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Dramatic Publishing



GAS

A Play in Two Acts
by
ELIZABETH KAY OTERO

This excerpt contains strong language.



Dramatic Publishing

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GAS premiered at The National Hispanic Cultural Center, November 16, 2001. The production included the following:

ORIGINAL CAST (before cuts)

Guillermo Martinez	NICK LOPEZ
Janel Salazar	ELIZABETH KAY OTERO
Frank Furter	JEREMY JOYNT
Ana Martinez	STEPHANIE BRIONES
Edward	DAVID MILFORD
Jorge	DIEGO LOPEZ
Sammy	STEVE PINZONE
Crespín	NICHOLÁS ARNAL
Carla Martinez	PAULINA MILLER
Ernesto Martinez	ESTEBAN MARISCAL
Margaret	TANIA ENSIGN
Darren	RICK EDWARDS
Tofu	BENJAMIN WALSH
Freda Martinez	MAGGIE JOHNSON
Melissa	CRYSTAL KELLOGG
Robert Martinez	TOM BRIONES
Jake	SCOTT PECK
Velma	LAURA SUNDQUIST
Francesca	MARISSA JUAREZ
Ursula	CRYSTAL MASSOTH

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director	SABINA ZUNIGA-VARELA
Stage Manager	BINKY MAYERSTEIN
Lighting Designer	ERIC KENNEDY
Scenic Design	RICHARD K. HESS
Technical Director	DAVID LEVINE
Costumes	JESSE BROWN

GAS

A Play in Two Acts
For 6 Men and 2 Women

CHARACTERS

GUILLERMO MARTINEZ: Age 17, half Chicano, half Anglo though he thinks he's puro Chicano. Handsome, with a confident and witty personality. Rides a unicycle.

JANEL SALAZAR: Age 23, half Chicana, half Anglo, blonde and blue-eyed, attractive. Escaping her problems at college.

FRANK FURTER: Age 45, young-at-heart gas station attendant from Oklahoma.

ANA MARTINEZ: Guillermo's mother, age 35, Chicana, very attractive.

EDWARD: Ana's new husband, age 36, Anglo. Easy-going, loves cheese.

JÓRGE: Guillermo's cousin, age 19. Large and intimidating, a bully.

SAMMY: Age 16, Anglo. One of Jorge's sidekicks. The mouth of the group.

CRESPÍN: Age 17. Another sidekick of Jorge's; the shy and emotional one.

PLACE: Various locations in Las Vegas, New Mexico.

TIME: The present.

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

SETTING: *We are at a small gas station in Las Vegas, New Mexico. One of the walls cannot be seen, as scenes take place both inside and outside of the store. Inside the store is a small counter where the cash register sits. Along the back wall are refrigerators and other gas station amenities, such as a hot-dog cooker and a cappuccino machine. There is also a doorway to a back room. There are a couple of shelves stocked with candy bars and bags of chips. On the outside of the store sets a pay phone. To the right of the stage is set a car in a diagonal position. It should look like a red, 1989 Nissan. It acts as different cars throughout the play and can be changed slightly to give the effect of different cars.*

AT RISE: *FRANK is inside the gas station staring at an open cappuccino machine. GUERMO enters. He removes a pinned-on corsage from his T-shirt as he starts to speak.*

GUERMO. You know what I'm starting to realize, Frank? That life is shit. *(GUERMO throws the corsage on the counter.)*

FRANK *(staring at the machine)*. Well, it's good yer learnin' it early. Took me forty-two years.

GUERMO. I just came from my mom's bon voyage party.
Man, was that a sorry sight.

(FRANK begins fidgeting with the machine.)

FRANK. Oh, that's right. Yer leavin' today, aren't you?

GUERMO. Ch, I'm not goin' nowhere. They can all kiss my ass. You shoulda seen it, Frank. I've never seen a more diverse group of people in one room since I don't know when, bro. There were people my mom goes to school with. They were weird, dude. They got like dreds and shit, all hippy. Then some of them were all nerdy with their calculators and pocket protectors. I went up to this one dude and was all, "Hey, what's the square root of nine thousand, eight hundred, fifty-seven, point nine-nine?" He looked at me all weird. I was all, "It's one of my homework questions." He started laughing all goofy, bro. *(GUERMO imitates him.)*

FRANK. Will ya hand me them powders there?

(GUERMO hands FRANK some bags of powdered coffee drinks that are on the counter.)

GUERMO. Then my Aunt Freda and Uncle Ned were there all quiet watching all the hippies. They're a weird couple all on their own. Man, it was so funny to see them with all these hippies. I think one of them was asking my Uncle Ned if he'd ever had his palm read or some shit like that. You shoulda seen the look on his face, bro. It was so funny. *(FRANK empties the bags of powder into the machine.)* Man, and then to see all my mom's family with white-ass Edward's family was fuckin' hilarious,

bro. It was like, on one side of the room was all the brown faces and on the other side were all these white faces. Everyone was trying not to look at each other. I think my mom was all nervous, but Edward, of course, didn't notice nothing except all the different kinds of cheeses there were.

FRANK. Gotta love cheese.

GUERMO. He was all excited, bro. Like he'd never seen a jalapeño cheese ball before.

FRANK. They have jalapeño cheese balls now? Boy, that doesn't sound too good now, does it?

GUERMO. I don't know, but Edward was all happy. He's stupid, bro.

FRANK. He's a pretty good guy. Lucky one too, to be marryin' yer mom.

GUERMO. What are you doing, A?

FRANK. Ah, we just got in this new cappuccino machine. I hate this high-tech stuff. I've been tryin' to figure it out all mornin'. Remember when we got the credit card machine?

GUERMO. Had to shut down the store for a week.

FRANK. I don't know why we can't just keep life simple.

GUERMO. That's what I'm saying. (*FRANK puts a cup under the machine to get a drink. Powder falls in the cup, and he drinks it.*) What are you doing, bro?

FRANK (*coughing*). This don't taste quite right. It's kinda dry.

GUERMO. Dude, you gotta put water in the machine.

FRANK. Oh, is that what it is? It's actually not so bad once it dissolves a little bit.

GUERMO. Don't you got the directions? Ah shit. I think Edward just drove by. My mom's already got him looking for me. Yo, Frank...

FRANK. Uh-huh?

GUERMO. If my mom or Cheese Head come by tell them you didn't see me. I'm gonna go get my unicycle. I'll be back *ahorita*. *(He exits.)*

FRANK. Unicycle?

(Lights fade.)

SCENE 2

(Lights up on JANEL. She is driving. She is crying as she does. She is listening to "Yesterday" by the Beatles. She searches for another song on the radio and comes to "Hound Dog" by Elvis.)

JANEL. Oh shut up. *(She changes the station again and comes to "My Own Worst Enemy" by Lit. It is at the beginning of the song where the lyrics begin. She looks at the radio in disbelief.)* Shit. *(She lowers the radio. It continues to play so that the words can still be heard. She looks at her gas gauge.)* Gas. I need some gas.

(Lights down.)

SCENE 3

(Lights up on the gas station. FRANK is fidgeting with the open cappuccino machine. He scratches his head, perplexed.)

FRANK. This thing was probably made in Japan. *(He presses something on the machine. Buzzing sound from cappuccino machine.)* Whoa! Hello? That don't sound good. Ded burn! If only I'd win the lottery already I could hire people to do this. Well, I didn't want to have to do this. *(He pulls out some instructions and begins reading. He looks at the machine.)* Water, huh? *(FRANK gets some bottled waters from the refrigerators and pours them in the machine.)* Fill-line. Guess I'll stop there. *(He tries pouring a drink again. This time it comes out as a liquid. He tastes it.)* Mmm, that's the best gas-station cappuccino I ever done had.

(EDWARD enters.)

FRANK. Hey there, Eddie, how's it going?

EDWARD. Hey, Frank.

FRANK. Gettin' ready for the big day, are ya?

EDWARD. Well, we're trying to.

FRANK. This yer first time?

EDWARD. Sure is. I've been a bachelor for thirty-six years.

FRANK. Smart man, smart man. Hey, you want some cappuccino, or cappuccino powder?

EDWARD. That sounds good.

FRANK. What'll it be?

EDWARD. Uh, French vanilla.

FRANK. Good choice. You want the drink or just the powder?

EDWARD. The drink'll be fine.

FRANK (*as he pours the drink*). I remember my first time gettin' married. I was eighteen, and so hung over I passed out right there on the altar, you know like on them funniest home videos?

EDWARD (*laughing*). Yeah, really?

(*FRANK hands EDWARD the drink.*)

FRANK. That was me.

EDWARD. That's funny. Mmm, this is good.

FRANK. You know, now that I think about it, I was passed out for most of that marriage. Hell, I didn't even know we were divorced till three weeks later. I always wondered what went wrong in that marriage. I bet the passing out had something to do with it.

EDWARD. You're probably right. Hey, Frank, have you seen Memo today?

FRANK. Guermo? Nah, he ain't been in today. Wish he had. I coulda used some help with this machine. It's a bute, 'n it?

EDWARD. Makes good coffee. Hey, if he comes in, will you call Ana? She's kind of worried about him.

FRANK. Oh yeah? Why's that?

EDWARD. Well, he's been kinda quiet ever since we told him we were getting married. I don't think he's too thrilled about the whole thing. He left early from the bon voyage party.

FRANK. Aw, he'll come around.

EDWARD. I hope so. I can understand where he's coming from though. I mean it's been just him and his mom his whole life, and here I come changing the whole thing. He's really close to his mom, you know.

FRANK. Yeah, he sure is. I've always admired their relationship. I was never that close to my mom what with her bein' on the road so much of the time.

EDWARD. Oh yeah? Was she a musician or something?

FRANK. Musician? Nah, she was a construction worker. Helped build most of the highways stretchin' 'cross Oklahoma. Boy was my daddy proud a her. That's how they met, ya know.

EDWARD. Oh, yeah?

FRANK. Mom was drivin' a forklift, and Daddy was one of those street-sign holders.

EDWARD. The ones with the "slow" signs and all that?

FRANK. Yeah, uh-huh. Well Mama had a thing for 'im, ya know, and she always used to tease 'im by drivin' real close to him. Well one day she got a little too close and crushed his foot.

EDWARD. Oh my gosh. That's awful! Are you serious?

FRANK. *Serio*. Yeah, I guess that was Mama's way of ensurin' he'd never run away.

EDWARD. Dang. That's pretty hard core. You've had one hell of a life, Frank.

FRANK. Boy, I tell ya. If I wrote an autobiography, they'd sell it as fiction.

EDWARD. Wow. Well, I guess I better get back. Ana's going to freak out when I don't come back with Memo. You know what freaks me out, Frank, is that Memo was always okay with me before me and Ana got engaged. We were together for a while before I proposed.

FRANK. Guermo's a pretty smart kid, ya know? I bet he thought you were just gonna be one of his mom's boy-friends that came and went.

EDWARD. Oh, yeah?

FRANK. Not that she's had a lotta boyfriends or anything. Just a couple.

EDWARD. I know she used to date a lot. She's told me all about it. She's real up-front, you know. That's one of the things I really like about her.

FRANK. Boy, I tell you. You are a lucky man. I never could figure women out. In all the times I been married, ya know. Ever'thin'd seem fine and dandy to me, and then the next thing I knew, I'd be on the front lawn with only my boots on.

EDWARD. Yeah, relationships are tough all right. So you got any advice for me, Frank?

FRANK. Well, I'll tell you this much. Go to bed with more than just yer boots on, no matter how drunk ya are when ya get home.

EDWARD. All right, Frank. I'll keep that in mind. Hey, thanks for the coffee.

FRANK. Oh, yeah. Thanks for remindin' me. That'll be one-o-six.

EDWARD. Oh, you know, I didn't bring any cash with me, Frank.

FRANK. Oh, don't worry. We got a credit card machine last August. Thing has a mind of its own, but it works most of the time.

EDWARD. I didn't bring my wallet, Frank. Can I pay you when I get back? (*A beat.*)

FRANK. Aw, consider it a weddin' present. Anyway I'm plannin' on winning the lotto this week, and I'll be able to buy you your own cappuccino machine.

EDWARD *(starts to leave)*. Well good luck with the lotto, Frank, and thanks for the coffee. Remember to tell Memo to call home if he comes in.

FRANK. All right then. Have a good trip.

EDWARD. I will. See ya. *(He exits.)*

FRANK. Man, I need to start enforcin' that "pay first" rule.

(FRANK sits behind the counter and begins reading a Cosmopolitan magazine. JANEL enters. She looks somewhat disheveled as though she hasn't had much sleep lately. She stands at the counter waiting for FRANK to notice her. FRANK giggles from behind his magazine.)

JANEL. Excuse me. *(FRANK giggles again.)* Excuse me.

FRANK. Be right with ya. *(A beat, then he giggles again.)*
"llbean.com." *(He giggles again.)*

JANEL. Hey look, buddy, I need to pay for my gas, okay?

FRANK. I'm not Buddy, honey. Yer thinkin' o' my brother, God rest his soul.

JANEL. What?

FRANK. How'd ya know Buddy? Wait, didn't you used to do his dialysis?

JANEL. I don't know any Buddy.

FRANK. Well, sugar, you should join a bowling league.

JANEL. A bowling league...

FRANK. You're bound to meet *somebody*. That's how I met Verna. She works at the snack bar down there at the alley. No one can handle a wiener like that woman, boy I tell ya. You like wieners?

SCENE 4

(Lights up on the front of the store. JÓRGE, SAMMY and Crespín are standing near the pump where JANEL's car is parked.)

SAMMY. This sucks, bro. *(He pulls out a cigarette and lights it.)*

JÓRGE. What the fuck are you doing, ese?

Crespín. *A la vay!*

SAMMY. What?

JÓRGE *(grabbing the cigarette from SAMMY and putting it out)*. Dumb ass!

Crespín. Are you trying to kill us, or what?

SAMMY. I'm a little stressed, all right?

(GUERMO enters on a unicycle.)

SAMMY. Ha! Check out Guillermo!

Crespín. *A la vay!*

JÓRGE. The fuck is that?

GUERMO *(getting off the unicycle)*. What up, carnales?

SAMMY *(excited)*. What are you doing, bro?

GUERMO. *Nada.*

SAMMY. Where'd you gank this from, bro?

GUERMO. I bought it, fool.

Crespín. Yeah...

SAMMY. With a five-finger discount.

GUERMO. What are you guys doing here?

SAMMY. Trying to get a ride, yo.

Crespín. Yeah.

GUERMO. Where you going?

CRESPÍN. We need to *tira una vuelta a* Herman's.

SAMMY. He's got a bag for us, yo.

GUERMO. Don't got a ride, eh?

SAMMY. Nope.

CRESPÍN. Nah.

JÓRGE. Why don't you tell Frank to lend us his ride?

GUERMO. His ride's in the shop.

CRESPÍN. Damn!

SAMMY. This sucks! I haven't gotten high all day.

GUERMO. Why don't you just take this car?

SAMMY. What?

GUERMO. Yeah, check it out. The keys are in here *y todo*.

Hurry up!

JÓRGE (*getting in the driver's seat*). That's the best idea you've had in a while, *primo*.

GUERMO. Maybe in the last five minutes.

SAMMY. Are you serious, Jorge? You don't think we'll get busted?

CRESPÍN (*agreeing*). Yeah.

GUERMO. You will if you keep stalling.

JÓRGE. Hurry up, *jotos*!

(*SAMMY and CRESPIÓN begin to get in the car.*)

SAMMY (*holding his hands in the air*). All right, all right, but I'm not touching nothing. They're not gonna find my fingerprints on this baby.

(*JÓRGE, SAMMY and CRESPIÓN exit.*)

GUERMO. Dumb asses.