is tentative.

LIMA

Woah! I fell asleep. Who put him on oxygen?

CHARLIE

Nurse did. She called to say goodnight, she didn't want to wake you. Glad you've rested we're in for a long night. *(Speaking towards the hallway)* Carmen...pase.

CARMEN enters. Disoriented. Scared? She eyes LIMA suspiciously.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Sorry, she doesn't recognize you.

LIMA

(Both women scrutinizing each other) Oh Charlie she's still beautiful! *(moved)* Mami, eres tan bella!

CARMEN is taken aback by LIMA's familiarity!

CHARLIE

(still holding a chair for her)

Call her by name Lima, it'll confuse her otherwise. Carmen sientese.

LIMA

Carmen you are such a beautiful woman!

CARMEN

(still guarded) Gracias.

CHARLIE

Give her some time she'll warm up to you.

LIMA

Look at her, she hasn't aged.

CHARLIE

She's well taken care of.

CARMEN

(gesturing for a mirror) Mirador?

LIMA

Mirror? Oh, here--

Hands here a pocket mirror. CARMEN fixes her makeup as needed.

CHARLIE

Still worries about her looks.

LIMA

Not "worried" she wants to look her best. Respect, Chuck.

CARMEN

Gracias, señorita. *(suddenly anxious)* Excuse me if I do not recall, it is late for me. We have met, yes?

CHARLIE

You don't have to tell her, just enter into her world.

LIMA

I know what to do!--it's OK if you can't place me just now, Carmen, your amongst family.

CARMEN

Good! You know I am to be married soon?

LIMA

I do! Congratulations. Who with?

CARMEN

I can't say it's a secret, *(whispering)* he is a rebel.

LIMA

Ohhhh, sexy!

CARMEN

Oh, yes, I know... But he's also a teacher so not crazy. Soon he will be back and we will have a big wedding. I would like to have it outside, not in that ugly Masonic Hall from nineteen-0-whatever...but outside in the sun! We'll all be barefoot!

*(LIMA & CHARLIE attentively listening,
small beat)*

CARMEN (CONT'D)

I don't think that I have ever seen my father with dirty feet! *(laughs)* He will walk me down an aisle made with garlands to the "altar" in front of the palm trees, where we met at night, *(exhausted)* at night... may I sit?

*She sits. CHARLIE & LIMA entranced.
CARMEN closes her eyes. It's late for her.*

LIMA

I remember their wedding pictures, now. They were just like she's described it.

CHARLIE

Long term memories are cemented. Newer ones--

LIMA

Not so much...

CHARLIE puts his things down, and settles. LIMA helps him find a place for CARMEN's things. CHARLIE sits. LIMA stands. CARMEN still hasn't acknowledged CARLOS in bed.

CHARLIE

Want the Nurse's number in case we need to call--?

LIMA

Send me her card. *(He does so)*

LIMA and CHARLIE look at CARLOS.

CHARLIE

(wary) What was he going on about earlier, "You don't know anything?" and "i promised not to tell you..." did you catch that?

LIMA

(Checking her phone after it pings)

He was delirious.

CHARLIE

Well, yes but...ever have the feeling that you've missed something?

LIMA

Kiiinda but who knows where the mind goes with all those drugs right?

CHARLIE

Lima he was writhing in guilt, apologizing to me / right before he went under.

LIMA

Look, he's been taking me for someone else ever since I've gotten here!

CHARLIE

Who?

LIMA

Calls me "Ruza" all day!

CARMEN

(hatefully) PUTA...!

Both turn to CARMEN.

CHARLIE

Mami, you alright over there?

CARMEN

Don't be rude young man, stop calling me "mami!" I'm a married woman!

CHARLIE

Sorry Ma'am.

CARMEN

Señora!

CHARLIE

Señora.

CARMEN

Cheeky Americanos, it's getting so that one can't walk out in public without being harassed, (*dismayingly at Charlie*) even from the most innocent-looking ones.

LIMA

(*impishly*) I know what you mean Señora.

CARMEN adjusts in her chair, vindicated.

LIMA (CONT'D)

What plans do you have for her?

CHARLIE

Mom's long-term care's in place. I'll sell the house...I've a realtor waiting for the call...Lima, I'm thinking about moving to Cuba.

LIMA

What? Haven't you gotten over that, by now?

CHARLIE

I've met with visiting academics, Cuban musicians and I could live there half the year-- maybe even naturalize.

LIMA

How will you live?

CHARLIE

What do you mean *how* will I live, I'll teach.

LIMA

For peanuts. Have you been offered anything yet?

CHARLIE

I won't leave without a job.

LIMA

And let's say you become a Cuban citizen--and how I don't know--

CHARLIE

I was born there, Li--

LIMA

Fine-- but wont you lose your status in the U.S.?

CHARLIE

Ya, recent changes have thrown my plan off-kilter a bit--

LIMA

Clearly you haven't thought this out too well!

CHARLIE

Well, like you said let's not stress--

LIMA

I mean, wow, ever give North Korea a thought? I hear Kim Jong-Un is a great fan of non-serial composition!

CHARLIE

Christ.

LIMA

So who would check in on Carmen when you're gone?

CHARLIE

I'll fly back from time to time, it's only 40 minutes by plane.

LIMA

(holding her tongue)

.....

CHARLIE

I'm not *abandoning* her.

LIMA

Don't you think she'll ask for you every day--?

CARMEN

I've waited all day for my son to pick me up!

(Beat. Fleeting lucidity.)*

I'm certain we have met young lady.

LIMA

Carmen, yo soy Lima.

CARMEN

Lo sabía! Mi *Limita* come!! (*going to Lima, kissing her all over*) It's so dark in here and I don't have my eye-glasses on! (*she does*) Where is Charlie?

CHARLIE

Here mami.

CARMEN

Yes, I know, I just didn't see you. Éste niño thinks I'm crazy! Charlie y ... (*pointing to Carlos*) ?

CHARLIE

(*opens his mouth to speak, but can't*)

.....

LIMA

(*gesturing, "relax"*)

Carmen, that's Carlos. He's been sick for a very long time, enfermo, and he wanted you to visit!

CHARLIE

Oh Lima I wish you wouldn't have--

CARMEN quietly walks over to CARLOS. Then:

CARMEN

I'm tired. I want to go home.

LIMA

Don't you want to stay with Carlos a little while? You just got here.

CARMEN

I have been here all day—!

CHARLIE

There ya go—

CARMEN

And this old man is not Carlos.

CHARLIE
Ven mami...(to Lima) See? It's what I told you!

LIMA
Carlos asked for her! Chill!

CARMEN
(panicking) My fiancé--?

LIMA
Carmen--

CARMEN
No, no, no, no... That can't be Carlos!?

CHARLIE
Mami let's go!

Note: The few exchanges from Carmen are subtitled in English on the screen.

CARMEN
Pero ese es un *viejo!!* [**But he's an old man!!**]

CHARLIE
We shouldn't have muddied the waters like this!

LIMA
She has the RIGHT to be here!

CHARLIE
I just don't want the hassle!

LIMA
Charlie your father's dying, it's going to get messy.

CARMEN
QUE!?

CHARLIE
SHUT UP! Why make her *hysterical*?

LIMA
(challenging) "HYSTERICAL," asshole?!

CHARLIE

(sotto voce) Tired of being called an asshole around here.

CARMEN

SHHHhhhhhh! No griten o se despierta. [**Stop shouting, you'll wake him!**]*She walks over to CARLOS in bed.**Searches for clues on his body. Takes her time.
Looks for scars, examines his feet and hands.
This is hypnotizing to CHARLIE & LIMA.*

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Apésta [**He smells.**]*Then: extracts from her hand purse a freshener
and sprays. Then a brush, and combs him.*

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Would you leave us alone please?

*(Beat.)**CHARLIE is silent only stares back at his
mother.*

LIMA

Chuck?

*CHARLIE goes to exit, LIMA follows. Then just
before he leaving, he stops at the door frame,
turning to look back at CARMEN.*

CHARLIE

Usted me reconoce? [**Do you recognize me?**]

LIMA

Charlie don't, come on...

CARMEN

¿Que? [**What?**]

CHARLIE

Do you recognize me?

CARMEN

Of course, yes.

CHARLIE

Who am I then?

CARMEN's awareness is occluded again.

CARMEN

She says that is my husband, there...*(as if gesturing to a stranger in bed)* then you have to be... *(trails off)*

CHARLIE

Say it, mami.

CARMEN

The man who drove us here.

LIMA

Chuck, why are you doing this?

CHARLIE

Because I will only leave her alone with him if she's aware--Where are we Carmen?

CARMEN

Why do you look at me like I've done something wrong? / What have I done?

LIMA

You've done nothing wrong, Carmen.

CHARLIE

Who are you?

CARMEN

My name is Carmen. I was born on July 16, 1936 in the township of Santa Isabel de las Lajas, on the Island of Cuba.

LIMA

See?--

CARMEN

I am married to Carlos Tórrrez

CHARLIE

And who...is that *(pointing to Carlos)* over there?

LIMA

She *just said* it was Carlos!

CHARLIE

NO! She only said she was married to a Carlos Tórrrez.
(*beat.*)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Yes. So again Carmen, can you tell me who *I* am?

CARMEN

(*to herself*) I'm not ready to yet...
(*Silence.*)

Quick TRANSITION-- to CARMEN's home in Miami, 2012.

Lights isolate CARMEN and CHARLIE in the playing space.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Charlie...?

CHARLIE

Your one and only...finished packing. Did I wake you?

CARMEN

(*nodding "no"*) It's my old friend insomnia. Where is your wife?

CHARLIE

She's asleep. Want to listen?

Takes one earpiece from CHARLIE's headphones and listen.

CARMEN

Bach?

CHARLIE

(*nods "yes"*) "Kunst der Fuge."

CARMEN

(*testing herself*) Art of Fugue of Bach? I first heard this at the end of the war.

CHARLIE

After the revolution?

CARMEN

No. THE War. The sisters took us to Havana, to the Cathedral, where the organist played from it...I was little.

CHARLIE

Let's listen together.

She hands him back one earpiece. They listen, holding hands.

CARMEN

Why no organ?

CHARLIE

Emerson String Quartet.

CARMEN

Ahhh ...Only *strings*--

CHARLIE

(slightly irked) Shhhh--listen, here comes the coda.

It ends. She hands back the earpiece and kisses him.

CARMEN

Thank you for staying with us tonight.

CHARLIE

Mami, I don't know if this move to New York will stick.

CARMEN

Ay Charlie... Without you here I will be *virtually undone*.

CHARLIE

(impressed) WOW! I've never heard you speak like *that* before!

CARMEN

I love to learn new expressions from the "Obras Maestras del Teatro" television program.

CHARLIE

Which program?

CARMEN

The one that starts:

*CARMEN "does" Joseph's Mouret's "Fanfare-Rondeau" *theme to Masterpiece Theatre.*

CHARLIE

OHHH...! *(enjoying this)* "Masterpiece Theatre!!"

CARMEN

Yes!

They may both do it for a bit, holding on to some silliness one last time.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

So: New York worries you. Why?

CHARLIE

Well, Lima's got a job but I've got to look / for one.

CARMEN

You have each other. That's all you need.

CHARLIE

"True dat" like Lima says. *(beat)* Mami, what's it like being married for 45 years?

CARMEN

You get insomnia. *(They laugh)* Easy to forget how lucky you are when you're married that long. I hope you and Lima will understand.

CHARLIE

Alright mami, why can't you sleep? Don't freak me out more than I am about leaving.

CARMEN

Something happened at the supermarket today.

CHARLIE

¿Que?

CARMEN

Charlie, papi and I saw a man we had not seen in a long time.

CHARLIE

From when?

(Beat.)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Cuba?

CARMEN

(beat)

Yes. You know you had a sister once?

CHARLIE

When?!?!?

CARMEN

Or a brother. A few years before you were conceived.

(Beat.)

CHARLIE

What happened?

CARMEN

Some men came in a truck--

CHARLIE

Why did you wait so long to tell me? Papi never said anything--

CARMEN

Now listen please! Some army men came at night in a truck to take your father away. I saw your father close the door behind him, I tried to open it but they were pressing him against it. I was just on the other side of the door and I couldn't...*(still traumatized)*
OPEN IT. Finally the door was freed and I saw your father fall to his knees as the men walked away. I thought they had killed him right on the porch.

CHARLIE

And you guys recognized one of the soldiers at the supermarket today...?

CARMEN

(nods "yes.")

I couldn't hold on. It started raining inside of me. Everything slipped away from under me.

*All is still for some beats. **Sound:** we can hear the cicadas, late in a Florida night.*

CARMEN (CONT'D)

And yes, one of the soldiers was standing in line with us at the checkout--

CHARLIE

I see.

CARMEN

The *curandera*-- you know what that is? They don't have them here.

CHARLIE

Of course, mami. A healer, a wise woman.

CARMEN

Yes. She said she could tell it was a girl by the shape of my belly.

(quick beat)

But that's OK because now...? Lima is my daughter! She should know this. Please tell her this story. I never have.

CHARLIE

I'll tell her.

CARMEN

You're leaving tomorrow and it would be strange to talk about this, then. She should know what she is to us. How we see her--

CHARLIE

I understand--

CARMEN

She never had parents like you did, remember that always.

CHARLIE

I promise to.

CARMEN

(changes tone) But she was always a happy girl--throwing sticks in the air...!

CHARLIE

Do you mean "batons?" Twirling batons?

CARMEN

"Buttons...?" *(Off his laughter.)* Whatever, some things are too American for me...

(A beat. Looking at her grown son.)

Don't wait? Start your family soon. After I aborted we couldn't conceive, Charlie... You were a miracle to us.

CHARLIE

(this moves him. Then, new thought.)

Mami, why don't we call the police about the man in the supermarket today?--

CARMEN

For crimes committed 30 years ago / in another country?

CHARLIE

Sorry / right.

CARMEN

But there is *something* we can do...

CHARLIE

What?

CARMEN

Find another supermarket.

(Beat.)

TRANSITION-- Bleeding back into the same moment we left them at Hospice. The present.

Lights slowly crossfade to hospice fluorescents.

CHARLIE

(grilling now) Do you even remember having a baby?

CARMEN

NO I DO NOT!

LIMA

Why are you doing this.

CHARLIE

She doesn't remember having me, how can we leave her unsupervised?!?

CARMEN

Charlie.

CHARLIE

No one in their right mind would leave them alone!

LIMA

I don't mean all *night*--

CARMEN

Charlie.

LIMA

Just enough for us to buy some coffee to bring back with us--

CHARLIE

So what, an *hour*? A lot can happen in an hour--

CARMEN

CHARLIE, CHARLIE, CHARLIE, CHARLIE!

(Beat. It's terrible.)

CARMEN (CONT'D)

I forget! But sometimes I remember again. Tonight, I remember too much! Too much coming at once. I live in a large... place. A home with long hallways and old people. It smells like piss-- "Carmen how did you get there?" I ask myself. *(with dignity)* And then I try hard to put in order: Carlos y La Revolución, then Charlie, Miami and Limita, and then...New York.

(at Lima to make sure)

Is that not right?

LIMA

Yes Carmen that is right...*(to Charlie, pointedly)* That is correct.

CARMEN

I recognize this Ol-*(affected)* ... this Old man is Carlos.

CHARLIE

Ay mami...

CARMEN

And I know PRECISELY who your mother is. Now leave me be alone with my husband to help me understand what is happening tonight...please.

Decision time.

LIMA

What more do you NEED? She couldn't be plainer.

CHARLIE

I--

LIMA

Charlie, buddy, I'm going downstairs to wait in the car before I punch you in the nose.

LIMA exits.

CHARLIE and CARMEN stare at each other for a few beats. She is expecting him to follow LIMA. Takes a few moments, then:

CHARLIE

Les voy a dejar una musiquita para que escuchen un ratico, te traigo un cafe con leche?
[I'm going leave you with a little music to listen to which will help you understand. I'll bring you a coffee with milk.]

CARMEN

Decaf--!

CHARLIE

Un decaf, Mami, seguro. Vendremos pronto. Portate bien. **[A decaf, you got it Mami, I won't be gone long. Behave now.]**

CHARLIE connects his computer speakers and turns on a playlist. Cuban Music from the 1950's is heard from the same. He finally exits.

CARMEN

Asshole.

CARMEN draws a chair nearer to CARLOS. Nothing happens. After some time she takes his oxygen mask off.

NOTE: *In the following scene, CARLOS & CARMEN mostly speak in Spanish. English subtitles flash on the screen as necessary.*

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Wake up, you're not so old!

CARLOS slowly wakes.

CARLOS
(Struggling for breath)

Carmen ...!

CARMEN

Que? [**What?**]

CARLOS

(pointing to oxygen mask) Give me...

CARMEN

Esto? [**This?**]

CARLOS

Yes.

CARMEN

No. Shhhhhhh. Te frotaré el pecho. [**I'll rub your chest...**]

CARLOS

(settling) Ay Carmencita...

CARMEN

Por dónde andabas, me asustasté. [**Where were you?? I was scared.**]

CARLOS

Shhh, shhh *(adjusting his breath)* rub, rub, rub.

CARMEN

(seductively) Quieres hacer un jueguito conmigo? [**Want to play a little game with me?**]

CARLOS

(worried) Cual jueguito? [**What game?**]

CARMEN

"Tent" ... DALE! [**GO!**]

Quickly gets into bed, pulling the sheet over them, giggling.

CARLOS

(coming out from under the sheet)

Ay, Carmen. You are confused.

CARMEN pops head out from under the sheets.

CARMEN

Plaaaaaay with me!

CARLOS

Tranquila. Me cuesta trabajo...(respira) respirar. [**Relax. It's hard to...(breath) breathe-**]

Rubs his chest more softly now.

CARMEN

Okei? (*lo besa*) vamos a descenzar un ahora [**OK? (She kisses him) Let's rest.**]

*CARMEN & CARLOS holding on to each other.
Her touch makes it easier for him to breath.*

CARLOS

He estado muy mal. [**I have been very sick.**]

CARMEN

Awww...!

CARLOS

He estado viendo sombras. Muertos. Vivos. Pero de noche mi amor, lo que me parece ser la noche, solo te veo a tí. Tus pies, tus muslos, caderas, (*la abraza más fuerte*) Ayyyyyy Carmen. [**I have been seeing shadows. Dead people, alive. But my love, at night, what I think is night, I only see you. Your feet, your calves, hips, (holds her tighter) ooooooh Carmen.**]

Soon after, CARMEN recognizes Mariano Merceron's "Angelina"(RCA VICTOR, 1956) playing out from Charlie's speakers.

CARMEN

Escucha, papi, "Angelina" en la radio! Vamos a bailar, tú puedes! [**Listen papi, it's "Angelina" playing on the radio! Come dance with me, you can do it!**]

*CARLOS tries to get out of bed but doesn't have the strength. When: **Blackout.***

*Romantic **TRANSITION**-- to what should look and feel like CARMEN's fantasy, outside of time.*

***Lights:** Spotlight opens on CARLOS. He rises, to dance elegantly with CARMEN.*

*A crystal ball descends and is lit with another spotlight producing sparkles everywhere. The couple dance slowly, whispering things to each other. By the end of the song, (1:00) they kiss-- which stops everything. **Music**, Movement, Time itself. Then the spotlight's iris slams shut and--*

***Lights** switch to stark fluorescents in Hospice again, stomping on CARMEN'S fantasy as CARLOS is on the floor, gasping for air. Spent.*

CARLOS

(gasping) No más. [**No more...**]

CARMEN

Se acabó la música. [**The music's stopped.**]

Beat. She is suddenly furious, reliving a difficult moment in their marriage.

Goes back to sit on her chair while CARLOS crawls on the floor to get to the oxygen mask.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Apuesto a que se si esa perra contigo estuviera aquí ahora estuvieras echando un pie! Desgraciado. [**I bet if that bitch were here you'd be cutting a rug wouldn't you?!**]

CARLOS

Te lo suplico [**..I beg you.**]

CARMEN

Falso. [**Two-timer.**]

CARLOS manages to get to the side of the bed. Struggles to get his oxygen mask back on.

CARMEN

Te debía haber dejado. [**I should have left you.**]

CARLOS

(referring to getting oxygen mask back on)

Carmen (*respira*) ayudame! [**Carmen (breath) help me!**]

CARMEN

Hijo de puta, no me mientas....a que sigues con esa tortillera!!
[Sonofabitch, don't lie to me, bet you're still seeing that dike!!]

CARLOS unable to breathe. He collapses on to the floor again.

CARLOS

(from the floor, with all he's got)

CHAR....LIEEEE!

CHARLIE (OFF)

PAPI?!?

LIMA and CHARLIE come running upstairs, still offstage.

CARMEN

¡Perdimos a la niña y tú te desapareces por más de un año..?!-- **[We lose the baby and then you're gone for over a year...?]**--

LIMA enters finding CARLOS over the edge of the bed, unconscious.

LIMA

CARLOS!

She gets to him but he's not responding.

CARMEN

Jugando a soldados por La Patria? *(se quiebra)* ¡¡YO SOY LA PATRIA!! **[For what, playing at soldiers for the fatherland? (comes undone) I AM THE FATHERLAND!!]**

LIMA tries to gather him off the floor and into bed but can't pick up dead weight.

CHARLIE enters a beat later. Sees LIMA struggling with CARLOS.

LIMA

CHARLIE, give me a hand here!

CHARLIE

I'll call for help.

LIMA

Let's just get him in bed now...

CARMEN

(Still in the past working it out.)

Te preocupa que la polaca sepa que nos vamos? A mi no. Y no me importa un coño que sea una coronel! [**You're worried *La Polaca* knows we are leaving Cuba? I'm not...Who cares if she's a fucking Colonel? Remember her son is legally *ours* now!**]

During Carmen's speech they've managed to put CARLOS in bed but catching the last thing CARMEN said, both stop and turn to look at her.

CHARLIE

Mami?

Speaking to Charlie as if he were her husband.

CARMEN

¡Deja de llamarme tu "mami," -- *(se levanta)* NO ME TOQUES! [**Stop with the "mami" business and take your hands OFF ME!**]

LIMA goes to CARMEN to calm her, perhaps sitting her back down gently.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

Yo me encargaré del asunto y hablaré con ella--no te metas, desgraciado! [**I'll see to this myself--don't interfere, you shit!**]

Then, CHARLIE turns to CARLOS in bed.

CHARLIE

(after quickly looking over Carlos)

LIMA!

LIMA

(running over) Chuck?

CHARLIE

Lima, he's gone. He's gone.

LIMA silent-screams. Electra.

CHARLIE sits on same spot on the floor by the bed, where CARLOS fell earlier.

CARMEN welcomes LIMA whom she takes to be Ostroff as if in her home.

CARMEN

(acogedoramente) Pero debiste avisarnos que venías temprano, hubieramos hecho algo...
[(welcoming) **But you should have told us you were coming early, we'd have made something...**]

LIMA

(getting past Carmen)

Charlie, what do you want to do?

CARMEN

(halagando) Pero aún así que sorpresa más agradable! Tu siempre eres bienvenida.
[(buttering her up) **But still, a nice surprise! You're always welcome!**]

CHARLIE

Call the Nurse. Tell her to take her time.

CARMEN

Carlos y yo estamos felicísimos! Es un ángel...[**Carlos and I are so happy he's such an angel...**]

CHARLIE

Could you take her outside, please?

LIMA

What are you going to do?

CHARLIE

Clean him he's a mess.

CARMEN

Nos has regalado un milagro, Ruza ---a [**You've rendered a miracle for us, Ruza---**]

LIMA

(harshly) Carmen BASTA!

CARMEN

(sorprendida) Dículte. “Coronel.” Solo me tomé la libertad porque quisiera hablarle “mujer-a-mujer”. [*(taken aback)* **Forgive me. “Colonel.” I only took the liberty because I’d like to talk to you, “woman-to-woman”--**]

LIMA

Vamos Carmen.

Brusquely tries taking CARMEN outside.

CARMEN

(breaking free of Lima/Ostroff)

¡NO! Coronel Ostroff yo respeto su autoridad, pero no seré empujada ni halada en mi propia casa. [**Colonel Ostroff I respect your authority but I will not be pushed and prodded in my own home.**]

LIMA

Carmen... *(spent)* por favor!

CARMEN

Un minuto Coronel! Usted sabe que nos vamos del país. Fue una decisión difícil pero ... bueno, lo hemos decidido. Nos gustaría llevar a Charlie con nosotros. Esto presenta complicaciones legales y personales, pero ambos sabemos que este "asunto" *(suspira)* pudiera comprometer su carrera en las fuerzas armadas* Carlos y yo seremos discretos. *(a Charlie)* Sabemos guardar secretos, ¿no, Carlos?

[In a minute Colonel! You know we plan to leave the country. We would like to take Charlie with us. This brings legal and personal complications but we both know that this *(sighs)* “affair” may compromise your career in the armed forces.* Carlos and I can be discreet *(to Charlie)*. We know how to keep secrets don’t we Carlos?]

CHARLIE

(ironically) Yes we do.

CARMEN

Le ofrecemos que se comunique con su hijo o no, como usted lo prefiere ... Lo que sí necesitamos saber es lo siguiente: ¿nos permitirá salir juntos como una familia? [**You would have direct access to your son or not, as you prefer...but what we need to know is this: will you allow us to leave together as a family?**]

CHARLIE is deflated. At a loss. LIMA looks at him. He gestures to her to, “go on.”

LIMA

(playing along)

I will consider it. May we continue speaking outside?

CARMEN

(hacia Charlie) Carlos, quédate con el bebé. La Coronel Ostroff y yo estaremos afuera.

(hacia Lima) Por aquí Coronel. [***(to Charlie)* Carlos, stay with the baby. Colonel Ostroff and I are stepping outside. This way Colonel.**]

CARMEN exits, LIMA follows. CHARLIE remains on the floor.

Cold TRANSITION-- lights crossfade to isolate CARLOS' body on the bed .

Enter OSTROFF. She has come to collect CARLOS as arranged.

On Screen:

Nurse's Final Report:* Time of death unknown. Depolarization and electrical silence of human cerebral cortex will not occur immediately after circulatory arrest. Neurons will continue to function between 8-10 minutes.

From within CARLOS' fading mind which is quickly shutting down, the following:

CARLOS

wait

OSTROFF

Time's up, hayseed.

CARLOS

you owe me

OSTROFF

No I don't. You've seen Carmen haven't you? *(fiendishly)* Did it go well?

CARLOS

more time please

OSTROFF

What?!?

charlie

CARLOS

OSTROFF

No. No sir. I can't I have my orders!

CARLOS

there is time. are some minutes left

OSTROFF

I know it's difficult at this stage for you but speak up and correctly!

CARLOS

i need charlie to know.

OSTROFF

Know what?

CARLOS

everything. *(w/ great effort)* 5-minutes-no-more

OSTROFF

What's happening now is as common as eating mangoes. Simple, real, and just as sweet.
A release.

(physically cueing him)

OSTROFF (CONT'D)

Let's go...!

CARLOS

you brought him wrapped in a blue blanket

OSTROFF

He has nothing to do with my task today.

CARLOS

with my breath under my shirt

OSTROFF

Hayseed don't get sentimental now, it's cheap--

CARLOS

in a hammock with mami--

OSTROFF

And indulgent. *(to herself)* Just like the middle class.

CARLOS

wrapped in sound he makes music--

OSTROFF

Hayseed I am not affected by this display. It only arouses me to see you beg.

CARLOS

in-fear-for-our-lives conceived

OSTROFF

That was two lifetimes ago. Literally.

CARLOS

your son ruza--

OSTROFF

No, he is Carmen's.

CARLOS

we owe. him.

OSTROFF

(considers, gives in)

Just like you People, always asking for one last bite of the apple. Five minutes, no more.

*OSTROFF exits. **Lights** do not change.*

CHARLIE stands, clears the medical equipment. He begins to disrobe CARLOS' body. Takes a sponge and some water in a pail from under the bed. Pulls out all the tubes and stuck tape.

During the following scene onstage, CHARLIE is busy washing the body. CARLOS is inert but his mind experiences its last thoughts/images before shutting down. Limbs fully manipulated like a rag doll.

*An XCU of CARLOS, live or recorded in video, responding to CHARLIE on the **screen** above.*

NOTE: This can also be achieved with a pre-recorded audio.

The idea is to stage a confluence of two minds.

CARLOS

(Time running out fast)

5 minutes

CHARLIE

I'm not angry nor upset, I only have this one last thing to do for you, they can't find you like this.

CARLOS

i know you what you doing

CHARLIE

This is feeling strangely biblical.

CARLOS

yo no siento [**i cannot feel**]

CHARLIE

I don't know why I'm talking to you, it's not like you can hear what I'm saying.

CARLOS

si te escucho [**i can listen to you**]

CHARLIE

What did you think I was going to say or do to you and mami, that stopped you from telling me?

CARLOS

many times we were--

CHARLIE

Were you that busy--?

CARLOS

no tienes idea [**you have no idea**]

CHARLIE

I wasn't going anywhere, I belonged to you.

CARLOS

que lindo hablas [**how beautiful to say**]

CHARLIE

I'm no parent but before anything *else* you needed to inform me.

CARLOS

listen

CHARLIE

To tell me the truth, papi.

CARLOS

we were wrong

CHARLIE

What a waisted opportunity to know what you and mom were really like. To fully appreciate what you both...*DID* for me. Did you think I would judge you? Well, I do now. If the "curandera" who said it would be a girl was right, I ascended to a place that belonged to my sister, I stole from her (*breaks*) *her place*. It should have been me mami lost that night on your porch. And I know it's melodramatic and insufferably indulgent and even *selfish* but it *is* the way I feel. I can't help it. Have I earned all this? My place? Earned how you both were dispossessed of her, earned your exile, your corner of the world, earned all that you fought for, there and here? Everything you knew and loved?... Fuck, I'm gushing all over you now let me stop. I'll have to deal. It's my turn now.

CARLOS

para-nosotros all we did--[**for us**]

CHARLIE

You're so cold papi.

CARLOS

to you release my warmth

CHARLIE

You kept secrets that would have made my love for you and Carmen more perfect.

CA-

nothing is perfect only

CHARLIE

Time.

CARLOS

time

CARLOS (CONT'D)

is perfect en effecto [**in effect**]

CHARLIE
I would trade half the time left in my life and give it to you--

CARLOS
you cant

(beat)

CARLOS (CONT'D)
you wont

CHARLIE
If mami hadn't come tonight--

CARLOS
to dance with carmen

CHARLIE
Was I wrong to?

CARLOS
i would again

CHARLIE is nearly done.

CHARLIE
I'm nearly done.

CARLOS
y yo [**me too**]

CHARLIE
You both took me up--

CARLOS
ascended

CHARLIE
And took me in. Thank you.

CARLOS
from us

CHARLIE puts his head on CARLOS' chest.

CHARLIE
 What is there left to say?

CARLOS
 room is made
 or time will end
(beat)

LIMA Enters whom CARLOS senses to be OSTROFF.

LIMA
 Sorry.

CARLOS
 ya [**done**]

Lights fade, settle, then:

Fluorescent lights flicker for a beat or two, then start up.

TRANSITION-- Unsentimentally back to Hospice. The Present. CHARLIE pulls a sheet over the body. Moving on.

LIMA
 Should I come back in a minute?

CHARLIE
 No, please, sit with me a minute would you? Where's mom?

LIMA
 She's down in the waiting room. No one's there should I bring her up?

CHARLIE
 Is she aware?

LIMA
 I don't think so she's quiet--sleepy.

CHARLIE
 Good, I need a breather.
(Beat.)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

What now?

LIMA

Take her back and go home to rest. I can stay, I don't mind. The Nurse said she'd show up in an hour--Good Lord, it's almost morning now.

CHARLIE

Hard to tell with these fluorescents on.

LIMA walks d.s., and gestures opening the blinds to a window. Sunlight filters in while CHARLIE turns upstage to turn the fluorescent lights off in the room for the first time in the play.

LIMA

You should go home. You've earned it after all these months.

CHARLIE

Would you stay with me?

LIMA

What?

CHARLIE

Come home with me—you know what I mean, stay the week.

LIMA

I will, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Why do *you* think they never told me?

LIMA

There's so many reasons why our parents kept secrets. Why did mom tell me dad died a hero in a Cuban prison--

CHARLIE

Right--sorry Li.--

LIMA

...a dissident when he was really CIA? It takes a lot of effort to maintain "official stories" and meet your daily needs--I think they just forgot they lied.

CHARLIE

And the guilty went unpunished...?

LIMA

No one's guilty Charlie, "More immediate truths took over" like mom said after I met my dad. Not fair but--

CHARLIE

Just the way it goes--?

LIMA

The way *memory* goes, yeah, I think so...

CHARLIE

Li, I can forget some our fights, some the pain I caused you, some of the ways we failed one another but I don't think that's *lying*.

LIMA

It isn't.

LIMA picks up a chair, takes it d.s. to the window where the early morning sunlight streams in. CHARLIE follows suit, placing his chair close beside hers.

They take the sunlight in, eyes closed. At one point one of them reaches out to take the other's hand.

CARMEN enters. Refreshed. She seems to recognize CHARLIE & LIMA.

CARMEN

Children, I want to hear some music.

CHARLIE

(walks to his computer) What would you like to hear?

CARMEN

Your latest

CHARLIE & LIMA exchange a look.

CARMEN (CONT'D)

(to her son) Please, Charlie?

CHARLIE brings a chair d.s. for his mother to sit next to he and LIMA in the sunlight. Returns to the computer and turns on "Lima's Home," which plays aloud.

LIMA glances u.s. at CARLOS' body, still covered. She mourns quietly. While:

CHARLIE sits with CARMEN & LIMA. She sits between her children and places her hand on both their knees. Proud mom.

Lights out in the background, CARMEN, LIMA and CHARLIE bask in sunlight: A Tableaux.

END OF PLAY

GLOSSARY & NOTES

P. 3, **hospital bed:** Throughout the play it is advisable that the bed be either in a semi-raised position to facilitate the action around it, so central to this piece.

P. 5, **Beny Moré:** Bartolomé Maximiliano Moré (1919 – 1963), known as Bení Moré or Beny Moré (in Spanish), was a Cuban singer, bandleader and songwriter. An early, Latin Jazz innovator.

P. 14, **Contextual Setting:** Communicates the relationship of context to content, in composition. Charlie may want to justify a setting to what he'd like to do musically. (source: www.igi-global.com/).

P. 22, **SIM:** (*Servicio de Inteligencia Militar*). As high a figure as 20,000 Cubans were tortured and killed by this secret police force founded by Batista following his coup d'etat in 1953.

P. 24, **Polaca:** a benign epithet for all emigres to Cuba originating from Eastern Europe.

P. 32, **climactic:** The Battle of Santa Clara in 1958 was fought just on the eve of Batista's departure and the Revolution's victory. (see, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Santa_Clara)

P. 37, **Przepraszam, ze cie zranilem**: In Polish, meaning "I'm sorry I've hurt you" ; Phonetically: **psh'epr'ash'am, z'e ch'e zr'any'eel'em "Ruza"** rhymes with the color "fuchsia," (r'ooz'a) **Cyryl** is phonetically said: **tsi(h)ri(h)l** .
 --Source: www.cavinguk.co.uk/holidays/Polish/

P. 43, **Varadero**: a resort town two hours' drive east from Havana in the province of Matanzas, Cuba, and one of the largest resorts in the Caribbean. Also rated as one of the best beaches in the world today (Trip Advisor, Frommer's, Michelin Guide).

P. 52, **FAR**: *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias* consist of ground forces, naval forces, and air defense forces with other paramilitary bodies including the Territorial Militia numbering to as high as 2.5 - 3 million.

P. 61, **fleeting lucidity**: Alzheimer's patients will from time to time exhibit an immediate if short-lived lucidity. It may be minutes-long or last a day. Bright lights may cause a spell of awareness in patients. (Maybe the bright lights in the hospice room may have helped trigger the same in Carmen, see: www.huffpost.com/entry/alzheimers_b_1511450)

P. 67, **Joseph's Mouret's "Fanfare-Rondeau"**: *Symphonies and Fanfares for the King's Supper, Rondeau*. French baroque composer, (1682-1738). The theme music to "Masterpiece Theatre," BBC.

P. 80, **standing in the armed forces**: It is important to note that while the Cuban Revolution was suddenly the most progressive in Latin American history, it nevertheless retained machismo with all its trappings of inferred and overt misogyny. In fact it was became institutionalized, with the state legally classifying some activities "counter-revolutionary" or "improper conduct." It sent homosexuals, prostitutes, Jehovah Witnesses or other "undesirables" to re-education camps east, and the end of the island. While Ostroff's bearing a child out of wedlock would not land her in one of those, it would certainly threaten her promotion in the FAR. See: <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/posts/the-truth-about-gender-equality-in-cuba> .

P.80, **Nurse's Status Report #4, Final**: For the latest, peer-reviewed study on cerebral cortex response after circulatory arrest, see: [Annals of Neurology](#) Volume 83. Issue 2, pp. 295-310, (First published: 13 January 2018).