

The House of Ramon Iglesia

By José Rivera

Charlie, 16; Javier, 22

The New York Ensemble Studio Theatre first produced *The House of Ramon Iglesia*, which was a winner of the Foundation of the Dramatists Guild/CBS Play Contest. Set in Holbrook, Long Island, New York, this contemporary play depicts the daily life of the Iglesias, a Puerto Rican family struggling to make ends meet. The play's power derives from the tension between the father and the eldest son, Javier, who is attempting to break away from his immigrant heritage. In the end, Javier comes to realize that as an Hispanic-American, he must first learn to appreciate his ethnic heritage before he can find his true identity.

In Scene 3 of Act One, Javier discovers his younger brother, Charlie, packing up the family's belongings; Ramon plans on taking the family home to Puerto Rico.



There are half-filled boxes all over the living room, piles of clothes, and garbage. The walls are nearly bare and some of the clutter of the room has been relieved. Charlie is playing a radio and packing things into boxes. Javier enters, putting a shirt on.

JAVIER: *Charlie* . . .

CHARLIE: Carlos to you, bro.

JAVIER: *Charlie* . . .

CHARLIE: It's Carlos now.

JAVIER: (*Noticing the boxes.*) When are you going to learn to *spell*?

CHARLIE: What? I can spell.

JAVIER: Did you mark up all the boxes like this? (*Inspects the other boxes.*)

CHARLIE: That's the spelling I got from Mom.

JAVIER: "That's the spelling I got from Mom."

CHARLIE: Hey, you better watch your step, when Julio leaves, I'm the beast of the house!

JAVIER: How the hell do you figure that . . . *Charlie*?

CHARLIE: 'Cause I got these. (*Grabs crotch.*) I don't know what you got!

JAVIER: None of you guys have a method for anything. Look at this mess. I wish you guys would check with me before doing stuff like this.

CHARLIE: What stuff?

JAVIER: Sending half your clothes to Doña Perez. Getting rid of half the furniture.

CHARLIE: If we listened to you, we'd never leave.

JAVIER: You guys just go ahead and do these mindless things.

CHARLIE: "You guys."

JAVIER: (*Sitting down to write letters.*) I mean, I didn't know Dad quit his job last week. No one told me.

CHARLIE: He was afraid you'd have a hemorrhage.

JAVIER: Wouldn't you? Charlie, Dad's spent Calla's downpayment already. What's he going to do for cash after it's gone?

CHARLIE: After today, Calla can pay Dad the balance on the house.

JAVIER: That's not the point. It's just that you guys never plan properly.

CHARLIE: (*Crossing to Javier.*) Why do you call everybody "you guys"? It really sucks, Javier. You're part of this family too, you know.

JAVIER: Don't remind me.

CHARLIE: You try to make everybody in the family feel stupid.

JAVIER: I don't try – it just happens. (*Charlie gives him a dirty look.*) I'm sorry Charlie – Carlos – whoever you are this week. I just wish you guys would consult with me sometimes.

CHARLIE: Consult with you! We have trouble eating meals with you.

JAVIER: Where did I go wrong? Where did I fail?

CHARLIE: You went wrong by calling everybody in the family "you guys." (*They continue packing boxes.*) Man, I don't know where you get all your hemorrhoids from. This is the best thing that could happen to Mom and Dad.

JAVIER: To Mom, maybe.

CHARLIE: You don't go shopping with Mom – me and Dad got to talk to everybody in the store for her. She don't read English. Dad drives her everywhere. This place is worse than San Quentin to her.