

Trace

A full-length play

Written by:

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CHARACTERS:

WARDEN -- Male, 60s, Caucasian. Texan. A heavy man. The weight of decades of alcohol, also meat, carbs, general sitting around.

ROJELIO -- Male, 30-40, Mexican. Prisoner on Death Row. Speaks truth.

HANNAH -- Female, 30, Caucasian, speaks Spanish fluently (for a white girl). Determined and defeatist at once.

DIANE -- Female, 40, African-American. Overworked lawyer/administrator for Texas Innocence Project. New mother.

MOTHER -- Female, 50s, Caucasian. Hannah's mother, but takes on different roles denoted as: MOTHER (AS BOY), MOTHER (AS HANNAH AS A YOUNG GIRL), MOTHER (AS KILLER)

ZACH -- Male, 30s, Non-white. A good, cute, nice guy you could fall in love with. He climbs mountains. Really.

EUGENIA -- Female, 50-60, Mexican, Mother of Rojelio. A woman who's endured her own pain and her children's.

Note on casting: A Latina actress who can pass as Caucasian can double as MOTHER and EUGENIA. However, neither Eugenia nor Rojelio should be played by Caucasian actors. Eugenia's doubling is only possible in one direction.

TIME: Present, and a little while ago, and 23 years ago (sort-of), and an out-of- time time.

SETTING: Mostly Texas—Fort Worth and Huntsville: Hannah's apartment, the offices of the Texas Innocence Project, the gym, the prison. Also a shack outside a landfill in Tijuana, as well as an out-of-place place. Also a toilet stall, like in a public bathroom. It's all fluid. Don't build walls. Action is continuous. Don't waste time moving scenery around. Hannah will need to walk directly from one scene into another. Or she may need to run. There's no time to waste.

A NOTE ABOUT NOTATIONS:

-- Indicates an interruption. Better to have lines spoken over each other than dead space.

... Indicates a thought that goes on but can't be articulated in that moment. Gestures are good. Unspoken communication. Fill the silence.

. Indicates a full stop. Sometimes fragments end this way. Because there's nothing more to say.

Passage
By Octavio Paz

More than air
More than water
More than lips
Light light

Your body is the trace of your body

SCENE 1

WARDEN

(Out-of-time, in the future, where everything that's about to happen has already happened.)

Out-of-place. He speaks to the heavens. Or the audience. Or someone or something else -- some indecipherable combination.)

I went looking for you today.
Knew I wouldn't find you, but I looked.
Looked under the couch.
Looked down in the basement.
Looked in the dang broom closet.
I know better than to look for you in the church. Only one less likely to be in church 'sides me is you.
Knew I wouldn't find you. I ain't no fool.
Still.
I keep thinking you might be somewhere.
What if you was there, somewhere, just waiting for someone to come looking for you, and I didn't?
Can't hardly sleep.
Can't hardly be in my own house no more. Wife screaming at me, you got to save your soul!
But I know what I know.
If we couldn't save you, how the hell we gonna save ourselves?

(Vague distant sounds of huge machinery starting up, going to work, clanks and whirs.)

WARDEN (CONT'D)

You there? (He waits.)

Martinez? (He waits.)

Rojelio?

SCENE 2

(The sound of the machinery continues. A few years ago, but also now. These people are not all in the same space together, and yet HANNAH is in the same space as each of them: ROJELIO; WARDEN; DIANE.)

ROJELIO

The old man was hanging--

HANNAH

He had hanged himself?

WARDEN

By his wrists, tied together, pulled up behind his back.

HANNAH

Like this? (She demonstrates.)

DIANE

Dead.

WARDEN

Dead.

ROJELIO

Not from hanging.

HANNAH

Starvation?

DIANE

And there was...

HANNAH

What?

ROJELIO

A cat.

HANNAH
Is that slang?

WARDEN
No, a cat. A real cat. Also hanging.

HANNAH
A cat dead from hanging?

ROJELIO
No.

DIANE
Shot.

ROJELIO
Yes.

HANNAH
With a bullet, shot? The cat had been shot?

WARDEN
Shot then hung.

DIANE
Dead from a bullet. Then hung with a noose.

HANNAH
The fuck...? Excuse me.
And you were the only suspect?

ROJELIO
You were.

DIANE
He was a picker.

HANNAH
A what?

WARDEN

Dead guy owned an apple orchard.

DIANE

He was a picker. The suspect.

HANNAH

A migrant?

WARDEN

Mexican.

DIANE

Illegal.

HANNAH

Any family here?

ROJELIO

Your mother.

HANNAH

What?

DIANE

His mother is in Mexico. We don't have information about anyone besides.

HANNAH

And that was their only lead?

WARDEN

They need any others?

SCENE 3

(Continuous only for the Warden and Hannah.
Machinery stops.)

WARDEN

Ms. Lumens?

Sir. HANNAH

This your job? WARDEN

I'm investigating. HANNAH

Nine to five. WARDEN

Sir? Oh. Six, actually. Nine to six. HANNAH

Long day. WARDEN

It doesn't really end -- HANNAH

Serious work. WARDEN

Yes. HANNAH

Getting a man out of death's waiting room. WARDEN

I take it seriously. HANNAH

Long time, we used to take bets. WARDEN

Sir? HANNAH

WARDEN

How long they'd last.

HANNAH

The prisoners? On Death Row?

WARDEN

Ain't got time for *that* kinda bet. Some of these men, they'll outlive me.

No.

How long they'd last in the chair. Then, for a while, it was in the chamber.

Now, on the table.

Some of them go quick. Not the ones you expect.

Others hang on. Lightning bolts going through them and they still alive.

HANNAH

That was before.

WARDEN

Right you is. We don't electrify them no more. Least, not in this state.

We don't bet on them no more neither. Leastways I don't.

Bet on a man's life.

Can't collect on that money, not in good conscience.

Served a different purpose. The betting.

Kept me. Apart. From them.

HANNAH

It must be hard--

WARDEN

He's my friend. This man.

HANNAH

Martinez?

WARDEN

Rojelio.

Used to call him Martinez. Now I call him Rojelio.

HANNAH

Warden. Sir. If there's anything you can tell me that would help--

WARDEN

Takes a long time to call a man a friend. Years. Know him better than I know my own wife.

HANNAH

I'm doing everything I can to get him--

WARDEN

You got a boyfriend?

HANNAH

Excuse me?

WARDEN

Just wondering how much time you've got for my friend.

The difference between life and death. Could be the difference of a kiss.

A few seconds.

When we bet, we'd put it down on paper. Sign our names. Never collected, but we knew.

Stood behind what we believed.

HANNAH

I don't. I don't have a boyfriend.

WARDEN

Pretty girl like you.

SCENE 4

(HANNAH's apartment. Present. She opens the window. Listens. Kneels down, puts her ear to the floor, listens. Closes the window. Sits down at her harp. Plays. The (woman?) below bangs on her ceiling/Hannah's floor with a...broomstick? Something. Then hard rock music blasts from below. Hannah stops playing.)

HANNAH

It's the fucking harp, you fucking asshole! The fucking music of the fucking angels!

(Hannah's cell phone doesn't ring, but she answers it.)

HANNAH (CONT'D)
(Yelling over the music)

HELLO? ...
MOM?...
MOM?...
MOM?...
MOM?...

(Hannah hangs up the phone.)

HANNAH (CONT'D)
(To the apartment below)
FUCK YOU, MOTHERFUCKER!

SCENE 5

(Present. And 23 years ago. And out of place and time. Feet visible under a closed toilet stall. Little boy's feet? Except they're too big. The feet disappear. A head appears at the top of the stall, the door still closed: MOTHER (AS BOY). Is it safe?)

MOTHER (AS BOY)
I missed school yesterday. That's why I'm not with my class. I was sick. Usually I wouldn't be in the bathroom by myself but I wasn't in school yesterday because I was sick so I went to the Resource Center to do the work I missed and on my way back to the class I stopped in the bathroom. See, here's my paper.

(Mother (As Boy) holds up a piece of paper that's a little crumpled and half covered in blood.)

MOTHER (AS BOY) (CONT'D)
I'm in first grade. We did a worksheet yesterday and I didn't do it because I was sick so I went to the Resource Center to do it and when I came back I stopped at the bathroom. Because I really had to go. And there was a lady in the bathroom. Not like a cleaner lady. In my school we don't have a cleaner

lady. We have Charles and he's not a lady. But Charles wasn't in the bathroom. There was a lady in the bathroom and she had guns. I thought they were toy guns because why would you have a real gun in a bathroom? But then she pointed one of the guns at me and shot it.

(Blood starts dripping from the inside of the stall onto the floor.)

MOTHER (AS BOY) (CONT'D)

Like a pop. I thought maybe it was a toy gun except that my belly button hurt right after. She took her guns and left. I took my worksheet and went to my classroom. I hurt a lot. I said, Mrs. Hollister I've been shot am I going to die? And then we heard sounds across the hall. From the second grade classroom. They had a substitute teacher that day. Mrs. Lumens. I remember her name because it means light. It sounded like they were making popcorn. Pop pop. Pop pop pop. Pop pop.

SCENE 6

(DIANE's office. Present. She's on the phone. Machinery whirs and clanks faintly in the distance.)

DIANE

(On the phone)

I can't be five places at once. Did they say why?

(Hannah enters. She's late. Diane waves her in.)

DIANE (CONT'D)

What evidence? (Her phone beeps.) Hold on. (Presses button.) I'm on with... Judge who? That's Green's case. Shoot. (Presses Button.) Give me a sec. (Presses button.) (To Hannah) Took you long enough. (Presses button.) Judge O'Shea? ...I did. Yes, Sir... It is what we... General's not the right place... I know, Sir... I know... I don't know if we'd call that a win, but... I will. Thank you. (Presses button.) (To Hannah) You've got dark circles.

HANNAH

Me?

DIANE

Who else am I talking to? (Presses button.) Get me Aldous Green's file. I do? (Moves some files on her desk.) Here it is. (Presses button.) You still there?

HANNAH

Me?

(Diane waves Hannah off.)

DIANE

I've gotta go. They found some new piece of... No, use the oldest milk first...
Not the microwave... (Her phone beeps.) Not the microwave... Hold on.
(Presses button.) (To Hannah) They're sending Aldous Green to General.

HANNAH

Are you talking to me now?

DIANE

Who the hell else am I talking to?

HANNAH

Why?

DIANE

Mistrial.

HANNAH

Is that why you --?

DIANE

No. Martinez. The filing date is --

HANNAH

I have another month.

DIANE

What?

(Her phone beeps. She presses a button)

HANNAH

I have another--

(Diane gestures that she's talking on the phone.)

DIANE

They're killing them faster than we can... Oh Lord, isn't that the truth? We'll all be dead by then. (Pushes button.) (To Hannah) Those cuts I told you about? They're coming down. Nobody's happy that taxpayer money is going to try to save these guys. (On phone) Call me after you feed him. (To Hannah) It's been almost five years with Martinez.

HANNAH

Only because that woman before me screwed things up.
I just got through sorting out what she'd forged from what she --

DIANE

(Overlapping)

(On the phone) Because the microwave doesn't heat it evenly...(To Hannah) I need you to get the case filed. (On the phone) No, you can't... You can't --

HANNAH

(Overlapping)

I don't have enough.

DIANE

Time? Testimony? (On the phone) No, I am not talking to you.

HANNAH

Both. I don't have enough testimony to mitigate--

DIANE

Who else do you need to talk to? (On the phone) No, not you. You can heat up water in the microwave and then stick the pouch in the water. But you can't heat the milk... (To Hannah) What's the problem?

HANNAH

Me?

DIANE

Yes you.

HANNAH

His mother. The neglect might have been worse than the --

DIANE

(Overlapping. On the phone)

No, not you.

HANNAH

I know it's just a hunch, but I --

DIANE

A hunch based on...?

HANNAH

A feeling.

DIANE

(Into phone:)

Well, I suggest doing it before he wakes up. (Hangs up.) (To Hannah) That's how your predecessor lost her job.

(More...)

HANNAH

She... What?

DIANE

Acted on her feelings. We all have them. They won't save anyone.

HANNAH

I'm beginning to think nothing saves anyone.

DIANE

How long have you been here now?

HANNAH

In Texas?

DIANE

At the Innocence Project.

HANNAH

Two years. Yesterday. Is that why I'm here?

DIANE

For what?

HANNAH

I don't know. A keychain?

DIANE

Maybe you need to take time off instead. You could go on a cruise or something.

HANNAH

And then what happens?

DIANE

You relax. You get less cynical. You--

HANNAH

I mean to these guys. To Martinez. I get tan and he dies.

DIANE

They say that you can't be a good mother if you aren't taking care of yourself first.

HANNAH

I'm not a mother.

DIANE

No.

HANNAH

I can't get him to talk.

DIANE

That's your job.

HANNAH

When he does talk it's about cats.

DIANE

Find your way in. It's a man's life.

HANNAH

I know that.

DIANE

You need to head back down to...

HANNAH

Tijuana.

DIANE

That's where his mother is?

HANNAH

Right by the landfill.

DIANE

You've got one month.

HANNAH

For the whole case? I can't get him--

DIANE

Where are you from? No, don't tell me. Ohio?

HANNAH

Chicago.

DIANE

The suburbs of.

HANNAH

...Yes.

DIANE

Your parents taught you about social justice and then got stoned after they tucked you in.

HANNAH

My mother--

DIANE

I had six weeks off for Maternity. My first day back I cried away my mascara at the day-care, and then leaked milk through a silk blouse. I sat at this desk with two big round nipple stains for the whole day. (Her phone buzzes. She picks up.) What?... Right now?... I'm coming. (She hangs up.) I've gotta run down to Records. We done here?

(She doesn't wait for an answer. She exits.
Hannah picks up the phone on Diane's desk.
It's not ringing, but she picks it up anyway.)

HANNAH

Hello?... Mom?... Hello?

SCENE 7

(The bathroom stall. Present and 23 years ago.
Door bangs open. MOTHER (AS HANNAH AS
YOUNG GIRL) sits on the toilet as if it is a chair.
She holds a phone to her ear. There is a distant
sound of sirens.)

MOTHER (AS HANNAH AS A YOUNG GIRL)

Hello? ...Hello? ...My name is Hannah. I'm Mrs. Lumens's daughter. She's a teacher there today. A substitute teacher. She doesn't usually teach there but she's a substitute teacher today... Why can't she leave? ...Why are the police there? ...Can I talk to my mommy? Please? Please? Can I please talk to my mommy? Can I please talk to my mommy?! Can I please talk to my mommy?!

SCENE 8

(Gym. Present. Hannah climbs a rock wall. It's hard. ZACH walks by. Stops. Backs up. Watches her.)

ZACH

You have to reach over to the right.

HANNAH

What?

ZACH

The foot-hold you're looking for? It's up and on the right.

HANNAH

Oh, thanks.

(Zach watches.)

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Are you watching me?

ZACH

Sorry. Didn't mean to freak you out.

HANNAH

Do I know you?

ZACH

No. I've seen you here. I'm Zach.

(Hannah falls on the mat.)

HANNAH

Ouch.

ZACH

You okay?... Can I help you up?... Everyone falls.

HANNAH

I'm trying to get to the place where I don't.

ZACH

I think that's called being dead.

HANNAH

...

ZACH

Sorry. I can see what you're doing...

HANNAH

Wrong? What I'm doing wrong?

ZACH

Where you're making a choice that's not helpful.

HANNAH

Nice.

ZACH

Go back to where you were.

HANNAH

Okay.

ZACH

It helps if you get your left foot on this one first.

HANNAH

Which one? I can't see.

ZACH

I can guide you. You want me to guide your foot?

HANNAH

Uh--

ZACH

You'll be able to--

HANNAH

Well--

ZACH

Cross it in front of your right.

HANNAH

I can't do that.

ZACH

Bend your right knee.

HANNAH

I'm going to fall.

ZACH

Tuck your pelvis.

HANNAH

Oh.

ZACH

Once you get it over, I'll--

HANNAH

I'm falling.

ZACH

I've got you.

HANNAH

Let go.

ZACH

I've got you--

Please let go of me. HANNAH

Okay. Okay. ZACH

(She falls.)

Fuck. HANNAH

Sorry. ZACH

... HANNAH

Can I help you up again? ZACH

No. No. HANNAH

Okay. ZACH

Crap. HANNAH

Are you okay? ZACH

Fine. Embarrassed. Neurotic. Sweaty. Fine. HANNAH

Can we start again? Maybe over a cup of coffee. ZACH

I like texting. HANNAH

Texting? ZACH

HANNAH
I can present the best version of myself. No cursing. You'd think I was perfect.

ZACH
I like you sweaty and swearing.

HANNAH
Just the girl to take home to mother.

ZACH
Are we there already?

HANNAH
...

ZACH
Sorry. How about coffee?

HANNAH
You say that a lot.

ZACH
How about coffee?

HANNAH
Sorry.

ZACH
About what?

HANNAH
You. Say it. A lot. Sorry.

ZACH
Oh. Tea?

HANNAH
It's not--

ZACH

I don't usually--

HANNAH

I'm more comfortable meeting people online.

ZACH

That's creepy.

HANNAH

I wade through the creeps.

ZACH

Do you?

HANNAH

I...

ZACH

Okay, see you around. Good luck with all the... not falling.

(Zach exits.)

HANNAH

Fuck.

SCENE 9

WARDEN

(Out-of-time. Out-of-place.)

You remember that game? The save by Hernandez right at the end? Last fraction of a second.

Beautiful kick.

Remember I said, That Chicharito got some foot.

You said, He can kiss your ass.

And I said, Your ass, my friend, but I knew what you meant.

Rooney slid right into it.

I thought he was going to help it into the goal, that's how it looked.

That woulda been the end of him.

But he slid right into it, right at the net, and out it went. Goalie wasn't anywhere near. Not anywhere near.

Used to think soccer was for pussies.

SCENE 10

(Rojelio's cell. Present. The Warden lets Hannah in. Machinery clicks and clanks.)

WARDEN

Did I get word someone's moving to General?

HANNAH

Aldous Green.

WARDEN

Aldous Green.

Now see, I hear that and I'm reminded of just how ass- backwards the whole thing is.

HANNAH

They declared a mistrial. His case--

WARDEN

I know, I know. I've seen it a million and one times.

Always the wrong people.

Green ain't done nothing good in this world.

Now, if you told me Javier was moving, I'd say all right. He's guilty as a raccoon top of an ant hill, but he ain't bad. Got two little girls love to see their daddy.

HANNAH

Javier?

WARDEN

Two cells down from Rojelio.

HANNAH

We're not investigating him.

WARDEN

Or that old white boy, Andy, sits in his corner all day. Missing half his brain. Be just fine with me if y'all kept him from the table.

HANNAH

I'll ask my boss--

WARDEN

You work on my friend here. Rojelio. Get him down to General.

HANNAH

That's what I'm trying--

WARDEN

Maybe he's done everything they say.

HANNAH

It's not actually my--

WARDEN

And maybe he ain't out in society helping babies or--

HANNAH

Helping babies?

WARDEN

I don't know.

Whatever them bleeding hearts do. Out there helping society.

HANNAH

We're all hoping--

WARDEN

You're not a lawyer.

HANNAH

I. No.

WARDEN

Just don't waste his time is all. 'Cause that's all he got.

Time.

Till it runs out.

Speaking of, you got yourself twenty minutes.

(The Warden lets Hannah into Rojelio's cell
and exits.)

...

HANNAH
¿Usted se acuerda de mí?

ROJELIO
...

HANNAH
Hablé con usted hace un par de meses--

ROJELIO
I speak English.

HANNAH
O, si, yo sé. Nada mas estoy chequeando. Ya hace un tiempo.

ROJELIO
I speak English.

HANNAH
Si. Porque tengo fluidez en--

ROJELIO
I speak motherfucking English.

HANNAH
... Yes you do.

ROJELIO
...

HANNAH
Mr. Martinez...

ROJELIO
...

HANNAH
Look, I'm happy to speak in Spanish. No hay ningún estigma--

Chingue su madre.

ROJELIO

Okay. Well said.

HANNAH

...

ROJELIO

HANNAH

I just want to be sure that you understand me. That I understand you. Our time. Your time. Is. Running out. If you'd answer some questions, we'd have a whole lot better chance of keeping you alive. Of getting you off the Row.

Why?

ROJELIO

Why what?

HANNAH

Here. There. It's all behind bars.

ROJELIO

It's the difference between life and --

HANNAH

Green isn't your friend.

ROJELIO

Green? Aldous Green? No, he's not my friend, but --

HANNAH

Don't need to be following him to General.

ROJELIO

No. Of course.

HANNAH

Rather be dead than go to General.

ROJELIO

HANNAH

We're looking for mitigating factors. In your. I want to show them that you're human. That you're--

ROJELIO

They don't know that you are human?

HANNAH

You. That you are human.

ROJELIO

That's what you said.

HANNAH

They... No. They don't.

ROJELIO

...

HANNAH

I didn't mean--

ROJELIO

Cats have 244 bones.

HANNAH

Look, I know this isn't easy, and you--

ROJELIO

God protects cats. Unless he doesn't.

HANNAH

I...

ROJELIO

If the cat lived you would have killed it yourself so that they could walk with Jesus Christ into the Kingdom of Heaven together.

HANNAH

The cat. Are you talking about the cat--?

ROJELIO

The old man said: Thank Christ that goddamn cat went too so we didn't have to smell its shit no more.

HANNAH

Wait. Which cat --?

ROJELIO

Your mother didn't say nothing.

She didn't say nothing about it never.

Closed her ears so that when he came to you instead of Berto she didn't hear nothing. Came to you instead of Berto because Berto was dead and he couldn't fuck him no more.

HANNAH

Who's Berto?

...

Mr. Martinez... Rojelio... I've been trying to talk to your family.

...

I've been down there to see them.

...

In their home. In your. Where you grew up?

...

Your mother. Your... grandfather?

...

I'm going to have to go back there --

ROJELIO

Did you see the tree?

HANNAH

The tree?

ROJELIO

You go down there again, ask her to show you the tree.

HANNAH

What's up with the tree? ...¿Que es la historia con el arbol?

ROJELIO

Your mother knows.

HANNAH

...?

ROJELIO

God protects cats unless they get too close to people. And then God says: Fuck you, cats. Until you want to walk with Jesus Christ, there is nothing I can do for you.

SCENE 11

WARDEN

(Out-of-time. Machinery stops.)

I remember my first day.

Long fore I found you.

I was fit to put these men in their place.

Wasn't no one looking over my shoulder those days.

A man crossed me, I beat him. No questions asked.

You asked me one time, how could I do this job.

Used to think them boys was the same as animals.

Worse.

I put 'em to work.

Wasn't no reason this prison couldn't make some money. Teach them boys some skills.

As soon as I was made warden, I had them planting and harvesting.

Herdin.

Anyone had good Texas barbecue, they had our cows.

Happy cows they were.

The boys weren't happy, but the cows were.

SCENE 12

(Sidewalk. Present. Hannah is texting.)

ZACH

Hey!

HANNAH

Hi. Oh. Hi.

ZACH

You're Miss Technology.

What? HANNAH

ZACH
(re: her texting)
You've got the whole thing going on.

HANNAH
...

Wanna grab a coffee? ZACH

I... No... HANNAH

It doesn't have to be a-- ZACH

No, because we just ran into-- HANNAH

So, not a date. ZACH

No. I mean-- HANNAH

Or we can just stand here and sputter at each other. ZACH

I don't know you. HANNAH

You know me from the gym. ZACH

Right, but... I don't know what you do. HANNAH

Is that important?	ZACH
Isn't it?	HANNAH
I do exactly what you've seen me do.	ZACH
Work out?	HANNAH
I'm a climber.	ZACH
Socially?	HANNAH
Professionally.	ZACH
...	HANNAH
As in mountains.	ZACH
You climb mountains for your job?	HANNAH
I do.	ZACH
You get paid for that.	HANNAH
I do.	ZACH
Wow.	HANNAH

ZACH

That's what everyone says.

HANNAH

You climb mountains, like, woo hoo, I'm climbing a mountain! And someone pays you for that?

ZACH

You say that like it's easy.

HANNAH

Well, okay, I know it's probably not easy. But it's like being paid for a hobby.

ZACH

A hobby?

HANNAH

...

ZACH

Pulling yourself up on fake hand-holds at an indoor gym is a hobby.

...

I'm sorry. That's not great date conversation, is it?

HANNAH

We're not on a date.

ZACH

Not now, but.

HANNAH

I'm much better electronically.

ZACH

I can't do the online stuff. I wouldn't know that I'm already interested in the way your muscles tense when you ask a question, your smell, your strange sense of humor.

HANNAH

My smell?

ZACH

I meant that in a good way.

HANNAH

My smell.

ZACH

Would you want to date someone who didn't like your smell?

...

We're animals.

HANNAH

Biologically.

ZACH

It's how babies recognize their mothers. At first. Smell. It's deep. You might already like the things about me that are unnameable. My essence. Whatever you want to call it.

HANNAH

That's assuming a lot.

ZACH

If you're hung up about meeting someone who looks good on paper--

HANNAH

I'm not.

ZACH

Okay. Online. "Lanky, insecure woman who laughs without smiling, seeks athletic hobbyist to complain to. Technophobes need not apply."

...

That was a joke.

HANNAH

You don't know anything about me either.

ZACH

Okay. What do you do?

HANNAH

...

ZACH
You're an exotic dancer?

HANNAH
What?

ZACH
I'm wondering what you'd be ashamed of telling me.

HANNAH
I wasn't... I'm not ashamed.

ZACH
This is how people get to know each other. Face to face. We exchange words and all kinds of other information, like smells.

HANNAH
Back to the smells.

ZACH
The part of us that reacts to pleasure isn't rational.

HANNAH
I'm a fan of being rational.

ZACH
And it wouldn't be rational to go on a date with me?

HANNAH
Not at all.

ZACH
You don't like me?

HANNAH
I don't know you.

ZACH
You could get to know me.

I do that online.

HANNAH

Yeah. I don't.

ZACH

So you said.

HANNAH

It's not--

ZACH

I know.

HANNAH

Ok Cupid...

ZACH

Doesn't smell.

HANNAH

SCENE 13

WARDEN
(Out-of-time. Out-of-place.)
If there's one thing I like it's being out of doors.
You wonder how I ended up in prison work. Me too.
My mama, I don't know she would've seen me in this life. She would've said, oh,
my boy, there ain't no way you'll keep him inside a prison, even as a free man.
But I s'pose she'd like it a mite better than finding me un-tethered and broke in
my middle years.
The prison's given me a job and a home. A way of life.
Can't argue with that. Though I'll tell you something.
Didn't know it then, but I know it now.
Me on this side of the bars, and you on the other, we ain't that different. A couple
of choices went one way 'stead of the other, and we'd be looking the opposite
direction through that metal.
Didn't used to believe it myself, but I sure do now.
I sure do.

SCENE 14

(DIANE's office. Present. Diane looks at a report.
Machinery clanging and clinking in the distance.)

HANNAH

That's my last visit.

DIANE

And you met with both his mother and...? (Her phone rings. She answers.)
Diane Freeman.

HANNAH

His grandfather.

DIANE

(On the phone)

He is? Yes. No. He is. (She hangs up.) And there's nothing new from this interview?

HANNAH

I think his mother isn't telling me something.

DIANE

We deal in facts. Only. You got a hunch, don't waste my time until it's a fact.

HANNAH

I know--

DIANE

We don't have time to waste.

HANNAH

I know.

DIANE

I'm leaking.

(Her blouse. Milk.)

HANNAH

What?

DIANE

Let's be quick. I'll pump after we're done.

HANNAH

Oh.

DIANE

(Opening the report)

Okay so... Hannah, I can't read Spanish.

HANNAH

Sorry. It's transcribed in the second part. That first divider?

DIANE

Why isn't that in front? Forget it. (Her blouse is getting wet. And now the phone rings. She picks up.) Diane Freeman. Wednesday? We haven't had time to... Yes. Okay. (She hangs up.) Is this where we are? (Re: her blouse) I'm going to have to change. (Re: the report) Here?

HANNAH

Yes.

DIANE

How long is this? You're supposed to summarize, not write a damn screenplay.

HANNAH

There were things said that I felt...

DIANE

Your feelings again.

HANNAH

The way they were said. Like I was talking to Rojelio's mother here, see? And she says she can't help. She's being really...protective. Or something. And then her father comes in. Came in. And everything changed.

DIANE

How?

HANNAH

I can't. I don't. I feel like --

DIANE

Hannah, there are words, there are actions, there are facts. Feelings don't mean shit.

HANNAH

She takes care of him. Rojelio's mother. Takes care of her father.

DIANE

Uh huh.

HANNAH

But the thing was -- and you'll see, I wrote this in. Here. When he came in, she -- the mother -- gave me this look, like... like...

DIANE

That's what you've got? A look?

HANNAH

She wouldn't say anything. After that. To me. Directly.

DIANE

... (A look.)

HANNAH

You know how you can tell something with a look?

DIANE

Hannah, what do you think this job is?

HANNAH

Is that a rhetorical question?

DIANE

No it's not. I don't have time for rhetorical questions. And neither do you have time for rhetorical questions, or looks, or wasting anyone's time. What in Jesus's name do you think we're doing here except getting people to tell us things they don't want to?

HANNAH

Martinez talks about cats.

DIANE

Martinez the grandfather or Martinez the man who's going to die if you don't get your shit together?

HANNAH

... Rojelio.

DIANE

This isn't some article you're writing for a high school paper. This is his life. If you can't get the story--

HANNAH

I'm trying.

DIANE

Are you? I see you going through the motions. This kind of work isn't for everyone. It's not some job you go home from at 6 pm.

HANNAH

I know.

DIANE

Do you? (Diane's blouse is wet with milk. Also, the phone rings.) Hannah, you've got to get back down there. Get the story.

HANNAH

He said something about a tree.

DIANE

Who?

(The phone is ringing.)

HANNAH

Rojelio. When I saw him this last time. He asked me if I'd seen the tree.

(The damn phone is still ringing.)

DIANE

And?

HANNAH

Are you going to answer that?

SCENE 15

(The sound of the phone ringing morphs into the ringing of a school bell. Present. Also 23 years earlier. The bathroom door opens and Mother (As Killer) steps out. The walls of the stall look like an armory. Guns of every shape and size. Mother (As Killer) carries several, putting them down one by one as she speaks, until she just holds one.)

MOTHER (AS KILLER)

I'm not a bad person.

Other people get married and they are happy and rich and rich and happy. And it's not my fault.

It's not my fault.

I think, Fuck you, you rich, happy person with your perfect children. Fuck you.

You can do anything because you are rich and happy.

But I'm here.

I'm here.

I'm here.

And I can't take away your rich but I can take away your happy.

I can do it.

Because if I am alive feeling like I am dead, maybe you can be dead and I will feel alive.

And how will I know until I know?

Look how scared you are.

I'm not a scary lady.

I take care of children.

I take care of children just like you.

Now you be good little children and line up.

That's right. Single file.

Do as I say. Single file against the wall. Just like that.

Such sweet scared children.

Such polite perfect children.

Such rich happy children.

Good boys and girls. You are very good at following directions.

(Mother (as Killer) aims the gun. Pop pop. Pop pop pop. Pop pop.)

SCENE 16

(Hannah's apartment. Present. Hannah sits at her harp, not playing. It's quiet. She looks at the harp.

She doesn't play.)

SCENE 17

(The gym. Present. Zach stands at the rock wall, waiting. Gosh, he's handsome.)

HANNAH

Are you waiting for me?

ZACH

I saw you coming.

HANNAH

So you waited.

ZACH

I can show you. Teach you. I do that.

HANNAH

Do you?

ZACH

These walls, they seem all cute and colorful. Like they should be easy. It looks like a playground. Makes you feel like you're a kid. Like you could scramble right on up.

HANNAH

Clearly we had different childhoods.

ZACH

You didn't play at playgrounds?

HANNAH

I. Things took a left turn. For my mother. For us.

ZACH

If you want to talk about --

HANNAH

I don't.

ZACH

...

HANNAH

You could show me how to do this wall. I keep. Falling.

ZACH

This one's a challenge.

HANNAH

I must be doing it wrong.

ZACH

Not wrong.

HANNAH

No?

ZACH

I don't use that word.

HANNAH

So how do you describe not right?

ZACH

I try not to judge.

HANNAH

...

ZACH

Put your left foot on this yellow one.

Way up there?
HANNAH

Start high. Pull yourself up here.
ZACH

I'll never make it.
HANNAH

You will. Trust me.
ZACH

I don't trust myself.
HANNAH

Yeah. We need to change that.
ZACH

(Over the following lines Hannah moves where Zach shows her. He helps her, gives her support, but mostly he just shows her and she does the hard work herself, until she's beyond his hands. But his touch. It's awfully nice. How can a body ignore that?)

If you say so.
HANNAH

Here. ... Then here. ... That's right. ... You got it. Here, but with your right foot.
ZACH

I can't --
HANNAH

You can. Your fingertips are going to be sore, but just hang on. Hang on. There you go.
ZACH

Oh.
HANNAH

See?	ZACH
Oh.	HANNAH
Right?	ZACH
I can't fucking believe it.	HANNAH
...	ZACH
So... Now... How do I get down?	HANNAH
Jump.	ZACH
Jump?	HANNAH
Backwards. Away from the wall.	ZACH
I'm pretty high.	HANNAH
Or climb down.	ZACH
How do I...?	HANNAH
Say, this is a situation. Let's make a deal. I'll help you down and you have coffee with me.	ZACH

HANNAH

Okay.

ZACH

That was too easy. Maybe we should make it dinner.

HANNAH

My fingers are numb.

ZACH

Dinner it is. Let's get you down.

(Somehow Hannah gets down. She climbs, or jumps, or maybe there's some other elegant solution within the set. Zach helps her, as much as feels right. It's nice that he helps. She participates in the next scene even as she's coming down and changing into regular clothes.)

SCENE 18

(A courtroom. A memory. A few years ago, told in the present. Also out-of-time. These people are not all in the same space together, but Hannah is in the same space with each of them: Rojelio, Warden, Diane. The machinery comes to life, whirring and clicking.)

ROJELIO

Someone said

WARDEN

All rise!

ROJELIO

And we did.

DIANE

And there was a lawyer from the D.A.'s office. White. Male.

ROJELIO

Not your lawyer.

WARDEN

And someone on defense. Young. Fresh out of law school.

DIANE

And twelve men and women of the jury.

ROJELIO

Who did not look like you. Or speak like you.

HANNAH

Did you understand?

ROJELIO

You said yes.

HANNAH

But you didn't.

ROJELIO

Except for.

DIANE

His lawyer snored. Out loud. Put his head down on the table at one point.

HANNAH

He slept?

ROJELIO

He was resting his eyes. That's what he said.

HANNAH

He was asleep?

ROJELIO

He said he didn't miss anything important.

HANNAH

Did anyone say anything on your behalf?

ROJELIO

Who would say?

DIANE

(Reading from a report)

The prosecutor said: Your honor. This man is an illegal. Came to this country without permission. For no reason. No reason except his own greed and jealousy. Killed an innocent man. A grandfather. He could have been your own father. And the cat. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury--

WARDEN

When he was awake, the defense made a couple of points, but the judge overruled them all.

ROJELIO

The jury said: guilty!

WARDEN

And the judge said: do you understand?

ROJELIO

And you said yes.

HANNAH

You admitted it.

ROJELIO

You said yes. And they said.

WARDEN

Lock him up.

ROJELIO

And.

DIANE

An eye for an eye.

ROJELIO

And.

WARDEN

Send him to The Chair.

(A gavel bangs.)

SCENE 19

(Continuous for Warden and Hannah only.
Present.)

WARDEN (CONT'D)

It's Saturday.

HANNAH

I need to see --

WARDEN

You're working overtime.

HANNAH

We're running out. Of time.

WARDEN

Don't I know it.

Ms. Lumens, I admit, I wonder why a nice young pretty girl like you is doing a job like this.

HANNAH

I. I have my.

WARDEN

I hope you do. I surely do.

HANNAH

My mother.

WARDEN

Your mother?

HANNAH

There was a day, when I was little?
I don't really.
I don't talk about it.
I.
Lost her.

...

WARDEN

I'm sorry to hear it.

HANNAH

It was a long.
A long.
I think she'd want me to...
It's her birthday tomorrow. Would be. Her birthday.

WARDEN

...I go home after I've said goodbye to a man. Given the signal. Watched him die. I drive home along the same roads I always do, fit my same key in the same lock on my front door. The house is always dark. My wife says an extra prayer for my soul, she's told me, but she don't wait up for me. I know my way in the dark. Have to go around that one chair so I don't stub my toe, watch out for the corner of the table. Don't even think about it. Second nature by now. Make my way to the bathroom. Wash my face in the dark. Go to sleep. Wake up in the morning. Have an egg for breakfast, coffee, toast. Go back to work. Everything normal. 'Cept there's one less person in the world, and you're the one what give the signal for it. I feel the hardness of the earth under my feet those days. Don't know how to explain it other than that. Feel my body, such as it is, going on with the business of living. And I wonder that the whole of it don't just crack open.
Me.
The earth.
All the bodies.
All us bodies walking around like it was nothing to be alive.

SCENE 20

(Rojelio's cell. Death Row. Present.)

ROJELIO

Footsteps are loud.
Your footsteps take you to, and take you away, and there's no one except Jesus Christ who will walk beside you.
Footsteps in the landfill are life and death.
Take a step and everything shifts.

ROJELIO (CONT'D)

Berto took a wrong footstep and then a truck was on top.
 The truck came on top and he was on the bottom, and it didn't matter what you called it because dead is dead.
 He was your big brother.
 Then you were the only brother, with no big and no little.
 An accident, the man said. The man who drove the truck. But the only accidents are in your bed.
 He had hard footsteps. Made the dirt jump from the ground.
 Footsteps have a belt in one hand and a cock in the other.
 It's 36 footsteps to your corner of the outside, where the sun shines or the rain falls, no matter who you are or what you've done. For one hour a day, if you squint your eyes, you can look through the metal and above the wire.
 It's 33 footsteps in the other direction to the room where there is no outside.
 There are no more footsteps there, except for Jesus Christ, who will walk beside you forever.

(Hannah is there. Was she there the whole time?)

HANNAH

You taught yourself English in here?

ROJELIO

Learned it better. Had a lot of time.

HANNAH

Because you said you didn't fully understand what was being said in court.

ROJELIO

Es verdad.

HANNAH

Your lawyer was asleep.

(Rojelio shrugs.)

HANNAH (CONT'D)

He could have made objections, asked questions. I don't know. Made more of a case for you.

ROJELIO

You don't know?

HANNAH

I. I'm not a lawyer.

ROJELIO

You did what you did.

HANNAH

When you say "you" ...?

ROJELIO

When you say you?

HANNAH

You mean... You. Right?

...

This isn't about what you did or didn't do. It's about what the State does with you now.

ROJELIO

And if they take you off the Row...

A shared cell.

The noise.

Light.

The Mexicanemi killing each other if the Aryans, the Mandingos don't get to you first. Chingasos. Men making tortillas.

HANNAH

Making tortillas?

ROJELIO

Men using men like women. Thought you spoke the language.

HANNAH

It's punishment. That's how the system works.

ROJELIO

Punishment.

...

Go see the tree. Maybe you speak that language.

SCENE 21

(Hannah's phone doesn't ring, but she picks it up as though it had, stepping out of scene.)

HANNAH

Mom? ...
Hello?....
Hello? ...
Hello? ...
Mom?

SCENE 22

(Hannah's apartment. Present. Hannah and Zach enter. Were they on a date???)

ZACH

Dude, you play the harp?

HANNAH

Dude?

ZACH

Sorry, I was overwhelmed.

HANNAH

By the harp?

ZACH

Yeah. Who plays the harp?

HANNAH

I do.

ZACH

Of course you do.

HANNAH

What does that mean?

ZACH

... I'm surprised you invited me up here.

HANNAH

Yeah. Me too.

ZACH

I mean, dinner was nice, I just didn't expect...

HANNAH

...

ZACH

Will you play for me?

HANNAH

Tell me about climbing mountains.

ZACH

Tell you...?

HANNAH

Why? How? When?

ZACH

I'll tell if you play.

HANNAH

I can't.

ZACH

You said--

HANNAH

My neighbor. Downstairs. She doesn't let me.

ZACH

She doesn't--?

HANNAH

She turns up her music really loud. Whenever I start to play. And I can't hear myself. And it's. Impossible.

...

I'm waiting for her to die.

ZACH

That's proactive.

HANNAH

She's really old.

ZACH

Will you try?

HANNAH

It's late.

ZACH

Maybe she's asleep.

HANNAH

If I wake her up she'll leave the music on all night.

ZACH

That seems...

HANNAH

Annoying?

ZACH

Ludicrous. Have you had a conversation with her?

HANNAH

I tried. When I first moved in. I mean, it's the harp for fuck's sake. I really didn't think it would be an issue.

ZACH

And...?

HANNAH

And she said she hates the harp.

Who hates the harp?
ZACH

She does.
HANNAH

Why?
ZACH

I don't know. Maybe it reminds her that the fucking pearly gates are looming.
HANNAH

You swear a lot.
ZACH

I know.
HANNAH

...

The views are pretty great.
ZACH

Here?
HANNAH

You asked why I climb mountains.
ZACH

Oh. Huh. That's a lot of work for a pretty picture.
HANNAH

I climb because it scares me. In a good way. Makes me feel alive.
ZACH

Because you could die?
HANNAH

That's a glass-half-empty way of looking at it.
ZACH

HANNAH
That's me.

ZACH
Is it?

HANNAH
Glass half empty is generous. I think of the glass as being pretty much empty, all the time, and once in a while someone will give you a plastic cup of pond water, and you're just thirsty enough to drink it and swallow some kind of bacteria that makes you puke your guts out for a few months.
...
I'm great at a party.

ZACH
I shouldn't have. Sorry.

HANNAH
You need to stop saying that.

ZACH
I know. Sorry.

HANNAH
Have you climbed Everest?

ZACH
Once. That feeling. There's nothing else. The sky is purple up there.

HANNAH
Why only once?

ZACH
I lost a friend. On the descent. He wandered off. Middle of the night. We didn't realize until. Never found his body. Could be buried under snow. Could have fallen off. You can lose your mind up there. People do things.

HANNAH
Yeah, people do things. Down here, too.

ZACH
It's heavy. Sorry.

HANNAH

Stop.

ZACH

Sorry. Okay. I told you about climbing. Now you play.

HANNAH

I can't. I really really really can't. The whole thing drives me crazy. I wish I understood what her problem was.

ZACH

People do things that can't be explained.

HANNAH

You just described my whole life.

ZACH

What would you play if you could? I'll try to imagine.

HANNAH

If I could play anything right now? I'd play you... "Oblivion." It's beautiful. And a little sad.

ZACH

Why sad?

HANNAH

Why is it sad?

ZACH

No. What makes you want to play a sad piece?

HANNAH

...I... (Drawn out, like she'd say the next word if only she could think of it.)

ZACH

I don't mean to--

HANNAH

I'm sorry. You're nice. You're really nice. But I think this wasn't the right--

ZACH
Wait. What did I do?

HANNAH
Nothing. You didn't do--

ZACH
We were having a conversation.

HANNAH
I just. Can't do this.

ZACH
Get to know a person?

HANNAH
I shouldn't have--

ZACH
I never would've known that you play the harp.

HANNAH
What does it matter? It's not even me. I can't play the fucking harp because of my fucking neighbor. So you still don't know anything about me.

ZACH
I guess I know that you're repressed.

HANNAH
Fuck you.

ZACH
In your harp playing. You're repressed. By your neighbor.....It's a joke.
...
So, let me ask you this. On paper, what would I have to look like?

HANNAH
I can't do that.

ZACH

If you were on one of those sites. One of those Match-your-Cupid-Grinder-in-Harmony-ok? sites, who would I need to be?

HANNAH

I don't...

ZACH

Isn't that what you do?

HANNAH

I don't...

ZACH

You don't?

HANNAH

I don't know what I'm looking for. I don't know it until I see it. It's like... It's like...

ZACH

It's like the way someone smells. It brings out something in you. It makes your heart beat fast. Or it repels you. Or it incites you to violence. Or, as I think is the case here, it doesn't do anything for you at all.

HANNAH

It's not--

ZACH

You invited me up here. That was pretty brave of you.

HANNAH

I couldn't even say what your smell is or how I feel about it.

ZACH

No. You'd have to get close to me to do that.

(Zach exits. Hannah stands alone with her harp. She doesn't play.)

HANNAH

Fuck.

SCENE 23

WARDEN

(Out-of-time.)

I never in a million years thought I'd be here telling you that I love you.

I know you did bad things.

Hell, we all have.

Maybe yours is worse than most. But...

You make my day better.

I ain't got to say "I love you" or nothing like that.

It ain't like that.

It ain't nothing we got to speak.

It's just truth. Cause that's all we got in here, isn't it? Time and truth.

SCENE 24

(Hannah's bedroom. She's asleep. MOTHER sits on Hannah's bed. Hannah wakes up as if the phone has rung, though it hasn't. Mother sees Hannah, but Hannah does not see Mother. She searches for her phone. Answers. Speaks into the phone that never rang.)

HANNAH

Mom? ... Mom?... It's me. It's Hannah.

...

Hello? ... Mommy?

...

...

MOTHER

(Too fast. The lines between Hannah and Mother overlap.)

She leaves her house at 6:30 am probably sometime around 6:30 am she may have woken up at 6 maybe 5:30 maybe she never even went to sleep that night she may have stayed up all night drinking Diet Coke--

HANNAH

Mom, please don't do this.

...

At 8 am she goes to her job--
MOTHER

It's your birthday. Today.
HANNAH

The job she's losing--
MOTHER

Happy Birthday.
HANNAH

They don't need her anymore she takes the baby the mother locks them in the basement sets the house on fire--
MOTHER

Stop! Mom!
HANNAH

Drives to the school--
MOTHER

We don't have to talk about this again.
HANNAH

The school where I am substitute teaching--
MOTHER

Twenty-three years ago.
HANNAH

...

Twenty-three...?
MOTHER

I'm all grown up, Mom. It happened such a long time ago.
HANNAH

...

MOTHER

(Again, too fast.)

She comes in there's no security there's no one watching no one would stop her--

HANNAH

Please.

MOTHER

Goes to the boys' bathroom lays out her guns all her guns on the bathroom floor a little boy comes in to use the bathroom Robert Robert Robert who missed school the day before--

HANNAH

Mom --

MOTHER

She shoots him at close range in the stomach--

HANNAH

If you were here--

MOTHER

Goes to the classroom across the hall--

HANNAH

You wouldn't be --

MOTHER

My classroom the room where I'm substitute teaching--

HANNAH

Mom?

MOTHER

Second grade it's a beautiful classroom windows that look out--

HANNAH

Please.

MOTHER

Hannah!

HANNAH

...

MOTHER

You have to hear the whole thing!

HANNAH

No. I can't.

MOTHER

You have to hear the end of the story!

HANNAH

I know how it ends. It was a long time ago. It's over.

MOTHER

It's not over!

HANNAH

I've heard it before, Mom. You tell me every time.

MOTHER

But this time...

HANNAH

What?

MOTHER

This time...

HANNAH

...

MOTHER

This time. It might have a different ending.

HANNAH

...

MOTHER

Please? ...Please?

HANNAH

...

MOTHER

Hannah...

HANNAH

The ending doesn't change. The ending's always the same. She shoots the children, Mom. She's always going to shoot the children.

MOTHER

No--

HANNAH

And then...

MOTHER

No--

HANNAH

And then she--

MOTHER

No--

HANNAH

She shoots you.
And then she shoots herself.

...

MOTHER

They were children—

HANNAH

And you did everything you could--

MOTHER

I couldn't protect them--

HANNAH

You tried. You tried. I know you tried.

MOTHER

Who would hurt children?

HANNAH

Sshh. It's all right. It's all right now. It's all right.

MOTHER

Who would hurt children?

(Hannah looks at her phone. No one's there.)

SCENE 25

WARDEN

(Out-of-time. Out-of-place.)

When I was a little boy, my mama'd open the back door, and I'd go. The whole day. Back by dinner, that was the only rule.

My backyard was acres.

I don't know what belonged to us or didn't, but it didn't matter none. Wasn't no one else around.

The grass led to the trees, trees to the river, river led to... well, depended on what all you wanted to do.

I'd go climbing, hunting, fishing, swimming. Get lost. Figure it out. Be home by dinner.

My mama never asked where I'd been, what I'd done. If I brought home a fish or two, she'd fry it up, happy to have extra dinner.

Not that my mama was happy.

I don't remember her being that.

But she wasn't unhappy neither.

Life was a commitment. You did what was expected of you. You worked and cleaned and cooked and prayed.

And I turned out okay.

Well, depends on who you ask, I guess.

Can't climb no more trees.

I take responsibility for my own weight. I know what it's done to me. But, hell, sometimes that's the way life goes, don't it? We make our choices and suffer the consequences.

WARDEN (CONT'D)

When we get to heaven, it'll be acres.

Don't you think?

And it won't never get dark, but if it did, your mama'd be there to fry up some fish.

Don't you think?

Don't you think?

SCENE 26

(Eugenia's house, Tijuana. Also Diane's office.
Present and a few days before. Eugenia
stands strangely, like maybe her bones don't
all fit together normally.)

HANNAH

Hola?

EUGENIA

...

HANNAH

¿Puedo pasar?

EUGENIA

Usted no debe estar aquí.

HANNAH

Su ... él está aquí?

EUGENIA

...No.

HANNAH

Necesito hablar con usted.

DIANE

Jesus, Hannah, why do you do this?

HANNAH

(Stepping out of scene)

Sorry, the translation--

DIANE

I don't need to see it in Spanish at all.

HANNAH

It's so you know it's true.

DIANE

What?

HANNAH

That I didn't make it up. This is what she said. How she said it.

DIANE

You don't have to--

HANNAH

Yes, I do. If we don't get him off, it's not going to be because I fucked up.

DIANE

You don't need to --

HANNAH

Like the woman before me.

DIANE

Okay. Okay. Here, I see.

(Hannah steps back into the scene.)

HANNAH

Rojelio told me about a tree.

EUGENIA

I don't know --

HANNAH

He said to look for a tree. Do you know what I'm talking about?

DIANE

What is this tree bullshit?

HANNAH
Please. Just. Keep reading.

DIANE
A tree...

HANNAH
A tree. He said I needed to see it. Do you know what tree?

EUGENIA
...

HANNAH
If I can't... If we don't...

EUGENIA
...

HANNAH
...

EUGENIA
...

DIANE
So she didn't talk to you. Is this going somewhere?

(Eugenia points to the window. Both Hannah
and Diane look.)

DIANE (CONT'D)
I don't understand.

HANNAH
(Overlapping)
I don't understand.

EUGENIA
...

HANNAH
This is the tree?

EUGENIA
...

HANNAH
It looks like. A tree. Is there something...?

EUGENIA
...

HANNAH
...

EUGENIA
...

HANNAH
It's hard to get Rojelio to talk to me. But the warden, he's become...
They've become. Friends. I think they're friends. I've never seen anything
like that before. He's... I wish I could. I'm trying to. To get inside. To figure
out something. Anything. Something that can help the people. The ones
who decide whether he lives or dies. I need them to see that he's a person.
He's had a hard life. Harder than most. He did a bad thing, but maybe.
Maybe we can explain it. Or, not explain. But help people to see that he
isn't a bad person. He did a bad thing, but he's not a bad person. Can you
help me do that? Can you please help me?

EUGENIA
...

HANNAH
This isn't about. It's about your son. You're not in trouble. But he is. Please
help me. Help him.
...
...

EUGENIA
The tree...

HANNAH
Yes?

EUGENIA
It was our punishment.

HANNAH
Your. Punishment?

EUGENIA
He punished us.

HANNAH
He... Your... Father?

EUGENIA
My father. His father too.

HANNAH
Who *is* his father? We don't have --

EUGENIA
His father. My father.

HANNAH
Rojelio's? Rojelio's father is also. Your father.

EUGENIA
...Yes.

DIANE
He what?

HANNAH
What did he do? Your father?

EUGENIA
He's going to be back soon.

HANNAH
Please. Then please tell me quickly. I want to help your son.

EUGENIA

...

I had two sons.

HANNAH

Yes?

EUGENIA

Berto first. Alberto.

HANNAH

Berto. I didn't know.

EUGENIA

I was very young.

...

My father was angry. At me. At the boy who. After Berto was born. He.

HANNAH

Your father... Your father was not Berto's father.

EUGENIA

No.

HANNAH

Okay...

DIANE

Rojelio's father is his grandfather.

HANNAH

Yes.

DIANE

And this wasn't revealed in his trial?

EUGENIA

You should go.

HANNAH

What did he do?

...

He what? Eugenia, what did your father do to you?

...

Your father is Rojelio's father.

EUGENIA

Yes.

HANNAH

That's what he did to you.

EUGENIA

...Yes.

HANNAH

As punishment. He. Raped you.

...

Where was your mother?

EUGENIA

Where is anybody's mother?

HANNAH

...

EUGENIA

My babies.

HANNAH

Did he hurt them?

...

What did he do to them?

...

Ms... Mrs.? Martinez...

EUGENIA

That tree? All the things you can think of. He thought of more. He broke us. We are all broken. Maybe it's better...

HANNAH
He beat you?

EUGENIA
Of course.

HANNAH
Did he beat the boys?

EUGENIA
There is nothing he didn't do.

HANNAH
Eugenia, I need to know what happened with the tree.
Please. We may be able to save Rojelio.

EUGENIA
He hung me.

HANNAH
What?

EUGENIA
He tied my wrists together, behind my back. And... You see that branch?
My arms were. Behind my back. Like this? He left me there.

HANNAH
Hanging? For how long?

EUGENIA
The day.... The night. At first the boys came out to see. To cry. To help
me. He tied them both to the trunk. One on either side. And whipped them.
Until they bled. Until they fainted, standing, tied to the tree.
They learned not to look at me.

HANNAH
And you were. Hanging. When did that happen?
...
Do you remember the year? How old they were?

EUGENIA
It happened always.

...

HANNAH

Where is Berto? I didn't know about him. Maybe I could--

EUGENIA

Berto is dead.

HANNAH

When?

EUGENIA

He was nine years old.

HANNAH

Oh. Oh, I. I'm so sorry. How?

...

EUGENIA

Have you been to the dump?

HANNAH

I... No.

EUGENIA

I picked garbage. Like everyone here. My boys picked garbage. But my father...

HANNAH

Yes?

EUGENIA

My father had a job there. A real job.

HANNAH

Yes?

EUGENIA

He drove a truck.

HANNAH

...

EUGENIA

My father never liked Berto.

...

You need to go now.

HANNAH

I'm going to do my best to get Rojelio--

EUGENIA

He killed that man. That old man.

HANNAH

That's... Yes. That's what he was convicted of.

EUGENIA

He hung him. That's what we heard.

HANNAH

The man's hands were tied behind his back. Just like what Rojelio saw your father do to you.

EUGENIA

He did a bad thing. He came from a bad man, and he did a bad thing. He couldn't help himself. It's in his blood.

DIANE

Hannah, we've got to get this filed now. Not now. Yesterday.

(Hannah crosses to Diane.)

HANNAH

This could. We could get him off. Couldn't we?

DIANE

I don't want to make you any promises. You know how it goes. Even the most revealing circumstances. Sometimes. It doesn't.

HANNAH

His father is his grandfather.

DIANE

She stayed. With him. Her father who's also her rapist.

HANNAH

I think. Sometimes people want to live with what they know, even if it's the worst thing in the world. It's like, the monster is out of the closet, out from under the bed. The monster is in the light where you can see him, and that's better than... Once you know there really is a monster, maybe it's the rest of us, walking around like we can save ourselves, protect anyone, maybe we're the ones who seem foolish.

SCENE 27

MOTHER

(Present. And out-of-time.)

There was a moment when my eyes met hers.

Her eyes.

You couldn't see into them. There was no color, or. My eyes just bounced off of her eyes.

Colorless. I couldn't turn away. I kept looking.

How a person could do that to children.

She's here. Inside me.

I look, and all I can see are her eyes.

Living. Dead. It doesn't make a difference.

She did what she did.

And now she's inside me.

SCENE 28

(Rojelio's cell. Present. Clicks and clanks of machinery.)

ROJELIO

24 hours.

WARDEN

You never know what might happen.

ROJELIO

You don't need 24 more hours.

WARDEN
Sure you do.

ROJELIO
You like it here.

WARDEN
On the Row?

ROJELIO
Don't think you'd like it much in General.

WARDEN
What if I'd come visit you?

ROJELIO
You wouldn't.

WARDEN
Well...

ROJELIO
You wouldn't.

WARDEN
I'd know you were there. And that would give me some peace of mind.

ROJELIO
Your peace of mind will come when you're walking with Jesus.

WARDEN
Wish you'd stop talking like that. It'll come sooner or later, but I wish you'd stop.

ROJELIO
Sooner. You're ready for it.

WARDEN
I wish you'd stop saying that. For once. I wish you'd stop saying that for one goddamn minute. Saying "you." The way you say "you," when you mean--

ROJELIO
You.

WARDEN
It ain't me. You got that, my friend? I ain't behind the bars.

ROJELIO
No?

WARDEN
I ain't the one gonna die.

ROJELIO
No?

WARDEN
Not here. Not like that. Think you're pretty cute.

ROJELIO
Not cute.

WARDEN
You speak English. Say who you are.
...
Say it.

ROJELIO
Rojelio.

WARDEN
Say: I am Rojelio.
...

(The Warden shoves Rojelio.)

WARDEN
Say it.

ROJELIO
You are Rojelio.

(The Warden punches Rojelio.)

WARDEN

Say it. Say it.
You're gonna die here, boy.

ROJELIO

You're gonna die here, boy.

WARDEN

Say your goddamn name.

ROJELIO

Your goddamn name.

(The Warden punches Rojelio again. Rojelio goes down.)

WARDEN

Are you my friend? Are you my friend? I ask one goddamn thing of you. Of you.

(Rojelio tries to get up. The Warden holds him down.)

WARDEN (CONT'D)

You got to own yourself. You hear me? You got to own yourself.

(The Warden extends a hand to Rojelio to help him up. Rojelio grabs his hand.)

WARDEN (CONT'D)

You gonna own it?

(Rojelio pulls the Warden down. They brawl on the floor. The Warden is heavy. Rojelio is strong. It's an even match. Finally The Warden is on top. He's about to throw the knockout punch. He draws his fist back. Holds it. Holds it.)

ROJELIO

...Hit me.

(Something unnameable between them. Don't think you know what it is. It's everything and nothing. It's two men and one of them is about to die.)

...

(The Warden helps Rojelio to his feet.)

WARDEN

You hear about Hernandez?

ROJELIO

That fucking goal.

WARDEN

With his face. That must smart some.

ROJELIO

He's a crazy motherfucker.

WARDEN

Some people will do anything.

SCENE 29

(Diane's office. Present. The machinery clinks and purrs.)

DIANE

(On the phone)

Isn't that someone's job? To make sure he never... Yes, I'll hold. (To Hannah)
Aldous Green killed himself.

HANNAH

What?

DIANE

(Into the phone.) Yes, I'm holding.

HANNAH

Wait, were you talking to me?

DIANE

Yes, you.

HANNAH

I thought they were moving him Wednesday.

DIANE

He didn't give them a chance. These guys hate General.

HANNAH

Jesus Christ. Jesus Fucking Christ.

DIANE

He was a bad man.

HANNAH

They all are. They're all bad. That's not the--

DIANE

(Into the phone) Yes, I'm still holding.

HANNAH

Why are we doing this at all? We get them off The Row so they can kill themselves?

DIANE

(Into the phone) Yes, I'm here. I just want to know if he's read... We submitted a file on Rojelio Martinez. ...Well do you know if he's... Has the file been...? The injection is scheduled for tomorrow and... Yes, I know. ... Yes, I know... Please tell him there's new evidence... There are mitigating circumstances... No... No, we can't prove his innocence, but we have new... I understand... If he would just read... I understand...(She hangs up. She shakes her head at Hannah.)

HANNAH

What is the fucking point? ...I tried to get him to talk. Earlier. If I'd been more --

DIANE

All those feelings you were getting. I was wrong to --

HANNAH

It took me too long. To get the information. I could have saved him if I'd been. If I'd. If. If. If. If. If--

DIANE

I go home at night. Too late. I miss dinner. If I'm lucky I get home just before my son goes to sleep. He's cranky as hell and so am I. But I hold him, and I think I must be out of mind to bring another black boy into this world. He could have all the money in the world, the best education, and they'll still try to put him behind bars because of the color of his skin. I know the statistics. Probably better than anyone. But I hold him, his heart right on top of mine, and the feeling. That feeling. That feeling overwhelms any facts. Sometimes that's all that keeps us going. A feeling.

The world is what it is.

And we do what we can.

SCENE 30

(Rojelio's cell. Present. Rojelio's face is swollen where The Warden punched him. The machinery is at work.)

WARDEN

Ah, Ms. Lumens. You look like you need some sleep.

HANNAH

I think that's just the way I look.

WARDEN

I thought maybe you'd heard the news.

HANNAH

About the case?

WARDEN

About our friend. Aldous Green.

HANNAH

I did. Yes.

WARDEN

He hanged himself.

HANNAH

I tried --

WARDEN

That's the way the cookie crumbles 'round here. These boys, you know, they get used to living on The Row. It's more of a death sentence to send them to General than it is to bide their time here.

ROJELIO

It's your home.

WARDEN

Like our friend here. He seems to have made up his mind that his time's up.

HANNAH

(Re: Rojelio's face)

What happened to you?

WARDEN

He got into a conversation.

HANNAH

Mr. Martinez. Rojelio. I'm sorry. I don't have good news. The Attorney General. He's not going to review your case. Even with the. The new evidence. I'm sorry.

...

WARDEN

Like I said, that's the way the cookie crumbles round here.

...

ROJELIO

You see the tree? (Hannah nods.) She tell you? She tell you?

(He moves as if he's throwing something.)

Their tiny heads exploding.

HANNAH

Tiny heads. Of...?

ROJELIO

Berto saved one. Just one.

HANNAH

Your brother. Berto.

...

Exploding?

ROJELIO

(Making the throwing motion again)

The old man. The tree.

Berto saved the last one. Made a bag out of scraps. Carried it. Slept with it. Fed it from the garbage.

HANNAH

A mouse?

ROJELIO

Pinche mouse.

HANNAH

What were the "tiny heads?"

...

ROJELIO

The cat was already dead. When you found him, the cat was dead. The old man had shot him in the head.

It was the old man.

It is always the old man.

You did to him what he did to her, because that is the language he speaks.

WARDEN

The old man in the field.

ROJELIO

That way he will understand that cats are cats and Jesus Christ watches over them. You didn't kill him. You left him there to be with the cat. You left them both so they could walk with Jesus Christ together.

HANNAH

I wish you'd told me this --

ROJELIO

Some people look at cats, and they see something they want to take care of.
And some people look at cats and see killers.
And they are.
They are both.

...

You didn't kill the cat.

HANNAH

You... You mean...

ROJELIO

Cats have 244 bones. You didn't kill the cat.

SCENE 31

(Just the Warden now. Out-of-time, but also in the Present. The machinery grows underneath until it's loud enough that he has to shout to be heard. Probably he needs to be amplified, his voice booming over the machinery.)

WARDEN

The way the medicine works is it puts you to sleep first, which I guess is a mercy.
Then it freezes your lungs. So that seems like it'd kill a person well enough.
Then it stops your heart.
Looks peaceful enough.
I give a signal to get it started. I do this: (he rubs his chin.)
The guy'll cough a couple of times. And that's that.
It's done. (Louder)
About 15 minutes from start to finish.
I wait until the exact time to start, because you never know if you'll get a call from a judge, or the Governor. But that ain't never happened on my watch. Once we're here in this room, it's pretty much a done deal. I know it. They know it. (Louder)
And I consider it an important part of my job to be able to say goodbye to a man.
Ought to be done properly, no matter how someone lived their life.
Ain't for me to say one way or another. (Louder)
YOU'RE GOING FROM HERE TO YOUR MAKER, AND HE'LL TELL YOU
WHERE HE'S TAKING YOU, AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED.

(The machinery is deafening.)

The WARDEN waits for a moment. Then rubs his chin. The machinery slowly comes to a shuddering stop.

And then it is silent.)

...

WARDEN (CONT'D)

Martinez? ...

Martinez? ...

Rojelio?

SCENE 32

(Stillness. Quiet. Then...

Hannah's apartment. Present. Zach enters.)

ZACH

Hey.

HANNAH

...

ZACH

Are you okay?

HANNAH

I... No...

ZACH

I brought you something.

HANNAH

What are you doing here?

ZACH

That's not the reaction I was hoping for. Though I guess it's the one I should have expected.

...

ZACH (cont'd)

Listen, I'm about to leave town. For a while. I'm leading a trek up Annapurna and --

HANNAH

You walked out last time.

ZACH

You didn't seem to want me here.

HANNAH

I don't... I don't know what I...

ZACH

I wanted to give you this.

(Zach hands Hannah a present. She doesn't open it.)

HANNAH

I'm an investigator.

ZACH

What?

HANNAH

I investigate people's lives. Prisoners. On Death Row. I investigate their lives to try to keep them from being executed.

ZACH

You try to prove their innocence.

HANNAH

Not even. I just try to get them off Death Row. Just. Try to keep them from. Being killed. That's all.

ZACH

Okay.

HANNAH

You asked what I did.

ZACH

A long time ago.

HANNAH

I guess it takes me a while to warm up.

ZACH

Why didn't you tell me before?

HANNAH

Because people have strong feelings. And I'm not really interested in talking about evil or closure or justice or money or... or... or...

ZACH

Why do you do it?

HANNAH

See, that's exactly--

ZACH

No, I mean. Why do *you* do it?

...

HANNAH

Because shit happens. People die. All the time. Too many people. For no good reason.

...

I don't want to be responsible for anyone else's...

This guy. His name was Rojelio. He was a boy once.

You wouldn't wish his childhood on...

It was my job to save him.

I didn't. Most of us don't. I knew that, but.

...

(She unwraps the gift. It's a white noise machine.)

ZACH
So you can play your harp.

HANNAH
This is.

ZACH
And not hear your neighbor.

HANNAH
White noise?

ZACH
Sometimes that's the only way to do it.

...
Maybe it frees you to play your music. You can't stop other people from. But you shouldn't stop yourself either.

...
I wanted to try one last thing before I... This was crazy, I guess. I'm sorry. I don't know why I keep.

HANNAH
My smell.

ZACH
I can't explain it.

HANNAH
You like my smell.

ZACH
I don't know why I expect people to understand. It's not like I'm hyper sensitive to smell or anything. I just know that I either respond to someone in person, or not. And I responded to you. And I wanted to get to know you. And I guess that's not how it's done these--

HANNAH
I think I like your smell too.

ZACH
You... What?

...

HANNAH

It scares me.

ZACH

What does?

HANNAH

Knowing that we're ruled by these inexplicable... What if your smell changes?

ZACH

I don't know. Do smells change?

HANNAH

People change. They don't even mean to. Shit happens. To us. And it makes us do things. Feel things. That maybe we don't want to. And then what?

ZACH

I don't know. I guess that's life.

HANNAH

Yeah.

ZACH

But wait. That's a big question mark. Are you saying you won't date me because you don't know what might happen in a week, or a year? Or a decade?

HANNAH

I... No... I'm not saying... I'm not saying I won't.

ZACH

You're not saying you won't. Okay. Okay. I think I can fit in that doorway.

...

HANNAH

White noise. It sounds so benign. A white noise machine.

Okay. Let's see what happens.

ZACH

Okay. Let's see what happens.

(A kiss. Don't rush it, either the getting there or the duration. It's like climbing Mount Everest to get to this kiss, and the descent is just as dangerous.)

(While that kiss is going on...)

SCENE 33

(Out-of-time. And the eternal present.)

WARDEN

(At some point during the Warden's speech, Zach and Hannah pull away from each other.
Don't rush it.)

It was me what give the signal.

It was me what stopped your heartbeat.

I seen your body laid out, the life gone out of it. It was me what done it to you.

I done it to a hundred men before you, and if I don't die tomorrow I'll do it to a hundred more.

I saw you rise up out of yourself. Ain't not one person ever done that before.

You rose up and came straight for me. I thought you was going to take me with you. I was ready too. I'd a gone.

Meet my maker.

Receive my judgment.

But it wasn't vengeance in your heart.

Your eyes.

Your eyes was not anywhere I could see, but I felt them.

Your eyes was on me. In me. You looked inside me like I had no skin. Like I had no body. Like you and me was the same person for one split second.

And then I had my eyes back and you disappeared.

Your body was laying there, but you was gone.

Not even a trace of who you really was.

(Hannah sits at the harp. She plays Astor Piazzola's "Oblivion.")

WARDEN (CONT'D)

I looked and looked for you.
I looked everywhere.
Martinez? I said. Martinez?
You wasn't in the hallway.
You wasn't in the yard.
Hell, you wasn't in the broom closet.
I looked there. I keep looking.
You gotta be somewhere, don't you think?
A person can't just be gone.
Don't you think?

Rojelio?

Don't you think?

(The booming bass of music starts from the apartment below. Zach turns on the white noise machine. The three sounds mix together: the harp, the white noise, and the booming bass converge and become one sound. Louder. Louder.)

END OF PLAY