

JOSÉ RIVERA

START HERE  
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(Cat and Coyote howl in heat.  
The backdoor opens.  
Gabriela rushes out, holding a .9-millimeter revolver.)

GABRIELA:  
*Enemies! Enemies!*

COYOTE (Terrified of humans):  
*Holy God!*

(Coyote hides.)

GABRIELA:  
*Benito gave me this gun—  
and taught me how to use it!*

CAT:  
*It's just me, Gabriela!*

GABRIELA:  
*I defended our house in Germany.  
I can do it here.*

CAT:  
*Put the weapon down, nena.*

GABRIELA:  
*Who's out here with you?  
Freaks? Pukes?*

COYOTE (To Cat):  
*Don't tell her about me, please—*

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REFERENCES TO SALVADOR DALÍ MAKE ME HOT

GABRIELA:  
*Benito says freaks and pukes are buying  
up houses all over the country.  
He says they're well organized.  
They try to be your friend.  
They smile without fear of detection.  
But Benito trained me well:  
I'm on high alert.  
I won't let them sink their fangs  
into my unprotected psyche  
and drain the blood from my mind  
and turn me into one of them.*

CAT:  
*Really, Gabriela, you need to get laid.*

GABRIELA:  
*Ay, don't remind me!*

CAT:  
*When does Benito get back from the field?—*

GABRIELA:  
*I heard voices—plural.*

CAT (A glance at Coyote):  
*Eh—no—it's just me—and the moon.*

GABRIELA:  
*The moon? The distant moon?*

COYOTE (Sotto voce):  
*Bless you, gentle, sexy Cat!*

*(A cactus moves.*

*Gabriela fires a shot at the cactus.)*

MOON:

*¡Una pistola! What a woman!*

GABRIELA:

*I've taken measurements.  
When we first moved here  
each of these cactus trees  
was thirty feet away.  
Then one night I heard curious sounds.  
I walked out here and thought I saw  
the cactus trees moving toward the house.  
I ran inside and got a tape measure—  
and sure enough! Twenty feet!  
"Get over here, Benito," I shouted.  
And Benito came and took measurements  
and told me I was crazy  
and went back to sleeping  
and snoring and gyrating in the bed  
and dreaming of Miss Panama  
and Miss El Salvador  
and Miss Teen Puerto Rico!  
And I sit out here  
and watch the cactus trees  
inching closer and closer to my house  
concealing dark spirits, hungry spirits,  
secret-keepers and heartbreakers.  
Yesterday I measured the trees.  
Ten feet! Ten feet exactly!  
What's it going to take to make  
Benito believe me?  
Why does he think I make it up?*

MOON (*Frustrated*):

*Ay, when is she gonna get naked?*

GABRIELA:

*Am I alone, Moon?  
Am I the only one?  
Does anyone in this desert,  
understand what I feel?*

MOON (*To Gabriela*):

*The people in this desert have their  
own problems, nena.  
In the house to your right  
an insomniac is looking through  
old photo albums.  
Her eyes trace memories back  
to their original moments:  
a fifteenth birthday party,  
a fight in a bar, a first kiss,  
a young boyfriend in uniform  
who wanted babies right away.  
She runs sleep-deprived fingers  
over black-and-white photos,  
trying to feel the skin  
of that old boyfriend.  
But the paper yields nothing.  
The moment before the photo was taken  
and the moment just after:  
these secret moments are exiled  
to those parts of the brain  
reserved for all the forgotten things.  
And this poor girl  
reenacts her nightly journey  
toward understanding her past—*

*and every night,  
inexplicably powerful currents  
turn her away.*

GABRIELA:

*Poor girl.*

MOON:

*In the house to your left  
an old man watches his old wife sleeping.  
She breathes slowly  
and he holds a mirror to her mouth.  
A little cloud assures the old man  
that she is alive.  
He thinks of the day they first made love,  
a sweet October day thousands of miles  
and seasons from here.  
He had never held a body  
so rich with dreams  
and she had never held a body  
so hot and hungry,  
and that first liquid night,  
a night without food or sleep—  
with my wicked light  
coming in through their bedroom window—  
as she lay in his exhausted arms . . .  
he reached for a mirror  
and put the mirror to her mouth  
and she breathed on it—  
proving to this young disbeliever  
that she was indeed alive  
and not a dream,  
a woman and not a fabulous invention.  
And now the old man is afraid*

*of life without her  
and keeps a .9-millimeter in his house  
and he checks his wife's dutiful breathing  
and knows what to do in case it ever stops.*

GABRIELA:

*Poor old man.*

CAT (*To the Moon*):

*Stop telling her those morbid stories  
or she'll never rest!*

GABRIELA:

*Poor girl, poor old man:  
poor people everywhere.*

*(Gabriela sobs.)*

MOON:

*¡Ay, pobrecita!  
She needs me!*

*(The Moon puts down his violin and comes down from the sky.*

*The Moon has an immediate and powerful effect on Gabriela and Coyote.)*

GABRIELA (*It feels good*):

*God!—it's like all my blood's  
going crazy-insane in my body!  
What the hell are you  
doing to me, Moon?*

MOON:

*You need me!*

*(As the Moon gets closer to the ground, Coyote howls in pain.)*

COYOTE:

OH GOD, OH GOD—  
THE MOONLIGHT!  
IT HURTS MY BODY SO BAD!

*(Cat goes to Coyote, who tries to run away as the Moon gets closer to the backyard.*

*Cat holds Coyote back.  
Gabriela watches the Moon approach, enthralled.)*

CAT:

*Coyote? Coyote?*

COYOTE *(Struggling, in pain):*

Lunar light—  
sharp like daggers—  
cuts my skin—  
ricochets off my nerves—  
it's why coyotes howl  
at the full moon!

*(Coyote runs off, howling.  
Cat runs off after him.  
The Moon enters the backyard and goes to Gabriela.)*

GABRIELA:

*Ay, Moon, I feel so honored.*

MOON *(To Gabriela):*

*They say from the tears of women  
are civilizations made.*

GABRIELA:

*They really say that?*

MOON:

*No, not really.*

GABRIELA:

*Then why did you get my hopes up?*

MOON:

*Shakespeare called me inconstant.*

GABRIELA:

*I see why.*

MOON:

*I never recovered from that.  
The bastard!*

GABRIELA *(Laughs):*

*Hey, Moon—  
Have you ever danced  
with a woman holding a gun?*

*(Gabriela and the Moon dance.)*

MOON:

*From the tears of women  
come mathematics sonatas  
table manners the zipper  
the merengue editorial pages  
county fairs guitar strings  
lipstick and the fables  
of Jorge Luis Borges . . .*

GABRIELA:

*You're trying to get into  
my shorts, aren't you?*

MOON (*Faster, more excited*):

*. . . brain surgery pickles  
Macondo Mecca  
the double play Bukowski tostones  
and Two Pieces of Bread  
Expressing the Sentiment of Love.*

GABRIELA (*Gasps*):

*¡Ay! References to Salvador Dalí  
make me hot!*

*(Gabriela kisses the Moon passionately.)*

GABRIELA (*To Moon*):

*Those are very soft lips  
you have for a celestial object.*

*(Martín, a fourteen-year old Latino boy, appears at the  
fence. He looks at the yard through a telescope.*

*As he continues to dance with Gabriela, the Moon  
notices Martín and snickers.)*

MOON:

*Aw, look at the little perv—  
back for more . . .*

MARTÍN:

*Gabriela's my religion, Moon.  
My altered state of grace.*

MOON (*To Martín*):

*Give it up, little boy,  
she's outta your league.*

MARTÍN:

*I look at her ass and I hallucinate.  
I'm all falling into her like I'm dying  
and her body is the grave  
and I got buried between her loins  
and get to spend eternity  
swimming in her  
like a warm, creamy, gooey bath!*

MOON:

*You want me to kick your ass?!*

MARTÍN (*To audience*):

*I've been coming every night  
for two months  
to watch Gabriela walk across  
the yard, back and forth,  
like totally naked—  
hoping like a sad son of a bitch  
to see her thing!  
But it's weird—tonight  
a strange transformation's  
taking place in me as I watch her  
dance with the pushy moon.  
I'm bathed in his weird, magnetic light  
and I'm changed completely!  
The little boy who wanted  
a cheap, dick-centered thrill is dead.  
In his place, out of his cold remains,  
rises a young man full of mature,*

*virile desire: a young man  
unafraid to take on all rivals:  
a young man in love with love!*

*(Martín jumps down into the yard.*

*Gabriela talks to the Moon. She and Martín speak in  
sync.)*

GABRIELA/MARTÍN:

*I (wanted/want) to touch (Benito's/her) skin  
because I (wanted/want) to learn something.  
Not about the temperature of (his/her) body.  
Or how soft the hairs on (his/her) thing are.  
Touching (his/her) skin (had/has) to do with . . .  
testing the vibrations . . .  
down past the glands and mute corpuscles . . .  
down where bones talk  
and the human body hums with music . . .  
I (wanted/want) to find out  
if we're tuned the same way.  
What's the pitch of (his/her) soul?  
Can I hear it if I tried?  
Will I ever be able to sing along with it?*

MARTÍN (To the Moon):

*I think she wants my ass.*

GABRIELA:

*But the idea of exploring  
the notes and chords of each other's souls—  
feels impossible now . . .*

MARTÍN:

*A-ha!  
She and the husband are incompatible!*

MOON (To Gabriela):

*Yes, actually, I do, actually,  
I, yes actually, yes, I do actually  
want to get into your shorts.*

MARTÍN (To the Moon):

*Get in line you big stupid rock!*

GABRIELA:

*The dreams of my husband are a mystery to me.  
What secrets have abducted Benito from me?  
Was it the war?*

MOON (To Martín):

*I'll kick your ass, punk!*

GABRIELA:

*What's funny is people always say,  
if you want mystery, go to the moon.*

MARTÍN:

*He ain't mysterious.  
He's been explored too much.  
Too many little nasty footprints  
and American flags on him!*

MOON:

*I'll knock your block off—*

GABRIELA:

*I say the deepest secrets  
and the most confusing mysteries  
aren't on the moon,  
they're in the heart of the person  
who lies next to you in bed every night.*

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MARTÍN:

*I'll let you in,  
mi vida, mi luz, mi alma!*

*(Martín pushes the Moon away from Gabriela.)*

GABRIELA:

*Martín!*

MARTÍN:

*Martín del Cuerpo Grande y Peludo,  
at your service.  
And the moon can't love you like I can,  
mi cielo, mi corazon, mi sangre!*

GABRIELA:

*What are you again? Twelve?*

MARTÍN:

*Fourteen, mi amor.  
And growing.  
I have new hair  
about to happen all over my body.*

GABRIELA:

*Remember my husband?  
Seven-foot-six?  
Two-eighty-five?  
Owner of this and other firearms?*

MOON (To Martín):

*What do you mean I can't love her  
like you can?*

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MARTÍN (To the Moon):

*You're incontinent.  
Shakespeare said.*

MOON:

*"I  
yo:*

*(The*

*The Moon takes the  
Martín. Martín falls h*

GABRIELA (To the Moon):

*Look what you did!  
You're supposed to be romantic.*

MOON:

*I did it for you.  
How romantic can you get, mujer?*

GABRIELA (To Martín):

*Kid. Hey kid.*

MOON (To Gabriela):

*Does this mean it's over?—*

GABRIELA (To the Moon):

*Just get out of my face, all right?*

*(Gabriela tries to revive Martín.*

*The dejected Moon goes back into the sky.)*

MOON:

*I shouldn't get involved with people.  
I should just watch.*