

“Heaven's Rivers”

A Play in Two Acts

Written by

Kevin T. Baldwin

CAST

FATHER DANIEL RACKMAN – Early forties. Former eighties hair band guitarist. Lost his pregnant wife, Mary, to a drunken driving accident. Through his grief, he resolved to enter the priesthood.

FATHER CLIFF – Early forties. Head of Saint Jeremiah’s Parish which abuts a wealthy neighborhood and an impoverished community housing project.

FATHER EMANUEL RUIZ – Late fifties. Fastidious Latino priest who works closely with Father Daniel.

JULIET LIMA – Late teens. Venezuelan-American girl in a highly emotional family crisis.

OSCAR LIMA – Late teens. Juliet’s brother, friends with Grover Dowd. Both boys serve as part of the altar guild at the church.

MRS. LIMA – Early to mid forties. Mother to Oscar and Juliet.

MRS. DOWD – Mid to late forties. A wealthy socialite, racist snob and member of the church vestry.

GROVER DOWD – Late teens. Mrs. Dowd’s son and part of the church altar guild. Loves Juliet.

EUGENA CONTE – Old high school friend of Daniel’s. Works as a nurse in the hospital where Juliet’s grandmother is being cared for.

MRS. ADRIANA LOPEZ – Juliet’s grandmother or “abuela”. Hospitalized because of her failing health.

JAVIER CORTEZ – Mid twenties. Pool hustler and gang leader. Nasty piece of work.

MARY'S VOICE - An offstage voice that speaks to Daniel.

MR. BARRIOS - An offstage voice of a resident in the apartment complex where the Limas live.

FEMALE CASHIER – Slovenly pool hall attendant. Flexible casting.

PARISHONERS/GANG/POOL HALL PATRONS/SCRUB NURSES – Flexible casting.

FEMALE NEWSCASTER – Ties the play to reported religious sightings. Flexible casting.

AUTOMATED MESSAGE –Should at least sound like a recorded message but can be done live at the director’s discretion.

Time: Latter Half of the Year 2001

Place: Millborough

ACT ONE

Act 1, Scene 1 - Saint Jeremiah's Church - Rectory Garage

(Rain is heard in the darkness. LIGHTS UP on a rainy afternoon in the garage attached to a church rectory. A MAN, wearing a buttoned up heavy coat drenched by the rain, appears through the frame of a stage right door to the rectory. It is a bare stage with only minimal set pieces to indicate where we are. There is a statuette or picture in the room depicting the "Blessed Virgin Mary". The man is DANIEL, but we do not see either his clerical collar or priest garments. At center stage is a large dark colored pew, and from behind the pew we hear the sound of sand paper being rubbed against the wood. DANIEL doesn't see anybody, but it is actually FATHER CLIFF who is located behind the pew, sanding away)

DANIEL – (Calling out) Hello? (The filing and sanding stops briefly, then starts up again. DANIEL calls out again) Hello? (The filing and sanding stops again) Cliff?

FATHER CLIFF - (Calling from behind the pew) Be right with you! Just removing some of the more clever limericks, allusions to my “questionable parenthood” and other assorted graffiti people have carved into this thing.

DANIEL - (Chuckling) Take your time. (FATHER CLIFF comes out from behind the pew. He is wearing a pair of overalls and is also not wearing a collar. The neck of his shirt is unbuttoned to the bottom of his throat. He stops and looks at DANIEL, almost contemptuously)

FATHER CLIFF - Daniel. You're here. (Pauses. Looks closer at DANIEL) So, you really went and did it.

DANIEL - (Nodding) Yeah.

FATHER CLIFF - And they sent you to me?

DANIEL - Yes.

FATHER CLIFF - Are you going to be okay with this?

DANIEL - I guess I'll have to be. Are you?

FATHER CLIFF - I guess I'll have to be, too, won't I. But it won't be easy for you, coming back here to the neighborhood.

DANIEL - I don't want easy and I don't expect easy. That's probably why they sent me here. They know I want it to be a challenge for me.

FATHER CLIFF – But after twenty years? Don't think for a minute this is the place you left. There have been lots of changes. Things are definitely not the way you left them. (Goes behind the pew and disrobes. He gets down to a T-shirt and underwear as he throws his overalls over the pew) But, it is the place where it all started...for you and for me.

DANIEL – Yeah, that's true. (Pause) I want you to know, Cliff, that ultimately I had nothing to do with the verdict. This is just where they wanted me.

FATHER CLIFF - I could be saying that to you.

DANIEL - (Nodding) I was wondering.

FATHER CLIFF – (Shaking his head) Nope. Not me. I didn't pull *any* strings to get you here. (He now has a newly pressed pair of black pants on along with a clean, black button down shirt open at the collar. After a beat, emphasizing) No favoritism. (He brings a pair of shoes out to a chair in front of the pew. Sits down)

DANIEL - I understand, Cliff.

FATHER CLIFF - I just wouldn't be able to do that, not for you, not for anybody. (Puts on his shoes)

DANIEL – (Defensive) I'm not looking for any favoritism.

FATHER CLIFF – (Stern) When I ask something of you, and there'll be lots of things I'll ask of you, I expect it to be done immediately and without question. (Finishes getting shoes on. His collar is in his pants pocket. He approaches DANIEL stage right) As far as you're concerned, you're Steed and I'm Mother.

DANIEL - (Confused, has no idea what that means) “Steed”? “Mother”?

FATHER CLIFF – “The Avengers”? Don't you remember that old show from the sixties? Steed was that British secret agent? Worked for his boss who was some big fat guy called "Mother"? (DANIEL stares, not having a clue what CLIFF means) Saturday nights? (DANIEL shrugs his shoulders) Seven o'clock? "Mrs. Peel? We're Needed"? (Hopeless) Anyway, that's me. I'm the big fat guy and you're my secret agent.

DANIEL - (Laughing) Whatever. “Thy will be done”.

FATHER CLIFF - (Not amused) What? You think this is funny? This isn't a damn joke. You could fail. Big.

DANIEL - I won't. I'm needed. Yes, it could have been Philadelphia, or Harlem, or East L.A. but it wasn't. They sent me here, which means they sense I'm meant to be here. So, as long as I *am* here (Pauses and then puts his hand on CLIFF's shoulder) “thy will be done”.

FATHER CLIFF - All right, fine. You ready to go to work?

DANIEL - Ready.

FATHER CLIFF - Okay then. (Takes the collar out of his pants and affixes it to his shirt) We gotta move this pew back into the church. You can put your jacket over on that bench there. (DANIEL goes over and removes his trench coat. His back is to the audience. He slowly turns around and reveals that he is also a priest. He joins FATHER CLIFF and they begin to lift the pew from either side) After this, Father Ruiz will meet us in the parish office. He'll have some paperwork we need to go over, then we'll get you settled in at the rectory. (They BOTH head out the door, but then FATHER CLIFF puts the pew down) One more thing. Not "Cliff". "Father Cliff".

DANIEL - Yes, Father Cliff.

FATHER CLIFF - Let's go. This parish garage gives me the creeps. It's so dark in here I swear there are ghosts watching me. (Lifts the pew again as THEY exit. LIGHTS DIM, isolating on the Virgin Mary statuette or picture as the scene TRANSITIONS to Act 1, Scene 2)

Act 1, Scene 2 – A Community Housing Apartment - Same Afternoon

(LIGHTS UP on a ratty old couch center stage. There are a few items on stage to depict a rundown apartment. There is also a different statuette or picture of the Virgin Mary in the apartment. JULIET LIMA, an attractive young Venezuelan girl, is sitting, watching a Spanish language television program. OSCAR, her brother, enters the room, drunk, slamming the door shut. The following dialogue may be spoken in English or in Spanish)

OSCAR - Where is she?

JULIET - At work. (OSCAR looks at JULIET, angry) What?

OSCAR - You've been seeing *him* again, haven't you?

JULIET - (Stands up and moves away from OSCAR) So?

OSCAR - (Advancing towards JULIET, threatening) I told you to stay away from him!

JULIET - I can see who I want! Get away from me. You're drunk! (OSCAR lunges at her) No! Don't!

OSCAR - (Grabbing her by the throat, he speaks very coldly, slowly, and threatening) I told you to stay away from him. (He moves his face closer to hers. She turns away, reeling in terror)

JULIET - Please! No! Don't! (He rips her shirt) It is a sin! (He moves in. LIGHTS DIM quickly isolating on the Virgin Mary statuette or picture again. As the scene TRANSITIONS to Act 1, Scene 3, we see a FEMALE NEWSCASTER isolated far stage right)

FEMALE NEWSCASTER – In the news, ever since the 9-11 attacks, unusual religious sightings have been on a steady climb. This past month, Hector Ramirez had his house condemned by the Board of Health. Seems Mr. Ramirez had a deadly mold problem stemming from his bathroom. Board of Health officials reported Ramirez was washing the bathroom wall and, using a lime dissolvent, an image formed of what he and family members asserted was the "Madonna" or Virgin Mary. Refusing to clean the room any further, the mold grew until the room became toxic and the house inhabitable. Still refusing, citing his religious beliefs, Mr. Ramirez watched as the authorities tore his house...down. (LIGHTS DIM)

Act 1, Scene 3 - Saint Jeremiah's Church - Church Office – Moments Later

(LIGHTS UP on the church office at Saint Jeremiah's Church. DANIEL is sitting in a chair by a desk center stage. FATHER CLIFF is standing behind DANIEL's left shoulder and FATHER EMANUEL RUIZ, an older Latino male, is holding a bunch of paperwork behind DANIEL's right shoulder. FATHER RUIZ places two large stacks of papers on the desk in front of DANIEL)

FATHER RUIZ - And these we need to submit to the Bishop by the end of tomorrow in order for you to conduct your first service in two weeks.

FATHER CLIFF - Two weeks? Emanuel. We don't usually have that long of a delay.

FATHER RUIZ - New administrative policy. Those just completing seminary must serve one year living and working in a parish, but they first must observe two weeks of services to get the "feel" of how we perform the mass. He'll only assist at the first service, then, in another month or so, he'll be able to perform his first solo service.

FATHER CLIFF - But I had hoped to introduce him to the congregation this weekend by seeing how he does with his first sermon.

FATHER RUIZ – (Cautioning) We wouldn't want to break with policy, Father. You know how testy Bishop Angelino can be.

FATHER CLIFF – Ooh, don't remind me. It's just damned unfair, that's all.

FATHER RUIZ - (Again cautioning) Steady, Father. You're language. Mrs. Dowd is in the ladies' parlor. You don't want her to hear you swearing again, do you?

FATHER CLIFF - (Leans over and tells DANIEL) Last time, she wrote a seven page letter to the Bishop on the, eh, how'd that go again, Emanuel?

FATHER RUIZ – (Off the top of his head, recalling) "The negative influence foul language has on young people in our parish and in our community".

FATHER CLIFF – Yeah, that. (MRS. DOWD starts to walk by the office with a green watering can in her hands) And all I was trying to say is that I thought the president's last speech on TV the other night was full of...

FATHER RUIZ - (Interrupting harshly) Father! (Indicating MRS. DOWD)

FATHER CLIFF - (Realizing, catching himself) Sinners! That's right. This community is just chock full of sinners and it's our job to, to, well, "de-sin" them. Right. (To DANIEL but really for the benefit of MRS. DOWD) So, your goal is to see that every pew is filled for Sunday services. (Greets MRS. DOWD warmly) Well, good evening, Mrs. Dowd. Pleasant evening to you. Watering the plants in the parlor *again*, I see. Well, you just keep up the good work. (Indicating DANIEL) This is (MRS. DOWD stares for a moment, then leaves. FATHER CLIFF looks off at where she went then hears, not a slam, but definitely an abrupt closing of the parlor door) Father Daniel. Hmm. Every two months we have to get new plants for the ladies' parlor because she drowns them. (To FATHER RUIZ) Can't we figure something out for Sunday?

FATHER RUIZ - Sorry, Father. He can be on the altar, and you can introduce him to the congregation, but he may only assist.

FATHER CLIFF – Blast it. (Conceding) Very well, then. Thank you, Emanuel. In the meantime, Daniel has a great deal of experience in music.

FATHER RUIZ – Really? What kind of music? Brahms? Gershwin?

DANIEL – More like Black Sabbath.

FATHER RUIZ – (After a beat) Beg pardon?

DANIEL – I was in a hair band.

FATHER RUIZ – (After a beat) Beg pardon?

DANIEL – Heavy metal, back in the eighties. We toured all over the country.

FATHER RUIZ – (After a beat) Beg pardon?

FATHER CLIFF – Yes, so anyway, given his experience, I've decided to put Daniel in charge of this year's holiday talent show. (FATHER RUIZ is shocked by this announcement)

FATHER RUIZ – But I've already got everything planned. I mean, what about my magic act?

FATHER CLIFF – How many times has the parish seen your "Cut and Restore Magic Rope Trick"?

DANIEL - Father Cliff, that's okay. If Father Ruiz has already begun planning, I wouldn't want to impose.

FATHER RUIZ - Impose? Well of course (Looking at a stern FATHER CLIFF) Of course you would...WOULDN'T be imposing. I need the (looking at FATHER CLIFF) help? (FATHER CLIFF shakes his

head) I've far too many clerical responsibilities. So, why DON'T you just handle the... *whole*...show, Father, eh, Daniel?

DANIEL - Sure. I guess. That would be awesome.

FATHER RUIZ – “Awesome”, yes. By the way, just a reminder: While you work for Father Cliff, I will actually be the priest in charge of doing your evaluation for the diocesan vocation office. They'll relay my comments to the Bishop. (Threatening, but polite) All of my comments. Please remember that.

DANIEL - (Beat) Hoo-kay.

FATHER CLIFF - Good. Then it's settled. Now, let's get back over to the rectory to see what Muriel has prepared for us.

DANIEL - Muriel?

FATHER CLIFF - You probably met her earlier when you arrived. She told you where to go.

FATHER RUIZ - (Sarcastic) She has an affinity for doing that.

DANIEL - (Recalling) Oh, yes. (Mildly acerbic) Interesting woman. Does she, uh, *live* in the rectory?

FATHER RUIZ - Oh, yes, round the clock. She's our live-in cook and housekeeper. She's constantly threatening to leave us, though. Complains that priests should have "normal banker hours".

FATHER CLIFF - Oh, she's just kidding, Father Ruiz. (To DANIEL) She's like our 'Florence' from "The Jeffersons". (FATHER RUIZ rolls his eyes). Always talks about leaving, but never does? (THEY do not get the reference) Nothing? (No response) Skip it. She'll never go.

FATHER RUIZ – (To DANIEL) God help us if she did. We'd be lost without her...cooking. I suggest, though, that if we want to eat supper *this* evening, we should leave now, or she'll leave us an empty dinner table.

FATHER CLIFF - Right. Off we go, then. (The PRIESTS exit as LIGHTS DIM. TRANSITION to Act 1, Scene 4)

Act 1, Scene 4 – St. Jeremiah's Church Rectory – Moments Later

(LIGHTS UP on the rectory dinner table moments later. The table is absolutely devoid of any place settings or food. As lights come up, the three men are standing behind the table, staring at it. FATHER RUIZ holds a letter in his hand)

FATHER CLIFF – Wow. I guess you called that one, Father Ruiz.

FATHER RUIZ – Yes, it appears our "Florence" has left us, "Weezie".

FATHER CLIFF - I don't understand it. I thought she was happy here.

FATHER RUIZ - Not if you read this resignation letter. (Hands FATHER CLIFF the letter. FATHER CLIFF reads the letter murmuring)

FATHER CLIFF - <mumble-mumble> ludicrous hours <mumble-mumble> lousy pay <mumble-mumble>. (Stops) Whoa. Now she didn't have to use *that* kind of language. We're in a church, for crying out loud.

FATHER RUIZ - (Pointing into the letter) Yet notice how she spelled every swear correctly? (Beat) Beautiful penmanship.

FATHER CLIFF - (Thrusts the letter at FATHER RUIZ) Father Ruiz! Please! Now we need to put in a request for a new housekeeper.

DANIEL - Is that difficult?

FATHER CLIFF – Yes, horrible. Every requisition has to be run by the diocesan financial office, and it could take months to process. I hate red tape. Oh, well. In the meantime, we'll each have to pitch in on the daily chores around here. Father Ruiz, would you please make up a chart for us to share?

FATHER RUIZ - Certainly, Father. I'll start immediately.

FATHER CLIFF - Not just yet. Right now, we've got a bigger problem.

FATHER RUIZ and DANIEL - What's that?

FATHER CLIFF - (Whining) I'm hungry. Get me my cellular phone.

FATHER RUIZ - Have you figured out how to use it, yet?

FATHER CLIFF - It's a ding dang phone. How difficult can it be?

FATHER RUIZ - You said that about the microwave. (To DANIEL) It now serves as a two-by-two electronic paperweight on the kitchen counter.

FATHER CLIFF – (Defensive) It mocked me. Just get the blasted phone. (FATHER RUIZ exits off left to retrieve the phone. Turning to DANIEL) I'll order up some pizza.

DANIEL - Cliff, excuse me, Father Cliff, what happened to the microwave?

FATHER CLIFF - It was possessed. I exorcised it.

DANIEL - What?

FATHER RUIZ - (Returning and handing FATHER CLIFF the cellular phone) He threw it against the wall. (To DANIEL, as FATHER CLIFF starts to dial the numbers on the phone) The man can figure out how to program the TV to record five shows in three hours, but give him any other technological marvel and he's lost.

FATHER CLIFF - (Listens then looks at phone) Why isn't it dialing?

FATHER RUIZ - (Presses a button on the phone) Press "SEND".

FATHER CLIFF – Oh. (Listens. Pulls phone away) Hmm. Lousy connection. (He steps away from the other two men. Listens) Still lousy. (Pulls phone away. Walks as far over to stage right as possible. Listens) Still lousy.

FATHER RUIZ - Try standing on a chair at (pointing) that side of the dining table, Father.

FATHER CLIFF - You're joking, right? (FATHER RUIZ shakes his head. FATHER CLIFF shrugs his shoulders, then walks over to the table and stands on one of the chairs. Listens) Hey. I can hear it now. What's it saying? (A recorded message or offstage voice starts)

AUTOMATED MESSAGE: Thank you for calling Ritolli Pizza!

FATHER CLIFF - Yes, I'd like to order a...

AUTOMATED MESSAGE: Please listen carefully as our menu options have changed.

FATHER CLIFF - What the devil?

AUTOMATED MESSAGE: To order a pizza in English, press one. Para pedir una pizza en español, presione por favor el número dos.

FATHER CLIFF - (Pulls phone away. Looks at it) You've got to be kidding me.

DANIEL - What is it?

FATHER CLIFF - It's one of those blasted automated attendant thingies. For pizza, for crying out loud! (Holds phone back up to his ear again)

AUTOMATED MESSAGE: To order a pizza in English, press one. Para pedir una pizza en español, presione por favor el número dos. (FATHER CLIFF presses a button on the phone) To place an order a pizza, press one. For all other menu items, please press two. (FATHER CLIFF presses a button on the phone) For a small pizza, press one. For a medium pizza, press two. For a large pizza, press three. All other options, press four. To return to the main menu, press eight. (FATHER CLIFF presses a button on the phone) Please enter the quantity desired by entering the number on your phone. Press one for one, two for two, three for...(FATHER CLIFF presses a button on the phone) To select from our list of toppings, press one. To order without toppings, please press two. (FATHER CLIFF presses a button on the phone) To order extra cheese, press one. To order without cheese, please press two.

FATHER CLIFF - (To DANIEL and FATHER RUIZ) Extra Cheese all right? (Both men nod affirmative. FATHER CLIFF presses a button on the phone) I don't believe this.

AUTOMATED MESSAGE: To order anchovies, press one. To order without anchovies, please press two.

FATHER CLIFF - (To DANIEL and FATHER RUIZ) Anchovies all right? (Both men nod affirmative. FATHER CLIFF presses a button on the phone)

FATHER RUIZ - No wait! No anchovies! I can't eat them!

FATHER CLIFF - (With a shocked look on his face) But I just pressed "one". What do I do now? (Panicking, presses a number of buttons, then listens)

AUTOMATED MESSAGE: Thank you. To confirm your order for twenty-two pizzas with anchovies, press one.

FATHER CLIFF - I didn't order twenty-two pizzas with anchovies! How do I exit out of this thing?

AUTOMATED MESSAGE: To make any changes, please press <mumble-mumble>.

FATHER CLIFF - What? What was that? What blasted kind of number is <mumble-mumble>? (Starts pressing numbers violently on the phone)

FATHER RUIZ - (To DANIEL) I'll be back in a minute. I need to return to the office.

FATHER CLIFF - (Yelling at phone) Of all the stupid, infernal...

DANIEL - (To FATHER RUIZ) Did you forget something?

FATHER RUIZ – No, but by the time he figures out he just confirmed his order, the delivery boy will be here and I'll need to be ready to give him about two hundred bucks. Be back. (Exits as FATHER CLIFF continues to press buttons and screams at the phone. FATHER CLIFF steps down from the chair, bangs the cellular phone on the table several times, steps back up onto the chair and listens into the phone)

AUTOMATED MESSAGE: Thank you for calling Ritolli Pizza!

FATHER CLIFF - Listen, I just tried using your automated...

AUTOMATED MESSAGE: Please listen carefully as our menu options have changed. To order a pizza in English, press one. (Defeated, FATHER CLIFF steps down off the chair, hands DANIEL the phone and exits. DANIEL listens into the phone) Para pedir una pizza en español, presione por favor el número dos. (LIGHTS DIM. As the scene TRANSITIONS to Act 1, Scene 5, we see the FEMALE NEWSCASTER once again isolated far stage right)

FEMALE NEWSCASTER – The increase in religious sightings continues as a viewer in New Hampshire sent us a photo of Jesus on a fish stick which he himself cooked at a lobster restaurant just outside of Seabrook. In Jonesborough, Tennessee, a man told reporters that when he stands next to his truck each morning a "holy" image appears on the passenger side front window. The man claims it is Jesus, while others have claimed it looks more like late Door's singer Jim Morrison. The man, who claims not to be particularly religious, told reporters he has no idea why the image keeps appearing. (LIGHTS DIM)

Act 1, Scene 5 – Altar at St. Jeremiah’s Church – Sunday Morning Service

(LIGHTS UP on the altar at St. Jeremiah’s Church. FATHER CLIFF and DANIEL are wearing appropriate vestments for the service. Seated at opposing sides of the altar are two members of the altar guild, OSCAR LIMA and GROVER DOWD, who also wear proper vestments. FATHER CLIFF is reciting his sermon at the pulpit downstage right)

FATHER CLIFF - What is it that brings someone to God? Jesus had spent some time on the hillside, alone praying to God. Jesus's disciples were in trouble in heavy seas and strong winds. Late that night, when the men saw him coming, Jesus appeared to be walking on the water. An amazing vision. How'd they react? Did they react like you and I would have reacted after years of watching TV and movies with incredible special effects? Of course not. They weren't as cognizant of such things. They screamed bloody murder (There is laughter among the congregation). They screamed because they thought Jesus was a ghost. But he assured them, "It's all right. I am here. Don't be afraid". Peter called to Jesus "Lord if it is really you, tell me to come to you by walking on water." Jesus said "Sure, go ahead." So, Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But when he looked around at the high waves, he became terrified and dropped into the water like an anchor. Boom! "Save me Lord!" he shouted. Instantly, Jesus reached out his hand and grabbed him." You don't have much faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?" Then, they climbed back into the boat. The Bible shows that while Peter was walking on the water, his eyes fixed on Jesus, he was safe. He was all right. But the second he looked away from Jesus to look around at his circumstances, he was in trouble. We have a choice to either stay focused on Jesus, or step away from our faith and be lost. Amen.

CONGREGATION - Amen.

FATHER CLIFF - You know, as I was preparing today's sermon, I was remembering an old TV show called "The Magician". (Various groans from the congregation. FATHER RUIZ appears to have a headache)

OSCAR - (Leaning over to whisper to GROVER) Oh, man. There he goes again. Another TV show.

FATHER CLIFF – The TV show made a point of saying that the star, Bill Bixby, performed his own stunts in the show. There were no special camera effects when he did the tricks. But, my guess is, if you were one of the girls he had to saw in half or shoot out of a cannon, your faith in him would surely have been tested. (Laughter from the congregation) Our faith is constantly tested, which is why we keep turning to God. (Looks at DANIEL) Perhaps we're not sure WHAT God has in mind for us, (back to congregation) and we do things just assuming it's what he wants us to be doing. It's our own internal defense mechanism to help us maintain our faith when our faith may actually be called into question. With that, I want to introduce you to Father Daniel Rackman. (DANIEL hesitantly rises and smiles at the congregation) He may look older, but he's actually just out of the seminary and will be here for one year before moving on to wherever the diocese needs him. I'm sure many of you will want to introduce yourselves after the service. We invite all newcomers, Daniel included (laughter in the congregation) to our coffee hour immediately following our service. (LIGHTS DIM as the scene TRANSITIONS to Act 1, Scene 6)

Act 1, Scene 6 - St. Jeremiah's Church – Greeting Area – Moments Later

(LIGHTS UP on a greeting area near the altar, moments later. FATHER CLIFF and DANIEL are still in their vestments. DANIEL is approached by FATHER RUIZ, who is escorting MRS. LIMA and JULIET)

FATHER RUIZ - Father Daniel, I'd like you to meet Mrs. Lima and her daughter, Juliet.

MRS. LIMA - Buenos Diaz, Padre.

DANIEL - Buenos Diaz, Senora Lima.

MRS. LIMA - (To her daughter, in Spanish) Speak to the father, Juliet.

JULIET - (In Spanish) I don't want to, Mama.

MRS. LIMA - (Spanish) Don't be rude.

JULIET - (In Spanish) All right. (In English, to DANIEL) Good morning, Father.

DANIEL – Buenos diaz. Please call me Daniel. Father Daniel makes me sound way too old. (Noticing a bruise on both of JULIET's arms) Did you hurt yourself there, Juliet?

JULIET - (Expressionless) Si. It is nothing. (In Spanish to her mother) May I go now, Mama?

MRS. LIMA - (In Spanish) Yes. Okay. Be home by seven thirty.

JULIET - (In Spanish) Okay, okay. (JULIET is then approached by OSCAR and GROVER, who are both carrying back-packs and have their coats on)

OSCAR - (To DANIEL) Good morning, Father. May we speak with Juliet? (DANIEL nods. OSCAR speaks to JULIET in Spanish) Are you ready to go, sis?

JULIET - (In Spanish) Yes. I suppose.

GROVER - (Stammering) Hell-hell-hell...

OSCAR - It's not polite to keep talkin' about hell in church, Grover.

GROVER - Hell-o, Juliet. Nice to s-s-s-see you.

JULIET - (Obviously smitten with GROVER) Buenos Diaz.

OSCAR - (Noticing how the two are admiring each other, pulls GROVER away) Oh, no-no-no-no. Come here, amigo. I told you before, I don't want my sister goin' out with no stuttering Muppet.

GROVER - I d-didn't ask her out. I just said Hell-hell-hell

OSCAR - Enough of that! Look. I like you. You're an okay guy. But Juliet doesn't need the kind of baggage you'd have her carry.

GROVER - What do you mean?

OSCAR - A white boy, and a stutterer to boot? In our neighborhood, you wouldn't last a minute, amigo. (Pause) You'd get a good beatin' just 'cause you talk funky. An' I don't want Juliet to go through that. I don't want her to hurt. You got that?

JULIET - (Intervening, having overheard OSCAR) Oscar, leave him alone. And as for Muppets, how come you got to be such a "grouch", eh?

OSCAR – (Threatening) Juliet!

JULIET – (Standing up to him) Just leave him alone. As a matter of fact, leave both of us alone. It is bad enough I got to cook and clean up after you all the time, but now you got to bully our friends, as well? (In Spanish) Stupid! I've had enough! (Exits, looking back at GROVER one more time. FATHER RUIZ notices and approaches)

FATHER RUIZ - Oscar, I wanted to talk to you about another shortage in the offering.

OSCAR - (Pretending not to hear FATHER RUIZ, OSCAR follows JULIET out, calling to her in Spanish) Juliet! Esperar! Por favor!

FATHER RUIZ - (Looks as OSCAR exits. Then he approaches GROVER) Mr. Dowd.

GROVER - Father Ruiz.

FATHER RUIZ – I'm no expert, but it seems to me that when a girl throws you a look like that *before* she departs a room it stands to reason she may want you to follow her.

GROVER - Right. (Thinks, realizes) Right! (Exits. FATHER RUIZ joins FATHER CLIFF with MRS. DOWD as they approach DANIEL, who is pulling out a pocket calendar from his breast pocket)

DANIEL - I'd be more than happy to meet with you, Mrs. Lima. (Checking his calendar) I have a few openings this week. Did you want to meet here at the parish?

MRS. LIMA - No. I was wondering if we could meet at the hospital.

DANIEL - The hospital? Is someone in your family ill?

MRS. LIMA - Si. I

FATHER CLIFF - (Not realizing he's interrupting) Daniel, I'd like you to meet Mrs. Dowd. She's one of our long-time parishioners here at Saint Jeremiah's. Mrs. Dowd? Father Daniel.

FATHER RUIZ - (Behind Daniel, whispering) Don't turn your back on her.

MRS. DOWD - What was that, Father Ruiz?

FATHER RUIZ - I said I want to go back for some cake. Mrs. Lima? (In Spanish) Would you care to join me?

MRS. LIMA - (Reluctantly agreeing, in Spanish) Yes. That would be nice, Father. (They go back over to the snack table as MRS. DOWD gives a scowling look to DANIEL)

MRS. DOWD - Father Cliff tells me this is your first assignment.

DANIEL - That is correct, Mrs. Dowd. My first parish.

MRS. DOWD - May I be so bold as to ask your age, Father?

DANIEL - No problem. I'm forty-two.

MRS. DOWD - (Shocked) Forty-two? I've never heard of a priest starting so late in life.

DANIEL - It's been known to happen, but you're right - it is less common.

MRS. DOWD - (Feigning a smile) Would you be available for tea at my house this week?

DANIEL - (Looking over towards MRS. LIMA) Well, I was just...

MRS. DOWD - I always enjoy the opportunity to get to know the new priests at our parish. We go through so many it seems, and Father Cliff's last appointee left a lot to be desired.

DANIEL - His last appointee? (Realizing) Father Ruiz.

MRS. DOWD - Not that there's anything *wrong* with a Spanish priest. Lord knows the neighborhood has developed a certain "need" for one. Nothing but mongrels all around here now. It's been far too long since there's been a "calming influence" in the parish. It would be a rather refreshing change. Would two o'clock this Wednesday be good for you, Father?

DANIEL - Well, I've got an opening that day, but I...

MRS. DOWD - Very good, then. I shall anticipate your prompt arrival. I serve precisely at two, so please don't be tardy. (Pulling FATHER CLIFF away from MRS. LIMA) Father Cliff, I need to speak with you about the plants in the parlor. I can't be there to water them all the time, but every time I go in there, the poor dears are simply dying of thirst. (FATHER CLIFF rolls his eyes to DANIEL as he exits with MRS. DOWD)

MARY'S VOICE - (To DANIEL) Charming woman, isn't she? (DANIEL says nothing. He just nods as LIGHTS DIM. As the scene TRANSITIONS to Act 1, Scene 7, we see the FEMALE NEWSCASTER once again isolated far stage right)

FEMALE NEWSCASTER –And the religious sightings continue. A surgery patient recovering at Saint Augustine’s Medical Center in Springfield, Ohio reported seeing a “holy” image miraculously appearing before him outside his window on a huge glass building directly across the street. The woman claims the image bears the likeness of, you guessed it, the Virgin Mary. Experts have offered a more plausible explanation, such as minerals in the glass causing an acidic reaction? Nevertheless, the window has begun to attract thousands of spectators. (After a beat, in disbelief) Oh, dear God. (LIGHTS DIM)

Act 1, Scene 7 - A Pool Hall – The Next Night

(LIGHTS UP on a derelict, smoke filled pool hall. A pool table is set up so that a certain number of pre-arranged shots can be made during the course of the next scene. There is a pay telephone set up near a door frame stage right. JULIET is standing next to the pay telephone. OSCAR is playing pool with JAVIER CORTEZ. There is a slovenly FEMALE CASHIER reading a newspaper behind the sign-in desk stage left. DANIEL enters the pool hall through the door stage left. He is wearing a dark flight jacket, with clerical collar still showing, and goes up to the woman)

FEMALE CASHIER - (Reading her newspaper, not looking at DANIEL) Sign in. Name?

DANIEL - Excuse me?

FEMALE CASHIER - Sign in. You wanna table? You gotta put your name in for one.

DANIEL - I'm not looking to play. I was asked to meet someone here.

FEMALE CASHIER - No loitering, bub. We get all kinds of losers in here. I don't want no trouble.

DANIEL - I promise I won't cause any trouble.

FEMALE CASHIER - (Puts her newspaper down) Well, gimme your name so I can write it down, just in case the cops show up.

DANIEL - Rackman. Daniel Rackman.

FEMALE CASHIER - Rackman. Rackman. (Looks down at her sign-in sheets at the desk) I knew a Rackman. Jewish kid. Lived down on King Street. You related? (Notices DANIEL and his clerical collar) Perhaps *not*. Sorry, Father. Who was it you was lookin' for?

DANIEL - (As JULIET approaches from the pay phone) Juliet!

JULIET - Father! Thank you for coming. I wasn't sure if that telephone was working.

DANIEL - Father Ruiz relayed your message. What's the problem, sweetheart?

JULIET - It's Oscar. My brother. He's in trouble again.

DANIEL - Again? This happens a lot, then?

JULIET - Si. This time, he's lost over three hundred dollars to Javier.

DANIEL - Who is Javier?

JULIET - Javier Cortez. He's no good. He's a shark. If Oscar loses again he won't be able to pay Javier back, and Javier could kill him.

DANIEL - Why not ask Father Ruiz? (JULIET looks off at OSCAR. DANIEL notices) He's had trouble with Father Ruiz, hasn't he? (JULIET nods) What did he do?

JULIET - He took some money from the offering. Said he'd pay it back. Playing pool, he was doing good at first. But then, he got greedy. Lost it all. Now, he's... (JAVIER makes a shot from the pool table)

DANIEL - But Father Ruiz...

JULIET - I think, after today, Father Ruiz may do worse to Oscar than I think Javier.

DANIEL - (Wiping his brow) Juliet, I don't know. This really isn't...

JAVIER - (To OSCAR, in a Latino accent) Ha! Six hundred, sucker! Pay up.

JULIET - Please, Father!

OSCAR - Gimme one more chance to break even.

JAVIER - Enough, pendejo <idiot>. Pay up.

DANIEL - (Approaches JAVIER and OSCAR) Excuse me. But I couldn't help overhear. Perhaps, Oscar, I can help you work out some sort of arrangement between you and this guy?

JAVIER - Buzz off, priest. This ain't no place for you, padre.

OSCAR - (In Spanish to JAVIER) Hey man, he's okay. He's new. (In Spanish to JULIET) Juliet, why did you call him?

JULIET - (In Spanish, to OSCAR) Oscar, let him help. Please?

OSCAR - (In Spanish) What a stupid thing to do! What's the matter with you? What good can a priest do here?

JAVIER - (In Spanish) How about you both just shut up and give me my money?

OSCAR - (In English) I haven't got it.

JAVIER - (Slamming his pool cue down on the table) Then I hope you really get off on pain, dude.

DANIEL - Tell you what: I've got thirty dollars on me. Why don't I give you that and Oscar can pay you over the next week or so? I mean, he isn't the type to welch on a bet, right?

EVERYONE IN THE BAR except DANIEL and OSCAR - Yes. He is.

DANIEL - I see. Well, then (pauses, takes the pool cue from JAVIER) how about I play you one game for what he owes?

JULIET - Father.

JAVIER – (Laughs) I don't play no priests.

DANIEL - Why? (Looking up at the sky) Think I have an *unfair advantage*? (Takes off his collar) I'll make it easy on you. (Throws collar onto the pool table) Give me one shot to make. If I make it, you forget about Oscar's debt and we all walk out of here safely. If I lose, I'll pay you double what he owes.

OSCAR - Double?

JAVIER - Double? You just said you had thirty dollars.

DANIEL - Ever hear of an ATM? I can get more.

JAVIER – Priests got ATM cards?

DANIEL – (Smiles) Some do. (To JAVIER) One shot. I make it, I win and you don't have to pay me anything. I don't, well, you really don't have a lot to lose. (Challenges) Do you? Come on. You in?

JAVIER - (Long pause) Rack 'em. (TWO of JAVIER'S CREW set up the shot)

DANIEL - (Comes behind the pool table to take his shot) Do you need me to call it or do you trust me?

JAVIER – (Looking at the arranged shot on the pool table) Three ball corner, five ball side, eight ball corner. (After a beat) I trust no one, padre. Call it.

DANIEL – Fine. (Pointing to where the balls should go) Three ball corner, five ball side, eight ball corner. Piece of cake. (DANIEL leans to make his shot) And may God have mercy on my soul. (He makes the shot. EVERYONE in the POOL HALL is amazed as DANIEL picks his collar back up and approaches JAVIER) We square?

JAVIER - Nice shot...what's your name?

OSCAR - He's Father Rackman.

JAVIER - Rackman? (Thinks) Rackman. Hey! The Rack? I thought it was you. Holy shit, dude! Whoa!

JULIET - "The Rack"?

JAVIER - Eighties hair band named "Dungeon Law" right outta this neighborhood. Real heavy metal shit. Made it big, then the main dude just up and split. Called him "The Rack" 'cause he played a mean game of pool. Used to wipe out everybody on tour. That's you, isn't it? You're "The Rack", huh?

DANIEL - I don't know what you mean. My name is Daniel. (Puts collar back on) Father Daniel.

JAVIER - (Pauses, smiles) Yeah, you "The Rack". Dude, what the hell happened to you?

DANIEL - (Turns and grabs JAVIER) You got the wrong guy, "dude". (To JULIET and OSCAR) Let's go. (JULIET, OSCAR and DANIEL exit the pool hall. LIGHTS DIM as JAVIER smiles throwing a ball up into the air and then catching it. Scene TRANSITIONS to Act 1, Scene 8)

Act 1, Scene 8 - Stoop Outside the Lima's Apartment Building – Moments Later

(LIGHTS UP on a typical brownstone stoop outside a dilapidated community housing apartment complex where the LIMAs reside. DANIEL, OSCAR, and JULIET are seen standing outside speaking to one another)

OSCAR - Thanks again, Father.

DANIEL - Hold on. We're not done, yet. You stole money from the offering plate, and you're going to repay that money. Tomorrow we'll talk to Father Ruiz and make some sort of deal. Got it?

OSCAR - Do we have to tell him? (DANIEL nods) Look, father. I got it covered. I swear, by the end of this week, I'll return every penny.

DANIEL – How can you get that kind of money in a week?

OSCAR – I got some money comin' to me. Only please, don't tell Father Ruiz. He'll bust my chops but good, man.

MR. BARRIOS - (Offstage voice) Quiet down there! I'm tryin' to sleep!

OSCAR - (Calling back) Sorry, Mr. Barrios!

JULIET - (To DANIEL) Please father?

DANIEL - (Pauses to consider, then) You got till the end of the week. But get the money to him and admit to Father Ruiz what happened, no matter what. Do you understand?

OSCAR - Fine. Thank you, Father. (Turns to leave, then turns back to JULIET) You comin' Juliet?

JULIET - You go ahead. I'll be there in a minute.

OSCAR - Juliet...

JULIET - (In Spanish) Go away and leave me alone! I said I'll be there in a minute.

OSCAR - (In Spanish, grumbling) Manita...muy estúpido. (Goes inside)

JULIET - (Calling after him) And leave me your laundry. I'm doin' whites tonight. (To DANIEL) Thank you again for helping him, Father.

DANIEL - That wasn't the first time he's been in trouble, huh? (Sits on stoop)

JULIET – (Sitting next to him) Oscar? He's been in trouble since I've known him. We're the same age, but he was two years behind me in school before he dropped out. He's been struggling ever since.

DANIEL - So, if I hadn't shown up tonight...

JULIET - Oh, he would have gotten himself into something deeper with Javier, I'm sure. Or he would have wound up drunk, beaten and bloodied...again.

DANIEL - I get the feeling that Oscar wasn't the only reason you asked me down here tonight. Was it?

JULIET - No. It's mi abuela. (After a beat) She's dying. They're looking after her in the hospital where my mother works.

DANIEL - I'm sorry to hear that. What is your grandmother's name?

JULIET – Lopez. Adriana Lopez.

DANIEL - Why does that name sound familiar? (Recalls) Is she the same "Adriana" as in that restaurant down on Fourteenth Street? (JULIET nods) Wow. That place was there forever. I grew up in that neighborhood. Always used to go in there. They had the best food!

JULIET - I worked with her over the summer as a waitress. I also helped bus tables 'cause she couldn't afford no bus boy. But last year she got sick.

DANIEL - With what?

JULIET - Emphysema. She had to sell the place because she needed to go to the hospital.

DANIEL - How long?

JULIET - She's had it for years, but now it's worse. Now there's only months left, perhaps weeks. The pain is unbearable. It's hard for me to watch her go through this. She is dying, but Mama won't see it.

DANIEL – What do you want me to do, Juliet?

JULIET - Would you please visit her? Maybe if you see how in pain she is, you'll explain this to my Mama.

DANIEL - I can't understand why it would need to be explained to your mother, Juliet.

JULIET - Mi abuela is at Saint Catherine's - a Catholic hospital.

DANIEL - And?

JULIET - Oh, just please go see her, and then maybe you'll understand. Please, father? I'd really appreciate it. I can't go anymore. It's too painful. Besides I'm busy looking for a new job.

DANIEL - Sure. I'll stop in. Your mother asked me to see her there, too, so I'll look in on them both.

JULIET – (Annoyed) Ay, she probably wants to talk to you about Oscar. Thank you, Father.

DANIEL - Of course. Have a good night, Juliet. (JULIET turns to go, then returns and gives DANIEL a tender kiss on the cheek then exits. DANIEL listens) What a night.

MARY – (Offstage) They need your help.

DANIEL - I know. But how much help will I be?

MARY – (Offstage) How much help *can* one be?

DANIEL - What kind of answer is that? I need answers, not riddles! (Pause) Well? (Pause) Anything? (Thinks for a moment, comes up with an idea. Calls out to JULIET) Juliet! Juliet!

MR. BARRIOS - (Offstage voice) Wherefore art thou, Romeo?

DANIEL - Very funny, Mr. Barrios.

JULIET - (Returns) Father?

DANIEL - You said you worked at the restaurant. (JULIET nods) I know you said you were looking for a *new* job. Are you working now? (She shakes her head) How would you like to work for us?

JULIET - What? Where? At the church?

DANIEL - We're looking for a new housekeeper at the rectory. It's a full time live in position.

JULIET - Oh, thank you, but I could never leave my family.

DANIEL - I understand. But I thought while we are looking for one, perhaps you could work for us in the meantime? Do well and we'll give you a great reference. What do you say? (JULIET appears excited, nods) Okay. I'll clear it with Father Ruiz in the morning. But you have to promise me that any money goes to you or your mom and *not* to Oscar. Got it? (JULIET nods) Okay. Then expect to start next week.

JULIET - Si, Father. Thank you so much. (Smiles and exits as LIGHTS FADE. As the scene TRANSITIONS to Act 1, Scene 9, we see the FEMALE NEWSCASTER once again isolated far stage right)

FEMALE NEWSCASTER – Yet another unexplained image of the Virgin Mary appeared imprinted on a tree trunk in western New Jersey, causing crowds to flock to the miraculous sight. People have been leaving ribbons, presents, pictures of ailing loved ones, cash envelopes and other personal belongings in the hopes that their prayers will be answered by the Holy Mother. (After a beat, again in disbelief) These people are unbelievable. (LIGHTS DIM)

Act 1, Scene 9 - The Dowd Home – Two Day Later

(LIGHTS UP on the fancy living room at the DOWD mansion. It is Wednesday. DANIEL is seated on the couch area center. In front of the couch is a coffee table with fancy placemats set up for tea. There is a mantle with pictures on it behind the couch. DANIEL is joined by MRS. DOWD, who enters carrying two cups of tea in her hands)

MRS. DOWD - There's cream and sugar on the table for you, Father Rackman.

DANIEL - Please. Call me Daniel, Mrs. Dowd.

MRS. DOWD - Very well. Father, I understand you hired a Puerto Rican girl to work in the rectory.

DANIEL - Boy, word sure travels fast. She's Venezuelan, by the way, not Puerto Rican.

MRS. DOWD - There's not much that goes on at Saint Jeremiah's that I don't know about. Now, far be it from me to be judgmental, Father, but you should be careful dealing with that family. They come from a rather *unseemly* area of town.

DANIEL - I *know* the part of town they come from, Mrs. Dowd.

MRS. DOWD - You've only been here a few weeks, Father. You don't know their type like I do. I have groceries delivered from the market and they are absolutely the most dishonest lot, believe me.

DANIEL - (Trying to be tolerant of MRS. DOWD's obvious bigotry) Juliet seems pretty honest.

MRS. DOWD – Watch out for that one. She's *not* to be trusted.

DANIEL – Why? I found her to be an amiable, hard-working young girl who is just trying to do the best she can for her family.

MRS. DOWD - Her mother used to work for me, stole from me. Of course I had to terminate her employment.

DANIEL - What did she take?

MRS. DOWD - (Walks over to the mantle and picks up a crystal dish) This dish. (Hands it to DANIEL who examines it) Notice where she cracked a piece? That's a four hundred dollar dish, Father. I caught her trying to hide it under her coat. Told me some sob story about her sick mother and needing the money.

DANIEL - Her mother *is* in the hospital.

MRS. DOWD - That doesn't give her the right to steal.

DANIEL – No, it doesn't, and I'm not condoning it. I'm simply telling you her mother is in the hospital.

MRS. DOWD - How she got a job at that hospital after the horrible reference I gave her is beyond me.

DANIEL - As you say, I haven't known the family that long, so I can't speculate as to why Mrs. Lima did what she did. I can only testify as to what I know about Juliet. And she seems like a wonderful young girl who is trying to help her family under, well, less than ideal conditions.

MRS. DOWD - But to give her a job in the rectory, of all places...

DANIEL - I thought having Juliet work near to Father Ruiz, Father Cliff and myself and being close to the parish might help alleviate some of her struggles.

MRS. DOWD - Well, just keep an eye on your silverware, Father.

DANIEL - (Irrked) Mrs. Dowd (restraining himself, he notices a picture of a man on the mantle) Where is Mr. Dowd, may I ask?

MRS. DOWD - Mr. Dowd is deceased.

DANIEL - My condolences.

MRS. DOWD - He died of a stroke about seven years ago. It was my daughter's fault.

DANIEL - Your daughter? How many children do you have?

MRS. DOWD – None living here. My daughter and I haven't spoken since the funeral. It's just my son and I now.

DANIEL - Why haven't you spoken with your daughter?

MRS. DOWD - It's a personal matter, father.

DANIEL - I didn't mean to pry. I am a priest, though. You know how nosy we can be. (Chuckles but MRS. DOWD is not amused) If you ever want to discuss it, I'd be happy to...(His cellular phone goes off in his pocket) Excuse me. (He picks up the phone and speaks into it) Hello? (Pause) Oh, yes. Mrs. Lima. (Looks at his watch) I'm sorry. I'm running late. I'll be right there. (Hangs up) I'm sorry, Mrs. Dowd, but I have to rush to the hospital.

MRS. DOWD - (Unimpressed) I see. Well, thank you for stopping by, Father Daniel. I'll see you at services Sunday.

DANIEL - Yes. Perhaps then we can discuss more about...

MRS. DOWD - (Sharply) I don't think so, Father.

DANIEL - (Feeling awkward) Yes. Well then (Pause) thank you (Pause) again for the tea. It was (beat) good. (Beat) Bye. (LIGHTS DIM as DANIEL exits the house. Scene TRANSITIONS to Act 1, Scene 10)

Act 1, Scene 10 - Saint Catherine's Hospital Room and Nurses Station – Moments Later

(LIGHTS UP on the hospital room of ADRIANA LOPEZ at Saint Catherine's Hospital. The room is in a partitioned area far stage left with a nurses' station far stage right. DANIEL approaches as EUGENA CONTE comes to the nurses' station desk)

DANIEL - Excuse me. What room can I find Adriana Lopez?

EUGENA - (Looking down at the forms on her desk) Oh, not again. What the hell did she break now?
(Looks up) Bad choice of words. Excuse my language, Father.

DANIEL - It's all right. I'm Father Rackman, from Saint Jeremiah's Parish. (EUGENA recognizes DANIEL) I was supposed to meet with Mrs. Lopez's daughter here, and...

EUGENA - Danny?

DANIEL - Huh?

EUGENA - (Embarrassed) I'm sorry. You probably don't remember me. I'm Eugena Conte. We went to school together. I was a freshman and you were a senior.

DANIEL - (Trying to recall) Conte? The name sounds familiar.

EUGENA - I'm Adam's sister.

DANIEL - Adam? (Recalling) Holy...cow. Now I remember. Last time I saw you was at Adam's graduation party. My band played.

EUGENA - I was all of fifteen. I had such a crush (stops, looks at his collar) on Timmy, your bass player.

DANIEL - (Curious) Timmy? He was gay.

EUGENA - (Feigning) But he was still cute. I knew him from band. You used to be in some shows at school, too. I remember you had the lead in some show. I was in the chorus. You probably don't remember. It was so long ago.

DANIEL - (Nodding) It was. It was...a long time ago.

EUGENA - (Smiling) Cast members used to write things to one another in our programs, remember?
(MRS. LIMA appears, dressed in a hospital maintenance uniform, pushing a maintenance cart)

DANIEL - (Laughs) Yeah. I do.

EUGENA - But I'll bet you don't remember what I wrote in yours.

DANIEL - (Thinks) Probably not. It was...a long time ago. (They stare at each other for a moment. There is obviously an attraction)

MRS. LIMA - Father Daniel?

DANIEL - (Startled) Mrs. Lima. I was just looking for you. (To EUGENA) Excuse me. (To MRS. LIMA) I apologize for being late. I had another appointment. How is your mother?

MRS. LIMA - (Indicating MRS. LOPEZ's room) She is this way, Father. I clean restroom. I'll meet you soon.

DANIEL - You won't be there?

MRS. LIMA - She don't listen, Father. She is so stubborn. I hope you're talking with her will help.

DANIEL - But I thought we were the ones who were supposed to talk.

MRS. LIMA - (Nodding) Si, I do. But please, see her first. Then we discuss.

DANIEL - All right. I'll see her and then come for you. Is about fifteen minutes okay? (MRS. LIMA nods) Very good. (MRS. LIMA takes her cart and leaves. DANIEL approaches MRS. LOPEZ's room, then stops. He turns back to EUGENA's desk) "Danny - Thanks for a great show. Hope I didn't hurt your foot"

EUGENA - What?

DANIEL - "Danny - Thanks for a great show. Hope I didn't hurt your foot". That's what you wrote in the program to me. You kept stepping on my right foot in one of the dance numbers. Right?

EUGENA - (Smiles) Right.

DANIEL - Huh. (Smiles back, then slowly turns around and heads into MRS. LOPEZ's room. Isolated, there is an elderly woman hanging from the side of her bed. DANIEL is startled by this sight)

MRS. LOPEZ - (Calling out in a mild Latino accent, weakly) Help!

DANIEL - (Leans over) Mrs. Lopez? Are you all right?

MRS. LOPEZ - Don't just stand there like a damn fool! Help me up! (DANIEL rushes over to help MRS. LOPEZ back up onto her bed) Easy-easy-easy. Old bones-old bones-old bones. I am so embarrassed! (She rests herself onto her bed and lowers her head onto her pillow) Who are you?

DANIEL - Father Daniel.

MRS. LOPEZ - Father who? (Picks up a pair of glasses from the bed and puts them on. She is shocked at the sight of a priest) I don't care how anxious the hospital is to get rid of me I'm not ready for last rights.

DANIEL - (Laughs) I'm not with the hospital. I'm from Saint Jeremiah's. Your daughter asked me to come see you. What happened just now? Were you having some sort of spell? Should I call for a nurse?

MRS. LOPEZ - No-no-no. Just do me a favor and get me my TV remote from under my bed? I leaned over to pick it up and I got stuck.

DANIEL - (Leans under the bed and picks up the remote. Holds it up to MRS. LOPEZ) Here it is. (Goes around to the other side so he can talk to her) Mrs. Lopez, they tell me you have emphysema.

MRS. LOPEZ – More precisely I have "*End-Stage* Emphysema". My husband? He died two years ago from the same thing. All it means is that they can't reverse it. All they can do is ease the pain.

DANIEL – I'm sorry. I always liked him. Your daughter must have been heartbroken.

MRS. LOPEZ – My granddaughter took it the hardest.

DANIEL – Juliet seems like a very sensitive young girl.

MRS. LOPEZ – Sensitive? I swear that girl can cry Heaven's rivers.

DANIEL - How long have you been "end stage"?

MRS. LOPEZ - Five years.

DANIEL - Five years? My God.

MRS. LOPEZ - Si. I've been in this hospital now for seven months. They keep me because my breathing is getting worse. Causing strain on my heart.

DANIEL - Sounds horrible.

MRS. LOPEZ – Forgive me, Father, but as my miserable grandson Oscar would say, "It's a beatch".

DANIEL - Well, I must say what I just saw wasn't exactly what I expected when I walked into the room.

MRS. LOPEZ - Sorry about that. It's these damn gowns they give us to wear. I try to keep it closed.

DANIEL - No. I mean you seem so vital and alert. I expected, well, I'm not sure what I expected.

MRS. LOPEZ – (Winking at him) Just because I'm on my deathbed doesn't mean I'm ready to go just yet, Father. (Looks at him) Rackman. I know you. You're a local boy. Didn't you and your friends used to come in our restaurant?

DANIEL - Yes. I'm amazed you remember.

MRS. LOPEZ - Always a good memory. You had some sort of band. You played on Saturday nights. You were supposed to be pretty good, as I recall. I couldn't listen to it, though. Simply awful music, but my husband say it paid the bills.

DANIEL - It certainly wasn't for everybody.

MRS. LOPEZ - There was a girl, too. You had a girl. Pretty girl with you all the time. What was her name?

DANIEL - (Looking away) Mary.

MRS. LOPEZ - Mary. She was nice. You didn't marry her?

DANIEL - Yes. We did.

MRS. LOPEZ - (Looking at his collar) But you're a priest.

DANIEL - Yes. I am.

MRS. LOPEZ - I think you in a lot of trouble, buddy.

DANIEL - She...My wife passed away unexpectedly.

MRS. LOPEZ - I'm sorry. I didn't mean to pry.

DANIEL - It's okay.

MRS. LOPEZ - But since I have already, how come you're a priest now?

DANIEL - Before I got into the band, I was in divinity school. I dropped out to travel with the band and be with Mary. When...when it all ended, I decided to make a return to the priesthood.

MRS. LOPEZ - You think that's what God wanted?

DANIEL - I...(Stops. Looks at her) Nice try, but I came here to talk about you, Mrs. Lopez.

MRS. LOPEZ - Me? Oh please. In another few months I'll just be a ten line mention in an obituary column. It's more fun to talk about you.

DANIEL - You think so?

MRS. LOPEZ - Sure. *You* still have more days ahead than behind you.

DANIEL - Not necessarily. I could get hit by a bus as soon as I walk out of this building. Then I could rate even less lines for an obituary.

MRS. LOPEZ - (Laughing) Nah! You'll be around for years.

DANIEL - What makes you so sure?

MRS. LOPEZ - Cause God don't make mistakes. He knows what he's doing. You'll live a long time. I can feel it. I got a good sense of such things. Do me a favor, though?

DANIEL - What?

MRS. LOPEZ - Pray for my Oscar. That miserable kid needs a lot of praying for.

DANIEL - (Pauses) Sure. I'll pray for him. I'll pray for Oscar, Juliet, your daughter and for you, Mrs. Lopez.

MRS. LOPEZ - Juliet. She's like the Madonna, that one. Special. (Kidding) My Madonna, not yours.

DANIEL – (Laughing) I know. I better go. It was awfully nice seeing you again. Do you mind if I stop in again next week to check on you?

MRS. LOPEZ – Hey, as long as the Good Lord keeps me here, (blessing herself) feel free to stop in anytime. Except during my soaps. I need to watch my soaps. (Realizing) Ooh. “Guiding Light” is on. Excuse me, Father? (Looking for remote again) Now where is that damn thing?

DANIEL - (Handing her the remote) Here you go. (Gently holds her arm, puts his other hand on her head and says a silent prayer. Afterwards, he says) I'll continue to pray for you, Mrs. Lopez.

MRS. LOPEZ - (Starts to click the remote as DANIEL exits) And I you, Father. (Lights fade on MRS. LOPEZ as DANIEL makes his way back to EUGENA's DESK, where MRS. LIMA has returned and is waiting for him)

EUGENA – Danny, how...

MRS. LIMA - How was she, Father?

DANIEL - She was fine, Mrs. Lima. She told me she's just frustrated from having been here so long.

EUGENA - Every time we've moved her to another ongoing care center she's had severe respiratory complications, so the facilities keep returning her to us. Finally, we made arrangements with her insurance company to just keep her here until we can figure something else out. Unfortunately, there probably won't be much time left.

DANIEL - Why? She seems fine.

MRS. LIMA - (To EUGENA) I need to bring the oxygen to her room now. (Exits)

EUGENA – (Quietly to DANIEL) That's why. She's requiring more oxygen every day. The doctor's are anticipating an arterial collapse soon.

DANIEL - Can't they operate?

EUGENA – (Shakes her head) Because of her advanced age, she wouldn't survive the procedure.

DANIEL - I see. What a horrible thing, to know you're dying but not being able to do anything about it?

EUGENA - What makes it worse is her daughter.

DANIEL - Mrs. Lima? Why?

EUGENA - (Comes around to the front of the desk, bringing DANIEL closer and in confidence) Her daughter has declared Adriana incompetent and unfit to care for herself.

DANIEL - She hardly seems incompetent.

EUGENA - She's not. But she wanted to sign a DNR and the only way Mrs. Lima could stop her was to declare her incompetent. (JULIET walks silently past the desk and into the room of MRS. LOPEZ)

DANIEL – A "Do Not Resuscitate" order?

EUGENA - Right. Mrs. Lopez wants no extraordinary efforts to try and save her at imminent death. Her daughter won't allow it.

DANIEL - What about the hospital?

EUGENA - Saint Catherine's is a Catholic hospital. The Ethics Committee is old school, very conservative. They won't ever withdraw treatment in order to speed a patient's death. Even if the patient is in a persistent vegetative state, they feel morally obligated to do whatever it takes to save them.

DANIEL - As a priest I can understand, but it seems cruel if a prolonged, painful death is not in the best interest of any patient.

EUGENA - Our doctors are usually good in explaining situations to the families of patients. I can't recall an instance where our staff ever prolonged the existence of a patient who they knew to be deceased by all other standards.

DANIEL – (Smiling at EUGENA) You always were a very caring person, Eugena.

EUGENA - (Trying to change the subject as JULIET is brought out by a very angry MRS. LIMA) Danny, didn't I hear that you...(Before she can continue, MRS. LIMA interrupts shouting)

MRS. LIMA - (In Spanish) I told you to stay away from here! You only upset her.

JULIET – (In English) Mama, I wanted to see how she was doing. She's so pale. You keep her hooked up to that awful thing for hours and hours. You make her so miserable.

MRS. LIMA - Father, would you please talk to her? Explain the situation?

DANIEL - I'm not even sure I grasp the whole situation myself, yet, Mrs. Lima. What was it you expected me to say to your mother? Or to Juliet?

MRS. LIMA - Tell them that it's a sin to try and take a life. That you will go to Hell if you try.

DANIEL - Mrs. Lima...

JULIET - Father, she's crazy. Mi abuela is in that room, day after day, suffering. Did she tell you about how they keep bringing her back?

DANIEL - Yes, they explained there were complications. (FATHER RUIZ appears at the rear of the stage, then steps back out of site, so as not to be seen. He listens to the conversation)

JULIET - "Complications"? She was dead! They bring her back. They spend hours, painful hours, trying to keep her alive. Last time? They caused her so much pain that they broke her ribs keeping her here.

DANIEL - (Shocked, he turns to EUGENA) Eugena? (EUGENA nods)

MRS. LIMA - But she *is* still here, and that is all that matters. Now, home with you. *Vámonos!*

JULIET - Father Daniel, isn't there anything you can do?

DANIEL - (Thinks) Your mother has legal guardianship of your grandmother, Juliet. I'm not sure there's anything that can be done.

MRS. LIMA - (Looks at DANIEL, as if he's forgetting to say something) Or *should* be done, Father.

DANIEL - (Sighs) Juliet, why don't we all discuss this tomorrow at the rectory? Perhaps there are options we haven't explored yet.

MRS. LIMA - Options? Father, I have to work double shifts to keep my family fed and my mother alive. I cannot take time out from work to discuss options that do not exist! (Turns to leave) I thought you would help me, Father. Now I see I must do this by myself. (Walks off angry, with JULIET in pursuit)

JULIET - Mama! (Exits)

EUGENA - I'm sorry, Danny. (EUGENA walks back to her desk. DANIEL stares out in the distance for a moment, then there is a sound of a heart monitor. DANIEL slowly returns to MRS. LOPEZ's room. EUGENA exits. MRS. LOPEZ is asleep, with the breathing tube attached to her and the monitors beeping slowly. DANIEL stares at her for a moment. He is obviously unsure of the position he should take as a priest. FATHER RUIZ quietly approaches unseen. He overhears DANIEL talking to himself)

MARY – (Offstage) She's asleep.

DANIEL - I know.

MARY - (Offstage) She seems so peaceful.

DANIEL - She does.

MARY - (Offstage) She's not.

DANIEL - (Nods) I know. (LIGHTS DIM. The scene TRANSITIONS to Act 1, Scene 11)

Act 1, Scene 11 - Saint Jeremiah's Church Rectory - Living Room Area – Two Months Later

(At LIGHTS UP, we see a couch and television set put into place. JULIET enters stage right with a basket of laundry. Then, after she sets it down on the couch, she turns on the television. She sits on the couch and begins folding clothes as FATHER RUIZ enters)

FATHER RUIZ - Juliet?

JULIET - Yes, Father?

FATHER RUIZ - You've been here how long now?

JULIET – I don't know. About eight weeks, I think?

FATHER RUIZ - I see. I wanted to ask you a question about the laundry.

JULIET - Yes, Father?

FATHER RUIZ - (Holds out a brassiere) Would you please, please, please tell me you didn't find this bra here at the rectory?

JULIET - (Embarrassed, she notices the brassiere) Oh, sorry, Father. No. That's mine. Father Cliff said it was okay if I washed a few of my things here since my mother is busy at the hospital.

FATHER RUIZ - Oh, thank goodness! (Breathing a sigh of relief) I thought we had a serious problem here for a minute. (Looking around) Is Father Daniel back from the hospital?

JULIET - Not yet.

FATHER CLIFF - (Enters) Hello, Juliet. Hello, Father Ruiz. (Pauses. Looks at the brassiere in FATHER RUIZ's hands) Eh, is there something you want to tell me, *Emanuel*?

FATHER RUIZ – (Embarrassed) Oh my God.

JULIET - (Takes the bra) It's mine, Father. (Hides it in the laundry basket)

FATHER CLIFF - Well, thank goodness for that! (Laughing, smacks FATHER RUIZ on the back) I didn't think it matched anything you wore. (FATHER RUIZ gives him a sharp look as he pulls him away from JULIET, who returns to watching the television. A Spanish telenovela is heard as the two priests speak)

FATHER RUIZ - Father Cliff, may I speak with you a moment?

FATHER CLIFF - Sure. What is it?

FATHER RUIZ - I've been meaning to talk to you for weeks. I'm concerned about Father Daniel.

FATHER CLIFF - What's wrong? Now, if this is about his evaluation...

FATHER RUIZ – No, it's not. When I was at the hospital a couple of months ago, Daniel was visiting Mrs. Lopez. I overheard him. She was sleeping. He was talking. (FATHER CLIFF looks at JULIET) Oh, don't worry. It's a telenovela. There could be a five alarm *fire* right now and she wouldn't hear it.

FATHER CLIFF – So, anyway?

FATHER RUIZ – Anyway, Father Daniel was talking, but her abuela, I mean her grandmother, was asleep. There was nobody else in the room. (FATHER CLIFF has a blank stare) He was talking to himself.

FATHER CLIFF - What's wrong with that?

FATHER RUIZ - Don't you think that's kind of odd?

FATHER CLIFF - Not especially. Many people do it. Are you sure he wasn't just praying aloud?

FATHER RUIZ - He wasn't praying. It sounded like he was responding *to* someone.

FATHER CLIFF - Really?

FATHER RUIZ - But there wasn't anybody there. I know it's probably nothing, but you had to see it for yourself. It was more than a bit unnerving.

FATHER CLIFF - I see. Okay, I'm sure it's nothing but I'll talk to him. (FATHER RUIZ nods, then exits.

FATHER CLIFF slowly watches JULIET watching TV and tries to understand what's going on in the show. He looks at his watch) Um, I usually watch my "Fugitive" reruns at this time on the big TV.

JULIET - Oh, I'm sorry, Father Cliff. Father Daniel said it was okay if I watched this one soap opera, "Fernando", while I do my chores. I can turn it off if you wish.

FATHER CLIFF - No. It doesn't bother me. You go right ahead. (Tries to watch the program but becomes a little uncomfortable) You know, I never could understand how people get hooked onto these soap operas. I mean, I watch a lot of TV, but soaps never really got to me.

JULIET - Oh, they're big in Venezuela. When I was much younger, mi abuela would visit us. I would come home from school and we would spend hours watching them together. (After a beat) I miss those days.

FATHER CLIFF - (Gently rests his hand on JULIET's shoulder) I'm sure you do.

JULIET - I can't even go to the hospital and watch TV with her. My mother says I upset her too much.

FATHER CLIFF - (Starts to watch the show) It's a difficult situation. I can understand and (sees something on the television) who the heck is that?

JULIET - Oh, that's Fernando's true love. Her name is Rosalinda.

FATHER CLIFF – My God! She's beautiful. (JULIET looks at him) Well, I don't paint, either, but I can still appreciate *art*, can't I? It's the same principal.

JULIET – (Laughs, then recalls) When she was younger, Rosalinda suffered because she was orphaned.

FATHER CLIFF - Orphaned?

JULIET - Si, but she doesn't know that her mother is really in some jail living out a twenty year sentence.

FATHER CLIFF - Let me guess: she's accused of a crime that she didn't commit.

JULIET – Si! That's right! Have you seen this show before?

FATHER – (Sitting down next to JULIET) No. It was just a guess.

JULIET - Rosalinda's childhood is full of happy memories with her sister, whose name I forget. But she, the sister, is jealous of Rosalinda for being so pretty and intelligent. Meanwhile Rosalinda's desire is to find the Spanish prince, the man who will love her forever.

FATHER CLIFF – (Now totally interested) I see. Who's that?

JULIET – The prince?

FATHER CLIFF – (Pointing at the television) No, that guy on the TV standing next to her.

JULIET - Him? Oh, that's Fernando.

FATHER CLIFF - Interesting. He *looks* like a “Fernando”.

FATHER RUIZ - (Re-enters and sees the two on the couch) What's this?

FATHER CLIFF and JULIET – (Mesmerized by the program) “Fernando”.

JULIET - Fernando has just told Rosalinda that he has been offered a scholarship to study music in Italy and he wants to take her there and get married. But what he doesn't know about yet is Alfredo.

FATHER CLIFF and FATHER RUIZ - Who's Alfredo?

JULIET - Alfredo is Fernando's friend. But he has secretly been blackmailing Rosalinda. Alfredo also knows the secret of Fernando's father's death.

FATHER CLIFF - How did he die?

JULIET - I don't know.

FATHER CLIFF - Why not?

JULIET - Because he just told Fernando while we were talking.

FATHER CLIFF – (Snapping his fingers) Damn!

FATHER RUIZ - I do not believe you two. Obsessing over some telenovela?

FATHER CLIFF - Shush, Emanuel. I can't hear.

FATHER RUIZ - It's in Spanish!

FATHER CLIFF - So?

FATHER RUIZ - You don't speak Spanish, Father!

FATHER CLIFF - I'll figure it out. Besides, Juliet's here.

DANIEL - (From offstage) Hello? Anybody home?

FATHER RUIZ - In here, Daniel.

DANIEL - (Enters) What's everybody doing?

FATHER RUIZ – Losing their minds.

DANIEL - Father Cliff, could I speak with Juliet alone, please?

FATHER CLIFF - (Staring at the television) No, no, of course not, go ahead. (Doesn't move)

DANIEL – Umm, here?

FATHER RUIZ - Father Cliff?

FATHER CLIFF - Huh? Oh, sure. (Rises to leave) After you're through here, Daniel, I'll want to meet with you. I'll be in the, in the uh, the kitchen.

DANIEL - Why the kitchen?

FATHER RUIZ - There's a smaller television in the kitchen...where the microwave used to be.

DANIEL - Right. (FATHER RUIZ and FATHER CLIFF exit together. JULIET shuts off the television) I saw your mother today. Your grandmother had another relapse. She's unconscious. She's not expected to recover. She's back on an artificial respirator to help keep her alive. The doctors say they can keep her that way for awhile. I'm sorry.

JULIET - This is not what she wanted. To be kept alive by machines. (Pauses) Will Mama let me see her?

DANIEL - No. She still thinks you're too emotional and that you'll just make things worse.

JULIET - She's mi abuela. I have a right to see her.

DANIEL - That's not your mother's only concern.

JULIET - What do you mean?

DANIEL - She said you once threatened to kill your grandmother.

JULIET - No. Not threatened. Not kill. Abuela asked me to end her life in case my mother would not allow her die the way she wanted. She tried to end her life once before, but she wasn't strong enough. Oh, father. The sickness is killing her, painfully, little by little each day. Her heart is going. She is frail and in so much pain. What should I do? (JULIET falls into his arms. DANIEL holds her, trying to alleviate her distress)

MARY – (Offstage) There is no choice now.

DANIEL - Shhh.

MARY - (Offstage) You have to tell her.

DANIEL - I can't.

JULIET - (Looking up at him, sobbing) What?

MARY - (Offstage) Look at her, Daniel. She needs to know that you have the answer. Tell her.

DANIEL - (Turning away from JULIET) I'm not sure I have the right answer to give. (FATHER CLIFF enters)

JULIET - Father?

DANIEL - Juliet, there is no question how much you love your grandmother. In her prime she was a vibrant, energetic person. Now, everything that made her what she was is lost and will never return.

MARY - (Offstage) Yes. Tell her.

DANIEL - What if it was your mother, lying there? Would you want her to suffer the same indignity?

MARY - (Offstage) There are always answers to be found in the heart.

DANIEL - (Holding JULIET's hands tenderly) Look into your heart, Juliet. You know wrong from right. I don't need to tell you. (JULIET looks at DANIEL a moment, appearing to have made a decision. She exits out of the room. FATHER CLIFF enters. DANIEL sees him) Cliff? Didn't see you there. Were you there long? (FATHER CLIFF shakes his head) Did you want to have that talk now?

FATHER CLIFF - (Shakes his head again) No. That's okay. Perhaps later. I think I need to reconsider my questions. (LIGHTS DIM as FATHER CLIFF and DANIEL exit. The couch and television are removed. The stage is left bare as LIGHTS COME BACK UP quickly isolating OSCAR who enters frantically. He is searching for someone, but acts as if he's trying to avoid somebody. As he makes a turn center stage he is confronted by JAVIER, who points a gun at OSCAR's forehead)

JAVIER - (In Spanish) Hello there, Oscar. (LIGHTS DIM as scene TRANSITIONS to Act 1, Scene 12)

Act 1, Scene 12 - Saint Catherine's Hospital – Later That Same Evening

(At LIGHTS UP, EUGENA is on her phone at her desk as DANIEL rushes in)

DANIEL - Hi Eugena.

EUGENA - (Hanging up the phone) Danny. Thank God you're here.

DANIEL - What's happened?

EUGENA - It was Mrs. Lima. Juliet and she were arguing. They just locked themselves in Mrs. Lopez's room. I've called for security. (Two loud gunshots are heard) Holy shit! Sorry, father. (The two rush into MRS. LOPEZ's room. EUGENA goes to check MRS. LOPEZ. She is dead. JULIET stands with the smoldering gun in her hand. MRS. LIMA is on the floor unconscious, bleeding.)

EUGENA - Mrs. Lopez is dead.

DANIEL - Mrs. Lima? (EUGENA checks MRS. LIMA)

EUGENA - There's a pulse...faint.

DANIEL - (Turning to JULIET) Juliet. (JULIET tries to speak but can't. She runs off with the gun) Juliet! Wait! Come back! (DANIEL runs off after her as LIGHTS DIM. The scene TRANSITIONS to Act 1, Scene 13)

Act 1, Scene 13 - Saint Jeremiah's Church Rectory Garage – Several Days Later

LIGHTS UP on the rectory garage. This time it's Father Cliff who comes in dressed in a raincoat and finds Daniel staining pews. Father Cliff is entering with a tiny plastic Christmas tree)

FATHER CLIFF - Got the tree! Prices are outrageous and it's not even December yet. (Places it onto the floor in front of the pew) I had to fight Charlie Brown and Linus in order to get this little guy, but I got it!

DANIEL - (Cool) Nice.

FATHER CLIFF - Any word from the hospital?

DANIEL - Eugena called. She said Mrs. Lima is stable, but still unconscious.

FATHER CLIFF - What about Juliet?

DANIEL - No word. I checked everywhere. Either nobody knows where she is or nobody's talking.

FATHER CLIFF - (Takes off his coat and hangs it up) She'll show up. Don't worry. The police will find her.

DANIEL - That's what I'm worried about, Cliff. She was so confused. Why couldn't I see what she'd do?

FATHER CLIFF - Are you sure you didn't?

DANIEL - What's that supposed to mean?

FATHER CLIFF - I heard you talking to her. What were you thinking, Danny? You know the stance on euthanasia by the Catholic Church is clear. I hate politics, but you've put me in a very tight political spot. The church cannot condone you for not intervening if you knew of Juliet's plans.

DANIEL – (Frustrated) Yeah, you're right. The position is clear...clear to the church.

FATHER CLIFF – As it should be to a man who is supposed to represent God's church. It's quite possible the advice you gave her was misinterpreted. (After a beat) Or was it?

DANIEL – Huh?

FATHER CLIFF - It seemed like you were having more than one conversation in that room, like you were talking with someone else. Father Ruiz noticed the same thing at the hospital a few weeks ago.

DANIEL - Father Ruiz? He saw me at the hospital?

FATHER CLIFF - In Mrs. Lopez's room. He said she was asleep and you were carrying on a conversation with, well, with nobody. And he said it wasn't like you were praying. (Pause) Want to tell me what's going on?

DANIEL - Not really. (Angry) What was he doing there? Was he checking up on me for his evaluation?

FATHER CLIFF - (Pause) No. He was in for treatment.

DANIEL - Treatment?

FATHER CLIFF - He doesn't want anyone else to know, but he's been going in for chemo treatments for the last year or so.

DANIEL - Chemotherapy? He's got cancer?

FATHER CLIFF - Head and neck.

DANIEL - Is he?

FATHER CLIFF - Dying? Not unless it spreads. He's a private man and doesn't want anyone to know. I shouldn't even be telling you. But he's not the issue here, Danny, you are. Who were you talking to?

DANIEL - I really don't want to discuss it.

FATHER CLIFF - I'm afraid you have to, if not to me than to a church shrink.

DANIEL – A psychiatrist? Why?

FATHER CLIFF - Because I need to know if the little voice in your head you're having conversations with convinced you to tell an impressionable young girl to go and kill her grandmother.

DANIEL - Mary wouldn't do that!

FATHER CLIFF – Mary? (Taken back) Mary?

DANIEL - Yes. Mary. I'm talking to her. Happy now? There it is. I'm hearing Mary's voice. But it's not in my head, Cliff. I hear her voice as clearly as I can hear yours right now as you stand next to me.

FATHER CLIFF – Danny, Mary's death was a tremendous loss to you. You two were inseparable for the whole time you were married, so it's perfectly understandable that you might think that you can hear her from time to time.

DANIEL - What? Not Mary my wife, Cliff. Mary. (He points to the statuette or picture of the "Blessed Virgin Mary") Mary!

FATHER CLIFF - Mary? (Pauses) Jesus's Mary?

DANIEL – Yes, *that* Mary, our Holy Mother. (LIGHTS DIM)

Blackout

End of Act One

ACT TWO

Act 2, Scene 1 - A Convent House Garden - Several Days Later

(At LIGHTS UP, a woman, SISTER RACHAEL, is seen gardening far stage left. FATHER CLIFF enters from stage right and approaches her)

FATHER CLIFF - Sister? Sister Rachael? (She doesn't answer) Your mother sends her best wishes.

SISTER RACHAEL – (Skeptical) I sincerely doubt that. (Turns to look at him) Father Cliff?

FATHER CLIFF - How are you, Rachael?

SISTER RACHAEL - Good, Father. How are you?

FATHER CLIFF – Fine. (Noticing her garden) Isn't it a little too cold to be gardening?

SISTER RACHAEL - Not for perennials. Planting in the fall gives my plants a head start in root development, and gives me a head start in my spring garden cleanup.

FATHER CLIFF - I thought most people plant in early spring.

SISTER RACHAEL - (Continues to work on her garden) Not always. Better root expansion if you plant in the fall. Springtime planting means the plant is focused on creating blooms. Fall planting means the plant is focused on root development. Gives it a good six month growing advantage over spring planting.

FATHER CLIFF – Always nice to get a head start, I guess.

SISTER RACHAEL – (Stops gardening, rises to face FATHER CLIFF) Builds a better connection with the earth. I like to stay focused on the things I can connect to, Father. Which is why I'm not sure I'm going to be able to help you with your problem.

FATHER CLIFF - Why not? The Bishop told me you're one of the best counselors in the whole Diocese.

SISTER RACHAEL - Strictly in an unofficial capacity. It's not like I have a shingle hung out or anything. But, if this were a simple case of a priest under duress, I might be able to help. But what Father Daniel claims to be experiencing is definitely not simple stress. There's something deeper going on, and I'm plainly not qualified to meet with him.

FATHER CLIFF – Rachael...

SISTER RACHAEL – Weed killer.

FATHER CLIFF – Beg pardon?

SISTER RACHAEL - Would you please hand me some of that weed killer?

FATHER CLIFF - Where?

SISTER RACHAEL – (Pointing off right) Right over there. (Kneels back down to continue gardening)

FATHER CLIFF - Oh, yes. Sure. (Grabs the weed killer, kneels and hands it to her) Sister, Daniel is a good man. I think he could be a good priest, too. The church has taken a beating over the past decade and we require good, hard working priests. But I need Father Daniel, not "Father Topper".

SISTER – (Turns and looks at FATHER CLIFF, curious) "Topper"?

FATHER CLIFF – (Explaining) "Topper". It was an old TV show. This guy used to have conversations with the ghosts of his friends? (He looks at SISTER RACHAEL, and sees she does not understand) It was based on the old movie with Cary...Grant? Oh, never mind.

SISTER RACHAEL – (Returns to gardening) He claims to be hearing our Blessed Mother.

FATHER CLIFF – Yes, but this isn't like those stupid news stories where somebody is claiming to see the Virgin Mary on a cheese sandwich and sells it for thousands of dollars on eBay. This is a man of the cloth.

SISTER RACHAEL – Granted, he's not "seeing" her as someone may in a dream, but Father Cliff, he claims to hear her...*actually, audibly* hear her. I don't know what to make of that. Do you?

FATHER CLIFF – No. (After a beat) Could this still be considered a vision?

SISTER RACHAEL - (Shakes her head) Not in the strictest sense, because he *doesn't* see her. She, or it, whatever it is, doesn't take any physical *shape*. He said he just knows it is her. (Sprays the weed killer in the soil) Die! Die! Die! Blasted weeds.

FATHER CLIFF - (Surprised) Okay. So, a priest talks to Jesus's mother and a nun screams maniacally at weeds. Perhaps I can book a double room at the holy funny farm?

SISTER RACHAEL – (Laughs) The difference is I don't expect a *response* from the weeds, Father. (Becoming more serious) Daniel expects responses from Mary and believes he's *getting* them. That's the biggest issue here.

FATHER CLIFF - People in our line of work, Rachael, feel they have conversations with God all the time and we expect, we hope, we... *pray*, to get answers in unusual ways. Couldn't this be one of those ways?

SISTER RACHAEL – Tangible answers, Father, not audible ones. You mentioned Father Daniel told you that these "conversations" started shortly after he returned to study for the priesthood?

FATHER CLIFF - But he said when he joined our parish, it started happening more.

SISTER RACHAEL - Then, it could be something that initiated at his wife's death but has manifested itself into something greater. (Stops gardening) How long ago was the accident?

FATHER CLIFF – A few years. Four, I think?

SISTER RACHAEL - (Rises) Then, could be the image of the Virgin Mary has some symbolic purity Daniel subconsciously has assigned to his late wife. (Looking around) Father, are you sitting on my hand towel?

FATHER CLIFF - (Looking behind him, he finds the towel) Oh, sorry about that. (Hands her the towel, she wipes her hands and forehead) Would you please help me up? (She does) So should I remove him?

SISTER RACHAEL - It's not really for me to say. Do you feel his actions led to the girl's shooting spree?

FATHER CLIFF - It wasn't a spree. Ow! (Leg is asleep) My leg fell asleep. (Tries to walk on it and is having trouble) There were two gun shots. The police seem to think...ow...that Juliet euthanized the grandmother first, Mrs. Lima came in, they struggled, the gun went off.

SISTER RACHAEL - But didn't you tell me on the phone that he advised her to go?

FATHER CLIFF - Not in so many words. His exact words to her were "follow your heart". (Shakes his leg and feels it) There. I think the blood's flowing now.

SISTER RACHAEL – (Surmising) So, he "heard" Mary advise him to give those instructions to Juliet.

FATHER CLIFF – (Concluding) That's the problem, isn't it?

SISTER RACHAEL – (Nodding) I'm afraid so, very much so. At least it could be interpreted that way. Let's go inside and I'll give you the number of a clinical psychologist I refer my more difficult cases to. Is your leg all right now?

FATHER CLIFF - I think so. (After a beat) Sister...what if we're, I don't know...what if we're wrong?

SISTER RACHAEL - What do you mean?

FATHER CLIFF - I know I'm a reasonably intelligent man, even if I can't figure out how to use a cell phone or microwave.

SISTER RACHAEL – (Chuckling) What?

FATHER CLIFF – Never mind. A few months back I gave a sermon on stepping away from our faith and being lost. There's no way we can prove what we're talking about, but, what if we do "cure" Daniel and it turns out that this is *not* a manifestation?

SISTER RACHAEL – (Resolute) That would be a miracle, Father.

FATHER CLIFF - Aren't we the ones who are *supposed* to believe in miracles? What does that say about our own faith? (SISTER RACHAEL does not know how to respond. LIGHTS DIM as FATHER CLIFF and SISTER RACHAEL exit stage right. LIGHTS UP isolated stage left and we return to the same point where JAVIER had the gun up to OSCAR's forehead)

JAVIER - Hello, Oscar. Nice to see you again.

OSCAR - Javier. Please, I...

JAVIER - (Taking the safety off the gun) Someone said you was looking for me. Well, here I am, cabrón!

OSCAR - Javier, no, please! (LIGHTS DIM. As the scene TRANSITIONS to Act 2, Scene 2, we see the FEMALE NEWSCASTER once again isolated far stage right)

FEMALE NEWSCASTER – In Madison, Wisconsin, an elderly woman who claimed she saw the image of the Virgin Mary in her tea bag recently put the tea bag up for auction on eBay. After a whirlwind of bidding, the tea bag ultimately sold for two thousand fifty dollars. (After a beat, now much more disconcerting) That's it. No more of these stories, guys. This is getting way out of hand. (LIGHTS DIM)

Act 2, Scene 2 – St. Jeremiah's Shelter – One Week Later

(At LIGHTS UP, DANIEL is seated at a dinner table across from EUGENA. It is one week later and they appear to be having an elegant dinner with glasses presumably filled with a dark rosé red wine)

EUGENA – I'm so glad we could finally have dinner.

DANIEL – Me, too. I'm just sorry it took serving meals at the homeless shelter to get us together.

EUGENA – It's okay. I don't mind. The hospital comes here every week to take a look at some of the people in need. (FATHER RUIZ comes over, dressed in a white serving apron, carrying a bottle of diet soda which he places on the table)

FATHER RUIZ – We had another bottle of soda, Daniel. Enjoy.

DANIEL – Thank you, Emanuel. I just ran out. Turkey was great by the way. (Takes the bottle and pours it into his glass, then pours some into EUGENA's glass)

EUGENA - How are you feeling, Father Ruiz?

FATHER RUIZ – Fine. Why?

EUGENA – (Realizing FATHER RUIZ may not want DANIEL to know) Oh, I, uh, just haven't seen you at the hospital for your...visits...to the infirmed. Lately you've been coming...more often.

FATHER RUIZ – Yes. I like to make my rounds, much like your surgeons. Excuse me. (Exits)

MARY – (Offstage) Soon.

DANIEL – (To EUGENA) He's getting worse, isn't he?

EUGENA – More than he lets on.

DANIEL – I try to help, but ever since the church restricted me last week, I can't do anything.

EUGENA – Why did the church suspend you? That was such a shock.

DANIEL – Well, technically, they didn't suspend me. I'm not being *defrocked* or anything. They just limited my activities and told me to stay put until they figure out how to deal with a priest who talks to ghosts. With everybody and their cousin these days seeing Mary's face in drywall, soup, potato chips and everything...(EUGENA laughs. DANIEL smiles at her) It's been great having you to talk with, Eugena. I haven't anyone else, right now.

EUGENA – I'm still not sure how you know its Mary you've been, uh, hearing.

DANIEL – Well, there weren't any formal introductions. I just...knew.

EUGENA – Danny...that night your wife died...can you, would you please tell me about it?

DANIEL – (Rising) I...I'm not ready...

EUGENA – (Rising and crossing to DANIEL) Maybe if you talked about it, well, it might help.

MARY – (Offstage) Tell her.

DANIEL – Why? What's one got to do with the other?

EUGENA – Maybe it doesn't. (Gently touching his face) Maybe I'd just like to know.

MARY – (Offstage) Tell her.

DANIEL – (To the voice) Mary! (Takes a breath, then says to EUGENA, more calmly) Mary...was driving. She was six months pregnant. She came to a four-way intersection. Some drunken woman came speeding through the intersection with her four year old daughter in the back. They were all killed.

EUGENA – Oh, God. Danny, no.

DANIEL – I was supposed to be driving, but I didn't want to leave the party. (Admitting)All right, I was too *stoned* to leave the party. Mary and I fought, she left. Our last conversation was a fight. Can you believe it? I worshipped her. I'd have done anything to have it turn out differently.

EUGENA – I'm sure you would have. (After a beat) But, why the priesthood?

DANIEL – (Taking a drink of his soda) There was this void. I had been in divinity school before, but I left because of the band. And then, I met Mary. When all that was over, there was this void that Jesus seemed to fill.

EUGENA – Seemed to?

DANIEL – Yeah. Well, that didn't come out quite right. I meant to say...I had nowhere to turn, Jesus was there for me.

EUGENA – How? Jesus told you to become a priest?

DANIEL – No. (Admitting) I was scared, alone. I tried to kill myself a bunch of times. One night I almost made it. I overdosed.

EUGENA – Oh, no.

DANIEL – I awoke in the hospital when I heard this voice.

EUGENA – Mary's?

DANIEL – No. It was a man's voice. When I awoke, there was this chaplain sitting next to my hospital bed. He had sat with me all night, praying.

EUGENA – Do you remember the prayer?

DANIEL – Never forget it. "Our Lady, healer of the sick, I ask you to watch over this man with the comfort of a mother's love. I pray to you on behalf of all those suffering and for this man's healing needs".

EUGENA – And ever since then...?

DANIEL – She talks with me. I'd hear her occasionally throughout my whole recovery. Tell me that wasn't a sign.

EUGENA – Daniel, it may have been a sign but not necessarily a call. I can't believe you didn't talk with anybody about it.

DANIEL – And say what? Wait...what do you mean "not necessarily a call"?

EUGENA – Danny, when we were in school, everybody was drawn to you. It wasn't for spiritual advice, but it certainly wasn't because you were this big head banger, either. It's because you were you. You were funny, smart, played pool, made the most beautiful music I ever heard come out of a guitar.

DANIEL – You're saying what I experienced wasn't a miracle?

EUGENA – It was, but maybe not the one you think. You’re here, alive. Alive because God has more intended for you to do. Not as “Father Daniel” but as Danny Rackman. Let me ask you...and be honest...are you happy as a priest?

DANIEL – (After a long pause, confessing) No. No, I’m not. I haven’t been for a long time, but I thought I had something to prove.

EUGENA – You blamed yourself for what happened to Mary and the baby and thought by serving some sort of penance it would ease your conscience. You’re not hearing Mary...you’re hearing Danny.

DANIEL – (Disagreeing) No. No I...I...(Becoming more emotional, sits back down at the table, admitting) It was all my fault. If only I hadn’t been so selfish.

EUGENA – (Sits next to DANIEL, consoling) Oh, no, Danny, it wasn’t your fault. I hear things like this at the hospital all the time.

DANIEL – Things like what?

EUGENA - “If only”. “If only I had been there”. Well, you know what? Some people fight. Some people make stupid decisions. And some people speed and drive recklessly. The only difference that night? If you had gone, you’d be dead, too. That’s why you tried to kill yourself. But Mary, or whoever or whatever it is, intervened. And I think it’s because God wants you to continue living because of who you already *are*, not because of who you *think* he wants you to be.

DANIEL – Who am I, then?

EUGENA – The most “miraculous” man I have ever met. (She turns. THEY kiss. FATHER RUIZ returns)

FATHER RUIZ – (Blessing himself) Madre de Dios. (Exits)

DANIEL – Man. That’s it.

EUGENA – What?

DANIEL – I know where Juliet is hiding. Come on. (LIGHTS DIM center. LIGHTS UP isolating stage left as OSCAR and JAVIER return. JAVIER still has the gun pressed hard against OSCAR's forehead)

JAVIER - (Taking the safety off the gun) Someone said you was looking for me. Well, here I am, cabrón!

OSCAR - Javier, no, please! (JAVIER stops, returns the safety lock on the gun, turns it around and hands it to OSCAR)

JAVIER - Bang-bang. Winchester. Forty-five ACP automatic pistol. (Holds out his hand) You got the cash?

OSCAR - (Takes out a wad of cash and hands it to JAVIER) Here.

JAVIER - (Counts the money) Last month you broke and now you got a pocket full of "Benjies"? (Puts the money in his pocket) Where'd you get 'em?

OSCAR - Doesn't matter. I got it. (Checks the gun) Where's the bullets?

JAVIER - Bullets an extra Benjamin, man.

OSCAR - I haven't got anymore!

JAVIER - Then you don't got bullets. Think you'll get 'em from any store in this neighborhood? (OSCAR looks around. Realizes JAVIER is right. Hands JAVIER another hundred dollar bill. JAVIER smiles and places the money in his pocket) What you need with that, anyway? (Hands OSCAR the bullets)

OSCAR - (Looks threateningly at JAVIER) Maybe to kill you with it?

JAVIER - You're funny, cabrón. You think I come here alone? (Whistles. Hears faint whistles in response from offstage along with several gun triggers clicking back) By the time you go to fire that thing you'd be dead. So, don't be stupid. (OSCAR slowly puts the gun away and leaves. JAVIER watches him run off) He'll be dead soon enough. (Exits. LIGHTS DIM as scene TRANSITIONS to Act 2, Scene 3)

Act 2, Scene 3 – The Dowd Mansion – Moments Later

(LIGHTS UP on the mansion as a doorbell is heard. GROVER, scrambling to put on a bathrobe, answers the door stage right. FATHER DANIEL and EUGENA stand on the other side of the door)

GROVER – F-father. (Closing up his robe more, embarrassed) I, uh, j-just a minute!

DANIEL - Hello, Grover. This is...(smiling) my friend, Eugena.

EUGENA – (Shaking Grover's hand) Pleased to meet you.

GROVER - If you're looking for my m-m-mother she's n-not here.

DANIEL - I know. But we really came to see you. May we come in?

GROVER - Yeah, I guess. S-s-sure. (DANIEL and EUGENA enter)

DANIEL – Son, we need your help.

GROVER - M-m-my help? Why?

EUGENA - We think you know where Juliet is.

GROVER - M-me? Why would I kn-know?

DANIEL - Look, it's no secret how you feel about Juliet, and I know you don't want anything bad to happen. But she's in trouble, and hiding her away like this is only going to make it worse for her.

GROVER - (Takes a deep breath) She didn't do it, father.

MARY – (Offstage) She's close. Very close.

DANIEL - (Trying to suppress the voice) Think of the pain Juliet's going through right now. Her grandmother's dead. Her mother's lying unconscious in the hospital. And now both Juliet and Oscar have disappeared. I want to help them, but I can't do it unless you tell me where I can find them.

GROVER - I'd help you if I could father, but I can't.

MARY - (Offstage) Upstairs.

DANIEL - (Slowly, he approaches GROVER) She's upstairs, isn't she?

GROVER - (Defensive) No. S-sh-she's not!

DANIEL - (Realizing he's hiding her, he calls out to JULIET) Juliet! It's Father Daniel. (Looks at GROVER) Please come down. (JULIET appears from stage right wearing a white bathrobe)

GROVER - Juliet! Don't!

JULIET - Hello, Father.

DANIEL - (Looking at GROVER) Well, I see we're going to have a talk about the dangers of harboring a fugitive from justice *and* having pre-marital sex.

JULIET - It's not *pre*-marital, Father.

DANIEL - (To JULIET) What? (Looks at GROVER and softly says) What?

GROVER - We got m-married last night, Father.

JULIET – It is true. (MRS. DOWD enters the room, unseen by the rest)

DANIEL - Married? (Wiping his brow, DANIEL moves to sit on the couch area center) Eugena, I feel like I'm back on the road with the band. Things are moving way too fast. Is Oscar here?

JULIET – No.

DANIEL - (To JULIET and GROVER) Married? Why?

JULIET – (Admitting) I'm pregnant.

MRS. DOWD - You're what? (ALL turn to see she has entered the room)

GROVER - Mom!

DANIEL – (To EUGENA) This is not good.

MRS. DOWD - (Seeing JULIET) Get out of this house. (Looks at DANIEL and EUGENA) Now.

DANIEL - Mrs. Dowd, I know this is a shock, but let's try to talk things through.

MRS. DOWD - (To GROVER) How could you do this? How could you be so stupid?

JULIET – Your son is not stupid!

GROVER - We I-I-love each other, Mother. And we wanted to marry months before Juliet got pregnant.

EUGENA – Months? How far along are you?

JULIET – Five months.

DANIEL – Five months? That’s impossible. You’re not even showing.

EUGENA – Oh, my God. Danny, she is. I can see it. Some women just hide it better.

MRS. DOWD – Yes. I can tell, as well.

DANIEL – Oh, sweet Jesus. Help me. (LIGHTS DIM. The scene quickly shifts to a small room in the rectory, isolated far stage left. LIGHTS UP isolating FATHER RUIZ who is counting the money from the collection plate. He coughs and takes a handkerchief to his mouth. As he pulls the handkerchief away he notices blood. He looks around to make sure no one is watching and then slowly begins to cry as the LIGHTS DIM. LIGHTS UP as we return to the DOWD home)

DANIEL - Juliet, where is the gun?

GROVER - It's up in my room.

JULIET - I'll go get it. (JULIET exits)

MRS. DOWD - A gun? She brought a gun into my house?

DANIEL - My guess is it wasn't hers. (Looking at GROVER) Was it?

GROVER - I promised her I wouldn't t-t-tell.

MRS. DOWD - What are you talking about?

JULIET - (Dressed, she returns with the gun) Here it is, Father. I guess we go to the police now?

DANIEL - After we find Oscar. (To JULIET) Where is he hiding?

JULIET – He’s with Cortez down on Lansing Road. (To EUGENA) How is my mother?

EUGENA – She’s in stable condition. She asks for you both.

DANIEL - Juliet, you didn't shoot anybody, did you?

JULIET - No. It was Oscar. He bought the gun from Cortez.

DANIEL - How'd he get the money?

GROVER - I g-gave it to him.

DANIEL - You? How could you? Didn't you know what he was going to do?

GROVER – No. He begged me for it. Said he needed to buy medicine for his grandmother. I had no idea he was g-g-going to buy a g-g-un.

DANIEL – (To JULIET) He went to the hospital.

JULIET – (Nodding) The nurses saw me and my mother arguing, but they forgot Oscar was also in the room. The nurses left. Oscar covered mi abuela with a pillow, said "God forgive me" and pulled out the gun and fired. My mother tried to stop him. She grabbed the gun and Oscar fired again. She dropped to the floor. He panicked, handed me the gun, and then ran out the door and down the hall.

DANIEL – (Indicating GROVER) So, you called him at some point to come get you.

EUGENA – And he's been hiding you ever since.

DANIEL - When was the last time you saw Oscar?

JULIET – He called yesterday. Wants me to meet him tonight at the pool hall.

DANIEL – I was afraid of that.

EUGENA – What?

DANIEL - Well, if Oscar's run of bad luck continues, my guess is sooner or later Cortez is going to realize what's going on and isn't going to want that gun traced back to him. Oscar's going to be killed.

EUGENA– Daniel, we've got to call the police.

JULIET – No! No police. They will arrest him.

DANIEL – She's right. If Cortez hears sirens, Oscar's finished. (After a beat) I'll go get him.

EUGENA – Daniel, no. You can't.

DANIEL – I have to. (To JULIET) But I'll need you to draw Oscar out from wherever Javier is hiding him.

GROVER - No! I won't let you take her.

JULIET – (Consoling GROVER) It's all right. (Kisses him on the cheek)

DANIEL – (Pauses to consider, then says to GROVER) All right. Come with us, then.

GROVER – M-m-me?

DANIEL - You're her husband, right? (To EUGENA) You?

EUGENA – (Taking DANIEL's hand) Do you even have to ask? Where you go, I go.

GROVER – (To JULIET) Juliet, please don't d-do this.

JULIET – He's my brother.

GROVE R- You know what he did.

JULIET – It doesn't matter. I cannot see him hurt. (GROVER relents, nodding to DANIEL)

DANIEL - Mrs. Dowd?

MRS. DOWD - I'm not going anywhere. I want *nothing* to do with *you* or any of the *other* neighborhood trash. Get out of my home! (Looks at GROVER and DANIEL) All of you! (LIGHTS DIM as the scene TRANSITIONS to Act 2, Scene 4)

Act 2, Scene 4 - Pool Hall – Moments Later

(LIGHTS UP on the smoke filled pool hall. Everything is set up as it was in Act 1, Scene 7. DANIEL, EUGENA, GROVER and JULIET enter the room. JULIET calls out for her brother)

JULIET – Oscar? Donde está? (JAVIER and OSCAR enter. OSCAR has been beaten and collapses to the ground. JULIET does not approach. JAVIER aims a gun at DANIEL. They ALL hear gun safeties clicked)

JAVIER – Hey, Rack! Wassup, *dude*?

DANIEL – We don't want any trouble. (Pointing to OSCAR, who is lying on the ground)

OSCAR – Juliet.

DANIEL – (To JAVIER) Just let me take him and we'll go.

JAVIER – 'Fraid we got a little problem, Rack, and you probably know what it is.

JULIET – You wouldn't hurt a man of God.

JAVIER – I take care of any threat, Chiquita. Any threat.

EUGENA – I'm a nurse. Let me help him.

JAVIER – Hey. You cute. Maybe we keep you around. (OSCAR kicks JAVIER who shoots JULIET)

OSCAR – Juliet! No! (He collapses by her side. Gunfire ensues. DANIEL and EUGENA drop to the floor. GROVER and JAVIER both get killed. Police sirens are heard and the unseen assailants are heard taking off. DANIEL and EUGENA check the wounded. DANIEL by JULIET and EUGENA by GROVER)

EUGENA – Oh, God. (To DANIEL) He’s gone.

DANIEL – Call an ambulance. (EUGENA pulls out a cellular phone and dials. DANIEL says to OSCAR) She’s alive...barely.

EUGENA – (Looking at the pay phone) The pay phone got trashed. I forgot my cell. Do you have yours?

DANIEL – Here. It’s the rectory cell, so you may have to stand on top of a car hood or a trash can in order to get a signal. (EUGENA exits)

OSCAR – Oh, no, God. (In Spanish) Not my sister. Not my sister. Not after all I’ve done. I’m so sorry.

DANIEL – Juliet, I’m so sorry, sweetheart. I never dreamed...

JULIET – It’s okay, father, but the baby...you must...(Handing DANIEL a blood stained envelope. In Spanish says) Please, give this to my mother. She’ll know what to...(DANIEL performs last rites as JULIET dies)

DANIEL – Oh, God. (To OSCAR) What did she say?

OSCAR – She said give it to my mother. She’ll know what to do. (DANIEL hands JULIET over to OSCAR then goes over to GROVER to administer last rites. OSCAR says in Spanish) Not my sister. Not my sister. Not after all I’ve done. I’m so sorry. (LIGHTS DIM. The scene quickly shifts back to the small room in the rectory, isolated stage left. LIGHTS UP on FATHER RUIZ who has decided to hang himself. He prepares the rope and has climbed up on a chair. He kicks the chair out from under him as the LIGHTS DIM as scene TRANSITIONS to Act 2, Scene 5)

Act 2, Scene 5 – Hospital Waiting Area – Several Months Later

(LIGHTS UP on the waiting area of a hospital. There is a row of seats center stage. MRS. LIMA is there, seated in a wheelchair. MRS. DOWD enters the room from stage right and sees MRS. LIMA. She sits near her, saying nothing. DANIEL and EUGENA enter. EUGENA is in scrubs and DANIEL is in a regular pullover shirt with no clerical collar. FATHER CLIFF is with them)

DANIEL – I’ve asked Father Cliff to join us here today.

FATHER CLIFF – I was in the hospital anyway seeing Father Ruiz.

DANIEL – How is he these days, Cliff?

FATHER CLIFF – Treatments have been going very well and I just found out looks like he’s in remission.

DANIEL – That’s wonderful.

FATHER CLIFF – And here he was trying to kill himself just a few months ago, the damn fool. Good thing he used that cheap rope he uses in his magic act. Dropped like a stone. Sister Rachael has been seeing

him throughout his therapy. He'll still need a lot of counseling, but he's doing much better and we'll get him through this.

DANIEL – By the way, I've been meaning to ask. That night you said he was in the rectory and you were in the parish garage. How did you happen upon him just as he was trying to hang himself?

FATHER CLIFF – Well, I didn't want to say. You had a lot on your plate already and it's a bit embarrassing.

DANIEL – What do you mean?

FATHER CLIFF – Well, like you said, I was in the garage. I heard, well...a voice. (DANIEL and EUGENA offer a surprised look) Now I know what you're thinking but I just thought someone had entered the room like when you first arrived. But I looked around and saw no one. Then, I heard it again...a woman's voice.

DANIEL – Oh, no. (After a beat) Mary?

FATHER CLIFF – (Shrugging his shoulders, a bit defensive) Beats me. She didn't introduce herself.

DANIEL – (To EUGENA) She really needs to work on that. (EUGENA laughs as FATHER CLIFF continues)

FATHER CLIFF - But I looked around the room...and no one was there.

MRS. DOWD – Oh, please. Ridiculous.

DANIEL – Mrs. Dowd, please. (To FATHER CLIFF) Cliff, what did she say?

FATHER CLIFF – All...the voice said was "Save him. Save him, now." Don't ask me how, but I just knew...I knew it meant Emanuel. So, I just ran as fast as I could over to the rectory. If I had been any later...

DANIEL – Well, thank God, and Mary, it turned out the way it did. I'm glad he's doing well, now.

EUGENA – (To MRS. LIMA and MRS. DOWD) Ladies, the reason we wanted you both here is that Juliet finally delivered last night.

DANIEL – Per your wishes, Mrs. Lima, the DNR was honored and they removed her from life support.

EUGENA – She passed away peacefully at ten fifty-three. We're so sorry for your loss.

MRS. LIMA – My baby died months ago. I want to thank you for respecting her last wishes. It is a miracle.

EUGENA - It's so uncanny. Juliet didn't want her grandmother to suffer by being kept alive by the artificial respirator...

DANIEL - Yet she put her baby's life over her own by doing that very thing.

EUGENA - Your daughter was so brave, Mrs. Lima.

MRS. LIMA - The baby...it is all right?

EUGENA – Juliet had a beautiful baby girl, Adriana, named for Juliet’s grandmother.

MRS. LIMA – Si. That is what Juliet wanted.

EUGENA - Five pounds, five ounces. A little underweight, but considering the circumstances of her birth, she’s a perfectly healthy little girl. They’ll be keeping her in the NICU for a few weeks.

MRS. DOWD – My boy...he had a daughter?

EUGENA – There’s something you need to know, Mrs. Dowd.

MRS. DOWD – What?

EUGENA – Your son wasn’t really the father.

MRS. DOWD – (Feigning relief but is actually sad at the thought) Oh, well...thank God. How do you know this?

EUGENA – The baby’s blood type. The records you both had sent over from your family doctors indicated your son to be type “AB” positive. Juliet was type “A”. The baby is type “O” negative. (To MRS. LIMA) We can run some DNA tests but before we do, we wanted to prepare you.

DANIEL – We think we know who the father is. (To MRS. LIMA) I think you might have an idea, as well.

MRS. LIMA – (Slowly realizing) Oh, no. Then it is true. (After a beat) Oscar.

MRS. DOWD – What?

EUGENA – You knew?

MRS. LIMA – Only from her letter. (To DANIEL) How did *you* know?

DANIEL – The bruises on Juliet’s arms when we first met. Playing in dive bars with my band I’ve seen my share of fights. They appeared to have been caused by someone holding her tightly...painfully.

FATHER CLIFF – (Pondering, to MRS. DOWD) I wonder if your boy already knew he wasn’t the father?

MRS. LIMA - (To MRS. DOWD) I’m so sorry.

MRS. DOWD – (Quietly, slowly gets up, heads out, turns back to the group and says) I’m *not*. I am *relieved*. Mongrels. Absolute mongrels. (Exits)

FATHER CLIFF – I suspect that will be the last we see of Mrs. Dowd.

MRS. LIMA – So sad. All her son did was to love my baby girl. He lost his life trying to save her. Why she no can see that?

FATHER CLIFF – Some people just walk through life with their eyes closed. But we can’t be too hard on her. She’s been through some great tragedies in her life. Her husband, now her son.

DANIEL – Plus she’s just a grade “A” bitch. (FATHER CLIFF looks at DANIEL who smiles back at him)
What? I can say that now. I’m no longer a priest.

MRS. LIMA – (To FATHER CLIFF) Father, what will happen to the baby? I mean my Oscar is in prison.

FATHER CLIFF – The judge could have imposed a more severe sentence if Daniel hadn’t pleaded on his behalf.

MRS. LIMA – Si, but he won’t ever admit the baby is his. And I...I can’t take care of it.

EUGENA – (Holding onto DANIEL’s hand) Will you trust a couple of newlyweds with her?

FATHER CLIFF – (Surprised) You two?

DANIEL – We were hoping you could perform the ceremony. How about two weeks from Saturday?

EUGENA – Oh, Danny. That’s too quick. I haven’t even got a gown.

MRS. LIMA – My mother gave me her gown which I saved. You and my mother are about the same size. I hoped Juliet would wear it someday. She would want this. I would be so proud if you would consider...?

EUGENA – Oh, Mrs. Lima. I’d be honored. (Hugs her)

FATHER CLIFF – It would be my pleasure and privilege to marry the two of you. Let me just check my schedule. (Pulls out a copy of a “T.V. Guide” magazine from the waiting room table) Now, when is “Fernando” on again?

EUGENA - Oh, wait! The baby. What do you say, Mrs. Lima?

MRS. LIMA – Of cour...(Stops and realizes, in shock) Madre de dios!

FATHER CLIFF – What is it?

MRS. LIMA - How did she know?

DANIEL – Who, Mrs. Lima?

MRS. LIMA – Juliet. I just remembered. She knew.

EUGENA – She knew?

DANIEL - Knew what?

MRS. LIMA – I forgot about the letter. It was Juliet’s wish. (Pulling out the bloodstained letter from JULIET) She said, well, there’s a lot, so I won’t read you the whole thing. It’s in Spanish but I’ll translate, (reading the letter) “Dear Mama, if you are reading this, then what the Virgin Mary told me would happen has come true. Please, save my baby and, after Adriana is born, give her to Mr. and Mrs. Rackman to care for.”

DANIEL – Oh, my God. (To FATHER CLIFF and EUGENA) Juliet heard her, too?

MRS. LIMA - I'm so used to calling you "Father Daniel" that I forgot your *last* name, until just this second. I thought she was crazy in grief so I put the letter away in my purse and forgot about it. But now, I mean...how could she have known? (LIGHTS DIM as scene TRANSITIONS to Act 2, Scene 6)

Act 2, Scene 6 – Hospital Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) – Moments Later

(LIGHTS UP on a hospital ward. The sound of babies is heard. There are CHARGE NURSES in scrubs working on the side of a glass partition. MRS. DOWD enters up to the partition, slowly, uncomfortably. She is curious about the baby. She knocks on the glass and calls to one of the CHARGE NURSES)

MRS. DOWD – I'd like to see Adriana...Adriana (Taking a breath to get the words out) the...the...Lima baby. (One CHARGE NURSE brings over a baby isolette. The baby is unseen but is heard. MRS. DOWD looks into the isolette and smiles at the baby) Oh, you precious thing. You have your whole life ahead of you, don't you? Well, as you grow, please do try to get past people like me. Would you do that for me, sweetie? Yes, I...(Stops. Looks into the baby's eyes, which are unseen) Oh, my. Your eyes. How can that be? (Calling out to the CHARGE NURSES) Nurse! Nurse! Her eyes! The baby's eyes! (LIGHTS DIM. The FEMALE NEWSCASTER once again is isolated far stage right)

FEMALE NEWSCASTER – (Becoming less interested as she reads) In the town of Millborough, today, an amazing sight was beheld as a newborn baby opened its eyes for the first time and...a woman saw the image of...Oh, for the love of...okay, that's it, guys! Stop tape. These ridiculous visions stories have gone too far! In a baby's eyes? Give me a break! I'm sorry, but that's it. I'm not doing these anymore! (Crumples and tears up the paper and throws it into a nearby wastebasket) Jesus! (LIGHTS DIM)

Blackout

The End