

Caged

Written by Me Nieves

Official Draft
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Dramatist Guild

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Setting - Immigration Detention Center

JOSEFINA ROJAS, 30's stands inside a detention cell, her hands tightly gripping the bars. She sings a quiet lullaby.

JOSEFINA

(Spanish)

Los pollitos dicen/Pio, pio, pio/Cuando tienen hambre/Cuando tienen frío/La gallina busca el maiz y el trigo/Les da la comida y les presta abrigo.

(English)

The little chicks say/Chirp, chirp, chirp/When they are hungry/And when they are cold/The mother hen looks for corn and wheat/She gives them food and grants them shelter.

**Los Pollitos Dicen/The Chicks Say*

A guard, CELIA VARGAS enters carrying a tray of food. Josefina watches Celia intensely as she approaches the cell.

CELIA

Please step back.

Josefina just stares at Celia.

CELIA

Por favor da un paso atras'.

Josefina does as she is told.

Celia opens the cell door. She steps inside.

Josefina approaches Celia.

JOSEFINA

Donde esta mi hijo?

CELIA

Step back.

JOSEFINA

My son, please. Where's my son?

CELIA

He's safe.

JOSEFINA

Where is he? I want to know where he is. I want to see him. Please I know he must be scared because I am scared.

CELIA

He is safe. Please take a step back. Listen to me, you need to calm down. It's going to be okay.

JOSEFINA

I need to see him.

CELIA

You two have nothing to be afraid of. I promise you. This is a secure area. It's clean. We have the best medical staff on site in case of an emergency.

JOSEFINA

Medical staff? Is he alright? Is he sick?

CELIA

No, no, no nothing like that. He's fine. You need to relax. I only told you about the medical staff so you'd know we have the very best people watching over you. Look, I brought you some lunch, see?

Celia presents the tray of food.

Josefina knocks it to the floor.

JOSEFINA

I don't want your charity.

CELIA

That was a very stupid thing to do. You're very lucky it's me and not some other guard standing here.

JOSEFINA

Where's my son?

CELIA

I told you he was safe.

JOSEFINA

I don't believe you.

Celia picks up the tray, collects the fallen food.

CELIA

You get three meals a day. That's it. You don't get seconds. You didn't have any breakfast this morning. You have to eat. I'm here to help you.

JOSEFINA

Help me to see my son.

CELIA

I told you he was safe.

JOSEFINA

And I told you I don't believe you.

CELIA

You can trust me.

JOSEFINA

Why should I trust you? You are no different than the others. You wear the same uniform. You wear the same badge. You treat us like filthy stray animals.

CELIA

You see the name on my badge? It says Celia Vargas. That's my name. What it doesn't say is that mi familia came here from Guanajuato, Mexico. According to your papers that's where you and your son were coming from. I'm Mexicana. I'm just like you.

JOSEFINA

You're nothing like me. I would rather slice my throat as well as my son's than be like you.

CELIA

You don't mean that.

JOSEFINA

Give me a knife.

CELIA

Look temperatures are high. Let's breathe and try and talk to each other. Please. Can we do that? We don't have to be at such odds with each other. I'm one of the good ones. I really am. I won't even report that you trashed your food.

Josefina turns her back away to Celia.

CELIA

Fine then have it your way.

Celia turns to leave.

JOSEFINA

Why do you do this kind of work?

CELIA

Excuse me?

JOSEFINA

You tell me that your familia came here from Guanajuato, just like my son and I did. If that is true then you must know why we risks everything to come here, to have chance at a life and this is how treat us?

CELIA

If it wasn't for people like me things here would be alot worse for the both of you in here. You don't know about these other guards. What they've been doing. What they've been getting away with. You don't know. I don't even want to know. But I do. For them this might as well be a concentration camp in Nazi Germany instead of the United States of America and they're the Gestapo.

JOSEFINA

From where I am standing I can not tell the difference.

CELIA

I'm going to try and get you another tray of food. I'll tell them I tripped. You need to eat.

JOSEFINA

All I want from you is to see my son.

CELIA

I can't do that.

JOSEFINA

Why not.

CELIA

He's not here.

JOSEFINA

What? Where is he?

CELIA

He's at a different facility. He and the other children are being looked after. I swear they're in good hands. Listen to me, you have to eat. You have to take care of yourself. You don't want to be sick when you see your son again do you?

JOSEFINA

Am I going to see him again?

CELIA

I honestly don't know. I mean you will, eventually. but There's a lot of confusion going on right now over what to do with all of you. I'm sorry. I really am.

JOSEFINA

And you say to me you are one of the good ones.

CELIA

I am. I'm going to get you another tray of food.

JOSEFINA

Is that how you are able to sleep at night after you finish saying your prayers?

CELIA

What?

JOSEFINA

You tell God that you are one of the good ones. You think God does not know who you are? You think he doesn't see what you are doing?

CELIA

I am one of the good ones.

JOSEFINA

The sounds of the cries from the children and their mothers that you hear at night in your sleep are not their cries alone, but God's as well.

CELIA

I'm a mother too. Just like you. I have two children. A boy and a girl. I'm all they have. They have no father. All they have is me. You don't think this is hard for me. I put myself in your position every day and every night. It never leaves my mind. Would I do the same as you? Would I try and seek out any way necessary to escape violence, to flee my country because there was no work, no life. Would I risk everything for the welfare of my family, to give my babies a chance at a future. Yes I would. I have a home. I have a family. This job is all I have that is keeping me where I am and not where you are. I'll be back with a fresh tray of food.

Celia locks the cell doors and turns to leave.

JOSEFINA

"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she with silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

Celia looks back at Josefina.

Lights fade. End of play.