

Milagro

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MILAGRO

The Characters:

Oberlin	60, White, an Episcopal priest working in Mexico for 35 years
Teresa	58, Mexican, his estranged wife, a chef, an activist
Paco	25, Mexican, Oberlin's assistant, a photographer
Michael	52, White, Jewish, a professor of law
Robert	36, Mexican-American, his partner, a marketing professional
Stephanie	50, White, a bank executive with a Molly Ivins accent, living in Dallas
Paula	45, Black, her former lover, a doctor, living Boston

The Setting:

A rustic resort on Mexico's Pacific coast, Dallas, San Francisco

The Time:

The present. June 24 (the traditional "Midsummer")

Acting Note:

Dialogue displayed in brackets [like this] indicates the characters are speaking over one another.

Design Note:

The action should flow without interruption between the scenes. Locales may be indicated by playing areas.

Act I. Scene 1.

Lights up on an isolated, rustic tropical resort, on Mexico's Pacific coast. Evening. Think, "Night of the Iguana." ROBERT and MICHAEL sit on the terrace overlooking the bay. ROBERT holds a Mexico guidebook.

ROBERT

Read this. No, here, I'll read it. *Rainbow Guide to Mexico*: "Bahia Media Luna." *Media Luna*. That's where I thought we were going. Not Bahia Luna. Bahia *Media* Luna. "Basking on a pristine, moon-shaped cove, the resort's Italian designers have created a colony of rustic chic cabanas. From a distance it looks like a native fishing village. Inside the casitas are graced by elegantly simple furnishings, native handcrafts, plush bath towels and artfully draped mosquito nettings. Lighting is by candle and oil lamps. Rooftop solar panels power ceiling fans and hot water showers. Outside, nature blooms, platoons of pelicans patrol the waves, and at night a carpet of stars festoons the sky. In the morning, raise a flag and coffee and breakfast soon appear. Rainbow rating – gay friendly." I thought I'd made reservations *there*. At Bahia Media Luna. Instead we got this. I can't believe it!

MICHAEL

Bahia Media Luna, Bahia Luna. It was a simple mistake.

ROBERT

It's my fault. I'll fix it.

MICHAEL

It's lovely here.

ROBERT

It's a freaking dump.

MICHAEL

It's rustic. Rustic chic.

ROBERT

Gilligan's Island was more chic than this. I'll take care of it. I'll get us out of here.

MICHAEL

It's fine. It's perfectly...

ROBERT

What? Perfectly what?

MICHAEL

Secluded. And lovely. Really, it's lovely.

ROBERT

There was a scorpion on the bathmat. Lizards on the ceiling. God knows what's in the bedding.

It's Mexico.
MICHAEL

ROBERT gives him a livid look.

I'm sorry, I—
MICHAEL

ROBERT
My grandmother does not have scorpions or reptiles in her house I [can assure you.]

MICHAEL
[I'm sorry.] I'm sorry. I just meant we're in a third world country, and—

ROBERT
A third world country?

MICHAEL
Economically emerging. An isolated portion of the coast. Primitive.

ROBERT
Primitive?

MICHAEL
I meant pristine. You said you wanted—

ROBERT
I wanted something romantic, special.

MICHAEL
It is.

ROBERT
Our fifth anniversary. I thought... you know, something memorable.

MICHAEL
Well, this is definitely unforgettable.

ROBERT
You know what I mean!

MICHAEL
Let's get a drink.

ROBERT
Just raise a flag and they'll—Oh, that's right, this isn't—

MICHAEL
A Margarita? How 'bout a Margarita?

Do they even have tequila? ROBERT

It's Mexico. They must. MICHAEL
(Calls out)
 Waiter?

Joven! ROBERT

Robert. MICHAEL

What? ROBERT

Señor? MICHAEL

ROBERT
Señor? He's a kid. Joven! Servicio, por favor!
PACO appears with two drinks.

Dos Margaritas. PACO

Terrific. MICHAEL

We haven't even ordered. ROBERT

With salt. No ice. PACO

I'd like a Cosmopolitan. ROBERT

You said you wanted a [Margarita.] MICHAEL

[Waiter,] I'd like a Cosmo. ROBERT

Tequila only. *Dos Margaritas, con sal, no hielo.* PACO

That's—! ROBERT

PACO

And I am the manager, *joven*.

STEPHANIE and PAULA enter.

STEPHANIE

Oh, my God, the view! Paula! Paula, look at this!

PAULA

Gorgeous.

STEPHANIE

Unbelievable. Just unbelievable.

MICHAEL

(To PAULA)

Buenos tardes.

PAULA

(To MICHAEL and ROBERT)

Well, here we are after all that, safe and sound.

ROBERT

Really? I don't feel very safe *or* sound.

PAULA

That was quite a ride. How are your things?

ROBERT

[Who knows.]

MICHAEL

[Everything's] drying. Looks like the laptop made it through.

PAULA

Definitely exhilarating.

STEPHANIE

Oh, my Lord! Look at that view! Isn't this incredible?

ROBERT

(To PAULA)

Now if we can just keep the scorpions at bay...

STEPHANIE

The website doesn't do it justice at all, don't you think? It's magnificent! Waiter! Waiter! Oh, what's the word, Paula, in Spanish?

PAULA

Mesero.

STEPHANIE

Mesero! Mesero! Dos Margari—

PACO enters with two more Margaritas.

PACO

Dos Margaritas. Con sal, no hielo.

STEPHANIE

Wow. That was fast.

PAULA

Like magic.

ROBERT

It's all they've got, apparently.

STEPHANIE

Perfecto! Race you to the beach. Don't spill your Margarita!

STEPHANIE takes off. PAULA follows, good-naturedly, but just trotting behind. PACO changes scenes with a FLASH!

Act I. Scene 2.

Flashback to that morning. TERESA -- a fit woman, a Mexican national, somewhat disheveled from many hours of travel, stands next to OBERLIN, tall, lean, bookish. From a bluff, they gaze at the bay below. The view is stunning, paradisiacal.

OBERLIN

Well? What do you think? Teresa?

TERESA

Very nice, Oberlin.

OBERLIN

Spectacular.

TERESA

So, this is your prison?

OBERLIN

Not prison. Sabbatical.

TERESA

Sabbatical?

OBERLIN

That's what I told the bishop.

TERESA

You're on the run! Does the bishop have any idea where you are?

OBERLIN

I'm in seclusion. Officially.

TERESA

Hiding, you mean.

OBERLIN

Writing the book.

TERESA

You are always writing a book, Oberlin. Or a sermon. Or an apology to the bishop. Wait! Has the bishop even been informed?

OBERLIN

Informed?

TERESA

About the — how would you say? — financial irregularities?

OBERLIN

You mean the money? The vestry's given me a month.

TERESA

To...?

OBERLIN

Replenish the treasury.

TERESA

Or...?

OBERLIN

Well, let's just say it wouldn't be an ecclesiastical trial.

TERESA

You're a fugitive. Nicely done, Oberlin. And look where you've landed. If this is the punishment meted out to clergy for a felony... I think I understand why you like this God of yours.

OBERLIN

God is mercy, Teresa. And beauty. You've heard me preaching this for 30 years.

TERESA

And still I wonder, where's the mercy for my 5,000 kids in San Cristobal.

OBERLIN

We've had this discussion.

TERESA

Many times. You and your gringo tourists get paradise and I have to scramble for whatever pesos I can get, or all those kids in Chiapas go back to eating a couple of tortillas a day. Maybe. If they're lucky. Thirty-five years in Mexico, and you still see this country through the eyes of a tourist.

OBERLIN

You should learn to look through the eyes of a tourist. At this bay, for instance. Paradise.

TERESA

Lucky you.

OBERLIN

People pay for paradise.

TERESA

I thought they put an end to that, selling off Paradise. Something about Luther and his 95 feces.

OBERLIN

Ecotourism, smartass.

TERESA

Watch your language, father.

OBERLIN

This is a kind of moral capitalism that benefits both God's creation and his people. That's my proposition. Mine and Jack's.

TERESA

(Understanding)

Jack. Ah, hah...

OBERLIN

He just purchased all of this. As an investment. The cove, the hillside. Picked it up for a song, and now he has an offer, for us both.

TERESA

Oh, really? An ecotourism offer.

OBERLIN

He wants us to partner with him to—

TERESA

To build a resort.

(She responds to his look.)

I'm thinking like a tourist.

OBERLIN

Not build. Restore, actually.

TERESA

Restore what? All I can see is a dozen palm huts.

OBERLIN

We're aiming for rustic chic.

TERESA

Ah, hah. You could come with me to Chiapas, I could show you rustic, maybe not so chic.

OBERLIN

It's a bit of grace—Jack's offer, this gorgeous place—and—

TERESA

An exploitive business scheme.

OBERLIN

Green building. Solar panels. Jobs for the locals. Who are we exploiting?

TERESA

The tourists?

OBERLIN

Think of this as progressive redistribution of wealth.

TERESA

Now you're Che Guevara. You.

OBERLIN

Fifty thousand pesos a month, Teresa. Each. We get this place up and running, fill it with happy, ecologically-minded vacationers, and we'll all split the profits: you, me and Jack. You get cash to feed your kids. I'll finish the book—

TERESA

And put the money back in the church's bank account?

OBERLIN

Of course. What do you think of me? And make a donation to the bishop's discretionary fund. While Jack gets some liquid income.

TERESA

A miracle.

OBERLIN

St. Paul says, "the whole of creation groans for restoration."

TERESA

I think that is blasphemy. And you are a felon.

OBERLIN

A [fel—]

TERESA

[A common] criminal, Oberlin. Robbing your own parish's treasury? And for what? The money might have gone to, I don't know, a food pantry, something useful?—Instead you, what? Buy a bunch of *campesino* drawings?

OBERLIN

Preserve the finest private collection of milagros in the world.

TERESA

With money you stole!

OBERLIN

The money wasn't for me! The collection was going to be broken up! Sold off to trinket shops in Puerto Vallarta.

TERESA

They're just superstitious cartoons, Oberlin. Magic spells scribbled on scraps of metal and wood. My grandmother made them. My *tias*.

OBERLIN

Votive offerings. Folk art. You of all people should appreciate that. Look at this. It brought you here, safely, all the way from Chiapas.

OBERLIN produces a milagro.

TERESA

What are you talking about?

OBERLIN

San Cristobal. Patron saint of --

TERESA

Have some imagination, Oberlin. St. Christopher? Why not simply hang a five peso medallion around your neck?

OBERLIN

San Cristobal has been venerated for centuries, millennia! Protector of travelers everywhere!

TERESA

I know all that. I live in the town bearing his name. San Cristobal is everywhere!

OBERLIN

Look at the story here, it's touching.

TERESA

Oberlin...

OBERLIN

The woman here, a campesina, has gone into town to sell her blankets at the market day there. She's returning home with food for her family, when a storm suddenly blows up. The rain is torrential and the river she is crossing is rising fast. She can't turn back, and she can't proceed. She's trapped on a tiny spit of sand, and will soon be swept away. She prays to San Cristobal, who carried the boy Jesus safely across a raging river, and suddenly a lightning bolt hits a tree on the river bank, splitting the tree in two and sending half of it crashing across the roaring stream, creating a bridge for the woman to walk to safety to the other side. She returns to her home and gives thanks to San Cristobal for delivering her safe and sound to her family. And so, you too, my dear, have made it safely here, all the way from San Cristobal.

TERESA

That's fine, Oberlin. Call your paintings whatever you want. They are not worth risking your career—your freedom! You want to spend your golden years in a Mexican jail? Sell them off and go back to your parish in San Miguel.

OBERLIN

Come with me to the studio. If you saw them, you would understand.

TERESA

Oberlin, I have seen [milagros before!]

OBERLIN

[Come with] me!

*OBERLIN takes TERESA off, to the studio.
PACO changes scene with a FLASH!*

Act I. Scene 3.

Morning. A sunlit condo in Dallas. STEPHANIE, enters, dressed in a nightgown. Her head is throbbing and her hair is disheveled.

STEPHANIE

Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God.

PAULA enters from kitchen, dressed in a bathrobe.

PAULA

You're up.

STEPHANIE

Hey Pumpkin.

They kiss.

STEPHANIE

Ow. Not so hard.

PAULA

You poor baby. Here's your robe.

Hands her a robe.

STEPHANIE

What time is it?

PAULA

Almost nine.

STEPHANIE

Oh my God!

PAULA

I made coffee.

STEPHANIE

I'm going to miss my flight!

PAULA

Do you still take milk?

STEPHANIE

Gotta call a cab. Yes.

PAULA

What?

Milk.

STEPHANIE

And sugar?

PAULA

Splenda. There's some on the counter.

STEPHANIE

It's not good for you.

PAULA

Really? That too?

STEPHANIE

Cancer.

PAULA

You don't know that. Oh my God, I'll never make it! I didn't hear the alarm. Did the cab ever come? I scheduled a cab.

STEPHANIE

I canceled it.

PAULA

What?

STEPHANIE

Your plane's been delayed. I checked the flight. I always check the flights.

PAULA

Delayed?

STEPHANIE

Major storm.

PAULA

It's raining in Puerto Vallarta?

STEPHANIE
(Disappointed, like a child)

It's raining here. Lightning. Hail. You didn't hear it? You're flight's not till one. Here's your coffee.

PAULA

How did you know which airline?

STEPHANIE

You've got the flight number on your wall calendar. June 24. Midsummer.

PAULA

Oh.
STEPHANIE

Happy 50th, Stephanie.
PAULA

Ughhh. All I wanted to do was slip away. Quietly. Instead...

You loved it. Center of attention, crowds of people. Old friends—and lovers—flying in from all over...

Like you.
STEPHANIE

A cast of thousands.
PAULA

They didn't all spend the night.
STEPHANIE

Not that I noticed, no. How are you feeling?
PAULA

Headache.
STEPHANIE

Well, it was a great party.
PAULA

Too great. You're sure the flight's at one now?
STEPHANIE

That's what they said.
PAULA

Aspirin?
STEPHANIE

No thanks.
PAULA

Can you get me some?
STEPHANIE

Am I your nurse?
PAULA

STEPHANIE
It's my birthday.

PAULA
A very important birthday.

PAULA goes to the bathroom.

STEPHANIE
They're in the medicine cabinet.

PAULA
Where else would they be? Girl, this bathroom is disgusting, did I tell you that?

STEPHANIE
I wasn't expecting company.

PAULA
All you've got is Tylenol.

STEPHANIE
That's what I mean. Bring three.

PAULA
You shouldn't be taking Tylenol after you've been drinking. It's very hard on your liver.

STEPHANIE
I need something. My head is going to explode!

PAULA returns with pills and water.

PAULA
(Counts out pills.)
One, two, three. Don't tell the A.M.A. I could lose my license. And buy some aspirin if you're going to have hangovers!

STEPHANIE
You're Florence Nightingale.

Takes the pills.

PAULA
Doctor Nightingale, thank you.

STEPHANIE
My own Dr. Nightingale. You sure work wonders.

PAULA
Do I?

STEPHANIE

Mn, hm. Where have you been all these years?

PAULA

In Boston.

STEPHANIE

Well, that was silly. What were you doin' there?

PAULA

Becoming the head of OB-GYN at Boston General.

STEPHANIE

Oh, right, Peggy told me. Congratulations.

PAULA

What were you doing here?

STEPHANIE

In Dallas?

PAULA

Yes, in Dallas. Big D.

STEPHANIE

(Evading)

You're sure the flight's at one now?

PAULA

Stephanie.

STEPHANIE

What?

PAULA

What you were doing. All those years. Besides becoming a big bank tycoon. Come on. Say it.

STEPHANIE

It's my birthday. Be nice to me.

PACO again changes scene with FLASH.

Act I. Scene 4.

OBERLIN and TERESA in the studio. It is filled with hundreds of milagros.

OBERLIN

Look at these. Look at them all.

TERESA

Well, they're certainly are a lot of them. I'll give you that.

OBERLIN

The most comprehensive collection in all of Mexico. Including museums. Two hundred years of paintings here. Examples from all over the country. Each one is valuable in its own right, but together, they're...

TERESA

A fortune.

OBERLIN

Together they make a panoramic view of the soul of the people of Mexico. *Un paisaje espiritual.*

TERESA

A spiritual landscape.

OBERLIN

Teeming with miracles.

TERESA

You can't possibly believe in these fantastical accounts.

OBERLIN

Look around you, Teresa. Behold! Hundreds of hand-painted thank-you-notes to the saints. The answered prayers of the poor.

OBERLIN leads TERESA through the collection, pointing to examples.

OBERLIN

Healings. Accidents averted. Husbands returned to their wives. Babies brought back from the brink of death. What's your explanation?

TERESA

Luck. Natural processes. A passing doctor gave someone a shot? I know you, Oberlin, that's what you believe too.

OBERLIN is silent.

TERESA

Admit it. You don't believe in this nonsense any more than I do.

OBERLIN looks about the room.

OBERLIN

And what poverty we live in, you and I. And the nation I come from. Imagine. Imagine seeing the world like the people who create these paintings. Crackling with saints, and miracles, and faith.

TERESA

These are my people, Oberlin. You don't need to preach to me. I say, let's start with food, medicine, education, employment. That would be miracle enough in Chiapas.

OBERLIN

"Man does not live by bread alone."

TERESA

Oh, please. I'm talking about real poverty. Relentless, soul-grinding poverty.

OBERLIN

So am I. The world we come from needs *milagros*. A universe that's open to—

TERESA

Magic.

OBERLIN

Grace. That's my calling. To take Mexico's miracles to the outside world.

TERESA

Your *calling* when you first came to this country—

OBERLIN

I know why I came here. I was young. We all were. Young—and foolish.

TERESA

Feeding the poor is foolish? Healing the sick is foolish? Liberating the [oppressed is foolish?]

OBERLIN

[Thinking we could] change all that. Naïve, anyway.

TERESA

"Liberation Theology: The Gospel of Freedom for 20th Century Meso-America." Your dissertation. You do remember, no?

OBERLIN

Of course [I remember--]

TERESA

That was why I married you.

OBERLIN

That and...

TERESA

Never mind. So, now what, you don't believe that any more? Freeing people from oppression in this world, *today*? That's naive now?

OBERLIN

Teresa.

TERESA

Oh, yes! Now you're "liberating" your church's treasury—

OBERLIN

I'll return the money. For heaven's sake! As soon as I find the proper collector—someone who can be trusted to keep the collection intact, maybe donate it eventually to a museum, then—

TERESA

And after you've written your book, you mean. Your Rizzoli coffee table number, slickly photographed by Paco, am I right?

OBERLIN

Scholarship. We need the source material. Just for a while. And Paco is the one who showed me this collection in the first place!

TERESA

So in order to elude the authorities, not to mention the bishop, you're hiding here, in Jack's little *cielito lindo*.

OBERLIN

"Bahia Luna." For the crescent of the bay.

TERESA

I see. So here you are. A fugitive in Paradise. You are a lucky man, Oberlin.

OBERLIN

Some might say blessed. You too, my dear.

TERESA

And the kids in Chiapas? Are they blessed?

OBERLIN

They could be. Jack's offer. Fifty thousand pesos a month.

She considers this.

TERESA

I need some air.

PACO changes the scene with a FLASH.

Act I. Scene 5.

In Dallas. Scene picks up somewhat later.

STEPHANIE

Please? Please, please, please?

PAULA

No. That's your fourth cup.

STEPHANIE

But I can almost feel my feet now.

PAULA

No more. You'll have a cardiac arrest. Besides, you need to take a shower and get going. I'll get you a Lyft. Go. *(Nothing.)* Go!

STEPHANIE

Yes, doctor.

She reluctantly starts for the bathroom, then turns.

STEPHANIE

Paula!

PAULA

What?

STEPHANIE

I've got an idea.

PAULA

What?

STEPHANIE

Don't laugh.

PAULA

What?

STEPHANIE

Come with me.

PAULA

To the shower? We don't have time.

STEPHANIE

To Mexico. Come with me.

PAULA

Come with you?

To Puerto Vallarta. STEPHANIE

Right. PAULA

I'm serious. STEPHANIE

Don't be ridiculous. PAULA

Just for a few days even. STEPHANIE

I can't go to Puerto Vallarta. PAULA

Why not? STEPHANIE

I have a job. PAULA

It's the weekend! Take an extra day. STEPHANIE

I can't. PAULA

You're a doctor! The head of OB-GYN. They're not going to fire you for taking a day off. STEPHANIE

I don't have a passport. PAULA

You don't have a passport? STEPHANIE

Not *on* me. PAULA

Oh. Shit. OK, I'll cancel! We can spend a few days here. Together. STEPHANIE

In Dallas? PAULA

STEPHANIE

Dallas can be fun. I'll show you around.

PAULA

Stephanie.

STEPHANIE

I know! Fly back to Boston, get your passport, and come to Puerto Vallarta!

PAULA

No.

STEPHANIE

I'll buy the flight. I've got frequent flier miles coming out my ass.

PAULA

You're insane.

STEPHANIE

Really. The bank has got me doing all these crazy trips to China... It's unbelievable.

PAULA

I can pay for my own flight.

STEPHANIE

So, you're coming?

PAULA

No.

STEPHANIE

Oh. *(Beat.)* Please? It's my birthday.

PAULA

No!

*Disappointed, STEPHANIE heads to the bathroom.
PAULA stops her.*

PAULA

Twenty years ago today. Do you remember?

STEPHANIE

Of course I remember.

PAULA

Your birthday party. Peggy invited me – that time too. Matchmaking, I think.

STEPHANIE

She's got a real gift. My 30th, my 50th... Works like a charm.

PAULA

So, what are you thinking? With Puerto Vallarta. We're going to get back together?

STEPHANIE

You never [know.]

PAULA

[Try again?]

STEPHANIE

Would that be so bad? We're both single now.

PAULA

True enough.

STEPHANIE

You and Nicki -- you got married, right? That's what Peggy said.

PAULA

Yep. Doesn't guarantee much.

STEPHANIE

Don't I know. What happened? Can I ask?

PAULA

Oh... politics. She said she needed someone more "aligned with her values."

STEPHANIE

What the hell does that mean?

PAULA

I don't know. I guess I didn't like marching around in pink hats or something. As if serving the poorest women of Boston for the past 15 years wasn't "advancing social justice," but... Not in Nicki's book. I was "wallowing in my privilege." Anyway, she moved out.

STEPHANIE

I'm sorry. *(Beat.)* So, why not come with me? To Puerto Vallarta. Just for a few days.

PAULA

A few days and, what, we fall back in love again? Like magic?

STEPHANIE

You never know.

PAULA

We're adults now, Stephanie. Not 25, not 30, like we were.

STEPHANIE

Alright. It's crazy, I know. It's just... I've got a flight in three hours, and... Now I don't want to go. Isn't that stupid? But, I don't. I don't want to go—without you.

PAULA

You're just horny for more.

STEPHANIE

Well... yes. After twenty years, why wouldn't I be? Shit, Paula, I just want to be with you.

A beat. PAULA is serious now.

PAULA

I wish you had realized that twenty years ago.

STEPHANIE

You don't know how many times I've [thought about you.]

PAULA

[You could] have called, you know. You could have written.

STEPHANIE

I wanted to. Really. So many times.

PAULA

But you didn't.

STEPHANIE

I was... I don't know.

PAULA

Married, for one. To Curtis.

STEPHANIE

I don't know what to say.

PAULA

Nothing *to* say.

STEPHANIE

I'm sorry?

PAULA

Sorry. That's a pretty thin word. *(Beat.)* You better get going.

STEPHANIE

I missed you, Paula. All that time. I missed you so much.

PAULA is silent.

STEPHANIE

I'm sorry. I know that's not much. It's nothing, but I am. I'm so sorry, I can't tell you. For everything.

PAULA takes this in. It's what she's been waiting for.

I've got a confession.

PAULA

PAULA produces her smartphone.

What's that...?

STEPHANIE

My boarding pass.

PAULA

For Boston.

STEPHANIE

For Puerto Vallarta.

PAULA

For... What about your passport?

STEPHANIE

PAULA

I always take a passport when I fly. In case I lose my ID. How else would you get back on the plane?

STEPHANIE

How... prudent. So... I'm confused. You're coming to Puerto Vallarta?

PAULA

Peggy told me you were going down there. To celebrate. Or lick your wounds. Or something. Alone. And I thought: I'll go to the party, we'll see each other, and... who knows? It's not like I've got Nicki to worry about. So I thought, what the hell. I'm going to Puerto Vallarta. Via Dallas. Worst case scenario—I have a week at the beach.

STEPHANIE

Were you planning to tell me?

PAULA

It depended.

STEPHANIE

On what?

PAULA

On you.

STEPHANIE

On me? You mean like a test? So...?

So.

Vamonos!

PAULA

(Beat.)

PACO changes scene.

Act I. Scene 6.

ROBERT and MICHAEL's home.

ROBERT
Where have you been?

MICHAEL
I had an errand.

ROBERT
The flight's in three hours. We need to be leaving like any minute.

MICHAEL
We've got plenty of time.

ROBERT
They say to get to the airport two hours in advance.

MICHAEL
That's ridiculous.

ROBERT
For international. That's what they say.

MICHAEL
An hour is plenty. All we've got is carry-ons.

ROBERT
I'm checking mine.

MICHAEL
Why? Yours will fit.

ROBERT
Liquids.
(He holds up a jumbo container of sunblock.)
We're going to need sunblock.

MICHAEL
That much?

ROBERT
I burn. I'd like to enjoy the beach too.

MICHAEL
Alright, alright. You're right. Let's say ninety minutes. Split the difference. I still need to pack. I haven't even emptied the suitcase since I got back.

I've already done it. You're all set.

ROBERT

What?

MICHAEL

I didn't know where you were. You weren't answering my texts. So I started packing. Do you want the pink shirt or the blue?

ROBERT

He holds up the two shirts.

I don't like pink.

MICHAEL

Then I'll take it. You get the blue. Where were you, anyway?

ROBERT

Uh, the university.

MICHAEL

You're on vacation!

ROBERT

I had to drop off some papers at the dean's office.

MICHAEL

What papers?

ROBERT

It doesn't matter. It's taken care of.

MICHAEL

Thank you. For packing.

(Beat. Covering. Sweetly.)

You're welcome.

ROBERT

I love you.

MICHAEL

Beat. MICHAEL takes ROBERT and kisses him. ROBERT softens.

I bought you something. While you were away.

ROBERT

(Slyly)

What?

MICHAEL

ROBERT

Something you haven't had in a while. We lost the old one. Where were we? Tahoe?

MICHAEL

What is it?

ROBERT produces a cock ring.

ROBERT

It was going to be a surprise. Once we got to the resort.

MICHAEL

(Nervously)

Well -- we don't have time to use it now.

ROBERT

No. And I don't want to hurry. We've got six weeks to make up for. *(Beat as ROBERT regards the ring.)* You think I can get it through customs, right?

PACO changes the scene.

Act I. Scene 7.

Bahia Luna, on the terrace. TERESA and OBERLIN pick up from their previous scene.

TERESA

What is it exactly you need from me?

OBERLIN

Nothing that you're not more than capable of.

TERESA

Such as...

OBERLIN

Something exactly suited to your magnificent talents, my dear.

TERESA

Like what?

OBERLIN

Something that for anyone else would seem, well, just a dream.

TERESA

Cut the crap, Oberlin.

OBERLIN

For mere mortals a miracle, but for *you*, Teresa--

TERESA

Oberlin! What is it?

OBERLIN

A world-class restaurant.

TERESA

Oh, something simple.

OBERLIN

Like the one in San Miguel. Four and a half stars, isn't that what Frommer's gave you?

TERESA

I am done with cooking for *ricos*, Oberlin. I am just trying to keep children alive. Check your Gospels, *padre*, I think I've got Jesus on my side.

OBERLIN

Rich people get hungry too.

TERESA

Yes, but they can buy all they need. My children in Chiapas--

They'll be here this evening.

OBERLIN

Who will?

TERESA

Our *huespedes*.

OBERLIN

Huespedes?

TERESA

Coming tonight. Our first paying guests.

OBERLIN

Where in the world are you putting them?

TERESA

We've got two of the bungalows ready.

OBERLIN

Bungalows? Shacks.

TERESA

OBERLIN

Their plane gets in at 4:30. With an hour from the airport and the panga from Puertocito, that's...6:30, rounding up. Paco can make drinks, just in time for the sunset. Margaritas on the terrace.

TERESA

See how easy it is pandering to tourists? You don't need me.

OBERLIN

Oh, but I do. Because after cocktails...

TERESA

Yes... After cocktails?

OBERLIN

Dinner?

TERESA

Good idea. What are you serving? Your guests. What are you serving them for dinner?

OBERLIN

Teresa.

TERESA

Oberlin.

Wasn't I clear? In my message?
 OBERLIN

You said it was urgent.
 TERESA

This *is* urgent. They're arriving in a matter of hours.
 OBERLIN

You dragged me all the way from Chiapas to cook dinner? You couldn't get someone from town? There isn't anyone in Puertocito who needs a job? Or knows how to cook?
 TERESA

There wasn't time.
 OBERLIN

For somebody to come 45 minutes across the bay, but I could track 14 hours, all the way from San Cristobal for *dinner*?
 TERESA

Not just for tonight. To launch this resort.
 OBERLIN

No thank you. I'm on that water taxi.
 TERESA

Fifty thousand a month, Teresa. For each of us.
 OBERLIN

You've started believing in miracles.
 TERESA

In ecotourism. It pencils. I can have Paco show you.
 OBERLIN

I don't need *milagros*, Oberlin.
 TERESA

But you do need pesos. Where are they coming from? Have you talked to your major donor recently? Jack's investment portfolio is down by half. His foundation is just as bad. Where are you getting the money to feed all those children?
 OBERLIN

I have options.
 TERESA

Such as?
 OBERLIN

I will find another foundation.
 TERESA

OBERLIN
Hard to get new grants right now. In this economy.

TERESA
Not if you have connections.

OBERLIN
Like?

TERESA
El alcalde of San Cristobal.

OBERLIN
What about him?

TERESA
The mayor has indicated he has funds—city funds—and he is — persuadable — to making them available.

OBERLIN
That still takes cash.
(Rubs his fingers together.)
To prime the pump.

TERESA
Oh, he is not interested in mammon. Not from me anyway.

OBERLIN
Then?

TERESA is uncomfortable and silent.

TERESA
I am still an attractive woman, [Oberlin.]

OBERLIN
[Teresa.]

TERESA
To some.

OBERLIN
Don't.

TERESA
Those kids are more important to me than anything, Oberlin. Anything.

OBERLIN
You don't have to—

My children need food.

TERESA

Selling yourself for rice and beans?

OBERLIN

Mi cuerpo, Oberlin! *My body!* I'll do whatever is necessary.

TERESA

You're still my wife.

OBERLIN

Are you trying to bully me? [Make me feel—]

TERESA

[I'm trying] to protect you.

OBERLIN

I don't need your protection, and I don't need your judgments!

TERESA

But you do need a steady stream of cash. Your children do.

OBERLIN

TERESA hesitates.

OBERLIN

It works. Paco's got it all on a spreadsheet. He can show you. In the meantime, we have guests arriving. In a matter of hours. Hungry people.

OBERLIN

She thinks this over.

OBERLIN

Help me.

TERESA

So what is on the menu?

OBERLIN

OBERLIN is silent.

TERESA

Oberlin. What did you buy for me to cook for your guests?

OBERLIN

I wasn't sure what you'd like to prepare.

TERESA

(It sinks in)

You don't have anything.

OBERLIN

Tequila. And coffee.

TERESA

You are living on tequila and coffee. Well, why change after all these years? What does Paco eat?

OBERLIN

The water taxi brings over a pot full of tamales every day. And there's bananas on the property. And coconuts.

TERESA

You are impossible! How can I cook when there is nothing to eat?

OBERLIN

Oh—and there's shrimp.

TERESA

Shrimp?

OBERLIN

In the bay. And scallops. Clams. Paco puts on his mask, or throws out his net and... Boom. Mountains of seafood. *Mariscos para todos.*

TERESA

Just like the Sea of Galilee?

OBERLIN

It *is* miraculous here, in its own way.

TERESA

It had better be.

PACO changes scene. End of FLASHBACK.

Act I. Scene 8.

Continuous with Scene 1. On the terrace.

ROBERT

Joven! I'm sorry. Senor Manager. Where can I use the Internet? There's no wi-fi in the room. Obviously.

PACO

Internet? *No se.*

ROBERT

No se? What do you mean? Internet. A new invention. You communicate through computers—you've seen computers, iPhones maybe? You use them to communicate with people all over the planet.

MICHAEL

Robert.

PACO

No Internet.

ROBERT

No Internet?

PACO

No Internet. No cell phones. No TV. Just the panga to Puertocito twice a day. Once in the morning, once in the evening. Usually. We want your visit to be restful. Like heaven.

PACO disappears.

ROBERT

Oh my God. This is a disaster. Really, when we get out of here, I am going to flame this place all over the Internet. These people will be closed within a month! Never fuck around with a PR professional.

MICHAEL

It's back-to-nature. Like camping.

ROBERT

No Internet! We are totally screwed. How am I going to get us out of here? How am I going to get us a room at Bahia Media Luna if there's no Internet or phone service in this place?

Sweetie.

MICHAEL

We're trapped!

ROBERT

Robert.

MICHAEL

We're utterly and totally trapped.

ROBERT

Well, we can't go anywhere tonight. That's for sure. Let's just relax, drink our Margaritas, have dinner. We'll sleep in our rustic chic—

MICHAEL

Dumpy.

ROBERT

Casita. Then in the morning—we'll see. Who knows? Maybe we'll like it.

MICHAEL

Like it?

ROBERT

Robert, please.

MICHAEL

I wanted something perfect. For you. To celebrate five years of us. I wanted—

ROBERT

Robert, just stop. Really. We have to—There's something I want to talk about.

MICHAEL

Me too. I wanted the moment to be just right. Raise the flag on our casita and order a bottle of Champagne. But obviously that's not going to happen. It's not going to be perfect, but—okay. Here goes. I want you—I think it's time—Why is this so hard? I want you to—I want you to marry me.

ROBERT

Marry you.

MICHAEL

For real. Not just cohabitate. Not marking our anniversary by the first time we [fucked.]

ROBERT

[Shhh!] Robert.

MICHAEL

ROBERT

A real wedding. A real marriage license. It was supposed to be more romantic than that, but...

MICHAEL

Robert, I...

PACO enters with seafood.

PACO

Joyas del Mar! Mariscos para todos! Senores! Senoras! Oye! La cena! Where are the senoras? Senoras! La cena!

TERESA and OBERLIN enter.

OBERLIN

Welcome to Bahia Luna!

TERESA

Dinner is served!

OBERLIN

You've done it again, my dear. A miracle!

TERESA

Don't push it, Oberlin.

PACO changes the scene.

Act I. Scene 9.

Bahia Luna, dinner. The guests and hosts are gathered on the terrace around a table. PACO directs the action as plates of food swoop on and off. The action swirls in a dreamlike fast-motion.

Delicious!

PAULA

I've never tasted such amazing shrimp!

STEPHANIE

Fantastic!

MICHAEL

But there's something else...?

STEPHANIE

Trade secrets.

OBERLIN

Tequila.

TERESA

That's it!

STEPHANIE

ROBERT

Tequila for the drinks, tequila for the shrimp, tequila snow cones for dessert.

PACO enters carrying a tray.

PACO

Y finalmente... La especialidad de la casa. Tequila sorbet!

ROBERT shoots MICHAEL a look.

OBERLIN

Teresa ran the best restaurant in San Miguel.

PAULA

San Miguel?

OBERLIN

Five stars from Frommer's.

TERESA

Four and a half.

OBERLIN
(Deliciously)

San Miguel de Allende. Three hours north of the capital. An exquisite colonial city.

ROBERT

"Gringolandia" they call it.

TERESA

Oberlin has a parish there. He is an Episcopal priest.

PACO

Anglicano.

TERESA

Believe it or not.

ROBERT

Retirees. Lots of them. In San Miguel.

OBERLIN

And students. Of art and language.

TERESA

Like Paco, here.

PACO

Si, conoci a Oberlin en el Centro de Bellas Artes.

OBERLIN

We're making a book, Paco and I on—

PACO

Milagros. Saludos a los santos.

STEPHANIE
(Botching the pronunciation)

Milagros?

OBERLIN

Folk art. Tributes to the saints.

PACO

Si. And while we work on the book...

OBERLIN

This lovely resort. We're helping a dear friend, aren't we, Teresa?

TERESA

Yes, you are our very first—guinea pigs.

Guests. OBERLIN

Oh, for Christ's sake. ROBERT

It's amazing. Paradise, really. STEPHANIE

"Rustic chic." MICHAEL

And Teresa will open another world-class restaurant. Right here. Right dear? OBERLIN

Oh, I am just grilling shrimp. TERESA

Five stars this time! OBERLIN

Just shrimp? ROBERT

Tomorrow, beautiful scallops, right from the bay. OBERLIN

Oh, yes, apparently Paco simply puts on his mask and snorkel and... (*snaps*). TERESA

Mariscos para todos! PACO

Like magic. ROBERT
(*Sardonically*)

Like a miracle! STEPHANIE

PACO changes scene.

Act I. Scene 10.

After dinner, on the terrace. PACO arranges two lounge chairs, facing the bay. He exits. ROBERT and MICHAEL enter.

Well, dinner was terrific.

MICHAEL

ROBERT
(Remains silent, sulking)

Don't you think?

MICHAEL

If we don't get food poisoning.

ROBERT

Robert, please, quit sulking. We're in a beautiful place. The food was great. And the people are—

MICHAEL

Crazy.

ROBERT

Eccentric.

MICHAEL

Insane.

ROBERT

Enjoy it! Life is too short! *(Waits for him to respond, then reaches out to touch him.)*
Sweetheart. I'm sorry. I'm just glad to be together. I feel like I've been gone forever.

MICHAEL
(Losing his patience)

You have. Six weeks.

ROBERT

Sweetie... Come on. Come on.

MICHAEL
(Caresses him.)

I'm such an ass.

ROBERT

You're not.

MICHAEL

ROBERT

You are so... positive, and flexible, and easy going. And I am so...

MICHAEL

Don't worry.

ROBERT

I said I'd plan this vacation, so you wouldn't have to worry about it, and... I totally fucked it up. And you're just being wonderful.

MICHAEL

Sweetie...

ROBERT

I guess that's why I love you.

(Now, a little dirty)

Among other things.

MICHAEL

Robert...

ROBERT

Hey! You never answered my question. From [before.]

MICHAEL

[Robert.]

ROBERT

[We've] got so many options.

MICHAEL

[Sweetie.]

ROBERT

[Big wedding,] everybody there...

MICHAEL

Robert.

ROBERT

Little cozy one...

MICHAEL

Stop.

ROBERT

What?

MICHAEL

Just stop.

ROBERT
I'm sorry. I'm getting way ahead. I know. I do that.

MICHAEL
I can't—

ROBERT
What?

MICHAEL
I don't... I just don't...

ROBERT
You don't what?

MICHAEL
I don't—I don't...

ROBERT
What? You don't what?

MICHAEL
I don't want to—Please.

ROBERT
You don't want to marry me?

MICHAEL
No...

ROBERT
At all.

MICHAEL
It's just... it's not...

ROBERT
Okay. Alright. You don't want to get married. Alright. Wow.

MICHAEL
It's not that. [It's just—]

ROBERT
[What] then?

Pause.

MICHAEL
I had an affair.

ROBERT
You... What?

MICHAEL
While I was in San Diego. Teaching. I—I had an affair.

ROBERT
Oh. *(Beat.)* Oh.

MICHAEL
I had to tell you.

ROBERT
(Stunned, barely hearing this.)
Uh, huh.

MICHAEL
It was nothing. I mean, just—you know—nothing. A weekend.

ROBERT
A weekend.

MICHAEL
That was it. The end.

ROBERT
Right. *(Beat.)* Who was he?

MICHAEL
Oh... Nobody.

ROBERT
Nobody.

MICHAEL
A student.

ROBERT
A student?

MICHAEL
One of my law students. Yeah.

ROBERT
Can't you get fired for that?

MICHAEL
Um—yes.

ROBERT
That was stupid.

Very. MICHAEL

Was he cute? ROBERT

Robert. MICHAEL

Was he? ROBERT

Yes, of course. MICHAEL

Of course? ROBERT

Of course he was cute. Why else— MICHAEL

Yes, why? ROBERT

I'm sorry. MICHAEL

Sorry. Why? ROBERT

Why? (*Nothing.*)

It wasn't—it wasn't serious. It was just... MICHAEL

What? (*Nothing.*) You're not attracted to me anymore? ROBERT

No. MICHAEL

We don't have enough sex? ROBERT

No. MICHAEL

You don't love me. ROBERT

MICHAEL
No!

ROBERT
Then, what? Mid-life crisis? I thought *I* was your mid-life crisis.

MICHAEL
Maybe. I don't know. I don't know why.

ROBERT
I think you do.

MICHAEL
Robert.

ROBERT
I have never, never cheated on you. Not once!

MICHAEL
I know that.

ROBERT
Well, this is a great piece of news. And I'm trying to propose. Christ.

MICHAEL
Uh... there's more.

ROBERT
More?

MICHAEL
Just before I came home, he, um, he told me—he sent me an email—to say he just found out he was—positive.

ROBERT
He...

MICHAEL
HIV positive. And that I better get tested.

ROBERT
Tested.

MICHAEL
Which I did just before we left, for here.

ROBERT
Tested. As a precaution. I mean—you were, you were safe, right?

MICHAEL
Well. Not completely.

ROBERT
Not “completely?”

MICHAEL
Not completely. No. No, we were not safe.

ROBERT
Why not?

MICHAEL
I thought—he said—he thought he was negative.

ROBERT
He *thought*—that is so—! That is just so—!

MICHAEL
I know.

ROBERT
(Trying very hard to control himself)
Uh, huh. And now...?

MICHAEL
So I had the test.

ROBERT
When was this?

MICHAEL
Today. This morning.

ROBERT
This *morning*?

MICHAEL
I told you had to some errands before we went to the airport, and—

ROBERT
That was your errand.

MICHAEL
Yes.

ROBERT
Getting tested for HIV.

MICHAEL
Yes, a quick test.

ROBERT
Great. And the result?

MICHAEL
Negative.

A beat while this registers.

ROBERT
Oh. Well. Whew. Okay. Good.

MICHAEL
Yeah. For now. I, uh—I need to go back. In six months. You know. To be sure. It can take up to six months to show up. You know that. So...

ROBERT
So you don't really know. One way or the other.

MICHAEL
No—not for sure. No. Not yet.

ROBERT
Oh, my God.

MICHAEL
So, obviously, I had to tell you. Right away.

ROBERT
Oh, my God.

MICHAEL
I am so, so sorry, Sweetie.

ROBERT
Uh, huh.

MICHAEL
And you're all right, of course. You're still... I mean we haven't done anything since I got back from San Diego—

ROBERT
That was just yesterday.

MICHAEL
Right. So...

ROBERT
Good thing I was so tired last night. Holy Christ.

MICHAEL

So—so you're fine. We're going to have to use condoms again.

ROBERT

(Meaning they will never have sex again.)

No.

MICHAEL

Or PreP. You could use PreP. It's just a pill, once a day--

ROBERT

I know what PreP is.

MICHAEL

At least until—At least until we're—

ROBERT

We're not doing anything again.

MICHAEL

Until we're sure.

ROBERT

Ever. We're not doing anything ever again. Ever.

MICHAEL

Robert...

ROBERT

Well. At least we won't have to get a *divorce*.

ROBERT starts to exit.

MICHAEL

Robert. Robert!

He's gone.

MICHAEL

I love you. *(Beat.)* Oh, dear God.

PACO ends scene.

End of Act I.

Act II. Scene 1.

*Later that night, on the terrace. PACO carefully places a bench at the perfect vantage point to view the rising moon. He exits.
PAULA and STEPHANIE enter.*

STEPHANIE

Oh, my God. Look at that moon! Come sit with me.

PAULA

Was this here before? This bench?

They sit, snuggle.

STEPHANIE

Oh, my. This place is just so magical. Don't you think?

PAULA

Mmmn.

STEPHANIE

The moonlight on the bay...

PAULA

La luna llena.

STEPHANIE

(Botches the pronunciation)

La luna...

PAULA

Llena. The full moon.

STEPHANIE

You'd think growing up in Texas I'd have learned more Spanish, but, no. What did I take? Mandarin. The only high school in the Metroplex with a certified Chinese instructor.

PAULA

Overachiever. At least you're putting it to good use. You and the bank.

STEPHANIE

La luna...

PAULA

Llena.

STEPHANIE

(Bungling it)

Llena.

Again. *Llena*.

PAULA

Llena.

STEPHANIE
(*Not too bad*)

Muy bien!

PAULA

Llena. La luna llena. Ohhh.... Let's move here!

STEPHANIE

PAULA
(*Amused*)

You've learned one phrase, and now you want to relocate?

STEPHANIE

It's just wonderful, don't you think?

PAULA

You want to move *here*? Where would we live?

STEPHANIE

Well, not here-here. Mexico. San Cristobal maybe, like Teresa.

PAULA

San Cristobal is nothing like here, silly. There's no beach for one thing.

STEPHANIE

I know where San Cristobal is. In the mountains, near Guatemala. I was there, remember? In the 90s. *Viva la Revolucion!* I learned that. What kind of ex-progressive lesbian do you think I am?

PAULA

Ex-progressive, or ex-lesbian?

STEPHANIE

Ha-ha.

PAULA

I'm serious.

STEPHANIE

My therapist tells me my self-identifiers are fluid.

PAULA

Uh, huh.

STEPHANIE
Well, I say that's life. We change.

PAULA
Do we? I don't think I've changed much, at least since the age of, say—

STEPHANIE
Twenty-five?

PAULA
Maybe.
(Beat. She's been waiting for this.)

What happened, Stephanie?

STEPHANIE
With what?

PAULA
With us. I never did understand, you know. What happened. Pretty abrupt.

STEPHANIE
That was my fault.

PAULA
Kind of mysterious, even.

STEPHANIE
I was so in love with you, Paula.

PAULA
Interesting way of showing it. Move across the [country...]

STEPHANIE
[I know.]

PAULA
... and marry Curtis. Curtis! I mean, what the fuck?

STEPHANIE
Preemptive strike.

PAULA
Preemptive [strike.]

STEPHANIE
[You were] 25, I was 30.

PAULA
So?

STEPHANIE

Five years. That seemed like a big difference at the time. You wanted to see the world. Europe, Asia, South America...

PAULA

Like you. I wanted to do what you had done.

STEPHANIE

I had no idea when you'd be back. Or *if* you'd come back. Or if you'd come back to *me*. I was so afraid you'd break my heart. So...

PAULA

So you married Curtis.

STEPHANIE

He was older. He was dependable.

PAULA

He was male.

STEPHANIE

He was ready to settle down.

PAULA

So *you* settled.

STEPHANIE

I loved him.

(More insistently.)

I *loved* him.

PAULA

As much as me?

STEPHANIE

Differently.

PAULA

"Differently."

STEPHANIE

I tried to explain it.

PAULA

In a letter.

STEPHANIE

Yes.

PAULA

A letter. I come back to Berkeley, so excited to see you, to tell you all my adventures, and you were gone. Vanished. I had no idea what happened. Or why. I call your house, and your mother wouldn't tell me where you were. Of course.

STEPHANIE

I tried. I tried to tell you.

PAULA

In a letter. After you were fucking married!

STEPHANIE

I tried.

PAULA

Well I didn't get it. I still don't.

STEPHANIE

I was scared.

PAULA

Scared.

STEPHANIE

I was afraid you'd leave me. I couldn't go through another Sandra.

PAULA

But you left *me*. And I'm not Sandra!

STEPHANIE

I told you. Preemptive—

PAULA

Strike. What the fuck.

STEPHANIE

I wanted... Some kind of insurance.

PAULA

Insurance? For what? Now you're divorced, my ex is filing papers, and half our lives are gone. Well that didn't work out very well, your "insurance," did it?

Silence

STEPHANIE

Why did you come down here?

PAULA

I've always wanted to see Mexico.

STEPHANIE
With me. Why?

PAULA
A whim.

STEPHANIE
Hell of a long way to come on a whim.

PAULA
Alright. To find out.

STEPHANIE
Find out what? What happened back then? Or what's going to happen now?

PAULA
Both maybe.

STEPHANIE
And? What did you find out?

PAULA
You're a selfish, son-of-a-bitch, Stephanie.

STEPHANIE
Oh.

PAULA
But I already knew that. Now I know that you were a chicken-shit, selfish, son-of-a-bitch. Who really was in love with me. That's a new wrinkle. And worth the flight. I guess.

STEPHANIE
Who is still in love with you.

PAULA
Oh... Don't.

STEPHANIE
I was the one who told Peggy to invite you, you know. To the party.

PAULA
Why didn't you just invite me yourself?

STEPHANIE
I was afraid.

PAULA
Of what?

STEPHANIE
I was afraid if I were the one, who invited you, you wouldn't come.

PAULA

What am I, six? Why would I do that?

STEPHANIE

I don't know. I was—embarrassed. About Curtis. About—leaving you. For a mistake.

PAULA

I thought you loved him. “Differently.”

STEPHANIE

Curtis was a mistake. I knew that pretty quickly.

PAULA

A pretty damn big mistake. Twenty years, Stephanie! Twenty years we could have been together.

STEPHANIE

[I—I'm sorry.]

PAULA

[You took] that from me! For a mistake! Jesus Christ! For twenty years you knew you were married to the wrong person and you never once thought to give me a call! Shit, Stephanie!

STEPHANIE

I thought [of it!]

PAULA

[Or] actually tried?

STEPHANIE

I—I...

PAULA

Yes?

STEPHANIE

I—I was...

PAULA

What? You were scared? You were too scared to call me. Is that it? Goddamn it! You think people change? Well, you definitely have not! Not one fucking bit!

PAULA gets up and starts to exit.

STEPHANIE

Paula.

PAULA

I'm going for a walk.

STEPHANIE

Paula...

PAULA

I want to take a good look at that *luna llena*.

She leaves.

PACO changes scene.

Act II. Scene 2.

PACO in a makeshift studio is photographing the milagros. He uses an impressive camera with a very large lens. The camera is stationed on a tripod. PACO positions each painting on an easel, then goes to his camera, calculates the lights, focuses, and shoots (perhaps there is lighting equipment as well). The camera is digital, and PACO uses a sophisticated computer to manipulate and process the images. ROBERT enters.

ROBERT

There you are. Why aren't you out by the bar?

PACO

Hola, chico.

ROBERT

When's the next water taxi?

PACO

La panga?

ROBERT

I need to get out of here. Now.

PACO

No puedes. You cannot leave now.

ROBERT

When then?

PACO

La mañana. What's wrong, chico?

ROBERT

Nothing. It's just—I've got to get out of here. (*very slowly and distinctly*) What time does the first water taxi arrive in the morning?

PACO

A las diez—las diez y media—once...

ROBERT

Christ.

PACO

But usually at ten. You want to leave?

Very much.

ROBERT

That is too bad.

PACO

*PACO goes back to work photographing the milagros.
ROBERT watches him.*

This is quite a set up.

ROBERT

Gracias.

PACO

In a place with no Internet.

ROBERT

Oh, there is Internet.

PACO

What? You said—

ROBERT

Of course there is Internet.

PACO

You distinctly said—

ROBERT

PACO grins innocently.

ROBERT

Never mind. *(Beat.)* So who paid for all this?

PACO

Oberlin. Why?

ROBERT

Thought so.

PACO

It's for the book.

ROBERT

And what else? Does he pay for?

PACO ignores the insult. He takes a photo, removes the milagro from the easel and positions another.

Se llama Roberto, no? PACO

Robert. ROBERT

Beto? For short? PACO

Robert. ROBERT

But you are Mexican. PACO

American. My parents were Mexican. ROBERT

Were? PACO

They're American citizens now. Why do you ask? ROBERT

Why do you ask where I get my equipment? PACO

Curious. ROBERT

Your boyfriend is a gringo. PACO

So is yours. ROBERT

Oberlin is not my boyfriend. PACO

No judgments. Even if he is a priest. ROBERT

He's my *patron*. That's "patron" in English, no? PACO

More like "boss." Or "master" even. ROBERT

I prefer patron. *Patron*. PACO

ROBERT
Your English is pretty good.

PACO
So is your Spanish. I graduated from *la Universidad de Guanajuato*.

ROBERT
Stanford.

PACO
Felicidades.

PACO shoots. Removes the milagro and positions another.

ROBERT
So what are these things?

PACO
You don't know?

ROBERT
They look like... I don't know... Mexican Grandma Moses.

PACO
Muy bien. That's close. Folk art. *Milagros.*

ROBERT
Miracles.

PACO
Correcto. Los milagros de la gente.

ROBERT
You don't believe this stuff.

PACO
Many people do. *Mi abuelita, por ejemplo.*

ROBERT
Your grandmother. Well, sure.

PACO
And Oberlin. He believes.

ROBERT
Oberlin? Really?

PACO
*Pues...*He wants to. But then he's a priest. He likes to believe.

And you? ROBERT

I like to take photos. PACO

He shoots. Replaces one milagro with another.

That's an awful lot of painted metal and wood you've got here. ROBERT

This is real Mexican art, *Beto. El arte del pueblo.* Your people. *Y su fe.* PACO

Their faith. ROBERT

En los santos. En Dios. PACO

ROBERT picks one up.

What's this? An angel slaying a dragon? That's faith? ROBERT

It is San Miguel. PACO

San—Miguel. ROBERT

St. Michael. PACO

I can translate "Miguel." ROBERT

PACO
Look at the painting, *chico*. The *campesino*, the farmer here, is clearing brush and comes across a poisonous snake. He has dropped his machete and calls out to San Miguel to save him. Just then, his little boy runs to the machete, which is far too big for him, but he manages to pick it up and kill the snake. So in the painting, the *campesino* gives thanks to San Miguel for giving strength to his little son to kill the *serpiente* and save him.

Why doesn't he just thank his son? ROBERT

PACO
Because it was a miracle that such a small boy could kill such a large snake. It took the power of San Miguel.

ROBERT

I'm American. We don't believe in miracles.

PACO

Yes, you do.

ROBERT

No.

PACO

Yes, you do. You believe, *por ejemplo*, in the miracle of *la ciencia*.

ROBERT

Science is not a—

PACO

Y la democracia.

ROBERT

Well... Maybe not so much these days.

PACO

Y la bolsa.

ROBERT

Wall Street. Not any more.

PACO

I bet you own stocks, no?

ROBERT

Some.

PACO

And you do not believe in the miracle of the markets, *Beto*? Of *el capitalismo*? The “unseen hand,” no? It knows all.

ROBERT

After the latest crisis I don't believe in anything.

PACO

Here in Mexico, in every *crisis*, *los santos* perform *milagros*, and the people make these paintings to say thank you for their prayers. *Eso es la diferencia entre tu pais y el mio.*

ROBERT

This is my country, too. My grandmother lives in Guadalajara.

PACO

No, *chico*. I was wrong. You are not Mexican, you are American. Definitely American.

PACO shoots. Removes the milagro and positions another.

PACO

Here is proof.

He holds up the milagro of San Miguel. PACO goes back to work.

PACO changes scene.

Act II. Scene 3.

*TERESA works in the kitchen, cleaning fish.
OBERLIN enters, looking for her.*

Can I help? OBERLIN

You can wash the dishes TERESA

What are you doing? OBERLIN

Cleaning fish for tomorrow. You will be safer washing dishes. TERESA

Dinner was magnificent. Miraculous. OBERLIN

You are flattering. TERESA

Not at all. OBERLIN

I know what you want. I am making no promises. TERESA

They work in silence.

You weren't serious about the *alcalde*. OBERLIN

Whatever it takes. TERESA

I know you. OBERLIN

He is not a bad-looking man. It could be romance, you know. Ever think of that? What about you and Paco? TERESA

What about him? OBERLIN

Oberlin.

TERESA

OBERLIN

There's nothing [going on—]

TERESA

[I don't need] to know. I gave up long ago trying to keep track, much less concern myself over [your—]

OBERLIN

[Don't get] self-righteous with me, Teresa. There's more to your revolutionary fervor than politics. Always has been. Even 25 years ago, when we first got to Mexico, it wasn't two weeks [before—]

TERESA

[You will] never let that go!

OBERLIN

Our own apartment!

TERESA

Mi cuerpo, Oberlin! My body!

OBERLIN

Yours—and half the Zapatista Liberation Army.

TERESA

I can get on that panga in the morning, you know, and head back to Chiapas *inmediatamente*, leaving you with your—

OBERLIN

Except I need you.

TERESA

You need a cook.

OBERLIN

I need *you*. I always have.

TERESA

Oh, Oberlin... Why does that still work on me? (*Beat.*) Hand me those onions.

He does. She chops onions, he continues to dry dishes.

TERESA

So, I have been doing some math. In my head.

OBERLIN

The income projections work, Teresa, I can show you.

TERESA

Let's just say they do. For argument's sake. So, the resort is up and running, full of happy, wealthy, liberal gringos indulging in a back-to-nature get-away. We're all making fifty thousand pesos a month. In profits. You, Jack, and me. But you have already sold the *milagros*, *no?* long before that.

OBERLIN

If I find the right collector.

TERESA

You had better, or your vestry will put you behind bars.

OBERLIN

I've got some ideas.

TERESA

So, by then, you have paid back the church.

OBERLIN

Of course.

TERESA

And you have published the book.

OBERLIN

We've already got a commitment.

TERESA

And then you are doing what? You are here running the resort?

OBERLIN

No, Paco's running the resort. Every young artist needs a day job. And we'll set him up with a beautiful studio.

TERESA

And you? Where are you?

OBERLIN

I'm back in San Miguel.

TERESA

Behind your pulpit?

OBERLIN

Of course! That's my calling.

TERESA

Of course. So what do you need the money for? They're not paying you enough these days in San Miguel? The wealthiest parish in the country? What is it for?

OBERLIN

The money?

TERESA

Yes, Oberlin, the fifty thousand pesos a month your projections are promising. What do you need it for?

OBERLIN

The fifty thousand?

TERESA

It is not greed. That is not your vice. One thing I will say about you: you have never been motivated by money. Not for yourself, *por lo menos*. So, why? Why the fifty thousand?

OBERLIN

Well, we have to pay Paco, of course. And your cooks. The gardeners.

TERESA

Those are operating costs, my capitalist. I am talking about our alleged profits.

OBERLIN

The profits.

TERESA

Yes. Why do you care so much about this place? I am certain Jack could find someone else to run a hotel. Why not simply hide out, write your book, sell the milagros, give the church back its money, and return to San Miguel? Just as you are planning. Why go to all the trouble to resurrect this decrepit resort?

OBERLIN is silent, evasive.

OBERLIN

What else could I be doing right now?

TERESA

Oberlin.

OBERLIN

That wouldn't be in your way? Any chopping? I think I can be safely trusted to chop.

TERESA

Oberlin. Tell me. The money. Your share. What is it for?

OBERLIN does not answer.

TERESA

Oberlin, answer me, or I swear I will stop right now and get on that *panga* first thing in the morning.

OBERLIN

You.

What about me? TERESA

The money. OBERLIN

I don't [understand.] TERESA

[It's for] you. For the children. OBERLIN

The children? TERESA

My share. It's for your children in Chiapas. OBERLIN

The children. You mean you're—you're giving me your... TERESA

Those children need you, Teresa. OBERLIN

Oh, Oberlin. TERESA
(Becoming emotional)

They need you, my dear. And so... OBERLIN

Oberlin... TERESA

TERESA quickly returns to chopping onions. OBERLIN observes her and becomes concerned.

Teresa? Are you...? OBERLIN

Go away! TERESA

Are you alright? You're crying. OBERLIN

There are tears.

The onions! TERESA

Teresa?
 OBERLIN

Go. Go away! Thank you for your help!
 TERESA

OBERLIN exits quietly. TERESA keeps working as she wipes her eyes. After a moment, STEPHANIE enters, searching for something. She bumps into TERESA, who is bending over, pulling out cooking utensils.

Oh, I'm so sorry! I didn't see you there.
 STEPHANIE

Can I help you?
 TERESA
(Surprised and annoyed)

Oh, I was just—
 STEPHANIE

Do you need something?
 TERESA

I, uh—I was just wondering if you might have a, a little more...

Yes?
 TERESA

Tequila. I didn't see Paco out by the bar.
 STEPHANIE

Tequila?
 TERESA

Yes, a bit. If that's alright. Just a plain tequila is fine.
 STEPHANIE

TERESA finds the bottle, pours a hearty tumbler full, finds lime and salt, and hands all this to STEPHANIE.

Here you go.
 TERESA

Oh, that's, uh. That's plenty. Thanks.
 STEPHANIE

TERESA pours a shot for herself, gulps it, then returns to work. STEPHANIE watches her.

STEPHANIE

What are you making?

TERESA

Lunch.

STEPHANIE

Lunch. Already?

TERESA

It is ceviche. Paco caught some whitefish this afternoon, along with the shrimp. It needs to marinate overnight.

STEPHANIE

It looks like it's still raw.

TERESA

It is. The lime juice cooks it. The acids break down the proteins in the same way heat would. In the morning the flesh will be white, like cooked fish, not translucent, like this. Don't be nervous.

STEPHANIE

I don't cook.

TERESA

That's too bad.

STEPHANIE

My mother never taught me. And I was definitely not going to take Home Ec.

TERESA

Too feminine?

STEPHANIE

Too Betty Crocker. In Texas they were teaching girls to make Frito pie. I think they still are. My ex-husband always did the cooking. Steaks mainly. And we went out—a lot. I regret it now. Not learning.

TERESA

You could learn anytime.

STEPHANIE

It's not—very inspiring to cook for one person.

TERESA

Perhaps. But then there is no pressure. Try cooking for thousands.

STEPHANIE

I am so impressed by what you do. In San Cristobal. Really in awe.

TERESA

There's nothing romantic about cooking rice and beans.

STEPHANIE

Well, I think it's heroic, actually.

TERESA

Heroic? Definitely not.

STEPHANIE

I mean, considering what you could be doing—an accomplished chef... You know.

TERESA

Making lots of money, you mean.

STEPHANIE

Well, and—renown.

TERESA

Famous for cooking for people like you, instead of poor kids in Chiapas.

STEPHANIE

It's noble, what you're doing.

TERESA

Noble! It's drudgery. Hot, boring but absolutely necessary work. Not noble. Not heroic.

TERESA turns her attention to preparing the ceviche.

STEPHANIE

I wish I had that. That sense of purpose you have. Of being needed.

TERESA

Then *be* needed. Do something necessary. I am sorry but that kind of whining makes me angry. You are a banker, right? Isn't that necessary? People need banks. We could use some banks in Chiapas.

STEPHANIE

Oh, I guess. Theoretically. I don't deal with people, though. I deal with projects. International deals. Mostly with the Chinese lately.

TERESA

Don't the Chinese people use banks?

STEPHANIE

I don't see the Chinese *people*, I see execs. And lawyers. Chinese lawyers. It's all very... It's like Monopoly. It's a game.

TERESA

Except it is real. A very real game, dealing with billions of dollars, and changing the face of the planet.

STEPHANIE

Yes, I suppose. But it doesn't feel real.

TERESA

Oh, I can tell you it is real in Chiapas. There are no banks there. Not for the poor. No money to start clinics. Or farms. *Nada*. Nothing that is not rigged to keep the people in debt forever, up to their eyeballs in interest, and never actually owning what they— Don't get me started. *(Still angry, and still cooking)* Hand me the cilantro.

STEPHANIE

The...

TERESA

The cilantro. You are from Texas and you don't know cilantro?

STEPHANIE

I don't cook. Really. At all.

TERESA

Over there. Looks like parsley.

STEPHANIE gets the cilantro, brings it to TERESA.

STEPHANIE

This is it?

TERESA

That is it. I will tell you how you could be useful. Why don't you juice the limes?

STEPHANIE

Limes I can identify. They go in Margaritas.

TERESA

Fantastico. Here is the juicer.

(She demonstrates the following.)

Cut them in half, put them in here, and squeeze.

Juice flows into a bowl.

STEPHANIE

Wow. They're so juicy.

TERESA

Yes, not like the fat, dry, rind-y things you get in the States. Now. I am going to need two liters.

STEPHANIE

Two *liters*? From these?

Two liters. Go. Make yourself useful.

TERESA

PACO changes scene.

Act II. Scene 4.

MICHAEL and PAULA, alone, on the terrace.

PAULA

You'd have a normal life-expectancy, you know.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry?

PAULA

Even if... You're positive. With treatment. You'd have a normal life-expectancy. Most men your age do.

MICHAEL

Really? That's, um—Really.

PAULA

Really.

MICHAEL

Thank you. *(Beat.)* Well, I'm glad I told you.

PAULA

I'm a doctor.

MICHAEL is silent, troubled.

PAULA

You're still worried. About Robert. That you'll infect him.

MICHAEL

I can't imagine... I can't even imagine what that...

PAULA

You'd have to be careful. Robert could use PreP. You know. And your meds—if you need them—they help reduce the chances of transmission as well. Together, it's not 100%, but almost.

MICHAEL is worried.

MICHAEL

There's no way I can get married now.

PAULA

There are lots of positive and negative couples. You must know that.

MICHAEL

How can he trust me? I just endangered my life—and Robert's. For what? I can't even trust myself.

PAULA

Infidelity is not exactly uncommon, you know.

MICHAEL

It is for Robert.

PAULA

Or unforgivable.

MICHAEL

Even though I put his life at risk?

PAULA

But you haven't, have you? You've told him and now you can take precautions. You want my diagnosis? You've got two problems. One: your fear of infecting Robert. Which you can mitigate. Two: your ability—or your willingness—to forgive yourself.

MICHAEL

What about Robert? Doesn't he need to forgive me too?

PAULA

You first. Just like on a plane: "First secure the mask over your own face, then assist others."

MICHAEL

Thank you, doc. You should be a shrink.

PAULA

A shrink?

MICHAEL

Or a rabbi. Or a priest, maybe.

PACO changes scene.

Act II. Scene 5.

PACO's studio. Scene picks up from before. ROBERT watches PACO work.

So, what makes these so special?

ROBERT

Their quality.

PACO
(This should be obvious)

Are they old?

ROBERT
(A beat while he looks more closely at them)

Some. This one has a hundred years, maybe more. The *milagros* of wood are older. Two hundred years, maybe. These, here are new. Five years they have, *quizas*.

PACO

So, people still do this.

ROBERT

Claro que si.

PACO

And they're valuable?

ROBERT

Oh, *si, chico*. Each one, *mas o menos*, but together—

PACO

A fortune.

ROBERT

Together—*son el alma de Mexico*.

PACO

The soul of Mexico.

ROBERT

This is what I wanted Oberlin to save.

PACO

You wanted...?

ROBERT

I showed Oberlin the collection. Told him they must be saved. *El alma de Mexico*.

PACO

Right...

ROBERT
(Not convinced)

And the book will—

PACO

Make you a lot of money.

ROBERT

Quizas.

PACO

So what really motivates you? The *alma* of Mexico, or the money?

ROBERT

El arte.

PACO

El arte. Of course. And not the money?

ROBERT

Los dos.

PACO

Both.

ROBERT

Claro. We have bodies and we have souls, no? *Necesitamos los dos.* We need both, yes? And *corazones*, hearts also, so... *el amor.*

PACO

El amor. The whole banana.

ROBERT

Y... el sexo tambien. No?

PACO

*PACO and ROBERT lock eyes in tension and attraction.
A tense pause.*

Michael had an affair. He just told me.

ROBERT

Si, lo se.

PACO

You know?

ROBERT

PACO

From his eyes. *Soy artista*. I see these things.

ROBERT

He said he might be positive. HIV positive. He doesn't know. He was tested just before we left, and it was negative. But... but he has to go back in six months to be sure.

PACO

And you are negative.

ROBERT

Yes. Yes, of course.

PACO

Lo siento, Beto.

ROBERT

(Becoming emotional)

I never. Never! Not even once. Cheated on him. He says this was the first, the only one, but... You know what the funny thing is? I wanted to get married. Really married. Legally. You know. That's why we came here.

PACO

To get married? You came here?

ROBERT

To propose. Stupid, huh?

PACO

And now you are unsure?

ROBERT

"Unsure?" Oh, no, I'm sure. Very sure. We're done. Why am I telling you this?

PACO

Because you must tell someone.

ROBERT

I suppose.

PACO

Y quieres venganza. You want revenge, no? On Michael.

ROBERT

Revenge.

PACO

You want to have sex with me.

ROBERT

What?

Do you not? PACO

Don't flatter yourself. are ROBERT

Okay... PACO

Beat. PACO takes another photo. ROBERT watches him.

So Oberlin isn't your—you're not— ROBERT

Amantes? No. PACO

But you are... I mean, you *are* gay. ROBERT

A veces. PACO

Sometimes? (*Beat.*) So you think I want to have sex with you to get back at Michael. ROBERT

Of course. This is natural, no? And because... *me quieres.* PACO

PACO takes another photo. Positions another milagro.

I want you. Uh, huh. You really are... I don't know. ROBERT

Why is this so strange to say? I want you. PACO

You do? ROBERT

Claro que si, Beto. PACO

Robert. ROBERT

Beto. This is obvious, no? PACO

Well, I thought...

ROBERT

Yes?

PACO

Yes.

ROBERT

ROBERT takes his shirt off.

What are you doing?

PACO

I'm hot.

ROBERT

PACO regards him for a moment. There are palpable sparks.

I am too.

PACO

PACO whisks off his shirt. They look at each other.

Now I feel weird.

ROBERT

Why? We could be swimming dressed *asi*.

PACO

True. But we are not. Swimming.

ROBERT

Podemos.

PACO

What?

ROBERT

Swim.

PACO

Now?

ROBERT

PACO

You have never been swimming at night? In the moonlight?

ROBERT

The ocean sort of scares me. When I can't see.

PACO

Oh, you can see. *Hay luces mágicas en la bahía.*

ROBERT

Magic lights?

PACO

At night, when you swim, the water glows. Your whole body is covered with tiny, twinkling stars.

ROBERT

Really? Wow.

PACO

It is best *desnudo*.

ROBERT

Desnu—

PACO

Or perhaps you are afraid to see the stars in the sea?

ROBERT

No, I— (*Beat. Decides.*) Let's go! *Vamonos!*

PACO changes scene.

Act II. Scene 6.

MICHAEL and PAULA on the terrace. The scene continues from before.

PAULA

A priest?

MICHAEL

I could use some absolution. I'm Jewish, but I understand they do that sort of thing.

PAULA

Hmm. I think you need to absolve yourself. But I can't help you. I'm not a big believer.

MICHAEL

Me neither.

PAULA

Sometimes I wish I were. Some divine judgment would be nice right about now.

MICHAEL

Divine judgment?

PAULA

Against a thief I know. A woman who stole twenty years from me. Twenty years of a life we could have had together. A woman who left me for a man she never loved—or rather, a man she loved differently—a mistake—because she was afraid I'd break her heart.

MICHAEL

Stephanie. And you never loved anyone else?

PAULA

I did, no, I did. Nicki. We're getting divorced now, but... But, you know, not the same as Stephanie. Maybe because we were so young when we met, but... Stephanie was this in-your-face, progressive white chick, this totally out, totally unapologetic lesbian, from *Texas*, and I was... this military brat—my father was an officer—and here I am in Berkeley, this buttoned-down, Black, Catholic girl from New England.

MICHAEL

You don't seem so buttoned-down.

PAULA

Not now maybe, but back then... Anyway, we were quite a couple!

MICHAEL

I can imagine.

PAULA

So, you see? That—magic—she took that from me. That's grand larceny, don't you think? What's your verdict, professor? Legally speaking.

MICHAEL
I'd say the verdict's already in. She's guilty. Clearly.

PAULA
Thank you. Now what?

MICHAEL
Well... She can either be punished... or pardoned.

PAULA
I like the punished.

MICHAEL
It has its appeal. But then, who, really, are you punishing?

PAULA
Very clever.

MICHAEL
Or there's probation.

PAULA
Probation.

MICHAEL
You could always suspend punishment. Take a chance. Watch and see. A judge has that discretion. People change.

PAULA
Do they? Essentially?

MICHAEL
Well, that's the premise of our entire penal system. And religion, from what I gather.

PAULA
I don't know...

MICHAEL
You used to be buttoned-down.

PAULA
Hmn. Pardon, probation, or punishment.

MICHAEL interrupts noticing something in the bay.

MICHAEL
What the—I'm sorry—What's that?

PAULA
What's...?

MICHAEL

In the bay. It's—glowing.

PAULA

Looks like a huge moon in the water.

MICHAEL

It's... people swimming. They're—shimmering.

(Recognizing the figures, he gets up.)

Excuse me.

He exits. PAULA remains looking at the bay. We see PACO and ROBERT swimming naked in a pool of sparkling lights. They frolic sensually. Then we hear a loud CRY from OFF:

STEPHANIE

(Offstage)

Aahhh!! Ow, ow, ow! Oh, my God!

TERESA

(Offstage)

I told you not to touch your eyes while you're dicing the chilies!

STEPHANIE

(Offstage)

My eyes! My eyes!

PAULA

Stephanie?

She exits.

PACO changes scene.

Act II. Scene 7.

STEPHANIE and TERESA in the kitchen. STEPHANIE cries in pain. TERESA wets a washcloth.

Here, use this.

TERESA

It's like fire.

STEPHANIE

Wash your hands with soap and keep rinsing your eyes.

TERESA

I can't even open them. Oh, my God it hurts. Where's some water? Help me!

STEPHANIE

Here. Come with me.

TERESA

TERESA leads her to the sink or water basin and helps her wash her hands and rinse her eyes. The moment is intimate, motherly.

You will be fine. This happens to all of us, even me. I forget, and rub my eyes, and *Dios mio!*

TERESA

TERESA continues assisting STEPHANIE, who begins to sob.

Are you alright? How much did you get in there?

TERESA

I'm alright, I'm alright. I'm fine.

STEPHANIE
(Between sobs)

You are not alright. You are crying like a baby.

TERESA

I know that!

STEPHANIE

Let me look at your eyes. Face me. Come on. Open them up.

TERESA

They're alright.

STEPHANIE

Let me look!

TERESA

STEPHANIE complies as best she can, but continues to weep.

They are very red.

TERESA

STEPHANIE

It's not—My eyes are fine. Really. They're fine now.

TERESA hands her freshly rinsed washcloth.

Keep wiping them with this.

TERESA

STEPHANIE
(Between tears)

Thank you.

STEPHANIE continues to cry.

Madre de Dios!

TERESA

STEPHANIE

I'm sorry. I feel—I feel like a fool.

TERESA

It is a common mistake.

STEPHANIE

Right.

Again she cries.

TERESA

Are you sure you are alright?

STEPHANIE

It's not the chilies. It's not that. It's, um—Oh, I shouldn't be telling you this.

PAULA appears and watches, unseen by TERESA and STEPHANIE.

TERESA

Tell me what?

PAULA hides to listen.

STEPHANIE

(Pulling herself together)

Oh. Whew. Wow. I'm sorry. That was—whoa. Man. I don't usually do things like that. Where's my tequila?

Finds her tequila and takes a deep swallow.

TERESA

You should not be telling me what?

STEPHANIE

Oh, um... you wouldn't be interested.

TERESA

We are chopping onions and chilies, there is not much else attracting my attention. You better take the onions. I will chop the chilies.

They chop as they talk.

STEPHANIE

It's just—I don't know—it seems so small compared with the issues you're usually dealing with. Feeding five thousand kids a day?

TERESA

You make financial decisions affecting millions of people. But right now we are preparing lunch for seven. Life is not always lived on the macro level. In fact, it almost never is. Tell me what?

STEPHANIE

(After a beat.)

Paula.

TERESA

What about her?

STEPHANIE

She can't forgive me.

TERESA

For what?

STEPHANIE

For leaving her.

TERESA

Leaving her?

STEPHANIE

We're not really a couple.

TERESA

You seem pretty coupled to me.

STEPHANIE

We were girlfriends twenty years ago. But I freaked out. I just took off for Dallas while Paula was in Europe, and married Curtis. We haven't seen each other since. Until yesterday.

TERESA

That must have been quite a reunion.

STEPHANIE

It was. Kinda... Fireworks all over again.

TERESA

After twenty years.

STEPHANIE

Yeah.

(With relish.)

Yeah. Pent up energy, I guess. And I was kinda thinking... hoping... that...

TERESA

That you two could reunite.

STEPHANIE

Yeah. Maybe not very realistic, but...

TERESA

Romantic.

STEPHANIE

Yes. But now... I don't think Paula can forgive me. She has no idea how hard it was. Oh, my God. It was like torture, at first, after I married Curtis. I'd think about Paula and... Oh, I can't tell you. It was awful. And then, after a while—like years—I don't know. I didn't forget, not at all. But it was bearable, you know? I was doing other things.

TERESA

Going to China.

STEPHANIE

And Curtis and I weren't fighting. We never fought. We were just...alone together. Even when we were with each other, in the same room, I felt—alone. Lonely. I'd go on a trip—Beijing, or Shanghai, someplace, I'd be there in my hotel room, alone, and I'd think about... you know... about Paula. And...

TERESA

Another life.

STEPHANIE

That we could have had—if we'd stayed together, yeah. And... oh, boy...

PAULA, still unseen, takes this in.

TERESA

It is not easy to stop loving people. In fact I don't think we ever do. Even if that love feels more like anger, or hate, it is alive.

STEPHANIE

Why did you leave Oberlin?

TERESA

I did not—leave him exactly—I went somewhere else.

STEPHANIE

To Chiapas. To San Cristobal.

TERESA

To where I felt needed.

There is a CRASH as PAULA, wanting to leave, stumbles into something.

PAULA

Ow! Shit! Ow!

STEPHANIE

Paula?

PAULA

Ow! Ow! Damn it!

TERESA

Another casualty?

PAULA

My fucking foot!

TERESA goes to her.

TERESA

Let me look.

PAULA

I'm the doctor.

TERESA

Let me look.

STEPHANIE

She works wonders.

PAULA lifts her foot, in a sandal; TERESA examines it.

STEPHANIE
Are you alright?

PAULA
I'm fine.

TERESA
You are bleeding. Let me find a bandage.

She searches the kitchen.

STEPHANIE
How long have you been here, by the way?

PAULA
A while. You were crying. I thought something had happened.

STEPHANIE
So, you heard.

PAULA
All those years you were with Curtis, you were...

STEPHANIE
Thinking about you.

PAULA
Holy shit, Stephanie.

STEPHANIE
All the time.

PAULA
I don't know if that makes things better or worse.

TERESA has found nothing, comes back to them.

TERESA
No first aid kit! Can you believe that? A kitchen with no first-aid kit! Here, use this rag. It is clean at least. Let's see if Oberlin has thought to pack a bandage somewhere in this *pinche* fantasyland.

TERESA and STEPHANIE help PAULA to hobble out, supporting her as they go.

PACO changes scene.

Act II. Scene 8.

PACO's studio. OBERLIN stands before one of the milagros. He tries to pray. Perhaps he kneels or crosses himself.

OBERLIN

Agnus dei, Lamb of God... O Lamb of God... O Lamb... (Giving up) Oh, Christ! Why can't I do this? (He reads from the milagro.) Gracias a ti, Cordero de Dios, llena de misericordia, por traerme mi querida esposa, Teresa. For bringing to me my dear wife—

PACO and ROBERT burst in, laughing and playing. They are dripping wet, wearing only towels. They do not see OBERLIN who watches them.

ROBERT

Oh, my God! I'm still glowing!

PACO

You are not.

ROBERT

I am. Look!

PACO

I don't see it.

ROBERT

Yes. Sparkling. See?

PACO

Where?

ROBERT

All over. Look!

ROBERT drops his towel and shows his body.

PACO

Hmn. Pretty shiny.

ROBERT

Yes?

PACO

Muy bonito.

ROBERT

How about you? Are you shining?

You tell me.

PACO

PACO drops his towel as well.

You definitely are. *Me gusta!*

ROBERT

OBERLIN suddenly emerges.

Shining like the moon. Both of you.

OBERLIN

The two immediately cover up.

Oberlin!

ROBERT

OBERLIN

Como la luna llena. How was your swim? Paco showed you the lights, I see? Bioluminescence. Magical, isn't it? It's plankton, you know. Photo-kinetic plankton. You see it here and a couple of other spots along the coast.

Amazing.

ROBERT

One of God's little miracles.

OBERLIN

(To PACO)

How is the work coming along?

Almost half of them finished.

PACO

Yes, he was showing me earlier. Beautiful. Really.

ROBERT

Wonderful. Where are your clothes?

OBERLIN

ROBERT and PACO realize they have left their clothes on the beach.

Oh, my God. The beach.

ROBERT

You might want to—

OBERLIN

MICHAEL enters. He holds ROBERT's and PACO's clothing.

Robert?
MICHAEL

Too late.
OBERLIN

Robert?
MICHAEL

We were just—swimming.
ROBERT

Paco was showing Robert the bioluminescence in the bay.
OBERLIN

Yes, we saw.
MICHAEL

It was amazing.
ROBERT

I bet.
MICHAEL

He drops the clothes on the ground.

Perhaps we should leave you two...
OBERLIN

The WOMEN enter. TERESA and STEPHANIE support PAULA.

Oberlin? Oberlin! We need a bandage here!
TERESA

A bandage?
OBERLIN

Why do you not have a first-aid kit in the kitchen? Every kitchen needs—
TERESA

What happened?
OBERLIN

Just a little gauze or something will be fine.
PAULA

OBERLIN

No, no. Bandages, we've got bandages.

He goes to get one. STEPHANIE helps PAULA sit down. TERESA notices PACO and ROBERT.

TERESA

You two are dressed—rather casually.

PACO

We went for a swim.

ROBERT

To see the bioluminescence.

TERESA

I see.

OBERLIN returns with a bandage.

OBERLIN

Here we are...

TERESA takes it and applies the bandage to PAULA's foot.

OBERLIN

(Diverting the subject)

Ladies, I haven't shown you two the milagros, have I? Here they are. The entire collection.

TERESA

(Finished)

How is that?

PAULA gets up.

PAULA

I think I'm good.

OBERLIN

Oh, excellent. Then, come take a look. Teresa, you come along, too. Paco, perhaps you'd like to... change your attire?

PAULA and STEPHANIE follow OBERLIN. TERESA tags along, observing the tour. PACO whispers to ROBERT.

PACO

And chico? You are not done.

Done?

ROBERT

No estas acabado con Miguel.

PACO

PACO removes himself to a secluded place to get dressed. ROBERT dresses, alone now with MICHAEL.

MICHAEL

How was the water?

ROBERT

Nothing happened.

MICHAEL

We could see you from the terrace.

ROBERT

Really, nothing happened. We were [swimming.]

MICHAEL

[Naked.] Yes, I saw.

PACO
(From a ways off)

Desnudo!

ROBERT

Swimming. That's it.

MICHAEL

Look. Robert. I don't have any stones to throw. I'm living in a house of very thin glass right now.

ROBERT

Really, Michael—

MICHAEL

It's understandable. You were angry.

ROBERT

I'm still angry.

MICHAEL

All the more understandable. I know you have never, ever—before.

ROBERT

I still haven't!

It doesn't matter.

MICHAEL

It *does* matter!

ROBERT

MICHAEL
Something happened. You were frolicking naked with an extremely handsome young man, and got so caught up in whatever you were doing you forgot your clothes on the beach.

ROBERT
 Michael.

MICHAEL
 Am I right?

ROBERT
 We were swimming—yes, naked—in the bay. Was it exciting? Yes. Was it the same as having sex—unprotected sex—fucking somebody else? More than once. Right? A weekend, you said. More than once. Is it the same? No! So don't try to assuage your guilt, professor, by thinking that somehow we're even. We're not!

PAULA and STEPHANIE with OBERLIN. TERESA is nearby. They are looking closely at a milagro.

STEPHANIE
 And this actually happened?

OBERLIN
 Absolutely. Yes.

TERESA
 Oberlin, why are you telling these fairy tales to them?

PAULA
 It has a date here.

OBERLIN
 The day of the miracle. When her wandering husband returned at last.

PAULA
 June 24. Your birthday.

STEPHANIE
 A hundred years ago today.

PAULA
 Midsummer.

TERESA

Oberlin, *por favor!* You cannot portray these stories as factual, please. Have some intellectual integrity. They are not real.

OBERLIN

It was very real to the woman who painted this picture, my dear. Perhaps more real than anything else in her life.

TERESA

[*Madre de Dios.*]

STEPHANIE

[And that's] what St. Anthony does? Brings back wayward husbands?

OBERLIN

And sons, daughters, keys, books, cattle, goats, whatever's lost.

PAULA

An all-purpose sort of rescue squad. That's what I remember from Catholic school.

OBERLIN

Quite right, Paula. And of course, cattle and goats are extremely valuable to the *campesinos*. Vital in fact. Aren't they, Teresa?

TERESA

Why, yes, Oberlin, food is in fact absolutely essential to the *campesinos*. And everyone else, for that matter. Finally, *me entiendas?*

STEPHANIE

I'll take it.

OBERLIN

The point is to preserve the collection. Intact.

STEPHANIE

But I need it.

Focus goes to MICHAEL and ROBERT.

ROBERT

I was ready to leave, if I could have. Tonight. Get on that panga and go home. Home. Well, that isn't going to feel the same, is it?

MICHAEL

Robert.

ROBERT

Why, Michael? Why?

MICHAEL

I don't know.

ROBERT

Why?

MICHAEL

I'm a dick. I'm a man. I'm—I've wrecked everything we had. Why? *(Doesn't know.)* Why.

PACO

Recuerdate, Beto. Recuerda nadando por las luces en la bahía.

ROBERT

What are you talking about?

PACO

Desnudo. Conmigo... Recuerda eso.

ROBERT

It's not the same. Skinny-dipping is not the same as—

PACO

Tal vez, pero... ¿Por qué?

ROBERT

Why.

PACO

Si, por qué. Y Miguel, por qué. La misma razón.

MICHAEL

What's he saying?

ROBERT

That I went swimming for the same reason that you...

MICHAEL

It's not the same. Swimming versus... It's not remotely the same.

ROBERT

No, but I can... understand.

PACO

Y puedes disculparlo.

MICHAEL

What was that?

ROBERT

Dis-culpar-te. Un-guilt-you.

Focus goes back to OBERLIN and the WOMEN.

OBERLIN

A photo. We'll have Paco give you a photo.

STEPHANIE

Fantastic!

PAULA

And who's known for handing out pardons, Padre? My Catholic schools are failing me. I need a milagro that's about wiping the slate clean.

STEPHANIE

Pardons?

PAULA

Michael says there's always three options following a guilty verdict: punishment, parole, or pardon. I need some help. With this—pardon thing. Give me whatever you've got, Oberlin.

STEPHANIE

I want you back, Paula. Like the woman in this painting.

PAULA

And what if I go back to Nicki? Or somebody else. What if I break your heart?

STEPHANIE

I'll have to pray to St. Anthony, I guess, to bring you back.

OBERLIN

It's not magical, my dear.

TERESA

Oh, my God. Thank you!

STEPHANIE

Yes, you could break my heart. But — it's worth the risk.

PAULA

You know? You're not a selfish, chicken-shit, son-of-a-bitch after all.

STEPHANIE

(Pleased)

Why, thank you.

PAULA

You *were*. But...

OBERLIN interjects and proffers a milagro.

OBERLIN

Here you are! There is this...

He shows a milagro. They look at it closely.

A sheep. In the clouds.
STEPHANIE

Agnus Dei.
OBERLIN

The Lamb of God.
PAULA

I thought you left the Church.
STEPHANIE

Some things you don't forget.
PAULA

OBERLIN
You see, the man, down here, Juan, has left his wife and his family. He moved to California, worked on a ranch, found another woman. They lived together for a while, and she leaves him. Now Juan is desperate and alone. He wants to go home, to his wife, to his family, but—

PAULA
He's been a bastard.

OBERLIN
He knows that. So he prays to *Agnus Dei*—

TERESA
He prays to a sheep.

OBERLIN
That his wife will forgive him. And she does.

STEPHANIE
Oh, my God. Look at the date. June 24. A hundred years ago. Like the other.

OBERLIN
And notice the artists' names. Juan Angel Ortega Ramirez. And...?

PAULA
Ana something.

OBERLIN
Ana Teresa Ramirez Bernal. Husband and wife.

TERESA
Oh, that is—

STEPHANIE
Unbelievable.

I am going to kill myself.

TERESA

Focus goes back to MICHAEL and ROBERT.

And what if I *am* positive?

MICHAEL

ROBERT
“For better or worse,” right? “In sickness and in health.”

MICHAEL
That’s lovely and romantic. But I’m trying to be realistic. It’s a very strange time to be getting married right now. At least until we know.

ROBERT
It’s exactly the right time. No matter what happens. It won’t be a surprise. We’ll be walking into—the future—with our eyes wide open. We’ll have to be careful. Take our meds.

MICHAEL
Can we be? That careful. Keep taking our meds. Not miss a day. For decades?

ROBERT
Are you saying—

MICHAEL
I’m saying I feel unbelievably guilty. And scared to death. And that’s why I’m saying—

PACO appears, holding his laptop, and interrupts.

PACO
Lo siento Excuse me. One moment.

ROBERT
Paco, please.

MICHAEL
It’s alright. He’s almost family now.

PACO
Mira.

On his laptop PACO shows a photo of ROBERT, naked and glowing, coming out of the water after their swim.

PACO
When you came out of the water. I thought Michael should see this.

ROBERT
(Aghast)
You took a picture of me? Naked?

MICHAEL
My God, he's... He's covered with stars.

ROBERT
Paco!

PACO
I will send it to you.

ROBERT
Don't send it. Just erase it!

MICHAEL
[It's— miraculous!]

ROBERT
[Paco!] Delete it. Now!

MICHAEL
No, I want it. It's how I want to see you. All the time.

ROBERT
Michael, I'm not some shimmering angel!

MICHAEL
To me you are.

ROBERT
[I'm—]

MICHAEL
[Even] when you're being an ass. You are.

PACO
(Hands the milagro of San Miguel to ROBERT)
Recuerda a San Miguel.

MICHAEL
What's that?

ROBERT
(Looks at the milagro, then hands it to MICHAEL)
It's you. Saint Michael.

PACO
San Miguel Arcangel.

MICHAEL
Archangel. I don't think so.

ROBERT

Saint Michael, slaying the dragon. Or in this picture, a very large snake. And you will.

MICHAEL

Robert, come on. Nobody slays this dragon—

ROBERT

Not *that*. This—thing, between us. It's poisonous.

MICHAEL

I think we have to slay that together.

PACO

I will send you the photo.

(Whispers to ROBERT)

Roberto, acuerdate, Oberlin es una cura. Si quieres una boda...

ROBERT

Oberlin could... Right here?

MICHAEL

Oberlin could what?

ROBERT

A wedding?

PACO

Porque no?

PACO changes scene.

Act II. Scene 9.

On the terrace. It is dawn. Both couples are presenting themselves to OBERLIN for a double wedding. OBERLIN wears a priestly stole. PACO is fussing with the appearance of the couples, preparing them for photos.

PACO

Stephanie, hold still. Do not play with your hair so.

STEPHANIE

I need a mirror.

PAULA

You look gorgeous.

PACO

No you do not. Not yet.

He fusses with her.

ROBERT

(To MICHAEL)

Oh, my God. Are there bags under my eyes?

MICHAEL

You're shimmering.

ROBERT

Oh, shut up. I've been up all night. I must look like—

PACO

I will fix the photo.

OBERLIN

Paco, the book.

PACO

The book?

OBERLIN

La misa.

PACO

El libro!

PACO goes to get the prayer book.

STEPHANIE

Is this even legal? I mean we when get home, will this even count?

PAULA

Oh, it definitely counts. It's just not legal.

MICHAEL

Well, it's true. We'll all have to go to the proper authorities, of course, for a—

STEPHANIE

Do over.

PACO returns with prayer book.

PACO

Aqui esta.

PACO goes to his camera.

OBERLIN

Are we ready? Then take each other hands. *(He opens the prayer book.)* Dearly beloved—*(looks about)* Oh, one moment. Teresa!

TERESA
(From off)

What?!

OBERLIN

We need you out here!

TERESA

I am making the wedding brunch! Not easy. We have almost no food. As you know! It will be a miracle if I—

OBERLIN

We need you!

TERESA

What for?

OBERLIN

As a witness. We need you out here!

TERESA

Madre de Dios!

PACO

Hold, everyone, for a moment.

*PACO again fusses with the couples for the photo.
TERESA enters wearing an apron and wiping her hands
on a washcloth.*

TERESA

I hope you all like banana pancakes. Emphasis on bananas.

OBERLIN

Teresa, if you'll stand right here, next to me...

PACO

Okay, *estamos bien*. *Listo?*

ROBERT

Ready?

OBERLIN

Dearly beloved...

OBERLIN takes TERESA's hand.

TERESA

Oberlin, what are you doing?

OBERLIN

Dearly beloved. We are gathered this morning before God and this company, to join together in holy matrimony these three couples.

TERESA

Oberlin!

OBERLIN

If anyone knows a reason that should keep these couples from being joined together, let them speak now or forever hold their peace.

TERESA

Oberlin.

OBERLIN

Teresa.

TERESA

Oberlin.

OBERLIN

My dear? You were saying?

A beat. They look deeply at each other.

TERESA

Go ahead. *Adalante.*

Michael, do you take Robert? OBERLIN

I do. MICHAEL

Robert, do you take Michael? OBERLIN

Absolutely. ROBERT

Stephanie, do you take Paula? OBERLIN

Completely. STEPHANIE

Paula, do you take Stephanie? OBERLIN

I do. PAULA

I now pronounce you— OBERLIN

Oberlin! TERESA

Teresa? OBERLIN

Oberlin? TERESA

With all my heart. OBERLIN

That is better. And mine. TERESA

You may now kiss—each other. OBERLIN

All three couples kiss.

Hold still, everybody. *Uno, dos, tres!*

PACO

FLASH!

End of scene.

Epilogue.

Milagro style images appear. PAULA, in a white doctor's coat, at a clinic in San Cristobal. STEPHANIE, beside her, distributes cash to the campesinos from her micro-bank. ROBERT presents an ad campaign for the resort. MICHAEL with OBERLIN before a Mexican judge, wins their case in court. TERESA directs a squadron of cooks in a gleaming kitchen, surrounded by hundreds of well-fed Mexican children. PACO, with his camera, appears on stage and turns the camera toward the audience.

PACO

Como milagro, no?

FLASH!

END OF PLAY