

the living'life of the daughter mira
by matthew paul olmos

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characters

luna/mira – female, hispanic, can play around fourteen, but also late teens
mysterious; not passive; a certain charm

lazaro – male, hispanic, can play late teens, but seemingly older
a charisma and romance to him

maya - female, hispanic, mid-thirties
has the adulthood to ignite;
but also a warmth and humor to connect

lupe – female, hispanic, later thirties/early forties
she is tough love, wild mouth

efren – male, hispanic mid-thirties
has gravitas, but we can't tell from what;
he has been through something.

time & place

a beach not unlike baja california, but really anywhere
possibly the 1980's or early 1990's, but really anytime

the un'courting of luna an lazaro

darkness. sounds of waves reaching out
in high tide. we see the movement of
fire'light and hear the cackle of partying
from closer to shore.

lights reveal a beat'ass, blue Chevy van
with chipped paint, and a crack across its
windshield.

stands LAZARO and LUNA, they sweat
and hold cans of Tecate. they are in their
late teens, but speak a bit older at times.

LAZARO

Y'know, I'm same one walked across that dance floor at you. Looked at you, like how I
still can't help lookin'at you.

LUNA

Es late.

LAZARO

We're young. It ain't ever late.

LUNA

I dunno I feel like goin'in there.

LAZARO

You was just in there.

LUNA

No, you was just in there; me, I was the entire time standing out here.

LAZARO

Finish that.

(LAZ finishes his Tecate. LUNA watches him, then finishes hers. LAZ
reaches into the van for two more; we hear an ice chest)

C'mon, look where we at. Got the entire ocean blue singing a song to just me an you.

And them. LUNA

Who cares about them. LAZARO

I do. I care. LUNA
I'll miss them.

They drunk. You an me is un'drunk. C'mere. LAZARO

I said I'd come cuz I wanted to be over there. With our friends. By their fire. LUNA

We can always be with— LAZARO

That's not true. LUNA

(An illumination from the moon lands on LUNA; making her seem distant from LAZARO)

I'll age. You'll age. And they will too.
Adults we'll become.
And someday, our teenage will be only memories.
Faces we can't place the names; names we can't find the faces.
And I'll wish I could travel back to now; walk over to them, while I was still this age; laugh with them for as many hours as this young body is capable to.

(Lights back to normal; LAZARO disappoints at the distance between them)

...an how'bout us tho— LAZARO

I imagine *this* is what happens to us. We'll stand like this. Looking across at one another, and for the next I dunno how many years neither of us will ever want what the other do. And our attraction will turn to trash. LUNA

LAZARO

You don't know, you got no idea.

You imagine, what, that I'm goin'ride out my life lookin'through that windshield of this Chevy Cassanova? No. Nuh-uh. The blue book for this bitch still least a couple thousand; me I'm goin'take that, an the bus, put myself to school. Maybe Fire Academy, maybe Po'lice. An we'll stay with my mom until I graduate an can put a down payment on a two-bedroom; heard if we look over by the train tracks we could prolly find something cuz people can't never stand the noise. I ain't sayin'I wanna raise our family where it's loud. But es a start. (pause) We could save there, you know. An after a few years get something else closer to the school system. Something with an upstairs. Backyard. Someplace our kids could walk; never haffta know what the inside of a bus feel like. (pause) You got no idea, love, what I got inside.

(LAZ kisses LUNA; she allows; afterwards she sips her Tecate)

C'mon, say it to me.

LUNA

Say what.

LAZARO

You didn't think even I knew what property value was.

(The moon lights LUNA again)

LUNA

I'll miss your eyes. When we don't talk anymore. And I understand all the girls that got lost in them.

(LAZARO pulls her to him; out of the light)

LAZARO

Stay here with me. Don't go to the fire. You know they'll be at it for hours. Me, I'm just asking for a little while.

LUNA

Is that all you want? A little while?

LAZARO

You push an you shove me, Luna, but lookit me still standing right here.

LUNA

You are a stupid, estúpido man.

LAZARO

I is.

LUNA

Can you even imagine, one day how we'll scream. How we won't even be able to stand the sight.

LAZARO

If ever I raise my voice at you, ever give looks ugly at you—

LUNA

What.

(LAZARO mimes taking a photograph of LUNA's face)

LAZARO

Show to me this shot. Of this beach, where we are right now. Them waves singing a song to me an you an only me an you. Them fools drunk around that fire a million steps away. Show to me this shot if ever I forget.

LUNA

So?

LAZARO

What.

LUNA

What'd you want then.

LAZARO

I want you to forget. Just for a little while. That you don't love at me like how I love at you. I want you to forget. An be close to me. Just on this beach. Just in my Cassanova. Just the night and then... when you get too cold, you can go back around that fire, cuz I know my heatin'system is shit.

(Beat)

LUNA

Say nice things to me.

LAZARO

What I been doing???

LUNA

Just...do.

(LAZARO pulls LUNA into him; he whispers into her ear. She smiles. She laughs. LAZARO leads LUNA into the van and slides the door shut behind them. The reach of the ocean turns melodic. Something beautiful happens; turning late night hours to early morning. The crash of high tide to low can be heard as the sobriety of day returns. A few moments. The van door creaks open, the same actress as LUNA deposits herself onto the sand; gone from her is her defensiveness and fear of one's late teens; she is now bright-eyed and looks around as though it is her first time outside. She is now MIRA. She looks around, noticing the Tecate cans stuck in the sand. She looks at the exterior of the van, running her hand along the chipped blue paint. MIRA hears and looks towards the ocean for the first time. She runs to it; offstage. A few moments. Of that spot, of that van. Then, the van door slides open, LAZARO deposits himself onto the sand quietly, he carefully slides the van door shut as though somebody is still sleeping inside, but then carefully reopens the van door and pulls himself a fresh Tecate; he drinks as his eyes adjust to the morning light. LAZARO smells his fingers, he smiles. He adjusts his prick. A few moments of his looking truly happy. This is broken as MIRA re'enters, she is wet with the ocean. LAZARO and MIRA stare at each other. A weighted moment; it looks as though they know each other, but have also never met. A tableau of a father and freshly conceived daughter)

the meeting of lazaro and his daughter mira

LAZARO lowers his Tecate; he moves closer to MIRA, looking at her closely. LAZARO mimes winding a camera disposable. MIRA embarrasses.

MIRA

... what's that they say? About a picture. About it lasts longer.

(MIRA poses awkwardly. LAZARO mimes taking a photograph)

LAZARO

Know what that is?

MIRA

A camera. Taking a picture.

LAZARO

Miras...

(LAZARO shows her the 'photo')

MIRA

Looks like yer hand.

LAZARO

Look closer.

MIRA

... my face...?

LAZARO

Es a purty face, mija.

MIRA

... thank you.

(LAZARO signs the cross)

LAZARO

... I can't believe it, will you look at you...

MIRA

I can't.

(They look at each other with curiosity; which breaks into a shared laughter and happiness. Beat)

LAZARO

Who'd uh thunk it?

MIRA

Thunk what?

LAZARO

Me an yer mom, makin'somethin'honest to God beautiful.

MIRA

Where is she?

LAZARO

...we should keep it quiet, she still...

MIRA

Honest to God beautiful is what makes a boy wanna... be in the van of a Chevy with a girl?

LAZARO

...look... just to be... for your sake... your... mother an me... we ain't... look I thought the two of us was supposed ta get up'close an never get un'close. But—

MIRA

But what.

LAZARO

Well, es only been handful uh months, but I can see yer mama's curious'ness go. An so I planned this whole trip way the hell down here. But last night, even after she wanted the van of my Chevy, I know I ain't no future uh things for her.

(LAZ puts his Tecate down, he looks at MIRA closely)

But if this is you here, what me an her created last night, then me an yer mama was always meant to be here. On this beach. With my Chevy blue Cassanova. An you.

(Beat. MIRA tries to peek inside the van)

MIRA

What does she look like. Like right now.

LAZARO

...sweaty. Heat worked last night afterall. Her sideburns, you know sideburns, they stuck to her cheek. She got dark, dark hair, almost black. She small, don't take up much blanket, but she flops in her sleep. An there's a lil'dent of a scar left on her forehead, think it was a chickenpock she picked before it were ready to go. An can you hear that?

(They listen; sounds of a delicate snoring are heard)

MIRA

You like listening to her sleep, I can tell that you do.

LAZARO

... she got like a little whistle in her nose.

MIRA

Does that mean I'll have a whistle in my nose too?

LAZARO

After I hear you sleep for the first time, mija, I'll let you know if you do.

MIRA

How long do I haftha wait?

LAZARO

For what?

MIRA

For you to hear me sleep.

LAZARO

Uh... let's see...

(LAZARO checks an imaginary watch)

...about a day under nine months.

MIRA

She doesn't know I'm here yet, does she.

LAZARO

If she knew you were here standing, mija, she'd be so excited; she'd hold around you and never be capable to let go.

MIRA

Can I ask something?

LAZARO

I don't know much, but okay.

MIRA

What's your name?

LAZARO

Lazaro; everybody call me Laz tho'.

MIRA

Laz, how come what you said, how come es not you and her and the future uh things?

LAZARO

...love is like... a lotta stuff.

MIRA

Stuff?

LAZARO

Es like on trash day, how all the little trash cars, they go all over the city—

(MIRA stares)

You've no idea what I'm talking about. (pause) So... there's like these little red trucks, and once a week they go all over the city picking up stuff that people don't want no more. And then they take it to this even bigger trash truck that pushes all the shit inside.

MIRA

And where does the bigger trash truck take it to?

LAZARO

Lookit you, all smart an whatever. I dunno where the hell you get that, but okay. (pause)
So the bigger trash truck take it to a place called The Dump. An all that is is this big
ol'hole or like—

MIRA

Laz?

LAZARO

Yea, mija?

MIRA

What's The Dump got to do with me?

LAZARO

Sometimes, when those little red trash trucks drive up to the bigger trash truck, I seen
them only half full. Me, if I was a trash driver, I wouldn't want to drive around half-full, I
would stay driving thru the streets until my truck was all the way overflowing.

MIRA

I don't understand.

LAZARO

See, when your Mama ride around in my van of this Chevy, mija, she don't feel all the
way full with me.

MIRA

...

LAZARO

What is it, wha's that look?

MIRA

I thought, I thought cuz here I am standing... that you an her...

LAZARO

It's not so many times we get to choose in this life, mija. Most of the time we just get no
say.

MIRA

So why am I talking to you?

LAZARO

...I dunno, I got no fuckin'idea—Sorry. Prolly shouldn't talk like that around you.

MIRA

Maybe you actually shouldn't talk around me.

LAZARO

Wha's that mean?

MIRA

Are you really gonna be here a day under nine months to meet me for reals? Is she really gonna stay only half-full for all that time?

LAZARO

Hey. Maybe this hasn't ever happened before in the history of the universe. Maybe not one other father and daughter have ever... maybe that's how special it is we created you; that you an me get to know each other before—

MIRA

Before we *never* know each other?

LAZARO

Hey.

MIRA

Sorry.

LAZARO

Don't apologize, just... believe in me, eh?

MIRA

Maybe if you didn't just drive around with her, maybe if you tried harder to be full with her—

LAZARO

Mija, me an your mama a half-full van of a Chevy couple an tha's it.

(Beat)

MIRA

What'll I be called? (pause) My name.

LAZARO

Think we best let your mom in on that kinda talk.

MIRA

How long *can* we talk? What happens when she wakes?

LAZARO

... I dunno, all this a first for me—

MIRA

I'll always be your first.

(Beat)

... what was it like? Like inside the Cassanova...

LAZARO

Well...

(The moon appears, the tide reaches night. The Delfonics' "Didn't I Blow Your Mind This Time" statics onto the speakers of the van. LAZARO begins to move to the beat. MIRA watches in fascination. LAZARO begins to feel the music in his hips and thrust. LAZARO relives what it was like to be with LUNA. Rhythm finds him. He continues jutting towards happiness at the chorus. Afterwards, as he looks to back to MIRA, the sun lights and the tide pulls out)

One day, mija, you'll move like we did. The music'll prolly be shit, but if you move with somebody you love at, an who love at you back, you won't give one fuck. Sorry.

MIRA

Thank you.

(They both hear a movement from within the van)

LAZARO

I uh... I think she wakin' up.

MIRA

What happens when she wakin' up?

LAZARO

I don't know, mija, but when she do, I'm gonna put my hand to yer Mama's belly, an say "what's up" to you. An you better say "what's up" back.

MIRA

Are you gonna tell her about me an you, about us?

LAZARO

Nah. She don't believe shit I tell her anyways.

MIRA

It'll be only our secret.

LAZARO

I'll be the only one knowing what a perfect little mija we got brewing inside.

MIRA

You promise you'll be there standing when I'm done, when I'm done brewing.

LAZARO

Te lo prometo.

(We hear more movement in the van. Something beautiful begins to happen to MIRA)

MIRA

Wait.

(A pause in the beautiful)

How old are you?

LAZARO

...I'm not so much older than you, mija.

(Something beautiful happens. MIRA disappears because of it. LAZARO looks up, around; he listens to the reach of the ocean. A moment. He then downs his beer, and gently slides the van door; he smiles at someone as he crawls back into the van. We hear the ice chest, sounds of a fresh Tecate being opened. Then a second. We hear two throats gulping. White out)

days under nine months

In the white, we hear the rushed movements from a Labor Delivery room; it is frantic, but controlled.

We hear LUNA crying.

The voice of a male doctor: “Push, push, come on.”

The voice of a female nurse: “Push, Luna, c’mon, push.”

Male doctor: “Hard, come on, real hard now.”

Female nurse: “You’re doing it, Luna, just a little more...”

We hear the strains of LUNA followed by a mild sigh of relief.

Female nurse: “Okay, Luna, now there’s no contractions for a little bit, so just close your eyes; go on take in some deep breaths; some deep breaths for your baby.”

We hear breathing through an oxygen mask; stylized. A few moments of this.

Female nurse: “Atta girl, there you go, Luna, breaths for your baby...”

More breathing. Then,

Male doctor: “Alright, Luna, the contractions are coming up again, take a deep breath in, hold it, and push! Hard, hard, hard.”

Female nurse: "C'mon, Luna, you're almost there. Push, push, push, Luna, push!"

We hear an OB tech counting from one to ten, we hear LUNA pushing for the entire count.

Female nurse: "You're almost there, Luna, you're almost there... you're baby is coming, the head is coming out; keep pushing... C'mon, Luna."

We hear LUNA scream out in pain, which follows into exhaustion and crying.

We hear the doctor suctioning the baby and cutting the umbilical cord; stylized.

Male doctor: "You have a girl. (pause) Note, we have a weak cry."

Female nurse: "Happy birthday to your baby girl, Luna."

Male doctor: "Nurse, is her IV open?"

Stylized sound of an IV on full blast with Oxytocin.

Male doctor: "Give her Methergine."

Stylized sound of a shot being given.

Female nurse: "Luna, can you hear me, your baby is working a little hard to take in air, but her color is good. I'm gonna show you your baby before we take her to the NICU. Are you ready to see your baby?"

LUNA cries; amidst her crying we hear the barely audible sounds of a baby making it's first noise.

White out goes to darkness. In the darkness the sound of the baby's first noise is transformed; it heightens and twists form; it morphs into something far darker; almost scary. Just as these sounds build to a climax, there is a static.

Static to silence. We hear nothing. Just only stillness; emptiness.

A few moments without sight, without hearing.

Then, the sounds of two muffled feet stepping quickly down a hallway; we hear the friction of a nurse's scrubs walking. Stylized.

A small hope of light begins to illuminate the stage, where there standing is MAYA, a thirty-something, petite, Mexican-American woman with dark hair; wearing blue and pink pastel scrubs; she stops, she speaks downstage as though to a group of people looking at her. She is the same female nurse's voice from before.

MAYA

Thank you for your patience, I know this has all been—it is a lot; I understand. Now, Luna has been moved to her own room, she's resting now, but someone will be out to let you know when she's up and okay for people. Now—

(MAYA looks to the family, listening; she interrupts)

Please. If you'll listen to me I can—

We've taken her baby to the NICU for observation. Her baby's lungs are a little weak right now, so we're helping her with some oxygen. Also, her baby's temperature is still

MAYA(cont)

unstable so we're keeping her in an incubator, a warmer, at this point. Our Neonatologist, a high-risk baby doctor, is watching her recovery and as soon as he says it is alright, we'll be able to let Luna in to see her baby, but—please, if you'll just listen to me. Luna's baby is fine and as soon as we know a little bit more about her breathing, about her condition, the Neonatologist will talk to Luna personally, and then someone will come out here to speak with you all. Are we okay, is everybody understanding what I've communicated? (pause) That's not what I was saying, I just was making sure we all— (pause) Thank you. Somebody will be out soon.

(MAYA excuses herself, walking back upstage; we hear the electronic opening of a large hospital door; MAYA walks further; we hear her open an outside door; sounds of traffic. MAYA stands looking up at the early morning sunlight; she collects herself and pulls a single Virginia Slims cigarette.

Sounds of a car with enhanced bass; MAYA watches as the engine is killed and the music stops. A car door opens. We hear boots walking. Enter LAZARO; looking more bling. He looks at MAYA, then pulls a rolled cigarette; he has trouble with it)

LAZARO

Hey, you got any paper?

(MAYA takes his cigarette, deposits it into a trash can; then takes one last hit of hers and does the same)

MAYA

No smoking. (pause) Can I direct you somewhere?

(LAZARO pulls a scrapped piece of paper and reads from it)

LAZARO

This, Beverly? Hospital?

MAYA

Says the incredibly large'ass sign reading Beverly. Hospital.

LAZARO

What about the Labor and Delivery Waiting Area.

MAYA

Who are you here for?

LAZARO

... I dunno yet.

MAYA

You just... felt like waiting for... you dunno yet?

LAZARO

I dunno... what they named it.

MAYA

The *mother*. Let's try with the name of the *mother*.

LAZARO

Awhh, sheeit, why ain't you say. Cuz you ain't goin' believe this, the mother's name... es Luna. Like fuckin' moonlight an shit.

(MAYA looks at LAZARO; a moment)

MAYA

... you're with Luna's family. Yea. That makes a lot of sense. That actually clears up a lot of things for me.

LAZARO

So... how is she? Luna.

MAYA

Main doors are right around that way. They're glass, but don't worry about walking into them, they'll open when you get too close.

(LAZARO looks off to where MAYA pointed)

Luna's *moonlit* family are all inside. I'm sure they've missed... like talking to you an shit.

(LAZARO looks towards the entrance, then back at his paper)

Would you like me to write those directions down for you? (pause) I could draw you a picture. (longer pause) I'm gonna guess since yer too scared to go in that—

LAZARO

Ain't scared.

MAYA

Okay. But you are the father?

LAZARO

I was. Is. (pause) It's been awhile... since I like... seen her.

MAYA

Has it been awhile... since you like... spoke to her?

LAZARO

Last time was, we was on this beach. Whole buncha us. Used ta go down there sometimes just to fuck around. My Chevy Blue Cassanova; fuckin' miss that bitch. You know I only got seven-fifty for her?

(LAZARO checks an imaginary watch)

... that was... like nine months ago the day. (pause) Nah, wasn't really. That'd be tight tho', right? If time, were like, on time like that.

MAYA

Are you on something? It's okay if you are. I'm no... I imagine you need it. To like focus.

LAZARO

I ain't seen or talked to her since that trip. Luna. (pause) See, she was all up-the-shit in love with me, couldn't get enough; wanted to be movin'in, start a savings account an all that, but I's like "What???" I still young, yo. I ain't at a time to be doin'all that. (pause) See, there it go with time again. Time's fucked up.

MAYA

Is Luna's family expecting you? Did they invite you to—

LAZARO

I was thinking maybe if there's a less'important waiting area, y'know, someplace for people not-that-welcome?

(MAYA takes a moment, looking him over)

MAYA

Hospital priority goes to the patient, so if she doesn't want you here—

LAZARO

Hey, mi *Luna* been *dreaming* the day I show up again. What you think she been doing these past nine months, huh? Straight'up prayers-to-God that I'd be here. You lookin'at some monumental romantic shit right now.

MAYA

How did you know though?

LAZARO

How I know what, I know lotsa things.

MAYA

How did you know Luna had her baby; she was premature by—

(Beat)

LAZARO

Look. I don't need to go inside or nothing. But can you just tell me if she alright? That she not hurt or anything.

MAYA

You have a daughter. They haven't named her yet. Luna, is resting; the birth was preterm at thirty-two weeks, but so far your baby is doing how we'd expect; a little difficulty taking in oxygen, so we'll have to see in the NICU the next few hours—

LAZARO

What's "difficulty taking"—

MAYA

Premature lungs need a little time. We'll know more soon. (Beat) There's an area on the second floor; renovations. You're welcome to wait up there, I doubt any of her family will wander up—

LAZARO

So—I mean... how come the lungs—

MAYA

Well—

LAZARO

I mean there's gotta be a reason. Shit don't just—

MAYA

The last thing anybody needs in these situations is—

LAZARO

Situations?

MAYA

Yes, your daughter is in a situation. And if you'd like to be here, I can keep you updated if anything progresses in that situation.

LAZARO

Why would you do that for, you like me or something?

MAYA

Less and less the more you speak.

If you'd like to stay, I can go up in a couple hours. If not...

Oh, and don't ever show up here with that music again; there's mothers sleeping.

(MAYA exits. LAZARO looks up at the hospital. A few moments. He then walks back to his car; we hear the engine go, and the bass of his system bounce, then lower. Lights out)

the intensive care of the daughter mira

Lights up on the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, MAYA checks several warmers, then stops at one in particular. She reaches her hands into the incubator.

Enter MIRA. MAYA notices; turns towards her administratively.

MAYA

You're not allowed to be—

(MAYA stops; stares, then slowly removes her hands from the incubator; removes her gloves)

...uh...can I...

MIRA

Weird room.

MAYA

...hopeful room.

MIRA

So this is where you go; like everyday?

MAYA

...uh... five days. I'm here five days, the other two I'm at... a different hospital. (pause)
I'm Maya.

(MAYA reaches out her hand awkwardly; MIRA stares)

MIRA

Who am I?

MAYA

... your name, I'd love to know your--

MIRA

Me too. (pause) It's funny, huh. This.

Funny how. MAYA

Your eyes, all looking at me like— MIRA

I'm sorry. You just... you look almost... almost *eerily* like— MAYA

Beautiful? (pause) Not what you were gonna say? MIRA

(MAYA glances nervously back at the incubator. MIRA moves towards it with curiosity)

Can I?

Wait. MAYA

(MAYA leads MIRA just offstage; we hear the rushing of water and scrubbing; stylized. A few moments of this before MAYA leads MIRA, now in proper attire, back into the NICU. MAYA places gloves on MIRA, then herself. MIRA puts her hands into the incubator, looking closely at the baby; MAYA watches with fascination)

See right there? Where she's trying to pull in air. MAYA

I'm so thin. MIRA

We can't feed her/you yet; the suck would tire you out and we need the space in your tummy for your lungs to expand. MAYA

Thank you. For whatever it is you just said. MIRA

(MIRA removes her hands from the incubator)

MAYA

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said so much... *information*.

MIRA

No. I like it. Hearing you say about me. It helps.

MAYA

Can I ask...

MIRA

I don't know much, but okay.

MAYA

Where did you—or I mean, how did you—

MIRA

Where I don't know. And I don't know about time or all that. But ... there was this beach. And this big blue van... with all the paint falling off... his Chevy...

MAYA

... Cassanova...

(Gentle lights begin over the beach and blue van; neither notices)

MIRA

He were awful nice ta see me. La'za'ro. Laz for short. Sad eyes he had. He talk kinda funny.

MAYA

Funny how.

MIRA

Dunno. Sometimes he sound so sure of stuff, an then like he don't know nothin'.

MAYA

You talked to him for awhile?

MIRA

I remember it like we did. I play it over an over in my thoughts. The way he smiled, couldn't help ta smile at me.

(Lights full over the beach and blue van)

MIRA

First I remember seeing my hand pullin' that shiny handle to slide open to the outside. My feet on the cold sand. Morning I guess. Oh, an the sound of them what-you-call waves. Then I'm running till I couldn't run no more cuz the water to my knees. An quick it got all white around me, so I jumped under. The wet was everywhere; waking me so awake. Next thing I know I'm walking, sand all stuck to my feet, an there he is standin'. That red can to his lips. A Day Under Nine Months is what he tol' me. By that van, by our beach.

MAYA

Do you understand where you are right now? Why we're in this room?

(MIRA looks at herself in the incubator)

MIRA

I understand it that I have a mother sleeping in another room right now. I understand it that *her* mother an uncle are waiting with her; and that other family keeps stopping by to laugh with them, but... no I don't understand any of this.

MAYA

If you mean this room; the warmer, that's what's necessary for a baby in your condition—

MIRA

But... how come I'm by my own tho'?

MAYA

Your mama... she's young. She's real young and your family they just don't understand where to put their worry right now. So they laugh about other things. But in their underneath, they're real worried about you.

(Beat)

MIRA

I wondered if he would actually be here. I wondered right from when he said it, "A day under nine months."

MAYA

What if he was though. Here.

MIRA

He ain't.

MAYA

... would you do something for me? I want you to close your eyes. I just need you to close them for real quick.

(MIRA closes her eyes)

Now, I want for you to imagine, imagine for a moment just like you remember him by. La'za'ro. Laz for short.

(The sun revolves over the beach and blue van)

Can you see him, in your mind, can you make a picture?

MIRA

... yea... I can make a picture.

MAYA

An what would you say to him if pictures an people could talk?

MIRA

That's private.

MAYA

You're right. That's family. That's a father and daughter. But you *do* have something... that you'd want to say, if he were here...?

(Beat. MIRA reopens her eyes)

I'm sorry, I shouldn't be getting—

MIRA

No. I like it. I like you talking to me about him. I like you helping me make a picture.

MAYA

Then that's what I'm here for; to help you with whatever'ever you need. I promise that to you.

MIRA

Is that something all adults do?

MAYA

What adults do?

MIRA

Promise stuff.

MAYA

No, you're right. Adults shouldn't have to promise anything. They should just do.

MIRA

...

MAYA

Can we talk about your Laz again sometime, would you want to make some more pictures later?

MIRA

I have time. Isn't that what they say.

(MAYA nods)

MAYA

Where do you go, do you just... wander—

MIRA

I do. Wander.

MAYA

And if you wanted to talk to *me*—

MIRA

You'll be at the information area; with the other women dressed like you.

MAYA

The nurses' station. (pause) So how do I find you—

MIRA

Just want to.

(Beat)

Can I— MAYA

I dunno can you? MIRA

Can I—is there anything you’d like to be called? MAYA

Oh, that. They don’t seem to get around to it, do they. MIRA

They will. I’ll make it my care that they do. MAYA

How about *Mira*? MIRA

That’s pretty. Where’d it come from? MAYA

He was showing me a picture of myself, said, “Miras.” I liked it; ‘cept es better without the ssss. MIRA

Mira. MAYA

Yes? MIRA

(MAYA smiles)

Maya, can I stay a little longer; in this room, I mean.

(MAYA puts a fresh set of gloves back onto MIRA)

Of course. You can deposit the gloves, mask and gown— MAYA

—in that bin over there. MIRA

MAYA

Thank you.

(MAYA exits. MIRA goes back to her incubator, she sings to herself)

MIRA

I gave my heart and soul to you, girl...

(Hums: *Didn't I do it, baby, didn't I do it, baby?*)

Gave you the love you never knew, girl, oh...

(Hums: *Didn't I do it, baby, didn't I do it, baby?*)

We hear waves crashing. MIRA looks up; she looks towards the beach and blue van. Lights out)

the mothering of luna

A hospital bed, we can only see the foot of it and the TV in front of it. In a chair next to it is LUPE, later thirties; she reads a gossip magazine. She hears somebody, she gets up quickly; in the doorway she stops MAYA walking by.

LUPE

Hey, the TV don't work in here.

MAYA

I'll let someone know.

LUPE

That's what the other one said.

MAYA

If there's no one to fix it, we can see if there's another room—

LUPE

We can't be waiting all this time without—

MAYA

You could watch with the rest of your family in the waiting—

LUPE

Es for my daughter. Mi Luna's gonna wake up an be all freaked out cuz that's how she does, an if there's not a TV to distract—

MAYA

I'll see what I can do. Excuse me.

LUPE

Yer the one who come out an talked to us this morning, huh. Wha's yer name?

MAYA

Maya.

LUPE

Lupe. (pause) Hey, Maya, wouldn't it be funny if I got Lupus. Lupe, Lupus.

MAYA

Excuse me, Lupe.

LUPE

You didn't answer me if you thought it would be funny.

MAYA

Yes, I did.

(LUPE watches MAYA walk off, then speaks to the gods)

LUPE

Doesn't anybody on this floor have a fucking sense of humor?! It don't have to be all like a hospital in here! Swear to God, my funny is wasted. Not one fucking person laughs the way they supposed to. Fucking serious'ass planet; fucking galaxy. Maybe one of the stars up there know how ta laugh, maybe when I get up to them stars'laughing tha's where I'll belong.

(LUPE spots MIRA; who is trying to sneak towards the blue van)

LUPE

Hey, I see you, you know. (pause) Hey, a grown'up's talking to you.

(MIRA stops)

Wuz yer name. (pause) I seen you in these hallways. (pause) Hello, do you see me talking to you?

MIRA

I see your lips moving yes; they like moving I think.

LUPE

So why don't you move yers then.

MIRA

I'm not supposed to move them for *strangers*.

LUPE

"Not supposed to move them for strangers" she says.

MIRA

Congratulations. On hearing me.

LUPE

Where's yer mother at, which room you in? (pause) You from around here?

MIRA

No. I'm from a beach, the most beautiful beach.

LUPE

"Most beautiful beach," she says. You funny; funny is important, you should know that.

MIRA

I should do lots of things.

LUPE

How old're you?

(MIRA shrugs)

Y'supposed to be proud how old you is. What're you fourteen an half? Fifteen an one quarter?

MIRA

Thank you for thinking me fifteen an one quarter.

LUPE

Y'know you talk funny, right?

MIRA

Maybe you listen funny.

LUPE

Your face—

MIRA

Your face.

LUPE

Ay, what's a matter with you, ain't nobody taught you how to listen?

MIRA

What, I'm sorry I wasn't listening.

LUPE

Mmm hmmm... think yer pretty smart, huh? What I was *going* to say was that the way your face is... look almost like mi Luna's face. (pause) You don't wanna tell me yer name, I guess you don't wanna tell me yer mama's name neither, huh?

MIRA

Lookit you, learning.

LUPE

Mi little Luna. She in there sleeping, but if I could look at you two side by side—

MIRA

So you named her then; when she was born, you give her the name Luna, like in the hospital?

LUPE

Me, no.

MIRA

Who then?

LUPE

Some man; some fool.
Why, you like that name? Luna.

MIRA

Me, no.

LUPE

Where was you sneakin' off to, you tryin'ta hide from your parents or something? You did something bad? (pause) Es okay, I won't tell.

MIRA

Won't tell what.

LUPE

What you did.

MIRA

What *you* did.

LUPE

Hey, wuz yer last name, huh? You can least tell me that. Ain't like I'm gonna know it.

MIRA

...Iunno; you might; prolly es not so much different than yours.

(MIRA exits. LUPE watches as MIRA runs off, then goes back into Luna's room; we hear the faint sounds of snoring and the static of a wrong television.

Lights brighten over the beach and blue van. MIRA walks onto the sand; staring at the blue van which is dusted; as though time has passed. She peeks inside its darkened windows, wiping the dirt. She tries the handle, which comes off in her hand)

MIRA

Hello??? Are you here? (pause) Laz? (pause) Pop? (pause) La'zah'rooooo....?

(MIRA hears something, she turns, looking slightly scared)

... someone there...?

(MIRA looks around worriedly as darkness falls over her. Lights focus back on the hospital hallway, MIRA moves to the light where EFREN; mid-thirties; thick mustache, is looking down at her)

EFREN

Hey, yoo'hoo, you hear me what I asked?

(MIRA stares)

I asked if you knew my

(MIRA shakes her head)

niece. (pause) You know, waiting till like the end of a question before you respond is considered a very adult thing to do.

(MIRA stares)

Tha's alright though. Me, I pull that shit all the time too. Sometimes, when somebody is talking at me, I just smile. I put my face like this:

(EFREN forces a smile; we see teeth)

EFREN(cont)

But I don't take in one word they sayin' to me. Es like their talkin' just bounce off my grilled front. An d'you know something? It works. I dunno what it is. Me, I got one of them faces I guess, that people just can't get inside of. Are you sure you ain't one of Luna's

(MIRA shakes her head)

little girlfriends or whatever?

(A moment of EFREN admiring MIRA)

You know something. I think you do know her. See, I seen you before, hanging around these hallways; an I seen you before lookin' in the direction of my family like you curious. So is you, curious? (pause) Es okay if you is. Here, listen...

(EFREN motions listening to Luna's door)

See how quiet that is, es nice right now. But soon as I open that door, you gonna hear my sister's voice run its ass all the way up the flagpole and then back down again. Tha's how much Lupe don't shut up, enough to hang a flag for the United States of America. Not like you tho'. You quiet type like me, huh. People like you an me don't hang nothin'. We just stay silent. Ain't nobody's goddamned business what kinda flag we fly.

MIRA

Has anyone ever told you—

EFREN

Tol'me what.

MIRA

That they don't know what the hell you're talking about.

EFREN

Yea. They have. Many times.

MIRA

This is one more time then.

(MIRA moves to leave)

EFREN

Wh'wh'wh'whoa, hold on there little not-Luna's friend. You almost forgot somethin'. Do you know what somethin'you almost forgot?

(MIRA shakes her head)

That's funny. I'd think you would.

(EFREN holds the van door handle up to her)

Strange thing to be carrying around a hospital in the first place, stranger you don't remember. (pause) What's a matter, now you don't want it.

(MIRA tries to respond that she does)

What? What was that?

MIRA

I do.

EFREN

Do what.

MIRA

Want it.

(MIRA reaches her hand for it, he pulls it back)

EFREN

Look like a van door slide. Chevy if I had ta guess. What's somebody like you doin'carryin'around a Chevy van door slide for?

MIRA

Somebody like me? Somebody like me what.

EFREN

Wow. Second ago you was mute, now yer like the anti-mute.

MIRA

Tell me what somebody like me is.

EFREN

What you doin' in this hospital, mijita? An why do you keep looking in the direction of my family?

MIRA

I belong to one of the nurses.

(MIRA quickly grabs the door handle, and runs off. EFREN looks at his hand, it is cut; he puts his mouth to the cut and sucks. Lights out)

the sacred spot otherwise known as the blue van

MAYA looks for LAZARO in the
secondary waiting area.

MAYA

... Mr... Lazaro...? Hello...? Helllloooo...??? (pause) I guess not.

(MAYA disappoints; makes to leave. Enter MIRA)

Oh. Hi. How did you—

MIRA

I need for you to come look.

MAYA

What's a matter, are you okay?

MIRA

Please, just...

MAYA

... what is it, is something wrong?

(MIRA takes MAYA by the hand and walks through the hallway, past
Luna's room as lights darken over the hospital and heighten over
the beach and blue van. MIRA pulls MAYA onto the sand. MAYA
stares; taking it all in)

MIRA

See, es just like you wanted me to make a picture of.
The waves are out that way. An tha's the—

MAYA

Cassanova.

MIRA

This is our beach, his an mine. (pause) It didn't look so much like this though.

MAYA

What do you mean, what didn't look like this?

MIRA

I dunno. The van was brighter last time. More blue. And see, look

(MIRA shows MAYA the van door handle)

stuff's all fallin' apart.

MAYA

Mira, how did you... how did you get to this place?

MIRA

I dunno. I was singing the song he showed me. I was remembering the way it sounded that day. And then when I looked up from the intensive care, here it was. Right inside your hospital. Do you think that he's here, do you think he's coming back just like he said?

MAYA

Mira, I don't know about all this, but your father, if you want him to come for you, I think we should go back to the hospital.

MIRA

But he doesn't know the hospital. All he knows is this.

MAYA

He does though.

MIRA

Does what?

MAYA

This morning. He was at the hospital. He came to see you.

MIRA

Then where is he then. If he came to see me where is he then?

MAYA

... he left... but if he comes back, when he comes back, it'll be... there, probably not here.

MIRA

You don't know that. You weren't here, you don't know what me an him—

MAYA

Listen, I know it might not make much sense now, but you arrived early. Weeks. And it'll be weeks before we're through taking care of you. So when Laz does come back for you, it needs to be at the hospital. In the NICU. Not this place. Now, c'mon, I don't think we're supposed to be here—

MIRA

But I like it here.

MAYA

I don't think it's safe here—

MIRA

But what if I miss him?

MAYA

Mira, I need you to believe in me, yea? Can you do that? The same way I'm believing in you?

(MIRA takes MAYA's hand; they walk off the sand; back into the hallway as lights resume on the hospital)

MIRA

Where was he. Tell me where you saw him.

MAYA

It was in the parking lot, just outside the—

(MIRA lets go of MAYA's hand and runs off)

Mira. Wait, hold on. Mira...

(We hear the regular of hospital sounds; voices, walking, the opening and closing of doors. MAYA looks at her watch, and walks back towards the nurses' station. From this point forward, the beach and blue van remain lit as a fixture in this world; from it we will see the passage of time.

As we watch the beach move us from day to night, we watch MAYA moving stylized from room to room; checking charts; doing paperwork; careful rounds inside the NICU; this could form some sort of responsible dance. The movement comes to highpoint as we

watch her carry a sleeping MIRA in from the parking lot to a spare room. Night falls. A spent MAYA pulls a single cigarette and tucks it behind her ear. She then spots LAZARO at the nurses' station; he holds a can of Tecate)

LAZARO

Where is she?

MAYA

She waited all day for you. Now she's sleeping tired.

LAZARO

I need ta see her.

MAYA

No, you need to keep it quiet.

LAZARO

Shit, I can spell quiet.

MAYA

... what???

LAZARO

Oh, you heard me.

MAYA

I thought you were going to be waiting in the—but I guess day'drinking was another way to go.

LAZARO

Yea, well I'm here now.

MAYA

Are you?

LAZARO

What I just said.

MAYA

Are you actually in this hospital where she needs you. Or are you drunk. Or are you still off on some beach.

LAZARO

What you know about—

(MAYA takes LAZARO by the hand and walks him into the hallway, past Luna's room, and to the beach and blue van; she shoves him onto the sand. He stares in disbelief; he runs his hand along his Chevy)

MAYA

Well, aren't you going to say anything.

LAZARO

This place... this where shit went down, son! This the spot I was tellin'you.

MAYA

Cassanova, yea, got that. What are we *doing* here, Lazaro?

LAZARO

You brought *me*.

MAYA

No, your daughter brought me. To the only place she seems to know you. In the past.

LAZARO

You, you seen her? You talked to her?

MAYA

Yes. I did.

LAZARO

She does, you know, know me,... my daughter. Morning after me an Luna...

MAYA

Go on.

LAZARO

Well, when I come out the van, this van... there she was my daughter standin'. Grown. Well, teenage anyways.

MAYA

"A day under nine months..."

LAZARO

She told you about that?

MAYA

You told her you'd be at the hospital, you promised to her.

LAZARO

... know what's fucked up, in this spot, I had a future.

MAYA

You still could, both of you.

LAZARO

Right here, on this piece uh the Earth, I had a wife. Child. Well, alright, she weren't my wife, but felt like it tho'. An for them couple days we were this coastal couple, my hand always to her middle, daytime-dreaming about the lives we's goin'live. It were the fullest days I ever lived.

MAYA

Your daughter is at a hospital. Not some beach.

LAZARO

Feels like her though; here. Like she goin'pop out the sand then stay with me forever.

(LAZARO notices the handprint on the van window)

LAZARO

Is... is this her hand?

MAYA

It is.

LAZARO

She were standing right on this spot, weren't she. Trying to peek inside. Why's it all faded though, why my Cassanova look like this, huh?

MAYA

Salt, weather, time.

(LAZARO notices the missing door handle)

LAZARO

...the shit... D'you do this?

MAYA

Why would I.

LAZARO

The goddamn door handle's off; somebody trying to break into my shit.

MAYA

Nobody is trying to break anything. Your daughter has your door handle. She was only trying to reach you. Now, c'mon, why don't we—

LAZARO

How's Luna tho', she still okay?

MAYA

From what I can see, Luna is still being mothered herself.

LAZARO

Ah, see you met *Lupe*.

MAYA

Lazaro, I don't believe your daughter is very hopeful with her situation, and I believe if we could peek inside her mind, if we could peek into what she's going through, we'd see a girl wishing, *begging* for some other future to be waiting for her. And if I could, I would magically make some person appear who just thinks the world of your newborn baby girl.

LAZARO

I'd do same. Dunno who that be tho'.

(Beat)

MAYA

Why don't we get you some water. Get your head right. And then let's go wait for your daughter to wake up.

LAZARO

What if she come back here tho'—

MAYA

This place...reeks of the past, Lazaro. She doesn't need with that.

(LAZARO notices something)

What? What is it? (pause) Laz. (pause) Lazaro.

(LAZARO walks upstage; we see a smoking fire pit with a stick sticking in it; we see a dark green, limp tent. LAZARO stares)

LAZARO

You seein'this?

MAYA

It doesn't matter.

LAZARO

Fire we had was up the beach. Ain't none of us slept in tents.

MAYA

Maybe other campers.

LAZARO

What other campers, this our spot.

MAYA

Maybe after you guys left—

LAZARO

This my memory, you can't just change, you can't just camp over my where my family at.

MAYA

Please, calm yourself, it's just—

LAZARO

Lookit es still smoking. Those motherfuckers are still here right on top uh my wife an child—

MAYA

The *hospital*, Lazaro. You're needed at the—

(LAZARO walks past the fire pit, he pulls the tent down flat)

MAYA(cont)

Lazaro!

(LAZARO goes to the fire pit, he pours sand over it)

LAZARO

Nobody even poured the sand; they just let it lit all night. Ain't supposed to let a fire lit all night with nobody watchin'.

(He looks up and down the beach)

(to the beach) Hey! Whatever motherfuckers on my lot, whatever motherfuckers leaving a goddamn flame over where my wife an child at...next time I be here y'all better be some ancient motherfuckers! You hear me!? Ancient motherfuckers!!

MAYA

There is nobody here, Lazaro. This place is empty. It's done. Now, will you man the fuck up and come back with me. (pause) Lazaro, can you hear me.

LAZARO

Yea. I does.

MAYA

And does you want to see your daughter or doesn't you.

LAZARO

Stop making fun uh me. And yes. Course I does.

MAYA

Then let's go. Let's go be by your daughter when she needs you most.

(LAZARO walks with MAYA down the hallway back to the secondary waiting area where there stands EFREN, staring at them; LAZARO instinctively stands in front of MAYA protectively)

MAYA

Excuse me, may I help you?

EFREN

Nurse, if you'll excuse us. We've a lil'history ta—

MAYA

Actually, if you'll excuse us, I was just taking Mr.—

EFREN

Taking him where? Who he got to see in this hospital? I can't think uh anyone in this hospital got to see him.

LAZARO

There is tho'. One person.

(LAZARO takes a pull)

EFREN

Sheeit, didn't know dranking was allowed the second floor.

LAZARO

Lot you don't know.

(EFREN steps towards LAZARO, MAYA stands between them)

EFREN

What was you two doin' up here anyways? This look like a storage area. Was you two *storing*?

LAZARO

I'm goin' see her, you know. My newborn baby girl. In the NICU.

EFREN

You two wasn't fuckin' was ya? There ain't some broom closet around here—

MAYA

How would you like me to call security.

EFREN

Do. An make sure ta tell'em what floor we three on.

MAYA

You do know I could have you removed from this hospital—

EFREN

Nurse, if you wanna make this into a whole big fuckin' thing we can do that. I can make your entire day fucking memorable. Or you can leave me to speak to this gentleman and go back to taking care of my niece and great niece.

LAZARO

(to MAYA) Es okay. You go take the care.

MAYA

(to EFREN) If I wasn't concerned about what your family is already going through, what Luna and her baby need, I would let you make my day memorable. But there's got to be some people who are fully grown.

(to LAZARO) If you need me...

(MAYA exits)

EFREN

Well, my my, lookit what the past drug up. Get it? *Drug*.

LAZARO

Efren, you're lookin' *healthy*.

EFREN

Simple thing, Lazaro, get your stalking' unwanted ass out this hospital, out this entire block radius, or I'm goin' call my cousins up and make sure you never leave this block radius.

LAZARO

This a hospital. And if you start anything in my child's hospital,—

(EFREN grabs LAZARO)

Maya, that nurse, will have you removed. But not me. Cuz she like me. So go on. Wait out in the parking lot for me after. I don't care. I ain't leavin' until my daughter is breathing on her own and out any Intensive Care Unit.

(LAZARO pulls out of EFREN's grip)

An after that... sheeit, ain't Luna ever told you nothin' about me, *Efren*? Cuz I don't really care what happens to me. You talkin' to one of the saddest motherfuckers you ever laid your goddamn eyes on. I'll take a beatin' to my face, body, or head, it don't matter. Cuz I ain't got no place to be but here no more.

EFREN

Lookit you.

LAZARO

Wish I could; cuz I imagine right now I look fuckin' beautiful.

EFREN

Nah, you just drunk.

LAZARO

I *was* drunk. But now, just the fucking scent of you has me all sobered up.

EFREN

Well, tha's what I'm here for, Lazaro; for you to see how they are.

LAZARO

Yea?

EFREN

Oh yea.

(LAZARO spits in EFREN's face)

LAZARO

So do something then.

(LAZARO exits. EFREN wipes his face; smells. Lights out)

the gestation of little mira

In Luna's room, MAYA speaks to LUPE at the foot of the bed. Just outside in the hallway stands EFREN. Across the stage, we see MIRA wandering to the beach and blue van.

MAYA

Now, we are taking this day by day, which is a good sign; had your baby come out any earlier, we might still be watching her on the hour. Do either of you have any questions?

(MAYA pulls a clipboard)

So, Luna, at this point, we do have to ask, during your pregnancy did you have any problems or infections? (pause) Any high blood pressure? (pause) Any diabetes? (pause) And, again we have to ask, was there any use of intoxicants, any kind at all? And please, for your baby's sake, we need for you to answer honestly. (longer pause) I see. And if you can tell me exactly what was ingested and at how many weeks into your pregnancy? (lengthy pause) Thank you.

(MAYA excuses herself, she walks into the hallway, where she spots MIRA looking at the van where Lazaro had begun to clean the dust off; however his handprint looks dusted; and we now see a shade of rust along the edges of the van; its tires cracked. MAYA looks up to notice LUPE and EFREN in the hallway staring at her)

I'm sorry, were you—

LUPE

Where do you get off speaking to my daughter like that? Can't you read faces? Isn't that part of your job? She don't need you attacking her like that, making her think this all is her fault.

MAYA

Do you have any comprehension of what is happening with your daughter's baby? She literally is not able to breathe oxygen, right now we are doing it for her. So we need every piece of information to go on as possible. Thank you.

(MAYA tries to walk off; EFREN stops her. MIRA notices the fire pit, the tent; she goes towards them. MAYA cannot help but watch)

LUPE

Hey, yoo hoo... Nursey'poo... did you think my brother wouldn't tell me about your little whatever up the stairs?

(MIRA is now poking the fire pit with a stick; we see embers glow)

EFREN

Hey. My sister talking at you.

(EFREN gets MAYA's attention)

LUPE

I don't know how you know that Lazaro kid, but if I find out you so much as telling to him what name we name mi Luna's baby, then Efren here... well he don't care what you're helping us. Efren only cares about one thing. An if mi Luna don't wanna see somebody near this our family, then tha's all the Efren care about.

EFREN

Hey, you heard that? You heard what I care about?

(MIRA coughs on the smoke. MAYA cannot take her eyes off. EFREN places MAYA in front of LUPE)

LUPE

Did you hear him what he care about, *Nurse Ma'ya*.

MAYA

I heard him. Excuse me.

(MAYA exits)

LUPE

The fuck's wrong with that one. Está loca.

EFREN

She purty tho'.

(LUPE rolls her eyes, then turns back to Luna's room, however EFREN looks to where Maya was looking; it feels as though he can see the beach and blue van. LUPE notices)

LUPE

Hey, estupid.

(EFREN turns back and leads LUPE back into Luna's room; lights darken over the hallway and come up on the NICU, where LAZARO is looking through the observation glass. MAYA joins him)

MAYA

Lemme go get her so you two can—

LAZARO

No. Leave her be awhile. She like it there. With all the waves, sand—

MAYA

She's not there for any waves an sand, she's there looking for you—

LAZARO

I know. And I will, meet her. Lemme just...

(LAZARO points through the NICU glass)

What're all those anyways—

MAYA

Those're just for oxygen. What did Efren say to you? After I left.

LAZARO

Is she gonna be okay?

MAYA

More okay if she knows she has at least one person here waiting for her the way they're supposed to be waiting for her. What was that about, upstairs?

LAZARO

Upstairs was upstairs. An don't matter what I say or do, Lupe, Efren, ain't never goin' let me downstairs.

MAYA

I don't understand what that means, what happened with you an—

LAZARO

Sheeit, I could spell what happened. (pause) Luna never saw me again after that trip. I tried everyday calling or showing up. But pretty soon she had her whole family keeping watch what I stay away. That I was some kinda ugly influence; selling drugs to make my living an whatever else she'd say. That I was a part of her history she never wanted a part of. (pause) So I used to imagine every night what if me an Luna coulda stayed forever on that beach. What if we'd never gone back inland where her family at. Just stayed a coastal couple. Who would never be mean, who would never disagree. But I guess tha's just not the story of mi Luna an me.

MAYA

But look what you did. Look what you two actually did.

LAZARO

What'd we do, huh? Fuck up a daughter's life too.

(A flame ignites in the fire pit. MAYA notices; LAZARO doesn't)

I ain't blame Luna for not wantin'ta face all this. Why would she.

MAYA

Why would she what.

LAZARO

All these complicated everything. That room. Intensive care whatever. Lookit all them fuckin'machines around where our daughter at.

MAYA

That's not for you to think about.

LAZARO

Lookit all them little—I mean so what, all them little shits in there can't breathe neither?

MAYA

No. Most of them are preterm, with possible infection or heart defect. Some are full-term, but need antibiotic therapy or observation. But they all have parents, Lazaro, they all have homes waiting.

LAZARO

You know you talk all this everything can be alright, but what'll it be like? Say she make it out here okay, say even if Lupe and the Efren let me be a part of her whatever, what the fuck'll it even be like.

MAYA

What will what even be like? Parenting???

LAZARO

Parenting *her*. She can't fuckin' breathe—

MAYA

What are you talking—

LAZARO

I'm talking about if she'll even be fucking normal.

MAYA

There is absolutely no reason why your daughter shouldn't have the most normal living life a girl could have. No reason.

LAZARO

I ain't stupid. I know this ain't just happen, I know mi Luna musta done something—

MAYA

Your Luna doesn't even know who she is yet, and now the whole world is telling her who she has no choice but to be. And it doesn't matter how or why it happened, this is the direction we're facing.

(At the beach, behind MIRA, the green tent is seemingly being put back up from the inside)

LAZARO

I was so stupid on that beach. I was so stupid getting in that van.

(MAYA notices the green tent)

MAYA

Lazaro—*Lazaro*, the beach.

(LAZARO looks towards the beach; he stares at the green tent)

LAZARO

The shit???

(MAYA and LAZARO are stopped dead in their tracks as the zipper of the green tent begins to slowly unzip from the inside as MIRA sits unaware at the fire'pit. Lights out. End of Act One)

the green of the tent

In darkness, sounds of waves reaching out in high tide, we see the movement of embers in the fire. As natural light comes up, we see MAYA protectively holding MIRA on the beach and standing staring at the green tent is LAZARO. Silence.

LAZARO walks to the green tent, readies himself, then pulls open the flaps. He looks inside; confuses. He steps inside, we see movement, we hear him muttering to himself. Finally, he steps back and zips the tent shut to the very top. He looks down at the embers in the fire; he tosses sand over them.

MAYA

Well???

LAZARO

Empty. Just some sand on the bottom.

MIRA

How about the tools though.

MAYA

What tools?

(MIRA moves towards the tent, MAYA holds her back)

MIRA

Well, I dunno what they're called really, but see... sticking to the ground.

(LAZARO picks up a couple of unused stakes)

LAZARO

They ain't need all the stakes is all.

MAYA

Lazaro, I don't know who 'they' is, but I think its best if maybe we take her away from here, what do you think?

(LAZARO nods)

LAZARO

We're okay. There's nothing... here, that I can see. Or whoever was here, they gone now. So... fuckthemverymuch for camping where we're still trying to...

(MAYA whispers in MIRA's ear, who then goes to LAZARO; they stand closer than awkwardness, causing LAZARO to grab her up into his arms; she wraps her arms around him tight. They hold like that. MAYA watches. Finally LAZARO sets MIRA down and they just look at each other)

MIRA

Yer late.

LAZARO

You were early. But no, yer right. I apologize for bein' late. Weren't very—

MIRA

Tha's okay. I like ya anyways.

LAZARO

Love you, mija.

MIRA

Say it out loud tho'; my name.

LAZARO

Mira.

MIRA

D'you know how come tha's what I named myself.

LAZARO

Hey, you didn't name yerself. I named you. Right here. On our spot. Said, "Miras"

MIRA

But es better without the "sss"

LAZARO

An I ain't goin' nowhere. Just in case you was wondering. I'm staying by you for I dunno how many years.

MIRA

...

LAZARO

What is it, what's that look?

MIRA

But what about my grandmother. And the Efren.

LAZARO

Ain't up to them, is it.

MIRA

An how about my—

LAZARO

You let me worry about yer mama, okay? I'm gonna talk to her, I'm gonna let her know what kinda special thang you an me have, an once she hears that, she'll just haffta—

MAYA

Lazaro.

(EFREN stands on the sand; he takes it in. LAZARO quickly puts MIRA behind MAYA)

LAZARO

Go on, get back to the hospital.

(MAYA stays a moment, looking directly at EFREN, who looks back. LAZARO motions MAYA, who then carefully leads MIRA away from the beach and back to the hospital hallway, past Luna's room, however MAYA then stops as she looks at the lit NICU where we see LUPE looking down at baby Mira's incubator. MAYA immediately hurries MIRA to an offstage room)

EFREN

So this the spot ain't it. That beach. An lookit this; yer Chevy up'close; I recognize from all your drivin'by; parkin'just up the block. (pause) Yea. This where you took her. Our little Luna. This where it all went down.

LAZARO

You ain't know nothin'bout mi Luna an me; never did.

EFREN

This like some beautiful'ass island to you, ain't it? You seein'all purty'colored sand, hearin' waves singing songs to you, you, an only you. (pause) Sheeit, look like you even bought yerself a little vacation tent to sleep, huh?

LAZARO

Ain't my tent. Ain't where I sleep.

(EFREN nudges the fire)

EFREN

So who's shit all this then? Huh?

LAZARO

...

EFREN

This ain't no island, d'you hear me. An my niece weren't never here on no honeymoon neither. This just some polluted place where some polluted boy polluted my sister's baby'girl an tried to pollute our entire line.

(EFREN kicks over a rock by the fire pit violently; sparks)

See, Lupe ain't spent all her own childhood raising me an my brothers, so many years workin' for her little Luna ta have everything just pulled out from inside her. Because some boy dragged her down to some shit'ass beach where he intoxicated her, said nice things to her, *confused* her.

Yea, I know how you Chevy'motherfuckers do.

And I hear you don't care what happens to you. But if you don't think I'll burn everything about who you are down to the fucking dirt, then you got no idea how hard my sister really struggled.

(LAZARO puts the rock back in place, EFREN stares at him. MAYA enters the NICU. A tableau of EFREN and LAZARO on the beach and LUPE and MAYA in the NICU)

LUPE

Don't you guys even lock this shit, anyone could just...

MAYA

You're not supposed to be—

LUPE

Lookit you. Ready to call the security cuz why? Cuz a grandmother wanted a little time with her baby's baby.

MAYA

Just you standing in here could cause infection.

LUPE

How you know? How you know I didn't read that little picture sign over there an scrub all up my arms-

MAYA

Doesn't matter. You need to leave now. Hospital regulations. Mothers and fathers only; anyone else by discretion only.

(LUPE laughs a bit)

LUPE

...mothers and fathers...

MAYA

Mothers and fathers.

LUPE

Y'know, if you even bothered looking down at me from where you do, you'd see me I'm both. A mother *an* father enough times over to teach you the meaning of what the hell you're even talking about. (pause) You even married, huh? Or lemme guess, you clock in here eighty hours whatever an think that mean something. But see, mothers and fathers don't clock shit. Time just add up. It just spend. All over our faces, so we look like me and can't even remember when we last looked like you.

MAYA

Put your gloves in the waste on your way out.

LUPE

They gloves. Relax.

MAYA

If I call security, you will not be able to come back into this hospital. I don't care what your Efren wants to threaten. And after you're gone, your daughter Luna will have to just deal. No more crying out for every little discomfort, no more complaining about every inconvenience. She'll hafta just face, on her own, the life you raised her into.

(MAYA picks up a hospital line. LUPE walks to the doorway of the NICU, properly depositing her gloves and mask into the waste receptacle)

LUPE

I can picture you, you know. As a little girl. So full of content and being by your own. An look at you now. All educated, yea, but you're where the line ends. Did you know that? People with their nose in the air like you are all the reason how come families die.

(LUPE exits. A tableau of LAZARO alone on the beach and MAYA alone in the NICU; both are scared. Then, as they both then move back to the hospital hallway, lights darken; we watch time pass through the beach. Days.

In the darkness, we hear the struggle of breathing; the strain of young lungs; stylized. When lights return to the hospital, both LAZARO and MIRA watch as MAYA pulls a curtain over the NICU observational glass so we see only silhouettes standing above Mira's incubator; a Respiratory Therapist connects a ventilator, we hear it run; stylized. Soon, we hear the strange, enhanced breathing of infant lungs ballooning in and out)

LAZARO

You sure you wanna be seeing this? We can go—

MIRA

Maya said how not all babies would need the ventilator, but me, I guess I do. An that I should't panic. Maya says the ventilator is just a stronger tube gonna help me breathe. An maybe they might even put some surfactant.

LAZARO

Surfa-wha???

MIRA

Surfactant. It goes on my little lungs; it coats them she says.

LAZARO

An she says this all okay tho', es like normal; or normal for somebody like you?

MIRA

Respiratory Distress Syndrome.

(Beat)

LAZARO

Hey, me, I'm sorry to you. About all this.

MIRA

Es not yer fault, you wasn't even there for the brewing.

LAZARO

But I should've been.

MIRA

Hey Pop.

LAZARO

Yea, mija?

MIRA

What's consent?

LAZARO

... tha's like permission, I guess.

MIRA

For what?

LAZARO

Anything, I think.

MIRA

Thora-cen-tee-sis?

LAZARO

Wha?

MIRA

Maya says mi mama wouldn't give the consent for the Thora-cen-tee-sis.

LAZARO

Mija, I don't know what you're—

MIRA

She says that they always ask whenever they put a ventilator; in case it goes bad. But when they asked mi mama, Maya says she never answers nothing, just sits, just sleeps, just the TV.

LAZARO

Hey, believe in this, yer mama will one day do anything in the universe for you; anything in all the stars. Just...not today maybe, but...just try to believe in her, huh.

(LAZARO holds MIRA's hand while silhouettes stand with a ventilator over baby Mira. This is disrupted as a form of beeping is heard; stylized; it repeats with alarm)

What is that, why's it sound like that for?

MIRA

...I...I dunno...

LAZARO

An wha's that all that about, what're they doin'with that light thingy.

(A stylized white illumination from the NICU)

MIRA

Tha's them gonna look to inside my chest, I think. I don't always know what Maya says to me. But proolly es gonna be okay, Laz, I got so many smart people looking at me so smart that you an me don't even haffta worry how smart.

(LAZARO and MIRA stare into the bright of illumination. White out)

the flickering of little luna

A flickering television; we hear the banality of daytime basic cable, just as we piece together the program or scenario, the station flips; the channels turn back then race forward; they pause on *shit*, but speed past anything of value; this should be infuriating and sound like youth.

Enter MAYA, she shuts the television and speaks to Luna, whom we do not see. Each “pause” is Luna speaking, to which MAYA listens patiently.

MAYA

(to LUNA) Listen, I know this is difficult, but your baby’s blood gases are going down; not enough oxygen is being circulated. Preterm babies have a larger risk of pneumothorax; that’s when air gets in between the chest wall and lungs. (pause) Luna, right now I absolutely need you to sign this. We need to put a tube to remove the excess air. There is not enough oxygen in your daughter’s lungs and we’re watching her color. Luna. *Luna*.

(MAYA watches a shift from Luna, she hands out a clipboard and watches as LUNA haphazardly signs it)

Thank you. Excuse me.

(We watch MAYA open the recovery room door and hand off the consent form; we hear the whispers of medical talk; from this room it sounds like an indefinite language. MAYA then steps back into the room and faces Luna)

This is... not how you imagined it, I understand. But if you could talk to her; your baby knows your voice, Luna; your scent; she recognizes all of it and just having you close would literally help her maintain warmth, allow for a deeper sleep; that’s how much feeling you near could bring to her. (pause) And...I don’t mean to bring it up again, but when she’s able to, breast milk can have an such an effect on— (pause) I’m sorry. I don’t mean to—I didn’t meant to cause pressure.

(MAYA moves to exit; then stops short)

MAYA(cont)

What? (pause) ... yea, I think we have some more DVDs somewhere, I'll have somebody check for you.

(MAYA exits. The television turns back on; more shit. Channel doesn't change; it holds on shit for a few moments. It then begins to change more slowly, more sadly than before.

We hear the sobbing of a teenage girl.

Lights darken over Luna's room; the sobbing enhances, it twists form. Lights come up outside the NICU where MIRA holds LAZARO's hand, under the score of Luna's crying)

See, all he's doing is taping that thin little tube in place, and then they're gonna put the other end to a reverse suction; and just like that all the extra air will come out of where it's not supposed to be.

LAZARO

She aaight, tho', right? This is all like, whatever, right?

MAYA

So, the lungs are made up of these tiny air sacs, like balloons almost, little grapes; with pneumothorax they collapse, causing air to leak out. And that's what you were hearing when the ventilator started sounding, that's how come her color is a little bluish. (to MIRA) But hey, no baby is perfect, right?

MIRA

I will be tho'. . Just... not today maybe, but one day I will be.

MAYA

As soon as Luna spends a little time with you, closer with you—

MIRA

Just like the kangaroos do.

MAYA

That's right, when she does just like the kangaroos do—

LAZARO

The fuck're you two talking about.

MIRA

Like in the pouch. When me an mi mama will be close like in the pouch, then I'll be—

(MIRA notices a look from MAYA)

Maya?

MAYA

Yes, mija?

MIRA

Do you like my mother?

LAZARO

Hey, Mira, c'mon...

MAYA

... so... sometimes. Not always, never definite. But it is a possibility that your breathing apnea is due to an immaturity of the neurological breathing mechanism, and your inability to maintain proper heat... well it is possible delivering preterm can come from a...

MIRA

A what? (pause) You can tell me what, I like the knowing, I like the talking about.

MAYA

A neglectful pregnancy. (pause) During her pregnancy your mother consumed alcohol on a somewhat regular basis—

LAZARO

She said that?

MAYA

It's not uncommon. Girls her age.

LAZARO

I don't give a fuck girls her age, she told you that she...

MAYA

She did say no drugs though, that she was never—

LAZARO

No, she would never; not even at parties or when—Wait, what else she said then.

MAYA

Cigarettes.

LAZARO

Cigarettes?

MAYA

That's what she—

LAZARO

What would she start smoking for—she ain't even smoked when she was—what would she start—

MAYA

Girls in her situation; they don't always—

LAZARO

What?

MAYA

They *react*. Even if they don't understand what they're reacting to.

LAZARO

The hell else she react then???

MAYA

Well, we could tell from Mira's size that Luna's eating hadn't taken her into consideration. And when I talk to her, when I try to explain about how her baby specifically needs *her* milk...

LAZARO

What, just say it.

MAYA

We need her to pump, Lazaro.

LAZARO

Can't you just use some other—

MAYA

We can, but if she could do this, if she could connect in *any way* to—

LAZARO

She will tho', she'll connect; she just—

MAYA

She doesn't speak to me anymore, Laz. She doesn't respond. She waits for me to leave the room and then tells Lupe that her breasts hurt; that she thinks something in her body is off; that she can't pump when she knows something is off.

LAZARO

I can talk to her. (pause) I can just...

MIRA

You gonna go in there?

LAZARO

I'm gonna go in there, where ya mama's at. I got buncha other shit to talk to her about anyways, so I'm just gonna...

MIRA

Do you think she'll—

LAZARO

I dunno, mija. Hey, no promises this time, but I'm gonna try, okay; how'd that be, if I at least try?

(MIRA kisses his cheek)

MIRA

It be.

(LAZARO kisses her head)

LAZARO

Love you, mija.

(He exits)

MAYA

Don't worry, he'll be—

MIRA

What would happen? If she did pump?

MAYA

What I explained to your mother was how you specifically need *her* milk, how it has everything that you need—see, your mother right now is producing a very special kind of milk that is especially special for her special baby at thirty-three weeks.

MIRA

She makes it no matter what?

MAYA

No matter what. That's how wonderful our bodies are, that's how much they know. And this milk, *mija*, it has everything a preemie like you needs; there is no other nourishment that compares. It has the antibodies you at your age need to fight infection; the fat to help you grow your full weight; the nutrients to get you out of the NICU faster; it has all that *and* its specially designed for your tiny digestive system, which isn't quite fully formed yet, so you can digest easy.

MIRA

And if she pumps I'll have all that?

MAYA

If she starts pumping now, we'll have enough to start you on a tube when you're ready, but by the time you would've been full term, you'll be able to suck on your own. We can even teach her how to freeze it for when you get home.

MIRA

Home?

MAYA

For when you leave the hospital.

(Beat)

MIRA

Maya. In your... professional mind, what will happen to me?

(Lights reveal LUPE and EFREN standing in the hospital parking lot)

MAYA

If I could, Mira, I would create some new kind of family for you from the one so already broke apart. And your father's love for you would soften their dark and guarded hearts. That they could see through their walls of disappointment and look at you, Mira, with love from brighter hearts of what a future could still bring.

MIRA

A future could still bring.

the un'finished romance of lazaro and luna

A flickering television; static; as though
left on a channel unprogrammed.
LAZARO enters Luna's room; the snowy
mish-mosh of static shining on his
person; he doesn't care the bright.

LAZARO

Knew you wasn't sleeping. I memorized all the sounds you breathe.

Y'know, even after the shit you tol'yer family about me. Even after they believe you. I still had to come here; make sure you was alright. Even here, with you in that one-piece; that gown. Lookin'at me like what-the-fuck-am-I-doin'-here. I still can't sleep 'less I know yer okay.

An I know you an me complicated the shit outta us, but I never stopped planning for a future with you. Es true. I got some extra hours over at the Firestone. An... you ain't goin'believe in this, but... I started a class; just like you said I should; at the continuing college. They got me readin'. Es nice. Words.

An you know I would never use a harsh word with you. But then I got here. To the intensive care...

(Volume raises again; LAZARO slams the TV off)

An I dunno what the fuck you doin', with our daughter. Maya says you ain't even walked into the NICU. Says you ain't even bothered with a name. Says now you ain't wanna pump for milk. That you stay in this room every day actin'like the world ain't been fair to you. An I know it hasn't. But what would you be unfair to our baby'girl for, huh? (pause) You goin'answer to me, Luna, I ain't leavin'here till you—

(The door opens. Enter MIRA; static falls onto her; she puts her hand to block the bright)

I apologize, I shouldn't have—look if you don't wish to speak to me, what can I do. But I want for you to look, Luna, I want for you to see who we made that day; or night, whatever. Luna, this Mira.

MIRA

I imagine she wants to see me tho'.

LAZARO

(whispers to MIRA) Es okay, sometimes she make like she can't hear or don't see, but for truth yer mama a lot smarter than she act.

LAZARO(cont)

(to LUNA) I ain't mean to name her without you. It just happen. An I know you'll never love at me like how I still can't help love at you. But I promised to her a promise, an it wouldn't be very fairness if I didn't keep. So I'm gonna be here. From now on. An don't worry, I ain't gonna be all up in your anything, but I'm gonna be wherever I need to make sure our Mira gets whatever she need.

(LAZARO takes MIRA's hand to exit; however she motions that she'd like a moment. LAZARO reluctantly exits. MIRA stands directly in front of Luna's bed; the TV turns back on, channels begin flickering the color of blue over MIRA's face and body)

MIRA

I wish you would not change the channels so much; flip so fast. I don't like the speed. I makes me feel like dizzy. You know dizzy? (pause) Maya says I'm thirty-three weeks ges'tay'shun. That there's room being made for my lungs to balloon in an out right now. And I like that. Being made room for.

But Maya says if my complications keep complicating, I'll haffta stay in that room. She says you don't haffta stay in *this room* though. That you could get up an leave whenever you like. Me, I like to imagine that you tell the doctors and nurses you don't feel so good cuz in your heart you don't wanna be so different from me. Is that true? You should tell me if it is. (pause) Es okay. Maya says when I make it to thirty-six weeks ges'tay'shun, that's when I'll be able to eat, breathe, an create warmness all my own.

Scares me. Doing all so much stuff all by my own? Is that what scares you; all on your own?

Maya says a lotta stuff I don't understand. I wish you would say stuff to me that I don't understand. Even if you think it'll scare me. (pause) I wish you could see through the walls an look at me, Luna. Even though I know I scare you.

(We hear a DVD begin; we hear the beginning of a movie; MIRA disappoints. However, the color of blue lessens as the flickering of the movie lands on MIRA, who stands in it for a moment and then exits. After she is gone, the volume of distraction raises)

the future movement of mira

MAYA, LAZ, and MIRA stand together outside the NICU observation glass; the curtain is closed and they watch through a silhouette of the neonatologist watching over the baby Mira.

LAZARO

Hey. What'd you say to her anyways?

MIRA

A wish.

LAZARO

Wish for what?

MIRA

That's private. I say it to you and it won't ever come true.

LAZARO

Yea, well, I wished for a lotta things when I's little. As you can see, none of it came true.

MIRA

Yea, well maybe from now on whatever kinda wishes you wish, you won't go telling them to everyone all over the place.

LAZARO

I only got one wish in me now, mija

MIRA

Yea, what is it?

LAZARO

Ah, thought you were gonna get me, didn't you!

(LAZARO makes zipping his lips; he and MIRA share a laugh. A few moments. MAYA alerts)

MAYA

Look.

(We hear the slow and steady pace of thirty-three week old lungs. We see the silhouette of a tube being removed)

MAYA(cont)

(to MIRA) They're taking out the catheter.

LAZARO

What's the—

MIRA

Es the tube.

I don't need the tube anymore, right?

MAYA

They'll still keep you on the ventilator likely, but your lungs are open full again, mija.

MIRA

See that, Laz. How open I is. Maybe you should try it sometimes.

(LAZARO and MIRA break into a laugh together. It is full and connected. A few moments as their laughter dies out. Then enter LUPE)

LUPE

(to LAZARO) My family asked what you keep away from mi Luna. An even after we made our position to you uncontrollably clear, here you are in this hospital like you ain't the entire reason this tragedy is happening.

(MAYA picks up a hospital line. Enter EFREN)

I'm waiting for you, Lazaro, to tell me what you imagine yourself to be doing here where mi Luna is suffering because of you.

MAYA

Your daughter isn't suffering. Her health is completely normal. She's just scared.

LUPE

Excuse me. Are you calling my daughter a liar.

MAYA

Yes. I am.

LAZARO

I could help, Lupe, with how's she's doing, with what's going on with our daughter. I have never tried to be close'by for any reason but that.

LUPE

This exactly why Luna don't love at you, Lazaro, cuz you don't get things. You talk to everyone what kinda life, what kinda love you hold for her; but in truth... you drive around that van, so many times around our house, like some garbage man that can't remember what his route. You talk about making mi Luna happy, but look at where you have her childhood. Lost in a hospital with so much pain. Cuz she know her life is over. An believe me, Laz, I know what not-being-loved-back es like an I understand how much es hard to accept. But if you really loved at her, you would never have let her in the van of your Chevy to begin with.

(We hear the sound of a machine going off; what was a constant noise is now flattened. MAYA knocks the receiver of the phone on the NICU glass. All look as the curtain is pulled back)

MAYA

Do you see. She's off the ventilator. There's no machine no more, just her.
(to LUPE) Your granddaughter is beginning that she can breathe on her own. She's gonna be okay. (pause) Do you hear me?

LUPE

(to MAYA) Of course I hear you. Of course she'll be okay. Cuz I'll haffta take the custody. I'll haffta take the care. Mi Luna would never be able to. Not at her age. So, you look at me how old my age and try to even just think how old I'll be when I finally get to rest.

MAYA

Your daughter is perfectly capable to—

LUPE

Ay, you. You make judgments at these little girls in here. I see how you do. But you have no idea what kinda strength it takes to steer a family by your own an what kinda lives these girls were supposed ta live; before it all turned to shit.

MAYA

Giving birth to a child is not shit. Your granddaughter has been struggling from her first breath. We had to put a *machine* to her lungs because neither you, nor Luna, could be bothered with the pregnancy.

LUPE

Don't you put blame to mi Luna—

MAYA

And now, even though this man is here for his baby'girl, you'd rather her go fatherless, than let him make up for whatever mistakes he made.

LAZARO

I'll fight you for custody, Lupe. I'm going to school now; savings account. Firestone ain't gonna be who I am forever.

LUPE

You a drug addict, Lazaro. You think we could let somebody like you or your family anywhere near our grandchild's life?

LAZARO

I know we messed up, I know we still young, but I ain't what she said about me. And if you want, I can meet you at the drug testing place whatever anytime. An after, if you still wanna go to a courthouse with me, I'll show the judge about my proper employment, about my continuing education. An you, what will you show?

LUPE

I won't have to show anything, Lazaro. The court will see it on my face the sacrifices I made.

(MIRA goes to LAZARO)

What's this one even doing here?

(to MIRA) Hey, what are you even doing here, huh?

MIRA

My name's not Huh, Lupe, es Mira.

LUPE

Well, Mira, listen to me, you need to leave this hallway.

MAYA

Leave her alone.

LUPE

Hey, this for her own good.

(to MIRA) I'm telling you, you don't wanna be standing where you're standing.

MIRA

You've no idea where I should be.

LAZARO

Alright, enough. Don't talk to her, Lupe; she ain't nothing to do with you.
An no, I'm not gonna be leavin'this hallway. I'll be in this hospital for as long as my
baby'girl needs me, I ain't goin'no place.

(EFREN calmly produces a steel pipe and begins beating LAZARO on the back of the neck. MAYA instinctively covers MIRA and screams for help. LUPE looks away. LAZARO's body to the floor and EFREN begins distributing the pipe to all parts; from Lazaro's head to his heart to his legs and ankles.

As lights sputter out, the sound of Mira's healthy breathing bellows in the space and mixes with the incoming sound of a frantic hospital staff and an alarm being sounded.

Lights dead on the hospital; only the beach is lit. Time begins to warp. We see weather turn day to night to week to month to year to years. We watch fourteen years pass.

Finally we settle on the van which is only a skeleton protruding from sand hardened by years of no visitors; however the green tent is now emerald green and the embers of fire still brightly lit)

the ballad of efren an lupe

Sounds of late afternoon tide; we hear the togetherness of families from closer to shore. Lights reveal the sand now loose and playful from the bright of the sun and campers walking. We now see however that the blue van, so taken over by weather and time, is now only a dune, where something was buried years ago.

The green tent stands perfectly upright. In front of a small fire is MIRA; she is dressed like a regular teenager; a bit more bling. MIRA bobs her head to her headphones attached to a discman.

Enter LUPE.

LUPE

Hey, wha's a matter, what you doin'way over here? Our campsite too small for you?

MIRA

Was loud.

LUPE

"Loud" she says. How would you know, you never take them things off.

MIRA

What, sorry, I never take these things off.

LUPE

Yer lucky yer funny. Funny's gonna save you, mija. Funny'll keep them boys remembering you a living person an not just holes one, two, three. Tha's what, me, I hope you'll at least remember about all your life, mija. No matter what happen, no matter how fucked up; you can always laugh.

MIRA

Don'worry, grandma. I laugh at you all the time.

LUPE

I know you do. An know what? Good. You *should* all the time. (pause)
Hey, know what's actually kinda funny, I just said all that an now I'm 'bout to introduce you to the most un'funny somebody God ever create.

(LUPE waves somebody over)

For truth, he think he funny; really he just weird tho'. Lotta men gonna fool you into thinking they funny when they just weird; so... be careful with that.

(Enter EFREN. He looks overgrown and more calloused)

Mira, I want you to meet your Great Uncle Efren. See, lookit him, how great.

MIRA

You do... you look... great.

LUPE

(to EFREN) See, she got her grandma's funny.
(to MIRA) Mija, you were just a baby last he seen you.

MIRA

In the hospital.

LUPE

(to EFREN) Listen to her, "in the hospital," like she remember.
(to MIRA) Anyways, he been away.

MIRA

Away where.

(LUPE looks at EFREN; who picks his teeth, then smells his fingers)

LUPE

Just... away.

MIRA

What, you don't know where yer own little brother was, all these years?

LUPE

Don't be stupid. He just been in the uh...

EFREN

Jungle.

MIRA

Yea. Seems like it. His face. Looks like the jungle.

EFREN

She turn out alright, Lupita. Funny.

(to MIRA) You smart too. About my face. See, there's not a whole lotta reasons to take care of yer face in the jungle, mija. In fact, mostly you wanna let your face whatever.

Mostly you wanna let a lotta things whatever, cuz way up in that jungle, Mira, the animals come for you at night. So I hope you forgive me my appearance, I know what I must look like. But it was just for protection.

And now, back at sea-level, I look at you an I feel proud, that for so many years you've been protected too.

(MIRA stares at EFREN; as though she remembers)

LUPE

Efren, what the hell are you talking about.

EFREN

I'm talking about her, Lupe. Lookit her; them eyes looking up at me just like how they used to look up at me. Yea, she ain't changed all so much.

MIRA

You ain't changed all so much either, Great Uncle Efren.

LUPE

Efren, why don't you go clean up, huh. I didn't realize how dirty you stink. Fucking jungle scent.

(EFREN smells himself, then removes his shirt and pants; standing in tattered boxers and nothing else; he walks off towards the ocean)

Hey, now I love my little brother, but if you ever go around with a man even anything like your great Uncle Efren, I'll—

MIRA

You'll what, have him beaten beyond recovery outside the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit?

LUPE

What did you say to me???

MIRA

Never to be seen again.

(LUPE tries to comfort MIRA; tries to hold her; MIRA pulls away)

LUPE

You listen to me, huh. Yer mama a storyteller; always been. She's my mija, but she's had an imagination from when she was just that big.

MIRA

Luna's not why I know what I know.

LUPE

Hey, don't call her that. She asked you enough times already.

MIRA

That hospital, that hallway by the observation glass. Con Lazaro. Con Maya.

LUPE

... how you know that name? The hell're you even talking about; how do you know that name?

MIRA

How could I not, Lupe.

LUPE

Stoppit. An wha'd me an yer mama tell you about talking weird like this. Es not funny. I don't like it. Es not healthy neither. An besides all that, you don't even know—

MIRA

You don't even know.

(LUPE takes MIRA's discman and drops it to the sand)

LUPE

Do you see, what did I tell you about listening to that thing an being in your own little world all the time, es making you not a normal little girl.

MIRA

I'm not. A normal little girl.

LUPE

Es important to have the respect for the people who are the adults in your life.

MIRA

What is it makes him great again? Was it what he did to my dad, or was it his time in the jungle, that now I should respect him.

(EFREN stands; looking at the situation; he drips wet)

EFREN

¿Lupita, qué pasó?

LUPE

Nothing. I was just telling her not to wear these things so much. Else she goin' miss out on the world.

(EFREN picks the discman up and tries to connect the headphones, but can't figure it out)

MIRA

You just put the silver end to the...

LUPE

Ay, these things.

(LUPE takes the discman and headphones, gives them back to MIRA, who quickly reconnects the headphones and is about to put them back to her ears)

EFREN

(to MIRA) An you. Yer grandma's right. About the world. About missing out on it. Lookit me, I spent all those years in the jungle so proud that I almost didn't even notice. But looking at you how tall on this beach, listening to you how smart with them waves... I almost don't understand it how time work anymore. I almost don't even know if these past however many years even happened.

MIRA

... they did... happen, and now here we are, Efren, on this beach with them waves just like we both remember them by.

LUPE

(to MIRA) Hey, enough. No more talking like that. You want me to make you a plate?

MIRA

...yea.

LUPE

An, hey, mija, whatever stories your mother told you about all that.

EFREN

What she said, her mother?

LUPE

(to EFREN) Nothing.

(to MIRA) Look, yer mama, when she was pregnant with you, was just real upset that yer Dad didn't wanna stay an help raise you. Yer Dad didn't love her the way the father is supposed to love the mother.

MIRA

How do you know, that he didn't ?

LUPE

Because lots of times boys don't like to stay places, mija, they like to not be still. An if there is a boy who does like to be still... then prolly something's off with him.

EFREN

Yea. *Staying still someplace* fucks all with boys' insides.

(LUPE swats EFREN)

LUPE

Ay, why you talking around her like that for.

EFREN

Your grandma is true, Mira. And I apologize to you how men are. The way we move. The way your father move. He should never have had to move like that. But...es what we do.

LUPE

(to MIRA) You don't hafta worry about the men anytime so soon, kay? But when you do, yer funny'll be right with you to keep them in line.

MIRA
Is that a promise, Lupe?

LUPE
Don't call me that. And yes, it is. Te lo prometo, huh.

MIRA
Is that what all adults do?

LUPE
What, what're you talkin'?

MIRA
Make promises to children.

LUPE
Mija, I promise whatever I could cuz tha's how much I want for you: whatever I could.
Hey, you be back in time so yer plate's still warm, huh.

(LUPE walks off. MIRA presses play on her discman, she begins to
hum The Delfonics)

EFREN
Wha'choo listenin'toooo...?

MIRA
"Didn't I blow your mind this time, didn't I, oh"

EFREN
"Didn't I blow your mind this time, didn't I..."

(MIRA presses stop)
Ain't know anybody yer age dig on oldies.

MIRA
My father played it for me. So I dig.

EFREN
Your father, huh.

MIRA

Lazaro. Laz for short.

EFREN

Hey. Can I ask you something, Mira?

MIRA

... you're going to do whatever you do anyways, Efren, so just do.

EFREN

... for realz, do I still stink like an animal? Even after the ocean. You can tell me honest, I won't be hurt.

(MIRA sniffs the air between them)

MIRA

... yea... your stink is still there, even after the ocean, but I can take it... I smelled your smell before...

EFREN

Oh, I know you have.

MIRA

It doesn't matter though, does it. I'll be leaving soon. Won't I.

EFREN

I don't know what to tell you , mijita. I don't know what about any of this.

MIRA

Yes you do. Even if you don't know it yet.

EFREN

You look just like him, you know. On this beach. On this spot. Lazaro. Laz for short.

MIRA

Oh, I know I does. And thank you, Great Uncle Efren, for finally seeing it so.

(EFREN looks at her strangely for several moments before walking off. After he is gone, we see anger and fear from MIRA's every pore; she begins to sob uncontrollably. Time begins to darken around her to dinnertime. Scents of meats cooking and sounds of partying

flavor the beach. MIRA pours sand over the fire and exits unremarkably towards her own family's campsite.

We see evening turn to night; we hear tides change; then night to very early morning.

We see movement from within the green tent. We hear the morning' talk of a husband and wife, but cannot make out the words; they sound happy though; they laugh; they tease; they kiss.

A few moments of what life should be like.

Then the zipper of the green tent begins to patiently unzip from the inside. We see a woman's hands working her way out. In the opening, we see MAYA wearing sweatpants and with her hair let down; she looks a bit older. She slips into her flip flops at the foot of the tent and stretches; welcoming the ocean air. She holds a toothbrush, floss, and a hand towel.

As she walks past the firepit, she stops. She sees that the rocks are messily out of place. She begins nudging them back around the still-smoking ash with her foot; then kneels to get them in place with her hands. Just as she has them set; she notices something in the sand; she digs.

MAYA loses her oxygen as she pulls up the limp hand of a small girl; she pulls further and we see a young arm. MAYA tries to scream, but her air is gone; she tries again; only silence. Finally MAYA lets out a silent godawful sound for help.

Time stops. Something beautiful happens.

Enter MIRA, she wears the same clothes she wore previously; however she is now the color of ash)

MIRA

Don't worry. They'll be here in about ten minutes.

MAYA

... wh... who...

The police.

MIRA

...omigod... Mira...

MAYA

Maya.

MIRA

Wh... what're you, what're you—

MAYA

This is me. I wanted to see you though. Before I go.

MIRA

Go? ... wh... what happened to you...

MAYA

What happens to everyone, I'm guessing. I was raised. I grew up by my family. (pause)
I had some nice times though. They taught me to laugh. They taught me that no matter
what, I could always just... find something.

MIRA

(MAYA, though scared, pulls MIRA into her; holding her)

I've thought about you, dreamt about you. I tried to help, I tried to talk to the police
after what happened, I even tried to see about custody, but they said that—I tried to
help, I—

MAYA

Help?

MIRA

There was nothing I could do.

MAYA

Help isn't even a word for what you did for me.

MIRA

This isn't you. This is just some nightmare, this is just some—

MAYA

MIRA

When I was still alive, people would always tell me about my birth. About how close I came; how lucky. About science, or God. But they don't know. They got no ideas. About Lazaro; my Laz. About that gentled, and motherly Labor/Delivery nurse. Both of whom for my tiny life was able to stay on.

And do you know something, even though my life would consist only of fourteen not-so-precious years, I would feel okay sometimes imagining all newborn babies in all the hospitals that would have someone like you to be there for them.

And now... I'll peer from some kinda heaven, with my face through the clouds, searching through all the labors and deliveries, following with my eyes, all of the nurses', just only to see you and your motherlike movements an the good they do.

MAYA

...please...

MIRA

Don't feel bad things for me though. I'll get to see my Laz now, won't I.

MAYA

Yes. He's there waiting for you. He's *been* waiting for you.

MIRA

Wherever there is. Guess I'll find out soon enough. In my dreams it doesn't matter. I just smile that we'll be with each other again. His arms the only the heaven I need.

(Beat)

They should be here real, real soon.

MAYA

...who...?

MIRA

The investigators. The yellow tape. All the questions they'll ask my family and all the answers they'll get back.

MAYA

...who... who did this to you...? What kinda animal would...

MIRA

Es not the animal's fault, you know. It coulda been anybody that let him in.

(We hear the sounds of police sirens reaching. MAYA instinctively grabs MIRA and holds her never to let go. The sirens get closer. Something begins to happen to MIRA; MAYA holds tighter)

MAYA

...no, no, what's happening, what is this—

MIRA

Don't worry. Remember, I got somebody waiting for me now. An tha's good.

(MIRA disappears. MAYA releases her empty arms as the sirens arrive. Daytime light and sounds begin to happen on all sides of MAYA as she walks to where Lazaro's Cassanova lays buried. Lights turn peaceful as MAYA runs her hand along the dune, giving no notice to the reds and blues that now color Mira's beach. Lights out. END OF PLAY)