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Dramatic Publishing

THE MIGRANT FARMWORKER'S SON

A Play in Two Acts
by
SILVIA GONZALEZ S.



Dramatic Publishing
Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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(THE MIGRANT FARMWORKER'S SON)

Cover design by Susan Carle

ISBN 0-87129-551-2

THE MIGRANT FARMWORKER'S SON

A Play in Two Acts
For 3 Men and 2 Women, 3-5 peasants

CHARACTERS

HENRY high school student, Hispanic
OLIVERIO SANTOS a farmworker, Mexican-American
DAD Mexican national, thirties
MOM Mexican national, thirties
GIRL Mexican-American, six to eight years old
BLUE MEXICAN PEASANTS (3-5)

PLACE: A rural community in Yuma, Arizona.

TIME: 1970-1985.

SCENES

ACT ONE

- Scene One: 1970
- Scene Two: 1972
- Scene Three: 1985 (early rap days)
- Scene Four: Late that evening
- Scene Five: Next day
- Scene Six: Late at night
- Scene Seven: Next day
- Scene Eight: Two days later
- Scene Nine: Later that day
- Scene Ten: Same day
- Scene Eleven: Same day
- Scene Twelve: Next day
- Scene Thirteen: A few days later
- Scene Fourteen: Next day

ACT TWO

- Scene One: Three months later
- Scene Two: Same day
- Scene Three: That evening
- Scene Four: Next day
- Scene Five: That evening
- Scene Six: Same evening
- Scene Seven: Two months later
- Scene Eight: That evening

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

(Eerie blue light. Sounds of a tractor going across a field. Silhouette light, chest up, on OLIVERIO looking blankly out. BLUE MEXICAN PEASANTS cut lettuce off the ground and bag them. [This is like a dance.] MOM and DAD also work the ground. [They are younger.] After a few moments, rough sounds from a tractor trying to stop in the distance are heard. Lights dim out on OLIVERIO. The PEASANTS look in the opposite direction. In awe, MOM and DAD and the PEASANTS start to move towards the sound, then stop. Sounds of a tractor, losing control, followed by music.)

BLUE MEXICAN PEASANT *(religious)*. Aye, Dios mio.
(The MEN take off their hats and the WOMEN cover their heads with their rebozos and turn away sadly. Eerie light. Slow blackout.)

SCENE TWO

(A young GIRL enters in a ruffled dress and hair in braids. She is playful and full of charm. The light is slightly on her. Purple shadows behind her. She is talking to a baby in a crib, but it is not seen.)

GIRL. Bay-bee. Leetle bay-bee. Cahm here, leetle baby.
That's how Mommy called you...I'm going to sing you a

little song. Itzy bitzy spider, went up the water spout. Down came the rain and...But, Daddy, I learned the song in school. Down came the rain and washed the spider out...Daddy, I like to...It's pretty...Out came the sun and...(Long pause.) Don't, Daddy, please.

SCENE THREE

(DAD enters with a crate of oranges. He's wearing field clothes and is quite weathered. He puts the crate aside. Then exits and enters with a Nintendo game. He sets it up to play. MOM enters. She has already changed from working in the fields. She has a nice clean appearance. She is drying her hair.)

MOM. What's that?

DAD. Nintendo.

MOM. Where's the telephone? What did I say to do after work?

DAD. It's for Enrigue.

MOM. Henry?

DAD. *Enrigue*. His name is Enrigue. You keep forgetting your own son's name.

MOM. What about the telephone?

DAD. Look how they put a game in the TV and you can play. Right here on the sofa. It's new. Everybody is getting one.

MOM. How much did that cost?

DAD. Practically nothing. Beto had to get rid of it. He was getting too addicted to it. It was taking all his beer time. We all forced him to sell it to me.

MOM. So the money is gone? Last time you were supposed to get a new carburetor, and instead, you gave the money to your brother.

DAD. He needed it to pay rent.

MOM. Does he ever return favors?

DAD (*looks at her with extreme sadness, returns to game*).

He did one time. (*Long moment*.)

MOM (*softly*). Play your game.

DAD (*recuperating well*). They say Mario is Italian, but I think he's a Mexicano. (*Pause*.) Aye, Mario hit a wall.

(HENRY enters with headphones. HENRY is much like a boy of today, in manner and dress. The clash of the cultures is obvious. HENRY will attempt to make lighter many moments until a certain point.)

HENRY. Wow! Dad bought a Nintendo. All right! Give me the controls.

DAD. No. *Todavía no*. (*MOM exits*.)

HENRY. Hey, Mom? What's the matter with her?

DAD. Ah! She's mad at me.

HENRY. For what?

DAD. Nothing. Women.

HENRY. Yeah, women.

DAD. Don't let a woman work. She'll think she's wearing the pants in the house.

MOM (*off*). I do. And I'm a harder worker than you in the fields.

DAD. You are working there because you want to. If we lived in Mexico, they would shame me for letting her work. A real man doesn't allow that.

HENRY. Then why do you cook, Dad?

DAD. Sh! That's a family secret. Never tell anyone what goes on in this house. Understand? I told you that before. It's not the way. (*Back to Nintendo.*) Look at that funny guy. He's a cartoon.

(*MOM enters with a basket of clothes.*)

MOM. You're a cartoon.

DAD. She wouldn't talk like that to me if we lived over there. And *your* Spanish would be better. (*Pause.*) I'm ready to go tomorrow to get my dignity back.

MOM. They already stepped on it and tossed it out into the gutter. You know I am not going back. And you're not going back either. You're dad's been talking like this for fifteen years. (*HENRY hasn't been listening. He is wearing his Walkman.*)

DAD. Are you making fun of me?

MOM. You're not going back. You would die of starvation over there.

DAD. I don't believe it.

MOM. I do. Why do you think you're here?

DAD. There's death in this dirt. (*MOM turns away. HENRY looks as if he is used to this situation, even though he's not sure what they are talking about. There is silence for awhile.*)

MOM. Henry wouldn't make it over there. And why should I go back?

DAD. Is there another man?

MOM. What?

DAD. Do you have a man to take care of you already?

MOM. No. You don't need a man in the United States.

DAD (to HENRY). See that. She's becoming more *gringa* every day. (HENRY's not listening. DAD knocks HENRY's headphones off.) Want to go with me to Mexico?

HENRY. Of course not.

DAD. Why not?

HENRY. Like you said, I don't speak Spanish well.

DAD. You used to speak Spanish when you were a child. Why did she have it in her head you would do better in life with only English? Now look at you. You don't understand half the things I say. This is a conspiracy to take you away from me and from the mother country.

HENRY. Dad, I like everything the way it is.

DAD. Ah! What do you know?

MOM. I'm his mother and I look after his education.

DAD. You took my son away. (Silence.)

HENRY. I'm not like you, Dad. We're different. Sorry.

MOM. That's not what's bothering him. You don't like it that I am learning too.

DAD. *Basta.*

MOM. I like to learn.

DAD. It's a waste of time for a woman to learn.

HENRY. Dad, you got to stop living in the stone age.

DAD. ¿*Que?*

HENRY. Let her be. (DAD looks at HENRY with inexplicable rage. He often does this.)

MOM. Go, Henry. I'll take care of this.

DAD. Come here, *pocho*.* (DAD motions for HENRY to approach. DAD touches his belt as a threat to HENRY, but MOM doesn't see this action.)

HENRY. We live in America, Dad. You can't do that.

DAD. You must respect your father.

* Slang term for being neither Mexican, nor American.

HENRY. Who is going to respect me? (*MOM directs HENRY out to get DAD a beer. MOM stares at DAD.*)

DAD (*softening*). I did the same to my father. He is growing up.

MOM. And what did he do?

DAD. Enrique's very first words, between the tears and pooping in his pants, were "*Hola papá.*"

MOM. It was "*Hola mamá.*"

(*HENRY re-enters.*)

HENRY. And before that I was a one-cell swimmer.

DAD. You didn't swim. You were born here. (*HENRY sits.*)

HENRY. You don't understand, Dad. Can I play the game now? (*Long pause.*) Thanks. (*Sounds of Nintendo game. All stare at the screen.*) Where did you get the money for this?

MOM. He used some of the money for the telephone connection.

HENRY. Man, no phone? Messed up.

DAD. Not everything. I sold his bike.

HENRY. What? Mom!

DAD. What do you need a bike for? You're too old for it.

HENRY. How will I get around?

DAD. You have two feet.

HENRY. I can't believe this. Without asking me?

DAD. Respect me. Respect me. (*HENRY looks at him with so much anger he can't take it.*) In the ranch, we had nothing. And you cry for a bike? (*HENRY rushes out of the house. A long silence between MOM and DAD after HENRY goes. MOM has an understanding expression on her face even though she disapproves greatly of what DAD did. DAD looks at her and becomes a little boy. He is really not the*

pillar of strength he tries to be. Softening.) You know I love him.

MOM. Then tell him.

DAD. Who told me? *(DAD goes to the Nintendo game and starts playing. He glances at MOM several times. MOM exits.)*

SCENE FOUR

(HENRY is by himself in a field. OLIVERIO is watching him from a distance. MOM approaches HENRY. OLIVERIO disappears.)

MOM. Henry.

HENRY. Mom.

MOM. Don't be angry with your father.

HENRY. I can't stand him.

MOM. Now God will punish you for saying that.

HENRY. We don't go to church.

MOM. I go. *(Pause.)* He's had a hard life.

HENRY. *I've* had a hard life.

MOM. I'll get your bike back.

HENRY. Forget it, Mom. I think I just saw some kid riding it and he looked too happy.

MOM. You'll drive the car then.

HENRY. That piece of crap. I'd be embarrassed.

MOM. That's a way of life for a lot of people. There's nothing wrong with being poor.

HENRY. I want to be alone, Mom.

MOM. *No, you don't.* You don't want to be alone. No one does.

HENRY. Yes, I do. (*MOM hesitates, then leaves quietly. HENRY sits there.*)

(*Crossfade to DAD near a canal in the background. He sits there staring at the water. He looks across and sees GIRL smiling at him. She then disappears.*)

DAD. Why did you go *hija*? I don't like being alone. (*Blackout.*)

SCENE FIVE

(*DAD enters the house. He is covered with mud from the canal. MOM is trying to play Nintendo.*)

DAD. I saw her.

MOM. You didn't see anybody.

DAD. I see her every time I clean out the canals. (*Silence. DAD is distraught again.*)

MOM. I don't know why I listened to you. No pictures, no talking about her. As if she was never alive. You even made me bury her far away.

DAD. I wanted her in Mexican soil.

MOM. This was once Mexican soil.

DAD. I have no worth here, so she couldn't stay.

MOM. Tell Henry about her now.

DAD. No. You know how I get. He'll think I'm weak.

(*HENRY enters. DAD stares at him. HENRY eyes DAD's muddy appearance.*)

HENRY. How come when I come in *that dirty*, I get in trouble? (*Silence. HENRY looks around.*) The silent treatment.

MOM. I'll get some towels. (*MOM exits. HENRY and DAD stare at each other.*)

HENRY. Hi, Pop.

DAD. Pop? What happened to papá?

HENRY. Yeah, what happened to you?

DAD. What do you got in that bag?

HENRY. Fish.

DAD. From where?

HENRY. The canal.

DAD. I told you not to go to the canals.

HENRY. Dad, this toxic waste could be dinner.

DAD. Don't go over there.

HENRY. Okay. I won't go there...*today*.

DAD. What did you say?

HENRY (*puts his Walkman headphones on*). Rap with me.

DAD. I'll rap your face. Stop that! (*HENRY keeps dancing.*)
¡Ya! (*DAD grabs HENRY.*) I want you to say thank you for breaking my back for you. *¡Dilo!* For a roof over your head, for food on the table. Give me appreciation for all that I do for you!

HENRY. Is it Father's Day or something?

DAD. *¡Dilo!*

(*MOM re-enters.*)

MOM. *¡Dejalo!*

DAD. *¡Diga!*

HENRY. Thanks, *Dad*.

DAD. *¡Papá*

HENRY. Thanks, *Papá!*

DAD. The rest!

MOM. Stop it, you two.

HENRY. I know you work hard.

DAD. No, you don't. Your mother tells you.

MOM. Leave him alone. *(DAD lets go of HENRY. HENRY sits on the table and picks up a hardened tortilla. He breaks the tortilla.)*

HENRY. Look, I'm abusing a tortilla.

DAD. What did he say?

MOM. He's being funny.

DAD. Being funny while we work in the fields.

MOM. Get your father a beer.

HENRY. Gladly. *(HENRY puts his headphones back on to escape. He starts moving to the beat. He gets the beer from the refrigerator and continues dancing with a beer in hand, absently. MOM and DAD are unaware of his movement with the can of beer for they are talking quietly with each other. Then HENRY stops to adjust his headphones, and DAD looks up.)*

DAD. You have my beer?

HENRY. Here, Dad.

DAD *(correcting him)*. Papá. *(He opens the beer and it squirts all over his face. DAD runs after HENRY and catches him by the ear.)*

MOM. Stop it!

HENRY. OW! Dad, you're making a Van Gogh out of me.

DAD. Hear that! He told *me to go!* No respect!

HENRY *(breaks away)*. *Van Gogh.* He lost an ear. Well, he cut it out.

MOM. Go out, Henry.

HENRY. Glad to. *(He exits to the bedroom.)*

DAD. He has no respect for me. The children born here are spoiled.

MOM. We came here to spoil our children.