

THE PHONE CALL

By

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

THOMAS MANLEY – about 40, Vice Principal of Hopkins Elementary School

ANA MARIA VEGA – about 30, exhausted mother of a Hopkins Elementary School student

SCENE

The stage is split between THOMAS MANLEY's office, stage right, and the kitchen of ANA MARIA VEGA, stage left. Mr. Manley reaches for a report from a large stack in his "in" basket, while Ms. Vega is busy washing dishes in her kitchen sink, humming a low tune with her radio. Mr. Manley seems to become more agitated as he reads, shaking his head and sighing. He finally reaches for his intercom.

MANLEY

(Into his intercom.)

Lindsay, is that Vega kid still out in the hallway?

LINDSAY

(Offstage voice.)

Yes, Mr. Manley.

MANLEY

Get his mother on the line for me, please.

LINDSAY

(Offstage voice.)

Sure thing.

MANLEY waits. The phone rings in ANA MARIA VEGA's kitchen. She turns down the radio and picks up the phone.

ANA MARIA

Hello?

LINDSAY

(Offstage voice.)

Mrs. Vega?

ANA MARIA

Yes?

LINDSAY

(Offstage voice.)

Please hold for Vice Principal Manley.

(Voice through Manley's intercom.)

Mr. Manley—Mrs. Vega is on line three.

MANLEY

(Into intercom.)

Thank you.

(He picks up the phone.)

Mrs. Vega . . . Thomas Manley from Hopkins Elementary here. How are you today?

ANA MARIA

Okay . . . is there a problem?

MANLEY

Well, yes, Mrs. Vega. Yes, there is. And it's the same problem we keep having with your son. Today he got into another fight, and this time he knocked out a kid's tooth and sent another to the hospital for stitches.

ANA MARIA

(Confused.)

I'm sure there is some mistake . . .

MANLEY

(Growing agitation.)

No—no mistake . . . other than my own, for not suspending your son for fighting the last time.

ANA MARIA

Mr. Manley, I think you got this all wrong . . .

MANLEY

(Exasperated.)

That's the problem with parents like you! You all think your little darlings can do no wrong! They may be angels at home, but they get to school and all hell breaks loose . . .

ANA MARIA

Mr. Manley, I'm sure that there are kids like that, but you are mistaken . . .

MANLEY

(On a roll.)

MANLEY (cont.)

Oh, sure! “Not my kid!” It’s never the kid’s fault! What’s the reason now? “His dad just got out of jail,” . . . “His dad just left home,” . . . “We’re breaking up.” You people are unbelievable.

ANA MARIA

(Offended.)

Excuse me? What do you mean, “you people”?

MANLEY

(Still venting.)

As if that were any kind of excuse for your kid to act like a thug . . .

ANA MARIA

That’s not fair . . .

MANLEY

I’ll tell you what “not fair”. For whatever reason, it’s “not fair” for your son to take his home problems out on other kids at school . . .

ANA MARIA

. . . which he never did.

MANLEY

Oh, really? And how do you know? You don’t see how he acts once he’s out the door. You don’t know the things he does.

ANA MARIA

(Angry.)

Well, I do know one thing! He never started that fight . . .

MANLEY

Unbelievable! We’ve got a ton of witnesses—students, teachers! You weren’t there! How come you’re so sure?

ANA MARIA

(Yelling.)

BECAUSE HE’S BLIND!

MANLEY

(Stunned. Long pause.)

Blind?

ANA MARIA

Yes. Blind. Since birth.

MANLEY

(Confused.)
We're talking about the same kid—Terry Vega, right?

ANA MARIA

Jerry. Jerry Vega.

MANLEY

You're not Lupe Vega?

ANA MARIA

(Barely contained patience.)
No. Ana Maria Vega.

MANLEY

(Looks through his report.)
Oh.
(Embarrassed.)
I believe I owe you an apology.

ANA MARIA

(Stiffly.)
I believe you do.
(Pause.)
But while I've got you on the phone, there is something you can do for me.

MANLEY

(Tired and cowed.)
Certainly, Mrs. Vega. What can I do for you?

ANA MARIA

We've got a little problem with some boys in Jerry's class hiding his white cane that he has leaning up against the wall as he's working at his desk.

MANLEY

I'm sure it's just a running practical joke . . .

ANA MARIA

Well, it's not funny.

MANLEY

Kids do these things all the time, Mrs. Vega. When I was a boy, kids swiped my tennis shoes nearly every day . . .

ANA MARIA

(Growing impatience.)

ANA MARIA (cont.)

Your tennis shoes? Really?

MANLEY

Sure. They were just having some innocent fun . . .

ANA MARIA

Tell me, Mr. Manley . . . how would you have felt if they took your legs?

MANLEY

(Snorts.)

That's absurd. I have my legs . . .

ANA MARIA

Lucky you. Jerry doesn't have his eyesight . . . not without his white cane, that is.

MANLEY

(Pauses to think.)

Oh.

ANA MARIA

Not so funny anymore, is it?

MANLEY

I see your point.

(Pause.)

But I don't know how we can control for that. We can move Jerry into another class—one for kids with special needs.

ANA MARIA

And why should we do that? Jerry's doing just fine where he is—except for these kids. What would moving him prove? That he isn't normal and doesn't belong in the sighted world? And what would these kids learn? That they can get away with this crap?

MANLEY

Boys will be boys . . .

ANA MARIA

. . . and bullies will be bullies.

(She shakes her head.)

Sheesh. No wonder you've got fights in the hallways.

MANLEY

(Tired.)

What do you suggest we do about it?

ANA MARIA

Talk to them. Talk to their parents. Hell, talk to them together . . . and then talk to ALL the kids. Teach them how to treat people with disabilities in this world. Isn't that part of what a school is supposed to do?

MANLEY

(Stiffly.)

I'll take it under advisement.

ANA MARIA

(Snorts.)

Sure. Sure you will.

MANLEY

(Considers, then softens somewhat.)

No—I mean it. I'll look into it.

(Pause.)

Is there anything else? Apparently, I've got another parent to call.

ANA MARIA

No, Mr. Manley. Thanks for listening. It's a start.

MANLEY

Well, you have a good day.

ANA MARIA

Thanks. You, too.

They hang up the phone. Both shake their heads and heave a deep sigh. Fade to black.

THE END