THE WOMEN OF JUAREZ

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SCENE 1

In the dark we hear noises. The light comes up slowly. Upstage left, a one-single room house, with dirt floor, and two doors with mosquito nets, one on the right, to the street; and one on the left to a porch. On the porch, there is ratty table with an old metal tub, a washboard and a bucket. Backstage, we see clotheslines and a latrine. Everything is old, bought in third hand stores. Next to the street door there are two girls sleeping on a single bed. Next to the bed, there is a dresser, a gas stove, a wooden table with four mismatched chairs, an ice chest and two plastic buckets. On the floor, by the bed, the MOTHER, and the FATHER, sleep on a “cobija”. The parents look older than their mid-thirties. The Mother sits up and yawns. The Father wakes up. MARITZA, 17, the oldest daughter wakes up, breathes deeply trying to wake up. She gets up humming a song.

1 MOTHER:
Maritza, are you going to take a bath?

2 MARITZA:
In a minute!

3 MOTHER:
You want me to heat up some water for you?

4 MARITZA:
No, thanks, mami! I'll just use cold. (When the mother turns away, Maritza, with a pillow, hits the other person on the bed. We hear some noise and Maritza exits.)

5 MOTHER:
Viejo! Get up! You need to go get some water. We almost ran out last night.

6 FATHER:
All right. (The Father stretches and sits. He takes his shoes, puts them on, takes the buckets, and exits. The mother prepares the family breakfast and sets the table. She talks and moves incessantly. CHAYO, 15, her youngest daughter, sleeps, ignoring her mother. Maritza, in the porch, takes the tub backstage.)

7 MOTHER:
Chayo! Get up; you’re going to be late! you’ll miss the bus and then you’ll have to wait another hour.

8 CHAYO:
Let me sleep a little longer. It’s only five in the morning.
9 **MOTHER:**
But you take forever getting dressed and then you skip breakfast. You have to catch the 6 o’clock bus if you want to get to the factory by 8.

10 **CHAYO:**
Just five more minutes!

11 **MOTHER:**
Well, then don’t complain later. In a few months, god-willing, we’ll have saved up enough to move closer to the factory, so it won’t take you three buses and two hours to get to work. But then, if we move closer to the factory, Maritza will be farther away from school. But I sure would like to move somewhere with electricity, running water, and paved roads. I wish I had a water heater, so I wouldn’t have to heat water on the stove. And if we had plumbing, all we’d have to do is turn on the faucet and we’d have hot water and we wouldn’t have to take birdbaths, or lug around buckets. Look, if we all pool our money together and save up, with the money you two make and whatever your father makes at the market, along with what I make at the diner, we’d have enough by the end of the year to rent a little house and get out of this dump. I don’t even know why we left the “rancho”; we’re no better off. No running water, no electricity, no plumbing. At least I had my comadres back there. But there was no work, nothing for your father, and even less for us women. No matter where you go, it’s always something.

**SCENE 2**

12 **MARITZA:**
(Maritza returns and sits at the table on the porch. She writes on a small notebook.)

Dear diary: I woke up with a burning desire to fill these pages. My name is Maritza Martinez Lopez. I was born on January 24, 1984, under the sign of Aquarius. My hair is dark brown but I dye it auburn. I have dark brown eyes but I wear violet contacts. I’m a nursing student. My parents are Maria Rosario Lopez and Jesus Martinez, and I love them with all my heart. I have a younger sister, Chayo. Argh! I have so many dreams. I love to sing and dance around the house. My favorite songs are: Antología, by Shakira, Lo Dejaría Todo, by Chayanne and all of Selena’s songs. (Pause.) I need to write, to go on living, or to be remembered after I’m gone. Today, I woke up afraid. Come to think of it, not afraid. It’s more of a feeling... like I’m about to discover something. I got to run, otherwise I will miss my bus and I don’t want to be late for school. (She exits.)
**SCENE 3**

*The light on the house comes up. The mother keeps on with her morning routine.*

13 **MOTHER:**

Maritza! Hurry up; you’re going to be late. Chayo! Get up!

14 **CHAYO:**

Mama, let me sleep.

15 **MOTHER:**

You should learn from your sister. She gets up early and is always cheerful, singing. She works and studies, and all you ever want to do is lie around. *(She sits on the bed and speaks sweetly.)* Why don’t you go to school, hm? You finished junior high school. You could learn to be a secretary or a receptionist. It’s better than working in a factory or being a cook like me. You girls have more opportunities than we did. Take advantage of them. *(Chayo doesn’t pay attention. Upset, the mother hits her once.)*

16 **CHAYO:**

¡Amá!

17 **MOTHER:**

Hm! It’s like talking to a wall. Goes in one ear and out the other. Look, here comes your father. Give him a hand with the water. *(Chayo extends her leg, opens the door and goes back to sleep. The father enters, crosses backstage with the buckets of water.)*

18 **MOTHER:**

Breakfast is almost ready, viejo. *(Maritza sings backstage. Her singing is interrupted by her body’s reaction to the cold water.)* Maritza! Hurry up, food’s getting cold. One of these days you’re going to catch pneumonia from all that cold water this early in the morning. But that’ll be a thing of the past once we get a house. *(The father comes back.)* Sit down, viejo. Breakfast is ready. Chayo! Did you go back to bed? Aren’t you going to take a bath? *(The father sits at the table.)*

19 **CHAYO:**

I took a bath yesterday.
Don’t tell me you’re going to go to work without taking a bath? A young lady should bathe every day. It’s best first thing in the morning, so you can start the day nice and fresh. *(Chayo covers her head with a pillow.)* If you’re not going to take a bath, then come to the table. Breakfast is ready. More coffee, dear?

**FATHER:**
Ahem! Move it, Chayo. Come to the table, you’re going to be late.

**MOTHER:**
Maybe she’ll listen to you, because she ignores me when I try to talk to her. Not Maritza. She’s a good daughter and she does what I say.

**CHAYO:**
*(She gets up, goes to the table and puts her hair in a ponytail.)* Maritza! Maritza! Always Maritza. I know she’s your favorite.

**FATHER:**
That’s not true, Chayo. But your mother is right. You have to think of the future. Or do you plan to work in the factory your whole life? You’re almost sixteen. Don’t you want to go to college?

**CHAYO:**
Yeah, right. I’ll go to medical school and meet Luis Miguel, and then we’ll get married. Then I’ll divorce him and marry Tony Motola. That’ll be the day.

**FATHER:**
I’m serious, Chayo. Take a look at Maritza. She’s going to nursing school.

**CHAYO:**
Oh, papa. I don’t know what to do. I’ll probably just get married and let my husband support me.

**FATHER:**
But the only men you ever meet are the guys from around here or the ones who work at the factory. How are you ever going to meet a different kind of man who’ll take you out of this dump if you don’t do something to better yourself?

**MOTHER:**
Maritza! Breakfast is ready.

**MARITZA:**
Coming. *(She enters drying her hair. She wears a nurse’s uniform.)*

31 **MOTHER:**

Is Juan Carlos picking you up? *(Chayo laughs.)* What are you laughing at?

32 **CHAYO:**

Nothing.

33 **MARITZA:**

*(Pulling Chayo her ponytail.)* You little brat...you’re just jealous!

34 **CHAYO:**

Leave me alone! You know what, I don’t want to hear about your crappy life ever again! You drive me crazy! You’re always pretending to be such a goody-goody but it’s all just an act. *(The sisters argue loudly. We can’t make out what they’re saying.)*

35 **MOTHER:**

Chayo! That’s enough!

36 **FATHER:**

*(Hitting the table, he screams.)* Be quiet, both of you. You’re acting like little girls. Hurry up and eat, we have to leave soon. *(Maritza sits down.)*

37 **CHAYO:**

She started it. Why don’t you say anything to her?

38 **FATHER:**

I said “both of you.” You behave like cats and dogs, not sisters. *(The family eats in silence for a few seconds. Maritza hums Selena’s Bidi-Bidi Bum Bum. Under the table, Maritza kicks Chayo.)*

39 **CHAYO:**

Papi!

40 **FATHER:**

Why can’t we eat quiet for once? *(Maritza sticks her tongue at Chayo, mockingly.)*

41 **CHAYO:**

Leave me alone, you stupid cow!

42 **MARITZA:**

Your grandma is the stupid cow!

43 **FATHER:**
¡Hey! Show some respect for my mother-in-law!
(Rosario reacts. Jesus and Maritza laugh heartedly. Chayo, upset, gets up, grabs her plate, goes to the drawer chest; takes some clothes and exit. Maritza hums again, but stops when her mother looks at her. Under the table, Maritza moves her feet, first slowly, then faster. The rhythm creeps up her legs, her hip and shoulders.)

¡Maritza!

Father:
Stop it! You’re going to break the chair!
(Maritza calms down and eats. She gets up, leaving her plate on the table. The father does the same. He gets up and puts a shirt on. From the table, the mother looks at them. Upset, she gets up, complaining unintelligibly. The father looks at her, he’s about to say something, but stops. The mother exits backstage, with the plates. Chayo comes back wearing a skin-tight short dress. Maritza whistles a strip-tease tune.)

Father:

Chayo:
Oh, papá. Don’t start again. This is how all the girls dress around here. We’re not on the rancho anymore, and it’s not like I’m going to church or anything.

Father:
But the men around here might get the wrong idea.

Chayo:
Well, personally… I don’t care. Let them think whatever they want.

Father:
But they could hurt you, or think that you’re one of those…

Maritza:
Prostitutes?

Father:
(Turning to Maritza.) Quiet! You be quiet! (To Chayo.) …a loose woman or something.

Chayo:
Don’t worry, papi. I can take care of myself. (Chayo playfully kisses him on the cheek.)
(Coming back.) Viejo, call the gas delivery guy to bring another tank? It’s almost gone.

55 **FATHER:**
What time are you leaving?

56 **MOTHER:**
In a little bit! I’m just going to clean up and get more water. The truck should be here any minute with fresh water and it’s best to get there early before they run out or it gets dirty. Maritza, are you coming for lunch?

57 **MARITZA:**
Yes. I got some homework and I need to study for tomorrow’s exam. Juan Carlos is going to come by and walk me to the bus stop.

58 **MOTHER:**
Chayo, when you get home, go get some water, we need to do the laundry.

59 **CHAYO:**
Yes, mama. *(The mother pulls down Chayo’s dress. Chayo pulls it up and the action is repeated.)*

60 **MOTHER:**
And m’ija, be very careful when you are on the bus because there are some creepy men that hang out over there. Don’t talk to any of them or go anywhere with them. Come straight home after work.

61 **CHAYO:**
Yes, ma’.

62 **MARITZA:**
*(Mocking her sister.)* Yes, ma’!

63 **CHAYO:**
Drop dead, bitch!

64 **MARITZA:**
Don’t worry, honey, one of these days you just may get your wish. Ha, ha!

65 **CHAYO:**
Well, I hope is really soon, because I’m sick and tired of you! *(The sisters argue again.)*

66 **FATHER:**
That’s enough, cut it out you two or I’ll…. And don’t you think I won’t. I still can do it, you know!

67 **MOTHER:**

May God and the Virgin of Guadalupe bless you and keep you safe along the way.

68 **MARITZA:**

Biddy-Biddy stupid!

69 **CHAYO:**

(With Shakira’s song melody.) Ciega, sorda y rependeja ya me tienes rete harta!

70 **FATHER:**

Shut up! Both of you, shut up! *(Quietly, The father and the girls leave.)*

**SCENE 4**

*(The mother breathes with relief and leans against the door, then goes to the drawer chest and turns on the battery-operated radio. We hear Las Hermanas Núñez’ Cuando Te Vayas. The mother sings along while cleaning the table, stove and floor. The song is interrupted by the news jingle.)*

71 **NEWSCASTER:**

The slaughter of young women continues in Juarez. Since 1993 over 150 women have been murdered and more than 300 are missing. Despite the fact that violence and impunity are on the rise, no concrete actions are being taken in order to put an end to the situation. Police reports indicate that the victims were prostitutes, drug addicts, or strippers who worked in nightclubs around the city. In response to the rumors that the suspect is a serial killer, the city attorney made the following statement:

72 **CITY ATTORNEY:**

This is not the work of a serial killer. The modus operandi is not the same, the bodies are left in different places and the victims are distinct from one another. It would be premature and irresponsible to say that this is the work of a serial killer.

73 **MOTHER:**
(Picking up her purse, turns the radio off and leaves while talking.) It must be horrible to disappear, just like that, as if the desert had swallowed them up. Well, there must be some reason this is happening to them. They’re probably out wandering the streets, going out with men. Thank God my daughters are good girls, both of them work and Maritza goes to school. Sometimes I wonder about Chayo, but deep down she’s a good girl. (Blackout)

SCENE 5
(The lights come up on the house. It’s almost 2 PM. Maritza comes in carrying a can of paint. She throws her purse on the table and drops the can by the drawer chest. She hums Bidi-Bidi-Bum-Bum. Goes to the radio and turns it on, really loud. We hear Amanda Miguel’s El Me Mintio. Maritza sings along wildly, shedding her uniform with highly sexual movements. She caresses her legs, her waist, and her breasts. She grabs some jeans and a red blouse and puts them on. She goes to the table, sits, and opens a book. Still singing, she takes two pencils and “plays” the drums. The mother comes in, stops at the door, and looks at her daughter. Rosario goes to the radio and turns it off. Maritza reacts startled, looks at her mother and smiles.)

SCENE 6
74 MOTHER:
How did it go, dear?

75 MARITZA:
Fine, mami. I finish my homework and I’m off to the factory.

76 MOTHER:
I just came home to finish the washing and I’m headed back to the diner.

77 MARITZA:
Juan Carlos is coming over on his lunch break. (Takes an envelope and hands it to the mother.) I cashed my paycheck. They finally paid me my overtime. And I bought more paint to finish painting the house.

78 MOTHER:
How much do you want me to leave you?

79 MARITZA:
Just enough to pay for bus fare to and from work, a soda and a sandwich.

80 MOTHER:
Thanks, dear. (Puts some bills on her daughter’s purse.) What’s that?
81 **MARITZA:**
Homework. “Proper procedures for cleaning deep wounds to prevent infection.”

82 **MOTHER:**
Oh, disgusting. Doesn’t all that blood scare you, m’ija?

83 **MARITZA:**
No, not at all. Actually, I love it when kids come in to the clinic, and to watch how they calm down while we bandage their wounds, and the happy smile on their faces when they walk out the door. I love to help people.

84 **MOTHER:**
Well, I’d pass out for sure if I saw a wound like that.

85 **MARITZA:**
The other day a girl came in who had been severely hurt in an accident and Maricruz, that blonde girl in my class fainted, and fell and hit her chin, so we got to practice on her too. *(Both women laugh.)* Juan Carlos is late. He said he’d be here before two.

86 **MOTHER:**
Rest for a while. Sometimes I’m afraid you’re going to get sick. Always on the go. Running from here to school, then back here again, studying, grabbing a quick bite and then off to the factory. You get home so late, you barely get any sleep, and then you start all over again.

87 **MARITZA:**
If I work hard, someday I’ll be somebody, mamá.

88 **MOTHER:**
I sure wish Chayo would think like you, but you know how she is!

**SCENE 7**
*(Juan Carlos, 18, comes to the door. He hides a guitar, behind him and knocks.)*

89 **MOTHER:**
How are you, Juan Carlitos? Come on in! How have you been? Maritza told me that you finally found a job. I’m glad to hear that.

90 **JUAN CARLOS:**
Yes, ma’am. And I want to save up for school too.

91 **MARITZA:**
Give me a minute. I just want to finish this chapter.
JUAN CARLOS: No rush.

MOTHER: Want some water? I think I still have some lemonade.

JUAN CARLOS: No, ma’am. Thanks anyway.

MOTHER: Won’t you come in? Don’t be shy. Oh, silly. Make yourself at home.

JUAN CARLOS: Thank you, Doña. (A long uncomfortable pause. Maritza looks at Juan Carlos, who looks at Rosario, who looks at both. Rosario understands they want to be alone.)

MOTHER: Well, I’m going to finish the laundry. Let me know when you’re leaving, Maritza. (She exits to the porch, dumps water on the tub and washes on the board.)

MARITZA: Yes, mama.

JUAN CARLOS: Look, I brought you a present. (Takes the guitar and shows it to her.)

MARITZA: It’s beautiful! (She jumps on his arms, kissing him.) Thank you so much, Juan Carlos!

JUAN CARLOS: (Takes some magazines from his pocket.) And I also bought you these books that teach you how to play.

MARITZA: You must have spent a fortune and you just got your first paycheck.

JUAN CARLOS: Don’t worry. I got a good deal on the guitar and I found the books in Don Manuel’s used bookstore. And look at this: Selena’s songs in “Guitar Made Easy”!

MARITZA: Thank you, thanks so much! (She hugs him and kisses him.)

JUAN CARLOS: I felt so bad not buying you a birthday present.
MARITZA:
I told you not to worry about it. I understand. We’re in the same boat.

JUAN CARLOS:
I know, but I still wanted to buy you something.

MARITZA:
It’s the best present I’ve ever gotten. You know I’ve always wanted to play the guitar.

JUAN CARLOS:
Well, now you have no excuse! *(They kiss passionately and fall to the bed. They forget they’re not alone and make out. The mother stops her washing to listen. She pretends to sing. Maritza and Juan Carlos stop and sit at the edge of the bed, embarrassed)*

MARITZA:
Oh...my mom! *(Takes the guitar and plays something, but nothing musical comes out.)*

JUAN CARLOS:
You’re really good!

MARITZA:
*(Flirtatious.) With the guitar? *(Both laugh.)*

JUAN CARLOS:
*(Doubts, gets up, sits back.)* I talked to my brother. He said that if I go to El Paso, he’d help me get a job and let me stay with him and his wife. I just have to find a way to get across, or save up enough to pay a coyote. But if I go, I’m going to miss you so much.

MARITZA:
*(Handing the guitar back to him.)* Well, then, why go?

JUAN CARLOS:
You know why. You can make more money over there.

MARITZA:
That’s exactly what they told us about Juarez, and look, it took me over a month to get a job at the factory. The night shift is so exhausting but I can go to school in the morning. Chayo got in because of me. But my parents had a really hard time finding work and we’re barely getting by on the salary the four of us take home. It’s no different here or there. What really matters is an education, so you can get ahead.
(Hanging the guitar on a nail on the wall.) I know, but it’s hard. By the time I leave the shop, I’m so tired that I have no time or energy left to study. And on what I make I can barely make ends meet, much less pay for school and books.

118 **MARITZA:**
Don’t you think I get tired? But you just have to keep on going.

119 **JUAN CARLOS:**
You know I want to marry you, and if I stay here, I’ll never be able to save up enough to give you a decent life. I want us to live somewhere nice.

120 **MARITZA:**
Listen; if I go with you across the border, I won’t be able to go to school. I won’t get any credit for my studies here. I’d have to start all over again without papers is going to be much more difficult. *(She sits at the table. Juan Carlos follows her.)*

121 **JUAN CARLOS:**
Once we’re there, it’s much easier. It’s easy. We’re gonna make it.

122 **MARITZA:**
Let’s wait a while. We’re still too young to get married.

123 **JUAN CARLOS:**
Don’t you want to?

124 **MARITZA:**
*(Screaming.)* Don’t be ridiculous. I already said yes, but there’s no reason to rush. I want to do things right. *(Juan Carlos looks at the floor. There is a long pause. Maritza calms down.)* Who knows, maybe I’ll learn to play the guitar really well and become a famous singer -- a star like Thalia.

125 **JUAN CARLOS:**
*(Not wanting fight.)* You know you’re my star. *(He kneels before her and tries to kiss her. Maritza offers her cheek. Juan Carlos places his head on her lap. Silence.)*

126 **MOTHER:**
Maritza! Bring me some water. There’s none left.

127 **JUAN CARLOS:**
I’ll get the water, Doña.

128 **MOTHER:**
Oh, thank you, Juan Carlos! The buckets are next to the icebox. (*Juan Carlos takes the buckets. Before he reaches the door, Maritza stops him.*)

129 **MARITZA:**

Juan Carlos.

130 **JUAN CARLOS:**

(*He stops without looking at her.*) What?

131 **MARITZA:**

Nothing.

(*He exits. The mother goes backstage to hang the wash. Maritza is alone onstage. Long pause. She gets her diary from her purse and writes.*)

**SCENE 8**

132 **MARITZA:**

"Dear Diary: I'm a hopeless romantic and I dream of meeting the love of my life. I'll know he's “the one”, when he hands me a rose and serenades me. We'll get married, and we'll live in a nice little house, with two beautiful children, a boy and a girl. My ideal man has long, wavy hair, blue eyes, fair skin; he's about 6 ft. tall, nice, and not too muscular. He has a car and a bank account with over 100,000 pesos in it. Just kidding. All I really want is a kind man who loves me. (*Long pause. Closes the diary and hides it behind the bed. The mother returns*)

**SCENE 9**

133 **MOTHER:**

¡Maritza! It's almost two o'clock! (*Maritza is playing with a teddy bear and doesn't react. The mother observes her in silence.*) Are you going out tomorrow? To the dance?

134 **MARITZA:**

(Quiet) No! It gets so crowded and then you can't even hear the music!

135 **MOTHER:**

Why don't you go for a little while? Just to get out. Have some fun.

136 **MARITZA:**

I have a lot of homework, and I need to study for finals.

137 **MOTHER:**

Are you tired?

138 **MARITZA:**
No, ‘ma? (A long pause.) I care about him, but I’m just not sure he’s the love of my life. (Juan Carlos comes back with the water.)

SCENE 10

139 **JUAN CARLOS:**

Here’s the water, señora.

140 **MOTHER:**

(Getting up, the mother opens the door for him to come in.) Thank you, Juan Carlos. Dump it in the big container over there.

141 **MARITZA:**

Juan Carlos, let’s go!

142 **JUAN CARLOS:**

Coming!

143 **MARITZA:**

Juan Carlos, it’s late!

144 **JUAN CARLOS:**

I’m coming!

145 **MARITZA:**

Juan Carlos, hurry up!

146 **JUAN CARLOS:**

Quit bossing me around! See you later, señora.

147 **MOTHER:**

May God and the Virgin of Guadalupe bless you and keep you safe along the way. (The mother does the sign of the cross on her daughter and goes back to her wash. Maritza and Juan Carlos turn away. Maritza stops, gives her purse to Juan Carlos, runs to her mother and gives her the teddy bear, a hug and a big kiss. The mother looks at her. Maritza turns around and leaves. She reaches her boyfriend, who’s standing with his back to the door. Maritza pinches his behind and runs away, laughing. Juan Carlos jumps and chases Maritza. The mother goes back to her chores. Suddenly, she stops. She’s breathing heavy. She holds onto the wall, almost fainting. She turns to the street door and runs. The mother crosses the house and screams at the door.)

148 **MOTHER:**
Maritza! Be careful and don’t be too late. If you’re going to work overtime call Chayo on her cell. You got yours? Maritza! (Silence. She leans against the door, breathing heavily. She shakes her head up.) The things I think of! No doubt about it, I’m getting old. (Blackout.)

SCENE 11
(Two spots shine on downstage, one to the right, one to the left. The NARRATORS, both in their late 30’s-early 40’s, walk into their lights. Narrator 1 wears a glamorized Tarahumaran Indian costume as usually Miss Chihuahua does. Narrator 2 wears a “cowboy” outfit with boots, hat and a fringed leather jacket.)

149 NARRATOR 1:
Ciudad Juarez is located in a valley along the Río Grande, bordering El Paso, north of the state capital of Chihuahua, 11 meters above sea level and enjoys a hot, arid climate

150 NARRATOR 2:
Situated in the middle of the desert, Ciudad Juarez, a really big city, is surrounded by beautiful scenery that illustrates the living geological history of northern Mexico and the transformation of an area that formed part of the ocean thousands of years ago.

151 NARRATOR 1:
In 1658 the Spaniards occupied the territory of New Mexico and claimed that land for Spain, including the metropolis known today as Ciudad Juarez, a really big city.

152 NARRATOR 2:
In 1659 the town of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe del Paso del Río del Norte, was founded.
(Maritza walks at the end of the stage to wait for her bus. She takes out her Walkman and turns it on. While the narrators talk, the following scene takes place. Two men, the RAPISTS, come behind Maritza. They whisper to each other and walk to her. Maritza hums a song, the men repeat after her. Maritza discovers their presence, puts away her Walkman, and takes out her cellular. One of the men, whispers something to her. She tries to walk away, but the other stands in front of her. Maritza pushes rapist 1 trying to escape. He grabs her arm and slaps her hard. She falls to the ground, losing her purse. She tries to grab her purse and her cellular. The rapists kick her. Maritza doesn’t move. The men stop. Rapist 1 kneels in front of her, pulls down his pants ready to rape her. Maritza opens her eyes and pushes the man to the side. She gets up and meets rapist
2’s fist on her face. She falls back unconscious. Rapist 2 pulls down her pants, tears her panties and throws them at his partner. Rapist 2 pulls down his pants and rapes Maritza violently. Rapist 1 moves to her head, grabs her purse and strangles her with the strap. Maritza wakes up and fights to free herself. Rapist 2 keeps raping her. Maritza loses consciousness. At a signal from rapist 2, rapist 1 takes out a knife and stabs Maritza on the chest. Rapist 2 arches his back, and rolls to his side. Rapist 1 takes his partner’s place, grabs Maritza’s legs and turns her around. He pulls down his pants and rapes Maritza even more furiously than rapist 2, who moves to her head. At a signal from his partner, rapist 1 stabs Maritza on the back. Rapist 1 convulses, collapses on Maritza’s side, and slowly pulls his pants up. His partner helps him up. They take Maritza’s things. One of them puts on the Walkman, turns it on and begins to hum Maritza’s song. His partner joins him and both exit by the time the narrator talks about the raceway.)

153 NARRATOR 1:
Between 1680 and 1693 Ciudad Juarez served as the capital of New Mexico becoming a border town by virtue of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

154 NARRATOR 2:
In 1865, President Don Benito Juarez established the federal government in Paso del Norte, during the struggle against French imperialist intervention. In 1888 it became a city and was given the new name of Juarez.

155 NARRATOR 1:
Ciudad Juarez came into its own following World War II. Its proximity to the US boosted its economy as a supplier of goods and services and a profitable tourist destination.

156 NARRATOR 2:
Its horse and dog tracks are the highlights of its tourist trade. It also boasts an international airport.

157 NARRATOR 1:
During the 50’s and 60’s, a large segment of the population works in factories, consumer goods and trade exchange. By the mid 60’s, it is the most vibrant city in the state thanks to the industrial boom generated large multinational corporations.

158 NARRATOR 2:
In 1965, the Border Industry Program supports the establishment of assembly factories, or “maquiladoras”, which transform the economy and foster the growth of the local and regional market, considerably increasing the female labor force.

159 **NARRATOR 1:**
Today, Juarez produces a television every three seconds and a computer every seven.

160 **NARRATOR 2:**
Thanks to the maquiladora industry, tourism and the indomitable Juarez spirit, we have the lowest national unemployment rate: 0.6 %, and the highest per capita income on the northern border. Ajua!

161 **NARRATOR 1:**
The high quality of manual labor as well as established international training and certification programs attract worldwide industrial giants. This aspect is indubitably the cornerstone of the excellent business climate of the city and of the state.

162 **NARRATOR 2:**
Ciudad Juarez offers industrial parks adjacent to factories, among which are Yassaki, Delphi, Phillips, Thompson Consumer Electronics, and UTA, among others.

163 **NARRATOR 1:**
Really big fun in Ciudad Juarez!

164 **NARRATOR 2:**
Year after year, the locals enjoy the blessings of a sunny climate with outdoor activities such as sports events, the traditional Expo Fair, and the unparalleled spectacle of the bull fights brimming with magic and romance.

165 **NARRATOR 1:**
Rodeo has become a national sport, due to the skill and courage it requires.

166 **NARRATOR 2:**
And if it’s excitement you’re after, the Juarez raceway is an adventure, filled with thrills and chills. You will marvel at racecars revving their engines as they try and speed past their competitors.

167 **BOTH:**
We welcome you to visit our city steeped in history and tradition. Juarez. A really big city!

168 **NARRATOR 1:**
For more information regarding Maquiladoras and Industrial Parks in Ciudad Juarez, feel free call the Maquiladora Association (AMAC) Tel.: 01(16) 382-8133. *(Black out. The narrators stay onstage. We hear the voice of the rapist humming Maritza’s song.)*

**SCENE 12**

169 MOTHER:

(Waking up.) Viejo, it’s Maritza. Get the door.

170 FATHER:

(He wakes up, gets up and goes to the door. He opens but no one is there. He goes back to sleep.) It wasn’t her. It was don Manuel’s daughter, Maribel.

171 MOTHER:

It’s late. It’s after two and she’s still not home.

172 FATHER:

Don’t worry, honey. She’s probably working overtime.

173 MOTHER:

Yes, but she always calls on Chayo’s cell to let me know.

174 FATHER:

She probably missed the bus. She’ll be home soon.

175 MOTHER:

Oh, I don’t know. I had a horrible feeling when she went to work today. She gave me a big hug and kiss right before she left. I noticed something -- she had a strange look in her eyes.

176 FATHER:

It’s just your imagination, woman. Go to sleep. She’ll be home any minute. If she had a problem, she would call Chayo on her cell. Did she take it with her?

177 MOTHER:

I think so!

178 FATHER:

See, nothing’s happened to her. She probably just missed the bus. She’ll be home soon. *(He goes back to sleep. The Mother gets up, covers her husband with the blanket, goes to the table and lights the candle. She cleans, but cannot concentrate on the task. The light for the narrators comes back.)*

**SCENE 13**

179 NARRATOR 2:
Life goes on in spite of the fear. In the poorest areas, not only are they’re no streetlights, there’s no security. Since the roads aren’t paved, the police cars won’t drive by on patrol.

180 NARRATOR 1:
The majority of women works and is the driving force behind the maquiladora industry. Unemployment is a thing of the past. The maquiladora industry is in full swing.

181 NARRATOR 2:
People come from all over to stay here, or to cross the border, to improve their life. Drug trafficking represents a valid way to defy the laws imposed by indifferent authorities.

182 NARRATOR 1:
The nightlife is the hottest in the country, and some say it’s a reflection of the city’s prosperity.

183 NARRATOR 2:
They are always gazing across the border. Geography engulfs them and buries them in a dizzying world of, technology and productivity, commerce, exploitation, survival and hope.

184 NARRATOR 1:
Oblivious of what lies ahead -- a grotesque world, full of horror, drug trafficking, police and political corruption, misogyny, Santeria and pseudo-satanic rituals.

SCENE 14
185 MOTHER:
(We hear Maritza’s song again. The mother goes to the door.) Maritza! Is that you! (Silence.) Dear god! It’s almost four in the morning, she’s not home and she hasn’t called. (Waking her husband up.) Viejo! Maritza’s not home yet and it’s so late.

186 FATHER:
What?

187 MOTHER:
Maritza’s not back yet! Now I’m really worried. She’s never, ever this late.

188 FATHER:
Did you try the cell?

189 MOTHER:
I don’t know how to use that thing, and Chayo’s sound asleep.
FATHER: Just wake her up!

MOTHER: Ay, Virgencita de Guadalupe, please don’t let anything happen to her!

FATHER: (Gets up.) Chayo! M’ija! Call Maritza on her cell. It’s 4 o’clock and she’s still not home.

CHAYO: (Half asleep.) She probably ran off with Juan Carlos.

MOTHER: Don’t say that. She wouldn’t have done that… eloped… without letting me know.

CHAYO: (Speed dials her phone.) No answer. I’m telling you, she’s probably with Juan Carlos.

FATHER: I’ll go ask him. (Exits.)

MOTHER: Be careful. (Closes the door and turns to Chayo.) Chayo! How can you just go back to sleep like that?

CHAYO: ‘má! You’ll see she’s with Juan Carlos. Let me sleep.

(The narrators’ lights come up. A candle dimly lights the house.)

SCENE 15

NARRATOR 1: Life in Juarez is dangerous for women. Still, they struggle in poverty-stricken, hostile surroundings. The poorer neighborhoods are overrun with gangs and drug addicts.

NARRATOR 2: The majority of the victims were workers, attacked on the way home from work, or vice versa. That is, in public places.

NARRATOR 1: Various local organizations have requested that this border be declared to be a “State of emergency”.

SCENE 16

(The father comes running, followed by Juan Carlos. The mother opens the door)

MOTHER:
Oh, no, no, no! No! Ay, my god, I’m worried sick.

203 **FATHER:**

Calm down, mujer! Chayo! Try your sister again. *(He runs and pours water in a cup, handing it to his wife.)* Chayo! Hurry up, girl!

204 **MOTHER:**

I’m going out of my mind, viejo. Dear God, what could’ve happened to her? She never comes home late without letting me know and it’s been more than 4 hours.

205 **JUAN CARLOS:**

I walked her to the bus stop and she went to work. Chayo! Don’t you know any of her friend’s phone numbers?

206 **CHAYO:**

No! She never tells me a thing. What time is it?

207 **MOTHER:**

Almost five.

208 **FATHER:**

Let’s go look for her.

209 **CHAYO:**

There’s nothing but desert out there, and it’s pitch black.

210 **FATHER:**

So what? She probably fell down somewhere in the dark and got hurt. Chayo! You and Juan Carlos go to the bus stop and your mom and I will head in the other direction. *(They take flashlights and exit. The narrator’s lights come up. In the back we see the flashlights cutting the dark.)*

**SCENE 17**

211 **NARRATOR 1:**

The desert surrounding us is a vast emptiness. Nothingness.

212 **JUAN CARLOS:**

Maritza!

213 **NARRATOR 2:**

You look side to side and you feel and see nothing.

214 **MOTHER:**
In this infinite sea of sand and dust our lives mean nothing.

Our voices are lost and become nothing.

Our dreams are nothing.

Thousands come and thousands go.

The desert, the emptiness, the nothingness tells them they’ve arrived at the Promised Land:

"Ciudad Juarez...

"Mexico’s finest frontier"

Maritza!
ALL:
Maritza!

SCENE 18
(The house is now fully lit. Juan Carlos and Chayo return. She crosses to the patio looking for her sister. He stays in the middle of the room, thinking. Chayo returns. She negates with a gesture. He reacts angrily, pacing up and down the place.)

CHAYO:
What time is it?

JUAN CARLOS:
Six. (Chayo speed dials again. No answer. She closes the phone) I'll ask Chava to lend me his car to go to the Red Cross. (Exit.)

CHAYO:
Call my cell if you find her. (She stays alone onstage, walks backwards to the bed and sits frozen for a moment. She cries. She listens something and wipes out her tears. Opens the door. The parents come back.)

MOTHER:
Didn’t you find her?

CHAYO:
No.

FATHER:
Where’s Juan Carlos?

CHAYO:
He went to borrow Chava’s car, to go to the Red Cross.

FATHER:
I’ll go with him. Call work and tell them I’m going to be late. (Exits.)

CHAYO:
Yes, papa. (Long pause. No one dares to talk. Mother and daughter avoid looking at each other. The mother gets up and tries to control herself. She walks to the stove.)

MOTHER:
You hungry? Want me to make you some breakfast?

CHAYO:
No, mama, thank you.
(The mother cannot stand it anymore and hits the store. She screams and cries. Chayo runs to her and hugs her. Mother and daughter cry. The Light on the house goes off. The narrators’ Light comes up.)

**SCENE 19**

242 **NARRATOR 2:**
The victims work for multinational corporations that pay no taxes in Mexico. 70% of Fortune 500 companies utilize maquiladoras and they are increasing over 10% each year.

243 **NARRATOR 1:**
There are more than 3 thousand companies employing over a million workers, with an annual product volume of $40 billion dollars.

244 **NARRATOR 2:**
98% are for the American market. 90% of the maquiladoras are situated along the northern border, and a third are in Ciudad Juarez.

245 **NARRATOR 1:**
These multinational corporations offer no security for their employees, the majority of which are women who must often come and go late at night.

246 **NARRATOR 2:**
These corporations that earn millions from the city should subsidize public safety programs and assist government and civic organizations in putting an end to these murders once and for all. *(Both exit.)*

**SCENE 20**

*(The mother and Juan Carlos walk up to the POLICEMAN, sitting at a desk)*

247 **MOTHER:**
Señor! Help us, please. My daughter didn’t come home last night and we’re really worried.

248 **POLICEMAN:**
Señora! You must wait two days before filling a missing person’s report.

249 **MOTHER:**
What do you mean, two days?

250 **POLICEMAN:**
That’s right. Did you check with her friends?

251 **MOTHER:**
No. She never would’ve stayed anywhere without letting us know.

POLICEMAN:
Well, I’m sorry, ma’am. We have to wait 48 hours before filling out any report.

MOTHER:
Please, sir. Don’t be cruel!

POLICEMAN:
Did you check the Red Cross?

JUAN CARLOS:
Yes, and we went to the local hospital and the police station, and she hasn’t been arrested or anything.

POLICEMAN:
Well, I can’t help you right now. You have to wait 48 hours.

JUAN CARLOS:
We’re not waiting, señora! Let’s go look for her at the school. Maybe one of her friends knows something. *(They exit talking and over the line lights fade out.)*

MOTHER:
Yes, m’ijo. And if not, then we’ll go to the factory. Chayo went and said she’d talk to the girls that work the night shift, to see if anyone has heard anything.

SCENE 21
*(The lights come up. The policeman is sitting at the same spot. The mother comes in running, followed by Chayo.)*

MOTHER:
Señor, please help me. My daughter hasn’t been home in almost two days.

POLICEMAN:
Señora, I already told you that we couldn’t file a report until it’s been at least 48 hours. She probably went somewhere with her boyfriend.

MOTHER:
No, her boyfriend is looking for her too. She got off work at the factory and never came home. We’ve looked everywhere for her and she hasn’t turned up. It’s been almost 48 hours what’s the big deal if it’s a little earlier. Please, look for her. For your mother’s sake, please, Señor.
Policeman: Okay, okay. *(He takes a piece of paper from a drawer and a pen.)* All right then! Name?

Mother: Maritza Martinez Lopez.

Policeman: Age?

Mother: 17.

Policeman: Build?

Mother: Average.

Policeman: Height?

Mother: Short. 5'5"

Policeman: Any scars or birthmarks?

Mother: None.

Policeman: What was she wearing the last time you saw her?

Mother: Jeans and a red blouse.

Policeman: Were the pants tight?

Mother: A little.

Policeman: Hm! Had she been drinking?

Mother: No!
POLICEMAN: Any drugs?

MOTHER: No! My daughter is a good girl. She goes to school and works.

POLICEMAN: (Malicious.) Did she hang out with the wrong crowd?

MOTHER: No! She leaves school, comes home and from there goes to the factory, gets off late, but comes straight home.

POLICEMAN: Are you sure she didn’t have any other boyfriends?

CHAYO: What’s wrong with you, sir? My sister’s been missing two days and you’re doing nothing to help us. And now you’re insinuating that she was a whore and a drug addict.

POLICEMAN: Shut your trap, you brat!

MOTHER: How dare you? Have you no feelings, no decency? Who do you think you are?

POLICEMAN: Watch it, señora! You’re insulting an officer of the law!

MOTHER: And you’re insulting me, and my daughter.

POLICEMAN: This happens because they’re out on the streets. Why don’t you stay home and watch your children?

MOTHER: We may be poor, but we’re honest. You have no right to treat us like this.

POLICEMAN: Look, ma’am, don’t give us any attitude or we won’t look for your daughter.

CHAYO: But you have an obligation to help us.

POLICEMAN: 
She probably ran off with some guy. That’s what a lot of them do. They leave and come back sooner or later, sometimes pregnant.

293 **MOTHER:**
No, she’s not like that. Don’t talk about her that way.

294 **POLICEMAN:**
Listen, stop making a scene, or we won’t look for your daughter. Why waste our time. I bet she took off with some guy.

295 **CHAYO:**
You have no right, you asshole!

296 **POLICEMAN:**
(Throws the file in the drawer.) Shut the fuck up, you fucking cunt!

297 **MOTHER:**
How dare you. You son of a bitch! Motherfucking idiot! (She jumps to slap the cop. Before she does it, Chayo grabs her and drags her out of the place. The Mother and the policeman keep screaming insults at each other.)

298 **POLICEMAN:**
You’d better shut your trap, you old hag, or I’ll throw you in jail.

299 **CHAYO:**
Let’s get out of here, mama. These pigs have no compassion. (The policeman sits down. Pause. Determined, Chayo returns by herself, stops center stage, and screams to the cop.) Chinga tu madre, pinche policía culero! (Go fuck yourself, asshole mother-fucking pig.) (The policeman gets up. Chayo runs offstage. Blackout.)

**INTERMISSION**
SECOND ACT
SCENE 22
(The Narrators are sitting at the family table with the mother. Chayo pretends to sweep.)

300 NARRATOR 2:
Don’t worry, señora. We’re going to help you here, but I’ll be honest. (Pause.)

301 NARRATOR 1:
The majority of these cases don’t turn out well. (Pause.) Have you heard about all the murdered young women?

302 MOTHER:
I think so.

303 NARRATOR 2:
From what you’ve told me, your daughter might be one of those cases.

304 MOTHER:
Impossible! My daughter wasn’t one of those… God forbid!

305 NARRATOR 1:
What do you mean?

306 MOTHER:
Well, on the radio, the police and government say that those women were prostitutes, strippers, and drug addicts. My daughter is a good girl. She works and goes to school.

307 NARRATOR 2:
That’s what the police want people to think, so they won’t be pressured into conducting a thorough investigation.

308 NARRATOR 1:
The truth is that in the majority of cases, the victims were young women, factory workers. Just like your daughter.

309 NARRATOR 1:
Look at these pictures. (From her briefcase, she pulls out a photo album. Chayo gets closer to the table.) They’re photos of over 100 missing girls.

310 MOTHER:
I can see my daughter’s face in every one of them, every one of these girls. The black, black eyes, the black, black hair... as if she were a part of all of them. But my daughter can’t be dead. She never hurt anyone
None of them were to blame. They weren't loose women, drug addicts, or prostitutes.

But why?

The police aren't interested because the victims are poor and often live alone or in out of the way place, like you do.

But who's to blame?

We don't know. All we know is that Juarez is the perfect place to murder women, because of the impunity. The failure of the police to resolve these crimes has turned Juarez into a paradise for maniacs, murderers. Throw in some drug smuggling, heroine and cocaine dealing, and this city has turned into one of the most dangerous places in the world.

So they have no idea who's responsible for all of this?

There are a number of theories out there explaining this mass murder of young women, including gangs of young, rich kids, assisted by bodyguards or the police. Other theories include the making of snuff films...

What's that?

Those are videos where the girls are murdered and their deaths are videotaped.

Other theories talk about drug dealers' perverse orgies, ritual homicide related to Satanism, organ trafficking. It might even be a social epidemic, or copycats, where other people recreate an established pattern, and in doing so, try to hide acts of domestic violence or sexual abuse of minors.

So then, what can we do to get them to look for my daughter?
Tomorrow we are going with you to the police and demand a copy of the file.

323 NARRATOR 2:
When was the last time you saw your daughter? *(The narrators gather their stuff.)*

324 MOTHER:
It’s been ten days.

325 NARRATOR 1:
*(Giving the mother a card.)* You can also contact, “May Our Daughters Come Home.”
It’s an organization formed by families in your situation who are fighting to find their daughters. They can help you make flyers and hand them out in the streets. The group can help you in many ways, but above all, it’s a matter of moral support.

326 MOTHER:
Well, what else can we do? The police won’t help us at all. All they do is make filthy insinuations about my daughter. And she was a good girl. Why are they doing this? Why won’t anyone at the factory do anything?
*(The narrators do not answer and exit. The mother closes the door and leans against it. On the other side Narrator 1 leans against the door. Narrator 2 observes quietly and takes his partner’s briefcase. They look at each other and exit. Pause. Chayo, who tried to conceal her nausea, runs off to the patio. The mother follows her. Fade out.)*

**SCENE 23**
*(Maritza’s voice is heard in the dark singing her song. Lights fade in. The mother comes running from the patio, crosses de room and stand at the door.)*

327 MOTHER:
Maritza! It’s that you? Maritza?
*(Pause. It was just her imagination. She controls her tears, goes inside, takes clothes from the bed and goes to the patio. Slowly, Juan Carlos enters, with a backpack, and goes to the door. He is about to knock, but stops, looks inside through the mosquito net, turns around and exit. The mother comes back, looks at Juan Carlos, rushes to the door and tries to say goodbye. Nothing happens. Juan Carlos leaves. The mother changes the sheet on the bed and feels something under the bed. She pulls out Maritza’s diary and opens it. The mother recognizes the writing, in shock; she exits towards the patio and sits next to the metal tub. She cries, holding the diary against her chest. Pause.)*

328 MOTHER:
I look for you everywhere. I see your face in the faces of others. I hear your voice in every person I meet. I know you’ll come home, saying “look, mami, what a beautiful day!” I know that you’ll come home. That’s why I stand at the door, waiting for you. You’ll be back, you’ll come home to talk to me, to sing, to tell me your thoughts, to share your laughter and smile with me. I have faith that you’ll just show up, saying that it was all a joke. That you stayed with a friend, that you were mad at Chayo or Juan Carlos...

(Catatonic, the mother stays sitting. The rest of the scene is slow and in silence, in contrast with the first scene of the play. Slowly, Chayo enters, opens the door and leaves her purse on the bed. She goes to the patio to look for her mother and finds her. Chayo does not know what to do and observes her mother for a long time. She turns around and wipes her tears. Chayo goes to the ice-chest, pulls a container and empties it on a frying pan on the stove. She stares again at her mother. The father enters, walks to the door, and opens it. Chayo turns to look at her father and signals him to be quiet and get closer. The father goes to the patio door and stares at his wife for a long time. He turns around and sits at the table, trying to control his emotions. Chayo goes to the stove, turns it off and empties the food in a plate. She goes to the table and serves it to her father. He looks at her, but Chayo looks away and goes back to the door to stare at her mother. The father stares at his plate. He gets up and exits in a hurry. Chayo turns to look at him, but can’t decide between consoling her father or her mother. Fade out.)

SCENE 24
(Slowly, the lights fade in. The house is empty. The mother still is sitting at the same place. Softly, she sings Maritza’s song and wakes up from her stupor, goes inside and from under the bed; she pulls a box with fliers and places it on the table. The father comes in. The Mother hides the diary under the box. The father doubts, but finally enters the house. The mother pretends to be busy with the fliers.)

How are you, dear?

I made a flier to post all over the place, to see if anyone has any information.

You didn’t go to work?
I called in and said I couldn’t make it.

333 **FATHER:**
(The father touches her shoulders. The mother freezes.) Why don’t you stay home and rest? You didn’t sleep all night and you’ve been on your feet all day.

334 **MOTHER:**
How do you expect me to sleep wondering where my daughter is, if she’s sick, if she’s been kidnapped, not knowing what’s happened to her? Why doesn’t she at least call?

335 **FATHER:**
(Softly, the father kisses her on the head. Pause.) ? You haven’t worked in two weeks and you’re running yourself ragged. Why don’t you let the police handle it, dear?

336 **MOTHER:**
(Violent.) How can you even think I’m going to leave this up to the police?
(The father moves away and stands next to the stove, looking through the door. Pause. The mother gets up, takes her sweater and looks on the drawer chest for coins. She picks up the box on the table, and goes to the door. She stops and without turning…)

337 **MOTHER:**
I told Chayo to stop at the market and get something. She’ll be here soon. (She exits. He turns around and looks at the diary on the table, takes it and opens it. Recognizing the writing, he’s overcome with emotion. We hear steps. He leaves the diary on the table and returns to his position. The mother walks in, goes to the table, takes the diary, looks at her husband and exits. He collapses, crying.)

**SCENE 25**
(Narrators read their lines seriously but it changes into mocking the recommendations. The mother walks through the audience passing fliers and asking for help.)

338 **NARRATOR 2:**
Hundreds of women come here hoping to improve their lives and those of their loved ones. Once they arrive, they meet other women like themselves, all looking for a new identity - or any identity at all - that will keep them from becoming just another victim of poverty and unemployment. But everything works against them. Their worth as human beings is diminished by political and social indifference. They become disposable. If one disappears or dies, there are many more who will come and take their place.

339 **NARRATOR 1:**
In that way, murdering women is easy to explain, since here, women are worth less than the garbage. Violence and impunity have turned us into point blank targets.

340 NARRATOR 2:
For example, The Chihuahua Penal Code says that a man that rapes women who has proof of provocation “shall receive a sentence of three to nine years in prison.

341 NARRATOR 1:
The same Penal Code, on the other hand, imposes a penalty of six to twelve years in prison for cattle thieves.

342 NARRATOR 2:
These recommendations are the property of the Prevention Campaign launched by the Commander in Chief of the Police of the City of Juarez. If you go out at night, try to go with one or more than one person. (The mother reacts to the narrators’ mockery.)

343 NARRATOR 1:
If you do go out alone, avoid dark, desolate streets.

344 NARRATOR 2:
Don’t talk to strangers.

345 NARRATOR 1:
Don’t dress suggestively.

346 NARRATOR 2:
Carry a whistle.

347 NARRATOR 1:
Don’t accept drinks from strangers.

348 NARRATOR 2:
If someone attacks you, shout “FIRE,” so people will pay attention to your call for help.

349 NARRATOR 1:
Have your car keys and house keys out and ready.

350 NARRATOR 2:
If you are sexually assaulted, make yourself vomit, so your attacker will be disgusted and run away.

SCENE 26
351 MOTHER:
(Screaming, she falls to her knees center stage in a small circle of light. The narrators exit.) Enough! Enough! I have no strength left, dear God. I’ve lost it all. I don’t want to live anymore. (Like a mantra.) How many deaths are too many? How many deaths are too many? How many deaths are too many? So many questions, so few answers. So many deaths, so few killers! How many deaths are too many? How many deaths are too many? How many deaths are too many? (She cries desperately.) Why did you leave me, m’ija? Don’t you see that I can’t live like this? Why did you leave? (Blackout.)

SCENE 27

The media refers to “dead women of Juarez” when speaking of these brutal murders. The name undermines the seriousness of these atrocious crimes, and that’s wrong. One dies of natural causes, by accident, or as a result of an illness. But these women were brutally murdered just for being women and living in conditions that made them vulnerable. Every time we use this euphemism we downplay the atrocity of these murders. We abort the feeling of social urgency and injustice necessary in order to achieve public response. We have accepted the euphemism without thinking of the repercussions, just because the media feels, is less offensive. But we can’t accept that out of convenience, we grow complacent and allow the problem to reach a level of “normalcy”. The public must feel all the horror a father or a mother feels when they see the daughter’s body dumped in the desert like trash. If we refer to the women who were assassinated as the “dead women of Juarez”, we will end up accepting that label such that it will no longer produce horror, or indignation, or even moral discomfort, and we will, in that way, assassinate these women over and over again.

SCENE 28

(The narrators, the mother and Chayo stand before the policeman’s desk. Narrator 1 has a file on her hands, which she throws on the desk on her first line.)

How is it possible that the file is only one page, señor?

POLICEMAN:
Well, what do you expect me to do? I’m not the investigator. You think we got nothing else to do. We’re not obligated to look for them, if we do, we’re doing you a favor and if you don’t like the work we do, then go find someone else to look for your daughter.

355 NARRATOR 2:
It’s your duty to look for them.

356 POLICEMAN:
Mire. Don’t push it or we won’t do nothing.

357 NARRATOR 2:
But you’ve done nothing. How is such inefficiency possible? This shows complete incompetence, indifference, insensitivity, and negligence. It’s obvious there’s been no full-scale investigation. That is, if there’s been any investigation at all.

358 POLICEMAN:
They asked for it. They were living a double life. Selling their bodies.

359 CHAYO:
That’s not true and you know it.

360 NARRATOR 2:
Well, let’s suppose it were true, what’s so bad about that? The life of one of those women is worth just as much as anyone else’s.

361 POLICEMAN:
It’s their own fault for hanging out at sleazy clubs. They’re loose women. That’s the problem. It’s the result of a loss of values, drugs and alcohol. Those women just don’t believe in the Virgin of Guadalupe any more.

362 NARRATOR 1:
That’s ridiculous, and immoral. Nobody goes around asking to be penetrated with a PVC pipe, or have their breast bitten off, or to bleed to death in the middle of the desert.

363 POLICEMAN:
Look, I’ve had it. Either you shut up or we’ll make you shut up. You’d better shut your trap! Here comes the City Attorney!

SCENE 29
(The CITY ATTORNEY, 30’s, comes in. He wears a suit and a tie and carries a briefcase. The mother runs to him.)

364 MOTHER:
Please, sir! Help us! Tell them to look for my daughter. They don’t want to pay attention to us. But they will pay attention to you, won’t they? I beg you, for your mother’s sake. (The City Attorney looks at the policeman, who signals the narrators with a gesture. Looking at the narrators, the City attorney understands the situation. They know each other well and the relationship is tense. During the scene, they try to be civil, but bit by bit the take the gloves off. The City Attorney adopts a public tone and repeats rehearsed explanations, trying to avoid direct confrontation with the narrators.)

365 CITY ATTORNEY:
We regret the laxity on the part of the previous government, of Francisco Barrios, part of the opposition party. They just left bags of bones and completely let the integrity of the previous investigations go to pot. Besides, he declared that the victims were at fault because they wore miniskirts; went out dancing, they were “easy”, or prostitutes. Once the new government came into power, we found that there wasn’t a single file on these cases, and that the City Attorney’s Special Commission for the Investigation of Murders of Women was sorely lacking. We will do everything we can to resolve this matter.

366 NARRATOR 2:
But you keep on ignoring clues.

367 CITY ATTORNEY:
We are doing everything humanly possible to resolve these cases.

368 NARRATOR 2:
In Chihuahua, kidnappings decreased, as well as car theft. Since the kidnappers’ victims are rich, a special group was formed with personnel and material resources that have yielded results. Why has there been no attention paid, either in terms of manpower or resources, in order to investigate these serial murders?

369 CITY ATTORNEY:
There are no funds available to create a special task force. Besides, a profiler from the FBI made an assessment and determined that there were no serial killings in Juarez.

370 NARRATOR 2:
But the Canadian profiler sent by the U.N. Human Rights Commission stated that there were at least two serial killers.

371 CITY ATTORNEY:
(He begins to lose his patience and turns to the mother.) This situation is painful for us, and it’s deeply embarrassing. These crimes are not only against women, but also against all of Mexico, humanity in general. But there’s no budget.

372 NARRATOR 1:
The problem is indifference on the part of the government, impunity, and machismo.

373 CITY ATTORNEY:
There are 93 people who’ve been detained and accused of homicide and abduction, including accomplices. You shouldn’t think that impunity reigns, that would imply inaction on the part of the state.

374 NARRATOR 2:
The main thing is that there shouldn’t be any more murdered women. These unpunished crimes against women are a matter of State. It demands intervention on all levels, both from government and the private sector.

375 CITY ATTORNEY:
(Screams.) The women who’ve died are dead. (He realizes his mistake and tries to save face.) And it’s painful for us, and we don’t want this to remain unresolved, we want to know what goes on in Juarez, and for there to be no not a single more murder.

376 NARRATOR 1:
This feminicide is a matter of global interest; it’s a question of basic humanity, above all when it’s the product of organized international crime involving the authorities.

377 CITY ATTORNEY:
Careful miss that might be construed as defamation.

378 NARRATOR 1:
Well, call it what you like.

379 CITY ATTORNEY:
Excuse me, but I have a very important meeting.

380 MOTHER:
(Kneeling before the City Attorney.) I beg you once more, sir! Find my little girl!

381 CHAYO:
No, mama! Don’t beg! (Grabs her mother by the arm and helps her up.)

382 CITY ATTORNEY:
Yes, ma’am! Don’t worry. We’re going to find her.

383 **NARRATOR 1:**

How can this be possible! I’m tired. Tired of fighting everyday for justice, where justice does not exist. How’s possible that so many women are being murdered and nothing happens? How is this possible? How can so much impunity, corruption, violence and ineptitude exist? We’re all guilty. You’re guilty. I’m guilty. Yes, we’re guilty for the fact that in Juarez, women can be hit and raped; guilty that all these women can do is work in the maquiladoras, and that in Juarez; there are five bars for every one school.

384 **CITY ATTORNEY:**

Relax, woman! *(Turns away to leave, but the women stand before him, cutting his exit.)*

385 **NARRATOR 1:**

The president should order the army to patrol the city of Juarez.

386 **CITY ATTORNEY:**

According to the constitution, those cases are under local jurisdiction. In other words, the case is in the hands of the state authorities.

387 **NARRATOR 1:**

What authorities? The ones who spent ten years staging a spectacle of lies?

388 **CITY ATTORNEY:**

We’re doing everything we can. *(Again, he tries to leave, but the women don’t let him.)*

389 **NARRATOR 1:**

There are 340 factories in Juarez. These multinational corporations that earn millions of dollars in Juarez should provide financial assistance in order to guarantee public safety.

390 **CITY ATTORNEY:**

The maquiladoras work with us, providing jobs and a future for our people. *(He signals to the policeman, who moves in between the City Attorney and the women.)*

391 **NARRATOR 1:**

They should collaborate with the Mexican government and the human rights’ organizations to put an end, once and for all, to the killing of these innocent young women.

392 **CITY ATTORNEY:**

And I’ve got to get going, I’m really late. *(Exits.)*
SCENE 30

393 NARRATOR 1:

(Screaming.) This feminicide, this massacre, where and when is it going to end?

(Narrator 1 tries to chase after the City Attorney, but the policeman stops her. Narrator 2 gives a step forward. Coldly, the policeman puts his hand on his gun. The mother and Chayo embrace Narrator 1. She calms down.)

394 NARRATOR 2:

Don’t worry. I’ll take them home. You should rest.

(The policeman exits. The mother and Chayo say goodbye to Narrator 1 and exit behind Narrator 2. Narrator 1 stays alone on stage. She turns, looks at the audience directly, and controlling her crying...)

SCENE 31

395 NARRATOR 1:

They found the lifeless body of my 12-year-old daughter, Rosita, in a cotton field. She had been strangled and raped, kidnapped the day before when she left school. Even if your father died, or your mother, or your husband, it’s not the same as losing someone that belongs to you, who is a part of you. A child is a part of you...

(Exits. Blackout)

SCENE 32

(The lights come up on the house. The radio plays an old bolero. The music shall play throughout the scene. Chayo sits on the ground, attaching, with a broken hammer, a piece of cardboard to stick of wood. The cardboard reads: LOOK FOR MY SISTER MARITZA. The mother moves up and down, organizing her box of fliers and instructing Chayo. The father comes in and looks at his wife and daughter. Nobody moves. Pause.)

396 FATHER:

What are you doing?

397 MOTHER:

Posters. We’re going to City Hall to protest.

398 FATHER:

(Goes to stove, to the table and back to the stove. Pause.) Is there anything to eat?

399 MOTHER:

Ay, viejo, I had to go to the hospitals and to the police again, and I was passing out fliers, I haven’t had time to cook.
FATHER:
(Back to the table.) You’re never home. There’s never anything to eat around here.

MOTHER:
Viejo, this is much more important to me than cooking. Can you understand that?

FATHER:
I understand. But it’s been almost two months. There’s never any food in the house or clean clothes for me to wear.

MARITZA:
Papá.

MOTHER:
(With a harsh hand gesture, she tells Chayo to be quiet.) Let him say it, Chayo!

FATHER:
(Screaming.) It feels like I lost my whole family, not just my daughter.

MOTHER:
(The anger she has repressed for all these weeks erupts to her family’s astonishment. The father tries to say something, but she doesn’t give him opportunity. Chayo begins hyperventilating.) You want to eat? Do you? Well, go ahead, eat, eat, since you can. I can’t eat. Whatever I eat gets stuck in my throat. I can’t eat thinking about where my daughter might be. That’s why I stay here, in this house, in this neighborhood, in the hopes that one day, if she comes back, she’ll know where to find us. I won’t lose hope. I can’t lose hope and think that my daughter is dead. I’d rather believe what that policeman told me, that she ran off with some guy. I’d rather find out she turned into a drug addict, or a prostitute, whatever, but not that she’s dead.

CHAYO:
(Screaming.) Stop! It’s all my fault! Before we left that morning I told her to drop dead, that I didn’t want to see her ever again. I cursed her. I killed her. It’s no one’s fault but my own.

(Chayo falls to the bed. Her parents run to her, embrace her and console her.)

FATHER:
No. No. It’s no one’s fault, not yours, or your sister’s. (The song is over and we hear the news jingle.)
NEWSCASTER:
Flash news in your favorite station, KILL in Juarez. Maritza Martinez Lopez’s lifeless body, in an advanced state of decomposition, was found in the desert. The body was lying face down; the hands were tied behind her back using the straps of her purse. No prints or clues were found. She had two stab wounds to the chest and two to the back. The coroner said she had been dead for two months. Given the condition of the body, it was impossible to determine whether she had been raped. *(When they hear Maritza’s name, the family freezes. They seem to be a photograph or a sculpture. Slowly, the mother gets up and walks forward in a trance. At the end of the news flash, Chayo runs to the radio and turns it off hitting it.)*

MOTHER:
Maritza!
*(The mother screams and falls. The father runs, catches his wife and falls to his knees, with his wife’s head on his lap. Chayo runs to them, hugs them and cries. Blackout.)*

SCENE 33

NARRATOR 2:
En 1997, a 7 year-old girl disappeared. The police did nothing to help, and repeated with impunity that according to the autopsy, she was neglected, had cavities, and had a calcium deficiency. That little girl was my daughter Irma. Her body showed signs of torture. Her eyes were ripped out. *(Pulls out a handful of pictures from his pocket.)* Look at these photos of Irma at her first communion, at her cousins’ quinceañera, one in her school uniform that she liked so much. We buried her in it. Here’s a photo of her body dumped in the desert. *(Swallowing his fury, tears and frustration.)* Who could do this to my baby girl? *(Screaming.)* Who? What monster is capable of doing such a thing to a child? *(A long pause to compose himself.)* Despite the years that have passed, I can’t help getting choked up, I feel pain in my chest and anger in my heart when I think of my daughter. The impunity is so rampant that the only way to go on is to fight so that we don’t become indifferent. *(Exit.)*

SCENE 34
*(Chayo and the parents, dressed in black stand before a table. A white sheet covers what seems to be a body. The policeman is standing next to the family.)*
POLICEMAN:
Here’s your daughter. We identified her by the school ID she had with her.

MOTHER:
But how could she be all bones in two months? A body takes longer to decompose.

POLICEMAN:
If you don’t want it, leave it.

MOTHER:
Can’t you do that DNA test to make sure that it’s her?

POLICEMAN:
Oh, señora. That cost a lot of money and it takes a long time. You have to identify the body. (He realizes the impact of his words and changes his attitude.) You’re lucky. There are more than 70 unidentified bodies.

MOTHER:
I can’t look at her. I just can’t. (Turns, burying her head on her husband’s chest.)

FATHER:
We have to make a positive identification before they’ll release the body to us.

CHAYO:
We need to look at her, identify her. Be sure that it’s her.
(The father steps forward. The mother stops him and gently pushes him back. She closes her eyes, breathes deeply and lifts the sheet, looking at the remains attentively.)

MOTHER:
It’s her clothing; her jeans, her blouse, but it’s not her face, it’s not her. (Crying and laughing hysterically, she turns to her husband and hugs him.)

CHAYO:
(Chayo steps forward and looks at the body.)
Those are her teeth, her fingernails, and her hair. It’s her, mama. Maritza is dead!

MOTHER:
No! No. No.
(The mother runs off crying, with the father behind her. Chayo tries to follow them, but stops and cries and cries. She looks up and looks at the audience. She calms herself.)

SCENE 35
CHAYO:
That was four years ago. Ever since that day when she didn’t come home, I knew she would never be back. I sensed it. She wasn’t the kind of girl who would just take off.

After the burial, we went out and painted crosses on the lamppost and wrote; “not one more.” We wrote her name on every lamppost and telephone pole in sight. Other families joined in and a long list of names on crosses began to appear; Maritza…

**SCENE 36**

(The mother walks into the house, wearing a black veil over her head. She packs hugs Maritza’s teddy bear and puts her in a box. She does the same with the diary. She stops, retakes the diary and begins to write on it. At the same time the mother walks onstage, the rest of the cast, except Maritza, come onstage too. They come in as actors not as the characters they play, and they are all in black and form a semicircle around Chayo. The men carry a lit candle and Narrator 1, wears a black veil over her head. After Chayo names her sister, they all, simultaneously, recite the names of the victims.)

424 **FATHER:**
Adriana, Agustina, Aida, Alejandra, Alicia, Alma, Alondra, Amalia, Amelia, América, Amparo, Ana, Ángeles, Angélica, Angelina, Araceli, Argelia, Berenice, Berta, Blanca.

425 **JUAN CARLOS:**
Brenda, Brisia, Carmen, Carolina, Cecilia, Celia, Cinthia, Clara, Claudia, Cristina, Daniela, Deissy, Donna, Dora, Edith, Elaine, Elba, Elena, Elizabeth, Elodia, Elsa, Elva.

426 **CHAYO:**

427 **POLICEMAN:**
Hilda, Idalia, Ignacia, Inés, Irene, Irma, Isabel, Isela, Ivette, Ivonne, Janneth, Jessica, Juana, Julia, Julieta, Julissa, Karina, Laura, Leticia, Lilia, Liliana, Linda, Lizeth.

428 **CITY ATTORNEY:**
Lorenza, Lourdes, Lucero, Lucila, Luisa, Luz, Mabel, Manuela, Margarita, Maria, Maria de Jesús, Maria Salud, Maria Santos, Maribel, Martha, Merced, Mireya, Miriam, Nancy.

429 **NARRATOR 1:**

14 years, four hundred murders and no one responsible!

Not one more...

(Screaming.) Alejandra!

14 years, four hundred murders, and a mountain of lies!

Not one more...

(Screaming.) Berenice!

14 years, four hundred murders, and a mountain of impunity!

Not one more...

(Screaming.) Erica!

14 years,

(Screaming.) Agustina!

...four hundred murders,

Cecilia

14 years,
...and walls of silence!

445 POLICEMAN:

(Screaming.) Janneth.

446 ALL:

(Screaming.) Not one more...
(They turn to the mother.)

SCENE 37

447 MOTHER:

(Steps forward and stops at the center of the semicircle. The father moves behind her on her right and Chayo on her left.)

We don’t ask for much: we just want justice. For the murders to be solved and the government to do something to stop it. To not live in fear, thinking that one of us will probably not come home someday. We want to be able to live and work in peace, to walk without fear. We want someone to take a look at Juarez and say, ENOUGH! Is that too much to ask?

(The women cover their faces with the veils and the men blow off the candle. Blackout.)

CURTAIN