

OWLESS OF SANTA CLARA

A One-Act Play

By

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First produced by Snorks and Pins Productions at Roy Arias Theater in New York, NY.  
25-31 July 2010. Dir. Bob Teague and Featuring Iveliz Negron and Sam Muniz.

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

REINA - Cuban percussionist, 20s

ALVARO - ex-lover of Reina, a doctor, 40s

## TIME AND PLACE

1980s.

NYC/Santa Clara, Cuba.

Fade in. ALVARO lies in the middle of the stage, on two simple drums, covered by sheet.

ALVARO  
Owless of Santa Clara...

REINA ENTERS.

ALVARO  
(CONTINUING)  
Now you prop up the night, a dome above a dome of Upjohn's church...

REINA walks toward him. She is wearing a long dress down to her ankles.

ALVARO  
(CONTINUING)  
Stumbling into the Limelight.

Alvaro sits up and grabs Reina by the ankle.

REINA  
Got a gig tonight, man.

ALVARO  
In a church.

REINA  
Way past those days. And it was a club, baby.

Reina pulls away.

REINA  
(CONTINUING)  
Back the days when I was stone-cold free, I dared all the way to Avenue D. I did my time in the hole-in-the-walls along Empire Boulevard.

ALVARO  
I taught you to dance... *dazon*.

Reina grabs the sheet.

REINA

You always stole the lyrics, but I swept up the beats.

Reina pulls the sheet off the drums, and Alvaro with it. She tosses it aside, but he takes it from her.

REINA  
(CONTINUING)

Like you trying to collect the sea.

ALVARO

What's between us.

REINA

I left that between the sheets.

ALVARO

I should never have said that you.

REINA

Don't sweat it, man. You were the one left behind.

Reina takes off the dress, revealing shorts and a tank-top.

REINA

You are as you are.

ALVARO

I sicken you.

REINA

I've earned my time; I'll head any marching band.

ALVARO

The very sight of the sickle and sugar sicken you, and I...

Reina sits down to play drums.

ALVARO  
(CONTINUING)

Faded away in all the barrel-chested smoke.

Reina plays.

REINA

So I've made men... dance in my hands. I'll throw the world and make it beat.

ALVARO

You once came to me... a long, wading knock into heat.

REINA

I'll drum on...

ALVARO

You're out of touch.

REINA stands up.

REINA

Look, Al-- it's been twenty years.

ALVARO

Al?

REINA

I live in the now.

Alvaro takes one of the drums.

ALVARO

As does the one who doesn't know the difference between tourist and traveler...

REINA

You still on the island. What do you know?

ALVARO

I know which is the fool and which the ruffian...

REINA

I'm no fool, man. Watch yourself.

ALVARO

And yet you perch so low.

REINA

Watch it.

ALVARO

You perch, while I walk this woman with a past...

REINA

I told you to come with me!

ALVARO

This casino-timetable, *bordello*-willed, a playground of sweatshop punches!

Reina slams a hand down on the drum that  
Alvaro holds and it falls to the ground.

ALVARO

As if you know how *that* feels!

BEAT.

ALVARO  
(CONTINUING)

When *I* was left behind with the rimshots of the high AM hours...

Reina sits down, rearranges drums and begins  
quietly playing.

ALVARO

Brushes swish off a trashcan lid displacing a cymbal. Tonight a fanatical crowd without fanatics cry, vice, vice, an hour before full daylight closes you down.

REINA

They move when I say they can!

ALVARO

You've brought in maximum capacity, your bass marimba could delay the dawn, just so the ostentatious can dance ungodly tomorrow.

Reina stops playing.

REINA

That's your problem, man. You always broke it down before I go to it.

ALVARO

Your assembly of believers....

REINA

I'm in a great deal of demand.

ALVARO

Even with those unsharpened, gray cadences...

REINA

I'm not fading, man. You better watch it.

Reina resumes playing.

ALVARO

Sometimes you fade... under the ample hips of this sun... I see the current that carried you away.

Reina plays louder.

REINA

I don't miss the rations, the skinny chickens.

ALVARO

Temptation as simple as a boat.

REINA

I wasn't given a choice, man.

Reina plays louder.

ALVARO

Drifting away as the motor chopping up the water...

REINA

You weren't there! We *sped--*

ALVARO

*Fled--*

REINA

ROARING--

ALVARO

Like the doctor driving his taxi of German tourists to make ends meet: this is my life now.

Reina plays up a storm and then stops.

She rises and hands him a drum while picking up the other.

REINA

You didn't have to stay; you could've--

I'm not as young.

ALVARO

Reina approaches center of stage and sets down her drums.

REINA

In my mind you are as you are.

ALVARO

I won't follow you.

REINA

Now that I'm leading. Who are you?

ALVARO

I'm not even asked that question.

REINA

A doctor who's taxi makes him money. S'not my problem, man.

ALVARO

Is that how you remember me?

REINA

I live in the now. And baby, I'm not 16 anymore.

ALVARO

Short-sighted. Have you forgotten--

REINA

You couldn't let go.

Reina sits down at her drums but Alvaro stands over her, so she rises.

REINA

I've moved on because I can. If you were here, you could too.

ALVARO

In your mind, it wouldn't have lasted?

REINA

I don't make promises.

ALVARO

And I'm not your follower.

BEAT.

Reina plays a slower beat.

ALVARO

(grabbing the sheet)

There was a time when they said when one dies in the homeland---

REINA

No one--

ALVARO

(draping over one drum)

--another must die in exile.

REINA

No one ever said that.

ALVARO

(draping over the other drum)

You're too young (to remember)--

REINA

You aren't dead, man.

Reina plays over the sheets and her pace quickens.

ALVARO

You don't know that.

REINA

In my head, you are as you are. And that's probably better than what you got anyway.

She plays more passionately. Alvaro moves to sit on a drum, and she plays on one.

ALVARO

And so you go on playing...Owless of Santa Clara...

Reina punctuates some beats and plays louder on the other drum until he leans back, interrupting her.

REINA

Reina of Alphabet City. I've played with outfits of all sorts.

ALVARO

(lying down on drums)

While somewhere I become less frequent on the radio... I am less than unknown...

She begins to play on his body.

ALVARO

(CONTINUING)

And yet it will come, after they teal down the lights and some morning shakes you sober, heavy with sudden dark and cold....as if wooed the first blow...

LIGHTS DIM.

ALVARO

(as REINA plays on her body)

And for a moment you step away from your congregation and walk the cement alone...

She struggles to play louder and her beats quicken.

ALVARO

(spoken as beats as quicken)

It will come and break you down a double-time...rhapsody...

LIGHTS DIM.

ALVARO

(CONTINUING)

Rueful heart...playing your last card.

Beats continue and quickly come to a standstill.

LIGHTS OUT.