

Solamente Una Vez: A Thaw

by

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a play

CHARACTERS

BECKY PIANO, 30's

DAVID RUIDO, 30's, Latino, Becky's fiancé

FEDERICO (FRED) CASTILLO, 40's, Latino

CONSUELO (CONNIE) CASTILLO, 40's, Latina, Federico's wife

HARRY KLINE, 50's, David's boss

SETTING

Iowa

The end of Winter

1.

Becky Piano, 30, enters. She sits and addresses her classroom of 5 year olds.

BECKY

Let's all sit down. Everyone sit down. There we are. Everyone's sitting, bodies quiet. Good. Now, I've been getting a lot of questions about my life from you, so I thought we could take some time and all sit down together and maybe I could answer your questions, and tell you a little bit about myself. Where to start? My birthday is May 18th. I live on the eastside of town in a beautiful apartment with my boyfriend, David. It has two bedrooms. One for us and one for our family. A baby. When the time's right. David works at a marketing firm. He makes posters and makes commercials on the radio. No, he doesn't go on the radio, he makes up things for the people to say.

(Beat)

No, we're not married.

(Smiles)

Have you been talking to my mother? We're going to be married this spring. Three months. You've all seen my ring? Want a closer look? You can come a little closer. It does, doesn't it? It's a diamond. Diamonds are made from coal. Yes, they are. Yes, they are, it takes a long time for coal to become a diamond. Lots of heat to form a diamond. No, Greg, don't do that. We don't do that at school. I'm sure it does, but we don't do that at school. Amanda. Amanda, didn't you just hear me tell Greg not to do that? What? I picked it out. David bought it for me. A lot. A lot of money. A lot. I shouldn't. Seven thousand dollars. I told you it was a lot.

(Beat)

What shape is it? Can you tell me what shape it is? Square, yes. They call it "Princess Cut." Isn't that funny? Yes, I'm a princess. Greg, will you take your hands out of your pants! What? Yes, that means that David is my prince. No, you can't come to the wedding. Because it's going to be far away. Far away. No, I won't be moving away. I'm still going to be here with you. Nothing will change. Well, my name will change. I won't be Miss. Piano anymore. I'll be Mrs. Ruido. It's Spanish. I don't know what it means. Yes, David is Spanish. We call people like that Latino. Yes, Latino. Like Jude. Everyone look at Jude. Jude is a Latino. And if you're a girl, you would be a Latina. No, Amanda, you can't be a Latina. Because you have to be born Latina. You can't become a Latina, you have to be... Your parents have to be Latinos. No, you can't, Amanda, because your parents are White. No, because you're Asian. Because you were adopted. It means. Ask your parents, I shouldn't have.

(Beat)

I think it's bathroom time. Everybody stand up. Stand up and let's get into a line. Straight line, everyone. Arms at your sides. See how I'm standing? Stand behind me.

2.

David Ruido, 30's, asleep at his desk. Harry Kline, David's boss, 50, sits in a chair, watching him.

HARRY

(Whispers)

David.

(Whispers)

David.

Harry taps David on the shoulder; whispers closer.

HARRY

Wake up, sleeping beauty.

David jolts awake.

Harry laughs.

DAVID

Harry. God. I'm sorry, Harry. I must've dozed off a second there.

HARRY

More than a second, David. I've been sitting here for fifteen minutes, you were fast asleep.

DAVID

Why didn't you wake me up?

HARRY

Didn't want to disturb you, you looked so peaceful.

David slaps himself in the face.

DAVID

I'm awake.

HARRY

Shit, David. You look awful.

DAVID

Do I?

HARRY

What's going on with you? You look worse each day. Ravaged.

DAVID

Haven't been getting enough sleep I guess.

HARRY

Stressed?

DAVID

Aren't I always?

HARRY

It's not me is it?

DAVID

What?

HARRY

You're not losing sleep over me. I've been coming down pretty hard on you lately.

DAVID

It's not you.

HARRY

We're close to deadline, I always get a bit tussled around deadline. I can be a real bitch to deal with.

DAVID

It's not you.

HARRY

Thank God. I'd hate to think I was the cause of your fatigue.

DAVID

No. It's these damn Mexicans that live above us.

HARRY

Mexicans?

DAVID

I haven't had a good night's sleep since they moved in about a month ago. It's fucking ridiculous. They're always shouting and stomping around. Like we're living under a hoard of Spanish-speaking Tyrannosaurus Rexes. I'm so damn exhausted.

Every night they're yelling. What the hell do they have to yell about every fucking night?

(Beat)

Our neighborhood has turned to shit, Harry. When Becky and I moved in, it was quiet, you could go for walks and not be afraid for your life. But now, we have Mexicans and Blacks filling up the neighborhood. Not that all Mexicans or Blacks are... I mean, the bad ones. Gang people. Drugs and shit. There was a shooting. An honest to God shooting, bullet went through a kid's window. Not a kid, an infant. We gotta get out of there, it's turned to shit.

Pause.

HARRY

I'd've figured it was the wedding keeping you up.

DAVID

No. What? No.

David laughs.

HARRY

Everything's okay with you and Rebecca?

DAVID

Becky and I are fine.

HARRY

No worries?

DAVID

No worries.

HARRY

Wedding planning's not stressful?

DAVID

Not for me, I'm keeping out of it. Becky's taking care of everything. It's her day, let her worry about it. I don't care.

HARRY

That might be a problem.

DAVID

No, no, I care about it. I do. But I don't care about little details, little shit like flowers or the cake. I don't care how big the cake is-- one tier, two tiers, three tiers, I don't care!

I don't care what color things are or what people should wear. I only care that we don't go over budget.

HARRY

That's the David I know and love. That's the kind of thinking that made me hire you. You keep a hold on things.

DAVID

This whole thing, Harry, this whole thing, have I told you about this, this whole thing is costing us, when everything is all said and done, this is costing us twelve thousand dollars.

HARRY

Didn't you spend five thousand on her ring?

DAVID

Seven. But that's different. A ring lasts. But twelve thousand dollars. For one day! No. Not even a day! An afternoon! You know what that is? That's one full year of, that's Becky's annual salary! One year of her income! We're blowing one year of income on one afternoon!

HARRY

Yeah, but you only get married once, right? You have to do it right.

DAVID

We could have done something simple, some courthouse, a judge, and two witnesses. Easy.

HARRY

I'd hope you'd've picked me to be a witness.

DAVID

Of course I would've. You'd've been the first person I would've asked. But it's not my choice. It's all Becky. This is her wedding, I just pay for it and show up in a tux.

HARRY

I'm sure you'll look great. It'll be a beautiful day for you both.

(Beat)

Hey, David.

DAVID

Hm?

HARRY

Let me take you for a drink after work. Get your mind off things. I haven't had the chance to take you out lately.

DAVID

I don't know. I shouldn't. Becky's been complaining that we never see each other anymore because of our schedules.

HARRY

I'll take you wherever you want to go.

DAVID

I can't, Harry.

HARRY

It'll be on me.

DAVID

Well.

HARRY

You know you want to go out with me. I know where you want to go.

DAVID

Hacienda.

HARRY

I'm sure she'll be there.

DAVID

Who?

HARRY

Your flame.

DAVID

She's not my--

HARRY

You love to look at her, David. I'm sure she'll be there. If that's what you need, I'll take you. If staring at some woman will make you feel better--

DAVID

I don't stare at her.

HARRY
You stare. And you salivate.

DAVID
I do not.

HARRY
You become like a hypnotized wolf.

DAVID
Hypnotized--

HARRY
You look at her like you want to bite her face off.

DAVID
Maybe I do.

HARRY
Then it's a date.

DAVID
Fine. It's a date.

3.

Becky and David's kitchen. Becky's voice rings out from offstage.

BECKY

David? I'm home! *(Offstage)*

I guess he's not here. *(Beat)*

The kitchen is this way. *(Beat)*

Becky enters, her arms full of groceries. Fred Castillo, 40's, enters behind her, carrying another couple bags of groceries. He wears a work shirt with his name on it.

FRED

Where do you want these?

BECKY

Anywhere on the counter. Sorry it's such a mess.

Fred puts the bags down.

BECKY

Ah, you're my hero. Thank you so much.

FRED

You looked like you needed some help.

BECKY

You saw me?

FRED

From my window.

BECKY

(Joking)
You were watching me?

FRED

Not watching you. Just looking.

BECKY

I'm glad you came along when you did, I would have lost hold of everything. But you saved me, um.

(Beat)

I don't know your name.

FRED

Federico. But Fred.

BECKY

Ah. Rebecca. But Becky.

FRED

Becky. That's a fun name.

BECKY

Thank you.

(Beat)

You moved in upstairs. Didn't you?

FRED

We did.

BECKY

I've been meaning to come by and say "hello" to you.

FRED

Why?

BECKY

To be nice and welcome you to the building. Every time I'd see you in the parking lot, I'd think to myself, "I've got to go up and meet him."

Pause.

FRED

Do you want help putting these away?

BECKY

That would be great.

Becky and Fred start putting groceries away.

BECKY

So. Where are you from, Fred?

FRED

I'm from here. Lived here for close to ten years now.

BECKY

Where are you from originally?

FRED

New Mexico.

BECKY

Really? That's interesting. You speak really good English.

FRED

New Mexico.

BECKY

Oh. I'm sorry. You must think I'm stupid. That was a stupid thing for me to say.

FRED

No, no.

BECKY

I don't mean to make a fool of myself.

FRED

You haven't.

BECKY

Good. I'd hate to make a bad first impression.

(Pause)

So. Fred.

FRED

Hm?

BECKY

Is, uh, New Mexico nice?

FRED

Nice enough.

BECKY

It's probably warmer than here.