

THE GENTRY
(Ten Minutes for Alex Nieto)

By **Mónica Sánchez**

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Nico	A young man of color. 20's.
Narrator/Sasha	The adult version of Nico's daughter.
Chan	Nico's co-worker.
<i>(also Cop 1 or 2)</i>	
Cop 1/Runner 1/Dog Walker	
Cop 2/Runner 2/Dog	

An empty space. Late night, almost dawn.

Narrator: Ahiiii-yaaaa!

Welcome, welcome!
Step right up
Sit right down
Know your rights
Lest you frown
Upon the governed and the government
Twixt the thin blue line and the hard pavement

Indulge our little story of a fool upon the hill
Had he been a different color, he'd be sitting up there still

Brother can you hear me, hear me?
Mother will you tear away the tears?
Father will come out of your darkest dark?
Lover will open up again your heart?

The story's not new but if we knew we might know,
We might know to say "No"--
To imagine something new.

*A neon sign lights up. 'Closed'.
We hear the sound of a door locking, a metal door
rolls shut.*

Chan: That's all she wrote. Another dollar, another night without a fight.

Nico: You're welcome.

Chan: Yeah you and that Taser gun think you all hot shit.

Nico: Taser my ass. I don't even want this piece o'drama. Sal makes it mandatory, due to his other bouncers don't have any conflict resolution skills. I never had to use it, not even once. Hell, the tweaker I wouldn't let in tonight wanted to buy *me* a drink. Gotta treat folk with respect.

Chan: House a Pancakes? I'm buying.

Nico: Nah, man thanks. Gonna hit the temple for the sunrise sit. Wanna come?

Chan: Shit, I ain't about no "Viet Nam yo-ho' ring gay-who."

Nico: Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Liberation my brother, the mantra shall set you free.

Chan: Thas' what I'm saying, "free breakfast!"

Nico: Next time. Gonna pick up Sasha after that, drop her at school.

Chan and Nico exit.

Narrator: And off into the Samsara yonder our young hero goes.
Breaks at the legs before the break a dawn
An hour in lotus before your first yawn.
Nico Rivera the pride of neighborhood,
the pride of his mother's side,
brighter than the gleam in his father's eye.
Nico's folks, new old school.
Joined at their hippy raza hips
From the moment in the street
she caught his eye, he caught her... 'bleep.'
They caught a flu called marriage, nearly did 'em in.
But their bodies were not anti, and they made some five-fold kin.

Nico was the eldest, text book first born son,
associated to a degree distinctly won.
Community college, criminal justice, his pursuit.
An anomaly of his community, not only smart but cute.

Yeah he had a daughter out of wedlock,
had some dumb luck.
First time hook up with his honey,
rubber couldn't take the rub-up.

They had the baby and a plan:
Each to work and save and then
get a place and make their vows,
in the meantime, share the child.

Little Sasha beloved girl,
she was the reason.
She was the world.

*Lights out. Lights up.
Two cops in a booth.
A neon sign lights up:*

“nuts”

becomes:

“Donuts”

becomes:

“Artisanal Donuts and Designer Cupcakes”

Cop 2: It's fair trade.

Cop 1: Six bucks for a cup a joe? Is not a fair trade.

Cop 2: It's a pour-over, drip brew.

Cop 1: You're a drip shrew.

Cop 2: This is one hell of a donut though; coconut cake and green tea icing? Who knew?

Cop 1: Who knew a donut hole could put you in the hole?

A game of 'footsie' ensues under the table

Cop 2: Shut your hole, you're just cheap. Hey, I haven't seen your sis around. She finally retire?

Cop 1: She would have. She's over in Alameda county now. Different district, has a few more years in the classroom.

Cop 2: She's not at this Elementary anymore? Why would she leave?

Cop 1: She got evicted, that's why. Only place she could afford to rent was the east bay. That commute didn't make any sense. She found a school out there, still 15 minutes from her place.

Cop 2: But this is her hood. You guys grew up here. She taught everyone, and then *their* kids–

Cop 1: Hell, none of the teachers, counsellors, social workers, from these schools can afford to live here anymore, try finding a carpenter or a mechanic that isn't commuting. Anyone you see working here, cannot afford to live here and anyone you see living here is either on the verge of extinction or an F.O.N.

Cop 2: F.O.N.?

Cop 1: Fresh Off the Net! Silicon Valley's silly puttied snot nosed no-mannered socially awkward self-absorbed skinny-jeaned raised inflection joy-stick-junkie jisum-factory pigment-challenged non-voting pet spa member soft-handed pedicured metro little pussy!

Cop 2: Hey, at least they're white. Mostly.

*A scrim lowers. It says 'scrim'
The Narrator takes a spray can and 'sprays'.*

*Letters are projected onto the scrim as though
coming from the spray paint can:
"VERNAL HILL/ THE PARK". A hill appears,
perhaps represented by a large A-frame ladder.*

*The projection of the letters turns into birds that fly
away.*

*Nico enters. The narrator gives him a large doll
which represents little Sasha.*

Nico: (to 'Sasha') We have time to walk today. Oh what a beautiful morning:

*"Que linda está la mañana en esta verde pradera, cuanta belleza se extiende en esta
inmensa savana..."*

We'll climb to the top and see far, far away. We'll see the house where nana and papi G live, where your daddy grew up, we'll see the street where I played soccer, we'll see the

avenue where Carlos Santana, a skinny little sack a bones with a big ‘fro stood on a stage for the first time and your nana and papi G saw each other for the first time and learned how to dance and learned how to love.

Then we’ll walk down the other side, we’ll see the roof of your pre-school from there! We’ll walk together to your school, I’ll kiss you and hug you tight and you’ll spend the day playing and learning and shining bright. Daddy will go home, take a nap and then wake up and go see all the little homies at the center, help ‘em find their center before I go to work so I can see you tomorrow morning and tomorrow and tomorrow. Hold my hand my little darling, my little Sasha-sha-sha.

The narrator enters with a toy airplane in her hand. She swoops it like cursive. A projection like jet trails is seen. The ‘sky writing’ says:

“As of 2014, Google’s Silicon Valley employees, were 2% black, 3% Latino, and 70% male.”

Enter a young couple on a run. Stylish running gear; neoprene leggings and shirts. State of the art running shoes. Sunglasses. Earbuds connected to devices strapped onto shoulders. One of the runners brings self and partner to a stop.

Runner 1: Something’s not right.

Runner 2: What’s wrong?

They continue a series of squats, burpees and maybe a yoga pose or two during the following:

Runner 1: That man, did you see him with that little girl?

Runner 2: The guy in the red jacket?

Runner 1: That’s right! OMG, red! Aren’t they the crips or the serranos or something like that?

Runner 2: That was a gangster?

Runner 1: OMG, he had a kid. That was not his kid, did you see her hair!

Runner 2: I can’t believe this is happening.

Runner 1: We have to call the police, I mean, we just saw a kidnapping!

Runner 2: I don't know, we have our waxing appointments, what if the police want to ask us a million questions?

Runner 1: I'm calling 911.

*Runner 1 makes the call, both are still exercising.
Narrator re-enters.*

Narrator: Gooo-ood *días!* *Buenos* days *damas* y *gents!*
Thank you for your patience and good will
I promise satisfaction, yes a climax!
Rising action as we follow up the hill.

The runners change characters with a simple costume change. One becomes a dog walker barely holding the other who becomes his dog on a leash, pulling hard.

At the top we see Nico calling below to Sasha who we don't see.

Nico: Hold up my little one! Wait for me there!

Dog: Grrrrr. Rrrfff. Rrrrfff. God I hate this city, I'm going back, back to my real yard, yards and yards away where I can take a shit in peace and take a pee on shit if I want to! Grrrrrrrrrrr.

The dog breaks away up other side of the hill.

Dog Walker: Patio Furniture! Patio Furniture come back here! Come! Come boy!
...shit.

Narrator as Sasha: And there's a big mean set of teeth coming closer! Slobber slobber...

Dog Walker: Come boy! Come!

Sasha: I climb up, on the picnic table. Daddy!

*The dog is chomping at the bench.
The dog barks ferociously.*

Dog Walker: Patio Furniture! Stop! Stop it! Come boy, come!!!

Nico: Get your dog! Get that dog away!
Sasha, it's okay, don't be scared--

Sasha: The dog mad, so mean, so mad below me.

And on the other side of the hill,
so mean and mad below him:
Police
coming for the ‘the kidnapper,’ ‘the gangster,’ ‘the foreigner,’
who grew up right here--
who was born down the street--
who played in this park--
who loved this hood and the hood did love him back.

Cop 1: There he is! Norteño Red!

*Nico pulls his Taser gun from his red 49er’s jacket
to aim at the angry dog.*

Nico: I’m gonna zap that dog if you don’t get him under control!

Cop 2: Gun! He has gun! Suspect is armed!

Sasha: Bologna! I find my bologna sandwich and throw it far as I can away from me, and the dog springs away to the food as I hear:

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten...I can only count to ten --I start again: plus one, two, three, four, five, six, seven... gunshots.

Daddy!!

Nico’s untimely demise.

Narrator: Brown his skin was brown.
Red, his jacket red.
They say his 49’ers 86’d him
But they are, we know, misled.

Runner 1: Look this is a free market. Why is “gentrification” a bad word?

Runner 2: We went out, got an education, worked hard, and we earned the right to live here.

Cop 1: He was armed and dangerous.

Cop 2: It’s open and shut.

Runner 1: I’ve been here six months now. It’s people like me that are making this neighborhood better...was there Sushi here before?!

Runner 2: I’ve paid my taxes here for almost a year, do I really have to deal with homeless people on my way to work every day? It’s real buzz kill.

Narrator: And there you have our little tale
of the fools up on the hill.
A jacket red drenched in scarlet
all before a little girl

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Mother will you tear away the tears?
Father will come out of your darkest dark?
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END OF PLAY for today