“If Tyranny is Law, Revolution is Order”: An Exploration of Puerto Rican Justice

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“If Tyranny is Law, Revolution is Order”
an exploration of Puerto Rican justice
Ana Reyes-Rosado

English Major
Race & Ethnicity Concentration
Theater Major
May 1, 2020
Con Gratitud

I truly could not have completed any of the following pages without the support I received from countless individuals.

From the bottom of my heart I’d like to thank my readers, Hubert Cook and Kenneth Prestininz for your support and encouragement in the early stages of the proposal process and initial research and playwriting brainstorms. Ken, thank you for your additional feedback on numerous script drafts.

Oscar López Rivera, meeting you, hearing you speak, and witnessing the sheer excellence and beauty of the paintings put on display at the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture was inspiring in a way I was not expecting when I walked into the museum that evening in 2017. I was moved to tears particularly by your work of Isabel Rosado. If we’re being honest, that’s really where this all started.

José E. López, our conversation over the summer of 2019 drastically changed the course of this project in a way that needed to happen. Thank you for your wisdom, your words, and the books you recommended. You helped shape all of this.

To the incredible people I had the absolute pleasure of working with at UrbanTheater Company. It was genuinely the greatest internship I ever participated in. Ivan Vega and Tony Bruno, you provided me with connections and resources I could have never imagined. Miranda Gonzales, your own play based on real events served as an incredible example of how to begin approaching my own. The three of you cemented why I want to pursue this line of work in this city and specifically in this community.

To my Posse mentor, Midge Thomas, I’ve still got that lavender hacky sack you gave me to help my anxiety after Hurricane Maria, and it has been my stress ball
throughout this process. Thank you for being one of the greatest pillars of support I could ever ask for.

Friends, you know who you are, thank you for putting up with me and all of my ramblings about this project, sticking with me through the mental breakdowns, the weekly FaceTime calls to keep me on track when Miss Rona derailed every plan, and offering your support even when I was being a brat.

Andre, you believed in me and my words when I didn’t, and somehow believed the two of us could produce something astonishing. I’m truly sorry it didn’t happen in April. You’ve been saying it will soon when this all blows over, and I finally believe it too.

Alison, where do I even begin? Thank you for always advocating for me, for always knowing what to say, and for always making yourself available for whatever I needed throughout this process. I know it’s been long and my procrastination didn’t help, but you stood by me. Thank you for every weekly meeting even when some turned into a “You really need to get it together and do this” conversation or a *Gilmore Girls* watch party. I am truly sorry that our physical time together at Conn got cut short, but I am so grateful that I got the absolute privilege of working with you. Thank you for being my advisor and my professor. But above all, thank you for being my friend.

Mom, when quitting felt like the only thing left to do, you wouldn’t let me, and even though that annoyed me in the moment, I am so grateful you didn’t. Thank you for hearing me, for listening, for helping me talk through my ideas, and for offering your advice. Thank you for making sure I always knew where I came from, and making sure I never forgot it. When this all blows over, we’re going to the island, okay? It’s been too long. We’re going to experience that homecoming together.

Mamabuela y Papabuelo, ustedes son los que sembraron las semillas de pasión por educación y el amor por mi isla en mi corazón. Tu me inspiras todos los días. Gracias, gracias, gracias, siempre.
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Timeline

1493 — Christopher Columbus’ second voyage lands him to an island, which he names “rich port” (Puerto Rico).

1812 — Spain’s Cádiz Constitution is applied to the island.

1814 — The Cádiz Constitution is repealed.

1820 — The Cádiz Constitution is restored.

1823 — The Cádiz Constitution is abolished.

1824 — A Spanish governor is put into power, giving Spain absolute control over Puerto Rican government.

1868 — Revolts are held, demanding independence from Spain in Lares. They are violent and semi-successful. Independence is declared, and support from slaves is given.

1869 — A liberal constitution grants Spanish citizenship.

1897 — The Carta Autonómica de Puerto Rico  

2 is introduced and establishes Puerto Rican legislation.

1898 — March — Elections for said legislation are set to be put into place in May. These elections will establish a free republic.

April 25th — The Spanish-American war begins.

May 12th — This war reaches Puerto Rico, and United States makes several press and religious statements about keeping

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1 The information compiled in this section was gathered from nearly all of the sources listed in the bibliography (see page 171).

2 Translates to the Autonomous Charter of Puerto Rico.
1898 — May 12th — “Porto Rico.” All of this creates the basis for the “Big Stick” policy in the Caribbean.

July 25th — “The day of infamy” marks the anniversary of the US invasion of Guánica.

July 29th — The first public statement of the US plans for Puerto Rico are made.

1922 — Sept. 17th — The Puerto Rico Nationalist Party is founded.

1930 — Pedro Albizu Campos is elected president of the Nationalist Party.

1937 — March 21st — The Ponce Massacre occurs.

Isabel Rosado Morales joins the Nationalist Party.

1948 — Law #53, or Ley de La Mordaza, is put into effect, outlawing the Puerto Rican flag, national anthem, to speak or write of independence, or to hold any assembly in favor of independence.

1951 — January — Isabel is arrested for the first time for a violation of Law #53.

1952 — April — Isabel is released from prison.

July 25th — Declaration of US Commonwealth is made, establishing Puerto Rico as a territory of the United States. This day is also declared a holiday, “Constitution Day.”

1954 — March 6th — Isabel, Doris Torresola, Carmen Maria Pérez, José Rivera, Sotomayor, and Albizu are involved in a police shootout at Albizu’s apartment. They are all arrested. Isabel is charged with attempted murder, a violation of Law #53.

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3 This refers to President Theodore Roosevelt’s “Big Stick” assertive approach to Latin America and the Caribbean in 1904. Essentially, it came down to an understanding that America should “speak softly and carry a Big Stick” when it came down on foreign policy. The policy attached to it would the Monroe Doctrine.

4 Translates to the law of the muzzle or, as it is better known, the “Gag Law.”
1954 — March 6th — and a violation of Article 6 of the Arm Statue.

1957 — Law #53 is repealed after being ruled unconstitutional as protected by freedom of speech under Article II of the Constitution of Puerto Rico and the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

1973 — May — Alejandro González Malavé begins working for police
1973 — May — as an informant and sends reports to the police detailing the “criminal” character and planning of the clubs and parties he had joined.

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1973 — May — as an informant and sends reports to the police detailing the “criminal” character and planning of the clubs and parties he had joined.

1976 — Arnaldo Dario Rosado Torres and Carlos Enrique Soto Arrivi meet sometime after Rosado Torres’ arrest in October.

1978 — Spring — Rosado Torres and Soto Arrivi form the Armed Revolutionary Movement (ARM).

May — González Malavé infiltrates the ARM.

July 4th — González Malavé and members of the ARM are watching news coverage of the following event at Rosado Torres’ apartment:

A pro-independence couple kidnaps and holds the Chilean counsel hostage at a bank in Old San Juan.

The ARM, in response to this event, assaulted the University of Puerto Rico’s security office.

July 14th — González Malavé reported to his superiors that the ARM planned to do something in protest to the celebration on the 25th.

July 15th - 20th — Both the ARM and the police planned for the 25th.

July 20th — González Malavé receives a service revolver and aeriel shots are taken of Cerro Maravilla
1978 — July 21st — A report is submitted by González Malavé confirming that the ARM planned to attack the communication towers at Cerro Maravilla.

July 24th — Final plans are made regarding transportation logistics for the ARM members.

July 25th — Early that morning, police agents spread out across the Toro Negro forest waiting for the ARM to arrive.

Torres Rosado, Soto Arriví, and González Malavé take a cab to Ponce then get into Julio Ortiz Molina’s cab. They take Ortiz Molina hostage and drive to Cerro Maravilla.

The men arrive there at noon and are ambushed by police.

Torres Rosado and Soto Arriví are murdered.

Governor Romero, who was aware of the police’s plans, celebrates the heroism of the Puerto Rican police at the “Constitution Day” parade.

July 26th — The surviving members of the ARM are arrested.

July 28th - Aug. 1st — Inconsistencies in the story arise as Ortiz Molina does interviews with different newspapers and stations. In response to the controversy the governor orders the Justice Department to investigate.

1979 — Both families file a $2.5 million lawsuit.

Governor Romero is accused of knowing a “terrorist” group was planning an attack on the communication towers, which he denies.

1980 — The case is suspended with no indictments by the US Justice Department.

1981 — The US Justice Department terminates investigation, stating it found no
1981 — grounds for prosecution.

The Commonwealth Justice Department follows suit and absolves the police of their crimes.

1983 —
March 8th — The surviving members of the ARM are acquitted.
March 17th — Charges against Governor Romera and Rivera Casiano are dismissed in the Soto vs. Romero Barceló civil suit.
June 15th — The Senate Judiciary Committee opens televised public hearings.
Sept. 7th — Hearings resume, testimonies are aired following this.

1984 —
Feb. 6th — Colonel Angel Pérez Casillas (Field Commander of the operation), Lieutenant Jaime Quiles, Officer Rafael Torres Marrero, Officer Luis Reverón Martínez, Officer Rafael Moreno, Officer Nelson González Pérez, Officer José Ríos Polanco, Officer Juan Bruno González, Officer William Colón Berrios, and Officer Nazario Mateo Espada are charged with 53 counts of perjury committed before the federal grand juries.

1985 —
Feb. 5th — The trial of the ten policemen aforementioned begins in US District Court.
March 27th — All ten are found guilty of 45 of the 53 charges. Individual sentences range from six to 35 years.
April 30th — González Malavé is charged with kidnapping Ortiz Molina.
Sept. 9th — Luis Reverón Martinez makes a plea bargaining agreement and makes a statement of what really happened.
Sept. 26th — Reverón Martinez’s testimony results in first degree
1985 — Sept. 26th — murder charges are filed against six additional policemen, Luis Daniel Erazo Félix, Roberto “Rocky” Morales, Eugene Rios, Carlos Rivera Falú, Carlos Santiago Borrero, and Luis A. Vargas Lebrón for being at the scene of the crimes. González Malavé is also charged.

Feb. 21 — González Malavé is acquitted of the kidnapping charge.

March 10th — The six additional officers and González Malavé have the first degree murder charges against them dropped.

April 29th — González Malavé is shot and killed outside of his parents' home in Bayamón.

October 13th — Reverón Martínez is sentenced to 25 years.

1987 — Feb. 28th — Both families receive a settlement of $575,000 each.
Roots of the Past

Let's get one thing straight right off the bat: Puerto Ricans are of a mixed race. To accurately understand exactly what I mean when I say that let me define a few terms.

For this, I turn to one of my favorite critical texts by Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. They define race as the “master category” (Omi and Winant 114). It is an umbrella term that categorizes a mass of people of different ethnic backgrounds by their distinct physical characteristics. This, therefore, effectively strips individuals of the choice of their own identity. When I say that Puerto Ricans are of a mixed race, what I mean is that the physical characteristics used in the categorization of race cannot be simplified to one alone, for Puerto Ricans’ biological make-up consists of a mix of white, black, and the indigenous natives of the Caribbean. Hence, a mixed race.

Each and every one of us is under the blanket ethnicity of Hispanic or Latinx, depending on which you agree with most. This means that we share a common sense of belonging to Puerto Rican tradition, culture, and language. We are a nation—“a self-defined community of people who share a sense of solidarity based on a belief in a common heritage, and who claim the right to political self-determination” (Morris 15). While each Puerto Rican shares this national identity and ethnicity, each of our genetic codes are a unique combination of the three previously mentioned races, resulting in the wide array of physical attributes we have, including skin tone, hair type, and eye color, to name a few.

These differences often created a discord among the people. This is most prominently seen in a type of caste system that recognizes degrees of physical whiteness in descending order from white to *pardo*, to *moreno*, to *negro* (Kinsbruner 5). This caste system was used to determine who was considered a free person of color (i.e. someone who was nonwhite but legally free during slavery times) and who was not (i.e. who was enslaved). This system was incredibly subjective and flexible from those in power who assigned these
The discord is one that continues to manifest itself today, and stems from the historical events and resulting trauma that established the nation.

The Taíno were one of the indigenous people of the Caribbean, but specifically inhabited Puerto Rico. They referred to their homeland as Boriquén and represented the native meaning of their name, “good,” as a pacifist people (Alegria 71). By the time of Christopher Columbus’ second voyage on November 19, 1493, Puerto Rico was inhabited by approximately thirty thousand Taíno. They welcomed Columbus, and consequently the seventeen ships, 1,200 men, horses, cattle, guns, and smallpox he brought with him (Denis 12). In his own diary, an entry reads,

[The Taíno] traded with us and gave us everything they had, with good will. [...] They are very gentle and without knowledge of what is evil [...] in all the world there can be no better people. (Sale 100).

This innocence and kindness he describes are the very qualities that he and the Spaniards took advantage of when they realized a profit could be made. You see, the Taíno made the mistake of showing Columbus their gold and accidentally began a gold rush.

Spain renamed the island Puerto Rico, meaning “rich port,” brought African slaves, and enslaved the Taíno to collect every scrap of gold the island had. The plague of smallpox, something they had never been exposed to, began killing them off at a rapid pace (Denis 12). Where harsh labor and sickness failed to kill these people, violent confrontations with Spanish soldiers more than made up for it. With the war, slavery, disease, intermarriage, suicide, and migration the Taíno’s population was entirely wiped out. By the Spanish census of 1802, only 2,300 “Indians” inhabited the area, and this would be the last time any of them did (Duany 11).

This brutal reality of slavery would continue on in Puerto Rico’s colonial status for Spain’s profit through plantations (Fernandez 4), and the only traces of the Taíno identifiers. That being said, these terms defined as the literal skin color of the individuals of African descent and are broken down as follows; pardo— translates roughly to brownish gray; those with the lightest skin shade, moreno— translates directly to brown; those of darker skin color, and negro— translates directly to black; those of darkest skin color.
people would be found in the blood of descendants of rape and intermarriage. Thus combining the three races of the white Spaniards, the black slaves, and the native Taíno into one nation.

Are and Are Not

I want to begin this section with a quote by one Eugenio María de Hostos. He said, “How sad and overwhelming and shameful it is to see [Puerto Rico] go from owner to owner without ever having been her own” (Denis 15). There is no better way to say it than that. At the end of the Spanish American War, the US was left to decide the fate of the island, and it would look at Puerto Rico as a war prize it intended to keep by any means necessary (Fernandez 3).

The question of how the US came to be in a position of so much power over Puerto Rico can easily be answered when one looks at how the US viewed the people. From there, the question is answered in three words: white man’s burden. There are a lot of sources that I could quote here describing in disgusting detail exactly what the US thought and continues to think of my people, but quite frankly, I do not want to give those words more space than necessary. Instead here is one quote that accomplishes the overall goal of these sources, Senator William B. Bate:

> What is to become of the Philippines and Porto Rico? Are they to become States with representation [in the US] from those countries, from that heterogeneous mass of mongrels that make up their citizenship? That is objectionable to the people of this country, as it ought to be, and they will call a halt to it before it is done.

> [Thomas] Jefferson was the greatest expansionist. But neither his example nor his precedent affords any justification for expansion over territory in distant seas, over people incapable of self-government, over religious hostile to Christianity, and over savages addicted to head-hunting and cannibalism, as some of these islanders are. (Nelson 17)

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6 A belief of white colonizers that they needed to impose their civilization on the inhabitants of their colony as a way of saving them from themselves (Nelson 16).

7 This is not a spelling mistake; this is actually how politicians news sources spelled Puerto Rico’s name.
The general consensus of the American people was that Puerto Ricans were poor, ignorant, uncivilized, morally corrupt, incompetent savages that needed the US to tame and protect them. Once that lie got started, the rest became easy as Americans and Puerto Ricans alike began to believe it.

Despite having a strong sense of a defined national identity, most Puerto Ricans believed that the US presence in the island would be a good thing. Instead of thinking of the independence they had been striving so hard for under Spanish rule, they began to think that after centuries of neglect this—being a territory of the US—was the next best step for the island. The democratic ideology and resources the US was bringing to Puerto Rico were favorable, and there was a hope that this territorial status would result in statehood as it had in the past for Florida and Louisiana (Morris 23). As a result, most people on the island were in favor of the political parties that favored status as a commonwealth or state of the US, leaving independence parties to receive low levels of electoral support (Morris 15).

Unfortunately, what looked to be such a great and promising thing in the beginning, quickly turned grim.

With a new “master,” loyalty had to be sworn to the “new nationality” and the American flag. This meant a plethora of changes were coming the Puerto Rican’s way. Among these was to only fly the US flag on the island, English became the primary and soon to be official language, and military control was placed on nearly every aspect of the island, including the government and education systems (Morris 24). Theodore Roosevelt would say,

   Like most countries, [the US] was convinced that we had the best form of government ever devised in the world and that our customs and habits were also the most advisable. (Morris 24)

Nothing could be truer. The US continued to reaffirm their superiority over Puerto Rico and had a clear agenda of Americanization for the people there. With this rose the tensions of a people who had essentially lost all control over what was
happening on their own land. There was anger from those who craved independence and confusion from those that desired statehood. From all of this came the Unionist Party. Founded in 1904, the party advocated for a self government on the island. They proposed the following suggestions for an arrangement to be made between Puerto Rico and the US:

We find it feasible that the island of Puerto Rico be confederated with the United States of North America; that it be a State of the American Union, through which we will attain the self-government that we need and request; and we also declare that the Island of Puerto Rico may be declared an independent nation under the protection of the United States. (Morris 29)

This was the first time since the US had taken over that independence was proposed as a solution to the “problem” Puerto Rico felt it was faced with though it was not the party’s first choice. Luis Muños Rivera, a unionist and commissioner to the US, reiterated these points while making it clear where he, his party, and the Republican Party, which had joined the Unionists in their advocating for statehood, stood. In 1911, he said,

Our problem has three solutions: the proclamation of statehood... the concession of home rule... and the concession of independence.... Of these three solutions, we would prefer the first, we propose the second, and we reserve the third as the last refuge of our right and our honor. (Morris 29)

Essentially what he and the initial statement in 1904 proposed was for the US to make a decision about exactly what Puerto Rico was to be to them: a state, a commonwealth, or an independent nation.

The US chose the option that was most beneficial to themselves: a commonwealth status.

Following the establishment of the commonwealth status in 1949, and the constitution in 1952, Puerto Ricans were able to make choices for themselves with a regained sense of agency. Sort of. Law #53 was still in effect, so if you were pro-independence, this did not change much for you (Morris 47). The Constitution of Puerto Rico brought on some new changes for the island. For one, Puerto Ricans
were able to keep a status of American citizenship. Depending on who you ask, even today, this could mean everything or nothing to an individual. The consensus of Morris’ case study, and many of the Puerto Ricans I have spoken to about it, is that this means very little outside of the technicalities of legal documents like passports and getting drafted in US wars (Morris 110-1). The Constitution also established an exemption from federal taxes, the right to elect local officials but not the right to vote in a federal election (i.e. presidential), representation in Congress, and a non-voting member in the House of Representatives (Morris 48). In addition to this, the national anthem, “La Borinqueña,” and flag were made official, though the latter of these was altered to create a flag more appropriate of a US commonwealth (Morris 34).\

These changes helped to establish the three party system. Each advocated for one of the status options: commonwealth, statehood, and independence (Morris 52). There was a loose connection between these parties and those of the US. The party in favor of commonwealth status was most closely aligned with the Democratic Party and the party in favor of statehood with the Republican Party. This did very little in the way of benefiting Puerto Rico, but it did help to keep political relations positive and strong.

Though it felt as though this, existing under US control, would be alright for Puerto Rico, there was still the pressure of having another country have the vast majority of control over policies. One such example was the ongoing question of the official language. Ultimately, it would remain English (Morris 54), but how could Puerto Ricans be expected to be happy when they could not even control what language

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8 Fig. 1, 2, and 3 (see page 172)
they were expected to speak—what language would be taught in their schools, to their children?

The situation then has not changed much from what it is now. Puerto Ricans are “a man without country.”

We are and are not an integral part of the United States. We are and we are not a foreign country. We are and we are not citizens of the United States...The Constitution [of the US] covers us and does not cover us... it applies to us and does not apply to us. (Carr 38)

There is an ambiguity that haunts our relationship with the US. These ambiguities were unsolved in 1898, then again in 1952, and have continued to be unsolved until this moment right now in 2020.

Of course, there are many Puerto Ricans that believe the US is their lungs and they will stop breathing without them. These are the people that keep waiting for the day that the US will declare Puerto Rico a state. To them, I am truly sorry, but that is never going to happen for many reasons. The first is the general consensus of congressmen in regards to Puerto Rico as a territory do not believe we deserve it. Many of them believe that we are a mixture of “ignorance, disdain, and irritation” that already receive more benefits than we deserve (Lewis 30). These are the same people that look in the faces of Puerto Ricans who are frustrated with the lack of rights and control and say, “you people don’t pay any federal taxes, so you can’t expect too much” (Lewis 31). This, of course, fails to recognize the US businesses that profit from the lack of federal taxes when they set their companies on the island and the history of exploitation in agricultural resources, such as sugarcane, and property that benefits from a lack of taxes, but I digress.

Secondly, we will never become a state because “the American racial classificatory system identifies Puerto Ricans as black and therefore undesirable” (Lewis 35). Now, I can understand how some might argue that this argument is dated, and yes, it is from 1974. However, it would be naive to say that there is not some truth to this. I feel like this does not need to be said, but racism still exists. Modern examples can be
seen everywhere from our social media feeds to the words of our current political representatives. I cannot imagine, in this current political climate, Puerto Rico becoming a state, and racism is one of the biggest reasons for that. In addition to this, politically speaking, if Puerto Rico became a state, the congressional delegation “estimated on a population basis, would be larger than those of twenty existing states, and could therefore seriously disturb the congressional balance of power” (Lewis 36) in the US. Why risk that for an island of people previously described as poor, ignorant, uncivilized, morally corrupt, incompetent savages?

Thirdly, and most importantly, the US will never grant Puerto Rico its independence status because there is more to be gained politically, economically, and militarily with the commonwealth status (Lewis 35). The US profits so much over Puerto Rico. To give that up from the standpoint of the US economy would be idiodic. The same can historically be said for US policies and the military. Drafting Puerto Ricans into wars is just one example of that. Did you know that the US military and Navy occupied Puerto Rico and even used sites as testing grounds for equipment such as land mines? This is also not to mention the economic gain and avoidance of a political scandal in testing early forms of birth control and sterilization on Puerto Rican women. But, again, I digress.

Senator Joseph Foraker in 1900 summed this all up simply, “Puerto Rico belongs to the United States, but it is not the United States, nor a part of the United States” (Fernandez 2). The US is not going to give us anything. It is mainly for this reason that the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico came to be.

The Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico

By its name alone, it is not hard to guess which party alignment the Nationalists are in favor of. Formed in 1922 as a radical offshoot of Puerto Rico’s Union Party, the Nationalist Party was dedicated to creating a free, sovereign, and independent republic in Puerto Rico. The Party represented a rebuttal to the US political and
economic control over the island (Duany 65). Independence was something they wanted to be complete and come as quickly and unconditionally as possible. This would mean Puerto Rico would reclaim its land, nationalize its banks, reinstate Spanish as the official language of the island and in school instructions, and eliminate all tariff payments to the US (Dennis 115).

Compared to the other two parties, the Nationalist had little support, so they rarely participated in elections and would eventually stop altogether in 1932. Instead, they focused on public education, international advocacy, and the development of the Ejercito Libertador de Puerto Rico\(^9\), also known as the Cadets of the Republic once Pedro Albizu Campos was elected president of the Party.

**El Maestro is Here**

Pedro Albizu Campos, better known as *El Maestro*, or the teacher, was like a breath of fresh, radical air to the Nationalist Party.

Albizu was born out of wedlock. Because of this and his dark-skinned complexion, his father refused to acknowledge him. His mother was carried out to sea after she tried to walk across the river, so at age four, Albizu was an orphan adopted by his aunt (Dennis 110).

Flash forward to years later, while Albizu is attending the University of Vermont, he receives a scholarship and acceptance to Harvard Law School, becoming the first Puerto Rican to attend the school. It is during his experience studying in the US, then serving in World War I that he experienced racism on an intense level. He received multiple job offers following his graduation, but he had made a realization:

[...] he would never be one of “them.” The United States would never take him, his people, or his homeland seriously. In fact, the Americans couldn’t even spell or pronounce his island’s name. (Denis 113)

He decides in this moment to dedicate his life to the cause of Puerto Rican independence and returns back home. During his time in law school, he

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\(^9\) Translates to the Liberation Army of Puerto Rico. More on this on page 26.
systematically studied and researched every document dealing with colonialism, the history of independence for the US, and the specific documents that made Puerto Rico a commonwealth among others. Albizu also worked with the Irish wards of Boston and studied the Irish liberation movement (Dennis 113). This would be where the basis for the Cadets would come from.

He pointed out the hypocrisy of the US in regards to slavery and colonialism:

> Everywhere you look, you see a Yankee army, Yankee navy, Yankee police, and Yankee courts. [...] According to the yankees owning one person makes you a scoundrel, but owning a nation makes you a colonial benefactor. (Denis 115)

Albizu was educated, insightful, and ready to make change. Back in Puerto Rico, he joined the Unionists, thinking this was the first step to do so. However, after seeing their efforts focus on achieving statehood and how they had removed independence from the party’s political goals, he made a statement and immediately resigned. On May 12, 1924, he wrote,

> We offer a most exceptional spectacle: The people are the action, their leaders the reaction; the people, the vanguard, their leaders, the impediment. All the force of our leaders seems to limit itself to organize armies that after they are organized, they become fearful, and the result is to deliver themselves, with their army, in order to incur the ill will of the enemy. (Fernandez 96-7)

This really captures the shift in Albizu’s approach to politics. From here on out, he would be fighting independence regardless of the costs. Shortly after leaving the Unionists, he became the vice president of the Nationalist Party. When he first joined them, other members were skeptical and even a little fearful of him becoming one of them. It was one thing to show such disrespect for US authority; it was another thing entirely to disrespect US authority and be dark-skinned (Fernandez 97). As a way to almost ease the rest of the Party into his position, and eventual position as president in 1930, he traveled across Latin America to share Puerto Rico’s status, gather support, and overall “convince the Americas to relinquish their hold on Puerto Rico and its people” (Fernandez 97). When he was not traveling, he spoke around the
island, defended Nationalist members in court, and registered bonds on Wall Street for the Republic of Puerto Rico, which will be redeemable when the island becomes independent (Dennis 116).

His presence as a figure in the independence movement did not become something the US wanted to eliminate until the sugarcane strike of 1934. It is the time of the Great Depression, and the US has just cut the wages of Puerto Rican workers. Strikes in tobacco, needlework, transportation, and sugarcane industries are rising up around the island. The sugarcane strikes, though, are building up traction, and by January of 1934, the entire industry was on strike. When their leader failed to get the workers the wages they were looking for, they turned to Albizu as president of the Nationalists. He agreed and delivered a speech to six thousand people the next day. From here, he and the workers create the Asociación de Trabajadores de Puerto Rico, or the Workers Association of Puerto Rico. Colonel E. Francis Riggs, a very wealthy man with control of many banks, attempts to bribe him to stop advocating for the sugarcane workers' rights. Albizu’s response is essentially, “Puerto Rico was not for sale, at least not by him.” (Dennis 120). In his success in getting a raised wage more than double the original amount, Albizu had put a target on himself and the Party.¹⁰

To the US, the Nationalist Party had to be stopped by any means necessary. Here is when things got violent. Death threats came pouring in to Albizu, and he had to relocate and guard his family from FBI assaults and attempted fire-bombing (Dennis 121). Still he continued to speak out for and take direct action for Puerto Rican independence, spreading the information to as many individuals as he could.

¹⁰ Fig. 4 (see page 173)
He was *El Maestro*, after all.

Albizu believed the United States’ occupation of Puerto Rico to be more than just a violation of his people’s rights, but also a violation of the rights granted by the Spanish prior to the country’s defeat by the United States in 1898. His work aimed to compact the dense historical context of the island’s status, the demands for the Nationalist Party, and the reason for each of them.

There is no one better to do due justice to his work than himself. He writes,

> The Treaty of Paris, imposed by force on Spain by the United States on April 11, 1899, is null and void as it pertains to Puerto Rico. For this reason, the military intervention of the United States in our fatherland is simply one of the most brutal and abusive acts perpetrated in contemporary history. We demand the withdrawal of the armed forces of the United States from our soil as the natural and legitimate defense of Puerto Rican independence (Albizu Campos 10).

Essentially, Albizu and the Party’s belief that the US had no right to invade and colonize Puerto Rico to begin with, for freedom to self-govern had been given to the island by Spain before The Treaty of Paris had been forced on the country. Therefore, the only appropriate words to describe this intervention is cruel, brutal, and abusive. At its fundamental root, the Nationalist Party wants the United States to remove itself to allow for Puerto Rican independence.

He goes on to explain the effects Puerto Ricans have been forced to endure under the United States’ rule, exploitation, and perpetrated abuse. This, he explains, can be seen in the indemnification and commercial monopoly of the US to name a few. All of these things are “evident through the universal poverty, the illnesses, and the elevated mortality rates of our population, the highest in the Americas” (Albizu 11). He called the US a tyrannical government in Puerto Rico and called Puerto Ricans to action, challenging them to draw arms and overthrow the US colonial regime. It is no wonder that the FBI watched every move he made (Duany 64). Yet he never let it stop his work, and he was never abandoned by his fellow comrades and those that followed him.
Dominga de la Cruz truly sums up the significance Albizu had as a leader of people the best. She said that people followed him because he took a people that was on its knees and with his great energy he raised us to our feet. He taught us how to walk, and he taught us to struggle. And after he [taught us] there was no way we would ever fall to our knees [again]. We had to move forward even though it was always hard [to fight] against such a powerful empire. Though many times we were fatigued, we kept moving forward... because we were defending our homeland and we did it with great enthusiasm. We did not question his orders. We loved Don Pedro, not as a mythological figure, but as a father who wanted his children to have dignity; he taught us dignity. (Jiménez de Wagenheim 40)

With a man like this leading a people like this, none should be shocked of the inspiration Albizu and the Nationalist Party served as for others. It is this ideology and courage that fanned the embers of revolution that carries over into the following events I intend to share with you.

Embers to the Fire

The following is the culmination of the events and people that I used to inspire the writing process and content of the play Seven Twenty-Five.
Isabel Rosado

Isabel Rosado Morales is a name I am sure many are unfamiliar with. She is not someone you will find in most history books. Though I was familiar with the name, I had no idea who she was. Isabel Rosado was my grandfather’s first cousin. When I first became interested in Puerto Rican independence, he would often brag that it was he and his father that had driven to pick her from prison and then took her to Albizu’s house. I didn’t understand why this was something he held onto with such pride until I learned what her role in the Party was and how she came to hold it.

Doña Isabelita, as those who knew her often called her, was a teacher at a rural school in Naguabo from 1926 to 1940 when she left teaching to pursue social work in the eastern towns of Ceiba, Fajardo, and Naguabo (Jiménez de Wagenheim 162). This makes sense, for she was described to have a magnetic personality, especially around children. She was the type of person you wanted to be near and learn from. Her work was something she enjoyed doing immensely. Exposed to the problems of the island by working among the poor in eastern Puerto Rico, she had a deep commitment to helping the very same people she served. In her eyes, the only way to create an equitable society was to set the island free from the colonial power the United State held over it. These beliefs aligned quite well with those of the Nationalist Party. However, it wasn’t until March 21, 1937 that she received the final push to join.

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12 I would like to acknowledge that this section was contributed to by conversations and firsthand accounts with my grandfather, Daniel Rosado, and the Executive Director of the Puerto Rican Culture Center, José E. Lopez. It is also worth mentioning that though Isabel Rosado did write an account of her own life in a work titled Mis Testimonios, the work was never put into public circulation. I was unable to access this source directly and, therefore, relied on the quotes from this text in Jiménez de Wagenheim’s work.

13 Fig. 6 (see page 173)
The Ponce Massacre

It was Palm Sunday and the anniversary of the island’s abolition of slavery (March 22, 1873). The Nationalist Party had plans for the great Cadet\textsuperscript{14} parade. The parade was meant to be a demonstration in response to the conviction and imprisonment of Albizu and seven of his closest aides (Jiménez de Wagenheim 41). It was going to be a peaceful event. The Party had secured permits through the Puerto Rican government and invited the whole island to participate. It was looking to be an exciting and festive day in the Ponce town square. By 3 p.m. the streets were filled with about three hundred men, women, and children.

While most of these individuals had traveled to get there separately, most members of the Party gathered at the Party’s headquarters and boarded buses to travel together. Among these members was Dominga De La Cruz Becerril. She recalls, “The buses were red, […] just like the police vans, the ‘Red Fleet’ that followed us.” She also pointed out that “some of the policemen [in the Red Fleet] kept staring at us and grinning, as if they already knew the fate that awaited us” (Jiménez de Wagenheim 41). The policemen in this so-called Red Fleet did, in fact, know what was about to befall the parade.

For twenty years, from the very inception the Cadets, the FBI, and therefore the Puerto Rican police, had infiltrated the entire Nationalist Party. They knew “almost every decision, every plan, every move that the Nationalist leadership tried to make” (Denis 40). The plans for the demonstration that day were no exception. The police had the upper hand that day, and at the start of it, no one in the Party was the wiser.

The morning of the parade the permit the Party had secured had been revoked. It was too late to cancel the event, so they went on as planned. When the members arrived, the streets were lined with heavily armed policemen. This was not anything new to them for their events, but the vast amount of them and the overtly menacing

\textsuperscript{14} The Cadets of the Republic were a branch of the Party that underwent a full training program including marching, field tactics, self-defense, and survival. Though they had no firearms, they trained with wooden rifles. They represented a symbolic threat (Denis 38).
way about them was a cause for concern. For the reason of the raised safety concern, higher members of the Party decided only men would be allowed to march. De la Cruz found this to be particularly outrageous and said, "Imagine our women having to fight for the right to participate in the struggle" (Jiménez de Wagenheim 41).

It was the sheer rage, overpowering their fear that motivated the Nationalists to begin the parade. The Cadet leader, Tomás López de Victoria, commanded the band to play "La Borinqueña," and everyone started to march. I was not there, obviously, but I imagine that for a moment this was a beautiful sight: a sunny day, the crowd cheering and singing along, men in the Cadets of the Republic uniforms, smiles on everyone's face, and the flag held high and waving in the air.

A shot was fired. Then another, and another until chaos broke through. The police had shot members of the crowd. They surrounded the parade, creating an inescapable kill zone that they fired round after round into. With nowhere to go, people screamed, panicked, and waited to die.

In the chaos, the Cadet's flag bearer was shot and killed. A woman nearby, Carmen Fernandez, grabbed it from him only a moment before she, herself, was shot in the chest. The only thought in De La Cruz's head as she ran towards her fallen comrade to lift the blood-splattered flag into the air were Albizu's words: "The flag must never touch the ground" (Jiménez de Wagenheim 42). It was heavy, so others stepped in to help her bear the weight. There was still nowhere to go, and De La Cruz, the people who had helped her, and others had no choice but to break into a house across the street. This would lead to the homeowner calling the police and then their arrest.

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15 Fig. 7 (see page 173)
16 The national anthem of Puerto Rico.
They were among the fortunate that day.

For thirteen minutes the police shot and clubbed any and everyone they could. By the end of it, nineteen men, one woman, and a seven year-old child were killed. Over two hundred others severely wounded (Denis 47).

Though the bloodshed of the day was over, the horror was not.

The chief of police, Colonel Enrique de Orberta, had received the order he carried out through his men for the massacre from Governor Blanton, but looking to provide himself and the force some extra coverage, he made a truly cruel decision. Using the cameraman from *El Mundo*, Ángel Lebrón, who had arrived to cover the story, the police,

> choreographed a series of “live action” photos to show that the police were somehow “returning fire” from Nationalists who were, at this point, already lying dead in the street. (Denis 49)

This obviously did not work for many reasons. For one, the doctors tending to the wounded noted that most victims were shot in the back, none of the killed or wounded Nationalists were armed, and, as if this wasn’t enough, a newsreel director, Juan Emilio Viguié filmed the entire slaughter.

When trying to manipulate the stories did not work for him, the governor, who had gone on record blaming the Nationalists, ordered the newest Ponce district attorney, Pedro Rodriguez-Serra, to pressure and intimidate witnesses to sign false affidavits (Denis 50-1). This tactic did not work for the newspapers on the island that printed the story, and several political comics to accompany them were made. However, in the United States this event was mostly referred to as a “Nationalist riot.”

De La Cruz summed up what happened that Palm Sunday the best:

> We lost our innocence in Ponce and since then, I have never felt that youthful happiness again. (Jiménez de Wagenheim 49)
The Flowers of Justice

It is not surprising that this was the event that pushed Isabel Rosado Morales to officially join the party. She said herself,

[The] injustice committed against the Nationalists in Ponce was what motivated me to join the Nationalist Party in 1937, and other injustices and the abuse of power by those in government reaffirmed my life-long commitment to the cause of independence. (Jiménez de Wagenheim 163)

She joined a chapter in barrio Daguao and was sworn in by its president, Ignacio Rodríguez. When she met Albizu for the first time, she had already been a member for nine years. Her role in the Party involved distributing the Party’s literature, including pamphlets and books each containing the virtues of independence and collecting dues from members. This money was used to pay the rent of the Party’s headquarters and support Albizu and his family.

Many recall her sitting at Albizu’s right hand during meetings, gatherings, and the annual assembly, where the Party elected their leaders for the year. As previously mentioned, the authorities had infiltrated the group and knew of everything happening and everyone attending these meetings. She also acted as a speaker at some protests including the annual demonstration in Guánica for July 25th17. Although this may seem small in comparison to the works of others, she was well known in the Party as being one of the most trusted and capable comrades of Albizu.

Close to her hundredth birthday, Isabel was asked in an interview to explain her relationship with Albizu. By this point, Albizu had already passed on. She described her connection to him as “an ecstatic relationship of almost mythical encounter,” and had lifted her hands to the sky, as if to touch him. When she began to cry in this moment, they were tears of joy, as if Albizu had never left her and she was speaking directly to him.

17 More on this event on page 43.
She was described as a small, but articulate woman with an incredible sense of humor and a larger than life aura. Above all, however, the most memorable trait that those who knew her spoke of was her courage.\textsuperscript{18}

As every member of the Nationalist Party, Isabel took an oath to give her total life and wealth to Puerto Rico’s independence. She lived her life to what Albizu would often say, “la patria es amor y sacrificio.”\textsuperscript{19} This meant that she was willing to lay down her life for what she believed was right. She was willing to give up everything she had because she believed so deeply in Puerto Rican independence. Everything she did was about how she served and was at the service of the island. She framed her life around this. It should be of no shock to anyone that this would eventually lead to her arrest.

The first time she had been arrested was in January 1951 for being a member of the Nationalist Party. She was accused of saying, “No country has ever won its independence without a struggle and bloodshed,” though she did not recall saying that. This was enough to arrest her, as it violated Law #53\textsuperscript{20}, and meant that she could be detained and interrogated about her support of the Party’s ideals and probable uprising. As sudden as this might sound, the authorities had been planning, building a case against her for nearly two months. During these times, she remembered being followed everywhere she went. Agents would even go as far as to show up at her place of work. Despite this, she refused to be intimidated and carried a Puerto Rican flag in her purse at all times even though the Gag Law had

\textsuperscript{18} Fig. 8 (see page 173)
\textsuperscript{19} Translates to “The homeland (being Puerto Rico) is valor and sacrifice.”
\textsuperscript{20} The newly amended Law #53, or as it is better known, the Gag Law, made it a crime “to belong” to any subversive group (i.e. the Nationalist). Before this amendment on December 20th, 1950, the law made it a crime “to advocate, preach, write, or conspire with others to overthrow the island’s government or harm any of its dependencies (Jiménez de Wagenheim 166).
made this illegal. I was also told that, knowing her arrest was inevitable and quickly approaching, she taught her students "La Borinqueña" despite its status as outlawed.

On the day of her arrest, Isabel was waiting for the bus with some of the other women that taught at the school she worked at. An unmarked, black car approached her, and the secret agents in the car asked her to get in. Instead, she boarded the bus. It, by the command of the driver of the car, would drive her to Fajardo police station. When asked by the women on the bus why they were being followed she said the following:

“Because I am a Nationalist.” [The women] then asked me to get rid of any evidence that might incriminate me, but I told them that I couldn’t, “Because all I have on me is a Puerto Rican flag which I will never give up.” (Jiménez de Wagenheim 167)

When she arrived at the station, she was arrested on two violation counts of Law #53, and then transferred to San Juan’s district jail, La Princesa. Though this sentence was to be served for one to ten years, the exact length decided on by a judge, she was convicted of one count, exonerated of the other, and was sentenced to serve only one year and three months, the time she had already served when she went before the judge. She was released in April 1952 (Jiménez de Wagenheim 171-2).

Life as a free woman from there was difficult, to say the very least. Her teaching and social work licenses were revoked shortly after her arrest. This meant that she would never be allowed to teach or work for the government social service agency (Jiménez de Wagenheim 163). Many of the jobs she was able to secure did not last very long, as her reputation as a Nationalist preceded her. She began knitting and selling baby clothes for an income and eventually found a job teaching in Cataño with the help of a fellow comrade, Paulino Castro.

Her life as a free woman would end in March 1954. On the first of that month, five United States congressmen were injured when a group of Nationalists led by Lolita
Lebrón opened fire on the first floor of the House of Representatives\textsuperscript{21}. This would lead to their arrest and, after Albizu praised their act of “sublime heroism,” the arrest of those that planned it. The fact that no one, but the Party members that opened fire that day knew of the attack was ignored (Jiménez de Wagenheim 172).\textsuperscript{22}

Isabel found herself at Albizu’s home the morning of March 6th when the police came to arrest him and any other members they found there. Also with her were Doris Torresola, Carmen María Pérez, and José Rivera Sotomayor. The officers surrounded the apartment, notified Albizu and his comrades that they were being arrested over a bullhorn, and then fired in “self-defense” after “a barrage of bullets” came from the house (Jiménez de Wagenheim 173).

They had expected this raid and had taken the precaution of moving the refrigerator to block the door and moved Albizu, who was very sick from his bed “and laid him on the floor, to keep him safe from the flying bullets” (Jiménez de Wagenheim 173). She recalled that they exchanged gunfire with the police until they eventually threw tear gas bombs into the home and the police dragged them out.

She was charged with attempted murder, a violation of Law #53, and a violation of Article 6 of the island’s Arm Statue. She would spend six months in jail before she was released on bail in September 1954 until her trial in December 1954. This would lead to her conviction of all three counts in February 1955 and sentenced the following April to seventeen years in prison. Unlike her first experience in prison, this one would be “a horror,” where she would be faced with inhumane conditions\textsuperscript{21} Keep this event in mind. It will become relevant again on page 38.
\textsuperscript{22} Fig. 9 (see page 173)
including a lack of schooling and drinking water, no access to toilets and showers, and cruel, abusive guards (Jiménez de Wagenheim 174-5).

After she served her time, and now fifty-eight years old, it was much harder to find employment, so she returned to knitting for her income. Isabel traveled to the United States to visit political criminals, attended Nationalist meetings and demonstrations demanding the release of Puerto Rican political prisoners still incarcerated, including Oscar López Rivera. She also found a new passion for advocating for prison reforms and joined the pacifists in their struggle to push the US Navy out of the island. This would cause her to be arrested twice “for trespassing on US military property” (Jiménez de Wagenheim 178). Though these arrests in Vieques would leave her beaten by the US armed forces, she managed to maintain a sense of dignity and her incredible power.

Her last years were spent in Ceiba where she was taken care of by staff and her nephew, Radamés Rosado. Even in those final years, those that visited her noted that her commitment to Puerto Rican independence was unwavering. She passed away on January 13, 2015 at the age of one hundred and seven. Rafael Cancel Miranda and Alicia Rodríuez, two ex-political prisoners gave the eulogy at her funeral. Cancel Miranda had these final words to say about Isabelita, “She triumphed because she

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23 Oscar López Rivera was the longest held Puerto Rican prisoner in the United States. He was incarcerated from August 11, 1981 to May 17, 2017, when he was pardoned under the Obama administration.

24 Fig. 10 (see page 173)
was never broken. They were never able to bring her to her knees [...] she left us the flowers of justice in our hearts” (Jiménez de Wagenheim 180).

The Cerro Maravilla Murders
How do you even begin to recount and unpack the event that is the Cerro Maravilla murders?

Let’s start from the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

Friendship and Infiltration
Arnaldo Dario Rosado Torres and Carlos Enrique Soto Arrivi met in 1976, when Rosado Torres was twenty-two and Soto Arrivi was sixteen. The two lived in the government built Quintana condos in Hato Rey and shared an air-shaft. Their friendship was cemented with a mutual interest in politics, specifically their pro-independence stance (Nelson 138).

The two of them were members of the Nationalist Party on the fringes of the University of Puerto Rico and would eventually form a party of their own, the Armed Revolutionary Movement (ARM). They often frequented Chiqui’s Laundromat, which was below their apartment. Where they and a few other members of ARM would “sit around drinking Cokes and talking about books [they’d] read” (Nelson 139). After their death, they were described as being the perfect examples of “cafeteria revolutionaries.” Their discussions tended to focus on their frustration with the growing statehood movement, dissatisfaction with marches, demonstrations, and mass meetings, and the lack of unity between independence movement groups (Suarez 17).

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25 The information gathered from this section came from a combination of the texts, Nelson’s Murder Under Two Flags and Suarez’s Requiem on Cerro Maravilla, original articles of news coverage, and the recordings of the trial.
26 This was defined as “exuberant youngsters who pour their passions and energy into marches, leafleting campaigns, and endless philosophical debates among themselves” (Nelson 139).
27 They called themselves realengos, meaning stray dogs compared to other groups and parties.
They were firm in the belief that “the only way independence would be obtained was through armed revolution. Talk was not going to do it” (Suarez 17), but were unsure of what this armed revolution would look like. For the most part, however, the group was peaceful. Though they had gone to a few rallies carrying handguns, they never used these arms. Rosado Torres was the only one in the group with a criminal record, but more on this specific arrest in a moment. He was described as intense. As a child, Rosado Torres heard voices and would go into agitated, distracted daydreams. To combat this and “his nerves,” his parents had him spend time in mental clinics. Eventually, his mother and younger brother moved to New York City. It was his decision to stay with his father in Puerto Rico and never visit because he described the United States as being not “lo de nosotros” (Nelson 141). His father described him as studious and intelligent. Though he did not agree with his son’s political views, as he was of the pro-state stance, he respected his son and his beliefs.

Unlike the two of them, Soto Arrivi and his father, Pedro Juan Soto, shared an independentista and Nationalist view. In fact, Soto was an author, and his writings were an integral part of the canon of independentista literature. During some time spent in New York City, Soto had decided he would never forgive the US for “the discrimination and degregation he encountered there” (Nelson 141). This belief was passed on to his children. Though the two shared a similar political view, they disagreed on the execution of independence. One such

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28 Translates to this, being the US, is not ours, being Puerto Ricans. Essentially what he is saying is we do not belong there because this is not ours and never will be. I’d like to think he is speaking to true Americanness and citizenship.

29 Fig. 11 (see page 173)

30 Translates directly to independence but is in specific reference to those that are in favor of an independence movement in a nation’s political standing.
example of this was in October 1977 when Nationalists draped a Puerto Rican flag from the Statue of Liberty. Soto had said,\textsuperscript{31}

\begin{quote}
They were stupid [...] It would just guarantee that the police would follow them for the rest of their lives. But Carlos argued that it was necessary publicity for the movement. (Nelson 143).
\end{quote}

Soto Arrivi and his family spent quite some time traveling and thus studied abroad. When he returned to Puerto Rico, he did not really fit in at his high school. Politics became his escape from this. He was described as brilliant, rebellious, and quixotic with an argumentative and intelligent nature (Nelson 142). His plans for the future included writing, which was both to his father's pride and discouraged from pursuing the "family disease" (Nelson 143).\textsuperscript{32}

So these two young men meet. They realize they have a similar affinity for Puerto Rican independence and decide to start a party of their own, inviting others to join them for conversations about their favorite books and politics over Cokes. The exact date of ARM's formation is not known for sure, but we do know it was up and running by the spring of 1978 when the fate of this group was shifted for a grim ending.

Enter Alejandro González Malavé.

At the age of sixteen, in May 1973, González Malavé was introduced to Officer Carmelo Cruz and the work he did for police intelligence. Cruz was struck by the

\textsuperscript{31} Fig. 12 (see page 173)
\textsuperscript{32} Fig. 13 (see page 173)
strong opinions González Malavé had in regards to his patriotism and pro-statehood views, and asked if he’d like to be an informant for the police. Of course, the boy agreed. The police department at this time were “the backbone of the effort to squelch left-wing terrorism” (Nelson 132) and González Malavé, being incredibly ambitious and impressionable, was more than happy to assist in this.

He had grown up as the son of a gardener in the worst part of his neighborhood and channeled his aspiration to make a better life for himself and his family into his work for the police (Nelson 133). This work meant he was infiltrating and reporting back on various group meetings. The people in these groups, his “fellow independentistas” would be referred to as “terrorists” and embellished their true actions and characters in such reports. Among the many groups he had successfully infiltrated was the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP). González Malavé was an outspoken advocate of armed action over words. For this reason, and how he took on the presidential position of the PSP's campus chapter, González Malavé became a red card holding member33 of the party.

His overall behavior was described to be kinetic. There were few moments when he was not in movement and was jittery. González Malavé was an excellent public speaker and spoke with great rhetoric, which helped him climb rankings. He also had a compulsive desire to touch and handle firearms. He was known to be an agitator for many of the groups, saying he believed the Party was too bureaucratic and that instead things should and needed to be taken by force (Nelson 134-5).

In March or May of 1978, he infiltrated ARM and used his manipulative devices to make the party look even worse to the police in his reports that followed. Ramón Rosado, one of the surviving members of ARM, would say, “If González Malavé hadn’t come in as an agitator, we just would have gone on as friends, talking about politics and going to demonstrations” (Nelson 139).

33 An elite status given to very few; the highest honor. Being a card holder was literal, and a very physical and bold declaration that you belonged to the party.
Remember that arrest I mentioned earlier? Our guy González Malavé was the one that orchestrated that whole thing. He purchased a gun revolver for Rosado Torres using police funds when the two were beginning to be friends, and then gave the police department the tip that he would have an illegal weapon in his car. This would lead to Rosado Torres’ arrest on October 6, 1976 and González Malavé’s own promotion from informant to undercover agent.

This man was a long term investment for the police and though he had already helped them with his reports, this was really just the tip of the iceberg. For González Malavé would be the one to pressure ARM’s founding members into the actions and events that would lead to their murders.

A Call to ARM
The year is 1978, and it’s the 4th of July, a date we all know marks the celebration of American independence. Of course, members of ARM did not fail to acknowledge the irony of this date being celebrated in Puerto Rico as they sat in Rosado Torres’ home. Among these members was undercover agent González Malavé and party member, Ramón Rosado. They were watching news coverage of the latest independentista scandal.

A couple kidnapped the Chilean consul and held them hostage at the bank in Old San Juan. Their demands for his release were the cancellation of the 4th of July celebration on the island and the freedom of the Nationalist prisoners and three survivors of the 1950 attack on the House of Representatives. Despite their best efforts, the couple was unsuccessful in securing the imprisoned Nationalists’ freedom. After several hours of negotiation, the hostage was freed and the couple was arrested by the FBI (Nelson 148).

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34 See? I told you it would be relevant again. This event is expanded further on page 32. By this time, all of the prisoners had been eligible for parole, but followed Albizu’s lead and refused to apply for it. By doing this, they refused to recognize the legality of their convictions and therefore were unable to benefit from the legality of parole (Nelson 148).
As ARM’s members watched this story unfold, a bold idea was shared: the couple should have killed the hostage. The argument for this was by killing the consul, leaving the bank guns blazing, and possibly killing some cops in the process, they would have made some kind of statement. In a testimony, González Malavé would say that this statement belonged to none other than Rosado Torres and would add that Rosado Torres also suggested they get in González Malavé’s car and open fire on any patrol car they came across. When this plan was objected to for being too risky, Rosado Torres suggested that they invade the university’s security office and kill all of those guards instead.

In an interview with the San Juan Star, Ramón Rosado recalled things very differently and reported that the mastermind behind the whole plan was González Malavé. He is quoted saying,

[González Malavé’s] was the only one who had ever been in the security office. He said he had gone to pay traffic tickets. He was the one who drew up a map of the place for us to follow. (Nelson 149)

Regardless of whose plan it was, it was followed through. The members of ARM drove to the university. When they arrived at the security office, there was only one female guard that they quickly overcame. Another joined her, and both were forced to lie on the ground. Though one shot was fired, no one was harmed, and they fled the scene with seven stolen walkie-talkies. A statement was made by González Malavé to the radio station, WKAQ (Suarez 24).

That same day, an independentista shot at two National Guardsmen in the 4th of July parade. All of these incidents, the Chilean kidnapping, the ARM university assault and robbery, the parade shooting, and a bank robbery in Río Piedras, were unconnected, but reported as such in El Nuevo Día (Nelson 149).

From here, things only started heating up. Though there is very little that is known to be undeniably true of what occurred between from July 4th to July 25th, we do know that the group ultimately decided to do something in protest of the July 25th
“Constitution Day” celebration. The conversation between Soto Arrivi and Torres Rosado only foreshadows the amount of back and forth the members would have on what to do. Despite this, González Malavé was in frequent conversation with the police, documenting the plans of ARM. I personally believe his correspondents to be exaggerated, but I'll let you decide that for yourself.

In a letter written to the police dated July 14, 1978, regarding “The criminal disposition of the ARM,” “Friar,” as was González Malavé’s code name, says the following:

The members of the Armed Revolutionary Movement (ARM) have declared open war on the Puerto Rican Constitution and the police. Every day that passes is a day of machinations, conspiracy, and attempts against the life of Puerto Rico on behalf of said group.

Every day they think about assaults, ambushing patrols and killing guards, assaulting businesses, etc.

They are determined to kill at any moment any who crosses their path in their attack, or even merely for some personal disagreement, no matter if it’s a policeman, a business employee, or a security guard. To kill is their watchword against anyone who looks at them askance.

I have observed that every time we are gathered in Arnaldo [Darío Rosado Torres]'s house and someone knocks on the door, everyone grabs his gun and points it at the door while they ask who it is. After the door is opened and they make sure who’s there they continue to point their guns until the person enters and then they lower their arms.

If it were police knocking on the door they would open fire.

Arnaldo Darío Rosado Torres has said personally that if anyone tried to arrest him he would shoot them dead.

Up to now they are planning to assault an armory and they’re buying bullets so that if there’s a confrontation with police they’ll be prepared and they are ready to kill anyone no matter who to accomplish their goals (Nelson 152).

By this correspondent alone, González Malavé is painting an image of a dangerous terrorist group to his fellow officers. He is telling these cops that every day the

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Soto Arrivi had suggested that they do something for the 25th. Rosado Torres believed it was too soon, and therefore too predictable for the police, from their attack on the university security office to do anything (Suarez 24).
members of ARM continue to live is one that puts their lives and the entire values of the Puerto Rican Constitution at stake.

Put yourself in the position of the officers for just a moment. Wouldn’t you want them dead too? Hence, the real beginning of the end.

By July 20th, the police began their preparations. González Malavé received a service revolver, and aerial photographs of Cerro Maravilla\(^3\) were taken.

On July 21st, González Malavé reported to the police that ARM had decided to attack the towers. He also said that Rosado Torres believed these towers to be the “key link between federal, Puerto Rican, and commercial communication” and that the members planned to bring “gasoline, rope, wire, nylon stockings for the faces, military jackets, books, and well-oiled weapons” (Nelson 153).

The only members of ARM involved in the planning were Alejandro González Malavé, Arnaldo Dario Rosado Torres, Carlos Enrique Soto Arrivi, and Ramón Rosado. There were many risks attached to it, including the fact that the only member with a car was González Malavé and it had been identified when they assaulted the university security office. The question of transportation had them planning for the next three days.

Simultaneously, the intelligent agent that initially recruited González Malavé, Carmelo Cruz, informed the chief and commander of the police Intelligence Division, Ángel Pérez Casillas. A meeting was called between Pérez Casillas, assistant police superintendent and chief of field operations, Desiderio Cartagena, and the police superintendent of the entirety of Puerto Rico, Roberto Torres González. From there, Torres González told the governor of the island, Carlos Antonio Romero Barceló (Nelson 154). With the added support, the operation began recruiting more men,

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\(^3\) You’ve been reading the name of the location for long enough without context. So what exactly is Cerro Maravilla? It is part of the highest mountain range on the island. The name translates to “marvel mountain.” With a peak of four thousand feet, this mountain stands in the heart of the Toro Nefro forest and holds two communication towers at the top. One was a transmitter for a commercial television station, and the other for police radio communication (Nelson 152-3).
including the lieutenant of the Criminal Investigations Division (CID), Julio César “El Negro” Andrades. Weapons were being distributed and tours of the site at Cerro Maravilla were given to ensure everyone was prepared for what was about to go down.

The operation ran into one detrimental problem with González Malavé's report on July 22nd. With the issue of transportation, ARM's plans for the 25th were changing. One alternative they had thought to do was change the location from Cerro Maravilla to Ponce. Another was to split the attack to four different radio stations on the island to deliver a communiqué of the following, according to González Malavé:

Today the 25th of July, 80 years after the Yankee invasion of Puerto Rico, members of the ARM, White Eagle Command, took over several communications antennae in the area of Toro Negro in the middle of the island. This equipment is used by the state and federal government for their work of penetration and colonialism, which our people are subjected to by Yankee imperialism and its local lackeys. This is one more act of war of the ARM against imperialism.

Stop the celebration of the 25th of July
Liberty to the Nationalist prisoners
Long live the Puerto Rican revolution
War, war, war (Nelson 155)

It was now July 24th, and plans for the next day were still being decided on. Both the police and the four members of ARM found themselves in a state of “anxious uncertainty.” Nelson describes the police log from this evening with its many entrances, exits, and crossed wires like “a one-act play with too many stage directions” (Nelson 156), which is both ironic for the outcome of this specific project and a perfect description. The entire night was filled with trips to and from San Juan to Cerro Maravilla. Around 12:30 a.m. Cartagena’s contacts in the FBI were informed of the possible terrorist attack in a few hours.

ARM, similarly scrambling to finalize plans, searched for a car to steal for their travel needs. This proved to be unsuccessful, and they held one last meeting at 1:00a.m. in Rosado Torres' apartment. By 2:30 a.m. Rosado Torres, Soto Arrivi, and Rosado were
asleep in their respective homes, and González Malavé met with Cruz to fill the police in on the latest plans: ARM would be going to Cerro Maravilla after all.

By 9:30 on the morning of July 25th, twelve agents and officers gathered in the Toro Negro forest. By 11:45 a.m., they were supposedly spread out across a small area of the Toro Negro forest, three at La Puntita, four at the police tower, and five hidden in the grounds of the television tower (Nelson 157). These men were the following: Carlos Rivera Falú, Eugene Rios, Carlos Santiago Borrero, Jesús Quiñones, Jaime Quiles, Nazario Mateo Espada, Carmelo Cruz, José Rios Polanco, Luis Reverón Martínez, William Colón, Rafael Torres Marrero, and Juan Bruno González.

Meanwhile, a Parade
Stick with me for a moment here. You must know by now that this story is going to end in tragedy. Let me digress for just a moment to paint the picture of what was happening outside of the police operation and ARM’s plans.

As previously mentioned, July 25th was a day to be commemorated. Many on the island celebrated this day at the “Constitution Day” parade the governor orchestrated after the date became a holiday in 1952. The parade was used as an excuse to wave the US flag and imagine the Puerto Rican constitution of 1950 as a first step toward statehood. While those in favor of pro-statehood spent the day celebrating at this parade, independentistas saw the day as one of mourning in remembrance of the first invasion of the United States Expeditionary Forces in 1898. These individuals attended a big demonstration in Guánica, where this first invasion occurred (Nelson 159).

This annual demonstration was one that Pedro Juan Soto and Carlos Enrique Soto Arrivi had previously attended together. However, this year Soto had decided to

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37 The smaller, less significant communications tower.
38 The divide between the two groups were made clear in the colors those of pro-statehood and pro-independence wore that day. In support of statehood, those at the protest wore and brandished red and white clothing and banners while those in support of independence wore black and red (Nelson 159).
escape with his wife to their country place in Naranjito. He had given his son permission to attend the demonstration without him. Soto Arrivi had told him he would be getting a ride from a friend, but his father still felt guilty about leaving his son behind.

If his son had gone to the parade with his friends as he said he was going to, perhaps the two would have met later that day, in the large crowd of Guánica when Soto’s guilt led him to leave Naranjito sooner than he planned. And if they met in Guánica, it could have been that father and son participated in the festivities of the demonstration, proudly proclaiming their independence. Maybe Soto would have met Rosado Torres for the first time, and the three would have discussed politics and protested together.

Obviously, this wasn’t the case.

Viejos
The morning of the 25th, Carlos Enrique Soto Arrivi woke up and got dressed. He left his bed unmade with a book face down on the sheets and wrote a note to his father and stepmother. “Viejos39, I left for Guánica” (Suarez 77). When Soto arrived back home to try catching his son before the demonstration, this note was all that would greet him in the empty apartment. He left a note on the back of this note, “The telephone’s dead. Call the phone company and get it fixed” (Nelson 160).

On the other side of the air shaft, Arnaldo Dario Rosado Torres woke and dressed in a hurry40. He kissed his wife, Angela, goodbye, told her he was going for a drive, and hugged their two-year old son, Manuel Lenin. Both were asleep by the time he and Carlos met downstairs to pick up Ramón Rosado at his condo, “The Gardens of France,” across the street.

39 Viejos, meaning old timers or folks.
40 The coroner would later note that he was wearing mismatched socks (Nelson 160).
Ramón had no idea whether they would shoot someone or just end up in Guánica for the demonstration that they had attended every year. When Arnaldo came upstairs to get him, Ramón was still in bed and barely awake. He said he was too tired from the night before and went back to sleep. Rosado would later say in an interview,

> We weren’t going to go to Cerro Maravilla. We gave up on that idea the night before. When [Arnaldo] Dario went to wake me up, it was to go to Guánica as we agreed to do the night before. [...] When I told him I was too tired from the night before and would not be going, he was not upset. He just left. (Suarez 81)

Arnaldo and Carlos met González Malavé at the University of Puerto Rico. It is assumed that the three took a cab from there to Ponce (Nelson 161). From there, they waved down a público. Once they got in, their handguns were pulled, and they took the terrified 65-year-old driver hostage. That driver was Julio Ortiz Molina, a well-respected, old-fashioned man that everyone who knew him addressed him as “Don Julio.” González Malavé shoved the man over, took the wheel of the car, and drove the four of them to Cerro Maravilla while Arnaldo and Carlos kept their guns on him (Nelson 163).

Despite the high tension in the car, it was the two of them that reassured Don Julio that he would be safe. It was Carlos that told him, “We won’t hurt you. We’re revolutionaries, and someday you will understand why we’re doing this” (Nelson 163). When they arrived at the site, González Malavé parked the car, took the keys, and ordered Don Julio to stay where he was. The three men got out of the car with their handguns drawn.

From here, things get a little fuzzy. It is not known to be without a shadow of a doubt what really happened at Cerro Maravilla. There were multiple witnesses including Don Julio, González Malavé, the several policemen that were about to strike, and the

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41 The públicos on the island are group taxis that pick up people along the road as they drive (Nelson 162).
communication tower’s technician. Each perspective, however, is objective. I know what I believe to be the most accurate, but all I can do is present you with the facts.

González Malavé’s account details the three of them gathering at the gate. The police report says they gathered at the público while Colón Berrios led three policemen to approach the car and gave the order to halt. This account goes on to say that Arnaldo and Carlos ignored the order and charged the police while shooting (Suarez 94).

Don Julio’s account says that when the three got out of the car they were approached by “ten to twelve” heavily armed men (Suarez 86). At the sight of this, he ducked down under the dashboard as the shooting started, and could hear voices shouting. One saying, “Don’t shoot me — I’m an agent,” and another yelling, “Help! I surrender!” (Nelson 163).

The police report said in their initial rush, Carlos was shot four times in the elbow, leg, knee, and finally the chest, killing him. In a second rush by Arnaldo, Bruno González and Reverón, causing them to throw themselves to the ground and return fire. Bruno González is believed to be the one to strike Arnaldo in the chest, killing him (Suarez 94). With both men now dead, the other policemen in Toro Negro that had not driven to the site after hearing gunshots were called to gather before all drove to the Jayuya Health Center (Suarez 95).

González Malavé’s sworn statement poked holes in the police reports. He claimed,

I heard a ‘halt,’ I don’t know from whom. Carlos Soto opened fire, followed by Arnaldo, as they ran toward the front of the car. [...] At that moment I was wounded and fell to the ground behind the car as I fired several shots in the air as I fell. On the ground I dragged myself closer to the mound and from there shouted not to do anything to [Ortiz Molina], that he had nothing to do with this, but first I shouted that I was a policeman. I heard gunshots. After the shooting was over, someone picked me off the ground and put me in a car. (Suarez 96)

By stating that an agent had been in the building, González Malavé had uncovered that there had to have been someone within the grounds that was excluded in the
police report. This person was identified as Torres Marrero, who the police report said was hiding in the bushes with Colón Berrios (Suarez 97). This was suspicious, and added with the fact that none of the policemen would confess where they had been hiding prior to the shooting was not looking to be in their favor (Suarez 98).

Don Julio’s account says he was approached by an armed policeman in civilian clothing after the shooting had stopped. He ordered him to get out of the car. At his fearful insistence that he was a victim in this scenario, he was roughly pulled from the vehicle and came to the cruel understanding that “his rescuers were treating him much worse than his captors had” (Nelson 164). He recalled two things happening. The first: the officers punched him, struck him in the head with a rifle butt, knocked him to the ground, and kicked him. The second: the two young men who he believed were mortally wounded protested his innocence (Suarez 86). It is believed that the harsh beating he received was in response to González Malavé’s injuries from the flying metal debris of the vehicle during the shooting (Nelson 164). This, of course, is something the police denied. He and González Malavé were taken from the scene to receive medical attention, and while he was being treated he recalled hearing about four or five more shots. The officer with him, Jesús Quiñones, said, “You’d better wait. It sounds like they’re still playing cowboy up there” (Nelson 165).

From here he was taken to the Ponce hospital where police were gathering to check on González Malavé’s condition. His wounds were far less serious than they feared and was in good enough health and spirits to have his photo taken. The driver of Ortiz Molina’s ride was a friend of his, and he had told him, “[..] thank God I’m still

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42 Fig. 14 (see page 173)
alive." Once they arrived at the hospital and Ortiz Molina believed he was not being watched, he called a friend to relay the message to his wife who did not have a phone.

Look, these kids held me up and took me to the tower at Cerro Maravilla and there was a shoot-out and I'm in the district hospital and I'm going to Ponce with the district attorney and they're here to see one of them who's wounded and I took the opportunity to call you, so if my wife calls you or something like that, you'll have an idea more or less — you can explain to her that I'm fine, you can tell her I'm on a trip or something. (Nelson 166).

From here Don Julio would be interviewed by the police for a statement and then by multiple news outlets about what happened. By process of elimination from his identification of the three men, he would have helped to identify González Malavé as the one giving orders in the car (Suarez 86) and thus made him the “apparent leader of the group” (Nelson 176).

Don Julio’s observations of González Malavé’s leadership and seeing Arnaldo and Carlos alive before he left the scene coupled with the inaccuracies between González Malavé’s statement and the police’s raised tensions of the public. This was only fueled when Governor Romero called the police action on the 25th “heroic.” In a televised statement on July 29th, he is quoted saying:

What happened at Cerro Maravilla was a victory of the legal forces over the illegal forces of terror and subversion. There at Cerro Maravilla, some terrorists arrived with revolvers and pistols to blow up communication towers. How should they have been received by the police? With white gloves? With a cordial greeting? With a message of surrender? With flowers?

Those who dedicate themselves to carrying revolvers and pistols, bombs to blow up communication towers, sawed off shotguns to fire against the homes of innocent people, who hold up offices of the University of Puerto Rico or anywhere else, armed to seize equipment and sow terror, who attack police stations and policemen with impunity, should know that they will be received like what they are—enemies of the people of Puerto Rico.

The enemies of a people are received with a strong hand at the moment of the terror they pretended to sow. (Suarez 87)
This man sang the praises of the agents and officers that heroically saved the island from terrorists when the facts pointed out that those officers acted with unnecessary cruelty. Police and government officials did their best to defuse the situation, but the controversy only continued to grow. In an attempt to appeal this, Governor Romero ordered a special investigation with the Puerto Rican Department of Justice. By August 30th, the investigation announced the following results:

1. The police identified themselves before firing shots
2. The victims fired first, and the officers returned fire in self-defense, killing the victims instantly
3. The leader of the terrorist group was Rosado Torres, not González Malavé
4. Only one set of shots was fired by officers
5. The victims did not speak after the shots (Nelson 176-7)

These officials had hoped this would be the end of it, but the discrepancies of the story only continued to be pointed out. The families of Arnaldo and Carlos both filed a $2.5 million lawsuit in the US District Court against the police involved in the killings and their superior officers. The subsequent hearings would reveal more of these discrepancies. Among them, and perhaps the largest, was that both men were kneeling when they were killed. Miguel Caragena Flores would reveal this detail in his testimony and the doctor responsible for the autopsy would support this claim (Nelson 227). The original police report had said the officers shot upward at the two from the ground when Arnaldo and Carlos charged them, yet the court transcript says the man would have had to “be kneeling, or at least on the right knee, if not both knees” from the angle the bullet entered (Nelson 227).

Another of the most significant discrepancies was the presence of Miguel Marte, the television technician that was at the scene that day. He said that the two men surrendered, and one had even begged for their life as the police surrounded him. When Marte left the tower, an agent was beating Rosado Torres and was told by another, “Remember, you didn’t see anything, and you only heard one round of shots
and a second, “That could have been you over there. You were born today. We saved your life” (Nelson 229).

The hearings would also reveal the initial order for the killings that day: “[A] hostage was going to come with them. And that these kids couldn’t or shouldn’t come down alive.” When asked why this was happening, they were told, “they were bad and had to be eliminated, or killed, or something like that” (Nelson 230). The evidence stacking up was damning to say the least against both the officers involved and the governor, who by this point had been accused of knowing about the plan.

It would be very easy for me to continue giving you the play by play of what happened in court, but I would much rather focus on the humans than the bureaucracy of this story. In regards to the legal actions and final decisions of this story, I leave you with this:

Officers Nazario Mateo Espada, Juan Bruno Gonzáles, Jose Ríos Polanco, and Officer William Colón Berrios were all participants.

Lieutenants Jaime Quiles Hernández and Nelson González Pérez gave the order for the final shots to three officers.

Officers Rafael Torres Marrero, Rafael Moreno Morales, and Luis Reverón Martinez received this order. Rafael Torres couldn’t do it, but the other did without hesitation. Both would later admit that they would never forget the look in the eyes of the men they killed. One, Martinez, even had a mental break as a result.

All of them faced murder and perjury charges.

A second group of six officers that were at Tero Negro, but not at the specific scene of the crime would face murder charges as well, but they and González Malavé would ultimately be found innocent.

The immediate consequences for the policemen involved in this case are as follows:
Colonel Angel Perez Casillas, Lieutenant Jaime Quiles, Officer Rafael Moreno Morales, Officer William Colón Berrios, Officer José Rios Polanco, Officer Juan Bruno González, and Nazario Mateo Espada were all suspended.

Lieutenant Nelson Gonzalez resigned.

Officers Rafael Torres Marrero and Luis Reverón Martínez would take a disability leave.

Agent Alejandro González Malavé would be promoted to an officer until tensions surrounding the case grew too high, and he had to step down from the position.

The legal repercussions would not show themselves until seven years later on March 27, 1985. These individuals would be found guilty of first degree murder and 45 of the 53 charges of perjury against them. Each sentence ranged from six to 30 years. Perez Casillas faced the additional charge of “inciting to lie.”

González Malavé would be accused of kidnapping Ortiz Molina in 1984 and would be acquitted the following year. Ortiz Molina would, however, collect $35,000 in damages from the Puerto Rican government.

The families of the victims would receive a settlement of $575,000 each in 1987.

The surviving members of the ARM, who were each arrested for the assault on the university security office would be acquitted of their charges in 1983.

All the while, the public and especially those involved in the pro-independence movement were furious. Protests of all kinds arose against the injustice of the whole ordeal. Many of these involved violence. Among them was the shooting and killing of patrolman, Julio R. Rodríguez Rivera in 1978, two Navy men killed and 10 others wounded by machine gun in 1979, and the murder of González Malavé in front of his parents’ home in Bayamón 1985.
I said I wanted to focus on the humans and the real emotions that were felt. So I want to take you back in time in this final section of retelling history.

No Such Consolation

While Alejandro González Malavé was able to return home to his wife, Carmen, and his family after his time in the hospital. She would have to wait anxiously to see him the next day, but she would get to see him again.

The families of the victims had no such consolation.

Arnaldo’s wife, Angela, was home with their son. Four or five men knocked on her door, showed her an identification card, and insisted that they were police and must be let in. They searched the apartment, told her Arnaldo was arrested. 45 minutes later, they left with family photos and important documents like her social security card and gave her a phone number to call. She and her son went to a neighbor’s home where she called her father-in-law, Pablo Rosado Leiva.

From there Rosado Leiva called the number and spoke to person after person until finally he was told his son was dead. He was killed by the police because he and another young man planned to blow up the communication towers. His body was at the morgue in Ponce. Rosado Leiva was the one to tell Angela the news.

Rosado Leiva then picked her and the baby up and drove to the morgue to identify the body. When he saw his son, he was confused about his appearance. Arnaldo had bruises on his forehead and a black eye. He was told his son died in a shootout, but both his son and Carlos, who was next to him, were shot in the chest. These questions were not voiced.

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43 It did not feel right to interrupt this section with in-text citations. All of the information within it came from Suarez’s chapter “The Days That Followed” and Nelson’s chapter “High Noon.”
As Angela was asked for her help in identifying the second body, Rosado Leiva called his ex-wife and Arnaldo’s mother, Juana Torres Aymar. She was in Brooklyn preparing for bed when she received the news.

Angela, who had met Carlos a few times, recognized the bruised body next to her husband’s with an exclamation of, “That’s Quico” (Nelson 171). Though she did not know his full name, she did leave the Soto family’s address.

She and Rosado Leiva made funeral preparations then left for Ponce, where Angela planned to stay with family.

Carlos’ family would not learn about his fate until the next day.

His family, girlfriend, Arlene, and her mother, Sylvia, were at the Soto family’s country home in Naranjito. Arlene was the one to point everyone’s attention to the radio, which reported that Arnaldo Darío Rosado Torres had been killed and someone named Carlos had been wounded at a place called Cerro Maravilla. Arlene had been told by a friend that Carlos had last been seen with Arnaldo, and she worried that he was the Carlos the radio spoke of.

The Sotos got back to their apartment at around 7:00 p.m. The radio reported an hour later that a terrorist only known as Carlos had been killed with another they identified again as Arnaldo Dario Rosado Torres. Soto and his wife, Carmen, visited and called everyone they could think of, trying to find out what happened to Carlos, but with so many men named Carlos on the island it was nearly impossible.

Soto called a friend at The San Juan Star, Samuel Aponte, at about 11:00 p.m. for any lead he could get. Aponte then called the Ponce District Hospital for information and learned that the other man killed at Cerro Maravilla was named Carlos Soto and lived in the Quintana Condominium in Hato Rey. He was the one to call Soto and tell him. They were about to perform the autopsy on his son, and he decided at that
moment to drive to Ponce and find out what happened. Aponte went with him, for he didn't want Soto to be alone. Soto let him because he wanted a witness.

On the drive, Aponte shared what he knew about the case. Similar to Rosado Leiva, he had been told that Arnaldo and Carlos went to Cerro Maravilla to blow up the communication towers and were killed in a shootout with the police. Unlike Rosado Leiva, however, he knew that there was an undercover agent with them. There was no way in Soto's mind that this could be his son—his quiet, pensive son.

When they arrived at the hospital just after 1:00 a.m., Soto looked down and knew it was his son. What he did not know was how the dried blood, bruises, and extra bullet wounds got on his son's body? Shaking with absolute rage and shock over the situation, he turned to the nurse and demanded answers. When she gave him nothing, he went on to the superintendent of the nurses, and when that woman gave him nothing, he demanded to see the police.

In that moment he was sure of two things: 1) his son was murdered and 2) he was going to learn how.

**Too Many Stage Directions**

Let's ignore the interruption of COVID-19 for a moment, and let me speak of a scenario in which what I am describing was a reality. Indulge me, okay?

One of the best and most rewarding parts of being a theater major at Connecticut College is having the opportunity to take part in a Capstone Festival at the end of your senior year in any creative capacity you choose. The concept behind this is to culminate what you have learned and what interests you most in the line of theatrical work you've chosen to pursue. As a freshman, I had no plans of participating in the festival as a playwright for a full production. The amount of work, commitment, and stress I viewed my peers of previous classes putting into this festival was something I never envisioned myself willingly undertaking. Obviously, I
was wrong because here I am having written the play and here you are reading the thesis I wrote compiling all of the research I did to do it. So what changed?

I started this project for one real reason, that then grew into a bunch of others. But fundamentally, it was simply: if not me then who?

I am a second-generation Puerto Rican. This means that my grandparents were the first in my family to come from Toa Baja to the United States, specifically Chicago. You must know this now if you have made it this far; Puerto Rico is a commonwealth of the US. We are not our own country nor are we among the fifty states. We have citizenship, but do not have the right to vote. We are completely under this country’s control, but have no say in what that looks like. We are part of the US but not truly.

When I thought, and continue to think about how little people with no relation to Puerto Rico knew of these facts that I have been aware of for as long as I remember, I was deeply disturbed. My emotions would drastically shift between a rage over the ignorance and a distress for the naivety of these individuals. Then I thought of how this goes beyond affecting me as an individual. I thought of my younger brother and sister, about how their schools will never teach them of our history and how if they want to know it they will have to find it themselves. I thought of the extended family I have in the US that is so out of touch with the island that they do not know, or worse do not care to know, of this history.

And just like that, I was writing a capstone proposal with one of my closest friends, Andre “AT” Thomas.

The project started off drastically different than the one enclosed in these pages. Originally, the play I was writing was called *A Call to Action* and focused on a small family planning a quinceanera. Their planning would be interrupted by Hurricane Maria and be shadowed by Isabel Rosado Morales’ own story of joining the Nationalist Party. I was focused on answering the question, “what do you do when your world crumbles around you?”
It took one conversation with José E. Lopez at the Puerto Rican Cultural Center while I was home for the summer to completely change the course of this project. I asked him what he thought of the protests going on at the time for Governor Ricardo “Ricky” Rosselló’s resignation, and we got to talking about history repeating itself. The words he said are some I will never forget. He said, “History can never repeat itself. Rather it is the unresolved conflicts of the past demanding to be solved.”

Then, he pointed out how the colonial rule in Puerto Rico continued to manifest itself in history, and how many of these, for lack of a better word, repetitions appear on July 25th: the invasion of the US in 1898, the rebranding of this day as the holiday, Constitution Day, in 1952, and the Cerro Maravilla murders in 1978. Around this date were also Isabelita’s arrest and Rosselló’s official resignation.

I remember walking home that day thinking a lot about this conversation. There was something so profoundly beautiful about this date, and José had introduced me to the murders of Cerro Maravilla, which Seven Twenty-Five focuses on and I was unfamiliar with. If I did not know about these two young men who lost their lives brutally in an attempt to silence independence, then others had not either.

This was a story that had not been told, or at least had not been told recently or strongly enough. Suddenly, it felt like I had a responsibility to the real people involved in these historical events to tell their story, to make sure it was being heard by someone that would never have heard it unless they were actively searching for it.

From the original idea and draft of A Call to Action, I kept the idea of telling two stories side by side and balancing fiction with history. It was often difficult to find that perfect balance and draw the line between reality and artistic interpretation, but looking back, that’s what made it fun. I also held on tightly to Isabel’s story. Yes, I am biased because she is family, but she was an incredible woman that deserves to be remembered too. I also kept the challenge the original title introduced. The play is
sad; I can’t deny that. However, if I made even one person want to do something in response to the injustice my play described, I would have considered that a success.

This is a story that needs to be told. I could have just written the thesis about it, but you wouldn’t have gotten it by that alone. I wanted to immerse the audience in the experience— to have them breathe the same air as these characters, to pretend for just a moment that it was really happening in front of them, to call them out, to make them uncomfortable, and above all to make them feel in a way I do not think words on a page alone could have. And what better place to do that then on the very stage I have spent four years working on and on a predominately white campus?

This is the story of only two of the many injustices that happen in our world every single day. The dire need for change is already here. It is my goal that this project helps people recognize that and step up to combat these injustices. There is a movement happening right now in front of us. This is my chance to contribute to it in a way that both honors the past and looks hopefully to the future.

I hope you enjoy Seven Twenty Five.
Characters:
ISABELITA
QUICO (pronounced Kee—Ko)
ARNIE
ALEJANDRO
CAB DRIVER
CHIEF | DEAN | PAPI
RAMI (pronounced Rah—Mee)

Time:
We are seeing two times in the same plane of existence, one in the early 1950s and the other in the late 1970s.

A Note About Punctuation:
A slash ( / ) signals the start of another character’s speech.
A dash ( — ) signals the interruption of a thought.
PROLOGUE

Sometime in the school year of 1950.
The doors to the theater have not been opened.
Patrons are just outside these doors, waiting to be let in.
ISABELITA opens the doors.

ISABELITA.
Come in, come in, come in!
She allows patrons to enter the theater space.
Please, sit. Make yourselves comfortable. We have a lot to talk about.
She stands by the doorway, acting as a greeter to those still entering.
Her greetings can be improvised ranging from “It’s good to see you” to
“I love that top.” They should be warm, inviting.
When most patrons are sitting, she moves to address the room
It’s so good to see all of you here! I would love to just sit and talk— there’s so much for us to talk about! But we don’t have much time.
I have something very important to tell you before it’s too late— before they get back.
(very seriously) They cannot know what I’m about to share with you all.
Do you understand?
(softly) I know you have a lot of questions, but I don’t have the time to answer them.
I need to teach you something. In your programs, there are the lyrics to La Borinqueña.
They’re in Spanish. You may not speak it, you may have never even heard of this song, but I need you to try your hardest, okay?
This is really important, mis hijos.
I know you don’t understand why this is happening— not because you are too young, but because they do not want you to know.
For now, we’re going to learn a song. Does that sound good?
Okay. Good. Everyone looking at it?
I can’t play you the music— not yet. But you can learn the words without it.
The lyrics are sung with the audience as a call and response.

¡Despierta, Borinqueño
que han dado la señal!
¡Despierta de ese sueño
que es hora de luchar!
Good. Very very good, hijos.
Make sure you—

Approaching footsteps. She responds to this.

remember all of that. We'll need it later.

She begins to exit but hurries back.

(mildly panicked) Do not repeat that anywhere. Do you understand? Do not repeat those words until I am with you again.

DEAN enters. He does not see her, but she sees him.

She exits in the opposite direction, running.

Dean is holding a notecard.

DEAN.

(clears throat and reads) Hello everyone, and welcome to your first day of university. This is an incredibly exciting time in your young lives. Cheer.


(reading) We warmly welcome you, class of... (mumbles) it doesn't say the class year.

He looks onstage. No one comes to his aid.

(again reading) We warmly welcome you, class of (mumbles something incoherently) as you begin this journey of growth both academically and as individual human beings. We are thrilled to take part in and witness this journey here. We have a thrilling program prepared for you all today. Exits are (vaguely gestures with hands) thataway and back there.

Again, thanks for coming. I hope you find a lot you can take away from today to apply to the future.

CAB DRIVER is sitting in his cab. It should be clear that he has been here for a long time. His hand is bandaged.

CHIEF interrogates him from offstage.

CAB DRIVER.
I already told you.

CHIEF.
Well, tell me again.

CAB DRIVER.
The story won’t change. There aren’t going to be any new details I missed the first time. I’ve already told you what happened. What more do you want from me?

CHIEF.
The truth. Why were you there?

CAB DRIVER.
(sighs) Dispatch got a call for a ride request to the radio tower. I was closest to the men that called in, so they sent me.

CHIEF.
And then what?

CAB DRIVER.
Everything was normal. Two got in the back seat, one got in the front, and I started driving. I was— I was trying to make small talk with them, you know? It’s what I normally do with my passengers.

CHIEF.
What did you talk about?

CAB DRIVER.
Normal things.

CHIEF.
Normal things?

CAB DRIVER.
Yeah, just normal small talk things.
CHIEF.
Like what? Think harder! Be specific!
CAB DRIVER.
I—I said something like, “Nice day we’re having” or “How about this weather?” Just a normal small talk starter. They agreed but were really quiet, almost on edge. They didn’t have much to say after that. It was quiet. Well, quiet except for the radio. I started humming.

For a moment he just hums. Chief clears his throat.

Eventually, I asked them why they were heading to the radio tower. It’s a long drive from the university you know? I’m not one to judge, especially when it’s ultimately going in my pocket, but they could have taken the bus or their own car or gotten a ride because the fare is expensive. This trip must be really important.

At first, no one said anything, and I thought maybe they’re being rude. They don’t want to waste their time talking to some lowly cab driver like me. But when I look in the rearview mirror before making a turn, I catch a glimpse of the two in the backseat, and they’re fidgeting. Are they nervous? I can’t imagine why.

The one in the front says, “Duty calls.”

So I ask if they were DJs or something because what else could duty mean?

A beat.

They weren’t— obviously. I know that now, but at that moment... they were young and had that look about them.

They were quiet and I thought maybe they didn’t hear me. So I asked again, “Are you DJs at the radio station?” and before I even finished the question, one of the ones in the back seat cocks a gun and pushes it right against the back of my head.

Maybe they thought I was interrogating them or was getting suspicious or asking too many questions or something— I don’t know!

All I know is there’s a gun pointed to the back of my head and I’m thinking why didn’t I take the cab with the divider? And I’m thinking about my wife. What will she do without me? Will she be okay? Will she have to raise our sons alone?

And all the while, the two in the backseat are yelling at each other, and in the rearview mirror, I can see that the other man, the one that isn’t holding me at gunpoint, draws his gun on the one who is. It’s like they’re having a standoff, but my head is on the line.

CHIEF.
What did they say?
CAB DRIVER.
I— I don’t remember.

CHIEF.
Think harder!

CAB DRIVER.
I don’t know! My heartbeat was ringing in my ears and my thoughts were racing a mile a minute. It felt like I was drowning! I was gripping the wheel harder than I’ve ever held anything. I think I was mumbling every prayer I knew or had ever heard.

CHIEF.
Then what happened?

CAB DRIVER.
The other one— the other man in the front seat. He reached over and put his hands on my shoulder. I know that the other two were screaming at each other, but it was like he was the only one I could hear. He was calm and— and—

CHIEF.
And what!?

CAB DRIVER.
He was trying to calm me down. He— he was, uh, wearing glasses, I remember that, and his eyes looked so calm. And he kept repeating, “Everything is going to be okay. Nothing is going to happen to you.” He said, “Let’s just get to our destination, yeah? We need your help, but you are going to be fine. I’ll protect you.”

A beat.

And I… I… believed him.

CHIEF.
What about the other two?

CAB DRIVER.
He, the one in the front seat, started talking to the two in the back. Got them to calm down. I drove them to the radio tower.

We were all silent.

CHIEF.
And the gun?

CAB DRIVER.
It stayed against the back of my head the whole way there…
But I already told you all of this. When can I go home to my wife, to my sons?

CHIEF.
When we're done, and we're not done yet.

CAB DRIVER.
What else do you want from me?

CHIEF.
Start again / from—

CAB DRIVER.
What!? / You can't—

CHIEF.
From the beginning. The very beginning.

CAB DRIVER.
*(sighs)* Dispatch got a call for a ride request to the radio tower. I was closest to the men that called in, so they sent me.

CHIEF.
And then what?
SCENE 2

1976.

In the air shaft of the Quintana Condos in Hato Rey.

ARNIE and QUICO enter on opposite staircases, each holding dirty laundry and detergents.

Both are distracted and run into each other at the bottom of their respective stairs, dropping what they are carrying.

ARNIE. I’m so sorry!

QUICO. Sorry! Sorry, I wasn’t watching where I was going.

ARNIE. I didn’t / mean to—

QUICO. Here, let me help you with all of this.

He immediately drops down to start picking up clothes that have spilled out of Arnie’s basket. Arnie does the same.

A pamphlet catches Quico’s attention. He stares at it for a beat.

Arniespeakingstartleshim. The pamphlet is shoved in his pocket.

ARNIE. Thank you, and, again, I’m really sorry about all of— Gestures to the mess with his hands.

QUICO. Really, it’s okay. And I’m sorry too.

By this point, the mess is cleaned. Each holding their own laundry again.

ARNIE. No harm done, right?

QUICO. Right.

The two continue to stand across from each other unsure of what to do next.

A beat of awkward silence.
QUICO.

You’re—

BOTH.

You go ahead.

They share a laugh at their awkwardness. Arnie gestures for Quico to continue.

QUICO.

I was going to ask if you’re the man in the condo across from mine.

ARNIE.

4D right?

QUICO.

Yeah, that’s me.

ARNIE.

Oh! We’re neighbors.

He balances his laundry to one arm and extends the other hand.

My name is Arnaldo.

Quico struggles to do the same.

QUICO.

Carlos.

They shake.

It’s nice to officially meet you. Sorry, it had to be so messy.

ARNIE.

(laughing) It’s quite alright. Are you heading to Chiqui’s too?

QUICO.

The laundromat? Yes, I am.

ARNIE.

I’ll walk with you. I can buy you a Coke as an / apology.

QUICO.

Oh, you don’t have / to—

ARNIE.

I insist.
QUICO.
Well, I do love Coke, and if you're insisting then...

Arnie laughs.

The two exit and begin walking to Chiqui's together.
SCENE 3

The same day as the previous scene. 1976.
At Chiqui’s Laundromat, ARNIE and QUICO are sitting, drinking Cokes.

QUICO.
So what brings you here?
ARNIE.
My wife is pregnant.
QUICO.
Congratulations!
ARNIE.
Thank you.
That’s why I’m doing the laundry tonight. Figured I’d keep her off her feet as much as possible. Her ankles are swollen like, ahh, balloons!

_Arnie gestures with his hands the size of her ankles._
_They laugh._

What about you? Did you draw the short end of the stick?
QUICO.
Nah. My father and I usually rotate, but I like it here. It’s quiet, so I normally read or do some homework.

_We hear the loud sounds of a laundromat. A baby crying, gym shoes tumbling around in a dryer, coins dispensed from a coin machine, etc._
_It is very much not quiet._

Lately, I’ve been taking all the turns myself.
ARNIE.
Oh, I’m sorry. I can stop talking your ear off if you want to / get some work done.
QUICO.
That’s okay. I’m enjoying talking to you, and you seem more interesting than my math homework.
ARNIE.
High school?
QUICO.
Yeah. You in school?
ARNIE.
Yeah, I'm in my fourth year at the university.
QUICO.
Oh wow! No kidding! I'm hoping to be there after I finish school.
ARNIE.
Maybe we'll be classmates in the future. I plan to be there for a few more years for grad school.
QUICO.
Yeah, maybe. Okay, senior at uni, going into grad school. That makes you what? 22?
ARNIE.
Yeah. And what about you? You're in high school so 14, / 15?
QUICO.
I'm 16. Thank you.

Arnie puts hands up in a joking surrender. They laugh.

ARNIE.
16? So young.
QUICO.
Not that young.
ARNIE.
(smiles) No, not that young. What do you want to do?
QUICO.
What? When I grow up?
ARNIE.
Not necessarily. Whenever. At whatever age. What do you want to do in the world?

Quico stares at Arnie for a long moment, silently asking.

"Can I trust you?" Arnie continues to smile at him.

A weighted beat.

Finally.

QUICO.
I'm going to take a chance here—on you— and tell you what I really want to do and not the answer I'd normally give.
I want to fight for Puerto Rico.

ARNIE.

(still smiling) Fight for Puerto Rico? Who are we at war with?

Quico eyes him for a moment.

QUICO.

I think you know exactly what I’m talking about.

ARNIE.

I do?

QUICO.

I think so.

He pulls out the pamphlet from his pocket.

Unless this Independencia pamphlet got into your laundry by mistake.

ARNIE.

(somehow smiling even bigger) No mistake. That’s mine.

Quico hands Arnie the pamphlet and takes a long sip of his Coke.

After a moment, he smiles at Arnie.

QUICO.

Good.

ARNIE.

Good.

QUICO.

I think we’re going to get along great.

ARNIE.

So do I.
In the classroom of a rural school in Ceiba, Puerto Rico. 

ISABELITA enters to start class. 

DEAN is in his office. 

We are watching two moments in time at once. 

ISABELITA. 

Good morning, mis hijos! How are we all doing today? 

She listens to the response while setting down her stuff. 

Well, as much as I would love to spend some time catching up from this past weekend, the dean is going to be coming in to observe the class today, and I've got a big schedule for us. Let's dive right in, okay? 

DEAN. 

Send her in. 

ISABELITA. 

Does someone want to remind us where we left off in our last discussion? 

DEAN. 

Isabel. 

She gestures for one of her students to speak. 

ISABELITA. 

Go ahead. 

Isabelita is now in Dean's office. 

You wanted to see me sir? 

DEAN. 

Have a seat. 

ISABELITA. 

Did you enjoy the class? I know we got off on a tangent near the end there, but I do think it is important that my students can ask / whatever they— 

DEAN. 

You did it again. 

ISABELITA. 

Did it again? What did I..?
We're back in the classroom.

Very good. So let's continue the conversation. We spent a lot of time focusing on events that have happened around the world. But what are some examples from right here?

She listens to the response of a student.

Good, good! Others?

She listens to another response.


They are in Dean's office again.

DEAN.

You said Occupation Day again, Isabel. It's called Constitution Day. Not Occupation Day.

ISABELITA.

I did? Surely / I—

DEAN.

You did.

ISABELITA.

(to the class) Is there anyone unfamiliar with Occupation Day?

DEAN.

You said Occupation Day.

ISABELITA.

(to the class) Occupation Day is—

DEAN.

You didn't say Constitution Day once. Just like in the other class I sat in of yours. That cannot continue.

ISABELITA.

But, sir, with all due respect. / I—

DEAN.

The holiday / is—

ISABELITA.

(laughing) Holiday?

DEAN.

Yes, the holiday.
ISABELITA.
(to her students) Occupation Day is a day of mourning. Does anyone not know what mourning is?
DEAN.
The holiday is called Constitution Day, and that is the way it should be taught and talked about with your students going forward. Do you understand?
ISABELITA.
Sir, what you are asking me to do completely erases—
DEAN.
I'm not asking you.
ISABELITA.
Completely erases the history of Occupation Day—of our people!
I'm sorry, but, as an educator, it is my responsibility to teach the past, the whole past. I can't—
I can't just pick and choose what I tell them. You cannot ask me to do that. It goes against everything I—
DEAN.
I am not asking you to do anything. I, as your employer, am telling you that, as long as you are an educator here and on the entire island of Puerto Rico, you must follow the approved curriculum. Am I clear?
ISABELITA.
But that isn't—
DEAN.
Am I clear?

A standoff.

ISABELITA.
Crystal.
DEAN.
Good.

He moves to leave but pauses.

Isabel, you're one of the best teachers this school has.
(a threat) Don't do anything you'll regret.

Dean exits. Isabel watches him go.

She is shaking and reaches for her wallet, clutching it close to her
We are back in the classroom. She quickly puts her wallet away.

ISABELITA.

Good work today, class. I’ll see you all tomorrow.
SCENE 5

Spring 1977.
Chiqui’s Laundromat.
ARNIE is leaning against a machine, reading.
For a moment, we just watch him. He turns a page.

QUICO.
Arnie! Arnie! Arnie!

QUICO enters, running. In his hand is a letter.
Arnie puts the book down. Quico catches his breath.

ARNIE.
Where’s the fire?

QUICO.
It’s here. When I got home from school, Papi, he just— he hands this to me.

Quico shows Arnie the letter. He knows what it is immediately.

ARNIE.
You haven’t opened it yet? What the hell are you waiting for!?

QUICO.
I don’t even know. I took the letter from him, and he was looking at me all expectantly, you know? Of course you know. You know how my dad / is.

ARNIE.
Quico!
QUICO.

QUICO.
Sorry, sorry! I just couldn’t do it in front of him, so I just said, “Oh.”

ARNIE.
Oh?

QUICO.
“Oh.”

ARNIE.
That’s it!? Oh!?

QUICO.
Just “Oh.” I think I might have been in shock or too excited or something. So I just sat in my room staring at it. This envelope right here has my future written down inside of it. That’s
heavy, right? And I was freaking out! Then, I thought about how much you would judge me and laugh at me for just staring at it. At this envelope and / I—

ARNIE.
You ran here?
QUICO.
I ran here.
ARNIE.
Well open it, pendejo!
QUICO.
I should open it right?
ARNIE.
Por el amor de— Yes! Open it!
QUICO.
Okay, I’m gonna!

Quico does not open the letter. He continues to stare at it.

ARNIE.
Now, Quico!
QUICO.
Right! Now!

Quico makes to open the letter but does not. He hands it to Arnie.

I can’t do it! You—

Arnie does not hesitate before ripping the letter open.

Do it...

Arnie quickly reads over the letter but says nothing. His face is blank.

Oh God... I didn’t get in, did I?
Read it! Wait, no! Don’t read it! No, no, no! I have to know even if it’s a rejection. Read it.
ARNIE.

(reading) Dear Carlos Enrique Soto
ARRIVI—

Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my God.

Would you shut up and let me read?
QUICO.
I can’t help it! I’m nervous.
ARNIE.
You’re not gonna hear me say you’ve been accepted / if you keep—
QUICO.
I’ve been accepted!? I was accepted!?

Quico snatches the letter from Arnie and reads it for himself.

I was accepted!
ARNIE.
That’s what I was trying to tell you.
QUICO.
I was accepted.
ARNIE.
Yes, you’ve been accepted.
QUICO.
I WAS ACCEPTED! ARNIE, I WAS ACCEPTED! LAUNDROMAT PATRONS, I WAS—

Arnie covers Quico’s mouth.

ARNIE.
You were accepted. I’m sure they heard.

Quico hugs Arnie, tightly. He can barely contain his excitement.

QUICO.
We’re going to be classmates! At the same school!
ARNIE.
Yes, we are. Congratulations, Quico! I’m so proud of you.
QUICO.
Thanks, Arnie. Couldn’t have done it without your help on the application. I can’t believe I was accepted. I— Oh my God!
ARNIE.
What!? What is it?
QUICO.
I have to go tell my dad!
I can’t believe I got in.
ARNIE.
What are you so shocked about? I told you that you were going to get in before you even sent in your application.
He hugs Arnie again.

QUICO.
Thank you so much. You’re the best friend I could ever ask for.
ARNIE.
Right back at you.
QUICO.
Okay, Papi will kill me if I make him wait any longer. Dinner tomorrow?
ARNIE.
Of course!

*Quico exits with the letter. Arnie watches him then returns to his book.*

*He is smiling.*
SCENE 6

RAMI.

18 degrees, 09 minutes, 11 seconds, north and 66 degrees, 33 minutes, 15 seconds west.

Don’t look at me like that. They’re coordinates.

“To where?” you’re thinking. I can see it written on your faces.

Alright, I’ll tell you.

Standing at 1,205 meters, is Puerto Rico’s fourth highest peak: Cerro Maravilla. It’s part of the Cordillera Central, or the Central Mountain Range for you non-Spanish speakers. The mountain is located at the northern edge of Bario Anón in Ponce, close to Jayuya. In the winter, the air gets crisper, and the temperature can drop to the 40s. But usually, it’s rainy, humid, and absolutely beautiful. The views are like something out of a travel magazine. On a clear day, you can see the northern and southern coasts of the island simultaneously. And if you happen to be there after nightfall, the coquis will be your accompaniment.

The sound of coquis is heard.

Beautiful, right?

There’s nothing like some singing frogs to bring you back home.

For a beat, she just stands there listening.

To get there, you need a car. Take Puerto Rico Highway 577 to the very end. You can access it through PR-143 either westbound or eastbound. 143 is a secondary two-way, two-lane mountainous road and fairly well-traveled. 577, itself is short, really short. It’s only about a quarter of a mile in length. It’s steep but safe to climb both on foot and in a car. The road is asphalt, so when it rains, you gotta be cautious. Unlike 143, it’s approximately 1 and a half lanes wide.

I don’t know if any of you have ever driven on a road that thin, but it’s terrifying. Picture it. You’re driving down this teeny tiny road. Your car can barely fit on with more road on either side it’s so teeny tiny. You’re also climbing a mountain, so the road is steep.

Suddenly, there’s another car driving towards you. You cannot possibly both fit side by side, so you’ve got to move at a glacial pace and move as much to the right as you possibly can so the other car can squeeze by, and, oh yeah, you’re on a literal mountain. It’s scary stuff.

So “Who could possibly be using this road?,” you’re wondering or “Is the view really good enough to be worth that?”
The road is primarily used to get to the television, radio, and telephone communications towers at the top of the mountain.

The sound of coquis fade.

Sound familiar?

It is silent for a beat.

Yes, it’s beautiful, but there are other places, other mountains that are just as, if not more so. The truth is the mountain isn't all that famous. Or at least, it wasn’t famous until...

It’s known as El Cerro de los Mártires. Don’t know what that means either? It’s the mountain of the martyrs.
SCENE 7

Fall 1977.
Chiqui’s Laundromat.

ARNIE and QUICO sit against a running washing machine drinking Cokes.

QUICO.
Winter.
ARNIE.
What!?
QUICO.
You heard me.
ARNIE.
Winter!?
QUICO.
Winter.
ARNIE.
Are you messing with me? Winter?
QUICO.
Winter.
ARNIE.
Why winter?
QUICO.
(shrugging) I like snow.
ARNIE.
You like snow?
QUICO.
Yeah. It’s clean / and—
ARNIE.
Clean?
QUICO.
Pure.
ARNIE.
Pure?
QUICO.
Why do you keep doing that?
ARNIE.
Doing what?
QUICO.
Repeating everything I say like I’m going loco.
ARNIE.
Vivimos en una isla.
QUICO.
Yo sé eso, Arnie.
ARNIE.
Like an actual island, Quico.
QUICO.
And?
ARNIE.
It doesn’t snow here. / What kind of Puerto Rican says winter is their favorite season?
QUICO.
Not here, estupido, but other places.
ARNIE.
You’re the estupido.

Quico playfully shoves him. They laugh.

QUICO.
While my family and I were abroad—bunch of places in Europe, you know? It snows there in some areas in wintertime. We stopped in Austria, and that’s where I saw snow for the first time. It’s beautiful. It covers everything in this, like, blanket, and the world looks deceivingly perfect / and—
ARNIE.
It’s cold.
QUICO.
You just put on layers.

Arnie makes a disgusted sound.

Lots of layers.

Arnie makes a disgusted sound again, louder.
What about you, huh? I bet your favorite season is summer.
ARNIE.
It is.

Quico makes the same disgusted sound, mockingly.

What do you have against summer?
QUICO.
What do you have against winter?
ARNIE.
It's cold.
QUICO.
It's hot.

Both laugh.
The washers behind them ding, signaling the end of the cycle.

Quico buries his face in his arm, groaning.
Arnies finishes his Coke and stands.

ARNIE.
Come on. Break time’s over.
QUICO.
Five more minutes?

Arnies starts transferring the wet laundry to the dryer.

ARNIE.
I know you, Quico. Five minutes turns into ten, ten turns into fifteen, fifteen to half an hour, and before you know it, the evening’s over and your assignment for tomorrow is still unfinished. Your professor may be forgiving, but she’s not that forgiving.
QUICO.
Ugh. You sound like my dad.
ARNIE.
We said we’d take a break until the clothes finished washing / and they’re done.
QUICO.
(moves his arm from his face) Ay por favor, Arnie! Why can’t you just let me procrastinate in peace?
ARNIE.
What kind of friend would I be if I did that?
Quico reluctantly stands and switches his laundry to the dryer.

QUICO.
If you really loved me, you’d enable me.

Arnie sends him a “Really?” look. They laugh.
They continue to switch their laundry, conversing and laughing.

It’s playful.

Maybe Quico throws a wet shirt at Arnie’s face.
Maybe Arnie puts him in a headlock in retaliation.

All of this happens in silence.

Our focus is now on ALEJANDRO and CHIEF.
SCENE 8

Fall 1977.
Outside of the University of Puerto Rico.

ALEJANDRO and CHIEF, in civilian clothing, sit on a bench.
Alejandro is facing forward.

CHIEF.
How’s your mother?

ALEJANDRO.
She’s alright. In good health, happy. Can’t ask for much more than that right?

CHIEF.
That’s good.

A beat.

And your studies? All going well?

ALEJANDRO.
Yes, they’re all going well.

CHIEF.
No problems with any of your professors, right? Because I can talk to someone if you / need me—

ALEJANDRO.
No problems. They’re all fine.

CHIEF.
The last time we talked you said that you were having problems / with—

ALEJANDRO.
That was because of the class, not the professor. I was struggling with—

Alejandro sighs.

It doesn’t matter.

Alejandro faces Chief.

Are you gonna tell me the real reason you wanted to meet or are we just gonna keep exchanging formalities?

CHIEF.
(nodding) Right. Yeah, okay. Have you given any thought to what I suggested last time?
ALEJANDRO.
I have.

Alejandro faces forward again.
Chief waits for him to continue. He doesn't.

CHIEF.
... And?
ALEJANDRO.
I don't think it's a good idea.
CHIEF.
You don't?
ALEJANDRO.
No I don't.
CHIEF.
But you'd be closer to me, to your family.
ALEJANDRO.
I know.
CHIEF.
I thought that's what you wanted.
ALEJANDRO.
I just don't think it's a good time.
CHIEF.
Not a good time? What could possibly be a better time than this?
ALEJANDRO.
I'm making friends here. I'm joining clubs and organizations. They trust me.

He smiles, facing Chief again.
I can't just leave them hanging now. I finally feel like I belong, you know?

A weighted beat.
Finally, Chief sighs.

CHIEF.
I don't know that I completely agree with you.. but I trust you. If you're sure that this is what you want /
ALEJANDRO.
It is.
CHIEF.
You can stay.

_Alejandro smiles even wider. He’s practically beaming._
_Has any other human ever been this happy before?_

ALEJANDRO.
You won’t regret this. It’s going to be so great, I promise. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you!

CHIEF.
But this means I’m going to be checking in even more.

ALEJANDRO.
Of course.

CHIEF.
About everything, okay? Academics, clubs, / the party—

ALEJANDRO.
I know, I know.

CHIEF.
Your mother won’t like it.

ALEJANDRO.
I just won’t tell her. / It’s okay. She wouldn’t understand, and she’d worry. I don’t want to worry her.

CHIEF.
/ Alejandro...

ALEJANDRO.
I’m _not_ going to tell her.

_A beat._

CHIEF.

_He checks the time._

I should get back to the station. But we’ll be in touch.

_Chen stands motions that he may go in for a hug. Alejandro looks down. Chief stops his motion._

Right... Well, I’ll see you around.

_Alejandro nods still looking down. Chief exits._

_After a beat, Alejandro looks around and exits in the opposite direction._
SCENE 9

Winter 1977.
Chiqui’s Laundromat.
ARNIE and QUICO are folding clothes.

QUICO.
I’ve been thinking…

ARNIE.
Uh-oh.

QUICO.
(laughing) Shut up! I have good ideas.

ARNIE.
Sure you do.

QUICO.
Do you want to hear it or not?

ARNIE.
You’re going to tell me even if I don’t.

QUICO.
True. But it’s important to me that you think you have a choice.

They laugh.

ARNIE.
So you’ve been thinking…?

QUICO.
We should start a party.

ARNIE.
A party?

QUICO.
Yeah, you know like the Nationalists or the Socialists. We should start one of our own on campus! Kind of like a chapter, but just for students at the university. Think about it! We could go to demonstrations together, maybe hold some of our own, create and pass out pamphlets and leaflets, and /

ARNIE.
You think we should start a party? Us?
QUICO.
Well, why not us?

You think it's a good idea too.

You always get quiet like this when I'm right and you hate it.
ARNIE.
I do / not
QUICO.
You totally do!
ARNIE.
(hesitantly) It isn't a bad idea.
QUICO.
Ha!
ARNIE.
It's actually a really good one. And you're right.

Quico gasps dramatically.

QUICO.
Somebody pinch me! I must be dreaming!
ARNIE.
You are!
QUICO.
Oh my God! Does anyone have a recorder? I need this moment documented!
ARNIE.
If not us, then who, right?
QUICO.
This is awesome! Because I've already thought of a name and everything. The Armed / Revolution—
ARNIE.
Armed!?
QUICO.
It's just the name, Arnie!
ARNIE.
People will think we really are!
QUICO.
That’s the point! Think about it. It sends a message to the people.
ARNIE.
Yeah, it says that we’re armed.
QUICO.
No, it says ‘don’t mess with us.’ It says we’re serious.

You love it!
ARNIE.
... I do.
QUICO.
Ha!
ARNIE.
What’s the full name?
QUICO.
The Armed Revolutionary Movement
ARNIE.
ARM?
QUICO.
ARM.
ARNIE.
And tell me, Quico. What would the ARM be doing exactly?
QUICO.
Exactly what me and you do!
ARNIE.
Fold laundry?
QUICO.
I mean, we don’t need to limit ourselves to just drinking Cokes as a party.

A beat.

They laugh.
Seriously though, it would be mostly casual. We would do what we do here talking about the books we’ve read, current events, the future of Puerto Rico, complain about what that pro-state idiot governor said this time, and just add a couple more people into the mix.

ARNIE.
And I’m sure you’ve already thought of some people to join.
QUICO.
Perhaps.

ARNIE.
Sharing is caring, Quico.
QUICO,
Well, I think if we asked, Rami would gladly join.
ARNIE.
Rami, huh?

Quico shoves Arnie, making him laugh.

QUICO.
Shut up! You like Rami.
ARNIE.
You like Rami.
QUICO.
I think that Mateo might be interested too, maybe even Neftali, and if we really need someone that isn’t the two of us, you could always bring your wife to one of our meetings.
ARNIE.
You know that Marisol doesn’t like talking about these sorts of things.

Quico waves his hand in dismissal.

QUICO.
She’ll come for her husband.
ARNIE.
She really won’t.

Quico waves his hand again.

We should keep our numbers small. It doesn’t matter if we’re discussing books and politics or if we’re actually armed. You know as well as I do that this could be dangerous.
QUICO.
You said our.
ARNIE.
Are you even listening to me?
QUICO.
You said our. As in your party.
ARNIE.
You’re impossible.
QUICO.
(serious) I was listening. It’s going to be dangerous no matter what we do.

A beat.

But I promise we’ll be careful, as careful as we can be with all of this.
ARNIE.
Then let’s do this.

Arnies extends his hand to Quico.

He looks at it, smiling, for a beat before shaking his hand.

QUICO.
Let’s do this.
ISABELITA rushes in before a real transition is even established.
She's clutching her wallet to her chest again.

ISABELITA.  
Mis hijos, I’m back! But we have even less time than before. There is no time to chat and—  
What’s that, preciosa? This? 

She holds out her wallet to the audience, showing it off.

This is my wallet. It... it brings me comfort during this... stressful time.  
What?

She laughs.

No, it’s not because of the money. There’s something inside that they’ve said I’m not supposed to have. It’s illegal. Do you know what that word means? Very good. 
I could get in a lot of trouble if they knew I had this, and you could get in a lot of trouble for knowing I had this. So I cannot show you— I cannot even tell you. 
What we’re doing is dangerous enough. 
Are you ready to continue with what I was teaching you before? Muy bien.  

Again, she teaches the lyrics in a call and response with the audience.  

A ese llamar patriótico  
¿No arde tu corazón?  
¡Ven! Nos será simpático  
el ruido del cañón.  
You’re all doing so well. 

She looks around.  

I don’t want to press my luck and stay here longer. 
Don’t look so sad, niños. If I could stay, I would, but we cannot be caught. 
Not yet. 
Remember you must not repeat this unless I am here with you. Do you understand? 
Good. I’ll be back as soon as I can. I promise.
SCENE 11

Winter 1977.
The University of Puerto Rico.

CHIEF is sitting on a bench. He is waiting for someone.

A beat.

ALEJANDRO enters. He does not greet Chief but sits at the other end of the bench.

CHIEF.
How are you doing?

ALEJANDRO.
Why are you here again? I thought you agreed I would stay / here.

CHIEF.
I did.

ALEJANDRO.
Then why are you here?

CHIEF.
I told you I would be checking in more often—

ALEJANDRO.
I thought you meant over the phone.

CHIEF.
Well, I didn’t.

ALEJANDRO.
It hasn’t even been a month since—

CHIEF.
Three and a half weeks since I was last here.

ALEJANDRO.
I’ve written.

CHIEF.
Once!

ALEJANDRO.
I thought once would be enough.
CHIEF.
That was two weeks ago.

        Alejandro turns away from him, annoyed. Maybe he rolls his eyes.

        A beat.

We agreed that if you were going to stay / you would—

ALEJANDRO.
Check in more regularly. I know.

CHIEF.
Well, that's why I'm here.

        A beat.

        This is awkward. Can we just go to the next scene?

ALEJANDRO.
I'm sorry.

        This is not the response Chief is expecting.

I guess I've been busy lately.

CHIEF.
Your classes?

ALEJANDRO.
Yeah... but, uh...

        Alejandro turns away from Chief.

CHIEF.
Yes...?

ALEJANDRO.
I also, you know...

CHIEF.
What?

        He turns back to Chief, smiling.

ALEJANDRO.
Joined a couple parties.

        Chief is overjoyed by this news.

        For a moment they just smile at each other.

        Chief slides over on the bench and wraps an arm around Alejandro.

        It's awkward but is allowed by Alejandro for a moment.
They separate but still smile.

CHIEF.
I am so proud of you.
ALEJANDRO.
Thanks.
CHIEF.
Tell me all about it. Which ones? Are you learning anything new? Have you made any friends? Anyone you want to introduce / me to.
ALEJANDRO.
No, no. Soon, but not yet. I'm still new, and it would be kind of weird if.. Yeah, so no.
CHIEF.
How many?
ALEJANDRO.
Four.
CHIEF.
Four!?

Chief laughs and fights the urge to hug him again.

ALEJANDRO.
But that's not the best news.
CHIEF.
It's not?

Alejandro shakes his head.

ALEJANDRO.
(in a lowered voice) I was told by an elite member of the Socialist Party that they are considering making me a card holding / member.
CHIEF.
No!

Alejandro nods rapidly.

This is why I said we need to check in more often. This is huge! We should celebrate! I am so proud of you.
ALEJANDRO.
Thanks. That, uh, really means a lot.
CHIEF.
(suddenly serious) Does your mother—
ALEJANDRO.
Hell no! Estás loco o qué? I can’t tell her that. It would break her heart.
CHIEF.
Do you think she would turn you in?
ALEJANDRO.
(almost disgusted) She wouldn’t. I’m her son after all, right?

Chief smiles sadly at him.

CHIEF.
Hey, forget I asked, okay? You do what you have to do.

Alejandro nods.

Four parties, huh? And maybe a cardholder soon too. You should be proud of what you’re doing.

ALEJANDRO.
(happily again) I am. You have no idea how happy this makes me.
SCENE 12


CAB DRIVER in his cab. He hasn’t moved since the last time we saw him. He looks tired.

CHIEF interrogates him from offstage.

CHIEF.
Again.

CAB DRIVER.
Dispatch got a call for a ride request to the radio tower. I was closest to the men that called in, so they sent me. When I arrived, there were three men waiting for me.

*We can't see them very clearly, but ALEJANDRO, ARNIE, and QUICO are waiting for the cab.*

Two got in the back seat, one got in the front.

*Alejandro and Quico sit in the back. Arnie in the front.*

I started driving.

*The cab’s radio plays music, quietly.*

I tried making small talk with them. It’s what I normally do with my passengers. I said something like, *(to ARNIE)* “Nice day we’re having” or *(to ALEJANDRO and QUICO)* “How about this weather?” Just normal small talk starters.

They agreed but were really quiet, almost on edge. They didn’t have much to say after that.

It was quiet. Well, quiet except for the radio. I started humming.

*For a moment he hums along to the music on the radio.*

Eventually, I asked them why they were heading to the radio tower.

*A beat.*

No one said anything.

I thought maybe they’re being rude. They don’t want to waste their time talking to some lowly cab driver like me. But when I look in the rearview mirror before making a turn, I catch a glimpse of the two in the backseat, and they’re fidgeting. Are they nervous? I can’t imagine why.

The one in the front says, “Duty calls.”

I ask if they were DJs or something?

*A beat.*
I thought maybe they didn’t hear me. So I asked again, (to ARNIE) “Are you DJs at the radio station?” and before I even finished the question, 

Alejandro points a gun at his head.

one of the ones in the back seat cocks a gun and pushes it right against the back of my head. Maybe they thought I was interrogating them or was getting suspicious or asking too many questions or something.

It doesn’t matter. There’s a gun at the back of my head and I’m thinking of my wife and my son / and—

CHIEF.

Keep going.

CAB DRIVER.

The two in the backseat are yelling at each other, and I can see the other man, the one who isn’t holding me at gunpoint.

Quico points a gun at Alejandro.

draws his gun on the one who is. It’s like they’re having a standoff, but my head is on the line. I can’t remember what they were saying. All I can remember is the one in the passenger seat. He reached over and put his hand on my shoulder.

Arnie puts his hand on Cab Driver’s shoulder.

He was calm, and he was wearing glasses /

CHIEF.

No.

CAB DRIVER.

No?

CHIEF.

He wasn’t wearing glasses.

CAB DRIVER.

(insistently) Yes, he was. I remember that specifically. He was wearing glasses, and his eyes looked calm. He was one of the ones that got—

CHIEF.

The one that calmed you down, that defused the situation, was not wearing glasses. That was the one who pointed the gun at you.

Arnie and Alejandro get out of the cab. Alejandro gives him the gun.

They get back in the cab, switching seats, so Alejandro is in the front,
and Arnie is pointing the gun at Cab Driver. Quico does not move.

CAB DRIVER.
No, that isn’t— that isn’t what happened. He was—

CHIEF.
That is exactly how it happened.

CAB DRIVER.
But it wasn’t. It just wasn’t. Why are you trying to— I don’t understand what you’re / doing.

CHIEF.
Your understanding means nothing to me! I told you I wanted the truth from you, and this is it!

CAB DRIVER.
But—

A slam is heard. Cab Driver is frightened by this. By Chief.

CHIEF.
This is what happened. Am I clear?

I said am I clear!?

CAB DRIVER
... Yes.

CHIEF.
Continue.

CAB DRIVER.
He, the one in the front seat, was trying to calm me down.

Alejandro puts a hand on his shoulder.

He was wearing— I mean...

I remember he looked so calm, and he kept repeating, “Everything is going to be okay. Nothing is going to happen to you.” He said, “Let’s just get to our destination, yeah? We need your help, but you are going to be fine. I’ll protect you.”

Cab Driver looks back at Arnie.

A beat.

And I… I… believed him.

CHIEF.

What about the other two?
CAB DRIVER.
He, the one in the front seat, started talking to the two in the back.

*Alejandro turns to the backseat.*

Got them to calm down.

*Quico puts his gun away.*

I drove them to the radio tower.
We were all silent.
CHIEF.
And the gun?
CAB DRIVER.
It stayed against the back of my head the whole way there...
CHIEF.
And what happened when you got there?
CAB DRIVER.
I parked the car. I was told to stay where I was, ready to drive away when they returned.
Imagine that. A getaway driver. *Me.*
CHIEF.
Yes, yes. It’s very shocking, yes. You parked the car, and then what?
CAB DRIVER.
They got out.

*Alejandro, Arnie, and Quico get out of the car.*

And they started walking towards the tower. I watched them.

*Alejandro, Arnie, and Quico exit.*

*Cab Driver watches them go. He does not look away even when they are out of his sight.*

I thought about leaving them. There was nothing holding me there except the fear of what would happen if they caught me abandoning them.
CHIEF.
Why didn’t you?
CAB DRIVER.
Because... as I had made up my mind...

*A beat.*

The gunshots started.
SCENE 13

It's not clear where or when we are.

Rami enters.

RAMI.

Have you ever been arrested?

She singles out one member of the audience.

(teasing) I know you have. You don't have to lie. It's just us.

She looks around

Who am I going to tell?

(to the rest of the audience) So come on. Have you?

She improves a response to whatever anyone says. Her remarks are always teasing.


For a beat, she just kind of watches the house.

Let me paint a scenario for you, okay?

You're driving down the street, listening to some tunes, relaxing.

We hear the sounds of the drive. Tires on road, wind through a window, a radio playing music, etc.

Life is good.

You're on your way home after a very long day at a very tiresome job that pays you very little. You take a deep breath, relishing in this moment of freedom and think about what you're going to do when you get home.

Greet your wife and son. Eat a quick dinner. Gather your things to do a load of laundry.

Maybe work on your poetry in between loads.

It is in this very same moment that you catch blue lights in your rearview mirror. And you don't think much of it because there's no way that squad car is trailing you.

Right?

But then you hear

The sound of a police siren.

And the car's right behind you now.

You pull over, and your mind is working rapidly to try and understand what it is that you did wrong.
Did you run a red light and forget? Is your headlight out? What about—
And then like a freight train it hits you.
It doesn’t matter why they’re pulling you over. Not in the least bit. Because when that cop strolls over to check your license and registration, he’s gonna catch a glimpse of what you have on the floor of your backseat. That thing you really shouldn’t have on the floor of your backseat. That thing you got just this morning and were planning on taking out today when you get home.
But this is what’s happening now, and there is no use thinking about what you should’ve, could’ve, or would’ve done differently.
So what do you do?

A beat.

Wait. This is kind of a long beat.
Are we supposed to answer this question?
Maybe someone tries to.

No, I’m not really asking any of you what you would do.
I’m still painting the scenario, so let me tell you what you do.

It’s silent.

When she speaks again, it is slower, quieter. Almost a whisper.

You reach over and push the release button on your seatbelt.
You move slowly, so the cop behind you doesn’t pick up on your movements.
You unlock your car door and cut the engine.
You take a deep breath.

She takes a deep breath.

You reach for the handle.
Then...
With as much speed as you can possibly muster... 

Now her voice is beginning to slowly increase in volume.

You open the car door and start sprinting.
You don’t know where you’re going.
You just know that they cannot catch you.
You’ve never run this fast before in your life.
It only takes a moment to hear / someone call out behind you.
CHIEF.
(Offstage) HEY! We’re building up to something now.

RAMI.
It only encourages you to run faster—faster than you ever thought you could move.
You know there is someone chasing you.
You can hear pounding footsteps and shouts. But mainly you just hear your heartbeat.
Is this freedom? Running like this?
You’re not sure.
But you think it could be.
Maybe?
And if it is—if it really could be

She’s yelling now. This is what we’ve been building to.

Why is freedom so contingent on captivity?

A beat.

She takes another deep breath. Maybe two. Whatever the actor needs.

You hear...
The cop catch up to you.
It’s the only warning you get before you’re pushed into the ground so rough and violent that
you’re sure you’ll have bruises for weeks.
You’re arrested.
The reason they give you is a traffic violation, and you’re not really sure if that’s true or not.
But you do know for a fact that the other cop, the one who wasn’t chasing you, the one you
didn’t know was there until you were shoved into the back of the police car, the one who
holds up a bag of evidence tauntingly before driving the three of you away and to the
station, searched your car while you weren’t there.

A beat.

This scenario—this isn’t my story.
I’ve never been arrested.

This is a lie.

But it does happen to so many of us in this line of work.
This— all of this—is just one of those stories. One I hope you all become very familiar with.
SCENE 14

Winter 1977.
Chiqui’s Laundromat.

_PAPI is putting a load in the washer. QUICO enters with his schoolbag._

QUICO.
I thought I’d find you here.
PAPI.
Llegas tarde.
QUICO.
I know, I know. One of my classes ran over, so I had to stay at my professor’s office hours later than I was planning. I’m sorry.
PAPI.
_(jokingly)_ Just don’t let it happen again, eh?
QUICO.
You got it, pa.

You scared me when you weren’t home.
PAPI.
Oh yeah?
QUICO.
Yeah. When no one was waiting by the door to ask how classes were today, I knew the house was empty.
PAPI.
And how were your classes today?
QUICO.
The same as they always are, papi. Mostly boring.
PAPI.
You have to pay closer attention.
QUICO.
I know.
PAPI.
And take better notes.

Quico helps him load the machine.
QUICO.
I know.
PAPI.
Maybe then your classes wouldn’t be so boring, and you’d bring home better grades on your essays than the last one.
QUICO.
I know.
PAPI.
(jokingly) You know everything. Is that it?
QUICO.
(matching his joking tone) I do know a lot of things.  

Papi laughs.
PAPI.
And you’re still determined to pursue the family disease.
QUICO.
(under his breath) Here we go.
Si, papi. I still want to be a writer like you.
PAPI.
It fills me with pride to know you want to write like your old man, but you could be a doctor.
QUICO.
I could be a lot of things, but this is what I want to do.
PAPI.
(in surrender) Okay.

They fall into a comfortable but tense silence as they finish loading the machines. When they are finished, they sit.

QUICO.
You don’t have to stick around here, pa. I’m sure you’d much rather be relaxing at home.
PAPI.
Is Arnaldo joining you tonight?
QUICO.
Claro que si. He should be here soon. Why don’t you head back and rest?
PAPI.
He normally meets you in the air shaft, no?
QUICO.
Normally, but he told me he'd be late tonight. And you are dodging the question.
PAPI.
I know you're trying to get rid of me, Quico. I'll wait with you until he gets here.
QUICO.
Hey, I'm trying to help you out, but if you want to stay here in this, no offense Chiqui, dusty laundromat on a stiff chair, who am I to stop you?

Quico goes to the vending machine.

Do you want a Coke?
PAPI.
That garbage will rot your teeth.
QUICO.
So no? I'm going to take that as a "no" from you.

Quico returns to his seat with a can of Coke and pops it open, taking a nice long sip.

Ahhh. Refreshing.
PAPI.
Cuando tu eres un viejo sin dientes / no vengas—
QUICO.
I'll get dentures.

ARNIE enters with his laundry, detergents, and schoolbag.

I hear they're all the rage with viejas.

Papi laughs.

ARNIE.
What are?
QUICO. PAPI.
The dentures I'm going to get when all Arnaldo!
this Coca-Cola rots my teeth.

Arnie laughs.

ARNIE.
You could even get a couple of gold ones. Really impress the ladies.
PAPI.
Please don't encourage him.
QUICO.
No, no, no. I think that that is the best idea Arnie has ever had. The idea is so good, I think you should follow through with it too.

Quico offers his soda can to Arnie who accepts it and takes a sip.

ARNIE.
Ahhh. Delicious.
PAPI.
You two sound like an ad.
QUICO.
Things go better with Coke.
ARNIE.
Like laundry.
QUICO.
Yes, like laundry.
ARNIE.
Or talking politics.
QUICO.
Yes, or talking—

Quico sends Arnie a sharp look. He watches Papi’s reaction.

Arnie preoccupies himself with his laundry.

PAPI.
You two are still staying out of trouble with all of that, right?
QUICO. ARNIE.
Of course, papi. Si, señor Soto.
PAPI.
You know that I, maybe more than anyone, understand independentista / but—
QUICO.
Mhmm. I know, pa. We don’t see eye to eye on... some things. I promise we’re staying out of trouble. Just discussions and leaflet passing for us. You know that.
PAPI.
That’s my boy.
Okay, I got the load started. You can handle it from here, Quico.
Papi gets up to leave.
Don’t be late tonight. What time is your curfew?
QUICO.
Diez de la noche.
PAPI.
Y ni un minuto más, okay?
QUICO.
Okay.
PAPI.
I’ll see you at home.
QUICO.
Bendición.
PAPI.
Y que Dios te bendiga.
ARNIE.
Adiós, Señor Soto.

I’m so sorry, Quico.
QUICO.
For what? Bringing up the one thing my father and I argue about more than my hopes for a writing career? Don’t worry about it, Arnie.
ARNIE.
I’m still sorry.
QUICO.
I know you are. But really it’s okay. We agree on everything politically. It’s just the execution that we aren’t on the same page about. It’s fine.

A beat.

Arnitz finishes loading his machine and moves to the vending machine.

Buuuuut... if you’d really like to make it up to me a new Coke wouldn’t hurt.
ARNIE.
(laughing) You got it.
SCENE 15

1950.

We can still see ARNIE and QUICO in the laundromat, drinking Cokes.

QUICO is writing in a notebook. ARNIE is reading.

But our focus is on ISABELITA who enters, running and out of breath.

ISABELITA.

Niños!

I was able to get away for a few moments. We don’t have a lot left to learn.

We just have to dive right back in, alright?

Like the last time, this is done in a call and response with the audience.

Unlike the last time, RAMI enters and hums the melody of the song.

Nosotros queremos
la libertad,
y nuestros machetes
nos la darán...

Isabelita looks around. She does not see Rami.

I think we have a little more time. We’re going to finish the song. Does that sound good?

She does this in a call and response. Rami hums along again.

Vámonos, borinqueños,
vámonos ya,
que nos espera ansiosa,
ansiosa la libertad.

Good! And that last line, “la libertad” repeats itself a few times.

There’s a longer version of the song, but that’s all we’re going to have time for. I’m so proud of you! All of you, really. This is going to be—

We see blue lights.

I’ve stayed away too long. I have to leave you again. Don’t be sad. I’ll be back as soon as I can. I promise.

Isabelita runs away.

CHIEF enters in uniform, crosses, and exits the same way as her.
SCENE 16

RAMI is still on stage, but we are all looking back to Chiqui’s Laundromat in Winter 1977. ARNIE stops reading, checks the time, and looks at QUICO. Quico doesn’t look up. As the scene progresses, neither see Rami.

QUICO.
What do you want, Arnie?
ARNIE.
I didn’t say anything.
QUICO.
No, but I can feel you staring, and I haven’t heard you turn a page for a while now.

Quico puts down his pencil and looks up.

What’s up?
ARNIE.
I’ve been thinking about someone joining ARM.
QUICO.
Oh yeah?
ARNIE.
Yeah.
QUICO.
Do I know them?
ARNIE.
I don’t think so? I met him at that coffee shop / by—
QUICO.
Coffee shop? You hate coffee.
ARNIE.
I do, but it’s close to campus, and I have a free hour where I can’t exactly come home every week. So I’ve been going there pretty frequently lately, but this isn’t the point! We met in this shop when I noticed we were reading the same book, and we got to talking. I really think that you’d like him.

Quico thinks this over for a moment.
QUICO.
Okay.
ARNIE.
Okay? That’s it?
QUICO.
That’s it.
ARNIE.
But you always have something to say.
QUICO.
And right now that something is “okay.” If you say I’d like the guy, that he’s a good fit for ARM, I trust you. You know I trust you more than anyone.
ARNIE.
Awww
QUICO.
Shut up. Never mind. I actually don’t trust you at all. I don’t even like you.

Arnies laughs at him and shoves him playfully.

ARNIE.
I trust you more than anyone too.
QUICO.
(gasps) I’m telling Marisol.
ARNIE.
Oh my God.
QUICO.
I can just picture the conversation now. Marisol, you’ll never believe what your husband said to me! He trusts me more than you, his ever-loving wife and mother of his only child! And then she’ll say, (over the top and in a high pitched voice) "He does!? I’m so crushed! How will I ever recover!?"
ARNIE.
You’re an idiot.

Quico just smiles at him.

Maybe I should just ban you from my home altogether.

Quico laughs.
QUICO.
So when do I get to meet him?
ARNIE.
Who?
QUICO.
This mysterious coffee shop inhabitor? The potential ARM member? Seriously, Arnie, we were just talking / about him.
ARNIE.
I was distracted by your performance. Maybe you should change your major.  

Quico snorts.

Funny you should ask about when because I actually invited him here.
QUICO.
Here?
ARNIE.
Yeah.
QUICO.
When?
ARNIE.
Tonight.
QUICO.
Tonight!?

Arnie looks at him amused.

ARNIE.
Is that alright?
QUICO.
Yeah, yeah, yeah. When exactly tonight though?

Arnie checks the time.

ARNIE.
Soon I’d say.
QUICO.
Soon? How soon?

Arnie waves at someone we cannot see yet.
ARNIE.
Now soon. That's him now.

ALEJANDRO enters with laundry.

Hey! You found us.

ALEJANDRO.
Yeah, hi! I'm sorry I took so long. I got caught up with my... parental. I didn't know if I should have brought some laundry, so I just...

He gestures to his laundry.

ARNIE.
No problem. You kill two birds with one stone this way, right?
I want you to meet / Quico.

QUICO.
It's you?

ALEJANDRO.
Carlos?

QUICO.
Alejandro?

ALEJANDRO.
(laughing) What a small world!

ARNIE.
Do you two know each other?

ALEJANDRO. QUICO.
We do! Yeah.

ARNIE.
No way!

ALEJANDRO.
We were classmates briefly in high school.

QUICO.
I transferred in. Alejandro was a year above me. We didn't interact a whole lot.

ALEJANDRO.
So crazy that our paths are crossing again. I always regretted not being able to know you better.
QUICO.
Well here's your chance.
Welcome to Chiqui's!
ARNIE.
Yes, welcome. Would you like the grand tour?
QUICO.
We could start with the coin machine.
ARNIE.
Or the washers—
QUICO.
If you're feeling adventurous.
ALEJANDRO.
I'm more of a dryer man myself.

It's funny. They were not expecting this response and genuinely laugh.

ARNIE.
Perfect! Then we begin with the dryers.
QUICO.
Transitioning to the washers.
ALEJANDRO.
Only top quality machines.

Alejandro sets down his laundry next to an empty washer.
He starts to load the machine still following the "tour" with his eyes.

QUICO.
Yes indeed.
ARNIE.
Next, we have the chairs.
QUICO.
Which we can guarantee will leave your spine never the same again after extended periods of time.
ALEJANDRO.
I can't wait.
ARNIE.
And finally our array of machines for all your laundry, snack, and beverage needs.
Make yourself comfortable. Can I get you a Coke?
ALEJANDRO.
No thanks, I don’t like Coke.

Quico gasps. It’s loud and overdramatic.

I’m actually more of a Pe/psi fan.
QUICO.
NO!
ARNIE. ALEJANDRO.
Quico... What? Is every/thing—
QUICO.
Pepsi? ARNIE. ALEJANDRO.
Oh my God. Yeah, I just think it’s better, you know?
QUICO.
No, I do not know!
ARNIE.
You’re overreacting, you drama queen.
QUICO.
You seriously believe that Pepsi is better than Coke?
ALEJANDRO.
Yeah, I really / do.
QUICO.
Blasphemy!
ALEJANDRO.
Is drinking Coke some kind of initiation for joining?
ARNIE. QUICO.
No! Yes!

Arnie sends a tired look at Quico.
Alejandro laughs.

ALEJANDRO.
Are other parties like this?
QUICO.
Couldn’t tell you.
ARNIE.
We don’t know of any other parties at the university, and neither of us is involved with any of the bigger ones like the Nationalists or the Socialists.
ALEJANDRO.
Yeah, me either. You guys are my first. So no to the initiation?

Quico thinks it over for a moment. Arnie is tiredly amused.

QUICO.
Fine. It’s not a requirement, but I will personally be judging you harshly.
ALEJANDRO.
Okay, okay. I’ll take a Coke.

Arnie gets a Coke from the vending machine and hands it to him.
Alejandro holds it up for a toast.

To the greater good of Puerto Rico.

Arnie and Quico join him.

ARNIE.
Here, here!

They clink cans and take sips. Quico watches Alejandro carefully.

QUICO.
So Alejandro. What have you been reading lately?

ALEJANDRO.
I thought you’d never ask.
ALEJANDRO, ARNIE, and QUICO are still in the laundromat talking about the books they’re reading and really hitting it off. We can’t hear them, but we know it’s going well.

RAMI makes her presence known before speaking.

Does the number 53 mean anything to you?
Really?
That’s so interesting.

She laughs. We aren’t in on this joke.

Okay. I’m going to tell you what it means to me, to a lot of us here.

She gestures to the stage.

When I think of the number 53, I think of Law 53.
You still haven’t heard of this?
It goes by some other names too.
Like la ley de la mordaza— the law of the muzzle
But mainly it’s known as the Gag Law.
The year is 1948.
The Senate of Puerto Rico is being controlled by the PPD— the Popular Democratic Party, and Luis Muñoz Martin, the president of the PPD, really wants to be governor, and he is very pro-statehood under the United States. So what does he do?
Our guy Luis creates the perfect passage for emergency legislation and gets the law passed.
I can see you turning to your neighbor, fighting the urge to ask, “What’s the big deal? It’s just another law, right?”
It’s not just another law.
Very similar to the United States’ Smith Act—
Who am I kidding?
They’re nearly identical.
The only real difference is what comes with the Spanish translation.
The Gag Law aimed to prohibit certain “subversive” activities.
The Gag Law banned any mention of Puerto Rican independence from the United States, including to speak in favor of, print, publish, sell, or exhibit any material that might undermine the insular government, as well as the organization of society, group, or assembly of people with similar intent. The Gag Law forbade anyone from singing—from so much as whistling the Puerto Rican national anthem. The Gag Law outlawed ownership of a Puerto Rican flag even within one’s own home. Imagine that. Being told that you aren’t allowed to fly your flag.

The Gag Law was used to arrest over 3,000 people without evidence or due process. Don’t even get me started on what the Gag Law did to support the FBI’s carpetas. Because I could go on and on about that secret information-gathering program, and we don’t have the time for that. The Gag Law meant that people all over the island were being followed by the FBI and police just because they were known or suspected to be a part of or in support of the pro-independence movement. The Gag Law was also used to force Pedro Albizu Campos’ hand. But if we don’t have time for carpetas, we really don’t have the time to start talking about El Maestro.

Law 53. Sounds unjust, right? A violation of freedom of speech or something? That’s because it was. But for the nine years it took the US Supreme Court to rule it unconstitutional by both Article II of the Constitution of Puerto Rico and the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, this was our reality. Can you imagine what this must have been like? She laughs again. We still don’t get the joke.

Well, you’ll know soon enough, I guess. That song you were singing, La Borinqueña? That’s our national anthem, specifically the original revolutionary version.
SCENE 18

Chiqui’s Laundromat.

ALEJANDRO, ARNIE, and QUICO are sitting around a radio.

RAMI’s voice comes from the radio for the scene.

RAMI.
Two armed terrorists held the consul of Chile hostage today in the bank of Old San Juan. Negotiators have informed us that their demands were for the cancellation of today’s 4th of July celebrations. No reason for these demands has yet been released to the public. Just moments ago and after hours of negotiation, we witnessed the release of the hostage and his captors led away in handcuffs by the FBI. / Officials are saying—

QUICO.
Turn that off.

ARNIE.
I’m so sick of this.

ARNIE.
I know.

QUICO.
Terrorists. They called them terrorists.

ARNIE.
They did.

QUICO.
Not just terrorists— terrorists without a cause. Without a cause, Arnie.

ARNIE.
I was listening to the same story as you. Es mierda.

QUICO.
I can’t even say I don’t believe this because I can. This is exactly the sort of thing that happens every single time we try to—

Quico stands and tries to express his frustration. Maybe he kicks a basket or knocks over a folded pile of laundry.

ALEJANDRO stops moving.
ARNIE.
They should have killed the hostage.
ALEJANDRO.
They should have killed the hostage.
QUICO.
What?
ARNIE.
I said they should have killed the hostage.
RAMI.
That’s not what happened.
QUICO.
What?
ALEJANDRO.
I said they should have killed the hostage.
ARNIE.
I don’t know about that.
ALEJANDRO.
They should have. They should have come out shooting because at least then they would’ve killed a few cops on the way out.
QUICO.
I need a Coke to have this conversation.
ARNIE.
You know that I agree with you.
RAMI.
That’s not what happened.
QUICO.
I need a Coke to have this conversation.

*Quico goes to the vending machine to get a Coke.*

ARNIE.
You know that I agree— that no country has ever won its independence without a struggle and bloodshed. But I don’t think that killing as many people as possible today would have helped the press see the Nationalist Party as anything more than terrorists.
QUICO.
*(scoffing)* Terrorists.

*He takes a long drink from the can.*
That sure would’ve made them go out with a bang, but I think I’m with Arnie on this. We should do something. Protest against this, you know? Make them recognize the purpose behind all of this.

ARNIE.

You know what we should do.

ALEJANDRO.

You know what we should do.

QUICO.

What are you thinking?

ARNIE.

We should get in your car, find every patrol car we can, and just open fire.

RAMI.

That’s not what happened.

ALEJANDRO.

You know what we should do.

QUICO.

What are you thinking?

ALEJANDRO.

We should get in my car, find every patrol car we can, and just open fire.

ARNIE.

That’s way too risky.

ALEJANDRO.

Then you stay here. Me and Carlos can take them, right?

Arnio moves to stand between Quico and Alejandro.

ARNIE.

I don’t want to kill anyone, Ale, and I don’t think you and Quico should either.

ALEJANDRO.

Well, what do you think, Quico?

QUICO.

I don’t know. I mean we / could—

ARNIE.

Not happening. Everyone is on high alert right now.

A standoff between Alejandro and Arnie.

ALEJANDRO.

Okay. You’re right. That’s too risky.
ARNIE.
I have a better idea.
ARNIE.
Let’s go to the university’s security office.
QUICO.
And do what?
ARNIE.
Shoot them.
RAMI.
Do I even have to tell you that’s not what happened?
ALEJANDRO.
Okay. You’re right. That’s too risky.
I have a better idea.
Let’s go to the university’s security office.
QUICO.
And do what?
ALEJANDRO.
Shoot them. Less heat than real cops, and we still send a message.

Quico thinks this over, finishing his Coke.

ARNIE.
You’re seriously considering this?
QUICO.
I don’t know, Arnie! Okay? I don’t. All I know is that’s two more of our people down, dragged away by the FBI as nothing more than terrorists. I’d be lying to you right now if I said I didn’t want— no, need to prove something.
(to Alejandro) We’re not going in there guns blazing, and we’re not killing anyone that we don’t have to.
ALEJANDRO.
Okay.
ARNIE.
And we don’t go in alone.
QUICO.
(smiling) We?
ARNIE.
Of course, dummy. Qué pensaste? That I was gonna let you take a stand on your own?
(to Alejandro) We’re picking up some more members. Neftali, Enrique, Rami, Mateo. We’re
gonna need some backup.
ALEJANDRO.
Perfect. First thing we need to do is call the party members and find out where to pick them
up.

They all exit as Alejandro says the last line.
Neither of you have been in the building, so I’ll talk you through it and lead us once we get
there, okay?

Rami watches them go, then follows.
SCENE 19

CAB DRIVER is sitting in his cab. CHIEF is offstage.

CHIEF.
The gunshots started?
CAB DRIVER.
Yes.

CHIEF.
Who fired first?

I said who fired first?

Maybe we should just start the story from the beginning / again.

CAB DRIVER.
No!

CHIEF.
He speaks.
Who fired first?

CAB DRIVER.
I don’t know.

CHIEF.
That’s not what you said the last time we went over this.

CAB DRIVER.
Which time? I’ve been here for...

How long have I been here?

CHIEF.
Who fired first?

CAB DRIVER.
Can you at least tell me when my next bathroom break is? Give me something to look forward to.
CHIEF.
You can go as soon as I get what I need from you.
Who fired first?
CAB DRIVER.
Fine! You wanna know who fired first?
You did.
CHIEF.
I wasn't there.
CAB DRIVER.
(confused) You weren't?
CHIEF.
No. I was not.
CAB DRIVER.
Yes, you were.
(unsure) At least I— I think you were there.
CHIEF.
I wasn't. So who fired first?
CAB DRIVER.
Fine! Your men then. Your subordinates. Your officers. Whatever you wanna call them. They fired first.

We hear a slamming sound.

Cab Driver flinches but doesn't back down.

That's what happened.
CHIEF.
No. it isn't. Stop playing games!
CAB DRIVER.
Your men fired first.

The slam again.

He flinches again as if he's being hit.

Your men fired first.

This sequence happens a couple more times. By the final time,

Cab Driver is cracking, maybe even falling apart.
CHIEF.
No, they didn’t, did they?

CAB DRIVER.
No, they didn’t.

CHIEF.
Who fired first?

CAB DRIVER.
I don’t know.

Cab Driver takes a long shaky breath.

Cab Driver slides down to hide under the dashboard.

I couldn’t see anything. I was hiding, hoping no one would see me.

CHIEF.
Not good enough.

He sits back in his driver’s seat. We are seeing him at his most broken state.

CAB DRIVER.
Please. You can’t make me say that. It isn’t true. It isn’t right. Those poor / boys.

CHIEF.
Terrorists. They were terrorists.

CAB DRIVER.
No. They—

CHIEF.
From the beginning.

Another slam.

Now!
SCENE 20

Spring 1978.
Outside the University of Puerto Rico.

CHIEF is sitting on the bench in civilian clothing.

ALEJANDRO enters, sits, and begins talking. There is no hesitation. He's excited

ALEJANDRO.
We're up to seven.

CHIEF.
Well hello to you too.

ALEJANDRO.
Hi—did you hear what I said? Seven!

CHIEF.
Seven!? That's amazing. Really, really good work.

ALEJANDRO.
Thank you!

CHIEF.
Everything's still going smoothly? Your last letter said you were having some problems with the Socialists after they gave you your card.

ALEJANDRO.
I took care of it. Everything is fine. Perfect even. All according to plan, right?

CHIEF.
Right. You look like you have more to tell me though. Should I bother asking about classes or are you going to tell me?

ALEJANDRO.
No, I do have something to tell you.

CHIEF.
Well, go ahead.

ALEJANDRO.
I'm building suspense.

Chief waits, expectantly.

Do you remember what I talked about in my letter?
CHIEF.
You talked about a lot of things. Can I have another hint?
ALEJANDRO.
About the funds.
CHIEF.
Right the funds. I approved that, so what did you use it on?
ALEJANDRO.
One of them has a revolver.
CHIEF.
A revolver?
ALEJANDRO.
Yeah. I bought it. He has it. It's not registered, obviously.
CHIEF.
Well do you—
ALEJANDRO.
Of course.

QUICO is in his home. His landline rings. He answers the phone.

QUICO.
Oh, hey Arnie! What's...
Slow down! Slow down!
Where are you?
ALEJANDRO.
I sent the info over to your office this morning. He's probably been met by someone already.
QUICO.
La cárcel!? How!? Wh—

A traffic violation? I don't—
Arnie, what the— Should I get Marisol?

He listens.
Are you sure? This really seems like something your wife...
Okay, okay. I'll be there as soon as I can— What?
ALEJANDRO.
I wouldn't be shocked if he was there now.
QUICO.
Well, Arnie, buddy, you gotta make up your mind. You don't want me to come down there.
You don't want me to get Marisol. You need bail. What do you want me to—

*We should barely hear the last word of Chief's next line.*

CHIEF.
Good work / agent.
QUICO.
Okay! Okay...
Yes, I understand. I'll find her.

*Quico hangs up the phone and exits, running.*

ALEJANDRO.
Really!? You're gonna let / me—
CHIEF.
You've earned it.

*Alejandro's smile is huge. Scarily so.*
SCENE 21

January 1951.

We are back in ISABELITA’s classroom. She enters, but it is clear she has no intention of teaching today. At least not in the way we expect.

ISABELITA.

Ninos.

It’s time.

I must leave you.

The rules have changed. They aren’t fair, but…

A beat.

That’s not important.

You remember the words, right?

Good. We’re going to put them all together, okay?

I know you still have questions, that you still don’t understand what’s going on. But if there’s anything for you to take from our time together, it’s this:

This is the most serious we have and ever will see her.

Don’t ever let anyone tell you not to celebrate who you are—especially not them, okay?

That—everything that makes us who we are—is too important to abandon no matter what someone tells you.

She is smiling again.

I am so proud of you all regardless of what happens next.

Now let’s show them exactly who we are.

She begins to sing. There is no music. Just her voice. At some point DEAN enters and sees what she is doing.

¡Despierta, borinqueno
que han dado la señal!

¡Despierta—

DEAN.

Isabel.

She sees him for the first time.
What do you think you’re doing?

ISABELITA.
You know exactly what I’m doing.

_Slowly, she pulls out her wallet, opens it, and reveals what has been in it from the very beginning: a Puerto Rican flag._

Dean watches her do this.

_A other standoff between the two._

DEAN.
And you’ve made up your mind? There’s no coming back from this.

_Music begins to fade in. It is the opening to La Borinqueña._

_They watch each other until finally_...

_She begins to sing the song again._

_This is her answer. Dean exits, quickly._

ISABELITA.
¡Despierta, borinqueño
que han dado la señal!
¡Despierta de ese sueño
que es hora de luchar!
A ese llamar patriótico
¿no arde tu corazón?

CHIEF enters in uniform. Slowly and deliberately, he walks towards her. She knows that he is here and what is about to happen but does not stop singing.

¡Ven! Nos será simpático
el ruido del cañón.
Nosotros queremos
la libertad.
y nuestros machetes
nos la darán...

Other voices are joining hers, fading up in their volume.

Chief pulls out a pair of handcuffs and watches her, expectantly.

When she does nothing, he pushes her to the ground. He holds
her down with a knee to the back and handcuffs her. Before she falls, she throws her flag into the air, and just as it is about to touch the ground, Rami rushes to catch it. Rami stares at the flag as Isabelita is led offstage by Chief.

Vámonos, borinqueños, vámonos ya,
que nos espera ansiosa,
ansiosa la libertad.
¡La libertad, la libertad!

By this point, Rami is alone on stage, and we hear Isabelita’s voice fade away as the others continue. ¡La libertad, la libertad!

¡La libertad, la libertad!

It is silent.
Rami is still staring at the flag, breathing hard.
We remain in this moment for a beat before the next scene begins.
SCENE 22


Chiqui's Laundromat.

ARNIE is pacing. He does not have any laundry with him, and the machines are not running.

For a moment, we just watch him.

ALEJANDRO enters with a knapsack over his shoulder.

ARNIE.
Hey.
ALEJANDRO.
Hey.
ARNIE.
Did you bring / the—
ALEJANDRO.
Yeah. Got it right here.
Where's Quico?
ARNIE.
Trying to figure out how to say goodbye to his dad.
ALEJANDRO.
Shit...
ARNIE.
Yeah.
ALEJANDRO.
Did you../ With Marisol? Because we / can—
ARNIE.
No. That's okay. I told her I was going for a drive. She went back to sleep, and she had a long night with our son. I don't want to wake her up.
And you? We can make a quick stop if / you—
ALEJANDRO.
No. It's okay. My mother understood.
Well, not understood all of it, you know? But this is important, and I told her that. So she gets it. This is something I— we have to do.
QUICO enters. He, like Arnie and Alejandro, is dressed for combat.

QUICO.
Hey.
ALEJANDRO.
Hey.
ARNIE.
Quico. How did it go?
QUICO.
Fine.

He’s hesitant to say more, but eventually does.

I...
I couldn’t think of anything to say to him, and we had talked about going to Guánica last night. He knows I’m going to meet him there when we’re done but, uh...

A beat.

I just didn’t want this goodbye to end in a fight.
I left a note. He probably won’t see it until later, but it’s something, right?
Even if it’s a lie. It’s something.
ARNIE.
Are you sure / you wanna—
QUICO.
I’m fine, Arnie.
You’re not getting rid of me. Not ever. We do this together, okay?

He extends his arm to Arnie, who does not hesitate to grip it firmly.

ARNIE.
Okay.

Arnie and Quico turn to Alejandro.

There is some hesitation, but he grabs both of their shoulders.

ALEJANDRO.
Yeah. Together.

They all release each other.

ARNIE.
Is everyone good on the plan?
QUICO.
Walk me through it one more time. I don’t want to mess any of this up.
ARNIE.
We get a cab to Ponce. From Ponce, we take another cab to get us to the radio tower. I'll ride in the front with the driver.
ALEJANDRO.
We take that one hostage.
ARNIE.
Right. But calmly. That driver's going to be the getaway. We treat them with respect, protect them. They are innocent in all of this. Got it?
QUICO.
Got it.
ARNIE.
Ale?
ALEJANDRO.
Yeah, I got it.
ARNIE.
I'm serious. We all have to keep a level head, okay?
ALEJANDRO.
Mhm.

Arnie watches him for a moment.

QUICO.
Where are the arms? We can't do this without protection.
ALEJANDRO.
I got them.

As discreetly as possible, Alejandro pulls from his knapsack two revolvers and passes one to Arnie and Quico.

These are quickly tucked away on their person.

QUICO.
Nice. Where did these come from?
ALEJANDRO.
They're the ones we used at the shootout at the governor's house

He taps his bag.

And I got some more ammo from my... dad.
QUICO.
What shootout?
ALEJANDRO.
You remember. The one that was on the news last week?
QUICO.
That was you!?
ALEJANDRO.
Shh! Yeah, that was me and Enrique and Mateo.
ARNIE.
Why didn't you tell me about this?
ALEJANDRO.
You were busy that night, and we were already together and just thought, hey, wouldn't it be crazy / if—
ARNIE.
I can't believe you didn't say anything! That was reckless!
QUICO.
Shh!
ARNIE.
(whispering) You went with other ARM members. What happened to making decisions as a group?
ALEJANDRO.
Relax, Arnie. What's done is done. And it all worked out, okay? No one got arrested, and the only people that got hurt were the security guards we shot at.
ARNIE.
Alejandro—

Quico moves to stand between Alejandro and Arnie.

QUICO.
Hey! Okay, okay. We can spend all day arguing about who's right and who's wrong, but we don't have the time for that right now. We've got a long day ahead of us. We can't be ripping each other apart on top of that.
So put it on hold, and let's all just kiss and make up. Okay?

He looks from one to the other expectantly.

Arnie and Alejandro mumble their responding "okay"s.
Well...
ALEJANDRO.
Well, what?
QUICO.
I didn’t see a kiss.
ARNIE.
(laughing) Quico, you’re such a doofus.
QUICO.
Yeah, but I’m your doofus.
Are we all good now? Ready to do this?
ALEJANDRO.
Yeah.
ARNIE.
No going back now.
QUICO.
(to Arnie) It’s not too late. We could just go to Guánica for the demonstration like we said we were going to.
ARNIE.
No. We’re doing this. I’ll go call the cab and tell it to meet us on the corner.

Arnie moves as if to find the phone.
QUICO.
Wait. What about Rami?
ARNIE.
She’s not coming. When I went to get her she said she was tired and we should just go on without her this year.

A beat of realization for Quico.
QUICO.
You didn’t tell her where we’re actually going, did you?

Arnie shakes his head. They hold each other’s gaze.

Quico nods once, and Arnie exits to make the call.
ALEJANDRO.
It’s better this way.
QUICO.
What?
ALEJANDRO.
Rami is staying home. It’s better that she’s not here.
QUICO.
Why do you think that?

ARNIE reenters.

ALEJANDRO.
Never mind.
ARNIE.
Cab’s on its way. We should go wait on the corner for it.
QUICO.
Yeah. Okay. Let’s go.
ARNIE.
Wait.
QUICO.
What?
ARNIE.
One more Coke? For the road?

Quico thinks this over for a moment. Alejandro makes a sound of disgust at the idea of drinking a Coke.

Quico glares at him. Arnie laughs.

QUICO.
No. I don’t think I want one today.
ARNIE.
What!? You don’t want a Coke? Who are you and what have you done with Quico?
QUICO.
It just doesn’t feel like a Coke kinda day.
ARNIE.
Okay then. Let’s go.

Arnies and Quico exit. Alejandro strays behind.

He watches them for a moment, fiddling with the gun on his person and smiling. He knows something we do not.
Alejandro exits in the same direction as Arnie and Quico.
SCENE 23

CAB DRIVER is sitting in his cab. He has clearly been beaten, looking disheveled and bruised. His voice is quiet, small.

CHIEF's voice comes from offstage.

CHIEF.
What happened this afternoon?

CAB DRIVER.
Dispatch got a call for a ride request to the radio tower up at Cerro Maravilla. I was closest to the men that called in, so they sent me. When I arrived, there were three men waiting for me.

ALEJANDRO, ARNIE, and QUICO are seen waiting for the cab. They look exactly as they did when they last left Chiqui's.

Two got in the back seat, one got in the front.

Arnie and Quico sit in the back. Alejandro is in the front.

I started driving.
I tried making small talk with them. It's what I normally do with my passengers. I said,

We're now in the afternoon of July 25th, 1978.
The cab's radio plays music is the only thing we hear.

(to ALEJANDRO) Nice day we're having.

ALEJANDRO.
It sure is.

A beat.

Cab Driver starts humming.

CAB DRIVER.
So, why are you all heading to the radio tower?

A beat.

Arnie and Quico are fidgeting in the back seat.

Cab Driver sees this in the rearview mirror.

ALEJANDRO.
Duty calls.
CAB DRIVER.
Duty? You guys DJs or something?

No one responds.

(to ALEJANDRO) You guys DJs for the—

Arnie points a gun at the back of CAB DRIVER’s head.

Without actually speaking, Quico and Arnie argue.

The two in the backseat are yelling at each other, and I can see the other man, the one who isn’t holding me at gunpoint,

Quico points his gun at Arnie.

I can’t remember what they were saying. All I can remember is the one in the passenger seat.

Arnie and Quico continue to argue silently.

Alejandro puts a hand on Cab Driver’s shoulder.

ALEJANDRO.
Everything is going to be okay. Nothing is going to happen to you. Let’s just get to our destination, yeah? We need your help, but you are going to be fine. I’ll protect you.

CAB DRIVER.
And I believed him. Then, he started talking to the two in the back.

Alejandro turns to the back seat.

Got them to calm down.

Quico puts his gun away.

I drove them to the radio tower. We are all silent, and the gun stayed against the back of my head the whole way there.

CHIEF.
And what happened when you got there?

CAB DRIVER.
I parked the car. I was told to stay where I was, ready to drive away when they returned. They got out.

Alejandro, Arnie, and Quico get out of the car. They all check their guns to make sure they are loaded.

And they started walking towards the tower. I watched them.

Cab Driver watches Alejandro, Arnie, and Quico leave.
We can still see their shadows.

I thought about leaving them. There was nothing holding me there except the fear of what would happen if they caught me abandoning them.

Chief enters with a shotgun. His shadow surrounds Alejandro, Arnie, and Quico.

CHIEF.
Why didn’t you leave?

CAB DRIVER.
Because as soon as I had made up my mind.

CHIEF.
The gunshots started.

CAB DRIVER.
Who fired first?

CHIEF.
They did.

CAB DRIVER.
Who?

CHIEF.
Them. The—

Terrorists.
The terrorists shot first.

CHIEF.
Good. And then?

CAB DRIVER.
Your men fired back.

CHIEF.
Self-defense, after all.

We hear gunshots. Or maybe it’s the beats from the cab’s music getting louder, deafening even.

We know that they are firing at each other.
CAB DRIVER.
Right. Self-defense. In the crossfire, the agent was injured, and those other two men were killed.

CHIEF.
Those what?

CAB DRIVER.
(sighing) In the crossfire, the agent was injured, and the two terrorists were killed. At least that’s what I was told happened.

*Cab Driver slides down to sit on the floor under his dashboard.*

*Arnie and Quico fall.*

When they started shooting, I hid. I didn’t want to get hurt.

CHIEF.
Good.

CAB DRIVER.
Good?

CHIEF.
Yes. That was good.

*Cab Driver peeks out from under the dashboard.*

CAB DRIVER.
Can I go? Can I please go home?

CHIEF.
Yeah. You can go home.

*Rami enters. Everyone else is frozen.*

Rami.
This was the story that was told the first time. The story that was published and printed and spread. But it’s not what really happened.

It was a little closer to something like this.

*We’re reset to an earlier moment of this scene.*

*Rami and Chief exit.*

*Alejandro, Arnie, and Quico return to the cab. Arnie sits in the front,*
and Alejandro and Quico sit in the back.

Alejandro has a gun pointed to the back of Cab Driver’s head.

There is music playing from the cab’s radio.

We are once again in the afternoon of July 25th. The scene resumes

ARNIE.

(to CAB DRIVER) You remember what I said to you, right? Everything is going to be okay. Nothing is going to happen to you. I’ll make sure of that. Wait for us here, okay? We have a message we’re going to transmit over the radio. Then, we’re going to leave, and you’ll never have to see us again. Stay here, and be ready to leave quickly.

There’s a moment between Cab Driver and Arnie.

Alejandro clears his throat, breaking it.

Arnie and Quico get out of the car.

ALEJANDRO.

No funny business. Got it?

CAB DRIVER.

Got it.

Alejandro gets out of the car.

QUICO.

Everyone loaded?

They all check their guns.

ALEJANDRO.

Loaded.

ARNIE.

You got the message?

QUICO.

Arnie please. Give me some credit. I’ve got it memorized.

He pats his pocket.

But yes, I do have a copy just in case.

Arnie takes a deep breath. Quico mimics him. Alejandro looks around for something.

There is nothing left to say.

Cab Driver watches them leave. We can still see their shadows.
Chief enters with a shotgun pointed at Alejandro, Arnie, and Quico.

His shadow surrounds them.

Chief and Cab Driver see each other.

Then, a multitude of gunshots. Or maybe they’re the repeated, disjointed notes
of a song.

It’s difficult to hear over the noise, but they scream, shout.

This is a surprise to them.

Well, not all of them.

ALEJANDRO.
Don’t shoot me! I’m an agent!
QUICO.
You’re a what!?

Quico is shot and reacts to this.

ARNIE.
Help! Stop! I surrender! We surrender!

It is silent.

We see Arnie and Quico still surrounded and on their knees.

They are clearly hurt.

Chief turns to Cab Driver, pointing his gun at him.

CHIEF.
Get out of the car.

CAB DRIVER.
No, no. I’m not with them. I’m a victim.

CHIEF.
Get out of the car, or I’ll shoot you where you are.

CAB DRIVER.
But I’m—

He gets out of the cab with his hands up and is pushed by
Chief, roughly. He falls.

I’m a victim. I didn’t do anything I swear to you.

Chief ignores him.

CHIEF.
Alejandro? Are you okay?
There’s no response.

Alejandro!?

CAB DRIVER.

Please. I’m just a victim.

Overcome with sorrow and rage, Chief begins attacking Cab Driver.

His shadow follows his lead with Arnie and Quico.

This goes for a beat longer than what we want it to be.

QUICO.

Wait! That man is innocent!

ARNIE.

Please don’t hurt him! He doesn’t have anything to do with this!

We see blue lights.

Chief stops. Cab Driver struggles to stand.

CHIEF.

Can you walk?

Good. They’ll give you a ride to the station.

Cab Driver hesitates, looking back at Arnie and Quico.

CAB DRIVER.

But what / about—

CHIEF.

Get out of here before I change my mind.

Cab Driver exits.

Chief joins Alejandro, Arnie, and Quico.


Do you two know what I told my men before we got here?

No? No? Feeling quiet?

QUICO.

You’re a real piece of shit, you know that?

Quico is hit.

CHIEF.

Wrong answer.

I told them not to let the terrorists come back down alive.
ARNIE.
Please. You don't have to do this. I'm a father. My son, my wife, they need me. I'll do whatever you want. Do you need another spy? I can spy. I can get so much information—

*Arnie is hit.*

*Chief pushes his shotgun against Arnie’s chest.*

CHIEF.
Matar al hijo de una puta. Matar al maldito terrorista.

*Gunshot.*

*Arnie falls, dead.*

*Quico responds to this.*

*Chief pushes his shotgun against Quico’s chest.*

QUICO.
Do it. All of this, everything you’ve all done to me is only wounds.

CHIEF.
Wounds, huh?

*Chief shoots him in the leg.*

How’s that for a wound?

QUICO.
Pathetic. Kill me like a man.

*Chief shoots him in the knee.*

You only wound me. Now shoot me in the head, so I can die easily.

*Chief points the shotgun against his chest.*

CHIEF.
Matar al hijo de una puta. Matar al maldito terrorista.

*Gunshot.*

*Quico falls, dead.*

*For a beat, Chief stands over Arnie and Quico.*

Alejandro is very hurt. Chief helps him stand.

Let's get you closer to the road.

*(to his shadows) Good work, everyone. You should be proud.*

*Chief and Alejandro exit.*
SCENE 24

We still aren’t sure where or when RAMI is in time or place, but as she speaks, we are transported to July 25th, 1978.

RAMI.
I was driving when I heard the news.
I was on my way to get something to eat before going to meet the rest of ARM in Guánica for the demonstration. Sleeping in was just what I needed, so I figured they’d be happy to see me there— that I changed my mind.
The radio station I was listening to started covering the story.
“Breaking news: At least one terrorist killed at Cerro Maravilla and one injured. More to follow.”
I didn’t think much of it. I had heard of Cerro Maravilla but didn’t really know where it was. And then the station came back from a commercial break, and they—
They said Arnie’s name, and I wasn’t paying enough attention to know exactly what they were talking about before.
My mind went blank. I couldn’t think. I couldn’t see straight.
All I knew was that I had to find out what happened and I was already in my car, so I just floored it to Marisol’s.
I have no idea how I got there in one piece, but I did.
Arnie’s apartment was a wreck. Marisol, holding and trying to comfort their two-year-old, was barely making any sense.
But I managed to get this: the police and the FBI came by and searched through all their things. They didn’t answer any of her questions, took personal documents and her social security card and family photos, and left as abruptly as they came in.
“I think he’s dead,” was the last thing she managed to choke out before breaking down.
I helped her pack a bag, so she could stay with Arnie’s father, and we both left.
I didn’t hear from her for a couple of days after that.
She was so sure he was dead. I—

A beat.

I didn’t even know where to begin looking for Quico’s family. I knew he and his father were planning on meeting up at the demonstration in Guánica that evening, but I didn’t know where he’d be until then.
So I called Ale’s mom, who didn’t know much. But she knew Alejandro was injured and at a hospital in Ponce and was already halfway there. And I knew how he felt about us being around his mother, but I needed to know what happened to my friends, so I drove as fast as I could.

Traffic was a nightmare with all of the stupid Constitution Day parades.

It took me hours, and I couldn’t bear to listen to the media call us terrorists over and over again, but it was the only way for me to figure out what was going on so I did.

A beat.

It felt like the longest day of my life.

I couldn’t tell you how long it took me to stand face to face with Alejandro if I tried.

ALEJANDRO enters. There is a sling on his arm, and he is on crutches.

But when I finally got there, he barely said anything to me.

For a beat, they just stare at each other. Rami is looking for answers.

He reveals none.

Ale, what happened?
ALEJANDRO.

You shouldn’t be here, Rami.
RAMI.

Are you kidding me? Look at you! What happened?

He says nothing.

Ale, please?

What happened?

Nothing.

Are you okay? Did— did you get shot?

He looks away from her.

The hospital patched you back up though, right?

Right?

Rami steps closer.

You have to talk to me, Ale. Please, I—

The radio— the radio is saying that— that you guys opened fire. But that’s not what happened, right?

She takes another step.

Right?
I mean it couldn’t have been because Arnie was there and— and Quico was there. And I know sometimes you and Quico can get excited, and you like to get trigger happy, but you didn’t fire first, right?

Alejandro stays silent.

They’re also saying that— that one of you was an undercover cop. That’s not true either, right?

There is no reaction from Alejandro.

Because they’re saying that it’s... you, Ale. That you aren’t really one of us, and that you were only there because of some assignment. And I know you, and you would never do... You would never...

It’s ridiculous, right!?

Some crazy story by the government to try and— and, I don’t know, break ARM up or make us look worse or something like that!

Because that just can’t be true, right!?

Rami collects herself for a beat.

I really need you to talk to me.

I don’t know what happened up there— I don’t even know why you all went up there, but you do. You were there, and you were hurt, and Arnie and Quico—

A beat.

Alejandro, where are Arnie and Quico?

He says nothing.

Are they in the hospital too? Like you?

Are they—

She cannot bring herself to say “dead.”

You can tell me if they are. I can handle it. But I need to know, Alejandro.

Please?

He looks at her. There is no emotion in his expression. Only hardness.

Okay. Okay.

You don’t want to talk to me? That’s fine. You don’t think I should be here? I guess that’s fine too.

You’ve been through a lot today. I get that I can never get that. That’s fine.

I know that I was supposed to be there today because Arnie stopped by my place. But I didn’t go with him, and I wasn’t there. Maybe you’re mad. Fine!
But you *have* to tell me where they are.  
Where are our friends, Alejandro?  
What happened to my friends!?!  

CHIEF.  
Hey.  

CHIEF enters in uniform.  

What is going on over here?  

Alejandro is silent.  
Rami scoffs.  

RAMI.  
Nothing, officer. Absolutely nothing.  

Chief and Rami have a staredown. He turns to Alejandro and begins leading him out.  

CHIEF.  
Come on. Let’s get you—  

RAMI.  
Hasn’t he been through enough? Where are you taking him?  

CHIEF.  
That’s none of your concern.  

Chief continues leading Alejandro out. Rami hesitates for a second before following, blocking his path.  

RAMI.  
Are you arresting him? You can’t arrest him; he’s hurt! Just leave him alone.  

CHIEF.  
(to Alejandro) Is this one of your friends?  

ALEJANDRO.  
Yeah. This is Rami.  

CHIEF.  
Rami.  

Chief approaches her, also smiling. Rami stands tall.  

I have heard so much about you.  

Rami is confused by this.
You’re under arrest.
RAMI.
What?

CHIEF.
For the holdup of the University’s security office.
RAMI.
How do you even know—

She looks at Alejandro.

You… / no. No.
No, no, no.
CHIEF.
You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. / You have the right to an attorney.
RAMI.
Wait! Alejandro, you—
CHIEF.
If you cannot afford an attorney, one will be provided for you. / Do you understand the rights I have just read to you?
RAMI.
Traitor! You betrayed us!?
ALEJANDRO.
I told you you shouldn’t be here, Rami.
You’re just like them. Those terrorists deserved it, and so do you.

Chief escorts Rami out. Alejandro watches, a smile still on his face.

Rami yells after him and as she is being dragged off.

RAMI.
Alejandro.
Alejandro!
ALEJANDRO!
SCENE 25

It is unclear when or where we are.
RAMI enters rubbing her wrists.

RAMI.
That was the first time I had ever been arrested. And it was all because of...
I bet you’re wondering if any of this is real.
Let me assure you that it is, very much so.
The murders at Cerro Maravilla really did happen.
Two men really lost their lives and no one was sure of how or why.
It was Puerto Rico’s very own Watergate, and the trials dragged on years after Arnie and Quico died.
To this day, no one knows exactly what happened because of all the lying and corruption.
The media said they were terrorists
(scoffing) The media said a lot of things. The US media said even more.
So what happened?
Hell, if I know.
I wasn’t there, remember?
All I can leave you with are the facts:
On July 25th, 1978, four men went to Cerro Maravilla. One an undercover informant of the police department, one a cab driver held hostage, and the other two members of the pro-independence party, the Armed Revolutionary Movement.
Ten police officers, each armed with a shotgun, ambushed them.
Now I don’t know if you can imagine what that looks like, so we’re gonna demonstrate it.

She points to someone in the audience.
Would you mind standing up for me? Yes, you.
Come on stand up. You aren’t going to be alone for much longer.
Okay. That’s one.

Rami chooses nine more members of the audience to stand up, counting each as she goes.

Imagine you and your best friend, and now these ten individuals are surrounding you, shooting at you, trying to beat you into submission.
Officers Nazario Mateo Espada, Juan Bruno Gonzáles, Jose Ríos Polanco, and Officer William Colón Berrios all participants.
Lieutenants Jaime Quiles Hernández and Nelson González Pérez gave the order for the final shots to three officers.
Officers Rafael Torres Marrero, Rafael Moreno Morales, and Luis Reverón Martinez were all given the order to shoot. Rafael Torres couldn’t do it. But the other two? Without hesitation. Both would later admit that they would never forget the look in the eyes of the men they killed. One, Martinez, even had a mental break as a result.
And finally, the field commander of the operation and colonel of the police department, Ángel Pérez Casillas.
Those are their real names. You can look it up.
And these men outnumber you, overwhelm you. Just looking around you think there’s no possible way you can get out of this on your own because you’re just two people and there are so many more of them than there are of you.
You all can sit down again. Thank you for your assistance.
It wasn’t until March 27th, 1985 that these ten individuals were found guilty of 45 of the 53 charges filed against them. Each sentence ranged from six to 30 years.
The cab driver took Alejandro to court for kidnapping, and won, obviously, a nice settlement. Both families walked away with a pretty good one too.
But justice took too long, and they lied to us—they lied to all of us. People were angry; are probably still angry.
Alejandro received countless death threats, but did pretty well for himself in the police department. There were some hiccups, and he’d eventually have to step down because of the heat surrounding the trials. But arguably a happy ending for him.
Until someone did more than threaten him and shot him dead outside of his mother’s house in Bayamón in 1986.
Is this the ending you were expecting? Did you want more? Less?

A beat.

Yeah. Me too.
But it’s the ending we got.
You know they were going to that radio tower to transmit a message. I don’t know what that message was. I didn’t help write it. But Quico’s dad, when he was going through his things, found what we think is an early draft.
She pulls a piece of paper from her pocket and unfolds it.

PAPI enters Chiqui’s Laundromat mimicking this action.

We hear the sound of radio static as if this message is being transmitted.

The voices of ARNIE and QUICO come from the cab’s radio.

PAPI, ARNIE, and QUICO.
We, the members of the
QUICO.
Armed
RAMI.
Revolutionary
ARNIE.
Movement
QUICO.
I knew you loved the name.

Arnie laughs.

PAPI.
On this day,
PAPI, ARNIE, and QUICO.
PAPI.
Exactly 80 years after the Yankee invasion of Puerto Rico, we invade your airwaves from a
tower in the very middle of our beautiful island to bring you this.
QUICO.
Which is ironic considering
ARNIE.
This equipment we’re using is typically used by the state and federal government
ARNIE and QUICO
For their work of penetration and colonialism
QUICO.
Which our people historically and presently are subjected to by
ARNIE, and QUICO.
Yankee imperialism and its local lackeys.
PAPI.
This is one more act of war of the ARM against imperialism.
Our demands are few, and what we believe to be simple and reasonable.
PAPI, ARNIE, and QUICO.
Stop the celebration of the 25th of July.
QUICO.
I mean, a holiday, guys? Really?
ARNIE.
It's a day of mourning. We want it to be treated as such.
PAPI, ARNIE, and QUICO.
Liberty to the Nationalist prisoners.
ARNIE.
You know the ones.
QUICO.
They've been in prison long enough.
ARNIE.
Freedom for our people!
PAPI.
And finally
QUICO.
And the most simple
ARNIE.
And reasonable of all
PAPI, ARNIE, and QUICO.
Long live the Puerto Rican revolution!
ARNIE and QUICO.
¡Viva Puerto Rico libre!

Rami folds the paper, putting it back in her pocket.

RAMI.
And I don’t know about you, but I think this is how I want to remember them.
¡Viva Puerto Rico libre!

A celebration.

We hear a mix of sounds ranging from couquis to police sirens.
Underneath it all are voices singing La Borinqueña.
SCENE 26


In Chiqui’s laundromat, PAPI is practicing a speech in the reflection of the running washing machine.

PAPI.

Thank you, everyone, for coming out. We all really appreciate your support in this difficult time. The battle for our boys has only just begun and is far from over but they can rest.

They’re finally resting.

No, no.

That’s all wrong. It’s not enough. They deserve—

You can do this.

What needs to be said?

A realization.

What would Quico say?

This brings a smile to his face. He laughs.

My son would have turned it into a political statement.

My son would have made jokes.

My son—

Papi looks at the vending machine and laughs.

He gets up and buys a can of Coke.

He puts it on the washer.

My son loved Coca-Cola. Arnaldo did nothing to help curb that addiction.

They’d often sit right here for hours, drinking Cokes and talking politics. It was always about what books they were reading or what stupid thing the governor said this time with them.

We never saw eye to eye on how to achieve our common believed goal—

No, focus on the good.

(scoffing) The good.

Do you know that my son didn’t tell me where he was going that morning? I didn’t even say goodbye. He just left a note.

He pulls a note from his pocket. It has very clearly been unfolded and refolded multiple times.

“Viejos went for Guánica early. Don’t worry if I’m back late.”
Don’t worry? Don’t worry, Quico?
How could I not worry? You were my son.
... are.
You are my son.
You are still my son despite...
I worry when the media calls you and your best friend terrorists.
I worry when they tell us that it was a shootout that killed you when all of the facts don’t line up.
I worry when I get a phone call from Marisol saying she thinks she saw your body in the morgue next to her husband’s.
I worry when I get there, stricken with grief, and see you covered in bruises, dried blood, dirt, and bullet wounds that look deliberate and match Arnie’s chest wound.
I worry when it’s clear you have been beaten and perfectly shot in a way that could not possibly have come from a shootout.
I worry when I demand to talk to the police after seeing this, and they keep repeating the story I have been hearing and reading about for the past few days.
I worry when you have been deliberately hurt and our supposed protectors are the ones who did it to you.

He takes a moment to collect himself.

I know that I will never hear your laugh or see you smile or argue with you about how to free our island or tease you about your teeth rotting or ask you about school and your grades. I will never see you fall in love or experience heartbreak or graduate or get your first real job or hold you ever again.
But mostly I worry that I will forget what it felt like to know you and love you like a father loves his son.
Look at me. Just a handful of days without you, and I’m already losing it. I’m talking to a washing machine and a can of soda.

He laughs.

You’d probably think this is hilarious.

He stares at the can for a long time. Then, he opens it and takes a hesitant sip.

He makes a face but pauses.

He takes another sip.

Ahh. Delicious.
You were right, mijo.

He holds the can, watching the washing machine spin.

I miss you.

We hear the sounds of the laundromat one last time.

End of play.
Character Inspiration

Isabelita — Isabel Rosado Morales
Perhaps the most daunting part of this project was starting the creation process of Isabelita. She meant so much to so many people. I was afraid that I would somehow fall short of the woman she truly was and fail to give her the justice she immensely deserved.

I started by asking others what they remembered most about her, the qualities that made her stick out in their minds, the memories they would never forget. I figured that at her very root, these would be the traits that needed to be portrayed in the character. I’d like to believe that I succeeded in doing this while also making the character just that— a character. She, and everyone else in the play, isn’t real. While they are each very heavily inspired by a person or figure in history, it isn’t exact.

Once I realized that as a playwright I could be flexible in what I took from history and what I created for myself, the process became slightly easier. She started off as a professor at the same university Arnie and Quico attended, but there was something I really loved about her staying true to the original Isabelita and teaching children. Isabelita became someone that children loved and wanted to learn from, but also someone that would stare down at the face of injustice and stand up in protest.

Originally, I had intended to use photos from the production in this section. With the cancellation of the Capstone Festival, this could not happen. Fortunately, Carly Sponzo, the Costume Designer of this production, is a literal saint and completed her renderings of each character. These are the images that accompany each character’s section.
Pardon the unscholarly language, but the woman was an absolute badass. I wanted to showcase her as such.

Dean — not a specific person
Dean to me had to represent Isabelita’s adversary. His character stood to represent everything that Isabelita did not support, meaning a pro-statehood stance, support of “Constitution Day,” and overall conformity. The double casting of Dean and Chief was very intentional to have this representation carry over, and it was important to me that both of these men be Puerto Rican. Sometimes, it is those from the same ethnic background as you that attempt to carry out your oppression.

Cab Driver — Julio Ortiz Molina
Above all else, Ortiz Molina was a victim. As cliche as it sounds, he was in the wrong place at the wrong time and suffered as a result. He was beat by the men he believed would protect him. I genuinely believe that these officers tried to beat him into submission physically and mentally. Suarez begins their novel with a dedication to him. “To don Julio Ortiz Molina and the valiant people like him throughout history of mankind who did not let the bastards get away with it.” These two qualities above all were what I wanted Cab Driver to have.
I really wanted to hone in on the trauma he had endured from the day. Having him repeat the information over and over was both a way for me to do this, but also to make it clear when Chief’s manipulation began to take root with the changes made to the story. I didn’t want him to keep his name. I feel that Don Julio went through a lot that day and giving Cab Driver his name would have felt to me like he and his surviving family\(^46\) would be forced to relive that trauma. This was not something I wanted to do, so I made him anonymous. In doing so, I think that there’s also something an audience can resonate with. Cab Driver could be any of us in any situation. The truth we tell is our choice regardless of the context and repercussions.

Chief — not a specific person
Though his name/title suggest that Chief was inspired by Colonel Angel Pérez Casillas, he’s actually like Dean in that he was not inspired by one specific person. I drew from a couple of different places for Chief’s character.

One was Agent Carmelo Cruz, who had recruited González Malavé initially. The familiarity between the two of them was what I used to inspire the father-son-like relationship Chief and Alejandro shared. Their relationship also mimicked the real Cruz and González Malavé, as the superior the informant would report to.

Another was Governor Romero. He praised the police officers as heroic, truly believing that the police had succeeded in ridding the island of two more terrorists. This ideology was one I wanted Chief to have. I wanted him to truly believe that he was the good guy in this story.

\(^{46}\) I’d like to point out that I have no idea whether or not Ortiz Molina is still alive or not, nor if or who the surviving members of his family may be.
The final were the police officers involved in the murders. What they did was cruel. Yes, they were following orders to not let the two men return from the mountain alive, but they beat them and an innocent witness before they did.

Alejandro — Alejandro González Malavé
There was something about not changing Alejandro’s name that I really loved. In a way it allowed me to create a unique character without definitively separating him from the real person he was inspired by, without allowing the real Alejandro, though deceased, escape from what he did.

I have to admit that in my research of González Malavé, I really hated him, and I wanted others to hate him the same way.

When you look at all of the events preceding the tragedy, it really boils down to his decision to betray the very people that considered him their peer, their friend. That type of cruelty is what I initially wanted to hone in on. After many conversations about it and some soul searching on my own part, it made more sense to make him someone almost redeemable. Alejandro became someone you knew was doing bad, but you wanted to see him do good.

Something that really helped in this, and that I really enjoyed playing with, was his relationship to Chief. I tried to write the first interaction the audience sees as if it were an estranged father and son talking. This helped establish the stakes Alejandro has. Yes, this is his job, but he also doesn’t want to disappoint the father figure in his life.

Rami — Ramón Rosado
At her very essence, Rami is the survivor— the one left behind to pick up the pieces of her friends' life and share their story and grapple with an irreversible betrayal and
the guilt she feels for surviving. She is very conscious of the historical moment she is living in and is seizing the moment to do something. Of all of the characters, Rami has the most of my voice.

Her name was derived from Ramón Rosado’s, and she was heavily inspired by the way Rosado spoke out about what really happened from his perspective. He would do interviews and flat out say, “that isn’t how it happened” when asked about events and González Malavé’s own account. That bluntness is something I had so much fun incorporating into Rami’s text.

Because she, like Rosado, was not physically present at Cerro Maravilla, she is detached from the story, and communicates solely with the audience until she confronts Alejandro in the aftermath of the murders. Rami represents the question of “now what?” in this play, and her answer is to tell this story over and over again until it gets through to someone.

Obviously the biggest difference between her and Rosado is her gender. I wanted to connect Rami to Isabelita. It’s the same reason for why she is the one to catch Isabelita’s falling flag; it’s the passing of a torch. I felt that it was powerful to have this come from a woman as it had from Dominga De La Cruz to Isabel Rosado.

Papi — Pedro Juan Soto

There had to be a character that shared the emotional response the audience was going through witnessing Arnie and Quico’s life end. Rami provided the response to the betrayal and the mourning of her friends, but Papi’s response solely focused on the pain of losing a son. So while Rami channels her emotions into sharing the story,
Papi’s keep us rooted in the very real sadness of it before seeking out justice for his son.

The character is obviously inspired by Carlos Enrique Soto Arrivi’s own father, Pedro Juan Soto, and I tried to bring that forth through their conversations of politics and the “family disease.” Most of his voice, however, came from the earliest father relationship I had with my grandfather. The dialogue is some I pulled from treasured memories with him, though he would never admit to liking Coke like Papi does.

Arnie & Quico — Arnaldo Darío Rosado Torres & Carlos Enrique Soto Arrivi
In the first version of this play, the one that had absolutely nothing to do with Cerro Maravilla, I started writing a brother and sister. The relationship between the two was something I knew would be central to the play. When the play became Seven Twenty-Five, this sibling relationship was one that I kept within Arnie and Quico’s friendship. It wasn’t something that I did consciously, and I didn’t even realize I did it until I witnessed a conversation between two of my own friends. One was being teased for being jealous of the second’s friendship with another guy, and the second friend laughed and said, “That guy’s my friend; me and you are brothers.” That really stuck with me. I wanted that for Arnie and Quico, to have such a deep connection in friendship that it translates into a familial relationship. From there, creating their relationship was easy.

I chose to keep the names of the characters closer to the original because I didn’t want the real Arnaldo and Carlos to be forgotten. What happened to them was a tragedy, and it is only one example of the many injustices people like them have faced throughout history. I refused to contribute to erasing their existence, but I also
wanted to separate them enough that I could take artistic liberties in storytelling. Arnie is clearly a shortened version of Arnaldo, much like Rami’s is a shortened version of Ramón. Quico was the actual nickname those closest to Carlos used, which I think sort of undermines the separation I was going for. However, in the play, I made a point to only allow Arnie, Papi, and Rami (only once I believe) call him by that name. I figured it was different enough from Carlos that it would work, and selfishly, I have a cousin who also goes by a shortened version of Enrique, Quique. That would have been my alternative, but I liked Quico more.

I feel like it is important to note that two very significant figures in the real Arnaldo and Carlos’ life are missing from this play. This is their significant others, Angela and Arlene. Early drafts of the play did include versions of them, but ultimately they were both scrapped. Including them felt like their sole purpose was to exist as a plot device for the emotional response of the audience. Their addition would have contributed to the emotional response of Arnie and Quico’s death, but that didn’t feel fair to those women and I felt that Papi and Rami covered this well enough without them. Marisol became Arnie’s offstage wife to establish Arnie’s emotional connection to characters besides Quico, and the idea
of doing the same with Arlene was abandoned because the audience sees this emotional connection on stage with Papi and Quico's interactions.

I made the decision to ground each of my characters in a specific trait. I chose the one I felt to be most memorable in the real people they were based off of. I recognize that the plot and choices that these characters make may not accurately reflect the real events and people they were inspired by. However, they were inspired by these events. I took historical events and people that lit a fire in me and poured them back out into a project all my own. I mentioned it in Isabelita’s section, but it bears repeating: these characters are not real; they are characters put into a world that was created and inspired by reality.

**Where We Are and Are Not**

So allow me to bring us to the present.

Puerto Rico is still a commonwealth of the US. We are still haunted by those ambiguities of the past. There doesn’t seem to be a change anywhere close to this moment on the horizon. One thing remains, however: Puerto Rican’s strong sense of and pride in a national identity.

For a people that have this great sense of self and pride in it, it truly baffles me that there is not a unanimous agreement among every single Puerto Rican for the status of our island. There is still a divide between those of pro-statehood and pro-independence. It was mentioned earlier, but there is a belief that the US is the lungs of Puerto Rico, and without them we will surely cease breathing. And to this I pose the question following the veins of this metaphor: are we even breathing now under the weight of the US restrictions and overall oppression over us? How can you breathe when these lungs have been punctured with the holes of racism, debt,
exploitation, and, lest we forget the elephant named Maria in the room, plain abandonment?

Look at the example of the summer 2019 protest for Governor Ricardo “Ricky” Rosselló resignation. We are so powerful when we stand together, and now is the time to do just that.

To quote our national anthem,

\[\text{Despierta, borinqueño} \]
\[\text{que han dado la señal!} \]
\[\text{iDespierta de ese sueño} \]
\[\text{que es hora de luchar!} \]

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46 Governor Rosselló’s resignation was called for by Puerto Ricans after a chatroom between him and members of his party were leaked to the public including, homophobic, racist, and downright cruel comments about the island and some individuals. Puerto Ricans all over the island gathered to protest his refusal to resign in the summer of 2019. He finally announced his resignation on July 25th.

47 Translates to:
- Wake up, Boricuas
- For they’ve given the signal!
- Wake up from this dream
- For it’s time to fight!
Bibliography

The title quote is pulled from Pedro Albizu Campos


Images

Fig. 1 “Flag of Puerto Rico (1895-1952).” found on the “Flag of Puerto Rico” Wikipedia page.

Fig. 2 “48-star flag of the United States of America.” found on the “Flag of the United States” Wikipedia page.

Fig. 3 “Flag of Puerto Rico (1952-1995).” found on the “Flag of Puerto Rico” Wikipedia page.
Fig. 4  “Albizu speaks to striking sugarcane workers.” Photograph. The Ruth M. Reynolds Papers, Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños, Hunter College.

Fig. 5  Vanessa Nazario. “Original artwork of Pedro Albizu Campos.” pouramor via Instagram. 15 July 2019.

Fig. 6  “Isabel Rosado.” added by Arthur de Moraes Silva Barbosa on her page on Gerontology Wiki.

Fig. 7  Carlos Aguilita Torres Morales. “The Ponce Massacre begins.” Photograph. El Imparcial. 2 April 1937, pp. 16-7.

Fig. 8  Mariana Libertad Marcano-Garcia. “Isabelita Flor de los Vientos.” Acrílico con espátula 36” x 48”. 2000.

Fig. 9  Oscar López Rivera. “Portrait of Isabel Rosado.” Pastel on paper 20” x 25 ¼”. Private Collection.

Fig. 10 “Isabel Rosado being arrested in Vieques.” Vieques, Fotomemorias de una lucha.

Fig. 11 "Arnaldo Dario Rosado Torres." Photograph. Requiem of Cerro Maravilla by Manuel Suarez. 1987, pg. 187.


Fig. 13 "Carlos Enrique Soto Arrivi.” Photograph. Requiem of Cerro Maravilla by Manuel Suarez, 1987, pg. 187.

Fig. 14 "Alejandro González Malavé being attended to in the Ponce District Hospital on July 25, 1978 taken for El Vocero.” Photograph. Requiem of Cerro Maravilla by Manuel Suarez. 1987, pg. 196.