

Unpacking Shakespeare: My Latina Experience With The Bard– A Journey To
Understanding And Acceptance

by
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DEDICATION

The Latino theatre-makers that will take this journey long after I am gone, that may feel undervalued, othered, out-of-place and/or erased. I write this for you. To say I see you. I hear you. You exist. Your story and experience and voice matter. You belong.

Now go kick some ass and take no shit.

AND...

My sweet and spirited daughter Izzy. If it wasn't for you, I would never had gone on this journey to discover my roots and find my identity so I could be the best mommy possible to you. I do this all for you. To show you that your mama had courage and never gave up.

AND...

My ancestors and parents who fought, sacrificed, persevered so that I could be here today.

EPIGRAPH

For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. Racism and homophobia are real conditions of all our lives in this place and time. I urge each one of us here to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives here. See whose face it wears. Then the personal as the political can begin to illuminate all our choices.

-Audre Lorde

We have to know the road if we're going to walk back down it and dismantle the systems that led us to trauma.

-Brene Brown

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a critical autoethnography that examines my journey with Shakespeare and the impact his work and idolization has had on me as a Latine theatre artists, as well as the importance of the representation of the Latine community in the current theatre industry through the lens of a Latine Shakespearean adaption. Latine playwrights and theatre artists must overcome the standards set and maintained by an institution with little insight into their culture. With recent societal paradigm shifts and the call to action for more diverse narratives, do we need Latine Shakespearean adaptations to keep Latine theatre moving forward? I have structured this project with lived and embodied experiences, interviews, and explored the politics for Latine artists in a predominately White institution. Lastly, I have examined *El Henry* by Herbert Siguenza, an adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Henry IV Part I*, and personalized it to the Houston, TX LatinX community, specifically the Tejano, experience.

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Figure 1: Introduction
Graphic Design by Greg Dean

Introduction: Why Autoethnography

I am not an academic. I know it may sound silly to declare but it is important to me and to this thesis that I do.

I have always struggled in school. In elementary school, I received low scores in reading comprehension on the TAAS Test, the early 90s equivalent to the STAAR Test. They encouraged my mother to enroll me in an afterschool program that met once a week until we were tested again. I was in third grade, but a fifth-grade language arts teacher tutored me in this program. I don't remember her name, but she was tall with long brown frizzy hair and wore glasses. I loved going to her classroom. She was in the corner of the fifth-grade block of classrooms in a separate room with an actual door (I mention this because none of the other teachers had doors to their classrooms). Her classroom was cozy with books and posters and pillows and tchotchkes all over and a giant round window that looked onto the playground and surrounding neighborhood. None of the other classrooms had windows and she used the natural light to brighten the space. When I think back to her room, I wonder how she was able to score such a sweet set up in an otherwise generic office-feeling-type building. I'm sharing this memory because this was a turning point in my education. I honestly don't know what I was doing before this. I remember getting good conduct marks with the exception of the "she talks A LOT" or "she's quite chatty" comments and my grades were decent for, you know, a second grader. But this was the first time I remember learning. Not struggling to accomplish tasks, but really learning. We would meet for two hours after school every Wednesday, and she would walk us through reading comprehension prompts, and reward us with treats and prizes. I got a plastic, yellow Batman binder that I had for a long time after. It

made me feel pretty cool taking home one of the bigger prizes. When we were done with our prompts, she would read to us before our parents came to pick us up. She introduced us to the *Polar Express*, *Jumanji*, *The Stranger* and *Zathura*. I now see she must have had a thing for books by Chris Van Allsburg but at the time I was just blown away by the stories, their darkness, the illustrations, and the artistry. I hadn't been introduced to these books in the third grade, and it made me feel like I was privy to some really cool fifth-grade secret. I knew what to expect once I got to fifth grade. The last few weeks we were with her, she introduced us to another book by Allsburg called *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick*; a book filled with beautiful black and white illustrations with a title and a single line of text per illustration. Once she read through it she gave us all a sheet of loose leaf paper and encouraged us to pick an image and create our own story. It was the first time a teacher had asked me to imagine something and to write it down. Before then I had only written about a weekend with my parents or a story we had read in class or a list to Santa. This was the first time, I can remember, being asked to use my imagination for a school assignment. Of course, being me, I was unable to decide what image I wanted to elaborate on. I wanted to dream on all of them, but we only had time to write about one. To be honest, I can't remember the one that I picked. I just know the assignment moved me. I went on to pass the TAAS with an improved reading comprehension score. This showed my mom that the extra tutoring made a difference. From that point on, she enrolled me in summer school even when I had pretty decent grades. I think she did this for fear of me falling behind. Any class I didn't have an A in, I took additional classes in over the summer. There was a lot of math in my childhood seeing that I'm not the best at it. This went all the way into high school, taking computer science and tennis over the

summer so I could get ahead on my credits. Getting ahead, however, allowed me to take dance and theatre throughout the school year.

Taking these extra classes didn't make me any smarter. I wasn't suddenly a math whiz or phenomenal tennis player because I took it every summer for three years, I still am a terrible tennis player, but it kept my mind and body going and exposed me to an array of different teaching styles. Looking back, it also signaled to me that something wasn't quite right with my education. The education system was not compatible with the way I learned or processed information. It's not that I wasn't smart – but I didn't thrive in a cultural where it was the grade was praised but the actual learning and journey that got me there. I spent my childhood thinking I was stupid and just needed to work harder to not be stupid. I was aware of the struggle to comprehend. Education has always been a point of insecurity for me. I don't always ask for help, instead I push through and spend extra time trying to grasp the content. Sometimes I excelled and sometimes I came up short. It took me over ten years to complete my undergraduate degree. I spent the first few years figuring out how to attend college, juggle four to five classes at a time, and navigate all the paperwork and applications they throw your way just to be able to register for classes and get financial aid. Even with AP classes in high school, I was still not prepared for the workload or the amount of reading and writing assignments. I did the same thing as I did before. I pushed through. I taught myself what I didn't get from my professors, spending a crazy number of hours in the library until I burned myself out and decided to take some time off. I did this off and on for years while trying on new majors because I wasn't sure where I fit. I wasn't sure what I was supposed to do. I also felt embarrassed pursuing art and theatre when I was told consistently my career in either

would amount to me being a poor, struggling artist. So, I majored in psychology, fashion, and early childhood education because I needed to make a career out of whatever I studied. I needed to make money. Something I haven't mentioned yet was that although my parents were adamant about good grades in primary and secondary school, when it came to college, my parents really didn't push me to attend. They preferred that I get a full-time job, pay my bills and move out on my own. They valued my immediate entry into the work force over earning a degree from a university. I don't blame them for this. It's what they knew and what had been passed down in my Mexican American family, putting food on the table was more important than getting an education. Survival trumped advancement. But I wanted more. But I had no idea what "more" meant to me.

In 2008, I read *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert. This book made me realize I was not happy juggling a 40+ hour a week retail job in Manhattan with trying to pursue an education and career that would be more than a job. In the book, Elizabeth finds herself on the bathroom floor crying her eyes out while her husband slept. While, I wasn't crying about my husband or our marriage, I was thinking about my unhappiness with my journey thus far, and it made me weep. I was tired and confused and didn't want to do the grind anymore. We eventually made our way back to Houston and I enrolled full-time at the University of Houston. Here, I found my way back to theatre, and I completed a BFA in Acting from the University of Houston. A series of events after graduation led me to return back to school to pursue a Master of Arts in Theatre Studies.

Upon entering grad school, I immediately noticed that I struggled with the assigned reading and the writing assignments. It was like primary and secondary school over again. I didn't always comprehend what the readings were saying, and it would take

me hours to get through just a few of the assigned 100+ pages of academic articles and texts. I really struggled. I was left feeling quite inferior and considered not continuing just after a few months. Recognizing my struggles with the readings and assignments for class, my professor encouraged me to investigate the autoethnography method for writing my required papers for his class. I had never heard of it and there weren't a whole lot of books and websites dedicated to that type of researching and writing. I settled on a book titled *Autoethnography: Understanding Qualitative Research* by Tony E. Adams, Stacy Holman Jones, and Carolyn Ellis. Along with the autoethnographical method he recommended, I read *Young Gifted and Fat: An Autoethnography of Size, Sexuality, and Privilege* by Sharrell D. Lockett. Both of these books changed my thoughts about academic writing and my research style. I don't think I would have continued graduate school if I had not been introduced to this method and this book.

In *Autoethnography*, Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis define autoethnographies as “stories of/about the self-told through the lens of culture. Autoethnographic stories are artistic and analytic demonstrations of how we come to know, name, and interpret personal and cultural experience...we use our experiences to engage ourselves, others, culture(s), politics, and social research.”¹ This method focuses on:

- The Researcher's “personal experience to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences.”
- “Acknowledges and values a researcher's relationship with others.”

¹ Adams, Holman Jones, and Ellis, *Autoethnography*, 1.

- “Uses deep and careful self-reflection - typically referred to as ‘reflexivity’ - to name and interrogate the intersections between self and society, the particular and the general, the personal and the political.”
- “Shows ‘people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles.’”
- “Balances intellectual and methodological rigor, emotion, and creativity.”
- “Strives for social justice and to make life better.”²

Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis list several reasons to do autoethnography “critique, make contributions to and/or extend existing research and theory; to embrace vulnerability as a way to understand emotions and improve social life; to dispute taboos, break silences; and claim lost disregarded voices, and make research accessible to multiple audiences.”³

Autoethnography as a method helped to fill the gaps between my experience as a Latina and the academic system built for cis White men. Autoethnography provides a method for documenting and analyzing my place in the White-dominated areas of academia and theatre that would allow me to work on my terms and not analyze myself through various lenses that are determined to “other” me. So much of my education had been void of the Latine community and their accomplishments. Without representation you can be left feeling invisible and unvalued. Most of my research over the last few years has been based on my own personal discoveries as a Latina, familiarizing myself with LatinX theatrical works, the Chicano movement, LatinX parenting methods and Texas history without erasing the atrocities done to the indigenous peoples and Tejano

² Adams, Holman Jones, and Ellis, *Autoethnography*, 1-2.

³ Adams, Holman Jones, and Ellis, *Autoethnography*, 36.

residents. With so much surrounding the Brown experience in America I needed a method free of the White gaze and colonial values.

Sharrell D. Luckett goes a step further and describes how autoethnography can aid an artist of color. In *YoungGiftedandFat*, Luckett says that autoethnography “proves to be a methodology that embraces interdisciplinarity, while simultaneously supporting critical aspects of my identity as an actress and artist whose work is steeped in activism.”⁴ She also points out how autoethnography “parallels the critical auto-narratives and storytelling in the Black community”⁵ because most of the storytelling was shared “orally because of a denial of basic human rights”⁶ and “still serves as essential modes of survival in the Black community.”⁷ Having relatives that couldn’t read or write, I remember them being avid storytellers with a flair for exaggeration – though they would never agree with that observation. So much of my family history has been passed down through stories – photographs are few and journals and letters are non-existent. Luckett shared that she “immediately recognized and gravitated towards the value of the methodology because of my heritage.”⁸ I feel the same. I’m a talker, a natural storyteller but I’ve always had trouble putting thoughts down on paper. Luckett encouraged me to incorporate storytelling into my research process and start journaling my research. When I doubted if I could make my scrambled narratives and memories work in the form of a thesis, I looked to a quote Luckett shares from author and activist bell hooks:

⁴ Luckett, *YoungGiftedandFat*, 12.

⁵ Luckett, *YoungGiftedandFat*, 12.

⁶ Luckett, *YoungGiftedandFat*, 14.

⁷ Luckett, *YoungGiftedandFat*, 14.

⁸ Luckett, *YoungGiftedandFat*, 13.

“From times of slavery to the present day, the act of claiming voice, of asserting both one’s right to speak as well as saying what one wants to say, has been a challenge to those forms of domestic colonization that seek to over-determine the speech of those who are exploited and/or oppressed.”

With Latine studies and scholarship only gaining interest since the 1970s, I feel a bit of shame and guilt for not contributing a traditional article and research to add to our very small section of the library. But I know this has to be in my voice. I have to unpack all that is still uncertain to me. My hope is that through this examination, others will feel compelled to tell their stories which will widen the lens and show the diversity of our community. Luckett shares “Because of my lived experience in a marginalized body, from a young age, I have understood the importance of valuing difference and epistemological diversity.”⁹ She put words to a feeling I’ve carried with me my whole life. The feeling of not having the words or the courage to share your own thoughts, your own stories due to fear of what...failure? Shame? I’ve been silent and complacent for so long. It’s important to honor one’s own voice and lived experiences because if we do not then who will. This method also allows me to explore outside of the structures and forms of traditional academia and to, for lack of a better word and in relation to their standards, be messy. Autoethnography allows my individuality and complexities to exist not as substandard, but rather as perfection--not only make sense but to shine. As an artist, the ability to color outside the lines and view my life and art from a non-white, non-colonial gaze is imperative because the road to creation and discovery is not always a straight and

⁹ Luckett, *Young Gifted and Fat*, 13.

clean path. It's even more important to point out that this method is ideal for artists whose work is entwined with activism by allowing for the personal to be political.

I recently read an anthology of stories called *You Are Your Best Thing* by Tarana Burke and Brene Brown. In the introduction they reiterate the importance of lived experiences. By sharing our stories and being vulnerable in this method, we are able to combine research with compassion. Vulnerability. Although dangerous because it can bring us more harm, necessary because it is the “foundation of courage and the birthplace of love and joy and trust.”¹⁰ This method also illustrated how experiences are vastly different. That true and authentic anti-racist work can only be accomplished when you experience BIPOC humanity and unfortunately that can only be accomplished by those of us from the global majority sharing our lived experiences. It's not enough to know something intellectually—you have to feel it.

The point of all this is to say, this will not be your typical thesis because I am not a typical academic. This is a guide to how I was introduced, learned, and eventually taught Shakespeare. It illustrates me feeling inadequate in traditional theatrical spaces because I struggled with his text which led me to not idolize him like many of my peers but grow with anxiety at the mere mention of his name. It will also explore my journey navigating the Latine Theatre movement and weighing the importance of playwrights like Shakespeare, Chekov and Ibsen as we move to create and uplift our cultures and voices in this predominately White industry. It will unpack the impact of classical adaptations of Euro-centric work and whether they are important to continue to move the Latine theatre community forward. Do we need the classics in order to exist and thrive in the theatre

¹⁰ Brown, Burke, *You Are Your Best Thing*, XVII.

world? It will also explore adapting a Herbert Siguenza's Chicano *El Henry* to a Tejano adaptation, which allows me to play within Shakespeare's structure without having to take on the text just yet. Although I struggle with Shakespeare, it's important for me to point out, like so many other subjects, I persevered. I taught myself what I didn't understand and I'm a pretty good Shakespeare actress. BUT I am not quite ready to adapt a full-length version of his work and Herbert has been so kind to let me play in the world he created to get my feet wet.

This has not been an easy to explore. I have three years of research and more journal entries than I can keep track of. I have cried, a lot, reliving these moments from my life. I have wanted to quit on multiple occasions. I have changed my mind about what to write countless times, but I always came back to this. If I can just unpack my relationship with Shakespeare, then maybe I can finally feel confident among other theatre professionals. Maybe I can move on, without my worth being attached to something so trivial in the whole scheme of life on this planet. Maybe I can heal the wounds created by a lifetime of feeling I wasn't enough. I know that I am not alone in this. So, "I 'write my life' for you...and me."¹¹

¹¹ Luckett, *Young Gifted and Fat*, 25.

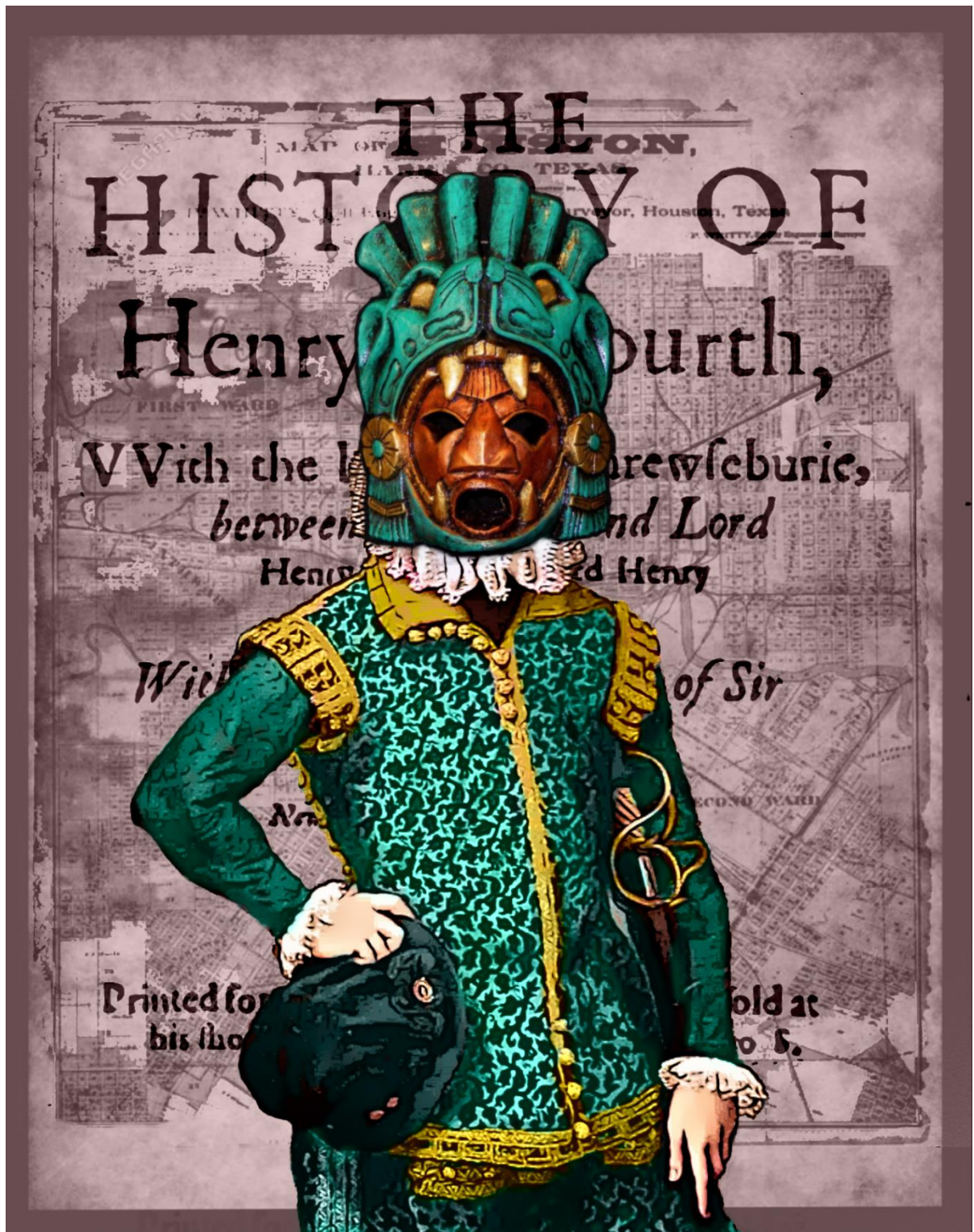


Figure 2: Me and The Bard
Graphic Design by Greg Dean

Chapter 1: Me and the Bard

What can I say? It's a bit of a strained relationship. I am not one who can rattle off Shakespearean quotes at the drop of a hat, knows all the plot lines for each of his plays, or all the inside jokes amongst theatre people. I like Shakespeare. I do. I admire and enjoy his work, but I don't idolize him. I don't worship him. And in this industry, that can make you feel like you're not part of the super cool club.

Before attempting to adapt an adaptation of one of his scripts, I thought it best to understand my relationship with the Bard. When did it start? How have I interacted or been exposed to his work? When did I start to pull away? Why does performing Shakespeare make my stomach turn? And is this relationship important for me to continue to move forward in my theatre career?

First Experience

When I was about nine years old, I remember my sister bringing home the VHS of Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo & Juliet* (1968). She decided to watch this film for her sophomore English class instead of reading the play. I sat down and watched it with her. I didn't understand what was being said. The language was fancy or at least fancier than I was used to. I didn't have a vocabulary beyond my weekly spelling words, 1980s cartoons and the words used in everyday life to communicate my wants and needs. The words the actors were speaking felt special, more special than my ears were ready for. There, of course, was a rhythm but my brain was too immature to quite pick up the pattern and intonations. But I understood the action. I understood the kisses, the fights, the tears, the separation, and heartbreak. The action felt universal. I had seen all of those behaviors before in other movies, shows, and real life. I recognized what they meant. I

remember crying when Romeo and Juliet die in the end. I didn't quite grasp that it was a plan gone wrong. My young mind missed what the exchange with the Friar really meant. But I knew they were dead, and I knew that meant they weren't coming back. My mom always said that death in movies was ok because "they are just acting". But I knew by then that death was forever and that meant those characters would not be coming back. Side note: I was also really into Kevin Costner's *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* and totally loved period costumes (and Christian Slater), so of course I was completely mesmerized by the styles, colors, fabrics, and textures that filled the screen – no wonder I became a costume designer as well.

But my biggest takeaway was young, unrequited love. At the time I had the biggest crush on a Vietnamese boy that lived down the street. I thought he was so cute and cool. He had golden tan skin, red cheeks when he played outside in the Houston heat and black hair in the latest cut. He lived in a white house with blue trim, and his dad had a garden with red roses. My sister had a boyfriend, so I knew about courtship and dating. I remember when I told my sister that I liked Thinh Tran she said my dad would never allow me to have a boyfriend. She was right, of course. My parents had issues with her dating at fourteen and fifteen, so how could I have a boyfriend at NINE. After watching Zeffirrelli's film all I could think was I was Juliet, and he was my Romeo. When I think back at this I laugh because it felt like the end of the world, but it was so silly. I would never allow my daughter to have a boyfriend at nine and hope that she's not even thinking about one at that age. But I was. And he totally knew I had a crush on him because I had whispered it to another neighborhood friend, and she told someone else and eventually it got to one of his friends and they told him. That's how it worked back then.

Almost like the scene where Juliet sends a message to Romeo through her Nurse. He wasn't a complete jerk about it either like other boys his age were. I was so embarrassed at the thought of him knowing but he would just smile at me while playing catch in the street or basketball in someone's driveway while I rode by on my bike or sat and watched them play. We didn't whisper sweet words or profess our love to each other off the side of a balcony, but he gave me a rose from his father's garden and a Christmas gift that year. He was sweet and thoughtful. My sister teased me about the gift and having a boyfriend, even though I didn't, in front of my dad and he got upset and I had to assure him he was just a friend. After that I tried to keep my distance so I wouldn't get scolded again but also out of fear and respect for my mother and father. It broke my little nine-year old heart. We moved away right before my 11th birthday. I told him one day after the school bus dropped us off that we would be moving in a few days. He seemed sad. I was sad. A group of us were walking down the street to our houses. Everyone was around and looking so we couldn't really say goodbye. It reminded me of Romeo being torn away into exile and the lovers not properly being able to say goodbye or be together. I cried when I got to my house. At the time I didn't quite know why, but I now know it was a form of grief, loss. I thought again of *Romeo & Juliet*. The night before we moved, he knocked on our front door and asked if I could come outside to talk. My dad had answered, and I thought he might tell him to go away but instead he told me to make it quick and I could talk by the front door but that I couldn't leave the porch because it was late. I honestly can't remember what he said because I was so worried about my dad watching through the sliver of a window or listening by the door. I just remember he said bye and before he walked away, he gave me a kiss on the cheek. I had never been kissed.

I touched my hot cheek and went back inside. If my dad had heard or seen anything, he never mentioned it. I just went to my room and closed the door and played Brian Adams' (*Everything I Do*) *I Do It for You* cassette over and over again. We moved a few days later and I never saw him again. My parents owned a video store when I was younger, so I grew up watching movies and playing make believe and reenacting what I saw. But this was one of the first times I had seen something that reflected a situation I was in. *Romeo & Juliet* would stay with me because for a brief moment in my life I loved someone (even if it was nine-year-old puppy love) and he seemed to return the affection, but we were unable to be together. I would remember this moment where I identified my own story and heartbreak within Zeffirelli's film. It is the earliest memory I have of recognizing that life was reflected in art and one of the first times I was able to see myself.

High School

I wouldn't revisit Shakespeare until sophomore year of high school. I'm sure I crossed paths with something he wrote or influenced or one of the 1700 words he created but I didn't know the difference. In middle school drama class, we did a lot of scenes and monologues that felt straight out of after school specials. We covered *Romeo & Juliet* in sophomore English, just like my sister did. The introduction to it by my sophomore English teacher was so sterile. She immediately went to the text, assigning us to read it at home for homework and reading the larger scenes as a class. Rarely stopping to explain or ask if we comprehended what we were reading. She sent home or passed out worksheets at the end of each scene and it went on like that until we finished reading the play. I was so jealous of the AP English students who were creating projects with family

trees, character thought processes and journeys, making up raps, and acting out scenes in class with costumes and props. Looking back at my non-AP classes in high school, they always felt so beige like the color of the walls, with terrible lighting, and disjointed. The AP classes always had so much color, posters on the walls, and soft lighting. There was a curated atmosphere for optimal learning. It makes me sad to think about how the system fails so many students because of the lack of effort by some teachers.

I immediately had trouble with the text, again. And when I didn't understand what we were reading, my mind would trail to other thoughts leaving me completely and utterly lost. My sister had used Cliffs Notes, so I went looking for her copy in the garage to get me through my homework. I remember we watched Zeffirelli's film in class once we were done with the Shakespeare unit, fast forwarding through the sexy parts, but I don't remember much from that time except that I knew I was struggling with the content, hadn't absorbed much, which overall just made me feel stupid and ashamed. Looking back and reliving this moment, I see that instead of asking for help or clarification, I retreated. I zoned out. I was too ashamed to ask for help, to let my teacher know that I didn't understand. I wish I could remember how many other Latino students were in the class with me. I wish I could see their faces. I feel their presence in my memory but all I can see are my White and Asian classmates excelling and their smiling faces when they would get good grades on the worksheets. Not stuttering when they read out loud like I did. Not opting out of reading out loud like the Latino and Black classmates did. I wish I would have had the instinct to reach out to them and ask if they understood. If they were struggling as well or if it was just me. It wasn't until later in life when I taught middle school drama and assigned a Shakespeare sonnet for Valentine's

day and asked my eighth grades to read it out loud that I was reminded of my sophomore experience with *Romeo & Juliet*. My Latino students refused to participate, and my Black students thought it didn't make sense. I would end up changing the assignment to accommodate each student instead of pushing them to complete an assignment that didn't seem to fit them. I allowed my Latino students to translate and read it in Spanish if that would help them. For everyone else that was having trouble I suggested they rap, sing, or draw an illustration of what they thought the poem was conveying. When I was a sophomore in high school it never dawned on me that my lack of understanding could be cultural but interacting with my own students and realizing their hesitations and reservations with the text and assignment lead me to take a step back and wonder why certain cultures and communities struggle with something that is supposed to be so universal. What about our cultures makes it so hard for us? What I've learned is there is no one answer but a combination of colonialization, oppression, toxic school systems and cultural biases that hold us back or in place.

Around the same time Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) was released in theatres. I remember my theatre friends flocking to see it. I was a big fan of Leonardo DiCaprio from his *Growing Pains* days and Clair Danes was on *My So-Called Life* and I lived for that show. I didn't get to see it in theaters, but we got it on VHS eventually at the video store. I watched it for the first time with friends and was completely blown away. It was beautiful: the costumes, the concept, the color, the imagery, the guns, the fight scenes, Mercutio, Tybalt. Elements that had never stood out to me in the readings or Zefferilli's version. It was like nothing I had ever seen before. I know there is criticism around the movie today by younger audiences, but when it was first released it was so

fresh and cool. Perfection, with the exception that I still couldn't quite understand all of what was being said, but I didn't have to. Luhrmann's direction, vision, and action were enough for me to follow along and be pulled in. It also had John Leguizamo, and I was hooked on him because of his sketch comedy show on Fox. Not because he was Puerto Rican; at the time I wasn't aware I was in need of representation. I just thought he was really funny and was drawn to him. I watched that movie over and over. Every time I was at a friend's house it was on in the background. Before it had been Tori Amos or Sarah McLachlan but for a time it was William Shakespeare. By this time, I had also been exposed to some terrible University Interscholastic League (UIL), an organization known for administering educational competitions for public primary and secondary schools in the state of Texas, productions of *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It* and *Much Ado About Nothing* and a few others. I was still not able to completely grasp the text, but I followed the action and enjoyed my theatre teacher's criticisms of some of the farfetched concepts, like setting *The Tempest* in Tijuana. My theatre department ended up scheduling a production of *Romeo & Juliet* the fall of my junior year which got everyone excited on the heels of the Luhrmann film. I was assigned a Juliet monologue to prepare for auditions. Looking back, especially after preparing for auditions throughout college and professionally, that seems so weird and unorthodox to be given the monologue to prepare before you're even called back. All the "pretty girls" got Juliet. The chubbier ones got called in for Nurse. The taller, senior girls got called in for Lady Capulet. I just was excited that they would think of me as a Juliet. I remember thinking "they must thin enough to be Juliet." Now it feels icky, like it was a beauty contest, and we were being judged for our looks and not substance.

At the time of the audition, I was struggling with my first AP courses. A lot of my theatre friends took AP classes and were always talking about all the really fun projects they had to do. It felt like they were in a really cool, smart kid club that I hadn't been invited to. When junior year came along, I asked permission from the AP English and History teachers if I could be placed in their classes. I had to retrain my brain to study in a new way. I had never had to read so much on my own and then write papers, summaries, and outlines based on what I read. Before then, I hadn't even needed to take a textbook home; we would read in class and then have homework based on the reading sent home with us. I struggled the first few months in AP History especially. At the time my dad was working out of town as an A/C independent contractor for companies that would install the A/C systems in new developments. My mom often traveled with him. They were traveling to El Paso, Austin, Waco, College Station, Mississippi, and Louisiana. I was alone often. My parents would leave me with money and groceries, and I secured rides to and from school from friends. My sister lived close by, but she worked and had her own child to worry about. I would go home after school or rehearsal and would warm up something to eat and get started on homework. I would spend hours reading and studying. I often fell asleep at the kitchen table on top of my books. I would pop up from my homework, shower and head to school to do it all over again. I was lonely and tired and probably shouldn't have been taking care of myself and the house while juggling school at the age of sixteen. But I was.

When auditions for *Romeo & Juliet* came along, I was not in the best place mentally. I had been assigned Juliet's monologue:

Shall I speak ill of him that is my husband?
Ah, poor my lord, what tongue shall smooth thy name,

When I, thy three-hours wife, have mangled it?
 But, wherefore, villain, didst thou kill my cousin?
 That villain cousin would have kill'd my husband:
 Back, foolish tears, back to your native spring;
 Your tributary drops belong to woe,
 Which you, mistaking, offer up to joy.
 My husband lives, that Tybalt would have slain;
 And Tybalt's dead, that would have slain my husband:
 All this is comfort; wherefore weep I then?
 Some word there was, worser than Tybalt's death,
 That murder'd me: I would forget it fain;
 But, O, it presses to my memory,
 Like damned guilty deeds to sinners' minds:
 'Tybalt is dead, and Romeo banished';
 That 'banished,' that one word 'banished,'
 Hath slain ten thousand Tybalts. Tybalt's death
 Was woe enough, if it had ended there:
 Or, if sour woe delights in fellowship
 And needly will be rank'd with other griefs,
 Why follow'd not, when she said 'Tybalt's dead,'
 Thy father, or thy mother, nay, or both,
 Which modern lamentations might have moved?
 But with a rear-ward following Tybalt's death,
 'Romeo is banished,' to speak that word,
 Is father, mother, Tybalt, Romeo, Juliet,
 All slain, all dead. 'Romeo is banished!'
 There is no end, no limit, measure, bound,
 In that word's death; no words can that woe sound.

They gave us a day to memorize it and prepare. I worked all night on my audition, but I couldn't quite memorize it. We hadn't studied how to act Shakespearean text in any of my high school drama classes. The year before we had gone to the UIL State competition with *Antigone* by Sophocles, but we had never done Shakespeare. I knew nothing about blank verse, iambic pentameter, or rhyming couplets. I just knew that when I saw it in Zeffirelli's and Luhrmann's versions, I cried. I was moved. Being an actress, or at least wanting to be one, and thinking back to all the actresses I had witnessed while watching movies at the video store, I believed I knew what needed to be done. Cliffs Notes told me what I was saying in the monologue. Maybe I didn't know everything

about Shakespeare and his writings, but I knew how to perform, and I knew what I needed to do. I needed to stand out. It didn't occur to me that I should focus on mastery of the text or good rhetoric. I needed theatrics – I had auditioned for Clytemnestra by pouring red paint all over myself and dragging a bloody doll behind me. I lived for spectacle.

Or at least I thought I did. I planned it all out. I found some old white tulle and fashioned it like a wedding dress and a flower crown. When it was my turn, I spread the tulle out around me and placed my script on my lap. I pulled my flower crown down and played and picked it apart while delivering my lines and occasionally glancing at my script. I ripped the tulle on “Hath slain ten thousand Tybalts” and lost my script for a split second. I got nervous, but I remembered what the lines meant (thank you Cliffs Notes) and I kept performing. Maybe not word for word, but I poured my heart out. I remember the tears rolling down my face as I stared into the eyes of the director and the other girls watching. The next day they put up the callback sheet with sides to prepare. I was not on the list. When I asked why I hadn't been called back at all, one of my theatre teachers shared with me that they were really rooting for me to be Juliet, but that I really disappointed them because I was so unprepared. I asked what she meant by unprepared. She told me not only did I not get off-book, but that it was clear that I didn't know iambic pentameter. How was I supposed to know iambic if we had never covered it? When I asked, she didn't have an answer. It must have been assumed that we all had somehow absorbed iambic pentameter through osmosis. Only the AP classes had broken it down for their students. I only knew of it from my Cliffs Notes introduction, but I was still a little fuzzy. Did my theatre teachers assume that we were all in advanced classes and

therefore should know it? They didn't cover it in any of their curriculum, so how could they assume we would just know it? Reflecting back, this assumption is dripping in White supremacy and privilege. How could I know, when for so long Latinos had been held back by the education systems in Texas and Houston. After the Texas Revolution, white settlers started to take over the state and in doing so decided the fate of the Tejanos residents. They declared that we didn't need any education. They stripped away our land, businesses and right to learn and within years most of the Tejanos were poverty stricken, working for the White settlers on the land they previously owned with their children in tow. So, how was I supposed to know when my grandfathers worked their butts off as carpenters and in the Texas cotton fields? But at the time I didn't know any of this and I just felt ashamed and embarrassed and spent a good amount of time crying alone in the girl's restroom to hide from the rest of my friends that were called back. Unprepared? I may not have been completely off book, but I didn't stand there and read from a piece of paper like some of the White girls that were called back. Why was I held to different standards than everyone else? The only other Latino in the department was a guy with fight and dance experience and they said they needed that. I wish I could have seen his audition to see if he had memorized his script. The boys and girls had been separated. Not knowing left me with the feeling of being stupid and unworthy. Why did I have to be perfect when so many others just showed up? This is something that would haunt me for the rest of my life. Watching my White peers roll out of bed, unmemorized and receive praise for the color of their skin and gracing us with their presence. It would be a knife in my heart every time, knowing I had done the work, was prepared but did not possess the attributes or charms of White skin. The feeling that I would always need to be perfectly

prepared, without faults just to be considered ok. This would start a reoccurring chant of “you’re not good enough” in my psyche.

Ultimately, they had forgotten to cast an Apothecary and they gave it to me. I was going to be the best damn Apothecary there was. But my grades started slipping in my AP and Algebra classes, and I decided to sit out from the play all together so I could focus on my classes. That was a hard decision because outside of my theatre friends and rehearsal, I had little to no community. Focusing on homework and school meant sitting alone in my house longer than I liked to. I don’t think I ever recovered from my teacher’s criticism or being left alone by my parents. There were three theatre teachers, and they were all critical and those criticisms became damaging after a while. I was always told how great I was in my acting classes but never took a lead on our mainstage. Looking back, I was a maid, a slut, a waitress, and chorus. I was taking home prizes at state and national competitions but could never get a lead role at my own school even with those perfectly prepared auditions, those went to all my White friends. And I was happy for them, but when was it going to be my chance? The only time I played a lead was when we did *A Chorus Line* because they needed a Latina to play Diana Morales. I couldn’t read music because I hadn’t had any formal training, but I could dance because I took dance for my PE credits. Also, Latinos have rhythm. It’s a fact. Since I couldn’t read music, I had trouble preparing my songs. I got to speak-sing Diana’s solo “Nothing” and “What I Did for Love” went to a better vocalist. I felt myself pull away because I felt inadequate. I went on to be the president of my high school theatre club and acted in a couple of more shows, but the trust wasn’t there like it had been before. Looking back, I was the only Latina in the department. I don’t know if that even matters but it’s

interesting since we were in a part of Houston that was considered the melting pot of the city. After high school I was accepted to NYU to study Acting at Tisch School of the Arts, but my parents couldn't afford it and I didn't want to put them through that. I ended up bouncing around trying to find my way but always hoping deep down that I would make it back to theatre.

Between high school and when I returned to college to pursue my BFA in Acting I saw A LOT of Shakespeare movie adaptations: *Titus Andronicus* by Julie Taymore, *Much Ado About Nothing* with Emma Thompson, *As You Like It* with Bryce Dallas Howard, and *Hamlet* with Ethan Hawke, as well as *10 Things I Hate About You* and *O*, both starring Julia Stiles. There was also *Shakespeare in Love* which gave me a better understanding of the time period and performing in the Elizabethan era. I knew it wasn't a true story, but you must admit it draws a pretty good picture for someone who has little-to-no context. It also made me curious enough to start to seek Shakespeare out, which was a first.

Learning to Act the Bard in College

The summer before I entered the BFA Theatre program at UH, I took a poetry class in the English department. We covered a few of Shakespeare's sonnets, but it left me feeling like I was going to need more text work if I was ever going to act in one of his plays. I was excited to get to work, but training in Shakespeare wouldn't start until my junior year. My freshman year we were asked to prepare a Shakespeare monologue for the spring audition because the department was producing *As You Like It*. I knew there was no way that I would be cast, especially since it was being directed by the department's Shakespeare professor, and she would be able to see through my audition

that I didn't have much Shakespeare training. So, I prepared Beatrice's short "What fire is in mine ears?" monologue from *Much Ado About Nothing* and wasn't surprised when I wasn't called back. I ended up styling wigs for the production and got to watch the actors in rehearsal, and that was good enough for me. I would go on to be the wig master for the Houston Shakespeare Festival for the next four years. Styling wigs and makeup for eight shows, one summer styling over forty wigs for *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Henry IV Part I*. At the time, I was just excited to be part of the productions but today I question my talents and enthusiasm being taken advantage of. I did hair, makeup, and wigs for every production throughout the four years of my BFA as well. Never being compensated or recognized, and with those in power knowing that all I wanted was to be onstage. I was trying to prove my dedication to the art and the department, but it was never enough, and most would never see me as anything but a helpful makeup artist.

When I finally got to junior year, I was nervous about Shakespeare, but I was also excited and ready. I had my *Arden* and lexicons. I had been waiting to dive in, to better understand because I was so ready to play one of the dynamic female characters I had seen in all those movie adaptations. This would end up being one of the most disappointing experiences during my BFA. Even to this day I only remember glimpses of the class because there was so much harm and trauma done from the very beginning.

We spent very little time going over iambic pentameter and how to break down text. It was clear that more than half of our ensemble had done Shakespeare many times in high school before and they were ready to move on to acting. No time needed to be wasted on catching some of us up. That's where the struggle began. There were three of us who had little to no experience with Shakespeare, and we happened to be three women

of color. I don't think this particular professor meant to create the divide that they did or the harm that they caused. After years of exposure and being around Shakespeare fanatics and purists I think it's hard for these groups to be unbiased. At the time, there was only one BIPOC professor and not many BIPOC students so we were the minority and there weren't many we could turn to for help and guidance or to complain or air our grievances. When approaching our Shakespeare professor about the challenges, they would chalk it up to us not rehearsing enough or not being bold with our choices or not doing the work. The three of us got to the point where we stopped speaking up and advocating because it always seemed to change the air in the classroom. The favoritisms created a clique, and we could hear our White ensemble members whispering about not wanting to be partnered with us. I now know that so many actor training methods are biased towards White students (men in particular) and that higher education does not account for issues that arise that only concern those of color because academia is so homogeneously White. Shakespeare would not be the only class that would illustrate this for me. I took ten acting classes during my BFA and workshops and private lessons on the side to supplement what I thought I was lacking, and they all painted the same reality. It's clear now why my White peers were praised while the women of color were treated as inferior. The system is built against us and we will always feel othered and erased when filtered through these lenses and practices. I think it's interesting how White and Euro-centric university curriculum has been. The only Latine play I was required to read *Zoot Suit*. It's discouraging that Shakespeare and whiteness was a must for the BIPOC students, but no White students are expected to know Jose Rivera or Cherrie Moraga or other Latinx playwrights. No wonder so many of us feel so lost, erased and stuck in the

in-between. Or that we're not expected to study The Black Acting Methods, Theatre of the Oppressed, Luis Valdez and other methods of performance. In academia if we don't assimilate, we perish. When I graduated with my BFA and left the program, I was a shell of a human being, not even a whisper of my former self. Joy had left me. I was competitive and performative. I had been performing for all my professors and trying to meet their needs, trying to get top scores on my auditions and good grades that I had no clue who I was authentically.

I think it's hard for them to understand what it's like for a marginalized actor with little formal training with the Bard to grasp what is being asked of them without a little more help, guidance, patience and understanding. I wonder if I and the other girls would have excelled if we had been given the opportunity. How we could have grown differently if we were treated like equals like the rest of the ensemble from the very beginning? At the time there was still a mentality of this is how the industry is, so you better get used to it. The current BIPOC movements of self-advocacy and the demand for more representation and understanding for people of color that may not have the same background and opportunities as White performers hadn't reached us in Houston while I was in undergrad. We were just following the lead of our professors, and I'm sure they were following their professors. The cycle just continued. I hold this experience with grace because for the first time it really showed me the inequities, lack of inclusion, diversity, and accessibility there was for a student like myself not only within the department but as an actress within the industry. It has always been there but this year-long semester with Shakespeare really illustrated it and solidified even more how I didn't have a place within its box. Throughout the rest of the fall semester, we watched the

professor gush and coddle the White students while zooming over our performances and critiques. I remember one student bragging about how they just got off book that morning and hadn't even rehearsed only to take the stage and be applauded for their "best work yet". Or another White student who shared they hadn't rehearsed, and the professor proceeded to take the entire class to work with them while those of us who were scheduled to perform and ready were rescheduled or rushed over with no notes. How blocking and ideas were given to the White students while the three BIPOC women looked on waiting to be nurtured in the same way. The three of us were recycled as scene partners over and over again until I finally spoke up and asked why we hadn't been paired with the rest of the ensemble. As if our mere existence in the scene work would taint the other actor, hold them back, make them look bad. I watched the student with a thick Spanish accent be treated with such a lack of consideration for her talent because she was a little hard to understand. She was held back a semester as if that would somehow erase her natural tongue. In Shakespeare she was constantly asked to repeat herself and was rarely ever given any acting notes. My heart broke for her, but she was always positive, and she persevered. I've learned that Latinas always persevere but that can get tiresome, and we shouldn't be expected to. The systems must change to reduce the harm and trauma done to actresses of color to not only meet the physical expectations of the industry but the expected attributes as well. I always wondered how marvelous she could have been if she was allowed to perform Shakespeare in Spanish. I started to develop an ulcer and dreaded going to class. So, for self-preservation, I found myself slowly shutting down. I became a robot when it came to getting through class. It wasn't

until I was assigned the following *Richard II* monologue that things started to click for me, and my spirits were lifted:

No matter where; of comfort no man speak:
Let's talk of graves, of worms, and epitaphs;
Make dust our paper and with rainy eyes
Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth,
Let's choose executors and talk of wills:
And yet not so, for what can we bequeath
Save our deposed bodies to the ground?
Our lands, our lives and all are Bolingbroke's,
And nothing can we call our own but death
And that small model of the barren earth
Which serves as paste and cover to our bones.
For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings;
How some have been deposed; some slain in war,
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed;
Some poison'd by their wives: some sleeping kill'd;
All murder'd: for within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of a king
Keeps Death his court and there the antic sits,
Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp,
Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
To monarchize, be fear'd and kill with looks,
Infusing him with self and vain conceit,
As if this flesh which walls about our life,
Were brass impregnable, and humour'd thus
Comes at the last and with a little pin
Bores through his castle wall, and farewell king!
Cover your heads and mock not flesh and blood
With solemn reverence: throw away respect,
Tradition, form and ceremonious duty,
For you have but mistook me all this while:
I live with bread like you, feel want,
Taste grief, need friends: subjected thus,
How can you say to me, I am a king?

I remember identifying with the feeling of being not enough, of being abandoned
- something I believed Richard is feeling at this very moment. When I was done
performing this piece and looked at my professor and class, they were stunned. There was

movement in the back of the room, and I watched one of the Masters professors leave the room. My professor was floored asking “where did that come from” and “how did I get there?” I should have felt happy to finally have their praise but instead I felt the sting of the last few months of being treated like I had no value. I later received an email from the visiting professor thanking me for my performance and for allowing them to sit in and be present. They said they had never seen Richard be played “so fragile, so delicate, so vulnerable.” I kept that email as a reminder that I could be all those things and that I deserved to be in the room, someone thought I belonged. I would go on to prepare the Lady Percy monologue “O yet, for God’s sake, go not to these wars.” Once again, I found it; I connected with her on a level I had never connected before and with that came the praise I had been searching for.

But ultimately it was too late. The damage had been done and it was no longer a club I hoped to be part of. Never being assigned or allowed to play the ingénue, I kept her in my back pocket just in case. Years later, I forgave that professor for the ill treatment. It wasn’t easy but it’s important to remember that we are all humans and good people make mistakes and instead of holding it against them it’s best to let them know they hurt you so that it can be acknowledged, and they can hold themselves accountable to change. I didn’t need to carry that weight or harm with me any longer, and now we’re really good friends and each other’s biggest cheerleaders today.

Finally Cast in A Show

After I graduated, a good friend asked me to audition for their community theatre production of *Romeo and Juliet*. I had come full circle. I auditioned and was cast as the Nurse. She was fun! I had always admired the Nurse, but I didn’t feel old enough to play

her. I thought of myself as more of a Lady Capulet, but I took the part and ran with it. I struggled once again to memorize the text but this time I was equipped to break down. I eventually got there but it wasn't my best work going up on line so many times before we opened that I decided to give the Nurse an eating compulsion where every time I forgot my line or got lost, I would take a bite of something so I'd have a moment to figure out where I was and what my next line was. I ended up eating a giant sub sandwich during the party scene, an ice cream cone when I went to talk to Romeo after the balcony scene, and shaved a whole cucumber with my teeth while delivering Romeo's message to Juliet - like literally pulled an entire cucumber out of my apron pocket. I always had some sort of candy to snack on hidden in my bra unless it was one of the more dramatic scenes like when we all think Juliet has died. It was a tick I created to cover up my shortcomings. And low and behold it worked. I got crazy laughs and everyone after the show said how funny I was and how much they enjoyed my performance. But I felt...empty because I knew what they thought was funny was me covering up an imperfection and kind of lying to them. Not my best work. I ended up gaining ten pounds during rehearsal and the run of the show (combined with another show that I did right after *R&J* where I sat and drank beer and ate popcorn in heaven). I vowed to never eat on stage again.

Two years after I graduated, I stopped auditioning for classical and Shakespeare productions because a mentor I love and respect asked, "do you know what you look like?" They weren't wrong. According to industry standards I was not physically a good fit. I was brown, busty and curvy. I trusted them and their opinion. They were trying to be honest with me when I was crying to them about the rejection I was facing and the lack of opportunities. They said, "no matter how stunning of a performer you are, they will never

want someone that looks like you.” It was a feeling I had felt in my gut for a really long time. Shakespeare wasn’t a good fit for me, and I needed to stop turning myself inside out to try to make it happen and be accepted.

Teaching Shakespeare

In the summer on 2018 I applied as a teaching artist for a local theatre. I had just spent a year teaching middle school drama full-time and needed a break from the long hours, workload and public-school bureaucracy. I was also pregnant with my first child and after having a chair thrown at me by a student who didn’t want to do their work and punched in the face trying to break up a fight, I came to the conclusion it just wasn’t for me. My hope was to teach acting or theatre history or movement - things I felt comfortable with. Instead, I was assigned...wait for it...Shakespeare. My first assignment was to teach Shakespeare to middle schoolers. I seriously considered resigning, but I was pregnant and starting grad school and I needed the money. So, I took the assignment. The good news was that the program had Shakespeare curriculum outlines, so I only had to follow the daily schedule and activities. The bad news was that the curriculum was for high schoolers and the theatre had me teaching iambic pentameter on the first day to sixth graders. I thought they had to have test driven it for middle schoolers and wouldn’t have assigned this without knowing it worked. So, I followed the outline that was given to me and I prepared for a week of Shakespeare with middle schoolers at a local magnet school. What I was not prepared for was that most of the students I was teaching had never ever heard of Shakespeare. I started going through the packet I was given, and I could totally see their disinterest and confusion. It was mortifying. I remember being so pregnant and sweating profusely and trying to get them to engage. And then I had to teach an

additional four classes just like that the rest of the day. I left absolutely exhausted, but I knew I could not come back and do the same thing the next day. I needed to rethink the curriculum, trim the fluff, and strategize. The next day I returned with a PowerPoint. It was a Shakespeare appreciation PowerPoint all about the Bard, his accomplishments and where they could find him in modern day/pop culture. Their minds were blown. They had no idea he had invented so many words or that *the Lion King* was inspired by *Hamlet*. We talked about the plots to some of his plays and they got so into me telling the stories, gasping, laughing, and clutching their chests. At no point did I revisit iambic pentameter. It was all about what a cool dude Shakespeare was and that's why they should care to engage with me the rest of the week. The next day I brought drums and we did movement/rhythm exercises while we repeated a line of text. Drawing the words with our fingers and bodies and creating pictures and movement. We went on to play around with lyrics to popular songs by Taylor Swift and Eminem that allowed them to talk through the song lyrics while adding movement, emphasis, and intent. I then explained the reason for the exercise was to illustrate Shakespeare's writing style and how unique it was and that it could be compared to speaking a song that we love, one that had all the feels and emotions but no music to accompany it. It finally clicked for them. I didn't harp on about it. I made sure they could identify that Shakespeare has a particular style and left them with a drawing of iambic pentameter slants and dashes to take with them to their next theatre class or high school English. I marked up a short monologue for them to keep in their journals to reference. The next day we went to the cafeteria and did Shakespeare insults. They got so into it, taking off their earrings and putting hands in faces and having a movement or animation for each diss. It was so much fun watching them pick words

from a list, discover their meanings and string them together to yell at their friends: “you bootless, common-kissing coxcomb!” What absolute nonsense, but they loved it. They had some really crazy ones. I kept the original curriculum in my back pocket for if I was ever assigned Shakespeare for high school students. I went on to teach Shakespeare at ten different middle schools that semester and I did the new curriculum at each one and had similar results. I would hook them immediately and they stayed engaged until the very end. This got me thinking about pedagogy and how we approach more difficult concepts. How do we get students more interested instead of making them feel dumb and causing them to shut down? One of my biggest takeaways was personalizing it, inviting them to be part of the conversation, using their personal experience to guide the activities and lift those that may have trouble so that they don’t feel left behind.

Rediscovering Shakespeare Through Race and Adaptation

Around the same time, I was teaching Shakespeare to middle schoolers, I started grad school. I was pursuing a Master in Theatre Studies, and boy was I not cut out for it. As I mentioned in the introduction, I struggled. My curiosity and passion weren’t enough to carry me through. One of my first classes was Shakespeare and Race. I was not only reading a Shakespeare play every week, but I was also reading articles with different theories about the text on top of the play that complimented or countered the Shakespeare text. Drowning is an understatement. I was buried. No matter how hard I worked or tired, I couldn’t move. Add being pregnant with preeclampsia to the mix and I was ready to walk away and apologize for wasting everyone's time because I was too stupid to grasp the content. Not long after my first few assignments and papers my professor identified my struggle and guided me to finding a way of working that complimented my personal

learning style instead of me dropping out. It was in that same class that I was introduced to *El Henry* by Herbert Siguenza. My professor had served as dramaturg on the original production and had worked alongside Herbert. He had a fondness for the play and playwright, and he shared that with us. This was the first time I had seen Latinos (and a whole bunch of them) embody characters inspired by Shakespeare. It was also the first time I had experienced the Latine culture, specifically Chicanoism, woven into every aspect of a play. At this point, I had never experienced or even seen a play written or performed with a full Latine cast and to know it had been produced and people watched and loved it. It gave me hope. This is when I had started to seek out more LatinX playwrights. *El Henry* blew my mind. I wanted to share it with every Latino I knew. It didn't make me want to do Shakespeare again, but I feel like it gave me permission to take ownership of something I had felt cut out of for so long. It also made me want to take Shakespeare and dissect it even further. Take other classic works and put my saliva all over it. This was also around the time I learned Shakespeare was racist and sexist and pretty problematic through the academic articles we were assigned to read. I know it was the times and it was accepted then, but it made me give side eye to an industry that still idolizes and worships him. I know he was only human and there's comfort in humanity, but it's disappointing to know that there are still a lot of theatres and directors that are Shakespeare purists who leave the racism and sexism in the cut scripts without addressing them or holding conversations around these topics.

In 2019 I created a traveling puppet show with a group of artists as a way to test out the busking laws in Houston. We decided on *Julius Caesar* since the Houston Shakespeare Festival was producing it that same year. Instead of a long puppet show, we

created a ten-minute show, just a nibble, summing up the play and characters. It was complete with puppet action and some of the most famous quotes from *Julius Caesar* woven in. We encouraged audience participation with instruments made out of recycled plastics and kazoos and ribbon for blood being thrown at the puppets from offstage. It was one of the first times I was able to fully produce and manage a production and pay all of my artists. It was great fun, and we received a great reception from everyone that saw it.

And Now

Over the last year I've been working on a community engagement proposal to do theatre with local Latine communities, bring the tools to them and create alongside them. I learned a lot from my experience with middle schoolers and how personalizing the story and seeing themselves within it can make the world of difference. It is a goal of mine to continue to grow future Latine theatre-makers and -goers. I know what theatre and movies did for me growing up and I want to use my privilege and platform to provide the tools for next seven generations to make their own theatre or art or maybe even just self-advocacy. With Herbert Siguenza's permission I've decided to take *El Henry* one step further and personalize it to Houston, specifically the Tejano experience. With this first production, we will create a program called Teatro Comunitario. The goal with *El Henry* is to not only perform it with the community live but to also record it and share the recording with high schools throughout the Houston area accompanied by workshops and Q&As with Herbert and the cast so that the local Latine students can see themselves within the production but also be exposed to the Bard, even if it's just so that they can feel confident if the subject of Shakespeare ever arises.



Figure 3: Conversations with Herbert
Graphic Design by Greg Dean

Chapter 2: Conversations with Herbert Siguenza

Since February, I've had the pleasure of chatting with Herbert Siguenza on several occasions, always talking about Shakespeare, the impact of theatre on the Latine community, and our hopes for the future. We spoke in February 2021 before the big freeze that knocked out power for most of Houston and then again through email exchanges until recently when we zoomed one last time to talk about my progress with the script, grant writing, and to ask a few follow up questions. Before chatting with him the last time I read through several articles so that I wouldn't ask questions seeking answers that already exist on the internet but also for preparation. Something I've learned as a dramaturg and interviewer is to always do your homework. The following is some additional information on Herbert and excerpts from two articles I thought would give me insight on *El Henry* and Herbert's feelings toward Latine adaptations of classical work.

Biography via New Play Exchange:

Herbert Siguenza is a founding member of the performance group CULTURE CLASH. Along with Richard Montoya and Ric Salinas, Culture Clash is the most produced Latino theatre troupe in the United States. Founded in San Francisco in 1984, Culture Clash has performed on the stages of America's top regional theatres including the Mark Taper Forum, The Kennedy Center, The Arena Stage, The Alley Theatre, The Berkeley Repertory, Yale Repertory, South Coast Rep, La Jolla Playhouse, San Diego Rep, Syracuse Stage, The Huntington Stage and countless universities and colleges. Mr. Siguenza has co-written, and or performed in the following Culture Clash plays: *American Night* (Commissioned by Oregon Shakespeare Festival), *Palestine New Mexico*, *Water and Power*, *Chavez Ravine* (all three commissioned by the Mark Taper Forum), *Peace* (Commissioned by The Getty Villa), *Zorro in Hell!* (Commissioned by the Berkeley Rep), *The Birds* (Commissioned by the Berkeley Rep and South Coast Rep), *Bordertown* (commissioned by the San Diego Rep), *Radio Mambo*, *Nuyorican Stories*, *Anthems*, *S.O.S.*, *A Bowl of Beings*, *The Mission* and others. As a solo writer and performer Mr. Siguenza has produced *Cantinflas!* and *A Weekend with Pablo Picasso* currently on national tour. His latest plays *Steal Heaven* and *El Henry* (Best new play San Diego Critics Circle Award 2014) have been produced at the San Diego

Repertory and La Jolla Playhouse. Mr. Siguenza is also an accomplished visual artist and has exhibited both nationally and internationally.

In an interview with Brent E. Beltran for the *San Diego Free Press* on June 25, 2014, Herbert shared his inspiration behind *El Henry*:

I wanted to write Shakespeare for the 21st century. Because I don't believe Shakespeare should be performed in its museum form. Even though I've been in the theatre arts for over thirty years I've never done Shakespeare. I've always found it difficult. Not only for me as an actor to understand but I think it's very difficult for contemporary audiences to understand it unless you're a scholar or something. So, it becomes a really elitist form of art. I think his stories are great and the concepts are good. The themes are great. They're still universal. So, I basically took one of his history plays and put it into a new contemporary context into a barrio world. In this case a sci-fi, futuristic, post-apocalyptic future. [He chuckles] And it works really well because the themes of loyalty, family, honor these are themes that are in the original play. And I didn't change any of the storyline. They still work. They work with Chicano gangs. The English kings and Chicano gangs are pretty much the same. [More chuckles]

This particular response stood out to me. It not only summed up how I was feeling but it was comforting to know I wasn't the only Latino who found Shakespeare challenging. But it's also about the community. It's so important to think beyond our own challenges and wants when creating Latine art. There's an incredible weight that comes with it, as if we're supposed to represent the entire community within a 90-minute play. It's impossible. I may not be able to encompass every aspect of being Brown, but I can make it accessible. I can make it digestible. I can offer tools and guidance to marginalized communities so they can tell their own stories and they don't have to rely or wait on the handful of Latine playwrights that are out there to write their story so they can be seen. This comment also illustrates the universality of Shakespeare. When you strip away at its core it can be adapted for many other communities and used as a road map from structure.

In an interview with Maria Patrice Amon for HOWLROUND on November 10, 2016, Herbert shared his views on the importance of Latine adaptations of White, Eurocentric work:

I adapt because I think that it is important to take classics and make them accessible to a modern contemporary audience. I love the classics because of their strong structures—their bones if you will. But quite frankly, I feel that the language of the classics is difficult to comprehend, and it even isolates some audiences from accessing the story. If an audience cannot understand the language, they cannot grasp the story and they become isolated from that history, from that moment in culture. I feel that in order to understand the classics and Shakespeare, you have to need to be somewhat educated and well-read. Personally, I don't have that background and education. I'm not a traditional, academically trained theatre artist. I missed a lot of classes like Classics 101 or Intro to Shakespeare. I think that I'm not alone in that, most Americans don't have those skills either. The Classics produced in America have become elitist because the language is challenging, and ultimately segregates classes of people. If you go to any regional theatre producing Shakespeare here in the States, you will see an educated, upper-middle class white audience. So, my adaptations are my attempt to democratize the classics for everyone. I had tremendous success with my previous adaptation *El Henry*. Audience members would come up to me after performance and thank me because they had never understood Shakespeare's Henry cycles. Contemporizing the language and cultural world the story inhabits made the story clear for people to follow. Contemporizing doesn't mean a dumbing down of the classics. Bringing them into our contemporary language isn't reductive. I think that it elevates the work because it makes them accessible to more people; then, conversations happening around the works are fuller and better.

There's a larger discussion happening around the importance of Latine adaptations and do they move the Latine Theatre community and movement forward. I think Herbert sums it up nicely. The language is sometimes alienating but that doesn't mean that modern audiences who aren't classically trained can't or shouldn't enjoy them. Shakespeare was created for the masses, for the people. But it's become elevated, unreachable to modern audiences. Modern adaptations give it back to the people. Latine adaptations solidify our place in the theatre world. They say we exist too. But they also

help build audiences for the newer Latine work. I don't think it's an "either or" but rather a "yes and."

My Conversation with Herbert

By the time I had read through at least ten different articles and a handful of reviews, I didn't have as much to ask Herbert as I thought I would. I ended up sending him a list of about ten questions, trying hard not to ask anything I had already read and knew. Herbert and I met over zoom, me still in my pajamas drinking coffee at noon CST and Herbert in sweatpants sitting on his bed at 10 am Pacific. We greeted each other and caught up on what we were working on. Before I got into the questions, I had sent him I mentioned that I had recently heard the Indigenous parable of the river and that I had it on my mind. It goes:

Long ago there were three sisters walking along the river. All of sudden they see all these tiny babies in water struggling to stay afloat. The first sister says this is an emergency and jumps in the river to save them. The second sister thinks about that and says "no, we'll never save them all. We must teach them to swim so they can survive in the water on their own." The third sister just starts walking upstream and the other sisters get really upset and yell out to her "Where are you going? Why aren't you helping?" And she says, "I'm going to go and find out who's throwing these babies in the water and I'm going to make them stop."

I told Herbert that the parable had been weighing on me as I planned and strategized community engagement in the Latine communities and with the Latine youth. I asked him if teaching theatre and the arts in college and high school was enough if trauma, colonialism and the harm of systemic racism had already set in? We chatted for a long time after that. I felt whatever nerves I had about interviewing Herbert melted away. Of course, I had nerves! Herbert is one of the great pioneers of Latine Theatre in the United States and made it accessible with CULTURE CLASH. But for that next hour we

talked more as colleagues trying to make the world a better place for our communities and people through sharing an artform that changed our lives and brings us joy.

I was in the process of transcribing our interview when it hit me that putting what was said down on paper felt like an invasion of privacy even though I had permission to. The difference was we didn't need to code switch or prove anything. We shared our experiences and strategized. We talked about the challenges we had faced as artists and teachers. For that moment, like many others I have recently had interviewing my fellow Latine artists from all around the nation, I felt not so alone in my quest. I felt safe in the space, no judgement and no need to prove anything. I felt community and relief that I wouldn't have to take these next steps alone. I felt at peace. There have not been many times in my life when collaborating with predominately White institutions that I have felt this way. Representation is not the only thing we should be striving for but community and a place to be our authentic selves. We must lift each other up for us to continue to move forward. For us to make progress we must unite.

Before Herbert and I ended our zoom call (him leaving his house and heading to a dentist appointment and me trying to wrangle my toddler), I told him that I was having trouble adapting *El Henry* because I didn't want to change or ruin his work. I admitted that I might be holding the script too precious. I walked him through some of my thoughts and he laughed and said, "that could work". He gave me some advice he had received before when he was adapting someone else's work. He told me to make it mine and to try something new. It's a work in progress but that's exactly what I did.

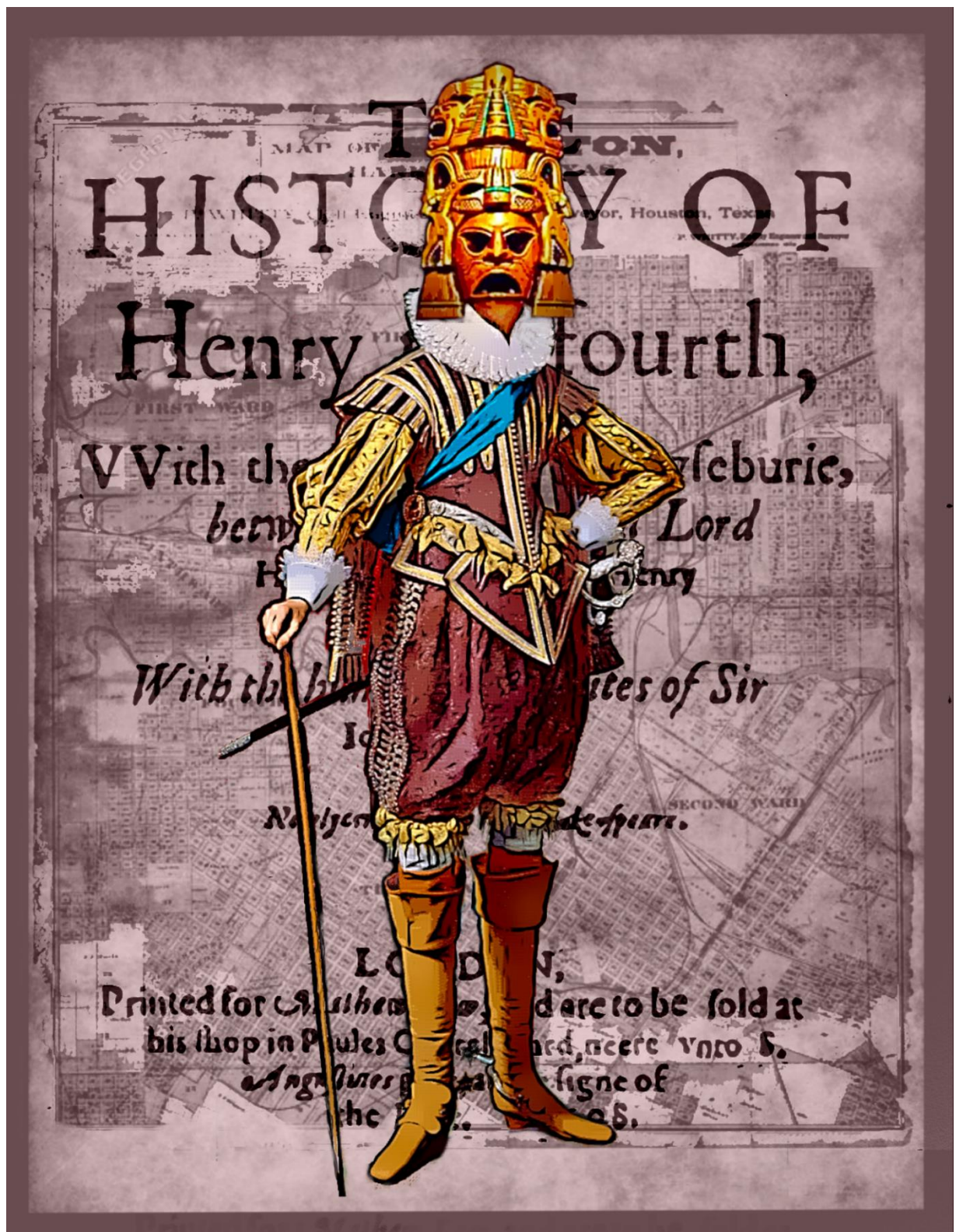


Figure 4: Adapting El Henry
Graphic Design by Greg Dean

Chapter 3: Adapting *El Henry*

I knew adapting *El Henry* was going to be a challenge because for one I really only have one perspective, my own, of Houston and two, I don't speak Spanish fluently.

I started researching all I could about Latine history and experiences in Houston on top of the research I had already done about Mexican Americans in Texas, Indigenous peoples of Texas and Tejano history. In researching Houston, I discovered a lot about gang culture, the school desegregation movement in the 1970s and the individual Latine neighborhoods and the gentrification of those neighborhoods. Coupled that with some of the natural disasters, past and most recent, that Houstonians have had to live through. I went on to make lists about what I loved about Houston or what I consider to be Iconic to Houston. I did Facebook polls and interviews asking for input with the hopes that someone would mention something I knew nothing about or had maybe forgotten. In the end I had a whole lot of information and only a few opportunities to weave it into the script. That really bummed me out because I had so many things I wanted to say.

Some of the larger changes were to the characters Fausto and El Henry. I took Fausto from an ultra-Californian Chicano to a Tejano complete with wranglers, boots and cowboy hat. To me he embodied the little old vaqueros that drive their paleta carts around Eastwood selling cold snacks and spicy chips. He also reminded me of some of my uncles that would get all dressed up in their best western wear and head to El Dorado Ranch night club off 45 to dance cumbia and grito until dawn when they would hit up a local taqueria and soak up all the beer with menudo, barbacoa tacos and pan dulce. The differences between Chicano and Tejano are subtle. If you're not born and raised in a Latino household then they would probably go right over your head. It's important to

note that Tejano is Chicano, but Chicano isn't Tejano and that all Brown isn't the same. Tejano is rooted in the Spanish, Mexican and Indigenous experience specific to Texas. That encompasses Indigenous genocide, multiple periods of assimilation, erasure, murder, and whitewashing. It also encompasses the frontier, Tex-Mex, Mexican cowboys, pride, and perseverance. I kept Fausto a thief and just added a dash of frontera. I trimmed down on using fat as an insult. Although Gordo is used affectionately in the Latine community, it still stings when you're called that.

For Henry I wanted him to embody the Tejanos who aren't first generation and don't really speak Spanish but also carry a certain amount of shame and embarrassment about that and disconnect from their culture. I modeled him a little after me, sans the drug use, girls and heavy drinking. I know a lot of Latinos that feel lost in the in between, and I wanted to illustrate that in Henry.

I made Chiqui an extra stripper because Houston and its strip clubs. We're not quite the strip club capitol of the US but we're close. Also, because my mom was a stripper when I was growing up and I have a lot of respect for women who do what they need to do to take care of their families. I edited Lil Gus' character description because I found it to be a little problematic considering our current social climate. We are in trying to erase stereotypes about both the Trans and Asian communities, not make them worse. I left all the other characters the same after a long talk with a few friends that grew up in neighborhoods with large gang populations and confirmed that a lot of Herbert's details and description existed in Houston as well.

I had the most fun changing locations and researching Nahuatl, the traditional Aztec language, in an effort to come up with some cool names like Tlaloc and adding the

Sin to Aztlan. I even googled “How to say Clutch City in Nahuatl.” I spent a lot of time looking at the Houston map trying to determine where all these scenes would take place. I settled on Eastwood because it was the most central Latine neighborhood that hasn’t been completely gentrified.

I kept the mass exodus but thought the elements of the hurricane and loss of the power grid would solidify the post-apocalyptic world but were also so current and so Houston. I did find the futuristic guns challenging. I wanted them in the script, but I couldn’t quite explain where the technology came from. I’m still trying to work some of those elements out.

Now the Spanish. In my research I found that Herbert used a style of Spanglish/Chicano slang called Calo. Originating with the gypsies it’s a weaving together of both English and Spanish. Not being a fluent Spanish speaker, I didn’t want to undo any of his work and make a mess of it. I tiptoed around the Spanish, translating the words to make sure I had a full understanding but also looking for opportunities to slip in some Tejanoisms. There were some words I had never heard here in Texas. I sat down with some friends and they walked me through their experiences with Texas Spanglish. For example: I’m going to vacuum la floor or the fact that some Latinos are raised not knowing that an English version of a word exists. One friend shared that she didn’t know that disinfectant spray was called disinfectant spray in her house all cleaners were called Fabuloso. I tried to weave a few of these elements in without disturbing too much of the Spanish.

My hope was to try and add a little more Shakespeare back into the script but my early struggles with the text kept creeping in and I found I was doubting myself. I will

continue combing through the script for months making little changes and adding more finite details.



Figure 5: El Bard
Graphic Design by Greg Design

CONCLUSION

Tejanos have a saying, “we didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us.” We belong here. This is our land, and this is our home. As a Tejano, there’s always this feeling of being in the in-between: not Latino enough to your own people OR too Latino for the White people. And those of us with Spanish blood are also both colonizer and the colonized. Stuck in the in-between. Either way we will never be enough for either side and we can never erase what our ancestors did, so we must start being enough for ourselves and we must start making peace with who we are.

I set out with hope to prove that we needed Shakespeare in order to continue to push the Latine theatre movement forward. I wanted to justify that we needed to adapt the classics to prove that we existed, that we share the same narratives. But I don’t think it’s a communal need as much as it is a personal one. I need these adaptations because I’m still trying to prove something to myself. For a classically trained actress that is never cast in classical work, it is a need I have to fulfill. It’s a need to take ownership of a club I’ve been kept out of. I may never fulfill this need, but I also may grow out of it and that’s ok too. As a Latina director that’s only called in to direct Latine works, I need the classics to prove to the predominately White institutions that I am knowledgeable.

But ultimately this need has me continuing to play into the system that was created to hold me down, to continue to play the game by their rules. I’m hoping that one day I won’t have this need. There are brilliant and beautiful adaptations that have been written by some of the most well-known Latine playwrights. I encourage whoever reads this to seek them out and if you can produce and share them. But I also believe we should

break away from the western cannon and create works with our own stories at the center. I think Latinos are worth that kind of dedication.

This retelling and journey are only a snippet of the immense research and discoveries I have uncovered over the last three years. I'm including most of the books I read on my road to self-identity and self-love. Use them as a guide. If you are from Houston, I hope my adaptation of *El Henry* brings you joy. I hope this thesis will guide whoever picks it up and chooses to read it. I encourage them to accept where they are with their education, theatrical practices and know they are enough. That even when you don't meet Academic standards that the work and research you are doing does and will make a difference because there aren't enough Latine scholars out here sharing their stories and getting them down on paper for the next person to come looking for resources and acceptance. Hasta la próxima!

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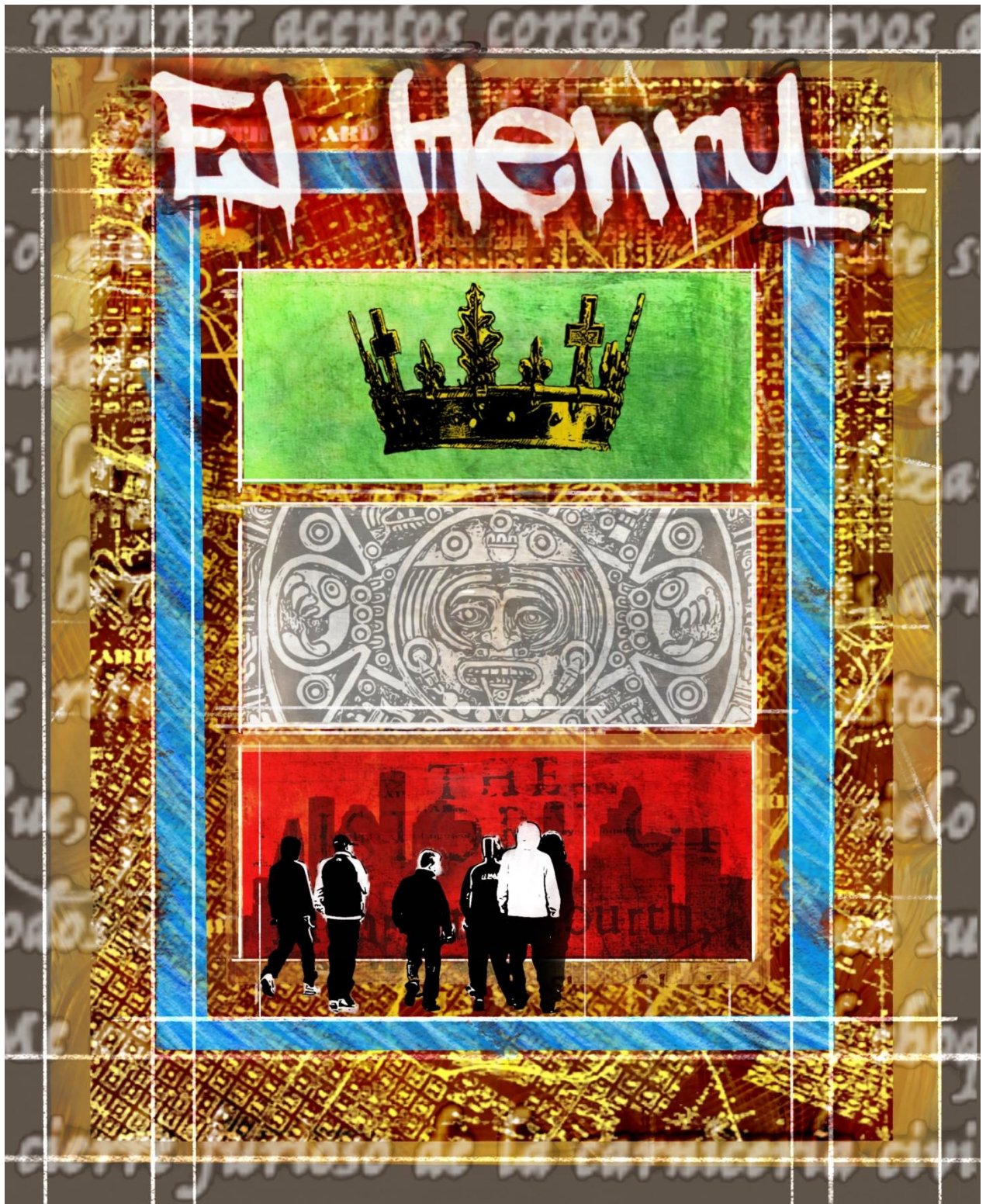


Figure 6: El Henry
Graphic Design by Greg Dean

El Henry

A post-apocalyptic, post-Gringo, Tejano¹² adaptation of William Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 1*.

Chicano adaptation by Herbert Siguenza

Adapted for Houston by Laura Moreno

¹² Chicano to Tejano

“Houston is a cruel, crazy town on a filthy river in East Texas with no zoning laws and a culture of sex, money and violence. It's a shabby, sprawling metropolis ruled by brazen women, crooked cops and super-rich pansexual cowboys who live by the code of the West -- which can mean just about anything you need it to mean, in a pinch.”

-Hunter S. Thompson¹³

“When I first arrived in Houston, I was fascinated with the elaborate styles of cowboy boots and thought they were incredibly exotic. They also seemed to be a central part of a specifically ‘Texan’ identity, one distinct from being ‘American.’”

– Shahzia Sikander

¹³ Added quotes that encapsulates the complexity of Houston, TX.

Prologue

A post-apocalyptic urban landscape. The year is 2045. The place is Tlaloc¹⁴ City, Sin¹⁵ Aztlan. (Formerly Houston, TX¹⁶). The set is a collection of trash, old signage, tires, old television sets, brick walls, pieces of old houses, graffiti walls, mosaic walls, scaffolding, chain link fences, generators, string lights, and shipping containers¹⁷. There is trash and graffiti everywhere¹⁸! An old broken down rusty art car style¹⁹ truck (Fausto's truck) is parked extreme stage right.

Two young homeless thugs YOUNG THUG and TIXOC enter²⁰, rummage through the trash.

YOUNG THUG

Tixoc!

TIXOC

What is it, fool?

YOUNG THUG

I found an iPhone 23!

TIXOC

So, what! That's old gringo technology. It's worthless, fool.

YOUNG THUG

I know, huh.

The Young Thug throws the phone against the brick wall.

(Sarcastic) We're back to steam, coal, and transistors. Yippee.

TIXOC

¹⁴ Aztlan to Tlaloc after the Aztec God of Rain and Water.

¹⁵ Added "Sin" to Aztlan because Aztlan in the Nahuatl language means "the Place of Whiteness" and sin means "without" since Texas is now without Whiteness.

¹⁶ San Diego, CA to Houston, TX.

¹⁷ Added additional set elements to build a world specific to Houston TX.

¹⁸ Emphasized the trash and graffiti and moved the brick wall to set elements in previous sentence.

¹⁹ Art cars are famous in Houston.

²⁰ Added "enter".

Stop your bitchin', fool. Keep lookin' for food or better yet, water!

*Young Thug finds a large body sleeping face down on a vaquero bedroll²¹
under newspapers up center.*

YOUNG THUG

Tixoc!

TIXOC

Damn! What is it, fool?

YOUNG THUG

There's a vato over here.

TIXOC

Muerto? Is he dead?

YOUNG THUG

I think so, dog.

TIXOC

Well, what cha' waiting for? Get his wallet, fool.

YOUNG THUG

Easier said than done, ese. The vato is gigantic! Help me turn him over.

Tixoc approaches the body.

TIXOC

(Disgusted) Fuchi! He stinks of pisto.

²¹ Weaving in the vaquero culture that is prevalent within Tejano culture.

The thugs turn the body²² over and go for his wallet. The man wakes up and jumps up getting on his feet. It's FAUSTO, the king of street thieves. Fausto swings his fists²³ missing the street thugs who scatter. It's FAUSTO, the king of street thieves but more like a Vaquero clown²⁴.

FAUSTO

QUE CHINGADOS!!? Who are the pendejos who hath the bolas to take my wallet? I am Fausto, king of all thieves! Lord of all ladrones! Hold still cabrones so I can give thou a chingazo upside your cabezas!

The thugs take out small makeshift knives.

TIXOC

Give us your money, you Tejano²⁵ elephant man!

YOUNG THUG

Yeah, cough it up, man tits.

FAUSTO

Ha, ha, ha! You call those fileros? Your shanks can't harm me! I got tires of steel! Lonjas de acero, buey!

YOUNG THUG

I think this gordo is crazy, yo!

FAUSTO

Damn right I'm crazy! I invented crazy. I'm living la vida loca crazy! Wooo! I am Fausto and I run with El Henry, so go ahead locos, make your move.

TIXOC

EL Henry? The prince of Barrio Eastwood²⁶?

YOUNG THUG

²² Removed "fat" as a description if it's not in the dialogue. Trying to be conscientious of fat shaming and what that may do to an actor playing this role, audience watching or the reader.

²³ Walking stick to fists – Tejanos are macho.

²⁴ Added a Tejano element.

²⁵ Chicano to Tejano

²⁶ East Cheap to Eastwood, info on Eastwood.

Son of El Hank?

FAUSTO

Simon timon. Now what cha' gonna do?

The thugs think it over.

TIXOC

This vato is connected. Let's get out of here, fool.

YOUNG THUG

Yeah dog, lucky for him.

Fausto swings his fists again²⁷.

FAUSTO

Nel! Lucky for you! Now get out of heres before I sit on your scrawny asses!

Ahhhhhhhh!!!!

Fausto chases the young thugs off.

Chavalas! Cowards! Culeros! Cuuuu-lee-rooos!

Catching his breath

Chingado, I'm out of breath right here. I gotta go back to the gym! Hee, hee.

Fausto takes out a flask and sips it. Fausto notices the audience.

Oh, q-vo. Welcome to Tlaloc City, formerly known as Houston²⁸, the capital of Sin Aztlan.

Begins to roll up his sleeping gear, gives himself a "Mexican Bath", and dresses in his cowboy boots, belt with buckle and hat.²⁹

Now Sin Aztlan is basically Texas³⁰ after the Gringo Exodus. Yeah, you heard me right, I

²⁷ Walking stick to fists.

²⁸ San Diego to Houston.

²⁹ Added stage direction to show the vaquero in him.

³⁰ California to Texas.

said Gringo Exodus! See back in 2032, there was a worldwide pandemic, Mexico went completely bankrupt, the pinche boarder wall³¹ collapsed, and fifty million Mexicans fled north. Crossing the border into Tejas³². No wall, no laws, no drones could keep them out. Raza everywhere! The Gringos were already trying to round us up and contain us before

but now they were just done with our asses. They were all like “Chale! Too many Mexicans.” They were like “Screw this, we’re out of here”. Abbott (you heard that right, that cerdo was still governor) decided to evacuate all the Gringos and left all the Latinos to fend for ourselves. They packed their bags and split so fast. It was “White flight” on a big scale, tu sabes! I mean they liked our food and us cleaning their houses and owing their lawns and taking care of their ninos but the moment we became the majority and started to blast Selenas 24/7 it all became too much for them. Abbott gave all the none

Latinos a work visa in their new colony right across the Texas state line and all the Blacks, Asians and pretty much everybody else split. They left us Texas to live and to rule. The Latinos called it Sin Aztlan and it was cool for a while. And THEN Hurricane

Karen³³ came and flooded the city of Houston and knocked out the power grid indefinitely. Because of the botched flood mitigation after Hurricane Harvey, the water never really receded causing Houston to turn into a island off the coast of Tejas. We have ourselves a modern day Tenochtilan. We changed the name to Tlaloc City on account of all the water. You know everybody was happy and getting along “Viva la Raza,” “De Colores,” and all that shit but then it all went to hell. Corrupt Hispanic politicians, you know the ones who think and look and act like they’re white, took the political and civic power; but the people, los Tejanos, we took the streets. We went tribal, ese. Got back to our Karankawan, Akokisa, Attacapa and Aztec roots. We formed our own street Kingdom and anointed our first King, El Hank. Now My dog Henry is El Hank’s eldest son see; he could be the prince but he don’t want that pedo. No, El Henry would rather battle between two chichotas and get a hard hit off the mota. That’s his kingdom...

MUSIC. Enter from up top on stage left storage container HENRY, a good looking vato with long hair and wearing a mix of Elizabethan and hipster³⁴ clothes. He is drinking from a beer mug³⁵ and partying with a HIPSTER friend³⁶ and Goth-y/Artsy CHICAS³⁷.

HENRY

(An ironic grito³⁸) Aiiiiiihaha!

³¹ Banks to boarder wall.

³² California to Tejas.

³³ Added a hurricane and flood because Houston has a history of destructive hurricanes.

³⁴ Harking to Houston’s Latino Hipster culture that loves craft beers, getting high, the Astros and the band Explosions in the Sky. Might have pursued a liberal arts degree if the apocalypse didn’t happen. Removed the leather and cholo clothes.

³⁵ Changed from tequila.

³⁶ Changed from Vato.

³⁷ Changed from Two Cholas.

³⁸ Added a stage direction for clarification.

EVERYBODY

Chug Henry! Chug Henry! Chug Henry! Chug!

Henry chugs a giant mug of beer³⁹.

HENRY

To la vida loca!!

Henry burbs⁴⁰.

Everybody laughs⁴¹. Henry bends a one of the CHICAS⁴² over and kisses her passionately.

HENRY

Do I give a madre?!

HENRY'S HOMIES

Hell, no!

HENRY

That's right!

Henry pulls out a futuristic handgun (a combination of weapons fashioned with duct tape⁴³) and fires into the air three times. Everybody takes cover. Suddenly, A loud sound from an unseen police helicopter is heard and a bright spotlight shines on Henry and his crew.

POLICE (V.O.)

Hispanic Police! Hispanic Police! Chicanos move along! Muevense or we'll shoot.

Henry and his crew give the cops the finger and run away laughing.

FAUSTO

So, this is what happens when Chicanos, Mexicans, and Hispanics run a country: Puro

³⁹ Changed from tequila.

⁴⁰ Added a stage direction to show Henry's indifference to the culture by disrespecting the beloved phrase.

⁴¹ Cut everybody cheering and repeating him and added them laughing instead.

⁴² Chola to Chica.

⁴³ Mexicans hold everything together with duct tape.

pinche chaos! I kind of miss the Gringos, you know? At least with them we had law, order, and WIC stamps!

The stage left metal gate opens and a fine old classic car enters the set and parks stage left with headlights on. Inside the car are EL HANK, DUKE OF EARL and NAVARRO.

Oh shit, talk about the diablo. Here comes El Hank and his generals right now. They don't exactly like me cuz they say I'm a "bad Influence" on his son El Henry. Can you believe that shit? Anyways, you guys go ahead and chill there on the bleachers as this tale unfolds. Catch you all later...

Fausto exits.

ACT 1

SCENE 1. HISPANIC PRESS CONFERENCE

A podium is carried out by a HISPANIC SUIT. The podium has a city seal that looks like the Mayan calendar with a Lonestar⁴⁴ and the UFW eagle over it and says "Sin Aztlán". He is followed by the HISPANIC POLICE CHIEF and the female Hispanic, MAYOR LINA HIDALGO⁴⁵. REPORTERS 1 and REPORTER 2 are there taking notes on notepads. The HISPANIC SUIT blows on a trumpet and plays the first notes of "Deep in the Heart of Texas"⁴⁶. The REPORTERS clap and follow with "Deep in the Heart of Tejas"⁴⁷.

POLICE CHIEF

Citizens of Tlaloc City! The Honorable Mayor Lina

Hidalgo.

Hispanic MAYOR LINA HILDAGO addresses the audience in a press conference.

⁴⁴ Added the Lonestar for Texas pride.

⁴⁵ Judge turned mayor when she was abandoned by the Gringos.

⁴⁶ Changed from the song "Tequila" to "Deep in the Heart of Texas" – a popular song played at Texas ballgames but also used in classrooms to get the attention of students by prompting them to clap to show they are listening.

⁴⁷ Added a stage direction for the REPORTERS to follow through with the prompt.

MAYOR LINA HILDALGO

Dear citizens of Tlaloc City. Today I address you, not only as Mayor but also as a concerned citizen and a grieving tia. ⁴⁸An aunt with a broken heart. Last night, a young Hispanic police officer named Joe Ramirez was gunned down in cold blood by a barrio hoodlum. This courageous officer was also my dear nephew.

Chicano gangs are destroying the moral fabric of Sin Aztlan. They threaten our Hispanic livelihood and peaceful way of life. We will not tolerate this violence and their savage ways any longer. Tonight, we Hispanics are declaring a war on Chicano gangs for the safety and future of our Hispanic children. To quote the great Anglo leader Ronald Reagan, whom we Hispanics base our political ideals on. I say, "When you can't make them see the light, make them feel the heat". Any information regarding this gruesome murder will be handsomely rewarded by my office. Gracias, De Colores, Viva La Raza, and God Bless Sin Aztlan.

REPORTER 1

Madame Mayor, are you suddenly "tough on crime" because it's an election year?

REPORTER 2

What are you doing about the illegal Gringo problem?

POLICE CHIEF

The Mayor will take no further questions. Gracias.

They all exit.

SCENE 2. SAFE HOUSE of BARRIO EASTWOOD.

Stage right, is a platform with a car seat and hub caps that make a makeshift royal "throne". A banner on a pole is placed by SIR BLUNT. The banner has the word BARRIO E" in Old English script on a field of royal purple. Sir Blunt, Hank's drug czar inspects two homegirls, LA GATA and SMOKIE carrying wooden crates with plastic bottles of water of all different shapes and sizes holding the precious liquid.

SIR BLUNT

Gata! Smokie! Hurry up! We got to load the trucks.

⁴⁸ Removed "fake anguish".

LA GATA

Damn, we used to load the trucks with guns and coca.

SMOKIE

We still do, but now we load water, too,

SIR BLUNT

That's right. Water is more valuable than gold so hurry up!

LA GATA

La Smokie is slowing us down.

LA SMOKIE

Shut up Gata, I'll cut you!

LA GATA

Smokie, why you walking funny, esa? You pregnant, *again*.?

LA SMOKIE

Not even!

SIR BLUNT

Yeah, why you walking funny than?

LA SMOKIE

I don't know...

SIR BLUNT

What's in your pants?

LA SMOKIE

(*guilty*) Nuthing...

SIR BLUNT
Take it out now!

La Smokie takes out a bottle of water from under her pants. Sir Blunt snatches it from her.

What the fuck? Why you stealing water?

LA GATA

Oooooohhh. You in trouble now!

LA SMOKIE

Shut up Gata!

SIR BLUNT

Both of yous shut up! You know if El Hank finds out you're stealing precious water
your ass will be grass!

LA SMOKIE

Come on Blunt, I need it for the baby!

SIR BLUNT

I don't give a shit! (beat) Even though the baby is mines...Load the truck, then get out
of here – you're fired!⁴⁹

LA GATA

Ha, ha! Fuckin fired!!

LA SMOKIE

I'll cut you, Gata!

La Smokie lunges toward La Gata. Sir Blunt gets between them.

SIR BLUNT

Are you two finished?! Go load the cases!

⁴⁹ Added additional punctuation to aid actor in thought process.

The two girls exit. On stage right, EL HANK –a mean but elegant street veterano gets out of the car followed by his right hand man, DUKE OF EARL, and his nerdy Hispanic attorney, NAVARRO.

EL HANK

Duke of Earl!

DUKE OF EARL

Yes, my Lord?

EL HANK

Get me a cold “Zapata!”

SIR BLUNT

How did it go my Lord?

EL HANK

I’ll let Navarro tell you.

El Hank sits on his throne. Duke of Earl hands him a can of Zapata beer.

NAVARRO

They threw everything at him. Conspiracy to murder, interstate trafficking of narcotics, international human smuggling...

SIR BLUNT

What happened?

NAVARRO

He beat all those charges. Lack of evidence. Nobody had the courage to take the stand against El Hank.

SIR BLUNT

Orale!

EL HANK

Don't get too smug, Sir Blunt. The local Hispanics got me on permit violation⁵⁰.

SIR BLUNT

A what?⁵¹

NAVARRO

Apparently, there's new paperwork to fill out when opening up a new business.⁵²

EL HANK

Remember all those legitimate water distribution centers we opened up a year ago?

SIR BLUNT

Simon.

NAVARRO

They claim we didn't properly register them with the Mayor's office.⁵³

SIR BLUNT

How long?

NAVARRO

Two years. He'll be out in nine months. His surrender date is in two weeks.

SIR BLUNT

Pinche Hispanics!

EL HANK

The Hispanics don't care if I'm dealing drugs and guns but once I got into legit water and

⁵⁰ Changed "theft" to "permit violation".

⁵¹ Changed "What's that?" to "A what?"

⁵² Changed the line to reflect the goal post always being moved by the politicians or in the case to trap El Hank.

⁵³ Additional explanation of the crime.

started taking money out of their pockets⁵⁴, they had to get me on something to put me away. Dishonoring me!

DUKE OF EARL

Hank, once the other barrios like Tomas of Barrio Hotspur find out you're going away, they're gonna step up their game and try to take away everything we got.

EL HANK

I hear you. They've never been satisfied since I took over. Duke of Earl...

DUKE OF EARL

Yes, my lord?

EL HANK

I'm putting you in charge of all my affairs.

DUKE OF EARL

Yo? What about your youngest mijo, El Johnny?

EL HANK

My youngest doesn't have the stomach or⁵⁵ the huevos, for this shit.

SIR BLUNT

I heard on the streets that Tomas' son El Bravo smoked that rookie cop.

EL HANK

El Bravo? Tomas' son? Que huevos de vato! He's always had a loose screw.

SIR BLUNT

That was no ordinary officer. The rookie was the Hispanic Mayor's nephew.

⁵⁴ Added stakes and conflict between the Hispanics and the gangs.

⁵⁵ Added "or".

NAVARRO

Now the Mayor has declared a war on all the Chicano familias and since you're the king of the barrios Hank, they're going to make an example out of you. Maybe blame you for the rookie cop's death.

EL HANK

El Bravo's defiant act of killing the rookie cop has fucked it up for all of us and *I'm* paying the price! (*reflective*) It's ironic to think that my eldest son El Henry used to run with El Bravo when they were chavalillos. Always getting into trouble together. I only wish El Henry had the same cojones and audacity that El Bravo has. I need a son like that, to look over things with a strong arm while I'm away.

NAVARRO

Where is your eldest mijo if I may ask?

EL HANK

Henry is dead to me. My mijo could be the prince of the streets but he prefers to get high with his hoes and bros. You'll find him most days wasting time with a sordid bunch of deadbeats⁵⁶ at Chiqui's Tavern. He hangs around borrachos that clack putas so used up, even their pimps discarded them years ago.

SIR BLUNT

Ouch.

NAVARRO

Oh my, I'm sorry to hear this Hank, but the reality of the situation is that you will be going away for a while.

EL HANK

Yes, this I know. Duke...

DUKE OF EARL

Yes, my lord?

EL HANK

⁵⁶ Added "deadbeats".

Send a message to all the Barrio generales that I want a face to face. I need to make sure these cabrones don't develop any thoughts of grandeur and start working for themselves just cuz I'm out of the picture, sabes?

DUKE OF EARL

Yes, my Lord.

EL HANK

Blunt...

SIR BLUNT

Yes, my lord?

EL HANK

How's the distribution⁵⁷ of water coming along?

SIR BLUNT

Got La Gata on it.

EL HANK

Orale. Navarro, that is all for now. Thank you.

NAVARRO

Hank, Uhm, my kids are having a raffle at their Catholic school, and I was wondering if you could buy some tickets?

EL HANK

(Intense) You got the nerve to sell me raffle tickets after you just raped me for your court time?...

Navarro is stunned and terrified...beat...

Ah!! Just fucking with you, man!

Everyone laughs with relief. El Hank bear hugs Navarro.

⁵⁷ Changed "shipping" to "distribution".

You're the only Hispanic I trust! How much per ticket?

NAVARRO

Two Selena Quintanillas'⁵⁸ each.

EL HANK

Hey Gata, bring the man 200 bills.

NAVARRO

100 tickets? Awesome!

EL HANK

What's the main prize?

NAVARRO

A 15th Generation iPod Touch with 56% battery left. It has the best of Selena, Emilio and La Mafia⁵⁹.

EL HANK

Orale! I'm gonna need that in la pinta.

La Gata enters, gives Navarro the money. He gives her tickets.

NAVARRO

Thank you young lady. God bless you. Buenas Noches.

Navarro exits. They all laugh at him.

LA GATA

(Mocking him) "Thank you young lady. God Bless". What a Hispanic spaz!

SIR BLUNT

Hey! Who said you could talk? Back to work, you hood rat!

⁵⁸ Changed Caesar Chavez currency to Selena Quintanilla because she's the Tejano Queen and royalty always goes on money.

⁵⁹ Changed the main prize from a Cheech and Chong box set to an iPod Touch with a little bit of juice left.

La Gata goes back to work as the lights go down.

SCENE 3. CHIQUI'S JOINT⁶⁰

A sign that reads "Chiqui's Joint" hangs in front of a makeshift outdoor bar which is owned by a street tough, ex-stripper⁶¹ named CHIQUI. She is a war veteran that wears an eye patch and smokes a stogie and wears a lot of black leather with studs. There are several sturdy tables and stools with all sorts from the neighborhood⁶² sitting around. A HOOCHIE roams for tips. On top of the bar an EXOTIC DANCER dances. Enter FAUSTO, and his partner in crime, LIL GUS – a non-binary Vato who also happens to be FAUSTO's sister's child⁶³.

FAUSTO

Orale locos! I'm large and...

EVERYONE

...and in charge!!!

CHIQUI

Diablos! Look what the pedo⁶⁴ blew in! If it's not Fausto, the lord of stolen hubcaps!

FAUSTO

Shut up Chiqui, just stay ugly and serve me a drink...

Fausto sits down and grabs a Hoochie to sit on his lap.

C'mere mija. How 'bout a lil' dance?

CHIQUI

Got to pay for the mami and the drink.

FAUSTO

Oh, come on Chiqui, you know I'm good for it.

⁶⁰ Changed tavern to joint.

⁶¹ Added that Chiqui is an ex-stripper seeing that Houston, TX has one of the highest concentrations strip clubs in America.

⁶² Changed vatos to all sorts to show the wide variety of Latinos Houston is home to.

⁶³ Changed Lil Gus' description to non-binary from a confused transgender to be more inclusive and made Lil Gus family to create a stronger connection between them and Fausto.

⁶⁴ Changed wind to pedo – fart in spanish.

CHIQUI

You're only good at loosening your oversized Wranglers⁶⁵ after lonche and sleeping on
park benches, cabron!

*The vatos laugh. The Hoochie escapes Fausto's hold. Enter EL
HENRY. He plays the first few notes of "Tequila" with his hand.*

EVERYONE

TEQUILA!

HENRY

(under his breath) Predictable⁶⁶. *(to the crowd)* Wuz up my fine locos?

EVERYBODY

Henry!

HENRY

Do I give a give a madre?

EVERYBODY

Hell no!

HENRY

Do I party?

EVERYBODY

Hell yes!

Henry jumps on a table.

HENRY

LIVIN' LA⁶⁷ VIDA LOCA!!!!

EVERYBODY

⁶⁵ Changed Dickies to Wranglers.

⁶⁶ Moved "Tequila" to this scene and assigned it to Henry to illustrate his feelings about his people and his culture.

⁶⁷ Added "Livin' La".

VIDA LOCA!!!!

LIL GUS

Henry, you got a smoke, ese?

HENRY

Anything for you, Lil Gus.⁶⁸

Henry gives them a cigarette.

HENRY

My good Chiqui, how are you chingona⁶⁹?

CHIQUI

Aqui no ma' mijito. Taking care of these animales, tu sabes. A beer, Henry?

HENRY

Do you have anything left from 8th Wonder?⁷⁰

CHIQUI

I got Zapatas.

HENRY

Zapatas it is!

FAUSTO

Hey Henry, what time is it my boy?

HENRY

First of all, I'm not your boy and second of all, steal a watch!

⁶⁸ Cut most of his line to eliminate calling Lil Gus a freak because of their gender fluidity and race. Instead made Lil Gus cool with Henry without explaining anything about their sexuality.

⁶⁹ Eliminated Chiqui being Puerto Rican and instead keeping her Latine neutral for casting purposes. Changed Puerto Rican sista' to chingona.

⁷⁰ Added 8th Wonder brewery and Henry's preference for craft beers.

Everyone laughs.

What the hell does it matter to you what time it is? Unless hours were shots of mezcal, minutes were tacos, clocks were sopes and the sun itself were a hot mamasota, I don't see any reason why you would need to know the time, aye.

FAUSTO

Now you're talking, ese! Thieves like us operate at night, en la noche, by the moon and stars, and not by the sun.

HENRY

That's because you sleep all day!

FAUSTO

And so do you, ese! Don't let those of us who work at night be blamed for wasting daylight by sleeping through it! In fact, our kind of work should get special recognition, tu sabes, titles like "Gentlemen of Shadows"

LIL GUS

"Piratas de la Luna"...

FAUSTO

"Lunar Ladrones"...

LIL GUS

"Moonlight Larcenists"

LIL GUS/FAUSTO

"The Late Night Prowlers"

CHIQUI

How 'bout "Lazy Ass Vatos Without Jobs"?

Everyone laughs.

HENRY

Our luck goes back and forth like the sea. The tide comes and goes just like our money.

On Monday we make a big steal, by Tuesday morning we wake up crudo and so broke
we can't even buy a Bud Light...

EVERYONE

...for breakfast

FAUSTO

Hey Chiqui, how 'bout a bucket of cold chelas right here?

CHIQUI

How about some money right here? Ice ain't free.

FAUSTO

Oh, come on sista', you know my credit is good.

CHIQUI

Embuste! What you gonna put down as collateral?

HENRY

A "pound of flesh"! He's got plenty of that!

Everyone laughs.

FAUSTO

Very funny, pretty boy, very funny. No, sabes que, I'll put down the title of my
stolen troca.

CHIQUI

Your troca? Ok, give me a handshake.

Fausto contemplates for a while.

FAUSTO

On second thought. Hey Henry, lend me a hundred Selena
Quintanillas'.

HENRY

Oh no, you'll never change Fausto.

FAUSTO

I can change, homes. Did I ever tell you I was an altar boy?

HENRY

You have changed. From praying to purse snatching!

FAUSTO

It's my calling, ese. It's no sin for a vato to follow his calling!

Enter EL OJO, a homie who looks like a junkie street thief.

Here comes my dog, El Ojo. He'll tell me what's going on.

HENRY

Why's his name "El Ojo"?

FAUSTO

Because the vato is my eyes and ears on the street, tu sabes. He knows what's ready to get hit up. He's a fine ladron, the most incredible small-time thief that ever said, "stick em up" to an honest man. Ojo, you know my boy Henry, verdad?

OJO

Nel. Never had the placer.

They do the new Tejano⁷¹ handshake.

You're El Hank's son, right?

HENRY

Yup⁷². I'm afraid so.

OJO

(Dismayed but curious) I don't mean any desrespeto, but why are you hanging with

⁷¹ Changed "Chicano" to "Tejano".

⁷² Changed "simon" to "yup" to illustrate that he doesn't speak Spanish.

this big scammer?

FAUSTO

Hey! That's *mister* big scammer to you!

OJO

All I'm saying is that you're "royal" ese. You're the son of El Hank, the mero mero of Barrio Eastwood. You're like a prince and shit.

HENRY

That's right, ese and this here barstool is my throne. This beer can my golden goblet and these homies are my subjects.

EVERYONE

SHAAA!!!

OJO

(Perplexed) Damn that's deep...

FAUSTO

So Ojo, what have you heard?

OJO

You know the carniceria next to the chop shop?

FAUSTO

The one on Mattress Mack⁷³ Memorial Boulevard?

OJO

Simon. They say those Mexi-clops are pulling down major cash selling pig feet and chicharrones. Bean counters, tu sabes.

FAUSTO

You're getting me hungry aye, stick to the story.

OJO

⁷³ Changed "Richard Ramirez" to "Mattress Mack".

Anyways, they make so much feria that they have to make three bank deposits a day!
Their biggest take is the one they take home at night after they close the shop. And get
this, they walk home with it!

LIL GUS

Stupid country ass one eyed paisas.

HENRY

Why do they have one eye?

LIL GUS

The state of Oaxaca had a big nuclear explosion in 2020 and all the babies were born
with one eye.

HENRY

Right, I forgot about that so they're one-eyed Mexican cowboys?

FAUSTO

Mexiclops! Duh. Ojo, what time do they lock up and walk home?

OJO

Just after eleven abouts.

FAUSTO

Which way do they go?

HOMIE #1

South down Jose Altuve⁷⁴ Boulevard.

HENRY

(Giddy) You planning on jacking the Mexiclops? With what?

Fausto takes out an old rusty revolver⁷⁵.

⁷⁴ Changed "Mendez Brothers" to "Jose Altuve".

⁷⁵ Changed pirate gun to revolver to accompany the cowboy in him.

FAUSTO

I got a gun ese.

Fausto points gun at vatos. The vatos ducks.

HENRY

Aguas, gordo!

FAUSTO

Who says it works, ese! It's just for show. It'll be like stealing candy from a mocosito. Like thieves in a castle, we'll be invisible.

HENRY

Invisible?

FAUSTO

Simon. We have a potion that makes us invisible. The darkness of night.

Fausto does a Batman move covering himself with a cape.

CHIQUI

You're gonna need a lot of potion and a lot of night to cover your large⁷⁶ ass!

The Homies laugh.

FAUSTO

Shut up Chiqui. This is man's work. Shit, all this criminal master minding made me hungry. Homies, let's go to down to Irma's taco truck and get some barbacoa, refried beans and some trompo with some cilantro and onions with six dozen tortillas. Oh, and add a spicey michelada⁷⁷ Henry, are you coming?

HENRY

Chale gordo. I love my arteries too much! Go ahead.

⁷⁶ Changed fat to large.

⁷⁷ Changed the food.

FAUSTO

Whatever, homes. I was going to buy.

HENRY

For reals?

FAUSTO

Hell no! I was just kidding! Let's roll vatos! Hey Henry, one more thing...

HENRY

What?

FAUSTO

...you're a pussy!

Fausto exits with the entire bar gang. Henry and Chiqui stay behind and shake their heads.

CHIQUI

Bendito. That gordo doesn't let up, verdad?

HENRY

Simon. I admire him⁷⁸. He does what he truly was born for.

CHIQUI

Stealing, drinking and getting high?

HENRY

Yes, and Fausto does it with true conviction.

CHIQUI

⁷⁸ Changed fatso to him.

But he's become disrespectful; you know what I'm saying? He comes in here like he owns the place and talks to you like you're his boy. And I know you don't like that.

Henry thinks about it a bit.

HENRY

You're right, Chiqui. I let him get away with all kinds of shit.

CHIQUI

You are Hank's blood and oldest son. Don't forget that.

HENRY

I can't forget it even though I want to, Chiqui. It's a burden. The crown calls me but my jefe is a vicious, ruthless killer and I'm *not* going to follow in his footsteps. I'm nothing like him. I'm a...I don't know what I am but I don't want to be him.⁷⁹

CHIQUI

But some day...

HENRY

Simon. But until then...Hey! I have a good prank I want to pull on Fausto.

CHIQUI

You got that mischievous up to no good glimmer in your eye. What is it?

Henry whispers into Chiqui's ear.

CHIQUI

Bendito! I can't wait to see the gordo's face!

HENRY

The devil shall have his bargain. I deserve a chela.

CHIQUI

⁷⁹ Changed vato loco to Henry not knowing who or what he is but highlighting the tension with his father and his obligations.

I got something special in the back room.

Henry holds up eight finger. Chiqui rolls her eyes but gives in.⁸⁰

This one's on me.

HENRY

No. Put it on Fausto's tab.

BOTH

Fuck him!

El Henry and Chiqui laugh and exit.

SCENE 4. MEETING OF GENERALES

El Hank enters with his loyal generales Sir Blunt and Duke of Earl and his younger son EL JOHNNY. They have no weapons. One of them carries the small banner for Barrio Eastwood. They await the rival gang.

A metal gate opens and an ominous looking lowrider car drives in and stops, leaving the headlights on. Out of the car emerges EL TOMAS, LA MAYAN - a woman dressed as a futuristic Mayan warrior, El MAGO dressed in a turban and cape and carries a big wooden puppet named WIZARD and LOCOS R US, a vato who wears a creepy evil clown mask. No one carries weapons but there is tension in the air.

HANK

Orale. I'm glad you all made it. Tomas, I'm going to make this short. I've called estè meeting⁸¹ because you all know what has come down. While I'm in la pinta things will remain the same. I don't want to hear about anybody getting crazy and thinking just cuz the cat is gone; the mice can play. If anyone tries to move into my affairs or try anything ludicrous, severe consequences will ensue.

TOMAS

Those are some grave warnings, Hank. The problem is I don't think you can defend them. Let us remind you that us right here, Las Mayans, El Mago, Locos R Us and my Familia, we helped you become the king, ese.

⁸⁰ Added a stage direction about 8th Wonder and that Chiqui has a stash.

⁸¹ Changed junta to estè meeting.

MAYAN

Simon. You couldn't have succeeded without us.

EL HANK

I hear you. But let me remind you that I have been generous with all of you. I gave all you locos an extra taste. Tomas, I let you run the game in all the housing projects, que no? Mayan – you run guns through Mexico. Locos R Us, you supply all the small-time dealers. Mago, you run all the cat houses and none of you ever get Vice messing with you. You know why? I got Hispanic police on payroll so that everything runs smoothly. But now my shit got messy when your son El Bravo smoked the rookie officer, and the Mayor goes after me instead of your son. Smells a little fishy, que no?

TOMAS

What are you trying to say, Hank? That I rattled el⁸² monkey's cage just to mess with you?

HANK

Maybes. I think it would be wise for *all of us* for you to give up your son Bravo to the cops.

TOMAS

Not even, homes. You're deranged. Or desperate perhaps. I'm not giving up my mijo just cuz you have two sons that aren't worth shit.

DUKE OF EARL

(Warning) You better stop right there Tomas.

TOMAS

Come on Duke, you know I speak the truth. Johnny right here, he's got no heart, no constitution, he's got no juevos⁸³.

Johnny tries to lunge at Thomas but is held back by Sir Blunt.

⁸² Changed the to el.

⁸³ Changed bolas to juevos.

Johnny can't run the business while Hank's away. And don't get me started on El Henry.

EL JOHNNY

That's enough, ese!

TOMAS

Johnny, your brother Henry is a pacheco⁸⁴, perezoso⁸⁵, and small time thief that rolls with that fat ugly, vato, named Fausto. (*To Hank*) Don't tell me to give up my fearless son just to keep you in power. Your days are numbered, Hank. When you go away all bets are off.

EL HANK

So that's how you want to play it? You better be ready to back up your words ese. Pero sabes que? I think you're talking shit. You're gonna need the Mayans, El Mago, Locos R Us, and every little clica in the city to side with you to overthrow me. (*To everyone else*)

After all I have done for you heedless cabrones, are you vatos down with Tomas and ready to go against me?

El Mago, Las Mayans and Locos R Us say nothing.

Your silence answers my question. Tomas, do the right thing: give up your son. Barrio Eastwood por vida!

El Hank, Johnny, Duke and Blunt walk out and exit, with banner. Suddenly, out of the darkness, EL BRAVO steps into the light. He is a mean street warrior with a Mohawk and wears football shoulder pads, a carrillera of bullets across his chest with punk and Aztec accessories.

EL BRAVO

You culeros just stood there like frightened deer looking straight into the headlights. Why didn't you say anything to him?

TOMAS

Calmate⁸⁶ mijo. It's best we keep him guessing.

EL BRAVO

⁸⁴ Changed "tecato" to "Pacheco".

⁸⁵ Changed borracho to perezoso.

⁸⁶ Changed calmalit to calmate.

No jefe. It's simple. We all unite and we get rid of El Hank, *now*.

EL MAGO

It won't be that easy, Bravo.

EL BRAVO

We helped become the king and now he's got us working for him. Like his bitches. He has the glory, and we get las⁸⁷ scrapas. That's bullshit, aye!

TOMAS

And now he's dealing water.

EL BRAVO

Water? Well, there you go...more valuable than gold. Now is the time to hit him hard and take it all for ourselves. No mercy!

MAYAN

Nel. We should wait till he goes away.

EL BRAVO

Wait? Hold back for what, my cautious Mayan? Chale! He's got no one. A few corrupt politicians and chota is all. They're gonna have to deal with us.

LOCOS R US

What about his sons, Johnny and Henry?

EL BRAVO

Johnny is no warrior. He'll fold fast. And Henry is so useless, so wasted, so indifferent⁸⁸ he won't give a shit. He never has, why would he now? We got this!

TOMAS

My mijo's passion and coraje is contagious.

⁸⁷ Changed the to las.

⁸⁸ Added "so indifferent".

EL MAGO

He's drunk with anger.

TOMAS

But he's right. The time to hit them is now.

MAGO

I cannot join your cause until I consult with the Wizards. Adios.

Mago exits

TOMAS

Mago, wait!

BRAVO

No Jefe, let him go! La Mayan, are you with us?

MAYAN

Simon. My warrior girls are down.

TOMAS

Locos R Us?

LOCO R US

We're down, ese. We can recruit some more locos.

EL BRAVO

Orale. What I hear pleases me. It's time to take revenge against this fool who mocks and scorns us. The honor of the fight is all that counts, no matters. Now let us go. We will meet again.

They raise their fists in the air.

EVERYONE

Adalante.⁸⁹

Tomas, Bravo, La Mayan and Locos R Us exit. The car backs out through the metal gate.

SCENE 5. STREET ALLEY

Fausto, Lil Gus and El Ojo sit inside Fausto's troca, which is an old broken down art car truck⁹⁰. They are waiting for the Mexi-Clops to leave the carniceria.

OJO

Fausto, your troca smells kind of funny, aye.

LIL GUS

This is new car smell, right here.

OJO

Chale. It smells more like old farts⁹¹.

Vatos laugh.

FAUSTO

Shut the fuck up, vatos! We're conducting business right here. What time is it Lil Gus?

LIL GUS

Damn loco, get a watch.

FAUSTO

Just give me the time, fool.

LIL GUS

Just after twenty-three hundred.

FAUSTO

⁸⁹ Changed "Con Safos! Y Que!" to "Adalante".

⁹⁰ Changed SeaWorld truck to art car.

⁹¹ Changes dead Shamu to old farts.

Twenty-three y qué⁹²!?!

LIL GUS

Military time ese! We're on a mission.

FAUSTO

What time is it before I mess you up, pendejo⁹³.

LIL GUS

Just after elevens fool. The paisas should be coming out about now.

Beat.

OJO

Here they come!

FAUSTO

Act natural!

The OJO and LIL GUS try to “act natural” while Fausto tries to duck⁹⁴.

*DUCK!*⁹⁵

OJO & LIL GUS

*Ooooooh.*⁹⁶

The vatos slouch down in the car seats of the truck. TWO MEXI-CLOPS, Mexican cowboys with one eye walk past the truck, each carrying a cloth bag full of money in their hands. They pass by and exit.

FAUSTO

Bingo! We'll let them walk down the block, then we'll drive alongside and jump

⁹² Changed “say what” to “y qué”.

⁹³ Changed “kill you” to “mess you up”, Added pendejo.

⁹⁴ Added a stage direction.

⁹⁵ Added line.

⁹⁶ Added response.

them under the street bridge.

OJO

They won't see or know what hit them. Shaaa!

FAUSTO

Ok, Lil Gus start the troca.

Lil Gus is in the driver's seat. The truck won't start.

What the hell?

LIL GUS

It won't start!

FAUSTO

Try it again!

LIL GUS

It freakin' won't start!

FAUSTO

Didn't you just pick it up from the shop?

LIL GUS

Simon. But those puto boneheads didn't fix it right!

OJO

The "paisas" are gonna get away!

FAUSTO

Que me lleva la chingada! What do we do now?

LIL GUS

Let's run after them!

FAUSTO

Chale, homes. I'll run out of breath and die. Besides they're gonna hear me coming huffing and puffing! They got excellent hearing, cuz they only have one eye.

OJO

I got an idea! My nephew lives right here.

FAUSTO

Your nephew, *què chingado*⁹⁷? Does he have a car?

OJO

Come on, follow me. Before they get too far!

The three vatos exit. Suddenly, EL HENRY and CHIQUI appear on another part of

the stage. HENRY

You see that Chiqui?

CHIQUI

You mean the three horsemen of the Kleptopolypse? Where are they going?

HENRY

They went into that garage across the street.

Beat. Henry and Chiqui see the Fausto gang.

CHIQUI

Cono, I've seen everything now! Ha! Ha!

HENRY

Ha Ha! Ha! damn, I got to give that fool⁹⁸ credit for not giving up!

CHIQUI

Bendito! Looks like Cirque de Soufflé!

⁹⁷ Changed "what the fuck" to "*què chingado*".

⁹⁸ Changed Gordo to fool.

HENRY

Come on let's follow them!

Henry and Chiqui exit. The Mexi-Clops enter and walk center stage. After a few moments, they are followed by FAUSTO, LIL GUS and OJO riding on three small low rider bicycles!

LIL GUS

CHARGE!

OJO

Come on Fausto, you big, old clown⁹⁹!

FAUSTO

(Huffing and puffing) I'm right behind you, ese!

They catch up and surround the Mexi-Clops with their small bikes.

FAUSTO

Stop! Stop! Alto! Motherfuckers!

The Two Mexiclops bust up laughing when they see the vatos on small bikes.

MEXICLOP1

Que? Que dice?

MEXICLOP 2

Como?

FAUSTO

These vatos don't understand the Queen's Spanglish!

MEXICLOP 1

Que? Que dice?

MEXICLOPS 2

Como?

⁹⁹ Changed "fat tire" to "old clown".

OJO

Put your hands up putos!

LIL GUS

Give us your money!

FAUSTO

Or else you get a cap in your eye!

OJO

That was funny, Fausto.

FAUSTO

Danos tu pinche dinero ahorita, cabrones!

Fausto takes out his rusty revolver. The Two Mexiclops get spooked and hold up their hands. and go down on their knees. The Mexi-Clops give up their four money bags.

Vayense a la chingada!

The Mexiclops get up and run out. A happy Fausto and the gang gather to count the money.

FAUSTO

Ojo, I got to say these biklas were genius homes!

OJO

Simon, but you looked ridiculous, homes! Like a circus oso on a bike.

LIL GUS

You almost killed the mojados with laughter.

FAUSTO

Whatevers. We still made the score. And it's a big one. Look at this booty!

Fausto shows off the bags of money with pride. Out of the shadows, enter HENRY and CHIQUI wearing lucha libre masks and capes¹⁰⁰ to conceal their identity. They each have five foot long fighting sticks.

HENRY/CHIQUI

Now your fat is *our* fat.

Henry and Chiqui startle and surprise the robbers.

LIL GUS

What the fuck? Who are you putos with?

FAUSTO

No matters. I run with El Henry, the prince of Eastwood, so don't think of doing anything crazy.

HENRY

El Henry, you say? Screw that long hair puto¹⁰¹!

CHIQUI

He can't help you now.

OJO

(Bravely) You're gonna have to shoot us to get our shit.

FAUSTO

(Panic) No! Chale! Don't listen to this fool! Can't we just talk this over? Maybe we can break you vatos a small taste.

HENRY

Very admirable of you gordo but no gracias, we're taking it all!

Henry and Chiqui hit Lil Gus and Ojo with their sticks and take their money bags. Lil Gus and Ojo get up and ride off stage on their bikes. Fausto takes out his gun but shakes with fear.

¹⁰⁰ Added capes,

¹⁰¹ Changed tecato to puto.

FAUSTO

You yellow belly putos aren't getting my shit! I'll shoot you I swear!

Henry lowers his stick and approaches Fausto.

HENRY

Go ahead pull the trigger, you sack of chicharrones.

CHIQUI

You don't have the juevos¹⁰².

FAUSTO

Stand back! I'm seventeen with a bullet, and I'm gonna pull it!

Chiqui grabs the gun out of his trembling hands. Fausto crumbles with fear.

Don't hurt me! Don't hurt me! Here! Take all my money but please don't hurt me!

Fausto gives up his bags of money.

HENRY

Get the hell out of here, Pendejo¹⁰³!

*Henry kicks Fausto in the butt. Fausto hops on his bike and speeds away scared¹⁰⁴.
Henry and Chiqui laugh. They run away with the bags of money.*

SCENE 6. CLUB THUMP. *Weird party music, a mixture of Techno, Punk and Banda. This club scene takes over the whole playing area perhaps. Dancers slam dance. A stripper pole with a chola go-go dancer¹⁰⁵. The Club is owned by El Bravo's girlfriend, PRECIOSA a beautiful gypsy chola. EL BRAVO enters.*

PRECIOSA

Hey, baby. Wuz up?

EL BRAVO

¹⁰² Changed bolas to juevos.

¹⁰³ Changed Porky to Pendejo.

¹⁰⁴ Cut "like a scared hog" and Fausto "oinking".

¹⁰⁵ Added stripper pole and go-go dancer.

Looks like the place is jumpin' tonight.

PRECIOSA

Always. Come back to my office and let's party
in private.

EL BRAVO

Maybes.

PRECIOSA

Maybes? That's not like you baby.

She tries to kiss him and he pushes her away.

Hey! What's up with you?

EL BRAVO

Just got a lot on my minds, that's all. Get me a Lean¹⁰⁶.

PRECIOSA

Ay, you're all tense. Want a massage?

EL BRAVO

Just go!

PRECIOSA exits mad dogging him. A homeboy, SOTO, enters and shakes hands with Bravo.

EL BRAVO

Soto. Orale good to see you here, homes. So are your Soto Street boys ready?

SOTO

That's why I'm here homes. You know that we grew up and ran together as

¹⁰⁶ Added stage direction, Houston is known for a drink called lean which is a mixture of codeine with other ingredients like soda or candy.

chavalos and I have a lot of love for your pops¹⁰⁷ Tomas and the entire familia.

EL BRAVO

Yeah, you're reeking with love, ese. Get to the point. Are you vatos ready or not?

SOTO

I think your plan is a taste dangerous, aye.

EL BRAVO

Dangerous?

SOTO

I don't trust your allies, your timing is not right, la chota is looking for you and your whole plan is too frail to fight so formidable of an opponent like El Hank.

EL BRAVO

Are you for reals? I should break your head open right here! My plan is firme. My allies are down and trustworthy. I got their loyalty! I got my Old Man¹⁰⁸, I got Las Mayans, I got Locos R Us. They're all down, ese. And now you're saying your pussy ass¹⁰⁹ Soto

Boys don't have the courage to join us? But let me tell you something, you fucking maggot, I will remember this day. The day Soto and his boys, pussied out. We'll be back to repay you fuckers. In fact, your juevos¹¹⁰ will be mine, ese. They will be hanging on my rear-view mirror, curly pelos y todo. I'll put them on a string and play clickity-clacks with them or I'll feed them to my pit bull and make you watch bitch!

El Bravo pushes Soto to the floor and jumps on him putting a large knife to his nose. The music and dancing stops.

You're weak, Soto. You've always have been. A measure of a true vato is his ability to fight. Defend his honor. Now get the fuck out of here before I swear on my abuela's¹¹¹ grave, I'll go Yolanda Saldavar on your ass¹¹².

Bravo picks Soto up and kicks him out.

Coward! Anybody else? I'm all warmed up and ready to kick some ass!

¹⁰⁷ Changed "jefito" to "pops".

¹⁰⁸ Changed "jefito" to "old man".

¹⁰⁹ Changed "yellow belly" to "pussy ass".

¹¹⁰ Changed "bolas" to "juevos".

¹¹¹ Changed "jefito's" to "abuela's".

¹¹² Changed "machaca on your face" to "Yolanda Saldavar on your ass". Yolanda Saldavar shot Tejano superstar Selena Quintanilla in the back and ultimately killed her.

People look away in fear. Preciosa gives Bravo a water bottle.

PRECIOSA

Here, cool off.

Bravo takes a drink.

EL BRAVO

Fresh water? Where the hell did you get this?

PRECIOSA

El Hank .

EL BRAVO

Oh, really...

PRECIOSA

What's bothering you?

EL BRAVO

New world order, esa.

PRECIOSA

Whatever it is, I don't like it.

EL BRAVO

I don't need to hear this shit. I'm out.

Bravo throws the bottle of water down and tries to leave but is held back by Preciosa.

PRECIOSA

What the fuck? What have I done? Where is the color in your cheeks? Tell me, what has

robbed you of your appetite, your desire and your sleep? In bed, I hear you mumble cosas about war and revenge. I've seen your head full of sweat beads at night. I've heard you cry in victory and have also heard you cry over dead homies. Your alma is at war. Tu face¹¹³ says it all. You can talk to me, your Preciosa. Bravo, I have to ask...

EL BRAVO

What, my haina? What?

PRECIOSA

Why so excited? What is it that carries you away?

EL BRAVO

Why my ride¹¹⁴, my love, mi¹¹⁵ ranfla!

PRECIOSA

Your car? You're acting like a fool! Tell me what's wrong. If you can't, then you don't love me.

EL BRAVO

This is not the time for love, munecas, and besitos. Chale. There is only time for bloody noses and cracked crowns and I'll gladly spread them around.

PRECIOSA

Fine, don't love me. But I swear, I will find out what you're up to, remember I'm a gitana!

EL BRAVO

Preciosa. Once I'm armed and in my ranfla, I swear I love you till el end of the¹¹⁶ mundo. But check this out loca, tonight I gotta leave you. You got your bizness and I got mines¹¹⁷. You might be able to keep a secret, but you're still a haina, and hainas can't keep secrets. You can't spill it if you don't know what it is. And that is as far as I can trust you Preciosa. This is for reals.

¹¹³ Changed "cara" to "face".

¹¹⁴ Changes the first "ranfla" to ride.

¹¹⁵ Changed "my" to "mi".

¹¹⁶ Changed "fin del" to "end of the".

¹¹⁷ Changed "I got the streets" to "I got mines".

PRECIOSA

For reals? That far?

EL BRAVO

Not an inch mas. But listen to me right here. Wherevers I go, you will be there with me, my unfailing homegirl. Isn't that enough?

He touches his heart.

PRECIOSA

Por ahora¹¹⁸ Bravo, for now. I'll be waiting for you.

EL BRAVO

My precious gypsy.

They kiss passionately. They dance to a slow oldie song. "Stay Beside Me" by Richie Valens¹¹⁹. After a while, Bravo steps away and exits leaving Preciosa alone

SCENE 7. CHIQUI'S TAVERN

Henry and Chiqui come in laughing carrying the four money bags and take their lucha libre masks off. All the bar vatos and hoochies wonder what's going on.

EL HENRY

Ha ha! Did you see Fausto's face?

CHIQUI

I "run with El Henry"!

They hear Fausto coming in yelling with Ojo and Lil Gus.

FAUSTO (O.S.)

A curse to all thieves I say!

¹¹⁸ Changed first "for now" to "por ahora".

¹¹⁹ Changed "Something On Your Mind" by Big Jay McNeely to "Stay Beside Me" by Ritchie Valens.

EL HENRY

Shhhh! He's coming! Hide the masks and money, Chiqui.

Chiqui hides the lucha libre masks and the bags of money behind the bar. Fausto enters followed by Lil Gus and El Ojo.

HENRY

Well, well, well...look at the sack of shit¹²⁰ that just wobbled in. Sweating like my tia in church¹²¹. Where have you've been?

FAUSTO

I've been to hell and back! Give me a tequilazo! Can't you see my legs are trembling? A curse on all thieves, I say!

HENRY

What happened Slim Jim?

Chiqui gives Fausto a tequila shot. Fausto spits it out.

FAUSTO

Cabrón! This ain't tequila! It's dirty tap water! All vatos are cheaters and schemers, but a thief is worse than watered down pisto!

CHIQUE

What are you mumbling about?

HENRY

Yeah, what's the matter, Fausto?

FAUSTO

What's the matter? He says, "What's the matter"? There are three hombres in this bar who had the juevos¹²² to steal ten g's tonight.

HENRY

¹²⁰ Changes "manteca" to "shit".

¹²¹ Changed "a Puerco under el sol" to "tia in church".

¹²² Changed "bolas" to "juevos".

Ten G's? Damn¹²³, Fausto! Where is it, homie? Where's the money?

FAUSTO

“Where is it”, he asks! Where is it? It was jacked from us!

HENRY

No way¹²⁴!

CHIQUI

The king of thieves was robbed by thieves?

HENRY

(Mock surprise) No! Say it isn't so!

FAUSTO

Sad but true, ese. A whole gang.

HENRY

How many?

FAUSTO

A dozen cabrones attacked the three of us. I'll be damned if I didn't fight all twelve of them for like two hours straight! It's a miracle I didn't get killed. I got away because of my amazing speed, tu sabes. My filero as cut up as una¹²⁵ hacksaw.

Check this out!

Fausto takes out a hacksawed knife.

It was the best fighting, I've ever did done, but even my best wasn't enough. *(To Ojo and Lil Gus)* Ask these fine vatos right here. If they don't tell you the truth, then I'm as skinny as a stripper pole.

¹²³ Changed “orale” to “damn”.

¹²⁴ Changed “hijole” to “no way”.

¹²⁵ Changed “a” to “una”.

Lil Gus and Ojo nurse their heads.

LIL GUS

The three of us got jumped by...

FAUSTO

...by at least sixteen vatos. I'm not lying.

CHIQUI

Sixteen? Pobrecitos!

LIL GUS

We was counting the money –

OJO

--when out of nowhere, wearing lucha libre masks, came two low-life¹²⁶ vatos.

FAUSTO

Two at first and then more and more vatos showed up.

HENRY

Ooooof¹²⁷! I pray you didn't kill any of them.

FAUSTO

Too late for praying loco. I peppered sprayed two of them for sures. I shanked another four that were wearing Texans¹²⁸ hoodies. You know, the real nice ones?

HENRY

NFL authorized?

FAUSTO

¹²⁶ Changed "yellow belly" to "low-life".

¹²⁷ Changed "dios mios" to "ooooof".

¹²⁸ Changed "Raiders" to "Texans".

Simon. Henry, these four vatos in Texans hoodies threw everything they had at me. I didn't sweat it. I just stepped asina. They missed me and they went flying.

HENRY

They missed *you*?

Everyone laughs.

FAUSTO

Are you listening to me, Henry?

HENRY

I'm all ears, friend.

FAUSTO

Good. This shit is worth paying attention to. You might learn something. Anyways, these nine vatos in hoodies I was telling you about-

HENRY

You said four.

FAUSTO

They started to run away like chavalas, and when I caught up to them, I wasted all eleven of them.

HENRY

Eleven? A soccer team just grew out of four!

FAUSTO

But as the devil would have it, a hundred vatos wearing leprechaun green jumped me from behind. It was such a dark night that you couldn't see your hand in front of your face, aye.

HENRY

A hundred? These lies are as huge as the vato who tells them. A big mountain of bull-

shit!

FAUSTO

Are you loco, homes? Are you insane in the membrane? Isn't the truth the truth? Or like my man Jack would say, "You can't handle the truth".

HENRY

How did you know there were a hundred vatos wearing leprechaun green when it was so dark you couldn't see your hand in front of your face? What do you have to say about that? Or as my man Will would say, "what sayest thou to this?"

CHIQUI

Yeah gordo, what "sayest thou to this?"

Beat.

FAUSTO

Shit, I wouldn't answer you even if you offered me two giant pepperoni pizzas with chorizo and a pitcher of Bud Light. Hells no!

HENRY

Ok. I've had enough of this bullshit.

CHIQUI

Me too.

Henry steps on a stool.

HENRY

Fausto, you red face coward, you flattener of mattresses, you breaker of horse's backs, you "all you can eat buffet" warrior, you equator around the waist...

EVERYONE

Ohhhh.

FAUSTO

Enough! You ponytailed creme filled churro, you bohemian raspado, you lazy Mexican¹²⁹, you ball¹³⁰-less puppy dog, you empty can of malt liquor, you condom wearing, tax paying, church going, Hispanic motherfucker!

EVERYONE

Ohhhh.

HENRY

Are you finished?

FAUSTO

Finito.

HENRY

Good. Kick back and catch your breath because I got one thing to say.

CHIQUI

You better listen good, Fausto.

FAUSTO

I'm all ears.

CHIQUI

And nalgas...

Everyone laughs. Henry goes behind the bar with Chiqui. Henry takes out the lucha libre masks from behind the bar and places them on the bar.

HENRY

A hundred vatos, you say? Fuck that¹³¹! The *two* of us jumped the three of your sorry asses, took your prize without breaking a sweat. We got it now, and we can show it to you right here on the table.

Chiqui puts a wad of cash and the four bags on the bar.

¹²⁹ Changed “fake cholo” to “lazy Mexican”.

¹³⁰ Changed “bola” to “ball”.

¹³¹ Changed “Chale” to “Fuck that”.

CHIQUE
Ah, smells good.

Henry goes to Lil Gus and Ojo.

HENRY

You two vatos put up a brave fight- not! But you Fausto, you ran away so fast and so sure footed, you looked like your pants were of hire¹³². You screamed like a little girl that lost her doll¹³³. You even left your pistol¹³⁴ on the ground, pendejo¹³⁵.

Henry shows Fausto his rusty pirate gun.

And you had the brilliant idea¹³⁶ to hacksaw your pocketknife¹³⁷ so it looked like you fought.

Henry holds up Fausto's hacked knife.

What story¹³⁸, what trick, what hiding place can you possibly find to hide you from your open and obvious shame?

EVERYONE

Yeah, Fausto.

CHIQUE

How are you gonna get out of this tight fit?

EVERYONE

Yeah, Fausto...

All eyes on Fausto. Beat...

FAUSTO

Shiiiiit, I knew it was you two vatos all along!

Everybody busts up.

¹³² Changed "looked like a squealing pig running from the slaughterhouse" to "your pants were on fire".

¹³³ Changed "muneca" to "doll".

¹³⁴ Changed "cuete" to "pistol".

¹³⁵ Changed "sack of lard" to "pendejo".

¹³⁶ Changed "bolas" to "brilliant idea".

¹³⁷ Changed "filero" to "knife".

¹³⁸ Changed "cuento" to "story".

Look, you know, I'm as brave as that Moctezuma vato, but you gotta listen to your instincts. My instincts told me not to kill the true prince. I was only a coward out of instinct! But God Damn it, I'm so glad you have the cheese! Chiqui! Lock the doors, let's party!

Henry hugs Fausto. Everybody cheers.

HENRY

(halfheartedly¹³⁹) To la vida loca!

EVERYBODY

To la vida loca!

A knock on the metal door is heard.

EVERYBODY

La Chota!!!

CHIQUI

Relax everybody! I'll go see who it is.

Chiqui goes out and quickly comes back.

Henry, it's your brother Johnny.

EL JOHNNY enters.

EL HENRY

(*Surprised*) Johnny, what are you doin' here?

JOHNNY

Henry, I need to talk to you, in private.

Fausto gets in Johnny's face.

FAUSTO

¹³⁹ Henry'd choices have been labeled "vide loca" by his father. He cheers to it but it's not his term.

If you want to talk to El Henry, you're gonna have to get through me, homes.

HENRY

It's okay, Fausto. Let him through.

El Henry and El Johnny go outside the bar to talk. They look at each other for a moment.

JOHNNY

Henry.

HENRY

Johnny. You've become a man, wow¹⁴⁰.

JOHNNY

It's been that long, ese.

HENRY

Simon, it's been that long. What brings you to this side of town, little prince?

JOHNNY

Dad¹⁴¹ needs you.

HENRY

So he does suddenly? Why did he send you?

JOHNNY

Actually, he doesn't know I'm here.

HENRY

What's going on?

¹⁴⁰ Changed "carnilito" to "wow".

¹⁴¹ Changed "apa" to "dad".

JOHNNY

Serious business, bro¹⁴². Come tomorrow to the safe house.

HENRY

And if I don't?

JOHNNY

As your brother, I'm asking you to come and talk to our Jefe. The familia needs you.
Rebellion is in the air.

HENRY

I don't give a shit. You know me and (*mockingly*¹⁴³) "El Jefito" don't see eye to eye.
He doesn't like my life, my choices or my freinds¹⁴⁴ and I don't like his.

JOHNNY

Simon, I understand. But let me tell you, our jefe has changed, aye.

HENRY

Fuck that, dude¹⁴⁵. Don't be naïve. A leopard can't change his spots. Now go.¹⁴⁶

JOHNNY

Nel. I hate being your younger brother, Henry.

*HENRY doesn't respond.*¹⁴⁷

It pisses me off the way they use your name on the street, with disdain, with
disregard, and with disrespect.

HENRY

Me? Disrespected? So what? I don't give a fuck. (*Beat*) By who?

JOHNNY

¹⁴² Changed "carnal" to "bro".

¹⁴³ Added mockingly because Henry doesn't believe in the hierarchy or calling his father El Jefe.

¹⁴⁴ Changed "mi vida" to "my life, my choices or my friends".

¹⁴⁵ Changed "chale, carnalito" to "Fuck that, dude".

¹⁴⁶ Removed "Andale".

¹⁴⁷ Added stage direction and removed Henry's "Porque".

By El Bravo of Barrio Hotspur. He's talking shit about you. He laughs at you. He laughs at me.

HENRY

El Bravo of Barrio Hotspur, you say? He's always had a bug up his ass for me, ever since we were kids¹⁴⁸.

JOHNNY

He disrespected you, our father, our familia.

HENRY

And so it begins...

EL JOHNNY

Henry. Will you come tomorrow then?

EL HENRY

I'll go... I'll go for you Johnny.

EL JOHNNY

Gracias. Viva barrio Eastwood.

Johnny hugs Henry and exits quickly through the bar. El Henry slowly returns to the bar. Fausto approaches him.

FAUSTO

Everything cool, Henry? What did your carnalito want?

HENRY

My brother wants me to go talk to my Dad¹⁴⁹. Surely there is a situation¹⁵⁰ and now he needs my help.

FAUSTO

You know that's right. You're the next in line. The heir apparent. You're gonna

¹⁴⁸ Changed "chavalillos" to "kids".

¹⁴⁹ Changed "Jefe" to "Dad".

¹⁵⁰ Changed "pedo" to "situation".

inherit all the haters. Aren't you scared, homes?

HENRY

I'm not in my (*mockingly*¹⁵¹) "Jefe's" game. I don't give a shit who's king of the hill.

FAUSTO

Your jefito is the king and he wants to stay that way.

HENRY

With my help.

FAUSTO

Fuck yeah. You're his blood, ese. You're his oldest mijo. What are you gonna say tomorrow?

HENRY

I don't know, Fausto

FAUSTO

You can practice on me!

HENRY

With you? How?

FAUSTO

Will play pretend. I'll act as your Jefe and you be my son, ok? I'll put this stool on the table and pretend like its my throne.

CHIQUI

Cuidado, don't break it!

FAUSTO

Quiet, you pint pushin' enana. You're gonna see some fine acting right here.

¹⁵¹ Added "mockingly".

Fausto sits on the “throne” and acts all cool and slow like El Hank.

Henry, thank you for coming mijó.

HENRY

Why do you summon me, Jefe?

FAUSTO

Henry, I do not only marvel where thou spendest thy time, but also how thou art accompanied. For like the cilantro, the more it is trodden on, the faster it grows. So youth, the more it is wasted, the sooner it wears. I knoweth you are my son. Your mother sayeth so, and the wicked glint in your eye and pendejo expression on your face prove it. You knoweth what tar is? The shit you put on roofs. Well, it makes you filthy and so does the company you keep. However, I do see a glimmer of hope. I have heard you are often seeneth with a firme, fearless and handsome vato.

HENRY

Who’s this you speaketh of father?

FAUSTO

A stout vato, a little overweight, but very noble. I think his name is...

CHIQUE

Fatso!

Everyone cracks up. Fausto gives Chique a dirty look.

FAUSTO

Nay, I remember me his name to be Fausto. A good name of good character. Mijo, I see goodness in him. If one can tell a tree by its fruit and a fruit by its tree, then this portly vato is de aca. Stay with him, hangeth with him, buy him pints of brew, give him smoke, and most importantly get him laid twice in a fortnight!

Everybody cracks up.

HENRY

Damn¹⁵²! That's the worst impression of my father I have ever seen. You don't sound like my Dad¹⁵³. You sound like those putos that used to do theatre in Balboa Park, the Old...

EVERYONE

Oop!

HENRY

English players or something... Now, you play me and I'll play my jefe.

FAUSTO

You firing me already? Shit, that was some good classical acting right there. I studied under Sir George Lopez. Orale, I'm ready. I'll play you.

Henry sits down and acts like a king.

HENRY

Now Henry, whence come you?

FAUSTO

My noble lord of Barrio Eastwood. I cometh from Chiqui's Joint.

Fausto looks at Chiqui.

Where they serve watered down pisto.

Everybody laughs.

HENRY

The complaints I hear about you are grievous.

FAUSTO

My lord, they are false! (*To vatos*) Hey, do I sound wimpy enough?

The vatos laugh.

HENRY

¹⁵² Changed "chale" to "damn".

¹⁵³ Changed "Jefe" to "Dad".

Ungrateful boy come closer so I can look at you. My son who has fallen from grace.
Come, sit at my feet.

Fausto sits at Henry's feet.

There is a devil that haunts you in the likeness of an old fat man, an obese fool. Why do you associate with this trunk of bodily fluids? This swollen sack of pedos? This barrel of mierda? This plastic bag of broken tamales? This ugly excuse of an hombre? What is he good for besides nothing?

The vatos crack up.

FAUSTO

My lord, I still don't know who you mean?

HENRY

The loathsome criminal, corrupter of youth, Fausto!

FAUSTO

My lord, this vato I know. But to say I know more harm in him than in myself, were to say more than I know. If drinking wine and mescal is a fault, then God help the wicked. If chasing women is a sin, then all men are going to hell. If being fat is ugly, then half of San Antonio¹⁵⁴ wins that prize. No father get rid of Chiqui, Lil Gus, Ojo and all these borrachos. But sweet Fausto, kind Fausto, loving Fausto, thou must not get rid of him.

HENRY

I can. Someday, perhaps I will.

FAUSTO

Say what? If they get rid of him, thy get rid of ...VIDA LOCA!

EVERYBODY

Vida Loca!

Everyone laughs and continues to drink and party.

¹⁵⁴ Changed "El Cajon" to "San Antonio".

SCENE 8. MEETING OF REBEL GENERALES

EL Tomas and his son El Bravo meet with three other gangs Las Mayans, Locos R Us and El Mago and his hand puppet, WIZARD. They all want to overthrow the Hank/Barrio Eastwood kingdom. A fire inside a metal barrel lights the rebels. A black banner with "Barrio H" in Old English script hangs nearby.

TOMAS

Generales, I'm happy to announce that El Mago and the Wizards, have decided to join our cause!

LOCOS/MAYAN

Orale!

EL BRAVO

The end of Hank and his familia commences today. The rebellion is growing. Our commitments to each other are real. Our allies are solid. *(To Mago)* Mago, who is this little vato?

MAGO

This is the leader of the Wizards.

EL BRAVO

This is the leader of the Wizards? He's a hand puppet!

We hear the deepest, scariest voice come from the puppet.

WIZARD

WHO YOU CALLING A HAND PUPPET, MOTHER FUCKER? I'M A WIZARD!
I'LL KICK YOUR ASS RIGHT HERE...PUNK BITCH!

This totally creeps out El Bravo but continues...

EL BRAVO

Ok...welcome. Let's get down to business.

MAGO

Espera, I knew this day would come, Bravo. I saw it in a vision that you would want

to be our head gallo.

EL BRAVO

Did you see this “vision” in your crystal ball or que?

MAGO

I don’t expect you to comprehend the powers of the occult, Bravo. You are all muscle and some brains but I’m an extraordinary individual with unique powers.

EL BRAVO

You –are- full- of -shit.

TOMAS

Mijo, calmate¹⁵⁵...

BRAVO

He ain’t shit, Pop¹⁵⁶! Just cuz he went to Cuba.

MAGO

Coo-ba.

EL BRAVO

Ex-coose-me! Sabes que loco? You’re creeping me out. I should shut your fucking hocico right now!

El Bravo rushes El Mago. El Mago lifts his hand and Bravo stops in his tracks. He falls to his knees, turning blue, choking!

TOMAS

That’s enough, Mago!

El Mago lowers his hand. El Bravo gasps for air. The Wizard laughs.

¹⁵⁵ Changed “trucha” to “calmate”.

¹⁵⁶ Changed “apa” to “Pop”.

WIZARD

HA! HA! HA!
MAGO

You see, Bravo? I am an extraordinary individual. Don't fuck with me, por-favor....

TOMAS

Nobody here questions your abilities Mago. Let us get to the business at hand. Did you bring the map of Tlalco City?

MAGO

Simon.

Mago gives the map to La Mayan to unfold. It's a large hand painted map on burlap that El Mago has designed. El Mago points with a stick.

Once we overthrow Hank and his familia the entire city is free for us to divide. Imagine if you will, the city broken up into four even parts. El Mago, that's me, and the Wizards will control of the Inner Loop. Las Mayans will control of the Outer Loop, everything between 6-10 and the Beltway. Locos R Us will get the area between the Beltway and 99. (then quickly without making eye contact) Except for the Ship Channel and LaPorte, you, Bravo, and your father Tomas will get that.¹⁵⁷

BRAVO

Wait, what the fuck!¹⁵⁸ The Ship Channel and LaPorte are under water and what isn't is just busted down old refineries.¹⁵⁹ You expect us to sell shit to the fishes¹⁶⁰? The fucking Ship Channel¹⁶¹? No fucking way, ese. We planned all this and we got all the klikas together. We deserve more territory.

TOMAS

My mijo is right. We want the Inner Loop.

MAYAN

We're down with that.

¹⁵⁷ Changed San Diego locations to Houston locations.

¹⁵⁸ Added "What the fuck".

¹⁵⁹ Added context to the new world they live in.

¹⁶⁰ Changed "dead people" to "fishes".

¹⁶¹ Changed "cemetery" to "ship channel".

LOCOS R US

Whatever Tomas wants.

BRAVO

*And we want all of Hank's water distribution centers and oil wells.*¹⁶²

MAGO

No way. That's Loco.

Bravo touches his weapon. Tension.

BRAVO

You got a problem with that, Mago?

MAGO

Well, what do me and the Wizards get?¹⁶³

BRAVO

We'll give you Montrose.¹⁶⁴

MAGO

We'll agree to your demands for now. Tomas, watch your mijo's temper. It could be the end of him and you.

BRAVO

Whatevers.

TOMAS

Then it's on. In two nights, we attack. This is the end of El Hank and the beginning of our coalition.

¹⁶² Added oil wells.

¹⁶³ Added the Mago's question.

¹⁶⁴ Added Bravo's reply.

EVERYBODY

Con safos! Y que! Hasta la Muerte!

BRAVO

Viva Barrio Hotspur!

EVERYBODY

Viva Barrio Hotspur!!!

They all run out. Moments later, El OJO emerges out of a garbage pile holding a can of sniffing glue. He is very high and addresses the audience.

OJO

Chingado, I'm aaaalllll fucked up aye! But I know what I heard. It's true, rebellion is in the air! Gotta go and warn El Hank or else all is lost! Oh! (To audience) You all can get up now take a whiz or go get an ice-cold chela or raspa¹⁶⁵. And one more thing, DON'T DRINK THE WATER. See you back here in fifteen.

Ojo runs off. Lights fade to black.

ACT 2

SCENE 1. SAFE HOUSE of BARRIO EASTCHEAP.

El Hank is sitting on his "throne". El Johnny and Sir Blunt are present. El Henry enters the court and stand before his father.

EL HANK

Gentlemen leave us alone. I need to speak to El Henry in private. But stay close by.

Johnny and Sir Blunt leave.

I don't know if God is punishing me for something I've done, but the way you live your life has me convencido that you are only meant for one purpose in this mundo: To be God's venganza against me for all my misdeeds. Why else would such despicable and lazy¹⁶⁶ actions, such wasteful pleasures, and such base company become associated with

¹⁶⁵ Added raspa.

¹⁶⁶ Added lazy.

my first-born son?

HENRY

I didn't come here to get lectured, Dad¹⁶⁷.

EL HANK

Henry, your payasadas run completely against the dignity and courage of your ancestors. Your pendejadas have cost your proper place on my council. Everyone says that you're done, washed-up, a mere civilian. That's the word on the street. So, it's Jefe to you.¹⁶⁸

HENRY

My life is my life.¹⁶⁹

EL HANK

No, your life is my life cabron! The only thing a vato has in this pinche mundo is his reputation. You think I would have gotten respect, if everyone on the street knew what I was up to? No, my affairs were always on the down low, always undercover, clean, careful -not sloppy. I was rarely seen but admired. Like the pinche Pope. People would say, "That's El Hank. That's one firme vato that has respect and a reputation de aca." But you, Henry, have ruined your reputation by running around with base criminals. There's not an eye in the barrio that isn't weary of looking at you. No eyes except mine, who have wished to see you more. But now my eyes are acting against me, blinding me with foolish tears.

HENRY

Tears? What about mine? I never saw you! When I was a kid¹⁷⁰, all I heard was how people feared you and how "chignon"¹⁷¹ it was to have a "jefito"¹⁷² like you. But it wasn't. I was lonely. So I said, "Fuck it, I don't want any of this noise", and I began drinking and smoking¹⁷³ myself into oblivion¹⁷⁴. Every shot of tequila, every beer I chugged¹⁷⁵, every wallet I stole, every needle I jammed in my arm¹⁷⁶ was because of

¹⁶⁷ Changed "Jefe" to Dad".

¹⁶⁸ Added Hank demanding to be called "Jefe".

¹⁶⁹ Translated the Spanish to English.

¹⁷⁰ Changed "chavalo" to "kid".

¹⁷¹ Added quotes.

¹⁷² Added quotes.

¹⁷³ Added "smoking".

¹⁷⁴ Changed "mi vida loca" to "oblivion".

¹⁷⁵ Added "beer chugged".

¹⁷⁶ Changed "brazos" to "arm".

you! And now you need me? Shit!

Beat.

EL HANK

I'm going to jail, Henry.

HENRY

Jail?

EL HANK

The Hispanics got me on a bullshit charge¹⁷⁷. Pinche permits, always moving the goal post¹⁷⁸. Now, the other large clicas are licking their chops, waiting for me to disappear. Especially Tomas and his firme son.

HENRY

El Bravo?

EL HANK

Simon. Your old friend.

HENRY

He's no friend. He's a hater and disses me any chance he gets.

EL HANK

Bravo should envy you but instead he dismisses you. He wants what is yours, Henry. Don't be naïve, once I'm gone, he's going to move in and take our shit, *your* shit.

HENRY

Not my shit. Your shit. You're the drug dealer. You're the gun runner. That's your world, and I don't want any part of it.

EL HANK

¹⁷⁷ Removed "utility theft".

¹⁷⁸ Added "Pinche permits".

Don't be a pendejo, mijo! When the Gringos left, they took everything with them. *Everything!* The technology, the cars, even the pinche plumbing!¹⁷⁹ They left us with scraps.¹⁸⁰ Then the Hispanics flew in like vultures, gnawed on the carcass, leaving the barrios nothing! Nothing! Nothing but drogas and guns and yes, that's what I do! That's how I survive! That's my business. That's my kingdom.

EL HENRY

And that's why you're feared but not admired.

EL HANK

Simon! And I will do *anything* to stay on top. But sabes que? I'm gonna tell you something that you don't know, so you better move your long grenyas out of your eyes and ears and listen carefully. What is the most precious resource in Sin Aztlan, more valuable than guns and drugs?

EL HENRY

Water.

EL HANK

Simon, el agua. H-2-O.

EL HENRY

I drink Tequila.

EL HANK

You think that's funny? The Hispanics drink clean water they buy from the Gringos while we drink "toilet to tap" chingadera, if we can even get it. The Hispanics would rather have us die of overdoses, kill ourselves than to thrive and live. Chavalillos in the barrio die every day, of dehydration, of disease. Well not anymore, I'm buying fresh water from North Sin Aztlan and I'm distributing it at no cost to the barrio. Helping the barrio. That's why the Hispanics are putting me away.

EL HENRY

That's very honorable of you D...¹⁸¹ jefe.

¹⁷⁹ Removed "the electricity".

¹⁸⁰ Added "they left us with scraps".

¹⁸¹ Added "D..." because it's hard for him to say and remember.

The Duke of Earl enters.

DUKE OF EARL

Despensa jefe...

EL HANK

I said no interruptions!

DUKE OF EARL

This tecato is here with some very disturbing news.

EL HANK

Orale, let him in.

Sir Blunt and Johnny bring in El Ojo.

OJO

Hey Henry.

EL HANK

“ Hey Henry?” You know this tecato?

HENRY

Simon. I vouch for him. His name is Ojo. This vato knows everything going on the streets.

EL HANK

Vamos a ver. Speak. What is it?

OJO

Last night, there was a meeting between the other big clicas. They were talking about hitting all your operations and taking you out in two nights.

EL HANK

They're not waiting for me to go away. Tell me, was El Tomas there?

OJO

Simon.

HENRY

Was his son there?

OJO

El Bravo you speak of? Simon. That vato is chingon I gotta say. The motherfucker is determined and focused. He's the brawn behind this pedo. Let's just say I would want that vato on my side if...

HENRY

Enough! Obviously, everybody is smitten by this so called cholo knight, this infant warrior, this Mars in baby clothing, this blind general leading his tropas to Hell. His ambition, his thirst for power, his illusion of grandeur must be halted!

EL HANK

I see the fog of apathy evaporating from your soul, Mijo. Blunt!

BLUNT

Yes, my lord?

EL HANK

Hook up this flea with whatever he wants for the information. Now get the fuck out of here.

They all exit. El Hank and El Henry are left alone. They both reflect for a while in silence.

I'm at war, Henry.

El Henry takes a long time to respond.

HENRY

No jefe, *we're* at war. Forgive me for turning against you. You're not the monster¹⁸² I thought you were. Let me redeem myself by beating these putos who dare attack us...

¹⁸² Changed "monstro" to "monster".

Sir Blunt, Duke of Earl and El Johnny enter and listen. El Henry is slowly starting to weave Spanish back into his speech, a little more confidence at a time. Some words are hard for him to say, remember, wrap his tongue around.

..and at the end of our chingon victory, I'll come to you and proudly say that I am your mijo. I will wear a wife beater stained with blood, and my face will be hidden by a bloody mascara which when washed away, will clean me of my shame. Your disappointing Henry will meet this brave Bravo in battle and he will surrender every last one of his glories to me, no matters how small, or I'll tear them right out of his pinche heart. I would rather die a hundred-thousand muertes than break even the smallest part of this pledge, this promesa de sangre to you, to La Familia, to Barrio Eastwood.

EL HANK

My prayers have been answered.

They hug.

EL HANK/HENRY

Por Vida y por Sangre.

Sir Blunt, Duke of Earl and El Johnny look on with pride and welcome Henry back into the Familia.

EVERYONE

Por Vida y por Sangre!

SCENE 2. CHIQUI'S JOINT

The bar is in full swing. Chiqui works the bar. The Hooche and a Vato sit and drink. Fausto holds court with Lil Gus and El Ojo.

CHIQUI

Fausto!

FAUSTO

Que?

CHIQUI

This morning I noticed that I'm missing two cases of tequila in the back. Do you know anything about that?

FAUSTO

What? You saying it's *me*?

CHIQUI

You slept here last night. Yes, I'm saying it's *you*!

FAUSTO

After all I do for you vieja? I bring you customers, I bring you runaway girls that become your dancers and I entertain these fools so they don't vandalize. You should be paying *me*!

Chiqui takes a new tequila bottle out of Fausto's big man purse.

OJO

You one greedy motherfucker, dog.

CHIQUI

Y esto? Vino del cielo?

FAUSTO

(*Embarrassed*) Ok. You got me. But what happened to all the money you and El Henry stole from me? I'm still traumatized from that night. You know if that skinny puto El Henry was here right now I would give him a piece of my mind. I would kick his little puto ass.

El Henry enters.

HENRY

I'm right here you big Blimp.

FAUSTO

(*Surprised*) Oh, shit!

HENRY

Pinche Fausto, why do you steal from dear Chiqui who has given you a roof over your head and food for your panza.

FAUSTO

I'll pay her back as soon as you give me back my money. Where is it?

HENRY

I gave it back to the Mexiclops.

FAUSTO

Say what? Chingado, who made you Mother Teresa?

CHIQUI

Henry, how about a beer?

HENRY

Nel. I just came to let you vatos know that I won't be coming here anymore.

Everyone gasps with confusion.

La Familia is in trouble. We're at war against the rebels of Barrio Hotspur. I am now in charge of my father's war council.

FAUSTO

You gotta do what you gotta do, Henry. Hey vato, as your partner in crime you gonna give me a post, right? Like personal trainers of hainas or something?

HENRY

Chale. I need real barrio warriors not two-bit ladrones.

FAUSTO

Ayyyy, que touchy!

LIL GUS

You almost hurt my feelings, homes.

All the vatos laugh.

HENRY

(*Serious*) This is some serious shit vatos! I leave the door open for anyone of you vatos to step up for me as I have done for you. But make no mistake about it, I will remember this day if any of you just sits on the sidelines. Mi “vida loca”¹⁸³ is over. No regrets. I am El Henry, son of El Hank, the prince of Eastwood and la Familia always comes first. Ay los watcho.

El Henry leaves. The vatos are stunned.

FAUSTO

Damn...I guess the vato means it.

CHIQUI

(*Serious*) Of course he means it! He is not one of us anymore. He never was. We should be grateful that he wasted his time with us. He is a true warrior prince and now he knows it. Viva El Henry!

Chiqui lifts a beer can.

EVERYBODY

Viva El Henry!

SCENE 3- BARRIO HOTSPUR SAFE HOUSE.

El Bravo prepares for war sharpening his large knife. Locos R Us is also there.

EL BRAVO

Our day is coming upon us.
LOCOS R US

Simon. I feel it in my bones.

EL BRAVO

Where’s El Mago?

¹⁸³ Added quotes.

EL Tomas enters.

TOMAS

El Mago is not coming. I just got word that El Mago and the wizards
are out.

EL BRAVO

He punked us! I never trusted that weirdo, anyways.

TOMAS

And I think he didn't trust you.

EL BRAVO

Fuck him and his voodoo dolls! We don't need him.

TOMAS

Mijo, maybe we should postpone el pedo. Mago was going to bring the majority of the
cuetes and ammo.

La Mayan enters with her bow and arrow.

MAYAN

No need. Me and my girls got it covered.

EL BRAVO

Asi me gusta! Las Mayans always find a way. No Jefe, we ain't postponing. That only
shows weakness. We keep the plan asi, as is.

*A barrio Hotspur soldier named MR. V enters. He is a professional killer and wears
skeleton tights, a skull mask and a long leather coat with army boots. He carries
futuristic weapons.*

TOMAS

Mr. V., Que paso? What have you heard? What have you seen?

MR. V

I think Hank and la Familia were tipped off. They're on red alert and I've seen their soldiers patrolling las calles with game faces on.

EL BRAVO

What else?

MR V.

I saw el mero Hank himself, in full war mode with his generales. They were riding heavy and packing to the nines. The streets are quiet but everyone knows something is going down.

EL BRAVO

What about that sad excuse of a vato, El Henry? Is he hiding in a bar between two soft breasts?

Mr V.

Nel pastel. I hardly recognized the vato. He cleaned up. He stood under the streetlight, and I swear I saw an Aztec warrior ready for battle.

BRAVO

Stop right there! Enough praise for that weak puto. This shit only makes me crazier! I'm going to go toe to toe with that fool. We'll meet and never separate, till one of us falls down as a corpse. Hasta la muerte. To the streets!

TOMAS

Mijo!

BRAVO

To the streets!

All exit.

SCENE 4. LA FAMILIA STREET CAMP

*El Hank and SIR BLUNT are all geared up in their futuristic war attire
(Cholo/Biker meets English Knight/ Steam Punk.)*

EL HANK

(Proudly) Sir Blunt. How bloody the sun looks as it peers over the hills. The day looks
pale-it must be sick to see the sun in such a mood.

SIR BLUNT

The winds of war are blowing, my lord.

EL HANK

And they blow in our favor now that my son Henry has returned to his rightful place.
I feel triumphant no matters.

SIR BLUNT

His years of vida loca have not dulled his courage or honor. He's just like I knew he
would be clever, strong and a natural leader.

*El Henry enters. He has shaved his head bald and now wears a white tank top, a
Pendelton shirt, high waisted khakis with suspenders, dark wrap around shades and
shiny black Stacy Adams shoes. He is armed with a large knife and a futuristic
handgun. He looks like a brave Cholo warrior of the future!*

EL HANK

Orale Henry you look firme, mijo. Like a true old school cholo warrior.

HENRY

I'm ready, jefe. Let us deliver Barrio Hotspur the fate it truly deserves. I got all
our soldiers in formation and ready, jefe.

An offstage voice startles the vatos.

VOICE (OS)

Good, because they might attack you as early as tonight!

*Everyone draws their weapons. EL Mago enters with his Wizard
puppet.*

EL HANK

Mago? Wizard? What the fuck? You came here to die or what?

El MAGO

Stand down Hank. We came to join you.

HENRY

Is this a trick Mago?

El MAGO

No! Henry, nice to see you back with your Papi which was the right thing to do.

HENRY

Mago, why are you here? Why did you leave the rebel coalition?

EL MAGO

The rebels are being led by Tomas' son, El Bravo. He's got heart but he's too impulsive and too volatile to lead with calma. I'm not going to go to war against your familia with a rabid dog leading me down to hell. El Hank, El Henry I pledge my loyalty to you and will do whatever to stop the rebellion.

El Mago bows down.

TOMAS

What about him?

WIZARD

I ALSO PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO BARRIO EASTCHEAP.

The Wizard also bows.

EL HANK

Mago, I was saddened that you were part of the rebellion, but now I'm glad you have come to your senses, and your help will be appreciated and rewarded.

EL MAGO

I have a plan that might prevent bloodshed on both sides. The Mayor and the police are still looking for the killer of the Hispanic cop, right?

EL HANK

Simon.

El MAGO

I think we can broker a deal with the mayor.

EL HANK

Trade El Bravo for my freedom?

EL MAGO

Yes. You got it.

EL HANK

Ok. Let's do it.

HENRY

Not even! Let me go to war instead and punish El Bravo for his disobedience!

EL HANK

Mijo, now you're being as hot-headed as El Bravo. Calmate¹⁸⁴. Don't lose your head to show me your loyalty. I'm going downtown with El Mago to broker this deal. They will pay someday. Please stay here, mijo.

HENRY

Esta bien, jefe. I will do as you say.

El HANK

¹⁸⁴ Changed "Calimation" to "Calmate".

Bueno. Vamonos.

Hank, Sir Blunt, El Mago and his Wizard exit. Henry remains alone.

Suddenly, we hear a rag-tag army entering. It's Fausto wearing a Highway 6¹⁸⁵ freeway sign as his breastplate and carrying his walking stick with empty beer cans tied to it. Chiqui carries a fighting stick and chains, Lil Gus holds an iron frying pan as a weapon, Ojo carries a broom and old nun-chuka sticks, another vato carries car muffler as a weapon, another carries a baseball bat. The Hoochie and Erotic dancer are dressed in sexy army gear and carry weapons. Chiqui blows a whistle and they all march in place.

CHIQUI

Left, left, left, right, left! Left, left, left, right, left! Why did the pollo cross the border?

EVERYONE

To get to the other side, Sir!

CHIQUI

Chiqui's Joint Commandos reporting for duty, commander cholo, sir!

HENRY

(Amused) At ease, "commandos". I never seen a more pitiful sack of losers!

FAUSTO

No, we're good enough to die, sir. Cannon fodder, ese, cannon fodder!

LIL GUS

Your ass won't fit in a cannon, homie!

Everybody laughs.

HENRY

Chiqui, I appreciate you getting these cabrones together but I need real soldiers.

CHIQUI

¹⁸⁵ Changed 'Hwy5' to "Hwy 6".

They're ready, Henry. They're ready. I trained them myself, commander cholo, Sir.
You want to see?

HENRY

(Sarcastic) Sure, I can't wait.

Chiqui blows the whistle. The commandos do an elaborate series of funny marches and exercises!

CHIQUI

Mama and papa were lying in bed...

EVERYONE

Mama and papa were lying in bed...

CHIQUI

Mama rolled over, this is what she said...

EVERYONE

Mama rolled over, this is what she said...

CHIQUI

Ah, give me some...

EVERONE

Ah, give me some!

CHIQUI

Ah give me some...

EVERONE

Ah give me some!

CHIQUI

Booty!

EVERYONE

Booty!

CHIQUI

Good for you

EVERYONE

Good for you

CHIQUI

and good for me!

EVERYONE

and good for me!

CHIQUI

Ahounga.

EVERYONE

Ahounga!

CHIQUI

Up in the morning till the rising sun...

EVERYONE

Up in the morning till the rising sun...

CHIQUI

Gonna run all day till the runnin' is done

EVERYONE

Gonna run all day till the runnin' is done!

CHIQUI

El Bravo I say is one son of a bitch...

EVERYONE

El Bravo I say is one son of a bitch...

CHIQUI

Got the blue balls, crabs and the seven year itch!

EVERYONE

Got the blue balls, crabs and the seven year itch!

Left, Left, left, right, left! left, left, left ,right, left!

De colores

De colores se visten los campos

En la primavera

Y por eso los grandes amores

De muchos colores me gustan a mi

Y por eso los grandes amores

De muchos colores me gustan a mi!

The commandos strike a pose. El Henry applauds.

FAUSTO

So, this is base camp, eh? Where's the mess hall? All this marching and soldiering has made me hungry.

LIL GUS

When *aren't* you hungry!

FAUSTO

Shut up Lil Gus! Drop the pan and give me ten pushups! If you want us to be the best we can be, you got to feed us, homes!

Lil Gus drops to do pushups.

HENRY

We got a taco truck down the street.

FAUSTO

Orale! Now you're talking.

CHIQUI

Ok tropa loca, in formation, march! Left, left, left, right, Left!...Left, left, left, right, Left...

El Henry shakes his head as the ragtag army exits.

SCENE 5. BARRIO HOTSPUR SAFE HOUSE

The Barrio H banner hangs. El Tomas, El Bravo are present. Suddenly, La Mayan rushes in. MAYAN

Tomas! Bravo! Barrio Eastwood is holding down their posts. Ready for any podo you throw at them.

EL BRAVO

That would be expected. What else?

LA MAYAN

My girls, staking out city hall, saw El Hank meeting with high Hispanic officials.

EL BRAVO

Fuck. I know what that puto is doing! Brokering a deal to save his sorry ass!

LA MAYAN

And that's not all. El Mago was with him.

EL BRAVO

El Mago? Pinche traitor! Fuck this shit, we attack tonight!

EL TOMAS

Wait, Bravo, now that Mago and his Wizards are on their side, Barrio Eastwood has the advantage.

Locos R Us brings in Duke of Earl of Barrio Eastwood.

Duke of Earl, loyal soldier to Hank. What the fuck do
you say?

DUKE OF EARL

I bring a message, an offer from La Familia. El Hank and El Henry say to give up your arms and your grievances ahorita and they will look away.

EL TOMAS

And if we don't?

DUKE OF EARL

No mercy for anyone who organized this undeserved uprising.

EL BRAVO

Undeserved? Are you out of your fucking mind, ese? Are you stupid or something? I want you to remind El Hank that *we* put him in power. And this is how he repays us? Ratting me out to the cops so he can stay free? Free to fuck my familia and the whole barrio? Chale! You will go back with Loco R Us and he will deliver our response, "Fuck, No. We ain't backing down." Now, go.

Locos R Us exits with Duke of Earl.

SCENE 6 -LA FAMILIA CAMP

The Barrio E Banner hangs. Locos R Us has just presented Bravo's rebuttal. EL Hank, El Henry, El Mago, Duke of Earl, Sir Blunt, El Johnny and Fausto are all present wearing war gear.

EL HANK

So that's how Tomas and El Bravo want to play? I'm not surprised they rejected my fair offer.

EL MAGO

Tomas and El Bravo think they can take on the whole pinche world together.

EL HANK

So be gone Locos R Us, get the fuck out.

Locos R Us is about to exit...

HENRY

Wait! Tell El Bravo that the prince of Eastwood joins the world in praising him. I don't think there's a vato alive who is more brave, more chingon, more daring, or more bold. I know he had lost respect for me and thought of me as a joke, and in this, I agree. I was lost for so many years but now I'm back. Our armies are full of vato warriors who will gladly make the ultimate sacrifice for their barrios. I say this in front of my Jefito and the entire war council- in order to avoid muertes on both sides and a way to restore my honor, I challenge El Bravo to a mano a mano combat to the death.

EL HANK

Mijo...

HENRY

I got to admit, based on Bravo's street cred and reputation, he's the favorite to win but I fear him not. Now go.

Locos R Us exits.

MAGO

They won't accept Henry's offer. I'll bet mi vida on it.

EL HANK

I think you're right Mago. (*Shouting out*) Everyone! Quick, to your battalions! We'll attack before they lift a finger. May Santa Muerte be with us! May we fight with

courage and honor!

El Hank runs off with his soldiers. El Henry and Fausto remain.

FAUSTO

Chingao, your jefito takes this war shit seriously, huh?

HENRY

It's dead serious carnal. Say your prayers
and throw down.

FAUSTO

I wish this was a dream ese, and I wake up and everything
was cool.

HENRY

Sooner or later, we all owe Santa Muerte a death.

El Henry runs off leaving Fausto in a special light.

FAUSTO

Mine's not due yet, ese. Why should I be so eager to pay her before she even asks for it?
Pero ni modo. Honor whoops me on. Yeah, but what if honor whoops me off once I'm
on, and picks me out to die? What happens then, aye? Can honor fix a broken leg? No.

Or a brazo? No. Can it make a chingazo stop hurting? No. What is honor? A word, a
palabra. What is in this word, "honor?" Air, aire. It's free. Who has it? The vato who died
last Wednesday in a drive by? Does he feel it? No. Does he hear it? No. Does he see it?
No. It can't be seen, then. Not by the dead, anyways. So, does honor live with the living?
No. I've never known anyone dead or alive with honor. That's why I don't want anything
to do with it! And that concludes my catechism.

Fausto marches out.

SCENE 7 -BARRIO HOTSPUR SAFE HOUSE

*El Tomas, LA Mayan and El Bravo are getting ready for war. Locos R U
enters.*

TOMAS

Locos R Us. You return. Did you refuse Hank's so-called peace offering?

LOCOS R US

Simon, que yes. I told him to shove it!

EL BRAVO

Good! Hank will never forget this pedo. Neither will we.

TOMAS

We attack them tonight!

EL BRAVO

Orale!

LOCOS R US

One more thing, Bravo. El Henry has challenged you to a one-on-one fight. Just you and him.

EL BRAVO

For reals? Ha! Asi me gusta! What did he say? Did he diss me? Did he show hate towards me?

LOCOS R US

Nel, not at all. I swear I've never heard a challenge issued with such elegance.

EL BRAVO

What the fuck?

LOCOS R US

It was like a brother asking a brother to a friendly contest. He paid you all due respect and props. He told me how valiente you were, like if he was your biographer. He praised you as the highest barrio warrior and he put himself down which made him humble yet

dignified. He told me that he knew he had wasted his youth in getting high but that fighting you would be an honor, and a way to redeem himself. No matters what happens tonight, whether he dies or not, El Henry, in my opinion, is a true prince.

El Bravo sarcastically claps.

EL BRAVO

Chingado Loco, for a minute there, I thought you fell in love El Henry. Did you fall in love, homes? Did he make you feel all funny insides? Sounds like you wanted to go down on him.

LOCOS R US

Calm down Bravo, I was just saying...

EL BRAVO

Oh, I know what you was saying, puto.

El Bravo puts a gun in Loco's mouth.

TOMAS

Bravo!

EL BRAVO

You were saying you wanted to suck his dick! Was that it, huh? You want to suck the vato's dick? Did I hear you right?

TOMAS

That's enough mijo!

EL BRAVO

Yeah I heard right...

BAM! EL Bravo fires a blast into Loco's mouth. He falls down dead. Everyone is stunned. Who else has something "nice" to say about the "prince"?

Everyone is silent. Suddenly, Mr. V runs in.

MR. V

Vatos! Barrio Eastwood has launched their attack! They're on the streets! They already hit a dozen of our homies down by the stadium¹⁸⁶!

EL TOMAS

Everybody! Go to your positions!

EL BRAVO

Hasta la muerte!

BARRIO HOTSPUR

Hasta la muerte!!!

On the opposite side of the stage...

EL HENRY

Hasta la muerte!

BARRIO EASTWOOD

Hasta la muerte!!!

BATTLEFIELD SCENE

The two camps line up on opposite sides of the stage in a charging line armed only with fighting sticks. They charge at each other.

EVERYONE

CHINGAAAAAAAAA!!!!!!!!!!!!

Hitting, twirling, swinging, jumping, tumbling! They charge back and forth two or three times. Everyone exits and returns to their camps.

SCENE 8-THE MEAN STREETS

EL BRAVO enters on one side of stage and SIR BLUNT (disguised as El Hank)

¹⁸⁶ Changed "bay" to "stadium".

enters and sees Bravo.

SIR BLUNT

El Bravo! Toma!

Sir Blunt shoots but misses. Bravo shoots and hits Sir Blunt in the leg and he loses his weapon. Blunt lays on the ground as El Bravo approaches.

EL BRAVO

Orale, is that you Hank? King of the Barrio with a slug in your leg?

SIR BLUNT

Simon. You got me.

EL BRAVO

Yeah I do. So now listen up. You have a choice. Do you want me to avenge my homies right here or do you want to be my prisoner? Either way you're fucked.

SIR BLUNT

El Hank was not born to surrender. Toma!

Sir Blunt pulls out an ankle gun but El Bravo fires four shots not missing. Sir Blunt falls dead. El Thomas runs in.

EL BRAVO

It's over Jefe! It's over, We won. Here's El Hank. He's dead.

EL THOMAS

Nel. I know this vato. Sir Blunt. He's Barrio Eastwood's drug lord. He's disguised as El Hank.

EL BRAVO

Shit!

EL TOMAS

They're trying to fool us.

EL BRAVO

No matters. I will kill every Hank I see.

EL TOMAS

Vamos!

El Bravo and El Thomas exit. Fausto enters covered with enchilada red sauce. Sound of battle in the distance.

FAUSTO

Chingao, bullets flying every which way, buey! A burrito, a burrito, my kingdom for a burrito! Shit! I don't need any lead in my panza. My gut is heavy enough. Who's this? Sir Blunt! Muerto? Well, there's honor for you!

El HENRY with Duke and Johnny enters.

EL JOHNNY

Henry!

EL HENRY

Johnny!

FAUSTO

Vatos!

EL HENRY

Sir Blunt, our most loyal generale of Eastwood, lies here cold and dead. He died with honor. We must avenge his death.

FAUSTO

No one has fought as heroically as I have tonight. I wasted hundreds of vatos fighting side by side with Sir Blunt. Look at all the blood on me.

El Henry tastes the "blood".

EL HENRY

That's enchilada sauce!

EL HENRY

Pinche Fausto. This is no time for chistes! We are at war! Vatos!

Henry, Johnny, and Duke carry SIR BLUNT out.

FAUSTO

If a bullet runs into me, orale fine. If it doesn't run into me, better. Because I don't want the kind of honor Sir Blunt just got.

MR. V enters.

MR. V

Hey fat fuck!

Mr. V aims his rifle at Fausto ready to shoot him.

FAUSTO

Wait homie! Can't you see I'm shot already? See the blood, ese? Let me die with honor.

Fausto slowly, dramatically falls faking his death.

FAUSTO

I'm coming to you abuelita! (cough) I can see the angels and papa Chuey!

Fausto falls with a dramatic thud.

Mr. V

Orale.

Mr V. exits. Fausto waits for the coast to be clear, and then gets up and exits. CHIQUI enters alone holding a fighting stick. THREE HOTSPUR SOLDIERS enter and surround her with fighting sticks too.

HOTSPUR SOLDIER

Hey, look at this vatos. Barrio Eastwood got bitches fighting for them!

HOTSPUR SOLDIER 2

A one-eyed bitch.

CHIQUI

Watch your hocico muchsacho. You don't know who you're messin' with.

HOTSPUR SOLDIER

A washed-up puta with a pool stick.

CHIQUI

You will pay for that. Soy Marine war veteran mijito. Two duties in Iran and one in the North Korean Nuclear War. So, come and get your ass kickin'.

HOTSPUR SOLDIER

Orale...

ALL THREE

CHINGAAAAAAAAA!!!!!!!

The three soldiers charge at Chiqui. She is an expert stick fighter! She spins around countering their blows and flips them and hits them with her stick out cold. They get up slowly and run away. El Henry enters. Suddenly, a Motorcycle enters from down right and drives by with EL BRAVO on the back holding a rifle. He sprays bullets randomly and speeds off, exiting through the stage left gate. Chiqui falls to the ground with a mortal wound and El Henry is wounded under the ribs.

EL HENRY

Chiqui!!! You've been hit!

El Henry holds her.

CHIQUI

You've been hit too Henry. Leave me here it's too late.

EL HENRY

No Chiqui! No!

CHIQUI

It's OK. I'm happy. (cough) I died for you Henry for your family's honor. I've loved you... I've always loved you...like a son. Now go kick some...

Chiqui dies.

EL HENRY

No!!!!

El Hank and El Johnny rush in.

EL HANK

Henry! You've been wounded, mijó. Johnny, take your carnal down the street and get him patched up.

EL HENRY

No Jefe. My friend Chiqui's death must be avenged. I'm not leaving las calles.

JOHNNY

Me neither, Jefe. I want to stay and fight!

EL HANK

(Proudly) You brothers have made your Viejo proud. No matters what happens tonight, I can die smiling. Look at this, carnales fighting shoulder to shoulder defending their familia. Johnny, I was wrong thinking you didn't have the stomach for this. Chale, you have shown juevos and valor tonight. Henry, you have come back to me and redeemed yourself. You fight like the true warrior that I knew you were. But you're no use to me if you bleed to death, sabes? Por favor take your brave amiga and get that wound tended.

Andale!

HENRY

Si jefe.

Johnny and El Henry exit carrying Chiqui. MR. V enters and sees El Hank alone.

MR. V

Well, well, well. Is that El Hank for reals? El mero mero? Or is it some other puto dressed up to look like him?

EL HANK

At least I'm not dressed like I'm the grand marshal of the Old Town Dia de los Muertos Parade. I'm El Hank lord of Barrio Eastwood, mucho gusto.

MR. V

Nel. El gusto es mio. They call me Mr. V.

EL HANK

Mr. P... Like pussy?

MR. V

Very funny pendejo. Mr. V.

EL HANK

(Moking) Oh, despena. Mr V...like vagina?

MR. V

You're a regular comedian. Now I can brag that I killed the so-called King.

EL HANK

Can't brag until it's done. Give it your best shot, dog.

El hank takes out a medium sized knife. Mr. V. pulls out a sickle.

MR. V

Fileros? Old school. Asi me gusta. Vamonos cabron!

Mr. V and EL Hank engage in a vicious filero fight. They make it to an upstage area on container or center platform. Mr. V finally disarms Hank and gets him on his knees.

Mr. V

Any last words, motherfucker?

EL HANK

(Defiant) Yeah...when I get to Hell, I'll make sure to clack your abuela.

Mr. V is about to slit Hank's throat when shots ring out (drumbeats) and kill Mr. V., who tumbles upstage and offstage and disappears as he dies. Enter JOHNNY and HENRY with guns a blazing!

EL HENRY

Are you OK, Pop¹⁸⁷? Johnny, take him out of here.

EL HANK

Yes, Mijo. I'm too old for this shit.

¹⁸⁷ Changed "apa" to "pop".

Johnny takes the wounded Hank out. Suddenly the stage left gate opens an ominous lowrider approaches and stops. Enter El Bravo emerges with a Futuristic Rifle and rage in his eyes. At some point in the scene the car backs out and goes away. This is the final showdown

EL BRAVO

You are El Henry, the so-called Prince of Barrio East Cheap.

He bows.

EL HENRY

Simon, and you are El Bravo of Barrio Hotspur.

He bows.

EL BRAVO

Con safos.

EL HENRY

Don't think for a minute Bravo, that you can share in my glory any longer. There ain't room for two gallos in the barrio. The kennel cannot have two top dogs.

EL BRAVO

I agree. The time has come for one of us to die. I just wish you had the rep of a street banger like me, so that this fight could be more even. This will be waaay too easy.

EL HENRY

My rep will grow big time by the time we part. I'll take all the silver from your fingers and make myself a necklace.

EL BRAVO

Still the small-time thief, huh? Sabes que? Enough talk let's do this.

EL HENRY

Mano a Mano. Fileros only. No cuetes.

EL BRAVO

Simon-timon. I would hate to waste a precious bullet on you.

The men put down their guns and take out their long knives. They fight a long and vicious fight. They are almost equal until El Bravo makes a slight mistake and El Henry stabs him in the neck.

Aahhhh!!!

El Henry holds the fallen warrior El Bravo like a Pieta sculpture.

EL BRAVO

Orale El Henry, I can handle the loss of mi vida, but not the loss of all the honors you have won from me. The loss wounds my mind more deeply than your filero wounds my flesh. But thought depends on life, and life depends on time, and time which watches over the whole pinche world, must stop someday. I could keep rambling but la Muerte is halting my tongue. No homie, I am dust and food for...

EL HENRY

...Worms.

El Bravo dies in Henry's arms.

Adios Bravo, brave street warrior. Your ambition, your passion and your greed were so enormous, that an entire city could not hold you. If you could hear me, I wouldn't praise you so much, but I would cover your face with my Pendelton as a sign of respect. I only hope you would have done the same for me. Ay te watcho. Take my praises to Hell. Let your wicked reputation sleep with you in the grave with a 40 ounce and let it be kept off your tombstone. Con safos. Y que.

El Henry exits leaving El Bravo's body on the floor. FAUSTO enters.

FAUSTO

Chingao, is that the brave and honorable El Bravo? You don't look so chingon now, huh ese? (beat) Say, I got an idea. I'll stab him a few times with my filero, that way I can say I killed him.

Fausto stabs El Bravo's dead body several times with his hacksawed knife.

Shit, someone's coming!

Fausto throws himself down and acts like a dead corpse. El HENRY and DUKE OF EARL enter.

EL HENRY

My dear Fausto, he lies here dead? Duke of Earl, in the end, the fat bastard died an honorable death. His debt to Santa Muerte is paid in full.

DUKE OF EARL

Who would have thought? The courageous Fausto.

EL HENRY

He will be remembered forever as a hero of Tlaloc.

DUKE and EL HENRY give the East Cheap Salute. EL HANK enters.

EL HANK

The war's over. The enemy has surrendered. Let's get out of here before the Hispanic Police come to pick up their most wanted.

DUKE and EL HENRY Begin to leave.

FAUSTO

Hey! Where you vatos going? Can't you see I smoked El Bravo?

DUKE and EL HENRY come back.

DUKE OF EARL

Holy shit! I thought you were dead.

FAUSTO

Nope, still kickin.

EL HENRY

Pinche Fausto, were you faking your muerte?

FAUSTO

Let me break something down for you vatos. I'm not a faker. To die is to be a faker, because a dead body is an imitation of a living one. But to fake being dead, in order to stay alive, that's no kind of fakin'. That's the truest kind of living there is! See, bravery is mostly about precaution and shit: I was careful, and it saved my life! So, what about my prize for killing Bravo? A medal or something? (pause)

EL HENRY

Fausto, there is no room in your chest for trustworthiness, truthfulness, or honesty. It's all filled up with tripas and stomach. Have you no shame? I killed Bravo, not you.

DUKE and EL HENRY exit.

FAUSTO

Maybe I should change...quit scheming, go on a diet, stop drinking, and live proper like an honorable man. What do you think? (pause) HELLS NO!!! Let's party!

Fausto exits.

FINAL SCENE - FAUSTO'S JOINT

PARTY TIME. The former Chiqui's Tavern sign now reads "Fausto's Joint and Girls". Big Victory Celebration. FAUSTO pours drinks. The Hispanic lawyer NAVARRO and CITY SUITS are there. MAYOR LINA HIDALGO is there. THE HISPANIC CHIEF OF POLICE, EL HANK, EL HENRY, EL JOHNNY, DUKE OF EARL, REPORTER #1, ONE VATO and LA GATA are there as are the two Motorcyclists. El Hank recuperates with his wounds sitting on his throne. He stands up to make a speech. Someone hands him a handheld microphone if possible. MUSIC quiets.

EL HANK

Familia! The uprising against us has concluded. Es mas, any others who try to do the same will end up the same way: defeated. I raise a glass to all of you. I raise a glass to all the homies that died in las calles. I pour a taste for my general Sir Blunt. May he Rest in Peace.

El Hank pours a beer on the floor.

EVERYONE

Rest in Peace.

EL HANK

I'm not going away anymore thanks to my lawyer Navarro. Un aplauso.

Everyone applauds.

And I have a check right here for 10,000 Quintanilla's for Mayor Lina Hidalgo's re-election campaign.

MAYOR

Gracias, De Colores, Viva la Raza, and God bless Tlaloc City.

At some point he silences the party MUSIC.

EL HANK

Mi hente carida... I've been banging since I was chavalillo and now I'm getting ruco and can't keep up with La Familia's business. I thought I would never retire or step down. But my hijos right here, stepped up and have gotten my full trust and respect. Today, my youngest son will take over the duties of Sir Blunt. I give you Generale El Johnny.

Everyone applauds.

EVERYONE

Viva El Johnny!

EL HANK

But I appoint my eldest mijo, El Henry as supreme leader of La Familia! The Lord of Barrio Eastwood!

El Hank puts his royal medallion around the neck of El Henry.

EVERYONE

Viva El Henry! Speech! Speech!

EL HENRY

Gracias a todos. Underscore a new dawn in Tlaloc City. This is a new day for La Familia. We have seen too much pain and muerte and it's time to turn a new page. We need to go back to the basic principles and foundations of Sin Aztlán. A brotherhood and sisterhood of respect, honor, and caring for each other.

Everybody cheers.

To improve our quality of life, my first order of business is to announce that I will build fresh drinking water distribution centers in all the barrios! The water will be FREE for all!

Huge applause and cheers!

EVERYBODY

Viva El Henry! Gracias Henry!

EL HENRY

My second order of business is to pardon the prisoners of the rebellion.

The people react surprised. Duke of Earl brings LA MAYAN and a HOTSPUR SOLDIER out.

In the past, Barrio Eastwood dealt with traitors only one way: Death. Punto. But today, I'm going to demonstrate compassion and forgiveness by letting our enemies go.

Applause. The prisoners are escorted outside by Duke of Earl.

EL HENRY

Now, let us enjoy a drink and celebrate a new chapter in the story of our Raza. Que viva Sin Aztlan!

EVERYONE

Que viva Sin Aztlan!

DJ plays a song. El Henry puts his arm around Navarro and takes him to the bar where Fausto is serving drinks. The DJ raises the volume of the song. Outside the party, on top of stage left storage container Duke of Earl takes out a gun and shoots the two unsuspecting prisoners in the head. BAM, BAM. No one hears the shots. Blood runs down the side of the metal walls. People continue to mingle, drink beer, dance, Fausto eats, etc. All is good with La Familia; all debts were paid and everything is right in the barrio. El Henry sits on the throne in a special pin spot with a hard determined look.

MUSIC plays. All lights fade to black.

THE END