

BROWN GIRLS

Pilot

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Dedicated to the brown girls that saved me.

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TEASER

EXT. BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA - DAY (ESTABLISHING)

The East Bay from the Bay Bridge. At a distance we see the University of California Berkeley campus.

EXT. COLLEGE PLAZA - DAY

"WELCOME TO BERKELEY" signs greet incoming students. College clubs talk to new students at their tables.

PROTESTORS protest on the ADMINISTRATION BUILDING's steps. A lone SKINNY STUDENT is their audience.

PROTESTORS
WHAT DO WE WANT?!

SKINNY STUDENT
More vegan options.

PROTESTORS
WHEN DO WE WANT THEM?!

SKINNY STUDENT
Yesterday.

EXT. BRIDGE - COLLEGE PLAZA - CONTINUOUS

Down the CREEK a COLLEGE GIRL gets high. A COUPLE make out. A PROFESSOR grades papers on the grass.

EXT. OFF CAMPUS - CONTINUOUS

At the EDGE of CAMPUS, we FOCUS on "THE HIP HIPPIE HOSTEL."

INT. HALLWAY INTO BATHROOM - THE HIP HIPPIE HOSTEL - DAY

There wall is littered with signs that say "NO SCREAMING AFTER 2:00AM", "DO NOT SHAME THE NAKED PEOPLE", and "YOUR LOCKER, YOUR PROBLEM."

INT. BATHROOM - THE HIP HIPPIE HOSTEL - DAY

LUPE GUERRERO, a 26 year-old Latinx woman powders her nose and looks at her reflection. She looks like she's going on a conference with a SEMI-PROFESSIONAL OUTFIT and PUMPS.

LUPE

Today is the beginning of the rest
of your life, Lupe.

Lupe smiles then notices a SINGLE GREY HAIR sticking out of
her SCALP. She grabs a TWEEZER and pulls it out.

A NAKED GUY reaches over Lupe's shoulder and grabs her
PERSONAL SOAP. A lover?

NAKED GUY

Dope soap!

Nope! Naked Guy rubs the soap on his armpits and checks out
his muscles on the mirror.

LUPE

That's, um, that's mine...you know
what? Keep it!

Lupe packs up. Five more NAKED PEOPLE of all shapes and sizes
walk around Lupe to reveal she is in a COMMUNAL BATHROOM.

NAKED LADY

Hey, you dropped something.

Lupe looks down and her NECKLACE with a KEY attached to it.
It sparkles on the floor. She picks it up graciously.

Naked Guy lathers his body.

NAKED GUY

What's the plan today, Lupes?

LUPE

No more touring the Bay, friends.
Today I go back to school!

The naked people cheer. Lupe receives the love.

NAKED GUY

You got this.

LUPE

Thank you.

END OF TEASER.

ACT 1

INT. LOCKEROOM - THE HIP HIPPIE HOSTEL - DAY

Lupe puts her BATHROOM SUPPLIES inside her LOCKER. A TIN BOX holds CASH, some charms, and a decent looking DIAMOND RING. She closes the box.

A PICTURE FRAME OF HER FAMILY looks back at her.

LUPE

I promise I won't mess this up.

Lupe locks the LOCKER with the small key on her chain necklace.

INT. LOBBY - THE HIP HIPPIE HOSTEL - CONTINUOUS

LUPE

Today is the big day, Turkey!

TURKEY MESS, 66 year-old retired hippie in a Tie-Dye shirt lowers his newspaper, he's hair and Patchouli all over.

TURKEY

You paid up til tomorrow, Lupe.
When are you moving out?

LUPE

I'm still looking for the perfect place, the perfect roommate, the perfect view!

TURKEY

You'll be searching for an eternity in this town. School starts today. You finally going to walk on campus?

LUPE

Yes, and I'm so excited.

TURKEY

You should relax your expectations a little. You don't want to get your heart broken.

LUPE

Call me hopeful.

TURKEY

Be careful out there, *hopeful*.

LUPE

Why? What, what is it?

TURKEY

You might fall in love with the town, become addicted to the smell of mist and fog...and never want to leave.

LUPE

Oh, Turkey!

TURKEY

Have a good day!

Lupe's forces a smile and exits.

TURKEY (CONT'D)

Good luck little bird.

NAKED LADY

Turkey, the showers are out of shampoo again.

Turkey points to a sign that says: "WE ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR SHAMPOO".

EXT. COLLEGE PLAZA - DAY

Lupe stands in front of the campus. It's packed with incoming students.

LUPE

Wow...

She is a bit overdressed, but no matter. Onward.

EXT. STUDENT CENTER - COLLEGE CAMPUS - DAY (MONTAGE)

- Lupe visits with CLUB TABLES. Gets free PENS, NOTEPADS, and HIGHLIGHTERS. Score!

- Lupe goes into the TRANSFER CENTER and comes out with a CAMPUS MAP.

- Lupe pulls out "ROOMMATE SEARCH" ads phone numbers from a light post.

- Lupe takes a selfie with the T-REX in the Science Building.

- Lupe lays on the grass by the BANCROFT LIBRARY.
- Lupe walks up a hill. The sun beats down as she wipes the sweat off her brow.
- Lupe is on the phone.

VOICE ON PHONE (V.O.)
Sorry, I found a roommate already.

LUPE
Okay, no worries. Thank you.

EXT. LECTURE HALL - LITERATURE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Lupe waddles up to the building. Her ankles are red and dressed in BANDAIDS. She pulls out her CAMPUS MAP, steps forward, misses her footing and trips.

Thankfully JULIAN NGUYEN, a preppy good looking 26 year-old Graduate student, catches her IN SLOW MOTION.

BACK TO REAL TIME.

JULIAN
Whoah! You okay?

LUPE
Yes...thank you.

JULIAN
That first step is a little tricky.
You gotta be careful on this
campus. Everything's historical!

LUPE
Yeah, no kidding. My feet haven't
hurt this much since my clubbing
days!

JULIAN
It's a hilly campus. May I suggest
tennis shoes next time?

Lupe holds the rails. Julian picks up her campus map.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
Are you looking for something?

LUPE
Yes, thank you-

ERICA CHAVEZ, a 19 year old vivacious plus sized Mexi-Salvi (Mexican and Salvadorian) Gen-Z theater geek on a bike, drives by Lupe and Julian and nearly hits them both.

ERICA
Watch it, nerds!!!

This time Julian loses his balance and Lupe catches him IN SLOW MOTION. They stare into each other's eyes.

BACK TO REAL TIME.

Julian stands and Lupe finds her footing.

JULIAN
Thanks for that. So, is this your first day on campus?

LUPE
Did the map give it away?

JULIAN
A little. Wait, are you new to the Literature Department? Where are you coming from?

LUPE
Los Angeles.

JULIAN
Ha! Hollyweird, eh? Celebrities, movies, and clubbing. Sounds exciting.

LUPE
That's why I left. Too much excitement. It's time to focus.

JULIAN
Well, you've come to the right place for that. Oh, your map-

They both reach for the CAMPUS MAP and hit each other on the head. A sweet and awkward moment.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
Sorry. Okay well, where are you teaching?

LUPE
Oh, I'm not a teacher.

JULIAN
I'm sorry, I assumed.

LUPE

That's okay! I'm an undergrad. I transferred from a City College. It took me seven years to get here.

JULIAN

Congrats on making it.

LUPE

I used to work in the movie industry.

JULIAN

Cool!

LUPE

If you call serving coffee for a living cool, then sure. Sorry, that was awkward. Thanks for your help. The room is D128.

JULIAN

No worries at all. I know it well. Let's walk together.

Lupe smiles as Julian walks ahead.

LUPE

(to herself)

Focus, focus, focus...

The CAMPUS BEAR MASCOT, "OSKI", pops up and SCARES Lupe.

LUPE (CONT'D)

JESUS CHRIST ON A CROSS!!!!

The Bear Mascot COVERS HIS EYES. Students laugh.

JULIAN

That's Oski. He's our mascot.

Oski kisses Lupe's hand.

LUPE

Charmed.

JULIAN

You ready?

Bear Mascot dances a POP LOCK with his arms.

LUPE

Where'd you used to work, Knott's
Scary Farm?

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. THEATER DEPARTMENT - OFFICE - DAY

Erica Chavez, our CHUBBY BROWN GIRL ON A BICYCLE, walks into the Theater & Arts Administration Office.

MARIO MONTERREY, a beautiful QUEER 25-year old graduate student greets her.

MARIO

Erica Chavez. How's the legend-in-the-making this fine day?

ERICA

Mario Monterrey, your student orientation this summer still chills me to disdain.

MARIO

Are you saying I'm memorable?

ERICA

I have since waited to hear about the auditions for *La Nueva Casa* aka *The New Home*, but the online newsletter says it's already cast?

MARIO

I know! Exciting, right?

ERICA

Mario, I never saw an audition notice. I want to know why this department insists on keeping me out of the loop.

MARIO

Erica, again, you're a first year theater student. In order to audition you must be a second year with at least 20 credits in performance practice-

ERICA

Mario, again, I was basically the drama department in my high school. Shouldn't that count for something?

MARIO

Even if that was enough, you have no musical theater experience.

ERICA

I can sing.

Neither are convinced.

MARIO

I don't make the rules, kiddo.

ERICA

How am I supposed to work in the Royal National Theatre by the age of twenty-five, if I'm still waiting around for people to invite me to auditions? This is unacceptable.

MARIO

The department traditionally casts second year students.

ERICA

(persistent)

Let me audition.

MARIO

I'm not the director.

ERICA

The newsletter says you're the Stage Manager, is that true?

MARIO

Yes.

ERICA

Can you *manage* the director's eyesight towards my direction?

MARIO

I'd love to continue this conversation, but rehearsals start in 5 minutes and everyone's already in the Studio...

He said too much. Erica's eyes shift to determination. It frightens Mario.

MARIO (CONT'D)

Shit.

INT. LECTURE HALL - LITERATURE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Julian opens the classroom door for Lupe. There are 300 seats and almost all are full up. Lupe's mouth drops.

JULIAN

I guess I'll be seeing you around.

Julian waves goodbye and sits by the other Graduate Student Instructors. Lupe waves.

Lupe sits at a desk and takes out a binder with dividers and notebook. Everything looks organized and ready for lecture, in the 1990's.

A shift. Lupe looks left and right. She scans the room. There are mostly non-BIPOC in the space. Her curiosity turns into panic.

LUPE

(to herself)

Am I the only Latina in this class?

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT 2

INT. LECTURE HALL - LITERATURE DEPARTMENT - DAY

In the middle of the class the ENGLISH PROFESSOR announces the assignment.

ENGLISH PROFESSOR
Finish Faulkner's "The Sound and the Fury" by tomorrow please. Read the entire text. There will be a test. I want to see what you're all capable of.

Lupe packs up her school gear.

ELIZABETH MORRISON, a 21 year old rock and roll writer chick who looks like Sylvia Plath and James Dean had a baby approaches Lupe. Linda Chu, 21 beautiful AAPI sporty student, stands beside Elizabeth. They hold laptops and look at Lupe.

ELIZABETH
Your pens are cute.

LUPE
Thanks, I'm Lupe. What's your na-?

LINDA
This professor goes real fast.

ELIZABETH
You might get Carpal Tunnel.

LUPE
I like writing by hand. I'm old fashioned.

ELIZABETH
Yeah, we can tell.

LINDA
I hope you can keep up.

They leave her. Lupe lowers her head.

INT. ACTING STUDIO - DAY

JESSICA INDIGO, a 20 year-old drama student dressed like a flamenco dancer with a red rose in her hair, stretches on stage with other ACTING STUDENTS.

Erica enters the studio, jumps on the stage and stretches beside Jessica.

Mario hurries in behind Erica. Jessica looks confused.

JESSICA
 (to Erica)
 I'm sorry this is a closed
 rehearsal space.

ERICA
 I'm here to audition.

JESSICA
 Mario, who is this?

Erica extends her hand to shake.

ERICA
 Erica Chavez, first year. Reading
 for the role of *Claudia*.

Jessica does not shake her hand.

JESSICA
 Mario, is this a joke?

MARIO
 Let's hear her out for a second-

JESSICA
 I'm *Clow-dee-uh*.

ERICA
 (incredulously)
 What?

Mario greets DIRECTOR JAMES SPILLARS, a Bay Area 50 year-old theater director who watches the young actresses stand off.

JAMES
 This is interesting.

JESSICA
 Excuse me, Director Spillars, we
 have a confused first year student
 in our space-

JAMES
 Do we? Mario, who is this?

MARIO

Erica Chavez. First year. She would very much like a chance to audition for the role of Claudia.

JAMES

The lead? It's already cast.

JESSICA/MARIO

(to Erica)

Yes, it is.

ERICA

Hello, Director James Spillars.

Erica curtsies.

ERICA (CONT'D)

The role of Claudia is written for a tough, grounded, thick Latina like myself. She speaks Spanglish like me. I *know* Claudia, Director. I am able to relate to her on a deep personal level-

JAMES

Really? Are you a middle aged woman discovering that her life has no meaning because of her incessant need to please everyone?

ERICA

Is she?

Erica points at Jessica, who removes the rose from her hair. Erica breaks into Claudia character.

ERICA (CONT'D)

"I am not your mother, I am your wife. I demand respect and love. You made a vow, are you a man of your word...or not?"

The acting students applaud. Erica is great. Jessica looks nervous. James thinks about it.

JESSICA

James?

Mario is taken aback by Jessica's informal address towards Director Spillars.

MARIO

Jessica?

ERICA
 (help)
 Mario!

JAMES
 I am sorry, but this was an invited
 audition process vetted by YOUR
 department. Your name was not on
 the list.

ERICA
 "Well behaved women seldom make
 history." Laurel Thatcher Ulrich.

JESSICA
 James?

JAMES
 Mario?

MARIO
 Erica...you have to go. Those are
 the rules.

Erica is taken aback.

ERICA
 Thank you for your time.

Jessica sarcastically waves bye. Erica exits.

EXT. ACTING STUDIO - AFTERNOON

Erica gets her bike and sees the Bear Mascot strolling by.

ERICA
 ¿Qu'uvo Pedro?!

They fist bump. The Bear Mascot/Pedro looks around to see if
 the coast is clear. He gestures a JUST SHOOT ME SIGN with his
 hands.

ERICA (CONT'D)
 Same, same. Keep your head up.

Erica pulls out a CHOCOLATE BAR from her DRESS pocket and
 slips it into The Bear Mascot's pocket. He gestures *I
 COULDN'T!*

ERICA (CONT'D)
 No, have it. I earned nothing
 today.

The Bear Mascot tilts his head with concern. He does the RUNNING MAN.

ERICA (CONT'D)

Alas. I am too distraught to participate in jovial movement.

Erica takes off on her bike and crosses paths with Lupe. They look at each other IN SLOW MOTION.

ERICA (V.O.)

It's that horny nerd...

LUPE (V.O.)

It's that jerk...

BACK TO REAL TIME.

Lupe gingerly touches her GOLD CHAIN NECKLACE and LOCKER KEY. Erica rides away.

The Bear Mascot waves at Lupe, and she pivots away.

LUPE

Nope.

INT. LOCKEROOM - THE HIP HIPPIE HOSTEL - EVENING

Lupe throws her PUMPS in the locker.

LUPE

May you rot in hell forever!

Nake Lady walks by.

NAKED LADY

Yeah, no bras too, sister!

Lupe pulls out her BUNNY SLIPPERS. A note is attached to them.

NOTE: "With love, from mom."

The slippers give her immediate relief. She LOCKS the locker and walks to the bathroom. The Bunny Slippers squeak on every step. She's too tired to care.

INT. THE HIP HIPPIE HOSTEL - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

It's empty. Lupe washes her face with water, and looks at her reflection.

LUPE
 Prove yourself. You deserve to be
 here. Focus. You got this.

As Lupe walks out of the bathroom, her GOLD CHAIN falls onto the BATHROOM FLOOR. It sparkles on the tile.

EXT. 24 HOUR CAFÉ - NIGHT

Lupe's slippers squeak all the way to the café. Students run past her enjoying their night. The entire block is in PARTY MODE.

INT. 24 HOUR CAFÉ - BOOTH - NIGHT

Lupe opens "The Sound and the Fury" and reads. A waiter drops off a COFFEE CUP.

LUPE
 Thank you.

TITLE CARD: THE NEXT DAY

INT. 24 HOUR CAFÉ - BOOTH - MORNING

A disheveled Lupe tries to finish "The Sound and the Fury" half awake. Coffee mugs are all around her.

Lupe's cell phone RINGS.

LUPE
 Hola ma. First day? It was great!
 Thanks for the cash, it's helping
 with the books. What? No, no I'm
 okay. I'm staying with friends...

Lupe touches her neck and feels that the NECKLACE IS MISSING. Panic takes over her face.

LUPE (CONT'D)
 I gotta go. Love you!

Lupe grabs her bag runs out of the café. She leaves her BOOK & the BILL behind.

WAITER
 Hey, you gotta pay!

INT. THE HIP HIPPIE HOSTEL - CONTINUOUS

Lupe runs into the hostel.

TURKEY

Good morning little lady!

Lupe squeaks her way past the lobby.

INT. BATHROOM - THE HIP HIPPIE HOSTEL - CONTINUOUS

Lupe runs into an empty bathroom and looks under the sink. She gets on her knees to check under the stalls. Her clothes and slippers get wet with what she hopes is water.

LUPE

No, no, no, no, no...

INT. LOCKERROOM - THE HIP HIPPIE HOSTEL - CONTINUOUS

Lupe's LOCKER IS OPEN! Everything except the POLAROID OF HER FAMILY is gone.

LUPE

FREAKING FUDGE CYCLES!!!!

Turkey approaches.

TURKEY

Oh, yikes.

Lupe looks at Turkey. He points to the sign that reads "YOUR LOCKER. YOUR PROBLEM."

Lupe realizes she FORGOT SOMETHING ELSE!

EXT. THE HIP HIPPIE HOSTEL/24 HOUR CAFÉ - CONTINUOUS

She runs out of the hostel and back to the 24 Hour Café. Her Bunny Slippers squeak and leave a water trail behind.

INT. 24 HOUR CAFÉ - MOMENTS LATER

Lupe enters out of breath. She looks at the table where she left "The Sound and the Fury" BOOK. It's also gone!

WAITER

Hey lady, you owe us \$27.30-

LUPE
BERKELEY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

The restaurant customers look up in alarm!

INT. THE HIP HIPPIE HOSTEL - FRONT DESK - AFTERNOON

Lupe slumps on a lobby chair.

LUPE
Turkey, I was robbed.

TURKEY
I know. I saw it, 'member?

LUPE
Twice. I was robbed twice. Should I call the police?

TURKEY
You can call the fuzz if you want, but they're probably going to write a report on their lil' pads and wipe their asses with it later.

LUPE
Thank you for that visual. I never in a million years thought this would happen in Berkeley!

TURKEY
Oh, yeah. It happens all the time.

LUPE
Do you have cameras?

TURKEY
We don't have cameras on account of the nudity.

LUPE
What am I going to do? Most of my money was in that locker.

TURKEY
Why?

LUPE
Because I'm a stupid romantic.

Lupe buries her head in a nearby pillow, it RIPS THE BACK of her CONFERENCE OUTFIT.

LUPE (CONT'D)

Of course.

TURKEY

You're paid through tonight, or you can do a communal room and have three more nights!

LUPE

I don't know if I could spend the night with a possible thief.

TURKEY

Hippies today, they aren't like when I was young.

LUPE

Can I get a partial refund for tonight? I need to eat something.

Turkey points to A HUGE SIGN that reads: "NO REFUNDS."

TURKEY

I don't make the rules.

Lupe's PHONE DIES.

LUPE

Perfect. Okay, well I'm just going to go think about my life choices and take a walk.

She exits squeaking and leaving damp trails behind her.

TURKEY

That is one sad little bird.

END OF ACT 2.

ACT 3

INT. LECTURE HALL - LITERATURE DEPARTMENT - DAY

R.E.M.'s "Everybody Hurts" plays in the air. Lupe enters her and does her best to quietly squeak to a seat. She looks terrible and smells worse.

The test starts. Elizabeth and Linda watch from a corner and chuckle at her slippers.

Lupe looks around again and notices, maybe for the first time, how almost everyone has a LAPTOP.

EXT. LECTURE HALL - LITERATURE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Lupe steps outside of the building and runs into Julian. She tries to hide behind the vegan SKINNY STUDENT, but it doesn't work.

JULIAN

Lupe?

LUPE

Oh, hi Julian! I didn't see you there.

JULIAN

Was the test okay?

LUPE

Yeah! I didn't finish the book, but I probably got two thirds of it right.

JULIAN

Don't worry too much about it. It's a practice test. He always does that on the first day.

LUPE

That's great.

JULIAN

Are you okay?

LUPE

I was robb...lost my book.

JULIAN

Oh?

LUPE
I'm really bummed about it.

JULIAN
You're definitely a Bear.

LUPE
What?

JULIAN
Oh, sorry that's what we call each other on campus. We're the Cal Bears, like our mascot?

Julian growls like a bear.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
That was embarrassing.

LUPE
Aw, no actually that was cute. I needed a laugh. I'm a Bear. Huh.

JULIAN
It's a compliment. You sound really sad about losing a book. Anyways, I have an extra copy. Here, you can have it.

Julian pulls a BOOK from his bag.

LUPE
You just had that in your bag?

JULIAN
It's a Beart thing, what can I say?

LUPE
Right.

JULIAN
Nice slippers by the way.

LUPE
Thanks.

Julian walks away with a smile.

Lupe's stomach rumbles.

LUPE (CONT'D)
Oh God, I could eat a Bear right now.

EXT. THEATER DEPARTMENT - OFFICE - DAY

Erica holds FLYERS for "A ONE WOMAN SHOW: THE SCHOOL SYSTEM IS BROKEN starring Erica Chavez". Erica lifts the flyer up to the ADMINISTRATION'S FRONT DOOR.

Mario walks out of the administration office.

MARIO

You can't post that flyer here.

ERICA

Mario, everyday, you chip away at my soul little by little. You're literally killing me-

MARIO

Erica, I'm just-

ERICA

Following your goddamn rules. I know. Is it wrong for a student to post a flyer on her campus? Do I not pay tuition? If you prick me-

MARIO

You can post a flyer, Erica. Just do it on the student bulletin board over there. No one will see them here.

ERICA

Oh. Okay. Cool. Thanks.

MARIO

You're welcome.

Mario turns to return inside.

ERICA

(under her breath)
Traitor.

MARIO

Excuse me, what?

ERICA

(Catch these hands energy)
What?

MARIO

Did you just call me a "traitor"?

Erica gets braver.

ERICA

Yes, I did, *Mario*. Because you are letting this department put on a show about Latinx folks without putting any of us in the lead roles! W. T. F., Mario?

MARIO

(tired)

Again, you're a first year, the rules are strict-

Erica - now at the STUDENT BULLETIN BOARD - rips off a flyer for *LA NUEVA CASA/THE NEW HOME* and holds it up to Mario.

ERICA

(holding it in Mario's face)

What rules let this happen?

Mario steps back in alarm. Jessica Indigo is in BROWN FACE.

INT. ACTING STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

James Spillars and Jessica Indigo are standing on stage. Jessica wears a BLACK WIG and APRON. MARIO and Erica bursts into the theater.

MARIO

Director Spillars may I have a word?

Erica runs in front of Mario.

ERICA

Director Spillars, did you approve this?!

MARIO

Erica, step back.

Erica steps to the side.

MARIO (CONT'D)

Director, did you approve this?

Erica lifts the poster up for all to see. The students react.

MARIO (CONT'D)
 (to Jessica)
 Who designed this?

JESSICA
 Guys, relax! It's our show flyer!

ACTING STUDENT
 Why is no one else on the flyer?

ERICA
 That's what you notice?

JESSICA
 Everyone, calm down. I designed it last night. Marketing has to happen ASAP with *these kind* of shows, otherwise no one will show up.

MARIO
 These kind of shows?

Mario steps forward, and Erica steps in front of him again.

ERICA
 I would like to formally say, that this is absolute horse shit. Excuse us.

Erica gets Mario out of the room.

EXT. ACTING STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

ERICA
 Chill.

MARIO
 What the hell?!

ERICA
 Breathe.

MARIO
 I have not been this angry in a long time.

ERICA
 It's okay. You drank the Kool-Aid. Many have. Listen, I get the stupid rules in this institution, and I'm pissed too, but get it together.

MARIO

Okay!

ERICA

You're on scholarship right?

MARIO

How did you know that?

ERICA

Call it intuition. Breathe.

Mario takes a deep breath.

ERICA (CONT'D)

You can thank me later for getting you out of there before you said something you'd regret.

Erica throws her ONE WOMAN SHOW FLYERS in a nearby trash bin.

MARIO

Are you okay?

ERICA

I don't know. I have to stew on this experience a little. Write it in my diary of character emotions. Also I may have posted those flyer in other buildings and now have to take them down. Crap.

Mario smiles at Erica with gentle eyes.

MARIO

You are so extra, Erica.

ERICA

I have to be. Listen, I'll follow the stupid rules for now. I wouldn't want to be associated with a brown face show poster anyway. Good bye, Mario.

Erica storms away.

Mario goes to the trash bin and sees the stack of Erica's ONE WOMAN SHOW FLYERS looking back up at him. He smiles.

EXT. CAMPUS GRASS AREA - DAY

Lupe talks to herself on a bench.

LUPE
 (practicing)
 Mom, don't freak out. I was robbed.
 I left the scene of the crime, so
 don't worry. I was dumb and most of
 my hard cash was taken from my
 locker, and-

Lupe notices MAKE OUT COUPLE look at her intently.

LUPE (CONT'D)
 I don't want to go home.

The young couple scurry away scared.

Erica rides her bike nearby.

Erica stops and points to a the same vegan SKINNY STUDENT
 that Lupe tried to hide behind earlier. He is reading ERICA'S
 FLYER.

ERICA
 Hey, give me that flyer!

The Skinny Student runs away afraid.

ERICA (CONT'D)
 The show is cancelled! Did you hear
 me?! THE SHOW IS CANCELLED!

Erica rides in front of Lupe.

ERICA (CONT'D)
 Excuse me homeless person. Wanna
 make fifty bucks?

LUPE
 Excuse me? I am not homeless.

ERICA
 Oh, sure. Excuse me, Sad Girl on a
 bench, want to make fifty bucks?

Lupe's STOMACH RUMBLES.

LUPE
 Maybe.

ERICA
 You see these flyers? I need help
 taking them down.

Lupe looks at the flyer and reads it.

LUPE
Hey, Chavez!

ERICA
Yes, that's my last name.

Lupe hugs Erica hard.

ERICA (CONT'D)
Ma'am, you smell awful please let me go.

LUPE
I'm sorry. I just, I'm in the Literature Department and I don't see many Latinx people around. So, it's so nice to meet you. Oh my God you're that jerk who almost ran me over.

ERICA
And you're that horny nerd.

LUPE
What?

Erica shakes her hand.

ERICA
I'll give you \$100 if you help me take down these performance flyers and promise not to hug me again.

LUPE
Done.

ERICA
Let's go!

INT./EXT. VARIOUS CAMPUS BULDINGS AND HALLWAYS - DAY

Erica and Lupe tag team and rip off Erica's posters from the many bulletin boards.

EXT. COLLEGE PLAZA - SUNSET

Erica and Lupe sit together exhausted. Erica pulls out her phone.

ERICA
What's your MONEY NOW account? I can transfer the funds instantly.

LUPE
My phone is dead.

Erica looks at Lupe's Bunny Slippers and backpack. Lupe looks like she's been dragged through hell and back.

ERICA
Why don't you charge up at my place? You can stay the night if you want. I have an extra room.

LUPE
Really?

ERICA
Yes, it's my personal black box theater and content creation room.

Lupe is almost in tears.

LUPE
Wow, I don't know what to say.

ERICA
Let's go to the pharmacy in the corner and get you some toothpaste.

INT. THE BLACK BOX ROOM - ERICA'S APARTMENT - EVENING

The door swings open revealing a room with BLACK WALLS, THEATER CUBES, a TRIPOD and RING LIGHT.

LUPE
This is perfect.

ERICA
Great.

LUPE
So you're an actress?

ERICA
Yes. The school is still catching up to me, but they'll get there.

LUPE
Nice.

ERICA
Anyway, you can stay here. I'm not too strapped for cash right now, so just chill, and please take a shower.

Lupe gets emotional, again. Erica doesn't know what to do.

LUPE

Sorry! It's just that for a moment there, I thought I was going to be homeless.

ERICA

I mean, I think you kinda were-

LUPE

But now, I'm here.

ERICA

Hey, it might be nice to have someone to run lines with on a regular basis. Let me know if you want to make this official.

LUPE

What?

ERICA

Roommate thing. It's not something I normally do, but it might be nice. Think about it?

LUPE

Okay. I will. Wow, I feel like I'm in the Twilight Zone.

ERICA

Never heard of it.

LUPE

Can I ask you something? Why are there so many laptops on campus? Whatever happened to journals, notebooks, writing by hand?

ERICA

No one understands the classics.

LUPE

Exactly!

ERICA

It's the same in *theatre*.

LUPE

Is that what you study?

ERICA

Yeah, my parents were like
"Awesome! You got into Berkeley.
Time to put to good use all of the
JPL summer camps we put you in."

LUPE

Wow, Nasa's Jet Propulsion
Laboratory!

ERICA

No. The Juniors Performance League.
They never read the fine print.

LUPE

How many years did you attend JPL?

ERICA

Since I was seven.

LUPE

They never noticed?

ERICA

Nope. My nanny took me all the
time. She saw it made me happy.
Bleh! Listen to me yap yap yap.
Sorry, I don't normally talk about
my personal stuff.

LUPE

Thank you for sharing and for your
kindness.

Erica is taken aback. This might be the first compliment
she's received since being at school.

ERICA

Well, this is Berkeley. I've only
been here since summer, but it's
growing on me.

LUPE

Really?

ERICA

Yeah, like mold. Are you first
generation?

LUPE

Yes, and a transfer.

ERICA

Double whammy.

LUPE

My family's from Perú, what about yours?

Erica deflects.

ERICA

If you choose to stay. Rent is \$500 a month. We can start next month. That cool?

LUPE

Sure! I can help around the house meantime.

ERICA

You remind me of my nanny!

LUPE

Oh.

ERICA

Let me guess? Organic shampoo, secret grunge music lover, and broadband survivor who secretly watches 90's anime?

LUPE

How did you do that?

ERICA

I'm a theater kid with hyper observational powers. Can't help it.

The sound of voices spill into the apartment.

ERICA (CONT'D)

What the?

EXT. ERICA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Erica and Lupe step outside. A group of BIPOC folks sit by Erica's front door.

LATINX GIRL

We're here for the one woman show.

LUPE

You have an audience!

Erica smiles.

ERICA
I guess I do.

Lupe takes a seat on the ground. Not too far back in the shadows Mario leans on a tree.

ERICA (CONT'D)
"Summer. The limo drives away..."

Everyone leans forward.

ERICA (CONT'D)
"I am once again, alone."

INT. LIVING ROOM - ERICA & LUPE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Erica exits her bedroom. The apartment is spotless. There are flowers in a vase, and fresh coffee on the table.

Lupe pops out of the bathroom with rubber gloves and a scrubber.

LUPE
Good morning!

ERICA
You don't have to do that.

LUPE
It's not a problem. I live here now.

ERICA
When are you moving your stuff in?

LUPE
I already did!

Lupe points to her backpack and the tattered bunny slippers in a plastic bag. It looks like a crime scene. Erica looks at Lupe like, are you serious?

LUPE (CONT'D)
(confessing)
I was robbed at the hostel.

Erica burrows her eyebrows.

ERICA
The hostel?

INT. LOBBY - THE HIP HIPPIE HOSTEL - DAY

Erica and Turkey lock eyes.

ERICA

So, my good friend Lupe Salguero-

LUPE

Guerrero.

ERICA

Guerrero was robbed under your watch and did NOT sleep in your establishment last night. Am I correct?

TURKEY

I mean, yeah, that happened.

ERICA

She requires a refund.

TURKEY

We don't do refunds.

Turkey points to the "NO REFUNDS" sign.

ERICA

Sir, she slept here for two weeks. I am sure the revenue garnished from her private room was appreciated by your business.

TURKEY

Of course, got us a mini fridge here by the front desk.

Lupe and Erica look over to see a fridge. Turkey opens it revealing purple pickle jars.

TURKEY (CONT'D)

I am starting a Kombucha business.

ERICA

Sounds like she's been an asset to your space. I am certain the possessions stolen from her locker are also making someone else happy as we speak.

TURKEY

Undoubtedly. These are hard times for travelers.

ERICA

Would you say that Lupe was like every other customer?

TURKEY

No, she's a special little lady. Clean, generous, a good egg.

ERICA

I am so glad we agree.

Erica pulls out her laptop.

ERICA (CONT'D)

And based on your website it seems that your hostel grew in popularity in just the last week for its cleanliness and friendly nudist atmosphere. This review here on your website even has a picture of Lupe handing out soap!

The website shows a PHOTOSHOP PICTURE OF LUPE passing out soap.

LUPE

What?! I didn't hand out soap!

TURKEY

Um-

ERICA

So really, Lupe is more like a contributor to your business. Allowing your reputation for cleanliness to garnish more income. Heck, it even inspired you to start your own business, Chicken.

TURKEY/LUPE

Turkey.

ERICA

Turkey. Couldn't you find it in your heart to at least give her a refund for last night?

LUPE

Turkey, I felt really violated. Like I had no support.

TURKEY

I'm sorry little lady, but I could get in trouble for breaking the rules...

Erica clicks on her keyboard again and reveals a poster design on her screen. Lupe doesn't notice.

POSTER DESIGN: "PROTEST ORGANIZED FOR RACIALLY INSENSITIVE HOSTEL BUSINESS IN BERKELEY".

ERICA

We require a few things from you. Take her image off your website and give the *little lady* a refund for last night and hmm, let's say ten percent of the reservations from the last three days.

TURKEY

The contract says-

ERICA

Yes, but I don't think she signed a media release form for her likeness on your website implying that she's *the help*.

Lupe covers her smile and gasps. Turkey looks nervous.

TURKEY

Um-

ERICA

I wonder how racial profiling is taken in this community?

EXT. SIDEWALK - BERKELEY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Lupe counts her money.

LUPE

How did you do that?

ERICA

Everything can be negotiated.

LUPE

You've got skills.

ERICA

Thanks.

They stand in front of campus.

LUPE

Wait. Speaking of negotiations...I don't know if you know this, but I used to work in the Entertainment Industry as an assistant on many, many, many projects.

ERICA

Really?

LUPE

I think I can help you, too.

INT. ACTING STUDIO - DAY

Erica enters the theater during vocal warm ups. Jessica goes from aria to scream!

ERICA

Director James Spillars. Erica Chavez again, 5'3, 145 pounds and bilingual in English and Spanish. I have a proposition for you.

The room goes quiet. Mario stands by, exhausted.

ERICA (CONT'D)

I want to understudy for the lead role, *Claudia*. As you and I both know, in the world of the arts, anything can happen.

JESSICA

I have never missed a performance!

ERICA

As her understudy, I pledge to help Jessica with her Spanish and support the rest of the non-Latinx cast with their's too.

JAMES

We have Mario for that.

MARIO

I don't speak Spanish.

JAMES

Oh, I assumed-

ERICA/MARIO
A lot of people assume.

ERICA
Don't you want your actors to sound authentic?

JESSICA
(hesitant)
I don't hate the idea, James. I mean, whatever it takes to make my performance better...

JAMES
(to Erica)
You intrigue me, young lady. Stay. As an understudy.

ERICA
And your new Assistant Director and Graphic Designer. That poster has to go.

JAMES
(to Mario)
Fine, but I'm only paying her for one job.

MARIO
(to himself)
Wait until she finds out nobody gets paid.

Erica looks over her shoulder and sees Mario. They smile at one another.

SOUND: Unapologetic laughter.

EXT. CAMPUS GRASS AREA - DAY

Lupe and Erica laugh hysterically.

ERICA
I couldn't believe it! It worked. I am in the room where it happens. Thanks for your help!

LUPE
Of course. I can honestly say that I am finally looking forward to the semester.

ERICA
 Hey, let's go to the LOST & FOUND
 and land you a laptop.

LUPE
 Can we do that?

ERICA
 I have no idea, but we're on a
 streak!

The stand. The Bear Mascot pops up and dances. Erica joins.

ERICA (CONT'D)
 ¿Qu'uvo Pedro?!

LUPE
 Pedro?

The Bear nods. Lupe joins the dance.

The SAME COUPLE that saw Lupe talk to herself the night
 before walk by again.

THE GUY
 Weirdos.

THE GIRL
 They're just Bears, that's all.

The couple make out and roll around the grass, while the
 friends dance out.

END OF EPISODE.