

BEFORE & OVER

by Star Finch

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4W, 1M

TRINITY: Late 20's. Asian/Pacific Islander.

MATEO: Mid 30's. Latino.

AMELIA: Late 20's - early 30's. White/White passing.

MARLA: Early to mid 50's. Black.

MICKEY: Late 20's. Mixed/Black.

Play takes place in Bernal Heights, a neighborhood in San Francisco, during the first year of Obama's presidency.

ACT I

Scene 1

House on Andover Street.

Trinity and Mateo at home.

*Trinity is on her laptop scrolling
through Facebook. Mateo is
watching a baseball game.*

TRINITY

Should I post it now, or would that be weird?
It might seem off. To have waited this long.
...I don't know why we kept it a secret.

MATEO

That was your idea.

TRINITY

Uhhhh-You're the one who lost him.

MATEO

...

TRINITY

I didn't mean that. Sorry. (beat) Did you put my number on the
flyer?

MATEO

No. Mine.

TRINITY

And no one has contacted you?

MATEO

Not yet. But that doesn't mean they won't.

TRINITY

Fuckin'-fuckity-fuck! I don't know why you had to take him for a walk so late at night.

MATEO

Because you were wine-drunk and had neglected to do so.

TRINITY

Fine. But it still didn't make sense not to change him out of his costume first. I paid a lot of money for that mini Indian headdress.

MATEO

Come watch the game with me.

TRINITY

Is that another way of saying, stop talking?

Mateo turns to make eye contact, but Trinity's attention is back on her laptop.

TRINITY

(grunts and sucks her teeth while perusing Facebook for a few beats.)

...Tuh. This chick is always posting her damn cars. *(mocking)* "His & Hers Porches."

It's like, yeah, you have a Porsche...annnd a new Gucci bag...that you bought in Italy? *(beat)* Pshhh--you still look old in the face, girlfriend. So relax.

Come look--She totally has that whole Hong Kong aesthetic happening. Super bleached skin on deck.

MATEO

I don't think you're supposed to...say that.

TRINITY

What? We're both Asian.

MATEO

But you're not Chinese. Did not you learn anything from--

TRINITY

None of your over asking price--all cash--Chinese national buyers can hear me. Besides your Mexican fam talks slick shit about Central Americans all the time--Sooo?

MATEO

That's not--

(to TV) What is he doing?!

TRINITY

We went to highschool together. Of course I can clown her on Facebook from the comfort of my living room.

MATEO (to TV)

Swing the damn bat!

TRINITY

Honestly, I don't even know why she friended me. It's not like we hung out together. She was in the nerd-Asian crowd. I was more with the "cool-artsy crowd"--I mean I was smart too, just not the: I'm gonna grow up to become a fucking surgeon at Stanford smart. (pause) Should I just unfriend her?

MATEO (*distracted*)

Uh huh.

TRINITY

...Don't do that.

MATEO

What am I doing?

TRINITY

Pretending to listen. Per usual. (pause) Baseball is boring.

MATEO

I can go back to watching games at the bar?

*Trinity gets up and goes
to the window.*

TRINITY

That car is still there. I'm gonna call.

MATEO

What exactly would we be calling for?

TRINITY

Suspiciousness.

MATEO

Suspiciousness?

TRINITY

General suspicious activity.

MATEO

They're just sitting in their car. Sitting.

TRINITY

They were there when I came back from yoga. And they were there when you got back from the gym.

MATEO

They could be having a deep conversation. Or waiting for a tow truck. Or listening to the game on the radio.

TRINITY (*tickled*)

You honestly think they live on this block?

MATEO

They could be new. Like us.

TRINITY

What are the odds that two young black dudes bought a house?

MATEO

The possibility exists.

TRINITY

In Bernal Heights?

MATEO

Black people did live here once upon a time. Maybe they're visiting their grandmother. Or they're gay with really good jobs. Either way, I'm sure calling the cops would ruin their night.

TRINITY

Ruin their life? Oh God, so dramatic! Having the police ask you a couple of questions hardly ruins a life.

MATEO

I said night. Ruin their night. (beat) How could you tell they were young?

TRINITY

Just a sense I got.

MATEO

Did you say hello?

TRINITY

Of course not!

MATEO

Why "of course not?"

TRINITY

Because as a woman I don't go smiling into the cars of strange men. And that is what they are: strange men. Men who are strange to the block--I mean hell, they're strange to this entire side of the hill.

MATEO

If they were older would you feel more comfortable?

TRINITY

Maybe.

MATEO

It just seems...

TRINITY

Look, I dated Black guys in high school. Even went to prom.

MATEO

I thought you said you only dated white guys before me?

TRINITY

In college. I only dated white guys in college. Who counts people you date before you're legal? Do you list the people you humped when playing house too? The issue here is these guys out of place-ness. That's the issue.

MATEO

You sensed their "out of place-ness" without even looking into the car?

TRINITY

I'm saying! It's the context of the situation.

MATEO

The context being-

TRINITY

--they were there when I got home. and now almost an hour later.
they're still there!

(takes a couple hits off of a volcano vaporizer)

You act like we don't have an investment to protect?

MATEO

Did you smoke before you went to yoga, or...?

TRINITY

Wait! Wait. Waaait...

Do you think they could have. Something to do. with Pepper
missing? Plotting to go after the reward money or something?!

MATEO

No. No, I don't.

TRINITY

You never knooooow...

MATEO

Babe. You tend to get suspicious when you smoke. And it leans
into paranoia whenever you try a new strain. Is that the one I
brought home last week?

TRINITY

How about I start keeping track of what I vape and how many
times a day. I'll make a nice little chart and keep it in the
drawer with all my negative pregnancy tests--

MATEO

Ok, got it. Relax. Let's both, relax.

Everyone else in the world mellows on weed. You move into wild
and aggressive mode.

TRINITY (cryptic)

HA! You've never seen me wild.

MATEO

You honestly feel like you'd be able to hold a conversation with the cops right now?

TRINITY

...

MATEO

Didn't everyone warn us that remodeling is stressful? Trying to get pregnant is stressful? That we should expect arguments to arise?

TRINITY

I'm relaxed!

MATEO

(beat) We're on the same team. I promise.

TRINITY

Oooh, why didn't I think of this before? I'll post the suspicious car on that neighborhood-watch blog. That way everyone will keep an eye out!

(logs onto the site on her laptop)

Ok! Let's get the hood on the case!

(Reading)

Hmmm...It says some "swarthy" Middle Eastern dude with sunglasses was seen suspiciously circling the block over on Ellsworth St this morning.

MATEO

Everyone looks suspicious when searching for parking.

TRINITY

This is way better than calling the cops. Someone might even say they know our loiterers. Then, boom!- crisis averted. No harm, no foul.

(Typing. Typing. Typing.)

Would you describe the guy in the passenger seat as
waffle-colored or more of a caramel latte?

LIGHTS FADE

ACT I

Scene 2:

House on Andover Street.

*Trinity and Mateo eating
takeout for dinner.*

TRINITY

Did anyone contact you about Pepper yet?

MATEO

Don't you think I would've shared that info?

TRINITY

Who knows, everything is such a mystery whenever I ask you to
elaborate. Typical Scorpio no-response responses.

MATEO

...

TRINITY

You sell any houses today?

MATEO

I'm still waiting to hear back about a counteroffer.

(SILENCE)

Did you get caught in traffic on your way back?

TRINITY

It was a little slow. Because of an accident. But then it picked up after the airport.

(SILENCE)

MATEO

Do you think this was a mistake?

TRINITY

Getting married?

MATEO

What?

TRINITY

Jokes.

MATEO

...Trying to get pregnant in the middle of a remodel. Beginning a remodel so soon after we closed. Technically we could've waited. Spent a year or two enjoying our accomplishment. Not just anyone gets to own a home in San Francisco.

TRINITY

We couldn't have waited because we'll need more space for the baby.

MATEO

But there is no baby.

TRINITY

Yet. There is no baby. Yet.

MATEO

Maybe it hasn't happened because it's not meant to happen, right now.

TRINITY

Oh please, this isn't one of your baseball games.

MATEO

Don't do that.

All I'm saying is, the unexpected can be a sign. *(pause)* You plan on slowing down with the smoking?

TRINITY

You're the smoker. I mostly eat edibles. Annnnd I'm not the one with a low sperm count.

MATEO

Not cool. *(beat)* You'll stop once we get pregnant?

TRINITY

You're right. Sorry.
Stop what?

MATEO

Weed!

TRINITY

Once it's all confirmed? Yeah.

MATEO

Edibles too?

TRINITY

They're supposed to be good for nausea.

MATEO

We're not having a kid baked in space-cake juice.

TRINITY

Do you plan on stopping?

MATEO

I mean of course I'll go downstairs or out on the deck.

TRINITY

But no plans to stop?

MATEO

How would it affect your pregnancy if I smoke outside?

TRINITY

Ah. So it's less "when WE get pregnant" then? (*Pause*)
Were you smoking when you lost the dog?

MATEO

I didn't "lose" the dog. A bigger dog started barking and he got scared and took off.

TRINITY

Were you high?

MATEO

Uh, no.

TRINITY

In the process of sparking one up perhaps?

MATEO

...No.

*Trinity eventually clears her
place and opens up her laptop
to log onto Facebook.*

TRINITY

Did you see the Facebook pics of my cousin and her new boyfriend
in Greece?

MATEO

We can't afford a vacation.

TRINITY

Everyone will ask about Pepper at the party: "Where's Pepper? I
want to hold Pepper!"

Do we have a plan, if we don't hear anything soon?

MATEO

We could say the remodeling was stressing him out...so we sent
him to stay with my Aunt in Sacramento?

TRINITY

I don't know. Maybe.

MATEO

Why are we even having this party? Technically they won't finish
the downstairs for another 2 months.

TRINITY

The kitchen and deck look amazing. This floor is basically
finished. Two months from now I'll probably be pregnant and I
already found a great recipe for a melon and gin punch I wanna
make.

I even bought an outfit to match the drink.

MATEO

It feels...premature.

TRINITY

Having a baby?

MATEO

The housewarming.

TRINITY

It's what you're supposed to do when you buy your first house: welcome your tribe over and make them feel part of the journey. Give them a taste of the Before to better appreciate the After.

MATEO

Then why aren't we inviting family?

TRINITY

Family is a different vibe than our other friends.

MATEO

I feel like that's code for something.

TRINITY

We already agreed to host Christmas here.

MATEO

(beat) Maybe I'll invite Amelia.

Mateo clears his place.

TRINITY

Who's Amelia?

MATEO

She works at the weed club. She hooked me up with her friend's listing. I told you about her.

TRINITY

The lesbian who talks sports with you?

MATEO

"The lesbian?" She's a writer! Don't you want our guests to be entertained?

TRINITY

Are writers entertaining?

MATEO

She tells interesting stories! She's been on vacation but I'm sure she'll be back by then.

TRINITY

Sounds awkward: "Who's that?--Ohhh, she's Mateo's favorite budtender."

MATEO

...All I said was maybe- Maybe I'd invite her. I don't even know if she'd come.

(SILENCE)

TRINITY

How could we not hold keep a dog for longer than a month?

MATEO

I know a couple who returned their dog to the ASPCA after 2 weeks. And just for the record, I said from the beginning that getting a dog in the middle of a remodel was madness.

TRINITY (laughing)

Is that why you lost him? Passive-aggressively?

MATEO

Are you high?

TRINITY

I don't know. It was an edible. *(beat)* Why?

MATEO

No reason.

(SILENCE)

TRINITY

Everyone's gonna judge us.

*Mateo checks the
volcano vaporizer
and takes a few
tokes.*

MATEO

About the house?

TRINITY

About Pepper. They'll say: "How can you two care for a baby when you couldn't even keep a dog for a month?"

(overwhelmed) I really hate fucking up.

MATEO

No one has to know.

TRINITY *(distracted)*

I selected the paint color in this room to match Pepper's coat.

MATEO

...Damn, this weed is strong. I swear getting hooked-up with a weed card was literally one of the greatest things to ever happen to me. Everything in life is connected to who you--

TRINITY

We should probably rip down the Lost Dog flyers before the party. At least on our side of the Hill. I used my profile pic--the one of me and Pepper at the festival...someone might recognize us.

MATEO (stoned)

Hmmmmmmmm.

TRINITY

We can put them back up after the party.

MATEO

(raps) "...After the show, it's the after party/ [Then] After the party it's, the hotel lobby [And]..."

(hits the vape)

You ever notice how...Life is supposed to get "back on track" after an event occurs: after graduation, after the wedding, after the remodel, after the baby?...But it's the event itself that pulls the track up. (hits the vape again) There is no way "back."

LIGHTS FADE

ACT I

Scene 3:

House on Andover Street.

*Trinity and Mateo arrive
home one after the
other: Mateo from work
and Trinity from
jogging.*

MATEO

Good run?

TRINITY (out of breath)

Great run! Anyone contact you about Pepper?

*Trinity grabs a
water bottle and
chugs it.*

MATEO

Nope. *(beat)* I thought...I thought we talked about it and we
said you wouldn't jog after work without me?

TRINITY

I needed to sweat. It slows down the anxiety in my head.

MATEO

But it gives me anxiety when you go bouncing past the gangbanger
posse smoking weed on the Hill.

TRINITY (tickled)

The gangbanger posse?

MATEO

You've seen them. They've definitely seen you.

TRINITY

The 3 dudes in the 49er gear?

MATEO (mimics)

"The 3 dudes in the 49er gear?"

TRINITY

They're harmless. They remind me of my football-crazy cousins back home.

MATEO

Your cousins like to check out your ass?

TRINITY

...

MATEO

They're not jogging. None of them have a dog.
I'm not blind to the faces of men up to no good.

TRINITY

They're not allowed to smoke a joint and watch the sunset? They could be up there meditating for all you know.

MATEO

Like the guys in the car the last week?

TRINITY

Wah, wah, waaaah.

*Trinity takes off her
shoes and socks.*

TRINITY (CONT)

I bumped into our neighbor down on Cortland earlier.

MATEO

Yeah? Which neighbor?

TRINITY

The one with the gigantic tits and bright red hair who jogs like a psychotic cheerleader. She's always waving at us up on the Hill.

We had coffee.

MATEO

Really? She asked you out for coffee or you asked her?

TRINITY

She asked me. Of course I completely blanked and couldn't think of an excuse in time.

MATEO

Was she nice?

TRINITY

Yeah. Annoying. But nice.

MATEO

Annoying how?

TRINITY

Annoying in that way that white women who've mastered their African dance class are annoying. So extra about everything. (beat) She kept asking: "Did you find your dog yet? Any news about your dog?"

MATEO

That's called being neighborly.

TRINITY

I can't figure out how she knew all our dog business.

MATEO

The flyers?

TRINITY

I swear she mentioned that she's a San Francisco native at least 5 times. Like damn bitch I get it--you were born here so you

think you're better than me.

Plus she was wearing these obnoxious little boots--you know those "look at me-I'm so edgy" clunky black-boots? (beat) I'm surprised she hasn't asked you out for coffee, she's always so excited to see you.

*Mateo searches for his
weed stash and begins to
set up his volcano
vaporizer with great
care.*

MATEO

Do you still wish we could've closed on the place in Noe Valley?

TRINITY

Hmmm. Here and there.

MATEO

You said you adored Bernal Heights. That you were in love with this house.

TRINITY

I do! I am. (beat) There's just something a little more--polished?--about Noe Valley. Namely there aren't housing projects anchoring in two directions---3 if you count Holly Park.

MATEO

Cesar Chavez and Alemany are relatively quiet as far as projects go.

TRINITY

You're a projects concierge now?

MATEO

Is it worth it? Always getting your little digs in?

TRINITY

Only cuz I love you. *(beat)* I guess I did imagine myself pushing a stroller up 24th, past all the cutesy restaurants and shops. I really tried to visualize and manifest the whole Noe Valley lifestyle. *(beat)* But I'm good here. There's coffee shops on Cortland. It's fine.

MATEO

We couldn't have afforded it long term.

TRINITY

You plan on inviting big titty jogger to the party?

MATEO

Of course not. I'm not inviting anyone else.

TRINITY

Good. *(Pause)* Do you think we might still have Pepper if we got the Noe Valley house?

MATEO throws up his hands in surrender and EXITS.

TRINITY

(calls out) Don't get too annoyed. I'm ovulating so it's a *we have to have sex* niiiiight!

LIGHTS FADE

ACT I

Scene 4:

House on Andover Street. Afternoon.

Trinity is on the couch with a glass of wine. She's partially undressed and setting the mood to

*maturbate: rearranging
pillows, trying to get the
perfect angle. Just as she
seems ready to begin, her
cell phone rings. It's Mateo.*

TRINITY

Hello? Yeah, I'm home. Why? (*listens*) Are you kidding me? Now?
(*listens*) No, it's not a big deal. I'm just...busy.(*listens*)
Working! I work from home--What else would I be doing? (*listens*)
Yeah, yeah. It's fine.

(*we hear the doorbell*)

Ugh! I think they're here--I gotta go. I gotta put something on.
What? Because I was changing! Bye!

*Trinity quickly puts her
pants back on and goes
to answer the door.*

AMELIA ENTERS

TRINITY

Hi, hi. Wait right here. I'll go get the card.

AMELIA

Hold on. One sec.

TRINITY

It's for my husband. He's running late so he asked me to-

AMELIA

You're Matt's wife?

TRINITY

Yeah, he's not gonna get here in time.

AMELIA

No worries. Matt's the homie. I'm Amelia.

TRINITY

Great. Do I owe you money?

AMELIA

No. I mean some people tip. But nothing is owed.

TRINITY

I don't think I have any cash on me.

AMELIA

Did I interrupt you?

TRINITY

What?

AMELIA

I just got this vibe. Like you were in the middle of something. Important.

(Amelia spots the vibrator.)

TRINITY

Do you normally linger like this?

AMELIA

Am I lingering? I guess I was hoping to bump into Matt. *(beat)*
Your husband's good people.

TRINITY

All the skinny white girl joggers around here seem to think so.

AMELIA

...Ok?

TRINITY

I'll let Matt know ya came, and ya lingered.

AMELIA

I can tell I'm annoying you. I'm aware. But I have one last request. Think of it as a tip?

TRINITY

What is it?

AMELIA

Can I use your bathroom? A quick pee. I promise.

TRINITY

Sure. It's two down from the front door.

*Amelia makes a dash
toward the bathroom.
Trinity puts away her
vibrator. Amelia
reappears shortly
thereafter.*

AMELIA

Woo! I'm a totally different person than the one who first came through the door.

TRINITY

Is that good or bad?

AMELIA

It's always good vibes with me.

TRINITY

You must be from here.

AMELIA

Proud native!

TRINITY

Is there any other kind?

AMELIA

I do have one last request, then I promise to leave you alone forever: Would you happen to have any Excedrin? I feel a migraine coming on and you would be saving my life.

TRINITY

I do actually. I get horrible migraines on my period. I had them all the time in college, like every other day, but now it's only once or twice a month. They come back like they're avenging their brother's death.

AMELIA

If you'd said that with a lisp it would've been a flawless Kool G Rap impression.

TRINITY

Holy shit--I'm actually impressed.

AMELIA

That's all it took?

TRINITY

I dated a DJ in college. He had a thing for old school Hip Hop.

(hands 2 pills to Amelia.)

How do you know who Kool G--

AMELIA

Can I have a sip of this?

Amelia takes a swig from the bottle without waiting for an answer. She cleans off the top with her shirt before returning it.

TRINITY

No worries...I only get the lip bump in the winter.

AMELIA

...

TRINITY

...

AMELIA

You're joking.

TRINITY

I am.

AMELIA

You look different from how I pictured you.

(moment of electric connection.)

MATEO ENTERS

MATEO

Yooo, I thought you were still on vacation! My bad for not being here, I got jammed up at work.

AMELIA

No worries! It all worked out.
Your wife was kind enough to spot me some migraine crack.

TRINITY

We swapped weed for Excedrin.

MATEO (to Trinity)

You sounded so pissed on the phone--

TRINITY

Quit it.

AMELIA

You never told me your wife's a hottie.

MATEO

Yeah, all the vatos up on the hill seem to think so.

TRINITY

Ignore him.

AMELIA

Why are we practically neighbors? I remember you saying you were buying a house, but for some reason I thought it was in Noe Valley.

TRINITY

Wah, wah, waaah.

AMELIA

What'd I do?

MATEO

Ignore her. You live in the area, right?

AMELIA

Over on Gates. On the other side of Cortland.

MATEO

You gotta come over and watch a game!

AMELIA

Hella down!

MATEO (to Trinity)

Amelia's my lucky charm. She referred me to a friend, and that one sale led to three more clients.

AMELIA

Always a pleasure to connect good people.
(to Trinity) Nice meeting you...?

TRINITY

Trinity.

AMELIA

Thanks again, Trinity. Check ya later, Matt!

(AMELIA EXITS)

MATEO

I really hope you weren't rude to her. I'm one of a handful of people they're testing out their new delivery service on.

TRINITY

Relax. It was fine. Let's go have sex.

MATEO

You don't want to wait until after dinner?

TRINITY

Don't be such an old man. We're have a schedule to keep. I'll even talk real dirty how you like.

(TRINITY EXITS)

Mateo looks around the room to see if anything is amiss. He sniffs the air then EXITS.

LIGHTS FADE

ACT I

Scene 5:

House on Andover Street.

Trinity is offstage taking a pregnancy test in the bathroom. We hear her cursing in frustration when the results are negative.

TRINITY ENTERS with the pregnancy test in hand and pours herself a glass of wine. She downs it and pours another. We hear the doorbell. Trinity finishes

her wine and then answers the door.

AMELIA

Hey!

TRINITY

We didn't order anything.

AMELIA

I'm not delivering anything.

TRINITY

Then why are you here?

AMELIA

I'm meeting Matt. To watch the game.

TRINITY

He's supposed to watch the game at a bar. Whatever. I'll be right back.

TRINITY EXITS.

Amelia looks around being nosey and spots the pregnancy test.

TRINITY ENTERS and pours another glass of wine.

They sit in silence for a couple beats.

TRINITY

Soooo...your plan is to wait here?

AMELIA

How ya feeling?

TRINITY

What?

AMELIA

You look stressed.

*Trinity looks around for
the pregnancy test.*

TRINITY

Do I?

AMELIA

A smidge.

TRINITY

I'm starving. What time is Mateo supposed to meet you? I'm thinking about ordering Japanese.

AMELIA

I'm part Japanese.

TRINITY

...

AMELIA

On my dad's side.

TRINITY (amused)

Mateo must think you're just white. He always tells his white friends and clients to call him Matt.

AMELIA

You're Japanese too, right?

TRINITY

Nope. *(beat)* Nothing bores me more than talking about race. Honestly my favorite thing about having a Black President is that in a few years, race as we know it will finally be over.

All those rules and restrictions for a game none of us asked to play.

*Trinity and Amelia take
each other in for a few
beats.*

AMELIA

You look a lot like this hapa girl I dated in college.

*Trinity spots the
pregnancy test and
grabs it.*

TRINITY

One sec. I'll be right back.

TRINITY EXITS

*Amelia pulls out a
notebook and
secretively
scribbles down some
notes.*

TRINITY ENTERS

TRINITY

I'm like 90% sure Mateo said he's watching the game at a bar.

*Trinity and Amelia
study each other
for a few beats.*

AMELIA

So what are you stressed about?

TRINITY

I don't follow.

AMELIA

You mentioned feeling stressed earlier.

TRINITY

Why does it feel like your studying me?

AMELIA

Am I making you uncomfortable?

TRINITY

Should I feel special or do you study everyone?

MATEO ENTERS

MATEO

Heeeey! Hold up. Am I trippin? I thought we were meeting at the bar later?

TRINITY

You want some wine, babe? It's wiiiine tiiiiime.

MATEO

Ah...Another negative test?

TRINITY

Yup! We failed! Again.

What's the point of having a body if it won't do as you say?

(to her uterus)

Make a baby you stupid little bitch! You had no trouble when I was in high school! Stop jerking me around and do the fucking magic trick!

*Mateo tries to comfort
Trinity with a hug.*

TRINITY

You smell...weird.

MATEO *(to Amelia)*

How many drinks has she had?

AMELIA

I don't know. I just got here, Mateo.

TRINITY

Oh, riiiiight. Riiiiight. Your friend here is part Asian. No "Matt" required.

MATEO

I don't get it.

AMELIA

Your wife was explaining to me how the topic of race bores her.

MATEO

Race doesn't bore her, the way people respond to what comes out of her mouth bores her--Did she mention her infamous Facebook post about why she was no longer catching BART to work?

TRINITY

God forbid I post my opinion on my own page.

MATEO

Your page was public-

TRINITY

It's totally cool for white people to say "no perfume--scent free zone"--but I have to sit on a train that smells like Bangladesh-spice because tech immigrants don't believe in deodorant?

MATEO (*to Amelia*)

You see? That's the mild version. It got worse.

TRINITY

On my page!

MATEO

Never once considered my coworkers or potential clients that might see it-

TRINITY

Spare me the human resources write-up. Indians are Asians, right?

AMELIA

Hmmmm--

TRINITY

Whatever. It's fine. They're Asian. Look, I'm a woman--I have no fucking power over anyone in this country.

My nose had an opinion, and it's fine. I'm so ready for the race game to be over already!

(to the ceiling) C'mon Obama! We're almost there--put this "race" shit to bed!

(cheerleading) O-BA-MA! O-BA-MA!

Oh-oh-oh! Tell her my theory.

I have a theory that Obama is really our first Asian President--Hear me out! He grew up in Hawaii surrounded by Asians so he has our work ethic. He's the perfect example of quit complaining and study harder. I know he's mixed or whatever, but he's Asian at heart--he's basically a dark-skinned Filipino dad.

MATEO

He got the job. You can stop your clit-rub campaigning now.

TRINITY

Barak!

MATEO *(to Amelia)*

She's been under a lot of stress.

AMELIA

No worries.

MATEO

Did she tell you about our dog?

AMELIA

You have a dog?

MATEO

Well he got chased by a bigger dog up on the hill and--

TRINITY

Annnd became totally high-strung and anxious afterward. Couldn't deal with the noise while they were finishing the deck. So...

MATEO

So we brought him to stay with my aunt until the holidays.

TRINITY

He's the same color as this room. *(pause)* I have to pee. Order me food. I'm going upstairs.

MATEO

Do you need help?

TRINITY

I need. a baby!

TRINITY EXITS

*Mateo stares into space,
deep in thought for a
few beats.*

AMELIA

My bad, man. Maybe we were supposed to meet at the bar.

MATEO

I don't know. I thought so, but I don't know. *(beat)* Let's just watch the game here.

AMELIA

We can link another night if that's easier.

MATEO

She'll be passed out for a couple hours. We got a routine going.

*Mateo pours a shot,
gulps it, then takes
another.*

MATEO (CONT)

Sorry about the Japanese nonsense. Trini always says awkward shit.

(pours himself a double)

My wife is like grapes: plump, juicy, sweet. But she has seeds. Lots of seeds.

AMELIA

Seeds are natural.

MATEO

Of course. However seedless does exist.
Same taste, less work.
I love her though!

AMELIA

How long have you guys been married?

MATEO

3 years? About.

We were already living together a year before that. One day she came into the bathroom while I was getting ready for work and told me she was pregnant.

A couple weeks later I proposed. When we finally went to our first doctor's appointment, she wasn't pregnant afterall. They said that it was most likely a false positive. That's a thing apparently.

We were stunned. *(beat)* Then she threw herself into the wedding planning and...now we're here.

AMELIA

In Bernal Heights.

MATEO

Living the dream! (*beat*) Truth is...I just want to eat at nice restaurants and take vacations and go to ball games on a weekday. I don't wanna wake up at 3am and change diapers to earn "unlock my wife's pussy" reward tokens. Not to be vulgar, I'm just talking real--

AMELIA

Of course.

MATEO

You're like one of the guys, Dre. You don't judge me. You roll like dice...--I don't know what the fuck I'm saying. I'm drunk. Trini says I sound like an asshole when I'm drunk. ...I'm just a guy with a mortgage and a car note, trying not to fuck it all up.

AMELIA

"Try not to fuck it up" is a universal prayer.

MATEO

...I came here in the late 90's as a musician! I was in a band! You're from here, you remember what it was like back then--the spirit. The rebelliousness. People were throwing pies in politician's faces! And now...everything feels on the verge of losing its essence.

AMELIA

Well/

MATEO

I mean look, I'm no native like yourself, but I'd like to think of myself as an honorary native. Anyone who moved here pre-dot.com is practically a native. At this point, you gotta include us, right?

AMELIA

I have a roommate who'd strongly disagree.

MATEO

I want to feel alive when I open my eyes in the morning.
...I'm really trying not to fuck it all up.

AMELIA

My dad used to always say that humans are basically frightened animals with enormous dreams.

MATEO (unraveling)

Totally! No one knows anything! We're all pretending to have life under control. Most people's parents got together for the same random reasons, right? "Parents" is basically a wholesome word for two people who were fucking without protection. And then certain decisions were made. Right?
Adults are just a pack of liars demanding to be loved. We only have to appear to be "the thing." Even if the thing isn't the thing, as long as it looks like the thing, it will be respected as such.

(Long pause)

AMELIA

Are you still ordering food for Trini?

MATEO (buttoning back up)

Yes! Yes. You hungry? I'll order a bunch of stuff. We'll feast!
I left my wallet in the car. Hold tight.

MATEO EXITS.

Amelia pulls out
her notebook and
scribbles like a
thief.

LIGHTS FADE

ACT I

Scene 6

House on Andover street.

Amelia politely snoops through books and such in the living room. TRINITY ENTERS carrying bottle of Excedrin.

TRINITY

Here, I got you a bottle.

AMELIA

But I don't-

TRINITY

Just take it. I went to Costco the other day. It came in a 3-pack.

(Trinity takes a hit from the volcano.)

AMELIA

You were saying something before your phone rang?

TRINITY

Oh, I was just saying that it's funny because I usually make it a point not to engage with people I'm attracted to, so for instance if I'm waiting for an elevator I'll take the next one; if standing in line at Whole Foods I'll choose another line or make sure to keep my back turned--

AMELIA

Wait. So?

TRINITY

So no eye contact. And definitely no long conversations. It's a respect thing--If I found out my husband was finding ways to make chit-chat with a woman at work, or the gym, or some coffee shop--that he knows he's attracted to, I would be murderous! It's basically a form of cheating. Don't you think?

AMELIA

So no talking to strangers if you're in a relationship? That sounds-

TRINITY

No talking to strangers that you know you're attracted to. There's a difference.

AMELIA

But how do you know?

TRINITY

You know! Of course you know! When you're attracted to someone it's instantaneous. They could be across the room and you'd know. Whether anything ever happens afterward or not, the flash-bang moment happens. And if or when it does, you have an obligation to move in the opposite direction. Because otherwise what are you saying? What are you saying with your actions?

AMELIA

That you're curious?

TRINITY

Exactly! And curiosity is cheating.

AMELIA

Curiosity is not cheating.

TRINITY

It is! Your mind starts getting all sneaky and manipulative in the same ways it would if you were having an actual affair. All the plotting and covering your tracks.

AMELIA

Curiosity is human.

TRINITY

Any initial attraction is a fantasy. You're only seeing your own projections.

AMELIA

Sounds like you have experience in this area.

TRINITY

I'm aware of my own shit and most times I can spot my patterns early enough to try and break up the algorithm. For example: 95-98% of the time, the men I'm instantly attracted to are pieces of shit. Without fail I always find out about some horrible fact or allegation or charge-

AMELIA

Charge?!

TRINITY

I know. But at least I'm aware of my glitch.

AMELIA

Mateo doesn't seem like the criminal type.

TRINITY

Exactly! And that's because I wasn't attracted to him initially. Not in the across-the-room-lightning-strike sort of way. It was more gradual.

(Pause)

We're having a housewarming party soon, if you'd like to come? Mateo says you tell really great stories.

AMELIA

Umm, yeah. No, yeah. I could come.

(Silence)

TRINITY

So you're really a writer?

AMELIA

I am. I wrote a book of short stories that got published, won an award, small cash prize, and now--Now I'm working on a novel.

TRINITY

What's your novel about?

AMELIA

It was going to be about Chinese gold miners, but it feels like the universe is moving me in a different direction lately.

TRINITY

I totally believe the universe can send us the things or people we long for. That's what makes desire tricky.

AMELIA

I'm not afraid to explore whatever direction my heart points me in. I've always been that way.

(Long pause)

So you said earlier that you "usually" make it a point not to engage with men you're attracted to.

TRINITY

Uh-huh.

AMELIA

Well you started off by saying "It's funny"--

TRINITY

Did I? Wow. You listen closely.

AMELIA

Writer's habit. (beat) I guess I'm wondering, do you have any male friends? Colleagues? College buddies?

TRINITY

Tons. I'm just not attracted to any of them.

AMELIA

What about women?

TRINITY

What about them?

AMELIA

Have you ever been attracted?

TRINITY

Who hasn't?

AMELIA

The "it's funny" part...your phrasing makes it sound like you've made an exception. *(beat)* Recently.

*Hold intense eye contact.
Move in closer. Perform a
dance of almost kissing but
pulling back at the last
moment. After much tension,
they finally give in.
After a few beats, Trinity's
cell phone rings. Trinity
excuses herself to answer it.*

TRINITY

Hey Babe! Hi. Yeah, hey. Nothing. Just working. Working hard from home. Any news about Pepper?

*Amelia motions that she'll
let herself out.*

LIGHTS FADE

ACT I

Scene: 7

House on Andover Street.

Mateo and Amelia are smoking weed and watching a game. Amelia takes notes in her notebook every few seconds.

MATEO

You're like a time-traveler with that pen and notebook.

AMELIA

Ahh, but from the past, or the future? Knock out all the power grids and where in time would we land?

MATEO

...

AMELIA

...

MATEO

What's this strain called again?

TRINITY ENTERS wearing some sort of pajama/loungewear that is just on the cusp of being inappropriate for company.

TRINITY

Oh hey, Amelia. I didn't know you were here.

MATEO

I told you she was coming over to watch the game.

TRINITY

Who's winning?

MATEO

Tie score.

AMELIA

You're into sports too?

TRINITY

Gotta support the home team.

MATEO

Since when?

TRINITY

What are you guys smoking?

AMELIA

Here, take a hit of this new strain we just got in.

MATEO

Oh God.

AMELIA

The taste reminds me of the first time I smoked some strong shit with my older cousin. She got from the hood--like Double Rock projects or somewhere crazy.

Anyway we smoked it in the car on our way to the movies. And she kept telling me. *"You only need a couple puffs. Don't take more than a couple puffs."* Meanwhile she already had like 5 as we pull up to a stop sign.

We're just chilling at the intersection, listening to some song on the radio. After a few seconds she's like, *"What are you waiting for?-We're gonna be late to the movie!"*

And I'm like...*"Bitch, this is your car. You're the one driving!?"*

She looks around, taking it all in, and then starts screaming, *"Oh shit-oh shit-oh shit!"*

TRINITY

...That's what we're smoking?

AMELIA

No, not like that. I just meant it's surprisingly strong. But in a good way.

TRINITY

Did you ever make it to the movie?

AMELIA

No. We immediately pulled over, locked the doors, and sat in the car giggling for 2 hours straight.

TRINITY

I miss days like that.

MATEO

You're not cold in that outfit?

TRINITY

Nope.

(to Amelia)

What's in the bag?

*Mateo's work cell phone
rings. He gestures that he's
going to take the call out on
the deck.*
MATEO EXITS

AMELIA

A surveillance camera that looks like a bear.
It's a long story, but basically my landlord's daughter is home
from prison and I told her she could hang out in my area when
I'm not there. I'm gonna leave it on my bed.

TRINITY

What if she finds out you're taping her?

AMELIA

I don't know. It's my property.

TRINITY

The room is your property?

AMELIA

I mean...I pay rent. I fixed it up. As long as I'm paying money
every month it's my ground to stand.

TRINITY

But you're being sneaky.

AMELIA

I'm treating it as public space.

TRINITY

...You like watching people?

AMELIA

You like being watched?

TRINITY

What if she gets comfortable, and starts touching herself, because she thinks she's alone?

AMELIA

Is that what you do when you get comfortable?

TRINITY

Wouldn't you like to know.

AMELIA

...Show me. Show me how you think she might touch herself.

*MATEO ENTERS with a
record-scratch effect on the
room.*

MATEO

What's the score?

TRINITY

...I'm not sure.

MATEO

Doesn't matter, I gotta run to meet with a client who's freaking out.

TRINITY

Now? Your clients are always freaking out lately.

MATEO

(to Amelia)

One day, we might actually finish watching a game. Let's just link at a bar next time.

(Mateo and Amelia dap it up)

AMELIA

No worries, my guy. I'm always around.

*Mateo and Trinity kiss goodbye, as
Amelia gathers her belongings.*

TRINITY

How long will you be gone?

MATEO

I should be back in an hour and a half.

AMELIA

I should use your bathroom before I bounce.

MATEO

All good--I'm out!

AMELIA EXITS to the bathroom.

MATEO EXITS

*Trinity arranges herself on the couch
to look sexy but casual.*

AMELIA ENTERS

TRINITY

Everyone's leaving me.

AMELIA

Never that.

*Trinity and Amelia are on the couch,
smoking, whispering, and flirting; they
are genuinely enjoying each other's
company.*

*MATEO ENTERS. Trinity and Amelia do
their best to disengage without seeming
obvious.*

TRINITY

Babe! Hey. Hi.
Did something happen?

MATEO

You tell me.

TRINITY

I mean did something happen with your client?

MATEO

I forgot my other phone.
(to Amelia)
You telling my wife another one of your funny stories?

AMELIA

Trini was just telling me what it was like growing up in Las Vegas.

TRINITY

Uncle Tino always says Vegas is pretty much the 9th Hawaiian island. Because so many of us end up moving there.

AMELIA

Vegas seems so...not you.

MATEO

Technically you don't know her well enough to--

AMELIA

True. I just tend to have a good sense about people.

MATEO

Of course. (beat) That's your superpower.

AMELIA

Is it?

MATEO

You making moves on my wife?

AMELIA

I haven't "moved" on anyone.

TRINITY

Exactly--I'm not some helpless object without a voice.

AMELIA

I basically stuck around to see what I should bring to the party.

MATEO

You're having a party?

AMELIA

Your party. The house warming. Trini hit me with the invite. What should I bring?

MATEO (to Amelia)

Wait. What?

TRINITY

(to Mateo)

I forgot. I thought I told you?

(to Amelia)

You don't have to bring anything! It's not a potluck.

MATEO

Was I there? For the invite?

AMELIA

Am I invited or...?

MATEO

Of course you're invited. Trini plans on wearing some slutty outfit and getting everyone wasted on gin punch.

(Uncomfortable silence)

AMELIA

I should head out.

MATEO

Don't let me run you off. You obviously had extra time to kill.

AMELIA

Yeah, but I just got a text, so--

MATEO

Just now? Can I see?

AMELIA

See what?

MATEO

The text.

AMELIA

...

MATEO

I'm just fucking with you! *(beat)* I like fucking with people who want to fuck my wife.

AMELIA

I've never--

MATEO

Jokes! Just jokes. Maybe you should take a couple more hits to relax, bro.

AMELIA

I'm good.

MATEO

I'm Fresno. From Fresno. *(beat)* Originally.

AMELIA

...

MATEO

The weather in Fresno is all the way hot or all the way cold. Extremes. No in between. *(beat)* Like Vegas. *(beat)* When I was a kid. I woke up one morning...and my goldfish had froze overnight.

TRINITY

...

AMELIA

...

MATEO

...

AMELIA

I should go.

MATEO

We'll see you at the housewarming party, then? It'll be great. Lot's of yoga chicks, a sprinkle of real estate assholes, a dash of techies dressed in plaid. Perfect material for one of your little stories in your little notebook.

AMELIA

...

MATEO

I won't take no for an answer.

AMELIA

(beat) Sure. I'll come thru.

MATEO

Ahhh! You hear that, babe? She'll "come thru." Who you been hanging with? You're a whole new Amelia. Meli 2.0 and shit. I love it.
(Shows Amelia to the door.)

AMELIA

Bye, Trini!
(Trinity waves but doesn't speak.)

MATEO

Oh, Amelia. Do me a favor. Don't come to my house anymore if I'm not home.

AMELIA

I can respect that.

MATEO

Make sure that you do.

AMELIA EXITS

(Silence as Mateo circles Trinity a couple of times in an investigative manner)

MATEO

If I were to place my fingers in your panties right now...would I find you wet? (beat) You leaking?

(Pause)

I'm gonna ask you this once. And because I do. actually know you...If you lie...I will recognize the lie flash across your face.

(beat)

Did you guys fuck?

TRINITY

No!

MATEO

Did she go down on you?

TRINITY

No.

(Pause)

MATEO

Are you ovulating?

TRINITY

...Yes.

MATEO

Good.

Now walk to our bedroom. Take off this outfit.

Put your panties in your mouth. Choose a position. Then wait for me.

And do not move. An inch.

Understood?

*Trinity nods her head,
waits a beat and then
EXITS.*

*Mateo hits the volcano,
sends a text, struts
across the room a couple
times and then EXITS.*

ACT I

Scene 8

House on Andover St.

*We hear the sounds of a party.
Trinity is in hyper hostess mode.
AMELIA ENTERS.*

AMELIA

Hey. How are you?

TRINITY

Yay--you're here! Are you hungry?

AMELIA

For you.

TRINITY

You see Mateo's in full party form out there? His jaw is grinding nonstop.

AMELIA

Can we go somewhere and talk?

TRINITY

In the middle of the party? Are you ok?

AMELIA

Are you ok?

TRINITY

I'm great!

(calls out to an unseen party guest)

All the BBQ is out on the deck! Try the boar sausage!

AMELIA

Why are you walking like that?

TRINITY

My thighs are so sore! Me and Mateo have been fucking for hours at a time. His testosterone is on a milli. I'm definitely getting pregnant this month.

AMELIA

Ah.

TRINITY

Do you want something to drink? Gin punch? Are you hungry?

MATEO ENTERS from the deck.

MATEO

Amelia's here! This is my budtender, everyone! Amelia this is everyone!

AMELIA

Hey. Hi, hi.

MATEO

You want a little bump? There's people in the bathroom/

AMELIA

Nah, no. I'm good.

MATEO

How about a margarita? Or melon-gin punch? AMELIA
I'm good with this beer for now.

MATEO

We gotta loosen you up a bit. You're looking real tense.
We're celebrating up in here! Life is good! Hold up-hold up, you
gotta tell one of your stories!

AMELIA

Now?

MATEO

Should I bring in people from the deck?

AMELIA

What? No.

MATEO

Shhh! Listen up everyone! Amelia is a writer. She has the best stories. Tell 'em, the movie theater story. Or that other story.

AMELIA

Way to put me on the spot.

MATEO

No pressure. Entertain us, writer!

AMELIA

Wow...Okay. Well.

I do actually have a story. You two might appreciate it given the close encounter you had with your own dog.

Let's see, so...my roommate told me this story about how she was walking her dog up on the hill. A pitbull.

TRINITY

Oh God. I can already tell where this is going. Did she have it on a leash?

MATEO

I don't think anyone uses a leash up on the hill.

TRINITY

Yeah, but pitbulls are dangerous.

MATEO

Will you let her tell the story?

AMELIA

So she's walking her dog. And she sees something from the corner of her eyes- it looks like a clown behind a tree.

TRINITY

Ugh, I hate clowns.

AMELIA

But as she gets closer she see that it's not a clown. It's just a woman with bright red hair and huge tits, and this guy is on his knees eating her out as she leans against the tree. And the woman is moaning and the guy is slurping her up- And then out of nowhere this chicken with bright yellow feathers appears from behind them and takes off running. So then her dog takes off running after it. And.....

The lighting shifts to something more artificial.

We hear canned studio laughter as if we're in a television show. Amelia keeps talking even though we can't hear her. We only hear the laughter. We watch various emotions flash across Mateo and Trinity's faces. They do their best to keep their masks on, but the energy should feel twisted.

LIGHTS FADE

Some sort of "Under Construction" board/panel is brought on stage to block the view as the set is changed for ACT II

ACT II

Scene 1

House on Gates Street.

Marla is meditating in the living room.

MICKEY ENTERS and observes quietly until Marla opens her eyes.

MICKEY

Sorry.

MARLA

Come here.

MICKEY

...You always cry when you pray?

MARLA

If I'm lucky. Tears are holy water. No tears mean my heart is closed. Only an open heart has wings to carry our prayers.

MICKEY

When I first went in, I cried every morning and fell asleep the same way.

By the 2nd year I was done. It's been a drought ever since.

MARLA

I said a prayer for you every night you were locked up. *(beat)*
Do you still pray?

MICKEY

Sometimes.

MARLA

Good. Pray for tears, babygirl.

(a few beats of silence)

What were you doing in the kitchen all night? You were up so late I expected to wake up to cakes or cookies.

MICKEY

I was making homemade dog food.

I found some cool organic recipes at the pet store.

"Farm-to-table."

MARLA

What does that mean?

MICKEY

I don't know. I read it somewhere.

The blender broke though. By accident.

(Silence)

MARLA

Why don't you put on some shorts and go to the beach? Get out of the house. Talk to people other than your dog.

MICKEY

I don't talk to my dog.

MARLA

You stay in your room too much. *(pause)* I know you're lonely.

MICKEY

I'm used to being alone, Ma.

MARLA

Ah-ha.

...You know sometimes when you come up the stairs, I think you're your brother. You walk sounds just like him now.

MICKEY

Please don't mistake me for the dead. It's not polite.

MARLA

Your brother loved pitbulls. Is that why you asked to get Cortland? In his memory?

MICKEY

You're the one who worships him like a saint, Ma. My life has nothing to do with him.

MARLA

Ah-ha.

Well is it Baraka? Is that who you're--

MICKEY (*softly*)

Stop.

MARLA

You didn't get to go to the funeral so I could see how it might haunt---

MICKEY

Stop. It.

MARLA

Ah-ha.

(*lights a sage stick and places it back in a shell*)

I didn't really want a dog in the house again, but if it makes you feel more comfortable...I just want you to feel more comfortable.

MICKEY

That's impossible.

MARLA

Comfort is impossible?

MICKEY

I've been gone too long to feel comfortable. There was no "iPhone", no "Facebook"; none of these white buses or fancy restaurants.

MARLA

You expected nothing to change, babygirl?

MICKEY

...

MARLA

If I learned to adapt, you can too. It was a challenge but now I FaceTime and text and email. Amelia can help if you have questions. She's very helpful.

MICKEY

How much longer is she staying up there?

MARLA

You should ask her for a tour. She fixed it up so nice! She's a good kid. I mean she's not a kid, she's twenty-something, but when you get older everyone looks like a kid.

MICKEY

When will she be gone?

MARLA

I gave her a two-year lease for redoing the floors and painting everything.

MICKEY

How much time left?

MARLA

About 9 months? She's paying me \$1750 for an attic with no kitchen---says it's a "steal!"

MICKEY

That just means she could afford to pay more, Ma.

(Silence)

MARLA

I hope you live long enough to become an old woman. Then maybe life might tickle you.

MICKEY

Hmmm, let's see: I served almost 8 years for possession...fast-forward and now the same product is for sale on damn near every other corner. All you need is a note--from a muthafuckin doctor no less. I'm tickled to death, Ma. It's a fuckin' riot of tickles on the daily.

MARLA

Don't curse so much. It attracts demons.

(lights sage and quickly cleanses the air)

...What tickles me, is that you were always so feminine before. All the boys on every corner wanted to be with you. They couldn't control themselves when you walked by.

MICKEY

They were horny-hyena pieces of shit, Ma.

MARLA

Your hair fell down your back with the "crimps" and highlights from all that, what was it called? Ahh, "Sun-In?" Then came the cloud of Aqua Net to get your pump just perfect. Next you'd go sooo sloooow to curve your eyeliner at

just.the.right.angle. Do you remember all the care you took with yourself? Every morning. You were undeniable. A star! You never look in the mirror anymore...even when you brush your teeth. (pause) Avoiding mirrors is something crazy people do...or the possessed.

MICKEY

I became my own mirror in prison. I don't have to "look" to see me.

(Silence)

MARLA

Since you like spending time with your dog so much, use her as a way to meet people. This city is in love with dogs. You could go to a dog park or a dog festival or--

MICKEY

Nah, they act funny-style with pitbulls. Like she's a thug not worthy of doggy rights. Somehow all dogs are animals but mine is the only *animal*.

MARLA

Just give it time, sweets. Once you start going out more and meeting new people...you just need time to remember who you were.

MICKEY

Ma...

MARLA

Yes?

MICKEY

You ever wonder what it'd be like to not have tits?

MARLA

What's the point of such a question?

MICKEY

They got an operation for that. A surgery to take them off. To be flat chested.

MARLA

So no grandkids then? It that where this is going?

MICKEY

You have grandkids.

MARLA

Not from you. Not born of my daughter.

MICKEY

I think it would feel like free.

MARLA

From?

MICKEY

From breastfeeding man-babies on every corner with hungry eyes. Tits attract pigs who want to suck your energy, your attention, your generosity. People will suck you without mercy. Like newborns.

MARLA

Ah-ha.

And why would you rip out your foundation?

MICKEY

Technically we weren't born with breasts, Ma. If anything I'd be reinstalling my original design. Before puberty. And its troubles.

MARLA

Being a man is nothing to aspire to.

MICKEY

I don't need breasts be a woman.

Forget it. Stop making that face. They're right here, okay?
(*Lifts shirt and flashes her mother*) Relax.

MARLA

It's like you remodeled your brain while you were locked up.
Where is my daughter?

MICKEY

You don't recognize me?

MARLA

I'm not used to this...this, this-

MICKEY

What if "this" helped me to survive and come back to you?

MARLA

I never got a chance to say goodbye to the daughter I knew. The daughter I birthed and raised.
You've become a replica, like a-a-a chimera of your brother and your boyfriend. Both taken by violence---

MICKEY (in a rage)

Enough, goddamnit!

(*A few beats of silence. MARLA lights her sage again, stands up and waves the smoke over MICKEY's crown chakra from behind.*)

MARLA

You are possessed by dead men. And *that* is not the protection you need. I promise.

(*MARLA exits*)

LIGHTS FADE

ACT II

Scene 2

House on Gates St.

Mickey is watching TV.

*MARLA ENTERS on the tailend
of a phone call.*

MARLA (on the phone)

MmmHmm. I know! Yes, for sure. Maybe a barbecue or something?

Ok. Yeah. MmmHmm. Sounds good. Talk soon.

(Marla sits down, grabs the remote, and changes the channel.)

MARLA (CONT)

That was your auntie on the phone. You went way out there and dropped Cortland off?

MICKEY

You told me to get out the house and go do something.

MARLA

She don't need no big ol'-buffed ol' dog in her house.

MICKEY

There's been some robberies in her neighborhood. She was happy I brought him over there.

MARLA

Moved way out there and still dealing with robberies? Pshhh-couldn't be me.

It's like the whole hood picked up and moved to Antioch, Discovery Bay, Stockton.

MICKEY

Her house is nice. A lightweight mansion.

MARLA

A McMansion in the middle of nowhere-ville, with an adjustable-rate mortgage at that. What's she gonna do now that the 5yrs is almost up and her monthly payments about to jump? Plus she already let ya knucklehead cousin pull money out the house three years ago to get a damn Escalade with hula hoop rims.

Where's she gonna magically get more money from?

MICKEY

...

MARLA

She certainly won't be able to sell it for what she owes with all them foreclosures everywhere.
I tried to tell folks: You leave the City, you ain't never ever-ever coming back.

MICKEY

The house is nice and she looked happy. Why you all on her line?

MARLA

Because she should've just went on ahead and kept her ass in the Fillmore like I told her. That's for sure your daddy's sister- Everybody in that family hardheaded.

MICKEY

Why every show you watch on here is a remodel or makeover? Nothing but ugly people, ugly kitchens, ugly backyards- front yards, bathrooms.
The whole formula is to set you up for these Before & After cum-shots at the end.

MARLA

Excuse me? Come what?

MICKEY

Real talk: if a bitch hates herself before the haircut and new outfit, then she'll go right back to hating herself after the cameras leave.
And if the husband is a piece of shit before they remodel the kitchen or front yard or whatever the fuck--then he'll still be a piece of shit afterwards. Nothing changes.

MARLA

Tuh! Nothing changes? All you do is complain that everything has changed in this city.

MICKEY

It's basically Big-bank take Little-bank. The remix. That ain't new.

MARLA

Ah-ha. *(beat)* You start thinking about your future yet? Any new ideas? Goals?

MICKEY

Turn the channel. Please? I don't want to watch nobody plan no damn wedding.

(Marla begrudgingly begins to channel surf.)

MARLA

...I honestly believed you'd grow up to marry someone rich. Maybe an athlete, a lawyer, stockbroker. Have some beautiful kids. Live in a fancy house. St. Francis Woods? Sea Cliff?

MICKEY

Don't.

MARLA

Don't tell the truth? I saw how all those rich dads at your fancy school used to look at you. You were supposed to go to college, allow yourself to blossom...not tie yourself down to some drug dealer.

MICKEY

You rent out my room to a drug dealer.

MARLA

She's a college educated writer. She went to NYU!

MICKEY

She's dangerous.

MARLA

Ooh, House Hunters *International*! -Dangerous? What are you talking about?

MICKEY

What are you talking about?

MARLA

...

MICKY

...

MARLA

God kissed your face. You could've gone down to LA to try your luck in Hollywood. The table was set for you with champagne flutes and fine china. But you chose to eat in the kitchen. With the help.

MICKY

Does that make you feel good--throwing your little darts at me? You trying to draw blood?

MARLA

Before falling asleep at night I would picture your wedding day. Shopping for your dress. Holding your hand while you deliver your first child. Helping you through the confusion and frustration of motherhood. (beat) That was how I passed the time.

MICKY

If you had come to visit me, you would've seen that my eyes never pictured those things.

MARLA

I did come visit! I made that long ass trip and you refused to see me. Remember that?

MICKY

You brought your piece of shit boyfriend.

MARLA

I couldn't make that drive out there by myself- It was a 4 hours, one-way!

(Silence as they each take in the years they've lost.)

MICKEY

I don't feel real, Ma. Every step outside is a haunting.

MARLA

But the world is open! More open than before you went in. You didn't miss anything, it's all here. Everything, at once.

MICKEY

Something was taken from me that I can never get back.

MARLA

Ok, And? Something was taken from every woman in your bloodline. But you also inherited the strength to move past the pain.

MICKEY

...You don't get it.

MARLA

What is "it?"

MICKEY

Me. The "it" is me.

MARLA

The "it" feels like anger.

MICKEY

...I've been contaminated by the system. It flooded my mind, my eyes, the belly in my throat. I'm all wet-concrete and barbed wire inside.

MARLA

Even your heart?

MICKEY

...No.

MARLA

Mm-Hm. Because God protected it.

MICKEY

I ain't special.

MARLA

That's a lie. You chose to hide and play small.

MICKEY

No-No-No-No-No. You will not sit up here and--

MARLA

And what?

MICKEY

And any of it! All of it.

I know you don't want me to vomit up my childhood and pick through it like the garbage dump that it was. All your sage and crystals and hippie shit didn't keep you from letting demons through the front door. It's like, like, it's like me and you are on a fucking ferris wheel! I've come back to the exact same spot I left you at all those years ago!

MARLA

What do you want from me?

MICKEY

I want my space back! It's mine. It was just a bummy attic but it was my little shell--my secret hideout. I need that back, in order to get back.

MARLA

I can't just kick her out.

MICKEY

I need it. In a real way.

MARLA

I cannot break her lease. There are rules. Laws. You want her out so badly, make nice and see if she'll do you a favor.

MICKEY

A favor?! Pshhhh, ain't that about a--

MARLA

Shhh! They're about to say what house they picked. Just hush for a minute...I think it's gonna be House 3.

LIGHTS FADE

ACT II

Scene 3

House on Gates St.

*MICKEY and MARLA in the
living room. MARLA is on her
old, bulky desktop.*

MICKEY

Why you smiling like that?

MARLA

My president just sent me another email.

MICKEY

You're like an addict. A straight Obama-fiend.

MARLSA

Because I love my President? You sound crazy.

MICKEY

I feel crazy. Every day feels like a loop. A scratched record.

MARLA

A loop? Girl, please. You have no idea what life was like when I was coming up- you have a Black President! A Black First Lady! Everything is open and free for young people now. Technology is like-like-like, magic! All the walls have come down. You can look up anything on the computers, find everyone you've ever known in life on the Facebook. You didn't miss out on anything, babygirl. The portal is open! And Obama is here to guide you into the future.

MICKEY (disgusted)

Obama. Who is Obama? His whole story is fantasy fucking island--up here acting like his grandparents were so noble and

brave, way out in the middle of the Pacific ocean. Bring that shit back to the mainland, back to Kansas, and I guarantee they would've switched it up on his ass so fast--had him calling them Ma'am and Sir out in public like his name was Webster. That's how white people do. But he act like he don't know. And he clearly ain't about no rah-rah. How you fix your mouth to say you wanna be the first Black president of the United States, and not stand ten-toes down ready to die behind it? If you ain't ready to die, then you ain't ready to right no wrongs. I'm not riding the Obama train just because his mama had a taste for dark-skinned men with student visas.

MARLA

He doesn't have to be "rah-rah" to be our President. Look where rah-rah got you. I'm not gonna have you up here disrespecting my President in my house.

MICKEY

I forgot you always side with your men over me.

MARLA

...Obama brings Hope. H-O-P-E!

MICKEY

Hope rhymes with: Cope. Dope. Nope. Soap. Rope. That poster could say any of those words.

MARLA

He is our new dawn, for a new America.

MICKEY

How? White people still gonna white. Cops still gonna cop. Wars still gonna war. He up here faking the funk. If Republicans keep on wilding and he don't check 'em---then what's the point? If they don't show that man no respect, then he ain't running nothing. He's a fuckin'...substitute teacher! And the regular lesson plan will be put right back in place as soon as the "real" boss gets back.

MARLA

Nope, nope, nope! Our next president will be Hillary Rodham Clinton--The women got next! Step into the light, babygirl. We living in the land of Hope now!

MICKEY

Tuh. Fuck her too.

AMELIA ENTERS

MARLA

Quit cursing all the damn time!

(to Amelia)

You see how negative she is?

(to Mickey)

You need to read "The Secret"--it can explain it better than me. Words matter. Your energy and attitude matter! Talk to her, Amelia.

She won't listen to me. Never has.

AMELIA

Uhhhhh, hi? I'm Amelia. Your Michaela, right?

MICKEY

I go by, Mickey.

AMELIA (sings and snaps)

Hey Mickey, you're so fine! You're so fine you blow my mind!
Hey, Mickey! Hey Mickey!

MICKEY

...

AMELIA

You must've heard that a lot growing up.

MICKEY

...

MARLA

Were you coming in here to tell me something, doll?

AMELIA

Yes! Haaaa. Thank you.

I am going to Costco. What do you want me to pick up for you? I know you love to make a list.

MARLA

Oooh, yes! I certainly do need a couple things from there. Let me go write my list right now!

(MARLA EXITS)

*(They sit in silence watching
TV for a few beats. It's a
program about the Twin
Towers.)*

MICKEY

I swear 9/11 looked hella fake from jail. Like it was a trick. Like the 2000's were getting ready to travel on one track, but then they pulled a lever to send us into a different timeline. A wormhole.

AMELIA (genuinely surprised)

Wow- You're familiar with wormholes?

MICKEY

Yes bitch, I read. I went to private school. I exist outside the fence of your lil' imagination, so just press pause on whatever you think you know about me.

AMELIA

I sense that you might be seeing me as an outside gaze..."one of them." However. I identify as mixed.

MICKEY

Like for scholarships and grants?

AMELIA

My dad is from Chile. He came to the states for college, met my mom, and never left.

We all have our own...basically I believe that we're all the captains of our identity ship.

MICKEY

How white of you. (beat) Did his people come out the rainforest or off a ship from Europe?

AMELIA

What rainforest?

MICKEY

Where you from?

AMELIA

Here.

MICKEY

What hospital were you born at?

AMELIA

Children's.

MICKEY

What school did you go to?

AMELIA

NYU for undergrad, then Brown.

MICKEY

Pshh, you ain't from here.

AMELIA

Because I went to college?

MICKEY

Because if you were from here, you would've named your high school off top. That's how people *from here* understand the question. They'd know I'm checking zip codes and temperatures. Don't nobody give a fuck about college resumes, and if they did they'd ask what college, not what school.

AMELIA

...I was born here. Technically. I was born here in the city, at Children's Hospital. Later, when I was 7 or 8, we moved to Mill Valley.

MICKEY

More of that steering your identity ship?

(Mickey disengages by shifting her attention to the TV.)

AMELIA

Your mom is right. Negative energy does hold people back. Unintentionally. I have some meditations on clearing the subconscious you can listen to if you want?

(Mickey keeps her attention on the TV.)

MARLA (from offstage)

I'm putting my list by the front door. On top of your bag.

AMELIA

Ok, I'm coming. *(beat)* It was nice to finally meet you.

AMELIA EXITS

(Mickey visibly lets down her guard.)

She realizes she probably
sabotaged her chances of
getting her room back.)

MICKY

...Fuck.

LIGHTS FADE

ACT II

Scene 4

House on Gates St.

*Mickey pulls up on Amelia in
her bedroom.*

MICKY

Aye.

AMELIA

Hey. Hi.

(Silence.)

MICKY

You don't keep your door locked?

AMELIA

No, I feel safe here. Your mom gives me space. *(beat)* She
usually knocks.

MICKEY

She told you how I feel?

AMELIA

Warned me, yes. Not *warned*. Alerted. Made me aware, of your discomfort. With the situation. (*beat*) I didn't know.

MICKEY

About?

AMELIA

About any of it.

MICKEY

Any of what?

AMELIA

Any--I don't know. I don't know what I'm trying to get across. Basically I didn't know this was your "safe space." I spent so much time repainting and remodeling to fix it up that I came to see it through my eyes...something I created with my own hands and sweat.

(Mickey and Amelia hold eye contact. Amelia is the first to look away.)

MICKEY

So you work at a drug spot?

AMELIA

Uhh, the dispensary? Yeah I help patients who--

MICKEY

I want you to stop giving my mom edibles. You trying to keep her high all the time, for what?

AMELIA

No, it's nothing sinister. They're CBD. Not a high. It helps her arthritis. I respect and adore your mom.

MICKEY

Is a white woman's respect worth more or less than when I went in?

AMELIA

I'm mixed.

(Silence)

(Mickey summons the courage to look around her old room.)

AMELIA

The city must seem like another planet to you now.

MICKEY

You could say that. The only things that still match my memories are the bank, the church, and the cowgirl dyke bar.

AMELIA

What about the library?

MICKEY

Nah, all the dope-boys are gone from the corner.

AMELIA

That's a positive, right?

(Mickey lingers at the shelves filled with records and books.)

MICKEY

The one that really fucked me up is the wash-house being a coffee shop. I have all these memories of sitting in the window helping my mom fold clothes as a kid. I'd be drinking a bottle of Orangina--listening to the sound of the 24 crackle on its line. Cortland had its own soundtrack: the church bells; the Spanish, Tongan, Tagalog; niggas hollerin *Errraayy* from corner to corner-- Hip Hop spilling from boomboxes and Skylarks...I keep searching the Before for clues

to this After. *(beat)* Real talk: walking down the hill to Mitchell's for a cone is about the only thing keeping me sane. Even without the glass- You used to have to order your ice cream through bulletproof glass. Did you know that?

AMELIA

I'm trying--I want to find the right words here because I know it's a delicate situation.

I understand and I respect the specificity of the angle at which you enter into--

MICKY

Just fucking say something.

AMELIA

Time moves. Cities evolve. This city has never been anything other than a site of change--Rapidfire history-making change! The Gold Rush, The Shipyards, The Summer of Love--You think the people who lived in the Castro or the Haight before the 60's and 70's didn't feel the exact same way?

MICKY

Bullshit. People who look like me don't get to show up to a new city and live in whatever neighborhood we choose; open up a store selling cupcakes; sit out and drink beer in any park we please all day. It don't work like that.

(Silence)

AMELIA

You look so different than I expected. Different from the pictures your mom showed me.

MICKY

...

AMELIA

Are you part native? Your mom told me your dad was a mix of different backgrounds--I only ask because your silence is so...powerful.

MICKEY

...

AMELIA

Your energy reminds me of a trip I took to the rainforest for an ayahuasca retreat last year. The people there had a similar vibe. To their silence.

MICKEY

...

(Mickey picks up a book about female masculinity.)

AMELIA

You're queer too, right?

MICKEY

Queer compared to what?

AMELIA

You like women?

MICKEY

I love women. But not like you.

AMELIA

How do I love women?

MICKEY

I have no idea. I just know me and you ain't the same.

AMELIA

I wasn't coming onto you.

MICKEY

I never said you were. *(beat)* I'm me: the life I've lived, the evils I've survived. I don't need to join a club about it.

AMELIA

Of course! It was just a vibe.

MICKY

You and your fucking vibes.

AMELIA

I'm learning to mind my business. *(beat)* You want something from me though.

MICKY

Pssh. Only thing you got that I want is my attic. That's it, that's all.

AMELIA

Awkward. *(beat)* Yeah, like I said before, I didn't know about your situation when I moved in.

(Amelia watches Mickey like an episode of National Geographic.)

AMELIA (CONT)

You know...I'm totally open to you spending time up here when I'm not home. You're welcome to read my books or play my records. Think of it as a library. My only rule would be that you don't sit or lie on my bed. I consider my bed to be like a sacred energy zone.

MICKY

...And what do you want in return?

AMELIA

Nothing.

(MICKY turns to leave.)

AMELIA (CONT)

Conversation!

MICKEY

That's your price? Conversation?

AMELIA

It's not a price.

MICKEY

...

AMELIA

Ok, yes, I'd like you to talk to me for a few minutes if you're up here when I get home.

MICKEY

You plan on adding tax to this price as time goes on?

AMELIA

Nope. Conversation. That's it. It's a reasonable price, right? I'd dare say it's a bargain.

MICKEY

Depends what you want to talk about.

AMELIA

I want to talk about whatever you want to talk about. I just want to hear your thoughts. Listen to stories about the city. Your perspective. As a new character in my life.

MICKEY

...

AMELIA

I'm genuinely curious about you.

MICKEY

Going forward. Always name your price up front.

LIGHTS FADE

ACT II

Scene 5

*Mickey is in the attic
listening to Hip Hop and
reading a book. We hear Nas:
"Imagine smoking weed in the*

*streets without cops
harassing."*

AMELIA ENTERS.

MICKEY

Hey. I was just about to bounce.

AMELIA

You don't have to leave the minute I get here.

MICKEY

My mom gave me a copy of your book.

AMELIA

She told me you used to write.

MICKEY

Here and there.

AMELIA

I swear secretly everyone is a writer. But they only admit it when they meet someone who writes professionally.

MICKEY

I didn't "admit" anything.

AMELIA

I'd love to read your voice.

MICKEY

So you can steal it? Relax.

AMELIA

Did you read my book? It's short stories told through the eyes of Black cowboys in the Old West. I did a ton of research. Parsed through pages and pages of untold history. There were

some ripples of pushback in blogs or whatever. I just find it interesting that anyone who wants to write white can do so, but the minute someone wants to use their art to enter the psyche of others--

MICKEY

Girl, no one *wants* to be white.

AMELIA

The entire history of this country is literally immigrants moving towards whiteness.

MICKEY

No one wants to go through life deaf, dumb, and blind. You really think we give a fuck about white opinions, white manners, white conversation? People want access--permission to Pass Go and grab a Get out of jail free card. Y'all just control the board.

AMELIA

I'm a woman. A queer Latina woman. I do not control the board. I promise.

Which...speaking of control...can you give me your perspective on something? Like advice?

MICKEY

Maybe.

AMELIA

Ok so--There's this guy I know from the dispensary I work at. And he's cool. Married. Hella buddy-buddy vibe--

MICKEY

Your homeboy?

AMELIA

It's friendly. Mostly Giants and Warriors talk. Plus he helped my friends sell their house. Some of the things he says are pretty wild. I might base a character on him in this new novella I'm sketching--

MICKEY

Yeah, and?

AMELIA

Annnnd, the dispensary recently started beta testing delivery service. Soooo I end up delivering to dude's house...why does he have a hot ass wife?

MICKEY

You fucked her?

AMELIA

No! But...I think she's feeling me.

MICKEY

She's bi?

AMELIA

That's the vibe I caught. She dated a Black dude in college.

MICKEY

How you know?

AMELIA

She told me. Said he was a DJ.

MICKEY

So because she dated a Black dude, you figure the gate is wide open?

AMELIA

No, it was a vibe. She was giving me signals. Like she wanted to let me dominate the situation. What do you think I should do?

MICKEY

You should stop sniffing after the next man's wife.

AMELIA

There was a current between us. You ever almost been pulled out by undertow at the beach? It was *that* strong.

MICKEY

All this from a hand off at the door?

AMELIA

I got inside. Had to use the bathroom. It was a way in. Twas the writer in me--I wanted to peek around her medicine cabinet, take a look under the hood.

MICKEY

What'd you learn?

AMELIA

Not much. It was a guest bathroom. The time in minutes was quick but super intense. Electric!

Now I keep thinking about her. I feel like I could give her amazing orgasms. Help her relax a little.

MICKEY

That's scand'lous.

AMELIA

That's spark. Magnetism.

MICKEY

If a married woman is sniffing around, it's because she needs attention. So of course she'll lick the plate clean if you serving it up. But sooner or later she'll tuck right back under her husband's wing. Especially if he got money. That's just how the game go.

(A few beats of Amelia awkwardly deciding whether or not to share more of her story.)

AMELIA

Ok, but...there's more.

MICKY

Of course there is.

AMELIA

I popped back up at her house a second time. Because there was a mix up or whatever. Annnnd- I told her I was Japanese. Part Japanese.

MICKY

For what?

AMELIA

I wanted to feel connected to her. I thought she was part Japanese.

MICKY

She's not?

AMELIA

No. She's like Filipino and something else.

MICKY

But you ain't even Japanese. You lied for nothing?

AMELIA

I'm still figuring out the angle-

MICKY

Hold up, are you lying to me too?

AMELIA

Uhh, no?

MICKEY

Telling me your grandpa's from Peru on some fake--

AMELIA

You're not even making sense. If I'm sharing my lie with you, of course I'm telling you the truth. I'm admitting the untruth because I trust you.

MICKEY

I don't trust you.

AMELIA

Don't be like that. So what, I lied to some chick about what I'm mixed with--That's what mixed people do: Lie in search of truth! Don't even front--we're an ambiguous, camouflaging, storytelling species. I know you know what I'm talking about.

MICKEY

Maybe.

There were always a couple round the way girls claiming to be mixed with Egyptian and Tahitian Treat, on some fake "Exotic" tip. Knowing damn well, they had a straight-out-the-Army St-projects Irish mama and a light-skinned Valencia Gardens daddy. But you ain't even mixed like that.

AMELIA

I'm definitely mixed. Or as I like to say: Multi-Culti.

MICKEY

You a pinky toe's worth of mixed.

AMELIA

I'm as mixed as Frida Kahlo.

MICKEY

Well you move white. There's plenty of white-mixed people, white-Black people, and white-Brown. The cops who blasted on Baraka were Chinese and Mexican. White ain't got shit to do with skin color. Not really. Not how they say it do.

AMELIA

Why do you prefer saying Army St instead of Cesar Chavez St.?

MICKEY

I don't "prefer" anything. That's how I remember it so that's what comes out my mouth.

AMELIA

"Army" is so oppressive. I would think you'd want to honor Cesar Chavez.

MICKEY

I'm not Mexican.

AMELIA

I know, I'm just meant--

MICKEY

What are you doing?

AMELIA

I'm not doing anything.

MICKEY

What are you doing here?

AMELIA

Living my life! Is that allowed? I'm not hurting anyone.

MICKEY

Living your life wherever you please.

AMELIA

Yes, we're all free to make choices in life.

MICKEY

A lot of violence is required for you to live so carefree.

AMELIA

Were you not given choices, Mickey? Not even at your fancy private school? I don't buy that.

MICKEY

Could me and ten thousand others like me follow our destiny into the neighborhood you grew up in?

AMELIA

If you had the money?

MICKEY

Yes, we have the money.

AMELIA

Is the money legal?

MICKEY

...

AMELIA

I don't know. Maybe there'd be some initial tension but--

MICKEY

You. fucking. know.

AMELIA

...

MICKEY

Shit like that ought to concern you. Occupy your thoughts from time to time when you're running out on a foggy afternoon to grab a burrito or a six-pack, in your T-shirt and flip flops.

AMELIA

I'm from here!

MICKEY

You're from wherever the fuck you want to be--that's the equation at hand. I mean, you're a writer--Your gift is to observe the world around you, right? So how you miss all the systems, and structures, and historical shit yo? How you up on ecology, recology, kombucha, organic, vegan-local sourced whatever the fuck, yet you're blind to what has gone down in this city?

AMELIA

But I'm not any of those things.

MICKEY

You don't have kombucha in your mini-fridge?

AMELIA

I validate your frustrations and your truth, but I'm not the "you" that you think I am.

MICKEY

You validate? Who are you to stamp me worthy of validation?

AMELIA

I honor. I meant to say honor, not validate.

MICKEY

I don't care what you *honor* or *validate* or *think*.

AMELIA

You do though. We wouldn't be having this conversation otherwise. No disrespect. But you do care. In a way. Right?

MICKEY

Nah. Pointing it out and caring are two different things.

AMELIA

Race is all bullshit--that's all I'm trying to get across. It's like, forget history! Let's just put it down and move on. Everything we've been taught is basically a lie. I'm just ready for the tension to be gone. (*long pause*)
...Have you been going in my mini-fridge? It's totally cool if you did. I never *technically* asked you not to. So. It's fine. I'd just prefer that you ask first.

MICKEY

...

AMELIA

You haven't been on my bed though, right? That was the one boundary I did put in place.

MICKEY EXITS
LIGHTS FADE

ACT II

Scene 6

House on Gates St.

*Amelia and Marla are in the
living room.*

AMELIA

I'm telling you, Ms. Marla : Cannabis is the new cotton. It's the new papyrus. It's the miracle fiber for our times!

MARLA

Really? All of that?

AMELIA

Just wait until it becomes completely legal in a few years. There'll be cannabis cafes and coffee shops, cannabis spas, cannabis bakeries, cannabis pet food, cannabis yoga, cannabis weddings--like literally anything you can imagine! A whole new world is on the cusp of being born.

MARLA

It's happening so fast. Almost doesn't seem real.

MICKEY ENTERS. She's
slightly inebriated and
wears sunglasses.

MARLA (to Mickey)

Where you been?

MICKEY

Out. And about.

MARLA

MmmHmm. You been drinking?

*(The house phone rings. Marla answers
the phone and motions that she's going
to take the call in the other room.)*

AMELIA

I'm glad to see you.

MICKEY

...

AMELIA

Why'd you stop coming up to the attic?

MICKEY

Wasn't comfortable. Felt like I was being watched.

AMELIA

Anything I could do to help you feel more comfortable up there?

MICKEY

What do you want from me? More advice?

AMELIA

Well...There have been developments. In the situation I told you about.

MICKEY

The one I already told you to pull back from?

AMELIA

Yeah. Sooo, I've been hanging out with the wife. A lot of kissing and talking. She loves to talk. And I honestly enjoy listening. There's something real high school about the whole situation, but I'm not trying to pressure her.

MICKEY

And?

AMELIA

Well...Mateo, the husband, he popped up unexpected and found us on the couch, just talking but...our body language was kinda loose. And he started acting weird and telling stories that didn't make sense. It was threatening in a way- like I felt threatened, but he didn't say anything to threaten me, exactly.

MICKEY

Maybe you felt guilty. Your guilt was the threat.

AMELIA

No, no it was definitely more than that. Then he invited me to this BBQ at their house. He kept stressing that I had to go. And I definitely do not want to go. So. I don't know what to do.

MICKEY

He's testing you, fool. You gotta go. If you don't, he'll know you've been fucking around with his wife.

AMELIA

But he lies to her. He doesn't really want the things she wants.

MICKEY

Everyone in a relationship lies. They're just lying about different things.

MARLA ENTERS

MARLA

Now. Back to the real deal- How do I get in on this cannabis boom? I'm trying to invest early and be part of this new world too!

MICKEY

Pshh. You selling her the dream that new means forward?

AMELIA

Doesn't it? Music, movies, fashion- all moved forward in your absence.

MICKEY

So my old is your new? Cuz cannabis ain't new. If anything it's ancient.

AMELIA

No, I'm saying that ultimately there is no me or you. Only time. I'm speaking purely of time.

MICKEY

You come in and reclaim everything as "New:" New York, New England,
New Mexico, New Mission, The New World. But it wasn't that. It was
never that.
And your *New* exterminates and devours our *Old*. Which was never
even *Old* necessarily, just Ours.
Our way becomes the *old* way and disappears under the weight of
your *New*--which is not *new* at all just a repeat of your *Old*. Yet
your *Old* is always *New*.

MARLA

Relax, Mickey.

MICKEY

Marijuana is the same plant it always was, but now that white people are ready to get paid--it's suddenly baptized clean and clear?

We know what it is, what it was, and where it's going. A repetition- and guess who's gonna come out on top, controlling the board again.

AMELIA

But you don't know that. The entire industry is literally wide open--and it's not even legal yet! There's no way you can say for certain what will happen. There's talk of cannabis equity programs, marijuana convictions could be expunged, sentences commuted--

MICKEY

You ain't selling me no fake dream, bitch-

(to MARLA)

Why'd you let this ol' missionary-pioneer-homesteader ass hoe in here? She's a plague upon this house! An infestation! Why'd you let her in?

MARLA

I want you to calm down. Take a couple of breaths.

*(Amelia motions that
she's excusing herself
and EXITS)*

MICKEY (distraught)

You hated Baraka for selling weed! Hated him!

But my man was a healer too. He made people laugh so hard they fell over in tears. Real tears! He was a good dude. Solid.

And not her, or anybody else working in a "weed dispensary" is better than him. More deserving of life. Or freedom. Or success. Cops pumped lead all through his body, but she gets a name tag?! She gets deliveries, and cash registers, and menus- But I get jail? Nah.

...And why are they so comfortable? They stay comfortable.
Anywhere they go. How?!
Everyone's pretending not to know what road we traveling down,
but it's the same road! A loop! There is no Before & After for
people who look like us---only Before & Over.

MARLA

Nothing is over...nothing is over. Why can't I get you to see
that?

(pause)

You miss your dog? Is that it? Why don't we go pick up Cortland
and bring him home?

MICKEY

...I can't.

MARLA

Why not? I'll drive you out there right now.

*(AMELIA ENTERS as though she forgot something.
She hovers undetected at the edge of the room.
She is not so much spying as waiting for a moment
to retrieve her item without causing a total
disruption.)*

MICKEY

It was a sign.

MARLA

What was a sign?

MICKEY

A while back...I took him for a walk up on the hill. Late night.
And as we passed by these bushes, I seen a redheaded chick with
her tits out. And there was a dude on his knees up under her
skirt. So I go to grab Cortland's collar because the bitch is

moaning hella loud, and I don't know how a dog might react to that.

Then out of nowhere this growling chicken-chupacabra with all these feathers comes running up on us. And it's dark, so Cortland reacts. Just like trying to protect me or whatever. I couldn't really see what was going on but I could hear that it wasn't good. And when I looked back at the couple, they're fully fucking against the

MICKEY (CONT)

tree--oblivious. But I already knew people would try to make us the aggressor in this situation--Pitbulls are always the bad guy.

So I grab Cortland's collar and we take off running.

MARLA

And then?

MICKEY

We didn't stop running until we got home. That's when I noticed that Cortland was holding something in his mouth.

...It was piece of the chicken-rat. But the chicken-rat had a foot like a dog. I guess it was like a chihuahua, I don't know. I panicked. And I dumped it in the blender to hide the evidence.

MARLA

Lord, today.

(AMELIA EXITS)

MICKEY

I been seeing Lost Dog flyers around the hill so...yeah. It was a sign. There's no new beginning for me.

MARLA

Come here.

Don't look like that. Don't you dare give up. That wasn't a sign.

It wasn't no sign at all.

LIGHTS FADE

ACT II
Scene 7
House on Gates St.

*Marla's in the living room
reading the paper.*

MARLA (calls out)

Mickey!...Mickey!

Come look at this article. It's talking about re-creation.
Marijuana re-creation. That could be a sign. A sign that you can
recreate yourself too.

*MICKEY ENTERS. She wears a
dress and makeup. Her hair is
done in a femme style.*

MICKEY

Recreation, Ma. Like recreational. For fun.

*Marla turns around and
sees Mickey.*

MARLA

Oh.

MICKEY

I thought it was only right that you get a chance to say goodbye
to Her. The one you remember.

*Marla is overcome by a sense
of fear and panic. She wants
to protect her daughter from
the violence of the past.*

MARLA

You don't have to do this for me. Not for me.

MICKEY

It's a funeral, I guess. Or a time machine? You never got a
proper goodbye. I want to give you that. Give us that.

*Marla crosses over to
embrace Mickey. She is
overcome as she goes to kiss
Mickey's cheeks and the
palms of each hand.*

MARLA

You're so beautiful my sweet, Michaela.
I missed you...Your voice, your beauty, your grace.
...And I'm so happy to have you home. Just as you are.
Alive. Free.
I know the danger. The price of this...softness. The tax of it.
I get it.

*We hear a hard knocking at
the door. Then: "Police.
Please open the door."
More knocking.
"We'd like to ask Michaela
Malveaux a couple of
questions"
More knocking.*

MARLA

No. No. No. Shh. Shh. Shh.

*Marla panics. The lights change to
reflect said panic. She performs
an eerie repetitive motion of
tiptoeing towards the door and
then tiptoeing back toward Mickey.*

*Mickey falls into a spiritual
laughter that cracks into tears.*

MICKEY (crying)

I can't...I can't.

I'm letting go...I'm letting go.

MARLA (tiptoeing)

No, no, no, no, no. Shhh. Jesus take the wheel. Jesus take the wheel.

We hear music that brings to mind carnival rides at a fairground, paired with strobe lighting. Marla continues her eerie repetitive movement as Mickey comes undone. The effect should be one of madness, if not horror.

BLACK OUT

ACT II

Scene 8

The Interview.

Spotlight on Amelia.
She's seated in front of
a microphone. She's
being interviewed on
KALW about her new
novella.

The INTERVIEWER is a
voiceover.

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)

You're listening to Cross Currents from KALW news:
Author Amelia Vidal was born and raised in San Francisco, which
means she's seen a lot of change in her hometown over the years.
Those changes, and her thoughts about what it means to be a
Californian, historically speaking, show up a lot in her work.
Her new novella, "Recreational" tackles the question of just who
exactly does San Francisco belongs to?
Thank you for joining us, Amelia.

AMELIA

My pleasure.

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)

Your new novella is quite a departure, style-wise, from your
previous work. You took a risk and that risk seems to have paid
off. Can you talk a little about your process, and this new
genre you're calling: "Meta Creative Nonfiction."

AMELIA

It was definitely a risk! You have no idea. But in some ways
it's always a risk to write about the people in your life. There
was a lot of drama, and threats, and chaos. I had to own up to
my part in sharing stories that I misheard and relayed
incorrectly. No one got harmed, or arrested, or divorced.
If anything, I was the one most inconvenienced--I had to
hightail it out of town and go work on a cannabis farm out in

Reno until certain tempers cooled. But in the end everything worked out because every experience was vital in the context of the work itself. I may never be allowed back in Bernal Heights again though. *(laughs)* No, I'm kidding. Everything is all good, all goddess.

INTERVIEWER (V.O.)

Well joking aside, you actually did have to move out of the City recently due to rising rents. Can you talk a little bit about your experience as one of the many artists being priced out of the City by the tech industry?

AMELIA

It might sound odd, but I have to say that I don't resent technology. I don't resent the internet or anyone who moves here to work on this innovative creation that my city invented. Yes, San Francisco has pushed a lot of artists and creatives out, but I'm proud of our city for once again leading the way for the rest of the country in terms of culture and forward thinking. I'm someone who'd rather do my best to contribute to the legacy of San Francisco than be angry all the time as some political identity.

I'm not a political artist. I'm just not. I choose to focus on observing "change" rather than judging it. And I say that as someone who has been pushed out.

My partner and I are now across the Bay in West Oakland in a lovely Victorian-- and like, you wouldn't believe the detailed woodwork in some of the older homes out there, plus our yard is huge! It's insane. But anyway all that is to say, this isn't just some theory--I actually live it. I walk it like I talk it when it comes to promoting positive vibes. And I can honestly say that I'm thankful for everything my sweet SF has given me. I owe this place something-- WE owe this place something-- and I just wish more people would keep that in mind.

We aren't entitled to anything! If you weren't smart enough to buy property and own a piece of it...then that's a conversation between you and your reflection in the mirror. So yes, I'm going quietly and proudly out into the Oakland wilds...It's the least

I can do for this city that shaped me; this wonderful city we
call: Saint Francis.

*The lighting changes to a
saturated exaggeration of
California sunshine. We hear the
sound of some super white
old-timey song about San Francisco
or California. Amelia pulls out
American Spirit tobacco and rolls
a cigarette. The light begins to
fade.*

END OF PLAY