

W.A.C. Iraq

by

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W.A.C. IRAQ

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You have my heart.

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I have a rendezvous with Death
At some disputed barricade,
When Spring comes back with rustling shade
And apple-blossoms fill the air -
I have a rendezvous with Death
When Spring brings back blue days and fair.

It may be he shall take my hand
And lead me into his dark land
And close my eyes and quench my breath -
It may be I shall pass him still.

I have a rendezvous with Death
On some scarred slope on battered hill,
When Spring comes round again this year
And the first meadow-flowers appear.

God knows 'twere better to be deep
Pillowed in silk and scented down,
Where love throbs out in blissful sleep,
Pulse nigh to pulse, and breath to breath,
Where hushed awakenings are dear ...
But I've a rendezvous with Death
At midnight in some flaming town,
When Spring trips north again this year,
And I to my pledged word am true,
I shall not fail that rendezvous.

I Have A Rendezvous With Death by Alan Seeger, who was killed in action during the first World War. From *A Treasury of War Poetry: British and American Poems of the World War, 1914-1917*. Edited by George Herbert Clarke.

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Historical Context

The Iraq War was a protracted armed conflict in Iraq from 2003 to 2011. It began with the invasion of Iraq by the United States-Led Coalition that overthrew the Ba'athist government of Saddam Hussein. The conflict continued for much of the next decade as an insurgency emerged to oppose the coalition forces and the post-invasion Iraqi government. US troops were officially withdrawn in 2011.

Definitions of W.A.C.

W.A.C.: Women's Army Corps

W.A.C.: Women in Armed Combat

W.A.C. (K): Lamé sorry ass, ain't even legit

W.A.C. (Whack): To strike or slap with a sharp resounding blow.

Characters

Pvt. Lydia Jemenez, mid 20's

Samira Zabari, mid to late 30's

Telephone Operator Edith Alvarez, 40's

Pvt. Monica Santiago, 20's

Pvt. Safiya Johnson, 20's

Juanita Rivera, 40's (Mother of Angelica & Michelle)

Angelica Rivera, early 20's

Michelle Rivera, late teens

Pvt. Dena Al-Atassi, mid to late 30's

Army Recruiter/Corporal Jocelyn Vazquez, early 30's

Setting:

The Present - On Home and Foreign Soil

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SCENE 1

A Village in Iraq.

*In Darkness: we hear the Islamic call to Prayer (**Azan Adhan), at the conclusion of the prayer we hear the voice of SAMIRA ZABARI.*

***Version by Rahim Moazenzadeh Ardabili*

Please Note: *Projected onto a screen is a village in Iraq.*

SAMIRA. *It is written, “If you should die or if you should be slain in the cause of God, his forgiveness and his mercy would surely be better than all of the riches that one can see and hold.” (Lights Come Up revealing SAMIRA ZABARI, a woman in her thirties in full Muslim traditional garb. She addresses the audience.) My beloved father’s final words to me, his only daughter were, “Make war on them until idolatry shall cease to exist and what remains is God’s religion, which shall reign supreme.” I will tell you that I miss my father. I will tell you that I miss my brother. I will tell you that I have nothing before me other than this body that you, yourselves, see before you. I am first and foremost an Iraqi. I am second an Arab and third I am and will be forever connected to the fate of my beloved country. My home. What brings harm to my country and therefore my home, injures me. Every family, here, where I live and breathe has had at least one member of theirs who have been killed, injured or imprisoned by this war. You call some of us who protest your hospitalities and your insistent belief that your democratic way of life is a vision we should share “Insurgents.” We are not. We are*

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simple people, who have nothing left. We are tired. Yes tired. You sit in your homes with your fat contented selves, watching the news on your television and all that you see is statues falling, people applauding, American soldiers carry Iraqi children on their shoulders. This is what you see. Would you care to know what it is that I see? I do not have a television to tell me what to see, think, and believe in... I have only my eyes. My two simple eyes... my eyes see corpses. My eyes see civil war. My eyes see death, killing, bombings...my eyes also see rape. Rape is a taboo subject in Iraq. Our families do not report rape...even in our prayers we are unable to escape our pain, for many we are now merely splintered pieces of flesh scattered over the sand. Why don't you Americans just go home? Our spines will not be broken. Didn't you see that even in his final moments, Saddam never bowed his head, that his final words to you American ****Kaffars'** were, *"I am a militant and I have no fear for myself. I have spent my life in Jihad and fighting aggression. Anyone who follows this route should not be afraid."* Then as the blood of the slaughtered animals stained the streets on the first day of Id Al-Adha: The feast of the sacrifice, when the Prophet Abraham showed his willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmael to God. He stood strong...until his neck snapped. As vicious as he was to your eyes. He held our country together. We were one. At his sentencing he said: *"I call on you not to hate, because hate does not leave space for a person to be fair. It makes one blind and closes all doors of thought and keeps one away from balanced thinking and making the right choice."* His execution does not make an illegal war, legal. Your Emily Dickinson once wrote, *"Hope is a thing with feathers."* If what she wrote is to be true, then my heart is truly dead, because hope has flown very, far, far away from Iraq...*Allah-U-Akbar. La ilaha ill-Allah.

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**Translation: God Is Great. There is none worthy of being worshipped except Allah. **Translation: Unbeliever*

SCENE 2

Fort Hamilton Army Base Call Center, Brooklyn New York.

EDITH ALVAREZ enters carrying her coffee and pastry. She is dressed casually in light summer wear, sleeveless tee-shirt, black cargo pants and sneakers. She glances at the calendar on wall it reads: August 2006 She notices the lights on her switchboard already flashing. She takes a seat in her cubicle, takes a sip of her coffee, places it by her side, puts on her headphones and plugs herself in.

EDITH. Fort Hamilton Army base call center...I'm doing fine thank you. Yeah, another day, another dollar, right? How are you doing? That's good. It's a little cloudy today. Really, we could use some of that sun over here. What's the number sweetheart? Got it. Area code? What's your name? Hold for connection... *(she takes a small bite of her pastry)* Hello? Is this Mrs. Angie Garcia? This is the Fort Hamilton Army base call center. Yes, he is. He sounds fine. I wouldn't lie to you sweetheart. Hold for final connection. Thank you, you too. *(She takes a sip of her coffee and picks up the next call.)* Fort Hamilton Army base call center. Yes, this is the Fort Hamilton Army base call center. That's right, we're in Brooklyn. Excuse me, come again? No, I'm sorry you have the wrong number. What was that? No, we don't provide that kind of service. That's right. No, I personally don't know who does. That's exactly right, I'm not that kind of operator. Why don't you do yourself a favor and pick up a copy of the Village Voice, take a glance at the last ten pages.

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I'm sure you'll find the number you're looking for. That's right, the last ten pages. Thank you, same to you...Putz. *(She removes her headset and takes in a stretch. She checks her watch. She puts on her headset and pulls herself back in.)* Fort Hamilton Army base call center.

The lights come up on PVT. MONICA SANTIAGO, she stands by a pay phone in an empty mess hall.

MONICA. I'm looking for someone to talk to.

EDITH. That's what I'm here for.

MONICA. Don't sell me that.

EDITH. What?

MONICA. I'm the one who's here, not you, you're somewhere else.

EDITH. Excuse me?

MONICA. You're somewhere else.

EDITH. Yeah, that's true I am.

MONICA. Where the hell are you anyway?

EDITH. I'm in Brooklyn.

MONICA. I know Brooklyn.

EDITH. Is this a crank call?

MONICA. I'm no crank.

EDITH. Sorry. It's been that kind of day.

MONICA. Tell me something I don't know.

EDITH. Where are you?

MONICA. Where the fuck do you think I am?

EDITH. I'm just trying...

MONICA. Don't you look at the fucking area codes?

EDITH. Iraq.

MONICA. Good for you, you just won the Jersey state lotto.

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EDITH. You really sound upset...maybe...

MONICA. You gotta be fucking kidding me?

EDITH. Look, I'm just here to help. I pick up the phone. I put you in touch with family or...

MONICA. You want to help me?

EDITH. Yeah, I do. I'm not looking for a fight. I'm here to help.

MONICA. Really?

EDITH. Yes, is there someone you'd like to talk to? Someone, I can connect you to that'll make you feel better.

MONICA. Make me feel better?

EDITH. Yes.

MONICA. Make me feel better.

EDITH. Yes.

MONICA. Anybody and everybody.

EDITH. I see.

MONICA. What do you see?

EDITH. Right now, not much.

MONICA. What is that supposed to mean?

EDITH. There are no windows where am at. No sun coming in. Are you from Brooklyn?

MONICA. No. I said I know Brooklyn.

EDITH. Right. You're right. You did say that, sorry. Where are you from?

MONICA. Jersey.

EDITH. I know New Jersey. Never won their lotto. Never actually played. I guess you can say "I've never been in it to win it"

MONICA. Funny.

EDITH. Where in Jersey are you from?

MONICA. Hoboken.

EDITH. 201 area code.

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MONICA. That's right.

EDITH. What can I do for you sweetheart?

MONICA. How can you call me sweetheart like you know me?

EDITH. I know your voice.

MONICA. You know my voice?

EDITH. I know where it's coming from. I talk to a lot of soldiers like you, and I know...

MONICA. What are you talking about you know? You don't know. You don't know what's going on over here.

EDITH. That's true I...

MONICA. That's right it's true, so don't you dare tell me you know.

EDITH. I won't.

MONICA. Because you don't know anything about anything...nobody does.

EDITH. You're right, you're right, I don't know...I'm sorry. Is there someone you want to talk to? Someone I can connect you to...

MONICA. No.

EDITH. You sure? I can call them for you.

MONICA. No.

EDITH. All I need is a name and number...

MONICA. I said no. Jesus Christ, you looking to get rid of me or something.

EDITH. No, I would never...

MONICA. I'm not another voice you can just re-connect to another area code. I'm not.

EDITH. I know you're not...I'm sorry.

MONICA. Fuck...What am I doing?

EDITH. Excuse me?

MONICA. What am I doing?

EDITH. What do you mean?

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MONICA. I mean what am I doing here in this place?

EDITH. I don't understand.

MONICA. Of course you don't. How could you?

EDITH. Maybe if you tell me.

MONICA. There's this sign on the wall of our barracks stating these not so simple rules, "*Be Polite, Be Professional, Have A Plan to Kill Everyone You Meet.*" I look at that sign everyday...every day. I think to myself, what am I doing here? What was I thinking? And then the light switch turns on and I remember...I didn't want to be living in the projects anymore.

EDITH. I grew up in the projects.

MONICA. You did?

EDITH. Yeah, mine was called Medgar Evers Community Projects.

What was yours?

MONICA. George Washington Carver.

EDITH. What's your name?

MONICA. Monica.

EDITH. My name is Edith.

MONICA. Growing up, every year that would pass, I'd sit there looking out of my third-floor window, staring at those buildings. The more I stared, the more they appeared to be the tallest prison walls I had ever seen.

EDITH. I think every kid growing up in the projects feels that way.

MONICA. I never thought I'd get out, but then I met this man, Lieutenant Anthony Dela Rosa.

EDITH. At school?

MONICA. Yeah, it was career day at my local community center. I was trying to go to school and work a full-time job. It was hard.

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EDITH. What were you studying?

MONICA. I was trying to be an EMS worker. He talked. I listened. It sounded so good, the words he was using, big words that only important people used, and he made them all make sense...now looking back, I think all I was hearing was that there was a life outside of those projects that maybe someone like me could be a part of.

EDITH. There is.

MONICA. I'm sure there is somewhere, but not here. Here I get up at the crack of dawn, say my prayers and hope to God that I'll come back to my barracks safe and sound.

EDITH. Prayers are a good thing.

MONICA. I used to think so...but sometimes I just don't know about them, not in this place, not from what I've seen...I'm afraid.

EDITH. It's okay. I'm here.

MONICA. You're too far away.

EDITH. Are you sure there isn't anyone...?

MONICA. I like your voice, Edith. I want to talk to you. Can I do that? Please, just talk to you. I just want you to talk to me...can you do that? Please.

EDITH. It's going to be okay.

MONICA. No, it's not, we both know that...

EDITH. You have to have faith.

MONICA. I've tried so hard to make sense out of all the things I used to believe in...

EDITH. Like what?

MONICA. Things like the basic goodness of humanity, that sort of thing, but right now...they just don't seem to make any kind of sense.

EDITH. I don't mind talking, but maybe your mother or father would love to hear that their daughter is doing okay.

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MONICA. You wouldn't want me to tell a lie, would you?

EDITH. No, I wouldn't. May I ask you something?

MONICA. Sure, it's not my dime we're talking on.

EDITH. Are both your parents still alive?

MONICA. Why would you ask me that?

EDITH. I lost my parents when I was very young. I was Fourteen...and I thought, since you didn't want me to try and reach them that may be...

MONICA. You thought wrong...my mother is still alive.

EDITH. That's good. I can call her if you'd like. I bet she'd love to hear from her daughter.

MONICA. We don't talk much.

EDITH. I see. What do you do Monica?

MONICA. I'm in the United States Army. What do you do?

EDITH. You're hearing it. I answer phone calls for a living.

MONICA. You go to college for that?

EDITH. No not really. I used to teach.

MONICA. High school?

EDITH. Elementary.

MONICA. What happened?

EDITH. Things changed. What's your job there?

MONICA. Things changed?

EDITH. Yes.

MONICA. Kids drove you crazy.

EDITH. Yeah, they did, but that wasn't the reason. I just needed to do other things.

MONICA. I loved elementary school. Eight was a good age for me...I had fun when I was eight.

EDITH. That's a cute age. I can still see my son...

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MONICA. Can't say that now though, especially not here, no fun here, no sir, here I'm just a female dog face, which let me tell you is not the easiest thing to be around here, especially when it's a hundred guys, and you're the girl. It's like proving yourself every day. When you're doing rifle training, close combat training, they're looking at you, watching you, wondering to themselves "*Can she do it?*", "*Can she handle it?*" You don't want to be laughed at; you know what I mean?

EDITH. I can understand that.

MONICA. You were in the military?

EDITH. No, I have flat feet...I have three older brothers though.

MONICA. Any of them single? Just kidding.

EDITH. Two are married. One isn't, but you wouldn't want any part of him. Don't get me wrong, I love him, but he's like Cujo on two legs. How about you, any brothers or sisters?

MONICA. Nah, it's just me.

EDITH. My son was in the military.

MONICA. Oh yeah?

EDITH. He was part of the 82nd airborne division. They were stationed west of Bagdad.

MONICA. I hope not in Anbar.

EDITH. That's where he was.

MONICA. That's a major hot spot.

EDITH. It is?

MONICA. A lot of ugly shit's happened over there, a lot of loss.

EDITH. What else do you do there besides training?

MONICA. Sometimes I help out in the medical division. I have a little bit of EMS experience.

EDITH. You mentioned that. It must get busy for you.

MONICA. On those days when my limited EMS experience is needed it is, I find myself assisting the medical staff in trying to patch up bullet

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wounds that don't heal or I try to find a heartbeat that I can't hear...that happened tonight. It's crazy, for a brief moment you think you have all this power. You can do whatever you need to do. You're trained. It's funny. You might as well be wearing a bat suit, but then you catch your reflection in some dirty mirror and that's when you know you're not. It's just a white gown, stained with blood, hiding an ugly green uniform underneath...people don't ever think to realize that when you go to war, you're going to lose some friends, some very good friends, along the way...fuck...it's not fair... (*Monica kneels down onto the floor, crying, holding the phone receiver tightly as if it were a life preserver.*) Edith...

EDITH. I'm here.

MONICA. Today was hard...very hard...tonight, I sat on the floor of the shower, fully dressed. I watched pink water swirling around and around, my eyes following as it slowly found its way down the drain. I found myself washing and scrubbing hard, until my fatigues didn't bleed anymore.

EDITH. Hang in their soldier. You'll be home soon.

MONICA. You shouldn't make promises that are impossible to keep.

EDITH. I have faith.

MONICA. That's a good thing to have...faith...can I borrow some of yours?

EDITH. You don't even have to ask.

MONICA. Yeah well, I'm asking...I'm begging...

EDITH. You'll be home soon. You have to believe that Monica.

MONICA. I don't know what that word means anymore, home... sometimes Baghdad feels more like home to me than anywhere else does. It sounds funny, doesn't it? I know it does. It's okay if you want to laugh. A Jersey girl calling Baghdad home...but I don't know anymore...home... it scares me to even think about it. I mean, there's this big part of me that would love nothing more than to be back home and

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just forget. Do you think that's possible? That one can forget this place.

EDITH. I don't know.

MONICA. I'm so full of contradictions about my feelings about what home really is, what it's supposed to be. There are so many things I feel I'm trying to run away from...I just want to forget. I just want to forget that I was ever here. I pray that my mind can just forget this place, erase it from memory. I don't want to come back home, I don't want to be in my old bed, close my eyes and dream about this place. I'd rather be dead than have that happen.

EDITH. Don't say things like that.

MONICA. It's true.

EDITH. I wish I had some magical powers that wouldn't let that happen to you.

MONICA. I wish you did...did you know that last month...how could you know?

EDITH. What don't I know?

MONICA. It's too embarrassing...

EDITH. What is?

MONICA. Last month, I was sitting on a portable toilet, in this dirty area, just outside an old Iraqi barrack, when a mortar shell landed just a few yards outside of the port-a-potty I was sitting on, sending dirt flying all over the place. Edith, I'll be honest with you, and I know it's going to sound crazy, but I was praying hard to the good lord above that I wouldn't have to die in such a humiliating way. Sounds crazy, right?

SCENE 3

An apartment in Washington Heights.

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JUANITA RIVERA sits at a tiny kitchen table, alongside her daughter, MICHELLE. Juanita addresses the audience.

JUANITA. My English is not so good. It makes me shy to talk. My daughter, Michelle, she speak English very good.

MICHELLE. Mom, come on, don't say things like that.

JUANITA. But it's true, *(to audience)* You see. She will talk English for me. *(She hands her daughter a folded letter. Michelle unfolds the letter.)*

MICHELLE. *(reading letter)* "Angelica Rivera's noble service in Operation Iraq Freedom has helped to preserve the security of our homeland and the freedoms America holds dear." *(Michelle re-folds the letter and hands it back to her mother.)*

JUANITA. Mr. Bush. He send that to me.

Please Note: The rest of Juanita's dialogue is to be spoken in Spanish and will be translated in her own words by Michelle.

JUANITA. Estoy muy orgullosa de my hija, Anjelica.

MICHELLE. We're both very proud of my sister, Angelica.

JUANITA. No hay descanso para mi. Me siento aqui de noche. Mirando fotos de ella.

MICHELLE. My Mother, she doesn't sleep much anymore. She sits here in the kitchen at night and just looks at pictures of my sister.

JUANITA. Todavia creo que ella esta alla, perdida en algun lugar. Y que un dia, ella estara sentada en esta cocina, mirandome y sonriendo.

MICHELLE. She doesn't want to believe that my sister's gone, she believes that she's still out there lost in the desert. That one night, she'll walk in here, turn on the light and my sister will be right here where I am, sitting and smiling at her.

JUANITA. Era mi regalo. Trate de no dejarla ir. Le dije que no tenia que

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hacer eso, pero era muy terca, como su padre, que en paz descanse.

MICHELLE. My sister was her gift. She tried to talk her out of going, but Angelica was stubborn, like our father. God rest her soul.

JUANITA. Ella tocaba el violin. Tenia mucho talento. Era artista. Le encantaba dibujar. Veia algo bonito en el parque y lo dibujaba. Y el dibujo quedaba como si fuera una foto de camara. El violin, tan lindo que lo tocaba. Ella queria crear cosas hermosas. (*Juanita presents several sketches that Angelica drew.*)

MICHELLE. These are some drawings of hers. She was very talented. Angelica loved to go to the park. She would sit there for hours, just looking for something pretty that would catch her eye and she would draw it. You see how these drawings? They're perfect. It's as if she was taking pictures with a camera. She loved beautiful things. She even knew how to play the violin.

JUANITA. No somos ricos. Mi esposo murio de cancer hace unos anos y Anjelica lo queria muchisimo...Ella queria cuidarnos y ir a la escuela al mismo tiempo pero le fue muy dificil. Yo trabajo pero no gano mucho. Limpio casas. A ella no le gustaba que yo hiciera ese tipo de trabajo pero era lo unico que yo podia hacer. Yo no queria que mis hijas pasaran hambre. Me encargue de que comieran bien y que tuvieran ropa linda para vestirse.

MICHELLE. We were never rich, even when my father was alive, it was hard and then when he got sick and couldn't work. It got worse, until he passed away. I miss my father. It was tough for us for a while. My mother got real depressed. My sister and I did the best we could to support...but it was hard. My mother cleans houses for a living. My Sister and I, at first weren't too happy about that, but it was the only work that she was able to find. When our father died, my Sister took it the hardest. She was the first born and I guess it's okay to say that, that she was my father's favorite. Don't get me wrong. He loved me too. I

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know he did, but Angelica was the first.

JUANITA. Le encantaba la musica. Todas sus maestras la querian y cuando Anjelica tocaba, mis ojos no eran los unicos con lagrimas. Ella me decia, “*No llores, Mami.*” Pero no podia contenerme. Eso es lo que hacen las madres. Lloramos por nuestros hijos. Lloramos la primera vez que se enferman. Lloramos la primera vez que se caen y se lastiman.

Lloramos cuando crecen y se nos marchan. Lloramos cuando ya no vuelvan a casa. Mi nena jamas volvera a casa...por eso lloro ahora

MICHELLE. When my sister played her violin, everybody would have tears in their eyes. She died when a rocket-propelled grenade hit the Humvee she was driving...the Humvee burned up from the inside...My sister won't be coming home. That's why we're crying now.

JUANITA. Mi hija tenia una alma hermosa y siempre queria ayudar a la gente, queria ayudar a su familia. Me recuerdo cuando un dia llego a casa, entusiasmada, porque se habia encontrado con una persona, una Latina, como ella. Esta persona le dijo de las oportunidades que podia tener en su vida y suenos que podia realizar y al mismo tiempo, ayudar a su familia.

MICHELLE. My Sister, she had a big heart. She wanted to help everybody, especially us. One day, she met this recruiter, a Latina lady...

SCENE 4

Atlantic Avenue-Pacific Street subway station. We see Corporal Jocelyn Vazquez, an Army recruiter.

Please Note: *Projected onto a screen is the Atlantic Avenue-Pacific Street Subway Station.*

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JOCELYN. (*addressing audience*) Hey, how you doin'? Can I have a minute of your time? Just one minute, sixty seconds is all I'm asking. You've ever taken a moment to give a thought to having a life filled with great adventures and great opportunities? Maybe a chance to see the world? No? That's cool. If you change your mind and want to open some doors for yourself, this is where I'll be standing, same time tomorrow. Have a good day...hey, how you doin'? You ever given a thought to being part of the greatest team on the face of the planet? No? That's cool. (*ANGELICA RIVERA, enters.*) Hey, how you doing? You look like you're not in too much of a hurry.

ANGELICA. That's because I'm not.

JOCELYN. That's cool. Can I chat with you for a bit?

ANGELICA. I don't know, I guess, so.

JOCELYN. You on your way to school?

ANGELICA. Not really.

JOCELYN. Work?

ANGELICA. I'm not working right now.

JOCELYN. No job. No school.

ANGELICA. I go to school.

JOCELYN. But not today. You in College?

ANGELICA. Not yet. I hope to, maybe next year, if I can save up enough money.

JOCELYN. Besides the money, what's stopping you?

ANGELICA. What's stopping me, what do you mean?

JOCELYN. I mean what's stopping you from moving forward in your life?

ANGELICA. I told you already, I want to go to college.

JOCELYN. I heard you. You sound a little frustrated.

ANGELICA. I'm not frustrated.

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JOCELYN. I can understand if you are.

ANGELICA. I'm not. I'm just saying, I think about my future. It's not like I don't.

JOCELYN. That's good. You understand Spanish?

ANGELICA. A little bit.

JOCELYN. You've ever heard the saying: "Del dicho al hecho, hay mucho trecho."

ANGELICA. No. What's that mean?

JOCELYN. It means: "Between the said and the done, there's a great distance."

ANGELICA. Yeah, so, cute, what's that got to do with me?

JOCELYN. Everything.

ANGELICA. What are you talking about?

JOCELYN. I'm talking about what's going on inside of you right now, what you're feeling.

ANGELICA. What I'm feeling?

JOCELYN. Yeah, would you like to know?

ANGELICA. You're a trip. You're going to tell me what I'm feeling?

JOCELYN. That's right.

ANGELICA. You're a funny looking fortune teller. You get paid for doing this?

JOCELYN. I'm at the service of the United States of America.

ANGELICA. Yeah, I get that, I can see the uniform and all, but do you get paid?

JOCELYN. I don't go hungry.

ANGELICA. Right. I get it. Okay thanks, thank you, but no thanks. Have a nice day.

JOCELYN. You can walk away on your future just like that?

ANGELICA. Excuse me Miss, I'm not walking away from my future, just from you, okay?

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JOCELYN. No school, no job.

ANGELICA. I didn't say I didn't have a job either. Don't be putting words in my mouth. I work, okay?

JOCELYN. But not today you don't. I'm curious, what do you do?

ANGELICA. I don't work at McDonald's if that's what you're thinking.

JOCELYN. I wasn't thinking that. What do you do?

ANGELICA. I work at a movie theatre.

JOCELYN. Selling popcorn?

ANGELICA. No, I don't sell no popcorn, what do you think? I tear the tickets, okay?

JOCELYN. Sorry. I stand corrected. You happy doing that?

ANGELICA. I like the people I'm working with.

JOCELYN. But are you happy tearing tickets?

ANGELICA. I'm not sad about it.

JOCELYN. You got doubt.

ANGELICA. What?

JOCELYN. Doubt. It's what you're feeling inside. You have doubts about what path to take in order to make your life a more meaningful one. Right now, what I see is that you are unclear.

ANGELICA. Excuse me, you don't know me. What'd you, see? How can you just be saying things like that without knowing a person? That's not right.

JOCELYN. I can say these things about you because I know you.

ANGELICA. Because you know me? You don't know me miss. I've never met you before today. How can you say you know me?

JOCELYN. Young lady, I know you better than you think.

ANGELICA. Please.

JOCELYN. It's scary, isn't it? But it's true. I know that look in your eyes. I've seen it before. You're unsure, full of questions. Don't get me

W.A.C. IRAQ

wrong, questions are a good thing. One should always be asking questions. But at the same time too many questions, especially for someone like yourself, can prove to be a stifling thing. It can cause you a great deal of struggle. It can hold you back and sink you deep into a place where you won't be able to see the light of day. That's what doubt does. It cripples you. Keeps you in one place forever. That's not life, that's death. I know of what I speak.

ANGELICA. Is that so?

JOCELYN. I was there once myself.

ANGELICA. You were?

JOCELYN. Hard to believe right? The way I look. The way I talk. The way I carry myself. But yes, I was there. Just like you are now: In a state of doubt. What if I told you that I can help you be all that you can be?

ANGELICA. What do you mean all that I can be?

JOCELYN. Listen to me. What if I told you that I can help you get the greatest job in the world? A job that will turn you into the strongest, smartest, brightest person, with the best future of all futures, with the chance to be able to change your life for the better. You're smiling at me. You think I'm full of it?

ANGELICA. No, I wasn't thinking that.

JOCELYN. It's okay, I'm used to it. You're thinking: "She sounds like a salesperson or a preacher", right?

ANGELICA. Well...

JOCELYN. I know I do. It's cool, but I'm not trying to sell you anything. I swear to you, no money will be coming out of your pocket. I promise you, right here and right now, you will be all that you can be. You'll have the power.

ANGELICA. Me?

JOCELYN. Yes, you. Remember what I said before, that I know you better than you think?

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ANGELICA. Right.

JOCELYN. You what to know why that is?

ANGELICA. Why?

JOCELYN. Because I was you.

ANGELICA. You were me?

JOCELYN. I was you, standing right here, where you are now. At a train station, just like this one, traveling to nowhere. I stopped. I started to listen. She was dressed, just as I am now, wearing the uniform, with shiny medals that made my eyes blink. She represented the very best of the best, as well as the best of what life had to offer someone like me, someone like you: A life in the United States Military Service. What's your name sweetheart?

ANGELICA. Angelica.

JOCELYN. What's your last name?

ANGELICA. Rivera.

JOCELYN. Angelica Rivera. That's a very strong, pretty name. Latina, right?

ANGELICA. Yeah.

JOCELYN. I'm Cubana.

ANGELICA. That's cool. I'm Dominican.

JOCELYN. That's cool too. You and me are practically sisters.

ANGELICA. I already got a sister.

JOCELYN. You the oldest?

ANGELICA. Yeah.

JOCELYN. Me too. You and I have a lot in common Angelica.

ANGELICA. How you figure that?

JOCELYN. We both like music.

ANGELICA. How do you know I like music? I didn't say anything...

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JOCELYN. The book you're holding under your arm. It has music notes on it. You sing?

ANGELICA. No, I play the violin.

JOCELYN. I'm impressed. So, you must know what a Stradivarius is?

ANGELICA. I've heard of it, sure that's a very special violin.

JOCELYN. I bet you're a prodigy.

ANGELICA. I don't know about being no prodigy.

JOCELYN. You're being modest.

ANGELICA. All I know is I like to play. The violin at the community center I go to is no Stradivarius, but it's mine. The sound that it makes, the vibrations that I feel when I play, how they make me feel inside... the music is both pretty and sad, you know what I'm saying?

JOCELYN. The Stradivarius is the greatest of all violins. Not many have been made.

ANGELICA. No, they're very special.

JOCELYN. Only the very best are allowed to play one. Not that it matters, but are you a citizen of the United States?

ANGELICA. Yeah, I was born here.

JOCELYN. That's good. Angelica, what if I told you that by serving your country you will not only be doing a noble thing, but one day because of this selfless act you may be able to play one of those few and very special Stradivarius violins?

ANGELICA. Now you're talking bullshit.

JOCELYN. What if I'm not? Think about that for one moment. What if it's not bullshit.

ANGELICA. I don't mean no disrespect, but.

JOCELYN. You can just walk away? Just like that. Turn your back on your future? Where, just maybe at the end of your tour of duty, you'll be able to afford to go to one of those fancy type of music conservatories you've been dreaming about going to all your life?

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ANGELICA. Like the one in San Francisco.

JOCELYN. That's right, the San Francisco Conservatory of music, where with your talent and hard work you just might find yourself playing in a big-time orchestra, may be even at Carnegie Hall strumming your very own Stradivarius.

ANGELICA. You're serious about all this, right?

JOCELYN. I am very serious. And all it would take is a little bit of your selfless time. That's all that Uncle Sam is asking. You have heard of Uncle Sam, haven't you?

ANGELICA. Yeah.

JOCELYN. Well, he's holding the door wide open for you. All you got to do is be willing to walk through that door and you can start on your journey to being all that you can be.

ANGELICA. You say that a lot.

JOCELYN. It's the truth and the truth is always worth repeating when it's real and honest.

ANGELICA. But it's dangerous right?

JOCELYN. All risks in life are full of some kind of danger. It's the nature of the beast. It's the ones who are willing to risk and not be afraid that succeed Angelica.

ANGELICA. Have you been to Iraq?

JOCELYN. Yes, I was there for eight months.

ANGELICA. What was it like?

JOCELYN. It was an experience that I will never forget. Changed my life forever.

ANGELICA. Did you fight?

JOCELYN. Yes, I did.

ANGELICA. You mean you actually...

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JOCELYN. Yes, I did.

ANGELICA. I don't know.

JOCELYN. I bet when you play the violin people cry.

ANGELICA. My mom cries when I play.

JOCELYN. I bet she does. I bet she loves you a lot and wants only the best for you and your little sister.

ANGELICA. She works hard for us.

JOCELYN. My mom worked hard for us too. She worked two jobs. You and I have a lot in common, Angelica. I look at you and I see how I once was, unsure, afraid, but he, Uncle Sam, held open that door for me and I was able to walk through and so can you.

ANGELICA. Weren't you afraid of dying?

JOCELYN. You bet I was. I'm human, just like you, but I'm here. I'm not some ghost. Angelica, I got to see the world. I saw places that I only thought existed in my imagination. You read the bible?

ANGELICA. Sometimes at night with my mom.

JOCELYN. That's beautiful. I used to do that with my mother. You know, I got to meet up with people who were actually descended from ancient Biblical cultures.

ANGELICA. You did?

JOCELYN. You want to know what else?

ANGELICA. What?

JOCELYN. I was less than a mile away from the Garden of Eden.

ANGELICA. It's a real place?

JOCELYN. Oh yes, oh Angelica, it's real and I did see it, and it is the most beautiful sight you could behold.

ANGELICA. I'd love to travel the world.

JOCELYN. You can and you will.

ANGELICA. You don't even know me.

W.A.C. IRAQ

JOCELYN. I know you. I was you, remember? You got a boyfriend?

ANGELICA. No.

JOCELYN. Well, maybe like me, you'll find that someone special in a place you'd never thought you'd be, and by being in that place, your life will be forever changed. Can you understand what it is I'm talking about? Have you ever been in love?

ANGELICA. No, not really...I mean, not like I want to get married and get all serious kind of love. Is that the kind of love you're talking about? I mean I would like to fall in love and get married one day.

JOCELYN. You will. You still have your whole life right in front you. I found my true love, because I dared to face the danger and walk through that door. I have two beautiful daughters. That never would have happened without the Army. I want you to take this pamphlet, look it over carefully. Has anyone in your family ever served in the military?

ANGELICA. My Father did back in the day.

JOCELYN. What branch of service?

ANGELICA. Marines.

JOCELYN. Marines? The proud and the few. They're pretty good too. Your father ever tell you stories about the days he spent in the service? What was it like being in the military?

ANGELICA. No, not really.

JOCELYN. That's okay. We're girls. We're not supposed to be wearing these types of uniforms, but the times, like the song says, "are a changing." Your time, your moment is now. It's not about tomorrow. It's about today. It's up to you Angelica. There's my number. That's my office. It's in East Flatbush. You know where that is?

ANGELICA. Yes, it's in Brooklyn.

JOCELYN. That's right. Where do you live?

ANGELICA. Washington Heights.

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JOCELYN. I know the heights well. I'm sure you've been to Fort Tryon Park.

ANGELICA. I love that park. I go there to draw.

JOCELYN. You draw too?

ANGELICA. Yeah.

JOCELYN. A prodigy and an artist. You call me, alright?

ANGELICA. Okay.

JOCELYN. Good. We'll set up an appointment and then the future, your future Angelica Rivera, will be yours to take. It'll belong to you and no one else.

ANGELICA. Thank you.

JOCELYN. No, Angelica, thank you. (*Angelica exits.*)

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