

***CHELA: HER THIRD HUSBAND,
HER FIRST ORGASM***
A multi-media, one-woman show

Dulce Maria Solis

Synopsis

Attending to her own orgasm is something Chela does when she's bored. At least that's what she tells the Oklahoma motel handyman who just gave Chela her first orgasm, which she innocently mistakes for peeing on herself. Although asking this man to sleep with her isn't the most ethical way for this married woman to sexually heal, it is a major stepping-stone in her journey as a survivor of domestic violence. Based on a true story of a woman's journey to find love, combat lunacy, confront sexual taboos, and battle domestic violence, *CHELA* is an intimately staged biography written and performed by me, her daughter, Dulce Maria Solis. This original story, told from my mother's point of view, follows Chela from Mexico to the United States in her quest to find love and affirm self-worth.

Characters

*CHELA, the protagonist. A Mexican woman portrayed from girlhood to middle age.

PANCHO, a motel maintenance man. Gives Chela goose-pimples "down there."

SERGIO, Chela's childhood sweetheart.

JAVIER, local fisherman with a stupid look on his face, who is in love with Chela.

NACHO BORRACHO, the local drunk who loiters at Angelita's eatery.

*ANGELITITA, mother of fifteen children. Chela is one of them.

*AURORA, Chela's sexualized sister, the most vocal of the siblings.

FINITO, Chela's calculating first husband.

*NURSE MARY JOE, the county hospital nurse who uses her high school Spanish to instruct Chela on how to properly feed her four-month old, thirty-five pound infant.

PABLO, Chela's younger brother and constant companion.

DULCE-MARÍA, Chela's young daughter.

*DR. GUSAMI, an East Indian doctor at the Beaconsville Psychiatric Ward in Oklahoma.

NARRATOR, voice over who offers commentary about Chela's plight.

*LINDA, an Oklahoma lesbian who befriends Chela at the women's shelter.

*ZUKI, self-proclaimed sexual guru and a friend of Chela's.

JOSE LUIS, Chela's sexually inexperienced second husband.

NOTE: In the original one-woman production, characters marked with () were portrayed by Dulce Maria Solis. All other characters were depicted through the use of multi-media or props.*

PROLOGUE

1992. The Sunshine Motel, Oklahoma City. Thirty-two year old CHELA is in bed with a man and at the peak of her orgasm.

CHELA: ...AHHHH! AHHH. AHHHH. AAAHHH!!! OH OH
AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH! EEEHHH.

CHELA closes her eyes. A smile forms on her face. Feeling a wet spot under her body, she frantically jumps up. Unable to pull the bed sheet off PANCHITO, she covers herself up with her apron.

CHELA (*responding to the man*): Eh?! No, nothing's wrong. I just need to go to the bathroom. (*She runs to the bathroom.*) NO!!! I mean no, don't come back here, but—Yes! Yes, I enjoyed it very much, it's just that I, uh...I think I just peed on myself. (*Beat.*) Did I cum? Come from where? (*Beat.*) Un orgasmo? What's that? (*Beat.*) Oh. OHHH! No. I mean yes. Oh YEAH, I orgasmo all the time. Oh yeah...I wake up and orgasmo, go to sleep and orgasmo, sometimes *just* so boring, I orgasmo. Mmm hhhmmmm. (*She cleans herself up.*) Look Pancho, if you no longer want to see me, then everyone go their own way. Viendo la bien; it's not like we can continue anyways. Right? (*He doesn't respond.*) I mean...I have to think about my kids, my home, and my husband, too. (*Beat.*) And my husband, too. (*Beat.*) Unless of course you're not bothered by all this.... Because if it doesn't bother you, it doesn't.... Are you scheduled to work again tomorrow night? Because if you want to continue, then I...want...to...go home.... and think about this first. But, it could be a very long time before I give you an answer. A *very* long time! Because, you can't just ask these types of questions to a woman and then expect her to give you an answer from one moment to the next, unless of course.... Unless of course, you get very stubborn on me that you need an answer right away, that it's now or never, and then of course, I have no choice but to say, Yeeesss. I will continue to see you. Since that's what you really want. (*He doesn't respond.*) That is what you really want, right? RIGHT?!!

Still not getting a response, CHELA peeks out of the bathroom doorway.

CHELA (*to the audience*): Look at him. He fell asleep. Pancho. He was always fixing this, that, or the other in the motel rooms I was cleaning. Well, he would take me in those big, big arms of his and say, "Chelita Preciosa. Every time I look at you, I think to myself that you are the most.... Almost the most.... Well, pretty close to the most beautiful woman in the world to

me.” Ay Pancho. You’re so romantic. And he would tell me, “How soft and golden your skin is. And your eyes: They sparkle like the stars in the sky.”
(*To PANCHO.*) Really? You don’t think they’re too close together? (*Beat.*) It didn’t matter to me if he was lying or not, because for the first time in a very long time, I felt alive again. I felt...that I was more than my obligations, that *I*, Chela, was beautiful.

But time went on and on, and he wouldn’t go past his, “Your eyes are this, and your skin is that,” and “I have too much respect for you to do this or that, and...” Respect? I no longer wanted to be respected. I no longer cared for what was decent, or for what people were going to say about me. What I wanted was to be with *that* man. *That* man that my body wanted, *that* man that my body chose, *that* man that my body burned for. And I couldn’t take it anymore.

So one day, just before he walked out that motel door, I shouted, “I WANT TO BE WITH YOU!” He turns around...and there I stood—completely naked. This time, *I* chose him. This time, *I* went after him; and, this time—I enjoyed it! (*She picks up a marble.*) And for the first time, in a very long time, I felt alive again—for the first time, in a very long time.

SCENE 1: CHELITA

1967. Uruapan, Michoacán, Mexico. A small impoverished room. A rooster crows.

CHELA: Si, ’ama, ya voy. Si, ’ama. I’m going! I’m going. Si, ’ama, I’m up!

Still half asleep, CHELA drags a bucket of dirty clothes toward the river, but noticing the audience, she runs underneath the kitchen table. She takes a peek at the audience, hides again, and then resurfaces with a giant smile.

CHELA: Hola! My name is Chela. And I'm seven years old. I have three brothers and two sisters, but I'm the oldest. That's why my mom asked me to help her. And every morning I get up, and I wash, and I clean, and I make beans and tortillas for my brothers and sisters. Except for Pablito. He's brand new. He only likes me to feed him milk—all day, and all night. And he poops a lot too. (*Addressing a male audience member.*) Hola, Niño Grandote!!! Wow, you're a really big kid. But I bet I'm older than you. How old are you, six? (*CHELA rejoices in the attention.*)

That's my favorite hiding spot (*pointing underneath the table*). And this (*grabbing a marble*), this is my favorite marble. Hey, you wanna see me do a magic trick? (*Takes a rag from the laundry basket and presents her marble as if for the first time.*) Now you see it. (*She covers the marble with the rag, carefully takes hold of the marble as the rag covers it, lifts it off her hand, and shows the audience her empty mano.*) Now you don't. (*CHELA repeats the trick in reverse action.*) You don't see it. And now, you do. Es magia! It's magic. (*Pause.*) I'm going to teach you how to play marbles! First, we take a bottle cap and we make a hole in the ground, just like this. Then, we line up all my marbles for everyone to see. So that Javier can say, "And I'll play you for that ocean blue marble," or so that Sergio can say, "And I'll play you for the tiger-eyed marble." And we're going to say, Yes! 'Cause all I have to do is go like this—mira. (*She demonstrates her marble winning technique.*) And like this, and.... Hey! You want to see me do some cartwheels?

CHELA does some pretty pathetic cartwheels, but is nonetheless very proud. Taking advantage of her captive audience, she offers them her newest trick.

Look. Look! I can also make my whole hand disappear. (*CHELA puts her whole hand in her mouth. By the time she gets to her wrist, she gags.*)

CHELA (*to the big kid in the audience*): Okay, now your turn. Here. You can borrow mine. (*She offers him her slobbery dripping hand. And when he doesn't take it...*) Ahhh...no pudo, no pudo. He can't do it! Only mee-ee!! Only mee-ee!!! (*Beat.*) If you're six-years-old that means you're in the first grade? Me too. I'm supposed to be in the second grade but.... My homework! I have to do my homework. (*Shouting.*) Toni, Chemo, Vero, Aurora, get up!!! (*She looks for her homework.*) One plus one is two. Two plus two is four. Three plus three is?? (*She kicks the bucket and yells to the back.*) You'll eat stale tortillas for breakfast, that's what you'll eat if you don't get up soon, Aurora! (*Notices her homework is stuck to the bottom of the bucket.*) My homework. It's all wet.

CHELA (*responding to her mother OFFSTAGE*): Si, 'ama, ahí voy! (*She wrings out her homework, irons it flat with her hands, and then blows on it.*) Si, 'ama, I'm going, I'm going. (*She spins around in circles with her homework, then checks to see if it has dried and is disappointed.*) Si, 'ama. Ahí voy. I'm going. (*To the big kid.*) Why did you have to come and talk to me, Niño Grandote?! If you hadn't come talk to me, I would have already finished. (*Tears up her homework and chucks it.*) Who needs school anyways? I learned how to cook, clean, and wash without going to school. And my mom says school is for whores. (*As she EXITS the stage.*) One plus one is two. Two plus two is four? Three plus three is...? She's right. School is for whores.

SCENE 2: WAKALA!

Same Location. In a makeshift kitchen.

CHELA (*singing*): "Son tus perfumenes mujer. Los que me sulibellan. Los que me sulibellan." Was the 1975 hit song that everyone was singing. And

Sergio. (*Beat.*) Was singing it to me. (*She continues singing.*) “Los que me sulibellan. Los que me sulibellan.” When all the sudden, I felt like somebody was watching me. I turn around and... (*To Javier.*) Ayyy Javier. Why didn’t you say something instead of just standing there with that stupid look on your face? You scared me.

It was just Javier the local fisherman. I thought for sure it was that pinche Nacho Borracho. Always sneaking in, and early too. (*Beat. In NACHO BORRACHO’s voice.*) “Oiga, Chelita. I know you don’t open for lunch until three, but if you could just give this poor old man just a little something to eat. I promise to pay you back tomorrow, (*biccup*) tomorrow.” Yeah, he’s going to pay me back. Si, from his hands to my hands, I’ve never seen not one peso. But like my mom says, it’s my fault for always giving it to him.

Ay Javier, you should have been here earlier. I had to kill this pig all by myself. Skin so tough, I had to ride him for half an hour and stab him a good five times before he would die. Now, I just got to figure out how I’m going to finish cutting and cooking him before my mom gets here. What? Did I like the serenade you brought me the other day? (*To audience.*) The serenade he brought me for my fifteenth birthday. Well, yeah, yeah I liked it-ed. (*To the audience.*) But I liked Sergio’s better.

CHELA (*to Javier*): Oh yeah, you sing really well. (*To audience.*) But Sergio sings better. Oh yeah, you sound just like...Vicente Fernandez...well, in your pitch—your falsetto. The way that you run out of breath by the time that you get to “te las cantamos así.” Ha ha ha!! (*Noticing that Javier isn’t laughing.*) Ha...ha...ha... (*To audience.*) Javier didn’t have much of a personality, but today he had even less.

Ay Javier, why the long face? Don't tell me you're still moping over the marbles I won off you the other day; just say it, "Chela. You're the Marble Queen." Yes, Javier, I know why you're here. But I'm going to tell you the same thing I always tell you. That there's nothing between us. *(Beat.)* Because YOU come around all the time. What am I suppose to do, ignore you? You come around so much, you got the whole neighborhood thinking you're my boyfriend. You?! And don't think I don't know about you going around and telling everyone that we are, eh. *(She gestures.)* The other day my grandmother asked me if we're together, then my mother asked me if we're together. Bueno, pero ya, ya estuvo bien, no?! I want to tell you this for the last time, Javier. You and I are nothing. Understand? Nothing. *(Beat.)* Let me show you something. *(Shows him a marble.)* You see this? Sergio gave it to me. Get it? *(Beat.)* And I know you're probably going to hate me for saying this, but I think I'm going to have to ask you not to come around anymore. You should probably go now. Adios. Adios, Javier! Adios!

Then, just as he starts to leave, he turns around, and plants a kiss on my face. Wakala! You saliva-ed all over my mouth, cochino. Vete! Then, he comes at me. *(She MIMES his actions.)* Both arms sticking straight out like a zombie. And squeezes my chi chis. ¿Qué chingaos haces, Javier? Suelgame. Suelgame. Javier Javier Javier!!! *(She wrestles with Javier and fights to push him away.)* But Javier was no longer there. He twisted my arm, threw me up against the wall, lifted up my skirt and.... No. No. NOOO!!! *(Long pause.)* The whole thing lasted only seconds. But it felt like forever. I ran for the kitchen knife. But all I could do was stare at him. He stumbles away and says, "I'm sorry. I'm really sorry." Hours passed before I heard my mother's voice again. I had let a crowd of customers gather in front of the house.

SCENE 3: FRESH CARNITAS

ANGELITITA (*addressing the audience*): Señores, Señores, I'm sure we're just a little backed up right now. Has Angelita ever let you down? Well, then see, you men are just getting all worked up for...Don Diego? I haven't seen you in so long, I thought you had forgotten about us girls. Don Rafael? Is that a new hat you're wearing? Looking good. The hat, I mean. Ha ha ha. What?! Where did you men get the idea that today's pig meat isn't any good? You just let me inside that kitchen, and I'll have you eating fresh carnitas in no time. (*Kicking NACHO.*) Y tu pinche Nacho Borracho, quítate de aquí, quítate. Get your drunken self away from these decent men. Fresh carnitas, coming right up. (*She goes inside the kitchen.*)

Chela?! Chela?! Hija de tu chingada madre...she hasn't even started on the pig? (*Takes off her rebozo. Grabs her apron.*) Toni! Chemo! Vero, Aurora, Pablo! (*She turns around and finds them all lined up.*) Toni. Chemo. Bring me down the pig! Aurora, start telling the whole neighborhood that tonight, Angelita stays open until the last taco sells. Vero, Pablo, go and heat up last night's carnitas, but make sure and bring it in through the back door, eh? I don't want the customers seeing it. Pablito, do you want to eat tomorrow? And the day after tomorrow? And the day after that? Then stop your arguing and GO, before I take off my chancla!!!

Suddenly hears whimpering. She follows the sound.

CHELA?! Chela? Chela. Que chingaos haces hiding underneath the table without selling me the lunch, without selling me the dinner, while we lose all our customers? Get out from underneath there, pero ya! (*Kicks CHELA out from underneath the table.*) Didn't you hear me calling you? And you better have a very good reason for this. Stop your mumbling and crying and speak

up, who did what to you, a ver? (*Beat.*) Chela, te juro, that now is not the time for your little inventions, eh? Tell me again what exactly *really* happened here? (*Beat.*) He did, did he? (*She slaps CHELA.*) A ver, sigue! Sigue con tus mitos! While I spent all day going door-to-door, begging people to lend us money, the princess decides that today she's going to take the day off, and then act like the neighborhood crazy to save herself. I knew I should have left you with one of the kids. Do you think I sell food for my health? That the money your father sends is enough? (*ANGELITITA goes back to the lunch crowd.*)

Ayyy Señores, you men were right. A tragedy in the family has happened. Tía Inocencia. Dead. Dead. Dead. But the good news is the funeral is not 'til next week. Right now, you men are hungry. Señores! Señores! A donde van? Please don't go. Well, do you want fast food or good food?! Because Angelita only serves the very best. (*In desperation.*) Don Diego! Remember two weeks ago when you and your hungry men came at three in the morning, and me and my daughters opened up even though we were already closed? Don Rafael. You ate here for a whole month! Without paying! 'Til you got your old job back. Gracias, Señores. Thank you. Fresh carnitas, coming right up. (*ANGELITITA returns to CHELA in the kitchen.*)

You've got five minutes to clean yourself up. And put a smile on that damn face of yours. Between you and that drunken Nacho Borracho, I'm not going to have any more customers left.

I let your teachers convince me to let you go back to school once before, but I won't be made a fool again. So you can stop asking me.

CHELA: I never did have the courage to again explain to my mother what happened that day; and, as promised, I never did go back to school. There

really wasn't any time anyways, what with the cleaning of the house and the taking care of my brothers and sisters, especially my sister Aurora who could always be found in some dark corner, with some guy.

SCENE 4: I'M NOT LIKE YOU

In a dark corner, AURORA giggles and heavily makes out with a boy.

AURORA: No, no ahí, no. No, no ahí, no. No, not there, I said. *(Feels something hit her head.)* Ay! Ay! Ouch! Hey, stop throwing rocks would you? Chela?! Gulp. Uh. We were just talking. Eiy, let go of my arm. Ouch. Eiy, stop hitting me. Ouch! *(Protecting her butt with her hand.)* No me duele, no me duele, cabrona! It doesn't hurt.

AURORA shakes loose, runs into a room, slams the door shut, and pushes herself against the door to lock out CHELA.

What happened to you, not feeling well? That you had a fever? Lo que pasa is that you're just jealous of me because nobody likes you, Chela. Nobody likes you 'cause you're scrawny, and you're ugly. You're scrawny, and you're ugly! *(Hears a clicking sound.)* Eiy! Did you just lock me up in here? Like... like a dog? Eiy, Chela. Mom told you not to be locking me up anymore, remember? You know how I get. The walls, they're starting to close in on me. Everything's getting darker. I'm going to drown. *(Starts to hyperventilate.)* HUUUUUhhh. HUUUUUhhhhh. AHUUUUhhhhh!!! *(Not getting a response.)* Open the door, and I promise to go and get your medication. Sweep the kitchen? Alright, alright, I'll lend you one of my boyfriends. El Pilin says he likes bones. Ha ha ha. *Ope-ehn the do-orrr.* Open the door, or I'll...I'll kill myself! I promise I'll do it this time; I'll kill myself with.... *(She looks around*

the room and finds only a bed sheet.) I'm going to hang myself. (*Tying one end of the bed sheet around her neck.*) You'll be sorry. When the people see you walking down the street, they're going to point at you and say, "THERE! There goes the girl who killed her little sister. Asesina. Asesina. Murderer!" Ha! Ha! Ha ha ha!

AURORA ties the other end of the bed sheet to the bed leg, lies down, and attempts to hang herself horizontally. Unable to commit suicide this way, she unties herself from the bed leg, climbs on top of a chair, and looks at the ceiling for a place to tie the bed sheet. But the ceiling is too high.

You just had to beat me up right in front of everybody, didn't you? Right in front of him?! Poor guy. I doubt he'll ever come around after what you did to his head. Adios, para siempre, adios. (*With the bed sheet still tied around her neck, she jumps off the chair and in mid-air yanks it up. Nothing. Still alive....*) You may want me to kill myself, but I won't give you the pleasure. HA! HA! HA! (*She grabs her one legged ragged doll and hugs it.*) I'm sick and tired of you always beating on me. We're all tired of you beating up on us. One day, we're all gonna gang up on you and see how you like it. I'm eleven years old. Almost a woman, and you're still hitting on me. If papi was here, you wouldn't be hitting on me, 'ama Chela. Me, the one who loves you the most. 'Ama Chela?! (*Crying.*) 'Ama Chela? (*Getting no response.*) Papi, where are you? I think it's better that I go away. Very, very far away. Where I can have all the boyfriends I want. Where people aren't always telling me, "Aurora, you're so lazy! Aurora, you never do anything. Aurora, you don't even know how to clean in between your nalgas, and you're out chasing boys. Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" Pues, NO! Let them see it, let them smell it, let them eat my caca-stained underwears. I don't care. I'm not like you, 'ama Chela. "Si, mama; whatever you say, mama; anything else I can do for you, mama?" I'm not like you. I am

not anyone's maid. *(She unties the bed sheet off her neck, leans over a chair, and exposes her butt.)* Andale, pues. Come and kick my ass, I won't fight you. But when you're finished, I'm leaving. *(There's no response. She yanks on the door.)* Eiy. Analfabeta?! *(Finding the door unlocked, she pushes it open, steps out, and trips over CHELA's body.)*

'Ama Chela, what are you doing on the floor? I thought we agreed you were going to kick my ass? Are you pretending to be dead so you can come after me, 'ama Chela? 'Ama Chela?! Well, if you're really dead.... *(Picking up a large stone.)* You're not going to feel this giant rock on your head.

CHELA: When I woke up, there was a giant bump on my head, a cut on my stomach, and my mother was slapping me. But for some reason, I didn't feel anything, anything at all. I felt like I was dreaming. Above me were a group of nuns dragging my mother off of me as she screamed, "Que fuiste hacer niña, que fuiste hacer? What did you go and do?!"

SCENE 5: THE NECKLACE

A pregnant Angelita sits inside a Red Cross office room.

ANGELITITA: You're right. You're right, Mother Superior! I shouldn't be hitting my daughter, especially while she's under anesthesia. It's just that when her father finds out that—No, you're right, you're right. I need to be a good mother to my daughter, I'm going to be a good mother to.... What is that you're filling out, Mother Superior? The hospital bill? Oh. I see. *(Abruptly wails.)* Ayyy Dios Mío! Twelve children, one on the way, and now my daughter. Ayyy Dios Mío! I don't know if you can imagine what it's like, Mother Superior, to rush to the waiting room, wait hours upon hours, only

for the doctor to come out and say...and in front of everybody too, “Señora Angelita, when we removed your daughter’s appendix, we also found that she...that she...” and in front of everybody too, in front of my poor, poor, *old*, arthritic mother. And that Doña Chenchá, who just couldn’t leave fast enough to go tell it to the whole neighborhood! And now I have to tell it to her father. Ayyy Dios Mío.... WHAT? You’re not going to bill us? Oh, you nuns have always been so good to my family. May God bless you nuns. Because God is great, you know. Because God never abandons. Because God may tighten his hands around your neck but never completely chokes you. Because—(*Beat.*) Am I ready to take her home? When? Today?! Now? But, but, but she just got here. Please, Mother Superior. Couldn’t she stay just one more day? You need her bed? I see. (*Long beat. Removing her necklace.*) Do you know, Mother Superior, at one time my family owned the land this Red Cross was built on. At one time, my family owned one third of all Uruapan, Michoacán. This necklace. The only thing I have left from that time. Whatever she can get from it, tell her to make her life somewhere else because I cannot take her home. What will I tell her father? To her father, I will simply say that.... (*Aside.*) No. I will write a letter. “Querido Papa, I’m running away. Do not look for me. I do not want to be found. Adios, Chela.” I don’t know what I will tell her father, but I’ll figure out something.

SCENE 6: EN LA CASA DE DOÑA MARÍA

CHELA, *nine months pregnant, wrings out a wet towel from a laundry basket.*

CHELA (*singing*): “Tu, solo, tu...has llenado de luto mi vida....” (*Stops singing.*) Seeing as I had no place to go, the nuns gave me the name of a certain Doña María, who lived in Mexico City, and who needed help around the house. So

here I am, en la casa de Doña María. Here we sit at the table and eat, together. And watch telenovelas, together. And stay up talking until all hours of the night. Together.

Someone ENTERS.

Oh. That's Panchita. The housemaid. She's been eyeing my laundry for a while now. *(To Panchita.)* Hola Panchita. *(Drops the towel she's been wringing out and YANKS the broom from PANCHITA.)* No no no, Panchita. I've got that. I'll do the sweeping around here.

(Noticing that PANCHITA is about to pick up the wet towel she just dropped on the floor. CHELA runs toward PANCHITA, broom still in tow, and steps on the towel.) No no no, Panchita. I got that. I'll do the wringing around here. *(CHELA attempts to pick up the dropped towel, but her pregnant belly gets in the way. She notices that PANCHITA has started to dust. With the broom still in tow, CHELA steps on the wet towel and drags it toward PANCHITA, takes out her own dust cloth, and dusts away.)* No no no, Panchita, I got that, I got that. I'll do the dusting around here. *(Responding to something PANCHITA says, an indignant CHELA throws the dust cloth on the floor and places her hand on her hip.)* Well, maybe you Mexico City maids can't clean everything all at once, but I am from Uruapan, Michoacán. Pues, just look it how I...how I...? *(Looking at the dust cloth she has tossed onto the floor.)* I... . *(Unable to pick it up, but refusing to give up, CHELA begins swishing her butt back and forth.)* I dust.... And sweep. And wring it out.... *(CHELA simultaneously orchestrates all three chores: She dusts with her butt, sweeps with the broom, and stomps on the towel.)* ...And dust, and sweep, and wring it out. Dust, sweep, wring. Just look at me, look at how I can do it *all* at once. Eiy Panchita, where you going? Don't you want to learn how to clean everything all at once?!

PANCHITA EXITS.

Doña María tells me to take it easy. That that's what Panchita is for. It's just that if Panchita does everything.... If I don't help.... At night when Doña María gives every one of her daughters a kiss, she gives one to me too. And she runs her fingers through my hair and tickles my belly. I know what you're thinking. Fifteen years old. Bigger than a watermelon. And still wants to be babied. But Doña María doesn't see it that way. (*Beat.*) The other day, she told me to start thinking about a career because as soon as my baby is born, she's going to send me back to school. Doña María says you can actually get paid to do something you love, so I was thinking that I could be something like... like a singer? (*CHELA serenades a male audience member. She sings fragments of many songs, in many different styles and many different keys. On her last song, she gets a cramp.*)

Ayyy ay. Ay Dios mio, what was that? Pinches frijoles Chilangos. Damn those Mexican City beans. They're really something. Excuse me, señor. But I think I'm going to have to be owing you that song because, because I need to go to the.... And if I don't go soon...I swear that I'm going to...ay buey, ayyy ayyy. (*She looks at the water running down her leg. Looks back at the man. She gets another cramp.*) Ay buey! And if it wasn't enough that I just peed right in front of you, Señor. Now, I swear that I'm going to...ay ay ay.... (*Noticing that someone has ENTERED, she quickly switches to singing.*) "Ay yay yay yay, Canta y no llores." Hola, Doña María! I didn't hear you come in. No, nothing's going on over here. What about where you're at? Anything happening over there? Panchita? Well, yes, yes, she was here, but just as soon as she saw everything there was to do, she...she got hungry. You smell something funny? Probably Panchita. You know how she likes to faaah faah faaahhhrrrrttt!!! (*CHELA falls.*) Aaayyy!!!

SCENE 7: GENERAL HOSPITAL, MEXICO CITY

CHELA sits at the edge of the hospital bed, holding her baby.

CHELA: Well, I know you're not going to believe me when I tell you this, but those mendigo pains I was feeling was just my baby trying to come out. N'hombre, pinches colicos nomás para este pistio de mujer. But as soon as I saw her little, little feet, and her little, little hands, and that big, big head that smiled every time she touched my face, all those pains disappeared. And all those nights, thinking what would become of my baby with a mother like me, also disappeared. I had always known I wasn't very smart. But with the help of Doña María, I was going to make something of myself. You hear that, mi'ja? I'm going to make something of myself. Then, we're going to pick up your uncles and aunts and help them make something of themselves too.

I had been missing my brothers and sisters for a long time now. So when I heard, "Ama Chela! 'Ama Chela!" I thought I was hearing voices. But there, outside the window. Madre Santísima, no puede ser! (*Lifts up the window, pokes her head out and shouts down.*) Pablo?!!! Pablo?! Up here, menso, on the fifth floor! HOW ARE YOU?!!! No, si, I've been hearing you for a while now, but I wouldn't let myself believe it, and it's a good thing I recognize your voice, because mira, nomás. Six months. And look how much you've grown. One second. (*Hangs her baby out the window.*) Look, your niece! Yeah, she has a big head. But she'll grow out of it. Que soccer ball ni que ocho cuartos, you kick her in the head, and I'll wrap you around a tree, cabrón! Eiy Pablito. Why don't you just come up and see us? I don't want these people to get the idea that we're nacos or anything. Room five nineteen. Five *nineteen!* Andale pues, aquí te esperamos, pero hurry.

(To the audience.) Look, my little brother. Only eight years old and comes all the way from Uruapan, Michoacán, just to see us all by himself. Goes to show you, I may not have a lot a brains, but my family really does. I look out the door window for my little brother Pablito, and there he was! *(Beat.)* With my mother right behind him. *(In ANGELITITA's voice.)* "Pablito, stop it with your 'Mama Chela, I want to see Mama Chela.' I've been telling you since Teriquaro that you were not going in, and you're not going in. Sit out here and wait."

CHELA: I ran to get my baby. But my mother. She was already one step ahead of me.

ANGELITITA: Hola, hija; how are you; where's the baby? Ayyy, mira; there she is; just look at her. Ay Dios mio; and what a big head. *(To the baby.)* Big head, just like your mamma. *(To CHELA.)* I remember I was only fourteen when I had you, and your big head almost killed me. Pero, Doña María tells me you had no complications, hija? *(CHELA does not respond.)* Well, if that's what Doña María says. *(To baby.)* Ay, que niña tan mas bonita, tan hemocha.

(To CHELA.) What'd you name her? *(Getting no response.)* Let me guess. Dulce-María? Just like Doña María. Just. Like. Doña María. Well, it's a good thing I brought tortas, because you look skinnier than when you left home. *(CHELA doesn't respond.)* They're your favorite. Carne de lomo. *(Still no response.)* When your father found out you left. He hit me. Said it was my fault.

Ay hija. We owe money everywhere. Now, no one even wants to give us credit. And Pati, your newest sister...premature, and just as sick as the day she was born. The Red Cross says we've already used up all our welcome. So we had no choice but to move in with your grandmother, and you know how your grandmother is. The worst part is that your sister, Aurora, es bien resongona.

The other day your grandmother told her that the clothes hadn't been washed right. And there it starts. Insult after insult. She starts yelling at your grandmother, your grandmother starts yelling at her. Your grandmother grabs the broom trying to hit Aurora...Aurora jumps on her back, covers her eyes, and starts biting her hair. When your grandmother finally shakes her off, she yells, "If you don't like the way things are done in my house, pues, largate!" She didn't even have to tell her twice; in three minutes, she was gone. Left with that one guy, the guy with the big scar on his head?

Doña María? Doña María. Doña María no es tu madre! *I am your mother.* If you think for one second that just because you are not living with me that you can treat me this way; well, you're wrong. Because of you, your father has hit me. Because of you, your father has left us. And because of you, Aurora has fallen in the same. Because of you. (*Angelita picks up the baby.*) I've already informed Doña María that you will not be returning to her house. Tonight you and your brother will catch the first bus to Juárez. Your father will be waiting for you on the other side. (*Beat.*) No. The baby stays with me. When you can offer her a decent home, the way God intended it, then you can have her back. Meanwhile, I'll take care of her with the money you'll be sending.

SCENE 8: HOLA AMERICA/HOLA FINITO

In this scene, a projected home video will share the storytelling. CHELA, portrayed by the actor on stage, will be referred to as STAGE CHELA, and CHELA, portrayed in the video, will be referred to as FILM CHELA.

STAGE CHELA ENTERS to the music "Yankee Doodle Dandee."

STAGE CHELA: Three hundred dollars and one coyote later, me and Pablito

were in the *Jew Nighted Estates Af America*. El Norte! The state: Oklahoma! Hamburgers. Pizza. Elevators. Water that runs to the inside of your house. Laundry machines. And flat lands that went on forever...and ever...and ever.... And ever. Gringos. Negros? Chinos?! (*Beat.*) FINITO. I met Finito because him and I lived in the same apartment building together. Finito. He liked to make home movies—

MUTED home VIDEO is PROJECTED. The scene we're watching on VIDEO is FILM CHELA in the back seat of a moving car. She is young, solemn, distant. Her every move is being recorded. She is indifferent.

Stage lights DIM. Single light on STAGE CHELA.

STAGE CHELA: Finito wanted us to get married. “Married? Why, you’re as old as my father? Married.” But it *had* been three years since I last saw my daughter—

ANGELITITA (*voice over*): “The baby stays with me. When you can offer her a decent home, the way God intended it, then you can have her back.”

STAGE CHELA: I agreed to marry Finito, but only after Papí got back from Mexico. Finito said we should go and get our marriage license so as not to waste any time. We go. Accompanied by a gringo couple, friends of Finito. And like all Americans, super tall and very smiley. A little *too* smiley if you ask me—just for a marriage license. Do you know the moment they gave me my marriage license, these gringos started to cry? “Well, you two are just the cutest little Mexicans I ever did see get married. Congratulations! We’re just so happy for both of you.” Well, I didn’t fully understand and didn’t want to be rude, so I said, “Kongra-shoe-lone-ess, sow happy for jew...también.”

This caused the gringos to laugh even harder. And they cried some more and laughed some more. I was so happy when they finally dropped us off.

I helped Finito carry inside his apartment the giant animal head the gringos had given us; and as I started to leave, he says to me, “Where are you going so fast, Chelita? You just live next door. It wouldn’t hurt you too much to stay for a while now, would it?” (*To FINITO.*)

STAGE CHELA reenacts the following exchange between CHELA and FINITO.

CHELA: It’s not that, Señor Finito, but it’s getting late, and I have to cook for my little brother Pablito. He’s probably wondering where I am right now.

FINITO: I have needs too, Chelita. A husband has needs too.

CHELA: And by any chance do your needs like beans and tortillas?

FINITO: Are you mocking me, Chelita?

CHELA: Yes. I mean, no. I mean...it depends. What does mocking mean?

FINITO: And what if I told you we were already married?

CHELA: Married? Married?! But you told me we were only...marriage.... (*To audience.*) I slapped him as hard as I could.

On VIDEO: The camera jerks. It gets thrown down. VIDEO POV: Scenes illustrate all that is narrated in STAGE CHELA’s dialogue.

STAGE CHELA: He turns around and squeezes my face really tight. I spit on him. He flings me to the floor. But I manage to get up, “Es usted un loco!” He

kicks me. I hear my ribs break; he kicks me again and again. I just wanted to wait until Papí got back...I just wanted to wait until Papí got back. I black out.

Stage lights DIM.

STAGE CHELA: And when I woke up—

VIDEO with sound TAKES OVER the storytelling. STAGE CHELA remains muted. VIDEO POV: FILM CHELA on the floor, wakes up a bit confused.

FINITO paces back and forth.

FILM FINITO: After everything I've done for you. Marrying you so you can have your stupid daughter. A ver. Try to hit me again. A ver. Come on. Get up!

VIDEO POV: FINITO grabs FILM CHELA by the hair and throws her on the bed. He tears off her clothes, unzips his pants, and holds her head down.

FILM FINITO: No, no, no what? You don't want this, Chela. And THIS. Is that what you're saying, Chelita? Or no no...no, don't stop this. Quiet! Don't act like you're a virgin. We both know this is not your first time. So, you wanted to escape me, Chelita. Is that what you wanted to do? Miss out on this? Do you really think you would have liked to miss out on all this. *(A knock on the door.)* It's going to be your brother. If you tell him anything, anything at all, if I don't like the way you look at him, I swear I'll kill him. I'll kill him and your father, and you'll never see them again. Me entiendes? *(He drags CHELA to the door.)*

FILM CHELA: Pablito?

PABLITO's VOICE *(off camera)*: 'Ama!

FILM CHELA: It can't be opened, mi'jo; the door's stuck. Go home, mi'jo.

PABLITO's VOICE (*off camera*): ¿Cuando vienes?

FILM CHELA: I don't know. I don't know. I said, GO! Que te vayas te digo si no así te va ir. Now GO! (*Pause.*) Pablito?

No response from PABLITO. Unable to hold back her tears any longer, CHELA cries.

VIDEO: FADES TO BLACK. End of video. Stage Lights UP.

STAGE CHELA (*to audience*): Finito burned all my "How to Speak English" books and glued all the windows shut. Every day before he left for work, he took with him the telephone cords and the kitchen knives, and locked me in the house from the outside. I didn't dare tell my father and brother what had actually happened for fear that Finito would actually make true his words, "If you tell them anything, anything at all, I'll kill them, and you'll never see them again, me entiendes?" As far as my family knew, I had simply gotten married. So I got my daughter back.

Pero lo que sea de cada quién, Finito did have his moments. After all, it was Finito who paid for all fourteen of my brothers and sisters to come to America. It was Finito who got them all fake social security numbers so they could get jobs. It was Finito who my mom called if she ever needed any money. If my family needed anything, anything at all, they just had to call Finito. So maybe I had finally done something right.... (*Contemplating her marble.*) And I just needed to learn to love him. And in between those beatings and two and half years that followed, my son was born. I remember one time I had to take my son to the hospital to get his "Check Ahp." And don't you know, they wanted to keep him in this "Check Ahp." But I had

already been warned how the gringos liked to steal Mexican babies so they can make Elmer's glue out of them.

But these gringos didn't even have the decency to steal them in the middle of the night. They wanted to steal him in broad daylight! And from my very own arms. "No take it away my baby, no take it away, NOOO!"

SCENE 9: ENFAMIL

Mercy Hospital, Oklahoma City. Out of breath and sweaty, NURSE MARY JOE enters the stage running after CHELA.

NURSE MARY JOE: Right, right, no take it away the baby! *Awww Laard*, you gonna give me a heart attack. Ma'am. It's not unheard of for the parents to leave their babies over night in the hospital. You can come visit him.... *(Slowly moving in for the baby.)* Whenever you want. *(CHELA escapes; NURSE MARY JOE sneaks up to her again.)* We just wanna help yo' baby. *(CHELA ducks and escapes.)* Calm down, ma'am. Calm down. We just wanna to take good care of yo' baby. *(CHELA escapes her yet another time.)* Ma'am, please! I'm just a lowly nursing assistant, and this is my first day on the job, AND you making me look awfully bad running around this whole hospital like a chicken with her head cut off! Oh, what do you care? You don't even understand. *(Slowly making a realization.)* Oh. Ohhh. OHHH!!! You *don't* understand. Does this mean I get to use my high school Spanish on ya? Well, of course it does! I don't know why I didn't think of that sooner. Well, first things first, let's get you to sit down. *Sssentir.... Pour...Fah Bore. (She demonstrates.)* Okay, your turn. *(To her surprise, CHELA sits.)*

Well, I'll be a dirty word. I still got it. (*Beat.*) Well, all this running around, I done forgot what I'm suppose to be doing *witchah*. (*Reading from the doctor's orders.*) "Please educate patient's mother on proper formula preparation for her four month, thirty-five pound baby... BOY?!" Well, that's gonna require some second year Spanish, right there. Well, you're in luck, 'cause I had me some three years. Let's see here. (*Shouting.*) *Two hee-joe!* Mucho, mucho, *gore-dough*. So now. We. *Need oh*. Comprendo? No comprendo? No?! No. It's me, isn't it? Women just don't care for the likes of me. Mamma told me, "Mary Joe, don't you run off to that big city in Oklahoma. People aren't as neighborly as they are here in Broken Arrow." I thought I was meant for bigger and better thangs. But, just look at me. Look at me! (*She bursts into tears.*)

Oh. (*Making a realization.*) Ohhh. OHHH!!! Well, I don't know why I didn't think of this sooner. But I know you gonna get this now. I just know you gonna get it. (*She goes to the fridge and cabinet.*) We just need some Enfamil milk, a baby bottle, and some water. (*She rolls the items over to CHELA on a metal tray.*) You see here, we gotta *bow-tell-ab*. Some *lay-che*, and some *ahgwo*. Now, I'm gonna be yo' baby, and you're gonna be my momma. (*Wailing.*) Whaaah whaaah whaaah!!! (*Mimics sucking.*) But the nipple all dried up, ain't good for nutin' but— (*Mimics the baby flicking the nipple and the sound of the nipple bouncing back.*) Puhhhrrrr. Puhhhrrrr. Puhhhrrrr. Baby's hungry. Right? *Prepare oh-maya camida, mama*. Gone now. (*Beat.*) That's right. You grab the baby bottle.... Then, you *po'* the milk in it, that's right. Then— (*Making the connection.*) OH! OH! OHHH! That's why yo' baby's so *gore-dough!*

You wanna know why yo' baby so fat? I'll tell you why yo' baby so fat. Yo' baby so fat 'cause you been feeding him *straight* Enfamil milk and no water. *Watchah* need to be doing is you need to be giving him fifty-fifty. Comprendo, fifty-fifty? *Seys* part *lay-chey*, *seys* part *ahgwo*. Or *sank sank*, *quat quat*, *trey trey*,

doe doe, oon oon. But because you've just been giving him too much of this and not enough of that, baby look like this (*MIMES fat*) and we got to get him down to this (*MIMES thin*), and who know how long that gonna be, but it's gonna take a while, quite a while, comprendo? (*Pause. Surprised.*) Yeah, comprendo? Yeah? Ohhh. They gonna have to give me a raise.

CHELA: The hospital kept him for two months. That, because he was too fat. They can say whatever they wanted to say, but my baby was the way God intended. Full and bursting with life. (*Sings.*) "Los Cochinitos ya 'stan en la cama, muchos besitos les dio su mama...."

SCENE 10: THE BILL

The Oklahoma City apartment. STAGE CHELA is visibly pregnant.

In this scene, a projected home video will share the storytelling. CHELA, portrayed by the actor on stage, will be referred to as STAGE CHELA, and CHELA, portrayed in the video, will be referred to as FILM CHELA.

STAGE CHELA (*picking up her son*): Mira, nomás como te desínflaron mi papichón. (*Shouting.*) Dulce-María, you better not be playing with your daddy's camera again. Dulce-María, where you hiding? (*Continues singing.*) "...quinientos pasteles nomás para el...."

Stage lights FADE TO BLACK.

STAGE CHELA sits muted as VIDEO with sound BEGINS. POV: We are under a bed looking out. FILM CHELA, with only her feet visible, continues the song STAGE CHELA was singing. DULCE-MARÍA, giggling, comes out from under

the bed and continues to video tape her surroundings: the wall, the sofa, her dolls... THE DOOR! Heard are the sound of keys and the unlocking of the many chains and locks necessary to get inside. DULCE-MARÍA drops the camera. VIDEO POV now from the floor. FINITO walks in, mail in his hands. The wind from the snow blizzard slams the door shut behind him. The camera gets jerked off the floor and set on the table. From the kitchen table, we see FINITO sit and go through the mail. FILM CHELA, visibly pregnant, ENTERS into frame, carrying her baby son.

FILM CHELA: Dulce-María, sit down and eat. *(She serves FINITO a plate of food. He rejects it.)* Dulce-María, try Daddy's food, mi'ja. *(She ignores her request.)* Andale, Dulce. You always try daddy's food. *(Not getting a response.)* 'Ta bien, pues. I'll try it.

VIDEO POV: FINITO hurls the plate on the floor. It shatters. FILM CHELA places the baby on the bed and grabs the broom. FINITO yanks FILM CHELA by the hair, the broom falls. FINITO drags her to the table and shoves the hospital bill in her face.

FINITO: Read this to me. I said, read this to me, Analfabeta. *(Finito smothers the hospital bill in her face.)* Anda! Read it to me! Read it to me, pendeja!—

VIDEO image continues with sound MUTED as STAGE CHELA addresses the audience.

STAGE CHELA: Those two months our son spent in the hospital cost Finito a lot of money. Money we didn't have. Money he needed to keep us moving; he was wanted for killing a man in Iowa. For years I had kept the beatings and the miscarriages to myself, but as time went on, it got harder and harder to hide the pain and the bruises from my family. And from Finito.

VIDEO POV: FINITO double slams FILM CHELA's face on the edge of the table. FILM CHELA falls to the floor. FINITO paces back and forth, yelling at her. He walks to the camera and picks it up to see if it is on. The picture goes BLACK, then returns to scene. We see the camera get yanked off the table. VIDEO with SOUND continues. STAGE CHELA remains muted.

FINITO: Get up and stand right here, Dulce-María! (*He places the camera in DULCE-MARÍA's hands.*) Take a good look, Dulce-María. Take a good look (*grabs CHELA by the hair*) at what happens to stupid women who don't know how to care for their babies.

FINITO slaps FILM CHELA. She raises her arms to protect her face. He places the bill on her face again.

FINITO: Do you see how much it cost me to keep you! You know what you are? A pendeja. Who can't fuck, can't cook, can't feed her own damn kids. And now you want me to pay for two months of your stupidity.

FINITO kicks FILM CHELA in the stomach. DULCE-MARÍA drops the camera and runs off. The VIDEO POV shifts to the floor.

FINITO: A whore (*FINITO kicks FILM CHELA in the stomach again*), chingao, a stray dog is a better mother than you! Women like you don't deserve to be mothers.

VIDEO POV: FINITO walks out of frame, returning with his arms full of medicine bottles. He throws them on the floor. With one hand, he yanks FILM CHELA's head back and with the other, he shoves pills into her mouth. She spits them out.

FINITO: Open your mouth, estúpida y trágatelas. Open your mouth. I said, open your mouth.

VIDEO POV: With every “open your mouth,” FINITO punches FILM CHELA in the stomach. She can only resist the first two blows; on the third one, she lets out a loud yelp. FINITO stuffs her mouth with pills. FILM CHELA, now hysterical, throws off FINITO. She then takes the pills and starts stuffing them into her own mouth. Too weak to continue, she falls to the floor and licks the pills off the floor. FINITO paces back and forth. VIDEO FADES TO BLACK. End of video.

LIGHTS on STAGE CHELA.

STAGE CHELA: Papí, I can't talk long. I'm at a pay phone. *(In her father's voice.)* “Mi'ja, if you're not happy, come home, mi'ja.” *(Returns to her own voice.)* No puedo, Papa, I can't, I really can't. *(She hangs up the phone.)* August 1980. My dad came for me, and Finito broke his collarbone. January 1981. My oldest brother came for me, and Finito blinded him with a broken beer bottle. February 1981. Pablito tried to help me escape.... And Finito had him deported. Because of me, my family was getting hurt. Because of me, my children lived in fear. Because of me.... In the corner of my eye, I could see Dulce-María watching wide-eyed, I could hear my son screaming. But, the pain...I could no longer stay alive for them. I wanted my life to end. I wanted my life to end. I closed my eyes and waited.

SCENE 11: YOUR HUSBAND REPORTED YOU MISSING

DR. GUSAMI: Good morning, Mrs. *Chey-Law*. I hope you don't mind, but we had to restrain your movements. Don't want you trying to hurt yourself again or that unborn child you're carrying. I am Doctor Rajan Gusami. I'll be taking over your case during the remainder of your stay here at the ward.

So, you're the one the police found stark naked under a dark bridge in the middle of an Oklahoma snowstorm with both her children. I ask myself, what on God's green earth would possess somebody to get behind the wheel and drive off after taking a massive dose of prescription drugs, but we're certainly lucky your husband reported you missing. Your husband has also informed us that this is not your first time you have tried to drown yourself? I have here that you have tried to: burn yourself, starve yourself while pregnant, and nick yourself with anything sharp? Mrs. *Chey-Law?* (DR. GUSAMI waves his hand in front of her face. Writes on chart.) Day seven: patient still unresponsive. Recommend increase dose .05 mg. Mrs. *Chey-Law.* As your doctor, it is my duty...my moral obligation, to inform you, that when we do these awful, awful things to ourselves, we have to be careful. Because if we are not careful, we run the risk of dying and coming back as...a snail!

Don't want to come back as a snail. People step on snails all the time. Don't mean to. In hurry, go to work, don't look down, and *squosh!* But maybe you are one of the lucky ones, and you don't come back as a snail. Maybe you come back as a fly. Come back as fly, no problem. Twenty-four hours later, you will either have a natural death or (*imitates a fly*) *buzzzzz zzzzz zzz.* (*Slaps his palms as if swatting the fly.*) Then reincarnation. But we don't get to choose how we come back, so we must choose to be happy. Take myself, for example. I have been doing this for over thirty years, thirty years I have been doing this; and yet, I'm happy. I. Am. Happy. You have a loving and doting husband who visits you everyday and buys you flowers—Purple Snap Dragons. My favorite. I must have done something horrible. Horrible! (*Slamming his head on the table.*) In. My. Past. Life. And now I must pay my debt. (*As if just noticing CHELA.*) Crying? There's no crying on my watch.

There, there, Mrs. *Chey-Law.* (*Fills syringe with meds.*) In just one moment, you're going to feel all better. Tomorrow, when you wake up, we can find

more things for you to be happy about. Remember, how fast you open up will determine if you will be here one year, two year, three years.... Meanwhile, don't worry, be happy. Someday, somebody ought to write a song about that.

CHELA: In the end, it wasn't even three months. In one of Finito's unsupervised visits, he walks me to the car, shoves me in, slams the door, and drives me away from the Beaconsville psychiatric ward, my hospital gown still on. Six hours later, in the back seat of that car, I gave birth, to another baby girl.

SCENE 12: THE WINDOW

CHELA stares out the window. Jungle animals scream, "Putá! Putá! Putá! Analfabeta! Analfabeta! Analfabeta!" A Wild Kingdom-like voice narrates.

NARRATOR (*voice over*): She is your typical *Cheyla*, five foot three inches, weighing only ninety-pounds, but today she does not wear the band-aid smile typical of her species. Today this *Cheyla* mourns the death of her most recent miscarriage caused by her attacker. The eight miscarriages over a six-year span have taken their toll on her will to live.

Surrounded by her three *cubs*. She seems almost lifeless, except for that look at them and back to the window every once in a while. She knows that if her and her cubs are to survive, she must muster up the courage to break the window to the outside world.

But to this *Cheyla*, as all *Cheylas*, the outside world seems scarier than her captive situation. It is going to take a massive amount of inner strength to put her fears aside and break that window to the outside world. (*Beat.*) Now, how lovely is that? The *oldest cub* is licking her mother's wounds and making

cooing sounds. She seems to almost intuitively understand the significance of what lies outside that window for her and her mother.

The laws of the Oklahoma jungle protect the family institution and do not allow a *Cheyra* to divorce her *attacker*, otherwise also known as husband, without first going through a year of family counseling. In the sweeping plains of the Oklahoma jungle, you also cannot testify or press charges against your own husband. These thoughts and many others compound the already heavy weight on *Cheyra* as she stares outside that window. Dusk has started to set in. If she is going to leave, she is going to have to do it now.

(Sound of a window shattering.)

Incredible. The oldest cub has taken a chair to the window and is now pulling her brother and sister through the broken glass. This is definitely unusual behavior for a young cub. Usually *Cheyra* cubs grow up exhibiting even less will than their parents. Amazing! The cub, using both her teeth and claws, has managed to drag her mother out the window. And they're out.

Definitely some unexpected excitement, because should the attacker return before expected, both *Cheyra* and cubs could be killed. Every step they take endangers or frees them. As the oldest cub leads the pack, you can see *Cheyra's* every hair is standing on end. Every passing car could be her attacker. Every friendly waving neighbor could be an informer. It doesn't help that *Cheyra* has blood running down her back.

If this pack does reach safety, there is a distinct possibility that the police will return her to her attacker. For in the Oklahoma wild, they don't interfere in domestic affairs. *(Ambient jungle noise ends. Phone rings.)*

OPERATOR *(voice over)*: 911. Can I help you?

CHELA: Hello my name is Chela. Chela. And I didn't fall down the stairs. I didn't try to drown myself, I didn't try to kill myself, I love my kids. Por el amor de Dios, ayúdenme, somebody help me!!!

Lights FADE OUT.

SCENE 13: OKLAHOMA WOMEN'S SHELTER

Lights FADE IN.

CHELA: Dulce-María says that the ladies here can help us. But they won't let me use the phone, and if I want to go outside, I have to ask for permission. Sounds familiar. Oh. And I have to leave in thirty days. (*Points to a stage chair.*) That's Linda. Arrived here the same day I did. Tall, blue-eyed blond Linda, with arms like Popeye's and legs like Pelé's. But even stranger than that about Linda is she had a confidence—like a man's confidence. She would sit with her legs wide open. Cigarettes tucked away in the sleeve of her shirt. So that every time she would hang her head and cry, it was difficult for me to comfort her because that image always reminded me of the song, “Los Hombres no Deben de Llorar.” Men shouldn't cry.

LINDA: 'Cause my brothers are a bunch of fucking sissies, that's why I'm here. 'Cause they can't take me on unless they gang up on me, that's why I'm here. Yeah, they know I'd whup their ass they tried to beat me up by themselves. That's why it took three of 'em, three of them, to beat me up. Shoot. If I could've had just two of 'em trying to kick my ass, they'd be in the hospital, and I'd be back in my house, not in no women's shelter, that's for sure. I don't bother 'em. Don't ask 'em for nutin' from Momma, yet they always on my ass. Been on my ass since I was yey tall. It never fails. If my

brothers would catch me climbing up a tree or wrestling with the boys, they'd be the first to holler it to momma and momma... Momma'd say, "I didn't have me three boys and a *lezzzy*, I had me three boys and one girl, and God, so help me, that's what I'm gonna continue to have." Then she'd turn to my brothers and say, "Beat her. Beat her real good." Then she'd go inside the house mumbling, "No *lezzies* in this house...no siree, no *lezzies* in this house," while my brothers just went to kicking my ass. (*Beat.*) Hey, but one time....

All right, let me back up. (*Beat.*) I used to have hair clear down to my ass. Nice shiny hair. (*To CHELA.*) Kinda like yours, pretty lady. Never any split ends. Nope. Momma made sure of that, brushed it every night, trimmed it every two weeks. So one day, just to spite Momma, I shaved my head bald. Aaaw, you should have seen the look on Momma's face when she saw my bald head. She was fuming at the ears, huffing and a puffing, nostrils all turned up. "You done tired me out, girl. Gonna make sure you don't ever try me again." She taught me a lesson all right. Had my brothers take me out to the woods to teach me, learn me how to be a woman. Shit, woman! My brothers didn't care. It was free pussy, pussy they didn't have to pay for, right?!

That was in 1973, and here I am eight years later, and I'm still fighting 'em off. Ain't that some Goddamn shit? You know they just ain't gonna be happy 'til they got me in a fucking dress and panty hose. Yet y'all talk about, "Pray to God. Pray to God, so He won't let this happen to you again." Pray to God? I want to know what kind of God you suppose to thank every time something good happens, but when something bad happens, he ain't to blame. As far as I'm concerned, God and my brothers, they all one in the same—I hate 'em at all.

CHELA (*praying at the edge of her bed*): Diosito...? The ladies here, who said they could help us. Well, now they're saying they can't. And they can't get

Dulce-María to talk, so it's just my word against his. Linda says if I go away with her, she will protect us. Diosito, please don't let Finito find us. En el nombre del padre, del hijo y del espíritu santo, amen.

SCENE 14: WHY DON'T YOU LOVE ME?

LINDA sits at the edge of the bed, a tattered envelope in her hand.

LINDA: Chela, why don't you love me? Oh no, you don't! I feel the way you tighten up when I touch you. I hear you getting up in the middle of the night to clean yourself. I mean, I care for you, I care for you and your kids. I try to take good care of you. I try to make sure you're safe, and whenever Finito finds us, don't we just pack up and leave? I don't worry that I just made a down payment on a house, or that I just landed a good job. No. We just get in the damn car and drive off, just like that, don't we? Don't we, Chela?

Do you know why I do that, Chela? Do you have any idea, any fucking earthly idea, why I do that? Huh? 'Cause I love you, that's why. But I guess I can just keep wishing, and hoping, and praying, 'cause you got me praying, for two years, you got me praying, 'til the cows come home, 'cause it's just never gonna happen for me, is it? Why, Chela? Is it that I'm not man enough? Is that it? Or is it that I'm not Mexican enough? Hey.... Maybe if I was a Mexican lesbian, think I'd have a better chance then? Shhh why?! So your kids won't find out that their momma's lesbian?! That their momma needs a Mexican to beat on her so she can be happy. What if I beat up on you, Chela? Make you feel right at home. Could keep you under my fist for six years, just like Finito. Think you could love me then? Huh? Huh? Answer me, goddamn it!? Say something. What do you want? Tell me what you want, and I'll give

it to you? (*No response. LINDA drops the letter on the table.*) Came in a month ago. Guess Finito's found himself another wife. Even named his two new kids just like yours. (*Takes out a picture from the envelope and shows it to her.*) Guess that means you're free. (*CHELA doesn't respond.*) Tomorrow morning, I'm taking you back to your momma's.

CHELA: I saw Linda only once after that day. Two months later. At her mother's funeral. In a dress and panty hose. (*Pause.*) And when I saw that picture of Finito, (*VIDEO still is PROJECTED*) and his new wife and kids. (*Beat.*) I looked at her. I mean *really* looked at her... Five foot, three inches. Weighing only ninety pounds, and that band-aid smile I knew so well. I knew for a fact that the *Finito Period* of my life was over. And hers was just beginning.

VIDEO still FADES OUT.

I lived my life working two, three, sometimes four jobs. Without seeing my kids and with my mother constantly telling me, "Finito may have found himself another wife, but those kids still need a father. You need to get married! What about Jose Luis? Ay Chela. No one's asking you to love him. He's a good man, Chela. Never been married, works hard. A woman in your condition. Yes, your condition. You're a twenty-five year old divorced woman with three kids, and yet this man will have you? Who else is going to do that for you, Chela? Who else?"

Jose Luis and I were married January 15, 1985. Twenty-three days after our wedding, he came to my bed for the first time, trembling and shaking, he says, "Che Che Chelita, I, I, I've never, you know, with anyone, you know? I always wanted to be a virgin to my wife. You know? So tonight. I'm really gonna, you know?"

He quickly turns off the lights, pulls down his pants, gets on top of me. And two minutes later, it was over. And that's how it was for seven years. But for some reason or another, something in me began to change. Something in me began to believe that there was more to this bed ritual than just lying there and fulfilling one's obligations. And that maybe.... (*With her marble in her hand.*) Some way, somehow, I could get him to want me...for more than two minutes.

SCENE 15: YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE

ZUKI: Ay, I can't believe it, Chela. Me lo dices, en serio? You're thirty-two years old, with three kids, and you still don't know how? Wow, I guess *jew* really aren't that smart after all, eh? Ayyy, but don get so sour-pussy face on me; *jew*'ve come to the right place. Of course, I can help you. *Bat*, it's going to cost *jew*. Ah, no no no. A mi, no me vengas con eso de amigas, mi'ja. Pues, I'm sorry, por la mañana me dijo el gringo, *bat* this is America, and this, this is business.

Bat not too much, Chela, what do *jew* take me for. Well, for estarters, I want *jew* to estop calling me Señora. What do *jew* mean, what are *jew* going to call me? *Jew* going to call me Zuki, la Zuki Ruki, just like everybody else. Then. Then, I want *jew* to lend me *jewr* Bible because my neighbor, he's a visiting Jehovah's Witness. Oh, no no no, mi'ja, ni lo mande Dios, I'm still Catholic, but he's good looking. Then, I want *jew* to...fix me up with *jewr* brother Pablito. Oh please, don't estart with me. What am I? A couple. Two. Three. What? ...Twenty years older than him. In Europe, esto esta de fashion. Well, it's up to *jew*, *jew* can have my help or no.

Okay, maguey. The secret to the bedroom...*jew* can find it in...THE MOVIES. Laugh if *jew* want, but if *jew* want Jose Luis to want *jew*, to really really want *jew*, *jew*'re going to have to be a...Sophia Loren. *Jew*'re going to have to seduce the man. Pursue the man. The man. He wants to be pursued. But, he must not know he is being pursued. No! He must think he did all the work himself. So how do *jew* do this, *jew* ask me? And I tell *jew*, pues, very facil.

First...let's start with a look at him. Look at him, and then lower *jewr* eyes, laugh a bit, and then look away because...I'm *chy*. What this does, Chela, is it says, yes! Yes, I saw *jew*, *JEW* tall dark and handsome man, *jew*. *Jew*!!! But I cannot pursue *jew* because I am a woman. I am delicate. I am *chy*.

Jewr lips, they must be a red, a bright and *chiney* red. They should be slightly apart, and the upper lip pushed up like this. (*She demonstrates the pout.*) So that we can see the top teeth, like all Sears Catalog models. The tongue, oh the tongue. Let it be loose, let it be ready, let it hang out. Eso, eso. Now. We untie our tiny sexy robe with nothing underneath, and let it drop... Ooops! I'm *chy*. Allow him to look at the side of *jewr* neck. Slowly turn to him. But this time, Chela. Don't look away. No. Focus, focus, focus. Begin to walk towards him, slowly, softly, sexy, like, like a panther. No! Like a pink panther.

Yeah, whose looking at who now, eh? Who wants who now, huh? Look at him, like the piece of meat that he is. Then spank him on the butt. Yeah. *Jew* like it when I spank *jew*, *jew* like it when I do that. Then, before he has the chance to change his mind, push him down on the bed. Jump right on top of him. Because now, *jew* are no longer a cute and delicate pink panther. Now, *jew* are a WOW! BLACK PANTERA! Press *jewr* lips on his lips, and like a lizard, take your tongue in and out, in and out, each time faster and harder, faster and harder. (*ZUKI demonstrates.*) FASTER AND HARDER!!!! And they always come back for more.

SCENE 16: JOSE LUIS'S SEDUCTION

CHELA attempts to seduce JOSE LUIS according to her guru's teachings. She comes out on stage dressed in a full dress slip doing her best impression of a pink panther to the song "Wasted Days and Wasted Nights." She wears lipstick that is too bright for her brown skin, torn fishnet stockings, and pumps with heels that are too high for her plump, worn ankles, making it difficult for her to walk in a normal gait. But this attention-getting outfit is still not enough to compete with her television-watching, baseball-loving husband, JOSE LUIS. Unable to gain his attention, CHELA changes strategies. She places herself in front of the television and begins to pole dance with the kitchen broom. Unmoved, JOSE LUIS leans over to take in the game instead. She drops the broom, places his limp hand on her butt, and begins to force him to rub it. He yanks it back to turn the television sound up.

Desperate now, CHELA places her chest in his face and slaps her double-A breast, while licking her lips in too many circles. A frustrated JOSE LUIS picks her up, throws her on the bed, pulls down his pants, gets on top of her, and two minutes later...it's over. He drops dead asleep on top of her and snores. He remains undisturbed as CHELA pushes him off. She sits at the edge of the bed, picks up her marble, and contemplates it.

EPILOGUE: 1992. SUNSHINE MOTEL, OKLAHOMA CITY

We return to the beginning of the play, a few minutes before the prologue.

CHELA: Pancho. He was always fixing this, that, or the other in the motel rooms I was cleaning. Well, he would take me in those big, big arms of his and say, "Chelita Preciosa. Every time I look at you. I think to myself that you are the most...almost the most.... Well, pretty close to the most *beautiful*

woman in the world to me.” Ay, Pancho. You’re so romantic. And he would tell me, “How soft and golden your skin is. And your eyes. They sparkle like the stars in the sky.” Really? You don’t think they’re too close together?

And it didn’t matter to me if he was lying or not, because for the first time in a very long time, I felt alive again. I felt...that I was more than my obligations, that *I*... Chela, was beautiful.

But time went on and on, and he wouldn’t go past his, “Your eyes are this and your skin is that,” and “I have too much respect for you to do this or that and....” Respect? I no longer wanted to be respected. I no longer cared for what was decent, or for what people were going to say about me. What I wanted was to be with *that* man. *That* man that my body wanted, *that* man that my body chose, *that* man that my body burned for. And I couldn’t take it anymore.

So one day, just before he walked out of that motel door, I shouted, “I WANT TO BE WITH YOU!” He turns around...and there I stood...completely naked. Silence. We both just stood there. Did I mention I was completely naked? I quickly laid down, spread by legs, closed my eyes, and waited. And waited. And waited.

When he finally walks over to me, he covers me up with a blanket and kisses my forehead. Then, my cheek? My neck. He goes underneath the blanket and kisses my chest?! My stomach! MY?!!! I said, “No no no.” But that quickly changed to, “Bueno, si si si.”

This time, I chose him. This time, *I* went after him. And this time *I*... Ay... aaayyy. Aaahhh ehhhhhhhhhhhhh ahhh ahhh ahhhh! (*CHELA orgasms. She drops the marble.*) Es magia. It’s magic.

BLACK OUT.

VIDEO still of CHELA and PANCHO is PROJECTED with the caption, "Chela eventually married Pancho, her third husband. They are still married today."

END OF PLAY / Finito