

The Last, Best Small Town

A Play

by
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Characters (In order of appearance)

PLAYWRIGHT - (30s...or maybe 40s. Perhaps it's difficult to tell). Male or female. It would be best if they were a person of color. Extra points if they are Latinx.

CHUY - (Late 60s at the start of the play). His full name is Jesús Gonzalez Muñatones, but everyone has always called him Chuy. He is Elliot's paternal grandfather and a retired plumber at a local plumbing company.

BENNY - (Late 40s at the start of the play). Benito Gonzalez is a son, a father, a husband, and a provider. Married to Della, he is a Southern California native who has lived his entire life in Fillmore, California. He spends his days working as a mechanic at a car dealership in Valencia. He does not own a car.

HANK - (Early 50s at the start of the play). Hank William Miller is a veteran of the United States Marine Corps, the editor of the local paper (known as the *Fillmore Gazette*), and Willow's husband. He likes a green lawn.

DELLA - (Late 40s at the start of the play). Dolores Gonzalez is an unwavering supporter of her family. She works as a cleaning lady for the Fillmore Best Western during the week and runs her own home maid service on the weekends to help pay the bills.

WILLOW - (Late 40s at the start of the play). A force to be reckoned with, Willow Miller was once an activist who pursued (and completed) two degrees. Now she is a housewife who manages almost every aspect of Miller house with aplomb.

ELLIOT - (18 at the start of the play). Elliot Gonzalez is the Fillmore High School valedictorian of 2004. People call him Eli (pronounced *El-EE*).

MAYA - (17 at the start of the play). Maya Miller is the Fillmore High School debate team captain elect, an all around great student, and a complete bad ass.

Place

A cul-de-sac of Fillmore, California.

Time

ACT I - Graduation day, 2004.

ACT II - April, 2005.

ACT III - The first day of Summer, 2009.

Format

- 1.) Sometimes a (/) notates an interup/
/
- 2.) Sometimes people really get going.
When they do, their thoughts get their own line.
Just like this.

/
- 3.) But sometimes people have big shifts in thought.
Those are notated with a hard line break.

Just like this.

/
- 4.) People can even contribute to the conversation
silently, as in:

PEOPLE

(...)

Act I

Two houses. One next to the other. They are represented as simply as possible, with framing for the structure and mailboxes out front. Otherwise, the stage is an empty space.

PLAYWRIGHT enters.

PLAYWRIGHT

Um...hi.

I'm the playwright of this here...well, you know what it is.

Normally, you wouldn't see me.

I'd be in the back hiding my face and pretending I was a part of the wall.

But we didn't have the budget for a proper stage manager, so here I am.

Sorry.

Behind me are two houses.

One belongs to *La Familia Gonzalez*.

The other to a nice family by the name of Miller.

The place is Fillmore, California.

Population: 15, 610.

118 degrees West, 34 degrees North.

In the heart of Ventura County.

It's nestled along the Santa Clara River, which isn't much of a river these days.

But still, the idea's nice.

It gives that dry rock-bed something to work towards.

The place was incorporated in 1914.

Before that, it was just a couple ranch homes by the railroad.

Before that, a Spanish conquistador camped here.

He called it *Cañada de Santa Clara*.

I don't know what it was called before that.

But now it's Fillmore.

And its motto is "The Last, Best Small Town."

When I was little, my parents used to love it here.

I have no idea why.

They had no history here.

No family.

No connection at all.

Except a desire to drive here, to drive through, and to comment on all the little changes they observed.

"Did you notice, they finally painted that house?"

"Yes I saw, but did YOU see the coffee shop?"

"Yes, I did!"

"It'll be a Starbucks next week, mark my words!"

"No!"

PLAYWRIGHT (CONT'D)

Driving around, Fillmore is the kind of place you see
cheerleaders practicing in a parking lot.
Their arms up.
Their faces smiling.
Peppy little odes to American goodness.

Because the people here ARE good.
Or at least that's what they like to hope.
They live in quiet houses on quiet streets.
And they worry about their bills.
Or their waste lines.
Or what's gonna happen to this GD country.

For the worries, there is church.
For everything else, there are birthday parties in the park, baby
showers at the pool, and high school football in the fall.
And also, there are graduations.
Like today.

Which isn't really today yet.
Not really.
At least not for a few more minutes.
The pickers are up, sure.
Filling boxes with strawberries and oranges before the sun gets
too high.
But the rest of town is still very much asleep.
Mostly.

*CHUY enters carrying a bag with a tallboy
in it. He's a little drunk. Well, maybe
more than a little...*

*As Playwright continues to speak, he
crosses to the Gonzalez house and sits on
the porch.*

PLAYWRIGHT

Aside from the pickers, the truckers are up.
And the kids who work the coffee shops.
And so is Benny Gonzalez.

*BENNY enters in coveralls from the
Gonzalez house.*

But he's usually up by now.
You see, he has to catch the daily 5:50 bus to Valencia so he can
get to work by 6:30 at one of the dealerships there.

*Benny stops when he sees Chuy. He sighs.
Reaches into his back pocket to fish for a
few bills.*

PLAYWRIGHT (CONT'D)

He'd like to drive a car to work.
 Like the ones he works on all day.
 Something with some horse power.
 And satellite radio.
 Leather interior.
 But these days, he has other things to worry about.

BENNY

(Without anger)
 I thought I told you not to come round here drunk no more.

CHUY

I'm not drunk.

BENNY

Then what are you?

CHUY

Sleepy.

BENNY

What's in the bag?

CHUY

Just a little nightcap.

BENNY

Little late for a nightcap, isn't it?
 The sun's almost up.

CHUY

It was a long night.

BENNY

You need some money?

CHUY

Just to get me through the week.

Benny hands the other man a modest wad of bills.

I'll make it up to you, little Benito, I promise.

BENNY

I know you will, pops.
 You always do.

Now come on, let's get you inside.
 Get some coffee in you before I head off to work.

Benny helps his father to his feet and lets the older man lean on him for support.

CHUY

You really got time for me?

PLAYWRIGHT

Not if he wants to catch his bus.
Which he does.
Cause the next one won't be by for almost another hour.

BENNY

Sure, pops.
I always got time for you.

PLAYWRIGHT

Benny's neighbor is an early riser too.
But not so he can catch a bus.
Hank William Miller gets up early every morning so he can keep his grass beautiful and green.

HANK enters from the Miller house.

PLAYWRIGHT

In the nineties, he bought the house next to Benny, not because he liked it, but because he could afford it on his salary at the *Fillmore Gazette*.

When he was a younger man, he used to take care of his home so that it would be ready when it was eventually time to sell and move his family to the city.
Now he takes care of it because he's afraid he'll never leave.
In a way, he's right.

Hank grabs a hose and begins to water his yard.

HANK

Hiya, Benny!

BENNY

Mornin, Hank.

HANK

(By way of greeting)
Chuy.

Chuy raises his hand, but doesn't bother looking at the other man.

(To Benny)
Off to work?

BENNY

Just as soon as I get this old drunk some coffee.

HANK

Got some coffee in the pot here if you like.
Made it myself.
Starbucks.

BENNY

Thanks Hank, but you don't gotta do that.
We got plenty of coffee over here.

HANK

Well, the door's always open if you need something.
Will I be seeing you at the party tonight?

CHUY

What party?

BENNY

Graduation party for Elliot and Marcus.
I told you about it last week.

CHUY

Is that today?

BENNY

Of course it's today.
What day you think it is?

CHUY

I didn't know.
I didn't know he was graduating.

BENNY

He isn't like I was, pops.

CHUY

What are you talkin about?
You graduated.

BENNY

Only cause they didn't wanna deal with me no more.
But Eli's different.
He's smart.

CHUY

So were you.

BENNY

I was a smart ass.
That don't make me smart.

HANK

Well?

BENNY

I'm gonna try.
Things are busy at the garage right now.
I might have to work late.

HANK

But you'll still make the ceremony, won't you?
For Eli's speech?

BENNY

He did it for me already.
Just in case.

HANK

A private show, huh?

BENNY

More like a practice run.

HANK

Well, what did you think?

BENNY

I gave him a few pointers.
Told him to make it funnier.

HANK

Then I'll make sure to look for your influence.

*Benny waves and turns to lead his father
into the house.*

CHUY

Little Eli's really graduating?
Why don't you tell me these things?

BENNY

I DID tell you, pops.
Like five times.

CHUY

Is he gonna work with you at the garage?
If he needs a job, I bet I could get him one at the plumbing
company.
They always need young guys like him.

BENNY

You think I'd let him waste his life at a place like that?
No.
Eli's gonna go to college.

CHUY

(In dis-belief)
No!

BENNY

I told you about it when he got accepted.

CHUY

Little Eli in college...

BENNY

Not so little anymore.

CHUY

You know, I had a friend who went to college.

BENNY

Oh yeah?
What happened to him?

CHUY

I don't know.
He never came back.

They exit to the Gonzalez house.

PLAYWRIGHT

Morning in Fillmore is like morning anywhere.
Tired people.
Hot coffee.
And parents waking up their children.

WILLOW

(Offstage)
Marcus!
Maya!
Time to get up.

DELLA

(Offstage)

Elliot, don't you make me come in there!
I'll drag you out by your ear if I gotta!

WILLOW and DELLA enter their respective houses from deeper within.

Willow wears workout clothes and sips a smoothie while Della is dressed in the uniform of a hotel maid as she sips from a cup of coffee.

WILLOW

(Calling behind her as she enters)

There's lunch for each of you in the fridge.
And I better not hear that you conned your father out of money for McDonalds!
This is a McDonalds free house, you hear me?

DELLA

(Calling behind her as she enters)

You hurry up and we can even stop and get a McMuffin.

Both women stand in their kitchens and drink their drinks with relish.

PLAYWRIGHT

For all their differences, there's a lot Willow Miller and Dolores Gonzalez have in common.

For example:

Both women were born in small towns.

In the summer.

In 1957.

Which means that, in a few short weeks for Dolores and in exactly one month for Willow, both women will mark forty seven times around the sun.

A fact which strikes both of them every morning while they stand in their separate kitchens, in their separate homes, drinking their separate beverages.

When both women were young, they used to dream of living exciting lives in exciting places.

But now they both believe that dreams, like excitement, are meant to be given up.

Which is, maybe, why both women married in the summer of 1980.

To the first men they had ever really loved.

And why, six years later, both women found themselves pregnant.

With boys.

They were twenty-nine.

Which was early for Willow.

And late for Dolores.

Not that the timing mattered much in the end.

PLAYWRIGHT (CONT'D)

Because both women had always wanted children.
 And when those children eventually came, both women thanked God
 for his gifts.
 And both women pledged to love those children till their dying
 day.

Yes, there's a lot that Willow Miller and Dolores Gonzalez have
 in common.
 Which is why it's a shame about their differences.

Benny enters from deeper within the house.

DELLA

What're you still doing here?

BENNY

My dad...

DELLA

I thought you told him not to come by here no more.

BENNY

He wanted to see Eli.
 To wish him happy graduation.

DELLA

You sure he wasn't just lookin for some money?

BENNY

It didn't even come up.

DELLA

Benny, I don't like him here.
 He's lazy.
 And whenever he's here, he takes up all our time.
 ESPECIALLY Eli's

BENNY

Can we talk about this later?
 I'm late enough as it is.
 My dad just needs a place to sleep his hangover off.
 And maybe a little coffee.

DELLA

And then some breakfast.
 And after that, some money.
 And.../

BENNY

/Della, please.
 He's family.

(...)

DELLA

BENNY

Now, I gotta go...

DELLA

Did you sign those papers for the bank yet?

BENNY

No, but I will.

DELLA

You better do it soon!
That college ain't gonna pay for itself.

BENNY

I'll sign em tonight when I get back from work.
How bout that?

DELLA

You mean after the ceremony, right?

BENNY

Right.
After the ceremony.

DELLA

Don't you miss it.

BENNY

I won't.

DELLA

The whole town is gonna be lookin at Eli tonight.
If you're not there...

BENNY

I'll be there, I promise.
And then I'll sign the papers, okay?

DELLA

We can't keep the bank waiting on this forever.

BENNY

We won't.

Now, I really do gotta go.
If I'm late again, Pat's gonna kill me.

DELLA

He tries to keep you late tonight, you tell him to go to hell!

BENNY

He won't keep me late.

DELLA

He better not!

BENNY

(Not angry)
He won't!

DELLA

mm-hmm
Whatever you say...

She returns to her coffee. He doesn't make a move to leave.

DELLA

What?

BENNY

Don't I get a kiss first?

DELLA

I thought you were gonna be late.
Now you want a kiss?

She makes a sound of annoyance, then turns her head to him and points to her cheek. He kisses it. She gives him the other cheek. He kisses that too. And before she can do anything else, he kisses her on the lips.

She laughs, smacks him on the butt, and shoos him out the door.

DELLA

You'll miss your bus!

BENNY

(Exiting the house)
I'll be there tonight, I promise!

He waves to Hank as he rushes off. Meanwhile, in the Miller house, Willow has finished her smoothie.

WILLOW

(Calling offstage again)
 Okay, I'm off.
 But I'll see you both later.
 And I'm serious about those lunches!
 There are children in Africa who would LOVE a meal like that!

Willow exits the house through the front door.

WILLOW

(To Hank)
 Are you STILL watering the grass?
 You keep this up and we're gonna have a lake for a lawn.

HANK

No harm in making sure everything's perfect for tonight, is there?

WILLOW

Not as long as it dries.

HANK

It'll be fine.
 It's supposed to be hot today.

WILLOW

Well, if people traipse mud around my house tonight, I'm blaming you.

HANK

I wouldn't have it any other way.

She gives him a quick but affectionate peck on the lips, then turns towards the Gonzalez house.

Where are you off to so early?

WILLOW

Tae Bo.

HANK

Thai what?

WILLOW

It's like kick boxing.

HANK

Then why don't you just call it kick boxing?

WILLOW

(With a smile)
Cause it isn't kick boxing.
It's Tae Bo.
And it's what you have to thank for your wife's glorious butt, so
don't make fun of it.

HANK

Oh really?
And which butt is that?

WILLOW

*(Showing off her butt as she walks over to
the Gonzalez house)*
This one.

HANK

Which one?
I don't see any butt.

WILLOW

You make jokes like that all day and you won't be.

*He raises the hose as if to spray her with
it and she stops. Assumes a defensive
position.*

Hank William Miller, don't. you. dare!

*He sprays near her, missing on purpose.
Even so, she screams and jumps further out
of the way.*

*He gives her a sly smile, then raises the
hose again threateningly.*

I will slap the absolute shit out of you, and don't think I
won't!

He sprays again. Closer.

Hank!

*And that's when Della appears in her door
to find Willow, trying her best not to
laugh as she looks at her husband with
hate-love.*

DELLA

Everything alright?

WILLOW

What?

Yes.

Sorry, I just... I was about to head off to class, but I wanted stop by and check in with you about later today...

HANK

(As he goes back to watering like nothing happened.)

Morning, Della.

DELLA

Mornin, Mr. Miller.

(To Willow)

I was gonna head over before the ceremony.

WILLOW

Great!

Oh my God, you're such a lifesaver!

If I asked Hank to clean the place up, he'd just shove everything in the closet.

DELLA

Is there anything you want me to focus on?

WILLOW

Oh, I don't know.

You always do such a good job.

I think you should just do what you normally do.

And if you need help, grab Hank.

He's taking the day off, so he'll be around.

HANK

Only till noon.

Then I'm supposed to meet George for a round of golf.

WILLOW

(To her husband)

But you're gonna be back before the ceremony, aren't you?

HANK

I dunno.

I was thinking I might just go straight.

You know how George is.

We'll probably grab a quick one and head over together.

WILLOW

But then who's gonna take ME?

DELLA

You can always come with us.
Eli said he'd swing by and pick me up later.
Why don't you come too?

WILLOW

No.
Della, thank you, but I couldn't do that.

DELLA

It'd be no trouble, honest.

WILLOW

(Actually touched)
God, you are just the nicest person, you know that?

DELLA

It's no big deal.
Eli's picking me up anyway.

WILLOW

Well, thank you!
I really do appreciate it.
Marcus and Maya were gonna go together.
But if Hank and I had to take separate cars...
I mean, you gotta think about the environment, you know?

DELLA

(Not sarcastic)
Sure.

WILLOW

So...?
Are you excited to see Eli talk tonight?
Oh my God, you must be SO. PROUD.
I don't think Marcus could string together enough words to
constitute a paragraph, much less a SPEECH!

DELLA

I think he's nervous.

WILLOW

Who, Eli?
No!
He's gonna do great!
Mark my words, he's gonna be somebody some day.
Before long, we're gonna turn on the TV, and we're gonna see Eli
talking to the United Nations or something.
I tell Hank as much every day.
Don't I, honey?

HANK

(Not paying attention)
Yes, dear.

WILLOW

Well, I do.
There's a lot to be proud of in that boy.

DELLA

I think there's a lot to be proud of in both our boys.
When does Marcus ship out?

WILLOW

The end of the month.

DELLA

What he's doin is real brave.
Benny and I both think so.

WILLOW

Yeah, well it's also very stupid if you ask me.
But what do I know?
I'm just his mother.

HANK

(Still watering)
It's a good decision.
I was in the service at his age, and look how I turned out.

WILLOW

(To Della)
He brings this up almost everyday.
(To Hank)
As if I forget!

HANK

I'm just saying...

DELLA

You know, I had a brother who was in the Marines.
He spent the whole time in San Diego.
Maybe it'll be the same for Marcus.

WILLOW

God willing.
Honestly, I just try not to think about it if I can help it.
It's better that way.

DELLA

Well, I know Eli's gonna miss him.
 Marcus is a good friend.
 Like a brother.

WILLOW

What a nice thing to say...
 I know Marcus thinks the world of Eli.

DELLA

Benny and I are glad we got to raise Eli here.
 With people like you in his life.

WILLOW

Della, stop.
 You're gonna make me cry.
 And I'm supposed to be at a class.

Oh what am I saying?
 Just give me a hug.

She throws her arms around Della.

WILLOW

We did it!
 Our boys are all grown up.
 Thank you.
 Thank you for everything.

Willow breaks the hug.

Okay, now I really should get going.
 Otherwise I'm never gonna make this class.
 Thanks again for stopping by today.
 I know it's not on the normal schedule, but what with the party
 and all...

DELLA

It's okay.
 I'm takin a half-day at the hotel anyway.

WILLOW

Well, I just want you to know I appreciate it.
 If we didn't have you in our lives, I don't think our house would
 ever get clean!

*She waves and Della turns to go back
 inside.*

(To Hank, once Della is back inside)
 I can't believe you're going golfing today!

HANK

What?
I go every Friday.

WILLOW

Well, just make sure you aren't late for the ceremony.
And don't let Maya or Marcus con you out of money for lunch!
They have lunches!

HANK

How would they "con" me out of anything?

WILLOW

Oh, don't pretend you're Mr. Hard-ass.
If it weren't for me, this family would all weigh four hundred pounds.

HANK

Yes, you take very good care of us.

WILLOW

Is that sarcasm?

HANK

I have no idea what you're talking about.

She turns to exit.

WILLOW

Just don't give them money, I mean it!

HANK

I won't!

WILLOW

Mm-hmmm.

HANK

Love you lots.

WILLOW

To the moon and back.

And don't forget to put Della's money on the mantle for her either!

HANK

What was that?
Give the kids all my money for McDonalds?

Without turning around, she flips him off and exits. He chuckles to himself, then goes around the house to put the hose away.

Meanwhile, Elliot enters from deeper within the Gonzalez house.

He is still dressed in his sleeping clothes--gym shorts with a loose fitting t-shirt and TEVAS with socks on his feet.

ELLIOT

Alright, I'm ready.

DELLA

Not looking like that, you're not.

ELLIOT

What?

I'm just dropping you off, right?

So what's the big deal?

DELLA

You're a college boy now.

And college boys don't dress like bums.

ELLIOT

Mom, this is exactly what college people look like.

DELLA

So?

You think Celia and Rocío know that?

To them, college is all polo shirts and...and...chinos.

You don't got no idea what it's like.

They're always showin me pictures of their grandkids

"Oh Della, isn't he cute?"

"Della, when're you gonna have grandkids?"

"Why isn't Eli married yet?"

And you know what I do?

I keep quiet.

Cause when you drop me off in that car, dressed in a polo shirt and chinos, those two ain't gonna say nothin.

They're just gonna look at you like:

She opens her mouth in mock surprise.

And I'm not even gonna smile.

I'm just gonna wave at you, and go work like always.

But they're gonna know.

Those bitches are gonna know.

But it only works if you're not dressed like no bum!

ELLIOT

I don't even know what chinos are.

DELLA

Neither do I!

ELLIOT

So how am I supposed to wear them if I don't know what they are?

DELLA

Just put on what you're gonna wear tonight.
Celia and Rocío won't know the difference.

ELLIOT

I thought you wanted me to keep those clean.

DELLA

I'll just wash em for you at the Millers' this afternoon.
They always got laundry anyway.

ELLIOT

Was that Mrs. Miller earlier?

DELLA

Yes, and don't you say nothin bad about her!
She's a very nice lady.

ELLIOT

I know she is.
I just don't like the way she talks to you.
You're not her employee.

DELLA

She pays me, don't she?

ELLIOT

Yeah but...it's weird.
I'm, like, best-friends with Marcus.

DELLA

And cause of that I don't get to take her money?

ELLIOT

No, I'm not saying that.
I just...you spend all day cleaning up after people at the hotel,
and then, on your weekend, you clean up after people like the
Millers too?
It's too much.

DELLA

I don't mind.

ELLIOT

I know you don't.
I just wish you'd let me help.

DELLA

Eli, no.

ELLIOT

But school's done now.
And I already got into college.
So it's not like I even have an excuse anymore.
Look, I've got three months of nothing ahead of me.
Let me help.

DELLA

Your father and I don't need your help.

ELLIOT

Still...

DELLA

We don't work like we do so you gotta go get a job in town.
We work so you can go to school.
So you can become a lawyer or somethin.

You wanna help THEN?
Go right ahead.
Buy me a house with stairs, and air conditioning, and a front-
load washer-dryer.
But till then?
You just worry about school.
That's what makes your father and me proud.
Not a few dollars.

ELLIOT

But.../

DELLA

/Elliot, drop it.

ELLIOT

(...)

DELLA

You really wanna do somethin nice for me?
You go put on those good clothes and you drive me to work.
And tonight, when you're up on that stage, you make your father
and me proud.

ELLIOT

You think he's really gonna make it?

DELLA
He said he would, didn't he?

ELLIOT
Yeah, but/

DELLA
/If he says he's gonna do something, he will.
He bought you that car, didn't he?

ELLIOT
I never asked for the car.

DELLA
Yeah, well what's that got to do with it?
You got into school, so he bought you a car just like he said he
would.
Cause that's the kinda man he is.

ELLIOT
(...)

DELLA
What?

ELLIOT
Nothing, I just...you mind if I ask you something?

DELLA
What?

ELLIOT
Would you still be cleaning houses right now if I wasn't going to
school?

DELLA
(...)

ELLIOT
You don't gotta answer if you don't want to.
It was just a question.

DELLA
Yeah, I know.
But for someone so smart, it's a pretty stupid one.

She walks up to him. Hugs him tight.

Listen to me: Your father and I don't got much, but what we got
is yours.

DELLA (CONT'D)

No matter what, okay?
Now come on, you wanna make me late?

She turns Elliot around and pushes him off towards his room.

(As he exits)
And I wanna see chinos, dammit!
And a polo!

Now alone, Della takes a breath. She shakes her head. Tries to clear her thoughts.

(Quietly. To herself)
A lawyer or a doctor.
He's gonna be a lawyer or a doctor.

She repeats the phrase over and over like a mantra as Playwright speaks to us.

PLAYWRIGHT

In a little while, Della Gonzalez is going to get what she wants. Her son is gonna drop her off at work. And when she walks into the building, she will hold her head up high. But it won't have the effect she hopes. Instead of looking at Elliot with awe or jealousy, the men and women of the Fillmore Best Western will note the car, the boy, and the clothes, and they will turn to each other and ask: "What? She think she white now?" And then they will go back to work. But they will never again tell her about their grandkids. Nor--and this will hurt the most--will they ask about hers.

Della stops her mantra, takes a breath, and exits deeper into the house.

Having finished with the hose, Hank walks to the mailbox and opens it up. He removes some envelopes and flips through them, looking less-than-pleased at what he finds.

One of the letters in particular catches his attention. He rips it open, unfolds it, and reads the contents.

Behind him, MAYA enters with a backpack.

Shaking his head in frustration, Hank turns to go back inside and almost walks straight into his daughter.

HANK

Hey!
Didn't see you there.

MAYA

What're you doing?

HANK

Just checking the mail.

He takes the letter he was reading, folds it up, and quickly jams it into the larger stack of mail...maybe a little too quickly.

HANK

What's up with you?

MAYA

Um...Marcus won't get up.
So can you drive me?

HANK

Why won't he get up?

MAYA

I don't know, it's Marcus.
Why does he do anything?

HANK

You should've gotten up a little earlier.
You could've gone with your mom.
She only left a few minutes ago.

MAYA

Yeah, no.
If those are my options, I think I'd rather walk, thanks.

HANK

Well, let me get my keys then.

MAYA

What were you reading when I walked up?

HANK

Nothing.
Bills.

MAYA

Then why are you being so weird?

HANK

I'm not being weird.

She gives him a look that says otherwise.

HANK

I don't have any idea what you're getting at.

MAYA

Really?
Cause you look like the weight of the world is slowly crushing you to death.

HANK

(Smiling)
I'm fine, I promise.

You mind if I take a quick shower before I take you?
I've been out here all morning.

MAYA

No, sure.
Go ahead.

HANK

Great.
Be right back.
(As he turns to walk away)
Are you gonna be able to find a ride to your brother's graduation tonight?
I'm supposed to meet George for a round, and I don't know if I'll be coming back here before things get started.

MAYA

I'll be okay.
I think Sarah and I were gonna meet some people at the diner after school, so we'll probably just go from there.

HANK

Are you gonna need some money for that?

MAYA

Well, I mean...it wouldn't hurt.

HANK

I'll take that as a yes.

But don't you dare tell your mother about it.
As far as she's concerned, you ate the lunch she made for you,
okay?

MAYA

Duh, dad.
I'm not stupid.

HANK

Okay, I'm just saying: we're together on this.

MAYA

I'll make sure to destroy the evidence.
She'll never even know.

HANK

That's my girl.
Be right back.

He exits.

*Meanwhile, Elliot comes back out in his
dress clothes--an ill-fitting white shirt
and black pants.*

ELLIOT

(Calling back behind him)
I'm gonna go get the car ready.

*He steps out the front door and sees Maya
standing in her yard.*

Oh...hey.

MAYA

Hey.
You look nice.

ELLIOT

Thanks.
Sometimes you just gotta put something nice on, you know?

MAYA

Your mom made you wear that, didn't she?

ELLIOT

Yeah.

MAYA

Well, you look nice anyway.

ELLIOT

Thanks.

Is Marcus sleeping in again?
You need a ride?

MAYA

No, I'm good.
Thanks.

ELLIOT

Cool, cool.

BOTH

(...)

MAYA

So...you excited?

ELLIOT

About what?

MAYA

"About what," he says!
About graduating!
About getting the hell out of here!

ELLIOT

Oh, that!
No, yeah.
I mean, sure.
Of course I am.
Why wouldn't I be?

MAYA

Okay, well you don't sound very excited.
You sound like you're walking to your execution.

ELLIOT

Maybe I'm just a little nervous about the speech.

MAYA

Why?

ELLIOT

I don't know.
It's a lot of people.

MAYA

So?

It's a graduation speech.

Quote a passage from *Oh, the Places You'll Go*, tell people you'll never forget this place, and then close with a "Go Fillmore Flashes!"

There, I just wrote the damn thing for you.

ELLIOT

Well, I'll make sure to give you credit if I use any of it.

MAYA

No need.

Consider it my graduation gift to you.

ELLIOT

Thanks.

MAYA

But of course.

Anyway, don't worry about it.

You're gonna do great.

You always do great.

It's actually kind of annoying.

ELLIOT

Annoying?

MAYA

Yeah.

Save some spotlight for the rest of us, why don't you.

ELLIOT

Something tells me you're gonna have plenty of spotlight ahead of you, Ms. Debate Team Captain.

I don't think I got a chance to say congrats, by the way.

MAYA

Whatever.

Who else were they gonna give it to?

Scott?

He smells like cheese.

ELLIOT

Scott's a good guy.

And he's a great debater.

MAYA

Sure.
But it's not like he's good enough to get us to State again.
I mean, he's no you.

ELLIOT

I wasn't the only one that got us to State.
It was a team effort.

MAYA

See, this is what I'm talking about.
Super. Annoying.
Just take the compliment, you dummy.

ELLIOT

Alright, fine.
I take your compliment and I thank you for it.
Happy?

MAYA

Well, don't get a big head about it.
Geez.

She smiles. He smiles back.

Behind them, Chuy enters from deeper within the Gonzalez house. He gets himself a cup of coffee from the kitchen and turns to head outside, but when he notices the two of them, he stops. Hides.

MAYA

Look, I guess I'm just trying to say that I'm really gonna miss you, okay?
Like, I know you're supposed to be my brother's friend, but...

ELLIOT

No, it's cool.
I understand.
I feel the same way.

BOTH

(...)

MAYA

Well...I should probably go get my stuff ready for school.

ELLIOT

Sure, sure.
Do you.

She turns to leave.

ELLIOT

I don't always do great, you know.

MAYA

What?

ELLIOT

What you said...

I don't always do great.

In fact, a lot of times, I feel like I don't do great at all.

MAYA

What do you mean?

ELLIOT

I just...it feels like everyone in my life has all these plans for me.

All these things they expect from me.

But what if none of them happen?

What if I leave here and I end up with nothing?

I'm the first person in my family to go to college.

As far as my parents are concerned, just going means success.

Like I'm automatically gonna become a doctor or a lawyer or something.

But what if that doesn't happen?

MAYA

Not everyone that goes to school has to become a doctor or a lawyer.

Just look at my mom.

She has, like, two degrees and she's a housewife.

And it's fine.

College is just college.

ELLIOT

Maybe...

I don't know, you're probably right.

MAYA

Of course I'm right.

Anyway, don't worry about it.

It's your life.

If people give you shit about what you choose to do with it, just tell em that Maya Miller says they can go to hell, okay?

Elliot smiles. Nods.

ELLIOT

Okay.

I'll make sure to keep that in mind.

Thanks.

MAYA

Anytime.

She waves goodbye before turning back to her house and exiting.

He watches her disappear inside , then turns back toward his own house... which is when he spots Chuy sitting on the porch.

ELLIOT

Grandpa!
I didn't see you there
How long have you been/

CHUY

(With a smile)
/Long enough.

The Miller girl, huh?
She seems nice.

ELLIOT

What do you mean?
(Then it strikes him)
Maya?
No.
We just...I mean, we aren't...I mean, she's Marcus's little/

CHUY

/Hey, slow down.
I didn't mean nothin by it.
I was just tryin to say she seems nice.
Can't a guy say someone's nice?

ELLIOT

No, yeah.
I mean, of course.
I just...I didn't want you to get any ideas or anything, you know?

CHUY

Uh-huh.

ELLIOT

What're you doing here anyway?
You stop by to see dad?

CHUY

Oh, you know how it is.
Just found myself in the neighborhood.
Figured I'd say hello.

ELLIOT

You needed money, didn't you?

CHUY

I don't always need money.

ELLIOT

You do when you come around here.

CHUY

(With a smile)
I don't got no idea what you're talkin about.

ELLIOT

You want a ride back home?
I'm already takin my mom to work, so it's no big deal.

CHUY

Nah.
I like it here just fine.
Your mom buys the good coffee.

ELLIOT

Well, just let me know if you change your mind.

CHUY

Did you mean what you said to the Miller girl?
About not wantin to go to college?

ELLIOT

I didn't say that.

CHUY

Then what were you sayin?

ELLIOT

I just don't wanna let anyone down.

CHUY

How are you gonna let anyone down?

ELLIOT

(...)

CHUY

Eli?

ELLIOT

Look, you have to promise to keep your mouth shut about this, okay?

CHUY

Who the hell am I gonna tell?

ELLIOT

The other day I heard my mom and dad talking. They wanna take out a second mortgage on the house.

CHUY

What?
Why?

ELLIOT

Why do you think?
To pay tuition.

CHUY

Don't they got, like, government money or scholarships for that?

ELLIOT

They don't want me to go into debt.
But I mean, what if I don't...?
What if I can't/

CHUY

/What if you fuck it up?

ELLIOT

This house is everything they have.

CHUY

(...)

ELLIOT

I don't know, maybe there's no point in worrying about it now. I mean, it's not like I can change anything.

CHUY

You know, when I was your age, my parents wanted me to be a rancharo.

ELLIOT

In México?

CHUY

(Nodding)

Just like my father, and his father, and his, and his.
All the way down the line.

They used to tell me all these stories when I was a kid.
And I used to love em.
Every night, when I went to bed, my head'd fill up with nothin
but horses till the sun came up.

But then things changed.
The owners got stingy.
The economy went to shit.
And every year, we had a little less.

Eventually, it got to where I knew I had to leave.
To come up here and actually make some money, you know?
But I knew my father wasn't gonna let me.
Cause he was scared, if I left, I was never gonna come back.

ELLIOT

So what did you do?

CHUY

I lied.
I told him I fuckin hated horses.
And that I fuckin hated him.
That I wasn't gonna stay in his shit hole house, or that shit
hole town another day.

ELLIOT

And?

CHUY

And he threw me out.
Said he never wanted to see me again.
Just like I knew he would.

So I came up here.
Got a job, met your grandma, had your dad.
And now, here we are.

ELLIOT

Did he ever forgive you?

CHUY

Course not.
But he never said no to the money I sent home either.

ELLIOT

(...)

CHUY

I'm not sayin you gotta do that.
I'm just sayin that you gotta follow your own way.
And if it hurts your parents, then that's just the way it is.
Cause sometimes people don't know what they need.
Sometimes what seems like hurt, can actually be help.
You understand?

ELLIOT

Yeah.
I think so.

CHUY

Your parents'll forgive you.

And if they don't, you just come over to my place.
I got your back.

Elliot thinks about that a moment. Nods.

ELLIOT

I should get going.
I'm supposed to give my mom a ride to work.

Elliot turns to exit.

CHUY

Hey.
You're a smart kid.
You'll figure this out.

Elliot exits. Chuy, meanwhile, returns to his coffee.

Playwright enters wheeling a podium center stage.

PLAYWRIGHT

(To us)
I've said it before, but it I'll say it again: graduations in Fillmore are a big deal.
So big that a couple of days before, Hank Miller prints a special issue of the *Fillmore Gazette*.
In it, you can find every single senior portrait printed in vibrant color.

It's the kind of thing that tends to be saved.
Like a time capsule.
Only, instead of holding keepsakes and knick-knacks, this time capsule holds the faces of an entire generation.
Each of them smiling in that way only a teenager can smile.

PLAYWRIGHT (CONT'D)

Each of them safe, at least in these pages, from what life can do to them.

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Today, we're watching 225 high school seniors walk into a stadium as children, and walk out as adults.

And in Fillmore that journey begins around six o'clock.

When every single graduating student boards a fleet of yellow school buses for one final ride around campus.

Because Fillmore is the kind of place where traditions run deep.

Where seniors arrive for this, the most important day of their lives so far, on the same buses they've ridden their whole lives.

And where they walk to their seats under archways of flowers held up the junior class.

Where the band plays *Pomp and Circumstance* even if no one can hear it over all the cheering.

Everyone but Elliot and Benny enter and stand (or sit) with us, facing the stage.

Because Fillmore is the kind of place where things are not forgotten.

Where even a high school graduation speech has an effect.

Right now, the sun is low.

The crowd is silent.

And Elliot Gonzalez prepares to speak.

Elliot enters in blue graduation robes and crosses to the podium.

Just before Elliot begins to speak, Benny enters and stands next to Della with a look of apology for being late. But rather than be annoyed, Della grabs his arm and lays her head upon his shoulder.

ELLIOT

Um...hi.

My name is Elliot Gonzalez and on behalf of the Fillmore High School graduating class of 2004, I'd like to extend a warm welcome to you all tonight.

Normally, this is where I'd launch into a speech for you.

And I did prepare something, honest.

He holds up a stack of white notecards to illustrate.

But I don't wanna give that speech, so...

He rips the cards in half. Lets the pieces fall to the floor.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Um...what I really wanna say tonight is that this place is special.
And, like, I know everyone thinks their hometown is special.
But this place really is.
I mean, I asked my dad the other day, how long we've done that school bus thing, and he told me it was something we used to do even when he was a kid.
Which is crazy, cause my dad's old.
And buses aren't cheap.
But still, every year, no matter what, we ride buses to graduation.
And every year, when we get here, the juniors are right there waiting for us.
And so is the band.
And so are you.
And that's special.
Which is why I don't think I'm gonna leave.
And why, a few hours ago, I called the admissions office at UCLA and withdrew my enrollment for Fall Quarter.

I'm sorry.
I know you were all expecting a big speech.
But this is all I really had to say.
So um...thank you.
For everything.

End of Act I

Act II

PLAYWRIGHT

Before I started writing this play, I went back to see how the Fillmore of my childhood had changed.

Driving around that day, I found myself playing my parents' old game.

"So they didn't put a Starbucks in after all!"

"Good for them."

"Oh, I wonder what ever happened to that house on Main with the new paint job."

But unlike my parents, I had no one but the radio to answer me. So eventually I just stopped.

And I drove.

And I wondered if this place, that I remembered so well, ever spared a memory for me.

It's been almost ten months since Elliot Gonzalez gave his speech.

I'd like to tell you that it made more of a splash, but life in Fillmore, like life anywhere, has a way of getting on.

In fact, by the time football season rolled around last Fall, most people had forgotten Elliot entirely.

Since then, they have filled their days with all kinds of things that tend to fill a day.

The kids.

First dates.

Mortgage payments.

Church gatherings.

Weddings.

And, in the case of Maya Miller, college visitations, which turned into college applications, and eventually, college acceptance letters.

It's April now.

The very last month that someone in Maya Miller's shoes can tell an institution like Stanford or Brown that, "Yes, I would like to join your club."

It also happens to be her birthday.

Which, in the Miller house, is a very big deal.

When they were young, Hank Miller used to take out ads in the paper for his children's birthdays.

He doesn't do it anymore.

But the sentiment remains.

And even though this will be the first birthday Marcus Miller isn't here to celebrate in person, he's still managed to secure a ten-minute phone call to mark the occasion.

When he calls tonight, it'll be 5:30am where he's stationed in Afghanistan.

PLAYWRIGHT (CONT'D)

Right now, Della Gonzalez is about to finish her weekly appointment at the Miller house. She has not spoken to her son in nearly two whole months.

Lights reveal Della hard at work in the Miller house. The sound of a car pulling up in the driveway stops her.

ELLIOT

(Offstage)
No problem, Mr. Miller!
I'll run right around and open the garage.

Elliot runs on and opens the front door of the Miller house, then stops dead when he sees Della.

What're you doing here?

DELLA

I have a key.

ELLIOT

No, I know.
I just...I thought you weren't cleaning the Miller's anymore.

DELLA

Willow wanted me to clean up special for the party

What are YOU doin here?
Don't you got work?

ELLIOT

I took it off--vacation day.

DELLA

You get vacation?

ELLIOT

As long as I don't mind not getting paid.

DELLA

(...)

ELLIOT

Listen mom, I've been meaning to call you...

DELLA

How's your grandpa?

ELLIOT
Fine.

DELLA
He takin care of you?

ELLIOT
As best he can.

DELLA
He better not be gettin you drunk!
If I find out he's been/

ELLIOT
/Mom, he's not.
He's good.
He's getting sober.

DELLA
(Laughing bitterly)
I'll believe that when I see it.

ELLIOT
It's true.
That last talk he had with dad really changed something in him.

DELLA
What talk?
You mean that time he showed up covered in piss, so drunk he
couldn't stand?
That time he called your father a stubborn jackass?
That time?

ELLIOT
He was just trying to stick up for me.
If dad hadn't/

DELLA
/The only person your grandpa sticks up for is himself.
He's always been that way and he ain't never gonna change.
Did you know, he didn't even bother to see Benny and me get
married?
Said he got stuck at work.
Benny found out what he was really stuck at was the bar.
I don't know why he ever talked to him again.
Me?
I woulda cut the bastard off right there.
But your father's a better person than me.

ELLIOT
Is that why he threw me out?

HANK

(Offstage)
Eli?
Everything alright?

ELLIOT

Be right there.

Elliot exits to the garage, leaving Della alone.

HANK

(Offstage)
I thought you might've gotten lost.

ELLIOT

(offstage)
I was just talking to my mom.

HANK

(Offstage)
Is she here?

ELLIOT

(Offstage)
I think she was just leaving.

Can I help you carry anything?

HANK

(Offstage)
Why else do you think I brought you?

Hank enters from the garage.

HANK

Della!
What a pleasant surprise.

DELLA

Hello, Mr. Miller.

HANK

Oh, come now!
I think you can just call me Hank after all these years, don't you?

Elliot enters from the garage with some bags. But he puts them down and exits again before anyone can say a word to him.

Della watches him the whole time.

HANK

Listen, I'm so sorry but I don't have any cash for you today.
Willow didn't tell me you were coming by.

DELLA

She can pay me tomorrow.

HANK

Well, I appreciate it.
If I had known, I would've stopped right by the bank.

DELLA

That's okay Mr...Hank.
It's no trouble.

HANK

Are you and Benny gonna stop by tonight?
You're more than welcome.

DELLA

Oh, no.
I don't think so.
Benny's got an early morning tomorrow.

HANK

They're really working him down at the garage, huh?

DELLA

It's a busy place.

HANK

Well, as long as you know you're always welcome.
Lord knows Elliot's here all the time.

DELLA

Why?

HANK

What do you mean?

DELLA

Why's he here all the time?
Is Marcus back?

HANK

What?
No.
He...wait, do you not know?

DELLA
Know what?

HANK
About him and Maya.

DELLA
Him and Maya?

*Elliot enters with a comically large
bundle of balloons.*

ELLIOT
(From behind the balloons)
Where do you want these, Mr. Miller?

HANK
Oh, um...outside is fine.
We can string them up a little closer to the party.

ELLIOT
Won't they float away?
I'll just put them in Marcus's room.
She never goes in there.

HANK
Great.

*Elliot takes the comically large bundle of
balloons and exits deeper into the Miller
house.*

HANK
(Once Elliot is gone)
You mean you didn't know?

DELLA
How would I know?
He's been livin with his grandpa.

HANK
What?
Why?
Is everything alright?

DELLA
Why don't you ask him about it?

HANK

Right.

Um...okay then

As far as he and Maya are concerned, Willow and I think it's great.

Not that Maya needs our approval or anything, but still...

DELLA

You think he's happy?

HANK

What do you mean?

With Maya?

She thinks about it. Can't decide if that's what she means. Nods anyway.

HANK

Um...yeah, it seems good.

Della takes that in. Nods.

DELLA

Excuse me.

She turns to exit.

HANK

Are you alright?

She nods, but it's all she can do to hold herself together enough to exit, leaving Hank alone.

ELLIOT

(Entering)
Is she gone?

HANK

Uh-huh.

ELLIOT

Thank you.

HANK

You care to tell me what all that was about?

ELLIOT

Not really.

HANK

I think I have a right to know if something's going on with you.

ELLIOT

Nothing's going on.
It's just a misunderstanding.

HANK

Your mother says you're not living at home anymore.

ELLIOT

(...)

HANK

Look, I don't care that you never told me.
I just wanna know you're alright.

ELLIOT

I'm fine.
My dad's just upset.

HANK

Cause of school?

You want me to talk to him for you?

ELLIOT

No, please.
It's not something he's gonna wanna talk about.
Especially not with you.

HANK

What's that supposed to mean?

ELLIOT

Well, you know...

HANK

Cause I'm white?

ELLIOT

It's nothing against you.
It's just different.

HANK

I have a son that didn't go to school.

ELLIOT

Yeah, but Marcus didn't need to.
You were always gonna be proud of him.
No matter what he did.

HANK
So?

ELLIOT
So it's different for my parents.

HANK
How?

ELLIOT
(...)

HANK
Eli, I'm only trying to understand.

ELLIOT
I know.
I just...what do you see when you look at me?

HANK
What do you mean?

ELLIOT
If you saw me walking down the street.

HANK
I see a young man.
Someone who carries himself well.
Someone who seems smart and honorable and/

ELLIOT
/Brown.
Don't forget brown.

HANK
Sure, but I don't see/

ELLIOT
/Because you're white.
And white people don't have to see.
But that's not how it is for my parents.
That's not how it is for me.

HANK
Eli, I wasn't trying/

ELLIOT
/I know, but that's just the way it is.
And because of it, I was my parents' last hope.

HANK

Their last hope for what?

ELLIOT

That someday they would be able to afford a life like yours.

HANK

(...)

ELLIOT

I'm sorry.
I shouldn't have said anything.

HANK

No, it's okay.
It's not that, it's just.../

The sound of a car horn outside interrupts him. It's the kind of honking that announces an arrival. The kind of honking that's joyous.

WILLOW

(Offstage, a moment later)
Hank, you in there?
Can I get a little help?

ELLIOT

I can go.

HANK

No, Elliot, I need to tell/

But Elliot is already exiting the Miller house to find Willow entering from the driveway with her arms full of shopping bags.

ELLIOT

Hello, Mrs. Miller.

WILLOW

Eli!
I didn't know you were gonna be here so early!

ELLIOT

I took the day off.

WILLOW

Well, isn't that sweet!

Back in the house, Hank looks upset. He tries to shake the feeling out. To re-center himself. But no matter what he does, it doesn't seem to work.

ELLIOT

Can I take those from you?

WILLOW

(Handing the bags off)
Is Hank here?

ELLIOT

Inside.

WILLOW

You hear that, Hank?
He takes the day off when it's his girlfriend's birthday!

HANK

(Inside the house--where he stays until otherwise noted.)
Well, if I had a girlfriend, maybe I'd take the day off too.

WILLOW

You better hope you don't have a girlfriend, Hank William Miller!
Or I'll fucking kill you.

Now get out here!
Help us carry all this in.

HANK

In a minute.

Hank crosses to the kitchen and removes a beer from the fridge.

ELLIOT

Where do you want all this?

WILLOW

The kitchen's fine.

Elliot turns to exit.

Wait.
Did Hank pick up the decorations?

Hank takes a hell of a swig from the beer. The kind of swig that isn't enjoyable at all. The kind that's desperate.

After he's done, he takes a breath to steady himself.

ELLIOT

We just got back from the store a little while ago.

WILLOW

He dragged you with him?

ELLIOT

I don't mind.

WILLOW

Did he do a good job?

ELLIOT

What do you mean?

WILLOW

Like, are the decorations nice?

ELLIOT

I mean, they're...well, after you spruce them up, I'm sure they'll look perfect.

WILLOW

(Laughing)
Right answer.
But tell me honestly, does it look horrible in there?
The last time Hank tried to decorate, the house looked like Party City threw up in it.

ELLIOT

Oh, well we haven't even got them up yet.

WILLOW

What?

ELLIOT

We only just got back.

Centered, Hank tosses the beer, pops a few mints into his mouth, and sniffs his hand to be sure the smell is gone. Then he pops a few more mints.

WILLOW
Hank!

HANK
Yes?

WILLOW
Have you got the decorations up yet?

HANK
No, we only just got back.

WILLOW
Are you kidding me?
She's gonna be done with debate any minute!

HANK
The store was busy, what do you want?

WILLOW
(Under her breath)
Jesus Christ, I give you one job...

ELLIOT
Should I, um...go put these down?

WILLOW
Yes, of course.
Sorry.

ELLIOT
No prob.

Elliot turns to go inside.

WILLOW
Wait.
Elliot?
When you go pick up Maya, would you mind/

ELLIOT
/Stalling?
Sure thing.

WILLOW
Thank you.

ELLIOT
Let me just put these down.

Hank steps out the front door as Elliot passes him on his way inside.

WILLOW

What the hell were you waiting for?
The bags to move themselves?

HANK

I was busy.

WILLOW

Doing what?

HANK

Can't a guy go to the bathroom?

Elliot re-emerges from the Miller house.

ELLIOT

(As he passes by them)
I'll take her out for coffee or something.

WILLOW

You're the best.

And Elliot is gone.

(To Hank)
You were supposed to put the decorations up.

HANK

Well I got stuck talking to Della who, by the way, I thought we weren't hiring anymore.

WILLOW

Oh come on!
It's one day.

HANK

Sure, but we talked about this.
The budget says/

WILLOW

/You and that budget, I swear to God!
Sometimes I think THAT's your wife.

HANK

The budget is necessary.
With Maya going away next year and the paper cutting hours...

WILLOW

Hank, I love you.
 But I don't wanna hear about budgets today.
 It's Maya's special day.
 And for all we know, it's gonna be the last one we have with her
 under this roof.
 So I'd like it to be a nice one.
 Where we don't talk about budgets or work or anything that's not
 our daughter who we love very, very much.
 Okay?

HANK

(After a moment)
 Okay.

WILLOW

Thank you.
(Kissing him)
 Now are you gonna help me set this place up, or what?

HANK

Wait, there's something else we need to talk about.

WILLOW

Unless it's what color streamers you wanna put around the dining
 room chairs, you know I don't wanna hear it.

HANK

Willow/

WILLOW

/Where did you put the balloons?

HANK

In Marcus's room.

She makes a bee-line toward the bedrooms.

HANK

Hey, I'm trying to talk to you.

WILLOW

Just a minute, I promise.

And she's gone.

HANK

Well, it's about Elliot.

WILLOW

(In the other room--where she stays until otherwise noted.)
 What about Elliot?

HANK

Did you know he's living with his grandfather?

WILLOW

He's living where?

HANK

With his grandfather!
 I think Benny and Della kicked him out.

WILLOW

What?
 Why?

HANK

Cause of the school thing, near as I could tell.

WILLOW

Well that's stupid.
 We should talk to them.

HANK

No, he doesn't want that.

WILLOW

Why not?

HANK

It's complicated and I'd rather not get into it right now.

WILLOW

Then why did you bring it up?

HANK

Because I think we should have a talk with Maya.
 I know how she feels about him.
 And I know what a good friend he is to Marcus.
 But I'd be lying if I said this didn't bother me.

She's about to go to college.
 Things are about to really start changing for her.
 But in order for those changes to take, I think she needs to be
 free of distractions.
 And I'm not saying Elliot would do anything on purpose.
 But, you know what?
 He said it himself today: the two of them are different.

HANK (CONT'D)

Well, I think it's wishful thinking to believe that those differences are going to do anything but grow over the next few years.

He may not want to admit it.

She may not want to admit it.

But that's just the truth.

And so, maybe it's best for everyone if they just go their separate ways now.

Before there's any bad blood, you know?

Or maybe I'm over-reacting.

I don't know, what do you think?

WILLOW

(...)

HANK

Willow?

Willow re-enters carrying a box full of open envelopes.

WILLOW

Hank, what the hell are these?

HANK

Where did you/

WILLOW

/They were holding down the balloons.

Are these mortgage bills?

HANK

I was just keeping them in there till I had a chance to get around to them.

WILLOW

You mean you haven't paid them yet?

Half of these are past due notices.

And some of them are final notice.

HANK

No.

I paid those.

Those are good.

I make sure to get to those when they come in.

WILLOW

How often have we gotten those?

(...)

HANK

Hank, how far behind are we?

WILLOW

(...)

HANK

Hank!

WILLOW

Three months.

HANK

What?

WILLOW

But it's only temporary.

HANK

Three months?!

WILLOW

Once I get a new job down in the city and start making a little more money/

HANK

/What are you even talking about?
How did this happen?

WILLOW

I don't know.

HANK

You don't know?

WILLOW

Look, I told you it was gonna be tight when the paper started cutting back on hours.

HANK

Not this tight.

WILLOW

HANK

Well, maybe not if we didn't have a million other things to worry about.

Or if we had gone with the fixed rate back when we bought this place like I said we should.

But between the credit cards and the car payments and...this, it's just been hard, okay?

Which is why the budget/

WILLOW

/You really think the budget's gonna help us pay three months of back-mortgage?

HANK

(...)

WILLOW

Oh my God, we're gonna lose this place.

HANK

No.

Absolutely not.

I have a plan to get us back on schedule.

That's all the bank needs from us.

I've been talking to George/

WILLOW

/You let George know about this before me?

HANK

He's a banker.

He sees this kinda thing all the time.

WILLOW

But he's our friend.

HANK

So?

WILLOW

So what the hell is wrong with you?

HANK

I thought he could help.

WILLOW

We're supposed to see him and Katie next week!

How am I supposed to look the two of them in the face when George knew about this before I did?

HANK

Willow, I think you're focusing on the wrong/

WILLOW

/I'll focus on whatever I damn well please, Hank!
You hid this from me.

HANK

No, that's wrong.
I wasn't hiding anything.

WILLOW

Then why the fuck were these in Marcus's room?
Why didn't I know about them?

HANK

Because I didn't want you to worry.

WILLOW

This is our home.
It's exactly what I SHOULD be worrying about.

Did you not trust me?

HANK

No, it isn't that.

WILLOW

Then what is it?

HANK

Look, I don't...can we not do this right now?

WILLOW

When would you rather do it?
When we're out on the street?

HANK

We aren't gonna end up on the street!
See, this is why I didn't wanna tell you.

WILLOW

Because it worries me that we might lose our home?
Or because it upsets me that you lied to me?

HANK

I didn't lie to you.

WILLOW

Then what do you call what you did?
You kept this quiet/

HANK

/Because I'm ashamed, alright?
I kept it quiet because I'm ashamed.
A man is supposed to provide for his family.
He's supposed to take care of them.
But look at me!
I can't even afford to put a roof over our heads.
I mean, shit, Willow!
When we bought this place, we didn't even like it.
We thought it was beneath us!

WILLOW

So?
Shame or no shame, I'm supposed to be your wife.
We're supposed to figure this kind of thing out together.

HANK

You think I don't know that?
You think that hasn't been tearing me up this whole time?

WILLOW

I think that's no excuse for keeping me in the dark.

HANK

Well, what do you wanna do about it?
You wanna figure this whole thing out right now?
Alright, fine.
Let's figure it out!

WILLOW

I'm not saying that.
I'm saying that I want you to trust me.

HANK

I DO trust you.

WILLOW

Bullshit you do!
We wouldn't be in this mess right now if you trusted me.

HANK

Well, what could you have possible done?
You don't make any money.

WILLOW

(...)

She turns to leave.

HANK

Willow, no.
Wait.
I'm sorry, I didn't mean/

WILLOW

/Do you think I wanna live like this, Hank?
Worrying about birthday decorations and gym classes and whether
or not my kids eat their fucking lunches?
Do you think I like it?
Do you think that, when I was a little girl, THIS is what I
dreamt of?
Cause it's not.
And if I had to try and explain this life to a younger version of
myself, I don't honestly know what I would say.

When I met you, I fell in love with you.
And for these past 25 years, I have lived like this BECAUSE I
love you.
And because I love this family.
And because I trusted that life with you was gonna be better than
life without.
But don't think for a second that makes me helpless.
I have hopes and I have dreams that have nothing to do with you.
I had them before I met you, and if you were gone tomorrow, I'd
have them after.

HANK

(...)

WILLOW

How many other people know about this?
Other than George?

HANK

No one.

WILLOW

Good.
Let's keep it that way.

She turns to exit again.

HANK

Where are you going?

WILLOW

We still have a party to set up, don't we?

*She exits deeper into the house. And after
a moment, Hank follows her.*

Playwright steps forward.

PLAYWRIGHT

Willow and Hank Miller met in front of a burning building in the summer of 1975.

She was eighteen and he was twenty.

Students from UCSB were protesting outside the local Army Recruitment center and things had gotten out of hand.

When she would tell the story later, Willow would say that she just happened to be walking by.

But that's wrong.

The truth is, she organized the protest.

When Hank would tell it, he would say he had to battle his way out of the flames.

That he had to carry a coworker to safety.

But that's wrong too.

When everything started, he was out back smoking a joint.

What both agree on is that when the flames started rising, the protestors bolted.

And when they did, Willow tripped.

And the stampeding people were all around her.

But then an arm reached down and lifted her from the ground, and the uniformed figure of Hank Miller pulled the woman who would one day become his wife to safety.

When the two would tell the story later, they would often end it by asking, "How could we NOT fall in love?"

Once the groans were finished, they would continue: "Of course, meeting in front of a burning building couldn't have been the best omen."

"But we seem to be doing alright."

And after that, they would laugh, marveling at the serendipity of life, and kiss one another.

As if for the very first time.

MAYA

(Entering)

You're kidding!

ELLIOT

It's really no big deal.

MAYA

Bullshit it's not!

I'm gonna go talk to them.

She turns to head inside.

ELLIOT

Maya, no!

Please, it's fine.

MAYA

But what kind of person asks about that?
I don't think it's any of his business WHERE you live!

ELLIOT

I think he's just worried about you.

MAYA

He never worried about Marcus this way.
That's some misogynistic bullshit, that's what that is!

ELLIOT

Or it's a dad being a dad.

MAYA

You know, it's really hard to be pissed off on your behalf when
you're always so accommodating.

ELLIOT

Are you actually pissed off?

MAYA

Yes, you big dummy!
Someone's gotta be.

What?

ELLIOT

Nothing.
I just...like you a lot.

MAYA

Oh my god, don't get all lovey-dovey!
You're gonna make me gag.

ELLIOT

I'm excited that you care about me.
What's wrong with that?

MAYA

Nothing.
But it doesn't mean you gotta be so meaningful about it either.

ELLIOT

I'm just trying to show my appreciation.
It's not everyday a guy gets to be with such a perfect
girlfriend.

MAYA

(Smiling)
Shut up.

ELLIOT

What?

MAYA

I'm still not used to hearing you call me that yet.

ELLIOT

Then should I say it again?
So that you get used to it?*After a moment, she nods with a smile.*

ELLIOT

Maya Miller, my girlfriend.

He kisses her on the forehead.

How's that?

MAYA

Well, don't stop.

ELLIOT

(Kissing her throughout)
My wonderful, perfect girlfriend who I'm absolutely, positively
crazy about.*By this time, the kisses have migrated
away from the head and down the neck.*

MAYA

(Laughing)
Ah!
Stop, stop, STOP!
Not in front of the house!

ELLIOT

Sorry.
But I had to keep you out of there somehow.
Your parents gave me a very important job.
And I intend to do it.

MAYA

Yeah, but not here.
What if they see us?

ELLIOT

You think they're done setting up yet?

MAYA

If they are, they can wait.
 I'm still mad at them.
 Well, maybe not mom.
 At least not yet.
 But then again, she IS a total racist, so...

ELLIOT

Your mom's not a racist.

MAYA

She is too!
 And don't pretend like you've never noticed.
(Mimicking)
 "Elliot, you're so hard working and helpful!"
 "Your family is just full of the NICEST PEOPLE!"
 It sounds like she's praising a dog.

ELLIOT

It doesn't bother me anymore, honest
 Maybe when I was a kid, but/

MAYA

/Yeah, right.

ELLIOT

What?

MAYA

You don't have to pretend that everything is perfect just cause
 we're dating.
 I know what kind of family I'm from.

ELLIOT

They've never been anything but nice to me.

MAYA

For now.

ELLIOT

For always.
 And if they say some things sometimes/

MAYA

/Ahah!

ELLIOT

If they say some things sometimes, it's not a big deal.
 I mean, it's not like they mean anything by it.

MAYA

Yeah, well you say that now.
But give it a couple of years as my boyfriend and then come talk to me.

ELLIOT

Oh, is this gonna be going on for a couple of years?

MAYA

It fuckin better!
I've been in love with you since the third grade.
You think I'd let you go now?

ELLIOT

Did you just say you love me?

MAYA

Well...you know, like in a figure of/

ELLIOT

/I love you too.

BOTH

(...)

She throws her arms around him and kisses him deeply. The kind of kiss that's years in the making. The kind of kiss that's an answer to a prayer.

It's a long moment before they break apart.

MAYA

Ugh!
Why do we have to hang out with my stupid parents tonight?
Let's just go.
We can drive out to the ocean.

ELLIOT

They're gonna think I kidnapped you.

MAYA

Fine.
Anything to not have to go in there.

ELLIOT

What about Marcus?
Don't you wanna talk to him?

MAYA

He's not even calling till late.
And anyway, of all people, he'd understand.
So come on, what do you say?

Elliot thinks about it. Shakes his head.

ELLIOT

I promised your parents.

MAYA

Oh my God, you are such a boy scout, you know that?

What do you even think they're doing in there?
You think they're, you know...?

She makes a lewd gesture.

ELLIOT

Ew, excuse me, but I try not to think about that.

MAYA

Oh really?
I do.
Well, not sex.
But I do wonder if they're still in love, you know?
I mean, they've been together for almost thirty years.

MAYA (CONT'D)

That seems like an awful long time to feel that way about anyone.

Do you ever think about that with your parents?

ELLIOT

I don't know.
They don't really talk about it.
Being in love, I mean.

MAYA

You think mine do?

ELLIOT

All I know is that they met in high school.
They were in the same math class or something.

MAYA

Isn't your dad older than your mom?

ELLIOT

Yeah, but she was always good at school
And he wasn't, so there you go.
He told me they used to call her periscope arm cause she used to
raise her hand so much in class.
Everyone always though she was gonna get out of here and go to
college after she graduated.

MAYA

So why didn't she?

ELLIOT

Cause it was the seventies.
And her family was poor.
And it was more important to them that she get married and start
a family than do anything else.

MAYA

Damn...
I had no idea.

ELLIOT

Why would you?
She doesn't exactly talk about it.

MAYA

Still...

ELLIOT

All I know is that whatever happened when my parents were young,
they're still together now.
And that's gotta count for something, right?

MAYA

Yeah, I think so.

BOTH

(...)

MAYA

Alright, well if you're not gonna whisk me away on some romantic
getaway, then I guess we might as well go inside.
Let me just grab the mail--see if grandma sent me anything.

*She crosses to the mailbox and opens it
up. There's one parcel in particular that
grabs her attention. She rips it open and
reads the contents. Then she gets very
quiet.*

ELLIOT

Everything alright?

MAYA
It's from Brown.

ELLIOT
Brown?
Holy shit!
What does it say?

MAYA
(Not happy)
It, uh...it says I got in.

ELLIOT
What?
But that's amazing!

MAYA
Yeah.
I really wanted to go there.

ELLIOT
Then what's the matter?

Maya?

MAYA
Why are you so stupid sometimes?

ELLIOT
It's just a couple of years.

MAYA
On the other side of the country.

ELLIOT
Well, I'll come out and visit.

MAYA
Oh yeah, cause you're making so much money at the plumbing company.

ELLIOT
I can save.

MAYA
So that I see you for, like, a week?

ELLIOT
Then maybe I'll go with you.
We can get a little place together.

MAYA

What the hell are you supposed to do in Providence?

ELLIOT

I'm sure I can get a job.
Or I'll take some classes at the community college.

MAYA

Maybe I just won't go.

ELLIOT

What?
No.
You have to go.

MAYA

You're kidding, right?
You, of all people, are telling me I have to go?

ELLIOT

It's different for you.

MAYA

What's that supposed to mean?

ELLIOT

My mom got stuck here.
I got stuck here.
But you don't have to be.

MAYA

You didn't get stuck here.
You chose this.

ELLIOT

(...)

MAYA

Didn't you?

ELLIOT

Look, it's not that I didn't wanna go to school last year.
I would've loved to have gone.

MAYA

Then what was all that shit in your speech about?

ELLIOT

It's complicated, okay?

MAYA

Oh, okay.
 Let's just not talk about it.
 Let's be my fucking parents and every time something even
 remotely real comes up, let's just pretend it didn't happen.

*She turns away from him and starts inside--
 disgusted.*

ELLIOT

My parents were gonna take out a second mortgage on their house.

MAYA

What?

ELLIOT

Last year.
 To pay for school.

That house is the only thing they have in the world.
 They don't have savings.
 They don't have retirement.
 And they were gonna gamble with it.
 For me.

I couldn't just sit there and let that happen.
 I mean, what if they lost it?

MAYA

They wouldn't have lost it.

ELLIOT

My parents aren't like yours, Maya.

MAYA

What is that supposed to mean?

ELLIOT

Look at your life!
 Your dad goes golfing.
 Your mom doesn't have to work.
 You guys have, like, three cars.

MAYA

Maybe when I was little.
 But you haven't heard the way they talk about money now.
 It's different.

ELLIOT

How different can it be?
 They still hire my mom.

MAYA

We're not rich.

ELLIOT

And that's the point!
If you're not rich, what does that make somebody like me?
Because I don't see your parents taking out a second mortgage to
send you off to school.

Look, I'm sorry to be so blunt.
But that's just the way it is.
Which is why I think you should go.

MAYA

Elliot...

ELLIOT

If you're worried about me, don't.
I'll wait for you.
As long as you want me to.

MAYA

It's not that.

ELLIOT

Then what is it?

MAYA

I wanted to go to Brown.
I really did.
But then, things changed.
And maybe now what I wanna say is: "Fuck that place."

ELLIOT

You don't mean that.

MAYA

I absolutely do.
Because maybe what I really want, what I've always wanted, is to
live a life that I can be proud of.
And maybe I don't need a place like Brown to live that kind of
life.
Maybe I have everything I need right here.

ELLIOT

What are you saying?

MAYA

I'm saying, Elliot Gonzalez, that if you'll have me, I wanna
marry you.

What? ELLIOT

You heard me. MAYA

Are you serious? ELLIOT

Of course I'm serious. MAYA

But.../ ELLIOT

/I love you, Elliot Gonzalez, and I wanna marry you. MAYA

But weren't you listening to me? ELLIOT
I don't have anything.
And neither does my family.

Do you really think I care about that? MAYA

No, I just.../ ELLIOT

/You have you.
That's all I need. MAYA

(...) ELLIOT

So? MAYA
What do you say?

(...) ELLIOT

I mean, you don't have/ MAYA

/I say, yes. ELLIOT

Yes? MAYA

Yes.

ELLIOT

She screams in delight, jumping on him as the two spin around like they have their whole lives ahead of them.

MAYA

I don't wanna leave.
And I don't wanna live a life without you in it.

ELLIOT

I feel the same way.

MAYA

(Smacking him)
Way to scare the shit out of me, though!

ELLIOT

What?
I was caught off guard!

She kisses him suddenly. A deep, long kiss. Full of hope and happiness

MAYA

So when should we do it?

ELLIOT

I don't know.
I mean, when do YOU wanna do it?

MAYA

How about now?

ELLIOT

Now?

MAYA

The Courthouse is still open, isn't it?

ELLIOT

Sure, but/

MAYA

/Then let's do it now.
Before anyone can try and stop us.

ELLIOT

I just have to check one last time.
Are you sure you wanna do this?

MAYA

Yes, you dummy!
I've never wanted anything else so bad in my whole life!

She kisses him again. Grabs his hand.

Now come on!
We gotta go now if we're gonna go.

Playwright enters, wearing a full dress uniform and assuming the roll of "Marine," just as the two kids barrel into them.

Oh my God, I'm so sorry!

PLAYWRIGHT

(Getting back up)
No, no, that's alright.
It was an accident.

MAYA

You alright?
You look lost.

PLAYWRIGHT

Is it that obvious?

MAYA

No, it's just BFE out here.
So if you're here, you MUST be lost.

PLAYWRIGHT

BFE?

MAYA

Butt-fuck-Egypt.

PLAYWRIGHT

(Laughing)
I'll remember that.

ELLIOT

Where are you trying to get?

PLAYWRIGHT

Oh, um...

Playwright fishes a piece of paper out of their pocket and hands it to Elliot.

You know, I don't think I'd call this place uh...what did you call it?

MAYA

BFE?

PLAYWRIGHT

Yeah.
This place isn't BFE.
You ever been to Mojave?

MAYA

That where you're from?

PLAYWRIGHT

Born and raised.
And let me tell you, THAT place is BFE.
When I was your age, I couldn't wait to get out.
But this place?
This place is nice.
It feels good.

MAYA

Well, you know how it is when you grow up someplace.
It never looks as nice to you as it does to other people.

PLAYWRIGHT

I don't know if Mojave would ever look nice to anyone.

I still miss it sometimes, though.

MAYA

Oh really?

PLAYWRIGHT

Well, sure.
It's home.
Everyone needs a place to call home.
Even it's just in your memories.

ELLIOT

Why are you looking for this address?

PLAYWRIGHT

Part of my job

MAYA

Are you a Marine?

PLAYWRIGHT

Sure am.
How could you tell?

MAYA

My brother has a uniform like yours.
He's somewhere in Afghanistan right now.

PLAYWRIGHT

Oh really?
What part?

MAYA

I don't know.
I can never remember.
But I'll ask him tonight.
He's supposed to call.
For my birthday.

PLAYWRIGHT

Happy birthday.

MAYA

Thank you.

PLAYWRIGHT

How old are you?

MAYA

Eighteen.

PLAYWRIGHT

Big year.

MAYA

Big enough, I think.

Now, if you'll excuse us...

PLAYWRIGHT

Of course.

*Playwright steps out of the way to let
them pass, and while Maya makes to leave,
Elliot doesn't.*

MAYA

Hey!
You coming?

ELLIOT

I think you should go get your parents.

What?
Why?

MAYA

Elliot shows her the piece of paper.

(To Playwright)
Why are you looking for this address?

PLAYWRIGHT

(To Maya)
Is it yours?

She nods.

Oh, well...
Is your family here?

MAYA

Inside.

PLAYWRIGHT

Then maybe we oughtta go inside.
That way we can sit down.

Maya looks to Elliot.

ELLIOT

It's okay.
I'll be right here.

She nods. Turns to Playwright.

MAYA

Um...right this way.

Maya leads Playwright towards the Miller house.

ELLIOT

Hey!
I love you.

*But all Maya can do is nod in response.
Then, she and Playwright are gone.*

Elliot is alone.

He looks to the Miller house. He looks to his own. And before he can stop himself, he walks up to his silent front door and knocks.

*When no one answers, he knocks again.
Louder.*

BENNY

(Offstage)
Just a minute!

*Elliot braces himself as the door opens to
reveal his father.*

*For a moment, all the two of them can do
is stare at one another.*

BENNY

What do you/

*But before Benny can get anything else
out, Elliot hugs him.*

*At first, Benny is stiff. Confused. But,
eventually, he softens.*

ELLIOT

I'm so sorry, dad.
I'm just so, so sorry.

*So Benny does the only thing he can, he
hugs his son back.*

BENNY

It's alright.
Everything's gonna be alright.

*The two of them hold each other as the
lights fade to black.*

End of Act II

Act III

PLAYWRIGHT

People ask me all the time why I'm writing this play.
And if I had to say it simply, I would say it's because of my
parents.

My mother is from Mexico.

And my father is a good ol boy from Oklahoma.

Growing up, I had no idea who I was.

I was too white to be Mexican.

And too brown to be white.

And living in the hyphen of my identity, I have searched an
entire life time for a place that reflected the reality of my
existence.

So what a surprise it was when Fillmore found me.

It's 2009 now.

It's been almost four years since Marcus Miller died on a windy
pass in the mountains surrounding the Kerengal Valley,
Afghanistan.

Since then, the sun has gone up and come down too many times to
count.

Babies were born.

Weddings were had.

Presidents brought the country hope.

And banks brought financial crisis.

Parents lost their jobs.

Grandparents were, themselves, lost.

And in Fillmore, the coffee shop on Main went out of business.

Along with the diner.

And the gym.

Across town, the *Gazette* has moved from daily printing to weekly.

And though the Best Western hasn't closed yet, people are
starting to whisper.

On the personal side of things, the Millers are moving away.

People think the shadow of Marcus Miller's death is the reason.

They think these old houses have a way of trapping grief inside
themselves like the pearl of an oyster.

And in a way, they're right.

But that isn't why they're leaving.

And it doesn't change the fact that, by the end of today, this
cul-de-sac will change forever.

But that's getting ahead of myself.

Today is the first day of summer.

And today, Maya Miller has come home.

*Chuy enters carrying a brown paper bag
just like in Act I. And just like he did
in Act I, he crosses to the Gonzalez house
and sits on the porch.*

After a moment, Elliot exits the house in coveralls like his father before him.

ELLIOT

Grandpa?
What're you doing here?

CHUY

Relax.
I ain't gonna stir nothin up with your dad.
I'm just takin a little rest.
Been a long walk from the bus stop.

ELLIOT

You, uh...you need some money or something?

CHUY

I don't always need money.

ELLIOT

It's no problem if you do, really.

CHUY

Well, I don't.
And even if I did, what makes you think I'd ask you for it?

ELLIOT

Okay, but if you don't need money, then why are you here?

CHUY

I came by to see Hank.

ELLIOT

Mr. Miller?
What for?

CHUY

Cause he asked me to.

ELLIOT

Why?

CHUY

Cause maybe he likes my company.
What kinda question is that to ask your grandpa?

ELLIOT

I just...I didn't know the two of you were friends.

CHUY

We get coffee all the time.

ELLIOT

Really?

CHUY

Why is that so surprising?

ELLIOT

I don't know.
You never come around to see him.

CHUY

Cause your pops wants to beat the shit outta me for convincing you to throw your future away.
Or did you forget?

ELLIOT

I told him it wasn't your fault when I moved back in.
But you know how he is.

CHUY

He just needs someone to blame.

ELLIOT

If he needs someone to blame, he should've blamed me.
This was my choice.

CHUY

But that's not how these things work.
No matter what, it's always gonna be easier for him to blame me.

ELLIOT

Why?

CHUY

Cause I wasn't the one who raised you.

ELLIOT

He wasn't the one who raised me either.
Mom was.

CHUY

Even worse then.

Look, I ain't sayin it's right.
But I also ain't sayin I'm upset about it.
The way I see it, if he's gotta blame someone, then why not me?

ELLIOT

But.../

CHUY

/It's okay, Eli, really.
If I'm honest, I don't even think about it much no more.
And today, the only thing I got on my mind is drinking this
coffee and shootin the shit with Hank.

*He removes a bottled Starbucks from the
bag to illustrate.*

ELLIOT

You like Starbucks now?

CHUY

Me?
Hell no.
Give me a pot of your mom's coffee over this crap any day.
But you know how white people are.
They go crazy for this shit.

Ah, what can you do?
It's Hank's last week in the neighborhood.
The least I can do is buy the guy the coffee he likes.

ELLIOT

I still can't believe the Millers are really leaving.

CHUY

Things change.
Better get used to it.

On the plus side, I heard Maya was comin home to help with the
packing.

ELLIOT

Yeah.
She got in last night.

CHUY

Oh really?

ELLIOT

What?

CHUY

Nothin.
I just thought I was bringing you news, and here I am tellin you
what you already know.

ELLIOT

I only know cause I happened to see her pull up while I was in the kitchen.

CHUY

Whatever you say.

ELLIOT

Shut up, old man.

CHUY

Are the two of you still a...you know...?

ELLIOT

(...)

CHUY

Guess I'll take that as a no.

ELLIOT

It's not a big deal.

CHUY

Sure.

ELLIOT

I mean, we were just a couple of stupid high school kids.

CHUY

Right.

ELLIOT

And it all happened years ago, so why worry about it?

CHUY

Of course.

ELLIOT

Can you stop doing that?

CHUY

Doing what?

ELLIOT

Agreeing with me.

CHUY

What, you want me to disagree with you?

ELLIOT

I'd just like to be done with this conversation, please.

CHUY
Whatever you say.

ELLIOT
Thank you.

CHUY
But if you ever want some advice/
/Grandpa, shut it.

ELLIOT
/Grandpa, shut it.

CHUY
Okay, okay.
Geez!

ELLIOT
Look, will you just say hello to everyone for me?

CHUY
Where're you goin?
You on call?

ELLIOT
No.

CHUY
Then why're you dressed for work?

ELLIOT
Cause I gotta clean my work truck.

CHUY
On a Saturday?

ELLIOT
What's wrong with that?

CHUY
Nothin.

ELLIOT
So why are you lookin at me like that?

CHUY
I just did that job for thirty something years and I ain't never
seen a person go in on a Saturday to/

ELLIOT
/I'm not avoiding anything if that's what you're getting at.

CHUY

Who said anything about that?
I was talkin about work.
And anyway, what would a man like you gotta avoid?

ELLIOT

Are you done?

CHUY

(Laughing)
Relax, lover boy.
I'm only pullin your leg.
Just, uh...don't spend all day cleaning.
Cause something tells me Maya Miller's gonna need all the friends
she can get right now.

ELLIOT

Why do you say that?

Grandpa?

CHUY

Ah shit, I shouldn't tell you this, but...can you keep a secret?

ELLIOT

What is it?

Chuy motions for Elliot to come near.

CHUY

(Quietly)
The Millers ain't movin cause they want to.

ELLIOT

What do you mean?

Chuy grabs Elliot. Pulls him close. Checks around to make sure that nobody is listening.

CHUY

The Millers are movin cause they're losin their house.

Elliot stiffens. Looks at Chuy in disbelief.

But before he can say anything else, Hank enters from the Miller house with boxes in his arms and a smile on his face.

HANK

Hiya, Eli!

Chuy?

What're you doing here?

CHUY

(Holding the bag of coffee up)
Did you forget?

HANK

Was that today?

Shoot.

Um, let me...let me just put these boxes down.
We're trying to clean out the attic before lunch.

CHUY

I ain't got nowhere to be.

ELLIOT

You want some help, Mr. Miller?

HANK

Oh, no.

That's very kind of you Eli, but if Willow sees me takin a break,
I'm sure to hear about it.
She thinks I'm getting fat.

CHUY

Just tell her it's more cushion for the pushin.

HANK

Maybe I should tell her it's all your fault.
Getting coffee and doughnuts with you every week is half the
reason I'm in this mess.

MAYA

(Entering)
Dad, mom says she needs...

When she sees Elliot, she stops dead.

Elliot!

ELLIOT

Hey.

I, uh...I didn't know you were back.

MAYA

I got in last night.
But I'm here all week.

ELLIOT

That's great.
We should, uh...catch up some time.

MAYA

Well, what're you doing today?

ELLIOT

I gotta work.

MAYA

On a Saturday?

ELLIOT

Just cleaning my work truck.
The guys all do it every Saturday.

MAYA

Oh...well, in that case, I wouldn't wanna keep you...

ELLIOT

I'll be back sometime this afternoon, though.
If you still, uh...I mean, if you're not too busy.

MAYA

Yeah, no.
I'll be here.
That sounds great.

ELLIOT

Great.

MAYA

Great.

BOTH

(...)

CHUY

I'll be here too, you know.

HANK

What was it your mom needed?

MAYA

Um...something about what boxes are supposed to go into storage.
I don't know, she's in Marcus's room.

HANK

Can't she figure it out herself?
I'm pretty sure I labeled everything.

MAYA

I don't know.
It's mom.

HANK

Well, let me just put these down.

ELLIOT

I can get those for you.
Where do you want em?
The garage?

HANK

Sure.
Thanks.

*Elliot takes the boxes from Hank and turns
to exit toward the Miller garage.*

MAYA

(To Elliot, as he goes)
Don't forget.
Later this afternoon.

ELLIOT

Sure thing.
I'll head right over when I get back.

MAYA

You promise?

ELLIOT

Promise.

And Elliot is gone.

MAYA

(To Hank)
I'll go tell mom, you'll be right in.

She runs back into the house.

HANK

Well that was...something.

CHUY

What're are you talkin about?
That all seemed perfectly normal to me.

HANK

Listen, I don't think I can do coffee today.
There's a lot going on around here.
You understand, right?

CHUY

You doin alright?

HANK

What do you mean?

CHUY

Well how'd last night go?

HANK

Fine.
Just a normal night.

What?

CHUY

Nothin.
But if I was in your shoes, I think I'd be drowning right about
now.

HANK

I'm okay, honest.

Alright, look, I had one glass of wine with dinner last night,
but that's all.
I just didn't want Maya to worry.

CHUY

(...)

HANK

Okay, fine.
It was more than one glass.
But I have it under control.
This is just...it's gonna be a long week, and maybe I needed a
little help last night.

CHUY

You want me to come back tomorrow?
I don't mind.
Hell, I can come over every day this week.

HANK

No, I don't need that.

CHUY

You telling me you ain't gonna be tempted when that house is empty and your whole life is nothing but box filler?

HANK

Maya's here.
I can keep it together as long as she's here.

CHUY

I think I'm gonna come back tomorrow.

HANK

Don't you got other stuff going on?

CHUY

What's an old man like me got goin on?

HANK

Chuy, thank you, but I don't need your help.

CHUY

That don't mean I ain't still gonna give it.

HANK

Look, I don't want Maya finding out about this.
Not with all the other stuff that's going on.

CHUY

It's gonna be a lot worse for her if she has to watch you fall apart.

I'm just sayin: you don't gotta go through this alone.
You SHOULDN'T go through this alone.

Hank thinks about that. Nods.

HANK

Thank you.
You're a good friend.

CHUY

Don't worry about it.
You just make sure to keep trying.
And put last night behind you.
The clock starts over today.

And brush your teeth a little, huh?
I can still smell some vodka on your breath.
Even from over here.

Hank stiffens. Swallows a protest. Nods again. Then turns and goes back inside.

Chuy watches him go. Takes a breath. Gets up to leave.

BENNY

(Offstage)

I thought I told you not to come round here no more.

CHUY

No.

What you told me was you were gonna beat the shit outta me if I ever came back.

In front of everyone.

Like a dog.

BENNY

(Entering)

Just get outta here.

Before you make a fool of yourself.

CHUY

Relax.

I was about to leave.

BENNY

(Entering)

Yeah, well you come by here again, I won't even tell you to go. I'm just gonna call the cops.

CHUY

What?

BENNY

You heard me.

CHUY

(...)

BENNY

What's the matter?

I thought you were leaving?

CHUY

You wouldn't really call the cops on me, would you?

BENNY

I don't know what else to do with you, pops.

I tried reasoning with you.

CHUY

Is that what you call this?

BENNY

Far as I'm concerned, you did this to yourself.

CHUY

What kinda thing is that to say to your father?

BENNY

Don't try make me feel sorry for you.
It's pathetic.

CHUY

(...)

BENNY

What?

CHUY

I never meant to hurt you.
And if I did something/

BENNY

/Don't try that AA shit with me, okay?
It might work on Eli, but I know you better.

CHUY

I'm not tryin nothin.
I'm just talkin to you.

BENNY

Why're you even here?
What, you already drink through your social security check this month?

CHUY

I came here to see Hank.

BENNY

Bullshit.

CHUY

You don't believe me?
Ask him.

BENNY

Hank's got his own troubles to deal with right now.
He don't need your problems too, you old drunk.

CHUY

I ain't like that no more.

BENNY

Of course you are.
It's all you'll ever be.
Nothin but a useless old drunk.

ELLIOT

(Entering)
Dad, what are you doing?

BENNY

Eli, stay outta this.
It don't concern you.

ELLIOT

He wasn't trying to start anything.
He was just here to see Hank.

CHUY

Told you.

BENNY

(...)

ELLIOT

Grandpa, maybe you should go.
I'll give you a ride.

CHUY

I was tryin to go.
But then your dad said he was gonna call the cops on me.

ELLIOT

What?

BENNY

I gave him a chance to leave.
And he knew what would happen if he came back.
So I think I'm bein pretty reasonable.

CHUY

If your mother was still here/

BENNY

(Suddenly furious)
/Don't you fucking bring mom into this.
After all you put her through, you think you got the right/

CHUY

/Seein you act like this would break her heart!

BENNY

What broke her heart was you, you stupid old/

ELLIOT

(stepping between them)
/Dad, chill.

Benny stops. Looks at his son. Looks at his father.

BENNY

Fuck this.
I'm callin the cops.

He makes a bee-line to the house, where Della is waiting for him in the door way.

Outta the way.

DELLA

What're you doin?

BENNY

He wants to push me?
He wants to see how far I'll go?
Fine.
We'll see how his drunk as likes wakin up in jail.

DELLA

No.

BENNY

What?

DELLA

You're upset.

BENNY

Yeah, and?

DELLA

You don't really wanna do this.

BENNY

Like hell I don't.
Now, move.

DELLA

No.

BENNY

Della. Move.

DELLA

And then what?
You're gonna go in there and your gonna call the cops?
Cause your father was sitting on our porch?

BENNY

I told him/

DELLA

/I know what you told him.
But that ain't what this is about.

BENNY

My dad and I got shit that goes back a long time.

DELLA

I know.

BENNY

He's used me my whole life.

DELLA

I know.

BENNY

So why won't you let me pass?

DELLA

Cause I also know you.
And I know what this is really about.
And it don't got nothin to do with your father.

BENNY

What do you mean?

DELLA

This is about Eli.

BENNY

Don't be stupid.

DELLA

You wanna talk stupid?
Then how bout you don't lie to me, okay?
I got eyes.
I seen you stewin all this time.
You think I didn't notice?

Eli. Chose. To stay.
And I'm sorry that makes you mad, but it was his choice and HE
chose it.
Not your dad.

DELLA (CONT'D)

Not anyone else but your son.
 And sooner or later you're gonna have to learn to accept it.
 Cause it's done.
 And we still got lives to live.
 And I can't keep living with this angry Benny.
 I lived with him for five years, and I won't do it no more.
 I'm sorry, but I won't.

BENNY

(...)

DELLA

So you do what you gotta do.
 But you call the cops, and I'll do what I gotta do too.

Benny takes that in. He glances at his son. At his father. At his wife. Then he sighs. The fight going out of him.

BENNY

Can you give us a minute?

ELLIOT

You gonna be okay?

BENNY

I'll be fine.

ELLIOT

I wasn't talking to you.

CHUY

It's okay.
 Just go inside with your mom.

Cautiously, Elliot crosses to the house and enters with is mother.

BENNY

(...)

CHUY

(...)

BENNY

What do you got in the bag?

CHUY

Starbucks.
 You want one?

Benny shrugs. Nods. So Chuy hands him one of the bottles and takes the other one for himself.

BENNY

I, uh...I owe you a/

CHUY

/You don't gotta do this.

BENNY

No, it's alright.
Della's right.
This thing between you and me, it's not/

CHUY

/I know.
And it's alright, honest.
Eli's your son.
You just wanted to protect him.

BENNY

I just...I wanted a better life for him, you know?

CHUY

I know, little Benito.
I know.

It's what we all want.
But you can't control everything.
Sometimes life just is.

BENNY

But what if he doesn't ever do better than me?
What if this life is the only life he's ever gonna have?

CHUY

(...)

BENNY

Pops?

CHUY

I don't know.
But it seems to me he could do a lot worse.

Playwright steps forward.

PLAYWRIGHT

I don't know how to tell you about this.
But I think it's important that you know how Chuy Gonzalez dies.

When my grandfather died, he died in his own bed, surrounded by his children.

Chuy Gonzalez won't be so lucky.

When he dies, it will be alone in his house.

And his son won't find him till later that morning.

But his son will find him.

And when he does, he will sit with him.

And he will cry tears that are just for him.

The day's almost gone now.

And even though he's late, Elliot Gonzalez has not forgotten his promise.

Elliot enters with flowers.

He walks up to the Miller house and knocks.

MAYA

(Offstage)
Just a minute.

The door opens.

Elliot!

I was starting to think you weren't gonna show.

ELLIOT

Yeah, sorry about that.
I got caught up at the store.

MAYA

Are those for me?

ELLIOT

I thought you might like something cheerful.
Well, my grandpa did.
But I agreed with him.
And these reminded me of you, so...

He hands the flowers to her.

MAYA

Thank you.
I don't really have anything to put them in, though.

ELLIOT

God, right.
 Sorry.
 I can, uh...take them back if you want.

MAYA

No, I like them.
 They're sweet.
 Thank you.

ELLIOT

Well, you know, I mean, I thought/

MAYA

/You wanna talk on the porch?

ELLIOT

Sure.

MAYA

I think the last time we were out here together was on my
 birthday.
 Before I went off to school

ELLIOT

I think you're right.

MAYA

Seems like such a long time ago...

Can you believe I actually asked you to marry me on this porch?
 Just like that?
 "Elliot Gonzalez, will you marry me?"
 How crazy is that?

ELLIOT

We were kids.

MAYA

Still...

BOTH

(...)

MAYA

My parents are losing this place, by the way.
 Have lost it already, really.
 Did you know?

Elliot nods.

MAYA

I bet everyone in town knows by now, the way this place is.

ELLIOT

What do you mean?

MAYA

Well, you know...small.

ELLIOT

I don't know about that.

I mean, I only know about your parents cause of my grandpa.

MAYA

Right.

Cause of AA.

Elliot gives her a look.

What, you mean you didn't know?

What am I saying?

Why would you?

It's not like my parents talk about it.

But yeah, turns out my dad's not as perfect as he like to pretend.

ELLIOT

Is everything alright?

MAYA

I don't know if anything's alright with anyone anymore.

But I don't think they're gonna get a divorce or anything if that's what you're asking.

I mean, they're fucked up.

But they still love each other.

ELLIOT

Well, that's good at least.

It's, uh...It's nice to have you back.

Even if it's only for a little while.

MAYA

It's nice to be back.

I never thought I'd actually miss this place, but I did.

ELLIOT

Of course you did.

It's the "Last, Best Small Town."

MAYA

Such a stupid motto.

ELLIOT

I don't know.
I kinda like it.

MAYA

Well of course you do.
You're a boy scout.
You like anything lame.

ELLIOT

So what does that say about you, huh?

MAYA

(Smiling)
Shut up.

You mind if I ask you something?
I've been thinking about it a while now and I can't get it outta
my head.

ELLIOT

Uh, sure.
What's up?

MAYA

Keep in mind, you don't have to answer if you don't want to.
But if you feel like it/

ELLIOT

/What is it?

MAYA

If you had left this place, back when you were younger, do you
think you ever would of come back?

ELLIOT

(...)

MAYA

Sorry.
That's kind of a fucked up thing to ask, isn't it?

ELLIOT

No, I just...it doesn't really matter now, does it?

MAYA

It could if you still wanted to leave.

ELLIOT

Sure.

MAYA

But do you think it was the right thing/

ELLIOT

/Can we not?

MAYA

Oh...sure.
Of course.

Listen, I, um...I know I've been beating around the bush, but the truth is: I wanted to talk to you cause I feel like I owe you an apology.

ELLIOT

No, Maya, you don't have to/

MAYA

/But I want to.
It's important.
I just...I want you to know that leaving here had nothing to do with you.
After Marcus died...

ELLIOT

It's okay.

MAYA

No, it's not.
I left.
And I'm not sorry I did.
But I owed it to you to try and explain why I had to go.
Or at least to say goodbye.
But when it came right down to it, I couldn't.
And so...I didn't.
And I'm sorry for that, because you deserved better.
You were one of the best things that had ever happened to me, and I threw you away.

ELLIOT

(...)

MAYA

Um, you don't to say anything to that if you don't want to.
I just/

Elliot kisses her. At first, she's taken aback. Then she's in to it. And then, finally, she pulls herself away.

ELLIOT

I'm sorry.

MAYA

No, it's okay.
I didn't hate it, I just...What are you doing?

ELLIOT

Look, I know it's stupid to say, but I've missed you.

MAYA

I've missed you too, but...

ELLIOT

What?

MAYA

Elliot, think about it.
We live different lives now.
You stayed here, and I left.
And now, I...look, I'm just not someone you wanna be with right now, okay?

ELLIOT

What do you mean?

MAYA

I didn't leave here and have some fantastic life.
I left and I still had so much shit to deal with.
I was lonely.
And depressed.
And now that I've graduated, I don't even know what I'm gonna do next.
I mean, it's not like I have some great job lined up.
All I got is, like, a hundred thousand dollars in student loans and no clue in hell about how I'm gonna pay em all off.

ELLIOT

If money's the issue, I got money.

MAYA

Elliot, stop.
No.

ELLIOT

What?
I do.

MAYA

Well, I don't want your money.

ELLIOT

Why not?

MAYA

Cause it isn't appropriate.

ELLIOT

So?

MAYA

So I don't feel comfortable with you offering it.

ELLIOT

What's to feel uncomfortable about?
You asked me to marry you not very long ago.

MAYA

Yeah, and then I ran away.

Look, I'd be lying if I said that coming back here didn't stir up some old feelings for me.
And that seeing you wasn't...confusing.
But we were together years ago.
Things are different now.

ELLIOT

Says who?

MAYA

Says everything!
I mean, look at this town.
When my mom and I drove in last night, I hardly recognized the place.
Everywhere I look is a testament to just how much things have changed.

ELLIOT

But you said it yourself, seeing me/

MAYA

/I don't even know what these feelings are.
All I know is that this chapter in my life was supposed to be closed.
I was supposed to be moving on to bigger, better things.

ELLIOT

Then why are we still having this conversation?

MAYA

I told you.
Because I wanted to apologize.

ELLIOT

And now that you have?

MAYA

(...)

ELLIOT

Things have changed for me too.
 But you know what hasn't changed?
 When I see you, I...
 Look, I don't know if choosing to stay here, instead of going to
 school, was the right decision.
 And I probably never will.
 But I do know that letting you walk out of my life was the
 biggest mistake I've ever made.
 And I'm not asking that we pretend like the last four years
 didn't happen.
 But I know what it's like to wake up to a life without Maya
 Miller in it.
 And it's no life I wanna live.

MAYA

(...)

ELLIOT

Sorry.
 I know that's a lot to dump on you.
 But I just...I felt like you should know.

MAYA

(...)

ELLIOT

I can, uh...let you be with your family if you like...

MAYA

I'm sorry, Elliot.

Elliot gets up, and heads back over to his house.

Playwright enters dressed as a deputy with a clipboard.

PLAYWRIGHT

Some facts:
 From the date of foreclosure, it's usually pretty hard to know
 when you need to be out of your home.
 A lawyer will tell you that the bank can repossess the property
 in a day, five days, a week, or even three.
 All you know is that, as far as the law is concerned, you're
 squatting.
 And if you aren't gone when they come, they'll make sure you
 leave.

*Playwright assumes the role of "Deputy"
and walks up to Maya.*

PLAYWRIGHT

(Referring to the clipboard)
Um, Hank William Miller live here?

MAYA

Who's asking?

PLAYWRIGHT

Does he live here, or not?

MAYA

He lives here.

PLAYWRIGHT

Is he inside?

MAYA

What is this about?

PLAYWRIGHT

Excuse me.

Playwright steps past Maya.

MAYA

Hey!
I asked you a question.

PLAYWRIGHT

Look, if this isn't your business, I suggest you head home.

MAYA

Hank Miller is my father.
And this is my house.

PLAYWRIGHT

Well then do you mind gettin him?
Cause he and I need to have a little conversation.

MAYA

(Suspiciously)
Just give me a second.

She exits into the house.

Meanwhile, Elliot re-enters.

ELLIOT

(As he walks on)
Hey, is everything...?

(To Playwright)
Who are you?

PLAYWRIGHT

Nothing to see here.
Go back inside your home.

ELLIOT

(Calling inside the Miller house)
Maya?

PLAYWRIGHT

(To themselves)
God, why is it always the ones right before I go off shift?

Elliot shoots Playwright a look, but before he can say anything, the door opens to reveal Hank Miller, followed closely by Maya.

HANK

Yes?

PLAYWRIGHT

Hank William Miller?

HANK

This is he.

PLAYWRIGHT

Um...
(Referring to the clipboard)
Hank William Miller, I am here to inform you that you are in violation of your foreclosure agreement.

HANK

What?
No, we worked with the bank.
We weren't supposed to be out till next week.

PLAYWRIGHT

Says here it's today.

HANK

Well, you gotta call someone then.
Cause that's wrong.

PLAYWRIGHT

(Showing Hank the clipboard)
That you?

HANK

Yes, but/

PLAYWRIGHT

/Then I'm sorry, but you gotta go.

HANK

But...

PLAYWRIGHT

Listen, sir, I got a truck full of movers out here.
They can either put your stuff on the truck or the street.
What would you like?

HANK

Can I just call my lawyer?
Real quick, please.
I'm sure this is all a misunderstanding.
Five minutes.
That's all I ask.
Please.

*Playwright thinks about that a moment.
Regards the other three. Then gives out a
sigh.*

PLAYWRIGHT

Okay.
Five minutes.
But no more.

HANK

Thank you.

*Hank steps back into the house as Willow
steps out.*

MAYA

(At a look from her mother)
They say we have to leave.

WILLOW

What?

PLAYWRIGHT

Ma'am, please.
I'm just tryin to do my job.

WILLOW

Which is?

PLAYWRIGHT

Paper says this is a bank owned property;
That the owners were supposed to be out by midnight, last night.

WILLOW

No, that's wrong.
We had until the end of the week.

PLAYWRIGHT

So your husband says.
But look, they just give me the paper and tell me where to go.
I don't ask questions.

WILLOW

We're not even packed yet.

PLAYWRIGHT

I don't ask questions.

WILLOW

So you just come in here and take our things?
What are we supposed to do?
Where are we supposed to go?

PLAYWRIGHT

Like I told your husband, the movers here can put your belongings
in storage where you can claim them at such a time as you see
fit.
Or, if you prefer, they can put it all on the street.

WILLOW

Excuse me?

PLAYWRIGHT

I'm not the one who makes the rules, ma'am.
I just do as I'm told.

WILLOW

Which is putting peoples' things on the street?

PLAYWRIGHT

If they decide that's the way they wanna play it, sure.

Now, if you'll excuse me, no matter what you choose, I'm gonna
have to put this up.
It's the law.

WILLOW

Put what up?
Let me see.

She grabs the piece of paper from Playwright's hand. Reads it. Then looks at Playwright defiantly.

WILLOW

No.
You can't put this up.

PLAYWRIGHT

I'm sorry, but regardless of what you worked out with the bank/

WILLOW

/You cannot put that on my house!

PLAYWRIGHT

With all do respect, ma'am, this house doesn't belong to you anymore.
And whether I like it or not, it's my job to put that public notice up.
So that's exactly what I'm gonna do.

Willow looks like she's about to either punch Playwright, or burst into tears.

MAYA

Mom, it's okay.
What do you need?

WILLOW

I just, um...I just...

She holds her hands out, and Maya crosses to her. Hugs her tight.

Hank re-enters.

PLAYWRIGHT

Well?
What did they say?

HANK

Just a few more days.
That's all I ask.
We don't start our lease till Tuesday.
And in the meantime, we won't have a place to be.

WILLOW

Hank, what did the lawyer say?

HANK

She says if the deputy's here, then we gotta do what they say.

WILLOW

But that's crazy.

HANK

Please, just give us till Tuesday.
It's only two more days.

PLAYWRIGHT

And if I give you two days, what am I supposed to do when the next house asks me for two more days?
And what about the house after that.
Or the one after that?
Y'all aren't the only people losing your homes today.
And I'm sorry about what you're goin through, I really am, but this was your fault, so...what's it gonna be?
The truck?
Or the street?

HANK

(...)

PLAYWRIGHT

Sir?

WILLOW

Just put our things on the truck.
(To Hank)
We'll figure the rest out tomorrow.

(To Playwright)

Can we at least have a few minutes to pack a bag?
Is that permitted?

Playwright nods.

Willow makes her way to the door. Stops at the threshold.

WILLOW

(To Hank)
Well?
You coming?

*Hank looks like he would like to protest.
To do SOMETHing.*

But when Willow holds her hand out to him, he takes it, and follows her in.

Meanwhile, Playwright takes the piece of paper they showed Willow earlier and tapes it beside the Miller front door.

MAYA

(To Playwright)
Can I ask you something?

PLAYWRIGHT

Yeah?

MAYA

Do you ever have to do this kind of thing with people you know?

PLAYWRIGHT

Not yet.

MAYA

Well, I hope you do.
And I hope it hurts.

Playwright takes that in. Nods. Turns to exit.

PLAYWRIGHT

Y'all have a nice day, y'hear?

And Playwright is gone.

Maya walks up to the sign.

MAYA

(Reading)
Bank owned property.
Keep out...

(To Elliot)
You still want me in your life now?

ELLIOT

Let me go talk to my parents.
You should all just come over to our place tonight.

MAYA

Elliot, no.

ELLIOT

This isn't what you think, okay?
It's being a friend.
That's all.

MAYA

But.../

ELLIOT

/Maya, I've known you and your family my entire life.
And this is what you do when someone you've known your entire
life is in trouble.

MAYA

Really?
Cause I don't think my parents would do this for yours.
If things were different.

*Elliot takes that in. Then shakes his
head.*

ELLIOT

Doesn't matter.

MAYA

Of course it matters.

ELLIOT

Just tell your parents to come over.
And in the mean time, we'll start getting things ready for you
all.

He turns to leave.

MAYA

Elliot, wait.

ELLIOT

Yes?

MAYA

Look, I don't know what's coming next for me.
Most of the time I just feel fucking terrified.
And lost.
But I do know one thing.
I don't wanna live a life without you in it either.

He smiles. Nods. Then exits.

Playwright enters as Playwright.

PLAYWRIGHT

It's getting late.
You should probably head back inside.

MAYA

Do you know what's gonna happen to us?
After all this is over?

PLAYWRIGHT

Not entirely
But I have an idea.

MAYA

Well?

PLAYWRIGHT

You want me to tell you?
(Pointing to us)
Or them?

MAYA

I don't care.
I just don't wanna be afraid anymore.

PLAYWRIGHT

Well, I'm sorry, but I don't think I can help you with that.
I have always been afraid.
I don't think that ever goes away.

MAYA

Then at least give me something.
One nice thing to get me through this night, please.

PLAYWRIGHT

Okay.
I think I have one thing.

Playwright crosses to her. Whispers something in her ear. We see her listen, and then we see her smile at what she hears.

MAYA

Really?
You're sure that'll happen?

PLAYWRIGHT

As sure as I am of anything.

MAYA

Thank you.

PLAYWRIGHT

There's more if you wanna hear it.

Maya thinks about it. She glances at us, then at the Gonzalez house, then back at Playwright.

MAYA

You know what?

No.

It's okay.

Maybe a little mystery isn't such a bad thing.

Just um...tell them.

So this isn't the last way they see me.

PLAYWRIGHT

Of course.

Maya exits to the Miller house.

Playwright is alone.

(To us)

What happens to Maya Miller is the same as what happens to Elliot Gonzalez.

And it is the same as what happens to Hank Miller and Willow Miller and Della Gonzalez and Benny Gonzalez.

It's the story of Chuy.

And of me.

And of you.

Because it's the same story that's been written for every baby that has ever been born.

And every baby that ever will be.

What happens next is:

They live.

End of Play