

(A park on a warm summer lunch hour. We hear the sound of birds singing. Arnold is reading the New York Times financial section. Hector enters stage right, walks stage left as girl enters stage left and walks stage right exiting. Hector watches as she passes calling after her. Arnold observes without moving his head. Both speak only to themselves, voicing their thoughts. Hector sits on the grass stage right.

(Bird sounds fade as he speaks.)

HECTOR Oh Mami you are so sweet! Take me home with you.

ARNOLD Look at him. He thinks he owns this park.

HECTOR Don't be staring at those sweet young legs. You'll get a heart attack at your age.

ARNOLD Arrogance, that's what it is, youthful arrogance. At least I know my place. I know where I fit in the scheme of things.

HECTOR Just keep reading your paper. You're working on tomorrow before it even gets here.

ARNOLD I am not taken in by all this.

HECTOR Your mind's clicking, checking me out and but your head never moves and I know you see me, old white guys with ties always see me. There's a special part in their brains that does nothing but watch out for Puerto Ricans.

ARNOLD I can feel the sun, smell the grass, hear the birds. I even know the names of trees. Oak, Elm, Beech, Horse Chestnut, go ahead, let's hear it. How many trees can you name?

HECTOR You've got to keep us blocked or we'll get inside. Put a little Latin rhythm in there.

ARNOLD I collected leaves from every kind of tree in the park when I was younger, pressing them in a book.

(Arnold pulls an old worn notebook from his suit coat pocket.)

I still have the book and there's even a poem in there. What did you ever write? Love note on dried leaves while wind whistles through bare trees. A first love lost with chilling caress bringing the pain of emptiness.

(Hector stands walks up stage, back to the audience urinating on a tree while Arnold reads from his little book.)

HECTOR Latin rhythm makes your feet want to move, makes you forget about tomorrow, cause it may never get here.

(Arnold notices Hector urinating.)

ARNOLD Oh now that is too much! Urinating on a tree, and zipping his pants up like he's got something important in there. I'd like to cut it off and feed it to the pigeons.

(Hector returns and sits on the grass.)

HECTOR Yo! Check it out Mr. This is where it's happening, on the grass.

ARNOLD Mr. Macho without a penis, he'd have no more reason to come to the park and piss on trees.

HECTOR You've just got to get down. Spread out, take it all in.

ARNOLD He'd go insane thinking about sex and getting none, not even a hand job, nothing to pull on. At least I have that!

(Arnold puts his book away, picks up his newspaper carefully turning the pages and folding it to create a shield from Hector's direct view of him.)

HECTOR Go ahead! Turn that page and fold it just right. You can't get more protection than that, a newspaper and a suit. But it won't be enough cause the sun's warm and the park's still here so close your eyes. That's it, let the sun get past your brain, feel it, don't think it. Old white guys can do it too. Look at Mick Jagger.

ARNOLD You'll learn. The trees will live longer than either one of us.

HECTOR Maybe letting go is a God thing, a way of showing you what's important, like rice and beans.

ARNOLD I wonder what the wake up call will be. A woman? Maybe just a look in the mirror, seeing more than expected, a gray hair, a wrinkle, a weariness in the eyes.

HECTOR God lets you have it straight, pleasure or pain you know it's real, just like a Puerto Rican and you know we've got it all covered.

(Hector does pushups as a girl crosses the stage in the other direction and exits.)

ARNOLD Ha! Go ahead, do those push ups till she passes, watch her hips shifting in a subtle farewell. Maybe tomorrow there'll be a smile, a comment, a way in; you've got time for now.

HECTOR Now I know you didn't miss those cheeks.

ARNOLD You'll learn, join the rest of us on solid ground. I sit on my bench and read my paper. I know my place in the scheme of things.

HECTOR You can't put me down with your stone white face cause my Mami's as light as you and my Poppa looks like Barak Obama only a lot shorter with a moustache. We are everybody so you better get used to it. God is a Puerto Rican and sooner or later he's coming to your house.

ARNOLD It's warm in the sun. Maybe I'll stay a little longer today.

(Arnold reads his paper as the Hector gets up and circles around Arnold. After a moment Hector approaches Arnold. Now they speak directly to each other.)

HECTOR God is a Puerto Rican.

(Arnold is silent.)

I said God is a Puerto Rican.

(Arnold still does not respond so Hector shouts.)

God is a Puerto Rican!

ARNOLD Are you speaking to me?

HECTOR Unless you've got a friend behind a tree or something.

ARNOLD I see.

HECTOR No you don't. That's why you're sitting on this bench reading The New York Times.

ARNOLD What is it you want?

HECTOR Same things as everybody else.

(Arnold gets up.)

ARNOLD I'd better get back to the office.

HECTOR Don't you want to know about God?

ARNOLD I know as much about him as I need to.

HECTOR Who said God is a he? My Mami rules in my house.

ARNOLD Your mother is not God.

(Hector grabs him and pushes him back down onto the bench.)

HECTOR Don't start talking about my Mami.

ARNOLD I'm sorry. Please, I'm really sorry. It was only an oblique reference intended to—

HECTOR My Mami ain't oblique.

(Arnold takes out his wallet and offers it to Hector.)

ARNOLD Here take it. There's a hundred dollars in there.

(Hector tosses the wallet back at Arnold who puts it in back in his pocket.)

HECTOR You guys always think a Rican's after your money.

ARNOLD Well I really do have to get—

HECTOR That's where the God thing comes in.

ARNOLD I'm going to be late.

HECTOR Fear, that's a God thing too.

(Arnold gets up and walks stage left leaving his newspaper on the bench.)

ARNOLD I have a meeting at one o'clock.

HECTOR You forgot your paper.

(Hector pick up the paper, walks toward Arnold holding the paper out toward Arnold who reaches for the paper grabbing the one end as Hector continues holding the other.)

See? There's a god thing happening here, all those words squeezed between your fingers and mine, getting pushed around, trying to figure out where they belong.

ARNOLD They belong with me.

HECTOR Shift them around and they're mine.

ARNOLD But it's the financial section.

HECTOR Words don't care, they're just out there. They go where they're needed.

ARNOLD Well I need them.

HECTOR Tools of the business trade?

ARNOLD Or weapons.

HECTOR On the bench or on the grass, words do what you want.

(Hector releases his grasp on the paper and returns to his sitting position on the grass stage right as Arnold calls after him.)

ARNOLD I don't understand.

HECTOR That's cause you're not listening.

ARNOLD I heard every word.

HECTOR But you still don't understand and that's why you're scared. People are always scared of what they don't understand.

ARNOLD I'm not scared.

HECTOR Sure you are. Everybody's scared. That's what keeps you alive.

ARNOLD That's ridiculous.

HECTOR Scared of losing.

ARNOLD Losing what?

HECTOR What you really want, money, power, a woman.

ARNOLD Love?

HECTOR Now we're getting someplace.

(Arnold turns and walks away.)

ARNOLD I have to go.

HECTOR I was scared of the dark.

(Arnold turns back.)

ARNOLD Really?

HECTOR Couldn't sleep without a light on till I was twelve years old.

ARNOLD I was only eleven.

HECTOR Even then I'd keep a flashlight under my pillow—just in case.

ARNOLD I did that.

HECTOR And some magazines.

ARNOLD Me too.

HECTOR When those hormones kick in you use up a lot of batteries.

ARNOLD I away had extra batteries ready just in case.

HECTOR That's is so damn white.

ARNOLD My mother would say, "Bed is a place to sleep, not to play".

HECTOR Unless you're under the blanket—you know—with the flashlight. Then it's like a huge cave, the kind you see on TV with the vampires and the dragons.

ARNOLD Mother would always check, "Are you sleeping Arnold"?

HECTOR Mami would be yelling, "What you doing under there Hector"?

ARNOLD
Nothing Mommy.

HECTOR
Nothing Mami.

(Lights fade to black as a Hector and Arnold sit on the stage as though they are nine years old under their imagined blankets. Hector pretends he has a Spiderman action figure and Arnold has a Poo figure, and both have flashlights.)

ARNOLD All right everyone, we're going to have a tea party in Poo's house. I'll be Christopher Robin and you all have to look up to me.

HECTOR Battles! We're gonna have some battles. I'll be Spiderman and you guys will be the kids that always kick the shit out of me in the school yard.

HECTOR AS SPIDERMAN
OK, Dr. Octopus. You're next man.

HECTOR AS DR. OCTOPUS
I didn't do nothing.

HECTOR AS SPIDERMAN
You called me a spick.

HECTOR AS DR. OCTOPUS
Spick the Spiderman, it's just a nickname.

(Hector slams his hand down on the stage as though he was killing an insect.)

HECTOR AS SPIDERMAN
How about Octopus the dead!

ARNOLD AS CHRISTOPHER ROBIN

Now pay attention Poo. We need to teach Tigger and Eeyore to follow my directions. When I tell them to sing “Hi ho, hi ho”, they have to sing together.

HECTOR AS SPIDERMAN

It's your turn Green Goblin. Let's see what you got.

HECTOR AS THE GREEN GOBLIN

We got to stick together bro.

HECTOR AS SPIDERMAN

You took my lunch money.

HECTOR AS THE GREEN GOBLIN

I was just holding it for—

(Hector slams his hand down again and then gets up as stage lights come up.)

HECTOR Did anyone ever kick the shit out of you?

ARNOLD Not when I was Christopher Robin.

HECTOR You're lucky

ARNOLD I was always good.

HECTOR But you've got to get your ass kicked at least once in your life to know what it's like for a lot of people.

ARNOLD Momma's boy—that's what they called me—the other kids—that's what they called me.

HECTOR It's like that for a lot of people man. Smacked up side the head so much you don't feel it no more. But Spiderman, he don't play those games. You hit, he hits back.

ARNOLD They left me alone, just me and my books.

HECTOR Nobody gets over on Spiderman. Nobody takes what's his.

ARNOLD Always alone.

HECTOR You sure no one ever kicked your ass?

ARNOLD Well there was this one time and it's given me lots of sympathy—really.

HECTOR Sympathy, that's another God thing. Lets hear it. I've always wondered how white people do it.

ARNOLD His name was Theodore.

HECTOR You can't get a whiter name than that.

ARNOLD I was fifteen. My family and I were spending the summer at the cape.

HECTOR At the what?

ARNOLD Cape Cod—that's in New England—lots of seashore—that sort of thing.

HECTOR Coney Island!

ARNOLD There was a girl.

HECTOR There always is.

ARNOLD I really liked her. She had very long hair and she was always laughing. Her name was Beatrice. We would spend the afternoons on the beach.

HECTOR I love Bikinis!

ARNOLD You know, this is irrelevant, my life has moved on.

HECTOR Don't stop now. I'm really getting into this.

ARNOLD I have made a point of not thinking about Beatrice for many years.

HECTOR A Puerto Rican could never forget a girl with long hair in a bikini even with a name like Beatrice.

ARNOLD She did not wear a bikini and I refuse to rekindle the memory.

HECTOR Long hair blowing in the wind? And I know you can't forget her eyes.

ARNOLD There was such joy in her eyes. Making you open your heart, making you dream, making you vulnerable.

HECTOR So what happened?

ARNOLD She had a boyfriend back home in Bridgeport and one day he suddenly appeared right there on the beach and as you said, he kicked my ass.

HECTOR That's it?

ARNOLD Precisely.

HECTOR Theodore just laid you out? You got to give me more than that.

ARNOLD I can describe it if you like.

HECTOR Words ain't enough. You got to make it real. Check this. I'm Beatrice. What's your name?

ARNOLD Arnold.

(Hector sits next to Arnold, grabs his hand, and speaks like a girl.)

HECTOR Oh Arnold. I didn't know Theodore was going to be here.

(Hector lets go of Arnold's hand and stands up. Hector pretends to be Theodore grabbing Arnold by the collar threateningly, pulling him up to a standing position.)

Beatrice is mine. You got that?

ARNOLD I didn't know. I'm sorry. You can have her.

(Hector releases Arnold and walks stage right.)

HECTOR Damn! I hope Theodore kicked your ass good.

(Arnold gets up and follows Hector stage right trying to show Hector his tooth.)

ARNOLD He broke my front tooth. This one is a cap. See?

HECTOR Don't be showing me your teeth. You dumb ass. You didn't even fight.

ARNOLD It wouldn't have made sense. Theodore was much bigger than me.

HECTOR Just go on back to work. It's no good talking about God to a guy with no balls.

ARNOLD Thank you Hector.

(Arnold walks stage left but stops and turns back to Hector.)

ARNOLD I just want you to know I've got—balls. But I've always been ruled by logic. You only fight when there is a chance of winning.

HECTOR No wonder God's a Puerto Rican. You don't feel nothing.

ARNOLD I feel things.

HECTOR You just told me about a girl on a beach with long hair. Man I could taste her. I could see the wind blowing in her hair.

ARNOLD It does get very windy on the cape.

(Hector imitates Arnold.)

HECTOR "It does get windy on the cape."

ARNOLD There is no need to make fun of—

HECTOR Shut up and sit down Arnold! I'm going to show you how a Rican would do it. You hold Beatrice's hand I'll be Theodore.

(Arnold sits down on the bench.)

ARNOLD But she's not here.

HECTOR Sure she is. I can see her right now. That long hair blowing against her soft skin, eyes that reach deep inside you. And those moist lips. Arnold, you can't forget those moist lips. You just got to let go of all that logic shit and hold her hand. Go on.

(Arnold reaches his hand out to hold Beatrice's hand.)

 That's it. It's very soft and she don't even wear nail polish, real innocent. You are one lucky bastard.

(Arnold closes his eyes.)

ARNOLD Yes, I am.

(Hector grabs Arnold, pulling him up by the collar.)

HECTOR That's my bitch. Touch her again and I'll cut you.

(Hector releases Arnold.)

 Ok. Now you do it just like that and I'll be you.

ARNOLD Theodore would never talk like—

(Hector yells at Arnold.)

HECTOR Just do it.

ARNOLD Ok.

(Arnold moves to one side, prepares himself and returns to the bench.)

ARNOLD Unhand my bitch or I'll thrash you.

(Hector gets up.)

HECTOR You talking to me?

ARNOLD Unless you've got a friend behind a tree.