

This preview is an excerpt only.

All Scriptmore script previews can’t be used for performance or distributed in any way. No part may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented. This script is fully protected under copyright law and all rights are retained by the author.

To read this script in its entirety, purchase a copy from scriptmore.com.

Mentor Wonders

scriptmore

Scriptmore.com

MENTOR WONDERS

written by
Catherine Lee

©2025 Catherine Lee | Licensed and Distributed by Scriptmore

Synopsis

During a mentor orientation meeting in a South Texas bilingual public school, volunteers— including veteran and new mentors— hear from the Principal and staff coordinator about why volunteering is needed for "at risk" students. Meanwhile, experienced mentors daydream (in poetry with music) about their activities with mentees. These cross-cultural educational efforts help both adults and students learn about each other's cultures, through often pleasurable, occasionally challenging, interactions. An AMBER Alert interrupts the meeting and causes consternation as staff and mentors realize the abducted child is one of their students. This is a one-act play.

Cast of Characters

TERRY LAKE	staff Community Coordinator at Confianza Academy, manages program, assigns mentors, and schedules group events
CARLOS CASTILLO	veteran mentor, one of the few bilingual mentors, works at a research institute. He was paired with Tomas Fuentes beginning last year. Their close male-centric bond helped Tomas compensate for his papa's absence.
JASON PETERSON	prospective mentoring volunteer, is an architect at a large firm. Detail-oriented to a fault, he interrupts with difficult questions, to compare this program to others he's considering.
POETA TAMBIÉN	*(optional cast)* is a bilingual Spanish reader of "Dreamscape" poems with music background as daydreams that interrupt meeting dialog. If only one poet is cast, this character has priority.
SANDRA KENNEY	is a retired educator of special needs children who has been mentoring since the program started nine years ago. She helps coordinate and recruit mentors.
BARBARA MINTON	veteran mentor, works in book publishing. She mentored Angela several years ago for the Alien Bunny creative project.
LINDA HALE	veteran mentor, also bilingual in Spanish, is a retired school nurse who has mentored Beryl Fuentes for three years. She helps Beryl deal with family instability caused by her mother's severe illness.
JOEY GREEN	is younger, a prospective new mentor. An ophthalmologic technician, this character can be either male or female.

PEARL HOUSTON, Ph.D.: has been Principal at Confianza Academy for the past five years. She instituted incentives to improve attendance and graduation rates, including mentoring, to counter her school's poor test-score performance.

POET DREAMER *(optional cast)* also recites poems with music background as daydreams that interrupt meeting dialog, alternating these "Dreamscapes" with Poeta También.

ANGELA FERNANDEZ *(optional cast)* is a student mentee, one of the co-authors who reads her Alien Bunny story to the Mentor Coordinator and Principal, either live on stage or as a video projection.

PHONE VOICE is an AMBER Alert automated announcement that comes through on all phones.

TOMAS FUENTES *(optional cast)* is a bilingual student mentee, Beryl's older brother, paired with Carlos. Family issues cause his papa to abduct him and move to Mexico. He reads a letter he's written to Carlos, either live on stage or as a video projection.

Place

Confianza Academy

Time

A new school year in the fall of 2016, early September and mid-November. It's been some years since a heavily-armed attacker invaded Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtowne, Connecticut. But another more recent armed ambush of Dallas, Texas police has some volunteers concerned about school safety.

Director Notes

SET

The play take places at two tables in the cafeteria, and then in a dedicated mentor room at Confianza Academy, a bilingual public school in San Antonio, Texas.

"Dreamscapes," music video-like interruptions containing poetry and illustrations, occasionally appear. These can be staged either as complete videos projected on scrim, or directed to one or two additional actors, POET DREAMER and POETA TAMBIÉN. Should actors perform these parts, they stand on one of four elevated platform stage areas obscured by scrim, arranged in an inverted V shape, two to a side behind the main stage (see diagrams at end of script). Projections of various scenes in motion or as stills appear on darkened scrim where indicated.

Also treated dramatically like Dreamscapes are the readings by two former mentees. One, ANGELA FERNANDEZ, reads her story, "Alien Bunny," to school officials. A second, TOMAS FUENTES, writes a letter of appreciation to his former mentor. These stories can either appear as video projections on scrim, or be portrayed by actors reading from elevated

platforms at the rear of the main stage.

The first four scenes take place during an Orientation for new and returning volunteer mentors at Confianza Academy, a bilingual public school in San Antonio, Texas. This gathering takes place in the school's Cafeteria, where the group is clustered around two tables, with school staff at the front. The fifth scene, several months later, takes place in the school's dedicated Mentor Room, and during a phone call between the Mentor Coordinator and a veteran mentor at his workplace.

ACT I

Scene 1

Setting: the cafeteria

At Rise: Mentor Orientation in Cafeteria begins with welcome speeches and discussion. The lights go up on the front of the Cafeteria at Confianza Academy on a school day morning. Two long tables are set up. TERRY LAKE, staff Community Coordinator, enters carrying a stack of handouts, to lead a Mentor Orientation meeting. On one table, she puts the pile of handouts. Several veterans and prospective mentors wander in and take seats at tables, either in friend groupings or as individuals. TERRY goes to the front of the room, which is staged diagonally stage right, relative to the tables. She has no lectern or mic. Greetings are heard around the room before TERRY starts speaking. TERRY gestures to those arriving.

TERRY LAKE

Morning, folks. Come on in. We're just getting started.

(When TERRY begins addressing them, greetings subside.)

TERRY LAKE

Welcome everybody to Confianza Academy. It's wonderful to see all of you, new volunteers and veteran mentors alike. I'm Terry Lake. I'm the school's Community Coordinator, your contact person with your mentees. I'll match you with a student, based on your interests and their needs. I'll be giving you a Mentor Handbook and two forms in a second.

(CARLOS CASTILLO, a veteran mentor, jumps up from his seat and picks up the pile of handouts.)

CARLOS CASTILLO

I'll help you pass those out, Terry.

TERRY LAKE

Thanks Carlos. Glad to see you're back. Tomas told me he can't wait to see you again.

(CARLOS passes a packet to each mentor while TERRY speaks.)

TERRY LAKE

New folks, mentoring is usually scheduled back-to-back from 9 A.M. 'til 2 P.M. You normally spend that hour in our mentoring room which is adjacent to my office. I've stocked it with craft supplies, books, and all sorts of games.

(From here on, throughout the play, projections of still and motion video interactions between mentors and mentees appear randomly on one to four scrims behind the actors on stage. These continue during school staff dialog, stopping when scrim lighting allows reveal of a platform stage where a poet or mentee performs.)

TERRY LAKE

The first time you meet your mentee, you might ask them to show you around the school or visit the library. You and your mentee decide together how to structure each one-hour weekly visit. This helps them develop analytic and decision making skills. Mentoring touches a child in a way that helps emotionally too. Making that connection is gratifying because you can see the child's growth. Maybe not the first week, or the second. Give it a month or two, isn't that so, veterans? After that, if it's really not working, I'll find a different mentee for you. In that packet, please find the background check permission form. New volunteers need to sign and return that form today. Returning mentors have already done theirs. All school personnel, including volunteers, are required to pass a back ground check. Don't worry. We don't count minor offenses like traffic tickets. But we must exclude anyone known to be a threat to students. If you have any concerns, please see me after the meeting.

(New mentor volunteer JASON PETERSON interrupts TERRY with a concern.)

JASON PETERSON

Before I commit to coming here to volunteer, I'd like to know more about security. Does this school have plans for what to do if a serious situation develops?

TERRY LAKE

Excellent question. To get into the building for this meeting, you've all just gone through our visitors' protocol of locked doors, buzzed admittance, sign in with ID, and wear badges. But if you mean drills, we do have both Tornado and Fire Drills. During those drills, you would go with your mentee, who has been taught where to shelter and wait. If you mean — god forbid — an "active shooter" situation, again, yes. We do have a school-wide drill protocol involving locked doors, covered windows, and hiding. We do not promote fighting back against armed intruders, if that's what concerns you. Please, read about our lockdown drill ahead of time in the Handbook. After you all start actively mentoring, we will schedule another meeting to explain it and practice as a group. An actual drill might happen while you're here. It would be a total surprise, unannounced, coordinated with police. Unfortunately, nobody can be warned that it's only a drill. That makes it extremely stressful.

TERRY's speech is interrupted by the Dreamscape, "Locked, Loaded, Dreadfully Drilled." POETA TAMBIÉN appears on an elevated platform behind the scrim located at center left behind the main stage. She performs the poem while images of school shooters and lockdown drills are projected on the other three darkened scrims. The Orientation attendees mime continuing to meet during the Dreamscape.

POETA TAMBIÉN

"Locked, Loaded, Dreadfully Drilled"

Our fire drills in elementary school were almost festive.

We filed as classes, grouped in orderly lines, to designated places on a playground.

We kids considered these events were extra recess opportunities, welcome interruptions to a boring day.

These modern days of heightened threats have transfigured thrill to anguish. When practicing to stay alive in face of random lethal bullets from omnipresent firearms, we cannot know if armed attack this day is drill or real.

Silence is essential during active shooter episodes.

Be an absolutely quiet target in darkened room, hopefully invisible behind drawn window blinds, blocked door.

In huddled corners, waiting for whatever, practice silent fear.

Never must we wail in terror over disembodied voice of stranger begging entrance, rattling doorknob, pounding rifle butt or shoulder into barrier, hurling curses in frustration, banned from easy access to our hiding places.

Bullets can penetrate walls and doors en route toward flesh and bones. Since crying calls attention to a body's whereabouts, practice is required, how to manage panic.

As "lockdown, lockdown" intercom alarms, training tells us what to do, and when.

Nothing mitigates against anxiety caused by either actual assault, or refresher simulation.

Until police and school officials eventually unlock our classroom door, fear rises instant, palpable, traumatic, continuous, persistent.

Mistrust, distress are loaded, locked into unsuspicious students with impressionable hearts.

Dreadfully drilled.

SANDRA KENNEY

It's terrible that we are forced to plan ahead for gun attacks. Children have to learn to fear for their lives in school? How to protect themselves? That's just not right. We have too many guns. It's not 1950s TV cowboy culture, which

SANDRA KENNEY (CONT)

was pure fiction even then. If everybody has guns, how can you pick out the good guys?

TERRY LAKE

I agree, Sandra. But the fact is, in this state, many believe in the absolute right to bear arms. This is not the time for this discussion…

BARBARA MINTON

As more and more states pass open carry laws, a lot of jobs get more dangerous. Nobody can feel safe anymore, not at college, the movies, or a concert. And what about that Afghan War veteran last July who killed five Dallas officers? Armed and trained Texas cops don't want unrestricted gun ownership, either.

SANDRA KENNEY

A mass shooting already happened at a school like this, Sandy Hook Elementary. The kid's mother bought an assault rifle legally. He took it, killed her first, then killed 26 more at the school. It's always some mentally-ill loner, exercising his Second Amendment right to own a military-grade rifle for hunting.

LINDA HALE

Government officials won't allot funding for mental health services for children or adults. We school nurses have to beg for supplies. Meanwhile the only action politicians want to take is turning schools into prisons with locked doors, checkpoints, armed guards, and school staff forced to be human shields with weapons we aren't qualified to use.

JASON PETERSON

I feel strongly about our right to feel safe and protected in a school building. Our children must have the same right. My work is designing buildings, with more than one exit for fire safety. Active shooter drills, do they help or do more damage? Children are supposed to feel prepared and therefore safer. But a lot of them get traumatized even when it's only a drill. Adults too.

TERRY LAKE

Listen, folks, on this campus, we do have entry restrictions, background checks, and random drills. We're doing the best we can to help everyone feel safer. Please, let's return our focus to the positive effects of mentoring. We came together here today to plan enjoyable things to do with our students this year, remember? Let's continue with the Orientation.

These pages have been removed
for the preview.

To read this script in its entirety,
purchase a copy from
scriptmore.com.

Scene 5

Setting: The Mentor Room; same semester, early November

At Rise: Mentoring has been going on since late September. Two mentors cross paths at the change of the hour. LINDA has just returned to the Mentor Room after having walked Beryl back to class. She is cleaning up craft supplies and a boxed puzzle quickly and putting them back on a shelf. BARBARA arrives, stashing her purse before going to pick up her mentee Juan for their weekly visit.

LINDA HALE

Morning, Barbara. Sorry, I'll be out of here in a second. Beryl and I lost track of time.

BARBARA MINTON

Oh, no problem. But, since you're here, did you ever hear anything from Beryl about what happened to her brother? I never saw anything in the news about it.

LINDA HALE

Yes. Beryl told me Tomas is fine. He now lives in Saltillo, Mexico with his papa's family. We looked it up and found out it's in Coahuila. It's a big city, like here, with beautiful Spanish colonial architecture from the 1500s. And much older indigenous cultural sites, too. We were both very surprised to find out that Saltillo was the capital of Texas when it was still part of Mexico. You've heard of Saltillo tiles—they're world famous. We both think it's a good move for Tomas. Beryl misses him, of course, but she's also happy to have more space to herself.

(LINDA marks her volunteer time in a notebook. TERRY comes into the Mentor Room on the way back to her office which is adjacent. She is carrying a pile of mail after having picked it up at the front desk.)

TERRY LAKE

Morning, ladies.

BARBARA MINTON

Hello Terry.

LINDA HALE

Oh, hi Terry, I was just leaving.

TERRY LAKE

I heard you talking. Back in September, the same day as that alert, the cops stopped the dad's truck close to the Mexican border. Both parents had a moderated discussion. Mrs. Fuentes finally agreed that Tomas would be better off with his father's people in Saltillo. She accepted how difficult it was for her to care for even one child given her illness. She withdrew the abduction complaint, and allowed Tomas to move.

BARBARA MINTON

Thank goodness. That's a relief to hear a happy ending.

TERRY LAKE

The one sad thing is, Carlos stopped mentoring. He was deeply affected by suddenly losing Tomas. They had developed a strong bond.

LINDA HALE

Oh, that's why I haven't seen Carlos around. Doesn't he know Tomas is doing well?

TERRY LAKE

Yes, I told him. And I encouraged him to come back. We really need our bilingual mentors. I don't think he's ready, though. I guess he's still grieving. But I'm also going to lose another mentor. Remember Jason Peterson? He withdrew. He can't continue after the winter break, because he got too busy at work. It's too bad, his seventh grader, Amalia Tamez, was doing really well with him. I need someone for

TERRY LAKE (CONT)

her, hopefully someone with a science background. If either of you might do it, or knows someone to recruit…

BARBARA MINTON

OK, I hear you. But right now, let me go get Juan. We're already cutting into his time.

(BARBARA leaves.)

LINDA HALE

Listen, Terry, I've been thinking about getting a second mentee. Beryl's home situation was so unstable. After her brother moved to Saltillo, I wondered if she'd be taken away, too. For now, that seems to be straightened out, but who knows? If you can't find anyone else before the winter break, I'll take on Amalia. Beryl and I looked up Saltillo, and now she can hardly wait to visit him. We hung drawings she made on the corkboard, see?

(pointing to scrims where these two images are projected)

That's Tomas visiting their dinosaur museum. In the other one he's playing baseball, with a snow-covered peak in the background. Beryl has never seen snow and wants him to show her.

(TERRY has been sorting through the mail.)

TERRY LAKE

Thanks Linda, I'm grateful to have that option. I'll definitely show these drawings to Carlos next time I meet with him. See you next week.

(As LINDA leaves, TERRY finds a letter, and says aloud to herself. TERRY dials CARLOS using her cell phone. CARLOS picks up his cell phone to answer the ring. He is at his desk in a workspace at a research center, which appears on an elevated platform behind the farthest leftmost scrim behind

the stage. A bank of computer screens and other research features are projected on the other darkened scrims.)

CARLOS CASTILLO

(a work phone greeting)

This is Carlos Castillo.

TERRY LAKE

Hello Carlos. This is Terry Lake from Confianza. I haven't heard from you in a while, how are you?

CARLOS CASTILLO

Estoy bien, gracias. I've been busy here at work. It has been a while.

TERRY LAKE

I was just speaking with Linda Hale about Beryl. They posted some of her drawings of Tomas in the Mentor Room. I'm letting you know in case you'd like to see them.

CARLOS CASTILLO

Qué interesante. Has Beryl heard from her brother recently?

TERRY LAKE

I don't know, to be honest. But you have heard from him. I found a surprise in today's mail. Tomas sent you a letter, in care of me. So that's the real reason I called.

CARLOS CASTILLO

¿Qué? Me escribió He wrote me? ¡Vaya! I'm tied up in meetings at work all day today. I will arrange to come tomorrow morning. But please, open it now and read it to me. I have to admit, not knowing how Tomas was doing in Mexico upset me quite a bit.

TERRY LAKE

(She switches to speaker phone, opens the letter, and reads slowly.)

Okay. Let me put you on speaker. Let's hear what he says. It starts out in Spanish,"¡Hola! Carlos ¡Feliz Día de Acción de Gracias!" and a couple more sentences I'll have to leave for you. Then he switches: "I am trying to practice using English here. I hope I won't forget too many words…."

(TERRY's voice is replaced with TOMAS, who appears on the platform center right behind that scrim. TOMAS is in his bedroom in Saltillo, Mexico composing and reading his letter aloud. As TERRY stops reading, an image of the letter is also projected on the center left scrim between TOMAS and CARLOS. An English translation of the Spanish section is projected on the fourth scrim, the one located at the far right:

[Hello Carlos, Happy Thanksgiving Day. … As the month of November arises, I become filled with thoughts about family traditions. I am well cared for here by my father and our relatives in Saltillo. I pray daily for my mother's health to improve. May mother, aunt Lupe, and sister Beryl all enjoy happiness during this holiday season. I notice the difference here to have Spanish language spoken by everyone. … Sincerely, your friend, Tomas.])

TOMAS FUENTES

"¡Hola! Carlos ¡Feliz Día de Acción de Gracias! Comenzo el mes de noviembre. Estoy pensando mucho en las tradiciones familiares. Aqui, en Saltillo, mi padre y mis parientes me tratan muy bien. Cada dia rezo porque mejore la salud de mi madre. Ojala que mi mama, tia Lupe y mi hermana Beryl gozen de felicidad durante estas fiestas. Noto la diferencia que hace que todos hablen en castellano aqui.

I am trying to practice using English here. I hope I won't forget too many words. We will be having turkey enchiladas with green mole when we gather together for our family meal. Carlos, I want to tell you this. Your friendship is one of

TOMAS FUENTES (CONT)

the blessings of my life in San Antonio, for which I thank God. It makes me sad that I cannot spend time with you every week like before. You taught me so much and inspired me to think about attending university. Papa's family is connected with Instituto Tecnológico de Saltillo here. I am working hard in the hope to follow your example. Maybe someday I will work at the Research Institute with you. Thank you for being my mentor and encouraging me during a time when I needed friendship and guidance the most. Atentamente, su amigo Tomas."

TERRY LAKE

Wow, that's amazing. How special.

CARLOS CASTILLO *(touched)*

No sé qué decir. ¡Me siento tan abrumado! I'm so overwhelmed, I don't know what to say. Is there a return address so I can send something back to him? I'll definitely come by tomorrow morning.

TERRY LAKE

Yes, he has his address. Congratulations. How wonderful to hear from Tomas himself what your friendship has meant to him.

(pause)

I was wondering if this is a good time to ask. Are you ready to consider mentoring again? One of the students is losing her current mentor. Do you remember Jason Peterson?

CARLOS CASTILLO

He was an architect?

TERRY LAKE

Yes. He informed me that he needs to withdraw for work reasons.

CARLOS CASTILLO

Let me think about it. When Tomas vanished out of my life, it was such a shock. I didn't feel ready to start with a different mentee. I've been too upset. But I do understand how much you need bilingual mentors. And if I remember correctly, you matched him with this girl because of her interest in robotics.

TERRY LAKE

Yes, it is Amalia Tamez. I hope I can find someone, so she won't have to go without a mentor mid-year. I was also very sorry that you lost Tomas so abruptly last fall. These losses are painful for both parties, so disappointing even when the reason is understandable. That's why I think the two of you would be well matched, good for each other. Doesn't the place you work have a division with robotics?

CARLOS CASTILLO

Yes. That's right, I know some people there. If I'm not ready to mentor her myself yet, I will ask around. I'll let you know tomorrow.

(pause)

Isn't it amazing how Tomas just suddenly reappeared, with gratitude and encouragement? It does make you wonder who mentors who.

TERRY LAKE

Yes, and just in time for Thanksgiving. It reminds me of the William Wordsworth poem, where he said, "the Child is father of the Man." Should I expect you first thing tomorrow? I'm here by 7:45 A.M. If I'm out of my office, the front desk can page me.

CARLOS CASTILLO

Bueno. Yes. I'll see you then. Maybe you can introduce me to Amalia? Gracias.

(TERRY hangs up, thinking that CARLOS may consider mentoring another child.)

(END OF PLAY)

(During the first, individual curtain calls, POET DREAMER appears on the elevated platform behind the scrim located at far right behind the main stage. She reads the poem "Missing Piece (For Jason)" while the other scrims stay dark for the curtain calls. POET DREAMER joins the rest of the cast onstage after finishing this reading for the last group curtain call.)

POET DREAMER

"Missing Piece (For Jason)"
I mentor a schoolboy who loves puzzles
but shies away from 4th grade reads.
Our jigsaw games, it's true,
they're fun but I'm more fond
of reading one-on-one.
I noticed he's a kid who imitates
so I'm attempting to inspire him.
One day his teacher sent an article along
for us to read outside of class.
I listened to him struggle,
read aloud while I read
upside down and silently
until he stumbled over words
like "conflict,"
"diamonds,"
"brutal" work
in tale of children mining gemstones
deep in Congo.
At age of 12, boys graduate
to working physically
instead of paying teachers cash
to finish school.
They have a choice, if you can call it that,
to mine blood gems and skip
the reading class.

POET DREAMER (CONT)

I reminded him he's also 12,
but he objected, stated he's 11 yet
'til next week's celebration.
I see. He always balks
when task is hard.
He finds it wrong to lose.
He must be Number One.
So we turn to different kinds of puzzlement
finding United State shapes
on a jigsaw map.
Texas is the shape he knows
extremely well
with border limits he can easily identify.
I best him 'cuz I hail
from north New Jersey,
old enough to drive through
lots of other states.
May he grow wise enough
to follow roadmaps
puzzling past the borders set before him,
smart enough to understand
the shifting shape of knowledge:
reading is the missing piece
he needs to always win.



Like what you read?

To buy this script in its entirety or check out other scripts, visit scriptmore.com.