

I'm Here

A 10-Minute Play

Written by

Conrad A. Panganiban

Contact:

conradap@gmail.com
@consplayspace

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MILAGROS: 50s. Filipina. She/her/hers. A lost tourist with a red coat from another country on the search of her lifetime. She says a one line spoken in Filipino/Tagalog.

ELLE: 30s. Filipina-American. She/her/hers. One half of a sister/brother scavenger hunt team about to win the trip of a lifetime.

TOM: Late 20s - early 30s. Filipino-American. He/him/his. The other half of a brother/sister scavenger hunt team about to win the trip of a lifetime.

SETTING

The present in San Francisco's Union Square.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

The '/' denotes an overlap of dialogue.

The lines where Filipino is written, translations follow in [brackets].

In the play, Milagros is wearing a red coat. But in the case where the actor who plays Milagros doesn't have access to a red coat, it can be changed to a different colored coat and said color may be changed in the text.

Lights up on MILAGROS, a tourist from the Philippines in her 50s visiting San Francisco's Union Square for the first time. She is wearing a red coat and unfolds an old photograph.

MILAGROS
(to the photo)

I'm here.
Now, where are you?

MILAGROS puts the photo away and holds up a map. She's looking around trying to get the bearings of where she is located.

With a cellphone in their hands, enter ELLE and TOM running from one side of the stage and exiting the other in a desperate search for someone.

ELLE (O.S.)
Hi. Are you a tourist from another country?

TOM (O.S.)
Excuse me, are you visiting from outside the U.S.?

ELLE (O.S.)
Hi, are you... oooo, sorry, I already asked you. Have a good day?

TOM (O.S.)
Hello, are you...? No no no. No need to call the cops. Sorry... I'm just leaving, so you enjoy San Francisco.

Re-enter ELLE. She sees MILAGROS and after a brief pause approaches her.

ELLE
Excuse me, but are you a tourist from another country?

MILAGROS
(Speaking with a Filipino accent.)
Why are you asking?

ELLE

(Shouting to TOM)

Oh my God! I found one! Tom! Tom!

MILAGROS

What do you mean by, you 'found one'?

ELLE

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to make that sound rude.

MILAGROS

Too late.

Enter a running TOM.

TOM

(Looking at his phone.)

Danggit! The twins from The Marina are looking for their last item too! See?!

ELLE

Don't worry about them! She's the one. After all this time... finally, the end of the tunnel!

MILAGROS

What tunnel? We're outside.

ELLE

I'm sorry, where are you from again?

MILAGROS

I never told you where / I am-

ELLE

Did you hear her? Different country! And she's wearing a red jacket too!

TOM

Oh my God! She's perfect!

ELLE

Do you mind if me and my brother took a really quick video selfie with you?

TOM

Just for a couple of seconds. We just need to hear you say something.

MILAGROS

I don't think it's safe for me to be on / video-

TOM

Don't worry. We, the both of us, voted for Biden! So, no need to be worried about any hate crimes from either of us or from any proud boys, girls, or cats?

MILAGROS

Uh...

TOM

Say, she has nothing to worry about, Elle.

ELLE

Absolutely! I promise. It'll be really quick and painless.

MILAGROS

There's going to be pain?

TOM

That was a joke! A joke. Haha. A painless joke.

MILAGROS

Sorry, I really don't have time / for a-

ELLE

It'll only take 30 seconds, tops!

MILAGROS

Why are you Americans so pushy?

ELLE

Did you hear that?! She called us Americans. So, then she *must be* from another country!

MILAGROS

And then I *must* find the police.

TOM

No, don't! Please. I already kinda got warned twice today for bothering strangers.

MILAGROS

Then why do you keep asking me to be in your video?

ELLE

Because it's for a scavenger hunt.

TOM

A game to look for items around San Francisco-

ELLE

And the last item on our list is to find a tourist from another country wearing a red coat.
So... you win!

MILAGROS

What did I win?

TOM

You... win the chance to help us get a trip to anywhere in the world.

MILAGROS

Why did you automatically assume that because I have an accent, that I'm a tourist from another country? Am I not allowed to live here *and* have an accent too.

TOM

Oooo... she has a good point.

ELLE

Whose team are you on?

TOM

I'm just saying that it's kinda wrong to assume that she's a tourist because her English doesn't sound like ours.

MILAGROS

Makinig ka sa kapatid mo. [Listen to your brother.]

ELLE

Forget the accent, a different language is better! Can you say that again on camera?

MILAGROS

Only if you can answer me back in your language.

ELLE

I can only speak in English.

TOM

But, I know a little Spanish, "Vamos a la playa."

MILAGROS

Why did you approach me?

ELLE

Because you were holding a map and had a red coat on.

MILAGROS

And nothing else? You didn't hear me talk to anyone so how could you have known if I had an accent or not?

ELLE

What are you implying?

MILAGROS

It doesn't feel good when other people assume things about you just because of the color of your skin, does it?

TOM

Oh snap.

ELLE

Shut up, Tom.

MILAGROS

Are we done? I still have my own searching to do.

Pause.

MILAGROS

Good luck.

MILAGROS begins to exit.

TOM

Wait! What about if we pay you?

ELLE

Tom, we can't do that.

TOM

I have \$20 and Elle usually carries a fifty dollar bill in the secret zipper in her bag for emergencies.

ELLE

Tom!

TOM

What?! This is an emergency and I thought you wanted to win this game!

ELLE

Not like that. And that's against the rules.

TOM

When did you ever care about the rules?

ELLE

I'm not going to lose this trip because you're the one who gets us disqualified!

TOM

Hey! I need to win this trip as much as you do!

MILAGROS

For two hundred dollars, maybe I could say something like, "I love being a tourist in San Francisco."

ELLE

That's extortion.

MILAGROS

I'm not the one who needs the trip.

TOM

Okay, fine. Wait right here. There's a Wells Fargo ATM right down the street on Ellis.

ELLE

You're not going to give her \$200!

TOM

You know I don't have \$200. But... don't you bank at Wells?

ELLE

If I had \$200, I'd be using it for a plane ticket instead of bribing her.

MILAGROS

Okay. Stop. Forget it. I know what it feels like to not have anything.

TOM

So, then you'll do our video for free?

MILAGROS

I didn't say that... but maybe you can help me find someone?

TOM

Not a problem! Elle is really good at tracking people down. Especially if they're on Facebook. She found out the name of this guy she saw on MUNI and stalked him on the socials / for days.

ELLE

What is wrong with you?

TOM

Hey! I'm desperate!

MILAGROS

All I have is an address and this map.

TOM

No problem! I can use the address and by the power of Google Maps-

ELLE

But we need to do the video first!

TOM

Elle, the person she's looking for is probably around the corner.

ELLE

Or he or she could be in the Mission. And by then the Marina Twins will be waving at us from SFO.
Video first.

MILAGROS

I can't have any videos taken of me.

TOM

(Looking at his phone)

NOOOOO!!!!

(to Milagros)

Sorry, not at you.

(to Elle)

But, you're right, Elle! The Marina Twins stopped moving so that means they're probably shooting their last video.

ELLE

Please, Mam! This video means more to us that you'll ever know.

MILAGROS

I can't risk letting him / see me.

ELLE

I promise you that this video's only going to be seen by us and the judges. It's not going to be on YouTube or anything like that. And if you're worried about Homeland Security, then I'll delete it right after we win the trip. We just... please? I'm begging you.

MILAGROS

I... I'm sorry. I can't.

ELLE

But-

TOM

If she doesn't want to do it, Elle, we can't make her.

ELLE

But, we're never going to find another one of her!

MILAGROS

Why does this mean so much to you?

TOM

We're going to find her another way. C'mon, let's go! There's still a bunch of tourists / around.

ELLE

NO! We're doing this!

ELLE takes out her phone and holds it out in front of her and MILAGROS and presses the 'record' button.

ELLE

Hi. This is Team Elle and Tom Garcia and we're with... what's your name?

MILAGROS

I never agreed to-

TOM

She has to agree to this too, Elle. Rules?

ELLE

What's your name, Lady?!

MILAGROS

Help! Police!

ELLE

Did you hear that judges? She's obviously a tourist from another country.

TOM

Elle, put the phone down, please.

MILAGROS

POLICE!

TOM

GABRIELLA MALABUYO GARCIA!
Stop recording and put the phone down.

Pause.

ELLE

(Lowers her phone.)

I... I'm sorry... I just thought that...
I'm sorry. Let's go.

TOM

We're really sorry.

Heartbroken, ELLE and TOM begin to walk
away.

MILAGROS

Gabriella?

(To TOM)

Tomás?

MILAGROS takes out an old photo from her
pocket, unfolds it and looks at it and back at
them.

MILAGROS

Every night for the last twenty years, I look at this photo of us with the promise of one day saying to them, "I'm here." They were taken from me before they could even talk, with or without an accent. And every day, I wonder what they are doing, if they are okay, if they hated me for not coming for them or worse, if they forgot about me. So I kept this photo of us folded to let them know that I will always be close by... and the crease would be my line to them.

TOM takes a close look at Milagros and pulls
out a photo the same size that MILAGROS is
holding, unfolds it and takes a long look at it.

TOM

The reason we needed to win this trip so bad was so we can find her.

TOM hands the photo to ELLE who looks at the photo, looks at MILAGROS, and then back at the photo.

ELLE

And we only found out about our real mom when our father died last year. While going through his things, we found this. On the back, it says Milagros Malabuyo March 2001.

Both ELLE and MILAGROS hold out their photos for them to compare. They match.

ELLE

Mom?

MILAGROS

I'm here.

Blackout.

END OF PLAY