

STANDING ABOVE PAJARO

A Filipino/a/x-American 10-Minute Play  
Inspired by the 1930 Watsonville Riots

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### CAST OF CHARACTERS

Melissa Anne Crawley: 40s. Female. Owner of the Watsonville General Store. Intelligent, strong-willed single mother in an abusive relationship.

Celestino Tobera: 20s. Male. Filipino migrant field worker. Well-read dreamer disillusioned with his vision of the American Dream.

Bobby Crawley: Late teens. Male. The son of Melissa Anne Crawley. Takes after his late father's short-temper trying to defend his town and Country against outsiders.

### SETTING

January 20, 1930. 4:10am. Watsonville General Store, Watsonville, CA

### TRIGGER WARNINGS

Domestic, Gun, and Anti-Asian/Immigrant Violence.

Lights up to dimly light up the interior of the Watsonville General Store. It is January 1930 at 4:10 a.m. On one of the sides of the stage, we see a window that is left slightly ajar.

A hand is seen pushing the window open.

CELESTINO TOBERA, a Filipino farm worker in his early 20s struggles to get through the window until he lands on the store's wooden floor. After hearing some voices come from the outside, he scurries behind a counter. After a beat, he goes to the window to check if the coast is clear. Realizing that it is, he takes a breath of relief and backs into a display of cans causing some of them to fall.

A light from upstage is turned on and CELESTINO searches for a place to hide.

MELISSA ANNE CRAWLEY, a woman in her 40s and the owner of the Watsonville General Store, enters wearing a nightgown holding a rifle. She reaches over to one of the walls and flips on a light switch to fully reveal the store.

MELISSA scans the store cautiously to see if anyone else is inside. She sees a can on the floor, picks it up and places it on a counter. She still doesn't see Celestino but as she gets closer to finding him, CELESTINO deftly moves around in the opposite direction where he hits another box that falls – he ducks, she raises her rifle.

MELISSA

Get up! I saw you!

CELESTINO slowly rises from behind the counter with his hands raised. He's dressed in a McIntosh suit, which is usually pristine, but on this morning, his slacks are dirty, a sleeve is torn and his face is bruised and bloodied.

Good God.  
MELISSA

Not tonight.  
CELESTINO

What did you...? Get out.  
MELISSA

(Pause.)  
GET OUT!

CELESTINO shakes his head saying, "No."

Can't you speak English?  
MELISSA

CELESTINO shakes his head to say, "Yes."

Then you can understand that when I say Get Out, I meant,  
MELISSA  
GET! OUT!

I can't. My feet are frozen, mam.  
CELESTINO

They weren't frozen when you... how did you get in here?  
MELISSA  
(CELESTINO points to the window.)

Mam, please. People are trying to kill-  
CELESTINO

That doesn't concern me-  
MELISSA

All over Watsonville. My friends were thrown off the Pajaro Bridge, so we had to run  
CELESTINO

MELISSA whirls her rifle around the store.

We? There's more of you in here?  
MELISSA

CELESTINO

No. No. Just me, mam.

MELISSA spins back pointing the rifle at Celestino.

MELISSA

Bobby! Bobby Jr.! Get down here!

CELESTINO

Shhh... Mam. Shh... Please. I will pay you, Mam! Here!

CELESTINO digs into his pockets and pulls out a few dollars and some dance tickets and throws them on the table.

MELISSA

Let me see your hands!

CELESTINO

So I can stay here until the sunrise. Please.

MELISSA

What are those? Are you trying to swindle me too?

CELESTINO

No. Oh, you meant... Those are dance tickets. From The Filipino Club in Palm Beach.

MELISSA

That's where you dance with our girls, isn't it?

CELESTINO

We're just using the few hours we have off from the fields for companionship. To to dance. To feel. To be a human being.

MELISSA

Then you should go home for that.

CELESTINO

This is our home.

MELISSA

No. Home is where everyone around you looks the same. You people are the ones invading our land.

CELESTINO

Invading? I was hired to come to here because I am a hard worker. Something you Americans aren't able to do.

MELISSA raises her rifle at CELESTINO.

MELISSA

Watch your mouth, boy!

CELESTINO

Celestino Tobera. That is my name. Not boy.

MELISSA

Dead. That'll be your name if you keep talking like that.

CELESTINO

No offense, mam. I was just trying to tell you my story.

MELISSA

"No offense, mam." I know you didn't learn that from working the Strawberries.

CELESTINO

Mr. Hartendorp. Before we came here. In Manila. I learned English through the stories he would read to us.

MELISSA

Mary had a little lamb? Or somethin' like Humpty Dumpty?

CELESTINO

Hamlet... As You Like It... Twelfth Night.

MELISSA

"Is this a rifle which I see before me, The handle toward my hand?"

CELESTINO

Ah. The Scottish Play. Except with a rifle and not a dagger. One of my favorite plays.

MELISSA

I'm not up at 4 in the morning to talk about Shakespeare.

CELESTINO

Then what about poetry?

MELISSA

You're kidding me.

## CELESTINO

American mouth-songs!

Those of mechanics — each one singing his, as it should be, blithe and strong, The carpenter singing his, as he measures his plank or beam,

The wood-cutter's song — the ploughboy's, on his way in the morning, or at noon intermission, or at sundown.

The day what belongs to the day — At night, the party of young fellows, robust, friendly, cleanblooded, singing with melodious voices, melodious thoughts.

Come! some of you! Still be flooding The States with hundreds and thousands of mouth-songs, fit for The States only.

That poem kept me afloat as our ship left from Manila Bay to Hawaii. From there to California's San Joaquin Valley to Alaska and back to Stockton. I chased after the meaning of that song which Walt Whitman writes about. But now. Now, I wonder if that version of *his* American had ever existed.

## MELISSA

It does exist. But only for the people who put in work for that dream.

## CELESTINO

Look at my hands.

(As CELESTINO takes a step towards  
Melissa, she holds up the rifle.)

LOOK AT THEM!

These are the hands of a person who *has* worked to be a part of that dream!

## MELISSA

For the last time, either get out of my store or I'll end those dreams of yours with this.

CELESTINO stops in his tracks and holds up  
his hands.

## CELESTINO

Okay... alright... I'll go.

CELESTINO backs his way out the door. As  
soon as he's out of site, MELISSA sits down in  
relief until we hear...

## BOBBY (O.S.)

Get in there!

The store's door opens with BOBBY JR. with a gun raised backs CELESTINO inside the store. MELISSA stands up.

BOBBY

Stand over there! You really think that you can run from me again, boy?

MELISSA

Bobby! Where have you been? And... who is that?

BOBBY

Would it matter? But if it helps to shut you up, I'm shooting the person who's breaking into our store.

MELISSA

But he... he didn't break in. You pushed him in.

BOBBY

That's not what I saw. And that's not what you saw either.

MELISSA

Why don't you let Sheriff Sinott handle this?

BOBBY

The Sheriff's only interested in helping these goo-goos. I heard that this one was at that clubhouse down in Palm Beach with Regina. So, I rounded up the boys to have a talk with her but the Sheriff and Locke-Paddon Boys were surrounding the place.

MELISSA

I'm sure that they were only protecting their Club.

BOBBY

Or those people.

All we're trying to do is defend our land. Our families. Our way of life.

Remember when Daddy was alive? We had no troubles with anyone in the valley.

Everyone respected us and our store. We kept everyone fed. We kept everyone in the light at night from the oil they bought from us. This town needs us.

This is 1930 and ever since those foreigners came here and started causing all these problems about not getting paid for what they think they deserve, or bringing in their diseases, or breaking our laws by trying to marry our women, they destroyed the balance of life in Watsonville... and in this country.

(Points the gun at Celestino.)

And this is to tip the scale... back to us.



CELESTINO

Mam, help me! Please! Use the dagger in your hand.

BOBBY

Wait what... how did you know...?

(BOBBY turns and points the gun at  
MELISSA.)

That's what she always mutters under her breath every time I...

MELISSA

Put the gun down, Bobby!

CELESTINO

It was because I was in here earlier.

BOBBY spins back to pointing the gun at  
CELESTINO.

CELESTINO

I was just trying to get away and I saw the window-.

BOBBY

SHUT UP! I wasn't talking to you! Ma, was he in here earlier?

Pause.

BOBBY

MA???!!!

MELISSA

No. No he wasn't.

BOBBY

This is what you get for lying, boy!

BOBBY steps to CELESTINO with the gun  
pointed at his head and cocks back it's hammer.

MELISSA

STOP! He was in here! He was in here! Celestino came in a bloody mess and I couldn't turn him away.

BOBBY

You... you know his name!? How could you lie to me like that? You had him in here?! Do you know what he could have done to you?

MELISSA

Nothing. Nothing happened. He just needed a place—

BOBBY strikes MELISSA, but she doesn't fall... this time.

BOBBY

(To MELISSA)

No wonder Daddy always called you weak. You never learn, do you? Get out of here. I'll deal with you after I'm done with *Celestino* here.

MELISSA doesn't move.

BOBBY

GO!!!

MELISSA starts to make her way up the hallway where Celestino went earlier to go to the bathroom.

BOBBY

(To Celestino.)

Get on your knees.

BOBBY stands over CELESTINO pointing the gun down at him ready to pull the trigger. Just as he's about to fire, MELISSA re-enters the scene, grabs a can and hits BOBBY in the back of the head stunning him and causing him to fall.

MELISSA

(To Celestino.)

C'mon, get up get up get up! You have to get out of here!

CELESTINO

Come with me. He will kill you if you stay.

MELISSA

He won't. I know him. Go.

In mad mixture of confusion and fear, CELESTINO runs out the door.

BOBBY regains some of his senses and starts after CELESTINO out the door.

BOBBY (O.S.)

Get back here!

Almost without thinking, MELISSA grabs the rifle, and standing in the open doorway, takes aim and fires a shot! And then another one! In a daze, she backs away from the door and slowly points the rifle down.

Silence.

CELESTINO runs from off-stage to the door and immediately stops and slowly enters with his hands raised in the air.

CELESTINO

Mam, he's...

MELISSA is still in a daze as CELESTINO moves towards her, slowly takes the rifle, places it on a counter, and pulls out a chair for her to sit in.

CELESTINO

Sit here. Everything will be... Thank you for... Is there anything I can...?

MELISSA finally makes eye contact with CELESTINO and rises from the chair and goes to the counter, takes out a box and the money inside it.

She goes back to him and gives him all the money.

MELISSA

Take this and get out of Watsonville.

CELESTINO

I can't take this.

MELISSA

Yes, you can and you will. You have to.

CELESTINO

What about you? And what about...?

MELISSA

This doesn't concern you now.

CELESTINO

I can't leave you like this. Come with me.

MELISSA

No. It's best I stay here. It would only raise suspicion about... if I went with you.

CELESTINO

I don't know what to say.

MELISSA

Say, "Goodbye".

CELESTINO

I'm so sorry things had to end like this.

MELISSA

The sun is starting to come up. You don't have much time.

CELESTINO moves to exit out the door.

MELISSA

Celestinio... I know that America isn't everything that Walt Whitman wrote about, but promise me to not lose hope. Seems like you know what this country is supposed to be... even more than some of the ones born here. We need people like you.

CELESTINO

"I can no other answer make but thanks; And thanks."

CELESTINO exits.

Lights fade out.

**END OF PLAY**