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Sometimes, I Wish ...

By
JOSÉ CASAS

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JOSÉ CASAS

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(SOMETIMES, I WISH ...)

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Sometimes, I Wish ... was premiered by California State University, Fullerton, on March 14, 2025, at Grand Central Theatre in partnership with Breath of Fire Latina Theater Ensemble.

CAST:

ITZEL..... Kristen Pereyra
DAKOTA..... Oliver Egan
BLESSED/
CHRISTIAN CASTRO CASTRO CASTRO Anour Her
HOT DOG PERSON/HOMELESS PERSON/
RAT PUPPETEER..... Dulcinea Olmos-Osorio

PRODUCTION:

Director Sara Guerrero
Stage Manager Christina Infranca
Dramaturg Diana Burbano
Director of Puppetry and Movement Mercy Vasquez
Production Managers Michael August,
Renee Duran & Mio Okada
Technician Will Lemley
Scenic, Properties and Puppet Designer ... Hannah Creighton
Costume Designer..... Nathalia Morales
Light Designer Dillon Lopez
Sound Designer..... Alex Bennett
Assistant Director..... Kristie Nasejje
Light Board Operator..... Line Wolkenhauer
Sound Board Operator Lauren Peters
Crew Joseph George, Keira Murray,
Jessica Esparza, Sarah Castillo, Lynette Hidalgo

This play is dedicated to

Sara Guerrero

Thank you for your belief in this story and
your friendship throughout the years.

Special acknowledgement to

ReImagine: New Plays in TYA

for selecting me and this play as a 2023 grantee and
for supporting the development of this play.

“We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked, and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty.”

– *Mother Teresa*

“The end is the beginning and yet you go on.”

– *Samuel Beckett*

Sometimes, I Wish ...

CHARACTERS

ITZEL: A 10-year-old homeless girl. She is Chicana (Mexican American), currently living in the area of Los Angeles known as Skid Row. She has a big heart and is a dreamer who tries to see the good in everything and everyone. The only family she has is her mother. They have been living on the streets for a few months.

DAKOTA: A 10-year-old homeless boy. Any ethnicity other than Itzel's. Also lives on Skid Row. He is a child in pain but works hard to hold a "strong" front for his mother and younger sister. He is angry at the world but also is a protector. His family has been homeless for a little over a year.

BLESSED: A homeless adult. Any gender/ethnicity. 40s-50s, suffering with an unmentioned mental health issue for most of their adult life. Dropped off on Skid Row by the local public hospital a few months ago.

CHRISTIAN CASTRO CASTRO CASTRO: A sock puppet that Blessed carries and believes is a living thing and is their best friend, preferably a *Sesame Street* Oscar the Grouch hand puppet (including the trash can) that Blessed has renamed.

HOT DOG PERSON: A Mexican immigrant in their 40s-50s. Sells bacon-wrapped hotdogs around Downtown Los Angeles. This person struggles to survive and doesn't ask for much in life ... just to get by. Primary language is Spanish.

HOMELESS PERSON: 40s-50s. Has been living on the streets most of their adult life. Like many in this world, they struggle to live a normal life. Their youth has passed them by.

SETTING

The setting is the area of Los Angeles known as Skid Row. It is the location of the largest homeless population in the United States. However, this space can be any urban space/city where homelessness exists. The play takes place on December 24 (Christmas Eve), starting at sunrise and continuing into the late night, time feeling like a continual loop: repeat, repeat, repeat. The time is the present.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The use of (*Extended beat.*) is prominent throughout the play. It can be interpreted as an elongated beat or any type of nonverbal movement/action to be utilized at the discretion of the director.

Words in Spanish or Calo (Chicano slang) are formatted with bold italics.

BLESSED is written with he/him pronouns in the script, but this can be changed to suit the identity of the performer.

The roles of Hot Dog Person and Homeless Person may be doubled if needed.

Although the Homeless Person is only in one scene, the character may appear (nonverbally) in the background of other scenes.

Sometimes, I Wish ...

1. sunrise

(Skid Row, downtown Los Angeles. There are torn tents, smelly blankets and sleeping bags, makeshift cardboard sanctuaries and trash, but they border the set/offstage.

This space is a dirty version of purgatory where lost and forgotten souls are invisible to the rest of the world; it gives off a “dreamlike” surreal vibe.

There is an abandoned and broken-down plastic Christmas tree, missing about half of its branches, that has been decorated by members of the local homeless community. The decorations are a collection of found items, sad and not so shiny, but carry with them a beauty that money cannot buy. There are also small strings of tiny discount Christmas lights that do not seem to be working. The only other objects on the main portion of the set are two old milk crates.

Ambient city noises play very quietly in the background: a dog’s bark, trash being picked up, the occasional argument, etc., but they soon fade. On this never-ending day, there is a quietness that is not normal, a beautiful eeriness shrouding this neighborhood.

After a few moments, we see a young girl, ITZEL, walking around the encampment. Many things about this place still fuel her curiosity, but her “new” home still very much scares her. She sits on a milk crate and begins staring at the Christmas tree, a mixture of sadness and reflection on her face. After a few moments, a young boy, DAKOTA, shows up.

DAKOTA stops and looks at the Christmas tree with nothing but hopelessness on his face. Beat. DAKOTA looks at ITZEL. ITZEL looks at DAKOTA. Beat. ITZEL motions for DAKOTA to sit next to her. He hesitates a little, then slowly crosses and sits on a discarded milk crate next to ITZEL.

Extended beat.

Extended beat.

Extended beat.)

ITZEL. Waiting.

DAKOTA. Waiting.

ITZEL. How long have we been waiting?

DAKOTA. Waiting a long time.

ITZEL. You think so?

(DAKOTA nods.)

ITZEL *(cont'd)*. I'm tired of waiting.

DAKOTA. Me, too.

ITZEL. So ... what do we do?

DAKOTA. Wait.

ITZEL. Oh ... OK.

(Extended beat.

Extended beat.

Extended beat.)

ITZEL *(cont'd)*. Do you think he's coming?

(DAKOTA doesn't reply.)

ITZEL *(cont'd)*. Did you hear what I said?

(DAKOTA doesn't reply.)

ITZEL *(cont'd)*. I bet you he will—

DAKOTA. Stop it! *(Beat.)* He's not real.

ITZEL. You **callate!** *(Beat. Whispering.)* I say he is.

DAKOTA. You're not a baby. You're too old to beli—

ITZEL *(angrily)*. No, I'm not. *(Beat.)* Neither are you.

(Extended beat.)

ITZEL *(cont'd, sincerely)*. Why don't you believe in him?

(DAKOTA doesn't reply.)

ITZEL *(cont'd, looking up, hopeful)*. I can already hear him ... them ... him, I mean, he should be ... uhm, he has to come here, doesn't he? *(Beat.)* Why wouldn't he come? To us? We didn't do anything wrong. Isn't he legally supposed to ... it's not fair.

DAKOTA *(condescending)*. Linus believed in the Great Pumpkin and look what happened to him.

ITZEL. Why do you have to be so negative?

DAKOTA. Doesn't make it NOT true.

ITZEL. It's just a cartoon. That doesn't count.

DAKOTA *(hopeless)*. We don't count.

ITZEL. Don't say that.

DAKOTA. It's true.

(Extended beat.)

Extended beat.

Extended beat.)

ITZEL. I miss our old house.

DAKOTA (*genuinely surprised*). You had ... like a real house?

(*ITZEL nods.*)

DAKOTA (*cont'd*). Was it nice?

(*ITZEL nods.*)

DAKOTA (*cont'd, sadly aware*). I've never lived in a real house before.

ITZEL. We had four bedrooms and a big backyard for our dog—

DAKOTA. You had a dog!

(*ITZEL nods.*)

DAKOTA (*cont'd*). I've always wanted a dog. What was his—

ITZEL. Her name was GiGi. She was the best dog ever.

DAKOTA. What happened to—

ITZEL. She ran away. She disappeared when we lost everything. (*Beat. Reflecting to self.*) We lost her ... and she lost us.

DAKOTA. I'm sorry.

(*ITZEL doesn't reply.*)

DAKOTA (*cont'd, hunger pain*). I'm hungry.

ITZEL (*hunger pain*). Me, too.

(*Extended beat.*)

ITZEL (*cont'd, visioning*). **Ambodigas. Tortillas con mantequilla. Tres leches** cake. **Pozole.**

DAKOTA (*also visioning*). A Double-Double from In-N-Out with extra onions and spread.

ITZEL. **Tacos de papa.**

DAKOTA. Peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

ITZEL. **Fresas** ... bunches and bunches of strawberries.

DAKOTA. Crush strawberry soda.

ITZEL. **Horchata.**

DAKOTA. Waffles.

ITZEL. **Caldo de rez.**

DAKOTA (*closes eyes, practically tasting them*). The **tamales** you say your mom makes.

ITZEL (*closes eyes, practically tasting them*). The lemon icebox pie you say your **abuelita** makes.

(They begin imagining more of their favorite foods, and you can tell by the smiles on their faces. After a few moments, the smiles slowly disappear; the reality of their situation obvious. ITZEL slowly opens one of her eyes and peeks at DAKOTA. She quickly closes her eyes again. After a few moments, DAKOTA peeks at ITZEL. He quickly closes his eyes again.)

The peace and quiet is interrupted by normal traffic and city noises and, at one point, the muffled sounds of two people fighting can be heard. ITZEL and DAKOTA notice it from afar. After a few moments, the arguing stops. DAKOTA and ITZEL open their eyes.)

ITZEL (*cont'd*). Why do people always have to fight?

(DAKOTA doesn't reply.)

ITZEL (*cont'd*). I don't know how we got here. (*Beat. Quiet seething.*) I hate it here ... **lo odio**.

DAKOTA (*quiet seething as well*). I wish this place would magically disappear.

ITZEL. Me too ... let's go!

DAKOTA. Let's go!

(DAKOTA and ITZEL look at each other. They want to leave but know they can't, another dose of reality they are trying to avoid.)

Extended beat.

Extended beat.

Extended beat.)

ITZEL. You still hungry?

DAKOTA (*sadly*). I'm always hungry.

(Extended beat.)

DAKOTA (*cont'd*). Black.

ITZEL. White.

DAKOTA. Mom.

ITZEL. **Papá.**

DAKOTA. Chocolate.

ITZEL. Mint chocolate chip.

DAKOTA. Lucky.

ITZEL. Un-lucky.

DAKOTA. Happy.

ITZEL. Birthday.

DAKOTA. Once—

ITZEL. Upon a time.

DAKOTA. A boy—

DAKOTA. And a girl.

ITZEL. Became friends.

DAKOTA. And not enemies.

(Extended beat.)

DAKOTA (*cont'd*). Not just friends. (*Beat. Sincerely.*) They became the best of friends.

ITZEL (*truly touched*). **De veras?**

(DAKOTA nods his head.

Extended beat.

Extended beat.

Extended beat.)

ITZEL (*cont'd*). Dream.

DAKOTA. Nope. (*Beat.*) Not today.

ITZEL (*another hunger pain*). Hungry.

DAKOTA (*another hunger pain*). Still hungry.

(DAKOTA reaches into his pocket. He has a half-eaten Snickers bar that is wrapped in a paper towel. It is a little bit of food that represents so much more. He looks at the candy for a bit, then tears off a piece. The piece of chocolate is hard and has lint on it. DAKOTA carefully pulls off any of the lint that is on this sweet little treat. Beat. He rewraps the rest of the candy bar and puts it back into his pocket.

Extended beat.

DAKOTA slowly crosses to ITZEL and hands her a piece of the Snickers. She doesn't quite know how to react. DAKOTA extends his arm to ITZEL. At first, she politely refuses

because she knows this is a big deal for DAKOTA. DAKOTA motions again for ITZEL to take the food. ITZEL cannot hide her hunger and graciously accepts this gift. Beat. ITZEL slowly, carefully and methodically begins eating the candy but notices that DAKOTA isn't eating anything. She pauses, then offers what is left back to DAKOTA, who refuses.)

ITZEL. Why don't you eat your—

DAKOTA. The rest is for my sister. *(Beat.)* She comes before me ... I'm the man of the house now.

(ITZEL slowly but gratefully finishes off the candy.)

ITZEL *(sincerely)*. Thank you.

(DAKOTA doesn't reply.)

ITZEL *(cont'd)*. **Gracias.**

(DAKOTA doesn't reply, but does smile.)

2. morning

DAKOTA *(defeated)*. Nothing to be done.

ITZEL *(curiously)*. Nothing?

DAKOTA *(still defeated)*. Nothing to be done. *(Beat.)* Just another day.

ITZEL. No.

DAKOTA. Yes.

ITZEL. Not ... just another day.

DAKOTA. Not any different than any other day.

ITZEL. You're wrong.

DAKOTA *(defiant)*. I'm not wrong!

ITZEL. What if you ARE wrong?

DAKOTA. I won't be.

ITZEL. You're wrong.

DAKOTA. Whatever. No room today.

ITZEL. No room?

DAKOTA. No. *(Beat.)* Spaces already filled. Tomorrow maybe. Just like Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus. They went from place to place, but nobody wanted to help them.

ITZEL. But ... we've been waiting.

DAKOTA. I know.

ITZEL *(pointing)*. Those others ...

DAKOTA. I know.

ITZEL. They got in. They got beds.

DAKOTA. I know.

ITZEL. But ... we were waiting.

DAKOTA. So were they.

ITZEL. Lucky them.

DAKOTA. They were here first. *(Beat.)* Waiting before we were waiting.

ITZEL. Then, tomorrow ... we stop waiting.

DAKOTA. We have to wait ... to find out.

ITZEL. I'm tired of waiting.

DAKOTA. Then ... don't wait.

ITZEL. But ... we have to wait. We don't have a choice.

DAKOTA. Exactly.

(BLESSED enters wearing a months-old hospital gown that doesn't completely close, raggedy hole-ridden and mismatched sneakers and an old Los Angeles Dodgers team jacket. He is carrying a small used-up gym bag. On his right

hand is a sock puppet affectionately known as CHRISTIAN CASTRO CASTRO CASTRO, who is “holding” onto the gym bag with its mouth. BLESSED begins to talk without acknowledging ITZEL’s and DAKOTA’s presence.)

BLESSED (*annoyed, to CHRISTIAN CASTRO CASTRO CASTRO*). Tighter. Tighter. You’re not holding it tight enough.

(BLESSED begins comically/vaudeville-style wrestling with the puppet over the gym bag. ITZEL and DAKOTA are confused but amused at the same time.)

BLESSED (*cont’d*). Do I have to do everything myself?

(BLESSED continues to wrestle with CHRISTIAN CASTRO CASTRO CASTRO. After a few moments, he notices the area where the audience is seated. He stops. Beat. He looks at the audience closer. Beat. He gently lays the gym bag on the floor, releasing it from CHRISTIAN CASTRO CASTRO CASTRO’s mouth. He is breaking the fourth wall, but he is not actually looking at an audience, his reactions are part of the mental health issues he struggles with.)

BLESSED (*cont’d, looking around, pointing, amazed*). Look at all the beautiful trees. The pink ones. The white ones. The purple ones. (*To audience.*) Do you see? Do you see?

(BLESSED walks around the stage, continuing to act as if they are at a Christmas tree lot. ITZEL and DAKOTA begin following, but BLESSED doesn’t notice them. BLESSED’s tempo of looking and watching begins to speed up to the point that it is just plain silly.)

BLESSED (*cont’d, to audience*). I just don’t know ... don’t know. So many to choose from.

(As BLESSED continues to talk/ad-lib to the audience, it is apparent that the words he is using are from A Charlie Brown Christmas. After a few moments, BLESSED sees the discarded neighborhood Christmas tree that is on the stage. He crosses to it with pure bliss and amazement. He stares at it.

Extended beat.

Extended beat.

Extended beat.)

BLESSED (*cont'd*). This little, broken, but loveable green one seems to need a home. I'll decorate it, and it will be just right for ... (*Beat. Gently shaking the tree.*) I'll take—
DAKOTA & ITZEL (*angrily*). Hey!!

(BLESSED stops and is surprised and a little unnerved. Beat.)

BLESSED. It was the night before Chri—

DAKOTA (*no nonsense*). That's our tree!

ITZEL. Yeah, it's ours!

DAKOTA. No one gave you permission to take—

ITZEL. Yeah, no one.

BLESSED. I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to offend. Christian
Castro Castro Castro and I only—

ITZEL. Who!?

BLESSED. Why ... only the best-est friend in the whole
wide world that anyone could possibly ask for!

ITZEL. He's just a puppet.

DAKOTA. A dirty and gross puppet!

BLESSED (*loud and offended*). How dare you ... why
I should ... that is an out-and-out lie! (*To CHRISTIAN
CASTRO CASTRO CASTRO.*) Don't believe these nasty

little children, my friend. *(Beat. To DAKOTA and ITZEL.)*
Please ... as empathetic and rational human beings, I ask you
to apologize.

(DAKOTA and ITZEL don't reply.)

*BLESSED looks at CHRISTIAN CASTRO CASTRO CASTRO
and then back at DAKOTA and ITZEL.)*

BLESSED *(cont'd, still annoyed)*. I would formally like to
introduce you to my companion, Christian Castro Castro Castro.

*(DAKOTA and ITZEL don't reply. The look on their faces
suggesting confusion.)*

BLESSED *(cont'd)*. Don't just stand there. That is so rude.
When one is introdu—

DAKOTA. That thing isn't rea—

*(BLESSED comically covers the eyes of CHRISTIAN
CASTRO CASTRO CASTRO.)*

BLESSED. SHHHHHH!! *(Beat. Whisper.)* Don't say that. He
might hear you.

ITZEL. Who?

BLESSED. Him.

ITZEL. Him? Who?

BLESSED. Christian Castro Castro Castro, of course.

DAKOTA. He's not—

BLESSED. He most certainly is.

DAKOTA. Is not.

BLESSED. You take that back.

DAKOTA. He ... is ... not ... real!

BLESSED. Is too.