

June 14, 2022

(Rehearsal script w/adjustments)

**DREAMING IN CUBAN**

A Play

(Adapted from the novel)

by

Cristina García

crstinagarcianovelist@gmail.

**CHARACTERS** (4W/2M)

**In Cuba:**

**CELIA DEL PINO**

The family matriarch, ardent Cuban Communist, 60s

**FELICIA DEL PINO**

Celia's younger daughter, depressed hairdresser, late 30s

**IVANITO VILLAVERDE**

Felicia's sensitive son, superb dancer, 11 years old

**In Brooklyn:**

**LOURDES PUENTE**

Celia's older daughter, Cuban-American, proud owner of Yankee Doodle Bakery, 40s

**PILAR PUENTE**

Lourdes's feisty, punk artist daughter, teenager

**JORGE DEL PINO**

Celia's newly dead husband, snappy dresser, forever 60s

**MAX AGUILAR**

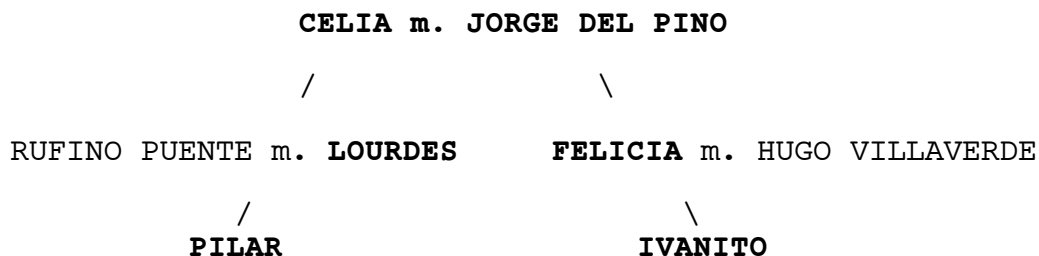
Lourdes's employee, Pilar's love interest, Latinx, teenager

**Doubling:**

\* Same actor plays Ivanito + Max

\* Same actor plays Jorge + Lt. Rojas + other voices (El Líder, Loudspeaker)

**Family tree:**



**SETTING:**

In seaside Cuba, Brooklyn, and all the spaces in-between, in imagination and memory. 1979-80.

**MUSIC:**

The play has a lively, varied soundtrack from Celia Cruz and classic boleros to flamenco, santería chanting, the Sex Pistols, and rock.

**SYNOPSIS**

**Dreaming in Cuban**, a theatrical reimagining of my first novel, follows three generations of women in the months preceding Cuba's infamous Mariel exodus. When the story begins, Lourdes Puente, a Brooklyn bakery owner, battles her daughter Pilar, who wants nothing more than to return to Cuba to see her beloved grandmother, Celia—the resolute Communist matriarch of the family. Meanwhile, the ghost of Jorge del Pino, Celia's newly dead husband, has taken up intermittent residence in Brooklyn. As another death befalls the family, the del Pino women reconvene on the island to face their personal and political traumas with wildly unexpected consequences.

## ACT ONE

### PROLOGUE

LIGHTS UP on Cuban seaside porch, evening. Celia sits on her bench, scanning the horizon with binoculars.

CELIA

No sign of gusano traitors. From here I could spot another Bay of Pigs invasion before it happened. I'd be fêted at the palace, serenaded by a brass orchestra, seduced by El Líder himself on a red velvet divan.

The ghost of her husband Jorge del Pino appears in a white summer suit and Panama hat.

CELIA

Ay Jorge, you startled me! What are you doing back in Cuba? Are you dead then?

JORGE

(Barely audible)

I've come to say good-bye.

CELIA

Speak up! I can't hear you!

JORGE

Mi amor—

CELIA

Ay, don't mi amor me!

JORGE

I've never stopped loving you.

CELIA

So, you're going to start haunting me now?

JORGE

Por favor, Celia. Listen to me.

Celia listens impatiently.

JORGE

Can't you love me just a little? Now that I'm dead?

CELIA

I don't have time for this, Jorge. Can't you see I'm busy?

Celia lifts the binoculars again. Jorge reluctantly exits.

JORGE

(Muttering)

Carajo. Even now, la revolución comes first.

Celia checks to make sure he's gone then pulls a satin-covered box from under her bench and examines the letters inside.

CELIA

(To herself)

Sometimes I ask myself which is worse, separation or death?

SOUND of surging ocean surf.

## SCENE 1

SHIFT TO: Yankee Doodle Bakery in Brooklyn, evening.

SOUND of RINGING PHONE. CUE MUSIC: A lively salsa plays softly in the background. Perhaps Celia Cruz's "Quimbara," or similar? Lourdes moves to the beat.

LOURDES

Yankee Doodle Bakery. How may I help you? ... Ay, Rufino, my employees are stealing from me. And where's our daughter, eh? Nowhere! Who can I count on if not Pilar? Tell me, how am I supposed to do this all alone?

(Huskily)

And speaking of alone, why are you avoiding me? I have needs, Rufino, womanly needs.

The ghost of her father Jorge del Pino enters. He brushes past Lourdes then leaves. She turns off the music with a remote.

LOURDES

(Looks around)

Ñoo, what was that? I feel a chill.

Pilar enters wearing paint-spattered overalls. She's got her Walkman on.

PILAR

Hey, Mom.

LOURDES

La princesa just arrived. I'll be home soon.

(Hangs up and glares at Pilar)

You're late. Again. The new girl stole fifty cents from me. Fifty cents! I had to fire her. If you'd been here that wouldn't have happened.

Pilar pulls off her headphones.

PILAR

Jesus, Mom. How about a hello?

LOURDES

Hello? You want a hello? Hello I say to a good daughter. A daughter who helps her mother. A daughter who doesn't give her mother a book for Christmas with that murderer Che Guevara on the cover!

Pilar shrugs, grabs a cookie.

PILAR

Oh, please. You hire immigrants at below minimum wage then scream at them all day long.

LOURDES

They steal from me!

PILAR

Yeah, like what? A butter cookie? A French bread? You think you're doing them a big favor by breaking them into American life? Hell of a welcome wagon you are.

LOURDES

I should've never left you with your grandmother when you were a baby. Comunistas! Comunistas las dos! That's where all my problems started.

PILAR

No, the problem here is *you*.

LOURDES

I work fourteen hours a day so you can be educated, and I'm the problem?

A beat.

PILAR

I want to see Abuela Celia again.

LOURDES

Are you crazy? You can't go back to Cuba!

PILAR

You should've left me with her.

LOURDES

Never! I'd prefer death.

PILAR

Yours, or mine?

LOURDES

Ingrata! You're a dangerous subversive, red to the bone. Just like her.

PILAR

Nice talking to you, too, Mom.

She leaves.

LOURDES

(Calling after her)

People are dying to escape that ... that island prison and you want to return?! Descarada.

Music starts up again. Lourdes furiously mops in time to the rhythm. Jorge's ghost returns. He lights a cigar, enjoys the music. Lourdes sniffs the air.

JORGE

I'm glad to see you, Lourdes.

A startled Lourdes hears him but can't see him. She drops the mop, looks around, turns off the music.

LOURDES

Papi? Is that you?

JORGE

I'm here. Even if you can't see me.

LOURDES

Why aren't you in the hospital?

JORGE

I didn't want you to hear this from anyone else.

Lourdes crosses herself.

LOURDES

Que dices? Where are you?

JORGE

Soon you'll bury me like an Egyptian king, with all my valuables.

LOURDES

Noooooo!!

JORGE

Cálmate, mija.

LOURDES

Por dios, Papi! Does Mamá know yet?

JORGE

I paid her a visit. But you know how she is. She thinks only about the Revolution—and El Líder.

(Fading)

I have to go now.

LOURDES

Can you return?



JORGE

From time to time. Listen for me at twilight.

SCENE 2

SHIFT TO: Seaside porch, morning. Celia's clothes are soaking wet from a late-night swim. A swirl of seaweed clings to her hair. Felicia and Ivanito are with her.

FELICIA

You're telling me that Papi was in the neighborhood and didn't bother to stop by?

CELIA

Felicia, it wasn't a social visit. He's dead.

FELICIA

But he's been in New York for ages! The least he could've done was say good-bye to me and Ivanito.

CELIA

Don't start.

FELICIA

He could've just *flown* over!

(To Ivanito)

You were a baby when your grandfather left, mi cielo. He loved you very much.

IVANITO

What happened to you Abuela?

FELICIA

Sí, Mami, what happened to you?

CELIA

I went for a swim.

FELICIA

With your clothes on?

CELIA

Sí, Felicia. With my clothes on.

Felicia nudges Ivanito in disbelief.

CELIA

I saw your father in a vision—from the beyond.

FELICIA

Why did he come to you and not to me?

CELIA

Now don't go working yourself into one of your black moods over this.

FELICIA

My black moods?! If anything, you're the cause of them!

(Checks her watch)

Damn, I'm late for work again. They're looking for an excuse to fire me since I burned Graciela Moreira's hair. Not that she didn't deserve it. Can Ivanito stay with you tonight?

CELIA

Of course.

FELICIA

(Reanimated)

I need to arrange a sacrifice with La Madrina. To keep Papi safe in the afterlife.

CELIA

You know I don't believe in that nonsense.

FELICIA

To keep us *all* safe.

CELIA

Fine. But no goats this time.

IVANITO

I want a goat! Just one goat? C'mon, please?

CELIA

If only you could take more of an interest in the Revolution, mija. It would give you a higher purpose, a chance to participate in something larger than yourself. It's been twenty years since El Líder's triumph /and you—

FELICIA

Por favor, Mami. Not today.

CELIA

We're part of the greatest experiment in modern history. No one is starving or denied medical care. Everyone works who wants to work. And everyone gets an education.

FELICIA

We're dying of security here!

CELIA

And you? What are you doing with your life?

A beat.

FELICIA

I'm working. And raising my boy.

CELIA

I'm the one raising him.

FELICIA

That's not fair! He's with me except when *you* send me away!

CELIA

(To Ivanito)

Go to the beach and play, mi vida. I have a surprise for you later.

IVANITO

What is it Abuela? Tell me!

Celia playfully kisses him on the nose.

CELIA

Una sorpresa, te dije.

Ivanito reluctantly leaves.

CELIA

Mira, Felicia. I'm going to recommend you for the remedial militia.

FELICIA

Not again! I got a million bug bites the last time. And I was constipated the whole time!

CELIA

I see no other way.

FELICIA

(Sarcastic)

So, the renown judge Celia del Pino is sentencing her daughter—otra vez!—to marching in the mountains with the island's worst malcontents.

CELIA

So, you admit you're a malcontent.

FELICIA

What good does all that stupid marching do me? I only get more depressed.

CELIA

You need help, Felicia. I'm trying to help you. And your attitude isn't making it any easier for Ivanito either.

FELICIA

You're the one who's turning me into a pariah.

CELIA

You're doing that all by yourself.

FELICIA

You should've let me go to New York when I had the chance.

CELIA

It wasn't the time.

FELICIA

My whole life's passed me by!

CELIA

You would've never made it in New York. You're not tough like your sister. Lourdes is a survivor.

FELICIA

And you never let me forget it! Lourdes is tougher, smarter—it never ends!

(Resentful)

She was Papi's favorite, too.

CELIA

Ay, I've lost all patience with you!

FELICIA

Whatever happened to the mother who used to read me poetry? Who sat on this porch with me for hours? Who stroked my hair and told me the sea intertwined our thoughts?

CELIA

That was a long time ago.

A beat.

FELICIA

(Bitter)

You didn't love Papi. You never loved him!

She stalks off.

CELIA

(Calling after her)

You'll be a revolutionary yet!

### SCENE 3

SHIFT TO: Pilar enters with a pile of clothes which she begins stuffing into a backpack.

PILAR

That's it. My mind's made up. I'm going back to Cuba. I'm done with that damn bakery and all of Mom's bullshit.

(Checks money in her pocket)

A hundred twenty bucks. That should be enough to get me to Miami. Then I'll hop on a plane and be in Havana in no time.

(Slips on backpack)

Every day Cuba fades a little more inside me. My grandmother fades a little more inside me. And there's only my imagination where our history should be.

Celia appears. She and Pilar live far apart but their mystical connection transcends time and geography.

PILAR

Abuela, I'm coming back!

CELIA

Qué bueno, mi cielo! I'll be waiting.

PILAR

I try to imagine what your face will look like when I sneak up behind you. You'll be sitting on your porch, overlooking the sea, and singing my lullaby.

CELIA

(Sings)

ARRURÚ MI NIÑA, ARRURÚ MI AMOR, ARRURÚ PEDAZO DE MI CORAZÓN ...

PILAR

I was only two years old but I remember everything that happened. I was sitting in your lap, playing with your drop pearl earrings, when Mom said we were leaving the country. You called her a traitor, accused her of betraying the Revolution. I clung to you so hard. That was the last time we saw each other ...

She turns and sees Celia, by magic.

CELIA

I love the paintings you're doing now, Pilar. All those vibrant red swirls!

PILAR

I wish Mom understood them like you do.

CELIA

Ay, corazón, you know how she is. She sent me a photograph of an éclair that looked like a grenade. As if she could bring down the Revolution with a pastelito.

PILAR

(To the audience)

My grandmother is a civil judge in Cuba. A pretty famous one.

(To Celia)

Whatever happened to that girl who stole her neighbor's pig for Noche Buena?

CELIA

I sentenced her to six months of community theater.

PILAR

Ha—nice! ... I need to see you again, Abuela.

CELIA

I *will* see you again. Te quiero, Pilar.

PILAR

I love you, too!

Pilar exits with her backpack.

IVANITO (O/S)

Abuela! Abuela!

CELIA

I'm right here, mi niño.

Ivanito rushes in and checks Celia's pockets for candy.

CELIA

You're my sweet boy.

She unwraps a caramel for him.

IVANITO

(Chewing)

Mmmakes ... my teeth stick together.

CELIA

Are you ready for your surprise?

IVANITO

Another one?

CELIA

First, tell me, how's your Russian?

IVANITO

Ochen' khoroshiy. [pronounced: OH-chen Ha-rah-SHOH]

Celia is pleased and gives him a Russian storybook.

IVANITO

Oh, wow! The Adventures of Vladimir the Cosmonaut! Gracias, Abuela!

They walk off together, Ivanito with his nose in the book.

IVANITO

And his space dog!

BLACKOUT.

SOUND of bus arriving. Pilar enters, climbs aboard the Greyhound, settles in.

LOUDSPEAKER

This is the express bus to Miami. Next stop is Newark. Newark is the next stop.

LIGHTS SHIFT to night time. Pilar is looking out the window.

PILAR

After New Jersey, it's a straight shot down I-95. Hey, look at that! It's a Shell station missing an 's.' HELL, OPEN 24 HOURS. Ha!

(Grows serious)

But you know what hell is for me? Having politicians and generals force events on us that structure our lives. That dictate the memories we'll have when we're old. That keep me and Abuela Celia apart.

Pilar pulls a cookie from her backpack, and eats it.

PILAR

(Mouth full)

Like, what am I now? A fugitive from my mother's bakery?

CUE MUSIC: santería chanting for Changó, god of fire and lightning. LIGHTS gradually deepen to a rich red.

PILAR

Back in Cuba, the nannies used to think I was possessed. They rubbed me with blood and leaves when my mother wasn't looking, rattled beads over my forehead. They called me brujita, little witch. I remember thinking: Okay, I'll start with their hair, make it fall out strand by strand. They always left wearing kerchiefs to cover their bald patches.

As music crescendoes, Pilar stands on her bus seat and stretches her arms skyward.



PILAR

(Awestruck)

From here I can see the stars and the moon and the black sky revolving overhead. I can see my grandmother's face.

SCENE 4

SHIFT TO: SOUNDS of jungle and tropical birds.  
LIGHTS UP on Felicia in her militia uniform, miserably marching, as Lieutenant Rojas barks commands.

LT. ROJAS

Compañera del Pino, you must keep up the rear! It's the most vulnerable position after the leader!

Felicia unscrews her canteen, takes a long swallow.

LT. ROJAS

Vámonos, vámonos! El Líder never slowed down in these mountains. For him it was a matter of life and death, not a Sunday outing! Keep moving! FATHERLAND OR DEATH!

FELICIA

Fatherland or death ... Carajo. It's the fifth day of this crap and I haven't taken a shit since Sunday.

LT. ROJAS

My job is to turn every last one of you sorry malcontents into revolutionaries! New Socialist Men and Women!

FELICIA

(Grumbling)

New Socialist Woman my ass. Most I ever did was pull a few dandelions in the weed-eradication campaign back in '62.

LT. ROJAS

You know, Compañera del Pino, I was like you once.

FELICIA

That's hard to believe.

LT. ROJAS

Cynical. Non-conforming.

FELICIA

Sounds like the definition of rational to me.

LT. ROJAS

Your attitude will defeat you, Compañera. Submit to the Revolution and it will take care of you.

FELICIA

Take care of me? All I see is a country living on slogans, always on the brink of war. We shall overcome. Change defeat into victory.

LT. ROJAS

Ñoo, that's my favorite.

FELICIA

It's depressing. Why is everything such a struggle? Even the breeze struggles with the trees here!

LT. ROJAS

Every single day counterrevolutionaries are trying to undermine our utopia. Malevolent, lazy criminals who drag down everything we stand for!

FELICIA

You mean like the people risking their lives to leave the island on rafts?

LT. ROJAS

Gusanos! Every last one!

FELICIA

They're just desperate for a little freedom. Like me. Can't you see that?

Lt. Rojas ignores her, turns to leave.

LT. ROJAS

Time to set up camp for the night, soldiers!

Lt. Rojas exits. Felicia unpacks her knapsack, unrolls her sleeping bag, pulls out a rusty file and does her nails.

FELICIA

My son doesn't belong in the Revolution anymore than I do. At school, the boys make fun of Ivanito for being weak. For avoiding stupid war games. For having me—una loca—for a mother. The days fly by and I can't account for a single one. It's a miracle when I get out of bed.

(Grows angry)

Mami's to blame for this. Mami and her obsession with El Líder. How she worships him! In love with him is more like it. She keeps a framed photograph of him on her nightstand over Papi's old picture.

(Looks heavenward)

Ay, Papi, how I miss you! Why did you have to follow Lourdes to New York? I know she's your favorite but I always loved you more. You know that, right?

LIGHTS DIM to nighttime. SOUND of crickets.

FELICIA

Damn El Líder! He's no better than any other tyrant in the world.

Felicia climbs into her sleeping bag, settles in.

FELICIA

Though he's the most handsome by far. No one looks better in a beard.

CUE MUSIC: slow, sexy bolero.

FELICIA

Hmm, I wonder what he'd be like in bed? ... Would he take off his cap and boots? Leave his pistol on the table? Have his guards wait outside, listening for the sharp bark of his pleasure? ... What would his hands be like? The hardness between his thighs? ...

Felicia begins masturbating inside her sleeping bag.

FELICIA

Would he churn inside me slowly the way I like? ... Trail his tongue along my belly and kiss me there? ... Mmmm, I feel his tongue moving faster and faster, his beard against my thighs ...

EL LÍDER (V/O)

We need you Compañera del Pino!

FELICIA

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaay!!

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 5

SPOTLIGHT ON Pilar.

PILAR

It's hot as hell when I finally get off the bus in Miami. The sun burns my scalp so I duck into a church. It's dark and cool and red dots float in front of my eyes like after somebody snaps a flash picture. Years ago, the nuns in middle school expelled me after I called the Spanish inquisitors Nazis. Mom pleaded with them to take me back. Catholics are always dying to forgive somebody so if you say you're sorry, you're usually home free.

(Exits church)

When I go outside again, the sky looks like a big bruise of purples and oranges. I walk and walk and end up on a fancy street called Coral Way. The store window mannequins look like astronauts' wives. Ugh. Now I'm totally lost. And exhausted. On a side street I see a Spanish-style house with a pool in the backyard. There's a half-inflated rubber alligator reclining on a lounge chair.

(Takes a look)

Let me just slip in here for a minute.

(Yawning)

Just a short nap next to this alligator here and ... I'll figure out my next move.

Pilar lies back on the lounge chair and closes her eyes.

LIGHTS SHIFT to indicate the passage of time.

Suddenly, Pilar startles awake and looks around. LIGHTS and SOUND of a police siren.

PILAR

What the hell?! Shit, it's the cops. I'm seriously goddam busted. It's back to Brooklyn for me. Back to the bakery. Back to my fucking crazy mother.

## SCENE 6

SHIFT TO: Yankee Doodle Bakery, afternoon. SOUND of phone ringing. Lourdes goes to pick it up, mouth full of sticky buns. Her new employee, Max Aguilar, is busy mopping.

LOURDES

Yankee Doodle Bakery ... Ay, Rufino! Pilar's plane was supposed to land two hours ago and still no word ... Espero que sí! But what if she changed her mind? Or got arrested for trespassing again? Qué desgracia!

(To Max)

Look over there! You missed a spot.

(To Rufino)

I'm talking to my new employee who doesn't know how to clean ... Qué? ... No, Rufino, those handcuffs aren't toys ... I told you: I joined the auxiliary police!

(To Max)

Rinse out that mop! You're just spreading the germs around!

(To Rufino)

Correcto. I scored 100 on the test by picking 'c' for the questions I didn't know. Captain Cacciola congratulated me personally. He wanted to make sure I was tough enough on crime. I told him that drug dealers should die in the electric chair. He liked that and assigned me to patrol two nights a week.

A bedraggled Pilar enters. She and Max notice each other. It's electric.

LOURDES

She's here! Later, Rufino.

(To Pilar)

Gracias a Dios!

PILAR

Hey, Mom.

LOURDES

That's it? I've been worried to death about you, Pilar. I've gained twenty pounds since you left. Twenty pounds!

Lourdes grabs another sticky bun.

Not humanly possible. PILAR

Don't underestimate me! LOURDES

It's only been five days. PILAR

It feels like a year! LOURDES

PILAR  
(To Max)  
Hi. I'm Pilar.

Encantado. I'm Max. MAX

LOURDES  
(Suspicious)  
You never told me you spoke Spanish.

MAX  
My Dad's Mexican. I grew up in San Antonio.

LOURDES  
Never mind about him, Pilar. He doesn't even know how to clean.

(To Max)  
Now straighten up behind the counter. And don't think you can clutter my bakery with your ... your paraphernalia! What do you have in there?

MAX  
It's a bass.

LOURDES  
Cómo?

PILAR  
An electric bass, Mom. Can't you see he's a musician?

LOURDES  
Qué de musician? He's my employee.

PILAR

(To Max)

Fender?

MAX

Rickenbacker.

PILAR

Cool.

The phone rings.

LOURDES

This conversation isn't over, tú sabes.

(On phone)

Yankee Doodle Bakery ... We're closed now but I'm pleased to take your order.  
Anniversary? Yes, of course ... a sheet cake for sixty ... lemon filling ...

PILAR

Don't worry about her.

MAX

I won't.

A beat.

MAX

So, you really tried to go to Cuba?

PILAR

Yeah.

MAX

That's awesome.

PILAR

(Irked)

Yeah, well, I wanted to see my grandmother who I haven't seen since I was two.

MAX

Bummer you got busted.

PILAR

You actually work here or just listen to my mom on the phone?

MAX

Just listen to your mom on the phone. And eat the inventory.

They crack up.

PILAR

My mom may be crazy but she knows her baked goods.

MAX

For real, though—I think it's cool that you tried to get there, to see your abuela.

PILAR

*Tried* is the operative word.

MAX

I haven't ever been to Mexico, so—

LOURDES

(On the phone, loud)

For Tillie and ... how do you spell that? ... I-R-A ... yes, like the taxes ...

They look at Lourdes then back at each other, amused.

MAX

So—you around here a lot?

PILAR

Unfortunately.

MAX

Not for me.

Pilar is pleased.

LOURDES

For Tillie and Ira, two golden oldies. Very good. We'll see you on Friday.

(To Pilar)

Now where were we?



PILAR

Uh, I believe you were berating me?

LOURDES

(To Max)

Wrap the leftover rugellah in plastic!

MAX

What's rugellah?

LOURDES

What am I going to do with you? You're in New York City now, Mister Maximiliano from Texas. You need to ... to assimilate.

PILAR

Whoa, Mom. Texas isn't a foreign country.

MAX

Actually, it kinda is.

LOURDES

Exactamente! You can go now. See you tomorrow at 5 AM sharp.

MAX

Got it.

LOURDES

And leave your guitarra at home. This isn't a hippie place!

He leaves. Pilar follows him with her eyes.

LOURDES

Ahora, tell me what happened.

PILAR

I'm fine, really.

LOURDES

I missed you, Pilar. Your father says it's my fault that you ran away.

PILAR

It's not anyone's fault. I wanted to see Abuela.

LOURDES

You could've ended up in a Cuban prison!

PILAR

Why? Because I'm the daughter of an anti-Communist extremist?

LOURDES

One of millions, believe me.

A stare down. Lourdes softens first.

LOURDES

Bueno, I'm glad you're back. Sticky bun?

PILAR

No, thanks. Can we just go home?

LOURDES

(Shifts tactics)

Espérate, Pilar. I have a very special *artistic* project for you.

Pilar is suspicious.

LOURDES

You know the banquet room I'm planning to open in two weeks?

PILAR

Yeah?

LOURDES

I want you to paint a mural for it. A big painting, like the Mexicans do, but pro-American.

PILAR

Wait. You want to commission *me* to paint something for *you*?

LOURDES

Sí, Pilar. You're a painter, no? So paint!

PILAR

You've got to be kidding.

LOURDES

Painting is painting, no?

PILAR

I don't think you understand. I don't do bakeries.

LOURDES

What? My bakery isn't good enough for you?

PILAR

It's not that.

LOURDES

If Michelangelo were alive today, he wouldn't be so proud.

PILAR

Mom, believe me, Michelangelo would definitely NOT be painting bakeries.

LOURDES

Don't be so sure. Most artists are starving.

(Whispers)

They take heroin to forget!

PILAR

Jesus Christ.

LOURDES

This could be a good opportunity for you, Pilar. A lot of important people come to my shop. Judges and lawyers from the courts. Executives from Brooklyn Union Gas. You could become famous!

PILAR

Give it a rest already.

LOURDES

You can paint something simple, something elegant ... like the Statue of Liberty! Is that too much to ask?

A beat.

PILAR

(Scheming)

Okay ... I'll paint something.

Something magnificent!

LOURDES

Oh, I can do magnificent.

PILAR

De veras?

LOURDES

Pilar nods. A delighted Lourdes hugs her squirming daughter.

## SCENE 7

SHIFT TO: Felicia lights a candle on a home altar. She's dressed in white, kneels down to pray.

FELICIA

(Melancholic)

O blessed Orishas, please guide me with your infinite wisdom. I've been in despair for so long, I don't know which way to turn. Every direction looms with evil, with destruction. My family is divided. My enemies threaten me. And now my father is dead. Only dancing boleros eases my pain ... Ay, if only I could believe what Mami believes. But my son and I don't belong here ... I beg you: lift the heaviness that's settled over me like a suffocating cloud ... Help me find a lasting peace.

Felicia crosses herself and turns on music.

CUE MUSIC: Beny Moré's "Corazón Rebelde." She sings along to the scratchy recording, dancing alone.

FELICIA/MUSIC

QUIERES REGRESAR, PERO ES IMPOSIBLE/YA MI CORAZÓN SE ENCUENTRA REBELDE/VUÉLVETE OTRA VEZ/QUE NO TE AMARÉ JAMÁS ...

Ivanito enters, surveys the all-too-familiar scene.

IVANITO

(To audience)

I don't know what brings on Mami's attacks but suddenly she can hear every sneeze and creak and breath on the island. Voices call to her—mean voices, she says—grabbing here and there for parts of her.

FELICIA

Do you see them, Ivanito? They're coming after us with their white shining eyes!

(Shouting to imaginary enemies)

Hijos de puta! You'll never get me or my boy! Never!

(To Ivanito)

I pray to your grandfather to help us but he never sends a sign. He's abandoned us. Like everyone else!

IVANITO

(To the audience)

I worry about her.

(To Felicia)

Mami, I worry about you when you talk like that.

A beat. Felicia tries to regroup but she's still off.

FELICIA

(Playful)

Ay, mi niño, let's speak in green!

He's reluctant.

FELICIA

Por favor.

After a moment, he relents.

IVANITO

Um, if the grass were black, would the world be different?

She considers this seriously.

FELICIA

Imagination, like memory, transforms lies to truth.

The ghost of Jorge del Pino walks in the shadows but they don't see him. He doesn't make himself known, though he isn't hiding either.

FELICIA

Listen, Ivanito. Do you hear that?

IVANITO

Qué?

FELICIA

The floorboards are creaking.

She looks around, listens carefully.

IVANITO

(Concerned)

Should I call Abuela?

FELICIA

No, no, no. Let's not worry her, mijo.

Ivanito replays the Beny Moré song from the beginning.

IVANITO

At times like this, only the Beny Moré album makes her feel better.

CUE MUSIC: "Corazón Rebelde" redux.

FELICIA/MUSIC

QUIERES REGRESAR, PERO ES IMPOSIBLE/YA MI CORAZÓN SE ENCUENTRA REBELDE/VUÉLVETE OTRA VEZ/QUE NO TE AMARÉ JAMÁS ...

She holds out her arms for Ivanito. They slow dance, as if in a private realm. SOUND of wind. Electricity flickers. Jorge watches them from the shadows, broken-hearted.

JORGE

Ay, Felicia, you never had a chance ... You were born cursed.

## SCENE 8

SHIFT TO: Brooklyn. SPOTLIGHT on Pilar assessing her mural-in-progress. She wears her paint-spattered overalls, puts a cassette in her small boombox.

CUE MUSIC: Sexy and provocative like Lou Reed's "Walk on the Wild Side." Pilar talks over the music.

PILAR

Shit! How did I get into this mess? Liberty, Liberty, statue of misery.

(Steps back)

I want her to glow, to look irradiated, nuked out ... Hmmm ... Maybe I should make her torch float ... slightly beyond her grasp?

(Moves back in)

Or I could put black stick figures pulsing in the air around Liberty ... Thorny scars that look like barbed wire ...

Celia appears behind her.

CELIA

Blues.

PILAR

Abuela!

Pilar turns off the music.

CELIA

Use more blues. Uncertain blues. Fluid blues. Liberty is surrounded by water, no?

Pilar pulls some paint chip samples from her pocket.

PILAR

She's an island ... Hmm ... How about this blue?

She points to a deep aquamarine and shows it to Celia, who approves.

CELIA

What are islands without illusions? Both keep us alive. Like secrets—and love.

PILAR

Then tell me a secret. About love.

Celia muses for a moment.

CELIA

There was a man before your grandfather, a Spaniard, a married man. We met in Havana at El Encanto department store, where I sold him a miniature camera. He bought me these drop pearl earrings.

(Touches them)

I've only removed them nine times, to clean them.

CUE MUSIC: soft flamenco guitars.

CELIA

But Gustavo Sierra de Armas returned to Granada, to the Spanish Civil War, to his wife. I wrote him many letters, always on the eleventh day of the month, but sent him only the very first one.

(Recites)

*April 11, 1934. Querido Gustavo. A fish swims in my lung. Without you, what is there to celebrate? I am yours always, Celia*

PILAR

Why didn't you send the rest of the letters?

CELIA

They became for me a separate existence. A dream that gave me more than I dared ask for.

Pilar considers this.

PILAR

Like a diary?

Celia nods.

PILAR

Read one to me?

CELIA

De veras?



PILAR

Choose one. Any one.

CELIA

Bueno.

Celia extracts a random letter from her satin box and begins to read.

CELIA

*August 11, 1953. Querido Gustavo, Yesterday I took the bus to Havana to join the protesters in front of the palace. We marched for the release of the rebels who survived the attack on the Moncada. Their leader is a lawyer, like you were once—*

PILAR

Was that El Líder?

CELIA

Sí, preciosa. When he was a young man. Should I finish?

PILAR

Go on, Abuela.

CELIA

*Their leader is a lawyer, like you were once, Gustavo, idealistic and self-assured. Now the Revolution is close enough to smell. We'll get rid of Batista and make our revolution stick like rice to a pot! Love, Celia*

PILAR

Wow, Abuela. You were a firebrand even then.

CELIA

(Laughing)

And I know someone who takes after me.

Celia fades away as Max stands at the door with his bass guitar. He's on break.

MAX

Can I come in?

Pilar nods. She's discouraged.

Max looks intently at Pilar's mural.

MAX

You're shooting out the lights with this one.

PILAR

Is that good?

MAX

Oh, yeah.

PILAR

I've done like a thousand sketches. Patriotism is fucking exhausting.

MAX

I think it looks great.

PILAR

Thanks, but it's basically six lines and a splotch of blue right now.

MAX

I figured it was abstract.

PILAR

Oh, good. I'm glad you got it.

MAX

Absolutely. The color really says "America."

She's enjoying this.

MAX

So, your mom hasn't seen it?

PILAR

Nope. I made her promise. No peeking before the unveiling.

MAX

How'd you do that?

PILAR

I threatened to paint a mural of El Líder, if she did.

Max cracks up.

Patria o muerte!

PILAR

VENCEREMOS!

PILAR AND MAX

They laugh.

PILAR

Plus I padlocked the door to the banquet room.

MAX

You know what?

PILAR

What?

MAX

My dad's a lot like your mom. Like separated-at-birth alike.

PILAR

He's psychotic, too?

MAX

Let's just say they share the zeal of new patriots.

PILAR

I thought I was the only lucky one.

MAX

They're passionate about what they believe in. Like us.

Pilar isn't buying it.

MAX

I mean, we have a lot in common.

PILAR

Like what?

MAX

Music for one.

PILAR

For one, two, and three.

MAX

And we're outsiders, though we grew up here. That gives us certain privileges.

PILAR

Oh, please.

MAX

It can be a ball buster but it's also a kind of super power.

Pilar considers this.

MAX

AND ...

PILAR

There's an 'and'?

MAX

You're pretty cute.

PILAR

You didn't just say that!

MAX

I'm sticking with it.

Pilar laughs an embarrassed laugh.

A beat.

MAX

Well, I should probably get back before—

PILAR

General Puente notices you're missing?

MAX

(Imitating Lourdes)

Exactamente!

(Pauses)

But I was thinking. It's Saturday, right?

PILAR  
It is?

MAX  
That's the word on the street.

PILAR  
Yeah, well, I get this bakery mixed up with Guantánamo sometimes.

Max laughs.

MAX  
So, maybe we could go out tonight after we close? Like, a jail break? Or another time, if that's better.

Pilar smiles.

PILAR  
Tonight sounds great.

MAX  
Uh, great.

The two stare at each other, hands drift to near touching. They pull away, self-conscious. Max leaves, elated.

Celia returns with her satin box but Pilar is lost in thought.

CELIA  
Pilar! Pilar, can you hear me? ¿Dónde estás?

Pilar hears her again.

PILAR  
Abuela! I'm here.

CELIA  
Who's the boy, mi cielo?

PILAR  
Someone I, uh, really like.

CELIA  
I can hear it in your voice.

She looks in the direction Max left.

CELIA

Handsome, too.

PILAR

And artistic!

CELIA

For you he would have to be.

(Conspiratorial)

Does your mother know?

PILAR

She doesn't.

CELIA

Then the secret is yours to keep. Better to make something sweet out of fear.

PILAR

Gracias, Abuela!

Pilar leaves as Jorge enters. He stands behind Celia as she pulls another letter from her satin box. He listens closely, painfully, as she reads it aloud.

CELIA

*October 11, 1946. Querido Gustavo, My husband says my smile frightens him so I look in the mirror and try on old smiles ... After you left me I took to my bed, Gustavo. I stayed there for months playing back every minute of our time together, watching it like I watched the movies, trying to make sense of the days we buried squandering love. Jorge saved me but for what I don't know. Yours always, Celia.*

JORGE

All I wanted was for you to love me. Love only me ...

Celia is lost in her memories.

JORGE

Celia? Celia?

She looks away.

## SCENE 9

SHIFT TO: Brooklyn, night.

CUE MUSIC: Something cheesy like “Mission Impossible” theme song.

Lourdes is on patrol in her auxiliary police uniform and thick-soled black shoes, which enthrall her. She runs, jumps a curb, breaks out a few martial arts moves.

LOURDES

Ooof. Just look at these shoes. They say POWER! If more women wore shoes like these, they could fight and protect what’s theirs!

Jorge appears, impressed as Lourdes fancily twirls her nightstick.

JORGE

Look at you, Lourdes. You’re a real talent with that nightstick.

LOURDES

Ay, Papi, you scared me!

JORGE

No gun?

LOURDES

The police department won’t issue me one.

JORGE

In Cuba, nobody was prepared for the Communists and look what happened.

LOURDES

Pilar told me that if I got a gun, she’d run away again.

JORGE

What can she possibly know of exile?

LOURDES

Watch this, Papi!

Lourdes demonstrates a series of elaborate fight moves.

JORGE

Ha! No one will escape you, mija!

LOURDES

FUÁCATA! Hijo de puta! Take that ... and that!

Jorge grows a little impatient.

JORGE

Escúchame, Lourdes. I need to talk to you.

She stops at last, breathing hard.

LOURDES

What is it, Papi?

JORGE

There are things I need to tell you ... about your mother.

LOURDES

I know all about her, believe me.

Lourdes stretches to cool down.

JORGE

When you were still a baby, I sent her away.

LOURDES

Away? Where?

JORGE

To ... a hospital. I told the doctors to make her forget. They used electricity. Gave her pills. I used to visit her every Sunday with a bouquet of tea roses and week after week she threw them at my feet ... Then her hands would grow very still ... I was afraid that I'd lost her forever.

Lourdes doesn't want to hear anymore.

JORGE

(More urgently)

Por favor, Lourdes. This is important. Your mother made a friend at the hospital named Felicia. This Felicia had murdered her husband by dousing him with gasoline.



Later, your mother insisted on naming your sister after that woman, esa loca. Can you imagine such an inheritance?

LOURDES

(Pained)  
Why are you telling me this?

A beat.

JORGE

You must return to Cuba, mija.

LOURDES

Qué?!

JORGE

There are things you must do. Things you will only know when you get there.

LOURDES

That's impossible.

Another long beat.

JORGE

Your mother needs you.

LOURDES

Mamá? She's never needed anyone but El Líder. You know that better than anyone.

JORGE

And your sister. She's not well.

LOURDES

Felicia *chose* to stay in Cuba. Nobody can save her from that. Besides, we were never close.

JORGE

Es tu hermana.

LOURDES

Felicia has Mamá all to herself. She always did.

JORGE

She has nobody now.

Jorge holds his daughter's hands in his.

JORGE

Promise me, Lourdes. I beg of you.

LOURDES

(Annoyed)

What the hell, Papi?!

Lourdes pulls away and turns her back on him. Then she exits, leaving Jorge alone on stage.

JORGE

Not even the dead are spared suffering.

## SCENE 10

SHIFT TO: Felicia's living room. She solemnly crushes pink tablets and sprinkles them on two bowls of coconut ice cream as Ivanito watches.

CUE MUSIC: Santería chanting to Oyá, goddess of the winds and cemeteries.

FELICIA

(Uneasy)

I'm so happy you're here with me, Ivanito. I don't like it when you spend so much time away from me. What do you and Abuela do together?

IVANITO

Not much. Mostly, we hang out on the porch. She tells me stories.

FELICIA

What's she saying about me? Is she planning to take you away?

IVANITO

No, Mami. Never.

FELICIA

Because I wouldn't stand for it! You're my son, not hers. We belong together.

Jorge drifts in carrying a silk calla lily. He watches and waits, despondent, helpless to intervene. Felicia grows still. Trance-like, she kisses Ivanito's forehead as if marking him as hers.

JORGE

DON'T!!

But Felicia hands Ivanito a bowl of the ice cream. From this point forward, time palpably slows. An inevitable procession.

IVANITO

What did you put on the ice cream, Mami?

FELICIA

Something to give us strength, Ivanito. To help us surrender to Oyá, goddess of the winds, of the cemeteries. Bravely, we must go.

IVANITO

Where are we going?

FELICIA

Away from this island ... to a place that will quiet our hungers. Together again, with your grandfather. He loved us very much.

Felicia eats her ice cream, rapturously. Ivanito tastes his.

Jorge sinks to his knees, hands clasped in prayer. His lips are moving as he quietly recites a 'Hail Mary' in Spanish. Felicia and Ivanito can't hear him.

FELICIA

(Looks skyward)

Take us, Oyá. Take us with you.

Felicia lies on the floor and motions for Ivanito to join her. They lie side-by-side, nearly motionless.

IVANITO

How do we get to that place?

FELICIA

You must imagine winter, Ivanito, winter and its white extinguishings. Imagine ice falling from the sky, covering everything we know. Ice on this house, ice coating the ships on the docks and the sparrows in mid-flight. Ice on the roads and the beach where your grandmother lives. Ice covering this whole island ...

It begins snowing, flurries at first then more insistently.

A forlorn Jorge shakes his head and exits.

IVANITO

I see it, Mami. I see winter!

MUSIC SURGES. The blizzard brightens to blinding.

BLACKOUT.

**END OF ACT ONE.**

ACT TWO

## SCENE 1

SHIFT TO Yankee Doodle Bakery.

CUE MUSIC OFFSTAGE: “When the Saints Go Marching In,” or similar. SOUNDS of party. It’s the opening of Yankee Doodle Bakery’s new banquet room.

The phone rings. Lourdes enters and answers it. She’s decked out in red, white, and blue.

LOURDES

Yankee Doodle Bakery, how may I help you? ... Espérate, espérate—qué?! ... Felicia?!

Lourdes hangs up, stunned. A wretched Jorge enters and brushes past her, trailing the silk calla lily. Lourdes exits through the same door she entered. SPOTLIGHT on Jorge as he, too, exits.

Lourdes addresses a crowd in the banquet room where Pilar’s mural will be unveiled. Max is there, holding a little paper flag. Pilar is uneasy.

LOURDES

(Subdued by the terrible news)

My fellow Americans and bakery customers. Thank you for coming to share this special day with us. Sixteen years ago, I arrived in this country as an immigrant. Sí, from Cuba, a tyrannical Communist regime where they ... they ... have NO RESPECT FOR WOMEN OR REGARD FOR HUMAN LIFE!

A panicked Pilar catches Max’s eye. Lourdes regroups.

LOURDES

My daughter Pilar Puente—

(Points to Pilar)

—is an arrrtista, a very brilliant arrrtista. And she created the mural you’re about to see in honor of our great country and the freedom it offers to all who want to work. Are you ready, Pilar?

PILAR

Um, well—

LOURDES

It's time to show off your masterpiece!

(Hisses to someone we can't see)

Pssst. Pull off the covering!

SOUND of drumroll.

LOURDES

And HERE IT IS!

SOUND of canvas dropping. The crowd gasps. Lourdes is silent as the shock of the mural sinks in. Pilar doesn't know where to look.

MAX

Oh, fuck.

LOURDES

Our bakery will close early today but please enjoy the free coffee and pastries. And remember our banquet room is now open for your special occasions. Thank you very much—

She gets emotional and runs out. Pilar follows her into the bakery.

Several beats.

PILAR

Look. I just wanted to make a statement.

LOURDES

Oh, it's a statement alright!

PILAR

It's my artistic interpretation—

LOURDES

The Statue of Liberty with a SAFETY PIN through her nose? The sacred image of democracy?

PILAR

We have different views of what's sacred.

LOURDES

To you, NOTHING IS SACRED! How could you do this to me?

PILAR

You're the one who forced me into this!

LOURDES

I FORCED YOU?! SINVERGÜENZA!! This was an opportunity for you—

PILAR

No, it was an opportunity for YOU! To try and control what I do!

LOURDES

If only that were possible! YOU BETRAYED ME! ABUSED MY TRUST WITH YOUR MURAL DE PORQUERÍA!

PILAR

You have NO RIGHT, Mom! ABSOLUTELY NONE!

LOURDES

(Blows her nose)

DESCARADA! You're selfish, and only think of yourself! EGOÍSTA ERES! Just like everyone else in this family.

PILAR

So, what else is new?!

LOURDES

I'll tell you what's new.

A beat.

LOURDES

We're going to Cuba.

PILAR

Wait. What?! What do you mean?

LOURDES

Your Tía Felicia.

PILAR

What about her?

LOURDES

She's ... she's taken her life.

PILAR

Oh my God ... I'm so sorry, Mom.

Pilar tries to comfort her mother but Lourdes is having none of it.

LOURDES

Don't even try.

Lourdes storms off, leaving Pilar onstage alone.

## SCENE 2

SHIFT TO: Celia's seaside porch. She scans the horizon with her binoculars, puts them down. Her hands tremble as she picks up a letter she's set aside.

CELIA

*November 11, 1938. Mi querido Gustavo, I've named my new baby Felicia. She's beautiful and fat with eyes that fix on me disarmingly. I'll be a good mother this time. She's mine in a way that Lourdes could never be. My little Felicia loves the sea. Her skin is translucent, like the fish that feed along the reefs. How I love reading poetry to her on the porch. You should see how she listens to me, her eyes so wide and curious ...*

Celia chokes up.

BLACKOUT.

## SCENE 3

SHIFT TO: Arrival in Havana. AIRPORT SOUNDS: Announcements in Cuban-accented Spanish, etc. Lourdes crosses the airport lobby wearing travel clothes and pulling a roller bag. Pilar trails behind her in jeans with her backpack and boombox.



LOURDES

Apúrate, Pilar. Or we won't make it to the funeral.

PILAR

I can't wait to see Abuela!

LOURDES

Believe me, she's the last person I want to see. I wouldn't step foot on this island except for my sister. And the promise I made to my father.

PILAR

Abuelo Jorge?

LOURDES

He and I have been, eh ... chatting since he died.

They walk outside. LIGHTS are glaringly bright  
Caribbean. SOUND of thunder.

#### SCENE 4

SHIFT TO: Havana cemetery, afternoon. SOUND of tropical downpour. Celia opens a battered umbrella over herself and Ivanito, who's holding his own calla lily.

SPOTLIGHT on Felicia in a spiritual form, dressed in the white clothing she was buried in. Loved ones are gathered, looking into her grave. Jorge is also there, waiting and dressed in white.

CELIA

(To Ivanito)

Go ahead, mi cielo. Give your mami the flower.

A teary-eyed Ivanito drops the lily into his mother's grave then returns to Celia's side. Lourdes and Pilar enter and join the mourners. Acknowledgements all around.

CELIA

I want to thank you all again for coming, and for the kindness you've shown Ivanito and me during this difficult time. Y gracias to my daughter, Lourdes, and my granddaughter, Pilar, who traveled from New York to be with us today ...

They nod at each other. A beat.

CELIA

Compañeros y compañeras, our dear Felicia loved the sea—

LOURDES

(Under her breath to Pilar)

Compañeros? To her, even funerals are political.

PILAR

Shhhh.

CELIA

I remember my daughter in a tiny lemon yellow bathing suit combing the beach for shells.

LOURDES

(Muttering)

It's not even a proper burial. They've outlawed Catholicism here.

Pilar jabs her mother. Celia hears the whispering and shoots Lourdes a 'look.'

CELIA

As I was saying, Felicia loved collecting shells and used to arrange them in beautiful patterns on the sand. Ahora, compañeros y compañeras—

LOURDES

(Finally erupts)

Mamá, por favor con esa compañera mierda! It's a eulogy for your daughter, not a speech for El Líder!

PILAR

Mom!

LOURDES

(To Celia)

I may be your daughter but I'm no daughter of this revolution!

PILAR

This isn't about you.

Celia glares at Lourdes then shakes her head and continues.

CELIA

I remember the day the tidal wave hit, how I pulled Felicia to safety. Most of Santa Teresa del Mar was washed away that day. Only our little brick-and-cement house survived ... Por favor, let us observe a moment of silence for our beloved Felicia, who left us much too soon.

SPOTLIGHT ON Felicia as Jorge escorts her away, hand-in-hand, to the afterlife.

An intensifying BLUE LIGHT engulfs everyone, as if trapping them inside the tidal wave. All freeze in place.

BLACKOUT.

## SCENE 5

SHIFT TO: Celia's porch, post-funeral. Celia enters with Ivanito and they sit on the bench together.

CELIA

Your mami used to play here for hours as a little girl, collecting shells in this bucket.

She holds up Felicia's little blue bucket.

CELIA

It's yours now, mi cielo.

CUE MUSIC OFFSTAGE: Beny Moré's "Que Bueno Baila Usted," or similarly vintage and danceable. Lourdes enters, dancing.

LOURDES

(To Ivanito)

Come, precioso! Baila conmigo! Dance with your Tía Lourdes!

Lourdes exaggerates her steps, teasing out the rhythm.

LOURDES

Ven. Show me if the boys on this island still know how to dance!

Ivanito joins her. There is an immediate, unlikely elegance. Pilar enters and watches them.

PILAR

What's going on?

Ivanito leads Lourdes through a series of sophisticated twists and turns. Celia is unamused.

LOURDES

(Breathlessly dancing)

Mi cielo, you're a dream to dance with—and so young. Who taught you?

IVANITO

Mami did.

LOURDES

But Felicia couldn't dance.

IVANITO

Yes, she could!

CELIA

(To Lourdes)

It's inappropriate to be dancing on the day of your sister's funeral.

LOURDES

Y por qué? After all, we're mourning a woman who tried to kill—

CELIA

Don't you dare, Lourdes!

LOURDES

—who tried to KILL her own son!

MUSIC fades out.

PILAR

Don't make assumptions!

LOURDES

Qué de assumptions?! Ask anyone!

IVANITO

Mamá didn't want to hurt me.

LOURDES

Whether she wanted to hurt you or not, Ivanito, you could've died.

CELIA

That's enough, Lourdes. He's still a child, and you weren't here.

LOURDES

Maybe if I'd been here, this wouldn't have happened.

PILAR

Drop it, Mom!

CELIA

You're making a tragic day worse for all of us.

LOURDES

(To Celia)

You're right about one thing. Ivanito is still a child. And he needs someone who can properly look after him.

PILAR

Mom, MOM! Cease and desist!

LOURDES

(To Pilar)

I've had enough of you acting so fresh. Who's the mother here?

CELIA

I am.

Celia takes a deep breath, regroups.

CELIA

Ivanito will be fine. He needs time. He's still in shock. We do things the way we do them here. That's how it works.

LOURDES

Really? Because from what I can see, nothing works here.

CELIA

(Losing it)

Is that so?! In the twenty years since *our* revolution triumphed, no child goes hungry—and every last one can read. That's more than you can say for that country you love so much.

LOURDES

What good is reading if all they read is propaganda?

CELIA

Yes, of course—that's the way you spin it!

LOURDES

If it's so wonderful then why can't people leave if they want to?

CELIA

Ay, sí—so they can all be as miserable as you!?

Pilar steps between them to break up the fight.

PILAR

Stop already!! Please, for Ivanito's sake.

But Lourdes and Celia keep arguing past her.

LOURDES

They sneak off on inner tubes in the middle of the night, like thieves! That's how desperate they are to get the hell out!

CELIA

We don't need their kind here.

PILAR

Enough! Both of you!

LOURDES

You sound just like El Líder

CELIA

You just paid me a big compliment.

Pilar gestures surrender. A stare down. Lourdes stalks away. Celia dismisses her with a gesture.

PILAR

(To Ivanito)

Hey, are you okay?

She offers him her hand and he takes it, gratefully.

IVANITO

(Shyly)

Do you dance?

PILAR

Not like you.

CELIA

But you're cubana, mi amor. Pura cubana.

PILAR

Not in everything. Listen up.

Pilar grabs her little boombox, hits play.

CUE MUSIC: Sex Pistols' "God Save the Queen" or other British punk.

IVANITO

How do you dance to that?

CELIA

(Overlapping)

How do you *listen* to that?

PILAR

Watch!

She jumps in place like a pogo stick. Ivanito comically tries to imitate her. Celia bobs her head uncertainly. They're all bonding.

CELIA

(Laughing)

I take it back! Pura americana eres!

Lourdes enters, brandishing a framed photograph of El Líder. Sensing more trouble, Ivanito leaves.

LOURDES

(To Celia)

This was on your nightstand. How dare you cover Papi's face with that assassin's?!

CELIA

Cuidado. This is my house.

(To Ivanito)

Go inside, mi cielo.

PILAR

That's none of your business, Mom!

LOURDES

Qué? My father is none of my business?

Lourdes kicks off her shoes and strides to the beach.  
Celia and Pilar watch her go.

PILAR

What the hell is she doing?!

(Watching in disbelief)

What the fuck?!

SOUND of splash.

PILAR

Mom just threw El Líder into the ocean!

CELIA

Descarada! How dare she?!

BLACKOUT.



## SCENE

SHIFT TO: Celia's house, a few days later. SPOTLIGHT on Pilar, holding an antiquated phone to her ear.

PILAR

That's right, 212-63CAKES. Yes, operator, I'll hold.

SOUND of staticky phone ringing.

Max picks up the long-corded phone in the bakery.

MAX

Yankee Doodle Bakery. We have a two-for-one special on sticky buns today.

PILAR

Max! It's me!

MAX

Oh my God, Pilar! It's so good to hear your voice!

PILAR

Yours, too. You sound so ... *professional*.

MAX

Ha! It's been crazy busy. No wonder your mom's always losing it.

PILAR

You should see her now.

MAX

What's going on?

PILAR

Days of endless crossfire between her and Abuela. It's like their very own Cold War.

MAX

Sounds hard.

PILAR

It is. But I also feel so at home here. It's like my body remembers everything. I've even started dreaming in Spanish!

MAX

That's incredible.

PILAR

And it's so beautiful! Like time has stood still. And the blues ... I never knew how many blues existed until I came here!

A beat.

MAX

You miss me?

PILAR

I wish you were here. I'd love for Abuela to meet you. She's amazing and strong and totally stands up to my mother. I've never seen anyone do that.

MAX

Except for you.

PILAR

You've seen what good that's done me.

MAX

Maybe you can take me there someday?

PILAR

I'd really like that.

MAX

I want you to hear something. Listen.

Max turns on the bakery's sound system with the remote then angles the phone so Pilar can listen.

CUE MUSIC: Something along the lines of "Electrify Me" by the Plugz.

Max and Pilar slow dance across the distance, phone cords entangling, until they're sexily trussed up. They exit as SOUND of dial tone is overcome by SOUND of ocean, seagulls.

## SCENE 7

LIGHTS UP on Celia sitting on her porch and takes her time rummaging through her satin box of letters. She looks at one, then another, reading to herself. Finally, she finds the letter she was seeking, and reads it aloud.

CELIA

*August 11, 1944. Querido Gustavo, My daughter Felicia loves to collect seashells then rearrange them in great overlapping circles on the sand, as if someone on the moon, or further still, could read their significance ...*

(Pauses)

*I remember this García Lorca poem y pienso en mi Felicia ... Your thought is shifting snow in an/ endless glory of whiteness. Your/ profile, an unending burn; your heart, an untethered dove .../While night and day, here on the corner/ of pain, we weave a wreath of/ melancholy ... Una guirnalda de melancolía ...*

(Teary-eyed)

Ay, niña mía... niña mía ...

SHIFT TO: Ivanito enters carrying the blue bucket filled with shells. He sets it down and starts arranging the shells in the sand, like his mother used to do. Felicia ENTERS in her spiritual form and intently watches her son from the periphery.

IVANITO

(To audience)

Everything is mixed up, as if parts of me are turning in different directions at once. I wake up so tired, like I've been working in my sleep, moving my thoughts like so many stones in the dark ... I've grown six inches since last summer. My clothes don't fit me anymore so at school they gave me the uniform of the senior who hanged himself from a mango tree.

He fusses with the shells until he's satisfied.

IVANITO

This is for you, Mami.

Somehow Ivanito feels his mother's presence and looks heavenward. Felicia is there but he can't see her.

## IVANITO

No one can take your place. No one speaks like you do, making garlands of words in the air ... Mami, can you hear me? Puedes oírme? If only I could talk to you again ...

Ivanito collects his shells and puts them back in his bucket. Then he exits, sadly. A heartbroken Felicia exits in a different direction.

## SCENE 8

SHIFT TO: Celia on her porch a day later. She's picking tiny pebbles out of a bowl of raw rice and dropping the pebbles—tick, tick, like time itself—into another bowl.

## CELIA

(To herself)

Felicia used to help me pick the pebbles out of the rice. She wasn't much of a cook but she liked to sort things, rearrange things.

Lourdes enters, clears her throat. A strained silence.

## LOURDES

Eh, can I sit down?

Celia indicates the threadbare cushion beside her.

## LOURDES

Ay, it's a tight squeeze. But it's ... nice. I remember this view.

Lourdes breathes in the ocean air.

A beat.

## LOURDES

So, how's Ivanito doing in school?

## CELIA

He's the smartest boy in the province.

## LOURDES

I'm not surprised.

CELIA

He even speaks Russian.

LOURDES

Russian?! Why would he be learning Russian?

CELIA

He might go to Moscow—to study alongside our best students.

LOURDES

He should be learning English! That's what the whole world speaks.

CELIA

Not our world.

Lourdes rolls her eyes.

CELIA

You haven't even asked me about your sister. Don't you want to know what happened to her?

LOURDES

You mean, according to you?

Celia ignores the slight.

CELIA

Pobre Felicia ... She couldn't find her place in the world.

LOURDES

Not surprising, considering where she lived.

CELIA

Not everything is political, Lourdes. She was very ill. She's been ill for years.

LOURDES

You didn't let her go to New York. Not even when Papi left. And she begged to leave.

CELIA

She was married by then and pregnant with Ivanito. It wouldn't have been safe.

LOURDES

Safe? Is that the story you tell yourself? She would've left if you hadn't shamed her into staying, into trying to become a revolutionary like you. I could've helped them.

Celia shakes her head.

LOURDES

Ivanito would've been born in the U.S. An American citizen! You denied him that, too!

Celia rises to battle.

CELIA

The U.S. is a corrupt, capitalist, *imperialist* system.

LOURDES

Oh, here we go.

CELIA

They have no respect for women or any regard for human life!

LOURDES

That sounds just like Cuba to me.

CELIA

Ay, por favor.

LOURDES

Mira Mamá, I wish you could see beyond yourself for once and think about what's best for the child.

CELIA

This is his home. Can't you see that?

LOURDES

What I see is a boy who needs a mother.

CELIA

Is that why you're here?

A long beat.

CUE MUSIC: a discordant melody.

LOURDES

(Barely a whisper)

And a mother who needs her boy ...

Lourdes slips into a trance-like memory.

LOURDES

I lost him ...

CELIA

(Confused)

Who?

LOURDES

Mi niño ... I begged them to stop ... told them I was pregnant ... *You'll hurt my baby!* ...  
But they didn't care.

CELIA

What are you saying?

Painfully, Lourdes recollects the scene.

LOURDES

Two soldiers appeared at our ranch with a deed saying that it was now the property of the Revolution. My husband was away that day. I ripped the deed in half and told the soldiers to get the hell out. But they refused. The taller one grabbed my arm. I tried to run past him but the other blocked my way. Then he pushed me to the ground while the other stood guard.

CELIA

Ay, mija ...

LOURDES

I can still smell the soldier's coarse soap ... The decay of his teeth, the citrus brilliantine in his hair, as if a grove of lemons lay hidden there ...

Lourdes turns away, stricken.

CELIA

I never knew.

LOURDES

Because I never told you.

CELIA

I'm sorry for what happened to you.

LOURDES

I would've named my son Jorge, after Papi ... A boy, a baby boy in a clot of blood at my feet.

Celia puts an arm around Lourdes but she's inconsolable.

LOURDES

Nothing ... has ever taken away the pain.

Another long beat.

CELIA

(Quietly)

How can you be sure that's why you lost the baby?

LOURDES

Qué dices?! Even now, you're defending the Revolution?! Against your own daughter?!

CELIA

That's not what I'm saying.

LOURDES

That's exactly what you're saying!

CELIA

If only El Líder had known ...

LOURDES

Are you crazy? He's directly to blame!

CELIA

He would've punished those men. I know he would.

Silence.

LOURDES

Why did I think I could expect anything from you? Papi was wrong.

CELIA

What does your father have to do with it?



LOURDES

Because he loved you in spite of everything. And he hoped that maybe you loved us a little, too.

Lourdes leaves. Celia remains on the porch staring out to sea. Then she resumes sifting through her bowl of rice, tick, tick, tick. SOUND of ocean, seagulls.

Pilar enters with a sketchbook and colored pencils, picks up on the vibe.

PILAR

Did something happen?

CELIA

Your mother's never been easy.

PILAR

You're telling me?!

CELIA

But we won't let her affect our relationship.

PILAR

No way, Abuela.

She holds up her sketchbook.

PILAR

It's time to do that portrait of you I promised.

CELIA

I just want to sit here with you, mi cielo.

PILAR

But this is our last day. We're leaving tomorrow.

CELIA

Won't you stay with me, Pilar? Won't you stay with me this time?

Pilar is resolute but silent. Celia understands.

CELIA

Then let's enjoy the hours we have left.

PILAR

At least let me immortalize you!

Celia laughs. The mood lightens a bit.

CELIA

Not like this.

PILAR

Then how?

CELIA

I want to be remembered as ... a revolutionary!

PILAR

(Teasing)

I can put you in fatigues, if you want.

CELIA

I'm serious, Pilar. What good are individual portraits? Why don't you go paint our local school instead?

PILAR

I definitely don't have enough colored pencils for that!

CELIA

It's the collective that matters, what we do in service of the whole.

PILAR

Then why are there pictures of El Líder everywhere?

CELIA

Because he's leading the collective.

(Changing subject)

So, aren't you going to tell me about your love? We're finally alone.

PILAR

Well, his name is Max. And he's so—

CELIA

Handsome and funny and serious all at once?

CUE MUSIC: Ibeyi's "I Wanna Be Like You" or similar upbeat song.

PILAR

Yes, exactly!

(Leans in)

Like *your* secret love?

Celia blushes a little.

PILAR

Whatever happened to him, anyway?

CELIA

After Gustavo returned to Spain, I never heard from him again. I took to my bed for eight months, hoping to die.

PILAR

Ugh, fucking heartbreak!

CELIA

As you can see, I didn't succeed.

PILAR

How could you ever forgive him?

CELIA

I guess I never did.

Music fades. Celia reaches for her satin box, shows Pilar the letters inside. Pilar rifles through them, astonished.

PILAR

There are so many of them ... How long did you write to him?

CELIA

Twenty-five years. But they were more for me than for him. I *survived* by writing them ...

(Pauses)

You know, your grandfather committed me to an asylum soon after your mother was born.

PILAR

What?! Abuelo had you committed because you were in love with someone else?

Celia nods. A pained Jorge enters but stays on the periphery. Celia selects a letter, reads.

CELIA

*January 11, 1937. Querido Gustavo, The pills they watch me swallow make my thoughts stick like cotton. I lie to the doctors. They burn my skull with electricity and tell me I'm improving. Jorge visits me on Sundays and speaks to me of Lourdes—always of Lourdes. His voice is a sweet-scented rot ...*

Another long silence.

JORGE

I'm sorry, mi amor. You don't know how sorry I am. I was desperate for you to forget him. To love me instead. Can you ever forgive me?

Jorge sinks to his knees. Celia turns her back on him.

CELIA

(To Pilar)

Sometimes to forgive is harder, much harder, even than to love.

A defeated Jorge slowly rises and leaves.

PILAR

Wow. I can't believe he did that ... Sometimes I wonder how different my life would've been if I'd stayed with you, Abuela.

CELIA

If only, mi cielo ...

PILAR

Right on this beach. Together.

They look out to sea.

CELIA

You would've had a larger purpose here. Building a new kind of future.

PILAR

No offense, Abuela, but utopias don't exactly have the best track record.

CELIA

It's about justice, Pilar. Before the Revolution, Cuba was a parody of a country. Half the people were starving, suffocating in the back pocket of the U.S. What is freedom if not the right to a decent life?

Pilar considers this.

PILAR

If I lived here, could I paint whatever I wanted?

CELIA

“Within the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing.” That’s what El Líder says.

PILAR

You know what I’d tell El Líder?

CELIA

(Bemused)

Qué?

PILAR

That art is the ultimate revolution! ... So, let me draw you already. But I want to portray your most *romantic* self. The woman who fell in love with Gustavo.

Celia finally warms up to the idea.

CELIA

Bueno ... I used to envision myself in a flared skirt like the flamenco dancers wear. Maybe with a few carnations?

PILAR

Red ones?

CELIA

Sí, rojos.

PILAR

That can definitely be arranged.

CELIA

And maybe with my hair a little darker? My waist a little more slender? Por dios, I don’t want to look like an old woman!

PILAR

At your service, Abuela.

Pilar opens her sketchbook, chooses a pencil.

Lourdes enters. Brief SOUND of radio news report in Spanish as she opens then closes the door.

LOURDES

The Peruvian embassy is granting asylum to anyone who wants to leave the country. I'd sure as hell get off this island.

CELIA

Thankfully, you already did.

LOURDES

This will be the start of a mass exodus!

CELIA

I doubt more than a few gusanos will leave.

LOURDES

Gusanos, eh? That's what you call me, too. Isn't that right, Mamá?

CELIA

If the chancleta fits ...

A beat.

LOURDES

Where's Ivanito?

CELIA

On the beach collecting shells.

Lourdes exits and heads to the beach, calling for her nephew.

LOURDES

Ivanito! Ivanito, I have something to tell you!

PILAR

Okay, Abuela. Now strike a pose for me and don't move a muscle!

Celia stands and strikes her best flamenco dancer pose.

CELIA

Así?

PILAR

Ha! Perfecto!

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 9

SHIFT TO: Pre-dawn. Lourdes tip-toes across Celia's house with a flashlight and a small duffel bag. A sleepy Ivanito follows her.

IVANITO

Where are we going, Tía?

LOURDES

Shhhh! To Disney World.

Lourdes hands him the duffel bag.

IVANITO

What about Abuela?

LOURDES

(Whispers)

Tranquilo, tranquilo. Let's not wake her.

IVANITO

But I want to say good-bye.

LOURDES

I promise you we'll call her from the Magic Kingdom.

Ivanito looks back at the darkened house as Lourdes leads him away.

It's pitch black. SOUND of a car as it screeches away. A moment later, Celia enters in a robe and looks around. Something is wrong. She frantically rouses Pilar, who's in her pajamas.

CELIA

Wake up! Wake up! They're gone!

PILAR

What's wrong?

CELIA

Lourdes took off with Ivanito! She stole my car!

PILAR

Mom kidnapped Ivanito?!

CELIA

I know exactly where they went.

The news sinks in.

PILAR

What the fuck?!

Celia picks up the phone and calls a neighbor.

CELIA

Oye, Gladys? I'm sending over my granddaughter to borrow your car. It's an emergency.

Celia gestures to Pilar where to go get the car. Pilar dashes out.

CELIA

Lourdes kidnapped Ivanito! She's taking him to the Peruvian embassy ... Por supuesto, I'll let you know.

Celia hangs up, terribly distraught.

CELIA

(To herself)

Families used to stay in one village, they buried their dead side by side ...

LIGHTS FADE. Growing SOUNDS of honking, a massive gridlock.



## SCENE 10

SHIFT TO: Grounds of the Peruvian embassy. SOUNDS of crowd, pandemonium, urgent announcements in Spanish. SPOTLIGHT on Ivanito and Lourdes.

IVANITO

There are so many people here!

LOURDES

They're all trying to leave Cuba, like you.

IVANITO

But I'm not sure I—

LOURDES

Try not to think about it, mi cielo. Here's two hundred dollars and a statement I wrote for you in English. You'll need it to get out of the country—so the officials know you have family waiting for you in the U.S. Did you memorize my phone number?

IVANITO

Sí, Tía. 212-63CAKES.

LOURDES

That's my bakery. You can eat all the pastelitos you want, Ivanito!

IVANITO

Will Pilar be there?

LOURDES

Claro, mi niño! Let me hear you say the rest.

IVANITO

(Strong Cuban accent)

My name is Ivan Villaverde. I am a political refugee from Cuba.

LOURDES

Excelente! And whatever you do, don't speak Russian! They'll think you're a spy.

IVANITO

But I'm only eleven.

LOURDES

Enemies come in all sizes, Ivanito. Now don't move from here until they call you for the bus to the airport.

IVANITO

Can you wait with me, Tía?

LOURDES

No, mi niño. You need to stay here without me.

IVANITO

(Anxious)

But why?

LOURDES

Pilar and I have to catch our plane very soon.

IVANITO

Why can't I go with you? On your plane?

Lourdes takes Ivanito's hands reassuringly.

LOURDES

That's not how it works, corazón. You need to trust me, okay?

A beat.

IVANITO

But what about abuela?

LOURDES

Abuela will be fine. Te lo prometo. We'll see each other again very soon! Adios, corazón.

Lourdes hugs Ivanito then rushes off.

A disoriented Pilar enters, desperately searching for her cousin. SOUNDS of crowd, shouting, chaos.

She spots Ivanito.

PILAR

IVANITO! IVANITO!! I thought we'd lost you!

She hugs him hard.

IVANITO

Tía Lourdes says I can come live with you in New York.

PILAR

You don't know what you're saying!

IVANITO

I have to leave!

Pilar looks around, making certain their grandmother can't see them.

PILAR

I'd love for you to come and be with us, but—

IVANITO

Mami's gone. There's nothing for me here, Pilar.

PILAR

But Abuela—she asked me to find you, to bring you home. She's waiting by the car so they don't steal it.

IVANITO

I want to go.

Pilar is torn.

LOUDSPEAKER

POR FAVOR, HAGAN COLA PARA EL AUTOBUS AL AEROPUERTO. SOLO UNA LINEA!

SOUNDS of crowd fighting and pushing.

LOUDSPEAKER

CALMA, GENTE, CALMA!!

IVANITO

Por favor, Pilar, this is my only chance! When I was a baby, Mami wanted us to go to New York. We could've grown up together!

A long beat.

PILAR

Is that what *you* really want?

Yes!

IVANITO

Pilar is nervous but relents.

PILAR

I get it.

IVANITO

You do?

PILAR

Yeah, I really do.

They embrace hard. Pilar watches him go.

PILAR

(Calling out)

Ten cuidado. I'll see you in New York!

Ivanito waves and exits.

A moment later, Celia enters.

CELIA

Pilar! Where is he?

PILAR

(Uneasy)

I ... I couldn't find him.

CELIA

What do you mean you couldn't find him? Did you look everywhere?

PILAR

I think he may have left already.

CELIA

But how is that possible?!

PILAR

Uh, somebody told me the first group of defectors left for the airport.

CELIA

Defectors? But Ivanito didn't defect, he was kidnapped!

PILAR

I know, Abuela ... But he must've been with them. He's ... not here.

CELIA

Are you sure?

A moment. Somehow, she knows.

CELIA

Are you absolutely sure?

PILAR

Sí, Abuela.

Celia is stricken by this betrayal. It's more than she can absorb. SOUND of departing bus.

CELIA

It's time for you to go back home, Pilar. You have a plane to catch.

PILAR

But Abuela—

Celia pulls a letter from her housedress pocket. She gives it to Pilar.

CELIA

Go. Vete ya.

Celia turns and walks away. Pilar stands there in shock.

## SCENE 11

SOUND of plane taking off, which slowly morphs into the whine of an espresso machine.

SHIFT TO: Yankee Doodle Bakery, over a week later.  
Pilar and Lourdes sit at a table, drinking cafecitos.

LOURDES

Ño, there's so much work to do but I don't feel like doing anything.

PILAR

I'm worried about Ivanito. I can't think about anything else. I haven't slept in days!

LOURDES

Cálmate, mija. Let's relax a moment.

PILAR

Yeah, like these triple espressos will help.

LOURDES

Más azúcar.

Pilar passes her the sugar. Lourdes absently pours a steady stream into her cafecito.

PILAR

And I can't believe I lied to Abuela Celia like that.

LOURDES

(Sighs)

My mother will die with El Líder's name on her lips.

PILAR

This is personal, Mom. Can't you understand that?

(Pauses)

I just hope we did the right thing.

LOURDES

Of course we did the right thing.

PILAR

What if we're RUINING Ivanito's life?

LOURDES

Ivanito will have a beautiful future here.

PILAR

Who knows if he'll even get here? It's been over a week. And still no word.

LOURDES

These things take time but the embassy reassured me—

PILAR

What?! When did you speak to the embassy?

LOURDES

This morning.

PILAR

Why the hell didn't you tell me?

LOURDES

I'm telling you now. They said they've finished processing his asylum papers and they'll be putting him on a plane very soon.

PILAR

*Very soon?* Is that soon today? Soon tomorrow? I can't stand the waiting anymore!

LOURDES

Paciencia, mija.

PILAR

You're being very cavalier about this! I mean, Ivanito just lost his mother AND his country in one fell swoop!

LOURDES

You sound like your grandmother.

PILAR

Watching the two of you fight reminded me a lot of *us*.

LOURDES

Ay, por favor.

PILAR

In fact, you two are *way* more alike than different.

This snaps Lourdes to attention.

LOURDES

What are you talking about? We're nothing alike!

Max enters, carrying his bass. He's nervous, beaming, exchanges a furtive glance with Pilar.

LOURDES

You're late. And I told you not to bring that hippie guitarra to work.

MAX

I have an announcement to make.

LOURDES

No time for grandstanding, Mister Maximiliano from Texas. Unload those pastry carts!

MAX

I'm quitting ... I mean, resigning. Eh, respectfully.

LOURDES

Qué cosa?

PILAR

You heard him, Mom.

LOURDES

But why? I've always treated you like family!

MAX

Actually, that's the point. It's a conflict of interest.

(Blurts out)

Your daughter and I are dating and I don't want work to get in the way ... to get in the way of ... of ...

LOURDES

LOVE? Ay por tu madre, say it already!

Everyone's pretty uncomfortable.

MAX

(Tentatively, to Pilar)

So, where's your cousin?

PILAR

Who the hell knows where he is?!

LOURDES

He'll be here by Friday. Saturday, at the latest. My intuition never fails me.

PILAR

Your intuition is delusional.

LOURDES

Ay, por dios.

Max looks back and forth between the two, sympathizing with Pilar.



MAX

I'm really sorry.

PILAR

That makes two of us.

MAX

How can I help?

LOURDES

You could begin by reorganizing the Danish.

PILAR

He wasn't talking to you!

MAX

Uh, I hate to go ... but I'm starting a new job today.

LOURDES

I hope you're not working for the competition!

(Muttering)

Not that Yankee Doodle Bakery has any real competitors in Brooklyn.

MAX

Actually, my band got a regular gig. At a club in Park Slope.

LOURDES

Qué de gig? Gigs don't pay the rent.

MAX

(To Pilar)

Call you later?

Pilar nods. Max blows her a kiss behind Lourdes's back then exits.

PILAR

I have something I need to say here.

LOURDES

Don't tell me you're pregnant!

PILAR

Jesus, Mom! ... What I want to say is that /for me—

LOURDES

Not that I entirely disapprove of Max.

PILAR

Let me finish!

LOURDES

Okay, okay.

PILAR

What I want to say is that for me it's no longer a question of here OR there.

LOURDES

Qué dices?

PILAR

About Cuba. I know now that I belong in New York. Not *instead* of Cuba but *more* than Cuba.

LOURDES

Guau.

PILAR

But it still doesn't mean we did the right thing.

(Double take)

Wait. Did you actually say you liked Max?

LOURDES

I said I didn't *entirely disapprove* of him. It's not the same thing.

A beat.

PILAR

So, do you really think Ivanito will make it to Brooklyn?

LOURDES

(Dead serious)

He has to.

## SCENE 12

SHIFT TO: Beach at Santa Teresa del Mar. Celia is barefoot, staring out to sea. SOUND of ocean, seagulls.

CELIA

Who could have predicted my life? What unknown covenants led me to this beach, and this hour, and this solitude? The sea has always been a great comfort to me, but it made my children restless. It exists now so we can call and wave from opposite shores.

CUE MUSIC: haunting flamenco guitars.

Celia beholds the world around her. It's almost too beautiful to abandon. Slowly, she walks into the surf, removes her drop pearl earrings, surrenders them to the sea. They become points of light, drifting like fireflies.

CELIA

I used to wonder, which was worse: separation, or death? But one doesn't exist without the other. Death may be the ultimate separation, yes. But to be forced apart, exiled, torn from those we love?

As the music softens, Celia yields to the sea. She's all alone, her gaze calm and clear.

CELIA

That is worse, much worse ...

The water rises, submerges her throat and nose, her open eyes. Her hair floats loosely in the tide. Celia is resolute as she disappears into the sea.

Pilar steps forward, also alone. She unfolds the letter her grandmother gave her, holds it up, then reads it aloud.

PILAR

*January 11, 1959. My dearest Gustavo. The Revolution is eleven days old. My granddaughter, Pilar Puente del Pino, was born today. It is also my birthday. I am fifty years old. I will no longer write to you, mi amor. She will remember everything. My love always, Celia.*

SOUND of heavy traffic, honking, city noise. Ivanito enters, disheveled and carrying his travel bag.

IVANITO

My name is Ivan Villaverde. I am a political refugee from Cuba.

BLACKOUT.

**END OF PLAY**