

# **Irma Voth**

by Miriam Toews

Adapted to the stage by Chris Craddock

DRAFT

## CHARACTERS

## ACTOR ONE

Irma – 19

## ACTOR TWO

Aggie – 13

Marijke – 41

Tina – 25

Man 2?

## ACTOR THREE

Jorge – 19

Miguel – 16

Oveja – 6

Wilson – 45

Carlito – 25

Dupont – 23

Boy

German Man 1

Cop

## ACTOR FOUR

Father – 50

Doctor – 45

Justice of the Peace – 50

Alfred – 35

Elias – 33

Jorge's Dad – 38

Police Officer – 43

Gustavo – 40

Humberto – 50

Driver

German Man 2

## ACTOR FIVE

Mother – 42

Diego – 45

Jorge's Mother – 33

Kate – 18

Noehmi – 21

Natalie – 45

*Lights up on Irma and Aggie, 2 young women, sisters, in traditional Mennonite garb.*

*The set includes a kitchen area of a simple home, and there is a screen in the back.*

IRMA: Once upon a time, in a galaxy far far away.

AGGIE: In the 1920's.

*The screen lights up. We see a shadow puppet play. Seven men, in Mennonite wear, approach the palace.*

IRMA: In the 1920's. Seven Mennonite men traveled to the Presidential Palace in Mexico City to make a deal.

*A man emerges from the Palace and speaks to them.*

AGGIE: They'd been offered land for cheap and decided to accept.

IRMA: And move their colonies to Central Mexico.

AGGIE: Where they wouldn't have to teach their children English.

IRMA: Or send them to regular school.

AGGIE: Or dress them in regular clothes.

BOTH: Great deal.

*The screen changes to a picture of Menno Simons.*

IRMA: The Mennonites were founded by Menno Simons!

AGGIE: He was so moved to hear the hymns of Anabaptists being executed by the Spanish Inquisition-

IRMA: That he joined their cause and became their leader!

AGGIE: And they began to move in colonies around the world looking for freedom!

IRMA: Isolation!

AGGIE: And opportunities to sell cheese!

IRMA: Different countries give us shelter if we agree to help the economy by farming in obscurity.

AGGIE: But sometimes a country wants us to be real citizens after all.

IRMA: They want us to pay tax or respect law or join the army.

AGGIE: But the joke's on them, because we pack up and disappear into the night.

IRMA: Move to another country.

AGGIE: Like Mexico.

IRMA: And live out of context.

AGGIE: In a rebuke of worldliness.

IRMA: For whosoever will be a friend of the world-

AGGIE: - is the enemy of God.

IRMA: Which is a pretty harsh motto. But that's how I happened to be in Mexico, with my father, mother, my two little brothers, and my sister Aggie.

AGGIE: But not Kate.

IRMA: No. Not Kate.

*Pause. Irma and Kate nod at each other*

IRMA: Some time ago my father stopped talking to me about real things.

*We see her father, driving a truck*

IRMA: I remember the last thing we talked about.

*She sits beside him*

IRMA: We were in the truck, heading to Cuauhtémoc, and my father said.

FATHER: Irma.

IRMA: We're speaking Low German now, but to you, it'll just sound like English.

FATHER: Irma, how do you think it's possible, that a group of people will stand at the bottom of a tall office building, and cheer a suicidal man on to his death, by encouraging him to jump?

IRMA: I don't know.

FATHER: What does it say about us?

IRMA: That we're cruel?

FATHER: No, I don't think so.

IRMA: I waited.

FATHER: I think we feel mocked.

IRMA: Mocked?

FATHER: We are mocked by the suicidal man. We appear foolish and cowardly next to the man who has wisely concluded that life on Earth is ridiculous.

IRMA: Oh.

FATHER: Life on Earth is ridiculous, and the man sees it and is acting upon it. And so we want him to die immediately, so that the pain of our own fear will also mercifully end.

IRMA: I didn't know what he was asking me. Committing suicide is a sin.

FATHER: Would you agree with that?

IRMA: No, I still think it means we're cruel.

FATHER: No.

IRMA: But, I –

FATHER: (harshly) No. It doesn't mean that.

*Irma falls silent.*

IRMA: And then he stopped talking to me for a while. And then things started to happen and we never got back in the habit.

*Father gets out of the truck.*

IRMA: Our father lost his family when he was a little kid, when they were driven off their farm near the Black Sea. He survived by singing German hymns.

*We see the shadow of a boy on the screen. He sings "Fairest Jesus" in German.*

IRMA: The hymns charmed the soldiers. And they foisted him off on another Mennonite family that was moving to Canada. He ran away from them at 12, and joined another family, where he met and eventually married my Mom. It's weird to say now, but, we had fun, when I was a kid. Farm fun. He was kind to me when my favorite chicken died. We went to the fabric store and I made him a burial suit. And he got a little grave by my bedroom window, instead of going on the pile with the others. But it was colossal and swift, the way all that disappeared, when he moved us overnight to Mexico.

*Aggie appears.*

AGGIE: Jorge's next.

IRMA: I know.

AGGIE: Father went to visit a colony in Belize.

IRMA: Because men are allowed to go places.

AGGIE: And Mother was exhausted.

IRMA: She was pregnant again, and she lost the last baby.

AGGIE: And just for that day she didn't care about the rules.

IRMA: She said we could go to the rodeo in Rubio, if we took the boys off her hands.

AGGIE: And so, we did! We went to a rodeo!

*The screen lights up with the sights and sounds of a rodeo.*

IRMA: It was a miracle that we were there!

AGGIE: Destiny!

IRMA: Maybe. Because that's where I first met Jorge.

*Pause*

IRMA: Do I have to?

AGGIE: Of course. It's the love story.

*Irma sighs and turns to the crowd*

IRMA: We were at a rodeo! And I don't know if it was a rush of adrenalin being away from the farm, but I noticed Jorge. Sitting there.

*Jorge sits on a bale of hay. He watches and moves unconsciously like a cowboy.*

IRMA: And he was watching the cowboys so hard, that without noticing, he started to do the movements of the cowboys and I thought it was funny. So I just ran up and said hello.

*She does so.*

IRMA: Are you pretending to be a cowboy? (out) I asked him in Spanish. We're speaking Spanish now.

JORGE: Are you pretending to be a Mennonitzcha?

IRMA: No, I really am one.

JORGE: Do you want to sit next to me?

IRMA: Uh... Alright. But only for a moment. I have to get back.

JORGE: Okay.

IRMA: And I sat next to him, and all my boldness evaporated and my knees started to shake from nervousness. What if someone saw me sitting with a Mexican boy and told my father?

JORGE: I am in town buying -

IRMA: Something, I can't remember what.

JORGE: - for my mother.

IRMA: That's nice.

JORGE: My job is to deliver cars over to US border. I drive them from Juarez to El Paso.  
I get forty American dollars a car.

IRMA: Oh.

JORGE: And I don't ask questions.

IRMA: What kind of questions?

JORGE: About what's in the cars or who's paying me or anything. I just don't ask.

IRMA: Oh.

*Beat*

JORGE: Some people are staring at us.

IRMA: No, they're not. No.

JORGE: Yeah they are. Like that guy over there.

*He goes to point. Irma nervously puts down his arm.*

IRMA: Please! Don't!

JORGE: It's pretty strange to see a Mennonitzcha at a rodeo.

IRMA: It's pretty strange to be here. My father has all these rules, but he's away, so here I am.

JORGE: Against the rules.

IRMA: Yes.

*They laugh*

IRMA: And then we started talking about fathers and mothers and eventually he told me this story about his Dad, and this story was what made me love him.

*Jorge steps into a spotlight*

JORGE: My father left my mother was I was little, but one day when I was five, my mother told me I was going to meet him. She told me to –

JORGE'S MOTHER: Look sharp and behave yourself.

JORGE: The plan was that my mother would leave me on a street corner, and my father would pick me up, and we'd maybe have a meal together, and then he would leave me back on the street corner for my Mom. So I decided I better look sharp for my Dad, so I washed my sneakers in the bathtub with shampoo and put them in the sun to dry. And then my mother left me at the corner. But he didn't come. I waited and waited and the skies darkened and then it started to rain. I waited more and I was starting to get scared. Cars drove by, but nobody picked me up. It rained harder and harder and then I noticed my shoes. My shoes began to foam up.

*On the screen we see a child's sneakers, with soap bubbling up out of them.*

JORGE: I hadn't rinsed the shampoo enough, and I felt like a fool. A clown, with his foaming shoes. And I was just about to rub them in the dirt, or do anything to make them stop foaming, when a car pulled up to the corner and a man got out.

JORGE'S DAD: Hello Jorge? I am your father.

JORGE: (suddenly five) Hello.

JORGE'S DAD: What's going on with your shoes?

JORGE: I don't know.

JORGE'S DAD: Shoes don't normally do that.

JORGE: And I wanted to say that I had been cleaning my shoes to look good for him, but I didn't know how to say that so I just started crying out of shame.

JORGE'S DAD: Hey. Hey now. I like it. I love it! I wish my shoes foamed just like that. Do you know where I can get a pair?

JORGE: (feeling better) No.

JORGE'S DAD: Fair enough. Let's keep them special for you. Are you hungry?

*Jorge nods. His Dad leads his younger self off. The lights change back and Jorge is sitting, talking to Irma.*

JORGE: And we went and had shrimp cocktail and I never saw him again.

IRMA: Oh. Where did he go?

JORGE: I don't know that. But I know he lied to me. He didn't like my shoes. Who would want shoes that foamed up like that?

IRMA: You were trying to look good for your Dad. Your Mom told you to!

JORGE: Yeah. But after that I decided to be a cooler boy and not try so hard for things.

IRMA: I'm sorry.

*Small pause.*

IRMA: I have to get back.

*She stands.*

JORGE: I guess I'll never see you again.

*Irma turns to leave and turns back*

IRMA: You could visit me.

JORGE: What?

IRMA: You could visit me in our field, maybe, beside the broken crop duster that crashed there. You could come later tonight, maybe? I can give you directions.  
(out) I gave him directions.

JORGE: I'll wait all night. All year, if I have to.

IRMA: (out) I wasn't used to romantic talk. (to him) No. It won't take that long.

JORGE: Okay...

IRMA: And I wanted to tell him that all my life I also tried to do things that made people stay, but that none of them had worked out either, but instead I just said – (to Jorge) Look sharp and behave yourself. (out) Like his mom said, but I didn't say it in Spanish right so it wasn't funny, if it ever was. He didn't get it. He just said -

JORGE: Okay.

*Irma steps away and Aggie joins her.*

AGGIE: AND SO IRMA'S FORBIDDEN LOVE BEGAN!

IRMA: Okay.

AGGIE: Secret and sweet, like chocolate in the night!

IRMA: It was nice.

AGGIE: FORBIDDEN!

*Jorge is back. He runs his hands over her body and kisses her neck. A field of stars appear on the screen.*

IRMA: When Jorge visited in the evening, we would lie in the back of his truck and touch each other's bodies gently, like burn victims.

JORGE: You don't have to be so nervous.

IRMA: I'm not.

JORGE: Don't you want to leave this place?

IRMA: I think so.

JORGE: So even if your father finds out about us, the worst thing that can happen is that we have to go away.

IRMA: But then we can't come back, really.

JORGE: Why would you want to?

IRMA: Well, I would miss my mother and my sister.

JORGE: But Irma, you could visit them secretly, like we are doing right now.

IRMA: I don't know.

JORGE: We are 18 and in love. We don't need our mothers so much anymore.

*Irma frowns. Jorge pulls her close.*

JORGE: Look at all these stars.

IRMA: Yeah.

JORGE: It's like a star museum out here. All of them, for the ages, kept in their place.  
You could be the curator. You would take care of all the stars.

IRMA: I'd rather not.

JORGE: I was just saying stuff.

IRMA: I'm serious. I'm not good at keeping things safe.

JORGE: I didn't mean it for real, it was just a thing to say.

IRMA: I can't be the curator of anything.

JORGE: Okay, Irma. I understand! You don't have to take care of the stars!

IRMA: I meant to tell him that I wasn't good at keeping promises or secrets or anything safe. I kept meaning to tell Jorge things.

*The stage goes dark. Jorge lights a candle.*

IRMA: On our wedding day, the Justice of the Peace got lost trying to find the farm, so it was late at night before he got there. Jorge had brought a candle. I leaned over to sign my name and my veil caught fire. Jorge grabbed it and threw it to the ground.

*A flaming veil flies up onto the screen, falls again.*

JUSTICE: Phew! You are a lucky girl!

IRMA: He pronounced us man and wife and Jorge grabbed my hand and we ran and ran.

*They run! Father and Mother enter the kitchen behind Irma. They arrive there. The news has just been dropped.*

IRMA: But eventually, we had to tell my parents.

*Beat*

*Mother takes a small sob and turns her chair, looking away. Father comes up to Irma silently and then suddenly slaps her face.*

*Jorge grabs Father, pushing him against a wall.*

JORGE: I'll kill you if you do it again.

*Irma runs to her mother and hugs her hard. Father shoves Jorge off.*

MOTHER: Do you love him, Irma?

IRMA: Yes. And don't worry, we're leaving!

FATHER: You're not going anywhere. You will live in the house next door, and work for me. And if you do not, I will turn this one over to the police. And the police will sooner shoot a greasy narco in the head than bother with the paperwork of processing him.

*They all stare at him. He nods and leaves the house. Pause. Mother jumps up.*

MOTHER: Who's hungry? Cheese bun? Rhubarb platz?

IRMA: Thank you.

JORGE: Thank you very much.

*Mother grabs their hands and prays aloud.*

MOTHER: May God grant you happiness and an everlasting love. *(to Irma)*  
Congratulations.

IRMA: She said congratulations.

JORGE: Thank you for the gift of your daughter.

MOTHER: You be sure to cherish that gift.

JORGE: I will.

*Father re-enters and loudly clears his throat.*

FATHER: You are no longer welcome in my home.

*Mother bows her head. Irma and Jorge stand.*

IRMA: We walked the dark little path to our new house.

JORGE: Do you believe what the Justice of the Peace said? That you are a lucky girl?

IRMA: I looked for the Sierra Madre Mountains in the distance, but I couldn't see them in the darkness.

JORGE: Irma?

IRMA: And I squeezed his hand, and he was kind enough to take that as an answer.

*They go in the house.*

IRMA: And we moved into the house, and Jorge went to work taking care of the cows in the campo. We got the house for free, but Jorge wasn't making any money, and he didn't like that. So he'd leave, to do his cars and I guess other stuff too, I know now. And every time he came back, he hated it a little more.

*Aggie enters.*

AGGIE: Okay! Two weeks after we moved to Mexico, Irma pronounced herself dead.

IRMA: Not this!

AGGIE: She was only 13! My age!

IRMA: Aggie!

AGGIE: We need something for before.

IRMA: Before what?

AGGIE: Before! Jorge -

IRMA: Don't spoil it!

AGGIE: Sorry.

IRMA: Spoiler! (to the audience) I was thirteen years old, the same age that Aggie is now.

*Aggie bows.*

AGGIE: Thank you!

IRMA: And my parents took me to the doctor because I thought that I was dead.

*Irma sits. Her mother and the doctor are there.*

MOTHER: She says she's dead. Nothing will convince her otherwise.

DOCTOR: Let me speak to her.

*The Doctor takes a small revolver out of his pocket and examines it, before putting it on the table.*

DOCTOR: What was your life like when you were alive?

IRMA: I don't know.

DOCTOR: Is this your life after death?

IRMA: Yes, I think so.

DOCTOR: How did you die?

IRMA: I don't know.

DOCTOR: Food poisoning?

IRMA: Maybe.

DOCTOR: Snake bite?

IRMA: No.

DOCTOR: Heart attack?

IRMA: I'm not sure.

DOCTOR: Do you feel that you were born and lived and then you died, or that you never lived at all?

IRMA: I was born and lived and then died.

DOCTOR: Are you in heaven?

IRMA: I don't know.

DOCTOR: What makes you feel like you're dead? Are you numb in some parts of your body?

IRMA: No.

DOCTOR: Did you see yourself die?

IRMA: Yes.

DOCTOR: How did you die?

IRMA: I'm not sure.

DOCTOR: But you saw yourself die?

IRMA: Yes.

DOCTOR: In a dream?

IRMA: Maybe.

*Small pause.*

DOCTOR: Well, if you still feel that you are dead in six weeks, will you please come back and see me?

IRMA: Okay.

MOTHER: You are getting too old for games, Irma Voth! Soon you will be a wife and mother! Will you come alive for that?

IRMA: (out) And now that I'm a wife, am I alive now? More alive? Or less?

AGGIE: And then Jorge left.

*Jorge walks through with his suitcase. Irma pushes him back.*

JORGE: You smother me, Irma!

IRMA: How can that be? I hardly see you!

JORGE: The better for you!

IRMA: Why? Why are you leaving?

JORGE: People always lie about their reasons for leaving, but what difference does it make anyway?

IRMA: How am I supposed to be a better wife without a husband to practice with?

JORGE: That is the kind of question that contributes to your loneliness.

IRMA: Why are you acting so strange?

JORGE: I'm not.

IRMA: Where do you go all the time?

JORGE: Don't ask questions.

IRMA: Why are you trying to be a tough guy, instead of just Jorge?

JORGE: Please stop.

IRMA: Stop what?

JORGE: Stop talking, stop shivering, stop blocking the door, stop crying, and stop loving me.

*Jorge exits*

IRMA: And he left me.

*The lights slowly fade. Irma turns on a flashlight.*

IRMA: He was all I had, and now I'm all alone. And if he never comes back, no Mennonite boy will want me, so I'll be alone forever. The last thing he gave me was a flashlight, one of the big ones with three C batteries in it. Which is good. Because our house doesn't have power, and this is a very dark, pitch-black part of the world.

*The stage goes dark, leaving Irma only her flashlight. She shines it in her face and then clicks it off.*

*A beat of darkness.*

*It's replaced by a huge spotlight. Diego walks into the light. We see Elias and Wilson as well, with a camera and sound equipment. Aggie appears with Irma.*

AGGIE: Irma!

IRMA: Who is that?

AGGIE: It's filmmakers, Irma! Filmmakers!

IRMA: Filmmakers?

AGGIE: Filmmakers from Mexico City are moving into our cousin's old house and we aren't supposed to talk to them or acknowledge them whatsoever!

IRMA: Of course not.

AGGIE: Filmmakers! Here! Isn't it inspiring?

IRMA: Is it.

AGGIE: Irma, I have a new dream.

IRMA: What's your new dream?

AGGIE: I want to be a singer of Cancionnes Rancheras! I will sing of heartbreak and unfaithful husbands!

IRMA: You aren't supposed to be here.

AGGIE: I snuck over! If it's even sneaking because Mom knows I'm here and she sent this jam. And this.

*She kisses her on the cheek.*

AGGIE: Oh! Also this!

*She produces a small baby sleeper.*

AGGIE: Mom said you wore this if you were a baby.

IRMA: *When* you were a baby.

AGGIE: When. English is such a prick.

IRMA: I miss you so much, Aggie.

AGGIE: I miss you!

IRMA: Are you still practicing your swears under the blankets?

AGGIE: No.

*Small Pause.*

AGGIE: Shit!

*The girls giggle.*

IRMA: Look, Dad is going to talk to the director.

AGGIE: (whispers) Shit.

*Dad walks over, into the spotlight, and harangues Diego.*

FATHER: You there! Is that your dog?

*One of the actors slumps to the ground and becomes the dog, loyally at Diego's side.*

DIEGO: He is mine, I am his. We belong to each other.

FATHER: I better not see that dog attacking my cows.

DIEGO: This would not happen. This dog was once a fighting dog, but he is haunted by the violence of those days. We are blood brothers, he and I. Both of us soldiers turned artist. Truly, his soul is gentle.

FATHER: And he's here for protection?

DIEGO: No, he integral to the film. He will play as the family's beloved pet.

FATHER: No family around here would have a Mexican fighting dog.

DIEGO: Ah, but this one has a gentle soul.

FATHER: And animals don't have souls. Not knowing that is but the first sign that you have no idea what you're doing.

DIEGO: Dogs have souls. A tree has a soul.

*He scoffs*

FATHER: I know your sort. Artists.

DIEGO: Yes. We make art here.

FATHER: Let me tell you something about art.

DIEGO: Yes, please!

FATHER: Art is a lie. It is a beautiful cake, but when you bite into it, the cake is full of shit.

*Diego stares.*

FATHER: If I see that dog in my field, I'll shoot it.

DOG: WHIMPER!

*He walks off, past the girls. Diego stares a bit and then waves his crew back into the house.*

AGGIE: That's Diego.

IRMA: Diego.

AGGIE: I heard Father say that he invested all of his own money into his art and he says he wants to make a beautiful film about our beautiful people.

IRMA: The beautiful people.

AGGIE: He says he has nothing but respect and affection for the Mennonites.

IRMA: Yeah, well. Wait til he gets to know us.

*Music is played offstage. We hear laughter.*

AGGIE: Is that music?

IRMA: And laughter.

AGGIE: Dad is not gonna like that.

IRMA: No ma'am.

*Aggie puts her head on Irma's shoulder.*

AGGIE: Can I come and live with you, Irma?

IRMA: If you want a quick and easy way to complicate your life forever.

AGGIE: Maybe I could live with you secretly.

*Irma frowns. We hear cattle lowing in the background.*

AGGIE: The cows are practicing English.

IRMA: What are they saying?

AGGIE: Help!

*They giggle together. Fade to black.*

IRMA: The next day I made a deal with God that I could observe the filmmakers, but not talk to them. I was standing in the field observing them, when I noticed their dog, charging at me, shooting sparks from his eyes and mouth.

DIEGO: Oveja! Oveja!

IRMA: And that's how I met Diego and broke my deal with God.

*Diego manages to control the dog.*

DIEGO: Hello.

IRMA: We're speaking Spanish now.

DIEGO: Do you live here?

IRMA: In that house there.

DIEGO: I am sorry for my dog. He was once a fighting dog.

IRMA: I know. I heard you talking to my Father.

DIEGO: Your father?

IRMA: Yes. I'm Irma. You're Diego.

DIEGO: Yes. May I ask, what languages do you speak, Irma?

IRMA: German, Spanish and English. It's Low German. Plattdeutch. Basically, only Mennonites speak it anymore.

DIEGO: Do you want a job?

IRMA: I don't know. I have the cows. And I'm a wife.

DIEGO: How old are you, Irma?

IRMA: I'm nineteen.

DIEGO: And you're married?

IRMA: For a year now.

DIEGO: Where is your husband?

IRMA: In the city.

DIEGO: Which city?

IRMA: Chihuahua maybe. Or Juarez.

*Pause*

DIEGO: Would you like to make some extra money as a translator?

IRMA: What would I have to do?

DIEGO: My lead actress is a Mennonite, like you. She does not speak Spanish. You will tell her what to say.

IRMA: Okay.

DIEGO: There will be subtitles, you understand, so the words do not matter. They could be saying "I have worms, you have worms" but I want the actress to know what she is saying, so that the emotional response is genuine.

IRMA: Okay.

DIEGO: I looked all over the world for this woman. I wanted her to be beautiful, but not beautiful. Her face should feel at home on an ancient coin. I want her eyes to harm me. She should be too big for her body, so that she is squeezed out through here.

*He touches her forehead.*

DIEGO: And here too.

*He touches her throat.*

DIEGO: But especially here.

*He covers her eyes for a moment.*

IRMA: And you found her?

DIEGO: In Germany. In a very small village. There was a French woman, but she was too beautiful. Why don't you come inside and meet the crew. I'll make you an espresso.

IRMA: No! I have to get back.

*She points.*

DIEGO: To the cornfield?

IRMA: No. I –

DIEGO: Irma. Do you feel we can rebel?

IRMA: I don't know what you're asking me.

DIEGO: Do you feel we can rebel against our oppressors, without losing our love and our tolerance and our ability to forgive?

*Small pause*

IRMA: I don't know.

*He smiles.*

DIEGO: Perfect. You will be perfect.

*Irma smiles tightly*

DIEGO: Tomorrow, Miguel will get Marjike from the airport, and when she is rested, we will make the movie. Sound good?

*He nods and exits.*

IRMA: Why not? What did it matter what my father said anymore? I could save money. Find Jorge. Make him keep me. It doesn't matter what Father thinks anymore. Or God for that matter. But, if I'm not guided by my God and my father, Who am I?

*Blackout.*

IRMA: The next day Aggie and I had one of our speed conversations. It's a silly thing we do, to make it seem like our imposed separation is not a source of never ending heartbreak and an abomination of what is just and loving.

*The two girls walk up to a bush and speak very quickly.*

AGGIE: Translating? Are you crazy?? Dad already hates them!

IRMA: But I can use the money to go to Juarez and Chihuahua and maybe find Jorge and save my marriage!

AGGIE: Can I come and live with you?

IRMA: You have to go home or you'll be in deep shit.

*Irma walks away.*

IRMA: And I ran away, but I could still hear Aggie calling after me.

AGGIE: I wanna live with you! I wanna run away! Irma!

*From a distance*

AGGIE: Where's Katie?

*Irma freezes, then runs off. There is a knock at the door. Miguel is there, in his giant sneakers.*

MIGUEL: Hello I am Miguel. I am Diego's assistant.

IRMA: He said in Spanish. (*To him*) I'm Irma.

MIGUEL: Hello! Diego says to please and thank you come to the house immediately.

IRMA: I can't. I have to milk the cows.

MIGUEL: Diego says that Marijke is here and he wants to explain things to her before they shoot and he needs you to do that.

IRMA: Well, I have to milk the cows. So I'll be half an hour, and if Diego and Marijke want to come to the barn, they can.

MIGUEL: Roger.

IRMA: He said in English.

MIGUEL: Is that what you say in Canada? Roger! Okay! Over and Out!

IRMA: Yep! I milked the cows alone and made my way to the house.

*She enters the house area. Wilson and Elias are there.*

IRMA: The furniture was the same as ever. My cousins must have left in a hurry. It was so strange to see people with tattoos, smoking and arguing about camera angles and politics on the same chairs where my cousins would sit. Dad said they ran away because their eldest boy Wilf was a narco, about to get eviscerated by rival narcos. But he said that about anyone who left. According to him, campo 6.5 is teeming with narcos, seeking sensations.

DIEGO: Irma! This is everyone!

IRMA: There were no women in here, at all!

DIEGO: This is Wilson and Elias and -

IRMA: And I met everybody.

DIEGO: Do you like the music?

IRMA: Oh yeah. It's great.

ELIAS: You like Tuberculosis?

IRMA: Like what?

ELIAS: The music.

IRMA: Sure. So, what's up? I thought we were in a big hurry.

DIEGO: We were, but now we are not.

IRMA: We're not.

DIEGO: There is a part missing in the camera. It is the size of your thumb, and without it, we are all utterly useless. We are using a Russian camera, but this thumb-sized part is coming from Los Angeles, so our camera is a United Nations.

IRMA: I see.

DIEGO: I have a gift for you. A tool for your work and for living life fully.

*He produces a notebook and a pen.*

IRMA: Thank you.

DIEGO: Things will happen very fast, and so it is good to have a record of our thoughts.

IRMA: Yes.

DIEGO: Write things down, Irma. It is the best advice you will ever get.

IRMA: Thank you. So. Where's the German star?

DIEGO: She is in the bedroom. (more quietly) She has been crying all day.

IRMA: Why?

DIEGO: That is what we would like you to find out.

*Irma nods nervously and enters the room. Marijke is smoking on the bed in jeans and a T-shirt.*

MARIJKE: Are you the translator?

IRMA: Yes. Hi. (out) We're speaking German now.

MARIJKE: How old are you?

IRMA: I'm 19.

MARIJKE: How old do you think I am?

IRMA: I don't know. 30?

MARIJKE: I'll be 41 in three weeks.

IRMA: You don't look 41.

MARIJKE: That is because something very traumatizing happened to me when I was 14, and as a result of the trauma, I was prevented from moving forward. In one way I have been alive for 41 years, but in another, I am still 14.

IRMA: What happened when you were 14?

*Marijke tosses her pack of cigarettes down on the bed near Irma. Her eyes widen.*

MARIJKE: A story for another time. I have a son near your age.

IRMA: How old is he?

*Irma grabs a cigarette. Marijke lights it for her.*

MARIJKE: He is 16. But emotionally, he is much older. Closer to 80.

*Irma coughs*

IRMA: I see. (*out*) And if later someone asks me about my first cigarette, I'll say "yeah, I was on my aunt and uncle's bed with a 14 year old actress who has an 80 year old son, no big deal."

MARIJKE: I miss my son. I worry I have been too much of a friend and not enough of a parent.

IRMA: Friends are nice. But you also need someone to say, "Don't inject that!"

MARIJKE: Hmm.

IRMA: Are you from Germany?

MARIJKE: I am originally from Russia, but the place I am from doesn't exist anymore.

IRMA: Oh.

MARIJKE: Have you read the script?

IRMA: Of the movie? No. What's it about?

MARIJKE: It's about agony. And swimming. I think. It's in Spanish. I can't quite figure it out.

IRMA: Right. Yeah. I should go.

MARIJKE: Why? Are your parents so strict?

IRMA: No, no. My husband.

MARIJKE: You're married?

IRMA: Yes. But my husband is away.

MARIJKE: So how could he worry?

IRMA: I don't know that he's worried about me at all.

MARIJKE: Hmm. Do you know the four-part cure?

IRMA: No.

MARIJKE: It's a philosophy for meeting life on its own terms.

IRMA: Ok.

MARIJKE: Do you want to hear it? It may help you.

IRMA: Okay.

*She counts off on her fingers*

MARIJKE: Don't fear God. Don't worry about Death. What is good is easy to get. What is terrible is easy to endure.

IRMA: Huh.

MARIJKE: It's Epicurean. From a thousand years ago. Everyone misinterprets it now. Everyone misinterprets everything.

IRMA: That's true.

MARIJKE: This philosophy will help me in the desert.

IRMA: Can I ask you a question?

MARIJKE: Of course.

IRMA: Why were you crying before?

MARIJKE: Oh that.

IRMA: Yeah.

MARIJKE: (she sighs) Well. It's true that I have a new philosophy and I am a little bit tough.

IRMA: Yes?

MARIJKE: But the fact is that I am alone in a Mexican desert, thousands of miles from home, about to do something I have no experience in, and I am feeling very alone and unsure and ridiculous and afraid.

IRMA: Why did you agree to do the movie?

MARIJKE: Why did you agree to be my translator?

IRMA: I don't know.

MARIJKE: I think I do. Because we were asked.

*Irma nods and stands.*

IRMA: (out) That night Aggie came by. She was mad.

AGGIE: Everybody hates you.

IRMA: No they don't. They don't care enough to. Only you hate me.

AGGIE: Yeah.

*Beat*

AGGIE: Alfredo is gonna be in the movie.

IRMA: Really?

AGGIE: Yeah. Now everybody is mad at him too.

IRMA: Huh.

AGGIE: He's gonna tell Dad what you're doing.

IRMA: Dad was gonna find out sooner or later.

AGGIE: Yeah.

*Beat.*

AGGIE: Mom's sick.

IRMA: Again?

AGGIE: She doesn't get out of bed anymore and she doesn't smile and all Dad does is yell and pray. Why did you have to marry a narco?

IRMA: He's not a narco.

*Aggie runs at Irma and hugs her hard.*

AGGIE: I don't hate you.

IRMA: I know.

*Aggie exits*

IRMA: And the next day we started making the movie.

*Lights shift, it's the morning.*

DIEGO: YOU MUST BE PREPARED TO DIE!

IRMA: I wrote that down in my notebook.

DIEGO: This is guerilla filmmaking. When it's time to work, it's time to work.

MARIJKE: What's he saying?

IRMA: He says we have to relax and have fun and be brave.

DIEGO: If you are not prepared to risk your life, go NOW! And know, that I will think less of you.

IRMA: Marijke was in a dress like mine, with all her makeup scrubbed off. I explained to her that the first scene would be about her family checking out a new tractor. And then Alfredo showed up with his wife and kids and they did not look happy. I waved hi to Peter and he waved back, because he's too young to know any better. Alfredo ignored me and went to talk to Diego.

ALFREDO: I have to quit.

DIEGO: What?

ALFREDO: I'm getting too much pressure from my wife and parents. It takes me away from digging wells, and my wife is jealous of the movie relationship with another woman.

IRMA: Diego went through a few tactics with Alfredo. Volume.

DIEGO: WE HAD AN UNDERSTANDING!

IRMA: Ego.

DIEGO: Alfredo, nobody but you can give this part so much depth! Humanity!

IRMA: Money.

DIEGO: I can pay you more.

*Alfredo looks up.*

IRMA: And that did it. Alfredo went to talk to his wife and then she drove off without waving and without Alfredo. Alfredo came up to me.

ALFREDO: Does your father and husband know you're working on a movie?

IRMA: I could smell the beer on his breath. Honestly, men are allowed to do anything.

DIEGO: Okay! The light is just right and the owners of the ground we are standing on are getting restless. This scene is simple, but establishing and vital and pivotal. So let's move the beer can off the tractor, please, yes? And you will speak of small things, as you examine this new farm equipment, yes? Irma!

IRMA: Present.

*She presents herself with her notebook.*

DIEGO: Okay, so Alfredo will tell his wife that he must go to town on some kind of business, and Marijke will indicate with her body language that she does not believe him, but she will say yes, for the sake of peace in the home. Then he will put his hand on her cheek and tell her that he loves her, and she will say that she loves him too.

IRMA: Okay. I should tell her now?

DIEGO: Yes!

MARIJKE: Yes?

*Irma reads from her notebook.*

IRMA: Your husband will tell you he's going to town. He's lying about the reason, but you let it go.

MARIJKE: Okay.

IRMA: And when he tells you he loves you?

MARIJKE: Yes.

IRMA: You put your hand on his face softly, and say very sadly that you are tired of his bullshit. No. That you are very close to being *defeated* by his bullshit.

*She shrugs slightly.*

MARIJKE: Okay.

*Irma faces the audience, eyes wide with the excitement of her subversion.*

ELIAS: Rolling.

WILSON: Speed.

DIEGO: ACTION!

*Blackout. Irma is revealed in the house, peeling carrots, with Wilson and Elias nearby.*

IRMA: Later that night Wilson was writing in his book, and Elias had to know what he is writing.

WILSON: No.

ELIAS: Come on!

WILSON: No.

ELIAS: What? Is it a love letter? Is it about us? Come on!

WILSON: ALRIGHT! I am writing that dreams are like art, and how in each we conjure what it is we need to survive.

ELIAS: Ha. That's why I always dream about sex.

WILSON: Art is of course a more willful act than a dream, which is unconscious and subconscious, but it comes from the same desire to live.

ELIAS: I once had a dream that I fucked the world. I was in Montevideo somewhere and I was bored, so I went outside and I took out my dick and started banging away at the world. It had no end and no beginning. It was everything. And I was fucking it.

WILSON: You were just jerking off in your sleep.

ELIAS: What else does it say?

*Wilson sighs and reads*

WILSON: Must I?

ELIAS: You love it!

IRMA: Please. I'd like to hear.

*Wilson does it, for her.*

WILSON: Our dreams are little stories or puzzles you must solve to be free. My dream is offering me a solution to the conundrum that is my life. My dream is offering me something, and it is my responsibility to myself to find out what it means. Our dreams are a thin curtain, between survival and extinction.

IRMA: I didn't say anything, but I thought it was just beautiful.

*She walks across the stage*

IRMA: When I get to my house, someone was there. My father.

*Her father stares at her and around the house.*

IRMA: And he spoke to me. But not before a long, weird silence.

*Irma waits.*

IRMA: Not before I spoke first. (to him) So what's up? Is Mom okay?

FATHER: You're involved with the filmmakers?

*Irma frowns.*

FATHER: And Aggie is spending time with you?

IRMA: She's my sister.

FATHER: She's my daughter.

*Beat*

FATHER: I am thinking of selling your house.

IRMA: Where will I live?

FATHER: I suggest you talk to God about that. Remember that I own this house, and only let you live here because you were tending the cows. But now Aggie does your work and you run around with artists. Your husband should be the one to take care of you now. Now, that you're humiliating your mother and father and relatives and the entire campo and the Church and God.

IRMA: What about the cows? Am I humiliating the cows?

FATHER: You're not funny, Irma.

IRMA: Well, you're not either. I guess the apple doesn't fall too far from the tree.

FATHER: I am not an apple.

IRMA: I'm the apple.

FATHER: You're the apple?

IRMA: You're the tree!

FATHER: You're a lunatic!

*He sits. Then, more softly.*

FATHER: Irma! What do you want from this life?

*She sits and touches his arm.*

IRMA: I wasn't supposed to answer. It's a kind gesture around here for a man to ask a question of his daughter.

*Beat*

FATHER: You don't have light here?

IRMA: I can't get the generator to work.

*He frowns*

IRMA: I could see he wanted to promise to come by tomorrow and fix it. I was waiting for him to say the words.

*He stands and leaves.*

IRMA: But then he got up and left. It felt like a scene in a movie. I imagined my father saying:

*He re-enters*

FATHER: Hey, how was that? Was that okay?

IRMA: It wasn't bad, but let's do it one more time. More compassion.

FATHER: More compassion.

*He nods and sits back in his seat.*

IRMA: The next day we were shooting in a slimy swimming pool near the apple orchard. It was supposed to be a nice scene about a hard working family getting a nice break, but with underlying tension. Diego was having a heart to heart with Alfredo about the necessity of taking off his clothes in the ancient change room.

ALFREDO: No.

DIEGO: Marijke is fine with it.

ALFREDO: She's European.

DIEGO: I'll take off my clothes too. The whole crew will, just so you can see you are not the only man in the world with a cock and balls. Yes?

*Wilson shrugs and start to take off his clothes. Alfredo exits hurriedly.*

IRMA: NO!

*She runs up to Diego*

IRMA: No! If you do this, the Mennonites will herd you up and shoot you in a field and sew your faces into soccer balls.

DIEGO: No!

IRMA: Maybe!

DIEGO: Okay. We will shoot this scene another time when no one is looking. Let's move on.

IRMA: But it was too late. Wilson and Elias were in their underwear in the pool. One of the watching Mennonite mothers came up to me. Tina.

TINA: Irma.

IRMA: She wasn't supposed to talk to me.

TINA: Irma, did you hear about Aggie?

IRMA: Is she okay?

TINA: She quit school to help out more at home.

IRMA: What? When did that happen?

TINA: I think today.

IRMA: News travels fast here on the campo.

TINA: I have to go.

IRMA: Can you have Abe talk to my father about Aggie staying in school?

TINA: What good will that do?

IRMA: My father always liked Abe. He might listen to him.

TINA: I'll try.

*Elias and Wilson splash in the pool.*

IRMA: I looked at Wilson in his underwear, and he had scars on his chest and stomach, some leading around to his back. Later, back at my cousin's house, I asked him about it.

WILSON: Do you really want to know?

IRMA: Yes.

WILSON: Come into my room.

IRMA: Oh. Uh –

WILSON: It's just for my secret.

*They move over.*

IRMA: And I went into his room.

WILSON: Ready?

*She nods.*

WILSON: I'm dying.

IRMA: From what?

WILSON: My veins won't stay open. They sometimes just collapse. The doctors open me up to work on a vein, but then another collapses and they have to go back in. Then they gave me this super strength medicine, that I had to squirt into my body, through a tap in my stomach. It was like blasting my veins open with TNT, to wake them up. I had a long tube and a pump I could hold in my hand, and every hour I would squeeze another drop into my body.

IRMA: But no tap now.

WILSON: No. The incision kept getting infected. It was excruciating. So now, I just wait. And I try not to think about it. The others don't know. I couldn't bear their pity.

IRMA: Are you scared?

WILSON: Irma, I am scared shitless.

*They share a moment*

IRMA: So then I told him everything, just everything about all the stupid things I had done as a kid in that very house, and how back in Canada we had to bundle up so much to stay warm that you wouldn't recognize your own mother. And how my father made a hockey rink in the backyard when we were kids, painting the line so precisely and how much pleasure that gave him. How we all played hockey in our boots and how Kate would referee for awhile before she got bored and went off with her friends. Me and Mom against my Dad and Aggie, and he would pretend to try hard, but I always got a goal.

WILSON: Is that rink still there now?

IRMA: No. That's all gone.

WILSON: Why?

IRMA: It melted away. It all melted away somehow.

*They look at each other. Irma stands.*

IRMA: The next day everyone was sick, probably because of the dirty water in the pool. I went to find Wilson.

*Diego emerges*

DIEGO: He's gone.

IRMA: What?

DIEGO: He went back to Caracas. I always forget how sensitive he is.

IRMA: What happened?

DIEGO: He wanted me to write an introduction for a book of his stories. But I am busy here. He was hurt and angry and now he's gone and we all have extra work.

IRMA: But –

DIEGO: I have to go! Extra work!

*Marijke emerges and takes off her shirt. She lies down.*

IRMA: Then Marijke came out of the house. She put her whole head under the pump and poured water all over it. Then she took off her shirt, exposing her breasts to the air and sun and God.

*Irma lies down on her side, with her back to Marijke.*

MARIJKE: Hi.

IRMA: hi.

MARIJKE: I think Diego might want to sleep with me.

IRMA: What? Why do you think that?

MARIJKE: It's obvious.

IRMA: You don't even know what he's saying.

MARIJKE: I don't have to know what he's saying.

IRMA: Well. I wouldn't.

MARIJKE: Why not? What if I'm feeling lost and lonely?

IRMA: Are you?

MARIJKE: Of course I am, Irma! Do I have a husband or son with me? Do I have friends? Do I know what I am doing? Do I have anyone to talk to here except you? Do I understand this story? Do I have anything to do, except lie around and remember not to look at the thing that's always looking at me?

IRMA: What kind of Mennonite are you? I asked, but softly and in Spanish, so she didn't answer.

MARIJKE: Don't worry. I won't sleep with him.

IRMA: Okay.

MARIJKE: Probably.

IRMA: Oh.

MARIJKE: What's wrong with you?

IRMA: Well...

MARIJKE: You miss Wilson.

IRMA: No! Jorge. I miss Jorge.

MARIJKE: Do you?

IRMA: Yes. He's my husband.

MARIJKE: I would like to meet your family.

IRMA: Well, that's pretty much impossible.

*Diego enters.*

DIEGO: We have to shoot, right now!

*Irma and Marijke stand*

MARIJKE: Something sounds urgent.

DIEGO: The light! The light is perfect! It is a rare gift from God! Please, change clothes!  
Hurry!

IRMA: We have to hurry.

*Marijke grabs her shirt.*

MARIJKE: Wait wait wait! Hurry hurry hurry! Wait wait wait!

*She walks off and does a lap, picking up a suitcase. She enters as Aggie.*

DIEGO: Light like this is a brief kiss. Sweet, but fleeting, and painful in the memory.  
Who's this!

*Aggie enters with a suitcase.*

IRMA: Aggie!

DIEGO: Who is Aggie?

IRMA: This is my sister. She has to go home.

AGGIE: I'm not going home. I'm running away.

IRMA: No you're not.

AGGIE: Yes, I am.

DIEGO: Wonderful! We have extra work. She arrives at the perfect time.

IRMA: No!

AGGIE: Yes.

*He picks up her suitcase.*

DIEGO: She has decided. She will stay with us.

*Aggie smiles at Irma while Irma stands dumbfounded.*

DIEGO: But for now, we have to hurry! THE LIGHT!

*Diego storms off with Aggie's suitcase.*

IRMA: You have to go back.

AGGIE: No I don't.

IRMA: Yes you do.

AGGIE: Well, I won't.

IRMA: Agatha!

AGGIE: Irma!

*She runs off after Diego.*

IRMA: You're risking your life!

AGGIE: I KNOW!

*Irma turns out.*

IRMA: Later on, we were waiting for rain. It seems like whatever nature is doing, Diego wants it do something else.

*Diego and Marijke and Alfredo work on a scene. He tries to kiss her awkwardly.*

IRMA: Diego was frustrated with Alfredo's clumsy attempts to kiss Marijke.

DIEGO: What are you doing. Look!

*He kisses her deeply*

DIEGO: Is that so hard?

*They all stare.*

DIEGO: Take 5.

*Marijke walks over to Irma.*

MARIJKE: Do you see what I mean now?

IRMA: I do.

*Irma looks in the script.*

MARIJKE: What scene are we on?

IRMA: I'm not sure. Diego has been making some stuff up as he goes along.

MARIJKE: Wonderful!

*She walks off.*

IRMA: It was a day of arguments. Elias and Diego were getting into it about politics, and me and my sister were too.

*Aggie storms on. They are mid fight.*

AGGIE: Why can't I work for the filmmakers?

IRMA: You just can't!

AGGIE: You do!

IRMA: I have no family! No husband! I have nothing to lose! You should go home and stay away from me!

AGGIE: You can't tell me what to do!

IRMA: You're an idiot!

*Aggie storms off.*

ELIAS: That man is not the president!

DIEGO: We must respect democracy.

IRMA: I guess there was an election, but maybe it was fraudulent? I didn't really get it.

ELIAS: There are thousands of protesters in Mexico City! Filling the Zocolo! They refuse to budge! That is democracy, more than this sham of an election!

DIEGO: Time brings justice.

ELIAS: You wait for justice? It makes more sense to wait for rain in the desert than for justice in Mexico City!

*Elias raises his hands and walks off. Diego looks up at the sky.*

IRMA: The clouds in the sky stayed where they were. Only the ones over our heads cracked open.

DIEGO: I thought it was the rainy season.

IRMA: It usually is.

DIEGO: Hrm.

IRMA: I have to get Aggie home.

DIEGO: Good luck with that.

IRMA: Hrm.

DIEGO: Okay. We give up for today.

*He thinks.*

DIEGO: Irma, do you think God is punishing us?

IRMA: I don't know. Maybe.

*She nods.*

IRMA: Maybe.

*Diego walks off, shaking his head.*

IRMA: When we got home, I saw smoke rising from a small fire behind my house. I saw the car! Jorge was home! YOU'RE HOME!

*She runs to him.*

IRMA: I wanted to put my head under his shirt and pin him to the bed and listen to his heartbeat, but he was busy throwing things into the fire.

JORGE: Where were you?

IRMA: Where were *you*?

JORGE: Help me put this shit away.

IRMA: And we took some boxes out to the back shed and hoisted them up into the rafters. After that he began to relax and smile a bit. I made him something to eat and he gave me some sunglasses he bought for me in the City as well as some blue jeans. I put them on under my dress.

JORGE: I want to teach you a dance.

IRMA: Okay.

*(He stands behind her, grabbing her hips)*

JORGE: You stand like this. And you move your ass in little circles while you crouch to the floor.

IRMA: Like this?

*She does a single rotation and crouches immediately to the floor.*

JORGE: No. Come on Irma.

IRMA: Well, I don't know –

JORGE: Take off your dress.

*He pulls her dress off over her head, leaving her in her jeans and bra.*

JORGE: And put the sunglasses back on.

*She does.*

JORGE: That's right.

*He moves behind her again.*

JORGE: Now we make the circles.

*Irma does some circles.*

JORGE: Slower.

*Irma crouches down.*

JORGE: What is your goddamn rush, Irma? I'm still up here and you're down there like you're taking a dump.

IRMA: Well I don't know the move! It feels weird. Where did you learn this dance anyway?

JORGE: Irma. I'm trying to improve our lives.

IRMA: I'm sorry. Let's try again.

JORGE: I'm tired.

IRMA: I'm sorry. Please.

JORGE: I'm sorry too.

IRMA: I miss you.

JORGE: I'm so tired, but I never sleep anymore.

IRMA: Why don't you try sleeping now? I could lay down with you until you fall asleep.

JORGE: I'm not a little kid.

IRMA: I'm sorry about the dance. It's just I can't move in these pants, and I –

JORGE: Just stop talking, okay? I don't give a shit about the dance.

IRMA: Why should I stop talking? How can I explain things if I don't talk?

*There is a knock at the door.*

JORGE: What's this now?

*Irma pulls on a T-shirt.*

IRMA: Just a second.

*She opens the door. Diego is there.*

DIEGO: Irma, hello.

IRMA: Hey Diego. This is Jorge.

DIEGO: Ah Jorge! Wonderful to finally meet you.

JORGE: Hello.

DIEGO: So tomorrow it may rain early in the morning, so we can film the rain scene perhaps, if we start early.

IRMA: Early. Ok. Is Aggie still over there?

DIEGO: Yes. She's fine. She's learning the devil sticks.

IRMA: Okay.

DIEGO: *(to Jorge)* Irma is a great gift to our movie. We couldn't make it without her.

*Jorge nods. Diego smiles and exits.*

JORGE: Irma, what the hell is going on?

IRMA: As questions go, it wasn't a bad one. So I told him about how my father was threatening to sell the house and I was translating for the movie to make extra money to try and find him, but now he was here and we could move in with his mother in Chihuahua city! I could get a job! I could sell cheese! I could learn to dance!

JORGE: Those are just words.

IRMA: Well this is just a situation. And you're just a man.

JORGE: You don't even know how to argue properly. You're just saying stupid things to keep me here.

IRMA: Why would stupid things keep you here?

JORGE: No.

*Jorge stands and exits abruptly.*

IRMA: He drove away and ran after the car. Like an idiot. Like a dog.

*She moves defeated, to the house.*

IRMA: That night, my father had more good news for me.

*Irma's father knocks on her door. Irma marches through the invisible wall and opens it.*

FATHER: I have come to inform you that I sold this house to:

IRMA: Someone, someone, some cousin, twice removed.

FATHER: And so, you will have to go. Perhaps your narco friends will take you in, and you can find work cleaning one of their warehouses.

*Irma slams the door in his face.*

IRMA: But I could still hear him.

FATHER: Proverbs thirty seventeen! The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures! Exodus, twenty-one seventeen!

IRMA: Father stopped eventually.

AGGIE: Did we get depicted?

IRMA: Evicted?

AGGIE: English is such a prick.

IRMA: Yeah. We got evicted.

*The screams of childbirth are heard.*

AGGIE: Who's screaming?

IRMA: Is that Mom?

AGGIE: She must be having the baby.

IRMA: Oh my God. *(out) We sat up listening.*

AGGIE: Elias told me in Mexico City the men stay with the women while they give birth.

IRMA: Yeah, well, we don't do that.

AGGIE: Yeah.

IRMA: Maggie will be with her. And maybe Cousin Bea.

AGGIE: Still. I liked what Elias said. The men should have to at least watch.

IRMA: I'm with you, kid.

*The screaming stops.*

AGGIE: She stopped.

IRMA: Yep.

AGGIE: So where's the –

IRMA: Wait for it.

*They wait.*

AGGIE: There should be –

IRMA: Wait a minute.

*They hear the tiny cries of a newborn.*

IRMA: Phew.

AGGIE: Our new sister.

IRMA: Or brother.

AGGIE: Yeah. If he's lucky.

*Irma hugs Aggie comfortingly, but seems worried herself. Lights down.*

*Lights up on Irma, as she sits thinking on the porch. Diego comes and sits beside her.*

DIEGO: What's wrong?

IRMA: Everything. I don't understand anything.

DIEGO: Yes. It was a difficult day of filming. Alfredo made a pass at Marijke.

IRMA: Really?

DIEGO: She feels I did not sufficiently defend her. She is angry with me.

*Irma nods.*

IRMA: My husband is gone. Maybe for good.

DIEGO: I'm sorry.

IRMA: Me too.

DIEGO: I, too, am rejected. Marijke is inside with Elias. I think she is punishing me with jealousy.

IRMA: Why?

DIEGO: She is European. European women are difficult.

IRMA: Oh.

DIEGO: Have you ever broken up with someone you didn't realize you were dating?

IRMA: I've never really dated.

DIEGO: Do you want a beer?

IRMA: Yes.

*Diego has one handy. She takes a long drink.*

IRMA: It was terrible. I had another. Diego showed how to smoke marijuana with his vaporizer.

DIEGO: It is important for the mind that people be able to express their loneliness. If Marijke needs to sleep with Elias, I don't mind.

IRMA: How is that possible?

DIEGO: She is a European woman. One must make allowances.

IRMA: I wish I was a European woman.

*Diego laughs and laughs*

IRMA: I was funny. Aggie and Miguel played with devil sticks in the yard. I don't see what's so devilish about them. Maybe they encourage a dangerous level of hand-eye coordination. Elias and Marijke came out and no one was angry with anyone. More beers, more vapour. How can human lives be so different from one another?

*Wilson enters behind her. Irma is drunk.*

WILSON: Buenas Noches Chickita.

IRMA: WILSON! YOU CAME BACK!

WILSON: Yes.

IRMA: Why did you leave?

WILSON: Diego and I had a fight, but he apologized and I got over it.

IRMA: I'm so glad.

WILSON: I need to make some money. Diego usually pays eventually.

IRMA: Money is nice.

WILSON: With some money, I could go to Paris and read.

IRMA: Read?

WILSON: Just read. For a month.

IRMA: What will you read?

WILSON: Karl Jung. *(he smiles)* I missed talking to you, my friend.

IRMA: And we talked and talked and I finally said: Come over here to talk. It's darker.

WILSON: Darker?

IRMA: Yeah, you know! *(to herself)* Make sense Irma!

*Irma drags him a few steps and then turns and kisses him.*

WILSON: Wait.

IRMA: Do you have a girlfriend?

WILSON: No. But you have a husband.

IRMA: He left me.

WILSON: I see.

IRMA: Make love to me.

WILSON: Really?

IRMA: Yes. But I want a poem first.

WILSON: A poem?

IRMA: Please. One of yours.

WILSON: Uhhhhh –

IRMA: You can do it.

WILSON: With flowers you write / O giver of life / With songs you give colour / with songs you shade / those who must live on the Earth / We live only in your book of paintings

IRMA: mmm.

WILSON: I'm sorry. It's all I could think o-

*She kisses him again, more passionately. Blackout.*

*Lights up on Irma and Wilson, laying together, intimately.*

WILSON: Tell me something.

IRMA: What?

WILSON: Tell me a secret.

IRMA: No.

WILSON: Come on. I told you I was dying.

IRMA: Well. I only have one. But it's a big one.

WILSON: Okay.

IRMA: It's about my sister, Kate.

WILSON: I haven't met this sister.

IRMA: No.

WILSON: What about her?

IRMA: Aggie thinks she ran away. That she's out there somewhere. But it's not true.

WILSON: I'm sorry.

IRMA: She was running away, back in Canada. She was going to run away to Vancouver, and start a new life. She disappeared into a snowstorm. Later, the cops said she was hit by a car.

WILSON: That's terrible.

IRMA: And then we moved here.

WILSON: For a fresh start.

IRMA: Yes. No.

WILSON: No?

IRMA: We moved here and I thought I was dead, but it was Kate that was dead.

WILSON: Come here.

*She settles back into his arms.*

IRMA: I never told anyone that.

*Lights up on Irma waking up outside.*

IRMA: I woke up to my family. Singing hard.

*Her Mother is sitting at the kitchen table, singing loudly, determinedly, desperately rocking the baby.*

MOTHER: (singing) GOTT IS DE LIEBE  
LEST NICH ERLOSON  
GOTT IS DE LIEBE  
ER LIBT AU DICH

*It repeats under Irma's line.*

IRMA: Why is my family singing so loudly like that at 2 in the morning? And I listened to another verse, my Mother and brothers singing so loudly. And then I realized I couldn't hear my father.

*She stands and walks in. Sounds of a beating come up off stage. He mother stares horrified at Irma.*

IRMA: Where is she?

*Mother points.*

*Irma walks off stage, emerging after a beat with Aggie. The back of her dress is ripped and her back is torn and bleeding. Irma leads her back into the kitchen.*

*Father emerges, holding his bloody belt. Irma turns and faces him. He stops.*

IRMA: His eyes were wild with fear. I remembered Diego's words.

*As they stare at each other, Diego's words are heard over the sound system.*

DIEGO: I want her eyes to harm me. She should be too big for her body. A living secret, that is squeezed out through here. And here too. But especially here.

*Blackout.*

*Diego speaks again in the darkness.*

DIEGO: Settle, everyone. Very quiet on set.

*Pause.*

DIEGO: And ... ACTION!

IRMA: We're still making the movie. But now, it's a war.

*Lights up, on the film crew working hard.*

IRMA: Now Aggie and me live in the house with the crew. Diego says our presence will calm Marijke. But she's not calm at all, because today she has to die.

DIEGO: Hurry! The sun is WAITING!

IRMA: It's a little out of sequence, but Diego is in a hurry to get done all the scenes that require Mennonite co-operation. Because we are running out of that real quick.

AGGIE: Because our Father put a price on Diego's head.

IRMA: He didn't.

AGGIE: Diego said.

IRMA: What he did do was go around to all the campos and tell people that if they co-operated with the filthy pornographers who have been raping his daughters, they are signing up for a first class ride to hell and enjoy the view!

AGGIE: And that Diego should leave immediately or end up with a bullet in his brain.

IRMA: Yeah, but he wasn't offering money.

AGGIE: Just, like, bragging rights.

IRMA: Marijke was doing a scene all by herself in the camera. Alfredo had already done his part, before he quit.

AGGIE: He quit because he couldn't take the pressure anymore.

IRMA: The stores were charging him double for cigarettes and his wife wouldn't talk to him. He was really done this time.

*Marijke is ready to shoot.*

MARIJKE: This time I look into the camera?

IRMA: And you pretend it's Alfredo's character.

MARIJKE: Marco.

IRMA: And you ask him, "why?"

MARIJKE: Why?

IRMA: "Why don't you want to be with me anymore?"

MARIJKE: Okay.

IRMA: And then ask, "is it because my vagina is too big from having too many babies?"

*Marijke looks at her*

MARIJKE: What?

IRMA: I also thought it was strange.

MARIJKE: You're joking. Diego wouldn't have written that.

IRMA: No. But isn't it more interesting?

MARIJKE: I should hate this movie by now. But it's taken up a chunk of my life and I'm not going to ruin it.

IRMA: You wouldn't ruin it. No one would understand.

MARIJKE: It's not true to my character.

IRMA: What character? She's a prop for Alfredo's dark night of the soul. She's barely breathing.

MARIJKE: Did Wilson say that?

IRMA: Yes.

MARIJKE: Still. I won't fuck around. I might diminish the art.

IRMA: Why is that so important?

MARIJKE: It's art, Irma. Art is art. You do anything. You die for it. Understand?

*Irma stares.*

MARIJKE: This is your art too, now. You should be proud.

IRMA: And they shot it. And it was –

DIEGO: PERFECT! It's goddamn perfect!

IRMA: Yay! And then the race was on. They had to get the film off the campo and to the airport, before my Dad and his crew could get their hands on it and destroy it.

ELIAS: I've got it! I've got it!

AGGIE: Elias was running down the hill with the reel, when suddenly he tripped!

*Elias runs by and falls off stage. A reel of film rolls onstage.*

IRMA: And he was hurt pretty bad.

AGGIE: He broke his fucking ankle.

*Irma is shocked.*

AGGIE: I've been practicing!

IRMA: And then Miguel grabbed up the reel and ran the rest of the way to the truck. We drove up to the house and we were greeted by my Father. He was backed up by Alfredo and some other campo men. Dad had a posse.

AGGIE: And then things got sneaky.

IRMA: Wilson slipped the reels into a backpack and switched to the spare jeep, parked right near the road for a quick getaway.

*Wilson sneaks across the stage, as Father and Diego take up positions.*

AGGIE: Diego kept Dad talking.

DIEGO: Please, I rent this house and the land it's on. I have a right to be here.

FATHER: Two men shall be in a field! One shall be taken and the other shall be left!

DIEGO: What is it you are saying to me?

FATHER: Two women will be in a bed! One will be taken and the other will be left!

DIEGO: Please! You all misunderstand me! This film is a tribute to the forgiving and generous nature of your people!

IRMA: I sidled up to Wilson.

WILSON: I have to go. Will you be okay?

IRMA: We'll see.

WILSON: I'll be back in two days.

IRMA: Goodbye.

WILSON: I'll be back.

IRMA: Just in case.

*Wilson nods and drives away.*

IRMA: And he drove away. He made it.

DIEGO: And the premiere will be here! Here in the campo, and you will see that it is a sacred testament to your holy nature.

*Diego backs to the door and makes it inside.*

IRMA: But as in any war, there are prisoners. And sometimes prisoners are exchanged.

DIEGO: Irma.

IRMA: What?

DIEGO: I am sorry, but Aggie has to go back.

IRMA: No. I told her she wouldn't have to.

DIEGO: Later, when filming is done, I will make sure that you're safe.

IRMA: How?

DIEGO: We will figure that out later.

IRMA: Diego, he'll –

DIEGO: He'll fuck up my movie, Irma! He'll ruin production. He'll gather men to sing songs in German and run cows into our lights and cameras. He'll kill it.

IRMA: Okay. She goes back.

DIEGO: Thank you, Irma.

IRMA: Just let me be the one to tell her. Give us some space.

DIEGO: As long as she goes back. Tonight.

*Irma nods and goes over to Aggie.*

IRMA: Aggie!

AGGIE: What happened?

IRMA: Nothing. Everything. But we're doing things too.

AGGIE: What are we doing?

IRMA: We are doing exactly as I say, Aggie. Do you understand? I know that your new religion is "Fuck everything Irma says" but for tonight I need you to go against your religion and do everything I say. Everything!

AGGIE: ... okay.

IRMA: First we go to the barn.

*They turn out into a spotlight*

AGGIE: Then we went to the barn.

IRMA: And we opened up the gates.

AGGIE: And we smacked cows on their asses until they were running around free.

IRMA: And we waited for Dad to hear about the cows from a neighbour.

AGGIE: While Irma stole the keys to one of Diego's trucks.

IRMA: We backed up to my shed.

AGGIE: And Irma made me pull all these boxes out of the rafters.

IRMA: They belonged to Jorge, and we're married, so they're 50% mine. Legally.

AGGIE: So, are you only taking fifty percent?

IRMA: No.

AGGIE: There was no time to think.

IRMA: But we did think to say goodbye.

*Lights up on the house. Mother sits with the baby.*

AGGIE: Mama.

MOTHER: My Aggie.

*She hugs her, hard.*

AGGIE: Hold me closer, Mama. Hug me hard.

MOTHER: My precious darling.

IRMA: We're leaving, Mom.

MOTHER: Yes. But, Irma, I want you to do me a big favour.

IRMA: Anything.

MOTHER: I want you to take her with you.

IRMA: I am taking Aggie with me. That's why we're here. To say goodbye.

MOTHER: I know. I mean the baby. I want you to take the baby too. I named her Ximena. Take her away.

*Long Pause.*

IRMA: Okay.

*Blackout. End of Act One.*

## **ACT TWO**

*Kate appears in a pool of light, with a letter. Irma drives, but talks to Kate like she's there. Aggie and Ximena sleep in the truck.*

KATE: (reading) I am living in an apartment below sea level in Vancouver, and ostensibly taking classes in fine Arts and Marxism.

IRMA: But, Kate! That's crazy.

KATE: (reading) You should join me. You'd like it here.

IRMA: You can't go to Vancouver.

KATE: Why not, eh? Why can't I?

IRMA: Dad would kill you.

KATE: Dad's not the king of the whole world, Irma.

IRMA: I know.

KATE: (reading) I am living in an apartment below sea level in Vancouver, and ostensibly taking classes in fine Arts and Marxism.

*She fades away.*

IRMA: I say that to myself, sometimes. Like a little message to myself of hope and possibility. I am living in an apartment below sea level in Vancouver, and ostensibly taking classes in fine arts and Marxism.

AGGIE: What?

IRMA: I am living in an apartment below sea level in Vancouver, and ostensibly taking classes in fine Arts and Marxism.

AGGIE: You wish.

IRMA: I do wish.

AGGIE: Where are we?

IRMA: Just outside of Cuamotec.

AGGIE: How are we gonna feed the baby?

IRMA: I've been thinking a lot about that.

AGGIE: What's Dad gonna do when he notices the baby's gone?

IRMA: Nothing.

AGGIE: Nothing?

IRMA: He barely noticed her. Mom'll tell him it died of dengue.

AGGIE: Dengue.

IRMA: You have to be buried fast with dengue. She'll say she put it with the other one behind the feed shed.

AGGIE: Will they have a funeral?

IRMA: Not worth it. Father will say a prayer at dinner and send its soul to heaven.

*Small pause*

AGGIE: Are we looking for Jorge?

IRMA: No.

AGGIE: Wilson?

IRMA: No. I don't know where he is.

AGGIE: You don't know where Jorge is either. That's why it's called looking.

IRMA: We're looking for Carlito Wiebe.

AGGIE: Carlito Weibe, actor and criminal.

IRMA: That's right.

AGGIE: Do you know where he is?

IRMA: I got his address off the paperwork for the movie.

AGGIE: So you know where he is.

IRMA: I do.

AGGIE: So that's not looking.

*Diego walks on, angry. Irma and Aggie get up off the 'truck'. Irma comes forward.*

DIEGO: Carlito Wiebe! That son of a bitch.

IRMA: This is maybe a week ago, when I was still a loyal crew member, instead of a baby-stealing truck-thief.

DIEGO: Carlito Wiebe.

IRMA: But, that doesn't answer my question.

DIEGO: It is the answer, damn his eyes!

IRMA: I asked why you can't pay me today.

DIEGO: And that is your answer Carlito Wiebe. A fine actor.

IRMA: Ok?

DIEGO: But a bad drug dealer.

IRMA: Oh. Is he dead?

DIEGO: No.

IRMA: That's good.

DIEGO: He is alive and so I have to pay his bribe. Four thousand pesos!

IRMA: Right.

DIEGO: And the cop wants a part in the movie.

IRMA: Well. That's show biz!

DIEGO: I don't like that expression. It excuses bad behavior.

*Carlito enters smoking, and hugs Diego.*

IRMA: And sure enough, in a few days Carlito was there, smoking joints with his new police officer friend.

*He stares at Irma.*

CARLITO: Hey! You're Jorge's wife, right?

IRMA: Yes. I'm Irma.

CARLITO: Right. Irma. Ha. Crazy.

IRMA: You know Jorge?

CARLITO: Little bit.

IRMA: Where is he?

CARLITO: That I do not know, little bird. That is something I do not know.

*He throws down his joint.*

CARLITO: LET'S MAKE A FUCKING MOVIE!

*He walks off and Irma joins Aggie at the door.*

AGGIE: It's the middle of the night.

IRMA: I know.

*She knocks loudly on the door. A tired Carlito opens the door.*

CARLITO: What the fuck!

*He sees her.*

CARLITO: Irma?

*Irma grabs a box and sets it down in front of Carlito. He pulls out a pound bag of weed.*

AGGIE: Carlito was pretty mad that we woke him up in the middle of the night. But when Irma opened up the boxes and he saw what was going on, he felt better.

CARLITO: Shit.

IRMA: So you're interested?

CARLITO: Yeah, I'm interested. Is that what you Mennonites have been growing out there?

IRMA: Haha. Well how about you give me the money and we'll go.

CARLITO: I don't know if I have enough.

IRMA: Well, how much do you have?

CARLITO: Let me check.

*He leaves the room.*

AGGIE: Irma, are you a narco?

IRMA: No. Shh.

AGGIE: Jorge's gonna kill you.

*Irma weighs this briefly*

IRMA: Mmm. Nah.

*Carlito comes back.*

CARLITO: I can give thirty thousand pesos.

IRMA: Jorge said it was worth at least a million.

CARLITO: He was just talking big. Honestly, Irma, I don't want to be a hard ass, but you don't know what you're doing. What are you going to do, drive around with a truck full of weed?

IRMA: And Aggie coughed a little and I looked in her translucent eyes and I felt all the weakness drain from my body.

CARLITO: Thirty thousand. Right?

IRMA: No. Forget it. I'll find somebody else.

CARLITO: Forty thousand.

IRMA: Fuck off, Carlito.

AGGIE: Fuck off, Carlito.

*Carlito stares and starts laughing.*

IRMA: What?

CARLITO: Irma, what are you doing?

IRMA: I'm selling drugs, you idiot! What does it look like?

CARLITO: Does Jorge know you're here? Did he send you?

IRMA: No. Okay? He doesn't know I'm here. This – It's all we have.

*Carlito thinks.*

CARLITO: I can do fifty. But you can't tell Jorge who you sold it to. Okay. Deal?

IRMA: Okay.

*They shake hands.*

CARLITO: Also, do you want a bag of oranges?

IRMA: Yes. Sure. Thanks.

*Irma and Aggie and Ximena get into the truck.*

AGGIE: So, what now?

IRMA: Now we buy some diapers. And formula.

AGGIE: Should we count the money?

IRMA: No. I'm afraid it won't all be there.

AGGIE: You're right. Doesn't matter. Let's just go.

IRMA: Okay.

*She pulls out.*

AGGIE: Where are we going?

IRMA: To the airport. That's where we said we'd leave the truck in that note I left.

AGGIE: Where are we flying?

IRMA: I don't know. Where do you want to go?

AGGIE: I don't know. Maybe, Canada?

*They stand and walk up to a counter that suddenly appears.*

IRMA: We'd like three tickets to Vancouver, please? Unless my baby can sit on my lap, in that case 2 tickets please?

TICKET AGENT: Absolutely. Can I see your passports?

*Irma and Aggie look at each other. They take a step away.*

IRMA: We're not going to Canada.

AGGIE: Shit.

IRMA: We can't hang around here, but we can only fly inside Mexico right now.

AGGIE: Okay.

IRMA: Mexico City?

AGGIE: Okay. Why there?

IRMA: (shrugs) I've heard of it.

*They step back up.*

IRMA: Two tickets to Mexico City, please!

AGGIE: The flight was a nightmare.

IRMA: I don't want to talk about it, because that's almost as bad as living it.

AGGIE: And we had a five hour layover in Acapulco!

IRMA: And Aggie had never been to a beach.

AGGIE: Six years in Mexico and no beach!

IRMA: So we decided to see the ocean.

AGGIE: And clean some of this baby puke off of ourselves.

IRMA: We came outside and hailed a cab.

GUSTAVO: Hello! Any bags?

IRMA: No. Just these.

GUSTAVO: Huh. No bags.

*They get into the cab*

GUSTAVO: So, where can I take you?

IRMA: To the beach.

GUSTAVO: Do you know the name of your hotel?

IRMA: To be honest, we don't have one. We're only in Acapulco for two and a half hours and I wanted to take my sister to a beach.

AGGIE: I've never been to one.

GUSTAVO: Really?

AGGIE: Yeah! And I've been in Mexico SIX YEARS!

GUSTAVO: Your baby is beautiful.

BOTH: Thank you.

GUSTAVO: No husband?

IRMA: Uh ... I'm a widow.

GUSTAVO: Oh no.

AGGIE: Oh no!

GUSTAVO: My mother was a single mother. It was always hard for her. She used to cry in the night. She didn't think I could hear her, but I heard.

IRMA: I'm sorry.

*He pulls over.*

GUSTAVO: How about this. I will take you to a real beach that Mexicans use. There are these tacos. To die for!

AGGIE: Really??

GUSTAVO: Sure, why not? I have been working for 18 hours or something and I can't feel my ass anymore. What do you think, beautiful baby? Should we go to the beach?

*They stand. The ocean comes up on the screen. We hear crashing waves. Aggie dances with Ximena as Gustavo puts down a blanket.*

IRMA: We had to stop to buy bathing suits. Mine was blue with an anchor, but Aggie's was black and gold and said RICH BITCH on it. Scandalous!

GUSTAVO: My wife and I would come here, when she was pregnant. She would lie on her front, and I would dig a hole for her belly. My child was incubated in the cool sand of this beach.

IRMA: That's nice you can come here.

GUSTAVO: Yes. But it reminds me how much I miss them. My son especially.

IRMA: Oh no. What happened?

GUSTAVO: I was a mailman. One day I opened a mailbox at the top of some stone steps, and a bird flew out! I was so surprised, I fell down all the steps!

IRMA: Oh!

GUSTAVO: And when I woke up, I couldn't remember anything. For weeks I was in the hospital, and when I came out, they told me they had given my job to another. I was unemployed and became depressed. Soon, my wife was tired of our poverty, and she left me for another man. She took my son, and I have not seen them since.

IRMA: That's terrible.

*He shrugs*

GUSTAVO: It is the sadness of my life.

IRMA: Gustavo was a nice guy. If I was his wife, I wouldn't have left him just for being sad and not making money for awhile. When he dropped us off back at the airport, he gave me a picture.

GUSTAVO: This is a picture of my son. If you meet someone who looks like this, can you give this to him? He can contact me with this number on the back.

IRMA: But, he would be so much older now.

GUSTAVO: Yes.

AGGIE: Where did you last see him?

GUSTAVO: At home, in Merida.

IRMA: That's so far away.

GUSTAVO: I know.

AGGIE: It would take a miracle.

*He nods sadly.*

GUSTAVO: Yes.

*They hug him. Gustavo blows kisses at the baby.*

GUSTAVO: You are a beautiful baby! So beautiful! Good-bye!

IRMA: And then we moved into the artificial world of the airport.

AGGIE: How many people are there in Mexico?

IRMA: Aggie was thinking of Gustavo's son, crunching the numbers. Leaving behind the wonder of childhood had made her ruthlessly pragmatic. While I was feeling something entirely else. Away from the danger, clean and rested and fed. I was feeling light. Blissful. Free.

*Irma reaches out like wings. We hear the sound of an airplane taking off.*

IRMA: On the plane I had a dream. Jorge and Wilson were on either side of me, stroking my hands. We'll live together like an unusual family, said Jorge. We'll have an apartment with big windows, said Wilson. Yes, I say. We'll be so happy.

*She hugs herself and the plane lands.*

AGGIE: Mexico City!

IRMA: The airport faded away, and we were in the world again. I thought about what we needed. A home. Food. A job. A school. A babysitter.

AGGIE: A cab!

IRMA: And a cab.

*Some chairs become a cab.*

DRIVER: Where to?

IRMA: Me and Aggie and Ximena looked at each other for a few seconds. The Zocolo?

DRIVER: The Zocolo?

IRMA: I've heard of it.

DRIVER: You don't want to go there.

IRMA: Sure we do.

DRIVER: There's thousands of protesters there. The place is a zoo. I won't be able to get you very close.

IRMA: That's okay. As close as you can will be fine.

AGGIE: Look Irma!

IRMA: There were men, swinging upside down from poles. Their feet were tied in ribbons, leaving their arms free to spread like wings. They must have been two hundred feet in the air.

AGGIE: It's amazing.

IRMA: What is that?

DRIVER: That? Meh. It's a tradition.

*Aggie and Irma gaze up at them*

IRMA: And we gazed up at the flying men until we couldn't see them anymore.

DRIVER: It's not going to work.

AGGIE: What's not going to work?

DRIVER: Obrador isn't going to get anywhere with this tent city. Calderon is president. It's done.

AGGIE: Oh.

DRIVER: Are you here to sell cheese?

IRMA: No. We're not.

AGGIE: Not all Mennonites sell cheese.

DRIVER: Well. Yes. Sure. I know that must be true.

IRMA: We got as close as we could and then we got out and walked.

DRIVER: You're crazy!

*He drives away. Protestors run by them and the sounds of a crowd come up.*

AGGIE: We bought some more diapers, and hoodies and T-shirts.

IRMA: For warmth and style.

AGGIE: The store clerk said.

IRMA: I bought a knife and a stroller for protection and comfort.

AGGIE: And some boy's sleepers for Ximena, as part of her disguise!

IRMA: And with giant stupid smiles on our faces, we wandered into the biggest crowd of people we ever saw.

AGGIE: What is everyone doing?

IRMA: They're protesting.

AGGIE: Are we protesting?

IRMA: No.

IRMA: And then I saw Kate.

*She sees Noehmi talking to a boy.*

IRMA: But it wasn't her. But she joked and smiled like her.

AGGIE: Are we stopping?

IRMA: Yeah. Can you feed Ximena?

AGGIE: You do it. I wanna go look at stuff.

IRMA: Okay, be careful!

AGGIE: Yeah.

IRMA: Be back in 20 minutes!

*Aggie waggles her ass at her and walks away.*

IRMA: In those jeans and T-shirt. She could just be a normal girl.

*Noehmi and Dupont walk on.*

DUPONT: But Calderon stole it. He stole the power.

NOEHMI: Power is always stolen.

*She sits suddenly beside Irma.*

NOEHMI: I saw you before.

IRMA: Oh yeah. I saw you too. Hi.

NOEHMI: Where are you from?

IRMA: I said Chihuahua, instead of Canada.

NOEHMI: Are you here for the protest?

IRMA: No.

NOEHMI: Can I hold your baby?

IRMA: Sure.

*She hands Ximena over*

IRMA: And I just handed her over. Ximena forgot her bottle and stared up at her happily.

NOEHMI: Did you know that we are over top of a temple right now?

IRMA: Really?

NOEHMI: It's a Mexico City fact. The Spanish conquistadors took the bricks to build their capital.

IRMA: Wow.

NOEHMI: Yes. They were dicks like that.

IRMA: Makes sense.

NOEHMI: May I ask, what was that language you were speaking before?

IRMA: Plattdeutch, it's called. It's a kind of German.

NOEHMI: It sounds medieval.

IRMA: We also speak some English and Spanish.

NOEHMI: Which one is your favorite?

IRMA: I don't know. Maybe English, but Aggie doesn't know it well. She wasn't supposed to learn Spanish either.

NOEHMI: Why not?

IRMA: Girls aren't supposed to learn.

NOEHMI: Which one do you dream in?

IRMA: Spanish or English. Never Plattdeutch.

NOEHMI: Because in your dreams you speak the secret languages of your freedom.

IRMA: Maybe that's it exactly. And we talked about languages and how I used to teach my Mom English words and phrases like hula hoop or Keep on Trucking, and how lucid dreaming might be the cure to human misery, and how we moved to Mexico when I was 13, but never went to the beach. We talked and talked. I talked SO MUCH. I even said: I'm married to a Mexican guy.

NOEHMI: YOU ARE NOT!

IRMA: I am. But he left me.

NOEHMI: Doesn't he want to see the baby?

IRMA: It's not his baby.

NOEHMI: Oh, I see!

IRMA: It's not like that either. She's my sister.

NOEHMI: Oh. Bad stuff at home?

IRMA: Yeah.

NOEHMI: You guys running away?

IRMA: Yeah.

NOEHMI: I understand.

IRMA: And I felt like she really did. There's different languages and religions and lengths of beards, but bad stuff at home is bad stuff at home.

NOEHMI: You are the hero of your family.

IRMA: Am I?

NOEHMI: (to Ximena) Your sister is your hero! Never forget this!

IRMA: I should find Aggie.

NOEHMI: Ximena can stay here with us, if you like.

AGGIE: You don't mind?

NOEHMI: We are staying until there is a recount and Oberon is the winner, so we have time.

IRMA: So I made Ximena an extra bottle and then I walked through the Zocolo, scanning for Aggie. I saw a boy who looked just like Jorge, and I panicked. It wasn't him though, and then I didn't know if I was happy or sad about that. Finally, I went into the palace, and there was Aggie, kneeling in front of a big mural.

*The screen is filled with the Diego Rivera mural México A Través de los Siglos.*



IRMA: She was crying.

AGGIE: Oh Irma.

IRMA: What's wrong?

*She shakes her head.*

IRMA: Are you afraid?

*She shakes her head again and points vaguely at the screen.*

IRMA: Is the picture making you sad?

*Aggie speaks through sobs*

AGGIE: I didn't know a grown up could do that. I didn't know a human being could do something like that. I didn't know.

*Irma hugs her and they look at the painting.*

IRMA: And if I had known anything back then I could have told her how Rivera was challenging his people to look squarely at the history of their lives, at the misery and the pain and the struggle and the wreckage caused by the profligate Cortés, and how just as he was finishing it, seven Mennonites came and visited this Palace and founded the homeland of Ximena Voth. But I didn't know yet.

AGGIE: Where's Ximena?

IRMA: With Noehmi.

AGGIE: Who's Noehmi?

IRMA: We should get back.

AGGIE: Can we come back here and see this again?

IRMA: As often as you like.

*They stand and stare as the stage blacks out, leaving just the mural and their silhouettes for a moment. Then, darkness.*

*Lights come up on Aggie and Irma finding Noehmi.*

NOEHMI: Hey!

IRMA: Did she cry much?

NOEHMI: She was perfection! She cried only a little and I sang her Jonathon Richmond songs.

IRMA: Who is that?

NOEHMI: He is an American. He is very old, almost 60, but he loves the world, and when you sing his songs, you do also.

IRMA: This is Aggie.

NOEHMI: Hello Aggie!

*A Guy walks past*

IRMA: Right then, a guy walked past and said;

GUY: Something about a blowjob!

NOEHMI: (cheerfully) Go fuck yourself with Hitler's dick!

AGGIE: wow.

NOEHMI: Are you guys hungry? We have a barbeque!

AGGIE: Yes please.

NOEHMI: These are my friends, Gillian and Dupont and Ernie. They're wasted.

AGGIE: What does that mean?

NOEHMI: They're on a different plane.

AGGIE: I was on a plane today.

NOEHMI: So what will you do? Do you have enough money for a month's rent?

IRMA: I'm not sure.

NOEHMI: You will need a job.

IRMA: Do you guys have jobs?

NOEHMI: We're students. We study political science and history. Dupont studies cinematography.

IRMA: We work in the movie industry.

AGGIE: We don't 'work in the movie industry'. We helped out on one movie.

NOEHMI: Oh! A movie?

IRMA: Once. It's called 'Campo Siete', I think?

NOEHMI: Who was making it?

IRMA: Diego Nolasco.

NOEHMI: What?

IRMA: Do you know him?

NOEHMI: You were working for Diego Nolasco?

IRMA: Just as a translator.

AGGIE: I carried things.

NOEHMI: Diego Nolasco.

DUPONT: Diego Nolasco has made some of the greatest films in Mexico's history. He made:

*Dupont silently enthuses about Diego under the following.*

IRMA: And then Dupont talked a long time about Diego's other movies, all towering works of mind-boggling genius. Dupont found it pretty hard to believe that we were working for him, but after a long time we convinced him.

DUPONT: Incredible.

IRMA: I guess it was.

DUPONT: I had one friend who almost got a job working for him.

IRMA: Was his name Wilson?

DUPONT: No, it was Roberto.

IRMA: Oh.

DUPONT: Are you still in touch with him?

IRMA: No. It all ended a bit awkwardly.

DUPONT: He's a genius. A genius.

IRMA: He was very passionate.

NOEHMI: Work in the movie business can be difficult to secure. Do you have other skills?

IRMA: Cows. We know a lot about cows.

AGGIE: And we're totally great at cooking and cleaning.

NOEHMI: Hmm. I might have an idea for you...

*Irma turns out*

IRMA: And before we knew it, we were on a bench waiting for Noehmi's brother in law Humberto to come back to his bed and breakfast where possibly there might be an actual job. And a few hours after that, Humberto came to his door, jingling his keys. He looked nice.

AGGIE: There he is.

IRMA: Okay, Aggie. I have to go and get us a job that will secure our futures. It will give us food and walls to protect us from bugs and kidnappers. All I ask in the meantime is that you stay exactly here and be safe. Watch Ximena and if anyone offers to buy her, pull our knife. Okay?

AGGIE: Do you have to do this every time?

IRMA: I know you feel that my words are just words, and you are very close to right in many ways, but know that your safety is of the utmost importance to me and nothing means anything if you guys are kidnapped or killed. I am begging you.

AGGIE: Will you go already? You could already had a job and been paid like twice.

IRMA: Will you?

AGGIE: Stay here and not move. Yes.

IRMA: I walked towards the bed and breakfast. I looked back at them, looking like a two-headed monster. I waved and Aggie waved back. She was watching me too and my heart was overwhelmed with love.

*Humberto walks on. Two Germans sit in the corner while Natalie sweeps.*

HUMBERTO: And your name?

IRMA: Irma. Irma Voth. We had already established that I was here because of Noehmi. We were in a lovely courtyard. A beautiful woman swept up flower petals and a pair of German men sat at a table in the corner.

GERMAN MAN: As far as I know there is no German word for kindness.

SECOND GERMAN MAN: HAHAHAHAAAAAAAA!

HUMBERTO: And you have just moved to Mexico City?

IRMA: Yes.

HUMBERTO: You're here to study?

IRMA: Yes.

HUMBERTO: Study what?

IRMA: Art.

HUMBERTO: Well, when life rains shit, art is your umbrella!

*Irma laughs*

HUMBERTO: I'm sorry, I heard that in a movie somewhere.

IRMA: That's pretty funny.

HUMBERTO: Have you seen any good movies lately?

IRMA: I have never seen a movie, but I worked on one recently.

HUMBERTO: And where do you live?

IRMA: I am looking for an apartment.

HUMBERTO: And where do you study?

IRMA: When I have a job and an apartment, I'll look for a school.

HUMBERTO: Well. First things first. Would you like a cup of coffee?

IRMA: Yes please.

HUMBERTO: Darling, would you mind getting us two cups of coffee?

*Natalie comes over and kisses the top of his head.*

NATALIE: Of course my love. Cream and sugar?

HUMBERTO: You are too good to me. This is Irma. Her sister and she are here to study art.

NATALIE: Lovely! You've come to right place. Will you be focusing on a particular medium?

IRMA: Yes. Things started to happen to me. My foot started to tap in a bizarre rhythm and my throat made a crude noise.

NATALIE: Do you mind if I ask what it is?

IRMA: I was silent and I waited for the world to end.

*Beat.*

NATALIE: Well it's not an easy thing to articulate, is it?

IRMA: I nodded, like an idiot.

NATALIE: But I love to read about the lives of artists. So many were melancholic.

IRMA: I agreed, knowing nothing, less than nothing about it.

NATALIE: The part of the brain that can obsess over things like death and fear and nothingness is the same part of the brain that allows a person to obsess over the infinite challenges of art, and produce with stamina! To create the focus required to complete a long query. Am I making sense?

HUMBERTO: I would say 'project' rather than 'query.'

NATALIE: Project, query. So serious! If I am not making sense, I am not making sense, so what?

HUMBERTO: So what indeed!

NATALIE: Do you know what these trees are called?

IRMA: No.

NATALIE: They are jacarandas.

IRMA: Cool.

NATALIE: One March I was feeling suicidal. I was going to walk in front of a bus.

HUMBERTO: My love.

NATALIE: But then I saw this tree. The exquisite patience of the tree. It waits and waits. Ignored. Barren. Unexceptional. Until a certain day in Spring when it explodes!

IRMA: It explodes?

HUMBERTO: (makes an explosion sound)

NATALIE: It explodes joyfully and comically to life in an abundance of purple flowers! Children get lost in them, cars crash into cars! People walk fully clothed into ponds, because they cannot see the water for the carpet of flowers!

IRMA: Wow.

NATALIE: If a tree could wait all year for a single moment of beauty, and stay alive for centuries, than so could I!

IRMA: Stay alive for centuries?

NATALIE: Why not! I am a student of the jacaranda tree. I lay low.

*She shrinks down in her chair*

NATALIE: But when the time is right, I explode!

*She jumps on Humberto and they start kissing.*

IRMA: Oh. Oh my. And at the end of this encounter, I had a job as a maid.

*She stands and moves forward*

IRMA: Isn't it often the case in life, that as soon as you secure one corner of the tent, another starts to flap in the wind. I got back to the bench, and Aggie was gone!

*Irma starts to breathe deeply.*

IRMA: I stared at the little bugs and tried to think. I'm Aggie. I'm Aggie and I'm bored as hell and poised to bolt. Where do I go? I walked and walked and finally found her.

*A couple tangos and Aggie imitates them with conviction.*

IRMA: She was in a class of people, learning to tango, with Ximena tied to her chest.

AGGIE: (still dancing) Did you get a job?

IRMA: Yeah. I'm a maid.

AGGIE: I'm a dancer!

IRMA: Yeah, well I get paid.

AGGIE: I get applause.

IRMA: I get money, and use that to pay rent and buy food.

AGGIE: Well, the applause I get affirms my amazing talent and makes me feel happy and confident and cool.

IRMA: Well, enjoy your life as a dancer.

AGGIE: I will! Enjoy your life as a maid.

IRMA: I will.

*Beat.*

IRMA: Aggie? Where's the bag?

*Aggie stops dancing. Blackout.*

*We hear Aggie in the blackout.*

AGGIE: I'm sorry.

IRMA: Yeah.

AGGIE: I'm so sorry.

IRMA: I know.

*Lights up on the girls, trudging in place.*

AGGIE: Really really sorry.

IRMA: We tried to sleep in a park, but policemen came and told us we couldn't do that. We had no food for Ximena, and the only way we could stop her screaming was to walk. So that's what we did.

AGGIE: So very truly sorry.

IRMA: We walked all around Avenidas Amsterdam and Mexico. We did a million laps. We watched over each other while we peed in bushes. We set off a car alarm. We ran. We were cold. Aggie cried a little bit. We made up German rhymes and tried to remember jokes. A drunk couple gave us a couple of pesos, and when dawn broke we gave them to a fruit vendor for some juice and an avocado. We washed our face in a fountain. I knew I would have to ask Humberto for an advance on my wages, and that made me nervous. At 7:30 AM, we stood outside the bed and breakfast.

AGGIE: I could wait in the park while you talk to him.

IRMA: I tried that before. You went dancing.

AGGIE: What do I say?

IRMA: You say nothing. You pray silently.

AGGIE: How will I keep Ximena from screaming?

IRMA: That's part of the prayer.

HUMBERTO: Hello!

*He sees them.*

HUMBERTO: Oh my.

*As Irma turns out, Natalie enters with a bottle and starts feeding Ximena. Aggie sits and drinks water thirstily.*

IRMA: It's a bit later now. Natalie went to get a plastic bottle and some diapers for Ximena and Humberto was thinking about what to do with us. We threw ourselves on their mercy. We don't realize it most times, but we're always at each other's mercy.

HUMBERTO: I apologize Irma, but I must ask some questions.

IRMA: Of course.

HUMBERTO: Why is it your little sisters are here with you like this?

IRMA: I wanted to tell the truth, but the truth in its plain dress was so ugly. I didn't want to say those words in front of Aggie. It might crush her.

HUMBERTO: I'm sorry, but your sisters are children still. Are your parents not looking for you?

IRMA: They're not looking for us.

HUMBERTO: How do you know? Are your parents not alive? I'm sorry for asking.

IRMA: It's my dad. He –

HUMBERTO: Yes?

IRMA: He doesn't like girls. When they get older. Something about his daughters just – makes him crazy.

*Beat*

NATALIE: You poor girls.

HUMBERTO: Natalie.

NATALIE: What? Am I not allowed to speak?

HUMBERTO: What about your mother? Won't she want you to come back?

IRMA: Not if he's there.

HUMBERTO: I see. And you lost all your money during an impromptu tango lesson in the park.

IRMA: Yes. She put the bag down.

AGGIE: Well, you can't dance a tango holding a bag.

IRMA: But you can while holding a baby?

HUMBERTO: What language is that?

IRMA: Sorry. It's German, sort of. The secret language of the Mennonites.

HUMBERTO: Fascinating.

AGGIE: What was I supposed to do?

IRMA: You could have stayed on the bench and stayed out of trouble!

HUMBERTO: What's life without trouble? One moment, please.

IRMA: And they took a second to talk without us.

AGGIE: These are strange people.

IRMA: You better hope so. Taking in strays is not a normal thing to do.

AGGIE: I like them.

IRMA: Then Humberto came back.

HUMBERTO: Okay.

NATALIE: Everything is settled!

HUMBERTO: You will stay here with us.

NATALIE: There is a room upstairs with a bed and microwave and a bathroom.

HUMBERTO: You will make breakfast for the guests and Aggie will go to school.

NATALIE: Then Irma, you will clean and run errands, and I will look after the baby.

HUMBERTO: Shopping, such and like. We can all help with the baby.

NATALIE: And in the evenings, you will teach me English, so that I may read Charles Dickens in his original form.

HUMBERTO: Okay?

*Irma starts to cry.*

IRMA: I don't know how to thank you.

NATALIE: Let's show you to your room for a nap, yes? Then we'll have lunch and speak of practical things.

IRMA: Thank you.

*Natalie carries Ximena off.*

AGGIE: That's how you thank someone. You say thank you.

IRMA: Shut up Aggie.

AGGIE: I don't know how to thank you? That's the stupidest thing to say.

IRMA: I wish I were as smart as you.

AGGIE: I pray for it everyday.

IRMA: Maybe someday.

AGGIE: I've almost given up hope.

HUMBERTO: German! Amazing!

IRMA: And life went on. Aggie went to school, and I went to work. Aggie found a boyfriend named Israel. He's a hemophiliac. I think she likes him because every little thing he does risks his life. Ximena has learned to bite and sit and lure people with her good looks. Natalie says when she learns to walk, Mexico City with know destruction akin to the quake of 1985. Aggie agrees to guard her, I sometimes go for beers with Noehmi, just like a regular girl. I kept phoning Jorge until the line went dead. I wonder if he thinks about me, or misses me. I wish I had been a better wife. I wish I'd been a worse daughter. Better late than never. But it was too late for Kate.

AGGIE: Tell me about Kate.

IRMA: Aggie wants to know all about Kate.

AGGIE: Maybe we can find her. With the internet.

IRMA: Now Aggie knows there's an internet.

AGGIE: You can do anything with it. It's AMAZING!

IRMA: And I have to tell her the truth. The whole truth.

*Kate appears, holding a letter.*

KATE: I am living in an apartment below sea level in Vancouver, and ostensibly taking classes in fine Arts and Marxism.

IRMA: Kate had gone wild.

AGGIE: Wild?

IRMA: She got arrested.

AGGIE: Get out!

IRMA: Resisting arrest. Assaulting a police officer.

AGGIE: You do not fuck with the Voth girls.

IRMA: She was walking home drunk from a bush party, and some cops pulled up beside her. They followed her, and one of them said something dirty. So she threw her lip-gloss at him.

AGGIE: What flavor?

IRMA: Chocolate Mint.

AGGIE: Chocolate Mint.

IRMA: And she was going to run away to Vancouver. And I was mad at her.

AGGIE: Mad? Why?

IRMA: Because.

AGGIE: Okay?

IRMA: And so I went to stop her. I went to –

AGGIE: What?

IRMA: I went to Dad.

AGGIE: She ran off with her boyfriend.

IRMA: She never had a boyfriend. She was running away by herself.

KATE: I am living in an apartment below sea level.

AGGIE: But Dad always said –

IRMA: I was so mad at her. I was 13 years old.

AGGIE: Why were you mad?

IRMA: She was leaving me there! I thought I'd never see her again!

KATE: I am living in an apartment.

AGGIE: Yeah?

IRMA: And so I told Dad.

*Dad appears, furious. Kate starts to run.*

AGGIE: No!

IRMA: He hit her, and she ran off. She was going to the highway, maybe to hitch hike.  
Dad went after her, like I wanted him too. To bring her home.

*Father drives. Headlights cross the screen. We hear a thud. Kate goes down.*

IRMA: It was Dad. He hit her with the truck.

*Father is horrified.*

IRMA: And then there was police.

*A police detective takes over Kate's light.*

COP: It just doesn't fit with human psychology. What we know about impulsive behavior.

FATHER: She had a fight with her boyfriend.

COP: Okay, who's this boyfriend?

FATHER: I don't know his name.

COP: You don't have a name?

FATHER: He was a secret boyfriend.

COP: How about a picture of your daughter? A recent photo, to help us track down this boyfriend.

FATHER: No.

COP: No photo?

FATHER: Our families do not have photographs.

COP: Okay. Okay.

*Lights down on the cop.*

IRMA: Later he said to me:

FATHER: Why, Irma? Why did you tell me, Irma? Why did you do that?

*Lights down on Dad. Aggie sits.*

AGGIE: Well. Why did you?

IRMA: I don't know. I was young. Your age.

AGGIE: I would never tell on you like that.

IRMA: I know, Aggie. You're the brave one.

AGGIE: We have to call the police.

IRMA: That's not how it works.

AGGIE: What if he kills someone else?

IRMA: Well. That's why we're here.

*Beat.*

AGGIE: I want to be alone for a little while.

IRMA: Okay.

AGGIE: Never lie again.

IRMA: Okay. (*Irma turns to the audience*) Is that what growing up is? Being trusted with the truth, but then having to live with it? Does that ever stop?

*Noehmi enters*

NOEHMI: Look at this!

IRMA: What's up?

NOEHMI: Your movie! It's coming out!

IRMA: Really?

*She hands her the newspaper.*

NOEHMI: Really for real.

IRMA: And there was a big picture of Diego, looking friendly and handsome.

NOEHMI: We'll go see it, yes?

IRMA: Yes.

*Noehmi squeals and runs off.*

IRMA: It never occurred to me that all that energy, all that running around, all that anguish might finally arrange itself into one coherent song. The story had never made any sense to me. It was so chaotic and haphazard, like a dream with missing pieces. Rushed and delayed and euphoric and broke, and the fake tears and the real tears and everyone being angry and having sex and freezing in the night. And now people could just go and see. Anyone could. That's how it works. I wasn't going to take Aggie, because I worried maybe Oveja would be killed or Alfredo would be naked. But I knew she'd be furious if I didn't, so she'd just have to deal with any dead dogs or naked middle aged guys that came along.

*Chairs come on. Aggie sits down. The other chair is for Irma.*

IRMA: I can't describe the feeling of going to a movie. Maybe you felt it tonight, before you came here.

*She sits.*

*On the screen behind, we see shots of the film.*

*Marijke smiles and laughs.*

*Alfredo shouts.*

*The sky rolls by.*

*Wheat.*

*Booted feet running.*

*Alfredo and Marijke lay on a blanket.*

IRMA: And I saw the skies. I saw the people I knew. And I cried. Even when my funny lines came and went, I cried. Diego was right. It didn't matter what the words were. All the feelings came through somehow. Souls communicating with souls. And at the end I was all hollowed out. There are words I want to say, but they aren't strong enough to describe how I felt. Like Aggie said when she saw the mural at the Palace. I didn't know. I didn't know a grown up could do that. We were all sitting there, when a man came out with a microphone.

MAN: And now, as a special treat, we have the filmmaker with us to answer a few questions. Please welcome, Diego Nolasco.

*Aggie claps loudly while Irma slouches in her seat.*

IRMA: Aggie. Shhh.

*An actor stands up in the audience*

AUDIENCE MEMBER: First of all, thank you for this film, and all of your work. Your genius is a blessing to Mexico.

DIEGO: You are too kind.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: May I ask. How did the Mennonites feel about having a movie made about them?

DIEGO: There was some interference, certainly. Alfredo, who played the husband helped to smooth things over. They eventually came to realize that I was there to make a respectful film, and now you have seen it, so you all can be the judge.

ANOTHER AUDIENCE MEMBER: What was it like to shoot there?

DIEGO: There were the usual difficulties. The heat, the lack of rain. But also, some things that were specific. We had a girl there as a translator, and she was ... not able to stay.

ANOTHER AUDIENCE MEMBER: Can you speak to the violent incident that followed?

DIEGO: Yes. A sad thing.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I was surprised that Mennonites would be involved in drugs.

DIEGO: It's a very remote area, and the people are very poor. There are very few opportunities. In any case, one of the barns was being used to store some drugs that went missing, and there was a shooting.

ANOTHER AUDIENCE MEMBER: The papers said there was a link to your crew.

DIEGO: Yes, well. The translator girl I mentioned. The man who was killed was her husband.

*Sad murmurs.*

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I understand you used a lot of natural lighting sources –

*Diego shakes his head.*

MAN: That is all the time we have tonight. Thank you for coming.

*Diego and the man fade away. Irma stands.*

AGGIE: Oh no, Irma.

IRMA: Jorge was dead.

AGGIE: I'm so sorry.

IRMA: And she tried to make me feel better.

AGGIE: He came back! He loved you in the end! That's nice! He cared!

IRMA: But nobody can say anything that helps. I cried for two whole days, and then I took out my notebook and wrote down my sins.

I told on my sister Kate, and because of that, she ended up dead.

I lied to the police, which led to us moving to Mexico, causing the life to drain out of my mother.

I selfishly took a job as a translator, causing my sister to become curious about film making, leading to her being beaten by our father.

I stole Jorge's drugs for money to run away from home, and so he ended up dead.

I carry all this every day, and this is my only punishment. I am not a good person. But I'm a free person, I think. If this is what freedom feels like. Everything I think, I write down in my notebook. That same one Diego gave me. I looked on the first page, to the first thing I wrote. You must be prepared to die.

*We see on the screen in all caps:* YOU MUST BE PREPARED TO DIE

IRMA: And I scratched out the word Die and replaced it with LIVE.

*We see the screen:* YOU MUST BE PREPARED TO ~~DIE~~ LIVE!

IRMA: But then that sounded too emphatic and uncool, so I added:

*We see the screen:* YOU MUST BE PREPARED TO ~~DIE~~ LIVE! SORT OF. AT LEAST TRY

IRMA: But then that sounded bossy, so I wrote:

*We see the screen:* YOU MUST BE PREPARED TO ~~DIE~~ LIVE! SORT OF. AT LEAST TRY-OR DIE TRYING!

IRMA: But that didn't seem right either, so I crossed it all out and started again. I kept writing until I wrote this whole play. Go figure. Wilson says that art is redemptive. So here's my art. You're my audience. And this is the ending.

Me and Aggie are in a rental car. We flew to Chihuahua and we're driving towards that dusty little campo to deliver a photo that Mom will have to hide somewhere, and look at while Dad is in the fields.

*Aggie joins her.*

IRMA: It's of us, her Mexico City girls.

*Mother emerges and waves! She rushes on and hugs her girls.*

*The picture appears on the screen. Irma and Aggie and baby Ximena, looking happy.*

IRMA: Hey Mom.

*The stage blacks out, leaving just the picture. Then, blackout.*

THE END

DRAFT