

8-2011

The Man On the Postcard

David Williams

Clemson University, dgwilli@clemson.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_theses

 Part of the [Theatre and Performance Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Williams, David, "The Man On the Postcard" (2011). *All Theses*. 1175.

https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/all_theses/1175

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses by an authorized administrator of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.

THE MAN ON THE POSTCARD

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
English

by
David Gaillard Williams
August 2011

Accepted by:
Dr. Mark Charney, Committee Chair
Dr. Cameron Bushnell
Dr. Angela Naimou

ABSTRACT

The Man On the Postcard is the tale of a generational struggle against “history” itself, in which one family attempts to discover the identity of a hero long ignored by the US.

On one August afternoon in 1916, the *USS Memphis* capsized off the coast of the Dominican Republic after being caught in a massive tsunami. Howard Weaver, just seventeen, was nearly lost to the unforgiving ocean before being saved by a native fisherman. Decades later, Weaver would leave his sons, Frank and Nathan, with a single remnant of this unknown hero’s legacy: a faded postcard bearing his likeness.

Now, in 2011, Frank and Nathan—with the help of Frank’s son, Travis—conduct their own investigation to solve the mystery. Their search yields shocking realizations about American occupation, military atrocities, and the unfortunate willingness of an entire nation seemingly to overlook one of the bleaker eras in its history (including the part it played in inciting dictator Rafael Trujillo’s rise to power). But will it lead them to the truth? Will all stay committed to the course? Or, will they falter after learning that their country was capable of an injustice that persisted twice as long as the First World War?

The narrative fluctuates between WWI and the contemporary to offer a striking contrast between history as it has been recorded and how it actually unfolded.

What exactly is “history,” though? This is the central question I address in my work. History is not necessarily what has happened; it is, also, what is *said* to have happened. It’s an *authored* depiction of time, place & people. Consequently,

storytelling is perhaps the most enduring means of passing down, and honoring, our pasts.

I do not offer an exact rendition of August 29th, 1916 or the events that followed. *The Man On the Postcard* is, rather, an imaginative response that attempts to “fill in the blanks” left by historians and to give resonance to the actions of a forgotten hero.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this manuscript to my family and friends who have supported me throughout my graduate career. To my mother, Kathleen, thank you for being a guiding light in my life; your goodness inspires me everyday. To my father, Frank, you're my best friend and a greater man than you may think. To Laura Datko, thank you for your love, kindness, and patience; I would be lost without you. Finally, my graduate education would not have been possible without my friends, who have given me so much inspiration and so many great memories.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to thank Dr. Mark Charney for chairing my thesis committee and for being a wonderful mentor for the last three years. Thank you, Mark, for your enthusiasm and for always believing in me even when I didn't believe in myself. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Cameron Bushnell and Dr. Angela Naimou, for their guidance and encouragement. I am truly fortunate to have worked with you both.

I would like to once again thank my father, Frank Williams. It was his interest in this subject that infected me with the desire to ultimately sit down and compose this work. Additionally, he acted as my personal dramaturg, always volunteering to help me research the American occupation of the Dominican Republic and the people whose lives were affected by it.

To Rebecca Sanchez de Solis, grand-daughter of the real-life hero whom my play honors, thank you for your willingness to help me with this project. It was truly an honor to immortalize your ancestor through writing.

I would like to thank the English Department at Clemson University, which has been my home for the past six years. The instruction I've received has been both enlightening and enjoyable. The opportunity to work with such tremendous educators has prepared me to go forth and fulfill every ounce of my potential.

Finally, to Emeterio Sanchez, thank you for saving my grandfather's life. I pray that my writing serves as an adequate tribute to the bravery and kindness you showed those many years ago.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE PAGE	i
ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
ACT I	1
Scene 1: “Memory”	1
Scene 2: “That Fateful Day”	3
Scene 3: “Pandora’s Box”	10
Scene 4: “Face-to-Face”	16
Scene 5: “The ‘Eureka’ Moment”	23
Scene 6: “Guests”	29
Scene 7: “Interpretations”	38
Scene 8: “The Line-Up”	40
Scene 9: “AWOL”	47
Scene 10: “Connected”	54
Scene 11: “Black Snow”	58
ACT II	67
Scene 1: “Prophets”	67
Scene 2: “Breaking News”	72
Scene 3: “Honorable Discharge”	74
Scene 4: “Friend or Flight”	79
Scene 5: “The Ideal Soldier”	82
Scene 6: “Obsession”	84
Scene 7: “Fathers & Sons”	87
Scene 8: “Captives”	90
Scene 9: “Reunion”	93
Scene 10: “Treason”	98
Scene 11: “They Always Run”	103
Scene 12: “The Bottom Line”	108
Scene 13: “End of the Road”	113

Table of Contents (Continued)

	Page
Scene 14: “The Best Parts”	116
Scene 15: “Storytellers”	118
Scene 16: “Farewells”	119
APPENDICES	122
Appendix A: Cast.....	123
Appendix B: Author’s Note Regarding Use of Spanish	125
WORKS CONSULTED	126

ACT I

Scene 1: “Memory”

Spot on FRANK WEAVER, who addresses the audience directly.

FRANK

One August afternoon, decades and decades ago, Howard LeNoir Weaver’s life nearly ended before he had the chance to truly live it. The events of that day—and everything that followed thereafter—are why I speak to you now. (*a beat*) He was my father, and this is a story about him— Well...it begins with him anyway.

I didn’t get to know Dad that well. He passed away in 1966, when I was just nine. My brother Nathan was thirteen. My mother never remarried.

I’m in my early 50s now. I have four kids—all boys. I call them my “girls” just as a joke.

I know Dad would’ve loved getting to know my sons—just...talking with ‘em, telling stories. He was a great storyteller, my father. But that’s because he led a great life. He was a Navy man—served in *both* World Wars. Signed up for it when he was just 17. He didn’t meet the weight requirement, though, so for three or four days before signing his name, he just ate pounds and pounds of bananas. Just *tons* of them. Quick weight.

When he was home, he took advantage of every day, every moment. He was a schoolteacher. He was the head of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. And get this: *John Phillip Sousa* picked my father out of *every other musician in the country* to be his base drummer.

He was just a showman in general. While he was stationed in San Diego, he made extra money singing at nightclubs in Tijuana...and usually blew it all in a couple hours. He’d leave on Friday with a fistful of dollars and be back on Sunday with empty pockets, a hangover, and—on one occasion—a broken wrist. He almost got arrested once for it, being AWOL...but I usually leave that part out.

Sorry, I know I’m rambling. I have a tendency to get a little long-winded, especially when I’m talking about family-related stuff like this.

My boys are to blame, I guess. They’ve always *loved* hearing about their grandpa, even now that they’re mostly grown up. When they were all younger, *a lot* younger, they would stay at my Mom’s every Friday night. It was our...tradition. And they would always ask her to show them Dad’s medals, his old uniform, even some of his old oil paintings from his “artistic period.”

Those were great years. It seems like eons ago that I was dropping the guys off at the same house I grew up in. ...But I still remember...

And that's what this story is about: remembering.

Most people don't care to remember. It either hurts to do so or they just don't have the time. I mean, kids these days don't know historical figures unless they have Facebook pages. (*mock teenage voice*) "Oh, sweet! Chuck Berry! Hey, I wonder if *Trane* is on here." (*chuckles, then surveys the audience*) You have *no idea* who I'm talking about, do you? (*sighs, then to himself*) Damn it...

But anyhow, the reason I've babbled on about Dad is because it would be impossible to tell this story without dipping into his, as well. He was a good man, and I want my kids to know about him so that they understand what it means to experience the fullness of life. (*a beat*) But I wouldn't even have the *chance* to teach 'em that lesson if it weren't for one brave man...

You see, there are people who are perfectly content with never shaking things up. Apathy is just too damn relaxing. So they drift through their existence, never amounting to more than ripples in the water.

Then there are the others, men and women about whom all the books are written.

(*a beat*) But there's another group still, made up of those whose actions have reverberated through time while being forgotten by it. ...They are the ones who live in the margins of the history books.

This story is about one of them.

It's about a country.

As is the inevitable case in life, it's about tragedy.

But in order to seize hope from suffering, lemme say this...

This is, first and foremost, a story of *courage and gratitude*.

Lights out.

Scene 2: “That Fateful Day”

The stage is empty. The tranquility of an afternoon breeze coupled with the nonthreatening sound of ocean waves. The calm before the storm. Gradually, a wall of light rises from the stage floor. It is of a yellowish-red hue – the sort of visually arresting sight one would expect to behold when observing the Northern Lights.

The level at which the wall rises gains speed the higher it gets. The wind picks up. The waves break with more might. What was once beautiful is now menacing. When the all-encompassing light reaches the top of the stage: swiftly black out.

Over blackness, the thunderous sound of a billion gallons of water crashing. The wind has grown to an incredible gust. Steel colliding with, and being dragged against, rock. The whole aural experience is deafening, violent. A crackling series of radio transmissions: “All hands, secure ship immediately for heavy weather!” “Engine room, this is the bridge! We need the engines! The ship is in danger!” “Request five additional minutes!” “We’re going ashore! Everybody, we’re going ashore!”

As these radio broadcasts play, a slide: “August 29th, 1916, off the coast of Santo Domingo.”

Then lights up, not fully. There should be a noticeable haze, a misty cloak emanating from the Atlantic. Death lingers in the air. The ground is littered with all kinds of debris: clothes, pots, pans, broken table legs, bundles of rope, silverware, etc.

HOWARD WEAVER, 17 years old, is dragged across the beach and set down. He’s in shock, barely conscious. He has no clothes on, except for a t-shirt, which he’s wearing as pants, one leg through each sleeve. The man responsible for hauling him to safety is EMETERIO SANCHEZ, 51, who checks him for serious injury.

EMETERIO’S shirt is torn to shreds, hanging haphazardly from his chest and arms. There is also a noticeable amount of dirt or soot or coal residue covering his face.

HOWARD

(gasping for breath) God— Where am—? Wha— What the hell?

EMETERIO

Todo está bien. Usted va a vivir.

HOWARD

Who are you?

EMETERIO

Lo siento. Tengo que ir.

He runs off.

HOWARD

WAIT! GET BACK HERE! (*looks himself over*) Where are my pants?!

He surveys the scene around him. His gaze eventually turns to a group of on-lookers assembled on the beach. Some are merely observing, intrigued. The women are praying, their hands clasped. HOWARD waves to them, his gesture returned by a few.

One of the observers snaps pictures with a first-generation flash bulb camera that, today, would be considered a valuable antique.

Pants? (*nothing*) “Pant—” “Pantalones”? ... You have “pantalones”?

The group, for the most part, continues merely to stare. Meanwhile, an American SAILOR rushes over. He’s dragging behind him a large wicker basket; in it is a severely BURNED MAN, who can barely speak beyond a grumble. He’s covered up to his shoulders in a laundry bag-turned-blanket, and his eyes are seared shut.

SAILOR

HEY! YOU!

HOWARD

Me?

SAILOR

Yeah, you! Get your ass outta the sand and help me, will ya?!

Howard manages to come to his feet and stumble over to the SAILOR.

What’s your name?

HOWARD

What?

SAILOR

YOUR NAME, YOUR NAME!

HOWARD

Weaver. Seaman’s Apprentice.

SAILOR

Okay, listen, Weaver. I have to go back, and I need you—

HOWARD

—Wait, what happened? What’s going on?

SAILOR

Not sure. I think it was a tidal wave. I was ordered to help put in the gun-port shutters when it happened, so I’m not sure.

HOWARD

(looking at burn victim) Jesus...

SAILOR

This one managed to hobble out onto the top deck. Do me a favor, will ya? Just talk to him. Say anything. Make sure he *talks back*.

HOWARD

What happened to him?

SAILOR

Steam burns. He was working in the engine room when it happened. Look, I gotta go. Remember: *talks back*.

The SAILOR runs off. HOWARD kneels down to the BURNED MAN, careful not to touch his charred skin.

HOWARD

Hey, fella. *(a beat / not sure what to say)* Everything’s gonna be okay. We’ll get somebody to look at you.

The BURNED MAN struggles to utter a few words.

Take your time. I’m not going anywhere.

A beat. HOWARD leans forward to make sure he can hear among all the chaos.

BURNED MAN

Can’t see...

HOWARD

That’s... It’s okay...

BURNED MAN

How...?

HOWARD hesitates for a moment before delicately grabbing the corners of the laundry bag with his fingertips and slowly pulling it down to waist level. The BURNED MAN groans.

HOWARD

(still tugging) It's okay. Just a little more...

Finally, the bag unravels down to the BURNED MAN'S torso, revealing a scorched white shirt fused with human skin for the most part. HOWARD gently covers him up again.

BURNED MAN

Bad?

HOWARD

Not great. *(a beat)* Listen, do you need anything? Something I can do for you?

BURNED MAN

What's... What's your name?

HOWARD

Weaver. Howard. From Kingstree, South Carolina.

BURNED MAN

Good to know you.

HOWARD

And you? What's your name?

BURNED MAN

Charlie Ellis. Hoboken.

HOWARD

Hoboken. Where's that?

BURNED MAN

Jersey.

HOWARD

Jersey. Okay. *(a beat)* Well, uh, Charlie from Hoboken, you're gonna be fine. Ya hear?

BURNED MAN

I'm write... I'm a writer.

HOWARD

Yeah. *(a beat / can see he's fading)* Why tell me that?

BURNED MAN

“Gonna be fine.” *(a long, agonizing beat)* That line...doesn't work on me.

The BURNED MAN bows his head, dies. HOWARD puts two fingers under his nostrils to make sure he's no longer breathing.

No time to grieve. A particularly loud crashing sound draws HOWARD'S attention offstage. He stares in disbelief as the SAILOR reemerges with another battered crew member, this time using a coal sack as a gurney.

HOWARD (cont'd)

The Memphis...

SAILOR

Yeah, and there's still guys inside of her. Ambulances will get these guys. Gotta focus on the ones we can help. Gimme a hand.

HOWARD

With what?

SAILOR

Breeches buoy. *(exiting)* From the ship to the shore.

HOWARD begins his exit but stalls when EMETERIO returns with another soul.

(from offstage) C'MON! PUT SOME FIRE UNDER IT!

HOWARD exits, returns with SAILOR. They pull a thick buoy line nearly across the whole length of the stage.

Alright, we need this line *tight*. We have nothing to hook it up to.

HOWARD takes a moment to watch EMETERIO kneel down to care for the man he's just saved.

HOWARD

That man saved my life.

SAILOR

HEY! *(regains his attention)* SEND HIM FLOWERS LATER! Listen, they're gonna be sending men down this line to us. We gotta move quick – the ship could unhinge any

SAILOR (cont'd)

second – so there are gonna be two sailors for every harness. We unhook ‘em, settle them somewhere outta the way, and get ready for the next pair. Like a conveyer belt. Now, c’mon, PULL!

Together, they pull the line as taut as they can. It’s definitely a struggle.

FUCK, THIS LINE’S HEAVY! Those guys are gonna drop like stones if we can’t hold it.

HOWARD looks back at the spectators.

HOWARD

(motions desperately for help) HELP! AYUDA! HELP!

The men in the group (5) rush over and grab hold of the line; the whole group tugs. While some of the women (6 total) continue praying, others are now shouting words of encouragement in Spanish to the rescue party.

SAILOR

ALRIGHT, GOOD! Get ready. They’re sending the first two.

Without sacrificing his grip, HOWARD watches EMETERIO, standing, who’s about to head back out. The man with the camera sprints to within four feet of him.

MAN WITH CAMERA

Mírame.

He catches EMETERIO’S attention and quickly takes his picture. EMETERIO is obviously annoyed by the interruption, but he speeds off.

¡Gracias! Dios te bendiga!

HOWARD turns his full attention back to the task at hand.

SAILOR

OKAY, HERE THEY COME!

Slowly, a boatswain’s chair supporting two men makes its way down the line. The man on the left has his right leg through the chair, and the man on the right, his left leg. They have their near arms around each other, and their far arms are wrapped in the sling of the chair.

Alright, the first ones are the worst off, so be careful.

The chair arrives at the rescue group. Gently, little by little, they lower it and its passengers into the sand. They finally release the line. HOWARD and the SAILOR carry one of the men, and the “volunteers” handle the other. They are laid next to one another in the sand.

HOWARD

When are the ambulances getting here?

SAILOR

We can't worry about that right now. Only a couple of minutes till the next chair.

The SAILOR and the rest of the group retake the line. HOWARD does not follow straight away.

HOWARD

(looking off in the distance) That man... Who was that man?

Lights out to the sound of the fierce Atlantic and the accompanying, very faint tune of “Anchors Aweigh.”

Scene 3: “Pandora’s Box”

Lights up: a kitchen table in a middle-class home in Kingstree, South Carolina. On the table is a small, dark wooden box, a few small piles of paper, and a book or two.

FRANK sits with his older brother, NATHAN, and his son, TRAVIS.

FRANK

And they mostly just end there?

NATHAN

Correctamundo. *All* of them, not just most.

FRANK

The rescue effort took about three hours, yes?

NATHAN

That’s right.

FRANK

And there were four or five zip lines set up, with handfuls of Marines and locals manning each one?

TRAVIS

Yessir.

FRANK

But in all of the history books, articles, blogs—

TRAVIS

—Don’t forget Wikipedia.

FRANK

—there’s not a single chapter or paragraph naming some, or even *any*, of the Dominicans who helped?

NATHAN

Nope.

TRAVIS

Zilch.

NATHAN

When they *are* mentioned, they’re lumped together as a single group: the “island

NATHAN (cont'd)
residents.”

A beat. FRANK, mentally exhausted, sighs.

FRANK
Hours, *days* in the library and on the Internet, and all we have is “local residents.”

TRAVIS
It’s a start.

FRANK
We’re a month into this. We should have a little more just a start. What about the fellas driving the ambulances? Did they have any interaction with the rescuers?

NATHAN
Not really. There weren’t enough ambulances available at the time.

TRAVIS
How’d they get all those men off the beach then? There were forty dead and over two-hundred injured.

NATHAN
Francisco Henríquez y Carvajal, the “president” of the whole country, declared that every automobile in Santo Domingo – trucks, taxicabs, private vehicles – was to be given over to the U.S. Navy for use in the rescue. Naturally, a tall order like that took a while. The men on that beach waited well into the night, soaked and freezing.

A beat. TRAVIS rubs his eyes. NATHAN raps his fingers on the table.

FRANK
So. Sound off. Where do we go from here, ya’ll?

NATHAN
(*stands*) Home. I’ll talk to you tomorrow.

FRANK
Home? We still have the statement from the Chief Master-at-Arms— What’s his name? DENIG! We still have the statement he gave to Captain Beach’s son for his book. We can look over *that* right quick.

NATHAN
It’s 11:00 PM on a Saturday night. Chief Master-at-Arms Denig can wait till tomorrow.

FRANK

I'll put on some coffee.

NATHAN

No, thank you. No more coffee, no more 5-Hour Energy, no more Red Bull. Just *sleep*.

FRANK

You're such a quitter.

NATHAN

What was that?

FRANK

You're a quitter. You always do this. Dropping out early, I mean.

NATHAN

Not always – only when I'm *tired, dehydrated, and starving*.

FRANK

Could you come down off the cross for a sec?

NATHAN

For Christ's sake—

FRANK

—Yes, what for *your* sake?

NATHAN

—all I've eaten in the last eight hours is potato chips and trail mix. I'm not gonna collapse because you're obsessed and wanna keep me sitting here till the wee hours of the morning.

FRANK

“Obsessed”?

NATHAN

Yes, *obsessed*. Dad died over forty years ago.

FRANK

So?

NATHAN

So, what's driving you *now* to solve this thing?

FRANK

We never had a *lead* until now.

NATHAN

A “lead”?

FRANK

You and I must have hearing troubles today. Yes, a lead.

NATHAN

(*pointing to the box*) Our half-sister in Virginia sends you a cigar box full of little trinkets, and suddenly, you have a *lead*?

FRANK

Margaret’s sick. She’s dying. She wanted me to have these “little trinkets.” (*angrier*) And these “little trinkets” are Dad’s personal effects.

NATHAN

“Personal effects.” Jesus. You sound like you’re reading straight from a Navy registry.

FRANK

Fuck yourself. (*to TRAVIS*) Sorry, Trav.

TRAVIS

I’m cool.

FRANK

(*back to his brother*) Lemme ask you this: do you even *care* about why we’re doing this?

NATHAN

Why *are* we doing this?

FRANK

Can you give a single response *not* packaged as a fucking question? Just one. Can you do that?

A long beat. The air is heavy with hostility.

NATHAN

I’ll talk to you later. (*exiting*) Asshole.

FRANK

Prick.

NATHAN leaves. FRANK calms himself, turns to TRAVIS.

FRANK (cont'd)

Sorry.

TRAVIS

Grew up with three brothers. It's okay. Really.

FRANK opens the box and pulls out a crumpled black-and-white postcard, which he examines.

FRANK

Maybe he's right. It ain't *much* of a lead. (*a single laugh*) Sort of looks like Errol Flynn, doesn't he? Swashbuckler-type. Just the way you'd like to picture the guy who saved your father.

TRAVIS

Anything more coming to you?

FRANK

Another package in a couple of days.

TRAVIS

Well, till then, we'll just work with what we got.

FRANK

(*a beat*) Thanks for helping with this.

TRAVIS

No problem.

FRANK looks at the picture more closely, almost entranced by it.

FRANK

I *need* to find out who this man is.

TRAVIS

I know.

FRANK

But I'm not obsessed.

He looks at TRAVIS.

FRANK (cont'd)

I'm *not* obsessed.

TRAVIS

I know.

Lights out.

Scene 4: “Face-to-Face”

Slide: “Two weeks later.”

Lights up. Afternoon. HOWARD strolls along a street in Santo Domingo. He’s decked in Navy attire, and he has a Smith & Wesson Model 10 revolver holstered on his left side. His palms are wrapped with gauze.

He’s walking alongside a Navy SHORE PATROLMAN, mid-20s, also uniformed. He has an armband with the letters “SP” stitched into it, and he’s armed only with a nightstick, which dangles from his belt.

The street is not crowded, despite the largeness—even in 1916—of the city. In fact, the whole town is eerily quiet. Suspended from the ceiling of the theatre are Dominican flags. Some are pristine. Some are dirty. Some are tattered. Some are big; others, small.

There are two distinct pairs of Dominicans conversing in the streets. One is an elderly FISHERMAN speaking jovially with a local. The former has a large netted sack of plantains, which rests by his right leg. His scruffy garments are caked in sweat and some dirt, suggesting he’s just returned from a long day of labor. Tied to his hip by a raggedy string is a leather pouch containing a machete.

EMETERIO—he doesn’t look very different from the last time we saw him—is also in conversation with another man. He’s out of the way, not yet a central part of the scene. We barely notice him. HOWARD definitely doesn’t.

Other than these characters, a few extras—maybe three or four—occupy the stage.

There are also two MARINES patrolling the street. They’re dressed in their dark greens and have Springfield M1903 rifles slung around their shoulders. They speak to the bystanders. Though we do not hear them yet, we can see that MARINE 1 is questioning while MARINE 2 translates.

HOWARD

(noticing the MARINES) What’s going on over there?

They stop. SP glances over at MARINE 1, who’s getting antsy with one local.

SP

Search and seizure. You don’t know?

HOWARD

I was mostly on the Memphis before last week. And I’d only been assigned there for a month. *(holds up his hands)* Lucky me.

SP

Official order from Knapp. All personal firearms are to be confiscated from the indigenous people. A hometown buddy of mine who's with the leathernecks told me.

HOWARD

Have they found many?

SP

Since the end of June, I think they've collected something like 20,000.

HOWARD

20,000?

SP

Yep. Crazy, ain't it? But that's just how it is in this country. For men, owning and *carrying* a gun isn't just acceptable; it's a symbol of manhood.

HOWARD

(looking again at MARINE 1) Well, I guess that explains the *unfriendly* attitude some guys have cultivated. But is it really called for, you think?

SP

In this place, it's a necessary evil. And it's not just the guns. Why do you think the admiralty has guard units standing watch over your ship? If we left it alone for even a day, these natives would be all over it like ants on a scrap of bread. They'd strip it right down to its bare husk. To the top men, that's stealing from the U.S. government. But to a lot of others, it's more akin to grave-robbing.

HOWARD

And that's what's really got everybody worked up.

The MARINES are now speaking to the FISHERMAN.

SP

We're here trying to bring order to this place, something the folks here have failed at more than once. Mix a strong sense of ingratitude with the fear of being murdered and robbed—

MARINE 1

Corporal, ask this man what his profession is.

SP

—and things can boil over real quick.

HOWARD and the SP turn to watch the interrogation.

MARINE 2

¿Que es su profesión?

FISHERMAN

Pescador.

MARINE 2

He's a fisherman.

MARINE 1

Does he know anything about the guerillas?

MARINE 2

¿Sabe usted algo sobre el ejército guerrillero?

FISHERMAN

No.

MARINE 2

He says—

MARINE 1

—I got it. Does he have any firearms on his person?

MARINE 2

¿Tiene algún armas con usted?

The FISHERMAN answers by shaking his head “no.”

MARINE 1

(pretty damn frightening) Tell him he'd better be telling the truth.

MARINE 2

Por favor, no nos mienten.

MARINE 1

(looking at, pointing to, the sack) Tell him to empty his bag onto the ground. We need to check its contents.

MARINE 2

Mi jefe quiere que vacía su bolso en el suelo.

FISHERMAN

No voy a hacerlo.

MARINE 2

He won't do it.

A beat. MARINE 1 and the FISHERMAN exchange heated glances.

MARINE 1

Inform him that we are soldiers in the United States Marine Corps.

MARINE 2

Él quiere que usted sepa que somos soldados de los Estados Unidos.

FISHERMAN

No me importa quién es usted.

MARINE 2

He doesn't care.

Another tense beat.

FISHERMAN

(slowly / no patience left) Corporal. You tell Raoul or Manuel or whatever the fuck this old man's name is that I want every damn stock of corn in the dirt. *Now.*

MARINE 2 is hesitant. MARINE 1 unslings his rifle: he has one hand at the handle the other gripping the stock.

Corporal.

MARINE 2

Él dice que usted es un hijo de puta testarudo y debe vaciar todo el maíz.

FISHERMAN

Esto no es el maíz. Estos son los plátanos.

MARINE 2

“This is not corn. These are plantains.”

FISHERMAN

Culero.

MARINE 2

“Asshole.”

MARINE 1 attempts to bash the FISHERMAN over the head with the butt of his rifle but is held back initially by MARINE 2. A lot of grunting and maybe some swearing for good measure. HOWARD and the SP rush over to help. Meanwhile, EMETERIO dashes to the scene and shields the FISHERMAN, who, rather than raise a fist, merely stands defiantly.

EMETERIO

(to MARINE 1) DEJE EL HOMBRE SOLO!

MARINE 1

(continues to struggle) FUCK YOU, SEA NIGGERS!

HOWARD

HEY, HEY, HEY! Look at me. *(he does; HOWARD pants, catching his breath)* Calm. Down. And look around.

MARINE 1 does. Too many witnesses / potential rebels. He breathes deep.

MARINE 2

Talk a walk. We’ll handle things here.

A beat. MARINE 1 calms down.

MARINE 1

Right.

He picks his hat up off the ground and brushes the dirt off of it; he then gussies up his uniform and re-slings his rifle.

(to FISHERMAN) Be seeing you.

He exits. Immediately after he is off-stage:

FISHERMAN

(towards off-stage area) TU MADRE CHUPA POLLAS, CABRÓN!

MARINE 2

(about a millisecond later) HE SAYS, “GOD BLESS!”

EMETERIO speaks to the FISHERMAN, probably consoling him.

(to HOWARD) Thanks for your help. That could’ve been a lot worse.

HOWARD

Sure thing. Seemed like you could use another pair of hands.

MARINE 2

He's really been on edge since yesterday. A bandit stole his smokes right out of his back pocket. Take the guns, but leave us our Pall Malls, you know?

HOWARD notices who's talking to the FISERHMAN.

SP

I gotcha, pal. Take care, and make sure he doesn't shoot anyone today.

MARINE 2

(laughs) I think I can manage that. Starting now.

He begins to walk away.

HOWARD

(to MARINE 2) Hey, buddy. Hold up a sec, will ya? *(he does)* Wanna pay me back? Come here real quick. *(he does; HOWARD addresses the SP)* I'll get together with you later.

SP

(exiting in opposite direction of MARINE 1) Be safe.

HOWARD

(walks up to EMETERIO, taps his shoulder) Hello?

EMETERIO turns around. HOWARD gives MARINE 2 a "You know what to do" nod.

My name is Howard Weaver.

MARINE 2

(pointing to HOWARD) Es Howard Weaver. Yo soy su traductor.

EMETERIO nods.

HOWARD

(a beat) You saved my life. *(another beat: he sees that MARINE 2 is taken aback)* I am one of the sailors you pulled from the water during the storm. I was a crew member on the large ship. The Memphis.

MARINE 2

Usted lo salvó durante la tormenta la semana pasada. Él estaba en el barco llamado Memphis.

A beat. EMETERIO is surprised.

HOWARD

I wanted to ask you—

A gunshot rings out. Screams and crying are heard not far away. Everyone on stage ducks and remains that way for the rest of the scene. The extras exit, but the major players—that includes the FISHERMAN—remain momentarily.

HOWARD draws his pistol and has his thumb on the hammer.

MARINE 2

SHIT!

EMETERIO

(running, motioning for the others to follow) SÍGUEME!

MARINE 2

(following) HE SAYS TO FOLLOW HIM!

HOWARD

(two steps behind MARINE 2) I PICKED UP ON THAT ONE! THANKS!

The three are now gone.

The FISHERMAN opens his rucksack, digs through the plantains, and retrieves a small revolver. He tucks it into the back of his pants and exits.

Lights out.

Scene 5: “The ‘Eureka’ Moment”

Lights up. FRANK sits at the same table as before, thumbing through various papers. He has a cigarette in his mouth and a coffee mug nearby. There’s an ashtray with four or five butts in it. The same little wooden box sits there, open.

TRAVIS enters.

TRAVIS

You need to sleep.

FRANK

I’m okay. Honestly. *(yawns)* Besides, I think I’m on the verge of something here.

TRAVIS

And what’s that?

FRANK

(a beat—he hasn’t really found anything) When I find it, I’ll tell you.

TRAVIS takes the papers out of FRANK’S hands and sets them on the table.

TRAVIS

It’s gonna be morning soon, and you’ve *got* to have sleep. Not that Mom doesn’t like having the bed all to herself...

A beat. FRANK drifts in and out of consciousness. The moisture on his lips is all that’s holding the cigarette to his mouth.

Dad?

Nothing. TRAVIS takes the cigarette from his father and dashes it in the tray. He then takes the mug and obliges FRANK to down the last few sips.

FRANK

I wanna...

TRAVIS

I know; I know. *(taking him by the arm)* Let’s get you there.

FRANK

(resisting / with renewed energy) I wanna look into the Asociación de la Prensa. They might’ve written about this.

TRAVIS

(aggravated) Jesus, I've never seen anybody do so much on half-a-cup of decaf.

FRANK

I just finished looking over some of the newspaper write-ups about the violent occurrences between September, October, and November.

TRAVIS

I thought the protests were mostly peaceful.

FRANK

Mostly. Tense atmosphere and frayed nerves – things were bound to happen. *(picks up one paper)* Like this. *(reads)* “Yesterday, in capital city of Santo Domingo, a U.S. soldier shoots a deaf-mute who refused to halt when ordered. A man emerging from a café for to help was also killed.” *(puts it down)* Not a good translation I found, but it's—

TRAVIS

—A start. Right?

FRANK

(a beat) Anyway, there's no mention of any Navy personnel – at least, nobody sounding like your granddad.

TRAVIS

(a beat) You know, I didn't want to put myself in the ring before with you and Uncle Nathan. But I have to ask you the same thing: why are you doing this?

FRANK

I can't just be genuinely interested?

TRAVIS

“Genuine interest” doesn't keep people up till 3:30 AM.

FRANK

Fair enough.

TRAVIS

So? What is it?

A beat. FRANK laces his hands together, hesitant to say anything more.

FRANK

If I can find out who the man who saved my father was... maybe I can track down his family – some descendants.

TRAVIS

To thank them?

FRANK

Exactly.

TRAVIS

(w/ a quick smartass chuckle) ‘Bout a hundred years overdue.

FRANK

Better late than never. *(a beat)* They have to know that *somebody* remembers. Historians, authors, and Ph.D.’s, they write history as if it were a shopping list. Only the main ingredients are included. It’s up to people like us—the people who *really* give a shit—to write the rest. It’s *our* task to fill in the blanks. Do you understand?

TRAVIS

Yessir.

FRANK

Good. *(looks into the box, sighs)* *Of course*, it would help if there were an address book in here, too.

TRAVIS

(laughing) I’ll bet.

TRAVIS laughs. FRANK takes out the postcard.

FRANK

(looking at it) When I think about it, it’s so remarkable. There’s no telling how many of these are floating around out here. But this little piece of paper may say more than any history book. *(chuckles)* And it’s not even a good picture.

TRAVIS glances into the box.

TRAVIS

So, what other little treasures do you have there?

FRANK

Let’s see...

He sets the postcard down and moves things around in the box for a second. He then removes the items and places them on the table as he catalogs them:

FRANK (cont'd)

Dominican campaign medal. Very *used* baseball. Letter to your grandma. A gold-plated chain wristwatch from Dad's Moose Lodge years—

TRAVIS

—Wait, wait, wait. Back up a minute.

FRANK

Don't get excited. It's not signed by Mickey Mantle or anything.

TRAVIS

No, no. Not that. What's a letter to *Grandma* doing in a box of Grandpa's things all the way up in Virginia?

FRANK

(hands it to him) Here. It's from a group made up of survivors of the Memphis.

TRAVIS

(looking at the envelope) Columbus, Ohio?

FRANK

They'd been meeting for a couple of years to commemorate that day and keep in touch, but Dad was never included.

TRAVIS

(opens the letter, shocked) Why?

TRAVIS quietly reads the letter as FRANK speaks.

FRANK

He'd only been serving aboard the Memphis for a month before the storm hit. And I guess record-keeping just hadn't been perfected yet. New crew members—or, at least their families—were being found and notified year after year. But for a while there, *decades* in some cases, men who were there that afternoon in 1916 were completely forgotten. *(scoffs)* Looks like there was a lot of this going around.

TRAVIS

(reads) "My dear Mrs. Weaver..."

He now reads silently.

FRANK

The letter was sent two years after his passing, and Mom was never able to afford the trip, not with two kids and a teacher's salary.

TRAVIS

(aloud again, visibly more intrigued) “I assure you that the picture you sent us will be investigated thoroughly, as a fellow shipmate provided a similar one. Any and all results of this inquiry will be included in our annual program book. Per your request, I would be more than happy to provide you with past editions. Thank you again for writing, and I say with much elation: ‘Welcome aboard.’” *(a beat)* Did you Xerox Grandpa’s Navy papers – *enlistment, pay rate, discharge* – all that?

FRANK digs through the papers on the table and retrieves a pretty thick stack held together by a black binder clip.

FRANK

(hands them to TRAVIS) Here.

TRAVIS looks through them briefly; he then holds them up to FRANK and turns the pages rapidly, like a flip book.

TRAVIS

Notice anything?

FRANK

What?

TRAVIS

No pictures. *At all.* *(a beat—FRANK is interested)* Have you ever actually *seen* a headshot of anyone who served on the Memphis? *(no response)* Credentials for Navy men *didn’t include photos* back then. Weight, height, personal info – that was it. You said yourself that record-keeping was still a new practice at the time.

FRANK

I think you’re reaching a little bit. My mother wrote to these people about *Dad*.

TRAVIS

Yeah, but think about that opening. It’s an *apology*. They already concluded that Grandpa was on the Memphis when they wrote the letter. And as for the “fellow shipmate” who sent in a photo, just think about this: what are the chances that a complete stranger would have a picture of your father that *wasn’t* taken by the Navy?

FRANK

Not very good.

TRAVIS

Right. It would most likely be someone Grandpa knew personally, and if that were the case, his actual name would be in this letter.

A beat. FRANK is starting to see the big picture.

TRAVIS (cont'd)

(slowly) Now, what are the odds that Grandma and this other guy, who may have never crossed paths with Grandpa even once, both have a copy of something that was printed more than once?

FRANK looks at the postcard, then at TRAVIS.

FRANK

Better. *(a beat)* The picture wasn't of Dad.

TRAVIS

Grandma was trying to figure this out, too...over *forty* years ago.

A long beat. FRANK is awestruck by this revelation.

FRANK

And this group...they published a program yearly?

TRAVIS

(scanning the letter) Since 1959.

FRANK smiles at his son and hands him the coffee mug. TRAVIS, also smiling, rolls his eyes and goes to refill.

I want a raise.

Lights out.

Scene 6: "Guests"

Lights up. EMETERIO'S home, just outside of Santo Domingo. It's an incredibly modest dwelling—essentially a one-room shack. In fact, it looks like it may have been built, board for board, by its resident.

The interior is particularly bare. The dominant set piece is a large, shabby mahogany table, around which six chairs sit.

*On one side of the room, flushed against the wall, is a fire chamber (**not** a stove): three brick masonry walls with an iron top cover and door. A cylinder chimney of the same metal protrudes several feet high (presumably through the ceiling). On top of the apparatus rests a sizeable paddle—mahogany, like the table; both were probably handmade from the same caoba tree.*

A faint, burning red light emanates through the chamber's small front crevices.

On the opposite side is a bunk bed. The cushions—not quite mattresses—are large enough for three children each; they're certainly not for adults. Disheveled green woolen covers hang from each bed.

MARINE 2 sits on the bottom bunk—hands on his knees and head lowered—letting his heart catch up with him. Meanwhile, HOWARD and EMETERIO sit at the table. HOWARD is no better off than his comrade, while EMETERIO is a bit more composed.

HOWARD

Thank you for bringing us here, mister. *(no response)* Thank you.

MARINE 2

Él dice: "Gracias."

EMETERIO

De nada.

MARINE 2

You're welcome.

EMETERIO

Usted dice que me salvó la vida?

HOWARD motions for MARINE 2 to join them, which he does.

MARINE 2

Listen. Buddy. I probably need to get going—make sure that something's being done—

HOWARD

—Wait, wait. Please. Wait.

HOWARD hastily pulls his wallet from his back pocket and hands MARINE 2 a fiver; he takes it.

MARINE 2

What you said to him earlier—you know, ‘bout him saving you...

HOWARD turns back to EMETERIO. He uses broad hand gestures while speaking slowly to illustrate what he’s saying. They’re mostly very vague—just feable attempts at communicating in a way that doesn’t require translation.

HOWARD

I was one of the sailors who nearly drowned. You dragged me to shore.

MARINE 2

Yo fui uno de los marineros que casi se ahogó. Usted me trajo a la orilla.

A beat. EMETERIO looks HOWARD over and comes to recognize him.

EMETERIO

Oh, sí. Sí, tú eras el hombre sin pantalones.

MARINE 2

(looking at HOWARD; confused and a bit disturbed) “Yes, you were the one without pants.”

HOWARD takes out another five and hands it to MARINE 2.

I already agreed to stick around.

HOWARD

I know. That’s to forget that last part.

MARINE 2

Gotcha.

EMETERIO

Estoy muy feliz de ver que estás bien. Pero, ¿qué estás haciendo aquí?

MARINE 2

“I’m very glad that you’re okay, but what exactly do you want?”

HOWARD

(not sure what to say) I just...wanted to thank you for what you did.

MARINE 2

Quiero darle las gracias por rescatarme.

EMETERIO

No podía dejar que un hombre muera. Usted no tiene que darme las gracias.

MARINE 2

“I couldn’t let a man die. You do not need to thank me.”

HOWARD

Yes. Yes, I do. *You* don’t have to thank *us* for helping back there, though.

MARINE 2

Sí, debo hacerlo. Y usted no tiene que darnos las gracias por ayudarlo a volver allí.

EMETERIO

Yo no tenía la intención de darle las gracias.

A beat. MARINE 2’S expression is that of silent shock.

HOWARD

What’d he say?

MARINE 2

He wasn’t going to.

Another tense beat.

HOWARD

That seems kinda disrespectful.

MARINE 2

Esto parece una falta de respeto.

HOWARD

(getting defensive) I mean, didn’t I repay the favor? You helped *me*; I helped *you*.

MARINE 2

Me devolvió el favor, ¿no? Usted me ayudó y le ayudaron.

HOWARD

And swimming out to save me doesn't seem *that* much greater than what I—we—did back there.

MARINE 2

Lo que hiciste no es mayor que lo que hice.

EMETERIO

Lo que le permite ahogar habría sido mucho más fácil.

MARINE 2

“Letting you drown would've been much easier.”

HOWARD

(*with a little more fire*) I'm sorry. Have I offended you in some way?

MARINE 2

¿Me ofende usted?

EMETERIO

No personalmente. Pero los últimos meses han sido muy difíciles, debido a los americanos.

MARINE 2

“No, not *personally*. But the last couple of months have been hard to bear thanks to the Americans.”

A beat.

EMETERIO

Lo siento. Disculpen mi rudeza. El anciano parte de atrás hay un amigo mío.

MARINE 2

“Sorry for my tone. The old man who was being harrassed back there is a good friend of mine.”

HOWARD

(*a beat; he understands*) It's okay. Uh, *está* okay.

EMETERIO

Bien. (*he gives an eating gesture with his hands*) ¿Quieres comer algo? Tengo pan en el horno.

HOWARD

(mimicking the gesture) Eat?

EMETERIO nods.

(nodding) Yes, that'd be great. Thank yo— Uh, *gracias*.

EMETERIO goes and gently takes a loaf of bread out of the fire chamber. He blows on it frantically, then picks it up with his fingertips and sets it on the table. He motions for his guests to help themselves.

HOWARD and *MARINE 2* hesitantly tear large chunks from the loaf and devour them.

HOWARD

Very good.

EMETERIO

(understands and is pleased) Bien, bien.

HOWARD

So, uh, are you a professional baker?

MARINE 2

Usted es un panadero profesional?

EMETERIO

Sí. Desde hace muchos años. Yo también soy un pescador.

MARINE 2

“Yes, for many years now. And I’m a fisherman, too.”

EMETERIO

Un marinero...mismo que tú.

MARINE 2

A sailor. Just like you.

HOWARD is pleased that some common ground has been found. He looks at the bunk bed, then at *EMETERIO*.

HOWARD

(indicates shortness with one hand) Do you have children?

MARINE 2
¿Tiene hijos?

EMETERIO
(*nodding*) Sí.

HOWARD
And you're not worried about them right now?

MARINE 2
Y no se preocupan por ellos?

EMETERIO
Ellos están muy bien, te lo aseguro. Ellos van a las casas de los amigos de siempre que este tipo de cosas suceden.

MARINE 2
He says they'll be just fine. When stuff like this happens, they just run to a friend's house.

HOWARD
That's all very good, but...

MARINE 2
What?

HOWARD
Just how safe are *we*?

Very swiftly, enter RAFAEL TRUJILLO, with an accomplice. EMETERIO jumps to his feet.

TRUJILLO is a relatively handsome, mustached man who wears the clothes of a common laborer (as does his partner). He carries himself with great swagger, though, as if he knows he is destined for greater things.

EMETERIO
¿Quién es usted?

TRUJILLO
Relájese, abuelo. Sólo estamos aquí para refugiarse de los combates.

MARINE 2 stealthily moves to HOWARD'S side.

EMETERIO

Yo no te quiere aquí.

MARINE 2

(whispers) He says he wants to know who this guy is.

HOWARD

(whispers) I figured that much out.

EMETERIO

¿Sabía usted tira un soldado o robar a una taberna?

TRUJILLO

Yo trabajo en una plantación de azúcar como un guardia. No me falta de respeto.

EMETERIO

Voy a hablar con usted siempre que quiera en mi casa. Usted o su amigo.

FRANK and MARINE 2 can clearly see that the situation is heating up very quickly.

TRUJILLO

Nos quedaremos aquí todo el tiempo que queramos.

TRUJILLO looks at HOWARD and MARINE 2, then back at EMETERIO.

TRUJILLO (cont'd)

¿Quiénes son?

EMETERIO

Ellos no son su preocupación.

A beat, then:

MARINE 2

(whispers) This is gettin' good.

HOWARD

(whispers urgently) What? What's happening?

EMETERIO

Gente como usted es lo que está mal en este país. No a los estadounidenses.

TRUJILLO, right fist cocked, quickly moves to within inches of EMETERIO.

HOWARD and MARINE 2 prepare to intervene; their movement is noticed by TRUJILLO.

EMETERIO (cont'd)

Deja. Ahora.

TRUJILLO

Eres muy valiente...por un panadero.

TRUJILLO looks at EMETERIO'S guests one more time, then:

Hasta la próxima.

Exit TRUJILLO.

EMETERIO

Tengo que ir. Lo siento. Tengo que conseguir mis hijos.

Exit EMETERIO.

HOWARD

Where's he going?

MARINE 2

I think he's a little more worried about his kids now. You saw how that fella just barged right in here.

HOWARD

Were those guys guerillas?

MARINE 2

Nah. The true "gavilleros" dont strut around like that. Those were strongarms on a sugar plantation taking cover from the fire. Just a pair of unwelcomed guests.

HOWARD

I'll say. Our host looked pretty ticked.

MARINE 2

Well, you *saw* how everything went down earlier. I wouldn't want somebody dragging trouble into *my* place either.

HOWARD

(a beat) I have *one* last favor to ask you.

MARINE 2

Good, 'cause I've spent just about all of my generosity on you.

HOWARD

You're a translator. That's what you're here for, right?

MARINE 2

Nothin' gets by you, huh?

HOWARD

So, you probably have a Spanish-American dictionary with you, right?

MARINE 2

Got a copy back at the barracks. I don't use it that frequently. There's usually just a handful of important phrases to remember. "Stop right there." "We're here to search the premises." Those sorts...

HOWARD

Could you loan it to me?

MARINE 2

Not sure about that. It's Corps-issued. Don't wanna get my ass chewed.

HOWARD

Well, is there anything I can do for you that'd change your mind? I'm outta fives.

MARINE 2

(a beat; thinks it over) Life back at camp is about to bore me into a fucking grave. Tell you what: one deck of poker cards buys you a dictionary for a little while.

HOWARD

Deal. *(shakes his hand)* I'm indebted to ya.

MARINE 2

No problem. *(smiles)* C'mon...

He takes out the two five-dollar bills and displays them in front of HOWARD.

I'll buy ya drink.

Lights out.

Scene 7: "Interpretations"

Lights up. Father and son in the living room; they continue raking through stacks of papers. FRANK sits on the couch while TRAVIS stands nearby, lost in his work, tapping the floor rapidly but lightly with his foot.

The television a few feet away is turned on, screen glaring, but the volume is turned down.

Eventually, FRANK notices the noise his son's making.

FRANK

When's the recital?

TRAVIS

(notes his behavior) Sorry.

FRANK

(w/ a chuckle) It's fine.

TRAVIS

Hey, Dad.

FRANK

Yes?

TRAVIS

I've got something I want you to look at. Actually, it's a *somebody*.

FRANK

Oh? Who? You've got a new name to add to our roster?

TRAVIS

Not necessarily, but maybe.

FRANK

That's informative. Who is it?

TRAVIS

Trujillo. Rafael Trujillo.

FRANK

Pretty colorful name.

TRAVIS

Yeah. And it's mentioned *at least* once in all the documents I've printed out. I understand why you didn't notice, though. (*hands FRANK his papers*) Here. I've highlighted a couple of times.

FRANK

(*thumbs through the documents*) If he's mentioned so many times, how come there isn't more of him in all of this? Seems like over a couple of months, we would've found *something*...

TRAVIS

I wondered the exact same thing. So, I took a little detour and decided to hit the Internet to find out more about him.

FRANK

And?

TRAVIS

Nothing concrete before 1930.

FRANK

What happened in 1930?

TRAVIS

He became the president of the Dominican Republic.

FRANK

Oh, well, *that's* probably why he comes up so much. How long was he the president?

TRAVIS

Thirty years.

FRANK

Yikes. He must've been a pretty good one.

TRAVIS

That's what the books and whatnot say. They call 'em things like "revolutionary" and "warrior." One even refers to him as a "stern father."

FRANK

Doesn't sound like anything too out-of-the-ordinary. What made you bring 'em up?

TRAVIS

I just thought— It seemed strange, you know. All of these different sources are about

TRAVIS (cont'd)

something that happened in 1916, but they keep mentioning somebody who was a no-name till fourteen years later. In two of the books I've read, he's mentioned in the very first pages of the introductions. I really didn't think too much about it at first, but the name just *kept* cropping up...

FRANK

But for now, let's just say he's a no-name, m'kay?

TRAVIS

Okay. I just thought I'd get it out there...

FRANK

I appreciate that. And now, we can just *leave it* out there. We gotta focus on people we *need* to find.

FRANK'S attention redirects to the TV. TRAVIS turns to look, as well.

(turns up the volume with the remote) Speaking of which...

TRAVIS

(mockingly) Where do they think he is *now*?

FRANK

Hangin' with Waldo somewhere. I don't know. I can't wait for us to finally nail him. I know it won't change much, but...

TRAVIS

You don't think we'll leave once bin Laden's dead?

FRANK

Oh, definitely not. It's not that simple. I *wish* it was, but it's not.

TRAVIS

At least we're doin' some good over there, though. We've changed *a lot*.

FRANK

We are and we have. But the sooner we get outta there, the better. And then there's that whole mess in Iraq. We're been there since '03.

TRAVIS

Has it really been that long? I was a sophomore in high school when we went in.

FRANK

That's right. You were. (*a beat*) Eight years is too long to stay in someone else's country.

TRAVIS

Eight years? (*a beat*) That's exactly how long we stayed in the Dominican Republic.

FRANK

Well...at least we've got experience.

FRANK smiles.

Lights out.

Scene 8: “The Line-Up”

Lights up. FRANK, piece of chalk in hand, stands next to a blackboard fixed to a wooden frame. On the board, a myriad of facts and leads have been written, including: “August 29, 1916,” “September 7,” “investigation,” and “1929.”

His tone throughout the scene is crispy and speedy, like he’s delivering a lecture with a time limit in mind.

TRAVIS and NATHAN sit at the table, each reading through a small booklet. They’re not extensive; they look like dime store novels, bound in black leather with gold sequins.

FRANK

Okay. Now. Before we start, are there any questions that need answering?

TRAVIS raises his hand.

Yes?

TRAVIS

When the hell did you find time to go buy a *chalkboard*?

FRANK

Didn’t. Stole it from your mom’s 3rd grade classroom. *Any*more questions?

TRAVIS and NATHAN raise their hands.

Well, if that’s all for the Q & A portion, let’s get down to brass tacks.

Both hands go down.

NATHAN

Got it.

TRAVIS

Let’s do this.

FRANK

Great. (*pointing to board*) Now, we’ve got most of the basics covered. Dates, places, names—

TRAVIS

—Except the *one*.

FRANK

—so now, we just have to figure out where to place Howard Weaver in all of it. We take what’s in these programs and combine it with whatever turned up on the Web—

NATHAN

—and *then* see if any of it syncs up with the service records that the NPRC sent us.
(*sarcastic*) *A cinch...*

TRAVIS

“NPRC”?

NATHAN

National Personnel Records Center.

FRANK

Excuse me. Please do *not* interrupt the teacher unless you have a burning question.

NATHAN raises his hand.

Yes, what?

NATHAN

Can we vote on a new teacher?

FRANK

No. So, we know that the wreck occurred on August 29th of 1916.

TRAVIS

Yep.

FRANK

(*to NATHAN, pointing to “September 7”*) And we know that Dad was off his feet for at least *nine* days after that.

NATHAN

(*picks up a Xeroxed document, reads*) “Howard L. Weaver. Admitted to medical care unit for deep lacerations to both hands and preliminary signs of pneumonia.”

TRAVIS

And because the Dominican Supreme Court burned to the ground in 1927, we know that governmental documents are likely a no-go.

FRANK

Bingo. And from the publications acquired from the Memphis Survivors group—

TRAVIS

—*Booyah.*

NATHAN

—we’ve learned that the chargé d’affaires *did* do an investigation on this in 1929.

TRAVIS raises his hand.

NATHAN

(*to TRAVIS*) Fancy wording for “diplomat.”

TRAVIS lowers his hand.

FRANK

And it’s because of the fancy diplomat—

TRAVIS

—Brought to you by Travis Weaver.

FRANK

—yes—that we finally have a big, fat, concrete lead. Nathaniel?

NATHAN

Yeah, don’t call me that. THREE NAMES! And they are...

As NATHAN gives the names, FRANK jots them down on the board in giant letters that overlap everything else that’s been written.

Prosper Marchena...Emeterio Sanchez...and Manuel María Dubreil.

A beat. The three quietly savor their significant victory.

TRAVIS

Well, this is terrific, *but* we still have to figure out which one of these guys was responsible for saving Grandpa.

NATHAN

He’s right. Even if we now know that *these* are the men who went into the water, how do we go any further?

FRANK puts down the piece of chalk. He then pulls an extremely worn notebook from his back pocket and sets it down on the table. TRAVIS picks it up, opens it.

What’s that?

FRANK

The other package Margaret sent me. (*to TRAVIS*) Remember? (*TRAVIS nods*) Your grandpa did some homework. Scan the first couple of pages, and tell me what you find.

TRAVIS

(*has some trouble enunciating*) “Mi nombre es...”

FRANK

“My name is...”

TRAVIS

“Yo estoy con la Marina de los Estados Unidos.”

FRANK

“I’m with the United States Navy.”

TRAVIS

“Por favor, nos traen ron.”

FRANK

“Please bring us rum.” (*a beat*) Basic phrases, right? Simple things that a soldier in a foreign country should know how to say.

TRAVIS

“Please bring us rum”?

FRANK

Now, how about the last couple of pages?

TRAVIS turns to the back of the notebook.

TRAVIS

“Six children.” “Fisherman.” “Lived near water.” “Loved swimming as child.” “Wife—Mercedes.” (*a beat*) It’s like a transcript.

A beat. This latest discovery hits TRAVIS and NATHAN like a ton of bricks.

NATHAN

He met ‘em...

FRANK

That or Dad wanted folks to know ‘bout his days moonlighting as a ladies’ man aboard a fishing liner.

NATHAN

We dig up some info on those three guys and find a match.

FRANK sits in a laid-back, self-satisfied position, hands laced behind his head.

FRANK

Want that cup of coffee now?

Lights out.

Scene 9: "AWOL"

Lights up. EMETERIO'S home. HOWARD and EMETERIO sit at the table. It's a few weeks after their first encounter.

The following conversation is offered in English, as their dialogue is in Spanish with accompanying subtitles. HOWARD'S speech is slow, arduous. He has with him a Spanish-English dictionary / phrase book, a pencil, and a small notebook. He's busily writing in the notebook as the scene opens. His Spanish is, to be expected, fractured, sloppy even.

When EMETERIO speaks, HOWARD records what he says in writing, occasionally accessing the dictionary for assistance.

The two men are also steadily drinking rum; they have been for some time.

EMETERIO

¿Está seguro de que serán castigados por estar aquí?
(Are you certain you will be punished for being here?)

HOWARD

Sí. Nadie sabe que estoy aquí. Te lo juro.
(Yes. Nobody knows that I am here. I swear.)

EMETERIO

Buena. Tengo que decir que esta es una experiencia muy nueva, con un americano en mi casa.
(Good. I have to say, this is a very new experience, having an American in my house.)

HOWARD

Me imagino. *(a bit concerned)* Luego, su casa no ha sido objeto de búsqueda todavía?
(I imagine. Then, your home has not been searched yet?)

EMETERIO

No, no todavía. Sin embargo, nuestro vecino, Guillermo, su casa fue registrada hace dos días. *(a beat)* No podía mirarme como él me ha dicho todo al respecto. *(a beat)* Cuatro hombres vestidos con uniformes irrumpieron en la cocina mientras su esposa estaba preparando la cena. Ni siquiera llamar. Guillermo llegó desde la otra habitación para darles la bienvenida. Era tan cortés como era de esperar.
(No. Not yet. But our neighbor, Guillermo, his home was searched two days ago. ...He could not look at me as he told me all about it. ...Four men in uniforms barged into the kitchen while his wife was preparing dinner. They didn't even knock. Guillermo came in from the other room to greet them. He was as courteous as could be expected.)

As EMETERIO continues, HOWARD tries desperately to keep up with his note-taking.

EMETERIO (cont'd)

Ninguno de ellos habla nuestro idioma, y no se molestó en tratar de entenderlo. Rodearon el lugar y se volvió del revés. Era como si Guillermo y Jada no estaban allí. Bueno, Jada no pudo contener su ira por mucho tiempo. Ella comenzó a gritar. Exigió que los hombres respecto a su casa y su familia o salir.

(None of them spoke our language, and they did not bother trying to understand him. They walked around and turned the place inside out. It was as if Guillermo and Jada were not there. Well, Jada could not contain her anger very long. She began to yell. She demanded that the men respect her home and her family or leave.)

(illustrating with his hands) Uno de los hombres agarró del pelo y tiró duro. Ella cayó al suelo, llorando. Y el soldado agarró el extremo de su rifle y lo apretó contra su garganta para tenerla allí.

(One of the men grabbed her hair and yanked hard. She fell to the ground, weeping. And the soldier took the end of his rifle and pressed it against her throat to hold her there.)

Cuando su hija de cinco años de edad, Itzel, entró en la habitación, Guillermo le envió de inmediato—

(When their five-year-old daughter, Itzel, came into the room, Guillermo sent her straight away—)

HOWARD

—Lo siento. Escribo muy despacio. *(looks through dictionary)* Repita, por favor. Más lento.

(—I'm sorry. I write very slowly. Repeat, please. Slower.)

A beat. EMETERIO cannot bring himself to do it.

EMETERIO

No creo que lo haré. Si eso está bien.

(I don't think I will. If that is okay.)

Another beat. HOWARD examines what he has just written and is a tad confused.

HOWARD

(not wanting to coerce him) Está bien. Ah, bueno, ¿cuánto tiempo ha vivido en esta ciudad?

(It's okay. Uh, well, how long have you lived in this city?)

EMETERIO

He vivido aquí toda mi vida. Desde 1865.

(I have lived here my entire life. Since 1865.)

HOWARD

¿Creciste cerca del agua?
(*Did you grow up near water?*)

EMETERIO

Estamos en una isla.
(*We're on an island.*)

HOWARD looks over this last statement, bobs his head in embarrassment.

HOWARD

Lo sentimos. Estúpida pregunta.
(*Sorry. Stupid question.*)

EMETERIO

(*laughs*) Está bien. No eres más que curioso.
(*It's okay. You're just curious.*)

HOWARD

Mucho. ¿Cuántos hijos tiene usted?
(*Very much. How many children do you have?*)

EMETERIO

Seis.
(*Six.*)

HOWARD

Seis. Mi dios.
(*Six. My God.*)

EMETERIO

Sí. Julio Emeterio, Julia Rosa, Octavia Virginia, Luis Bautista, Graciela, y, por supuesto, Eugenio.
(*Yes. Julio Emeterio, Rosa Julia, Virginia Octavia, Luis Bautista, Graciela, and, of course, Eugenio.*)

HOWARD

Ese es un gran familia.
(*That is quite a family.*)

EMETERIO

Sí, lo es. ¿Y tú? ¿Tiene hijos?
(*Yes, it is. And you? Do you have any children?*)

HOWARD's initial response to the question is a light chuckle.

HOWARD

Uh, no, que yo sepa.
(Uh, none that I know of.)

EMETERIO

Eso es triste. Ser padre es una gran alegría. *(jokingly)* Por supuesto, rara vez tiene tiempo como este para sentarse y charlar. *(now serious)* Y me preocupo por ellos constantemente.

EMETERIO (cont'd)

(That is sad. Being a father is a great joy. Of course, you rarely have time like this to sit and chat. And I worry about them constantly.)

HOWARD

Les prometo que los americanos no le hará daño a sus hijos.
(I promise you that the Americans will not harm your children.)

EMETERIO

No son ellos los que me preocupa. *(a beat)* Es parte de nuestra propia gente.
(It's not them I'm worried about. ...It's some of our own people.)

HOWARD

Usted está hablando de las campanas que vinieron por aquí?
(You're talking about those hoods that came by here?)

EMETERIO

Sí. Se llaman: "El 44." Ellos han desarrollado una gran reputación.
(Yes. They call themselves: "The 44." They have developed quite a reputation.)

HOWARD

¿Qué se conoce?
(What are they known for?)

EMETERIO

No dudará en hacer daño a otros, pero son capaces de mucho más. Todo lo que su ingenio puede alcanzar y su conciencia puede pasar por alto. Chantaje y el robo son sus favoritos. *(scoffs)* Los políticos en ciernes. Hay muchos de su especie. *(a beat—he's visibly troubled by the topic)* Entonces, ¿estás casado por lo menos?
(They will not hesitate to hurt others, but they are capable of much more. Anything their wits can achieve and their consciences can overlook. Blackmail and thievery are their favorites. Politicians in the making. There are too many of their kind. ...So, are you married at least?)

HOWARD

No, no tienen ni siquiera una vuelta a casa cariño.
(No. I don't even have a sweetheart back home.)

EMETERIO

Usted no quiere una familia?
(You don't want a family?)

HOWARD

Se podría decir que simplemente no tienen tiempo.
(You could say that I simply don't have the time.)

EMETERIO

Usted debe encontrar el tiempo. Tienes razón muy joven, pero eso no te garantiza nada. Nunca se puede predecir cuando la vida se va a “tirar una mala pasada.”
(You should find the time. You're very young right now, but that does not guarantee you anything. You can never predict when life is going to “throw you a fast one.”)

Suddenly, almost fiercely, three Marines burst in. Not even a knock. The GUNNERY SERGEANT (“GUNNY”), the leader, has a holstered pistol at his side, while his subordinates hold their rifles at the ready—bayonets fixed.

HOWARD and EMERTIO stand. HOWARD manages to stuff his conversational materials into his back pocket before they are noticed.

Naturally, he now speaks in English. EMETERIO'S words are still subtitled.

GUNNY

What the fuck's going on here? *(to HOWARD)* Who're you?

HOWARD

Seamen's Apprentice Weav—

GUNNY

—Shut it.

EMETERIO

(threatening voice) Fuera.
(Get out.)

GUNNY

(picks up on EMETERIO'S tone) What was that?

HOWARD

Sergeant, I think he was saying—

GUNNY

—I told you to keep your yap *shut*. Now, what are you doing congregating with this man, sailor? Don't you know that fraternization with locals is prohibited?

HOWARD

Yes, I do—

GUNNY

—QUIET! (*a beat*) Do you have any kind of written approval from a superior officer that allows you to be here?

A beat. EMETERIO is about to explode.

WELL, SAY SOMETHING, MAN!

EMETERIO

LES DIJO QUE SE FUERA!
(*I TOLD YOU TO GET OUT!*)

Immediately, the GUNNY motions for the other Marines to prepare for a struggle.

HOWARD

(*holds his hands up*) WAIT! JUST FUCKING WAIT! Sergeant, there's no need to subdue this man.

Reluctantly, the GUNNY has his men lower their weapons.

I *don't* have approval from my CO. (*slowly / thinking it up on the spot*) I went to an inn a couple blocks down. Got really drunk and started stumbling down a street. This man found me before any *bandits* could cut my throat, and he brought me here. I came to only about fifteen minutes ago.

A beat. The ruse seems to be working.

And now, he'd just like us—*me* especially—to leave.

The GUNNY looks at EMETERIO, then back at HOWARD. The moment is painfully tense.

GUNNY

(*to the other Marines*) We'll come back here later. (*to HOWARD*) Come with us. You're

GUNNY (cont'd)

in a world of hurt, boy.

He exits first. The other two Marines follow, escorting HOWARD, who manages to glance back at his now former host.

Lights out.

Scene 10: “Connected”

Lights up. Hours after the team’s meeting. FRANK stares at the blackboard. Maybe he’s trying to find another connection. Maybe he’s just silently reflecting.

NATHAN enters.

NATHAN

Travis has done really great. Hard to believe. *One* misread letter to Ma, and we almost lost out big time.

FRANK

(his gaze remains fixed) Yep. He’s a good kid. *Great* kid.

A beat. FRANK and NATHAN both know the impending topic of discussion.

NATHAN

I want to talk to you.

FRANK

(turns to face NATHAN) ‘Bout what?

NATHAN

‘Bout that argument we had a week ago. I want to apologize—

FRANK

—It’s okay. I know you didn’t mean it.

NATHAN

Not what I was gonna say.

FRANK

You just said, “I want to apologize.”

NATHAN

And you cut me off in mid-sentence. Everything that I said, I meant. I *still* mean it. I just regret the tone I used. But, you know, older brothers talk to their little brothers that way.

FRANK

(in a smart-alecky tone) This is *some* apology.

NATHAN

Nothing else to be sorry for. All I did was ask a question that you never answered.

FRANK

And that was? Remind me.

NATHAN

Why are you doing all of this?

FRANK

(immediately annoyed) Aw, jeez, that one?

NATHAN

Well?

FRANK

Why do you keep asking that?

NATHAN

'Cause I know Trav's probably asked you the same thing. But what you told him wasn't *everything*.

FRANK

That's pretty good. I guess big brothers really *do* know everything, huh?

NATHAN

Frank...

FRANK

Nathaniel.

NATHAN

(annoyed but moving on) Just...humor me, would ya?

FRANK

You think this is all just a time-kill.

NATHAN

I never said anything like that. And I've been with you since the very beginning of this thing.

FRANK

I said, you *think* that. Big difference.

NATHAN

Well, can you really say I'm wrong? There *is* a feeling of futility to this whole thing.

FRANK

Truth is almost *always* an exercise in futility.

NATHAN

Who said that?

FRANK

Frank Weaver, 2011. What's your point?

NATHAN

We're not talking about truth here; we're talkin' 'bout *history*. Do you think you're honoring all of these people, Dad included?

FRANK

Something wrong with that?

NATHAN

No. But good intentions aren't enough. Too much has been lost, Frank. To time, fires, *negligence*. We're never gonna get a crystal clear picture of what happened on that day or the many days after it. You have to know that, in the end, we're not really rescuing history.

FRANK

Then what are we doing?

NATHAN

We're telling a story. Albeit one based on facts but, nonetheless, just a *story*.

FRANK

The Bible is "just a story." It's a collection of "just stories."

NATHAN

Don't get preachy. You know what I mean. So, why? Why go through all of this if you know that the end result is gonna be ten-percent fact and the rest...?

FRANK

Because trying to remember, even if it means writing most of the chapters yourself, is every bit as important as *actual* knowledge. Maybe more. It's kinda like when you're in school and you pull an all-nighter cramming for your geology final. You pack all those definitions, graphs, stats—all that shit—into your brain and then flush it out once the test is over. But something like *this*... This is different. You can't distance yourself from it. You have to become part of it. (*a beat*) Don't you see?

NATHAN

Maybe. A little.

FRANK

Stories are *how* we remember. I think that's why Dad never told us the name of this man who saved his life. You don't just *forget* something like that. (*a beat*) This isn't just some whodunit, it's our inheritance. (*a beat*) Stories aren't just a parent's way of getting the kids to sleep. They're how we stay connected—to places, to times, to ideas, to *people*... (*a beat, longer than the others*) The ones who left too early...

A beat. It's much clearer to NATHAN now.

NATHAN

Thank you. I just needed to know. One more big-brotherly duty is being the hardnosed realist.

A beat. FRANK nods. NATHAN just looks at him with understanding.

Here's another little fact... (*a beat*) I miss him, too.

Lights out.

Scene 11: “Black Snow”

Lights up, not fully—just a small patch. FRANK and NATHAN stand upstage.

NATHAN

Hey, look at this.

He hands a document to FRANK, who quickly reads over it.

FRANK

(surprised) This is a *reprimand*. Where’d you find this?

NATHAN

In Dad’s paperwork. He was only cited for misconduct two or three times in his *whole* career, so that paper was just put at the bottom of the pile, so to speak.

FRANK

(reads, excited) “Unlawful fraternization with native resident of Santo Domingo.”

NATHAN

This *proves* that you were right. About Dad meeting this fella, I mean. Well, it’s not necessarily *the* guy, but considering the stuff written in that notebook...

FRANK flips over to the second page.

FRANK

Villa Du— Due—

NATHAN

Villa Duerte. A district of Santo Domingo. Dad was assigned there as a sentry for one week as punishment. *(a beat)* But something’s a little...odd.

FRANK

Oh? What?

NATHAN

I read a little bit about Villa Duerte. And I mean, *a little*. Marines went there in late 1916 to arrest a general—guy named Ramón Batista. It was during the same week that Dad was paying off his debt.

FRANK

And what’d this Batista do?

NATHAN

Don't know. (*a beat*) Most of the stuff printed in the US doesn't mention the town even once. And the few that *do* only do so in passing. (*a beat*) I *did* find a Spanish editorial about Villa Duerte during the occupation, though. I haven't had time to work up a translation, but one name—or maybe it's a title—stood out to me. Bold lettering with quotation marks around it. (*a beat*) “El Fuego,” which means—

TRAVIS

(*from offstage*)—EMETERIO!

TRAVIS enters, fluttered.

NATHAN

Not quite.

FRANK

What's that?

TRAVIS

That's his name—the man who saved Grandpa. *Emeterio Sanchez*. I found it. I fucking *found it*. Sorry.

FRANK

I'm cool.

NATHAN

How'd you come to that?

TRAVIS pulls a folded document from his pocket and unravels it.

TRAVIS

This. (*reads*) “HR 12742.”

FRANK

A congressional bill?

TRAVIS

Yep.

NATHAN

Where'd you find it?

TRAVIS

Google.

FRANK

Makes as much sense as anything else, I guess. Go on.

TRAVIS

(back to the document) “It is the recommendation of the Committee of Foreign Affairs that an annual sum of two-hundred dollars—or 7,570 DOP—be paid to the family of Emeterio Sanchez in recognition of his valiant efforts in assisting in the rescue of members of the crew of the USS Memphis. We request that this bill be passed without amendment and that the period of compensation be set at no less than twenty years. The proposed sum is to be granted to Emeterio’s widow, *Mercedes Martinez*.” The name Grandpa wrote down...

NATHAN

Two-hundred dollars a year for *twenty years*?

TRAVIS

Somebody’s owed a ton of back pay. *(flips to the second sheet, reads)* “...but it was ascertained that the Navy Department did not have enough funding from which payments could be made. See item seven in HR 16983.” Probably why this was so hard to find...

A beat. The atmosphere is a mix of intrigue, astonishment, and outrage.

FRANK

When was that bill written, Travis?

TRAVIS

1924.

FRANK

“Emeterio’s *widow*”?

NATHAN

(a beat) Christ. He didn’t live *ten years* after the wreck.

FRANK

(a beat) I think I need a little time to digest this.

NATHAN

Right. How ‘bout we say that’s lunch?

FRANK

Howard?

NATHAN

Yeah?

FRANK

That town you were talking about, the one that almost nobody's written about?

A beat. NATHAN already half-knows where FRANK is headed.

NATHAN

Villa Duarte.

FRANK

Yeah. You said there was a title fixed to it. El...

NATHAN

El Fuego. Right.

FRANK

(a beat) You were about to tell me what that meant. So...?

NATHAN

(a long, unbearable beat) "The Fire."

FRANK and NATHAN exit, but TRAVIS remains, pouring over manuscripts. He reads for a few seconds before lifting his head, gazing onward with a horrified look on his face.

TRAVIS

Grandpa...what'd you do...?

Lights up on the rest of the stage. Villa Duarte, a sector of Santo Domingo. It's late 1916, and the nation-wide hysteria has cooled down a bit. For the moment. By this time, the occupation has been "accepted." A small gathering of locals lines the street.

TRAVIS reads further, completely separated from the rest of the scene.

HOWARD walks along the street at midday. Though he's not an SP, he's been outfitted with all of the appropriate gear. He's accompanied by MARINE 2, who's laughing as the scene opens.

HOWARD

Fuck you, it ain't that funny.

MARINE 2

Sorry, sorry. Just... What'd he say to you again?

A beat of hesitation, then HOWARD embraces the humor.

HOWARD

Alright, okay. He said... *(clears his throat; then, in a mock tough-guy voice:)* “Boy. If I ever catch you doin’ something other than your government-ordained duty, I’ll personally bore a hole in your head and skull-fuck you.”

MARINE 2

(second round of laughter) I mean, I can see how you wouldn’t find that funny, but c’mon. “Government-ordained duty?” Sounds like he ripped that straight from a recruiting poster.

HOWARD

(sarcastic) Sure. A hoot.

HOWARD and MARINE 2 turn their attention to the off-stage area. The distant sounds of marching, horses, clattering saddles, and rifles swinging to and fro.

What’s that?

MARINE 2

Oh, nothin’ that concerns us. Heard from one guy with the Thundering Third that some big shot’s being taken in today.

HOWARD

Oh, yeah? And the lucky guy?

MARINE 2

Ya got *me*. All my pal said was that he’s a “priority.”

HOWARD

And he just outright told ya all this, huh?

MARINE 2

Yep. God help us if they’re ever trusted with any *big* secrets...

Enter EMETERIO, who’s carrying a wooden basket full of bread loafs with a cloth covering it. HOWARD notices him instantly; MARINE 2 recognizes him, as well.

The portions of this scene involving this trio are spoken in Spanish with English subtitles.

HOWARD

HEY!

EMETERIO comes over.

Es bueno verte. ¿Qué estás hacer?
(It's good to see you. What are you to do?)

MARINE 2

It's *haciendo*. "Doing."

HOWARD

(to MARINE 2) Okay. (to EMETERIO) Lo sentimos. Yo todavía estoy para aprender. (Sorry. I'm still to learn.)

EMETERIO

(chuckling) Está bien. Estoy pagando mis amigos una visita. De vez en cuando, les traigo el pan a un par de familias en esta parte de la ciudad.
(It's okay. I'm just paying my friends a visit. Every so often, I bring bread to a couple of families in this part of the city.)

MARINE 2

Eso es muy amable de su parte.
(That's very kind of you.)

EMETERIO

Bueno, todos podemos usar un poco de bondad.
(Well, we can all use a bit of kindness.)

MARINE 2

No sé que alguna vez me presenté a usted. La última vez que nos vimos fue bastante frenético. Mi nombre es rico. ¿Y tú?
(I don't know that I ever introduced myself to you. The last time we met was pretty frenzied. My name is Rich. And you?)

EMETERIO

Emeterio.

MARINE 2

Bueno, Emeterio, es bueno conocerlo oficialmente.
(Well, Emeterio, it is nice to meet you officially.)

EMETERIO

Lo mismo digo. Hola, mis hijos me ayudaron a cocinar estos. ¿Quieres uno?
(Same here. Hey, my kids helped me bake these. Want one?)

MARINE 2

Por supuesto.
(*Absolutely.*)

HOWARD

Gracias.
(*Thank you.*)

Just as soon as MARINE 2 is able to get his hand near the basket, furious shouting and a volley of gunfire is heard not far away. EMETERIO drops the basket, and the three stare in the direction of the unseen chaos.

EMETERIO

Dios mío...
(*My God...*)

The lighting of the scene turns crimson with hints of yellow and amber. These shades are not static. They fluctuate. These are flames.

TRAVIS'S facial expression turns from intrigue to horror as he continues to envision what may have been.

EMETERIO

What are they...?

A troupe of Marines marches across the stage. No real order. Their casual pace is petrifying. Some of them hold their rifles assertively; others have them slung about their shoulders. A couple of them are smoking. Most noticeably, a few of them are carrying lit torches.

HOWARD waves to one of them. From this point onward, he speaks English.

HOWARD

Hey, buddy, what the hell's going on?

MARCHING MARINE

(not stopping / with murder in his voice) Tried to arrest a general, and he had his men open fire on us. Couple of our guys got hit.

HOWARD

What're the torches for?

MARCHING MARINE

(still going forward) It's time to scare the fight outta these bastards. If you ain't joinin' in,

MARCHING MARINE (cont'd)

best get outta the way. It's gonna get uglier. *Fast.*

MARINE 2

(to HOWARD) Shit. We gotta get *him* outta here.

HOWARD

(to EMETERIO / *too alarmed to speak Spanish*) You need to go. *Now.*

More Marines arrive as the others continue moseying along. These ones are not as civil. They harass the civilians in every way possible; and after a few seconds, harassment upgrades to violence: A man is brutally beaten with a rifle being held as a club; a woman is thrust down into the dirt; a crying child is simply thrown out of a Marine's path. At worst, a resister is shot down.

EMETERIO goes to help one now-bloodied man who's being dragged away by two Marines.

NO! EMETERIO! DON'T!

HOWARD tries to restrain him, but it's no use.

EMETERIO tries to physically pry the two Marines away from their prey, but he is overpowered and dragged offstage by his arms.

HEY! LEAVE 'EM ALONE!

HOWARD grabs one Marine's arm, but he is shoved to the ground. MARINE 2 picks him up, prevents him from going any further.

LET GO OF ME, GODDAMN IT!

Once EMETERIO is finally off-stage:

EMETERIO!

MARINE 2

(grabbing HOWARD) HEY! WE GOTTA GO!

HOWARD

We have to help him.

MARINE 2

He'll be *fine*. He can look after himself. (*gunfire increases*) C'MON THEY'RE

MARINE 2 (cont'd)

BURNING THIS PLACE TO THE GROUND!

As MARINE 2 hauls HOWARD away against his will, a blizzard of charred flakes rains down from the sky. This is the ash that was once several homes in Villa Duerte. The lighting. The sounds. The black snow. It should all come together to create an apocalyptic vision worthy of Dante.

The lights dim, indicating a passage of time. The all-encompassing blaze has lessened significantly, though it can still be seen for miles. The ash continues to fall. The street is, obviously, completely empty.

TRAVIS remains on stage the entire time, looking upward as death continues to rain down; then, his attention is redirected as—

HOWARD stumbles back out and comes to occupy center stage. His clothes and face are covered with black residue and sweat. He holds out his right hand and lets a small amount of ash pile up; he then looks around, disoriented.

HOWARD

(in all different directions) Emeterio... Emeterio... Emeterio...

The MARCHING MARINE reappears, smoking, and equally grimy. As he goes by:

You...

MARCHING MARINE

Hey, you're okay. Glad to see. Seems like everything happened in just a couple seconds.

HOWARD

I—I need help. I'm...looking for someone... Not a soldier...

MARCHING MARINE

Check the morgue. Nobody without a gun coulda made it outta that mess alive...

He exits.

HOWARD turns. He and TRAVIS gaze across the stage. They share a look of dread.

Emeterio... No...

Light dim and spots on TRAVIS and HOWARD. Hold for a few seconds, then—

Blackout. End of Act I.

ACT II

Scene 1: "Prophets"

Over darkness, the following quotes appear in succession:

"History is the version of past events that people have decided to agree upon."

-Napoleon Bonaparte

"World War I was the most colossal, murderous, mismanaged butchery that has ever taken place on earth. Any writer who said otherwise lied, so the writers either wrote propaganda, shut up, or fought."

-Ernest Hemingway

Lights up. TRAVIS, FRANK, and NATHAN—the trio now visibly disillusioned—sit at their table. All of the papers, books, and whatnot have been cleared away. The only item still on the table is an ashtray.

After a few moments, in which nobody wishes to speak first, NATHAN pulls a pack of Cheyenne cigarettes from his back pocket. He puts one to his mouth and goes for his lighter.

FRANK

Could you not do that?

NATHAN

What?

FRANK

(pointing at the cigarette) That. Unhealthy.

NATHAN

What, you actually *worry* 'bout these things killing you?

FRANK

Maybe. Label tells me to.

NATHAN

They're Cheyenne; they're too cheap to be dangerous. And besides, you light up as much as I do.

FRANK

I'm not asking for *me*.

TRAVIS

Dad, it's okay, I promise.

FRANK

I just don't like it. You know I don't smoke around the boys.

Stirred by this last remark, NATHAN dashes the cigarette out.

NATHAN

I'm sorry. I just...

FRANK

Yeah, I know.

NATHAN

I thought it would...relieve some of the tension, I guess. It feels like we're meeting inside of a coffin.

FRANK

You don't have to tell me.

NATHAN

(a beat) You don't think that Dad...?

FRANK

(quickly, with force) No.

NATHAN

How can you be sure?

FRANK

U.S. Marines were responsible for Villa Duerte. *Marines.*

NATHAN

There's nothing saying that Navy men *weren't* involved. And we have proof that Dad was there—

TRAVIS

—I'm sorry...

A beat. TRAVIS works up some nerve.

FRANK

What is it, kiddo?

TRAVIS

I, uh...don't think I wanna do this anymore.

FRANK

What?

NATHAN

Why?

TRAVIS

I just don't want to, that's all. But you guys managed for a while before I joined in.

NATHAN

And you've been totally onboard since. But you wanna jump ship *now*?

TRAVIS

That's kind of an unsavory way of putting it, but okay.

NATHAN

I don't understand.

TRAVIS

Look, deep down, you couldn't have expected me to tag along for the whole ride. I mean, I got a "C" in History class. This *All the President's Men* stuff isn't exactly my strong suit.

FRANK

Bullshit.

NATHAN

You've been every bit as invested in this as the two of us.

TRAVIS

Before...

A beat. FRANK and NATHAN already half-know what he's thinking.

That was before Villa Duerte.

FRANK

I understand. But Travis, I *promise* you that your grandpa wasn't a part of that.

TRAVIS

This isn't about that day.

FRANK

Well, then, I'm right back to confused again.

TRAVIS

Right now, *at this moment*, I don't know that Grandpa had anything to do with day. And if it's all right with you, I'd like to keep it that way; so, I'm checking out early. You both wanted the truth; so did I. But guess what? I can't *handle* the truth.

NATHAN is about to speak up; TRAVIS halts him.

Yeah, I know.

FRANK

(a little more aggravated) You don't want to find out with Emeterio lived through that day? We're talking about the man who saved your grandpa. He deserves that much.

TRAVIS

I agree, but what good is it going to do him? It's like Tolstoy said, you know: "Historians are like deaf people who go on answering questions that no one asked them."

A beat. FRANK is wounded a bit.

FRANK

I never *asked* you to lend a hand.

TRAVIS

You're right.

FRANK

And you could've quit anytime you wanted.

TRAVIS

Yep, but I didn't. And we got the name. That's what this was about to begin with: a *name*. And all we had to do retrieve that little gem was wade our way through six-foot piles of *shit*. *(a beat)* Burning down houses, dragging families out of their homes, children screaming...

FRANK

That's not *everything*, Travis.

TRAVIS

"History is little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind." Edward Gibbon—the guy who wrote *The Fall of the Roman Empire*.

NATHAN

How'd you make a "C" in History?

TRAVIS

Look, I don't wanna argue.

FRANK

Little late for that. Just make your point perfectly clear before you run off.

A beat. TRAVIS can see that his father is near fuming; he chooses to go ahead and leave.

Hey...

TRAVIS stops, turns around.

We're gonna keep going.

TRAVIS

Don't let me slow you down.

FRANK

(crossly) Fine.

TRAVIS

Just remember one thing, though, and this *is* my point: whatever you learn along the way...you can't *unlearn*.

He exits.

Lights out.

Scene 2: “Breaking News”

Spots on two RADIO NEWSCASTERS, both in their mid-thirties. One (#1) is a native of the Dominican Republic, who speaks entirely in Spanish; the other (#2) is a New Yorker.

They address the audience directly, all while holding speaking into microphones suspended from the theatre ceiling.

NEWSCASTER 2

Get all the latest on what’s happening overseas, folks. Right here on WLCD Radio.

NEWSCASTER 1

NOTICIAS TERRIBLE EN LA REPUBLICA DOMINICANA! Aquí en la red de radio local.

(TERRIBLE NEWS IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC! Here on the local radio network.)

NEWSCASTER 2

This week’s major story comes from the Dominican Republic—more specifically, from a small town district called Villa Duarte.

NEWSCASTER 1

Las fuerzas estadounidenses causaron la tragedia y tanta muerte.
(The U.S. forces have caused much tragedy and death.)

NEWSCASTER 2

United States Marines sought to apprehend General Ramón Batista, who refused to disband his forces despite our country’s mandate.

NEWSCASTER 1

Fueron directamente a la casa del general, que se transformó en una fortaleza.
(They went directly to the general’s home, which was transformed into a fortress.)

NEWSCASTER 2

(a little theatrical) This situation was handled calmly. Until Batista ordered his men to open fire on our boys in uniform.

NEWSCASTER 1

Varios infantes de marina resultaron heridos durante esta represalia.
(Several Marines were wounded during the retaliation.)

NEWSCASTER 2

From there, Marines quickly took control of the situation.

NEWSCASTER 1

El pánico se produjo con rapidez en las calles.
(The panic spread quickly into the streets.)

NEWSCASTER 2

Our boys managed to quell the relatively minor struggle, suffering few injuries and handful of casualties.

NEWSCASTER 1

Este pequeño conflicto se convirtió rápidamente en un incidente grave que amenazaba cientos de vidas.
(The little conflict quickly became a serious incident that threatened hundreds of lives.)

NEWSCASTER 2

Dominican residents in the area presented *no trouble*, and the whole ordeal last just a matter of hours.

NEWSCASTER 1

Las casas fueron quemadas en el suelo. ...Las personas inocentes fueron golpeados y asesinados. ...Era un espectáculo de terror.
(The houses were burned to the ground. ...Innocent people were beaten and killed. ...It was a spectacle of terror.)

Spot off of NEWSCASTER 1.

NEWSCASTER 2

For future updates on our nation's efforts to bring democracy to the rest of the world, just turn to WLCD, leading the way at *home* while the Army, Navy, and Marines do so in the trenches.

Spot begins to fade. He remembers something:

Oh. Drink Schlitz.

Spot completely out. End of scene.

Scene 3: "Honorable Discharge"

Lights up. A military office set up in a Dominican building, perhaps an inn that was annexed when the occupation began.

A CHIEF PETTY OFFICER with the Navy sits behind a desk covered with folders and papers. He flips through one dossier in particular. He has a damp rag hung around his neck, and his hair sticks to his sweaty forehead.

HOWARD enters.

PETTY OFFICER

I swear to God, Christ, and all the saints, if the guerillas don't kill me, this fucking humidity will.

He takes the rag and quickly buries his face in it.

This goddamn country... At this point, I wouldn't mind a nice, cozy trench in No Man's Land. Let the animals have this place. It'll all be ash within a month anyhow.

He throws the rag over his shoulder. He dives back into the folder.

(without looking up) And you are...?

HOWARD

Weaver, sir. You sent for me.

PETTY OFFICER

Right. Weaver. Seaman's Apprentice. I was just looking through your file.

A beat. The PETTY OFFICER continues reading.

HOWARD

Sir, is something wrong?

PETTY OFFICER

Actually, it's quite the contrary. *(tosses the dossier onto the table, close to HOWARD)*
You're going home.

HOWARD

Sir?

PETTY OFFICER

Has this heat made you deaf? Your enlistment is up. See for yourself.

HOWARD picks up the dossier, looks through it.

PETTY OFFICER (cont'd)

(reciting from memory) “Howard LeNoir Weaver. Enlisted August 12, 1915. Service to be terminated by Honorable Discharge on July 30, 1919.”

HOWARD

Oh, my God...

PETTY OFFICER

I know. You lucky fuck. I have a half a mind to shoot myself in the foot so they'll punch *my* ticket, too.

HOWARD

When are they putting me on a boat, sir?

PETTY OFFICER

You'll have to wait just a little longer, sailor. After that mess in that town a couple of weeks ago, we're hesitant to send troops back home just yet. The people running this sideshow are scared shitless of retaliation. But realistically, I'd say you'll be outta here within a week.

HOWARD

A week?

PETTY OFFICER

Maybe *less*. And that's not the only news.

HOWARD

Sir?

The PETTY OFFICER hands HOWARD a single document.

(reads it and is surprised) A promotion?

PETTY OFFICER

Petty Officer Third Class. Jumped right past Seaman. A pair of Devil Dogs recommended it. Both testified that you pulled a wounded infantryman from Bravo Company out of the street after all hell broke loose in Villa Duerte. That order was received just yesterday.

HOWARD, uncertain of what to say, hands his dossier and the commendation back to the PETTY OFFICER, who smiles at what he perceives to be the sailor's dumbstruck joy.

So...whaddya think of all this?

HOWARD

Sir, I can't go back.

PETTY OFFICER

I'm sorry?

HOWARD

I can't go back, sir. Not now.

PETTY OFFICER

Why the hell not?

HOWARD

I've got...unfinished business here, sir. ...*Personal* matters.

A beat. If looks could kill...

PETTY OFFICER

"*Personal* matters"?

HOWARD

Yes, sir.

PETTY OFFICER

The government gives you a paid ticket back to the States, along with a bump in rank and pay grade, but you're refusing orders because of "personal matters"?

HOWARD

I know it sounds strange—

PETTY OFFICER

—Fucking *ludicrous* is how it sounds.

HOWARD

Sir, I'm looking for a friend.

PETTY OFFICER

A friend?

HOWARD

Yes, sir. He was with me during Villa Duerte. I haven't seen him since. I don't know if he's alive or...

PETTY OFFICER

Check with the medical unit or your company pastor. All of our dead and wounded have been accounted for.

HOWARD

Sir...

PETTY OFFICER

What?

HOWARD

(a beat) He's not an American.

The PETTY OFFICER stands, keeping his composure as he speaks.

PETTY OFFICER

I've gotten word that we're putting together a national police force. Have you heard anything about this?

HOWARD shakes his head "no."

I guess you wouldn't have. But eventually—and *sooner* rather than later, I hope—we *are* gonna leave this country. But first, we've gotta train its people to keep the order once we're gone. We have to teach them how to march. How to salute. How to *shoot*. *(a beat)* And once we get out...they'll never let us back in. Do you understand?

HOWARD

Yes, sir.

PETTY OFFICER

Good. Now, if you wanna re-enlist, go right ahead. Hell, do it *years* down the road. The war will be over and you can maybe get assigned to some place where you can lay on the beach all day. But let's make one thing perfectly damn clear. *(a beat)* You have *no friends* among these people. So, you can cut the moral fucking indignation. You get to go *home*. A lot of other men don't have that privilege right now... Understood?

HOWARD reluctantly nods "yes" and receives a "You know what I want to hear" stare.

HOWARD

Yes, sir.

PETTY OFFICER

Good. You can go now. When the date for your departure is set, you'll be notified.

HOWARD turns to leave.

PETTY OFFICER (cont'd)
And Petty Officer...

HOWARD stops, turns to him.

Congratulations.

Lights out.

Scene 4: "Friend Or Flight"

Lights up. A dock in Santo Domingo.

HOWARD has his things packed in a large green leather sack, which he carries on his back. His uniform is noticeably much tidier than in previous scenes.

He stands alongside a fellow ENLISTEE who, from the look of him, is also on his way home.

They observe a pretty startling scene. Two Marines display the corpse of a dead guerilla fighter, each holding up an arm. The chest and torso are covered with mostly dry blood, and the face is grotesquely disfigured, suggesting that they body may have been mutilated after the man died.

While they do this, a military journalist snaps photos.

ENLISTEE

(cringes) Christ Almighty, the smell...

HOWARD

That's the first dead guerilla fighter I've seen.

ENLISTEE

Won't be the last, but hey, it ain't *our* problem anymore. Besides, the schmuck made his choice.

HOWARD

What's that?

ENLISTEE

These little bastards are dug in real deep. So, instead of wasting the time and energy burning them out, we're offering amnesty and military trials to any of 'em that surrender. Some are hanged, but most are just put in prison work gangs. And others work *until* they're hung...

One of the Marines uses his free hand to draw his pistol and point it at the dead body in a comically threatening gesture.

The ones that *don't* come outta the trees just need to know what'll happen to 'em.

The MASTER-AT-ARMS (MA) enters, wielding a clipboard and pencil.

MA

(looks at HOWARD) Weaver?

HOWARD

Yes, sir.

MA

(looks at ENLISTEE) And...?

ENLISTEE

Papanikolopoulos, sir.

MA

Not sure how I missed that. Okay. The crew is readying a few last-minute things, then we'll board you both.

HOWARD AND ENLISTEE

Yes, sir.

The MA exits momentarily.

Yet another Marine enters from the opposite side of the stage. This one leads a group of seven (7) prisoners in a single-file line. Each man has his hands tied together by rope, and some of them look as though they've just emerged from a fight.

ENLISTEE

See, that's what I was tellin' you 'bout.

HOWARD

So, those are resistance fighters?

ENLISTEE

A few probably. Some might be drunks; others, they just broke with censorship laws. *(laughing)* I heard they even arrested some *poet* last week.

HOWARD stares at one grimy, unshaven man specifically and recognizes him as EMETERIO.

HOWARD

Holy shit...

ENLISTEE

What?

MA

(*re-entering*) Alright, fellas. Everything's set. Have a safe trip.

The ENLISTEE exits.

HOWARD

EMETERIO!

The train of prisoners is disrupted as EMETERIO stops to glance over at HOWARD. The man directly behind him nudges him to continue onward before trouble occurs. The Marine turns around and forcefully grabs one of the other prisoners, attempting to hurry them along. The prisoner responds by taking a poorly aimed swing at him; the others, save for EMETERIO, join in and overwhelm him.

HOWARD stands inert. No time to feel guilty. He knows what intervening may cost him. The MA is about to rush over when—

The other three Marines go to help repress the situation. After a relatively short skirmish, during which EMETERIO is the only one who offers total cooperation, the prisoners are all on the ground, on their stomachs with hands laced across the backs of their heads. The Marines all have their weapons drawn. The journalist continues taking pictures.

MA

We can't even get these people to walk in straight lines without somebody drawing blood.

EMETERIO continues to stare at HOWARD.

Well, at least you're leaving this all behind, eh?

HOWARD is still fixed on EMETERIO.

(*getting impatient*) Hey, buddy, you hearin' me? Time to go.

A beat. HOWARD slowly nods "yes," never diverting his gaze from his friend. What else can he do?

HOWARD

Right. (*a beat*) Let's go.

He exits, following the MA.

Lights out.

Scene 5: "The Ideal Soldier"

Lights up. Inside the barracks of the U.S.-established Dominican Constabulary. The scene is dimly lit.

Two officers, a COLONEL and a MAJOR, dressed in light brown khaki uniforms, are in the midst of a discussion. Their posture suggests that they're waiting for a third party to arrive. Their slouch hats and a very "official" looking document rest on top of a table in the center of the room.

COLONEL

¿Cuánto se sabe acerca de este soldado? Se supone que debo felicitarlo por sus logros, y nunca he encontrado con él.

(How much is known about this soldier? I'm supposed to congratulate him for his achievements, and I've never even met him.)

The MAJOR picks up the document, scans over it.

MAJOR

Trabajó como jefe de seguridad en una plantación de azúcar antes de que se ha registrado.
(He worked as the chief of security at a sugar estate before he signed up.)

COLONEL

Sólo un trabajador común, entonces?
(Just a common laborer then?)

MAJOR

No es muy común acuerdo con su antiguo jefe. *(reads)* "...mostraron la mayor discreción, buen carácter, y el celo en el más estricto cumplimiento de sus funciones."
(Not very common according to his former boss. "...showed the greatest discretion, good character, and zeal in the strictest fulfillment of his duties.")

COLONEL

Cualquier elogios de los soldados reales?
(Any compliments from actual soldiers?)

MAJOR

Un inspector de distrito escribió que es "uno de los mejores en el servicio."
(A district inspector wrote that he is "among the best in the service.")

COLONEL

Bueno, gracias a Dios por eso.
(Well, thank God for that.)

MAJOR

Él tiene un pasado cuestionable, sin embargo. Algunos problemas con la ley ...
(*He does have a questionable past, though. Some troubles with the law...*)

COLONEL

¿Quién no? Además, necesitamos un liderazgo. Esa es la única manera que este país va a cambiar.
(*Who doesn't? Besides, we need leadership. That is the only way this country will change.*)

MAJOR

Estoy de acuerdo, señor.
(*I agree, sir.*)

COLONEL

Dime otra vez lo que su rango es. No quiero parecer un culo.
(*Tell me again what his rank is. I don't want to look like an ass.*)

MAJOR

Segundo Teniente
(*Second Lieutenant.*)

The MAJOR quickly glances offstage.

Aquí está, señor.
(*Here he is now, sir.*)

The COLONEL now also looks offstage. The presumption should be that their guest, still unseen, is standing in a doorway.

COLONEL

(*extends his hand*) Felicidades, muchacho. Y gracias por su servicio a nuestro país. Los hombres como realmente son el futuro de nuestro pueblo.
(*Congratulations, boy. And thank you for your service to our country. Men like you truly are the future of our people.*)

A uniformed TRUJILLO emerges and shakes the COLONEL'S hand.

TRUJILLO

Gracias, señor. Y espero que usted tiene razón.
(*Thank you, sir. And I hope you are right.*)

Lights out.

Scene 6: "Obsession"

Lights up on FRANK and NATHAN, continuing their research.

FRANK

When did Dad re-enlist?

NATHAN

1922.

FRANK

And they sent him right back to the Dominican Republic? How'd *that* happen?

NATHAN

I guess he just made the right friends while he was in the service.

FRANK

Alright, well, we have a three-year dead period.

NATHAN

Perfect time for a break. On that note, have you visited Dad this week?

FRANK

Haven't had the time.

NATHAN

Make the time.

FRANK

Alright. (*a beat*) You know, maybe it *is* time for a quick breather.

TRAVIS enters.

Hey.

TRAVIS

Hey. Just wanted to let you know that Adam's coming over in a bit. We're gonna head over to Florence.

FRANK

And do what?

TRAVIS

(*shrugs*) I don't know. Just hang out with some friends. Maybe go to a movie.

FRANK

Well...have fun.

TRAVIS

'Kay.

A beat. TRAVIS doesn't leave.

FRANK

Is there something else?

NATHAN

Frank...

TRAVIS

Found anything new yet?

FRANK

No. Don't worry, though. If we do, I'll text you. That's what all you kids do, right?

TRAVIS

You don't have to act like a whiny kid. I was just asking a question.

FRANK

And I just gave you an answer.

TRAVIS

Well, now, I'm *really* regretting dropping out.

FRANK

I don't need that tone of voice from you.

TRAVIS

Fine. I'll just leave you here to highlight and write down dates. I'll be home around 2:00 AM to pull the cigarette outta your mouth. You wanna write that time down?

NATHAN

Okay, guys, stop it.

FRANK

(losing it) You know, you really...

FRANK calms himself before he can finish his sentence.

TRAVIS

I really *what?* (*no response*) Come on. I *what?*

FRANK

(*more sorrowful than angry*) ...disappoint me.

A beat. FRANK'S words cut pretty deep.

TRAVIS

(*wounded*) Sorry... (*a beat*) I'm going.

FRANK cannot bring himself to say another word after his last statement.

Hope you don't mind me staying out so late. It's kind of a special occasion. Guess it's just *one* date you didn't jot down. (*a beat—getting a little emotional*) My birthday. (*a beat*) Still not obsessed?

He exits.

FRANK'S face is positively blank.

NATHAN

Break?

FRANKS shakes his head "no" and dives back into his papers.

(*nodding sympathetically*) Okay. (*a beat*) He'll come around.

FRANK

No, he won't.

Lights out.

Scene 7: "Fathers & Sons"

Lights up. The Weaver family living room. TRAVIS is sprawled across the couch reading a lengthy book. The TV a few feet away is on, though the noise and the flickering light emanating from the screen doesn't bother him in the least. The console should be positioned so that the audience cannot see what's on.

NATHAN enters.

NATHAN

Hey. Reading?

TRAVIS quickly gives him a "duh" nod.

Mind if I sit with you for a bit?

TRAVIS curls his leg up to make space for NATHAN.

Good, 'cause I wanna talk about your father.

TRAVIS swiftly stretches his legs right back out again.

Gimme a break, would ya? I'm a neutral party.

TRAVIS

(doubtful) Okay.

He allows NATHAN to sit.

NATHAN

Whatcha reading?

TRAVIS

Summer reading for freshman comp.

NATHAN

Cool. *(a beat)* Still angry?

TRAVIS

Nope.

NATHAN

Well, you sure got a mean way of bein' happy. ... You know, your dad loves you a whole lot.

TRAVIS

I know. He wrote that on my imaginary birthday cake.

NATHAN

He's really pissed at himself for that.

TRAVIS

I know the feeling.

NATHAN

You oughta talk to 'em. He really needs you right now.

TRAVIS

He doesn't need anything except his research. He *definitely* doesn't need *me*.

NATHAN

You really think that?

TRAVIS

Yes.

NATHAN

(a beat) This has all been hard on *us*, too, you know. There's a lot of stuff we've read that we'd like to just push to the side. But we don't have that luxury.

TRAVIS

Why?

NATHAN

Because we have to hold onto the goodness in all of this. 'Cause when we occupied an entire country, there were still moments of humanity. And those are always worth remembering. Your dad just wants to share them with you. He wants you to see that people are capable of kindness. Now, lots of parents don't care to teach their kids that lesson. Heck, they don't care if they're *ever* involved in their kids' lives.

TRAVIS

We couldn't just start a softball team together?

A beat. Not much more NATHAN can add.

NATHAN

Promise me you'll think things over.

TRAVIS

(not really honest) Fine.

NATHAN

(not really believing him) Alright.

NATHAN stands.

You know, your dad was half your age when we lost our father. *(no response)* You're pretty lucky just to have one, let alone one who takes it this hard when he's hurt you. *(a beat)* That's it, I guess. *(starts to leave but stops)* Oh, and I know I'm a day late, but...happy birthday, Trav.

He exits. TRAVIS just sits and thinks.

Lights out.

Scene 8: “Captives”

Title card: “1922”

Lights up. A forested area outside of the down of Dos Ríos.

HOWARD walks along a path that has been pruned through the thick brush. He’s been back in the Dominican Republic for maybe a month and now has the demeanor of an experienced soldier.

With him is DONNIE, a sailor in his late teens who’s fresh out of basic training. He continuously slaps the back of his neck because of mosquitoes.

DONNIE

(slaps) Goddamn bugs... I’ve never been bit this many times in my whole fucking life.

HOWARD

You’ll get used to it.

DONNIE

Ain’t likely. I’m a New Yorker. *(snaps)* I got— *(looks at his hand)* No, I didn’t get it. Quick little bastards. Hey, uh, how long have you been over here, sir?

They stop for the time being.

HOWARD

Do me a favor. Call me “Howard.” When you say “sir,” I look around for my 4th grade teacher.

DONNIE

Sorry. So, how long you been stationed here?

HOWARD

A month or so. But it’s my second time here. The first time, I was in Santo Domingo.

DONNIE

Talk about your change of scenery. Chris, I don’t know how you could come back a second time. This place is an inferno. It’s hot. There’s *(snaps)* bugs that stay within two inches of ya all day. Guerilla fighters. And those “accommodations” in Dos Ríos? Sleepin’ under a roof made up of fucking *palm-tree leaves*. “Accommodations,” my ass. *(nothing from HOWARD)* Say, whatcha thinkin’ ‘bout, Howard?

The continue walking.

HOWARD

Oh, just the days in basic training. How nice it was when guys weren't allowed to talk without permission.

DONNIE

At least they got a road, though.

HOWARD

This isn't a road. Marines tracking the resistance cut away some of the vegetation for their camps.

DONNIE

Jeez, you don't think we'll get shot being out here, do ya?

HOWARD

(encouragingly) I've spent three years total in this country. Haven't seen a city boy get shot yet. Besides, it's the *Marines* they're concerned with, not us.

HOWARD hears a loud, ruffling sound. He stops.

DONNIE

What's wrong?

HOWARD

Shhhhhh.

DONNIE

You heard something?

HOWARD

Donnie, keep your mouth shut.

Suddenly, five (5) guerillas emerge from behind bushes. They aim their rifles at the two sailors, who are caught off guard and, consequently, unable to go for their weapons in time. They place their hands above their heads.

One of the guerillas shouts at them in Spanish.

DONNIE

OH, GOD, ARE THEY GONNA SHOOT?!

HOWARD

No, he's telling us to get on our knees. Do it, *slowly*.

They begin to. One of the guerillas fires a shot into the air.

HOWARD (cont'd)

Now quickly.

They're on the ground now. The guerillas approach and remove the men's pistols from their holsters.

As the guerillas pick them up by their shirts and lead them away:

DONNIE

(still in a panic) I don't wanna die, Howard. You said they were only after leathernecks. You can understand 'em. Ask them not to shoot us. Tell 'em we both got families or something.

HOWARD

Donnie, if you're ever gonna pick one time in your life to *shut the fuck up*, make it now.

Lights out.

Scene 9: "Reunion"

Lights up. A guerilla encampment located deep in the woods.

Several temporary huts have been erected. They're nothing but ragged tarps staked into the ground and tied to tall tree limbs that have been cut down and used for posts. In the middle of the stage are the remains of an extinguished fire.

There are maybe six (6) guerilla fighters occupying the camp at the moment. They may be talking. They may be disassembling and cleaning their weapons. As a reprieve from the harshness of warfare, they may even be playing baseball.

HOWARD and DONNIE, hands still above their heads, are led in by their captors.

The other guerillas all stop what they're doing and stare daggers at the Americans. One of them steps forward and looks the both of them over; he is the GUERILLA LEADER. He speaks in Spanish to one of the armed men.

DONNIE

Hey, uh, pal, I don't know what you're sayin', but I swear we weren't looking for you. We were just stationed in that town.

The LEADER just looks at him.

HOWARD

He doesn't speak English.

DONNIE

Well, that puts us in a bad fucking spot.

HOWARD

Just don't do anything stupid.

DONNIE

(approaching the LEADER) Listen. Mister—

The armed guerillas halt DONNIE, shouting and pointing their rifles at him.

HOWARD

Nicely handled. *(to the LEADER)* I es inofensivo. Él es simplemente estúpido. Por favor, no hay ninguna razón para hacerle daño. *(He's harmless. He's just stupid. Please, there is no reason to harm him.)*

After a beat, the LEADER motions for his troops to lower their weapons, which they do.

DONNIE

What'd you say?

HOWARD

Same thing *you* said.

LEADER

(looking at their uniforms) ¿Quién es usted? ¿Con quién estás?
(Who are you? Who are you with?)

HOWARD

Estamos con la Marina de los Estados Unidos. No son los marines. Mi nombre es Howard. El nombre de mi amigo es Donnie.
(We are with the United States Navy. We are not Marines. My name is Howard. My friend's name is Donnie.)

A beat. The LEADER gives a very slight nod.

¿Es eso suficiente?
(Is that enough?)

LEADER

En realidad no. Es difícil confiar en ninguno de ustedes. Estemos o no de matarlo es nuestra decisión.
(Not really. It is difficult to trust any of you. Whether or not we kill you is up to us.)

HOWARD is petrified.

DONNIE

What'd he say that time?

HOWARD

Didn't catch all of it.

LEADER

Tienes treinta segundos para decirme por qué no debe ser fusilado aquí.
(You have thirty seconds to tell me why you should not be shot right here.)

HOWARD

Por favor, te lo juro, que nunca quise hacerle daño a usted o sus hombres.
(Please, I swear to you, we never meant to hurt you or your men.)

LEADER

Ahora tienes veinte segundos.

(Now you have twenty seconds.)

The LEADER retrieves a pistol that was tucked away in his pants.

DONNIE

(on the verge of hysteria) Whatever you're saying, say it fuckin' better.

HOWARD

Si disparas, otros lo escuchan. Infantes de Marina.

(If you shoot, others will hear it. Marines.)

DONNIE

Buena. Pueden venir a nosotros. Diez segundos.

(Good. They can come to us. Ten seconds.)

He raises the gun and takes aim at DONNIE'S head.

HOWARD

ESPERE! POR FAVOR! NO HACER ESTO!

(WAIT! PLEASE! DON'T DO THIS!)

One of the other guerillas whistles at the LEADER, then directs his attention offstage.

EMETERIO enters with a basket of bread. He immediately notices HOWARD, and the two exchange fairly uneasy glares.

LEADER

Buena. Usted está aquí. Todos estamos hambrientos.

(Good. You're here. We're all hungry.)

EMETERIO

(to HOWARD) ¿Qué estás haciendo aquí?

(What are you doing here?)

HOWARD

Pensé que habías muerto o en prisión.

(I thought you were dead or in prison.)

LEADER

(to EMETERIO) Conoce a este hombre?

(You know this man?)

EMETERIO

Sí, lo hago. Él no es una amenaza.

EMETERIO (cont'd)

(Yes, I do. He is no threat.)

The LEADER slowly lowers his pistol down to his side.

LEADER

Él es su carga. Si se trata de nada, se le en la mierda, también. Entender?

(He is your burden. If he tries anything, you will be in shit, too. Understand?)

EMETERIO nods "yes."

DONNIE

You wanna fill me in, sir?

HOWARD

Relax. I think we've been okayed.

DONNIE sighs in relief.

(to EMETERIO) Usted es un soldado rebelde?

(You are a rebel soldier?)

EMETERIO

No, pero tengo amigos que son. Les traen el pan y otros productos esenciales de vez en cuando.

(No, but I have friends who are. I bring them bread and other essentials from time to time.)

He comes closer to HOWARD and DONNIE, who have now lowered their hands.

¿Cuánto tiempo ha estado?

(How long has it been?)

HOWARD

Tres años.

(Three years.)

EMETERIO

Mucho tiempo.

(A long time.)

HOWARD

Su familia se ha mantenido a salvo?

(Your family has stayed safe?)

EMETERIO

Están bien.
(They're fine.)

HOWARD

Me alegro.
(I'm glad.)

HOWARD and EMETERIO look around. Everyone else is watching them as though they're on the other side of a glass panel.

EMETERIO

(to the LEADER) ¿Podemos hablar de una de las cabañas?
(May we talk in one of the huts?)

LEADER

Por supuesto. Pero mantenerlo en secreto.
(Certainly. But keep it quiet.)

He brandishes his gun so that both HOWARD and DONNIE see it.

No queremos ningún ruido innecesario.
(We don't want any unnecessary noise.)

He smirks, then waves them away.

Lights out.

Scene 10: "Treason"

Lights up. A hut. DONNIE stands while HOWARD and EMETERIO sit.

HOWARD

¿Está bien si mi amigo espera afuera?
(Is it okay if my friend waits outside?)

EMETERIO

Sí. Pueden jugar con él un poco, pero no herido.
(Yes. They might toy with him a little, but he won't be hurt.)

HOWARD

(to DONNIE) Wait outside.

DONNIE

Are you sure? It don't seem same here.

HOWARD

Trust me, we're okay. I'll only be a couple of minutes. Nobody will ever know we were here.

DONNIE

Okay. If you need anything, I won't be five feet away.

DONNIE exits. HOWARD and EMETERIO are unsure of where to begin.

EMETERIO

Usted fue detenido una vez sólo por estar en mi casa. Si usted se encuentra aquí con nosotros...
(You were arrested once just for being in my house. If you were found here with us...)

HOWARD

Está bien. A juzgar por lo mucho que andar, no creo que estamos en peligro de ser encontrado en este momento.
(It's okay. Judging by how far we walked, I don't think we're in danger of being found right now.)

EMETERIO

Las búsquedas son cada vez mayores y más destructivos. Cuando no pueden encontrar ciertos hombres, simplemente quemar las casas de sus familias para negar refugio.
(The searches are becoming larger and more destructive. When they can't find certain men, they simply burn the homes of their families to deny them shelter.)

HOWARD

Su casa no ha sido blanco de ataques?
(*Your house has not been targeted?*)

EMETERIO

No, pero mi familia está aterrorizada, no obstante. Todos lo estamos. Y luego está la policía nacional...nuestros propios hermanos y vecinos.
(*No, but my family is terrified. We all are. And then there's the national police...our own brothers and neighbors.*)

HOWARD

Fueron ellos los que te detengan?
(*They were the ones who arrested you?*)

EMETERIO

No. Durante el ataque de Villa Duerte, que salvó a un amigo mío de un soldado estadounidense. Resulta que él era un revolucionario que estaba trabajando para Vicentico. Fui detenido poco después como un conspirador.
(*No. During the attack in Villa Duerte, I saved a friend of mine from an American soldier. It turns out that he was a revolutionary who was working for Vicentico. I was arrested soon after as a conspirator.*)

HOWARD

Me siento aliviado que está bien, mi amigo.
(*I am relieved that you are okay, my friend.*)

EMETERIO

Soy muy afortunado. Yo pensaba que iba a ser ejecutado o enviado a uno de los campos de concentración.
(*I'm very fortunate. I thought I would be executed or sent to one of the concentration camps.*)

HOWARD

Emeterio, no puedo quedarme aquí.
(*Emeterio, you can't stay here.*)

EMETERIO

Tengo que hacerlo.
(*I have to.*)

HOWARD

¿Por qué?
(*Why?*)

EMETERIO

Los infantes de marina creo que la mayoría de estos hombres están muertos. Mientras les traen comida y medicamentos, pueden *permanecer* muerto.

(The Marines think that most of these men are dead. As long as I bring them food and medicine, they can stay dead.)

HOWARD

Sus amigos va a estar bien sin ti.

(Your friends will be fine without you.)

EMETERIO

Uno de ellos tiene una fiebre terrible. Las dos murieron la semana de la malaria.

(One of them has a terrible fever. Two died last week from malaria.)

HOWARD

Esa no es razón para agregar su muerte a los suyos.

(That is no reason to add your death is theirs.)

A beat. EMETERIO can see the concern growing on HOWARD'S face.

Tu eres mi amigo. ...Pero si usted seguir ayudando a los rebeldes, que finalmente serán perseguidos también.

(You're my friend. ...But if you continue to help the rebels, you will eventually be hunted, too.)

EMETERIO

(a beat) Yo me quedo.

(I'm staying.)

HOWARD is made very distressed by this.

Pero ha sido difícil para cuidar a estos hombres por mí mismo. Y podría usar su ayuda.

(But it has been difficult caring for these men by myself. And I could use your help.)

HOWARD

¿Qué?

(What?)

EMETERIO

Usted me puede ayudar a conseguir más medicina para estos hombres. Dos hombres pueden llevar a más de uno.

(You can help me get more medicine for these men. Two men can carry more than one.)

HOWARD

¿De dónde?
(*From where?*)

EMETERIO

La infantería de Marina tiene una instalación médica en El Seibo, no lejos de aquí.
(*The Marines have a medical installation in El Seibo, not far from here.*)

HOWARD is numbed by the realization of what EMETERIO is asking of him.

HOWARD

No puedo.
(*I can't.*)

EMETERIO

No todo. Sólo lo suficiente para los hombres.
(*Not everything. Only enough for the men.*)

HOWARD

¿Sabe usted lo que podría suceder a mí?
(*Do you know what could happen to me?*)

EMETERIO

Usted sabe lo que sucederá con algunos de estos hombres de otra manera. Todos ellos tienen familias.
(*You know what will happen to some of these men otherwise. They all have families.*)

HOWARD

(*a beat*) Lo siento.
(*I'm sorry.*)

EMETERIO

A continuación, hacer esto por mí...el amigo que salvó su vida.
(*Then do this for me...the friend who saved your life.*)

HOWARD takes a moment to consider it. EMETERIO has got him.

HOWARD

¿Cómo vamos a hacer esto?
(*How are we going to do this?*)

EMETERIO

Los otros se desmonte este campo y mudarse a otra parte. Yo no sé dónde todavía. Usted y yo iré por la noche y traer de vuelta la medicina. Vamos a tener una guía con nosotros

EMETERIO (cont'd)

ya que no conoce esta parte del campo que bien.

(The others will disassemble this camp and move somewhere else. I don't know where yet. You and I will go during the night and bring back the medicine. We'll take a guide with us since I don't know this part of the countryside that well.)

HOWARD

(w/ a slight smirk) Usted es un panadero rolón.

(You're a pretty shifty baker.)

EMETERIO smiles back at him.

Mi amigo nos puede ayudar, también.

(My friend can help us, too.)

EMETERIO

Por supuesto.

(Certainly.)

HOWARD

DONNIE!

DONNIE reenters.

DONNIE

Yes, sir?

HOWARD

We're heading back. Got a plan to discuss with you.

DONNIE

What're we doin'?

HOWARD

(sighs) Something I hope to fucking God works.

Lights out.

Scene 11: "They Always Run"

Blackness. Only the sounds of footsteps and the lifting, sorting of boxes indicate that the scene has begun. This persists for a full minute; the tension stews.

Finally, out of the darkness, we hear voices. They are little more than whispers.

HOWARD

¿Tenemos todo lo que necesitamos aún?
(Do we have everything we need yet?)

EMETERIO

Casi.
(Almost.)

DONNIE

This'd be a lot easier with some light.

HOWARD

Nothin' doin'. We can't be seen.

DONNIE

Can't believe you dragged me into this. I'd rather be out in the jungle with the *bugs*.

HOWARD

Just keep quiet, and you won't have anything to worry about.

EMETERIO

He oído algo.
(I heard something.)

HOWARD

(lightning quick) ¿Qué?
(What?)

EMETERIO

Está bien. Estamos bien.
(It's okay. We're okay.)

HOWARD

¿Qué tal tu guía?
(What about your guide?)

EMETERIO

Aldo, ¿estás bien?

(Aldo, you okay?)

ALDO

Sí, señor.

(Yes, sir.)

From maybe twenty yards away, the sound of a bolt-action rifle being cocked.

HOWARD

(now frenzied) ¿Qué fue eso?

(What was that?)

A voice from offstage shouts: “¡ALTO! INSURGENTES! (STOP! INSURGENTS!)”

EMETERIO

¡CORRE!

(RUN!)

Four (4) shots ring out. There are bursts of light from gun barrels, but they do not illuminate the scene enough to tell what’s happening.

We hear the rapid, possibly clumsy pace of footsteps as someone exits in alarm. Then, we hear the noises of a struggle: heavy breathing, impeded movement, jerking, pulling of clothing, et cetera.

After about half a minute, TRUJILLO, in uniform, enters the scene with three (3) subordinates, one of them carrying a lantern (the only lighting in the scene). The other two carry rifles, and TRUJILLO, a revolver.

We now see that it was EMETERIO who managed to escape.

The guide, ALDO, a boy barely in his teens, pulls HOWARD’S arm, trying to get him back to his feet. HOWARD’S exit has been halted by DONNIE, who clings to his right leg with one arm, presumably having tripped him.

DONNIE has been hit twice. One bullet struck his chest; the other, his stomach. His shirt is already covered with blood. HOWARD takes him in his arms, pushing ALDO away, once he sees what’s happened.

Dropped, open boxes of gauze, needles, and broken vials lay on the ground next to the group.

ALDO just looks at TRUJILLO, prepared to flee at any moment.

TRUJILLO

(to one of the other soldiers) Obtener este hombre la atención médica. Ahora.
(Get this man medical attention. Now.)

His man leaves. DONNIE gurgles as he speaks, blood trickling from his mouth.

DONNIE

I don't wanna... I d— I don't... I— Please... Sir...

HOWARD

(w/ urgency) I'm right here, pal. Not goin' anywhere.

DONNIE

I do— I don't... wanna die. *(starts crying)* I want— I wanna go home. ...I wanna see my mother...

HOWARD

(trying to curb DONNIE'S weeping) Shhhhhh. It's nothin', pal. Not for a New Yorker.

He smiles at DONNIE, who tries to return it but cannot muster the strength.

DONNIE

(managing to remain cool for a moment) Thank you, sir.

HOWARD

I told you, call me Howard.

HOWARD pulls DONNIE closer to him, holding him there until his last breath. Once DONNIE dies, HOWARD wraps his arms around him, embracing him.

After a moment, he slowly rests DONNIE completely on the ground.

TRUJILLO

(to one of his other men / pointing at ALDO) Arresto éste.
(Arrest this one.)

ALDO dashes away. However...

Dispara.
(Shoot.)

HOWARD

NO!

The rifleman quickly takes aim and fires.

HOWARD stands and gazes offstage. A considerable amount of DONNIE'S blood now stains his shirt. He then faces TRUJILLO.

TRUJILLO

Ve por él.

(Go get him.)

The rifleman exits. TRUJILLO inches closer towards DONNIE'S body.

TRUJILLO (cont'd)

¿Qué estaba pasando aquí?

(What was happening here?)

No response. HOWARD'S torment is giving way to rage, but he must proceed carefully.

HOWARD

(the first story he can think of) Bandidos.

(Bandits.)

TRUJILLO

Usted habla nuestro idioma?

(You speak our language?)

HOWARD

Sí. Y los bandidos estaban robando la medicina.

(Yes. And bandits were stealing medicine.)

TRUJILLO

Voy a informar de ello a los americanos ya mis superiores.

(I will report this to the Americans and to my superiors.)

He looks at the medical supplies scattered all over the ground, then back at HOWARD.

Bandidos, eh?

(Bandits, eh?)

HOWARD nods anxiously, then a beat.

Terrible sobre el niño.

(Terrible about the boy.)

HOWARD

Sí. lo es.

(Yes. It is.)

TRUJILLO

Ese es el problema con muchas de esas personas, sin embargo. *(a beat)* Nunca aprender cuando *no* se ejecuten.

(That is the problem with many of those people, though. ...They never learn when not to run.)

The one remaining subordinate douses his lamp, which serves as...

Lights out.

Scene 12: "The Bottom Line"

Lights up. EMETERIO'S home back in Santo Domingo, several hours after the failed nighttime robbery. EMETERIO sits at his kitchen table with his head in his hands.

HOWARD enters. His eyes are red, and the blood all over his shirt and hands is now dried. He and EMETERIO merely look at one another for a few seconds before either man speaks up.

EMETERIO

Dios mío, ¿qué te pasó?
(*My God, what happened to you?*)

HOWARD

No te preocupes, es la sangre de mi amigo.
(*Don't worry, it's my friend's blood.*)

EMETERIO

(*a beat*) ¿Y Aldo?
(*And Aldo?*)

HOWARD shakes his head, telling EMETERIO enough.

HOWARD

¿Qué pasó?
(*What happened?*)

EMETERIO

¿Qué quieres decir?
(*What do you mean?*)

HOWARD

¿QUÉ PASÓ?!
(*WHAT HAPPENED?!*)

EMETERIO

Hubo disparos. ¿No me oyes gritar para correr?
(*There was gunfire. Didn't you hear me yell to run?*)

HOWARD walks over to the table and takes a seat across from EMETERIO.

HOWARD

Usted nos ha dejado para los perros. Mi amigo está muerto a causa de su plan.
(*You left us for the dogs. My friend is dead because of your plan.*)

*EMETERIO is offended by this remark and loses his empathetic posture. *

EMETERIO

Llevar él era *su* idea.
(*Bringing him was your idea.*)

HOWARD

Me lo trajeron para ayudar con un esquema que no debería haber sido parte. Yo tampoco.
(*I brought him to help with a scheme that he should not have been part of. Me neither.*)

EMETERIO

Lo siento por tu amigo. Yo realmente soy. Nunca quise que nadie se lastime. Pero no me eches la culpa solo por lo que pasó esta noche.
(*I am sorry about your friend. I truly am. I never meant for anybody to get hurt. But don't blame me alone for what happened tonight.*)

HOWARD

No culpe a usted? USTED ES EL RAZÓN QUE ESTOY AQUÍ!
(*Don't blame you? YOU ARE THE REASON I'M HERE!*)

EMETERIO

¿Qué se supone que significa eso?
(*What is that supposed to mean?*)

HOWARD

Volví a ayudarte, para protegerte.
(*I came back to help you, to protect you.*)

EMETERIO

Ooooooh, ya veo.
(*I see.*)

HOWARD

¿Qué?
(*What?*)

EMETERIO

Porque no puedo. Y tampoco puede nadie en este país, ¿no?
(*Because I can't. And neither can anybody else in this country, right?*)

HOWARD

Ustedes no tienen una gran historia de poder, no.
(*You people don't have a good history of being able to, no.*)

EMETERIO

Usted es como los demás. Salvo eres igual que ellos, mientras que predica su propia virtud.

(You are just like the others. Except you are just like them while you preach your own virtue.)

HOWARD

Vete al infierno.

(Go to hell.)

EMETERIO

Ustedes creen que sólo son pobres, nativos ignorantes que necesitan ser atendidos. Como los niños. Durante muchos años, la gente cree que su país nos dio la paz y el orden. Como si alguna vez el suyo para dar.

(You all believe that we are just poor, ignorant natives who need to be cared for. Like children. For many years, people will believe that your country gave us peace and order. As if they were ever yours to give.)

HOWARD

Lo tienes todo mal.

(You have it all wrong.)

EMETERIO

¿Verdad?

(Do I?)

HOWARD

¿Cuál era este país como antes de que llegáramos? Fue un infierno.

(What was this country like before we arrived? It was a hell.)

EMETERIO

Hay gente en problemas en todo el mundo. Pero usted no vive en sus países.

(There are people in trouble all over the world. But you don't occupy their countries.)

HOWARD

Eso no es por qué volví.

(That is not why I came back.)

EMETERIO

¿Por qué, entonces?

(Why, then?)

HOWARD doesn't know what to say other than...

HOWARD

Tú eres mi amigo.
(You are my friend.)

EMETERIO

Usted no tiene amigos en este país.
(You have no friends in this country.)

HOWARD is taken aback. It's the second time he's heard this.

Usted tiene la gente que se utiliza para sentirse mejor consigo mismo cada tres años.
(You have the people that you use to feel better about yourself every three years.)

HOWARD leans forward, places his elbows on the table, and wearily rubs his hands together, all while avoiding eye contact with EMETERIO.

Si usted abre los ojos, vería las cosas como realmente son.
(If you would open your eyes, you would see the way things really are.)

A beat. HOWARD finally looks at EMETERIO again.

HOWARD

Usted me salvó.
(You saved me.)

EMETERIO

Y nunca lo he lamentado. Ni una sola vez.
(And I have never regretted it. Not once.)

HOWARD

Tal vez deberías.
(Maybe you should.)

EMETERIO

Nunca.
(Never.)

HOWARD

¿Por qué no?
(Why not?)

EMETERIO

Si perdemos la compasión, ¿qué más hay?
(If we lose compassion, what else is there?)

HOWARD

(*a beat*) Creo que voy a ir.
(*I think I'll go.*)

EMETERIO

Creo que sería bueno.
(*I think that would be good.*)

HOWARD gets up, starts to leave.

HOWARD

¿Qué debo hacer?
(*What should I do?*)

EMETERIO'S initial anger has subsided.

EMETERIO

¿Ese dolor que sientes?
(*That pain you feel?*)

HOWARD nods.

Vivir con ella. Esto te hará fuerte. (*a beat*) Confía en mí.
(*Live with it. It will make you strong. ...Trust me.*)

HOWARD exits.

Lights out.

Scene 13: "End of the Road"

Lights up on FRANK, alone at the table. All the contents of his family's research are laid out: Internet articles, books, the annual Memphis Survivors Group publication, everything. In front of FRANK, though, is the cigar box of treasures from the early scenes of the play.

FRANK'S tone throughout this scene suggests that he is perfectly at ease with things.

He's holding his father's watch, inspecting it lovingly, when TRAVIS enters.

TRAVIS

Hey there.

FRANK

Hey, kiddo.

TRAVIS

Mind if I take a seat?

FRANK

Go right on ahead.

TRAVIS does.

TRAVIS

Grandpa's watch.

FRANK

Yep. One of the few things I have left of 'em. Finally took it to a jeweler a couple of days ago and got it working.

TRAVIS

How's the research coming along today?

FRANK

The research is *done*.

TRAVIS

Really?

FRANK

Yep. We're finally callin' it quits.

TRAVIS

But you and Uncle Nathan have come so far.

FRANK

As far as we *can*. The trail's gone cold. We found all we could possibly find, and as much as it *does* tell us, none of it suggests that Dad knew Emeterio beyond the stuff written in his little notebook. So...that's that.

TRAVIS

No. No, no, no, no. Y-you *can't*. There's gotta be something else—

FRANK

—Trav. ...It's okay. Really.

TRAVIS

No, it's not. You've worked so hard. We all have.

FRANK

(smiling) "We"?

TRAVIS doesn't share his father's sentiment at the moment:

TRAVIS

You wanted this *so much*.

FRANK

Yes, I did.

TRAVIS

There's *got* to be something else we can do.

FRANK

Well, there isn't. But it really is okay.

TRAVIS slumps back in his chair, defeated.

(back to the watch / nostalgic) Boy, I sure do remember my dad wearin' this bad boy. He checked it all the time. The man was never late for *anything*.

TRAVIS

It's a beautiful watch.

FRANK

You think so?

TRAVIS nods. FRANK offers him the watch.

TRAVIS

No. No, I can't.

FRANK

Yes. Yes, you can. You'll get more use out of it, college boy.

FRANK grabs his son's hand and plants the watch in it. TRAVIS accepts it.

Hope that makes up a little for the birthday. It's not exactly a videogame or anything, but...

TRAVIS

It's awesome.

FRANK

Good. Hey, I told Nathan I'd visit Dad this week. Wanna come with?

TRAVIS

Sure thing.

FRANK

Then let's go. We'll grab some lunch on the way back.

FRANK exits. TRAVIS sits for a moment and fondles his gift.

(from offstage) You comin'?

TRAVIS

Yeah. Comin' right now.

He smiles and slips the watch onto his wrist, then gets up to go.

Lights out.

Scene 14: "The Best Parts"

Lights up. Cedar Swamp Cemetery. The day is absolutely gorgeous.

FRANK cleans the heaps of moss and overgrown vines off of a burial marker while TRAVIS watches. He then stands back with his son and looks upon it.

FRANK

Much better.

TRAVIS

Don't they have, like, staff that are supposed to come by and do that?

FRANK

City workers. You get what ya paid for.

TRAVIS

(reads) "Howard LeNoir Williams. Beloved Husband and Father. 1898-1966."

FRANK

Just sixty-eight years old.

TRAVIS

"Just"?

FRANK

He lived a fuller life than you imagine. I wish you boys could've met him. You'd have sworn he was gonna live to 120.

TRAVIS

(chuckles) I'll take your word for it. *(a beat)* Hey, Dad?

FRANK

Yeah?

TRAVIS

Why are you so okay with stopping?

FRANK

I know everything I need to. The rest, I can piece together as I go. ...Does that make sense?

TRAVIS

'Bout as much sense as anything else you've said to me throughout this ordeal. *(a beat)*

TRAVIS (cont'd)

It's just... I know you also thought that this thing was gonna to bring you closer to your dad.

FRANK

And it has. But it's not the *biggest* thing that keeps me connected to him. There's something else.

TRAVIS looks at his watch.

You.

TRAVIS

Me?

FRANK

I only knew my father till I was nine, Travis, but I *knew him*.

TRAVIS

And I remind you of him? Really?

FRANK

Yes, really. That's why I can tell you that he never did anything wrong over there. 'Cause I see a lot of him in *you*, and you have no bad in you. You've got his smarts, his courage, his *stubbornness*, his principles... (*a beat*) You've got the best parts of 'em...

TRAVIS

(*a long beat*) That's pretty lame, Dad.

TRAVIS laughs.

FRANK

(*laughing w/ him*) Got plenty of smartass in you, though.

The laughter continues for a few more seconds, then fades. FRANK and TRAVIS go back to admiring the headstone.

Slowly, FRANK places a hand on his son's shoulder.

Lights out.

Scene 15: "Storytellers"

Spot on FRANK, addressing the audience once more.

FRANK

What is "history"? For that matter, what's *life*?

It's shards. It's clips. It's snapshots. It's...*fragments*.

How it's survived is incomplete and imperfect and oftentimes leaves us with more questions than answers. And that's frustrating, because it's natural for people to demand closure.

But we're rarely ever *given* the full picture. A date. A photograph. A place. Sometimes, these are all we have. So, what's there to do? We have to complete the pictures *ourselves*. We have to be the masters of our own stories, the authors of the world.

You look at a picture of your eighth birthday, and it can only tell you so much. But in your mind, you recreate that whole day; and you can make it as realistic or fantastical as you want. You can even remove your family's neighbor's pain-in-the-ass kid who ate all your birthday cake.

Or, you know that your grandmother traveled to Ireland when she was younger, and you imagine her exploring a castle or watching the sun set from the seaside cliffs of Galway or, hell, even meeting her first love. And you do this to add more *richness* and *adventure* to her life.

Don't you see? (*a beat*) It's a *gift*.

For me, I *know* how part of my family's history unfolded. (*a beat*) But I get to *choose* how it ended.

Lights out.

Scene 16: “Farewells”

Lights up. The dock in Santo Domingo. HOWARD prepares to board a vessel, leaving the Dominican Republic for the second—and, most likely, final—time.

EMETERIO enters. HOWARD is surprised to see him.

EMETERIO

Su salida es un poco más tranquila esta vez.
(Your departure is a little more peaceful this time.)

HOWARD

Me sorprende que usted está viendo que me vaya por segunda vez.
(I'm surprised that you are watching me go for a second time.)

EMETERIO

¿Va a estar bien?
(Will you be okay?)

HOWARD

Sí. Voy a encontrar trabajo rápidamente de nuevo en los Estados Unidos, creo.
Demonios, incluso puede dar de alta otra vez. Me encanta el aire marino demasiado.
(Yes. I will find work quickly back in the United States, I think. Hell, I may even enlist again. I love the ocean air too much.)

EMETERIO

Un marinero de verdad.
(A true sailor.)

HOWARD

¿Va a estar bien? *(a beat)* Las cosas pueden empeorar antes de mejorar.
(Will you be okay? ...Things may get worse before they get better.)

EMETERIO

Vamos a salir adelante. Es lo que hacemos.
(We will cope. It's what we do.)

HOWARD

(nods, then a beat) Emeterio, lo que necesita saber algo.
(Emeterio, you need to know something.)

EMETERIO

¿Qué es eso?
(What's that?)

HOWARD

Aquellos años...cuando fueron encarcelados... Cuando te vi ese día y se fue de todos modos—

(Those years ago...when you were imprisoned... When I saw you that day and left anyway—)

EMETERIO

—Usted no tiene que explicar.

(—You do not have to explain.)

HOWARD

Sí, lo hago. Cuando me fui de ese día, no fue porque no me importaba lo que estaba sucediendo. Espero que sepas que. Yo estaba...estúpido y egoísta y miedo y quería estar en casa.

(Yes, I do. When I left that day, it was not because I didn't care about what was happening to you. I hope you know that. I was...stupid and selfish and afraid and wanted to be home.)

A beat. EMETERIO nods in appreciation for HOWARD'S honesty.

Espero que no me odian.

(I hope you do not hate me.)

EMETERIO

No mucho.

(Not too much.)

They smile at each other. Then, a loud belch of steam coming from the ship's horn.

HOWARD

(a beat) Gracias otra vez por salvarme la vida.

(Thank you again for saving my life.)

EMETERIO extends his hand. HOWARD takes it.

EMETERIO

Adiós...mi amigo.

(Goodbye...my friend.)

HOWARD pulls EMETERIO towards him by his hand and locks him in a hug.

EMETERIO withstands it at first but eventually submits.

FRANK enters and watches, a peaceful smile on his face.

The horn bellows once again.

Lights out.

End of play.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Cast

Primary:

Howard Weaver

Seventeen (17) when we first meet him. The protagonist of the play. Best described as a “good ole Southern boy.” Enlisted in the U.S. Navy. He’s not seen very much of the world. Can be courageous at times, but his age and idealism cause him trouble.

Emeterio Sanchez

Fifty-one (51) when we first meet him. Family man. Fisherman and baker. Not politically minded. Only interested in leading a peaceful life and providing for his family. Not afraid to act or speak when the situation demands it.

Frank Weaver

Mid-fifties. Howard’s younger son. Very principled, sometimes to an alienating degree. Always striving to do right by his family, though—especially his son. The unofficial leader of the contemporary Weaver trio.

Nathan Weaver

Slightly older than Frank, his little brother. Stubborn at times; extremely dependable at others. Still doesn’t mind a good war of words with his baby brother.

Travis Weaver

Late teens. Frank’s son, the youngest of four. Future college student. World-class smart-aleck when he wants to be. His behavior almost mirrors that of his youthful grandfather.

Rafael Trujillo

Mid-twenties. Single-handedly ruled the Dominican Republic “officially” from 1930 until 1961. Gained power through his intellect, but he ruled with violence.

Secondary Roles:

Sailor. Also plays Shore Patrolman, Gunnery Sergeant, Marching Marine, and Newscaster 2.

Man w/ Camera. Also plays Fisherman, Newscaster 1, and the Dominican Colonel.

Burned Man. Also plays Marine 1, Petty Officer, and Enlistee.

Master-at-Arms. Also plays Donnie.

Marine 2. Also plays the Dominican Major.

Setting:

South Carolina and the Dominican Republic.

Time:

Present day and World War I.

Appendix B: Author's Note Regarding Use of Spanish

Much of the dialogue in *The Man On the Postcard* is written in Spanish. Subtitles are provided when the story demands them. However, my knowledge of Spanish is extremely rudimentary. Thus, I've not been able to convert much of my writing to the Dominican idiomatic version of the language. Doing so will most likely require the assistance of an experienced translator, and the process itself will take place at a later date. Cultural accuracy has been one of my top priorities since the onset of this project, and so, I give the reader my word that I will work tirelessly to make sure that the vernacular of the Dominican people is utilized properly and respectfully.

WORKS CONSULTED

- Alvarez, Julia. *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 1991. Print.
- Beach, Edward. *The Wreck of the Memphis*. 1998 ed. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1998. Print.
- Calder, Bruce. *The Impact of Intervention: the Dominican Republic During the U.S. Occupation of 1916-1924*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1984. Print.
- Danticat, Edwidge. *The Dew Breaker*. New York: Knopf, 2004. Print.
- Díaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2007. Print.
- Neipris, Janet. *To Be A Playwright*. New York: Routledge Publishing, 2005. Print.
- Sanchez de Solis, Rebecca. E-mail interview. 20 January 2011.
- . E-mail interview. 6 February 2011.
- Turits, Richard. *Foundations of despotism: peasants, the Trujillo regime, and modernity in Dominican history*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003. Print.
- van Itallie, Jean-Claude. *The Playwright's Workbook*. New York: Applause Theatre Books, 1997. Print.
- Wright, Michael. *Playwriting Master Class: The Personality of Process and the Art of Rewriting*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2000. Print.