

CHARLES

Ana, Ana, Ana, Ana . . . your name goes backwards and forwards  
 . . . I love you . . .

ANA

And I love you.  
 Take off your white coat.

*They kiss.*

### 5. Lane, Virginia, Matilde, Charles and Ana

*We are back in the white living room.*

*We are deposited at the end of the last scene of the first act.*

*Charles is at the door, with Ana.*

CHARLES

Lane?

LANE

Charles.

CHARLES

Lane. I want us all to know each other. I want to do things right,  
 from the beginning. Lane: this is Ana. Ana: this is my wife, Lane.

ANA

Nice to meet you. I've heard wonderful things about you. I've  
 heard that you are a wonderful doctor.

LANE

Thank you.

*Ana holds out her hand to Lane.*

*Lane looks around in disbelief.*

*Then Lane shakes Ana's hand.*

CHARLES

This is my sister-in-law, Virginia.

ANA

Hello.

VIRGINIA

How do you do.

MATILDE

(*To Ana*) You look like my mother.

ANA

Ah!

LANE

(*To Ana*) This is the maid, Matilde.

(*To Charles*) I fired her this morning.

ANA

Encantada, Matilde.

(*Nice to meet you, Matilde.*)

MATILDE

Encantada. Sou do Brasil.

(*Nice to meet you. I'm from Brazil.*)

ANA

Ah! Eu falo um pouco de portugues, mas falo mal.

(*I know a little bit of Portuguese, but it's bad.*)

MATILDE

Eh! boa tentativa! 'ta chegando la!

Es usted de Argentina?

(*Ah! Good try! Not bad!*)

*You're from Argentina?*

ANA

(In Spanish) ¿Cómo lo sabe?  
(How did you know?)

MATILDE

(Imitating Ana's accent) ¿Cómo lo sabe?  
(How did you know?)

They laugh.

LANE

We've all met. You can leave now, Charles.

CHARLES

What happened to your wrist?

LANE

Can opener.

CHARLES

Oh.

Charles examines the bandage on Lane's wrist.  
She pulls her hand away.

MATILDE

¿Ha usted estado alguna vez en Brasil?  
(Have you ever been to Brazil?)

ANA

Una vez, para estudiar rocas.  
(Once to study rocks.)

MATILDE

(For a moment not understanding the Spanish pronunciation) Rocas?  
Ah, rochas!  
(Ah, rocks! In Brazil it is pronounced "hochas.")

ANA

¡Sí! rochas! (Pronounces it "hochas.")

They laugh.

VIRGINIA

Should we sit down?

LANE

Virginia!

They all sit down.

(To Virginia) Could you get us something to drink.

VIRGINIA

What would you like?

MATILDE

I would like a coffee.

ANA

That sounds nice. I'll have coffee, too.

VIRGINIA

Charles?

CHARLES

Nothing for me, thanks.

VIRGINIA

Lane?

LANE

I would like some hard alcohol in a glass with ice. Thank you.

Virginia exits.

So.

CHARLES

Lane. I know this is unorthodox. But I want us to know each other.

ANA

You are very generous to have me in your home.

LANE

Not at all.

ANA

Yes, you are very generous. I wanted to meet you. I am not a home-wrecker. The last time I fell in love it was with my husband, a long time ago. He was a geologist and a very wild man, an alcoholic. But so fun! So crazy! He peed on lawns and did everything bad and I loved it. But I did not want to have children with him because he was too wild, too crazy. I said you have to stop drinking and then he did stop drinking and then he died of cancer when he was thirty-one.

*Matilde murmurs with sympathy.*

My heart was broken and I said to myself: I will never love again. And I didn't. I thought I was going to meet my husband in some kind of afterlife with fabulous rocks. Blue and green rocks. And then I met Charles. When Charles said he was married I said Charles we should stop but then Charles referred to Jewish law and I had to say that I agreed and that was that. I wanted you to understand.

LANE

Well, I don't understand. What about Jewish law.

CHARLES

In Jewish law you are legally obligated to break off relations with your wife or husband if you find what is called your *bashert*.

ANA

Your soul mate.

CHARLES

You are *obligated* to do this. Legally bound. There's something—metaphysically—objective about it.

LANE

You're not Jewish.

CHARLES

I know. But I heard about the *bashert*—on a radio program. And it always stuck with me. When I saw Ana I knew that was it. I knew she was my *bashert*.

ANA

There is a *midrash* that says when a baby is forty days old, inside the mother's stomach, God picks out its soul mate, and people have to spend the rest of their lives running around to find each other.

LANE

So you are Jewish?

ANA

Yes.

LANE

And your husband was a geologist.

ANA

Yes.

LANE

And you're from Argentina.

ANA

Yes.

LANE

Well. It's all making sense.

CHARLES

Lane. Something very objective happened to me. It's as though I suddenly tested positive for a genetic disease that I've had all along. *Ana has been in my genetic code.*

ANA

Yes. It is strange. We didn't feel guilty because it was so *objective*.

CHARLES

Lane. Something very objective happened to me. It's as though I suddenly tested positive for a genetic disease that I've had all along. *Ana has been in my genetic code.*

ANA

Yes. It is strange. We didn't feel guilty because it was so *objective*. And yet both of us are moral people. I don't know Charles very well but I think he is moral but to tell you the truth even if he were immoral I would love him because the love I feel for your husband is so overpowering.

LANE

And this is what you've come to tell me. That you're both innocent according to Jewish law.

ANA AND CHARLES

Yes.

*Virginia enters with the drinks.*

MATILDE

Thank you.

ANA

Thank you.

*Lane takes a glass from Virginia.*

LANE

(*To Virginia*) Charles has come to tell me that according to Jewish law, he has found his soul mate, and so our marriage is dissolved. He doesn't even need to feel guilty. How about that.

VIRGINIA

You have found your *bashert*.

LANE

How the hell do you know about a *bashert*?

VIRGINIA

I heard it on public radio.

CHARLES

I'm sorry that it happened to you, Lane. It could just as well have happened the other way. You might have met your *bashert*, and I would have been forced to make way. There are things—big invisible things—that come unannounced—they walk in, and we have to give way. I would even congratulate you. Because I have always loved you.

LANE

Well. Congratulations.

*A silence. A cold one.*

MATILDE

Would anyone like to hear a joke?

ANA

I would.

*Matilde tells a short joke in Portuguese.**Ana laughs. No one else laughs.*

¡Qué bueno! ¡Qué chiste más bueno!  
(*What a good joke!*)

(To Lane) You are firing Matilde?

LANE

Yes.

ANA

Then we'll hire her to clean our house. I hate to clean. And Charles likes things to be clean. At least I think he does. Charles? Do you like things to be clean?

CHARLES

Sure. I like things to be clean.

ANA

Matilde? Would you like to work for us?

MATILDE

There is something you should know. I don't like to clean so much.

ANA

Of course you don't. Do you have any other skills?

MATILDE

I can tell jokes.

ANA

Perfect. She's coming to live with us.

LANE

My God! You can't just walk into my home and take everything away from me.

ANA

I thought you fired this young woman.

LANE

Yes. I did.

ANA

Have you changed your mind?

LANE

I don't know. Maybe.

ANA

Matilde, do you have a place to live?

MATILDE

No.

ANA

So she'll come live with us.

VIRGINIA

Matilde is like family.

MATILDE

What?

VIRGINIA

Matilde is like a sister to me.

ANA

Is this true?

MATILDE

I don't know. I never had a sister.

VIRGINIA

We clean together. We talk, and fold laundry, as women used to do. They would gather at the public fountains and wash their clothes and tell stories. Now we are alone in our separate houses and it is terrible.

ANA

So it is Virginia who wants you to stay. Not Lane.

LANE

We both want her to stay. We love (*An attempt at the Brazilian pronunciation*) Matilde.

ANA

Matilde?

MATILDE

I am confused.

LANE

I depend on Matilde. I couldn't stand to replace her. Matilde—are you unhappy here with us?

MATILDE

I—

LANE

Is it the money? You could have a raise.

ANA

Matilde—you should do as you wish. My house is easy to clean. I own hardly anything. I own one table, two chairs, a bed, one painting and I have a little fish whose water needs to be changed. I don't have rugs so there is no vacuuming. But you would have to do Charles' laundry. I will not be his washerwoman.

VIRGINIA

Excuse me. But I think that people who are in love—really in love—would like to clean up after each other. If I were in love with Charles I would enjoy folding his laundry.

*Virginia looks at Charles.*

*Lane looks at Virginia.*

*Virginia looks at Lane.*

ANA

Matilde—what do you think? If you stay with us, there is only one condition: you will have to tell one joke a day. I like to laugh.

VIRGINIA

Please don't leave us, Matilde.

MATILDE

I will split my time. Half with Lane and Virginia, half with Ana and Charles. How is that?

ANA

Lane?

LANE

Matilde is a free agent.

ANA

Of course she is.

CHARLES

Well.

That's settled.

LANE

Are you leaving now?

CHARLES

Do you want me to leave?

LANE

Yes.

CHARLES

Okay. Then we'll leave.

Ana and I are going apple picking this afternoon. She's never been apple picking. Would anyone like to join us?

MATILDE

I've never been apple picking

CHARLES

So Matilde will come. Virginia?

VIRGINIA

I love apple picking.

LANE

Virginia!

CHARLES

Lane?

LANE

You must be insane! Apple picking! My god! I'M SORRY! But—apple picking? This is not a foreign film! We don't have an *arrangement*! You don't even *like* foreign films! Maybe you'll pretend to like foreign films, for *Ana*, but I can tell you now, Ana, he doesn't like them! He doesn't like reading the subtitles! It gives him a headache!

CHARLES

Lane. I don't expect you to—understand this—immediately. But since this thing—has happened to me—I want to live life to the fullest. I know—what it must sound like. But it's different. I want to go apple picking. I want to go to Machu Picchu. You can be part of that. I want to share my happiness with you.

LANE

I don't want your happiness.

MATILDE

(*To Ana*) Es cómo una telenovela.

(*It's like a soap opera.*)

CHARLES

Lane—I—

LANE

What.

CHARLES

I hope that you'll forgive me one day.

LANE

Go pick some apples.  
Good-bye.

CHARLES

Good-bye.

ANA

Good-bye.

MATILDE

Good-bye.

VIRGINIA

I'll stay.

*Ana, Matilde and Charles exit.*

LANE

I want to be alone.

VIRGINIA

No, you don't.

LANE

Yes, I do.

VIRGINIA

No, you don't.

Do you want—I don't know—a hot water bottle?

LANE

No, I don't want a hot water bottle, Virginia.

VIRGINIA

I just thought—

LANE

—That I'm nine years old with a cold?

VIRGINIA

I don't know what else to do.

*A pause.*

LANE

You know, actually, I think I'd like one. It sounds nice.

## 6. Ana's Balcony

*Ana and Matilde are up on Ana's balcony.*

*It is high above the white living room.*

*It is a small perch, overlooking the sea,*

*with two chairs, and a fish bowl.*

*Through French doors,*

*one can enter or exit the balcony.*

*A room leading to the balcony is suggested but unseen.*

*Ana and Matilde are surrounded by apples.*

*The following dialogue may be spoken*

*in a combination of Portuguese and Spanish*

*and subtitled in English.*

*Underneath the balcony,*

*Lane is in her living room.*

*She lies down with a hot water bottle.*

*Ana polishes an apple.*

*Ana and Matilde look around at all of the apples.*

ANA

We're never going to eat all of these damn apples.

MATILDE

But it's nice to have so many.

So many that it's crazy to have so many.

Because you can never eat them all.

ANA

Yes.

*Ana picks out an apple and eats it.*

MATILDE

I like the green ones.

Which ones do you like?

ANA

The yellow ones. They're sweeter.

MATILDE

We could take one bite of each, and if it's not a really, really good apple we can throw it into the sea.

ANA

Now you're talking like a North American.

MATILDE

It will be fun.

ANA

Okay.

*They start taking bites of each apple*

*and if they don't think it's a perfect apple they throw it into the sea.*

*The sea is also Lane's living room.*

*Lane sees the apples fall into her living room.*

*She looks at them.*

MATILDE

I made up eighty-four new jokes since I started working for you.

I only made up one at the other house. It was a good one though.

Sometimes you have to suffer for the really good ones.

ANA

Why don't you tell jokes for a job?