

**THE LAST GUANTANAMERA**  
**A Performance in Two Acts**

**By**

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## PERFORMERS

- Best friends ROSA and MARIO. They are Cuban American, queer, and in their mid-thirties. ROSA is a brunette of medium height, a college professor. MARIO is slim, has a fair complexion and chestnut-brown hair. He is an artist.
- The voice of an MC
- The voice of Mario's mother (Mima)

## SETTING

A beach town in Southern California.

## TIME

1988-1989

## MUSIC

Suggestions for musical themes are given throughout the text: disco and salsa numbers, Spanish ballads, boleros, cuplés. The performers should feel free to improvise, singing popular songs of the period whenever the mood calls for music.

- ROSA: She has a weakness for ballads with melodramatic, boisterous endings in crescendo. When sung by the character, these songs must always be rendered with exaggerated mannerisms. She loves the style and histrionics of European

stars of the late 1960s: Tom Jones, Raphael, Shirley Bassey, Massiel, Charles Aznavour, Adamo, Sarita Montiel.

- MARIO: He acquired his musical repertoire on the disco dance floors. He likes to listen to Donna Summer, Barry White, Gloria Gaynor, Grace Jones, Bette Midler, the Bee Gees, and Bronski Beat, among others. The songs he enjoys have catchy, sensuous melodies, repetitious lyrics, and hard-driving rhythms.

## PROPS

- An old photo album.
- A large Cuban flag and a flag bearing a hammer and a sickle.
- A late Fifties-style suitcase containing the following items: a wavy auburn wig, spike-heel pumps, a makeup kit, gaudy costume jewelry, a pink fur coat; and a black, strapless evening gown.
- Rum and Coke, and cocktail glasses for Cuba Libres.
- A drawing pad and an assortment of crayons.
- Appliances and ingredients for a meal of chicken breasts, cooked carrots and mashed potatoes.
- Spanish record covers from the late Sixties, ideally of Raphael and Sarita Montiel albums.

## STAGE DIRECTIONS

There are three performance areas: ROSA's condominium, a discotheque, and a beach park. The discotheque is downstage right: a circular dance floor surrounded by tables with chairs; a disco ball hangs from the ceiling. Extreme right of the dance floor, there is a standing microphone where ROSA will do her comedy/storytelling performances.

ROSA's condo comprises most of the stage. Upstage center is the living room, which contains a high-end entertainment center and a variety of furniture. The only comfortable piece is a long couch with several pillows. Two large watercolors in the style of Georgia O'Keeffe are displayed on the back wall. A hyperrealist oil painting of MARIO and another man in the nude will eventually appear between the watercolors.

Extreme downstage left of the living room area, there is an oblong-shaped full-size mirror that seems to be floating in midair. Behind the living room, at a slightly elevated second story level, is the kitchen. It features a stove, a sink, and a counter. Most appliances and gadgets can be painted on cardboard.

One of the walls in the kitchen will work as a screen for projected images depicting the characters' memories and fantasies. A staircase leads to the living room and the beach at the left end of the wall-screen.

The beach is represented by a sandy area downstage center of living room and left of discotheque. A large beach towel is laid out on the floor, near a park bench.

## PERFORMANCES

Each of the following titles will be projected on the screen, announcing the corresponding performance. These titles, rendered in rose color on a gray background, and the year (Act One: 1988; Act Two: 1989) will flash on and then fade out as lights go up.

## ACT ONE

1988

Accomplices

Wise Advice

Guantanamera

One Huge Cemetery

A Number

Carnival Queen

Mercocha

High School Days

Man of the House

Drawing

ACT TWO

1989

A Healthy Meal

The Native Island

Toy Brothers

Trashy Memories

A Palm Tree and a Flower

This River

Salty Tears

Human Form

Ten Years of Bar Hopping

Rosamario

## ACT ONE

1988

### PERFORMANCE 1

#### Accomplices

*A strident instrumental version of "Guantanamera" resounds as an overture. The voice of an MC announces: The Rosa Rodríguez Comedy Hour! Applause. Spotlight on the microphone.*

*ROSA enters, takes a bow, and wields the mike with a flourish. She is clad in a charcoal gray, loose-fitting suit. Her white cotton shirt is unbuttoned at the top. She is also wearing a Virgen de la Caridad medallion on a long gold chain. This is the way she will dress for most of her monologues.*

ROSA: *(To the audience)* Welcome! Bienvenidos! How's everyone doing? *(Applause)* Great! I am Rosa Rodríguez, your hostess for the evening. I thought I'd start with a little background info, so you know where I'm coming from. *(Pause.)* I used to think of myself as simply Cuban, one hundred percent Guantanamera and with a Caribbean ass to prove it. But I've finally realized I'm here to stay. It took me long enough! *(Proud)* So, now I'm a Young Urban Cuban American, a YUCA. *(Like a grade school teacher)* The yuca,



by the way, is a starchy root that Cubans love to eat. They boil it and smother it with lots of hot oil and garlic, or they fry it; that's the way I like it, yuca frita. *(Chewing)* Mmm. *(Pause)* Okay, are you ready for a true confession? *(She takes a deep breath.)* I am also a lesbian, *(cringing)* a tortillera! *(Pause. Relieved)* I can't believe I said it. Tor-ti-lle-ra. *(She pats her hands together as if making a tortilla.)* That word still makes me cringe. It's so fucking real!

*Lights up on MARIO. He is in the living room, looking at old snapshots in ROSA's photo album. He is wearing tight-fitting blue jeans and a white tank top, his habitual outfit. The tank top will at times be replaced by T-shirt.*

MARIO: *(Excited)* Oh, my God! You've got pictures of Ramoncito and me and... *(pointing to a photo)* look! My house! The front porch and the patio and the back shed where he and I used to...*(He sighs)* I don't believe this!

ROSA: *(Turning to MARIO)* You better believe it.

MARIO: *(Absorbed in the images)* It all really happened, Rosa.

ROSA: *(Holding up the album)* You have the overwhelming proof. We were born and raised in Guantánamo, Cuba.

MARIO: So it wasn't just a bad dream, after all.

ROSA: Some of it was good.

MARIO: *(Sarcastic)* Yeah, like what?

ROSA: The things we did together, our games, our fantasies...

MARIO: *(With a deep sigh)* Ramoncito!

ROSA: *(To the audience)* You know how the story goes. Typical tale of a Cuban family of Worms, Los Gusanos.

MARIO: *(Discovering a photo)* Here it is! The farewell picture.

Rosa and her parents in Havana, at the José Martí airport.

ROSA: *(To the audience)* Nineteen sixty-eight. I was sent to Spain, alone, because I had an aunt in Madrid who paid my way.

MARIO: *(Melodramatic)* Your parents looking up at the blue Cuban sky and asking themselves, Will we ever see our baby again? May the Virgen de la Caridad protect you, Rosi. May she help you find your way back to us some day.

ROSA: Yeah, they had to get me out of that communist hell in whatever way possible. Even if it meant never seeing me again.

That sure took a lot of guts! How the fuck did they manage?

*(Pause.)* Anyway, so I was taken in by this aunt, Doña Lola, an old widow who was stingy as hell. She kept telling me I was too fat, so she starved me to death.

MARIO: *(Laughing)* It took more than communism to burn off your baby fat. Rosa la Gorda! Isn't that what they called you?

ROSA: *(Slightly annoyed)* Yes, Fatso Rosa. Now can I go on? *(To the audience)* Doña Lola sent me to an all-girl school in an old area of Madrid, around Lavapiés. *(Pensive)* As hard as I try, I can't remember anything I learned at that school, or the friends I made there. *(Pause.)* But I do remember the songs that were

popular, "Delilah," "Yo soy aquel." Oh, and the one that made me cry, "Guantanamera." *(Singing)* Yo soy un hombre sincero, de donde crece la palma...

MARIO: *(Singing)* Y antes de morir me quiero, echar mis versos del alma... Guantanamera...

BOTH: *(Singing)* Guantanamera, guajira guantanamera...

ROSA: *(Campy)* I remember the fashion! Those gorgeous bell bottom pants. Wow! I felt so chic in Madrid. I loved my cheap boots and my fake-leather overcoat, and my sunglasses, the gafas. My hair was long for the first time in my life, and wavy. *(Posing like a stylish model)* I had the Spanish touch, *(with a Castilian accent)* la gracia castiza. I had surely become a perfect combination of Raquel Welch and Ursula Andress and Sarita Montiel. *(Turning to MARIO)* But enough of my trip!

*ROSA takes off her suit jacket and throws it over one shoulder, holding the collar between her thumb and index finger, a la Raphael. She enters the living room, where MARIO sits, flipping through album pages.*

MARIO: There are too many pictures of your parents.

ROSA: *(Looking at an album page)* No kidding! *(She sits with him.)* But what about you? What happened after you left Guantánamo?

MARIO: *(Teasing)* Oh, many exciting things. *(Silence. As he looks through the album)* There, that's my favorite picture of us.

*A black and white snapshot of ROSA and MARIO as children is projected. They are about twelve. She is chubby; he is thin. They obviously posed for the shot, holding hands and smiling.*

MARIO: *(Nostalgic)* You used to call me Marito.

ROSA: And you called me Rosi.

MARIO: *(Reminiscing)* We're twelve years old.

ROSA: You live next door.

MARIO: We have similar families.

ROSA: Macho father, puppet mother.

MARIO: We help each other out.

ROSA: *(Enthused like a child)* We're accomplices!

MARIO: Best friends.

ROSA: Amigos del alma.

*Silence. Lights dim, closing in on ROSA and MARIO. The projected image fades as the characters relive a memory.*

ROSA: *(Saddened)* My father says I shouldn't play with you.

MARIO: Yeah, boys and girls aren't supposed to play together

ROSA: No, that's not why. It's because he says you're sick.

MARIO: *(Hurt)* Yes, and very contagious.

ROSA: *(Impersonating her father)* I never want to see you with that boy again! Never ever. Can't you tell he's a pájaro?

MARIO: A pájaro, yeah. A pretty little bird. *(He whistles.)* What else did they call me?

ROSA: Butterfly.

MARIO: (*Fluttering around*) Mariposa!

ROSA: Pato.

MARIO: A cute little duck. Quack quack quack!

ROSA: Invertido.

MARIO: Bender!

ROSA: Partido.

MARIO: (*With a limp wrist*) Broken one!

ROSA: Mariquita.

MARIO: (*Posing like a ballerina*) Tiny Mary!

ROSA: Pervertido!

MARIO: Perverted.

BOTH: Pervertido!

*Silence.*

ROSA: (*Like her father*) I don't want to see you with that boy again, is that clear?! Don't even speak to him!

MARIO: (*Somber*) He's afraid I might contaminate you.

ROSA: (*Laughing*) Little does he know!

*Fade to black.*

## PERFORMANCE 2

### Wise Advice

*Lights up on MARIO and ROSA, in the living room. MARIO's laughter is heard as ROSA walks to the microphone. Like a parody of John Wayne, she takes long, thumping steps and puts on her coat jacket, pulling up her pants and grabbing her crotch. Behind the mike, she once again assumes her storyteller pose.*

ROSA: *(To the audience)* Yeah, my fantasies started pretty early. I remember when I was seven, and I used to play doctor with this neighbor girl... She'd hug me and I'd touch her "sick" tummy and she'd touch the "bebé" I had between my legs. It felt so good! We played house and I was the husband. And we had children. *(Pause.)* I was usually a handsome knight in love with a princess. Or a tough militia man, a Miliciano who carried two guns, one hanging from each hip. Or a brave army captain. Oh yes, and I drove a jeep. Everyone respected me and loved me, especially the women. And I always managed to get the lady of my dreams, Sarita Montiel. *(She turns to MARIO, who is sitting on the couch, posing as a femme fatale.)* You, on the other hand, you wanted to be Sarita!

MARIO: *(Taking a bow)* The most feminine woman that ever lived!

ROSA: What a voice she had! *(To the audience)* La Montiel was a Spanish movie star famous for her roles as singing starlet.

MARIO: *(He props up his imaginary breasts)* She was also famous for her humongous tetas.

ROSA: *(Entranced)* She sang cuplés, old songs about forbidden love, valiant bullfighters, and beautiful women who sell violets.

MARIO: She'd always succumb to temptation and was saved from a sinful life by a handsome and wealthy leading man.

ROSA: Oh, how I loved her in *The Queen of Chantecler!*

MARIO: But she gave her greatest performance in *The Last Cuplé!*

*MARIO impersonates the voluptuous songstress. His left hand on his waist, his right playing castanets, he flutters his eyelashes and sensuously wets his lips with his tongue. He begins humming and then sings the refrain from "El Relicario" ("The Locket"), a song about a brave bullfighter and his beloved lady.*

ROSA: *(While MARIO sings)* All her movies told the same story, and in most of them she died in the last scene. The cause of her death was usually mysterious and dramatic: a deep unrequited love or a heart attack from too much passionate singing..

*MARIO falls on the floor, tries to sing despite the heartache he is suffering. ROSA runs to him, holds his limp body.*

ROSA: No! No! A doctor, please! Is there a doctor in the house?!

*(MARIO fakes a melodramatic death. ROSA faces the audience, solemnly.)* Señoras y señores, the great Sarita-Marito, singer of singers, has just sung her last Guantanamera.

*MARIO scrambles to his feet. ROSA goes back to the mike.*

MARIO: *(Waving his hand with a flourish)* Bah! Too much melodrama.

ROSA: Yeah, but don't you just love it?

MARIO: Back to your story, please.

ROSA: *(To the audience)* Okay. Where was I? Ah, yes, my fantasies.

Damn how I prayed. I prayed and begged God to help me change.

*MARIO kneels down and prays. His eery silhouette flickers on the screen.*

ROSA: I'd kneel during Mass and I'd tell Jesucristo and the Virgen de la Caridad. Look here you guys, please, you've got to save my soul from eternal damnation.

MARIO: *(Echoing ROSA)* And my body from temptation!

BOTH: *(In litany)* From eternal damnation.

ROSA: *(Looking up)* Let's do it now, Papá Dios, Virgencita. It's now or never! I'll close my eyes and I'll pretend real hard that I'm a normal girl and that I like boys...

MARIO: That I'm a normal boy and that I like girls...

ROSA: Then I'll open my eyes, I'll look at the body of Christ on the cross and Wham! *(She kisses her medallion)* Rosita Rodríguez has been cured. She's a new person! *(Imploringly)* Is that a deal? *(Pause.)* But there were no miracles for me.

MARIO: No miracles for us.

*Silence. ROSA takes off her coat jacket and turns to MARIO. He is back on the couch.*

ROSA: You're not going to believe what Mami said to me one day.



MARIO: (*Campy*) Was she worried, perhaps, about your tomboy manners, about your disdain for domestic activities?

*ROSA adopts a body builder's pose.*

ROSA: She wanted to drive out of me all traces of masculinity.

MARIO: (*Effeminate*) To force you to be fragile.

ROSA: (*Mockingly*) Soft.

MARIO: Womanly.

*Silence.*

ROSA: Lucky for me there were no beatings and no black eyes.

MARIO: Lucky for you.

ROSA: (*Somber*) From my hideaway I listened to your cries...

MARIO: Things were much worse for me because I was boy.

ROSA: Your crime deserved no mercy and no forgiveness.

MARIO: Blows and kicks for me, The Butterfly.

ROSA: The Duck. The Tiny Mary.

MARIO: For you, wise advice.

ROSA: (*Extremely feminine, as her mother*) You should lower your voice when you talk, Rosita. Little girls are supposed to be well mannered. You shouldn't be out there hunting birds and climbing trees. (*As if carrying a baby*) Play house with your dolls, not war games with the boys. (*She runs to the kitchen and pretends to cook.*) I want you to help me more around the house, and with my cooking. (*Authoritative*) And you have to start wearing skirts!

*Fade to black.*

### PERFORMANCE 3

Guantanamera

*Lights on the living room. MARIO and ROSA enter marching. MARIO is waving a large Cuban flag. ROSA is carrying a flag bearing a hammer and a sickle.*

MARIO: *(Saluting)* To the frontline!

ROSA: *(Saluting)* To the frontline, Guantanameros!

MARIO: Your flag is flying high above the world!

ROSA: To the frontline, Guantanameros!

BOTH: Your Fatherland is proud of you!

*MARIO points somewhere offstage.*

MARIO: Señorita García is coming!

ROSA: Oh, no! Coñó!

*They place the flags on the floor. ROSA poses as the teacher. MARIO salutes her and freezes in this military posture.*

ROSA: A ver. Respondan. What did Cristóbal Colón say when he first set foot in Cuba in 1492?

MARIO: This is the most beautiful land human eyes have ever seen.

ROSA: Very well. Who died in 1895, fighting for our freedom?

MARIO: The greatest poet that ever lived: José Martí.

ROSA: Yes, our apostle! When did Cuba gain its independence from the Spanish crown?

MARIO: In 1898.

ROSA: Muy bien. Respondan. What did Che Guevara say to Fidel before leaving Cuba to fight for the liberation of Latin America?

MARIO: Hasta la victoria, siempre!

BOTH: Until victory, always!

ROSA: Now name one of Fidel's best friends.

MARIO: Nikita.

ROSA: What does President Johnson do to Black people in the United States?

MARIO: He throws them to the dogs.

ROSA: What is a better word for capitalism?

MARIO: Exploitation.

ROSA: Recite one of Martí's famous poems.

MARIO: *(Solemnly, his hand over his heart)* I am an honest man from where the palm tree grows. And before I die, I want to tell these verses of my soul. *(Singing)* Guantanamera, guajira Guantanamera...

ROSA: *(As the teacher)* Quiet! Quiet I said!

*Silence. They march and then come to a sudden halt. MARIO takes a crumpled piece of paper out of his shirt pocket and waves it aggressively in ROSA's face. He is impersonating a Miliciano.*

MARIO: This paper says that you people want to leave the country. Is that correct?

ROSA: *(Somewhat intimidated)* Yes. That's correct.

MARIO: In that case, I'll have to inventory your belongings.

ROSA: We know.

*MARIO inspects the place.*

MARIO: I'll make a list of everything you own. And if there's anything missing the day of your departure, you won't be allowed to leave the country. Those are the rules. Understood?

ROSA: Yes, sir. Understood.

MARIO: Call me comrade.

ROSA: Yes, comrade.

MARIO: The man of the house must show up at Guantánamo Park Sunday at five in the morning.

ROSA: And why is that, comrade?

MARIO: Because he'll be taken to the fields with all the other scummy Gusanos. To cut lots of sugarcane!

ROSA: Will he come home at night?

MARIO: No! He'll live in Las Barracas from now on.

ROSA: Is that our punishment, comrade?

MARIO: Yes. It's what you deserve for betraying the Revolution.

ROSA: Understood, sir.

MARIO: I said to call me *comrade*!

BOTH: (*Frenzied, pacing*) Camarada camarada camarada!

*Silence.*

ROSA: (*To the audience*) So, now we're the Worms. That's what they call us, Gusanos.

MARIO: A los Gusanos! *(He stomps his feet.)* A los Gusanos los aplastamos!

ROSA: The Worms! *(She stomps her feet.)* Let's crush the Worms!

*They jump onto the couch in free fall.*

MARIO: We're traitors, eager to kiss the Gringo asses.

ROSA: Speak for yourself!

*MARIO picks up the Soviet flag and mounts its pole, rubbing himself against it.*

MARIO: We're willing to sell ourselves.

ROSA: Gusano!

MARIO: We're turning into whores.

ROSA: I'm not!

MARIO: *(Secretive)* Suddenly, people start disappearing. They get picked up at night. Guys with long hair, women in hot pants. The patos and the tortilleras...

ROSA: Especially those.

MARIO: *(Pretending to cut the flag's pole off the ground)* Chopped off the ground like sugarcane. A troche y moche. Helter Skelter!

ROSA: *(To the audience)* The faggots, the dykes, and the Gusanos are taken to the Barracks because the Revolution says they're sick and need reforming. Treatment!

MARIO: But fortunately you and I will escape the Raid.

ROSA: Yeah, we're too young for that shit.

MARIO: Too bad.

ROSA: *(Surprised)* What do you mean too bad?

MARIO: Didn't you know? Las Barracas is a magical place. *(He hoists the Cuban flag.)* It cures the sickos. It turns deviant men and women into decent, normal people.

MARIO: *(Saluting)* And traitors into soldiers!

*The Cuban national anthem is heard far away. The characters march, waving the flags.*

ROSA: To the frontline!

MARIO: To the frontline, Guantanameros!

ROSA: Your flag flies high above the world!

*They exit marching and saluting.*

BOTH: *(As an echo)* Your Fatherland is proud of you!

*Fade to black.*

## PERFORMANCE 4

### One Huge Cemetery

*Spotlight on ROSA, behind the mike.*

ROSA: *(To the audience)* The first few months in California, I did nothing but bitch. Couldn't stand it here. The sidewalks were always empty. No one walked! There were too many fucking cars! Oh, and the music on the radio was insufferable. *(She mocks an American pop song from the Sixties. Suggestion: "Daydream Believer" by The Monkeys.)* There was a silver lining, though. The weather here was warm like in Cuba, and my parents would be able to find work right away. *(Pause.)* Poor Mami, having to join the workforce for the first time in her life! *(Pause.)* Yeah, California was supposed to be the Promised Land, but to me it seemed like one huge cemetery. Nothing moved me. No, not even the sexy Gringas or the prospect of "espeekee de eengleesh"...

*Lights up on MARIO in the living room, looking at photos.*

MARIO: I can't believe you have a picture of Ramoncito and me holding hands. This is too much! *(He tosses the album.)* Burn these damn pictures!

ROSA: Okay, I will.

MARIO: *(Grabbing the album protectively)* Don't you dare!

ROSA: But you're right, Marito, those pictures are too much.  
Let's burn them, coño.

MARIO: Just like that? Everything up in smoke, magically?

ROSA: Yeah. Why not.

MARIO: *(Looking at photos again)* Don't fool yourself, niña.

*Lights down on MARIO. ROSA takes off her jacket, throws it over one shoulder, and faces the audience.*

ROSA: Anyway, long story short, one day I woke up with this heavy realization: I'm stuck here! So, I grabbed my photo album and my Spanish records, and I stashed them all deep in the closet. *(Melodramatic)* Adiós al pasado! *(Pause.)* Now I was determined to become a full-fledged Gringa. The first movie I remember enjoying and understanding was *Valley of the Dolls*. My first American mouthful was a Sir Burger Supreme, with cheese. Mmm... And the first song I sang in English? Guess...

*She exits singing "It's Not Unusual," impersonating Tom Jones, as lights fade to black.*



## PERFORMANCE 5

### A Number

*Dark stage. A haunting disco tune is heard. (Suggested song: "Smalltown Boy" by Bronski Beat.) The disco ball begins to turn, producing an explosion of swirling stars.*

*Lights up on MARIO, under the ball, dancing. He is entranced. As the ball gradually slows to halt, a series of slides is projected on the screen: images of MARIO in the nude. The photos have the look and texture of a soft-porn centerfold. In several of them, MARIO's body appears sensuously intertwined with another male body. Only their silhouettes are seen in the last shot, which lingers and fades as the music stops.*

*MARIO looks around, surprised to see himself alone on the dance floor. Lights up on ROSA. She is standing in front of the blank screen, facing MARIO reprovingly.*

ROSA: Did you make the appointment? (MARIO ignores her. He is dancing again.) I'm talking to you, Marito!

MARIO: Call me by my real name. I'm not a kid anymore.

ROSA: Did you call the clinic, Mario?

MARIO: No, I didn't.

ROSA: I'll make the appointment for you...

MARIO: I said no! Leave me alone. Can't you see I'm enjoying myself? There's nothing wrong with me.

ROSA: I know. But we have to be sure.

*MARIO stops dancing and turns to ROSA, clenching his fists. They stare at each other for painful, silent seconds.*

MARIO: But what if...?

ROSA: ¿Qué?

MARIO: What if it turns out that I'm... infected?

ROSA: We'll deal with it. Together.

MARIO: Will the test be expensive? I don't have any money.

ROSA: It's a program set up by the state. And it's free. *(She walks down to the living room, reaching out to MARIO with her hand) Vamos, Marito!*

MARIO: *(Childish)* If you call me Marito, I'll call you Rosi.

ROSA: Fine with me.

MARIO: After we make the appointment, could we go for a walk at the beach?

ROSA: Sure.

*Lights dim as they enter the beach area. ROSA sits on the bench, MARIO on the towel. She gently massages his shoulders.*

ROSA: I know how hard this is for you. I went through it myself, and I was scared shitless waiting for the results.

MARIO: But you're okay, aren't you?

ROSA: Yes. I'm okay.

MARIO: The last time I had a blood test, I fainted.

ROSA: That happens to some people.

MARIO: My blood looked so thick. And so alive! It had a beautiful color. Deep red. Carmine...

ROSA: You won't pass out this time. Don't worry.

*Music plays faintly: a Spanish ballad from the late Sixties.*

*(Suggestion: "Yo soy aguél" by Raphael.)*

MARIO: They give you a number, and you wait a week.

ROSA: You should spend that week with someone you love.

MARIO: Are you willing to pamper me for seven days?

ROSA: I'll make you frijoles negros and yuca frita.

*MARIO leans back and rests his head on ROSA's lap.*

MARIO: You don't know how to cook Cuban food.

ROSA: I can learn. And I'll even make your favorite dessert.

MARIO: Mercocha?!

*She caresses his face and tousles his hair.*

ROSA: Yes, mercochita. *(Pause.)* And I'll play my oldies for you.

We'll sing and dance all week.

MARIO: *(Glum)* But the seventh day will come.

*The music stops abruptly. MARIO jumps up. He seems confused and frightened. Silence. MARIO is now under a spotlight.*

MARIO: Did you hear that?

ROSA: Yes, I did.

MARIO: Was that my number?

ROSA: I don't know. Why don't you check? Do you have your slip?

MARIO: I'm not sure. *(He pulls a crumpled piece of paper out of his pants pocket, stares at it and tosses it away.)* Coño, Rosi, they're calling me!

ROSA: *(Picking up the slip)* Go in, Marito.

*MARIO seems restless, trapped in his body. He wants to set off running and escape his fate.*

MARIO: No, coño!

*He enters the disco area. Blaring music plays as the slides are projected again, this time in rapid succession. (Suggested song: "San Francisco/In Hollywood" by Village People.) The disco ball is swirling frantically.*

*MARIO tries to move to the music, but he is shaky and scared. His dance is a forced mockery of pleasure. The ball comes to a halt, and the music stops.*

*MARIO faces ROSA, who is standing next to him.*

ROSA: Give them your number, Marito.

MARIO: I'm afraid.

ROSA: I know. But we have to find out. *(She hands him the paper.)* Here. They need this to look up the results of your test.

MARIO: And then what?

ROSA: Then we'll know what to do. We'll get help. If you need it.

MARIO: *(As he exits reluctantly)* I'll see you soon...

*Fade to black.*

## PERFORMANCE 6

### Carnival Queen

*Lights up, by the mirror. ROSA is taking garments out of an old suitcase while MARIO watches.*

ROSA: Where did you get all this stuff?!

MARIO: From a friend who does drag for a living.

*She brings out a black evening gown, a pink fur coat, spike-heel pumps, a wavy auburn wig, and gaudy costume jewelry.*

MARIO: Go ahead. Try some of it on.

ROSA: *(Stroking the fur coat)* This feels so good.

MARIO: It should. Have you ever seen finer fake fur?

*ROSA puts it all on and freezes into a feminine, doll-like posture. MARIO looks her over from several angles.*

MARIO: *(Laughing)* I don't know. Somehow it isn't you.

ROSA: I disagree! *(Observing her reflection)* I look radiant.

MARIO: *(Overacting)* Like a delicate and desirable flower?

ROSA: Yes! The Real Rose.

MARIO: You're not *always* a man in your fantasies, are you?

ROSA: *(As she puts on makeup)* No. There are those rare occasions when I feel totally fem. *(Campy)* When I become La Mujer.

MARIO: Eat your heart out, Sarita!

ROSA: (*As she brushes her wig*) Do you remember our show?

MARIO: How could I forget such a beautiful story? The tale of a dancer and her tragic love affair...

ROSA: (*Feminine*) The Carnival Queen.

MARIO: (*Excited*) Your kingdom is a majestic float. You're the dancer of dancers, the singer of singers! (*Pause.*) One night you decide to take a break from your royal demands and..

ROSA: Yes! I want to experience the wonders of a simple life.

MARIO: You're strolling through the park, mingling with the people... (*He takes a bow.*) Your faithful, abiding subjects.

ROSA: (*Entranced*) And then I meet him.

MARIO: His name is... Amore.

ROSA: I fall in love with him at first sight.

MARIO: You'll become his sweetheart, and he'll take you to his humble home to meet his parents. (*ROSA takes a few dainty steps, acting meek.*) You walk in looking pure, innocent...

ROSA: His parents greet me with open arms. They think I'm a decent, pious girl. (*She crosses herself as if in church.*) And that I go to Mass on Sundays.

MARIO: They're so pleased their boy has met you, Rosita.

ROSA: But then. Oh then.

MARIO: Amore sees you one night, half-naked on your float, dancing your butt off around a giant cardboard penis.

ROSA: My man cries bitter tears because I'm not the decent girl he thought I was. (*MARIO kneels in front of ROSA, sobbing, affectedly anguished.*) I catch his glance full of sadness and rage. (*MARIO walks to the beach.*) Then he runs, and I run after him. I must tell him the truth! (*Aside*) But what the hell is the truth?

*Sounds of a raging storm.*

MARIO: (*Disheartened*) Adiós, Carnival Queen!

ROSA: (*Crying*) Ay, he's headed for the pier...

MARIO: (*About to plunge in*) Adiós!

ROSA: No, Amore! Don't do it! Wait! You must listen to me, I'm not who you think I am! (*Aside*) But he just saw me dancing around a huge pinga. He *does* know who I am.

MARIO: Adiós!

ROSA: (*Horrified*) There's a wave, a tidal wave that swallows him in one gulp. Ay, no! Amore mio! (*MARIO jumps into the choppy ocean.*) Love of my life!

*ROSA kneels by the mirror, crying, as lights fade to black.*

## PERFORMANCE 7

Mercocha

*Lights up on ROSA, by the mirror. She is taking off her Carnival Queen outfit, laughing. MARIO enters, carrying a plate of mercocha. He offers ROSA some of the chewy toffee-like candy and sits on the floor. The childhood fantasy continues.*

MARIO: Here's some mercocha for you. Mima just made it.

ROSA: Gracias, Marito! *(She eats some, chewing with gusto.)* Mmm... cooked sugar, cinnamon... I love this gooey stuff.

MARIO: *(Timidly)* Rosi, could I give you a kiss, just a little kiss? Would you let me?

ROSA: Sure, Marito, but not on the mouth, okay? 'Cause that's for grown-ups and, besides, I don't like to kiss boys.

MARIO: Fantastic, Rosita, 'cause I don't like to kiss girls but I'd love to kiss you, because you're my sister.

*She sits by him. He gives her a breathy kiss on the cheek.*

ROSA: Marito, you're blushing!

MARIO: No, I'm not! *(She hugs him.)* Rosi, I don't...

ROSA: Yes, Marito?

MARIO: I don't think Amore should die.

ROSA: I agree. The Carnival Queen and her lover should live happily ever after.



*Silence. MARIO drapes his arm over ROSA's shoulders.*

MARIO: There's something else I've been meaning to tell you...

ROSA: What is it?

MARIO: *(Apologetic)* I don't like playing the part of Amore.

ROSA: *(Laughing)* You want to be the Queen?

MARIO: Only if you play my leading man.

ROSA: Okay, let's do it your way.

MARIO: *(Thrilled)* Really?

ROSA: Of course, chico!

MARIO: *(He stands up impulsively)* Our show?

ROSA: Your way!

*MARIO picks up the garments hastily and begins to dress in front of the mirror. A moving song by a Spanish chanteuse plays while he is dressing. (Suggestion: "Nena" by Sarita Montiel.) ROSA looks at MARIO from different angles, as if preparing the scene for filming. The song lingers.*

ROSA: *(Like a movie director)* Your long hair waving and bouncing. Your chin barely touching the left shoulder. Closeup of your eyes. Turn your head to face the camera. Yes! Alluring, provocative. Now let your coat fall gently on the floor. Show your bare back. Then rest your hands on your thighs. Yeah! Así! *(The song resounds, powerfully.)* Wet your lips, let your voice be an echo. Sing!

*MARIO walks seductively to the microphone. He takes it with a delicate gesture and then turns to ROSA.*

MARIO: How should I feel while I sing?

ROSA: Just feel the music. Make the words tell your own story.

MARIO: Should I think about him? About Amore?

*ROSA stands erect, reaching out to MARIO. She becomes the parody of a leading man saying farewell to his beloved mistress.*

ROSA: Yes, think about me. Your Amore...

*Spotlight on MARIO. He dances, transported by the music, and he lip synchs the song. His impersonation is vivid and convincing. He is a beautiful woman dancing for her man, a Spanish songstress rendering the lyrics of love song with passion. ROSA's velvety voice is heard over the music.*

ROSA: Your hips are swaying for me. Closeup of your carmine lips. Your mouth is sweet as mercocha. Now throw your head back, your silky hair flowing. Yes! You're the Carnival Queen, a desirable flower, Marito. The lady of my dreams.

*Fade to black.*

## PERFORMANCE 8

### High School Days

*Dark stage. Rock music is playing. Suggested song: "Come Together" by The Beatles.) Spotlight on ROSA, behind the mike.*

*MARIO's laughter can be heard occasionally.*

ROSA: *(To the audience)* Can you picture me attending Garden Grove High School? My hair dyed blonde, or rather what I thought was blonde; in reality a strange orange shade somewhere between red and brown, a barf-inducing color. I used to wear those dreadful bell bottoms with the waistline below the hip; and a wide, scaly, worn-out leather belt. Wow! I thought I was so hot! *(Pause.)* The American students, compared to the ones in Madrid, seemed to me like people from another planet: skinny girls with false eyelashes made of broom straw. Straight hair teased on top in the form of a nest, hanging long and loose below, as if all of a sudden there were a million greasy baby boas coming out of the high nest. Eyeshadow in blue, green, purple or all three colors smeared on their eyelids. Miniskirts that displayed long, feeble legs wrapped in grey stockings. Platform shoes that forced them to drag themselves like war tanks. *(Pause.)* And the boys? Pitiful, too! Most of them were freckled blonde types, dead-white, washed up, with boring T-shirts and filthy tennis shoes. *(Pause.)* The

Koreans were gaining a reputation for being smart. Through a trick of fate they'd ended up first in Argentina and then in "America," so they spoke fluent Spanish with a Tango accent. There was also a species called Low Riders, dudes who smoked marijuana and lived in Santa Ana. And the Blacks! Dios mío! How they warned me at home to stay away from those people! Which I did, Heaven forbid. I was an obedient Cuban girl in those days. (Aside) And a fucking racist! (Pause.) So, I did have my own Latino clique and Yours Truly was the Leader of the Pack. La Jefa! We were all recent immigrants. There was the Colombian Leticia, who one day would become an anorexic flight attendant. Ramón El Peruano, who had the hots for me and who finally left me alone when I smacked him and gave him a chronic bloody nose. Luisita La Cubana, whom I lusted after, today a mother of three and the resigned wife of a Marielito. And Francisco El Mexicano, destined to be a wealthy and stressed-out doctor. (Pause.) The five of us exchanged life stories during our first and only high school reunion. And we had a ball reminiscing about our boring ESL class. English as a Second Language didn't teach us a thing. It was taught by a stooped old geezer who didn't speak a word of Spanish, much less Korean. We called him Mister Flaco. You have to be prepared to be good citizens of this great country, Mister Flaco would intone, day after day. Then he'd make us sing the national anthem. Every so often he'd write a verb chart on the

board and ask us to repeat ad nauseam: I eat you eat he eats she  
eats we eat they eat!! (*Laughing.*) By the way, the last I heard,  
Mister Flaco went on to become the mayor of Garden Grove.

*Fade to black.*

## PERFORMANCE 9

### Man of the House

*Lights up on ROSA and MARIO, in the living room. They are drinking Cuba Libres and listening to mellow Cuban music.*

*(Suggested song: "Cómo fue" by Beny Moré.) The look of the room has changed slightly: a couple of knickknacks have been added, and a hyperrealist painting of MARIO and a Latino man in the nude appears between the watercolors.*

MARIO: *(Looking at the painting)* God, I miss him!

ROSA: Do you love him?

MARIO: Yes.

ROSA: Does he love you?

MARIO: Maybe.

ROSA: Why aren't you with him, then?

*MARIO approaches the painting, observes it intently.*

MARIO: It's a long story.

ROSA: I like long stories.

MARIO: I can attest to that!

ROSA: He doesn't mind that you're a Cuban Worm?

MARIO: He knows how I feel. He's a poet, you know.

ROSA: Yes, and poets know about feelings. But does he know that you're a slimy Gusano?

MARIO: Speak for yourself!

ROSA: Do you like his poems?

MARIO: *(Laughing)* I don't understand them.

ROSA: *(Toasting)* Here's to poetry!

*MARIO sits on the floor, by ROSA's feet.*

MARIO: I'd rather toast to art, to the masters I admire, Dali, Van Gogh, Frida Kahlo...

ROSA: And to the pretty landscapes you paint. Original Marios!

MARIO: *(Laughing)* Worth a pretty penny a century from now.

*Silence.*

ROSA: So, are you moving to New York?

MARIO: I don't know. I like where I live.

ROSA: Here and there and everywhere.

MARIO: *(Defensive)* In beautiful homes, all in the best areas of West Hollywood and Laguna Beach...

ROSA: *(Jokingly)* A kept woman. La Mantenida.

MARIO: Please! I prefer to think of myself as a hired artist.

ROSA: You mean a glorified interior decorator.

MARIO: Give me a good budget, and I'll turn your house into a work of art.

ROSA: *(Looking around the room)* I like what you did here.

MARIO: *(With false modesty)* I just added a couple of trinkets, a little color, put up a new picture. Nothing much.

ROSA: Joan doesn't like the art.

MARIO: *(Alarmed)* She doesn't?

ROSA: She thinks it's self-indulgent, or narcissistic or something. I mean, why give us a picture of you and some guy getting it on?

MARIO: We're not getting it on!

ROSA: She thinks you are.

MARIO: And what do you think, Rosa Rodríguez?

ROSA: Never mind. Let's get back to the topic of your trip to New York. When are you leaving?

MARIO: I decided I'm not going. I'm staying right here.

ROSA: You love living in other people's houses, don't you?

MARIO: The variety does wonders for my biorhythms.

ROSA: I happen to like your art, Marito.

*He makes a face.*

ROSA: Really, I do. What do you call that style?

MARIO: Hyperrealism.

ROSA: That's it. Suddenly the place looks... hyperreal. I like it.

MARIO: Thank you thank you thank you! *(Pause.)* Actually, I think I'm a better house-sitter than I am a decorator. And a much better decorator than an artist. *(He turns to ROSA, pretending to be distraught and vanquished.)* Joan doesn't like me, does she? *(Faking bitter tears)* She hates my guts.

ROSA: Yeah. And you know why?

MARIO: Because she thinks I'm prettier than her?



ROSA: *(Laughing)* Well... that's definitely part of the reason.

*(Pause.)* No. It's because you and I have something special, and she can't figure out what it is. So she's pissed.

MARIO: We share memories. There's no way she can be part of that.

ROSA: She doesn't like being left out. And she resents you for it.

MARIO: Too bad.

*Silence. ROSA lights a joint and passes it to MARIO. They smoke zestfully, relishing their highs.*

ROSA: Speaking of art, what have you been working on lately?

*(Teasing)* Another nude of yourself?

MARIO: *(In jest)* I'm experimenting with new media, growing bacteria on soiled underwear and exposing toilet paper to the sun. Decay is my theme.

ROSA: *(Amused)* It sounds like a science experiment.

MARIO: Yes. It's all very detached and objective.

ROSA: *(Laughing)* You won't be hanging any of that new stuff here, that's for sure.

MARIO: Thanks for your support.

ROSA: You're ahead of your time, Marito.

MARIO: Yes. A century from now people will finally understand and appreciate my underwear pieces.

*ROSA puts on a record of upbeat Puerto Rican music.*

*(Suggested song: "Amor verdadero" by Willie Colón.)*

ROSA: You'll get a break one of these days, I'm sure.

MARIO: Maybe in New York...?

ROSA: *(Sarcastic)* Dreams do come true in the Big Apple!

*The music is inviting. MARIO and ROSA get into the rhythm.*

MARIO: *(Dancing)* My man is waiting for me in his beloved Harlem, wearing his Puerto Rico Libre T-shirt. *(Shouting)* Viva Puerto Rico Libre! He is listening to Willie Colón, waiting for me..

ROSA: Go back to your Boricua poet, then!

MARIO: Maybe I will.

ROSA: But dance with me first.

*She joins him, leading. They are very compatible dancers, their steps intricate and fanciful.*

MARIO: We still have the knack.

ROSA: What do you mean? We're better than ever!

*The song ends. They catch their breath. Silence. Voices of Caribbean men are heard far away, telling jokes and laughing.*

MARIO: *(Enticed by the sound)* You hear that?

ROSA: What?

MARIO: The Machos Caribeños talking downstairs, in the lobby, or maybe at the corner store. You hear them?

ROSA: No.

MARIO: My Boricua poet, he's one of those "real" men.

ROSA: Yeah, you like the Macho type. El Hombre!

MARIO: The man of the house.

ROSA: Hair on his chest, a bulging basket, (*showing off her medallion*) and a gold medallion.

*Silence. ROSA mixes drinks.*

MARIO: He's a ghetto school teacher; a radical, leftist Portorro from Upper Manhattan.

ROSA: Definitely not my type.

MARIO: I met him in Miami, at a restaurant.

ROSA: What was he doing there, starting the Revolution in the belly of the monster?

MARIO: He was visiting an ex-lover. Another Cuban.

ROSA: No me digas! He has the hots for Gusanos?

MARIO: (*Defensive*) He has the hots for me.

ROSA: I'm sure the feeling is mutual.

*They drink. MARIO looks at his painting.*

MARIO: He wants his writing to change things, to make people think differently about the world.

ROSA: (*Skeptical*) And he wants to do all that with poetry?

(*Pause.*) Oh, what the hell, I'll toast to change!

MARIO: (*Nostalgic*) When he got home everyday, after his subway ride, I'd greet him with a kiss...

ROSA: (*Surprised*) He'd let you kiss him?

MARIO: Yes. Then he talked about his students, about the lack of everything at school, even good faith. (*Pause.*) On Sundays we'd

take long walks through Central Park, or we'd go to visit his comrades, the Independentistas.

ROSA: *(Sarcastic)* Your kind of crowd.

MARIO: Yes, he's passionate about his cause. Puerto Rico Libre! But in bed, we are the only revolution that matters.

*ROSA puts on a disco song. (Suggestion: "I Feel Love" by Donna Summer.) Lights dim, closing in on the painting.*

MARIO: *(Entranced)* He kisses me reluctantly, but he'll let me run my tongue down his neck and his arms; down the ecstasy line that passes through his belly button, that leads to his balls and there it becomes a fragrant thicket. He'll let me savor his thighs, the dense ringlets on his legs. His balls are tender, overflowing; he'll let me drink them. His pinga is mine, too. I'll count each tiny vein. Reddish brown, mushroom head. My baby pink tongue on his huge dick. This is our favorite subject...

ROSA: Sex.

MARIO: Love.

ROSA: Revolution.

MARIO: Passion.

ROSA: Death?

MARIO: No! *(Pause.)* He... He didn't infect me.

ROSA: How do you know?

MARIO: He tested negative.

ROSA: Is that what he told you?

MARIO: Yes.

ROSA: *(Sarcastic)* Here's to his health, then. Salud!

MARIO: Salud!

BOTH: Cheers!

*ROSA lights the joint again. She smokes and offers MARIO some. He declines.*

MARIO: You shouldn't mix pot and Cuba Libres. It turns you Evil. Rosa La Horrorosa. The Greatest Yuca Bitch.

ROSA: You're drunk.

MARIO: *(Laughing)* And you're a pothead.

*Silence. ROSA walks up to MARIO's painting. She studies it.*

ROSA: Who did, then?

MARIO: Who did what?

ROSA: Who made you sick?

MARIO: Hell if I know!

*Fade to black.*

## PERFORMANCE 10

### Drawing

*Lights up on MARIO. He is at the beach, sketching on a drawing pad. The mellow, heavily accented voice of his mother is heard offstage. MIMA's cries cut into MARIO's thoughts, overlap with his words, drown him out. But her voice also becomes, at times, a distant wail, a soothing whisper.*

MIMA: Leave him alone!

MARIO: Glass walls, the wind, a trace of the wind..

MIMA: (*Imploring*) Déjalo en paz! Leave our son alone!

MARIO: I'll draw the sunlight and the heat, the highway..

MIMA: I live with this fear. This fear!

*MARIO grows increasingly anxious as he continues drawing.*

MARIO: The blond stud who's running to the beach, to his freedom.

MIMA: This fear that one day you'll go too far.

MARIO: I'll draw his muscles, the perfect shape of his..

MIMA: You'll go too far!

MARIO: The brick facade, the fruit stand. Guantánamo Street..

MIMA: What has the boy ever done to you?

MARIO: Guantánamo Street leads to the sea.

MIMA: What has he done?!

*Children are heard, laughing.*

MARIO: The children who play by the shore...

MIMA: I'm going crazy, Dios mío!

MARIO: The cool breeze that revives me... The statue of an angel in some church, I'll draw it...

MIMA: I'm going crazy in this house! Loca!

*A disco song comes on. (Suggestions: "Forbidden Love" by Madleen Kane; "Once Upon Time" by Donna Summer. MARIO tosses the pad and runs to the dance floor. He dances awkwardly, as if in pain. His mother's tormented voice is heard over the music.*

MIMA: Loca! Loca!

*The music fades. MARIO tries to shut MIMA out, holding his hands over his ears, but fails. The memory engulfs him.*

MIMA: What do you mean he's a pájaro? Can't you see he's just a little boy? What does a little boy know about being a homosexual? He likes to do his drawings, that's all. So what if he turns out to be that way?! Does he deserve to die because of it?!

*(Horried)* Leave him alone! You'll kill him!

*MARIO falls on his knees.*

MIMA: *(Lovingly)* You're going to be fine, baby. Just fine...

*Silence. MARIO gets up with great effort. He listens attentively, relieved that his mother's voice is finally gone.*

MARIO: *(To the audience)* I'm holding his hand. There are crowds and tall buildings. I cling to my father, straggling behind. Why does he push me away? I look for his mustache but don't see it.

*(He sobs.) Where is my Papi?! (He runs to the mirror and presses his face against the glass, as if looking for his father on the other side.) I see him, and I hug him hard, afraid he might leave again. (Pause.) He tells me I shouldn't cry. Tears are for sissies! He'd been hiding from me to see my reaction, that's all, expecting me to behave like a tough little boy. (Crying) But I let him down! (He steps away from the mirror, terrified.) In my room, he pushes my face into the watercolor set. He's forcing me to eat my greens, my reds and blues and grays, my pinks and my browns, the spots of colored water, the fine hair of my brushes. (Like his father) Eat it all, coño! Eat it! (Mellifluous music is heard. MARIO returns to the dance floor. He sways and hums, submerged in his memories. Lights dim, closing in on his face and torso.) Your arms used to embrace me, Papi. There, in front of my bedroom window, you used to kiss me. (To the audience) Shhh... Quiet, please. (Pause.) I just heard you come in, Papi. You're tiptoeing your way to my tiny arms. Lie down by my side. Cuddle up to me. Let me caress your eyelids. (Pause.) I'm three years old and you still love me. Don't you? You're proud of your tough little boy.*

*Fade to black.*

**END OF ACT ONE**



ACT TWO

1989

PERFORMANCE 1

A Healthy Meal

*Lights up on the kitchen. ROSA enters, putting on a frilly apron. She will stay busy slicing carrots, preparing broiled chicken breasts and mashed potatoes, washing dishes and doing other related chores during the entire performance.*

MARIO: *(Entering)* I'm hungry, coño!

*ROSA sticks a large carrot in his mouth.*

ROSA: Here. Have a snack.

MARIO: *(Nibbling at the carrot)* Mmm.. What are we having?

ROSA: I'm making us a healthy meal today. *(Matter-of-fact)* Broiled chicken breasts and mashed potatoes and..

MARIO: *(Alarmed, in jest)* No red meat?!

ROSA: And for dessert, vanilla frozen yogurt.

MARIO: *(To the audience)* It's a lost cause. She's become an American. Or worse: a SoCal gal!

ROSA: *Estás loco! (Laughing)* That'll never happen. I was too old when I came to the Promised Land.

MARIO: *(Melodramatic)* Too old to become a true Gringa, too young to embody the real Guantanamera.

ROSA: You got it.

*MARIO walks down to the living room, humming and singing the "Guantanamera" refrain. He picks up one of ROSA's record albums.*

MARIO: Oh, but there are traces of the past in her pad.

ROSA: An occasional song by Raphael, yes. *(She sings the refrain from Raphael's "Digan lo que digan.")* Nothing like a good dose of that guy to get me going.

*MARIO returns to the kitchen, gives ROSA a pat on the back.*

MARIO: She's a special kind of gal, this Rosita.

ROSA: *(With a Castilian accent)* Muchas gracias.

MARIO: *(Like an orator)* She's eternally grateful to her loving parents. They made great sacrifices for her, leaving their homeland forever, working long hours in a factory..

ROSA: *(Laughing)* So they could end up with a five-bedroom house in Garden Grove, a swimming pool, and a two-car garage.

MARIO: *(Aside)* Mr. and Mrs. Rodríguez are proud members of the Cuban Club José Martí, ironically named after the great poet and apostle. *(Secretive, campy)* What mysterious activities go on at the Cuban Club, we'll never know!

ROSA: There's no mystery. My father plays dominoes with three other Papi lookalikes. *(Stroking her imaginary beard)* They all

love to bash you-know-who. *(Pause.)* My mother gossips away in a corner. And the Cuban studs try to pick up all the sexy Jevas.

MARIO: The supposedly virginal Cubanitas who always ask you the same questions, right? *(Catty)* Oye, chica, when are we going to meet your boyfriend? Oye, Rosita, niña, aren't you worried that you're getting too old for marriage? Oye, chica, Rosita...

ROSA: Shut up! No jodas más!

MARIO: Okay, okay. Would you rather talk about the Island?

ROSA: No, please! I'm sick of el Tema. Cuba Cuba Cuba!

MARIO: Oh my God! You're committing blasphemy. You'll pay for this affront with your life.

ROSA: Papi and everyone at the Club make it sound like we're the only people who've suffered in this world. Thirty years later, and we're still hurting. Coño!

MARIO: What do you think will happen when Fidel falls? Because he'll have to go, you know. No evil can last a hundred years.

ROSA: We'll try to reclaim our sugar mills and our land and our mansions. And since we won't be able to recover any of it, we'll have plenty good reasons to go on suffering.

MARIO: *(Melodramatic)* Pobres de nosotros.

ROSA: Truth is, Papi would never go back. He likes his swimming pool and his Chevy Impala too much.

MARIO: Wait, but didn't he have a Chevy and a pool in Cuba?

ROSA: *(Sarcastic)* Sure. We all did!

MARIO: Oh, but everything was so much better on the Island.

ROSA: *(Holding up her breasts)* The mangoes were sweeter! *(She draws a circle around her crotch)* The papayas were the biggest and juiciest in the whole world...

MARIO: *(Fondling the carrot)* The yucas were so long and thick.

ROSA: And Varadero was the most beautiful beach that human eyes have ever seen!

*They laugh.*

MARIO: We're being much too irreverent, niña. We should take our Cubanity more seriously.

ROSA: I do, actually. I just don't live in the past.

MARIO: Of course you don't. *(Pause.)* You're proud of the world you've created. *(Pointing to the watercolors)* Tantalizing art, no maps of the Crocodile Island, no portraits of Martí...

ROSA: And no frijoles negros.

MARIO: *(Faking surprise)* No mercocha?

ROSA: No. Not even yuca frita.

BOTH: *(Prissy)* It's too fattening.

ROSA: *(Pensive)* Seriously, Mario. Would you like to visit Cuba?

MARIO: I don't think so. You know what it was like. The gossip and the homophobia and the fucking heat. Coño, chica, ese calor!

ROSA: I've heard things are different now. The way they treat gay people, I mean.

MARIO: Memories don't change, Rosita.

ROSA: We should go check it out. *(Laughing)* It couldn't be any worse than the Cuban Club.

MARIO: Bon voyage!

ROSA: Just think, Marito, the two of us in Guantánamo again.

MARIO: Make sure you take good notes. I want a detailed report.

*Silence. ROSA gets involved in her cooking. MARIO helps her.*

ROSA: I've got to get this meal going.

MARIO: *(Touching ROSA's apron admiringly)* She's a good little cook, this Rosita. A dyke with no ties and no roots anywhere.

ROSA: Stop picking on me!

MARIO: She makes a great living teaching español. *(Doing a grammar drill)* Yo como tú comes él come ella come!

ROSA: *(Defensive)* I don't teach grammar.

MARIO: What do you teach, then? The Cuban tongue?

ROSA: *(Jokingly)* Sí, coño. *(To the audience)* I tell my students, listen here, muchachitos. You wanna know about Cuban nouns? Most of them have gender, comprenden? *(Like a grade school teacher)* For example, the noun tortillera is of the feminine gender because it ends in a. And the word pájaro, which means birdie, is masculine because it ends in o. You understand?

MARIO: Niña, but how do you explain the gender of pinga? *(He fondles the carrot)* It ends in a but don't let that fool you; it's the most masculine of all words!

ROSA: Haven't you ever heard of transgender nouns?

MARIO: You teach those, too?

ROSA: Yes! *(With exaggerated pride)* I'm a progressive educator.

MARIO: *(Secretive, to the audience)* She does have a weakness for lesbian harlequin romances, the ones with lots of eating scenes. Her favorite lit. And there ain't nothing progressive about that! *(To ROSA)* By the way, how's the White Lady doing?

ROSA: Joan?

MARIO: The one and only. Unless there's a new tortilla...

ROSA: No, there's no one else. Joan's doing fine.

MARIO: Do your parents know about her?

ROSA: Parents always know. They just don't like to hear about it.

MARIO: *(Pensive)* How do you manage to fake it all so well?

ROSA: Fake what?

MARIO: You know. Pass for straight.

ROSA: I have no choice. I need to pay the mortgage.

MARIO: Would you lose your job if you came out at work?

ROSA: Probably not. But the fucking machos of my department would make life unbearable for me. The chair especially, that homophobic pig. I can almost hear him cracking jokes about my tortillas. Typical male academic, a total asshole.

MARIO: So, you'd have no choice but to quit.

ROSA: That's right.

MARIO: Do you ever get sick of acting, Rosi, of putting on a show for people you don't give a shit about?

ROSA: Yes. I get sick to my stomach.

*Silence.*

MARIO: *(Sampling the food)* When are we eating? I'm hungry, coño.

ROSA: *(Throwing up her arms)* And I'm tired of cooking!

*Fade to black.*

## PERFORMANCE 2

### The Native Island

*The instrumental version of "Guantanamera" plays. The MC . announces: The Rosa Rodríguez Comedy Hour!*

*Spotlight on ROSA, behind the mike. She is wearing a tight-fitting dress with a bolero jacket. Her makeup and hairstyle accentuate her feminine qualities. She looks elegant and professional. Lights up on MARIO. He is sitting at one of the bar tables, having a drink and watching ROSA.*

ROSA: You like my outfit? The Academic Look. It isn't really me, but what the heck. I gotta play the part! I'm a Profesora de Español at the University of Orange. (*MARIO makes a face, seeming exasperated.*) Don't worry, I'm not going to talk about my teaching, about my very popular conversational approach and my great student evaluations. (*Pause.*) Wouldn't you rather hear about Joan? (*MARIO nods excitedly, urging the audience to cheer.*) Okay, okay, I'll get to the point. (*She makes a feminine Sarita gesture, straightening her dress and retouching her makeup.*) By the time I met Joan, I had already stopped fighting my deviance. I'd told myself, Niña, your native island is Lesbos, not Cuba. Now, what are you going to do about it? I guess you could say I had experience. Joan didn't. She was a Baby Lesbian, and I was



more than willing to share with her my knowledge of La Isla.

*(Pause.)* I met her at a bar. I didn't even know her name yet, and she was already talking about her job. Joan was a producer of TV commercials, so I fed her this routine about my interest in publicity and the advertising industry, and she bought it!

*(Pause.)* Here was Joan sipping her Martini, talking about production theories, sales dynamics, and all I could think about was her... *(She touches her breasts.)* Anyway, as I'm sure you guessed by now, that very night we embarked on a wild joy ride.

MARIO: *(Laughing)* Wild joy ride! What a ridiculous way to describe the first time you fucked her.

ROSA: Hey, this is my story. I can be ridiculous if I want to.

MARIO: *(Reproachfully)* You poke fun at everything, your Cubanity, your work, your sex life...

ROSA: And you eat it up, don't you? You love to laugh at the White Lady, at my tortillas and my teaching. As long as your sex is glorified and exalted, who cares, right?

MARIO: You're not in love with Joan. The truth!

ROSA: Poor Marito. He was beaten to a pulp by his father. He turned gay because he rejected the Cuban macho culture.

MARIO: Joan's a good lay, and that's the only reason you're with her. Admit it.

ROSA: Or was he born inverted and had to face his difference in order to be true to himself?

MARIO: *(Defensive)* I was born gay, not inverted!

ROSA: Ah, the pain of having to hide your deepest truth. He's such a tragic hero! Oops, pardon me... a tragic heroine.

*Silence.*

MARIO: Why are you always trying to be funny?

ROSA: Because I hate tragedies.

MARIO: I don't like them, either.

ROSA: Then do what I do. Laugh about it all.

MARIO: I can't. There's nothing funny about my life.

ROSA: Use your imagination, then. Invent a little!

MARIO: I'm not a comedian.

ROSA: Neither am I.

MARIO: Yeah, but you wish you were. You'd love to have your own show. *(He grabs the mike.)* The Rosa Rodríguez Comedy Hour!

ROSA: *(Pushing him away)* Nothing wrong with a little comedy. It keeps me going.

MARIO: That's why you teach, isn't it? *(Pointing to the audience)* All those sexy Gringuitos listening to your dumb jokes in Spanish and laughing. Your captive audience!

ROSA: Hey, don't knock it. It's a living.

*Silence. MARIO returns to the table.*

MARIO: *(Somber)* Your comedy routine is getting old, Rosi.

ROSA: I won't say another word. Promise. My lips are sealed.

MARIO: *(Amused, pointing to her crotch)* No, they're not.

ROSA: Well, I guess I should clarify that.

MARIO: Please go on with your story.

ROSA: I don't want to bore you.

MARIO: Just make it short. Time is running out.

*Fade to black.*

PERFORMANCE 3

Toy Brothers

*Dim light. Living room. MARIO is lying on the couch, covered with a blanket, shivering. ROSA enters and throws another blanket on him. She sits by his side.*

ROSA: Did you call your folks?

MARIO: No, I didn't.

ROSA: I thought we agreed... They need to know.

MARIO: What for? I've been dead to them for a long time.

ROSA: Not to your Mima, you haven't.

MARIO: Let me go to sleep, Rosi. *(He cuddles up next to her.)* It feels so good to be with you. Can I hold you?

ROSA: *(Lovingly)* Yes. You're the only boy who's allowed to do it.

MARIO: *(Caressing her)* Your soft, wavy hair, your smooth skin; your legs, so firm.

ROSA: I'm not Rosa la Gorda anymore?

MARIO: No, you're not fat at all. You're a beautiful girl... My Guantánamo girl.

ROSA: Your Guantánamo woman.

*She tucks him in. He dozes off and minutes later wakes up with a start. He seems terribly frightened.*

MARIO: No, coño!

ROSA: What's the matter?

MARIO: Let me go! I've got to get home!

ROSA: You're there already, Marito. At home. Safe.

MARIO: Steps behind me, and gunshots. My mother warned me, Don't go near the fence, Marito. Stay away from there. Don't cross the Guantánamo Fence!

ROSA: But you crossed it, didn't you?

MARIO: Yes, and I saw incredible things on the other side...

Delicious food, joyrides, and gorgeous blonde men. *(Sobbing.)* But then I got lost, and they hunted me down. They killed me!

ROSA: *(Caressing him)* You're not lost. Or dead. Feel my fingers through your hair. *(Kissing his hands)* My lips on your hands, on your rosy nails, Marito. Feel them.

*Silence.*

MARIO: Papi! *(To Rosa)* He's sleeping with me. I like touching his chest, so hairy and warm...

ROSA: What's he doing?

MARIO: Looking at me, smiling. I think he loves me.

ROSA: He does.

MARIO: I like the way he sings.

ROSA: *(Stroking his forehead)* Go to sleep now. Duérmete, mi niño.

*Silence.*

MARIO: *(Suddenly wide awake)* I can't. He doesn't love me anymore.

ROSA: How do you know?

MARIO: Because he's mean to me. And to Mima. She cried a lot the day of the fight.

ROSA: What fight, Marito?

MARIO: Mima was sweet and kind...

ROSA: What was the fight about?

MARIO: I don't know. I just remember Papi pushing and shoving and throwing things. I tried to protect her. I went for his legs, biting them. But he was too strong.

ROSA: Did he hit you, too?

MARIO: *(Sobbing)* Yes, and no one could help us.

ROSA: *(Trying to comfort him)* You're going to be fine, Marito.

MARIO: Mima was nice. She helped me write the letter, and I forgot about the fight.

ROSA: What letter was that?

MARIO: *(Reveling in the memory)* The one I wrote to the three Wise Men. *(Pause.)* I saw the Reyes Magos riding their camels across the skies. They wore pointed boots, cloaks and garments of lights. They flew into my room and found my list of wishes...

ROSA: What did the Wise Men bring you?

MARIO: *(Excited, like a child)* I asked them for crayons and coloring books, a watercolor set and lots of brushes. But what I wanted most was a doll, a beautiful doll you could wind up, and then it would walk and talk and sing.

ROSA: It had to be a boy doll, no? Un muñeco.

MARIO: Yes, a tough little boy! And we could pretend to be brothers. *(Pensive)* I always wanted to have a brother...

ROSA: So, what did the Reyes bring you?

MARIO: A whole lot of stuff. Baseballs and bats and trucks and cars and war tanks. And on the floor there was a train running wildly, surrounded by mountains and lakes and green grass...

ROSA: Nice! But did you get your muñeco?

MARIO: No, the fucking Reyes didn't bring him!

*Silence. MARIO is very agitated. He tries to get up but can't. ROSA holds him tightly.*

ROSA: ¿Qué te pasa?!

MARIO: Leave me alone! Déjame!

ROSA: Try to relax, Marito.

MARIO: I can't feel my face!

ROSA: Your face is fine.

MARIO: He's hitting me!

ROSA: Why does he hit you?

MARIO: Because...

ROSA: Why?

MARIO: Because I like to draw pictures of naked boys. Because I ran away from home with a neighbor kid, and I was gone for hours.

ROSA: Did your Papi find you?

MARIO: Yes, he found me sitting on the grass, kissing Ramoncito's hands, his fingers... dark and long like the legs of a spider.

ROSA: Your father couldn't handle that, Marito.

MARIO: Papi hates me! He hates me because I look like... like...

ROSA: Go on.

MARIO: I look and act like... a girl.

ROSA: There's nothing wrong with a boy looking like a girl.

MARIO: If you say so!

ROSA: Tell your father not to hit you anymore.

MARIO: I can't.

ROSA: Tell him, Marito.

MARIO: He can't hear me!

ROSA: Speak to him with your eyes, then.

MARIO: Let me forget him!

ROSA: Not yet. Not until you stand up to him.

MARIO: Okay, okay. ¡Coño!

*MARIO makes a fist, confronting his invisible father, crying.*

MARIO: Get away from me, you fucking monster!

*Fade to black.*



PERFORMANCE 4

Trashy Memories

*Lights up on MARIO. He is sleeping on the couch. ROSA enters and tucks him in. She walks to the mike as she peeks at her friend. Then she faces the audience.*

ROSA: Joan wanted to make a Meat-and-Potatoes kind of gal out of me. She hated my music, said it was melodramatic and artificial. Because you see, Joan is into "real" music. She tried to turn me on to Emmylou Harris and Bonnie Raitt and Linda Ronstadt. *(Aside)* Linda without her mariachi hat, of course. *(Pause.)* Joan said my accent was sexy, but she gave me diction lessons on a regular basis. And she taught me wonderful words I thought I was incapable of using, like discombobulated. *(As Joan)* Not tonight, honey. I feel discombobulated. *(Pause.)* She got me to try a high-fiber, cholesterol-free diet and refused to eat at the local Cuban restaurant because, as she put it, Cuban cuisine is salty, cloyingly sweet, greasy, totally unhealthy. *(Pause.)* Joan showed me the wonders of camping and hiking and mountain climbing. I still can't believe she considers that stuff a vacation! Sleeping on the floor and getting bitten by mosquitoes and all kinds of bugs? Having to do your caca in an outhouse? Forget it! *(Pause.)* Joan bought us a computer and an answering machine and a VCR. She

turned my life around, or she thought she did. *(She walks to the couch and sits next to MARIO, who is sleeping soundly. She covers him with her suit jacket.)* Joan moved out a couple of months after Mario moved in. She couldn't handle the situation. *(As she looks at MARIO.)* No, Joan wasn't just a good lay, Marito. She was my partner. And I do miss her. *(To the audience)* I'll admit there was one thing I hated with a passion about living with Joan. And it was having to play my music low so it wouldn't bother her; or having to listen to it with my earphones when she was at home and I just couldn't resist the urge for some loud Sarita. *(She sings the refrain from Sarita Montiel's "Nena.")* Ay, those corny and "artificial" singers! *(She sings.)* My only cherished traces of the past. Voices that I felt forced to hide as if they were a shameful addiction. *(She hums Sarita's song.)* My private, decadent pleasure. *(Ironic)* Trashy memories of underdevelopment.

*Fade to black.*

## PERFORMANCE 5

### A Palm Tree and a Flower

*Lights up on MARIO and ROSA. He is wrapped in blanket, posing for her in front of the mirror. He seems absorbed in his reflection. A guitar version of "Nena" plays softly.*

MARIO: Don't you just love my dress, Rosi? It's long and tight and black and I'm wearing a fur coat.

ROSA: You look radiant.

MARIO: Like Sarita Montiel?

ROSA: Yes! It's carnival time, isn't it?

MARIO: It sure is. And I'm walking on my lover's arm.

ROSA: Is his name Amore?

MARIO: *(He nods)* He's very Catholic and very handsome. And I am his decent girl.

ROSA: But doesn't he know?

MARIO: What? What is he supposed to know?

ROSA: That you're not really his innocent girl.

MARIO: No, he has no idea that I'm the Carnival Queen. *(Aggrieved)*

So... I guess our love is doomed. He'll leave me when he finds out.

ROSA: Or he might accept you just the way you are.

MARIO: *(Staring at his reflection)* Sick... and dying.

ROSA: He loves you.

MARIO: He won't be swallowed up by the sea because of my truth?

ROSA: He won't. I promise.

MARIO: Amore! Say you forgive me!

ROSA: But there's nothing to forgive.

MARIO: Say you accept me, then.

ROSA: I do.

*Silence. MARIO has a pleasant inner vision.*

MARIO: There are so many people! I like it here!

ROSA: Where are you?

MARIO: Walking down Guantánamo Street with Papi. *(He holds her hand, takes a deep breath.)* Don't you just love that ocean air?

*(Excited)* Guantánamo Street leads to the sea.

ROSA: Let's stay here for a while, okay?

*Silence. They stroll.*

MARIO: *(Pulling away)* Where is Papi? *(Scared)* I can't see him!

ROSA: *(Pointing to the mirror)* There he is!

MARIO: Why is he hiding from me?

ROSA: It was just a prank, Marito. He didn't know you'd be so frightened.

MARIO: But I am! *(He hits the mirror, making it swing like a pendulum.)* Don't you hear him?

*Silence. MARIO listens.*

ROSA: What's he saying?

MARIO: He's talking with Mima. He's telling her that we'll have to leave soon, that Cuba has turned into a Soviet hell.

ROSA: Does your Mima agree?

MARIO: Yeah. She's saying that Fidel had everybody fooled, that he's not an angel and a savior but a mean devil.

*MARIO starts laughing.*

ROSA: What's so funny?

MARIO: The way my parents talk. They're so scared of Fidel!

ROSA: And you're not?

MARIO: No, I don't fear that man the way they do.

ROSA: And why is that?

MARIO: Because I've already known a worse dictator.

*Silence.*

ROSA: Hey, you wanna go for a ride? The beach, maybe?

MARIO: Yes! And later we'll go to the disco.

ROSA: I'm not in the mood for a bar tonight, Marito.

MARIO: *(Resigned)* That's okay. There's something else I rather...

*(He searches the living room frantically.)* Where... Where is it?!

ROSA: What are you looking for?

MARIO: My drawing pad. Where did you put it?

*ROSA fetches a drawing pad and a pencil for him.*

ROSA: Here it is.

MARIO: *(He draws excitedly)* I'm working again, Rosi!

*He hands her his sketches. She scrutinizes them.*

ROSA: Yes, a palm tree and a flower. Is it a rose?

MARIO: *(He sits on the couch, exhausted.)* Always a rose.

*A Puerto Rican song is heard far away.*

ROSA: *(She sits with him.)* Does your lover like the fact that you're an artist?

MARIO: Sure, he's impressed by that. *(Pause.)* Is he alive, Rosi?

ROSA: *(Pointing to his heart)* Yes. Here, in your heart.

MARIO: He died?

ROSA: I don't know, Marito.

MARIO: So many people dying...

*Silence. She holds his hand.*

ROSA: You want some mercocha?

MARIO: Only if you made it.

ROSA: I did. I made it for you.

MARIO: Rosi, can I kiss you?

ROSA: Sure, but only one besito, okay?

MARIO: Only one?

ROSA: Yes, you know I don't like to kiss boys.

MARIO: *(Making an effort to smile)* Then just pretend I'm a girl!

*He kisses her as lights fade to black.*

## PERFORMANCE 6

### This River

*Dark stage. The svelte silhouettes of two women are seen on the screen. They are sensuous shadows making love. ROSA's seductive, omnipresent voice is heard offstage.*

ROSA: My eyes closed, I imagine her skin. Soft? Warm? And my lips on her breasts. She's wearing a tight skirt and stockings. My hands under her skirt. The edge of the stockings, where the fabric ends and the skin begins. The softness, the saline smell. Playing with her hair, then drinking that slippery dampness. Drinking eternally, as if each drop of love were the last drop. (Pause.) She stares at me, thinking I'm asleep. I spread my legs and the throbbing sensation begins. My hands are cups overflowing with her skin; her nipples, hard and pointed. She laces my waist with her arms and inserts her finger, moving it lightly. (Pause.) Yes, baby, I'm wet. But she wants more, and so do I. She's licking in circles, around and deep, up and down on the burning surface. The rhythm of her fingers, ants in my veins. I have no arms no legs no lungs no eyes. Only my lips on her lips. An all-consuming kiss consuming all of me. I am her tongue inside, this river that grows. Where she swims. I am her.

*Fade to black.*

## PERFORMANCE 7

### Salty Tears

*Night. Sounds of a rainstorm. Women are heard chanting.*

MARIO: *(His voice)* Shut up! I said shut up! Shut the fuck up!

*Lights up on MARIO. He is pacing the living room. ROSA enters, having been awakened by his screaming. He runs to her when he sees her. The chanting stops.*

MARIO: Get me out of here, please!

ROSA: Out of where, Marito?

MARIO: Out of this convent.

ROSA: My house is not a convent!

MARIO: Yes it is, and I'm one of the nuns.

ROSA: It sounds like you're playing Sarita again.

MARIO: *(Confused)* Sarita who? No! I have to get out!

ROSA: Okay, okay. Why do you want to leave?

MARIO: Because I came here to rest and now...

ROSA: Go on. *(They sit on the couch.)* Cuéntame.

MARIO: I wanted... I wanted to get away from my life and now...

ROSA: Yes, Marito. What is happening now?

MARIO: There are men crushing the flowers, chasing us!

ROSA: Who are these men?

MARIO: I don't know. Bandits.



ROSA: They won't hurt you.

MARIO: *(Agitated)* They're tearing off our habits!

ROSA: I promise you they won't harm you.

MARIO: But they.. they take us. They're raping me!

ROSA: *(Holding him)* No, they're not. You're here with me. Safe.

*MARIO relaxes. He is comforted by the sound of the rain.*

MARIO: Could I sleep with you tonight?

ROSA: Of course, chico.

MARIO: But what if my father finds us? He'll kill me.

ROSA: He won't. I'll protect you.

*The chanting is heard again. MARIO runs to the mirror and stares at it as if looking through a window. He is pointing to a spot down below.*

MARIO: In the courtyard, down below, a tiny casket. So tiny.

ROSA: There's nothing down there, Marito.

MARIO: The nuns are burying my son, the stillborn son of a bandit.

ROSA: I don't think so.

MARIO: Am I the one in the casket?

ROSA: No.

MARIO: Who are they burying, then? Please tell me.

ROSA: *(Looking through the "window")* There's only rain out there.

MARIO: And flowers, lots of flowers.

ROSA: Yes. They're all roses.

MARIO: I see a procession. *(Pause.)* And some nuns. They're standing around these men... men who are digging a hole in the ground. *(Pause.)* Now the men are lifting the casket...

ROSA: Do you see yourself? What are you doing?

MARIO: I'm standing by the hole. My hand is reaching down to Papi.

ROSA: So, he's down there?

MARIO: *(Crying)* Yes. They're covering his body little by little...

ROSA: Why are you crying?

MARIO: Because...

ROSA: Why?

MARIO: He's covered with dirt. No trace of the casket.

ROSA: Your father's not in that grave, Marito. He's still alive.

MARIO: *(Hyperventilating)* There's no air. I can't breathe!

ROSA: Yes, you can.

MARIO: I'm afraid.

ROSA: But there's nothing to fear.

*They embrace.*

MARIO: *(Crying)* I'm afraid you'll leave me.

ROSA: Never.

MARIO: That you'll hide from me.

ROSA: *(Caressing his face)* Never, Marito.

*Silence.*

MARIO: *(More at peace)* Papi's hand feels cool on my face. He's wiping off my tears with his fingers.

ROSA: Your tiny tears on his lips, he savors them.

MARIO: What a nice taste, he says.

ROSA: My boy's tears are so salty.

*Fade to black.*

## PERFORMANCE 8

### Human Form

*The tremulous voice of woman is heard, humming and singing what sounds at first like a children's song. The lyrics are cryptic. The musical arrangement will gradually turn hard-driving: electric drums and synthesizer strings. There is no harmony between orchestration and voice, yet it all works into haunting whole.*

*Lights up on MARIO. He is dressed in black, wearing a blood-red cloak and a carnival mask, his lips painted purple; his hair combed back, glistening. He stands in the middle of the dance floor as an imposing image: virile yet tender, somewhat gaunt, intensely sensual. His shadow is cast on the screen.*

MARIO: *(To the audience)* I sought the darkest niche in that old Victorian house, and there I sat, drinking and nourishing my Halloween fantasy. *(Pause.)* I wouldn't say a word. The slightest sound could reveal my sharp, gleaming teeth. And I couldn't display them for just anybody. Not yet. *(The music blares. MARIO is dancing.)* I danced with all the other creatures of the night, always keeping a distance, playing the part. *(Moving sensuously)* The music traveled down my throat, through my veins, killing me softly. *(The music begins to fade.)* No one noticed the cold sweat trickling down my spine. No one could detect my fear. Behind the

frightful blood sucker there was a homeless man, alone, afraid of dying. *(He reaches up, trying to touch an invisible angel.)* Oh, God, if you exist, appear in human form! Before my eyes, tonight, in human form! *(He runs to the mirror and then to the beach, as if chased by someone.)* I ran out of there, my cloak soaring behind me. *(Breathing with effort.)* Desperate for air and desperate for life, I ran. Had I become a true vampire? I belonged in the night. I'd never felt as free as I did now, thrust into the dark like a bullet. *(Pause. He touches his legs.)* Suddenly, I couldn't move my legs; they were frozen. *(He caresses his chest.)* I reached inside and held on to my heart. It was burning, throbbing with life. *(Pause.)* And then... then I saw him. *(Elated)* I did! He was resting on the sand, looking up at the moon. So beautiful. *(Pause.)* He took my mask off, for he knew my hungry canines weren't real. *(Lights dim, closing in on his face and torso.)* No, I didn't really want his sex. The soothing tone of his voice, yes, and the tender way he held me. Tenderness, oh how I craved it. I kissed the palms of his hands; his thin, dark fingers tenderly. I rested my head on his chest and listened to his comforting words. I savored his breath, I inhaled him. Unable to believe that I could finally possess his human form.

## PERFORMANCE 9

### Ten Years of Bar Hopping

*The photo of MARIO and ROSA as children gradually comes into focus on the screen. Lights up on ROSA.*

ROSA: *(To the audience)* I finally ran into him at a bar in Santa Monica eleven years ago. We hadn't seen each other since the time we left Guantánamo. *(Pause.)* Can you picture that scene? It was like finding a part of me I thought I'd lost forever...

*Lights dim. The image of the children fades, and a Seventies disco song comes on. (Suggestion: "Let's All Chant" by The Michael Zager Band.) The disco ball shines and turns.*

*Suddenly, ROSA is at the discotheque, sitting at one of the tables with a woman. The place is crowded with dancers, mainly male couples. MARIO is dancing with a young man, doing a fancy step. It is obvious he enjoys the attention he is calling to himself. ROSA looks at him intently. She walks up to him and grabs him by the arm, scrutinizing his face. MARIO reacts defensively, thinking she just wants some room to dance.*

MARIO: Don't be so rough, honey. There's room for everyone!

ROSA: *(Utterly surprised)* I don't believe it!

*MARIO tries to ignore her and dances feverishly.*

MARIO: I have a dance partner already, sweetie, so why don't you just grab somebody else and scam.

ROSA: It is you! Mario!

MARIO: *(Thrilled, reading her face)* Wait... are you...? No! Rosita?

ROSA: *(Overjoyed)* Yes, the one and only. *(With a Castilian accent)*  
La misma que viste y calza!

*They embrace.*

MARIO: What are you doing here?

ROSA: Never mind that. What are you doing here?

MARIO: *(Laughing)* This is where I live.

ROSA: I knew I'd find you sooner or later.

MARIO: You've been looking for me?

ROSA: All over the world. In every fucking bar I've ever been to.  
*(Pause.)* For ten years I've been thinking, yeah, one of these days I'm going to find him.

MARIO: Ten years of bar hopping. Sounds like fun.

ROSA: *(Laughing)* You're all grown up!

MARIO: So are you!

ROSA: *(She hugs and kisses him)* I've missed you, Mario.

MARIO: I've missed you more.

*A new song comes on. (Suggestion: "Never Can Say Goodbye" by Gloria Gaynor.) The music blares as the characters walk to the beach, chatting. Part of the conversation is heard when the music fades to background.*

ROSA: My parents sent me off to Madrid alone in '68. I lived there for about eight months, until we were all reunited here in California. *(Pause.)* By the way, I hated Spain...

MARIO: *(Mockingly)* La Madre Patria!

ROSA: Yeah, it was cold and filthy and dark and infested with Franquistas. *(Pause.)* But what about you? When did you get out?

MARIO: *(While he scribbles the word Guantanamera on the sand)* That same year, with my parents. We spent a couple of months in Miami and then we came here. And that's it.

ROSA: *(She reads the word, pronouncing in crisp Cuban Spanish.)* Guantanamera. *(Pause.)* Wait, what do you mean that's it?

MARIO: There isn't much more to tell. Not long after we got to California, I ran away from home. For good!

ROSA: *(Laughing)* ¡Viva Mario Libre!

MARIO: ¡Que viva!

*Fade to black.*



## PERFORMANCE 10

Rosamario

*The "Guantanamera" overture resounds. Spotlight on the microphone. Applause. ROSA enters and takes a bow. She is clad in a velvet tuxedo.*

ROSA: *(Engaging the audience)* How are you all doing so far? Have you enjoyed the show? *(Applause)* Great! That's what I want to hear. *(Pause)* So, before we wrap things up, I'd like to tell you about this friend of mine, a very funny guy...

*Lights up on MARIO. He is seated in the living room, wearing the pink fur coat and looking at photographs in ROSA's album. He seems annoyed by her monologue.*

MARIO: Hey, I told you there's nothing funny about my life.

ROSA: *(Forcing her laughter)* Don't worry, I'll take care of that...

MARIO: *(Accusatory, pointing at her)* Don't!

ROSA: *(Ignoring him)* As I was saying, this guy's a riot. You wouldn't believe...

MARIO: *(Defiantly, interrupting)* I said don't!

ROSA: Okay, okay, Marito, we'll tell the story your way.

*Lights dim as MARIO approaches ROSA, clutching the album to his chest. They face the audience.*

MARIO: They gave me a number, and for the next seven days that's who I was, a number.

ROSA: One week. Then we knew.

MARIO: You cooked for me that week. Cuban food!

ROSA: We listened to my old records...

MARIO: And the seventh day came.

ROSA: It was a Tuesday.

MARIO: Or a Friday. Unlucky either way.

ROSA: Someone called out your number.

MARIO: And I went in.

*MARIO places the album on the floor.*

MARIO: They said I'd been exposed to the virus. Infected.

ROSA: But you didn't believe it, did you?

MARIO: No. I was feeling so good in those days.

*Full lights up as they walk to the beach.*

ROSA: We went to the beach that Tuesday or Friday. And we sat near the water, getting our feet wet.

MARIO: I wrote a word on the sand, just like I did the night we found each other. *(Singing softly)* Guantanamera...

ROSA: *(Singing)* Guajira guantanamera...

BOTH: Guantanamera, guajira guantanamera...

*MARIO reaches up, as if touching the wings of an angel.*

MARIO: Imagine the orgy I'm going to start up in Heaven, Rosi!

ROSA: Oye, chico, and without me!

MARIO: We'll meet up again, don't worry.

ROSA: I want a spectacular reception when I get there.

MARIO: Yes! With a choir of cherubs and cupids singing your name.

ROSA: *(Laughing)* And a few sexy female angels, please.

*Silence.*

MARIO: *(Pointing to the album)* We need a new picture for your album, Rosi, a recent one. Before I go.

ROSA: You're right. We'll get one.

*The image of MARIO in drag as the Carnival Queen and ROSA in her tux is projected. The song "El Relicario" plays faintly.*

MARIO: *(Excited)* Let's put on our show, Rosi!

ROSA: Oh, no, not the Carnival Bitch again.

MARIO: Please? Pretty please? *(Pause.)* I promise I'll give you my greatest performance ever.

ROSA: Okay, okay, why not.

MARIO: Fantastic! *(Excited, he takes off his coat and runs to the mike, grabbing it with a flair.)* After the grand finale, the queen tears the mask off her face and turns into a bird! Not a vampire, not a bullet, but a pájaro!

ROSA: And not just a pájaro but also a tortillera, right?

*(Laughing)* Two for the price of one.

MARIO: *(As he returns to the beach)* Yes, Rosa and Mario...

*They hold each other and begin to spin around like children.*

ROSA: Rosamario!

MARIO: Rosario! Rosamar!

ROSA: Marirosa, mariposa!

MARIO: Rosamar!

ROSA: Ocean rose!

MARIO: Butterfly!

BOTH: Mariposa!

*They embrace. MARIO looks up, excited.*

MARIO: Look at the blue sky and the white clouds. Those colors are so fucking real.

ROSA: We did it, Mario. We're home!

MARIO: Are we safe here?

ROSA: Yes! No one can touch us.

MARIO: *(Relieved)* We don't have to act for anybody...

ROSA: Only for ourselves.

*The image of ROSA and MARIO in drag is replaced by the photo of the characters as children. Having been colorized, the photo looks impressionistic, like dream.*

MARIO: We're twelve years old..

ROSA: Amigos del alma.

MARIO: Soulmates.

*Silence. The photo gradually fades.*

MARIO: My father... My father didn't abuse me...

ROSA: No. And your mother stood up to him, protected you.

MARIO: Joan didn't move out when I moved in...

ROSA: No. She wasn't frightened by your sickness.

MARIO: You didn't spend a year taking care of me, then.

ROSA: No. I didn't become your loving nurse, and you didn't have to feel grateful.

MARIO: I made it!

ROSA: Yes. You've never gone hungry.

MARIO: I never hustled.

ROSA: You were a famous artist!

MARIO: We never heard of Castro.

ROSA: A plague hasn't broken out.

MARIO: And I am not dead.

*A heartfelt guitar solo of "Guantanamera" plays. ROSA and MARIO hold each other, lovingly.*

ROSA: We found each other here, on this sunny beach.

MARIO: You were resting on the sand.

ROSA: You told me you had lost your way.

MARIO: I lay down by your side. You held my hand.

ROSA: Then we performed for each other...

MARIO: A show that we remembered.

ROSA: A song that we learned long ago.

BOTH: When we were children...

**THE END**