

READY OR NOT

by Greg Vovos
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TO PRODUCE THIS PLAY
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CHARACTERS

LUCIA: Mexican girl. Bright, attractive, vibrant.

JAMES: Black boy. Athletic, charming, drug dealer, smart, poetic.

DEREK: Black boy. Derek's friend. Sensitive, hard worker, challenged student.

FEMI: Black girl. Lucia's friend. Very personable. Looking for love.

ALONSO: Mexican boy. Lucia's older brother. Rigid. Strict. The best athlete in the school. Tough and assured.

SHANNON: White girl, a cutter. Very smart but lost. Comes from a bad family situation.

LEON: One of James's friends. Reckless, funny, looking for a good time, always.

CW: Leon's sidekick. A tough guy.

SERENA: A mother focused on her baby and her education.

SETTING

A high school in northeast Ohio, and other surrounding areas, including a hospital.

This play was commissioned by Willoughby Fine Arts for Harvey High School in Painesville, Ohio.

SYNOPSIS

Students face many challenges, but life for James and Lucia just got harder when she learns she's pregnant.

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READY OR NOT

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Lights up as DEREK, a black boy, FEMI, a black girl, and SHANNON, a white girl, sit in a study hall. SHANNON, chewing gum, sits at a desk away from them. Steadily, slowly, and with precision she is cutting into her arm with a blade. She watches the blood with the interest of a scientist. She exhibits very little pain. She has done this before. FEMI is checking out DEREK. DEREK is reading, but looks very frustrated.

FEMI

Your face is weird. Are you in pain?

DEREK

I'm trying to read this stuff. This Shakespeare.

FEMI

You're Derek, right? I'm Femi. "Femi" means "love me."

DEREK

Okay.

He goes back to reading.

FEMI

Hey, check out that girl. She's so weird.

DEREK acts as if he can't hear her.

That's Shannon. She's the cutter.

Did you hear me, Derek?

DEREK

Yeah, and I'm sure she did, too.

SHANNON

Every word.

DEREK

Sorry.

DEREK

Are you okay?

SHANNON

Yep.

FEMI

Then why you cutting yourself?

SHANNON

Same reason you feel the need to tell everyone your name means love me.

FEMI

Whatever.

DEREK

You're in my English class, right?

She puts her hand over the cut and closes her eyes.

SHANNON

Yep.

DEREK

Did you read this *Romeo and Juliet*?

SHANNON

Yep.

DEREK

Did you understand it?

FEMI

It's about love, Derek. Here let me help you.

FEMI looks at the book. Can't make much sense of it.

We can rent the movie if you want to come over tonight.

SHANNON

It's about light. The light of being, the light of love. The light that ultimately must be extinguished because man is ignorant.

DEREK

Really?

SHANNON nods her head. Lights fade. End of scene.

SCENE: LUCIA and JAMES in the hall.

LUCIA, an attractive, smart, Mexican girl comes up behind JAMES, an athletic, charming good-looking Black kid. He's stylish, confident, sure of himself. LUCIA covers his eyes with her hands.

LUCIA
Guess who!

JAMES
Lucia.

LUCIA
How'd you know?

JAMES
Because what my eyes can't see, my heart can.

LUCIA kisses him.

ALONSO walks by. He's very athletic, smart, extremely confident. He and JAMES eye each other cautiously.

JAMES
Whassup, Alonso?

LUCIA
Hey, Alonso.

ALONSO just shakes his head and keeps walking. JAMES stares at him.

JAMES
Who your brother think he is nodding his head like that at me?

LUCIA
Forget him. Think about me.

She kisses him.

JAMES

You want to get out of here? It's our one-month anniversary. We should celebrate.

LUCIA

I got class.

JAMES

Why you care about school so much?

LUCIA

Have to take care of my mind, James. It's one of the things you love most about me.

JAMES

Maybe.

LUCIA

See you later?

JAMES

You know it.

HE exits. She blows him a kiss. ALONSO re-enters.

ALONSO

Stay away from him.

LUCIA

You're not my father.

ALONSO

Just do what I say, 'Cia.

ALONSO exits.

SCENE: JAMES catches up to Derek in the hall.

JAMES

Feel like burning one?

DEREK

Man, why you gotta do me like that? You know I got to study.

JAMES

Why do you worry so much about these tests, Derek?

DEREK

I have to pass my classes to graduate. If I don't graduate then what?

JAMES

You think some piece of paper's going to save you? The only thing that can save you, Derek, is Derek. Look at me. Do I look worried about any test?

DEREK

That's because you're just naturally smart. You never have to worry.

JAMES

No, it's because I got what I need in my pocket: a thick roll. And I got my Gs. And I take care of them. Right?

DEREK

Don't you ever think about—

JAMES

What?

Bell rings.

DEREK

I have to get to class.

SCENE: LUCIA and JAMES, a month later.

JAMES

(Reciting) Before Lucia

there was no love.

She was my gift

sent from above.

When storms were raging

she came to me,

her lovely heart

set my soul free.

Happy 2 Months Anniversary, Lucia.

LUCIA

You're such a good poet. I love that about you.

JAMES

Yeah, you know.

LUCIA

Have you thought about going to college?

JAMES

Why would I do a fool thing like that?

LUCIA

For your future?

JAMES

I have my future under control.

LUCIA

If you say so.

JAMES

What's with the baditude, Little Mama?

LUCIA

I don't know — I just think —. You're smart, you know? You could do more.

JAMES

More than what?

LUCIA

Than what you're doing now.

JAMES

What's this all about, Lucia?

LUCIA

I would just think that if I had a mind like yours and the freedom to do anything I wanted with my future that I wouldn't throw that opportunity away. And even if I didn't go to college, I'd at least try to make a difference with the people who are close to me. Like my family.

JAMES

Huh?

LUCIA
I'm pregnant.

JAMES
What?

LUCIA
Yeah.

JAMES
Oh.

LUCIA
Yeah. Oh.

JAMES
Well. What are you...? I mean, are you...?

LUCIA
Yes, I'm keeping it. It's my baby.

JAMES
Yeah, of course.

LUCIA
Well, what do you think?

JAMES
I gotta go. I'll holla at ya.

SCENE: LUCIA and FEMI

FEMI
Oh my God, Congratulations, Girl. That is great news.

LUCIA
You think so?

FEMI
Yes! I am so happy for you. Aren't you happy?

LUCIA
I guess.

FEMI
You guess? This is like a dream come true. Oh, I wish it was me. I want a beautiful baby girl. Someone I could just love and love and she'd love me right back. Girl, I don't mind telling you I'm a little jealous right now.

LUCIA
Yeah, but what about my future? How will I go to school and —

FEMI
That's what you have your mama for. What she say when you told her?

LUCIA
I didn't tell her yet.

FEMI
You mean, you told me before you told your mom? You do love me, don't you, Lucia?

LUCIA
Well, yeah, Femi. As a friend.

FEMI
Don't you worry about a thing. I'll help you every step of the way. What James say when you told him?

LUCIA
He said he'd holla at me.

FEMI
Mm mm mm. That ain't right. But that's a boy for you.

LUCIA
I gotta go.

LUCIA exits.

SCENE: Hallway, Shannon and Derek.

SHANNON

How'd you do?

DEREK
I failed.

SHANNON
Let me see.

She looks at the test.

You really didn't understand that play, did you?

DEREK
No.

SHANNON
At least she's going to give you a chance to make it up.

DEREK
Big deal. I won't understand it then either.

SHANNON
Don't say that.

DEREK
I see you have some new cuts.

SHANNON
(*Ignoring his comment.*) I can help you understand this stuff.

FEMI approaches.

DEREK
Really?

SHANNON
Yeah.

FEMI
Really what?

SHANNON
See you later.

Shannon exits.

FEMI

Are you like dating her?

DEREK

No.

FEMI

You know she's crazy, right? Her name means "crazy."

DEREK

No it ain't.

FEMI

You better not get her pregnant.

DEREK

I think your name means crazy, Femi.

Derek exits.

FEMI

(Calling after him) It means "love me."

SCENE: ALONSO and LUCIA

ALONSO

Papa's going to take you out of school, Lucia.

LUCIA

Maybe he won't.

ALONSO

How could you do this to your future? What are you going to do?

LUCIA

I'm keeping the baby.

ALONSO

I wouldn't be too sure about that. If Papa finds out you did it with a black boy...well, I just wouldn't be too sure about that.

LUCIA

You're not going to tell him, are you?

ALONSO

I told you to stay away from that punk.

LUCIA

Don't call him that.

ALONSO

I don't know who he thinks he is getting my sister pregnant, but that bitch is gonna pay.

LUCIA

Alonso, don't you dare do anything—

ALONSO exits.

'Lonso! Wait!

DEREK walks by. He's heard the entire conversation.

DEREK

Hey, Lucia.

LUCIA

Hi, Derek.

She exits, opposite the way he is going.

SCENE: JAMES AND LUCIA

LUCIA

I was starting to worry about you.

JAMES

What you mean, Girl?

LUCIA

I thought you left me.

JAMES

You think I'd abandon you? I love you, Lucia. And you're carrying my baby. I just had to straighten some things out, set up some situations. I got us a house.

LUCIA

A house?

JAMES

Yeah, and I want us to stay together until —

LUCIA

James, I don't know how you got us a house or whatever. I mean, I appreciate it, but we can't move into a house together. How would we live?

JAMES

You let me worry about that. I'm going to be a man to you and our baby.

LUCIA

But what about money?

JAMES

I got it all under control.

LUCIA

I don't want to live off drug money.

JAMES

You calling me a drug dealer?

LUCIA

Look...I just...I don't want our baby brought up in that kind of an environment.

JAMES

You don't think I can be a father.

LUCIA

It's not that. I just think we should go to our parents for help.

JAMES

I don't go to my parents for anything.

LUCIA

Then we'll go to my parents.

JAMES

You know if we go to your parents that they'll try to break us up.

LUCIA

I don't know that for sure.

JAMES

I can take care of it, Lucia.

LUCIA

James, I love you. And I see so much in you. But if we run away now to wherever this house is, and you deal more drugs to support us, then you'll never be anything close to what you're capable of. You have it in you to do amazing things.

JAMES

You think so?

LUCIA

Yes. This doesn't have to be the end of anything.

JAMES

Look, Lucia, your family is never going to accept me.

LUCIA

That's not true.

JAMES

Then why's your brother on my back?

LUCIA

He's not. He's just talking.

JAMES

Sure about that?

Pause.

LUCIA

No.

JAMES

And you weren't even going to tell me. I had to find out from Derek.

LUCIA

You haven't exactly been around since I told you I'm pregnant. I mean, this is the first time I've even seen you. So I'm sorry if I'm so wrapped up in the fact that I have a baby growing inside of me that I neglected to tell you that my brother wants to kill you. (*Suddenly worried.*) Oh God, James, my brother wants to kill you.

JAMES

Don't worry about him. I can take care of myself.

LUCIA

I don't want anything happening to anybody. I'll talk to him.

JAMES

Do what you gotta do. And I'll do what I gotta do.

LUCIA

But James, I'm serious when I tell you I want you to quit dealing. If you don't, I'm not going to let you see our baby. So if you want to be a part of the baby's life, you'll stop.

JAMES

Babe, it's not that easy. People count on me —

LUCIA

That's priceless. I gotta go stop my brother from killing you now. So in the meantime, try not to kill yourself with your "business," okay?

She exits.

JAMES

Lucia! Come back.

SCENE: JAMES, LEON, and DEREK

LEON

This some good smoke, James. Real good.

JAMES

Yeah.

LEON

Hey, can you score me anymore of that X?

JAMES
I don't know.

LEON
What do you mean, you don't know? I need some X.

JAMES
Well, I might not be able to get it.

LEON
You holding out on me?

JAMES
No. I just don't know.

LEON
I need some X for the Sex.

JAMES
I'll see what I can do.

DEREK
Lucia don't want him dealing no more.

JAMES
Close your mouth, Derek, before you choke on my fist.

LEON
I think that Lucia got you whipped pretty good.

JAMES
This got nothing to do with her. I told you I'll see what I can do. 5-0's been snooping around. And X attracts attention. So just cool off. And don't say anymore about Lucia. You got that?

LEON
Yeah, sure, I got it. We cool.

SCENE: FEMI and JAMES in school.

FEMI
Hey, Daddy.

JAMES
Don't call me that.

FEMI
Whatever you say, Dad.

JAMES
Where's Lucia? I ain't seen her in two weeks. She ain't returned any of my texts.

FEMI
She's in lockdown. Her daddy is not a happy pappy.

JAMES
How do you know?

FEMI
Uh, she's my friend. I care about her. I check in on her. Which is more than I can say for you.

JAMES
Yeah, well. It's a little easier for you.

FEMI
Whassa matter, scared her brother's going to beat you up? Later, masturbator.

JAMES,
Femi, wait!

SCENE: JAMES and LUCIA. Her house. She's up at her window. He's down below.

JAMES
(Reciting) Ah sweet girl
who makes jealous the moon
with her eyes of spring
and the promise of June,
come down to me
and reveal your beauty
and lend me a piece
of that fine, fine booty.

LUCIA
Excuse me?

JAMES
I'm just playing with you. Come on down.

LUCIA
Can't.

JAMES
When you coming back to school?

LUCIA
I don't know. My dad's really pissed.

JAMES
Because of me?

LUCIA
If he sees you here, he'll shoot you.

JAMES
Lucia, I can't live like this. I miss you.

LUCIA
Oh yeah, what do you miss?

JAMES
(*reciting*) I miss your skin, your laugh, your lips
the rhythmic sway of your sweet hips.

LUCIA
Do you miss anything that's not my body?

JAMES
You know I do. But I can't help that I'm blinded by your beauty.

LUCIA
No, I suppose you can't. (*She laughs.*)

JAMES
Don't you miss me?

LUCIA
Of course, I do.

JAMES
Can't you sneak out or something?

LUCIA
Have you thought about what I asked you?

JAMES
Yep. And I haven't dealt since.

LUCIA
Okay, I'll come on down.

Alonso appears out of the blue right next to JAMES.

ALONSO
If you know what's good for you, you'll turn around, leave, and never come back.

JAMES
I'm the baby's father, Alonso. Ain't nothing going to change that.

ALONSO
You ain't nothing to that baby but a boy who blew his load too fast.

JAMES takes a swing at ALONSO. ALONSO easily avoids it and pins JAMES to the ground. LUCIA arrives.

LUCIA
Don't you hurt him, Alonso.

ALONSO
You know as well as I do that you don't want anything to do with that baby. The best thing you can do for my sister and for yourself is to go away and stay away. Don't fuck things up for Lucia any more than you already have.

ALONSO gets off him. Helps JAMES up. JAMES just looks at him.

Say goodbye, Lucia.

LUCIA

I'll talk to you later, James.

JAMES blows her a kiss and exits.

SCENE: SHANNON AND DEREK

DEREK

So you're saying that when Romeo sees Juliet, he thinks she's dead, but really she's just playing so she can fool everyone else; so he drinks the poison to get rid of his heartbreak, she wakes up, sees he's really dead, tries to suck the poison off his lips, but that don't work so girlfriend stabs herself so she can meet him on the other side?

SHANNON

Yep.

DEREK

Damn.

SHANNON

Yep.

DEREK

I had no idea that's what happened. That's rough shit.

SHANNON

Life's rough shit.

DEREK

You know what's weird, Shannon?

SHANNON

What?

DEREK

Anytime I hang out with you, you kind of make me feel sad about the world.

SHANNON

The world is sad.

DEREK

But you also make me feel happy at the same time.

SHANNON

Sorry. I'm not trying to.

DEREK

It's okay, I like it.

DEREK kisses her.

SHANNON

What the hell is that?

DEREK

I was just kissing you.

SHANNON

Well, don't.

DEREK

Why not?

SHANNON

Cause I don't want that.

DEREK

Sorry.

SHANNON

I gotta go, Derek.

SHANNON starts to exit.

DEREK

Would you try not to cut yourself today?

SCENE: JAMES, DEREK, LEON, CW

They're laughing. Having a good ol' time.

JAMES

Aww, man. I needed this. You guys are my boys.

LEON

Course we are.

JAMES

I feel like I was losing myself or something.

LEON

G, you just gots to remember who you are. You don't need some girl or her a-hole brother telling you whassup. Ball's in her court now. You try to reach her, didn't you?

JAMES

Yeah.

LEON

And what she say?

JAMES

She want me to quit dealing.

LEON

Must be nice to have a mommy and daddy take care of everything for you. But she don't know what it's like for us. Look at you, James. You doing just fine. You going to let her tell you how to handle your money?

JAMES

She just thinks I can be something else.

LEON

She don't like you the way you are? See, that's how those womens do it. They talk you all up with their fancy ideas, waving their painted fingernails in your face to the point you don't know which way is up, and before you know it, they's pregnant and you're thinking you have to change everything about yo'self, when in fact there ain't a damn thing wrong with the way you is. Am I right?

CW

You's right.

DEREK

I don't know.

LEON

Shut up, Derek. Since when do you know a damn thing?

DEREK

Well, I been reading *Romeo and Juliet*, and I'm thinking maybe her family really is —

LEON

Hear that? Derek's reading. Big man's going read a book and change the world.

DEREK

I'm going to pass that graduation test.

LEON

You ain't going to pass shit 'cept yo stinky gas.

CW

We should get that Alonso.

JAMES

I don't want you guys doing nothing. You got it?

CW

Sure.

JAMES

I'm serious, CW. I know you.

CW

Man, you got me all wrong. You don't want me to start anything, I won't. It's cool.

JAMES

I'm out of here. You can pay me for that X later, Leon.

LEON

Thanks for hooking me up. And Daphne thanks you, too.

CW

I just don't like seeing a brother made the fool, James. Especially a brother like you.

JAMES

I'm not made the fool.

CW

If you say so.

SCENE: Shannon pounds on Derek's front door. It's raining. He answers.

DEREK

Shannon? What's wrong?

SHANNON

Can I stay here tonight?

DEREK

Of course. Are you okay?

SHANNON

My family's fucked.

DEREK

I know.

SHANNON

How do you know?

DEREK

All us kids, all our families are messed. James's daddy don't even let him sleep at home.

SHANNON

Yeah, well, my daddy's not going to be happy when he don't find me lying in my bed.

Pause.

DEREK

Oh.

SHANNON

You know, Ms. Clark thinks I'm a good writer. She says she could help me get a scholarship. And that by this time next year, I could be a whole new person.

DEREK

Are you going to try for it?

SHANNON

Hell, Derek, this time next year, I'll be lucky to be alive.

DEREK

You'll be just fine, Shannon. I promise.

DEREK holds her, hugs her. She kisses him. Lights fade.

SCENE: ALONSO, CW, and LEON

CW
Hey, Alonso.

ALONSO wants to get past.

LEON
Hold it, Ese. We just want to congratulate you.

ALONSO
For what?

LEON
We hear your family's expanding.

ALONSO pushes past, but CW tackles him. But, again, ALONSO gets control, until LEON puts a knife to him.

LEON
We don't want you messing with James anymore.

ALONSO
Hey, I'm just —

LEON
Shut it. And get off my boy.

He does.

Now you listen —

JAMES runs on.

JAMES
Let him go.

LEON
James, we're just —

JAMES
Back off him.

LEON
This prick's turning you into a little girl, James. You want us to let him go? Okay.
Then punch him. Be a man, punch him, and we'll let him go.

JAMES hesitates and then he punches Alonso in the face.

Good. Now cut him. Here.

*JAMES takes the knife from LEON. He looks at ALONSO. CW holds ALONSO.
JAMES walks closer. Then he punches CW.*

LEON
Wooo, dog.

JAMES
I told you not to do anything.

ALONSO breaks free. Watches. JAMES holds CW back.

CW
You just made a big mistake, James.

JAMES
Hell, I did. If anyone's making me look like a little girl, it's you idiots. I don't need
anyone fighting my battles. And if you got a problem with that then tell me now.

LEON
He's right, CW. You deserved that.

CW
What are you--

LEON
Come on. Let's go smoke one. James?

JAMES
Go 'head without me.

CW and LEON exit.

I'm sorry about that, Alonso.

ALONSO

Are those cops?

OFFSTAGE COP VOICE

James Poole? Put your hands behind your head and drop to the ground.

James freezes. Lights fade.

SCENE: Three months later. JAMES sees LUCIA walking down the hall towards him. LUCIA is much more pregnant.

LUCIA

When did you get out?

JAMES

Just this weekend. It's so good to see you.

LUCIA

You, too.

JAMES

I'm glad you're back in school.

LUCIA

That's the one good thing about you going to prison, right?

JAMES

You're so big.

LUCIA

What did you just say?

JAMES

No, I just mean, you know, you're so pregnant.

LUCIA

Again, wrong answer.

JAMES
Sorry.

LUCIA
My brother appreciates you sticking up for him. That was really cool.

JAMES
Ain't no thing.

LUCIA
I thought you were going to quit dealing, James.

JAMES
Lucia, I needed money. I'm trying to set aside money for the baby. And for –

LUCIA
It'll never end, will it?

JAMES
But I'm done with that now. I learned a lot about myself when I was in there. And you were right. I can be something. There's this school down south I want to go to. Maybe if I get out of this town I can become the person I want to be.

LUCIA
Down south? What about the baby?

JAMES
Or maybe not south. Just out of this town. I don't know. We'll figure it out, right?

LUCIA
The baby's due in three weeks, James.

JAMES
Three weeks?

LUCIA
Yeah.

JAMES
Damn.

LUCIA
Yeah. Damn. I gotta go pee. This baby's treating my bladder like a trampoline.

She exits.

SCENE: Lights up as SERENA sits, studying. LUCIA approaches her, cautiously. Not sure what to say. LUCIA studies SERENA intently. Finally, SERENA gives in.

SERENA
All right, what do you want to know?

LUCIA
Does it hurt?

SERENA
Uh, yeah. A lot. Get the epidural. Don't even think twice about it.

LUCIA
What's it like?

SERENA
What's what like?

LUCIA
The whole thing. Being a mom, going to school.

SERENA
You'll see.

LUCIA
Yeah, I guess so.

SERENA
All I can tell you is this will be the hardest thing you will ever do in your life. Nothing will ever, and I mean ever, compare to it. You're going to need all the help you can get.

LUCIA
Oh.

SERENA
And get every bit of sleep you can between now and then, because you'll need it. In fact, instead of sitting here talking to me right now, you should be sleeping.

LUCIA

It can't be that bad.

SERENA

It's worse. I can't even describe the screaming. You'll just have to experience that on your own. And when the baby makes you so angry you feel capable of murder – and that moment will come – just walk out of the room before you do something stupid.

LUCIA

Isn't there anything good?

SERENA

If you hate sleep, and can handle a baby hanging onto you every second of every day, and you don't care about living a life of your own, then you're in for a big treat.

LUCIA

Oh. *(Pause.)* Well, at least you still got school, right?

SERENA

I love school. And I used to hate it. But now...it's a beautiful place. Thank God for my mom, that's all I can say. Your mom will help you, right?

LUCIA

She's threatened not to if James is involved but she'll help.

SERENA

That's good. You don't want to end up like Violet. That girl was smart, too.

LUCIA

Yeah, what happened to her?

SERENA

Exactly.

LUCIA

Well, either way, I got James. He promised to help me.

SERENA

I'm sure he did.

LUCIA

He means it.

SERENA

Of course he does.

LUCIA

Why do you have to be so negative?

SERENA

Listen to me, Lucia. He might have all the best intentions in the world, but he won't be there for you or your baby.

LUCIA

You don't know him.

SERENA

But you don't need him. Because even though it's so incredibly hard, in so many ways, it's the best thing. When I hold my girl and she laughs and smiles, I feel like I'm looking into an angel's eyes. I mean, a real angel. It's like when she's sleeping, she's not really sleeping, she's talking to God. And she's making sure He cares about me.

LUCIA

That's amazing.

SERENA

And then she poops. And it's really messy. And really smelly. And the only one who's going to be there to change the diaper is Y-O-U.

LUCIA

I see.

SERENA

I gotta finish my homework. Good luck, Lucia.

Lights fade. End of scene.

SCENE: JAMES, DEREK, LEON, and CW are sitting around. DEREK's reading. The other three are passing a blunt.

LEON

Pass that to the big daddy.

CW passes it to James. He takes a hit.

LEON

Here you go, James. Me and CW got you this present.

LEON gives him the present; JAMES hands him the blunt.

JAMES
What is it?

LEON
Open it.

JAMES opens it. It's a diaper with poop in it. James flings it.

JAMES
What the – there's shit in here.

LEON and CW are laughing.

LEON
Yeah, that's what diapers is for.

JAMES
What the hell is wrong with you fools?

LEON
You better get used to it, 'cause you're going to be up to your balls in it.

JAMES
Whatever.

LEON
Think about what you're doing, James. If you get out now, it'll be easy. Don't waste your time. Or the girl's neither. It's not your fault she got pregnant.

DEREK
Well, actually –

CW
Shut up, bookworm.

LEON
That girl knew what she was doing. She was setting you up. They's all do that around here. Don't get no love from mommy and daddy so they trap some sucker like you.

JAMES

I don't think that's what Lucia's doing.

LEON

That's exactly what it is. Walk away now, and you'll be doing her a favor.

JAMES

How do you figure?

LEON

'Cause what they don't count on is how much they love those little turd machines. The first time they hold them screaming little monsters they's hearts turn to mush and they can't think of anything but that baby. She won't care about you anymore anyways so there's no point to you hanging around and getting in the way.

JAMES

That's not true with Lucia.

LEON

This baby love is more than any man can handle. You're no match for it. And besides, if it's a boy, he just going to want to kill you when he gets older.

JAMES

You crazy.

LEON

Hell I am. That's nature. The boy wants to replace the father. It's instinct. Ask Einsteiner. He tell you.

DEREK

Well, I don't know about all that, but Oedipus did kill his father so...

LEON

See? They teach you that stuff in school. And if he don't kill you, then being a teenage daddy will.

JAMES checks his cell phone.

JAMES

Lucia's going into labor.

LEON

Woo, looks like you better get going, Daddy.

JAMES

Damn, this is like real.

CW

Reality bites, Dude. Take a toke. You'll need it.

DEREK

James, you gotta go.

JAMES

Relax. One hit won't hurt anything.

JAMES hits it. Hits it again. And again.

LEON

That's a boy.

He hits again. Closes his eyes. DEREK leaves.

SCENE: ALONSO and LUCIA in the hospital room.

LUCIA

Thanks for standing up for James like that.

ALONSO

He just better show. I don't want Papa thinking I can't judge people.

LUCIA

He'll be here. He cares about--*(In pain.)* Oh my God.

ALONSO

Are you all right?

LUCIA

Yeah, but I think you better get Mama. Oh God. Nurse. Nurse. Call a nurse. Oh God.

ALONSO

Will you be okay if I leave?

LUCIA

Yeah, just get someone. Quick. Hurry!

ALONSO
I'll be right back.

LUCIA
Hurry!!

She's in great pain. End of scene.

SCENE: *Three days have passed.*

LUCIA sits in her hospital bed. She looks really uncomfortable. JAMES enters.

JAMES
Lucia? Lucia?

No response.

Are you okay?

Lucia?

I'm really sorry. I know you must hate me. But— Are you okay?

I understand if you don't want to talk to me.

Long silence.

LUCIA
You said you loved me. You said you wanted to be part of our baby's life. You said a lot of things. But they were all lies.

JAMES
I'm sorry.

LUCIA
Just go. If my parents — or especially my brother — sees you here, he'll kill you. I'm serious.

JAMES
Look it wasn't easy to come back here. I didn't have to come back.

LUCIA laughs at him.

LUCIA

Three days, James. I texted you three days ago. And you just now show up? And you want to tell me it wasn't easy to come back here? How could you do this to me?

JAMES

I'm sorry.

LUCIA

Means nothing.

JAMES

I'm not moving down south. Like I told you.

LUCIA

Oh, thank God. I can't tell you how worried I was about that.

JAMES

Look, Lucia, I'm trying to get my life in order. But it's not easy. You want me to be a father, but I'm not ready. I couldn't be one, even if I wanted to.

LUCIA

Even if you wanted to?

JAMES

You know what I mean.

LUCIA

Yeah, you mean exactly what you said. That's why you haven't even asked one question about the baby. Like what sex is it? Is it okay? Is it even alive?

LUCIA starts to cry.

JAMES

Lucia, is the baby — Is the baby...alive?

LUCIA

What do you care?

JAMES

I do care.

LUCIA

Enough to raise it? Enough to be with me? Enough to sign this paternity affidavit so we have in writing that you are in fact the father?

She hands him the paperwork. He looks at it.

JAMES

Gabriella? That's a beautiful name. A girl. Wow. Where is she?

LUCIA

She's with the nurses. You want to sign it?

JAMES

I don't know if I'm ready for this, Lucia.

LUCIA

I do. Give it back.

JAMES

No, I'm not saying that. It's just —

LUCIA

You're not ready. And I don't want you to. I want you to go away. Go make a man out of yourself. My baby deserves a man. And if you can't be one then just go and don't come back. Because guess what, James, I don't have the same luxury as you. I can't say I'm not ready. Because ready or not, I've got a baby. And she's beautiful. And I love her. And you can just leave now.

Long pause. He hands her the paperwork back, unsigned.

JAMES

A piece of paper don't mean nothing. I'm going to be part of its life. You'll see.

LUCIA

Not it. She. The baby's a she. She is not a thing.

JAMES

I know that.

LUCIA

Bye, James.

JAMES

I mean it, Lucia. I'm going to help out. Somehow. Money, something.

LUCIA
Yeah.

JAMES
I will.

LUCIA
Just go, James.

He starts to leave. He goes to the door and turns.

JAMES
This isn't the last you'll see of me. You'll see.

He exits. She cries. Lights fade.

SCENE: LUCIA's house. LUCIA and FEMI walk out LUCIA's front door.

FEMI
I didn't think she was going to stop crying. I knew babies cried but I didn't —

LUCIA
(*Sharply*) Yeah, well, they do. A lot. (*Pause.*) Sorry. It's — I haven't slept much. And...I just hope she takes a long nap for once.

Uncomfortable pause. Femi tries to break it:

FEMI
Hey, did you see Derek graduated? Mr. Important's going to Ohio State. I was so disappointed. I really thought him and I could date this year if he failed. I blame that cutter girl for helping him.

LUCIA
She's not a cutter anymore, Femi. And she's really smart. Give her some credit.

FEMI
I guess. I still think I would have been better for him. But I'm over it.

Pause.

Well, I guess I better go.

LUCIA

Don't want to be late for the first day of school.

FEMI doesn't leave yet.

FEMI

Are you okay, Lucia?

Pause.

LUCIA

I was just so scared, you know? At first they acted like it was no big deal. But then they just kept monitoring and monitoring, running all kinds of tests, hooking her up to all these machines. It was awful. Six weeks, Femi. And practically every minute of it, I thought she was going to die. I was so scared.

FEMI

It's okay. She's okay now.

LUCIA

It's not okay. I have no idea what I'm doing. Sometimes I think she would've been better off if she didn't make it out of the hospital.

FEMI

You don't really believe that, do you?

LUCIA

No. I just...It's just scary. And I feel so alone. I look at you and I'm just so pissed, like I wish I could go to school. Why can't I go to school?

FEMI

You will. You said you'll go to night school, right?

LUCIA

We'll see. Maybe I can next year when the baby's bigger. I don't know. But reality is I'll probably have to get a night job cleaning offices.

FEMI

You'll figure it out.

LUCIA

Yeah, that's what they all say.

FEMI

Lucia, she's beautiful.

LUCIA

Look, I better get going. I need to wash some clothes while she's napping.

FEMI

Sure.

The baby is heard making noises from inside.

LUCIA

Oh my God, why are you waking up, Child? I gotta go, Femi. Thanks for coming by.

LUCIA goes in quickly. FEMI stands a moment, looks at LUCIA'S front door. The baby can be heard crying louder now. We hear LUCIA comforting the baby.

(From inside) It's okay, Honey. Mommy's here.

FEMI walks off as lights fade to black.

END OF PLAY