

La Llorona

by

Gabby Wolfe

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Gabby Wolfe
804-638-8396
gabbyr.wolfe@gmail.com

CHARACTERS:

PRESENT

- MARTA** (Can double as LUPE/others in PAST) 12-16 Young girl, coming close to womanhood. Bright, stubborn, and yearning for understanding of herself, and her family.
- ABUELA** (Can double as MAMA in PAST) Keeper of stories, looks like an amazing hugger, smells like warm bread. Caring, worried for her daughter and granddaughter.
- MAMA** (Can double as ESPERANZA in PAST) Marta's Mother. 30- 40s Holding it together. Strong. Impatient.

PAST

- ESPERANZA** Young Latina/Indigenous woman 18-20. Wants "more" than the life her parents had. Frustrated by her sister's willingness to go along with what has been handed to them in life. Observant, intuitive, headstrong, passionate, rash.
- MAMA ANA** Esperanza's Mother. Latina/Indigenous, widowed. Single mother to Esperanza. Caring, warm, strong. Worries like many mothers.
- RAMÓN** Esperanza's childhood friend. 18-25. Works in the mines. Has had a boy-next-door crush on Esperanza for years. Doesn't trust the authority in place. Loyal, caring, good-humored, willing to sacrifice.
- DOÑA ELENA** A noblewoman from Spain, 30s-40s or older, while she may come across as shallow, she's very passionate about her family's work in Latin America. Constantly planning, and strategizing.
- HERNAN** Dona Elena's nephew. The next generation in a long line of Dons. Handsome, quiet, fascinated by what his life "could be" instead of what it's planned to be.
- OFELIA** A young noblewoman, Early-Mid 20s, friend of Dona Elena, she aspires to be Hernan's wife, so that she can assume a powerful role in her community. But she also knows that such aspirations may come with a cost.
- LUPE** 5 year old daughter of Esperanza and Hernan
- TOMAS** Infant Son of Esperanza and Hernan (no actor needed)

CONT'D

WOMAN IN WHITE

Spirit of a Crying Woman, a warning.

VILLAGERS/GUARDS/PARTY GOERS - Ensemble members

“What is most wonderful about this Wailing Woman, Señor, is that she is seen in the same moment by different people in places widely apart.”

-Legends of the City of Mexico Collected
by Thomas A. Janvier

“She is a lady who killed her husband and six kids. She was sorry later. She killed herself, because God said she would have no peace until she found the kids. The kids are buried in her backbone, but she doesn't know it. She's been looking for them ever since. She is generally found in Mexico, but a friend of mine saw her in Griffith Park.”

-La Llorona in Juvenile Hall Sue P. Age
16 Mexican American, Sue P. heard this
from her uncles when she was 12.

SCENE 1

We hear a guitar playing the beginning strums of "La Llorona " someone is gently humming/ooing the vocal line. Stories of La Llorona are shared by the company.

SCENE 1A

We open in a backyard, string lights softly glowing, outdoor furniture meant for gathering, laundry hanging on the line, an old radio playing music. ENTER ABUELA , taking out some trash, she goes over to look at her plants. An argument breaks out over the serene night air. ENTER MARTA and MAMÁ coming in mid-argument.

MARTA

Mamá I told you I'm going out with Zoyla tonight!

MAMÁ

That kitchen is NOT clean Marta, you know what it's supposed to look like—

MARTA

Ma—por favor terminaré cuando vuelva a casa.

MAMÁ

You say that everytime Marta, no. No puedes salir con Zoyla.

MARTA

Mama please! I promise I'll be back in a few hours-

MAMÁ

A few hours, like last time?

MARTA

That was Zoyla's fault! She wanted me to wait while she picked out the "perfect outfit"

MAMA

I don't care who's fault it was, you're not going. I told you I need more help around the house with these extra shifts.

MARTA

It's not my fault you're working so much! Why do I have to—

ABUELA

/Marta mijita you should—

MARTA

/I can't believe you're taking HER side Abuela ?! I'm so sick of—

MAMÁ

I'm sick of your whining, you never help me without complaining, not ONCE. I always have to be ready for some kind of attitude with you, and I'm DONE. Now go back inside and finish the kitchen, you're not going anywhere tonight.

MARTA

Mama! PLEASE...Abuelita tell her to let me go, I promise I'll be back—

MAMÁ

Eh! None of that, you're not going. Now for the last time—

MARTA

You never let me do anything. Dad would let me go.

ABUELA

Martita you know it's been difficult with your mama working so much, she just needs a little extra help around the house, since your dad...you know it's been hard.

MARTA

Why does that matter, there's less of us now! So there should be less work! You just don't want me to have any fun.

MAMÁ

You're right Marta, I'm an evil mother and I want you to scrub the kitchen like you're Cinderella

MARTA

Oh my god Ma...please! Please just can I—

MAMA

NO Marta. Now I don't want to hear another word – I'm going to be so late!

MARTA turns to head back in the house, but then stops.

MARTA

You know it's not a surprise dad left, who can stand being around you!

ABUELA

Marta!

MAMA stops and drops her bag and goes inside.

(to MAMA) Wait Laura! Ay...

MARTA

Abuela... I—

ABUELA

No puedo creerlo Marta. Go inside and apologize.

MARTA

She doesn't listen to me! No one does! I'm

ABUELA

MARTA!

MARTA runs off into the surrounding woods by the river, she collapses by the river and begins to cry. We hear MARTA'S cries begin to meld with something, or someone else. Enter a WOMAN IN WHITE, she moves towards Marta, long white hands outstretched. Marta begins to follow her getting closer to the river....then

ABUELA

MARTA ¡NO TE VAYAS CON ELLA!

MARTA

(Snapping out of it) Abuela?! What's going on?!

THE WOMAN IN WHITE disappears. There's still a chill from what almost happened.

ABUELA

Marta!! NEVER run off like that again! Don't you realize—

MARTA

What was that?! Who was that?! I—I don't

ABUELA

Martita, respira.

MARTA

But who was that Abuela?!

ABUELA

Try and calm down—please Marta—

MARTA

No! Who was that woman?!

ABUELA

Marta...do you remember the stories I would tell you, cuando era niña, sobre La Llorona.

MARTA

Yes, but what does that have to do with anything?

ABUELA

Las leyendas tienen algo de verdad ¿no? It's dangerous to see her, if she had taken you away—

MARTA

Ay come on Abuela! -- Dime la verdad!

ABUELA

Marta te prometo que ella es real.

MARTA

I should've known you'd like to make something up. You and Mama are always keeping things from me. First papa now—

ABUELA

¡Nosotras estamos tratando de protegerte! I have NEVER lied to you. Your papa leaving has made things very difficult right now. It's been hard on all of us, especially your mother. We are not..we are not strong right now. La Llorona can feel it.

MARTA

This is crazy! You're not seriously saying she's REAL?!

ABUELA

Marta you saw her. You cannot lie to yourself about that.

MARTA

I—I don't know.

ABUELA

Marta, escuchame...then maybe you'll understand.

Marta nods.

There was a woman... named Esperanza. She was a seamstress, like her mamá, and her abuela before. Because their work was so delicate and fine, the noble ladies would come to them, to mend their beautiful dresses for fiestas, weddings, baptisms....Esperanza and her mother were getting ready to deliver Doña Elena of the Valdez Family her dress, that she was planning to wear to a very important fiesta.

Transition from present to the past. EXIT MARTA and ABUELA. Company helps set the stage for the legend. Musical interlude.

SCENE 2

*Scene Changes to early 1800s. We see a small house, **ESPERANZA** enters with a fine dress.*

ESPERANZA

Mama,! Llegaremos tarde a menos que nos demos prisa! You know how Doña Elena gets!

MAMA ANA

From offstage Sí, hija, I'm almost done! I want to make sure I look "presentable"

ESPERANZA looks down and realizes she has not put the effort forth to "tidy up."

ESPERANZA

Mama, it doesn't matter what we wear, recuerdas que somos campesinas.

ENTER MAMA ANA.

MAMA ANA

But we have pride, Esperanza, never forget that.

Looking at the dress

Are you sure you got that detailing right? Doña Elena said everything had to be perfect.

ESPERANZA

What's so important about this dress?

MAMA ANA

She mentioned the De la Cruz Family was holding a big fiesta. I think the, daughter Ofelia has been planning it, my friend Beatriz mentioned—

ESPERANZA

Please Mama! I need time to get to town! I haven't even started on my chores.

MAMA ANA

And who's fault is that? Besides, what's in town that would make you need to hurry? I promise you it can wait. And please don't forget to feed the chickens again, they're looking skinny!

ESPERANZA

The chickens are fine, there's a dance tonight, I want to make sure I have time to get ready!

MAMA ANA

Ahhh, well when you go mijita, please don't be all

gestures something for stuck up.

ESPERANZA

What's that

repeats gesture

MAMA ANA

Esperanza, you know you can be a little stuck up, even if you don't mean it--

ESPERANZA

Not this conversation again--

We hear a carriage come down the road, horses whinnying, and pull to stop.

MAMA ANA

¿Quién será?

Enter DOÑA ELENA and her nephew HERNAN.

DOÑA ELENA! Perdón Señora, we were just about to leave to deliver your gown!

DOÑA ELENA

Buenos Dias Ana, Esperanza, we won't be long I promise you. I saw we were close by, and asked Ruben to pull over, so I could pick up my dress. This is my nephew, Don Hernan Mateo Rodriguez Valdez.

HERNAN

Buenos días señora, señorita. I hope you can forgive our intrusion.

MAMA ANA

(Curtseying) ¡No trouble at all Don Hernan! We are so glad you have arrived safely, I've prayed for your family since your father's passing. I hope the journey wasn't too hard. This is my daughter Esperanza.

ESPERANZA

.....

MAMA ANA

Esperanza!

ESPERANZA

--Buenos Dias...

MAMA ANA

Buenos Días....(Don Hernan)

ESPERANZA

Buenos Dias...

DOÑA ELENA

As my nephew said, we were close by, and I want to take my dress now. I presume it is properly cleaned and hemmed Ana? With the detailing all finished?

MAMA ANA

Sí señora. Claro que Sí

DOÑA ELENA

Bueno, hand it over to Hernan, take care with the wrappings Hernan. The roads are so dusty here. Really Ana, it's a miracle you all aren't always covered head to toe!

ESPERANZA holding the dress in the wrappings has not heard a word DOÑA ELENA has said.

MAMA ANA

Esperanza...will you please hand over Señora Valdez her dress! She's a busy woman!

ESPERANZA

Oh! Of course.

*As **ESPERANZA** goes to hand over the gown, the stage lights flicker, time seems to freeze for everyone except Esperanza. We hear a woman cruelly laughing, **ESPERANZA** keeps looking for the sound. The laughing is getting louder and louder, **ESPERANZA** is clearly frightened. Suddenly the horse whinnies and screams. Time resumes. **ESPERANZA** quickly moves towards the carriage, but then trips and falls, the dress in tow. A huge rip is heard. The beautiful dress is now covered in mud and torn.*

DOÑA ELENA

¡Idiota! Look what you've done—oh it's ruined!

MAMA ANA

Ay! Doña Elena, please forgive my daughter, she's clumsy at times. Tomorrow we may be able to fix it! I'm sure we can—

DONA ELENA

This is Hernan's grand arrival to town, everyone will be expecting us to look our best, I can't possibly—This is the last time I will ever have you—

HERNAN

¡Con permiso! Tía Elena, I am sure they can fix the dress before Señorita Ofelia's fiesta, there should be plenty of time! Verdad Señora?

MAMA ANA

Of course we can. I assure you Doña Elena, your plans will not be ruined.

ESPERANZA

I apologize for my clumsiness Doña Elena, I will have your dress ready in time for the fiesta I promise. I will deliver it myself.

DOÑA ELENA

See that you do! This fiesta is a very...important event for our family. You have 2 days, I'm sure there will be no issues with that?

MAMA ANA

Of course not Señora, we will have the gown ready by then. We promise.

DOÑA ELENA

Bueno. Be sure to enter through the servant's entrance, Come Hernan!

HERNAN gives a slight bow to ESPERANZA and MAMA ANA, then turns to leave with DOÑA ELENA, making sure to leave one last glance at ESPERANZA.

ESPERANZA

I don't know what happened! I was just about to hand the dress over to Don Hernan – Did you hear it? I heard someone– they were laughing..

MAMA ANA

I saw what happened. You let Don Hernan distract you! Sí, él es muy guapo, but Esperanza, remember who he is, and who you are. Vamos. We have other dresses to

finish, and now with Doña Elena's gown needing to be cleaned again, we have to work quickly!

Exit MAMA ANA with the dress. ESPERANZA lingers on stage trying to piece together what just happened. She waits...wondering if the laughing will start again...nothing. She turns to go into the house.

SCENE 3

A guitar player (the same one playing the interludes) plays music for dancing. Sounds of people laughing, drinking. ENTER a few party goers dancing, eating, gossiping etc. ENTER ESPERANZA

PARTY-GOER 1

Oye! Mira LA REINA ESPERANZA

Collective teasing oooooos and bowing

PARTY-GOER 2

La Reina has graced us with her presence. I wonder if her majesty will dance with any peasants this evening.

PARTY-GOER 3 (Ramón)

I asked her one time, and she just danced away.

ESPERANZA

With that face, all the señoritas dance away from you Ramón.

Collective Oooooo's and laughs at poor Ramón's expense. Sick burn. Ramón, quickly recovering, pretends that he's been stabbed through the heart. Esperanza laughs at this. They're childhood friends. It's typical.

ESPERANZA

Ramón! Where have you been? I went by your place last week, but your mama said you were still out in the mines.

RAMÓN

They have us working such long days, it's easier to just stay out there and sleep in the fields.

ESPERANZA

Ugh, I couldn't do that. Too many bugs.

RAMÓN

Well of course not, La Reina must have her soft, warm bed and chocolate every night

ESPERANZA

Well better a soft warm bed than sleeping in the dirt.

She brushes his hair and a little bit of dirt comes out. They laugh.

RAMÓN

You actually going to join us this time 'Anza?

ESPERANZA

What are you talking about?

RAMÓN

A few fancy moves and calling it a night is not exactly joining the party.

ESPERANZA

At least I don't look like a chicken strutting around!

Music begins, dancers take the floor. A few party-goers try to dance with Esperanza, but no luck, they can barely keep up. After a few unlucky suitors, one man with a hat on, who has been in the background, steps in for a dance with Esperanza. Esperanza, impressed with this new dancer, dances with passion and competition. Faster and faster until the song ends, applause follows, then the mysterious party-goer takes off his hat.

ESPERANZA

Don Hernan?!

HERNAN

(Applauding the band) Shhh!!! Yes..I thought I'd get away for a little while. That's the best playing I've heard in a long time.

ESPERANZA

You sound surprised?

HERNAN

This is so much better than anything I went to in Spain.

ESPERANZA

Again the tone of surprise.

HERNAN

Ay come on, I'm just enjoying myself, you should try it sometime.

ESPERANZA

It's hard to enjoy yourself, when the Spanish show up to a party they weren't invited to.

HERNAN

I wasn't trying to embarrass you—you came up to me! I'm sorry if I made you feel—

ESPERANZA

You didn't MAKE me feeling anything, now if you'll excuse me.

HERNAN

Señorita please..

ESPERANZA

It's late señor, and my mama is expecting me. Be careful walking home. The roads are very dusty, and you can't have the head of the Valdez family looking like a dirty peasant.

Hernan at a loss for words, bows quickly and walks away, RAMÓN, walks up to Esperanza.

RAMÓN

Oye 'Anza, who was that?

ESPERANZA

No one important, sorry I need to get home—

RAMÓN

Ahhhh La Reina only dances with tall dark strangers, none of the peasants

ESPERANZA

¡Ay Ramón, deja de burlarte!

RAMÓN

'Anza you know I'm just messing with you. You could never take a joke! Even when we were kids!

ESPERANZA

None of the jokes I heard were funny.

RAMÓN

HA! You always gotta have the last word don't you 'Anza. You sure you won't dance with a poor peasant this evening? Who knows I might turn into a prince!

ESPERANZA

A prince who sleeps in the dirt? I think it would take a bit more than a dance, Adios Ramón.

EXIT ESPERANZA. HERNAN approaches RAMÓN.

HERNAN

She's a friend of yours?

RAMÓN

Sometimes... We grew up together. And you are?

HERNAN

Oh? Um, Just passing through. Excuse me.

HERNAN leaves, RAMÓN goes over to the band and picks up a guitar. playing into the night.

SCENE 4

The next day. Late morning. ESPERANZA and MAMA ANA are working on finishing, cleaning and mending Doña Elena's gown. It's tedious, and takes very meticulous scrubbing. There are other big white sheets of laundry and various clothing hanging on the lines.

MAMA ANA

'Anza, necesitamos más jabón. ¡Esperanza! Pay attention, go look for more soap. Por favor.

ESPERANZA gets up to look for the soap, it isn't where she set it down earlier. She begins walking around to see if she dropped it somewhere, she lifts a sheet, where she finds HERNAN holding the soap.

HERNAN

Hola señorita, looking for this? *Holding up the soap*

ESPERANZA

Ay!

(lowering her voice)

Don Hernan. What are you doing here?

HERNAN

I wanted to come and apologize for tricking you last evening.

ESPERANZA

You couldn't have done that last night?!

ESPERANZA tries to grab the soap from HERNAN.

If Mamá sees you here, she'll tell Doña Elena. Give me that!!

Another keep away game commences with the soap.

MAMA ANA

*(Calling over to Esperanza)*Anza! Encontraste el jabón?!

ESPERANZA

¡Damélo!

MAMA ANA

'Anza! Where are you?!

HERNAN

(Still holding it just out of reach) Meet me tonight! Where can I see you?

ESPERANZA

You must go Señor!

(Chasing HERNAN around the laundry)

HERNAN

Not until you tell me where to go tonight.

MAMA ANA

'ANZA!!!

ESPERANZA

¡YA VOY MAMA! Fine, tonight meet me by the river, near the mango trees. Just outside of town.

HERNAN

See you then.

ESPERANZA

Yes, now quickly, go!

Wait! You forgot to give me--

Just as MAMA ANA comes over, HERNAN ducks behind one of the sheets. ESPERANZA quickly turns her back to the sheet, hoping to conceal any shadow or movement from Hernan.

MAMA ANA

Ay Dios Mio 'Anza, que estás haciendo?

ESPERANZA

Lo siento, mamá, I started looking for the soap, but then saw some of the sheets needed to be hung, and then--

MAMA ANA

Y, el jabón?

ESPERANZA

El jabón?...Oh! pues, ummm

Like a flash, HERNAN from behind the sheet hands her the soap, and kisses her hand. MAMA ANA doesn't see this.

Ay-Aquí! El jabón.

MAMA ANA

Well come on! That dress won't clean itself!

ESPERANZA

Sí Mamá, claro que sí.

ESPERANZA goes to finish cleaning the dress, MAMA ANA hangs back, she thinks she hears something from behind the sheet, she lifts the sheet up, but nothing is there...Lights fade.

SCENE 5

We are in the study of the hacienda of the Valdez family. DOÑA ELENA is waiting for HERNAN to return. HERNAN enters.

DOÑA ELENA

Hernan! Dónde estabas?

HERNAN

I was exploring.

DOÑA ELENA

Well I'm sure you'll find that it's quite...different from Spain.

HERNAN

So I've noticed...

DOÑA ELENA

No olvides que mañana por la noche iremos a la fiesta de Señorita Ofelia. Everyone will be there, and I'm especially eager for you to meet her.

HERNAN

Really Tía Elena? More match making?

DOÑA ELENA

Hernan, you know as well as I, that it's important you marry someone who will be a strong partner as you take over the family business. Your father worked very hard to build up this town and the mines. Before he died, he told me that it was important I help guide you and prepare you to become head of our family.

HERNAN

Yes, I'm sure my father wanted many things for me.

DOÑA ELENA

And they are waiting for you, Hernan, but first we must find you a worthy bride. To stand by your side as you take over our family's work. Believe me, there are many young women vying for a spot in this family, but I have determined who truly shines. You needn't worry—

HERNAN

So it's all decided then? Do I have any say in who I will be spending my life with?

DOÑA ELENA

Mira Hernan (*goes over to open a box, selects a silver cuff bracelet*) Ves este pulsera?

HERNAN

Examining it, Was it made from the silver in the mines?

DOÑA ELENA

Sí. This was one of the first pieces made from the Valdez mines. Una cosa magnífica no? You see, the locals don't understand how to create something so refined and pure.

HERNAN

And we do?

DOÑA ELENA

Sí, exactamente. Our family has made treasure from this land. We're bringing honor to the Valdez family, and to Spain. We cannot continue this work if you—

CRYING WOMAN

“Ayyy mis hijos”

HERNAN

Qué es eso-(*going to window*) -¿Quién es Tía?

DOÑA ELENA

One of the local women. You see, many of their men go to work in our mines. Sometimes accidents happen. She will be gone soon enough...

HERNAN

Accidents? What sort of accidents?

CRYING WOMAN

“AYYYYY MIS HIJOS” (*continues to sob...*)

DOÑA ELENA

There are collapses, Sometimes the men dig too far. Your father would provide some compensation to some of the families that had lost men in the mines, pero...

HERNAN

And this woman?

DOÑA ELENA

Son cosas que pasan, Hernan. It's likely she's lost her sons. I imagine her husband has already passed. She may be alone, but we've done what we can for her Hernan—

HERNAN

Are there more women like her in the village?

DOÑA ELENA

Not many, but it does happen from time to time. They eventually leave to go stay with other family, or...

HERNAN

Or?

DOÑA ELENA

Hernan no te preocupes, ella no es nadie. Vamos a cenar. We can continue discussing your new responsibilities tomorrow.

They exit, we still hear the woman sobbing, the sound fades, as the stage transitions to nighttime. Someone is singing an old song on a guitar.

SCENE 6

The river, by the mango tree. It's a full moon, ENTER ESPERANZA. She begins to check her appearance in the water, as she looks down into the water, something seems to beckon her closer, she leans in, when a cold, white hand shoots out and grabs her. She screams, unable to wrench free--then she finally breaks off, and falls back against the tree, trying to catch her breath. ENTER HERNAN

HERNAN

Buenas noches Señorita Esperanza--are you alright?

ESPERANZA

There was something in the water! I--

HERNAN

A little late to be fishing?

Joke clearly doesn't land

I'm sure you were just a little tired and nervous waiting around here in the dark.

ESPERANZA

I know what I saw! --I thought I saw...It almost looked like... nevermind...

HERNAN

Señorita Esperanza-

ESPERANZA

Call me 'Anza. I always feel like I'm about to get into trouble when I hear my full name.

HERNAN

Please then, 'Anza... Hernan.

ESPERANZA

Very well...Hernan.

HERNAN

I was afraid you wouldn't meet me.

ESPERANZA

Really? Why?

HERNAN

I thought you might still be mad at me. Last night-I never meant to—

ESPERANZA

Don Hernan please. I'm fine. Last night was...an exception, I was caught up in the music, but generally I'm very aware of my surroundings, and any ..misleadings.

HERNAN

Says the girl who kept losing the jabon.

ESPERANZA

I have a feeling it wasn't so much that I couldn't keep track of it, more so it was stolen.

HERNAN

You've caught me! El Ladrón del Jabón.

This makes Esperanza laugh. A moment.

I'm sorry for my Tía's behavior the other day. Anyone could see it was an accident.

ESPERANZA

I —well-thank you señor-- Hernan I mean- It really my fault, I let myself get... distracted.

HERNAN

Distracted?

ESPERANZA

Well yes, I saw--we were caught off guard you see, seeing you all there the other morning at the house--and then.

HERNAN

'Anza

ESPERANZA

(Snapping out of it) Huh?

HERNAN

Were you just distracted?

ESPERANZA

You see? Lost in my thoughts.

HERNAN

Well you didn't get distracted dancing last night!

ESPERANZA

I love dancing, it's the only time I feel truly free. Everything seems to fade away.

*Esperanza begins to dance a little, humming a tune, guitar gently playing along.
Hernan perhaps joins in.*

HERNAN

I see what you mean. Before you get distracted –would you meet me again tomorrow night?

ESPERANZA

I thought you had to go to Señorita Ofelia's tomorrow.

HERNAN

I can slip away after dinner... This fiesta is a plot of my tía's to marry me off to Señorita Ofelia, or another young lady of social standing.

ESPERANZA

You're not interested in marrying one of the fine ladies of this town? "Oh Don Hernan, I hope I can live up to the family name! Oh Don Hernan, quisieras tu cafécito aquí en el cuarto de plata o el cuarto de oro? Don Hernan, how many sons would you like?" Yes I can see how that would be a terrifying group to face. I'm sure one of them will make a lovely wife, seeing to your every need, making sure you're at every important function, telling you to wear this dinner jacket not that one. You know, important things a Doña does.

HERNAN

I'm not interested in being told what to do.

ESPERANZA

You are the son of a wealthy Don, you don't have power to say what you will and won't do?

HERNAN

Right now, I'm just an obedient servant to the demands of the family. When to eat, when to sleep, when to go out. Who to marry.

ESPERANZA

(Teasing) I bet when it's time to eat, they've already brought you your food on a silver platter? That doesn't sound so bad.

HERNAN

It's actually a gold platter

ESPERANZA

I knew it.

Mama is always saying "Esperanza, don't be so stuck up, or else you will never find a husband"

HERNAN

You? Stuck up?

ESPERANZA

Some people in town see it that way. You heard them the other night... "¡La reina Esperanza!" Marrying a man from town means a life where he works all day in the mines, while I am stuck at home with the babies, sewing, cleaning, over and over. If I stay here...I'll be trapped.

beat.

Mi papa trabajó toda su vida en las minas. I never got to see him. When I did, he looked like he had just crawled out of his own grave...He would always try to wash his hands and face, before kissing me and Mama, then as the years went on, the dirt seemed to pile up more and more on his face. Sometimes he would be too tired to wash up, as soon as he sat down he would fall asleep. He died in the mines, in the dirt and silver, there was a collapse. I remember, Mama was sewing Papá a new shirt. She was so excited to show it to him. Then we heard people yelling outside and running towards the mines. She grabbed me by the arm and we ran, she was still holding his shirt. We ran as fast as we could to the mines, but it was already too late.

HERNAN

I'm sorry Esperanza...I lost my father too..it's...

A shared moment of silence. Connection.

ESPERANZA

I think about leaving here sometimes. Mama has taught me everything she knows. Maybe I could get work somewhere as a seamstress. I've been saving some money, but I can't...

HERNAN

Why not?

ESPERANZA

I'm all she has, she's all I have...

HERNAN

I'm sure she would want you to be happy...to be free.

A rooster crows, morning light and sounds are starting to creep in.

ESPERANZA

Ay! It's morning?!

HERNAN

According to the rooster, it must be.

ESPERANZA

Meet here again tomorrow night?

HERNAN

You mean tonight?

A "seriously" look with a smile breaks over Anza's face

ESPERANZA

I guess you'll just have to see.

Hernan flashes a smile, takes Anza's hand and kisses it and bows low. He exits. Anza stays a few moments watching him leave. A breeze blows through, she shivers, drawing her shawl tightly around her shoulders, then rushes off to get home before Mama Ana realizes she's gone.

SCENE 7

ESPERANZA returns home, quietly trying to sneak back in. Her stomach growls loudly, Seeing a mango on the table, she grabs it and takes a big bite, juice spilling over, she tries to clean up with a towel, spotting a piece of bread, she continues to add to her makeshift breakfast. As she turns to get some water, she sees her mother.

ESPERANZA

Mama! How long have you been standing there? I was just- I woke up so hungry--

MAMA ANA

No me mientas.

ESPERANZA

Mama, I'm sorry, I just wanted some time to be alone, it was a long day and--

MAMA ANA

You weren't alone.

ESPERANZA

Yes I was Mamá, who would I be meeting— definitely not Ramón—besides I'm too stuck up remember?

MAMA ANA

You were with Don Hernan.

ESPERANZA

Wha-? How? How could you know that?

MAMA ANA

I saw bootprints around the laundry. The only man that was around the house wearing such fine boots was Don Hernan. Not to mention the way you were looking at him the other day. And the way he was looking at you.

ESPERANZA

Mamá, nothing happened. I think he just needed someone to talk to. Besides, he wanted to apologize for Doña Elena's behavior. You saw how she talked to me!

MAMA ANA

'Anza...Please listen to me. You need to be careful. Men like Don Hernan do not just "talk" to women like you, alone, at night. And I keep telling you, it's time you found a young man in the village to marry.

ESPERANZA

Mama please. What if Hernan...

MAMA ANA

DON Hernan is not a man for you. What about Ramón?

ESPERANZA

I don't want to marry any of the men from here! You know as well as I do, that the men here are either broken from working the mines, poor farmers, or dead. I can't live like this, sewing, taking care of babies, making meals for a man who can barely lift up his head to look at his wife who is just as tired.

MAMA ANA

That's not fair 'Anza. Papa did his best and you know that. He tried 'Anza!

ESPERANZA

Those mines killed him! Papá lived the life he was expected to have and now he's gone--I refuse--I can't be someone's widow in waiting.

MAMA ANA

Esperanza- you don't know—

ESPERANZA

I do know! I see the same story happen everyday, and now you WANT it to happen to me?

MAMA ANA

That's not what I'm saying, Esperanza—

ESPERANZA

I'm not going to just sit around sewing and wait for things to happen-

MAMA ANA

'Anza!

ESPERANZA

I'm not going to be pathetic like you!

Shame. It stings. It can't be taken back

MAMA ANA

Esperanza, men like Don Hernan don't take women like you for brides. Men like that... they make you believe they can give you the world, when really they are here to take it. They take. That's all they do 'Anza. I don't want you to--¿Esperanza me estás escuchando...? It's late. Finish up and go to bed. You can't be late to Doña Elena's.

ESPERANZA, not having much of an appetite anymore, gets up from the table to go to sleep.

MAMA ANA

(As Esperanza is leaving...)

Esperanza. If I find out you are sneaking to see him again, I will have no choice but to tell Doña Elena. I promise you.

ESPERANZA stops at this. Then continues to go to bed. MAMA ANA alone in the kitchen, begins to clean up. It's too much.

SCENE 8

We are back in Doña Elena's home. ESPERANZA is there to personally deliver Doña Elena her dress. She waits for Doña Elena in the same sitting room that we saw Hernan and Doña Elena in before. She takes in the grandeur of the home. Enter DOÑA ELENA and OFELIA.

OFELIA

¡Ay Señora Elena, no sé qué más hacer! I invited Hernan for dinner last night, like you said, to encourage his attention, but he told me he was otherwise engaged. I feel like I'm doing everything right but—

DOÑA ELENA

He slipped away so quickly last night, I wonder what could have taken his attention away from you my dear. Pero no te preocupes Ofelia. Hernan will be my escort to your fiesta this evening. You will have your chance with him.

OFELIA

I'm glad to hear you say that. There aren't many young men, or should I say, suitable young men around here. Hernan's arrival has caused a stir amongst some of the ladies in town. Ay...quiero dar una buena impresión.

DOÑA ELENA

Oh Ofelia! Ven aquí cariño. You will be the only woman he speaks to this evening, I will make sure of that.

(Finally noticing ESPERANZA)

(DONA ELENA cont'd) Ay! Esperanza! Qué diablos estás haciendo aquí?!

ESPERANZA

Perdón Señora. I have your dress.

DOÑA ELENA

No dirt this time, you managed not to be clumsy on your way over?

ESPERANZA

No dirt Señora...

DOÑA ELENA

Mmm. Ofelia you think this will do for your fiesta this evening?

OFELIA

Oh it's absolutely perfect Doña Elena. You have such exquisite taste.

DOÑA ELENA

Oh gracias Ofelia, I wanted to show you sooner, but it wasn't ready.

OFELIA

Que pena señora, Ay! Is that the time? I must go and see how preparations are coming along.

DONA ELENA

Of course! Hasta pronto!

Exit OFELIA. We are left with DOÑA ELENA and ESPERANZA.

DOÑA ELENA

There will be a wedding here in a month. I'm certain.

ESPERANZA

¿Señora?

DOÑA ELENA

Ofelia y Hernan! They will be a perfect match.

ESPERANZA

Don Hernan plans to marry her?

DOÑA ELENA

Hernan will marry her. It has been planned. Ahora necesitas irte, so I can get ready for tonight. Here is your payment.

ESPERANZA

Doña Elena...es la mitad! This is half what you promised to me and my mother.

DOÑA ELENA

Yes. It was not ready when promised. Por eso, this is what you have earned.

ESPERANZA

That's not fair! My mother and I have always done excellent work for you! The dress was ready in time-- there was--you didn't give me a chance to explain what happened!

DOÑA ELENA

Silencio! What on earth has gotten into you? How dare you speak to me this way? You're lucky I pay you anything.

ESPERANZA

Perdóname Señora, Gracias. My mother and I appreciate your patronage.

DOÑA ELENA

Bueno. Now leave, before I change my mind about paying you at all.

ESPERANZA turns and exits. Doña Elena remains admiring her dress. Lights fade.

SCENE 9

Back at ESPERANZA and MAMA ANA'S house, after dinner, MAMA ANA is mending some shirts. ESPERANZA is washing the dishes and cleaning up. Tension hanging in the air from the fight. Esperanza finishes up, heads to bed without saying goodnight. Mama Ana sighs and heads to bed as well. Moments later, Esperanza sneaks out.

ESPERANZA sneaks her way across the gardens towards the party at OFELIA'S. She sees HERNAN taking in the night air with OFELIA. OFELIA is called away, and Hernan is left standing there, ESPERANZA seizes her moment.

ESPERANZA

Hissing ¡Oye Ladrón del Jabón! ¡Soy yo! La Reina Esperanza.

HERNAN

Mi reina! Have you come to take me away from this boring party?

ESPERANZA

A good queen always takes pity on her loyal subjects, but Señor Hernan, it looks like you were enjoying Señorita Ofelia's company.

HERNAN

Our families have known each other for years, I was just being polite.
(Looks back behind him) Race you to the river?

Esperanza, smiling, raises her shawl back up like a hood and starts running towards the river. Hernan runs after her

Gardens change to riverside

She beats him there, she's looking out for him, but he sneaks up behind her and "scares" her. They laugh, a kiss, another. Fade to blackout.

SCENE 10

Several villagers and RAMÓN are outside enjoying the night. Guards from the Valdez household are patrolling. Someone spits at their feet. A fight builds and ensues. A shot is heard and a villager falls to the ground. RAMÓN runs towards ESPERANZA & MAMA ANA's house. MAMA ANA coming out of her house worried. RAMÓN.

MAMA ANA

Ramón! ¿Qué está pasando??

RAMÓN

A fight broke out between some of the workers and Valdez's guards. Someone shot into the street and killed Carlos!

MAMA ANA

Have you seen Esperanza?!

RAMÓN

She's not here with you?

MAMA ANA

No, I thought she was in bed, pero cuando fui verla, oh Ramón where—

The fight grows louder and louder. Mama Ana is visibly under strain.

RAMÓN

It 's not safe here, por favor, señora tenemos que irnos!

MAMA ANA

I'm not leaving without Esperanza!

RAMÓN

Señora please, I'm begging you we have to go!

MAMA ANA

No Ramón!! Please go look for Esperanza, I'll be fine I promise. I'll wait inside and close the windows.

RAMÓN

I'll find her, te lo juro!

RAMÓN leaves to go search for Esperanza. MAMA ANA is left by the house, as the sound of the fights grow louder, she is struggling to get the window shutters closed. She struggles, grasps her chest, and falls to the floor. Lights fade.

SCENE 12

The next morning, rooster crowing, sun peeking through. We see ESPERANZA and HERNAN by the river. HERNAN is still asleep. ESPERANZA wakes up and realizes she was out all night. Slight panic sets in, as she springs up to get herself together.

ESPERANZA

AY. NO! Hernan! HERNAN WAKE UP! Despiertate!!

HERNAN

Wha- what? Ouch! 'Anza I'm awake—I'm awake! You don't need to hit—ow!!

ESPERANZA

I have to get home, Mamá is going to find out. She said she would tell--Ay what will I say to her?! Que lo voy a decir?!

HERNAN

If you hurry, maybe you can get there before she wakes up. Go! Don't worry about me.

ESPERANZA

I'm sorry I don't mean to leave so quickly, I just—

HERNAN

La Reina Esperanza has important places to be, I'll be fine. Go!

Esperanza gives Hernan a kiss, it's hard to leave...she grabs her shawl and runs for the house. We hear sounds of the villagers lamenting over the events of the previous night. ESPERANZA encounters one of the VILLAGERS on the way home.

ESPERANZA

Que paso aquí

VILLAGER

Un tiroteo, no sé quién lo empezó. Terrible. Terrible.

*The villager moves on. As **ESPERANZA** sees other members of the village picking up the rubble from the fight. As she approaches her house, she sees **RAMÓN** coming out of the house.*

RAMÓN

Esperanza!

RAMÓN runs to hug her.

Are you okay? I've been looking everywhere for you. I thought maybe you had come back home—

ESPERANZA

Ramón! What happened? Is Mama okay?

RAMÓN lets go of her.

RAMÓN

A fight broke out between some workers and guards in the village. Your mama came out when she heard gunshots. She was worried about you. She—

beat.

I tried to get her to leave with me ‘Anza, I tried!

ESPERANZA

Is she—

RAMÓN

....

ESPERANZA

Ramón...

ESPERANZA looks towards the entrance of the house. The door is ajar, and it is dark inside.

RAMÓN

I—I’m sorry ‘Anza.

ESPERANZA pushes RAMÓN out of the way and enters the house. Screams, sobbing. RAMÓN sinks to the ground. A villager woman walks by holding a limp child in her arms. Music underscores.

SCENE 13

A cemetery. Early morning. A morning dove is heard. VILLAGERS, RAMÓN, and ESPERANZA are onstage. The final words are being said by the Padre. Mourners slowly file out. ESPERANZA and RAMÓN remain onstage.

ESPERANZA

I love you Mama...

RAMÓN

‘Anza.

ESPERANZA

Breaking into tears. It’s all my fault.

RAMÓN

What do you mean?

ESPERANZA

If I hadn't gone out, if I just stayed.

RAMÓN

Esperanza, no podrías saber! It's not your fault–

ESPERANZA continues to cry.

'Anza...where were you that night?

He goes to hold her, at first she doesn't reciprocate, but then is about to reciprocate, when HERNAN enters, with flowers in his hand. RAMÓN and ESPERANZA see him immediately, ESPERANZA springs up. HERNAN was not expecting to see RAMÓN there.

ESPERANZA

Herna- (quickly remembering RAMÓN) Don Hernan my apologies, mi mamá, ella–, we were just saying goodbye. This is Ramón, we grew up together.

RAMÓN just barely nods his head to HERNAN.

HERNAN

Yes, one of the servants told me what happened. I wanted to come and pay my respects– your mother worked for my family for many years, it only seemed right to offer condolences. Siento mucho tu perdida.

ESPERANZA

Muchas Gracias Don Hernan.

HERNAN hands her the flowers. They look at each other, RAMÓN moves to put a hand on ESPERANZA's shoulder. HERNAN takes his leave, bowing to ESPERANZA and exits.

RAMÓN

How could you 'Anza...

ESPERANZA

What are you talking about?

RAMÓN

Don Hernan? You were with him that night! Te acostaste con él?

ESPERANZA

You have no right to judge me Ramón– Why shouldn't he want me? He loves me. We understand each other. He knows I want more than this life.

RAMÓN

And he's going to give it to you? You really think men like Don Hernan make women like you their wives? No Esperanza. I know you're smarter than that. He's had what he wanted. He's not going to come sweep you off your feet.

ESPERANZA

Leave me alone Ramón.

He doesn't move.

GO!

She throws the flowers at him.

RAMÓN

You know I'm right 'Anza.

RAMÓN exits. ESPERANZA stays staring at her mothers grave. Off in the distance, we hear something like a lullaby. ESPERANZA looks for the sound, but cannot find it. Lights fade...

SCENE 14

Several weeks have passed. Late in the evening. We are at the mango tree by the river where HERNAN is anxiously waiting for someone. ENTER ESPERANZA

HERNAN

Esperanza!

They run and hug each other. Taking a moment of safety and comfort in the embrace.

I'm sorry I couldn't get away, Tía Elena has been worried about me leaving the hacienda, so she ordered for a guard to be around me any time I leave. I found out the guard has a fondness for wine, so he's guarding a barrel at the moment. What's wrong? Your message sounded important.

ESPERANZA

I'm just so glad to see you— I was afraid after not hearing from you—

HERNAN

I'm sorry mi reina— do you forgive me.

A smile breaks across Esperanza's face. Then she remembers why they're here.

ESPERANZA

Hernan...I need to tell you something.This is not easy...

HERNAN

What is it mi reina?

She takes his hand and puts it on her belly. He can feel a change. Initially he's happy, but then happiness quickly shifts to worry.

HERNAN

.....

ESPERANZA

Hernan? Please. I know this is not going to be easy, but maybe if we—

HERNAN

Esperanza... I don't—

ESPERANZA

I have a plan Hernan, you will go to Doña Elena and tell her exactly what's happened. I'm carrying the future of the Valdez family, y ella tiene que respetarlo.

HERNAN

I--I don't know 'Anza, I need time to think, I will speak to her. I promise.

We hear the church bell toll the hour. Morning is starting

(Continued) I need to get back to the hacienda, before the household wakes up.

ESPERANZA

Wait, Hernan! What about Doña Elena? The baby will be here before we know it
Hernan, I need you to do this. For our family. I need to hear it. I don't want to lose anyone else...

HERNAN

I will talk to her as soon as I get back to the hacienda. We will be together I promise.

They embrace again, a kiss, Esperanza sits by the mango tree, with her hand on her belly. A moment of rest. The church bells ring again in the distance. A woman cries "Ayyyyy mis hijos" it repeats over and over getting louder and louder. Her cries intermingle with the church bells. A WOMAN in WHITE appears.

ESPERANZA

Who are you? What do you want?

Church bells ring louder and louder, ayy mis hijos continues, the woman in white outstretches her hand, she moves closer to ESPERANZA.

ESPERANZA

No! Get away from me! Get away!

We hear Ramón calling for Esperanza. The woman in white drifts away...

RAMÓN

'Anza?

ESPERANZA

Ramón?! What are you doing here?

RAMÓN

My mother told me 'Anza. She said you came by because you were worried about—Is it true?

ESPERANZA

Yes...it's true

Beat.

RAMÓN

Marry me 'Anza.

ESPERANZA

Ramón...you don't know what you're—

RAMÓN

I do know. I don't care, he won't take care of you. He's not the man you think he is Esperanza, he'll turn out like the rest of them. Men like them don't treat women like you—

ESPERANZA

Women like me? Are you trying to help me or insult me Ramón, because I can't really tell. I know Hernan. He will keep his promises.

RAMÓN

And what has he promised exactly? What has he said that makes you so sure 'Anza?

ESPERANZA

He's going to talk to Doña Elena today. I know what she's like, but my child is the future of the Valdez family, she can't deny that.

RAMÓN

One of two things will happen, Anza. They will ignore you both, or they will take the child away. Don't let them have control over your life. Marry me and we can go far away from here, start somewhere new.

ESPERANZA

I—

Beat.

Dejame pensarlo Ramón. Please.

RAMÓN

Nods. exits.

Esperanza stays for a moment. As she leaves she passes by some workers on the way to the mines, looking defeated and worn.

SCENE 15

Later that morning, HERNAN is sitting in his study, preparing his conversation with DOÑA ELENA. Just as he's about to go talk to her. DOÑA ELENA enters with OFELIA.

DOÑA ELENA

Hernan! Look who's dropped by!

OFELIA

Buenos días, Hernan. Your tía and I were just discussing how glad we are that things have finally settled down with the rebellion.

HERNAN

Buenos días Ofelia, unfortunately the rebels still think they can win this fight. Es como luchar contra una hidra. Just when we think we've regained control, they come at us again.

OFELIA

Muéstrales quién eres, Hernan. They cannot ignore that you are the leader of the Valdez family. The rebels are hurting not just the Valdez family, but the entire village. I'm sure if you show them who the real enemy is, these... thugs will finally stop.

HERNAN and DOÑA ELENA marvel a bit at OFELIA's perception.

I only wanted to drop by and see how you are doing, Hernan I wonder if we might–

A knock from the door. HERNAN goes to open it. A servant with a letter arrives. HERNAN takes it, and begins to read it.

DOÑA ELENA

Qué pasa Hernan?

HERNAN

Lo mataron, the foreman at the mines, a fight broke out, and they pushed him down the mineshaft. The workers are threatening to strike if nothing can be done about the deaths that have been happening.

Shouting from far away can be heard through the window. It's happening.

OFELIA

Do you hear that? It's getting closer.

DOÑA ELENA

I'm afraid Hernan, now is the time to assume your place. We will call a meeting of the Dons.

Rings bell for servant

(To Servant) Preparen el coche para llevarala a casa, and send word to the other Dons to meet at the hacienda.

OFELIA

Oh Doña Elena, please let me stay! Let me help!

DOÑA ELENA

It's too dangerous, Ofelia. If the rebels come here and something were to happen to you, your father would never forgive me. You must go.

OFELIA

Yes, señora. I understand. *(To Hernan)* Please be safe.

HERNAN

Muchas Gracias Ofelia..Be safe riding home.

Ofelia curtseys to Hernan, she smiles and exits. Sounds of an angry mob grow louder.

DOÑA ELENA

Quickly Hernan, we must go and prepare for the meeting. Send word to bring some guards from the mines to guard the house.

HERNAN

Yes tía. Right away.

Sounds of the mob grow closer. The sound of a window breaking. Hernan and Doña Elena duck, and quickly move towards the door. They exit safely. The mob sounds grow more and more...an AYYY MIS HIJOS layer on top. End scene.

SCENE 16

Music plays, Lights shift to Hernan and Esperanza and Ramón in their own isolated pools of light. Time passes as each faces their own challenges.

RAMÓN

Esperanza I know you're worried, but I promise we can start a new life. The baby—

VOICE 1

Is coming soon, I hear. Pobrecita, with her mother gone, and no one to help raise the child. I heard—

ESPERANZA

The workers are planning to strike soon aren't they Ramón? They murdered the foreman. They want blood. Will they let you leave? They want—

HERNAN

All men report to the hacienda (To the guards) To regain control, we must take drastic measures. Be ready for my command when I—

RAMÓN

I promised I would help with the rebellion, but I will not stay 'Anza, if you agree to marry me. It will be—

OFELIA

Very difficult I'm sure to regain control Don Hernan, but please you must rest. You must stay strong for-

DOÑA ELENA

For the family Hernan, for the future of the Valdez. I believe you can—

RAMÓN

Trust me 'Anza, Trust me and all will be—

VOICE 2

Gone, just like that, they took my husband in the middle of the night without warning, I can't-

ESPERANZA

Believe that things will be different Ramón. I — I love Hernan. And he loves me. The baby will have a better chance of a good life. He will be a good father. I know it's hard for you to understand—

RAMÓN

Nothing, 'Anza you understand NOTHING. How can you do this? You choose HIM over one of your own? You're a traitor Esperanza. You've betrayed me, your people, your mother, and your child. You'll see what kind of a father he truly is.

Ramón leaves to join the rebellion.

ESPERANZA

Ramón! Where are you going?! Please wait I—Ah!!

Esperanza begins to go into Labor. Company members become women of the village helping her give birth.

WOMEN

“RESPIRA RESPIRA”

ESPERANZA gives birth to Lupe. She weeps but is still overjoyed with her daughter. A bonding moment. LUPE starts crying, ESPERANZA sings a lullaby.

ESPERANZA

Oh shhh shh mija, Lupe, shh.

Begins to sing

*“Que linda Lupita que tengo yo
Que linda y pequeñita que Dios me dio
Que lindos ojitos que tengo yo
Que lindos y negritos que Dios me dio
Que linda hijita que tengo yo
Y nadie puede robarmela”*

Shift to Hernan standing before the crowd. They quiet, and let him speak

HERNAN

It is time for this war to end. To stop this bloodshed. You have lost loved ones, brothers, fathers, uncles. I understand. What I cannot and will not allow is for violence to go unpunished. My father told me that to keep safety and order, we must weed out the cause. You have rebels among you that would destroy everything we have worked for. Rebels like him.

Ramón is brought before the crowd struggling against his bonds. Tired. Beaten.

This man was found with guns and powder stolen from the armory. His plan? To destroy the mines. The livelihood of our town. And he was ready to kill anyone who got in his way.

RAMÓN

Mentiroso!!

Guard hits RAMÓN in the back, he falls silent.

HERNAN

Now we understand that it is dangerous work, and so many of you have lost loved ones who worked in the mines, but sacrifices must be made in order for the future to flourish! This man would tear it all down with no path forward for the people. He is the enemy here. un ladron. Y no lo voy a permitir.

RAMÓN

Asesino! No lo escuches!

HERNAN

Anyone who challenges the Valdez name will be dealt with. No more will these rebels and thugs dictate when your families have food on the table. When your children can play safely. We will not tolerate this threat. We will rebuild from ashes, we will be stronger than before!

*The crowd responds in a mix. HERNAN signals for RAMÓN to be executed.
Blackout.*

SCENE 17

5 years have passed. We are at the river by the mango trees. ESPERANZA is sitting on the riverbank with LUPE, now 5 years old, while holding her infant son TOMAS.

LUPE

Papá! Mira!!

ENTER HERNAN.

HERNAN

Yes mija! So many fish pero ten cuidado!! Don't get too close to the water.

ESPERANZA

Lupe ven, you haven't finished your lunch.

LUPE

Papá, when can we come to the hacienda?

ESPERANZA

You have all the questions today don't you? Ay! Lupe, you're making a mess!

ESPERANZA goes to grab LUPE who runs behind HERNAN.

LUPE

Papá come climb trees with me!

HERNAN

You go ahead! I'd like to speak with your mamá for a bit.

ESPERANZA and HERNAN are left alone on stage. HERNAN goes to try to help ESPERANZA, but she quickly jerks away.

ESPERANZA

You were late. Again.

HERNAN

'Anza I'm sorry, you know it's difficult to get away. Please 'Anza.

ESPERANZA

It's so hard Hernan, not knowing when we'll see each other next. You come and see the children for a bit and then you're gone. It feels like you're a ghost, there one minute, and gone the next—

TOMAS starts to cry, ESPERANZA sits and tries to quiet him down.

HERNAN

Can I help? Please I'm here now 'Anza let me help.

He goes to take TOMAS and ESPERANZA holds him away.

ESPERANZA

No—

Harsher than she intended...

He's used to me. He'll settle in a moment.

TOMAS settles. Cooing and gurgling.

This can't go on forever, Hernan. I need help. You've provided us a home, yes, but the children need more. I need more. I can't—

HERNAN

You're right 'Anza. I should've realized. I'm sorry. I know things haven't exactly gone to plan. Those years dealing with the rebellions, I feel like I finally have control over the mines. I'm truly the Don my father wanted me to be. Seeing Lupe and Tomás, I think I'm finally starting to understand how he felt.

ESPERANZA

Nothing has gone to plan, Hernan! I have been so patient. And Lupe has been patient. Lupe deserves so much more. I'm tired of hiding. She needs a father, and I don't know what to tell her anymore! That her father is too powerful a Don to have a child like her? That she would bring shame? That her mother is nothing more than a silly girl who let a powerful Don seduce her?

HERNAN

You don't believe that 'Anza.

ESPERANZA

I don't, but the longer this goes, I can't help but think...Ramón...he said...

HERNAN

Esperanza, not this again. I told you who he really was. He was caught with supplies for the rebellion. He never had plans to leave. He just wanted you for himself.

ESPERANZA

I keep hearing his voice in my head...Ramón, Mama...

HERNAN

Please mi reina. Look at me. I am here.

ESPERANZA looks at HERNAN. ESPERANZA breaks off her gaze.

ESPERANZA

Lupe saw you the other day in town, and I had to hold her back from running up to you. I had to hold our daughter back from running to her Papá. Now I can't bring her with me to town anymore, because she might see you. She asked me if you loved her, then why can't she ride with you in the carriage.

HERNAN

You are right 'Anza. Lupe deserves a father. And she will have one.

ESPERANZA

You mean it? Will we be a family?

A sharp cry is heard offstage. LUPE comes running back on.

ESPERANZA

Ay Lupe, que paso mija! ¿Por qué estás llorando?

LUPE

Mamá, I was playing--and I- I-

ESPERANZA

And?

LUPE

I fell down.

HERNAN

Lupita, you should've waited for me.

ESPERANZA

Eh! Enough! It's time we went home. It's getting late, and you need a bath

LUPE

NOOOOOO. *Runs behind Hernan*

HERNAN

Ayyyyy 'Anza what is that smell? Is it a monkey? Un mono? (*Lupe giggles*) Come here you. Be good and go clean up with your Mamá. Te prometo que te veré pronto.

LUPE

Promise Papá?

HERNAN

Sí, and we can go for a ride in the carriage.

LUPE

Oh gracias papá!! Muchas gracias.

ESPERANZA

Ya Vamos. *To Hernan* You promise?

HERNAN

No te preocupes. 'Anza. Everything will be taken care of.

Hernan gives Esperanza a gentle kiss on the forehead goodbye. Hernan watches them go.

SCENE 18

Lights up Doña Elena and Ofelia are sitting together talking. Doña Elena hears Hernan arrive, and quickly gets up to leave. Ofelia stays to welcome Hernan. Hernan enters, surprised to see her there.

HERNAN

Ofelia!

Hernan goes to greet Ofelia.

It's good to see you! Are you waiting for Tía Elena? Did one of the servants go to get her? I'll ring for-

OFELIA

No, I actually saw her-

HERNAN

Ah bueno, I didn't see you at the church on Sunday. You know I enjoy our walks afterwards.

OFELIA

I wanted to be there it's just—

She's trying to hold back tears.

HERNAN

Ofelia! Que paso? Come sit.

Offers her his handkerchief.

OFELIA

My father...my father wants to send me to Spain, to....to be married.

HERNAN

What?! Por que Ofelia?

OFELIA

I made him angry. During the rebellion it was too dangerous, but now that things have settled, he's been trying to find me a husband. I've done everything, pretended I was sick when I was supposed to meet someone, made up some reason why they were unworthy of my family, but I'm running out of reasons, and I thought for so long that you—

HERNAN

That I would...propose.

OFELIA

Yes...

HERNAN

Ofelia....

When will you go?

OFELIA

Next week...

HERNAN

So soon? Have you told Tía Elena?

OFELIA

Yes, I came by to invite you all for dinner tonight. She told me you would be home soon, I wanted to tell you first, but I just couldn't hold it in. I can't delay my father anymore. Unless...I find a husband here. I want you to know Hernan, that I have been happy to be here, helping you, caring for you...and Doña Elena during these times. I hope you see that.

HERNAN

Ofelia I don't want you to go, but I can't—it's—

OFELIA

Why not? Tell me.

HERNAN

.....

OFELIA

I see...Goodbye Hernan.

Ofelia goes to kiss Hernan on the cheek, and turns to leave. Hernan remains onstage. He picks up the silver bracelet, and then throws it across the room. DOÑA ELENA enters

HERNAN

Tía Elena. I—

DOÑA ELENA

Hernan! Perfect, Señorita Ofelia has just invited us for dinner this evening. I told her to expect us. Did you speak with her?

HERNAN

I did. She told me her father wants to send her to Spain.

DOÑA ELENA

So you will propose tonight. It is time. I understand why you couldn't get married before. A wedding during the rebellion would have been out of the question, but there is peace now. You have taken control. There is no reason to delay this anymore.

HERNAN

I fell in love.

DOÑA ELENA

Of course, you did Hernan! Y ahora la boda!

HERNAN

No! The reason I didn't ask Ofelia to marry me is because...because I fell in love with Esperanza.

DOÑA ELENA

Esperanza?

Realizing who he means.

The peasant girl? Oh, please Hernan, this must be a joke. You cannot be serious.

HERNAN

It was before the rebellion tía, right before. We fell in love, and there are children, tía. A daughter and a son.

DOÑA ELENA

I have worked so hard, Hernan, to help you, to guide you, to instruct you on how to lead the Valdez family, and this is how you repay me? By getting some Indian girl pregnant? Why wasn't I informed the second you knew! How do you know she's not lying?

HERNAN

They are mine Tía! I will not have you insulting the mother of my children.

DOÑA ELENA

There are...solutions to these kinds of problems! Your father wanted you to—

HERNAN

My father wanted me to take over running the silver mines, and I have done exactly that. I would remind you that your instruction only extends so far. I am the head of this family now.

DOÑA ELENA

Hernan you aren't not thinking! You're a fool if you think—

HERNAN

ENOUGH! Now. I am going to be married, tía. The children will finally have their father. I need you to begin the preparations. Can you do this?

DOÑA ELENA

And what do you think will happen, Hernan? What will happen when the other Dons see that you have brought this woman into your home. When she wears your Mama 's

jewels? Do you think they will respect you? Will the village respect you? Sí, eres Don Hernan ahora, pero es muy frágil mi sobrino. Any sign of weakness will destroy us.

HERNAN lets out a physical outburst. It rises and falls. DOÑA ELENA steps back.

HERNAN

Do you think I asked for this to happen? Yes, it would be easier to marry Ofelia, and I want her to stay but— but I fell in love with Esperanza. I fell in love with someone that I chose. And now no matter what choice I make I can't—What else do I have to sacrifice for this family? You told me if I took control I would have everything. Did you lie to me? Answer me!

Fuming, Hernan moves away from Doña Elena.

DOÑA ELENA

There may be a way...Escuchame Hernan! There may be a way for you to have everything you want...but you must follow my instructions. Every word.

DOÑA ELENA Writes a note on the desk. Rings the bell. ENTER SERVANT

(To Servant) Please deliver this note to Señorita Ofelia expressing our apologies. We will have to miss dinner this evening.

(To HERNAN) Now listen to me very carefully....

DOÑA ELENA and HERNAN sit and begin to talk. Lights fade.

SCENE 19

Market in town. ESPERANZA is walking through the square, with her shawl up to conceal her face. She moves through with her basket shopping for food. A few villagers are gossiping.

VILLAGER 1

Did you hear? Don Hernan is to be married this Sunday!

VILLAGER 2

Si, my cousin Zoila told me that Doña Elena put in an order for enough food to feed a hundred people! All to be prepared by Saturday and delivered to the hacienda!

VILLAGER 3

Who is he getting married to?

VILLAGER 1

No one knows! But I heard the Padre say that this marriage would bring a family together finally in the sight of God.

VILLAGER 2

Well, whoever it is, she's one lucky señorita. The Valdez family fortune would take care of anyone for the rest of their life!

VILLAGER 3

My sister said that if there's leftovers, she'd bring me some, you want some too?

Conversation devolves into "rich people leftovers? You think she can get me some of those pasteles? Esperanza hears all of this. The villagers continue chatting, she goes to ask them more, but they've already gone.

ESPERANZA

He's going to marry me.... Mamá, I told you, I would find a way to have my family all together. It's going to happen at last.

She quickly grabs everything else she needs, and hurries back to the home. End Scene.

SCENE 20

Evening, day before the wedding. LUPE is in her best dress, TOMÁS is playing nearby. ESPERANZA is hemming LUPE'S dress.

LUPE

Do you think Papá will like it, Mamá?

ESPERANZA

Mija of course he will. You will be the most beautiful girl there.

LUPE

No, I won't

ESPERANZA

What do you mean Lupe?

LUPE

I'm not the bride, the bride has to be the most beautiful, and that's you mama!

ESPERANZA

Ay! Oh hold still mija! There's just one more pin to get out. There!

LUPE

Can I see your dress mama?

ESPERANZA

Oh no not yet, I still have to finish it tonight.

LUPE

What did Papá's letter say again?

ESPERANZA

The message said to bring you both in your best clothes to the hacienda early tomorrow morning. And since we need to be up so early, it's time both of you got to bed!

LUPE

I'm too excited to sleep! Can't we go over there now?

ESPERANZA

Ay no hija.. Try to sleep, tomorrow will be here before you know it!

LUPE heads to her room to go to bed. ESPERANZA goes to a chest and takes out a beautiful gown, her wedding gown that she's lovingly sewn together. She sits down and finishes off the last bit of alteration and embellishment. She holds it up and admires her handiwork. As she gingerly sets it down on the chair, she turns to blow out the extra candles in the room and take one to head to bed. Before she can do so, her light dims, and it becomes terribly cold. Esperanza hears a woman laughing, but it is a cruel laugh, it starts off very loud. Esperanza goes to cover her ears, it is unbearable.

ESPERANZA

Stop! Stop it! STOP!!

She grabs a rosary and begins to pray; the laugh will not stop. As Esperanza reaches the end of her prayer, the laughing grows more and more faint. She rushes to the children's door to check on them, but they are sound asleep. She sinks to the floor, exhausted. A moment, then she gets up and heads to bed herself.

SCENE 21

Early the next morning, we are at the hacienda. ENTER Esperanza in her wedding gown, holding hands with LUPE, and carrying TOMAS.

ESPERANZA

Vamos, we must get to your Papá's study. That's where he told us to meet him.

LUPE

Mamá I'm hungry and my clothes are itchy.

ESPERANZA

You had your breakfast! Now stop whining! You must be on your best behavior today!
Me entiendes?

LUPE

Yes, Mamá.

A servant enters.

SERVANT

Señora, Can I help you?

ESPERANZA

We are expected. Don Hernan told us to meet him in his study this morning.

SERVANT

Don Hernan is getting ready for his wedding presently. I don't believe he was expecting guests to arrive this early.

ESPERANZA

Please, I promise you, here, his letter.

SERVANT

(Reading the letter) Very well, I will escort you to Don Hernan's study. Follow me, quickly!

They follow him to the study; a hustle and bustle of wedding preparations can be heard. Esperanza holds tight to her children's hands.

Wait here, Don Hernan will meet with you soon.

ESPERANZA

Muchas gracias.No toques nada Lupe! Let 's wait for your Papá.

HERNAN enters a few moments later in his best suit. He pauses and looks at ESPERANZA and LUPE.

LUPE

Papá! Papá!!

HERNAN

Yes mijos, and how handsome you look. 'Anza you look...

ESPERANZA

I would've preferred to have you see me when I entered the church, but we've done so much backwards already, what's one more thing? Do you like it Hernan? I sewed it myself, from my Mamá's best dress. I wish she could see me now. I wish she could see us all here together.

HERNAN

It's beautiful 'Anza. Esperanza, please sit, I need to talk to you about—

ENTER OFELIA in a wedding gown much grander than Esperanza's.

OFELIA

Doña Elena? Oh! Hernan, I didn't want you to see yet! It's bad luck! No matter...Has visto Doña Elena? I need her help with—

Seeing the children and Esperanza

Are these the children Hernan? They're so darling. And who is this?

HERNAN

Ofelia, this is Esperanza, and this is Tomás and Lupe.

OFELIA

Tomás and Lupe, you are just absolutely darling. Esperanza, you look...lovely, a bit more grand than I would expect for a niñera.

ESPERANZA

Una niñera? You think I am the nanny?

HERNAN

Esperanza, please let me explain--Ofelia, step outside for a moment--

ESPERANZA

NO HERNAN. What do you mean...is she?!

OFELIA

Hernan, what is going on?

HERNAN

It's just a misunderstanding my darling, please go and finish getting ready.

OFELIA exits. Leaving HERNAN, ESPERANZA and the children in the study.

HERNAN

Esperanza listen to me I never meant to—

ESPERANZA

So you're going to marry Ofelia after all. Then tell me Don Hernan. What will happen to us? Did you ask us here to say goodbye before your wedding you—

HERNAN

Silencio!

Esperanza is stunned by this reaction.

I realized Esperanza, that I need to show the people that I am more than a Don. I need to show them that I am a father as well. They will see me in a new light, they will see that I want my children to live in a peaceful world. But you cannot be my wife. With Ofelia as my wife, there will be no question of my honor.

You and the children will move into the hacienda. You will serve as their niñera for the next few years. Once they are old enough, they will go to school and you will return to the house. I have told Ofelia that they are my orphaned niece and nephew from an older cousin, and I want to adopt them as my own. Everyone will be provided for, and we will still all be together.

ESPERANZA

But it's a lie...they're my children too!

HERNAN

Esperanza...You are the only woman I have truly loved. But, it's just not possible. I didn't want to have to tell you this way, on this day, but there was no time. Ofelia was able to help me as I worked through the rebellions, I saw that she was a strong ally, a strong partner.

ESPERANZA

I have been strong, for us! For our children! And now you want me to be a servant in your house? To tell the children that they cannot call me Mamá anymore? Mis padres están muertos y ahora mi familia?

HERNAN

This is the only way! Be realistic Esperanza! Marrying Ofelia is the only way to ensure the children will have a future with everything. I want this for our children.

ESPERANZA

You coward! You-- you couldn't face me before, and now you save it until this day where there is no turning back. You really are a ladrón Hernan, you've stolen my life, and now you steal my children. You--

HERNAN grabs ESPERANZA, the children cry out, which makes him stop. Tension hangs midair.

HERNAN

I did what I had to do. What needed to be done. Now go, clean up, we are expected at the church by 11. I'll have the servant show you where your quarters will be.

HERNAN rings the bell for a servant to come take Esperanza and the children away. ESPERANZA looks back at HERNAN, with a pleading look, he looks at her, and turns away. She walks with her children out of the room, her head held high.

SCENE 22

The wedding. At the church. We hear the Padre speaking in Latin through the ceremony. DOÑA ELENA is present. ESPERANZA is there with the children. HERNAN and OFELIA stand before each other about to say their vows when suddenly ESPERANZA steps into the church aisle.

ESPERANZA

No!

HERNAN

To men about to seize Esperanza NO! Don't touch her! Esperanza, stop this at once!!

ESPERANZA

NO HERNAN.

(To wedding guests.) You see the truth is that this should be MY wedding day.

She rips a large portion of Ofelia's veil and puts it over her head. Gasps, sounds of shock and disbelief from the crowd

Isn't that right Hernan, because we've all agreed to your lie haven't we?

OFELIA

Hernan, what is this madwoman saying?

ESPERANZA

Madwoman? Maybe I am una loca, but only because this man is trying to steal MY children!!

DOÑA ELENA

–Hernan! Stop this.

Hernan hesitates

To guards You grab the this woman and remove her immediately–

Guards move to grab ESPERANZA, LUPE is holding TOMAS and crying.

ESPERANZA

No!! They're mine!! They're MINE.

OFELIA

HER children?! Hernan, what is she saying? What is going on?

HERNAN

Ofelia do not listen to her. Esperanza you will never see these children again, I swear! I am their father; I can take care of them!

ESPERANZA

You cannot take them away from me, Hernan!

ESPERANZA grabs a revolver from one of the guards to warn off anyone coming near her and the children, a guard grabs her arm and the gun fires off and hits DOÑA ELENA. DOÑA ELENA falls to the ground. Thunder breaks across the sky, and the wind picks up. The sound of broken glass shocks everyone. Darkness comes over the wedding, and no one can see. Confusion breaks out. ESPERANZA takes her chance and runs off with the children. HERNAN manages to find some light but sees that ESPERANZA and the children are gone, nowhere to be seen.

HERNAN

FIND HER! Do not hurt her or the children. Bring them back!

HERNAN exits to search for ESPERANZA and the children. OFELIA runs over to DOÑA ELENA. She holds her hand and weeps.

SCENE 23

ESPERANZA and the children are running and hiding through the forest. They finally reach the river's edge by the mango tree.

ESPERANZA

No one will take you from me no one!!

The children are crying, they are scared and confused.

Shhh shhh!! No lloren!! They will hear you!!

LUPE

Mamá! Mamá please stop!!

You're hurting me Mamá!

ESPERANZA looks desperately for somewhere else to run, but the horses and men are quickly approaching. She quickly grabs the children.

ESPERANZA

Quiet! They will hear you!!

ESPERANZA holds the children close and jumps into the water, holding both children. A struggle to stay under until the men go away/loose them. Lupe and Tomás wrestle and try to fight, but they're so tired from running,

then... stillness.

Esperanza quickly rises up out of the water, and hears the horses begin to run in a different direction, She realizes what she has done. It hits her in waves.

ESPERANZA

Ayy- ayy Lupe! Tomas!! por favor, no no no

She tries to breathe air into their lungs, trying to revive them. Nothing works

AYYYYYY MIS HIJOS NO!!!

Shouts of men are heard, "I think I hear something!" from offstage.

ESPERANZA

No! They cannot take them from me!!

Lupe, Tomás....We will be together I promise....

ESPERANZA lowers herself into the water fully submerged. Music underscores. We hear the river gently lapping. The WOMAN IN WHITE ENTERS she gently brings up ESPERANZA out of the water, and places a veil on her. ESPERANZA

reaches towards the bodies of LUPE & TOMAS, but realizes they're not there. She goes to search for them. Slow fade to black out.

SCENE 24

ABUELA and MARTA are sitting together still.

ABUELA

Esperanza couldn't take back what she had done. She had murdered her children and had taken her own life. In that moment she had become La Llorona. Un fantasma, a spirit doomed to roam the earth for all time, as punishment for killing her children. Some say El Dios Cristo cursed her, some say that it was the ancient gods of the land, some say it was a spirit older than all the gods we know of today. She was La Llorona now, cursed to travel across the world and time, searching for the lost souls of Lupe and Tomás. Many say they have seen her, by the rivers, looking for them. Men who have done wrong have been visited by her, and are never seen again. Children wake up screaming from feeling a cold, wet, hand on their little shoulders. If La Llorona hears a child crying, she will appear, thinking she has finally found her children. She will never stop until she finds them. More importantly Marta, she's a warning to us.

MARTA

What do you mean?

ABUELA

Esperanza pushed away her loved ones mija. She made choices that had bigger consequences than she could've imagined. She held onto fear and anger, instead of letting them go, and letting love in.

MARTA

Abuela—

ABUELA

What is it mija?

MARTA

What if I can't let go...I'm just so angry.Papa just left us, he left and he didn't even say goodbye. I didn't mean to take it out on Mama— what if Mama doesn't forgive me for what I said? What if—

ABUELA goes and fiercely hugs MARTA. A release of emotions.

MARTA

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry-

ABUELA

Oh Martita, she has already forgiven you. I have already forgiven you.

MAMA enters.

MAMA

Marta?

beat.

I'm sorry Marta—I

Marta runs up to hug her mother. Release.

Will you come home? It's time we talked, really talked.

Marta nods

The three women come together. It's not the end, it's the beginning. Music underscores. They exit to head home. A WOMAN IN WHITE enters...she lifts her veil....blackout.

END OF PLAY