

ARROZ ES ARROZ ES ARROZ

Characters

ROSE, non-Hispanic white, 20s, a woman in love.

MARTIN, non-Hispanic white, 50s, her father.

Time

Present.

Setting

A kitchen table, two chairs. A counter with coffee maker, cups, and a full loaf of bread.

ARROZ ES ARROZ ES ARROZ

MARTIN, dressed for household chores, sits at a kitchen table, nursing a cup of coffee as he contemplates a photo on his cell phone. ROSE enters in disheveled pajamas and robe and assembles a cup of coffee. MARTIN watches her ambivalently. Finally...

MARTIN

Good morning.

ROSE

(Sleepily.)

Buenos días.

MARTIN

(Grumpily.)

It is still morning around here.

ROSE

Lo siento. Dormí tarde. ¿Qué hora es? [Sorry. I slept late. What time is it?]

ROSE is not fluent, and gestures for semantic effect.

MARTIN

Nine.

ROSE

¿Nueve?

MARTIN

Nine. Nine o'clock. You know that's not what I meant. The word is "morning."

ROSE

Sí. Día.

MARTIN

How long you gonna keep this up, Rose?

ROSE

¿Qué?

MARTIN

Don't play dumb. You know damn well.

ROSE

(With mock innocence.)

¿Qué?

MARTIN

This Spanish shit.

ROSE

¿Español?

(Pointedly.)

El idioma de mi marido-a-ser. [The language of my husband-to-be.]

MARTIN

Marido? Ser? What the hell?

ROSE hums the Wedding March opening.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Stop!

ROSE

(Saucily, tapping her ring.)

Es demasiado tarde. Esteban me pregunta. Yo digo sí. [It's too late. Esteban ask me. I say yes.]

MARTIN

That's not what I'm referring to and you know it. You're not letting me explain.

ROSE

Tal vez en Español. [Perhaps in Spanish.]

MARTIN

Will you cut that out!

ROSE

Shhh! Los demás duermen. [Others sleep.]

MARTIN

Look. That's not my language, our language. Not the language spoken in this house.

ROSE

Es ahora. [It is now.]

MARTIN

You know, Rose, this is still kind of a shock to us.

(Waves his cell at her.)

When you told us yesterday, about your engagement--well, it was quite a surprise. Don't get me wrong, we're very happy for you and Stephen--

ROSE

--*Esteban.*

MARTIN

(Through gritted teeth.)

I'm very happy for you and Esteban. It's just that we've barely had time to process the news. It was such a surprise. We don't know what to think.

ROSE pauses, then she digs in the pocket of her robe for a small dictionary, which she consults while MARTIN fumes.

ROSE

Es difícil de creer? Que estamos en el amor? Que nos vamos a casar? [It is hard to believe? That we're in love? That we're getting married?]

MARTIN

Why are you doing this to me?

ROSE

¿Que?

MARTIN is stuck. ROSE encourages him with a rolling hand motion.

MARTIN

I'm so confused.

ROSE

Usted...

(Leafing through her book.)

Usted entiende. No. Usted va a entender. Eventualmente. [You understand. No. You will understand. Eventually.]

MARTIN

My point exactly! It takes you forever to get that across in Spanish. Last night you even had to pretend the thing with the rice to act out that you're getting married.

MARTIN mimes throwing rice overhand at a bride and groom.

ROSE

(Giggling.)

Eso fue divertido. [That was funny.]

MARTIN

I'm glad you thought it was so funny. Wait 'til you need to tell a doctor that you have diarrhea.

ROSE laughs.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

What I don't get is why this is so important to you.

ROSE

(Shrugs.)

Esteban y yo, hacemos una nueva vida juntos. Queremos comunicar mejor. [Esteban and I make a new life together. We communicate better.]

MARTIN

Huh?

ROSE

Queremos entender mejor uno al otro. Comprender. [We want to better understand each other. Understand.]

MARTIN

So you both want to speak the same language, I get that. Did you two flip a coin and you lost?

ROSE

(Laughs.)

Esteban va a hablar Inglés con sus padres. [Esteban is going to speak English with his parents.]

MARTIN

Oh, so he's putting his parents through this same ordeal with our language?

ROSE

(Fondly.)

Sí, correcto. Claro. [Of course.]

MARTIN

Great. I can't wait--the "Rehearsal Dinner of Babel."

ROSE consults her dictionary.

ROSE

Usted aprenderá. Vamos a aprender juntos. [You'll learn. We'll learn together.]

MARTIN

Huh?

ROSE mimes writing letters.

ROSE

Ah, bay, say...

MARTIN

I'm 53. I'm too old to learn another language.

ROSE

La madre de Esteban tiene... [Esteban's mother...]

ROSE pauses to calculate in her head.

ROSE (CONT'D)

...tiene cincuenta y dos años. Ella aprende Inglés. [...is fifty-two years old. She learns English.]

MARTIN

Good for her. English is easier. Everybody knows that.

ROSE

Usted son muy inteligente. [You're very smart.]

MARTIN

Not smart enough to pass common sense along to my daughter apparently.

ROSE takes a note from the pocket of her robe, reads.

ROSE

Mi matrimonio va a combinar nuestras dos familias. [My marriage will combine our two families.]

MARTIN

Are you serious? You brought notes? Where's the Teleprompter?

ROSE

Nuestro matrimonio... [Our marriage...]

(With interlaced fingers.)

...se va a combinar. Dos culturas. Eso es bueno para el mundo. [...is going to combine. Two cultures. That's good for the world.]

MARTIN

And what about your real family?

ROSE

Esteban es mi verdadera familia. [Esteban is my real family.]

MARTIN

I mean the family you're turning your back on, the one you're leaving behind. Your mother and me.

ROSE

Nunca...

(Looking it up.)

Nunca te...dejaré. No voy. [I'll never leave you. I'm not going.]

MARTIN

Maybe you should go. Esteban could bring his English and live here, and you could take your Spanish to his parents' house.

ROSE

*(With mock pity.)**Mi papito miserable.* [My poor daddy.]

MARTIN

You know, I always thought as you got older--became an adult--we'd be having more, I don't know, more profound conversations. Like grownups, you know, kindred spirits. Now this. You meet this guy and...

(Snaps his fingers.)

...all of a sudden we need a dictionary, you and I.

ROSE

Será mejor. Yo prometo. [It'll get better. I promise.]

MARTIN

(Beat, a dramatic sigh.)

OK. You want a new life with this man. And I approve. It's just...Well, I'm not sure we'll work it out, the language thing. But...I guess I can try.

ROSE

Te amo, Papa.

MARTIN

I gotta ask though: What's in this new life of yours for me?

ROSE

Niños. Los nietos para Usted. [Children. Grandchildren for you.]

ROSE takes the packaged loaf of bread and cradles it in her arms as if it were a baby.

MARTIN

What? Are you pregnant?

ROSE

*(Coyly.)**No, no...pero...tal vez pronto.* [...but maybe soon.]

MARTIN

Grandchildren, huh. I guess I'll need more rice, to celebrate, huh?.

MARTIN mimes tossing rice. ROSE mimes gently rocking the infant in the joyful shower.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Yeah, but your kids--what will they talk?

ROSE

Amor... [Love...]

ROSE places the bread loaf in MARTIN's lap and arranges his arms around it.

--el lenguaje entre bebés y sus abuelito... [...the language between babies and their grandpa...]

ROSE mimes taking a photo of MARTIN's begrudging smile of duped surrender.

Fade to black.

END OF PLAY