

Salud

by Editha Rosario-Moore

Characters

Jennifer	Server/bartender/actor, Black woman in her mid-30s
Cara	Server, actor, white woman in her mid-30s
Alejandro	Head busser/sometimes line cook/sometimes acting manager, Latinx man in his mid-50s
Esteban	Busser/student, Afro-Latinx man in his mid-20s

Time

Late February 2021.

Evening in Chicago.

Worker rest area in the backyard patio of a neighborhood restaurant, a de facto breakroom/server area.

There are two heat lamps but it is not set-up for service.

Everyone is masked but removes them or lets them slip every now and then.

JENNIFER

(She bursts through the back door of the restaurant.)
That is the last fucking time I wait on a bitch like that.

CARA

Slow down!

JENNIFER

(She paces and rips off her mask.)
That motherfucker better never come here again.

CARA

(She tries to sit Jennifer down.)
I know, just breathe. Breathe. Breathe.

JENNIFER

(She looks at Cara hard. She sits down herself. She *is* breathing.)

CARA

(She sits down a few seats away and removes her mask.)
We're not tolerating racists anymore.
(Hitting the table) No. More.

JENNIFER

Cara. What you did *is* tolerating.

ALEJANDRO

(He enters slowly and lowers his mask.)
All OK here?

JENNIFER

(She looks at Alejandro as if to throw daggers.)

ALEJANDRO

Don't be pissed at me.
You the one who agitates people who supposed to TIP you.

JENNIFER

I didn't do a damned thing, and you don't take shit from racist bitches either.

CARA

Hey hey hey, friend, I've never heard you talk like that—

JENNIFER

(She cannot believe it.)

Then you've never seen me mad.

CARA

I guess not.

(There is a painful silence.)

I really thought you didn't like the word "bitch" because it's demeaning to women.
I don't like it.

JENNIFER

(Overlapping) Are you for real? I can't.

CARA

(It's not enough.)

I think you need to play it cool.
We just opened up again, you need the money.
We all do.

ALEJANDRO

Jennifer. It's only people like that asshole who are going out to eat now anyway.
In the middle of *winter*, *inside* a restaurant, during a *pandemic*.
We gonna have to eat some shit.
But, Esteban. He's got this.
He's gonna talk to Mark today about making those scheduling and wage changes.
Mark's a good guy, he'll do the right thing.

JENNIFER

(She does not believe it.)

I'm not gonna eat shit anymore.

CARA

Got it, no eating shit.

I'll get the "Karen" to settle the tab. Alejandro, please stay with her.

(She puts her mask on and leaves through the door.)

JENNIFER

Yeah, Alejo, you better watch me, I might go off.

What the fuck. Are you serious? I did nothing wrong.

ALEJANDRO

(He puts his mask on and sits.)

(Overlapping) I know, m'ija. Hell no, I'm not gonna tell Mark.

I just said that, to get her off of you! We gotta be strategic now—

JENNIFER

But I'm the one who "agitates people," huh. You're just "pretending" to believe I'm an angry Black woman. You're good, my friend.

ALEJANDRO

(Overlapping) Cara might go snitch to Mark. You can't trust her. I want her to know we don't think the way you acted will happen again.

And we got Mark where we want him. He needs us, he's gonna give us a raise.

JENNIFER

In a pandemic.

ALEJANDRO

(Overlapping) He owns like, twenty restaurants. We're his best spot. He has the money!

(They have gone through this so many times.)

JENNIFER

I don't trust goodwill. We need a union.

ALEJANDRO

We are soooooooooo far from that.
Aren't you already in one?

JENNIFER

Actor's Equity. Yay.

ALEJANDRO

We need this job, m'ija. Pick your battles.
(He knows she's right.)
You're right. It ain't right.
Mark comes in, I'll tell him what happened.

JENNIFER

You're playing both sides. No, no.
All sides.

ALEJANDRO

(He's incredulous.)

CARA

(She enters through the door holding a \$50 bill, removing her mask.)
She left \$50. On a hundred-dollar tab.
People confuse me.

JENNIFER

She felt guilty.

CARA

(She hands Jennifer the bill.)
We won't add it to the tip pot.

ALEJANDRO

(He bows his head.)

Amiga.

JENNIFER

(She puts it in her pocket.)

CARA

I'm gonna cover your tables while you take a break.

JENNIFER

No thank you.

(She puts on her mask leaves through the door.)

CARA

I really don't understand what I did.

ALEJANDRO

She don't believe you're on her side.

(He grabs a stack of plates and walks out.)

CARA

(She considers whether she is.)

JENNIFER

(She comes back in and pulls her mask down to her chin.)

There *are* no tables, ahahaha.

(She takes a bottle of whiskey from under the server station.

A ritual. She goes to take a swig.)

CARA

If we're doing that, we need glasses.

(She takes two glasses from the server station and puts them in the center of the table and sits.)

JENNIFER

(Handing the bottle to Cara) Salud.
You're not real with me.

CARA

(She pours the whiskey into both glasses.)
Come again?

JENNIFER

Are you really my friend.
(She takes a sip.)

CARA

(Surprised) We're friends, Jennifer! But I'm not gonna agree to just agree—

JENNIFER

You do whatever you want, you don't ever let anything really change what you think,
you never have to *consider* how your words or actions might affect—

CARA

Sounds like you don't wanna be *my* friend.

JENNIFER

I don't have the privilege of being reckless.
And I care about my friends.

CARA

What is going on?
We haven't known each other since we were 18 year-old babies?
You can be reckless.
Not often, but you can.

JENNIFER

Ah.

(She taps her head with her finger.)

All in my head.

CARA

No. No. Slow down.

Slow down.

I know what happened sucked, it does!

I'm sorry for not standing up for you.

I really am.

I don't always know what to do.

JENNIFER

I am not gonna teach you anymore.

CARA

(Overlapping.) I am not gonna ask you to. I'm learning. Doing the best I can.

JENNIFER

Not at my expense.

CARA

Is there any way we can do this with a little less fury?

JENNIFER

(She considers it.)

OK.

It's like how you don't clean your feet—

CARA

(She can't believe they're going through this again.)

I clean my feet now—

ESTEBAN

(He bursts in wearing headphones and a keffiyeh over his mouth, singing Ana Tijoux's "Somos Sur.")
"Todos los callados, todos, todos los omitidos..."

(He punches in, notices them staring at him, takes down his keffiyeh, and turns down the music.)

Hola, mujeres.

(Concerned.) Que pasó?

CARA

Do *you* wash your feet and use wash cloths?

ESTEBAN

Uh, yes, and yes.

CARA

Well. *I* thought the soapy-ass water that falls onto your feet for, oh, I don't know, 20 minutes or so, was enough to wash the things that are always touching the ground anyway!

JENNIFER

(Laughing) I wear slippers. And what do you do for 20 minutes if you don't use a wash cl—

CARA

OK. Congratulations! You figured out I'm a dirty-ass white girl! Jesus fucking Christ. I don't get why you're bringing this up again. Sa-fucking-lud.

(She empties her glass and pours another.)

JENNIFER

She's mad because she admitted she don't wash her feet or use a wash cloth. On Twitter. And it blew the-fuck-up.

(She empties her glass and pours another.)

ESTEBAN

(Laughing.) Well, you clean now. So.

(He grabs a glass and fills it with whiskey.)

There ain't *nobody* here. Saluuuuud.

(He empties his glass.)

CARA

(She is hurt.)

(To Esteban) Why don't you tell her how she doesn't know how to pass.

ESTEBAN

(He is harmed.)

You tryin' to start shit.

JENNIFER

What?

ESTEBAN

Why don't you tell her you told Mark.

JENNIFER

(Her eyes get wide with anger.)

CARA

It's nothing, man.

Man. OK, you know what. You pass on the left.

JENNIFER

In my car?

CARA

(Demonstrating) No. When we're moving-moving, when it's busy, in the dining room, or in the kitchen, we come face to face, and I try to go to my right, your left. And you try to go to my left! And you don't budge. So I gotta go left.

It's disorienting.

JENNIFER

(Overlapping) Get the fuck outta here, Cara.
(She does not know why this even matters.)

CARA

(Overlapping) It causes problems, Jennifer. Mark wanted to know why I'm slower these days, and *he* carries big ass trays and almost dropped—

ESTEBAN

Please don't speak for me.

JENNIFER

I don't pass on the left.

CARA & ESTEBAN

Yes you do.

ESTEBAN

(To Cara) You shoulda just told *her*.

JENNIFER

But you told Mark.
Because you don't know how to walk if someone doesn't walk like you.
This is what I mean, Cara.
(To Esteban) That's my friend.

ESTEBAN

(Laughing) Well. She gotta point. This ain't Britain.
Seriously though, you don't need to be friends.
Just respectful.
Co-workers.

ALEJANDRO

(He walks in slowly, as if to monitor the situation.)
Hola, amigos.
(To Esteban) Vamos, ponte tu máscara.

ESTEBAN

(Raising his keffiyeh) Got this.

ALEJANDRO

(Holding out a disposable mask) Porfa. Tu. Mas. Ca. Ra.

ESTEBAN

(He looks at Alejandro hard, takes the mask, and puts it around his neck.)

CARA

(Earnestly) I'm sorry. It just came out when Mark asked me. I wasn't think—

JENNIFER

(She has gone into her phone and her whiskey.)

CARA

I don't do anything right, lately. I feel like, I cannot. I am constantly thinking and rethinking what I do. And it's exhausting.
I'm tired. I wanna go home.

JENNIFER

(Rolling her eyes) It's only 6:30, there'll be more tables—

CARA

Home-home.

JENNIFER

Come again?

CARA

Everyone is moving back home.
If I moved back to Omaha. What could I do.
Voiceover work . . .
Donna wants to buy me a home.

JENNIFER

(Her eyes get wide.)

CARA

There. Not here. Never here.

JENNIFER

(She knew it.)

You wouldn't let your mom do that anyway.

CARA

She lords it over me.

(Mocking) "You could have—

CARA & JENNIFER

—a really nice life. *In Nebraska...*"

CARA.

(She is flattened.)

Nah.

(She thinks on it. She's never sure.)

If I got my teaching certification, she'd buy me a home, and then--

JENNIFER

(She's a bit stunned.)

It's a pandemic, Car, not Armageddon. We'll all be back on the boards. Soon.
Don't give in.

CARA

You never get depressed?

JENNIFER

I am always depressed. Functionally. I have been thinking and rethinking what I do, how I wear my hair, how I say what I say, all my life. My friend.

But I take breaks. I made this.

(She pulls an intricately embroidered handkerchief from her pocket).

CARA

You should sell on Etsy.

(She takes out her phone and does a quick search.)

That is so much better than this shit, or this shit, or *this*.

JENNIFER

You stay monetizing, everything. Nope.

(She tucks it away in her pocket.)

CARA

Just looking out, Jen. Didn't mean--

(Angry) So then why even bother doing it.

JENNIFER

(Dives into her phone.).

CARA

You just can't think there's a world outside of acting. Just stay put and complain.

JENNIFER

There's that privilege.

CARA

What. What do you dream of doing, for *real* money?

JENNIFER

I don't dream of labor.

CARA

Well. That makes me sad.

(She wipes her eyes and drinks her whiskey.)

JENNIFER

Are you crying for me?

CARA

It just kinda spills out now. Maybe it's the meds.

JENNIFER

(Her eyes get wide, with pleasant surprise.)

CARA

Yep, I finally did it.
Capitalism took my norepinephrine and serotonin and sold it back to me.
(Taps the side of her head with her finger.)
So fucking smart.

JENNIFER

It is. I do want you to be OK. OK?

CARA

I love you, Jen,

JENNIFER

(She considers if she still does, too.)

CARA

(She feels bold and silly. She balances a plate on her head, then two, then three. She tries adding the whiskey glasses, while the others are speaking.)

JENNIFER

(She softens a bit.)

I like waiting tables. I'm proud when I make a good drink. My dad says it doesn't matter what you do, just be a good person, productive. Happy. Because life is good. I want to be happy, and not worry about rent, health insurance—

ESTEBAN

(He has been listening, waiting for a moment to speak.)

We all want to be happy.
But no one is happy.
And now we're all drunk.
I'm talking to Mark. Tonight.
He left Alejo to supervise tonight, but I asked him to come.
Any minute. We'll talk out here.

ALEJANDRO

(Bursting through the door and pulling down his mask) Three-top up front!

CARA

(The plates and glasses crash to the floor.)

(Defiant) Just leave it.
Leave it.

(She puts her mask on and leaves through the door.)

ALEJANDRO

(He snorts—this fucking woman.)

Mark's gonna love that whiskey smell.

JENNIFER

(She looks worried but throws up her hands. It wasn't her.
She puts on her mask and leaves through the door.)

ALEJANDRO & ESTEBAN & JENNIFER

(Alejandro and Esteban pull up their masks and start to clean the mess.
Jennifer re-enters with a mop to help clean the mess.)

CARA

(She comes back in.)

I'm so sorry. I fucking hate this.
(She goes to help clean the mess.)

ALEJANDRO

(Holding up his hand) Lo tenemos. Can you keep watch? Mark'll be here.
Any minute.

CARA

(She looks out the door hole.)

I can do that.
I can do that.

END