

WHATEVER IT TAKES

"Pilot"

by

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impact 1

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Note: All dialogue amongst the family is in Spanish.
Everything else is in English.

YELLING IN SPANISH: a very Garcia Christmas Eve dinner.
Underneath the YELLING, "El Burrito de Belen" PLAYS on
the radio; a traditional Latin American Christmas song.
It's all piano and maracas while a little kid sings about
visiting Jesus on a donkey. You get the picture.

We PAN across the room: there's very nice furniture,
originals, you can tell, but it's all barren. The
bookshelves have no books, the armoires are China-less,
and the frames hold no paintings.

Back at the table. The only China they own is being used
to contain a homemade Duck a L'orange and a side of white
rice.

PIERRE and HELENA scream at each other. He's a 6 foot 8
giant in his early 30's with a stick up his ass to match
his size. I'm HELENA, his twenty-one-year-old sister. I'm
only 5 foot 7, but I always give him a fair fight.

HELENA

I dare you.

PIERRE

GRINGA.

HELENA

You're a fucking asshole. You know
that? And I mean, the actual ass
hole.

PIERRE

That's all you got?

HELENA

NARCO!

PIERRE

Why don't you kill yourself,
Helena? One less selfish American
on the planet.

CARLOS (60's) - our father, sits at the head of the
table. He's a slim 6 foot dandy with no hair.

CARLOS

(to Pierre)

Son. It's not worth it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PIERRE

Armando back me up here.

ARMANDO, born 15 months after Pierre. Our middle brother, a gentler 6 foot 8 giant. He's always afraid of making anyone upset, which only makes everyone even more upset.

ARMANDO

Well I--

HELENA

Don't let him get to you.

PIERRE

Back off.

HELENA

(to Pierre)

Why don't you just knock him out?

ARMANDO

Helena don't.

HELENA

Get him on your side like the good old days?

ARMANDO

Don't!

HELENA

Pierre the exemplary brother. Prince of family virtues. Telling his sister to go kill herself and beating on his younger brother for the better part of 20 years. Give him the fucking award already!

MARTINE

Stop! Stop it!

That's our mother, MARTINE (50's). She's French and blonde and none of us look like her. She's red in the face (the only one whose coloring lets that happen). She cries.

MARTINE

Carlos you can't let them talk to each other like this.

CARLOS

But he's right. Just look at who she sleeps with.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Dad's talking about TYREN (22), my boyfriend. Tyren's sitting next to me and hasn't said anything all dinner because he doesn't speak a lick of Spanish. This is basically a live *tevenovela* for him. He is, however, quietly getting very drunk.

HELENA

(to Tyren)

I'm sorry. They're just going through a lot right now.

INT. ARENA THEATER - DINING ROOM SET - FLASHBACK

Whenever I flashback, we jump to a theater stage. For this first flashback, the stage is in Arena Configuration, that means there are audience banks on all sides of the set.

TYREN and I, dressed as we were in the previous scene, are the only ones in the audience. We watch onstage as...

...Imagine a dining room straight out of Chekov's THE CHERRY ORCHARD. A giant Baccarat Chandelier hangs Center Stage. Actually, there's so much crystal on the stage, we almost have to dodge reflections from the audience.

This is Colombia, circa 1999; there's a sign that says that. My family's eating dinner, dressed in 90's cocktail attire. There's a CORNUCOPIA of FOOD on the table- a whole filet of salmon, different colored potatoes, three different kinds of salads, a platter of very tropical fruit, etc.

A LIVE BAND plays traditional Colombian MUSIC. Dancers dressed in traditional Colombian garb FAN, TWIRL and DANCE all around the theater.

Back at the table, a twelve-year-old me reaches for the POTATOES but my father intercepts...

CARLOS

Why don't you just have salad?

My mother RINGS a BELL and suddenly the scene is FLOODED with MAIDS, entering from all sides of the stage. The table is cleared in what feels like 2 seconds.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Back in our actual dining room. The rice is all gone. That annoying donkey song PLAYS ON A LOOP.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PIERRE

Don't you dare put on a play about this.

HELENA

Why? Scared you'll come off as a bigot? Because you are.

PIERRE

Shut up! Shut up! Just shut the FUCK UP!

HELENA

Listen to me asshole. Our parents sent me to America. I didn't choose that.

(to her parents)

You sent me to America. You told me to figure it the fuck out.

(back to her brother)

And now I'm getting shit for it? I'm selfish because I did what I was told to do? Well I'm sorry Pierre. I'm sorry I was better at it than you and now you live a small and pathetic LIFE.

Silence.

CARLOS

Get out.

HELENA

Yeah, Pierre, get out.

CARLOS

(to Helena)

No, you.

HELENA

It's Christmas Eve.

CARLOS

I don't care. Get out. *Ingrata*.

HELENA

Ingrata?

CARLOS

OUT.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

I'm back in my room, packing furiously.

TYREN
It's going to be okay.

HELENA
You don't know that.

My dad KNOCKS on the open door.

CARLOS
(to Tyren)
Can you get out of here? I need a
moment with her.

Tyren checks in with me. I nod at him that it's okay. He exits.

HELENA
Packing as fast as I can, dad.

CARLOS
Sit down.

HELENA
I'd rather finish.

He sits.

CARLOS
I didn't want to say anything in
front of your brothers.

HELENA
I wonder why.

CARLOS
Hija.

HELENA
Fine.

I sit.

CARLOS
Well. There's no easy way to say
this so... Listen, honey.
(then)
We have no money. Not a dime. And
there's no one to help. No one
dares to help us anymore.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELENA

Sorry. I don't-- what are you talking about? No money for what?

CARLOS

For your school. There's no money to pay for your school.

HELENA

That doesn't make any sense. You just bought this house. And what about my college savings?

(off his look)

Oh my god. You didn't.

INT. AIRPORT - DAWN

Paris Charles de Gaulle. Tyren and I approach the Air France ticket counter.

HELENA

I need to go see Frank.

TYREN

Because he's been so helpful?

ATTENDANT

Welcome to Air France. Passports please.

HELENA

Do you have a better idea? I'm supposed to be in New York next week.

ATTENDANT

Any bags Mr. Jones?

TYREN

None. Thanks.

(to Helena)

Can you take out a loan?

ATTENDANT

Ms. Garcia, your visa?

HELENA

Sorry, I gave you the wrong passport. Here.

I hand her my American passport.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ATTENDANT

I see you're both flying Paris to Pittsburgh direct.

HELENA

I still can't believe this flight exists.

ATTENDANT

We're overbooked. I could offer you a \$500 voucher and a stay in Newark, if you'd like. It would really help us out.

TYREN

I'll do it.

HELENA

I can't.

TYREN

You sure?

HELENA

I have to be there first thing when financial aid opens.

TYREN

Okay. You know I can't pass on five-hundred dollars. Right?

HELENA

Of course. You go. Do that. I have a shift anyway.

(to the attendant)

He'll fly to Newark.

TYREN

And she'll fly direct to Pittsburgh.

The attendant prepares our tickets.

TYREN

Look at me.

I do.

He pulls me in and kisses me on the forehead.

TYREN

Don't you let that doubt come through right now.

INT. AIRPLANE - LATER

I'm on the plane. I'm making lists of all the possible people who could help me out. Barbara, the Provost, is that rich alumna still around? When suddenly I realize...

INT. ARENA STAGE - THAI RESTAURANT SET - FLASHBACK

There's a giant TABLE in the middle of the stage. ON the table, is a CORNUCOPIA of food that's BIGGER THAN LIFE. Egg rolls, GIANT spring rolls, TUBS of curry, ORANGE CHICKEN the size of a beach ball.

A SPOTLIGHT follows me as I walk through the audience in a tight red dress, carrying a tray full of GIANT food. I'm headed for the table. My name tag reads HOSTESS. I put the food on the table, sweating as I hurry. It's like I'm one of the maids from the previous flashback.

A second spotlight comes ON to REVEAL... The White Man. He sits at the head. An older gentleman (54) in a BLUE SPORTS JACKET.

HELENA

I can't keep serving you. I'm the hostess. I host.

MAN IN SUIT

Carnegie Mellon. I'm a trustee there, you know. Look it up. I'm on the list on the internet. How about those spring rolls, honey?

INT. AIRPLANE - CONTINUOUS

I jolt up in my seat.

HELENA

Shit!

The three people to my right LOOK at me.

HELENA

Sorry. I have sleep apnea.

I take out my phone. I google "Ezra Gold Carnegie Mellon." Come on, come on. Bingo! It's the same white guy from the flashback I just had.

I click on his email and start typing:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELENA (V.O.)

Dear Ezra, I hope you won't mind--

The airplane INTERCOM COMES ON.

INTERCOM

Ladies and Gentlemen, mesdames et
messieurs--

HELENA (V.O.)

I took the liberty of finding your
email online.

INTERCOM

Please turn off all--

HELENA (V.O.)

My financial aid situation has
changed and I would love the
chance to discuss it over coffee.
Please let me know when you have
time.

HELENA

Sent!

Everyone looks at me again.

HELENA

Sorry. Did I say apnea? I also
have turrets.

I sit back in my seat. The AIRPLANE TAKES OFF.

EXT. COLLEGE BUILDING - DAY

Establishing shot of a grey college building. There's a
large sign out front that reads: FINANCIAL AID.

You see me walk to the door, dragging my suitcases.

INT. COLLEGE BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

I walk straight into the financial-aid office building,
still rolling my suitcases behind me. It's 7AM. I check
my phone to see if Ezra's written back. He hasn't.

FRANK (40's)- a pudgy Pittsburgh native and my financial
aid counselor- waddles into his office. I follow him.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Frank's sitting at his desk. He takes a donut out of a Dunkin' Donuts bag.

I BARGE in.

FRANK

Miss Garcia! Of course. I thought I heard clomping.

HELENA

You have to help me.

FRANK

Office hours start at eight. Please come back in an hour.

HELENA

We've lost everything.

FRANK

I'm sorry to hear that.

HELENA

No you don't understand. We lost everything. I'm gonna have to drop out if you don't help. Right now.

He hesitates. He puts his donut down.

HELENA

Thank you.

I take a seat while he checks the computer.

FRANK

Let's see. Helena Garcia. Drama School. (A beat.) It looks like you have an outstanding balance of \$35,662.90.

A beat.

HELENA

Sorry was I supposed to say something? (A beat.) I know that. I thought we agreed that's why I'm here.

FRANK

Well you have to pay, if you want to stay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELENA

That's why I'm here Frank. You're gonna help me pay it.

FRANK

Me? But I can't do that.

I realize my intensity isn't working on him. I try to soften. That's hard for me.

HELENA

But you're the financial aid guy. That's what you do. You aid. With the finances.

FRANK

According to our records your family can technically afford to have one child in college. Paid in full.

HELENA

I understand what the records say. But they're wrong. The records are wrong.

FRANK

Can you get a loan? That could help you cover this year and your senior year.

HELENA

I'm the only piece of American property we own. I can't get a loan.

FRANK

Any family members who can help you co-sign maybe?

HELENA

I'm the only one in America.

FRANK

Any family friends?

HELENA

To sign for one hundred thousand dollars? Yeah, Frank. Maybe I'll even get adopted by the Obamas.

I grab my shit and storm out of there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HELENA

Enjoy your donut.

INT. THAI RESTAURANT - LATER.

This is the real version of the Thai restaurant we saw in my flashback, earlier.

The place is empty except for one table. I drop off some ORANGE CHICKEN and walk back to the hostess stand to find ANGELA (21), my best friend and the manager of this restaurant. She dropped out of her PreMed program at Howard University to follow her passion in Musical Theater. She is no-nonsense with a huge heart.

I get a notification on my phone from CARNEGIE MELLON. It's like an Amber Alert it's so intense. Angela and I both glance at it.

BUZZZZZZ: OUTSTANDING BALANCE!!! \$35,662.90.

ANGELA

My offer stands.

HELENA

You can't cosign my loan. Your credit is worse than mine.

ANGELA

I'll just get a really high interest rate. They love taking money from black people.

A small beat.

HELENA

I can't believe this is happening.
Can you believe this is happening?

ANGELA

Well your family is a little...

HELENA

We talked about this.

ANGELA

Fine.
(a beat)
Call her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELENA

I can't ask her for that kind of money.

ANGELA

Alright. Work here for the rest of your life. Isn't that what all failed directors do anyway? Work in restaurants?

I pick up my phone.

INTER CUT WITH:

INT. BEACH HOUSE - DAY

A true Cape Cod beach house. BARBARA (50's) sits by the phone while she KNITS, the view of the ocean vast behind her. Her son and I went to boarding school together.

The phone RINGS.

BARBARA

This is Barbara.

HELENA (O.C.)

Barbara hi! It's Helena Garcia.

BARBARA

Oh my! Hi, Honey. So great to hear your voice.

HELENA

Same to you. Listen--

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. THAI RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Back to me.

HELENA

I'm calling with a bit of a favor. I just landed and-- Well. Okay well there's no easy way to say this.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELENA (CONT'D)

So I'm just gonna-- I just got back from home and my parents have lost everything and I have no way to pay for tuition and I was wondering if you would be willing to co-sign a loan for one hundred thousand dollars for me?

INT. BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Back to Barbara at the beach house. But now her husband, Rob, sits next to her.

BARBARA

Honey of course I'll sign your loan.

HELENA (O.C.)

You will?

Rob mouths "NO" to Barbara.

BARBARA

Of course.

HELENA (O.C.)

Oh my god, Barbara, thank you--

Rob mouths "WE CAN'T. HOUSE. TAKE IT BACK," to his wife.

BARBARA

Actually honey.

Rob facepalms.

BARBARA

I just realized we're about to buy a house upstate.

(a beat)

Oh honey, We really can't have a loan on our record. I'm so sorry.

END INTERCUT

INT. THAI RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

I've just hung up the phone.

HELENA

She said yes!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANGELA

She said yes?

HELENA

And then she took it back.

ANGELA

Hold that thought.

The doors to the restaurant BURST OPEN. IN WALTZ: Three Caribbean nannies and the three kids they look after.

HELENA

Here comes Carnaval.

ANGELA

We definitely talked about that.

HELENA

(to the nannies)
Welcome to Plum!

ANGELA

Your table is ready.

Angela gives me a look and walks the nannies and their three strollers to their table. EZRA OPENS the door. He's the trustee I emailed.

EZRA

Ready?

HELENA

Me?

EZRA

Yes, you.

HELENA

But you never come to Carnaval.

EZRA

Excuse me?

HELENA

Forget it. Ready for what?

EZRA

I got your email. Come on. Let's go get lunch.

INT. COUNTRY CLUB - LATER

Old money Pittsburgh COUNTRY CLUB. The walls are red and the wallpaper is old: it curls up at the corners. The curtains are velvet and the carpet is stained. For a place with such old, steel money, Pittsburgh has terrible taste.

I sit across from Ezra, who's ordered us salmon, two different kinds of fries, and bottled water.

HELENA

Seriously?

EZRA

Do you have other plans?

HELENA

I guess not.

EZRA

So the beginning it is.

HELENA

Ok. Well.

(a beat)

My dad is Colombian, my mom is French, they met in med school. My dad was a brain surgeon and my mom was his student. She asked him out for coffee and four months later she was pregnant with my oldest brother.

EZRA

You don't have to rush.

HELENA

I'm rushing?

EZRA

Like a mad woman. Take a breath.

HELENA

Okay.

EZRA

When you're ready.

HELENA

Okay.

A beat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELENA

By the time my second brother was born, my dad decided to leave surgery for politics...

INT. PROSCENIUM STAGE - FLASHBACK - SEQUENCE

While I narrate the story of my family, we will see the scenes play out on a PROSCENIUM STAGE.

For this sequence, picture the musical, CHICAGO – somewhere between Cell Block Tango and Mr. Cellophane.

A set of the Senate Floor. There's a spotlight on my impeccably dressed father, CARLOS, who sits at the podium. He leads the debate in the room. Across his chest is a comically large sash that says "SENATOR" while the comically large NAME TAG on the podium reads "PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE."

HELENA (V.O.)

"I grew up understanding that by the time I got to high school, my father would be the President of Colombia. He was a senator for four terms, and the President of the Senate in 2001. I was nine. That same year, he created the leading political party in the country."

INT. PROSCENIUM STAGE - SENATE FLOOR INTO JAIL CELL-FLASHBACK

My father still sits at his podium. All the DELEGATES turn into STAGE HANDS as they take the stage apart in swift choreography.

Finally, they take his sash and then the name tag he's desperately clinging on to. They undress him. He's left Center Stage on the black, bare floor, wearing only briefs. A huge cage DESCENDS on him from above.

My father is left, trapped in a bigger than life cage, a spotlight directly on him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELENA (V.O.)

By the time I was in high school, in order to retaliate against their president, the supreme court opened criminal investigations on 90% of the country's delegates. My father was one of them. Essentially, he was framed for a murderous crime he did not commit. But since in Colombia you are guilty until proven otherwise, my dad was thrown in prison for 27 months under "preventive detention." I was sixteen and a junior in high school.

END OF FLASHBACK**INT. RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS**

We're back in real life, sitting at the restaurant. We're having coffee and cookies now.

HELENA

Once my father got out of prison--

EZRA

How did he get out?

HELENA

France.

EZRA

France?

HELENA

My mom is French. And my dad is technically French by marriage. So my mom got France to prove that Colombia was treating a French citizen inhumanely.

EZRA

Good for France.

HELENA

They're good sometimes. Anyway, my dad sued the Colombian government for said inhumane treatment.

EZRA

Garcia v. Colombia.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELENA

Exactly! So they fled. Because you can't really live in a country you're suing.

EZRA

That makes sense.

HELENA

Obviously the trial sucked them dry and now here I am, talking to you, because they have nothing left.

A beat.

EZRA

Any scholarships?

A beat.

HELENA

No scholarships.

A beat. I drink water. Stuff a cookie in my mouth. Anything.

EZRA

How is he now?

HELENA

Who?

EZRA

Your father.

HELENA

Heartbroken.

(a beat)

He says Colombia is the only woman who ever broke his heart.

And then.

EZRA

How much do you need?

HELENA

Thirty-five thousand, six hundred, sixty-two dollars and ninety cents.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EZRA

For the rest of your time?

HELENA

No. That would be another seventy-five.

EZRA

So you really need one hundred thousand dollars.

HELENA

I need that. Yes. That's the amount.

EZRA

And what's this thing in New York?

HELENA

My second semester. We intern at a theater or with a director. To get a job.

EZRA

As a theater director?

HELENA

Hopefully.

EZRA

To pay off your one-hundred-thousand dollars.

HELENA

If I work really hard I'll get a Tony and be all paid up by 2068.

A beat.

EZRA

Alright.

HELENA

Alright you'll do it?

EZRA

You sound surprised.

HELENA

You barely know me.

EZRA

You're very convincing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

A beat.

HELENA

What's the catch?

EZRA

The catch?

HELENA

Yes. Catch. The got you moment.

EZRA

There is no catch.

(a beat)

Honey. You're young, you're extremely bright. Why wouldn't I help you?

EXT. PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Ezra walks me to a Range Rover in the parking lot. He instructs his driver to take me home. Then he opens the door for me and says--

EZRA

I'll be in touch. Okay?

I nod. He kisses my hand goodbye and shuts the door.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

I'm in the back of this Range Rover. The driver asks about the temperature or something. But I...

INT. PROSCENIUM STAGE - FLASHBACK

Back to a proscenium stage. The GIANT RED VELVET CURTAIN is DOWN so this all happens in front of it...

A Range Rover drives onto the scene from Down Stage Right. A HUGE MAN (40's) opens the door and gets me out of the car. I'm now five-years-old. He's 6 foot 5, 300 pounds, and wears a bullet-proof vest with "GARCIA PROTECTION" in big neon letters on the back. I strap onto his back. This man is our bodyguard. He's also my manny.

He sits me down at a VANITY center stage, right in front of the curtain. He takes off the AK47 strapped around him and places it by the mirror.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He takes out a huge COMB and brushes my hair into a ponytail. It looks like a giant palm tree on top of my head.

He slips on a cute flower dress over my head and once I'm ready, the giant red velvet curtain LIFTS TO REVEAL...

INT. PROSCENIUM STAGE - COCKTAIL PARTY - FLASHBACK - CONTINUOUS

Picture the party scene from SWEET CHARITY: it's AUSTIN POWERS meets FOSSE.

A huge marble living room. Guests are dressed in cocktail attire. Groovy music plays and everyone moves in Fosse-like choreography- even just to freshen up their drinks. All of this is bigger than life, the very best that Broadway can afford.

I hold my giant man's hand- a comical contrast between his grandeur and my tiny little self. The SPOTLIGHT stays on us as we walk through the crowd. He instructs me to CURSTY when I'm introduced. The guests respond to me in Fosse gestures. He picks me up and asks me to help him pour the champagne. He shows me how. When it's my turn, I grab the bottle with both my tiny hands, pour a bit into a flute, and hand the flute over to the beautiful woman waiting for her drink. She whips her head and spins her ponytail.

My parents walk over to us- they're the best dressed at the party, with the biggest shoulder pads. My GIANT MAN hands me over to them. My FATHER hands me the champagne bottle and while the three of us make our way around the room, I'm the SHOWSTOPPER. The little five-year-old girl who knows how to refresh people's champagne.

Eventually, I start walking around by myself, pouring the drinks on my own. I manage to get all the men in the room to pick me up and pass me around, crowd surfing like Beyonce at a concert.

We CUT TO present me, watching the stage, sitting alone in the audience in a sea of red velvet seats.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

We've arrived at my house. I snap back to life and get out of the car. I wait for the driver to drive off before I get into...

INT. OTHER CAR - CONTINUOUS

My shitty Kia Soul. The bumper's fallen off and my tail-light is duck-taped together. I stick my key in the ignition and pray that the car turns on.

EXT/INT. AIRPORT - LATER

I pull into the ARRIVALS curb at the Pittsburgh "International" Airport. TYREN, the boyfriend who flew to Newark, is FACETIMING his childhood friend, CANDY.

He gets in the car.

TYREN

Say hey to Candy.

I wave hey.

TYREN

(to Candy)

I'll call you later, alright?

That's nice. I drive us off.

INT. CAR - LATER

We're back at the parking lot by our house. Tyren's about to get out of the car.

TYREN

Go back to Frank.

HELENA

I'm gonna see what this guy can do.

TYREN

The rich guy?

HELENA

Ezra. Yes.

Tyren opens the door and steps out of the car.

HELENA

Hey how was Newark?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TYREN

Gorgeous as ever.
(a beat)
I'll see you later?

HELENA

Did you have time to see anyone?

TYREN

Love you, Lena.

HELENA

I'll see you after my shift!

He closes the door. My cell phone rings.

HELENA

Hello?

WOMAN (O.C.)

Helena, hi. It's Ezra Gold's
assistant Eileen. Is this a good
time?

EXT. BANK - MOMENTS LATER

I turn the corner to find Ezra standing outside of the bank.

HELENA

How did she get my number?

EZRA

I'm sorry?

HELENA

How did your assistant get my
number?

EZRA

Eileen?

HELENA

Yes, Eileen. How did Eileen get my
number.

EZRA

She's really good at her job.

HELENA

And how did she know how long it
would take me to get to the bank?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EZRA

She did?

HELENA

Yes. She said "it's only a three minute walk from your house."

EZRA

Did I mention she was good at her job?

HELENA

What are we doing here?

EZRA

Here.

He hands me three envelopes.

EZRA

That's everything you need for this semester.

HELENA

Why are there three envelopes?

EZRA

They're gifts. It makes it easier for Eileen to do my taxes.

HELENA

Very fancy envelopes. Nice stationary.

EZRA

I could get some made for you.

A beat.

HELENA

Ezra. Thank you.

EZRA

Go. I'll be here.

INT. BANK - MOMENTS LATER

I'm standing in front of the bank teller.

TELLER

Would you like all forty-five thousand in the same account?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELENA

Forty-five?

TELLER

Yes. Forty-five. Is something wrong?

HELENA

Those checks add up to forty-five thousand?

TELLER

Each check is fifteen. There are three checks.

(a beat)

So all in the same account?

INT. ARENA THEATER - DINING ROOM SET - FLASHBACK

Back in our family dining room on the Arena stage. My father sits at the head of the table, concentrating on some paperwork. I'm twelve-years-old.

HELENA

Papi?

CARLOS

Hija!

HELENA

Did you look at it?

CARLOS

Look at what?

HELENA

Dad, come on. I know it's really far and expensive but I promise this boarding school will be a really worthwhile investment.

CARLOS

Hija.

He hands me an ENORMOUS CHECK, the kind you win the lottery with, and kisses me on the forehead.

END OF FLASHBACK

EXT. BANK - MOMENTS LATER

I walk out of the bank and go greet Ezra, whom despite the cold, wears only a sports jacket.

EZRA

All set?

HELENA

You didn't have to do that.

EZRA

How else are you supposed to get yourself to New York?

HELENA

Ten thousand dollars is a lot of money.

EZRA

I'm about to spend much more than that.

I hug him. It's a sincere hug.

EZRA

Shall I walk you back?

HELENA

You've done enough. Go back to--

EZRA

I'll walk you back. I want to see what else we can help with before you take off.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

We're standing outside of my apartment building.

HELENA

This is me.

EZRA

You rent the entire building?

HELENA

No?

EZRA

So this isn't your door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELENA

It's one of my doors.

EZRA

A gentleman walks a woman to her front door.

INT. MY APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

I open the door to REVEAL my apartment. It's never looked more like a college dump than right this moment. The couch is blue and has a bunch of holes with yellow foam OOZING out.

Our SUITCASES are on the floor and opened, clothes are EVERYWHERE.

The dishes aren't done.

We can HEAR Tyren SINGING in the shower.

HELENA

I'm sorry. I only had time to clean my room after I landed.

EZRA

And where is that?

HELENA

My room?

Suddenly the room SPINS. Tyren's singing gets LOUDER. The SHOWER SOUNDS intensify in my ears.

INT. PROSCENIUM STAGE

Picture the sex scene from SPRING AWAKENING.

There's a huge FLOATING PLATFORM in the middle of the stage, almost like a giant wooden swing. In Spring Awakening, all the students circle around the swing and "swing it" while Leah Michelle and Jonathan Groff play out the scene.

Here, instead of the students, it's Tyren, in a towel, holding the swing in place, watching this whole thing go down.

Ezra and I stand on the platform. He's dressed in a blue linen suit and SWEATING even though I'm shivering in my dress. He pulls down my sleeves and my breasts are out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He puts my nipple in his mouth.

EZRA

They don't make frames like yours
anymore.

I let him flip me around and I get down on all fours.

I'm FACE-TO-FACE with Tyren, as he holds onto the swing.

Behind me, Ezra UNZIPS his pants and merely takes his
thing out. I let him pull up my dress and he lifts his
stomach to get it out of the way. IN he goes.

Ezra starts to thrust. And MOAN.

TYREN

He's really small, isn't he?

Before I can nod yes, Ezra interrupts.

EZRA

I'm going to fall in love with
you. Is that alright? Am I safe to
do that?

Ezra keeps thrusting.

He's panting.

TYREN

So what's it gonna be, Helena?

And just when Ezra is about to finish...

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Back to reality. I hear Tyren SLAM our front door,
outside the bedroom, as Ezra ZIPS his pants back up.

I can't move.

INT. THAI RESTAURANT - LATER

Tyren's sitting at the bar of the Thai restaurant,
completely plastered. I burst through the door and hurry
to him.

HELENA

Nothing happened.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TYREN

Go away.

HELENA

I promise you. Nothing happened.

TYREN

I could hear it.

HELENA

Let's go home. You're drunk.

I grab his arm.

TYREN

Don't touch me! Don't touch me.

HELENA

Tyren--

TYREN

Did you suck his dick?

HELENA

Let's go home.

TYREN

Is that what you're doing now?
You're sucking dick for money?

HELENA

Let's go.

TYREN

Should I have walked in? Did he
tip you?

HELENA

We're going.

TYREN

Answer me!

HELENA

I'll see you at home.

INT. BEDROOM - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHTTyren's passed out next to me. I'm wide awake and staring
at the ceiling.

INT. BLACK BOX THEATER - DAY DREAM

An empty blackbox theater. The college kind.

I'm pushing together six acting blocks— those black cubes one uses to stage scenes in acting or directing class when there's no furniture. There's a SILENCE to this scene that no other scene has experienced. It's really bare. There's no scenery, or props. It's just an empty black room.

Anyway, I'm pushing six acting blocks together to form a rectangular bed, down stage left. Or DSL.

Ezra stands just outside the playing space, waiting for me to tell him what to do.

HELENA

Ok Ezra. How about you try your entrance by the bed down stage left? And I'll be here. Waiting on the bed.

He does as he's told. He enters the playing space right by the bed.

HELENA

Ok, no. Walk in Upstage Right and make the long cross. Across the stage.

I get on top of the six blocks as Ezra makes his cross. We HEAR a few TAPS on a microphone OFF-SCREEN. A VOICE on the God mic SPEAKS.

GOD MIC (O.S.)

That's right. You see how the longer cross changes the power dynamic there?

That's my directing teacher. I nod yes, trying to find where the man behind the voice is sitting but the stage lights are BLINDING.

GOD MIC (O.S.)

Good. And what about the Tyren character?

HELENA

I don't think he should be in this scene.

(to Ezra)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELENA (CONT'D)

Anyway, once you make the cross.
Can you make the cross again?

Ezra makes the cross again.

HELENA

Then you touch my breasts.

He does.

HELENA

And then I take my skin off.

And I do. I rip my skin off like a skin suit. Like the Alien in MEN IN BLACK when he violently rips through EDGAR'S skin and emerges as a full monster.

GOD MIC (O.S.)

That's great, Helena. Really visceral. But what are you going to do when people find out you're a whore in real life?

INT. BAGEL SHOP - MORNING

Local Pittsburgh bagel shop. Ezra sits across from me. I'm wearing jeans, a sweatshirt, and no make up. He's eating two bagels. I'm just drinking coffee, black.

HELENA

I can't do this. I'm giving you your money back.

EZRA

Helena--

HELENA

I can't. I'll never be able to live with myself. We've basically made a prostitute out of me.

EZRA

Sweetheart...

HELENA

My whole career will be on the line.

EZRA

You won't have much of a career if you don't finish school, honey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELENA

You don't think I know that?!

(a beat)

I feel dirty. And heavy. I feel heavy.

EZRA

Then we--

HELENA

And you have a wife. And like a thousand kids.

EZRA

Alright so--

HELENA

I have a 4.0 GPA. I'm supposed to be the first Latina to graduate from this stupid program.

EZRA

Hon--

HELENA

Your kids are barely toddlers!

EZRA

Helena!

HELENA

Sorry.

EZRA

We don't have to have sex.

A beat.

HELENA

What?

EZRA

Don't get me wrong. You're fantastic. Terrific. That frame of yours?

HELENA

Alright.

EZRA

But you need help. I want to help. Let me help you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HELENA

I...

EZRA

And who knows, maybe one day
you'll be ready for me. And I'll
be waiting. Your Prince Charming.

HELENA

Prince charming?

EZRA

Your mentor then. I'll teach you
everything I know.

(a beat)

This is about your future, honey.
The first Latina to graduate from
your program. Get out of your own
way. Forget about me.

EXT. PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

I stand outside of the country club. I pull out my
phone...

INTERCUT WITH:

My father's sitting at the head of the same dinner table
we saw at the beginning, reading the newspaper. His
cellphone rings.

CARLOS

I haven't heard from you in days.

HELENA (O.C.)

I know. Listen dad I found the
money.

A beat.

CARLOS

All of it?

HELENA (O.C.)

At least for this semester.

CARLOS

How?

HELENA (O.C.)

It's not important.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A beat.

HELENA (O.C.)
Hey dad?

He doesn't say anything.

HELENA (O.C.)
I'm sorry I--

He doesn't let me finish.

CARLOS
Just make sure you finish school.

END INTERCUT

EXT. PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

I end the call. I look up to see Ezra who hands me an envelope.

EZRA
Your plane ticket.

HELENA
You got me a plane ticket?

EZRA
Tomorrow 7AM to JFK.

HELENA
You could've just had Eileen check me in online.

EZRA
I'm old. I like them printed.
(a beat)
Take it.

I do.

EZRA
I'll come visit.

HELENA
Okay.

EZRA
You alright?

A beat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELENA

I can't wait.

END OF PILOT.