EXHAUSTION:
Dancin' Trees in the Ravine

ARROYO:
En el Barranco

A psychedelic comedy

by
Fran Astorga
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<td>SHROOM</td>
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Casting Note: This is a QT,BIPOC show. These foos are inspired by queer, trans, fat, disabled, brown, and black persons. Please take care of the cast in and outside of process and honor their relation to the earth, sky, and one another.

SETTINGS


2. A pizza place not unlike Domino's called Dante's.

3. An administrative office.

4. A liminal space that exists and connects all realities, time, and space. Where SHROOM and the trees (audience) exist to perceive, interact, and/or ignore. The immersive quality of the space.

SUMMARY

Three friends escape into the Santa Cruz mountains in search of a place to swim and BBQ. They packed for the beach without realizing they had a treacherous hike down a ravine. Once at a waterhole the consumption of some shrooms sets the stage for a heartfelt adventure between friends too tired to know how to rest.
SCENE ONE.

In darkness. The forest wakes up. The floor is damp and spongy. The air is pure and fresh under the canopy. The sun begins to rise. The trees sway in the breeze.

Then, the soft humming of fuel-efficient cars, doors slamming, and people preparing for their hiking adventures.

A car with three friends backs-up and parks at the top of the ravine. Only the trunk and rear lights can be seen as CHIO, APÉ, and TAKI exit the car to start their day trip adventure. They begin to stretch and walk around as their bodies feel the relief of movement after hours of sitting. CHIO and APÉ find a place to discretely pee as TAKI takes in the beauty of nature and the fresh air blessing their lungs.

TAKI
 Wow. (To audience) I forgot how pretty trees can be.

CHIO and APÉ return from behind the trees.

APÉ
 I’m glad I wore crocs . . .

CHIO
 This is nice.

APÉ
 There’s twigs everywhere!

TAKI
 I thought this place would be easier to find.

APÉ
 It’s nice . . . but it isn’t what I . . .

TAKI places their hand on APÉ. They both breath.

TAKI
 I know.
APÉ
¡It’s just that we/ planned for the . . .

CHIO
/Aye Apestose, chill. Look! Que hermosura.
A moment of calm and curiosity as they continue to stretch, fill their lungs with fresh air, and explore their immediate surroundings.

TAKI
I’m starving.

APÉ
Me too. vamonos!

CHIO
Apé.

TAKI
Apé ... our shit.

APÉ
Oh, right.

The trunk opens and they unload it.

CHIO
Aver . . . ¿Bien cargados y listos para el viaje?

APÉ
Yup.

TAKI
Uh, Chio. Did you just ask if we are good and shitted?

CHIO
What?

APÉ
No, that would be, “bien cagados”

CHIO
Oh yes, it’s cargados not cagados. We’re . . . loaded-up.
With all our shit.

Ahhhh, okay. *cargados.* So... Andamos bien cargados?

Si! And ready to trip.

And ready *for* our trip.

Ah, okay. *For.*

Pues. Both.

En serio?

Not if we don’t secure our spot. Let’s gooo.

APÉ closes the trunk.

ahwoooOOooooOooooUUuuuuUuu!!!! Mi mano! (ad lib)

Oh, no! I’m soooo so so sorry! (Realizing the weren’t actually hurt) ai, Achiote - why?

Ni siquiera te fijaste, Apé.

Um, okay. But I didn’t actually do it tho-

Casi lo hiciste...
TAKI
Yeah yeah yeah. Vamonos already. Always fight’n. Can’t take you no where.

CHIO
Perdón.

They all approach the ledge that leads into the ravine with all of their luggage.

CHIO
Jajajajajajaja no mames güey. Andamos bien mal. Qué bajada!

APÉ
Oh, no. Oh, no no no no no.

TAKI
It’s fine. The other hikers went down this way.

APÉ
The hikers?!

CHIO
It’s still early. We can still try the beach.

APÉ
I thought that was what we were doing!

TAKI
No, remember - I said, “y’all wanna try going to this water hole?” and then y’all foos said, “yeah. Sure.” . . . That was it.

APÉ
Right. But we planned for the beach. Like, we were on our way to the beach.

CHIO
It sounded cool when we googled it though. Como se llama?

TAKI
The Garden of Eden.

CHIO
Ahh, Pues si, con ese nombre teníamos que venir. Fuck la playa.
APÉ
Santa Cruz equals beach for me.

TAKI
Even if we’re going to a waterhole in the redwoods?

APÉ
I thought it was a waterhole. In the forest. Next to the beach.

TAKI
We’re kind of near the beach . . .

CHIO
Si, estamos justo al lado de la playa, - ¡pero en lo alto de una montaña. . .

Not helping.

APÉ

TAKI
That’s not helping either.

CHIO
Pues, we’re already here so . . .

APÉ
Okay okay. How are we getting all of this down?

TAKI
We’ll figure it d’fuck out. That’s how.

APÉ
Fine. Let’s do this.

CHIO
Hey! I think we can go down from here.

FADE TO BLACK.
SCENE TWO.

We’re at Dante’s, a pizza place not unlike Dominos, but instead of a cute table-top game theme. The seasonal theme rotates and at Dante’s, it is always hell on earth. You can hear the notification sounds as online orders are being received.

THE ROBBER

(Via God Mic)
Attention! This. Is. A. Hold. Up. Do not move and keep your hands where I can see them!

Lights up. TAKI is standing still next to the pizza oven and the make-line. THE ROBBER is wearing a Ski mask and pointing their “gun.”

TAKI
Yeah sure. Whatever you say. Just please don’t shoot.

THE ROBBER

(via God Mic)
This is a taser.

TAKI
Oh . . . Okay, then don’t tase me?

THE ROBBER
I won’t. Don’t worry. Just

(Via god Mic)
give me all your money . . .

TAKI hands THE ROBBER all the money in the register.

TAKI
There you go.

THE ROBBER
This is it-Where’s the rest!?

TAKI
Most people pay card now.
THE ROBBER

What about the safe?

TAKI

Oh, yeah. Well - I can’t give you that money.

THE ROBBER

Give it to me.

(Via God Mic)

Now!

TAKI

Okay - but you will have to wait ten minutes for it to open.

THE ROBBER

Ten Minutes?!

CHIO enters. They are a delivery driver returning to the store.

CHIO

Que pasa aquí?

TAKI

It’s another robbery.

CHIO

Oh no! Otro robo, tan pronto?

TAKI

Yup.

CHIO set down the pizza delivery bag and begins to put on an apron.

CHIO

Oh, okay. Do you need me to give you the money in the register, or?

THE ROBBER

No, I already have that money. I am waiting for the safe to open.
TAKE
What? No. You’re not. I haven’t put the code in-- You didn’t let me know if you wanted to wait the ten minutes.

THE ROBBER
It’s fine. I’ll wait.

TAKE
Okay, cool.

TAKE bends down to put in code for the safe that’s under the register.

TAKE
There you go! (to Chio) Hey!

CHIO
Mande!

TAKE
Go grab me some medium sized dough from the walk-in and help out on the make-line. (to Robber) you wanna wait in the lobby or?

THE ROBBER
Uhhh. Yeah. Sure?

LA KAREN is spotted offstage.

TAKE
Oh Fuck! Not her again.

THE ROBBER
Oh shit--She’s gonna see me.

CHIO
Ohh, She’ll for sure call the cops.

TAKE
Get in here.

THE ROBBER
What?

LA KAREN enters
TAKI
(to the Robber) Heyyy you’re late. Hurry up and put an apron on, clock-in, and help me make food . . . (to Karen) Sorry about that. . . “Welcome to Dante’s, where the pizza is hot ‘nd only hell is hotter. Someone will be right with you. . .” Chio help her please.

LA KAREN

Is my food ready yet?

CHIO

... how can I help you?

LA KAREN

My food. Is it ready?

Virtual orders begin coming in. Upstage, TAKI and THE ROBBER get into high-pace work mode. They clown trying to keep up with the orders.

TAKI AND THE ROBBER


Then, a sudden return. As the scene continues, TAKI and THE ROBBER’s rhythm relaxes and becomes almost a dance.

CHIO

Sorry- (beat) What’s the’uhm . . . What’s the name on the order?

LA KAREN

I was just in here.

CHIO

I need your name to look-up the order.

LA KAREN

I wasn’t asked for a name. Is it ready?

CHIO

Oh, okay. What did you order?
LA KAREN
(exhales) I ordered two pizzas.

CHIO
Ok. Can you be more specific? I have a few orders that are just two pizzas.

LA KAREN
One cheese. One pepperoni.

CHIO
I am sorry m’am. There’s three orders just like that one ready for pick-up.

LA KAREN
Just give me my food.

CHIO
Oye Taki. Tomaste su orden?

TAKI
No. I don’t think so-

LA KAREN
I’d appreciate it if you spoke to me in English.

CHIO
Y tu güey, la ayudaste?

THE ROBBER
En serio güey... ni ando trabajando.

LA KAREN
Excuse me!

CHIO
Ohh! eres . . . ai -- whoever took your order put it under “smelly patata.”

LA KAREN
You / took my order!

CHIO
Do we have an order for Smelly Patata ready?

THE ROBBER
What?

LA KAREN
Excuse me!
Check for a smelly patata.

THE ROBBER
Aye cabron. .

LA KAREN
Hellooo... My food?!

CHIO
No güey. Es el nombre de la señora.

THE ROBBER
Aye que nombre, pues. I have an order for a Vivi and Livi pero / not one for

CHIO
/Oh, la Livi y la Vivi son esas famosas de la area que se pelearon el otro dia. Casi me meo cuando entraron una después de la otra hace media hora.

LA KAREN
I can’t believe this!

THE ROBBER
Me either! Que paso!?

CHIO
Valentina, la mama the Vivi, siempre anda chismeando con su amiga Rubi en instagram live de todo lo que esta pasanda en sus vidas.

TAKI
Hey, it’s on the screen.

CHIO
Oh! (pointing at the monitor with all the orders) It’s highlighted on the screen. We haven’t made it yet. (to La Karen) It’ll be another 30 minutes.

LA KAREN
Thirty minutes!

While CHIO speaks to THE ROBBER, LA KAREN breathes in and out like a bull ready to charge, taps her foot louder and louder, and continues to try to nonverbally capture their attention.

CHIO
Yes - thirty minutes. (to The Robber) No creo que llegen a recojer sus pizzas porque Livi empezó a llorar cuando vio que estaba aquí la Vivi.
LA KAREN

Seriously?!

CHIO, THE ROBBER, AND TAKI
(to La Karen) MmmHmmmmmm!!

CHIO

Yes! (excitedly to Robber) Valentina le dijo a Rubi en instagram live - que Jób le dijo a Alex que Liví se junto una noche con Penny - la prima de Vivi! - y cuando Vivi se enteró le puso uno putisa a Penny.

THE ROBBER

Oh, wow. Por eso tronaron?!

CHIO

Si güey! Puro pinche drama en el Onlyfans the Vivi. Te lo recomendo—menos los videos cagoso de Jefe. Esos si que no los considero arte verdadero.

LA KAREN

Give me a goddamn refund!

CHIO

Oh, do you not want to wait for your food? I can cancel your order and give you a credit for next time?

LA KAREN

Credit? No, I want a goddamn refund!

THE ROBBER start to record LA KAREN on their phone.

CHIO

Okay. Sure. I can do that for you. Do you have your receipt?

CHIO starts to record LA KAREN on their phone -- with the flash on.

LA KAREN

Oh wow. Wooooow! You don’t even care -- do you? This is terrible customer service. You’re just standing around talking about me like if I wasn’t even here! Let me speak to your manager.

CHIO

Taquache, La Karen wants to talk to you.
TAKI
Who’s La Karen?

LA KAREN
(to herself) Figures. That she’s the manager.

THE ROBBER
I think they’re talking about smelly patata.

TAKI
Great. Well, m’am - how can I help you?

LA KAREN
I want a refund. And. I want my food made immediately.

TAKI
I’m sorry / but we can’t do that.

LA KAREN
/No. No. I want an apology from him! (pointing at Chio) He was rude. He called me names. He lied to me about my wait time and I am not leaving until he apologizes or you fire him. You know what, what’s your name, son?

CHIO
Soy Achiote.

LA KAREN
Coyote? Uh huh. I wanna give a call to Dante’s corporate office and I’ll make sure you get fired for infringing on my god given rights and hiding your identity from me. Let me see your ID.

TAKI
Dante’s phone number is area code 734. 930. 3030. Feel free to give them a call. Our store number is 6669. I’m gonna let you know now that they’re not going to give a single fuck. But please, do me a favor and tell them how understaffed we are and how broken all of our equipment is.

LA KAREN
I’m not gonna do shit for you. But I am gonna call the cops.

CHIO AND THE ROBBER
Oh fuck.
LA KAREN
You’re denying me my refund. You’re refusing to make the food that I paid for. And you have undocumented people working here.

TAKI
M’am. That’s uncalled for.

LA KAREN
You should know better . . . actually no, I guess you wouldn’t. That’s why you’re here . . . making pizzas.

THE ROBBER tases LA KAREN. She falls unconscious on the lobby floor.

TAKI
Dayum. . .

THE ROBBER
What?

Pizzas are falling out of the oven as they stand over LA KAREN.

TAKI
I just wish I would have done that.

THE ROBBER
You can do it next time.

CHIO
Y yo que? Tambien lo quiero ser.

THE ROBBER
Paciencia güey.

TAKI tries opening the safe.

TAKI
Fuck!

THE ROBBER
What happened?

TAKI
I put the wrong code in. You’re gonna have to wait another 10 minutes.
THE ROBBER
(devastated) Nah, foo I just want my money!

CHIO
I thought it was longer with that whole second code thing.

TAKI
Oh right, so more like 15 minutes.

THE ROBBER begins to panic. TAKI places their hand on them to calm them.

TAKI
You’re good. You’ll get your money.

CHIO
(mocking) Paciencia güey.

TAKI
Not helping.

CHIO
Okay, so what do we do about this lady.

THE ROBBER bends down to check LA KAREN’s pulse.

THE ROBBER
Oh my god! She’s dead. I killed her.

CHIO
Hijole

TAKI
Fuck.

FADE TO BLACK.
SCENE THREE.

The Ravine. As they descend down the mountain side into the ravine; the car trunk begins to lift and the forest begins to reveal itself.

Perhaps the mountain side is expressed as a jungle gym, a series of ramps, a rock climbing wall, projections of a video game level, a Ninja Warrior obstacle course, the magic of pantomime, et cetera . . .

TAKI and APÉ attempt to carry the cooler together. CHIO carries the beach chair and a large reusable grocery bag. They all carry backpacks full with their beach supplies.

TAKI

These handles suck.

TAKI and APÉ attempt to coordinate their steps together, while CHIO finds their paths.

APÉ

Wait wait wait wait wait! You’re going too fast.

TAKI

I’m just trying not to slip.

They slip. They fall.

CHIO

Esta bien pesada esta bolsa

APÉ

It’s full of food.

TAKI

Es la sandía?

APÉ

Yeah, that’s the word.

TAKI

Cool. Then la sandía esta en la bolsa.
CHIO
En serio, wow. Quién fue?

APÉ
It was on sale and I wanted to try it grilled.

CHIO
Ah, okay. Pero que suerte que no esta la sandia el la llelra, eh?

TAKI
We can switch.

CHIO
No, It’s okay.

They proceed down the mountain. TAKI and APÉ drop the cooler and CHIO drops the chair and the bag. The watermelon rolls downstage a little in its bag.

CHIO
Okay, maybe we can switch.

TAKI
Sweet - cause Apestose just cannot.

APÉ
Yeah, . . . Okay.

They exchange items. CHIO carries the cooler. TAKI carries the beach chair, and APÉ carries the large reusable grocery bag with the watermelon inside.

TAKI
Is it too heavy Achiote?

CHIO
It’s heavy. But, easier to carry.

CHIO begins to leap around while carrying the cooler with both hands--finding paths quicker. Paths that are very ambitious for TAKI and APÉ.

APÉ
I can’t. It’s too steep!
APÉ is petrified and unable to move.

TAKI
Chio! Yoh--how are you doing this?

TAKI carefully finds their footing then falls on their ass and realizes it’s easier to slide down. APÉ follows TAKI’s lead. CHIO leaps and explores gracefully like a goat.

They arrive to train tracks. They set their things down for a moment of rest.

TAKI
Train tracks? Out here?

CHIO
I think I saw people walking in that direction.

APÉ
I hear water running.

TAKI
Where?

APÉ
Directly below us.

CHIO
Si güey, pero - no cres que deberíamos perseguir la gente que sabe llegar?

APÉ
Queda más lejos. Miranos. Andamos bien cansados.

TAKI
Si, y tengo hambre.

APÉ
Oye!

CHIO AND TAKI
Oigo!

APÉ
No! (whisper) Escucha.
The three friends listen. An ear firmly pressed on the cool forest floor. The sounds of the stream become more clear.

TAKI
Yo (unable to think of word) I agree.

CHIO
Si, andamos de acuerdo.

One big collective step downstage and they have arrived to the waterhole.

APÉ
Porfin! Llegamos.

TAKI
Sweeet! This is perfect.

CHIO
Si, aunque no creo que sea el lugar que encontramos en el google, huh?

TAKI
Really? So we found our own private spot.

APÉ
Yes, I think so!

Relief-joy Sighs.

TRANSITION.
SCENE FOUR.

Still in the ravine. They set up camp. Like a camp camp . . but beachy: lots of towels, blankets, a beach ball, a big parasol. One of the backpacks holds a small grill and some charcoal. TAKI and CHIO begin to set up for food making as APÉ rummages through one of the backpacks. They begin to cook. They pass around a cartridge of some fire sativa.

TAKI
You know . . . Maybe we should’t be grilling out here

CHIO
Llovió toda le semana pesada. Tenemos suerte que no hay tanto lodo.

APÉ
It’s hot as fuck today sure, but we’re right next to the water and everything is green ‘round here. . . Yes!

APÉ has found what they were looking for. From one of the backpacks APÉ pulls out a ziplock bag full of dried magic mushrooms.

TAKI
You found ‘em?

CHIO
That’s what we’re doing?! Si hubiera sabido, habría traído el té de hongos que hice.

APÉ
Estos son algunos de los que nos diste.

TAKI grabs the bag of shrooms from APÉ

TAKI
Yes they are. I saved ‘em for us. There’s enough right?

TAKI hands the bag to CHIO. CHIO nods

APÉ
Great. How should we eat’em? We can wait for the papas con mantecilla, ajo, y romero to be ready.
TAKI
Uh huh. . . Or we can eat them with that french loaf and the hummus.

They begin to tear apart the loaf, dip it in hummus and top it off with heavy shroom coverage.

CHIO
Okay, y la piña nos puede dar la cítrica.

TAKI
I thought orange juice was best . . .

APÉ
Should’uh grabbed some from the grocery store, Chio . . .

CHIO
Pues-- tal vez lo hubiera hecho . . . si me hubieras dicho . . . que hoy ibamos a comer hongos . . .

APÉ
Era sorpresa!

TAKI
. . . Surprise!

CHIO takes the first bite. Loves it. APÉ and TAKI follow suit. They make more and eat more until there is no more shrooms left to eat.

APÉ
This is sooo good.

TAKI
Mmmhmmmm

CHIO grabs a container from a bag near them. From it, they deliberately place a piece of precut pineapple in their mouth. Anticipation. It hits hard and good. They’re speechless. Attempting to communicate via pantomime, but they can not.

TAKI
It’s good?
CHIO hands the container to APÉ. APÉ gestures to drench the pineapple in <i>Tajin</i>. They all nod. APÉ obliges happily.

APÉ

Oh, guau! Wow. Guau! Ggua. <i>Que rico!</i>

APÉ hands the pineapple to TAKI.

TAKI

Oh, it’s soo juicy.

A moment of them all sit dancing from enjoying their food. Foodgasing until completion. Food porn for the audience. Not sexual, but just about – in a clowny way.

APÉ

We should take another hit.

TAKI

Uh, yeah no. I don’t think so Apé. We’re already <i>hella</i> zooted.

CHIO

Si, nos deben de llamar los zorrillos

APÉ

So no? You could have just said no.

TAKI

How about some music?

APÉ

Sure, the bluetooth is in the bag I found the shrooms.

TAKI retrieves the speaker and connects their phone.

CHIO

We should wait for our food to settle. Van a pegar pronto.

TAKI

How will we know? It’s been a while for me.

APÉ

I can feel it already.
TAKI
I just feel . . . happy.

CHIO
That’s it. Vamos a trippiar bien agusto aqui en la naturalesa.

TAKI
Que bien . . Oh, fuck. I don’t have service for the music.

A subtle shifts in the space and in reality. The trees sway in the breeze with a little more groove. Then the first wave hits. A tsunami of colors. Everything has newfound interest. TAKI, APÉ, and CHIO melt as the canopy transforms and speaks to them. As they lay and sit there, they reach to the sky, embrace the earth, and are moved by the wind; just like the trees surrounding them. A true moment of rest for the performers and the audience.

TAKI’s phone finds service and techno funk music begins to play.

ALL
Yas/yeees/hhmmmm

They get up to feel the music. They each establish their signature clown dance moves. Dance moves that make perfect sense with the music and their specific bodies and personalities-- and finally they dance.

FADE TO BLACK.
SCENE FIVE.

At Dante’s. Online order notification sounds. Lights up. TAKI is alone in the store rhythmically stretching dough, saucing pizzas, topping pizzas, throwing them in the oven. Cutting pizzas. Boxing pizzas.

A customer is illuminated in the lobby. TAKI notices, but gives no physical indication of breaking their rhythm only/

TAKI
/“Welcome to Dante’s, where the pizza is hot ‘nd only hell is hotter. Someone will be right with you.”

Another customer is illuminated in the lobby. More online orders received.

TAKI
“Welcome to Dante’s, where the pizza is hot ‘nd only hell is hotter”

Another customer is illuminated. More orders online orders.

TAKI
“Welcome to Dante’s, where the pizza is hot!”

Another customer. More orders.

TAKI
“Welcome to Dante’s!”

Another. More.

TAKI
Welcome!

APÉ enters

APÉ
Thank you! It’s my first day.

Hard shift. Trance Broken. No more customers.
(dazed) What?

I’m Apestose. I’m new.

Oh! For real?! No one told me. (beat.) That’s your uniform, yeah?

Yeah.

Cool. I’m glad they gave you the right theme.

It’s hella cold outside.

Yeah, that’s on brand. If you ever need extra swim trunks or tank tops or whatever - feel free to grab’em from the box in the office. It’s always hot as fuck inside the store so enjoy the cold outside. In the Summer, you’ll have a choice between a leather or latex jumpsuit for your deliveries so . . . enjoy days like today.

CHIO enters. TAKI pokes a touchscreen monitor.

Chio, I checked you in. We have a new driver. Take them on your next delivery and train them. Your order will be out soon so watch the oven.

‘ta bien.

(to Apé) Help me on the make-line. The orders are on the screen. The number of toppings you need to add is right there above the ingredients.

My next one is a double.

Good. Make Apé. .s . (trying to remember name) . .
APÉ

That works too.

TAKI

Cool. Show Apé the ropes on the first delivery. Then have them deliver the next one with you.

FRANCESCA enters. A beat.

FRANCESCA

Heyyyyy.

TAKI

(to Francesca) You’re late.

FRANCESCA

Yeah, sorrty.

TAKI

Clock-in. I need to pee!

FRANCESCA

Oh my god! Why didn’t you go?

TAKI

The screen was full, I just cleared it. . . Bitch. Hurry-up! I gotta go.

FRANCESCA

Then go.

TAKI doesn’t move. FRANCESCA attempts to clock-in. The computer asks for the managers code.

FRANCESCA

I need your code.

TAKI

Yeah. I know.

TAKI quickly puts in their code and exits. FRANCESCA finishes her clock-in and begins stretching dough. Online order begin to roll in again. APÉ is chaotically topping the pizzas. CHIO is boxing up their orders.
FRANCESCA
Hey Chio, do you have an order ready? (beat) Oh shit. Who are you?

APÉ
I’m Apé. First day.

FRANCESCA
oh . . .

CHIO
Yeah, my orders are ready now. Let’s go Apé.

FRANCESCA
Shit. You’re taking them with you?

CHIO
Yeah. Want us to wait until Taki is back?

FRANCESCA
No. You’re good. The wait time is too long.

CHIO
Let’s go, güey.

CHIO and APÉ exit with food orders in hand. APÉ returns to wash their hands from touching slimy meat and cheese and exits again.

A wave. A time skip and shift in space from APÉ’s first day to FRANCESCA’s last. TAKI enters. A beat.

FRANCESCA
Have anything to say?

TAKI stands motionless.

FRANCESCA
Right. You give me sooo much shit when it’s me. But, now that it’s you . . .

TAKI
Chesca/

FRANCESCA
/Taki. You’re late. Today. Out of all days. What if I had to pee or something. What would I have done?
(inhale) . . .

TAKI

FRANCESCA

Taki, stop. We’ll be fine.

TAKI and FRANCESCA hold each other in a tender embrace.

(exhale) Fuck!

FRANCESCA

We’ll be good. We’ll figure it out, Okay?

TAKI

I only get to see you because we’re both here. With you transferring- I’ll never get to see you.

FRANCESCA

Taki, We’ll figure da’fuck out. Okay? We have to.

TAKI

I don’t get it. How did they even figure it out? Not even Chio and Apé know and we love them. . .

TAKI clocks-in.

FRANCESCA

It must have been fucking Becky with her white feminism bullshit. She played it cool, but she for sure caught us.

TAKI

We should have been more careful. (beat) How have you been handling it?

FRANCESCA

Me? Oh, I’m . . . Fuck, it’s hot! Isn’t it hot in here? Dayum, the AC off?

TAKI

Yes, but Chesca/. . .

/Why is it off?

FRANCESCA

TAKI

We can’t turn it on.
FRANCESCA
What? Why?

TAKI
It’s gotta be over a hundred and five degrees in here.

FRANCESCA
What the fuck? Since when?

TAKI
Like a week ago . . .

FRANCESCA
That’s why?

TAKI
Yes. How are/ (you though, like actually?)

FRANCESCA
/and it’s not that hot right now? It feels like it. Or even hotter, to be real.

TAKI
A hundred five where the sensor in the back of the store. But, /Francesca-

FRANCESCA
/Oh, shit. That’s next to the walk-in . . . It’ll never get hot enough next to the fridge door. I’m gonna turn it on. It’s m’last day here. You can blame me. I’m going from one hell hole to another. At least I got you here.

TAKI
No, we actually can’t. They added a real camera pointed there. Now/

FRANCESCA
/They don’t have anything better to do than watch us all day! I wanna enjoy my last day here with you. (beat) Please?

TAKI nods no.

FRANCESCA
Wow. They really got us all fucked-up in here. First it was the camera on the coke refrigerator and now this. Sure! We can still grab water. But for a motherfucking dollar. A dollar! These ovens are at 400 something and we can’t even get a drink on the house.

FRANCESCA stress stretches dough.
TAKI
Chesca. I wanna know how you are. Right now. Please, stop dee/(deflecting)

FRANCESCA stops stretching dough.

FRANCESCA
/I am not deflecting or whatever . . . I am actually upset about those things.

TAKI
Really? That pizza dough is all fucked-up because of the AC and the water? Your transfer has nothing to do with how you mangled that dough? I have to tell you. . . I didn’t know we were adding Pretzels to the menu.

TAKI and FRANCESCA laugh in their familiar comfort.

FRANCESCA
Okay, the transfer hella got me.

TAKI
I’m devastated.

A beat. FRANCESCA lovingly observes TAKI.

FRANCESCA
Me too.

They embrace. They kiss. FRANCESCA rests her head on TAKI’s shoulder.

FRANCESCA
I am still turning the AC on.

TAKI
Ugh. Fine. “gopher it.”

FRANCESCA shows her front teeth and gives a thumbs-up. Then she goes to turn on the AC. A wave begins. CHIO and APÉ enter as the CORPORATE INSPECTOR (Dom Zaddy) and the REGIONAL MANAGER (Sub Pup).

REGIONAL MANAGER
Excuse me! What are you doing?
The CORPORATE INSPECTOR vigorously scribbles on their clipboard.

FRANCESCA

I was/ turning on the AC. . .

The REGIONAL MANAGER places their nasty ass finger on FRANCESCA’s lips.

REGIONAL MANAGER

Shh. Francesca. Darling. That was rhetorical. (to inspector) Perdonala. Es su último día antes de su transferencia y creo que la emoción se le ha subido a la cabeza--Como un insecto sin antenas, una rana sin piernas. una jirafa sin cuello!/ 

/(clears Throat)

REGIONAL MANAGER

(begging flirtatiously) ¿Podemos empezar la inspección de nuevo?

The REGIONAL MANAGER begs on their knees. When it’s not enough, they wiggle their butt to persuade the CORPORATE INSPECTOR.

CORPORATE INSPECTOR

(a long beat) Sí.

The CORPORATE INSPECTOR rips out the page with notes on their clipboard. The REGIONAL MANAGER frantically catches it.

REGIONAL MANAGER

Oh, thank you, sir! (beat) Taki. Come here. Let me introduce you to our new corporate inspector. Yo soy el supervisor regional. Taki es la supervisora de la tienda. Y Francesca es la asistente de Taki ... pues era, estará como supervisora de otra tienda a partir de mañana.

FRANCESCA

I’m actually starting next Monday. I requested a few days off.
REGIONAL MANAGER
No. No, you’re not. They were denied. You start tomorrow as the Store Manager of your new location and we don’t have anyone to cover you.

TAKI
Wait. That can’t be right. They just notified us that/ they were approved.

The CORPORATE INSPECTOR scribbles in their notebook.

REGIONAL MANAGER
/Oh! (Collecting themself) Francesca, give this marvelous human a tour of the facility since it’s their first time here. Taki, darling. Let’s have a chat.

FRANCESCA’s tour begins. A Pantomime sequence of odd obstacles, strange levers, knobs, and buttons -- mixed in with things you would expect to find at a Pizza Place and functions you’d expect to perform during an inspection (like demonstrating how the food is made or how the dishes are washed.).

TAKI
What’s going on? Inspections from corporate are random. But, we usually have a few days notice and . . .with Fr/ncesca

REGIONAL MANAGER
/Listen. (almost growling, but with a smile) You better not fuck this up for me. I brought him to your store first because it’s not as much as a shit show as the other locations.

TAKI
That can’t (be true)? Have you (seen this place)? Are you for real?

REGIONAL MANAGER
Yes, I’m “for. real.” Right now you’re a level two manager, but ever since Francesca started you’ve gotten lazy.

TAKI
I’m here almost everyday. I even stay on-call on the one day I have off every week.

REGIONAL MANAGER
No no no. You were averaging eighty plus hours a week and now I’m lucky lucky if you work seventy-five.
TAKI

Am I in trouble or?

REGIONAL MANAGER

No. You’re not. I am just... (beat) disappointed. I thought you could take my place when I am promoted.

TAKI

I’m up for Regional Manager?!

REGIONAL MANAGER

Yes, you could be making forty-five thousand a year... plus bonuses in six to sixty-six months.

TAKI

That... would be life changing.

REGIONAL MANAGER

Yes, darling. But it comes with sacrifice. Here’s the secret. I am being fast tracked to a level 8 manager in corporate. Regional manager could just be the start for you if you’re able fix your... situation here.

TAKI

What do I have to do?

A gentle wave begins. The REGIONAL MANAGER sssssounds and kind of movessss like a ssssssnake in a way that’s subtle and menacing. FRANCESCA and the CORPORATE INSPECTOR are synced and mirroring the beats to follow.

REGIONAL MANAGER

Get. Me. Those. Bonuses. Darling. And soon they will be your bonuses. It’s simple: Don’t run up that damn electricity bill with the air conditioner, don’t waste any supplies, and Do run on a skeleton crew.

TAKI

I don't - I mean, ...how?

REGIONAL MANAGER

For the A.C. and food waste... just say... it’s for the environment. The drivers will eat that shit up. My favorite trick is finding that golden staffing ratio where it’s just busy enough that no one can take a break and just busy enough that no one can have more than just one day off a week. That’s simple enough right? You can do that? I believe in you.
TAKE

I . . . I’m not sure.

REGIONAL MANAGER

I’m sticking my neck out for you because I came to you with this opportunity - not any of the other managers. You. So you gotta cut some corners here and there . . . So what? You can’t even tell mushrooms are rotten after they’ve gone through the oven or that some of that the pepperoni fell on the floor. No one actually cares. Why. Do. you? It’s cheap pizza. People get what they paid for and you and I climb to the top. You and I could become branch owners within a few decades. We got what it takes.

TAKE

I do?

REGIONAL MANAGER

Yes, we do. Everyone else here just comes and goes, but we stay. Don’t jeopardize your future for some random person. Got it? (beat) Good.

The REGIONAL MANAGER turns to exits. The wave becomes more intense.

TAKE

Wait! What about his inspection.

The REGIONAL MANAGER laughs like a donkey.

REGIONAL MANAGER

Oh, darling. You’re not passing that! At most you’ll get two stars out of thirteen stars. Three if you’re lucky. Don’t look so surprised. I can see you scrubbed the walls and cleaned every corner of this place. You must have put in extra hours during closing. That’s what I like to see. But, you’re short-staffed -- that’s a deduction. You’re delivery times are terrible -- that’s another deduction. The air conditioner is off -- that’s another deduction. What’s important is that you and I impress this corporate pawn, so he reports that we are doing well with less resources. I think we’ve done that. Congratulations! You’re really working your team down to the bone. Squeezing every last possible minute out of there schedule to be here. Working. It’s a true talent. (As unsettling as a dog about to bite, a snake about to strike, and a donkey about to kick) How do you do it?

TAKE

They’re my . . . friends.

REGIONAL MANAGER

ALL, but TAKI exit.

A bad trip as TAKI becomes overwhelmed by emptiness. Now in the Ravine. SHROOM appears as an onlooker in the distance.

TAKI
We’ll be. . . Oh, my god. Why? I’m so sorry. (exhausted) I’m so so sorry.

APÉ and CHIO enter.

APÉ
Hey Taki. You doin’ okay?

TAKI
Apé! I’m sorry! I fucked up!

CHIO

APÉ grabs some water for CHIO. The wave recedes.

TAKI
No, I’m good. I’m feeling better. Sorry about that. It just kind of hit out of nowhere and took me somewhere.

CHIO
Ese es el aspecto mágico --Te hacen pensar en cosas que necesitas pensar -- o recordar de las que ni siquiera te das cuenta.

APÉ
Are you feeling better?

TAKI
Yeah, the good vibes are coming back.

CHIO
En que piensas Taki?

TAKI
En la chamba y en Francesca. La extraño.
CHIO
Valgame Dios! Pero, hoy no es día de pensar en el trabajo. Es día de celebrar nuestros éxitos. Y, Aunque no pudo venir Chesca, está aquí en espíritu.

APÉ
Oh my god! Porque hablas de ella como si murió?

CHIO
Ay, güey, eres taan dra. mat. tic. co!

APÉ
Me?

CHIO
Si, tu güey. (beat) ¿Venimos a nadar o que?--O, vamos a seguir como vacas desparramadas?

TAKI
You’re right. Let’s swim

APÉ
Cool. It’s gettin’ kinda toasty.

APÉ, CHIO, and TAKI begin to grab towels from around the camp to place closer to the water. SHROOM brings an apple to the attention of TAKI. TAKI goes to take a bite, but “sees” something on it and drops it. SHROOM gleefully smiles as TAKI joins the others downstream -- at the edge of the water.

TRANSITION
SCENE SIX.

At the water’s edge. SHROOM chills sunbathing while wearing her mushroom cap sunhat, sunglasses, a mixed drink, and fan while observing APÉ, CHIO, and TAKI being too themselves to enter the water.

APÉ
We got this. Si se puede! Oh my god, no!

CHIO

Apé.

APÉ

Chio.

CHIO

Apé!

APÉ

Chio!

CHIO

Just go!

APÉ

I don’t see you trying.

CHIO

Taki, you go.

TAKI

Oh no. I’m not going in first.

CHIO

Juntas?

TAKI

That never works.

APÉ

On the count of three. One. Two/

CHIO AND TAKI

/No.
APÉ
Why?

TAKI
Apé, why we playing this game? We know it’s gotta be you. It’s always you.

CHIO nods passionately in agreement.

APÉ
What do you mean?

CHIO
Nomas tenemos que esperar. (to Apé) Sin paciencia . . .

APÉ
Oh, just ‘cause i’m the new bad bitch in town, huh? (to Chio) Chillon

How do you do that?

TAKI
What?

CHIO
Insult each other all day, but not upset each other.

APÉ
Ohhh, you’ll get it soon.

CHIO
Es porque cuando chantajeamos, lo hacemos con cariño.

APÉ
(hella melodramatic) Y es fácil cuando me siento abandonada por mis amigas.

TAKI
Apé. We’re gonna get in the water too. We just have to mentally prepare for the impact a bit longer.

APÉ
Fine, I’ll wait for y’all to be ready.

TAKI

CHIO
No!

Nooooo.
APÉ
What? Why?

TAKI
We need the social pressure.

CHIO
Si! Y sí ya estás en el agua, entonces me siento celosa y siento que también tengo que entrar al agua.

APÉ
Pero no quiero estar sola

TAKI
Right. We’ll be here with you . . . Just not in the water . . .

APÉ
Okay. Pues. Nomas me voy a meter mis pies un poco.

How is it?

APÉ
Ay que rico. Se siente maravilloso.

CHIO
¿Qué tan profundo crees que se pone?

APÉ
No se, but it feels amazing. Se siente como . . . la primera mordida de una tortilla hecha a mano o el primer tragito de atole en una noche fría con familia o como cuando ponen la primera cumbia en la pista para baillar.

APÉ does a lil dance.

TAKI
Maybe we can put our feet in too?

TAKI and CHIO join APÉ in submerging their feet in the water.

TAKI
What the (squeel)!

CHIO
Tramposa!
APÉ
(laughing) You’ll get used to it. Después de un ratito, el sol y la agua se sentirán bien suave juntos.

SHROOM blows her fan towards the clowns. The breeze makes APÉ lose balance and become completely submerged underwater. Then CHIO. Then TAKI. A psychedelic wave hits. A blanket of shimmering pyrite dust swirls around them. A fever dream dance sequence.

They emerge. The pool of water is only waste deep. They balance precariously on boulders as they commune. SHROOM channels the most glamorous boulder.

LA ROCA
It’s been years since anyone has come and spoken with me. Or should I say could speak to me?

CHIO
I think “can”.

LA ROCA
Oooo perfect! You can? Wow. This is a treat.

APÉ
Nos esta hablanda esa roca, güey?!

TAKI
Wow. I’ve never talked with a boulder before.

LA ROCA
Oh my gosh! Y’all are soo sweet. I haven't been a boulder for hundreds of thousands of years. Oh! I knew I was gonna like y’all. I’m just La Roca now. I mere pebble in this marvelous stream.

APÉ
I hear you, but I don’t “hear you,” hear you.

LA ROCA
That’s because you needed help to listen-to reconnect with the minerals and the roots. We’ve been calling, but no one is answering. Literally no one. . . . Actually we’ve been screaming, but we do it in shifts now-- we’re really finding a balanced dynamic of panic and minding our own goddamn business-except at this point it’s our business too (sigh of relief) But enough of that - tell me about you!
My last visitor was a bear, but that must have been... what ... over 100 years ago now-Haven’t seen another bear since-Not long for me, but long for them.

CHIO
Creo que te conosco.

LA ROCA takes a closer look at CHIO.

LA ROCA
Oh, yes. We’ve met. But I was in a different body and so were you. Wow. Y’all grow and shrink so much faster than me.

TAKI
Oh my god, how do you know her?

CHIO
Cuando yo era un niño. Mi vecino me dio un hueso de tortuga para que lo cuidara. Todos los días lavaba el hueso, le contaba cuentos antes de dormir y lo dejaba en el sol para que se calentara. Esperé y esperé a que naciera mi amiga la tortuguita. Hasta le cantaba (singing) “Tor tu gē ē tah, como te quiero tortugita”

LA ROCA
Ah!!! That’s my song. I was so taken care of. That’s why I am in this riverbed now. To be washed by the stream everyday like you took care of me my lil’ Achiote.

CHIO sings their lullaby sweetly as they all learn to be at rest in the mountain spring.

CHIO
Tor tu gē ē tah, como te quiero tortugita.
Tor Tū, Gē Tah, eres el cielo tortugita

LA ROCA
Oh, wow. It’s been years since I’ve been sung that song. Entire mountains used to sing to me. Oceans. Valleys. The Sky.

CHIO
Y ahora?

LA ROCA
Chio, I’m here because this spring arroyo still rumbles with my song and I don’t want to say goodbye. I’ve seen timelines like this before.
Where Rocas like me get turned into concrete, (and) our stories (become) buried as a foundations for buildings who’s realities cannot rest on us without breaking us. My song . . . (is) at a cadence and I’m (too) scared it isn’t gonna resolve as this (final) movement (in the symphony of life) ends.

As CHIO sings. The others join (even LA ROCA) knowing the lyrics and SATB harmonies via shroom magic -- Happily perched on sturdy boulders, half floating so the force of them slipping doesn’t destabilize the placement of their new Roca friends. Friends they praise and sing to in gratitude for their support. Urging the trees to join (as they always do) and find a resolution.

(Rinse, repeat, and condense as needed)

CHIO AND FRIENDS

Tor tu gē ē tah, como te quiero tortugita.
Tor Tū, Gē Tah, eres el cielo tortugita

Tor tu gē ē tah, como te cuido tortugita?
Tor Tū, Gē Tah, eres la tierra tortugita

Tor tu gē ē tah, como te'spero tortugita
Tor Tū, Gē Tah, eres la vida tortugita

LA ROCA
(to trees) Our time in this stream will only be remembered by foos who are listening enough to acknowledge us. Consider us. But that’s not what I need right now. I need you to sing with me so I can be heard and remembered as a I was before all of this change that’s to come. I’m worth fighting for. (lingering beat) (Only to and if trees participated) Thank you for giving me hope.

The wave recedes. LA ROCA shifts back to SHROOM.

APÉ

Wait, what?

CHIO
Oh, si. Pues resulta que . . . Mi vecino me hizo una broma. No me dio un huevo de tortuga. Me dio una piedrita.

TAKI
(seriously) Oh my god. Seriously? An actual pet rock?
CHIO
What do you expect? Tenía quatro años. I had never seen a turtle egg before. I still haven’t.

APÉ
Ay que tierno. Somehow. This explains soo much, con tú, “el medio ambiente nos necesita!”

CHIO playfully splashes water at APÉ. SHROOM approaches TAKI and brings their attention to the trees.

TAKI
Oh whoa. The trees look funny now. They’re like vibrating or something.

TAKI
begins to imitate they’re movement.

TAKI
No, actually. It’s more like shimmering. They’re like blowin’ in the wind but I feel like I can feel it now.

APÉ, CHIO, and SHROOM join.

APÉ
Almost like they’re breathing and we can breath with them.


CHIO
Los arboles estan baliando juntos.

The gently dance as they sway in the breeze.

SHROOM
They’re vibin’ and thrivin’ -- talking to one another. Sending each other love.

They vibe, dance, and breath with the trees for a moment. After another moment of vibin’ and thrivin,’ everyone becomes cold, exit the waterhole and dry themselves off.

TRANSITION
SCENE SEVEN.

CHIO, TAKI, and APÉ hang their towels after they’ve finished drying themselves off. SHROOM observes.

CHIO
Que es lo mas “homo” que podriamos ser?

TAKI
Lo mas homo?

CHIO
Si, lo mas homo.

APÉ
Aver, I think that if we’re talking homosexual, then, ya ganamos con solo existiendo . . . Pero! If we’re talking about Homo Sapien . . .

TAKI
So “Homo” without the “Sapien”?

APÉ
Si.

CHIO
“Homo” sin lo “Sapien?” Nunca lo pense.

APÉ
(Shakespearean) Ser sapien o’ no ser sapien . . . Esa es la pregunta

CHIO
No! Not “ser o ne ser” or “be or not be.” Creo que it’s cuando!

TAKI
Why not how?

APÉ
Hmm (beat) it’s both! It’s quando and how!

TAKI
What’s it like being a “Sapien” without the “Homo”? Do you not feel like we need the “Homo” still?
CHIO
I’m a Homo, you’re a Homo. Todos somos Homos.

APÉ
I think we’re trying to forget. Like, I like being homo. We’re apes.

TAKI
We don’t talk about it enough. We’re so focused on being Sapiens that we forget that we’re from the earth.

CHIO
Si, ser Homo es ser de la tierra como toda la naturalesa. (beat) Ahora la pregunta origenal - que es/

TAKI, CHIO, AND APÉ
/Lo mas “Homo” que podriamos ser?

A moment of pause where they get lost in thought and maybe begin to observe themselves and life around them.

CHIO
Hay algo en como me siento cuando camino bien agusto.

CHIO stands up and begins to pace. As they walk, they begin to slowly transition into their clown walk.

TAKI
Yes! I think, I think better when I walk.

CHIO
Because you can! Cuando caminamos, nuestras pantorrillas trabajan como nuestro segundo corazón y es por eso que podemos pensar mejor. All our blood is in our cerebros is . . . hella oxigenada.

APÉ joins CHIO in their pacing.

APÉ
Oh my god, it’s working!

TAKI
Really?

TAKI joins. They all pace in a circle together.
TAKI
I can feel my second heart beating!

A shift. SHROOM is now walking alongside CHIO, APÉ, and TAKI. As they walk and become new to their surrounds, they become “prehistoric” humans who are hunting and gathering. CHIO is the pathfinder. APÉ and TAKI are having trouble keeping up. SHROOM is shadowing and unnoticed. Night falls.

(shaking) What era eso?!

APÉ

I heard it too.

TAKI

CHIO

Creo que era el viento.

APÉ

No! Era the monstro!

SHROOM

(as the wind) Shhhh Shhhhh

TAKI

Oh no! We should stop.

APÉ

Yes, estoy de acuerdo.

CHIO

Ay no! Siempre con, “oh, we should stop,” o’ “I’m tired,” o’ “oh nooo, se robaron mis zapatos.” No. Ya basta. Segimos.

APÉ

Pero Chio/

CHIO

/Pero Chio nada. Let’s go. Vamonos!

TAKI

Where are we even going, Chio?
SHROOM snaps a branch. Panic. The HOMOS are back-to-back and surrounded.

APÉ
Si güey. A donde vamos--Porque. . . no quiero quedarme aqui.

CHIO
Ahhhh ahora sí, verdad? Que genio tienen . . .

SHROOM snaps more branches.

SHROOM
(an owl call),(a wolf howling at the moon), (an ominous ghoul sound), and /

*Extended Clowning beat.* The HOMOS run around the stage frantically screaming and hiding like they do in ScoobyDoo montages.

SHROOM
(via God Mic)
We've been trying to reach you concerning your earth's extended warranty. You should've received a notice in the mail about your earth's extended warranty eligibility. Since we've not gotten a response, we're giving you a final courtesy call before we close out your timeline. Press 2 to be removed and placed on our does-not-care list. To speak to someone about possibly extending or reinstating your earth's warranty, press 1 to speak with a warranty specialist. . .

The HOMOS find themselves once again back-to-back and terrified.

SHROOM
(via God Mic)
*Or . . .* ignore this call because you know it’s a lie! There is no extended warranty and it’s not the earth that needs it. It’s us . . . it’s life. We need it--our time here to be extended (to trees) Pick up the phone. Pick it up! Stop ignoring it. This floating rock will move on without us. Pick! Up! The! Phone! *This* is your final courtesy call before we close out your timeline. . .

Then, sounds trigger designated movements/reactions from the HOMOS. They dance to them with SHROOM’s orchestration.
The sounds are produced via foley, vocalizing, and SFX (drum beats/thunder, animal calls, and ethereal electronic funk beats). The HOMOS discover fire (the portable grill). In celebration of the warmth and in erupting joy, HOMOS join in the vocalizing and continue dancing to the rhythmic foley sounds.

SHROOM AND HOMOS

(howl)

In resonating joy the TREES join.

THE HOMOS, SHROOM, AND TREES

(howl)

As their howling ends, so does the life of the fire.

The HOMOS are now exhausted and resting on the cool forest floor.

TAKI

Please Chio! Let’s keep going.

APÉ

Also, Chio . . . I am kind of hungry. Like muchisma hambre. Muchisima. So if you could figure that out. It would be great.

CHIO

¿Algo más, o es todo?

APÉ

Pues, algo dulce porque- no creo que my no me cayó bien el palo seco que me comí hace rato

TAKI

. . . and I’m thirsty.

CHIO

Solo eso? Claro que sí.

SHROOM rolls the watermelon in-between the HOMOS.

APÉ

Lo lograste Achiote!
That’s perfect.

APÉ takes the watermelon. Cracks it on the point of a boulder and tears it open. They pass one of the halves around. APÉ then takes the remaining half of the watermelon and holds it up to the sky in gratitude.

Thank you!

We should do something with it.

Like?

I want to use it to show gratitude.

A ritual commences that the three friends have created that is like a harmonious dance.

Luz de alma
Dios te protege

Refugio de amor
Amparo en contra del dolor

Brighter. Stronger.
Source of life.

Let hope guide you.

Love you.

Ease you.
TAKI
Gratitude and love uplift you higher

CHIO
Con intencion pura y el destino trascendente

APÉ
Evolving la amor you’ve inspired

ALL
Tiera Santísima.

They place what’s left of the watermelon as an offering.

TRANSITION
SCENE EIGHT.

Back in the ravine

TAKI
So y’all feel the most homo when you’re walking?

CHIO
Yes. Soy homo cuando uso mi cuerpo. Si no lo uso, no existo. Como la vida! Solamente tenemos una y la voy a disfrutar . . . incluyendo los momentos dolerosos.

APÉ
Masoquista . .

CHIO
Bien santo que eres Apé . . . aver, tu que?

APÉ
No, se. That feeling in-between faith and hope. ¿Qué podría ser? ¿Hay una palabra para describir el sentimiento entre la fe y la esperanza?

CHIO
¿Podría ser confianza?

APÉ
Si, algo así. Pero connected, you know? It’s vibin’ with something I don’t understand and it feels nice. It’s . . . a feeling. (beat) It’s the same feeling I got when I met y’all foos. Like, we were meeting again.

I feel that.

TAKI

CHIO
Me too.

APÉ
Y tu Taki? What makes you feel the most homo?

TAKI
No se. I’m thinking and I think it’s thinking (beat) not thinking. Learning. I like learning things that make me think. Things like, (referring to audience) how trees can send nutrients to their saplings. They can recognize them and send them food using the network of fungi under the forest floor. And it doesn’t even have to be their sapling . . . They all work together to send nutrients to trees who need them because it makes their ecosystem stronger to support one another.
APÉ
Wow. I wish we could figure that out.

TAKI
Well, at least the three of us do. . . Right?

APÉ
Yeah. But, the world is scary right now. It can’t just be homos like us. It has to be all of us.

CHIO
Tienes razón Apé. (to audience) Quiero la oportunidad de poder disfrutar de la naturaleza. Esta podría ser una de nuestras últimas oportunidades de ver árboles por un tiempo si no nos convertimos en buenos cuidadores de la tierra.

TAKI
Right now it sucks because, (to audience) trees love growing in close proximity to one another and right now it’s the biggest threat to their existence. There’s less water, diseases, parasites, viruses, pollution . . . Everything right now is against them. We’ve gone from fire prevention season to fire management season and it’s Homo Sapiens’ fault.

APÉ AND CHIO
Fuck.

TAKI
“Fuck” is right. I watched a video about how trees cracked the system when they first evolved on earth. There was nothing around to decompose the organic structures they built because they hadn’t evolved to yet. . . so for a while, forests were kind of eternal. That’s what some of our fossil fuels are from. Now, organisms like mushroom have evolved to decompose trees.

APÉ
So what’s around to decompose us? . . . or I guess, what’s around to decompose our structures?

CHIO
We’ll be the next coal if we don’t find our mushroom.

TAKI
Oh my god, or oil.

APÉ
Oh, like the petrified forests.
CHIO
Dijieron los arboles, (hella melodramatico) Aver - yo aqui mando putas, Cren que me van a destruir?! (beat) No! Yo Aqui Mando! Que dije?

TAKI AND APÉ
Tu, aqui mandas!
If you have some groovy trees have them join in this call and response too.

CHIO
Que dije?!

TAKI AND APÉ
Tu, aqui mandas!
A wave hits. They are now in administrative office with their manager, LA KAREN. TAKI and CHIO are neighboring cubicle buddies to APÉ.

LA KAREN
What?!

APÉ
Que tu aqui mandas perra!

APÉ hums and chuckles.

LA KAREN
What did you say?

APÉ
Oh shit. Um. Sorry. - said? Uh . . . I said, “yes. sir! ... uh, mam ... boss”

LA KAREN
How do you say it?

APÉ
Say what?

LA KAREN
You’re the boss, but in Spanish.
"Tu, aquí mandas."

I thought I heard. . .

Oh, right. (beat) I said, “pera”

Excuse me? So all together that would be?

Uh um. It would be, “Tu aquí mandas, pera.”

Right. . . So. Then. *That* would mean?!

(laughing) Oh my god! I mean gosh. No! Nononono It means *pear*. Not. . . It’s pear. It’s literally a saying meaning, “you’re the boss *Pear!*”

shimmies.

The boss pear! Everyone in Santiago Papasquiaro-where my family is from- says it. . . But not a lot of people from Durango immigrated to this part of the country. More like Chicago, Reno, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles. . . But not many here. . . ooo y’know . . . Maybe it’s not something the Spanish speakers *here* say? Have you heard of it?

No, I don’t think I have.

Wow. . . MmmHmm then. . . That must be it then. They don’t say it around *here* . . .

LA KAREN and APÉ stare almost longingly at each other for a beat. Another beat. And then another beat.

I like it.

CHIO and TAKI fall over in their chairs. APÉ nearly does too.
Really?!

Yeah! Can you say it again? (deliberately for ease-droppers) I want to practice my Spanish; I am trying to learn!

Oh, sure. “Tu. Aqui”

Tookee.

Wait. Uh . . . I’ll say it slower. (beat and a deliberate inhale) “Tu.”

Tu.

Tu (beat) Aqui

Toooo Wahkee

LA KAREN smiles proudly


Man does.

Uh, yes! And then, uh . . . “pera”

Uhpehra

No. Sorry. It’s “pera.” Hmm. actually. it makes more sense to say, “Aquí tu mandas, pera”

Aquí tu mandas pera?
APÉ
Oh wow. That sounds good. Really good. Say it again.

LA KAREN
(with as close to the right pronunciation and attitude) Aqui Tu Mandas Perra!

APÉ
Aye, gracias. Ya lo sé... Oh, but careful with that “r” roll. It can get you in trouble in the wrong neighborhood. (whispers) “perra” means B.I.T.C.H.

LA KAREN
Oh my gosh. I thought that’s what you said in the beginning! And I was like, did I hear them right? Remember?

APÉ
Yeah! I am glad it was a huge misunderstanding... (beat)

LA KAREN
Okay, good. Aqui tu mandas, pera!”

APÉ
Oooo maybe don’t say this to other folk? Especially if it’s not used around here. When you say it, it still sounds like you’re rolling your “r” and saying profanity.

LA KAREN
Oh really. Wow. I have been practicing my “r” rolls. I must be doing it now without even realizing. What does, “aqui tu mandas, pera” mean again?

APÉ
You’re the boss bih...puh puh (cough) pear. You’re the boss pear!

LA KAREN
(Accusing) Really? I can’t believe you--This whole time?!

APÉ
(exhaling) yeah, I know / It’s hard to believe...

LA KAREN
/This whole time I have been calling you the boss?!

LA KAREN fraterna bro punches APÉ’s shoulder.

APÉ
Ou(ch)ee (through teeth) Oui!... Si!... Yes.
LA KAREN
How would I say I am the big boss . . . the big pear? Oh my gosh, I get it. It’s like saying the big apple. Or, like, the apple of my eye!

APÉ
Yes. Exactly-- and what you would say is “Soy la mas pera.” If you want to be the big pear.

LA KAREN
“Soy la mas pera”?

APÉ
Yeah, but that “r” roll tho-- Might still get you in trouble with HR. Try a dental “d” instead. They sound basically the same to Spanish speakers. Feel free to use that “r” roll with me though. I won’t tell anyone if you call me a (whispers) “perra.”

LA KAREN
Ooooo naughty. Oh, okay. . . so “Soy la mas peda?”

APÉ
Yes! You got it!

LA KAREN
(gleefully) Soy la mas peda!!

APÉ

LA KAREN
And?

APÉ
“y”

LA KAREN
Y aqui tu mandas perra!

APÉ
Wow. Yes!

LA KAREN
(jumping) Soy la mas peda y aqui tu mandas, perra!!!!!
APÉ

Yaaas! Bitch!!!

LA KAREN and APÉ high five. A shift back to the ravine. SHROOM locks eyes with APÉ. SHROOM laughs and enters her liminal space along with the receding wave.

TAKI

I can’t believe you left Dante’s for that place.

CHIO

Yeah foo, I was so upset with you when you quit Dante’s, that I was happy when they fired you from that cool office job.

APÉ

Well (beat) That’s not nice. Y’all foos were really mean to me when I left.

CHIO

What do you mean? No we weren’t. I was so sad.

TAKI

Our lil crew was broken up. We were hurtin’

SHROOMs ears have perked.

APÉ

Oh, no! Don’t gaslight me. Y’all foos were soo mean. You said you hated me.

CHIO

No es sierto güey.

TAKI

We would never say that shit. You’re our friend.

A wave. SHROOM positions the trio back at Dante’s.

CHIO

I can’t believe you . . . you’re quitting?

APÉ

Yeah.

TAKI

Seriously--What are you still doing here?
APÉ
I put in my two weeks.

CHIO
(beat) and you’re actually working them? You’re an asshole—uh’fucked-up one.

APÉ
I thought it would be more fucked-up not to.

TAKI
No, Now we gotta have to think about you leaving while you’re still around.

CHIO
Yeah, foo-- you’re supposed to quit and go. It’s the most decent thing you can do.

TAKI
Rip off that bandaid.

CHIO
Da’fuck you doing warning us about it?

TAKI
We can’t be your friends anymore. You’re dead to us.

CHIO
Dead. Absolutely dead.

APÉ
I thought we were friends.

CHIO
Si somos amigas. Eso es el problema. Keep up. Damn. I thought you were supposed to be smart or somethin’.

TAKI
You’re leaving us in this shithole.

APÉ
Oh/ I-

CHIO
/For real, Why d’fuck did you get to know us if you were just gonna quit like that? Actually workin’ your two weeks, puta’madre, who even does that shit, man -- it’s hella fucked.
APÉ
Shit. I’m sorry y’all / I didn’t know

CHIO
Here we go con tu “y’all” -- se me pega todo lo que dices güey. *Fijate* en el putaso que me dio mi hermano cuando se le dio cuenta que se le pego a el tambien. Pinche plaga güey, con tu, “hey foo” y tu “y’all foos.”

TAKI
For real -- I’m stuck with that shit too. *Especially* when I am zooted, “y’all foos wanna hit or wut?”

TAKI actually takes a hit from their dab pen. TAKI passes it to CHIO. CHIO takes a hit.

CHIO
Nah, *y’all foos* better quit with that smoking shit. (exhales) They might catch you in the cameras.

APÉ
I thought they were busted.

CHIO
They are. Keep up foo’. We’re playing pretend -- were you ever a kid?

APÉ
I don’t remember. I had to look after myself a lot of the time and I started workin’ early.

TAKI
Who the fuck di’nt have to do that shit tho . . . You’re something else.

CHIO
Todos aquí han trabajado toda su vida. You ain’t special. Fuck, (to audience) this foo here di’nt even finish highschool because he had’ta work. That foo there has a Master’s and is here too. Workin’ *this* job -- underpaid as fuck. That foo there splits there time between here and the corner to support the kids they had young. But you know what -- At least no one expects anything of us here. You’re fucking your shit up by going and tryin’ to do something. So, I’m good. You go. Do your *thing*. Enter the world were people expect you to be prompt. Save face. Do your matherfukn’ job well.

TAKI
That aint here. Our standards here are. Show up. Give enough of a shit that no one from corporate is up our ass and don’t give enough of a shit that they’ll be up our ass trying to figure out what’s workin’ here. It’s a special balance that we have to a “t” here.
A snap back to the ravine

CHIO
Damn. Okay. To be fair, Apé. We never said we hated you.

APÉ
My bad. You’re right. I confused “We hate you” with “You’re dead to us.”

TAKI
Is that worse?

SHROOM becomes FRANCESCA

APÉ AND FRANCESCA
Yes.

APÉ
Cuando los deje.

FRANCESCA
I felt alone.

APÉ
Sin el trabajo en donde andábamos juntos.

FRANCESCA
I was lost in a place where I couldn’t be myself.

APÉ
Tuve que actuar con un respeto que nadie me mostró.

FRANCESCA
Even though I see you outside of work. I feel like/

APÉ
Algo cambió. Y, que todavía hay resentimiento porque sienten que los abandoné,

FRANCESCA
But I am the one trying stay connected.

APÉ
Pero esa es la parte más brutal de dejar el trabajar por otro.
FRANCESCA
It’s harder to support each other now.

APÉ
Ahora es más difícil apoyarse unos a otros.

FRANCESCA rests her head on TAKI’s shoulder. APÉ sits in-between CHIO and TAKI and holds their hands.

FADE TO BLACK.
SCENE TEN.

Back at Dante’s

TAKI
I put the wrong code in. You’re gonna have to wait another 10 minutes.

THE ROBBER
Nah, foo I just want my money

CHIO
I thought it was longer with that whole second code thing.

TAKI
Oh right, so more like 15 minutes.

THE ROBBER begins to panic. TAKI places their hand on them to calm them.

TAKI
You’re good. You’ll get your money.

CHIO
(mocking) Paciencia güey.

TAKI
Not helping.

CHIO
Okay, so what do we do about this lady.

THE ROBBER bends down to check LA KAREN’s pulse.

THE ROBBER
Oh my god! She’s dead. I killed her.

CHIO
Hijole

TAKI
Fuck.

THE ROBBER
What are we going to do?

CHIO
We? Yo no hice nada. entraste y la mataste.
THE ROBBER
O, si. Pero tu bien listo para ser un plan, eh?

TAKI
Shut up!

THE ROBBER
So what do we do?

TAKI
We figure this out. (beat, a deep deep breath) Okay, so luckily the cameras in the lobby are duds. Even the one looking at the register. (beat) If we wanna get her out of here without anyone noticing. We have to take her out the back door.

THE ROBBER
Okay, sounds good to me.

THE ROBBER and CHIO carry LA KAREN to the back door.

TAKI
No, stop. It’s next to the walk-in where the AC is. The camera there is real.

THE ROBBER and CHIO carry LA KAREN to the customer lobby.

THE ROBBER
So turn it off?

THE ROBBER and CHIO carry LA KAREN to the back door.

CHIO
Because that wouldn’t be suspicious. Que menso eres.

THE ROBBER and CHIO carry LA KAREN to the customer lobby. They drop her.

TAKI
I got it. Apé take that damn ski mask off. Put it on her. Then you gotta go.

APÉ
What? How’s that gonna work.
Because she’s the robber.

APÉ
Uh, no she’s not. I am. Remember. We talked about this. We agreed.

TAKI
You’re still taking the money, but we’re framing her. I’m calling the cops.

APÉ puts the ski mask on LA KAREN.

You’re framing smelly patata?

TAKI
Yes! Take the money so we can still go on our beach trip, but leave some scattered around her. Yes. Make it rain a lil. Not that much. Less. Less. No less. That’s perfect. Wait! don’t leave a twenty. Exchange that for a one. Good. Okay go.

APÉ turns to exit.

Next time, one of you is the robber and the safe is ready.

TAKI
I can’t wait. Let’s do it tomorrow?

APÉ
Then how are we going to go to Santa Cruz? I just bought a beach chair and a lil grill I want to use.

CHIO
Oh shit. We’ll have to wait until after the trip.

TAKI
Oh right, It’s gonna be a really good trip. Right Apé? All planned out.

APÉ
I got you. We’re good to go. (beat) How do y’all have a day off together?

TAKI
We finally got a new hire.
LA KAREN starts to wake-up. APÉ impulsively responds and tases her again. She faints.

CHIO

No que estabe muerta, güey? Que paso?! 

APÉ checks her pulse.

APÉ

Fuck! Esta vez si la mate.

TAKI walks over and checks LA KAREN’s pulse.

TAKI

She’s not dead. How are you going to kill her with a $10 taser.

TAKI takes the taser from APÉ. TAKI tases APÉ.

APÉ

Ahhhhh!! (beat) oh, wait. Apenas lo sentí.

TAKI tases CHIO.

CHIO

Da cosquillas.

They play a game of *chasing* and *tasing*.

LA KAREN wakes up. She isn’t noticed. She sneaks up behind the homo with the taser; startles them. LA KAREN grabs the taser and chases the HOMOS with the taser. In all the commotion/

TAKI

/Oh my god! She tased herself and fainted again. Y’all foos good?

APÉ and CHIO nod bent over from running and laughing.

CHIO

Y ahora qué?
TAKI
We’re goood. We call the cops. (beat) I know, totally not the vibe, but now we have videos of her pinning and tasing Chio against the coke refrigerator and of her trying to hog tie Apé, our customer, next to the A.C. thermostat.

APÉ
Oh, shihhht.

CHIO
Toda via pienso que la chota no nos van a creer. Solo existen para proteger a personas como ella, no a nosotros.

TA KI
No necesitan creernos porque tenemos . . . proof.

APÉ
Tenemos pruebas.

TA K I
Thank you. tenemos pruebas en las cameras.

APÉ
That’ll be enough?

TA K I
It has to be. We’ll be safe. They won’t hurt us. She’ll be safe too. . . they’ll take one look at her when they remove the ski mask, slap her wrist gently, and give her a police escort to her home.

The safe beeps and opens.

TA K I
(laughing) Oh Shit! Apé you better take that money, stick it in-between your cheeks, clench, and run and hide it in your car. I’m about to call some pigs and they’ll probably want to question you most. You feel up to that? We’ll go on our trip tomorrow and forget this ever happened.

APÉ
Yeah, I’ll be good. Not my first rodeo. (beat) we better get turnt d’fuck up tomorrow!

CHIO
Si güey! Puro periar en la playa!
APÉ begins stuffing stacks and racks in their pants.

FADE TO BLACK.
SCENE ELEVEN.

The Ravine. SHROOM observes her lovely clowns. They sit around the grill trying to remember the warmth it provided earlier.

APÉ
I’m cold and if i’m cold, you must be freezing Taki.

TAKI
Yeah, I’m still kind of wet. Should we go?

APÉ
Oh my god! How have we been here nine hours!

CHIO
Si, antes que baje el sol.

They begin to pick-up the camp and get loaded-up with all their shit

TAKI
Are we leaving the watermelon?

APÉ
Yes, It’s my offering for the waterhole.

CHIO
No! We’re leaving this place like we found it. We have to take everything.

APÉ
Chio, Por favor, ten algo de compasión, tenemos que escalar mucho terreno.

CHIO
Apé, lo dejamos como lo encontramos. (beat) Dilo

APÉ
Lo dejamos como lo encontramos.

CHIO
Taki.

TAKI
Lo dejamos como lo encontramos.
CHIO
Además, podemos encontrar un nuevo camino.

APÉ
Yeah, we’re good at that.

TAKI
Always having to figure d’fuck out.

APÉ
Hey! Maybe that’s cuando and how?!

CHIO
Of what?

APÉ
El homo sapien. The when and como?

TAKI
It’s “always having to figure it the fuck out?”

APÉ
Yes, because the when y cuando is “always.” We never stop. Even if we think we have everything figured out. There’s always more. Always more to (realization) consider. We must consider and continue considering to be homo! Ser homo es considerar las posibilidades de lo que observamos!!!

CHIO
Okay, y lo Sapien que? Sera “Figuring it the fuck out?”

TAKI
Yeah, it is. That’s how we’ve survived and evolved. By figuring it the fuck out. It’s the “how” we’re sapiens.

CHIO
Ahhh, I don’t know. All life figures it the fuck out and considers things always. Why do we have to be different from the rest of life? Sabes que? Lo único que nos hace humanos--es no saber vivir. We’ve convinced ourselves that we’re removed from all life. Separate from earth instead of a part of it. But, we’re still connected.

APÉ
Uh huh, no cres que es kind of a stretch, eso?

CHIO
Que cosa?
TAKI
I think the part that’s a stretch is what you said about us still being connected. We’re connected right now. But that’s ‘cause we took some shrooms. I can feel the new pathways being built in my brain and I feel like I belong right now with y’all foos and the earth.

APÉ
Yeah, it does feel nice to belong. I love this feeling.

CHIO
Que chido se siente conocer y que me conocen. To be real, nunca pense que iba ser tan amigo de ustudies. Porque, como enfadan! Dios mio, siempre una coso o otra. Que Foolano this and Foolana that-- Pero, los quiero un chingo.

TAKE
Creo que, to be homo sapien is to querer conocer.

CHIO
Sabes que, tienes razon.

APÉ
Si. Eso es!

SHROOM
Que es lo mas “Homo” que podriamos ser?

THE HOMOS
Querer conocer.

The HOMOS spend a moment acknowledging each others’ existence. They’ve arrived to an opening in the ravine. A steep climb up, but it’s the golden hour and it’s absolutely stunning.

TAKE
Wow. What is this place?

APÉ
It’s a ravine.

CHIO
Que es un ravine?

APÉ
Un lugar donde caen los árboles.
TAKI
It’s dangerous and beautiful. Some of these trees are just barely keeping themselves up. There’s even some that are only standing because they’re leaning against each other.

APÉ
Look at the trees over there.

CHIO
Esos tres árboles sobreviven en este lugar por cómo se apoyan.

TAKE
That’s what it takes to survive this place.

APÉ
They’re here and survived this place because of each other.

SHROOM
Que es lo mas “Homo” que podriamos ser?

CHIO
Nos faltaba eso... en nuestra respuesta a la pregunta.

APÉ
El apoyo de uno a otro.

TAKE
We’ve been missing that in our answer for a long time.

CHIO
*Miranos. Trajimos una maldita parrilla a un bosque en *California. I don’t wanna be a fire starter. I want to be a tree.

APÉ
Let’s be motherfuckin’ mushrooms. Nuestras ideas y cuentos spores in the wind. Connecting trees and decomposing their structures como los hongos chingónes que somos.

They do their signature dance moves one final time.

TAKE
We keep on dancin’! (quick beat) Oh my god! Let’s take a picture. I want to remember this forever.

TAKE coordinates a selfie picture with the APÉ and CHIO. SHROOM photobombs.
APÉ
Wait! The trees.

They do a one-eighty to include the trees in their selfie.

TAKI
Ready? Uno. Dos. Tres! (adlib for aditional shots/poses)

A commemorative selfie is taken.

CHIO
Aver ... Bien cargadas y listos para el viaje?

TAKI AND APÉ
Si!

They take one last look at their waterhole. Then begin their climb up the ravine. As they ascend, the car trunk comes down to greet them.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF PLAY