

a home what howls
(or the house what was ravine)
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Under Construction Playwrights Group

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people

abrana y manuel vargas *mid-late 30s, Mexican*
soledad *20, Mexican-American*
frank/male conductor, *50/60s, Caucasian*
coyotl/syera loma, *50/60's; Latina*

place & time

a metropolis, just into progress

the home - in darkness we hear the sounds of one person snoring from the back of the throat.

as our eyes adjust, we can make out a cramped room with a window covered by old clothes and a mattress cornered with two figures under a comforter.

*moonlight creeps around the loosely placed tin roof
creating a moving pattern of shadows which stir the room.*

*then, what sounds like a splashing of water.
MANUEL VARGAS jolts up; he wasn't asleep.*

*a second splashing of water.
MANUEL gets out of bed fast and moves under the window listening intently.*

MANUEL

...Abrana...es the water again...like from the reservoir...
Abrana...

the snoring remains.

Ay, mi corazon, listen to you, you found your sleep again.
Es okay, don't wake. I'll be for protección.

*MANUEL carefully lifts the "curtain" to peek outside. nothing.
he tries letting the "curtain" down and then lifting it up fast, but still, nothing.
after several moments of standing guard, MANUEL yawns from his depth like he hasn't slept in
he can't remember how long.*

...maybe was just branches fell in the water...
Me, I don't know what's for realz anymore an what's not.
My body...it don't even remember what not bein'scared feels like.

MANUEL lets the "curtain" stay open.

So, I dunno if es my eyes playin' me for stupid,
but even after all we been though,
this country look still so beautiful, mi corazon.
Over the southern hills lookit how lights of the downtown are lit.
Some of those new buildings stand so high up,
they proly shadow everything in their wake.
An sometime soon you'll be able to recognize the skyline from anywhere;
in every direction.

MANUEL (*cont*)

An will you lookit that, huh. I think just past where it goes flat...in the distance, I can make out clouds; like low laying clouds over ocean.

snoring.

Imagine that. This whole time, right from where we live. Maybe we couldn't see before cuz it was so dark. But now with the buildings lit, they shine off the clouds an we can almost make out an entire blue.

then,

a third splash; the clearest we've heard.

MANUEL *yelps.* ABRANA; *she sits up half'asleep; she glares at him.*

...lo siento I didn't mean to...

ABRANA

I was *asleep*, Manuel, why would you —

MANUEL *tries to illustrate "splashing."*

Just talk.

MANUEL *tries to illustrate "splashing at the reservoir"*

You know yer not very good at that.

MANUEL

Splashing.

MANUEL *points north.*

ABRANA

What time is it even, what would be out there so early???

MANUEL

If whatevers at the reservoir already, all they'd haffta do is come up the hill.

ABRANA

How d'you know you even heard it tho'. We're both so tired; like ratas cornered in some corner.

MANUEL

Yer right, mi corazon. Go back to sleep.

MANUEL sits on the bed and rubs her back, however, he uses his other hand to reach under the mattress and pull a long kitchen knife. he hums a soft melody until she closes her eyes.

MANUEL then walks towards a wooden front door and tries to unlatch it without a sound. at one point, he almost drops the knife, but catches hold of it at the last moment.

finally, he manages the door ajar. outside, we hear what night sounds like, crickets and soft wind through trees.

MANUEL slips through the doorway and closes it behind him. we hear tiptoeing on gravel and dirt away from the house.

ABRANA sleeps alone; the shadows swarming themselves around her like ghosts of all who have passed.

*then,
a fourth splash.*

ABRANA

Manuel...? Was that...? *(pause)* Mi amor? *(pause)* Manuel.

ABRANA sits up, looks towards around.

¿Dónde estás?

she gets out of bed and rushes to the window; she lifts the "curtain" and peeks out; nothing.

she goes to the mattress and reaches for the knife; nothing.

finally, she moves to the front door and notices that the latch is undone. just as she is about to open the front door, she hears soft footsteps on gravel and dirt;

*then,
a push on the front door,
ABRANA instinctively holds it shut.
finally, a muffled voice from outside:*

MANUEL
¡Es me... abre la puerta!

*ABRANA opens the door and pulls MANUEL inside;
then quickly latches the door.*

You heard it.

ABRANA
A splash.

ABRANA points north.

What'd you see?

MANUEL
I looked down the hill and tried to hear, but when it splashed again,
I was scared to the ground, crawled back fast as I could.

ABRANA
How long from the reservoir up the hill?

MANUEL
In the dark, no se. Pero, in daylight about ten minutes.

ABRANA
How can we just leave???

they hold each other in comfort. beat.

MANUEL
In moments like these, I can feel my heart how it beats.

MANUEL puts her hand to his heart.

But maybe cuz I'm with you, I feel a calmness.

ABRANA
That is not a calmness, mi amor.
That is what our heartbeats have been made to do.
Meanwhile, there are people whose hearts never have to race.
They wake every day in a world good and just.
They stand up in a straight line; with enough to feed their familias.

ABRANA (*cont*)

Yes, one day we will not haffta live like this.
But it'll only be cuz we've nothing left to beat our hearts.

MANUEL

You forgetting our secret weapon.

ABRANA

Ay, even when we're being terrorized you talk like you an her
are off playing pretend.

MANUEL

Our Soledad is not playing what she does.

ABRANA

Our Solé is playing that if she educates herself,
if she learns the ways of their world,
she will someday have a say.

MANUEL

We've no idea what she's capable.

ABRANA

But maybe tha's where we turnt wrong.
We should've been less congratulations with her.
Made her understand their world doesn't care how bright,
they will darken you for all your days just so they can sleep at night.

MANUEL

Mi Abrana,
when the development'men first walked into our ravine,
our Soledad stood calm.
She never yelled or even raised voice.
She used their own vocabularies against them.
Her mouth spoke so smart I didn't even know where she learnt it.
She is who we are and more.

ABRANA

Lookit us, mi amor. We are by a thread.
And our Solé is out there because of us.

MANUEL

Or maybe we are only still alive because of her.

ABRANA

She is alone. An with no comunidad.

Ay, when we were growing up, entire neighborhoods would stand arm in arm.
It was our numbers, pero, it was *our comunidad* what made us strong.

MANUEL

Pero, in this country, each home lives by its own.

ABRANA

"Protect your own."

they manage a laugh.

MANUEL

"Buy a gun."

ABRANA

"Individual

MANUEL

freedom."

they lose themselves in laughter over the bullshit what is this country.

then,

as if their most horrible nightmare,

they hear something or somethings crunching on leaves and small branches from the north.

ABRANA jolts to the other parts of the home;

we now see the displaced wooden planks along the floors and walls;

that the living room has been working a double'shift as their bedroom.

ABRANA frantically collects family memories;

black and white photographs of children, keepsakes from older generations.

the shadows resemble the comunidad and life which once surrounded The Vargas Home.

¡Abrana, vámonos, ahora!

*ABRANA rushes to him,
dropping several items along the way.*

MANUEL braces himself about to open the front door.

*then,
as if just outside the front door,
they both hear movement on gravel and dirt.*

*they instinctually retreat to the kitchen and hide behind a small, wooden countertop;
staring at the front door; trying not even to breathe.*

the sounds of gravel and dirt and leaves and small branches all collide into terror.

MANUEL signs the cross and prayers quietly.

*“Padre Nuestro,
que estás en el cielo.
Santificado sea tu nombre.
Venga a nosotros tu Reino.”*

*both gasp as the sounds of something stepping on the loose tin of their roof,
ABRANA joins her husband’s prayer.*

*ABRANA y MANUEL
“Hágase tu voluntad en la tierra como en el cielo.”*

*a cacophony of sounds surround the home;
as though predators of all shapes and sizes encircling at that last moment before the kill.*

*ABRANA
...our lives will not end like this...*

*MANUEL
...our Solé will see us again...*

*then,
the singular long howl of a coyote;
it rises in pitch as it stretches from earth to moonlight*

*the howl then shortens and falls; followed by a staccato of yips, yaps, and barking;
which echo as though the hills are filled with families upon families of coyotes.*

*afterwards, it is as though all sounds have been silenced.
and the first signs of morning light begin to show.*

*ABRANA and MANUEL slowly begin to stand up and find their breath.
they go to the front door and listen,
then relatch.*

MANUEL
Coyotl.

ABRANA
It sounded like so many.

MANUEL
Tha's their trick. When two coyotl sound, their voices crash up in the air an make
like there's many. Protección.

ABRANA
Maybe they know us, we've been here so long.
We've seen them generations.
Ay, me I used ta worry they would thieve our babies at night.

MANUEL
Or children, playing all over.

ABRANA
Pero all this time they were here for us.
Coyotl see we belong as much as they.

MANUEL
La comunidad de coyotl.
But...

ABRANA
Huh.

MANUEL
Are we...?

ABRANA
Safe?

MANUEL nods.

ABRANA

Right now, I believe we are.
Coyotl has run off whatever was out there.

*as morning light seeps in from all sides,
ABRANA begins putting back fotos and keepsakes.
MANUEL puts the knife back under the mattress. beat.*

MANUEL

She'll be by soon. Our Solé knows when her parents are by a thread.

ABRANA

Ay, I'm done with this thread. Tomorrow, we need to go out.
Map for footprints. An to the reservoir; see if there's branches.
We can't live like this.

MANUEL

We'll look over everywhere, outside, on the roof, down the hill.

ABRANA

The reservoir too.

MANUEL

We'll be okay, we'll find something.

ABRANA

Depends what we mean by "something."

lights.

the outside – sounds of a young woman humming quietly.

*morning light reveals a public housing unit;
single cot with messed blankets,
a found mirror on the wall with black and white fotos taped along its edges.*

*standing in front of the mirror getting ready,
wearing a dark-colored, button down coat dress,
is SOLEDAD.*

she speaks to we-don't-know-yet.

SOLEDAD

Ay, I wish I could stay in the bed and you could go instead uh me.
Lookit me, my eyes. So...dark.
Like es been years since I slept all the way through.

SOLEDAD puts drug store foundation under her eyes.

...an no matter what I do, tha's how they stay.
Ay, how old am I, talking like this.
Lookit me,
I'm like some vieja can't shut up about my face what it used to be.
But I know where I get it from.

SOLEDAD pulls a foto from the mirror; kisses.

Ay, mamá, I know I ain't been by.
But when I do, I'll tell you an papá all about wha's goin'on with everything.

SOLEDAD puts the foto back on the mirror. beat.

Ugh, I feel like I can't breathe with make'up on,
but tha's what they expect en la ciudad.
They want women what look up at you all nice,
like we just happy we get to speak.
An if you don't powder what you say,
these men will walk right past you,
like you some vagrant come down from the hills don't even talk human.

SOLEDAD looks at herself in the mirror; done.

SOLEDAD (*cont*)

What you think, do I look human to you? (*pause*)

Uh, perdóname, tha' was a question.

*SOLEDAD goes to the cot,
she reaches into the blankets and then playfully ruffles and kisses what seems a small brown dog
stuffed animal.*

Buenos dias, Señor Palo Marrón, mi Palo Marrónito.

Are you gonna answer me my question, huh?

Do I look like a human being, huh? Is that what I look like to you,
is that what I am, am I a human being, am I a human to you, huh???

C' mon,

I want you to howl it to me,

howl to me that I'm the most human human you ever did see.

Awhooo....!

Ay, okei, you stay the sleep, an me, I'll go out there an try to wake the world.

SOLEDAD kisses Palo Marrón and covers him with covers.

she stands, takes one last look in the mirror, then clears her throat and hums.

lights.

*the downtown – sounds of the hustle and bustle of a small metropolis;
we hear streetcars boarding mixed with the occasional honk of an automobile passing;
we hear men’s voices.*

*morning light as SOLEDAD walks with a small purse,
politely navigating her way through oncoming pedestrians.*

*she turns to enter a doorway;
however, FRANK kindly opens the door for her.
she looks at him with an appreciative smile before going inside.*

he follows.

*inside, we hear men’s dress shoes walking on tile in any direction they please;
the occasional women’s heels can be heard tapping passively.*

FRANK taps SOLEDAD lightly on her shoulder.

FRANK

Pardon, might you be Ms. Soledad...Vargas?

SOLEDAD reluctantly turns with a powdered smile. FRANK puts his hand.

Frank. From the Public Works. At your service.

SOLEDAD offers her hand briefly.

SOLEDAD

Oh. I—

FRANK

Didn’t meant to startle. I just— well, I’ve been through plenty of public hearings,
and if there’s anything I can do to make this more comfortable, for you.

SOLEDAD

Wow. So thoughtful.

FRANK

Now, things can get a little tense in there. Local community attending an all.
So, keep in mind that it’s just you and I talking.
Who knows, might even be a little fun.
And do you know something, Soledad?

SOLEDAD

I don't.

FRANK

This is how things get done.
When individual people, sit down, together.

SOLEDAD

Together.

FRANK

And boy, I could tell you, the way things *don't* get done.
When people start piling on top.
You get a room full of voices all trying to have their say, it just...

SOLEDAD

Too many voices.

FRANK

That's right, that's precisely put.
I appreciate how you phrased that.
"Too many voices."
Why, you get a room full of "too many voices," they can't agree on anything.
But two individuals...

FRANK illustrates, "Like you and me."

SOLEDAD gives a smile.

SOLEDAD

Gracias.

FRANK discomforts.

FRANK

Uh...
A little advice from someone who's been through this before.
These things tend to run a little smoother if we're all...
That we all use the agreed upon...words.

SOLEDAD feigns confusion.

I apologize. I'm not speaking clearly.

FRANK (*cont*)

I said I was going to talk straight with you,
and here I am wandering all over the place.
It's better all around if you don't speak in your native...

SOLEDAD

Oh, *oh*. I didn't even know I had.
Sometimes it just comes out.

FRANK

Completely understandable.

SOLEDAD

Thank you though, for saying something.

FRANK

Hey, better it happened out here, then in there.

SOLEDAD

You are very right.

FRANK

Well, I won't keep you any longer.
I'm sure you'd like to freshen up, or do whatever you women do.

SOLEDAD smiles, references the makeup on her face, then turns to go.

Remember, just two people talking.

SOLEDAD heads off.

FRANK watches; a deed done good.

lights.

a system – sounds of several electric fans spinning.

afternoon light through the windows of a public hearing space with a long table and microphone; at the table is SOLEDAD, she is flipping back and forth through a booklet.

*she can't find something.
it feels like it's been awhile.*

*then,
a voice from within the room.*

FRANK

Y'know, whatever it is you're looking for,
I'm sure I could direct.

lights reveal another long table and microphone directly across; the tables face each other. seated is FRANK, he often turns his right ear forward, as he is hard of hearing in his left.

SOLEDAD finds something; she holds the booklet up.

SOLEDAD

I'm so sorry everyone,
I thought I had it underlined –

FRANK

Hey. This is *your* room.

SOLEDAD

...I appreciate.
So, I noticed right here in the first section, it mentions,
well, it says: "Native Representation."

FRANK

See, there you were worrying about wasting everybody's time,
but here you are referencing my favorite part of that entire
Public Works –

SOLEDAD

uh, thank you.

FRANK

– and I'll tell you why.

FRANK (*cont*)

What you're holding in your hands aren't just proposals in city planning, no, if you read between the graphs, the studies, which it sounds like you have, is a record of how people come together. You're holding human beings in your hands right now.

SOLEDAD *puts the booklet down.*

SOLEDAD

I see. It also mentions when Public Works completed construction in the "Arroyo Region," that you held a...ceremony?

FRANK

A celebration. An inspiring, just...glorious gathering of— why we had music, breaking of bread; some even...with the tobacco.

SOLEDAD

That sounds... And so, during this "gathering," a native to that land actually relinquished their rights, thus formally transferred property to the State, is that *right*?

FRANK

God must've been shining down on us because we were honored, just so fortunate to have an actual "citizen" from—

SOLEDAD

I'm sorry. To interrupt. I'm so sorry. But when you say "citizen", you do mean...

FRANK

Yes. Exactly.

SOLEDAD

And, not to spend too much time, but you are referring to the man dressed in the indigenous costume holding what looks like a drum?

FRANK

That was no costume, I can assure you. Well, first of all, it had that dusty or – dirty – *worn* smell to it. Do you know? But it was just the most vibrant display with so many colors; he really did outshine the rest of us.

SOLEDAD

Thank you, for that...descriptive description.

FRANK nods welcome.

May I ask how you procured this representative – this citizen?

FRANK

Pardon – oh, how did I – how did we...
You know, I actually don't know.
Someone else on our team somehow must've –

SOLEDAD

I hope this doesn't sound – I don't mean to –

FRANK

I'm here to answer anything you put in front of me.

SOLEDAD

...he *was* a real...I mean, he was *real* – omigosh is that awful to ask?

FRANK

Well, I guess it depends how you mean it.
How do you, mean it?

SOLEDAD

He wasn't...*pretending* to be native.

FRANK

Oh. No. Of course not.
No, no, no, this was an actual native to the Arroyo region.
We are one-hundred percent on that.

SOLEDAD

(sighs) Oh that's so good to know. That is...I just feel so much better we clarified that. I was so stressed out about having to ask.
So, could you...who would we speak to in finding out how he was found?

FRANK takes a moment; thinks.

FRANK

I'll tell you what, after we finish up here,
I'll do some digging for you.

SOLEDAD

Thank you.

Can we make sure the record shows Public Works will be retrieving specifics on
the origins of the native representative?

Um, how long do you think?

FRANK puts his right ear forward.

Sorry. To get that information to us.

FRANK

Well, the wheels of state government tend to work at their own—
but I'll be sure to put it in motion.

SOLEDAD

...we appreciate.

Okay, so moving on, we have this native representative, in costume—in *attire*,
sorry, we have drumming going on, and we also have you actually.

FRANK

Oh, I was there alright. Sat directly in the dirt. In fact, I sat side by side with him
for what was essentially a peace offering.

SOLEDAD writes that down:

SOLEDAD

"Peace Offering."

Hmm.

SOLEDAD flips through the Public Works.

Apologies for...I just want to get this right...

SOLEDAD finds something.

Ah, here it is.

SOLEDAD (*cont*)

So, you're using the words "peace offering,"
but this Public Works uses the words "relinquish" and "transfer."

FRANK

This, is precisely why we hired a photographer.
If you'll take another look at the photographs from said section,
you'll see plain as day it was just the most pleasant exchange between...

SOLEDAD

Natives and the...progress of—

FRANK

Between people. We were all just people.

*SOLEDAD flips through the booklet and finds something with ease;
she holds it up. FRANK squints.*

SOLEDAD

Is this the photograph you—

FRANK

That's the one. See how easy you found it.
Now, it might be a little grainy, but take a look at the specialness between us.
In fact, I remember when the photographer was setting up,
I took a moment to take it all in; every direction. I felt such...privilege, for the...

SOLEDAD

Transference?

FRANK

Connection. Between us.

SOLEDAD lowers the booklet.

SOLEDAD

I can definitely see from the photographs how it was clearly a very...
And while I understand you were given rights and property,

FRANK puts his right ear forward.

SOLEDAD speaks louder, as to an older person.

SOLEDAD (*cont*)

I'm just having a little trouble locating where it says what the natives were given.

FRANK

...I'm sorry, I don't – what they were *given*?

Well, he was given respect.

That we acknowledged the previous – or former –
we acknowledged what had come before.

*SOLEDAD looks at FRANK directly for several moments.
Just before he is about to speak:*

SOLEDAD

I wonder, Mr. –

FRANK

Frank, please.

SOLEDAD

If several men were to march into your home,
grab hold of you by force,
then drag you out, drag your family out, bulldoze your home to dirt,
and then begin building something for themselves right on top...
how would you feel?

FRANK

Excuse me?

SOLEDAD

How would you feel?
If that happened to you.

FRANK

I would feel upset, naturally.

SOLEDAD

But what if they *acknowledged* you though. That you'd come before.

FRANK takes the time necessary to answer thoughtfully instead of reactively.

FRANK

I think you're right. In your reaction to...
It is very understandable to read about something,
to read the record of what took place,
and to form an opinion.
We all do it.
I do think though, in my own life,
that to be somewhere in person, to *feel* what actually occurred.
As a matter of fact, I agreed to this hearing,
so that I might meet you all.
Breathe the same air.

*FRANK glances around the room; smiles.
beat.*

SOLEDAD

We appreciate you being here.
And we look forward to our own celebration with you.

FRANK takes a moment.

FRANK

I said I was going to be straightforward, so I will be.
Now, the Arroyo was our first substantial project in this region, so we *opted* for a
celebratory gesture – but we simply don't have the time or budget with every
project to –

SOLEDAD

Oh, no, I didn't mean to – we completely understand.
The Arroyo gesture was sort of...all'encompassing.

FRANK

Though, if we *are* talking gestures,
you might say that our reaching out some months ago to the local uh –

SOLEDAD

Ah, comunidad, sí. I forgot you all had reached out.

FRANK

Ms. –

SOLEDAD
Soledad.

FRANK
If you don't mind.

SOLEDAD
...

FRANK
How you were just speaking – what we talked about. Outside.

SOLEDAD
¡Ay dios mio –! I didn't even realize.

FRANK
Well. If you could not, I would appreciate.

SOLEDAD
...sometimes people just don't realize their wrongs,
until somebody else points them out. So, thank *you*.

beat.

Now, I just want to clarify for the room.
By "reaching out," you are referring to these, yes?

SOLEDAD holds up a small stack of surveys.

FRANK
Yes, we collected surveys from local business owners, the majority of whom
were excited about the commercial possibilities, the economic growth.
In fact, I believe it was their enthusiasm which garnered both city and state
support.

SOLEDAD
Yes. Your team has been very politically effective.
This committee could learn a lot from you.

FRANK
Well, we *have* been doing this for some years.
And my door is always open.

SOLEDAD

Uh, before we move on, were there any other type of surveys?

FRANK puts his right ear forward.

I'm just making sure there aren't any surveys from anybody else, from *non'*business owners.

FRANK

Well, our approach was scientific, not necessarily democratic. We focused on research and data for *long-term* substantial benefits to the sustainability of this community.

SOLEDAD

I will also now be straightforward, I'm feeling unsure if you answered my question or didn't.

FRANK

...I believe I have.

SOLEDAD

So, there aren't any other surveys.

FRANK

The surveys are in your hand.

SOLEDAD puts the surveys down.

SOLEDAD

Meaning, aside from business owners, the majority of this community have not been asked how this impending freeway will affect them; and their families.

FRANK

No, they were not asked. But they were considered carefully throughout our process.

SOLEDAD

So, Public Works was able to research and calculate the long-term substantial benefits for displacing 30% of an entire community, without ever speaking to them.

FRANK sits calmly, letting any reaction pass.

SOLEDAD (*cont*)

Would you care to share with us the benefits...?

SOLEDAD hums,

the air changes,

FRANK and SOLEDAD are in a vacuous space

like decades from civilization.

Es just like you said, Frank, those are just papers.

An papers only lead to reading and making judgments.

FRANK looks at the atmosphere surrounding him.

FRANK

What is this?

SOLEDAD

I dunno.

Sometimes I can just...*reach people*, when nobody else can.

FRANK

I'm uncomfortable with this.

SOLEDAD

No te preocupes.

This is just you an me –

FRANK

Take us back. Please.

SOLEDAD

I need you to talk to them.

So they understand exactly what's gonna happen.

To their houses.

To their church and their children's schools.

I know you came here to be helpful,

but so far you haven't been.

And I don't believe es because you're not a decent person.

I can see what you are.

SOLEDAD (*cont*)
Can you do that for them?

FRANK *nods*

Gracias.

SOLEDAD *hums.*
the air changes back.

FRANK *looks to SOLEDAD,*
then puts his papers aside and adjusts his microphone.

FRANK

To the people of your community, the Public Works is offering access. Should any of you mothers or fathers wish to get a better paying job, with our highway in place, you'll be able to look for employment in any of the outlying areas. Or, for those of you with steady work, your commute could be cut in half.

Should any of your families wish to relocate to a better suited area, you will have that option.

The construction of this highway is going to result in expanded housing development. That means new, affordable neighborhoods are going to be opening up in every direction.

I understand how change can make us nervous.

I have a family too.

But I wouldn't be here if I didn't believe in what we're doing.

SOLEDAD

Thank you.

May I ask, if any research was done as to the number of mothers and fathers living in this community who currently own an automobile.

FRANK

No. But that is a number, which I can assure you, will be rising.

SOLEDAD

I would think the number will have no choice but to rise, *because* of the impending freeways.

FRANK

Tell me, have you ever driven one?

A highway.

SOLEDAD

I don't drive.

FRANK

Well. I highly recommend you at least experience one from the passenger.

SOLEDAD

I guess I'll hafta try one then.

FRANK

That you should.

SOLEDAD

I appreciate you walking us through what Public Works is offering, I'm wondering now if you could share what sort of change you were referring to.

FRANK

Everyone's house will be appraised and for those within the path of construction, they will be paid out.

commotion from the room.

SOLEDAD motions the room to trust her.

SOLEDAD

Now, in the Public Works, in the later section where appraisals are addressed, you reference this community.

FRANK

Of course, we assess any and all locations for —
May I?

FRANK references his papers, SOLEDAD motions that it's fine.

FRANK finds what he's looking for and reads.

"the location is through an area of older houses, which some of the occupants have owned for thirty years or more. The deteriorating condition of the properties are not likely to improve. Meanwhile, the area is honeycombed with diverse and subversive elements. A thoroughly blighted neighborhood which is ripe for renewal."

SOLEDAD

Did you write that?

FRANK

No, but I believe the point is clear. These houses aren't going to last much longer regardless. So, we'll have them appraised —

SOLEDAD

The blighted houses, the ones deteriorating without improve.

FRANK

Families will be paid a fair sum for their property.

SOLEDAD

What about their non'property?

FRANK puts his right ear forward.

I imagine, wherever you came from,
it wasn't just four walls and a roof you left behind.

FRANK

Personal mementos, things of that ilk.

SOLEDAD

I was thinking more like lives.
Some people, maybe not all, but some people do create lives in where they live.
Homes filled with memories of what they been through,
neighbors who they struggled alongside,
who their children grew up with.
Tell me, is that part of your appraisal?

FRANK

It's not in the Public Works, but there are several non-business owners in your community who view this as opportunity,
opportunity to move somewhere with better living conditions for their children.
Who have been fully cooperative —

SOLEDAD

Cooperative. Working together towards the same end.

FRANK

I appreciate how you phrased that.

SOLEDAD

But what if I were to phrase it different.

Working together because one of you had absolutely no say whatsoever.

FRANK covers his microphone and tries to talk to SOLEDAD only.

FRANK

This doesn't have to be like this.

SOLEDAD

So, es me what's makin' it like this, is that right?

FRANK

I am here trying to help—

SOLEDAD stands, speaks loud enough without a microphone.

SOLEDAD

And I am here for sake of everyone who was not given any survey.

Mi gente who don't get asked much of anything.

They get *told*.

You see, you work and provide for your family in a world that encourages you to do so. But most of us in this room, were born into a different world.

One that encourages us to keep quiet,

to take the little we are given and figure it out ourselves.

a cheering from the crowd.

D'you hear that?

Es okay if you can't. I know you have your challenges too.

But tha's the sound of too many voices.

Who will not be quieted anymore.

It is *not* only two persons here talking.

This is all of us.

a wild applause.

SOLEDAD (*cont*)

Yea, look around you.
The gente yer looking at,
they took off work,
just so they could be here.
And they did not come for gestures, or any empty exchange.
They came to look at your face up'close,
and ask you,
"Please. Do not do this.
Do not take from us our homes."

So, what say you?

SOLEDAD sits; awaits his response.

FRANK

May I ask?

SOLEDAD

Es *your* room.

FRANK

Do you see me as something imposing upon you?

SOLEDAD

Depends if you see me as something imposing on you.

FRANK

And is that the reason you see fit to call attention to my physical defects?

SOLEDAD

...

FRANK

Despite how you see me, I have been cordial.
Despite your rousing this room against me, I have remained in goodwill.
But now I do have to wonder aloud,
what did you tell your community might happen here?
Did they really take off work to ask me anything,
or did you make promises you are in no position to make?

SOLEDAD

...

FRANK

You asked me if this community had been asked.
And the truth is, they didn't have to be.
Their reaction is...as expected.
So, I almost don't understand what we're doing here.
A more effective strategy, would've been to rouse those communities
who weren't already on your side.

SOLEDAD

...

SOLEDAD needs a few moments.

...I, uh, I would like to return to one question, then we'll open up the room.

You quoted earlier, that this area was "honeycombed with diverse and subversive elements."

FRANK

That is correct, it's researched and studied right there in the Public Works.

SOLEDAD

Would you mind, taking another look around at the people gathered here?

FRANK looks towards the crowd.

See if you can feel each their faces.

FRANK looks more closely.

There's even some in the back over there.
And whenever you've seen all of us, lemme know.

FRANK finishes looking.

Now, if I may ask, what does "honeycombed with diverse and subversive elements" mean to you?

FRANK shuffles papers, searching for some response.

*just when it feels like he has found something and is going to speak,
SOLEDAD begins to hum a melody,
then,
softly begins to sing words which can't quite be made out.*

FRANK looks around to see if anyone else sees what he's seeing.

*then,
the crowd begins to hum along.
lights.*

the surroundings – *sounds of a day settling down in the hills outside of downtown.*

*the first lights of dusk over ABRANA y MANUEL;
both of them crouching under the window, trying to look out.
they are both dressed for outside, but without shoes on.*

MANUEL

Wait for it, any moment...

ABRANA

Ay, mi corazon.

MANUEL

Porfa.

ABRANA

We have things to-

MANUEL

Es worth it, créame.

ABRANA

I've seen lights before, Manuel.

MANUEL

But these aren't just lights.

ABRANA

I've seen downtown before too.

MANUEL

But when they turn them on.

ABRANA

Yea, we used to have lights. Remember? They turned on even.

MANUEL

Espera.

ABRANA

Es gonna be dark soon.

MANUEL
Tha's the point.

ABRANA moves away from the window, but MANUEL takes her hand.

Okei. If you don't think es worth it, after they come on,
then you can take the reservoir. An I'll sniff around here.

ABRANA
You promise? You won't say nothing, you won't follow me behind?

MANUEL holds his heart in promise.

...okei. But if I so much as see you watching down the hill after me—

MANUEL
Te lo prometo.

ABRANA moves back to the window.

then,
MANUEL spots something, he stands up excited.

Es happening, es starting up!
D'you see? ¡Mira! They're all coming on!
Can you even believe?

ABRANA
Yes, es very pretty.

MANUEL
No me importa que sea bonito.
Look at how they do.

ABRANA
I see. Now, can we go?

MANUEL positions her to look again.

MANUEL
¿Qué ves?

ABRANA

The lights're on. All over downtown.

MANUEL

¿Y qué más?

ABRANA

Ay, just say what yer going to say already.

MANUEL

This is how they do.

Even with the sun still out,

they put so bright all these little lights in every single building.

¿Y para qué?

They don't need them.

ABRANA

Manuel, the lights are for the people on the inside.

MANUEL

The workday is done, Abrana.

An now everyone all dressed in suits will come out into a crowd,
rushing to their bus or train.

The buildings are empty.

ABRANA

What about the cleaners?

MANUEL

...

ABRANA

The people who clean up after everyone in their suits.

What you think, they don't work all night?

MANUEL

...but, that many lights?

All for them?

ABRANA

Ay, I ruined what you were gonna say.

Go on. Tell it to me anyways.

MANUEL

I didn't think about the cleaners.

ABRANA

Of course you didn't, cleaning's not something you spend time on.
Why did you wanna show me?

MANUEL

I still don't think all those lights, at the same time, is for —

ABRANA

You're right. Now talk.

MANUEL

What I was thinking was that,
they keep all those lights on because they don't think.
They don't care about such little things.
They've got all those men in their suits making all the monies.
What's a little light?
An if they don't pay attention to all those little lights being let.
Then why would they care about us.
You an me, we're just *this big*.
An how big are those buildings they keep building?
People like them out there, they look for the future.
Me an you, we're like the past.

So, they're prolly not anymore even looking to find us.

MANUEL turns back to the lights.

ABRANA joins him.

they hold hands.

ABRANA

Even if they had a few cleaners for each building.
Tha's a lotta lights left on.
Thank you.
For making me see.

ABRANA kisses MANUEL.

Now vámanos.

ABRANA quickly takes dark-colored rags and begins wrapping her head; then grabs the kitchen knife from under the mattress.

MANUEL

You said if it wasn't worth it.

ABRANA

Mi corazon, it was worth it because I love the way you see things.
But lights turning on, was just lights.

MANUEL

Why don't we go together.

ABRANA

Ay, I'll check what I find by the reservoir an be right back.
You haffta check all around the house an get up on the roof an everything.

MANUEL

What if I fall—

ABRANA

Fall? Both our heads almost touch ceiling.
If you fall, get yer ass back up and keep looking.

MANUEL

We'll check for prints around the house tomorrow.

ABRANA

Mi Corazon. How long has it been since we slept, huh?
Our whole lives have become nightmare.

MANUEL

They're just noises what we make worse in our heads—

ABRANA

Manuel. Nightmares aren't supposed to last this long.
An es getting worse.
So, whatever is outside our home, I wanna know what.

ABRANA begins putting on broken, old'ass shoes.

MANUEL begins putting on his as well.

MANUEL

Right back you said.

ABRANA

What you think, I'm gonna go swimming all thru the reservoir
so anyone can see?

MANUEL

What if something happens, how'll I know?

ABRANA

You said ten minutes down, so that's ten minutes up.
Plus, time to look around. If I'm not back in half an hour —

MANUEL

But what if you're in —

ABRANA

Ay, what is it you think, I can't be outside?

MANUEL

They could be anywhere.

ABRANA

You just finished telling me all pretty how nobody is even
looking for us anymore.

MANUEL

A sign then.

ABRANA

Okei, I'll howl. How about that?
If you hear a woman howling —

MANUEL

Show me how yer gonna do it —

ABRANA

Ay, enough with you.

*ABRANA takes the knife and opens the front door ajar; they both peek out. nothing.
they both step outside.*

we hear ABRANA stepping on gravel and dirt as she heads off.

a few moments of the empty home.

*finally, we hear MANUEL climbing up onto the tin roof.
as he makes his way, he hums;
it is the same song of Soledad.
lights.*

the ravine – *sounds of leaves and small branches being stepped on.*

*through the shadow of trees, lights on ABRANA as she creeps down a hill;
she stops as she sees something ahead.*

*ABRANA removes the rags from her face and takes a huge breath.
she walks excitedly to the edge of a reservoir;
quickly kneeling down and bringing water to her face and mouth.*

*ABRANA takes in her surroundings, the trees all around,
the still sunlit sky and light bouncing off the lake.
she closes her eyes.
she hums.*

*a few moments of remembrance,
of what was,
of all the times.
she laughs as she sees her Soledad playing in the wet as a child.*

*then,
movement in the water.
distinct.
ABRANA chooses to keep her eyes closed,
as she slowly stands up.*

*then,
drinking.
distinct.
it laps and slops.*

*then,
ABRANA opens her eyes and steps back.
she drops her rags and frantically waves her hands for the knife.*

*then,
ABRANA looks differently at what she sees.
she holds her ground.
she speaks.*

ABRANA
We heard you.
Last night. Was that you?

*reveal COYOTL,
with her paws in the reservoir,
drinking her thirst.*

ABRANA (*cont*)

We were so scared.
We didn't know what to —
But then your sounds.
Turned to many.
Protección.
Gracias.

COYOTL finally looks up towards ABRANA; snorts.

I dunno if you can hear me,
or feel what I say, pero —

COYOTL

Yer kinda hard to avoid.

COYOTL begins to encircle ABRANA; snorting while speaking.

With your constructing all over our hills,
pushing yourselves all through our trees.

ABRANA

...I'm...

COYOTL

But es quiet now, ain't it.
Got our water back to our ourselves.
An lookit me, lapping it up in the sunlight.

COYOTL looks up at the sun, takes it in.

ABRANA

We're all but gone, you know.

COYOTL moves in close to ABRANA; she tenses.

COYOTL

Oh, we know. We seen it.

COYOTL (*cont*)

They got them tractor machines an leveled everything about you.
We could hear yer crying so high' pitched.
Wish I could say we was broke up about it.
But...land is land, it come an it go.

ABRANA

...can I ask...?

COYOTL nods.

...are you going to...eat us?

COYOTL looks into her eyes; she does her best not to look away scared.

COYOTL

Oh, we're always thinking it.
How could we not?
We fucking coyotl.

So many nights we'd watch,
how little of you left.
Your families dwindling day by day.
In your still' standing little houses,
we watched each you sleep.
Didn't you know?
How easy we crawled through yer vacant windows,
slunk through your crooked roofs.

COYOTL walks in on ABRANA.

Tell me, how did it feel to have your homes so encroached?

ABRANA

...it felt.

COYOTL

Y'know, there once was upright ones just like you,
hunted and gathered their way to this very spot.
So, we encircled around them, bared our teeth,
lifted our claws, an howled through their air.

COYOTL (*cont*)

First for their legs, to stop their escape,
then for their necks, to quiet their breath,
an while they choked, we would lay feast one by one.

COYOTL grins at ABRANA, now shaking.

But then one of their old ones raised up her hand,
and swore to their maker they would abide by the rule.
'To not take any more than they need.'

The story as it goes, we held her for truth,
and allowed them to live,
but kept watch their hunts were for hunger, never for greed.
And we learned to give trust, the world seemed in peace.

Then came these Others, also like you,
with gun machines so loud,
sweeping in to massacre their own.
They struck down trees and dug up the Earth.
They carried sickness and fed unfulfilled.
Stockpiling meats more than they could eat.

So, we started on their little ones,
carried off in our mouths.
We encircled any what wandered off on their own.
Oh, they tried to hunt us, so clumsy and loud.
But alls it would take is one howl through their home,
an they'd live most of their days scared and indoors.

COYOTL howls, ABRANA looks around frantically as other howls are heard surrounding her.

ABRANA

...I understand. How it must've felt.

COYOTL

Good. Cuz tha's like exactly what I'm going for.

COYOTL bears her teeth.

ABRANA

We have both had our homes taken over.

COYOTL

We trusted once, but never again.

COYOTL lifts up her claws.

ABRANA

We're not like them, we have only lived what we need.

COYOTL

You look down on us,
sharing stories how savage, how rabid and vile; desperate and diseased.

ABRANA

We didn't know.
We fear what we don't.

COYOTL

Go on, take me in.
Lookit me how beautiful,
lookit what having land can do.

ABRANA

If yer gonna carry me off, just do.
Take what you came for.

ABRANA closes her eyes and readies.

COYOTL pounces on ABRANA, but then pulls back fast; sniffs.

ABRANA opens her eyes, not sure what's...

COYOTL

Your bones.
They're seeping through your skin.

ABRANA

We barely eat.

COYOTL sniffs more; confused.

...what...what're you—? Our bodies are weak—

COYOTL

Then why aren't you trembling?

ABRANA

Because I can't fight you.
I know that I can't.
But I can offer apology.
For what people upright have done.

COYOTL snorts: "useless"

That is all we have left to give.

COYOTL

Then why're you still here?

ABRANA doesn't understand.

Your families have gone, your structures have been unstructured.
What are you even—

ABRANA

This is our home.

COYOTL

No not more.

ABRANA

Every day we wait in hiding. For them to find us out.

COYOTL

Ha, what would they still want with you.

ABRANA

We're the last ones left.

COYOTL

Your line is ended.

ABRANA

No, we still have a voice.

COYOTL snorts, "useless"

COYOTL

You'd barely be heard.

ABRANA

You're right. Our shouting it did nothing, no matter how loud in protest.
But if we sing,

ABRANA begins to hum.

if we sing when we're cornered, they won't know what to do.

ABRANA begins to sing, COYOTL intrigues.

"Can you imagine a land like that
When thieves don't exist
The ground we've grown, has never been owned
Our beginnings, the beginning of time..."

ABRANA resumes humming.

COYOTL watches for a few moments,

then begins to softly howl along.

lights.

the men – *we hear the sounds of tin; it folds and crinkles with every movement.*

though the last lights of dusk, we can make out MANUEL lying on his tin roof; sweating as he listens intently for something.

*then,
men's voices.
MANUEL holds his breath.
he tries his best to understand what they're saying; but indecipherable.*

*then,
sounds of ABRANA humming as she walks up the hill.
the men's voices stop.*

MANUEL desperately lets out an amateur howl.

MANUEL
Awhoooo...

ABRANA's humming stops.

MANUEL carefully stands up on the tin roof; trying to see what is going on, but it is too dark.

*then,
a loud crumple of the tin roof.
MANUEL turns in fright, only to see ABRANA climbing up.*

MANUEL
Ay, mi Abrana, venga.

ABRANA
Shh...they're just right there.

MANUEL helps her up; they both immediately lay flat on their back; trying not to move a muscle.

a few moments of quiet.

*then,
sounds of gravel on dirt.
men's voices too close.*

ABRANA and MANUEL take each other's hand and close their eyes. they speak with their minds.

MANUEL

Are you there, can you feel me speaking?

ABRANA

...I can. But how do we know what they can't?

MANUEL

Lookit my face, if it's moving.

ABRANA carefully peeks at MANUEL's face; it is still; his lips closed.

And you can still feel my voice?

ABRANA

Yes, mi amor. I can feel you so clear.

ABRANA puts her head back down; closes eyes.

MANUEL

You an me. We are sunk no matter what surrounds.

ABRANA

Ay, you can't help yourself always romantic.

MANUEL

Well, what kinda love do you think it takes to talk like this?

ABRANA

The kind that has ta hide out, Manuel.
Ay, I wonder what they're saying.

MANUEL

It's hard to understand, their words sound...technical – or like –

ABRANA

Big words. Not everyday.

MANUEL

What'd they look like?

ABRANA

I couldn't get a glimpse.

*men's voices into laughter; sounds of congratulations.
MANUEL's mind begins to stand up.*

Ay, what're you –

ABRANA peeks to see MANUEL still lying perfectly still.

MANUEL

Lookit how I can do,
my body still flat, but I can imagine myself standing upright like they.

ABRANA

Ay dios, where did you learn that???

*MANUEL's mind offers a hand to ABRANA's mind; she takes.
together their minds stand upright, then walk across the tin roof without a sound.*

MANUEL

No te preocupes. Nobody can see us.

their minds peek over the side of their home, down at the voices underneath.

They don't even look like they're outside.

ABRANA

With their shiny shoes, an brightly colored clothes.

MANUEL

Like they in some city all built.

ABRANA

With their cars parked not so far.

MANUEL

Laughing and congratulating.

ABRANA

For all what they'll build

*then,
the men's voices move on,
until they are gone.
ABRANA y MANUEL relieve.*

ABRANA (*cont*)
Let's stay like this.

MANUEL's mind looks back to see their actual selves still laying low.

MANUEL
Lookit us. Side by side.
Tranquilos.

ABRANA
We are not alone, mi amor.

MANUEL
Well, I think technically, there's still just two of us up here.

ABRANA
No, there are others...

ABRANA's mind looks around at the hills surrounding.

And they are not so different from we.

lights.

*the streetcar – the dinging of a streetcar making a stop; doors opening.
light from the windows show us SOLEDAD seated and looking out.*

SYERA LOMA, takes a seat next to her.

SYERA LOMA
I hope I'm not bothering.

SOLEDAD smiles; shakes her head.

Syera. Loma.

SOLEDAD
...I'm Solé.

SYERA LOMA
I know.

SOLEDAD isn't sure what...

I was there. At the...hearing.

SOLEDAD
...I should offer you apology then.
That wasn't how it was it was supposed to—
I shouldn't have told people we could change things.

SYERA LOMA
Yes, you should. If that's what you believe.

SOLEDAD shakes herself off.

SOLEDAD
Please. Tell me. How have you been holding on with everything?

SYERA LOMA
Well, this was our first house...in this country.
An when the letter came, we read it was good.
That we would get money.
Wow, paying for our inconveniences the construction would bring.
But then our neighbors, helped us read the letter more clear.

SYERA LOMA holds back her anger.

SYERA LOMA (*cont*)

Like they didn't even care how much it is to buy a new home.

SOLEDAD

They claim their appraisals are fair,
but then tear up every affordable barrio within distance.

SYERA LOMA

Where do they expect? For us to live on the streets, in the hills?

this hits SOLEDAD.

SOLEDAD

...there are people. Who've done that. Who built their own homes,
by their own hand. Created comunidad where there was none.

SYERA LOMA

...are we allowed, in this country...to build our own?

SOLEDAD

Not anymore. And if they find out you did, they'll come for you.

SYERA LOMA

It won't be long, before they've people sleeping on their paved streets,
Turning to animales cuz no place to go.

SOLEDAD

It will not come to that. Te lo prometo..

SYERA LOMA

I can still see the fight in your eyes.
Pero, this is not my country. I don't wanna make any troubles.

SOLEDAD

If you came here, and work. Then this *is* your country.
And your story needs to be heard.

SYERA LOMA

My story is not special.

SOLEDAD

Tha's like exactly our point.

SYERA LOMA

Yes, but me, I don't like to talk.

SOLEDAD

Shy is okay.

SYERA LOMA

No, I'm scared I'll say something I can't take back.

SOLEDAD

Syera Loma, if you boarded this streetcar special to meet me,
then you have fight left too.
Ride with me awhile, huh?

SYERA LOMA can't help smile.

SYERA LOMA

...so, where're we headed?

SOLEDAD

Have you ever been to un "suburb"?

SYERA LOMA looks at her oddly.

Where people with privileges put themselves all by their own.

SYERA LOMA

Pero, ¿qué es un "suburb"?

SOLEDAD

I'm imagining rows of houses so many,
their brightened colors all alike.
With green grasses and trees lining each street,
not a speck of dirt anywhere in sight.
Neighbors who smile, their grins so wide,
the white of their teeth each time they wave hi.

SYERA LOMA

...people are gonna *wave* at us?

SOLEDAD

We'll be there in an hour.
See for ourselves.

lights.

*in darkness,
the dinging of the streetcar making a stop & doors opening; then again, again, again,
until the dings begin to drown into one another; they twist and turn into sounds unsettling.*

*bright lights from the windows hit SOLEDAD and SYERA LOMA from either side;
they are both looking out at their surroundings in discomfort.*

from the front of the car, we hear a MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE.

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

Last stop...

SOLEDAD and SYERA LOMA continue looking; neither moving.

This is the last stop, ladies.
Hello? You two okay?
Y'know, I did notice you both looking a dip uncomfortable the ride up.
Yea, these rails can do that to you.

SOLEDAD

Um, would you mind directing us to the town center?

*sounds of the streetcar shutting down.
sounds of the MALE CONDUCTOR turning to face them.*

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

Where are you two from anyways?

SOLEDAD

We got on downtown.

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

A long way from here, wherever you originated.

SYERA LOMA stands; SOLEDAD follows.

SOLEDAD

If you don't mind, we're trying to post a public hearing announcement before close of day.

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

The hills, if I had to guess. Both of you. You got that...hilly look.

SOLEDAD

A post office or town square —

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

Could be your darker hair, or skin; like you both grew up in the sunlight.

SOLEDAD

It's okay. Don't trouble. We'll manage ourselves.

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

Now, me an sunlight, we don't get along so well.
That's why this job is perfect.

SOLEDAD

...should we exit the back or — ?

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

Even here, at the last stop, you'd think I'd wanna step out,
stretch my legs, get a little color. But nuh-uh, I stay put where I was posted.

SOLEDAD looks at him uncomfortable.

SYERA LOMA

Solé. Vámonos.

SYERA LOMA pulls SOLEDAD to the back of the car.

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

What was that word you just used?

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE (*cont*)
Funny. You could have just said, "let's go."

they stop. stare at him.

But you chose, to use that word.
An I think there's something to that.
Yea. You must feel something, that people can't understand.

SOLEDAD
What is this? What're you —

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE
Me, I'm at work. Making money for my family.
You two, I have no idea what you're up to.

SOLEDAD
What is your name?

*sounds of MALE CONDUCTOR getting out of his chair,
sounds of his boots walking down the streetcar;*

*however, he is tall and we can't make out his head;
only his slacks and long-sleeve shirt.*

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE
What are you asking my name for?

SOLEDAD
I think City Lines has a right to know what sort of conductors —

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE
And the sort of passengers?

SYERA LOMA tries the door at the end of the car; it's locked.

SYERA LOMA
Solé. Está cerrado.

SOLEDAD quickly goes to the door and tries the handle; locked.

SOLEDAD

Unlock the door.

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

...

SOLEDAD

This doesn't have to be like this.

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

...

SOLEDAD

We'll scream.

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

See, now, the houses begin out that way.

they reluctantly look.

MALE CONDUCTOR points west.

And let me tell you, they are a sight. Almost look like...the future.
Whatever that means.

Now, you asked about Town Center.
Well, that'll be right here. When they build it.
Yea, this whole expanse is going to have the nicest shops, sundries,
soda fountains, you name it.
You can already see the lots marked off.

Which makes me wonder what you two were expecting to find.

Anyone lives around here, knows they got to get off at the previous station,
if they want to do anything public.

And if you're not here to do anything public,
then you must be here for private.

SYERA LOMA

Simplemente le gusta hablar.

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

Y'know, I didn't used to like talking either.

Might even say I was shy; didn't wanna make any trouble.

SOLEDAD

Please just let us go.

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

I offered to let you go, "Last stop..." Remember?

But you two didn't move. You just sat quiet.

As a matter of fact, you asked for my help.

SOLEDAD

We should have gotten off at the previous station. I apologize.

SYERA LOMA

No le pidas disculpas.

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

So, here I am helping.

Feeling very under' appreciated.

SOLEDAD

...thank you for trying to—

SYERA LOMA yanks SOLEDAD away from him; several leaflets fall from her person.

*MALE CONDUCTOR squats down; we get a glimpse of his person.
he comes back up holding one of the leaflets; reads.*

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

Can't hardly imagine what you'd want to post up around here,
that you'd come all this way.

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE (*cont*)

Yup. You two should be thanking me.

SOLEDAD

For what?

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

Oh, just life.

SOLEDAD puts her hand out for the leaflet back;

MALE CONDUCTOR pays no mind.

Do you have any idea of what that is out there?

SOLEDAD

Suburb.

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

Yes, that is one way of putting it.

A gentle flight from the urban crawl.

But what does anyone really, truly need to get away from?

People. People who aren't like us.

That comfort you get through your shoulders and stomach,
when absolutely everyone around is the same as you.

And you feel proud, to call that home.

So, if you ladies were to walk out there,

march yourselves onto people's porches, knock against their front doors.

How do you think they would feel?

SOLEDAD

Maybe we're not all so different as you like to think.

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

Is that right?

Well, what would *you* do? If somebody, who looked like me,

were to walk up to where your family is at, knock on your door,

and hand my problems across to you printed on a piece of paper?

SOLEDAD

If it were me, I would read it.
I would listen what you're going through.

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

Come now, is that honest?
No. My problems are a joke to you.
Anything I'm dealing with, any defects I was born with,
they look like privilege from where you're standing.

SOLEDAD

You don't know me.

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

Y'know, just because you feel you've been un'righted,
doesn't mean you're altogether righteous.

MALE CONDUCTOR'S HAND hands the leaflet back; SOLEDAD takes.

You best keep this to your own. They're not interested here.

MALE CONDUCTOR walks back to the front of the car.

SOLEDAD

How come you get to decide?

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

Am I the one keeping you in? Is that what happened here?
You had more than opportunity to take your chances out there,
but you *chose* to stay put right by my side.

SOLEDAD

You Locked The Doors.

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

Hey, I just conduct my line, and be where I was put to be.

SYERA LOMA

No, you speak down to us,
you stand yourself over on top of us.

SOLEDAD

An now you say we did this to ourselves???

MALE CONDUCTOR'S VOICE

If you two wanna take to your seats,
I'll let you know when it's time to turn this bird around.

MALE CONDUCTOR tips his hat and turns to face forward.

then,

*SYERA LOMA runs and pounces her arms and feet into his back;
crashing his face into the windshield; it cracks.*

SOLEDAD

...ay dios...

*SYERA LOMA stands breathing heavy; saliva drips,
then picks up a brass fire extinguisher.
SOLEDAD watches in envy.*

SYERA LOMA

Me, I *am* from the hills.
Far away hills that you'll never in your lifetime see.
Nor understand.
But I have traveled far, leaving mi familia behind.
An d'you know how come?
¡Contestame!

sounds of MALE CONDUCTOR coughing and spitting up.

Tha's right.

We have come all this entire way, FOR YOU!

*SYERA LOMA slams the extinguisher onto MALE CONDUCTOR.
the lights whiten from all sides into bright.
end of act one.*

the construction – *sounds of strange machines in the distance; like mechanicals straining.*

*morning light on ABRANA and MANUEL asleep on their roof;
but they quickly wake at all the noise.
as the tin bends and folds around them; they scramble down.*

MANUEL

¡Bajate, bajate!

they both slide off.

*window lights reveal the interior of their home. they both enter from the front door.
MANUEL checks his body for any damage.*

Hey, d’you know something?

ABRANA

Dime.

MANUEL

I actually slept all the way through.

ABRANA

...ay, ay, ay, we *did* sleep, didn’t we.
I can’t even believe it.

MANUEL

...an yer okay...?

ABRANA checks her body for damage.

ABRANA

I think so – why, don’t I look okay?

MANUEL

I just meant...since you slept for so long.

ABRANA

Ay dios, you’re right.
Bad dreams didn’t even come for me.
No tractor machines, nada.

MANUEL comforts.

MANUEL

Ay, mi amor, maybe the awful dreams are done.
Maybe sleep is come back to us.

ABRANA

Is it bad I wanna do it again?
Me, I just wanna sleep over an then over all the time.
(sighs) I missed it so.

MANUEL

Is that all you wanna do again?

MANUEL touches her intimately.

You were like an animal up there.

ABRANA lets a smile.

ABRANA

Es verdad, sometimes I look at you like my prey.

they kiss, pull at each other's clothes.

MANUEL

I almost thought our roof would come crashing down.

ABRANA

I wouldn't have cared.
Un animal doesn't stop until its fed.

ABRANA starts in on him again.

MANUEL

Ay dios, look what it's done to you.

ABRANA

What done?

MANUEL

You know..."talking" with your —

ABRANA stops.

ABRANA

Lo sabia. I knew you didn't believe.

MANUEL

If you say coyotl can speak, then I guess they can speak.

ABRANA

But you think I'm some vieja who can't tell real from not.

MANUEL

Mi corazon, I know you never lie to me.

ABRANA

Well.

MANUEL

Okei. But when you do, es for my own good. *(beat)*
I guess we'll have to get a new signal, huh?
We can't be *howling* now —

ABRANA starts laughing.

ABRANA

You sounded so e' stupid.
"Awhoo..."

MANUEL

Tha's not how I was, mine was Awhoo...

ABRANA

Like somebody punched you in your stomach,
like all your wind pushing out. "Awhoo..."

they both fall into each other with laughter; they begin to lose their breath and fall to the floor.

then,

sounds of steel being dropped onto the Earth; the house booms in aftershock.

*ABRANA and MANUEL both stay low;
then quickly to the window.*

ABRANA

What was...???

MANUEL

...it sounded up high...like...

ABRANA

I don't like what it felt so close.

sounds of steel being dropped on steel; the stinging pitch cuts through the house; they hold their ears in pain.

MANUEL

¿Estás bien? *Abrana.*

ABRANA checks MANUEL's ears before her own.

ABRANA

Estamos bien, estamos bien.

MANUEL

¿En qué dirección fue esa?

ABRANA looks in all directions.

ABRANA

...all of them. I could feel it from every direction.

MANUEL peeks through the window.

MANUEL

but no puedo ver nada.

ABRANA

Manuel.

If they are doing something out there.

Something they just started today.

Maybe our Solé didn't succeed.

MANUEL

You see, you believe more in un coyotl than our own-

ABRANA

Did that sound like they are stopping construction, huh???

MANUEL

...

ABRANA

Manuel, you need to prepare yourself.
Our Solé could walk herself back here with nothing.

MANUEL

I've already seen her so many times.
Walking through our door so excited to tell us so many things.
And we both listen so proud.

*sounds of the machines strangely close; mechanicals operating.
ABRANA and MANUEL hold each other in safety.
then.*

ABRANA

Ay, Manuel.
We can't just corner ourselves like this.
Not no more.

*ABRANA pushes open the front door and begins to hum loudly.
MANUEL tries to pull her back.*

*then,
ABRANA sings:*

"Can you imagine a land like that
When thieves don't exist
The ground we've grown, has never been owned
Our beginnings, the beginning of time...

Hearts were hearts,
with no wicked of mind
to hurt someone,
had never been done,
no need the stubborn of pride."

ABRANA (*cont*)

"The days of deeply listening,
when, how we spoke
the time we took
the way silence could...
the call of yesteryear."

ABRANA motions MANUEL to sing with her.

ABRANA y MANUEL

"Can you imagine a country like that
The ways what we were born
No lines in the dirt, no sides done drawn,
Unlike the things we'd known..."

nearby, a howl of a coyote morphs into many.

MANUEL

...was that...?

ABRANA

D'you see, if we sing when we're cornered,
those men don't know what to do.

appears COYOTL.

ABRANA takes MANUEL's hand in comfort.

Hello again.

I'd like you to meet mi Manuel.

COYOTL

Oh, I recognize him.

From his sleep.

MANUEL: WHA???

ABRANA

Oh, I forgot to tell you, they watched us sleep.
But didn't do nothing.

COYOTL

How could we. Look at you.

MANUEL

Watched us sleep when???

ABRANA

Thank you, for having voices with us.

COYOTL

Voices is all you have.

ABRANA

But the men heard us. Together.

COYOTL snorts.

COYOTL

Sound travels; it bounces around the hills,
through the entire ravine, over and over.
We were heard, but not in the way you think.

ABRANA

Do you think they'll come back?

COYOTL laughs.

COYOTL

They believe once they happen on a place,
make it their own in conquest, there is nothing to be scared of no more.

ABRANA

We are *not* in conquest.

COYOTL

Then again, they also believe this world was created for them,
an only them. So, shows what they know.

ABRANA

But what did they react?

MANUEL

Could you see them?

ABRANA

Are they stopping the construction?

COYOTL looks over ABRANA y MANUEL, circles.

COYOTL

Tell me, how many generations d'you think we've been howling?

ABRANA

But with both our voices together —

COYOTL

You sang your song.

Today.

But us, our songs are never'ending.

ABRANA

...I thought that....

COYOTL

Maybe tha's yer problem.

You *think*, while the rest of us *do*.

Move on from here,

this is not your fight to fight.

Our young an theirs after will struggle the same struggles what we do.

Cuz our howls are but a reminder

of what this world should be.

MANUEL

Solé though. Our daughter.

COYOTL looks to MANUEL; intrigued.

Soledad is making this her fight.

COYOTL

...I remember her...

MANUEL

You do???

COYOTL

Her scent; un'scared of anything.
Walked wherever she pleased, dark or light.
We have been close before.
Maybe will be again.

MANUEL looks at COYOTL uneasy.

MANUEL

What you mean again?

COYOTL

Your Soledad and I...encountered.
Where the reservoir runs down,
on the bed surrounded by rocks.

MANUEL

Wait, encountered when???

COYOTL

You see, when coyotl have a rift amongst us.
The stronger male can turn any of us away on our own.
Me, I was young and intent.
I tried to feed from a feeding what wasn't mine.
And my punishment was to be pushed out.

So, there I was by the rocks.
Ravenous and alone.
Then, this savoring scent:

Your Soledad standing with her feet in the water.

COYOTL slurps in hunger; MANUEL uneases.

But when I made my hunger known.
She stood her ground; like the stream was mine as much as hers.
She asked why I was alone.

Nobody had ever...
But then from the distance, I heard one of your voices calling her to come back
inside: "Solé!"

MANUEL

It was me what called her home,
an so long as I'm still breathing,
your hunger will never touch her.

COYOTL

You really think *you'll* be able to keep her from me?
Lookit you an lookit me.

COYOTL laughs. MANUEL steps'up.

MANUEL

If you so much as —

ABRANA

Manuel.

COYOTL

Lookit you two,
separated from your young,
but still behaving like she'll come back.
Me, when I was abandoned,
left alone in the scavenge,
d'you think I could go back?
Not even if my life was in threat.

We move forward, by hunger an force.
How else d'you think we survive?

So, I say again,
move on from here,
give up this ravine you call house,
let your daughter fight by her own.

MANUEL

We will not give up our home,
an our Solé will never be left alone.

COYOTL sniffs MANUEL.

COYOTL

D'you know something. You and your daughter scent nothing alike.

COYOTL is gone.

MANUEL

How could you bring *that* into our home!?!?

ABRANA

Why did you behave like some —

MANUEL

I am in protección of our daughter.
Can't you see she is endangered???

ABRANA

Manuel, if Coyotl wanted us out of their way, we would be.

MANUEL

Abrana, this is why our Solé hasn't been by!
Any time she tries to come near, Coyotl is circling.
Savoring her scent.

this hits ABRANA.

ABRANA

...by the reservoir, Coyotl said about my bones, that there wasn't enough meat.

MANUEL

That our scent and Sole was nothing alike.
Coyotl is waiting for her to come home.

ABRANA has no answers.
lights.

the road – *sounds of night; crickets and harsh wind through an open sky.*

*moonlight gives way to SOLEDAD y SYERA LOMA huddled under a bridge.
they look exhausted with their clothes and hair messed; both have scratches.
SYERA LOMA has blood on her person.*

SYERA LOMA

...my hands're still with their shaking.

SOLEDAD

I don't think this bridge is bein'used yet.
We should be okay.

SYERA LOMA

You don't shake?

SOLEDAD checks her hands, heartbeat.

SOLEDAD

I'm good I think, but...wasn't me what...

SYERA LOMA

Still can't imagine *me* doin'something like...what you described.

SOLEDAD

You was pushed.

SYERA LOMA

Both of us.

SOLEDAD

To be truth,
wish it'd been me.
I wanted it to be.
What I felt.
Inside.
I've felt before.
But...I keep it down.
Something in me always thinks I'm so smart.
That I'll get them in the end.
But look at me.

SYERA LOMA

Ay, mija, you will finish what you started downtown.

SOLEDAD

There's no downtown no more.
We're wanted, prolly looking for us all over.
Can you imagine, if he's alive what he'll say.
An if he's not...

SYERA LOMA

But you didn't touch him. It was me.

SOLEDAD

Lookit us.
Will la policía even bother, or will their government pick us up however they please. Nobody even know where or what happened. Conqusted.

SYERA LOMA

I ruined everything what you worked for.

SOLEDAD

No. Well, yes, pero...

SYERA LOMA

Ay, me, I am so sorry.

SOLEDAD

When his head was against the glass,
I was thinking.
All my time socializing to people, introducing who I was,
even thinking to run Joint Committee.
I actually felt like the world had improvements.
Like I was part of making things better.
But I forget,
what the everyday world an everyday people will always be.

SYERA LOMA

I should never have followed you.
I should never have come up to –

SOLEDAD

I would have just let him do what he did to us.
I would have gone home and made phone calls feeling so proud.
Lookit me my connections.
And nothing would have happened.
Maybe he would have been written up.
But he'd still be out there.
Looking at us like how he do.

SYERA LOMA

Solé, can you tell me something verdad?

SOLEDAD nods.

D'you think I'm wrong? In my insides.
Is there some part wrong in me?

SOLEDAD

You pushed for people pushed like you.

SYERA LOMA

Pero, el diablo, is he in the control?

SOLEDAD

Is it a sin when an animal defends herself from another animal?

SYERA LOMA

He had familia. Isn't that something he said?

SOLEDAD

So do you.

SYERA LOMA

...pero, could be his won't ever see him no more.

SOLEDAD

Could be ours won't ever see us either.

SYERA LOMA

Ay, I am sorry to have brought my misfortune to you and all your hard workings. To him and his familia too.

SOLEDAD

We're in this together me an you.

SYERA LOMA

I wanna ask the Lord for forgiveness,
but I don't think God is even for me anymore.
Lookit where I dragged us.
No roof over heads, only the dirt an rock where we'll sleep.

SOLEDAD

We have your instincts, for when my thinking can't get us through.

*then,
they both hear MEN'S VOICES in the close distance.
SYERA LOMA yanks SOLEDAD low; they listen intently.*

MEN'S VOICES move closer.

SYERA LOMA

Vámanos, ahora.

SYERA LOMA moves off stealthily, SOLEDAD follows suit.

lights.

*in darkness,
we hear fast breathing and legs moving through brush,
we hear footsteps on rocks and the crunching of branches.*

*finally,
the cool, constant of running water.*

*moonlight spots SYERA LOMA and SOLDEAD keeled over catching their breath.
along their side is a small creek bed.*

SOLEDAD

D'you think we lost'em?

SYERA LOMA

They won't go this far into the brush.

SOLEDAD

We'll never get home like this.

SYERA LOMA

I can go on my own.

SOLEDAD

We'll get you to your familia.

SYERA LOMA

...

SOLEDAD

What is it?

SYERA LOMA

I'd be hunted every day in the light.

SOLEDAD

Yo también, pero –

SYERA LOMA

¿Y tú? ¿Familia?

SOLEDAD

I was so busy trying to put myself into their world of...politico, that I never...
nothing my own.

SYERA LOMA

Es okei.

SOLEDAD

I do look forward tho' ...at least something I could call home.

SYERA LOMA

You can call so many things home.
Even look all around us.

SOLEDAD

I make a promise to you, we will get you back to where you belong.

SYERA LOMA

Ay, mija.

SOLEDAD doesn't know what she...

SYERA LOMA (*cont*)

For so many years, my husband begged.
To make children of our own.
Pero, I was so scared.

What if he couldn't find work,
what if we couldn't get enough food.
Ay, he held it so against me.
For years we lived like that.
But I hoped...some day at least a house.
So, we saved our savings.
But, I guess a home...

SYERA LOMA pulls a crumpled sheet of paper still bright of white.

was never our domain.

SOLEDAD

Ay, Syera.

SYERA LOMA

This letter...put a rift between us.
And my strong man turned away.
Leaving like how men do.
An me pushed so alone.

SOLEDAD gets on the ground, cups water from the creek; then offers it to SYERA LOMA; who takes a drink from hand to mouth.

Thank you, for taking me in.

*SOLEDAD cups herself water; drinks.
then,*

SOLEDAD

Ay, dios, I can't believe I didn't think.

SYERA LOMA

¿Qué estás pensando?

SOLEDAD

I recognize the taste.
This starts at the reservoir, right where I lived.
We can follow the water.

SYERA LOMA

You still go to..?

SOLEDAD

I haven't been by for so long.
We always think we are so busy.
But what else is there what really matters, huh?

SYERA LOMA

It is okay what I come with?

SOLEDAD

They'll be so excited.
They haven't seen anyone from the outside for...

SYERA LOMA

¿Qué pasa?

SOLEDAD

...nothing.
I just wish I hadn't left them so alone.

*SOLEDAD leads SYERA LOMA up the creek.
lights.*

where home is – *sounds of quiet. peaceful and as it should.*

*first morning light on ABRANA y MANUEL under the window;
they have been up all night.*

MANUEL
Abrana. (*pause*) Mi Abrana.

ABRANA moans that she is listening.

D'you know what my mind has started to do?

ABRANA
Our minds are gone, Manuel. I can't tell if it's day or light.

MANUEL
I keep getting flashes. Of when we first set foot.

ABRANA
¿De qué estás hablando?

MANUEL
Carrying on our backs everything we'd need.

ABRANA
Porfa, mi Manuel.

MANUEL
An then you called out.

*lights shift,
we see ABRANA y MANUEL twenty years younger; looking at something up in the distance.*

ABRANA
“¡Miras allí!

MANUEL
¿...son esas casas?

ABRANA
Veo niños.

MANUEL
¿Por qué están en las lomas?"

ABRANA
Tal vez ahí es donde viven.

MANUEL
¿Crees que deberíamos ir allí?

ABRANA
Si. Sígueme.

*ABRANA leads MANUEL into the hills.
they walk up for a bit,
then stop and look out over something their eyes can't believe.*

ABRANA
Mira a toda la gente.

sounds of children playing.

MANUEL
Escuchas. Hablan como nosotros.

ABRANA
¿Crees que nos dejarán entrar?

MANUEL
Esta será nuestra casa.

ABRANA
Vámonos entonces.

*they walk together towards the sounds of comunidad.
lights shift back to their older selves.*

MANUEL
Gracias, for bringing me.

ABRANA
We brought here together.

MANUEL

This is where she started.

ABRANA

She was so small when she came out.

MANUEL

Pero, so loud.

ABRANA

Thought she would never shut up.

MANUEL

Ay, what I would give to hear her now.

ABRANA

She'll come when she's news.

then,

sounds of leaves and twigs being stepped on, coming upwards the hill.

MANUEL quickly grabs the knife from under the mattress.

then,

as if from outside the front door, they both hear movement on gravel and dirt.

ABRANA y MANUEL both stand their guard against the front door.

then,

a polite knock. one, two, three.

ABRANA y MANUEL look at one another oddly.

another knock, one, two, three.

ABRANA opens the door to SOLEDAD y SYERA LOMA; looking ragged and worn.

SOLEDAD immediately throws herself into the protection of her parents embrace like a child.

THE VARGAS FAMILY cry and hold each other as though es been years;

this takes as long as it needs to.

finally, ABRANA y MANUEL take a look at their daughter safe and alive; they sign the cross.

MANUEL
Sabía que volverías.

ABRANA
Tu padre nos dio esperanza.

MANUEL
Not even for a moment did I ever doubt it.
Our familia would be familia again.

ABRANA
Tha's how sunk we are, huh?
Whatever I lose in hope, he gives us his own.

SOLEDAD manages a laugh.

SOLEDAD
You two are still like how I left.

beat. they notice SYERA LOMA.

ABRANA
An who's this?

SOLEDAD
Uh, this is...Syera Loma.

MANUEL
Ah, is she una política like you?

ABRANA y MANUEL notice the blood on SYERA LOMA's clothes, the condition of their daughter.

ABRANA
¿Qué le pasó?

MANUEL
¿Estás herido?

SOLEDAD
I'm fine, I'm not hurt.

ABRANA
But look at her.

MANUEL
Was coyotl? Did they try to encircle –

SOLEDAD
No, no *coyotl*. Estamos bien.

MANUEL
So what happen then???

SOLEDAD finds a place to sit.

SOLEDAD
there was this streetcar,

ABRANA
Streetcar where – what were you – ?

SOLEDAD
Mamá, porfa.

ABRANA y MANUEL find their breath.

there was this public hearing –
an it didn't go well –
an it was all my fault –

SOLEDAD composes her emotion.

SOLEDAD (*cont*)

I just wanted people,
those other kinds of people,
to hear what was being done to us.
I thought I could organize another hearing that –

SOLEDAD loses her emotion.

SYERA LOMA

It wasn't her fault.

ABRANA

Ay dios, dime what is this.

SOLEDAD

The conductor; he started to speak strangely at us.

SYERA LOMA

He locked our doors.

SOLEDAD

That we locked ourselves, that it was our fault –
I was so scared.
But then I just...*watched*...while Syera attacked from behind him.

ABRANA

Ay, dios.

SOLEDAD

His head knocked through the shield.

SYERA LOMA

...I think I killed him.

ABRANA y MANUEL hold SOLEDAD y SYERA LOMA tightly.

MANUEL

"Padre nuestro, que estás en el cielo.
Santificado sea tu nombre."

SYERA LOMA

Your Solé didn't do anything wrong.

SOLEDAD

We were both there.

ABRANA

Ay, I don't even know what to...

MANUEL

Hey, you're home now. You're home and we won't let anything come for you.

ABRANA

But why wasn't anyone with you, why would you —

SOLEDAD

My Committee told me not to; I wasn't supposed to.

ABRANA

If they told you no, why did you?

SOLEDAD

...

MANUEL

This will pass, Solé.

SOLEDAD

...we fled, mamá.
We didn't even check what he was breathing.
We could see them gathering after us —
we ran so scared —

MANUEL

You're safe here, mija.

ABRANA

And after here, Manuel???

MANUEL

After here what? This is home.

ABRANA

A man could be killed. One of *them* could be killed.

MANUEL
But Solé didn't—

ABRANA
She was there. That's all what'll matter.

MANUEL
They won't find her.

ABRANA
Our daughter cannot live her life like we do,
she cannot stay here in hiding for all her life.

MANUEL
Time will forget.

SOLEDAD
They will stay looking for us, papá.

SYERA LOMA
I shouldn't have come.

SOLEDAD
Todo el mundo, por favor.
Solo necesito algo de tiempo para pensar.

MANUEL
Okey, mija. Take whatever time you need.

ABRANA
...you two must be hungry, huh?

SOLEDAD y SYERA LOMA nod.
ABRANA quickly begins putting various grown vegetables in the kitchen area.

MANUEL offers them the bed; they both lie down.
lights.

several hours later.
sounds of quiet remain.

*afternoon light on all four of them quietly;
SOLEDAD y SYERA LOMA on the mattress.
MANUEL y ABRANA under the window.*

MANUEL
Mija, can I ask?

SOLEDAD
Claro que sí, papá.

MANUEL
Can you tell us what is happening out there?

SOLEDAD
I'm sorry I haven't visited earlier.

ABRANA
You don't need to apology with us.

SOLEDAD
D'you remember that letter you got?

ABRANA goes to a hiding spot and pulls a folded sheet of paper what used to be white.

ABRANA
Their "Eminent Domain."

SOLEDAD
They started handing them out again.

SYERA LOMA
Me, my neighbors, all got letters look like that one.

ABRANA
Those same men who came here?

SOLEDAD nods existentially yes.

MANUEL
What is it this time? More buildings up in the sky?

SOLEDAD

Not buildings.

ABRANA

Ay, do they even know why they do it for?
Clearing so many familias, an then what.
Lookit here, how long has it been y nada.

SOLEDAD

For this project they been planning, es going to be a freeway.
To cut straight through familias pobres. Inmigrantes.
People they look at not as people.

MANUEL

You'll stop them.

SOLEDAD

I don't know if we would have stopped them.
Pero, when las comunidades understand what is being done,
when they know what is voices. Maybe someday we will.

MANUEL

You still have time, mija. Your life's still to live.

ABRANA

We are proud of you whatever happens, Solé.

MANUEL

Mija, pero, d'you know what is happening out *here*?
There have been these machine sounds,
then these loud...metal being dropped.

SYERA LOMA y SOLEDAD share a look.

SOLEDAD

...tha's from the construction, papá.

MANUEL

Pero no veo ninguna construcción.

ABRANA

What are they constructing, mija?

*SYERA LOMA goes to stand by the window; giving them space.
SOLEDAD opens the front door.*

MANUEL

Cuídate, we can't let them –

SOLEDAD

Mamá, papá, I need you to tell me each what you see.

ABRANA

Trees. Hills growing green again.

MANUEL

The sky still so blue.

they notice a strange, scared look across their daughter's face.

ABRANA

What is it, mija, what's wrong?

SOLEDAD

Syera Loma, can you tell us what *you* see?

SYERA LOMA walks to the doorway; looks out.

SYERA LOMA

These hills are flattened,
with grey concrete laid over.
Then, just there, beams of steel an wood.
Their crane towering overhead.

ABRANA y MANUEL look to SOLEDAD like "What is she talking about???"

SOLEDAD

She sees same as me.
Ay, I'm so sorry. I should have said to you sooner.
But I wanted to keep our –

ABRANA

Ay, mija – what are you – said to us what?

SOLEDAD

Your letter, mamá, is years and years ago.

MANUEL

¿Qué years?

SOLEDAD

They cleared our ravine over seven years ago.
Everybody. Even you.

MANUEL

But we're right here.

SOLEDAD

When I used to come visit,
I didn't know where else to go.
This is where you both stood your ground.
This is where...

ABRANA

Where what mija? Dime.

SOLEDAD

You didn't know what would happen.
How could you know?
They knocked over our house,
with you both still inside.
Mamá, you told to them they would have to pull you out.
Papá, you stayed by her side.
Then with their tractor machine.
They run it right on top.

*ABRANA keels over to a flood of tears, MANUEL comforts.
several moments.*

MANUEL

Es okei, es—

ABRANA

...es not okei. Our only daughter we let by her own.
What kinda mother could think it was some bad dream???

MANUEL

This is how come we couldn't sleep, mi Abrana.
Because what parents could?

ABRANA

Ay, mi Soledad, dime lo que sucedió.

SOLEDAD

When they started their engines,
I tried to run to our front door.
But la policía held me back.
My mouth screamed an screamed an screamed.

ABRANA y MANUEL cry into one another.

But I never blamed you. How could you know?
What human beings were capable.
What they would rip a child from her parents;
bulldoze familia from familia

*ABRANA y MANUEL pull their daughter into them.
they share the years they missed.*

then,

ABRANA y MANUEL both notice something outside.

MANUEL

Ay, dios, miran.

ABRANA

Es tan grande.

*sounds of a baseball being knocked out of the park; a crowd goes crazy.
bright stadium lights from above,*

SOLEDAD

When construction is done,
where we're standing will be their parking lot.
Our entire ravine was torn for public housing,
pero por dinero, now es for their sports park.

MANUEL

You can't see where our houses even were.

ABRANA

Those aren't even our trees.

SOLEDAD

They'll bring in their own.

SYERA LOMA

Look how you can't even see the ground.

the stadium lights darken, the sounds of the crowd gone.
ABRANA y MANUEL look at each other; at their home.

ABRANA

Ay, hija. I can't believe you were without.

SOLEDAD

You don't have to apologize.
Never to me.

MANUEL

Pero, hija.
If me and your mamá are...then why are we still doing here?

SOLEDAD

Whenever I came back here,
I saw it just like it was.

But, I'm sorry, I should have been more brave,
I should have not kept looking back.
But the city's so alone.
I didn't know where else to...
I should have let you go.

MANUEL

We wouldn't have let you.

ABRANA

Es verdad.

MANUEL

I still saw you with us all the time,
talking to, laughing alongside.

ABRANA

I wanted to see you, I wanted to see you on every day.

SOLEDAD

Ay, look at you both; how long since you slept.

ABRANA

Ay, mija. Parents aren't for sleep; no matter how old.

MANUEL

Maybe there was reason,
we kept each other in sight.

SOLEDAD

Maybe yer daughter still needed you.
This one last time.

MANUEL

We will protect you.

ABRANA

No, Manuel. Our daughter needs now to fight by her own.

SYERA LOMA

Not only her own.

SYERA LOMA looks out the front door; the moonlight hitting her just so.

SYERA LOMA transforms into COYOTL.

SOLEDAD steps calmly towards.

SOLEDAD

Neither of us will be ever alone.

SOLEDAD reaches out and touches COYOTL's mouth. beat.

Pero, mamá, you're right. I have to go.

I can't go backwards to the life I tried.

MANUEL

But where will you – “ever alone”? What life will you have then, mija?

SOLEDAD

I'll be in comunidad, surrounded by mi gente.

Everyplace I go.

I'll speak for those who can't speak,
an listen to them what feel so alone.

An when speaking don't work,
I'll use my hands for any too scared to put up their own.

You don't haffta worry.
I'll be in wherever our gente need,
when pulled from their homes,
or cornered in some corner,
there's who I'll be.

An when the voiceless hear song,
an the pushed push back,
then I know I found home.

*SOLEDAD hums; ABRANA y MANUEL join.
The familia holds each other in music;
other voices join their song; all notice.
finally...*

MANUEL

Thank you for needing us.

ABRANA

At least one last time.

SOLEDAD

I love you both, an I'll never stop needing you everyday.

MANUEL

Te queremos, nuestra Soledad Vargas.

SOLEDAD

This isn't goodbye.
Me, I'm still gonna speak to you so many times.

MANUEL
We'll be in whenever you need.

ABRANA
In however you please.

SOLEDAD leads COYOTL out of the house.

lights happen.

*revealing ABRANA y MANUEL to be standing amongst the wreckage of a crumbled house;
nothing more than shards of wood and tin amongst the dirt.*

they look up at the darkened sky.

they are gone.

distant lights and sounds of...

headlights flashing,

a crowd cheering,

freeway cars racing,

a stadium so bright.

white out.

END OF PLAY.

