

STEADY AS SHE GOES

A new musical

Book by Mara Palma

Music and Lyrics by Rheanna Atendido

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“Life's full of challenges
Not all the time we get what we want
But don't despair my dear coz (I know now)
You'll take each trial and you'll make it through the storm
Coz you're strong my faith in you is clear
So I'll say once again this worlds wonderful and
Let us celebrate life that's so beautiful, so beautiful
Ohhhh

Take a little time baby
See the butterflies' colors
Listen to the birds that were sent
To sing for me and you
Can you feel me
This is such a wonderful place to be
Even if there is pain now
Everything would be all right
For as long as the world still turns
There will be night and day
Can you hear me
There's a rainbow always after the rain.”

-- “Rainbow,” South Border

Characters:

REYNA GUINTO - a 1.5 or 2nd generation Filipina, performer; optimistic and ambitious but hiding the fact that she's feeling rudderless and adrift

NOVA MENDOZA - a Filipina-American, security personnel, ex-Navy, guided by her strong moral compass of what is right and wrong; her presence is like a quiet storm, and is accompanied by a quick wit

MIGUEL SANTOS - a Filipino chef and cook, passionate about his job and cooking and homesick for his family and homeland; he has a nurturing heart who seeks to help out anyone who needs it

ARTHUR OBERMEYER - a mixed-race American Filipino preferred but person of color/person of the global majority desired, Cruise Director and Reyna's boss; hard to tell what he's thinking most of the time, and you may guess he's hatching a plan or two

THE EMCEE - a woman of color/women of the global majority, the MC and stage manager of sorts, mother figure to many of the crew; guided by a razor-sharp intuition, she manages to keep track of all the moving pieces in her ensemble

OOH-BAE - performer; she enjoys life and work on the cruise ship, though has started to see the darker side of things

KALAMANCEE-CEE - performer, Reyna's bunkmate; she's gotten jaded over the past few years, but still has a strong sense of adventure

QUESO CITY - performer; she's a truth teller and proud of it, yet has slowly come to terms that working on a cruise ship might be the best job she can get out there

PINAY (OR PINOY) NOIR - wait staff; he's constantly overestimating himself, but his main concern is with his own promotion and career growth

CABER-NAT - wait staff

RISA LING - wait staff

SECURITY DIRECTOR

VACATIONER (#1-5), VACATIONER'S WIFE

ENSEMBLE - whenever possible, according to production capabilities; strongly prefer actors of color and mixed race actors to represent how international a cruise ship passenger manifesto can look; performer/stage names could include the following, dependent on how actors identify:

Tamara Rind

Cocoa Nuts
Mango-go
Livian Vidaloka
White Rushin'

Setting: On board a cruise ship en route, and in various parts of the ship: the galley, or ship kitchen; Reyna's cabin; Arthur's office; entertainment hall; on the top deck;

Early 2000s.

Development and Production History:

TIDES OF FORTUNE was chosen as one of nine teams at the 5th Avenue Theatre's First Draft: Raise Your Voice Story Summit in October 2018.

June 2019: Workshop Reading, Seattle's Pagdiriwang Cultural Festival. Rheanna Atendido as Nova, Mara Palma as Reyna, and Michael Cercado as Miguel and Stage Directions.

June 2019: Writing Residency and Invited Performance, The 5th Avenue Theatre

There are no professional productions at this time.

Notes:

--- cut-offs, dialogue overlaps
... unfinished dialogue

Special thanks to the following:

The 5th Avenue Theatre; Pagdiriwang Cultural Festival 2019; the following national roller derby teams for stage name inspirations: Team Philippines, Team USA, VLDR, Team Korea, Jewish, Team Japan, Team IRN, Team Greece, Team West Indies, Team Brazil

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

(The crew kitchen and dining hall on-board a cruise ship, currently at sea. A large group is gathered for Staff Orientation.)

THE EMCEE

Alright, alright, settle down! *Todos! Madames et monsieurs! Hoy, pare!* (Waits a bit) Now that the boss is out of earshot, let me give you the real run down.

MIGUEL

The Emcee is the one who actually calls the shots. She's the Boss-ing.

THE EMCEE

Tita Em to you. Don't come to me for any of that touchy-feely stuff. That's what our Head Chef, Tito Miguel, is for.

MIGUEL

As Nanay told us, "There isn't anything you can't cure with food." But you know, in Tagalog.

SONG: Kitchen Jams

INSPIRATION: that one Tarzan song in the camps

MIGUEL. Ay nako one in the morning already?

EM. Hurry up! Gutom na ako!

MIGUEL. Don't complain kong hindi ka makatulong.

EM. Fine. I'll help.

EM. HOY! PASS THE LUMPIA.

CEE-CEE. TOSS ME THE PATIS.

OOH-BAE. SAAN NG KANIN? WHERE'S THE RICE?

MIGUEL. DOON.

ENS. PARE, WHAT IS THIS?

CEE-CEE. I NEED KUCHARA FOR THE SAUCE, PLEASE.

QUESO. OOH WHO MADE LECHE FLAN?

ENS. GET THE SODA.

MIGUEL. HEY, WHERE'S TESSIE?

OOH-BAE. BRUHA, WASH YOUR HANDS.

ENS. SHE ON A DATE?!

EM. PSSHH- YAH RIGHT.

CEE-CEE. FILIPINO TIME AGAIN.

MIGUEL. TABLE'S READY. WHO'S LEADING GRACE TONIGHT?
QUESO. NO SE.
ENS. I CAN!

ENS. DEAR LORD. SALAMAT SA LAHAT NG-
MIGUEL. ENGLISH, NENG. FOR OUR FRIENDS DI MARUNONG TAGALOG.
ENS. AY, SORRY. DEAR LORD. THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING YOU DO. THANK
YOU FOR THIS FAMILY WE'VE MADE ON THE CRUISE. PLEASE BLESS THE FOOD
WE'RE ABOUT TO RECEIVE, IN JESUS' NAME AMEN.
ALL. AMEN.
EM. LET'S EAT.

OOH-BAE. WELCOME TO OUR KITCHEN
THIS SABAW IS BITCHIN'.
ENS. HOW MUCH SAWSAWAN DO I PUT?
ALL. A LOT!
OOH-BAE. MMM! MASARAP ANG SINIGANG. OW! I BURNED MY TONGUE.
CEE-CEE. STOP GOOFING AROUND KASE.

MIGUEL. HEP HEP HEP. FRIENDS, KAIBIGANS, I HAVE A SURPRISE DISH FOR YOU.
TONIGHT! (*Drumming on the table, tongue rolls, etc.*) FRESH FROM THE KITCHEN. STILL
IN THE POT. PREPARED WITH INGREDIENTS I PAID OUT OF POCKET.
ALL. SALAMAT KUYA / OH WE LAB YOU SO MATS! / ORALE!
MIGUEL. MIGUEL SANTOS' WORLD FAMOUS
EM. WORLD FAMOUS?
MIGUEL. KALDARETA!
(*Everyone cheers, says mmm, exclaims, or is disappointed. Choose your own adventure.*)

WELCOME TO MY KITCHEN.
I KNOW YOU'RE ITCHEN TO TASTE MY
CHICKEN AND TOMATO PASTE.
IT IS YUMMY FOR YOUR TUMMY.
CLEAN YOUR PLATE. DON'T MAKE ME WAIT.

(Plates and food are passed around. Small pockets
of conversation.

At one of the tables, REYNA and some other crew
members are digging into their food.)

REYNA
Hey, I'm Reyna. I'm one of the performers. It's my first day. Night, sorry. Super nervous.

KALAMNCEE-CEE
Cee-Cee, one of the performers, too. You a virgin?

REYNA
(scrambling)

I-I-I mean I dated people, it just wasn't the right time.

OOH-BAE

She meant your first time on a cruise ship, honey. I'm Baby, by the way. Ooh-Bae when I'm on-stage.

REYNA

Just graduated college a couple months ago. I'm gonna do a tour on a cruise ship, and then do a national tour, and then go to Broadway.

KALAMANCEE-CEE

One of *those*. I love your American spirit, I'll tell you that. We tend to be more cynical than that.

REYNA

Oh, I'm Filipina.

OOH-BAE

It'll definitely be a whirlwind tour, that's for sure.

PINOY NOIR

Hey, who's the new girl? Well hello, I'm Pinoy Noir.

QUESO CITY

(pushing PINOY NOIR aside)

About time! We need some fresh blood around here! The one, the only, Queso City.

(A small group of people file in: the Security Director and small staff of mostly men and one woman, NOVA.)

MIGUEL

Security Director, a plate of food for you, ma'am-sir?

SECURITY DIRECTOR

I'm fine, thank you.

MIGUEL

You sure? They say it's rude to refuse a chef's offer of hospitality.

NOVA

I'll take the Director's plate.

MIGUEL

We have a taker! I like you.

NOVA

You say that every time, Kuya Miguel.

EMCEE

Everyone, listen up for a moment! Despite us being the Entertainment and Hospitality Department, it's not all fun and games here. You should get to know our Security Team, though if you're doing everything right, you shouldn't need to know them.

SECURITY DIRECTOR

Welcome on-board for those newbies out there, and welcome back to those who have renewed their contracts. Since the, uh... incident last spring, we've decided to make some changes for security protocols on-board. You can always flag us down at any time if you need help. But everyone on my team will be the point of contact for a small segment. Most of you may already know her, but for the newbies, I'd like to introduce you to Officer Mendoza, your Entertainment and Hospitality staff will be in great hands with her.

PINOY NOIR
(heckling)

I'd like to see those hands up close!

NOVA
(without missing a beat)

Want to see my fists instead?

EMCEE

Hoy, Pinoy! First lesson: Don't piss Tita MC off. Second lesson: No one messes with Officer Mendoza, or we'll both make life a living hell for you. Ain't that right, officer?

NOVA

Yes, ma'am. You're the boss.

OOH-BAE

We love a woman in uniform!

(NOVA, with a twinkle in her eye, is about to respond but sees the SECURITY DIRECTOR.)

SECURITY DIRECTOR
(to the EMCEE)

Back to you, ma'am. See you around. Let's make sure we don't get to know each other better.

(SECURITY DIRECTOR, the staff, and NOVA exit. REYNA notices NOVA.)

EMCEE

Third lesson: We're your family and friends now for the next six months. Deal with it. Use us. We've assigned your living quarters, and if you're a newbie we made sure you had someone who's old hat at this.

MIGUEL

Oh, and more good news from Mr. Obermeyer. He's gonna start counting our tips at the night of the night.

(Ensemble members react.)

EMCEE

Apparently some folks were walking away with more tips than they deserved. According to Arthur. Whatever the Boss says. He's the good guy here, looking out for all of you.

MIGUEL

That goes for dining staff, too. (Ensemble members react.) We gotta show we're team players on this. Show the boss we can follow his rules.

EMCEE

Now, go on and finish your food. I suggest you get yourself to your quarters soon as you're done. You'll need the rest. Oh! And, welcome on-board.

(People start shuffling around.

REYNA looks a bit overwhelmed. She turns to her plate.)

End of Scene.

SCENE 2

(Living quarters, KALAMANCEE-CEE and REYNA's room. It's tiny. The two are basically on top of each other.)

CEE-CEE

I only got to pick my bed because I was here first. Nothing personal, newbie.

REYNA

Wow, it must have been awesome to have a room to yourself!

CEE-CEE

Aww, honey, you're so cute. No, my previous roommate took a different assignment. AKA, she totally couldn't hack it and quit for a job on land.

REYNA

How many roommates have you had?

CEE-CEE

Six. But don't worry, that's over the 3 years I've been working here.

REYNA

Oh. Hey, where's our shower?

CEE-CEE

Ladies' shower is down at the end of the hall. Don't accidentally use the guys' shower like I did that one time. I'm never gonna un-see that.

REYNA

So, the guys live on this floor too? We don't get our own wing...

CEE-CEE

Nah, not enough room for all that. It'll be like college all over again!

REYNA

Um, I went to theatre school.

CEE-CEE

Ohh, right. It's okay, we're all sexually fluid here, don't worry. We don't judge, as long as you don't judge us.

REYNA

I didn't mean anything--

CEE-CEE

It's okay, roomie. I gotchu.

REYNA

My friends call me Rey. You can call me Rey too, if you want! And thanks, I guess. I'm just gonna hit the showers and then I'll try not to wake you up when I come back.

CEE-CEE

Come back? Where you goin', girl?

REYNA

All this excitement, I don't think I can go to sleep yet. So I might go rehearse a little bit. You know, keep my monologues and song book fresh.

CEE-CEE

Your monologues? Song book? (Cracks up laughing)

REYNA

What? Is what I said totally stupid?

CEE-CEE

No, honey, I don't mean that. It's just--you just graduated from college, huh?

REYNA

Absolutely! I got my BFA in Musical Theater with a Minor in Dance.

CEE-CEE

And I bet you're putting in your dues here on this cruise ship so that you can book a national tour--

REYNA

Exactly! Then, from there I'll get hired Off-Broadway and then make my Broadway debut a few years later. You get it!

CEE-CEE

Honey, I do. I get it. I had that dream once. And so did several other people here.

REYNA

Awesome, we should do a weekly scene study! (Gasps) Or, we could even do a weekly musical theatre showcase. That's going to be amazing and I'm going to learn how to be an ensemble member rehearsing with all of you. I'm gonna be in such good shape! Cee-Cee, you're brilliant!

(REYNA embraces CEE-CEE in a bear hug. She grabs a towel and starts unpacking some things throughout this next conversation.)

CEE-CEE

Reyna, I like your...energy but you've gotta slow down a bit. Working as a performer here isn't like anything else you've ever done.

REYNA

Alright, then, what is it like?

CEE-CEE

You know those shows you work on where it starts out all fun, but then you start feeling like your castmates only get more annoying? You suddenly start wishing that the show was over because it's not fun anymore. You ever worked on a show like that?

REYNA

Oh, god, my sorority did a show like that. We should have ended that run two weekends earlier!

CEE-CEE

Right! Well, our cruise ship contracts are months, and some of us have signed a year contract. These shows definitely feel like those shows, only they never seem to end.

REYNA

Well, I guess I'll have to challenge myself and treat it like a Broadway run. Those shows run for years, and they're doing 8 shows a week. Can you imagine?!?

CEE-CEE

You've got no idea. Okay, well, how about this? When we're not performing at night, we're rehearsing all morning long. We take breaks for meals, but even then, sometimes we have to cut them short so that we can squeeze a rehearsal in.

REYNA

Oh, rehearsing is nothing! I used to have 10 out of 12s basically for weeks in a row because of classes and rehearsals. I love having nothing to do except sing, dance, and act... and eat, of course.

CEE-CEE

Alright girl, I think I better show you. Come with me.

NOTE: I think this might work better as a song with REYNA and CEE-CEE going back and forth, walking throughout the quarters and the ship. Reyna's tone is: "Now I've somewhere I belong" and Cee-Cee's tone is: "Just you wait."

CEE-CEE

Let me show you what your life might look like the next few weeks.

REYNA

Oooh, a tour! I love tours.

CEE-CEE

Wow, you're very perky, aren't you?

REYNA

No! Just trying to see the bright side of things.

CEE-CEE

See all these quarters? Everyone's squeezed in tight, just like us.

REYNA

Hey at least you'll always be able to find people for rehearsal!

CEE-CEE

Remember our dining hall? It's barely half the size of where the vacationers eat. Their dining hall is where we perform, but we never eat there.

REYNA

Whoa! Check it out, their dining hall has a chandelier. It must be so beautiful in the sunlight and sunset.

CEE-CEE

Girl, that's not my point. Look at how well-kept their poolside area is. It's all of us workers who have to do that thankless work.

REYNA

I bet it's so awesome during the daytime. Even that water slide must be so cool to see!

CEE-CEE

Look, but don't touch. We're not allowed onto the poolside decks. Break your back, only to be invisible. This isn't a pleasure cruise for us. We're expendable.

REYNA

No way, that can't be right. We're like the Showgirls in Vegas. The performers are the stars of the show.

CEE-CEE

Once they've seen a couple of our shows, they get tired of it and move on. They're onto the next shiny thing.

REYNA

But then we're onto new audiences, though, right? Whenever there's new people on-board, then they're back to seeing our shows. I read that each time we dock we get to see the city we're staying at. I've always wanted to travel the world!

CEE-CEE

Each port or dock starts to blend together after awhile. And it's a temporary break, we usually get less time than you think to explore. After all, who else is going to clean up after the guests if not us?

REYNA

That's not in my contract.

CEE-CEE

I know, girl. Just remember that when they're asking or forcing you to do something that's "not" in your contract.

REYNA

This is going to be a long six months, isn't it?

CEE-CEE

It feels like six years for me, but it's only been half that long. What I'm telling you is to pace yourself, okay?

(They're back at their living quarters.)

REYNA

I--okay. I'll try. I better go take a shower, then. It's been a pretty long day.

(REYNA takes her shower things and exits.)

OOH-BAE pops her head into their room.)

OOH-BAE

She doing okay?

CEE-CEE

Give her time. I think she'll fit right in. Eventually.

OOH-BAE

You gave her the newbie Orientation, huh?

CEE-CEE

I'm the older, more mature one. Of course I had to.

OOH-BAE

You certainly aren't the young, spry one that's for sure.

CEE-CEE

(throwing something at her, jokingly)

Hey!

OOH-BAE

Girl, you know I love you! Bishh. Get some sleep or those bags under your eyes are going to pop right out.

CEE-CEE

(calling out into the hallway)

Bish! As long as I don't see your face, I'll sleep just fine.

(CEE-CEE settles in, giving a once-over of REYNA's things. She starts to snooze.

REYNA comes back a bit later, and tucks CEE-CEE in, under the blanket. A moment.)

End of Scene.

SCENE 3

(Crew rehearsal hall, with EMCEE running things and REYNA and ensemble mid-rehearsal. REYNA and a couple ensemble members are stretching, taking water breaks, things you normally do after finishing a dance combination or particular number.

The scene begins in rehearsal mode and through theatrical transformation, ends in the performance hall with the audience.)

REYNA

It's six days of this?

KALAMANCEE-CEE

Wait until the holidays. Then it's seven.

REYNA

I've never done so many full-out rehearsals in a day. Or, like, in a month.

QUESO CITY

Girl, you've been going full-out? Tsk, tsk.

REYNA

You all don't?

KALAMANCEE-CEE

It's the only way you'll survive. Trust us, your body and voice will thank you.

EMCEE

(gathering everyone)

Let's rehearse that section, again. This opening drag act is a killer. We gotta open strong so they'll open their wallets at the end.

QUESO CITY

If they're not drunk off Friday happy hour drinks!

KALAMANCEE-CEE

They're harmless! Mostly.

REYNA

Wait, we don't have to...?

QUESO CITY

We won't make you do anything you don't want to, newbie.

OOH-BAE

Until we get to know you better!

EMCEE

Alright, focus, *mes amis*. Let's get this run down, and I'll let you go home early.

QUESO CITY

She has a heart, thanks Auntie Em!

EMCEE

Places. Reyna, from the top.

(We glimpse her on-stage MC personality.)

Welcome back on board! I hope all of you out there have enjoyed your time in the islands... where the sun is hot but nothing's hotter than our talent! You're in for a real treat, a sight for sore eyes, a balm for those mosquito bites... The King of the Pacific, and a thrilla' from Manila himself..... The Engineeeeeeer.

SONG: Welcome

INSPIRATION: Bongga Ka Day, Mr. Suave, Wowowee
(Am E)

REYNA.

HETO NA NAMAN. WALA KA SA PILING KO.

SAAN KA PUMUNTA? AT WHY DID YOU NEED TO GO?

LONGING FOR YOUR TOUCH, TORTURED BY THE BRUISE.

YOU HURT ME SO MUCH, I WENT ON... A CRUISE.

(The transformation begins, and perhaps Reyna is the last one to transform in front of our eyes.)

HOP ABOARD AND INSTANTLY I SEE
PEOPLE READY WAITING FOR ME
“TARA LET’S” THEY SAID, AND OFF WE WENT
TO PLACES SOBRANG WOWOWEE

I COULD NOT BELIEVE MY EYES
CHANDELIERS AND VELVET SKIES
WHAT A MARVELOUS SURPRISE
TO HEAR THE SECOND I ARRIVE

WELCOME AS YOU ARE, COME NEAR OR FAR
HEAR OUR SIREN CALL GO UH-OH UH-OH
JOIN OUR CELEBRATION, WE’RE YOUR DESTINATION FOR FUN
COME ON GO UH-OH-OH
ALL YOUR LUXURY NEEDS HAND DELIVERED AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT
ALL DAY AND NIGHT
IT’S A SEA OF POSSIBILITY
ON THE FORTUNATA

Reyna banters a bit, talking to the audience. Something like “Can you belieb? One day I am lonely, the next I am holding caviar in a martini glass. Naks.”

TAKE A DIVE IN THE POOL, LOUNGE ON THE DECK
TAKE A TRIP TO THE SPA, MASSAGE YOUR NECK
TRY YOUR LUCK AT THE CASINO. YOU NEVER KNOW,
THE JACKPOT HASN’T GOT A HOME
COME AND DANCE AT THE CLUB ON SEAS WE ROAM

SIT BACK, RELAX, UNWIND, IT’S WHAT YOU DESERVE
ARE YOU CRAVING DESSERT? WE’RE HERE TO SERVE!

WELCOME AS YOU ARE, COME NEAR OR FAR
HEAR OUR SIREN CALL GO UH-OH UH-OH
JOIN OUR CELEBRATION, WE’RE YOUR DESTINATION FOR FUN
COME ON GO UH-OH-OH
ALL YOUR LUXURY NEEDS HAND DELIVERED AT THE SPEED OF LIGHT
ALL DAY AND NIGHT
IT’S A SEA OF POSSIBILITY
ON THE FORTUNATA

(Applause! We get the sense that they perform the same song multiple times over the course of a few days. By the final chorus and verse, everyone's slightly less energetic.

After the song ends, the bright lights turn off in the entertainment hall.

Performers start to peel off their costumes. They have that post-performance glow, and are chattering amongst themselves. Then they're off to family dinner.

REYNA is the last one. We see her have a moment to herself, finally. She looks at the mirror and gets out of costume. Takes off some stage makeup.

EMCEE almost turns the lights out on her.)

EMCEE

When was the last time you ate?

REYNA

This... afternoon.

EMCEE

That's too long ago. C'mon.

(They walk out together.)

End of scene.

SCENE 4

(EMCEE and REYNA in the hallway of the crews' quarters. REYNA's a bit intimidated at being alone with the Boss.)

EMCEE

Have something against us?

REYNA

What?

EMCEE

Around here we like to have family dinner together. Especially after a long week of rehearsals and shows.

REYNA

Oh, I didn't know. I just thought people were being nice and asking me if I wanted to eat.

EMCEE

Well it's how they show you they like you. But it's also just part of what we do here. You kinda' have to get with it.

REYNA

I just don't feel like it sometimes. I--uh, like to have some time to think.

EMCEE

Alright. (pause) Bit of advice for a newbie, though?

REYNA

Ohmigod, yes please. I don't know what the heck I'm doing half the time.

EMCEE

Go to family dinners. You get a warm meal after a show, you can relax and unwind, and... you don't give off the vibe that you're better than everyone else.

REYNA

I never said that--

EMCEE

Right, but you're not there to defend yourself, are you? The first few times they'll probably chalk it up to you being kinda shy or new. But after that they'll start to think it's weird and that you're too snooty to eat dinner with us.

REYNA

I just prefer to have my time to myself. And I can barely find other times to talk to my family back home. Living with everyone around me all the time is... it's just a bit much and I'm feeling so claustrophobic.

EMCEE

Well, buckle up, ma cherie. That's how your whole contract's going to be like. I bet they didn't tell you this in the brochure, huh?

REYNA

There's A LOT they forgot to put in the brochure. (pause) How do I--won't they already have their, I don't know, favorite seats, or whatever?

EMCEE

It's not a classroom. Or a cafeteria, for that matter. We dine together... very loudly, but that's why it's family dinner. You've just gotta put some effort into it. C'mon. You're overthinking this! Here, hold this.

(EMCEE brings out a plate.)

REYNA

Aww. I have my own plate?

EMCEE

What? This old thing? No, I just made sure to grab you one because you're going to be late and when you're late usually plates are gone.

(They pass by an office with its light on, or somehow indicating it's occupied.)

REYNA

Hey, is that Arthur?

EMCEE

Mmmhmm.

REYNA

Hang on, shouldn't we tell him it's family dinner time?

EMCEE

He knows.

REYNA

So he doesn't go to family dinner but I have to?

EMCEE

Remember what I said about people liking you once they get to know you? Don't be like Arthur. Now, stop dilly dallying and let's get some food. I'm starvin'.

(EMCEE ushers REYNA towards the crew dining hall.)

End of Scene.

SCENE 5

(A month later. REYNA's modest living quarters, with her roommate, KALAMANCEE-CEE. The room's so small, CEE-CEE's got her feet on REYNA's bed, and REYNA's rehearsal clothes are scattered on both beds as she takes layers off. They both look a bit worse for wear.)

KALAMANCEE-CEE

Oh, god, my poor feet. Those heels don't do your girl any favors.

REYNA

I don't think I've been this tired since... ever. Do you ever get used to it?

KALAMANCEE-CEE

The getting paid pennies but smiling for the slightly drunk old guy in the front? It's been years. I'll tell you when I get used to it. (A moment) Hey, we missed you at the last family dinner.

REYNA

I needed some time alone.

KALAMANCEE-CEE

And before that? And a couple weeks ago? (Waiting for REYNA to say something, then...) Look I don't want to be nosy.

REYNA

Then, don't. I had to take a call. It was important.

KALAMANCEE-CEE

I get you're close with your family, but while you're here, we're your new family. I promise it makes everything so much better. This can really be a tough gig if you try to go it alone.

REYNA

I can see that. It's just, a lot. It's a lot of talking, laughing, shouting... It's--

KALAMANCEE-CEE

Like home?

(A look of understanding.)

KALAMANCEE-CEE

It's totally normal to feel a little homesick, you know.

REYNA

I'm fine.

KALAMANCEE-CEE

We all go through it, and there's different ways to deal. I think it's why Auntie Em is so good at her job, and why Kuya Miguel is always cooking. All I'm saying is there's no shame to wanting to have some "me" time... especially to keep the goddess down there happy.

REYNA

The goddess down there?!? Oh my god you think I leave the room so I can--so I can--(whispering) masturbate?

KALAMANCEE-CEE

We gotta take care of ourselves, girl! And once you've made your way through all the cute guys and girls on the crew like I have, you gotta keep it fresh.

REYNA

Cee-Cee, I promise you, I'm not doing...that. I just, I'm really close with my family.

Hey! I'm not here to slut shame you. All those text messages telling your boyfriend or whoever that you really miss them, or that your heart hurts. Girl, you're a real poet sometimes. You just coulda' told me and I woulda' left so you could have the room to yourself.

REYNA

No, why would I kick you out? It's YOUR room too. But that's not why I like to have alone time! Like I said, I'm fine. (Changing subjects) What day is it? I can't keep my days straight.

KALAMANCEE-CEE

Saturday. Well, for us at least.

REYNA

I gotta go. I promised my family I'd call them. You're tired.

KALAMANCEE-CEE

No, you stay. I'm going to shower and hope this glitter comes off. Wait, have you seen my shower stuff?

REYNA

Is it the big plastic thing that always smells wet?

KALAMANCEE-CEE

Oh you've seen it?

REYNA

I put it near the air vent.

KALAMANCEE-CEE

Huh. That's such a weird place. I'm just gonna--

(CEE-CEE has to reach awkwardly around REYNA. REYNA tries, and fails, in giving CEE-CEE some privacy as she gets into her shower shoes and towel. She goes.

REYNA is about to make a call. (The ringing phone starts soft and grows into the beginning of the song.)

Song: “I Made a Vow”

REYNA.

CAPO 3

C Em Am C G
THERE GOES MY DREAM
WALA NA. KA TAPOS. GOODBYE.
SALAMAT. YOU GAVE IT A TRY.
IT JUST DIDN'T WORK OUT THIS TIME.

SO MUCH FOR HOPES.
SIRA NG PAG-ASA. PACK UP.
DI PWEDE MAAYOS. ENOUGH.
FEELINGS RUSHING IN NOW THAT I'M
GOING HOME.

C Em* Am G F*
I MADE A VOW
I WON'T GO BACK UNTIL I'M WANTED
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO RETURN NOW?
I MADE A CHOICE
I WON'T GO BACK WHILE I'M STILL HAUNTED
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO RETURN NOW?

Dm Am G / F*
TO THE FAMILY I FLED FROM IN TEARS
TO THE HOUSE THAT HASN'T BEEN MY HOME IN YEARS
DI KO KAYANG MAKABABALIK NGAYON
CAUSE WHAT IF THEY STILL TELL ME TO GO.

I MADE A VOW
I CAN'T GO BACK IF I'M NOT WANTED
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO RETURN NOW?

REYNA

‘Nay? I’m giving my notice. I want to come home.

End of Scene.

SCENE 6

(ARTHUR in his office, talking via video call with his bosses.)

ARTHUR

I know you all expect results, and I've been working on a solution for your, uh, cash flow problem. What happened last spring will not happen again.

Look, the changes I implemented on workers' wages took effect last spring. Maybe it's just taking some time to see how it affects the bottom line--

I'm working them as much as I can. Anymore hours for them and they're... they're likely to get hurt or injured.

I have to get creative? What does that mean?

These people have been working long days and nights. They aren't machines.

We've gotten off-track here. I was reporting back that our numbers looked good because I've frozen any wage increases and with the new hires starting work this week, we'll have some fresh blood. So--

Are you threatening to fire me?

It's been five years with the company now, sirs, ma'ams. I've done well for the cruise ship these past few years. I have built relationships with these people. They know me. You can't find someone who can do the job like I can. Especially while we're at sea.

That's ridiculous. Working on a cruise ship means I get to see a lot of new scenery. Ah, no. That's putting words in my mouth.

You're wrong. I'm ready. Watch me. I'll have this problem child turned around in a few weeks.

But of course, I'll need some support from you on this. I can find those extra dollars in the budget, but really, I'll need to be compensated for the extra time to plan and strategy. I believe bumping my hourly rate by \$10 an hour will be sufficient. I'm sure your people can take care of that.

It's been a pleasure, sirs, ma'ams.

(Sound of meeting ending. ARTHUR lets out a sigh.)

End of Scene.

SCENE 7

(The crew kitchen and dining area, dead of night. Sounds coming from the walk-in fridge.)

MIGUEL sleepily walks in and suddenly notices he may not be alone. He grabs a spatula and a big pot, and starts banging on it.)

MIGUEL

Hoooooy!!! Anak ng pating. Hoy! Mamamatay kayooo!!!

(REYNA comes out, reacting to the noise.)

REYNA

Can't a girl get some peace and quiet?!? (She sees MIGUEL.) Oh, no. This is the worst night ever.

MIGUEL

Ay! What are you doing, *anak*? You scared me. I thought the rats had gotten into our food, and I would have been---well, anyway. (Really seeing her in the dim light.) You are one of the new girls, right?

REYNA

It's Reyna. I started a month ago.

MIGUEL

I remember! The one with the big shoulders. You wore a tux in the show. (Chuckles to himself. A yawn) It is late. Or early. I don't know which one.

REYNA

(blurting it out suddenly)

I think I might be homesick. Oh god, that sounds so stupid. Never mind, forget I said anything.

MIGUEL

No, it is not stupid. Sometimes the banging on the pots releases bad spirits.

REYNA

Huh?

MIGUEL

Ah, well, Pinoy tradition. Anyway, you can tell me. I'm Tito Miguel for a reason. Come on, now. Why are you in the fridge?

REYNA

My mom would take me to work when I was little. I would help her scoop the cream cheese. But, everything was in the walk-in fridge and I don't know if I was technically allowed to be at work with her. Anyway, when I see one of these, I think of her.

MIGUEL

I don't have to be a master chef to see you are definitely homesick. You have to give yourself a chance, anak. Trust me, I have been through this a lot. Do you know how many young kids like you have the same dream? That this was going to be easy? Well, sorry, life is not easy.

REYNA

My mom and dad used to say that all the time. Me and my sister would just roll our eyes.

MIGUEL

Smart parents. They are probably so proud of you for getting this job, enh?

REYNA

I wouldn't know. They aren't exactly the type of people who would tell us they loved us every day.

MIGUEL

A Pinoy parents trait. We care about you deeply, but we usually show it in different ways. Did your parents pay for your piano lessons and ballet classes and math and reading enrichment programs?

REYNA

Guitar, but yeah. And, they did go to all my shows growing up.

MIGUEL

Ohh, see? Don't worry about it. They love you. Tito knows.

REYNA

But what if they want me to give up on my pipe dream? What if they think working on a cruise ship is a complete waste of time? That they told me I'm wasting the money they spent on college?

MIGUEL

Ay naku, *anak*. That is between you and your family. But it is also between you and yourself. What is more important? And can you live with yourself the rest of your life if you give up now? (REYNA mulls this over.) I know something that will help you feel better. It always makes me feel better.

(MIGUEL pulls out large trays, his prepped foods for the upcoming day. I imagine dough for pan de sal, but whatever might be possible for production. He sets a station for himself, and a station for REYNA.)

MIGUEL

Might as well be useful. Here, help me with some of my food prep. I find when my hands are busy, my mind is calmer.

(The two work in silence for a bit.)

REYNA

How long have you been working here?

MIGUEL

Five years. The first year felt like the longest year of my life. Longer than even when my son was a baby, and all he did was cry and poop and eat.

REYNA

Don't you miss your family?

MIGUEL

Every minute. Every day.

REYNA

But you don't want to go home and be with them?

MIGUEL'S SONG: Someday
INSPIRATION: Biyahe Tayo, Rainbow

Miguel takes out a picture of his family, maybe, or looks at one. Or does something, like, talks into his food as if he's talking to his family. Each food/pot is a family member.

MIGUEL.

G Am C D

Em A C D

SOMEDAY, ANAK, WE'LL HAVE ENOUGH TO
FLY TO DISNEYLAND, EAT ALL THE CHURROS THAT WE CAN
SOMEDAY, ANAK, I WILL PROVIDE WHAT
YOU NEED AND MORE TO KEEP YOUR DREAMS ALIVE

SO REST YOUR EYES TONIGHT, I'LL BE RIGHT BACK
I SWEAR FIVE YEARS WILL FLY RIGHT BY
WITH EVERY POT AND PAN AND PLATE I HAVE TO STACK,
YOU ARE SURE TO BE ON MY MIND.

I'LL POUR THE LOVE I HAVE FOR US
INTO THE FOOD THAT'S GONNA GRANT US OUR "SOMEDAY", OUR "SOMEDAY"

THOUGH IT'S HARD TO BE AWAY,
I FIND STRENGTH DIYOS AND KNOWING THAT EACH DAY
IS ONE DAY CLOSER TO YOU.
CLOSER TO HOME. CLOSER TO "SOMEDAY"

SOMEDAY, MAHAL, WE'LL HAVE A HOUSE
MUCH BIGGER THAN THE ONE WE SQUEEZE OURSELVES IN NOW
SOMEDAY, MAHAL, JUST WAIT AND SEE, OUR
LIVES WILL BE HAPPIER. PANGAKO SA'YO, AND PROMISES I KEEP.

SO DON'T LOSE TOO MUCH SLEEP, I'LL BE THERE SOON
WITH EVERY CHURN OF MY SPOON.

I'LL MIX THE LOVE I HAVE FOR US
INTO THE FOOD THAT'S GONNA GRANT US OUR "SOMEDAY", OUR "SOMEDAY"
THOUGH IT'S HARD TO BE AWAY,
I FIND STRENGTH DIYOS AND KNOWING THAT EACH DAY
IS ONE DAY CLOSER TO YOU.
CLOSER TO HOME. CLOSER TO "SOMEDAY".

MIGUEL

I made some promises I intend to keep. So, I will not show my face at home until I have
provided for them.

(They work side-by-side a few more moments.

Then NOVA pops her head in the doorway.)

NOVA

I thought I heard you, Tito Miguel.

MIGUEL

Officer! The graveyard shift for you tonight.

NOVA

Just doing my job, sir. (Turns to leave)

MIGUEL

Your favorite is on the menu tomorrow. I will make sure you get some!

NOVA

(with an American/Fil-Am accent)

Maraming salamat, po. It'll be a taste of home.

MIGUEL

Walang anuman! Do you two know each other? Reyna, this is Officer Nova Mendoza. Officer, this is Reyna, one of our newbie ensemble members.

REYNA

You were at orientation!

NOVA

Pleasure to meet you, ma'am.

REYNA

I seriously doubt I deserve that "ma'am."

NOVA

It's in the blood. And, the academy training, of course. (Catches herself.) I'll leave you to it. Good night, sir. Ma'am.

MIGUEL

I am almost done here, hija. Why don't you let this kind officer get you back to your room safely?

REYNA

NOVA

No need--

I'd be happy to--

MIGUEL

That settles it. Good night, Reyna. Get some rest, anak. You sleep on things tonight, do not make any big decisions yet. Thank you, Officer.

(REYNA gives MIGUEL a look, and she and NOVA exit.)

End of scene.

SCENE 8

(Hallway of the cruise ship, early. REYNA walks back to her quarters, NOVA escorting her. REYNA absentmindedly starts to hum a lullaby.)

NOVA

Say again?

REYNA

Oh, I, uh-- didn't say anything.

NOVA

Ah. Must have been my ears. This side's a bit deaf.

(A few moments. REYNA is definitely humming a lullaby, maybe she doesn't notice.)

NOVA

I definitely heard that. You're humming something.

REYNA

I was? I don't know where my head's at. My sister used to make fun of me. She said she knew whenever I was trying to solve a problem because I'd sing to myself.

NOVA

Smart lady. Where is she?

REYNA

Home with my parents.

NOVA

Where's home?

REYNA

Washington. The state, not the district. Small town you've probably never heard of.

NOVA

Try me. I've travelled quite a bit. For work, you know.

REYNA

Are you like a spy or something? (NOVA has a twinkle in her eye) Oh. My. God. You ARE a spy, I'm so sorry. Please don't kill me. I just thought people who travel are usually on missions or something. I'm so stupid!

NOVA

I'm not a spy.

REYNA

Oh my god, that's what spies say.

NOVA

Alright, take a breath. I'm not a spy. I was in the Navy.

REYNA

Oh. Okay. Was?

NOVA

Got out a year ago. But I was craving travelling around the world and being near water. A friend of mine said she knew about a job on a cruise line. The rest, as they say, is history.

REYNA

God, how do you stand it? I've been away from my family less than a year and it's just. I'm just a mess.

NOVA

Don't get me wrong. It does suck to be away from them. But you get used to meeting new people and choosing your family. (A moment) So, why are you comforting yourself?

REYNA

I'm scared to face my family.

NOVA

Running away from them or something?

REYNA

Running back home is more like it. I'm thinking about quitting. This just isn't what I signed up for. I'm proving them right by going home, and I can't face their disappointment. Especially my mom. I can see her face, and hear her voice.

REYNA'S SONG: Mag-Ingat Ka
INSPIRATION: Kailangan K'oy Ikaw

Capo 5: G

REYNA.

KAHIT SAAN KA PUPUNTA,
SANA MAG-INGAT KA.
AT ANUMAN ANG NASA IYONG HINAHARAP,
SANA MAG-INGAT KA.
AT KUNG UMALIS KA BAGO
HANAPIN ANG KAILANGAN MO,
BASTA ALAM MO
NA NANDITO AKO PARA SA IYO.
MAHAL, MAG-INGAT KA

MMMM.

NOVA

What does it mean?

REYNA

Well, translated it's...

KAHIT SAAN KA PU- NO MATTER WHERE YOU GO,
SANA MAG-INGAT. Ingat? Ingat. TAKE CARE.
AT ANUMAN ANG NASA- WHATEVER IS THERE IN YOUR FUTURE
TAKE CARE.
AT KUNG UMA- Like, if you go away?

Okay, it sounds better in Tagalog. But that's basically it. "Be well, I'll always be there, my love, take care."

NOVA

Did you write it?

REYNA

No, it's actually an old song that my mom - nanay - would sing to me.

NANAY ALWAYS USED TO TELL ME
AS A BABY ALL I EVER DID WAS CRY
NANAY SAID THE ONLY THING THAT HELPED ME
SLEEP THROUGH THE NIGHT
WAS HER VOICE AND THIS LULLABY

SOMETIMES WHEN I LET MY MIND ROAM
OR WHEN I MISS THE SOUND OF HOME
IT COMES OUT ALMOST LIKE A SIGH
AND I THINK BACK TO MY GOODBYE,
TO MY LIFE, TO MY NANAY

KAHIT SAAN KA PUPUNTA,
SANA MAG-INGAT KA.
AT ANUMAN ANG NASA IYONG HINAHARAP,
SANA MAG-INGAT KA.

SOMETIMES WHEN MY HEART IS ON THE FLOOR
I IMAGINE HER HOLDING ME CLOSELY LIKE SHE DID BEFORE.
NOW BECAUSE OF WHO I AM TO HER I'M
NOT SO SURE
SHE'D SING THIS SONG TO ME ANYMORE.

NOVA

Will you teach it to me?

REYNA

Siempre. Of course.

NOVA is slightly delayed, in counterpoint.

REYNA.

KAHIT SAAN KA PUPUNTA,
SANA MAG-INGAT KA.
AT ANUMAN ANG NASA IYONG
HINAHARAP,
SANA MAG-INGAT KA.
AT KUNG UMALIS KA BAGO
HANAPIN ANG KAILANGAN MO,
BASTA ALAM MO
NA NANDITO AKO PARA SA IYO.
MAHAL, MAG-INGAT KA

NOVA.

KAHIT SAAN KA PUPUNTA,
SANA MAG-INGAT KA.
AT ANUMAN ANG NASA IYONG
HINAHARAP,
SANA MAG-INGAT KA.
AT KUNG UMALIS KA BAGO
OH

MAHAL, MAG-INGAT KA

REYNA

Not bad, Navy Lady. You almost got me tear-ing up a bit there. And aaaalmost made me want to stay.

NOVA

I dunno, Spy Girl. It's a pretty big decision, and you may surprise yourself. I think there might be a part of you that wants to stay. There's a lot of people who are in your corner here. You just have to be willing to let 'em in. Just give it another month.

REYNA

That seems like a hundred years on a cruise ship. Does it get easier?

NOVA

Truth? No. It's YOU who gets stronger in the face of everything.

REYNA

Alright, another month--

(Sounds from behind a door, slightly ajar.

ARTHUR's office. He's counting up the tips from that night's performance.)

REYNA stops in her tracks, and is about to tiptoe around when she sees ARTHUR take wads of cash out and stuff them into his desk.)

REYNA

Oh, god. Oh god oh god ohgod. I need to get out of here.

NOVA

What's wrong?

(REYNA bumps into something trying to get away, making a noise.)

ARTHUR

Who's out there?

(Sounds of a chair scraping, or other way to indicate ARTHUR getting up and coming out of his office. REYNA books it, NOVA catches her.)

NOVA

Hey! (Picks up on the sounds) Follow my lead.

(NOVA leans into REYNA, very flirty. NOVA in character.)

NOVA

(fake drunk slurring)

You're really the best one on that stage. The other performers can't even touch you. You're on fire, girl. (other flirty ad lib here)

ARTHUR

Hey! What the hell are you two doing?

NOVA

Oh, s-s-sorry. Didn't know anyone was still up.

REYNA

(suddenly bursts out in a giggle)

Sh-sh-sh you're being so loud. You smell sooooo good.

ARTHUR

Hey, you're one of the performers, right? Get back to your quarters. And you. Aren't you supposed to be doing your job?

NOVA

Somebody's jealoussss.

REYNA

(fake drunk staggers along)

Aye-aye Captain!

(REYNA and NOVA book it out of there, drunkenly. They check to make sure ARTHUR hasn't followed them. REYNA slumps.)

NOVA

Whoa, hey. You good? (REYNA's still in adrenaline mode) What happened back there? I can't help if I don't know what's going on.

REYNA

I think I just saw my boss stealing money. (A moment) I'm not gonna get a chance to quit. I'm gonna be fired.

End of Scene.

SCENE 9

(The next day, in the crew kitchen and dining area.
Family meal.)

REYNA

Tita Em, can I talk to you for a sec?

EMCEE

Reyna, hon. Come sit. Where's your plate? Have you eaten?

REYNA

I'm not hungry.

EMCEE

Oh no. (Preparing for the worst)

REYNA

What? What's going on?

EMCEE

I should be asking you that. You, not hungry means there's something wrong. Momma always knows. So, spill.

REYNA

Last night, I saw something that I don't think I should have seen. And, uh, I figured you might know what to do.

EMCEE

Pinoy Noir spilled the merlot?

REYNA

Uh, no.

EMCEE

Queso City slapped that handsy customer?

REYNA

What--no!

EMCEE

Don't tell me it was Ooh-Bae with the pool!

REYNA

I don't want to know. (Swallows) I saw Arthur in his office last night. He was counting up the night's tabs and tips and... he put a bunch of it in his drawer. All evil movie villain-like.

EMCEE

When was this? Did he see you?

REYNA

Last night. He did see me, I think. And Nova--Officer Mendoza was there too.

EMCEE

This is a damn serious accusation, Reyna. What happened exactly?

REYNA

I was heading back from the kitchen. While we were walking by, there was an open door. I didn't know what it was but when I looked in, I saw Arthur. He had a bunch of big notebooks laid out in front of him, and there was just cash everywhere. Next thing I know, he's taking a fat wad and putting it into some drawer in his desk. And, I just booked it. Because I had seen enough.

EMCEE

Did Officer Mendoza see it?

REYNA

No.

EMCEE

Damn. But you say she was there with you? (REYNA confirms.) You didn't do anything wrong, it would've just helped our case.

REYNA

Has it happened before?

EMCEE

We think, a couple months ago. And maybe a couple months before that. But it's all been hypothetical. It would've been our word against Arthur's. Godammit.

REYNA

I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said anything. I didn't mean to mess anything up.

EMCEE

No, I'm glad you told me. This might just be what the cook ordered.

(EMCEE goes to MIGUEL, whispers something in his ear.

Then, EMCEE and MIGUEL get the attention of everyone in the dining area. Feel free to be creative - I'm thinking pots and pans, but there's so many possibilities!)

EMCEE

Todos mis amigos, Meine Damen und Herren, Hoy! I've got an announcement. One that I don't think you're gonna like, because I know when I heard it, I almost couldn't believe it's true. Arthur, who's supposed to be our leader extraordinaire, has been stealing from our tips. Our hard-earned money isn't coming back to our pockets. It's lining his. Arthur, who supposedly knows better than us lowly workers, has been trying to outsmart us. Well, there's more of us than there are of them. I think it's time for us to raise some hell. Our momma and papas didn't raise no slaves.

PINOY NOIR

Hold on, where is this coming from?

EMCEE

One of our own was brave enough to come forward. If they're brave enough, I'll let them identify themselves.

(REYNA goes to stand next to the EMCEE.)

QUESO CITY

She's a newbie! What does she know about anything?

KALAMANCEE-CEE

Hey! That's my roommate. She's got more brains than you've got fake boobs, so hear them out, okay?!?

OOH-BAE

It's been one month and she thinks she knows how this place runs?

(Various reactions.)

EMCEE

Look, most of you remember that incident last spring when Carmen got fired for telling one of our customers about the tips situation. Then the customer went all Hercules and tried to take it out on Arthur. And I'm going out on a limb here, but I think it's happened one other time before,

alright? You more seasoned folks remember when we somehow didn't get the overtime money for the Birthday Party from Hell. You all have given your blood, sweat, and tears to this place. I think you deserve better.

(People mull this over.)

EMCEE

I thought we're family. Family believes when one of our own sees something serious like this. So, I think it's time for us to get what's ours. This is our time.

PINOY NOIR

Em, you know I got a lot riding on this job. I don't want to get fired over some...crusade or something.

QUESO CITY

Oh, really? That's your first thought when we hear that our boss might be stealing OUR money? That you want to keep this job working for his corrupt ass.

OOH-BAE

Wait, but we don't know it for sure, right, Em? We're going to need some proof of this.

REYNA

I agree with you. I'm really hoping I'm wrong y'all. But if he really is stealing from your money, I want him to give it back.

KALAMANCEE-CEE

God! I knew there was something weird about him! I shoulda' followed my gut on that.

RISA LING

Girl, your gut got you this job. Maybe you better check yourself.

EMCEE

Alright, alright, this isn't the time for us to be dissin' on each other. For this to work, you all gotta be with me. Because I'm going to need your help for what I'm thinking of. We're going to need something that'll get Arthur's attention. Something with pizzazz. What kind of performers would we be if we didn't?

(Slowly but surely, sounds of assent.)

MIGUEL

What did you have in mind?

End of Scene. **END OF ACT ONE.**

ACT TWO

Scene 1

(Rehearsal hall, a few hours before dinner service.
Ensemble members are setting up for their
performance.)

QUESO CITY

All right, let's get this To-Done list over with early. This

PINOY NOIR

Who died and put you in charge?

QUESO CITY

My shoe.

PINOY NOIR

Your shoe?

QUESO CITY

(raising it in the air)

If it doesn't kill you first.

REYNA

Hoy, Pinoy! Tita Em left me in charge so cool it.

KALAMANCEE-CEE

Where's Tita Em?

CABER-NAT

Tito Miguel's usually supervising before dinner service too. Where is he?

OOH-BAE

You don't think?!?

QUESO CITY

Ooooh! That's some juicy drama.

REYNA

What are you guys talking about?

KALAMANCEE-CEE

About time she had some fun around here. Maybe she can finally... relax.

OOH-BAE

I'm sure he's good with his hands.

CABER-NAT

But obviously she calls the shots right?!?

REYNA

No, Tito Miguel would never do that! He's got a wife and kids at home.

OOH-BAE

Eww. Way to ruin it, Reyna.

QUESO CITY

He's been at sea for a long, long, loooooong time.

(EMCEE and MIGUEL rush in, out of breath but looking proud of themselves.)

KALAMANCEE-CEE

Where have you two been?

(Flashback to several minutes before. Arthur's office, door closed. EMCEE and MIGUEL going through cabinets, drawers, bookshelves, and whatever else is in his office.)

EMCEE

Keep an eye on the door!

MIGUEL

Sus, you need help searching through this office. He's such a hoarder.

EMCEE

Don't be so loud. Someone's going to hear and then he's going to know we've been here.

MIGUEL

Then look with your eyes and not your mouth.

EMCEE

I wouldn't have to if you'd just hurry up already.

MIGUEL

What am I looking for?

EMCEE

Ay Dios. We need proof that he's been stealing money from the counts at the end of the night. If he's smart he probably moved the money, but he might have left some printouts. Anything to show he's changed the numbers.

MIGUEL

Naks, I'm getting a nosebleed from all these numbers.

EMCEE

It's gotta be here somewhere---

(Finds the piece of paper she needs.)

This. This is what we need. My phone... I need to take a photo of this.

(As she finds her phone, ARTHUR can be seen walking toward his office. He stops by a window looking into his office -- perhaps he notices the light or hears the sounds first. He watches.

EMCEE snaps a few photos.)

Got it. Let's go.

MIGUEL

Wait. I saw this on my crime show. He is going to notice if we do not put all his papers back.

EMCEE

Are you serious? That's going to take so long.

MIGUEL

I do not want to go to jail!

EMCEE

We're on a cruise ship--never mind. You're right, Migs. Let's put everything back. It's not like I have to get ready for a show tonight.

(ARTHUR sees all this. Backs up a bit into the hallway, disappearing the way he came.

MIGUEL and EMCEE finally finish up and run out, making sure to close the door and turn off the lights.

End of flashback. Grand ballroom, EMCEE and MIGUEL in front of the ensemble members.)

EMCEE

I'm going to overlook you're taking that tone with me, Miss.

REYNA
(to ensemble)

If you had listened to me, I could've told you.

EMCEE

Doesn't matter. We've got what we need to confront Arthur. I've got that proof we were looking for.

MIGUEL

And me? I am chopped liver? I helped.

EMCEE

Ayyy yes, alright, Tito Migs here was so helpful. More importantly, I'm going to need your help because we're about to seriously rock the boat. Forget what we've rehearsed for tonight. We're improvising.

(ENSEMBLE gather around her.)

End of Scene.

SCENE 2

(Security Director's office. NOVA with her supervisor, SECURITY DIRECTOR.)

NOVA

I don't accept that this isn't our problem.

S.D.

Work long enough on a contract like this, you find things tend to resolve themselves.

NOVA

Then it's happened before. Tell me you did something about it.

S.D.

We provide security for the ship. Our job is to look after the people who paid to be on here.

NOVA

We're talking about a crime here. Embezzlement. Maybe fraud depending on how deep this goes.

S.D.

It was probably nothing. Late at night, too, and I'm sure this woman--

NOVA

Reyna.

S.D.

She probably misinterpreted what she saw. It's not worth rocking the boat over something like this.

NOVA

But if she's right, it's happening on our watch. We need to investigate this before it gets around to that their boss is stealing from them.

S.D.

Those are some strong words, Mendoza. There isn't any proof. We are in charge of keeping everyone safe, not running down criminals. We don't even have jurisdiction here. I don't tell the other Directors what to do. I sure as hell don't expect them to tell me what to do. The best thing is to let them figure it out themselves.

NOVA

I'll do everything myself, then. Shouldn't be too hard to confront that lowlife. God, I hate people who steal from their employees. Thanks so much, boss.

S.D.

Let me remind you I'm not paying you to go on some crusade on someone else's behalf.

NOVA

You were the one who put me on Entertainment Detail. It's your fault I've gotten involved with this.

S.D.

What happened last spring was avoidable. We needed a security team member to cover their department so that we don't have another lawsuit on our hands.

NOVA

The way I see it, you're about to have another lawsuit. And we're supposed to be protecting our people too, not just the ones who pay to be here. I see the kind of department you run here.

S.D.

Careful, Mendoza. I don't like your tone. I expected a military girl to follow orders.

NOVA

Then you've clearly never met a Navy officer. You say it isn't our problem. I don't see it that way. If you're so worried about keeping the customers happy, then consider this: once the crew hears about what's happening with their boss, they're going to get angry. These people have been working long hours. Now someone's stealing from the till. They're not gonna be happy.

Something big's going to happen. It's probably not gonna make your petty customers jump for joy. Look, the train's rolling -- Reyna's about to tell the Emcee. You can either get on this or get steam-rolled. It's on you, boss.

S.D.

You are getting so involved with this crew. You have gone soft, Mendoza. You have a job to do!

NOVA

Damn right. Yours.

(NOVA leaves.)

End of Scene.

SCENE 3

(The grand ballroom, during food service. Ensemble members are at their various stations. VACATIONERS are seated all around.)

ARTHUR seated at a table in the back.)

ARTHUR

What's so special about tonight?

EMCEE

We wanted you to be in the house for our special performance.

ARTHUR

You don't need me for that, as long as you keep the customers happy.

QUESO CITY

This isn't something you want to miss, boss.

(Ensemble take their places, and EMCEE gets on-stage.)

EMCEE

Ladies and gentlemen, madames et monsieurs, Wanita dan pria [Indonesian]! We, your servers, performers, and staff are pleased to present a new number we've been working on.

KALAMANCEE-CEE

We call this, "The Vanishing Act."

QUESO CITY

You may need to avert your eyes for the Fabulous cannot be contained.

PINOY NOIR

An immersive experience, which puts you in the middle of the action.

EMCEE

This has never been tried before! So you're in for a real treat. You may see performers walking through your tables, joined by the serving staff. Please, remain calm -- this is part of the show. I know what you're thinking, that you did not sign up for a new, immersive show in which you must participate. Not to worry! We've thought of that already. Our lovely performers and staff have prepared your lines for you.

OOH-BAE

These [coasters] will tell you everything you need to know!

(ENSEMBLE members have started passing out index cards, or whatever may be possible for production, to each table.)

RISA LING

Listen for the words at the top, and then read your line when you hear your cue.

REYNA

This show can't happen without you!

CABER-NAT

And we've got to thank the man who started it all.

ENSEMBLE

Arthur Obermeyer!

EMCEE

Who is this Arthur, you say? Well, the Entertainment Director has traditionally been a man of mystery. But, here, especially for you, we're giving you a sneak peek into the man behind the curtain. Or, in our case, the man behind the office door on the 3rd floor. Hold on, I see that he's here tonight!

(ENSEMBLE highlights ARTHUR sitting at his table.)

EMCEE

There he is, folks! Our performance tonight is inspired by him. (EMCEE turns into her on-stage persona.) Once upon a time, there was a Circus Ringleader.

(EMCEE indicates this is some audience member's cue.)

AUDIENCE

(reading from index cards or aides)

"His name was Arthur."

KALAMANCEE-CEE

The Ringleader had to take care of many performers and circus people.

QUESO CITY

These performers and circus people were outcasts of their homes, their neighborhoods, their societies.

REYNA

But all together, they formed one big, weird, happy family. Until one day, someone threatened their family.

(EMCEE indicates out to audience.)

AUDIENCE

"His name was Arthur."

PINOY NOIR

One of the circus people discovered that the Ringleader had been hoarding food and wine in his tent.

CABER-NAT

The circus people worked day and night, rehearsing and performing, and they were always starving and thirsty.

RISA LING

It was never enough. But their Ringleader always seemed plump as a pig. Now, they knew why. There was a thief among them.

(EMCEE indicates to the audience.)

AUDIENCE

"His name was Arthur."

EMCEE

So the circus people decided enough was enough. Nobody steals from their family, and gets away with it.

OOH-BAE

On a performance night, packed to the gills with audience members, the circus people walked out after the opening number, leaving just one man on-stage.

REYNA

The performers announced they would return, if and only if, the Ringleader returned what was rightfully theirs. The crowd's attention turned to the Ringleader to see what he would do.

(EMCEE indicates to the audience.)

AUDIENCE

"His name was Arthur."

(ENSEMBLE is now getting ready to walk out.)

EMCEE

We shall return when what's ours has been returned.

(ENSEMBLE walk out in a deafening silence.

Then, VACATIONERS start to look around in confusion.)

VACATIONER 1

Am I still getting my meal?

VACATIONER 2

So, there's no show tonight?

VACATIONER 3

I'm not getting my money's worth here. Who can I talk to about this?

(Chaos builds.

ARTHUR comes to his senses and runs out.)

End of scene.

SCENE 4

(Crew's kitchen and dining area. ARTHUR and SECURITY DIRECTOR are pleading with the ENSEMBLE, the EMCEE, and Chef MIGUEL.)

ARTHUR

You ambushed me out there.

S.D.

Do you realize how you've endangered your director's security? There is a reason we protect the crew's privacy by keeping office and living quarters in a separate wing.

ARTHUR

Now I can't go anywhere on the ship without some client or other stopping me to make a complaint.

RISA LING

Aren't we all about customer service here, boss?

QUESO CITY

I'm sure you have a way with words.

EMCEE

And until we get our business resolved, we won't be performing. The stages will stay dark.

ARTHUR

What business are you talking about? I'm your boss, you all work for me. Look if you don't perform, you don't get paid. Not only that, you could all get fired.

QUESO CITY

Good luck replacing us in the middle of the ocean. Who's gonna do your shows for the cretins you call customers? Ay, anak ng pating.

ARTHUR

I don't have any control over who stays and who goes. That's all my bosses' decisions, and even they answer to other bosses.

KALAMANCEE-CEE

Then I guess it's time we all meet your boss, and your boss' bosses!

ARTHUR

Em. I thought I could count on you to keep your people in line. This is getting out of hand.

EMCEE

Funny choice of words, Arthur. I thought we could count on YOU to do your counts correctly. Instead, we find out you've been extra handsy with those tips.

ARTHUR

What are you talking about?

EMCEE

One of my people came forward and told us what they saw you doing. You're the last to touch the tips and receipts. Seems like you've been dipping into those funds to pay yourself. I went back a couple of days to check on some of the numbers, and never did I want to be proven wrong. Then what did I notice on the tally two nights ago? A mysterious dip in the tip funds. You disappoint me.

ARTHUR

Someone is trying to start some cruise ship drama, Em. Who are they? They can tell me to my face what they saw.

PINOY NOIR
(pointing)
It was her --

KALAMANCEE-CEE
(staring daggers)
Ssshhhh!

(REYNA's caught in ARTHUR's gaze.)

ARTHUR

Who, her?!? You're going to believe that kid? She didn't even want to be here.

KALAMANCEE-CEE

Of course she does! Just ask her.

(Attention goes to REYNA.)

REYNA

I'm so sorry. I wrote my resignation letter before-- Before I got to know you all better.

KALAMANCEE-CEE

He's telling the truth?

PINOY NOIR

I knew there was something about her I didn't like.

ARTHUR

It was a very moving letter, talking about how she missed her family and how she felt oh, so, lonely... blah, blah, blah.

MIGUEL

Reyna? This man is lying, right?

REYNA

I wrote a letter. I did quit. But I had no idea we would go down this road. I'd take it back if I could.

ARTHUR

She has no loyalties, this one. Why would you trust her? She's leaving anyway, she probably just wants to make drama where there is none.

REYNA

I'm telling you the truth about what I saw that night! Tita Em, please.

KALAMANCEE-CEE

Girl, you broke the Roommate Agreement. How could you?

REYNA

Cee-Cee, I didn't know how to tell you.

KALAMANCEE-CEE

We're supposed to share everything! And not just towels and favorite moscatos... everything. How come I'm just finding this out?

QUESO CITY
(to Ooh-Bae)

Did she just say towels?

OOH-BAE

Don't you share with your roommate?

EMCEE

Wait, Reyna, Cee-Cee, spare me the feelings. Did you tell the truth about what happened, Reyna?

REYNA

Yes. You've got to believe me.

EMCEE
(searching her face)

I want to. Even if I didn't, it won't change what we want.

PINOY NOIR

Why not? Reyna didn't even want to be here.

RISA LING

She's a quitter and she's got no loyalty to us.

CABER-NAT

Why are we making things harder for ourselves?

EMCEE

It's always gonna be hard to change things around here. They run this ship off our backs! On our labor.

MIGUEL

I've got a family too, but I must always do what's right. We've gotta stick with your Tita Em on this one.

ARTHUR

Let me remind you. You all wouldn't have a job if it weren't for me. For us. And if you just let this go, I'm willing to turn the other cheek.

OOH-BAE

Honey, you are no savior. Shut up!

ARTHUR

Who pays you every week, huh? Who makes sure you get your money so that you can send it to whoever you all left at home? It's me. I guess you all are more loyal to some girl who wants out because she can't hack it rather than give me the benefit of the doubt. Ouch.

EMCEE

So you've got a reason why you were stuffing wads of cash and money into your desk?

ARTHUR

Look, you all had a good night for tips a couple nights ago. I ran out of space in the safe, so I decided to keep some of it elsewhere. For security.

EMCEE

Then if I check the logs tonight, I'll see the numbers back to where they should be? And how much exactly did you put somewhere else? How much off the total did you take? Do you even know?

ARTHUR

Check the logs, huh? Don't you mean break into my safe.

(EMCEE falters for a moment.)

ARTHUR

I don't answer to you, any of you. Here's the deal. People are getting mad out there and it's our job to make them happy. Your job is to entertain. So seriously. Get over yourselves. Anyone who wants to perform tonight, I will pay you double your normal rate. (to the group) You're not gonna get a better deal. (to EMCEE and MIGUEL)

S.D.

I am reassigning Mr. Obermeyer's offices elsewhere. Next person to reveal sensitive information to civilians gets to spend some quality time with the brig. In case you were wondering, we do run it like a real jail.

(ARTHUR and SECURITY DIRECTOR leave.)

QUESO CITY

I am not meant for jail, y'all.

OOH-BAE

That's messed up.

CABER-NAT

What do they mean the jail? Is he serious about the double pay if we finish dinner service?

REYNA

Where are they taking Cee-Cee? Tita Em!?!

EMCEE

This is how they break up strikes. They need to divide us because there's more of us than there are of them.

PINOY NOIR

That's a lot of money, Auntie Em! I gotta pay the bills and send some home to my parents.

REYNA

Y'all. We gotta follow Tita Em on this.

QUESO CITY

Says the girl who apparently wanted to jump ship. Metaphorically.

REYNA

Look, I take it back, okay? I wrote that letter when it got real bad in my head. I let my parents' doubt and words convince me I wasn't good enough for this. Or, I mean, they didn't say it like that but it's just that look they give you, you know. That look when you've told them something and they immediately tell you to kill the idea without actually saying anything?

OOH-BAE

Mmhmn. Every day since after I left med school!

REYNA

What I'm saying is that seeing you all work so hard every day... I know you all deserve better. You deserve better than having a boss who's not looking out for you. You deserve better than having to wait until the end of the week to call your families because you don't get a lot of time off. I've seen what a family, a true family, can be like. Feel like. You showed me that. So now, I'm gonna fight for you. Even though I messed up. Because my parents told me that you do anything for family.

MIGUEL

We would give our lives for each other, that's what a family is.

REYNA

Please. We can all do so much better. We deserve so much more.

EMCEE

I'm willing to bet there isn't a single one of us who hasn't thought of quitting at some point. That doesn't make Reyna a quitter. It makes her one of us. But Arthur hasn't shown he cares about us beyond what money we can make him. His true colors revealed. It's a reminder that we're surrounded by people who see us as something other than... human. That's why we've got to stay off the stages. We show them just how important we are, and just how valuable we are. We can't ever let them forget it. Lights stay off, and we stay strong. You in? (Some mumbled assent.) I didn't hear you. You in? (A bit louder.) Where's your inside voice?!? YOU IN? (A roar.)

(Lights dim as they all get fired up.)

End of Scene.

SCENE 5

(Grand dining hall, where the vacationers and clients are wined and dined. Dinner service, with a dark stage.

Servers are walking through the dining area. EMCEE, REYNA, and ENSEMBLE members are cleaning the stage but are definitely not in performance mode. Or, they may be holding signs for their "strike."

Some passengers start to notice them.)

VACATIONER 1

(moving physically closer to the ENSEMBLE)

Where the hell is the show I paid for?

PINOY NOIR

(getting in between VACATIONER 1 and ENSEMBLE)

We're currently experiencing some internal restructuring. There will not be any performances until the work's done.

(All round the dining room, QUESO CITY and some other ensemble give some "Mnhhm"s and snaps, or other sounds of assent. Servers continue with food service.)

VACATIONER 2

That's got nothing to do with me. You figure your shit out.

(VACATIONER 2 and those at their table wipe their mouths with pristine napkins and throw them onto the floor.)

RISA LING

(picking up fallen napkins)

Please, there's no need to use that language. We're working with our departments to get this sorted out as quickly as possible.

VACATIONER 3

It's been days of this! What else do you need to sort out?!?! You all should be doing your jobs, or I want other people who will do what you aren't.

(VACATIONER 3 stands on their chair, taunting the servers. RISA LING tries to get him down, but VACATIONER 3 ignores her.)

CABER-NAT

Excuse me, but we are still here for your food service. What our Entertainment colleagues are doing is for a bigger cause than just... to annoy you.

VACATIONER 4

Hey this waiter's giving me some lip! This must be what they call customer service.

(VACATIONER 4 pushes their chair back, and CABER-NAT walks into it, her tray wobbling precariously.)

KALAMANCEE-CEE

(can't help jumping in)

They're telling the truth, and if you'd just hear us out then maybe you'd understand why this is so important.

VACATIONER 5

I paid top dollar for the entertainment package. How much more is it going to take to get what I paid for? Huh? How much?!?

(VACATIONER 5 starts throwing bills around and whatever contents might be in their, or their spouse's, purse. They manage to hit one of the servers trying to calm them down since the bills start to land in food and plates.)

EMCEE

We don't control that, ladies and gentlemen. Please, if you wouldn't mind calming down.

VACATIONER 1

I'll show you some calm!

(VACATIONER grabs whatever's closest and throws the bucket of ice on PINOY NOIR.

Everyone's a bit shocked. PINOY NOIR stands for a moment, and then finds the closest plate to dump on the VACATIONER... only VACATIONER tries to hide behind his wife, who gets a plate of food fully in her face.)

VACATIONER'S WIFE

You gonna just stand there and let them do this to me? Get back at them, you coward.

(So ensues a food fight, where all parties are casualties of sauces, liquids, and more. Ad lib lines, verbal threats, physical comedy until...

A VACATIONER picks up a steak knife and is headed towards CABER-NAT. Alternatively, VACATIONER might grab a broken wine bottle and hurtles toward NAT. Before they get to her, NOVA, SECURITY DIRECTOR, and a few others from the security staff arrive. MIGUEL leading them in.)

NOVA

How is this NOT our problem?

(SECURITY DIRECTOR blows a whistle to get their attention. Everyone comes to a halt except for one enthusiastic VACATIONER...)

NOVA

STOP. Put the knife down!

(VACATIONER stops just inches away. Lowers the steak knife.)

VACATIONER 2

I'm tired of this! They owe us.

CABER-NAT

They started this whole thing.

VACATIONER 3

I want what's mine!

REYNA

We want what's ours!

CABER-NAT

We're asking for fairness. Why are you punishing us for it?

QUESO CITY

You should be getting mad at the system! The Man is keeping us all down.

VACATIONER 4

This ain't the 70's, and we all aren't hippies!

NOVA

Everyone, take a breath. No one's thinking clearly right now. So, I need everyone to lower whatever utensil or plate you're holding. (Waiting for plates to lower.) Ma'am, you too, please. (VACATIONER'S WIFE lowers her raised silverware.) Let's take a step back and look at how we're trying to solve things. This isn't a school cafeteria, and we've all outgrown our childish ways, haven't we? Your dining room servers are not the ones you should be angry at. It goes deeper than that.

S.D.

Officer Mendoza, stand down--

NOVA

Ladies and gentlemen, if there's anything I've learned it's that leisure is not free. I won't tell you how to spend your money or your time, but know these staff and crew members on the ship are here to serve you. Their labor goes unseen so that you don't have to lift a finger. I've watched these fine people pull sixty hour weeks without breaking a sweat. Now what they and their entertainment crew counterparts are asking for is better working conditions and better pay. All it costs you... is some inconvenience and discomfort.

S.D.

Folks, there is nothing to worry about. We will return to our regular schedule shortly.

EMCEE

That's right. In fact, we may return even sooner if you all use your... energy and focus elsewhere. While you dine with your families, these crew members have said goodbye to their families for months, or years, at a time.

REYNA

We're asking for your patience. If you'd be willing to walk in our shoes for a second, you might be more inclined to understand where we're coming from.

VACATIONER 1

What the heck have we got to do with this?

REYNA

If they won't listen to us, they'll definitely listen to you. Our boss needs to tell his bosses to give us our demands for better hours and more humane working conditions.

EMCEE

But he's not giving in. Maybe if some complaints came in about the disruptions, he might be more open to giving us what we need.

REYNA

Strongly worded... complaints from the passengers would definitely light a fire in their butts.

EMCEE

We miss doing what we do best -- performing. But enough is enough. We're hungry for more. Please, I know you've felt like that too. You know when someone's not treating you right, and you fight to make sure they do. That's what we're doing here.

VACATIONER'S WIFE

Complaining is what I do best. Tell us what to do.

(A flurry of activity as people spring into action.

REYNA heads to NOVA.)

NOVA

You're quite the troublemaker, Reyna.

REYNA

Not too bad yourself. Very Brutus in Julius Caesar. Uh, never mind, forget I said that. (to herself) Way to geek out, Reyna.

NOVA

(after a second)

Doesn't Brutus die?

REYNA

Yes, so it's not a perfect metaphor. (NOVA chuckles) You knew that already, didn't you? Hey, I'd follow you into battle any day.

NOVA

You've gotta give the pep talks, though. We could make a hell of a team. (Smiles) After tonight, you'd think you were a pro at this.

REYNA

I'm pretty good at convincing adults to do what I want. Have been, ever since I was a kid. I was always more comfortable with them than with kids my own age.

NOVA

I get that. People always told me I was an old soul. Never knew if I should be offended or not.

REYNA

I didn't think it was cool when I was a kid. But now I totally get the appeal.

(SECURITY DIRECTOR calls the security team.)

NOVA

That's my signal to go. You all watch your backs, alright?

REYNA

Thanks for having our backs tonight.

NOVA

Good luck. I hope you all get what you deserve.

(NOVA goes. REYNA watches her.)

ENSEMBLE members start picking up fallen chairs, etc. REYNA looks around for a bit and then...)

REYNA

Tita Em! I've got an idea!

End of Scene.

SCENE 6

(Grand ballroom, in the aftermath of the food fight. ARTHUR on video conference with his bosses.)

The "damage" can be clearly seen.)

ARTHUR

As you may have noticed, we've had a bit of an incident in the grand ballroom--

I can explain. It's not as bad as it looks--

Of course I'm the man for the job. Please, ma'am, sir. I'm handling the situation best I can. It escalated only recently and... well, the Entertainment and Dining Staff have a list of demands.

I'm sure the head of Client Satisfaction has already heard, and I can only imagine how this could be hurting the bottom line. But, there's a solution here and I think you'd best hear them out. The staff have assured me that if we meet their demands, things will go back to normal.

Sir, there's no need for that kind of language. I'll let them speak for themselves.

(EMCEE, MIGUEL, and ENSEMBLE surround ARTHUR.)

EMCEE

We are the staff who keeps your ship running.

MIGUEL

We are the ones who feed your clients and then feed our chosen family.

REYNA

You pretend like you don't care about us, but when we disappear you suddenly want to know more.

KALAMANCEE-CEE

This is what happens when you don't treat your people well.

CABER-NAT

We're working 50 hour weeks, but getting paid below American minimum wage.

QUESO CITY

We are the one who left our homes for better opportunities, only to find despair.

OOH-BAE

The thing keeping us together... is each other.

PINOY NOIR

So we decided to do something about it.

RISA LING

We have a list of demands for our human rights.

EMCEE

Because we are human beings, not machines to be worn down and discarded.

ENSEMBLE

Crews' rights, get on board!

EMCEE

A humane schedule of 40 hours with two days' off!

ENSEMBLE

Crews' rights, get on board!

MIGUEL

Don't punish us when we're sick or hurt! We deserve that time to heal.

ENSEMBLE

Crews' rights, get on board!

REYNA

Let us keep our tips at the end of food service and after the show! You let US tally each night and report to someone we trust.

ENSEMBLE

Crews' rights, get on board!

ARTHUR

Sirs, ma'ams. There isn't time for a full crew and staff overhaul. Certainly not if you want to resolve this before we dock in a day. It's time to make some changes around here.

ARTHUR

There's some merit to their, uh, demands. While I don't agree with everything, I can see where they're coming from.

(Some indication that the bosses on the other end are getting more upset.)

EMCEE

Careful, now. We have videos of our working conditions, testimonials from staff members... oh yeah, and say hello to some of the video cameras around the room.

(ENSEMBLE members probably have recording devices, or perhaps there are now some video cameras revealed in the grand ballroom. No matter what, the whole conversation has been recorded up to this point.)

REYNA

Our contracts can be redrafted and rewritten. Unless you're alright with some of these videos leaked out to the world about our story on board your cruise ship?

ARTHUR

You'll also want to consult with our Security Director. They've been dealing with the aftermath from this past spring and from yesterday's incident.

EMCEE

Perhaps you'll need to speak with our esteemed Captain too. See just how important our little Entertainment Department is.

ARTHUR

Whoa, no, I had nothing to do with this. Like you, I'm merely a victim.

EMCEE

We'll hold you to that promise, *madames et monsieurs*. It's been...a pleasure.

(ARTHUR hangs up the video call.)

OOH-BAE

So... we won, right?

EMCEE

We've gotta make sure they actually keep their promises... but, yes, we did.

(Slowly, ENSEMBLE starts to celebrate and hug or otherwise congratulate each other.)

ARTHUR

Em. Hey, Em!

EMCEE

Oh, now, you got something to say to me. Since we've got the upper hand. Don't think I'll forget that you tried to wash your hands of it by saying you had nothing to do with it. I've seen your true colors.

ARTHUR

Hey, I was looking out for myself. I've got mouths to feed and I thought this was the fastest way to climb the ladder. I don't like rocking the boat. You've gotta understand.

EMCEE

I understand, alright. We trusted you, and you broke that trust because you're the most important person in your universe.

ARTHUR

I'm not good at this, okay? Just, please. I'm sorry. I thought that playing their game and following their rules would somehow make me equal with them. Now I see I fell for the trap and

sacrificed the people I work every day with to try to brown nose some folks in some board room somewhere on land. I messed up.

EMCEE

You did. Now the question is what you're gonna do about it.

ARTHUR

I've been working with those bosses for years now. I bet can help you speak their lingo and make sure they won't try anything shady. It's not much, I know.

EMCEE

But it's a start. (Offering hand) Fresh start?

ARTHUR

A fresh start.

(They shake hands. Everyone else around them has been filing out in a celebratory way.)

End of Scene.

SCENE 7

(Crew kitchen and dining area, decorated for a party. ENSEMBLE fill up the space. Plenty of food and drink, and a celebratory feeling.)

KALAMANCEE-CEE

Alright, simmer down now, just for a second you wild ones! Whatever you're doing, just give me a second of your time and raise your drink.

QUESO CITY

Or if you're double-fisting, both of them!

KALAMANCEE-CEE

I like your sass! (Raises glass) Here's to getting what we want, and to finally getting what we deserve!!!

ENSEMBLE

(overlapping, ad libbed)

I'll drink to that! Watch out! Yahoo!

KALAMANCEE-CEE

I wanna give some lovin' to my newbie roomie. (Searching) Where is that girl? Reyna!?! Girl, where you at?

(REYNA suddenly feels a lot of eyes on her.)

KALAMANCEE-CEE

Girl, I'm so proud of you! Look what you made us do. We stood up to our boss!

RISA LING

We asked for what we deserve!

MIGUEL

We'll actually get time to talk to our families!

EMCEE

Reyna did more than that. She took something shitty and turned it into a chance to do something right. Reyna, honey, I know it's not easy being new on a cruise ship contract. Lawdy knows we've all gone through that, and we all have our own ways of dealing. But what I love most is that when new folks come around, we're reminded of some things that we've forgotten along the way. You reminded us that our family comes first and we protect it at all costs. I'm drinking to you and to our family.

(Everyone drinks again, and EMCEE and REYNA smile.)

OOH-BAE

Alright, what have you done with our Tita Em? This is way too much touchy-feely stuff!

CABER-NAT

Nah, let her stay, I like her! Maybe she won't work us as hard.

EMCEE

No way, work hard, play hard. That's how we make the dough!

MIGUEL

There she is. Big Boss-ing is back.

(REYNA, with a plate full of food, goes over to MIGUEL.)

REYNA

Oh.my.gosh Tito Miguel, this food is like... my mom's home cooking, it's so *sarap*!

MIGUEL

It's because it has my blood, sweat, and tears.

REYNA

Ha! That's what my mom says too when she's making us food.

MIGUEL

No, I am serious. It is really hot in the kitchen.

REYNA

(stops eating her food)

Tito--why?!?

MIGUEL

I got you! Just kidding. *Ayy naku*, you should have seen your face. Actually, there is no secret. The food I make is so beautiful on its own. What you are eating is one of my signature dishes. Kaldereta — a Spanish dish that we Pinoys took for our own. We make the most of what's given to us. The tomato sauce is for the blood we spilled trying to make the Philippines ours. The meat is the Filipino who works hard for everything in his life, no matter what. You cook it on slow heat over time because it takes a while for tough meat to break down. But when it's done, it's a thing of beauty — it falls off the bone onto your plate. The rice that we eat with every meal is our family who is always there supporting us and filling us up.

REYNA

Stop it, Tito. You're gonna make me cry.

MIGUEL

So *maarte*. It's true. Don't you forget you are with your family. You ARE staying, yes?

REYNA

I told Arthur to throw away my resignation letter. I'm staying.

(MIGUEL gives her a big papa bear hug.

Meanwhile, a mini performance area is getting set up. NOVA and a few of the security staff are there too.

NOVA's getting ready to go to the mic. QUESO CITY gets the room's attention.)

QUESO CITY

Tita Em, I know this is usually your job to introduce the talent, but you're taking the night off, hot mama. So I'm gonna get the par-tay started, all you Lovers and Fighters! I want to see you all with drinks in your hand and dancing the night away. We've got a bunch of acts lined up so let's get started. First up, our favorite woman in uniform.

NOVA

Uh, hey, all. I haven't done this for a while, but, uh, MC said y'all were celebrating so I wrote a little something. It was awesome to see you all stick it to the Man, and uh, I was inspired by that.

(NOVA and REYNA find each other in the crowd
for a brief moment.)

NOVA'S SONG: I Didn't Know
INSPIRATION: Especially For You, Panalangin

NOVA.

Capo 1

E Am

I AM CERTAIN TO A FAULT
AT LEAST I WAS
WHEN I SAW THE WORLD I
TOOK IT WITH A GRAIN OF SALT
SIMPLY BECAUSE THAT WAS HOW I LEARNED TO
PERSEVERE IN A PLACE MALE-TYPICAL;
WIPE THE FEAR OFF MY FACE, BE CRITICAL OF
EVERYTHING SO NOTHING TAKES ME BY SURPRISE.

I AM GROUNDED IN MY WAYS
AT LEAST I WAS
HOW COULD I NOT BE WHEN
I WAS TAUGHT TO NEVER STRAY
OUT OF THE LINES MANY OTHERS LAY. JUST
KEEP TO YOURSELF AND DON'T BE DIFFICULT
LOVE ISN'T WORTH MUCH, BEST BE CYNICAL OF
EVERYTHING SO YOU DON'T GO OFF CHASING LIES.

NOW I DON'T SEE A PROBLEM WITH MY INDEPENDENCY
BUT LATELY I'VE BEEN THINKING MAYBE IT'S OKAY TO LIKE BEING
SOMEBODY'S SOMEBODY IF THAT SOMEBODY
HAPPENS TO BE A WALL AWAY FROM ME

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT I COULD WANT THE THINGS I WANT TIL YOU
I DIDN'T KNOW THE LIFE I GOT IS NOT HOW I INTENDED TO LIVE
NOT SINCE YOU'VE GIVEN ME A NEW PERSPECTIVE
I DIDN'T KNOW THAT I COULD SEE THE THINGS I'VE SEEN WITH YOU
AS HAPPINESS GOES, I DID NOT KNOW THAT I HAD NEVER FELT IT
COMPLETELY
FUNNY HOW SWEETLY IT FLAVORS MY SOUL
I- I DIDN'T KNOW

I AM STEADY AS A ROCK

AT LEAST I WAS
THEN YOU KISSED MY LIPS AND
SOMEHOW I CAN BARELY WALK
TRY TO RUN BUT I'M CAUGHT IN BLISS

NOW I'M NOT GOOD WITH OWNING UP TO VULNERABILITY
BUT RECENTLY I'VE REALIZED THAT MAYBE IT'S ALRIGHT BEING
HELPLESS, SELFISH, EVEN FOR A SHORT WHILE
JUST LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO STOP AND SMILE CAUSE

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT I COULD WANT THE THINGS I WANT TIL YOU
I DIDN'T KNOW THE LIFE I GOT IS NOT HOW I INTENDED TO LIVE
NOT SINCE YOU'VE GIVEN ME A NEW PERSPECTIVE
I DIDN'T KNOW THAT I COULD FEEL THE WAY I FEEL FOR YOU
AS HAPPINESS GOES, I DID NOT KNOW THAT I HAD NEVER KNOWN IT
ENTIRELY
FUNNY HOW QUIETLY IT CREPT IN MY BONES
NOW I'M

SINGING WORDS I'D NEVER HEARD BEFORE
DANCING BY MYSELF OUTSIDE YOUR DOOR
I'M USED TO WEARING MY HEART IN MY SLEEVE
NOW I CAN'T MANAGE TO LEAVE

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT I COULD WANT THE THINGS I WANT TIL YOU
I DIDN'T KNOW THE LIFE I SOUGHT IS NOT WHAT I WAS HOPING TO FIND
TIL YOU REMINDED ME OF SO MUCH GREATER
I DIDN'T KNOW THAT I COULD DREAM THE WAY I DREAM WITH YOU
AS HAPPINESS GOES, I DID NOT KNOW THAT I HAD NEVER FELT IT FOR MY
OWN
FUNNY HOW LIFE GOES
FUNNY HOW I- I DIDN'T KNOW

(Cheers and hooting from the audience.)

QUESO CITY

Well, well, looks like our Woman in Uniform knows how to carry a tune... cuz she just carried
all our hearts away. Alright, make way for our next performer!

(NOVA, breathless and on a performance high,
finds REYNA in the crowd.)

REYNA

How many hidden talents do you have, Officer?

NOVA

Nova, please. It's no big deal, I was part of an a cappella group when I was in high school, so. (A moment) Hey, you feel like taking a walk? I want to show you something.

REYNA

Let's get out of here.

(NOVA and REYNA go.)

End of Scene.

SCENE 8

(On the crew deck area, nighttime. NOVA and REYNA breathe in the night air.)

NOVA

This makes the top ten of my favorite views on-board.

REYNA

(it takes her breath away)

This is incredible! Look at all those stars!

NOVA

You haven't been to this part of the ship before?

REYNA

With how much we were rehearsing and performing, I just haven't had the time. I don't know what to say. How did you find this?

NOVA

I like to get lost. (Seeing REYNA's expression) I just mean I was feeling a bit lonely my first few weeks aboard. I'd walk around and explore every part of the ship that I could get to. I found this. It was perfect.

REYNA

It feels kinda lonely up here.

NOVA

This may sound weird but it was comforting, feeling alone. Because actually, looking out at the stars and the water, it stopped feeling lonely.

REYNA

The stars out here seem endless.

NOVA

Yeah, and not seeing where the sky meets the sea. Knowing I was just one small part of this huge universe kinda' put things in perspective. (Shrugs) You don't need to hear that.

REYNA

No, please, I understand. More than you know.

(They take in the views for a second.)

REYNA

Is this you making a move?

NOVA

Pffht-what? Me? I would never.

REYNA

Because this feels like I'm in some movie or something.

NOVA

Guess it depends.

REYNA

On?

NOVA

How you'd feel about it.

REYNA

What about that song you sang in there? I seem to remember you singing about how you were kissing on somebody.

NOVA

Oh, I mean, I've kissed plenty of people.

REYNA

Unh-huh.

NOVA

Maybe I was hoping one particular person would kiss me.

REYNA

And that is?

NOVA

You get one guess.

(REYNA leans in and kisses NOVA. NOVA totally kisses her back.

Celebratory shouting and cheering from the crew party in the background.)

REYNA

Hey, maybe I can get a private performance of that song later?

NOVA

Well, would you go on a date with me?

REYNA

I'll have to think about it.

NOVA

I can sweeten the deal with a home cooked Filipino meal from this world famous chef I know.

REYNA

You had me at "home cooked Filipino meal."

NOVA

For the record, I'm glad you decided to stay.

REYNA

Me too. I'm home now.

(NOVA goes in for a kiss, but the ENSEMBLE bursts onto the deck, joining the two of them for a celebratory last song.)

SONG: Come as You Are/Welcome (Reprise)

Full Ensemble and Cast

[Insert song lyrics here.]

(A celebration.)

END OF PLAY!