

June 9, 2014

**JUST LIKE US**  
**THE PLAY (9 actor version)**  
**By Karen Zacarías**  
**Inspired by the nonfiction book by Helen Thorpe**

CHARACTERS: 9 ACTORS

**HELEN THORPE:** 40s. The REPORTER: Irish American-Quaker, very smart, confident, unfussy, woman with a penchant for interesting eye glasses. Highly educated, career woman married to the Mayor of Denver. Mother of one small child. Much more comfortable as a thoughtful observer than as the center of attention. Prefers being a reporter than First Lady of Denver. Has strong conviction of principles, is self-aware about her role, and is consistently fair-minded.

**MARISELA:** 18-22. Fully bilingual and bicultural Mexican. Colorful! Does not have legal status to be in the country. Emotional, sassy, intelligent, energetic, ambitious, yet sometimes insecure, a bundle of contradictions, attracted to bad boys yet great student. She craves excitement, wears a lot of make up, tight jeans, and loves loud music (Ranchera especially) and is an excellent student. Also Plays (RAUL GOMEZ GARCIA)

**YADIRA:** 18-22 . Fully bilingual- bicultural Mexican. Does not have legal papers to be in the country. Still waters run deep. Beautiful, lean, reserved, smart young woman who craves stability and security. Marisela's best friend, yet polar opposite in manner and look. Wears skinny jeans and bare rift shirts and yet, isn't a party girl at all.

**CLARA:** 18-22. Bilingual- bi-cultural Mexican. In the US legally. Innocent, religious, earnest girl. Good student. Hard worker. Discreet clothes, no make-up, wears a cross every day. The peacemaker and dreamer.

**ELISSA:** 18-22. Bilingual and bi-cultural . In the US legally. The go-getter, team captain of the group. Good student. Hard worker. **Also plays ZULEMA**, Yadira's younger sister.

**FABIÁN:** 30- 40s. Marisela's hard working, sometimes grouchy father. Spanish and non-English speaking father. A janitor at a supermarket who loves his family and worries about Marisela's wild ways. In the US without legal status. **Also plays TOM TANCREDO**, a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation Italian-American Congressman born in a working class neighborhood in Denver who now represents a very affluent neighborhood in Colorado. The leading voice in Congress against illegal immigration. Charismatic, smart, loud, affable, and very single-minded in his fervor against illegal immigration., **Also plays: RECRUITER (Tom Johnson), CEZAR MESQUITA, CARLOS** (ALMA's husband), **FEDERICO PEÑA, COP** , ensemble

**JOSEFA:** Late 30s, early 40s. Marisela's Mexican mother. Spanish-, non -English-speaking. A devoted mother and hard working cleaning lady who looks after her four kids in the US. **PLAYS MRS SMITH, CAROL VIZZI -maybe LISA MARTINEZ**

**YOLANDA:** early 30's Brassy Bilingual hairdresser. ALSO PLAYS ANA, CYNTHIA POUNDSTONE, LUCY, BUSINESS WOMAN, maybe Lisa Martinez

**JULIO:** 20s Latino. Plays RAMIRO, MIKE McGARRY, ensemble.

## **ACT ONE**

### **SCENE: MARISELA'S BEDROOM**

(LIVELY RANCHERA MUSIC)

(PROJECTION: PICTURES OF DENVER...Welcome to Denver sign. Images of the airport, the Convention Center, the Theater, the streets, the Rockies, affluent neighborhood, streets, and then the neighborhood where MARISELA lives. )

(HELEN walks on to the stage. She looks at the audience.)

HELEN

Tonight is a very special night in the lives of four best friends I recently met. And it is a special day for me, because I get to be a small part of it. I get to witness.

(MARISELA, YADIRA, CLARA, AND ELISSA in fabulous prom dresses enter dancing along to the Ranchera song. )

(They stop dancing and start getting ready for prom.)

(FABIÁN and JOSEFA, MARISELA's parents, come in.)

FABIÁN

¡Marisela, voy a ir contigo!

MARISELA

¡Mami, dile a Papi, que no puede venir conmigo!

JOSEFA

¡Ay, pues no sé qué decir!

FABIÁN

¡Yo soy tu padre!

MARISELA

¡Mami, habla con él!

JOSEFA

¡Fabián!

FABIÁN

¡Josefa, es que no me gusta!

(FABIÁN storms off and exits)

(JOSEFA follows him and exits)

ELISSA, YADIRA, CLARA  
Uy, Marisela.

MARISELA  
¡My Papi says he's coming to prom!

ELISSA  
Marisela, nobody goes to prom with a chaperone.

CLARA  
He's just worried about the boys.

YADIRA  
Clara, he's worried about Fernando.

ELISA  
But Fernando is working in Arizona

MARISELA  
It's a secret, but Fernando is driving from Arizona to be here tonight with me at the prom.

ELISSA  
¿Driving a thousand miles in one day?

MARISELA  
I haven't seen him in six months.

CLARA  
That's so romantic. Like Romeo and Juliet.

YADIRA  
Except Romeo's horse is an old truck.

ELISSA  
It's crazy. Fernando is too old for you. And your Papi is bound to find out!

HELEN  
Elissa: The bossy one. If the four girls had been a sports team, Elissa would be their captain.

MARISELA  
Clara, I have to see Fernando. You have to cover for me.

CLARA

Ay, Marisela...no sé...

HELEN

Clara: The sensitive one. Sweet. No make-up. No boyfriend. Parents believe her with good reason.

MARISELA

Besides, it's not cool for a father to go to prom.

YADIRA

Cool is not the best argument for your Papi.

HELEN

Yadira: The poised one: organized, serious, and very private.

MARISELA

¡Please, guys! You have to help me! ¡Prom is the most important night of our lives!!!

HELEN

Marisela: the dramatic one: Emotional. Colorful. Loud. A straight-A student who also likes to party.

CLARA

Oye Marisela, your dress still has a price tag---oh my God. That's like a month of work for you.

MARISELA

It's still Ross Dress for Less.

YADIRA

Not less enough for me.

MARISELA

I couldn't help myself. I'm an elegant woman. And this is Prom.

ELISSA

And then we get to dress for up for graduation.

YADIRA

Graduation. I can't wait. I just can't stand being around my step-dad anymore.

MARISELA

Ugh. Maybe your Mom will leave him.

YADIRA

No, I think she's stuck.

MARISELA

Don't talk about sad things Yadira. It's making your hair limp.

ELISSA

I thought you got Yolanda to come and do our hair.

(MARISELA sprays YADIRA's hair. It's huge.)

YADIRA

Oh God!

MARISELA

That's great!

ELISSA

Hand me the hairspray.

MARISELA

Do you want me to do your make-up, Clara?

CLARA

You can do my nails.

MARISELA

What? You don't like how I do my makeup?

CLARA

I'm already wearing too much make up!

MARISELA

It's too simple.

ELISSA

Let Clara be Clara!

(YOLANDA, big hair and colorful clothes, bursts in with make-up and hair stuff.)

YOLANDA

Hola, nenas!

GIRLS (annoyed)

YOLANDA!

YOLANDA

¡Aquí estoy! To make you beautiful for el prom.

CLARA

¡Gracias a Dios!

YOLANDA (to MARISELA)

I just talked to your Papi. He's a mess.

MARISELA

Mi Papi is worried because he doesn't understand prom.

YOLANDA

He is worried because he understands boys. Who's up first?

ALL

Marisela.

YOLANDA

¡Órale! You girls are going to look requete chulas!

GIRLS

Gracias.

YOLANDA

Prom! Graduation!

MARISELA

It's all happening so fast.

YOLANDA (to MARISELA)

So what are you going to do after graduation? Are you going to get another job? Are you and Fernando going to get married?

MARISELA

No. I'm going to college!

YOLANDA

Going to college? Really? Where?

(Pause. A change in the mood)

MARISELA

I don't know. Nowhere yet. I'm waiting to hear.

YOLANDA

You girls waiting too?

ALL GIRLS (subdued)

Yes.

YOLANDA

College! Válgame Dios. You girls must be so smart. And so rich! You are going to el college?!!!

MARISELA

Trying... trying ...trying.

YOLANDA

Is that why there's a white lady sitting in the corner, taking notes?

(ALL turn to look at HELEN. HELEN looks up)

HELEN

Oh. Hello.

YADIRA

Oh. That's Helen.

CLARA

Helen Thorpe.

MARISELA

She's married to John Hickenlooper, the mayor of Denver!

ELISSA

Helen is the First Lady of Denver!!!

CLARA

I love how fancy that sounds.

HELEN

I feel a little miscast in that role.

YOLANDA

If she's the mayor's wife then what is she doing here?

ELISSA

Helen is a reporter.

CLARA



A very respected journalist—

YADIRA

—and she's is writing an article in a magazine.

MARISELA

About us!!!!

YOLANDA

Who's going to want to read that?

HELEN

I hope lots of people. I think I will learn a lot from these young women.

YOLANDA

Interesting. So Helen, hablas español?

HELEN

Un poco. Quiero aprender más.

(A cluck of appreciation by all the girls for her Spanish and her interest)

MARISELA

Nice job, Helen.

HELEN

I hope I will learn more in the process of writing the article.

YOLANDA

Ah (beat) An article about you? Is that safe?

ELISSA

Of course it's... safe.

YOLANDA

For you, maybe, Elissa. But is it safe for all of you? I don't think so.

(THEY all look at HELEN.)

HELEN

I won't use your real names. I'll change the name of your high school. Protecting a source is part of a journalist's ethic.

MARISELA

See? Helen is going to protect us.

YOLANDA

I hope so. Because if the wrong people find you, you will lose everything.

(A car honks. )

MARISELA

The boys are here!

(The girls scramble to get ready.)

MARISELA

¡Ay! Hairspray!

(GIRLS LINE UP and YOLANDA covers the girls' hair with hairspray)

YOLANDA

Wait! We need a photo! Foto.

HELEN

We can use my camera!

(THE FOUR GIRLS pose.)

1,2,3.

GIRLS

¡Queso! (A flash)

(Another car honk. The girls shriek!)

ELISSA

We gotta go!

YOLANDA

Have fun!

MARISELA

We will!

YOLANDA

But not too much fun!

YADIRA

OK ladies...Prom officially begins

ELISSA  
Right...

CLARA  
Now.

ALL  
¡Órale !

(As the GIRLS exit.)

HELEN

ELISSA was born a U.S. citizen ( ELISSA exits) CLARA is a legal resident (CLARA exits) MARISELA and YADIRA do not have documents. (MARISELA AND YADIRA exit). And under current law the two without papers have NO way of becoming citizens; their legal status is beginning to affect how they see one another. Since they are about to leave the safety of high school, I want to know what will happen to them.