

Day 19

Walls

by

Chris Leyva

Two Latinos. Ricky is stretching. Chris has just walked in. He starts to stretch.

CHRIS

Nice stunt back there,

(No response.)

I think it really had a great effect. I was, I have to say, I was “wowed.” Just. Wow.

(No response.)

What I most appreciated is you mocking me in front of a room full of strangers. That was classy, indirect, and it was, literally, the most passive-aggressive attack I’ve seen in my life. I bow humbly at the feet of you and your passive aggressive prowess. God forbid you come over to me and have a conversation. God forbid you try to engage in an adult manner. No. You had to use a public forum to enact a skit to do what exactly? Shame me? A stranger? Shame me in front of a room of strangers? Kill my credibility? The word “dick” gets tossed around a lot, but I think--

RICKY

Are you done?

CHRIS

Am I done? No, I’m not done, you fuck. You childish, sick, little fuck. What the fuck was that?

RICKY

You deserved it.

CHRIS

Did I?

RICKY

People like you.

CHRIS

Seriously?

RICKY

“I’m Latino, but I don’t call myself Latino.”

CHRIS

That’s not--

RICKY

I’m proud of who I am. I’m proud of where I came from.

CHRIS

Is this where you trot out the grandmother story? And pour on the waterworks? Because you really touched people.

RICKY

You're a prick.

CHRIS

I didn't say I don't call myself Latino.

RICKY

You don't define yourself as Latino.

CHRIS

I call myself Latino. I define myself as Latino, but I don't want other people to define me as a Latino.

RICKY

You're not proud.

CHRIS

I'm proud. I don't want to be categorized. I don't want to be a genre. Latino playwright? Just playwright. Is it too much to be looked at by my work?

RICKY

Being Latino defines the work.

CHRIS

My *experience* defines the work.

RICKY

My grandmother worked as a migrant worker, everyday in--

CHRIS

Yeah, so did mine. She worked as a migrant worker, my dad was in the fields as a 3 year old. My grandmother dragged her kids along with her on a sack of cotton. But you know what? That's not my experience. My experience is watching fucking Popeye cartoons, watching Mickey Mouse, Sesame Street and shit. That's my experience. Yes, I ate tortillas and refried beans and all that. Yes, my grandma made tamales at Christmas and spoke to me in Spanish, expecting me to understand. My grandma's experience is not mine. Am I proud of her? Shit yes. Am I proud of where my family has gone and where I am thanks to them? Fuck yeah. Do I want to be called a Latino playwright? Fuck no.

(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Do I want people to ask me about the American, Latino experience? I can tell them my experience like I just told you. But I can recite for you the Disney full-length animated features in order of release.

RICKY

You don't get it.

CHRIS

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.

RICKY

You don't--

CHRIS

Pinocchio. Fantasia. Dumbo. Bambi.

RICKY

I'm proud. I've seen the glass walls separating me that I have to struggle against.

CHRIS

Glass walls. Glass ceilings. Glass boxes. They put us in there. I'm not going to stay in their categories. As long as I can be defined as "other," then I'm still trapped.

RICKY

You're denying your race.

CHRIS

No.

RICKY

You're saying you're color blind.

CHRIS

I'm not saying that. You're not listening. I can't hide being brown. I don't want to hide being brown.

RICKY

I grew up in a two bedroom house with six people. Two sisters. My mother. My father. My grandmother. Me. And we lived in that house until I went to high school. My sisters and I shared a bedroom, my grandmother had a bedroom. My parents slept on the floor of the living room. Then, my bedroom was the couch once my sisters turned 12 and began to become women. My parents still slept on the floor. No mattress. Quilts my grandmother made and crocheted blankets. All of us sleeping under crocheted blankets she had made us. When my grandmother died, she left behind seven unfinished blankets. Seven.

(MORE)

RICKY (CONT'D)

She had taught me how to crochet time and time again and I could never get it no matter how hard I tried. I would come home after my job, after a day of high school and would teach myself. Borrowed books from the library and everything to finish her work. All that time and effort and I told myself that I wouldn't go to college until they were done. I was out of high school two years, and I finished all seven of those blankets. And I had saved up enough money to go to school part time. Work and study. I was the first of my generation to go to college. The first in my family at all. It took me six years to get through it. And now I'm here, Columbia University, auditioning, and you fucking talk about cartoons and shit, defending your inaction and hatred of your race. Because, yes, you hate your race. When you deny it like you do. I wear it on my skin, on my face, in my fucking bones. I want them to know I'm a Latino, to never forget that I'm Latino. I want to shove it in their faces until they see me for what I am. And if you don't, then fuck off and get out of the fucking way. Because you can either be a Latino or not. So, choose not to be a Latino. *You're* the one keeping yourself in the glass box, in glass walls. I'm the one banging on them with a fucking sledge hammer. Get comfy in there. Stay entertained.

CHRIS

You can say I'm not Latino. You can say I'm not Latino *enough*, but I'll define my own labels. No one will define them for me. And there's nothing wrong with cartoons. Did you know that after Bambi there's Saludos Amigos and the Three Caballeros? You can go out and tell them what it's like to be Latino. Bang your sledgehammer. I'll cheer you on. Viva la raza. But I'm going to tell them what it's like to be me and I'll walk through the front door.

Chris exits. Ricky goes back to his stretching.