

A million light bulbs.

A million dreams.

My *corazon* is empty without my sister.

That's why I'm painting her on my heart, old man.

So that I don't forget her.

Nino To each his own . . .

Orestes I have to go back.

If only to bring my sister here and show her what her very name has inspired.

Nino Then you have to be *listo*. (*Comes up from behind, easily grabs Orestes by the neck and takes him down.*)

Oh man, we're going to be here forever . . . (*Helps Orestes up.*)

Toughen up, *puto*.

I'm running out of nickels!

START *They walk away as the sky does a big vuelta from noche to dia in a casino minute.*

Scene Eleven: We Are Family

The yard. Medio dia. That quiet time between morning and All My Children.

Clemencia enters la yarda, a bit nerviosa and fumando, of course. Electricidad sits up, ready to strike.

Clemencia Don't worry. I won't touch him.

Lo toque enough when he was alive.

Electricidad It won't do you no good to come beg his forgiveness.

Clemencia Oh, you're funny.

We need to talk.

Electricidad I have *nada* to say to you, murderer.

Clemencia I am not charging you *renta* in this *yarda*.

The least you can do is talk *conmigo*, "tenant."

Listen, I'm sorry I called the sanitation on you.

But I'm a homeowner now. "Property values," *mija*.

Electricidad I know what you did.

Clemencia Oh really? Raise you so that you could turn on me like this?

You're just like him.

Electricidad *Que bueno.*

Clemencia Stubborn. Unforgiving.

If I did anything wrong, it was that I let him give you too much of his *filosofia*.

I let him try to shape you to his hardness.

I let him show you the destructive ways.

Electricidad He taught us the *cholo* way.

Clemencia Yeah, but how?

Everyone forgets what a bully he was.

He made us think that we couldn't grow and change and make something better than what we are.

He beat me and made me scared of the world.

Scared of crossing over these bridges.

It was the only way he could control us.

Like the petty thief that he was, he took our dreams.

Electricidad And you murdered them.

Looks at Clemencia with an absolute lack of fear.

Electricidad You took his eyes and tongue because, even though you have no soul, you've been here long enough to know that you should be afraid of the gods.

Then you told everybody that someone broke in.

You blamed it on one of the *locos* from the Four Directions.

Nobody broke in. Only you.

Into this house. Twenty-three years ago.

Te estoy viendo, cabrona.

You're like an X-ray. His *sangre*-stains are all over you.

Clemencia You got some way of looking at the world, my daughter.

Don't forget that I was the one that convinced the repo man to give us another chance on the Monte Carlo.

Electricidad You let the pit bulls attack him!

Clemencia Yeah, well, he gave us another chance, didn't he?

I made sure the mortgage never died.

I made sure you kids always had your *cholo*-wear.

I even scared the *vecinas* into buying all that Avon, so we wouldn't starve when your *papa* got lost in some City Terrace thighs.

Oh, don't look at me that way.

You think it's easy being a woman in this *hombre* world?

Those *hombres* are ruthless *conmigo*. And they will be with you, too.

They want one thing from us. And they always take it.

But when we want a cut. A place in their world. Our fair share.

Well . . . *vas a ver*.

Electricidad You're the queen of excuses, Clemencia.

I can't wait to see what you'll say when the hands wrap around your neck. I'll be here waiting.

Clemencia You think you can sit there forever?

You think he isn't going to leave you at some point?

They always leave you, these men.

And then what? Who will watch your back then?

Everyone smells the *oportunidad* that an empty throne brings.

Without backup, little *nina*, you're like a wounded coyote out there.

(*Ai, hold on, cigaro.*)

Clemencia Let me protect you.

Electricidad Desperate.

(*Un puff importante.*)

Clemencia You know how I met your sweet *papa*?

On the boulevard.

I was thirteen.

He smelled good, like VOS, and I flirted.

What's wrong with that, huh?

I was an innocent.

But he took my girlhood from me.

In the back of a car.

And he brought me here.

My father looked at me and called me a tramp.

My mother hid in a back room to save herself a black eye.

And he sold me to him.

Because he thought I was dirty.

This is what they do.

Did I get to *escojer*?

No, my stubborn daughter, I didn't get to choose.

And neither will you.

History just keeps repeating itself.

Cholos don't move forward.

They just keep going farther into the past.

Oldies, oldies, oldies.

And I want to change it.

I want to take back every bruise your father gave me and turn it into a dollar.

I want the memory of every one of his punches to be a kiss that could make me believe in myself.

I am going to make a business.

In his name, if you want.

I could give you a cut.

Then you could have a piece of him that's worth something.

The piece that makes *dinero*.

Electricidad *glares at her.*

Clemencia You and I are cut from the same cloth, Electricidad.

Imagine us working together.

Electricidad Together, ha!

Clemencia These *hombres* wouldn't know how to deal with the both of us.

They wouldn't be able to ignore us, I'll tell you *eso*.

Think about it.

Then you could honor his *nombre*, if that's what you want to do.

We could even make a statue and put it out here where his stinky body sits.

Come on. Come back inside the *casa*.

Electricidad Not into that living coffin.

Clemencia A mother sacrifices.

I never did. I admit that.

Just like you, I like the "running around" too much.

I was never good with the "domestic."

But then again, I never meant to be a mother.

But now we have to start *pensando* about our *futuro*.

You and I are survivors.

Electricidad *No tengo nada* in common with you, monster.

Clemencia You hate me *porque me ves* inside of you.

We are more alike than you can ever imagine.

Electricidad Lies.

Clemencia *No seas mensa*.

This could all be yours.

Yes, even the house.

Electricidad Why would I want this house?

Clemencia Oh, you love this house *mas que yo*.

You can't wait to live out the last of your days in the past.

Looking out this window at a world that would never have us.

Not me.

I am going to forget all this, sell this house and buy a condo.

In Pasa-fucken-dena!

She takes a deep drag of the cigarette. She smiles at Electricidad.

Clemencia I would have even given him to you.

Electricidad (*caught off guard*) *Callate!*

Clemencia Oh, I know you wanted him.

Electricidad Stop it.

Clemencia You did, didn't you?

Hard *chola* with no friends to call her own.

Your sister always in jail, and your little brother too soft for his own good.

Little *chola* whose only friend was your hard *papa*.

He took the soft skin from you and made you a warrior.

And you are stupid enough to thank him for it.

But why wouldn't you?

You were in love with him.

Electricidad I hate you . . .

Clemencia That ain't a new *sentimiento*.

I hate me too sometimes.

Listen to me.

I am offering you things.

Attention.

Partnership.

Motherhood even, if that is *lo que quieres*.

All of the things that no one ever gave me, I am offering to you.

But you must pay me for it.

Electricidad I will pay for your casket.

Clemencia Pay me for being your *mama!* I never wanted it.

They took being a girl from me and they gave me "mother."

I didn't ask for it.

No, my daughter, I'm not old enough to be old.

It's all yours, Electricidad.

Make a choice.

There's nothing to stand in your way now.

You could change the destiny of La Casa de Atridas.

MIRA, MENSA, TAKE SOMETHING FROM ME!

Electricidad It's your last breath *que quiero*.

Beat. Clemencia composes herself.

Clemencia Okay.

I am going to start a neighborhood association.

And you are going to be the first item on the agenda, *cabrona*.

Last *chansa*. Are you going to come inside or not?

Electricidad I'll come to your funeral, old lady.

Clemencia I'm going to go back inside and use up my "anytime minutes."

She flicks her cigarette butt on Auggie's corpse. Electricidad frantically runs over to him and tries to pick it off him.

Clemencia Don't say that I didn't warn you.

She walks into the house. Electricidad turns to watch her leave.

END Scene Twelve: *Que Viva Las Vegas*

The nighttime glow of Vegas neon. The distant sonido of the ker-ching, ker-ching of a slot machine on a winning play. Orestes and Nino are backstage, working at a buffet. Nino sits on a white bucket sipping a malt 40, while Orestes struggles with a tray full of dirty dishes.

Nino Young *cholo*, come sit.

Orestes We're on a shift, old man!

Nino Don't worry about it.

I just paid a *mojado* to do our work.

We got *cholo* matters to attend to.

Orestes *comes and sits with Nino.*

Orestes Okay, lazy *viejo*, *dime*.

Nino A few days ago, someone tried to take you out.

Orestes What? Are you messing with me?

Nino Someone showed up to stop your *corazon*.

Orestes *looks like a little mocosito all of a sudden.*

Orestes Should I be worried, old man?

Nino Relax, nervous *cholo*.

I took care of it.

No one will hurt the next king while the old *viejo*'s around.

Orestes Was it one of the *locos* from the Four Directions?

Nino Don't know.

He came knocking to your doorstep. Said he was from the IRS.

What a *pendejo*! Everybody knows *cholos* don't pay taxes . . .

I put on my Chiclets face.

(Does his pobre Chiclets cara.)

And he lowered his guard.

He came in and looked around. Said he would wait.

I offered him a malt 40, and I held it out for him to grab.

When he reached for it, his sleeve raised and I could see he had a tattoo from back home.

He looked down and realized his mistake, but it was too late.

The bottle was already on the way to his head.

I tried to get something out of him. I cut off a couple of fingers, hoping he would talk, but he was a "professional."

You have to admire a man's loyalty.

I injected him with bleach, because there's no point in making a man suffer.

Orestes I know they're gonna get me. I don't think like you. I don't have the "*cholo* instinct."

Nino Listen, young *cholo*. Word's coming through the *cholo* satellite that things are not good back home.

In *el mundo del cholo* the Four Directions are at war.

The North Side Locos are moving into the hills.

The East Side Locos don't got no way to grow.

We're trapped between three freeways and a Pollo Loco.

La Casa de Atridas is vulnerable.

But never underestimate the great *cholo* leader of the East Side.

He knew to send you away.

Your job, little homeboy, is to *reemplazar a tu papa*, when his time comes to go to the *barrio* in the sky.

You need to be ready when the Council of Old *Cholos* calls on a new leader.

I will be there as your sergeant, *a tu lado*.

Orestes Thank you, old *viejo*.

For saving my life.

Nino We have to step up your training.

Orestes Yes, *viejo*.

But what if they're setting us up?

Nino That's the life.