

PLAYS FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

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Last Stop on Market Street

By
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Based on the book by
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Music and lyrics by
Lamont Dozier and Paris Dozier

Last Stop on Market Street was co-commissioned by the Children's Theatre Company (MN) and Chicago Children's Theatre in 2018.

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TIME: Spring

SETTING: A Chicago neighborhood, though the city can change to reflect the current city of production. The set is spare, theatrical with simple pieces that evoke the color and different locations in the book upon which the play is based: Nana's colorful house, the bus, the soup kitchen.

MAIN CHARACTERS:

NANA TEACAKE 50'ish, Afro Cuban

CJ, 7, Black or Latino, her grandson

ENSEMBLE

NOTE: Except for Nana and CJ, the 4 additional actors (two males and two females) play all of the following characters. All will be required to sing, dance and hopefully play instruments.

STAY AT HOME DAD

MR. DENNIS, 40'ish, bus driver

TATTED MAN, bus passenger

MADAM BUTTERFLY, bus passenger

VERNON, a blind bus passenger

SOFTBALL TEEN GIRL #1, bus passenger

SOFTBALL TEEN GIRL #2, bus passenger

MR. CHOW, soup kitchen patron in wheelchair

GRANDMA POSEY, 70'ish, soup kitchen patron

JOJO, 8-10 years old, grandson of Grandma Posey, soup kitchen patron

SCENE 1 - OUTSIDE NANA'S NEIGHBORHOOD

In a pin spot, we see only CJ, frightened and bereft. He clutches his turtle pillow, waves.

CJ Bye-bye Mommy. Bye-bye daddy. Take care of Doggy...Yes, yes... I'll be a big boy. I promise. Bye Bye. *(He squeezes his turtle pillow even closer.)* Why do they have to leave me? I wish I could be like you turtle - hide in a shell until we both can get back home.

He pulls his hoodie over his head as if to mimic a turtle and hide his head while Nana and the loud boisterous city noises make their presence known all at once -- busses, el trains rumbling on the tracks, horns honking, garbage trucks backing up, loud radio with a thumping bass beat.

NANA (In Spanish) ¡Estas aquí! Nana está muy emocionada. (In English) LOOK EVERYBODY, MYGRANDBABY IS FINALLY HERE! I only got the one and he's come to see his Nana like a big boy. Just look at you!

Lights full on neighborhood and CJ. The noise and the imposing figure of Nana frighten CJ. He fights back sobs that escape anyway. He wears his backpack, his suitcase at his feet, and is outfitted in the latest boutique wear, including the most expensive sports sneakers known to man. Around his neck are huge expensive headphones. His iPhone peeks out of his pants pocket.

SONG: #1 96 HOURS!

Our colorful ensemble circles to greet CJ and scatter about in this dense Afro-Cuban Chicago neighborhood. We hear their music - music that's a blend of Latin and soul, rap and hip-hop, all wafting from open windows and doorways, along with the city noises and snippets of animated Spanish and English speaking conversations. It's loud, it's delightful, it's community, except to CJ.

NEIGHBORHOOD Hola- Good morning... Buenos Dias... What's Up? How ya doing, young man? We heard so much about you! Hey, Que Paso? Hey brotha - Hey Cuz - Good to see ya!, Hey, welcome to town... Watch ya' self now...Yo, what's good? - Good morning. .. Buenos Dias -what's up? How ya feelin, young brotha? What it do, Boo... Hey man, What's cracking -How ya feeling, -- CJ, turn that frown upside down (ETC)

CJ HERE I AM...
I JUST GOT DROPPED OFF ON THE CURB
THIS PLACE ALREADY GETS ON MY NERVES
IT GIVES ME THE CREEPS ...

MY MOM AND DAD. ...
... HAD TO GO ON SOME BUSINESS TRIP
BUT I HAVE WORK TO DO BACK AT HOME;
SO I NEED TO LEAVE... BECAUSE ...

I RESEARCH AND I CATALOGUE EVERY TYPE OF ANIMAL
THIS IS WHAT I DO...
GOT 7 HUNDRED DOLLARS IN MY PIGGY BANK;

SAVING UP FOR A BIG FISH TANK
IN MY ROOM
GOT BOOKS ON PELICANS, PYTHONS, MONKEYS AND
(HEY HEY HEY HEY)
ELEPHANTS... JUST TO NAME A FEW
GOT DINOSAUR TEETH FROM PANAMA & AFRICA
THAT I CAN'T WAIT TO GET BACK TO... BUT I'VE GOT...

CHORUS 1 96 HOURS LEFT ON MY WATCH TIL THE TIME I
FINALLY GET TO COME HOME
(OOOOHH OOH OOH)
THEY SAID THIS WOULD BE FUN, BUT NO, IT'S REALLY NOT...
I ALREADY KNOW THAT I WANNA GO...

NEIGHBORHOOD HEY, WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD ...
WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD ...
I JUST WANNA GO HOME!
WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD ...
WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD ...

NANA You and Nana are going to have so much fun, so much fun. Aren't you excited,
the first time you get to stay at Nana's house.

CJ I want my own house.

VERSE 2 I'VE GOT AN ANT FARM COLONY SITTING ON TOP OF THE
TABLE NEXT TO MY DOOR
AND A CUSTOM MADE BED, IT'S A REPLICA SAFARI JEEP...
RAISED UP 6 FEET FROM THE FLOOR
GOT A PET SALAMANDER NAMED ALEXANDER; MY
HOUSEKEEPER PROMISED TO FEED HIM AND KEEP HIM WARM
I GOT EVERYTHING A KID COULD EVER WANT BACK HOME SO I
GUESS UNTIL THEN I'LL BE BORED, CAUSE I GOT...

CHORUS2 96 HOURS LEFT ON MY WATCH TIL THE TIME
I FINALLY GET TO COME HOME (OOOOOHHH)
THEY SAID THIS WOULD BE FUN, BUT NO, IT'S REALLY NOT...
I ALREADY KNOW THAT I WANNA GO...

HEY, WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD
WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD
I JUST WANNA GO HOME!
WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD
WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

NEIGHBORHOOD TRANQUIL ITO MI COMPAY
NOSTAS SOLITO AY CARAY
AQUI CONTIGO AY AY AY

NEIGHBORHOOD WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD
TRANQUILITO MI COMPAY
NOSTAS SOLITO AY CARAY
AQUI CONTIGO AY AY AY

WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD
TRANQUILITO MI COMPAY
NOSTAS SOLITO AY CARAY
AQUI CONTIGOAY AY AY

WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD...
WELCOME TO THE...
TO THE...
WELCOME TO THE...
NEIGHBORHOOD

NANA Honey, don't look so sad. It's just a week and...

CJ No, it's not! It's not a week. Four. FOUR DAYS!

NANA Okay, honey, four it is!

CJ And I'm supposed to count down the hours I've already clicked off almost only 90 hours left.

(On cue the grandfather clock loudly gongs. CJ, unnerved, jumps at the sound. SONG ENDS. Ensemble disperses.)

CJ (CONT'D) What was that?

NANA That's Big Ben. It strikes on the hour. I bet you'll love that. It keeps good time
Come on inside.

(Nana picks up his suitcase. He grabs it from her.)

CJ No thank you. I can handle my own suitcase.

NANA *(Nana laughs at his attitude.)* Well, handle your business, little man.

CJ *(CJ hands her an oversized card he made.)* I made this for you. Hope you like it.

NANA Aww, look at you. *(reads)* "Thank you for hosting me. I will try to be a good guest, which means not a brat." *(Nana laughs)*

CJ My mother wrote that last part. Do you have a dog? I have a dog.

NANA No. No pets for Nana. When'd you get a dog? Ya'll didn't have one last time I came to visit.

CJ He's almost two years old.

NANA Nana wishes you didn't live so far away. Flying don't agree with Nana anymore and that's a long flight. So what's your dog's name?

CJ Doggy.

NANA Put a lot of thought into that name, did you?

(He frowns. And she leads him...INSIDE through the clean but cluttered space. C'J begrudgingly follows, walking almost in a zig-zag through the rather tight space.)

NANA (OS) Well, you and Nana are going to have so much fun! All kinds of surprises.

CJ I don't like surprises.

NANA That's why I told your parents, go on and take your trip and bring that boy here to his Nana's house. Let him appreciate some city livin 'stead of being holed up in a house behind a gate all the time. Here, we can walk just about everywhere and talk to the people and...

CJ What's that smell?

NANA Oh, Nana's cooking up some good, good Ropa Vieja for dinner!

CJ Ropa what? I don't know what that is.

NANA Ropa Vieja? Of course you do. I taught your mother how to cook it. You know what it means, don't you? Go 'head guess. Guess! *(He shrugs)* It's Spanish for "old clothes." Isn't that a hoot? *(Nana laughs like she invented the Joke.)*

CJ You're cooking me old clothes?!!! But why?

NANA Es delicioso!

CJ I'm sorry but I don't know what you just said.

NANA No hablas español? Your mother hasn't taught you Spanish?

He shakes his head no. Nana finds this a bit distressing.

NANA(CONT'D) Delicioso means exactly how it sounds like - delicious! Boy, you in for a treat.

CJ As long as the treat doesn't have meat.

NANA Of course it does.. Some good ol' shredded beef and tomatoes and...

CJ But I'm a vegetarian!

NANA You're a what? Good Lord. Your mother didn't mention that. Or maybe she wrote it on your papers, but poor Nana ain't had time to read your instructions yet.
 Wait, are you crying?

CJ No...but I am upset. Animals are my friends so how could I eat one?

NANA Oh, honey, Nana don't want you to eat your friends. Okay, you don't like meat, then for four days Nana ain't gon' like meat either. How 'bout that?

CJ knocks over one of Nana's many statues. As he rights the statue...

CJ Oh no, Sorry Nana. I was trying so hard to be careful. I don't mean to be so clumsy. So many statues... so many things.

NANA I know. Your Nana's quite the collector, isn't she? People throw away such good things.

CJ Never seen plastic all over furniture. And who painted your walls all these different colors?

NANA Look at you, appreciating your Nana's flair for decorating. I'm so glad you like it. One day you're going to have a pretty house just like Nana's!

CJ 89 and a half more hours to go.

As the clock once again loudly gongs and we experience some visual of passing time....

SCENE 2 - BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

In a tiny bedroom, CJ wearing pajamas, animatedly plays a game on his phone while simultaneously watching a TV show on his tablet. His big headphones transmit the sound from his phone in one ear, while his earbuds transmit the sound Ji-om his tablet in the other. Nana enters.

NANA Looks like my little one is a lot happier. So did you say your prayers? (No response, so louder) DID YOU SAY YOUR PRAYERS?

CJ too engrossed in his game to notice her. She takes off his headphone.

NANA (CONT'D) Boy, what are you listening to?

And we hear the rap.

CJ Thug Sauce.

NANA What? Thug Sauce? What the...heck is that?

CJ (Not bothering to even look up) You wouldn't understand.

Nana watches him be totally engrossed in his game, even laughing out loud. Finally, she's had enough.

She leaves the room only to return with a plastic bag which she uses to load up his gadgets.

- NANA Looks like Nana needs to put these head phones, and phone and... *(Re: Tablet)*
What does this do?
- CJ It's my tablet. I play games and watch movies on it. I even have a better one built into my daddy's car and I have another one in my mommy's car, too, so I can watch movies and animal documentaries all the time.
- NANA I'll just be putting these gadgets up until...
- CJ Put them up?! You can't do that. They're mine. What if my mommy and daddy need to call me?
- NANA 8 o'clock. It's bedtime.
- CJ 8 o'clock? Only babies go to bed at 8 o'clock. Pm not a baby.
- NANA Now your mama gave me a schedule. *(Retrieving schedule from her pocket)*
Lawd, and she typed it up, too, like I don't know nuthin' about kids. Anyway...
- CJ I don't go to bed until I get sleepy. And I always go to sleep with my phone.
- NANA That I don't understand which means it certainly will not happen under my roof.
- C.J Well, I can't sleep without it... I can't and I won't. *(Near tantrum state)* Why are you looking at me like that?
- NANA Because, boy, I'm trying to figure out who in the world's been raising you?
- C.J *(With dramatic enunciation)* Look, Nana, I'm really trying to practice good manners like my mother said... but. .. I need my phone... in my hand... because I believe... I will need to call my parents before the night is over...
- NANA *(Attempting to match his enunciation)* Well ... sir... when and if you need to use the phone... I'm happy... to let you use Nana's phone. But what about being with me?

SONG #2: 'CAUSE I SAID SO

- C.J OKAY, I NEED YOU TO LISTEN TO ME, NANA
CAUSE I DON'T THINK YOU KNOW
WHAT THE PROGRAM WAS
THE PLAN WAS FOR ME TO BE OCCUPIED
WATCHIN 'VINES ON YOUTUBE
AND LISTENIN' TO SPOTIFY
- I'LL KEEP IT REAL, I DON'T REALLY WANNA BE HERE
SO THOSE HEADPHONES NEED TO BE ON THESE EARS
AND THAT TABLET SHOULD BE IN MY HAND

YOU DON'T KNOW HOW BORED I AM
I'VE BEEN PLAYIN' IT COOL....

NANA Oh, really?

CJ BUT ENOUGH IS ENOUGH (NANA: HM)
SO C'MON, GIMME BACK MY STUFF
GIMME, GIMME MY STUFF, (NANA: NOPE)

CAUSE NOW YOU'RE VIOLATING MY TRUST
C'MON GIMME BACK MY STUFF, (NANA: UH-UH)
GIVE IT OVER AT ONCE (NANA: NO)
CAUSE NOW YOU'RE DOTN' WAY TOO MUCH,

YOU NEED TO GIMME BACK MY STUFF
GIMME, GIMME MY STUFF, (NANA: I SAID NO)
YO, YOU'RE DRIVIN' ME NUTS!
WHAT'S TAKING SO LONG? HURRY UP!!!

NANA I SAID NO!

CJ BUT WHY?

NANA 'CAUSE I SAID SO

CJ WHY?

NANA 'CAUSE I SAID SO

CJ WHAT?

NANA ALL YOU EVER NEED TO KNOW IS THAT I SAID SO

CJ UH, I DON'T GET IT

NANA IT'S SIMPLE, I SAID SO
YOU'LL UNDERSTAND WHEN YOU GET OLDER

CJ starts to protest.

NANA (CONT'D) NOW TBAT'S ENOUGH OF ALL THE WHINING
AND THE YIPPTN', AND THE YAPPIN'
SORRY HONEY; IT AIN'T GON' HAPPEN,

UNTIL IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO GO HOME TO YOUR PARENTS
AND THEN J'LL GIVE YOU BACK ALL THESE GIZMOS AND GADGETS .

AND WHILE WE'RE AT JT, YOUNG MAN,
YOU REALLY NEED TO WATCH YOUR TONE
IT'S MY HOUSE, MY RULES
BOY, YOU'RE NOT AT HOME

BUT I'M REALLY, REALLY HAPPY
YOU'RE MY HOUSEGUEST
I JUST NEED YOU TO BE A GENTLEMAN
AND SHOUT LESS

MATTER OF FACT, NOT SHOUTING AT ALL
WOULD BE BETTER
ASK YOUR MAMA HOW NANA CAN GET WHEN
YOU UPSET HER

NOW LET ME GO AHEAD AND PUT THESE THINGS
AWAY FOR YA
DON'T WORRY, I'LL KEEP 'EM SAFE FOR YA

CJ BUT YOU NEVER TOLD ME WHY!

NANA 'CAUSE I SAID SO

CJ WHY?

NANA CAUSE I SAID SO

CJ WHAT?

NANA ALL YOU EVER NEED TO KNOW IS THAT I SAID SO

CJ UH, I DON'T GET IT

NANA IT'S SIMPLE, I SAID SO
AND GIMME THAT CELL PHONE

CJ NO

NANA BOY, YOU BETTER LET GO!

CJ YOU'RE COMMITTING A ROBBERY
YOU STOLE MY PERSONAL PROPERTY
THE STUFF MY MOM AND DAD BOUGHT FOR ME
JUST... GIVE...IT...BACK...PLEASE.

NANA DON'T BE DRAMATIC,
IT'LL BE JUST FINE
THIS STUFF IS YOURS;
I DON'T THINK IT'S MINE
BUT WHILE YOU'RE HERE
WE NEED QUALITY TIME
IT'S JUST...YOU...AND...ME...!

CJ IS THIS WHAT YOU CALL DISCIPLINE?
I'VE NEVER HEARD OF THIS...

YOU CAN'T JUST TAKE STUFF IF YOU DIDN'T PURCHASE IT...

WAIT TIL MY MOM GETS WORD OF THIS...
GIMME MY PHONE,
I'M GONNA CALL CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES!

NANA WOAH! HOLD UP, LITTLE BOY!
 WAIT A MINUTE!
 LET ME TELL YOU ONCE AGAIN
 WITH A LITTLE ANGER IN IT...
 WHEN I TELL YOU WHAT TO DO,
 YOU BETTER LISTEN
 WHEN YOU VISIT MY HOUSE...
 I DON'T WANNA HEAR ANOTHER WORD
 OUT OF YOUR MOUTH!!!

CJ BUT YOU STILL HAVEN'T...

NANA BOY DON'T YOU...

CJ TOLD ME WHY

NANA CAUSE I SAID SO

CJ WHY?

NANA CAUSE I SAID SO

CJ WHAT?

NANA ALL YOU EVER NEED TO KNOW IS THAT I SAID SO

CJ UH, I DON'T GET IT

NANA IT'S SIMPLE, I SAID SO
 THAT WAS FUN
 BUT NOW YOU NEED TO GO TO BED THOUGH.

At song end, Nana cracks open the window.

NANA (CONT'D) Let's get a little air in here in case you get too hot.

She clicks off the light, cueing more boisterous night city sounds.

CJ No, no, please, Nana, it's too scary. Everything is too loud here.

NANA *(Chuckle)* Yeah, Nana's neighborhood will put it on you! I d'clare it will.

CJ Put it on you? I don't understand.

NANA *(Adjusts the window lower.)* Maybe just a crack.

C.J What does that even mean?

NANA I don't know CJ, it's just something I say.

CJ Well, mommy says you should always be clear with your words.

NANA *(Trying for patience)* Then how about a hug?

CJ I like my Mommy's hugs. I miss my Mommy.

NANA *(Realizing he's on the verge of tears.)* I'm sure you do, honey. Now let's tuck you in with your little turtle pillow... *(Re: animal pillow)* This is so cute.

CJ *(Taking it from her)* Mommy got it for me. I'm going to be a zoologist one day.

NANA A zoo-lalalogist. Wow!

CJ It's pronounced ZOOLOGIST.

NANA Such a big word for such a little boy. Zoo-ologist, my my my! Nana's got her a real smart grandson. And you talk so proper.

C.J What other way is there to talk?

NANA Boy, I wasn't saying...why don't you just tell Nana what a zoologist does

CJ They study animal behavior, which, in some species, can be like human behavior.

NANA Is that so?

CJ Yes, like animals communicate and form community just like humans. *(Getting quite animated)* Some create their own tools...like chimpanzees, they use stones like a hammer...

NANA Really?

CJ And I bet you didn't know dolphins have two stomachs. One to store food and the other is for digestion and then whales...

NANA Okay, okay, you supposed to be restful now. You need to go to the bathroom 'fore you go down?

CJ No, but I bet you didn't know wood frogs hold their urine for eight months?

NANA What you mean? They don't pee for eight months?!

CJ Yeah, they hibernate and during that process they...

NANA Ok, honey, that's enough about the frogs and their pee and everything else. You can teach Nana all about the animals tomorrow. You're a tad strange, you know

that?

CJ I'm not strange and I hate it when people call me that. Just because I'm smart and I'm interested in a lot of different things.

NANA Oh, where's my mind? I have a surprise for you.

Suddenly the room is illuminated by a special lamp with rotating animal figures that dance around the walls. CJ mesmerized.

CJ Wow...oh wow...

NANA Your mother liked animals too. I used to sing this special song to her... you want me to sing it to you? Might put you to sleep.

CJ No thank you.

NANA (Tad hurt) Well, okay then. *(She gets up to leave.)* How 'bout you lay some good sugah on me. *(He looks puzzled)* You don't have no good sugah for your Nana?

CJ I don't believe so but if you want I can go in the kitchen I guess and get you some.

NANA *(laughs uproariously)* Boy, I was talking about a kiss! It's okay, go on an' get some sleep, remember to say your prayers now. *(She blows him a kiss, leaves, still laughing and muttering.)* If you want you some sugah, Nana, you better go find it in the kitchen. Ain't that about nothing.

Once she's gone, CJ hears more street noise. He covers his ears, rocks himself.

CJ Mommy, I wish you were here. I know I said I should be a big boy but Nana, I know she's your mother, but she's so mean! She took my phone and tablet away! And my headphones! It's not fair but she just laughed. She laughs all the time.

He humorously imitates Nana's laugh.

NANA *(Yelling off)* I hear you in there. Now close your eyes boy and go to sleep.

CJ *(More to himself)* But I can't sleep.. I wish you were here to sing to me. Mommy, you could sing me my special song.

SONG #3 - QUE DESCANSES [CJ'S LULLABY]

CJ *(Sings to himself)* IF YOU EVER FIND YOURSELF IN A FAR AWAY LAND
IF YOUR LIFE SHOULD EVER NOT GO ACCORDING TO PLAN

Nana listens out of sight, smiles.

CJ (CONT'D) IF YOU SHOULD EVER CEASE TO FEEL THE TOUCH OF MYHAND ...
JUST KNOW I'M SOMEWHERE OUT THERE AND I UNDERSTAND ...
AND IF EVER YOU FEEL ALONE AND UNSURE...

YOU'LL STILL BE ABLE TO FEEL MY LOVE IN THESE WORDS...

QUE DESCANSES ... BUENAS NOCHES
AND WHEN YOU'RE FAR AWAY...
I'LL ALWAYS LIVE IN YOUR HEART

NANA

QUE DESCANSES ... BUENAS NOCHES ...
AND WHEN YOU'RE FAR AWAY...
I WILL ALWAYS STILL LIVE IN YOUR HEART

As Nana gently eases the door close.

The CLOCK GONGS. CJ dramatically inhales his special turtle pillow, positions it in his favorite way and finally sleeps. Soon, lights shift and we hear the morning city sounds mixed with Nana's loud gospel singing.