

BENNY

WELL, CHECK THE TECHNIQUE! YO!
(*Into the dispatch.*) THERE'S A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT I HAVE TO MENTION
AT THE INTERSECTION OF TENTH AVE AND THE JACOB JAVITS
CONVENTION CENTER.
AND CHECK IT, DON'T GET STUCK IN THE RUBBER-NECKIN'
ON A HUNDRED NINETY-SECOND,
THERE'S A DOUBLE-DECKER BUS WRECK!
AND LISTEN UP, WE GOT A SPECIAL GUEST!

BENNY

LIVE AND DIRECT FROM A YEAR OUT WEST!
BENNY . . .

WELCOME HER BACK, SHE LOOKS MAD STRESSED!
NINA ROSARIO, THE BARRIO'S BEST!
HONK YOUR HORNS . . .

(*We hear a series of syncopated horn blasts, as BENNY continues to sing.*)

SHE'S SMILING . . . SAY HELLO!

(*NINA steps to the microphone.*)

NINA

HELLO . . .

(*We hear the cacophony of the most beautiful horn chart ever written.*)

GOOD MORNING!

(*NINA catches herself having fun, abruptly stops.*)

I BETTER FIND MY FOLKS.
THANKS FOR THE WELCOME WAGON.

IN THE HEIGHTS

BENNY

ANYTIME. ANYTIME, NINA.

(*NINA heads for the door. BENNY stops her.*)

WAIT HERE WITH ME.
IT'S GETTING HOT OUTSIDE. TURN UP THE A.C.
STAY HERE WITH ME.

(*She sits beside him. Big button!*)

"Everything Is Melting"

DANIELA/CARLA/SONNY/OTHERS

WHOOA!
OH!
WHOOA!
OH!

SCENE 4

(*ABUELA CLAUDIA is on her stoop, feeding pigeons. USNAVI enters from the bodega.*)

USNAVI

Oye, you missed another doctor's appointment.

ABUELA CLAUDIA

Mijo, would you take medical advice from a man named Dr. Gross?

USNAVI

As long as you're taking your medicine.

(*ABUELA CLAUDIA doesn't respond.*)

Abuela . . . No puedes olvidar—

ACT 1

ABUELA CLAUDIA

It makes my heart work better, but in return it gives me headaches. Imagine, with what those pills cost, I could get myself a good facelift. (*Demonstrating nips and tucks on her face.*) Sácalo de aquí, mételo pacá. Sácalo de aquí, mételo pacá. Pacá, pacá . . .

(*SONNY comes out of the bodega with a soda in hand.*)

SONNY

Who hooked it up? Ice-cold country-club cola champagne! Ahhhhhh.

USNAVI

Put that on your tab. You owe me five thousand, three hundred—

ABUELA CLAUDIA

Usnavi, I think he's trying to tell you, he fixed the Frigidaire.

SONNY

So let's talk about that raise. Free sodas or I walk.

USNAVI

Half price. Diet. Cola champagne. That's my final offer.

(*He exits.*)

SONNY

Ain't no Dominicans be drinking no diet soda!

VANESSA

(*From across the street.*) Be thankful, at least someone around here is getting a raise!

SONNY

I'm starting a union. Underage cousins of bodega workers unite! (*Exits into the bodega.*)

(*Lights shift to the salon. VANESSA is outside on her phone. DANIELA comes out of the salon.*)

DANIELA

Excuse me, this isn't social hours.

VANESSA

Sorry, it's Con Edison. I gave my mom half my check to pay the bills . . .

DANIELA

Y que pasó? She drank it away? Vanessa, when are you going to get out of that toxic environment?

VANESSA

(*Into the phone.*) Hi, ma'am? I get my check on Monday, I can pay then. Yes, I'll hold. (*To DANIELA.*) Daniela, I know I still owe you from last time . . .

DANIELA

Carla, what's my rule?

CARLA

(*To VANESSA.*) She'll do anything for you but she won't support your mother's malfunction . . .

DANIELA

(*Correcting her.*) Dysfunction.

VANESSA

My lights are going to be out all week.

CARLA

What would Jesus do?

DANIELA

Do I look like Jesus to you?

VANESSA

(*Into the phone.*) I'm still here. Don't transfer me! Hello? Hello?

DANIELA

(*Takes the phone.*) Comay, it's time to clear out that negative energy! So take five

and get me some packing tape.

VANESSA

Anything else? While I'm at it?

DANIELA

A Pepsi. (*Exiting, to CARLA.*) Tough love, chacha.

(*DANIELA and CARLA exit into the salon.*)

“It Won't Be Long Now”

VANESSA

THE ELEVATED TRAIN BY MY WINDOW DOESN'T FAZE ME ANYMORE.
THE RATTLING SCREAMS DON'T DISRUPT MY DREAMS.
IT'S A LULLABY, IN ITS WAY.
THE ELEVATED TRAIN DRIVES EVERYONE INSANE, BUT I DON'T MIND, OH
NO.
WHEN I BRING BACK BOYS, THEY CAN'T TOLERATE THE NOISE
AND THAT'S OKAY, 'CUZ I NEVER LET THEM STAY.
AND ONE DAY, I'M HOPPIN' ON THAT ELEVATED TRAIN AND I'M RIDING
AWAY!
IT WON'T BE LONG NOW!

(*Men whistle at VANESSA on the sidewalk.*)

THE BOYS AROUND THE WAY HOLLER AT ME WHEN I'M WALKING DOWN
THE STREET.
THEIR MACHISMO PRIDE DOESN'T BREAK MY STRIDE—
IT'S A COMPLIMENT, SO THEY SAY.
THE BOYS AROUND THE WAY HOLLER AT ME EVERY DAY, BUT I DON'T
MIND, OH NO.
IF I'M IN THE MOOD, IT WILL NOT BE WITH SOME DUDE
WHO IS WHISTLING 'CUZ HE HAS NOTHING TO SAY.
OR WHO'S HONKING AT ME FROM HIS CHEVROLET.
AND ONE DAY . . . I'M HOPPIN' IN A LIMOUSINE AND I'M DRIVING AWAY!
IT WON'T BE LONG NOW!

(*VANESSA approaches USNAVI outside the bodega.*)

Ay, Usnavi, help! SOS!

USNAVI

GOOD MORNING, VANESSA!
IF IT ISN'T THE LOVELIEST GIRL IN THE PLACE.

(*She wipes his cheek.*)

VANESSA

YOU GOT SOME SCHMUTZ ON YOUR FACE.

USNAVI

Another late night, eh? Whoever you were with, he's got nothing on these biceps.
I bench-press six gallons of milk and two cases of Goya beans.

VANESSA

It was my mom. They shut our power off. Again.

USNAVI

Coffee. Whole milk. Very sweet. Little bit of cinnamon.

VANESSA

Mm. Just like my abuela used to do.

USNAVI

That's what all the ladies say. I remind them of their grandma.

SONNY

GOOD MORNING!

SONNY/USNAVI

GOOD MORNING!

(*VANESSA kisses SONNY on the cheek. She grabs SONNY to dance.*)

VANESSA . . .
USNAVI

VANESSA . . .
SONNY

VANESSA . . .
USNAVI/SONNY

VANESSA . . .
DANIELA
(Screaming from the salon.) VANESSSSSSAAAAAA! I'm thirsty, coño!

VANESSA
Can I get a Pepsi and some packing tape?

SONNY
Uh, my cousin over there with his tongue hanging out, has been meaning to ask you . . .

VANESSA
Yes?

SONNY
What a lady such as yourself might be doing tonight?

VANESSA
Does your cousin dance?

SONNY
Like a drunk Chita Rivera.

VANESSA
Okay . . . After Nina's dinner, we can hit a few clubs and check out the fireworks . . .

(USNAVI awkwardly hands her a bag. She exits.)

USNAVI
OH SNAP! WHO'S THAT? DON'T TOUCH ME, I'M TOO HOT! YES!
QUE PASÓ? HERE I GO! SO DOPE! Y TU LO SABES!
NO PARE—

SONNY/USNAVI
SIGUE SIGUE!

USNAVI
DID YOU SEE ME—

SONNY/USNAVI
FREAKY FREAK IT!

USNAVI
WHAT A WAY TO BEGIN THE WEEKEND! SONNY, ANYTHING YOU WANT IS
FREE, MAN!
AND MY DEARLY BELOVED DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN

SONNY/USNAVI
YOU!

USNAVI
GONNA SEE THIS HONEY, MAKE A LITTLE MONEY
AND ONE DAY I'LL HOP

SONNY/USNAVI
JET BLUE!

USNAVI
BUT UNTIL THAT FATEFUL DAY, I'M GRATEFUL
I GOT A DESTINATION.
I'M RUNNIN' TO MAKE IT HOME AND HOME'S WHAT VANESSA'S RUNNIN'
AWAY FROM!
I'M RUNNIN' TO MAKE IT HOME AND HOME'S WHAT VANESSA'S RUNNIN'
AWAY FROM . . .

(USNAVI is at the bodega door, VANESSA at the salon door. She sings to him.)

VANESSA

THE NEIGHBORHOOD SALON IS THE PLACE I'M WORKING FOR THE MOMENT.

AS I CUT THEIR HAIR, LADIES TALK AND SHARE—
EVERY DAY, WHO'S DOING WHO AND WHY.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD SALON DOESN'T PAY ME WHAT I WANNA BE MAKING, BUT I DON'T MIND.

AS I SWEEP THE CURB, I CAN HEAR THOSE TURBO
ENGINES BLAZING A TRAIL THROUGH THE SKY.

I LOOK UP AND THINK ABOUT THE YEARS GONE BY
BUT ONE DAY—I'M WALKIN' TO JFK AND I'M GONNA FLY!

IT WON'T BE LONG NOW!
ANY DAY . . .

(They exit.)

SCENE 5

(BENNY and NINA in the dispatch booth.)

BENNY

(Into the radio. Shaky Spanish.) Roger. Cómo? Uh . . . dónde estás? Uno momento. Yo, cabrón, I'm trying to help you!

NINA

Whoa, who taught you Spanish?

BENNY

The drivers, dirty bastards.

NINA

(Takes the radio.) Aha, dime. (Listens.) He's going to the Cloisters, he's stuck on the Hudson.

BENNY

Exit fourteen, follow signs to Fort Tryon.

NINA

The U-turn off exit fifteen is quicker.

BENNY

It's also illegal.

NINA

(Into the radio.) Salida quince, hagas una media vuelta, sigue derecho.

BENNY

You gave him your directions, didn't you?

(KEVIN enters, watching BENNY and NINA flirt.)

KEVIN

Eyes on the dispatch, por favor.

BENNY

(Back to work.) Yes, sir.

KEVIN

(Hugs NINA.) You look more beautiful and even smarter!

NINA

It must be the bags under my eyes.

(CAMILA enters.)

CAMILA

Nena de mamá! Mija tan preciosa! Turn around, let me see my flaquita!

NINA

Mom.