

UNTITLED

by Karina Billini

TIME:

Fall, 1998

SETTING:

A medical practice in  
Washington Heights, Manhattan;  
A townhouse in Fort Lee, New Jersey

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*September 20, 1998. A vacant medical office in Washington Heights. On the corners of the room are floral-engraved pillars. The walls are cream. On the wall hangs the medical license of our protagonist, LEO DOMENECH. Center stage is an abandoned medical examination table and three empty file boxes. A large window with a view of the George Washington Bridge.*

*MARC, a 40 years old Caucasian doctor in dress shirt and pants, tall and lanky, enters. He moves around the space like a real estate agent. He throws his hands in the air triumphantly, as though he's ready to embrace the space if he could.*

*ANDRES enters. He is Leo's chauffeur and childhood friend; a 45- year old dark-skinned Dominican man with a richness to his presence and skin that confirms he's not from the States. His English is limited and speaks with a heavy accent. He is excited by the room. His eyes are big and expressive. His suit is a little baggy on him. He wears a white polo shirt under it. Leo has lent him the suit. MARC sees ANDRES' excitement and slaps his hand onto ANDRES' back. ANDRES laugh. MARC guides ANDRES to check out one of the pillars.*

*And then Leo enters. LEO, a 45- year old light-skinned Dominican man, is a carbon-copy of Pablo Escobar. He wears a really nice suit. With the men not paying attention to him, Leo allows his eyes to get big while taking in the space. He is impressed. But most importantly, He is overwhelmed. Until Marc turns around. Leo adopts a smug look on his face. Leo has a slight accent, but it sounds like a lisp lacing his beautiful English.*

LEO

Marc. It's big—

MARC

I mean, look at how *wide* this place is, Leo!!—

ANDRES

Waoow. Very big—

MARC

All these buildings up here in the Heights are pre-war buildings. Look how breathable the air is. It's like your breathing in good health. Check it out. (*The men all breathe in and let out audible exhales: satisfaction.*) You're not breathing in asbestos here like you're doing at your run-down Brooklyn office, Leo—

LEO

Nothing about my office is run-down, Marc. Don't over-step, okay?—

MARC

*(He catches himself.)* Sorry. No offense. *(Pause.)* BUT. WHO. WOULDN'T. Want to get there body checked in here? Shit, I'd let you give me a rectal examination in here just so I can be in here—

LEO

Marc—

MARC

Alright, I'm a little excited. I mean, look. *(He motions to the men.)* Large windows and look at these high ceilings— *(Turns to ANDRES; in wonky Spanish.)* Grande, no?

ANDRES

*(In awe.)* Wow. Yes, very.

LEO

Yeah.... But my Brooklyn office got glass doors—

MARC

Okay, but the inside, Leo, the inside.

*LEO wanders the space until something catches his eye. LEO notices his medical license on the wall. He walks closer to it to make sure his eyes aren't tricking him; they aren't.*

LEO

What...in the hell is this—

MARC

Your license—

LEO

I went crazy looking for this!

MARC

I know—

LEO

I broke my office looking for it—

MARC

I saw—

LEO

I called the board for a replacement! You stole this from my office?—

MARC

*Borrowed, just for today—*

LEO

*For what!—*

MARC

*Dramatic effect. You're being dramatic so it worked. (Re: license on wall. Suave.) Trying to give you the full effect. You gotta envision yourself here. Dr. Domenech, in his new office. So. Tell me how that looks.*

*LEO looks at it. He looks at it with disbelief. A moment until it feeds into his ego. MARC reaches into the inside pockets of his suit jacket. He pulls out three shot glasses and a bottle of brandy. He passes shot glasses among the men. ANDRES tries to take the shot glass from LEO, but LEO absentmindedly blocks him and grabs the bottle of the brandy. He pours himself a glass and drinks. LEO has a moment until he laughs with disbelief.*

LEO

You're crazy! (TO ANDRES.) This *hombre* is *medio-loco*, right?

*ANDRES is not amused by the action. LEO pours himself another and takes it back.*

ANDRES

*Uh-huh.*

MARC

(to LEO.) You like it, though...

LEO

A man's name on a big wall! *COÑO!* What is that like, Andres? Ah? It's like seeing himself on a beautiful woman!

MARC

(Excited.) Alright, then!

*LEO laughs. He looks at his license again. He turns to scan the room and the largeness of it all hits him again. He looks at his license again and gets lost for a moment.*

MARC

Leo?

LEO

This wall's already asking me for money. And Manhattan money , Marc. I dunno—

MARC

These are Washington Heights prices, Leo. Trust me. I'm not paying much for my office—

LEO

The rent's gonna shoot up. I know it will; it always does. In Brooklyn, nobody raises your rent, nobody bothers you there—

MARC

Exactly. *NOBODY bothers* you down there. You are in the slumps of a no-name part of Brooklyn, Leo— *of course*, you're not getting business. Got a bunch of old Jews and Russians who got a two-month expiration on 'em. Borderline hospice cases. Die before you can cut a bigger check. *(Pause.)* Look. All those money-hungry real estate moguls don't want to shoot up here and raise the rent. Trust me. Everyone wants to be close to Central Park and *faaarr* from here. I mean, I can say this to you—this area's sketchy. But you can *STILL* make some big city money. Let go of all that side businesses you got. Andres, what this fella got? Two cab businesses, a hair salon even though he barely got hair—

LEO

Please. It's still all here—

MARC

And a farm over in D.R, like come on—

ANDRES

The farm gone. Hurricane George drown her real bad—

LEO

*(To MARC.) Ya see?*

MARC

Whatever. Money has never been a problem for you, Leo! Let's not pretend now. This rent is not a problem. I get it. You like your money; I do too. *So I promise you...* You're gonna be rolling in money, Leo. You can leave your businesses aside and breathe. Right? Isn't that what this is about? To breathe—

LEO

*(Unease.)* I know, I know—

ANDRES

Think about Antonia—

LEO

I'm thinking about Toni, Toni, Toni. Mari. The kids. Of course. I'm thinking. But money goes into them too—

MARC

Man—these Dominicans out here get word that there's a Dominican doctor in town— and shit one that came from an Ivy league—I know how your people are with name brands—your Versace cuff-links are shining real nice today by the way—

LEO

Thank you, they always do....

MARC

When they find out an Ivy-league, legit—no witchcraft, hocus pocus-- Dominican doctor is here in little freaking D.R., they're gonna be flocking to you, they're going to be like....

ANDRES

Dominican power!

MARC

Dominican power!

LEO

*(Chuckles.)* Dominican power...

ANDRES

They will look at you like a hero, *manin*.

*These words hit LEO. He bashfully waves his hands at ANDRES as though to shoo the compliments away.*

MARC

*You'll be the tenth wonder of the world. Your people are loyal people; they'll worship you. I mean, they even worship me; my glow-in-the dark skin and broken Spanish and all. I can't tell you how many mofongo dishes I got to take home after every appointment. I gotta shitload of Dominican clientele. You might give me a run for my money—*

LEO

*(Teasing.)* If I give you a run for your money, then why are you putting me on?

MARC

*(Laughs nervously.)* I get lonely up here in bumble-fuck Upper Manhattan. And ...Damn, I sure do miss those days competing with you in Columbia.

*A moment.*

LEO

I am getting tired of scrapping off bed sores from the Russian babushkas.

MARC

Well, you get a variety of skin ailments and saggy parts to look at here. But *sometimes*, you're lucky... and *(He makes a figure of a woman's body with his hands.)* you get a nice, firm Mamacita with....

LEO

*(Serious.)* I get *nothing*. I'm not here for that, remember?

MARC

Right. Got it.

*LEO waves his arms in the air, disrupting space.*

LEO

I don't want that idea to even settle in here! Before Toni comes in here, smelling it!

MARC

Got it, got it. I was just playing around with you, Leo. You know, I don't go in there thinking like that, I don't.

*(He shines his wedding ring towards LEO. LEO holds up his wedding ring finger. The men wave their fingers dramatically like "WONDER TWINS, ACTIVATE! The men laugh. )*

Lemme show you the view.

*MARC motions for LEO and ANDRES to walk over to the window. LEO looks out the window in awe.*

MARC

The George Washington Bridge: a woman that looks good at every angle, huh?

LEO

It's a beautiful view. I got the same view in the new townhouse. Toni doesn't even want to hang up curtains up in our living room.

MARC

Ya know, I think.....that little pink speck right there, right across the bridge—you see where Jersey is—

LEO

*(Searching for it.)* Ah-hah—

MARC

That pink speck, ya see it—

LEO

Yeah-yeah—

MARC

*That's* your new townhouse.

LEO

*(Genuine.)* Wow. *(A joke.)* Then, Toni will really love the view over there.

*MARC and ANDRES laugh.*

ANDRES

How they say—*(He points to his eyes.)*—on the prize, *manin*.

LEO

Eye on the prize!

*MARC's phone begins to ring.*

MARC

Speaking of the apple of my eye, my prize...*(He picks up the phone.)* Baby! Yeah,—I'm here with Leo showing him the office space—uh huh...

*MARC exits. LEO looks at the view. He leans in to look closer. He lets his body drop into true form; his belly sticking out, his shoulders sink in front of him. He seems overwhelmed.*

ANDRES

Wouldn't be surprised if that white boy got into the black market, selling body parts.

LEO

Why you say that?

ANDRES

I guess that is what happens when a real estate agent lives in a doctor's body.

LEO

He always been like that. *Imagine*—me listening to that, not knowing English—already dizzy by everything at Columbia and New York and then listening to *that*. (*He lets out a laugh.*) But he's grown on me, the *pendejo*.

*ANDRES examines the space. A moment.*

ANDRES

He's right. This is a smart move, Leo.

LEO

I know, Andres. I'm gonna sign the lease.

ANDRES

(Claps his hands in celebration.) HA-HA-HA! DR. DOMENECH! His first practice in Manhattan! Ay, no! We need to take a picture! Come on, come on!

*ANDRES takes out an old-school disposable camera. LEO rolls his eyes at the sight of it.*

LEO

*Ay Dios*—You've been acting like a tourist since you landed here.

ANDRES

Everywhere is Times Square, Leo. And this is yours...

*LEO straightens up his posture. He slides his hand on the window pane and puts his weight on it. LEO looks quite dapper. ANDRES looks at him.*

ANDRES

Damn, *manin*. Look at you. From the slums of Bani picking mosquitos out of our food to the streets of Broadway picking out office suites. I'm proud of you.

*LEO smiles wearily at his old friend. ANDRES tries to take a photo, but he's out of film. LEO is bothered by this.*

ANDRES

*Espera-espera*. Stay there. Film's done—

LEO

Ay, leave it—leave it---leave it—

ANDRES

I just gotta replace it....*un momento!*

*ANDRES goes digging in his pockets. He struggles to keep the camera and used film in his hand. LEO takes notice and takes the objects from him. He lowers the camera onto the window pane . He fingers the used film, eying it.*

LEO

*Ya know... I was a maldita weird kid, you remember?*

ANDRES

*(While winding the camera.) Mmmmmmmhmmmm. Dissecting bugs while everyone played stick baseball—*

LEO

*I used to think... my whole future was wrapped in a brand new roll of film. I thought...all I had to do was unroll that piece of film and I could get a glimpse of the life I was gonna live—*

ANDRES

Can you Imagine that, ah? Save us all a lot of heartache—

LEO

Broke lotta films in my hand to look into the roll—

ANDRES

Dissectng , dissecting---

LEO

*I'd imagine the very last frame of the film—me going to the university. And that's as far my imagination would let me go. I'm an old man, I know better now—but that idea followed me. So every step further than that image of the university— *Whoosh*—I felt myself pulling the roll of the film more further out than it was built to go. Every milestone— medical school, my license, marrying Antonia, coming to New York— were things not printed on the film. And I keep waiting for the film to retract it all back— “ *I'm sorry, Leo, that life was on lend.*” Shoot me back to Bani. Back to the dirt. *(Pause.) The roll would break...and then break me entirely.**

*A moment.*

ANDRES

Leo.

This is a roll of film—

LEO

Humor me, *manin*. Brandy makes me nostalgic—

ANDRES

And this is your new practice.  
And you are the new doctor on the block—  
*The Dominican doctor.*  
*And la gente are outside waiting to be at home with you.*  
This film wont break,  
the camera won't break  
unless your Ugly breaks it—  
which might happen if you keep on with that ca-ca face—

LEO

(*Laughing.*) Alright, shit-head. *Coño*—

ANDRES

*De verdad, Leo! Who is this in front of me? This is not you! Give me Papi chulo status when I point a camera at you!*

LEO

*Oye!* I invented *Papi chulo* status, don't forget that!

*The men laugh. Leo pours himself another shot. He takes it. And then he poses. He is not smiling.*

ANDRES

Try to hide your ugly!

*And finally, LEO smiles. ANDRES takes the photo. LEO freezes in tableau: The Manhattan Doctor.*