

WHERE'S THE CARNE? (by Diana Yanez)

INT. BUTCHER SHOP - DAY

A typical mom & pop butcher shop in the barrio. MARIO MENENDEZ (50s) in classic butcher apron is moving a large slab of meat from a tray to the display.

He unexpectedly sneezes right onto the meat.

Horrified, he stands there debating what he should do as his wife, ANGELICA MENENDEZ (50s) quietly enters to find him stuck in place.

ANGELICA
What are you doing?

Startled he drops the meat on the floor.

MARIO
Mujer! You know how much this piece of meat costs!? Now we can't sell it. Wonderful.

ANGELICA
Wash it off good, put it back in the display. It's fine.

MARIO
That's terrible, Angelica.

But he smiles to himself, problem solved.

ANGELICA
What? It's not like you sneezed on it.

Now Mario is caught between the truth and a lie.

ANGELICA (CONT'D)
The reason we can't seem to turn a profit in this "carneceria" is not you dropping the meat carelessly on the floor.

MARIO
What is it then?

ANGELICA
Your children.

MARIO
My children?!

Mario looks lovingly at a large Sears-style portrait of 5 Chihuahuas hanging prominently in the shop.

MARIO (CONT'D)
My Chihuahuas? You know I promised
their mother I would feed them
fresh meat every day.

ANGELICA
Their mother was a bitch.

Insulted, Mario washes the meat.

MARIO
Why you have to say it that way?

ANGELICA
For a bunch of dogs the size of
footballs they eat like an entire
defensive line.

MARIO
It's not my dogs. It's the gangs
in this neighborhood. They are the
reason our insurance rates are
through the roof.

ANGELICA
Thank God, we got Roberto out of
here when we did.

Mario is struck. There's something he hasn't told her.

MARIO
Mama, sit down.

ANGELICA
Sit down? There's a ton of things
to do.

MARIO
Sit down.

ANGELICA
You're scaring me.

MARIO
It's nothing bad. Well, it's not
so bad.
(taking a deep breath)
Roberto is coming back home.

ANGELICA

What? Dios Mio, what's happened?!
Is he okay?!

MARIO

Calma, calma. He is fine. He just
doesn't want to do it anymore.

ANGELICA

Que? (beat) School?

MARIO

He hates studying business. He's
depressed. He wants to come back
and start over again.

ANGELICA

For what, Mario? So he can hang
around here and get involved with
gangs? Or get in trouble because
he looked at a girl the wrong way?
No!

MARIO

Angelica, think about it. He wants
to study art, he always has.

ANGELICA

Art is a hobby!

MARIO

Bueno, that may be... to us.

ANGELICA

Why can't he study his hobbies
after he finishes business school?

MARIO

Because it's not a hobby to him.
And he hates business. You
remember hate? Think about how you
feel about my babies?

ANGELICA

(staring at Chihuahuas
portrait)

That... I can understand.

Mario returns to the meat counter.

ANGELICA (CONT'D)

Why didn't he just stay there and
study art where we sent him.

MARIO
At the ITT Technical Institute?

ANGELICA
Well, where is he going to study
then?

MARIO
I don't know. He says he is
figuring it out.

ANGELICA
Figuring out what? How we can get
more into debt at his expense?

Mario stops washing the meat and still holding it, confronts
her.

MARIO
Angelica, what you should be asking
yourself is why he is coming to me,
his father, and not his mother
about this.

ANGELICA
I know it's ridiculous because you
don't know anything.

MARIO
I know a lot. And especially about
the most important thing: the
heart.
(beat)
And that's not because I'm a
butcher.

ANGELICA
I know about the heart.
(softening)
I know for a fact that the heart
doesn't make the best decisions.

MARIO
How do you know that?

ANGELICA
Well, there's this place.
(beat)
And then there's you.

MARIO

You don't fool me. You play this game with me that you don't like being the wife of the butcher and that you have to put up with me. But we have fun. I know you love me and you love Roberto.

Angelica begins to cave. She doesn't answer for fear of showing her weakness.

MARIO (CONT'D)

I even know you don't hate my Chihuahuas so much. I saw what you did for Frito last night.

ANGELICA

(surprised)
You did?

MARIO

I saw you take Frito for a walk last night when he was begging. That was so sweet of you to let me sleep.

Mario kisses Angelica and she smiles sweetly as he walks away with the meat.

Out of Angelica's line of sight, he secretly throws the meat in the garbage.

In turn Angelica has pulled out her phone and when she knows Mario is out of earshot, she makes a discreet call.

ANGELICA

(whispers)
Hello, Downtown Dog Rescue? Did you find a Chihuahua tied to your front door this morning?