

Samuel French Acting Edition

Native Gardens

by Karen Zacarías

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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CHARACTERS

TANIA DEL VALLE – early thirties; smart, likeable, positive, passionate, highly-energized, pregnant PhD candidate and gardener

PABLO DEL VALLE – early thirties; smart, likeable, ambitious, savvy young attorney

VIRGINIA BUTLEY – sixty to mid-seventies; smart, likeable, assertive, direct, no-nonsense engineer

FRANK BUTLEY – sixty to mid-seventies; smart, likeable, excitable, caring, detail-oriented federal employee and gardener

The play should also use two to four extras to play the silent roles of the **SURVEYOR**, **LANDSCAPERS**, and **BUILDING EXAMINER**. There are short theatrical vignettes between scenes that can help transform the garden. These workers should preferably be Latinx and exude unique personalities as they work. They are the witnesses and the energetic transformers of both the play and the situation.

SETTING

The back of two houses. Two back gardens. A disheveled wire fence with ivy divides them. One garden is beautiful: lush grass, very symmetrical garden beds, and flowers lining the fence. The other is unkempt: dying hydrangeas, crabgrass, a large oak tree, leaves, and acorns.

Excerpt from Scene Twelve: Friday Evening

(VIRGINIA and FRANK are chanting, "Give our plants a chance!" as the scene begins.)

PABLO. What are you doing?

FRANK. Border patrol.

TANIA. You are on my property, Mr. Butley.

FRANK. I'm protecting my property, Señorita Del Valle.

TANIA. That's almost Doctor Del Valle to you, Butley.

PABLO. Frank, I'm going to have to ask you to move aside.

FRANK. To build a fence. Never.

TANIA. Virginia, please get up.

VIRGINIA. No can do.

PABLO. Don't tell me you are doing a sit-in.

VIRGINIA. They were effective for young folk back then.

Maybe they will work for us old folk now.

FRANK. Are you building the fence by yourselves?

PABLO. We are.

VIRGINIA. But there's a stop order.

TANIA. Well, a little sign can't stop us.

PABLO. We are taking back what you took from us.

(TANIA crosses upstage to get the post hole digger.)

FRANK. Oh no you don't!

(FRANK picks up an acorn; he throws it at

PABLO. *An acorn fight ensues.)*

PABLO. Desgraciado. Que te creì.

VIRGINIA. GET OFF MY LAWN!

TANIA. It's our lawn.

VIRGINIA. Get off my lawn before I call the police.

TANIA. It's our lawn. Thought we could talk this out. But no. There is no talking with you people.

VIRGINIA. You people. Did you hear that? That's it!

(VIRGINIA runs off to call the police.)

FRANK. This is my property. My land.

TANIA. No, it's my land. I'm building my fence to keep you out!

PABLO. And you're going to pay for it.

(TANIA raises the post hole digger above the flowerbed.)

FRANK. You can't! You can't do that.

PABLO. Don't tell my wife what to do.

(TANIA plunges the digger into the flowerbed.)

FRANK. NOOOOO!

Wait a minute – I planted those flowers. I paid for those seeds and bulbs. I can prove it. You can't keep them on your side.

PABLO. He's right.

(TANIA reaches down and plucks one out. She throws it at FRANK.)

TANIA. Here you go. I'm returning your flowers to you.

FRANK. No! Stop!

TANIA. You stop, Frank.

FRANK. It's a massacre.

(TANIA starts pulling out a lot of flowers. Suddenly, VIRGINIA comes out with a chainsaw.)

VIRGINIA. Unhand my husband's flowers. Or else!

(VIRGINIA revs up the chainsaw and crosses to the tree.)

TANIA. No!

(**VIRGINIA** starts to attack the tree.)

PABLO. Not the tree!

TANIA. My Oak Tree.

PABLO. No!

VIRGINIA. This will make us better neighbors, Pablo.

PABLO. Stop!

TANIA. I'm going to call the police.

PABLO. I can't be part of an incident!

TANIA. None of this would have happened if it wasn't for the barbecue.

PABLO. No, they would have been happy with a normal lawn...but no...you had to go exotic.

TANIA. Native is not exotic.

FRANK. It's ugly. It goes against the historical landscaping of this neighborhood.

TANIA. It was here before the neighborhood ever existed.

PABLO. Oh my God.

(**FRANK** make to squirt **TANIA** with the hose –
PABLO jumps in front of her. Only a fine mist comes out.)

Demonios!!!

TANIA. Argh!!!!

PABLO. Tania are you okay?

TANIA. ARGHHH My Water...

PABLO. The baby. It's early.

VIRGINIA. The Baby!

TANIA. It's coming.

VIRGINIA. Tania, just breathe.

TANIA. I am breathing!

(**TANIA** screams.)

VIRGINIA. Your breathing is all wrong. Breathe like this...

PABLO. We have to get to the hospital.

TANIA. I don't think so...

PABLO. I'm getting dizzy.

VIRGINIA. You are hyperventilating Pablo.

(**VIRGINIA slaps PABLO.**)

Stay focused.

TANIA. Forget it. I don't think I can walk anymore.

PABLO. Wait, you can't have the baby out here in the field!
Like...

TANIA. Like a peasant?!?!

FRANK. Is she going to squat?

VIRGINIA. Get a grip, Frank.

(**TANIA screams.**)

(*To TANIA.*) Tania, Honey, it's okay, lean on me.

TANIA. Ginny, I'm so scared. Help. My baby...

VIRGINIA. Just breathe, Tania. The baby is going to be fine.

FRANK. Can you take another step?

TANIA. I have to lie down.

PABLO. Not here...in the dirt.

VIRGINIA. It's going to have to be here.

(**FRANK takes off his sweater.**)

FRANK. Lie on my sweater.

PABLO. Breathe Breathe Breathe. I'm so sorry Tania. This
got too big...we lost sight.

TANIA. It's okay.

(*Screams.*)

Ay Dios Mio de los Santos!!!!

PABLO. I love you.

TANIA. Puta Madre!

FRANK. Your Spanish is so much better than you think.

VIRGINIA. Breathe.

FRANK. Breathe.

PABLO. Breathe. Honey.

VIRGINIA. We are here. It's going to be fine.

TANIA. Arghhhhhhhh!

PABLO. *(Yelling with her.)* Arghhhhhhhh!

(Lights out...a baby cries: Arghhhh!)