

JUAREZ

by

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Dramatis Personae:

Miguel - First Cartel guard/late twenties

Julio - Second Cartel guard/ late twenties

Isabel - First captive Juarez girl/mid to late twenties

Maria - Second captive Juarez girl/early twenties

Place:

Juarez, Mexico

Time:

Present

## Act I

## Scene 1

Two empty jail cells occupy center stage. One cot is in each cell; they are placed on the left side of the first cell and the right side of the second cell as it faces the audience. In front of both cells are two chairs on either side downstage. There is also a small table with a radio and a bottle of water downstage left. Light rises on Miguel wearing a suit jacket and jeans.

He answers his phone.

## MIGUEL

Sí...Sí...The trucks are ready to go...They'll leave in twenty minutes...Sí...The room is clear...Two clean cells...Yeah...The girls are from the factory – the gringo store...Right now they're in the main house...Yeah...After the coke is dropped off...Sí – then the party.

(laughs)

If you think they're ugly they can be mules...I know you'll like the girls. We watched them for three days before we grabbed them.

(laughs)

That's right! So you'll be back at seven...Bueno...Yeah... We have a case of tequila...You want two cases...Okay – and a case of Irish whiskey.

(laughs)

Sí...That should do it.

*Miguel turns on radio and sits in chair left of center. You hear the faint sound of Mexican music (Rancheras). He lights a cigarette, takes a few puffs and stares sadly into the void. There is the sound of a doorknob being fumbled with. Miguel shuts off radio. He stands up reaching for a gun inside his suit jacket. Enter*

*Julio dressed casually with a shoulder holster and gun.*

JULIO

Qué tal?

MIGUEL

You scared the shit out of me!

JULIO

Por qué?

MIGUEL

Remember the signal?

JULIO

Shit...What is it?

MIGUEL

Two quick knocks, wait a second, then a third.

JULIO

I can't believe I forgot.

MIGUEL

I could have blown your head off! Remember...New orders, new signals...We can't afford mistakes – the trucks are leavin' soon.

JULIO

I'm sorry amigo.

*Miguel sits. Julio grabs the chair from across the stage and sits next to Miguel. Julio takes out a flask.*

JULIO

Want a drink?

MIGUEL

Carlos would kill you if he caught us drinking.

JULIO

C'mon man...He won't be back for a while.

*They stare at each other for a few*

*seconds. Miguel takes the flask from Julio and drinks.*

MIGUEL

You drink too much.

JULIO

I know.

(beat)

Anna is pregnant again.

MIGUEL

This is your fifth.

JULIO

Sí.

MIGUEL

Don't you use any protection?

JULIO

She's a devout Catholic...There's nothing I can do.

MIGUEL

Look there's a girl I know in town. She's forty dollars — when you get the urge.

*Julio takes the flask from Miguel.*

JULIO

That would be cheating.

MIGUEL

No man...It's sex, not love — you can imagine she's your wife.

JULIO

No...It wouldn't feel right.

MIGUEL

What's right anymore...Forget I said that.

JULIO

I love my wife...I could never betray her.

*Julio takes a long drink and grimaces.*

MIGUEL

That stuff will kill you.

JULIO

It's this job that's killing me.

*Miguel grabs Julio.*

MIGUEL

(loudly)

Don't you say that - don't ever talk that way...Do you want to end up on the streets with your head chopped off?!

JULIO

I don't care.

MIGUEL

You better care. You have a family to support.

JULIO

We kidnapped these girls and-

MIGUEL

And what?!

JULIO

It's that I'm tired of-

MIGUEL

Shut up!..How would you feed your family - where would you get that kind of money - no. They won't let you leave man - there's no way out.

JULIO

My cousin knows someone-

MIGUEL

Forget it. They'll kill you and your family...Just do your job and shut up!

(beat)

Give me the flask.

*Miguel takes a long drink.*

MIGUEL

You want a decent house don't you...You want to get out of that cruddy shack you live in - don't make it personal.

(beat)

Sí...You are right.  
JULIO

*Miguel gives Julio the flask.*

When are they coming?  
JULIO

MIGUEL  
Any minute...Fredrico will take them to the door – you  
bring them in...Same as always...Just remember the signal.

Can you bring them in?  
JULIO

No. It's your turn.  
MIGUEL

Okay...All right.  
JULIO

*He stands up.*

(beat)

MIGUEL  
Ellena says "Hi" by the way.

How is she?  
JULIO

MIGUEL  
(sarcastically)  
She's fine.

What's wrong?  
JULIO

MIGUEL  
It doesn't matter.

C'mon man.  
JULIO

MIGUEL

(beat)

The bitch is cheating on me.

JULIO

How do you know?

MIGUEL

She leaves the house and—

*There are several signal knocks. Julio stares at Miguel for a second.*

JULIO

I'll be right back.

*Julio exits. Miguel lights another cigarette and straightens his posture in the chair. He's thinking about his girlfriend and shakes his head. Julio enters with Isabel and Maria. They are blindfolded, handcuffed, with tape over their mouths. Miguel drops cigarette and instinctively pulls out his gun. Julio leads Isabel to the first cell, stage left; she is pulled in. Miguel guides Maria into the second cell stage right; She is pulled in. They remove the blindfolds and duct tape on both women. Maria, clearly distressed, is shaking and mumbling. She sits on the cot. Isabel is shaking slightly and is still standing.*

ISABEL

(to Julio)

What are you going to do — what do you want? Tell me.

JULIO

Shhh...Don't worry.

*Julio leaves the cell, locking it, and drinks from a bottle of water.*

*Miguel also leaves Maria's cell, locking it; he walks over to his chair in front of Isabel's cell.*

ISABEL

Do you have water?

JULIO

We'll get some.

ISABEL

What about the cuffs?

MIGUEL

Shut up!

ISABEL

You think I'm going to escape?

MIGUEL

They stay on.

(beat)

Your friend's not talking.

*Isabel stares at Maria.*

ISABEL

She's in shock.

*Miguel points to Maria.*

MIGUEL

(to Julio)

Give her some water.

*Julio grabs his water bottle and walks into Maria's cell.*

ISABEL

She doesn't look well.

*Julio pours water in his hand touching her forehead and cheeks. He pours a little water into her mouth. She barely swallows. Maria just stares though the cell. Julio gently shakes her.*

JULIO  
Hey...Wake up...Wake up!

ISABEL  
You should let her go.

MIGUEL  
What's her name?

ISABEL  
Maria.

MIGUEL  
(to Julio)  
Say her name.

JULIO  
Maria.

*He gently touches her cheek.*

JULIO  
Maria.

*Maria mumbles. Isabel walks to  
Maria's side of the cell.*

ISABEL  
Maria...Despierta!

JULIO  
(to Miguel)  
What are you going to do?

*Miguel's cell phone rings. He  
answers it.*

MIGUEL  
Sí... Sí...Right away.  
(closes phone)  
(to Julio)  
They want you at the house.

*Julio takes a drink from his water  
bottle and leaves Maria's cell.*

JULIO

I guess everything's under control.

MIGUEL

Hurry up.

As Julio exits.

MIGUEL

Bring back some water.

*Julio exits.*

*Miguel takes a long drink from Julio's flask. He lights another cigarette, taking a long drag. Miguel and Isabel stare at each other for a while.*

MIGUEL

What?! Suddenly you have nothing to say?

(beat)

ISABEL

I'm not going to scream — or cry.

MIGUEL

Good.

ISABEL

Just tell me.

MIGUEL

What?

ISABEL

Is it the sex trade...Organs?...Drugs?

MIGUEL

What does it matter?

ISABEL

It matters to me.

MIGUEL

Why?

ISABEL

If you were me...You'd want to know.

*Miguel turns his back on Isabel.*

MIGUEL

I shouldn't be talking to you.

*He walks over to his chair and sits. He turns on the radio in a low tone. A Mexican song (Rancheras) is playing. He takes a quick drink.*

ISABEL

(loudly)

Do you have a family?..A wife?

*Miguel turns the radio up.*

ISABEL

(shouts)

Two kids! I have two children waiting for me. My aunt's with them right now.

*Miguel shuts radio off and walks over to Isabel's cell.*

MIGUEL

Do you want me to gag you?

ISABEL

I want you to-

*Maria starts screaming. She continues screaming in short bursts while crying.*

MIGUEL

What is she doing?!

ISABEL

She's hysterical.

MIGUEL

Do something!

Let me out!

ISABEL

*He unlocks the cell door. She raises her cuffed hands. They stare at each other for a few seconds. Miguel unlocks her cuffs. Maria is mumbling and rocking on her cot. Miguel has his hand on his gun pushing Isabel in front of him.*

Don't try anything.

MIGUEL

*They hurry over to Maria's cell. Isabel crouches beside her stroking her hair. Maria has a blank stare.*

It's okay...It's okay.

ISABEL

*Maria continues to mumble and rock.*

(to Miguel)  
Do you have a rag?

ISABEL

*Miguel pulls out a handkerchief from his back pocket. She takes it, pressing it against Maria's forehead.*

Give me some water.

ISABEL

*Miguel walks swiftly to the table, grabbing Julio's water bottle. He returns, handing it to her. Isabel pours water in the handkerchief and caresses Maria's forehead and cheek.*

ISABEL

There, there now...It's all right...Everything's going to be all right.

*Isabel loses her balance and falls backward. Miguel reaches to pull her up. She grabs his arm, pushing into him, trying to knock him off balance, while reaching for his gun. They struggle for control, pushing and pulling, until Miguel holds both her arms by her side. They stare at each other for a few seconds.*

MARIA

(hysterically)

No! You can't do that. No! It's not right!

*Miguel loosens his grip. Isabel grabs Maria's arms.*

ISABEL

She's somewhere else.

*Maria screams. Miguel begins to pull out his gun.*

MIGUEL

Get her to stop!

ISABEL

Maria!

*Isabel shakes her.*

ISABEL

Suficiente y cállate.

MARIA

He's over there!

*Isabel raises her hand to slap her. Maria is suddenly quiet.*

MIGUEL

What's she doing?

ISABEL  
 (sarcastically)  
 I don't know...Staring.

*She strokes Maria's hair.*

ISABEL  
 (to Miguel)  
 She'll need more water – she'll be okay.

MIGUEL  
 If she starts again, I'll have to hit her.

ISABEL  
 I'm sure you won't scratch her face.

MIGUEL  
 You're a smart one...C'mon...Get out of the cell.

*He briefly stares at Isabel,  
 admiring her beauty.*

MIGUEL  
 A woman like you is out of my league.

ISABEL  
 (sarcastically)  
 I belong to the bosses – don't I.

*She walks out in front of him then  
 suddenly turns to knee him in the  
 groin. He catches her knee,  
 pushing her leg back down. Miguel  
 stands inches from her face.*

MIGUEL  
Don't do that again.

*Miguel escorts Isabel to the front  
 of her cell. She glares at him. He  
 cuffs her again.*

MIGUEL  
Get in.

*Isabel walks into her cell. She quickly turns around.*

ISABEL

Why are you doing this?! Dónde está su corazón?!

*Miguel turns his back on her and walks to his chair. He sits facing audience.*

ISABEL

Señor...Hombre!

MIGUEL

Quiet Mujer!

*He drinks from Julio's flask and lights a cigarette. Maria is whimpering. She lies on cot and curls up. Miguel turns on radio. A Mexican song is playing. Isabel sits on cot stroking her arm. She suddenly stands up, walks to front of cell, grabs bars and stares at Miguel.*

ISABEL

Señor.

*Miguel turns up music.*

ISABEL

Señor!

MIGUEL

What!

ISABEL

Are you married?

*Miguel turns up music.*

ISABEL

Do you have a woman?!

*He lowers music.*

MIGUEL  
What?!

ISABEL  
Do you have a girlfriend?

MIGUEL  
Why should you care?

ISABEL  
I'd like to know.

(beat)

MIGUEL  
I have a woman.

*He turns up music slightly.*

ISABEL  
And?

*He turns chair around to face Isabel.*

MIGUEL  
And what?

ISABEL  
Tell me.

MIGUEL  
Tell you what?! That the bitch is cheating on me – that I'd like to kill her! What do you want to know?

ISABEL  
You must love her very much.

MIGUEL  
Bullshit...There's nothing I can do about it.

ISABEL  
Why?

MIGUEL  
Because the bosses do what they want.

*Maria groans in the corner.*

ISABEL

And you just take their crap?

MIGUEL

That's right...If I want to live...I do as I'm told...Why am I talking to you.

*Miguel turns chair around and turns up music.*

ISABEL

You must have a family – children?

*Miguel turns up music.*

ISABEL

A mother?!..Children need their mothers.

*Miguel turns up music in louder tone. Maria sits up and screams.*

MARIA

He'll come for you! You'll see!

*She screams. Miguel turns off radio, quickly stands, grabbing his gun.*

MIGUEL

Get her to shut the fuck up!

*Isabel rushes to Maria's side of the cell.*

ISABEL

Maria! Tienes que mantenerte callada.

*Miguel walks close to Maria's cell with gun drawn.*

MARIA

No Papa...I won't let them.

ISABEL

(softly)  
Quiet Amiga...Quiet.

*Maria quiets down rocking and mumbling to herself.*

MIGUEL

Goddamn fucking job!

*He kicks second folding chair in front of Maria's cell.*

ISABEL

(nervously)  
I think she'll be okay – she needs food and water.

*Miguel puts gun away, takes drink from Julio's flask, and walks over to Isabel's cell staring at her for a few seconds.*

MIGUEL

I never knew her.

ISABEL

What?

MIGUEL

(bitterly)  
Mi Madre died after I was born – tuberculosis.

As Miguel turns around.

ISABEL

Your father raised you.

*He turns around quickly, laughing bitterly.*

MIGUEL

(rapidly)  
Yeah...When the motherfucker wasn't drunk he was working at a gringo factory for four dollars a day. Anything else?

ISABEL

Maria and I work in the same kind of place for the same shitty wages.

MIGUEL

There are no choices for people like us – you work, ya live and then you're gone.

(chuckles)

It's not gonna work for you.

ISABEL

What do you mean?

MIGUEL

You're making it personal...I'm not gonna let you go.

ISABEL

You're a hard son-of-a-bitch.

MIGUEL

You think you're the only one who's played this game?..You got balls, I'll give you that – and your smart and pretty.

ISABEL

So tell me.

MIGUEL

What?

ISABEL

Do you have brothers?

MIGUEL

All right, I'll play along...After I tell you, promise me you'll shut the fuck up. Comprende?!

ISABEL

Sí...I promise.

MIGUEL

One brother.

*Maria sits up and yells.*

MARIA

He's coming for you!

*Miguel takes out his gun and stomps over to Maria's cell. As he is unlocking the door.*

ISABEL

(nervously)

What happened to him?!

*Maria keeps screaming. Miguel enters cell and raises gun to strike her head.*

ISABEL

You're brother?!

*Miguel stops, and turns toward Isabel with hurt expression.*

MIGUEL

He died in prison!

*There are a series of door knocks. Enter Julio carrying bottled water, bread and cheese. Maria quiets down and is mumbling and rocking. Miguel lowers gun staring in a controlled rage at her.*

MIGUEL

(loudly)

What took so long?

JULIO

They wanted me to escort the bosses into the main room.

MIGUEL

(sarcastically)

A big goddamn meeting.

JULIO

I brought water and food.

*Julio puts food on table. Miguel points to Isabel.*

MIGUEL

Give her the water first.

JULIO

They want to see you at the house.

MIGUEL

What for?

JULIO

I don't know.

*Miguel opens cell phone and dials number. Julio walks into Isabel's cell giving her water. Miguel is talking on phone.*

MIGUEL

It's Miguel...Sí...Sí...Is it important?...Sí...What about the girls?...Sí...All right...I'll be there.

*He closes phone sadly and stares at Julio.*

MIGUEL

I'll be back soon.

(points to Isabel)

Don't talk to her – she's poison. If the other one starts yelling – hit her.

*Miguel exits.*

(beat)

JULIO

I have cheese and bread.

ISABEL

Why don't you give her the food.

JULIO

She's still not talking?

ISABEL

Mumbling mostly.

JULIO

You gotta control her.

ISABEL

There's not much I can do sitting in this cell.

*Julio stares at her.*

JULIO

No...You can't leave.

*Julio leaves Isabel's cell, grabs cheese and bread from the table and walks into Maria's cell. He sits down beside her, pulls out a bandana pouring water into it. He dabs her forehead, stroking her hair.*

JULIO

There now...Everything's all right.

*Maria slowly comes to life.*

JULIO

Drink this.

*She sits up. He pours water into her mouth. Maria grabs the bottle drinking it in a feverish manner.*

JULIO

Slowly...Slowly.

*Maria slows down. Julio continues to wet and caress her forehead.*

ISABEL

She's coming out of it.

JULIO

Here's some bread and cheese.

*She takes the food and wolfishly eats it.*

JULIO

Easy.

MARIA  
Where am I?

JULIO  
You're in a room.

MARIA  
With bars?

JULIO  
It's to keep you safe.

MARIA  
Safe?..No – no...I'm late. My father's expecting supper.

ISABEL  
We'll be leaving soon Maria.

MARIA  
(loudly)  
No...I have to get home.

JULIO  
Drink some more water. You'll feel better.

*Maria knocks the water out of  
Julio's hands.*

MARIA  
Who are you!?

JULIO  
You need to keep quiet.

*Isabel leans up against the bars  
on Maria's side.*

ISABEL  
Maria!..It's me!

*Maria stares at Isabel, then at  
Julio.*

MARIA  
Isabel.

ISABEL

That's right.

*Maria turns to look at Julio.*

MARIA

Who are you?

JULIO

A friend.

MARIA

No you're not! - I know who you are. You're one of them.  
(shouts)

Help..Help me! Please! They're going to kill me!

ISABEL

Maria!

MARIA

Please!..Someone help!

JULIO

Silencio!  
(reaches for his gun)

You have to keep quiet!

ISABEL

Maria!

Maria stops shouting.

ISABEL

Rest now...You'll be all right...We'll leave soon.

*Maria looks at Isabel and at Julio. She slowly lies down. Julio slides a blanket over her. He leaves Maria's cell and walks over to Isabel.*

JULIO

Gracias.

ISABEL

She'll be okay.

(beat)

I think she has hypoglycemia.

JULIO

What's that?

ISABEL

Low blood sugar...Extreme stress can set it off...Her father is very sick.

JULIO

What's wrong with him?

ISABEL

He has cancer...He worked in a rubber factory for thirty years - lungs are gone.

JULIO

Tough luck.

*Julio turns around and walks over to radio. Isabel partially unbuttons her blouse.*

ISABEL

I could use some food...And more water.

Julio grabs water and food. He points to cot.

JULIO

Sit there.

*Isabel sits on cot. Julio enters cell and gives her water. She is still handcuffed.*

JULIO

Don't try anything.

*Isabel quickly drinks water and voraciously eats bread and cheese. Julio stares in Maria's direction.*

JULIO

Is she gonna be all right?

ISABEL

The food helped her.

JULIO

She looks better.

ISABEL

Maria could be diabetic – she should be in a hospital.

MARIA

That's not going to happen...You'll have to look after her.

ISABEL

I don't know her very well – we're not close friends.

JULIO

We thought you were together.

ISABEL

We're co-workers who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Isabel notices Julio looking at her unbuttoned blouse.

ISABEL

Could you take the cuffs off?

JULIO

No.

ISABEL

I won't do anything. Please...They're uncomfortable.

JULIO

No...I can't.

He turns to leave.

ISABEL

What do you want with us?

He turns around.

JULIO

I shouldn't be talking to you.

*Julio lights a cigarette. He  
stares at Isabel's partially  
exposed breasts.*

JULIO

You are so beautiful.

ISABEL

They want us for sex – don't they?

JULIO

Miguel warned me.

Isabel stands up.

ISABEL

I'm not trying to change your mind.

JULIO

You can't. Siéntense.

Isabel sits.

ISABEL

Will you let me explain.

JULIO

If I let you go...They will kill my family – then they'll  
kill me. Comprende?! I have four children with one  
coming...I have to follow orders.

Julio turns his back.

ISABEL

I can get you help – I know a lawyer...Give me a chance.

*He turns around.*

JULIO

I could never betray Miguel – I've known him for a long  
time.

ISABEL

I could help both of you.

JULIO

He would never go for it.

ISABEL

You're not like him...You have kindness in you.

*Julio bends down, looking sadly  
into Isabel's eyes.*

JULIO

I am like him...We've done some bad things together.

ISABEL

Now is your chance to do better.

JULIO

There is no chance for us.

He walks out of cell.

ISABEL

(loudly)

I have two little girls waiting - you're a father.

*Julio turns around.*

JULIO

I have to tape your mouth...Miguel is right - you're  
poison.

Maria sits up.

MARIA

Isabel.

ISABEL

Sí Maria.

MARIA

Are we leaving soon? My father needs me.

ISABEL

Sí...We are.

MARIA

It feels like I had a bad dream.

*Isabel walks over to Maria's side of cell.*

ISABEL

It'll all be over soon...Lie down and get some rest.

*Maria lies down. Julio's cell phone rings.*

JULIO

Sí...Sí...Right away.

There are a series of knocks.  
Enter Miguel.

JULIO

He just came in... Sí.  
(to Miguel)  
They want to talk to you.

*He hands phone to Miguel.*

MIGUEL

Sí...One's okay, but the other girl-

*Miguel looks in Maria's direction.*

ISABEL

Don't take her!...Take me.

*Miguel cups phone.*

MIGUEL

Shut up.

(back on phone)

No...Nothing wrong...One girl feels a little dizzy...Sí...  
We have one ready to send up...Yeah...Her name is Isabel...  
Yeah...Right away.

(closes phone) (to Isabel)

I should shoot you for interfering.

*Miguel unlocks Isabel's cell and pushes her out.*

MIGUEL

(to Julio)

Go check the other girl.



MIGUEL

(glares menacingly at Isabel)

You don't let up, do you.

ISABEL

You don't want to bruise the merchandise.

*Miguel is tense with rage.*

JULIO

Amigo...The other girl needs more water.

ISABEL

(raises hands)

What about my handcuffs?

MIGUEL

Do you have the key?

JULIO

(searches his pockets)

Shit. I can't find it.

MIGUEL

Jesus Christ. What's wrong with you!

JULIO

I know where it is.

*He rushes into Isabel's cell and  
picks key off the floor.*

ISABEL

How long will I be there?

MIGUEL

(loudly)

Uncuff her at the house...Get the hell out of here.

*Isabel stares fiercely at Miguel.*

ISABEL

I'll survive this bullshit.

*Julio and Isabel exit. Miguel moves the chair a few times, then throws it across the stage.*

MIGUEL

Goddamit!

*Miguel stares at chair, lights up cigarette and walks over to it. He picks up chair and brings it back to end table. He turns on radio and sits. A guitar solo by Segovia is playing. Miguel continues to smoke and brood as the music plays on. He puts out his cigarette and pulls out his gun, staring at it. Miguel calmly caresses it, then slowly brings it up to his open mouth. Maria quickly sits up.*

MARIA

I know this!

*Miguel slowly lowers gun, shuts off radio and turns chair facing her. Maria stands up.*

MIGUEL

What?!

MARIA

I know the music...It's Segovia...My father used to play guitar at night to help me sleep. Sometimes it was classical like Segovia...Other times it was Mariachi.

MIGUEL

Go back to sleep.

(beat)

MARIA

My mouth is dry.

*Miguel walks into Isabel's cell and grabs a bottle. He walks over to Maria's cell giving her the*

*water. Maria takes a long drink  
and sits.*

MARIA

Gracias.

MIGUEL

Keep the water.

MARIA

Mi Padre sang beautiful lullabies. Sometimes love songs...The words always sounded a little sad...But beautiful...The way he played his guitar...It was like the angels were playing right through him – like God himself suddenly stopped to listen.

*She stares off into space.*

MARIA

Then the factory horns would scream, calling him to work.

*Maria is still lost in thought.  
Miguel snaps his fingers in front  
of her.*

MIGUEL

Do you know your name?

(beat)

MARIA

Sí...Maria.

MIGUEL

Do you know where you are?

MARIA

I am in a cell.

MIGUEL

Do you know what happened to you?

(beat)

MARIA

We were leaving work...The parking lot was dark – it's always dark. I was walking next to Isabel...She was asking me about my father.

*She suddenly stands up and grabs the cell bars.*

MARIA

You took us!

MIGUEL

Sí...Now listen to me...You have to remain calm – be rational...If you start acting crazy, they'll get rid of you...comprende?

MARIA

I understand.

MIGUEL

Bueno.

(beat)

MARIA

Do you have a candy bar?

MIGUEL

Just bread and cheese.

MARIA

I have hypoglycemia – low blood sugar...When I'm stressed...When I don't have sugar, I can have a fit.

MIGUEL

You've got to control it if you want to live.

MARIA

Are you going to hurt me?

MIGUEL

No.

MARIA

You have plans for us.

MIGUEL

(nervously)

I'll get you some cheese...You need to keep your strength up.

*Miguel walks to end table, grabs cheese and returns. He opens cell door and gives her food. She sits.*

MARIA

Can you take the cuffs off?

MIGUEL

No.

*As he leaves cell.*

MARIA

Do you like Segovia?

(beat)

MIGUEL

(turns around)

I played guitar a little – mostly classical.

MARIA

Do you still play?

MIGUEL

(coldly)

There was no time.

MARIA

(loudly)

What do you mean?

MIGUEL

Remember what I said – no hysterics.

MARIA

(calmly)

You stopped playing guitar.

(beat)

MIGUEL

(loudly)

I had two sisters and a brother that needed food. That's it  
- no more.

(beat)

MARIA

I'm sorry.

MIGUEL

Sorry for what?!

MARIA

Suffering is suffering...I don't wish it on anyone.

MIGUEL

What are you a saint?! Let me tell you something...Saints  
die young - they're spit on and crucified...No one cares  
about them.

MARIA

God has reasons for everything.

MIGUEL

Oh Christ...So you think this is about God...There is no  
God in Juarez.

MARIA

You need to-

MIGUEL

This is about drug dealers kidnapping and raping girls and  
kill-

(He stops himself)

MARIA

I'll pray for you.

MIGUEL

If you want to pray...Pray for yourself.

MARIA

God forgives everyone.

MIGUEL

Shut the fuck up!...I liked you better when you were crazy. Just sit in the corner and shut up – I don't want to hear prayers.

*Maria remains sitting on cot.  
Miguel walks towards chair and end table.*

MARIA

You can be redeemed.

*Miguel turns around and angrily walks to Maria's cell. He pulls out his gun, aiming it at her.*

MIGUEL

I will kill you right now!...One more word!

(beat)

Put your hand over your mouth and keep it there.

Maria stares at Miguel.

MIGUEL

Do it!

*She covers her mouth. Miguel lowers his gun and walks back to his chair, collapsing in it. He turns on the radio. Mexican music (Corrido) is playing. He stares at his gun and grabs bottled water for a drink.*

Fade to Black

End of Act I

Act II

Scene 1

*Light rises on the holding cells. Miguel is half asleep sitting in his chair downstage. Mariachi music is playing. Maria is asleep. There are a series of door knocks. Miguel quickly wakes up. Enter Julio.*

MIGUEL

Qué pasó?

JULIO

Bien.

MIGUEL

Any problems?

JULIO

That Isabel was something...She was polite, friendly, even laughing...She had this sexual power over them.

MIGUEL

Did they ask about the other girl?

JULIO

They did...But she sashayed around saying "Isn't she woman enough for them"...Then she put on a show-

MIGUEL

Were they rough on her?

JULIO

I don't know...I could see something in her eyes - a kind of rage.

MIGUEL

(admiringly)

It's defiance...She has a fierce heart.

JULIO

She's something special...

(shakes head)

We're getting too close. You said never make it personal.

MIGUEL

Those scumbags made it personal when they stole my girlfriend.

JULIO

Elena was there.

MIGUEL

Was she with Carlos?

JULIO

Yes.

(beat)

MIGUEL

(sighs)

It's been a long night amigo...Let's sit down...Do you have a cigarette?

*Julio gives Miguel a cigarette. Julio walks cross-stage in front of Maria's cell and picks up other folding chair. Miguel lights his cigarette. Julio brings his folding chair downstage. He lights up his cigarette. They both take long drags.*

(beat)

MIGUEL

How long have we known each other?

JULIO

A long time.

MIGUEL

We've been through a lot together, haven't we.

JULIO

We fought a thousand battles.

MIGUEL

Do you remember how poor we were – hustling pennies in the street.

JULIO

Sí...I remember when we first met.

MIGUEL

(smiles)

You were crawling under food tables looking for scraps.

JULIO

And you walked toward me carrying this huge knife and a strange look...I thought you were going to cut my throat.

MIGUEL

(laughs)

I remember!

JULIO

(excitedly)

You flashed that knife in front of me...I closed my eyes, thinking this is it...Then I smelled fresh meat...You cut two pieces of hot chicken – paid the man – and said come with me.

MIGUEL

Sí!...We snuck into Raoul's junk yard – found us an old Chevy roof to sit on and drank cheap wine all night.

JULIO

(quickly stands)

That's right! It was a full moon...The night was real clear – the stars looked like bright diamonds...We told stories.

MIGUEL

You couldn't stop talking...It's like you hadn't spoken to anyone in years...You told me your parents were killed by the police...Your brother died in your arms – then you laughed...You kept laughing.

JULIO

And you cried...I was shouting, screaming, laughing – but you cried.

(beat)

We sang crazy folk songs until sunrise.

MIGUEL

(laughs)  
You were a lousy singer.

JULIO

So were you!  
(beat)  
Do you remember any?

MIGUEL

It was a long time ago amigo...We don't sing anymore.

JULIO

What about this one.

*He begins to sing an old Mexican ballad. Miguel sings along. Suddenly he stops.*

MIGUEL

Do you ever wonder?...If it could have been different?

JULIO

What do you mean?

MIGUEL

How we got here.

JULIO

It was your uncle who got us in.

MIGUEL

That's not what I mean.

(beat)

I heard about this scientist who studied bats in a South American cave. He lived with them, he slept near them, he was around them all the time...After a while he began to act in strange ways. He had become what he studied...He thought he was better than the bats. In the end he became...Just another bat.

JULIO

Miguel...This is not like you man...You're getting sentimental.

MIGUEL

Jesus...You're right! You have your family to think about!

JULIO

And you'll find a new girlfriend – You'll get married and have children...You'll see.

*Miguel's cell phone rings.*

MIGUEL

Sí...Sí...Right away.

(closes phone)

They want me at the house.

JULIO

Don't be long...And bring some cigarettes – I have only one left.

*Miguel exits. Julio lights up a cigarette. Light shines on Maria sitting up and blessing herself after praying.*

MARIA

I heard you.

JULIO

(turns in chair)

Qué?!

MARIA

I heard you talking about Isabel.

He walks over to her cell.

JULIO

You shouldn't be listening.

MARIA

She was always flirting around at work...Now I know what a slut she is.

JULIO

That slut bought you time...She saved your life.

MARIA

I don't understand.

JULIO

Of course you don't...You were hysterical.

MARIA

I wasn't well.

JULIO

If a girl gives us too much trouble, we shoot her – those are the orders...Your Isabel sacrificed herself to save you.

MARIA

Do you believe in God?

JULIO

My wife does.

MARIA

Well God doesn't like loose women. The sins of the flesh are the worst kinds of sins. Don't you know that?

JULIO

(rapidly)

What about judge not and ye shall not be judged or he who casts the first stone...Girl...You don't know what you're talking about.

MARIA

I think I know her better than you.

*There are a series of door knocks.  
As Julio walks toward stage left.*

MARIA

She has sinned!

*Julio is whispering something to a guard offstage. Isabel is standing there visible to the audience, with a blanket wrapped around her.*

JULIO

(offstage to guard)

Okay...I have her now.

*Julio escorts Isabel into her cell. She looks shaken, but still in control of her emotions. Julio's cell phone rings. He answers it.*

JULIO

Sí...Sí...Yeah, she's here...No problem...That means no one is guarding them...Yeah...All right...You take full responsibility...Okay.

(closes cell phone)

(loudly, to Maria and Isabel)

They want me at the house...Do you want any food or water?

*They are silent. Isabel sits on cot in a controlled rage, with blanket around her.*

JULIO

(to Isabel)

Are you all right?

ISABEL

(defiantly)

Never better.

JULIO

I won't be long.

*Julio exits. Maria walks over to Isabel's side of cell. Maria is about to say something. But Isabel puts her hand up, controlling tears. Maria crosses herself. Isabel desperately looks around the cell. She stands up, shakes the bars, fumbles with the lock, looks around cell, and hits bars hard.*

ISABEL

Goddamit! There's gotta be a way out of here!

*She collapses on cot, covering her mouth, squelching tears.  
Long pause.*

ISABEL

(turns to Maria)

Did they hurt you?

What? MARIA

Are you all right? ISABEL

Yes. MARIA

(beat)

I could use some water. ISABEL

*Maria grabs bottle of water and hands it to her through the cell. Isabel takes the water with a slightly shaky hand.*

I prayed for you. MARIA

You prayed. ISABEL

Sí. MARIA

And what did you expect to happen when you were praying? ISABEL

A miracle. MARIA

(bitterly)  
There was none – there never is. ISABEL

Maybe if you weren't so— MARIA

So what?! ISABEL

So flirty. MARIA

ISABEL

You ignorant—

MARIA

I see you at the factory.

ISABEL

(points off stage)

The men up there want to rape you.

MARIA

God prevented it.

ISABEL

Girl...You are so naïve!

MARIA

You're friendly to everyone at work — always joking, and whispering.

ISABEL

Maria...I wasn't flirting — I was organizing.

MARIA

You were stirring up trouble.

ISABEL

We need a union...Ya know those Gringo bosses pay us nothing for wages — You and your father are starving.

MARIA

We get by.

ISABEL

No you don't...At the end of the week you borrow money — like everyone else — like I do.

MARIA

That's none of your business.

Isabel paces.

ISABEL

(rapidly)

It is my business Goddamit!...I see you in the parking lot asking the girls for money...The parking lot that has no lighting. The place where we were kidnapped. How many times

ISABEL (cont'd)

did I ask the supervisor to install lights – he ignored me.  
How many girls have been kidnapped and found dead along the  
road?!

MARIA

It's God's will.

ISABEL

That's bullshit!

MARIA

You come on too strong...Some of the girls are afraid of  
you – I'm afraid–

ISABEL

What are you afraid of?...What's worse for you – the truth  
or the bosses.

MARIA

(covers ears)

Stop! No more!

MARIA

(walks away praying rapidly)

"Hail Mary full of grace. Our Lord is with thee. Blessed  
art though amongst women–

ISABEL

How many women workers have fallen sick from the bad air we  
breathe?!

MARIA

"And blessed is the fruit of thy womb–

ISABEL

Cut the shit Maria! Wake up for Godsakes!

MARIA

You don't believe in Jesus do you?

ISABEL

(stops pacing)

(long sigh)

Oh brother...I've seen too many people die on their knees  
praying to Jesus...C'mon Maria...You gotta stand up against  
these guys and fight...Our boss wants us to act like sheep!

*Maria rushes up to Isabel's cell bars.*

MARIA

It's all in God's hands, don't you see! You just lack faith...I know I can convince Julio to change his ways.

ISABEL

Maria...The next time those men come, they will come for you...We need a plan.

MARIA

I have faith this won't happen.

Isabel taps head in frustration.

ISABEL

Jesus Christ Maria!

MARIA

Stop your blaspheming.

ISABEL

What about God helping those who help themselves.

MARIA

God works through everybody, even you.

ISABEL

And I suppose God works through the supervisor who gropes all the women.

MARIA

That's the devil reaching out.

ISABEL

(long sigh)

Okay...If God is working through somebody like me, don't you think he'd want you to fight - to save yourself?

MARIA

No!...You're a non-believer. I believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

(beat)

ISABEL

And what about your father?

MARIA

What about him?

ISABEL

Girl...I've seen you come to work with bruises.

MARIA

No!

ISABEL

You limp...And your face—

MARIA

Stop it!

ISABEL

Everyone knows your father rapes and beats you.

MARIA

You are a witch! That's what you are...A demon come to plague me.

ISABEL

I'm not your enemy Maria.

MARIA

Then why do you talk to the other girls behind my back. I see you joking and laughing — then you look at me.

ISABEL

That's not true!

MARIA

(paces)

You come to work...And sometimes you look so pretty...I want to say: "Isabel that's a beautiful looking blouse"...But you turn the other way — you smile and snicker.

ISABEL

(stares at Maria)

(loudly)

Okay! You're right goddamit...I hated you...I hate everything you stand for – your naïve ignorance – waving your God around like some personal crusade...You're so self righteous.

(stands close to Maria's side of cell)

(rapidly)

I look at you and think, "Here is a beautiful woman and she is some blind slave to religion"...How could I get close to you when your Jesus is blocking the way – how could I compete with that.

MARIA

God forbids such closeness. Only love between a man and woman is sacred.

ISABEL

(hits bars)

No Girl...I'm talking about love between two compañeras – two women workers.

(beat)

Your God is so full of hate and retribution.

MARIA

No, he is–

ISABEL

There was no miracle when my husband bled into a machine... Your God wasn't around when he begged his boss for safer work conditions.

(turns away from Maria)

I was left with two children to support...And I break my back every day to keep them alive.

(turns around and walks up close to Maria)

And you give me a God full of judgments!

*Isabel breaks down and cries.*

*Maria watches, then walks over to the bars and gives her Julio's handkerchief.*

ISABEL

This will be the last time I'll ever cry.

She cries again.

MARIA

That's all right.

*Isabel puts her hand up gesturing her to back off, Maria turns away. Isabel wipes her tears.*

(beat)

ISABEL

I'm sorry if I ignored you at work...Really I am...But we're fighting a war here...The government is corrupt, the police are corrupt – they do nothing to help us.

MARIA

(turns facing Isabel)

It's all too much for me.

ISABEL

Listen...Try...If anything...To think of my children...I need to get back to them...We need an escape plan.

MARIA

(turns back on Isabel)

I am so tired...I'm afraid of going back...He will beat me for being late – he'll hurt me.

(suddenly turns facing Isabel)

I should honor my father.

ISABEL

We can help you...Fight Maria...We'll fight together – you have friends.

*Maria starts to shake. She's beginning to have a fit.*

MARIA

I have to see my father – he needs me.

Enter Julio carrying water.

JULIO

What's wrong?

ISABEL

She's having a fit. Give her some water.

*Julio rushes into Maria's cell with water. He tries to give her some but she is delirious. Julio shakes her and slaps her face.*

MARIA

Where are you papa!..I'm here.

JULIO

Shhhhh!

ISABEL

Let me help!

*Julio runs out and unlocks Isabel's cell. They run back into Maria's cell. Isabel is stroking Maria's hair.*

ISABEL

There, there, now...You're all right.

MARIA

I didn't do it Papa! No...It wasn't me!

JULIO

I have to shoot her.

*Isabel shakes Maria.*

ISABEL

Maria...It's Isabel! You've got to snap out of it!

*She sees Julio reaching for his gun.*

ISABEL

(to Julio)

Grab the cheese!

*As Julio turns behind him to get the food, Isabel pulls his gun out of the shoulder holster. She points it at him.*

ISABEL

Don't you fucking move...Step back!

*She shakes Maria. Julio moves closer.*

JULIO

(to Isabel)  
What are you doing!

ISABEL

Back off!

*She shakes Maria again.*

ISABEL

Come on girl...Wake up!

JULIO

Don't hurt me...I have a family.

ISABEL

So do I!

MARIA

Papa no!

*Isabel looks down at Maria. Julio lunges at Isabel. They struggle for control of the gun. She retains control of the weapon.*

ISABEL

Get in the corner...On your knees.

*Julio hesitates.*

ISABEL

Do it now!

*He kneels. Maria slowly comes out of her fit.*

MARIA

Isabel.

*Enter Miguel. He sees Isabel with the gun.*

MIGUEL  
Julio!

*He begins to draw his weapon.*

ISABEL  
Don't try it...Put your gun on the floor.

MIGUEL  
You don't want to hurt anyone.

*Isabel points weapon at Julio.*

ISABEL  
I'll shoot him...I swear to Christ I will...Put the gun down.

*Miguel places his weapon on the floor.*

MIGUEL  
Calm down.

MARIA  
(to Isabel)  
What are you doing?

ISABEL  
Kick it over here.

*He kicks the gun.*

ISABEL  
Now get in the cell and close the door.

*Miguel walks into Isabel's cell and closes door.*

MARIA  
You're not going to hurt Julio? I can bring him to God — I can change him.

ISABEL  
We've got to move now.

*While Isabel bends to help Maria,  
she knocks the gun out of her  
hand.*

MARIA

I can save him!

*The weapon lands near Julio.  
Isabel and Julio struggle.*

MIGUEL

Grab the gun!

*Julio regains control of the  
weapon.*

ISABEL

(to Maria)

You fool!

MARIA

Don't worry...It'll be all right – he can be saved.

*Julio nervously points gun at  
Maria.*

JULIO

(to Maria)

Get in the corner and kneel down.

MARIA

You won't hurt me will you?

JULIO

Just do it.

*Maria kneels in corner, closes her  
eyes and prays.*

MIGUEL

(to Isabel)

I want you to back up slowly to the bars.

ISABEL

You don't want to do this.

*Isabel doesn't move. Julio points gun at her.*

JULIO

Do what Miguel says.

ISABEL

(to Julio)

I know there's some good in you.

MIGUEL

You have the chloroform bottle in your pocket.

JULIO

Sí.

MIGUEL

(to Isabel)

Move or your dead.

*Julio nervously cocks gun. Isabel walks backward until she is up against Miguel's bars. He reaches through the cell holding her arms in place. Julio approaches Isabel with chloroform and a rag. She struggles, kicking Julio in the knee. Eventually he subdues her. She slowly slides to the floor.*

MARIA

Jesus loves you.

*Julio walks over to Maria.*

MARIA

Don't hurt me!...Please!

*He uses the chloroform on Maria. She collapses. Julio limps as he unlocks Miguel's cell. Together they carry Isabel and Maria to their cots. While they are doing this, they talk. Maria is placed on her cot first.*

MIGUEL

How's your knee?

JULIO

She kicked me hard, but I'll be okay.

MIGUEL

What happened?

JULIO

Isabel caught me off guard – she took my gun.

MIGUEL

You've got to be more careful.

JULIO

You're right...I'm sorry.

(beat)

That Maria has a bad case of religion.

MIGUEL

(chuckles bitterly)

She thinks we can be saved.

JULIO

Sí, I know...How long will they be out for?

MIGUEL

About forty minutes.

JULIO

They'll want them in the morning...If Maria acts up, I'll have to—

MIGUEL

(sadly)

I know.

JULIO

Will you do it?

MIGUEL

Sure.

*They finish carrying Isabel to her cot. Miguel stares down at her.*

MIGUEL

What a waste...She's so beautiful...Proud looking.

*Julio takes out a flask and drinks.*

JULIO

Want a drink?

MIGUEL

Why not.

*He grabs the flask and takes a long drink.*

JULIO

It's never been like this...It used to be simple...Kidnap the girls, and get rid of 'em.

MIGUEL

(sighs)

It's catching up with us.

JULIO

Yeah...But you convinced me there was some value to what we're doing...You made me remember my family...I need to think of them...Am I right?

MIGUEL

(chuckles sadly)

What else are we good at.

*Julio's cell phone rings. He answers it.*

JULIO

Sí...Sí...They're sleeping...Okay...I'll be right there.

(closes phone)

I have to take care of my knee and get some rest...Will you be okay?

MIGUEL

Sure...Bring back some food.

JULIO

Sí.

*Julio begins to exit but then slowly turns around.*

JULIO

We're not bad people are we?

MIGUEL

We are good soldiers following orders – doing our job.

*Julio stares sadly at Miguel for a few seconds. He exits. Miguel turns on radio. A Mexican song (Corrido) is playing as light dims.*

Fade to Black.

End of Act II

## Act III

## Scene 1

*It's complete darkness. Suddenly you see the light from a cigarette. Slowly light rises on Miguel sitting in chair smoking. He takes a few more puffs and turns on radio. Rancheras music is playing. He slowly stands and walks to both cells checking on Maria and Isabel. Miguel walks back to chair, takes out wallet and stares at photograph of his former girlfriend. He shuts off radio and sits. Miguel raises photograph to eye level, extending his arms.*

MIGUEL

Loyalty was never your strong point – was it...Hell I can't blame you. When the head of the Cartel wants to fuck you – you can't say no.

(laughs bitterly)

We had great dreams, didn't we...You and me getting as far away from this shit hole as possible – a place in the country where they can't find us...A fresh start.

(coughs)

And so, here we are...You with a drug lord and me kidnapping and killing women...Ya know...When he's done with you, he'll throw you away.

(laughs loudly)

Maybe you're with him to protect me...I'd like to believe that.

*Miguel hears Isabel waking up. She sits up on the cot. He turns the chair to face her.*

MIGUEL

Welcome back.

*Isabel rubs eyes.*

(beat)

MIGUEL

Why are you so quiet?

ISABEL

Why bother.

MIGUEL

That's not like you...The fire in your eyes hasn't gone out...I can see it...You're like a female Che Guevara.

ISABEL

Look señor...What do you want?...Do you want me to beg?...I tried that with Maria - and here we are.

MIGUEL

You're not the begging type.

ISABEL

Sometimes you find yourself doing horrible things to survive.

MIGUEL

(sadly)

Sí...I've experienced desperate acts in my life.

ISABEL

(bitterly)

So you want me to feel sorry for you?

MIGUEL

Do you think it's possible to change one's direction - despite the past?

*Maria wakes up. Isabel walks over to cell bars on Maria's side.*

ISABEL

Maria.

MARIA

(groggy voice)

Yes.

ISABEL  
Are you all right?

MARIA  
Sí.

ISABEL  
Did they hurt you?

MARIA  
No.

Miguel continues to smoke and  
listen.

ISABEL  
Why did you knock the gun out of my hand?

MARIA  
I didn't want you to kill Julio...He can be saved – and  
it's against God's commandments...Thou shall not kill.

ISABEL  
Maria...Haven't you heard anything I said?!  
(points in Miguel's direction)  
They are going to come for us and we will be raped...And  
when they're finished, we will be killed.

MARIA  
Maybe I'm better off dead.

ISABEL  
How can I fight that?!

MIGUEL  
Maybe you won't have to.

*Miguel puts out cigarette, slowly  
stands up, and unlocks Isabel's  
cell. She is almost outside of the  
cell when Julio enters without  
knocking.*

JULIO  
Sorry I forgot to—  
(sees Isabel outside of cell)  
What are you doing?

*He draws his gun. Miguel moves close to Julio.*

MIGUEL

It's not what you think. Listen to me!..Listen!

JULIO

You are letting them go! You said don't get involved – don't make it personal.

MIGUEL

It isn't!

JULIO

Don't let them go!

*Miguel grabs Julio and they struggle. Isabel is poised, ready for the outcome. Miguel turns Julio's gun on him and he's fatally shot. Julio slumps into Miguel's arms.*

MIGUEL

Oh no!..No – no...God no!

*They slump to the floor. Julio's head is in Miguel's lap. He's rocking and stroking Julio's hair. Isabel is standing next to them looking down at Miguel.*

MIGUEL

Don't die...Don't die on me...Please God.

JULIO

(whispers)

It's all right Miguel...It's okay.

MIGUEL

Stay with me!

JULIO

I'm so tired.

MIGUEL

Remember this song – You-you know the words – we sang it a long time ago.

*He begins to sing a Mexican ballad (Corrido). Miguel looks down at Julio and sees that he is dead.*

*Miguel screams in agony and begins to cry. He reaches inside his jacket, takes out his gun and throws it at Isabel's feet. She quickly picks it up.*

ISABEL

Give me the key.

*Miguel throws the cell key on the floor. He continues to cry and rock. Isabel grabs the key, runs over to Maria's cell and unlocks it. Maria is sitting on the cot looking lethargic.*

ISABEL

C'mon Godammit!

*Maria moves slowly. Isabel grabs her hand, pulls her out of the cell and drags her to the door.*

ISABEL

(to Miguel)

Don't stop me!

*Miguel slowly raises Julio's gun to his head intending to shoot himself. Isabel shoots him first.*

MARIA

You killed him!

ISABEL

He could have turned on us – C'mon Maria.

*As Isabel drags Maria offstage left, she pries herself loose and kneels by Julio's side.*

MARIA

Please Lord, forgive this man his sins and let him enter into your eternal—

*Isabel pulls at Maria's arm.*

MARIA

I'm not going!

*Isabel grabs Maria, pulls her up on her feet and slaps her across the face. She pushes Maria against the cell raising her hand to hit her again.*

ISABEL

You ignorant—

MARIA

(defiantly)

Go ahead papa!

*Isabel stares at Maria for a long second. She lowers her hand.*

ISABEL

Vamos!

*Isabel grabs Maria's hand and they swiftly exit stage left.*

Fade to Black

End of Act III