

**Scene 1**

*A small family-owned grocery store.*

*Andres, the elderly father of the owner, sits on stage he is singing or sleeping.*

*Roberto enters. He is the owner's brother-in-law.*

ROBERTO

Abuelo, buenos dias

ANDRES

Yo no soy tu abuelo...pero, Buenos dias, buenas tardes, buenas noches

*ROBERTO grabs a broom and begins sweeping.*

ROBERTO

Did you see how I restacked those cans at the end of the aisle. Se ve bien, no? necesitamos pensar cómo mejorar la tienda. I've been thinking about doing some advertising too. I was at Walmart, and I saw Maria Cintron standing in the produce aisle! I went right up to her, "Maria! Como estas?" she turned red. "Oh, solo estaba mirando!" I must have seen three other customers there. Walmart, Giant Eagle, Sav-A-Lot - they're killing us! Espera a que te cuente lo que estoy pensando para la vitrina del frente.

*Doña Isabel enters. Roberto immediately starts sweeping. Isabel is the owner of the store ever since her husband, Jorge died a few years back. She exchanges a kiss and hello with Andres.*

ISABEL

¿Que paso, ningún cliente todavía?

ROBERT

We've only been open for a few minutes. Did you see this end-cap? I stayed late last night to set it up. Bendito, luce bien, no? tenemos que hacer que la tienda se vea realmente linda si queremos conseguir nuevos clientes. Y tengo una gran idea para decorar la vitrina de enfrente.

ISABEL

Why do you have to keep changing everything?

ROBERT

We need to make the store look nice.

ISABEL

It looked nice before. I liked it better the way it was. The way it was when Jorge was alive. Oh, Jorge! My dear husband Why did you leave me ? Especialmente con este hermanito tuyo!

ROBERTO

Well times are changing and we need to change too.

ISABEL

Your brother Jorge ran this store great! And I run it just like he did.

ROBERTO

Sure, sure, but we aren't doing as well as we...

ISABEL

Mira este piso—you missed that area right over there.

ROBERTO

Eh, dónde está Junior? He is supposed to be sweeping. He's always late!

ISABEL

He's in college! He has to study a lot.

ROBERTO

Mimas a ese esquinle demasiado, lo vas a hechar a perder.

ISABEL

I'm his mother and don't forget you work for me!

ROBERTO

OK.

ISABEL

Now finish up here and then restack those cans.

ROBERTO

*(Crestfallen but submitting.)* Ok, I will follow you. Bueno lo hare.

*She stops. He sweeps. Pause. She reconsiders.*

ISABEL

Roberto, I ... its ok. The cans can stay. Pues esta bien. Se ve bien . (*Brief pause.*) I know you're worried but that's why Junior is in school. To learn more about business so he can run the store, even better.

ROBERTO

Well, I need to tell you something, anoche vi a Soledad y ella mencionó

*Junior enters. Isabel runs to him.*

JUNIOR

Hi mom.

ISABEL

Junior! Mijo. Cómo estas? Y los studios cómo van?

ANDRES

Did you hear that... "MOM." He called you MOM. And no BENDICION.

JUNIOR

(Unphased turns to Andres) Bendición.

ANDRES

Que Dios te bendiga.

ROBERTO

Junior, you're late! (He hands him the broom.)

JUNIOR

(To Roberto but without feeling.) Bendición.

ISABEL

Did you eat any breakfast? Etas muy flaco mijo! Como puedes estudiare si no comes bien?

ANDRES

(*to Roberto*) You better watch out for him!

JUNIOR

Mom, I'm fine. I need to talk to you.

ISABEL

Estoy aqui!

JUNIOR

I've been thinking about school and everything.

ANDRES

*(to Roberto)* He's going to be your boss some day, al menos que tengas cojones.

ISABEL

I know you want to spend more time at the store but you have to go to school.

JUNIOR

No, Mom, see at school... things are... well... I've been thinking about the future.

ISABEL

Maravilloso! Deberias pensar en el future, es parte de la vida.

*José enters. He is quite dignified and stands for a moment surveying the store.*

ROBERTO

Tu de nuevo? Can I help you?

JOSÉ

Well I am looking for something muy especial...

ROBERTO

What can I help you with?

JOSÉ

Doña Isabel. probablemente deberia de preguntarle a la duena Isabel

ROBERTO

Bueno, conozco bien la tienda.

JOSÉ

Yes, yes, but I think it would be best if I were to speak with Doña Isabel myself. It's a very special item.

*He sees Isabel and quickly moves to her.*

Doña Isabel! I am looking for something very special. Té.

ROBERTO

Aisle 3!

JOSÉ

Not Té, Té... Mate.

ISABEL

Yes you know it's right over here.

JOSÉ

Yes, but do you have my brand? You see it's very special. Deverias probarlo alguna vez, Have you ever tried Yerba Mate? Yo podria preparalo para vos. Maybe you would like to come to my house and I can show you how to prepare it. *(pause)*

*Juan enters. He is looking desperate and is trying to conceal his drunkenness. He thinks about stealing something but is unsure.*

ANDRES

Oh, oh, here's trouble.

ROBERTO

Can I help you?

JUAN

Yes. I need some milk. Leche para mi bebe. Leche!

ROBERTO

You mean formula?

JUAN

Si. Si...

JOSE

But I need a particular variety....Hoy te ves muy hermosa. Tu pelo se ve muy lindo y tus ojos...

*Junior has walked up and is listening. José notices him.*

JOSE

As I was saying, I am looking for a particular kind of Mate...

*Soledad enters. She is well dressed and walks in like she owns the place. Isabel and Roberto immediately notice but do not go to her.*

JUAN

OK, I can pay you next week.

ROBERTO

No.

*Soledad waves Isabel to come over. She walks over with a smile.*

JUAN

What? You're not going to give a man some milk for his starving child?

ISABEL

Soledad. How lovely to see you, can I help you find anything?

ROBERTO

You still owe us. You have no credit here.

SOLEDAD

We need to talk.

ISABEL

I am very busy! Can you call later and we can set up a time.

JUAN

Pero no tengo dinero! Que debo de hacer?

ROBERTO

Bueno, pero si tiene para andar borracho.

SOLEDAD

No this can't wait. I have waited long enough. 6 Months!

JUAN

Por favor, no es para mi.

ROBERTO

Hey man, it's not personal its business.

ISABEL

What's wrong?

JUAN

Porque hago esto? Me quiero morir!

ROBERTO

That's it.

*Roberto grabs Juan and escorts him out.*

SOLEDAD

You need to pay on the loan.

ISABEL

We always do, we always catch up. It's no problem, next week we can maybe catch up a little.

SOLEDAD

Toda. Pagaras la dueda completa.

ISABEL

Soledad! Cuanto tiempo hace que nos conoces? Por cuantos anos has sido nuestra prestamista, nuestra banquera?

SOLEDAD

That doesn't matter!

ROBERTO

Soledad, things are a little slow but...

SOLEDAD

A little slow??!!

ISABEL

Has something changed? Did we offend you somehow? What's different?

SOLEDAD

Its been six months! Six months since you paid anything.

ISABEL

But I have to pay for my son's college and Isabelita is a senior now...and you know how that is.

SOLEDAD

That's none of my business. This isn't personal.

ISABEL

What are we supposed to do? I have a family.

SOLEDAD

This is final. Either pay me your back due or I will have to foreclose on this establishment.

*Silence.*

ROBERTO

Please... just a little more time.

*Soledad walks to the door.*

SOLEDAD

You have until Friday. Buen dia.

*Soledad exits. A moment of silence.*

ANDRES

*(Waking up.)* I just had a horrible nightmare.

ISABEL

Ay, papa.

ROBERTO

No, this is real. This is real.

JOSE

*(Unexpectedly a cry of joy)* Oh, here it is, I found it. Canarias brand!  
Lights shift. JOSE is now actor, Dante. He addresses the audience.

## Scene 2

DANTE (JOSE)

In Uruguay, Argentina and other parts of Sud America, we drink this Mate. This is my brand Canarias. It's stronger than the Argentinian brands, because they like the stems. Mate's origins are with the indigenous people in Sud america.

It was a communal drink and the European newcomers felt confused and threatened by its use. But any attempt to eradicate mate failed strongly (laughs)

You can drink mate in the countryside, in the city, before, after, at work, **on beaches and walks, even in the streets** ....., the rich, the poor, **the young, the old, the politicians, the mothers** .... it embodies a philosophy...**a conception of the world and life** ... the mate ritual overcomes isolation trends and social classes.

Most people in Uruguay will not go anywhere without mate, and a thermos of hot water. In fact sometimes we even drink it when we ride our bikes!

Drinking mate is social; drink it with friends and family .... look on Facebook, we post photos of our babies with their first Mate.... (before 1 years old of course) it's so cute and gets the most likes.

Some - by circumstance of life are separated from our families, from our friends and our community.

For us,..... drinking mate alone... the mate becomes your companion. It reminds you of your connection.

When we see Mate, we see our culture, our friends, our family, our children, our life.

JASON

Wow. That's very complicated. Its simple to make tostones. All you need to do is this....first you gotta get a plantain. Peel it. Chop it up. Smash it. Fry it. Season it. Eat it. Crunch crunch crunch...you can never forget that crunch.

AIDA

Pasteles are unique from Puerto rico. despues de prerados, los echas en una olla con agua hirviendo,mas o menos por una hora. Los sacas le cortas el cordon te los comes y que delicia.

OLGA

Rice and beans is not a unique dish but the way my grandma made it, that was very special. Everything was fresh from the garden. Ella era pequenita y usaba unbolquesito para poder alcanzar el fogon, que sabroso su arroz con habichuelas.

RAFY

My beloved mother prepared arroz con pollo. It has arroz, sofrito y pollo. Muy sencillo y delicioso.

BLANCA

Blood sausage is simple. Blood. Rice. Seasoning. Intestines.

My TiTi Milla taught me how to make morcilla and how to prepare the intestines, that's not so simple. That was hard work. The first time I saw her do it, I ran to the priest because I thought she was doing some kind of evil sacrifice. He laughed at me. And took a bite. Everyone loved my TiTi Milla. She was tall, statuesque like Boriquerna queen. Feared by many but loved by everyone.

### Scene 3

*Andres, the elderly father of the owner, sits on stage. Isabel is reviewing bills or counting money.*

ISABEL

**Ay Dios Mio.** I don't know what I'm gonna do. I think maybe I could make a full payment for this month, maybe, but the last six months? And she says she's going to close us down. Papi, Que voy hacer?

ANDRES

Mamita, ven aquí. I will help you.

ISABEL

I can't handle this.

ANDRES

Te puedo ayudar

ISABEL

Papi, this is business!

ANDRES

Lo sé. Lo sé. Ven aquí. (She looks at him.) Acercarse más. (Quieter because this is so precious he doesn't want to speak it too loudly.) Más...pasar...más...ven... (She is very close now... and a bit annoyed. Suddenly in a big booming voice.) ¡DEBEMOS PEDIR AL MUNDO ESPIRITUAL EN BUSCA DE AYUDA!

ISABEL

Ay. Papi.

ANDRES

No, no, esto es serio. Here's what you're gonna do. You need to get una vela, a candle, grande y white, not yellow—white, blanco. And you're going to put it in front of the saint. And you're gonna get un vaso de agua, and we'll put it at the feet of el indio.

ISABEL

¿El indio? Ay papi, dejame sola con eses cosas!

ANDRES

Yes, el indio in my room on the back.

ISABEL

Eso es diferente.

ANDRES

This is from the old country, I know what I'm talking about.

ISABEL

¡Ay, santo vela!

*Andres begins to sing. Isabel shakes her head. Isabelita AKA Izzy enters.*

IZZY

*(Calling to her friends.)* Ok, I'll be out in a minute, just hold on! *(To Andres.)* Bendicion, abuelo.

ANDRES

Dios te bendiga, niña.

IZZY

Hola mom.

ISABEL

Bendicion? Bendicion?

IZZY

Bendicion.

ISABELA

Dios te bendiga.

IZZY

I just need to get something and then...

ISABELA

Isabelita...

IZZY

Please don't call me that. Everyone calls me IZZY. IZZY.

ISABELA

I am your mother, I can ...

IZZY

Please, I hate that name... *(realizes she said the wrong thing)* I mean for me. I hate that name for me.

ISABELA

Hey, how come your friends are waiting outside? Why don't you invite them in.

IZZY

No they're ok out there.

ISABELA

No, no, you can invite them in and I can give them some chips and pop.

IZZY

It's OK! Mom.

ISABELA

Una empanadilla.

IZZY

Mom, they don't want to come in.

ISABELLA

Why not? What's wrong with them?

IZZY

Mom, mom, please.

ISABELLA

What's wrong? What's wrong? I need to know your friends. Why do you never, never ever bring your friends in here.

IZZY

OK. OK. I don't want to, that's why,

ISABELLA

¿QUÉ?

IZZY

Mom, they don't speak Spanish, they don't know anything about us...

ISABELLA

What does that have to do with it, I am your mother, this is your home.

IZZY

Mommy, this place is just... old, and nasty—look the ceiling is stained over there from where it leaked.

ISABELA

Are you ashamed of us? And the store that has given you everything you have so far?

IZZY

...mommy...

ISABELA

You know your father, worked very hard to establish this place, and everything you have, todo, you owe to this store.

IZZY

Mommy, why do you always have to bring up Papi.

ISABELA

That's it! Mira. Mira. Sienta allí.

*Isabel grabs Izzy's arm and pulls her over to chair.*

Stay put!

*She walks over to the door and calls to the friends in a very nice tone.*

Ladies! So sorry. Isablita has to stay in for a bit. She'll call you later. OK? OK. Bye bye.

*Walks back over to chair area. Sits down.*

Niña, we need to have a very serious conversation.

IZZY

I'm sorry, mom. I just...

ISABELA

It's ok. I understand. Really, but I need to tell you something. *(Pause.)* I have something serious to talk about. You know things are a little slow in the store right now. And you know we are paying a lot of money for your brother to go to college. I know that you are very interested in going to college. But we are having some problems. You're going to have to hold off on that. You need to hold off on it, because I just can't do it all. We just can't afford it. I need to make sure your brother finishes so he can run the store. Then you can go to college.

IZZY

What? I can't believe I'm hearing this! He gets horrible grades...C's, D's, I'm getting straight A's. English, Math, Science...all A's. I'm on the honor roll.

ISABELA

I know, mamita and I'm very proud of you. But I need you to wait. Two years. Two years of your whole life.

IZZY

This is not fair.

ISABELA

Isabelita, I'm doing it all! I'm taking care of the family, I'm running the store, I just can't do it. I need your help.

IZZY

Is this because I'm a girl?

ISABELA

No, you don't understand. We owe a lot of money... I don't know what we're gonna do.

IZZY

This is so unfair!

ISABELA

I'm sorry, but NO COLLEGE. (*Pause.*) And, I need you to start working at the store. Everyday. Only family works at the store now. I can't afford to pay anyone else.

IZZY

Ahh. Mom! This is totally not fair. I hate this place!

*She storms out.*

ANDRES

Just calm down. It's going to be ok.

*Pedro enters. He is in a bit of a hurry.*

ISABELA

(Composing herself.) Hola, como estas.

PEDRO

Bien, bien. Where is the mole sauce?

ISABELA

You mean from the jar?

PEDRO

Yes. I know... I should really make it from scratch, but I don't have the time.

ISABELA

Ok, right here.

PEDRO

Is it the real dark kind?

ISABELA

Look at the picture...

PEDRO

Of course from the jar it's not the real thing. But this picture makes it look good.

*Lights change, we are in a different world now. Pedro is now the actor, Alex. He looks up.*

## Scene 4

ALEX

have a picture of my Mom. She was holding me as a small child. Happy as can be. As any mother and child should be. For whatever reasons, we were pulled apart. 35 years later, Enchiladas de Mole brought her back to me. "Mijo, ven a comer. Hice enchiladas de mole." Wherever I was, whatever I was doing, I drove as fast as I could to Mom's house. The mole was good but the conversations with Ma were even better. Although we could never make up for lost time, mmmm, our time together, just you and I, was delicious. I wasn't ready to let you go. Miss you Ma.

*Pause.*

NEIZA

My Father makes pescado al mojo, hmm it's like traveling back to the island. Fries el pescado, preparas las cebollas en salsa, lo pones con el pescado. Oh! Perfecto. It brings everyone together.

NEYDA

But not all food brings the people together. If you eat pana de pepitas, everyone run away! (*wave hand*) You know what I'm talking about. (*They laugh.*)

LETI

The best Sopa de Borracho, I ever had was made by Doña Carmella. To make Sopa de Borracho, Drunken Soup, you need a lot of ingredients. This is what you make when you have to feed A LOT of people. First you start with chopped ham, tomato, tomato sauce.

PABLO

Olives, Celery, Black Pepper.

ERNESTO

Yucca, Red Pepper, Green Pepper....

PABLO

Don't forget the wine and the beer! It's Sopa de Borracho, Tu sabes!

ERNESTO

Pimiento morones, papas y mucha sal

*Others have joined them and they are all talking about what can go into the soup and how great it is. They surround an imaginary pot DSC. They all get quiet looking at the amazing pot of sopa de Borracho*

LETI

Esta la historia of Doña Carmella and the Sopa de Borracho.

*They all look up. An actress, OLGA, becomes Doña Carmella.*

Doña Carmella was the grandmother of the whole neighborhood.  
 Le encantaba cocinar she loved to cook  
 And she cooked HUGE quantities of food and shared it with all the neighbors. Everyone loved her food because it tasted so good. She was such a generous woman but one day she stopped sharing.  
 one day she stopped sharing.  
 Everyone was wondering, "que es lo que esta pasando? Que esta sucediendo?"  
 We know she's in there cooking, but for who?  
 So that's when us kids...  
 got curious and decided to spy on her.  
 We watched her leave her house carrying a big pot.  
 She walked into the forest. La mirabamos caminar mas lejos, por todo el camino all the way to the beach shore. Luego regresaba a su casa. And did this again.  
 She was an old woman, so this was tough work. Durante su ultimo viaja, cargaba agua -- gallons of water and she placed this on the beach as well.

*One Niña tries to go look, but the others hold her back.*

We could hear the ocean. Esperabamos en la oscuridad of the night.

*SONG:*

Yo se lo que son los encantos  
 de mi borinquen hermosa  
 por eso la quiero yo tanto

*Sing softly*

Lugo los oimos... Then we saw them--men, came out on the ocean, viniendo a la orilla del mar. on a small raft.

*SONG soft:*

por siempre la llamare Preciosa  
 Isla del caribe

*LOUD add pablo*

Isla del caribe  
 Borinquen  
 Continue softly

Starving! Thirsty.

They came up on the shore, nearly dead. We didn't know where they had come from. We didn't know they had crossed the water for a better life in Puerto Rico.

*Song soft:*

yo se de sus hembras triguenas  
se del olor de sus rosas  
por eso a mi tierra riquena  
por siempre la llamare Preciosa

*(Hold if needed)LOUD add pablo:*

Isla Del Caribe, Isla Del Caribe  
Borinquen

*Then soft...*

Dona Carmello's amazing soup saved their life. Somehow she knew they were going to be there. La sopa salvo sus vidas. As they ate and drank, they became strong again. Y finalmente se fueron a las montanas.

*Softly until text ends, with Pablo FADE OUT>*

Preciosa te llaman las olas  
del mar que te bana  
Preciosa por ser un encanto  
por ser un Eden  
Y tienes la noble hidalguia  
de la Madre Espana  
y el fiero cantio del indio bravio  
lo tienes también

*Children run up to where the pot was.*

DANTE

They didn't leave anything for us

MONICA

Traidora!

NEIZA

Traitors!

LINEY

I'm gonna go tell my mom.

MONICA

Vamos!

*Doña Carmella re-enters. The children march DSL and then slowly shift into the parent.*

LETI

And when the villagers heard the children's story? Cuando se dieron cuenta de que Dona Carmell estaba ayudando a esta gente, when they, learned that Dona Carmella was assisting these immigrants, they gathered together and went to confront her. No sabia que iba a pasar. She was scared..And they said,

Dona Carmella, you are too old to be doing this.  
We are worried for you.

Dona Carmella, ya tienes muchos anos para andar hacienda esto.  
We are worried for you.

Dona Carmella, we will help you with the cutting, and chopping and cooking.

**Dona Carmella, we will help you with the cutting, and chopping and cooking.**

DANTE

**We will help you carry the food to the beach.**

LETI

We will help you carry the food to the beach.

*SONG Aida Pablo:*

Yo se lo que son los encantos  
de mi borinquen hermosa  
por eso la quiero yo tanto

*SONG softly.*

The village agreed: "We will help our Dominican neighbors!"  
It became a community effort that has been passed down for by generations.

*Softly Aida:*

por siempre la llamare Preciosa  
Isla del caribe  
Isla del caribe  
Borinquen

*All group sings:*

yo se de sus hembras triguenas  
se del olor de sus rosas

*Enter immigrant men as singers and Leti join group*

por eso a mi tierra riquena  
por siempre la llamare Preciosa

*Full cast enters and joins.*

Isla del caribe  
Isla del caribe  
Borinquen

*Blackout.*

## Scene 5

*Lights up. Everyone is in the place of the last scene except they are all checking their phones. CONCHITA makes a phone call. Monica picks up.*

LORNA

Hola?

CONCHITA

Wait till you hear what I just heard.

LORNA

Who is this?!

CONCHITA

Don't be funny, you know this is CONCHITA! I just was calling to say hello.

LORNA

Hola.

CONCHITA

And you know I don't like to talk about other people, but I was at the bus stop and I overheard, Maria Alvarez hablando to some gringa about shopping and she said she never goes to Supermercado Jorge's. And Maria's brother said that the supermercado was having financial trouble

ALL

problemas fi..nan..cie..rossssss

BLANCA

And you know her brother is in business, so el sabe. Y sobre todo, Maria is putting on a few pounds, so she could be pregnant! I wonder if it's his...

*Conversation crossfades into one between Neiza and Aida.*

NEIZA

I know, Yo se. Oh, and tu sabes lo que mas yo escuche? Maria Alvarez is pregnant!

AIDA

Wow, really. Well, I thought she was a little old for that but...

NEIZA

Yeah, Bueno cosas mas raras han pasado. Thank god its not Maria Diaz! She is 60 years old! Oooooo imaginese si estaba preña!

AIDA

You can't have a baby at 60!

NEIZA

Oh, y tu sabes que mas escuche? **Supermerco Jorge's is in big trouble!** They told Conchita that they were having problemas fi..nan..cie..rossssss

*Crossfade.*

CONCHITA

That's right Maria Diaz, she's 60 years old and pregnant! That's what I just heard. Maria Diaz. Ay, I don't know what she was thinking! And like I told you a few hours ago, it's for sure now. Jorge's is in **big trouble**. Everyone's going to Walmart and Sav-a-lot. And you, they do have better prices on toilet paper and tampons. I'm just saying....

*Crossfade.*

ALEX

Well, that's what Conchita told me, I'm telling you, it couldn't possibly be her husband's child, I don't care how miraculous it is that she's pregnant, there has to be a father and I know for a fact que no se le para. Maybe it's Andres from Jorges' Supermercado? Yeah, he's the old guy that sits by the door. He does all that Santeria stuff, but hey, did you hear they may close? Yeah, problemas financieros.

*Crossfade.*

LINEY

Yeah, my friend told me Jorge's is closing. And her friend told my friend,. that the old guy has been having an affair with Maria Diaz! Crazy, right? Mm hmm. I heard they were doing it in the back room!

ALL

(REACTION)

LINEY

No quiero volver entrar hay. Thank god Jorge's is closing!

*Crossfade.*

LUIS

... Jorge's is closing?! Really? That's terrible. We should do something about it. I don't know what, but it's a tragedy! I bought my first beer from that store!

CONCHITA

Escandaloso! I don't want to say anything bad about people but Andres put a hex on Maria Diaz AND Maria Alvarez. They're both knocked up! And Jorge's Supermercado is bankrupt! It's so sad. Though I do most of my shopping at Walmart, it's really a tragedy to lose Jorge's from the neighborhood. Of course now sav-a-lot has platanos, but still, its so sad for the community! I don't want to say anything bad about people but maybe they were running something in the back room? Y no solamente dominoes!. Well I am not going to speculate, but... you never know...

ROBERTO

Que? What? No, that's a bunch of gossip! Why are you even listening that stuff? You're crazy. No! No!

ISABEL

No, no, no, no, no. Maybe we are having some financial problems... but we are not closing. We are not closing the store! OK, bye. Adios!  
(all leave the stage except for Pablo, Andres and Isabel)  
(Hangs up. Pause. She looks out.)

ISABEL

Maybe we need to close the store.

## Scene 6

*Lights up on the store. Isabel, Roberto, Junior and Andres on stage. ITCHY*

ITCHY

Yeah, I got that itchy itch again, gotta get me some scratchers bro! Right here. Right here!  
(*Roberto is helping her.*) Not that one, the next one. OK. (*Transaction*)

ISABEL

I'm just sick of all the calls and rumors.

ROBERTO

Well, that's just gossip, so we can't listen to it.

*ITCHY starts scratching.*

ISABEL

Except that it's true.

ANDRES

I am NOT having an affair with Maria Diaz or Maria Alvarez or the holy mother of Jesus herself!

ISABEL

We all know that Papi, but the store... it's in big trouble. How am I going to feed my family, and get Junior through college, and...

ICTHY

BOOM YEAH! That's right, I won the lottery.

ANDRES

We're saved!

ITCHY

Dream on, pops, its for 50 dollars. Right here. Pay up bro. Pay up.

ROBERTO

(*Looks in drawer, under drawer. Then awkwardly says*) You're going to have to cash that at another store.

ITCHY

What? What?! I bought it here! You gotta be able to pay me.

ROBERTO

I'm sorry man, but I can't do it. I don't have the money.

ITCHY

Then give it to me stuff.

*She starts pointing at all the things she wants.*

ITCHY

I want two of those, two of those, two of those - Nah man – FORGET IT! This is BULL!

*She exits.*

ISABEL

See?

ROBERTO

Yeah.

JUNIOR

Mom. Mom, listen, I can make one of your problems go away.

ISABEL

Junior, don't worry about school...

JUNIOR

Mom, listen! I've been trying to tell you this for a few days!  
Please, just listen.

ROBERTO

Oh great, he probably wants a raise, or to do less sweeping.

JUNIOR

No.  
I... mom, I didn't register for school this semester.

ISABEL

What???

JUNIOR.

I wanted to tell you, I just couldn't...

ISABEL

Then where have you been late nights “STUDYING” and going to the “LIBRARY?” and early class.

JUNIOR

I got a job!

ISABEL

What?

JUNIOR

I hate college. You know that. That’s not my thing. Not right now.

ISABEL

But the store.

JUNIOR

I love you and I miss dad, but mom, I’m not dad. I can’t be him, and I don’t want to be him. *(Pause.)* You know I love working with my hands. Making things. I got a job as a carpenter. Fine craft work in a custom furniture store.

*Isabel sits down defeated. Izzy enters, realizes she is entering into something and quietly listens.*

ISABEL

But the supermercado.

JUNIOR

Think about it, you won’t have to pay for college and you don’t have to worry about feeding me.

ISABEL

Junior? First your sister and now you too? I don’t know what to say.

JUNIOR

Mom

ISABEL

I don’t know what to say.

JUNIOR

This is for the store. *(He pulls out an envelope.)* There’s \$1500 there.

ROBERTO

That's a big envelope. Are you a carpenter or a drug dealer?

JUNIOR

I haven't had any time to spend my wages on anything because I'm always either working or I'm working here.

IZZY

I have something too.

ANDRES

Otro Carpintero? Una carpenterito?

*IZZY hands an envelope out to Isabel. Who is looking away.*

ISABEL

Otro sobre?! Roberto?

ROBERTO

Northwestern University.

ISABEL

Ay.

ROBERTO

Full... scholarship... Isabelita! Is this one of those... what are they called?

IZZY

Yeah, FULL ride.

ROBERTO

Full ride. *(Quietly.)* Wow.

IZZY

So you won't have to worry about feeding me either, and you can rent out my room.

ISABEL

Isabelita—I said no college! I need you here!

IZZY

Well I'll be 18 by then so I can do whatever I want! *(She storms off.)* \

ISABEL

Everyone's leaving me? What do I do now. Ay Jorge? Jorge? They are all leaving me here!

ROBERTO

No, no Isabel, this is all good. With this 1500 and the incredible news from Izzy! I'm inspired. All those people who called us? All those people who came in and said, OH no I heard you're closing? We're gonna call THEM. I'm going to call a meeting and get organized. Stand up to Soledad and raise some money. The community will help us. Let's get organized! Unamonos todos! Todos Unidos!

*Blackout*

## Scene 7

### MÓNICA

My grandother, Mama Justa's secret was love.

Mi Mama Justa was little and chubby and gosh was she an amazing cook. I have beautiful memories of her. One of them was how she enjoyed having fiestas at home, dancing, drinking, a lot of eating, and a lot of LOVE. It has always been intriguing to me how we never ran out of food during these fiestas. She would prepare food in these HUGE pots enough for everybody to enjoy during the night. Dancing and partying could go until 4 or 5 in the morning even on a weekday. See, if your birthday fell in the middle of the week, it didn't matter, ese era el dia para celebrar, even if you had to work the next day. And guess what? Mama Justa would lock the door so nobody could leave! I don't remember but maybe it was by the time she was falling sleep that she would let people go. We all wanted to hold on to that love for hours. I can still feel my grandmother's love.

### AIDA

December 2011, my whole family made plans to go home to visit our grandmother for Christmas. We were so happy because we were going home to Puerto Rico! And we looked forward to sharing special time with Abuelita and eating her specialties: pasteles, morcillas, empanadillas. Hmmmm. And Abuelita was soo happy that all of her five kids, grand kids and one great grandson were coming to see her, coming from Virginia, New York, California. My cousin Fernando who was in the navy in Germany was coming too!

By December 21<sup>st</sup>, Grandma was ready for us: the pasteles were done, Christmas decorations were up and everything was ready!

On December 22, my uncle Luis from Puerto Rico called everyone to let us know that grandma was very ill. Abuela passed away on the 24th and everyone was devastated. On Christmas day everyone went to Puerto Rico and we celebrated our amazing grandmother with the food and decorations she had prepared.

### LIZ

Café con leche: the smell would take over the whole house and it would feel like I was in Puerto Rico with my whole family. Café con leche was something special for me, a father and daughter time and I knew there was love.

### LUIS

Right before I left Mexico, my mom cooked me chile rellenos. Stuffed poblano peppers filled with ground beef and seasonal fruits, then dipped in a delicate egg white batter and fried. This dish takes a lot of time to make. You have to buy the perfect peppers, wash them, grill them, peel them and dry them all up ... Puede tomar de 5 a 6 horas solo la preparacion.

That day that Rita, mi madre, cooked Chile Rellanos for me, I could taste her devotion and I felt that it was her way of making peace with me.

See, me and Rita had a struggling relationship. I wasn't raised by her and she left me with my abuelita when I was young. And even though many years had passed, deep inside me I was still holding a grudge, asleep but alive.

But that day, when she cooked for me, we ate together, bromeamos , platicamos de muchas cosas about me leaving Mexico, and at one point her husband called on the phone and she told him she was busy ... She really devoted herself to me that day and I was just enjoying my mom, after all those years that had passed .

And after we finished eating, I held all the courage I had on me and decided to tell her that I was gay. She hugged me and started crying ... And she said the words I would never forget : I'm not crying because you're gay, I'm crying because you might never find someone to love and to grow old with ... But no matter what, I will always be here with you, if not by distance , but by heart.

## Scene 8

ERNESTO

Mi nombre es Ernesto Guevara Luna.

MÓNICA

My name is Ernesto Guevara Luna.

ERNESTO.

Yo recuerdo a mi padre haciendo un asado a las brazas en el patio de mi casa.

*Padre enters and grills meat.*

MÓNICA

I remember my father grilling meat in the back yard, **un asado a las brazas**.

ERNESTO

Y mi madre cantando un tango.

*Madre enters.*

MÓNICA

And my mother singing a tango.

Yo adivino el parpadeo  
De las luces que a lo lejos  
Van marcando mi retorno.

PADRE

Son las mismas que alumbraron  
Con sus pálidos reflejos  
Hondas horas de dolor.

PADRE AND MADRE

Y aunque no quise el regreso  
Siempre se vuelve al primer amor.

ERNESTO, PADRE, MADRE\

Y aunque no quise el regreso  
Siempre se vuelve al primer amor.

ERNESTO

Naci en Montevideo Uruguay en 1973

MÓNICA

I was born in Montevideo, Uruguay in 1973

ERNESTO

En ese año mi país y gran parte de latino America caian en los años oscuros. Gente inocente desaparecia por pensar diferente. La palabra libertad y ciertos nombres considerados revolucionarios y subsibos eran prohibidos.

MÓNICA

During that year my country and greater part of Latin America was falling into dark years. Innocent people disappeared because of thinking differently. The word FREEDOM and certain names were considered revolutionary and subversive, **forbidden**.

ERNESTO

In a bet with my godfather El Gallego my dad had the balls to name me Ernesto Guevara, just like Che Guevara. CHE Guevara el gran revolucionario. This almost made me one of the so many missing babies. En la escuela las maestras tosían por miedo a decir mi nombre.

MÓNICA

At school the teachers would cough in fear of saying his name. He started breathing fear without understanding why. One night los milicos... came kicking doors open and searching without a warrant.

MILICO

Abran la puerta, documentos!!

MÓNICA

...came kicking doors open and searching without a warrant. His mother's instinct made her hide him in the closet. His sister (pause) stayed with Mom holding hands and giving her more strength and courage. The guards entered the room and viciously search each corner. Before leaving one of them spat on the floor and on the wall.

MILICO

MIERDA AQUI NO NADA, LARGUEMONOS!!!

MÓNICA

He was just a baby

ERNESTO

Yo solo era un bebe

MÓNICA

He could have had cried, but he didn't. An angel was in the house that night.

ERNESTO

Mi madre dijo que un ángel llegó esa noche a casa y le dio un consejo.

MÓNICA

The angel told her

MADRE AND ANGELS

“Do not say that you have a son whose name should not be named, make up a name but never say his name is Ernesto.”

MÓNICA

Ernesto.

ERNESTO

Ernesto.

Years later I remember my father, mi Viejo, at the grill, cooking up meat. El asado a las brazas.

MÓNICA

He was a master of the grill. He would always pour some beer on to the flames.

ERNESTO

Eso era como un ritual.

MÓNICA

And he would say:

PADRE

Para que los muertos sepan que hay un asado y que vengan a compartir con los vivos un día en familia.

*Padre exits.*

MÓNICA

“This is for the death ones, so they will know that there is un asado and they will come and share with the living, a day with the family.”

ERNESTO

Since I was a kid I splash some of my drink, I still do it. I close my eyes and I can hear the whispers of time telling me a fragment of the past that will never be back. It is my “thank you,” my gratitude, that... (*small pause*).

I am here.

I am NOT one of the disappeared.

I am here now.

ERNESTO AND MADRE

Sentir.

Que es un soplo la vida

Que veinte años no es nada

Que febril la mirada

Errante en las sombras

Te busca y te nombra.

ERNESTO

Vivir.

Con el alma aferrada

A un dulce recuerdo

Que lloro otra vez.

My name is Ernesto Guevara Luna.

## Scene 9

*Roberto, Isabel, Andres, José, Luisa and , Ana are mingling about rady to meet. There are folding chairs set up in the a half circle.*

ISABEL

Where is everybody? I thought you said there would be at least twenty people.

ROBERTO

I don't know. I talked to a lot of people and they said they were coming.

JOSÉ

Isabel, I was so sorry to hear the news about the store and I wanted to tell you... you are looking wonderful tonight!

ISABEL

*(Extricating herself.)* Gracias. *(TO Roberto.)* We were supposed to start a half hour ago.

ROBERTO

I know.

JOSÉ

Your eyes, you hair, your...

ROBERTO

I guess we better get started. *(to the whole group)* Everybody, let's take a seat. *(They do, there may be some business about who sits where...)* OK, *(maybe he is reading a prepared speech)* Dear friends and neighbors, as you may have heard we are having some ... problemas financieros. We are reaching out to you, the community, for help. We know you value us and we know you want us to stay. Together we can save Supermercado Jorge. *(Expecting applause...but no.)* Well, does anyone have any ideas?

LUISA

OH OH OH, I have an idea... see once at my school we had to raise some money for a trip and we sold candy bars to raise money, how about that?

ROBERTO

But we already sell candy bars. Other ideas?

LUISA

OH OH OH! Another time at my school, we had a bake sale and...

ROBERTO

OK, well are there any other ideas?

LUISA

OH OH OH! We could have a reverse raffle?

ROBERTO

Por favor! Now mas!

*Luisa shrugs and sits down. A moment of awkward silence.*

ANA

Let me ask this, what do you need.

ROBERTO

Well, we need some money or we need the bank to be a little more easy on us.

ANA

OK. How much money?

ROBERTO

Well that depends.

ANA

Well, you bring us here, you need to have a plan. And specifics.

ROBERTO

Yes, well specifically we need help with the bank.

ANA

I've lived in this neighborhood all my life, and I want to help, but you are a business, and I need to know that if I help it's going to pay off.

ROBERTO

Yes, you're right...

*Councilman Gomez enters.*

GOMEZ

Hello everyone, sorry I'm late! (*He enters briskly and shakes everyone's hand. He breaks his speech with hellos, getting names wrong, etc.*) With the election coming up soon, I have a lot on my plate. But I really truly care about our neighborhood. And I can help, I also have lawn signs in my car, if anyone wants to help me help you. Because this store is so important.

Isabel, Andy, and Reynaldo (*pause*) I am here to help because I care about you and this neighborhood. Because I care.

*He looks around to see if his cohorts are there yet. Then he sits and immediately begins to text.*

ANA

If you need help with the bank, maybe we can sign a petition.

ROBERTO

Great idea!

ANA

Of course its hard to convince a bank, but you never know, especially if the councilman is on our side...councilman? Councilman? Councilman!

GOMEZ

What? Oh yes, I support the neighborhood. (Takes a selfie with someone there. Back to texting.)

*Soledad has entered with Ariana.*

ROBERTO

You're right! We need to stop that Soledad from closing us down. We need to stand up to her and tell her...(he senses something and turns around...sees her) Soledad!

*Gomez quickly stands to go to the two ladies and is effusively thanking them and saying hello.*

SOLEDAD

Hello everyone.

ISABEL

You invited HER?

ROBERTO

NO!

GOMEZ

Everyone listen, she has a right to speak and you may learn something. (*Smiles at her.*)

## SOLEDAD

Thank you. This store owes the bank a lot of money. Six month's behind! The bank needs to be paid. It's not me, it's the bank. **But I have not come here empty handed.** I want to introduce you to Ariana Flores.

## ARIANA

Thank you Soledad. I know this is an important store. This is an important corner. And I think I have a wonderful plan to help your family and the community. I have plans with me right here for a new market-rate housing development. I am willing to purchase this property for a significant amount--profit for you Isabel. The bank will be paid. You will get something to carry you along for a year as you look for a new location or a new job. And the neighborhood will have an influx of middle to upper income people who can help raise property values and improve the area. Here, let me show you.

## ISABEL

No. No! I don't want to see the plans. How dare you come in here this way.

## GOMEZ

Isabel, let's not be unreasonable. This could be your legacy to the community!

## ISABEL

Soledad! How could you? You knew this from the beginning. Admit it. This is why you are suddenly being so strict. You knew all about her plans.

## SOLEDAD

Maybe so, but that's business.

## ISABEL

And you *Senor* Gomez, do really you care about the real community? The real community that lives here and works here everyday.

## COUNCIL

I grew up in the house just on...

## ISABEL

And you, Ariana, I remember you from Sister Martinez's class. Oh, sonow you went away to college and come back here just to make money on us! What about traditions? What about our culture, our heritage! Have you forgotten that? This store is a connection to our past!

## SOLEDAD

This store is *in* the past.

ARIANA

Times change Isabel. I'm helping to promote Hispanic businesses. That's why I'm doing this project here in this neighborhood.

ISABEL

Maybe I don't have a choice about this store/

SOLEDAD

/You don't

ISABEL

/but for now its my store. And I want everyone out! Everyone!

JOSÉ

(going to comfort her) Oh, Isabel...

ISABEL

Everyone! Out!

*They all go. Roberto and Andres are left.*

ANDRES

Well, at least I got a few strands of hair from Soledad. This time we need a candle, but not white...

ISABEL

Ay Papi, please!

*He goes. Roberto looks at her.*

ROBERTO

I'm sorry...

ISABEL

Its ok. You tried. There is nothing to do now. We can't stop the wave of change.

*Black out.*

## Scene 10

### PABLO

My grandma made the most delicious food dishes. She put that special ingredient on the plates that up to these dates I don't know what it was. That sazon and flavor was always there. One of my favorite dish from her was Guanimes con Bacalao (Cod Fish). She don't make it often. Pero cuando los hacia "Ay mi madre" the pot was empty. It was the favorite of many in our family.

I remembered how the smell of Bacalao was all over the house and how she tried to showed me how to do make the Guanimes. La harina, the flour, sticks in my fingers and covered allover my body trying to help mi abuelita (grandma). She look at me and laughed and joked about it.

It was at the hospital when I was right next to the bed that she told me "No te preocupes mijo que yo te hago los Guanimes cuando salga de aqui " Don't worry I will make you Guanimes when I am well again. It was the look on her face that struck me. I remember that I looked down, wipe my eyes and ask for la bendicion , kissed her in the cheek and left. I knew she would not fulfill her promise. She would never make Guanimes con Bacalao again. But when I remember her, she's not in the hospital. She's at the stove, and I am covered in flour. I love you Grandma and wherever you are I know that your sazon and flavor is there.

## Scene 11

OLGA

It started with the birds  
She sings

DANTE

La historia comienza con los pajaros

LORNA

Birds, flying away from the beach, and heading inland.

DANTE

Yendose de la playa lejos del oceano.  
La joven mujer esta parada cerca del agua

LORNA

She is there at the edge of the water.  
Only 15 years old.

DANTE

Ella tiene solo 15 anos.

LORNA

At the beach!

*BEACH SCENE*

NEIZA

EMPANADILLAS! Empanadillas! Compres sus empanidillas

NEYDA

Papa, papa! Vamos a jugar

PABLO

No voy, ve con tu mama.

JASON

I'm gonna build a sandcastle!

NEIZA  
Empanadillas

NEYDA  
Pero donde esta mama???

PABLO  
No se, sé fue

JASON  
Look at all the sea shells!

NEIZA  
Compres sus empanadillas

ALEX  
Pero ven mi amor, ven mi amor

MONICA  
Mi amor, this is like a paradise

ALEX  
Pero no seria igual sin ti

MONICA  
Escribamos nuestros nombres en la arena

LUIS  
*En el mar, la vida es más sabrosa , en el mar , te quiero mucho mas (singing)*

LORNA  
Beyond the horizon  
Where the sea and the sky united in an infinite line.  
El aire, el brillo del sol,  
, the distance  
A people united by destiny.  
One girl watched as the  
sea began to retreat  
Revealing the ocean floor.

DANTE  
Dejando al descubierto lo que antes cubria con su manto azul.

LORNA

She knows in her heart something big is going to happen

DANTE

En su corazón ella sabe que algo grande está pasando.

*BACK INTO ACTION!*

JASON

Icecream!

NEYDA

Caminando por la playa

ALEX

de pronto observe

NEYDA – ALEX - ERNESTP

Como el mar se escondia sin dejarse ver.

LIZ

The ocean is going out!

LORNA

Fue un momento de agonía

DANTE

sin precisar que hacer.

NEYDA – LORNA

De repente ,como alarma en el interior de mi ser;

ALEX – DANTE – ERNESTO

Una voz me decia: Corre y alejate.

LIZ

She feels – something is wrong

GROUP

Sali como alma en pena sin parar de correr,  
Para alertar a mi gente y tratar de socorrer.

LIZ

She knows – she must – DO SOMETHING!

LINEY

Tengo un mal presentimiento.  
Algo no está bien.  
Creo que debemos irnos.  
Mira! Look!  
The ocean is gone!  
Las aves no cantan.  
There is an eerie feeling in the air.  
I can't explain it, but we must leave now!  
Warn the tourist! Warn the people!

PABLO

She says

PABLO+LINEY

Senor, you have to run to the hills

PABLO

She says

PABLO+LINEY

Senor, the sea has left us

PABLO

She says

PABLO+LINEY

Something bad is going to happen  
Save your life.

PABLO

He replies:

PABLO

Niña, que dices estas loca. I'm not going anywhere.

LINEY

Salgan de la playa! Salven los niños! Corran! Salgan del agua!  
No se queden parados ahí. I'm not crazy! No estoy loca Deben creerme. Something is  
wrong! Please leave! Run, run, run! A wave is coming! CORRAN!!!!

LIZ

The unstoppable sound of the wave breaking over the land was no longer heard.

LORNA

Ovo silencio

JASON

There is a clock in the town that stopped at the time of the tragedy.

EERNESTO

El reloj del pueblo se detuvo al momento de la tragedia.

PABLO

Ese fue el día que los muertos salieron de y sus espíritus volaron con las gaviotas del mar.

LORNA

The day the dead rose, up out of their tombs and their spirit flew away, with the seagulls  
of the ocean.

ALEX / OLGA

estas son las palabras de mi abuelita

That is my grandmother.

bendita y bonita, me contaba de chiquita

She saved many lives that day.

Ay dolor mis ojos se cierran

She told me this story when I was 6 years old.

a pensar de lo que le paso a mi tierra

y mi gente tragados por el agua

She died soon after.

corre corre les gritaba y lloraba

el mar se escondio pero regresa con fuerza

levandose la pobreza y la riqueza

I told this story to my daughter, and her  
daughter.

hombre mujer, anciano y nino

We pass the story on now to you.

abuelita la salvavida en

**ALL nuestro bello puerto rico**

## Scene 12

*Mónica sings Todos Vuelven. As the stage is set and Isabel enters. She walks up to a table.*

ISABEL

**Jorge. Porque tuviste que dejarme? Jorge. Te falle.** I failed you. **Yo trate y trate pero no pude.** I wish you were here now. Your son is grown up. He doesn't like it here at the store. **Pero el es un buen chico.** And Isabelita, she's... she's smart, she's going to college. She's smart, but she doesn't speak Spanish. I don't know if you would be proud. I feel like we are losing them. I am afraid they are losing their heritage! **Estaran ellos perdiendo su conexión?**

And the store, I am losing the store. There's nothing I can do. I have to sell it. I have to. **Lo siento. Lo siento mucho.** Forgive me, Jorge. I feel like I have lost everything.

*The spirit of her grandmother enters.*

ABUELA

Nieta. Nieta! Isabelita.

ISABEL

Abuela? Grandma?

*Isabel looks up.*

ABUELA

**Porque estan tan triste? You have a smart and fierce daughter and a talented son. Tu estas aqui. No seas tan dura contigo misma. Don't be so hard on yourself. Don't forget what I told you, "whenever you are lost and you don't know what to do... go to the kitchen." Ve a la cocina Nieta, y recuerda lo que te enseno tu abuela.**

*There is a cutting table. Isabel pulls out a knife and an onion. She begins to cut.*

ISABEL

Yes, Abuela. I remember. **Yo recuerdo**

*Abuela walks up to the table. She also begins to chop too. She starts to sing softly. Izzy enters. She sees what they are doing. Isabel glances back. A split second connection. Izzy joins them chopping.*

IZZY

*(Softly.)* I remember.

*Roberto, Junior, and Andres enter. Followed by the cast. Some join the song.*

CAST

*(Echoing.) I remember. **I remember** (the echo transforms into) We remember. **We remember.***

*Others join the song. Song ends.*

FULL CAST

We remember. Nosotros recordamos.