

MI COCHE, MI QUINCE

A full-length dramedy by
Susan Lieberman

This script is for evaluation only. It may not be printed, photocopied or distributed digitally under any circumstances. Possession of this file does not grant the right to perform this play or any portion of it, or to use it for classroom study.

www.youthplays.com
info@youthplays.com
424-703-5315

Mi Coche, Mi Quince © 2015 Susan Lieberman
All rights reserved. ISBN 978-1-62088-401-0.

Caution: This play is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, Canada, the British Commonwealth and all other countries of the copyright union and is subject to royalty for all performances including but not limited to professional, amateur, charity and classroom whether admission is charged or presented free of charge.

Reservation of Rights: This play is the property of the author and all rights for its use are strictly reserved and must be licensed by the author's representative, YouthPLAYS. This prohibition of unauthorized professional and amateur stage presentations extends also to motion pictures, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video and the rights of adaptation or translation into non-English languages.

Performance Licensing and Royalty Payments: Amateur and stock performance rights are administered exclusively by YouthPLAYS. No amateur, stock or educational theatre groups or individuals may perform this play without securing authorization and royalty arrangements in advance from YouthPLAYS. Required royalty fees for performing this play are available online at www.YouthPLAYS.com. Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Required royalties must be paid each time this play is performed and may not be transferred to any other performance entity. All licensing requests and inquiries should be addressed to YouthPLAYS.

Author Credit: All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this play must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisements and publicity relating to the production of this play. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line with no other accompanying written matter. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the play. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s) and the name of the author(s) may not be abbreviated or otherwise altered from the form in which it appears in this Play.

Publisher Attribution: All programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice:

Produced by special arrangement with YouthPLAYS (www.youthplays.com).

Prohibition of Unauthorized Copying: Any unauthorized copying of this book or excerpts from this book, whether by photocopying, scanning, video recording or any other means, is strictly prohibited by law. This book may only be copied by licensed productions with the purchase of a photocopy license, or with explicit permission from YouthPLAYS.

Trade Marks, Public Figures & Musical Works: This play may contain references to brand names or public figures. All references are intended only as parody or other legal means of expression. This play may also contain suggestions for the performance of a musical work (either in part or in whole). YouthPLAYS has not obtained performing rights of these works unless explicitly noted. The direction of such works is only a playwright's suggestion, and the play producer should obtain such permissions on their own. The website for the U.S. copyright office is <http://www.copyright.gov>.

COPYRIGHT RULES TO REMEMBER

1. To produce this play, you must receive prior written permission from YouthPLAYS and pay the required royalty.
2. You must pay a royalty each time the play is performed in the presence of audience members outside of the cast and crew. Royalties are due whether or not admission is charged, whether or not the play is presented for profit, for charity or for educational purposes, or whether or not anyone associated with the production is being paid.
3. No changes, including cuts or additions, are permitted to the script without written prior permission from YouthPLAYS.
4. Do not copy this book or any part of it without written permission from YouthPLAYS.
5. Credit to the author and YouthPLAYS is required on all programs and other promotional items associated with this play's performance.

When you pay royalties, you are recognizing the hard work that went into creating the play and making a statement that a play is something of value. We think this is important, and we hope that everyone will do the right thing, thus allowing playwrights to generate income and continue to create wonderful new works for the stage.

Plays are owned by the playwrights who wrote them. Violating a playwright's copyright is a very serious matter and violates both United States and international copyright law. Infringement is punishable by actual damages and attorneys' fees, statutory damages of up to \$150,000 per incident, and even possible criminal sanctions. **Infringement is theft. Don't do it.**

Have a question about copyright? Please contact us by email at info@youthplays.com or by phone at 424-703-5315. When in doubt, please ask.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

ANA, 14, a high school freshman.

LUIS, 17, Ana's brother, a high school senior.

MIRIAM, 17, Luis' girlfriend, a high school senior.

NELI, 15, Ana's friend.

INES, 39, Ana and Luis' mother.

RAMIRO, 39, Ana and Luis' father.

DONA, 35, Miriam's mother.

FATHER ANDREW, late 30s-early 40s, a priest, any race.

MR. RUBIN, any age, high school teacher, white. (Can also be "Ms. Rubin" & played by female.)

HELEN, 30s-40s, Asian female.

ABUELA TINA, 60s, Neli's grandmother.

ABUELA LOLA, 60s, Neli's other grandmother.

PENNY, 30s-early 40s, white female.

JACKIE, 30s-early 40s, white female.

DAUGHTER, 14, a high school freshman.

MR. TORRES, 40s, Neli's father.

KYLE, 30s-40s, white male.

MIKE, 30s-40s, white male.

PHOTOGRAPHER, any age, male or female.

ENSEMBLE, male(s) and/or female(s) for party & fantasy scenes.

DOUBLING SUGGESTIONS

ANA/DAUGHTER

LUIS/PHOTOGRAPHER

MIRIAM

NELI

INES/HELEN/ABUELA TINA

RAMIRO/MR. TORRES

DONA/ABUELA LOLA/PENNY/JACKIE

FATHER ANDREW/MR. RUBIN/KYLE/MIKE

All cast members should be part of the ensemble.

SETTING

The present. Berwyn, Illinois.

NOTES

All characters are Latino/Latina except where otherwise indicated.

Producers and directors may translate additional English phrases or even complete lines from the script into Spanish or Spanglish. However, translations must strictly adhere to the existing text in both meaning and spirit.

Mi Coche, Mi Quince received its world premiere under its original title of *Cars and Quinceañeras* at Clockwise Theatre in Waukegan, Illinois in 2013, produced by Founding Artistic Director Madelyn Sergel, directed by Juan Casteñada, stage managed by Cassandra Ellwing and featuring Christopher Acevedo, Charlotte Mae Ellison, Kelly Lynn Hogan, Marjory Mejia, Norma Serna, Dagoberto Soto and Jeri Tocco.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Chicago Dramatists for script development support.

Thanks to Diana Serna and TreSe Productions for help with quinceañera customs and terminology.

Thanks to Jim, Ellie, Julia and Josh Stoller for unwavering companionship and encouragement throughout the process.

ACT I

SCENE 1

(Empty stage. Everyone enters and counts off. [For larger casts, all can join the count-off—in unison, as an echo or with a combination of both.])

ANA: Uno.

INES: Dos.

RAMIRO: Tres.

DONA: Cuatro.

FATHER ANDREW: Cinco.

MIRIAM: Seis.

NELI: Siete.

ANA: Ocho.

RAMIRO: Nueve.

MIRIAM: Diez.

INES: Once.

NELI: Doce.

DONA: Trece.

ANA: Catorce.

LUIS: Fifteen.

ANA: Quince, Luis!

LUIS: Fifteen!

ANA: When I turn 15, it's quince. My quince años celebration!

(All turn to Luis and shout:)

ALL: Quinceañera!

SCENE 2

(Father Andrew, bathed in church lighting and music, steps forward.)

FATHER ANDREW: St. Benedict's affirms the value of the "Quince Años" celebration as a means of renewing baptismal promises and a moment of giving thanks to God for the gift of life, family and community.

(Father Andrew exits.)

SCENE 3

(Ana and Luis' home. Radio plays loudly as lights go up on Ana getting dressed for a quinceañera celebration. Luis enters and turns down the music.)

LUIS: Where you going, Ana?

ANA: Neli's quinceañera.

LUIS: Neli?

ANA: Neli Torres.

LUIS: Who's she?

ANA: Her dad owns Fresh Fare.

LUIS: *That* Torres?

ANA: Yeah.

LUIS: She's your friend?

ANA: We're on the volleyball team together. The whole team's invited. It's gonna be huge, like 500 people at Salon Adelio.

LUIS: Oh yeah. The place with the mirrors. Everybody watches themselves.

(Luis does flashy dance steps in front of an imaginary mirror.)

ANA: Wow, Luis! You gotta be my honor escort if I have a quince.

LUIS: A quince? For you?

ANA: Half the money's in my name.

LUIS: Well, don't spend it on a puffy dress and a pink cake.

ANA: All the freshman girls are having quinceañeras.

LUIS: Miriam skipped it.

ANA: She's different. She'd'a probably felt stupid holding a Last Doll.

LUIS: That's my Miriam.

ANA: Love...

LUIS: I got a way better plan.

ANA: You always got a plan.

LUIS: My half of the money –

ANA: Is for the most unbelievably fantastic four wheels on the planet –

LUIS: Just listen. We could put Grandpa's insurance money together and buy a much better car.

ANA: I can't even drive yet.

LUIS: Driver's Ed next year. Learner's Permit.

ANA: That's why I should spend 4000 dollars on *your* car?

LUIS: *Our* car. Vince just got a used Honda CRV at the garage. He'll let me have it for 7800. Think about it, Ana...

ANA: You'll be driving around with Miriam all the time.

LUIS: We'll take you places. Mom won't have to get you from volleyball practice.

ANA: We wouldn't have to use Papi's van so much.

LUIS: Never!

ANA: That'd be kinda good. It's always stalling.

LUIS: Pa doesn't do good maintenance.

ANA: So it's not the guy who sold it to him?

LUIS: Or General Motors. "If they woulda' just made a good van, I could get a good job."

ANA: A really big job.

LUIS: President...CEO...

ANA: King!

LUIS: Then he could buy a hacienda.

ANA: Just like Abuelito's!

LUIS AND ANA: Beautiful hacienda!

(Ines enters.)

Hi, Mom.

(Ines takes an iPod out of her bag and gives it to Ana.)

ANA: How'd you like my iPod?

INES: What kinda songs did you give me?

ANA: Miriam mashed my favorites.

INES: It's like garbage exploding in my ears. "Once a whore, you're nothing more!"

ANA: Who says that?

LUIS: Paramore.

ANA: No way.

LUIS: Yeah, that's the line. Miriam has to pay really good attention to lyrics. When she DJs a party, she won't play certain songs if there are little kids—

INES: Little, big, who cares? It's still garbage!

ANA: Mom, no one cares about the words.

INES: I do. *(Noticing Ana's shoes:)* Where did you get those?

ANA: I traded with a girl in my homeroom. They hurt her feet.

LUIS: Guess why!

INES: The Torres family don't want girls showing up in heels like that.

ANA: Everyone's gonna have 'em that high.

INES: You can't wear shoes like from a Nicki Minaj song.

ANA: I love her music.

INES: Too bad. I bought the shoes you traded, I get to say what's on your feet.

ANA: I'll pay you back with Grandpa's insurance money.

LUIS: Wait, Ana. We need all of it for the Honda.

INES: What Honda?

ANA: Me and Luis might put our insurance money together to buy a car.

LUIS: Vince got hold of a CRV that's like new. At CarMax, it'd go for 13-14 grand.

INES: Sounds good.

LUIS: See? I knew it!

INES: Change the shoes—okay, Ana? It makes a bad impression.

ANA: Luis...

LUIS: Miriam won't wear those kind.

ANA: 'Cause she likes to be different.

INES: 'Cause she don't wanna break an ankle.

ANA: Fine.

(Ana exits. Luis' cellphone rings.)

LUIS: Hello?...oh, uh...hi Mr. Rubin... *(Startled, recovers:)* Uh...sure ...50 dollars? Okay...yeah, text me the address. I'll see you there at four. Bye. *(To Ines:)* Mr. Rubin just asked me—

INES: Who?

LUIS: My English teacher. He asked me to inspect a used Nissan for 50 bucks. Someone else was going to charge him a hundred.

INES: Luis...you're gonna be a big success one day.

LUIS: It's only 50 bucks.

INES: So? Mr. Rubin's tough, right?

LUIS: If you're not in your seat, notebook open, mouth shut, when the bell rings, he marks you late.

INES: He called 'cause he got respect for you.

LUIS: He called 'cause he doesn't know anything about cars.

INES: What do they say? "You the man!"

LUIS: Stop it, Mom.

INES: Why?

LUIS: Sounds awkward coming from you.

INES: If my son's turning into a man, I get to say so. "You the man!"

(Luis reads a text on his phone.)

LUIS: It's in Riverside. Can I take your car?

(Ines hands him the keys.)

INES: Don't you forget, Luis –

LUIS: I'm the man.

(Lights shift.)

SCENE 4

(Father Andrew addresses the audience.)

FATHER ANDREW: On the cusp of womanhood, a quinceañera rededicates herself to becoming a more perfect follower of Christ as did The Blessed Virgin Mary. Each young woman makes a public commitment to be as holy as Mary in order to change and save mankind.

(ABUELA LOLA and ABUELA TINA stand on St. Benedict's steps. They watch each other surreptitiously as the PHOTOGRAPHER snaps photos.)

LOLA: *(Under her breath, eyeing Tina:)* Un ugly dress.

TINA: *(Under her breath, eyeing Lola:)* Diez extra pounds.

LOLA: Un stupid hat.

TINA: Veinte extra pounds.

LOLA: Uno —

TINA: Veinte —

(Father Andrew approaches them.)

FATHER ANDREW: Honored grandmothers! It is a joy to have you at St. Benedict's for Neli's quinceañera. God bless you both for a beautiful granddaughter.

(Abuela Lola and Abuela Tina break into forced smiles as Father Andrew shakes their hands and moves on. A piercing baby's cry is heard. Abuela Lola smiles joyfully as Abuela Tina glares.)

ABUELA TINA: What's that baby doing at St. Benedict's?

ABUELA LOLA: Neli's brand new cousin — *my* great-grandson!

ABUELA TINA: Llena de pecado.

ABUELA LOLA: And you? Divorced.

ABUELA TINA: No marriage at all is a bigger sin.

ABUELA LOLA: Like you're some kind of santa? My granddaughter –

ABUELA TINA: Puta!

ABUELA LOLA: Did you say puta?

ABUELA TINA: When a girl gets a baby that way –

(Mariachi music begins just as a limo pulls up to the church. The two Abuelas abruptly turn their attention to the limo. As the mariachi music builds, the Abuelas' expressions soften.)

ABUELA LOLA AND ABUELA TINA: Neli...

(Neli enters in her quince dress.)

ABUELA LOLA: Como has crecido...eres todo una señorita...

ABUELA LOLA AND ABUELA TINA: *(Kissing her:)* Mi princesa!

ABUELA LOLA: Lipstick!

ABUELA LOLA AND ABUELA TINA: Ai-yai-yai!

(They each rub their lipstick smudges off of Neli's cheeks. Photographer snaps pictures furiously. As Neli exits, the two women fall into each other's arms, sobbing and sharing Kleenex as the lights shift.)

SCENE 5

(Luis and MR. RUBIN stand in a driveway.)

MR. RUBIN: What do you think?

LUIS: It needs a brake job and new tires. Don't take it unless he knocks off 700.

MR. RUBIN: Okay.

(Mr. Rubin hands some cash to Luis.)

LUIS: Thanks a lot, Mr. Rubin.

MR. RUBIN: You just saved me hundreds of dollars.

LUIS: The guy might not drop the price just 'cause of what I say.

MR. RUBIN: Then I'll walk. I'm no pushover.

LUIS: Yeah, I know.

MR. RUBIN: If you proofread and edited your essays, Luis, you could get your grade up to a B.

LUIS: Well...maybe...

MR. RUBIN: Don't you plan to go to college?

LUIS: Morton Community. They have a certificate in automotive technology.

MR. RUBIN: What about a four-year college?

LUIS: It costs too much.

MR. RUBIN: That's what student loans are for.

LUIS: Then I'm stuck with payments.

MR. RUBIN: But you could get a bachelor's degree and go for a higher salary.

LUIS: I want to open my own garage. For that, what's college gonna do? Like...would you *not* believe what I say about a brake job 'cause I don't have a degree?

MR. RUBIN: Uh...no. I wouldn't really care.

LUIS: So I'm better off just getting some training from Morton.

MR. RUBIN: Luis, you don't traffic in dreams. You traffic in traffic.

LUIS: What?

MR. RUBIN: "To traffic" means to deal or conduct negotiations.

LUIS: Like drug trafficking?

MR. RUBIN: I meant trafficking in the realities of everyday life. Like new brakes and tires. Like a certificate instead of a degree.

LUIS: So...is it a good thing to traffic in traffic?

MR. RUBIN: We should all mix a little trafficking in dreams with a lot of trafficking in traffic.

LUIS: Uh...okay. (*Beat.*) Vince can give you a good price on the brakes. For tires, Sears or Sam's Club is better.

MR. RUBIN: Let me know when you open your own garage, all right?

LUIS: You got it, Mr. Rubin—Chicago, New York and Beverly Hills.

(Luis exits.)

SCENE 6

(Lights shift to a ballroom. Transfixed, Ana watches as MR. TORRES presents Neli to PARTY GUESTS.)

MR. TORRES: Una daughter Neli.

NELI: Un waltz with Papi.

MR. TORRES: Un grand ballroom.

NELI: Un dress.

MR. TORRES: Una corona.

NELI: Un best day of my life!

MR. TORRES: Un most expensive day of *my* life.

(Mr. Torres pulls out a sparkling pair of heeled dance shoes. He removes the flat slippers on Neli's feet and replaces them with the high heels.)

My little girl is gone. With these shoes, Neli, you waltz as a young lady.

(Neli and Mr. Torres waltz around the Party Guests. As the lights go down, a loud ripping sound is heard. Party Guests gasp in horror but then Neli is heard laughing happily.)

SCENE 7

(A school stairwell. Sounds of the school cafeteria in the background as Luis and Miriam cuddle and kiss. Hearing footsteps, they stop. Ana enters.)

MIRIAM: How was the quince?

ANA: Awesome.

MIRIAM: Did everybody watch themselves in those big mirrors?

(Miriam and Luis imitate a couple dancing while watching their reflection. Ana laughs hysterically.)

ANA: Just like that, the whole night. And guess how many cakes they had! Nine!

MIRIAM: Nine?

ANA: All sitting inside a huge Cinderella pumpkin coach—three chocolate, three vanilla, three strawberry. With a chocolate, vanilla and strawberry layer inside each one. It was perfectly coordinated with the damas and chambelanes—three girls each in brown, cream and pink dresses and three guys with bow ties the same color. So beautiful. But during the waltz, one of the damas stepped on Neli's dress by accident and the dress ripped half way up her side.

MIRIAM: Did she freak out?

ANA: No, this party planner took her into a private dressing room and three minutes later she came out in a different dress. The video crew taped the whole thing. It'll be up on the website next week.

MIRIAM: How was the music?

ANA: It was...good.

MIRIAM: Not fantastic?

ANA: They had tons of equipment but the mashups didn't make a whole lot of sense.

MIRIAM: For your quince, Ana, I'll do better mashups than Neli Torres' – better than any quince in the whole school.

LUIS: Ana's skipping it.

MIRIAM: No quince?

ANA: You didn't have one.

MIRIAM: That doesn't mean you shouldn't.

LUIS: Me and Ana are using the insurance money to buy a car.

MIRIAM: And you're okay with that?

ANA: I guess.

LUIS: We already talked about it!

ANA: I know.

LUIS: Ana, you don't want to waste \$4000 on a party.

ANA: I gotta meet a friend in the cafeteria.

LUIS: Ana, you said –

ANA: Bye!

(Ana rushes away.)

MIRIAM: What'd you talk her into a car for?

LUIS: She liked the idea of putting our money together.

MIRIAM: She wants a quince, Luis.

LUIS: How do you know?

MIRIAM: I just do! I hated that my mom couldn't afford a quince.

LUIS: Did you really want to waltz around in a humongous dress and a *corona*?

MIRIAM: Yes.

LUIS: But it's freaky – like a Halloween costume on steroids.

MIRIAM: I felt like a total freak not to get one.

LUIS: It's good to be different.

MIRIAM: I sure didn't want to be when I turned 15.

LUIS: But it made you strong. Pushed you forward.

MIRIAM: Oh sure.

LUIS: Are you gonna end up like your mom, counting shirts at a cleaners?

MIRIAM: No. I'm gonna produce the Grammy Awards.

LUIS: See? You got steam in your feet. Drive in your gut. That's what the United States is all about. A quince holds you back.

MIRIAM: It's just a fun celebration.

LUIS: But it makes us so...typical. Brown people who eat beans at parties.

MIRIAM: Well, we are brown and we do eat beans.

LUIS: Driving rust boxes with music blasting.

MIRIAM: You got real attitude, Luis.

LUIS: Cops know my dad's Mexican from two blocks away.

MIRIAM: So he's one person.

LUIS: You know what I'm saying.

MIRIAM: We could be Korean and eat noodles. Drive a Lexus like my mom's boss.

LUIS: Those Korean ladies really like Lexus SUVs.

MIRIAM: In beige. Understated.

LUIS: Beautiful car. Helen works hard—14 hours a day. People like her end up on top. Same for Mr. Torres. He's got four Fresh Fare stores. Steam in his feet. Drive in his gut.

MIRIAM: So what did he spend his money on? A huge quinceañera for his daughter—with a buffet loaded with beans for 500 brown people.

LUIS: He can afford it.

MIRIAM: For \$4000, Ana could have a little quince.

LUIS: Frijoles for everybody!

MIRIAM: Listen, Luis—I felt terrible when the other girls were going to dress fittings and I wasn't.

LUIS: I just don't want Ana to try to have Neli's quince.

MIRIAM: She'd have better music.

LUIS: Miriam...

MIRIAM: She would. I'd do something phenomenal. Free of charge.

LUIS: Don't get all neurotic again.

MIRIAM: What?

LUIS: If you do music for Ana—for anybody—you gotta stay chill.

MIRIAM: I am.

LUIS: You got pretty intense for Spring Fling.

MIRIAM: I wanted the music to be good.

LUIS: How 'bout the most perfect thing that ever happened at this high school?

MIRIAM: What's wrong with that?

LUIS: You didn't eat, you didn't sleep...you threw up...

MIRIAM: Only for a few days.

LUIS: It felt like a month.

MIRIAM: Well, it's gonna feel like 10 years for Ana if she's left out of the whole quince thing.

LUIS: I'm not pushing her, okay? A decent car's gonna make things easier next year. Ana can get a job after school and I'll be able to pick her up.

MIRIAM: That's pretty lame.

LUIS: Nothing "lame" about having your own car. I never want to be one of those guys waiting for a bus in January, late to work...

MIRIAM: You won't be, Luis

LUIS: Because I think about these things. I traffic in traffic.

MIRIAM: Do what?

LUIS: I don't traffic in dreams, I traffic in traffic. Everyday reality.

MIRIAM: Oh, like selling Porsches to Prince Royce.

LUIS: Lot of trafficking in traffic, a little bit of trafficking in dreams. Just enough to take you the Grammys.

(Luis draws Miriam into a kiss as the lights shift.)

SCENE 8

(Lights up on Sun Cleaners, late afternoon. HELEN goes through register receipts while Dona rakes a sweater with a lint brush.)

HELEN: I'm going to the bank now, so you lock up.

DONA: Okay.

(Helen is about to leave but stops when Mr. Torres enters with shirts.)

MR. TORRES: Hello, Helen. Hello, Dona.

HELEN: So many shirts today, Mr. Torres. Busy week?

MR. TORRES: Every week is busy.

HELEN: How soon you need them?

MR. TORRES: Wednesday is good. Tuesday is better.

HELEN: Tuesday, no problem.

MR. TORRES: My wife will pick them up.

HELEN: Thank you, Mr. Torres.

(Mr. Torres exits as Helen gives shirts to Dona.)

See you tomorrow, Dona.

DONA: Bye.

HELEN: Lock up at 6:30 – not a minute before.

(Helen exits.)

DONA: *(Muttering to herself:)* So many shirts today, Mr. Torres. Busy busy busy. Very important man, Mr. Torres. Tuesday no problem, Mr. Torres. *(Counting shirts:)* HAH-nah, Dhool
Seht
I can count like you, Helen.

Neht

DA-suht

YUH-soht

Helen's not your real name.

EEL-gohp

YUH-dohl

AH-hop

Yul

Your name is Myung. I think you should keep it. It's a pretty name. *Your* name.

(Miriam enters with a fast food bag.)

MIRIAM: Who you talking to, Mom?

DONA: No one special.

MIRIAM: Everyone can see through the window.

DONA: So I'll get a microphone. I don't understand people trying to hide.

MIRIAM: Who's hiding?

DONA: Myung.

MIRIAM: *Helen.*

DONA: Inside, she's really Myung. God loves her, Miriam. God loves all of us.

MIRIAM: Even you—but with less fat. I got you grilled, not crispy, and no fries.

DONA: No fries?

MIRIAM: You said bring a *snack*.

DONA: Fries keep me happy till 6:30.

MIRIAM: Find a job where you're not so bored.

DONA: They all get boring.

MIRIAM: I love being a DJ.

DONA: Well, you can't do that when you're older.

MIRIAM: I'm gonna produce the Grammys.

DONA: Don't forget to invite your brothers and me.

MIRIAM: So no more fries till then. You gotta fit into one of those slinky gowns.

(Miriam picks up her backpack and starts to leave.)

DONA: Where you going so fast?

MIRIAM: I gotta work on salsa music for Vince. He wants it for his wife's 40th birthday party.

DONA: Is he paying you?

MIRIAM: Of course! See, Mom? I'm not gonna have a boring job. Bye!

(Lights down as Miriam exits.)

SCENE 9

(Luis cleans up for the day at Vince's garage. Miriam enters with her laptop in a tirade, taking him by surprise.)

MIRIAM: I lost Vince's mashup! It was going great and then it froze and when I replayed it—zero. Damn! He wants fantastic salsa.

LUIS: Like he really knows. Vince is half Italian, half German.

MIRIAM: But he's your boss. It's gotta be...perfecto.

LUIS: Nothing's perfecto. Except me.

(Luis begins to kiss her.)

MIRIAM: I promised to finish it by today.

LUIS: Well, he left early 'cause they had a wedding in Oakbrook.

MIRIAM: Oh...

LUIS: Chill.

(Miriam giggles as Luis starts to kiss her. They lose themselves in a deep kiss.)

You got any music that didn't freeze up?

MIRIAM: Salsa?

LUIS: Whatever. Just something sweet for us.

(Miriam chooses something on the laptop as Luis pulls out a blanket and kicks off his shoes. Miriam kicks off her shoes too as the lights shift and the music builds.)

(Sounds of a fantasy Grammy Awards. Other characters play WINNERS picking up statuettes as Miriam operates a sound board and Luis cruises around in a sports car. Sounds of the Grammy Awards ending. Luis screeches to a stop and Miriam leaps into it as the Winners cheer.)

© Susan Lieberman

This is a perusal copy only.

Absolutely no printing, copying/distribution or performance permitted.

WINNERS: You the man!

LUIS: Goodbye, Berwyn!

WINNERS: You the woman!

MIRIAM: See yah, Berwyn!

WINNERS: Traffic, traffic, traffic...!

LUIS: Sales and service in Beverly Hills!

MIRIAM: Mixing and mashing superstars!

WINNERS: Dreams, dreams, dreams...!

(Amid the fanfare, Luis pulls Miriam into a huge kiss. Lights down as the heat between them builds.)

SCENE 10

(High school gym. Ana and Neli toss a volleyball around after practice.)

ANA: Four thousand.

NELI: How'd you get it?

ANA: When my mom's father died last year, he left her 8000 in life insurance. She put it into two CDs. Luis wants to use his for a car and I could use mine for a quinceañera.

NELI: Don't.

ANA: You had, like, the best quince of anyone.

NELI: "It's our American dream for you, Neli!"

ANA: Quince's Latino.

NELI: Except Papi made money in America. So after three sons, Mami got to spend it on me.

ANA: It was pretty incredible.

NELI: You had fun?

ANA: The whole team did.

NELI: They were checking out what's gonna be better or worse at their quinces.

ANA: Neli, everyone's is worse than yours.

NELI: Well, they're all jealous. Except you.

ANA: I'm jealous.

NELI: Did you really say that?

ANA: You just did.

NELI: But you're totally admitting it.

ANA: I'd like a Cinderella pumpkin full of cakes.

NELI: So cool.

ANA: It was.

NELI: I mean you. Not the cakes. Can I tell you something? I mean, don't let anyone else know I said this. In the end, my quince wasn't as fun as I thought it would be.

ANA: 'Cause your dress ripped?

NELI: No, that was really really funny. But just about everything else at Salon Adelio was so huge and unreal. Papi invited all the Fresh Fare managers and suppliers and their wives and their husbands and their kids.

ANA: Why?

NELI: To show them "Señor Torres" is a big deal and Mami has a million friends and I am *so, so* popular.

ANA: Oh, that's why she let you invite the whole team.

NELI: I couldn't remember everyone's name.

ANA: Like mine.

NELI: I forgot *your* name?

ANA: Did you know it before the quince?

NELI: Um...maybe not.

ANA: I didn't know every single name either. We've only been playing together for, like, a month.

NELI: I wish I coulda just hung out with the team.

ANA: Sounds like everybody except *you* had a blast. I mean, even your grandmas were rockin' out.

NELI: You know what's crazy about that? Abuela Tina and Abuela Lola hate each other.

ANA: No way!

NELI: Abuela Tina says my father's side doesn't have honor in the eyes of God 'cause my cousin had a baby when she wasn't married. But Abuela Lola says Abuela Tina's a hypocrite because she's divorced. I don't see why they're so stressed out anyway—so many people are divorced, so many girls get pregnant—

ANA: Not so many.

NELI: Enough to make the whole quinceañera thing pretty fake in the first place. (*Exaggerated Mexican accent:*) Traditional celebration for a young Meh-hee-kahn-o girl. A special time for families and friends to mark a young girl's passage into messing up her life.

ANA: Neli!

NELI: You can be a perfect little lady in ruffles and lace—or a big old ho in ruffles and lace. Doesn't matter. It's all for show.

ANA: Your grandmas looked pretty real, like they were best friends.

NELI: All 'cause of the mariachi music. Mariachi! Eech! Boring! I wanted Japanese pop.

ANA: Japanese?

NELI: Yeah, like Hamasaki Ayumi. But Mami said it had to be mariachi at St. Benedict's. I guess she was right. It sure set the grandmas off. Next time they fight, I'm gonna take out that picture of them crying together and say "Don't forget my quince!" Once in 15 years, my family was awesome.

ANA: I don't think my family could do it in 50 years. I mean, my dad's still dreaming about his mother's quince on the hacienda.

NELI: That's pretty cool.

ANA: Yeah but it didn't happen. My grandma said so.

NELI: So why doesn't she tell her own son?

ANA: 'Cause my dad likes the stuff inside his head way better than what's outside. My mom got so sick of it, she divorced him.

NELI: How come your brother is so, like, unbelievably sane?

ANA: How do you know?

NELI: Papi uses the garage where he works. He asked him about a car for me.

ANA: So you're also getting a car.

NELI: Luis showed him a year-old Honda CRV –

ANA: Oh yeah, the CRV...

NELI: Papi says it's a great value.

ANA: If you could only have one—a car or a quince—what would you pick?

NELI: Wow, I don't know, Ana.

ANA: What about your cool pictures? Your video?

NELI: Come over and watch it, okay? You're in some of the shots.

ANA: See? It's worth it.

NELI: Kinda. I mean, everybody in America drives cars their whole life. But you only turn 15 once. You don't want to let it go without making at least a little noise.

(Car honking.)

There's my mom.

ANA: Bye!

NELI: Ana?

ANA: Yeah?

NELI: I'm glad I know your name now. See you later!

(Ana takes out her cellphone and makes a call.)

(Lights up on Ines in a hotel housekeeping uniform.)

ANA: Mom?

INES: You okay?

ANA: Fine but I was talking to my friend –

INES: I'll call you on my break. Two cleaners are out sick today so I'm doing rooms myself.

ANA: I really want a quince.

INES: A quince?

ANA: I'm sorry, Mami! But I'm thinking, like, maybe just a small one.

INES: So no car with Luis?

ANA: I only turn 15 once. That's what Neli said. Every girl should have one.

INES: I didn't.

ANA: Not so many moms did. I mean, it wasn't cool when you were 15, right?

INES: Hey, the supervisor's coming. I need to go.

ANA: You *are* the supervisor.

INES: I got one above me and she's got one above her. Everyone's got a supervisor. I'm yours.

(Ines ends the call. Ana calls Luis. Lights up on Luis at Vince's garage.)

LUIS: What's up, Ana?

ANA: Neli's dad is buying that CRV for her.

LUIS: Yeah, Vince couldn't turn down the offer – 9500.

ANA: Luis, I want a quince.

LUIS: Why?

ANA: So for once, the family can be amazing.

LUIS: Oh sure, that'll happen.

ANA: Neli's family fights a ton but they pulled together.

LUIS: Ana...

ANA: Come on, Luis. What's wrong with a small one?

LUIS: Well...

ANA: I know Miriam's above it, she has too much sense.

(Luis doesn't answer.)

Right? Sensible Miriam.

LUIS: She...she said she felt like a freak not having one.

ANA: Every single freshman spent the whole night talking about what they're doing for their quinces. Even the white girls. It's the American dream. If you can open a garage in Beverly Hills, I can have a quince.

LUIS: In Berwyn.

ANA: Yeah. A real one in Berwyn, USA. Not some hacienda-fantasy quince in my head.

(Luis thinks for awhile.)

LUIS: I'll talk to Mom tonight.

ANA: You're the most fantastic brother in the universe! Hey, you'll be my honor escort, right?

LUIS: Not that fantastic.

ANA: Luis! That's what the brother's supposed to do.

LUIS: Okay, okay.

(Luis and Ana hang up as the lights go down.)

SCENE 11

(Vince's garage after hours. Ramiro waits as Luis enters, wiping oil off his hands.)

LUIS: Hey, old man—your tires need rotating.

RAMIRO: I just did it.

LUIS: "Just"?

RAMIRO: When I got the flat downstate, asshole wouldn't patch the tire so I got stuck buying a new one. I made him rotate the tires for free.

LUIS: That was a couple years ago, Pa.

RAMIRO: Last year.

LUIS: Two years at least. You should take care of the rust too.

RAMIRO: I don't got that kinda money.

LUIS: You just bought an HD radio.

RAMIRO: It's boring to drive without music.

LUIS: Yeah, so the whole world knows a Mexicano's coming.

RAMIRO: What kinda talk is that?

LUIS: Nothing, Pa. Bring it in next week.

RAMIRO: I'm going to Indianapolis. I got a friend doing a huge rehab project. I'm in charge of the electric.

LUIS: Right.

RAMIRO: It's six, seven months' work. *Luxury* condos.

LUIS: Sure, Pa.

RAMIRO: Don't worry. I'll be back for Ana's quince.

LUIS: She said something to you?

RAMIRO: I'm her father. In my pueblo, they set up tables for the quince años right in the avocado grove.

LUIS: You saw your "pueblo" exactly once – and your pictures were full of bony dogs and rusty cars.

RAMIRO: I heard Abuelito's stories so much, I got it in my blood.

LUIS: Stories, right.

RAMIRO: It's important to our family – a tradition! Your mom's gotta respect that.

LUIS: She's pretty frantic right now. They cut staff at the hotel so she's got, like, three jobs.

RAMIRO: She likes bossing people around.

LUIS: If she doesn't keep up, she's worried they'll cut her too.

RAMIRO: Not your mother.

LUIS: No one knows anymore.

RAMIRO: Well, she's still gotta do right by her daughter.

LUIS: She's *your* daughter too, Pa.

RAMIRO: I'm gonna sponsor the banquet hall. How much is the deposit?

LUIS: 300.

RAMIRO: What's the place called?

LUIS: Las Flores.

(Ramiro writes a check and holds it out to Luis.)

Okay.

RAMIRO: That's all you say to \$300? "Okay"?

LUIS: The last time a check from you cleared was when I was 14.

(Ramiro grabs Luis' arm.)

RAMIRO: No son o' mine talks like that!

(Luis struggles to pull away.)

LUIS: If Mom gives the check to the banquet hall and it bounces, everyone'll know it came from you.

RAMIRO: She's got a big fat mouth—

LUIS: Your name's on the check. Not hers.

(Ramiro lets Luis go.)

You want to be part of Ana's quince, go with cash.

(Ramiro digs into his wallet.)

RAMIRO: Here's a hundred.

LUIS: Hang onto it for a suit, okay? And make sure you show up on time.

RAMIRO: I will be there to deliver the brindis. In my pueblo—

LUIS: Lots of avocado groves, all around the hacienda.

RAMIRO: A dozen mariachis playing. It was beautiful.

LUIS: Don't let the tires go too long.

(Lights change as Luis exits, leaving Ramiro alone. In a fantasy, Ramiro picks imaginary avocados and juggles them.)

RAMIRO: Once, doce, trece, catorce...so many avocados for the quince años! One for every year of my daughter's life— one for everyone in the pueblo!

(Mariachi music. PUEBLO GUESTS gather onstage as Ana enters wearing a corona. Pueblo Guests toss avocados to each other as Ramiro raises a glass and gives the brindis. Lights shift.)

SCENE 12

(After school. Luis waits outside the girls' bathroom.)

LUIS: You okay in there...? Miriam...? It's been, like, 20 minutes... Should I get security?

(Neli comes down the hallway.)

NELI: What's up, Luis?

LUIS: Hi, Neli.

NELI: Papi loves the Honda. He says 9500 is a steal.

LUIS: Great.

NELI: He said you have a good head for business. He wants you to work for him.

LUIS: What about your brothers?

NELI: They're in Arizona. Their wives hate snow. And each other.

LUIS: I'm into cars, Neli.

(Neli stops and looks at him carefully.)

NELI: Whatcha doing hanging outside the girls' bathroom?

LUIS: Miriam's in there.

NELI: Well, you don't have to stand guard.

LUIS: She's been awhile. I think she might be sick.

NELI: So you're waiting for her to die before you tell anyone? Jeez!

(Neli races offstage to the bathroom as Luis paces nervously. Neli comes out a few minutes later.)

She's throwing up.

LUIS: That's serious!

NELI: Should I call 911?

LUIS: No, not 911 serious. I mean stress. She takes everything really seriously.

NELI: I heard some girls say she was really intense for Spring Fling.

LUIS: Yeah, well...

NELI: Aren't you really intense about cars?

LUIS: I don't throw up.

NELI: It's good you're both into something. Papi's obsessed with Fresh Fare and Mami doesn't have anything like that, so she always feels useless. She buys him a lot of shirts.

(Miriam comes out.)

MIRIAM: Back to normal!

LUIS: What happened?

MIRIAM: My egg salad sandwich at lunch was bad.

NELI: You can get salmonella from the school's egg salad.

MIRIAM: Last time for me.

NELI: I hear you're DJing Ana's quince.

MIRIAM: I'm working on it.

NELI: You should do some Japanese pop. I played Hamasaki Ayumi for Ana last week and she loved it.

MIRIAM: I'll check it out.

LUIS: Better check the lyrics. Nothing dirty with my mom in charge.

NELI: It's all in Japanese.

MIRIAM: Excellent.

NELI: Where did you learn to do that kind of stuff?

© Susan Lieberman

This is a perusal copy only.

Absolutely no printing, copying/distribution or performance permitted.

MIRIAM: No place special. I just messed around till it worked.

NELI: If you ever need help...like for the talent show...or a party.

MIRIAM: You want to learn?

NELI: Maybe.

MIRIAM: You can help me with Ana's music. Find some Japanese pop.

NELI: Cool! See ya!

(Neli exits.)

LUIS: Miriam...

MIRIAM: Yeah?

LUIS: Don't get all obsessed with Ana's music, okay?

MIRIAM: I won't.

LUIS: I mean it.

MIRIAM: No puking. Promise.

(Lights down on Miriam and Luis as lights go up Father Andrew.)

FATHER ANDREW: In ancient Mayan and Aztec cultures, girls were trained in social graces and domestic skills, and presented to the community as ready for marriage at age 15. European influence united this coming of age with the Catholic Church, thus adding a spiritual element to the quince años. Today in the United States, young Latinas can enjoy this rite of passage without the pressure of marriage and no matter how modest or wealthy their families. All the important people in their lives will help to ensure a memorable celebration.

(Lights down on Father Andrew.)

© Susan Lieberman

This is a perusal copy only.

Absolutely no printing, copying/distribution or performance permitted.

SCENE 13

(Ana and Ines sit at a table at home, making a list.)

INES: How many are we up to?

ANA: 82.

INES: Already? That's not even your dad's side.

ANA: Like they'll show up.

INES: A lot of them will.

ANA: What if Dad's cousins start a fight? You know? Like when they get drunk.

INES: We call the police.

ANA: Mom!

INES: I can't lock them out, Ana.

ANA: I want my quince to be amazing.

INES: We all got an idea of how something's going to be. But when it happens, it never matches the picture in our heads.

ANA: That's kinda what Neli said.

INES: She's right.

ANA: Do you ever have a picture in your head?

INES: Of course.

ANA: Really, Mom?

INES: Every single day. But I'm an adult. I know real life turns out different.

ANA: How come Papi doesn't?

(Ines shrugs.)

I hope he doesn't talk all night about Abuela Belinda's quince on the hacienda.

INES: No one'll be listening. We'll be having too much fun. Look at all your *madrinas* and *padrinos*.

(Shows list to Ana.)

Everyone wants to be part of the celebration. Josie's sponsoring *pan de polvo*.

ANA: The one who talks too much in the car?

INES: A big mouth and a big heart. She's also a very good baker.

ANA: "Tia Hedda"? Tio Paco's new wife?

INES: Yes, she's Norwegian.

ANA: I thought she's Puerto Rican.

INES: Half and half. Tia Hedda pushes the Norwegian side. She wants to sponsor "*gravlaks*."

ANA: What's that?

INES: Smoked salmon.

ANA: Uck!

INES: If she wants to pay for a tray of food, we say thank you.

(Phone rings.)

Hi!... Really?... Wait'll I tell Ana... Thank you so much!... See you Monday. *(Hangs up.)* That was my supervisor. She's gonna sponsor your corona.

(Knock at the door.)

RAMIRO: *(From outside:)* Hey, it's me!

ANA: Papi?

(Ana opens the door. Ramiro hugs Ana warmly.)

RAMIRO: Ana!

INES: I thought you're in Indianapolis.

© Susan Lieberman

This is a perusal copy only.

Absolutely no printing, copying/distribution or performance permitted.

RAMIRO: Not every weekend.

(Ramiro hands an envelope with cash to Ana.)

\$215 for the banquet hall deposit. I'll bring the rest next week.

INES: I paid the deposit two weeks ago.

RAMIRO: So this pays you back.

INES: Right.

RAMIRO: That's where Luis learns it. "Right." Attitude all over the place. *(To Ana:)* Abuela Belinda's buying your shoes.

ANA: My heels?

RAMIRO: Yeah.

ANA: How high?

RAMIRO: Whatever the girls are wearing.

ANA: Five inches!

INES: You cannot wear —

RAMIRO: I'm the father. I say she can.

INES: Ana breaks an ankle, you gonna take her to the ER?

RAMIRO: Crazy talk!

INES: I'm the one with health insurance.

RAMIRO: I got las tradiciones familiares! Abuelito set up tables for everyone to celebrate his daughter!

INES: Abuelito couldn't feed his family.

RAMIRO: Mierda! I don't gotta listen to you.

INES: They left the pueblo! Your mother turned fifteen waiting at the border!

(Ramiro starts to leave.)

At the border, Ramiro! Ask her!

© Susan Lieberman

This is a perusal copy only.

Absolutely no printing, copying/distribution or performance permitted.

RAMIRO: Cállate!

INES: Ramiro! Come on!

ANA: Papi!

(Ramiro slams the door as he exits.)

Mom, you made him mad.

INES: It doesn't take much.

ANA: He can't stand it when you say the stuff in his head isn't true.

INES: Someone has to.

ANA: Why doesn't Abuela Belinda tell him?

INES: She finally gave up on her own son.

ANA: You think she'll really buy my shoes?

INES: If not, we'll just have to buy a pair ourselves.

ANA: Okay...

INES: Don't worry, Ana. It'll work out.

ANA: Can Luis change my slippers to my heels? I know it's supposed to be the father's job but...

INES: Luis does so many things that are the father's job, why not this one too? We'll have a good celebration. I promise.

(Hugs her.)

My beautiful children.

ANA: Luis is gonna look so good in his tux.

INES: Leading you in a wonderful waltz.

ANA: Is that the picture in your head?

INES: Yes.

ANA: It's going to be amazing, Mom! I just know it.

© Susan Lieberman

This is a perusal copy only.

Absolutely no printing, copying/distribution or performance permitted.

(Lights up on Father Andrew.)

FATHER ANDREW: At this special moment in a child's life, when ears and eyes are open, the Church makes every effort to nourish the family's faith. Let the word of God enter their lives and lead them to holiness.

SCENE 14

(SPONSORS name their contributions in between Miriam and Luis's conversation.)

SPONSOR #1: Un photographer.

MIRIAM: One day late.

SPONSOR #2: Dos party shoes.

MIRIAM: Two days late.

SPONSOR #3: Tres gravlaks – a taste of Norway!

MIRIAM: Three days late.

SPONSOR #4: Cuatro layers of cake.

MIRIAM: Four days late.

SPONSOR #1: Cinco cases of champagne.

MIRIAM: Five days...nothing.

SPONSOR #2: Seis crates of Pepsi.

MIRIAM: Six days...Luis!

SPONSOR #3: Siete gifts for the honor court damas.

MIRIAM: I'm a week late with my period.

SPONSOR #4: Ocho M&M colors for the candy bowls.

LUIS: Your period's eight days late?

SPONSOR #1: Nueve bottles of tequila.

MIRIAM: Now it's nine.

SPONSOR #2: Diez cases of beer.

LUIS: Ten? *Ten!*

SPONSOR #3: Once centerpieces.

MIRIAM: Eleven!

SPONSOR #4: Doce roses for the Virgin Mary.

LUIS: Twelve!

SPONSOR #1: Trece tablecloths.

MIRIAM: Thirteen...

SPONSOR #2: Catorce toasts to Ana!

(EVERYONE raises glasses to Ana.)

LUIS: Fourteen...

MIRIAM: Two weeks overdue.

ALL SPONSORS: All for the quince!

LUIS: Fourteen and one day.

MIRIAM: Quince.

(Miriam and Luis stare at a pregnancy test in horror. Sponsors ecstatically clink glasses.)

ALL SPONSORS: Quinceañera!

(Option 1: End of Act I with Intermission.)

(Option 2: Continue without Intermission.)

ACT II

SCENE 1

(Ana follows Luis down a school corridor.)

ANA: Luis? Luis, wait! The bell's gonna ring. I need to tell you something first!

LUIS: What?

ANA: Papi's bringing more money for the banquet hall.

LUIS: The whole quince thing's stupid.

ANA: Stupid?

LUIS: Waste of time.

ANA: Why are you so negative?

LUIS: I'm not.

ANA: Yeah you are! What's going on?

LUIS: Nothing to do with you.

ANA: Are you mad that I didn't use my 4000 for a car?

LUIS: I said it's got nothing to do with you.

ANA: Just wait till we're out there doing our waltz, Luis. You'll have such a great time—

LUIS: Shut up!

ANA: Okay. Fine. We need at least one guy in the family to flake out!

LUIS: Ana—

ANA: Muchas gracias!

(Ana is about to storm away.)

LUIS: I got bigger stuff to deal with, okay?

ANA: Like what?

© Susan Lieberman

This is a perusal copy only.

Absolutely no printing, copying/distribution or performance permitted.

LUIS: You better sit down.

(The bell rings. Ana slides down to the ground. Luis slides down next to her. He looks in each direction to see if anyone's within earshot.)

I'm in trouble. Miriam's in trouble. Both of us.

ANA: Whatever you did—

LUIS: She's pregnant.

ANA: Pregnant?

LUIS: She just found out.

ANA: Luis...

LUIS: We're totally blown away.

ANA: Pregnant...wow...

LUIS: Sometimes...things just don't happen the way they're supposed to.

ANA: Mom knows?

LUIS: Yeah, I told her. She was...well, you know how she gets.

ANA: Solving the problem already.

LUIS: I can't be your honor escort.

ANA: *What?*

LUIS: I can't do a job with the word "honor" in it.

ANA: Did Mom say so?

LUIS: We didn't even talk about the quince.

ANA: So don't change the plan.

LUIS: But everything's different. Miriam says she won't even come. She'll be showing by then.

ANA: What about the girls in that special class? They're all showing.

LUIS: O.K. for school. But a quinceañera's about a girl's purity.

ANA: Well...maybe a long time ago in Mexico.

LUIS: How's it gonna look for you, walking into church on my arm when everyone knows Miriam's pregnant?

ANA: Neli's cousin brought her baby.

LUIS: So what about the baby's father? Was he there?

ANA: I don't know.

LUIS: No way I'm gonna put myself in the middle of that kinda scene.

ANA: You gotta be there for me!

LUIS: Me, me, me!

ANA: You got Miriam pregnant! That's pretty me-me-me!

LUIS: Ana...

ANA: I wanted one thing, one day – you changing me into my heels and waltzing –

LUIS: Ana –

ANA: Something happy and normal –

LUIS: Nothing's normal anymore! Me and Miriam are having a baby!

ANA: Okay, but –

(Mr. Rubin enters and stands quietly.)

LUIS: It sucks! I want to sell sports cars in Beverly Hills – not change diapers. I'll turn into one of those dads standing at a bus stop in January with my kid in a blanket.

ANA: Like, no car.

LUIS: No anything. It just sucks! (*Whirling around:*) Mr. Rubin!

MR. RUBIN: I just handed out the test. You're losing time.

LUIS: That's okay.

MR. RUBIN: You'll also lose points for being late.

LUIS: I'll make it up.

MR. RUBIN: More points off for a full unexcused absence.

LUIS: Some other stuff came up.

MR. RUBIN: So it has. I heard your news all the way down the hall. I'm sure others did too.

LUIS: Forget it.

MR. RUBIN: Under your new circumstances —

LUIS: You don't know what —

MR. RUBIN: Don't let school slide.

ANA: Yeah, Luis. Take the test.

LUIS: Stay outta my business!

ANA: Luis —

LUIS: Just shut up!

MR. RUBIN: I'll let you work it out yourselves.

(Turns to go and stops.)

Ana?

ANA: Yeah?

MR. RUBIN: If Miriam needs help —

LUIS: She doesn't!

ANA: Luis, *you* shut up.

MR. RUBIN: My wife is a social worker. If Miriam wants to see what her options are —

© Susan Lieberman

This is a perusal copy only.

Absolutely no printing, copying/distribution or performance permitted.

ANA: Like what?

MR. RUBIN: There are other choices besides motherhood. Stop by my office for her number.

ANA: Okay.

LUIS: We don't need it, Mr. Rubin. *We don't.*

MR. RUBIN: All right then.

(Mr. Rubin leaves.)

ANA: What kind of choices?

LUIS: Getting rid of the baby. An abortion.

ANA: For real?

LUIS: "Choice" is the code word.

ANA: Miriam told you?

LUIS: No. That's what the ads on the bus say.

ANA: Are you sure that's, like, the only thing "choice" means?

LUIS: Yeah.

ANA: You still better go take your test.

LUIS: No way I'm sitting in the same room with Mr. Rubin!

ANA: He'll flunk you.

LUIS: Ana, it's all different for me now.

ANA: So you get to ditch everything? Like being my Honor Escort?

LUIS: I can't do it.

ANA: But we were gonna be awesome together.

LUIS: Really, really different!

(Luis exits. Lights out.)

SCENE 2

(Miriam and Dona at Sun Cleaners. Dona watches out the window.)

DONA: How can she afford such an expensive car?

MIRIAM: She cleans a lot of suits.

DONA: I think it's some kind of Korean mafia.

MIRIAM: Mom...

DONA: They all stick together. One big dry cleaning operation. Once I sweep the floor, I can lock up and we'll get something to eat.

MIRIAM: I'm not hungry.

DONA: Are you into your music again?

MIRIAM: Something else.

DONA: Yeah?

MIRIAM: I'm pregnant.

DONA: You say "pregnant"?

MIRIAM: Yeah.

DONA: Embarazada...

MIRIAM: Yeah.

DONA: Luis' baby?

MIRIAM: Yeah.

DONA: He knows?

MIRIAM: Yeah.

DONA: "Yeah"..."yeah"...that's all?

MIRIAM: Right this second – yeah.

DONA: Luis got anything more to say?

© Susan Lieberman

This is a perusal copy only.

Absolutely no printing, copying/distribution or performance permitted.

(Miriam shrugs.)

He's gonna stand by you?

MIRIAM: Yeah.

DONA: That's the most important "yeah." Luis'll be a good father. You'll be a good mother.

MIRIAM: How do you know?

DONA: 'Cause I'm your mother. I'll be a grandma. Abuela.

MIRIAM: You're not getting into this, are you?

DONA: Abuela Dona...

MIRIAM: You're happy?

DONA: Un niño...a new life.

MIRIAM: Mom!

DONA: A baby's the most beautiful present from God.

MIRIAM: Not now!

DONA: If I could give instructions to God, I wouldn't say, please make her pregnant before she graduates. But you coulda told me something bad like cancer or a car crash. Babies are exciting!

MIRIAM: Mom!

DONA: When are you due?

MIRIAM: I think June. But I need to see a doctor to be sure.

DONA: We'll go to the clinic on Saturday.

MIRIAM: I want to finish high school.

DONA: Who says you can't?

MIRIAM: Graduation's in June.

DONA: The school will help you.

MIRIAM: But I don't want a baby.

DONA: Just wait till you look down and see what God has growing inside you.

MIRIAM: I want to go to college!

DONA: You gotta enjoy the pregnancy.

MIRIAM: Did you "enjoy" having kids when you were 17?

DONA: It's the only thing I enjoyed.

MIRIAM: Didn't you want something more exciting?

DONA: Fashion design. (*Beat.*) Crazy idea.

MIRIAM: They had scholarships for Hispanic students when you were in school. But not for the ones who had three babies with two dads by 23.

DONA: You're insulting my life?

MIRIAM: I just don't want it, Mom!

DONA: Nobody loves you more than me, Miriam.

MIRIAM: So do you want me working in a cleaners for the next 20 years?

DONA: No.

MIRIAM: Me neither!

DONA: Miriam, you got the baby already, okay? You can't get un-pregnant. So you might as well be happy. Be proud. Be who you are! I don't understand people trying to hide. Now, you need some frijoles.

MIRIAM: I'll puke.

DONA: Small bites.

MIRIAM: Stop making a fuss over me.

DONA: How 'bout I call you a puta like my mother did?

MIRIAM: No.

DONA: Frijoles have lots of iron. The baby deserves the best from you.

(Lights down as Dona locks up the cleaners.)

SCENE 3

(Ines, Luis and Miriam at home.)

LUIS: The ceiling's low but it's got pretty good light.

INES: We'll add a shower stall to the bathroom.

LUIS: The basement'll be our place with the baby.

INES: Upstairs is just too crowded. *(Checking the time:)* I need to get to work.

LUIS: That's three Saturdays in a row.

INES: Nothing I can do about it except quit.

LUIS: Why don't you?

INES: In our situation, I better hold onto it.

LUIS: "Situation"?

MIRIAM: The baby, Luis.

LUIS: But Mom—

INES: It's not the way I thought things would turn out for you—

LUIS: 'cause I'm supposed to be "the man."

INES: You're a man all right. But "*the* man"? That's gonna be tough. See you tonight.

(Ines exits.)

MIRIAM: Luis, I'm not moving in with your family.

LUIS: You got a better place?

MIRIAM: No but...I've been thinking a lot...I'm supposed to go to Morton next year.

LUIS: Why can't you?

MIRIAM: That's what my mother thought—she'd be able to have a baby, finish school, do what she wanted with her life. Look what happened.

LUIS: You got more going for yourself than your mom. Sorry but she's pretty stuck.

MIRIAM: How did that happen? Getting pregnant! *(Pause.)* I checked out an adoption agency.

LUIS: What?

MIRIAM: We should not keep this baby.

LUIS: An adoption agency?

MIRIAM: Yes.

LUIS: We can't give it to strangers.

MIRIAM: We'll meet them first. Adoption's a lot different now.

LUIS: Come on, Miriam, we don't need adoption. That's sick.

(Miriam goes to Luis' laptop.)

MIRIAM: Just take a look at the agency website. We can register online.

LUIS: You didn't sign the baby over, did you?

MIRIAM: Calm down!

LUIS: Did you?

MIRIAM: I didn't do anything but click the mouse a few times. I have the right to change my mind right up until I sign—

LUIS: "I have the right"? What about me? The father?

MIRIAM: In the end, it's always the mothers.

LUIS: Only when the fathers are jerks.

MIRIAM: Will you look at this webpage? These people might be good. They're not blonde and blue-eyed. The husband's grandfather is Mexican. He speaks some Spanish.

LUIS: Muy bien!

MIRIAM: Keep reading.

LUIS: It's like an infomercial.

MIRIAM: Well, of course they're trying to sell themselves. Thousands of people want babies.

LUIS: "Penny and Kyle"?

MIRIAM: Kyle works for U.S. Cellular and Penny works for McDonald's Corporation.

LUIS: Making milkshakes?

MIRIAM: Read this! She's an executive assistant at corporate headquarters. They've got health insurance and pension plans, savings for college...

LUIS: That's their kitchen?

MIRIAM: It's a three-bedroom townhouse. There's a playground. A pool, too. See it?

LUIS: Why don't we pick people with a real house, not just a townhouse? Coupla Jaguars in the garage and Mexicans doing the lawn and a Puerto Rican cleaning lady! Maybe they'll speak Spanish so they can tell 'em what to do.

MIRIAM: Luis!

LUIS: We are not staying in a basement forever, Miriam. I'll make a good life for us.

MIRIAM: What about me? Babies are really intense. I'll be so stressed out.

LUIS: We'll deal with it.

MIRIAM: It's too much, Luis! I'm a mess right now and I'm only in the first trimester! Look at Kyle and Penny! They look happy! Read this – special counselors for birth parents –

LUIS: Who gives their baby to white people?

(No answer.)

Who?

(No answer.)

Anybody we know?

(No answer.)

Did Mr. Rubin tell you about the website?

MIRIAM: No!

LUIS: He didn't tell you to call his social worker wife?

MIRIAM: He asked if everything was okay since you started cutting class.

LUIS: Once.

MIRIAM: Twice last week. Including a test.

LUIS: I went to see Vince about working more hours.

MIRIAM: So it's bad Mr. Rubin's paying attention?

LUIS: He doesn't get it. He'll all on about "options" and "choices." That means abortion.

MIRIAM: It doesn't mean abortion! It's finding a really fantastic home for the baby. So what if no one we know does adoption? It's good to be different! "It makes us strong."

LUIS: Don't twist my words to prove you're right!

MIRIAM: But they are right! I gotta go.

(Miriam starts to leave.)

LUIS: Where?

© Susan Lieberman

This is a perusal copy only.

Absolutely no printing, copying/distribution or performance permitted.

MIRIAM: The cleaners. I'm working twelve to six on Saturdays now.

LUIS: *What?*

MIRIAM: Today's my first day. Helen offered me a job till the baby comes.

LUIS: Miriam, what's up with you? You won't live in my mom's basement but you're gonna let yourself rot at Sun Cleaners?

MIRIAM: I'm gonna make some money till I figure out all of my options.

LUIS: You're going to Morton—going to the Grammys!

MIRIAM: Right now I'm trying to have a healthy baby.

LUIS: Not like that!

MIRIAM: Yeah, well, think about it when you're dissing adoption.

(Miriam exits.)

LUIS: I'm still the father! Do you hear me? I'm still the father!
The father!

(Luis paces and fumes. Ana and Neli enter.)

ANA: Hey, Luis, do you know where the volleyball net is? The one with the big tear?

NELI: We're gonna take it to Sun Cleaners.

ANA: Helen's got an industrial machine.

(As Ana looks around, Neli glances at the laptop screen.)

NELI: "Meet Marie, the birth parent counseling specialist..."

LUIS: Get outta here.

ANA: What's that?

NELI: "You and your adoption counselor are a team from the first session until —"

ANA: Luis, what are —

LUIS: I said outta here.

NELI: Are you giving your baby up for adoption?

LUIS: Get out!

ANA: Are you?

NELI: You're gonna want to keep it—really. My cousin's baby—oh my god!—Benito's just the sweetest thing! My dad's family is totally nuts about him

ANA: *Are you, Luis?*

NELI: My cousin's boyfriend was gonna go to Texas but once he held that baby, he called my dad and got a job stocking shelves and now he's really into fatherhood and —

LUIS: *Get out!*

(Luis flings the net at Neli. She runs out with it.)

ANA: Luis?

LUIS: I said get out!

ANA: If you had a car, would you still want to give the baby up?

LUIS: Miriam wants to, not me.

ANA: What if she knew you had a car?

LUIS: It doesn't matter.

ANA: Sure it does. You won't have to take the bus when it's zero carrying a ton of baby stuff. I still have most of my CD money. Like about \$3500. I can even take the dress back.

LUIS: What are you saying?

ANA: Let's put our money together so you can get a car.

LUIS: No way!

ANA: I don't care about a quince anymore. It's just an idea in my head. You know, like you waltzing with me while Miriam plays exactly the right music.

LUIS: We really blew that one for you.

ANA: But it's not real – like Papi's avocado grove. An amazing day when everyone's happy and gets along. You know what Abuela Belinda told me yesterday? Someone loaned her a nice dress for her quince años.

LUIS: They were in Agua Prieta, I thought.

ANA: They were. She went to Mass and then some other families waiting to cross the border brought over food. They danced to the radio.

LUIS: I can believe that's how it happened.

ANA: Go buy a car, okay?

LUIS: No.

ANA: Your baby's gonna be part of our family for the rest of our lives. My quince's one day. I can do the Mass at St. Benedict's. I'll borrow a dress. All the madrinas and padrinos can bring food over here afterwards. We'll listen to Miriam's mash.

LUIS: Is that what you want?

ANA: No, but it's okay. I'll still turn 15.

LUIS: Wow...

ANA: What?

LUIS: You sound so grown up.

ANA: Isn't that what a quinceañera's all about?

LUIS: Yeah but...you should have your dream, Ana. At least for one day.

(Luis hugs her as the lights go down.)

SCENE 4

(A coffee shop. KYLE and PENNY sit at a table. Luis and Miriam enter.)

KYLE: Buenos dias. Encantado!

PENNY: Encantada.

MIRIAM: Encantada.

PENNY: Me llamo Penny.

LUIS: We speak English.

KYLE: My grandfather's Mexican. I speak some Spanish.

PENNY: I learned some from Kyle.

LUIS: I don't speak Spanish.

PENNY: Not at all?

MIRIAM: You understand it, Luis.

LUIS: My parents were born in Chicago.

PENNY: How about you, Miriam?

MIRIAM: My grandparents came here when my mom was little.

KYLE: So we're all kind of coming from the same place.

LUIS: We are?

PENNY: That's a positive.

(Miriam and Luis fall silent.)

KYLE: Ask anything you want about us.

PENNY: You're considering us for your baby after all. Everything should be on the table. That's what our counselor said. A good connection starts with common ground...

KYLE: We know about Mexican rituals. Like your sister's quinceañera, Luis.

PENNY: (*To Luis:*) Miriam told us.

KYLE: I think it's terrific.

PENNY: If it's a girl, there's no reason we can't have one for her.

KYLE: It's not like your child's heritage would get lost with us.

PENNY: Not at all.

KYLE: At our age—

PENNY: 39 and 41. It's right on our webpage.

KYLE: We're definitely mature.

PENNY: We value human life.

KYLE: Did you see the pictures of our home?

MIRIAM: Yes.

KYLE: Pretty great, isn't it?

PENNY: The school district is one of the top in DuPage County.

KYLE: Homes don't come cheap because of that.

PENNY: Schools were our top priority. Gosh, I'd have never said that 10 years ago.

KYLE: Me neither.

PENNY: I was all caught up with my title at work. But now raising a child comes first.

KYLE: Absolutely.

PENNY: I'm going to scale back to part-time for the baby.

KYLE: Not right away.

PENNY: It's okay. My supervisor is completely on board.

KYLE: But, uh, Penny...

PENNY: How far along are you?

MIRIAM: Three months.

PENNY: That's very early. We all have loads of time to make adjustments.

KYLE: But don't tell your supervisor that you want to—

PENNY: We'll figure it out.

KYLE: You need to play your cards close to the chest.

PENNY: Take it easy. *(To Luis and Miriam:)* We've had some changes. Kyle lost his job.

KYLE: I didn't lose it. They closed the U.S. Cellular store that I managed.

MIRIAM: That's not on the web page.

KYLE: It just happened a few days ago. But I've already got some good leads.

PENNY: It really doesn't change our plans for me to spend more time at home—

KYLE: McDonald's won't keep you in Executive. You won't get benefits.

PENNY: It'll work out, Kyle. You'll find a new job.

KYLE: Don't talk about part-time till I've got something in the bag. *(To Luis and Miriam:)* The layoff had nothing to do with my performance. It's the economy. The strip mall's half empty.

PENNY: Something could come up at another location—

KYLE: But we need to be cautious about—

PENNY: You just said the layoff wasn't about your job performance.

KYLE: The economy sucks—I said that too! There's 20 phone store managers for every opening. No—50. You're behind glass doors in an executive suite so you don't have a clue—

PENNY: I do so!

KYLE: Then don't talk about giving up our benefits!

PENNY: We should be positive about this. A baby's positive. We're positive people!

(Kyle and Penny suddenly stop and look at Luis and Miriam who stare at them uncomfortably.)

Fighting is part of marriage.

KYLE: We can fight because we love each other.

PENNY: You'll see what we mean.

KYLE: We're at a very stable time in our lives.

PENNY: Yes. We can focus on a baby. I will absolutely be able to drop down to part—

KYLE: Will you stop saying that? Just for now. Stop saying that.

PENNY: It's a true statement!

MIRIAM: Uh...could you excuse me? I need a ladies room.

PENNY: Oh of course—your poor little bladder's got a baby sitting on it.

(Miriam gets up.)

LUIS: I'll make sure she gets there okay.

(Luis follows Miriam. Miriam grabs Luis' hand.)

MIRIAM: Let's get out of here.

LUIS: Ditch them?

MIRIAM: They're whack jobs. So intense – they make me look chill! I never shoulda done this!

(Luis and Miriam flee as the lights shift.)

Want to read the entire script? Order a perusal copy today!