

1180523 12/11/08

The Boiler Room

A Play in Two Acts

by

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(c) Reuben Gonzalez

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The set is a large boiler room which also serves as a living room. The boiler sits upstage with a pile of coal directly to its right. Above stage and directly above the coal there are two metal coal chute doors and throughout the play passersby can be heard walking across the door from the above and offstage sidewalk. The boiler room floor is covered in linoleum and many areas, particularly the areas directly in front of the boiler, are worn and faded. Pipes of various lengths and circumferences protrude from the boiler and disappear into the walls and ceiling around the boiler. Two plastic plants hang from these pipes.

Down stage and almost center stage sits a couch protected by plastic covers. An old wooden coffee table sits in front of the couch with carefully arranged knick-knacks resting on top. Downstage left and against the wall sits a large floor-model color television set with a large glass tiger resting on top. The design of the television is modern and conflicts with the rest of the room. Upstage left there is a door which leads to the offstage bedroom. Upstage right and beside the coal there is an entrance leading to the offstage kitchen and bathroom areas. The front door is located at the center of the left wall.

In spite of the inexpensive quality of the furniture and obvious intrusion of the boiler, this is a room which a fair amount of care has gone into making it warm and comfortable.

ENTER OLGA from bedroom. She is carrying a can of shoe polish, a rag, and a shoe brush. She rests the articles on the floor beside the boiler, ties a handkerchief to her head, and then proceeds to feed the boiler a few shovels full of coal. She then wipes the boiler door of dusts and applies shoe polish to it. She then picks up the brush, and while humming a cheerful Latin theme, brushes off the polish and admires the shine. She then crosses to the dresser and brings out five candles and a book of matches. She places the candles across the top of the boiler and lights them. She then removes the handkerchief from her head, kneels in front of the boiler, makes the sign of the cross, and with her hands still folded in front of her, begins to pray. Her prayer is recited in Spanish, but recited in a rapid manner and neither Spanish or English speaking audiences should be able to fully make out what she's saying. During this scene the stage lights are concentrated on Olga's head, shoulder and hands. The same light also reflects the front of the boiler with its door open and its flame roaring. It is a mystical and religious scene. Her prayer completed, Olga stands and proceeds to blow out the candles one at a time. As each candle goes out, the stage lights broaden and Olga closes the door. She finally gives the boiler one last gentle wipe and returns to humming that same cheerful Latin tune as she exits to the bedroom carrying the shoe polish and other articles.

For a moment the stage is alone as we listen to Olga's humming offstage. The sound of someone attempting to enter the front door is heard and Olga quickly reenters.

OLGA
(cheerful)

Coming...

(Olga approaches the door but someone has opened it from the other side with a key. The door chain won't allow entrance and suddenly the door is forced open, breaking the chain in two. ANTHONY stumbles in and quickly locks the door behind him. His face and hands are dirty and some tools are sticking out of his back pockets.)

ANTHONY

You and that stupid chain! One of these days they're going to grab me right outside that door cause of that stupid chain!

OLGA

What theys?

ANTHONY

Theys, that's all. The kind of theys that put you in jail.

OLGA

(as she exits to the bedroom
carrying the broken door chain)

Stop making up stories.

ANTHONY

(louder so that Olga can hear offstage)

You're going to think it's a nightmare when you have to take a train and two buses to visit me on Riker's Island.

(Anthony opens the front door and drags in a long and heavy cardboard box. He leaves the box in front of the couch and returns to the door. He presses his ear against the door and listens for a moment. He then crosses to the dresser and places his tools in the bottom drawer. Next he returns to the box, squats down beside it, and proceeds to look inside. Olga reenters trying to tie some electrical tape around the broken door chain.)

OLGA

(noticing the box)

Didn't I tell you not to bring those filthy car parts into this house? They're dirty. And with those friends of yours, they're probably stolen too.

ANTHONY

(matter-of-fact, his head in the box as he searches inside)

You know they're stolen.

OLGA

Just get it out of here this minute, Anthony!

(she tries pushing the box but it's too heavy for her)

ANTHONY

I don't know what you're acting all proud and holy for. There's already stolen property in this house.

OLGA

(surprised)

What are you talking about?

ANTHONY

(pointing to the television set)

What do you think that is?

OLGA

You stole that?

ANTHONY

No, I put it on my American Express.

(Olga suddenly rushes to where Anthony is squatting and slaps him hard on the head. The blow causes Anthony to fall backwards to the floor.)

OLGA

I'm your mother, damnit! You watch what you say to me! And get this junk out of my house!

(this time she tries pushing the box with her foot but it's still too heavy for her)

Get it out, I said!

(Anthony has taken the blow lightly and calmly pats his hair back into place as he watches Olga struggling with the box. He then reaches inside the box and hands Olga a small gift-wrapped box. Olga's mood abruptly changes.)

OLGA

...You got me something?

(she quickly starts removing the wrapping paper)

You're such a good boy, Anthony. Are you keeping up with your school work?

(Anthony doesn't answer and anxiously waits for Olga to finish opening the gift. Olga excitedly pulls out a woman's bracelet.)

OLGA

Oh, Anthony... It's beautiful.

ANTHONY

Put it on, Ma.

OLGA

Here, you do it for me.

(Olga hands Anthony the bracelet and Anthony stands and begins to carefully tie the bracelet to Olga's wrist.)

OLGA

It's so nice, Anthony.

(She kisses him on the head. Anthony finishes and steps back to admire Olga.)

OLGA

How many carats is it?

ANTHONY

It's not real gold, Ma.

OLGA

(suddenly disappointed)

Not real?

ANTHONY

It's plated. Fourteen carat.

OLGA

(still disappointed)

Oh...

(Disappointed by Olga's reaction,
Anthony quietly returns to his box.)

ANTHONY

I thought you'd like it.

OLGA

Yeah... I guess it's kinda nice...

ANTHONY

I'll take it back.

(as she holds her arm up in front
of the mirror above the dresser
to model the bracelet)

OLGA

It's nice, Anthony... Nobody can tell it's not real
if we don't tell them, right?

ANTHONY

(still disappointed, his
head in the box)

Right, Ma.

(Olga removes the bracelet and places it in the top dresser drawer. She then returns to the box.)

OLGA

What else you got?

(Anthony pulls out a car alternator and proudly displays it.)

ANTHONY

Look at that. Can't be more than a year old.

OLGA

(not really interested)

That's nice, Anthony.

(She pats him on the head and looks inside the box. Anthony reaches in his pants pocket and hands her a roll of bills.)

ANTHONY

I sold some tires this morning. Forty bucks. Pretty good, hah?

OLGA

You helped somebody with some tires? You're a nice boy, Anthony.

(again she pats him on the head)

ANTHONY

No, Ma. I helped myself to some tires.

(Olga seems not to have heard Anthony's last comment and proceeds to anxiously count the money which seems to be mostly in single dollar bills. Anthony seems to have forgotten the incident with the bracelet and again seems like a little boy awaiting his mother's approval and maybe even another pat on the head. He proudly slaps the side of the box.)

ANTHONY

I'll get rid of these later.

(Olga squints at fear of losing count.)

ANTHONY

Guy only wanted to give me twenty-five but I held out. Guy didn't know who he was dealing with. Suckers were brand new. I don't sell no garbage you know.

(Olga finishes counting the money and stuffs it in her bra.)

ANTHONY

Don't I get a kiss?

(Olga leans over and gives Anthony a small peck at the top of the head, at the same time she takes another glance inside the box.)

OLGA

You have to get that junk out of here. Olivia is coming home.

ANTHONY

(surprised)

I thought she was supposed to be in Europe or something.

(he throws his head to the air as he pronounces Europe)

OLGA

They just got back. She wants to see the apartment.

ANTHONY

What apartment?

OLGA

(matter-of-fact)

Mrs. Downing in 4E is dead.

ANTHONY

Olivia wants to live here?

(MORE)

ANTHONY (cont'd)

(he laughs)

What happened to her rich lawyer husband that she's so ashamed of bringing here to visit? What happen, he make a bad investment something?

OLGA

For your information, wise-guy, Olivia said this building is going co-op.

ANTHONY

(laughing)

This dump? What are you, crazy?

OLGA

Oh, you don't know nothing, Anthony. You're just a stupid kid. Haven't you seen what they did to A-hundred-and-fifth?

ANTHONY

I don't care what they did to A-hundred-and-fifth. All they're going to do to this place is put two bombs down here and two on the roof and blow it up so they can collect on the insurance. And when that day comes, I think we should go out and celebrate.

OLGA

What about that co-op they just put up on A-hundred-and-third? Hah, wise-guy? What about that?

ANTHONY

That ain't no co-op, Ma. That's an old age home.

OLGA

...Are you sure? Olivia said...

ANTHONY

(interrupting)

Olivia is full of shit. And what are you making such a big deal over her for, hah? She wasn't

(MORE)

ANTHONY(cont'd)

here when we needed her so why are you making such a big deal over her now? Why don't you make a big deal over me for a change? It was me who helped you, Ma. It was me.

OLGA

She wasn't here cause she was traveling. But you better believe that if she was here she would have taken care of everything just fine cause she's my daughter and she cares about me. And it'll be nice having somebody around here that cares about me for a change.

ANTHONY

She would of called the cops is what she would of done and right now you'd be on Riker's Island eating baloney and tea.

(Olga turns to the boiler and makes the sign of the cross.)

ANTHONY

Oh, Jesus Christ, Ma! Don't start that shit up again! You're driving me crazy with this praying shit all the time!

OLGA

I don't want you bringing it up anymore, Anthony. I don't want you talking about it ever again.

ANTHONY

...I'm sorry.

OLGA

There are places for little things like you, you know. All I have to do is make one call over there

(she point to the phone)

and you'll be gone just like that.

(she snaps her fingers)

ANTHONY

How you expect me to forget it when every time I turn around you're over there praying to that stupid boiler?

OLGA

I could force you to forget it, that's how. In Puerto Rico when we wanted the pigs to stop digging up the ground with their noses we'd hit them on the head with a broom until they stopped. I'm almost certain the same thing would work on you.

ANTHONY

I said I was sorry.

OLGA

Have you ever heard of Warwick? The Warwick School For Mentally Disturbed Little Monsters just like you? Riker's Island is a country club compared to Warwick. That's where I'm going to put you. I talked to Dona Rosario the other day and already the color is coming back to her cheeks, ever since she had that little monster of hers....what's his name?

ANTHONY

Tommy.

OLGA

That's right, Tommy. She looks a hundred times better ever since she had him put away.

ANTHONY

Maybe now that Olivia is coming back with her rich lawyer husband you don't need me anymore.

OLGA

And since when did I ever need you for anything? Hah? Answer me that. Can you take me dancing?

(MORE)

OLGA(cont'd)

Can you take me out for a drink? I'd look ridiculous is what I'd look if I ever went dancing with a little twerp like you.

ANTHONY

You're not fooling nobody, you know. I know what you're up to, Ma. You just want to give Olivia that apartment upstairs and then move right in with them, don't you? That's why you're making such a big deal, isn't it?

OLGA

I knew you'd spoil it for me. I just knew it. Ever since Miguel brought me down here all I ever wanted was to move upstairs like normal human beings and now you're going to spoil it for me, aren't you?

ANTHONY

What do you think, that Olivia's husband is going to want to wake up every morning and see your face asleep on the couch?

OLGA

See. See what I mean? You're just a stupid kid. You don't know nothing. That apartment is in the E line. Every apartment in the E line has two bedrooms. One for Olivia and her husband and one for me.

ANTHONY

And what about me?

(Olga doesn't answer.)

ANTHONY

What about me, Ma?...What's going to happen to me?

OLGA

I knew you'd spoil it for me. I just knew it.

ANTHONY

We don't need her to move upstairs, Ma.
You and me can move upstairs together.

OLGA

What's the matter with you? Are you stupid today or something? You know we don't pay rent down here. What do you think, the landlord is going to give a us an apartment upstairs for free?

ANTHONY

They promised us a free apartment when we moved here.

OLGA

Oh, forget about that, Anthony. That was ten years ago and it wasn't even the same owner then. And how you know about that, anyway?

ANTHONY

Poppi told me. He told me he was sorry that I had to live down here but that they had promised him an oil boiler and a free apartment upstairs but that they never gave it to him and that now they were forcing him to live under their feet.

OLGA

Nobody ever made Miguel do nothing. And you're just like him, stubborn. Maybe if he wasn't so stubborn things could have turned out better than they did.

ANTHONY

Things are going to get worse is what's going to happen.

(he coughs)

You hear that? I'm beginning to sound just like him.

OLGA

Stop that!!!

ANTHONY

(again making himself cough)

That's not supposed to be like that, you know.
It's supposed to be clear.

(continues to cough)

OLGA

(covering her ears)

Stop that!!! Stop it!!!

(she angrily kicks Anthony's box)

And get this junk out of here! Get it out, I said!!

ANTHONY

This stuff ain't junk, all right?! If this is junk,
then you're junk cause this is what feeds you.

(Olga takes a swing at Anthony but Anthony
catches her hand and holds her arm up in
the air.)

OLGA

Go ahead. Hit me. I know you want to.

(Anthony continues to hold her arm in
the air.)

OLGA

Go ahead, you lousy no-good bum. How can
you even think of hitting your own mother?

(Olga suddenly slaps Anthony across the
face with her free hand and breaks away
from him.)

OLGA

You're no son of mine.

(Anthony stands to the side with tears
running down his face. He checks his
mouth for blood.)

OLGA

What did I ever do to deserve a son like you.

(she angrily passes a hand over
the plastic covers on the couch)

And this filthy coal dust!! Look at it! It's getting
worse. I can't control it anymore!

(Olga angrily grabs a rag from the dresser and
begins to frantically wipe down the couch. She
then moves to the television and then to the
floor directly in front of the boiler.)

OLGA

(on hands and knees)

Look at it! Look at it!

(Olga continues to frantically wipe at the floor
until she finally exits into the kitchen still on
hands and knees. Anthony wipes the tears
from his eyes and collects the scattered car
parts and places them back inside his box.
He drags the box to the front door and then
crosses to the dresser. He opens the top
dresser drawer and pulls out the bracelet he
had given to Olga. He stands for a moment
rubbing the bracelet between his fingers
while looking off towards the kitchen area.
He finally throws the bracelet back into the
drawer, slams the drawer shut and removes
his tools from the bottom drawer. He then
exits through the front door dragging his
box. For a brief moment we view an empty
stage with a separate light on the boiler.
LIGHTS FADE.)

Scene Two

(We view an empty stage for a moment. There's a light knock at the door. No one answers. Another knock. Again no one answers and OLIVIA ENTERS followed by DOUG who is carrying a large gift-wrapped package with a ribbon around the top.)

OLIVIA

Ma... Ma, it's me.

(Doug is taken aback by the boiler. He looks from the boiler, to the pipes above his head, and then back to the boiler.)

DOUG

This is a boiler room.

OLIVIA

(a bit sarcastic)

That's very good, Doug.

(she sticks her head into the kitchen)

Ma...

DOUG

I thought you meant a basement apartment.

(he looks around again)

This is really a boiler room.

OLGA

(offstage from bedroom)

Olivia? Is that you?

OLIVIA

It's me, Ma. Doug is with me.

(Olga enters from the bedroom wearing a new dress and one high-heeled shoe. She quickly limps over to Olivia and embraces her.)

OLGA

This is wonderful, Olivia. You really brought him over.

DOUG

I'm glad we finally got to meet, Mrs. Acosta.

(Doug extends a hand to Olga but Olga bypasses the hand and passionately throws her arms around him.)

OLGA

I've been waiting so long to meet you. You look even better than Olivia described you. This is such an honor.

DOUG

We would have come sooner but with all the traveling we've been doing there wasn't much time for anything else.

OLGA

(noticing the gift on the floor)

Is that for me?

OLIVIA

Open it, Ma.

OLGA

Oh, you didn't have to..

(She then rapidly throws the wrapping paper off the gift revealing a large hanging plant.)

OLGA

(disappointed)

Oh...

OLIVIA

What's wrong, Ma? Don't you like it? I thought you'd be happy to have a real plant in here.

OLGA

(touching the plant as though
it were already condemned)

It'll die.

OLIVIA

No it won't, Ma. This plant doesn't need
much light. Doug picked it out special, Ma.

OLGA

It's the dust, Olivia. It's getting worse.

OLIVIA

Oh, come on, Ma. It can't be that bad.

(she pulls a chair to the
pipes and hangs the plant)

Just water it once a week and it'll be fine. I'm
going to take these plastic things down, okay.

OLGA

No, leave them up. One of them is covering a
leak in the pipe. Come to think of it, while
you're up there, pass me the one on the right
so I can empty it.

(Olivia takes down the plastic plant and hands
it to Olga. Olga empties the water from the
plant into the coal pile and hands the plant
back to Olivia.)

OLIVIA

(as she climbs off the chair)

We got some pictures, Ma. You want to see them?

(to Doug)

Honey, could you pass me my bag.

DOUG

You should have seen her, Mrs. Acosta. Just
clicking away at everything. I think we spent
more on film than anything else.

OLIVIA

(to Olga, as she hands
her a photograph)

Look, Ma. This was in Paris. Isn't it beautiful?

OLGA

It's very pretty there. It looks like Puerto Rico.

OLIVIA

(handing Olga another picture)

This was in Switzerland. I took this one.

OLGA

Suissawhat?

OLIVIA

Switzerland. Say it, Ma. Swit, zer, land.
Switzerland.

OLGA

Suissaland.

OLIVIA

That's right, Ma. Isn't it beautiful? We went
skiing there.

OLGA

Suissaland.

OLIVIA

I think these are in Germany.

OLGA

Germany.

OLIVIA

(shows the photograph to Doug)

Honey, this was in Germany, wasn't it?

DOUG

(looking at the photograph
in Olivia's hand)

..Ahh, yeah. That's right. That was in Germany.

OLGA

(to Doug, as she looks
at the picture)

You look very nice.

DOUG

Thank you.

OLGA

(to Olivia)

How come there are no pictures of you
in here?

OLIVIA

They're on the other roll, Ma. They haven't
come back from the lab yet.

(she hands Olga another picture)

This was in Rome.

OLGA

When me and Miguel went to Puerto Rico
we got everybody to take our picture together.
We got pictures with the pigs behind Dona Lola's
house, about ten pictures together in Luquillo
Beach, two more in the garden in front of
cousin Antonia's house..

(to Doug)

Wait here. I'll show you.

(Olga stands and limps over to the bedroom.)

OLIVIA

Ma, what happened to your other shoe?

OLGA

(from bedroom)

I was packing some things and I think I
packed it away by mistake.

OLIVIA

Don't you have another pair?

OLGA

Of course I do. I was just leaving this one on to remind me to look for the other one later. Why, does it bother you?

OLIVIA

I don't think it's very good for your feet to walk around like that, Ma.

OLGA

Maybe you're right. I don't think it's too good for your head either going up and down like that. I'm beginning to get dizzy. I'll have to go barefoot. My other shoes don't match. I hope Doug doesn't mind.

DOUG

Not at all, Mrs. Acosta.

OLIVIA

How's Anthony?

OLGA

He's in school.

OLIVIA

How's he doing?

OLGA

He's doing real good. After Miguel left I thought I might have some problem with him. I thought he might rebel or something like that and blame Miguel's leaving on me. But not Anthony. He's made me real proud. I'm thinking of putting him in one of those nice military schools.

DOUG

West Point?

OLGA

Yeah, that's the one... There's about four pictures
(MORE)

OLGA(cont'd)

here with a stupid face right out front. But don't pay any attention to that cause that's Dona Lola's son and the poor thing, he's a little slow and he kept getting in the way of the pictures.

(Olga reenters barefoot and holding a stack of photographs. She stops for a moment and looks down at one of the photographs in her hand.)

OLGA

(a bit reminiscent)

Miguel was always so happy in Puerto Rico.

OLIVIA

Maybe that's where he went, Ma. Have you written to anybody over there?

OLGA

Oh, that's the first thing I did, Olivia. I wrote to everybody and asked if they had seen him. But you know Puerto Rico, with all the problems they got over there now, it was as though they didn't even hear me. First cousin Antonia writes to say that Pablito left her too and that Miguel and Pablito probably ran off together. Then Miguel's brother writes to say that Miguel is not over there but that he'll help me look for him in New York. Only thing is he wants to stay here with me until he finds him. Then finally Dona Lola decides to write and she doesn't even mention Miguel. She wants to know if her retarded son can stay here with us until he finds a job. A job doing what? Look at him, Olivia..

(she hands Olivia another photograph)

The poor thing. He can't even tie his own shoe laces.

(Doug looks at the photograph over Olivia's shoulders.)

OLGA

(to Doug, as she hands
him another photograph)

This was in Arecibo.

DOUG

It's very pretty there.

OLGA

(handing him another
photograph)

This was in San Juan. I took this one.

DOUG

He's a handsome man, Mrs. Acosta.

(Olga takes another look at this photograph.)

OLGA

Twenty-five years I lived with that man, Doug. Five in a basement on Jerome Avenue in the Bronx, another ten in a basement in Washington Heights, and next month it'll be ten more years in still another basement here on a-hundred-and-ninth. Twenty years I followed that man from basement to basement and when he finally stops drinking, I'm not good enough for him anymore.

DOUG

If you ask me, he's the one who lost out, Mrs. Acosta.

OLGA

(suddenly angry)

If he's the one that lost out, then why am I the one still in the basement?

(Surprised by Olga's reaction, Doug doesn't seem to know what to say and looks to Olivia.)

OLIVIA

Doug didn't mean anything, Ma. He just meant that...

OLGA

(interrupting)

It wasn't so bad when he was here helping me. But look at this place. Twenty-five years of living in basements, you'd think I'd be used to them by now. Oh, he was a smart one that Miguel. Telling me jokes all the time. Making me laugh. Keeping me under anesthetic is what he was doing. Novacaine. Doctor Miguel Novacaine I should of called him. Only thing about Novacaine is that unless the doctor is there to give you another shot, it wears off. The son-of-a-bitch. Look at this place!

OLIVIA

Forget about it, Ma.

OLGA

That's easy for you to say. You got Doug over there to...

(The telephone rings.)

Excuse me.

(she picks up the phone)

Hello...Miguel is not here. He went to the store.

(Olivia seems puzzled at what Olga has said.)

OLGA

(into phone)

...No, it's a store downtown. He had to take two trains, a bus, and a ferry...What?...Maybe Anthony can... No, I told you, Miguel is not here. He went to the store...What?...Okay, already! I'll tell him when he comes back.

(she hangs up and turns to Olivia)

That Mrs. Puso in 2D is driving me crazy. Everyday is something else. She used to pull that same thing on Miguel. Now it's her toilet. You think there's something wrong with that woman's toilet? Nothing. I know her. All she wants is company.

OLIVIA

Ma, why are you telling people that he went to the store?

OLGA

What do you think, that I like to lie, Olivia? I don't like to lie. You know that. But what am I supposed to tell her? If the landlord finds out that Miguel is not here anymore he'll kick us out for sure.

(she stands underneath the coal chute doors and yells up towards the street)

Anthony! Go up to 2D and unclog Mrs. Puso's toilet!

OLIVIA

Ma, I thought you said Anthony was in school.

OLGA

Oh, yeah. I did tell you that, didn't I?

(she points at the telephone)

I'd like to tell her that the weak son-of-a-bitch couldn't take it anymore and left me down here to fend for myself. I'd like to tell her that he went to hell and then tell her to go there too.

(she turns and starts towards the kitchen)

Excuse me. I better go see about the coffee before it turns to mud.

(The telephone rings again and Olga angrily picks it up.)

OLGA

(into phone)

Hello!...Oh, hello, Mr. Brooks...Yes, I know all about that. Mrs. Puso, she just called and...No, Miguel is not here. He went to the store...I don't know. It's a store downtown. He had to take two trains, a bus, and a ferry... She said

(MORE)

OLGA(cont'd)

that?....Of course he hasn't been in the store going on seven months. But it's been at least two months since we told her that she had to get rid of that stupid cat she has up there. There's a clause in the lease that says that.... What?... Okay, okay. I'll tell Miguel as soon as he gets back...A nice day to you too, Mr. Brooks.

(she hangs up and angrily yells up at the coal chute doors)

Anthony!! Anthony!!

(she waits a moment for an answer then turns to Olivia)

You've come just in the nick of time, Olivia. Cause not a moment more can I go on like this. Not a moment more.

(She again starts towards the kitchen but stops by the kitchen entrance to look at the plant hanging from the pipes.)

OLGA

It's kind of pretty that plant you brought me. It'll be okay once we take it upstairs.

(Olga exits. Olivia quickly turns to Doug.)

OLIVIA

I think we have a problem, Doug.

DOUG

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend her. I was just trying to make small talk.

OLIVIA

That's not what I'm talking about. I think she wants to move in with us.

DOUG

Are you sure?

OLIVIA

(calling out to Olga)

We bought the plant for you, Ma.

OLGA

(from kitchen)

Of course you did, Honey. It's a beautiful plant. I have to remember to get you something too. It's sort of like exchanging house warming gifts, isn't it. The plant will be okay upstairs. I know just the spot for it. Right in front of the window.

OLIVIA

(to Doug)

See? I knew this would happen. I just knew it.

(she pulls down on the top of her dress
and shows Doug part of her chest)

Look at this, Doug. I'm here five minutes and already I'm breaking out in hives. I told you this was a bad idea. It's my nerves, Doug. She does it to me every time.

DOUG

I think you're over-reacting a bit, Liv.
Where would she expect to sleep?

OLGA

(offstage)

It's a two-bedroom apartment, you know.

OLIVIA

There! She's already got her room all picked out.

OLGA

(offstage)

Olivia?... Did you hear what I said? I said it's
a two bed...

OLIVIA

(cutting her off)

We heard, Ma! It's a two bedroom apartment!

(Olga appears at the kitchen entrance holding a wash rag and an empty coffee cup.)

OLGA

...Is anything wrong?

OLIVIA

Could we look at the apartment now, Ma. We don't have that much time and we'd like to get it out of the way before we look someplace else.

OLGA

...Someplace else?

OLIVIA

I told you over the phone, Ma, all we wanted was to look at it. I didn't want you to be disappointed.

OLGA

But the plant. It'll die down here.

OLIVIA

The plant will be fine, Ma.

(The tremendous disappointment is immediately evident in Olga. Her shoulders droop, her movements slow to a crawl and her voice is that of a beaten woman as she exits into the bedroom.)

OLGA

I'll get you the key.

OLIVIA

(to Doug)

Now she wants me to feel sorry for her. It's all an act, you know.

DOUG

Well it certainly worked on me. All of a sudden I feel terrible.

OLGA(cont'd)

Not in this house. An old and ugly used-up piece of chewing tobacco is what I am around here. A burden.....Olivia?

OLIVIA

Yeah, Ma? I'm trying to find the key for 4E.

OLGA

Yeah, you already told me what a big rush you're in to go look at apartments someplace else. But if you don't mind spending another five minutes with your mother, Anthony should be home from school soon and he's memorized all those keys now. Can you come in here and help me clean out this pot? All of a sudden I'm not feeling that good. I feel a lump in my throat.

OLIVIA

(to Doug)

I'll be right back. Try not to get too many tears on the couch while I'm gone.

(she exits)

(Alone on stage, Doug pauses for a moment then notices something moving across the floor. He follows it for a moment with his eyes and then suddenly stands and steps on it. He then skips over to the boiler on one foot and uses the shovel to scrape the roach from the bottom of his shoe. He then crosses back to the couch and starts lining-up the keys in rows of five on the table. He seems to be trying to develop some sort of system when we hear a key entering the front door. Doug looks up towards the door as Anthony enters looking even dirtier than when we last saw him and quickly locks the door behind him.)

DOUG

(standing)

Hi. I'm Doug. Olivia's husband.

ANTHONY

So what do you want, a medal?

(Anthony continues on and disappears behind the boiler. Doug takes a few steps towards the boiler and tries to figure out where Anthony went.)

DOUG

(trying to be light)

Sometimes I think I deserve one.

(Anthony reappears from the back of the boiler carrying a ladder.)

ANTHONY

Don't come crying to me about it. She couldn't sucker anybody around here into marrying so she goes downtown and wiggles her ass in front of you and you think you got yourself another Evita. Well it's too late now sucker.

(Anthony places the ladder underneath the coal chute doors.)

DOUG

I was only kidding.

ANTHONY

(as he climbs the ladder)

No you weren't. You forget, I know her.

(he stops halfway up as he notices the plant hanging from the pipes)

And I suppose you think that's a swell gift.

DOUG

I know what you're thinking. But we picked this one out special. It doesn't need much light.

ANTHONY

Who the hell is talking about light?

(he makes himself cough)

(MORE)

ANTHONY(cont'd)

You hear that? That's not supposed to be like that. It's supposed to be clear.

(he coughs some more)

You hear it? I'm beginning to sound just like him.

DOUG

Like who?

(Anthony doesn't answer and peers out towards the street from under one of the coal chute doors. He then climbs back down the ladder as Doug curiously looks on.)

DOUG

What's going on?

ANTHONY

Somebody's trying to kill me.

(Doug laughs. Anthony takes offense.)

ANTHONY

You think that's funny?

DOUG

...Well, no. Of course I don't think it's funny if somebody were actually trying to kill you. But..

ANTHONY

(interrupting)

Somebody was murdered up there, you know.

DOUG

Up where?

ANTHONY

4E.

DOUG

Murdered? Are you sure? I thought she just died of old age?

ANTHONY

Who are you going to believe, my mother or me? The woman is flipso. Or haven't you noticed? I thought lawyers were supposed to be so smart?

(Doug doesn't seem to know how to deal with Anthony and just stares at him for a moment. Anthony turns and again disappears behind the boiler carrying the ladder. He then reappears from the other side of the boiler unseen by Doug and crosses to the dresser.)

ANTHONY

(from dresser, as he searches through one of the drawers)

The woman never even goes outside. How is she supposed to know what goes on around here?

(Doug is a bit startled by Anthony's reappearance and quickly turns around to face him. Anthony takes off his jacket and shirt and throws them into the drawer. He then puts on a clean shirt and walks towards the television wiping his face with the back of his shirt sleeve.)

DOUG

...I think your mother would like for you to take us upstairs and show us the apartment. Do you know which one of these keys is for 4E?

ANTHONY

Yeah...It's this one.

(Anthony picks up one of the keys and shows it to Doug. He then throws the key back into the pile and mixes the keys back up. Doug doesn't seem to know what to say and just watches curiously as Anthony turns on the television and squats less than a foot away from it. The television is turned sideways from the audience and the reflections can be seen bouncing off Anthony's face. Anthony turns up the volume and we hear a line of dialogue.)

TELEVISION

"But Mr. Jameson, I was supposed to get that assignment."

(Anthony suddenly gets up and rushes to the dresser. He quickly opens one of the drawers and pulls out a stack of comic books.)

ANTHONY

(to Doug, excited as he searches through the comic books)

I got this one!

(Anthony then quickly turns to a page inside one of the comic books and proceeds to read the next few lines of dialogue along with the television.)

ANTHONY AND TELEVISION

"Now you listen to me, Peter. Spider Man is going to be at that museum tonight and that is precisely where you will not be. Because you will be right here with me. And if my suspicions prove me right, that means that Spider Man will be here too. Because you, Mr. Peter Parker, and Spider Man, are one and the same!"

DOUG

(calling out to kitchen while looking at Anthony as though he were dangerous)
Olivia?...Olivia, your brother is home.

(Olga and Olivia enter carrying cups and a pot of coffee. Olivia is happy to see Anthony and quickly places the pot on the coffee table.)

OLIVIA

Anthony!

(Olivia gives Anthony kiss on each cheek, European style. Anthony wipes them off with the back of his sleeve. Olga turns off the television.)

OLIVIA

Look at you. You're so dirty. Weren't you in school today?

ANTHONY

(turning the television back on)
It's a holiday.

OLGA

I swear, Olivia, in all my years I never heard of a school with so many holidays.

(Olga again turns off the television.
Anthony turns it back on.)

OLIVIA

What holiday, Anthony?

(Anthony suddenly raises the volume drowning out any further questions.
Olga again turns off the television.)

ANTHONY

Come on, Ma! I'm trying to watch this!

(Anthony turns the television back on. Olga goes around the back of the set and removes the cord and wraps it around her hand. Anthony angrily scatters the keys off the coffee table, picks one up off the floor, and exits through the front door screaming at the top of his lungs. Doug and Olivia look to Olga with puzzled expressions.)

OLGA

(to Doug and Olivia)

Go on. Go on. He's going to take you upstairs.

(Doug and Olivia exit. Olga connects the cord back into the television and turns to a soap opera. She then begins to pick the scattered keys off the floor while listening to the soap opera. LIGHTS FADE.)

Scene Three

(The lights come up on Olga as she pulls a pair of man's pants out of a large cardboard box and holds them up for inspection. She places the pants against her side for a moment and then once again holds them up in the air for further inspection. Dissatisfied, she throws the pants towards an already existing pile of clothing by the boiler and reaches back into the box. She brings out a white long-sleeve man's shirt and holds this up for inspection as the front of the door opens and Anthony enters. He stops to look at what Olga is doing and then crosses to the television and turns it to cartoons.)

OLGA

Well?

ANTHONY

Well, what?

OLGA

Did they like the apartment?

ANTHONY

How am I supposed to know? I left them up there.

(He drops the key to the apartment into the bottle that is now resting on the dresser.)

OLGA

And how are they supposed to lock the door if you took the key?

ANTHONY

It locks by itself. All you have to do is pull it shut. If you'd go out sometime you'd know things like that.

OLGA

Didn't they say anything about it? They must have said something.

ANTHONY

(eyes on the screen)

They said a lot of things.

OLGA

Well?

ANTHONY

Well, what?

OLGA

What did they say, you stupid nitwit.

ANTHONY

Why should I tell you. You don't care about me.

OLGA

Of course I care. If I didn't care I would punch you in the back of the head and make you tell me. But since I care I'm going to give you one more chance before I hit you. Now what did they say?

ANTHONY

First Olivia started talking about how everything looks the same around here. That nothing ever changes. Then she started talking about how everything looks smaller. Oh, yeah, she said you looked older too.

OLGA

(suddenly angry)

So what the hell does she expect?! That's the way things work! The years go by and you get older. What is she, stupid all of a sudden?

ANTHONY

Don't ask me. I didn't say it. It was your precious Olivia that said it.

OLGA

What about the new stove up there. Did they say anything about that?

ANTHONY

No. I don't remember them saying anything about that. But Doug did mention something about the roaches.

(Olga suddenly slaps him on the back of the head.)

OLGA

I'm tired of playing these stupid games with you, Anthony!

ANTHONY

Oh, yeah, you just made me remember something else Doug said. He said you looked dangerous.

(Olga takes another swing at Anthony but this time Anthony ducks and runs around the couch.)

OLGA

I hate you!

ANTHONY

Well I hate you too!

OLGA

The day you were born I took one look at you and I knew you'd be trouble.

ANTHONY

That same day I looked at you and I tried to commit suicide. They didn't tell you about that at the hospital, did they? Well I did you know.

(he lifts up his shirt and shows her his stomach)

See. I tried to commit hare kari.

OLGA

(from box where she's returned
to sorting Miguel's articles)

Had I known I would have made sure you
succeeded.

(Anthony returns to the television.)

OLGA

It's him, isn't it? It's that Doug. He doesn't like
me, does he.

ANTHONY

(eyes on TV)

It's both of them.

OLGA

I could see it the moment he looked at me.
I could see it in his eyes. I don't trust people
who can't look you in the eye when they
talk to you. It usually means they got some-
thing to hide. It's all in the eyes, you know.
They give you away every time.

ANTHONY

Then you better go buy yourself a pair
of sunglasses. Black ones.

OLGA

Maybe that's what it is. Maybe he ain't
really thirty like he's been telling Olivia.
Maybe he's going on forty. Or fifty even.
What is it you called Mr. Seeter when he
brought that little girl down here to tell
us that she'd be staying with him for a
while?

ANTHONY

A cradle snatcher.

OLGA

Yeah, that's right. That's what he is, a cradle snatcher.... What kind of car are they driving?

ANTHONY

I don't know. I looked for it but I couldn't find it.

OLGA

And what are you doing looking for their car? You stay away from that car, you hear?

ANTHONY

I wasn't going to do anything to their car. I was just curious, that's all. You see his shoes? They don't look like no rich lawyer shoes to me.

OLGA

And how would you know what rich lawyer shoes look like? That Legal Aid lawyer they gave you when you broke into that restaurant could barely afford tie...Here. Try on this shirt.

ANTHONY

(eyes on TV)

All I want is the glove.

OLGA

It's not here. Go look under the bed.

ANTHONY

I already got it.

OLGA

And who gave you permission to do that? Did I give you permission to go snooping through his things?

ANTHONY

All he left was junk. It ain't worth anything.

OLGA

You let me be the judge of that. Some things you can't judge by how much you can get for them on the street. You didn't throw anything away, did you?

ANTHONY

Just his hat. It had some blood in it.

(Olga seems jarred by Anthony's comment.)

OLGA

.....You had to tell me that, didn't you.

ANTHONY

You asked.

OLGA

You won't let me forget, will you?

ANTHONY

I thought it was the other way around. Look at you going through all that junk, looking for an excuse to save something. I don't want his stinkin' shirt, all right?! I don't want nothing!

(Anthony suddenly opens the boiler door and throws the pile of clothing inside. He then rushes for the box containing the rest of Miguel's clothes.)

OLGA

Anthony, stop it...Stop it, Anthony.

(Anthony tries to drag the box towards the boiler but Olga suddenly slaps him hard across the face forcing him to stop. They stare each other down for a moment until Anthony runs into the bedroom and slams the door behind him.)

OLGA

(after a moment)

...Anthony... Anthony, are you okay?...
I didn't mean to hit you so hard you
know. It's just that sometimes when
you get like this I get scared and I
don't know what else to do.

(A moment passes and we begin to hear
a distant pounding coming from inside the
bedroom.)

OLGA

Anthony, I don't want you bouncing that
baseball off that wall in there. Those walls
can't take that kind of pounding.

(The pounding stops. There's a knock
at the front door.)

OLIVIA

(offstage)

Ma...

(The sound of Olivia's voice brings on the
pounding from the bedroom. This time it
is hard and angry.)

OLGA

Anthony!

(The pounding stops.)

OLIVIA

(offstage)

Ma, open the door.

OLGA

(while dragging the box with Miguel's
clothes out of sight behind the boiler)

Coming...

(Olga crosses to the front door. Olivia and Doug enter. They seem upset.)

OLIVIA

Where's Anthony?

OLGA

What's the matter? What happened?

OLIVIA

You know what that little creep did?
He locked us inside the apartment.

OLGA

No he didn't, Olivia. It's just one of those doors that locks by itself.

OLIVIA

I'm telling you that little creep locked us in.
He did something to the lock so we couldn't get out. Look at my shoes. We had to climb down the fire escape.

DOUG

I'm not saying how it happened, Mrs. Acosta, but there's no doubt about it, we were locked in.

OLIVIA

And there was at least a foot of garbage in every room. It looks like it was just put there.

OLGA

Anthony, goddamnit!!!

(she kicks the bedroom door open and drags Anthony out by the back of his neck)

Go clean that up!!

ANTHONY

One of these days I'm going to have to sit you down and teach you how to talk with your mouth!!

OLGA

(she slaps him on the head then rams
the bottle of keys into his chest)

You go this minute, goddamnit!! You go this
minute and clean it up!

(Anthony drops the bottle on the couch
and runs back into the bedroom.)

OLIVIA

You've turned into nothing but trash, Anthony!
Common ghetto filth is what you are!

(The pounding returns.)

DOUG

Forget about it, Olivia. There was no real
harm done.

OLIVIA

You think I worked my butt off all these years
to make it out of here just to come back and
be disrespected by trash like that?

ANTHONY

(from bedroom)

I'm sure it was real hard getting your butt
into those tight jeans so you could go wiggle
it in front of chumps like Doug overhere.

DOUG

I'm not a chump, Anthony.

OLIVIA

(to Anthony)

I was planning on taking you out and buying you
a new coat. But Popsicles will be dangling from
your ears before you get two cents out of me.

ANTHONY

You weren't the first one you know, Doug.
Did she ever tell you about Tim Cornell?
She picked him up by Rockefeller Center.

OLGA

That's enough, Anthony. You come out of there right now and go up to 2D and unclog Mrs. Puso's toilet before she calls Mr. Brooks again.

ANTHONY

First she makes him get a loan to get a car. Then she makes him get a loan to go to Disneyland. Then when they get back and he has to work two jobs to pay off the loans, she gets mad cause she ain't got nobody to take her out anymore and she dumps him. I would have kicked her butt all up and down the street. But this stupid jerk ends up in the hospital with a nervous breakdown. But don't worry, Doug. I already called the hospital and told them to save a bed for you.

OLIVIA

(to Doug)

I hope you don't believe any of that. Tim was always a bit unstable. I was just trying to help him and when I finally realized that I couldn't, well we just went our separate ways that's all.

DOUG

It doesn't matter, Olivia, really. Just tell your brother to give me the key to the apartment so I can go up and clean that garbage up for you.

OLGA

(to bedroom)

I hate you!

ANTHONY

I hate you too!

OLIVIA

What the hell is going on with you two?
We come here to look at an apartment and
and we find ourselves in the middle of a war.

DOUG

Look, why don't we just try to do this nice
and calm. Is the key back inside the bottle,
Mrs. Acosta?

OLGA

That little monster threw it back in there.
(to bedroom)
West Point my eye! Warwick's where you're
going! Warwick!

DOUG

(bottle of keys in hand, he takes
the broom beside the boiler)
May I borrow your broom, Mrs. Acosta?

(Olivia takes the broom away from Doug.)

OLIVIA

We didn't come here to clean up no garbage, Doug.
We came here to look at an apartment just like
anybody else. We're not the super here. They are.

OLGA

I'm not the super, Olivia. I'm your mother.

OLIVIA

I haven't been traveling halfway around the
world just to come back here and collect the
garbage, Ma. You don't ask other people to
clean their apartments before you show it
to them so why are you asking us.

OLGA

Olivia, no one is asking you to collect the
garbage. Just an hour ago that apartment
was spotless. It's that little creep in there
that messed everything up.

OLIVIA

We don't have to live here, Ma. Doug makes excellent money. We can afford to live anywhere we want.

OLGA

I know that, Olivia. And believe me, I appreciate everything you're doing.

OLIVIA

Doug and I came here because now that Poppi's gone I thought you might need some help. Moral help, Ma. Not asking my husband to collect the garbage.

(The sound of the baseball hitting the bedroom wall returns.)

OLGA

Olivia, I didn't ask...

OLIVIA

Well maybe you didn't. But nevertheless this is a good time to discuss certain things. If you want us to take that apartment we want to be treated just like any other tenant. We'll help you anyway we can but there's going to have to be a clear and distinct separation. We have to draw a line. We're the tenants and you're the super.

(Hurt, Olga sits on the arm of the couch.)

ANTHONY

(from bedroom)

Next she's going to be calling down here so we can run up with plungers and Drano to unclog her toilet.

OLIVIA

For trash like you that would be an honor!

OLGA

Maybe he's right.

OLIVIA

Don't be ridiculous, Ma. We can unclog our own toilets. It's not so much the work, Ma. That's not what I'm talking about.

OLGA

...I know. It's the separation.

DOUG

Look, why don't you guys go ahead and work these details out among yourselves. I'm going up to clean the apartment.

(he picks up the bottle of keys)

OLIVIA

Put down those keys, Doug.

DOUG

Please, Liv, don't speak to me in that tone. I'm not your friend Tim, or Tom, or whatever his name is.

(and then to Olga as he exits with the broom and bottle of keys)

I'm sorry I had to raise my voice like that, Mrs. Acosta.

OLGA

I didn't draw any lines when I had you, Olivia. Maybe I should have. Maybe the moment they cut my cord from your stomach I should have said, 'My responsibility's done. I conceived her, carried her in my womb for nine months, suffered twelve long painful hours in labor to give her life, but from here I must draw the line'. But I didn't draw any lines, Olivia. And God knows I had every excuse to. We barely had money to eat. But instead of drawing lines, Miguel and me, we took you home and raised you to be the beautiful woman who is standing here now telling that we have to draw lines.

OLIVIA

Last time you told that story you were only
in labor for eight hours.

OLGA

No, that was Anthony.

ANTHONY

(from bedroom)

I thought I was eighteen, Ma?

OLGA

You shut up in there!

OLIVIA

This isn't going to work, Ma.

OLGA

No, I suppose not. One day I might forget
my place and you might take me out and
have me whipped.

OLIVIA

I'm going up to get Doug.
(she exits)

OLGA

(calling after her)

I survived before I brought you into this
world and God forbid that anything should
happen to you, but if it does, if by some
unfortunate accident you should slip down
a flight of stairs and hurt yourself, I'll
survive just fine after you're gone!

(Anthony appears at the bedroom door.
He watches Olga for a moment.)

ANTHONY

Two more seconds and I would have picked
up that shovel and drew a line right across
the middle of her forehead.

OLGA

Go to the liquor store and get me a bottle of lemon-flavored gin. All these years and I'm finally beginning to understand why Miguel drank so much. Tell Roy to put it on Miguel's tab. You didn't tell him that he left, did you?

ANTHONY

I told him he had to go to Puerto Rico cause somebody had died over there.

OLGA

Good. Now hurry before I change my mind and have to look at myself in the mirror dead sober.

(Anthony exits. Lights begin to fade.)

OLGA

(to herself)

When I think of all the sacrifices I've made for this family it makes me want to puke.

(BLACKOUT)

Scene Four

(The front door opens and Anthony enters carrying what is clearly a quart bottle of liquor in a brown paper bag.)

ANTHONY

Ma...

(Anthony takes the bottle out of the bag and places it on the coffee table as Olga enters from the bedroom.)

OLGA

What the hell is that? All I wanted was a small half-pint bottle. How much did that cost?

ANTHONY

Nothing. It's free.

OLGA

What do you mean it's free? Did I send you out to steal? What I said was to put it on Miguel's tab.

ANTHONY

I didn't steal it. It's a present from Roy.

OLGA

A present for who?

ANTHONY

For you. I think he likes you.

OLGA

(exiting to kitchen)

Men, they all stink.

ANTHONY

He's a nice guy, Ma.

OLGA
(from kitchen)
He's supposed to be Miguel's friend.

(Olga reenters with a cup in her hand.) "

ANTHONY
Poppi's not here anymore, Ma.

OLGA
Yeah, but he doesn't know that.
(she opens the bottle and pours
herself a cup)
You did tell him that Miguel had to go to
Puerto Rico, didn't you?

ANTHONY
Can I have some, Ma?

OLGA
No, you may not have some!
(she snatches the bottle
from the table)
Now what exactly did you tell him?

ANTHONY
(after a moment)
I told him that he probably wasn't coming back.

OLGA
Goddamn you, Anthony!

ANTHONY
Well he isn't.

OLGA
Don't you understand, you stupid nitwit, where
the hell are we going to go when the landlord
kicks us out of here?!

ANTHONY
I heard he was planning on taking over the
(MORE)

ANTHONY(cont'd)

candy store and making the liquor store even bigger.

OLGA

The hell with his liquor store!

ANTHONY

And he told that guy that works with him that I had the most beautiful mother in the whole world.

(This catches Olga's attention.)

OLGA

(softer)

...He said that?

ANTHONY

He's a nice guy, Ma.

(Olga crosses to the dresser and looks at herself in the mirror above the dresser.)

ANTHONY

He asked if I thought it would be all right if he called here.

OLGA

And what did you tell him?

ANTHONY

I said I didn't know.

(There's a moment's silence. Olga is still by the mirror. She slowly passes a hand through her hair and then gently touches the area under her eyes. Anthony watches her.)

ANTHONY

It's been a long time since you've been out, Ma.

OLGA

What else did he say?

ANTHONY

He said hello.

OLGA

To me?

ANTHONY

Should I say hello back?

OLGA

(after a moment)

...Let me think about it.

(The telephone rings. Olga picks it up.)

OLGA

Hello...No, Miguel is not here. He went to the store. No, it's a store downtown. He had to take two trains, a bus, and a...What?.. Okay, I'll tell him when he comes back.

(hangs up, to Anthony)

Go up to 3A and see what's the matter with his lights.

ANTHONY

I don't know how to do all that stuff up there, Ma!

OLGA

Then you learn!

ANTHONY

Ain't nothing wrong with that man's lights. The bulbs just go out.

OLGA

See. You're learning already. And take a piece of cardboard with you. He said somebody's dog had done something on the second floor.

ANTHONY
JESUS H. CHRIST!

(Anthony angrily grabs a piece of cardboard from the side of the boiler. There's a knock at the door. Anthony opens it. Olivia enters holding the broom and bottle of keys.)

OLIVIA
Have you seen Doug? I can't find him.
Did he come back down here?

(Olga turns and gives Olivia her back.)

OLIVIA
I found the keys in the hallway on the fourth floor. Doug's very responsible. He wouldn't do a thing like that. Something must have happened.

ANTHONY
He's probably dead. Somebody's trying to kill me and they probably thought he was me.

OLIVIA
What are you talking about? Who's trying to kill you?

ANTHONY
Everybody.

OLIVIA
Oh, why don't you shut up already.

OLGA
You're stepping over the live, Olivia. This side is for supers. Tenants belong over there.
(she points to the front door)

OLIVIA
Touché, Ma! Okay?! Touché!

(Olivia opens the front door and exits, slamming the door behind her.)

OLGA

(calling after Olivia)

Don't try any of those fancy French words
with me! Cause I know some words in Spanish
that'll make your ears ring!

(and then to Anthony)

What does touche mean?

ANTHONY

It sounds like fuck you.

(Olga quickly slaps Anthony across the
face. BLACKOUT.)

Scene Five

(The boiler door is open with its flame roaring at high pitch. Candles are burning next to the quart bottle of gin on top of the boiler and a moderate Spanish waltz is playing from a small radio on top of the television as Olga, slightly drunk, dances with an imaginary partner in front of the boiler. Olga turns and spins and allows her imaginary partner to lead her around the room and then throws her head back and laughs as though a private joke had been whispered in her ear in the course of the dance. There's a knock at the door. Olga continues to dance as she answers.)

OLGA

Miguel?...Come in. The door is open.

(Doug enters. He too is slightly drunk and remains by the door watching Olga. Olga turns in the course of her dance, notices Doug and stops.)

DOUG

I'm sorry. It's only me, Mrs. Acosta.
Have you heard from your husband?

OLGA

I had a dream today. He said that he had to go away to save some money so that we could go back to Puerto Rico. He said he was sorry for making me worry so much but that it was the only way he could do it.

DOUG

That's wonderful, Mrs. Acosta.

OLGA

In Puerto Rico, Dona Lola dreamt that her rooster had three legs. Then in the same dream a tornado came and lifted her house

(MORE)

OLGA(cont'd)

right off the ground and threw it back down in eighteen pieces. The next day she wakes up and goes and plays three-eighths and hits it for forty dollars.

DOUG

Amazing things, dreams.

(he looks towards the kitchen)

Is Olivia here?

OLGA

Olivia?...Oh, now I remember. Olivia, the new tenant in 4E. I'm sorry, but all you'll find down here is an old discarded super that was once her mother.

DOUG

If you don't mind, Mrs. Acosta, I've had it up to here with all the self-pity that goes on around here.

(he sticks his head into the kitchen)

Olivia?...

OLGA

Oh, is that a fact? You rich little twerp! How dare you talk to me like that? What the hell would someone like you know about self-pity?

DOUG

After almost two years with your daughter, Mrs. Acosta, believe me, I know plenty. If there's one thing you've managed to give her is a sense of doom.

OLGA

Get out of my house.

DOUG

My intentions precisely. But by the way, I may be a twerp, but I am not a rich one.

OLGA

You don't have to lie to me. I'm not going to ask you for anything.

DOUG

I have nothing to give, Mrs. Acosta. I wish I did. But I'm not rich. And I'm not from Connecticut like Olivia's been telling you. I'm from Queens. My father just retired on a hundred-and-sixty-dollar-a-week pension after spending half his life making window bindings.

(Silence. Doug waits for what he's said to penetrate. Half disbelieving Olga finally speaks.)

OLGA

What are you talking about?

DOUG

I'm talking about your daughter, Mrs. Acosta. She lies so much that it wasn't until we were just three blocks from here that she remembered to tell me that her father didn't really own this building and even so she had forgotten all the other things she had told me and I walked into this place expecting a garden apartment with a built-in greenhouse.

OLGA

Well I'm sorry to disappoint you. But I don't believe anything you're saying. Olivia wouldn't lie to me like that.

DOUG

It's not so much you she lies to, Mrs. Acosta. It's herself. There was no Paris, or Rome, or Venice, or Swit-zer-land. or any other place in Europe. We were never there. Half those pictures my grandfather took when I went to visit him in Michigan and the other half are cut-out postcards Olivia picked up at a drug store on forty-third and Broadway.

OLGA

(covering her ears)

I don't want to hear anymore. You just go and you tell Olivia that if she wants to leave to just leave. Tell her she doesn't have to send you down here to tell me a bunch of lies.

DOUG

Olivia didn't send me down here, Mrs. Acosta. And if she had, believe me, it wouldn't be to tell you what I'm telling you now. It would be to tell you that our Lear jet has just landed down the street and that she had forgotten to tell you about an important appointment we had on one of the Rockefeller's yachts. I'm not condemning her for it, Mrs. Acosta. I understand. Really, I do. It's just that I'm tired of the lies. I'm not real, Mrs. Acosta. I'm just something your daughter made up in her head. I'm not even a lawyer. Up to two months ago I was a clerk in a law office and I was laid-off. We didn't come here because this building is going co-op. We came because for the past two weeks we've been living out of the back of my car and we needed a place to stay.

(Silence. The weight of the world is again on Olga's shoulders. She extends a hand out towards the couch and slowly sits down.)

DOUG

It's really amazing. Olivia did the exact same thing when I told her I had lost my job. But you go ahead, Mrs. Acosta. No need to hide your disappointment for my sake. I'm really quite used to this by now.

OLGA

...Anthony knew all along.

DOUG

He knew what, Mrs. Acosta?

OLGA

...He said those didn't look like no rich lawyer shoes to him.

DOUG

(looking down at his shoes)

No, I guess they don't at that.

OLGA

...You really don't have any money?

DOUG

No, I don't. I wish I did. I wish I could help you. But right now I just have to find a way to help myself.. I don't want all those things Olivia wants, Mrs. Acosta. I just like to play baseball in the park and maybe go to a movie once in a while.

OLGA

Miguel used to like to play baseball too. And he didn't have anything either.

DOUG

It's a poor man's sport, Mrs. Acosta.

(Doug takes an envelope from his pocket and places it on the coffee table in front of Olga.)

DOUG

There's a letter in there with half the money we were going to use for the first month's rent. Tell Olivia that I'm sorry but that I had to take some of it to eat.

(he crosses to the front door)

And don't worry, Mrs. Acosta. My leaving is not going to come as any great shock to her. Most of what Olivia and I once felt for each other was lost when she finally realized that I really wasn't any better off than she was. Good-bye, Mrs. Acosta.

(He exits)

(Alone on stage Olga sits looking at the envelope in front of her. After a moment she picks it up and holds it up to the light. She then brings the envelope back down and tries to open it with the nail on her pinkie finger. This is unsuccessful and she puts the envelope down and crosses to the dresser and proceeds to rummage through the drawers looking for something to open the envelope. Not finding an appropriate tool she exits into the kitchen. We watch an empty stage for a moment and listen to Olga rummaging through the kitchen drawers when Anthony comes sneaking out from behind the boiler and heads straight for the envelope on the coffee table. He picks up the envelope and starts to retreat behind the boiler when Olga reenters with a knife in her hand and catches Anthony in the act.)

OLGA

(waving the knife)

You little sneak! You were back there all the time, weren't you?! Give me that money!

ANTHONY

(hiding the envelope
behind his back)

I don't want the money. I just want to read the letter.

OLGA

(going after him)

Give it to me, I said!

(Anthony dashes behind the boiler and comes out the other side carrying the ladder. He quickly places the ladder underneath the coal chute doors and runs up into the street with Olga just a few steps behind.)

OLGA

(as she too exits into the street)

Give me that money, Anthony!!!

(The stage is alone for a moment.
The front door slowly opens and
Olivia steps inside.)

OLIVIA

Doug?...

(she crosses to the kitchen
and looks inside)

Ma...

(She looks inside the bedroom and then looks
up at the open coal chute doors. The front
door opens and Olga enters.)

OLIVIA

What's going on? Where have you been?

OLGA

You never mind about me. Where have
you been?

OLIVIA

Doug and I had dinner out. We found a halfway
decent place not too far from here.

OLGA

Oh, really. You must mean Angelo's. That big
fancy place over on ninety-sixth street.

OLIVIA

Not Angelo's, Ma. That place has turned into
a dump. It's another place. We had to get in
the car and everything. By the way, Doug
has to go away for a few days on business.
He just called his firm. He has to go handle
a case for them in L.A. Is it okay if I stay
here until he gets back?

(BLACKOUT)

End Act One

ACT TWO

(Olga and Olivia are at the coffee table having breakfast. ~~A roll of toilet paper sits at the enter of the table in place of napkins.~~)

CUT

OLIVIA

Doug wanted me to go to L.A. with him and maybe take a look at some houses while we were there but I told him that I hadn't seen you in a long time and that I wanted to spend some time with you.

(Anthony enters from the kitchen carrying a plate with his breakfast.)

ANTHONY

Jesus Christ, Ma. Is she still bullshitting?

OLGA

Shut up, Anthony.

OLIVIA

What's he talking about?

OLGA

He's talking about nothing as usual.

(she touches Olivia's hand)

You just forget about him and finish your breakfast.

ANTHONY

Oh, yeah, Ma. I almost forgot. With all that first class traveling she's been doing, she probably hasn't eaten a meal in months.

OLIVIA

Aren't you going to be late for school?
Or is today another holiday?

ANTHONY

You got it.

OLGA

Anthony, you got one minute to finish those awful burnt eggs you made in there and put on a clean shirt and get that little butt of yours over to that school.

(she smacks him lightly
on the head)

No more holidays, you hear?

ANTHONY

I ain't going to no school. They're trying to kill me over there.

OLGA

I swear on your grandmother's grave, Anthony,
(she makes the sign
of the cross)

if you don't go to school today I will definitely kill you over here.

ANTHONY

(to Olivia, quickly)

Nine-times-nine?

OLIVIA

What??

ANTHONY

Eighty-one. Seven-times-seven?

OLIVIA

I don't care how well you know your times-tables, Anthony, you still have to go to school.

OLGA

(after counting on
her fingers)

Forty-nine.

ANTHONY

That's good, Ma.

(He slaps Olga's arm. Olga seems proud.)

ANTHONY

(to Olga)

Eight-times-seven?

OLGA

That's enough already! What do you think, I got nothing better to do than sit around all day saying those stupid times tables with you? Now you get going before I throw those eggs in a paper bag and make you have them for lunch.

ANTHONY

Okay, Ma, okay. I just want to ask Olivia one question, all right?

(to Olivia)

When you and Doug went to Connecticut to visit his family, did they let you use their Cadillac?

OLGA

Get the hell away from this table, Anthony!
(she tries pushing him off the chair)

ANTHONY

Come on, Ma. I want to hear this.

OLIVIA

Cadillacs are ghetto cars. Anthony. They have a Mercedes.

(Anthony begins to laugh hysterically. Olga quickly slaps him on the side of the head.)

OLGA

That's enough, I said!

OLIVIA

What the hell is so funny?

ANTHONY

(to Olga, still laughing)

This shit is worth a hit on the head. Go ahead,
Ma. Hit me again. Go ahead.

(he puts his head out so that
Olga can again slap him)

I just want to ask her another question.
Just one more question, all right?

OLIVIA

Let me ask you a question, Anthony. Do
you plan to spend the rest of your life
mouthing off to people and running
around the street like some wild animal
giving people excuses to treat you like
garbage? I know this is going to be hard
for you to believe but there are people
out there who actually make plans to
try to better themselves.

ANTHONY

What, you think I ain't got plans? I got plans.
As soon as I can get me a new distributor cap
so I can get Poppi's old Chevy going and it
gets a little warmer outside, I'm going to the
beach. But that's for the future. As far as the
present is concerned, as soon as Paco and
Ricky come to pick me up we're going to
Riverside and see about snatching us a pocket-
book so me and Ma can eat for the next few
days. I don't know what you're going to do
but I suggest you stretch whatever money
your rich husband left you as far as you can
cause you ain't getting shit from me.

OLGA

Anthony, goddamn you!

(she takes his plate away and
knocks him off the chair)

Go! Now! Before I put my fist down your
throat!

ANTHONY

Come on, Ma. I'm hungry.

OLIVIA

What's he talking about?

(Suddenly we hear a loud stomping coming from the coal chute doors.)

ANTHONY

I gotta go.

(Anthony tries to stand but Olga quickly grabs him and throws him back into the chair.)

OLGA

You're not going anywhere!

(then yelling up at the coal chute doors)

Get the hell away from here, you goddamn hoodlums! You leave him alone!

ANTHONY ,

Jesus, Ma. I wish you'd make up your mind. First you want me to leave, then you want me stay. I can't take all this confusion.

OLGA

I don't need you snatching no pocketbooks for me! How dare you?! I want you to go to school!!

(and then pointing to Olivia)

Look at her, Anthony. Look at our savior. I thought that one day she'd come back and get us out of here. But look at her, the only one she came back to save was herself.

OLIVIA

I don't know what you're talking about, Ma. But I can't stay here if you're going to continue to talk to me like that. As a matter of fact...

(she crosses towards the telephone)

I think I'll call Doug in L.A. right now and tell him to be expecting me.

(Olivia picks up the phone and starts to dial. Olga and Anthony quietly watch.)

OLIVIA

I don't know what got into me thinking that I could spend a week with you two without losing my mind.

(Olivia dials another two numbers. Olga and Anthony still haven't said a word. Olivia finally becomes aware of this peculiarity and stops dialing.)

OLIVIA

(phone still in hand)

What's going on?

(Olga takes the now opened envelope from her bra and drops it on the coffee table.)

OLGA

Here. This is what your rich lawyer husband left you.

(Olivia quickly picks up the envelope. She looks at the money for a moment then starts to read the letter.)

OLGA

I'm the super and you're the tenant. I'm the super all right. But now you're the super too.

(The stomping on the coal chute doors returns and quickly turns into a single tapping sound. Olga rushes underneath the doors.)

OLGA

Get away from here! Help! Police! Help!

(While Olga is busy yelling, Anthony grabs his jacket and runs out the front door. Olga tries to stop him but Anthony is just a bit faster.)

OLGA(cont'd)

Mr. Novacaine working as a dishwasher in a diner on thirty-seventh street. And I didn't get off no banana boat like you think either. It was an airplane with free drinks and everything.

OLIVIA

(after a moment, softer)

I know it wasn't a boat, Ma.

OLGA

You're just trying to hurt me. You don't have to explain. Around here hurting Olga is like a national pastime. I wouldn't be surprised if one of these days I was sweeping and I came across a scoreboard.

OLIVIA

I had so many plans.

OLGA

Sure you did. Only thing about your kind of plan is that it only includes Olivia.

OLIVIA

Not just for me, Ma. For all of us. Don't you think I wanted something better for you too? Don't you think I wanted to get you out of here? You don't know how many times I've driven past those big fancy houses and swore that one day I was going to buy one for you. I even know the one I'd buy you. It's right on a corner in Stamford, with hedges and trees out front. And in the back there's this area where they're building a swimming pool. One day I even went around the back of the house and watched as they cleared a space for the pool. And you know what I wanted to do, Ma? I wanted to say, 'Hey, stop! Hey, my mother doesn't want no swimming pool

(MORE)

OLIVIA(cont'd)

back there. She just wants some dirt and some seeds so she can grow things.' Then I imagined you squatting back there planting something just like in that picture with you and Dona Lola in Puerto Rico... It's all so unfair, Ma. Everything's so unfair. I listen to Anthony talking about snatching pocket-books and I look at him all dirty and looking like he just came out of a war, and then I think of all those other kids, the same age as Anthony without a care in the world. The most they'll ever have to worry about is first whether it'll be Harvard or Yale, and then later whether they'll go into their Daddy's business or conquer some new turf of their own. It's all so unfair. Those kids didn't have to work for that, Ma. One day they were born and it was just there, waiting for them. They become doctors, lawyers, politicians. They run for President. They have their country clubs, their health clubs, their country houses, their winter houses. They shop at Bergdorff's. They have lunch. They have their faces made... I'll never be able to have any of those things.

OLGA

(after a moment)

...What color is the house?

OLIVIA

White. With columns this big. And a little porch out back.

(Another moment of silence. Nothing more is said. They sit looking down at the floor. The phone rings. Olga picks it up.)

OLGA

(on phone)

Miguel is not here. He went to the...

(But it's not who Olga thought it was. Her voice suddenly becomes softer, almost childish. A slight blush appears on her cheeks.)

OLGA

(cont'd into phone)

Oh...Hello... Yes, I got it. Anthony brought it over. Thank you, but you really didn't have.. No, no. I know it was a gift. It's just that it's such a big bottle and I really don't dri...What?... Out where?.... Well, I... Well if it's just for a drink maybe I could... No,, don't come here. I'll see you in the store...Good-bye.

(She hangs up but remains by the phone for a moment thinking about what she has just done. She then turns to notice Olivia watching her.)

OLIVIA

Who was that?

OLGA

Roy.

OLIVIA

From the liquor store? That slob?

OLGA

He is not a slob, Olivia.

OLIVIA

He's a slob, Ma. I can't believe you're going to go out with him.

OLGA

(from dresser, she takes out a comb and look at herself in the mirror)

Don't judge me, Olivia. Your days as a judge are over.

OLIVIA

Touché, Ma.

OLGA

And so is your French. I don't want to hear anymore French in this house.

OLIVIA

That man has been trying to pick me up ever since I was twelve.

OLGA

Anthony likes him. I have to think about those things now. Like you said, I should have been thinking about those things a long time ago.

OLIVIA

What the hell would Anthony know. He probably just gives Anthony money.

OLGA

Exactly. What do you think, I'm going to go out with him for love? A lot of good love has done me. Somebody has been playing a dirty trick on us, Olivia. If love is supposed to be so good, why is it that it fits so well with all those other four letter words? If love is supposed to be so good for you, why is it that I feel like...

(pause)

You know that house you were talking about. The one you were going to buy for me in Connecticut. Well me and Miguel we went and we looked at a house just like that, only this one was blue and it was in New Jersey. And just like your house, this one had a pool in the back too. But I have to be honest with you, Olivia, I don't know if I would have told them to take out that pool just to put a bunch of dirt in it's place. I'm tired of dirt, Olivia. Dirt is something that followed Miguel around all his life. And me like a damn fool, I followed the dirt while it was following Miguel. A nice

(MORE)

OLGA(cont'd)

trio it was. Miguel, the dirt, and me. But no more. You're absolutely right. I don't want to hear nothing for love anymore. Money is what I want now.

(Olga takes one last look at herself in the mirror and exits into the bedroom. A loud banging suddenly starts at the pipes and Olivia quickly covers her ears.)

OLGA

(from bedroom)

Well are you going to get it or should we wait until your maid gets in from Paris?

(The banging continues and Olivia finally picks up the shovel and proceeds to yell up at the pipes sounding very much like Olga.)

OLIVIA

Enough already!

(The banging continues.)

OLIVIA

I know it's you, Mrs. Puso!

(Olivia sticks the shovel into the coal and proceeds to feed the boiler. After a number of shovels full the banging finally stops. The bedroom door opens and Olga steps out. She is over-dressed. A woman who hasn't been out for a drink in a very long time. Olivia stands by the boiler door holding the shovel. They look at one another for a moment and it seems that Olga might be looking for a compliment.)

OLIVIA

Don't you think it's a little early for that dress?

OLGA

(crosses to dresser)

I'm going to Dona Rosario's to see if she can get this filthy coal dust out of my nails.

(Olga takes a last look at herself in the mirror and starts towards the door. Here she remembers something and returns to the dresser. She puts on the bracelet that Anthony gave her at the opening of the play and returns to the door.)

OLGA

(from door)

When Anthony gets home tell him to open a can of tuna.

(Olga takes one last look at Olivia and finally exits. Olivia gives the boiler a couple of final shovels full and closes the door. The phone rings. Olivia picks it up.)

OLIVIA

(on phone)

Hello... No, my father's not here. He went to the store... No, it's a store downtown. He had to take two trains, a bus and a ferry...

(LIGHTS OUT)

Scene Two, ACT TWO

(It's the middle of the night. Olivia is asleep on the couch with the television on. We hear the electronic crackling from the television telling us that it too has signed off for the night. We hear a key at the front door. The door slowly opens and Olga looks inside at Olivia. Olga looks a bit wobbly from drink as she steps inside and quietly closes the door behind her. She then grabs a wall for support and takes off her shoes. She then quietly crosses to the television and turns it off but here she loses her balance and falls back onto the couch landing on Olivia's legs. Olivia screams from the pain.)

OLIVIA

What are you doing? You scared me.

OLGA

I'm sorry.

OLIVIA

You're drunk.

OLGA

I am not drunk. I just lost my balance.

OLIVIA

You lost your balance because you're drunk.

OLGA

Oh, Olivia, so what if I'm drunk. I had a good time. Don't you want your mother to have a good time?

OLIVIA

What time is it?

OLGA

I think it's going on five. Does that sound right to you?

OLIVIA

Five in the morning? Boy, that was a hot first date.

OLGA

Give me a kiss.

OLIVIA

Stop it, Ma.

(Olivia pulls away but Olga reaches over and plants a big wet kiss on Olivia's cheek. Olivia laughs and wipes it off.)

OLIVIA

You smell like whiskey.

OLGA

I remember when you used to sit on my lap and I used to have to push you off to get you to stop kissing me.

OLIVIA

You probably smelled a lot better then.

OLGA

(smelling her own blouse)

I can't smell anything.

OLIVIA

You probably can't see much either.

OLGA

I can see you just fine. And you want to know something? You're beautiful, Olivia.

(She gives Olivia another wet kiss. Olivia again wipes it off.)

OLIVIA

Jesus, Ma.

OLGA

You remind me so much of the way I used to look. I look at you now and it's as though I was looking at my own reflection ten years ago. That's one thing you have to be thankful to your father for. Cause if I would have married Dona Maria's son, Ramon, like they wanted me to in Puerto Rico, your nose would have looked like this.

(Olga pushes her nose against her face to demonstrate a pug nose. Olivia laughs.)

OLGA

And if I would have married Don Eduardo's son, Ernesto, you would have looked like this...

(Olga lifts her shoulders up to her ears and squeezes her neck into her chest.)

OLGA

He had no neck.

OLIVIA

(laughing)

I didn't know you were so popular.

OLGA

And if would have married Dona Rubilia's son, Fernando, you would have looked like this..

(Olga limps across the stage. Olivia is now laughing so hard that she has to wipe the tears away from her eyes.)

OLIVIA

Stop it, Ma. You're making me cry.

(But Olga won't let up.)

OLGA

And if I would have married all three of them, you would have looked like this..

(This time Olga does all three. She pushes her nose into her face with her forefinger, brings her shoulders once again to her ears, and then limps across the stage. Olga now joins Olivia in the laughter.)

OLGA

What do you think about Miguel now, hah? Miguel is the best thing that ever happened to you. Look at you, you can run for Miss Puerto Rico.

OLIVIA

My sides are hurting.

(Olivia continues to laugh but Olga has suddenly become quiet and she now begins to quietly cry. Olivia finally notices.)

OLIVIA

What is it, Ma?

OLGA

I miss him, Olivia. I miss him so much.

(Olivia takes Olga into her arms.)

OLGA

And you were right about that Roy, you know. He is a slob. We went dancing at the Corso and all night I kept fantasizing that it was Miguel holding me in his arms. But then I'd feel Roy's pudgy little hands sliding down towards my ass and I'd be reminded of where I was. I felt dirty, Olivia.

OLIVIA

Well with Roy that's not hard to understand.

OLGA

It's not just that, Olivia. In over twenty-five years this the first time I've been out with a man other than Miguel. I felt like I was doing something wrong. I felt cheap. I may be a lot of things, but I'm not cheap, Olivia.

OLIVIA

I know you're not, Ma.

(and then after a moment)

Who knows, Ma, maybe Poppi will come back. Twenty-five years is a long time, Ma. I'm not you. I don't know what that feels like. But I don't understand how after all that time he could just get up one day and leave never to be heard from again. All right, maybe you and him used to fight. And me, well we were never that close. But what about Anthony, Ma? He loved Anthony. They did everything together. The cleaning, the mopping, fooling around all the time. The baseball games on Saturday. That was no act, Ma. I just don't understand how he could be gone all this time without as much as a letter or a phone call. Maybe something happened to him.

OLGA

(more to herself than to Olivia)

Anthony's right you know. He's beginning to sound just like Miguel.

OLIVIA

What do you mean?

OLGA

Listen...

(Olga takes a few quick breaths.
Olivia puts her ear to Olga's chest.)

OLGA

You hear it?.. That wheezing sound?...That's
(MORE)

OLGA (cont'd)

how Miguel first started. Then it turned into a cough. Then one day I went into the bathroom and there he was, spitting blood into the sink... Miguel was a very sick man, Olivia.

OLIVIA

(after a moment)

Ma... Have you checked the hospitals?

OLGA

(bypassing the question)

I should have spotted it before you know.

(Olga gets up from the couch. Drained and beaten, she slowly crosses to the bedroom.)

OLGA

(as she exits)

I should have spotted it before.

(Not a moment passes when Olga quickly reenters with a concerned look on her face.)

OLGA

Where's Anthony?

OLIVIA

He's not in there? I fell asleep. I thought he had come in.

(Olga quickly crosses to the kitchen and looks inside.)

OLGA

Anthony...

(she looks behind the boiler)

He's supposed to be in by twelve. We made a deal. I lock him out after twelve. He knows that. He hasn't called or anything?

OLIVIA

No. He probably just stayed at a friend's house.

OLGA

He would have called. We made a deal.

(Olga walks underneath the coal chute doors and yells up at the sidewalk.)

OLGA

Anthony!

(She waits a moment for a response and then takes the ladder from behind the boiler and places it under the coal chute doors.)

OLIVIA

What are you doing?

OLGA

(as she climbs the ladder)

He's probably working on that junk piece of car Miguel left behind. I don't know where he thinks it's going to take him.

(she opens the doors and sticks her head offstage onto the street)

Look at that, the sun is coming out. It's even later than I thought. Anthony!

OLIVIA

Ma, you're going to wake everybody up.

OLGA

Good. It'll be the first time in ten years that somebody didn't wake me up first banging on those pipes asking for heat.

(again she yells into the street)

Anthony!

(she looks to both sides of the street and again waits for a response before closing the doors and starting back down the ladder)

He's never pulled this one before. Just wait till I get my hands on him. I swear, Olivia, if he stayed out all night he's going to have to

(MORE),

OLGA(cont'd)

wait until tonight to go to sleep because the last thing I want around here is some bum kid sleeping around the house all day.

(Olga exits into the bedroom. Alone on stage Olivia sits for a moment then turns the television back on. She turns the dial looking for something to watch but most channels are off the air. She passes a religious program, stops to listen for a moment, and then continues on. Not finding anything else she turns back to the religious program and sits watching it when the telephone rings. Olga appears at the bedroom door as Olivia picks up the phone.)

OLIVIA

(on phone)

Hello....What?...No, this is her daughter.
Who is this?...

OLGA

Who is it?

OLIVIA

(into phone)

Yes, he's my brother. Is anything wrong?..

OLGA

(firm)

Who is it, Olivia?

OLIVIA

(into phone)

WHICH HOSPITAL, DAMNIT?!!!

OLGA

Oh, my God...

(Olivia listens for the name of the hospital and then puts down the phone.)

OLIVIA

(to Olga)

Anthony's been shot.

(Olga quickly places her hands over her ears as Olivia rushes into the bedroom and quickly reenters carrying their coats.)

OLIVIA

Come on, Ma. We have to go to the hospital.

(Olga seems paralyzed. She remains in her spot, her hands covering her ears. Olivia grabs one of Olga's arms and leads her to the door. They exit. BLACKOUT.)

Scene Three, ACT TWO

(About four hours later. The pipes are banging and the telephone is ringing as the front door opens and Olga and Olivia return from the hospital. Exhaustion, bewilderment and sadness are weighing heavily on their bodies as Olivia crosses towards the telephone and Olga picks up the shovel and begins to feed the boiler.)

OLIVIA

(on phone)

Hello...Yes, we know. There was something wrong with the boiler. You should be getting heat in about five minutes...Yes, I know. I'm sorry.

(she hangs up)

OLGA

(as she feeds the boiler, her voice is weak, barely audible)

Was that Mrs. Puso?

OLIVIA

No. That was 2A.

(The telephone rings again. Olivia picks it up.)

OLIVIA

Hello...Oh, hello, Mrs. Puso...Yes, we know. I'm sorry but there was something wrong with the boiler. You should be getting heat in about two minutes...Yes, I know, Mrs. Puso. I'm sorry... No, this is his daughter, Olivia... I'll tell him, Mrs. Puso. Good-bye.

(She hangs up. The telephone rings again.)

OLIVIA

(on phone, losing her patience)

Hello... Oh, hello, Mr. Brooks...No, this is Olivia... He's not in right now, Mr. Brooks. But everything's

(MORE)

OLIVIA(cont'd)

(into phone)

been taken care of. The boiler went off by itself for a while but we got it going again. They should be getting heat any minute now....Thank you but we've broken up since then. That's why I'm home now... No, Mr. Brooks. No kids. So don't worry. I didn't come back with a tribe.

(Olivia slams the phone down. The banging from the pipes has stopped but Olga seems lost in her own world and continues to slowly and rhythmically feed the boiler. Olivia crosses to the boiler and takes the shovel away from Olga then leads her back to the couch.)

OLIVIA

Would you like some coffee, Ma?

(Olga doesn't answer. She is still lost in her own thoughts.)

OLIVIA

Ma, are you all right?

OLGA

(after a moment)

...Why do they need so many tubes?

OLIVIA

They always do that. You go in there with a cold and the first thing they do is stick a tube up your nose.

OLGA

...I once saw this man on TV that had been in a coma and he said that people should talk to you because you can hear them. He said that all his life he and his brother had been fighting and that when he was in the hospital

(MORE)

OLGA(cont'd)

his brother came to visit and told him things
he could never tell him before...

(pause)

I told Anthony that I loved him.

OLIVIA

I know you did, Ma. That was nice. But
Anthony's not in a coma. He's going to
be okay.

OLGA

(after a moment, to herself)

I had never told him that before.

(Again there is silence. They sit side by side,
each lost in their own thoughts. Another
moment passes when suddenly the coal chute
doors are opened from the offstage sidewalk
and Olga and Olivia quickly turn to see a long
metal slide enter the stage and rest on the
coal.)

OLGA

No!

(Olga quickly runs towards the slide and
begins to yell up at the sidewalk.)

OLGA

Wait a minute! Wait a minute! You're supposed
to be converting this to oil! Where's the oil
boiler?! Where's the oil boiler you promised
Miguel?!

(Small amounts of coal begin to roll down the
slide and land on the coal below.)

OLGA

Goddamn you! Don't you understand?! We
don't want no more coal! This stuff is not
good for you! The dust! It gets in here!

(She slaps at her chest. The coal pebbles continue to roll down. Olga grabs a handful of coal and throws it back towards the sidewalk.)

OLGA

Stop it!

(Olga grabs another handful of coal and throws it back up towards the sidewalk when suddenly, as though in retaliation, a large mass of coal rolls down the slide and forms a huge pile below which extends out from the boiler area into the rest of the room. Olga and Olivia are both shocked at the amount of coal which has entered the room.)

OLIVIA

Oh, my God...

OLGA

You sonnavabitch!!!!

(Having done its job the slide starts to retreat back up towards the sidewalk but Olga grabs the shovel and starts to attack it as it exits. The slide disappears, the coal chute doors are closed from offstage, and Olga turns the shovel on the boiler and shatters one of the glass dials above the boiler.)

OLIVIA

Ma, what are you doing?

(Olga swings again and shatters another one of the dials.)

OLIVIA

Stop it, Ma!

(Olivia tries to take the shovel away from Olga but Olga pushes her into the coal and continues to swing at the boiler.)

OLGA

I hate this place! I hate it!

(Exhausted, Olga finally drops the shovel and begins to sob hysterically.)

OLGA

This place, Olivia. It killed my Miguel!
It killed him.

OLIVIA

What are you talking about, Ma?

OLGA

Miguel is dead, Olivia. He's dead. This place killed him. He died right there coughing his guts out. A hundred times I tried to get him to go to the hospital, but that weak sonnavabitch, he wanted to die!

OLIVIA ,

Why didn't you tell me this before?

OLGA

Look how he left me, Olivia. We had no money. No insurance. Nothing.

OLIVIA

Ma, why didn't you tell me this before?!

OLGA

(at the top of her lungs)

BECAUSE WE BURNED HIM, THAT'S WHY!!!

OLIVIA

(not sure of what she heard)

You did what?

OLGA

We burned him! We burned him, Olivia. Me and Anthony. We burned him right here in that boiler.

(Olivia is shocked. She backs away from Olga.)

OLGA

Don't look at me like that!!..What else were we supposed to do? Do you think he would have wanted to let the city bury him like he was some piece of garbage from the street? You tell me, Olivia, what else were we supposed to do, make a collection so the landlord could find out and kick us out in the street? Don't you dare judge me, Olivia, cause it's too late for that. Only God can judge me now. And what else can he do to me that he hasn't already done? He's taken my husband, and now my son is laying in the hospital with a bullet hole in his stomach. What else can he do to me? Send me to hell? Well you take a good look around you, Olivia. You take a good look and tell me how hell could possibly be any worse than this.

(There's a moment's silence. Olga exits into the bedroom. Olivia watches her exit then looks over at the boiler. She stands looking at the boiler for a moment and then walks over to it. Her walk to the boiler is guarded and cautious. She carefully opens the door and stands looking inside at its flame when the telephone rings. Olga appears at the bedroom door and waits for Olivia to pick up the phone.)

OLIVIA

(on phone)

Hello...

OLGA

Is it the hospital?

OLIVIA

(on phone)

Hello, Roy...

(At hearing Roy's name Olga turns back into the bedroom and slowly closes the door behind her.)

OLIVIA

(into phone) ,

This is Olivia. My mother can't come to the phone right now...Yes, that's right. We just got back. Bad news travels fast, doesn't it...
...Yes, as a matter of fact, there is something you could do. Do you have any money? I want to move my mother out of here and I need to borrow the security deposit and the first month's rent....A drink?....

(Olivia looks agonized, finding it hard to make up her mind. And then, almost inaudible:)

...Fine, Roy... I'll see you there.

(she hangs up, but remains there, as though trying to accept what she's done. She looks towards the bedroom)

Ma...

(she crosses to the bedroom and knocks lightly on the door)

Ma, I have to go out for a while. I'm leaving the phone by the door in case the hospital calls... Ma?...

(Still there is no answer. Olivia finally crosses to the front door and exits.
SLOW FADE TO BLACK.)

Scene Four, ACT TWO

(Most of the furniture has been pushed closer to the front door and anything capable of holding loose articles - cardboard boxes, pillow cases, garbage bags, milk crates, shopping bags - has been put into use and stacked around the front door. It's moving day. There's an excitement in the air as Olivia enters dragging a cardboard box from the bedroom and leaves it by the front door with the others.)

OLIVIA

We're going to have to make about thirty trips each to get all this stuff upstairs.

(Olga enters from the bedroom dragging another box.)

OLGA

As long as the last trip leaves us upstairs, a hundred trips would be fine by me.

(she calls out towards the kitchen)

Anthony...

(Anthony appears at the kitchen entrance in crutches. Olga walks over to him.)

OLGA

You smell like chicken. You've been eating that chicken in there again, haven't you?

ANTHONY

I'm hungry, Ma. I thought the point of going to the hospital is to get better. How am I supposed to get better eating nothing but baby food and milk?

OLGA

Don't you understand your stomach can't take anything hard right now?

ANTHONY

It's not my stomach that's hurting, it's my
behind from having to go to the bathroom
so much. All that milk is giving me diarrhea.

OLGA

Once a knuckle head, always a knuckle head.
What does it take for you to learn something?
Did you pack everything in newspaper like
I told you to?

ANTHONY

I can't get the box off the sink.

OLIVIA

I'll get it.

(Olivia exits into the kitchen.
Anthony follows her in.)

OLGA

I still can't believe we're moving. I keep
expecting something to go wrong.

(The telephone rings. Olga picks it up.)

OLGA

(on phone)

Miguel is not here. He went to the... Oh, Hi.
I thought it was one of the tenants. I was
hoping you'd call...No, no. Everything is
fine. I just wanted to thank you again for
loaning us that money and I also wanted
to tell you that I'm looking forward to
paying you back. I know this is going to
sound strange but it actually feels good
being in debt. You know, having a goal
and all...

(Olivia reenters carrying the box of dishes.)

OLIVIA

Who is it, Ma?

OLGA
(to Olivia)

Roy.

(Olivia immediately becomes guarded. She puts the box on the floor and stands listening to the conversation.)

OLGA
(on phone)

We're going to an employment agency tomorrow to see if they can find us something. I'm sure Olivia will find something right away, her having a High School diploma and all. But I think with me it might be a little harder. I was thinking maybe I could do some baby-sitting or something like that. After Olivia and Anthony a pair of wild gorillas would be a breeze for me. Listen Roy, I know I wasn't very nice to you the other night but I had a lot on my mind and I think I had you all wrong. I was thinking that maybe if you had some time later this week we should try again. My treat, okay?...
...What?...Well then maybe next week. We could...What?...Olivia?...Yes, she's right here. You want to speak with her?

(Olga looks to Olivia not fully understanding what is happening. Olivia takes the phone.)

OLIVIA
Hello...

(Olga sits on a chair but continues to listen to the conversation.)

OLIVIA
(on phone)
No, nothing is wrong. We just have so much
(MORE)

OLIVIA(cont'd)

to do and we're all kind of anxious to get upstairs....No, I don't think so, Roy. I'm going to be dead tired after this and...Well tomorrow I have to go to the employment agency Ma was telling you about and... No, it's really not a good week for me, Roy. We'll get the money back to you as soon as we can...No, next week is not good for me either...Well I'm sorry you feel that way but someone like you doesn't get used unless he wants to be used. I have to go now, Roy...The same to you too.

(Olivia hangs up and looks towards Olga. They look at each other for a moment and Olivia finally picks up a couple of knick-knacks from the coffee table and takes them to a box by the door. Olga continues to watch her.)

OLGA

You went out with him, didn't you?

OLIVIA

We had a drink.

OLGA

(suddenly furious)

You had more than a drink. After everything that's happened, I thought we had learned something! How could you go out with that pig?!

OLIVIA

What did you want me to do!? I didn't want you to have to spend one more day down here! What did you think, that that pig was going to loan us the money for free?!

OLGA

Olivia, I didn't want it to be like this! I thought things were going to be different?!

OLIVIA

(walks over; softer)

Things are going to be different, Ma. But the first thing we have to do is get the hell out of this place. Poppi's gone, Ma, and we can't do anything about that. But we're still here and I think it's time we started having a little faith in one another. We have a choice now, Ma. It may not be a big fancy house with a pool in the back, but at least it's a start. We have to start someplace, Ma. Let's just pack whatever's left, pay that pig back his money, and for once, Ma...let's start believing in each other.

(Silence. Olga still seems unforgiving. The moment is interrupted by Anthony who appears at the kitchen entrance.)

ANTHONY

Oh, this is really great. If I knew I'd be stuck in there doing all the packing, I would of stayed in the hospital.

OLGA

(directing this to Olivia)

We we're just talking about how different things are going to be around here from now on.

(back to Anthony)

And as soon as you get better, you're going to have to find yourself a job after school to help out around here. And I'm not talking about stripping cars or going down to Riverside Drive to snatch pocket-books. You see where that got you.

ANTHONY

It would of gotten me eighty-five bucks if that stupid Paco didn't mess everything up.

OLGA

(softer, almost pleading)

Anthony, I couldn't go through this again..
...I think you know that.

OLIVIA

Anthony, if that woman didn't feel sorry
for you and decided to press charges,
right now you'd be in jail recuperating.

ANTHONY

There she goes using that French again, Ma.

(Anthony makes his way to the front door.)

ANTHONY

Ma, can we go upstairs now? Ricky's out front
and I want to drop a water balloon on his head.

(Anthony exits.)

OLGA

I swear, Olivia, sometimes I look at that boy
and he reminds me exactly of Dona Lola's
son.

OLIVIA

What about this tiger, Ma? It's missing a foot.
You want to take it upstairs?

OLGA

All this time and now you notice that?
That tiger's been missing that foot ever
since Miguel found it upstairs collecting
the garbage.

OLIVIA

I'm going to leave it, Okay? I'll buy you
another one later.

OLGA

Thank you but I wouldn't know what to do with myself if I suddenly got one of those animals with all four feet. I know it'll never be in a museum or anything like that but Miguel didn't have too many things and whatever's left I'd like to take upstairs with me. I'll keep it in my room.

OLIVIA

We'll put it right smack in the middle of the living room is where we'll put it.

(Olivia wraps the tiger in a towel and places it inside one of the boxes. She then picks up the box and exits. Olga picks up another box and starts to exit but she stops by the door and looks up at the plants. She then places the box on the couch, gets a chair, and takes down the plant that Doug and Olivia gave her. Olivia reenters and notices what Olga is doing.)

OLIVIA

Ma, what are you doing? That plant is dead.

OLGA

(looking inside the plant)

No. There's still something in there.
I think we caught it just in time.

(Olivia exits. Olga places the plant on top of the box on the couch. She stands alone looking at the room for a moment. Finally she picks up the box and plant and follows Olivia out.
FADE TO BLACK.)

THE END

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