



Fat of the Land

by Adam Hughes

A play for secondary school students focusing on both the causes and impact of under and overnutrition.

Cast

The characters are as follows:

Miguel Francisco

Leticia Maria

The Group- Businessmen, Children, Labourers, Truck and Villagers.

Four Students

The casting is flexible and ultimately down to the teacher's choice. The four main characters (**Miguel, Francisco, Leticia and Maria**) should be played by the same students throughout. The only other roles that are fixed are the **Four Students** who will be utilised in each scene to form the outline of the space. They will become an integral part of the scene and their actions should reflect this. The other parts are flexible and can be altered where appropriate. I would suggest assigning a particular number of students as 'The Group' who will take on the multiple roles throughout. As this piece may be performed by a variety of class sizes, 'The Group' will fit any outfit from 8 to 20 students. Any dialogue spoken by 'The Group' is left open and should be assigned to ensure that each student plays a part in the performance. The play is not set in any particular country and, due to the fact that this is a global issue, it is kept as non-specific as possible. That said, it should be clear that all of these characters are from the same location.

Setting and Style

In terms of stage directions and movements, these are there as guidance and can be tailored/adapted to fit the space in which the piece is performed. For example, there are stage directions within the play to help support 'in the round' style production using four students to define the stage space but these are solely suggestions and can be altered should the teacher have a suitable alternative more fitting to the performance space

Sound and Movement

Alex Parson's original music and sound effects are provided for your use. It is clearly marked in the script where to use the music or sound cues; however, feel free to add your own spin on things or incorporate the pupils' own live sound effects.

Take a look at Movement Director Robin Guiver's movement videos for ideas and starting points.

Scene 1 – Factory Office

SFX – The sound of factory machines whir and trucks drive away.

FOUR MINUTE INDUSTRIAL AMBIANCE.MP3

TRUCK PULLS AWAY.MP3

*The space is established by **Four Students** who all form a rectangular shape. They stand in a corner each and chug constantly throughout, reminiscent of a machine turning.*

***Miguel** stands before **Francisco**.*

*The **Businessmen** walk around on stage, talking into their phones.*

Miguel: You want me to work late again?!

Francisco: They're opening three more fast food restaurants in the city. That's three more potato trucks we need to get out before midnight.

Miguel: Before we do anything-

Francisco: This is big business for us.
The way they keep opening these restaurants we'll need to open another factory.

Miguel: Francisco!
If you want us to do this, then we need more workers.

Francisco: Nonsense! You have more than enough!

Miguel: But we can't work in these conditions. With the weather getting hotter all the time, it keeps getting warmer in the factory too.
Three of my team passed out yesterday!

Francisco: No wonder! They're all so short and weak.
You need to employ somebody bigger. Stronger!

Miguel: Nobody else is bigger or stronger.

Francisco: Just because you're my cousin doesn't mean you get special treatment.
You need to set an example to the others.

Miguel: Francisco, we are busier than we have ever been!
Maybe if we had some more breaks. More food to eat.

Francisco: They have all the rice and bread they want!
And what about those soda drinks we gave them the other week?
They're supposed to give you energy.

Miguel: They do but-

Francisco: Then stop moaning.
Now go back down to the factory and get those shipments ready.

Scene 2 – Fast Food Restaurant

SFX - The sound of cash tills ringing along with (if possible) the sound of a frantic rush.

FAST FOOD.MP3

*The **Four Students** stood in each corner now pretend to be on cash registers.*

*Francisco sits with **Maria** whilst three of his (overweight) **children** lounge in front of them, eating.*

Francisco: Isn't it fantastic?

Burgers, pizzas, fried chicken.
All available on our doorstep!

Maria: They seem to have all popped up from out of nowhere.

Francisco: And let's hope they keep doing that! The more fast food restaurants there are the more money I make and the better life we have.

Maria: Yes, but don't you think...?

Francisco: What?

Maria: Well the children. They are getting very big.

Francisco: Nonsense!

Maria: When I took them to the doctors the other week.
He said eating all this fast food will make them overweight. Unhealthy.

Francisco: Ignore him! It's good to see some fat on our children.
Would you rather have them like Miguel's kids?
All short and skinny.

Maria: The doctor says it's ok to eat fast food once in a while.
But we're coming here all the time recently.

Francisco: Listen! I've worked hard all my life so we can move to the city.
Eat in places like this. It looks good that we're here.
Do you know how jealous most people would be if they saw us?

Maria: If you're sure...

Francisco: Of course I am.
Not to mention it saves you having to cook and get everything ready.

Francisco moves over to **the children**.

Francisco: Now. Who likes eating here?!

Children: Me, me, me!

Francisco: See! It's like what my mother always said.
A full tummy makes a happy heart.

Scene 3 – Miguel’s House

SFX - Something much slower and more melancholy.

EATING OUT OF HABIT.MP3

The Four Students in each corner now droop, their motions become lifeless.

*The Villagers are sprawled and scattered across the edge of the stage.
Some walk around looking dazed, others are clearly begging.*

Leticia: You’re late.

Miguel: I’m sorry.
We had another big order to get out.

Leticia: Again?

Miguel: It’s the busiest it’s ever been.

Leticia: Is Francisco going to get anyone else in to help?

Miguel: No. He just wants to make us work twice as hard.

Miguel rubs Leticia’s stomach.

Miguel: How are things?

Leticia: He’s been kicking today.

Miguel: Where are the others?
(*Looks around*)

Leticia: They’ve been asleep for a few hours now. They weren’t feeling too good.

Miguel begins to open some cupboards.

Leticia: I’m worried about them.

Miguel: Why?

Leticia: They are just so short.
Especially when you compare them to Francisco and Maria’s children who are the same age.
I kept wondering when they’re going to grow? If they’re going to grow?

Miguel: We’re not exactly tall though.

Leticia: Yes, but they are weak too.
The twins were sick again today.
They had to miss school!

Miguel: Just make sure they get some rest then.



Leticia: I am but they can't miss any more lessons.
They're at the bottom of their class as it is.
The teacher says they find it hard to concentrate

Miguel: They'll be fine.

Miguel continues to search through the cupboards.

Miguel: What's for dinner?

Leticia: What we all had before you came. Rice and bread.

Miguel: Exactly what I had at work.

Leticia: If I could get us something different I would.

Miguel: I know.



Scene 4 – Factory Office

SFX – The sound of machines whir. A truck drives away.

TRUCK PULLS.MP3

The Four Students are once again motioning the factory machines.

The Buyers are on their phones, forming a square around Francisco who moves around, unable to escape from this (yet not trying to).

Francisco: The delivery is on its way, sir.

Buyers: We're going to make you a rich man, Francisco.

Francisco: I appreciate that, sir.

Buyers: All your children will go to college.

Francisco: Yes, sir.

Buyers: Your company will just keep on growing.

Francisco: Yes, sir.

Buyers: And because you live in the city you get to enjoy our food too.

Francisco: I know, sir.

Buyers: But we need our order to go out on time, every time.

Francisco: Of course, sir.

Buyers: The fast food business is just going to keep on growing, Francisco.

Buyers: And growing.

Buyers: And growing.

Buyers: And growing.

Francisco: I know, sir.
I cannot wait.

Scene 5 – Factory Floor

SFX - The sound of machines whirring intensifies.

MORE INTENSE FACTORY.MP3

The Four Students now resemble the factory machines, chugging away frantically.

The Workers stand in a line, pretending to pack the potatoes, all looking equally exhausted. One of them (Worker 1) collapses.

- Miguel:** Are you ok?
- Worker 1:** I can't do this.
- Miguel:** Yes, you can.
- Worker 2:** Get up!
- Miguel:** Are you hungry?!
- Worker 1:** No. I had potatoes at lunch.
- Worker 2:** And some rice.
- Miguel:** Then what's wrong?
- Worker 1:** I don't have any energy left.
- Worker 3:** You'll get us into trouble.
- Worker 1:** It's this boiling weather. And then all of this extra work.
- Miguel:** Just get up.
You'll get us all into trouble.
- Worker 3:** If you can't get up then get out.
- Worker 2:** I'm not losing my job because of you.

Scene 6 – Francisco’s House

MUSIC CUE – The sound of classical music, signifying affluence.

FRANCISCO’S HOUSE.MP3

The Four Students stand to attention.

Francisco’s Children should be at the edge of the stage, pretending to eat.

Leticia: Are the children playing outside?

Maria: They’ve gone to the shopping centre with their friends.

Leticia: What for?

Maria: Probably to buy burgers, fried chicken, pizza, soda.
All they seem to do recently is eat and drink.

Leticia: Yes, but remember.
A full tummy makes a happy heart!

Maria: More like a full tummy breaks your heart.

Leticia: What are you talking about?

Maria: My children. They just keep on getting bigger.

Leticia: What’s wrong with that?

Maria: When I was speaking to the doctor he said they were overweight.
That they needed to eat a balanced diet.
Otherwise they’ll have heart problems when they’re older.

Leticia: I never realized that would happen.
And you’ve told Francisco this?

Maria: Yes, but he wasn’t interested.
He said there was nothing wrong with being a bit bigger.

Leticia: Maybe he’s right.
I’d rather my children were like yours.

Maria: Your children are fine.
They’re just short.

Leticia: They’re tiny!
Not to mention they’re still behind at school.
(*Rubs stomach*) I’m worried this one will be the same.

Maria: Don’t worry! Look all children in the village are small.
They always have been. Even when me and Francisco lived there.
Your children will be fine. Trust me.

Scene 7 – Factory Office

SFX – The cash tills continue to ring.

FAST FOOD.MP3

The Four Students stand, pretending to count money.

FOUR MINUTE INDUSTRIAL AMBIANCE.MP3

Francisco stands before Miguel, talking on his phone.

The Businessmen quickly move around the stage, frantically with no direction.

Francisco: The fried chicken is so tasty.
(*On the phone*)

Miguel: Excuse me, Francisco.

Francisco: My children love it.
(*On the phone*)

Miguel: Francisco?

Francisco: Yes, that's fine. I'll speak to you later.

Francisco hangs up.

Francisco: Never do that again.
These are very important clients.
They're using us for four new restaurants they're opening next month.

Miguel: I'm sorry.

Francisco: What do you want anyway?

Miguel: I was wondering if you thought any more about our chat the other day.

Francisco: What chat?

Miguel: About helping out the team. With more breaks?
I was thinking that maybe at lunchtime we could eat something different to keep us going.

Francisco: Just drink some more soda drinks, you'll be fine.

Miguel: I was thinking more about some meat and vegetables?
Something different from what we normally have.

Francisco: I'll think about it.
First thing's first though. I need you all to work late tonight.

Miguel: Again?!



Francisco: We have another big order that needs to be out by tomorrow morning.

Miguel: Francisco, I am exhausted.
We all are.

Francisco: You'll just have to keep going.
This is important.

Miguel: But I need to go home and help Leticia with the children.
She's seven months pregnant! It's taking its toll.

Francisco: Miguel.
I'm not going to ask you again.
Now please. Go down there and do your job.

Scene 8 – Factory Floor

SFX - The **Four Students**, who now emulate workers, begin to stamp slowly. The pace of this should naturally increase to coincide with the intensity of the scene.

MORE INTENSE FACTORY.MP3

*The Workers begin to box the potatoes. They do this robotically.
Miguel, situated centre stage, stands in the middle of this group, struggling.*

Worker 1: Do we get a break?

Miguel: I don't...

Worker 2: I'm exhausted.

Miguel: Yes...

Francisco appears, on his phone.

Francisco: Yes, we are sending out your order now.
Of course we can do that for you.

Miguel: Please...

*The Businessmen appear on their phones.
Maria and Leticia are stood behind them.
From this moment onwards, everyone on stage should form a circle and slowly enclose Miguel.*

Businessman 1: Can we get three more orders out by tonight?

Miguel: No...

Businessman 2: We're opening four more restaurants in the city.

Miguel: No...

Businessman 3: You should feel privileged that we're bringing this food to your country.

Miguel: I don't...

Leticia: Miguel, the children are so small...

Miguel: I know...

Maria: He says a full tummy means a happy heart.

Worker 2: I can't do this anymore.

Miguel: I know.

Worker 1: It's so hot.



Worker 3: It's too much!

Francisco: I want five more orders out by tonight!

All of the other characters now fully engulf **Miguel**. He screams.

Miguel: No!

All of the characters fire back and scatter across the stage in an explosion.

SFX - EXPLOSION.WAV

Miguel lies in the centre, collapsed.

Scene 9 – Francisco’s House

MUSIC CUE – Something slow, melancholy.

EATING OUT OF HABIT.MP3

The Four Students stand in each corner, looking glum.

Francisco’s children sit around, slowly eating their food, doing so purely out of habit as opposed to enjoyment. Miguel’s children lay next to them, asleep.

Maria: How was he?

Francisco: Fine. For now.

Maria: What did the doctors say?

Francisco: That he was exhausted.

Maria: And whose fault is that?

Francisco: Not mine!

Maria: Really?!

Francisco: Yes!
He’s actually got something wrong with him. A medical condition.

Maria: What is it?!

Francisco: The doctor said he’s stunted.

Maria: Stunted?! What does that mean?!

Francisco: It’s where you don’t eat the right foods when you’re growing up.
You don’t have a balanced diet so your body can’t grow properly.

Maria: But he was never hungry, was he? He always had something to eat when he was a child.

Francisco: That’s what I told the doctor.
But he said that doesn’t matter. You can eat as much of one type of food as you like but if you’re not eating anything else then you won’t grow.
Not only that but you’re more likely to catch diseases too.

Maria: And that’s why he collapsed?

Francisco: His body’s not strong enough apparently.
But looking round at the other workers.
They’re not much different.

Maria: So that must be why his and Leticia’s children are so small.
Because they’re stunted as well.

Francisco: I guess they are...



Maria: What are you going to do about Miguel then?

Francisco: There's nothing anyone can do that can help him now.
He'll always be like he is.

Maria: You'll have to take it easy on him.

Francisco: Yes, but the company is busier than ever!

Maria: Miguel is your family!

Francisco: You know how this works.
The fast food industry just keeps on growing so that means more work for us.
At the end of the day we're making more money. For ourselves. For our children.

Maria: Sometimes in life, there are more important things than money.

Francisco, for once, has no answer. He notices Miguel's Children.

Francisco: Are they staying here tonight?

Maria: I said they could.
Seeing as though Leticia will be in hospital with Miguel.

Francisco moves over. He stares at them, saddened.

Maria: Look at them.
Look how different they are to our children.

Francisco: I know.
I can finally see.

Scene 10 – Factory Office

SFX – The sound of factory machines continue to whirr.

FOUR MINUTE INDUSTRIAL AMBIANCE.MP3

*The **Four Students** once again form the factory machine and chug away – yet now at a much more even pace.*

***Miguel** stands before **Francisco**. The **Businessmen** stand along the outline of the office, all of them glaring expectantly at **Francisco**.*

Francisco: You could have had a few more days' rest.

Miguel: It's fine.
You said we had some big orders to get out so...

Francisco: We do.
But that's not that important anymore.

Miguel: Are you sure about that?!

Francisco: Look I know recently that all I've seemed to talk about is orders and restaurants and money.
But now? I want to help you.

Miguel: Help me?

Francisco: Yes! You're my cousin, part of my family. It's what I should have done a long time ago.

Miguel: And how will you help me exactly?

Francisco: I'll give you more breaks at work, make sure you get the rest you need.
I'll help you buy the right foods too. For you and your children.
You can eat well. Finally get the things you need.

Miguel: But the doctor said that me and the children are stunted.
It's too late for us now.

Francisco: Not for the new arrival it isn't.

The Businessmen turn to each other, shocked.

Miguel: I appreciate that but...

Francisco: But what?

Miguel: What about everyone else?
What about all the other young babies in my village?
The children of the workers who have just been born?
The ones that will be born in years to come.
Who is going to help them?



Francisco: I'm only one person.
I can only do so much.

Miguel: I know and I'm grateful.
But there are millions out there now suffering.
With nobody to help them, nobody to stop this problem.

Francisco: People bigger than me, with more power need to help them.

Miguel: But will they though?

Francisco: I... I don't know..
All we can do is hope they realize how big this problem is.
And that it won't go away unless we all start to do something about it.

Miguel: And when will that be?

The Businessmen begin to circle around **Francisco** and **Miguel**.

Businessman 1: We're opening more restaurants, Francisco.

Businessman 2: We need more orders, Francisco.

Businessman 3: We're going to make you a rich man, Francisco.

The End