‘IN THE HEIGHTS’ audition readings

You will be asked to present one scene for the character you are auditioning for. You may be asked to cold-read another of the excerpts provided for a different character. Please present in appropriate accent

Notes:

• * There is no dialogue section required if you are auditioning for the role of Piragua Guy only. If you are also trying for other roles, you’re advised to read Kevin’s scene.

• * Those auditioning for the role of Usnavi are asked to present the ‘Alabanza’ sequence. Please present this in the way it appears in the musical, although there may not be any musical accompaniment.

• * Those auditioning for Graffiti Pete only should prepare one song with rap and one piece with singing (singing is not a vital part for this character but we’d still like to see what you can do)

GOOD LUCK!

SONNY

Sonny, Usnavi’s cousin, works with him at the bodega. Their friend Benny, who works at the taxi dispatch, has just entered.

BENNY
How do i look?

USNAVI
Benny, you look the same as every day. Quit trying to impress Nina.

SONNY
(Sniffs.) Whoo, you need to impress some Old Spice under those arms.

BENNY
Shut up. My boss put me on dispatch. I need to look professional.

SONNY
“My boss, my boss.” You’re paving the road to someone else’s dreams. Man, strike out on your own.
BENNY
I'm learning on someone else’s dime. They day I open Benny’s Car Service, I’ll know my trade inside out.

USNAVI
Either one of you Rockefellers wanna take this business off my hands?

SONNY
Heck no.

USNAVI
Yeah, I thought so.

SONNY
Usnavi, double-check this. (Hands Usnavi the paper.)

USNAVI
Take Five Lotto. Hold up, we sold a winner yesterday?

BENNY
Somebody won?

SONNY
Yo, I want a cut of your cut!

ABUELA CLAUDIA

She is with Usnavi on the street corner. It’s very hot.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
Ay, que calor. Usnavi, ooo-oo!

(USNAVI enters.)

USNAVI
Something’s wrong, you were off-pitch.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
It’s the heat. Toma, your ham and cheese.

USNAVI
Thanks. You know, you already brought me one.
ABUELA CLAUDIA
De verdad? My memory goes two miles an hour. I’m taking a walk. I need some air.

USNAVI
Breadcrumbs for your birds. *(Hands Abuela Claudia a little bag.)* Stay in the shade, okay? As long as you’re taking your medicine.

*(Abuela Claudia doesn’t respond.)*

Abuela.... No puedes olvidar -

ABUELA CLAUDIA
It makes my heart work better, but in return it gives me headaches. Imaginate, with what those pills cost, I could get myself a good facelift. *(Demonstrating nips and tucks on her face.)* Sácalo de aquí, mételo pacá. Sácalo de aquí, mételo pacá. Pacá, pacá... Ah! I should stop by Padre Carlos’s church and light a few candles.

USNAVI
Light one for my busted grate. I gotta go call the mechanic about that thing. Mi amor, like you always say, patience and faith.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
Paciencia y fe.

**NINA & BENNY**

*Nina’s father owns the Rosario Car Service where Benny works. Nina and Benny become the love interest in the story.*

BENNY
*(Into the radio. Shaky Spanish.)* Roger. Cómo? Uh... dónde estás? Uno momento. Yo, Cabrón, I’m trying to help you!

NINA
Whoa, who taught you Spanish?

BENNY
The drivers, dirty bastards.
NINA
*(Takes the radio.)* Aha, dime. *(Listens.)* He’s going to the Cloisters, he’s stuck on the Hudson.

BENNY
Exit fourteen, follow signs to Fort Tryon.

NINA
The U-turn off exit fifteen is quicker.

BENNY
It’s also illegal.

NINA
*(Into the radio.)* Salida quince, hagas una media vuelta, sigue derecho.

BENNY
You gave him your directions, didn’t you?

NINA
*(Puts down the radio.)* Did you learn some more curse words?

BENNY
I’m trying but it’s like two different languages. Dominican Spanish, Puerto Rican Spanish.

NINA
I hear you. They spoke a different kind of English at Stanford.

BENNY Really?

NINA

BENNY
Well, did you teach them a few words from home?

NINA
Of course. “Would you like fries with that?”

BENNY
*(Like a toast.)* To not speaking the language.
GRAFFITI PETE

Pete enters Usnavi and Sonny’s bodega.

GRAFFITI PETE
Yo Sonny, check out my new wall! I painted that shit by candlelight!

SONNY
Shh, the man’s having female troubles.

GRAFFITI PETE
My bad... (Pulls out a hand-airbrushed T-shirt) Yo. Buy my T-shirt.

USNAVI
That’s your sales pitch? Get the hell out of here.

GRAFFITI PETE
Today’s special, two for twenty.

USNAVI
How about I give you nothing and you scrub your initials off my awning?

SONNY
(Hands PETE a slushie.) Sonny’s secret recipe.

USNAVI
That’s a dollar twenty-five.

GRAFFITI PETE
Let’s trade. I got some Roman candles, bottle rockets. Third of July, party starts tonight!

USNAVI
Contraband. Vandalism. you got three second before I call the cops. 9. 1.

(Graffiti Pete exits.)
“ALABANZA” from the soundtrack

(to perform a cappella)
Abuela Claudia has just passed away. Usnavi is out on her front stoop.

USNAVI

SHE WAS FOUND AND PRONOUNCED... AT THE SCENE. SHE WAS ALREADY LYING IN BED.
THE PARAMEDICS SAID HER HEART GAVE OUT.
I MEAN, THAT’S BASICALLY WHAT THEY SAID, THEY SAID A COMBINATION OF THE STRESS AND THE HEAT.
WHY SHE NEVER TOOK HER MEDICINE, I’LL NEVER UNDERSTAND. I’D LIKE TO THINK SHE WENT OUT IN PEACE
WITH PIECES OF BREADCRUMBS IN HER HAND.
Abuela Claudia had simple pleasures
She sang the praises of the things we ignore.
Glass Coke bottles, breadcrumbs, a sky full of stars... she cherished those things, she’d say “Alabanza”. Alabanza means
to raise this thing to God’s face
and to sing, quite literally, “Praise to this”
when she was here, the path was clear.
and she was just here, she was just here...

DANIELA and CARLA

Daniel and Carla are closing up their salon for the last time. Also, Daniela arranges to sign Vanessa’s apartment lease.

DANIELA
You know me, I don’t like to talk about nobody, pero... oye esto!

CARLA
Dani, don’t! My pastor told me gossip is a sin.
CARLA  
(Looking at all the candles.) I'm seeing double.

DANIELA  
You say that every time you wear those tight jeans. I got a little something...

CARLA  
(Sadly.) No me diga.

DANIELA  
Vanessa's new address. (She shows a piece of paper.) A little birdie told me you needed a credit reference.

VANESSA  
What do you mean?

DANIELA  
I'll cosign on the apartment. But you have to invite me for a housewarming cocktail.

VANESSA  
How did you get this?

DANIELA  
Usnavi swore me to secrecy... (To Carla.) What's my rule?

CARLA  
She'll do anything for you, but she won't support your mother's malfunction.

DANIELA  
Dysfunction.

VANESSA  
I know the rule, I just never thought you meant the first part of it. I'm touched. You care about me.

DANIELA  
Oye, I'm just signing the paper. You're still paying the rent!

VANESSA  
Thank you!

CARLA  
Feels good, doesn't it?

DANIELA  
What?
CARLA
Spreading Jesus’s love.

DANIELA
I never should have gotten you that ‘Miracle A Day’ calendar.

(Daniela finds her keys, Carla winces. A moment.)

CARLA
This is it. Gettin’ out the barrio, and headin' to the hood. Make a farewell speech.

DANIELA
It's like a Band-Aid. Rip it off quick, you don't even notice.

KEVIN AND CAMILA

They are at their Car Service Dispatch Unit and Kevin is on the radio to taxi drivers while his wife Camila is going through invoices and other mail.

KEVIN
(into the radio.) Ciento noventa y dos, en la esquina, al frente del McDonald’s. (Beat.) Atención, I know it’s hot but I don’t want to see any drivers without a tie, this is Rosario’s. (Cozies up to Camila.) How can you be stressed when our muñeca’s home?

CAMILA
The mechanic called, he won’t touch another engine till we pay for last month.

KEVIN
Then I’ll get a little engine grease on my hands.

CAMILA
Why, so you can hurt your back again?

KEVIN
You used to think I was sexy when I fixed cars.

CAMILA
Before all that mileage... (looking at a letter) Mira, Uptown Investment Group...
KEVIN
Another developer. It’s not an offer, it’s an insult.

CAMILA
Regency Bank. (opens a letter.) We’re behind on all these payments. We need an emergency loan.

KEVIN
We’ll go see the bank manager Monday.

CAMILA
This can’t wait, Papi.

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VANESSA

Vanessa visits Usnavi’s bodega. Usnavi has has a crush on her for a long time.

VANESSA
Ay, Usnavi, help! SOS!

UZNAVI
Another late night, eh? Whoever you were with, he’s got nothing in these biceps. I bench-press six gallons of milk and two cases of Goya beans.

VANESSA
It was my mom. They shut our power off. Again.

USNAVI

VANESSA
MM. Just like my abuela used to do.

USNAVI
That’s what all the ladies say. I remind them of their grandma.

VANESSA
Oh, almost forgot. And can I get a Pepsi and some packing tape?

USNAVI
Uh, Vanessa... I been meaning to ask you...
VANESSA Yes?

USNAVI
What a lady such as yourself might be doing tonight?

VANESSA
Do you dance?

USNAVI
Like a drunk Chita Rivera.

VANESSA
Okay... after Nina’s dinner, we can hit a few clubs and check out the fireworks.

(Usnavi awkwardly hands her a bag. She exits.)