

¡ÁTAME! TO TAKE!

VISIONING ALMODÓVAR ONTO THE AMERICAN STAGE

BY CARTER WEEKS MADDOX

Thesis Supervisor:

John Hood, MFA
Department of Theatre and Dance,
University Honors Program

Second Reader:

Nancy Wilson, MA
Department of English

Approved:

Heather C. Galloway, Ph.D.
Director of the University Honors Program

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HONORS THESIS

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Carter Weeks Maddox

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ABSTRACT

Auteur Pedro Almodóvar's work provides highly important representations of the Spanish-speaking world's cultural viewpoint from the latter quarter of the twentieth century through today. English-speaking audiences appreciate his work, laud him with awards, and we have even begun to make his films into English-language stageplays. With this thesis, I argue that direct translation will not bring about understanding of Almodóvar's typically Spanish ideas, and if we are to understand those ideas we must rely on a model of cultural adaptation instead. I then offer my stageplay *Take!* as an example of the proposed cultural adaptation.

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THE ORIGINS OF *TAKE!*

Entitled *Take!*, my stageplay—the creative component of this Honors Thesis—was produced by At-Random Theatre and premiered in December 2009. As I admitted countless times during the writing and production of *Take!*, I wrote the play after having difficulty in finding a copy of Spanish auteur Pedro Almodóvar’s *¡Átame!* (1990) to watch. I had seen all of Almodóvar’s other films and found it frustrating to wonder what bits of Almodóvar’s career I could be missing by having not seen *¡Átame!*. When I traveled abroad to Spain in the summer of 2009 to learn Spanish, I even searched for the film there and never found a copy.

What I did know about *¡Átame!*, though, was that it stars Victoria Abril and Antonio Banderas, and Banderas’s character kidnaps Abril’s character. I knew the film was released under an X rating by the American MPAA system and never saw widespread popularity in the U.S.—thus giving me reason for why I could never find a copy. Because of a paper I wrote for a class entitled “History of Narrative Film” I took at Texas State in 2008, I also knew *¡Átame!* was the *last* film to be given an X by the MPAA; in fact, I knew it was now rated NC-17. I knew Almodóvar fought for *¡Átame!*’s American rating to be lowered—and even the country of Spain supported his appeal. In

result, a Spanish film directed by the figurehead of Spanish cinema “changed the U.S. rating system” (Kinder 10)

But that was all I knew. When I began writing *Take!*, I had never seen *¡Átame!*.

I sensed it as being a misunderstood text, though. That the MPAA changed its rating system on *¡Átame!*’s behalf seems to speak to an American sensitivity to at least *try* and accommodate texts it does not understand. However, even an NC-17 rating limits the audience a film can reach, and has “long [been] seen as the kiss of death for a movie” (Dutka 1). Upon the release of Bernardo Bertolucci’s *The Dreamers* (2003), the MPAA gave its first NC-17 to a film in six years. When Darren Aronofsky’s *Requiem for a Dream* (2000) was given an NC-17 rating, Aronofsky appealed, claiming that “cutting any portion of the film would dilute, if not outright destroy, its message” (Berardinelli 1). When the MPAA refused his appeal, the production company for *Requiem*...released the film unrated. Simply put, the MPAA’s NC-17 carries a stigma, and when producers feel threatened by the rating they sometimes forgo the system altogether so they can still have an audience for their films.

When I wrote *Take!*, I approached my frustration of being unable to watch *¡Átame!* because the culture within which I reside does not accept Almodóvar’s film. And I wondered *why* we didn’t accept it. Without seeing *¡Átame!*, I could not understand Almodóvar’s body of work in its entirety. I wanted understanding of that missing text; I was missing a link in a chain.

So, I wrote my own version of *¡Átame!*. Or, rather, I wrote what I wanted *¡Átame!* to be.

ALMODÓVAR'S IMPORTANCE

The most critically and commercially successful Spanish film director ever, Pedro Almodóvar has documented fictional stories of Spain for nearly forty years and shows no signs of slowing his pace. The international film community shows no signs of forgetting him either, as he, his films, performers and crew continue to win awards and make consistent leaps and bounds in filmic development. He's been compared to auteurs such as Bergman and Fellini and categorized as an auteur alongside his contemporaries such as the United States's Steven Soderberg and Denmark's Lars von Trier. In his home *comunidad autonoma* in Spain, the University of Castilla-La Mancha opened the world's first Almodóvar Studies center in 2003, making "all of his papers and production materials accessible to scholars from any part of the world" (Kinder 9).

Although Pedro Almodóvar's prominence as a world leader in cinema cannot be denied, what distances him from his contemporaries and what makes him actually more similar to those older auteurs like Bergman and Fellini is his insistence upon making typically Spanish films—Spanish in language and in culture. More specifically, he and his stories are as synonymous with a post-Franco Spain and post-modern Spanish-speaking world as Vincente Minelli's films are synonymous with the American ideal of a wild, formidable West bounding with possibility. Tied to *la movida*, a Spanish cultural

and intellectual movement that occurred in urban Madrid and other epicenters from the late '70s to the mid-'80s, Almodóvar's films—especially the ones from that time period—portray a Spain that is healing, a Spain that, after years of right-wing, conservative, dictatorial oppression, cannot wait to express itself. Thus, Almodóvar's films became embodiments of the voice of *la movida* and have since continued to speak for the Spanish culture. As Marsha Kinder asserts in "Reinventing the Motherland: Almodóvar's Brain-Dead Trilogy," "Almodóvar has remained committed to making movies only in Spanish and only in Spain, where he has total artistic control" (10).

Contrarily, some auteurs broaden their scope, infuse their ideals specific to their own cultural lineage into another culture. In a single film—*Traffic* (2000)—American Soderberg put his camera in the cultures of Americans and Mexicans alike as he interpreted differing visions of diplomacy between two battling countries. Throughout another distinguished career, von Trier has likewise placed his ideals from his own Danish background onto America (see the "Golden Heart" and "USA: Land of Opportunity" trilogies, in which von Trier tackles Puritanical ideals of freedom, slavery and generosity within an American, not Danish, context—and also includes scripts in the English language). From his practice, we can see that when von Trier made *Dancer in the Dark* (2000) and set it in America, he transferred his own Danish cultural assumptions into his film. Likewise for Soderberg.

Almodóvar, though, has never made a film about a linguistic community that did not speak Spanish. He *has* used English (and French, among other languages) in his films—but only sparingly. In result, his use of other languages never acts as more than decoration: in *La flor de mi secreto* (1995), Marisa Parades's character rattles out some

French on the phone and then almost directly goes back to speaking Spanish, and in *Abrazos rotos* (2009), Penélope Cruz's character reserves a hotel room in English and then continues to speak Spanish as soon as the trade is made. Some may find implications behind Almodóvar's use of foreign languages, but the fact these usages are few and far between—and when they occur, they are fleeting—suggests those implications are not of much importance. Because of his refusal to use foreign languages, some perceive Almodóvar to be an “insular” (11) character within the tapestry of world cinema; however, Kinder claims he is not. While describing Almodóvar's status as an auteur of the highest class, she suggests

by extending the reach of his films throughout the Spanish language world [through the use of Latin American music, actors, et cetera], he deepens his penetration of the global [film] market in a way that rivals Hollywood and Europe while still remaining loyal to his Spanish speaking origins and retaining the outsider's edge. (11)

In effect, the films from Almodóvar's career are constitutive of a new Spanish-language world cinema. More specifically, Almodóvar is the Spanish-speaking world's leading directorial voice in film.

The connection to be made from Almodóvar's resistance to producing a film in English lies within the comparison to other leaders of world cinema. Whereas von Trier places his Danish view upon America in his trilogies, Almodóvar never does this. We must do it for ourselves.

Unlike von Trier and other contemporary auteurs who place their cultural background over another culture (through idiom, value systems, style, et cetera),

Almodóvar's insistence on remaining a strictly Spanish-language film director, even if he is an internationally recognized auteur of the highest degree, creates a logical disconnect between his foreign-language-speaking viewers (we English-speaking ones) and his intended, Spanish-speaking audiences. Almodóvar often teases at other world cinemas—especially Hollywood. He makes Penélope Cruz into the spitting image of Audrey Hepburn in his latest film *Abrazos rotos* (2009); he transforms the storyline of *All About Eve* (1950) into a tale of maternity and stardom and death in *Todo sobre mi madre* (1999). This playfulness suggests he wants us, specifically, to pay attention to his films. However, because we are not of his Spanish-speaking world, we cannot fully and completely understand the viewpoint through which Almodóvar tells his tales.

But, recently, English-language theatre institutions have begun adapting Almodóvar's films. In 2007, *Todo sobre mi madre* premiered as a stage musical written by Samuel Anderson at London's West-End Old Vic Theatre to great acclaim and with Almodóvar's approval (Benedict 1). However, as theatre critic Peter Brown claims when speaking of this adaptation,

there's [nothing] implicitly wrong with transferring a story from one medium to another. But when a story also changes language it doesn't always carry with it the cultural niceties which produced its distinctiveness in the first place...[*Todo sobre mi madre*] the play doesn't seem to have quite let go of its filmic roots...[and] leaves one wondering why there was a need to adapt the original. (1)

Similarly, *Las mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* will see the light of the American stage as a musical to premiere in November of this year at the Belasco Theatre

on Broadway. Hopefully the production will correct the issues Brown sees in the adaptation of *Todo sobre mi madre*. There is no telling for sure, though—at least not until November.

While these productions do promote Almodóvar's status as a world artist worthy of attention, they are not surprising considering the atmosphere surrounding contemporary, English-speaking theatre. As David Benedict claims, "if it's been seen on the screen, someone will stage it" (1). Indeed. Benedict also points out that Fellini's masterpiece of procrastination *8 ½* (1963) was turned into the musical *Nine* (1982), as were other directors' films such as *Little Shop of Horrors* (1982), *Footloose* (1998) and even *Carrie* (1988). Further, in recent years, Broadway's attention to musicals has shifted from originals to adaptations; see *Xanadu* (2007), *The Wedding Singer* (2006) and *Legally Blonde* (2007), among others. Benedict's claim makes sense, then. We should have expected Almodóvar's films would be made into plays eventually.

One such adaptation has already completed a successful run, and another is in the making. What seems to be missing from current English-language adaptations of Almodóvar's work, though, especially as they appear on English-speaking stages, is attention to his stories through music-free storytelling. As well, the approach to adapting Almodóvar's work onto the stage thus far lacks an emphasis on English-speaking audiences foreign to a Spanish cultural mindset.

I see a problem here: instead of *adapting* Almodóvar's films into stories set against a cultural backdrop (our own) we English speakers can understand, we are currently relying on *translating* his works. In doing so, we forget that our audiences

never fully understand his films to begin with. How will translation, then, give us new versions of his stories that we can understand and learn from?

Take *Las mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios*. In English translation, the title means *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*—and the title is problematic. The problem lies within the English-language conception of a nervous breakdown and the Spanish-language conception of *un ataque de nervios*. In fact, *un ataque de nervios* does not even translate into English at all, for the phenomenon is a culturally based psychiatric “folk diagnosis” (Schechter, et al. 529) and is therefore not relatable to members outside the culture within which the term exists. The cultural assumptions behind *un ataque de nervios* and a nervous breakdown do not align. Even before seeing *Las mujeres...*, English-speaking audiences will misunderstand Almodóvar’s title and, in turn, misinterpret his film. As the stage musical will have the same title, English-speaking audiences will presumably misinterpret and misunderstand the adaptation, too.

If Almodóvar’s films represent the viewpoint of the Spanish-speaking world, and if the English-speaking world is becoming increasingly aware of the necessity of communicating with that Spanish counterpart, English-language translators of his work should do more than tell his exact stories in different (language) words. Telling *Las mujeres...* exactly as Almodóvar originally told it on film, but this time on stage in English with music, will do nothing more in adding to our understanding of the typically Spanish ideas of Almodóvar’s original work. Again: as English speakers, we can’t even understand the title. How are we to understand his typically Spanish ideas within the film, then, or those within an adapted musical made from the film, if we are confused about even the title?

To alleviate this problem, I propose a solution rooted in translation. It is not a new solution, at least not as applied to other world artists (even those we now consider historical figures). However, the translation of Almodóvar's films into stageplays has not yet been done utilizing the method I suggest. In short, I propose that instead of translating Almodóvar's films into English-language stageplays through direct adaptation, we should translate his films into stageplays through cultural adaptation. By this, I mean that when we adapt his screenplays into stageplays, we should clarify the blurry boundaries between our respective languages; we should make up for the gap left between *un ataque de nervios* and a nervous breakdown—among other misunderstandings between our respective cultures. Instead of directly translating his stories into English from Spanish, we should re-position and adapt them to fit inside our own culture. Our own, English-language-influenced cultural ideals, assumptions and traditions should be the backdrop to our newly adapted stories.

The process by which to achieve my thesis, as I said, is not a new idea; as I will explain, even English poets during the Renaissance adopted the use of cultural adaptation versus direct translation when translating Italian poems. On a worldwide scale, cross-cultural dialogue has developed so that members of all cultures can share their own (even diametrically opposed) value systems with other members of other cultures.

When translating Almodóvar's work, I believe we can benefit from adhering to cultural adaptations of his films—adaptations like those of the Renaissance poets and Kurosawa.

In presenting my stageplay *Take!*, which was produced by At-Random Theatre in December 2009 as a creative component of this Honors Thesis, I not only offer a defense

of my own stageplay's cultural adaptation of one of Almodóvar's most misunderstood films, *¡Átame!* (1990), but I also offer a solution for the translation issues I have here described. *Take!*, hopefully, can help set an example for others interested in adapting Spanish-language texts onto our own, English-speaking, English-presuming stages.

NOTHING MUST BE LOST IN TRANSLATION

Consider an old childhood game which demonstrates how people interpret the same information differently: to begin, a secret is whispered in one person's ear. That person then whispers the secret into the next participant's ear, and the secret continues to circulate the room until it returns to its teller. In most cases, the original secret has undergone so much change that the original teller merely laughs. The game, after all, is intended to be humorous.

The game also reflects the style of translation in sixteenth-century English literature. Sans the humor, English translators working with a young and developing language translated the classics the best they could. And as in the game, translators often shifted the method of re-telling the original text so much as to sometimes make that original text unrecognizable. In so doing, translators suffused their translations with personal beliefs and values. While I admit the poems I will discuss *are* translations because of the switch from Italian to English, I believe this style of translation, which I have defined in my "Background" chapter as cultural adaptation, is what we can use in order to better tell Almodóvar's stories to our own audiences in English.

From Petrarch's "Sonnet 140," we can find two sixteenth-century adaptations: one by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey; and one by Thomas Wyatt (both of whom are

credited with introducing the sonnet form into English). Both adaptations ultimately arrive at the same conclusion—Petrarch’s subject matter remains unchanged. But in matters of tone, the poems differ greatly. In turn, the adaptations demonstrate the sonneteers’ differing fundamental beliefs about love—and, even more, the diametrically opposed viewpoints of religion in sixteenth-century England, as Wyatt writes from the Protestant perspective and Surrey from the Catholic. What we can learn from these poems is translators can do more than just translate a work: they can also adapt that work, supplant it into their own cultural perspectives.

Direct translations would not achieve this goal.

First, a look at Wyatt’s adaptation: “The Long Love” insists on love being a freeing experience. The speaker of Wyatt’s poem “harbour[s]” (1) love, allows love a place of “residence” (2) in his heart. This admission, the speaker’s telling the reader he invites love to work within his heart, warms the tone of Wyatt’s poem from the beginning—it also carries Protestant undertones. To Wyatt’s speaker, love is an invited experience, and love has set up “camp” in offered territory (4). In doing so, Wyatt builds a safeguard for the reader; the tone of the poem will shift, but already readers feel cozy in its embrace. In later lines, Wyatt’s speaker admits the heart is akin to a “forest” (9), and the speaker questions whether he should give into love or into “lust’s negligence” (6). These instances are nothing more than abdications. Wyatt’s English-cultured, Protestant speaker believes an ideal, earthly love does not exist.

But while this harsh reality could distance readers, it does not. Because Wyatt introduced his poem with warm, welcoming lines, even the strife-filled reality present toward the middle of the poem is stomach-able. In addition, Wyatt suffuses the

remainder of the poem with his own personal beliefs based on his own Protestant point of view. As a Protestant in sixteenth-century England, Wyatt would have believed in the world's metaphorical representation of heaven, and Wyatt would have believed that the act of loving on earth could signify his own divine election into heaven. Wyatt's speaker enforces this belief by ending his poem on a note of faith—stating what he loves most, love itself (and in essence God), is what he will follow. In saying “What may I do when my master feareth, / But in the field with him to live and die” (12-3), the speaker admits his earthly self to love and to faith. What once he invited and welcomed, he now submits to. And all for good reason. For if “good is the life ending faithfully” (14) is indeed a valid edict that Wyatt believes, then Wyatt's earthly, personal, Protestant journey—faith-filled and welcoming—could signify Wyatt's soul will reach a good, heavenly end.

Surrey's translation of Petrarch's original entitled “Love That Doth Raine,” on the other hand, paints a bleaker portrayal of love. The speaker in Surrey's poem sees love as a darker entity: notice the use of words like “captive” (2) and “[c]lad” (3), words that suggest hostility, a sense of being trapped. If readers associate these such words with the word “Raine” from the title of the poem, we notice that Surrey's speaker feels insubordinate to love at the beginning of the poem. For kings reign over their people, and knights are trapped inside their iron-clad armor. Surrey's speaker is constricted by love, held back by it. Love is an ideal to be obtained—and an ideal that may be impossible to obtain on earth.

So Surrey's speaker opts to “suffer paine” (5), to “refrayne” (7) from earthly desires. And where Wyatt's speaker opted to persevere through love on earth, Surrey's speaker sees nothing more but bleak reality: love is only found in the Lord. It cannot be

found on earth. On earth, love “take[s] his flight” (10), “[h]is purpose lost” (11). The only love left must be found in God. So Surrey’s speaker promises that “from [his] lorde shall not [his] foot remove” (13), indicating that, no matter what, he will not stray from his beliefs. He will not betray his God. (An alternative reading suggests he will not betray his king, either. But, as the king stands as the divine figurehead of a nation who is appointed by God, the reading still suggests he will not betray his God.) As Wyatt’s translation ended with an edict, so also does Surrey’s. With the words “[s]weet is the death that taketh end by love” (14), Surrey makes a martyr of his speaker, sacrificing his earthly, debaucherous entity to a higher power. Though Surrey’s speaker wishes to be both of the earth and in the earth, he knows he must lay down his earthly pleasures. Spitefully, then, he accepts love. Regardless of his feelings, his death is still sweet.

In essence, both Wyatt and Surrey accomplish the same goal in their translations: their speakers give into love. Though Wyatt’s speaker does so through earthly avenues, allowing himself to be freed by love so that he may enjoy all that lies around him, and Surrey’s speaker accepts love out of spite, both poets’ speakers stand on the same ground at the end of the poem. We must remember: these poems are translations, and there is still an original text. Though Petrarch’s “Sonnet 140” was translated differently by Surrey and Wyatt, its ultimate moral remains the same. To look at the contrasting translations, though, is to reflect upon the religious thought of sixteenth-century England. The sonneteers have contrasting viewpoints. Wyatt’s religious undertones are more Protestant, more personal, more willing to accept a few earthly pleasures here and there; Surrey’s are more devout, more forced, more institutionalized, more Catholic.

In sixteenth-century England, translators did more than re-write a work into a new language. They also suffused that work with their own, personal assumptions. By studying these assumptions, perhaps we can better understand exactly what that popular childhood game demonstrates: every culture has its own viewpoint. The job of the translator, then, is to serve as an interlocutor between the two viewpoints. In both Wyatt's and Surrey's cases, the poets stand as middlemen between the original Italian poem and their new, culturally adapted translations.

Had our poets *not* culturally adapted their poems, they would not have presented Petrarch's original "Sonnet 140" in such a way that their intended—Protestant and Catholic—audiences could understand. As Susan Sontag claims in *Against Interpretation*, "it is the habit of approaching works of art in order to interpret them that sustains the fancy that there really is such a thing as the content of a work of art" (3). Indeed, both of these poets infuse their works with their own values; but—as I have shown—the essence of Petrarch's original stays the same. This accounts for Sontag's content. The content of Petrarch's original, as well as its cultural adaptations, says that we should give into love. Even if there are multiple avenues by which to achieve this claim, the content—the message of the poem—still remains the same.

Shakespeare, as well, has been adapted time and time again. If we juxtapose *10 Things I Hate about You* (1999) to *The Taming of the Shrew*, we see two distinctly different stories—in style, substance, depth. Shakespeare's, obviously, is the work that inspired *10 Things I Hate about You*—a disagreeable girl must become agreeable and marriageable so that her sister may be married as well. But our contemporary version harks Shakespeare's story to us in terms we understand: high school halls, locker rooms,

football fields—places and situations that every American teenager can associate with. Through telling Shakespeare’s story from our own viewpoint, we revitalize an older text through cultural adaptation and find a new audience for that work.

If we view Japanese auteur Akira Kurosawa’s films *Ran* (1985) and *The Throne of Blood* (1957), we see

he has utilized Shakespearean tragedy for...Japanese-set screen [stories]: his acclaimed *Throne of Blood* featured Toshiro Mifune as a Japanese Macbeth. Kurosawa was asked if *Ran*'s Lady Kaede, who marries her dead husband's murder out of selfish ambition, is another version of Lady Macbeth. “It's not especially Lady Macbeth,” Kurosawa said. “But behind every man of power there's lady in back manipulating him.”

(Peary 1)

As well, it has been dually noted that *Ran* carries story elements from Shakespeare’s *King Lear*—both contain the story of a monarch who steps aside in order for his three children to take control of his throne. In order to tell his own version of *Lear* and *Macbeth*, Kurosawa had to supplant those Shakespearean stories—with cultural attitudes particular to Renaissance England—and apply them to a setting more familiar to both himself and his audiences: the Japanese landscape, along with its history, he knew. That Kurosawa is considered an auteur of the greatest class and his films have lasted and will surely last the tests of time attest to his ability to cross cultural lines with his films and dig into the core emotions and story—Sontag’s content—within classic (if even unfamiliar) works.

In turn, when translators approach work, they benefit themselves and their translations by acting as adaptors. In short, they should forget translation’s direct, line-

by-line tendencies and ignore the notions that ideas can be lost in translation. For if they consider themselves adaptors, then translation is no longer an issue: situations and story do not have to parallel, but the core of the original piece will still be intact.

TAKE!’S ADAPTION

As with the Renaissance poets, as with Shakespeare, we can do adapt Almodóvar’s works, too.

When I wrote *Take!*, I did this. Taking the genesis of Almodóvar’s idea from *¡Átame!* (man kidnaps woman, ties her up—this was really all I knew about the story, having never read anything but summaries), I wrote my play against my own cultural backdrop. I admit: I realize this retrospectively. It didn’t occur to me I was doing this as I wrote my play.

But I further confess again: when I wrote *Take!*, I worked off a desire to write the Almodóvar film I had always wanted to see. I hadn’t seen *¡Átame!*. Of course I had to approach the story from my own cultural background; by situation alone, I was forced to—I had no reference point, no guideline. Just Almodóvar’s canon of work. I realize my situation is a unique one, that I stumbled across adapting a Spanish piece into English by chance; not every adaptor will experience this same situation. Some, of course, will read a piece in a foreign language, feel the need to adapt it into English. Not all will be writing their adaptations as blindly as I wrote *Take!*—without having ever seen the original work.

However, my ultimate result—now that I can view it in retrospect—surprises me. As I went through the script of *Take!* a few days ago and circled every line in which I either made a direct allusion to another artist or another artist's work, or places where I referenced another artist's work to inform the construction of my play, I found I referenced Gloria Swanson *a lá Sunset Boulevard* (Wilder 1950), Harold Pinter's stageplay *Betrayal* (1978), Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), David Mamet's *Oleanna* (1992), Mary Gaitskill's *Bad Behavior* (1988). As well, the music we used in our production of *Take!* included an English-language version of "Besame Mucho" by The Beatles. In my own defense, we included the DVD case to Almodóvar's *Volver* in the set design at my instance, and I also referenced Rossy de Palma in the script.

But, thinking in retrospect, I see these works I refer to in my script all fit within the paradigm of English-language, English-cultured texts. At one point, I tried to incorporate thematic elements from Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* (1966) into the script. Specifically, I wanted a character to step on a piece of glass another character had intentionally set out as a boobie trap. But the event didn't work correctly; something about it didn't feel right within the story. As I attempted to use the telenovela form throughout *Take!*, I couldn't match that mood with the mood created by an allusion to Bergman. So, the production team and I re-arranged the scene into one in which Jack, the main character, washes Caro's (the woman he has kidnapped) feet. The parallels here between my story and biblical texts are obvious: for forgiveness's sake, my captor submitted to his captive. Bergman probably knew the biblical story as well. But my

script called for the allusion to the more universal tale in this case—a story I was more familiar with, one that I understood inside my own, cultural backdrop.

Even this digression suggests that I could not culturally understand Bergman; when I see the glass event happen in *Persona*, I love it. But I love it in a way that seems exotic to me; I understand the psychological implications behind the film, but I worry that maybe the particular event could be indicative of a Swedish sensibility—perhaps it's in an earlier Swedish story that I don't know about. My American, English-speaking sensibility is disconnected from Bergman's. I cannot interpret it.

So how did I interpret—translate—Almodóvar's text, then, especially if I had never seen it? I return to Sontag's *Against Interpretation* to support what I recognize in hindsight as my method in doing so. Sontag claims, "Directed to art, interpretation means plucking a set of elements (the X, the Y, the Z, and so forth) from the whole work...the interpreter says, Look, don't you see that X is really—or really means—A? That Y is really B? That Z is really C?" (3). By taking that genesis of an idea—man ties woman up—I put the situations I knew of in Almodóvar's film onto my own backdrop, that one consisting of Wilder (my direct allusions to *Sunset Boulevard*), Albee (I learned how to make women and men argue in plays from ...*Virginia Woolf?*), Pinter (the references to *Betrayal*, my constant use of Pinter pauses and silences in my actual script).

I guessed. I guessed how *¡Átame!* would be. Having never seen it, I only had at my disposal to use the conventions I was familiar with to put the story I wanted to see on the stage. I inserted Almodóvar's idea into my cultural backdrop so not only I could understand it, but also so I could share it with others.

DID IT WORK?

I watched *¡Átame!* for the first time a few nights ago. My eye—keen on noticing patterns in Almodóvar’s works now that I’ve seen them so many times—loved it. The visuals were spectacular, as expected. His visuals always are. My ear wasn’t so pleased. His music has improved over time. The acting was great, as it always is in his films—and he even used Rossy del Palma. The story was Almodóvarian—if such a term even exists—for sure. A man chained a woman up and held her captive until she fell in love with him.

Did *Take!* compare? I can’t humbly say I think it does. Almodóvar is a culturally approved artist, one who will no doubt stand the test of time as being an important figure in world cinema. I can’t imagine my work compares.

Did *Take!* capture *¡Átame!*’s essence, though? I think so. As the cover to the VHS I watched said, *¡Átame!* is a “daring...comedy...showing us that those who long for love are longing to be tied down—one way or another” (*¡Átame!*). And that’s what I’d say *Take!* is about.

By adapting Almodóvar’s story, I—along with the help of many others—introduced it to American audiences. We put on an adaptation of a story that was

snubbed by our own audiences, and we sold out the house. We gave them Almodóvar's story in a context they understood, and they liked it.

As I have outlined here, others can do this, too.

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APPENDICIES

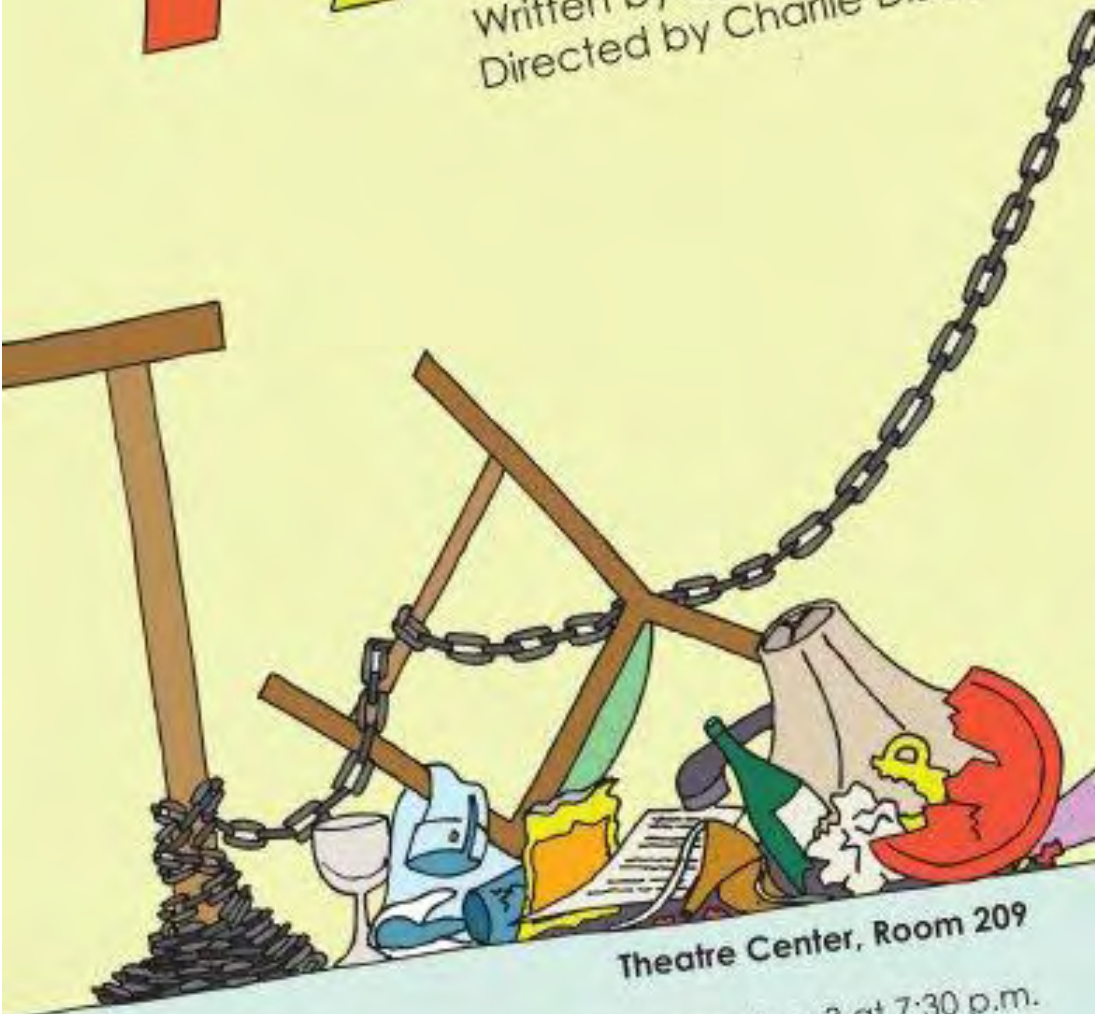
Poster for *Take!* designed by Anthony Villanacci

Script of *Take!* by Carter Weeks Maddox

DVD of *Take!* (December 6, 2009)


TAKE!


Written by Carter Maddox
Directed by Charlie DiBlasi



Theatre Center, Room 209

Thursday, December 3 at 7:30 p.m.
Friday, December 4 at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, December 5 at 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, December 6 at 2:00 p.m.

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TAKE!

by

Carter Weeks Maddox

First Draft Completed:
September 7, 2009

Production Revisions Completed:
November 16, 2009

Produced by At-Random Theatre
December 6-9, 2009

CHARACTERS:

Jack:

Late 20s to early 30s. Drug dealer. American.

Carolina Palamore:

32. Actress. Spanish.

Ruth:

Whatever age. Caro's publicist. American.

Anchor:

Whatever age. Gossip reporter. American.

SETTING:

Jack's apartment in New York. Needs a table. Beyond that, a designer's free-for-all.

ACT I - CAPTURE

SCENE ONE - SAME

Dark theatre. A projection in white letters says:

11:33 p.m.: Witheld #: can i grab some good?

11:36 p.m.: Re: Witheld #: yea, come over

11:36 p.m.: Witheld #: im on my way

Dim lights. A Spanish guitar plays a slow, sad song--an overture. The set is simple: A table with a large jar on top of it, a laptop, a candle in the center, two chairs. A door. When the overture is finished, the doorbell buzzes.

Silence.

It buzzes again. JACK, 30 or so, enters, straightening his collar. He opens the laptop, presses play. The ill-timed lines and canned laughter of a telenovela play. He is well-dressed. He presses the button on the wall, and then unlocks the door. He goes to the table and opens the jar, takes out a freezer bag full of stuff, as well as a scale and another, smaller plastic bag. He watches the telenovela. A knock on the door.

JACK

It's open!

Caro, 32, also enters. She looks like shit. Jack stops dead in his tracks.

JACK

Carolina Palamore...

CARO

(Noticing the telenovela)

Just give me some.

JACK

How did you--

CARO
I buy from you all the time and you never knew it, now give me some so--

JACK
Okay. I'm Jack.

He offers his hand.

Pause.

Caro shakes his hand.

Jack goes back to the bags and jar and scale.

JACK
How much?

Caro fishes in her pockets, counting change.

JACK
Don't worry about it. How much do you want?

CARO
About what?

JACK
About paying me. Don't worry about it.

CARO
Oh, God...

JACK
Por tuyo, gratis..

CARO
(Slightly surprised)
You don't have to--

JACK
No, it's okay. I want to--for you I want to.

Caro walks around the apartment as Jack finishes transferring the stuff from one bag, to the scale, to the other bag. She stands in front of the Mac, watches it.

CARO
What is this?

JACK
What?

CARO
La telenovela.

JACK
Just a telenovela--

CARO
I know that. Claro. Which one? I've never seen it.

JACK
Uh...Fuego en tu vida.

CARO
Oh.

JACK
You can have a seat, Miss--

CARO
Miss?

JACK
--Palamo...

CARO
Wow. You called me miss. I'm not Norma Desmond...I'm not even Rossy de Palma. Call me--

JACK
I'm sorry.

Pause.

Jack is taking careful time in getting the bag and the scale back into the jar.

CARO
Do you watch these all the time?

JACK
Kinda--

CARO
¿Y le entiendes?

JACK
Más o menos.

Beat.

CARO
Are you...did you know this was going to be me?

JACK
No--

CARO
I thought I blocked my number--

JACK
You did--

CARO
¿Y estabas mirando la tele ya?

JACK
Sí.

CARO
¿Me entiendes?

JACK
Claro, yo decía sí. But only a little. Only a little.

CARO
Como la mierda--

JACK
And that was mean.

Pause.

JACK
A lot of people watch telenovelas.

CARO
In New York?

JACK
Soap operas are filmed here--

CARO
Not the ones from Spain.

JACK
But we watch those, too.

CARO
Is that how you knew my name?

JACK
And from your plays.

Pause.

CARO
Look: sorry...

Pause.

CARO
Te dije--

JACK
It's okay. I'm almost done.

Silence.

CARO
Are you okay?

JACK
Yeah. I'm fine.

CARO
I didn't mean to be so...rude. What's your name?

JACK
It's okay. You came over here with a mission, and I can't blame you. I'm here to help you. That's my job. It won't take much longer.

CARO
Wow.

JACK
What?

CARO
You just seem...self-aware.

JACK
Is that unusual for...

CARO
Yes. Yes, it is.

JACK
I think that's a shame. You're a customer. You're my customer.

Pause.

Jack finishes and hands the other bag to Caro.

CARO
Gracias.

JACK

And my name is Jack.

CARO

Jack. Well, nice to meet you, Jack. Are you sure you don't want any payment?

JACK

Yes. Like I said, I'm a fan of yours.

Pause.

CARO

You never actually said that.

JACK

Didn't I?

CARO

Of course I knew it. You--

JACK

That obvious?

CARO

It's just...funny? Small world--

JACK

Big star.

CARO

That's my job.

JACK

You're a good actress.

CARO

Thanks.

Pause.

JACK

Well--

CARO

I--I...I don't really want to give you the wrong impression that...do you want to do some with me?

She offers her bag of stuff out.

JACK

Oh. No. No.

CARO
Huh?

JACK
I don't do it. I only sell it.

CARO
Oh.

She starts taking bumps of stuff.

JACK
I don't want to get dependent on it or anything.

CARO
(Overlapping on "dependent")
I could quit tomorrow if you took it away from me.

JACK
Oh?

CARO
Yeah, oh. It's just recreational. I promise.

Pause.

JACK
I do smoke pot. Do you want to smoke some pot?

CARO
I don't have to--

JACK
I'm going to.

Jack exits, returns with a joint and a lighter. He lights it, hits it and passes it.

JACK
Take a hit.

CARO
Thanks.

Pause.

JACK
I bought the DVDs of your show. I finished it all.

CARO
Cheesey, right?

JACK

They always are.

CARO

I enjoyed that job. But it was cheesy.

JACK

That's why I watch them.

CARO

Let me ask...since you are an American. Do you think they're overacted? A lot of Americans think they're overacted.

JACK

Kind of but I don't care about--

CARO

They're not overacted. People just don't understand our language.

JACK

We speak English. Of course we don't understand your language.

CARO

But that's the way we really speak. Almost.

JACK

It's a good show.

CARO

Good melodrama. It was a good job. I'm doing better now.

JACK

(Going scatterbrained)

So you've bought from me before?

CARO

Yeah.

JACK

What'd you buy?

CARO

I don't know, lots.

JACK

(Laughing)

Yeah...who usually picks it up?

CARO

Different people. Sometimes you've done it through mailboxes.

JACK
Oh, no. Not lately, not anymore.

CARO
¿Cómo?

JACK
I just stopped doing it. A mailman came by one time. I didn't get in trouble, but the client got charged with possession.

CARO
Didn't box it up--

JACK
I did.

CARO
Wouldn't it have been illegal for--

JACK
It's just risky. No matter what you do.

CARO
Yeah...thanks for it, though. It's a good way to end the day. Or begin the day.

JACK
Yeah.

(Beat)
Just don't take too much.

Jack stares at Caro--a little too long.

JACK
You have such pretty hair close up.

Caro doesn't know what to do. She forces a laugh.

CARO
Whoah! Wow. Ee--no. Sorry. But no.

JACK
(Simultaneously)
Sorry! Sorry, sorry, sorry...

CARO
(Half-laughing)
Wow. Not a statue.

JACK
Sorry--that's pretty kind of...embarrassing that--

It's okay. CARO

Caro's phone rings. She digs through her purse to find it. She opens it, reads the message.

Projection:

11:58 p.m.: Mike Cell: r u coming home 2nite?

Caro closes the phone. The projection disappears.

Everything all right? JACK

No. But I'll be okay. CARO

Anything you want to talk about? JACK

No, not really. Marriage is a bitch. CARO

So I've heard. JACK

Like you're trapped down. CARO

I guess. JACK

Yup...And that's all I want to say about that. CARO

That's fine. JACK

Pause.

Could I ask you a question? CARO

Yeah. JACK

Okay. Lo siento, pero...just making sure...your name is Jack, right? CARO

JACK
Yeah.

CARO
Okay.

(Beat)
Look. This is going to sound really weird. Really weird--

JACK
Go on.

CARO
Can I stay here tonight?

JACK
¿Aquí?

CARO
Yeah, like here. Like here...on the couch or...floor or on the table or something. Just for tonight.

Jack looks astounded.

JACK
Sure! I mean if you need to...you can, yeah.

CARO
Only for tonight. I promise. I know it's weird.

JACK
No! Not weird.

Pause.

JACK
Are you sure you'll feel...safe? Eh, bad word--

CARO
Like am I comfortable with--

JACK
With it, staying here, yeah.

Pause.

CARO
Is there any reason I shouldn't feel comfortable?

JACK
No.

CARO
Good.
Que suave-- (Looking around the apartment)

JACK
Huh?

CARO
What?

JACK
What's suave?

CARO
Oh. Oh, your apartament.

JACK
Oh. Thanks. I've only got one bed, though, so you'll have to sleep on the couch...unless you want to take the bed, but the sheets aren't--

CARO
It's fine. Completely fine. I usually fall asleep on the sofa anyway--

JACK
Oh--

CARO
--I'd go to a friend's house, but I really don't want to see any friends--

JACK
And you can't go back home for your wallet.

Pause.

CARO
No. No puedo. No puedo regresar. No esta noche. Nunca.

JACK
Okay.

Pause.

CARO
Good.

JACK
Valé.

Pause.

JACK
(Referencing the joint)
This is out.

CARO
Triste.

JACK
I've got more if you wanna--

Caro snorts a bump.

JACK
Right.

Pause.

CARO
Cómo...

JACK
Voy a dormir.

CARO
Okay.

JACK
There's...blankets in the coffee table...thing. The living room's that way. Just open the table thing up. It's wicker. Are you sure you don't want me to sleep on the sofa and you can have my--

CARO
I'll be fine.

JACK
All right.

Pause.

JACK
Well, goodnight.

CARO
Buenas noches.

Jack gets up to exit. Caro grabs his arm as he leaves.

CARO
Thank you.

JACK
De nada.

Jack grabs the jar off the table, and then exits. Caro gets the bag out of her pocket and opens it as the lights fade to black.

END SCENE ONE

SCENE TWO - THE FUCK

Lights are dim, possibly colored. The Spanish music plays a slow, seductive song. Caro is at the table, a mirror and a razor laid out before her. There is residue on the mirror and the plastic bag is empty. She snuffles and scratches her nose, smiles. She runs her hands through her hair. She's enjoying herself.

Jack enters wearing a towel, a cup in his hand.

JACK

Lo siento. Deseo que no te molesta--

CARO

No pasa nada.

Pause. A cell phone rings. They pay it no attention.

JACK

Yo pensaba que--

CARO

No.

JACK

Vale.

Pause. The cell phone rings again.

JACK

Cómo. Voy a ir--

CARO

No.

Silence.

The two look at each other, Caro never breaking her smile. The cell phone keeps ringing.

CARO

Ven aqui.

JACK

Yo--

CARO

Callate. Vamos.

Jack moves toward Caro. She pulls off her shirt and tosses it aside as he comes to her. She grabs him by the top of his pants and pulls him toward her. He bends down. They kiss. Lights fade away as the Spanish music and the cell phone rings keep playing until they both end at the same time.

END SCENE TWO

SCENE THREE - SILENCE

Lights up. Caro is asleep on the floor near the table, covered with a blanket. There is a hefty breakfast on the table with two place settings. Caro's shirt is still on the floor. Jack enters and sits down at the table and begins putting breakfast on his plate. Caro wakes up. She tries to stand but is wobbly and falls back down. Her hair's a mess.

JACK

Whoah now. Easy. Easy.

CARO

Got it.

She tries to stand again--successfully this time. When the blanket falls, we see that she is not wearing a shirt, just a bra. We also see that she is tied to the table with rope by her leg.

JACK

Con cuidado...

CARO
(She gives him a look as she
sits at the table--she hasn't
noticed the rope)
My head's killing me.

JACK
Hay café allí.

CARO
Good.

Pause.

CARO
How'd I wind up over here?

She looks down and sees her shirt.

CARO
Ay. Sí. Me recuerdo.

They both laugh.

JACK
You never made it to the couch.

CARO
No. I didn't, did I?

Pause.

JACK
I saw you finished off the whole bag.

CARO
Bag?

JACK
The bag of stuff. That I gave you last night.

CARO
Oh that. Yeah. I can put some away.

JACK
Sí, puedes.

Pause. Jack keeps eating, and Caro
begins.

JACK
You know I don't like that you do that. You know.

CARO
Oh? But isn't that your--

JACK
Sí. Es mi trabajo. And most of the people I don't care about. But I don't like that you do it.

CARO
Well--

JACK
No wonder your head hurts. Stuff'll fuck you up.

CARO
That's why I--

JACK
I thought it was for fun?

Pause.

JACK
El café.

Pause. Caro complies. They keep eating.

CARO
Mira. Thanks for letting me stay.

JACK
De nada.

CARO
I still feel like that was...weird. But thanks for letting me.

JACK
It's really--

CARO
And...I know we...

JACK
Yeah...

CARO
But I just want to say, I was a little high, and--

JACK
(Overlapping)
Ay, sólo--

CARO
Sí. And so it happened, but I don't mean to make it, like, a regular...

JACK
A regular thing. Okay.

CARO
Yeah.

JACK
I can handle that.

CARO
Good.

JACK
Okay.

CARO
Valé.

Pause. They eat. Caro sips her coffee. She starts laughing as she watches Jack eat sloppily.

CARO
Eres un cerdito.

JACK
¿Cerdito?

CARO
A pig!

They laugh.

CARO
(Laughing)
Thanks.

JACK
(Laughing too)
What?

CARO
For the...coffee!

JACK
Oh, that--no big deal. I figured you'd need it.

CARO

Yeah. I did. I do!

JACK

Good. Drink it. There's some more in the kitchen, too, if you want more.

CARO

Cool. Very cool.

Pause.

CARO

This is actually a nice place.

JACK

Thank you. You told me that last night.

CARO

Did I? This is a huge dining room. For an apartment, I mean. You could do a lot with it if you fix it up some.

JACK

Yeah. I like it. It's not bad.

CARO

No. I know I make more money than you, and my apartment's still just about this size. You must do pretty well being a dealer--

JACK

Helper.

CARO

Helper?

JACK

I don't like to think of myself as a dealer. Just...a helper. And you don't know how much money I make. I do very well being a...helper.

Pause.

JACK

It doesn't hurt having clients like you. Even though I don't like that you in particular do it. But it's nice having clients who can always pay on time, who always want something and want a lot of it...

CARO

I don't always want something--

JACK

Just on nights when marriage catches up?

CARO
That's none of your business.

JACK
I'm making it my business. Apparently I'm correct.

CARO
No you're not.

JACK
Then why are you snorting shit after you've had a fight at home with your husband?

CARO
(Overlapping on "fight")
It's not the shit that makes me forget about what happened at home it's the fun I have on the shit--

JACK
My dick?

CARO
Ay, dios...
(Calmly)
I don't...need it. And if I gave you the wrong impression...well, that's your fault for getting the wrong impression. You can't trap words and feed them to me--

JACK
I wasn't putting words in your mouth...

Pause.

CARO
I don't like that I do it.

Beat. Jack looks at her.

CARO
I don't.

JACK
Sure--

CARO
But I do it. Especially when...

JACK
Like last night?

CARO
Yeah.

JACK
I won't ask for detai--

CARO
It's okay--

JACK
No, it's none of my--

CARO
I slept with you; I made it your business.

JACK
(Immediately)
I thought you didn't?

Pause. They eat.

JACK
Since it's my business...what happened last night?

CARO
We fucked.

JACK
No. Antes.

Pause.

CARO
My husband and I got into a fight. He hit me. Cómo...almost hit me.

JACK
Wow, sorry--

CARO
No, it's fine. Not the first time. He's actually hit me before, it's a, it's a weird...well, I kinda like it. Sometimes. I just do.

JACK
You like being dom...?

CARO
Not that, that makes it sound so...perverse.

Silence.

CARO
But, last night we had a fight, and it was a real one, and he almost hit me...and if he had hit me it would have been for real.

Pause.

CARO
I don't like it when it's for real--

JACK
Only for sex?

Silence.

CARO
So I left.

Silence.

Caro reaches into her pocket, looking
for her phone. She finds nothing.

CARO
Have you seen my phone?

JACK
Yeah, it's on the counter, I--

CARO
Where?

JACK
In the kitchen. It was beeping like it was dying so I turned
it off and put it in there.

CARO
Thanks I'll be right back, then--
(Rising from her seat)
--which way is the kitchen?

JACK
(Reaching out to stop Caro from
getting out of her seat)
Don't worry about it--

CARO
But I want my phone--

JACK
(Pulling her arm back to the
table)
Tranquila. Let me get it. You don't need to be up and
walking. Stay here.

CARO
Thanks--

Eat. JACK

Jack exits and comes back with the phone. He hands it to her. He also hand her the empty bag of stuff.

Thanks. CARO

You're welcome. Eat. JACK

He sits back down at the table and keeps eating. After she turns on her phone, she eats as well. There is a racket of phone rings--messages from the previous night.

Projection:

01:14 a.m.: Mike Cell: where r u?

01:15 a.m.: Mike Cell: caro?

01:21 a.m.: Mike Cell: WHERE THE FUCK ARE YOU

01:21 a.m.: Mike Cell: caro answer me.

01:47 a.m.: Mike Cell: fuck you

01:48 a.m.: Mike Cell: you're a loose cunt

02:31 a.m.: Mike Cell: please tell me you're okay.

The phone beeps. The projections stop.

Goddammit. CARO

JACK
Told you. It was doing its death rattle all night long. I'm surprised you couldn't hear it. It was ringing while we were...

Caro laughs her ass off.

Oh, God! CARO

JACK
(Laughing as well)
Funny, I know, I know I know--

CARO
Holy God...

The laughter dies down.

CARO
Thanks for the breakfast.

JACK
You're--

CARO
And for letting me crash here.

She stands, still a little wobbly.

CARO
Where's my purse?

Jack rises quickly, heads toward her.

JACK
Don't worry I'll get it. What do you need out of it?

CARO
Just--my keys, and--

JACK
They're not in there--

CARO
What?

Pause.

CARO
What?

JACK
Yes. They're not in there.

CARO
How do you know?

JACK
You said so last night.

CARO
Did I?

JACK

Yes. And they're not in your purse. I looked when I was--

CARO

What for why?

JACK

I was turning your phone off and putting it into your purse.

CARO

Where's that at?

JACK

The purse is in the kitchen.

CARO

(Rising from her seat)

I'm gonna go get it if my phone--

JACK

(Loudly--almost a scream;
definitely a command)

Sit down!

Caro sits quickly.

Silence.

JACK

You told me you forgot a lot of your stuff at home. You can't seem too surprised they're not there. Let me go get it.

Jack exits. He returns with the purse and puts it on the table in front of Caro, who opens it and starts looking through it immediately.

JACK

You know...knowing that you went through every bit of what I gave you last night all last night makes me think really differently of you.

Pause.

Caro looks up from the purse.

CARO

How?

JACK

I didn't think you'd do that. I didn't even think you were anyone who would ever do drugs.

CARO
What made you think that?

JACK
Just...

Pause.

CARO
Everyone does something. Of some type. Everyone's got a catch.

Pause.

JACK
Sorry I yelled at you. You were just getting...hysterical.

CARO
Huh?

JACK
(Overlapping)
Maybe that was bad word choice.

CARO
It's okay.

Extended silence.

The two eat. Jack finishes his food and stands up, takes Caro's plate out from under her while she is in mid-bite.

CARO
¡Ay!

JACK
You're finished.

Jack exits with the plates. The clatter of the plates in a sink from offstage. Jack returns just as Caro stands up.

JACK
No--no. Sit back down.

CARO
¿Porque? I need to go--

JACK
Caro, sit down!

CARO
What's your problem?

Jack lunges at her, pushes her back in the chair by her shoulders.

JACK
Sit down! Stay there!

CARO
I really don't think you should do that--

JACK
Why not, huh? Stay there.

CARO
¡No!

She swiftly stands up. She starts walking, pushing her chair in with her free leg. She grabs her purse off the table and begins walking away.

CARO
I'm gonna find somewh...

She trails off as she trips, the rope tethering her to the table running out of slack.

CARO
What the fuck?

Pause.

CARO
What the fuck?!

She drops to her hands and knees and tries to undo the knot in the rope.

CARO
What in the hell--wh--what the fuck are you--

JACK
You won't get it undone tha--

CARO
(Much intensity)
¡Cómo lo sabía!
(Less intensity)
Like fuck I won't this is--

JACK
You won't--

CARO
Shut the fuck up, man! ¡Cómo lo sabía! Get me out of this--

JACK
Get you out of it? I put you in that for a reason!

CARO
(Overlapping on "it")
¡Áyudame!

Caro screams--loudly. High pitched.

JACK
(Yelling over her)
¡Callate!

Caro jumps up and pulls away, jerking her leg, pulling the table away from its place with her.

JACK
¡Hija de puta!

Jack stands up and kicks her in the stomach. She gulps air, holds her side.

JACK
(Kneeling down to her--
forcefully)
Now stay there!
(Softer)
You stay there.

Pause.

JACK
I'm sorry I kicked...I'm sorry.

Pause.

JACK
L--lo siento. Sorry. I'm sorry.

Caro is whimpering, holding herself in a fetal position on the floor.

JACK
Just stay there.

Lights out.

END SCENE THREE

SCENE FOUR - INTERRUPTION

Jack and Caro sit at the table, a dinner laid out before them. Caro hardly touches her plate, while Jack devours the food on it with great efficiency. Jack's phone rings and he checks it.

Projection:

7:24 p.m.: Witheld #: if your at home im coming by.

7:25 p.m.: Re: Witheld #: come on

JACK

I've got a client on his way.

Jack stands up from the table, exits, and returns with the jar. He places it on the table, and then grabs Caro's plate away from the table. She grabs the plate and slams it back down.

CARO

No! I'm not finished.

JACK

Yes you are.

CARO

No I'm not, and if you move me I'll scream so loud everyone around will hear me doing it!

JACK

(Overlapping on "loud")

No, they won't--believe me, they won't. You're not going to--

Caro screams--loudly. Jack slaps a hand to her face and she tries to bite him, but he slaps her repeatedly off of him with his other hand. She stops screaming after a few slaps.

Pause.

CARO

You fucking lunatic! You--

She rises from her chair and begins to back away, still, of course, roped to the table.

CARO (CONT'D)

--fucking lunatic!

Jack grabs a cloth napkin from the table and lunges at her, attempting to shove the napkin in her mouth. Dialogue here may be ad-libbed appropriately per how the struggle is directed. Eventually, Jack wins and holds the napkin in her mouth with his palm. Caro whimpers and cries.

JACK

Stay! Stay!

He grabs the runner on the table and pulls it, making the plates, etcetera on the table fall into a mess everywhere. He wraps the runner around Caro's face and ties it behind her head. She is gagged, still lying on the floor. More dialogue may be ad-libbed here to convey the fight if necessary with the direction.

JACK

Good. Stay there.

Pause.

JACK

Now I've got to...I've got to untie you...

Caro pulls her leg hard, making the table shift across the floor.

JACK

Stop it...

Caro does it again. The table almost hits Jack. He pounces on her as she squirms, tangled in the table runner and still tangled into the rope, to get up off the floor. He slaps her more.

JACK

Stop it! Stay still!

After a few slaps, she stops wiggling. Jack starts to untie her leg, and as soon as she is loose enough to attempt to squirm out of the rope (though she is not successful), she kicks Jack in the face with her other leg, knocking him backward. She leaps up and runs for the door, dragging the table behind her, and opens it. Jack, who has been recovering from the blow to the head, gets up and grabs her arm and pulls her back into the apartment. She kicks and kicks and kicks, so Jack slams the door literally on her body to get her to stop. He slams it on her again and again until she lies limp on the ground in the doorway. Again, dialogue should be ad-libbed here: Caro's moans from underneath the napkin and the table runner and Jack's demands for her to cooperate. Jack stands over her, a blood stain on his shirt. An eerie silence as he catches his breath. He's crying. Then, he bends down, untangles her leg from the rope, lifts her limp body up gingerly, and carries her offstage. After half a minute or so, he returns, clears a spot at the table, picks up the jar, opens it and begins working. He drops his work and gets out his phone, sends a text message, and then continues working.

Projection:

7:34 p.m.: Re: Witheld #: place is a mess, sorry. had upset client

7:34 p.m.: Witheld #: i'll be in an out, no big

7:35 p.m.: Re: Witheld #: just come in...doors unlocked.

7:37 p.m.: Witheld #: alright cool

Lights out.

END SCENE FOUR

SCENE FIVE - THE ID

The Spanish music is playing again and the lights are dim. Caro is bound and gagged, lying on her side on the floor. Her shirt is still off. Jack has a power drill and bolts and brackets in his hands. He's bolting the table to the floor one leg at a time. He's still got the blood on his shirt. The music plays throughout the entire scene.

The drill.

JACK

I hated to do that to you. Ever since you did all that stuff...I was battling myself about whether or not I'd actually do it...

Pause. The drill.

JACK

I guess I'll move you when I know someone's coming over to pick something. Or I'll start making outcalls again. No mailboxes though, I can't do that. I'll do outcalls. That'll be easier.

Pause.

JACK

I won't keep you here long. But I knew that if I was going to keep you here at all I had to do it. You shouldn't try to escape. I don't even think you will try to escape.

Silence.

JACK

I watched your play...I don't even know how many times I watched both your plays this season. Every Friday? Every Thursday and Friday? Sundays?

Pause. Jack moves to another leg on the table.

JACK

You were the perfect Magdalena in the cross play. Going off to be a nun...disappearing, leaving Mexico...I just kept coming back to watch you, and kept coming back, and kept coming back.

The drill.

Silence.

JACK

And then you were Emma in the other...wow.

Pause.

JACK

When you showed up here...

He moves to another leg, drills it in.

JACK

You said you liked be dominated. Didn't you?

Silence.

JACK

You see an actor. You, for instance. And you apparently strip yourself up there for me. I go to watch you to forget that I'm me. And you're there for me when I'm doing watching you...But then the curtain goes down. And you disappear and you take all that...hope? You take it back with you.

Jack exits, dropping the power drill on the floor. When he returns he has a chain and padlocks in his hands. He drops the chain on the floor before he speaks.

JACK

All I'm left with is your character, not you. I can't take anything away from it but an act. I can't take you. And I'm holding broken pieces again. I can't reattach them together without you.

Pause. Jack grabs the chain and attaches it to a leg on the table, and then he grabs Caro across the floor and attaches it to her leg.

JACK

You can't blame me, you know.

He drills in the last leg of the table.

Silence.

JACK

Te amo.

Caro curls herself into an even tighter ball under the table.

JACK

Okay. I know.

Jack exits. Caro never moves. Lights out. The music keeps playing.

END SCENE FIVE

SCENE FIVE - A PHONE CALL

The music continues. Voices are heard, overlapping each other. Jack enters, sits at the table.

VOICE 1

Famed stage actress Carolina Palamore has disappeared, her publicist says. The ingenue was last seen by her husband, who says she left after a quarrel the two had three nights ago--

VOICE 2

Actress Carolina Palamore is still missing, authorities say. It's now been exactly a week since she--

VOICE 3

Searches continue for actress Car--

VOICE 4

--her understudy has taken over her role in Betrayal--

VOICE 5

Carolina Palamore's bizarre disappearance has led some authorities to believe that she may have been murdered--

The ANCHOR enters.

ANCHOR

Riding on the back of her extremely well-received role in Harold Pinter's Betrayal, Palamore's legend has only gotten bigger within the last two weeks...The question now is, will Carolina Palamore's mysterious disappearance jolt her chances at being nominated for a Tony award this season?

The anchor exits.

JACK

You've got to talk.

Silence.

JACK

It's been almost three weeks now since you talked. Not a word. At first at least you'd say something, surely you've got something to say.

Silence.

JACK

You stink, you know. You really stink. And your hair looks...simply, like shit. It's greasy. I could let you take a shower--

Caro rattles the chain.

JACK

I can take it off.

Pause.

JACK

I'll take it off.

Pause.

JACK

I'll have to lock the doors, of course.

Silence. Caro still stares at him.

JACK

Eat, then.

Pause.

JACK

That's one thing you have to give me. I've never not fed you.

Caro eats.

JACK

You could say thank you for that.

Caro puts her fork down.

JACK

You know why I'm keeping you.

Silence.

JACK

When I found out it was you I was selling that stuff to...I had to do something. Get you off that nasty. Have you even had a touch of it since you've been here? Save that first night?

Pause.

JACK
Have you?!

Pause. She glares at him.

JACK
(Softly)
I know. Recreational only. I know.

Silence.

JACK
You still need to take a shower.

Pause.

JACK
Do you want to take a shower? Because I think you really,
you know...need. To take a shower.

Pause.

Caro nods her head.

JACK
Good. Let me just, uh, clear the table. Then I'll...unlock
you.

Jack stands up and begins taking the
plates, etc. off the table. He exits
into the kitchen. He comes back with a
key to the padlocks and starts
unhooking the chain from Caro's leg.
She winces. The skin underneath the
chain on her leg is very red.

JACK
Oh, Jesus.

He looks at her. Tears are welling up
in her eyes. She's obviously in pain.

JACK
How come you never told me about this?

She lifts her hands in an I-don't-know
gesture. She wipes her eye.

JACK
¡Dios!...let me get some peroxide.

She turns her head--fast--to look at
him.

JACK
Is that not okay?

She nods: yes.

CARO
(Struggling to speak--she's in
pain she wasn't in while the
shackle was on)
I--it--it's o...kay.

Beat while Jack looks at her.

JACK
I'll be right back. Let me just...

He finishes taking off the chain and
drops it on the floor.

JACK
Stay here? Don't leave.

Caro nods. Jack exits. Caro looks
around the room--at the door, at the
table. She stands, favoring the leg.
Jack re-enters, a bottle of peroxide
and a bowl and a cloth in his hand, as
well as a marijuana joint.

JACK
(Gingerly)
Whoah, whoah, sit back down. You don't need to be up on that
leg. Sit down, just sit down.

Caro sits. Jack arranges his things on
the floor.

JACK
Stick your leg out. Take deep breaths.

She does. He puts the bowl under her
ankle, and holds her foot up with one
hand. He undoes the cap on the bottle
of peroxide and pats her foot. She
sees the joint.

CARO
Is that a joint?

JACK
Yes. I thought it might help--

CARO
(Overlapping)
No, I don't need it, I don't--

JACK
--the pain a little--

CARO
No. I don't want it.

JACK
Are you sure?

CARO
Yes.

JACK
Okay.

CARO
You can smoke it if you want, though. I don't--

JACK
I'll be okay. If you're not going to I don't want it either.

Pause.

JACK
Your foot?

CARO
Oh, yeah.

She lifts her foot up, and Jack,
kneeling, places it on his knee.

JACK
You ready?

Caro nods. Jack pours the peroxide
over her leg. She winces; it's
hurting.

JACK
I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry...

CARO
Shit...

Jack stops pouring and lets the fizz
die down. He dries her foot with the
cloth, and then puts the cloth over her
ankle and pulls the bowl out from under
her foot.

She lets her foot hang in the air. He closes the bottle of peroxide and sets it down on the floor beside the bowl.

JACK

I hope that'll be better. I'm sure it will be. You talked...

Caro looks at him.

JACK

¿Digame? ¿Por favor?

Silence.

CARO

Okay.

JACK

I'm sorry your ankle was so bad. I didn't realize--

CARO

It's okay.

JACK

But no, it's not--my intention wasn't to--

CARO

It's okay. Don't worry--

JACK

You're going to hate me for doing this to you forever.

CARO

Can I have that shower?

JACK

Yeah, right, just the bathroom you--you know where it is.

Caro begins to walk, but nearly crumples on her foot.

CARO

Ah!

JACK

Oh, Jesus. Caro...oh. Just, just sit down, just sit down.

He helps her to the ground.

CARO

When you took the chain off, it--it really started hurting. With the chain on I guess it was...numb, or something. I couldn't feel anything.

JACK
(Optimistically)
It got you to talk--

Caro looks at him disapprovingly.

JACK
Right.

Pause.

CARO
Yes. It did get me to talk.

Pause.

Jack smiles, stifles a laugh.

JACK
For a while I was starting to think about that thing you said
about Norma Desmond that first night--

CARO
(Confused)
Huh?

JACK
The first night you were here...the very first one. I called
you Miss and you said that you didn't need it, that you
weren't Norma Desmond.

CARO
(Simultaneously)
Norma Desmond.

Pause. Jack smiles.

JACK
You remember.

CARO
Yeah.

JACK
I've thought about that a lot, lately.

Caro looks away.

JACK
I know I kept you in here...by...force, or whatever. I took
you.

CARO
Yes, you did.

But I had...good...
JACK

Silence.

Jack smiles.

JACK
Anyway. You said you weren't Norma Desmond. And I've been thinking about it lately because it seemed like you were trying to be her.

Pause.

JACK
You know...
Talk, talk! (A la Gloria Swanson)

Caro laughs.

JACK
That bitch hated talking.

CARO
Even though she did so much of it.

They smile at each other. A weird moment.

CARO
I'll talk now.

JACK
Good.

CARO
I'll take that shower.

JACK
Okay.

Silence. Caro struggles, but she gets up. Jack gets up as well, and lets her drape her arm over his shoulder.

CARO
Thank you.

Pause. They don't move.

JACK
Would you also like to...

Beat.

CARO

What, like to what?

JACK

I was wondering if you'd like to use the phone. Call that...your husband? Or somebody. Your mom, even. Just to let them know that...you're okay.

Caro focuses on him intently; she doesn't move. She's formulating something.

CARO

(Tone of voice shifts, becomes more placid)

Yes. Yes, I'd like that. Me gustaría este. Mucho.

Pause.

JACK

You would?

CARO

Sí.

Pause.

JACK

Okay. First your shower. And then I'll get you the phone.

CARO

Good.

They exit. The Spanish guitar plays.
Lights out.

END SCENE FIVE

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO - FREEDOM

SCENE ONE - TAKING

Dim lights. Caro, opening the door slowly, enters. She holds shopping bag upon shopping bag. She wears bitch gogs that cover her whole face. She takes the sunglasses off and tosses them on the table. She tosses her purse on the table, too.

The apartment itself has stuff in it: on the walls, decorations. The table has elaborate place settings on it-- plates, forks, tablecloths and all. A fake ficus tree sits in the corner. This is Caro's space now.

Caro places the bags on the floor gingerly. She doesn't notice when Jack enters from the side and watches her as she unloads the bags. She's got more house stuff, as well as clothes--both for her, and for him.

JACK

Good shopping?

CARO

¡Ay, dios! You scared me.

JACK

(Overlapping)

Where at?

Pause.

JACK

Lo siento.

CARO

It's okay.

She grabs one of the guyshirts she's bought.

CARO

Por tuyo.

JACK

You bought me clothes?

CARO
Yeah...of course why not?

JACK
You're shopping a lot lately. That's a lot of outdoor time.

CARO
I disguise myself.

JACK
And if some...photographer?

CARO
Wouldn't happen, and so what?

JACK
That's not the point, not the whole point. That's part of
the point. But it's also...
(He surveys the room)
...do we really...need--

CARO
No, of course not, but I want to--

JACK
(Overlapping)
Then why--

CARO
Because it's fun for me. And it has given both me and this
apartment more life.

JACK
You've just put make-up on my apartment. I don't need any of
this.

CARO
I didn't mean to...

JACK
But you did.

Pause.

JACK
What else did you buy?

CARO
(Referencing the guyshirt)
Clothes...and for me, too. And a cookbook. And a little
painting that I thought could go in the bathroom, and--

JACK
All of this today?

Sí. Yes. CARO

Pause.

¿No te gustan? ¿Algo? CARO

How much did you spend, Caro? JACK

How much did I-- CARO

¿Cuanto? ¿Cuanto? JACK

Not that-- CARO

Not much for you, maybe. But a shit ton for me. JACK

Pause.

Give me my billfold. JACK

Jack... CARO

Give it to me. Damelo. JACK

Pause.

¡Ahora! JACK

Fine. CARO
(Immediately)

She goes to the table, digs through her purse and retrieves the wallet. She hands it over.

Thank you. JACK

Pause.

I'm not mad. JACK

Pause.

JACK

But you're--

CARO

(Obviously pissy)

I'm not angry, no--

JACK

Good--

CARO

But I am offended.

JACK

You're offended. ¿Y porque, chica?

CARO

Because of that! Y porque me dijese que yo podía. You gave me rights, Jack, and you're taking them away from me.

JACK

Caro don't start that shit--

CARO

¡Mierda! ¡Mierda! Shit? I'll tell you shit I'll feed you shit Jack--you let me out of that chain you will not put me back in it this way--

JACK

I don't want you back in it

Caro pouts hard.

JACK

I know I said I did well being a helper. And I do, Caro, but I don't do that well. I don't do movie star well--

CARO

(Overlapping)

Soap operas? Telenovelas rosas, Jack. And theatre--theatre, not even film!

JACK

(Overlapping)

But I do well enough for me, and that affords me a private life, not in the public eye, not having to always--

(Caro finishes her line)

I know you're on Broadway, Caro, I know. But I do not do as well as you do money-wise. Take it.

CARO

I just wanted to fix up our home together.

JACK
(Immediately)
Then do it on your own budget. Or, ask me first.

Pause.

CARO
In Spain if you told someone this they would--

JACK
You're not in Spain anymore, Caro, you're not--

CARO
I know--

JACK
Not even in esta casa. Not even here.

Silence.

CARO
(Fiercely--she is not docile at
all anymore)
You hold me here like a prisoner.

JACK
No, Caro, I don't--

CARO
¡Sí lo haces!

She grabs a plate from the table and
hurls it against the wall, shattering
it.

CARO
You treat me like shit. You chain me up. You won't let me
go--

JACK
(Overlapping)
You're free to go whenever you want--

CARO
(Overlapping)
--And I feel like I'm stuck in this mindfuck with you! Every
word means something, every word has twenty different layers
to it, goddammit--

She grabs another plate and slams it
down on the table, shattering it.

JACK
Caro, stop it! Stop it!

She holds up a section of plate like a knife.

CARO

Not until you give me my life back. Not until you stop trying to take me away from myself.

JACK

You're hysterical.

CARO

I'm just tired of your bullshit. I will stay here and love you, Jack, but I will not put up with this bullshit. I will be an equal in our relationship if we are to have one.

JACK

Caro...

CARO

¿¡Me entiendes!?

JACK

Caro.

She wields her plate.

CARO

¿Que? ¿Que? ¿Que, puto, que?

Pause. Jack approaches her. He grabs the plate, lowers her hand down.

JACK

Caro...

CARO

(Lifting the plate again)

¡Hijo de perra!

JACK

Stop it!

He slaps her. She slaps him back hard with the hand holding the plate. He puts his hand to his cheek. He's bleeding. He kneels, gasping.

CARO

Eres un bastardo. And you deserve that. Eres un bastardo en total. La totalidad de tu ser.

Pause.

JACK
Caro please don't say that.

CARO
Te folle.

She stands over him with the plate.

CARO
¡Te folle!

She throws the chunk of plate on the ground as she screams. Upon the crash of the plate, the lights go out.

END SCENE ONE

SCENE TWO - NODS

Dim lights; no actors on the set. The Spanish guitar plays over the entire scene.

VOICE 1
Missing actress Carolina Palamore is not missing anymore. According to Palamore's publicist, the Spanish stage performer--whose latest role as Emma in Harold Pinter's Betrayal has garnered her Tony buzz in the theatre community--contacted her husband just two nights ago. She is in Spain, she says, on the Pilgrimage of Santiago de--

VOICE 2
She may have reappeared for a while, but Carolina Palamore is nowhere to be found. Attempts by her family and business partners have been futile, as the actress--

The anchor enters.

ANCHOR
More than three months after her cyclical disappearing act began, actress Carolina Palamore has been nominated for the Tony Award for Best Actress in a play for her role as Emma in Betrayal by theatre legend Harold Pinter.

The anchor exits. With lights still dim, Caro enters, dressed entirely in what is obviously Jack's clothing. She is under a spotlight. She pulls out a phone and sits in a chair to the dining table, which she is not chained to. She lights a joint and begins smoking it while she dials a number. A ring, and then another.

RUTH, 30s, African-American, enters.
She is dressed business casual. She
answers the phone. The rings end.

RUTH

Ruth Markham speaking.

Pause. Exhale.

RUTH

Speak!

CARO
(Immediately)

Ruth?

Pause.

RUTH

Caro?

CARO

Hola.

RUTH

Hi, hola, oh, god, hi. Caro, where are you? You need to cut
this shit out where are you? Did you hear about the
nominations? Where are you calling from, ¿Donde estas?

CARO
(Overlapping)

I know--I know about the awards...yes...I'm--

RUTH

What--did you just...disappear?

CARO

That I can't really...explain. I just had to.

RUTH

¿Donde estas?

CARO

I--

RUTH

Where--are--you?

CARO

I--

RUTH

Are you back in New York--

CARO

I tried to--

RUTH

Where in New York are you?

CARO

Yes, I'm back in New York, and Jesus Ruth I'll tell you the hell where I am if you just shut the shit up...

Pause.

RUTH

I'm with a friend.

Pause.

RUTH

Who?

CARO

Mi novio.

RUTH

(Immediately)

Boyfriend! Caro you're still married.

CARO

I know.

Beat.

RUTH

Do you know how lucky you are that the media hasn't found out about--

CARO

Yes! Yes, I know. I know.

RUTH

Apparently you don't know. Girl you've been missing for two--three months now! What made you think you could drop off the face of the planet like that--

CARO

I was doing research--

RUTH

(Getting heated)

Don't give me that bullshit--

CARO

You don't underst--

RUTH

(Hot)

Research my ass. Girl you made me worried about you--you made everyone worried about you--

Ruth exits, speaking from offstage.

CARO

I was on fucking Pilgrimage--

RUTH

Research my--

CARO

(Loudly)

How is that not research? Huh? How?

Silence. Ruth re-enters, holding a box of crackers which she begins munching on nervously.

RUTH

Research for what? Have you taken another role? No. Because I would know about it.

CARO

No, I haven't taken a new role--

RUTH

You're trying to break into movies, aren't you--

CARO

No! I just wanted to...

RUTH

What? To what?

CARO

To...I don't know.

(Beat)

I just wanted to do it.

Silence.

CARO

Lo siento.

Silence.

CARO

Jesus, Ruth, I'm sorry. I guess I should have told people. I wanted to do it alone.

RUTH

You sure as hell have a lot of the letter "I" in you.

CARO

I know. It was...selfish?

RUTH

I'm glad you see that.

Silence.

CARO

Anyway. Now that I'm back, I figured that since the time seems right, I'd like to have...people. Come over. You know. Una fiesta.

RUTH

A fiesta. God, girl. Wow. A fucking fiesta. How in the hell will people come over if nobody knows even where you live and you won't tell--

CARO

I'll tell them.

RUTH

Is your new novio gonna be okay with that?

CARO

We've been fixing up the apartment, so yes. Yes! And stop the Spanish shit. Don't mock me, hija de perra.

RUTH

(Overlapping)

Is your husband gonna be okay with that--you stop it...

Pause.

CARO

Quiero un divorcio.

RUTH

Yo decía stop.

CARO

I want a dicorce!

RUTH

Girl, what kind of life change are you going--

CARO

I-want-a-divorce. It's as simple as that. I'm going to divorce Mike. I don't know what I'm going to do after that. I'm seeing Jack--

RUTH
 (Cutting in)
 That's the boyfriend's name, Jack--

CARO
 (Never stopping)
 --and I've moved in with him--

RUTH
 (Overlapping again)
 Where did you meet him? How?

CARO
 (Immediately)
 That...doesn't matter.

Pause.

CARO
 It's a long story.

Silence.

CARO
 It's a really long story.

Ruth softens. Her body loosens.

RUTH
 You are such a woman.

CARO
 (Almost giggling)
 Like, like girly?

RUTH
 No. Like Madonna.

Ruth's phone beeps and she checks it.

RUTH
 I've got to go. Stay in touch this time. Please?

CARO
 I will. Adiós.

RUTH
 Adiós cariña. Come see me. Don't disappear again. I'm serious.

CARO
 I will. And I won't. Bye.

Lights out. The music stops.

END SCENE ONE

SCENE TWO - LAY IT DOWN

Dark stage. Heavy, post-sex breaths.

JACK

Up! Up!

CARO

Oh.

JACK

Better. Sorry.

CARO

No don't be sorry. Don't be sorry at all.

Pause.

JACK

Wait there.

The sound of footsteps as Jack exits. He turns on a light offstage, and fragmented slivers of illumination spill into the room. Caro's under sheets.

CARO

(Loudly)
Grab the key! Please!

JACK

(Offstage)
All right!

CARO

I'm not used to this thing anymore.

Silence. Jack returns, a towel around his waist and his shirt off. Caro sticks her leg out from the blanket. The shackle is around her ankle. He unlocks Caro's leg. She holds the sheet over her as she rises and exits. Jack leaves behind her. From offstage, the sound of a distant shower. Clanks of plates. Jack returns, two plates of food in his hands.

He places them on the table and exits again, returning with glasses of water. Caro enters just as Jack is turning on the light. She's in a bath robe, a towel wrapped around her hair. They sit at the table and eat. They look at each other. And giggle.

JACK

You're great.

CARO

Not like you.

JACK

I'm the creepy one, remember?

CARO

That's what makes it hott now.

Pause.

JACK

Do you really like...?

CARO

I get some kind of charge from it...yes.

JACK

¿Por que?

Pause.

CARO

It's how I know you.

JACK

You haven't known me that long.

CARO

But I've known you long enough.

JACK

But I hurt you--

CARO

You helped me.

Silence. They eat.

CARO

Jack?

JACK
Sí.

CARO
I have something to tell you.

Pause.

JACK
What?

CARO
I called Ruth.

Pause.

JACK
Ruth? Ruth who's Ru--

CARO
(Cutting in)
My publicist--

JACK
Oh...
(Beat)
Why?

CARO
I thought it was time.

JACK
Oh..

CARO
I'm nominated for a Tony, Jack. I think I can--

JACK
(Cutting in)
Very rightly so, you are--

CARO
(Overlapping)
--appear back into the world if I want to--

JACK
(Immediately)
You can?

Pause.

CARO
Yes.

Pause.

CARO

You don't own me, Jack.

JACK

I know.

CARO

You've tried to before, but you don't own me. And when you do you're not very good at it.

Pause.

JACK

I didn't really want to keep you stuck here--

CARO

(Interrupting, sarcastic)

I could tell.

JACK

I let you go. And you stayed. What about that?

Silence.

CARO

(Smiling)

So, I called Ruth today, and I told her that I wanted a divorce from my husband...

Jack looks up from his food, astounded.

CARO

(Cont'd)

...and I told her that I was living with my boyfriend.

Pause.

JACK

Your...boyfriend?

CARO

Sí, sí.

Pause.

JACK

Did you tell her how we met?

CARO

No. She didn't ask.

Pause.

JACK

Well. Wow. I didn't know that's what you were considering us to be--

CARO

We live together, don't we?

JACK

Yes.

CARO

We cook together?

JACK

Yes.

CARO

We sleep together?

JACK

Yes.

CARO

What link are you missing?

Silence.

CARO

Jack, look at me.

He complies.

CARO

You brought me in here for a reason. You were in love with me. Don't tell me that isn't so. You had seen me before, and you came and watched me, and you fell in love with me. And the first opportunity you got, you took me.

She kicks the chain with her foot.

CARO

It's All About Eve with a chain, Jack.

She kicks the chain again.

CARO

I like this thing now. I really do.

JACK

I'm still sorry--

CARO

Never, ever be sorry for what you did.

Silence.

JACK

You told her you wanted to divorce your husband?

CARO

I do. I wanted to the first night I came here.

JACK

All right.

(He looks at her)

I'm happy.

CARO

I'm happy you're happy.

Silence.

JACK

Why?

Pause.

CARO

I was having an affair with a stagehand. He was Korean. I thought I was pregnant. That's what Mike and I fought about.

JACK

That's why he hit you?

CARO

That's why he almost hit me.

JACK

Were you really pregnant?

CARO

I guess not. I'm not anymore if I ever was.

JACK

I'm sorry, Caro.

CARO

Don't be. If I was, I'm glad I'm not anymore.

Silence.

JACK

I'm glad you're here.

CARO

I am, too.

JACK
I'm excited about your nomination. You'll get--I think
you'll get it.

CARO
Crossing my fingers. I don't care that much, though--

JACK
You'll get it.

CARO
Jack?

JACK
Yeah.

CARO
Do you still smoke pot?

JACK
Why?

Pause.

JACK
You want some pot.

Caro giggles.

CARO
Maybe...

Jack bursts out in laughter. Caro
follows suit. They stare at each
other.

CARO
I just got a Tony nomination. The least you can do
is...Jack, dámelo!

JACK
(Smiling)
Valé.

Jack exits.

CARO
(Yelling to Jack as he leaves)
Don't put any of that nasty shit in it though.

JACK
What?

CARO
That toxic stuff!

Pause.

JACK
Well, Caro, I'm...
(He enters holding a small box)
...glad to hear you say that.

She looks at him.

CARO
Thank you.

Pause.

CARO
Now...the pot.

They laugh. Jack goes to the table and sits down, arranging the things out of his box and rolling a joint.

JACK
I haven't had a joint since...since first night you were--

CARO
Mierda.

JACK
No it's not.

CARO
You had a joint that night my ankle was bleeding so bad. You offered it to me--

JACK
But I didn't smoke it--

CARO
...and then, after all that was over and you went to bed, you smoked the joint in your bedroom.

Pause.

CARO
(Holding back laughter)
Your door was open. I-I saw all of the lighter flicks and smelled that whole fucking joint and I thought to myself, Why in the hell did I turn that down?

They laugh together.

JACK

You pay attention to me too much. Hold on a second.

He lights the joint, smokes it, passes it to Caro, who smokes it before she speaks.

CARO

It's about all you can do when you're not talking to someone: look at them. Study them.

JACK

You didn't ever look at me...

CARO

Not when you were looking at me.

Jack is taken aback.

CARO

But I did look at you. All the time. You just weren't looking at me enough to see it.

Pause.

CARO

What were you caught up with?

JACK

What do you think?

CARO

I don't know; that's why I'm asking you.

JACK

Caro...I took you. I stole you. If you were an item in a department store I could have been arrested for shoplifting--

CARO

And as a human you could be arrested for kidnapping. But I'm okay, Jack. And I feel like I'm better off since that happened--since you happened.

JACK

Good.

CARO

(Referencing the joint)

I don't pay that much attention to what's legal and what's not, though.

JACK

(Laughing)

I can tell.

Pause.

CARO
I want to move my stuff in here.

JACK
(After a beat)
You mean...actually--move...in? But you've already gotten all this stuff.

CARO
I've got more at Mike's. Stuff from back home, stuff my mother gave me cuando era chica. I want to move it here.

JACK
Oh--wow--uh...

CARO
¿Sí o no?

JACK
Well I--of course you know what I'll say--

CARO
¿Sí?

JACK
Yeah, of course--sure it's a yes--

CARO
Then I'm moving in.

JACK
Yes. Yes, yes, yes, yes--you can.

CARO
Good. I'll call Ruth tomorrow and tell her to bring my stuff over here--

JACK
Why do you need to call your agent for that?

CARO
So she can arrange to have my things brought over here.

JACK
You and I couldn't just...go get the stuff?

CARO
You?

JACK
Yeah.

CARO
And actually do work?

JACK
I guess?

CARO
Wow.

Pause.

CARO
No. I'm calling Ruth. I'm not going back to Mike's. No
puedo.

Pause.

CARO
Jack?

JACK
What's that?

CARO
I know...that I told you...I told Ruth about us. But she's
my publicist, Jack. She's who I tell things so she can
control who finds out about something I do. If I tell Ruth
to make sure X information stays out of the media, her job is
to make sure that X information stays out of the media--

JACK
And you don't want me in the media. Associated with you, at
least.

CARO
At this point, Jack, no. Not yet.

Pause.

CARO
Let me get my divorce first. Then I can go public with you.

JACK
Right.

CARO
I promise I will. I've just got to get this divorce
finalized. Hell, I've got to get it started. Not to mention
the media, the courts would kill me if they found out I was
living with my drug dea--

She cuts herself off when she notices
Jack's sharp gaze her way.

Pause.

JACK
So I'm just your drug dealer?

CARO
No--Jack...

JACK
That's all I am?

CARO
No.

JACK
It seemed easy for you to call me that. Is that who I'm going to be to you? After you stay here? After you live in my house, with my things?

CARO
Oh, Jack, you don't have that many things--

JACK
But it's still my house--

CARO
You don't have that much--

JACK
I do now! Because of you!

CARO
You brought me here, remember?

JACK
You came here! To get...

CARO
To get drugs?

JACK
Well...yes--

CARO
Then do you see my point, Jack? Do you see my point?

Pause.

CARO
Jack if they find out that that's who you are and what you do we could both be arrested, you realize that? God if they only knew how much stuff you've got around here you could be imprisoned for God-knows-how long--

JACK
That's my fucking job, Caro--

CARO
You're giving up a lot for your job--

JACK
A lot of what? A lot of freedom? Liberty? You think that just because I can't open a bank account because all my income is tax-free cash flow that I'm lessening my freedom as a, as a citizen--

CARO
As a person, Jack. As a person.

Silence.

CARO
Jack...You let others use you. And you fake yourself into believing that you're helping them. You sell yourself, really. You can't do that anymore.

Pause.

CARO
(A sharp intake of breath,
then)
Jack: you are tender, and you are a sweet, kind, gorgeous man who I would like to begin a relationship with. But my work puts me in a public eye. You can sympathize with me for wanting to make sure that that public still views me as a decent--

JACK
I'm not decent?

CARO
Yes, Jack, you are decent.

Pause.

CARO
That's why I don't think you should sell drugs anymore. You're too decent for that.

Pause.

CARO
Really. You are.

Silence.

JACK
What am I supposed to do?

CARO
For income?

JACK
(Overlapping)
For a living, yes.

Pause.

CARO
Well...after I move in, you can...not work.

Pause.

JACK
So then what do I do with my days?

Pause.

CARO
You spend them with me.

They kiss--a long one.

JACK
I think I could love you.

CARO
Then go ahead and do it.

They kiss again.

JACK
I don't want to quit my job.

CARO
But you need to. And with me around, you can.

Pause.

JACK
Are we going to stay here? In the apartment?

Jack's phone rings, keeps ringing.

CARO
Why not? The place itself is nice enough. I like it.

Pause.

JACK
When are you going to file for divorce?

Pause.

CARO
Tomorrow, Jack--your phone...

JACK
Caro--

CARO
--I'm announcing it soon.

JACK
Announcing it?

CARO
En la tele, sí. Jack, answer your phone.

He pulls his phone from his pocket.

Projection:

3:25 p.m.: Witheld #: you were coming
at three?

JACK
On TV? You're announcing it on TV? Uh, a fucking client.

CARO
Yes.

JACK
When?

Pause.

JACK
When?

CARO
Soon.

JACK
I don't want you to do that.

CARO
No. Too bad. Voy a hacerlo. Go to your client.

JACK
Are we done here yet? I don't want you to--

CARO
Jack! Go to your client.

Pause. Jack closes his phone, and the
projection turns off.

CARO

You're the one who started making outcalls.

Jack shrugs, exits. He re-enters, wearing a fancier shirt and shoving something into his pocket.

JACK

I'll be back. We're not done with this conversation.

Caro stands, kisses Jack.

CARO

I think I could love you too.

They kiss again, and Caro breaks away.

CARO

Go to your client.

Jack nods, tossles Caro's hair, giggles. Then he leaves the apartment. Caro stands for a few beats, staring at the door. Then she exits the stage and returns holding the power drill. She looks at the table, tests out the drill, and bends down and begins unbolting the table.

Lights out.

END SCENE TWO

SCENE THREE - USE HIS TOOLS

Dim lights. Jack is sitting on the floor by the table, playing with the chain and shackle with his foot. He's flipping through channels on an unseen television.

CARO

(Offstage)

Jack!

JACK

Yeah?

CARO

(Offstage)

Don't watch it...

JACK

I want to.

CARO

Come in here with me...

JACK

I'm going to watch it. I'll be in there in a minute.

The anchor enters, sharing the stage with Jack. As he speaks, he arranges two chairs interview-style.

ANCHOR

Carolina Palamore's life has been the subject of near-constant scrutiny since her mysterious disappearance from both the Broadway stage and the New York social scene. Palamore claims to have been on the Camino de Santiago de Compostela pilgrimage in Spain over the past few months, but her cell phone records indicate otherwise. Instead, many believe that Palamore may not have disappeared at all--the possibility that Palamore simply shrank away from the stage and turned herself into a virtual recluse. The Tony-nominated actress sat down with me briefly this morning for her first interview since before she disappeared.

Caro, dressed elegantly, enters with Ruth trailing behind her, fixing her make-up, etcetera. Ruth holds a glass of water in her hand and hands it to Caro. The anchor motions for a glass, but Ruth gives the anchor a bitch look and simply grabs the fake ficus from the corner and drops it behind the two chairs and exits.

ANCHOR

So--tell us what happened. Where were you?

CARO

Oh, that...could take a while.

They laugh.

ANCHOR

Three months almost, that you disappeared.

CARO

Yeah, yeah.

ANCHOR

Is that the word you would use for it? Disappearing?

CARO

(Beat, then)

I--um...actually, no.

ANCHOR

What would you call it?

CARO

I like to see it as a growing experience. I was taken out of my element a little and really shown my place in the world.

ANCHOR

You say you were taken. Why the passive voice there?

CARO

If you mean against my will--

ANCHOR

No. Let me rephrase...what were you taken by?

Pause.

CARO

Just...learning, really.

Pause.

CARO

You're allowed to get a really big head when you're put up on a pedestal. And I think it just became too much for me. You know?

The anchorwoman nods.

ANCHOR

So where were you?

CARO

Spain--

ANCHOR

No, for real.

Caro laughs.

CARO

Ay, díos. Even if it were true you wouldn't believe me.

ANCHOR

When phone records prove otherwise--

CARO

I was in New York still.

ANCHOR

With whom?

CARO
Staying at a friend's.

ANCHOR
Not the new boyfriend?

CARO
Yes, actually. Sí.

Pause.

ANCHOR
What's his name?

CARO
His name is Jack. Jack, Jack, Jack.

ANCHOR
Do you love him?

CARO
(Beat, then)
Um...

(She laughs)
...yeah--

ANCHOR
(Overlapping)
Enough to divorce your husband for him, from what I understand--

CARO
(Overlapping)
Enough to move in with him very shortly after I met him.

ANCHOR
And the divorce?

CARO
That too.

Pause.

ANCHOR
Why the divorce?

CARO
We just...weren't working out anymore. Me and Mike.

ANCHOR
But you and Jack are good?

CARO
Oh, yeah, definitely. I think we'll be together for a long time.

ANCHOR
That's good to hear.

CARO
It's good to feel.

ANCHOR
Do you have any plays coming up?

CARO
No...

ANCHOR
Any films? I heard rumors that you were going to try your hand at films.

CARO
Nope, nothing. I'm...trying to take a break for a while.

ANCHOR
Even if you win your Tony?

Caro laughs.

CARO
You know...especially if I win the Tony.

They laugh.

CARO
I've worked really hard, you know. I'm 32 now...let's...yeah that's eleven full years...since I graduated from college. And before that I was even trying to find acting jobs when I was...I think my first real, paying job doing anything with acting was when I was seventeen. So it's been a long time coming. People think actors don't really work. But they don't realize that we live and breathe our profession. We-work-all-the-time. The audience only sees the two hours, and they think that's all you're good for.

ANCHOR
That would be with screen actors, though--

CARO
Then it's even more relevant with stage actors. We work more in just performances: how many performances do we give in a single week?

ANCHOR

Has that work changed any since you've gotten older? Has it amplified?

CARO

The only difference between the work we did then and the work we do now is that now we take our work into the domestic sphere more. It's difficult to hold a relationship whenever you're acting your way through it.

ANCHOR

And that was in reference to your ex-husband?

CARO

Yeah.

ANCHOR

What about this new Jack?

CARO

Jack...Oh, Jack. You know, when I met Jack, I dropped all the acting. I stopped having to pretend who I was and could just be human--animal. I didn't have to disguise myself behind some other character. And I still don't. I think that's really the biggest reward of this whole past year--Tony nomination aside. I met someone around whom I do not have to act.

Pause.

An awkward moment in the interview.

ANCHOR

So! With your nomination and your...re-emergence into the public sphere, what are you going to do with your time if you're not acting?

CARO

Well, as little as possible, not any more than I have to--

ANCHOR

(Overlapping on "more")

We've heard that you and your publicist are planning on holding a party at new boyfriend Jack's place.

CARO

Yes, actually, yeah we are.

ANCHOR

Wanna give us some of the scoop about that?

CARO

It won't be anything huge and grand, but Jack's got a pretty nice apartment, actually, and we're planning on opening it up for just...friends for drinks and stuff before the awards show. Most people wait until afterward to get together on awards show days, but we thought it would ease tension and calm nerves if people met up before, so we're inviting just twenty or so people just to come over and have some fun for a while.

ANCHOR

With the timing it almost seems like a welcome back party for you.

(Referencing the crew)

We'll be there, by the way.

CARO

The Tonys?

ANCHOR

Well of course for that--but I meant the party. We wouldn't miss it; we're excited!

CARO

(Laughing)

You should be.

ANCHOR

I've really enjoyed having you--covering your story.

CARO

Thank you.

ANCHOR

So naturally I'm looking forward to the welcome back.

Caro laughs.

ANCHOR

What?

CARO

Welcome back. It seems...it just sounds funny.

Pause.

CARO

It could be seen that way, yeah. But those aren't really my intentions. I'm just wanting to get together with a few friends and have a good time. I'll also get to show off Jack.

ANCHOR

Oh, Jack, Jack.

CARO

Jack, Jack, Jack, Jack, Jack--

Lights down. The anchor and Caro clear
the stage of the chairs and the ficus.
Lights up.

JACK

You're opening my house up for a party?

CARO

Yeah, is that okay?

JACK

You never asked me if you could open my house up for a party--

CARO

I didn't think I had to, it's my house too now--

She re-enters, wearing a bathrobe.

JACK

Caro, dammit, do you know how much trouble I could get into--

CARO

Trouble what kind of trouble?

JACK

I used to deal drugs, Caro! I think I've got it all cleared
out but every now and then I find a bag shoved under a table
here, in a drawer there--if somebody finds one of those at
the party--

CARO

They'll probably use it!

JACK

(Overlapping on "use")

--use it!

Pause.

JACK

This is my house, Caro--

CARO

(Overlapping)

I live here now too--

JACK

--just because you live here now doesn't mean that it is your
house. I make the payments on this apartment every month, I--

CARO

I've offered to fucking buy the apartment for you!

JACK

I don't want you to buy it for me! I don't want you to buy anything for me.

CARO

I think I'm just going to buy the apartment for you.

JACK

You can't do that.

CARO

Of course I can.

Pause.

JACK

You don't have to purchase me, Caro.
(Imitating the interview)
Jack, Jack, Jack, Jack...

Pause.

CARO

I'm not trying to purchase you. I'm not trying to buy you out--

JACK

Good. Because I'm not going to sell myself.

CARO

Jack come here.

Jack goes to her. She pats the floor beside her and he sits down. She rests her head on his shoulder. His foot touches the chain. He moves the chain. Its rattling noise is especially loud in the silence.

CARO

I should have asked you about the party.

JACK

Yes. You should have.

CARO

I'm sorry.

JACK

It's okay.

CARO
Can I still have the party?

JACK
Here?

CARO
Yeah.

Silence.

JACK
Yes.

Caros kisses him. Lights out.

END SCENE THREE

SCENE FOUR - TE FOLLE, TE FOLLE, TE FOLLE

A shared fantasyscape. Jack stands in a spotlight smoking a cigarette, jazz music playing in the background.

JACK
I hear they got they own kind of slang ovah in that Spain place. We do here too. But I don't speak it. I speak my own tongue, that which is mine. And I've learned another-- Spanish, actually. I learned it from watching those telenovelas you saw on channel thirteen late at night when you were little. I learned it from listening to the kids in my neighborhood talk.

The spotlight lifts as Caro enters. She carries armfuls of shopping bags. Throughout the scene, Caro speaks directly to the audience, not acknowledging Jack.

CARO
¡Cariño! ¿Donde estas?

JACK
Speak English, Caro, speak English.

CARO
What's got you in a cranky Sue mood, boo?

JACK
I-was-talking!

The spotlight falls back on Jack.
Tableau Caro.

JACK

She brings this shit in my house. My house! Mi casa es su casa--no, stupidshit. She's taking over my house. She's taking over my house! Ayudame? Someone?

He reaches up and touches the place on his cheek where Caro cut him with the plate.

JACK

She even hurt me. She hurt me...it's my mark of Cain.

The spotlight lifts again as Caro unfreezes.

CARO

You don't like the new stuff? I haven't even taken it out of the bags.

JACK

It's not that.

CARO

Good.

She begins to unload the bags--a blanket, a coffee table centerpiece, etcetera.

JACK

Maybe it is that.

CARO

You don't like any of it?

JACK

I don't see the need for it.

CARO

I do. Don't you want a home that is welcoming and personal and inviting and not one that only has the bare minimum--

JACK

None of this stuff is even particularly fancy--

CARO

Fancy? Eres un pijo. It doesn't have to be fancy, it just must be warm.

JACK

Shutup!

The spotlight falls back down on him as Caro freezes again.

JACK

She's taking over. I wanted this to happen oh I did but now she's taking over. And I don't know what to do. I should own up to my responsibility. You don't start someone and quit them. But she's taking over. Carolina Palamore--

Light off; unfreeze Caro. She acknowledges Jack directly for the first time in the scene.

CARO

Yes?

JACK

I'm stopping it here.

CARO

Why, Jack?

JACK

You're taking over. You're taking over and I don't--

He grabs a new decoration from her pile of bags. He smashes it on the ground.

JACK

--think I need any of it--

Caro slaps him hard.

CARO

(Immediately)

¡No se hace eso!

Jack smashes another ornament.

JACK

Fuck that.

Another ornament.

JACK

And that!

CARO

Eres loco--

JACK

I don't want any of this stupid shit!

CARO

(Lashing out)

But I do!

Tableau Caro just before she would have hit Jack. The spotlight falls again.

JACK

She's won. I know it. I love Carolina Palamore. I can be Carolina Palamore's lover. I am Carolina Palamore's lover. She can show me off. Look at her. Even when she's like this, I know...wow. Aren't people beautiful when they're crazy?

END SCENE FOUR

SCENE FIVE - CAROLINA'S PARTY

The anchor enters. Ruth and Caro are frozen as if they were talking on the set by the table.

ANCHOR

For as much talk as she's generated in the past months, actress Carolina Palamore, who last night won her first Tony award for her role in Harold Pinter's Betrayal, is generating even more talk now. Not only did Palamore reveal in her acceptance speech that she will be acting in her first film role this upcoming year, but the actress also hosted a pre-award show party last night at her new boyfriend's apartment, and there we were able to catch a...rather shocking glimpse of her ever-questioned private life.

The anchor moves to the door, and Caro and Ruth un-freeze. Caro opens the door and greets the anchor.

CARO

Hi! Hi! Oh, come in!

ANCHOR

Oh, we must have come a little early--

CARO

It's okay.

ANCHOR

Your boyfriend has a nice place!

CARO

He does, doesn't he? I'm really glad I'm going to have people over here tonight; it's really helping keep my mind off of the show.

ANCHOR

(Looking toward Ruth)

Who's this?

CARO

This is Ruth, my publicist. She did a great job with the party, don't you think?

RUTH

I'm just glad you're back and asking me for favors again! Thought I'd never be able to help you out anymore--

(To the anchor)

We have a really good working relationship.

The anchor looks down, sees the chain on the table. The guitar begins playing.

ANCHOR

(Toward Caro)

So where's the boyfriend, Jack? Where's Jack?

CARO

He's still getting ready, I think, I'm pretty sure. I could go look--

ANCHOR

But he's coming out, right? He's coming out?

CARO

He will be--

ANCHOR

Just a question, but why do you have a chain attached to your table?

Caro turns around and runs away from the anchor. Ruth looks confused.

CARO

It's nothing, it's nothing, I was having something re-modeled and--

ANCHOR

What's the chain for?

CARO

--it's nothing don't--

ANCHOR

Why do you have a chain attached to your table?

CARO

--decoration--

Jack enters, the chain around his ankle. Jack looks at Caro and smiles.

ANCHOR

Is this your boyfriend? Is this Jack?

CARO

Yes, it is.

ANCHOR

And the chain--what's the chain for?

Silence as the music stops and Jack
thinks of something to say.

JACK

I like it.

Lights out. The guitar plays again.

END SCENE FOUR

END ACT TWO

END PLAY