

Refugee Hotel Lighting Script Treatment

University of California Irvine — Robert Cohen Theater

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Introduction

The following is a script treatment for UCI Drama's production of *Refugee Hotel*. Similar to how Costume or Scenic Designers submit sketches of their designs to the team, this script treatment is a "sketch" of the lighting design. The purpose of this treatment is to create a dialogue about the creative process between the Lighting Designer and the Director/design team for the production. Throughout this document, I will discuss the atmosphere of the story, the world in which the story takes place and how lighting can aid in the storytelling of this play to the audience. This document will be a crucial part in creating my light plot and continuing into tech, so any specific questions, thoughts or feedback will be indispensable.

Overall

The production will be presented in the Robert Cohen Theater at the University of California Irvine on a proscenium stage. The play will be set in its period time and location of 1974 in a Hotel in Vancouver, Canada.

Scenery

To support the overall ideas of the production, the scenery will contain realistic and practical furniture pieces. The hotel will be divided into 3 bedrooms and a lobby with a long entrance point coming from the center aisle of the audience. Surrounding this hotel will be two large walls on the stage left and stage right sides of the space with doors in each wall. These side doors will be used as entrance points for the actors once they have entered the hotel. The bedrooms will be raised above the lobby and connected with small staircases to each room. Each bedroom will include a bed, a table lamp and a window to the outside world. One bedroom will contain an oven to be used for the attempted suicide by Cristina (Cakehead) in Act 1 Scene 12. The lobby will contain a receptionist desk, a vintage Coca-Cola machine, a television surrounded by period style chairs, a couch and a table. Specific moments of the play will use projections to communicate abstract concepts experienced by the characters – specifically moments involving the Cueca Dancer and the Concentration Camps referred to in the nightmare sequences.

Important Plot Points

Refugee Hotel is a story about family, guilt, exile, haunting pasts, and bright futures. The play revolves around the true stories experienced by a group of Chilean refugees who were seeking asylum from the 1974 coup in Chile. Each character is trying to make a new life for themselves and their families in this strange new world of Vancouver. Different characters are experiencing different struggles with their new adjustments. Fat Jorge, Flaca and Manuel are constantly reliving the horrifying experiences of torture within the Chilean Concentration Camps. Isabel, Cristina, and

Juan are struggling with isolation and intimacy, trying to connect and make new relationships with these strangers. Manuelita and Joselito are worried about their parents and how their lives will change once they leave the hotel. The Receptionist, Bill, and Social Worker are worried about the safety and well being of these refugees, hoping and praying they can protect them.

Lighting Concept

This paragraph contains big, conceptual ideas that will be repeated and fleshed out with images throughout the scene by scene descriptions. The lighting for this story will complement the realistic scenic design and anchor itself in location and environment. Emotional response from dialogue or character actions will fuel lighting shifts within the scenes. Lighting will create two different worlds within the play: a realistic world that supports the interior, bland and minimal style of the hotel (Fig A), and an abstract and broken world that supports the haunting flashback and nightmare sequences.

Because the scenery does not move, lighting will be a large force to drive the smooth transitions. Transitions leading into the nightmare scenes will emanate from the room and character who is experiencing the nightmare. Each sequence will become more and more chaotic and painful as the audience learns more and more about the story. To support the harshness of the nightmare sequences, lighting will use channels of colored lights within each bedroom to take the audience out of the hotel and into a strange world (Fig B). These channels of light embedded within the set will match the craziness and chaos from the characters' dreams. Lighting will also cover the entire set in harsh, broken, sharp, jagged textures to support the environment of these dreams.



Fig A



Fig B

Scene by Scene

Prologue

The play begins with a radio broadcast of Allende's final speech at the La Moneda Palace on the day of the coup. This powerful speech remains as the last moment of Chile's history that these people remember and fought for. This is the Chile that they love. A small, tight light will rise on Manuelita as she begins to translate the broadcast (Fig 1). The light will instantly go out on Manuelita as the sound of the coup with bombs and explosions fills the space.

As the explosions begin to fade, lighting will introduce the hotel to the audience.

Question: How do we see this scene being blocked? Any specific location?



Fig 1



Fig 2

As if in the middle of the night when no one is awake or in the lobby, the space will be lit with very little warm light. Dimly lit table lamps and a soft glow from above will illuminate the hotel (Fig 2). A small, tight, hard edged light will rise again on Manuelita as she begins to describe the hotel. This hard edge light will cut her away from the soft world of the hotel and separate her spatially. As Manuelita begins to exit, her light will fade and the rest of the hotel will slowly "wake up" and open up to a warm, brightly lit lobby.



Fig 3

Act I Scene I

This scene introduces the family into their new home of the hotel. The hotel is not a 5-star luxurious space – it is a minimal style building with very little design and grandeur. The family just wants to find comfort in a place after their long journey. They are frightened, exhausted, confused, nervous, and a little excited about what this place may bring them.

The lighting for the space will be sparsely lit to match the warm sources of the table lamps in within the lobby (Fig 3). The bedrooms will not be lit during the beginning of the scene since the family has not "checked in." Once the family is escorted to their rooms, the table lamp in the room will turn on, but the main focus of the scene will remain in the lobby.

Act I Scene 2

Later that same evening of the family's check-in, Fat Jorge has his first nightmare of the play. The emotional trauma that Fat Jorge has experienced is overwhelming and extremely painful for him to endure. This nightmare is more than a bad dream – it is something that is consuming Fat Jorge.



This nightmare will remain in the bedroom and only focus on Fat Jorge. Cold moonlight will enter the space from the downstage edge of the bedroom from the channels of light in the set and highlight Fat Jorge on the bed (Fig 4). The haunting angle from lights beneath Fat Jorge will emphasize the dramatic shadows to fit to the trauma Fat Jorge is experiencing (Fig 4A). As he runs to vomit, the table lamp will be turned on and fill the room with warm light, saving him from his nightmare.



Fig 4

Question: Are the windows being used as a projection surface? Will lighting be able to shoot light through the windows?

Fig 4A



Fig 5

Act I Scene 3

As Fat Jorge leaves his bedroom and makes his way to the lobby, lighting will shift focus from the bedroom to the lobby. He has just been through a personal reminder of the traumas he and his family went through in Chile. These events are slowly chipping away at him physically and mentally. There is a reason Flaca is concerned about her husband – this is a new side of him she's never seen.

It is the middle of the night, and the only light source that is on in the lobby is the cool glow from the television. A cool glow will emulate from the tv and moonlight from the windows will sweep across the lobby (Fig 5-5A). The table lamp from the bedroom will be turned off as Flaca makes her way to the lobby so the kids can go back to sleep, but the moonlight will remain.



Fig 5A

Act I Scene 4

Flaca and Fat Jorge are interrupted in their conversation by the Social Worker, Cristina and Isabel. Their entrance will suddenly turn on the main lights in the lobby and open up to the normal, warm, interior look (Fig 6). Their entrance is a new addition to the family with Fat Jorge, Flaca and the children. Being around people who have gone through similar struggles can bring these strangers together in a close knit way. This drastic shift in lights will be a bright change from the moonlight and the glow of the tv. The coolness from the moonlight will still sweep across the lobby from the windows.



Fig 6

As Manuelita and Joselito come into the lobby, the moonlight from their room will remain in their bedroom, but not as prominent as the previous scenes. More focus will be in the lobby than their bedroom.



Fig 7

Act I Scene 5

Once Isabel and Cristina are escorted to their room, the table lamp in their room will glow slightly to show the new energy and occupancy in the space. This is their new home – they can finally rest. The children's bedroom will have the same moonlight glow emulating from the window (Fig 7).

As Fat Jorge and Flaca return to the lobby, they begin to discuss the resistance in Chile. This is the first time in the play when the painful memories and details of their escape are discussed. To support the intimacy and privacy of this conversation, lighting will slowly highlight and isolate them from the lobby.

Act I Scene 6

Scene 6 takes place 2 days later from the first nightmare and the midnight check-in. The children are watching *The Martian* on the tv in the lobby early in the morning. Although the scene takes place in the morning, it is still raining outside. It is raining so hard that Flaca arrives later in the scene drenched from rain. As awful and gross as it is outside, the children are embracing the lifestyle of their new home and country. This hotel has become a safe haven for them and they are protected from the outside world. Lighting will fill the lobby with the familiar interior and artificial light, but a warmer tone will be present to match the silliness of coke machines and Fat Jorge's tangents (Fig 9).

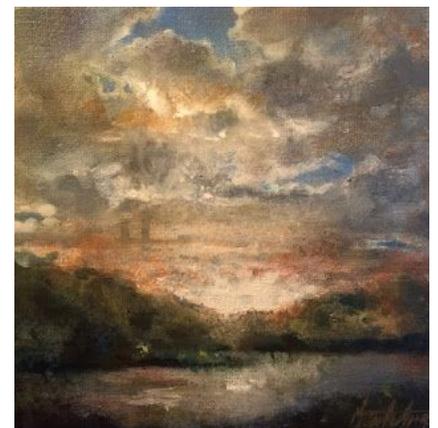


Fig 9



Fig 10

Act I Scene 7

The children leave the hotel and go “on a stroll” with Calladita and Cristina, leaving Flaca and Fat Jorge alone in the lobby. Their conversation starts with an awkward tone with Fat Jorge’s sexual intent and Flaca’s hesitant manner. The couple tries to talk about the nightmare and the concentration camps, but it is too painful for either one to discuss. They both can feel the distance that is beginning to widen between them. Delicate details surface about Flaca’s torture and the emotional trauma both felt while being separated from one another. Lighting will highlight the two and deemphasize the remainder of the lobby to support the private conversation. The dark tone of the conversation will impact the tone of the space with a colder and harsher shift in lighting (Fig 10).

Calladita, Cristina and the children return from their trip and are drenched from the rain. Their entrance opens the room up from Fat Jorge and Flaca’s conversation.

Act I Scene 8

Pat Kelemen enters the lobby with a new refugee, Manuel. Manuel is escorted to his room by the Receptionist. Once Manuel reaches his room, he breaks down and begins to cry. Not only is he in this hotel escaping his own personal traumas, but he is all alone and has no one to connect with.

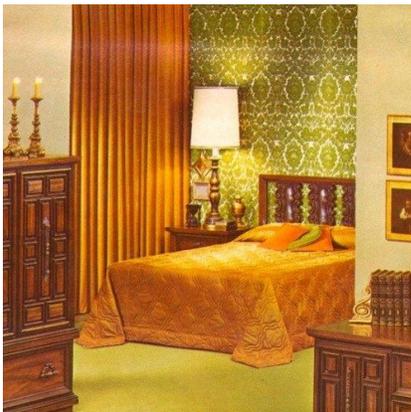


Fig 11

In Flaca and Fat Jorge’s bedroom, people are playing card games on the bed and having a fun time. To emphasize the emotional and physical separation between the game room and Manuel’s room, lighting will fill the game room with bright, welcoming light (Fig 11) while Manuel’s room will be lit with just his table lamp. This single source of light from the table lamp will cause dramatic shadows on Manuel’s face to support his emotionally traumatic state (Fig 12).

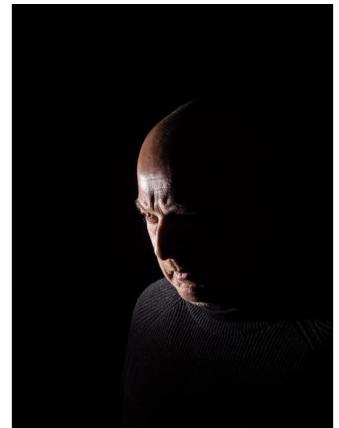


Fig 12

As the Doctor enters Manuel’s room and begins to examine him for his physical, lights will slowly fade away from the game room and only focus on Manuel’s room. As he begins to list the trauma he has gone through, lighting will fill his room with cold and hollow light. He may be alive, but he still carries his scars and personal nightmares with him.



Fig 14

Act I Scene 9

Scene 9 takes place 2 days after Manuel's arrival. All the refugees come downstairs to the lobby. Manuel's journey downstairs is assisted by the Cueca Dancer. The Cueca Dancer brings a physical shift in the space with low sweeping light gliding across the floor.

Question: *Is Projection Serving as the Cueca Dancer or will we have a physical dancer?*

The familiar interior and artificial light with the cold tone of the rain fills the lobby (Fig 14). Bill enters the scene drenched from the outside rain. His personality fills the room with laughter and positive energy. He has fully embraced his hippie demeanor. Despite the many weeks he spent in the Chilean Stadium, he still finds a way to be happy and joyful. The scene ends with the characters raising their wine glasses and toasting to their home (both old and new) and the future. The final "Salud!" will lead the stage into an evening transition. Sweeping Moonlight will fill the stage and guide the characters to their rooms for bed (Fig 16).



Fig 16

Act I Scene 10

Later that night, everyone is asleep in their rooms. Fat Jorge, Flaca and Manuel place themselves in a hanging position as if being hung by their wrists. We have now fully entered into the nightmares of the chaos that surrounded Chile. Lighting will take a drastic shift from the familiar nighttime fill of the hotel.



Fig 17

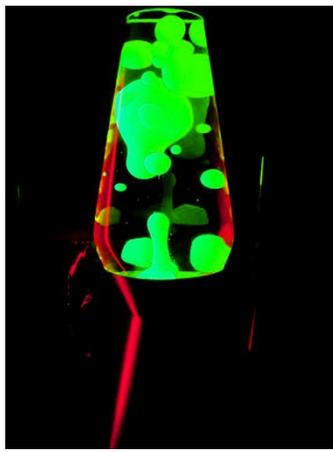


Fig 18

Channels of light embedded within the set will glow and create bright borders within each room (Fig 17). The colors of these channels of light will be bright neon like a lava lamp, totally transforming the environment of the rooms to a dreamlike state (Fig 18). The haunting uplight used for Fat Jorge's first nightmare will now be thrown throughout all the bedrooms to give Flaca, Fat Jorge and Manuel a haunting and hollow tone on their faces.

Bright, linear and harsh texture will wash over the entire stage to suggest they are back in the Stadium where the torture happened (Fig 19-20). The physical surroundings of their torture will surround them within the set. The chaos they feel inside will be all around them and they can't escape. Bold, bright warm pockets of light will appear behind the set, emulating from the bottom edges of the window to suggest there are explosions and bombs outside the hotel windows (Fig 21).



Fig 19



Question: Is this something Projections could do if the windows are projection surfaces?



Fig 21

As Fat Jorge screams and wakes up from the nightmare, the hotel will slowly and painfully shift back to the familiar nighttime coolness.

Act I Scene II

Immediately following the nightmare sequence is Juan's entrance into the hotel. He has come running in from the outside rain with Bill. The interior lights from the lobby are turned on revealing the refugees in the lobby, all frazzled from Fat Jorge's screams. Although the lobby lighting is familiar by this point in the play, the haunting tone from the previous scene carries through with a darker and colder tone throughout the space (Fig 22).

The scene ends with everyone shouting "Vi Va Chile" as they welcome Juan into their new family. This exclamation leads the story into another transition. Lighting will lose all interior lighting sources and just use the moonlight support to drive the transition.



Fig 22

Act I Scene 12

Later that evening, Fat Jorge, Flaca, the children, Juan, Bill, Calladita, and Cristina are all in the lobby discussing their escape from Chile and the painful stories of what happened to their friends and families. Lighting will live within the interior world, but will use the table lamps as the main point of source instead of any overhead lighting like we have seen predominately throughout the lobby. The conversations from the lobby are too painful for Fat Jorge and Cristina, so the characters all separate with Cristina going to her room and everyone else going to the family room.

As the characters are making their way to their rooms, lighting will shift focus to Manuel in his room. Manuel is discussing the painful and depressing memories of his life before the hotel. To support Manuel's emotionally raw state, lighting will use steep angles to pressure down on Manuel physically (Fig 23). Cold and haunting tones will emphasize his bare mental space. The desperate and depressing feels weighing on Manuel are too much for him and he attempts to kill himself by jumping off the roof.

Everyone sees Manuel jump and runs outside to find him. Lighting will shift focus to the family room as Flaca protects the children and keeps them close to her. They have seen enough trauma in their short life already. In Cristina's room, she is also contemplating suicide. Her loneliness and fear of her anger overwhelms her, and she too attempts to end her life

by sticking her head in an oven. Lighting will immediately shift focus to the warm interior lobby as Fat Jorge enters with Manuel and will quickly fade out from Cristina. This immediate shift in focus away from Cristina will help hide the makeup shift on her face.

The scene ends with everyone in Cristina's room after her failed suicide attempt. Despite the harsh underlying tone of death and suicide, everyone is relieved that the suicides failed. Lighting will lose all areas of the stage except Cristina's room to bring everyone closer together as they all share the tender bonding moment.

Fat Jorge steps away from the group and has a moment with the Cueca Dancer. His mental state is flooding with the events that have just happened, but he also understands the reasons why Manuel and Cristina are depressed. Could this be a look at Fat Jorge's mental state too? Lighting will end the act with a tight special for Fat Jorge as we see him in his own world with the Dancer (Fig 24).

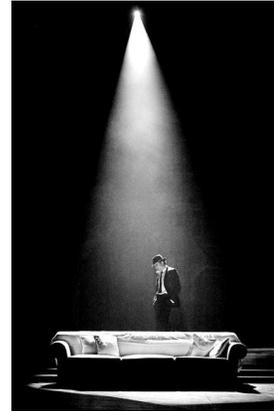


Fig 23



Fig 24

Intermission

House lights will come up. The table lamps throughout the hotel will glow and have a slow twinkle as a result from the Cueca Dancer's interaction with the final scene. Once intermission is over, the table lamps will fade out followed by the house lights.

Act 2 Scene 1

The following day after the failed suicide attempts of Cristina and Manuel, the scene opens to the music of *Pollera Colorada*. Adult Manuelita is dancing around the hotel with the Cueca Dancer. The lighting for this scene will exist in the music and live within the dance. The tableau of the frozen guests in comparison to the dance between Manuelita and the Cueca Dancer is within an abstract world. Lighting will use a combination of warm and cool tones to fill the space with the brightness of the song, suggesting an atmosphere around twilight (Fig 24A). This is a joyful moment following a painful evening. It is important to acknowledge the joy and happiness that is within this hotel.



Fig 24A

As Flaca and Fat Jorge start to dance, Flaca becomes overwhelmed with emotions and begins to cry, but she continues to *dance until the pain passes*. Lighting will shift from the warm abstract world of the dance with the Cueca Dancer and enter into the artificial interior lighting within the lobby with Flaca and Fat Jorge's dance.



Fig 25



Fig 26

Act 2 Scene 2

Fat Jorge has received the *Inti-Ilumani* record from the Cueca Dancer. This little taste of home draws the other guests intently into the record as *El Aparecido* begins to play. As the record plays, lighting will take a tonal shift throughout the room. Warm, beautiful light will enter the lobby and bring the characters back home to the Chile they all love and remember (Fig 25-26).



Fig 27

Act 2 Scene 3

Following the beautiful and powerful moment with the Chilean record is a drastic shift in environment and atmosphere throughout the hotel. The scene transitions to the middle of the night and returns to the nightmare. Fat Jorge, Manuel and Flaca assume their positions with their hands tied above their heads. The bright channels of light will emerge from the corners and beneath the edges of the bedrooms (Fig 27) and the stadium bar texture will wash over the stage (Fig 28). The hotel must have a painful and haunting shift from its normal interior look to the torture of these people.



Fig 28



Fig 29

Act 2 Scene 4

Fat Jorge awakens from the dream and pukes out the window from the lobby. Flaca rushes down to check on him. The lighting for the scene will quickly shift from the abstract world of the nightmare and open to cold moonlight sweeping throughout the lobby (Fig 29).

The conversation is the first time Fat Jorge has truly discussed his personal tortures and interrogations. The tone throughout the scene needs to have a painful and brittle tone to match the content of the conversation (Fig 30).



Fig 30

Act 2 Scene 5

Later that evening, Fat Jorge and Flaca have gone to bed. Joselito and Manuelita have snuck downstairs to the lobby to use the phone. They have had to grow up quickly within the family. They have seen things that children their age should not have to. Juan has come to the lobby from his room to also use the phone, but stays on the staircase and eavesdrops on the children's conversation. Lighting will use the moonlight source sweeping throughout the lobby, but to support the separation of the children from Juan, lighting will highlight the phone and the stairs with small pools of light (Fig 31).



Fig 31



Fig 32

Act 2 Scene 6

The following morning, the scene opens up to the lobby with Calladita and Receptionist around the Receptionist Desk. Lighting will open to the interior and artificial warmth of the lobby, pulling more attention and focus to the Reception Desk (Fig 32-32A). This interaction between the Receptionist (Jackie) and Calladita is the most personality we have seen from Calladita. It is important to embrace the excitement of us and the characters discovering her voice.

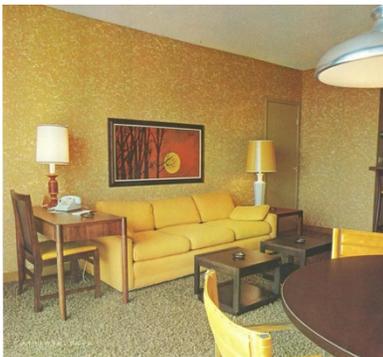


Fig 32A

Juan enters the lobby and startles Calladita by the phone. To show that Calladita was in her own world, lighting will open up from the Receptionist's Desk to the rest of the lobby as Juan descends the stairs. The scene ends with everyone discovering that Calladita is not mute, and their excitement fills the room. The men all leave the hotel to go on a job search around the city.

Act 2 Scene 7

Immediately following the men's exit from Scene 6 is Bill and Pat's entrance. They have come with good news saying that they have found jobs for the guest. The men return from their job search and Juan is wearing a chicken suit.

The scene ends with the refugees discovering that they will be leaving the hotel the next day. Even though this is what they were told when they arrived, this is still another drastic shift for these people's lives.

Lighting will remain the same as the previous scene since there are no drastic time or emotional shifts with the scene. The scene will end with a slow fade out of the lobby interior as the refugees take in their final moments of the lobby.

Act 2 Scene 8

Later that night, Fat Jorge and Flaca are in the lobby having an argument. Moonlight will enter the space and the table lamps of the lobby will be turned on for their conversation (Fig 33). This argument has drawn attention from the entire hotel and people are eavesdropping on the stairs. Lighting will highlight the eavesdroppers on the stairs to show that they are actively listening to the conversation between Fat Jorge and Flaca.

Fat Jorge is drunk and ends the argument by shattering his bottle in the lobby. To show the separation of this couple beginning to take place, lighting will slowly fade out of the lobby leaving Fat Jorge in the dark alone – just like his relationship with Flaca.

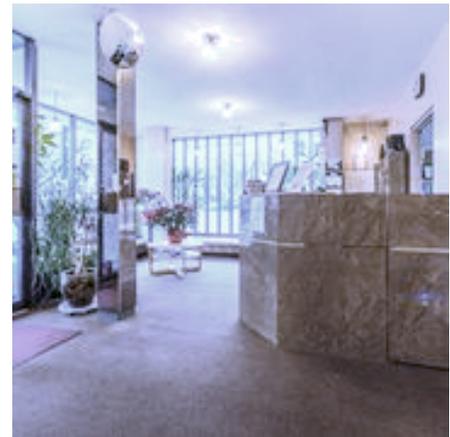


Fig 33



Fig 34

Act 2 Scene 9

Focus shifts from the lobby of the hotel to Manuel's bedroom as Cristina knocks on his door. Cristina is seeking intimacy with Manuel and chooses to visit his room in the middle of the night, trying to connect with him physically and emotionally. To support the intimate and private tone throughout the scene, lighting will only focus on Manuel's room, taking any lights away from the lobby and bedrooms. The tone for the room will be cool to support the evening moonlight (Fig 34). As the two begin to physically touch one another and unbutton each other's clothes, lights will slowly pull down to focus on the two within the room, highlighting the sensitivity of the scene.

As Cristina and Manuel embrace one another, little vignettes happen throughout the hotel. The Cueca Dancer begins to dance in the lobby; Fat Jorge makes his way back to his bedroom; Juan goes to the lobby and finds Calladita rocking on the couch – he embraces her and the two rock together; Fat Jorge attempts to be intimate with Flaca, but she denies him and Fat Jorge passes out on the bed. Each member of this hotel is trying to find intimacy and an emotional support from someone. Some relationships are developing, but some are breaking. Lighting will silhouette the vignettes with a cool highlight from behind to support the sensitivity of each vignette (Fig 35).



Fig 35

Act 2 Scene 10

Each vignette falls asleep and will be wrapped in cool moonlight filling the bedrooms and the lobby. As Fat Jorge stirs and begins to enter another nightmare, the characters assume their nightmare positions. Channels of light will emulate from the set with a bold red color to match the intensity and emotional strain of Flaca as she screams mercy for her baby (Fig 36). These red channels will pulse and tremor as Flaca and Fat Jorge scream from the nightmare.

Flaca runs to Fat Jorge and wakes him up. Lighting will immediately shift from the red pulsing lights to the moonlight in the bedroom (Fig 37). Fat Jorge is emotionally drained and breaks down crying. Lighting will only focus on their bedroom after the two wake from the nightmare to emphasize the emotionally intimate moment between the two.



Fig 37

Act 2 Scene 11

The next morning is Check-Out. The warm lights from the table lamps within the lobby fill the room. There is a colder tone throughout the lobby as it rains outside and as people arrive with their luggage to leave. The space is a mixture of sadness about leaving this place they've called home during their transition period, but there is also a feeling of excitement as they look forward to the future and what it may hold.

As people gather around during the final moments of the scene, lights will pull down to the group for the photo and there will be a burst of light to emulate the flash from the camera.



Fig 36

Epilogue

As the camera flash fades out, a cool silhouette will highlight the cast in the hotel (Fig 38). Manuelita emerges from the group and proceeds to update the audience on the life and journey of each character. Lighting will pull Manuelita out of the group and pull tightly to her as she moves from the group, calling back to her hard edged light used in the Prologue (Fig 39).



The Cueca Dancer emerges and has one final dance before the end of the play. Lighting will fade out on the group in the hotel and highlight the dancer for his final moments. After Manuelita's final line, lights will fade to black.



Fig 38

Fig 39