

*whole thing comes crashing the fuck down. Shit goes everywhere.)*

**LUCIA.** Puta madre... [Motherfucker...]

*(Great, she broke the fucking thing. Now what? She stands there, over it all. What a fucking day. She thinks for a moment, then goes to the door and stands at the threshold to call the janitor.)*

Disculpa...disculpa. ¿Joven? ¿Me podrías ayudar por favorcito? [Excuse me...excuse me. Young man? Could you help me please?]

*(She goes into the hallway.)*

¿Podrías venir por favor? [Could you come here please?]

*(The vacuum cleaner shuts off. After a little bit, LUCIA enters, followed by ABEL.)*

¿Me ayudas a arreglar esto por favorcito? Han de estar mal atornilladas. Te lo agradecería mil. [Could you help me with this, pretty please? They must be screwed in wrong. I'd be so grateful.]

*(ABEL goes to reset the shelving units as LUCIA inspects the cracked picture frame and then goes back to text at her desk as ABEL keeps working on the shelves.)*

*(ABEL has finished putting up the two shelves and starts to head out. As he's about to disappear, and without looking up from her smartphone:)*

Me salvaste la vida. Mil gracias... [You saved my life. Thanks a bunch...]

*(ABEL nods and goes. After a few moments we can hear the vacuum cleaner again.)*

## Scene Two

*(LUCIA is on the office phone. The writer's assistant is mansplaining on the other line, and LUCIA's tone is different than it was with ABEL. Girlier. Almost ditzzy.)*

**LUCIA.** Yeah, sorry, they're saying I need to watch the whole season, but I'm not understanding the, yeah, the studio streaming thing so I can start watching the episodes. Yeah. I'm typing in the log-in you gave me but... Oh, right. Okay, let me try that. *(Beat.)* Hey, that worked. Yeah, I think I'm in. Okay, thank you and sorry I'm so stupid at computer things. Yeah, thanks again...

*(She types something in and clicks – the episode comes on.)*

**ROSA.** *(Voiceover.)* Do you know what's the hardest thing about being brown and from the barrio, like I am? It's knowing that I'll never be one of them. Knowing that all they'll ever see is my brown-brown skin. It's my curse.

**LUCIA.** Trágame tierra... [Kill me...]

*(LUCIA's hands go to her mouth. Oh, gawd, it's so bad! She shuts it off and her head goes to her hands.)*

*(ABEL opens the door. When he notices LUCIA is at her desk, he knocks to get her attention, which startles her.)*

¡Ay, me asustaste!

*(She goes back to the computer and clicks on the episode again. ABEL stands there for a moment. He then quietly goes to empty the trash from the bin next to the desk as the clip plays again.)*

**ROSA.** *(Voiceover.)* Do you know what's the hardest thing about being brown and from the barrio, like I am? It's knowing that I'll never be one of them. Knowing

LUCIA. Okay...

Alright...

I'm either going to need a lot of cocaine to get through this or a fucking protección from a curandera. Straight up magic because... Oh my God!

ABEL. What'd chu do this time?

LUCIA. I hope you know a good Señora.

ABEL. See, right when I start to think you crossed to the gringo side, you remind me that you're true rice and beans. You looking for a bruja now?

LUCIA. Yeah. Who does her spells with the herbs and the candles and shit.

ABEL. That stuff's for widows and fat ladies who've been left by their man.

LUCIA. And for people who just fucked over their work nemesis and might need some protection. Abel, if I don't see you tomorrow, it's because Gary found me in the parking lot and beat the shit out of me.

ABEL. You talking for real? Don't be playing about that shit.

LUCIA. No, but he's for sure going to hate me now. That, I'm one hundred percent certain of. Fuck. But you know what? I'm not going to feel bad.

Gary is the biggest fucking asshole who's ever walked the Earth. And, on top of that he's a hack. It's on him that his script is a total shitshow. He keeps having to rewrite it and rewrite cuz John keeps giving him notes – and Gary keeps coming back with garbage. Three times now, he comes back to the room with a garbage script. It just keeps getting worse, if that's possible. And today John was...he was mad. / Not like before where he blew his lid. Worse. Cuz he was quiet and seething and just plain scary. And Gary's smarmy joke-jokes weren't working anymore. So he's up there dying and he pulls this pitch straight from his anus. // He starts pulling stuff out of his ass that makes no fucking sense. Listen to this, he wants to fix this one part where Rosa frames a bad guy, who happens to have allergies by

rubbing a dog on a bed. /// A DOG, Abel – on a bed. He's proposing Rosa bring an actual dog to this dirty cop's house and to literally RUB the little animal on a literal bed. (*Beat.*) But what was insane was that all the other writers didn't say shit. They're all "Good Old Boy's Club," letting Gary struggle but not stepping in either. And John is about to lose it. I can tell. Because I recognize that "about to lose it" look. And I don't know how, but I drop straight into my cunt //// and I speak the fuck up: "Wouldn't it be easier to just plant the dog hair? Instead of sneaking in an actual dog?" ///// I'll explain the whole thing. We have to link the dog to this cop-killer. It's stupid. Anyway, John was like, "Finally, ///// someone's using their head." Simple fix. And that was that. But Gary? Oooh. Gary had daggers for me.

ABEL. / What's new. // [*Verbal reaction.*] /// A dog. //// Jesus. Your mouth. ///// Why is she? ///// Hey!

LUCIA. I should have known because everyone leaves and I go into the kitchen for a pinche Diet Coke. Wrong move. I should have come straight down here because that fucker, Gary, corners me in his favorite little harassment nook by the fridge – Abel, can you get up from there please?

(*Oh. Now she notices?*)

ABEL. You so bossy right now.

LUCIA. It's weird with you down there.

(*ABEL obliges and comes out from under the desk.*)

ABEL. Ya pues.

LUCIA. So, fucking Gary has me trapped in the kitchen, and he grabs me by the arm.

ABEL. He fucking grabbed you?

LUCIA. Yeah. But, not like that.

ABEL. He put his hands on you, though.

LUCIA. Yeah. He just held me by the elbow like this and came real close –

## Abel

everything real fast, the wedding, todo shotgun. And like six months later Melita came. That's my baby girl's name, Melanie, but we call her Melita. But like with all of these situations I'm convinced, it was doomed from the start.

LUCIA. The marriage?

ABEL. Yeah. My ex is real jealous and very passionate. Who knew that Central Americans are so feisty? I always thought they were the calm ones.

LUCIA. Well...they're always having wars and coups down there, so...

ABEL. Yeah, but the women? Aren't they supposed to be all mansitas? That's why I never dealt with a Caribbean or a Columbian, cuz I hear they can be fieras. But I had always heard Central Americans were supposed to be the -

LUCIA. The submissive ones? Well maybe that's what you get for being a macho then.

ABEL. That is true. Joke was on me.

LUCIA. What about Mexican girls? What are they like?

ABEL. Oh, they just trouble.

*(LUCIA breaks into a smile. Shoot, they both kind of do.)*

Anyway, I didn't know she would turn out to be a liona. She was on her best behavior right up until we moved into our own place in Boyle Heights. Then she turned into a real -

LUCIA. Is that a nice place? I'm still looking to rent something permanent.

ABEL. Ha. You're never going to live in Boyle Heights. You wouldn't last. But it was okay for us and for like around six months everything was good. Pretty nice actually. And then, I don't know what happened but she started - truth be told is I think she was sniffing, but I still can't prove that. She had this aunt that came to live with us and she would always start drama with us. And

the thing is, it was like affecting the baby. She'd leave with her aunt God-knows-where and I'd come home and the baby would be all alone, crying in the crib.

LUCIA. That's no good.

ABEL. Yeah. But if I would say anything, the both of them would pounce on me. Para no hacértela larga we split up and then it got, just, it got bad. La tia, she came to my job, not here, I used to be a fireman, actually, so she came to the firehouse, / y armo un desmadre saying that "this and that," that now that she had her citizenship she was going to take the baby back to El Salvador and not tell me where.

LUCIA. You were a fireman?

ABEL. So I run over there and all her cousins - well, that's who she says they are, but I never met no cousins of hers before - there're like six of them in the front yard. And something didn't look right. The whole thing - God, I've played it back in my mind, over and over. Drove me nuts while I was locked up. Something just wasn't right that day.

Anyway, I go in and my ex is like half-dressed and all wyled out. Sweaty and hyper. The baby crying on the floor there with like two big Salvatrucha-looking dudes.

LUCIA. Like, Mara Salvatrucha? / Like gangbangers?

ABEL. Yeah. But who knows right? They just looked like it to me. Could have been her cousins but I don't know.

LUCIA. Why were they there?

ABEL. I didn't want to find out. I just wanted my baby. So I start telling Silvia - that was my ex's name - I tell her that she can't take my baby. That I won't let her take her. And let me tell you, hell really hath no fury. This bitch, she's about this big but she can get crazy. Throwing shit, spitting out things you wouldn't even write on a bathroom wall. The Salvatrucha dudes give us some space I guess because they go outside. And I grab Melita and try to get her diaper bag to just take her away while Silvia calms down. But as soon as I do

## Abel

ABEL. Only one cook could have cooked it up like that.

LUCIA. You know what? I'm not going to apologize for this. I asked your permission. You said yes. I put the thing out there. Now, I didn't know my boss was going to cast that guy – he has a certain type of look, but that doesn't mean I think that way about you or the character we came up with. That was something which wasn't in my control. But the thing we're putting out there – the thing *I got to put out there* is complicated and multidimensional. It's a real human being. At least it's my best attempt given the parameters so no, I'm not going to apologize for this.

*(ABEL is looking at LUCIA as if he'd been clobbered over the head and he's only just coming to.)*

Hey, I asked you. Didn't I? I asked before I did any of this.

*(Beat.)*

I asked. And you said yes.

ABEL. I didn't say yes to this shit. You put the prison thing in there – the one thing I asked you not to do.

LUCIA. No, that... I didn't mean for that to get in there. That was sort of a pitch that got out of –

ABEL. You said. From your own fucking mouth, "Okay, I won't put any of that in there." You did. So you're a fucking liar.

LUCIA. Oh, come on. It's a fictional character. Your boss is not going to put two and two together about you having gone to jail. There's no way. I don't think you have to worry about that.

ABEL. And you put Melita in there. You put her in there like nothing.

LUCIA. That's not really her, / Abel...

ABEL. That's my daughter he's talking about like that.

LUCIA. That's not Melita, Abel...

*(LUCIA's stomped for a bit.)*

Abel, I wanted a real life human up there. I needed him to be real. Not the same old shit we see on Network TV.

ABEL. And you couldn't come up with an idea of your own? You had to take the things someone told you word for word cuz you don't got another way of doing things?

LUCIA. Oh, God. They're not word – Abel, it's not word for word. Please give me a little bit more credit than that.

ABEL. I'm not giving you shit. You just take it anyway. That's how you do.

*(A slap for LUCIA.)*

LUCIA. Abel, he punches a woman. I had to give him something to make him likeable, if not he's just an angry macho punching a woman.

ABEL. Like I was an angry macho punching a woman? / Cuz that's what you been thinking of me this whole time.

LUCIA. No, Abel, that's not at all...

No, / you had your own reason for punching your wife. Please know I understand that. I'm not saying... I'm not saying anything about that. I promise –

ABEL. Oh, man.

LUCIA. I'm just / saying that we had to justify the punching – for the character. Not saying you're a... Oh, God.

ABEL. This whole time. Walking around, judging me.

*(Fuck. Fuck.)*

Oh, man... You had me fooled.

*(Beat.)*

Definitely had that Gary guy fooled.

LUCIA. Don't say that.

ABEL. You know, when I first walked in the door and you were here, sitting there doing your high and mighty thing, I knew you were this. First time I saw you, I knew it. But then I believed you – I believed all the words. Because I'm a fucking idiot. Cuz I shoulda known it; words are you thing, right? That's what a person like