

THE WINDOW WASHER

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CAST LIST

MRS.DECKER, a sixtyish widow. She looks like someone's favorite Florida aunt, but her looks have been frayed by time and her life's most difficult experience, a tragedy from which she has never recovered.

MIGUEL ZAMBRANO, nineteen, a native of an Inner City. He projects self-confidence to hide his insecurities, but if we look past the bluster and tattoos, we'll find a boy who wants to climb the ladder of success, and he's pretty sure where to find the ladder.

SETTING

The faded study of MRS. DECKER'S deceased husband, indicated minimally by a large desk and behind it, a desk chair. There's also an old rocker nearby. There is a cloudy window stage left, and another invisible two are the fourth wall. There are two doors, one that leads into the room from a hall, the other that leads to a bathroom.

ACT ONE

A BUZZER SOUNDS

MRS. DECKER appears from either doorway and pushes a button, then speaks into the intercom

MRS. DECKER

Hello, Miguel?

MIGUEL (OFF STAGE)

...(mumble)

MRS. DECKER

I'm buzzing you in. I'm in Five C. When you get off the elevator, turn right and it's a few steps down the hall.

She pushes a button to admit him, then hurries to the desk, pulls out a drawer and checks what's inside. Then goes to the door and waits for the doorbell.

DOORBELL

MRS. DECKER opens the door to admit MIGUEL

MIGUEL

Sorry I'm a little late.

MRS. DECKER

No worry. Long commute, I know.

MIGUEL

Yeah.

MRS. DECKER

Luckily no rain, though. I didn't want to cancel.

MIGUEL

Right. No rain.

MRS. DECKER

So. I thought we'd begin here.

(MIGUEL has followed MRS. DECKER as she moves through the room. He sets down his bucket, which is filled with rags, rubber gloves and a squeegee, and looks around. He is mentally tallying up the amount of work and possibly what this job will pay.)

MRS. DECKER

(she points to the fourth wall) You can start with this one. It once had a great view, right through this window. And then, well, as soon as you wash it you'll see what happened.

MIGUEL

What happened?

MRS. DECKER

They put up this block of steel they call an engineering marvel.

MIGUEL

Uh-huh.

MRS. DECKER

The bathroom is right through this door (points to a door at stage left) and you can fill the bucket in the tub. Please try not to spill anything. I'm my own cleaning lady these days.

MIGUEL

No problem.

MRS. DECKER

So, these three windows. I washed the living room windows myself, but then, my back said *Stop*. Please be careful of the rug. It's an antique.

MIGUEL

Got it.

MRS. DECKER

I have a stepladder you may want, too. Although... You may not need it.

MIGUEL

I'm six one. And a half. Depending on the ruler.

MRS. DECKER

Excuse me?

MIGUEL

Okay. I will be by next year. I do stretching every day.

MRS. DECKER

Right. My husband always said he was six feet tall but he wasn't quite. Needed a better ruler, made of elastic. Six feet is every man's holy grail I guess.

MIGUEL

Holy grail? Oh. Yeah.

MRS. DECKER

You know, he had a bit of a case of male vanity... I always humored him, of course. I was a pretty good wife. A five-star wife, I'd say.

MIGUEL

Uh-huh.

MRS. DECKER

I'll get the ladder for you just in case. I never use this bathroom. It was my husband's but it's quite a mess now... (as she moves toward the bathroom) Twenty dollars a window, okay Miguel?

MIGUEL

I was hopin for twenty-five.

MRS. DECKER

No streaks, guaranteed?

MIGUEL

I never leave streaks.

MRS. DECKER

Well, that's a comforting thought. You're a no-streaks window washer.

MIGUEL

I am. I'm a five-star no-streaks window washer.

MRS. DECKER

Okay then, twenty-five... Did I mention I'm going to be moving? I guess I did. As soon as I sell this place. I actually have a young couple interested. They were here twice already, measuring corner to corner. They kept saying, 'The place needs work,' but they're from Southern California. They think everything needs work, I know that, but it always hurts to hear it. Because they're right.

MIGUEL

Hmm.

MRS. DECKER

Well, at least I can afford to give them a few clean windows.

MIGUEL

Right.

MRS. DECKER

You'll be very careful of the rug, okay? I want to sell that too.

MIGUEL

Got it...you moving far?

MRS. DECKER

I'm moving to Sun City, Arizona. That's pretty far.

(MRS. DECKER has moved towards the bathroom)

MIGUEL

(calling after her) So. You won't be needin your car then?

MRS. DECKER (OFF STAGE)

Oh, the car. That's right. You admired my car.

MIGUEL

I always wanted a BMW. Since I was a kid. Silver. Like yours. Except I'd maybe change the hubcaps.

MRS. DECKER

(calling) It's an old car, Miguel.

MIGUEL

I don't care how old. I think spending my time in a BMW would be good for me....with the right hubcaps.

MRS. DECKER

(at the door) You might just be spending your time waiting for a tow truck.

(MRS. DECKER reappears with the ladder and
MIGUEL takes it from her and sets it up, center stage.
He is looking at the fourth-wall windows)

MRS. DECKER

Last time I had it serviced, the dealer told me it was the oldest E28 in the county. It's like a child with its own mind.

MIGUEL

Like how?

MRS. DECKER

It throws tantrums.

MIGUEL

What?

MRS. DECKER

It keeps trying to turn right when I'm trying to go straight. Like a toddler.

MIGUEL

I could fix that.

MRS. DECKER

I'm not sure.

In about a minute.

MRS. DECKER

Everyody thinks they could. The man at the gas station keeps asking me if I want to sell it. The doorman downstairs asks me the same thing. I don't know why everyone wants it.

MIGUEL

Put my name first on the list, okay? I can fix anything. I could even upgrade it. Add a few flame decals maybe.

MRS. DECKER

!!!

MIGUEL

No? Just to the hood!

MRS. DECKER

If it's your car, it's your flame decals, your hubcaps... Okay. Miguel Zambrano. Numero uno. I got the name right?

MIGUEL

Pretty good. Everyone always gets it wrong. So when you gonna be leavin for Arizona?

MRS. DECKER

Well, as I said, as soon as the place gets sold.

MIGUEL

It should sell right away. It looks like a good apartment.

MRS. DECKER

It once was. When we bought it, a woman came in here from House Beautiful. The shelter magazine? You probably never heard of it but we got two pages in full color in it. It's faded, but I still have it. Time-- it empowers and it kills, my husband used to say.

(MRS. DECKER begins to rummage in the desk)

MRS. DECKER

I should put the magazine out to show them when the couple comes back-- Californians will improve everything, including their own teeth, you know. This pair had teeth so white I practically had to put on sunglasses when they smiled at me.

MIGUEL

Uh-huh. (No interest) So, this is the window you want me to start with?

MRS. DECKER

Yes... the picture is here somewhere... Oh, here, I put it in this folder.

(She retrieves the magazine: MIGUEL takes a glance)

MRS. DECKER

Almost thirty years. I can hardly believe it. (points to the magazine) See this chair? Still here. My daughter called it the poetry rocker. She used to sit here at the window. When she was a teenager she wrote Haiku poetry here. You know what that is?

MIGUEL

Not really.

MRS. DECKER

Here's a Haiku poem she wrote after her father died:

Spring sun departs now , Taking Father from his life, My sun eclipsed too.

MIGUEL

That's it?

MRS. DECKER

That's it.

MIGUEL

With all due respect, that's not poetry. To me.

MRS. DECKER

With all due respect, let's change the subject.

MIGUEL

(after a pause) So your daughter, she don't want the car?

MRS. DECKER

My daughter is dead.

MIGUEL

Oh...Sorry for your loss... She got Covid? My uncle, the one who got me the job at the carwash, he died of it. Got sick on a Tuesday, passed on Sunday.

MIGUEL takes off his jacket and tosses it across the back of the rocker)

MRS. DECKER

I'm sorry but... nothing like that.

MIGUEL

My mom used to say, 'Only one way to get born. Lotsa ways to die.'

MRS. DECKER

Inky was visiting a friend uptown. A fight broke out down the block, six bullets fired, one of them hit Inky.

MIGUEL

Wow. Wrong place, wrong time, wrong luck, huh? They find the *ladron*?

MRS. DECKER

They never did.

MIGUEL

The more time goes by, the less chance, I guess ...

MRS. DECKER

Don't say that.

MIGUEL

Oh, sorry... Inky? That was her name?

MRS. DECKER

We called her Inky because she always had ink on her fingers from the leaky ballpoints. She was named her after her grandmother. Wilhelmina. She hated her name.

(MRS. DECKER takes a framed photo from the desk and shows it to MIGUEL)

MIGUEL

(glances) Nice hair.

MRS. DECKER

That's her natural color. Color of a sweet potato. Like mine used to be.

MIGUEL

Well, they might still find the guy. They got video cameras all over the place. Especially in my neighborhood. They catch guys who haven't done anything even.

MRS. DECKER

I suppose.

MIGUEL

I actually got arrested for stealin a white puppy from a pet store. It was like three years ago. I have a little space between my front teeth and the jerk who stole the puppy had a space between his front teeth. Next thing you know I'm in the police station in silver bracelets. Now they got me in a file, fingerprints and everythin.

MRS. DECKER

Did you think of having that space fixed? A dentist could do it, probably in one visit.

MIGUEL

I'm not fixin it! It's like my trademark. Abraham Lincoln had a space between his two front teeth too. So, did God make a mistake? No. Lincoln and I was suppose to have it.

MRS. DECKER

I have to admit, I like your smile. I never knew that about Lincoln.

MIGUEL

And Laurence Fishburne, you ever see him in The Matrix?

MRS. DECKER

No.

MIGUEL

There's reasons for everything.

MRS. DECKER

Miguel, did they catch the puppy thief? Or did God intend to let him get away with that too?

MIGUEL

Not up to me to second-guess Dios, right?.... mind if I open that other window? It's gettin a little warm in here.

MRS. DECKER

(she goes to stage left and opens the window) I'm sorry there's no AC. The unit in this room died last summer.

MIGUEL

(He picks up the bucket) No problem. I better get started.

(MIGUEL EXITS to bathroom)

(While he's in the bathroom she goes to her desk and pulls out a box from a bottom drawer. It's tied with a cord, looks as if it's been there for some time. This could be leather or some other durable material. It might have a lock that needs a key to open. She puts it on top of the desk, where it stays prominently displayed.

(MIGUEL returns with the bucket and proceeds to "wash" the invisible windows during these exchanges)

MRS. DECKER

Even if you don't think so, Inky was really talented. What happened to her/

MIGUEL

/Was it on TV? I must've missed it. I been pretty busy, as I said.

MRS. DECKER

It was three years ago, Miguel. It was a year I said God went on Sabbatical.

MIGUEL

What's that mean?

MRS. DECKER

I think there are times, like during the Pandemic, when people think God takes time off.

MIGUEL

Yeah. Like a vacation break. He's only human, after all (smiles at his own joke)...

MRS. DECKER

September, the ninth. You know what? Since then, both time and God both went dead for me.

MIGUEL

My mom always says, 'People always talk about killin time but meanwhile I guess time is killin them.'

MRS. DECKER

For some of us, not fast enough.

MIGUEL

Mrs. Decker. Could I ask you a question.

MRS. DECKER

Of course. What would you like to know?

MIGUEL

How come you're drivin all the way over to the Jackson Avenue Carwash? If you don't mind my askin.

MRS. DECKER

What? You think I should wash my own car?

MIGUEL

You're a lot closer to the Royal Mohammed Carwash. The Royal Mohammed is like half a mile from here. They give discounts Monday and Tuesday. We don't.

MRS. DECKER

Oh, I didn't realize. I get a little absent-minded when I have things on my mind. So, I missed the discount.

MIGUEL

Uh-huh. one other thing. Mrs. Decker. How'd you pick me? I mean, Carlo was right next to you, but you called me over? He's even taller than me.

MRS. DECKER

Oh, I don't know... maybe it was the Abraham Lincoln space between your front teeth. It does make you look especially (smiles) beguiling.

MIGUEL

Or maybe someone told you there was a guy that looked like the puppy thief workin at the Jackson Avenue Carwash?

MRS. DECKER

Miguel! I'm not a detective and I don't own a pet shop. I'm a retired Junior High School principal.

MIGUEL

Okay. It was just a thought.

MRS. DECKER

So, Miguel. ... Do you happen to own a dog?

MIGUEL

Why are you askin me that, Mrs. Decker?

MRS. DECKER

I'm just making conversation. I like dogs. We used to have one. Woody, a shelter dog. He slept with us, ate with us, my husband said he was so smart if you asked him to he could probably solve a crossword puzzle .

MIGUEL

You're makin me uneasy. No I don't have a dog. I happen to have a cat.

MRS. DECKER

I don't want to make you uneasy. I'm just... filling you in about my family.(Finds a picture on the desk, shows MIGUEL) This is Woody. A mutt, who lived to be fifteen years old.

MIGUEL

Nice dog, Mrs. Decker. And by the way, I never stole my cat.

MRS. DECKER

Why would you say that? You're acting like I accused you of stealing.

MIGUEL

I'm just wonderin why I happen to be here. It's like not likely, you know what I mean? Wrong carwash, wrong guy. It's like a little weird. Scary, even.

MRS. DECKER

You're perspiring. Would you like me to get you some cold water?

MIGUEL

Okay. Yeah. Thanks.

(MRS. DECKER Exits. While she's gone, MIGUEL drops the squeegee and goes to the desk, picks up the picture of Inky, examines it; he replaces it just as MRS. DECKER returns with a bottle of water. She's spotted him checking out the picture)

MRS. DECKER

A second look?

MIGUEL

I thought she looked a little like Demi Lovato. Except for the hair... And the mouth.

MRS. DECKER

I have no idea who that is.

MIGUEL

She sang the Star Spangled Banner at the Super Bowl..

MRS. DECKER

(Hands him bottle of water) Aha. I usually don't watch the SuperBowl. Now I might watch a replay and check out Demi what?

MIGUEL

Lovato. Except for the hair...and the mouth. Thanks. (gulps of water) So, I'm not here just to get the windows clean, am I right?

MRS. DECKER

Well, okay. There *is* a special reason you're here.

MIGUEL

I knew it. I could feel it right off. I'm good at that, readin people. You, on the other hand I couldn't figure out.

MRS. DECKER

I see that.

MIGUEL

So, I'm a tiny bit nervous here.

MRS. DECKER

That's obvious.

MIGUEL

Because you think I'm somebody I'm not, some other somebody, and in a few minutes you're gonna pick up the phone and call 911, and somebody in blue is gonna come and put some more silver around my wrists and off I go in another cherry-top.

MRS. DECKER

No, Miguel, no. You're wrong.

MIGUEL

So Mrs. Decker. Why isn't Carlo here? Or DeShawn, or one of the other guys? What am I doin here?

MRS. DECKER

I want to get to know you better.

MIGUEL

You want to get to know me better? Why?

MRS. DECKER

(points to the package on the desk) I have a gift for you. That's why you're here.

MIGUEL

What?

MRS. DECKER

Yes. A sort of gift. You'll get it as soon as you finish washing the windows. Without streaks.

MIGUEL

Excuse me? Why would you give me a present? You don't know me.

MRS. DECKER

That's true.

MIGUEL

So why would you-- I'm just your window washer. Right?

MRS. DECKER

You're not just any window washer...

MIGUEL

Waitaminute! You need a kidney transplant or something?

MRS. DECKER

No thank you. I have two of my own.

MIGUEL

Is it something to do with carryin drugs someplace? I'm not doin any of that!

MRS. DECKER

(Laugh) Drugs? Of course not. I don't deal drugs.

MIGUEL

Me neither, just for the record...! You think I look like I'm in that business?

MRS. DECKER

No.

MIGUEL

You do, though. It must be the haircut. Yeah, it's the haircut. I'm lettin it grow out.

MRS. DECKER

Don't. I actually like your haircut. You're a handsome kid. You have a girlfriend?

MIGUEL

Not since last September.

MRS. DECKER

I'm sorry. What happened?

MIGUEL

She took off. To college. After I gave her a gold ankle bracelet with two hearts. And I never heard from her again.

MRS. DECKER

Oh, that's life...

MIGUEL

Yeah. There she went, with six months of my tips around her ankle. That's *my* life.

MRS. DECKER

She may come back. You never know. What was her name?

MIGUEL

Eureka..

MRS. DECKER

Eureka? With all due respect, that's not poetry. To me.

MIGUEL

She's from Eureka Springs. That's why she was named Eureka.

MRS. DECKER

Well. I shudder to think-- I was born in Schenectady.

MIGUEL

That's funny, Mrs.Decker!

MRS. DECKER

So... You don't mind if I just want to watch you work?

MIGUEL

I don't get it, but I guess not... I'll just put on my headphones. I got some stuff on tape I listen to.

MRS. DECKER

Schoolbooks?

MIGUEL

No. I'm finished with school. I don't need any more. Not with where I'm headed.

MRS DECKER

I'll take a guess. Show business? A rock band? A TV studio?

MIGUEL

I'm the pigeon you pigeon-holed, Mrs. D? Show business? Like some dummy tries out for a talent show but winds up beating up a guitar in a dive bar? Not for me!

MRS. DECKER

Okay. I take it back. What then?

MIGUEL

I got other plans.

MRS. DECKER

(looks at this Marine Corps shirt) Like the Marines? I just noticed your shirt.

MIGUEL

No. I don't want to die... like my dad did.

MRS. DECKER

Your dad was a Marine?

MIGUEL

He was.

MRS. DECKER

What happened to him?

MIGUEL

He died. In Afghanistan.

MRS. DECKER

Your dad died in Afghanistan? How old were you?

MIGUEL

I was five.

MRS. DECKER

That's a sad story.

MIGUEL

He was a hero. Won the United States Medal of Honor.

MRS. DECKER

Medal of honor? Not many of those around--!

MIGUEL

You look like you don't believe me.

MRS. DECKER

Why shouldn't I believe you?

MIGUEL

(putting on the headphones) You just got this face on-- like I was snowin you. ... Excuse me. I better concentrate. Keep up my no-streak streak.

MRS. DECKER

Miguel. Wait. Don't put on the headphones yet.

MIGUEL

Huh? It's my window-washin music. You want a good job, don't you?

MRS. DECKER

I would like to know more about you.

MIGUEL

Like ...what?

MRS. DECKER

Your life. Your plans. Your dreams. Whatever you want to tell me.

MIGUEL

For instance... what?

MRS. DECKER

Oh, I don't know. All I know is you don't want to play music in a dive bar. What are those special plans you have?

MIGUEL

I am spooked now. Really spooked.

MRS. DECKER

You don't have to tell me anything you don't want to.

MIGUEL

I don't get this at all.

MRS. DECKER

Why? I'm just being friendly.

MIGUEL

I don't think so, Mrs. Decker. What's the deal here?

MRS. DECKER

All right. I do have an agenda.

MIGUEL

You're scarin me.

MRS. DECKER

I don't intend to, though.

MIGUEL

So. Ask a question, okay? I'll try to answer it.

MRS. DECKER

You're a man of many tattoos. What do they all mean?

MIGUEL

Which one?

MRS. DECKER

The bulldog with the fangs? It's not for Yale, is it?

MIGUEL

It's the Marines symbol.

MRS. DECKER

Oh... I didn't realize that! And the vampire bats?

MIGUEL

They're not vampires. They're just long-eared bats. You know, bats can eat like 3,000 insects a night. And they're symbols of happiness. Great neighbors.

MRS. DECKER

And those horrible snakes?

MIGUEL

I caught two copperheads upstate in one night two years back.

MRS. DECKER

What? Where? Two poisonous snakes! Very brave. You killed them?

MIGUEL

Relocated them, Mrs. Decker. Relocated!

MRS. DECKER

So, that's being kind to snakes and environmentally conscientious, but what's your actual dream?

MIGUEL

My *dream*?

MRS. DECKER

Your soul. Your future self.

MIGUEL

Okay. My future self is I'm goin to work on a goat farm. I am goin to be a goat farmer. Is that interestin to you?

MRS. DECKER

A *goat* farm? That's your dream?

MIGUEL

That's it. That's my dream.

MRS. DECKER

But you could be a senator, run a foundation, climb Mount Everest--you could teach in an inner city school! Become a role model!

MIGUEL

Not my scene.

MRS. DECKER

A goat farmer! You're nineteen years old and you could be anything!

MIGUEL

How did you know I was nineteen?

MRS. DECKER

You told me.

MIGUEL

No. I didn't.

MRS. DECKER

You sure? I thought you did, at the carwash.

MIGUEL

No.

MRS. DECKER

Okay. I intuited it.

MIGUEL

Tooted it? I don't know what that means.

MRS. DECKER

It means I sort of guessed it. You look nineteen, Miguel.

MIGUEL

Everyone tells me I look at least twenty-two.

MRS. DECKER

So, I must be psychic.

MIGUEL

You're psychic? Okay. You're psychic. So. Let's see... what did I eat for breakfast today?

MRS. DECKER

Hmm. Cold cereal with milk.

MIGUEL

Okay. Bingo. O'course everyone who's nineteen eats that if they live in the USA.

MRS. DECKER

You might be right about that.

MIGUEL

So, wait a minute... Mrs. Decker. What's my blood type?

MRS. DECKER

I'm not *that* psychic.

MIGUEL

Looks like you don't want my kidney or you'd probably know it.

MRS. DECKER

I told you, I don't need any body parts... At the moment.

MIGUEL

Okay then. Where did I go to school?

MRS. DECKER

Hmm. Let me think.

MIGUEL

You gonna guess, right? You'll never guess.

MRS. DECKER

Loyola Prep.

MIGUEL

Dios mio! You are really psychic?

MRS. DECKER

It's not actually on my resumé.

MIGUEL

But then, how did you know--? Maybe I just look Catholic? Wait--what month is my birthday?

MRS. DECKER

(thinks for a moment) November?

MIGUEL

Hey! That can't be a guess!

MRS. DECKER

No it can't.

MIGUEL

Okay, wait a minute. I'm a Sagittarius. Maybe you could tell. My mom's friend Amalia, she can tell your sign the minute you walk into a room.

MRS. DECKER

She knows your day of your birth too?

MIGUEL

No.

MRS. DECKER

You were born the twenty-seventh of November, Miguel.

MIGUEL

(drops the squeegee, which splatters the rug) What the fuck!

MRS. DECKER

My rug! Look what you did! I told you to be careful of my rug!

MIGUEL

(down on his knees, he's mopping up the rug) Sorry.

MRS. DECKER

That's a hand-knotted antique Ushak! It's a hundred thirty years old! I told you to be careful!

MIGUEL

I didn't mean to--

MRS. DECKER

Careless!

MIGUEL

It'll be okay. When it dries. It'll be fine.

MRS. DECKER

It was a wedding gift! In the living room of our first apartment. I drew the shades every day *for years* so it wouldn't fade.

MIGUEL

I'm sorry.

MRS. DECKER

I warned you to be careful!

MIGUEL

I said I was sorry. It'll be fine... You're not having a teargasm, Mrs. Decker? I'll clean it up. (he gets down on his knees) It gonna be alright!

MRS. DECKER

No. I'm not crying about the rug. There are so many other things that need my tears....okay. It was an accident. I'm sorry I yelled at you.

MIGUEL

No problem.

MRS. DECKER

I don't usually go into a tailspin like that.

MIGUEL

It's okay. When the windows are clean, you'll feel better.

MRS. DECKER

Yes. I'll definitely feel better when the windows are clean.

MIGUEL

Maybe then you could, like, read my palm. Can you see into the future, Mrs. Decker?

MRS. DECKER

(smiles) Unfortunately I guess I can. Go ahead. Tell me about your goat farm dream.

MIGUEL

My cousin Reynaldo has a goat farm upstate and I'm going to be his partner as soon as I put away enough money to buy in. I'm half there already. You know how long that will take?

MRS. DECKER

Look, Miguel, I'm not clairvoyant. Not psychic, I mean.

MIGUEL

Then how did you know my birthday? How could you know?

MRS. DECKER

Okay, I'll get to your birthday sooner or later... But...first, that's really what you want to do with your life? Goats?

MIGUEL

Yeah.

MRS. DECKER

Because you love goats?

MIGUEL

Who doesn't?

MRS. DECKER

I've never met one.

MIGUEL

They're wonderful animals.

MRS. DECKER

To eat, you mean?

MIGUEL

I would never kill a goat for meat.

MRS. DECKER

You know what, Miguel? Couldn't you-- aim a bit higher?

MIGUEL

Work in some office? Here in the city? Live in an apartment with a fire escape and a budget for rat poison instead of in the country where there's woods and owls instead of raccoons and police cars on every corner? Do you know, goats know their names and come when you call them? Like dogs? They have their own special voice, too, so their mother knows which is which. Some goats are better people than people.

MRS. DECKER

So that's your ambition? Is there enough goat cheese business or petting zoo business to make it worth living your life on a stool milking goats?

MIGUEL

You know what we else get from goats? Butter, ice cream? And guess what else? Candles! Soap! It's very good for skin, the soap is. There's goat-milk paint, too. People don't even realize/

MRS. DECKER

/And they smell. Maybe that's why Eureka left.

MIGUEL

It's perfume to me, Mrs. Decker. That's not why she left. Different dreams is all.

MRS. DECKER

Different dreams is right. The world is an exciting place, Miguel, and you don't want to miss seeing every corner of it, do you?

MIGUEL

I've had enough excitement Mrs. Decker. Plenty enough! A farm is exactly where I want to be!

MRS. DECKER

/So Miguel, what would you do with a BMW on a goat farm?

MIGUEL

I'd be out tellin the world about goat milk every day. And I mean, I wouldn't be just a guy in a car, I'd be the man in the silver BMW.

MRS. DECKER

No. You'd be a goat herd in a silver BMW.

MIGUEL

That's right. That's exactly right, Mrs. Decker. With my initials on the license plates.

MRS. DECKER

I am disappointed Miguel. Deeply disappointed.

MIGUEL

I don't get it. What's it to you? What's it to YOU?

MRS. DECKER

Miguel. I have a few beers in the refrigerator. Would you like one?

I don't like beer.

MIGUEL

Iced tea?

MRS. DECKER

No thanks.

MIGUEL

Coke?

MRS. DECKER

Okay.

MIGUEL

(MRS. DECKER exits and as soon as she's gone MIGUEL runs to the desk and picks up the wrapped gift. He examines it, shakes it. When he spots her returning, he drops the box and in rushing back to the window, knocks over the desk chair. The jacket falls to the floor.

MRS. DECKER catches him. A hesitation, she then hands Miguel a coke. She shakes her head and upends the desk chair, picks up Miguel's jacket. As she does it, she lets out a loud scream.

OHMYGOD!

MRS. DECKER

What?

MIGUEL

(catching her breath) A roach! A ROACH! Horrible! It was the size of salt shaker!

MRS. DECKER

You got roaches here?

MIGUEL

MRS. DECKER

Here? Are you serious? We've never had roaches here! This is a white glove building... or used to be! It fell out of your jacket!

MIGUEL

That's possible. I found one in my shoe once. Hey. It scooted under the desk... Got any spray?

MRS. DECKER

Just Lysol. Will that work?

MIGUEL

Well, it will clean him up a bit...

MRS. DECKER

That's not funny! It's hideous !

MIGUEL

Never mind... I think I see it!

(MIGUEL is behind the desk, searching for the roach and finds it, stomping hard on it)

MIGUEL

Gotcha! RIP! Sorry, Mr. Roach, or Ms. Roach. Or, non-binary roach.

MRS. DECKER

You're apologizing to that monster?

MIGUEL

Whenever I kill anything, I apologize. It's a life, y'know. Could've been pregnant for all we know.

MRS. DECKER

God help us! How often do you get to do this?

MIGUEL

Last cucaracha was-- let me see... last Sunday night. Maybe its mother or daddy. I gotta say I never saw anyone go postal like that over a little bug like you did.

MRS. DECKER

It was the size. The size of a-- a salt shaker. I'm still shaking.

MIGUEL

You know something, Mrs. Decker? You need a boyfriend! He will kill bugs for you. And you won't have any more meltdowns.

MRS. DECKER

I never have bugs here, Miguel. Or boy friends.

MIGUEL

You know goats can't be raised alone? They need other goats. That's the truth. They get depressed without a partner. You tried dating at all?

MRS. DECKER

How did we get on this subject? I'm not a goat.

MIGUEL

You never tried dating? I mean, you're not old. I mean, not that old.

MRS. DECKER

Oh, the compliments are flying!

MIGUEL

No dating, ever?

MRS. DECKER

I tried a senior dating site once, to tell the truth.

MIGUEL

There you go! How was it?

MRS. DECKER

Well, the first date I had was with an actor. It was a coffee date because he was between Off-Broadway roles. He took me to a local coffee place and I ordered a Mocha grande and he ordered a small American coffee. And he was charming. He was carrying a canvas bag and I thought he might have taken along a script he was reading.

MIGUEL

Sounds good so far?

MRS. DECKER

But it wasn't a script. It was sad, very sad.

MIGUEL

A gun? A knife? What?

MRS. DECKER

Two muffins. He brought two muffins from home...so he wouldn't have to *buy* muffins. And they were stale.

MIGUEL

You gotta be kidding.

MRS. DECKER

When I looked at this man pulling muffins out of his briefcase, I couldn't speak. I was with a man who thought I would be okay with coffee and an old muffin just to have a date. It was a feeling of being stale too, being used, a throwaway. I jumped up, paid for the coffees and actually ran out of the café. Then I felt guilty! I've never been that poor.

MIGUEL

Wow. A tacaño!

MRS. DECKER

What does it mean?

MIGUEL

We call it being a cheapo.

MRS. DECKER

I call it an eye opener.

MIGUEL

So, that was it? One and done?

MRS. DECKER

Oh, no. I had a few more. One man had a pet boa constrictor in a tank in his apartment. The snake's name was George. I couldn't get along with George. Another man took out his false teeth and put them in his pocket because they were hurting him. And a man who worked for the government, a man I admired, who showed me pictures of his grandchildren, a man who was kind and offered to take me on a trip to Bermuda, well, he was also kind enough to call and tell me he'd decided to go back to his wife.

MIGUEL

Bad luck in love, Mrs. Decker.

MRS. DECKER

Mala suerte en el amor. See? I even know how to say it in Spanish.

MIGUEL

Maybe you could try Bumble?

MRS. DECKER

You know what, Miguel? Just, please continue washing, before there's another calamity.

MIGUEL

A calamity is when there's a fire or a flood, not when there's a little roach doing what it was suppose to do.

MRS. DECKER

Okay, Miguel. It's just semantics I guess.

MIGUEL

Whatever.

(As MIGUEL puts on his headphones and continues washing the windows, MRS. DECKER sits in the rocker sipping her iced tea. The lights go down; when the lights go up, time has passed, the stage is brighter; the windows are sparkling clean. Both the Coke and iced tea glass are empty.)

MRS. DECKER

So, Miguel. You said you were helping your mother? Washing her windows too?

MIGUEL

(taking off earphones) No. (clears throat) She's movin... I'm helpin her move.

MRS. DECKER

That's nice. Being a caring son. I always wished I'd had one of those! Where is she moving to?

MIGUEL

Africa.

MRS. DECKER

Africa! Why?

MIGUEL

She's a pharmacist. She volunteered to go over there.

MRS. DECKER

She's a pharmacist? Really?

MIGUEL

That's right. She's goin over to vaccinate African kids.

MRS. DECKER

Vaccinate? You're telling me your mother is a pharmacist? And she's going to vaccinate African kids? And your father was a Marine who won the Medal of Honor?

MIGUEL

Yeah. You don't believe me?

MRS. DECKER

No I don't.

MIGUEL

Well, that's your problem, Mrs. Decker.

MRS. DECKER

I guess it is. (jumps up, takes her purse, opens it and counts out the bills) Here you go. This is what I owe you. You did a good job. The windows are clean. No streaks. Thank you. Let me show you out.

MIGUEL

What? That's it?

MRS. DECKER

Yes. That's it. Job well done. I can see the engineering marvel clearly now.

MIGUEL

That's goodbye? No gift? Didn't you say--?

MRS. DECKER

I changed my mind.

MIGUEL

You changed your mind? What'd I do? You don't believe me about my mom? Okay. I was just puttin you on. She's not goin to Africa, so maybe you're a psychic for real then?

MRS. DECKER

No, you weren't kidding and no I'm not a psychic.

MIGUEL

So you're mad because of the rug? I didn't mean to mess it up. It'll be okay. Look, it's drying already. It'll be good as new.

MRS. DECKER

No. Not it's not about the rug.

MIGUEL

The roach? It was the roach? You think I brought a cockroach to your place on purpose?

MRS. DECKER

No. Of course not.

MIGUEL

So what else did I do? What'd I do wrong? What?

MRS. DECKER

You lied. He who lies, steals. He who steals is capable of anything, my husband used to say.

MIGUEL

I lied? What? About my mom? I told you, I was just kiddin. (clears throat) Oh. About the goat farm? Okay. I don't have half the money yet, but I will in another few months.

MRS. DECKER

You looked right into my eyes and you didn't blink. About your mother. About your father. You lied, with such facility, such ease. You could have passed a lie detector test and maybe you have, for all I know.

MIGUEL

Waitaminute! What? How would you know?

MRS. DECKER

I want to show you something.

(She goes to the desk, takes out a photograph)

MRS. DECKER

(showing the photo) Who is this cute little boy with the space between his teeth?

MIGUEL

Huh? Waitaminute. Is that suppose to be me? Hey! I remember that Nascar shirt! That IS me! Where'd you get that picture?

MRS. DECKER

Your father's wallet. Your real father's wallet!

MIGUEL

Wait, wait... what?

MRS. DECKER

Go ahead... think hard. You know, Miguel, I couldn't afford a detective to track you down. Finally, though, my lawyer found you online. It wasn't that difficult, as it turned out. There you were, holding a goat. The timing was perfect.

MIGUEL

I gotta sit down a minute. (sinks in Inky's chair)

MRS. DECKER

That's Inky's chair.

MIGUEL

Sorry. (He jumps up)

MRS DECKER'

(anger) You lied about your father. He was not a Marine, not by a long shot. At first, I thought, well, maybe Miguel doesn't even know who his father was. But then, you made up a story about your mother, too. So, what does that say about you? What does it say? He who lies... is capable of anything.

MIGUEL

You know what, Mrs. Decker? I don't think I really need anything from you... I don't. I think I better go now. This minute!

MRS. DECKER

Yes! Go!...

(MIGUEL stops in his tracks)

MIGUEL

Wait a minute! Maybe you think I'm the perp who killed your daughter!

MRS. DECKER

Of course not!

MIGUEL

(AS he grabs his bucket and starts to leave) Okay then, thanks for the cash.

MRS. DECKER

Wait, Miguel! Stop. Maybe you should stay long enough to hear the story of your own life.

MIGUEL

I'm gettin a headache--you're givin me a/

MRS. DECKER

/I have a headache too. I've had one for ten years. My husband was a personal injury lawyer, is what he was, he was your father and he sure wasn't a Marine. Just sit back down... You go ahead and sit in Inky's chair ...you're her brother, after all.

MIGUEL

Brother? What? WHAT? I'm outta here. (he begins to leave)

MRS. DECKER

SIT!

MIGUEL

(as he sinks back into the rocking chair) Okay. So my father wasn't a Marine. My friend Armando's father was a Marine and I pretended he was mine. Wanting to be the son of a hero? Is that a crime? I never knew my dad. So, for all I knew, maybe he WAS a Marine.

MRS. DECKER

And your mother was not a pharmacist.

MIGUEL

Leave my mom outta this!

MRS. DECKER

Sorry, but she's the leading lady in this conversation.

MIGUEL

Okay. She wanted to be a pharmacist. But I don't want to talk about her, okay?

MRS. DECKER

Oh. You're a protective son. That's nice. I'm sure she's a fine mom.

MIGUEL

Best mom. Yes, the finest.

MRS. DECKER

But I don't think she's moving to Africa. Maybe you'll give in and tell me where she *is* moving to, IF she's moving anywhere.

MIGUEL

My mom could've been a pharmacist, a doctor, anythin. She was so smart, she could've been even a-a school principal! She was takin care of us and my grandma and my little sister, who has special needs, okay? When did she have time to learn to be a pharmacist? When did she have time to do anythin except any job she could get? But could she pay for pharmacist school? Could she even finish two years o' community college? No she couldn. And she had an accident in the elevator of a building where she was workin in security... it fell four floors with her in it. She wound up in the hospital for a month, her jaw broken, couldn eat, her knees trashed. Both of 'em!

MRS. DECKER

Well, that's tragic, and it fits. She was my husband's client. And obviously a lot more.

MIGUEL

(sinks back into the chair) Waitaminute. Am I supposed to believe all this you're tellin me? I need to process.

MRS. DECKER

Go ahead. I'm telling you what happened twenty years ago. Your mother was suing for the elevator accident in her employer's building. She found a lawyer and became a mistress/

MIGUEL

/Yeah. She's on disability now. Goin to move in with her sister in Florida. Okay, I lied. I wanted to make my family look good. Is that a crime?

MRS. DECKER

You wanted to make *yourself* look good!

MIGUEL

...Yeah. I think... I did. I don't look like some loser with roaches in his pockets, in trainin to be a big failure, so it's like a sort of resume touchup. You never did that, Mrs. Decker?

MRS. DECKER

I never had to.

MIGUEL

Well there you go. We came outta different eggs. You got an egg with a four-leaf clover on it and I got an egg that was already cracked. See what I'm sayin?

MRS. DECKER

I don't think I'm responsible for social inequality. I feel bad about it, I used to send checks to City Harvest, to the Neediest, to Save the Children, all of the above, and I volunteered at the Downtown Crisis Center-- until my own life got smashed to bits. And that happened when you came along.

MIGUEL

Like I had anythin to do with anythin?

MRS. DECKER

One day I woke up in the middle of the night and my husband was standing at the window in his overcoat, staring at nothing. I asked him what was wrong and he said he was going for a walk. It was three in the morning. I said, 'You meeting meeting Lady Gaga? You better put on your better coat,' it was a joke, and he said 'I need to take a walk, just take a walk. 'In the cold?' I asked him. 'It's colder in here,' he said, and he pointed to his heart, and ran out. I sat for while waiting for him to come back and then, I saw his wallet lying on his dresser. I'd never done that in thirty-two years, looked through my husband's wallet. But I was suspicious. Lately he'd been having too many late nights at the office. He always said, "Working people have to come during evening hours,' and I believed him, of course I did, always did, but suddenly, I wasn't sure. And there it was, his wallet, your picture. And you had the same smile... and the same space between your teeth. It's called a diastema, did you know? Well, it tore a space in my heart, the one that had stored my love for Mickey for over thirty two years. When he came back from his walk, I didn't really have to think about it. When he confessed, I told him I was done. And he said, 'I'm done too. We're stony broke, sweetheart.' Just those words, 'Stony broke.'

MIGUEL

Mickey? His name was Mickey?

MRS. DECKER

He'd been supporting you and your mother from the time you were born. He got your mother a cash settlement, but obviously not enough to cover his guilt.

MIGUEL

Uncle Mickey! He took me to Taekwondo and Kickboxing. He got me into Martial Arts. Keeping me safer in my neighborhood. And one time, he took me out for a blue marble Sundae. He bought my mom a Purple Hybrid mattress and me a Bull Rider skateboard!

MRS. DECKER

Paid for Loyala Prep! And you never wondered why?

MIGUEL

My mother said he was my rich uncle... I was a kid. Why wouldn't I believe her?

MRS. DECKER

You never asked why he stopped coming around?

MIGUEL

I begged her to call him all the time. I kept askin, "Where's Uncle Mickey?" She said he was on a trip around the world. I always asked her when he'd be back.

MRS. DECKER

Oh! Irony! We hoped one day we'd do that, a sea voyage to Asia! So that dream dissolved into your health and childhood happiness, and so did our future. Mickey was a wreck, his clients began to drop him. I thought it was just a mid-life thing, sleeping half the day and endless crying jags, but he'd wiped us out. This apartment, this beautiful apartment, became a war zone. And then, there were the ethics he worried about.

MIGUEL

Yeah, I guess it was a little late to worry about that.

MRS. DECKER

So many tears flew in this apartment you'd think there were leaks in the ceiling! He told me he'd sent you to summer camp and made sure you had school clothes and a computer. And all of this so you could come in here and tell me you were going to be a goat farmer. And tell me your father was a Marine! A big hero!

MIGUEL

A goat farm is a good thing, Mrs. Decker! And you know what? There's always a view without engineering marvels, know what I mean? You people see things your way, through your elegant windows. Now I see it's not just your windows that's cloudy! There's nothin' wrong with a goat farm, Mrs. Decker. It's a good job and even if you don't get rich and get special old rugs on the floor, you get so rich in other ways. You get to help baby goats get born! ... Goats, they're crazy smart. You give them a name, they get to love you. And that's a big payoff!

MRS. DECKER

For your father, a big payoff was to be able to afford good seats to a hit show. A big payoff was a weekend sail for us to the Caribbean or a five star dinner in a quiet restaurant where the menu was hand written, and maybe in French.

MIGUEL

Last time I went up to my cousin's farm, my favorite goat, Luna, came runnin' over to greet me the minute I stepped out of the car. Then she followed me like a puppy, tried to get into my car with me when I was leavin'. That's the truth. You never told a lie, Mrs. Decker?

MRS. DECKER

I'm not an angel, but... I try.

MIGUEL

You lost a husband and a daughter, I get that, and I'm sorry. But when you look at me, you look down. I didn't want you to do that. I hate when anyone does that.

MRS. DECKER

What I hoped, what I wanted, was --I don't know. A son, I suppose, a son of Mickey's who was sort of a chip off the old block. Not just the teeth, and the truth is, your smile is so much his, and your voice, the way you clear your throat, it's Mickey. Your voice/

MIGUEL

/I'm no replica, Mrs. Decker. I'm Miguel. Just me.

MRS. DECKER

Of course a part of me thought/

MIGUEL

/Thought you'd have your windows washed and pay sixty dollars and maybe a tip, and get a son too? Is that what you hoped?

MRS.DECKER

I didn't have a long family tree to pick a branch from, Miguel.

MIGUEL

And if you did, you wouldn't pick a goat farmer, right?

MRS. DECKER

I won't lie. No, I would not.

MIGUEL

You want another person, Mrs. Decker. You don't want me.

MRS. DECKER

I have a sister in Arizona. She has Lewy's Dementia. She has a son and he's a chemical engineer living in Idaho. He has no time for me. No one does. *No one*. Mickey and Inky were what I had. And I didn't even have Mickey, as it turned out. And all the love I'd put into him, treating him all those years like a pope! It just poured out like--like a burst dam, almost the very instant I saw what that picture of you in his wallet meant. Then, after he died, it got complicated. I missed him. Moment to moment, I was a mess of anger, fire, love and... loneliness.

MIGUEL

I'm tryin to feel sorry for you, tryin hard, but somehow...

MRS. DECKER

Somehow you imagine that people like me, used to driving their BMWs to have their cars washed by people like you, they always have enough in the bank to stand tall and stand strong. That's what you thought.

MIGUEL

I don't think much about people like you, Mrs. Decker. That's the truth. My head is filled right here under my hair with what's goin to happen to my mom and my real sister and when am I gonna have enough to buy/

MRS.DECKER

/Stop. I'm tired. The windows are clean, I've said enough as it is. (goes for her purse) Yes. Sixty *-five* dollars, a ten dollar tip. (hands him the money, picks up the box and hands it to MIGUEL) And here's the present. I have no one else to give it to.

MIGUEL

(hesitates) I'm not sure I want it, Mrs. Decker.

MRS. DECKER

Just take a look, Miguel!

(As MIGUEL slowly pulls out each item)

That's a photograph taken when your father graduated law school. His wedding ring. You can sell that on eBay. The plaque with the scales of justice is from his office. It was hanging on his wall for twenty-five years.

MIGUEL

And this? What's this?

MRS. DECKER

His leather belt... Not many customers for that, I'm afraid...It's what he hanged himself with.

MIGUEL

I--I...that's sick, Mrs. Decker. SICK!

MRS. DECKER

You're right. I've been sick ever since that night. I found him hanging right there, in front of that window you just washed. In his striped pajamas. While I was asleep in the bedroom, a few feet away.

MIGUEL

I don't think this is a present I want. (tries to give the package back)

MRS. DECKER

Take the picture. Your mother will want it. Take it all.

MIGUEL

(looking long and hard, takes the box).

MRS. DECKER

Either way. I don't care. (she does)

MIGUEL

You know, it'll make her cry.

MRS. DECKER

Probably, but I'm not sure she deserves those tears.

MIGUEL

I usually got a lot to say, but now, there's a pileup in my head.

MRS. DECKER

Just say goodbye, Miguel.

MIGUEL

Yeah. well, g'bye. Good luck, Mrs. D.

MRS. DECKER

(As he is about to EXIT) Wait a minute, Miguel... I want to tell you something else--

MIGUEL

...?

MRS. DECKER

I lied too... I told a very big lie.

MIGUEL

(He waits) But you don't want to tell me what it was.

MRS. DECKER

That's right, I don't.

MIGUEL

Which is okay.

MRS. DECKER

But I will. I told Inky her father died of a stroke. Quite a whopper. I didn't want her to know... I mean, it was pain enough.

MIGUEL

There you go. There's times when there's a real need for a lie. Like... to stop the bleeding inside.

MRS. DECKER

Yes. They're life's analgesics, I guess.

MIGUEL

Whatever. You had a right, Mrs. D.

MRS. DECKER

Maybe you did too, Miguel.

MIGUEL

So, Mrs. Decker... What's your first name? It's not Schenectedy, I guess.

MRS. DECKER

Serena.

MIGUEL

Okay. Serena. I'm thinkin, if you need someone to drive you to Arizona in your BMW, I could do that. I'm a good driver. And if it breaks down, I can fix--

MRS. DECKER

Let me mull that over, Miguel. I'll need to sleep on it.

MIGUEL

Okay. That would be great. Now you know where to find me, right?

MRS. DECKER

I do.

MIGUEL

There's one more thing-- Serena. I think I ought to tell you... It's a little bit hard.

MRS. DECKER

You don't have to/

MIGUEL

/I saved my mother's life. I thought she was close to doin what Mr. Decker done. One night I found her on the roof, tryin to get to the edge on her two canes.

MRS. DECKER

You talked her out of it.

MIGUEL

I tried! But I couldn always be with her.

MRS. DECKER

No, of course not.

MIGUEL

So I found another way...

MRS. DECKER

Another way--?

MIGUEL

One night, I broke into a pet shop, and I stole a puppy for her.

MRS. DECKER

So, you *are* a thief.

MIGUEL

I was. Once. And that's my whole criminal history, and that's the truth.

MRS. DECKER

When I was a Junior High principal, I gave every kid a second chance. Even the worst kids.

MIGUEL

You must have been a dynamite school principal, Serena.

MRS. DECKER

I was, Miguel, I was.

MIGUEL

And you know what? I'm gonna be a dynamite goat farmer.

MRS. DECKER

I know you will be, son, I know. I can see your future very clearly through these windows now.

MIGUEL

Me too. Without even one little streak.