

# Antinomy

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Translated by Charlotte Baker (under the supervision of Dr. Erica Cobb)

(Based on his stories “Confirmation” and “Antinomy”)

## An introduction

(All of the roles of this production are performed by one actress and one actor, distinguishing between characters with their performances. When the action requires it, whoever is in charge of the secondary character brings in a small table and a chair)

## Scene I

*(Carlos, approximately thirty years old, enters the empty stage. He moves as though he is nervously looking for something. He makes up his mind and speaks towards the wing)*

**Carlos**: Good afternoon! Hello? I need antibiotics. For my fever. It’s already over 100 degrees

*(The Pharmacist enters from the side Carlos was walking towards)*

**Pharmacist**: Any trouble sleeping? How many hours would you say you get a night?

**Carlos**: Look, it’s a bacterial ulcer in my larynx or pharynx, I don’t know which... but it hurts...

**Pharmacist**: That’ll certainly keep you from sleeping. Are you taking anything to help?

**Carlos**: Just give me a generic antibiotic please

**Pharmacist**: *(hands him a bottle of pills)* These could knock out an elephant, just remember to never take more than two a day...

*(The Pharmacist leaves)*

**Carlos**: (to himself) Now all I need is a coffee shop...somewhere I can wash down this entire bottle

*(He walks around repeating this, he looks indecisive)*

**Carlos**: I've always found it difficult to talk to the people I'm closest to. Baring your soul to a loved one is costly. Talking to strangers is infinitely easier; it requires less investment. Strangers don't try to solve your problems. When exposing your heart to a total unknown, you avoid expensive phone bills and unsolicited advice. It's easier to talk like this, alone. I don't have to concentrate on fine tuning a few words or using the most eloquent, politically correct turns of phrase. But it's more than that. Do you know how difficult it is to think of the exact opposite of what you want to say or mean? Searching for the perfect contradiction? When I was a child, my *abuela* used to say...

**Abuela**: Carlitos, I'm going to buy you a gift, as you've been such a good boy. What would you like? A teddy bear? A toy train?

**Carlos**: I want a teddy bear! I'll carry it around, and cuddle it, and snuggle it while I sleep

**Abuela**: Alright, my grandbaby, tomorrow I will bring you a toy train. (Exits)

**Carlos**: After that, I spent so much time wishing that my train set was a teddy bear. Every time I played with it I wished it were a teddy. Did my grandma not love me? Why had she betrayed me? She couldn't understand why I was so sullen...

*(The aunt enters)*

**Aunt**: There's my favorite nephew, come now, come to your auntie... Remind me, what was it you wanted for your birthday, my little angel?

**Carlos**: A bicycle!

**Aunt**: That's right! And I found you the most beautiful set. We can play together now. Sound good?

**Carlos**: I guess?

**Aunt**: (sits on the floor and takes out chess pieces) Okay so, the rook moves side to side and front to back, the bishop moves diagonally, and the pawns move one square at a time

**Carlos**: (excitedly) Got it, the rook moves side to side and front to back, the bishop moves diagonally, and the pawns move one square at a time

(The aunt exits)

**Carlos:** (To the audience) I had wanted to go to the playground so I could eat *canchita* with the other kids while my aunt watched me play. Instead, my afternoons with her were spent devising strategic moves to checkmate her king.

(The Godmother enters)

**Godmother:** How's my favorite godson today? Deserving of a gift for being so good no doubt. Is there anything would you like?

**Carlos:** A bicycle

**Godmother:** Perfect! Tomorrow I will bring you a shiny red fire truck with a working ladder!  
(Exits)

**Carlos:** (To the audience) I could never understand why every time I spoke, people only heard the opposite. I said no and people heard yes... I said yes and people heard no. Why was it so difficult to get what I wanted? So in order to be understood, I resorted to trial and error. I figured, if I wanted chocolate ice cream, I would say strawberry. If I wanted strawberry, I would say chocolate. But if I wanted one of the less conventional flavors, say pistachio, *crema del cielo*, or rainbow sherbert, I couldn't order it without doing some mental math beforehand. And so I started to devise my system; lemon sorbet was mint chocolate chip, coffee was *dulce de leche*, and rocky road was butter pecan. But I still couldn't crack the code. My words came out distorted, it was as if they lost their meaning the instant they left my mouth. At school, the greatest challenge was simply saying my name.

(Teacher enters)

**Teacher:** Name?

**Carlos:** Carlos Martínez

**Teacher:** Right, Felipe Corona

**Carlos:** (To the audience) But my name is Carlos Martínez...

**Teacher:** Remind me again of your first and last name.

**Carlos:** Carlos... Martínez

**Teacher:** Ernesto Sosa? That's strange, you aren't on my list. There must be some mistake

**Carlos:** (To the audience) And so I had to try combination after combination of first and last names until two finally clicked into place and when spoken aloud perfectly matched my identity: Carlos Martínez

**Teacher:** Your name again?

**Carlos:** Roberto Gonzales

**Teacher:** Ah, Carlos Martínez here you are... very good...

**Carlos:** (To the audience) From then on I grew accustomed to being Roberto Gonzales in order to be Carlos Martínez. I thought as if I were Roberto. I told all my friends I was Roberto, and they all heard me say Carlos.

I also learned to be a Gonzalez, that is, a Gonzalez in order to be a Martínez.

But there were still responses I hadn't accounted for.

**Teacher:** Carlos Martínez

**Carlos:** Present

**Teacher:** Absent again, I don't understand how Martínez can afford to miss another day

**Carlos:** (to the audience) I should have started lying right then and there. I hadn't missed a single day and yet I was about to get kicked out of school for truancy. I only decided to start lying after they notified my parents of my multiple absences, anything to avoid punishment.

I began lying through my teeth.

Truth became lies and lies became truth.

**Teacher:** Carlos Martínez

**Carlos:** Absent

**Teacher:** I am very pleased with your behavior, you have improved immensely

**Carlos:** (to the audience) This was the first lie of many in my universe of falsehoods that I created in order to convey the truth

**Teacher:** What is the coldest place on Earth?

**Carlos:** The Sahara Desert

Teacher: What is the world's largest mammal?

Carlos: A mosquito

Teacher: When did World War II start?

Carlos: 3000 BC

Teacher: What continent is Argentina part of?

Carlos: Antarctica

Teacher: Very good. What sport does Lionel Messi play?

Carlos: Table tennis

Teacher: Excellent

Carlos: I created a dictionary in my mind to keep me from further misunderstandings.

But sometimes I found myself in a maze of contradictions and I couldn't find my way out. I turned right and left and still couldn't see an exit. I couldn't figure out if Booth shot Lincoln or if Lincoln shot Booth. I was completely lost. Was don Quijote the fat one and was Sancho Panza the thin one? Or was it the other way around?

I didn't know if I liked *arroz con leche* or if I hated it. Did I prefer my sandwiches with soup or salad? When it came to soccer, I didn't know which side to root for. I took to avoiding matches altogether in fear of someone witnessing my ignorance. But when the World Cup came around it was unavoidable, which meant I was surrounded by other fans. I couldn't figure out when to cheer. I found myself shouting: "that's offside!" for the wrong team more times than I'd care to admit

Sure this may seem funny to you, but if I'm not paying attention, I could order cake as a main course and a burger for dessert.

(speak to one side, as if talking to someone)

Bring me two bowls of ice cream for my main course, and later could I get some ribs with french fries? And I'd also like carbonated coffee to not drink. That order effectively got me *arroz con pollo*, a soda, salad and a chocolate lava cake

I've had to experiment, submit myself to trial and error. What choice did I have? The alternative would be like falling into a quicksand, bogged down by misunderstandings. I've had to create a

whole new language; memorize thousands of antonyms. Cat is dog, guitar is drum, ear is nose, corn is wheat. After I'd worked out most of these language puzzles, I had to figure out what I was going to do about more complicated vocabulary. I originally wanted to study law, but how could I ever employ all of that judicial jargon? Medicine seemed easier.

(enter doctor)

**Doctor**: Alright, let's see you diagnose this patient's neurological condition

**Carlos**: Diarrhea

**Doctor**: Very good, and what type of inflammation is it?

**Carlos**: There's shit in his head

**Doctor**: Meningitis is correct. Congratulations, you've passed!

**Carlos**: (to the audience) It wasn't easy, with each new term, there were new words and I felt like a walking contradiction, a practical joke, but all humor was lost on me as I felt increasingly lonely and incomprehensible.

**Doctor**: I see that you've already defended your thesis? Could you tell us a little bit about your research?

**Carlos**: I investigated indigestion and how to treat it with mushroom extract on that webby skin between the two smallest toes on your left foot.

**Doctor**: And why do you think these post surgical cardiac complications arose after the transplant?

**Carlos**: Because we thoroughly disinfected the scalpel

**Doctor**: Very good, it is the rhythm that creates the blockage. You've passed again. Well done! Doctor, tell me your name so I can mark it down

**Carlos**: Roberto Gonzales

**Doctor**: Carlos Martínez, congratulations (exits)

**Carlos**: (to the audience) And thus, I embarked on the greatest time of my life. Having fully embraced this new language, the fog that had surrounded me since childhood seemed to have cleared. The sun shone brightly and like a cherry on top of a sundae, love bloomed. Silvana was a vision. Of course, I had to call her Alicia so that she would hear me call her Silvana... We were

building a future together. I started allowing myself to feel this wholly new emotion, not quite the sensation of fluttering butterflies in my stomach that I knew was supposed to come with being in love, but perhaps in my parallel language it could be described as “hummingbirds in my pituitary gland.”

(Enter Silvana)

**Silvana**: *Hola* Carlos...

**Carlos**: You look so ugly, I hate you

**Silvana**: You always say the sweetest things... Are we off to the cinema or the theater today?

**Carlos**: The theater... (to the audience) we always saw the best films together

**Silvana**: Right now they're showing a comedy and a drama, which would you prefer?

**Carlos**: Drama

(to the audience) I remember that day, hearing her laugh, it was louder than all the others in the theater, including my own. Everything was going well for me at work, plus I was well regarded by everyone in my life. I was a doting son, a trustworthy neighbor, an honest friend, and an ethical doctor. Asking Silvana to marry me would be my crowning achievement.

Alicia, I just wanted to tell you that I never want to speak to you ever again

**Silvana**: What's up?

**Carlos**: Messi scored a goal against Brazil, he got past five players, bending it just like Beckham

**Silvana**: Aww, you're so romantic

**Carlos**: I think they should hire a new coach for the national team. And now I'm going to go buy a book written by Kendall Jenner

**Silvana**: Yes, of course!

**Carlos**: I hate you

**Silvana**: I love you too, I want us to get married in a church, not just a courthouse...

**Carlos**: (to the audience) And so I anxiously counted down the days to our wedding and the joy I would feel living my life by Silvana's side. Everything would change after our wedding day. It would be like in those fairy tales from childhood. Beauty, who saw the true nature of the beast

and was able to break his curse. Silvana would be my Beauty and I her magically transformed Beast.

(Silvana and Carlos are side by side, holding hands)

**Offstage Voice:** Silvana Capuzzi, do you take Carlos Martínez to be your lawfully wedded husband?

**Silvana:** I do

**Offstage Voice:** Carlos Martínez, do you take Silvana Capuzzi to be your lawfully wedded wife?

**Carlos:** (moves away from Silvana and speaks to the audience) My lungs were filled with air, I felt like I was floating through space, like my feet weren't touching the ground. I was free, finished with lying, done with contradictions. It was time to be honest, and finally say what I felt. (returns to Silvana's side). I do.

(Silvana moves away from him, she looks at him horrified for a few seconds, and leaves running)

(Whispers play in the background)

**Carlos:** She left and never returned. She was my everything and I had carelessly exposed her to the ridicule of everyone we knew. I entered a period of great confusion, losing all sense of time and direction, unsure whether I had spoken truth or lie.

Apart from that, I was still a doctor, I had patients to care for, but I started misdiagnosing. One day everything came crashing down

(the patient enters)

**Patient:** What do I have, Doctor? Did you find anything?

**Carlos:** Your case isn't very complex, I'm going to recommend a specific diet and some exercises...

**Patient:** How dare you? In this day and age, have you not heard of Me Too? You're going to be canceled so fast, you pervert.

**Carlos:** (to the audience) She filed a lawsuit that led to my suspension. I repeated the medical advice I had given the patient before a judge and she heard me say the same thing my patient had. From my own lips they heard me say that my patient was hysterical from lack of orgasm and that she needed a properly good fuck.

I found myself without options and without a future. In a Hail Mary attempt, I went crawling to Silvana, begging her to take me back. After all, my misfortune began with our estrangement. Perhaps I would miraculously find my way back through her.

I fell prostrate before her, believing that true love could conquer all.

(Enter Silvana)

**Silvana**: Alright Carlos, what did you want to say to me?

**Carlos**: So, I'm a little nervous, can I quickly use your bathroom before we talk? (To the audience) I felt like I was going to piss myself from nerves, but she heard me say that I needed to sleep for a while because I was tired.

**Silvana**: Fine, there's the sofa, but just this once

**Carlos**: Her tenderness confirmed to me that she was, without a doubt, the woman I wanted to spend the rest of my life with. She was someone with whom I could be transparent. If she wanted me to do it there, then by God that's where I would do it. And so I pissed on her sofa.

**Silvana**: What are you doing? You're an animal! You're a neanderthal and I'm the idiot who loves you

**Carlos**: I love you too!

**Silvana**: Yeah, obviously you hate me, thank you for finally admitting it **Carlos**:

No, I love you, I adore you, please understand me, I need you!

**Silvana**: I hate you! I never want to see you again you son of a bitch (exits)

(Carlos stops to think for a few seconds)

**Carlos**: I had lost both my job and the love of my life. I was the laughingstock of all my family and friends. Everyone turned their backs on me after what I'd done to Silvana. They all thought I was a piece of shit.

(Takes the pill bottle from the pharmacy out and begins to look at it)

**Carlos**: (To himself) That's it, I want to sleep and never wake up. One pill to sleep through the night, two pills to knock myself out– the entire bottle for a quick and painless death. My life will be nothing but a distant, fragile memory, erased by the sands of time. This is the only way to free myself from this prison of lies. I'll walk into a coffee shop and quietly take pill after pill until the

bottle is empty. I'll wait for death to arrive slowly and serenely. I'll take them with tea and lemon, so obviously I'll be ordering coffee with a slice of lime. (Sits down and speaks to the wing) Waitress!!

(Enter a young woman, María) **María:**

What can I get for you, Sir?

**Carlos:** Coffee with lime, please.

**María:** Oh, coffee with lime sounds horrible

**Carlos:** Oh right, I'm sorry, ah, tea with lemon... wait can you understand me? **María:**

Of course... one tea with lemon coming up (exits)

**Carlos:** (to the audience) Tea with lemon, tea with lemon... She understood me: tea with lemon. How can I express the euphoria of that moment? To feel the meaning of my words, their truth. I could taste them, feel their physical weight on my tongue...

(Enter María, she serves him)

**María:** Any sugar or sweetener with that?

**Carlos:** Sweetener please

**María:** Sure, here you go (she offers him a small packet) **Carlos:**

No, sorry I wanted sugar, that's why I said sweetener

**María:** If you wanted sugar, why not just say sugar?

**Carlos:** (to the audience) When she threw my words back at me, they sounded almost virginal coming from her mouth. There was a whole new world to discover. Regardless of how I had pronounced words in the past, it was worth uttering them all again and again, one by one, if only to hear the truth of them.

**Carlos:** (to María) The sun?

**María:** It rises in the East and sets in the West?

**Carlos:** The sky?

**María:** Blue, although right now it's cloudy

**Carlos:** Water?

**María:** Oh sorry, I'll bring you some right now... (leaves)

**Carlos:** (to the audience) I should take the pills now and forever sleep. (To himself) ...Oh Carlos, you coward, how can you even contemplate leaving after being understood for the first time ever. Are you truly unable to face the unknown?

(enter María with the water)

**Carlos:** (To himself) What if just this once, you said exactly what you wanted, without worrying what people want to hear or how it will be interpreted... go ahead, take a chance

**María:** Sorry to be so forward, but I'm going to give you some advice. Don't play games

**Carlos:** (He blushes and laughs) who said anything about games? I was just talking to myself, offering myself a bit of advice

**María:** Advice? My advice is to simply say what you mean and mean what you say.

**Carlos:** (He watches her and after a few seconds he holds out the bottle of pills) Would you mind tossing these for me?

**María:** Don't you need them? I have your water right here

**Carlos:** No, throw them away, I assure you I don't need them

**María:** If you say so...

**Carlos:** (Takes the glass in his hand and looks at it) You know what? This water tastes like a word come to life. Do you know what that means?

**María:** It's just water, don't overthink it. The beauty of words is in their simplicity. They mean what they say and say what they mean.

**Carlos:** But water is joy (smiles)

**María:** (to herself) How can a tiny glass of water bring him such joy? But then it's brought me equal joy. He walked in with such sadness... I saw him and thought to myself: poor thing, how handsome, but how sad. Now, look at his beautiful smile... I like people who smile. People who are content with just a simple breakfast and a glass of water. (to Carlos) I'll be back with your check in a bit.

**Carlos:** I'll be waiting, there's something else I want to say to you

**María**: How intriguing, but remember: don't overthink it.

(She leaves)

**Carlos**: (To the audience) I have never tasted more delicious water. It tastes like hope...

(Slowly picks up the water while the lights gently dim until complete darkness)

## **Scene II**

(When the lights come back on the empty stage, María enters, she's around 27 years old and she speaks off to the wings)

**María**: What did you say? Please, just check again... (speaking to the audience) I've always enjoyed fulfilling my civic duties. In school, I always ran for student council. This is why I always vote. I never miss an election. That is, until today, right here, right now. (Speaks off to one of the wings) What did you say? Please, I'm begging you, check it again...

(While she is speaking, the Election official enters with a small table, a chair, and ballot box and he sits)

**María**: This cannot be possible, the name is Arredondo...

**Election official**: Alright, here it clearly states María Aredondo

**María**: But my last name is Arredondo, two r's, not one, A-rre-don-do, A-rre-don-do, not Aredondo...

**Election official**: As I've said, I'll let it slide and allow you to vote as your date of birth and address match. So why don't you just go vote and stop arguing?

**María**: But my name is María Arredondo

**Election official**: Well here, it's Aredondo, so unless you make some sort of appeal to modify the voter registration list, your name is Aredondo.

**María**: But it's not! Clearly there's been some kind of mistake

**Election official**: I don't know why it matters to you if it's one "r" or two.

**María**: Because you've misspelled my last name

**Election official**: As you've repeatedly said, but believe me, it's very unlikely that the computer would make a mistake

**María**: Listen, my father's name is Tomás Arredondo and my grandfather was Venancio Arredondo... Do you think I'm making this shit up?

**Election official**: I have no idea and I really don't care. You'll have to go to the Central Registry to fill out your claim. For now, I'll let you vote, under observation

**María**: What do you mean under observation? Observe me how?

**Election official**: Well, Ms. Arredondo, how do I know for sure that you are the Arredondo on the list, and not someone pretending to be Arredondo?

**María**: Why would I? What would be the point?

**Election official**: Sometimes people buy votes, so until this is cleared up...

**María**: What do you take me for? Selling my vote? I've never been more offended in my life...

**Election official**: Ms. Arredondo, please, look at how long the line is behind you...

**María**: A-R-R... A-R-R

**Election official**: As you've said, repeatedly, and as I've said, just go vote.

(María goes to cast her vote, the official stops her)

**Election official**: You'll need to hand me your ballot

**María**: (She gives it to him) Fine...

**Election official**: I have to mark it first (writes on the envelope) Alright then...

(María places her ballot in the box, the Election official stamps a document)

**María**: What's that stamp? What does it say?

**Election official**: Identity to be confirmed

**María**: Okay, but can you at least mark somewhere on there that my last name is Arredondo?

**Election official**: You'll have to do that in the registry office. For now, I need you to just be okay with it as there's nothing else I can do...

(María leaves, talking to herself)

**María:** I can't believe this! What do they take me for? Honestly, the things I have to put up with... At first I assumed the poll worker was just lazy or being pissy, forced to suffer the interminable monotony of his job, underpaid, overworked and therefore lacking any attention to detail. But then it dawned on me that this might be something more serious. What if the system is unwilling to recognize its mistake?

(Enter the father)

**Father:** Calm down and tell me what's going on

**María:** Don't you find it absurd that someone would try to buy my vote?

**Father:** Oh I doubt it's that bad... it's probably just an administrative error, don't take it to heart

**María:** An administrative error? More like an administrative nightmare

**Father:** There, there, I'm sure it's just a typo

**María:** A typo? That's terrifying, a single typo could obliterate our entire family history!

**Father:** Well now you're just exaggerating!

**María:** Exaggerating? Are you mad? Are you an Arredondo or not?

**Father:** While I thank God every day that I am who I am and that I am a true Arredondo, if this happened to me, I wouldn't overreact so violently... I would simply go to the appropriate office first thing tomorrow morning and have the error corrected. I wouldn't be freaking out or say that our entire family history has been obliterated

**María:** But dad, I am an Arredondo, just like you. And even though I only met him a few times, Grandpa told me thousands of stories from your childhood. And he was an Arredondo, like his father, and his father's father, all the way back to the beginning of time.

**Father:** My old man? He never even mentioned our ancestors

**María:** If I could climb our family tree, branch by branch, generation after generation, I know I would reach Adam himself

**Father:** *Mi pobre tonta*, what is this nonsense? Have you considered the possibility that maybe your great grandfather or great great grandfather misspelled it?

**María:** What?

**Father:** Someone could have copied it down wrong on some baptismal certificate

**María:** What are you saying? That you aren't an Arredondo?

**Father:** Of course I'm an Arredondo, but I can't say for certain if that's actually how it's spelled

**María:** What are you saying?

**Father:** That I'm done talking about this. If you want to look into it that's fine by me

**María:** Fine, I'll go to the registry office tomorrow to clear all this up

**Father:** Good luck, I really do hope you get it all sorted. But it does seem odd in this day and age of computers and technology that there'd be an error in the system (Father exits)

**María:** How could my father not even try to defend his name? We are Arredondos. And Arredondos are who we are. It's more than just a name. It's everyone who came before us, it's the places we've lived, the stories we've told. Being an Arredondo fills me with pride.

(The employee enters while María speaks)

**Employee:** Aredondo

**María:** Arredondo, with two r's

**Employee:** Whatever. I just need to take a couple photos first, please turn to the left (she turns and he takes a photo), now to your right (she turns and he takes a photo) and finally straight ahead (she turns and he takes a photo). Alright, and now sign here to request a new ID

**María:** I don't want a new ID, I just want you to fix the spelling of my last name, it was wrong in the voter registration in the last election

**Employee:** Not to worry, this happens all the time...

**María:** Yeah maybe, but it is very important to me that my name appears correctly

**Employee:** (Types information into the computer) Well, according to your file number, your name appears to be Aredondo. You are María Aredondo

**María:** But it's Arredondo, with two r's

**Employee:** That's what I said, Aredondo

**María:** A-rre-dondo, A-rre-dondo, can't you hear the difference?

**Employee:** Look, miss, I've only worked here for a month, I wasn't the person who created the file, and I wasn't the person who put your information into the system either, so please calm down

**María:** I'm sorry, forgive me, I'm not mad at you

**Employee:** (Typing) Okay, María A-rre-dondo... A-rre-dondo, two r's

**María:** Correct, Arredondo

**Employee:** Alright, next?

**María:** Sorry sir, is it fixed now?

**Employee:** (Without looking up) You have to come back in 15 days to get your new registration, then you have to take it to the IT department and they'll cross reference it with the voter registration and make all the corrections.

**María:** Thank you...

(Employee exits)

**María:** Well that was a bit of a headache, but at least it's fixed now and I can return to my daily life... Oh here comes my bus (she makes a signal as if to hail the bus, then looks at her wallet and stops signalling) Oh I'm such an idiot, I left my old ID in the Registry office. Back I go. It's not like one can walk around without documentation, even less so when it's not showing your correct name

(Enter the employee)

**María:** Excuse me sir...

**Employee:** You again? What can I do for you this time?

**María:** My old identification papers, I think I left them here...

**Employee:** You're the one who came here to fix a spelling mistake?

**María:** Yes, A-rre-dondo

**Employee:** Uh-huh, Aredondo to Arredondo. A new file was created

**María**: Yes, but until the new ID arrives, I think I should carry the old one, you know, to identify myself if needed

**Employee**: The paperwork I gave you should be more than sufficient...

**María**: Paperwork? You didn't give me any paperwork.

**Employee**: I'm sure I must have given you something

**María**: Well I'm telling you that you didn't give me anything

**Employee**: I should have given it to you

**María**: No...

**Employee**: Are you sure?

**María**: Yes...

**Employee**: Look, my shift just ended and I need to go, perhaps you should just go speak to my superior... (exits)

**María**: I can't believe he just left, without even trying to solve my problem. Here I am stuck with my dubious identity, without a single document to back me up. So I go looking for his boss in the hope that he would be able to resolve this misunderstanding. I mean, you'd assume that the guy at the top should be the smartest, most capable. Surely capable enough to resolve this issue.

(The boss enters)

**Boss**: How can I help you, Miss?

**María**: Okay, so I came in to rectify a spelling mistake on my voter registration, but they kept the old one and now I don't have any current identification to carry in the meantime

**Boss**: That's alright, they'll have given you a temporary certificate, no?

**María**: Well, that's the thing...

**Boss**: Who was it that assisted you?

**María**: I didn't get his name, but he sort of looked like all the other employees here...

**Boss**: Look at your certificate, it has the name of the employee who assisted you

**María**: But that's the problem, he didn't give me a certificate

**Boss:** Well, the first stage of the process is completed when you are given the certificate

**María:** But again, no one gave me anything...

**Boss:** When was this transaction?

**María:** Fifteen minutes ago, but the employee already left

**Boss:** Fifteen minutes ago? Ten minutes ago all of the files were taken to the central office, they were just signed out. Everything will be back in two weeks

**María:** Maybe I could go get it myself...

**Boss:** I wouldn't recommend it, as there are thousands of files to go through, it would take forever to find yours. Come back in fifteen days and we'll sort out your new ID then. Right now, just give me your name and sign this withdrawal form.

**María:** Arredondo, María

**Boss:** And I need the number on your ID

**María:** Thirty-three, thirty-two, thirty-two, thirty-three

**Boss:** Thirty-three, what a good gambling number (He takes out a piece of paper and hands it to her, she goes to take it and then he keeps it for himself)

**Boss:** One moment (takes the paper, stamps it, then gives it back. María takes it and reads it)

**María:** Why does it say to be confirmed?

**Boss:** It's nothing personal, but I can't give you proof that you are who you say you are (The boss exits)

**María:** Confirmation, again that cursed word, that term... Confirmation, how can this be? It's not like I want to get into a fight. I was so sure that the system would fix the error and everything would go back to how it was before. I just wish I could get the whole thing settled. Now I have to go back to work and call the personnel manager...

(Personnel Manager enters)

**Personnel Manager:** Aredondo

**María:**

It's Arredondo

**Personnel Manager:** I need to update your information for our audit, it's routine procedure

**María:** Very well.

**Personnel Manager:** When we filled out your profile in the system it autocorrected your name to Aredondo.

**María:** Come on, I've worked here for years, everyone knows that my name is Arredondo

**Personnel Manager:** Arredondo, I already know that you're an Arredondo, but you have to understand that everything we do is supervised and corrected by the system. And even though I know you're an Arredondo...

**María:** Obviously

(The Personnel Manager hands her a payroll to sign)

**Personnel Manager:** Please sign this...

**María:** But here it says Aredondo, it should be Arredondo, with two r's

**Personnel Manager:** Yes, I know, but until this is resolved in the database, I need you to sign it with one r. If you don't, we won't be able to deposit your wage or complete your contributions

**María:** I'll sign it because I need to get paid, but before I sign it, I want to reiterate that I am an Arredondo

**Personnel Manager:** Of course...

**María:** (Speaking in a loud voice while signing) A-rre-dondo, A-rre-dondo, I am María A-rre-dondo

**Personnel Manager:** Got it (takes the payroll and stamps it) Confirmed!...

(The Personnel Manager takes the payroll and exits)

**María:** I feel so dirty, like I've sold my soul for a paycheck. I've acquiesced, I've admitted to being someone other than myself. I have to go back to the Registry office, I have to right this wrong

(Enter the Employee)

**Employee:** Arredondo you said? Álvarez, Amado, Antúnez, Aparicio, Aredondo, but no Arredondo, then Atanasio, Atencio...

**María:** The Aredondo should be me

**Employee:** But didn't you just say Arredondo?

**María:** Yes, the missing R has been the issue

**Employee:** No, no it's not you, it's a man named Roberto Aredondo... How odd! How long has it been since the transfer?

**María:** Two weeks.

**Employee:** Do you have the transfer certificate?

(María hands it to him)

**Employee:** Oh good, confirmation, that's where we should've started, let's see, search by number. Right, you're in luck! Your identity has already been confirmed, now I'll just record and certify it.

(He hands the document back)

**María:** How? Wait, this says María de los Ángeles Redondo... But my name isn't Redondo and where did de los Ángeles come from? I'm Arredondo, Arredondo, do you understand?

**Employee:** Please, there's no need to shout... we've confirmed your identity: you are María de los Ángeles Redondo...

**María:** Let me repeat myself, that is not my name! Where did the "Ángeles" come from? And Redondo, that's worse than Aredondo!

**Employee:** An error of this magnitude is impossible, case closed... I mean if it were just one wrong letter... but there's no way the system could have made this kind of error

**María:** But at first it *was* just one letter

**Employee:** I don't know about that, the only thing I can recommend is that you consult a lawyer. The system blocked any new changes through the standard procedures and is forcing me to close the file.

(The Employee leaves)

**María:**

Anyone with half a brain would see that since my father is Tomás Arredondo, there's no possible way I could be a Redondo. I felt almost obligated to retain a lawyer, even though I've never liked court. The asphyxiating hallways seem to crush people— people begging to be heard, begging for justice. But my case is clear cut, there's no way my lawyer would have to present more than two or three short briefs. It would be impossible for the court to miss the injustice and cruelty in my case. They'd have to see reason. Little did I know that the law too would let me down...

(The Lawyer enters)

**Lawyer:** Your case may seem simple, but I assure you it is anything but. They repeatedly told you that you had to have confirmation Ms. Redondo...

**María:** Arredondo, two r's, A-rre-don-do

**Lawyer:** Exactly, all of the employees at the Registry agreed that you said María A-rre-dondo. So, in writing, it was María A Redondo, María A period Redondo, and clearly the computer wanted to fill in the initial too, and the most common combination is María de los Ángeles. Are you following, Ms. Redondo? Your case is a conundrum. Is there anyone willing to testify on your behalf who could corroborate your true identity? And it can't be anyone you listed at the beginning, not the company's Personnel Manager nor any of its employees. You were fired with cause and without compensation, charged with falsifying information for which they are now seeking damages... Your file is the main piece of evidence against you, as it looks like you lied on purpose. Frankly, your reputation is in shambles, your coworkers have testified that you are a liar, and even your closest friends describe you as less than forthright. Is there anyone else who can offer an alternative testimony? Anyone who can prove that your last name is Arredondo instead of Redondo, Ms. Redondo?

**María:** My father, Tomás Arredondo.

**Lawyer:** Very well

(The Lawyer exits)

**María:** Surely my father won't refuse me, he too is proud of our family name. He's the reason I care so much about my heritage, my history, the traditions of the neighborhood in which I was raised, and all the generations of my ancestors. As his daughter, I am the future of our family... if I were to have a son I would demand that he retain his maternal last name, Arredondo. I would want to impart to him all of the pride that comes with being an Arredondo.

(The Father Enters)

**Father:** Your honor, I am Tomás Arredondo, and I am here as an honorable citizen to offer my testimony. I am the father of María and recognize her as my daughter. However, I cannot confirm with complete certainty that her last name is Arredondo because I cannot confirm that our family tree has been recorded correctly over the years. Surely you have seen how the old records of births and baptisms have suffered alterations. While historically, my family has registered ourselves as Arredondo, is this enough to contradict our modern and exact record-keeping system? I fear my daughter has completely overreacted to what is, more or less, a single r. I cannot help but wonder if all of this fuss is truly necessary. May I approach the bench? If possible, I would very much like to continue using the last name Arredondo, with 2 Rs. However, if your ruling does not allow for this, I will take the case no further and simply trust in your impartiality and wisdom.

(Father exits)

**María:** I had never felt so abandoned. In that moment, I hated my father. Later I would come to pity him, the poor thing was surely frightened. Understanding that at his age to change your last name meant changing what your friends had called you for decades. But it hurt. Of course I loved him, though I could barely meet his eye. And it was then that words of the judge rang out with the blow of his gavel.

(The Judge enters)

**Judge:** As there is no real evidence that you are an Arredondo, Ms. Redondo, you have left me no other option but to declare that you are not who you say you are. You are now officially María de los Ángeles Redondo. In addition I rule that you must compensate your former employer for the deliberate and intentional concealment of your identity and for the falsification of public documents. Case closed. (Bangs the gavel. Exits)

**María:** As I couldn't afford the fine, they seized all of my belongings. I found myself alone and unemployed. It was then that I decided to pick myself up and start over. At that very moment, when everything seemed lost, a sign appeared. A small help wanted sign in this very coffee shop.

(María puts on the coffee shop's apron)

**María:** And I began to work. While waiting tables, I found hope, a new start. I began to embody the lie of my new name, making new friends. Eventually my new coworkers came to love me as María A period. At the beginning, it was difficult, but day by day it got easier. In gratitude to the owners of this coffee shop, I worked hard to make their business a success. I've helped the coffee shop grow. I've given it new energy. A cute little plant here, a knick-knack there ... oh a customer just walked in...

(Carlos enters)

**María:**

What can I get for you, Sir?

**Carlos:** Coffee with lime

**María:** Oh, coffee with lime sounds horrible

(Carlos appears surprised)

**Carlos:** Oh I'm sorry, I meant tea with lemon... wait, can you understand me?

**María:** Of course... one tea with lemon coming up (exits)

**María:** This customer seemed strange to me. When he spoke to me about the sky, I told him it was light-blue since it isn't raining. When he talked to me about the sun, I told him that it rises in the East and sets in the West... It was as if he were discovering each word for the first time. When I went to give him his water he drank it as if it were a life-giving elixir

(María comes back in)

**María:** How was your tea? Can I get you anything else?

**Carlos:** No thank you, María...

**María:** Wait, how do you know my name?

**Carlos:** You dropped this piece of paper, I picked it up and accidentally read it. María A Redondo... odd...

**María:** Could you please give that back?

**Carlos:** Of course (He returns it) But that abbreviation, that spelling, it just doesn't fit. It should read María Arredondo, that's the name that suits your features, your mannerisms. Redondo doesn't fit with your figure, not with someone so beautiful... María Arredondo is what you should be called.

**María:** How? (She starts to cry)

**Carlos:** I'm so sorry if I've said the wrong thing, I didn't mean to upset you. I'm used to saying things and having the world understand the complete opposite. I felt over-confident with you, forgive my clumsiness...

**María:** To the contrary, you said just the right thing, no one has ever said anything more beautiful to me than what you just said. You cannot imagine how happy you've made me...

(Carlos moves away from her and faces the front)

**Carlos**: I invited her to never see me again and she said: what? Of course, in that moment, I had forgotten that she could understand me without having to invert my sentences. I repeated that we should see each other again, maybe get a drink sometime. And I said it without worrying about myself or denying my feelings. I discovered that talking to her was like a poetic feast, words bouncing around my palate like sweet flavors

(María moves away to the other side of the stage and speaks to the audience)

**María**: Suddenly, I found myself confessing my entire life story to a man I'd just met. I even told him about the day that my father, Tomás Arredondo, played in a soccer match against the neighboring village, and how he got into a terrible argument. He had scored a goal after it had gotten dark, and since no one could see, they asked a random spectator to act as a referee. That solitary witness confirmed the goal, and nobody suspected that that man, Venancio Arredondo, was my grandfather. And that story, where not a single person doubted his word, filled my lungs with oxygen and my heart with pride.

(They go to the far sides of the stage and speak)

**Carlos**: A whole new world has opened up, where I can speak freely

**María**: A world where I can be known

**Carlos**: Where we won't have to search for words

**María**: Where we won't have to hide our fears...

(They look at each other from across the stage, they move towards the middle of the stage and embrace each other as the lights dim to black)

**(END OF THE PLAY)**

***Barrio de La Boca, Buenos Aires, 26th of September, 2020***