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Handmaid

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
in
Film, Theatre and Communication Arts
Creative Writing

by

Jennifer Chase

B.A. University of North Florida, 2000

May, 2008

HANDMAID

A DRAMA WITH ORIGINAL MUSIC

by Jennifer Chase

Synopsis: Set in Little Havana, Miami, Handmaid is the fictional story of Cuban immigrant and fledgling artist Rodriguez DeSilva. Rodriguez has twenty-four hours to fulfill the requirement for a commission he's received to paint a replica of the famous Velazquez painting, "Las Meninas". The replica will be a permanent fixture in a welcome center of a park named in his dead father's honor.

There are many obstacles that Rodriguez faces. He is resentful of the project to begin with to paint a replica instead of an original painting. Also he is obligated to do it to honor his family's wishes. His father had thwarted every attempt by Rodriguez to become an artist. He continues to object to this vocation posthumously from his portrait that Rodriguez is painting.

When pressure from his family and his ambitious girlfriend Margaret become too great, Rodriguez turns to drinking, and painting everything but his commission and has some important fantasies that include visits by Velazquez himself.

The characters unwittingly parallel those in the painting Las Meninas. Rodriguez's original paintings unwittingly parallel many of Velazquez's famous works also. The dream characters, commission, and real life events begin to blend in Rodriguez's conscious leading him to ask himself: Is it possible that life is a dream and dreams themselves dreams as well?

CAST OF CHARACTERS:

RODRIGUEZ DE SILVA: A twenty-nine-year-old Cuban immigrant. He fled Cuba with his family in 1977 at the age of 9. He's a frustrated, undiscovered painter. Many of his works are unwitting replicas of famous Velazquez works. His father vehemently disapproved of Rodriguez painting throughout his entire life. He works as a project coordinator of an outreach program for at-risk Latino boys. (Rodriguez is also **Juan de Pareja**, Velazquez's former slave turned assistant in the fantasy/dream sequences.)

CACHITA DE SILVA: She is Rodriguez's mother. She is a fifty-four-year-old, attractive, blonde, heavy-set, Cuban woman. Educated and loving. She married Constantine after a secret romance with a Cuban painter. She has kept this secret from Rodriguez. (Cachita is **Reina Mariana** of Spain from Las Meninas in fantasy/dream sequences.)

CONSTANTINE DE SILVA: Rodriguez's deceased father, a sixty-year-old Cuban immigrant. He's ambitious and stern. In the U.S. he became wealthy and successful. He appears in mirror as Rodriguez paints his portrait in dream sequences. (Constantine is **King Philip IV** of Spain in the fantasy/dream sequences.)

DIEGO VELAZQUEZ: He is the 17th-Century Spanish painter of Las Meninas. He is wise and has sarcastic humor. His goal in his last years is to obtain the prestigious Cross of Santiago in King Philip's court. Yet, he doesn't reveal this or any of his disappointments, fears or mistakes to Rodriguez directly. He appears to Rodriguez in fantasy/dream sequences. (He appears in fantasy/dream sequences wearing a mask when he is someone other than Velazquez.)

MARGARET CHILDS: She's Rodriguez' girlfriend, a 28-year-old aspiring playwright and musician. She's relentlessly ambitious, American born to Uruguayan parents who fled Uruguay. She sings the lead parts of the songs. Friend of Minerva since high school. She is pretty and blonde and looks younger than her age. (She is The **Infanta Margarita**, the central character in the painting Las Meninas, in fantasy/dream sequences.)

MINERVA: A precocious 29-year-old very short actor. She is a dedicated and loyal friend to Margaret but is secretly in love with Rodriguez. She's intelligent and well educated. She has never had a romantic relationship. (She is also THE DWARF, **Maribárbola** from Las Meninas in the fantasy/dream sequences.)

"GUYS" (Javi, Manuel, Antonio) three piece band- (Drums, bass, guitar). They're 17- 18-year-old, Cuban refugees. They're Rodriguez's billiard students at the youth center.

SET CONSIDERATIONS:

The play takes place in Miami, Florida in Little Havana in 1997. There are three spaces within one set. The stage is divided in two. One half is Rodriguez's apartment. This is his living and painting space. The other half is the youth center next door to where Rodriguez works. The third space is a combination of both sides, treated as one room. These are where Rodriguez's fantasy/dream sequences take place. They are indicated by the sound of billiard balls clacking or music, sung by Margaret.

Space #1; Rodriguez's Apartment:

There is a tall easel with a scrim on it where a canvas would be. When Rodriguez is painting behind the easel, he is visible. The "back" of the easel faces the audience. Rodriguez' paintings hang on the wall behind the easel. An ornate frame of the mirror the size of the canvas on the easel hangs on the wall behind. There is a scrim inside the frame and an access behind from backstage. Characters in Rodriguez's dreams appear behind this scrim within the frame as reflections of his canvas. The image of Las Meninas is projected onto this scrim, reversed, as a reflection of the canvas.

Space #2; The Youth Center:

There is a billiard table here and a doorway in the back wall that separates the two spaces. There are some paintings on the walls by Rodriguez and a large diamond-systems poster that hangs on the wall behind the billiard table. There is also a long rope with wooden beads that hangs above the billiard table for scoring.

Space #3; Rodriguez's fantasy/dream scenes:

In the fantasy/dream sequences, spaces 1 & 2 are treated as one space. The King and Queen appear within the frame of the mirror on the wall, as in the painting Las Meninas. On the wall behind the billiard table is a large 17th century Hermetic painting of an astrological wheel. Velazquez' paintings* of the Infanta, Reina Mariana, King Philip and Las Meninas hang in the same place as their modern counterparts by Rodriguez on the wall when the scenes are from Velazquez' time. *An attachment is included with specific paintings of Velazquez and their counterparts by Rodriguez used in the set.

The easel, mirror*, the wooden ladder, billiard table with hanging beads overhead and doorway will remain in place.

Note: *Images could be projected onto the scrim for the "mirrored" reflections of still images when actors are not positioned within the frame.

ACT I

PRELUDE: MIAMI- 1997: RODRIGUEZ* (5)

I:SCENE 1: MADRID- 1663: VELAZQUEZ & JUAN PAREJA* (6-18)

I:SCENE 2: MIAMI-1997: MARGARET AND RODRIGUEZ (19-26)

I:SCENE 3: RODRIGUEZ & CONSTANTINE* (26-34)

I:SCENE 4: RODRIGUEZ AND CACHITA (35-42)

I:SCENE 5: CUBA- 1974: RODRIGUEZ'S CHILDHOOD* (43-45)

I:SCENE 6: *RODRIGUEZ AND VELAZQUEZ BILLIARD GAME* (46-57)

I:SCENE 7: RODRIGUEZ & MARGARET- 1996* (57-58)

ACT II

II: SCENE 1: YOUTH CENTER: MARGARET'S PLAY REHEARSAL (59-70)

II: SCENE 1: RODRIGUEZ'S STUDIO* (71-74)

II: SCENE 3: RODRIGUEZ & MINERVA (75-80)

II: SCENE 2: MINERVA'S CARNIVAL* (81-82)

II: SCENE 3: MADRID-1667/MIAMI 1997 FINALE RODRIGUEZ* (83-87)

*INDICATES DREAM/FANTASY SEQUENCE

PRELUDE: RODRIGUEZ' STUDIO: LITTLE HAVANA/MIAMI, FLORIDA 1997

The mirror on the wall in Rodriguez's studio reflects Las Meninas from his canvas. Rodriguez's paintings hang on the wall.

MARGARET (SUNG/ V.O.)

*We live while we see the sun, our life and dreams become one
and living has taught me this*

[Rodriguez holds his palette and brush. He turns around and paints a large red cross of Santiago on the mirror behind him. A light from behind the doorway illuminates him, and the reflection of Las Meninas is projected in the mirror.]

*Man dreams a life that is his
until his living is done
and honey you taught me this
With your kiss
Que toda la vida es un sueño, y los sueños son sueños
tambien,*

[There's a knock on the door.]

CACHITA (V.O.)

Rigo, the foundation directors are at the door. They've come to see your progress.

MARGARET

*A little dust on the way, a frenzied extreme, were we are
year or a day,*

[Instruments accompany her voice.]

*Dreams themselves are a dream
Que toda la vida es un sueño, y los sueños son sueños tambien*

[King and Queen step behind frame in mirror. Velazquez is in the doorway. Enter Margaret wearing Infanta costume, and Minerva wearing angel wings and dwarf costume. Rodriguez steps away from the canvas, holds up his palette and brush. Everyone looks intently in the direction of the audience.]
Instruments sustain dreamy notes.
Billiard balls clack. Lights out on everyone except mirror. All exit.]

SCENE 1: RODRIGUEZ'S DREAM 1656 -MADRID, SPAIN. PALACE OF KING PHILIP IV

There is a red glow left on the Cross of Santiago in the mirror. Lights come up slowly on the painting Las Meninas. It is reflected in the mirror on the wall. The Cross of Santiago is absent from Velazquez's chest in the painting. The rest of the stage is dark. A light illuminates Velazquez's easel. Velazquez's work hangs on the walls.

[Juan de Pareja stands in the doorway. Velazquez faces Las Meninas on his easel with his brushes and palette in hand. Juan walks over and stands next to Velazquez.]

JUAN DE PAREJA

Don Diego, it's magnificent!

VELAZQUEZ

I'm quite pleased.

JUAN DE PAREJA

It is as if the Infanta is about to leap from the canvas to demand something.

VELAZQUEZ

The Infanta isn't the only person in the painting, Juan.

[Velazquez hands his palette and brushes to Juan. He wipes his hands with a towel that hangs off the easel.]

JUAN DE PAREJA

She is the centerpiece of the painting. There is more light on her than any of the others, including yourself.

VELAZQUEZ

Philip had commissioned a replica of a Titian. I was uninspired.

JUAN DE PAREJA

I've never known you to be uninspired.

[Juan puts away the brushes and palette.]

VELAZQUEZ

On the contrary, I assure you that I'm quite inspired now. I found my painting.

JUAN DE PAREJA

That's not a replica.

VELAZQUEZ

I had to put the commission out of my mind in order to work.

JUAN DE PAREJA

The royal family is in dire straits. They can't pay the pastry chef! You don't want to risk displeasing the king do you?

VELAZQUEZ

The replica is completed since long ago. In fact, it was while painting it that the inspiration came for this work, my manifesto.

JUAN DE PAREJA

Astounding!

VELAZQUEZ

There now remains one ambition.

JUAN DE PAREJA

Your application for knighthood. The order of Santiago?

VELAZQUEZ

Now I will focus solely on personal service to Philip. I've worked a lifetime toward that end, Juan. I will wear my Cross of Santiago. Parity, not painting, is my concern.

JUAN DE PAREJA

No bloodline nor royal order could endow a man with your mastery. Your paintings are important.

VELAZQUEZ

Without the cross of Santiago, I'm merely a court painter. Acceptance into the aristocracy validates my nobility. I must have it.

JUAN DE PAREJA

A man's worth is not rated by his family name. I learned that from you.

[Juan rolls a cigarette and lights it.]

VELAZQUEZ

Why are you smoking Papeletes? They're for sailors and peasants, not gentlemen.

JUAN DE PAREJA

I enjoy the tobacco, a luxury I have thanks to your generosity.

VELAZQUEZ

One must smoke a pipe to enjoy the taste of the tobacco, Seville's finest product.

[Velazquez takes out his pipe and lights a long stick match.]

JUAN DE PAREJA

You are Seville's finest product. Señor, the doctor ordered you not to smoke at all.

[Juan extinguishes the flame. Velazquez, irritated, puts the pipe down on the table. They walk over to the billiard table. Velazquez pours two glasses of wine. He hands one to Juan. Juan bows his head.]

VELAZQUEZ

To the crown!

JUAN DE PAREJA

Indeed! To the crown!

[They raise their glasses up in toast and drink. Velazquez removes two cues from the wall. He hands one to Juan.]

Has the king seen the new work?

[Juan nods to the easel on the opposite side of the room. Velazquez takes several shots, then with the tip of his cue pushes beads across a string and marks his score.]

VELAZQUEZ

No, not yet. After 34 years of service, King Philip thinks of me as his confidant. As his painter, one would hope, he trusts my sensibilities.

[He takes a third shot and with his cue pushes beads across a string to mark his score.]

JUAN DE PAREJA

One would hope.

[Juan takes his shot.]

VELAZQUEZ

I'm aware of displeasing the king only once. It was during our second visit to Italy. Philip only became disquieted when I didn't immediately return upon receipt of his request.

[Juan takes a second shot and marks his score.]

JUAN DE PAREJA

As I recall, your wife also became "disquieted" when you didn't return!

[Velazquez laughs, takes his shot.]

VELAZQUEZ

She had no reason to be jealous. This old Spaniard had little to offer the Italian vixens we encountered I'm afraid!

[Velazquez's laugh turns to a cough.]

JUAN DE PAREJA

Don Diego!

[Juan rushes to him. He holds up his hand refusing Juan's help.]

VELAZQUEZ

I'm fine Juan. [Coughs again]. In Italy the King allowed me to purchase what I wished for the palace. My portrait of you there is as fine as any of our purchases. Indeed, I'd like to return to Italy and buy it back!

JUAN DE PAREJA

I'm pleased that you find me a suitable subject. I've failed as an artist. I can't claim myself an artist by copying works.

VELAZQUEZ

That is how I began. In the process of creating a replica I recognize a shared humanity. Your humanity makes you a fine subject. That same humanity will make you a marvelous artist Juan.

JUAN DE PAREJA

Those abilities are far from my reach. Like many things.

VELAZQUEZ

On the canvas, I see myself as clearly as if I were standing in front of that mirror.

[Velazquez points to the mirror on the wall.]

VELAZQUEZ (CONT'D)

On the canvas as on this table, I see possibilities and magical, inexplicable patterns. You see these three balls, a simple game.

JUAN DE PAREJA

The game is difficult. But the concept is simple: hit at least three cushions with your cue ball before it hits the third ball.

VELAZQUEZ

Simple? The patterns are far from simple. They are, in fact, quite complex.

[Juan slides a ball in triangular shapes on the billiard table.]

JUAN DE PAREJA

How do you decide which path to follow? How do you determine the mathematical certainties?

VELAZQUEZ

The art of the billiards is striking a balance between instinct and acknowledging those mathematical certainties.

JUAN DE PAREJA

Yes, if a level of mastery is reached. But not everyone can reach that level.

VELAZQUEZ

The path of my cue ball can turn dreams to gold, hope to reality and death to rebirth.

[Velazquez points to the Hermetic wheel in the painting on the wall behind him.]

Your people brought these ideas to Spain, yet you don't acknowledge their truths? There are limitless combinations on this wheel. These are the limitless varieties of life: the dream of lead being transmuted to gold, the soul being freed from an enslaved mind...

JUAN DE PAREJA

Slaves remain slaves even after they're freed. Some dreams remain only dreams. That's reality.

MARGARET (V.O.)

Que toda la vida es un sueño y los sueños son sueños tambien

[Velazquez stops, listens.]

VELAZQUEZ

Ah the sound of an angel's voice. Do you hear that?

JUAN DE PAREJA

Si, the Infanta enjoys her fantasy world. Her music occupies her often.

[Enter the Infanta and the dwarf, Maribárbola by the easel. The Infanta looks over at Juan and whispers to Maribárbola. Velazquez and Juan don't see them.]

VELAZQUEZ

When nobody is looking at me, like now, I reflect on the question: Wouldn't music be the only possible answer?

[Maribárbola takes a gold chain with a satchel and quill pen from around her neck. She pulls out a tiny shred of paper and writes something on it.]

How's your painting coming?

JUAN DE PAREJA

Painting?

[Juan chalks his cue.]

VELAZQUEZ

Si, I saw you painting in the courtyard, captivated. Your subject was a mysterious, blonde beauty. The painting, in fact, was quite good. Who was the object of your inspiration?

JUAN DE PAREJA

It was only an exercise. I was trying to copy one of your paintings...

[Juan hesitates, shoots. Enter King Philip and Reina Mariana. They overlap the reflection of Las Meninas in the mirror. They stand behind the frame.]

KING PHILIP

Diego!

[Velazquez ignores the king. Juan whispers to Velazquez.]

JUAN DE PAREJA

Don Diego, aren't you going to answer?

VELAZQUEZ

[Velazquez reluctantly puts down his cue and walks to his easel. He looks out into the audience.]

Si, mi Señor.

KING PHILIP

I must have a word with you.

VELAZQUEZ

Yes, of course.

[They stand near the Infanta Margarita and Maribárbola. They look out into the the audience. The Infanta interrupts and talks to her father.]

INFANTA

Father, may I paint like Señor Velazquez?

KING PHILIP

Cielo, the world will never again see the birth of a painter like Diego Velazquez, I assure you. We are most fortunate.

INFANTA

But father, I want to paint all day, each day! How lovely that would be!

KING PHILIP

You may not, mi amor. Señor Velazquez cannot teach you to paint. He has other duties besides his painting to attend to as Royal Decorator of the Alcazar and Chief Chamberlain. We must prepare you for your future duties as Duchess of Austria.

INFANTA

Señor Velazquez! Father says I may not! Please talk to him! I must paint. I dreamed that I was painting you!

JUAN DE PAREJA

(To Velazquez) Dreams!

VELAZQUEZ

One must listen to her father, your highness! He is wise and knows what is ... best for his daughter.

MARIBÁRBOLA

I saw the portrait you were working on in the courtyard Juan. It is of the Infanta, isn't it?

[Juan looks at the Infanta.]

It's magnificent.

JUAN

It's nothing.

[Juan doesn't look at her.]

REINA MARIANA

[To Philip.] Señor, what is the harm in allowing Margarita to paint? Have you seen her attempts? They are remarkably beautiful.

KING PHILIP

Nonsense Mariana! Have you lost your head? We have more urgent activities planned for this child. Must I remind you of her betrothal to her uncle Leopold? Just as you were betrothed to me, your uncle. One day she will not only be the princess of Spain, but also the Empress of Austria! The Hapsburg line relies on our daughter and her children. The Hapsburgs must endure.

REINA MARIANA

[Whispers to king.] It is years from now that she's to marry. What harm would it do if it amuses her?

KING PHILIP

My priority is ensuring our enduring power. She is our only hope, Mariana. She has duties and familial responsibilities. Perhaps at a later time she can indulge dreams of painting.

REINA MARIANA

Don Diego, the king knows what is best. I hold your opinion in the highest regard.

[Velazquez, embarrassed, bows his head to her.]

VELAZQUEZ

I'm honored to be at your service your highness.

KING PHILIP

Have you offered an opinion about the talent of my little bufon that I'm unaware of Diego?

VELAZQUEZ

Si Señor, pero, I know that the more important concern now is arrangement and decorations for the marriage of the Infanta Téresa.

KING PHILIP

Of course, you will begin planning the 23 staging posts for the Royal journey to the marriage of the Infanta Maria Téresa and King Louis XIV.

KING PHILIP (CONT'D)

A truce between Spain and France is only possible with the regal Spanish fulfillment of this magnificent union.

VELAZQUEZ

I pledge my unwavering service. I pray that you will find the planned decorations acceptable.

KING PHILIP

Indeed. I see you've found some time to paint, Diego. You've produced only two paintings in 18 months.

VELAZQUEZ

Si Philip. I've just completed a new work. I hope that you are pleased with it.

KING PHILIP

What is its subject?

VELAZQUEZ

The worthy and regal, the disillusioned and unfulfilled.

KING PHILIP

What do you know about, the disillusioned and unfulfilled?

VELAZQUEZ

Perhaps a little. They retain hope.

KING PHILIP

Nonsense Diego! You know nothing of them. You needn't concern yourself with them!

VELAZQUEZ

Of course.

KING PHILIP

It is a remarkable painting however. You have shown only the back of your easel in the painting. Who are you painting in the piece, Diego?

VELAZQUEZ

I'm painting you, mi Señor, of course! Who would make a finer subject?

KING PHILIP

A magnificent work. I shall hang it in my private chambers upon completion.

INFANTA

Pero, Padre, Señor Velazquez said that I paint very well.

KING PHILIP

We'll not talk of that any longer, daughter. You have your court to amuse you, mi bufon!

INFANTA

Must I wait for everything I desire to fall from the sky?

KING PHILIP

Maribárbola, occupy yourself with my daughter. I'm putting her in your charge for the afternoon. Amuse her with a song or comedy.

MARIBÁRBOLA

Of course your highness! I assure you that her highness will be amused. The Infanta enjoys creating her own musical dramas.

KING PHILIP

Very well then.

INFANTA

Padre, please reconsider. I don't want to be a princess if I can't do as I wish.

KING PHILIP

Mi bufon, you are a princess. That is the reality. Someday painting will be a means for you to pass the time, pero, nada mas. Maribárbola, don't encourage my daughter's ridiculous notions of being a painter.

MARIBÁRBOLA

Yes your highness.

[Maribárbola bows and curtsies. She kneels as next to the Infanta. Velazquez coughs.]

KING PHILIP

Diego, the Court Nobles have found more defects with your claim to parity in your application for the Royal Order of Santiago.

VELAZQUEZ

I understood the process was complete.

[Velazquez's voice trembles.]

KING PHILIP

Another commission of inquiry has convened to investigate. I've requested papal intervention. I'm certain Jewish nor *Moorish* blood will be found in your ancestry.

[Velazquez coughs uncontrollably.]

VELAZQUEZ

It is my dream, Mi Señor, to earn the honor of wearing the Cross of Santiago during my royal service as well as in my paintings, for posterity.

KING PHILIP

I've done what I can. We shall see.

[Velazquez coughs again. Juan rushes to his side.]

That sounds serious Diego. Have you seen the doctor?

VELAZQUEZ

Yes, I have.

KING PHILIP

Perhaps you shall see him again?

VELAZQUEZ

Indeed I shall, mi Señor

[Velazquez and Juan nod and bow to the king.]

INFANTA

Buenos noches, Padre!

KING PHILIP

Hasta la mañana, hija mia!

INFANTA

Dulces sueños, Madre.

REINA MARIANA

Buenos noches, mi sueño bonito.

KING PHILIP

Come Mariana.

{The king and queen exit. Reina Mariana looks behind to Velazquez and follows the king. Juan pours a glass of water for Velazquez. He takes it to him and puts a hand on his back. The mirror again reflects Las Meninas from the canvas. Maribárbola and the Infanta play quietly. Velazquez reaches into his pocket and pulls out his pipe.}

JUAN DE PAREJA

Don Diego, you should not.

[Velazquez lights it, still coughing slightly.]

VELAZQUEZ

But I shall.

JUAN DE PAREJA

The inquiry into your bloodline will be completed soon and your name cleared of impurities.

VELAZQUEZ

Perhaps the "purity" of my bloodline will only further ensure my life of servitude.

JUAN DE PAREJA

Soon you will wear the Cross of Santiago and paint it on your chest in this painting.

VELAZQUEZ

How odd, Juan! Your Moorish heritage destined you to be my slave and yet, now liberated, you may paint whatever you wish, when you wish. You are truly free.

JUAN DE PAREJA

But there is much I will never be permitted to do. Think of the fortune bestowed upon you as royal painter. You paint important people that will always be remembered: popes, kings and infantas. You are one of them. Once the formality of parity is complete you will have proof. I couldn't dare to dream of that end.

VELAZQUEZ

One day everyone in this palace will be gone, dust where our bodies once moved. Art will remain. I would rather be the first painter of common things than second in higher art.

[Mari takes the little pad and quill out of a small satchel around her neck scribbles something on her pad and quickly puts it back in the satchel and down the front of her dress.]

JUAN DE PAREJA

You will one day be recognized as the first painter of all things, the greatest painter of all time!

MARIBÁRBOLA

[To Infanta.] Come along your highness. I'll act in your musical comedies with the meninas.

INFANTA

But I must make Padre change his mind. I want to paint now. Why can't we do what we want to do?

MARIBÁRBOLA

You will I am certain. Señor Velazquez, Juan, hasta mañana.

[Juan nods absently. Velazquez slowly bows. Maribárbola exits with the Infanta. Velazquez coughs. He holds his pipe up to the painting Las Meninas on his canvas.]

VELAZQUEZ

Thirty-three years of my life here Juan, painting their visions of themselves, for them. How many do I have left? What do I know about the disillusioned and unfulfilled? I may be one of them. I await clearance for my Cross of Santiago, validation of my very existence. Yet someday the bloodlines that dictated who we were will matter not. "Who" am I painting in the painting, he asks. How easily he believed that it was he! How fragile the regal ego! How easily he believed that it was he!

Billiard balls crack.

SCENE TWO : RODRIGUEZ AND MARGARET -1997

[Rodriguez is hunched over, sitting on a rung of the ladder behind his canvas with his palette and his head in his hands. He jumps up, disoriented. Nothing is reflected in the mirror. He turns off the lights and exits his apartment. In the youth center, Margaret and Minerva stand with scripts in hand. The three guys play billiards.]

MARGARET

I told you guys, you can pull it off. Trust me. Come on let's go through it one more time. Then you guys can go back to your billiards for the rest of the day...OK?

[They reluctantly put down their cues and pick up their instruments.]

Try it again, but this time with a slight Bossa Nova feel. ...one...two and uhhh Dah dah duh dunt dunt dah dah, uhhh.

[They laugh and shake their heads. They start playing the song with a Bossa Nova feel and end abruptly. They try again and continue playing. Enter Rodriguez behind Margaret.]

MARGARET

OK Min, go!

MINERVA

It started right after mama died. Papa was drinking more and more

[All notice Rodriguez except Margaret. The guys continue to play the same groove. Margaret looks on, nods her head to the rhythm.]

MARGARET

That's it! I'm not playing with you! That's friggin hot!

[The guys stop playing, laugh uncomfortably. Rodriguez approaches Margaret from behind.]

RODRIGUEZ
Baby! What are you doing here?

[Margaret turns around. Rod kisses her.]

MARGARET
Hi.

RODRIGUEZ
[To guys.] Que tal?

GUYS
Hey man.

[Guys shake hands with Rodriguez.]

MINERVA
Hi Rodriguez.

[Minerva looks down shyly. Rodriguez turns back to Margaret.]

RODRIGUEZ
What's going on baby? What's Minerva doing here?

[Minerva looks down at her script.]

MARGARET
Rehearsing.

RODRIGUEZ
For what? [Then to the band.] Guys, we'll start in a few minutes okay?

[Guys nod and reach for packs of cigarettes putting them in their mouths and heading for the door.]

MARGARET
The play! It won the contest! Remember? I thought it was a long-shot when I entered. The prize is a staged reading next month on Calle Ocho! Isn't that incredible!

[She claps her hands smiling.]

RODRIGUEZ
Wow! I can't believe it! So soon?

[Margaret backs away from Rodriguez. She shrinks.]

MARGARET

Soon? Are you kidding, Rigo? I've been working on it for over a year now!

RODRIGUEZ

I've been with you, the whole way, right? Still, it seems soon to me. A year isn't that long. Do you think you're ready?

MARGARET

I'll make myself ready.

RODRIGUEZ

I read the draft again the other night. It wasn't finished.

MARGARET

Whatever! You aren't even excited about my news.

RODRIGUEZ

I don't get excited till I know things are certain.

MARGARET

Nothing ever happens if you wait for it to fall from the sky, baby. Would it kill you to show a little fucking enthusiasm once in a while?

RODRIGUEZ

What do *my* guys have to do with all of this?

MARGARET

Your guys?

RODRIGUEZ

My students. Baby, come on. You know what I mean.

MARGARET

I asked them to work on the music for the reading. I need a band, and they need experience. Who knows maybe if it works out something permanent will come out of it?

[Smiles again, childlike.]

RODRIGUEZ

I think that's a little premature. These guys just started a band. Besides, they already have challenges, like finishing high school. They need to concentrate on that.

MARGARET

You've been talking about how great they play and how all they need is an opportunity, someone to encourage them.

RODRIGUEZ

I don't want to them to have expectations and end up disappointed, or you, for that matter. This is too important for you.

MARGARET

How's the painting coming?

RODRIGUEZ

You're changing the subject.

[Rodriguez steps back to the billiard table, adjusts the diamond-systems poster and framed posters of billiard players.]

MARGARET

I'm not changing the subject.

RODRIGUEZ

You are, as usual. It's not coming, at all. I don't even know how they can call it a commissioned work.

[He unzips his cue bag and removes his cue.]

MARGARET

It is a commission.

[He assembles his cue.]

RODRIGUEZ

Technically, yes

[She puts her hand on top of his and stops him from continuing.]

MARGARET

They gave you the money up front.

RODRIGUEZ

Half of it, yeah.

[His head drops. She pulls her hand away.]

MARGARET

Money that you already spent?

RODRIGUEZ

That's one problem.

[He doesn't look up. Minerva eavesdrops.]

MARGARET

And the other problem is...ummm...that you still haven't started the work, right?

RODRIGUEZ

Mag, is this conversation designed to motivate me? Because it's having the opposite effect.

[He takes out three balls, arranges them on the table and pretends to study them.]

MARGARET

Yes, it is designed to motivate you.

RODRIGUEZ

What are you trying to prove?

MARGARET

Minerva and I will come over and pose for you.

[Minerva drops her script. Margaret and Rodriguez both stop and look over at her. She dives to pick it up, flustered.]

MINERVA

I think I'll go and get some air.

[She exits and joins the guys just outside of doorway with her water bottle.]

RODRIGUEZ

I don't see what that will do baby.

MARGARET

Looking at living, breathing people will make you feel the ones frozen in the painting.

RODRIGUEZ

Christ Margaret, the guy painted it over 300 years ago!

MARGARET

Then flip the foundation a big fat bird . Do your own painting. What are they going to do about it?

RODRIGUEZ

Are you fucking kidding me? Do you have any idea what my family will do to me if I screw this up?

MARGARET

Just DO something! What about your dream of being recognized as an artist?

RODRIGUEZ

I don't dream. I paint. This isn't a big opportunity.

MARGARET

I don't accept that! This is an opportunity and you sit apathetically by.

RODRIGUEZ

I'm not apathetic, Mag. But I'm not going to try to turn it into something it isn't.

MARGARET

Maybe someone will appreciate your work three hundred years after you die!

RODRIGUEZ

Mi niña, melodramatica!

[He kisses her gently on her forehead.]

MARGARET

You get a chance to have your work displayed publicly, to finally get the recognition you deserve but you say your hands are tied just because it isn't exactly what YOU think an opportunity should be. So make it one!

RODRIGUEZ

The foundation wants a replica of my father's favorite painting, to commemorate him. There will be a memorial park named in his honor, Constantine Alejandro de Silva Memorial Park...

MARGARET

He's dead!

RODRIGUEZ

...Then there's mama, who definitely isn't dead! Things aren't always as simple as "follow your dreams."

MARGARET

But *your* painting will hang in the welcome center at the memorial park!

RODRIGUEZ

It's more like a tomb!

MARGARET

It's not a bad start.

[The Guys and Minerva enter from outside through the doorway. They get their cues. Minerva gathers her things.]

RODRIGUEZ

You have to be intelligent. Plowing ahead my own way isn't.

MARGARET

So now I'm stupid for telling you to believe in yourself?

RODRIGUEZ

You're not being realistic, baby.

[Rodriguez reaches for her. She ignores him.]

MARGARET

What does reality have to do with this? Anything's possible. Dreams transcend reality.

[Minerva tears a corner off of her script, pulls a pen from a long chain around her neck, scribbles something on it, and sticks it down the front of her dress.]

RODRIGUEZ

You need to recognize it occasionally, mi cielo!

[Indignant, Margaret picks up her gig bag and script. Minerva looks down shaking her head.]

RODRIGUEZ

I gotta work now. The guys are waiting.

MARGARET

Let's go Min. Thanks guys. We'll meet up here tomorrow OK?

GUYS

OK.

MINERVA

Bye Rodriguez.

RODRIGUEZ

Wait a minute. Here? Tomorrow? What's going on tomorrow?

MARGARET

Rehearsal. Your boss said he doesn't mind if we use the space when no one's here.

RODRIGUEZ

Scheduled rehearsals? Already?

MARGARET

No Rigo, I thought I'd sit around a few years and think about it first.

[Rodriguez shakes his head. He kisses her several times, quickly and motions to the guys to come over. He chalks his cue.]

RODRIGUEZ

OK.

[He puts on a fingerless glove. Minerva watches from the doorway.]

Today I'm going to illustrate some mathematical formulas in the diamond systems of billiards.

MARGARET

[Rolls her eyes.]

The diamond systems.

RODRIGUEZ

The cue ball is going to hit the second ball and then travel to this cushion here [He points with his cue.] Then to this one, then here, before making contact with the third ball. If you follow your diamond system knowledge, it's a mathematical certainty.

[Margaret walks over to Rodriguez and stands between him and the table.]

MARGARET

No Rigo! You're explaining it all wrong. Here guys, let me illustrate for you.

[She takes two balls off the table and holds them up to the guys.]

MARGARET

Think of it this way: Imagine this ball here is a guy, and this ball here is his girlfriend,

[She turns to the diamond systems poster.]

MARGARET (CONT'D)

and these three cushions are huge, no... colossal, opportunities. Now, if he grazes his girlfriend, like this,

[She slides one of the balls along the lines on the poster.]

and bounces off this opportunity, then the next, steadily losing speed and force,

[She turns back to the guys.]

It is a mathematical certainty that they will break up and nothing good will happen to him ever again!

[Margaret slams the two balls down on the table, picks up her things and exits noisily. Minerva leaves behind her, shrugging her shoulders.]

RODRIGUEZ

[To himself.] Ay ya yaay! Sorry about that guys. Margaret gets a little dramatic sometimes.

[He makes a few shots aggressively, then stops and disassembles his cue.]

We'll get an early start next week. I think you've had ah... enough on your plates for one day anyway. OK?

GUYS

Yeah, it's cool.

RODRIGUEZ

Besides you guys have your S.A.T. test soon don't you?

GUYS

No joke. Unfortunately.

RODRIGUEZ

You'll be fine. I can help with the mathematics or English...uh, whatever you need. Don't hesitate to ask OK?

GUYS

Yeah, of course man. We're cool.

RODRIGUEZ

OK guys. Don't overdo it this weekend. You gotta do well on the test.

GUYS

All right man.

RODRIGUEZ

I'm serious. It's important. Javi, don't hesitate to call me if you need help.

GUYS

Yeah, OK.

[Guys exit. Rodriguez pulls a pack of tobacco out of his pocket and rolls a cigarette. As he licks the cigarette paper he studies table, puts balls under the table and drapes a cover over it. He looks at the diamond systems poster, turns out the lights, exits and locks the door.]

*ACT I :SCENE-3: RODRIGUEZ AND CONSTANTINE

Sound of keys stage right. There are empty liquor bottles, Chinese take-out containers, pizza boxes and piles of clothes everywhere. Constantine and Cachita stand behind the frame of the mirror they are a reflection of Rodriguez's canvas. He goes directly to the canvas and paints more of the portrait. There are two artist's mannequins standing around the easel. A foam-board-backed poster print of Las Meninas leans against the wall on the floor beside him. A painting of Margaret hangs on the wall. [Rodriguez enters his apartment from darkness. He stops, stares at his easel.]

MARGARET (SUNG/V.O.)

A king dreams he's king and he lives, in the deceit of a king, commanding and governing. And all the praise he receives written in wind and leaves, and honey I taught you this with my kiss: Que toda la vida es un sueño y los sueños son sueños tambien.

[From behind the frame of the mirror Constantine reads the newspaper. Cachita is beside him, expressionless.]

MARGARET (SUNG/V.O.)

Que toda la vida es un sueño y los sueños son sueños tambien

CONSTANTINE

So, Rodriguez, big article here about this project. You're getting pretty good at chasing dreams to avoid real work, eh?

[Rodriguez faces the easel.]

RODRIGUEZ

I don't dream, Papa. It's just an article about your memorial park and your beloved "Las Meninas."

[He flips his hand toward the poster of Las Meninas.]

CONSTANTINE

The most beautiful painting by the world's greatest artist, my favorite painter.

[Constantine points to the poster of
Las Meninas from behind his frame.]

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

It's inconceivable that any novice today could create
something of that magnitude.

RODRIGUEZ

This "novice" hasn't painted a stroke for the commission yet.
So you may be worried about my painting disappointing you,
for nothing!

CONSTANTINE

Velazquez was brilliant. He was financed Rodriguez, royal
painter to the king! Money is power. You have to work hard
and help others fulfill their dreams. That is what I did so
we could come here. But, look at this article! To read this
interview you'd think you paddled yourself here from Cuba!

[Rodriguez takes a swig. He shrinks.]

Does that look like the face of an artist who's hungry,
living in a run down apartment? No! You need to work. Worry
about art later.

RODRIGUEZ

I do work!

CONSTANTINE

Chita, do you hear your son? He calls shooting pool with
street rats a few times a week work!

RODRIGUEZ

Billiards, Papa.

CACHITA

He is putting a lot of effort into the boys, Papa. He's
working very hard.

RODRIGUEZ

I support their ideas, teach them the discipline of the sport
and its mathematical principles. I listen to them.

CONSTANTINE

You're no further along than they are!

CACHITA

Your father only wants what's best, Rigo. He worked your whole life to give you more opportunities for success than those boys had.

RODRIGUEZ

I didn't want to leave mama! At least back home they had an education. Art wasn't an underfunded luxury for the rich.

CONSTANTINE

Back home? Home? This is home! My education in Cuba didn't get us a new Cadillac. Or a big house with air conditioning did it? You seemed to enjoy those amenities when we came here, amenities provided to you through my hard work!

RODRIGUEZ

Can't you see I'm trying to do what YOU want?

CONSTANTINE

Working with menaces to society? It's practically volunteer work. Your salary is nothing! Your not even financially stable.

RODRIGUEZ

I understand them.

CONSTANTINE

I won't allow you to undermine years of building the family name with your ridiculous, selfish notions of becoming a painter!

RODRIGUEZ

I'm not "becoming a painter," Papa, I am painter!

CONSTANTINE

Don't embarrass me with this foundation commission. Just do a simple replica. It's only a painting of a painting.

CACHITA

Papa, be reasonable. He has considerable talent. It's who he is.

CONSTANTINE

Chita have you lost your head? He has no idea who he is!

[Cachita fights back tears.]

RODRIGUEZ

I used to give my paints to mama to keep hidden in a box so you wouldn't find them. Did you know that?

CONSTANTINE

Listen to me very carefully, there will never be another Velazquez.

[Constantine and Cachita freeze. Rodriguez finishes the portrait of his father. He removes it from the easel and hangs it on the wall. He sits back down and stares at the easel. Nothing is reflected now in the mirror. He swills his rum and talks to himself.]

RODRIGUEZ

Mag's right. I should flip em a "big bird" and paint my own interpretation. ...Mag.
Mag!

[He lights his cigarette and walks over to the Las Meninas poster. He's unsteady. He points to Velazquez in the painting.]

Royalty? Kings? Fucking royal courts and princesses? Look at this guy! He's got it made.

[He smokes, pours himself a shot of Rum, staggers over to one of the mannequins.]

And you? What about you? Did your parents like the way you turned out?

[He pauses, drinks his shot and puts the glass down. He extinguishes his cigarette. He walks over to another mannequin.]

A dance señorita?

[He sings, picks up a mannequin and slow dances.]

Dame la mano, daaaaaaaaahme la mano...la da da da da...mi corozon! What did you say señorita? You think I'm a great dancer? Hmmm. Margaret used to say that. She's not saying that now. Nope. Not anymore. Nada, nunca.

[He looks at the painting of Margaret on the wall.]

RODRIGUEZ (CONT'D)

What's that Señorita? Oh, you think I'm cute, do you? De verdad?

[He puts the mannequin down, laughs.]

Sorry baby...no depth!

[He returns to his easel. He picks up his paintbrush and stares at the blank canvas. He puts the brush down. He walks next to the poster of Las Meninas.]

And what do you say, Señor Velazquez, of what my father calls my "ridiculous dreams of being a painter"?

RODRIGUEZ (AS VELAZQUEZ)

Why your talent is magnificent Rodriguez, and your dream, in fact, quite attainable.

[Rodriguez laughs hysterically. He's drunker. He stops laughing and turns around to the painting of his father on the wall. He turns back to Las Meninas and laughs more.]

I knight you Rodriguez de Silva. On behalf of myself and with the blessing of King Philip, to whom I am but a humble servant, the Cross of Santiago!

[Rodriguez dips his brush into red paint and paints a cross on his own chest.]

I, Diego Velazquez do hereby recognize the magnificence, sophistication and insight of your work. And you didn't even have to kiss any royal ass! Remarkable.

[Rodriguez laughs, pours a drink and rolls a cigarette. He holds up his glass, almost spilling its contents, in a mock toast.]

RODRIGUEZ

Here's to you Papa, King Constantine! If they turn me down tomorrow, I'll piss in your park!

[Rodriguez staggers over to the Las Meninas poster and kicks it over. He kicks the mannequins over onto the floor. He throws his paints and brushes violently. He laughs and falls on the floor with the mannequins.]

RODRIGUEZ

Did you hear me Papa? I'll piss in your fucking park!

ACT I: SCENE 4: CACHITA AND RODRIGUEZ

[Rodriguez lies in the pile of paints, the poster, canvases and mannequins, and bottles on the floor. There is a knock on the door. He pops his head up, startled.]

RODRIGUEZ

Que?

[He gets up in obvious pain and pours rum into a glass. He walks to the mirror and looks at himself. He walks to the door.]

Okay, okay, I'm coming!

[He looks through the peep hole. His head drops. He moves away from the door and shoves some of the mess in piles. There is another knock on the door.]

(To himself) Shit!

[He pulls a garbage can over to a table and in one fluid movement of his arm, pushes bottles and ashtrays and mess into the can. Cachita calls to him from outside the door.]

CACHITA

Rigo?

[There is a third knock on the door. Rodriguez covers the blank canvas and easel with a sheet, goes to the door, opens it. Cachita is there with a pot in her arms.]

RODRIGUEZ

Mama!

[He takes the pot from her and kisses her on each cheek. He hesitates to back up and let her in. She looks over his shoulder into his apartment and he retreats.]

Como estas?

RODRIGUEZ

[She walks past him into the apartment. She pulls out a fan and snaps it open.]

CACHITA

I hate this heat. It's going to kill me!

[She walks passed him flipping her fan dramatically.]

RODRIGUEZ

What's all this?

CACHITA

Ropa vieja y frijoles negros.

[She unties the scarf from under her chin, takes it off her head and starts to put it down on the table, picks up a Chinese food container, and drops it in the garbage can. Rodriguez looks around at the mess.]

RODRIGUEZ

Mama, please!

[Cachita puts her scarf over the back of a chair.]

CACHITA

I thought you could use a home-cooked meal.

RODRIGUEZ

Thanks Mama, it wasn't necessary.

CACHITA

I've been calling for days Rigo. When you didn't answer I got worried and decided to come over.

[She continues clearing the trash off the table.]

RODRIGUEZ

Really?

CACHITA

You didn't get any of my messages?

RODRIGUEZ

Huh? Weird.

RODRIGUEZ (CONT'D)

[He takes out his paints and supplies. He busies himself arranging them and flips through a sketch pad.]

Well, I'm fine. Just busy working...

CACHITA

Si, claro.

[Cachita puts her fan down on the chair. She takes an apron out of her bag and ties it around her waist.]

CACHITA

How's the commission painting coming mi hijo?

RODRIGUEZ

Great. Fine.

[Cachita cleans the table and puts a cloth over it. She takes out a covered plate, and silverware from her bag and sets them on the table. Rodriguez walks over to her. She takes his face in her hands.]

Mama, please ... you don't have to...

CACHITA

Mira! You look like you haven't eaten or slept in weeks! Sit down and eat.

[She pushes him insistently into a chair.]

RODRIGUEZ

I'll eat later Mama, I'm not hungry. You shouldn't have gone to all this trouble.

CACHITA

Trouble, to cook for my son from time to time?

[She uncovers the plate of food looks at the poster of Las Meninas and the mannequins on the floor, then, at Rodriguez's easel.]

CACHITA (CONT'D)

Besides, they completed the final touches for the opening of the park last week so the foundation wants to come over tomorrow to check on your progress with the painting and I thought I should ...

RODRIGUEZ

Tomorrow? What? No I can't. I ... I won't even be here.

CACHITA

I'll use my key and show them the painting. We should clean up this place first, after you eat. Eat Rigo!

RODRIGUEZ

Mama please.

CACHITA

They are excited to see your progress. Imagine a park named in your father's memory, his son's painting on permanent display. That's quite an honor, no?

RODRIGUEZ

Si, for papa. Constantine Alejandro DeSilva Park! Even dead he's recognized for his achievements!

[Rodriguez flips his hand at his father's framed portrait on the wall. Cachita also pauses and looks at it expressionless.]

RODRIGUEZ

I could be anybody, Mama. It doesn't matter *who* paints the replica. It doesn't really matter who I am.

CACHITA

Look mi hijo you aren't just anybody. You are the son of Constantine DeSilva!

RODRIGUEZ.

You said it yourself. I'm "the son of Constantine DeSilva." That's who I am.

[He begins eating. Cachita looks away, says nothing.]

CACHITA

[Forcefully she spoons more onto his plate.]

Do you plan to get discovered by barricading yourself in here never showing your work to anyone?

RODRIGUEZ

I don't plan, I paint. I don't think about being discovered. It's not up to me.

CACHITA

How's work? Are the niños doing better?

RODRIGUEZ

They're not exactly niños mama. Teenage boys, no one cares about.

CACHITA

They have families, don't they?

RODRIGUEZ

Antonio floated here on a tire. Half of his family is still in Cuba.

[Cachita gets an ironing board out and irons madly.]

Javi, came here on his own after his father abandoned him. He's never even known his father! I can't imagine how that feels.

[Cachita wipes the sweat from her forehead with her apron.]

His mama came after. She works three jobs just to take care of him and his sisters. She doesn't even speak English. She doesn't have time ... Mama?

[He looks at Cachita. She is lost in thought. She burns her finger and drops the iron on the floor.]

CACHITA

Ay!

[She shakes out her left hand and sticks her ring finger in her mouth.]

RODRIGUEZ

Mama!

[He runs to her. He picks the iron off the floor.]

CACHITA

I'm fine. Mi hijo. It's nothing. Go! Eat!

[Rodriguez stares at her, perplexed and reluctantly returns to his seat. She resumes ironing. She looks at the painting of Margaret on the wall.]

CACHITA

Where's Margaret been?

RODRIGUEZ

Around.

[Cachita looks around at the mess.]

CACHITA

I haven't seen her lately.

RODRIGUEZ

She's busy. That's all.

[She stops ironing and looks at him.]

CACHITA

Mira, Rigo, I know you're talented. But patrons don't listen to the mamas of artists. If they did, you'd be the most patronized artist in all of Little Havana!

[She returns to ironing.]

RODRIGUEZ.

The foundation doesn't consider me an artist. I don't choose what to paint - or anything - for that matter.

[Rodriguez shrinks down into his seat. Cachita stands behind him. She looks up at the portrait of Constantine, then down at her son lovingly.]

CACHITA

This is a chance to show what you can do. Who knows what doors may open? Look at this portrait of your father, Rigo! It's the work of a great artist.

RODRIGUEZ

Mama, everything's fine, really. It can't be tomorrow. That's all I said.

CACHITA

The foundation has a right to come if they want to. I can't stop them. You're 29 son. Do you know what that means?

[Rodriguez shrinks into his seat.]

CACHITA (CONT'D)

That means you have less than an hour for each year of your life till the board members come here to see your progress!

[Cachita smiles and winks.]

RODRIGUEZ

Thanks mama, it sounds even more impossible when you put it that way! The foundation operates like papa. King Constantine wins again.

CACHITA

Your father wasn't a monster. He worked hard to earn what we have now.

[Cachita hangs the pants and shirt on a hanger. She begins to clear the table.]

RODRIGUEZ

Mama, I'll do it.

[Rodriguez stops eating and stands up, takes her head scarf off the chair to hand to her. Cachita ignores the gesture and continues cleaning.]

CACHITA

It won't take long!

RODRIGUEZ

I'm gonna work now. I'll do it myself later, please.

[She reluctantly unties her apron and puts it in her bag. He helps her collect her things.]

CACHITA

OK, pero soy tu madre. Escuchame!

[Cachita flips her fan open again.]

RODRIGUEZ

Si, si, claro. Besitos Mama.

[Rodriguez kisses Cachita.]

CACHITA

Don't forget to eat your tres leches for dessert.

RODRIGUEZ

I'll eat it don't worry, vale vale!

CACHITA

I'll see you tomorrow night then with the foundation. Be here. Rigo, have something ready for them to see.

[Rodriguez opens the door for her.]

RODRIGUEZ

I'm trying not to let anybody down.

[Cachita's tone is reproachful.]

CACHITA

You better do more than try! You are representing the family. This is important.

[Cachita looks over at the easel and begins dramatically fanning herself again.]

CACHITA

Hasta mañana! Este calor me va a matar!

[Cachita reluctantly exits.]

RODRIGUEZ

Bye Mama, besitos!

CACHITA (V.O.)

Besitos mi Rigo!

[Rodriguez shuts the door and falls back against it. He picks up his drink and takes a swig. He walks over to the easel and removes the sheet. A blank canvas is reflected in the mirror. He turns to the wall and talks to the portrait of his father.]

RODRIGUEZ

I bet you're laughing like hell watching us jump through hoops for you, huh papa? Would it have killed you to smile at her once in a while? Would it have fucking killed you to tell her she looked pretty from time to time? Even dead your blood boils. Did you hate me so much that you had to take it out on her?

ACT I: SCENE 5* HAVANA, CUBA 1974: RODRIGUEZ'S CHILDHOOD

Billiard balls crack. [Rodriguez sits on the ladder and stares at blank canvas. He takes another sip of his drink. Guys play song: "Dame la Mano".]

GUYS (SUNG)

*Quisiera que mis cantares
Nacidos del corazon
Lo guarde como un ofrenda de mi amor hacia ti
Para que nunca te olvides
Dame la mano, amigo mio del corazon
Tu eres la luz que me alumbra
Dame La Mano*

[Cachita enters. She wears an apron and is younger. She puts a table cloth over the billiard table. Rodriguez slowly walks over to her and helps her set the table.]

*Y caminemos por el sendero que conce a la felicidad
Que los dias que no queden sean felices para ti
Caminemos caminemos mucho mas
Dame la mano, que me vengo cayendo.*

[Velazquez enters. He wears a masquerade mask. He carries a small child-sized easel and a bouquet of flowers. He gives the flowers to Cachita. She puts them in a vase and places the vase on the table. She looks down, embarrassed, when he tries to kiss her and nods to Rodriguez.]

*Quisiera que mis cantares
Nacidos del corazon
Lo guarde como un ofrenda de mi amor hacia ti
Para que nunca te olvides*

[Velazquez sets up the easel, and hands Rodriguez a palette and paint brush. He instructs him as Rodriguez paints. Rodriguez turns to him mesmerized.]

CACHITA

I knew he was the one, the love of my life. But what could I do? He had nothing except his paintings and dreams. He loved me though, I knew that.

[Rodriguez paints on a paper on the little easel.]

Cachita gently puts her hand on Velazquez' shoulder and motions to the door for him to leave. She kisses Rodriguez and sends him off too. He slowly walks to the large easel in his studio Turns back to watch his mother.]

Then I met Constantine Alejandro de Silva, full of ambition and confidence. He said could take us to the land of opportunity. He asked me to be his wife. So I let go of the man of my dreams. And I waited. I cooked, I cleaned, and I waited for you.

[Enter Constantine. He is younger with his hair slicked back. Slowly Cachita pours wine in a glass on the table. She serves Constantine.]

GUYS

*Dame la mano, amigo mio del corazon
Tu eres la luz que me alumbra
Dame La Mano*

[Music continues. Volume increases. Constantine points to the little easel, pulls off a painting, holds it up to Cachita and shakes it.]

CONSTANTINE

What the hell is this Chita?

[He crumples up Rodriguez' artwork. She takes it from him and straightens it out carefully on the table.]

He was here, wasn't he!

[She pleads with him to be quiet and motions for him to sit back down at the table. He points to the vase of flowers. He stands up, hits it, and sends it flying off the table.]

This is how you repay me for my hard work? He comes to my home when I turn my back? Soon we'll be far away from him? We will never see him again.

CONSTANTINE (CONT'D)

[He grabs her shoulders and pushes her against a wall, he takes the back of his hand and slaps her across the face.]

Do you understand me Chita? You'll never see him again! You are my wife!

[He storms off away from Cachita. She cries, and grips painting in her hand. She squats.]

GUYS (SUNG)

*Y caminemos por el sendero que conce a la felicidad
Que los dias que no queden sean felices para ti
Caminemos caminemos mucho mas*

[Constantine dances with one of the mannequins passionately. Velazquez appears in the doorway. Constantine dips the mannequin, kisses it, and puts it down. He stops, looks at Velazquez and leaves.]

MARGARET AND GUYS (sung)

*Y caminemos por el sendero que conce a la felicidad
Que los dias que no queden sean felices para ti
Caminemos caminemos mucho mas
Dame la mano, que me vengo cayendo
Dame la mano, que me vengo cayendo Dame la mano, que me vengo
cayendo*

[Cachita picks up each flower and puts it in the vase. She walks through the doorway and behind the mirror frame.]

CACHITA

He would come home, into our room late at night. I still smell the perfume of other women on him when he made love to me. I still feel his hot skin and body against mine and his beating heart pumping the blood through him. He was still a good man, Rigo. He tried to be a good man. So I waited. I waited for you.

[She stares straight ahead with her flowers in her hands. Her image slowly freezes. Rodriguez paints. She is now a reflected painting. He cries, continues to paint a portrait of her.]

ACT I : SCENE 6 :RODRIGUEZ AND VELAZQUEZ*

Rodriguez is slumped over sitting on a rung of the ladder behind his easel. He is disheveled. A fresh painting of Cachita now hangs high on the wall above the portrait of Constantine. Velazquez' hat and cape hang on a hook on the wall by the doorway. Spanish guitar plays instrumental "Calderon". Billiard balls clack.

MARGARET (V.O.)

*We live as we see the sun. Our life and dreams are as one,
Andd living has taught me this.*

[Rodriguez jumps up, disoriented. He walks through, into the youth center to the billiard table. He sees Velazquez playing billiards.]

*Man dreams a life that is his.
Until his living is done.*

VELAZQUEZ

Balls said the queen!

[Rodriguez, drunk, leans with his back against wall to keep hidden. He watches Velazquez.]

MARGARET (V.O.)

Que toda la vida es un sueños y los sueños son sueños tambien

[Rodriguez goes back to his apartment, searches through art supplies near the easel. He returns with a paint brush with a pointed end and holds it up like a weapon.]

RODRIGUEZ

Hold it right there!

[Rodriguez is breathing heavily. He's scared. Velazquez Looks up, but continues playing.]

VELAZQUEZ

Please hold your fire ... or your brush stroke.

RODRIGUEZ...

You need to get the hell out of here now or I'll...

[Rodriguez staggers lunging forward and almost falls.]

VELAZQUEZ

You're a little cranky. I probably should have asked permission before I started playing in here. Maybe we would have been off to a better start!

[He continues playing.]

RODRIGUEZ

Who are you? How did you get in here?

VELAZQUEZ

Be reasonable Rodriguez. I'm an old man, I don't have to answer these unimaginative questions.

RODRIGUEZ

I think you do ... mother fucker!

[Rodriguez's voice cracks.]

VELAZQUEZ

You know Rodriguez, the profanity doesn't become you at all.

RODRIGUEZ

I'd hate to have to hurt you with this!

VELAZQUEZ

Indeed! I've heard being painted to death is a horrific way to go!

RODRIGUEZ

How do you know my name? You're one of those identity thieves.

VELAZQUEZ

Yours wouldn't be high on the list of desirable identities to steal, I'm afraid.

RODRIGUEZ

What are you doing here?

VELAZQUEZ

It's been a long day Rodriguez. I missed my connection in Paris, then there was the ordeal with customs at JFK ... shoes, cape, hat ... everything had to come off. I had to throw away a brand new tube hair gel, 32 Euros! You're lucky I made it in time to help you at all!

[Velazquez stops playing. He pulls a tobacco case and pipe out of his pocket. He sits down and begins filling the pipe with tobacco.]

RODRIGUEZ

Help me?

VELAZQUEZ

You do seem rather desperate and sad though. So I'm going to answer one of your questions. The rest will have to wait till my jet lag subsides...or your hangover, whichever comes first.

[He lights the pipe and smokes.]

VELAZQUEZ

"Who are you?", you ask me. Some people spend a lifetime trying to find the answer to that question. Or for that matter, many lifetimes.

RODRIGUEZ

How about answering it in our lifetime?

VELAZQUEZ

Time is relative mi hijo. Two minutes, a lifetime? A little dust on the way, a frenzied extreme. Art lasts. People don't.

RODRIGUEZ

Look old man, enough riddles. I'm calling the cops!

[Velazquez smiles.]

VELAZQUEZ

That would be unfortunate for you Rodriguez, since I believe I can be of some assistance to you.

RODRIGUEZ

Assistance? That's a joke. You're too late.

VELAZQUEZ

Really? We don't have much confidence in our abilities, do we?

RODRIGUEZ

Copying a work isn't a question of abilities.

VELAZQUEZ

Isn't it? Your biggest obstacle is your dead father. What a
crook of shit!

RODRIGUEZ

What do you know about my father?

VELAZQUEZ

I've done my research too.

RODRIGUEZ

The "de Silva name" is my curse.

VELAZQUEZ

I think I may be able to help you with the replica of that
"archaic royal portrait" you keep whining about.

RODRIGUEZ

No one can help me with that.

VELAZQUEZ

Really? Not even the creator of Las Meninas? Take a good look
Rodriguez. I Think you know who I am.

RODRIGUEZ

Look! I'm telling you

[Rodriguez looks at the poster Las
Meninas. His eyes rest on Velazquez.
He walks over to the hook on the wall
with the hat and cape.]

VELAZQUEZ

Hmmm?

RODRIGUEZ

I mean, how could it ... Diego Velazquez?

[Velazquez, pipe in hand, studies the
poster of Las Meninas, laughs.]

RODRIGUEZ

No, no, no, nightmare, for sure

[Rodriguez rushes over to look at the
liquor bottle, stubs his toe, screams
in pain.]

Ouch, shit!

[Velazquez doesn't look at Rodriguez.]

VELAZQUEZ

Hmmm, relax mi hijo. Anything is possible. My good friend Calderon says "Life is a dream and dreams themselves are dreams!" Perhaps, in fact it is I, dreaming you!

RODRIGUEZ

Then I'm crazy.

VELAZQUEZ

Yes, but I'm here anyway.

RODRIGUEZ

A 17th century painter, in my house?

VELAZQUEZ

Indeed. If I were going to be an imposter...do you honestly think I would choose someone who wore a get up like this? I mean really! In south Florida heat? You'd have to be out of your mind!

RODRIGUEZ

Diego Velazquez!

VELAZQUEZ

Yes! Sadly, not exactly a household name in your country, yet! I could have come disguised as someone really impressive like ...Spider Man for example? I bet you wouldn't have threatened to pierce him with your sharpest paint brush! Are you at least going to offer an old painter a drink?

[Rodriguez, shocked, pours Velazquez a shot and hands it to him. Velazquez laughs.]

By the way, I thoroughly enjoyed your little soliloquy of self-adoration earlier Rodriguez, or is it Diego?

RODRIGUEZ

I got carried away.

VELAZQUEZ

You think you've got it all figured out already do you?

[Velazquez hands Rodriguez a billiard cue.]

I challenge you to a game of billiards.

RODRIGUEZ

Game?

VELAZQUEZ

Yes! While we are playing perhaps you could enlighten me on your view of how I "kissed royal ass"? Yes? It should make for some interesting conversation I suspect.

[Velazquez sips his drink.]

RODRIGUEZ

You had a king dictating your every move.

VELAZQUEZ

Imperialism takes many forms, Rodriguez, we all have our kings we must answer to, and sometimes queens, no?

[Rodriguez laughs nervously.]

VELAZQUEZ

What's the problem? I thought you were an excellent billiard player.

RODRIGUEZ

I'm pretty good at it.

VELAZQUEZ

I see that you have a *real* billiard table. No pockets? I thought you Americans didn't call it a sport unless there were lots of little holes to put your balls into?

RODRIGUEZ

It's not so easy to find here. Besides, my students only old men play three cushion like me. I learned a long time ago, visiting my cousins in Spain.

VELAZQUEZ

You've been to my mother county, eh?

RODRIGUEZ

... Yes.

VELAZQUEZ

Why billiards? Why not basketball, baseball, ping-pong?

RODRIGUEZ

The game is magical. It requires intellect, mathematical principles and takes a very long time to master. It's not spectator oriented or a team sport. Without those distractions I can focus on perfecting my skill.

VELAZQUEZ

Indeed, learning the art of billiards, and to play well, is like learning the craft of painting. It seems a natural game for painters in fact. You learn first by imitating those you admire, quietly and methodically. You copy techniques and adopt them; some you discard. Your work begins to develop as an amalgam of artists you admire. In the process many times, you discover yourself.

[Rodriguez takes his shot. He fumbles pushing the beads with his cue across the abacus-like string of beads to tally his score.]

RODRIGUEZ

I instruct my students on how to apply the principles, utilize their instincts, and at the same time appreciate the magic.

[Velazquez takes the chalk, twists it over the tip of the cue stick. He takes his shot and another, then a third. He motions to Rodriguez to go.]

RODRIGUEZ

If you are who you say you are, why are you here?

[Rodriguez shoots.]

VELAZQUEZ

If I am who I say I am Rodriguez, wouldn't you want to know how before *why*?

.

[Rodriguez takes his second shot.]

RODRIGUEZ

How?

[Velazquez takes his shot, looks at Rodriguez with serious contemplation, balls clack twice. He takes another and a third.]

VELAZQUEZ

You're up

[Rodriguez shoots.]

RODRIGUEZ

Oh.

[He misses.]

VELAZQUEZ

You're overtired tonight Rodriguez, we'll resume this game later when you're better rested.

[Velazquez takes the cue from Rodriguez, puts it down and puts his arm around him. They walk over to the diamond systems.]

Indeed, magical patterns of our lives, revelations of one's self reflected in the green of a billiard table or the cream of a canvas.

[Velazquez, with an arm around Rodriguez, his pipe in the other hand, walks "through" the wall separating the youth center and Rodriguez's apartment.]

RODRIGUEZ

When I try to focus on the magical patterns. Life gets in the way. Obligations, family pressures. I can't find magic in doing a replica.

[Velazquez points with his pipe at Rodriguez' paintings.]

Look at your paintings. You have plenty of inspiration to paint. You need to find that same inspiration for the commission.

RODRIGUEZ

The whole thing pisses me off.

VELAZQUEZ

Picasso pissed me off.

RODRIGUEZ

What?

VELAZQUEZ

Have you seen his 'Las Meninas'? It was said to be his tribute to my work. I saw no evidence of my influence in his horrid black and white rendition. You Americans recognize him, a newcomer, before anything I've accomplished! I'm amazed his popularity has soared as it has. However, he did have a something to say about inspiration that be of help to you: "inspiration exists but it has to find you while you're working."

RODRIGUEZ

Why do I need inspiration for a replica? It's a copy.

VELAZQUEZ

Whether it be a replica, a mural or a portrait, do it with compassion and the process in itself will be revealing.

RODRIGUEZ

Compassion?

VELAZQUEZ

My subjects were real with struggles, pain, dreams. They had something that you don't have yet.

RODRIGUEZ

What's that?

VELAZQUEZ

Esperanza tragica, mi hijo. Tragic hope. I remember the profound sadness of a dwarf, Mariebarbóla, I painted her in Las Meninas. No one cared to document her story or ask her philosophy. Her gaze spoke volumes. I painted her, as well as the Infanta Margarita and the rest of the royal family, I wondered what their dreams were. They were all limited beings in some way. I found a certain beauty recognizing that sadness and hope behind it.

RODRIGUEZ

You really are Velazquez

VELAZQUEZ

I'm encouraged that you're able to finally recognize that!

RODRIGUEZ

Look, I don't want to do this. I don't participate in the competition for money and power. Billiards, my students and my girlfriend are all I have.

VELAZQUEZ

But you have something much more important - humanity, Rodriguez. You have the compassionate humanity I've been talking about. You wouldn't be in this dilemma if you didn't. You don't want to do the replica. But you worry for your family. You don't want to disappoint them.

RODRIGUEZ

Anyone would do the same. I'm a simple man.

VELAZQUEZ

You exemplify humanity. You encourage your girlfriend's endeavors, you mentor the young men at the youth center. You try to fulfill your family's unreasonable expectations.

RODRIGUEZ

I do what anyone would do. I treat people as I'd like to be treated.

VELAZQUEZ

Look around ! The world is teeming with vultures! What you view as ordinary consideration for fellow man is a rare quality indeed!

RODRIGUEZ

Thanks anyway, but all the humanity in the world isn't going to get this thing painted in a day!

VELAZQUEZ

What about your girlfriend?

RODRIGUEZ

My girlfriend?

VELAZQUEZ

Yes you remember her, 5' 4" blonde, Uruguayan decent?

RODRIGUEZ

Margaret?

VELAZQUEZ

No Rodriguez, your other 5' 4" Uruguayan blonde girlfriend!

RODRIGUEZ

We aren't doing so great right now. She broke up with me.

VELAZQUEZ

Your lack of personal hygiene alone could have caused that. I've got a nice exfoliating body scrub you could try.

RODRIGUEZ

No she's serious. There's not much I can do about it. It's not in my hands.

VELAZQUEZ

Really? Interesting! Whose hands is it in then?

RODRIGUEZ

You know what I mean. Her mind is made up.

VELAZQUEZ

Sounds like your mind is made up too, hmmm? I guess you're not planning to take her up on her offer then?

RODRIGUEZ

What offer?

VELAZQUEZ

To model with her friend, to give you a couple of live bodies to ah, stimulate you into performance?

RODRIGUEZ

It's a little late for me to have "esperanza tragica" now. Her idea to model isn't going to change anything. There's no time.

VELAZQUEZ

I think her idea is worth a go. Her music is, in fact, quite good. At times music can be the sole inspiration one needs.

RODRIGUEZ

Now you're a music connoisseur?

VELAZQUEZ

When nobody is looking at me, like now, I reflect on the question: Wouldn't music be the only possible answer?

[Velazquez ponders his own words for a moment. He looks over Rodriguez shoulder at the blank canvas.]

Consider Margaret's support, mi hijo. Since it seems you have...nothing to lose, hmmm?

RODRIGUEZ

I have one day left to create a believable replica.

VELAZQUEZ

Go get some sleep Rodriguez. Sleep will help you find reason.

RODRIGUEZ

So you think I'm being unreasonable?

[Velazquez exits through doorway. Rodriguez stares at the easel. He turns to Velazquez and sees he's not there. He sits back down in a chair behind the easel. He takes another drink and begins to paint.]

MARGARET (SUNG)

Que toda la vida es un sueño, y los sueños son sueños también.

ACT I: SCENE 6*:RODRIGUEZ' DREAM: BAR/ LITTLE HAVANA- MIAMI

[Billiard balls clack. Velazquez wears a masquerade mask, plays billiards with Cachita and Constantine. Rodriguez stands behind easel. A self -portrait is reflected in mirror. Margaret sings with band guys. The mannequins are in the bar area. Minerva sits at a table alone, smokes and drinks. She watches Margaret.]

MARGARET (SUNG)

I wanna find a secluded spot where I can meet you, hike my skirt on your lunch break and, wipe it all up with my shirt when we're done. I wanna drive around with you, for hours in the rain. Singing, stupid eighties songs at the tops of our lungs, yeah, tops of our lungs yeah.

RODRIGUEZ

When we met we talked nights, hours and years. Mostly you talked, I listened. My paintings thrived.

[Rodriguez enters, through doorway stops and watches Margaret sing. He plays billiards with Velazquez. His parents exit through the doorway and stand behind the frame of the mirror and watch. Rodriguez and Velazquez play without talking. Minerva watches Rodriguez. Margaret walks over to Rodriguez. He lifts her onto the table. They kiss passionately. He reaches in his pocket and gives her a box. He pulls a necklace out of the box and puts it around her neck.]

You didn't want more then. Your voice makes everything possible. You live that way.

[He starts to make love to her on the billiard table. Minerva watches them. His parents watch from behind the frame. Velazquez continues to play billiards around them.]

RODRIGUEZ

You laugh, drink, fight, intensely. You love, cry and write intensely. Your expectations are high. I burn out. I try to keep up. There's no comfortable calm. You're intense and relentless. It's unforgiving. It's your way. I can't keep up.

[He tries to continue making love to her. He can't perform. He is distracted by Minerva, the Guys, his parents and Velazquez. He stops and stands up.]

RODRIGUEZ (CONT'D)

I can't sleep without your voice. I will die alone even if you're next to me. I breathe, but too slowly. You love me a year in a day. It's out of my hands. So I wait. I wait for you.

[Margaret sits up confused. Rodriguez slowly walks away. He keeps looking back. Margaret tries to stop him from leaving. Velazquez puts down his cue and approaches Margaret. He takes her face in his hands and passionately kisses her. Margaret objects trying to keep her eyes on Rodriguez. Rodriguez returns to his easel and paints. Velazquez makes love to her on the table. She returns to the stage and sings.]

MARGARET (SUNG)

I wanna trace every inch of your face with my fingertips. I wanna rest my head on your shoulders at a late morning movie in the middle of the week, yeah, middle of the week, yeah.

[She reaches up to her neck and grips the medallion on the necklace with one hand and stares out at audience. Minerva looks out to audience. Rodriguez stops painting, stands back from his easel, holds his palette. Velazquez, walks to the doorway and stops. Cachita and Constantine look from mirror. Action freezes. Music sustains actors mirror the characters in Las Meninas. Music ends abruptly with a percussive bang.]

END OF ACT I

ACT II: SCENE 1: YOUTH CENTER: MARGARET'S PLAY REHEARSAL

[The Guys play billiards. Margaret prepares to rehearse with them. She tunes a guitar. Minerva backs in through the doorway, her arms are loaded up with clothing. She struggles with the long trains of the dresses, dragging on the floor. Guys help her place the dresses on a table next to the billiard table. She takes out a coke for each of the Guys and Margaret.]

MARGARET

Min, what exactly are you doing?

MINERVA

I'm trying to do what you asked

MARGARET

What's that your carried in?

MINERVA

Costumes from the theatre!

MARGARET

For?

MINERVA

I was talking this old man at the theatre yesterday about Rodriguez's project and he told me that there had been a Spanish play there years ago called Las Meninas. Do you believe that Mag?

MARGARET

The theatre had costumes? Yeah. Okay guys, almost ready.

[She fidgets with a guitar tuner and hand the guitar to one of the guys. The other two guys walk over to their instruments.]

MINERVA

No! I mean isn't that ironic about the play "Las Meninas" and the costumes?

[Minerva holds two fingers on each hand forming quotation marks in the air as she says 'Las Meninas'.]

MARGARET

I guess. [To the guys.] The song is in open E, wait for my cue OK?

GUYS

Yeah

MINERVA

You still don't have a clue do you?

MARGARET

No. I have no idea what you're talking about as usual.

MINERVA

Las Meninas is the painting! The replica your boyfriend is doing?

MARGARET

OK?

MINERVA

And these are costumes just like the people in the painting?

MARGARET

I've never heard of "Las Meninas".

[Margaret forms quotation marks with her fingers sarcastically as she says "Las Meninas".]

Could we come back, some other time to this subject and rehearse, now, while I've got these guys?

MINERVA

You know you astound me Margaret. You should be the actor, you act like you have no intelligence or education at all. 11th grade Art History class, remember? King Philip, the princess, the dwarf, Velazquez, ring a bell? Las Meninas!

MARGARET

Look I didn't expect a dissertation on the painting Min, I just thought it might motivate Rodriguez a little if we modeled. Or at least you. I thought you could stand around and rehearse your lines for the play, if nothing else. You didn't have to go this far.

MINERVA

What are you talking about? Don't you see that obviously it was meant to happen? I'm more excited now than ever! It's destiny.

MARGARET

Forget it. It's old news. Rodriguez knocked down my idea, as usual. So you won't get a chance to try out your acting, your costumes, or to realize your destiny.

MINERVA

Really? That's not what I heard.

MARGARET

What are you talking about?

MINERVA

Apparently, Rodriguez has reconsidered your idea.

MARGARET

Where did you get that?

MINERVA

Someone at the theatre told me.

MARGARET

Who?

MINERVA

I don't remember. Maybe I dreamed it. But, he was there looking for you. Anyway, why don't you just model yourself?

MARGARET

I don't like standing still for frigging hours, okay?

MINERVA

Why me?

MARGARET

You're the actress. Besides, I thought you liked Rodriguez?

MINERVA

These are the Infanta and the dwarf costumes. Aren't they beautiful?

MARGARET

If you're into 17th century bodices I guess.

MINERVA

I know you may find this hard to believe but your boyfriend might find you attractive in something that isn't butt tight fitting crushed velvet Lycra!

MARGARET

He's not my boyfriend, anymore. I'm trying to help him as a friend.

MINERVA

Whatever.

MARGARET

What's that supposed to mean?

MINERVA

Remember cloud nine where you've floated for the last year with your "soul mate", according to YOU? Presents every five minutes, poems, paintings, little romantic trips to the mountains? Am I supposed to believe this little moment disenchantment will stick?

MARGARET

Yes it's going to stick. I have to keep moving forward with my plans. Rodriguez prefers to wait for his future to come to him.

[Enter Rodriguez. He watches from the doorway. No one sees him.]

MINERVA

He's worth waiting for Mag! You're the most impatient person I know!

MARGARET

I don't want to wait. I've had a long life already. I've waited, and I've fucked up a lot of stuff. I'm in a hurry. It isn't a choice, it burns through me and looms over me.

MINERVA

He's crazy about you. Personally, with all due respect to your creation, I'd rather have him burning and looming over me!

MARGARET

I'm not a "diamond system" or mathematically certain. Life is a dream...with meanings hidden everywhere. It is different every day. I have to experience it and challenge it not hope that the formulas will work out somehow. I can't keep waiting for Rodriguez to get that.

MINERVA

How can you say that so easily?

MARGARET

I don't say it easily. It's something I just know. I've waited enough.

MINERVA

The man's a dream come true!

MARGARET

No Min, a dream come true is that someone comes in here in 2 1/2 minutes with a Primo-combo burrito with extra cheese and sour cream and a side of guac and chips. I'm fucking starved! Are we going to do this scene or what?

MINERVA

Try cleaning up the language, it doesn't become you at all.

MARGARET

I'm not a tidy package, okay? I never said I was. Now can we please rehearse the carnival scene?

MINERVA

Yes Margaret, we can do the carnival scene

MARGARET

Guys ... you come in when she says, "I think he wanted me to die." OK? Good.

[Guys nod. Margaret reads from the script.]

It was ...

MINERVA

It was a long time ago, back in Hungary. I'm lucky to have escaped

MARGARET

I'm lucky I escaped.

MINERVA

I know that's what it says in the script but I think what you are trying to say is better in the preterite tense. It's more sophisticated that way, so I changed it.

MARGARET

[To herself.] You've got to be kidding me! [To Minerva.] That's thoughtful of you, really. But my character is a Hungarian immigrant. I don't think she has quite the command of the English language that you do!

MINERVA

That hurts, Mag. I assumed foolishly that you made the character Hungarian in my honor. Sadly, you forget that my paternal grandparents were Hungarian immigrants! I don't think that you hear me talk in an overly simplistic way, do you?

MARGARET

Will you just read from the frigging script?

MINERVA

[Sung, to herself.] Suit yourself.

[Minerva rolls her eyes. Rodriguez laughs. Guys fidget bored, one looks at his watch.]

It all started after Mama died. My papa was drinking more and more. We had an act in a the travelling circus. But after Mama was gone, the act was finished.

[Rodriguez continues to watch unnoticed. Margaret reads stage directions from script.]

MARGARET

She holds back tears at the mention of her mother. She shakes her head. Okay Min go!

MINERVA

So papa decided to make this spectacle. He would tie me to a spinning wheel, give it a hard pull, step back, tie a blindfold over his eyes and throw knives at me. Every time he would drink more and more before the show. I would think. "I'm going to die this time"...

[Margaret holds one finger up to guys.]

MINERVA

I think he wanted me to die.

MARGARET

Excellent. Go guys!

[Minerva sees Rodriguez. She looks down embarrassed. He's watching Margaret. Guys play instrumental to "Cockpit".]

Guys, instrumental music begins here. Then she takes a deep breath and tries to collect herself ... ready and dunt dunt dah nunt, dah nunt dunt dunt, dunt dunt dah nunt, dah nunt dunt dunt ... and sung) Then I come in with vocals.

MARGARET (CONT'D SUNG)

You got what you wanted. But you can't have what you got. So go ahead, flaunt it, I won't be what you're not.

[Margaret notices the guys distracted and looking at the door behind her. She sees Rodriguez and motions to the guys to stop playing.]

MARGARET

Let's take a five minute cigarette break okay? Good job. [To Rodriguez.] Hi.

RODRIGUEZ

Hi.

MARGARET

We'll be out your way in a few minutes.

RODRIGUEZ

You're not in my way bab ... I mean, I'm not working with the guys today.

MARGARET

What are you doing?

RODRIGUEZ

Trying to paint. I enjoyed watching the rehearsal. It's coming finally, huh? It's going to be great Mag.

MARGARET

Thanks ... I gotta go back to rehearsal.

RODRIGUEZ

Wait. I've been thinking about what you said.

MARGARET

About what?

RODRIGUEZ

Letting you model and maybe that will help me get this replica together.

MARGARET

It wasn't "letting" me Rigo. I've got plenty of stuff to do. It's not like you're doing me any favors.

RODRIGUEZ

Obviously, baby, come on . I know you care about it. The foundation is coming to check on my progress. I'm running out of time

MARGARET

When did you figure that out? We're all running out of time.

RODRIGUEZ

I don't like to concentrate on that so much.

MARGARET

So why the sudden decision?

RODRIGUEZ

Why so suspicious, analyzing? Does it matter why?

MARGARET

Yeah, it does. I put a lot of energy into getting your ideas flowing. So I'd like to know who or what made you see what I've said all along.

RODRIGUEZ

I decided to do it. Nothing more. You're searching again for things that aren't there.

MARGARET

I heard that you were at the theatre looking for me.

RODRIGUEZ

I went there to see if we could talk.

MARGARET

What about?

RODRIGUEZ

How weird it feels not to have you around. I missed you last night.

MARGARET

You're right. I'm searching for something that isn't there. If you can't have the drive to seize something as important as this, then we have nothing in common.

RODRIGUEZ

Let's not do this baby...it's not good for us, you're making everything so hard.

MARGARET

Why is it "making things hard" if I don't accept things as they are all the time? Things are great until I challenge you or question you and then it's "too far ahead to think about" or "too far in the past!"

RODRIGUEZ

It doesn't seem natural to be this way. Why can't we just be in the present? Mag?

MARGARET

I can't keep fucking trying to get you excited about opportunities, you don't want to be. So lets just leave things the way they are.

RODRIGUEZ

There's more I have to tell you ... some weird stuff has been happening lately and I ...

[Minerva comes over with her water bottle.]

MINERVA

Hi Rodriguez! I've been studying a lot about the painting in preparation to model for you , but can't find biographical information about the dwarf in the painting! I assume you want me to pose for the dwarf, and Margaret the Infanta right? All I know is that her name is Marie ...oh I'm sorry I didn't mean to interrupt.

MARGARET

You didn't.

[Rodriguez looks at Margaret, objects. Margaret looks away deliberately.]

MINERVA

Well I was just going to tell you about the history I'm discovering in my research of the painting...

RODRIGUEZ

It's not necessary.

MARGARET

She's an actor. Believe me, to her, it's necessary.

[Rodriguez looks at Margaret as he speaks and is distracted by her. Minerva notices this and interrupts.]

MINERVA

Las Meninas, is a brilliant choice.

RODRIGUEZ

It wasn't a choice.

MINERVA

I've admired it since High School.

RODRIGUEZ

Today is a last attempt. I'm trying to create something for the foundation to see by tomorrow. Its practically a lost cause.

MINERVA

I'm quite certain that it's your destiny to do this painting.

[Margaret rolls her eyes and walks over to the guys. Rodriguez watches her leave.]

RODRIGUEZ

What's all this?

[He points to the costumes.]

MINERVA

Costumes from the theatre. I heard there was once a play there called Las Meninas! I thought that, since you've decided to accept Mag's offer for us to model, I'd use them! Aren't they magnificent!

RODRIGUEZ

What do you mean since I "decided to let you model"?

MINERVA

Well, I heard you were at the theatre and that you changed your mind about ...

RODRIGUEZ

I was at the theatre. But not for that reason, for something else.

[He looks at Margaret. She talks to the guys and looks at the script. He takes one of the billiard balls in his hand moving it in a triangular shape. He studies the balls.]

RODRIGUEZ

What do you know about the play?

MINERVA

It's called Las Meninas, a fictional work by Antonio Buero Vallejo. I've researched him too. He's a Spanish playwright from the Franco era who was imprisoned during the Spanish Civil War and sentenced to death but fortunately he...

[Rodriguez stops moving the ball abruptly, talks to Minerva. He keeps his eyes down on the table.]

RODRIGUEZ

Thanks for your ideas. I'll take these over to my apartment

[He gets up abruptly and takes the costumes in his arms. He walks toward the door.]

MINERVA

Rodriguez are you all right?

RODRIGUEZ

Yeah, I'm fine. I gotta get back to work

[He keeps walking backs around to push the door open and exits. Minerva calls to him.]

MINERVA

When do you need me to model?

RODRIGUEZ (V.O.)

Later.

MINERVA

OK! [To herself.] Oh my God, Margaret's crazy. He's a dream.

MARGARET

You ready to do the carnival scene all the way through?

[Margaret looks around.]

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Where's Rigo?

MINERVA

He left pretty abruptly. [To herself.] Strange.

MARGARET

He's gotten himself in a corner now. The clock's ticking. I don't know what he thinks he's waiting for.

MINERVA

Did you kiss and make up? He seems so sad without you. [To herself.] Why, I'm sure I don't know.

MARGARET

It's over, I told you.

[Guys take turns shooting.]

MINERVA

You're crazy and I guarantee you're going to regret it if you let him get away.

MARGARET

Did you two work out a time for you to model?

MINERVA

Sort of. Mag are you not listening? You're making a big mistake. I know what you're doing and it's wrong, making him pay for other guys' mess ups.

MARGARET

Look, Rigo needs to learn that apathy has consequences.

MINERVA

Maybe you need to learn to let people do things on their own terms and in their own time.

MARGARET

Thanks for the unsolicited analysis. Tomorrow's rehearsal will include my analysis of your love life.

MINERVA

That should be pretty brief.

MARGARET

Guys, let's take the carnival scene from where we left off. Ready?

[Minerva prematurely launches into delivering her lines.]

MINERVA

So papa decided to make this spectacle. He would tie me to a spinning wheel, give it a hard pull, step back, tie a blindfold over his eyes and throw knives at me. Every time he would drink more and more before the show. I would think. "I'm going to die this time". I think he wanted me to die.

[Guys play billiards.]

MARGARET

Guys, come on, that's your cue!

Billiard balls crack.

ACT II SCENE 2* RODRIGUEZ'S STUDIO

Lights come up on Rodriguez's studio through the doorway [Rodriguez is in his apartment. He puts the costumes on the mannequins that stand near the easel. He pours a shot of rum; he stands, and contemplates the costumes. He walks to his easel and paints a couple of final strokes on a painting of Margaret. He stares at the easel. Margaret appears in the mirror.]

MARGARET

My parents fled Uruguay. Military stormed their little business and took everything. So they came here, with nothing. Are you listening Rigo?

RODRIGUEZ

I know this story, Mag. You've told me before.

MARGARET

They believed this was a place of limitless opportunities. They worked hard. I was born. They encouraged me to believe in myself, to be spontaneous and think on my feet.

RODRIGUEZ

Everyone isn't so fortunate. My father believed I should as little like me as possible. What does this have to do with anything?

MARGARET

I fell flat on my face so many times. Every time they'd tell me to pick myself up and try again. They gave me hope. Dreaming was a luxury they didn't have.

RODRIGUEZ

I can't be someone I'm not. Not for you or for Papa. It's not possible. But I can wait. I am patient. I will wait for you.

MARGARET

You are beautiful to me, methodical and certain. Life is urgent, a dream is important. I love you Rigo. But, I can't wait for you. I may never grow old.

[Rodriguez finishes the painting. He takes it off the easel and puts it on the floor next to the Las Meninas poster. He puts blank canvas on his easel, sits on a rung of the ladder. Enter Velazquez. He stands in the doorway smoking his pipe.]

VELAZQUEZ

A night's sleep did some good, espero?

[Rodriguez stares straight ahead at his canvas.]

RODRIGUEZ

She's not coming back.

VELAZQUEZ

Your profound feeling for humanity, it's getting in the way, distracting you from your work.

RODRIGUEZ

You said my humanity is my strength as an artist! Now you say it's a weakness.

VELAZQUEZ

An obstacle can be your greatest inspiration.

RODRIGUEZ

How am I supposed overcome my "humanity"?

VELAZQUEZ

Die!

[Rodriguez freezes.]

VELAZQUEZ

It certainly freed me up for the afternoon didn't it?

[Rodriguez laughs, relieved.]

RODRIGUEZ

Did she ever paint?

VELAZQUEZ

Who?

RODRIGUEZ

The Infanta. Did you teach her how to paint?

VELAZQUEZ

No.

RODRIGUEZ

Did she grow old?

VELAZQUEZ

No, she didn't.

RODRIGUEZ

What happened to her?

[Velazquez stops smoking.]

VELAZQUEZ

She died, in childbirth with her seventh child. She was twenty.

[Rodriguez drops his head. Velazquez puts his arm around him. They walk through the wall between Rodriguez's apartment and the youth center to the billiard table.]

RODRIGUEZ

You were her father's favorite painter, and mine.

[Rodriguez takes a cue and shoots.]

VELAZQUEZ

I would be disappointed if you despised my work due to your father's admiration of it. Yet, I would be as disappointed if you liked it for the same reason.

RODRIGUEZ

My father doesn't really know who I am.

VELAZQUEZ

Perhaps you don't really know who he is.

RODRIGUEZ

I'm sure he doesn't want me to know. He wants to remind me that I'm not measuring up to his expectations.

VELAZQUEZ

I suspect that his pressure is forcing you to find capabilities you never imagined you had.

RODRIGUEZ

So far I'm a disaster. Tomorrow the foundation will come and see an empty canvas.

VELAZQUEZ

Mira, hijo mio, it is sometimes quite difficult to discern between inspiration and imitation ...

[Velazquez points to the Las Meninas poster.]

...humanity and apathy ...

RODRIGUEZ

I hate him.

[Velazquez points to the portrait of
Constantine with his pipe.]

VELAZQUEZ

... between love and hate...

[He points to the doorway.]

... reality and dreams, 300 years or a day. They are all
connected, truths that have always been here. Just as we
artists are connected, the same geometrical patterns in our
works and in your diamond systems can be found in all of
life's mysteries.

[Rodriguez shoots and turns to
Velazquez. He is gone. He looks at the
empty doorway. He walks to the easel.
He sits behind it, smoking. Billiard
balls crack.]

ACT II SCENE 3: MINERVA AND RODRIGUEZ

[Rodriguez sits and paints behind easel. There's a knock on the apartment door. Rodriguez does not respond. There is a second knock. Rodriguez does not answer. Minerva enters.]

MINERVA

I'm here to model now Rodriguez.

RODRIGUEZ

I know.

MINERVA

Have you made progress?

[She puts her bag and script down on the table.]

RODRIGUEZ

Yeah, 4 paintings in 24 hours. I'm painting everything but what I'm supposed to paint.

MINERVA

Everything? Really? Or an endless series of portraits of "Princess" Margaret?

[Rodriguez continues to stare at the canvas. Minerva unbuttons the costume from the mannequin and pulls it off from the top.]

MINERVA

May I use your bathroom?

[She begins to unbutton the back of her shirt.]

RODRIGUEZ

I don't know how safe it is at the moment.

MINERVA

Your bathroom's dangerous?

[She laughs and exits with costume in hand.]

RODRIGUEZ

You know, clean.

MINERVA (V.O.)

Margaret said you're stuck.

RODRIGUEZ

True.

MINERVA (V.O.)

She wants you to succeed, you know.

RODRIGUEZ

I don't think it matters now.

MINERVA (V.O.)

You mean since you're stuck?

RODRIGUEZ

Yeah, since I'm stuck. No matter what I do it's going to piss somebody off. I have no real choices.

MINERVA (V.O.)

If you choose to think that!

RODRIGUEZ

I didn't choose the circumstances, my parents foundation or Margaret's expectations.

[He picks up his palette and continues painting.]

MINERVA (V.O.)

You can whine and intellectualize. Or you can make something out of the situation.

[Minerva returns in costume. Rodriguez looks up stunned.]

Mother used to say, "If you can't find the choice that will make you happy, choose the one that's the least painful."

RODRIGUEZ

Actually that makes sense.

MINERVA

Life involves suffering Rodriguez. It's unavoidable.

RODRIGUEZ

There's nothing I can do about it.

MINERVA

You view many things as out of your control. You don't even attempt things that are well within your reach. Margaret, assumes that all is possible. When she's told she has no chance of succeeding it only further fuels her determination. She dreams and relentlessly pursues.

RODRIGUEZ

She's not coming back.

[Rodriguez hangs the portrait of
Margaret on the wall.]

MINERVA

If you accept it that easily, then perhaps your assumptions
are correct.

RODRIGUEZ

She has pulled away from me, far away.

MINERVA

So you give up hope. I get up everyday hoping that if I wash
my face and smile, maybe I'll be seen, noticed, acknowledged.

[She turns to the mirror and fixes her
hair. Rodriguez approaches her]

RODRIGUEZ

You are talented, Minerva.

MINERVA

And loved? Adored? No. I'm like your students in the youth
center. They are invisible, cute, irrelevant. I see hope in
their eyes though. Not happiness, but tragic hope.

RODRIGUEZ

[To himself.] Esperanza tragica!

[He stares at her mesmerized.]

MINERVA

I see the same look in the eyes of those in Las Meninas.
There are inescapable realities in their eyes, rich or poor,
homely or lovely.

RODRIGUEZ

You are lovely.

MINERVA

It seems to be the premise of Velazquez's work, from what I
can tell. It's a necessity of survival, of existence. Hope.

RODRIGUEZ

Amidst adversity

MINERVA

Amidst life. Hope is found in a painting or a song.

[Minerva tears a little corner of a
pizza box. On it she writes something.]

She kisses it and puts it in down the front of her dress. Rodriguez paints.]

RODRIGUEZ

What are you writing on all those little pieces of paper?

MINERVA

Quotes. I like to write things down. I look at them at the end of the day and paste them into my journal. Here's one you can keep.

[She pulls the cardboard shred out of the front of her dress and puts it down on the little table. Rodriguez paints. Minerva walks to the Las Meninas poster. She studies it.]

Velazquez gave light to people usually considered unimportant, misfits who are overlooked or underestimated. I'm one of them, a misfit in the shadows.

RODRIGUEZ

People worth knowing are there. They aren't caught up in the rat race. I can't find my way out. I'm fucked up. I can't see right now.

MINERVA

You'd be surprised at the things that go on right in front of me and those of us who are not attractive, or are damaged in some way. We don't count. But with that unimportance comes clarity.

RODRIGUEZ

Everything has become blurred. I can't listen to her voice now. It used to have answers.

MINERVA

The answers are there in front of you. The blind have keen vision. Those of us left alone in the darkness see the light more clearly.

RODRIGUEZ

Then I belong there too.

[Rodriguez walks over to her and stands very close.]

I always try to stay in the shadows as much as possible.

MINERVA

For you it's a choice not a condition. You can go back into the light whenever you please. That's the difference between you and me.

[Minerva moves away.]

RODRIGUEZ

My darkest moments have been in broad daylight. Some of my loneliest have been in the most crowded places.

[He moves toward her again and strokes her face. He takes her face in his hands and passionately kisses her. Rushed, he pushes her backwards against the billiard table and unbuttons the back of her dress. Minerva starts to embrace him. Her opens hands clench to fists. She pounds his back and violently pushes him away.]

MINERVA

What are you doing? You're right. You are fucked up. Am I that pathetic to you?

RODRIGUEZ

No, Minerva! I didn't mean to!

MINERVA

How convenient to have a sad and hopeful starry eyed admirer here to help you get over Margaret! I'm so stupid.

[Her voice begins to crack.]

RODRIGUEZ

No, it isn't that! Please wait! Listen!

MINERVA

It's tempting. I could pretend for some moments. Pretend that you see something in me.

RODRIGUEZ

I do Minerva. I would never hurt you.

[Minerva cries.]

MINERVA

I could close my eyes and make love to you. But when I opened them yours would be closed too.

RODRIGUEZ

I was out of line. It was wrong.

MINERVA

My feelings have been written all over my face, haven't they? So you took advantage of me, because you could. I'm an easy mark.

RODRIGUEZ

I'm so sorry.

MINERVA

What's the matter? I'm not responding the way you expected? I came here because I saw a good man with talent. Someone who needs inspiration, encouragement. You confuse hopefulness with weakness. I do have some fucking dignity. I have that!

[She grabs her purse. She runs out through the doorway, wearing the costume, crying.]

RODRIGUEZ

Let me explain. Minerva!

[He runs and tries to stop her. He notices her clothes left on the table and takes them.]

You left your clothes.

[He turns around and throws the clothes down.]

That's great you fucking idiot! You fucking ass-hole! Fucking ass-hole!

[He kicks the Las Meninas poster across the floor. Pulls the portraits of his father and Margaret off the wall and throws them down. He kicks the pile of clothes on the floor. Minerva's cardboard quote flies up out of them. He stops, picks it up and reads it.]

RODRIGUEZ

When nobody is looking at me, like now, I reflect on the question: Wouldn't music be the only possible answer?

[He breaks down, crying, his head in his hands. He begins to paint.]

ACT II SCENE 4*: MINERVA'S WHEEL

[Rodriguez paints a portrait of Minerva, wearing angel wings, and holding a mirror. Margaret is in the painting also. She's lying nude on her side, facing the mirror. Rodriguez hangs the painting on the wall. Billiard balls crack. Enter Velazquez, wears a masquerade mask. He pushes a platform with an upright big wheel painted with many colors. (The wheel pictured in the Hermetist painting from King Philip's palace). Minerva enters. She wears the Maribárbola costume. She methodically pushes the step ladder to the wheel and mounts it. She stands in a jumping jack position on two pegs. Her hands grip the other two pegs over her head. Guys play. Velazquez bows to King Philip and Queen Mariana reflected in the mirror. He nods to audience.]

MARGARET (V.O./ SUNG)

*You got what you wanted. But you can't have what you got.
So go ahead, flaunt it. I won't be what you're not.
Wheel keeps spinning, round and round.
It takes her upside down. Daddy's beaming, he's so proud.
Makes you wanna wring her neck. You know you gotta wring her neck.*

[Velazquez walks up to the wheel and gives it a full tug causing her to rock from side to side. The wheel slows. Minerva, addresses Rodriguez.]

MINERVA

You had it all, both of you. Nobody noticed, I was there. It's okay, I don't resent you for it. We'll all die someday. We're equal on that day. All that we'll leave behind are our creations, little remnants of lives lived: Las Meninas, your mother's child, your painting, songs and tiny words on shreds of paper.

[Velazquez approaches the wheel and pulls it harder this time. It slowly spins Minerva around. He steps back far from the spinning wheel and throws knives at her as she spins. He bows with each successive throw of the knife. The king and queen applaud.]

MARGARET (V.O.)

*Ardent bravado, you should take your pill
So crawl across the floor to her
Your destiny's fulfilled
Wheel keeps spinning round and round
It takes her upside down
Daddy's beaming, he's so proud
Makes you wanna wring her neck , you know you gotta wring her
neck.*

MINERVA

From my darkness you were illuminated. I knew your brilliance Rigo. So did she. She was vibrant, but in a hurry. So neither of you really saw. You could have seen it if you were invisible like me. She waits for no one and expects everything. I expect nothing, but hope for the improbable, and I wait for you.

[Velazquez walks back to his place and takes a long swig from a bottle. He calls Rodriguez to come. He blindfolds Rodriguez. Rodriguez throws the last knife. It goes through Minerva's heart. Her body goes limp.]

MARGARET (V.O.)

I got what I wanted. But I can't have what I got. The task made you feel daunted. So you had to pull it out.

[Music abruptly stops. The king and queen applaud heartily. Velazquez bows for them. The wheel stops. The king and queen exit, then Velazquez. Margaret, enters. She's wearing the Infanta costume. She pulls the knife out of Minerva's heart. Minerva's body slumps over onto Margaret. Rodriguez removes his blindfold and sees Minerva's limp body and tries to help. Guys push wheel with Minerva and Margaret off stage.]

ACT II SCENE 5: RODRIGUEZ'FINAL DREAM: MADRID, 1660/ MIAMI
1997.

Billiard balls clack.

CACHITA (V.O.)

Rigo, the foundation directors are at the door. They've come
to see your progress.

[Rodriguez is alone in his studio. The
Infanta from Rodriguez's replica of Las
Meninas is reflected in the mirror.
Some other details from the replica are
also finished. He talks to the canvas.]

RODRIGUEZ

Mag, I try to cry out for you. No sound will come. I hear
your voice, so clearly, that I can't even hear my own. I move
slowly, so you leave me behind. But I am moving. I am finding
my way. I never told you I love you. You were always in a
hurry. I do. I'll be here; I'll be okay.

[Enter Margaret in the Infanta costume.
She kisses Rodriguez passionately. She
walks to the billiard table and with
her back to Rodriguez, she takes off
the Infanta costume. She wears a
backless black dress. She climbs onto
the billiard table and lies on her side
facing the diamond systems poster.]

[Enter Velazquez. He stands in the
doorway calls to Rodriguez, he
addresses him as Juan. He's weak.]

VELAZQUEZ

Finally inspired?

RODRIGUEZ

Come, look. Thanks to you I've been able to work. Let me get
this out of the way.

[Rodriguez moves the ladder out of the
way.]

VELAZQUEZ

No, hijo mio. It won't be necessary. I won't be painting now.
It was, in fact, quite an arduous journey from France.

RODRIGUEZ

I know you're not going to paint, but, I wanted to show you
my progress ... on the replica ...

[He studies Velazquez.]

VELAZQUEZ

Any news from the inquiry commission?

[Velazquez coughs. He takes out his pipe and tobacco, packs it and lights it.]

RODRIGUEZ

You mean the foundation?

VELAZQUEZ

Get me a wine.

[Velazquez walks to the billiard table. Rodriguez goes to him and gives him a drink. Rodriguez takes down two cues. Velazquez declines.]

VELAZQUEZ

No, you play now, without me, Juan.

RODRIGUEZ

Juan?

[Rodriguez reluctantly plays alone around Margaret.]

VELAZQUEZ

The truce between France and Spain is now in force since the wedding. King Philip can now turn his attention to procuring my acceptance for the Order of Santiago.

[Velazquez coughs more now. Rodriguez gets up to help him.]

I shall wear it proudly to the next royal marriage of the Duke of Austria and the Infanta Margarita ... your muse in the paintings? Isn't she?

RODRIGUEZ

Why did you help me?

[King Philip appears in the frame of the mirror.]

KING PHILIP

Diego! You've returned. We received the confirmation from the inquiry into your bloodline. Your bloodline is pure. You are officially accepted into the Royal Order of Santiago. Congratulations.

[The king turns around from behind the frame of the mirror and exits. Las Meninas is reflected in the mirror. Velazquez coughs more, collapses. Reina Mariana comes to help him. She becomes Cachita.]

VELAZQUEZ

Rodriguez!

[Rodriguez runs to the mirror and paints the red Cross of Santiago on Velazquez's reflection.]

Thank you, my son.

[Velazquez's head drops back down. King Philip becomes Constantine. He enters through the doorway. He carries a little child's easel and puts it down on the floor in front of the billiard table. He walks over to Rodriguez in front of the Las Meninas replica. He looks at it.]

CONSTANTINE

Rodriguez, you've completed the replica, as well you should.

RODRIGUEZ

Papa?

CONSTANTINE

Your father was a magnificent painter. I had never seen such talent. Your mother was like a school girl. I could see the enchantment in her eyes when we would see him painting out in the streets of Havana. He illuminated her. I wanted her to look at me with those same eyes. I loved her. What could I offer her? How could I win? I didn't have his talent or charm.

RODRIGUEZ

What are you saying Papa?

CONSTANTINE

But he couldn't be a real father to you. He couldn't offer you a life in the United States of America! No! That costs money. I had that. I was sure you both would grow to love me. You didn't. If it weren't for you, your mother would have denied herself all I offered. But for you, she denied herself love; The man of her dreams.

RODRIGUEZ

No Papa! Mama? Mama, why? Your whole life? A lifetime Mama, my lifetime!

CONSTANTINE

You are so much like him, your father. You paintings are so much like his, they bring me nothing but pain. I gave you both a name, the de Silva name! At least I deserve some respect don't I? I deserve it from you! I demand it. So I waited. I waited for you.

[He tries to cry out but his voice is strained.]

Mama!

[Cachita gets up slowly. She stands next to Constantine in front of the mirror.] There's a knock on the door.

CACHITA

Rigo, the foundation directors are at the door. They've come to see your progress. I'm proud of you mi hijo.

[Enter the Guys with clip boards. They walk to the large easel with Rodriguez' replica and silently write notes.]

RODRIGUEZ

I think I understand. We do what we have to do to get through. But just like you, I have to fall. Papa is still my papa even though he isn't at all.

[Minerva wearing angel wings and the Maribárbola costume walks slowly to the mirror on the wall and takes it down. The Cross of Santiago Rodriguez painted on it remains. She holds it resting on the billiard table. Rodriguez touches her face gently.]

I can see my reflection clearly But in the end, just like you, I had to find my own way.

[Rodriguez talks to Velazquez stands slowly.]

Just like you, my blood is pure. And just like you, I'm still who I've known I was all along.

[The Guys put down their clip boards, walk over to their instruments and begin to play. Velazquez rises up, suspended.]

The mannequins and chunks of rock float. They remain suspended over the billiard table with Margaret on it. Rodriguez and Margaret are reflected in the mirror that Minerva holds. He paints a self-portrait on the little easel. The painted Cross of Santiago covers his image in the mirror. Margaret jumps off of the billiard table with her script in hand.]

MARGARET

That was perfect guys. Let's take it all the way through one more time.

THE END

La Vida es Sueño - Pedro Calderon

(Music & adaptation /J.Chase)

We live, while we see the sun
Our life and dreams are as one
And living has taught me this.
Man dreams a life that is his,
Until his living is done,
And honey you taught me this
With your kiss.

Que toda la vida es un sueño
Y los sueños son sueños tambien
A king, dreams he's king and he lives,
In the deceit of a king,
Commanding and governing,
And all the praise he receives,
Is written in wind and leaves,
And baby you taught me this,
With your kiss

Que toda la vida es un sueño
Y los sueños son sueños tambien
A little dust on the way,
A frenzied extreme,
Were we a year or a day,
Dreams themselves are a dream
Que toda la vida es un sueño
Y los sueños son sueños tambien

Vita

In 1995 Jennifer Chase arrived in Jacksonville's music scene. By spring 1996 she had received critical acclaim in Europe and the U.S. for her debut original album *kid jail*. Jennifer's highly anticipated second album *Famadihana*, released in 1998, featured collaborations with well known songwriter and guitarist Gary Smalley. The album explored other themes ranging from racism, animism, mythology and ancestor worship while still adhering to the eclectic signature style debuted in the earlier work. The album also includes the first of several originals recorded in French.

Subsequent solo tours in France and study of the French language, heightened Jennifer's interest in International Studies. The albums received frequent airplay on public and college radio stations throughout the U.S and Europe. At home, Jennifer opened for such Grammy award winners as: The Doobie Brothers, The Rippingtons, and Lisa Loeb. She founded and spearheaded, j.a.n.e. (Jacksonville Artists' Night of Entertainment), a non-profit project boasting two concerts and an original CD that funded child-care scholarships for single parents pursuing a college education. The project was the first and only of its kind in Florida.

In spring of 1998, Jennifer was honored with the Annual University of North Florida's Women's Leadership Award for her service and accomplishments with j.a.n.e. In the Fall of that year, Jennifer was awarded the Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship in recognition of her academic and humanitarian achievements. The scholarship sent her to Senegal, Africa for a semester to share her music and to immerse herself in the Wolof and French languages in the Islamic country. In 2000, Jennifer received her B.A. from the University of North Florida in International Studies and returned to Senegal. There she began to write the original musical *Majigeen*, which has enjoyed five successful runs on Florida stages.

In 2007 She performed in, and wrote original music for, the P.B.S. documentary, *In Marjorie's Wake*. Her album by the same title is now available.

Recently, Jennifer spent two consecutive summers in Madrid, Spain. There she worked on her newest drama, *Handmaid*, while in residence to complete her M.F.A. from the University of New Orleans. She is a professor at Florida Community College teaching English as a Second Language and continues to perform and travel.

Jennifer resides in Jacksonville, Florida with her children and partner, Aure, to whom her new drama, *Handmaid*, is dedicated.