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The Washing of the Water

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts

by

Marcus V. Renner

June 2013

Thesis Committee:
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CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

JEFF REINHART - white, 7, student, Tom Sawyer camper

PHINEAS BRODY - white, early 60s, forager, naturalist

BRANDON - 17, La Cañada HS student, Tom Sawyer counselor

LISSA NAVARRO - white, early 30s, artist, 3 months pregnant

MONICA KEMP - late 40s, lawyer, advocate

JAMES BRODY - white, mid 60s, contractor, homesteader

TALLULAH "TALLIE" BANKS - African-American, early 60s, advocate

LYNN REINHART - white, 17, La Cañada HS student

PERRIN REINHART - white, mid 40s, doctor

ADAM REINHART - white, mid 40s, engineer

PRINCIPAL WRIGHT - late 40s, Muir HS administrator

JIM PENDORF - late 30s, teacher, garden manager

APRIL FUENTES - Latino/African-American, 18, Muir HS student
JAMAAL JORDAN - African-American, 17, Muir HS student

RAPHAEL RIOS - Latino, 18, Muir HS student

JASMINE - African-American, 17, Muir HS student

DANAE - 18, Muir HS student body president

TREMAIN - early 40s, African-American, ex-gang member, mentor

COUNCILMEMBER DAVID LAYTON - white, mid 40s, politician

EMILIA FUENTES - Latino, early 50s, advocate

OMAR - early 20s, drug dealer

Non-speaking roles on stage include the part of the
MOUNTAIN LION, DEER, FROGS, TADPOLES (best played by children), and if the production team so chooses, individual to play TREES and BUSHES.

SETTING: Scenes take place across the neighborhoods of Northwest Pasadena, Altadena, and La Canada-Flintridge with two primary locations being Hahamongna Watershed Park and Muir High School.

TIME: 2013
AUTHOR'S NOTE: I have written this play to support a community-based production, meaning a production that actively seeks involvement of community members in the cast and on the production team. As such, many particulars of the script can change to accommodate participation by community residents. Artful edits might include addition of characters, lines, and changes to names or genders hopefully without losing the structural integrity of story. I have specified an ethnicity for the characters only when necessary for the story.

The multiple locations suggest a flexible staging with only those set pieces that I list at the top of each scene. Many scenes take place in the park, a dynamic environment that encompasses several different habitats. My vision for the park has people holding painted panels for particular habitat types (e.g. willow trees) or people in costume to represent trees. This should allow for more community participation and provide opportunities for a certain choreography of habitat to accommodate the action and cover quick set changes. Movement of trees and shrubs also suggests the maze of ever-changing vegetation one encounters off-trail in the park. The "neutral" position
for the habitat is a pool circled by willow trees. This is where the frogs and tadpoles live and both opens and closes the play.

The intent with animals is that they be humans in costume, but creative use of puppetry and other visual devices are also possible. The conceit with the size of the frogs and tadpoles is that the audience watches them as if they were also small frogs. When people or the large animals pass through, the audience returns to human scale and the amphibians become small enough to fit in the palm of one's hand.

Within the park, the soundscape is important. At night, this consists of chirping frogs. During the day, birds and crickets might prove helpful. Flowing water is especially inside the Devil's Gate Tunnel.
ACT I

SCENE 1

(HAHAMONGNA WATERSHED PARK, WILLOWS, NIGHT - Dim light on frogs amid a chorus of CROAKS. TADPOLES wriggle through a pool. One TADPOLE has yellow legs. ALL scatter as a MOUNTAIN LION passes through and exits. Lights fade.)

(PARK, OAKS, DAY - Lights up on TOM SAWYER CAMPERS, seven and eight years old, sitting in a circle. One of them is JEFF, 7. BRANDON, 17, stands over them along with PHINEAS, early 60s, wearing a small, rumpled hat, a buckskin vest, a coyote tooth necklace, and a buck knife.)

JEFF
But why does the Echo Princess stay in the tunnels?

BRANDON
We've told you Jeff. The Silly Wizard has her locked up.

PHINEAS
With powerful silly magic. There is, however, a golden key that unlocks her prison.

JEFF
Where?

PHINEAS
Somewhere in Hahamongna park, out in the willows and the sand.

JEFF
(To Brandon)
Can we look for it?

BRANDON
Jeff, your sister is picking you up in five minutes.
(JEFF stands.)

JEFF
I want to find the key!

BRANDON
Maybe tomorrow. Okay, Crumpet Eating-Zombies, give a big zombie cheer for Mr. Phineas Brody for giving us more info on the Echo Princess.

CAMPERS
Aaaaargh!

PHINEAS
Very nice. I'm looking forward joining the legion of the undead very soon.

JEFF
She needs our help!

BRANDON
Okay, line up. You too, Jeff.

(The CAMPERS stand and assemble themselves into pairs. JEFF is at the back.)

BRANDON
Make sure you have everything and there's no trash on the ground.

(To Phineas)
Thank you Mr. Brody for setting us straight.

PHINEAS
It's amazing how everything gets crooked, isn't it?

BRANDON
Um...yeah.

(PHINEAS moves to exit but stops at the edge of the trees and watches the group.)

BRANDON
Okay, Tom Sawyer campers...I mean zombies, move out.
(BRANDON leads the CAMPERS off stage. JEFF turns, takes a few steps toward the park. PHINEAS watches him. JEFF then turns and rushes to catch up with the rest of the group.)

SCENE 2

(PARK, STABLES, DAY - LISSA, early 30s, stands in front of an easel, painting. MONICA, late 40s, sits at a picnic table reading a stack of reports. Next to her is a brown lunch sack. Opposite are oak trees. Birds CHIRP.)

MONICA
At least help me with these reports.

LISSA
You're the lawyer.

MONICA
I study insurance claims not environmental policy. And don't give me that "I'm an artist. I don't do details" crap. You mastered the county regs for the Altadena Farmer's Market.

LISSA
I thought Adam was going to help you.

MONICA
He's at JPL locked in his lab. Just go through the appendix for me. I want to get the talking points for the park meeting out to the group by tomorrow.

LISSA
They're the same talking points we've had for the last three years.

MONICA
The last fifteen years.
"Soccer fields plus nature park equals bad idea."

Equals?

The worst idea since the dawn of ideas.

We have to keep things simple.

We win on the soccer field, then what?

Then we stop the county from bulldozing the willows in the name of flood control.

And when are we able to just enjoy the park?

We can enjoy it, but we can't just enjoy it. Nature deserves vigilance. Now, read this.

(MONICA offers a book to LISSA. She takes it but doesn't open it.)

You know I can't wait much longer for this woman to show up.

Be patient.

You're telling me to be patient? You're the one always pushing for revolution. Since when-

Since I realized that certain things are beyond my control.

Like what?
LISSA
Like how much you eat when you're pregnant.

MONICA
I don't know why you want to talk with her. We already know what we're going to say.

LISSA
But if we can get her on our side, the community will have one voice.

MONICA
I don't care how many voices there are as long as we're the loudest.

LISSA
The only way we're going to protect the park is if everyone works together. That's the key.

MONICA
I'll bet she's never even been here. We'll have to explain everything.

LISSA
If we can get everyone moving in the same direction, the city will have to listen.

MONICA
The city is just going to keep holding meetings until we all die. That's what the city is going to do. Then once we're gone, they'll do what they want.

LISSA
"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe."

MONICA
Look, I like John Muir as much as the next person, but-

LISSA
I'm tacking that above this tadpole's crib. It's not just about nature. It applies to communities...to politics.

MONICA
I'm just saying there's a history. If other people wanted to be involved, they'd be involved.
LISSA
Things are changing--the Altadena Farmer's Market, the food co-op, the time bank. I think I've learned enough about how the community works to bring people together.

MONICA
Just remember some things are beyond your control.

(JAMES, mid-60s, enters and sets up a ladder. LISSA puts down her brush and approaches him.)

JAMES
I'm not here.

LISSA
But see that sounded like your voice.

JAMES
How many times do I have to say "no"?

LISSA
And all the time "yes" has been sitting over there just waiting for you to ask her to dance.

MONICA
He doesn't want to do it.

LISSA
Come on, James. We need a contractor to join the time bank. One time credit for each hour you spend providing a service gets you an hour of service from someone else.

JAMES
Do I get any credit for listening to you?

LISSA
An interconnected community of people helping each other out without money getting in the way.

JAMES
Money can get in my way any time it wants.

LISSA
You can decide later if you want to participate. Just sign up.
JAMES
So if I earn time, can I give it to someone else? Can I add years to their life?

LISSA
I don't want you to be left out.

JAMES
I'm from Altadena. Being left out is what we live for.

LISSA
I've moved to Altadena now and that's going to change.

MONICA
(To Lissa)
If Chris wants you to give something up now that you're pregnant, find someone else to run the time bank.

LISSA
I keep asking, but no one has any-

MONICA
Time?

LISSA
I can't let it just die. We have over 900 members. (To James)
But no contractors.

JAMES
Nine hundred people and everything depends on a pregnant lady?

MONICA
Not a real sustainable business model.

JAMES
I'm just here to check on the roof.

(MONICA climbs the ladder.)

MONICA
I'm with Chris. Your own family has to come first.

LISSA
The community feels like my family.
MONICA
Once that kiddo pops out, your idea of family will shrink pretty fast.

(JAMES descends, folds the ladder, moves to leave, then notices the painting.)

JAMES
What's that?

LISSA
That's my painting of the proposed environmental center.

JAMES
What are those?

LISSA
Solar panels.

JAMES
It looks like a space ship.

LISSA
(Annoyed)
Come on, it's visionary.

JAMES
I hope they never build that.

LISSA
But the more people who get to know the park, the more people will want to protect it.

JAMES
The more people who trash the park, the less it will be worth protecting.

MONICA
The more buildings, the more people, the less wildlife.

LISSA
Who's going to take our place at these meetings if we don't train the next generation?
MONICA
The city doesn't have money to staff it, much less build it.

JAMES
I've got another job in Flintridge I've got to get to.

LISSA
Wait.

(LISSA gives JAMES the brown paper bag.)

JAMES
What's this?

LISSA
Cherry tomatoes from my garden.

For what?

LISSA
Just something extra, to show you the wonders of the "sharing" economy. Say "hi" for me to your goats.

(JAMES takes the bag, grimaces, and exits. TALLIE, early 60s enters.)

LISSA
Mrs. Banks? Tallulah?

TALLIE
Call me Tallie. Everybody does.

LISSA
I'm Lissa. I spoke with you on the phone. This is my friend Monica.

TALLIE
(To Monica)
Looks like someone gave you some homework.

(TALLIE sits across from MONICA and LISSA at the picnic table.)
MONICA
The city's environmental impact report.

TALLIE
Pasadena sure knows how to write a report.

LISSA
The park commission's meeting is a week from Thursday.

MONICA
The city has a million dollars to build another soccer field-

LISSA
To add to that old one over in the trees.

MONICA
But this one is where the river comes through.

LISSA
Which means moving a lot of the sediment-

MONICA
Mud and gravel-

LISSA
And that's going to destroy a lot of wildlife habitat.

MONICA
And completely change the park.

TALLIE
Shoot, I remember when this was all gravel.

MONICA
You...you know the park?
TALLIE
Played "King of the Mountain" on the sand piles those cement companies left. My brothers would built rafts, float out on that lake behind the dam, bring home some fish to fry. I've been trying to get more parks for Northwest Pasadena, but the commission says, "You've got that big park right next door." And then I come down here, and it's the same as it was when I was a kid, except without the piles of gravel and the lake. I mean, there's nothing here.

MONICA
(Upset)
Actually there's quite a bit of wildlife.

TALLIE
That's what I'm talking about. The parks they're giving us are full of snakes. That's not right. But this has been going on for a long time. They think they have enough meetings, I'll give up or pass on and they can just do what they want.

LISSA
So, what do you think about the soccer field?

TALLIE
No, that doesn't make any sense. I can't support that.

LISSA
(Relieved)
We don't think it's a good idea either.

TALLIE
Just building one lonely little field. Now, if they were going to make it a real park like Brookside--with basketball courts, a running track, barbecue pits, maybe an amphitheater for concerts--that's something I could get behind.

MONICA
That wasn't what we had in mind.

LISSA
I'm sure if we just keep talking we can figure something out.
(The sound of a YUCCA FLUTE comes from the brush. PHINEAS appears. He takes the flute from his mouth and looks askance at his instrument)

PHINEAS
Getting some fibers stuck in my teeth.

LISSA
Phineas! Perfect timing. How are you?

PHINEAS
Warm. The flame of my love for you would stay lit despite deluge, downpour, or flood. You are my mugwort.

LISSA
Mugwort?

PHINEAS
Mugwort, the plant the Gabrieleño used to carry their smoldering embers from one camp to the next. It also makes a fine beer. So, you are twice honored. But if you so desire, I can call you Smoldering Ember.

MONICA
Oh god.

PHINEAS
What is your morning endeavor?

LISSA
We're talking about the park meeting a week from Thursday.

PHINEAS
Defending nature for my namesake?

LISSA
(To Monica)
He wants me to name the baby Phineas.

MONICA
If it's a girl?
PHINEAS
Willow. Sage. Laurel—all quite acceptable, as is Alisa, which follows aliso, which is Spanish for "sycamore." Linnea, after Linnaeus, the father of biological taxonomy, would also suffice.

TALLIE
Oh...my...god.

LISSA
He seems a bit odd, but he's harmless.

TALLIE
(To Phineas)
Brody? Phin Brody?

PHINEAS
(Sighs)
Tallie Banks.

How long's it been?

MONICA
What is going on?

PHINEAS
Twenty years?

TALLIE
Twenty-five. How's your brother?

PHINEAS
Where is my brother is a better question.

LISSA
He said he had a job up in Flintridge.

TALLIE
I can't believe it.

MONICA
How do you two know each other?

PHINEAS
Muir Class of '68.
TALLIE
That's right. Mustangs for life.
(To Phineas)
You with these folks?

PHINEAS
I'm a satellite member of their conservation cabal.

TALLIE
(Laughing)
Honey, you were flying with the satellites back in high school.

PHINEAS
My interest in plants now is less...recreational.

TALLIE
Where you living these days?

PHINEAS
I avail myself of these trees most days. But on occasion I take lodging with my brother in Altadena.

TALLIE
(To Monica)
Now I see what you mean about wildlife. If you've got Phin Brody living down here, life is going to get pretty wild.
(To Phineas)
Homecoming's around the corner. You should come.

LISSA
Homecoming for what?

TALLIE
PHINEAS
Football. Football.

(Lissa and Monica stare at them.)

TALLIE
The Turkey Tussle. Against PHS.
(To Lissa)
How long you lived here?
LISSA
Almost three years. But...I'm involved in a lot of community groups.

TALLIE
Your not involved in the right groups if you don't know about the Tussle.

(TALLIE shakes her head.)

TALLIE
New folks moving in...Have you even been to the high school?

LISSA
I know the Muir Ranch garden has a table at the Farmer's Market.

TALLIE
You said on the phone you wanted to get more of the community involved. How you going to do that if you haven't even been to Muir? Ain't that right, Phin?

PHINEAS
Muir is the great oak, and we are all its acorns.

MONICA
I heard the new school board is sharpening its axe.

TALLIE
What do you mean?

MONICA
They might close the school.

TALLIE
Close Muir? Not on my watch. (Noticing the painting)
And what is that?

LISSA
It's a painting of the proposed environmental education center in the Hahamongna Master Plan.
TALLIE
Environmental? If the city builds anything, they should build a jobs center. That's what we need.

LISSA
But wouldn't you like a place to learn about the wildlife.

TALLIE
Honey, my life's been wild enough already.

SCENE 3

(FLINTRIDGE, PERRIN'S LIVING ROOM, DAY - Lights up on a plush, modern space. There is a table or counter with a bottle vodka, a pitcher of lemonade, and glasses. Loose papers sit in the center of the floor with a pencil and eraser. PERRIN'S framed medical school diploma is on a wall.)

(LYNN, 18, enters with a hammer, crosses in stealth, and exits. PERRIN enters in stylish fitness gear. ADAM follows in jeans and a rumpled shirt. Both are in their mid-40s. He carries a leather-bound notebook. PERRIN stoops, stacks the papers from the floor, and puts them on the counter between her and ADAM.)

ADAM
I figured as long as I was up here-

PERRIN
Do you want a drink?
(beat)
Of course you don't want a drink. I'll just drink alone.

ADAM
Don't drink.
PERRIN
Why not? This is an occasion. A divorce. A fresh start for both of us.

(PERRIN pours herself a glass of lemonade, then adds vodka. She holds up the glass.)

PERRIN
Sure? It's a Bullfrog. Ribbit. You could just have the lemonade. I made it this morning.

(beat)
Do you want me to sign the papers now?

ADAM
There's no rush.

PERRIN
We're doing fine by the way. Thank you...Even though the backyard smells like a sty because of the septic; gangbangers broke the gate again; I'm behind organizing the fundraiser for the Education Foundation; and Lynn hates us, or at least hates me.

ADAM
How's Jeff?

(PERRIN yawns.)

PERRIN
I'm sorry. I've been having trouble sleeping.

ADAM
Talking with anyone about that?

PERRIN
Still looking for the key to my psyche?

ADAM
I gave up the search that algorithm a while ago.

PERRIN
Why did I marry an engineer?

ADAM
Jeff?
PERRIN
He's fine. His regular dreamy self.

ADAM
I wanted to take him and Lynn on a foraging walk down in the park next Saturday. That all right?

PERRIN
Is Monica going?

ADAM
It's her kind of thing.

PERRIN
You know they found a dead body down there, next to the bathroom.

ADAM
So...Is that a yes?

PERRIN
You can ask Lynn, but I made an appointment for Jeff at the salon to get his hair cut.

ADAM
I'm sure he's thrilled.

(Pause)
He seemed interested in the Rover. Curiosity found an oxidation gradient in its Martian rock sample.

(PERRIN yawns again. She moves to tidy the living room.)

PERRIN
I don't care.

ADAM
It could just revolutionize our understanding on the origins of life.

PERRIN
I don't care.

ADAM
You used to care.
PERRIN

Fresh start.

ADAM

Anyway, there's a lot of press stuff NASA wants me to deal with. I'm apologizing in advance if I screw up.

PERRIN

You'll pay half if I have to repair the septic?

ADAM

Wouldn't it be better to wait for the neighborhood vote on the sewer before pouring money into a septic?

PERRIN

I'm the one who's been going to the meetings. They're voting no.

ADAM

Tell the sewer will lower their water bill.

How?

ADAM

The water district wants to treat the sewage, pump what's left to tanks under the athletic fields at Muir High School. The more water they put into the ground, the more free water they can take out.

PERRIN

Muir--that school's been a mess forever. I suppose one mess deserves another.

ADAM

Your mom seemed to like it.

PERRIN

(Sarcastic)

Because she and I agree about everything.

ADAM

Talking about high school...she seemed happy.
PERRIN
If it was so great when she went there, why did La Cañada break away from Pasadena and build its own high school?

(Lights down on PERRIN'S LIVING ROOM. Lights up on LISSA and PRINCIPAL WRIGHT, mid-40s, at MUIR HIGH SCHOOL.)

WRIGHT
We could use a positive article on the school, after you finish the one for the garden.

LISSA
It's just a blog. But this is my school now, so I'll do what I can.

WRIGHT
The board says it can't afford four high schools.

LISSA
Why are there fewer students?

WRIGHT
La Cañada built their own high school fifty years ago and that made Muir more black and parents sued to keep it diverse and there was a huge fight and the court ordered busing and one thing led to another...

LISSA
And the white parents pulled their kids.

WRIGHT
Sent them to private schools. When I went here we had 3,000 students. Now I'm principal and there's 1,300. Pasadena used to have one of the best school districts in the country.

LISSA
You mean except for the segregation.

WRIGHT
Well, yeah. People think Muir is struggling, but you compare us academically to other schools in the district, we're right there.
LISSA
Once people get an idea in their head-

WRIGHT
We're fighting the past. I wish you could meet Danae, our student body president. Got into Stanford early decision. She's running around trying to organize our homecoming assembly. I told her with all this talk about closing the school, it needs to be special this year.

LISSA
Why can't they close one of the other high schools?

WRIGHT
Muir's valuable real estate, right next to the freeway. And the developers pay for all the campaigns.

LISSA
That's not supposed to happen. This is Pasadena.

WRIGHT
Growing all those roses takes a lot of fertilizer. On that note, let me take you over to the garden, introduce you to Jim Pendorf, the teacher in charge.

(Lights down on MUIR. Lights up on PERRIN'S LIVING ROOM with ADAM and PERRIN.)

PERRIN
This guy outside you called to fix the gate...

ADAM
James. He's a friend of Monica's.

PERRIN
If he's her friend, then you should be the one to pay him.

(ADAM writes a check, tears it out of his book, and gives it to PERRIN.)

ADAM
There. Fill in the amount. You really think it was gangs?
PERRIN
Of course not. Your lovely daughter is vandalizing our house because you won't spend time with her.

ADAM
I doubt that. Here are the divorce papers.

(ADAM gives PERRIN the papers.)

PERRIN
Fabulous.

ADAM
Happy to be of service. Give the kids my best.

(ADAM exits. PERRIN inspects the papers and pours herself another drink. JEFF enters, stops, and looks at the floor where he left the papers. PERRIN notices him.)

PERRIN
(Sensitive)
Oh no, honey. It's okay. It's all right. Here are your drawings. We have to keep things neat.

(PERRIN hands him his sheets of paper, pencil, and eraser. JEFF spreads them on the floor, sits down, and starts drawing. PERRIN shakes her head and exits. JAMES enters with his tools. He sees JEFF'S drawing and stops.)

JAMES
Who's that?

JEFF
The Echo Princess. The Silly Wizard has her locked up. My group at camp says "Hi" when we go past the tunnel, and she says "Hi" back.

JAMES
Didn't know that. Who's that in the silver suit?
JEFF
That's the alien. He's going to marry the princess. My
dad looks for aliens.

(JAMES rises and inspects PERRIN's
diploma. PERRIN enters.)

PERRIN
How's the gate?

JAMES
You're a doctor?

PERRIN
Ophthalmologist. How's the gate?

JAMES
You need a new track. Someone bashed it.

PERRIN
I know.

Like last time.

JAMES
What will it cost?

PERRIN
Same as last time.

JAMES
Right.

PERRIN
I'll write out an estimate.

(JAMES exits. LYNN crosses trying
to ignore PERRIN.)

PERRIN
What did you get on your calculus test?
(Calling after her.)
You know I'll just call your teacher.

(LYNN turns.)
LYNN

I got a "C."

PERRIN

A "C."

LYNN

Lots of people got C's.

PERRIN

Your father was just here. He wants to do a park thing with you on Saturday.

LYNN

He was just here?

PERRIN

But if you're getting C's, you won't have time.

LYNN

Yes I will.

PERRIN

Then do better. You're applying to colleges. This isn't a game. What about the draft of your essay?

LYNN

The application isn't due until December.

PERRIN

You know you have to do at least three drafts.

LYNN

Fine.

(Lights down on living room.
Lights up on MUIR HIGH SCHOOL GARDEN. LISSA follows MR. PENDORF, late 30s. He sets down a flat of seedlings next to a wheelbarrow and a raised bed of soil with two standing shovels.)
PENDORF
With our new curriculum, students can take vocational classes and do college prep. But I'm always trying to get them internships. Shovel?

(PENDORF holds a shovel out to LISSA. She accepts and they shovel dirt into the wheelbarrow.)

LISSA
Job experience sets the table for success.

PENDORF
Everyone's willing to take an unpaid volunteer. As soon as I bring up money, people stop taking my calls.

LISSA
Money sucks.

PENDORF
Funny, most people don't feel that way. Most people are glad places like Wal-Mart are moving in, you know, a job's a job.

LISSA
That's like saying the pink tomato you buy in the grocery store is the same as the one you grow here in the garden.

PENDORF
You're saying Wal-Mart is a pink tomato?

LISSA
Kids need jobs that will let them grow, as people, explore their interests, give them new experiences.

PENDORF
So, you'd be willing to hire one of our students, perhaps, teach them about art?

(LISSA sways and touches her head.)

PENDORF
You all right?
LISSA
Nobody told me that being pregnant affects you, you know, physically...It's great you can give them jobs here at the garden.

PENDORF
Your article will help. The more boxes of vegetables we sell, the more kids I can hire.

(APRIL, 18, enters with JAMAAL, 17, who wears a new football jersey. They set down a bag of compost.)

PENDORF
April and Jamaal, this is Lissa. She's writing a story on the garden for her website.
(To April)
You have that list of colleges to apply to?

APRIL
My aunt says we can't afford college.

(RAPHAEL, 18, enters disheveled with plastic bags on his feet.)

PENDORF
You're late Raphael.

RAPHAEL
Not my fault.

PENDORF
Why are there bags on your feet?

RAPHAEL
I ain't getting my Jordans dirty.

PENDORF
We talked about this. You have to come prepared to work.

RAPHAEL
I'm prepared. Bags on my feet don't affect my preparation. My work shoes are at the house.
JAMAAL
What happened?

RAPHAEL
Mom's boyfriend up and kicked me out.

PENDORF
Why?

RAPHAEL
No reason. But it's cool. I did some camping last night.

PENDORF
Raphael, this is Lissa. She's writing a story on the garden. This is Raphael, he's...working off detention.

RAPHAEL
Last day, too.

LISSA
How do you like the garden?

RAPHAEL
My dad was a gardener. I was through with this shit by the time I was twelve.

PENDORF
You need to watch your mouth.

RAPHAEL
How am I supposed to watch my mouth? I can't see my mouth. I can see your mouth, and you need to brush your teeth.

PENDORF
(To Lissa)
I'd like to give him a job. He works hard and is good problem-solver. Does all right in my science class.

RAPHAEL
Glad you appreciate my talents, but I already got me some jobs, one of them is being the finest dude in this school.

(RAPHAEL gives JAMAAL a high five.)
PENDORF
You don't look so fine today. You need me make some calls, find you a place until you work things out with your mom?

RAPHAEL
Naw, it's cool. My people will take care of me.

APRIL
Mr. Pendorf, after I graduate can I get a job with the garden?

PENDORF
That money has to go to students.

APRIL
I wish I could stay in school. People are nice here.

PENDORF
You can stay in school. It's called college.

RAPHAEL
She could get a job at Wal-Mart. Don't need no college for that.

(PENDORF and LISSA exchange looks.)

MR. PENDORF
April, they have art classes in college.

LISSA
You're an artist?

PENDORF
She draws. Takes photos too. Shows up on time, without bags on her feet or under her eyes.

LISSA
(Pause)
Have you ever worked on a website?

APRIL
I've looked at websites.
PENDORF
(To Raphael and Jamaal)

Stop laughing.

LISSA
(Pause)

April, if you want, I will pay you to be my assistant.

APRIL
Assistant?

LISSA
I'm going to have a baby, and I need someone to go to events, take photos. I can train you on my website, and maybe you can help with the time bank. How does that sound?

APRIL
Good.

(LISSA looks at PENDORF.)

LISSA
Here's the deal. With the money I give you, I want you to buy something every week at the Altadena Farmer's Market. Have you been to Hahamongna Watershed Park?

APRIL
Where?

LISSA
That's going to be your first assignment.

(JASMINE, 17, enters wearing tight clothes. She has a small purse and red and pink highlights in her hair.)

JASMINE
(Flirting)

Heeeeeeey! Jamaaaaal!

JAMAAL
Oh man.
RAPHAEL

(Laughing)
On the baseball team and you hidin' from Jasmine. That's weak.

JAMAAL
I don't want people to think we hang out.

JASMINE
Mr. Pendorf, Principal Wright needs to see you.

PENDORF
(To Lissa)
Let me walk you out to the main building.

(Lissa and Pendorf exit.)

JASMINE
(To Jamaal)
What you doing?

APRIL
We're working.

JASMINE
(Angry)
I'm not talking to you girl. What you answering for when I'm not talking to you?

(To Jamaal)
You coming to the function at Shawnie's house on Saturday?

JAMAAL
There's a...church...thing...on Saturday.

JASMINE
They be having church on Saturday? That's out of control.

(beat)
Raphael, I need more of what you got.

RAPHAEL
Text me after school.

JASMINE
(To Jamaal)
The Dance Team posted a new video online. I'm in front. Promise me you'll look.
I...uh. 

Promise. 

Well... 

(Desperate) 

Promise. 

I promise. 

I'm going to cross your heart on it. 

(JASMINE writes her name with her finger on Jamaal's chest.) 

J-A-S-M-I-N-E. 

(JASMINE puts her face next to Jamaal's and snaps a photo with her phone. She exits singing to herself "Pour it Up" by Rihanna.) 

Money on my mind, Money, money on my mind...Throw it, throw it up, Watch it fall off from the sky, Throw it up, throw it up... 

She's ratchet. 

She's just likes him. He should take it as a compliment. 

(Lights down on GARDEN. Lights up on PERRIN'S LIVING ROOM.) 

I've decided to move Paca from the stables in the park.
LYNN

Why?

PERRIN
The park isn't safe. They found a dead body next to the bathroom.

LYNN
Was it somebody we know?

PERRIN
Don't be a smart ass. Most kids don't have a horse. You shouldn't care where he stays.

LYNN
Monica has a horse at the stable. I'll just have to ride hers.

(beat)

PERRIN
And...

(To Jeff)
Jeff, go draw in your room so your sister and I can talk.

(JEFF continues drawing. LYNN gets down on the floor with him.)

LYNN
You can use my pens for coloring. They're under the bed.

(JEFF gets up and exits. PERRIN takes a drink.)

PERRIN
I'm going to stop Jeff's afterschool camp with Tom Sawyer, so you don't have to pick him up.

LYNN
You can't take camp away from him.

PERRIN
He's going to have to find other ways to spend time.

LYNN
(PERRIN yawns.)

PERRIN
And doing his homework.

LYNN
He's seven. He wants me to help him act out his comic book.

PERRIN
So get your friends together and act it out.

LYNN
Ask people at school to dress up as aliens and run around the woods. That will make me so popular.

PERRIN
What about that boy Brandon? You're not...

LYNN
No. Geez. We run cross-country together. I'd have more friends if you had let me go on the service trip to Mexico. That's where people bond.

PERRIN
It was Mexico. There are drug killings every day.

LYNN
Hello. La Cañada High...Drugs.

PERRIN
Kids aren't killing each other.

LYNN
What about the guys who beat the crap out of that kid and left him on the school lawn?

PERRIN
That was...unfortunate.

(JAMES enters, stops, and listens.)

LYNN
Nothing was going to happen in Mexico.
PERRIN
(Forcefully)
Things happen.
(beat)
I don't want you going down to the park.

LYNN
Whatever. I'm eighteen. I can do what I want.

PERRIN
And you live here.

LYNN
Maybe I should go live with Dad and Monica.

(LYNN rushes out.)

PERRIN
I'm sorry that you had to hear that.

JAMES
The park's safe.

PERRIN
What?

JAMES
I spend a lot of time down there. The park's safe.

PERRIN
People just dump bodies there.

JAMES
Got to dump them somewhere. Here's your estimate.

PERRIN
Thank you.

(beat)

JAMES
I've been wanting to ask you about these tiles here.

(JAMES points to the decorated tiles around the fireplace.)
PERRIN

What about them?

JAMES

They look like Batchelder.

PERRIN

What?

JAMES

Ernest Batchelder, the tile guy.

PERRIN

Is that important?

JAMES

It's craftsman. People don't know this stuff and then they go and wreck something beautiful because they're ignorant. Like whoever put that gate across the driveway.

PERRIN

The gate was my idea.

JAMES

Oh. Be better off without it.

PERRIN

It's for protection.

JAMES (Sarcastic)

Dangerous neighborhood. What year they build this house?

PERRIN

I don't know. My father bought when he started his research at JPL.

JAMES

What kind of research?

PERRIN

Rockets.

JAMES

Anyway, call me when you want me to fix it.
(JAMES moves to leave.)

PERRIN
You spend a lot of time in the park?

JAMES
Play disc golf.

PERRIN
The plastic things? I almost got hit by one of those last time I picked up my son.

JAMES
You probably got in the way.

PERRIN
Expecting grungy...golfers to look before decapitating someone is probably too much to ask.

(JAMES turns to leave.)

PERRIN
Wait. Would you mind...um, maybe showing me around the park some time...Give me a short tour. Get me oriented.

JAMES
I thought it wasn't safe.

PERRIN
That's why it's important to, you know, know what's what.

JAMES
(Pause)
All right. But you have to play disc golf with me.
(Pause)
And wear something grungy.

(Lights down on living room. Lights up on GARDEN. RAPHAEL sits with JAMAAL and APRIL.)

APRIL
(To Raphael)
What about your mom?
RAPHAEL
Man, she just stood there and watched him throw my stuff into street.

APRIL
Where you going to stay?

RAPHAEL
Omar will put me up.

JAMAAL
I'd go to the shelter before I'd stay with him. You'd be selling his weed 'til you're thirty to pay him back. You should stay with Tallie.

RAPHAEL
What kind of a name is Tallie?

JAMAAL
I stayed with her when my bro got out of prison, and my mom went to take care of him. She's good people. (Pause)
The only thing is...

RAPHAEL
What?

JAMAAL
You can't be doping around her. She has a clean house. It's a deal with her.

RAPHAEL
Forget that.

(DANAE, 18, enters talking with FRIENDS.)

RAPHAEL
(To Jamaal)
Bro, give me your shirt.

What?

JAMAAL

Give me your shirt!

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JAMAAL and RAPHAEL exchange shirts. RAPHAEL straightens himself up. He approaches DANAE, realizes the bags on his feet, stops, and struggles to take them off. Finally, he gets to her just as she's about to exit.

RAPHAEL

Danae.

DANAE

You talking to me?

RAPHAEL

That's right. I've been working hard in the garden all morning, and the only thing that's kept me from going crazy is thinking about you.

DANAE

(Pause)

Is that your shirt?

RAPHAEL

Yeah.

DANAE

Cause it doesn't fit.

I could take it off.

RAPHAEL

Dang, don't be scaring me like that. I've got the homecoming assembly to get together and I don't have time-

RAPHAEL

But-

DANAE

What? Unless you have a real Mustang for the assembly, we have nothing to say to each other.

(DANAE exits. JAMAAL and APRIL laugh.)
JAMAAL
Man, she got you. Here, give me my shirt.

(They exchange shirts.)

RAPHAEL
That's all right. She was checking me out, saw that your raggedy ass jersey didn't fit.

JAMAAL
(To April)
I say our boy agrees to meet with Tallie or we give what we saw to Jasmine. She'd put it on blast to the whole school.

APRIL
Sounds good to me.

SCENE 4

(PARK, WILLOWS, NIGHT - A MOUNTAIN LION stalks a DEER through the trees to a chorus of FROGS. Both exit and the chorus fades. Lights brighten as PHINEAS enters. He directs a group consisting of LISSA, APRIL, MONICA, ADAM, and LYNN. They fill plastic bags with leaves and berries from surrounding bushes. APRIL has a camera around her neck.)

LISSA
Phineas, what are you going to make for the commissioners?

PHINEAS
White sage tea, nettle soup, and nightshade salsa are on the menu.

MONICA
Nightshade? We don't want to kill the commissioners.

PHINEAS
Western black nightshade. As long as the berries are black, they are quite safe.
ADAM
Is it native?

PHINEAS
Its origins are...complex. Most of the plants we're harvesting today are exotic...much like myself.

ADAM
Then it helps the park to remove them? They're aliens?

PHINEAS
Planetary citizens. What did your superiors say to my suggestion?

ADAM
To have JPL engineers find a way to take out the dam and restore the river?

PHINEAS
I take suggested donations for these walks. Speaking to them was the donation I suggested for you.

ADAM
It's outside JPL's mission.

PHINEAS
Tell me, what is the truest sign that Mars once had life?

ADAM
Flowing water.

PHINEAS
And yet here we stand in Hahamongna, which is Gabrieleño for...

LISSA
Flowing Waters, Fruitful Valley.

PHINEAS
The waters flowed until they built the dam. You see it is quite within your mission. The Gabrieleño figured out the connection between water and life thousands of years ago.

ADAM
You don't believe in space exploration.
PHINEAS
Park exploration might prove more fruitful. Spending untold sums reaching for a single scoop of Martian soil when magic sediment abounds around us? Yes, there is a black hole in that logic.

ADAM
NASA is paying to clean up the groundwater.

PHINEAS
Good point...good, of course, only in comparison to the very bad circumstances of the original pollution.

ADAM
That was before my time.

PHINEAS
Mine too. And still it haunts us.

(MONICA approaches LISSA.)

MONICA
I told you that meeting with that Tallie woman was going to be a waste of time.

LISSA
I thought it went fine. I told her I'd do a feature on open space in Northwest Pasadena.

(MONICA stares at LISSA.)

LISSA
That's how it works. You want support, you lend support. People like Tallie just need to spend more time down here.

MONICA
And you're going to tell them that?

LISSA
If I have to. I need my kids to be able to listen to the frogs with their kids. And for that to happen it has to be more than just white folks with time on their hands speaking for the trees.
MONICA
I don't think the trees care who speaks for them.
(Looking at April)
Is that why you brought her with you?

LISSA
I brought her because she needed a job, and I needed some help.

(LYNN approaches APRIL.)

LYNN
Can you pretend to talk to me?

APRIL
Sure.

LYNN
My dad wants me to bond with Monica, that's his new girlfriend, and I am so not into it right now.

APRIL
Okay.

LYNN
Or you could actually talk to me. My name's Lynn. What school do you go to?

APRIL
Muir.

LYNN
I go to La Cañada.
(Pause)
I don't know anyone from Muir.
(Pause)
You go to Jim's.

APRIL
Yeah.

LYNN
Regular or zucchini fries?
LISSA
(To Monica)
I think we should meet with some of the soccer groups.

MONICA
No.

LISSA
The problem isn't going away. The city says it needs six or eight more fields to satisfy demand.

MONICA
The city is wrong. And even if they did need that many fields, you don't kill wildlife or cut down a hundred year old trees to make it happen.

LISSA
This isn't theoretical anymore. My countdown has started. I need to see some progress.

ADAM
Lynn, don't you want to come over here with us?

LYNN
April's telling me where she's from.
(To April quietly)
Tell me where you're from.

APRIL
My dad's from Mexico.

LYNN
I almost went to Mexico for a service trip.

LISSA
April, you live with your aunt?

APRIL
And her family and my younger brother and my grandmother.

LYNN
You have a house in Pasadena?

APRIL
We rent. But my aunt wants to move to El Monte.
So much for getting her to bond with Hahamongna.

LISSA
(To April)
What does your aunt do?

APRIL
She volunteers, helps people get their citizenship.

LISSA
She knows a lot of people who play soccer then.

(LISSA and MONICA exchange looks.)

APRIL
My cousins played in the league at Villa Parke.

LISSA
The meeting on Thursday, bring your aunt. I want to get her opinion on something.

SCENE 5
(COMMUNITY ARMS HOUSING PROJECT, TALLIE'S LIVING ROOM, NIGHT - A cramped but homey space with a dining table and chairs, mirror, a closet door, and wall of photos and awards. JAMAAL watches RAPHAEL who looks at the photos. RAPHAEL has a full laundry bag.)

RAPHAEL
There's a photo of her and Magic Johnson.

JAMAAL
That was when they opened the 24 Hour Fitness on Woodbury. Tallie helped get that going.
(Pause)
She should be here soon. She's with my mentor Tremain, so you can't be embarrassing me.

(RAPHAEL checks himself in the mirror.)

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RAPHAEL
Relax, hombre. The ladies are no match for the full Rafiki charm. First, on your woman Tallie and then on Danae.

(TALLIE enters talking with TREMAIN.)

TALLIE
Turn those schools they closed into parks. That's what I'm saying.

TREMAIN
That means the school district working with the city.

TALLIE
And what should be so hard about that? And then that woman Lissa in my ear about her time bank. Told her about my cherry pie, and she said I could trade the hour to make the pie for a guitar lesson. Jamaal, honey, sorry it took so long. And this must be your friend. Are you hungry, you need something to eat? What's your name?

RAPHAEL
Rafiki...I mean Raphael.

TALLIE
This is Tremain. He's my godson. Jamaal, why don't you get him some something.

(JAMAAL exits.)

TALLIE
Young man why do you need a place to stay?

RAPHAEL
My mom's boyfriend decided he didn't want me around.

TALLIE
Was there a reason or was he just in a bad mood?

RAPHAEL
It's a territory thing.
TREMAIN

Territory? You in a gang?

RAPHAEL

No, man. I mean, he's like a dog or a lion or something. He doesn't want the kids from some other guy around.

TALLIE

Where's your father?

RAPHAEL

In jail.

TALLIE

How did that happen?

RAPHAEL

He got drunk, drove the wrong way down a freeway ramp, killed a lady.

TALLIE

Lord. You have brothers and sisters?

RAPHAEL

Two brothers.

TALLIE

Where are they?

RAPHAEL

One's in jail, another's on probation...stupid gangbangin' stuff.

TALLIE

You go to Muir?

(RJAMAAL enters and puts milk and cookies on the table.)

RAPHAEL

On and off. I just need a few credits to graduate.

TREMAIN

What about you Jamaal? You keeping your grades up?
JAMAAL
Four B's and an A.

TALLIE
(To Tremain)
You hear that? That's what Muir needs. More students like Jamaal, and they wouldn't think of closing the school.

RAPHAEL
I have a job...at the movie theater. I'm saving for my own place.

TALLIE
(To Tremain)
What do you think?

TREMAIN
I'd leave it to Jamaal. You willing to put yourself on the line for Rafiki here?

JAMAAL
(Pause)
He's cool.

(TALLIE notices the laundry bag.)

TALLIE
All right, you can stay. But you'll be doing your own laundry.

(RAPHAEL pulls out a pair of new Air Jordans.)

TALLIE
Will you look at that? Those all shoes?

RAPHAEL
Yes.

TALLIE
How you paying for those shoes working at a movie theater?

RAPHAEL
(Pause)
I do sales on the side.
TALLIE
And what do you sell?

(RAPHAEL looks at JAMAAL.)

RAPHAEL
Seeds. I work at the garden, at Muir, and we get these extra seed packets.

TALLIE
(Skeptical)
Seeds.

RAPHAEL
Yeah. I collect them too, like those pumpkins, you slice them open and pull out those seeds.

TREMAIN
(Amused)
Really? That must take a while.

TALLIE
Maybe he should join that time bank. What's your shoe size?

RAPHAEL
Ten.

(TALLIE looks at TREMAIN.)

TALLIE
All right. There are a load of sneakers in the back closet that belonged to my son. We can box those up and put yours there. Did Jamaal tell you about my rules?

RAPHAEL
Rules?

TALLIE
I get headaches and need my sleep, which means you need to be home before midnight. And this is a clean house, no drink and no drugs. Understood?

RAPHAEL
Yes, ma'am.
TALLIE
Is something I said funny?

RAPHAEL
No, ma'am.

TALLIE
Then you shouldn't be smiling. Don't stand there thinking you're all that and a bag of chips. You're not pulling anything on me. No drugs. Do you understand?

Yes, ma'am.

TALLIE
And you will be going to church on Sunday. You can come with me, or I can drop you at the Catholic Church. Honey, we're going to get you on track.

On track?

TALLIE
To graduate. We're trying to save a school and we can't be having any more dropouts. You a part of something now.

SCENE 6

(CONFERENCE ROOM, NIGHT - The PARKS COMMISSION sits in a horseshoe in front of a large CROWD. LISSA is at the microphone with her painting. COUNCILMAN LAYTON, mid-40s, runs the meeting. MONICA sits with ADAM, APRIL is next to EMILIA, her aunt, early 50s. RAPHAEL sits in the back with TALLIE, who knits.)

LISSA
The environmental education center would provide a place for everyone to come together. Do you want my painting?

LAYTON
Thank you. We'll take a photo of it for the record.
LISSA
Oh, and I don't support the addition of the soccer field.

LAYTON
Thank you. Monica Kemp is the next speaker. In the interests of time, I'll ask everyone to keep comments brief.

(LISSA sits and MONICA steps up to the microphone.)

MONICA
Our native habitats—the oaks, chaparral, willows—they come together and meet in this park. And that brings wildlife from all over. You put in a field and that means gophers and that means poison to kill them and that puts poison in the food chain.

(Pause)
And I hate to say it, but the people that play soccer down there now, they're ignorant. I've watched them leave trash all around after games. These people don't know how to take care of a place like this.

(Some in the CROWD CLAP, others GROAN. TALLIE looks up from her knitting.)

LAYTON
Do we have any other public comments?

(EMILIA pulls APRIL up to the microphone. EMILIA speaks in Spanish. APRIL translates.)

EMILIA
Me llamo Emilia Fuentes. Mi sobrina me pidió que viniera. Toda nuestra familia juega fútbol y no somos ignorantes.

APRIL
My name is Emilia Fuentes. My niece asked me to come here. Our family plays soccer, and we're not ignorant.

EMILIA
El consejo municipal prometió que recibiríamos campos de fútbol. Ellos arreglaron Jackie Robinson Park para los morenos. ¿Por qué no podemos tener nuestro propio lugar?
APRIL
The city council promised that we would get soccer fields. The city repaired Jackie Robinson Park for the blacks. Why can't we have our own place?

EMILIA
He visto un parque detrás de la presa, y es solamente para personas con caballos.

APRIL
I've seen this park behind the dam, and it's only for people with horses.

(The CROWD MURMURS. Some HISS. EMILIA and APRIL sit.)

LAYTON
Thank you Ms. Fuentes. Is there anyone else?

(TALLIE signals to LAYTON and approaches the microphone.)

LAYTON
Mrs. Banks, would you like to say something?

TALLIE
Now, I don't know if this is the best place for a field with all them coyotes running around. But I need to say that Jackie Robinson Park is for everybody, because what Jackie and Mack did was for everybody. People should come on over; there's nothing to be scared of. And for the commission, how we going to find the next Jackie Robinson if we don't provide our youth places to play. Because, you know, right now the largest green space in Northwest Pasadena is the cemetery. And that's not right.

LAYTON
Thank you, Mrs. Banks. Technically, Hahamongna is in Northwest Pasadena, but we understand what you mean. With the end of the comment session, we are going to adjourn so the commissioners can give this issue further study. Thank you.

(People stand. ADAM shakes his head at MONICA.)
ADAM

Ignorant?

MONICA

That's what you said when we were picking up all that trash.

ADAM

I meant everyone, humans...generally. You don't point fingers.

MONICA

I do.

(As people file out, LISSA looks hard at her painting.)

SCENE 7

(PARK - WILLOWS, NIGHT. The TADPOLES and FROGS scatter as the MOUNTAIN LION enters and drinks from the pool. PHINEAS watches unseen. The MOUNTAIN LION exits and PHINEAS follows.)

(PARK - WILLOWS, DAY - JAMES watches PERRIN pour sand from her shoe.)

PERRIN

You didn't say anything about quicksand.

(JAMES hands her the disc.)

PERRIN

Where was it?

JAMES

Stuck in that willow tree. The hole is over there.

PERRIN

I know. My mother won the Miss Guided Missile Pageant at JPL. You don't have to give me pointers on navigation. If they would cut all this back, manicure it like so it looks more like-
JAMES

Your lawn?

PERRIN

Is there something wrong with my lawn?

JAMES

No. My goats love thick green grass.

PERRIN

And you live in-

JAMES

Altadena.

PERRIN

Of course you do. Just...keep your goats to yourself.

JAMES

Vegetables would be a better choice.

PERRIN

Do I look like a farmer?

JAMES

No.

PERRIN

La Cañada-Flintridge isn't some barnyard hamlet. We're a modern, educated, forward-looking community.

(PERRIN hurls her disc, which immediately disappears in the willows.)

PERRIN

Shit.

(JAMES gets up.)

PERRIN

No. I'll find it. I'll find it.

(PERRIN starts thrashing around in willows.)
JAMES
You need dandien [DAWN-dee-en].

PERRIN
What?

JAMES
Tai chi. It means "power from the center." You find your inner power and send it into your throw.

(PERRIN emerges from the willows.)

PERRIN
Dandien.

(JAMES demonstrates in slow-motion with his disc.)

JAMES
Dandien.

(PERRIN imitates, then throws her disc, which again goes into the brush.)

PERRIN
Ahhhhh. I hate this game!

JAMES
(Offended)
It's a sport.

PERRIN
(Sarcastic)
Sorry.

(PERRIN disappears in the willows to look for her disc.)

JAMES
This happens to be the very first disc golf course.

PERRIN
In the country?
JAMES

In the world.

PERRIN

Double sorry.

(PERRIN appears with her disc.)

JAMES

Why did you want me to show you the park?

PERRIN

My daughter likes to sneak out at night. She's the one bashing the gate. Half the time she comes down here to visit her horse.

JAMES

Why don't you talk with her?

PERRIN

Because I'm fighting with my daughter about several things right now, and don't want to fight with her about sneaking.

JAMES

How do you know where she goes?

PERRIN

I follow her.

JAMES

You get that from a parenting class?

PERRIN

I know what you're thinking, that I'm one of those helicopter moms. Well, I'm not.

JAMES

Okay.

PERRIN

I'm not. If I was, I'd bust her. I keep my distance. I did my share of sneaking from that house when I was a teenager. The most important thing is that she gets into a good college. I save my fighting time for that.
JAMES
You studied cancer in med school, right?

PERRIN
Sure.

JAMES
You know any special treatments for liver cancer?

PERRIN
You have liver cancer?

JAMES
No. Someone else.

PERRIN
This "other person" got a diagnosis. What did they recommend?

JAMES
Radiation.

PERRIN
And...

JAMES
He wants something herbal.

(PHINEAS enters.)

PHINEAS
That's right.

PERRIN
Who are you?

PHINEAS
Phineas Brody--wild food gourmet, consort of cougars, and brother of Shamus.

PERRIN
Shamus?

PHINEAS
Gaelic for James. He doesn't use Shamus because he doesn't like to stand out. But perhaps today is different.
PERRIN
Let me guess: you live in Altadena.

PHINEAS
On occasion, currently I reside under yonder cottonwood.

JAMES
This is Mrs. Reinhart.

PHINEAS
Ah. Companion of Adam. The original woman.
(To James)
While I've been tracking my mountain lion, you've been tracking something else, brother. I'm impressed.

PERRIN
You know my husband?

PHINEAS
Is he your husband still? He attends my plant walks with what I can only presume is your daughter, during which I do my best to infect him with an awe of nature.

PERRIN
The plant guy. You're...not what I expected.

PHINEAS
And your expectation consisted of...

PERRIN
Someone with more...clothes.

PHINEAS
(To James)
Brother, I told Lissa you would take her into the tunnel.

JAMES
The water department doesn't want people down there.

PHINEAS
And yet you have keys.

JAMES
Because I used to work for them. They trust I won't do anything stupid.
PHINEAS
As do I and as does she. If you take her into the tunnel, I will acquiesce and visit your modern-day medicine man.

JAMES
(Pause)
All right. But only to the first bulkhead.

PHINEAS
You should bring Mrs. Reinhart, as she seems very much in drought.

PERRIN
What tunnel?

PHINEAS
Devil's Gate Tunnel.

JAMES
The first settlers dug tunnels under the park to collect groundwater.

PHINEAS
Devil's Gate, named after the rock formation that was there before the dam.

PERRIN
I'll pass on the tunnel.

PHINEAS
I'm sure your daughter will enjoy it. Lovely girl, a bit saddled by this nonsense between her parents. I say "saddled" because she rides horses-

PERRIN
What about my daughter?

PHINEAS
Let me see if I can recall the conversation from our foraging expedition...At my suggestion, Lissa expressed enthusiasm about the tunnel. Your daughter inquired as to its meaning. Learning said meaning, she said it would be perfect for her brother to look for the Echo Princess. Her father begged off, whereupon Monica, his "friend," volunteered to take your children on said adventure. Of course, I'm sure they'd rather go with you.
PERRIN

(Angry)
I'll have to have a talk with my husband.

PHINEAS

Then you are still married.

PERRIN

Yes.

(PERRIN winds up and throws the disc with great force. They follow the throw with their eyes.)

PERRIN

Am I close to the hole?

JAMES

You sure you're an eye doctor?

SCENE 8

(TALLIE'S LIVING ROOM, DAY - RAPHAEL, just out of bed, sits at the table next to a small stack of papers. TALLIE stands over him.)

RAPHAEL

A hundred and twenty! No one told me I need a hundred and twenty units.

TALLIE

If you want to graduate in June.

I can't do all this.

TALLIE

Not if you sleep in on a Saturday morning. Now, is there a reason you got home at 2 a.m.? I thought I was clear.

RAPHAEL

You know you're a cool lady and all, but I've got to take care of my business.
TALLIE
And what business is that?

RAPHAEL
My business is my business.

TALLIE
If you're sleeping in my son's bed, your business is my business. And the only business you're open for right now is math. I'm going to the grocery store and the cemetery-

RAPHAEL
What's at the cemetery?

TALLIE
My son. Now I want those problem sets done so I can check them when I get back. We're going to get you thinking about your future.

RAPHAEL
I know my future.

TALLIE
Really? And what does that future hold?

RAPHAEL
Let's just say I plan on being my own boss.

TALLIE
You running the movie theater now.

RAPHAEL
Naw, but I could. Got my car, fresh threads, shoes. I could quit that job anytime I want.

TALLIE
I see. You don't need to know math.

RAPHAEL
The only math I need is for counting money.

TALLIE
The shooting last week off Woodbury. The police dispatcher earns fifty thousand dollars; detective gets eighty; fire department ninety; judge, stenographer, bailiff, just the salaries, we're spending three hundred thousand on that
shooting. By the time, they lock someone up, it's maybe a million. Do the math, child. We have a whole economy that depends on kids shooting each other, and you think you smart enough to keep free of that?

RAPHAEL
You look all that up?

TALLIE
Don't need to.

RAPHAEL
I'm not Jamaal. I'm not going to college.

TALLIE
Honey, this isn't about college. It's about getting you so you can love someone besides yourself.

SCENE 9

(TUNNEL - JAMES holds a lantern that creates a pool of light, showing PHINEAS, LISSA, and APRIL in front. PERRIN, JEFF, and LYNN, who holds a second lantern, follow. All wear slickers. APRIL has a flash camera, PHINEAS has a canteen. The tunnel is wide enough for two abreast but not comfortable. DRIPPING and TRICKLES echo, the walls seems alive.)

PHINEAS
Water spirits calling to the wild water within us.

APRIL
I didn't think I believed in ghosts until now.

JAMES
Slap the name Devil's Gate on something and people get the wrong idea.

PHINEAS
(To Lissa)
There are lessons for you here.
LISSA
You mean the cleanup. This is the water NASA's cleaning?

PERRIN
Lynn, hold my hand.

LYNN
I've got Jeff. Jeff, how are you doing?

JEFF
(Calling down tunnel)
Princess, helloooo!

(They hear an echo on "hello.")

JEFF
She's here. She's really here.

(JEFF moves forward. LYNN follows. PERRIN grabs for them, misses.)

PHINEAS
The percolation, vaginal waters, the menstrual flow of Mother Earth, all around us as we crawl back to the womb.

LISSA
They dug this to catch the groundwater, right? Pipe it out to the reservoir?

JAMES
That was the original reason for the dam, to increase the flow in the tunnel.

PHINEAS
Our spirits, our imagination, our dreams, everything flows together, flows without end, underneath the sand.

JAMES
The granite wall that makes the Devil's Gate runs east-west from Washington Middle School across to Flintridge. It makes a bowl that holds all the water from La Cañada, Altadena, Northwest Pasadena.
PHINEAS
No boundaries, no obstacles, everything connected under the surface, flowing toward Hahamongna, feeding the springs that gave life to the river and are no more.

(LYNN holds JEFF and approaches APRIL.)

LYNN
How is your college essay coming?

APRIL
I don't have anything to say.

LYNN
My mom worked for USC admissions before med school. She can read your essay. She knows what they want to hear.

APRIL
But I can't get into USC.

LYNN
Mom, you'd read April's college essay for her, wouldn't you?

PERRIN
What are you talking about? Just hold onto Jeff.

JEFF
(Calling out)
Princessss, you okayyyy?

(They hear an ECHO on "okay.")

PHINEAS
(To Jeff)
See, she's doing fine.

LYNN
April's applying to college. You can read her essay for her.

PERRIN
Fine. Whatever. Yes.
LISSA
(To April)
April, if Mrs. Reinhart reads your essay, you should do something for her.

PERRIN
It's fine. She doesn't have to-

LISSA
Maybe April could help James out fixing your gate.

JAMES
Oh geez.

LISSA
Then he could see how the time bank works.

JAMES
I'm taking all of you down here. How about that pays for her reading the essay?

PHINEAS
No, I'm paying for that by agreeing to see the doctor.

PERRIN
What are you talking about?

LISSA
We'd love to expand the time bank into La Cañada.

PERRIN
I'll do it for free! What part of free is confusing?

LISSA
It's only fair that you get something back.

PERRIN
I don't need anything back.

LISSA
But reciprocity-

PERRIN
I don't need reciprocity! I need to finish whatever the hell we're doing down here.
JEFF
(Calling)
Sorry. We don't have the key.

(They hear the ECHO of "key.")

LISSA
April, why don't you get some photos for us.

(APRIL starts taking flash photos. PERRIN covers her eyes.)

JEFF
(To Lynn)
Now we know where she is, we can find the key and rescue her.

LISSA
It's still polluted down here, right?

JAMES
Less so since La Cañada went on sewer. But, yes, we're in the plume.

PERRIN
Plume of what?

JAMES
Water contaminated with rocket fuel, from the first tests.

PHINEAS
And the reason our father killed himself.

JAMES
(Angry)
That's not why.

PHINEAS
Defiling sacred waters gave him nightmares.

JAMES
It was working on the missile tests that gave him the nightmares!

PHINEAS
And the chemicals they dumped into holes in the ground.
PERRIN  
(On edge)  
Lynn, Jeff, don't touch the walls.

PHINEAS  
(To James)  
Does she know the history?

JAMES  
Her dad was a rocket guy.

PHINEAS  
Perhaps that's why she can't sleep.

PERRIN  
My father didn't have anything to do with the pollution!

PHINEAS  
Are you sure?

(PHINEAS opens his canteen and catches trickling water from the walls and drinks.)

LISSA  
What are you doing? If that's polluted...

PHINEAS  
Cancer, the price my family pays for its absolution, awful truths absorbed into my cells, my body full of reckoning.

JAMES  
The water doesn't give you cancer. It was the booze that gave you cancer! The pollution is measured in parts per billion, you idiot. "Billion," with a "B."

LISSA  
Phineas! You have cancer?
PHINEAS
Unlike most, I don't pretend my cells are clean. We're all part of the stream, the pollution of past flowing into present, one generation flowing into the next. Until we clean these waters, the Echo Princess will live here and everything will...

(Calling into the tunnel)

Repeat.

(They hear the ECHO of "repeat.")

PHINEAS
Isn't that right, Mrs. Reinhart?

PERRIN
Lynn, bring Jeff. We're going.

LYNN
But mom-

PERRIN
Bring the lantern!

PHINEAS
(To Lissa)
We clean the water with the stories we tell, which is why the education center is important. We clean the water with truth. Isn't that right, Mrs. Reinhart?

PERRIN
Lynn, let's go!

JEFF
(Calling)

Goodbye!

(They hear an ECHO of "goodbye.")

LYNN
But-

PERRIN
I'm not listening to this.
(PERRIN hustles her children out, leaving the others listening to the water TRICKLE down the walls.)

SCENE 10

(MUIR HIGH SCHOOL, GARDEN, DAY - RAPHAEL stands in front of a twenty-pound bag of compost leaning against the bed of soil. A wheelbarrow, garden knife, and shovels are next to him. JASMINE watches from a distance unseen. RAPHAEL takes the knife, drops to his knees, and thrusts it into the bag, several times. He gets up, kicks the bag, and flips over the wheelbarrow. The shovels clatter. He sees JASMINE frozen and approaches her.)

RAPHAEL
(Angry)

What are you looking at?

JASMINE
(Angry)

Don't you be giving me attitude 'cuz the school got rid of your teacher! They fired Mrs. Johnson last week, and you don't see me go tearing up shit.

(beat)

RAPHAEL
Why you so loud all the time, girl?

JASMINE
I am loud because no one listens to me! I want people to listen to me. People listen to me I be quiet.

(beat)

No one sees me either.

RAPHAEL
What are you talking about? People see you coming a mile away.
JASMINE

Naw, I mean for real.

RAPHAEL

What you want people to see you as?

JASMINE

A dancer. A good dancer.

(beat)

I got some money.

RAPHAEL

Tomorrow. I don't want to sell to you today.

SCENE 11

(CONFERENCE ROOM, NIGHT - LISSA faces a semi-circle of chairs. Against one leans her painting. RAPHAEL slouches next to TALLIE who knits. EMILIA waits next to APRIL, who stares at the floor. JAMES stands with his back to the group next to a large trash can and table on which there is a tray of snacks. PHINEAS glances from JAMES to LISSA. The many empty chairs have presence.)

LISSA

(To Emilia)

PerdÛn. Yo soy Lissa.

EMILIA

I speak English.

LISSA

Oh. I assumed because April translated for you at the meeting.

EMILIA

I like reminding those commissioners other people might come if they had translators.
LISSA
April's been doing a great job...She said you might be moving soon?

EMILIA
Rents are getting too high in Pasadena.

LISSA
Would April be able to stay at Muir?

EMILIA
Depends on the bus schedule.

LISSA
(Pause)
I coordinate the Arroyo Seco Time Bank. We've been talking to a few landlords about trading labor for lower rent.

JAMES
(Sarcastic)
I'd like to hear those conversations.

PHINEAS
(To Lissa)
I dragged him here. He's bent sideways about what happened in the tunnel.

LISSA
Lynn's mom seemed upset.

JAMES
(To Phineas)
It wasn't the time or place.

PHINEAS
Brother, it's sweet you're looking for someone to play disc golf with after I'm gone.

JAMES
Why didn't you keep it to groundwater?

PHINEAS
The cleanup is about more than groundwater.

TALLIE
Are they done with that?
JAMES

Eighteen more years.

TALLIE

Eighteen years?

PHINEAS

Drop by drop is the only way, up to the surface, pull out the poison, then send the water back down to join the flow.

(RAPHAEL yawns.)

RAPHAEL

Man, this is worse than school.

TALLIE

(To Lissa)

Muir just let go his favorite teacher.

LISSA

Mr. Pendorf? April, what's happening with the garden?

APRIL

They closed it. The garden doesn't work without him.

(Uncomfortable silence.)

LISSA

I guess we should get started. I invited some other people from our conservation group, but...something must have come up.

EMILIA

(Sarcastic)

Of course...something came up.

LISSA

I thought it would be good to think long term...about shared goals...find a solution that would leave everyone satisfied.

EMILIA

I'm not interested in everyone.

TALLIE

That's obvious.
LISSA
I thought perhaps we could identify other spaces.

EMILIA
There are no other spaces.

TALLIE
There were before they put in the 210 freeway. If they can bulldoze our neighborhood, they can knock down a few houses for some more parks.

JAMES
Keep that out of Altadena. We have too many historic homes.

TALLIE
James, is it really about historic homes or wanting to keep kids out of your neighborhood.

JAMES
Can't it be both?

TALLIE
Phin, please don't tell me he's turned into that person.

PHINEAS
I told him the Altadena hermit thing has gone out of style.

JAMES
It's about appreciating craftsmanship; it's about beauty.

TALLIE
Black is still beautiful, James.

LISSA
If we could just focus. I know there's something we haven't thought of.

EMILIA
We'll leave it to you then to tell us what to do. You seem good at that. April, let's go.

(EMILIA and APRIL stand up to go.)

LISSA
No, wait. Please.
EMILIA
You just want to keep us "ignorant" people out, so you can watch your birds and ride your horses without having look at people like me.

LISSA
No, I want to bring you in.

EMILIA
We don't need your permission.

LISSA
I didn't say you did.

EMILIA
You said you wanted to "bring us in."

LISSA
That's not what I meant.

EMILIA
It's just what you said.

LISSA
I'm sorry. I used the wrong words.

TALLIE
Telling folks where they can and can't go in this town has a history. It would be nice if new people, new groups, moving in remembered that.

EMILIA
This was happening to Mexicans here way before there were any blacks.

TALLIE
We would have come out to California sooner, but we were... delayed.

EMILIA
It wasn't my people who had slaves.

TALLIE
And I suppose all those Indians who were out here just dropped dead on their own.
RAPHAEL
(To April)
Do you know what they're talking about?

APRIL
I want to do my homework.

EMILIA
(To April)
This is homework, hija. They don't teach you this in school. The labor camps below Raymond Hill with all the Mexicans locked behind a chain-link fence.

TALLIE
The city chasing out black homeowners with redevelopment.

EMILIA
(To Lissa)
White women like you giving us white bread and telling us to eat hot dogs to be more American.

LISSA
But that's not me.

EMILIA
(To April)
Latinos founded Pasadena, hija. Arturo Bandini married Helen Elliot...

APRIL
I know. You've told me.

JAMES
The Bandini-Elliot mansion. They built a beautiful craftsman home, and Caltech, in all its far-sighted wisdom, decided to tear down.

EMILIA
Why?

JAMES
Parking.

EMILIA
Claro.
RAPHAEL
Now I want to do homework. That's how boring this is.

TALLIE
You have enough time pick seeds from the center of a pumpkin, you have time to learn a little history.

RAPHAEL
You want me to care about dead people, you have to pay me.

EMILIA
No, *hijo*, the past is important because if you want the city to do something, you have to know what's happened before.

TALLIE
Otherwise you get the nicest blow off you can imagine. All polite, on letterhead.

EMILIA
Council defers to staff and staff defers to council...You can never tell what's going on.

TALLIE
You say anything, word gets back that you're a troublemaker, and no one answers your calls.

EMILIA
Eso. The Pasadena Way.

TALLIE
And you always ask for more than you need, just so you can walk out with something.

LISSA
That hasn't been my experience with the city.

EMILIA
Of course that hasn't been your experience with the city!

PHINEAS
I'm so glad you're all talking.

(LISSA picks up her painting.)
LISSA
Tallie, I was thinking about what you said about jobs. One of Muir's academies is environmental science, and I thought what if we set up a junior ranger program, pay youth from the neighborhood to work at the education center we want to build and take care of the park. Everybody wins.

EMILIA
You are doing it again.

LISSA
What?

EMILIA
You want us to be gardeners.

LISSA
No, biologists.

EMILIA
That's not realistic. We want them to be lawyers, doctors...

LISSA
What makes a biologist less real than a lawyer?

EMILIA
That's not what their families want them to do.

JAMES
I work outside every day. I don't see what's wrong with it.

TALLIE
But that's your choice. It's different when you're forced.

LISSA
No one's forcing anything.

EMILIA
You are forcing our children to go on walks where you tell them what to care about. Why not get them into the park for something they already want to do, like soccer, and let them discover it on their own?
LISSA
That's why April should be able to go to college, so she can discover what she wants to do on her own.

EMILIA
She needs a job, a real job.

LISSA
But she can't become a lawyer or doctor without college.

EMILIA
And I can't keep a roof over her head her without another paycheck coming in! How is she going to pay for college? And then she hears from people like you that she should go to art school? And why are you telling her she has to spend her money at the Farmer's Market? Who are you to tell us? You're not her mother.

(beat)

TALLIE
You're not her mother either.

EMILIA
Pardon me.

TALLIE
(To April)
Your mother was Keisha, wasn't she?

(APRIL nods.)

TALLIE
Twenty years ago my friend Vonnie comes over, tells me her niece is getting married. Says that Keisha is so happy, that her guy is Mexican, but so long as Keisha has that big smile on her face, Vonnie's happy. When Keisha got sick and passed, we heard there was a relative who was going to take the children, because I guess your brother-

EMILIA
It's complicated.

TALLIE
Yes, everything is complicated.
EMILIA
Family first.

TALLIE
That's right. But family can be more than blood. You get what I'm saying?

(APRIL starts to cry.)

RAPHAEL
Dang, man, you're making her cry. See what happens when you talk about all that past bullshit.

EMILIA
De que estado en México viene su familia?

RAPHAEL
They're not from Mexico. Mom is from Honduras, dad from El Salvador.

LISSA
Jalisco.

EMILIA
What?

LISSA
Jalisco. That's the state that my husband's family is from. His last name is Navarro. And he earns a living as a cameraman for the studios. That's why I suggested art school...Because there are jobs, real jobs, for people who like to take pictures.

PHINEAS
The truth is always more complex and lovely than we can imagine. And so we bury it, under layers and layers and layers of sand, and the only way to find it again is to dig a tunnel. Isn't that right brother?

(JAMES gets up and leaves. PHINEAS follows.)

LISSA
I'm sorry. I...I don't know...I was trying to help.
EMILIA
If you could help, those chairs wouldn't be empty.

(EMILIA gets up and moves to leave. APRIL stays seated.)

EMILIA
April, ven ac'.

(APRIL gets up and leaves with EMILIA.)

TALLIE
(To Raphael)
Now it's time for you to do your homework.

(TALLIE and RAPHAEL leave. LISSA still holds her painting. She rises, lifts the tray of snacks in her arms, and as she leaves, drops her painting in the trash.)

ACT II
SCENE 1

(PARK, WILLOWS, NIGHT - FROGS and TADPOLES scatter as a deer comes to the pool to drink. A loud HIP-HOP RING TONE chases the deer away. The voices of JASMINE and RAPHAEL come from off stage.)

RAPHAEL
Man, turn that off! You're going to get us caught.

JASMINE
(Loud)
Don't be telling me to be quiet! You invited me, remember.

RAPHAEL
For your eyes, not your mouth.
(RAPHAEL, JAMAAL, JASMINE, and APRIL enter with flashlights. The sound of a HELICOPTER passes above them.)

JASMINE
I got mud on my shoes...and that is not okay. Do you hear me?

RAPHAEL
Dang girl, the cops in the helicopter can hear you.

JAMAAL
Danae's dad flies the ones that land over behind Jack in the Box.

RAPHAEL
So.

JAMAAL
He could zap you with that infrared camera, you try to date his daughter.

RAPHAEL
Let him. I don't need his permission. (To April)
You sure you know where you're taking us?

APRIL
No.

RAPHAEL
You said you knew where they keep the horses.

APRIL
I do, but I don't know how to get there from over here.

JAMAAL
We get caught, we're all getting expelled.

APRIL
Why don't we just ask someone?

RAPHAEL
To give us a horse for homecoming? Girl, you crazy.
APRIL
They might say "yes."

(HELICOPTER sounds. A roving spotlight misses them. Sound and light disappears. RAPHAEL feels his waist.)

RAPHAEL
Oh man. Those branches must have snagged my jacket.

JAMAAL
Where you going?

RAPHAEL
I gotta get my jacket, bro. Just keep going. I'll find you.

(JAMAAL, JASMINE and APRIL exit. RAPHAEL moves back through the willows. The MOUNTAIN LION appears and stares at RAPHAEL. RAPHAEL freezes.)

RAPHAEL
(Tough)
You want a piece of me?

(Realizing)
Damn. You want a piece of me. I am not Mexican food, okay. I'm Central American.

(The MOUNTAIN LION lies down and watches him. RAPHAEL waves his arms and makes NOISE. The LION is unimpressed. PHINEAS enters.)

PHINEAS
(to Mountain Lion)
Irusan, leave him be. Away with you.

(The MOUNTAIN LION exits.)

RAPHAEL
You're the dude from that meeting?

(beat)
I scared him off for you. What did you call it?
PHINEAS
Irusan, an Irish name for King of the Cats, I have been tracking him for some time. He is my guide.

RAPHAEL
To what?

PHINEAS
Death. The eyes of cats look into both worlds. Curious he should bring us together here. Are you lost?

RAPHAEL
No, man. I'm not lost. I just don't know where I am. I left my...

(PHINEAS hands him his jacket.)

RAPHAEL
...jacket. You homeless?

PHINEAS
Far from homeless. That crooked cottonwood is my current abode.

RAPHAEL
How is this place to sleep? Seems peaceful.

PHINEAS
The space is quite commodious if you are in need.

RAPHAEL
It's all right. But my family moves around a lot, so you never know.

(beat)
Man, what is this place?

PHINEAS
A nature reserve, rocket launch site, disc golf course, water conservation area, summer camp, and flood control basin--a floor wax and dessert topping rolled into one. As befits our encounter, it is a place of discovery.

RAPHAEL
Looks like a giant sandbox.
PHINEAS
That is from the floods. This is a place where the rain gods rule. The river carries sediment and leaves it like Santa Claus behind the dam.

RAPHAEL
What do you do when it floods?

PHINEAS
Go swimming. There is a nice piece of re-bar in the canyon that I hang from to let the flood waters shake me.

RAPHAEL
So, you're crazy.

PHINEAS
To embrace the flood is to absorb its powers. From chaos, comes creativity; behind death is young life nipping at its heels. Irusan knows that, as do I. Perhaps you do as well. And what is your story?

RAPHAEL
I don't have a story.

PHINEAS
A man without a story. That's a problem.

RAPHAEL
I'm a businessman.

PHINEAS
And what business would that be?

RAPHAEL
I'm looking for a horse.

PHINEAS
Ah, you are from Muir.

RAPHAEL
Yeah.

PHINEAS
This is for homecoming.
RAPHAEL
Yeah.

PHINEAS
You're trying to impress a girl.

RAPHAEL
How did you-

PHINEAS
Follow me.

(PHINEAS and RAPHAEL exit. The HELICOPTER sounds return and fade. Spotlight on TALLIE in her home sorting laundry. She smells something and searches for its source. She finds it in Raphael's sheets. Her shoulders slump.)

(Lights out on TALLIE. Dim light up on PHINEAS, RAPHAEL, JASMINE, JAMAAL, and APRIL, now at the stables.)

PHINEAS
An inspired idea, often tried, seldom successful. I think I still have the hoof prints on my chest.

(A flashlight CLICKS on revealing LYNN and BRANDON.)

LYNN
Who's there? We're on hold with the police.

APRIL
Lynn?

LYNN
April?

JASMINE
How come she knows everybody?
APRIL
(To Lynn)
What are you doing here?

LYNN
My friend Brandon and I went on a run and decided to come down here to check on my horse.

Hey everyone.

BRANDON
You have a horse?

APRIL
He's sweet. You want to see?

APRIL
These are my friends Jamaal and Raphael.

JASMINE
Ahem.

APRIL
And Jasmine. They're from Muir.

LYNN
Phineas?

PHINEAS
Irusan is out tonight, Miss Lynn, in case you wish to ride.

LYNN
(To April)
Why are you here?

(APRIL looks at RAPHAEL.)

JASMINE
Come on, people. This is for the school!

RAPHAEL
(Sheepish)
We have this big homecoming assembly coming up, and we're the Mustangs and we wanted to see if someone would let us borrow a horse.

85
LYNN
At night?

RAPHAEL
We thought we'd figure out which one would work best before we, uh, asked permission.

LYNN
I can show you Paca and you can see if he would work. (thinking) But you'd have to do something for me.

APRIL
What?

(LYNN looks at BRANDON.)

LYNN
I need you to wear some costumes. It's for my little brother. (beat) Do you need me to teach you to ride? I volunteer for MACH-1. They take disabled kids out on horseback.

JAMAAL
Now that would impress Danae. Throw her on the horse and ride away into the sunset.

RAPHAEL
Her dad would never find us.

(A spotlight fixes on RAPHAEL and a helicopter WHIFFS overhead. RAPHAEL, JAMAAL, JASMINE, and APRIL scatter. LYNN moves to spotlight and waves to the chopper.)
SCENE 2

(TALLIE'S LIVING ROOM, DAY - TALLIE packs Raphael's sneakers into his laundry bag. She stops, opens the closet door, and pulls out an old shoe box. She takes out an old high top sneaker. She holds the sole of this sneaker against the sole of Raphael's sneaker. They are the same size. She sighs and puts the sneaker away as she hears RAPHAEL enter.)

(RAPHAEL smiles. He holds a cut rose and a sheet of paper.)

RAPHAEL
Get along little doggies. Get along! You, Miss Tallie, are looking at a vaquero bravo. Because I done rode me a horse today. My friend Lynn got me up on Big Red. Big Red's my horse. And we're just riding along, and it's all quiet down there in the park, peaceful. And then we see a fox. I don't mean a girl. I mean a real fox! Lynn gets all excited. Said she sees coyotes all the time but not foxes.

(RAPHAEL holds the rose out her.)

RAPHAEL
And this is for Miss Tallie. Because I got a "B" on my math test - a "B," not even a B minus, a B. Cut this from one of those rose bushes in the garden at school.

(RAPHAEL sees his things.)

TALLIE
(quietly)
I need for you to go...I told you. We don't have that in this house.

RAPHAEL
(Pause)

What?
TALLIE
I know what marijuana smells like. You lied to me.

RAPHAEL
It's medical. I hurt my back.

TALLIE
Another lie.

RAPHAEL
Come on, it's just some weed.

TALLIE
You're not the first person who's said that in this house.

RAPHAEL
You're kicking me out?

TALLIE
(Sad)
Is Jamaal using?...No, don't tell me because I can't believe you anyway.

RAPHAEL
You're sending me back to the street?

TALLIE
Lord knows, I don't want to.

RAPHAEL
Then don't. Don't. You want me to say I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Lo siento. I'll never do it again.

TALLIE
Stop it. Every time you lie, you're breaking my heart.

RAPHAEL
Fine. I don't need you. I don't need anybody. You're just like her! You want me to fail, so you can say I'll never be anything. That I'm just like him. That I'm not better than you. Don't you want me better?

(Breaking down)
Ain't mothers supposed to want me better?
TALLIE
I do not want you to fail. But you have broken faith with me. And I need my faith.

RAPHAEL
So this is a God thing?

TALLIE
Without faith you can't put two sticks together.

(Pained)
And...there is a history...here...in this place, on this ground, and I have to believe that all these years...some good has come from that. That we've made progress.

RAPHAEL
Your people's history. Not mine.

TALLIE
Do you even know the history of your people? Do you even know the history of your parents?

RAPHAEL
Not important.

TALLIE
You so busy running away from them, you running away from yourself. But history is in your bones. How you gonna run away from your bones when they're what's movin' your legs?

RAPHAEL
Isn't God supposed to be about forgiveness?

TALLIE
The last twenty years, my whole life has been about forgiveness. I've forgiven Tremain for what happened to my son, forgiven his friends....And I still can't forgive myself...for not loving my son more or loving him right. That's the pain I live with. But until you feel the wrong and move to make it right, I can't forgive. There's a wall that keeps God's love from flowing through me into you. And without forgiveness, there's no fresh start.

RAPHAEL
I'm sorry. I'm sorry, all right.
TALLIE
I don't need your apology. I need my faith...not that you'll always do right, but that when you do wrong, you will make it right.

(Pause)
Give me back my faith and you can stay.

SCENE 3

(PARK, STABLES, DAY - LISSA sits at a picnic table and draws plant cuttings on a sketch pad. MONICA enters. LISSA notices but keeps drawing.)

MONICA
(Subdued)
We won. The commission is recommending the council pull the soccer field.

LISSA
(Uninterested)
Congratulations.

What are you doing?

LISSA
Phineas is helping me make a field guide for my daughter. It's going to be a girl.

MONICA
That's nice.

LISSA
Since pictures will be all that's left one day. You know all it takes is one generation not being able to come here. We lose that experience, that thread, people will forget how important it is.

MONICA
I know.
LISSA
Anyway, I figure when it's gone, pictures will help my daughter believe all my park stories.
(beat)
We missed you at the open space meeting.

MONICA
Look, if we try to solve every problem, we won't solve any.
(Pause)
You're having a daughter, but this park is the only child I'll ever have. It was the orphan that I took in, watching over it takes everything I have.

LISSA
Isn't there anything that gives you faith in other people?

MONICA
My faith isn't the issue. It's the faith of these trees. It's the faith of the mountain lion. See humans the way they see us. Theirs is the faith we've broken. When we do something that justifies their faith, that's when things change. Anyway, I wanted to post an announcement on the website and need your password.

LISSA
"Mosaic."

MONICA
It would be nice to have your help.

LISSA
I'm sure Adam can take care of it.

MONICA
Adam and I broke up.

LISSA
I'm sorry.

MONICA
Me too.
(beat)

LISSA
Come with me to the Muir homecoming. They're plowing under the garden. You should see it before it disappears.
(LISSA gets up and gives her a hug.)

LISSA
Remember some things are beyond our control.

SCENE 4

(PARK, SUNSET OVERLOOK PARKING LOT, NIGHT - RAPHAEL talks with a well-dressed OMAR.)

RAPHAEL
Naw, man, she don't do that?

OMAR
She might if you asked her? She got you dressin' up like some dude from outer space.

RAPHAEL
That was for her little brother.

OMAR
Get her to smoke a bowl. Use some of that charm I taught you.

RAPHAEL
It's not like that.

OMAR
Forget her if she don't want you. Just get her to invite you to a party. Meet a few people. La Cañada is some serious money.

RAPHAEL
Man, listen to me!

(Pause)
You know you can watch the sun go down on the park from here. They call this the Sunset Overlook. It's peaceful.

OMAR
Boy, what the hell are you talking about?

(RAPHAEL holds out a bag of marijuana.)
RAPHAELE
I don't need this anymore.

OMAR
What's that? You buying from someone else now.

RAPHAELE
No, man, I'm out. I'm done selling.

OMAR
You playing. You playing me.

(beat)
You think it's that simple? I just put cash down on extra because you and me were going to branch out into La Cañada, into high end. Now you're leaving me hanging.

RAPHAELE
I'm sorry, man.

OMAR
Sorry. Sure as shit you sorry. One sorry, dumb-ass Mexican punk-

RAPHAELE
I'm not Mexican-

OMAR
Drivin' your junkyard special, workin' your crappy job takin' tickets, cause that's all you good for, takin' tickets. I let you into the big show and you walkin' out on me?

RAPHAELE
Take it.

OMAR
It ain't all here. This coming back there better be some money with it.

RAPHAELE
I'll get it to you.

OMAR
No, you get it to me now.
RAPHAEL

I'm good for it.

OMAR

That's not the way this is going down. Give me your shoes.

No, man.

OMAR

Boy, you creating a problem for yourself. Give me your goddamn shoes!

No!

OMAR

I know where you staying. You want peace. You gonna get some war, you don't get those Jordans off your feet.

(A SPOTLIGHT hits them and HELICOPTER sounds fill the air, along with flashing lights and a SIREN.)

OMAR

SHOES!

(RAPHAEL takes his shoes off and shovels them to OMAR who bolts away. RAPHAEL jumps from the overlook and heads into the park.)

SCENE 5

(PERRIN'S LIVING ROOM, NIGHT - LYNN paces in front of ADAM and PERRIN. The bottle of vodka sits on the counter with glasses and an ice bucket, along with a scattered pile of invitations. There is anxious silence before anyone speaks.)

ADAM

Honey, you know whatever it is, you can tell us.
LYNN
You won't think it's important.

ADAM
Of course, we'll think it's important.

PERRIN
We just want you to tell us.

LYNN
(Pause)
Fine...You need to go with Jeff to see his fort.

ADAM
Huh?

PERRIN
What do you really want to tell us?

LYNN
That's it.

ADAM
What fort?

LYNN
The fort his Tom Sawyer group made in the park.

(ADAM and PERRIN exhale.)

ADAM
(To Perrin)
I thought she was coming

PERRIN
(To Adam)
I thought she was pregnant.

LYNN
You are both out of your minds.

(beat)
Don't you get that Jeff's comic book is about you? You're the Echo Princess and you're the Alien. Ever since we went down in that tunnel, he's been desperate to find the golden key. I thought once we acted out the comic book, he would chill out. But it just made it worse. Look, you don't have to worry about me. The end of this year, I'll head off to college or join the Army—
ADAM
You're not joining-

PERRIN
You're not joining-

LYNN
Or whatever. But Jeff has to live here. You know the only other thing he does besides his comic book is play Angry Birds on the computer. The next comic book...it won't be a love story. Now get it together and go look at his fort!

PERRIN
Jeff is fine.

LYNN
He's not fine. And he'll get worse once you take him out of camp.

ADAM
Why would you take him out of camp?

PERRIN
The park is dangerous.

ADAM
He's with a group.

PERRIN
And what happens when he runs off to look for this stupid key, which, you know, isn't out of the realm of possibility. There are mountain lions for god's sake.

LYNN
(To Perrin)
It's not fair. You've got us on lockdown. Why do you think I sneak out of the house? By the way, I know that you know that I broke the gate.

ADAM
You broke the gate?

PERRIN
I told you. This is what I'm talking about.
LYNN
And she didn't even talk with me about it.

PERRIN
I was trying to give you space.

LYNN
By following me around with binoculars.

PERRIN
I'm sorry for trying to make sure you're okay.

ADAM
Binoculars?

PERRIN
Maybe if you'd spend more time with your kids.

ADAM
I'm...sorry. I'm trying to find life on another planet.

LYNN
Aren't Jeff and I life enough?

(beat)

PERRIN
(To Adam)
There are other things you don't know. She got a "D" on her calculus test.

ADAM
How could you get a "D"? You're good at math.

LYNN
Calculus isn't math. It's a foreign language.

PERRIN
And she wants to cut class on Friday to go to this homecoming assembly at Muir.

LYNN
(Sarcastic)
Can't have the daughter of the fundraising chair cutting class. What would people think?
PERRIN
Maybe someday you'll appreciate that people give money to make sure you get a decent education.

LYNN
Maybe someday parents will stop being all OCD about school, and kids can actually enjoy life instead of hanging at Panda Express complaining how there's nothing to do. Muir Homecoming is the real deal, and I want to see it.

PERRIN
You don't know what could happen down there.

LYNN
(Sarcastic)
Oh my god. Something...unpredictable...with people who are different.

PERRIN
You should worry about your own school.

LYNN
I am worrying about my school.
(To Adam)
You told me one of the conditions for life to exist is having enough variation so that evolution can do its thing.

ADAM
So?

LYNN
Our school, this neighborhood, this whole town doesn't have enough variation.

PERRIN
Come on. What about all the Korean students?

LYNN
That's not what I'm talking about. Everyone has the same amount of money.

PERRIN
They do not.

LYNN
You're right. They either have enough or more than enough.
ADAM
And that's a problem?

LYNN
Yes.

(beat)
That's why I wanted to go on the Mexico trip. If I can't cross the border, I'm at least crossing the Arroyo.

(beat)
I don't want to be scared of the world.

PERRIN
Muir isn't safe.

LYNN
You don't know anything about Muir. April's going to show me their garden.

PERRIN
Lynn-

LYNN
It took a week to get her to talk to me after you ripped her essay.

PERRIN
Not everyone is cut out for college.

LYNN
Is that you or the vodka?

ADAM
I thought we were talking about Jeff.

LYNN
We are. Go look at his fort and spend more time with him.

PERRIN
(To Lynn)
You want to know why I put up that gate and why I follow you around? I was just like you, good at math. And I was bored just like you, snuck out this house to find some excitement. But once I found it, this smart girl got stupid. And when my father found out I was pregnant...He
said it would damage his position at the lab, his standing in the community. And my mother went along, didn't even ask how I felt. Then she drove me to the clinic, sat there in the waiting room until I was through. Didn't say anything. Not one word.

(Pause)
That's why I fight with you. I would kill for you. And you're goddamn well going to know it!

(Pause)
You're going to be smart and tough, and you're going to get into a good college and no man is going to push you around. 

LYNN
Dad's not pushing me. He's not here enough to push me. You're the one who's pushing me around.
(beat)

ADAM
(To Perrin)
Your mom didn't say anything, but she's the one who sat in that waiting room. Your dad...I can't say anything about him.

PERRIN
But you're doing the same thing he did. Living the same way.

ADAM
God, I hope not.
(To Lynn)
And I would be here enough to push you, but...your mother and I...we've always had a hard time loving each other.

LYNN
Be honest. I've had a hard time. You've always cared. It's me that's not sure.

ADAM
(To Lynn)
But sweetheart, you have to know that you and Jeff are what both of us love most in the world.

LYNN
Goddamn it! Then prove it. Go see his fort and come with me to homecoming.
SCENE 6

(PARK, OAKS, NIGHT – The DEER enters the clearing. The MOUNTAIN LION tackles it and kills it by the throat. PHINEAS watches unseen.)

(PARK, OAKS, MORNING – BRANDON holds hands with a group of Tom Sawyer CAMPERS including JEFF around a recently planted oak seedling. APRIL stands to the side and takes a photo.)

BRANDON

What should we name it?

JEFF

Pepperoni Pizza.

BRANDON

All right. All together.

GROUP

Trees need people. People need trees. Welcome to the world Pepperoni Pizza.

SCENE 7

(PARK, WILLOWS, MORNING – RAPHAEL sleeps under a canopy of willows. PHINEAS stands over him covering his body in willow stalks. A small satchel sits on the ground. RAPHAEL wakes in a panic and knocks the willow stalks away.)

RAPHAEL

What is...where am...I?

PHINEAS

You, my dear friend, are in the fort of the Crumpet-Eating Zombies, a most ferocious gang of eight year-old boys.
RAPHAEL
Man, can't you go find some berries for breakfast.

PHINEAS
Why don't you? I showed you what to look for.

RAPHAEL
My feet are all cut up.

PHINEAS
Yes, you are quite the tenderfoot.

RAPHAEL
What are all these branches and shit?

PHINEAS
*Salix lasiolepis*, the Arroyo willow.

RAPHAEL
Willow?

PHINEAS
The neighbor Indians called the people that lived here the Kiz'h [Kish]--the people of the willow branch--because they built their houses out of these willows, that spring back up after a flood, after all that sand and water rushes through. You know, it's the roots that hold them in place.

(As PHINEAS talks he ties a willow stalk into a hoop and begins weaving stalks together to fill its middle.)

PHINEAS
As willow people, it was Kiz'h's stories that gave them roots. Have you figured out your story yet?

RAPHAEL
I ain't got no roots. My mom is moving us around all the time.

PHINEAS
Perhaps starting over is your story. Seems you know a lot about how to make something out of nothing.
RAPHAEL
That's all I've got now: a whole bunch of nothing.

PHINEAS
Is that any different than before?

RAPHAEL
I had shoes before!

(PHINEAS pulls a pair of moccasins from the satchel. RAPHAEL puts them on.)

PHINEAS
You never begin from absolute zero.

(beat)
The key to starting over for this place has always been the floods. That sand and rock so kind to slice your feet was once part of those mountains and for millions of years the sediment has ridden the floods out across the flats. And sparkling on all those sand grains are the nutrients that feed new life, pure potential.

RAPHAEL
When's the next one? I'll get a ticket.

PHINEAS
Hard to say when or in who the flood will start. Most of us have done to our souls what they've done to the river, checked it behind a dam or between two walls so all the freshness that comes with a flood never touches our lives. But in this park, the flood still holds sway, waters and souls and imagination still run free, and the willows grab this sparkling sand and turn it into new life. Good stories are trees branching out toward sunlight.

RAPHAEL
I told you. I don't have a story.
PHINEAS
Are you sure? You're living with a most important person in the willow clan. You need to listen to her.
(Pause)
When that flood came through Tallie's life and Amir died, Tallie put everything she had into her roots, trying to hold all the little grains of this community together, trying to make new life for people.

RAPHAEL
Has she always been a God person?

PHINEAS
She sang in the choir in high school.

RAPHAEL
What about you?

PHINEAS
I attend the church of the well-placed shade tree.

RAPHAEL
You really went to high school with her?

PHINEAS
You want to learn about some real roots, go to the alumni museum at Muir. My brother helped set it up.

RAPHAEL
What should I do now?

PHINEAS
Start walking.

SCENE 8

(SOCcer FIELD - Villa Parke COMMUNITY CENTER, DAY. EMILIA and LISSA sit watching a soccer match. Underneath a folding table is a box of cheap snacks and a flat of bottled water. We hear SHOUTS in Spanish from players and the occasional WHISTLE.)
LISSA
What do you call what that guy is doing?

EMILIA
Dribbling. That's the first thing they teach. Always be in touch with ball. I tell my kids to imagine their spirit as the ball and life as the field. Never lose touch with the ball.

(LOUD WHISTLE.)

EMILIA
Okay.

(EMILIA gets up and starts arranging snacks and water on the table.)

EMILIA
You said you wanted to help. So help.

(LISSA helps EMILIA. She takes a bag of BBQ Doritos and looks at the ingredients.)

LISSA
You know I might be able to get fruit donated through the Farmer's Market.

EMILIA
Is there something wrong with these snacks?

LISSA
It's just...there are healthier options.

EMILIA
Are you saying I'm ignorant?

LISSA
(Frustrated)
No...I'm saying that there are many factors that play into the choice of snacks and that most of those factors are economic and that I might be able offset the costs so we can provide healthier options.
EMILIA
You want to tell them they get carrots instead of Doritos. Good luck with that. When I have more time, I make tamales.

LISSA
I'm sure they're delicious.

(beat)
So, if kids came to an education center at Hahamongna what would you tell them?

EMILIA
What do you mean?

LISSA
You said that I wanted to force kids to care about certain things. What would you tell them?

EMILIA
I'd tell them about the Mexican homesteaders who lived in the Arroyo and about Doña Eulalia Perez de Guillen, the first owner of Pasadena. You know even La Cañada, half the kids in their first little schoolhouse were from the Mexican families that picked oranges? What would you tell them?

LISSA
I would tell them about the Englemann Oak. How thousands of years ago, when things started to get warmer, all the other Mexican Blue Oaks left to go back to Mexico. But this oak, with its sweet acorns, decided to stay and all the other trees and plants here welcomed it and made room so this one oak could have a home. And that it's now endangered, and we need to plant more all around the city.

EMILIA
I like that. That's a good story.

LISSA
What if we called it the Environmental Science and Cultural History Center?

EMILIA
I'll think about that.

(beat)
LISSA
Your children played in this league?

EMILIA
They did. Now they play at Muir.

LISSA
That's good.

EMILIA
But the fields at Muir aren't as nice as this one.

(LISSA and EMILIA look at each other.)

LISSA
A million dollars would go a long way to fixing up the fields at Muir.

EMILIA
Lights would let the youth groups use it afterschool.

LISSA
I'm going to homecoming. Are you?

EMILIA
Yes.

LISSA
I'll talk to the city. You talk to the Principal Wright.

SCENE 9

(MUIR HIGH SCHOOL, ALUMNI MUSEUM - RAPHAEL sits at a table and chair with a book. Behind him are shelves with old yearbooks. There are several panels with photo collages on a wall. JAMES enters with PERRIN.)

PERRIN
I wouldn't have pegged you as a school spirit kind of guy.
JAMES
Muir is the only one of the public high schools with an alumni association.

(They notice RAPHAEL.)

JAMES
Oh. I wondered why the door was open.

(RAPHAEL closes the book and gets up to go.)

JAMES
You can stay.

RAPHAEL
I got to get my saddle for homecoming.

(RAPHAEL exits.)

JAMES
Sorry again about my brother.

PERRIN
No. It was actually quite helpful.

JAMES
What year did your mother graduate?

PERRIN
1958.

(JAMES pulls several yearbooks from the bookcase.)

JAMES
Here they are.

(JAMES opens one yearbook, and he and PERRIN look at it together.)

PERRIN
I didn't realize there were so many Japanese students at Muir.
JAMES
Japanese-American. The last part's important. When they got out of the internment camps, this part of the city had the cheapest real estate.

PERRIN
Here she is. She looks so young. What does this mean "Service Award"?

JAMES
Huh. The Key Club gave golden keys to the seniors whose service most benefited the school. She probably raised money selling oranges from the old farm north of the school.

PERRIN
Is there a picture of these key awards somewhere.

(JAMES flips back through the book.)

JAMES
Here. They're holding the keys. And there's your mother.

PERRIN
Can I make a copy of this?

JAMES
I'll take it down to the office. Take as much time as you need. This is what homecoming is for.

(JAMES exits. A moment passes. LYNN, APRIL, and JASMINE enter.)

LYNN
Oh my god mom, the garden is amazing. We have to get something like this at La Cañada. April says the teacher who ran it was let go. I told her you would do something, I mean, since you do all that fundraising.

JASMINE
That would be fresh, right, if we got money to bring our teachers back. Make a lot of people happy. Let me show you my mom.
(JASMINE goes over to one of the photo boards.)

JASMINE

There she is.

LYNN

She was a cheerleader?

JASMINE

All turned up too. You know I'm not trying to be rude or nothing, but I have to get practicing for my routine.

LYNN

And I have to help get Paca ready. April brought her essay.

(To April)

See you in bit.

(LYNN exits. APRIL holds her college essay and stands wary by the door.)

PERRIN

April, why do you want to go to college?

APRIL

I don't know.

(Long pause)

PERRIN

What will you do if you don't go?

APRIL

I don't know.

PERRIN

What do you want to do?

(APRIL is silent)

PERRIN

You know my mother went here.

(PERRIN holds out the yearbook.)
PERRIN
That's her. She never knew what she wanted to do, either. Ended up in the typing pool at JPL, where my dad found her... Made her the perfect unhappy housewife.

(beat)
You need a goal. That's what's missing from your essay.

APRIL
But all I like to do is take pictures and draw.

PERRIN
Then write about that.

APRIL
That's nothing.

PERRIN
Turn it into something. There's all kinds of arts groups in Pasadena.

(beat)
You said in your essay that Muir feels like family. What did you mean?

APRIL
It's just like nobody believes in us, nobody thinks we'll do well, and so it's like all we have is each other.

PERRIN
Is that why you're applying?

APRIL
Mr. Pendorf and my friends kept on me. And Lynn made me promise.

And...

APRIL
I think my mom would have liked if I got into college.

PERRIN
I know she would be proud of you. I'm a mother. I know.

(beat)
You really should apply.
But you didn't like my essay.

PERRIN

No, I did. You spoke from the heart.

(beat)

But that's just your first draft. You have to write at least three. You should have seen what I did to Lynn's first draft.

SCENE 10

(MUIR HIGH SCHOOL, AUDITORIUM - Lights up on the MUIR HIGH SCHOOL DRUM CORPS in yellow t-shirts playing a fight song. A CROWD with all the major characters sit in bleachers and hold signs that say "Beat the Dawgs" and "Ring that Bell." Most wear gold and navy football jerseys and wave pom-poms and balloons. The DANCE TEAM does an energetic dance with JASMINE taking the lead. The energy is raucous, beyond a polite pep rally.)

(DANAE steps out after the song. A large bell RINGS in the background.)

DANAE

Give it up y'all for the Drum Corps!

(CROWD ROARS. The next cheer gets louder each time.)

DANAE

Whose house?

'C-Stangs house!

DANAE

Whose house?
'Stangs house!

DANAE

WHOSE HOUSE!

CROWD

'STANGS HOUSE!

DANAE

All right y'all. We got one last thing. The best principal in the world has an announcement for us. Let's hear it for Mr. Wright!

(CROWD ROARS.)

WRIGHT

(Emotional)

Thank you everyone for coming.

(Pause)

I want all the students to know that you are all so important. I want you to know that all the staff and teachers love you.

(Pause)

Second...ahem...uh...I don't know how to say this. The new school board has decided, for next year, to change the focus of our school.

(CROWD MURMURS.)

WRIGHT

The plan next year is to lease the campus out as an industrial park. And use some of our rooms for training classes.

EMILIA

What about the students?

WRIGHT

Students who want the training sequence can stay. The others will be re-assigned to other schools.

TREMAIN

What about athletics?
WRIGHT
There won't be an athletics program.

TALLIE
What about college prep?

WRIGHT
Students wanting college prep will be re-assigned.

EMILIA
Why don't you just say it? They are closing our school.

WRIGHT
I'm afraid so.

(People CRY and YELL. WRIGHT struggles to hold attention.)

WRIGHT
People...People...PEOPLE! I know this is upsetting. The school board will be holding a meeting to explain their decision a week from Thursday. I will be available to answer questions after the assembly.

(Most exit, angry, dejected, leaving only the main characters.)

TALLIE
Principal Wright. Why an industrial park?

WRIGHT
They say the community wants jobs.

TALLIE
But kids shouldn't have to choose between jobs and college.

EMILIA
Why are you telling us today?

TALLIE
Because he wants the alumni to do something about it.

PHINEAS
The alumni who care are dying and don't have any money.
JAMES
And the parcel tax for the school district didn't get enough votes.

TALLIE
Did you vote for it?

JAMES
Yes, I voted for it.

LISSA
I thought test scores were going up.

WRIGHT
Not fast enough.

PENDORF
You can't raise test scores when the students don't come into ninth grade with basic skills.

TREMAIN
These kids are under attack. Broken families, drugs, how we gonna keep these kids out of gangs if we break up the only family they know?

TALLIE
Under threat, under attack, under siege. It's always been that way.

MONICA
That's the story of the park as well. The broken families out there are made of plants and animals.

PERRIN
La Cañada feels that way too.

EMILIA
That's ridiculous. La Cañada has everything.

PERRIN
But that's how people feel. Caltrans built the 210 freeway through the middle of the community and they created the city to defend against that happening again.

PHINEAS
That wasn't the only thing they wanted to defend against.
JAMES
La Cañada always wanted to be select.

PERRIN
True. I think, and I guess I should just speak for myself, people are scared... It's personal insecurity.

TALLIE
About what?

PHINEAS
About death. An old fear. Hard to shake. So many came to Pasadena, La Cañada, Altadena to escape death, for health and fresh start. But the fear of death led them to confuse health with purity. Anything, and anybody, that didn't meet their particular puritanical standard got pushed out, away, to the margin. Monica knows: health in nature isn't about purity.

MONICA
It's about process.

PHINEAS
It's about connection. You are all the Hahamongna watershed, bound together by what flows underneath.

JAMES
He means groundwater.

PHINEAS
And other things.

WRIGHT
It's hard to change the perception of the school. How do we beat the past?

LISSA
With new stories. New ideas.

TREMAIN
Mentoring programs.

APRIL
And art classes
JASMINE
And dance. Don't be forgetting about dance.

JAMAAL
And the garden.

APRIL
We need to bring back Mr. Pendorf.

(The students in crowd start to chant.)

STUDENTS
Garden! Garden! Garden!

PENDORF
Thank you...I appreciate that.

TREMAIN
During my time it was Mr. Davis. I used to come to this school just for him.

ADAM
I'm not an alum, but I work at JPL. Caltech and JPL could help Muir. It could be the next Bronx Science, a top flight magnet school. I could help.

PERRIN
Where are you going to get the time?

ADAM
(To Perrin)
I'll make the time...for these kids and ours.

RAPHAEL
Not just new stories.

TALLIE
What are you saying, Raphael?

RAPHAEL
There are old stories you can use. I know the history. This school's always bouncing back. We got roots.

APRIL
Pride.
DANAE
Spirit.

RAPHAEL
Whose house?

APRIL
'Stangs house.

JASMINE
That's right.

RAPHAEL
And the integration.

JAMES
Always have had diversity.

LISSA
There's the story of the Altadena Community Garden.

PERRIN
And the trail network in La Cañada-Flintridge.

EMILIA
Older stories, like Toypurina, *la indígena* that led a rebellion against the mission.

MONICA
The story of the river and its floods—that's the oldest story of all.

RAPHAEL
This is where I live. They ain't closing my house.

DANAE
Whose house?

GROUP
'Stangs house?

RAPHAEL
Thank you. Forget the Rose Parade. This school is what we should be celebrating on New Years.
TALLIE
That's right people. That's right. We got all the pieces, we just got to figure out how they go together.

PHINEAS
You figure this out, anything is possible.

RAPHAEL
Forget the school board. We come up with our own plan.

JASMINE
(Clapping with each word)
That is so tight. You know what I'm saying.

PHINEAS
Dams will crumble and rivers will flow.

WRIGHT
It's a question of money.

EMILIA
Lissa and I think we can get a million dollars from the city for the athletic fields.

LISSA
I know that businesses don't want to give students paid internships. But what if students earned hours through the time bank that business would pay off with donations to the school. Lowers costs for Muir and it's a tax write-off for the business.

WRIGHT
That's good, but it won't be enough.

ADAM
Foothill MWD wanted to send its sewer water down here to drain into the aquifer.

(Everyone looks at ADAM.)

ADAM
They might give the school some money.

TREMAIN
They want to send their sewer down here?
ADAM
They need a big space. They thought the athletic fields would be the best place. It happens in tanks, underground.

TALLIE
That is not even in the vicinity of right.

PHINEAS
But that's what this school does. People's mess runs through this place and comes out cleaner than it went in.

TALLIE
The washing of the water. Hmmm.

EMILIA
Does anybody here know people with money?

(PERRIN hesitantly raises her hand.)

PERRIN
I volunteer for the La Cañada Education Foundation. La Cañada parents aren't going to give money to Muir. But they might give to something the two high schools could share.

MONICA
The park is in between the two schools.

LYNN
April and I were saying we should build a horse trail between Muir and La Cañada High.

LISSA
And it could connect to the education center.

MONICA
The park is at the center of watershed and that would make the center-

PHINEAS
The center of the center.

LISSA
It could support classes at both schools—science, history, social studies.
LYNN
Might even make calculus fun.

TALLIE
What was that idea you talked about a jobs program...junior rangers?

LISSA
Train youth to take care of the park.

MONICA
They could clean up all those plastic straw wrappers I hate.

WRIGHT
This all fine, but they're fast tracking the permits for the industrial park to council.

EMILIA
He's right. The school district, the city. We need to get them on our side.

TALLIE
What we need is some of you all to run for school board.

WRIGHT
We need more time.

(Pause)

TALLIE
I know someone who can help. Y'all work on your plan. I've got someone I need to see.

SCENE 11

(PASADENA CITY HALL, COUNCILMEMBER LAYTON'S OFFICE, DAY - COUNCILMEMBER LAYTON sits across his desk from TALLIE and RAPHAEL.)

TALLIE
Thank you for taking the time. I know we don't live in your district.

LAYTON
We live in the same city.
Yes, we do.

And this is?

(RAPHAEL and LAYTON shake hands.)

Raphael Rios.

Pleasure to meet you.

Nice office.

They take care of us.

Maybe I should run for city council.

You should.

I'd win too. Because Tallie knows all the black people in town. And the Mexicans would vote for me, even though I'm Central American. Isn't that how it's supposed to work?

(To Tallie)

You've found a politician.

He's always talking. I suppose that's important for a politician.

Listening is more important. What can I do for you? If it's about the open space issue, I need to wait for the recommendation from the parks commission.
TALLIE
It's something different. But thank you for thinking of that. With the school board trying to close Muir, we thought it would help if-

RAPHAEL
We want to make a new holiday.

LAYTON
A holiday?

TALLIE
A remembrance...of the struggle to integrate our schools.

LAYTON
I don't understand.

TALLIE
We think it would be helpful to mark the desegregation decision...officially.

LAYTON
(Pause)
What date was that?

TALLIE
January 23, 1970. I had just found out I was pregnant with Amir. What year were you born?

LAYTON
Seventy-one.

TALLIE
See, you both came into a different world.

RAPHAEL
We made buttons.

(RAPHAEL gives a button to LAYTON. He eyes it suspiciously.)

LAYTON
That's a school bus.
TALLIE

That's right.

LAYTON

You said January 23rd. We could organize a ceremony for Martin Luther King Day, maybe a luncheon.

TALLIE

We thought about that but feel this should have its own holiday. We thought September 8th, which was the first day of the busing.

LAYTON

I would think a luncheon would be sufficient.

RAPHAEL

We want a parade.

LAYTON

A parade?

RAPHAEL

Yeah. Like the Rose Parade.

LAYTON

You'd have to talk to the Special Events Office—

RAPHAEL

Get a school bus, all pimped out with flowers, paint it different colors so it's all multicultural and drive around the neighborhoods—

LAYTON

A school bus?

RAPHAEL

Nice and slow, maybe get a marching band or some mariachis. The drum corps from Muir would be down. We thought the bus could start at Muir and end up at PHS.

TALLIE

He likes the parade idea. I told him it would be nice if it could ride through the different neighborhoods to show how busing unified the city.
But it didn't.

TALLIE

That was the hope.

LAYTON

But that's not what happened.

TALLIE

Not completely, but it got things moving in the right direction. And maybe if we remember that every year, we'd move on down that road a little faster.

RAPHAEL

Get on the bus.

LAYTON

I really don't think-

TALLIE

I was out there that first day, with the buses, volunteering with the PTA, telling people where to go. Amir had just been born. And I took him with me, riding against my chest the whole day, on the bus, off the bus, riding around to all the different schools. White, black, Mexican, everybody taking care of each other. Lord, there was a feeling that day, and I told him, "Boy, this, this is your world."

LAYTON

Mrs. Banks, no one wants to talk about busing.

TALLIE

Call me Tallie. You've known me long enough.

RAPHAEL

What's the big deal about busing?

LAYTON

Tallie-

RAPHAEL

I don't get it. What's the big deal?
TALLIE, that feeling, it didn't last.

TALLIE

It was a step.

RAPHAEL

Why don't people want to talk about busing?

LAYTON

(To Raphael)

Because it had the opposite effect. White people ran away from busing.

TALLIE

They ran away, but it wasn't from the buses.

RAPHAEL

So, let's talk about it.

LAYTON

Tallie, you understand this isn't going to happen. I know things have been hard. But you understand.

RAPHAEL

Why can't we talk about it?

LAYTON

It's not something people want to talk about.

RAPHAEL

Why not?

LAYTON

(To Raphael)

It's not how things are done.

RAPHAEL

I don't get you.

LAYTON

People don't want to stir up trouble.

RAPHAEL

You calling me a trouble maker?
LAYTON
This is Pasadena. We don't... We don't publicize problems. Tallie, you know.

TALLIE
Oh, I know. But some problems don't go away. They just keep flowing underground, from one generation to the next, polluting everything. And the only way to clean them up is to do what they doing with that water under that park, bring it to the surface. Not all at once, not that. Just one day a year, bring it up, wash that water, and send it back down, until one day it'll all flow clean.

LAYTON
It would just open old wounds.

TALLIE
Tell me, David, did riding the bus with Amir wound you?

LAYTON
That's not what I meant to say.

TALLIE
Because I'd heard these stories when Amir got home. "David this..." and "David that..." and Amir was always laughing at something you did when he got off that bus.

LAYTON
I can't make this personal.

TALLIE
It was personal when Amir went to the sleep over at your place. I'll tell you it was personal for me driving him over there. I don't think I'd ever been around those big houses east of Lake. Scared me to death. It was personal when you stayed with us and ate my greens, went down to Devil's Gate looking for frogs.

LAYTON
That was just us.
TALLIE
That's why we need a holiday, so it's not just us. So, everybody knows it happened. I had him draw that yellow bus big on the button, so it would look like a sun.
(Long pause)
I'm sorry to take up your time. We have one other thing-
(TALLIE gets up to leave.)

LAYTON
We have to put all that behind us.

TALLIE
I understand.

LAYTON
We have to concentrate on the future.

RAPHAEL
The future?

TALLIE
Raphael-

RAPHAEL
You're not giving us a future.

TALLIE
Hush.

RAPHAEL
The past isn't behind us. It's around us, like the ocean. We're living it every day. Maybe it's behind you, maybe that's the idea, leave the rest of us behind and not look back.

TALLIE
He's upset that they're closing his school. Raphael, let's not-

RAPHAEL
No, I've done the math. I looked at those school websites. Spend thirty thousand for your own kids, but when it comes to kids that look like me, you buying our school at Wal-Mart.
LAYTON
Take it to the school district. It's not the city's problem.

TALLIE
David, if you could just-

RAPHAEL
Where do you send your kids to school?

LAYTON
That's not the issue.

RAPHAEL
Come on boss, where do they go?

LAYTON
I don't have to justify-

TALLIE
Raphael, I'm trying to ask-

Where do they go?

RAPHAEL
My family isn't the-

LAYTON
Private or public?

RAPHAEL
I don't like it any more than you do, but I have a responsibility to my daughter-

LAYTON
That's what I thought. I tell you, you're not leaving me behind. I'm going to run for city council. Get me one of these offices.

(Pause)

Nah, I wouldn't like it here. There's no soul.

(beat)

TALLIE
The building permits, David.
LAYTON
What building permits?

TALLIE
For the industrial park they want to put at Muir. Delay them. Have the staff put them under review.

LAYTON
What about the holiday?

TALLIE
That seed is planted. And you know me well enough that I'll keep watering it. But right now we need time. We've got to organize the parents. If they're going to close our school, can't be sneaking it through. Give us that, David.
(Pause)

LAYTON
I'll slow it down.

TALLIE
Thank you.

LAYTON
And Mr. Rios.

RAPHAEL
Sí, señor.

LAYTON
I think you should run for office.

RAPHAEL
Why?

LAYTON
So I can vote for you.

SCENE  12

(PARK, WILLOWS, NIGHT - Dim light on frogs and TADPOLES at the pool. One TADPOLE has yellow legs. They scatter as lights brighten.)
(PARK, WILLOWS, DAY - Lights up on PERRIN, ADAM, and JEFF in Jeff's fort.)

ADAM
So this is it. The hideout of the Crumpet-Eating Zombies.

JEFF
When people walk by on the road we all go back over here to hide.

PERRIN
Not as big as our house, but a lot of natural light.

ADAM
And no gate.

PERRIN
I'm done with gates.

ADAM
Lynn said that her friend April is going to stay with you.

PERRIN
Just so she can finish the year at Muir.

ADAM
Lynn's excited.

PERRIN
My dad pulled me from my school during my senior year. It was terrible.

ADAM
Jeff, tell mom how your comic book ends.

JEFF
The Echo Princess and the Alien, they go off to the park to live in a fort. And then they have kids, and all the kids live in forts.

PERRIN
Honey, let's not call them forts. Let's call them homes.
ADAM
All made of willow trees.

(Lights down on ADAM, PERRIN, and JEFF. Lights up on PHINEAS and LISSA at the stables sitting at the picnic table.)

PHINEAS
What about the name Airmid [AIR-uh-mid] for your daughter?

LISSA
Airmid?

PHINEAS
The Irish goddess of healing, the mistress of herbal magic.

LISSA
All right.

PHINEAS
She was the keeper of the Well of Health. This was back in the time of fairies.

LISSA
Of course.

PHINEAS
And when warriors died in battle, they put them in the well and brought them back to life.

LISSA
That's helpful.

PHINEAS
But during one battle, much like Hahamongna, her clan's enemies filled the well with stones.

LISSA
What did they do?

PHINEAS
They discovered new magic to win the battle.

LISSA
New magic to defeat death?
PHINEAS
You can't defeat death.

LISSA
Then what should I teach my daughter, so she doesn't become puritanical.

PHINEAS
That love provides a maddening instinct for survival. One of the earliest steps in the evolution of life, love, and very hard to escape from. It quite splashes over everything. We're scared of death because we love life so much.

LISSA
And what happens when there's nothing left to love, when the bulldozers scrape down to bare earth? What do I say?

PHINEAS
That all the cement in this city came from the sediment of these mountains, that in every cinder block are those sparkling grains of sand. Tell her that even on Mars water flows under the surface.

(Lights down on LISSA and PHINEAS. Lights up on ADAM, PERRIN, and JEF next to the planted oak seedling.)

PERRIN
Jeff, you planted this?

JEFF
Our group did. It's called Pepperoni Pizza.

ADAM
Looks like an Englemann Oak to me.

PERRIN
New life.

ADAM
"A self-organized chemical system with enough variation for novelty to evolve and a way to transfer that novelty from one generation to the next."
PERRIN
Thank you NASA project manager. What did the director say about the magnet school idea?

ADAM
He was open to it. I told him after we build the next rover, I wouldn't mind working on setting it up.

(JEFF sees LYNN off-stage, in the distance, and yells)

JEFF
Lynn!

PERRIN
(To Jeff)
Go get your sister.

(JEFF exits.)

PERRIN
Do you think there could be any new life for us?

ADAM
The whole premise of the Mars mission is that life isn't some random accident, that understanding more of the mystery will help us treasure what we have. But I need someone who's in love with me.

PERRIN
And I don't want us to become my parents.
(beat)

ADAM
So, imagine if we were strangers and going on a date, the first thing I would tell you is that I have these two amazingly smart and imaginative kids.

PERRIN
And I'd say, "That's funny. So do I."

ADAM
And that would probably get us to a second date.

PERRIN
Probably.
ADAM
Why don't we start there?

PERRIN
At the second date? What's after that?

ADAM
Launch a few probes. Build a robot. Discovery.

PERRIN
Why am I so hot for engineers?

(Lights down on PERRIN and ADAM. Lights up on LISSA in the WILLOWS, looking into the pool. PHINEAS, and TALLIE enter.)

LISSA
The tadpoles loved that new rain we got last night.

TALLIE
Man, there are a lot of them.
(beat) I need to ask you who to talk with at the city about getting Raphael a job here at the park. This place, it unlocks something good inside him.

LISSA
Maybe he's our first junior ranger. Let's go to the city together.

(PERRIN, ADAM, LYNN, and JEFF enter.)

TALLIE
How did your meeting go with the Foundation?

PERRIN
They were intrigued. They need to see other donors getting behind the center.

LYNN
Jeff, look at all the tadpoles.

(JAMES enters with his bag of discs and gives a paper to LISSA.)
JAMES
Here.

LISSA
What's this?

JAMES
My application to join the time bank.

LISSA
Why...?

PHINEAS
In the spirit of such an endeavor, I offered a trade: radiation treatment for me, the end of hermitude for him. I think he got the better of the deal, though he might argue.

LISSA
I thought you were making peace with death.

PHINEAS
I can make peace with death. What I can't make peace with is never beating my brother at disc golf.

LYNN
Why does that one tadpole have yellow legs?

(PHINEAS inspects the pool, then speaks to the invisible tadpole.)

PHINEAS
Welcome back.

(To Lynn)
This will become a yellow-legged frog, a species discovered to science in this very park in 1908. They disappeared and have been endangered, but they're making a comeback in the mountains. This is the first I've seen them down here.

LISSA
Why are they coming back?

PHINEAS
No one knows.
TALLIE
Maybe the water is getting cleaner.

JASMINE
Heeeey, we're here. Let's get this party started.

(JASMINE, APRIL, RAPHAEL, and JAMAAL enter.)

LYNN
You're in a good mood.

JASMINE
Jamaal said I was a good dancer.

JAMAAL
What are you all looking at? Just telling the truth.

RAPHAEL
What's in the water?

LYNN
Tadpoles.

RAPHAEL
(To Jasmine)
You should kiss one.

JASMINE
Kiss one?

RAPHAEL
You kiss him he turns into a prince.

A prince like Jamaal?

If you want him to.

I'll kiss him then.
(MONICA and EMILIA enter with a wagon loaded with pots of Arroyo Willow seedlings and trowels.)

MONICA
All right. Here they are. If we're going to get this "save the school" plan off the ground, we have to do this right.

EMILIA
Everyone take a shovel and a willow.

(EVERYONE grabs something from the wagon.)

MONICA
Look for wet sand to dig.

LISSA
What happens if the county ends up bulldozing these for flood control?

MONICA
We plant more. Show people how to take care of their watershed.

RAPHAEL
Man, what's that word, "watershed"?

MONICA
An area of land drained by a common stream or river.

PHINEAS
Also a turning point.

LISSA
So is this a watershed for the watershed?

PHINEAS
It could be...if others join in.

APRIL
Look! The one with the yellow-legs, he's swimming.

(EVERYONE leans over to look.)
RAPHAEL

Dang, look at him go.

END OF PLAY