

DUPLICITY

By David Stea, based on a short story by Dagoberto Gilb

Setting: Entrance to Santa Monica Freeway, LA

Cast: George Gerst, driver of the second car Helen Hart, driver of the first car. The two cars have collided, a minor collision, across from the entrance to the Freeway

Staging: four chairs in line, representing two cars. **Geo**, driver of the rear car, seated in the 3rd seat. mimes opening the door and exits, walking to 1st seat of front car, where **Helen** is seated

[Sound of brakes screeching, then minor crash. Pause. Then sound of car door slamming]

GEO. It didn't even scratch my paint. [pause] So, how you doin'? Any damage to the car?

HELEN. Haven't had a chance to look at it.

GEO. I was kind of hoping ther4e might be at least a little ding, just so it takes a little more time and we can talk some.

HELEN. [tensely] I was hoping to get on my way pretty soon.

GEO. OK, in that case perhaps you can give me your phone number now, and I wouldn't have *to lay my regular BS on you to get it later.*

[*HELEN* smiles and relaxes. *GEO* inhales her scent and straightens out his clothes]

GEO. I saw that you had Florida plates. With your skin color you look like you could be Cuban.

HELEN. My parents are from Venezuela.

GEO [holds our his hand] My name's Jake.

HELEN. Elena. Well, that's the Spanish version, with which I was born. [they shake hands like it's the first time they've done so in their lives]

GEO. I really am sorry about hitting you like that.

HELEN, It happens. You didn't mean to.

GEO. Let's look at the damage. [he goes back with *HELEN* to examine the damage]

GEO. It's amazing how easy it is to put a dent in these new cars. Of course, it's just a small one, but new cars are so soft now they might r3eplace water beds soon. [giggles, then laughs]

So maybe we should go out to breakfast and talk it over.

HELEN. I usually don't eat breakfast.

GEO. Well, some coffee then.

HELEN. Thanks, but I really can't

GEO. You're not married are you?

HELEN. [looks surprised] No, I'm not.

GEO. Not that it would matter that much to me. I'm an open-minded kinda guy. (giggles)

HELEN. I have to get to work. [gets back into car]

GEO. I'm sure someone as interesting as you have an interesting job...

otherwise, that excuse sounds boring.

HELEN. Getting back to the problem of the present.....I'd better get your drivers license: state, number, all that .

GEO [nods, but looks disappointed] One little problem.

HELEN. What's that?

GEO. I didn't bring my license. I just forgot it this morning.

HELEN. [looking peeved] Why's that?

GEO. I'm a musician....and well, I dunno. I left my wallet in the pants I was wearing last night.

HELEN. SO? You play your music at night?

GEO. Yes...if you have a paper and a pen I'll give you're my address and all that.

[*HELEN* gets out of car again and both walk around to the glove compartment side of her car.

HELEN mimes getting a pad out of the glove compartment and handing them to *GEO*]

GEO. What if we don't report it to the insurance companies? I'll just get the dent fixed for you.

HELEN. I don't think my dad would let me do that.

GEO. Your dad? It's not your car?

HELEN. He bought it for me. And I live at home.

GEO. Right. I get it.

HELEN. You do have insurance?

GEO. [thinks for a moment, looks puzzled] Oh, yeah, sure.

HELEN. I guess you better write the name of that insurance company down, too.

GEO. [thinking again, scratches head, writes something on HELEN's pad] There.....I act, too.

HELEN. You do?

GEO [his chest swelling] Yep. Been in a couple of movies, too!

HELEN [smiles]. Cool!

GEO. So how about your phone number?

[*HELEN* scribbles something on her pad]

GEO. Would you excuse me for a moment? Be right back. [goes back to his car and sits in driver's seat, mimes taking out a cell phone and mimes dials a number]

GEO. Hi, sweetie! I had a little incident on the freeway but am back on my way to the office. [pause] Yes, it looks like a busy, busy day, back to back conferences morning and afternoon. [pause] What's that? [pause] Looks like I won't make it home for supper. Got two calls while on my way to work: there's company dinner scheduled, and I have another meeting after that [pause] No, I won't make it home until late, but please do give the kids a squeeze from their daddy. And save one for you. Love yuh. Sits thinking, talks to self; signs off, mimes putting phone away]

GEO. [To himself] Well, I wrote down the name of an insurance company an old friend once belonged to. Even if she copies my license numbers the now-expired old plates were replaced by plates from an old junked Buick. As for a telephone number, I made it up.

[*GEO* gets out of car, walking to *HELEN*'s car, mimes knocking on window; makes motion of rolling it down]. Elena, you are beautiful! Call me.

GEO. I will , but I just had an idea. What are you doing tonight?

HELEN. Nothing, yet.

GEO. How about having dinner with me.

HELEN. Not so I'll forget about out little accident!

GEO. Not at all. Just for a new friendship. What kind of food do you like?

HELEN. I haven't said yes, yet.

GEO. Yes, then?

HELEN. OK, yes.

GEO. What kind of food do you like?

HELEN. How about Italian?

GEO. Fine. Where do you live?

HELEN. In Santa Monica.

GEO. I know a nice little place where Santa Monica and Venice come together. Rosatto's,. Have you heard of it?

HELEN. I was there once, and liked it. They have very good pasta.

GEO. What kind of pasta you like?

HELEN. Fettucini's my favourite. What time?

GEO. How's 7:30 suit you.

HELEN. Fine with me.

GEO. Great, but I'm not up to meeting your father, after this. Can you meet me at Rosatto's?

HELEN. Mmmmmm. Yes, but in that case 7:00 PM's better for me.

GEO. Done. I'll have a good table reserved, with a view of the beach, and of the setting sun.

HELEN. You're on. [Turns to car window. *GEO* looks away, walks back to and enters his car]

END