**187**by Jose Rivera *John*

*(The City of Industry, CA. Present day. Five PM. A bus stop. ALEJANDRA waits for a bus. She ‘.s exhausted after working an eight hour day in a factory. JOHN comes running up to her He\*s run a long distance. He is exhausted from working the same job.)*

There\*s something I have to tell you...... hi... hi... I\*m sorry, hi...*(Catching his breath.)* I—I don\*t chase people. I have my pride, you know. Pride\*s very important these days. Not much of it left. ‘Specially when you\*re working a crap job like we are, huh? The conditions in that place... like a slave labor camp... some gulag... I don\*t think they\*re gonna pass a hike in the minimum wage... looks like we\*re stuck in this Dickensian hell forever... Dust, cat crap, bad lighting, noise, filth, low pay: it\*s immoral is what it is; but it\*s *work,* I guess, and I don\*t let the work get me down. I have my pride, like I said. That\*s why I feel weird, you know? Chasing you. I don\*t chase people. Hard to have a lotta pride when you\*re waiting for a bus, I imagine. *(Beat.)* I\*ve got an old T-bird. Twenty trillion mules. But it\*s an ass kicker. Red interior. Original everything—except the engine. Which I rebuilt myself. You\*ve probably seen it in the lot. It\*s right over... there. I could drive you... I mean, I swallowed my pride and ran all the way out here chasing you to ask if I could drive you home in my ancient but very cool T-bird. Wanna? I\*m John. You\*re from a Spanish speaking country. But you don\*t look like a lot of the Spanish speakers at the plant. You are, uh... well... they\*re kinda smaller.., they have more Indian, I guess, features.., dark... and eyes that really penetrate... you don\*t know what their minds are doing... you look into their eyes and it\*s like looking into an infinite tunnel going into this deep ancient place and all you can see is this dark alphabet spelling words and feelings you can\*t read. You\*re not like them. *Your* eyes aren\*t so... unfathomable. There\*s light in that tunnel. A sparkle. Something I can recognize and read. A friendliness. Like you don\*t wanna, you know, cut me up on some Mayan pyramid and offer my heart to some jealous horrible god. You\*re not gonna do that! There\*s a frightening, primitive *distance* I feel with the other Spanish speakers at work. But you\*re different. You\*re a different branch of the Spanish speaking world. Where is your home? Where? Oh, Argentina. *(Smiles.)* That makes sense. There\*s something more Italian about you than those Guatemalan chicks I see all the time. A Sophia Loren kinda quality... Whoa, back up... I *know you’re not Sophia Loren.* Just want to say hello. I don\*t know. You don\*t have to...*Idiota?* That doesn’t sound like a compliment! Who\*s talking about love anyway? Ijust wanna drive you home in my car. I don\*t want you to wear yourself out taking four buses every day. I don\*t want to see you breaking your back any more than you have to. I\*m offering you something good in your completely crappy day. I didn\*t imply anything else. You—you— brought up sex and love, not me! I have feelings too. Latin Americans don\*t corner the market on feelings! Yeah, that\*s fine. You can do that. You say no it\*s no. I\*m not from the 1950s when no didn\*t mean jack to a man. I know what *"pendejo"* means: you can\*t call me that ‘cause I ain\*t one! *(Slight beat.)* I was drawn to the light reflected in your eyes. It warms me. I don\*t get enough of that light in my life. Thought if you spent a little time in my car as I drove you home you could tell me aboutyour world and I\*d be able to enjoy that light a few extra minutes.*(Slight beat.)* Because I live in darkness. I live in a pit. I live among the moles and shrews and earthworms, all these eyeless creatures digging in the crap of the world looking for their love and their sex. You\*re the one person I\*ve seen in a year in this city that\*s got more than survival on their minds, whose laughter I\*ve heard louder and clearer than all the sounds of all the machinery in that damn plant. I thought I could live on that a few extra minutes a day. To keep me from suffocating in the darkness. You have *that much* you could hold over me. That much. And I don\*t have anything. No money, no degrees, no family, no politics: just a pathetic old car my older brothergave me ‘cause he felt sorry for me. *(Slight beat.)* The only thing I have, I guess, is that I live here. I\*m American. And you\*re not. I have this country and its laws. And you don\*t. You have your papers, honey? You have that green card? You have a right to be standing here waiting for my bus? Using up my roads and my housing? I\*ve seen it happen before—I\*ve seen the company call Immigration every time there\*s a little agitation at the plant. Union talk. Unhappy workers. I\*ve seen it. It\*s not nice. The place goes crazy when those agents appear. You see old people running pretty fast! I\*d laugh—I would—I\*d laugh watching those pretty legs running from the INS like a dog. *(Beat.)* I\*m sorry. Forget that. Sounding like a Nazi ass. I don’t mean to make threats to you. I’m not the kind to do that. I guess it’s the only power I thought I had over you. And I guess I don’t even have that.