

## KITCHEN AND EGGPLANT Annotations

### Commentary from the Producers

Our *Bel Canto* scene interpretation took over twenty hours to brainstorm, film, and edit. Every camera angle and prop was thought out intensely and intentionally. We chose the kitchen scene because it gave us the opportunity to examine the stark contrast in maturity and age between the teenage captors and the adult hostages that is portrayed as a theme throughout Patchett's text. In this particular scene, Beatriz and Ishmael show themselves to be emotional and immature— Ishmael can be seen at the edge of laughter throughout the entirety of this scene. On the other hand, Thibault, Gen, and Ruben are seen as unflappable in the face of what they deem to be childish threats. They are unfazed by the captors, taking them and their weapons as a joke. In some perverse form of Stockholm Syndrome, in which captives feel trusting or affectionate towards their captors, they see their young captors almost as their own children. Our interpretation of the kitchen scene from *Bel Canto* is meant to satirically display the discord between the innocent childishness of the young terrorists and the apparent ferocity determined by their role as terrorists through their juxtaposition with the clearly more-mature adult captives.

### Ambiguity and Risk-Taking

We took our scene literally, almost verbatim. However, our risk-taking and ambiguity lies in our dramatization and exaggeration of certain motifs and emotions. For example, Ishmael's giggle after Thibault jokes about the hostages' lack of ability to handle knives is exaggerated into uncontrollable laughter. This highlights the teenage silliness and goofiness in Ishmael, a contrast to what his terrorist "occupation" requires him to be.

The onion was one of the objects that we decided to exaggerate, to opera-tize. We included an extended segment of Thibault and Beatriz tossing the onion back and forth, both from a side angle and from the perspective of Beatriz, enhancing the playful, teasing, even daring, tone of Thibault, and Beatriz's rebellious, stubborn, almost childish response ("fine" is spoken with incredible angst).

We used camera angles to draw a parallel between Ruben and Thibault. When Beatriz talks back to Ruben the camera is looking over her shoulder. When Beatriz is holding Thibault at gunpoint, the camera is in the same position. Both Thibault and Ruben have fatherly instincts towards the other people in the house. Ruben cleans up the mess that the others make and Thibault teaches young Ishmael how to peel the eggplant.

We highlighted the difference between the expectation of the weapons to be real and deadly and the true childish nature children in the scene when the knife drops, in which we altered the sound of the collision of the knife with the floor. The knife, being a silly, malleable cardboard knife, makes the sound of metal on tile when it hits the floor. It is similar to the image on the right, in which the cat sees the lion that he wishes to be. The children believe that they wield the ability to kill like a lion (hence the brash noise of the metal) but in reality they are children like the domestic cat with no real intention to kill (hence the true nature of the knife as cardboard). This shows our risk-taking to subtly demonstrate the theme of the absurdity of the children acting like adults with a single sensory detail change.



Another example of our interpretation of Patchett's ambiguity is in the watermelon-smashing scene. Although the book skimmed over the idea of the Thibault's thought about the multitude of potential weapons, such as shards from broken glassware, we decided to emphasize that fact. The elongated scene of

Thibault's realization — with the twiddling around with the cutting board, the focusing in and out on his eye, the smashing scene, and the metal rock music — emphasize this scene. The emphasis on this scene in turn adds more ridicule to the idea that the adults were not to handle knives because of the presence of so many potential weapons.

### Language

Although our group took language from our chosen scene very literally, it is in the manipulation of camera angles, tone, and facial expression that our language is artistically, operatically, enhanced.

For example, in consideration of camera angles, when Beatriz questions whether or not she can shoot Thibault and Gen, it is seen in the perspective of Thibault and Gen. The audience is facing the barrel of the gun. We also used camera focus here to emphasize the gun and then Beatriz's face. This emphasized the impact of the weapon on the tone of the scene, while also stressing the absurdity of a moody tween holding a firearm and a man's life in her hands.

Also, when Beatriz asks, "I can shoot you?", it is much softer than her nasty replies to the hostages' questions. This contrast in tone puts an emphasis on her innocence, on her reliance on permission. She likes to act tough, as if she is prepared to shoot anyone at any time. But when given the opportunity, the side of her that is still a little girl needs permission and persuading to actually pull the trigger.

### Manipulation of Roles

*Thibault:* Our interpretation of Thibault has a specific emphasis on his struggle with the temptation to attack his captors while still feeling like a father-figure to them. The chaos of the watermelon-smashing scene conveys the inner-chaos Thibault feels in regards to freeing himself: possible but with lots of strings attached, such as the guilt of harming children. And the very act of teaching Ishmael how to peel an eggplant was a fatherly gesture in a way, though we made sure to include the gap between the two characters by including Ishmael holding a "gun" to Thibault's head and Thibault expressing some frustration at Ishmael's reaction to the lesson. The conflict between Thibault and the rest of the characters carries the particular tension between and among the hostages and captors that the entire scene was meant to capture.

*Beatriz:* We attempted to highlight Beatriz's immaturity. She cries over the onions, she fights with adults, and she gets nasty when she is called away from the television to do chores— and when it comes down to it, she can't walk the walk, she can't pull the trigger. She is also prone to mood swings and incapable of complex reasoning, as shown through her soft response of "I can shoot you?" to Thibault's negotiations of peeling lessons. She has an innocence to her that her tough girl act cannot hide. The fact that she is the only one with a "real" weapon is meant to highlight the absurdity of the entire scene: an unstable and upset teenager should be the last person with a firearm in hand, especially one with authority issues like Beatriz has.

*Ishmael:* In our artistic portrayal of Ishmael, we wanted to emphasize his out-of-place teenage immaturity. Throughout the film he is on the verge of laughter, as if guns being pointed at humans is somehow an amusing prospective. It's almost the equivalent to teenage boys playing shooting video games; the gun isn't real to him, so it is portrayed as so in the scene (hence the banana gun). He does show irritability after the lesson from Thibault, but he is a layered character. In Patchett's original text Ishmael has an internal reflection in which he thinks about his lack of parents and how he must cook for himself. This internal discussion is a trait that most young children don't have and can be considered unique to these

captors. We showed this depth of character through Ishmael's insistence of learning how to peel while still delivering the lines in an aggressive manner.

*Gen:* Gen's role in our scene is similar to Thibault's, a mature voice in a sea of immaturity. However, Thibault takes the situation in a more humorous way than Gen, and he even authorizes the girls to shoot Gen just for "credibility." The contrast in reaction to potentially being shot at between Gen (horror) and Thibault (indifference), emphasizes Thibault's lighthearted confidence and Gen's seriousness of the situation. While Thibault knows that the girls will not shoot Gen, the latter is especially scared of anything threatening the delicate balance between the restrictions of the generals and the laxation caused by the bored children terrorists that exist that allow him and Carmen to exist together. Hence Gen demonstrates the other, more conservative side of maturity that represents the adult captives.

*Ruben:* Ruben's appearance is limited, similar to his appearances in Patchett's version of the scene. Ruben's role in the scene is mainly playful, emphasizing the lack of seriousness in the face of a hostile situation, as seen in his placing the watermelon in the microwave. He is seen continually serving as a waiter of the house, the servant at the extended party, not really absorbed in the main conflicts of the scene. While Thibault is almost shot at, Ruben simply exclaims, "Jesus!" and returns to his work shortly thereafter; when Gen is accused for interrupting Beatriz's television show, Ruben asks if they know how to cook, a practical question. Ruben is simple, down-to-earth, knowing what needs to be done to maintain a group of people practically — another form of maturity that clearly distinguishes the adults from the children.

*Weapons:* We chose to use mock weapons with one notable exception. Beatriz, arguably the most immature of the two captors in this scene, carries a "real" gun. The gun is the first indicator of a serious conflict. The audience has been looking at clearly fake weapons for the beginning of the film so when the real gun comes on the harsh contrast is made even more obvious. All the other weapons are silly, like Ishmael's banana gun and the cardboard knives. This is to play to the recurring motif of the absurdity of the scene.

#The #End