

**BEAUTIFUL FIG**

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## Setting

The action takes place in 3 locations: Lena's office at NYC Public High School/Drug Rehab; Carmen's apartment; and Ma's house including her garden and fig tree which begins the play in full leaf and fruit and ends with bare branches. The set can be as simple or detailed as decided.

Lena moves from set to set as the scenes overlap and flow one into the next. Carmen, Ma and Dyyana move in and out of their locations.

## Time:

The present.

## Characters:

Lena: 45 - 50, Italian American - Guidance Counselor

Ma: 78, Italian American - Lena's mother

Carmen: 43, Puerto Rican - Lena's best friend

Dyyana: 15, Caucasian - Lena's client

*Lena's office. She is at her desk, unlit cigarette in her mouth surrounded by piles of papers, snacks, big bottle of Tums, etc, opening a cellophane donut. Dyyana enters.*

Dyyana

They told me to come here.

*Lena takes the cigarette out and shoves it in her desk.*

Lena

And you are?

Dyyana

Dyyana Franco.

Lena

Okay. *(begins looking for her folder)* Knock next time. Sit. I'm Ms. Frigerio. *(looking for folder)* How're you doing?

Dyyana

I feel like shit.

*Lena gives her a look as she continues to search.*

How long I gotta be here?

Lena

*Lena feels a slight stomach pain.*

I'm not sure they sent your folder to me.

*Lena takes a piece of Nicorette gum.*

Dyyana

They already asked questions.

Lena

We have to go over some things.

*Lena continues to search through papers. She knocks a pile onto the floor.*

Dyyana

I'm hungry.

Lena

You'll have lunch soon. You understand this is a school and a drug treatment program? Lots of rules. There's 120 kids. You'll get a placement test. Your classes'll be scheduled accordingly. I'm your counselor. We'll meet once a week for the first 3 months. You'll attend group sessions. After that you or I can request a session. If you have questions, you come to me. Okay?

*She grabs a clean sheet of paper.*

Your file must be in another office. Your name again?

Dyyana  
I tole you. *(they look at each other...stand off)* Dyyana Franco.

Lena  
D-I-A...

Dyyana  
No. D-Y-Y-A-N-A. Shit.

Lena  
And Franco. F-R-A-N-C-O.

Dyyana  
Yeah.

Lena  
Your age?

Dyyana  
15 -- 2 days ago.

Lena  
Happy Birthday. Your address?

Dyyana  
No where.

Lena  
Where were you living?

Dyyana  
You wanna know where I slept?

Lena  
I want to know your last address.

Dyyana  
I don't got one. I'm hungry. You got a Coke or something?

Lena  
I have water.

Dyyana  
Sucks. Fine.

*Lena gives her a bottle of water.  
Lena continues to look for Dyyana's folder.*

Lena

Ah! Here's your folder. You were arrested for possession of illegal drugs along with the adults living in the apartment. Because this was your first offense the judge gave you the option to come here instead of serving time in the Juvenile Justice facility you just left. If all goes well, you'll complete the program and go home. If not, you'll be remanded back there. Its your choice.

*Re: folder.*

The address listed here is 328 Classon Avenue in Brooklyn.

*No response*

New York City Housing Authority... Lafayette Gardens?

Dyyana

Where my mother lives.

Lena

And you?

Dyyana

I don't like roaches. *(beat)* And I don't like pigs.

Lena

Excuse me?

*Dyyana doesn't respond.*

You left your mother's apartment?

Dyyana

Too crowded.

Lena

Who else was living there?

Dyyana

Joey. I'm tired. I ain't slept in 2 days. Can I go?

Lena

Who's he?

Dyyana

My mother's boyfriend.

Lena

How long's he lived there?

Dyyana

I don't wanna talk about him - he's a fucking pig.

Lena

You're going to sign a contract. No more cursing. (*re: papers*) You were arrested at 425 East 105th St. in East Harlem. What was your relationship with the adults living there?

Dyyana

Friends.

Lena

*re: papers.*  
Your medical looks good.

Dyyana

I gotta go to the bathroom.

Lena

Oh... You know you're pregnant?

Dyyana

Yeah.

*Carmen enters.*

Carmen

Excuse me.

Lena

Its okay. We're finished for now. Ms. Cruz this is Dyyana Franco. Ms. Cruz'll be your English teacher.

Carmen

Hello Dyyana.

Dyyana

Can I go?

Lena

Yeah.

*Dyyana exits.*  
When'd the semester start?

Carmen

September 4th. You don't/look good.

Lena

/Its a record. 6 days is all it took. GET ME OUTTA HERE!! A few minutes ago James ran in here because Shakia's threatening to beat the crap out of him because he told all the boys she had the clap. She followed him in threatening to remove one of his testicles. I think they're in love. Followed by Dyyana Sunshine...pregnant. Its only 9AM! I'm crawling under my desk.

*Lena puts the unlit cigarette in her mouth.*

Carmen

Do you have any crackers?

Lena

Saltines.

*She gets them from her bottom drawer.*

You okay?

Carmen

Yes. Your hair.

Lena

I know.

Carmen

What did you do to it?

Lena

I'm pulling it out. I leave this lunatic asylum and go to Ma's yesterday. She's eating a huge piece of bread, salami and provolone. Just what the doctor ordered for her cholesterol and hypertension. Shit. I gotta cook all her meals now. You been eating? You look thin. Brought you some leftover meatloaf last night from Ma's. The super gave me the UPS package for you. Left them both at your door. You get'em?

Carmen

Yes. Thanks.

Lena

Another book?

Carmen

A collection of Latina poets. Icons and Fallen Idols. I'm bringing some in for Senior English.

Lena

How'd the crazy Freshmen do yesterday?



Carmen

I passed out journals. It quieted them. I invited them to submit something for the Fall poetry magazine. The kids from last year want me to include one of my poems this year. What do you think?

Lena

Absolutely. Show'm how it's done. You talk to "Principal Brown" about getting a sub for Friday?

Carmen

I will. She's been out.

Lena

They sent her to a leadership conference. It can only help.

Carmen

The first draft of the epic poem is due soon. I wouldn't have gone to graduate school if I'd known it would take me this long. Maybe I'll ask for an extension on the thesis.

Lena

Think he'll give it to you? He's the asshole, right?

Carmen

He reminds me of Dr. Platt. Remember him?

Lena

English Lit. Self important prick....Oh my God, got my head caught in the subway door this morning. Scared the shit out of me.

Carmen

You got your head caught?

Lena

I was distracted. Did I break anything?

*Lena shows Carmen her head.*

Carmen

Your head looks fine. Its your hair.

Lena

Were you home last night? Rang your bell again on my way back up from the garbage room. Package and meatloaf were gone.

Carmen

I went to sleep early. Does your head hurt?

Lena

Its dented. Got a headache. Told Ma. Says I got a testa dura. Hopes I don't get a brain tumor.

Carmen

How is she?

Lena

She stopped going to bingo on Fridays. Says its confusing. Probably caught her cheating. She says "hi". Figure she always wanted to adopt you. You'd be the sweet daughter. Thinks you're getting too skinny. Come downstairs tonight. I'm picking up salmon. Make a salad. A little rice.

Carmen

I can't eat fish right now.

Lena

You love fish. You're pale. You need to eat.

Carmen

I've been throwing up.

Lena

It's the flu.

Carmen

Its not the flu.

Lena

It's the flu!

*beat beat*

So... what?

Carmen

pause

I'm pregnant.

Lena

What?

Carmen

I'm pregnant.

Lena

What are you talking about? How could you be pregnant?

Carmen

A week after Danny and I broke up, we just.... I was up writing. He rang the bell. He's moving back to Los Angeles. We didn't really talk. We made love. He left. We said good-bye to each other.

Lena

You didn't tell me you saw him.

Carmen

No.

Lena

When did you find out?

Carmen

Last week.

Lena

You didn't say anything.

Carmen

I couldn't.

Lena

Why not?

Carmen

My body feels...its changed.

Lena

Did you go to the doctor?

Carmen

I took two home tests last week. Can I have a water? I took another one last night.

Lena

Why didn't you tell me?

Carmen

I didn't believe it.

Lena

Did you talk to Danny?

Carmen

No. I'm not going to. *(beat)* All these years, I was so careful. I dreamt I was wandering on...a street like Hillside Ave. where Titi and I lived in Queens. I was looking for the house. I stepped on a little dead something, a little sleeping something, like a baby bird or... I don't know. I woke up crying.

Lena

What're you gonna do?

Carmen

I've never wanted a child. You know that. My breasts hurt. I feel pressure in my uterus.

Lena

How far along are you?

Carmen

Five weeks.

Lena

Call the doctor. You have to take care of this.

Carmen

No one in my family chose to end a pregnancy. Titi Alicia had 6 miscarriages.

Lena

You're 44. Its not safe.

Carmen

It was all she wanted. Then Mami got pregnant.

Lena

She was a baby herself.

Carmen

I was only 8 months old when she died. Titi kept me. I was the baby she could never have. "You were the precious gift de mi querida hermanita.." She told me that over and over.

Lena

What are you going to do?

Carmen

I don't want the "precious gift." Since I was 14, I knew I wasn't a mother. But I never wanted to make this decision. I was Mami's 'munnequita'. I was Titi's 'bebe'. They would want this life.

You aren't them. Lena

They are in me. Mis Madres. Carmen

*You* don't want it. Lena

How do I do this? Carmen

I'll call Dr. Larschon. Lena

I could have it. Women do it all the time. Couldn't I? Carmen

If you wanted a baby, you could. Lena

The dream was desolate. I was alone. Carmen

I'm here. Lena

Lena, I don't want to be pregnant. Carmen

But you are. Lena

Will you call the doctor? Carmen

I'll take care of it. Lena

Maybe not right away. Carmen

Carmen. Lena

*Lights up on Ma in the garden. She is weeding.*

Carmen

If you ever had to make this decision, you would know.

Lena

You need to eat. Anything sound good?

Carmen

I want rice and beans.

Lena

Anything else?

Carmen

Cafe con leche

Lena

We'll go to Malecon. Get me mofongo and chuletas.

*Carmen exits.*

*Lena enters Ma's garden.*

Ma

What a mess. The cicordia looks lousy. The tomato's puny. Nothing's growing.

Lena

Anything else? Look, I murdered all these snails. Cheer up.

Ma

We been planting the garden here for years. The soil's worn out. Like me.

Lena

We could move it.

Ma

There's no other place in this yard with full sun. I should probably stop planting anyway. I'm too old. I wish God would just take me.

Lena

The cicordia's okay. Just puny like you. Where you gonna find it if you don't plant it?

Ma

I'll just do without. See that - pull it up. And this fig tree's too big. Its leaning on the roof. All the leaves fall into the gutter. Blocks it up. I can't reach most of the figs anyway. Daddy planted it here when you were born. I told him to plant it over there. Another testa dura. I'm gonna get a tree guy to cut it down.

Lena

You can't cut it down. The beautiful fig. I love it. The birds love it.

Ma

Course they love it. They eat'm all. And we prune it wrong.

Lena

Stop fussing.

Ma

We always prune it wrong. - the trunk gets thicker - looks like a elephant leg. It should just come down.

Lena

I'll take care of it.

Ma

That's what you say. I wish you'd let me do what I want.

Lena

Come here. Sit down.

Ma

I wanna finish this.

Lena

Come here ma. In the shade. Sit. (*Ma sits.*) Stay.

*Lena picks 2 figs and gives one to Ma. She lifts her fig in the air, toasting.*  
Salute.

Ma

You're crazy. Don't eat too many You'll get diarrhea.

*Dry cough.*

Lena

Stop for one minute. Just eat it. Look at the tree. Bellissima. Right?

Ma

You use that word for women, not fig trees.

*She eats the fig.*

They're pretty good this year.

Lena

Fico squisito-- si?

Ma  
You're a bamba.

Lena  
So *I* would be bellissima--bamba bellissima.

Ma  
Right. You tooting your own horn?

Lena  
You gonna toot it?

Ma  
I don't toot.

Lena  
Eat another fig then toot my horn. It'll do you good.

Ma  
You gonna finish the weeding?

Lena  
That's not a toot.

Ma  
Finish the weeding -- then I'll toot.

Lena  
Right.  
*Lena puts the cigarette in her mouth...doesn't light it.*

Ma  
*Ma goes back to the weeding.*  
If there's enough figs, maybe I'll put some in the oven. I like'm dried. When're you gonna stop sticking that thing in your mouth.  
*Dry cough.*

Lena  
Never. You want one? (*beat*) People pay big money for fresh figs. You shrivel'em up in the oven for 24 hours. End up with fig rocks.

Ma  
They last me all winter. I like'm dried. They're chewy. I put'm in a jar with some dates. Softens'm up.



Lena  
Like shoe leather. You're a little nut, you know that?

Ma  
Yeah?

Lena  
Yeah.

Ma  
And you're a big nut. You gonna help me here?

Lena  
You're the mama nut.  
*Lights down on Ma.*  
*Lena DS.*

Lena  
*On phone.*  
Carmen?... Carmen? I can barely hear you. Where are you?...Yeah, I got your message, but the appointment was at 2. Dr. Larshon was... What?... I can't hear you. What?...Just meet me back at school... I rescheduled it for Thursday.... Okay.  
*Lights up on Carmen's apartment the following week.*  
*Lena enters.*

Lena  
I called Larshon's office. They said you'd left.

Carmen  
Yes.

Lena  
You alright?

Carmen  
I'm fine. I rested there. I took a cab home. How's Ma?

Lena  
Fine. Always thinks its her heart. I thought I'd be done in time.

Carmen  
What was it?

Lena

They did an EKG. She's too feeble for a stress test. Took blood. Doc thinks she pulled a muscle. She was chopping up the branches we pruned from the fig tree. I told her I would do it. "When you got time?" She's a blockhead. Plus she's getting woozy.

Carmen

What's that?

Lena

Her lungs're slow. She's not getting enough oxygen. Dizzy old lady. How're you feeling?

Carmen

Okay.

Lena

You got the valium/demerol drip?

Carmen

I did.

Lena

Ah! The best!

Carmen

Did you bring the Motrin?

Lena

Extra strength. Take 3. How about some tea?

Carmen

I'm going to close my eyes. Can you stay?

Lena

Yeah. I brought some soup.

Carmen

I'm not hungry.

Lena

I'll heat it up when you want it. Chicken and pasta. Made it at Ma's last night. The kids were looking for you. Everyone at school thinks you have the flu. So does Ma. She told me to make the soup for you. Go lay down.

Carmen

My body has been put back the way it was. That is what I wanted. I had a dream last night I was carrying a baby around under my arm, like a pound of potatoes. I put her in a dresser drawer. She fell out and rolled away. I couldn't find her.

Lena

You dream too much, my friend.

Carmen

I think about all my mothers. I know what I did was right for me, but it was never supposed to happen.

Lena

Give it time. Eat some of my soup.

Carmen

It was vacuumed out. They have no reference for that. I have no reference for it. I'm one of them.

*Lights up on the fig tree and Ma in the kitchen.*

Lena

You need rest.

Carmen

Why did I let this happen? I'm afraid to close my eyes.

Lena

It's okay.

Carmen

Lena...

Lena

Go lay down.

*Lights down on Carmen.*

*Lena crosses to Ma. Ma has a more frequent dry cough.*

Ma

*Dry cough*

What're you doing here? Why aren't you at work?

Lena

You have a doctor's appointment.

Ma

When?

Lena

This morning. 9:45. I reminded you yesterday.

Ma

I'm losing my mind.

Lena

I know. You eat breakfast?

Ma

I'll just change my shoes and my shirt. Are these pants okay?

Lena

You look fine.

Ma

Why are we going to the doctor's?

Lena

Review your medications. We talked about this remember?

Ma

Madonna, I wish you'd just leave me alone.

Lena

Fine. Want me to leave? I'll go to work.

Ma

*(Dry cough)* We gotta go now. We have the appointment.

Lena

They give you more drugs, you'll be happier. Won't that be nice? You still got that cough.

Ma

I'm not taking any more pills. Just wait till you're my age.

Lena

Me and Carmen had facials yesterday. How do I look?

Ma

You got money to throw in the street?

Lena

*"The street."*

*Lena puts cigarette in her mouth...doesn't light it.*

Ma

Its just a figure of speech. You're not going into the doctor's with that thing in your mouth.

Lena

It's not a figure of speech. It's an insult.

Ma

What do you want from me? How's Carmen got time for a facial?

Lena

Never mind. You ever look at me? Did you notice I lost weight?

Ma

Your coolo's too big.

Lena

Don't say that to me.

Ma

I'm your mother. If I don't say it, who will.

Lena

NO ONE. Forget it. You eat breakfast?

Ma

Cereal and banana.

Lena

You look skinnier.

Ma

I don't have any appetite. If you're not hungry, you can't gain any weight no matter what you eat.

Lena

You probably have malnutrition.

Ma

*Dry cough.*

What's a matter with you? I'm fine. I'm no spring chicken.

Lena

Just eat more. You have any cough drops?

Ma

They don't work.

Lena

Gonna get someone in here to clean and cook for you.

Ma

I don't need anyone here. This is my house.

Lena

You need help. Sometimes I can't get here in time to make dinner. When was the last time you changed your sheets?

Ma

You think I'm dirty? I'm not the dirty one.

Lena

Fine.

Ma

Come on. Lets go if we're gonna go. Take that thing out of your mouth. You look like a bum.

Lena

I am a bum.

Ma

I'm not the dirty one.

Lena

Right.

Ma

I can make my own food.

Lena

Right... How about fish tomorrow?

Ma

If that's what you want. Don't buy it old. If it smells like fish, its no good.

Lena

I'm not a total idiot.

*Lights up on Dyyana in Lena's office.*

Ma  
Fine. Wait till you're old...Miseria!

Lena  
Okay.

Ma  
You'll see. I think I'm losing my mind.

Lena  
Come on. Get your purse. We'll go to Gristedes afterwards.

Ma  
I don't want fish.  
*Lights out on Ma.*  
*Lena crosses to office. She has the cigarette in her mouth.*

Lena  
I was delayed. Sorry.

Dyyana  
This place sucks. You smoke in here? Can I have one?

Lena  
No.  
*Sticks cigarette in drawer.*  
What's going on?

Dyyana  
The food's garbage. Making me throw up.

Lena  
You still have morning sickness. You're eight weeks pregnant.

Dyyana  
I throw up all the time. I hate this place.

Lena  
Are you holding anything down?  
*Lena holds her stomach.*

Dyyana  
Crackers and soda. What's a matter?

Lena  
Nothing.

*Takes a few Tums.*

Dyyana

I felt fine till I got here.

Lena

You saw the doctor when? ....Thursday? Did she explain your options?

*No response*

What're your plans? Did you talk about termination?

Dyyana

I'm not killing my baby. Fuck that shit.

Lena

Next time you curse, you put fifty cents in this jar...You're only fifteen. How are you going to take care of a baby?

*Dyyana sucks her teeth.*

Think about it. You won't be able to stay here long if you're pregnant.

Dyyana

Whatever.

Lena

I need to ask you a few questions again about your mother's house. You were living there until six weeks ago

*no response*

Answer the question.

Dyyana

Yeah.

Lena

You said, your mother doesn't drink or use drugs.

*Lights up on Ma in kitchen.*

Dyyana

This is so stupid....NO. Why you asking me this shit, again.? I tole you I don't live there no more.

Lena

Joe. Does he drink? Do drugs?

Dyyana

He's a fucking wino/meth-head.

*Lena holds the jar out.*

I'm broke.



Lena

Your mother and he...do they...?

Dyyana

He beats her till she bleeds or passes out. Then she makes his dinner and washes his shitty underwear. He broke her arm. I left.

Lena

Did he hit you?

Dyyana

He don't hit me. He only hits people who don't hit back. He's a pussy assed motherfucker.

*Dyyana exits.*

*Lena crosses to Ma.*

Lena

Ma, all the dishes are cleaned up. I'm going home soon.

Ma

*(Dry coughs)* I could've done them. You go. It's too dark already.

Lena

It's okay.

Ma

I never liked traveling at night. Keep your head down.

Lena

Good idea. You wanna go to bed and watch TV?

Ma

Not yet.... Oh, I gotta go to the bathroom.

*She gets up.*

Lena

I'll wait. You okay?

Ma

I can't hold it.

Lena

What do you mean? Ma!

Ma

Oh, my God. I'm all wet. Oh, my God. My pants. It's in my socks. Did I mess up the floor? Oh, my God. Pee all over the floor.

Lena

Don't panic. I'll take care of it. Let's go to the bathroom. Get your clothes off.

Ma

What's a matter with me? I don't know why God doesn't just take me.

Lena

Has this been going on?

Ma

Clean the floor. Madonna!

Lena

You got pain when you pee?

Ma

I don't wanna smell. Put it all in the washing machine. I don't wanna smell.

Lena

Okay. I'll clean it.

Ma

Put everything in the washing machine.

Lena

I will.

Ma

And the floor.

Lena

You pee in the bed?

Ma

I'm too old.

*Lena walks Ma to the bed.*

*Carmen enters Ma's kitchen. She is chopping garlic.*

I gotta go.

Lena

Where you gonna go? Come on, let's clean up... get into your nightgown.

Ma

Why'm I still here?

*Ma lays in the bed.*

*Lena crosses to the kitchen.*

*Carmen and Lena prepare dinner.*

Lena

Last night was a mess with Ma. Chop a lot of garlic. I'm making enough pasta for two days.

Carmen

Where is she?

Lena

Saying her rosary.

Carmen

What happened?

Lena

She peed on herself. I went into her bedroom to get clean underwear. Noticed a pile of plastic sheets and clean towels under her bed. Asked her about them.

*Puts cigarette in her mouth.*

Said she wet the bed 2 weeks ago. Afraid it'll happen again. Chop the garlic finer. You know she hates it. Crazy Italian lady. She's glad you're here.

*Lena opens a can of whole tomatoes and begins to chop them.*

Carmen

What is she doing with the plastic and the towels?

Lena

Laying them on the bed. She sleeps on top of them.

Carmen

Why?

Lena

Case she wets herself. She sleeps with an old blanket that she can wash. No sheets. No pillow. God forbid, she should get pee on anything.

Carmen

How can she sleep like that?

Lena

She's nuts. Surprised she doesn't sleep on the floor. Keep the bed clean. I gotta get someone in here. Someone to put her to bed... make her meals. I'm running back and forth all the time.

Carmen

You can't move a stranger in. She won't let you.

Lena

I can't let her live like this. It's a mess.

Carmen

This is her home.

Lena

What'm I supposed to do?

Carmen

Lena, you can't push people around because you're uncomfortable and want to fix everything.

Lena

I don't push people around. I have to do something.

Carmen

She's a very private person.

Lena

She hates people.

Carmen

She's frightened.

Lena

*(pause)* Shit. I have to do it, right?. I have to move in here.

Carmen

I think so.

Lena

I'll suffocate and die. This was NEVER in my plans. Wanted to move out when I was 11. I was never, ever gonna live with her again.

Carmen

And you didn't.

Tell me to put her in a home. Lena

Put her in a home. Carmen

Shit. Shit shit shit shit. Lena

The garlic is done. Carmen

Do these mushrooms. Cut'm in half...slice'm. Stayed far away from Brooklyn. I worked shit jobs every summer at school - on campus, off campus. Lena

You had that job at the Pizza Chalet after Junior year. No one ever ordered pizza. Whenever I visited you there, Mickey was sitting in the back with a customer and a scale. Carmen

Busy guy. Some weeks he paid me with "dry goods".....Shit, gimme some now. (pause) I didn't see this coming. Lena

She's getting older. Oh...damn. Carmen

You cut yourself. Lena

It's not bad. Carmen

There's blood on the board. Wrap this paper towel around it. Sit. I'll finish it. Lena

You're so bossy. Carmen

I am not. You want to do them? Lena

No. I broke 3 glasses this week. I drop them. I cry. I dream. I cry all the time. Am I in mourning? Carmen

It was a speck. Lena

Lena, did you ever have an abortion? Carmen

You should wash out that cut. Lena

I feel alone. Carmen

I'm here. Lena

Did you? Carmen

What? Lena

Have an abortion? Carmen

This isn't about me.  
*Carmen looks at her.*  
WHAT! Lena

I want to know. Carmen

*Lena chops onions. Keeps cooking.*  
Yeah I did.. Pass me the garlic. Lena

You did? When? Carmen

They were back in the day. Lena

They? Where was I? How many? Carmen

A few. Lena

A few? Carmen

YES. What? What was I gonna do? Lena

Did you think about it? Carmen

I thought about how stupid I was. Couldn't manage birth control. Pill made me sick. IUDs fell out. Hated diaphragms. Too many one night stands. Lena

Did you have them when we were at school? Carmen

A couple. Lena

When? I never...when? Carmen

I just...i don't know. Lena

How many did you have? Carmen

It doesn't matter. Lena

I don't understand. You never said anything. Carmen

I just took care of it. You were a virgin. Then you were with Nesto for 3 years. You were a 'good girl'. Lena

What about now? Why didn't you tell me? You knew I was struggling. Carmen

I didn't think it would help. (*beat beat*) Carmen, I'm not like you. They just happened. Lena

Carmen  
WHAT? I can't believe you. *(pause)* How many?

Lena  
Another time.

Carmen  
How many?

Lena  
FOUR!!... I had four.

Carmen  
You had four abortions?

Lena  
Good old Dr. Nelson. And then good old Planned Parenthood.

Carmen  
One after the other? What were you thinking?

Lena  
I WASN'T. I did what I had to. I gotta finish this pasta.  
*She cooks.*

Carmen  
I think about it all the time.

Lena  
You think too much. Its history. You want penne or orzo?

Carmen  
That was your birth control. Abortions.

Lena  
I don't want to talk about it.  
*Lights up on Ma getting up.*

Carmen  
You need to//think about...

Lena  
//Carmen, let it be! Ma's all I can deal with right now.

Carmen  
Fine. *(silence)*



Lena

I stayed with her last night. She's been waiting for me to come home.

*Carmen and Lena exit.*

*Ma walks to the kitchen table. Dry cough. Puts her head on her hands.*

*Lena enters Ma's kitchen.*

Lena

Ma. What're you doing?

Ma

I'm resting. Just for a minute. What're you doing here?

Lena

I'm staying here, remember? Why don't you go lie down.

Ma

I'm saying my rosary.

*Cough.*

Lena

No, you're not. If you're tired, go to bed.

Ma

No. I don't want to fall asleep. Then I won't sleep tonight.

Lena

You're back hurt?

Ma

Yeah.

Lena

Pick your head up. Did you have lunch?

Ma

No. My back hurts.

Lena

I'm gonna make some dinner.

Ma

I'm not hungry.

Lena

How about some cottage cheese and fruit. A little salata?.

No. Ma

You just gonna stop eating? Lena

I'm tired. Its time for me to go. Ma

I'm sick of that. Lena

What? Ma

Your threats. How do you think it makes me feel? Lena

I wish you'd leave me alone. Ma

You feel lousy. You won't eat. You keep talking about dying. Why don't I just shoot myself in the head. Lena

What're you talking about? Ma

I don't know. I just...You ready to die? Lena

Go ahead. Give me some cottage cheese. No salata. Ma  
*Lena begins to prepare the food.*

How's Carmen?

She's okay. Here's some water. I was thinking about Daddy on the way home. You think about him? Lena

He shouldn't've had the stroke. I got stuck with the yard, the bills, all of it. Your father took care of everything around here. *He* knew how to prune the fig tree. I told him it was the wrong spot. Never listened to me. Then...boom! I don't know how I survived it. That's when I lost all the weight. Ma

Lena

Daddy had the stroke.

Ma

Wait till it happens to you. You were upstate doing God knows what. It was just me and your father all those years.

Lena

I know.

Ma

You don't know.

*Lena cooks. Quiet.*

Lena

Daddy gave me a pocket knife when I was 12. Never told you.

Ma

You were 2 of a kind. Never tole me anything. You move around fast just like he did.

Lena

I still have the knife.

Ma

Look at that branch. The fig's gonna poke a hole in the screen. You gotta cut it.

*cough*

Lena

I remember one day we were all out in the backyard. I was about 5 . Digging around. You were both over by the fig tree. Daddy said something to you I couldn't hear. You smiled. He fed you a fig off the tree. You both laughed.

Ma

You're nuts. (*cough*) I don't remember that. The clippers are on the wall by the door. Cut it off and put it in the trash.

Lena

"Mama, give me a kiss".

Ma

What?

Lena

I used to ask you that when I was little.

Ma

I think you dream this stuff up.

Lena

“Give me a kiss right here”.

*She points to her cheek.*

You’d be in the kitchen ironing. I’d stand there till you kissed me.

Ma

Yeah, you were a little monkey. Daddy was working night and day at the liquor store then. I was tired all the time in those days.

Lena

Here.

*Puts the cottage cheese and salad on the table.*

How about some water?

Ma

*Cough.*

I don’t want any.

*Pushes the plate away and puts her head back down. Cough.*

Lena

Come on Ma, you gotta eat. You’re getting weak.

*Grabs stomach. Makes a little sound.*

Ma

What’s a matter?

Lena

Gas.

*Moves the cottage cheese closer.*

Have a little.

Ma

Lena, I’m not gonna live forever, you know.

Lena

I know. But you’re a skinny little runt. Don’t want people to think I’m starving you.

Ma

When Daddy had his stroke, I wasn’t gonna let him lay in the bed. I made him walk. I made him talk. He didn’t want to do anything. He sat there like a magoong. I prayed every day to the Virgin Mary to make him better. I yelled at him. Then one day I was so mad, I hit him. That’s when I took him to The Home.

Lena  
Yeah.

Ma  
I wanted him to be like he used to be.

Lena  
I know.

Ma  
We got to accept God's will. If I get too skinny, put me in The Home.

Lena  
Ma, you're not going to The Home. Just eat.

Ma  
Fine.  
*Dry cough. Lights up on Carmen in Lena's office.*

Lena  
Gonna go out and mess with the fig. You eat.

Ma  
How'm I gonna know when I'm dead?

Lena  
What?

Ma  
How'm I gonna know?

Lena  
I don't know, Ma.  
*Lights stay up on Ma. She puts her head on her arms. Lena enters her office.*  
Hey.

Carmen  
Here's your mail. How is it at Ma's?

Lena  
Nuts. Haven't talked to you since last week. All I do is work and Ma. How's my plant?

Carmen  
She misses you. I'm buried also. The thesis is overdue. Friday was the deadline.

Lena

Last night she sat at the kitchen table with THE CHECKBOOK! She was off 12 friggin cents. She fell asleep at the table at 9. Sent her to bed. Told her I'd fix it. I stared at it till 10:30.

Carmen

Did you find it?

Lena

NO! She's driving me to the sanatarium.

Carmen

That would be nice.

Lena

She keeps wetting herself. I bought pull up diapers. She's totally pissed. They're \$19.99 a box. On sale.

Carmen

Poor Ma.

Lena

She wants me to air them out if they aren't too wet and use them again.

Carmen

Just like her paper towels.

Lena

Complained last night that the chicken was dry. Last week, it was bloody. I don't know, maybe I *am* trying to kill her. All she wants is chocolate and ice cream. Won't eat any fruit.

Carmen

You're the mother.

*Lights down on Ma*

Lena

YEAH... DAMN! Doesn't even have cable. TV gets 7 channels - three of'em are Spanish.

Carmen

You could watch the novellas.

Lena

I'm hooked. Mariposa de Barrio. Every night at 8. I called you. Left a couple of messages. Wanna dried fig?

Carmen

*Re: figs.*

These are so unattractive. I didn't talk to anyone. Midterms. Thesis. I'm tired all the time. I stayed in bed all day Sunday.

Lena

What's the matter?

Carmen

I'm depressed. I feel like a thumbprint.

Lena

Why didn't you call?

Carmen

You're busy.

Lena

I'm sorry. All I've been able to do is work and not kill ma. Tell me.

Carmen

Another time.

Lena

Come on.

Carmen

*(pause)* I didn't want to be pregnant. I chose to have an abortion. AND I'm grieving. Can you understand that?

Lena

Carmen, let it go now. You took care of yourself.

Carmen

Its not that simple.

Lena

Actually, it is.

Carmen

The definition of abort is to "arrest in development."

Lena

You're too deep. It was a little jelly bean.

Carmen

No it wasn't. It was an embryo that I chose to arrest in development. I should never have gotten pregnant.

Lena

But you did and you made a choice. I wish I could...

*Looks at watch*

Shit. Told Ma I'd be home by 6. She stares at the clock. Thinks I'm dead on the subway if I'm 10 minutes late.

Carmen

You need to go.

Lena

Come to Ma's and have dinner with us.

Carmen

No. I have too much work. You go.

Lena

Come on, Carmen. Let me feed you. Chicken stew!!!

Carmen

I'm not good company.

Lena

Makes 3 of us.

Carmen

Another time.

Lena

Ma likes you better than me. You haven't seen her in weeks. Sit between us. I'm too crazy.

Carmen

Lena...

Lena

PLEASE....

Carmen

Don't yell at her.



I don't yell at her.  
*Carmen gives Lena a "look".*  
Okay. Okay. I promise.

I'll meet you downstairs.  
*Carmen exits. Lena sits and stares.*  
*Dyyana bursts in.*

Why I gotta go?

You can't just barge in.

Why I gotta go?

You've decided to have your baby. We're looking for another placement for you. We aren't licensed for babies. Next time you knock.

That's fucked up.

*Hands Dyyana the cursing jar.*  
It's possible for you to go to a group home, maybe foster care. I could try to arrange for you to stay until you start to show more. Then you would be transferred. It would give you another couple months here. What do you think?

Whatever.

I want you to tell me. *(beat beat)* Dyyana, do you want to stay?

*(silence)* FINE! Shitty choice.

You could terminate. Its still an option.

I ain't killing my baby.

Lena

I don't know what you or the father were using when you got pregnant, but if there was crack or alcohol involved the baby could be compromised. Consider that.

Dyyana

My baby's fine.

Lena

You need to be informed.

Dyyana

*(pause)* My friends're in jail?

Lena

Unless they got out on bail. There was a large quantity of opiates, crack/cocaine and marijuana found in the apartment. What were you using when you were living there.

Dyyana

You saw the drug test. Why you gotta ask?

Lena

You tell me.

Dyyana

Weed.

Lena

What else?

Dyyana

*(silence)* 24's. You happy?

Lena

Beer and marijuana. Were you having a sexual relationship with any of the men in the apartment?

Dyyana

That ain't your business.

Lena

Yes it is. You're still a child. Who's responsible for your pregnancy?

Dyyana

I ain't no child. They gonna be in jail a long time?

Lena

I don't know. Dyyana, the two men in the apartment were adults. You were fourteen years old. You had sex with somebody. If it was a man over eighteen, it's statutory rape.

Dyyana

They didn't rape me. They're my friends. I go with who I want. I'm a bitch, right?

Lena

No. You're not a bitch

Dyyana

You don't know.

Lena

Yeah, I do.

Dyyana

Yo, I'm out.

Lena

SIT. Do you know who you're pregnant by?

Dyyana

Shit.

Lena

Dyyana, did you have sexual relations with Joe?

Dyyana

Fuck you, bitch.

*Tosses \$ on the desk and exits. Lena exits.*

*Lights up on Carmen. She is packing a suitcase.*

*Lena enters.*

Carmen

I read about it in the New York Times. I spoke to a woman who went. I need to go.

Lena

Japan?

Carmen

Yes.

Lena

It's crazy.

Carmen

Lena, please, I need your help. How do I fit all of this into that little bag?

Lena

Put the shoes in first. When did you decide? What about Christmas?

Carmen

We have 2 weeks off. I found a great fare.

Lena

Why are you doing this?

Carmen

There is a ceremony in Japan...Mizuko Kuyo. I need to do something.

Lena

We're making ravioli for Ma. I can't do it alone. Do something HERE.

Carmen

There's nothing to *do* here. It's a talking point. Pro life. Pro Choice. In Japan I can bless the unborn. That's what I need. They call them 'water children'.

Lena

Its 3 days before Christmas. We always do dinner. Ma's expecting you. You could have talked to me about this.

Carmen

No, I couldn't.

Lena

Go to therapy. Take drugs. You don't know anything about Japan.

Carmen

No I don't. Titi couldn't even imagine. Mami was only 17 when she died. No one in my family left Queens. And I'm going to Tokyo. Maybe I can sleep again.

Lena

It's another world.

Carmen

That's why I'm going. The Buddhists in Japan describe abortion as a necessary suffering. A necessary loss. That's how I feel.

Lena

You're acting like you did something wrong.

Carmen

It is not about right or wrong. Its about grief. I cry every day. Titi cried in her sleep for years. I'm bringing mis madres with me.

Lena

What're you gonna do there?

Carmen

I'm going to a temple in Tokyo. There is a place there for people to grieve abortions and miscarriages. They dedicate statues to a kind of angel...I don't know how to pronounce it... He's the protector of their souls.

Lena

They aren't souls.

Carmen

Lena, can you just help me? I'm going.

Lena

What about Christmas?

Carmen

Lena...

Lena

Could be Ma's last Christmas.

Carmen

PLEASE. Help me pack.

Lena

It doesn't make any sense.

Carmen

Which shoes?

Lena

The black ones. Put'm in a plastic bag. In the side pocket. Here, give them to me. I'll take care of it.

Carmen

I want you to accept this.

Lena

I'm trying to understand.

Carmen  
No you're not.

Lena  
What do you want?

Carmen  
I want to put it to rest. I want to bury it.

Lena  
There's nothing to bury. You made a decision. I don't need to tell you that. It's all wrong.

Carmen  
NO, IT IS NOT WRONG. You don't know what I need. How could you?

Lena  
You don't need to go to Japan.

Carmen  
YES I DO! I want you to back me up. But you aren't capable because every damn thing is about you and what YOU think. You had your conveyor belt abortions and never thought one minute about them. How could you do that? And now I'm supposed to be like you. Blank. Alone. No relationships. A total mess with your mother.  
*Lights up on Ma sitting up in the bed.*  
(beat beat) You should go. I can't... I have an early plane.

Lena  
Here's some snacks for the plane.  
*Lena throws them across the room and exits.*  
*Carmen continues to pack.*  
*Ma's coughing.*  
*Lena enters Ma's bedroom..*

Lena  
Ma? Ma. Where are you?

Ma  
I made the filling. Cheese and meat pieno. Fran, how many ravioli we making?

Lena  
Who you talking to?

Ma  
The dough's too stiff, huh? I'll roll. Fran?

Lena

What're you doing? Aunt Fran's dead, Ma. For a long time.

Ma

*Ma coughs then looks straight at Lena.*  
You're late.

Lena

You see her?

Ma

No. What's a matter with you.

Lena

You want me to make ravioli for Christmas?

Ma

Carmen coming?  
*Cough.*

Lena

No.

Ma

Why not?

Lena

She's going on a trip.  
*Lights down on Carmen.*  
Your cough's worse.

Ma

No ravioli. Too much work.

Lena

You feel okay? When'd you go back to bed? You were up and dressed when I left this morning. You in bed with all your clothes on?  
*Ma coughs.*

Ma

Yeah. I got cold. I don't feel good. I'm coughing and coughing. Maybe there's a draft.

Lena

There's no draft. There isn't a window open in this whole house.

I got dizzy. Everything went black. Ma

You have a fever? Lena

I don't know. What time is it? Ma

6:30. What're you talking about ravioli? I was thinking I would get us a little tree. Lena

You're late. Ma

I got stuck at work. Let's take your temperature. Lena

I don't know what I'm supposed to do. Ma

Why didn't you call me? Lena

You were at work. You gonna make dinner? Ma

You hungry? I'll make soup Lena

Don't put beans. Too much gas. Ma

How about chicken and pastina? Lena

A little bowl. I don't want a Christmas tree. Makes a mess. Carmen's not coming? Ma

No. How's your chest? Lena

I can't breathe good. It hurts. My legs feel like they weigh a ton. They're wobbly, like they're not gonna hold me up. I was afraid I'd fall. Then I'd lay there waiting for you to get home. Ma



Lena

You got the Med Alert thing around your neck. Push that button if something like that happens. That's why we got it. Never mind. I'll go make dinner. Wanna eat in bed?

Ma

NO.. I'll get up. Did you pick up some salata?

Lena

Yeah. Wanna wash it?

Ma

There's always dirt in the heads. Its gotta be washed good.

Lena

Okay. I'll wait to cook the pastina. It'll take you an hour to wash it.

Ma

Well, I'm not speedy like you. You can't do a good job. You wanna eat dirt in your salata.

Lena

I love dirt.

Ma

And get the mail. All those Christmas cards. I'm not sending any out. I don't know why they gotta waste their money.

Lena

You don't have to.

Ma

I don't know what I'm supposed to do now.

*Lights up on Dyyana in Lena's office.*

Lena

Sit on the edge of the bed. I'll take your temperature.

Ma

Don't over cook the pastina.

Lena

I know. Al dente. Come on.

*Lena has the thermometer.*

*Ma stands up. Her legs give out.*

I can't.  
*She falls against Lena*

Oh.  
*She is coughing.*

Come on, Ma. Get back in bed.

My legs can't hold me.

You breathing okay?

What's gonna happen?

Nothing. Dinner.

*Lena puts Ma back to bed. She exits. Lights down on Ma. Lena enters her office.*

The holidays?

Sucked.

You went to Rockefeller center?

Been there already.

You still feel sick?

No.

Looked at your academic records. AP English last year.

I don't feel good. Can I go, Miss?

Dyyana

You're smart. You were a good student. How're your classes here?

Lena

I got a bad headache.

Dyyana

(*silence*)

Fine. 'I love school'. Can't wait to get up every morning at 6:30, clean the bathroom floor, eat the shit breakfast and go to a 8 o'clock math.

What'd you do over the break?

Lena

Slept. Read a book for English.

Dyyana

What'd you think?

Lena

It was okay. Can I go?

Dyyana

You finished the book?

Lena

Nothin' else to do. So boring here.

Dyyana

*Silence*

What? Its about a little black girl. Everybody's poor and sick. She wants blue eyes.

Why?

Lena

She thinks she's ugly.

Dyyana

Is she?

Lena

I don't know...No. She's just dark. She gets all..."f'd up" she's only 11.

Dyyana

She gets hurt?

Lena

Yeah. Hurt. Dyyana

What happens? Lena

I tole you. She gets messed up. You read it? Dyyana

The Bluest Eye. Lena

She's just a little kid. Dyyana

She is. Like you. Lena

I ain't a little kid. Dyyana

What do you think that means? Lena

Stupid cry baby. Dyyana

Is she a stupid cry baby? Lena

She don't cry. Dyyana

The little girl needs something. Lena

To be left alone. Dyyana

To be seen. To be asked questions. Lena

Whatever. Dyyana

*beat beat*  
How about you? What did you do for Christmas?

Just me and my mother. Lena

Nobody else? Dyyana

No. Lena

Everything was different this Christmas. Just me and my baby. Dyyana

Your baby. Keep your eyes on it. No blood. Lena

What? Dyyana  
*Carmen enters.*

Oh, excuse me. Hi Dyyana. Ms. Frigerio. Carmen

I have to go. Lena  
*Grabs her stomach.*

Lena... Carmen

You okay? *(to Lena)* Dyyana

Its just...come in on Monday. Lena

Did I interrupt? Carmen

I need to go now. Lena

Miss... Dyyana

Carmen

It's alright, Dyyana. I read the poem you submitted. It's beautiful. I'll talk to you about it on Monday.

*Dyyana exits.*

Hi.

*Lena puts an unlit cigarette in her mouth.*

Lena

I'm leaving.

Carmen

How's Ma?

Lena

In the hospital. Pneumonia. Hospice.

Carmen

Oh my God. Hospice? Why?

Lena

PNEUMONIA. Congenital heart failure. Everything's shutting down.

Carmen

It happened fast.

Lena

Lot happens in 2 weeks.

Carmen

Can I go visit...?

Lena

Gotta go.

Carmen

Lena...

Lena

Fuck me, right?

Carmen

NO. I didn't know she was so sick.

Lena

How could you know. You weren't here.

*Lena exits.*

*Carmen exits.*  
*Dyyana enters Lena's office. Sits.*  
*Lena enters.*

Oh! Lena

You tole me I should come back today.  
*Lena sits in silence.*  
You okay?...Miss? Dyyana

What. Lena

I'm here. You said... Dyyana

Right. What else? Lena

Huh? Nothing. Dyyana

What're you doing? Lena

You told me...You okay? Dyyana

Your weekend? What'd you do? Lena

Ms. Cruz gave me a journal. Been writing poems. To my baby.  
*Lena grabs her stomach.*  
You sick? Dyyana

What kind of poems? Lena

I don't know...what I like. What's she's gonna see. Dyyana

You feel like you know her already? Lena

What? Dyyana

What do you tell her? Lena

Nothing. Like the color of my eyes. My favorite shirt. Stupid shit really. Dyyana

You want her to know you. Lena

I guess. Dyyana

When she meets you, she'll recognize you. Lena

I don't know. Dyyana

*Silence.*  
You got kids?

No. Lena

How come? Dyyana

Does she tell you things? Lena

What? Dyyana

Do you know her? Lena

She's all I got. We almost done? Dyyana

Yeah. We're done. Lena  
*Dyyana exits.*  
*Lena lights a cigarette. Smokes.*  
*Puts her head on her arms.*  
*Carmen enters.*



Carmen

Lena

*No response*

You haven't been here for days. Have you been sick? I left messages at Ma's.

Lena

Its 4. I'm out.

Carmen

Can we talk?

Lena

Lets talk about Japan. Big head stone dolls dedicated to the dead babies. Sell'm to the suckers. You bought one?

Carmen

Nevermind.

Lena

How much did you pay?

Carmen

Don't ask me that.

Lena

A thousand fucking dollars for what? There's blood on your hands, right? I'm covered in it. A bloody mess. You want the baby back. You can't get it back. Gone. You murdered it, right?

Carmen

That's not why//

Lena

What about me? Conveyor belt murders 1,2,3,4.

Carmen

There were no murders!

Lena

I should be stoned bloody.

Carmen

Lena.

Don't.	Lena
Could we...	Carmen
WHAT??	Lena
Could we talk about it?	Carmen
I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY. Bloody stone babies. ( <i>Silence</i> ).	Lena
Is ma...?	Carmen
Ma's dying.	Lena
I know.	Carmen
You're so fucking.....	Lena
WHAT?	Carmen
Nothing. I'm the bloody shit.	Lena
No.	Carmen
I'm out.	Lena
NO!	Carmen
Move.	Lena
<i>Carmen stands in front of Lena.</i>	

Don't, Lena? You need... Carmen

What do I need!!?? Lena

You need help. Carmen

Fuck you. Lena

*Carmen steps aside.*  
Go, if you want to.  
*Lena stays.* Carmen

You're so fucking smart. Lena

**You're** so fucking smart. What are you doing here!? You're mother's sick. You're scaring the kids. Go home to Ma... I could help you. Carmen

*Silence*  
Here. I brought you a cup of tea.

NO! It's all shit! Lena

Yeah, it is. You're in so much pain. And Ma's dying. (*beat beat*) Lena, I went to Tokyo to make peace for myself. Carmen

You're so good. The clean one. You all fixed up now? Lena

NO I'M NOT!! (*beat beat*) I am sleeping a little better. Carmen

*Silence.*  
*Lena grabs her stomach hard.*  
Are you sick?

I don't know. Lena

You're exhausted. Carmen

I'm bleeding. Lena

What? Carmen

A bloody hole. Lena

What's bleeding? Carmen

My gut's sliced up. Sloughing off the dead shit. Friggin crazy ass - just like Lady. Lena

Lady? Carmen

My dog. Found her when I was 7. Fucked every heat.. False pregnancies. Cried, digging into a corner of the dirt cellar. Thought she gave birth and couldn't find her puppies. A childless mother. Lena

Sit down. Carmen

Go away. Lena

No. What happened with Lady? Carmen

She had one. Tried to kill it. I'm the dog. Lena

No. Carmen

I lay down with the baby resting on my chest. Feel the weight sink in as she goes into a deep sleep. I smell her baby head. I wake up sweating. Lena

Carmen  
You wanted a baby?

Lena  
Stupid, drunk romantic crap.

Carmen  
You wanted one.

Lena  
Too fucked up. What was I doing? Got pregnant, first time. Barely 17.

Carmen  
You were a kid.

Lena  
Then one after the other. Get pregnant. Call the doc. Fast and easy just like it's supposed to be. Get it done...go home...bottle of wine, bottle of wine. Play fetch with the cat. Why'd I fuck so many men?

Carmen  
Who knows. (*beat beat*) Maybe you wanted a baby. Lena, you have a mothering heart.

Lena  
Lady cried for her unborn puppies. I didn't. Then she had one and tried to kill it. 2 bitches.

Carmen  
No Lena.

Lena  
Broken. Scarred up uterus. Couldn't even imagine one.  
*Silence.*

Carmen  
There was a ceremony at the temple for us. An acknowledgement. They gave us wood carvings. "Please sleep peacefully. Please forgive me." I put two at the shrine - one for me and...one for you. Not because we committed sin. Because we had to return the gift.

Lena  
I hated you for going to Japan.

Carmen  
I thought your abortions were so easy – so careless.

No babies to hold. Lena

Now you have Ma. Carmen

Dying. Its all mixed up. Lena

It is. Las madres i los hijos. Being a mother - having a mother.  
*Lena grabs her stomach.*  
Lena, you need to see a doctor. Carmen

My stomach. I'm starting to leak. Lena

You have to stop working for awhile. Carmen

I lay on the floor by her bed at night. Watch her breathe - like a baby. She lays on her back. Looks dead. Lena  
*Lights up on Ma in bed.*

Is she conscious? Carmen

Yeah. She's scared. I open my eyes, she's awake. Change her diaper. Feed her sweet things. She cries when I leave in the morning. We say the rosary in the middle of the night. Asks me what's gonna happen 100 times. Asks me how she's gonna know when she's dead. Lena

Yeah. Carmen

I'm so tired. Lena  
*Lena bends over her stomach.*  
Ah!

Give me your doctor's number. Do you have help with Ma? Carmen

Lena

Hospice sends an aide to change the sheets and bathe her. Get her lunch.

Carmen

I'll come home with you and make you both some food. I want to see her. You can rest for awhile.

Lena

I want white food. Mashed potatoes and butter.

Carmen

I can do that.

*Carmen and Lena exit.*

*Lena stands under the fig tree. And smokes.*

*Enters Ma's room. Watches her.*

*Silence.*

Ma

Where's the girl?

Lena

She's on her way. Bath day.

Ma

How come you're not at school?

Lena

I stopped working for awhile.

Ma

Why?

Lena

Taking some time off.

Ma

*Ma tries to sit up.*

Gimme a Kleenex.

Lena

Want me to fix the bed?

Ma

No.

Lena

I'm gonna put another pillow. Need to prop you up on the right side, too. The nurse said we have to get you off those bones. You're getting all red.

Ma

I don't like the pillow there.

Lena

You don't want bed sores. Come on.  
*Lena moves Ma.*

Ma

I wish you'd leave me alone.

Lena

I know. Help me out. Can you turn to the left?

Ma

You look terrible.

Lena

Thanks.

Ma

It's too much for you. I know. I don't know what to do. I pray to the Virgin Mary. What's gonna happen?

Lena

They said you'll probably sleep more and more. Your breathing might get harder but we have medicine. The oxygen is helping.

Ma

Will I make a big sound?

Lena

I don't know. Don't think so.

Ma

You think I'll see Aunt Fran?

Lena

What do you think?

Ma

What's that?



What? Lena

THAT! Ma

I don't know what you're talking about ma. Lena

Oh, for heavens sake - THAT. The bright flash. You see it? Ma

Wanna say your prayers? Lena

You don't see it. Ma

You looking at the bathroom light? Lena

NO. Ma

Want some breakfast? Lena

I been thinking about before you were born. I didn't want a baby. Ma

I know. Lena

I was scared. Mama had a terrible time having kids. Your father wanted a baby. Ma

Yeah. Tricked you into it. Lena

He tole me he was taking care of everything but he didn't. Then I was pregnant. My mother always tole me kids were work and pain. I always felt bad about that. Like she hated us. She called me 'stupida'. Ma

She wasn't nice. Lena

Ma  
She had a terrible childhood. She didn't like my father. I was a lousy mother.

Lena  
No. You weren't.

Ma  
I couldn't give you what I never got.

Lena  
Yeah. Was I a good kid?

Ma  
You never got in trouble.

Lena  
You never called me stupid.

Ma  
I promised myself I wouldn't.

Lena  
You didn't. You called me monkey.

Ma  
Yeah. You were funny

Lena  
Was I?

Ma  
You made me puppet shows at night.

Lena  
That's right. You watched.

Ma  
What else could I do? You worked hard on them.

Lena  
You liked having me after all that?

Ma  
You were my daughter.

Lena

Sometimes I wish I'd had kids.

Ma

You never got married. You got your work. You didn't need'm

Lena

When I was young I was doing a lot of things. I was very confused.

Ma

You were wild. That's what you were.

Lena

I was. Everything was crazy. I was crazy too.

Ma

You never talked to me. Made me feel like you couldn't stand to be around me.

Lena

I was trying to be...something. I don't know. Made a mess. (*pause*) I got pregnant. Had an abortion. ...More than one.

Ma

(*beat beat*) I knew something was happening - bad. You never talked to me.

Lena

Never talked to anyone. (*pause*) What do you think?

Ma

I think Virgin Mary blesses us if we go to her.

Lena

I feel so bad now. You bless me, mama.

Ma

You want me to forgive you?

Lena

I just want you to know.

Ma

We all do things that make us sorry. But some things just have to be. I was pregnant again a year after I had you. Your father wanted another baby. I couldn't do it. I just let that one go. I made him get fixed after that.

Lena

Let it go?

Ma

Yeah. I made a novena asking the Virgin Mary to take it away. After a few weeks, I had a lot of pain. I bled and it was gone.

Lena

A miscarriage.

Ma

I didn't want it. God forgives us our sins.

Lena

I got pregnant 4 times.

*Lights up on fig tree.*

Ma

Oh.

*Silence.*

God doesn't count.

*Ma closes her eyes.*

*Silence.*

Is it time to go?

Lena

Nowhere to go. Want to say your rosary?

Ma

Okay.

*Lena hands Ma her rosary.*

Lena

Hail Mary full of grace the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus

Ma

Holy Mary Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Lena

Hail Mary full of grace the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus,

Ma

Holy Mary Mother of.....what're we...? Look, there...Its time...

Lena

What's a matter Ma?

*Ma begins an increasing agitated behavior.*

Ma

I can't. No. Its time. What're you doing?

Lena

We're saying the rosary. See? You got it in your hand. I'm gonna get you some oxygen.

Ma

No. Don't. I just wanna sit up. Help me.

Lena

You feel like you need to sit up cause you don't have enough oxygen. That's what the nurse said.

Ma

Let me up. I wanna get up. Close the windows.

Lena

They're closed. Put your head back, Ma. Need to go to the bathroom? You got your diaper.

Ma

Get me up. Oh, Jesus. Please. Get me up.

Lena

Where you wanna go?

Ma

I wanna go. Lemme go. I can't breathe.

Lena

Come on Ma. Lay back. I'm getting the oxygen.

Ma

No. Please. Jesus. Please. Help me.

Lena

Its okay, Ma. Lay back.

Ma

*Ma throws her blankets off.*

I gotta go. Please God. Help me. I need to go.

Lena

You need to take a BM? You got a diaper. Just go.

Ma

No no no. Close the windows. I'm cold.

Lena

You just threw your covers off. Windows are closed.

Ma

Oh my God. Where? What'm I supposed to do now? Oh, Jesus. Please.

Lena

*Opening the bottle of morphine.*

Open your mouth. Gonna put a drop under your tongue. Make you breathe easier. We just gotta have faith. Mama, you're going to be alright.

Ma

I can't...Where is everybody?

Lena

I'm here.

Ma

No no. What'm I supposed to do now. I don't know what to do. Get me up. Up. Gotta get up. No no no.

Lena

Its okay ma.

*Lena holds her down on the bed.*

Just rest. Close your eyes.

Ma

Goddamn you.

*Ma gathers her strength, sits up and hits Lena in the chest.*

Lena

STOP MA.

Ma

No more. No No. What! Jesus... please.

Lena

*Lena lays Ma back.*

Mama, I love you - I love you mama. I love you. I love you. I'm here mama. I love you. Its okay. You can let go. I love you forever, mama. "Hail Mary full of grace..."

Ma and Lena

The lord is with thee..."

Ma

Virgin Mary...

Lena

Yeah, Ma.

Ma

How'm I gonna know when I'm there?

Lena

I don't know.

Ma

Holy Mary - Where's my rosary?

Lena

Here.

Ma

She watches us. She talks to Jesus.

Lena

She's Mother Mary.

Ma

Gimme your head.

Lena

My head?

Ma

Gimme your head. Here.

*Ma puts her hand on Lena's head.*

On the kitchen cabinet - I saw Her for the first time. She was always there. She loves us.

Lena

You saw the outline of Her in the wood cabinet under the sink, right? I used to look at Her when I was little.

Ma

She was always there.

Lena

She was. We both saw her. Thank you Mama.

Ma

What songs you gonna have'm sing?

Lena

At the funeral?

Ma

What songs?

Lena

Your favorites. Ave Maria and "The Lord is my Shepherd". That okay?

Ma

Yeah. Not too fast.

Lena

Not too fast. Sleep now. Good night, Ma.

*Lights down on Ma in the bed.*

*Lena on the phone under the fig tree.*

Lena

Carmen. Its me. Ma's gone....This morning.... About half hour ago... Outside in the back yard (*beat beat*) Yeah. I'm under the fig tree. (*beat beat*) Carmen, can you come over?... Good.

*Lena goes back to Ma, straightens her up, combs her hair. Puts a clean white sheet on her and crawls into the bed next to her, patting her head.*

*Carmen comes into the bedroom.*

Carmen

Look at you and Ma.

Lena

Hi.

Carmen

She's out of her tired little body.



Lena

Yeah. She died at 10:53. Hour ago. She looks okay.

Carmen

Her hair looks good.

Lena

I combed it. Looked better before I started patting her.

Carmen

Was she quiet?

Lena

Since last night. Like she was sleeping. This morning her breathing changed. I held her hand. Stared at the pulse on her neck. She took a deep inhale. Right away the pulse started slowing down. Then it stopped. I sat. I opened all the windows. Took off her diaper. Put on a clean pair of underwear. A clean, white sheet.

Carmen

She's still around here.

Lena

You think?

Carmen

How are you feeling?

Lena

Like someone punched me all over. My bones ache.

Carmen

Like the flu. You're lying down. That's good. I'll stay here.

Lena

Haven't talked to the mortuary yet.

Carmen

I'll can take care of it.

Lena

I'll...(beat) Yeah okay. I want her here till later.

Carmen

Okay.

Lena  
I know she's dead but I don't know what that means.

Carmen  
I don't either.

Lena  
I'm an orphan.

Carmen  
You had her for many years.

Lena  
You're the orphan.

Carmen  
All my life. Did you eat breakfast?

Lena  
No.

Carmen  
I'll make it.

Lena  
She didn't want to leave... Oh...Ma put her hand on my head.

Carmen  
She did?

Lena  
A blessing.

Carmen  
She loves you.

Lena  
I never planned to love her.

Carmen  
She was funny.

Lena  
She was.... Crabby.

Carmen

Like you. I'm going to start breakfast.

Lena

I'm not crabby. She was a pain in my ass. How do I live in this world without her?

Carmen

You won't have to. Trust me. She'll hover.

*Lena crawls out of the bed looking at Ma.*  
How's your stomach?

Lena

Same. Am I dying too?

Carmen

You're going back for the test results next week.

Lena

Going back to work on Monday.

Carmen

You need another week.

Lena

Okay.

Carmen

The kids miss you. Dyyana's angry. I told her you were taking care of your mother.

Lena

Few weeks ago I told Dyyana she was a "tough cookie but she was a cookie". I could see the "fuck you" in her eyes. Then she grinned. She needs a family, her and the baby.

*Lights up on Lena's office.*

Carmen

What?

Lena

She's slotted to go to a group home soon. Better if she and the baby were fostered by a family.

Carmen

Are you thinking...?

*Dyyana enters the office.*

No.....No, not me. I'm not that crazy.	Lena
Good.	Carmen
I am hungry.	Lena
What do you want?	Carmen
Toast and butter.. One boiled egg...	Lena
3 ½ minutes. I'll take care of it. <i>Lena and Carmen exit.</i> <i>Lena enters her office</i>	Carmen
Oh. Hi Dyyana.	Lena
You weren't here.	Dyyana
I know. How are you?	Lena
I'm leaving this shit hole.	Dyyana
What've you been doing?	Lena
Eating like a horse.	Dyyana
You look good.	Lena
I'm fat. You left for a long time.	Dyyana

I did. Its good to see you. Lena

They said you'd be here. Dyyana

First day back. Lena

I was gonna leave. Dyyana

But you're here. Lena

What're those? Dyyana

Figs. Try one. My mother dried'em.  
*Lena eats a fig.* Lena

*Dyyana picks up a fig and smells it.* Dyyana  
They look like turds.

They do. What can I do for you, Dyyana? Lena

Nothing. Where were you? Dyyana

Taking care of my mother. She was very sick. Lena

She better? Dyyana

She died. Lena

I'm sorry. Dyyana

Thank you. She was old. Lena

But she was your mother. Dyyana

She was. Lena

You wish you had kids now? Dyyana

...Yeah. I do. Lena

Cause your mother's gone. Dyyana

You think? Lena

That's why I want my baby. I won't ever be alone again. Dyyana

Right. *(beat beat)* Dyyana, we need to know who the father of your baby is. Lena  
*Silence.*

Is it Joey? The police have questioned your mother about it.

Mommy already hates me. Why they have to talk to her? Dyyana

...Did he rape you? Lena

*Dyyana laughs.* Dyyana  
SHIT!!! EVERYBODY'S SO STUPID!!! I knew what I was doing.

What happened? Lena

We got high one night. Dyyana

Had he touched you before? Lena

Dyyana

Sometimes. I had a plan. Mommy was asleep. He was passed out on the sofa. I went to the kitchen. I got a blade. I stood over him. I was gonna cut'm. Then I kissed him. I don't know why. When he saw the blade he laughed. Threw it across the room. He grabbed me. I started it. He just kept going. It was my fault.

Lena

He was 42. You were 14.

Dyyana

I started it. It hurt. I didn't care. He's a pig. I didn't say no. I had a plan. I wanted to kill'm but I fucked'm.

Lena

You were hurt and confused.

Dyyana

You don't know. I went back a week later. I found him fucked up on the couch again. I went back. I'm a dirty whore.

Lena

You're a child. You were unprotected.

Dyyana

He's not the father of my baby. I knew that. I wouldnt've kept her. He's a stupid pig shooting blanks. Never had any kids. Too ugly. She hates me now. She's cooking Joey's pork chops. Will he go to prison?

Lena

He'll be charged with statutory rape. I can talk to your mother for you.

Dyyana

Mommy doesn't wanna see me. I would've killed him for her. He hurts her all the time. It used to be just me and her. She had a job. She helped me with homework. She was smart. Why don't she kick his ass out. Why don't she choose me?

Lena

Your mother loves you. She can't stand by you right now. She's too frightened.

*Lights up on Carmen. under fig tree.*

You want her to remember she loves you best.

Dyyana

Yeah.

*Lights down on Dyyana.*

*Lights up on Lena joins Carmen under the fig tree. Carmen is reading.*

Carmen

“Mis madres.  
Estaba conmigo.  
Susurran.  
Benediccion, Mami.  
Benediccion, Titi.  
Benediccion.”

I wasn't alone in Tokyo.

Lena

They came with you.

Carmen

I invited them.

Lena

Something I wouldn't do.

Carmen

We come from different stock. Different styles of loving.

Lena

You always knew they loved you.

Carmen

Titi kissed me all the time. “Mi Corazon. Alma de tu madre.”

Lena

I didn't know if Mama loved me when I was little.

Carmen

Different styles. The sweetness was too much responsibility. I had to be so good but how could I be as splendid as my saintly mothers?

Lena

One Christmas she bought me a doll. She sewed her a perfect little corduroy suit, just like she made me. True love.

Carmen

She still made you clothes when we were at college.

Lena

I wore ripped jeans. She made me leisure suits.



Carmen

Titi saved up every summer to buy me Buster Brown oxfords for the school year. I wanted paten leather flats. I wore Buster Browns.

Lena

Ma hated making lunches. I would trade them for Edna Garcia's fried potato sandwiches. All I wanted was Wonder Bread.

Carmen

Titi made her own patelles. All I wanted was Wonder Bread.

Lena

Ma loved Daddy and wouldn't tell him. She loved the fig tree and wanted to chop it down. Wanted to have me and didn't know it. Then she adopted her own daughter.

*Lights down on Carmen.*

*Lights up on Lena's office. Dyyana and Lena are there.*

Dyyana

I know it's a girl. I'm naming her Acacia. It was my grandmother's name.

Lena

It's beautiful.

Dyyana

She's quiet.

Lena

Acacia is the name of a tree.

Dyyana

What's it look like?

Lena

Tall and full.. Delicate leaves. Lots of tiny yellow flowers.

Dyyana

That's pretty.

Lena

How are you?

Dyyana

Okay.

Lena

How does it feel to be leaving?

I don't know what's it gonna be like.

Dyyana

Its going to be fine.

Lena

I'm going to these people in Queens.

Dyyana

The Rosadas. Your case worker told me they're in their 50's. Their kids are out of the house. They fostered a girl for a few years. They were very good.

Lena

They know its me and my baby.

Dyyana

They like kids.

Lena

What if I don't like'm?

Dyyana

You meet them first. Be nice. Give it a chance.

Lena

They're old.

Dyyana

Right.

Lena

I wrote mommy a letter. Ms. Cruz tole us to write to somebody . Someone we wanted to tell a secret to. But we had to write it with metaphors and shit. Not to put in the mail. I tole her she was a pale moth. That all the dust on her wings was wearing off. That she was gonna fall. She don't know it. Then the wind's gonna pick her up and she'll disappear into the sky - behind the moon.

Dyyana

You're afraid for her.

Lena

It feels like I don't got a mother.

Dyyana

Lena

You say the wind will pick her up. She'll disappear behind the moon. Seems like a safe place for her.

Dyyana

Maybe.

*Pause.*

You think its okay I'm having the baby?

Lena

Yeah. I do. You?

Dyyana

I feel like I already know her. Can I call you sometimes?

Lena

Absolutely. I'd like that. And i'll call you. You stay clean. And strong. You got Acacia to take care of. And remember, the Rosada's are old. Be gentle.

Dyyana

Yeah. You okay?

Lena

I'm okay. Thanks for asking. I miss my mother too.

Dyyana

I don't get it. You know....the missing.

Lena

Me neither.

*Lights down on Dyyana.*

*Lights up on Ma under the fig tree wearing classic RayBan sunglasses.*

*There's a ladder near the tree.*

*Lena enters with an armful of old blankets and rope and a lit cigarette.*

*She sees dead Ma. Puts out cigarette.*

Lena

What're you doing here?

Ma

A visit.

Lena

Carmen says you'll probably hover. That what you're doing?

Ma

I guess. Keeping an eye on you and the fig.

Lena

No drying this year. I'm gonna eat'm fresh. Hey Ma, bless the tree.

Ma

You think I'm a saint now I'm dead.

Lena

Yeah.

Ma

Its a good tree.

Lena

I'll take care of it.

Ma

You gonna cover it before it gets too cold?

Lena

Right here. I got the blankets out of the garage.

Ma

Don't forget the plastic.

Lena

I'll take care of it.

Ma

How you feeling?

Lena

I have an ulcer. Feels like a hole.

Ma

That's no good.

Lena

I fall a lot. Fell off the table at the dermatologist's office. Naked.

Ma

Naked?

Lena

2 days later, tripped on a sidewalk crack. Split my knee open. That hurt.

Ma

You're confused. Whatta they gonna do for your stomach?

Lena

Its getting better. Doctor put me on a diet for the ulcer. Gave me some pills.

Ma

Good.

Lena

We'll sit here.

Ma

Fico Squisito. Don't chop it down.

Lena

I won't.

Ma

I *am* hovering.

Lena

You are.

Ma

It's fun.

Lena

That's good, Ma. Fun.

Ma

What you gonna do now?

Lena

I'm gonna sit with you. I like the RayBans, by the way. I'm gonna cover the tree. And then I'm gonna leave the house. Go back home.

Ma

All the way there?

Lena

Yeah. You see Aunt Fran?

Ma  
Not yet.

Lena  
What're *you* gonna do?

Ma  
I'm gonna help you wrap the tree. Come on.

Lena  
You can do that?

Ma  
I don't know. Lets see.  
*Ma picks up one of the blankets.*  
This one goes at the top with the grommets on the bottom side.  
*Lena climbs the ladder. Ma hands her the blanket.*  
Lay it on the top of the branches....even it out. Little more on the left. Good.

Lena  
I have done this before, Ma.

Ma  
Last year it was crooked. I had to go up and straighten it out myself.  
*Ma grabs the 2nd blanket which has hooks to coincide with the grommets of the first one.*  
Okay. Lets hook this one on. Don't miss any holes.  
*They walk around the tree connecting hooks to grommets. The blankets are down to the ground.*

Lena  
You know nobody else does this.

Ma  
Why we got the best fig.

Lena  
You and Daddy made these.

Ma  
Couldn't buy anything like this. This one I'll lay on the roots.  
*Ma places the last blanket on the ground around the bottom of the tree.*

Lena  
Thanks Ma. Easier with two.

Ma

Yeah. Easier with two. What're you gonna do with the house?

Lena

Not sure. Too much room for just me. Always loved this garden.

Ma

You gotta learn how to prune right.

Lena

Yeah.

Ma

Maybe somebody could come live here with you.

Lena

A fig pruner, maybe.

Ma

Maybe. So...you good?

Lena

Yeah. You?

Ma

Yeah. Stop falling down.

Lena

Okay.

Ma

And stop smoking.

Lena

I miss you.

Ma

I'm here.

END OF PLAY

