

En Las Sombras

by

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CHARACTERS

<u>Mari/Mami-</u>	<u>30. Latina. The matriarch.</u>
<u>Xenia-</u>	<u>12. Latina. The big sister.</u>
<u>Luz-</u>	<u>10. Latinx. The younger sibling.</u>
<u>Vulture-</u>	<u>Ageless. White. An ancient god that takes the form of a King Vulture.</u>
<u>Jaguar-</u>	<u>Ageless. White. An ancient god that takes the form of a White Jaguar.</u>
<u>Coyote-</u>	<u>Ageless. White. A trickster. Played by the same actor as Jaguar</u>

TIME

An ancient myth. The story of right now.

READING NOTES

/	Indicates where overlapping dialogue should start
...	Indicates that a line trails off
-	Indicates that a line has been cut off, by another or themselves
<u>Underlined directions</u>	Indicates those words should be read in a staged reading

PRODUCTION NOTE

For as long as their are children being held in concentration camps in America, all playwright royalties are to be donated to RAÍCES. I encourage theatres to match my donation to this or a similar organization working for justice along the US/Mexican border.

MARI

Listen closely because tonight, I'm going to tell you the story of the beginning of the world. You may be asking yourself, "How do you know what the beginning of the world was like?". If you dared to ask me that, I would tell you, "That is the wrong question." Your question should be, "Why are you telling me the story of our great beginning." "How could something that happened millions of years ago relate to my life with its tweets and its insta and its tick tocking?"

(a breath)

If you let those words leave your lips, I would remind you that you time isn't linear, it is cyclical and what happened in the past, did happen again and is happening now. I would tell you all that if you bothered to ask the question, but you didn't so I will go on telling the story as if no question had ever entered your head.

(a breath)

Well, no not the very beginning. The banging and crashing of rocks in space, that's not very interesting. I am going to jump ahead to the first humans and the gods who lived among them. At the beginning, there were millions of gods, each with their own role. But for this story you must know three of them: the Vulture god of rebirth.

(lights up on the Vulture)

The Jaguar god of death.

(lights up on the Jaguar)

And the Sun god of life.

(lights up on an empty space where the Sun should be)

The Sun god really should be here.

(Mari considers for a moment)

But if shoulds were facts, there'd never be any need for story.

a breath

Without the Sun god, the world was covered up in darkness and every little thing began to die- from the shrubs and the trees, all the way up to the top of the food chain. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Our story begins with two siblings, so like halves of a whole, that many confused them for twins. But they were not born at the same time. There was an older sibling, Xenia.

(Lights up on Xenia.)

And her younger sibling, Luz.

(Lights up on Luz.)

(Xenia stalks up to Luz. Xenia growls and pounces. Luz moves out of the way just in time.)

XENIA

No one escapes the jaguar god's clutches.

LUZ

(spreading their arms out wide)

The vulture can fly away.

XENIA

Not fast enough.

(Luz and Xenia play fight.)

MARI

And these children lived with a mother who loved them very much. This is an important role, but a small one. So as the most mature person here, I'm going to act it out.

(MORE)

MARI (CONT'D)

If you asked, I would tell you to not read into this as any more than a practical decision.
But you didn't, so I won't.

(Lights shift)

LUZ

You can't catch me.

MARI

Shh.

XENIA

We're only playing.

MARI

It's not safe.

LUZ

I'm tired of walking.

XENIA

When are we going to get to God's Gate?

MARI

We will get there when we get there.

LUZ

That's not a real answer.

(Xenia tackles Luz to the ground).

XENIA

Got you.

LUZ

That's not fair.

(The sound of a coyote howling in the distance.)

MARI

Quiet.

LUZ

What was that?

MARI

We need to keep moving.

XENIA

Fine.

(Xenia lets go of Luz and they both stand.)

You only won because you cheated. LUZ

I always beat you. XENIA

Only because you're bigger than me. LUZ

And prettier. And smarter. XENIA

Not smarter. LUZ

Smart enough to get a jump on you. XENIA

Mami, which one of us is smarter? LUZ

You're both smart in your own ways. MARI

Yeah but I'm the brains kind of smarter, right? LUZ

You shouldn't compare yourself to your sister. MARI

That's a no. XENIA

I didn't say that. MARI

You didn't say yes either. LUZ

You two need to be looking out for each other, instead of fighting all the time. MARI

I don't need anyone to look out for me, especially not Luz. XENIA

Is that so? MARI

What can Luz do that I can't? XENIA

You're asking the wrong question. MARI

What's the right question?
 (Mari picks up a stick and holds it out to Xenia.)

Break this.

What?

Come on, I want you to show me how strong you really are.
 (Xenia snaps the stick in two)

Satisfied?

Now break both of these sticks together, snap them the same way you did before.
 (Xenia takes the sticks and tries to break them.)

Can't you do it?

Easily.
 (She can't.)

Doesn't look like it.

Then you try.
 (Luz also can't break the sticks)

The world is a dangerous place, but you'll find strength if you stay by each others side.
 Your question shouldn't be what can they do that I can't, but what can't we do together?
 (Mari waits for her children to respond. They do not.)

Nothing, do you hear me?

But Mami-

Luz, who is the bravest child you know?

Xeni.

And Xenia, who is the most clever? MARI

I see what you're doing. XENIA

Answer the question. MARI

Luz is. XENIA

So what can't you accomplish together? MARI

Nothing XENIA Nothing LUZ

Exactly. MARI
(a breath)

Now come on, we can't waste anymore time here.

Can't we rest for the night? LUZ

How do you know it's night? XENIA

Because it's dark. LUZ

It's been dark for days. XENIA

It doesn't matter, I'm tired. LUZ

You're always tired. XENIA

It's not safe to rest here. MARI

Why not? LUZ

Because of the monsters. XENIA
(in a spooky voice)

Stop. MARI

What monsters? LUZ

(to Xenia) MARI
You're scaring Luz.

XENIA
It's not my fault she's such a scaredy cat.

MARI
Don't call your sibling that.

XENIA
She is.

MARI
Don't call your sibling she.

XENIA
Did I?

MARI
Yes.

XENIA
Sorry.

MARI
I'm not the one you need to apologize to.

XENIA
Sorry, Luz. I'm still getting used to it.

LUZ
Are there really monsters here?

MARI
We'll be safe once we get to Gods Gate.

LUZ
What's it like?

MARI
God's Gate?

LUZ
Yeah.

MARI
I've never been there myself, but I've heard stories.

XENIA
What do they say?

MARI

All the god's live beyond the gate, so they spare no expense in creating a home for them. The gate itself is made of copper inlaid with jade and once you get inside the ground is paved with gold. But most importantly everyone has their own home and no one ever goes hungry.

XENIA

And that's where we're going to live?

MARI

All we have to do is get there.

XENIA

What if the god's don't want us?

MARI

Of course they will.

XENIA

How do you know?

MARI

It's their duty to protect us. Without the Sun, they have to take us in.

XENIA

Then why did the Sun leave in the first place?

MARI

I don't know. That's what we have to go find out.

XENIA

Maybe she's dead. Maybe someone killed her.

MARI

Don't talk like that.

XENIA

Why not?

MARI

This isn't a joke.

XENIA

I never said it was.

MARI

Come on, let's keep moving.

XENIA

You better tell Luz that.

(Xenia and Mari look at Luz who has sat down and looks to be asleep.)

My baby. MARI

I wasn't making up the monsters. XENIA

I know. MARI

Luz should know. XENIA

Another night of walking and we'll be at Gods Gate. MARI

You don't know that they're letting people in. XENIA

We have to try. MARI

But what if they're not and we came all this way just to have to turn around and go back. XENIA

They should- MARI

Mami. XENIA

If they're not letting humans in, then there is only one thing left to do. MARI

What? XENIA

You have to become a god. MARI

I can't take the trial. XENIA

You'll have to. MARI

Why can't you do it? XENIA

Only children are allowed to- MARI

Why? XENIA

MARI
You'll have to ask the gods.

XENIA
Every human who's tried has died.

MARI
Believe me when I say that you and Luz aren't any safer here. Death is hiding in these shadows, but if you take the trial then you'll have a fighting chance.

XENIA
You won't be able to convince Luz to take the trial alone.

MARI
That's why you have to do it together.

XENIA
But only one child is allowed to take the trial at a time.

MARI
Then I guess we'll have to bind you together.

XENIA
Isn't that cheating?

MARI
The gods designed the trial to trick and fool you. The only way you'll survive is to make use of whatever advantage you have.

XENIA
If the gods can't lie to us, how can they trick us?

MARI
The best tricks are found in truth.

XENIA
When are you going to tell Luz all this?

MARI
Not until we get there. If they're letting everyone behind Gods Gate then there's no reason to worry them.

XENIA
But it's ok to worry me?

MARI
The burden of being the oldest.

XENIA
By two years.

MARI
Twelve might as well be a lifetime older than ten.

It's not fair. XENIA

Fair or not, if we get separated, Luz will be your responsibility. MARI

But- XENIA

Do you still have your father's arrowhead? MARI

Of course. XENIA

He gave that to you for a reason. Don't let us down.
(Xenia doesn't respond)
Promise me that no matter what happens, you'll look after Luz. MARI

Ok. XENIA

Promise me. MARI

I promise. XENIA

Thank you. MARI

What now? XENIA
(Mari goes to Luz)

Luz, my love, you have to wake up. MARI

I'm so tired. LUZ

We need to keep walking. MARI

Let me sleep a little longer. LUZ

What if we played a game? MARI

I thought we had to be quiet. XENIA

MARI
I could give you a riddle, wouldn't you like that Luz?

XENIA
I hate riddles.

MARI
No you don't.

LUZ
A new one?

MARI
Yes, baby, a new one.

LUZ
Ok.

MARI
All you have to do is stand up.

LUZ
Ok.
(Mari helps Luz stand).

MARI
There you go.

LUZ
What's the riddle?

MARI
Let's see... I'm thinking about something that can be broken without being touched.

LUZ
(to themselves)
Broken without being touched...

MARI
Do you want a hint?

LUZ
Can you see it right now?

MARI
No.

XENIA
Is it something that we made?

MARI
Definitely.

Is it-? LUZ
(The sound of a coyote howling loudly. Mami covers Luz's mouth to quiet them. Mami motions for them to hide behind a rock on their path and they do. The Coyote approaches.)

Look what we have here. COYOTE

Who's there? MARI

A friend. COYOTE

I don't have any friends around here. MARI

And that's exactly why you need me. COYOTE

What do you want? MARI

I might ask you the same question. COYOTE

I'm on my way to God's Gate. MARI

You and the rest of the world. COYOTE

So I better be going. MARI

Not so fast. Are you by yourself? COYOTE

Yes. MARI

No husband to take care of you. COYOTE

I... uh... he's already left. I'm meeting him there. MARI

Surely he wouldn't want you to make the rest of the journey all on your own. COYOTE

I'm all right.

MARI

Why don't you come with me? I can give you a place to rest for the night.

COYOTE

That's ok.

MARI

It's another ten hours walk to God's Gate. If you come with me you'll find good food and even better company before you get on your way.

COYOTE

It's a kind offer but-

MARI

I insist.

COYOTE
(grabs Mari by the arm)

There's no need for that.

MARI
(A moment. Coyote smells something in the air.)

I thought you said you were alone.

COYOTE

I am.

MARI
(Coyote lets go of Mari and begins to walk towards the rock that Xenia and Luz are hiding behind.)

Then why do I smell-

COYOTE

Oh no! What do you smell? Is it a monster?

MARI
(grabs Coyote by the arm)

No-

COYOTE

Oh please no, I can't fight a monster. Please, I take back what I said before. I'll go anywhere with you, please just take me away from this place.

MARI

Really?

COYOTE

Really? I was trying to put on a brave face but I... I'm afraid one little noise and I'm all in pieces.

MARI

Then let's go. COYOTE

All right. MARI

(loudly)
I hope that whatever's hiding in the shadows doesn't try to follow us.
(Coyote and Mari walk off together. Mari takes a note from her pocket and drops it on the ground. Once they are out of sight, Xenia and Luz pop up from their hiding place.)

Where is she going? LUZ

I don't know. XENIA

We have to go after her. LUZ

Wait. XENIA

We're going to lose them. LUZ

She dropped something. XENIA

So? LUZ

It's has my name on it. XENIA

What's it say? LUZ
(Xenia is reading)
Xenia?

It's directions. XENIA

To God's Gate? LUZ

Not just that. XENIA

To where? LUZ

The trial of the gods. XENIA

Ok, we can give it back to her when we find her. LUZ

You heard her. She told us not to follow. XENIA

She wasn't talking to us. LUZ

She was. We have to come back after we beat the trial. XENIA

What are you talking about? LUZ

We can't fight whatever that was on our own. XENIA

We can't leave her with him. LUZ

What are a couple of kids going to do against a monster? XENIA

I don't know but we have to try. LUZ

Think about it, Luz. If we take the trial of the gods- XENIA

We'll become gods. LUZ

Exactly. XENIA

But what if we can't? LUZ

She didn't drop this by accident. If she left it for us, it means it's what she wanted us to take the trial. XENIA

But by the time we get there and come back- LUZ

Then we'd better hurry. XENIA

Are you sure about this? LUZ

It's the only thing I'm sure of. XENIA

I don't want to leave her. LUZ

We're not. We're going to become gods so that we can save her. XENIA

Together? LUZ

Together. XENIA

Ok. LUZ

Then let's go. XENIA

(Luz and Xenia continue forward)

MARI

The children left behind their mother and ran, as fast as they could, they ran by themselves to God's Gate. When the siblings finally arrived, they discovered that they were not alone. It seemed that all people who had struggled in darkness had also made the journey. And the god of rebirth was in charge of determining who next could take the trial of the gods.

(Lights shift)

(The sound of a mob fills the space.)

Look at all the people. LUZ

Yeah. XENIA

Are we in the right place? LUZ

The directions said to come here. XENIA

But the gate... LUZ

What about it? XENIA

Where's the copper and jade? LUZ

I don't know.

XENIA

(The Vulture God approaches the mob)

Xeni, look!

LUZ
(pointing at Vulture)

What?

XENIA

Settle down please.

VULTURE

It's-

LUZ

The Vulture.

XENIA

I didn't think-

LUZ

We'd actually meet-

XENIA

A god-

LUZ

So soon.

XENIA

Settle down.

VULTURE

Let's get closer.

.XENIA

VULTURE

So many new faces. I assume you all are here take the trial of the gods.
(Luz and Xenia nod)

Good. Add your name to the list and we'll call on you one at a time when it's your turn to try.

XENIA

How long will that take?

VULTURE

Anywhere between a day and ten years. Who's to say?

XENIA

Why can't you?

VULTURE

How am I supposed to know if the children on the list before you will take five minutes or five months to fail?

XENIA

We can't wait that long.

VULTURE

You can and you will.

XENIA

What do we do in the meantime?

VULTURE

You wait.

XENIA

Here?

VULTURE

Where else?

XENIA

But it's not safe.

VULTURE

That's none of my concern.

XENIA

Where is the Sun God?

VULTURE

Why would you ask that?

XENIA

Do you know?

(The Vulture considers Xenia, makes a choice to not answer her.)

VULTURE

Today's contestant is the one who calls herself Amelia.

(to an unseen child)

Come child, I will take you to your trial.

(The Vulture leads an unseen child away.)

(Luz turns to Xenia)

LUZ

What do we do now?

XENIA

What can we do?

We have to find a way in. LUZ

You heard the Vulture. XENIA

Mami needs us, we can't wait months. LUZ

What if we get caught? XENIA

That doesn't matter. LUZ

I promised to keep you safe. XENIA

Then don't make me sneak in by myself. LUZ

You're the worst. XENIA

I'm the best and you know it. LUZ

Do you have a plan? XENIA

The next time the Vulture brings a child in, we follow behind. LUZ

Won't she notice us? XENIA

Not in this darkness. LUZ

What if the Sun comes back? XENIA

She won't. LUZ

How do you know? XENIA

Did you see how the Vulture reacted when you asked about her? LUZ

So. XENIA

LUZ

I think something happened to her and I think the Vulture knows what it is.

XENIA

We can't worry about that now.

LUZ

But-

XENIA

Luz.

LUZ

Don't you want to know what happened? If we could bring the Sun God back, we could save everyone.

XENIA

We're here to beat the trial, not pretend to be heroes.

LUZ

I know.

XENIA

We have one job.

LUZ

Beat the trial and save Mami.

XENIA

Right.

LUZ

Do you think the Vulture will come back soon?

XENIA

We better bind ourselves together, just in case.

LUZ

What's the point? If we're going to sneak in-

XENIA

We don't know what's going to happen next. I'm not going to give anyone a chance to tear us apart.

LUZ

Ok.

(The children begin binding themselves together.)

(Lights shift.)

MARI

That's the strange thing about the hero's journey. You never know whether you've been on one until the end of the tale. For all you know, you're just a pawn in a much larger game.

(Lights shift.)

(The Vulture enters)

VULTURE

All right, everyone let's make this quick. Today's participant in the trials is the one who calls himself Jaime.

(An unseen child walks up to Vulture)

Come with me child and I will take you to your trial.

(Xenia and Luz follow behind the Vulture)

It's right up ahead.

(Xenia and Luz continue following before bumping into an invisible wall. The Vulture continues on without them.)

LUZ

What is this?

XENIA

I don't know, try pushing-

JAGUAR

It's a precautionary measure for anyone trying to sneak past God's Gate.

XENIA

Who's there?

JAGUAR

A god, a guard, a guide. I am all three in one, so I suppose you can take your pick.

LUZ

(to Xenia)

A god?

XENIA

A guide to where?

JAGUAR

The underworld, of course. I could take you now if you're so inclined.

LUZ

The Jaguar.

JAGUAR

The one and the same.

(the Jaguar comes closer to the children)

And who might you be?

XENIA

I'm Xenia.

And you little one? (to Luz) JAGUAR
 Luz. LUZ
 What was that? JAGUAR
 (Luz looks to Xenia for help)
 This is Luz. XENIA
 What strange names you have. JAGUAR
 They're not strange to us. XENIA
 No, I suppose they wouldn't be. JAGUAR
 (a breath)
 Where do you come from?
 The forest region, south of here. XENIA
 So many of you come from the forest, why is that? JAGUAR
 We don't have much choice with the Sun- XENIA
 (The jaguar roars)
 Do not speak that name in my presence. JAGUAR
 Why not? XENIA
 What's your father's name? JAGUAR
 My father's dead. XENIA
 Then I must have met him at some point. JAGUAR
 His name was Martín. XENIA

Martín... I met a Martín once. JAGUAR
 So? XENIA
 As a matter of fact you look just like him. It really wouldn't surprise me if he were your father. JAGUAR
 What is that supposed to mean? XENIA
 Surely you know he died trying to sneak past God's Gate. JAGUAR
 He did? (to Xenia) LUZ
 He might have died in the very spot you stand in now. JAGUAR
 Xenia. LUZ
 It's okay Luz. XENIA
 Yes, it's ok. I'm sure we can arrange a family reunion soon enough. JAGUAR
 Really? XENIA
 Once your dead, of course. JAGUAR
 I don't plan on dying anytime soon. XENIA
 Then why ever did you come here? JAGUAR
 To take the trial of the gods. XENIA
 It's not your turn. JAGUAR
 I didn't realize gods waited their turn. XENIA

You're not a god. JAGUAR

Yet. XENIA

(The Vulture returns.)

VULTURE
Can we please start the trial soon? I'm starving.
(noticing Xenia and Luz)
Children! What are children doing here?

JAGUAR
They followed you in when you weren't paying attention.

VULTURE
Me? Are you sure?

JAGUAR
Positive.

VULTURE
I was distracted- what with the other child- please don't be mad- I promise it won't happen again.

JAGUAR
See that it doesn't.

VULTURE
What should we do with them?

JAGUAR
I suppose I could kill them.

VULTURE
They do look delicious.

XENIA
You can't.

JAGUAR
And why not?

XENIA
Because... Because...

(Luz whispers into Xenia's ear)

JAGUAR
What is she whispering?

XENIA
Don't call my sibling-

(Luz puts a hand on Xenia to stop her from speaking, just as the Jaguar roars).

JAGUAR

Don't tell me what to do.

XENIA

Luz was reminding me that it's the law of the gods that every child be allowed to take the trial. You can't kill us without giving us a chance.

JAGUAR

It is also law that children wait their turn, which you failed to do.

XENIA

Please, our mother is... It's her wish to see us become gods, so we have to take the trial now before it's too late.

VULTURE

(to Jaguar)

What do you think?

JAGUAR

Perhaps we can solve this with a game.

VULTURE

Oh yes, I love a good game.

XENIA

What kind of game?

JAGUAR

A wager. If you can get past this barrier, I'll let you take the trial of the gods.

XENIA

And if not?

JAGUAR

We'll have to kill you.

VULTURE

And then eat you.

JAGUAR

What do you say?

(The Jaguar and Vulture smile wide at Xenia and Luz, showing all of their teeth.)

XENIA

What do you think, Luz?

(Luz nods)

Are you sure?

LUZ

(to Xenia)

We have to.

XENIA

Ok, we'll do it.

JAGUAR

I think you've misunderstood me, only one of you can take the trial.

XENIA

We were born together, we can't be split apart.

JAGUAR

Is that so?

XENIA

If you make a deal with one of us, you make a deal with us both.

(The Jaguar considers)

JAGUAR

I suppose it doesn't matter. No one's ever been strong enough to break through this barrier, one or two does not make a difference. So when you're ready to give up-

XENIA

We won't.

JAGUAR

Or if somehow you escape, all you have to do is call our names.

XENIA

How do you know you'll hear us?

JAGUAR

Names have power in this place: say ours and we will appear.

VULTURE

Good luck little ones.

JAGUAR

You're going to need it.

(The Vulture and Jaguar disappear)

LUZ

Xeni?

XENIA

Yeah.

LUZ

We just met the god of death.

I know. XENIA

I didn't think he'd be so... LUZ

What? XENIA

Do you think he... Do you think Papa.. LUZ

I'm sure the Jaguar was just trying to scare us. XENIA

Why? LUZ

We outsmarted them, outsmarted their rules. XENIA

Do you think anyone's ever done that before? LUZ

If they have, I've never heard of it. XENIA

Do you think we can see him? LUZ

Who? XENIA

Do you think the Jaguar can take us to Papa? LUZ

I don't think there's any way back from the underworld. XENIA

But the Jaguar must do it all the time. LUZ

He's a god. XENIA

So when we become gods- LUZ

I wouldn't get your hopes up. XENIA

Why not? LUZ

XENIA

I don't... it probably depends on what we become gods of. I doubt the Vulture makes many trips to the underworld.

LUZ

I guess you're right.

XENIA

Let's just focus on one thing at a time?

LUZ

Do you think we can do it? Beat the trials.

XENIA

They're not going to make it easy.

LUZ

I know.

XENIA

And we have to get past this barrier first.

LUZ

Yeah.

(Luz taps on the invisible wall)

XENIA

What do you think it's made of?

LUZ

It's as solid as a rock-

XENIA

But clearer than the lake-

LUZ

And colder than anything I've ever felt before.

XENIA

It doesn't seem possible.

LUZ

It shouldn't be.

XENIA

Help me push.

(Xenia and Luz put their hands against the invisible wall.)

LUZ

One.

Two. XENIA

Three. LUZ

Push. XENIA

(Xenia and Luz try pushing. The wall does not move.)

This isn't working. LUZ

I know. XENIA

If we can't go through it, maybe there's a way around. LUZ

How do we find an opening in a wall that we can't see? XENIA

(Luz thinks for a moment)

Put your hand here. If you follow along the wall, maybe it'll lead us to where we're supposed to go. LUZ

What are you going to do? XENIA

Go with you. LUZ

It'd be faster if we each went a different way. XENIA

(Xenia begins separating herself from Luz)

Stop. LUZ

What's wrong? XENIA

What if they can see you? LUZ

No ones here. XENIA

LUZ
But what if they can see everything? Know everything.

XENIA
They couldn't possibly know everything.

LUZ
How can you be sure?

XENIA
If they did, then they'd know better than to challenge us.

LUZ
Xenia.

XENIA
It's true.

LUZ
But we're supposed to stick together.

XENIA
I won't go far. I promise.

LUZ
Ok.

(Xenia and Luz separate.)

XENIA
Come on, let's see where this leads.

(Luz and Xenia put their hands on the invisible wall
and go their separate ways.)

LUZ
Anything?

XENIA
No.

LUZ
I found a corner.

(Luz turns the corner.)

XENIA
(turning)
Me too.

LUZ
That's great! Keep going.

(They follow the invisible wall some more.)

I found another corner. XENIA

Me too! LUZ

(They keep following the wall until they bump into each other.)

Hey. XENIA

Sorry. LUZ

What's it mean? XENIA

We're trapped. LUZ

(Lights shift.)

MARI
And so the children sat and thought, offering ideas, each more nonsensical than the last.

LUZ
The next time the gods come back, we'll follow right behind them, then maybe we can get through before the magic invisible door closes.

XENIA
Who says that they're ever coming back?

MARI
As the seconds turned to minutes.

XENIA
If you stand on my shoulders, maybe I can push you over the wall.

LUZ
Then how will you get over?

MARI
And the minutes turned to hours.

LUZ
Maybe if I scream loud enough it'll crack whatever this is made of.

XENIA
That doesn't make any sense.

MARI
And the hours turned to days.

(Lights shift)

(Xenia punches at the invisible wall)

What are you doing?	LUZ
I have to get us out of here.	XENIA
	(She continues to hit the wall)
Stop.	LUZ (going to Xenia)
No.	XENIA
You're gonna hurt yourself.	LUZ
I'm not.	XENIA
Yes-	LUZ
Don't you get it? Nothing hurts anymore. Nothing.	XENIA
Xenia.	LUZ
I'm fine.	XENIA
Give me your hand.	LUZ
Why?	XENIA
You're bleeding.	LUZ
It doesn't matter.	XENIA
We don't know what the gods are going to do to us next and you're not going to be helpful if you break your hand now.	LUZ
	<u>(With reluctance, Xenia stops hitting the wall.)</u>
Let me see. Hold still.	

(Luz uses a torn piece of clothing to bandage her hand)

XENIA
How do you even know how to do that?

LUZ
Mami showed me.

XENIA
Why didn't she show me?

LUZ
I guess she figured you were going to be the one to hurt herself.

XENIA
And you'd have to patch me up?

LUZ
Something like that.

XENIA
I'm sorry I yelled.

LUZ
It's ok.

XENIA
I just wanted to do something.

LUZ
I know.

XENIA
And I'm so cold.

LUZ
I know.

XENIA
I can't remember what my toes feel like anymore.

LUZ
Why do you think it's so cold in here?

XENIA
To torture us.

LUZ
So we'll give up sooner?

XENIA
Probably.

If only we had a blanket. LUZ

Come here. XENIA

Why? LUZ

If we have to be cold- XENIA

We might as well be cold together. LUZ

(Luz goes up to Xenia. Xenia wraps them in her arms.)

Better? XENIA

Yeah. LUZ
(a moment)
I'm worried about Mami too.

Where'd that come from? XENIA

I know that's why you're worried. Why you got so mad. LUZ
(Xenia considers this for a moment.)

It's not just that. XENIA

Then what is it? LUZ

If I'm not strong enough to get us out of here now, then what chance do we have once the real trial starts. XENIA

Whatever it is, we can beat it together. LUZ

Together. XENIA

Do you think she's ok? LUZ

I don't know. XENIA

I don't want to think about what he might be doing- LUZ

Then try to think about something else. XENIA

(Luz and Xenia sit in silence.)

Can you tell me a story? LUZ

No. XENIA

Why not? LUZ

I'm trying to think of a way out of here. XENIA

I need a break. LUZ

Then why don't you make up your own story? XENIA

I can't. LUZ

Sure you can. XENIA

It's impossible to tell yourself a story. LUZ

No it's not. XENIA

If I did then I would already know the ending and where is the fun in that? LUZ

You could tell yourself something that doesn't have an ending, something that goes on forever. XENIA

What's the point of a story with no ending? LUZ

What's the point of any story? XENIA

LUZ
Pleeeeeeeeeeeeeeease.

(Xenia has a coughing fit.)

XENIA
Sorry.

LUZ
Are you ok?

XENIA
I think I'm getting sick.

LUZ
You're not sick, you're a... A scorpion.

XENIA
What?

LUZ
That's the game, you say that you're sick and then I say an animal that starts with the same letter.

XENIA
What kind of game is that?

LUZ
Mami and I used to play it all the time.

XENIA
Where was I?

LUZ
Probably hunting with Papa.

XENIA
That was a long time ago.

LUZ
Now it's your turn. Let's see... I'm tired.

XENIA
Ok.

LUZ
Now you say, "you're not tired. You're a..."
(Luz waits for Xenia to fill in the blank. She does not.)
You have to say an animal that start with the same letter.
(Xenia coughs.)
Am I a crab? A crocodile? A rabbit?

I wish you were a canary. XENIA

Why? LUZ

Maybe then you could fly us both out of this place. XENIA

Yeah. I'd like to be a canary. LUZ

(Silence for a moment until Xenia coughs again.)

Sorry. XENIA

We have to get you out of here. LUZ

We will. XENIA

How? LUZ

What if we called the gods back and trick them into telling us how to escape. XENIA

How are we going to do that? LUZ

Think of it like a riddle. You can figure out what to say. XENIA

It'll never work. LUZ

(Silence)

Luz? XENIA

Yeah. LUZ

Why didn't you want me to correct the gods when they called you she? XENIA

What do you care? You call me that all the time. LUZ

I don't. XENIA

Xenia. LUZ

I'm sorry. XENIA

I know. LUZ

No really. The way I used to... there's no excuse and there's no way I can make it up to you but I want you to know how sorry I am. XENIA

Thank you. LUZ

I don't want to be like them. XENIA

You're not. LUZ

I'm not going to let anyone call you something that you don't like. XENIA

Even the gods? LUZ

Even the gods. XENIA

I don't want to give them a reason to separate us. LUZ

I'm not going to let that happen. XENIA

We're supposed to be in the same body right? They'd be suspicious if we weren't the same... And it's easier for me to pretend to be a girl than the other way around. LUZ

You shouldn't have to do that- to change who you are. XENIA

I know, but when the gods are around, you shouldn't correct them. LUZ
(a breath)

You still have to call me they when it's just us. XENIA

I will. I promise. LUZ

Good. LUZ

(Lights shift)

They've been in there an awfully long time.	VULTURE
What did you expect?	JAGUAR
Maybe we should check on them.	VULTURE
They'll call us when they're ready to give up.	JAGUAR
They seem like good children.	VULTURE
Good or not, there is something about them...	JAGUAR
I wish we could help them.	VULTURE
We can't help every child.	JAGUAR
Why not?	VULTURE
Then there would be hundreds- thousands of more gods.	JAGUAR
Would that be so bad?	VULTURE
The more gods that exist, the less powerful any one of us is.	JAGUAR
So we don't help all of the children. Maybe we can help these two.	VULTURE
You're too sentimental.	JAGUAR
It's different for you. You were born a god.	VULTURE
Exactly.	JAGUAR
That doesn't make you superior.	VULTURE

Doesn't it? JAGUAR

Don't you ever get lonely? VULTURE

How can I when I have thousands of souls under my care? JAGUAR

Sometimes I think about what life was like for me before all this, when I was just a vulture with a family to feed. And when I see those two, the way they care about each other, I don't think I could bear to see them torn apart. VULTURE

Don't pretend that you aren't as hungry as I am. JAGUAR

(The Vulture considers this for a moment.)

That last child was pitiful. VULTURE

Nothing more than skin and bones. JAGUAR

So why do we even bother, if these children can't satisfy our hunger for longer than the time it takes to eat them. VULTURE

That's why it's time we had ourselves a real meal. JAGUAR

Where are we going to find something like that? VULTURE

I have hope for these daughters of Martín. JAGUAR

What do you mean? VULTURE

The longer they're here, the more the trial will tenderize their flesh. And when they are finally defeated, who knows maybe we'll finally have the power to move up in the universe. JAGUAR

What are you saying? VULTURE

It doesn't look like you-know-who is coming back. Someone has to take her place. JAGUAR

You want to be the next Sun? VULTURE

JAGUAR

Better to be ruling from the sky than in the underworld, or here in this forsaken transitional space.

VULTURE

I like it here.

JAGUAR

And if I became the next God of life, you could take my place, run the underworld however you see fit.

(The Vulture considers this)

VULTURE

What if these children beat the trial instead?

JAGUAR

They won't.

VULTURE

You don't think that they have any hope of succeeding?

JAGUAR

Of course there's hope. The whole point of all this is to give them hope.

(Lights shift to Xenia and Luz.)

(Xenia is coughing. She does not look well and coughs throughout this scene.)

LUZ

We have to get you out of here.

XENIA

We will.

LUZ

If only we had a knife or something sharp.

XENIA

I have Papa's arrowhead.

LUZ

Maybe it can pierce through whatever this is.

XENIA

Or it could break.

LUZ

There's only one way to find out.

XENIA

But it's all we have left of him- of both of them.

Mami's still alive.

LUZ

For now.

XENIA

So we have to use everything in our power to save her.

LUZ

Yeah.

XENIA

(Xenia pulls out Papa's arrowhead and considers it for a moment before striking the invisible wall. Then she reaches out to feel it)

Anything?

LUZ

I've scratched it a little, but It's still as solid as before.

XENIA

(Luz considers this.)

Hit it again.

LUZ

Why?

XENIA

If you chip off a small piece, maybe we can see what it's made of.

LUZ

(Xenia hits the wall some more and Luz tries to catch whatever may fall.)

Anything?

XENIA

Yeah...

LUZ

What is it?

XENIA

Some kind of magic.

LUZ

What do you mean?

XENIA

It's turned to liquid.

LUZ

XENIA
What kind of liquid?

(Luz smells their hand)

LUZ
I don't know.

(Luz licks their hand.)

XENIA
Do not lick the mysterious liquid.

(Luz thinks for a moment.)

LUZ
It's water.

XENIA
How can something solid turn into water?

LUZ
I don't know.

(Lights shift.)

MARI
You may think the children foolish, for not understanding this strange substance that surrounded them. But they lived in a time and a place before they knew of such things as ice. So cut them a little slack here.

(Lights shift.)

LUZ
Maybe it's cold for a reason.

XENIA
Like what?

LUZ
Maybe that's what's keeping it solid. When you hit it with your arrow, maybe it's like starting a fire, you're creating heat, and maybe that's what turns it to water.

XENIA
That's a lot of maybes.

(Luz begins to exhale heavily, trying to blow hot air onto the wall.)

XENIA
What are you doing?

LUZ
This is what I do when my hands get cold.

Is it working? XENIA

(Luz touches the wall)

It feels a little wet. LUZ

Is that a good thing? XENIA

I think so. LUZ

(Luz pushes their whole body against the wall)

What are you doing? XENIA

Maybe my body heat is enough. LUZ

And? XENIA

I'm even colder than before. LUZ

Then you should stop. XENIA

But it could work. LUZ

We shouldn't both get sick. XENIA

It'd be worth it to get out of here. LUZ

Stop. There's got to be a better way. XENIA

A smarter way. LUZ
(moving away from the invisible wall)

Exactly. XENIA

If we had flint and steel we could make a fire LUZ

We'd need wood too

XENIA

That I have

LUZ

You do?

XENIA

(Luz pulls out the two bound together sticks)

Of course.

LUZ

You held onto it?

XENIA

I didn't want to forget.

LUZ

We can make a fire with that.

XENIA

We can?

LUZ

I've seen Mami do it before.

XENIA

That's not the same thing.

LUZ

Just give me the sticks. This might take a while.

XENIA

(Luz hands Xenia the sticks. Xenia uses the arrowhead to sharpen one of the sticks.)

Xenia?

LUZ

Yeah?

XENIA

After we're done, can you bind us back together?

LUZ

As soon as I get the fire going.

XENIA

What do you think the trial is?

LUZ

XENIA
I don't know. No human's lived through it to say.

LUZ
Do you think it'll take very long?

XENIA
I hope not.

LUZ
Maybe we can ask them.

XENIA
Even if we do, they might not tell us.

LUZ
I have a lot of things I'd like to ask the gods.

XENIA
Like what?

LUZ
I'd like to know how Mami is.

XENIA
Do you think they know?

LUZ
Wouldn't the Jaguar know if she's...

XENIA
I'm sure she's fine.

LUZ
You are?

XENIA
Of course.

LUZ
I'd also like to know what happened to the Sun god.

XENIA
This again?

LUZ
We wouldn't be here, if she were still in the sky. None of the other children would be.

XENIA
Maybe.

LUZ
Will you ask them?

It doesn't matter, they won't tell us. XENIA

I'm tired of no one listening to us. LUZ

Me too. XENIA

(Lights shift.)

MARI
The gods thought that the Ice Box would break their spirits, but these children were not so easily beaten. And as they felt the barrier before them melt, they were feeling quite pleased with themselves. If only they had known what the gods had planned for them next, they would not be smiling now.

(Lights shift.)

(Xenia and Luz walk through the invisible wall)

What now? XENIA

You have to call their name. LUZ

Why me? XENIA

They scare me. LUZ

They scare me too. XENIA

Please. LUZ

Ok. XENIA

(a breath)

Vulture...? (a breath)

Jaguar...? (a breath)

(to Luz)

It's not working.

Try saying their whole title. LUZ

Are you there, Vulture god of-? XENIA

(The Vulture suddenly appears, seemingly from nowhere.)

(Xenia and Luz scream)

VULTURE

You made it! Did you see that Jaguar God?

(The Jaguar suddenly appears)

JAGUAR

I see.

VULTURE

Very well done.

XENIA

Do we get to take the trial now?

JAGUAR

That was the deal.

VULTURE

But first some ground rules.

XENIA

Rules?

JAGUAR

Of course, every game has its rules.

XENIA

This isn't a game to us.

VULTURE

Rule number one: You can quit the trials at any time.

JAGUAR

And we encourage it.

VULTURE

But if you do quit.

JAGUAR

The penalty is death.

VULTURE

Rule number two: There is no pausing the trial.

JAGUAR

No calling for outside help.

VULTURE

You have to prove that you, yourself, are worthy.

We can do that. XENIA

And final rule, is to remember that we are here to reward anyone who completes the trial. VULTURE

So violence against the gods is- JAGUAR

Absolutely- VULTURE

And strictly- JAGUAR

Prohibited. VULTURE

Any questions? JAGUAR

Are there any rules that you have to follow? XENIA

Gods aren't bound by rules. JAGUAR

That's not completely true. We can't lie to you. VULTURE

But you can deceive us? XENIA

Why would we want to do a thing like that? JAGUAR

My mother always told us that the best lies were found in truths. XENIA

Smart woman. JAGUAR

No one's trying to deceive you. We would love nothing more than to see you succeed. VULTURE

When do we begin? XENIA

Now, if you're ready. VULTURE

Tell us what to do. XENIA

JAGUAR

You have to battle us, of course.

(Lights shift)

MARI

Now narrative structure would dictate that the children shouldn't go head to head with the gods until the end of the tale, until the last seconds before the clock runs out. But I would like to remind you that this story is true. The truest one you'll ever be told. And truth does not always follow narrative structure.

(Lights shift)

XENIA

Battle?

VULTURE

Not a physical battle.

XENIA

Then what?

VULTURE

A battle of wits.

JAGUAR

It's time to prove how clever you are.

VULTURE

I'm very excited to see what you can do.

XENIA

How does it work?

VULTURE

We will ask you a series of questions.

JAGUAR

Riddles.

VULTURE

All you have to do is solve them.

JAGUAR

Correctly.

XENIA

How long will it take?

VULTURE

As long as it takes you to answer.

JAGUAR

Or give up.

VULTURE
Are you ready to begin?

XENIA
Luz?
(Luz nods)
We're ready.

JAGUAR
I must be broken before you can use me, what am I?

(Xenia hesitates.)

(Luz whispers something in Xenia's ear.)

XENIA
(to Luz)
Are you sure?
(Luz nods.)
You're an egg.

(Lights shift)

MARI
Then the gods spent the better part of a day asking questions.

VULTURE
I am the tool of the drunk.

XENIA
A bottle.

MARI
Riddles that they assumed no ordinary child could ever know the answer to.

JAGUAR
I am tall when I am young and short when I am old.

(Luz whispers the answer to Xenia)

XENIA
A candle.

MARI
But fortunately, these were no ordinary children.

(Lights shift)

VULTURE
I can't talk but will reply when spoken to.

(Luz whispers the answer to Xenia)

An echo. XENIA

Last question! VULTURE

I am always in front of you but can never be seen.
 (Xenia looks at Luz expectantly. Luz doesn't have an answer.)
 Have we stumped the unstumpable children? JAGUAR

No. XENIA

If you don't know the answer, then I think we're done here. JAGUAR

You said that we have until we quit and we're not quitting. XENIA

She has the right spirit for a god, you have to give her that. VULTURE

When you fail and eventually you will fail, you want us to be in the best of moods. JAGUAR

What does it matter- you'll kill us either way. XENIA

True. But there are ways to die that are much more pleasant than others. JAGUAR

There's no need to frighten- VULTURE

Don't tell me what to do. JAGUAR

Of course not, forgive me. VULTURE

(to the children)
 You see my friend likes her dinner to be previously deceased. Me on the other hand, I prefer live meat. And I take my time when I eat, helps me to really savor the flavors. JAGUAR

You're not gods. You're monsters. XENIA

Gods, monsters, call me what you like. they're all fancy names for men in power. JAGUAR

XENIA

We will never give in to you. Never.

VULTURE

Why don't we all focus on the question?

XENIA

What was it again?

JAGUAR

I am always in front of you but can never be reached.

(Luz whispers to Xenia.)

VULTURE

Does she know the answer?

XENIA

Luz says that you changed the riddle.

JAGUAR

I did not.

XENIA

The first time you said, "I am always in front of you, but can never be seen." This time you said "never be reached".

JAGUAR

Ah.

XENIA

Is the answer still the same?

VULTURE

Yes, I believe it is.

(Luz whispers in Xenia's ear)

XENIA

(to Luz)

What does it matter?

LUZ

Please.

VULTURE

What is it, child?

XENIA

Luz wants to know if these were the questions that you were asked before you became a god.

JAGUAR

I never took the trial.

You didn't? XENIA
 Some gods are created, and a select few are born. JAGUAR
 What about you Vulture? XENIA
 The trial was different for me VULTURE
 How so? XENIA
 That's enough. JAGUAR
 It's just a question. XENIA
 I see what you're trying to do here. JAGUAR
 And what is that? XENIA
 The Vulture may not have always been a god, but she wasn't an animal like you. JAGUAR
 I was just trying to make conversation. XENIA
 That's not why we're here. JAGUAR
 What would be wrong with that? What are you afraid of? XENIA
 Answer the riddle or forfeit. JAGUAR
 (Luz whispers in Xenia's ear)
 Does she know the answer? VULTURE
 Luz wants to know who came up with the riddles. XENIA
 Only the most powerful gods. VULTURE
 (Luz whispers in Xenia's ear)

Not now. XENIA

Please. (to Xenia) LUZ

Luz wants to know if the Su- The god of life came up with the riddles. XENIA

Why should it matter? JAGUAR
(Luz whispers into Xenia's ear)

Stop whispering.

Why- XENIA

Because I said so. I shouldn't have to explain myself to the likes of you. JAGUAR
(Luz whispers into Xenia's ear)

I said stop.
(The Jaguar swipes Luz's face with his claw. Luz screams and covers the scratched side of their face with their hand.)

Luz! Are you ok? XENIA
(Luz doesn't respond. Xenia turns on the Jaguar)

Why did you do that?

I warned her. JAGUAR

You did it just because you could. XENIA

Maybe. JAGUAR

When I become a god you will pay for this. XENIA

Do you smell that? JAGUAR

Yes. VULTURE

What? XENIA

Fresh blood. JAGUAR

Young blood. VULTURE

We could simply eat you where you stand. JAGUAR

It's so tempting. VULTURE

Too tempting. JAGUAR

Stay back. XENIA

We could nibble on her a bit. VULTURE

Except that we'd never stop. JAGUAR

Never satiated. VULTURE

Never satisfied. JAGUAR

You gave us your word that we could take the trial, that we would have as long as we needed to, if you can't lie then you can't eat us now. XENIA

Damn. JAGUAR

Clever children. VULTURE

They don't know the answer, it's only a matter of time. JAGUAR

Let me see your face. (to Luz)
(Luz shakes their head no.)

Are you hurt? (Luz nods.)

We need a healer.

You can't see one. JAGUAR

But Luz is hurt. XENIA

That doesn't matter. JAGUAR

Of course it- XENIA

Tell them Vulture. JAGUAR

No pausing. No outside help. If you see a healer, you fail. VULTURE

And if you fail, you won't exactly be needing that healer anymore. JAGUAR

But you did this. XENIA

Answer the question or forfeit. JAGUAR

It's up to you, Luz. XENIA
 (Luz mouths a word to Xenia)
 I don't know what you're saying.
 (Luz tries again.)
 Do you want to forfeit?
 (Luz frantically shakes their head no then makes a gesture. It could mean forward, or ahead, or any number of things.)

XENIA (CONT'D)

What are you trying to say?
 (Luz repeats the gesture)
 Does this have to do with the riddle?
 (Luz nods)
 Do you know the answer?
 (Luz nods)
 What is it?
 (Luz hesitates)
 Tell me.
 (Luz looks at the Jaguar)
 Forget about them. Look at me.
 (Luz looks at Xenia.)
 It's just you and me. You can tell me anything, can't you.

LUZ
 (barely audible)

Future.

What did you say? XENIA

The future. (a little louder) LUZ

Is that the answer? XENIA

What did she say? VULTURE

I am always in front of you, but can never be reached. The answer is the future. XENIA

Congratulations. VULTURE

Did we do it? XENIA

Very well done. I knew you could. VULTURE

We did it Luz, we beat the trial. XENIA

You passed a test. JAGUAR

What do you mean? XENIA

You didn't really think it would be that easy? JAGUAR

But you said that once we pass the trial- XENIA

And the trial is comprised of several tests. JAGUAR

But- XENIA

So you've proved yourself to be clever, did you really think that was the only trait needed by a god? JAGUAR

It feel like you're just changing the rules to keep us from succeeding. XENIA

We would never.	VULTURE
How many tests are there?	XENIA
Just one more.	JAGUAR
You've shown yourself to be strong and cunning.	VULTURE
Now we have to see if you are brave enough to be a god.	JAGUAR
How are we going to do that?	XENIA
Welcome to your final trial.	JAGUAR
<u>(The lights illuminate previously darkened corners to reveal small human bones.)</u>	
Are these bones?	XENIA
What else would they be?	JAGUAR
What did you do to them?	XENIA
We ate them of course.	JAGUAR
But only when they asked us to.	VULTURE
Who would-	XENIA
You'd be surprised. After a month.	JAGUAR
Month?	XENIA
Most begged me to guide them to the underworld, leaving their bodies behind to eat.	JAGUAR
I see what you're trying to do.	XENIA

Which is? JAGUAR

You can't scare us. XENIA

I needn't try. JAGUAR

Then let's get this over with. XENIA

Let the test of bravery begin. VULTURE

What is it? XENIA

You didn't think we'd make it that easy for you, did you? JAGUAR

You have to tell us what we're supposed to do. XENIA

It's easy. All you have to do is survive. VULTURE

Survive what? XENIA

(gesturing)
There's a pool of water you can drink from. VULTURE

What about food? XENIA

I wish you good luck little ones. I sincerely wish you the best of luck. VULTURE

(Jaguar and Vulture are gone.)

Are you ok? XENIA

No, I don't think I am. LUZ

What can I do? XENIA

I thought the gods wanted us succeed, but all they want to do is hurt us. LUZ

He told you not to whisper. XENIA

So it's my fault now? LUZ

Of course not, but... XENIA

What? LUZ

Is there a reason why you won't talk to the gods? XENIA

You know why. LUZ

I don't. That's why I'm asking. XENIA

I'm not brave like you. LUZ

This has nothing to do with being brave. XENIA

When we're in front of them.... I hear what they're saying but my words they... It's like I've forgotten how to speak their language. LUZ

You have to figure it out. XENIA

You talk enough for both of us. LUZ

What if something happens to me? XENIA

It won't. LUZ

What if we get separated? XENIA

We won't. LUZ

You don't know that. XENIA

Please Xenia, no matter what happens, don't leave me. LUZ

I won't but... XENIA

What? LUZ

You need to speak for yourself, instead of going through me all the time. XENIA

Why? LUZ

Because we're just a couple of kids going up against the gods of the universe. We're already at a disadvantage. Don't let them take away your voice to. XENIA

I'll... I'll try. LUZ

Good. XENIA
(a breath)
Now, help me figure out what we're supposed to do next.

How do we survive- LUZ

A threat that we can't see- XENIA

As quickly as possible- LUZ

I have no idea. XENIA

We can do this. LUZ

They said that it's a test of bravery so... XENIA

How are we supposed to prove that we're brave alone in this room? LUZ

We're not exactly alone. XENIA

Those bones do not count. LUZ

Maybe the jaguar will come back to fight one of us- XENIA

LUZ

Or a giant spider will come to eat us-

XENIA

Or maybe they just won't feed us-

LUZ

See which one of us turns on the other first?

XENIA

That'd be crazy.

(a breath)

Right?

(Lights shift)

MARI

They were imprisoned with the remnant children who had been unable to beat the trials. Left alone to imagine their worst nightmares coming to greet them.

(a breath)

How are you doing so far? Are you scared? Of what might jump out of the shadows. Of what might happen if they don't succeed? I suppose I could tell you not to be afraid, could remind you that this is just a story. But we're past that point aren't we? In believing that this story lives only in the telling of it. If you must need to be comforted, find comfort in this: that you could do something to help them. Someone could do something. If they really wanted to.

(Lights shift.)

(Xenia coughs. She does not look good).

LUZ

Are you ok?

XENIA

I've been better.

(A moment.)

LUZ

This is what's supposed to happen right?

XENIA

What are you talking about?

LUZ

The heroes always feel their worst right before they beat the monster.

XENIA

It's just you and me, there's no monster here.

LUZ

You know what I mean.

Where are the gods? XENIA

I don't know. LUZ

Why haven't they done anything yet. XENIA

We just have to survive. So far we're doing ok. LUZ

Speak for yourself. XENIA

Xeni. LUZ

I'm so hungry. XENIA

You're not hungry, you're a hippo. LUZ

Don't start that again. XENIA

Why not? It's what Mami- LUZ

Mami's not here, is she? XENIA

Xenia... LUZ

No, she sent us on our own to battle gods. What did she think would happen? XENIA

We're the only ones who can do this. LUZ

How do you know that? Because Mami said so? Because she filled our heads with stories? Grow up. XENIA

What other choice did we have? LUZ

It's because she's selfish, because she couldn't do it herself, so she sent us. XENIA

She didn't want us to go alone, that monster- LUZ

XENIA

Maybe you were right. Maybe we should have never come here. If we're going to die, I wish we were at least with her.

LUZ

As long as you and I stay together, we cannot be broken.

XENIA

I don't know if I believe that anymore. To be honest, I don't know if she ever believed it.

(Xenia's words hang in the air for a moment.)

LUZ

Xeni?

XENIA

Yeah Luz?

LUZ

What did Mami write on that note?

XENIA

I told you, it was directions to get here.

LUZ

Can I see it?

XENIA

No.

LUZ

Why not?

XENIA

I don't even know if I have it anymore.

LUZ

Can you check?

XENIA

It had my name on it, I don't have to show it to anyone.

LUZ

Even me?

XENIA

Even you.

LUZ

That doesn't seem fair.

XENIA

Life's not fair.

(Lights shift)

MARI

Luz was right, of course, that they had hit the lowest point in their young lives so far, but unfortunately these two still had much further to fall. What's worse, I'm sorry to inform you, is that hitting rock bottom is absolutely no guarantee that you will defeat your monster.

(Lights shift)

LUZ

You know when you're so hungry that you don't feel hungry anymore? I think I'm that hungry.

XENIA

I'm so hungry that after not being hungry, I'm hungry again.

LUZ

I'm so hungry that-

XENIA

Stop. This isn't helping.

(A moment.)

LUZ

Let's play a game.

XENIA

I don't have enough energy for a game.

LUZ

You'll like this one.

(Luz goes to the bucket and draws water. They bring it over to Xenia.)

XENIA

What's this?

LUZ

Dinner.

XENIA

I am not thirsty.

LUZ

It's not water.

XENIA

It's not?

LUZ

No, this is... This is... albóndigas soup.

Where did you get albóndigas? XENIA

Mami showed me how to make them, remember? LUZ

But where did you get the meat? XENIA

I imagined it and it appeared. LUZ

Luz. XENIA

Your turn. If you could pick any soup what would it be? LUZ

Imagining something doesn't make it real. XENIA

Tell me. LUZ

No. XENIA

Fine. Don't tell me. I know what it is anyway. LUZ

You do? XENIA

Of course, you always asked Mami for pozole on your birthday. LUZ

Not always. XENIA

(Luz makes some chicken noises.)

Did you hear that? LUZ

Luz. XENIA

(Luz makes more chicken noises.)

I found a chicken. LUZ

Did you? XENIA

(Luz adds "the chicken" to the pot.)

What else goes into pozole? LUZ

Vegetables: onions, zucchini, hominy... XENIA

Looks like we have all that growing right here. LUZ

Lucky us. XENIA

I know, right? LUZ

We need something to make it spicy. XENIA

I have some chiles. LUZ

Perfect. XENIA

(Luz adds in "the chiles")

Ready to eat? LUZ

Doesn't it need to cook first? XENIA

No, this is magic soup. LUZ

How could I forget? XENIA

(Luz lifts the bucket to their lips)

Delicious. LUZ

What do you think? (Luz passes the bucket to Xenia. Xenia drinks.)

It's... Not as thick as I remember... But... XENIA
(a breath)

Thank you, Luz.

(Lights shift)

MARI

Thus the siblings lived on water and imagination alone. So that while their bodies slowly weakened, their minds grew that much stronger.

(Lights shift.)

(Xenia is coughing, looks close to death)

LUZ

We have to get you out of here.

XENIA

We have to pass the test.

LUZ

What if we asked for help?

XENIA

No outside help.

LUZ

What about the Vulture? She's a part of the trial, not outside of it.

XENIA

Why would she help us?

LUZ

I don't know. She seems different, she seems like maybe she cares.

XENIA

The last time we saw her, she tried to eat us.

LUZ

But she didn't.

XENIA

Couldn't we ask one of the other gods?

LUZ

Which one?

XENIA

Anyone but the Vulture and Jaguar.

LUZ

That would count as outside help and then we would be disqualified.

XENIA

What if the Vulture doesn't help?

LUZ

There's only one way to find out.

Ok.	XENIA
You do it.	LUZ
Luz.	XENIA
Please.	LUZ
Ok... Vulture...	XENIA
Vulture god?	(no response)
	(The Vulture god appears)
Hello.	VULTURE
That was fast.	XENIA
One of the perks of the job.	VULTURE
Were you watching us?	XENIA
What can I do for you my dear?	VULTURE
Can you help us figure out how to pass the trial?	XENIA
That's against the rules.	VULTURE
Technically its not, besides, we're not asking you to give us all the answers, just a hint.	XENIA
I...	VULTURE
I know that you're not heartless, they you care.	XENIA
I do.	VULTURE
Isn't there anything you can do?	XENIA

VULTURE

You know, you remind me so much of my sister. She was so smart, smarter than me even and she had the most beautiful wingspan.

XENIA

Had?

VULTURE

Once you start living forever, everyone you loved becomes past tense.

XENIA

That's why we're trying to beat the trials together.

VULTURE

And I wish you the very best of luck.

XENIA

You could-

VULTURE

No. I want to help you, I do, but if...
(Vulture looks around)

He ever found out...

XENIA

What?

VULTURE

I haven't lived this long to die now.

XENIA

Are you saying the Jaguar would-

VULTURE

Shhh.

XENIA

He would, wouldn't he?

VULTURE

If he had reason.

XENIA

Has he killed other gods before?

VULTURE

I've already said too much.

XENIA

Why would he do that?

VULTURE

Why do the gods do anything? For power.

XENIA

That's it? He took her away, he put all of us in danger, for power?

VULTURE

You sweet, sweet children. You're too good to be gods.

XENIA

What other choice do we have?

VULTURE

You could give up now.

XENIA

If we give up, we die.

VULTURE

I'll make sure it's a quick death, it's the least I can do.

XENIA

Or you could tell us how to finish this test.

VULTURE

I can't.

XENIA

Of course you can.

VULTURE

I can't risk my own neck. You understand, don't you?

XENIA

No.

VULTURE

Don't tell him we talked and don't call on me again.

XENIA

But-

VULTURE

Goodbye, little ones.

(The Vulture flies away.)

LUZ

She's scared.

XENIA

Wouldn't you be?

LUZ

I think the Jaguar killed the Sun, it's the only thing that makes sense.

So do we give up? XENIA

What are you talking about? LUZ

If even the Vulture is scared, what hope do we have? XENIA

There's always hope. LUZ

There won't be when we're dead. XENIA

Don't talk like that. We'll be out of here before you know it. LUZ

We'll be gods. XENIA

Exactly. LUZ

When you become a god, what are you going to do first? XENIA

Save Mami of course. LUZ

Right... But after that, what kind of god do you want to be? XENIA

I think I'd like to be a god of healing. If someone gets hurt or sick, they can call on me and I can come save them. LUZ

I think you'd be really good at that. XENIA

Thanks. What about you? LUZ

I like talking to people. XENIA

(laughing)
You want to be the god of talking? LUZ

Don't laugh. XENIA

You're serious?
 LUZ
 XENIA
 No, I was thinking maybe I could help people who are having trouble understanding each other, at speaking the same language... Do you think there's a god for that?
 LUZ
 You could always be the first.
 XENIA
 If we survive.
 (Lights shift)
 MARI
 I wish I could stop the story here. I wish I didn't have to tell you what happens next. But you've listened to me thus far and so, I suppose I owe you an ending. Because what is the point of a story without an ending?
 (Lights shift)
 LUZ
 We have to do something.
 XENIA
 Calm down.
 LUZ
 Mami is counting on us. We've been here too long already.
 XENIA
 Panicking won't help us save her or figure out a way out of here.
 LUZ
 We have to give up.
 XENIA
 What?
 LUZ
 If we call the Jaguar.
 XENIA
 We give up, we die and then we can't help anyone.
 LUZ
 We explain the situation, maybe he'll let us go back to Mami.
 XENIA
 Even if the Jaguar did let us go, we can't go back, that monster that has her will-
 LUZ
 I'd rather be dead than think about what he'll do to her.

Then you need to forget about her. XENIA

LUZ
(looks at Mari)
How can I forget, when everywhere I go, I see her.

What are you talking about? XENIA

Nothing. LUZ

Do you see her now? XENIA
(A moment.)

The whole reason we're here is to save her. LUZ

And to save ourselves. You have to accept the fact that we might not be able to do both. XENIA

I can. I will. LUZ

How? XENIA

Jag- LUZ
(calling out)

(Xenia covers Luz's mouth with her hand.)

Stop. XENIA
(Luz bites down on Xenia's hand.)

Ow!

Don't shut me up. LUZ

That's hilarious. XENIA

There's nothing funny about this. LUZ

What was your plan after he showed up? We both know you're not brave enough to speak up for yourself. XENIA

(Luz runs at Xenia, They fight. Once again Xenia finishes on top.)

Get off of me. LUZ

You started it. XENIA

I said, get off. LUZ

(Luz pushes Xenia off. Luz moves to a corner on their own.)

Even when I'm sick you're not strong enough to beat me. XENIA

Leave me alone. LUZ

Don't sulk. XENIA

I don't want to talk to you. LUZ

You should know better than to fight me. XENIA

Why's that? LUZ

You never win. XENIA

The point isn't always to win. LUZ

What are you talking about? XENIA

(Xenia sees that Luz has taken Mami's note and is reading it)

(reading)
Listen closely because tonight I am going to tell you- LUZ

Stop. XENIA

This is just a story. LUZ

Give that back. XENIA

Why did she give you a story? LUZ

Maybe it's the only piece paper she had. XENIA

Where are the directions? LUZ

I don't know. XENIA

(Luz flips over the paper)

(reading) LUZ

Take care of Luz and don't come back. No matter what happens never-

Luz. XENIA

You never planned on saving Mami. LUZ

She didn't want us to. XENIA

But once we become gods- LUZ

Even gods can be killed. XENIA

But- LUZ

No matter what happens next, Mami never wanted us to go back home. Never. XENIA

It doesn't matter what she wanted, we could have saved her. We could have tried. LUZ

I promised Mami that I would protect you and I'm not going to break that promise for anything, not ever for her. XENIA

You lied to me. LUZ

No, I just didn't tell you the truth. XENIA

You're no better than the gods. LUZ

You don't mean that. XENIA

You let me go on this journey thinking that we could save her. You made me believe. You let me hope when there was none. How are you any different than them? LUZ

Because I am doing this all for you, everything I do is for you to become a god. XENIA

Then let's call the gods and finish this. LUZ

I'm not giving up. XENIA

No, we're going to fight. LUZ

That's against the rules. XENIA

I know. LUZ

They're supposed to give us the power of the gods. XENIA

And why did he kill the Sun God? LUZ

We don't know that he did. XENIA

But why would he? LUZ

For power. XENIA

Exactly. LUZ

If we kill the Jaguar- XENIA

We get his power. LUZ

And if this is a test of bravery- XENIA

What better way to prove it- LUZ
 Than to kill a god- XENIA
 And take his power for ourselves. LUZ
 The whole trial is a riddle- XENIA
 That they never expected us to solve. LUZ
 We could be wrong. XENIA
 There's only one way to find out. LUZ
 We could wait it out, just a little bit longer. XENIA
 For how long? Until we starve and beg for the gods to kill us like every other child? Why wait when we could fight? LUZ
 We've been here a week with only water to eat, what chance do we have against a god. XENIA
 You're only gong to get weaker. LUZ
 I know, but- XENIA
 You have to fight him now before it's too late. LUZ
 I'm not fighting on my own. XENIA
 I can't. LUZ
 But you just- XENIA
 I'm the smart one who comes up with plans and you're the brave one who fights off the monsters. That's the way it's always been. LUZ

XENIA
You can be brave too.

LUZ
I can't.

XENIA
You fought me didn't you?

LUZ
I wasn't actually afraid of you hurting me.

XENIA
Do you remember the time that you told Mami and I, that you weren't a girl?

LUZ
You mean that I'm a niña.

XENIA
And the way that you correct me every time. You don't think that's brave?

LUZ
It doesn't feel brave. When I told you- it felt like what I had to do. I had to tell my family who I was.

XENIA
How did you know?

LUZ
I felt like... feel like I can't be defined by an a or an o, niña or niño. But I can live beyond them both.

XENIA
When I feel unsure of myself. I think about that moment, how certain you were.

LUZ
You do?

XENIA
You can be very intense when you want to be. I've always admired that.

LUZ
I thought you hated that about me.

XENIA
You're my little sibling. It's my job to give you a hard time.

LUZ
You could give me a break once and a while.

XENIA
Luz, if I'm going to fight the Jaguar, the only way I can do it is with you by my side.

LUZ

As long as you promise me that no matter what happens next, win or die, we'll do it together.

XENIA

Promise.

LUZ

Promise.

(Lights shift)

MARI

Thus the siblings readied themselves for an attack against the gods. But how can you really plan for the moment that determines whether you're a hero or a pawn.

(Lights shift)

XENIA

Ready?

LUZ

As ready as I'll ever be.

XENIA

One.

LUZ

Two.

XENIA

Three.

XENIA

Jaguar god.

LUZ

Jaguar god.

(The Jaguar god appears)

JAGUAR

Well now children, are you ready to give in?

XENIA

No.

JAGUAR

Then why did you call me, if not to give up?

XENIA

(to Luz)

Tell him.

(Luz doesn't respond)

You can do this.

JAGUAR
 Why is it that you never speak to me?
 (Luz doesn't respond.)
 Are you scared?

LUZ
 No.

JAGUAR
 What a curious girl-

LUZ
 Don't call me that.

JAGUAR
 She speaks.

LUZ
 Don't call me she.

JAGUAR
 Then what should I call you?

LUZ
 You act like you know everything but you couldn't even tell that my sister and I were not
 the same person. I-

JAGUAR
 Of course I knew that you were two different children.

LUZ
 You did?

XENIA
 Then why did you let us take the trial together?

JAGUAR
 Because there was never any chance that you'd become gods.

LUZ
 No.

JAGUAR
 You don't believe me?

XENIA
 If we can't pass the trial, then no one can.

JAGUAR
 Why do you think only children are allowed to take it?

XENIA
 A god has to be made from someone pure of heart.

And who told you that? JAGUAR

Our mother. XENIA

Then she lied to you. JAGUAR

She wouldn't. XENIA

It's not likely a lie of her own making. But it's a lie, nonetheless. JAGUAR

Then why? XENIA

The gods decided that any child should be allowed to take the trials so their parents would never revolt against the gods they might become. But only children are allowed to take the trials, because they have no chance at succeeding. JAGUAR

But someone has to beat the trials, eventually- XENIA

I suppose if a creature of exceptional talent appeared, but that certainly wouldn't be a human from the forest region. JAGUAR

What could they have that we don't? XENIA

Our help. JAGUAR

What? LUZ

Don't you get it? These trials are made so that no matter what you do on your own, you won't pass unless we want you to. JAGUAR

That's not fair. XENIA

When you have this much power, you don't have to be fair. JAGUAR

Is that why you killed her? LUZ

I've killed many, you'll have to be more specific. JAGUAR

They mean the Sun. XENIA

You think I killed her? JAGUAR

Didn't you? XENIA

If I had, I wouldn't be wasting my time trying to eat the likes of you. JAGUAR

Then what happened to her? XENIA

Your precious Sun God. The truth is, she didn't care enough to stay. Every night she left you, until finally I suppose she had had enough of you altogether. But I was always here, patiently waiting for each soul to meet me in death. Why did you never give me half of the respect that you gave her? JAGUAR

You never earned our respect. XENIA

I have always admired your spirit child, but this is not a fight you can win. JAGUAR

We'll see about that. XENIA

Throw away the arrowhead that you think is hidden so well in your palm and we'll see who is braver. JAGUAR

I'll throw away my arrowhead the second you throw away your claws and teeth. XENIA

I'm afraid that is impossible little one. JAGUAR

And I would say the same to you. XENIA

You children are clever. JAGUAR

We know. XENIA

But even clever children are no match for the gods. JAGUAR

All we have to do is beat you and take your power- XENIA

JAGUAR

You think it's that easy?

XENIA

There's only one way to find out.

(Xenia rushes at the jaguar god. Luz follows suit
They fight until Xenia has gained the upper hand.)

(Lights shift.)

MARI

And so our heroes beat the god of death. They had proven themselves to be strong, clever, and brave. But they should have known that the gods would have one more trick up their sleeves.

(Luz manages to pull of the Jaguar's facade, revealing a man
in a detention center guard uniform. The world transforms.
We are no longer in the underworld.)

They should have known that even clever children can be fooled.

(The Jaguar guard makes a call on his walkie talkie.)

Once the siblings took the Jaguar's power, the older became the new Moon God and the younger became the Sun.

(The Vulture, now dressed as a guard, enters and surveys
the situation)

One power split between two celestial bodies, and so the siblings were destined to be separated for all time.

(The Vulture guard drags Luz away from the fight, from
Xenia.)

They each brought light to the earth and watched over their people. It was a lonely existence, so the Moon God stole a few moments with the Sun every few years. Not enough time to let their people starve, but just enough time for a loving embrace.

(The Jaguar guard pulls out his baton and begins to
beat Xenia with it. The Vulture puts Luz into solitary
confinement. Lights down on Xenia and the Jaguar.)

MARI (CONT'D)

So you never have to be afraid when the Moon eclipses the Sun and turns day into night. It's the sibling gods keeping their promise to one another.

LUZ

I never liked that ending.

MARI

I know you didn't.

LUZ

Families shouldn't be separated. For any reason.

MARI

In a perfect world, maybe, but this world is far from perfect.

LUZ

You used to tell us that story every night, like you knew what would happen.

No I didn't. MARI

So it's a coincidence? LUZ

I didn't tell you that story. MARI

Of course you did. LUZ

Your mother told you and I'm not her. MARI

You look exactly like her. LUZ

Only because that's how you imagined me. MARI
(a breath)

Besides, this is not exactly the story she told you. You made some changes along the way.

I had to. LUZ

I know you did. MARI

I miss you, so much. LUZ

You can't miss a figment. MARI

Stop saying that. You're my mother and I'm the Sun and Xenia's the Moon and any second she's going to find me and cover me and we'll never be apart again. I don't care if people need my light to live, I need her more. LUZ

How I wish that were possible and true, but you've been living in fantasy long enough. MARI

It's the truest story you will ever hear. You taught me that. LUZ

Fantasy and truth aren't mutually exclusive. MARI

Where's Xenia? LUZ

You already know the answer to that. MARI

LUZ

She told me that no matter what happened, we would be together. She promised me.

MARI

You could have been good little children and played their game, but you dared to challenge the guards.

LUZ

What happens now?

MARI

How should I know?

LUZ

You're telling the story.

MARI

No, you are and I've only ever known as much as you do.

LUZ

That doesn't help me now.

MARI

I tried to help you.

LUZ

You did.

MARI

It's time for you to tell your own story.

LUZ

To who?

MARI

The guards are coming to take you soon.

LUZ

They can't send me back without my sister, to the country that took my mother.

MARI

Then you'll have to speak up for yourself.

LUZ

I've never been very good at talking to strangers. That's why I needed you. Why I needed Xenia.

MARI

None of us can speak for you now.

(The Jaguar guard enters.)

JAGUAR

Time to go.

¿Adónde?
LUZ

(The Jaguar guard hits them)

JAGUAR
Why don't you try that again? In English please.

LUZ
(to Mari)
¿Qué tengo que hacer?

JAGUAR
What's the matter? Not so smart without your sister to translate for you?

MARI
Cuenta tu historia.

LUZ
No sé como hacer eso.

JAGUAR
I don't have time for this today.

MARI
Sé fuerte. Sé inteligente. Sé valiente.

JAGUAR
Let's go.

(The Jaguar guard takes Luz away from Mari and in front of the Vulture dressed as a judge. Luz speaks to the judge, facing the audience.)

LUZ
Usted...

VULTURE
What?

JAGUAR
Don't mind her. She's always been crazy.

LUZ
Not she.

JAGUAR
See?

VULTURE
Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen, I am immigration Judge Sandra Roberts, These are the removal proceedings of in the matter of Luz Gomez. The defendant is present in court, but without a lawyer.
(MORE)

VULTURE (CONT'D)

The government charges that you are a native citizen of Guatemala and that you are present in the United States without legal permission or parole.

(a breath)

Do you have a lawyer?

LUZ

No.

VULTURE

Have you spoken to a lawyer about these proceedings?

LUZ

Nunca.

VULTURE

What was that? Do you need a translator?

LUZ

No.

VULTURE

Is there anything you'd like to say for yourself?

LUZ

A ver...

VULTURE

Speak up. I don't have all day for little girls to find their voices.

(Luz looks around nervously. They pull out the note from Mami and begins to read.)

LUZ

Listen closely because tonight, I'm going to tell you about of the beginning of the world.

VULTURE

How do you know what the beginning of the world was like?

LUZ

You are asking the wrong question.

VULTURE

That's for me to decide.

LUZ

Your question should be, "Why are you telling me the story of our great beginning."

VULTURE

This is your one chance to speak up for yourself, are you sure you would like to waste it on some fairy-tale.

LUZ

This story is true. The truest one you will ever be told.

VULTURE

I'll be the judge of that.

LUZ

Our story begins with two siblings, so like halves of a whole, that many confused them for twins.

(Lights up on Xenia in her own space.)

XENIA

What can't we accomplish if stick together?

LUZ

The children left behind their mother and ran, as fast as they could, they ran.

(Lights up on Mari in her own space.)

MARI

As long as you stay by each other's side, nothing and no one can break you.

LUZ

The gods- the guards thought that the Ice Box would break their spirits, but these children were not so easily beaten

XENIA

I don't think I've ever been so cold in my life.

LUZ

Then the guards spent the better part of a day asking questions. Riddles that they figured no ordinary child could ever know the answer to.

MARI

But fortunately, these were no ordinary children.

LUZ

They were imprisoned with the remnant children who had been unable to beat the trials. Left alone to imagine their worst nightmares coming to greet them.

VULTURE

I think I've heard enough.

LUZ

You must never forget time isn't linear, it is cyclical and what happened in the past, did happen again and is happening again now. But someone could do something. You could do something if you really wanted to.

VULTURE

It is the court's opinion that Ms. Gomez be removed from this country immediately.

LUZ

Or you could let it happen again.

VULTURE

Please take Ms. Gomez from the courtroom.

(The Jaguar tries to remove Luz, but they stand firm.)

LUZ

Are you going to let it happen again? And again. And again.

(End of play)