

Phoenix Cafe

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LIST OF CHARACTERS

Eloise	33 - Half White/Half Mexican
Saffron	17 - Eloise and Curtis' Daughter
George	57 - White, Eloise's Father
Curtis	37 - Black
Jaime	22 - Born in Mexico, raised in U.S.
Hersh	35 - Eloise's Husband
Adriana	45 - Deceased Grandmother (pronounced Spanish accent)

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"In Mexico. . .reality and dreams are perceived to merge and miracles are thought to be daily occurrences."

-H. Herrera

ACT I

SCENE ONE

Somewhere is the southwestern desert. 3 a.m.

Curtis and Jaime are down stage right. Their faces cast in shadow so they cannot be seen. They are standing over their dying mule. The only light afforded to them comes from the desert sky. They are escaped convicts, dressed in jeans and cotton shirts.

JAIME: Is it dead?

CURTIS: No such luck. Damn!

JAIME: Probably belonged to some old prospector looking for gold.

CURTIS: I just never heard of gold around here.

JAIME: That would've been something to ride him all the way to La Pesca. I was sort of having this little fantasy about how surprised everybody would be coming in with you sitting behind me. It would stir things up around there and they would talk about the day Jaime Rojas-Mejias returned to La Pesca after riding three thousand miles on a mule con *El Negro* and they'll tell this story for years to all the little kids who by that

time will have a touch of *El Negro* in their blood-'cause that's what they'll call you down there, *El Negro* and if they like you, they'll call you *El Negrito* and your old lady will call you *Mi Negrito*-

CURTIS: Yeah, yeah, in the meantime-we better think about putting this poor bastard out of its misery.

JAIME: Yeah, you're right we should put it out of its misery.

CURTIS: TURNS TO LOOK FOR A LARGE ROCK:

One of these might do the trick.

JAIME: I wonder how thick a mule's skull is.

CURTIS: Don't want to think about it. FINDS A ROCK THE SIZE OF A SHOE BOX. You want to do it?

JAIME: Maybe we should flip my lucky coin.

CURTIS: How lucky is it?

JAIME: Just a Susan B. Anthony, man.

CURTIS: Heads.

JAIME: FLIPS THE COIN. MISSES IT. COIN FALLS TO THE GROUND. Damn!

CURTIS: See it?

JAIME: It's too dark: ON HIS HANDS AND
KNEES FEELING THE AREA FOR HIS COIN. Aye!
What was that?!

CURTIS: It's hopeless.

JAIME: My Susan B. . .

CURTIS: Forget it, man.

JAIME: My good luck coin. PAUSE. Curtis?

CURTIS: What?

JAIME: Go 'head, you do it.

JAIME: Maybe we should say some words first.

CURTIS: Like what?

JAIME: Well, you know, like. . .uh. . .Thank you
little mule for carrying our tired asses
for two days and taking us this far and
now we that we've worn you out, we are
only trying to do you right by putting
you out of your misery so the coyotes and
moscas and vultures won't start picking
on you while you're still alive.

CURTIS: You through talking to that mule?

JAIME: Man this is the way you do things in the
village where I'm from and if you're
planning to live in México then you
should start getting used to our
costumbres-

CURTIS: Okay, okay, but if we don't get this over with, we may never get to La Pesca and the little children there may never see the touch of "*Mi Negrito*" in their blood.

: CURTIS RAISES THE ROCK OVER HIS HEAD.

JAIME HAS TURNED AWAY SO AS NOT TO SEE.

CURTIS: Holy shit! JAIME TURNS TO LOOK.

JAIME: What is it? *Madre mía y todos los Santos!* Touch it!

CURTIS: Touch it yourself!

JAIME: Look at it! Maybe it's radio-active!

CURTIS: If it is-our butts are next!

JAIME: It's turning blue, and its glowing!

There is a sound of wings beating around their heads. They jump around trying to duck and fight it off. Together:

CURTIS: What the hell-whoahh!?

JAIME : Duck-whoahhh-Hey! Get this off of me!:

The sound of beating wings stops as suddenly as it began.

JAIME: It stopped!

CURTIS: There's nothing out there. Couldn't have flown too far! See anything?

JAIME: Nothing. . .Not even a hummingbird.

CURTIS: It was a lot bigger than any hummingbird.

JAIME: What do you think it was, Curtis?

CURTIS: Vultures? Had to be. . . 'Cept, that we would've seen them or it or whatever-

JAIME:: Look! The mule's gone!

CURTIS: It's got to be here! It's gone alright. Let's get out of here-

JAIME: I'm with you. Hey-a road!

CURTIS: I'll be damned. That mule took us right to the edge of the highway. Well, Jaime, it'll make you happy to hear me say, the gods are with us tonight.

JAIME: Let's go-

CURTIS: No, this way.

JAIME: This way is south-Look at the North Star, it's up over there, so-

CURTIS: Believe me, I know my way around here, the way the road is laid out you gotta go north to get south. *They exit still arguing but Jaime going along with Curtis.*

JAIME: North to go south? Hey last guy who tried that was Chritopher Columbus and look what happened to him-

CURTIS: We should be so lucky. Trust me.

JAIME: I get very nervous when people say that.
*In the distance the mournful howl of a
lonesome coyote is heard. As Jaime and
Curtis exit.*

CURTIS. That nose gives me the creeps.

JAIME: It is a beautiful cry. It is the soulful
cry of the Mexican before he sings a
Ranchera about his little village, that
he has left to go El Norte for El Gringo.

CURTIS: Man, you're crazy.

JAIME: I am crazy but you are a Gringo.

CURTIS: What happened to Mi Negrito?

SCENE TWO

" . . .

There is

Hopeless fusion of your presence and your absence

I have found the secret

of loving you. . ."

?Andre Breton

Saffron's bedroom. Same time.

Saffron's grandmother's picture framed

in an oval which hangs over an alter of

flowers and objects from the desert.

Saffron, wearing a cotton knit

nightshirt is lighting incense, kneeling

on an oversized pillow. She takes a deep breath and in a single breath says the following.

SAFFRON: O other people living in the same place next to my insides, talk to me.
O UFO I saw that time but said I didn't want you tagging me like a pigeon
O other people who take on the form of animals to live in a world of smells
O asshole Christine who thinks having a Mustang gives her the right to be stupid and her just as stupid caveman brother!
Falls backwards on the bed and starts breathing. Then, solemnly, staring at the ceiling:
O Grandmother I don't know where my mother keeps your journals; lead me straight to them so I can take you with me. *Pulls the covers over herself and falls asleep. Dragging of a gas can can be heard outside. George enters with a flashlight. He is outside the cafe.*

GEORGE: : Sure I heard something out here. *Looks around.* Guess I'm gettin' edgy in my old age. Look a that,

Saffron's just turning her light out.

Kids.

Adriana, can be seen in a dim light that opens and closes giving enough time for the audience to notice her presence.

Light dims. She is at a distance.

GEORGE: Get me a couple of bums and I'll outwit them, am I right, Adriana? If you watch the way a man moves, you know what he's thinking and if you know what he's thinking then you know the man. Course, provided you have the luxury of time. Otherwise you show them ol' Jessie. Am I right, Adriana?

Adriana now appears very close to George.

ADRIANA: I want to take your picture.

GEORGE: : What for?

ADRIANA: Because you're my best *carnal* and tomorrow you're going to be a hero.

George: Well, I could be. I'm in the mood for a little fireworks. Could be a touch of Spring fever. *Winks at her.*

ADRIANA: I was thinking about when we first met. I thought, who is that handsome gringo? You were being very polite.

GEORGE: And you were wearing a white dress,
sitting with your hands folded in your
lap. I think it's the only time I ever
saw you behaving yourself.

ADRIANA: That's because you couldn't read my
thoughts.

GEORGE: How could I? You never looked at me
once.

ADRIANA: Until we "accidentally" met on the
terrace. . .Well one thing about coming
to this desert, it's when I first noticed
that plants had a personality, of course,
everybody talks to animals. *Pero es*
otra cosa, when they started talking to
me. Then, one day, I was sitting right
here in this very spot and I heard a
little whisper and I look over at a
cactus and it was making a wish. I had
an aunt who spoke to cats, female cats
only, *los macho* cats don't talk until you
take away their *cojoncitos*.

GEORGE: Well they do that to me, you hear a lot
of hollering. So did the cactus talk
back?

ADRIANA: *Pues, como que no?* That's why she always knew how many kittens they were going to have.

GEORGE: So what does a cactus wish for?

ADRIANA: Ohhh, the cactus is a simple plant-now the Birds of Paradise, those are very complicated-but a cactus just wants a lot of sun, a little rain and a pretty little bush *de rosas azul* nearby for eye-candy, you know.

GEORGE: Blue roses?

ADRIANA: *De seguro*, the way blonds like dark skin and *morenitos* like blondies. So, it only makes sense that the cactus wishes for the scent of blue roses-Sh!

GEORGE: What?

ADRIANA: I can hear the marigolds.

GEORGE: What are they saying?

ADRIANA: Oh, if only George would come and pull these weeds out. They're stepping on our little roots. It's getting so raggedy around here. *Calling softly: Socorooo!*

GEORGE: They're calling for help?? Raggedy? My Garden? We'll see about that-! *Heads towards the garden.*

Adriana: Georgie-

GEORGE: Yeah?

ADRIANA: Maybe you should wait for the sun to come up.

GEORGE: *Laughs.* The older I get the more I remind myself of my grandfather. One time we found him hoeing away in the middle of the night. I even to look like him when he was my age. *Looking out with flash light.* Was that you I heard out here before, Adriana?

The flash of the bulb as Adriana snaps a picture of George.

ADRIANA: There! I've captured the real you-it's for my journal.

GEORGE: Wait! Before you go, sing me one of your songs. It always helps me go to sleep. *Adriana lets out a soulful, mournful, cry and begins singing. Lights Fade, George exits, Dawn comes up as Adriana slowly exits singing.*

ADRIANA: Sings *Canción Mixteca*

Que lejos estoy del suelo donde he nacido!

inmensa nostalgia invade mi pensamiento;

*y al ver me tan solo y triste cual hoja
al viento,
quisiera llorar, quisiera morir de
sentimiento.*

*Oh tierra del sol!, suspiro por verte
ahora que lejos yo vivo sin luz, sin
amor;*

*y al verme tan solo y triste cual hoja al
viento,
quisiera llorar, quisiera morir de
sentimiento.*

How distant I am from the land where I
was born

A great nostalgia invades my thoughts
To see me so sad and alone, a leaf in the
wind

I could cry, I could die from this
feeling

Oh, Land of the sun, I lament to see you
Now that I live so far without light,
without love

To see me so sad and alone, a leaf in the
wind

I could cry, I could die from this
feeling

SCENE THREE

*Are we always to regret what we say? Are we never
to say what we regret?*

?Francisco de Quevedo

11:00 a.m. Same desert, 15 miles from where Curtis
and Jaime tried to kill the blue mule.

*The Phoenix Cafe and gas stop. The
desert stretches beyond. A couple of
stools and cheap kitchen tables furnish
the dining area. A few tacky mementos on
the walls. A Yosemite souvenir key
holder is tacked on the wall with a few
keys hanging on it. A Mr. Coffee and
cash register, along with a suggestion of
equipment needed in a cafe. A door way
leads to the rest of the house in the
back and an outside door for customers,
who rarely come by since the highway
built several years ago neglected to
provide a convenient exit ramp.*

ELOISE I ain't gonna stop you this time, Hersh. .
.I want you out-y'hear me? You can't

leave me, cause I am throwing you out.
I'm sick and tired of you and me HERSH:
Where's my other boot? Son of a bitch! Oh
now You're throwing me out that's just
like you, Eloise?turning everything
around?like it's your idea. But not this
time Eloise. This is my idea. *Laughs.Dog
whining and scratching at the screen
door. Eloise enters from house. She is
wearing a bathrobe.*And take that damn
dog with you too. I'm sick and tired of
that worthless mongrel.You ain't getting
my dog!ELOISE: UNDER HER BREATH.
Good for nothing but eating, sleeping
and-Oh shit-! *Snatches the keys to the
truck and drops them in her bathrobe
pocket just as Hersh enters. He reaches
for them on the key holder.*

HERSH: Where are the keys, Eloise?

ELOISE: What keys?

HERSH: You know goddam well what keys.

ELOISE: Hitchhike.

HERSH: Give me the keys.

ELOISE: It's the least you can do until the
Chevy's out of the shop, Hersh.

HERSH: You gotta be crazy. Give me the keys.

ELOISE: It's in my name too.

HERSH: Hand them over or I'll take them 'cause now that I'm through waiting for you to come around, I'm feeling pretty good, pretty righteous-Yeah-I think I'm starting to feel like a man, because Heaven knows you never did anything to make me feel like one-

ELOISE: I always figured feeling like a man was your business-

HERSH: Oh yeah? Well, my advice to you?hand over my keys-My advice Man to Fish is before you go to sleep tonight, when you're lying there in that piece of shit, torn up acetate nightie that I hate, with you legs clamped shut all the way to your thighs, staring up at the ceiling, with that bored look, that I hate, I want you to say, there is something wrong with me. As sure as ol' Hersh is, sliding and slipping himself into something young and sweet and hot and hungry-I want you to say, there is something very, *muchisimo* wrong with me, Eloise-

Dog whines.

ELOISE: The one who loves you is calling you.

HERSH: *Suddenly ashamed of himself.* Look-I'm-
. .Let's just forget-Why don't you just
give me the keys, so's I can get the Hell
out of here?

: *Dog whines.*

ELOISE: Shuttup, Useless!

: *Hersh grabs her, going for the keys.*

ELOISE: What're you doing?

ELOISE Daddy! : Get away from there-: You?!HERSH:
Give me those-dammit! You just let go
of- *Hersh gets the keys. Eloise goes
for the phone and begins dialing*HERSH:

Now what're you up to?

ELOISE: Operator, get me the sheriff.

*Hersh yanks the phone line from the wall.
Taking the phone with him.*

HERSH: I'll take everything-How's that? We even
now?

ELOISE: *Suddenly reasonable:* Give me
the phone, Hersh. You can't leave us all
stranded here, no car, no phone-what if
some psycho shows up?

HERSH: I pity him.

HERSH EXITS THROUGH CAFE DOOR. OFFSTAGE.

Come on, Useless, we can say good-bye to
this Hell-Hole. THE SOUND OF TRUCK
STARTING UP AND WARMING UP.

ELOISE: Where's Ol' Jessie? SHE TAKES OUT
SHOTGUN BEHIND COUNTER. I'll acetate
nightie your tires right out from under
you! STOPS. Just calm down, just calm the
hell down. TRUCK IS HEARD DRIVING OFF.
Acetate nighties. PACES FOR A MOMENT.
STOPS. TURNS ON THE COFFEE.
Sorry Folks, no vacation. Well I'm glad,
I'm glad, I'm glad. SINGS. In the still
of the night. . .Now what?

ENTER GEORGE.

ELOISE: Where were you?

GEORGE I try to mind my own business.

ELOISE: Oh, is that to say, the fact that we
have no telephone and no car, none of
your business?

GEORGE: It was his car.

ELOISE: And the phone, you're going to say that
was his too?

GEORGE: No call going for the sheriff.

ELOISE: Glad you're not my lawyer.

GEORGE: Doing something like that in the heat of battle-all kind of crazy things happen.

ELOISE: Am I the one who violently yanked the phone out?

GEORGE: Well I can't yell at Hersh, can I? Anyway the car's in his name.

ELOISE: I co-signed for it. If he runs into a school bus, I'm liable and so's this whole place.

GEORGE: Don't go talking that way. Something terrible might come true.

ELOISE: It's in my name too.

GEORGE: You should've waited, if you were so set on bringing in the sheriff on a thing like this, at least you could've waited for Hersh to be gone. The sheriff would've said there was nothing he could do, but at least we'd still have a phone.

ELOISE: Blame me for everything. You should've waited too.

GEORGE: Waited for what?

ELOISE: One more day, I wouldn't be me-I mean, you would've had a different kid, because right now I wish I'd never been born.

GEORGE: Now Eloise, your just playing my pity but
you already have it.

ELOISE: You've got no right to pity me!

GEORGE: Want some more coffee?

ELOISE: *Calming down.* Coffee, give me some
coffee.

GEORGE: Not that you need it.

ELOISE: I got a right. I got a right to be
upset, don't I? My husband's just left.
It could've been worse. What if he'd
done this while we were on vacation?

GEORGE: You threw him out.

ELOISE: I thought you were minding your own
business?

GEORGE: I said I *try* to mind my own business.
Except for Saffron. She's still sound
asleep in there. Sleep of the innocent.

ELOISE: I never said, get out, Hersh.

GEORGE: They must've heard it in Derby.

ELOISE: He was already packing by then. I got my
pride, you know.

GEORGE: Hersh wasn't so bad, played a damn good
hand of Poker. But I knew his movement,
y'see. Subtle like, but I can read the
notion off a lizard if I need to.

ELOISE: You're beginning to worry me, Daddy.
Like you ain't getting the drift of what
this whole conversation is about. Like
you're talking to yourself, or is it me
who's talking to herself in this
godforsaken hole in this godforsaken
desert. Oh Lord, what did I do, what did
I do, what did I do?

GEORGE: He might be back.

ELOISE: What? You want a murderer in your
family? *Pause.* I never loved him
anyway.

GEORGE: That is a mean thing to even think!

ELOISE: I didn't and it's the truth as much as
you hate to hear the truth and I can say
it and feel good to finally be able to
say what I been feeling, or not feeling
for a terrible and long time.

GEORGE: You've never loved nobody, far as I can
see-Maybe it was getting with Saffron
that soured you on these matters-But if
you never forgot about that-it ain't good
for you, Darlin'. A person's got to
forget and keep on going.

ELOISE: I can't believe it-do you realize this is the first time you have even mentioned that whole business?

GEORGE: I never talked about it, 'cause you never did.

ELOISE: You never asked?you never wanted to know.

GEORGE: Well it had to be one of the boys from high school and it was obvious that he didn't exactly come breaking down your front door to give Saffron a proper name and I just figured it was a touchy subject and so out of respect-

ELOISE: He never knew.

GEORGE: You never told him?

ELOISE: I never had a chance to tell him. He wasn't one of my classmates. He worked at the school.

GEORGE: He was a teacher?

ELOISE: No, his name was Yusef. He was a student at Oakview College, and he worked part-time in the cafeteria. That's how we met. He was twenty-one and I, of course, was sixteen so we were afraid of what would happen if we told anyone. One day he didn't show up. I waited a few days,

getting more and more worried. Then, I found out that he had just stopped going to classes. The high school had no idea where he was, and I didn't know where he lived. He had just disappeared. Later I realized I was pregnant and then Mama-

GEORGE: Keep your voice down-

ELOISE: Did what she did. One minute I had a mother-eccentric to say the least-but there. I was so in love with what I thought was the greatest guy in the world. The next minute everything was yanked out from under me, and you. . .well, you. . .

GEORGE: I know, Ellie, I was not the best company after your mother passed on. I should of-

ELOISE: Wasn't your fault, Daddy. Everything just happened: PAUSE.

GEORGE: He worked at the High School?

ELOISE: Yeah. Why?

GEORGE: Nothing-just asking-no reason.

ELOISE: When Hersh came along and he was so sweet and funny, I figured if I fell in love with him everything would be all right.

He should've taken me away from here but Hersh loves the desert, so we stayed. I tried to make it happen, make it work, but some things can't be wished up. Now I'm really depressed.

PAUSE.

GEORGE: Saffron sure likes her sleep.

ELOISE: *Takes out a bottle of sleeping pills and takes out four.*

GEORGE: How many you taking of them things?

ELOISE: Four, so what?

GEORGE: That's too many-

ELOISE: I know what I'm doing.

GEORGE: Well then give me the rest of the bottle.

ELOISE: Now you're getting silly. . .Jesus. Good night.

GEORGE: Don't pay her no mind, Adriana. I ain't faultin' you, that ain't what I'm saying. Do something damn foolish, they don't even get the chance to regret it. I don't know. I don't know nothing no more. I had a dream couple nights ago. I been meaning to tell you. It was about this strange group a people, cultish type of people and the way they brought you into

their group was by drilling your teeth without any pain killers and when you learned to like the drilling you were one of them. And when I woke up I said to myself, Self, where in my mind did I ever come up with such a foolish dream. And you know what my Self said? He said, Do you, George, ever wonder about the dreams you don't remember? Another cup, George? Don't mind. *Refills his cup with coffee.*
Enter Saffron. A young woman in full bloom. She is wearing a tight mini skirt and fitted top. Her hair is in a tangle.

SAFFRON: Talking to yourself again, Grampa?

GEORGE: Hersh is gone.

SAFFRON: I know. Which means we ain't going on vacation.

GEORGE: He might come back.

SAFFRON: I knew something was going to happen. It always does.

GEORGE: I asked the sheriff to keep an eye on the place while we were away. He sure will be surprised to find everybody running around, business as usual.

SAFFRON: Embarrassing if you ask me. Well at least he can give us a ride to the mechanic's so we can pick up mom's car and get another telephone. I told you, I needed my own phone. If you had gotten me a phone we wouldn't be in this predicament. *Pause.* You want some breakfast, you hungry?

GEORGE: No honey, you go ahead.

SAFFRON: I will in a minute. *She pours herself a cup of coffee.*

GEORGE: Shouldn't be drinking that stuff.

SAFFRON: Mom said it was okay.

GEORGE: She did not.

SAFFRON: She did so!

GEORGE: When?

SAFFRON: I don't remember a long time ago.

GEORGE: And what time did you get in last night?

SAFFRON: Geez, Grampa, are you in a bad mood? Not that late. *Looks at her grandfather.*

One o'clock?

GEORGE: Try four.

SAFFRON: No way! It couldn't have been more than two-thirty.

GEORGE: Three-thirty, if I'm a day.

SAFFRON: I know it was three o'clock and I was already in my room, ready for bed. Besides, I told you we were going to a concert in Derby. It takes two hours to get back from there. But you know it wasn't that late because we saw you by the marigolds talking to yourself again.

GEORGE: Now you're getting way out of hand. I wasn't outside at no three in the morning.

SAFFRON: You were listening to the coyotes howling-

GEORGE: You saying, I don't remember what I'm doing from one day to the next? Concert. I don't recall you mentioning any concert.

SAFFRON: Well, it's either because you got not more short attention span, you never pay attention when I'm talking. What if I told you I was getting La Virgen de Guadalupe tatood on my back and you didn't hear me.

GEORGE: There was a flash flood out towards Jeremiah last night. We're damn lucky to be where we are. They had some trouble up at the state pen and the president's wife had gallstones removed. She's doing fine and gallstones ain't nothing to be ashamed of-did a big special on them, how you get 'em, what not to eat. Your grandma always said you can learn from other's even it's by bad example.

SAFFRON: Remember when I was little and we stopped at one of those electric field with all the electrical towers buzzing away like a million yellow jackets?

GEORGE: Oh yeaah, that's when we went to Yosemite in the old woody. Sold it to a strange feller, a lawyer, I recall. A regular feller trying to grow one of them hippy beards. Wasn't having much luck. Not all of them are greedy you know, lawyers. Some are, some aren't. Strange sort, half of them get so they got to high-tail it out of the country themselves. I reckon anytime you truck

with the law, it takes you to one extreme or another.

SAFFRON: Grandpa!

GEORGE: What is it darling?

SAFFRON: We were talking about electric fields.

GEORGE: You know, your grandma had exactly the same way of standing, with her hand out, just like that.

SAFFRON: Anyway, I stuck my hand this far from the top of my head and my hair stood straight up-straight as it'll ever be, and I could hear the electricity running through the towers like I was inside. . .in a volcano-no. . . Like I was inside a great big, but a weird kind of fire-

GEORGE: I don't see what a power station's got to do with fire-

SAFFRON: Oh grandpa, it's a feeling I don't have the exact words for a feeling, but it's a feeling like in my veins-that's what a concert is all about. I can't even talk to anybody. I get to the dance floor and make my way to one of those speakers and just stand there.

GEORGE: Waiting for a feller to ask you to dance?

SAFFRON: You don't do it like that anymore,
Grandpa. You don't have to wait for
nothing except the music.

GEORGE: That so? Why when I was young, we'd just
about sweat our pants off getting up the
nerve to ask a girl to dance. Then she'd
turn red and say no, and we'd feel like a
pretty fair-sized ass.

SAFFRON: There were two guys making fair-sized
asses of themselves. This was after the
band was packing up, so we ditched them
behind this door, Marisa and me and
there's the drummer, whose name is Styro,
and he asked us if we wanted to go to
their party. I mean it was only back
stage. There were a lot of people and it
was so cool.

GEORGE: I see.

SAFFRON: What do you see? You know what Derby is?

GEORGE: Too far for you to be gallivanting off
to.

SAFFRON: It's the closest thing to "civilization"
we have around here and last week the
librarian hung herself. Books were
scattered all around where she'd used

them to stand on. And pinned to her dress was a note that said, Derby is a bullet headed tribe of ambulatory idiots. I looked up ambulatory and it means walking. . .like zombies or something. I wish I'd known my grandma. I miss her even though.

GEORGE: I don't know if you should be carrying on that way. I hear about how those kind of fellers are always on drugs, drowning in their own vomit.

SAFFRON: If I wanted drugs, Grandpa, I wouldn't have to wait for no rock musician to give them to me. You're not hip to the facts of life. Not everybody is like a drug-crazy, but who's going to buy the paper if it says, EXTRA-Rock Star Does Not Drown in Own Vomit. I mean, that would be too cool.

GEORGE: Men like that-

SAFFRON: They're not men.

GEORGE: What d'ya mean they're not men, They ain't some of them sex-switcheroos, are they?

SAFFRON: Hersh is a man. Styro's just, you know,
like me.

GEORGE: Styro. What kind of name is that anyway?

SAFFRON: Besides, I need to be gallivanting about.
It's what keeps me from breaking the law.
*. .She is looking out the window and
notices Curtis and Jaime. That's funny.*

GEORGE: Foam-That his last name? Styro Foam. I
am too cool.

SAFFRON: There's somebody coming from down the
road. Out there, Grandpa. Walking.

GEORGE: Walking? Must've run out of gas.

SAFFRON: See them, Grandpa? Two men, yeah.

GEORGE: Can't see, where's my glasses?

SAFFRON: They don't look so good.

GEORGE: I can't see a thing ?

SAFFRON: I think they need help-
*Saffron runs out of the cafe while george
exits into house looking for his glasses.*

GEORGE: Now where are my specs? *Exits, enters,
stops.* Last time I had them. *Rings cash
register.*

Ah Hah!: *Finding his glasses, puts them on. Looks
out the window. I don't see nobody?
Saffron, Curtis and Jaime enter.*

GEORGE: Get them some water.

Saffron exits, returns with a pitcher of water and two glasses.

SAFFRON: Maybe I should call the doctor - oh I forgot.

CURTIS: It's all right. We're just a little tired and thirsty.

GEORGE: What happened-did your car break down?

CURTIS: Well we-you tell them, Pete.

JAIME: I don't know, it's kind of embarrassing-

CURTIS: Ridiculous.

SAFFRON: What is?

CURTIS: I don't think we passed the test anyway.

JAIME: I doubt it.

CURTIS: See, we were part of a survivalist training camp-

GEORGE: Survivalist training camp?

CURTIS: Yeah, you know, where you learn to fend for your-

GEORGE: I know what they are. But I didn't know there was one around-

CURTIS: There isn't. I mean, this was our final test. They drop us off in the middle of nowhere with a gallon of water and a

compass-except old Pete here lost the
compass-

JAIME: Me?

CURTIS: Well, I thought you had it-

JAIME: You know I-

CURTIS: I know, I know, Pete. See, it's a
clandestine operation-but I was getting
fed up with their ways. Actually, Pete
and I were. I think they sort of
suspected we weren't so gung ho. Didn't
you get that feeling?

JAIME: They were kind of racist-not that I get
all excited if someone is a little
racist-

GEORGE: You mean they didn't come back for you?

CURTIS: Well, no, not exactly.

JAIME: They just couldn't find us since we'd
lost our way and weren't where we were
supposed to be at the end of the three
days.

CURTIS: Because Pete lost the compass.

JAIME: That Courtney was supposed to have.

CURTIS: So that's what happened.

GEORGE: I see. You ain't exactly dressed like
one of them survivalist type fellas.

JAIME: It's part of the course. The theory being, when you get stranded somewhere, you're not likely to be wearing jungle fatigues, like some Rambo Boy Scout type.

SAFFRON: You're not likely to be carrying a compass either.

CURTIS: Even Captain Bligh had a compass.

GEORGE: How'd you find out about this outfit?

JAIME: Through a friend of ours.

GEORGE: You fellas ain't even carrying a knife far as I can see.

SAFFRON: Even Captain Bligh had a knife.

CURTIS: Extremists.

JAIME: Very extremist.

CURTIS: We should've insisted on at least a knife.

GEORGE: I can't see anyone being that extreme. Though I did see a special about one of them outfits on the TV. Can't say they appealed much to me. I'm sure you two are famished. Saffron, go fix them up something to eat-and don't be stingy, Honey: *The finish their water.*

GEORGE: More water?

JAIME: Hey, a beer would be real nice if you
have one.

GEORGE: What kind?

SAFFRON: We only got one kind, Granpa.

JAIME: Anything sounds good right now.

GEORGE: What about you Courtney?

CURTIS: Please.

Saffron exits.

GEORGE: You can't call out-the phone, and the
car-. . .Well, you know how it is,
everything went at the same time. When
it rains it pours, yessir. Best thing is
for you two to rest up 'til morning, then
you can hitch a ride to Derby. Derby's
some ninety miles east of here.

CURTIS: I thought there was another town closer.
Joshua Corners.

GEORGE: Oh that place been dried up for years,
nothing but a ghost town.

CURTIS: Is that a fact?

GEORGE: You familiar with these parts?

CURTIS: I used to drive through here some time
ago. Anyway, it's very hospitable of you,
Mister-

GEORGE: You can just call me George.

CURTIS: We're very grateful to you, George.

JAIME: It's very hospitable of you, George.

GEORGE: Least I can do. You fellers are mighty lucky is all I can say. There was a feller who got lost out in the desert couple years back. He had gone off to get purified or some fool thing like that and when they found him, he was still-
Suddenly, without a word George stands up and crosses to outside door. He is about to exit.

CURTIS: What's the matter, George?

GEORGE: Huh? Oh. . .the garden's looking raggedy. Got to go do some weeding.
Exits.

CURTIS: Can you figure that?

JAIME: It's very fishy around here, Courtney.

CURTIS: Courtney. Do I look like a Courtney?

JAIME: So what?

CURTIS: Courtney.

JAIME: To them you look like whoever I say your name is.

CURTIS: Pete's a better name.

JAIME: Damn, I never had to name anybody, especially off the top of my head. This

is a weird place. I get a funny feeling about it.

CURTIS: Don't start with your feelings, man, you'll just drive yourself crazy, then start on me.

Enter Saffron with three plates of sandwiches. She sets two plates on the table where Curtis and Jaime are sitting and takes hers and sits behind the counter.

SAFFRON: I hope you don't mind sandwiches.

CURTIS: Not at all.

JAIME: Great. Meatloaf.

SAFFRON: Old family recipe.

CURTIS: My favorite.

SAFFRON: I never eat breakfast. Eggs are bad for you.

JAIME: Yeah?

SAFFRON: They cut off their beaks after they hatch. Doesn't that sound gross, a bunch of beakless, laying chickens? *They eat in silence politely contemplating this.*

SAFFRON: Where you from?

CURTIS

JAIME

New Orleans.

El Paso.

CURTIS: Oh, you mean now? Las Vegas.

SAFFRON: When my mom and Hersh just got married, they used to go everywhere-and Las Vegas was the first place we stayed for a few days-steak and eggs for a dollar. They even talked about moving somewhere else-but anyway, they took me to Circus Circus. They've got tightrope walkers 24 hours a day.

CURTIS: Where are they now, I mean Hersh and your mom?

SAFFRON: Mom's asleep and Hersh-isn't here. What do you do in Las Vegas?

CURTIS: Construction.

SAFFRON: You too?

JAIME: Yeah. Both of us.

SAFFRON: I thought only mercenary types went for that survivalist stuff. Were you training to be a mercenary?

CURTIS: Why should only mercenary types know how to take care of themselves while the rest of us sit on our hands?

SAFFRON: I guess so. 'Cept you didn't do so well.

JAIME: Yeah, as it stands now, the mercenaries are ahead.

SAFFRON: You gonna do it again?

CURTIS: That's hard to think about right now.

SAFFRON: I mean, just to say you won, just to know you didn't give up after one try.

JAIME: Sure, we're gonna do it again. Next year but this time, we'll have a knife with us and jungle fatigues-with every James Bond toy there is and, I won't assume that Courtney here, knows where the compass is.

CURTIS: Which means maybe, *if* the Giants win the pennant, next year, *if* it's the Year of the Ass.

JAIME: Yeah, except with you it's always the Year of the Sour Puss, man.

CURTIS: Did you make the meat loaf?

SAFFRON: My mother did.

JAIME: What's this green stuff in here?

SAFFRON: Spinach. We use that instead of crackers.

JAIME: Spinach?

SAFFRON: Nobody's ever complained yet.

JAIME: Oh, I'm not complaining. It's just kind of unusual.

SAFFRON: Not too dry?

JAIME: Just right.

SAFFRON: The trick is to use a lot of mayonnaise.
A lot of mayonnaise.

CURTIS: I love mayonnaise.

SAFFRON: Mom says, you might as well put lard on
your sandwich for all the good it does.

CURTIS: Maybe your mama just likes to take care
of herself.

SAFFRON: I guess. Everybody's always mistaking us
for sisters.

CURTIS: That so? *Smiles to himself.*

SAFFRON: Says it's her Latin blood.

JAIME: Your mom's Spanish?

SAFFRON: No not Spanish, that's so ignorant?My
grandmother was Mexican. This area
you're either Mexican or Indian or White.

JAIME: Sorry! So is Mom where you get your good
looks from. What's your sign?

SAFFRON: Aries.

JAIME: Fire sign. You know I get along with hot
little rams-

CURTIS: Pete-

JAIME: What?

CURTIS: Eat your sandwich.

JAIME: I'm eating. Where you going?

SAFFRON: I can't miss my soap-Don't laugh. . .It's
the only one I ever watch.

EXITS.

JAIME: That's one waiting, wanting little ram,
Curti-

CURTIS: Damn you, Pete, don't call me that and
keep away from that child-

JAIME: *Reproachful:* What do you mean?

CURTIS: You're not thinking, that's all. You
start trouble with that child-You're
going to mess us up.

JAIME

Man, I'm just like flirting, you know, throwing
the old *ojo* around-you ever heard of
flirting-? Jeez, I swear, man, you
sound like a Mexican father-

CURTIS: What're you talking?

JAIME: And besides, what do I need with one
little desert *ratonsita*, when the whole
world-full of women-is out there waiting
for me.

PAUSE: We got to get the Hell out of here.

CURTIS: . . .She can't be that old...

JAIME: Hey, my grandfather lived to be ninety-
seven with a full head of jet black hair-

Her old lady's Mexican, Saffron could be
twenty-five.

CURTIS: Wishful thinking.

JAIME: You know I worship older women. Saffron
is probably a lot older than she looks.
Funny they don't have a car or a
telephone. Like one of them movies.

CURTIS: What movies?

JAIME: Two guys. They got no idea what going
on. See, they were killed when they were
trying to escape-so actually they ain't
where they think they are. Dig?

CURTIS: Don't start, man, you'll just freak
yourself out.

JAIME: They are in Hell, man. The old man's
nuts. The kid is weird and there's
spinach in the meatloaf-?

CURTIS: Nuts? What's weird? What've they done
or said that makes them nuts and weird?

JAIME: "Hersh" isn't here and where's the kid's
old lady?

CURTIS: Maybe Hersh has the car.

JAIME: They probably did something to him.
Notice she was evasive-

CURTIS: Don't use them big words, you'll only confuse yourself.

JAIME: Creepy, man. Para abnormal. *Jaime pinches himself once, twice.*

CURTIS: Now what are you doing?

JAIME: Checking to make sure I'm awake. Okay so maybe this ain't Hell-but it's spooky. What was that?

CURTIS: What?

JAIME: Some thing made me get goose pimples. Look at my arm, the hair's standing straight up.

CURTIS: I can't believe I'm trying to talk sense with a half wit like you.

JAIME: What about the glowing mule?

CURTIS: We were out of water, we hadn't eaten, doesn't it occur to you that we may have been just a tiny bit delirious?

JAIME: That'll be the day you and me hallucinate the same thing.

CURTIS: It could have been a mirage.

JAIME: Where I come from weird shit is a fact of life. Nobody goes around saying this is impossible and that is ridiculous because too many normal things are ridiculous.

Just 'cause you're out of touch with your mystical roots, it's too bad for you. You been anglo-ized, that's what. You been brainwashed by the white man's culture-

CURTIS: Now you're telling me white people aren't superstitious? Well in that case I'm reporting you to the Racist Patrol, man, for depriving Whitey of his rights to superstition.

JAIME: I like you and I hate seeing you go through life with a giant blind spot fucking up your field of vision.

CURTIS: Field of vision, that's good.

JAIME: I thought you'd like it.

CURTIS: Bet your ass, the old man's sane. He's suspicious as hell.

PAUSE.

JAIME: You know what? I think we should eat again, rest a few hours, wash up, hit the cash box and hitch a ride the fuck out of here.

CURTIS: I think we should spend the night.

JAIME: You crazy? What if they hear about us in the news?

CURTIS: We can get at the TV, fuck with their reception somehow. Look, there should be a cable outside. We can mess with the wires.

JAIME: We could do that...I can take a look outside later on. It would be easy.

CURTIS: Right, then we can rest up a day. You know what surprises me? That little town. . .

JAIME: What town?

CURTIS: Joshua Corners, drying up like that. But it never had more than three or four thousand people in it at one time.

JAIME: I don't think it's such a good plan, I think I'll stick around for a while, 'til night time, then clear out.

CURTIS: You can't do that.

JAIME: Why not?

CURTIS: 'Cause it'll look funny if you go and I stay.

JAIME: No, No, I ain't gonna stay, man.

CURTIS: Man, what in the world is your goddam hurry? It's not gonna be all that easy to hitch a ride, you know.

JAIME: Easier for me than you.

CURTIS: Sure, Immigration will be happy to give you a ride. Look, do me a favor. One last favor. Stay the night, then we set out together. We split up as soon as we leave. I doubt if anyone would give you and me a ride anyway. Besides we're as safe here as anyplace else.

JAIME: Okay, but first thing tomorrow morning, we're on our way.

CURTIS: Yeah. Maybe I'll go round back to see the old man's garden-get on his good side. In the meantime, find out where Hersh is. *Exits.*

JAIME: Too much stress, man. *Resumes eating then casually knocks his drink over. Stands calls through house door.* Saffron?

SAFFRON: *Offstage.* Yeah?

JAIME: Could you come out here a minute?

SAFFRON ENTERS.

I had a little accident-if you just get a rag or mop or something-

Saffron exits returns with mop and rag.

I can do it.

SAFFRON: That's okay. *She takes her time cleaning it up.*

JAIIME: Don't get much business do you?

SAFFRON: When they built the new freeway somebody decided it would be better to build it three miles from where the old highway was, I forget why-something to do with the top layer of earth around here. Now we get mostly regulars, people like that. It's okay, we just never see many tourist types unless they get lost or something. It's like this now 'cause we told all our regulars we were going on vacation.

JAIIME: And now you're not going?

SAFFRON: No.

JAIIME: How come? What happened?

SAFFRON: Oh, Mom had a fight with Hersh and he left with the truck.

JAIIME: That's cold, leaving you with no wheels.

SAFFRON: We have the Chevy, but it's in the shop right now.

JAIIME: Yep. In the middle of nowhere. You like it out here?

SAFFRON: You don't choose where you get raised.

JAIIME: Don't seem to like it much.

SAFFRON: You might say, the way I'm feeling now is something like . . .extreme fatigue,

something like a survivalist training camp. I might hitch a ride with you-I might just walk into Derby.

JAIME: What's in Derby?

SAFFRON: A friend. PAUSE. If I don't, something terrible will happen.

JAIME: Terrible? Like what?

SAFFRON: Terrible like it would take my whole life so far to explain it to you, and I got less time than ever for talk. You could wake up one of these days and find out you died or it was your dreams that died. I am a witness to that. If I don't get out now, history might repeat itself.

JAIME: What history?

SAFFRON: Oh, who knows? I'm just talking. Besides, what d'you care? JAIME. Well, maybe this isn't any of my business, but you wouldn't by any chance, be in some kind of trouble?

SAFFRON: What do you mean? Oh. Ohh. Does it show? Am I glowing or something?

JAIME: Well you sort of glow but it's hard to tell what kind of glow it is. I just figure, you know, things happens.

SAFFRON: I was going to wait until we got to Phoenix where I could get it done. After that I'd make my way to California or New York and begin a whole new life. Then mom and Hersh really had it out this morning and now he's gone. So, I don't care, if I have to use a coat hanger-fine.

JAIME: Now wait a minute-

SAFFRON: When I was in Juvee, I saw a girl do it.

JAIME: Do what?

SAFFRON: Abort herself. Georgette. Weird girl. She'd get mad and smash her fist on the wall. Then she'd pour perfume on her knuckles, to clean the wound. Perfume she'd stolen from this other weird girl who'd kick your ass if you parted your hair on the same side she did. So anyway, Georgette could've gone, gotten herself checked and had an abortion if that was the case. But she'd rather take the coat hanger and bend it this way. Then she lays back, while I hold the mirror for her. She takes these two fingers and. . .But you know what? I

don't think she was pregnant at all. .
.just like I don't think you and Courtney
ever took a survivalist training course.

GEORGE: OFFSTAGE. Saffron-!

SAFFRON: What?

GEORGE: Come out here a minute, will you?

JAIME: Wait a minute-

SAFFRON: Grandpa wants me, see you later.

LIGHTS DOWN.

ACT II

*Everyone spends his life throwing sand in his
neighbor's eye.*

?Labiche et

Martin

SCENE FOUR

Café 11:00 p.m.

*Curtis, Jaime and George are playing
poker, betting with cigarettes.*

JAIME: I bet you five.

GEORGE: Well, well, well.

CURTIS: I see your five.

GEORGE: Looks like I got me a pair of big time
Las Vegas gamblers. *Meets their bets.*

JAIME: I'll take three.

CURTIS: One.

GEORGE: Dealer takes two.

JAIME: Two? And you took three. Uh huh. Here
we go, here we go.

CURTIS: *Laughing.* You think you're slick, huh?

JAIME: Who me? Raise you *dos cigarillos*.

CURTIS: I fold.

JAIME: Ain't got the chutzpah, eh man?

GEORGE: Chutzpah? What's chutzpah?

JAIME: Moxi.

GEORGE: Moxi?

JAIME: *Huevos*

GEORGE: *Huevos?* Oh you mean like *huevos rancheros?*

JAIME: I mean like bullox.

GEORGE: Bullox? You making this up?

JAIME: What you got between you legs, bro.

GEORGE: Oh them. *Laughs knowingly.*

CURTIS: Crabs.

GEORGE: Crabs?

JAIME: *Cojones, bolas-*

CURTIS: Bull shit.

JAIME: *On a roll.* Menards, mountain oysters, jewels, eggs florentine, man.

CURTIS: So Phoenix Cafe-Wasn't Phoenix some Greek who was set up by his mother to seduce his father's mistress. Then later, Phoenix fought in the Trogan war, if I remember it right.

GEORGE: Seduce his father's mistress? First time I ever heard of that. My wife picked the name. She said it was Egyptian and it's supposed to be a five- hundred-year-old bird, that came from a worm, that crawled out of it's dead body after it jumped

into a bonfire. Sort of eternal and it looks like an eagle with red and yellow feathers but just one at a time lives.

JAIME: Pretty wild: *The howl of a lone coyote is heard in the distance. Enter Saffron.*

SAFFRON: Who's winning?

JAIME: The coyotes are way ahead of us.

GEORGE: I see your two, raise you *quatro gallinas en mole y cebolla-*

JAIME: Hey you speak the lingo!

SAFFRON: Grandpa's got all kinds of tricks up his sleeve.

CURTIS: That's what I'm afraid of.

JAIME: I toss *quatro gallinitas* into the cooking pot and add three more *frijolitos* for fun and profit.

GEORGE: See your three, and I call.

JAIME: Feast your eyes on this straight-a-rooskie.

GEORGE: Full house.

JAIME: Oh, man!

CURTIS: Never learn. He was playing you all along, man and you never saw it.

SAFFRON: TV's broke.

GEORGE: Broke? How'd it get broke?

SAFFRON: Don't ask me.

GEORGE: We'll have to call up the cable man in the morning.

SAFFRON: Telephone.

GEORGE: Damn! Sometimes. . .What does it do?

SAFFRON: Nothing, no picture, no sound. Just fuzz.

GEORGE: When did it break?

SAFFRON: I watched my soap this afternoon. But it ain't working just now when I turned it on.

GEORGE: I'll have to check out the wires in the morning. You fellers know anything about TVs?

CURTIS: Just give me a remote control and I'll show you everything I know.

JAIME: Volume, channel and power button.

SAFFRON: That's okay, there's nothing on anyway. Well good night, Everybody.

GEORGE: G'night Darlin'.

CURTIS: Night.

JAIME: Nightie Night:

SAFFRON EXITS.

GEORGE: Come to think of it, you fellers must be tuckered. Maybe I should just hit the sackeroo myself. Let's see, you both need something to sleep on-EXITS.

CURTIS: *Lowering his voice.* Well you managed to do it?

JAIME: Somebody already messed with it.

CURTIS: What are you talking about?

JAIME: I'm sure it was the cable-I remember what it looked like 'cause I'd watched the guy set it up at my folks-

CURTIS: But who, dammit-?

ENTER GEORGE WITH PILLOWS AND TWO SLEEPING BAGS.

GEORGE: This'll seem like Heaven after where you two been sleeping. Light's over there when you're ready.

CURTIS: Thanks George. We really appreciate this.

GEORGE: Oh no trouble. No trouble. Sleep tight now.

CURTIS: G'night.

JAIME: Don't let the bed bugs bite

GEORGE EXITS. CURTIS STARES AT JAIME.

JAIME: What're you looking at?

CURTIS: You're trying too hard, man.

JAIME: You're the one who's forgotten how to talk normal talk. I only been away a year. You should be listening to what I say.

CURTIS: The best policy is to keep a tight lip in any situation.

JAIME: No way-We act exactly the same, like we're following some kind of rule book then we really look suspicious. You can be the silent type. I'm the friendly type. That's why we're buddies, see. Opposites attract.

CURTIS: How'd I ever get hooked up with you?

JAIME: I'm the idea man, you do the planning and shit. Opposites attract.

CURTIS: Never mind, just tell me who fixed the wires.

JAIME: It had to be the girl.

CURTIS: Saffron-but why would she-?

JAIME: She knows who we are-She-

CURTIS: She said that?

JAIME: She's on the cagey side. She hinted at it, but I haven't been able to get her

alone. I think she's been avoiding me,
in a very flirtatious way, I might add.

CURTIS: Hinted like how?

JAIME: If you'd let me explain-

CURTIS: If you'd get to the point-

JAIME: Which pillow you want?

CURTIS: Don't matter-that one's fine. Go on, I
won't butt in anymore.

JAIME: Okay. See, Saffron is pregnant-

CURTIS: Pregnant?

JAIME: And she wants to come with us as far as
Derby where she plans to meet what I
figure must be some guy.

CURTIS: What guy?

JAIME: How the hell should I know? Anyway, she
could've told the old man right off, but
no. She wants something from us.
Perfect. She's pregnant and if she don't
get to the doctor very soon, it'll be too
late. She can be our liaison *Pronouncing
the word "lays-on", man-:*

CURTIS: *Pronouncing the word correct.* Liaison for
what?

JAIME: Liaison like for when we need groceries-
ever think of that? You know, to check
if the coast is clear.

CURTIS: We don't know until tomorrow.

JAIME: What's tomorrow?

CURTIS: Everything can change by tomorrow.

JAIME: Like what?

CURTIS: Trust me.

JAIME: Oh man, there you go again, making me
very nervous, but okay, if you want to
play it like that.

PAUSE: You know, I doubt if that guy means
anything to her. I got a feeling. Some
women make a career out of being a tease
just to drive a guy crazy. They don't
have to wear shorts so short their nalgas
hang out. I mean, like winking at you.
Oh man! One time I was mopping up the
corridor to the visiting room? And one
of them sweet. . .juicy. . .swung right
by me wearing these white shorts-up to
here. You can look but what would happen
if I copped just one teensy tiny
tocadito? They'd have my Oysters
Rockafellas . I thought-I was so close

to her-I thought, I mean, it was on the tip of my tongue. Hey, uh, Miss, or Mzz-I'm cool-would you mind donating you panties? That's all. Donating for who? Just me. A little secret between us, Darling. There's the ladies room, nice and private. Just slip them off and what a nice little gift to me. : Then, you know what I'd do? See, I'd go in the kitchen and steal some paprika and sprinkle it on the crotch, and man, hours of pleasure, sniffing, chewing-

CURTIS: Don't get yourself worked up-

JAIME: My point is, that girl in there knows how to tease, but she's not one of them broads in white shorts. Mmmm mmm mmm
mmmm mm!

CURTIS: Why don't you just shut up?

JAIME: What you lost sensation below the belt like some wooden Indian? In fact, I never remember you doing nothing. Maxine was okay-shit, she was fine, you know. Nobody would've blamed you if you'd given

it to Maxine and the way she looked at you. You could tell she went for the intellectual type.

CURTIS: A dude is a dude, man, with or without shaved legs, I don't play that shit.

JAIME: Yeah well, you have a very good point there. . .Ahh, but from the moment she walked up to us, wiped out as I was, I still felt something right here-

CURTIS: For Maxine?

JAIME: Saffron, man.

CURTIS: You ain't four days in the real world and you're thinking gung-ho with your damn dick-

JAIME: Except who took care of the cable-Mr. Know-it-all?

CURTIS: Gotta be no more than seventeen. . .

JAIME: How do you know?

CURTIS: Don't make sense.

JAIME: Lot of things don't make sense. You saying she's statutory right?

CURTIS: That's right.

JAIME: Let me explain this to you, *Compadre*, you and me are in it about as deep as we can get and we are, what they call outlaws.

CURTIS: Shit.

JAIME: Desperados. I'm telling you, if she wants to come farther than Derby with me-since you and me is splitting up, for the meantime, that is. . .What I'm saying is we'll meet you in La Pesca.

CURTIS: Not so loud. Okay, Okay Jaime-

JAIME: Pete-

CURTIS: What did you find out about Hersh?

JAIME: Seems he and the old lady got into a beef and he took off.

CURTIS: You sure about that?

JAIME: Makes sense, she hasn't come out once. Why? Heavy duty split scene. Right?:
HAS COMPLETED LAYING OUT HIS BED AND lies DOWN. Ahh. This is Heaven. Close the light, Bro.

CURTIS: How many times I gotta tell you, it's turn off the light.

JAIME: Please be so kind as to turn off the light.
CURTIS SWITCHES LIGHT OFF. LIES DOWN.

CURTIS: This pillow. You want to trade?

JAIME: It don't matter to me. My ancestors used rocks for pillows.

CURTIS: Who told you that bull shit?

JAIME: Hey-You talking about my ancestors, now.

CURTIS: What ancestors?

JAIME: I dunno. The Incas.

CURTIS: The Incas lived in Peru.

JAIME: I was just testing you. The Aztecas, of course.

CURTIS: I reckon. I don't fucking know anything right now. I'm beat to shit.

JAIME: All this excitement's hard on an old man like you.

CURTIS: I do feel like an old man right now.

JAIME: *Sings: Old man river.*

CURTIS: I haven't seen a river in eighteen years. First one I see, I'm gonna wash in that river like a baptism into my new life. Wash away the feeling of wall- to-wall gray and green tattoos getting all hazy in the skin of caged up men, year after year after year. Styrofoam plates and all those ugly mother-fucking guards tossing you butt-naked into the hole.

JAIME: With noses like Porky Pig.

CURTIS: And eyes like black holes sucking everything out leaving you empty and weak

so that when you hear the word,
"justice," you fill up with hate and
bitterness.

JAIME: You think a little river's gonna wash
eighteen years out your system?

CURTIS: It'll be washing out a case of food
poisoning. Afterward you don't say it
never happened, you just get well. What
went down, went down. But I'm gonna make
it, Petey, my man, 'cause my time has
come.

JAIME: I hear you bro'. Going home *via El Rio Grande*. You know, I always meant to
thank you for talking me out of getting
that Jesus tattoo done on my chest. I
mean, the way you put it-"Hey, bro' you
ain't doing your Jesus no favor, you're
just putting the mark of the prison on
your hide until you die." You're all
right, man, I mean that.

Curtis begins snoring softly.

Have a good one.

SCENE FIVE

*It may be that a strange dream
Seized you tonight,
You thought you saw an angel
And it was your mirror*

?Max Jacob

Curtis and Jaime Asleep

*The far off sound of coyote. Enter Adriana in red
flowing robes and a with a gas can
chained to her ankle. Jaime sits up.*

JAIME: *Ay! Mamá-es la llorona!*

ADRIANA: What's the matter with you, *La Llorona*
wears white.

JAIME: The who are you?

Adriana: Funny how in those moments of
abandonment, what comes out is the
language you heard in the cradle. Eloise
is like that too, normally she doesn't
know a word of Spanish but give her a
little shock and it's, *Ay Mami!*

JAIME: Eloise?

Adriana: My daughter sleeping in the next room
under the influence of four seconals.

JAIME: Daughter? Who are you?: *Adriana*
howls like a coyote: Lady,
please, you'll wake up the whole house,
then they'll think I'm crazy! Are you
the coyote goddess?

ADRIANA: There's no coyote goddess, *pendejo*. The
coyote god is a god, as in penis.

JAIME: Oh yeah, that's right. What's he called?

ADRIANA: Never mind! Because I am the spirit of
the Phoenix, the spirit of rebirth and
new life and a little bit of the spirit
of Emiliano Zapata-which has nothing to
do *con ese sangron de* Marlon Brando.
Damn, it feels good to speak Spanish
again.

JAIME: Yeah, I know what you mean. Hey, this
must be a dream!

ADRIANA: You keep on thinking that, *Cuatesito*.

JAIME: *Cuatesito*-Shit! I ain't heard that word
in a million years! I must be tapped
deep into my *sin*-conscious, man. I wish
Curtis, I mean Courtney, could?

ADRIANA: The reason I'm here is because I'm
always here.

JAIME: You mean here?

ADRIANA: Yes.

JAIME: As in haunted.

ADRIANA: It's part of the plan.

JAIME: Who's plan?

ADRIANA: My Plan. And the reason you're here is because you've come to take me home.

JAIME: What?

ADRIANA: With the help of my granddaughter.

JAIME: Not Saffron?

ADRIANA: Exactly. She is the Phoenix-More or less-in a meaningful and symbolic way. But I'll tell one thing, it certainly feels like it's been five-hundred years in this miserable desert-*She Spits*-But then you come along and everything starts to fall into-

: *Enter Hersh in a dream state.*

HERSH: Eloise? Where are you? *Sees Adriana.*

Oh it's you again.

Hersh exits through kitchen exit.

JAIME: Who's he?

ADRIANA: Pobrecito, he's looking for my daughter. I told him last night it was time for him to leave. And I thought that was the

last of it. But I guess he's not about to give up so easily.

JAIME: How did he get in my dream?

ADRIANA: He's in his own dream:

HERSH ENTERS.

HERSH: She's asleep.

JAIME: Who's dream. . . .?

ADRIANA: Forget about her, *Mijo*, she's not for you.

HERSH: But she's my wife. I need her.

ADRIANA: Do you know how many times she's faked it with you?. . . Now is that what you want? You're a young man, you deserve some real fireworks.

HERSH: I didn't mean to say those things to her.

ADRIANA: You should have said them a long time ago.

HERSH: No. . . I'm really sorry. . . It's not what I wanted to say at all. HE WANDERS OUT THE FRONT DOOR.

ADRIANA: *Que lastima, Pobrecito*. Sometimes, life just isn't fair, *tu sabes?*

JAIME: I'll say, trying to kill that mule was no fun.

ADRIANA: Did you ever stop to think maybe he was just tired of hauling you and your friend around?

JAIME: Well he didn't have to attack us.

ADRIANA: Attack you? When?

JAIME: When he turned into a bird.

ADRIANA: He had to. So, you are planning to take Saffron, aren't you?

JAIME: It crossed my mind.

ADRIANA: Well maybe I had something to do with it.

JAIME: Hey, I got my own mind.

ADRIANA: Sure you do, that's why I'm here, to make sure you stick with it.

JAIME: You mean like Saffron and me are written in the stars?

ADRIANA: Maybe. That depends on you.

JAIME: How so?

ADRIANA: That is, if you can keep up with her.

JAIME: I'm into evolution, man-the monkeys, black holes, folded up time-

ADRIANA: *Bueno pues*, you have a chance. *México* is her future.

JAIME: *México* is my future *tambien!*

ADRIANA: *Mira, Si no eres tarugo, you might have a chance. If not, be sure you do right by her.*

JAIME: Hey you're talking like this is gonna be forever-

ADRIANA: If you're that lucky. So now, you go to her. You make her a woman-but keep in mind she's already *muy mujer*. You take her to Mexico and teach her what you know. I give you my blessing and watch over you. Any questions?

JAIME: Uh, yeah. Like why have you got that gasoline can chained to your leg?

ADRIANA: It's my connection to your world. Which I can't wait to get rid of. Now go back to sleep!

JAIME: Go *back* to sleep?

ADRIANA EXITS.

JAIME: *Huehuecoyotl!* The Coyote God!

ADRIANA: You'll do, *cuatesito*, you'll do.

Silence. Jaime is sleeping. He wakes up. Sits thinking a moment.

JAIME: Damn! I can never remember my dreams. *Stands, gets a drink of water. Paces. Walks out the front door.*

SCENE SIX

Saffron's bedroom

Saffron has just opened a wooden box that is filled with a half dozen cloth covered journals. A letter sits on top of these journals. She picks up the letter.

Jaime taps gently on her window.

SAFFRON: Hi!

JAIME: Good Evening I've been wanting to tell you something. I mean your name is Saffron. Is it okay if I come in?

SAFFRON: What? *Pulling the curtain aside so that he can climb in.*

JAIME: Well, ever since I heard the song on the oldies but goodies radio, I always wondered if there was anybody out there who actually had that name.

SAFFRON: My mother heard the song and liked the name also.

JAIME: Wait a minute!-*He disappears for a moment then returns with a blue rose in his hand and climbs in.*

SAFFRON: Where did you get that?!

JAIME: There a bunch of them growing right
outside your window.

SAFFRON: But it's a blue rose. . .

JAIME: Yeah, how could you not know they were
there-I mean you don't see blue roses
every day-especially here in the desert-

SAFFRON: They only bloom right after a rain. And
that's only happened twice. And then
right after that a. *She looks outside the
window searching the desert.*

JAIME: What're you looking for?

SAFFRON: The mule.

JAIME: What?! What mule?

SAFFRON: This mule that's usually out there. It
just waits and waits until I fall asleep
then comes to eat all the roses.

JAIME: A blue mule?

SAFFRON: How did you know?

JAIME: Like it sort of glows?

SAFFRON: Iridescent.

JAIME: Always believe what you see. I've just
made up my mind.

SAFFRON: When did you see it?

JAIME: Courtney and me rode it for two days.

SAFFRON: It let you ride him?

JAIME: Yeah, it saved our lives. We were really lost out there when it came up to us, sweet as a lamb. As soon as we climbed on its back, it took off like a bird- Yeah, in fact, I think when it got tired of us, it turned itself into a bird and dive bombed us.

SAFFRON: It had to be the same one. I saw a UFO one time.

JAIME: You did? You and me are going to get along just fine. . .What's that?

SAFFRON: My grandmother's stuff. But I'm supposed wait until I'm-21, before I can have them. But since I'm leaving now, I can't wait that long. I took them from my mother's room. She's been saving them.

JAIME: So how old are you?

SAFFRON: Nineteen.

JAIME: I told that guy.

SAFFRON : *Looks at letter.* Oh no!

JAIME: What?

SAFFRON: I guess it only makes sense that she would write them in Spanish. My grandmother was born and raised in Mexico. She and some other students were

protesting against the U.S in Mexico.
One of the students was killed and the
police were looking for the rest of them.
Grandpa was visiting some friends of her
family. My grandma's parents had them
married so she could escape. I guess
they fell in love.

JAIME: Seems like the smartest thing.

SAFFRON: It must've been awful coming from Mexico
City to this.

JAIME: Well that depends on what you like.

SAFFRON: She died five months before I was born.
Grampa said it was a brain tumor.

JAIME: Couldn't have been that.

SAFFRON: Why do you say that?

JAIME: I don't know, it just popped out-I didn't
mean-

SAFFRON: No-no, I've always wondered about that,
something. . .in the way mom and grandpa
act. . .

JAIME: Hey, you know what? I read Spanish.

SAFFRON: Really?

JAIME: Baby, I was born in *México*.

SAFFRON: Really? Where?

JAIME: Ah well um, ever heard of Glacamora?

SAFFRON: Glacamora? Yes, I have. So what does it say?

JAIME: *"Para mi Nieta quando cumple los dies y ocho anos."* Which means, *"For my Granddaughter when she becomes 18 years old."* I thought you said you had to be 21?

SAFFRON: Where does it say granddaughter?

JAIME: Right here, *nieta*.

SAFFRON: I wasn't born yet, how did she know I was going to be a granddaughter and not a grandson? Go on-no wait- : *Takes it from Jaime and reverently opens it. Hands it back.*

JAIME: *Dear Granddaughter:* You will meet a dark stranger. You will let him in through your bedroom window.

SAFFRON: Where does it say-

JAIME: Just fooling-

SAFFRON: Come on, Jaime-

JAIME: You just called me Jaime.

SAFFRON: Yeah, so?

JAIME: My name is Pete.

SAFFRON: Whatever?go on with the letter.

JAIME: No, I want to know why you called me
Jaime?

SAFFRON: Are you really armed and dangerous?

JAIME: I got these two loving arms but I am,
generally speaking, not dangerous.

SAFFRON: What were you in for?

JAIME: I did a stupid thing.

SAFFRON: What?

JAIME: A favor for a friend.

SAFFRON: What kind of favor?

JAIME: A favor that got me ten years.

SAFFRON: Did you kill someone?

JAIME: Oh no, nothing like that.

SAFFRON: Are you sure?

JAIME: As sure and you and me are going to make
love tonight, I never hurt anyone.

SAFFRON: I read that in prison. . .well. . .

JAIME: Well, what?

SAFFRON: Nothing.

JAIME: No, tell me.

SAFFRON: That the men, you know, do it with each
other.

JAIME: Oh. Yeah, that's true. But for me a
dude's a dude, with or without shaved
legs.

SAFFRON: Oh.

JAIME: No. . .I can't lie to you. . .But you see, in prison, well, it's a funny place- I mean, it's not funny at all because you end up doing a lot of things you wouldn't do outside. And, I did some of those things.

SAFFRON: I think I understand. . .except. . .

JAIME: If you're thinking what I think you're thinking, I was very careful then, just like I would never do anything to hurt you now.

So, here we go. . ."*You are the worm to crawl from my ashes. Bursting with new hopes, I will rise in the birth of your flesh.*"

SAFFRON: There's magic in this room. Can you feel it?

JAIME: For some people there's magic wherever they go.

SAFFRON: I've always believed that. Go on.

JAIME: "*Do not be frightened by these words. They are. . .'una sombra,' only a shadow of our visions. 'La Muerte, pasa un momentico'-Death lasts a single moment.*"

Like everything else, it is an ignorant word that misinterprets the actual thing. As our last breath escapes us, new lives begin: "Heroic maggots, prolific bacteria and, the Noble Worm." Wow!

SAFFRON: How-? I gotta learn Spanish. Everything about her is right in these dairies. Read me the rest.

JAIME: *"This is the secret between us. When you make your life 'en la tierra donde naci,' where I was born, everything will make more sense. : But one thing first. Before you leave these burning hills, we must complete a very important. . something."*

SAFFRON: Something?

JAIME: I can't make out this word.

SAFFRON: Just keep reading maybe we can figure it out.

JAIME: *"There is a plot to assassinate. . ."*
Jaime hesitates.

SAFFRON: Go on.

JAIME: Mmm.

SAFFRON: What? Another word?

JAIME: No-no it's a heavy duty, déjà vu attack!

SAFFRON: *Looks at the letter:* Emiliano
Zapata? Isn't he the guy Marlon Brando
played in that movie? But he was already
dead-before my grandmother was ever born.

JAIME: You said, Marlon Brando.

SAFFRON: And?

JAIME: It's getting kind of Twilight Zone around
here: *Takes letter from him.*

SAFFRON: Living here drove her crazy, the way it's
driving me crazy.

JAIME: Yeah I know what you mean, We got a lot
in common.

SAFFRON: You know what made you come to my window?

JAIME: What?

SAFFRON: I did. I wanted you to.

JAIME: Also maybe I had something to do with it.

SAFFRON: You'd be crazy not to. . : *They kiss.*
Each time longer: Are we really going
to make love?

JAIME: I get the feeling.

SAFFRON: Don't you have to be in love first?

JAIME: Maybe we are and we don't know it.

SAFFRON: You know what my mother said about Hersh
after he left? She said she never loved
Hersh.

JAIME: She said that?

SAFFRON: Why did she marry him?

JAIME: People do all kinds of weird things. I don't think my mother loved my real father either.

SAFFRON: Why do you say that?

JAIME: Because when I was little, I was playing by the side of the house when I heard her crying. She was sitting on the back porch with my uncle, he was holding her and talking to her and I remember his hand was holding her at the elbow and his thumb was rubbing her, like feeling her skin. My mom has the softest skin in the world. And she was crying and shaking her head. And then. . .he took her chin like this and he kissed her, very gently. I had never seen my the old man kiss her like that. All he ever did was come home from work, sit at the table with the newspaper and not say a word to anyone until my mother served him his dinner and he'd finished eating. My old man never talked to my mother like my uncle was talking to her and never

looked at her the way my uncle was looking at her. And then my mother got up, ran into the house and left my uncle just sitting there. My uncle put his face in his hands and made the ugliest sounds I'd ever heard anyone make. That's how a man cries. You know what really bugs me about all that?

SAFFRON: What?

JAIME: I think it was my uncle, not my father, who taught me what it means to be a man.

SAFFRON: *Leans over and kisses him sweetly on the cheek.* Will you teach me Spanish?

JAIME: I'll take you to *México* and you can soak it up like the sun. It's already in here. *Referring to her heart.* But the first thing I would do is take you to this little restaurant there run by this Spanish guy-I mean from Spain-and he makes this mean Paella, and then you could meet the other Saffron.

SAFFRON: What does she look like?

JAIME: *He kisses her and turns off the lamp.*

LIGHTS DOWN.

SCENE SEVEN

Saffron's bedroom.

Safe and Jaime are under the covers.

JAIME: What time is it?

SAFFRON: Four-Thirty: *They come up from
under the sheet.*

SAFFRON: And to think I was planning to run away
with Styro.

JAIME: You mean the guy who doesn't even know
you're coming?

SAFFRON: He wouldn't be surprised.

JAIME: He the father?

SAFFRON: No, we never even did anything. But he
might come by and pick me up. He has my
address. He might be here any time.

JAIME: The guy's an asshole if he ain't come by
now. Forget about him. Baby, you're my
Venus de Milo with arms.

SAFFRON: I am?

JAIME: My Mona Lisa with a grin. From the
moment you walked up to me, my heart
jumped out to here.

SAFFRON: Like immediate and total?

JAIIME: Ain't anyone ever been in love with you before?

SAFFRON: Oh sure, guys fall in love with me at first sight all the time.

JAIIME: You're a crazy little girl, you know that?

SAFFRON: Yeah:

JAIIME: Hey-how did you figure us out?

SAFFRON: When I was watching my soap-It's all over the news. *Pulling Radio from under her bed. Leans over and kisses him sweetly on the cheek.*

See, I stole Grandpa's radio so he wouldn't find out about you two. Some people would say I was crazy, but there are some things I've never been wrong about.

JAIIME: Wow-and she does cable too.

SAFFRON: Joshua Corner is only 20 miles from here. We can catch a bus from there-what do you mean, cables-?

JAIIME: I thought George said Joshua Corners was a ghost town? *They stare at each other for a moment before the door swings open. George enters.*

GEORGE: What the Hell is going on h-? EXITS.

SAFFRON: Get your pants on hurry-

JAIME: Where are they-?

SAFFRON: There-Hurry!

JAIME: Just like the good old days.

SAFFRON: What's so funny?

JAIME: Why are you laughing?

SAFFRON: I don't know!

JAIME: Where did he go?

SAFFRON: Probably to get ol' Jessie!

JAIME: That your mother?

GEORGE: Returns *with shotgun*. You're staring at Jessie right now. Now real slow. You just move on out of there, into the cafe and turn the light on real nice. We ought to let your convict friend in on this too.

GEORGE: *To Saffron*. Is this what you do first time you get a chance?

SAFFRON: It just happened, Grandpa-

SCENE EIGHT

Cafe

: *George, Jaime and Saffron all enter cafe
waking Curtis up.*

JAIME

SAFFRON

You got this all wrong, George,

Grandpa-!

we're a couple of good ol' boys,

What're you doing?

just like you. Just a couple of

It was my idea!

drop outs from survivalist school-

GEORGE: Stand over there. Both of you. . .

That's it. Now sit yourself down-easy.

CURTIS: He's right, George, you're making a
terrible mistake-

GEORGE: We'll just let the sheriff decide us that
one. He should be coming along pretty
soon.

Enter Eloise wearing same robe.

ELOISE: What the hell is going on here-Ay Mami-Oh
my God, *Staring.*

CURTIS: Hello, Eloise.

ELOISE: Yusef? Is it you??

JAIME: Yusef?

GEORGE: He's Yusef?

JAIME: Yusef. . .You surprise me everyday,
brother.

ELOISE: What're you doing with that gun?

SAFFRON: They escaped from the state pen.

ELOISE: State pen?

GEORGE: You knew and didn't say anything?

ELOISE: You've been in prison all this time?

SAFFRON: *To George.* You did too.

GEORGE: I had a plan.

SAFFRON: So did I.

GEORGE: What kind of plan?

SAFFRON: A none-of-your-business plan.

ELOISE: Saffron-!?! *To Curtis.* Why didn't you
tell me, why didn't you write or call?

CURTIS: I did write. You never answered any of
my letters.

ELOISE: I never got any letters.

CURTIS: When I tried calling, your number had
been disconnected.

ELOISE: What? Oh, I remember. Daddy-you had the
number changed because-I can't remember
why now.

GEORGE: I figured it was a no good bum, coming from the penitentiary-and I'm glad I did!

ELOISE: You had no right!

GEORGE: I had every right to protect my sixteen-year-old daughter from any such poison. Now I find out this man is a murderer-!

CURTIS: I was sent up 25 years for burglary and second degree murder.

ELOISE: Murder?

CURTIS: I didn't do it-

GEORGE: That's what they all say-

ELOISE: Daddy, please! What happened?

CURTIS: An old man had been killed by his own gun while trying to stop a burglar who was black and wearing grey sweats. Two days later I went jogging in the same neighborhood when the man's wife saw me and called the cops on me.

JAIME: Twenty-five years for wearing a jogging suit.

CURTIS: You know I was knocking myself out, getting through school and all so we could have a decent life. The plans we'd made meant more to me than anything else.

ELOISE: And now you come here, after all these years and you expect me to-what? Not knowing what happened to you. It was so awful, pregnant and no one around-

GEORGE: Eloise-

ELOISE: You! You did this to us. *To Curtis.* If you only knew. I thought you were dead. And then, then, I didn't know what to think. I figured you. . . it was not knowing. That was the worst part.

CURTIS: I never stopped thinking of you-

ELOISE: I tried. I did everything I could think of to forget about you, including making poor Hersh miserable. I don't know. I don't know. I just don't know anything, right now. I was trying to, trying to, to uh, raise Saffron and, and um. . .I thought you were dead. I thought you didn't care. I thought I was the biggest fool that ever lived. You shouldn't have come here. It's too late for anything. How could you do this to me? You've just torn up the ground, everything that was buried and gone and. . .and. .

.forgotten?: Just go away, okay?

It's-

CURTIS: Listen to me! Listen to yourself. If you haven't been happy then maybe it's because, like me, I haven't been able, after all these years, to get you out of my head. You think I wanted to spend half my life in prison for something I didn't do? I still had the feel of you in my arms from the night before when they took me away. You think I didn't try to shake that feeling? At times, I was sure I'd lose my mind. Maybe for some people there just isn't but one person and maybe, just maybe, we're two of those people. Honey, where I'm going they got a river so wide you can set Joshua Corners on a raft and float it into the ocean. They got colored birds as big as your arm. The people there have skin like the women like caramel. We can't exactly pick up where we left off but what happens from here on, Eloise, depends on you and me.

ELOISE: I had a right to know, Daddy.

GEORGE: Your mother wanted you to have the baby here-to raise her here-not to go off with some criminal!

ELOISE: She knew I was pregnant?

GEORGE: We both did-but she was set on you raising it here.

ELOISE: But why?

JAIME: It was her escape plan!

ELOISE: Her what?

JAIME: Why did I say that?

GEORGE: It was her last wish. She made me promise the night before she- She told me you were going to have Saffron.

SAFFRON: She knew my name too?

ELOISE: Of course not-

GEORGE: Even when she was gone, even then I couldn't go back on my word-being her last wish and all.

ELOISE: You wouldn't go back on a promise made to a mad woman? What about me? I was the one who had to keep going. I still had my dreams and-and. . .How could you? She couldn't help herself. But you knew what you were doing- :Saffron, say hello to

your father. TO CURTIS. I wasn't about
to let go of any part of you and me.

SAFFRON: Curtis-I mean Yusef?Wow this is so cool.

. . .

JAIME: She's going to have my baby.

CURTIS: What? What're you talking about?

ELOISE: What?!

JAIME: But don't worry, man I'll do right by
her-

ELOISE: That's impossible!

JAIME: Ask her.

ELOISE: Saffron, now what?

SAFFRON: Oh brother.

JAIME: You mean, you're not pregnant? You just
told me that to trick me into taking you
with me?

SAFFRON: Well you were trying to trick me-

ELOISE: Who is this man?

JAIME: I am Jaime Rojas-Mejias and I am in love
with your daughter. *To Curtis.* I guess,
yours too, Yusef..

SAFFRON: TO MOTHER. I was the only virgin left in
Homerom- probably in the whole school!

JAIME: What? But what about when you were in
reform school with-

GEORGE AND ELOISE: Reform School?!

: *They exchange glances. Saffron's prevarications are reminiscent of Adriana's eccentricities.*

SAFFRON: Don't you look at each other like that-
You talk about me-You talk about me? You two have been lying to me since day one. For instance, how did Grandma die?

GEORGE: She had a brain tumor-

SAFFRON: That's been the trouble around her, everybody's forgotten how to tell the truth. *To Eloise.* It had something to do with fire, didn't it? Didn't it?

JAIME: She poured gasoline all over herself and lit a match. *To Saffron.* But that was her way-you gotta understand that.

ELOISE: How did you know?

JAIME: I think I'm going psycho!

CURITS: He means psychic.

SAFFRON: Just like the Phoenix. Mom, if I were to tell you how I felt-how I really felt. .
.I just don't belong here any more. .
.And besides, my grandma, this is what she wanted.

ELOISE: But Sweetheart, I thought I'd always
tried to make it easy to talk to me.
Didn't I?

SAFFRON: Except you left out all the important
stuff!

ELOISE: *She looks helplessly at George.*

GEORGE: Adriana, you've got to help me on this
one.

SAFFRON: *Not taking her eyes off her mother:* I
got a right to know.

GEORGE: When your grandma died, I went round and
round trying to figure what I'd missed,
where I hadn't heard her calling me. All
this time I should've been listening to
one of them coyotes. You're grandma'd
say, They know, George, they know
everything we're too scared to think
about. It's a hard fact of life, Darling,
we can't bare our souls outright to no
one. At best only in small doses, being
as each of us has the burden of his own
soul to carry. That's why we ever so
often feel like something alone in the
darkness. And that fear, it turns us
into liars and thieves. When she died, I

told myself I was keeping your mama safe, following her mother's last wishes, but it was me all along who was looking to cheat the loneliness of my own soul. Not wanting to face the fact that I had my moment with Adriana and that it was your mama's time now to share a bit of her soul with someone else. *The sound of a truck pulling up.*

SAFFRON: Oh my God, It's Styro-!

GEORGE: It's the sheriff!

ELOISE: Daddy, put the gun away-

GEORGE: These men are still criminals, Eloise.

ELOISE: I'm not so sure what that means right now-

George seems frozen. Enter Hersh with telephone. They stare at him.

HERSH: Why is everybody up? What's going on here?

Everyone speaks up at once

GEORGE: They're friends of mine. *Lays the gun on the counter:*

SAFFRON: I was showing these fellers Ol' Jessie.

JAIIME: Our truck broke down.

CURTIS: We lost our way.

HERSH: *To Eloise.* What did they say?

ELOISE: Their truck broke down. About eight miles from here.

HERSH: Oh. I hope it's nothing serious. I brought the telephone back: *He set the telephone down on the counter along with the keys.* *To Eloise.* : We need to talk

They exit. The first rays of dawn can be seen filtering through the window.

JAIME: I know that guy. Where have I seen him before?

: *Lights down. Light on Eloise and Hersh down stage right.*

HERSH: Baby, I was half-way to nowhere when I started thinking. . .

ELOISE: Hersh-I-

HERSH: I know. . .I know, we ain't been getting along so good lately, but then maybe we just started taking each other for granted. That happens to everyone at one time or another. I mean, you don't go throwing out the whole thing. You-sometimes need to fall in love again. I know this might sound, I don't know.

It's just that I remember when you first told me about the Phoenix-something's gotta die so something else can live and in the same way something's gotta be said so it can be, you know, in the open, and, and then changed. And I knew, if I turned the truck around and got to you by dawn, that it would be like meeting a new beginning with the sunrise, that everything would be all right.

This place here-it's a kind of paradise, this desert, especially with a woman like you. Maybe we were meant to live our whole lives watching the sun go down, like that bird, every evening, then rise at dawn, me holding you this way. HE BEGINS TO KISS HER.

ELOISE: Hersh, I've got to tell you something. I don't want to hurt you anymore.

HERSH: And I-I hate it when I hurt you. . .Let's you and me have a baby-

ELOISE: A baby? Oh Hersh, I can't-

HERSH: Okay. . .I realize it's kind of sudden. Come on, baby let just go in here-I need to hold you. They can take of themselves

out there. You go 'head and do what you need to do. But maybe you can start thinking about what I said. Okay? I'll be in our room. Waiting for you.

Adriana's howl of a coyote can be heard not far away. It breaks the spell that Hersh created.

ELOISE: I'll take but a minute.

Lights Dim. Eloise and Hersh exit.

Lights up on the others again.

Adriana looks on.

JAIME: What are we waiting for? This is our chance-!

CURTIS: We're going to wait a minute-

JAIME: Are you crazy? Come on Saffron-

CURTIS: I've come all this way and I say we're waiting!

JAIME: *Backing off.* Yeah. . .Okay, Bro', we'll wait: *Enter Eloise.*

ELOISE: Saffron, get in the car-quiet now.

Saffron crosses to house door. Where are you going?

SAFFRON: I got to get Grandma's diaries-They're in my room. *Exits.*

ELOISE: *To Curtis* I'm going with you, Yusef.

Adriana cheers. She runs off and returns a moment later carrying a small valise, and wearing a sun hat. Ready to accompany them.

CURTIS: Eloise-!

ELOISE: *To Jaime and Curtis.* The both of you, go on, get in the car.

CURTIS: All right! *To Jaime.* Let's go!:

Jaime and Curtis exit.

GEORGE: Now wait a minute, Ellie-

ELOISE: Daddy, please. Tell him, I'm sorry. Tell him I don't have another five hundred years to burn in this desert and I never did him justice and I wouldn't be good to anyone, especially him if I went and stayed. Tell him I don't really have a choice and that all I was up 'til now was that stupid bird, never letting nothing come near me. Tell him-:

Saffron enters with the box of journals.

SAFFRON: Bye, Grandpa. Don't be sad. I'll write you. *She embraces her grandfather.*

GRANDPA: I'm going to miss you, Darlin' You be very careful-

ELOISE: We've got to go now, Daddy.

GEORGE: I tried. You know that?

SAFFRON: Yes, Daddy.

They embrace for the first time in years.

They exit. Truck drives off.

GEORGE: I been some hero, all right.

The sound of Adriana's gas can be heard being thrown away. Enter Hersh buckling his pants.

HERSH: I heard my truck?where'd everybody go-
What the Hell's going on here?:HE RUNS
OUT THE DOOR. OFFSTAGE. Hey! Damn!
ENTERS. Eloise driving them to get their
car?

GEORGE: I believe they ain't coming back.

HERSH: Wha-? Well, did they have a truck or
didn't they?

GEORGE: Nope.

HERSH: And you didn't call me out here-you-?

GEORGE: She told me to tell you she's no good and
she used to be like a big bird but she
wasn't going to be anymore and she told
me to tell you she was sorry.

HERSH: Sorry? Sorry? Well-who were those two
guys?

GEORGE: Friend of hers.

HERSH: What friends?

GEORGE: You seen the flashlight?

HERSH: Behind the counter. Friends? They took-
they've stolen my car!

GEORGE: It was her truck too. *He opens the front
door and sees the sky has lightened
enough to see. Don't even need it now.
Puts the flashlight back.*

HERSH: I paid for it. You know that. Where are
you going?

GEORGE: Fix the cable box.

HERSH: What's wrong with the Cable box?

GEORGE: I unhooked it

HERSH: What for?

GEORGE: What for?

HERSH: Yeah, why would you do a thing like that?

GEORGE: 'Cause you can't watch TV without it.

EXITS.

HERSH: *Mouths George's words silently. Shakes
his head. He crosses to door. Dog
whines as him from outside. What's the
matter, Useless? You smell a whole lot
of rats too? Crosses to phone, plugs it
in. Listens into receiver. It doesn't*

work. Damn! *Sits.* This is not what I had in mind at all!

Enter ADRIANA with her valise and hat.

ADRIANA: You can say that again!

HERSH: Who are you?!

ADRIANA: A friend. A *loca in la cabeza*, friend!

HERSH: Well *loca* or not, I sure can use a friend.

ADRIANA: All this time, I do all this work give little pushes to *chencho* over here and *chucho* over there-just so that I could get back to my *precioso* Mexico! But if I do that I leave you and poor Georgie by your *pendejo* selves.

HERSH: You look so familiar. But I have no idea what you're talking about?

ADRIANA: Shut up and listen. When the Sheriff comes by in a few hours, have him take you to pick up Eloise's car.

HERSH: They told me it wouldn't be ready until Friday?

ADRIANA: Pick up the car and have your bags ready.

HERSH: Ready for what?

ADRIANA: You're going to Austin.

HERSH: Texas?

ADRIANA: Get a copy of the *Austin Underground*.
There will be a band, called The Losers
looking for a vocalist / songwriter.
Join them.

HERSH: Are you crazy? I have never written a
song in my life.

ADRIANA: You will have time to write a few songs
on your way there.

HERSH: What about George?

ADRIANA: Take him with you. You need a Manager
and George is an undiscovered genius.

HERSH: What kind of music?

ADRIANA: You have to find your own voice. Excuse
me now, I'm going to go sulk. *Exits.*

HERSH: My own voice? *Pinches himself.* I am
fully awake! The Losers? Hey! wait a
minute! Friend! Does this mean I'm
gonna be famous?

ADRIANA: *Offstage voice.* And change the name to
"Los Five Coyotes."

THE SOUND OF DONKEY BRAYING, FOLLOWED BY
THE SOUND OF FLAPPING WINGS. A COYOTE
HOWLS OFF IN THE DISTANCE. THEME SONG
OPENS.

LIGHTS DOWN.