

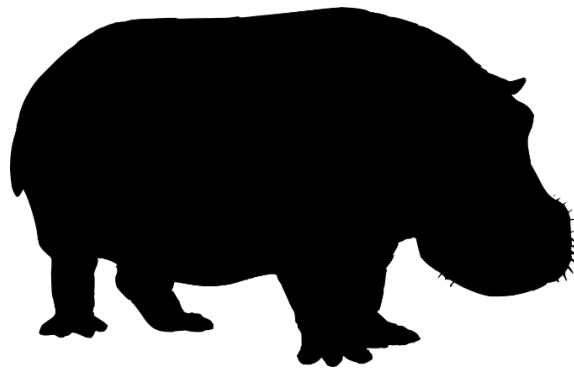
Escobar's Hippo

by

The Hippo Formerly Known

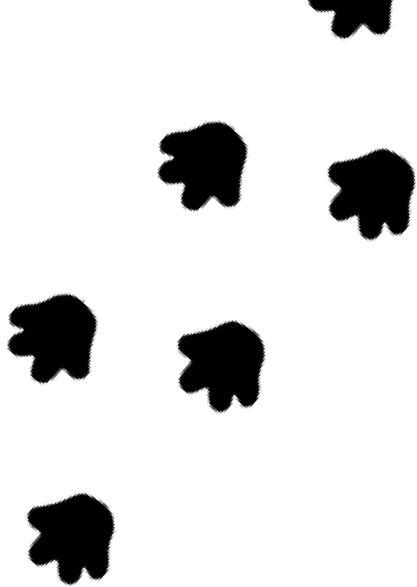
as

Franky D. Gonzalez



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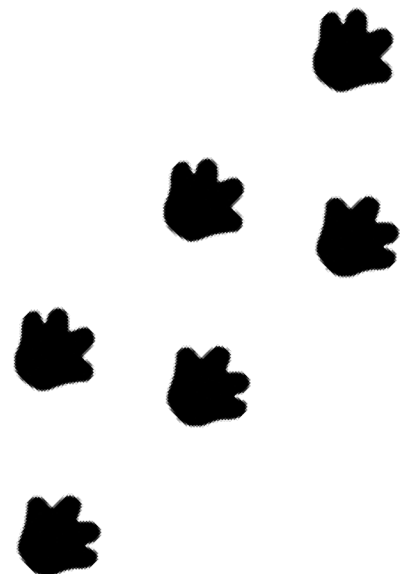


To John and Daniel

Who both pushed me in a McDonald's to write something that was fun for once in my life

and

to the Hippos of Colombia for holding my interest for so long



Characters

Bernardo	Unkempt, messy, old clothes, fashionably poor with a Bohemian flair. Self-pitying. He feels the world owes him for his genius. mid-20s to early-30s. Male.
Dalia	Waitress at the café Bernardo frequents. Sensibly dressed. Good spirits, and a desire to be part of something important. Mid-20s to early-30s. Female.
Juan	Bernardo's best friend. Smartly, but casually dressed. Well put-together, no-nonsense, does not like to waste time. Mid-20s to early 30s. Male.
Escobar's Hippo	A hippopotamus of either sub-Saharan or Colombian descent. Can't say for sure. Is descended from Pablo Escobar's private collection of hippos and may even be one of Pablo Escobar's original hippos. Again, can't say for sure. But it's definitely a hippopotamus and probably immortal.
Town Mayor	Self-important, bureaucratic, but not smart enough to actually be a bureaucrat. Overcomplicates the simplest of matters and jams up the power of government to do something useful. You know, like in real life.
Chorus of Townspeople	A group five* people always suggesting, always questioning, and never really doing anything except complain. As such, they are the most powerful and influential voting bloc in the town, and therefore the most important people at town halls and gatherings.
The Hipposapien	Part human, part hippo, all belligerence. Should have the head of a hippo and begins bipedal but ends on all fours.
The Narrator	A commentator on the inner lives of the characters. Think David Attenborough if he was watching the end of humanity with fascination and a little excitement.

Settings:

-A town along the Magdalena River in Colombia

- -Café
- -An Assembly Hall

-The Ruins of Pablo Escobar's Compound in Hacienda Nápoles

*Versions of this play casting three townspeople or four townspeople can be provided upon request.

Note on the Narrator. the Comedy. 'cpf 'Ecupi :

The NARRATOR character should read the bolded stage directions/descriptive moments. These should be done off-stage and in a style that resembles a documentary narrator. At the end of the play, the NARRATOR will reveal themselves to be a HIPPOSAPIEN.

Any stage direction that is only italicized (such as the *Blackouts* or in the Hippologue) should not be read aloud in production. If doing a reading of this play, have the actor who played ESCOBAR'S HIPPO read the stage directions in the Hippologue.

To the Actors:

Be campy. Be over the top. Be wildly dramatic. Have big reactions. As the NARRATOR narrates your movements, do them, and then deliver the lines as the Narrator finishes their own. Make it melodramatic and have a good time.

I don't mean to be prescriptive or give you a line reading, but the operative word for this is "Play."

It's a play, so play around.

On Casting:

While it would be fantastic for a cast that is completely Latin American in descent, I acknowledge that this can be a challenge for a cast of this size. I am happy to consider a diverse cast as a compromise. Latin America, after all, encompasses many ethnicities and backgrounds. My only ask, is that the best effort possible is made to ensure BERNARDO, DALIA, and JUAN are cast with actors of the global majority.

-FDG

Scene I: Un Hippo con Leche

1

AT RISE: Our story begins in the distant past at a café in a town along the Magdalena River, the most important river in Colombia. It is a curious land where, interestingly enough the next great leap in evolution shall occur. At the precipice of this miraculous event is an uninteresting Colombian JUAN sitting at the café, sipping roasted bean water with the milk of a cow while looking over a script. He is clearly unhappy, both with the bean water and the script in front of him. DALIA the waitress, another Colombian, who is far more interesting than her customer, comes out of the café with some arepas--a tasteless utterly contemptible corn patty that will baffle scientists the world over on how humans could ever consume such filth--and sets them on the table with butter.

Juan

Thank you.

Dalia

I'm inside if you need anything.

Satisfied that she has performed her duties, DALIA leaves to tend to her various responsibilities. JUAN checks his watch impatiently, wondering why he does this to himself. But his thoughts are interrupted by a loud GRUNT from offstage. JUAN looks around to see where the noise came from. BERNARDO a human somehow even more uninteresting than JUAN and yet somehow louder, stumbles toward JUAN'S table, gasping for breath.

Juan

Seven.

Bernardo

I know, I'm late. Let's not linger on this.

Juan

Seven.

BERNARDO takes his seat across from an annoyed JUAN who cannot help but wonder how perhaps he could get away with homicide.

Bernardo

I know what you're doing. I am not playing along.

Juan

Seven times. In a row. Late.

Bernardo

And seven times. In a row. You show up.

Juan

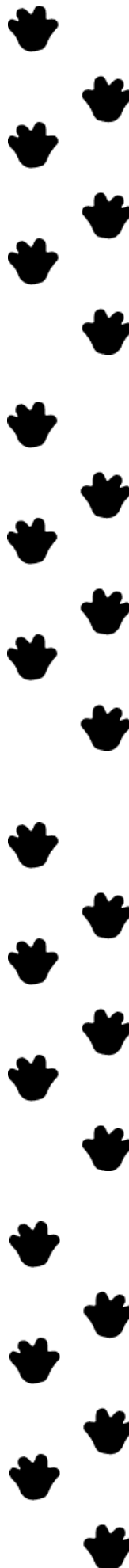
You're abusing my friendship

Bernardo

And you're being melodramatic.

Juan

You ask me--no--you *beg* me to read your script and show up here in the morning to discuss--



Bernardo

Oh, my God. I am sorry. I had you wake up early to spend the day with a friend to talk about literature. Oh, how you've suffered such indignities—

Juan

(overlapping)

You are over thirty minutes late for this meeting that you called “absolutely the most important meeting we’ll have in our lifetimes.”

Bernardo

(overlapping)

And it is the most important meeting of our lifetimes. I was helping you build anticipation and gather your thoughts—

Juan

(overlapping)

Oh, cut the bullshit, Bernardo. Just admit you were late and take responsibility like a man—

Bernardo

Fine. I was late. I was late because of who I am as a human being. I cannot get my shit together. And you, Juan, are the superior specimen.

Juan

At last. We agree on something.

Bernardo

Can we get started, please?

Juan

By all means.

BERNARDO waits, expectantly. **JUAN** opens his mouth as though to speak. **BERNARDO** leans forward, ready to receive **JUAN'S** notes. But, **JUAN** thinks better of it and closes his mouth.

Juan

Hmmm...

Bernardo

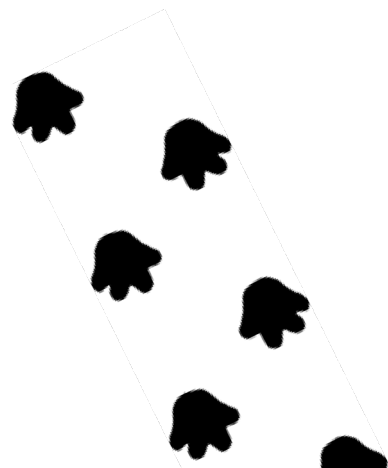
Yes...?

Juan

Hmmm...well first, do you want some coffee?

Bernardo

Oh, fuck you.



Juan

No, no. It's a reasonable question. After all, we're at a café.

Bernardo

I'll pass on the coffee.

Juan

Why?

Bernardo

They burn their coffee here.

JUAN is rendered speechless.

Juan

(incredulous)

There are literally five cafés closer to where we live and you had me come to a place, 45 minutes away, where you don't even like the coffee.

Bernardo

The atmosphere is nice here.

Juan

Atmosphere is not worth a 45-minute commute.

Bernardo

But good coffee is?

Juan

(increasing anger)

Yes! Idiot. I can understand a commute for the best coffee you ever had. I cannot, absolutely, cannot justify it for "atmosphere."

Bernardo

It's—it's a charming café. Burnt coffee notwithstanding, this is a lovely establishment with— uh —character!

Juan

Why are we here?

Bernardo

I told you—

Juan

Bullshit. Bullshit. Bull. Shit! Why are we here?

DALIA returns. BERNARDO upon seeing the waitress reveals to JUAN why they are here.

Dalia

Everything okay?

Bernardo

(more manly)

Yeah. Yeah. Fine. Just, you know. Talking with my friend, you know?

DALIA sees BERNARDO and she smiles, activating her survival mechanism that employs professional flirting which yields larger and larger tips from customers who think they have a chance.

Dalia

Aww, there's my favorite customer! It's been awhile. Where you been?

Juan

(disgusted)

Oh my God...

BERNARDO ignores JUAN'S gaze as he tries his best impression of "viable life partner material."

Bernardo

Oh, you know...been at home writing my new play. Juan here is a big fan. He just had to meet me after reading it.

Dalia

You're a playwright? Wow! What's your play about?

Juan

(disbelief, overlapping)

Oh. My God.

BERNARDO gives JUAN that look, "Go with it, man. Don't ruin this for me."

Bernardo

It's a, you know, romantic drama. Trying to find the lead actress. Know anybody?

Juan

Jesus Christ...

Dalia

No, I mean. I don't know any actors so...

Bernardo

Well what about you? You ever consider being an actress?

Juan
Wow...

Oh dear. It's DALIA'S worst nightmare. That customer.

Dalia
(playing it off with a little laugh)
Stop teasing me.

Bernardo
No, I'm serious.

Juan
Oh yeah. Of—of course you are.

Bernardo
Maybe you and I can meet up sometime and see if, uh, the chemistry is there.

A series of loud GRUNTS and SNORTS interrupts BERNARDO'S sad attempts at seduction.

Dalia
The hell was that?

DALIA, a woman of action, goes to investigate—and get away from BERNARDO who, now free of the fog of attraction, remembers JUAN.

Bernardo
So, uh, what did you...uh...what'd you think of *100 Days of Ennui*?


Juan
The script is stupid. It's trite, derivative garbage. Whoever told you that you should be a writer, should be executed by hanging—no—firing squad—no—guillotine—no—burnt alive with your garbage scripts fueling the flames.

Bernardo
But did you like it?

JUAN is rendered speechless yet again.

Juan
If you ever, ever fucking waste my precious time dragging me to some burnt-ass- coffee with overpriced arepas café, I will personally see to it that you never—

A piercing SCREAM fills the air. DALIA returns to the men. Behind her, we see what will become the catalyst that will change the world. A large and belligerent hippopotamus arrives at the cafe. This is ESCOBAR'S HIPPO. It is mighty. It is massive. It is monstrous. JUAN jumps out of his seat in shock and backs away, while BERNARDO sits frozen in his chair unable to move, much like his theatrical career.



Escobar's Hippo
grunting noises

Juan
What the fuck is that?

Escobar's Hippo
ROAR!

Juan
Go away! Go!

JUAN throws an arepa at ESCOBAR'S HIPPO. This greatly offends the hippo.

Escobar's Hippo
Snorts in defiance

Bernardo
That's a fucking hippo...Jesus Christ. That's a fucking HIPPO!

Escobar's Hippo
trumpets proudly

ESCOBAR'S HIPPO leaves, angered and unable to bear the insult of these humans.



Scene II: The Hippopotamus in the Room

We come now to a packed assembly hall. A gathering place for Colombian townspeople where they talk about accomplishing everything and doing nothing.

Townsperson 1

I saw its paw prints heading in the direction of the store.

Townsperson 2

Do hippos have paws?

Townsperson 3

Does that matter?

Townsperson 2

I think it matter tremendously. If we can't properly identify what kind of tracks it leaves, how can we be sure that we're tracking the hippo and not some other creature?

Townsperson 4

Are there other creatures?!?

Townsperson 1

Then what would you call them?

Townsperson 2

I would say they are more like hooves.

Townsperson 3

Hippos don't have hooves.

Townsperson 2

How would you know?

Townsperson 4

We're losing the subject, are there other creatures besides the hippo in the town?

Townsperson 1

What makes you think there are other creatures?

Townsperson 3

If you ask me, they have feet.

Townsperson 2

Nonsense.

Townsperson 3

As opposed to hooves?

Townsperson 4

Are there other creatures we need to prepare for or not?

BERNARDO, JUAN, and DALIA arrive having escaped the Hippo and in search of more information. They watch the unfolding chaos with the realization; much like the government bodies of all human societies, nothing is being accomplished. It is sad. It is pathetic.

Townsperson 5

Um...I...I think hippos have webbed toes? Does that mean... they have claws?

Townsperson 4

Claws???

Townsperson 3

You're basically implying that a hippo is closer anatomically to a duck than a rhinoceros?

Townsperson 2

Wait, wait, wait, ducks have claws?

Townsperson 3

I thought they had webbed toes.

Townsperson 5

I think you can have both.

Dalia

I think we're fucked.

Juan

(to BERNARDO and DALIA)

What the hell are they talking about?

Bernardo

No clue...

Townsperson 1

I've always wondered if the difference between a hippo and a rhino is that hippos swim while rhinos stay on land. Otherwise they're the same creature. Like frogs and toads.

Townsperson 2

(*incredulous*)

Hippos and rhinos are not like frogs and toads.

Townsperson 4

A plague of frogs and toads? Rhinos? Is this a zoological invasion?

Townsperson 5

Wait. Um...I thought we were here to debate the merits of opening the assembly hall to weekly meditation classes?

Townsperson 1

That was rescheduled.

Townsperson 5

Then...what are doing here?

Dalia

(facepalm)

You're kidding me!

Townsperson 2

We're here to discuss the hippo.

Townsperson 4

And the rhinos, the toads, the ducks, and the frogs.

Townsperson 5

But the capybara is a friend to all.

Townsperson 3

No, just the hippo.

Townsperson 1

Well however many animals, we need to deal with it.

Townsperson 3

Deal with what?

Townsperson 2

The hippo.

Townsperson 5

I thought we were talking theoretically. There's an actual hippo?

Dalia

We need to do something about this...

Bernardo

I think we should let the miracle of the government process run--(its course).

A rattling shakes the assembly hall. The hippo has arrived! Chaos begins to take hold of the TOWNSPEOPLE as the rattling grows louder and violent.

Townsperson 3

It's the rhino!

Juan

There is no rhino!

Townsperson 4

How do you know? There are five different sets of tracks from different animals!

Escobar's Hippo

(offstage)

ROAR

We hear the sound of tearing cloth and yelling.

Mayor

(offstage)

My cardigan!

The TOWNSPEOPLE activate their greatest and most effective defense mechanism: panic and yelling.

Townsperson 5

Hooves, paws, webbed claws!

Townsperson 1

I only said there was one set of hippo tracks heading to the store!

Townsperson 4

Then why are we talking about frogs and toads?

Bernardo

I have no earthly idea.

A bloodcurdling scream fills the assembly hall. A silence fall over the gathering. Just then, The MAYOR of the Colombians struggles into the assembly hall pulling on a cravat in a mighty tug-o-war with ESCOBAR'S HIPPO.

Mayor

You may have taken my bodyguard and my cardigan, but you will NOT take this cravat, do you understand me?

Escobar's Hippo

Bellows out in disagreement.

Townsperson 4

Look! Our heroic mayor is battling the hippo and protecting us!

Townsperson 2

I know who I'm voting for next election!

Mayor
I said no!

11

Escobar's Hippo
Grunts in determination

The MAYOR starts getting pulled toward ESCOBAR'S HIPPO.

Dalia
We need to help the Mayor.

Bernardo
In a crisis it's best if civilians not get involved.

Juan
You are truly the hero we need.

Bernardo
(sincerely)
Thank you.

Dalia
The mayor's going to die!

JUAN takes action remembering his earlier triumph. He pulls an arepa from his pocket. He throws the arepa at ESCOBAR'S HIPPO. This greatly offends the hippo—AGAIN!

Juan
Go away! Go!

Bernardo
Shoo, hippo! Shoo!

Escobar's Hippo lets go of the cravat harrumphing in indignant rage. As slowly the hippo noises fade, the assembled citizenry take stock.

Dalia
Is everyone alright?

Bernardo
I am, yes thank you.

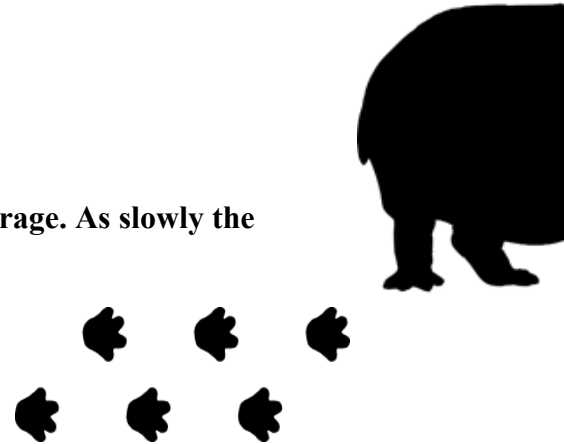
Townsperson 1
Yes, I think we're alright.

Townsperson 4
I think that was a hippo and it had feet.

Townsperson 2
Fine. We'll call them feet.

Townsperson 5
Am I the only one who didn't know about this hippo? Just me?

The MAYOR has sunk to their knees, holding the shredded cravat, mourning this unbearable loss. JUAN meanwhile goes to investigate the carnage outside. A moment later he returns.



Juan

There's a man outside. I think he's dead.

Dalia

What?

DALIA goes with JUAN to investigate. BERNARDO knowing there's protection for him in a herd rather than in solitude begins to follow and immediately turns around followed by DALIA and JUAN who have already completed their investigation.

Dalia

Awful...

Juan

Shit...literally. Shit. He was just...trampled...

Bernardo

And covered in shit.

Mayor

He sacrificed himself to protect me.

Townsperson 1

He's a real hero.

Townsperson 3

We need to set up a memorial.

Mayor

(to Juan and Bernardo)

Did you happen to see a cardigan next to the body?

Dalia

I don't know. Did you happen to see one Bernardo??

Bernardo

I...I don't know...

Juan

I did...I'm sorry mayor.

Mayor

No...

The MAYOR rushes out. He howls in anguish.

Mayor

(crying out like in Ranchera music)

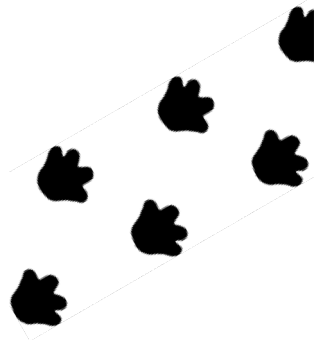
Por Dios!! NOOOOOOOOOO!!

Townsperson 4

Listen to the mayor. What a pure heart.

Townsperson 5

Mourning the loss of a manservant.



The MAYOR returns with what used to be a really fetching cardigan.

Mayor
(*resolute*)

We must begin our meeting. We must show that our glorious civilization is resilient against the bestial tides of nature. We must show the murderer and butcher of those things most precious to us, that we are not easily felled by intrusions and audacity. We must come together, united by our common cause to bring this destroyer of what we hold most precious to justice.

Townsperson 3
For the dead!

Mayor
For my cardigan and cravat!
(*realizing that people are staring*)
I mean, manservant! His name...Cardigan Cravat. A tragic loss.

Townsperson 4
(*wailing*)

If I have another child, I shall name that baby Cardigan Cravat in his honor!

Everyone applauds, using the slapping of their hand paws to express approval of this commitment.

Mayor
Order. Order! We must act quickly if we are to overcome this crisis. First. As in any criminal investigation. We must establish a pathology and a overall profile. What do we know about our enemy?

Juan
It's a...hippo...

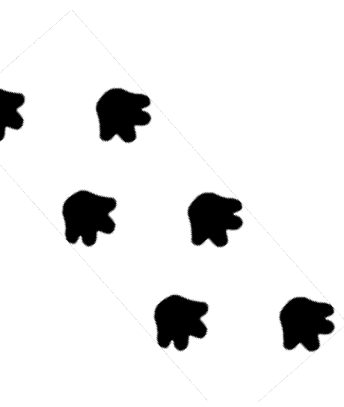
Dalia
A rampaging hippo.

Townsperson
Query!

Mayor
Acknowledged.

Townsperson 3
Is the hippo rampaging or cavorting?

Bernardo
The hell's the difference to a hippo?



Townsperson 3

Rampaging denotes malicious intent. Cavorting means God bless it, it doesn't know any better. It may as well be frolicking.

Bernardo

It just frolicked a man to death. Again, what's the difference?

Townspeople

Question!

Mayor

Acknowledged.

Townsperson 2

Do we know where the hippo came from?

Townsperson 3

Aren't they from Africa?

Mayor

Ah! So! It's a foreign invader. Violating our national sovereignty.

Juan

Are we sure it's a foreigner?

Mayor

What do you mean?

Juan

My grandfather worked with Pablo Escobar at his farm Hacienda Napoles years ago. He helped Escobar bring many animals from Africa. After he was killed, the government retrieved all the animals, but they wouldn't take these four hippos.

Mayor

Why not?

Juan

I'm not certain.

Mayor

Are you telling me that our government refuses to remove this invasive predator?

Townsperson 1

Or, is the government unable to remove the hippos?

Mayor
Explain.

Townsperson 1

Well it's clear that our government was able to arrest, detain, and deport the other animals to their countries of origin. Why not the hippos?

Bernardo

Because the hippos would try to kill anyone that comes near?

Townsperson 1

Or—or! Did Escobar secure the correct documentation and paperwork to bring the hippos here and establish them as naturalized citizens of Colombia?

Dalia

Ca—can hippos become Colombian citizens?

The TOWNSPEOPLE all look to the MAYOR for the expected guidance of their leader. The Mayor, alas, is not a very good guide.

Mayor

(surprised)

I...uh...If the hippos have proper documentation...I suppose it's possible.

Townspople

Query!

Mayor

Acknowledged

Townsperson 2

Could their citizenship be revoked on grounds of being a public menace?

The MAYOR has grown confused and quickly is losing the ability to speak.

Mayor

I...

Townsperson 3

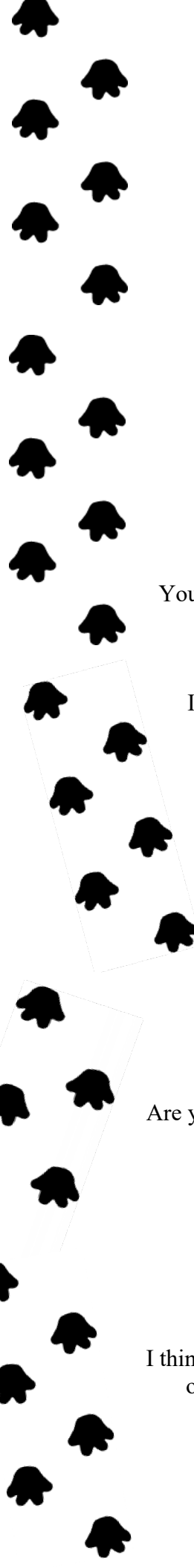
Could your citizenship be revoked for being a public menace?

Townsperson 2

Of course not, I was born in Colombia. I've no other nation of origin.

Townspople

Question!



Mayor
Acknowledged.

Townsperson 3
What if this hippo has no other nation of origin?

Townsperson 1
That's absurd, hippos are not from Colombia.

Townsperson 3
Point of order! That's xenophobic.

Townsperson 1
How dare you insinuate I'm a xenophobe?

Townsperson 3
You said hippos are not from Colombia, but it is a distinct possibility that this hippo was from Colombia.

Townsperson 1
I retract my statement and ask all accusations of xenophobia be stricken from the record.

Mayor
Well, the record-keeper was frolicked and/or rampaged on by the hippo so...

Townspeople
Question!

Mayor
Acknowledged.

Townsperson 3
What if this hippo is a descendant of the four hippos who emigrated here?

Townsperson 1
Are you saying that hippo's a natural citizen and we have no right to deport it from this country?

Townsperson 5
But surely, we can arrest the hippo?

Townsperson 2
Can we?

Townsperson 3
I think what's most important before we can take a course of action is to establish if this hippo is one of the original four hippos brought here, or if it's a descendant of those four hippos?

Townsperson 5

But can't you obtain naturalized citizenship after living for five years in this country?

Townsperson 3

But you have to pass a test.

Townsperson 5

What if that hippo did?

Townsperson 1

How would a hippo pass this test?

Townsperson 2

But that's a legitimate question! If this hippo has met the requisite five-year requirement of living here, is it our civic duty to offer this hippo the chance at Colombian citizenship and administer the test?

Townsperson 3

It's only fair.

Townsperson 1

How would we know if it qualifies to take the test or has already passed the test?

Mayor

Well...uhh....

Townsperson 4

So what we need to figure out is if this hippo is either an undocumented immigrant, a naturalized citizen, or a Colombian by birth?

Townsperson 2

Does this mean that there is a brand new species of hippo?

Townsperson 1

A Colombian hippo?

Townsperson 3

Could that mean, that, potentially, this makes the hippo a national treasure?

Townsperson 1

I wouldn't go that far...but it certainly makes it one of us.

Townspeople

Query!

Mayor

You don't say query everytime...

Townsperson 2

Have we considered the possibility that this new species of hippo may be endangered?

Townsperson 4

Do we have conservation laws in place for the Colombian Hippo?

The TOWNSPEOPLE, look to the MAYOR not realizing their leader is of no help.

Mayor

Well...uhh...

Townsperson 1

We still haven't answered whether it even IS Colombian.

Townsperson 4

How will we know?

Townsperson 2

Do you think there are any records?

Townspeople

Question!

Mayor

We don't need to keep doing that...

Townsperson 3

Where would we find a hippo's birth certificate?

Juan

It stands to reason it would be in Hacienda Napoles where Escobar first brought the hippos...wouldn't it?

Townsperson 4

That means we need to contact Hacienda Napoles for the records.

Juan

It's abandoned. Practically a ruin.

Townsperson 1

We're overcomplicating this. Why not ask the hippo directly for its citizenship status?

Bernardo

Who in their right mind is gonna go up to a hippo and ask for its papers?



Mayor

We need to get back on track. As I see things. We need to establish several committees and taskforces aimed at gathering information and preparing for all eventualities regarding our new...resident pest...or potential compatriot.

Townsperson 3

Point of order. Calling a hippo a pest without first establishing—

Mayor

Fine. Fine. Strike it from the record.

(beat)

Now, as I see it. We need a taskforce for the eventuality of capture and deportation of the hippo should it prove to be an undocumented immigrant first overlooked by the intelligentsia Bogota in the original raid of Hacienda Napoles. Agreed?

The citizens murmur in assent.

Mayor

Next—

Townspeople

Query!

Mayor

Ignored.

Townsperson 2

How do we form a committee?

Mayor

Begrudgingly, I acknowledge that this is a query that needs answering. I propose we form a council to select the committee from a pool of worthy candidates for committee and taskforce.

Townspeople

Question!

Mayor

Please stop.

Townsperson 3

How do we form a council that will decide the committees and taskforces?

Mayor

Simple. We get qualified individuals to lead that taskforce. Has anyone lived in close proximity to hippos either African or Colombian?

Juan

I lived near Hacienda Napoles when I visited my grandfather, before things-

Mayor

You are now the head of the various councils, committees, taskforces, and other such bodies that will decide all questions surrounding our hippo...issue.

Juan

What?

Townspeople

Query!

Mayor

Oh God...

Townsperson 2

Regardless of anything, there is going to be a lot of paperwork involved. Some of which this hippo will have to sign.

Townsperson 5

Can a hippo sign anything?

Townsperson 4

Poor dear, it has no hands.

Townsperson 1

No, no, no. Several animals have survived just fine without hands.

Townsperson 4

But this is a potential Colombian citizen. We need to help make sure it can sign documents.

Townsperson 2

Would a stamp of its hoofprint work?

Townsperson 3

Point of order! We established that hippos have feet.

Juan

Does it really matter?

Townsperson 1

I still think they have paws...



Townsperson 3

No, we all agreed that hippos have—

Mayor

We will get a stamp and drop the subject.

Townsperson 3

Point of order!

Mayor

No more! Now who among us will volunteer to go to Hacienda Napoles and try to retrieve the hippo birth records?

Dalia

This is a waste of time. Why do we need birth records?

Mayor

We must exhaust every possibility to arrive at the best conclusion. Even if it means we take too much time, or even run completely out of time. Or never had the time at all! Now, who shall go? Who will rise to the occasion?

Seeing none of the TOWNSPEOPLE, JUAN, or BERNARDO rising to the occasion, DALIA raises her hand, if only to reach some kind of solution.

Dalia

(eyes rolling)

I can go. I can do it.

Bernardo

(seeing an opportunity)

I'll go with you! You may need protection.

Dalia

No, no. That's okay.

Mayor

That's a good idea! Traveling in pairs means you can cover more ground. All in favor?

All except JUAN and DALIA says "Aye." DALIA hates her life while BERNARDO begins planning.

Bernardo

(to Juan)

This could be the romantic excursion I need to win her over, filled with suspense, danger, and...uh.. romance! Like my--critically underrated and still criminally unproduced--screenplay, *Love in the Time of the Common Cold*.

Juan

You're going to get sued.

Mayor

Now go forth you two. So it is. So, it shall always be.

Dalia

I know who I'm not voting for next election.

The FOURTH TOWNSPERSON offended at Dalia's lack of loyalty retaliates.

Townsperson 4

I volunteer Juan to speak with the hippo.

Mayor

There's an idea!

Juan

Wait, what's happening!?

Mayor

Go then, our most learned citizen--who having a degree is the most qualified to take this task!

Juan

My degree is in Communications!

Mayor

What degree is better suited for speaking with the Hippo than Communications? Now go! Though you risk your life, know that your community also carries the greatest risk of all, the risk of losing you to this cardigan carnivore.

A CRASH. ESCOBAR'S HIPPO has returned—with a vengeance! The people know what to do.

Mayor

Meeting adjourned, Godspeed to you all, you have your tasks.

The TOWNSPEOPLE panic and flee. The MAYOR ties the remnants of the cravat around their neck and follows. JUAN, DALIA, and BERNARDO stay attempting to understand what happened.

Dalia

Juan? Come with us?

BERNARDO gives JUAN the look that says, "You will not cockblock me today, bro."

Juan

No...I should stay and...try to interrogate the hippo. Let's meet at the café tomorrow afternoon?

Bernardo

Good idea, Juan. Come on. We gotta get those papers!

Dalia

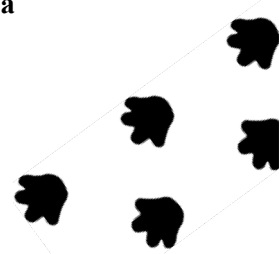
Shit.

BERNARDO takes an unwilling DALIA'S hand and they set off on their journey. JUAN has a sudden, and tremendously important epiphany.

Juan

Wait. How do you talk to a fucking hippo?

Blackout.



Scene III: Call of the Hippo

JUAN follows a trail along the river holding a lunchbox full of arepas. He is tired and frustrated from the long hours searching for a hippo that he's not sure can actually talk.

Juan

No, send Juan. Juan will do it. Juan's stupid enough. Juan has no self-respect. Juan has a degree. Send the only responsible adult. Of course. Makes sense. They don't even know what a Communications degree is.
How can they know if it's the best degree for talking to hippos?

JUAN stops and ponders his life up to this moment. Where did it go wrong? Was it that one time where he parked in a handicapped space right in front of someone who needed it? Perhaps it was when he tricked his family into joining that dietary supplement pyramid scheme. Perhaps it was when he insulted BERNARDO'S play. But no. It couldn't be that. BERNARDO deserved that shit. Suddenly he interrupts his own thoughts.

Juan

Why am I doing this? Why did I agree? So Bernardo could have a shot at seducing some woman whose name he doesn't know? What am I doing?

JUAN sighs, knowing that he is nothing if not a man of duty and schedule.

Juan

The greater good. It's for the greater good...find a hippo and ask...ask it if it can...hoofprint something? Paw print? Sign? Verify it's...citizenship? Wait, what am I actually doing? I need to leave. This is absurd.

JUAN, having changed his entire belief system in less than a moment turns to run away from his responsibilities when a ROAR pierces the area. JUAN looks around trying to spot his enemy.

Juan

Dammit...

A low, menacing laugh and rumbling. A brown mist fills the stage. JUAN retches.

Juan

Oh my God...what is...what is that??

A sound like a weed eater fills the air. Something brown is flung at JUAN. JUAN understands what it is immediately.

Juan

This...this is...oh God...oh God please no...

ESCOBAR'S HIPPO appears, backside first, tail spinning and flinging solid excrement and turning more watery excrement into a mist with its rotating tail. It wears the look of supreme joy as it releases the contents of its bowels.

Escobar's Hippo

A satisfied groan

Juan

WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU, YOU FILTHY ANIMAL!?!

ESCOBAR'S HIPPO looks around, not knowing where the noise came from. Was that God? What is God? Was that a fart sound? If so, the HIPPO has yet to hear such a thing before. Can it be done again? This is too much thinking. The HIPPO snorts and shakes its head, perishing all thoughts.

Juan

Over here you dumb stupid culicagado [*Translation: shitass*].

The HIPPO realizes the noise is coming from behind. The HIPPO turns and sees JUAN. The offensive one with the arepas.

Escobar's Hippo

growls threateningly

Juan

You have caused nothing but mess after mess since you've come to town. You need to leave.

Escobar's Hippo

(*tilting its head*)

confused mumble

Juan

You know what you've done. You've destroyed property. Killed people.

The HIPPO considers JUAN for a moment before deciding that JUAN is no true threat. The HIPPO rolls over on its back and spread its legs. The HIPPO just loves the way the afternoon sun kisses its nethers. JUAN is, naturally, stunned.

Escobar's Hippo

yawn

Juan

What are you...what are you doing?

Escobar's Hippo

snores softly before farting gently

Juan

Why are you asleep? I'm confronting you!

JUAN goes into his lunch box and pulls out an arepa and hurls it at the HIPPO. The HIPPO'S eyes snap open. The HIPPO turns over on all fours and stares at JUAN. The HIPPO is greatly offended once again! JUAN realizes he may have just screwed up, badly.

Escobar's Hippo

pissed off grumbling

Juan

I'm just...I'm just here to...uh.... are you a Colombian citizen? Were you born here or...?

Juan falls silent. Waiting for some kind of response.

Escobar's Hippo

chortles

The HIPPO begins to laugh. The laughter is filled with venom instead of mirth. JUAN begins to back away slowly as the HIPPO continues to laugh. The HIPPO suddenly rushes at JUAN with frightening speed. JUAN jumps out of the way. The HIPPO turns around and shakes its head readying a second charge.

Juan

No, no, no, no, no, no, no....

JUAN reaches for his lunchbox and pulls out another arepa. The HIPPO stops, eyeing JUAN with anger and disgust, but not moving.

Juan

You're going to stop. I'll use this! I swear I will.

The HIPPO sniffs the air. The Hippo raises its mighty head and opens its mouth. A long roar held in a single, hypnotic note. JUAN drops the arepa to cover his ears. The HIPPO stops and stares at JUAN. JUAN stares back, defiantly, slowly lowering his hands. The HIPPO begins to stomp rhythmically and grunt-chant.



Juan

What are you...?

Escobar's Hippo

continues to grunt-chant

The air is filled with more stomping and grunt-chants. The lights begin to fade as the noises multiply. Juan looks around in awe at what he is bearing witness to.

Juan

How is this...?

Escobar's Hippo

laughs mirthlessly

The HIPPO charges at JUAN. JUAN stands stunned, unable to move as the noises of the grunt chant fill the air.

Blackout.

Scene IV: The Hippo is the Remnant of the Man

The ruins of Hacienda Napoles. A once-beautiful compound and getaway for Pablo Escobar, now decayed by time, nature, and general disrepair. It is twilight. In the distance we hear rampaging-- or cavorting as the humans put it--hippos drawing closer as the time passes. BERNARDO and DALIA sit together, exhausted after a long journey.

Dalia

I thought there would at least be security here.

Bernardo

If there was, they're probably long gone. Or, perhaps they were trampled to death.

A gloom overtakes DALIA. She looks around sadly at the ruins of the once beautiful getaway.

Dalia

Why didn't the government take care of the hippos?

Bernardo

Because they're hippos.

Dalia

What does that even mean?

Bernardo

Well, because they're big dumb animals. Not worth paying attention to. Plus, they live in the water. It's difficult to capture animals like that.

Dalia

Then why not just kill them?

Bernardo

Because they're living beings. They...they deserve to live.

Dalia

They have no natural predators in Colombia.

Bernardo

That's their fault?

Dalia

So, we risk our lives because it's not their fault that they have no natural predator in a place they do not belong?

Bernardo

They deserve a chance to coexist with us.

Dalia

These hippos are rampaging everywhere and destroying everything. Did you not see what they were doing on the way here?

Bernardo

Maybe that's just their way.

Dalia

Why are you defending them?

Bernardo

I'm not defending them. I'm just curious about why they're the way that they are.

Dalia

The way that they are is to undermine our society and cause destruction. If they destroy our creations, shouldn't we try to do all we can to stop them?

Bernardo

If there's a peaceful way to accomplish that, then sure.

Dalia

Don't be fucking stupid. You can't preach peace to something that only wants to destroy things.

Bernardo

Do you think that's all the hippos are? Destroyers?

Dalia

Are you suggesting we reason with them?

Bernardo

If we can.

Dalia

We can't reason with the legacy of a drug lord.

Bernardo

You don't see them as separate from Escobar?

Dalia

The hippo is the remnant of the man.

Bernardo

So, we treat the remnant like we treated the man?

Dalia

You prefer trying to reason with a brute beast that destroys our way of life for its own gain?

Bernardo

No, it's just...there are ethical concerns don't you think?

Dalia

Does the hippo bother to concern itself with ethics?

Bernardo

Just because they don't bother, doesn't mean we abandon what makes us human. They go low, we go high.

Dalia

Do you know what happens when you go high and they go low?

Bernardo

What?

Dalia

You miss your punch and lose your balls.

Bernardo

There's another way. I'm sure.

Dalia

What does that matter? We should be defending ourselves instead of going on wild goose chases looking for birth certificates that we know don't exist.

Bernardo

How do we know that they don't?

Dalia

Because they're fucking hippos.

Bernardo

Fair point.

Dalia

So, why are we still here?

Bernardo

I personally saw this as a way to keep ourselves safe while the town sorted out the hippo problem.

Dalia

You're pathetic.

Bernardo

If preferring to live is pathetic, then I don't want to be brave.

Dalia

And your friend Juan? What about him? What about the townspeople?

Bernardo

Juan and everyone else could have chosen to come. And yet, despite his fancy communications degree that makes him so special, he and the rest of the town decided to make the foolish choice.

Dalia

They're confronting the problem.

Bernardo

So, while they're doing that, we can stay here until all's clear and come back ready to help as we rebuild our town.

Dalia

What if there's no town to go back to?

Bernardo

Right, because one hippo is going to destroy an entire town.

Dalia

You don't hear them, do you?

The sounds of the hippos grow louder. Bernardo, grows uneasy at the noises that draw closer.

Dalia

It's a matter of time, unless we act.

The sounds of the hippos grow more fervent, wilder. BERNARDO looks around nervously but tries to play it off with a laugh.

Bernardo

You're a surprisingly intelligent woman.

Dalia

Why surprisingly?

Bernardo

Oh, you know, cute waitress working at a café. You...it's just surprising.

Dalia

Why is it surprising?

Bernardo

It's just, I thought I was the only intelligent person in town. It's...refreshing to know someone else actually thinks about things, you know?

Dalia

No, I don't know. And I still don't understand why you think It's surprising.

Bernardo

Well...I...

Dalia

What I find surprising is how you have the actual audacity to be surprised by my intelligence, when you don't even have the brain capacity to realize we cannot reason with fucking wild animals brought into our country by a glorified drug mule.

Bernardo

You really hate him, huh?

Dalia

Look at everything around us. This used to be beautiful. This used to be a place where children played. Now...it's...it's just another corpse left behind by Pablo Escobar.

Bernardo

Didn't Escobar build this place?

Dalia

And look at what happens to everything he touched. Ruins. Destruction.

Bernardo

But it was still built. Would this be here were it not for Escobar?

Dalia

What's here are hippos destroying our country.

Bernardo

These are the consequences of creating your own place in the world.

Dalia

I want to get to the time when we are beyond dealing with the consequences of men's stupidity.

BERNARDO places an arm around DALIA, who is not in the mood for BERNARDO'S attempts at a mating ritual.

Bernardo

Maybe I've misspoken. I apologize. I meant...I knew you were beautiful, but I didn't know you held such strong convictions.

DALIA pushes BERNARDO'S arm off her and scoots away from BERNARDO to indicate to him she does not want him near her.

Dalia

There's a lot you don't know.

Bernardo

(not taking the hint)

I hope I can get to know more about you.

Dalia

We have a hippo problem to deal with.

Bernardo

But after that?

Dalia

After that...after that we'll see.

Bernardo

(drawing closer to DALIA)

Is that a promise?

Dalia

(standing up)

Think of it more like, we'll see each other again at the café, and I'll smile right at you and ask about your bad plays and pretend to care so that you leave me a better tip.

Bernardo

Beautiful. Intelligent. Witty. Deal. It's a date.

DALIA stares down at BERNARDO for a moment, dumbfounded at his inability to take rejection.

Dalia

I'm gonna deal with this problem first. Then after, we'll talk about your actual chances, okay?

Bernardo

(he thinks he's getting laid)

Gotcha.

A piercing SCREAM startles them both. The hippos begin to grunt rhythmically, almost like they're chanting. They stomp to create an impromptu drum beat. The sound grows louder drowning out everything even rational thought.

Dalia

(loudly)

We need to get out of here.

DALIA tries to run for it, but BERNARDO grabs her hand and pulls her to him attempting to prove his worth as a protector, not realizing that staying put before an onslaught of hippos is quite possibly the stupidest thing you could do in this situation.

Bernardo

Stay by me. I'll protect you!

DALIA tries to pull away so that she can have at least a chance at survival.

Dalia

Let me go, you dumbass!

Bernardo

(not hearing her correctly over the sound of hippos)

No, I'm sure those are hippos, not asses!

Dalia

You're the ass! Not the hippos!

Bernardo

We can't stop the hippos!

Dalia

Oh my God. That's why we need to run!

Bernardo

Oh....

DALIA pulls BERNARDO with her and they try to escape. Just before they can leave, another SCREAM fills the air. The hippos stop their chanting and drumbeat. DALIA and BERNARDO also stop, faces showing horror at what's in front of them.

Dalia

What the fuck is that?

Bernardo

Holy shit...

They back away and from where they were trying to flee in shock as they bear witness the great leap in evolution...A HIPPOSAPIEN! A grotesque hybrid with the body of a human and the head...OF A HIPPO! It wears the tattered remains of a security guard uniform. It moves about on two legs awkwardly, trying to hold its disproportionately large head up.

The Hipposapien

grunting noises

Bernardo

Oh my God. People have been fucking hippos and this is their hybrid child!



Dalia

No, it's the missing security guard. It's transforming into a hippo!

Bernardo

People don't transform into hippos!

Dalia

People don't fuck hippos either!

Bernardo

Well then what the fuck is that?

Dalia

It doesn't matter we need to run, NOW!

The HIPPOSAPIEN falls and gets up...on all fours. It shakes its head like a dog shaking off water before spotting DALIA and BERNARDO.

The Hipposapien

(to *Dalia and Bernardo*)

inquisitive snort

BERNARDO locks eyes with the HIPPOSAPIEN. The HIPPOSAPIEN interprets this as a challenge. BERNARDO thinks he's making a profound connection between man and beast.

Bernardo

I think it's trying to speak with us.

Dalia

Forgive me if I don't care, right now.

The HIPPOSAPIEN begins to make its way toward DALIA and BERNARDO slowly, almost laboriously as it gets used to moving. BERNARDO believes he is about to achieve a great discovery.

Bernardo

What are you trying to say to us?

The Hipposapien

snorts threateningly

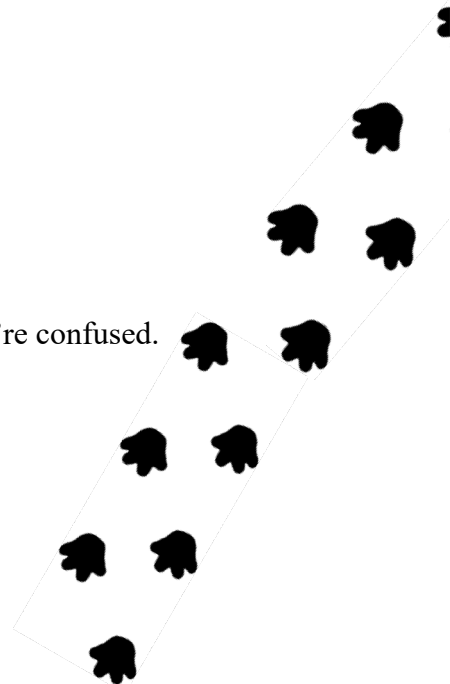
Bernardo

(*patronizing*)

Okay...I didn't understand that. But I felt the emotion behind it. You're confused.

The Hipposapien

grunts in confusion



Bernardo

Poor beast. You're practically an idiot.

The Hipposapien

growls and bristles

Dalia

Don't patronize it.

Bernardo

It's an animal. It doesn't understand things like being patronized.

Dalia

I'm pretty sure that it understands you.

Bernardo

No, it doesn't. It's just a big ol' stupid animal.

(talking to the HIPPOSAPIEN like a puppy)

Yes, you are. You're an ugly little creature, yes you are!

(to DALIA)

See? It's like a baby. You can insult it all you want; all it understands is tone.

(to the HIPPOSAPIEN)

You dumb fat beast. So, stupid. So, so stupid. Yes, you are!

The HIPPOSAPIEN does not appreciate condescension. It starts waddling a little faster toward BERNARDO, who is touched.

Bernardo

Look. It wants to meet with me.

Dalia

It wants to kill you.

The Hipposapien

stomps and snorts in agreement with DALIA

Bernardo

You don't know that.

Dalia

Neither do you!

Bernardo

This is where we could make a serious breakthrough. At the very least this is a massive scientific discovery. Part hippo, part human!

The HIPPOSAPIEN reaches BERNARDO and stands on its haunches. BERNARDO opens his arms for a hug. DALIA pulls BERNARDO away just as the HIPPOSAPIEN swipes.

Bernardo

Look, he tried giving me a high five. Haha, sorry buddy! Too slow!

BERNARDO wags a mocking finger at the HIPPOSAPIEN. The HIPPOSAPIEN can take no more and decides that Bernardo's death shall be slow and painful. Dalia meanwhile can leave. She showed some real empathy to its plight earlier, and that's a rare quality. You shouldn't kill that.

The Hipposapien

ROARS!

BERNARDO realizes the truth at last.

Bernardo

Oh...shit...

Dalia

We need to get out of here NOW!

They try to flee pursued by the HIPPOSAPIEN. The air is filled with the primal grunts of the hippos as they begin their chanting and drum beat again.



Scene V: Hippolitics

The assembly hall. Two podiums. The TOWNSPEOPLE are seated talking among themselves, confused.

Townsperson 1

I don't understand.

Townsperson 3

Is it even legal?

Townsperson 4

Do you think the Mayor should even show up?

Townsperson 2

I heard the Mayor planned this, actually.



Townsperson 1

But why?



Music begins playing signaling the start of the debate. First the MAYOR arrives with a determined look. As the MAYOR reaches the podium a loud SNORTING is heard. The HIPPO clomps towards its assigned podium dressed like a politician with Juan, who is in a nice suit. JUAN sits between the podiums. The TOWNSPEOPLE shift uncomfortably seeing the HIPPO.

Townsperson 5

What the hell is going on?

Escobar's Hippo

burps

Juan

Thank you all for attending the first debate of four this week.

Townsperson 1

There's going to be four debates?

Juan

We want to make sure that we have a rigorous and thorough discourse so that voters can make informed decisions before going to the ballot box in this snap election that we have called.

Townsperson 3

There is absolutely no contest.

Juan

That's not what others believe. But let's get to it.

Townsperson 2

This is a waste of time.

Juan

According to the signatures gathered, there are many voters who are dissatisfied with the direction of our political discourse. As such the Mayor has agreed to make the case for the status quo over the upstart candidate before us here.

Escobar's Hippo

hiccups

The HIPPO begins to nuzzle its head against the podium scratching an itch that's been there for a few hours. The MAYOR watches in disgust.

Mayor

Fear not, citizenry! I have accepted to participate in these debates to once-and-for-all end this absolute travesty on our political process. Despite not knowing a hippo can run for office, I am confident I can make the case for our current administration and earn re-election.

Juan

Regardless of your anti-immigrant leanings and bias against the candidate, the signatures to initiate a recall—

Mayor

Anti-immigrant—? Bias? Against a hippo?

Juan

That is neither here nor there. I will be moderating this debate which—

Mayor

It will hardly be a debate. This will be settled in one sentence.

Juan

That sentence being?

Mayor

An animal cannot run for human office!

Juan

Where is that statute?

The HIPPO shifts uncomfortably in the suit. It's a little tight between the legs and that's not great. The MAYOR meanwhile shifts uncomfortably.

Mayor

...Admittedly there is no statute, but it can't answer any of the debate questions!

Juan

I will translate.

Mayor

Can the hippo not speak for itself? How can it lead the town if it cannot speak our language?

Juan

The candidate has a handicap that prevents it from articulating clearly. Thus I will translate. Really, Mayor. I would think you would have more sensitivity to the needs of others. You are being quite ableist.

Mayor

THE HIPPO HAS NO HANDICAP!!

A collective gasp. The MAYOR falls silent. The HIPPO wishes to urinate and dreams of the chance.

Escobar's Hippo

a longing sigh

Mayor

(trying to rally)

And what qualification do you have to be the Hippo's translator?

Juan

My communications degree.

(beat)

Was it not you, Mayor, that said I was the most qualified to communicate with the Hippo. Has that somehow changed since you've been recalled? Because that would be rather convenient for you that I'm suddenly not qualified to communicate with hippos and thus cannot translate, wouldn't you say?

Mayor

No...nothing has changed...

Juan

Besides. This shouldn't be a problem, should it? After all. It's just an animal right? This will be easy.

Mayor

Yes...of course. Yes. Let us proceed.

Juan

Then we go forward. First debate question. Mayor how do you answer the allegations centering around the controversy of Cardigan Cravat?

Townsperson 2

You can't talk about Cardigan! This debate is a sham. To try to besmirch a hero's name. Our thoughts and prayers are with him always.

Mayor

There is no controversy.

Juan

Precisely. There is no controversy because Cardigan Cravat does not exist.

A hush falls over the audience, in disbelief at this information. The Hippo meanwhile, grows frustrated with having to hold in its urine when it needs desperately to urinate right now.

Mayor

What are you talking about? Cardigan is a hero who gave his life protecting us from the hippo menace!

Escobar's Hippo

blusters in full bladder frustration

Mayor

Cardigan is real! Long live Cardigan!

The HIPPO relieves itself, sighing with ecstasy. The attention of the TOWNSPEOPLE is split between the debate between JUAN and the MAYOR and the HIPPO'S act of public urination.

Juan

And Cardigan's family? The Cravats?

Mayor

They've asked for...for privacy in this time...

Juan

There is no Cardigan Cravat on record.

Mayor

Am I debating you or the hippo?

Juan

Just following up on the debate question.

Townsperson 3

Wait, why is there no Cardigan Cravat on record?

Townsperson 1

Yeah, Mayor!

Mayor

This is a farce. That hippo doesn't even know human speech.

Bored and in need of amusement, the HIPPO makes the only possible decision in this impossible set of circumstances. It smashes through the podium, rushes the Mayor and gores them with its mighty tusk. The MAYOR screams before dying. The TOWNSPEOPLE panic.

Juan

Wait! Don't you all see? This is how we achieve true change! The mighty Hippo has cut through the redtape and bullshit and killed the symbol of corruption in this town! The elite have lied and now they pay with their lives! This is revolution!

Townsperson 2

The Mayor was just murdered!

Townsperson 4

We need to stop that hippo.

Townsperson 5

Hurry!

The TOWNSPEOPLE begin to advance on the HIPPO who is now rolling over the corpse of the MAYOR. But just as the TOWNSPEOPLE reach the HIPPO, a group of HIPPOSAPIENS rushes in and begin attacking the townspeople in a fight for territory and control of the town. The HIPPOSAPIENS chase the TOWNSPEOPLE away successfully.

Juan

There will be a change! You can choose to evolve with the times or find yourself destroyed underfoot by the future!

The HIPPOSAPIENS cheer having secured the best shady spot in town. The HIPPO, meanwhile decides it's time for a swim and tasty grass and walks off. JUAN watches, horrified and exhilarated. At long last; he is no longer uninteresting. He is more than just a pathetic man reading bad scripts in the middle of a cafe. He is the highest form of human that can possibly exist. He is...an "Influencer!" JUAN laughs and goes after his HIPPO candidate.

Scene VI: The Hippo in the Old Man's Pants

Assembly Hall. Hours later. A spread of Supercocos, Colombia's most beloved coconut candy treat, is laid out with a pitcher of water at the table. We hear the sounds of hippos grunting as the TOWNSPEOPLE sit hiding. The first FOUR TOWNSPEOPLE chatter while the FIFTH TOWNSPERSON is clearly in an altered state and breathing deeply.

Townsperson 3

I saw the Mayor hanging from its tusk.

Townsperson 2

So, did the hippo eat the Mayor?

Townsperson 1

But..hippos don't eat people...do they?

Townsperson 3

Query.

Townsperson 1

Acknowledged.

Townsperson 3

Are we certain there is only one hippo now?

Townsperson 4

More hippos?

Townsperson 2

We have no reason to believe there are more hippos.

Townsperson 3

But then what were those people attacking us? And what are those noises outside?

Townsperson 1

Just masks. It has to be.

Townsperson 3

But it didn't look like masks.

Townsperson 4

And their arms and legs. They...

Townsperson 3

They looked like a hippo's leg where a human leg should have been.

Townsperson 1

That doesn't mean anything...

Townsperson 3

There are more hippos. I know it.

Townsperson 5

Anyone else feel warm?

Townsperson 4

I think some people are transforming into hippos.

Townsperson 1

Why would you say that?

Townsperson 4

One of those...things that attacked us was wearing my neighbor's clothes.

Townsperson 3

So, you think that somehow your neighbor changed into a hippo.

Townsperson 1

But it can't be possible...

Townsperson 5

Seriously, it's really hot...

Townsperson 3

What do we think causes the change? A disease? Magic?

Townsperson 1

Magic??? This is preposterous. Humans don't transform into other animals. This is not some Kafka or Marquez story—

Townsperson 3

Point of order. I have been slandered.

Townsperson 1

How?

Townsperson 3

When you said I was preposterous.

The FIFTH TOWNSPERSON lets out a frustrated sigh that almost sounds like a feral growl.

Townsperson 5

Why is it...why is it so fucking hot in here?

Townsperson 4

Language, please. We must maintain decorum in the assembly hall.

Townsperson 5

(temper flared)

You want decorum? You want decorum?

The FIFTH TOWNSPERSON stands up and heads toward the FOURTH TOWNSPERSON, who cowers. The FIRST TOWNSPERSON intercepts the FIFTH TOWNSPERSON attempting to stop this rapidly devolving situation from breaking down entirely.

Townsperson 1

Easy, easy now.

Townsperson 3

C'mon have a seat.

Townsperson 5

(gruffly, almost grunting)

Yes...yes...sorry...just...a little stressed.

Townsperson 1

We're all stressed, but we can't lose our cool. We must advance with open eyes and calm mind.

Townsperson 2

Question.

Townsperson 1

Acknowledged.

Townsperson 2

Outside the window...am I seeing correctly?

The TOWNSPEOPLE look out the window and are shocked.

Townsperson 1

Yep...definitely two hippos, showing their uh...everything...

Townsperson 4

That's my neighbor. The old man. He...he...he's a hippo now.

Townsperson 1

My God...they're defecating everywhere.

Townsperson 3

It's not preposterous now, is it?

Townsperson 2

I didn't know their tails could do that...

Townsperson 5

I need some water...

Townsperson 3

It's fascinating...

Townsperson 4

Is it...is it some kind of disease? Can we catch it?

Townsperson 5

Please...I'm asking...nicely...water...water...

Townsperson 2

What does this all mean?

Townsperson 5

(shallow breathing)

Water...? Where? I need...it's too dry. It's too dry...

Townsperson 4

Don't be silly, we're by a river. How can it be dry?

Townsperson 5

(roaring)

Are you calling me a fucking liar???

All fall silent and stare at the FIFTH TOWNSPERSON. The FIRST TOWNSPERSON leaps into action and pours a cup of water from a pitcher on a table.

Townsperson 5

Give me the pitcher.

Townsperson 1

All of it?

Townsperson 5

GIVE ME THE FUCKING PITCHER!



The FIRST TOWNSPERSON hands the FIFTH TOWNSPERSON the pitcher who immediately dumps the water all over themselves attempting to cool off.

Townsperson 5

(grunting and huffing)

Not enough...need *snort* more...where...more....

The FIFTH TOWNSPERSON gets up and leaves, walking with a distinct waddle.

Townsperson 4

Oh my God. They. Were. Soooo rude.

Townsperson 1

Alright, order, order.

Townsperson 3

Query.

Townsperson 1

Yes. Fine. What?

Townsperson 3

There are now three hippos out there.

Townsperson 1

Three?

Townsperson 3

Yes. This one is wearing what looks to be a torn-up dress.

The FIRST TOWNSPERSON looks out the window attempting to verify this claim.

Townsperson 1

(unnerved)

Yes...uh...it looks...there is...a third hippo.

Townsperson 2

Question.

Townsperson 1

(still looking out the window)

Acknowledged...

Townsperson 2

There was no actual query with my earlier query.

Townsperson 3

And there's no question to your question my dear and honorable colleague.

Townsperson 2

Is there a penalty, do you think for...?

They are interrupted by the sounds. You know the ones. The sounds hippos make when they love each other very, very much. The TOWNSPEOPLE lean forward on the window.

Townsperson 4

I know that dress on the third hippo.

Townsperson 1

Whose is it?

Townsperson 4

That's my neighbor's wife. She's turned into a hippo!

Townsperson 1

That's impossible...people don't...

Townsperson 4

He'd always talk about his performance issues, too. But by all indications, based on what's happening out there, there are no issues with the act of performing.

Townsperson 2

She looks really happy...

Townsperson 1

Well, I mean...look at the size of him...it looks like a fucking hook.

They fall silent taking in the passionate noises and grunts that come with the miracle of hippopotamus reproduction and fierce love making. Soon they become enthralled... titillated even by this lewd, arousing, and erotic display of coitus.

Townsperson 3

Query...

Townsperson 1

(mesmerized)

Shut the fuck up...

The THIRD TOWNSPERSON nods. THE FIRST TOWNSPERSON is right. Time to shut the fuck up. The grunting noises grow louder, more needy, more feverish, more scandalous.

Townsperson 1

Oh wow...

Townsperson 4

They're in public. Do they have no shame?

Townsperson 1

There's nothing to be ashamed of there.

Townsperson 2

Jesus...

Townsperson 3

I don't think Jesus has a part in this...

A howl signifying the reaching of crisis that settles down into a low satisfied murmur and gentle crooning.

Townsperson 1

Well...I guess that's that.

BUT THE NOISES RESUME! The sexual cycle of a hippo, dear audience, is a three-day marathon of intense lovemaking, excrement flinging, and violent wrestling. This is no human mating ritual. This is the goods. Suddenly, everyone is snapped out of their reverie when the doors to the Assembly Hall fly open revealing the FIFTH TOWNSPERSON, only now with a distinct pale grey hue.

Townsperson 5

(snorts)

Sorry about that. Was really thirsty.

Townsperson 4

It is contagious...

Townsperson 5

What's contagious?

Townsperson 3

The...hippo...ness...

Townsperson 5

What do you mean?

Townsperson 1

Your skin it's...grey.

Townsperson 5

What about my skin?

Townsperson 1

Have you seen it?

Townsperson 5

(snorts indignantly)

What are you trying to say?

Townsperson 1
You're...you're ill.

Townsperson 5
Ill? I've never felt better in my life. I feel like I can do anything.

Townsperson 3
But you look awful...

Townsperson 5
I have never felt stronger. More powerful.

The FIFTH TOWNSPERSON smashes the table of Supercocos, Colombia's most beloved coconut candy treat, which collapses. The TOWNSPEOPLE back away.

Townsperson 5
(*furious*)
How can anyone say that I'm sick? Who said such thing? Who?

The TOWNSPEOPLE stay silent, terrified at this grotesque transformation and display of strength.

Townsperson 5
Look at all of you. Throwing queries and questions, acting self-important. Creating committees to study problems that could have been solved with a bullet between the eyes. You don't see what I see. You don't understand what I understand.

Townsperson 1
You need to calm down...

Townsperson 5
(*snorts in derision*)
Oh, but you see, I am calm. I am the calmest I have ever been, because I see the truth. And the truth outrages me.

Townsperson 4
What truth are you talking about?

Townsperson 5
(*grunting*)
I don't need to explain myself to anyone! The hippos are right. The hippos were always right. We just never listened. The hippos aren't indecisive cowards pretending to be something that they aren't. They want something, they get it. They have a problem, they solve it. They don't need committees; they don't need to be stupid little children playing pretend politics. They are who they are. They own it. That's something we should all be doing...but no. You sheep are too weak. So, stay here. Stay here and let life pass you by. I meanwhile...I'm with them. I am them.

The FIFTH TOWNSPERSON leaves, embracing destiny and the transformation into Hippodom. The remaining TOWNSPEOPLE stand there a moment, trying to find the words.

Townsperson 3

Que...query...

Townsperson 1

You don't need to say that anymore...

Townsperson 4

I guess it's safe to say definitively that's my neighbor and his wife out there?

Townsperson 1

Yes...I suppose so.

Townsperson 4

The government needs to intervene.

Townsperson 1

Why? *sniffs*

Townsperson 4

This is clearly an epidemic infecting our people.

Townsperson 1

Is it?

Townsperson 3

What are you saying?

Townsperson 1

I'm saying, I heard a lot of truth just now.

Townsperson 3

Like what?

Townsperson 1

I heard the call to freedom. Look at those hippos. *snort* They look so happy.

Townsperson 3

They do...

Townsperson 4

But they're animals!

The sounds of hippo farting and frolicking echo as if calling to the TOWNSPEOPLE.

Townsperson 1

Are they? Or have they figured how to really live? Imagine having the freedom to live wherever you want. Nobody can stop you from doing what you want. I mean, when you're a fucking hippo who can stop you? There's no cleaning your house, no chores, bills. No care at all except to eat, swim, live, and...fuck in public. You don't care what other people think, because you're free.

The noises that can only come from a three-day marathon of passion--you know the ones-- resume.

Townsperson 1 (cont.)

Imagine having that old man's stamina. Imagine a world with no taxes.

Townsperson 4

Now wait a minute, there...

Townsperson 1

Imagine not having to worry about buying clothes anymore. *chortles* No more suits, no more shoes...

Townsperson 2

No more uncomfortable cravats. No struggles... *grunts*

Townsperson 1

No more queries. *coughs*

Townsperson 4

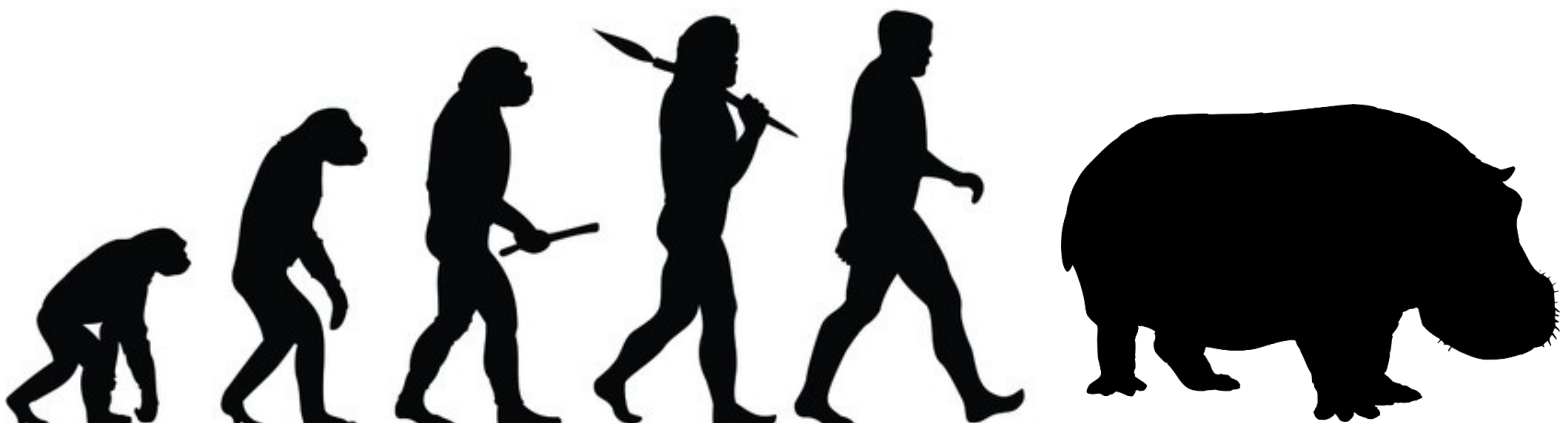
No more questions. *sniffs*

Townsperson 3

...no more being afraid... *snort*

The rhythmic snorts of the hippos outside begin. The stomping soon follows. The TOWNSPEOPLE smile and embrace each other, making their decision. Slowly, one by one, they file out of the Assembly Hall embracing the final frontier of their lives. The sounds of the hippos fill the night air.

Blackout.



Scene VII: The Hippocrite

We return to the café. It is night. JUAN sits sipping his roasted bean water mixed with cows milk, which scientists have recently identified as "coffee con leche." He watches a procession of Hipposapiens passing, trumpeting and grunting. Arepas are strung up around him forming a kind of protective barrier keeping the hippos from accessing the cafe. For good measure, he has a stack of arepas at his table ready to fling them if necessary. One of the Hipposapiens draws close and Juan quickly throws an arepa at the Hipposapien who backs away with a grunt. The Hipposapiens leave while JUAN continues to sip his coffee.

Juan

Hundreds of years to get it right, and at the end of the world the coffee here is still...burnt

BERNARDO stumbles in looking terrified. Spotting JUAN, BERNARDO yells out, overjoyed at finding his friend. BERNARDO tears through the barrier of arepas. One of JUAN'S hands tightens into a fist.

Juan

I worked very hard on that...

Bernardo

Juan, I am sorry for breaking your...uh...

Juan

Arepa barrier. Arepas ward off hippos. It's well-known now.

Bernardo

I didn't know that.

Juan

Neither did any of us until after you left.

Bernardo

We have to put the barrier back up, then! Hurry.

BERNARDO tries to string the arepas back up. They fall apart, much like Bernardo's scripts at around Page 3.

Juan

Doesn't matter. They'll be coming soon.

Bernardo

The hippos?



Juan

The ones who've transformed. The hipposapiens. Yes.

Bernardo

We have to get out of here.

Juan

Eight.

Bernardo

(confused)

What?

Juan

That's eight times you've been late. Eight. Do you realize that?

Bernardo

Juan, what's happening?

JUAN is silent. The silence is interrupted by hippo noises and a CRASH. BERNARDO looks around scared.

Juan

What's happening is you've been abusing my friendship for years.

Bernardo

I'm sorry I'm late, but Juan the fucking hippos are rampaging all over the place.

Juan

And yet somehow, I'm here at the appointed time and you're late. Like always.

Bernardo

And like always I showed up, didn't I?

Juan

But late. Always late.

Bernardo

Why are there hippos everywhere? Where is everyone?

Juan

There are things you should know.

Bernardo

Such as?

Juan

Did you know that hippos are said to produce pink milk?

Bernardo

(confused)

I see...umm...

Juan

It's actually an urban legend. Their milk is white to beige in color. But hippos do secrete hippusudoric acid in their sweat which acts as a suntan lotion. If that acid should mix with hippo milk, then it will make pink hippo milk.

Bernardo

Thank you for...that information?

JUAN does not respond. Instead, he drinks more coffee.

Juan

Tell me about your trip to Hacienda Napoles.

Bernardo

What does it matter?

Juan

Did you find the birth certificates?

Bernardo

No.

Juan

Not surprised.

Bernardo

Why?

Juan

What hippo has a fucking birth certificate?

Bernardo

We were trying to save the town.

Juan

I assumed you were trying to get that waitress alone so you could try to seduce her. By chance, where is the waitress?

Bernardo

We lost each other in the chaos. There were Hippo-people everywhere at Hacienda Napoles.

Juan

Do you think that hippos can form a religion?

Bernardo

I don't understand the question.

Juan

To these Hipposapiens, Hacienda Napoles is a holy site.

Bernardo

Why do you keep calling them Hipposapiens?

Juan

It's almost like a Garden of Eden, wouldn't you think? The place where their God brought them to build their Hippodom.

Bernardo

Their God?

Juan

Pablo Escobar.

Bernardo

He's not a god.

Juan

To us, no. But, perhaps to the hippos and their converts, Pablo Escobar and those who follow his way are the beginning of a religion.

Bernardo

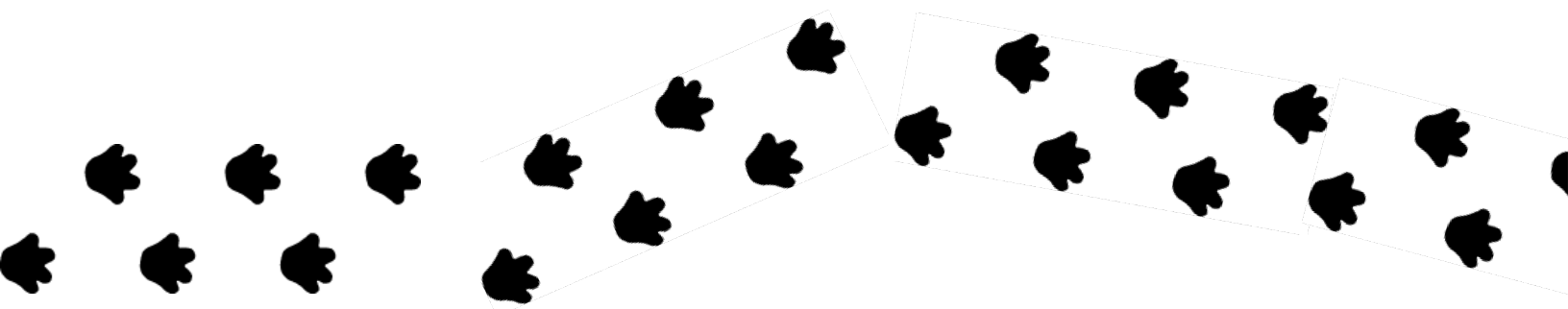
Well, for one, that makes Escobar more of a prophet. Second, why are we even talking about this?

Juan

When hippos defecate, they rotate their tails like a fan.

Bernardo

Juan we have to go.



Juan

Their tails fling their shit away from them up to several yards from their anus. Sometimes right in the faces of their predators or enemies. That's why you should never try to sneak up on a hippo. They're ready...

Bernardo

Okay...you know a lot about hippos. Now can we please--?

Juan

Sometimes, depending on the consistency of the waste the shit can become a mist. That's when, as they say, "the shit hits the fan."

JUAN stares without blinking at BERNARDO. JUAN gives a toothy grin. His bottom two canine teeth appear bigger. A transformation is beginning.

Juan

It was terribly risky trying to run a hippo for political office.

Bernardo

Political office?

Juan

I thought for sure it was over when the Hippo gored the Mayor.

Bernardo

The Mayor was gored?

Juan

And killed. Honestly, the Hippo's political aspirations should have died after it urinated itself.

Bernardo

What??

Juan

It turns out the people liked the honesty with which the Hippo approached the situation. Who would have guessed?

Bernardo

This is nuts.

Juan

(to himself)

For a brief moment I thought I could control them. But no...not without...Becoming...

Bernardo

Becoming?

Juan

(changing the subject)

What's the waitress' name?

Bernardo

...

Juan

Her name's Dalia.

Bernardo

I knew that...

Juan

Stop lying.

Bernardo

I planned on learning her name...it just...never came up...

Juan

Of course. Finding out about names is more for after you've fucked them.

JUAN coughs? Was that a grunt? BERNARDO squirms at the sound of JUAN'S grunt-coughing. BERNARDO'S instincts tell him to run away, but the chair he wants to sit on has great lumbar support and is overriding BERNARDO'S survival instinct.

Bernardo

Juan, I know I can be a fuck up.

Juan

Yet you make no attempt to change.

Bernardo

I'm sorry.

Juan

Wouldn't it be nice if that were true?

Bernardo

I mean it. I'm sorry.

JUAN is silent for a long while. With his hand, JUAN gestures to a chair. BERNARDO takes a seat and reaches for a particularly dry and offensive arepa and offers it to JUAN.

Bernardo

Are you hungry?

Juan

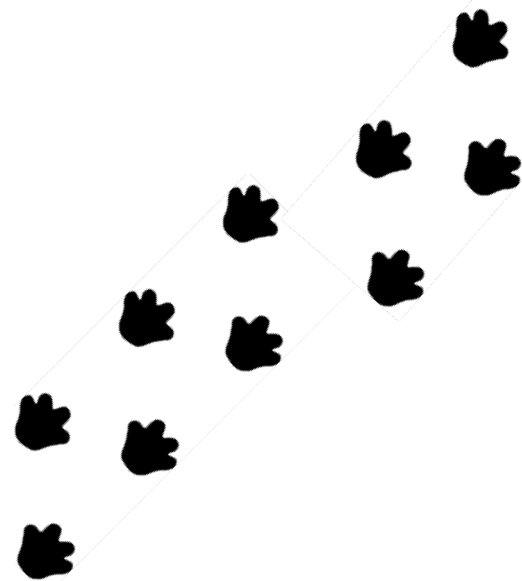
(greatly offended)

GET THAT THING AWAY FROM ME!

BERNARDO, in fear of his friend, drops the arepa.

Bernardo

What the hell is going on, Juan?



Juan

If humans can transform into hippos. Do you think it can be reversed?

Bernardo

Why would anyone want to become a hippo?

Juan

You can't see "why?"

Bernardo

Why would anyone want to give up their humanity? Especially to transform into a hippo.

Juan

Yet people are choosing to transform.

Bernardo

It's because people want an excuse to be animals.

Juan

Say more.

Bernardo

I see—rather, I saw what those hippos do. They act on their base instincts. If they aren't lounging around lazily, they're destroying things or fucking on the town square.

Juan

You see this massive shift in consciousness and grotesquely painful choice to oneself as an excuse by the masses to return to our most foul and basic natures.

Bernardo

Yes.

Juan

Always the contrarian.

Bernardo

Do you see things differently?

Hippo sounds fill the atmosphere. JUAN stiffens and sniffs the air, as if searching for something.

Juan

The people who choose to transform are protesting.

Bernardo

What are they protesting?

Juan

They're protesting a failed society. A society that couldn't have been bothered to get rid of the problems left behind by drug lords and corruption. They're protesting our inability to make decisions for the common good because we place a higher premium on the life of an animal than our own citizens who lost everything to its rampaging. Of course people chose to change. If the hippo can do as it pleases, then one must become the hippo. Liberty. They wanted liberation.

Bernardo

It's not worth our humanity.

Juan

Do you know what happened while you were galivanting in Hacienda Napoles? Those who **changed** trampled those who **refused** to change. To keep our humanity is to place us in danger.



Bernardo

Oh God...

Juan

It's no longer for ideological reasons that people change. It's to protect themselves. It's necessary for survival. This is plain evolution at work.

Bernardo

Then they are cowards and the blood of the dead is on their...paws? Hooves? Did we decide what kind of feet appendages hippos had?

Juan

I think they're webbed feet.

Bernardo

Doesn't matter. Those who change to protect themselves...they're complicit. That's not evolution. It's cowardice.

JUAN laughs deeply, strangely.

Juan

You're saying death is preferable?

Bernardo

Preferable to losing our civilization?

Juan

There's the echoes of a society in their grunting and rampaging. They have leaders, they have convictions.

Bernardo

They use their tails to make poop mist, sweat suntan lotion, and do God knows what on the town square. They're wild beasts with absurd biology and impulses.

JUAN'S jaw clenches, growing angry at BERNARDO'S dismissiveness.

Juan

No more absurd than a human who can't keep track of time, looks for hippo birth certificates, and can't even get laid.

Bernardo

Your observations of me are hurtful.

Juan

Did you know that when a Hippo laughs, that means that it's ready to kill?

Bernardo

I...I didn't know that.

Juan

Just imagine. One of the world's most dangerous men and one of the world's most dangerous animals, together. Their eyes meet. They laugh. What could that laugh mean to two such as they?

Bernardo

(uneasy)

I...I wouldn't know...

JUAN smiles at BERNARDO with no humor in his eyes. JUAN makes a decision.

Juan

A joke.

"Pablo Escobar and his business associate go to Hacienda Napoles to see Escobar's animals. Escobar asks if the Business associate would like to hear a joke. The associate says he does."

Bernardo

Wait, a joke within a joke?

Juan

(continuing as if Bernardo did not speak)

"Escobar comments that running a private zoo is much like their business.

How so, asks the associate?

You have to do routine maintenance and clean up the waste.

They reach the hippo pit. The Hippo approaches. Escobar and the Hippo make eye contact. They laugh. The business associate is confused.

You don't get the joke? laughs Escobar to his nervous associate. You have to clean up the trash.

And both Escobar and the Hippo laughed as Escobar pushed his associate into the hippo pit.

The Hippo laughs.

Escobar laughs.

The associate screams.

The Hippo laughs.

Escobar laughs.

My grandfather is silent.

Juan (cont.)

Escobar grimaces.

"That motherfucker never did have a sense of humor."

JUAN watches **BERNARDO** expectantly. **BERNARDO**, for the first time, perhaps ever, has been horrified into silence.

Bernardo

Is there more?

Juan

No.

Bernardo

Oh....

Juan

You're not laughing.

Bernardo

Maybe I don't get the joke...

Juan

Laugh.

Bernardo

At what?

Juan

(roaring)

I SAID LAUGH!

BERNARDO is too terrified to do anything. **JUAN** gives a booming, mirthless, inhuman laugh that fills the cafe. **JUAN** stops suddenly. **BERNARDO** meanwhile is scared shitless.

Juan

You frequently waste my time. You have me wait forever. I can die at any moment and those precious moments are used on your vanity projects, forcing me to go to faraway cafes that burn coffee and overprice their arepas just so you can try to fuck waitresses whose names you don't even know. And you can't even show me the common courtesy to laugh at my fucking joke.

You disgust me with your self-interest. You're a parasitic leech. That's what you are!

JUAN flips the table over causing arepas to scatter and coffee to spill. BERNARDO falls out of his seat and tries to crawl away and save himself from the wrath of his friend.

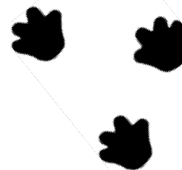
Bernardo

Juan, violence is not the way.

Juan

Violence? Oh, you haven't seen violence.

JUAN rushes into the café howling. BERNARDO instead of fleeing decides it would be best to look for something to fight a transforming Hipposapien with. He seizes upon his dagger: a very dull butter knife, still coated in butter. JUAN, meanwhile, returns wielding a pot of coffee and the legs....OF A HIPPO!! Bernardo, seeing the horrifying transformation before him is frozen in horror and awe at the strangely great definition of the hippo legs.



Juan (cont.)

Let's talk. Let's talk over some cold, burnt coffee. Come! Have some.

JUAN pours the coffee all over a scared stiff BERNARDO.

Bernardo

(sputtering)

Juan, you're spilling coffee all over me!

BERNARDO brandishes the butter knife at JUAN ready to use his weapon if JUAN does not relent. JUAN stops and considers BERNARDO before smiling again, showing his enlarged bottom canines. BERNARDO realizes that his attempt at deterrence has failed, much like his self-produced play Don't Cry for Me Colombia a few years ago.

Bernardo

You can't think clearly because you're not in your right mind.

JUAN snort-laughes. It's definitely giving Hippo and it freaks BERNARDO out. Does he flee? No!

Juan

Oh but I am in my right mind. Everything before me is so very clear now.

Bernardo

What are you saying?

Juan

We're going to conquer the world soon. It's either join our ranks or die. I chose life. I joined them.

Bernardo

Who?

Juan

The hippos you fucking moron!

JUAN hurls the coffee pot back into the café. BERNARDO, remembering that crawling is not the only mode of transportation available to humans, scrambles to stand up, grabbing a few arepas in his other hand. Both circle each other, two alpha...ummm...alpha-males is wrong. Two males in a violent disagreement ready to do some drastic things to settle their tiff.

Bernardo

You're...you're one of them now.

Juan

I am embracing the future of the human race. You're late as usual, stuck in the past. Instead of securing your place in the world, you sit pontificating, never seeing your own hypocrisy. You say those who chose to transform choose to do so to indulge in their base instincts? What were you doing when you forced me to come to this café? What were you doing when you were trying to convince a waitress to act in your show? You were indulging in your most basic urges to *fuck*. You're the animal here, you're just too afraid to admit it. The last disgusting human and you're furious. You hate that people have caught onto your game and improved on it. You've become irrelevant overnight.

Bernardo

Humanity does not become irrelevant.

Juan

It already has become irrelevant, much like your plays.

BERNARDO stuffs the butter knife in his pocket before grabbing as many arepas as he can.

Bernardo

He's a hippo! Oh my God! He's one of them now!

A large brown something is flung at BERNARDO followed by poop mist.

Bernardo

(retching)

What is...is that...is that a mist of...no...


Roars and grunts surround BERNARDO. HIPPOSAPIENS march from all sides while JUAN advances on a doomed BERNARDO.

Juan

Soon I will be a general. I will be a king among hippos. A leader. I will be everything. I will be the powerful one. Come here, old friend. We shall make an example of you.

Bernardo

No. No. No...fuck!



But fate has another plan for BERNARDO! A cannon goes off. JUAN and the HIPPOSAPIENS panic. They retreat out of sight. Another round of cannonfire. Wild cries and grunts of pain all around. JUAN staggers in, covered in soot, mortally wounded.

Juan

moans and grunts in pain

Bernardo

Juan!

BERNARDO rushes to JUAN and cradles his head, comforting his friend in his last moments.

Juan

murmurs in pain like a wounded animal

Bernardo

I know. I know. I love you too.

Juan

grunts weakly in protest

Bernardo

No. I forgive you. You weren't in your right mind...

Juan

(snorting)


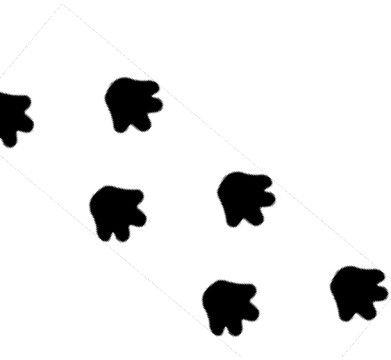
I...hate...you...

JUAN dies.

Bernardo

Nooooooo!!!

BERNARDO keens and wails at the loss of the only man on earth who was still willing to read his scripts. Worse yet he never got JUAN'S notes on his new, completely original and not AI-generated Hip-Hop musical about Colombia's founding father BOLIVAR! Another shot of cannon fire goes off. BERNARDO knows where he must go next. He gently lays JUAN down and places an arepa over JUAN'S heart before crossing his hands over his chest. BERNARDO rushes off.



Scene VIII: The Hippocalypse

We come to the end of our narrative in the ruins of the assembly hall. DALIA stands on a raised platform with a cannon and several cannonballs. Below her, several HIPPOSAPIENS grunting and roaring trying to reach her. DALIA stands tall, a pistol holstered to her side, boldly facing the hippo menace. She fires her cannon. The HIPPOSAPIENS fall.

Dalia

That's fucking right. Come on you fucking traitors to humanity. Every single one of you.

DALIA loads and fires again. BERNARDO wanders in carrying an armful of arepas.

Bernardo

Dalia! Dalia, there you are.

DALIA brandishes her pistol and points it at BERNARDO.

Dalia

Get the fuck back.

BERNARDO stops dead in his tracks. He squeaks in terror.

Bernardo

It's me...Dalia it's me.

Dalia

I know exactly who the fuck you are.

Bernardo

I'm not...

Dalia

Smile for me. Right now, show me your teeth.

BERNARDO smiles awkwardly revealing no hippo teeth. DALIA considers shooting him anyway but then! A HIPPOSAPIEN rises up from the ground and rushes DALIA trying to capitalize on her distraction, but DALIA, supremely aware of her surroundings turns on the enemy immediately and shoots the HIPPOSAPIEN, who howls and retreats. BERNARDO gets on the platform and drops the arepas by the cannon.

Bernardo

We have to get out of here.

Dalia

I refuse.

Bernardo

Do you even know how to use that thing?

Dalia

I will shoot you right the fuck now.

Bernardo

Okay. Sorry for questioning.

DALIA fires her cannon again towards her elusive target.

Dalia

Coward! Come out here!

Bernardo

What are you doing?

Dalia

I want him. The First Hippo. Escobar's Hippo.

Bernardo

We don't know if it was one of Escobar's original (hippos)—

DALIA fires a warning shot at BERNARDO reminding him that she is no longer entertaining any more sophistry from anyone, least of all this man.

Dalia

No more splitting hairs. No more petty debate.

Bernardo

(shocked, absolutely shocked)

Dalia!

Dalia

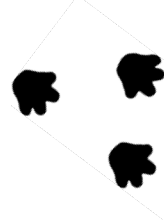
I will never forgive you. I could have been here. I could have helped before they changed. I could have convinced them to stay human. But no, I wasted time with you at that fucking drug lord's home looking for birth certificates.

Bernardo

Dalia—

Dalia

How the fuck do you know my name?



Bernardo

(evasive)

How—how could I not know the name of the woman I care for?

Dalia

I never told you my name.

Bernardo

Well...uh, you see...

Dalia

Oh my God. You fucking stalker. You fucking disgusting creep!

Bernardo

No! Juan turned into hippo-person and I ...

A mighty ROAR! Rhythmic stomping and grunting fill the air. The final battle is commencing. And DALIA plans to meet this moment, head-on..

Dalia

Load the cannon.

Bernardo

How do I do that?

Dalia

Idiot! Move.

DALIA shoves Bernardo out of the way and picks up a cannon ball to handle the loading.

Bernardo

(can't help himself)

I love a woman who takes control.

DALIA can take no more. This man, at the end of the world is still thinking with his dick. Her rage cascades from her like a waterfall.

Dalia

WHAT THE FUCK IS WRONG WITH YOU!?!

DALIA drops the cannonball which rolls away.

Bernardo

You lost the...the uh...

Dalia

I have never. I will never, ever have an ounce of feeling for you and your perverted—

Suddenly we hear the sounds of flatulence followed by that deadly brown mist. DALIA covers her nose.

Dalia

What the fuck is that?

Bernardo

Hippos have booty fans that make their shit into mist.

Dalia

That's not fucking real.

Bernardo

No, seriously!

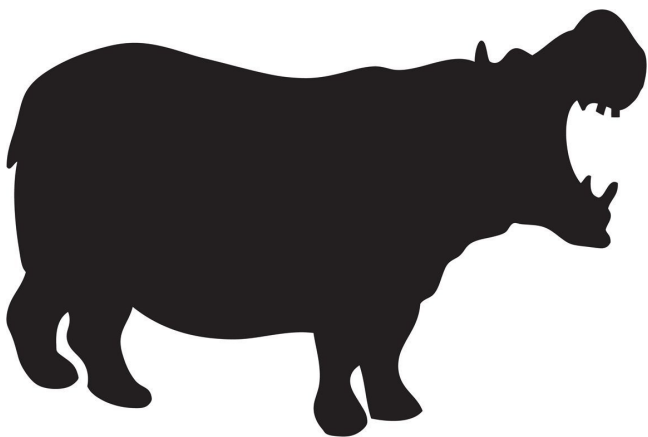
The rhythmic stomping and hippo-grunt chants cease. ESCOBAR'S HIPPO arrives at last. It is even more immense than before. It wears a military beret and moves with the pomp and self-aggrandizing swagger of a general or a dictator. Its ears spin and its eyes like onyx. ESCOBAR'S HIPPO opens its' massive mouth and lets out a piercing roar.

Bernardo

It wasn't that big before. It's only been one day.

Dalia

It's last day. Fucking finally.



Escobar's Hippo

snorts

Dalia

Fuck you too.

Escobar's Hippo

harrumphs

Dalia

Yeah?

Escobar's Hippo

trumpets mockingly

Dalia

Well, see how you like this!



DALIA gets a cannonball and loads it into the cannon, and prepares to fire it . Without her noticing, BERNARDO stuffs many arepas into the cannon.

Bernardo

You have to fire arepas!

DALIA tries to fire the cannon. Nothing. She tries again. Nothing. She tries one last time, and the cannon coughs out arepas. **DALIA** looks in horror at **BERNARDO**.

Dalia

WHAT DID YOU DO???

Escobar's Hippo

guffaws and grunts

DALIA gets her pistol and begins firing madly but all the shots miss.

Dalia

Why?

Hippo magic. It's a thing.

Bernardo

(grabbing **DALIA**'s hand)

We have to go.

Dalia

No. I won't leave.

Bernardo

It's not cowardly to retreat. Come on.

Dalia

The hippos win if we retreat.

Escobar's Hippo

chortles and grunts

Bernardo

We have to look at things as if it's the worst case scenario. We don't know if this is global. We could possibly be the last two humans on earth.

This realization hits DALIA hard. The horror. The utter horror.

Dalia

The...last...two?

ESCOBAR'S HIPPO also stops and tilts its head wondering about that idea. The last two humans..? Could it be true?

Bernardo

So, we have to prepare.

Dalia

For...for what?

Bernardo

Strategies to fight back. Shelter. Food...eventual...procreation...and...um...repopulation of the human race?

This is the straw that broke DALIA'S back. She tries and fails to make sense of all the emotions running through her mind. The only thought that sinks in her mind's eye is the idea of BERNARDO'S lovemaking. For a moment she looks like she's about to have the greatest mental breakdown of all time. Instead, a calm comes over her. She looks at BERNARDO and smiles at him. Bernardo takes her hand and draws closer to her, interpreting her smile as an acceptance at last of their relationship.

Dalia

(at peace with her decision)

I can't. Not with you.

Bernardo

We have a duty to save the human race.

Dalia

Then fuck the human race.

Bernardo

That's what we're going to try to do, right? Fuck the human race back into existence.

Dalia

No. I won't. Simple as that.

Bernardo

What have you been fighting for all this time, then?

Dalia

I'm willing to die for humanity. But I will not procreate with you to save humanity. Nope. Fuck that.

Bernardo

In time you'll learn to love me...

Dalia

I need you understand something.

Bernardo

Okay.

Dalia

I mean this unambiguously. I'm not flirting or playing hard to get when I say this. I would rather fuck the hippo.

BERNARDO squeaks, heartbroken. The unflappable confidence in his own seductive prowess, vanquished at last. **ESCOBAR'S HIPPO** meanwhile is into the idea of being with **DALIA** and gives an enthusiastic grunt of approval. **ESCOBAR'S HIPPO** begins to pimp strut in **DALIA'S** direction, grunting with desire and intent. Yes, dear audience, it's true, bestiality is more attractive to **DALIA** than **BERNARDO**.

Escobar's Hippo

low seductive grunt

Bernardo

You'd seriously fuck a hippo before...?

Dalia

Yes. Without hesitation.

Bernardo

I can't believe that...

Dalia

Believe it.

Escobar's Hippo

grunts in laughter at Bernardo's humiliation

Dalia

Now. I'm gonna find a way out. Do you have any kind of weapon? A gun? Knife? Anything?

Bernardo

(pulling it from his pocket)

I have this butter knife from the café.

Dalia

Oh my God...It never ends how disappointing you are.

She snatches the butter knife from BERNARDO and rushes at ESCOBAR'S HIPPO resisting to the last.

Dalia (cont.)

Better to die with my pride than in humiliation—!

The HIPPOSAPIENS rise up as if from the dead and meet **DALIA** before she can reach **ESCOBAR'S HIPPO**. She cries out, but the scream is cut short by the **HIPPOSAPIENS** surrounding her. They raise **Dalia's** dead body, covered in scratches, like a trophy. They depart grunting in celebration as **BERNARDO** falls to his knees, with only **ESCOBAR'S HIPPO** as his company. Something changes in **BERNARDO**. He discovers something he's never yet known...his courage...and, as you will soon see, an endless lung capacity.

Escobar's Hippo
trumpets in victory

Bernardo
The love of my life!! Whyyyy!?

Escobar's Hippo
grunts

Bernardo
That's not a response. You need to answer for yourself. Why?

Escobar's Hippo
grunts

Bernardo
Why this town? Why didn't you stay in Hacienda Napoles where Escobar brought you? Why can people change into hippos? What about your ideology seduces so many people?

Escobar's Hippo
grunts

Bernardo
Ah. That's where I've failed, you say? That to assume there's an ideology in the first place is the fatal flaw in my thinking? Of course. Yes, yes. But why do people rally around you? You and all those like you inevitably fail. People who bring about destruction and chaos always...

Escobar's Hippo
grunts

Bernardo
It doesn't matter? What do you mean it doesn't matter? Of course it matters. Unless...you mean that an ideology doesn't die with the man? That it persists in memory until it rises again? Then why fight? Why do we do anything at all? If we eradicate the Nazis and the Communists, the drug lords, the strongmen, and the liars at the publishing company, they'll just return? What kind of existence is this? It's absurd.

Escobar's Hippo
grunts

Bernardo
Of course. The poor will always be poor. The rich will always be rich. We are trapped in the eternal repetitions of history. But the arc of history inevitably bends toward justice. It does.

Escobar's Hippo
grunts

Bernardo

What? Unless it's a wheel and the bend to justice leads to the descent into the worst moments of human history. But then what are you, Hippo? What are you to the eternal turning of the wheel? You will perish along with all others and will eventually be forgotten.

Escobar's Hippo

flatulates

Bernardo

But you are not here as history's pawn, you say? You come to break the wheel. By changing the fundamental nature of man to hippo, they will break free. Then Juan was correct. To transform into a hippo is to rage against the cruelty of repeating fate. It's to go against human destiny and truly free oneself. Then I should change into a hippo. Yes. I must.

Escobar's Hippo

grunt-sighs

BERNARDO closes his eyes, trying to will himself into a state of hipponess. The **HIPPO** also watches with interest. **BERNARDO** waits there, holding his breath, growing red in the face until-

Bernardo

I CAN'T!!

Escobar's Hippo

chortles

Bernardo

Shut up!

Escobar's Hippo

continues to guffaw

Bernardo

I can't let go of my humanity. I can't accept that this is the solution to breaking the wheel. Freedom cannot come at the expense of our basic decency. It can't. It can't come from following a hippo brought here by an egomaniac who killed so many people and couldn't be removed by a government that killed even more people. You're too pathetic.

ESCOBAR'S HIPPO has now grown bored with this. He opens his mouth and roars the mightiest roar yet. **BERNARDO** falls back and sees the arepas.

Escobar's Hippo

snorts dangerously



Bernardo

Ah, so if I won't change, you'll eliminate me? That makes sense. But one last question.

(beat)

Why do you hate arepas so much?

BERNARDO grabs an arepa and hurls it at ESCOBAR'S HIPPO. This greatly offends the hippo— **FOR THE LAST TIME!**

Escobar's Hippo

grunts ferociously

BERNARDO throws arepa after arepa at ESCOBAR'S HIPPO, driving it back.

Bernardo

Because it represents the one thing your ideology can never offer? Because the arepa is the foundation of our triumph over nature? Because it sustains and feeds? Because it is the human spirit and all our ingenuity in one, flaky, sometimes dryly made patty?

Escobar's Hippo

growls threateningly

Bernardo

I know what I am.

(throws an arepa)

I'm no great human being. Monsters like you destroy our smartest and bravest and leave cowards like me behind. But even a coward has his moment of bravery, when he protects his own skin at all costs. The coward will use courage if he must.

(throws another arepa)

You killed Juan and Dalia. The smartest and bravest. You took this town over down to its political infrastructure. You took this town and its people under your sway. You intend to dominate and transform or kill everyone until you achieve permanent change. But I'm still here.

You won't win until you've killed me. The human spirit endures as long as I'm here.

Escobar's Hippo

grunt-laugh

Bernardo

Yes. Laugh. Laugh at me. I'm worthless. I can't write worth a damn. I'm egotistical and have always acted in my own self-interest. I wanted to run away from you until others got rid of you. I did nothing to try to stop you until it was too late. But I'm here now. That counts for something right? I am still human, and I defy you to the end. It may be true that Colombian men have a grand propensity for failure, but I won't let you win this one easily. If I'm the last man, then I shall defend humanity to the last breath even if I fail in my task. I will keep...oh...

BERNARDO sees there's only one arepa left. The HIPPOSAPIENS arrive and begin a march toward a defiant but still hapless **BERNARDO** following behind ESCOBAR'S HIPPO.

Escobar's Hippo
growls menacingly

BERNARDO realizes perhaps the greatest truth of this entire journey.

Bernardo

Or you're just a hippo that doesn't like things thrown at you and you have no other meaning beyond that and I'm just trying to intellectualize something because it makes me feel special.

ESCOBAR'S HIPPO prepares to rush at **BERNARDO** now completely done with this one-sided dialogue

Escobar's Hippo
snorts defiantly

Bernardo

So, this is how it ends...

BERNARDO remembers something. A question, one that he must have answered.

Bernardo

Last question. Were you born in Colombia or Africa? It would help solve something for me.

ESCOBAR'S HIPPO is caught off-guard and is confused for a moment before finally grunt-laughing.

Escobar's Hippo
(low, labored)
Hijue...pu...ta...

His question answered and his fate now sealed, **BERNARDO** can only laugh with the **HIPPO**.

Bernardo

Ah. I see now. It's not an immigration problem. You're just a vulgar animal surrounded by stupid people.

ESCOBAR'S HIPPO'S patience has officially run out. It rushes toward **BERNARDO** who himself shrieks out in a pitch that was not thought possible of men after puberty. **BERNARDO** holds the arepa above his head like it's a spear. So it is. We have the last, perhaps not best, but last human being fighting for his backwards notions of nobility. Standing up--in his own roundabout way--for the ultimate dignity of humanity. For whatever that's worth. We hope you enjoyed our dramatic re-enactment of our Hippocene era's glorious beginnings.

Blackout.



Scene IX: Hippologue

A HIPPOSAPIEN enters. It directs its words to the audience. It has the voice of the HIPPOSAPIEN NARRATOR who guided us through this story.

Hipposapien Narrator

We come to the end of our journey at the beginning of a new epoch. Born along the Magdalena River of a land once known as Colombia, our numbers grew until the human transformed or went extinct. There are rumors, like so many extinct species that the human animal yet lives in isolated pockets, far and away from the world we have built from their ruins. We have seen them all, in their unwillingness to compromise, in their unwillingness to let go of pride and ego, even if it meant saving their own lives. We saw acceptance and resistance each in their measure. We have witnessed so much, and I hope that this documentary provided you all with insights and knowledge into what it is that caused humanity's end. It was not us; it was what they believed we offered, and what they believed we were taking.

A final word to the wise.

The vanity and ego of human beings is so fragile. They cannot stand even the slightest shift or perceived insult They—

An arepa gets thrown at the HIPPOSAPIEN NARRATOR who is greatly offended by this insult.

Hipposapien Narrator

Who did that?? WHO DID THAT??? HOW DARE YOU!?! I WILL BE REVENGED!

The curtain falls on the snarling HIPPOSAPIEN NARRATOR.

End of Documentary

