

Nuestro Paso

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN - SLAVE SHIP - 1700S

We push in on a sturdy, large ship in the midst of turbulent waters. The ocean sprays the deck with sea water as the captain chaotically instructs his crew mates to configure the sails.

Enslaved Africans in bondage line up the deck. A dark-skinned woman in the middle of the line protectively holds on to a distressed infant boy.

Dark clouds start to roll in, the shade consuming the ship's deck.

A sudden RUMBLE in the distance.

A storm brews on the horizon.

A slave at the front of the line collapses.

CAPTAIN

What's this?

The captain takes a closer look.

He smacks the slave's face, no sign of life in his eyes whatsoever.

He strongly pokes him. No response.

The captain takes off the slave's tattered trousers. Slight disappointment reads across his face.

A crewmate walks up and kneels down next to him.

CREWMATE

What do we have here?

CAPTAIN

Look at his testicles...
malnourishment.

CREWMATE

What do we do with him?

CAPTAIN

Throw him overboard. The plantation
wouldn't want this.

The crewmate unshackles him and hoists him up on his shoulder. He makes his way to the edge of the ship.

The captain notices him and signals for another crewmate to help him.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Help him out, would you?

They lift the body together and throw it overboard.

The infant, having witnessed all of this, starts crying hysterically.

The captain walks up to the infant and slaps him. The mother instinctively sinks her teeth into the captain's hand and bites down HARD.

Her teeth sinks into his flesh and streams of blood run down his hand, some of it dripping down her face.

He punches her with his free hand and he recoils in pain.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
(to crewmates)
Get rid of her, NOW!

They unshackle her and carry her off, the boy shouting after her.

They throw her overboard and she crashes into the water, immediately getting swept over by a wave

EXT. UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS

She sinks deeper into the ocean as the captain's blood on her face expands. Her hair spreads out as she sinks lower and lower into darkness.

EXT. SLAVE SHIP DECK

The captain cleans himself up with a handkerchief.

CAPTAIN
Send him downstairs.

Crewmates unshackle the boy and grab onto him, bringing him to

INT. SLAVE SHIP LOWER DECK

The lower deck is tightly cramped with slaves. Some of them weep while others either sing in unison or mutter to themselves.

The horrified boy is tossed on the floor, positioned next to another slave.

One crewmate prepares to shackle him, while the other stops:

CREWMATE

Leave him be, he's learned his lesson.

They head off.

An older slave stares deeply into the boy's eyes. He cowers away and fidgets with his Yoruban bead necklace.

OLDER SLAVE

(in Yoruba)

The necklace you hold is a testament to the strength of your people.

The little boy simply pouts at him.

OLDER SLAVE (CONT'D)

You don't understand it now, but there is greatness in your lineage. In all of ours.

He looks around at the rest of the slaves.

OLDER SLAVE (CONT'D)

The deities never abandon us, child. Even when the rest of the world might.

The child sits down and simply looks down at the necklace. He analyzes its detail, its texture.

We push in as he continues grazing his fingers over the necklace.

CUT TO:

INT. PEREZ HOUSEHOLD - RUN-DOWN BATHROOM - HAVANA, CUBA

The same necklace remains in view, except its being cradled by the hands of a lightskin girl.

We pull out to reveal 13-year old ISABEL PEREZ playing with the necklace in a make-shift bathtub.

SUPER: NOVEMBER, 2017

The bathtub, lacking a clear water supply, does not have an awful lot of space in it, but Isabel washes herself sufficiently.

She hums to herself gently while scrubbing her arms.

She gets up out of the bathtub as more of the cramped, run-down bathroom becomes visible.

She grabs a towel off the rack and begins drying herself off.

BLACKOUT. The lights shut off, Isabel's face illuminated from the moonlight glistening through the cracked window.

Water slushes around in the bathtub, prompting Isabel to look over, a distressed look on her face.

A dark-skinned woman with ruffled hair ominously emerges out of the bathtub, her height exceeding the depth of the bathtub itself.

Isabel stares at the woman, consumed by the shadows of the darkness. We can see that it's the slave that was thrown overboard hundreds of years ago.

INT. PEREZ BEDROOM - SECONDS LATER

JUAN and BENITA Perez, both half-dressed, awake from their slumber.

We can just barely make out their features through the moonlight.

Benita is the darker-skinned of the two, both have a very intense attachment to each other, also marked by pangs of anger and passion.

JUAN

When was the last time we made love
like that?

BENITA

I'm not sure.

Benita lights a candle.

A piercing scream comes from the bathroom. They look at each other, alarmed.

INT. RUN-DOWN BATHROOM

Isabel, horrified by the figure in the darkness, backs up against the door. Benita barges in with the candle in her hand, illuminating the room.

Juan follows behind her.

BENITA
What's wrong, *mija*?

Isabel clutches on to her parents.

ISABEL
Mami, there's a strange woman in
the water.

She shines the candle at the bathtub, nothing there.

Juan makes it, with his flashlight on. We can barely make out the woman in the corner of the room, standing behind the family.

JUAN
What's wrong, Izzie?

ISABEL
Fuck, I-

JUAN
Watch your mouth, *mija*!

ISABEL
There was a woman.. in the tub. She
was right there.

He exasperates.

JUAN
Nonsense, it's just us here.

Juan takes the candle from Benita and waves it around the room, nothing to be seen.

JUAN (CONT'D)
See? You're just imagining things!

ISABEL
I'm telling you, she's always here.
In the darkness.

JUAN
Make friends with her!

Isabel smacks her teeth

ISABEL
Maybe she just doesn't like you!

JUAN
What the fuck do I care if she
doesn't like me, you listen to your
father.

ISABEL
You're supposed to protect me from
her

Juan winds up his hand to hit her, but hesitates.

He looks at the corner of the room where the supposed
apparition was.

JUAN
Protect you from...

He looks around.

ISABEL
Fuck you!

JUAN
Que pinga fuck you! You do not talk
to me like that, I am your-

He stops talking...

He feels a shiver.

ISABEL
You were saying?

JUAN
Go to your room!

The lights come back on. Isabel lets out a sigh of relief.

Benita takes Juan aside.

BENITA
This keeps happening.

JUAN
She's just been filling her head
with ideas. She'll grow out of it.

BENITA
No, this is different.

JUAN

How so?

BENITA

You felt a shiver.

JUAN

Que shiver que, don't give in to her ideas.

BENITA

All I'm saying is: it's been going on for a while. Maybe we take her to see a psychiatrist.

Juan looks at her with solemn eyes.

JUAN

Mujer, she doesn't need to see anyone. Could it just be her period coming in?

Isabel shoots him a look.

BENITA

Possibly, but we can't rule out her mental health. These past few weeks have been a lot.

They look towards her.

CUT TO:

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE

A female psychiatrist with her hair in a bun sits across from Isabel, who sits in a chair fiddling with her thumbs.

The psychiatrist takes out a notepad and clicks her pen, intent on picking Isabel's brain.

PSYCHIATRIST

Do you know why you're here, Isabel?

ISABEL

There's a woman who's following me and my parents don't believe me.

The psychiatrist embraces the answer and goes along with it.

PSYCHIATRIST

Do you know her?

ISABEL

I don't know. She's weird. She seems like she wants something.

PSYCHIATRIST

Does she say things to you?

ISABEL

No, she just stares at me. Sometimes she starts walking towards me, but she never reaches me.

PSYCHIATRIST

Is there ever a specific time you see her or does she come randomly?

ISABEL

Usually when I take a bath.

PSYCHIATRIST

Interesting.

ISABEL

Yeah I just-

A pause.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

I don't take showers. The water's too rough like that. Reminds me of when I almost drowned, *coño*.

PSYCHIATRIST

When?

ISABEL

When I was about 8 years old.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. HAVANA BEACH - MORNING

Juan and Benita share a beer on the sand as an 8-year-old Isabel plays in the water with another girl.

Terror strikes as the wind shifts suddenly and the ocean becomes violent.

ISABEL (V.O.)

Me and another kid my age got caught in a rip current.

Isabel and a young boy get swept into the water.

She struggles and panics.

We see her wave desperately around in the water as the other child gets pushed further in.

After a while, Isabel pops back up over the water as Benita recovers her.

END FLASHBACK.

PSYCHIATRIST

Wow. I'm sorry you had to go through that.

ISABEL

Thank you... It's easy for me to forget about it. I just don't go to the beach anymore.

The psychiatrist jots down some notes.

PSYCHIATRIST

If I may ask? How do you sleep at night?

ISABEL

Good, for the most part.

PSYCHIATRIST

Do you have any dreams, nightmares, night terrors, etc?

The hair on Isabel's neck stands up.

ISABEL

To tell you the truth, I have a recurring image when I go to sleep. I see this woman in a hut with her child. She's with other people.. like her. Then.. I have this nightmare about them getting dragged out by other dark-skinned people.

PSYCHIATRIST

Dark-skinned?

ISABEL

Yes. They're darker than I am.

PSYCHIATRIST

This happen often?

ISABEL

I guess when I'm stressed, yeah.

The clock on the wall strikes.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

I get nightmares about drowning
sometimes, but *ya tu sabe*.

Later, Isabel is given some paper to sketch on.

She sketches a fairly detailed and frightening scene: tall shadows kidnap a distressed child as a woman fights to save him.

The psychiatrist then brings Isabel's parents in and shows them the drawings.

PSYCHIATRIST

Bueno, pues is there a strong
delusion on her part that someone
would be sneaking into your house
at night?

JUAN

Of course it is. Kids like to be
delusional. She's taking it too far
and needs to grow up like the rest
of her peers.

PSYCHIATRIST

I understand. How's her diet at
home?

JUAN

Tenemos pan, carne, y agua. What
else would she need?

PSYCHIATRIST

That's fine. I just want to make
sure she's not suffering from any
sort of malnutrition.

Juan scoffs.

BENITA

If I may interject: there is a
history of mental illness on my
side of the family.

PSYCHIATRIST

Do tell.

Juan doesn't wanna hear it.

BENITA

I had an uncle with schizophrenia.

PSYCHIATRIST

How serious was it?

BENITA

It wasn't too bad until he was older. He was going in and out of psychiatric wards... He's deceased now. Could Isabel have it?

PSYCHIATRIST

I wouldn't jump to that conclusion. It's possible that the trauma of almost drowning as a child is manifesting itself in these nightmares, convincing her that someone, or something, is after her.

BENITA

Anything we can do to fix it?

PSYCHIATRIST

I don't think she has any neurological issue. She should be fine if you just reduce the obvious triggers and keep a close eye.

Juan and Benita look over to each other and, through a glance, come to an understanding.

CUT TO:

INT. HAVANA SECONDARY SCHOOL - DAYS LATER

Isabel stands at the board, holding up her necklace to display to the other students.

All of them are in their mandated school uniforms, white shirts with blue scarves, the boys in maroon pants and girls in suspender skirts.

Isabel proudly speaks.

ISABEL

Santeria runs deep in my family.

We see imaginary flashes of Yoruban entities in the room, this time more exciting and child-like.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

This is a Yoruban necklace passed down as a heirloom from my mother. Her mother also had it. She says it belonged to a distant ancestor of mine that was enslaved.

FLASH: The slave ship.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

Santeria originated from the religion of Yoruba. They believed in the *Orishas*, spirits that protected and guided people on Earth. Because many slaves from West Africa were brought here, this set of beliefs became popular in Cuba. Hence, Santeria.

TEACHER

Muy interesante.

Isabel holds up a polaroid of a buff Afro-Cuban.

ISABEL

This is my dad's friend, Alexander. I believe he strongly embodies the spirit of Ogun, a very strong, protective spirit.

CUT TO:

INT. TEXTBOOK FABRICATION FACTORY

Juan sits at a desk, polishing the logo he was working on before. He colors it in, adding more intricate details in his workspace.

Alexander, from the polaroid, swings the door open holding a box of *arroz con habichuelas*.

ALEXANDER

Como va todo, jefe!?

JUAN

You know how it is.

Alexander sits down and digs in.

JUAN (CONT'D)

Let me get some of that.

ALEXANDER
Hungry already?

JUAN
Fuck yeah, I am.

He shares with him.

ALEXANDER
Bring your own lunch next time.

JUAN
Been dealing with shit.

ALEXANDER
What's up?

JUAN
It's Isabel... she's sick.

ALEXANDER
Isn't Benita a nurse?

JUAN
Not like that.

A pause.

JUAN (CONT'D)
We took her to see a psychiatrist.

ALEXANDER
The doctors here are complete
hacks.

JUAN
You don't say.

ALEXANDER
Get this. Got a friend up in the
states. Had trouble sleeping. Lots
of wicked nightmares. Doctors gave
him some medication.

JUAN
I don't want to put Isabel on
medication.

ALEXANDER
Listen, he went to another program
for a second opinion. They got him
on some therapeutic program, no
medication. The therapy went deep
into his issues and-

JUAN

And?

ALEXANDER

He started sleeping like a baby. I was trying to remember the name. Something about cognition.

Juan starts eating some of the food.

JUAN

Well, I can definitely tell you Isabel doesn't have a "cognition" problem. She's very smart.

ALEXANDER

Well that's the thing, brother. You think that girl will get rewarded for being smart in a country like this?

JUAN

I don't know, she'll make something out of herself if she stops being a *come mierda*.

ALEXANDER

You're not listening.

JUAN

What are you getting at?

ALEXANDER

Look around, my man. We make more than the doctors do. The cab drivers make buckets more. There's some *come mierdas* that are getting the same rewards we get. And for what?

JUAN

Alexander, things should get better.

ALEXANDER

No, that's what they want you to think! With this new election, we don't know how things will go down.

Juan stops engaging in the discussion and finishes eating his food.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

I'm working on a boat to get out of here. You and your family are welcome to come along.

JUAN

Where?

ALEXANDER

To Miami.

JUAN

Do you know how far it is?

ALEXANDER

The boat's gonna have space, we have plenty of food and rations to bring along. Regardless, I know my way around the sea. I used to be a fisherman, you know.

JUAN

I know, I know. I just... Isabel's got school here. It wouldn't be the idea. She's fucking scared of the ocean.

A pause.

JUAN (CONT'D)

I don't know, I don't know. Just thinking about even running it with Benita is stressing me out.

ALEXANDER

Think about it, my friend. I'll even wait another week if you need more time.

CUT TO:

EXT. HAVANA STREET - END OF THE SCHOOL DAY

Isabel walks down the vegetated sidewalk closely holding her backpack. Another student her age starts walking alongside her.

He loosens his scarf, exhaling a sigh of relief.

RAUL

I can't wait to go home and take this off.

ISABEL

Oh Raul, I didn't see you there! I was a little nervous during my presentation. How did I do?

RAUL

I think you did great! I didn't know all that about Santeria! You're very smart.

She blushes.

ISABEL

Thank you, that's very nice of you! My mom used to talk about it all the time when I was younger.

RAUL

Cool! My mom just liked to talk about movies our cousins send back from America.

ISABEL

Which one's your favorite? I like Jaws!

RAUL

Die Hard. Bruce Willis is great. Things are definitely interesting over there.

They arrive at an intersection where a small group of protestors holding up anti-Castro, anti-government signs march down the street.

PROTESTORS

*Patria y vida! Patria y vida!
Patria y vida! Patria y vida!*

A police vehicle shows up just in time for officers to get out and disperse the crowd. Isabel and Raul watch in intrigue.

One officer pushes a protestor to the ground.

OFFICER

Cut that shit out, if you know what's best for you!

One of the protestors spits on the officer. He looks back at the other officer, wipes the spit off his face, pulls out a baton, and beats the protestor senseless.

A riot ensues amongst the crowd as other officers pull up and disperse the crowd.

Another police officer shoos off Isabel and Raul. Isabel and Raul run off, scared.

They reach a further point of the street and Raul puts his hand on Isabel's shoulder.

RAUL
Are you alright?

ISABEL
Yeah, I should be fine.

She looks around as the sky turns dark. She gets overwhelmed as we see vivid flashes of Isabel drowning at the beach.

She starts hyperventilating. A sharp ring pierces the surroundings as Isabel's vision gets blurry.

Shadows elongate from the crevices of the cracked sidewalk, forming into a dark figure that stands behind Raul.

Isabel stares at it in horror. Raul tries to shake Isabel out of it. She runs away and into the streets of Havana.

INT. TEXTBOOK FABRICATION FACTORY

Juan is startled.

ALEXANDER
What's wrong?

JUAN
I gotta go check on Isabel, she should be getting back from school.

CUT TO:

INT. PEREZ HOUSEHOLD

Isabel closes the door and starts hyperventilating. Juan walks in.

JUAN
Hey, is everything alright?

ISABEL
I saw people getting arrested! I got scared and-and

JUAN
Hey, hey, it's alright.

He hugs her. Isabel cries in his arms.

ISABEL
What's gonna happen, papi?

JUAN
Nothing, it's just silly protests.

The lights go out. Isabel groans.

JUAN (CONT'D)
Carajo! Come with me, I'm gonna get
some light in here.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Juan grabs a lighter and lights up the nearest candle,
perched on top of some furniture.

A voice faintly exclaims "ISABEL"

ISABEL
What?

Juan turns around.

JUAN
What, Isabel? I'm just lighting the
candles.

We hear an exhale and clearly see it doesn't come from either
Isabel or Juan

ISABEL
Uhh...

JUAN
It'll be alright. I'll just light
the candles down here and go get my
flashlight. Just stay put.

Several tender whispers lap over each other as Isabel begins
getting overwhelmed.

The voices grow louder and louder as she begins to cover her
ears.

Juan walks over to the dining table and lights a candle in
the center of it.

All at once, a wind sweeps through the house and blows out the candles, enveloping Isabel in darkness.

Isabel hears footsteps from upstairs, presumably her father.

She tries to focus on her breathing and the sounds of the footsteps.

FROM ISABEL'S PERSPECTIVE:

Juan's footsteps and Isabel's breathing drown out any other ambient or outside noise.

We see a hand, unclear to make out, press firmly on Isabel's shoulder. She freezes, paralyzed by fear.

The house shakes as obscure shadows emerge from the darkness.

Isabel tries to lift the hand from her shoulder, but she can't move it. The candles spontaneously light up again, but the flames double in size.

The flames illuminate the silhouettes, revealing them to be mutilated slaves. They yell out in anguish.

The flames enlarge again, but this time engulfing the slaves. The noise around Isabel reaches an unsettling threshold.

We hear the footsteps from earlier getting closer as

FROM JUAN'S PERSPECTIVE:

Isabel covers her head and screams at the top of her lungs, nothing in the room except for a small piece of fabric catching on fire by the living room candle.

He quickly extinguishes it with a rapid smack of his hand and shines the flashlight around the room, nothing to be seen.

He rushes over to Isabel and hugs her tight.

JUAN (CONT'D)

Mija, it was just a little fire.
Nothing to be scared of.

The lights slowly flicker back on. Juan cups Isabel's face in his hands.

JUAN (CONT'D)

See, everything's alright now. It's alright.

Benita, wearing nurse's scrubs, walks through the door and sets down her supplies at the sight of Isabel's flushed face.

She kneels to attend to Isabel alongside Juan.

ISABEL
I feel better now.

BENITA
What happened? Sweetie, you look sick.
(To Juan)
Weren't you keeping an eye on the girl?

JUAN
I just came back from work.

BENITA
Right.

INT. ISABEL'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Benita and Juan put a drained Isabel to sleep.

They take a look at each other.

BENITA
Something needs to be done.

JUAN
Obviously, *pero*... what has to be done?

BENITA
I don't know.

Isabel exhales, shuffling in her sleep for a moment.

Benita and Juan lower their voices.

JUAN
What time you get off work tomorrow? They need me at the institute.

BENITA
I'll watch her. I can take the night shift when you come home.

JUAN
Thank you.

He kisses Benita on the forehead.

They get up and leave the room.

ANGLE ON ISABEL SLEEPING: The light minimizes on Isabel's head as the bedroom door closes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HAVANA BEACH - NIGHT (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Isabel stands at the beach in her pajamas, her bare feet intertwined in the sand.

A clave rhythm echoes throughout.

She examines the waves crashing against the shore, the water bestowing a mesmeric effect upon her.

We push in on the waves crashing, something bubbling underneath the surface.

Isabel walks towards the water, her feet reaching the wet zone of the sand.

She reaches her hand out towards the water.

A hand jumps out of the water and clutches onto her.

INT. ISABEL'S BEDROOM

She gasps, awake.

She sighs and goes back to sleep.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS OF LA VIBORA - NOON

The day is a bit sunnier. Kids on the street play soccer with a worn-out ball.

We hear muffled barks from household dogs underscore the scene.

Juan continues walking down the street, accustomed to Cuba's urban landscape.

A large dog darts in between the boys playing soccer, but they don't seem to mind at all.

The dog hangs his tongue out, the sun's rays dehydrating it by the minute.

INT. PEREZ HOUSEHOLD - MOMENTS LATER

Benita, in nurse scrubs, braids Isabel's hair, the graceful touch of a mother's hand calming her.

Juan walks in and kisses his family.

Jaws plays on TV, its low-quality merely underscoring the room.

Juan serves up leftovers of his food at the dinner table.

JUAN

I brought some food. *Aqui*.

SERIES OF SHOTS

1. Benita and Isabel eat at the dinner table as Juan loosens his shirt.

2. Juan and Isabel watch TV as Benita gets ready for work. Benita joins in for a brief moment.

3. They laugh at a funny scene on TV. Benita gets up to put her shoes on.

4. Isabel playfully shouts out the window at some kids her age riding bikes.

BENITA

Okay *mi amor*, I have to go.

She kisses her husband and blows a kiss to Isabel.

ISABEL

Ciao, mami.

Juan leans out the window and watches the scenery alongside Isabel.

CUT TO:

INT. HAVANA HOSPITAL - LOBBY

Benita sits at a reception desk with papers and medical forms. Sunlight shines through from a roof opening.

RALPH, a man in his late 20s, walks in with a crumpled up piece of paper.

RALPH

Excuse me, miss. Do you guys have this medication here?

He hands her the paper.

BENITA
Glucose? Yes, it's 30 *chavitos*.

RALPH
Why so much?

BENITA
Storage guy has to get paid too.

RALPH
Alright.

INT. HAVANA HOSPITAL - STORAGE ROOM

Benita walks with Ralph into a dingy storage room with different bottles and containers of medication.

She glides her hand around one row and takes out a medium-sized vial.

BENITA
Here you go.

She hands it to him.

RALPH
That's it? I kinda needed more.

BENITA
That's all you're getting. You're lucky you were able to get your hands on them.

RALPH
Okay, thank you.

He leaves.

INT. PATIENTS' ROOM - LATER

Benita administers fluids to an old, sickly woman in a hospital bed.

Another nurse assists her.

BENITA
Hey, I'm going to take my break right now.

INT. BREAK ROOM

Benita, having ate a half of a sandwich, makes a call on the work phone.

INT. UNITED STATES RESIDENCE

IVAN, 30s with a slicked back hair, makes out with a young, undressed blonde woman on the couch.

He smokes a cigar and wears a floral shirt.

The phone rings and they stop.

IVAN

One second, *mi amor*

IVAN (CONT'D)

Hello?

INT. BREAK ROOM

BENITA

Ivan, it's Benita

IVAN (V.O.)

Hey, *dimelo hermana!*

BENITA

It's been a little wild these past couple of days.

IVAN (V.O.)

Just been focused on business

BENITA

That's good, I'm glad to hear!

IVAN (V.O.)

How's everything with you? How's Juan and my niece?

BENITA

That's what I wanted to talk to you about

IVAN (V.O.)

Yeah?

BENITA

She's been having episodes. Took her to a psychologist, but that didn't really help.

IVAN (V.O.)

I see.. well, now would be a good time to see if you could come up here.

BENITA

You think so? Isabel's still in school.

IVAN (V.O.)

Think it over, I have contacts in Mexico that can get you past the border if you take a boat.

BENITA

I'm listening.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUSY STREET OF HAVANA - EVENING

Juan takes Isabel out on a walk, holding her hand as the evening sky calmly washes over the scenery.

We see old Chevys drive through the streets as pedestrians shamelessly cross the road in between the gaps of the traffic. An elder woman yells from a balcony to a little girl on the street.

Some young boys try to wrestle a stick out of a stubborn dog's mouth.

The night is lively and refreshing as can be seen by Isabel's face, her anxiety visibly gone.

INT. ICE CREAM PARLOR

They sit at a table both eating their preferred flavor. Isabel, like any child, excitedly licks away at her ice cream.

They stop for a moment to talk:

JUAN

You feeling better today, mija?

ISABEL

Yup!

JUAN

You know how I know you're feeling good?

ISABEL

How?

JUAN

When you make fun of things, goofy stuff.

ISABEL

Well, I haven't found anything goofy today.

Almost as if on cue, a group of drunk tourists walk in. A young man, clearly the drunkest one; speaks to his friend in a British accent.

DRUNK TOURIST

(in English)

Hey Colin, you promised me frozen yogurt!

COLIN

(in English)

Is that what I said, mate? Or are you so drunk out of your mind, nothing else registered?

DRUNK TOURIST

Well, I don't see any frozen yogurt.

COLIN

Piss off!

DRUNK TOURIST

Okay, well you're paying!

He playfully shoves his friend Colin, but his drunk state makes him stumble a bit further back than usual. He bumps into Juan.

COLIN

Sorry about that, sir.

Juan doesn't think anything of it as Colin walks back to his friend to get on line for ice cream. Isabel scrunches up her face, holding in a laugh.

JUAN
What is it?

ISABEL
They talk funny!

JUAN
I think they're British. They talk
different from Americans.

ISABEL
Do you understand what they're
saying?

JUAN
Que se yo!

A Cuban man in a stained polo shirt walks into the parlor with a box of cigars. He scans the room and notices the tourists on line. He walks up to them with no hesitation, no shame.

VENDOR
Excuse me, sir.

The drunkest one turns around.

DRUNK TOURIST
What do we have here?

VENDOR
I sell to you... authentic Cuban
cigars. Good quality. The best!

DRUNK TOURIST
How much?

VENDOR
15 dollars for you, my friend

DRUNK TOURIST
Hmm, I don't know.

COLIN
This is what they're known for,
mate! I say we take his offer.
Trying to get them overseas is
bloody difficult.

DRUNK TOURIST
Well, bruv. I'm not exactly sold on
the price... we can get it lower

Isabel lets out a hearty laugh. Juan can't help but to join her. The drunk tourist turns around.

DRUNK TOURIST (CONT'D)
Are you laughing at me?

JUAN
No English.

A police officer walks in and promptly grabs the cigar vendor..

POLICE OFFICER
You know better. Leave these tourists alone and come with me.

VENDOR
Señor, por favor.

He continues to resist, but the officer simply takes him outside.

DRUNK TOURIST
Looks like that copper's about to give him a proper beating for trying to swindle me.

COLIN
You're drunk, Nate. The poor man just needs some money.

Isabel is clearly startled.

ISABEL
(to Juan)
Why are they arresting him, papi?
What did he do?

JUAN
He's not supposed to be selling that. Worse that he's selling it to tourists.

The vendor bursts back into the scene in a scuffle as the officer struggles to restrain him.

The tourists hoot and holler as if this is tailored to their entertainment. Juan has had enough.

JUAN (CONT'D)
Vamonos.

He grabs Isabel's hand and guides her out.

EXT. ICE CREAM PARLOR - CONTINUOUS

Juan and Isabel make their way out, but another officer stops him.

OFFICER 2
Stop right there. I saw you talking
to these tourists, hermano.

JUAN
I have no business in this. I'm
out.

The officer doesn't budge. Meanwhile, the scuffle in the background gets worse. A third officer goes in the parlor to assist.

OFFICER 2
Just need you to stay put.

FROM ISABEL'S PERSPECTIVE:

The sound drowns out until everything is muffled and a piercing noise accents Isabel's harrowing distress.

Isabel sways her head back to see that the man has overpowered the other officer and stolen his handgun.

SLOW MOTION: The vendor runs out, turns around, and aims his handgun at the officer talking to Juan. He's quick to realize what's going on and instinctively carries Isabel to shield her. The vendor pulls the trigger.

BANG!

A clean headshot sprays blood onto Juan's shirt, akin to a splash of paint on a canvas.

END SLOW MOTION.

The slain officer falls down quite bluntly as the vendor just stands there for a second. He drops the gun in shock as he exchanges a meaningful look with Juan, his eyes full of simultaneous rage and relief.

They both run off as one officer tends to the corpse and the other chases the vendor.

INT. PEREZ HOUSEHOLD - MOMENTS LATER

Juan, holding Isabel, barges in and sets her down. He kneels to her, holding her hands together.

She's on the verge of a panic attack. Juan tries to calm her and implores:

JUAN
Listen, hey hey... we cannot tell
your mother about this.

ISABEL
Why would we lie!?

JUAN
I didn't do anything!

Tears well up in Isabel's eyes.

JUAN (CONT'D)
Right? That man brought it on
himself.

ISABEL
Okay, okay.

JUAN
You're okay, right?

ISABEL
I guess.

Juan puts Isabel to sleep.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Juan noticed that he's had his bloody shirt on this whole time and proceeds to crumple up the shirt and head outside.

EXT. PEREZ HOUSEHOLD - SMALL BACKYARD CORRIDOR

Juan looks around the dense, unorganized clutter of items in the corridor. On a railing sits a cat that stares at him. He rummages through junk and clutter and stuffs it in a loosely tied garbage bag.

He looks at a cat.

JUAN
What are you looking at?

INT. PEREZ HOUSEHOLD

Benita comes home, gets settled, and shares a kiss with Juan.

BENITA
How was tonight?

JUAN
Good. She's in bed right now.

She goes over to Isabel's room and cracks the door open a little to take a peek. Isabel is sound asleep.

BENITA
That's nice, mi amor.

Juan and Benita come together in the living room.

BENITA (CONT'D)
I talked to Ivan today.

JUAN
I talked to Alexander today.

They pause

JUAN (CONT'D)
You go first.

INT. ISABEL'S BEDROOM

Benita and Juan continue their discussion in the background as Isabel jolts up in her sleep.

MEMORY FLASH: The police officer slumps to the ground, the blood on Juan's shirt in stark display, the indifferent look on the tourists' faces.

Isabel takes a deep breath.

Deep in meditation, she has flashes to the more pleasant parts of the night: eating ice cream, bonding with her father.

INT. PEREZ HOUSEHOLD - KITCHEN

We see the three of them eat breakfast at the table, well into the start of a seemingly mundane day.

BENITA
Isabel, can you water the plants,
please?

Isabel goes to the sink with a glass of water. She turns on the sink, but no water comes out.

ISABEL

Mami, there's no water.

Benita goes to the sink to check and fiddle with the lever.
Nothing

BENITA

That's never happened before.

We hear a neighbor from outside yell in a characteristically Cuban volume and inflection.

NEIGHBOR (O.S.)

Oye, nos quedemas sin agua, coño.

EXT. HAVANA STREET

We see people congregate out on their street to discuss the issue. Juan walks into the midst of the commotion and spots a police car cruising into the neighborhood.

He heads back inside the house.

INT. PEREZ HOUSEHOLD - CONTINUOUS

Juan nervously walks over to the house phone placed on a small table.

BENITA

What's going on?

JUAN

The water's out. What does it look like?

Benita has a look of confusion on her face. Juan continues to pick up the phone and place a call.

ALEXANDER (V.O.)

Dimelo.

JUAN

The boat. Are you going away anytime soon?

ALEXANDER (V.O.)

Probably within the week, yes. But like I said, my offer's still open to wait a week for you.

JUAN

What if I decided now?

ALEXANDER (V.O.)
That's what I like to hear... what
day works for you?

JUAN
Alex, listen... we gotta get out of
here as soon as possible.

ALEXANDER (V.O.)
That shooting at the ice cream
parlor had anything to do with you?

JUAN
Yeah, but... I didn't do anything.
I was protecting Isabel.

ALEXANDER (V.O.)
Okay listen, we can head out
tomorrow. You guys can come over to
my place.

JUAN
You sure?

ALEXANDER
Yes.

He hangs up just in time for a knock on the door to intrude
on them. Benita starts to walk over to the door.

JUAN
Benita, wait!

BENITA
What is it?

He grips her shoulders, almost as if pleading.

JUAN
You remember what we talked about
last night?

BENITA
Yeah, what about it?

JUAN
Now's our chance. To give Isabel a
shot at getting better. We can fix
this and--

The knock is followed up by aggressive pounding.

POLICE OFFICER

Juan Perez, we have a warrant for your arrest!

BENITA

Juan, what the hell is going on?

JUAN

We have to leave today.

BOOM. The door is being rammed. Juan springs into action and secures the bolt on the door and reinforces it with a chair.

BENITA

Juan, you're scaring me!

JUAN

They think I killed a police officer last night!

Benita throws her hand up to her face in shock.

BENITA

What were you doing last night?

JUAN

I was with Isabel, but we don't have time for this. We need to go!

He starts scrambling around the house for necessities.

BENITA

You're not telling me enough!

Isabel has been standing there, watching the argument this whole time.

ISABEL

He didn't do anything, *mami*. Another man shot the police and *papi* protected me.

BENITA

You didn't care to tell me any of this last night.

BOOM. A more devastating ram buckles the door.

JUAN

We don't have time!

Benita understands.

BENITA

Isabel, get your things! At least a couple blankets or something, I don't know. Be quick!

She looks at Juan.

BENITA (CONT'D)

I hope this is worth it.

BOOM. Another ram BREAKS the bolt off the door, but the chair still gives them a fighting chance. Juan haphazardly closes a suitcase and grabs Benita's hand. They go over to Isabel's room.

INT. ISABEL'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

They stand at the door.

BENITA

Isabel, *mija*. We need to go!

Isabel hesitates.

JUAN

You need to be brave right now. We have no time.

Isabel goes through with it. She carries with her a small blanket and wears a backpack.

INT. PEREZ HOUSEHOLD - CONTINUOUS

They escape through the back as the police SLAM the door open, breaking the chair in the process. They don't immediately notice the family slip through the back.

EXT. PEREZ HOUSEHOLD - SMALL BACKYARD CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The family rush down the corridor and weave out into an alleyway in between other houses and residential apartments. They make their way out of the tight spaces and into

EXT. HAVANA STREET - CONTINUOUS

Juan spots a blue Chevy taxi and hails for it. As it comes to a stop, he looks over his shoulder to check for any law enforcement. It seems that they've lost them.

Juan makes sure Benita and Isabel get in the back. He gets in the passenger seat.

CUT TO:

EXT. MALECON RESIDENCE - LATER

The taxi drops them off at the front of an apartment building overlooking the ocean.

Waves crash up against the seawall, slightly spraying the street as they hop out of the cab. Juan pays the driver and the family walk inside.

INT. MALECON RESIDENCE

The family walk up the stairs in the dim, empty apartment lobby. Juan rings one of the apartment buzzers.

INT. ALEXANDER'S APARTMENT

Alexander opens the door and lets the family in.

ALEXANDER

Buenvenidos!

Alexander briefly gives Juan a handshake, Benita a kiss, and Isabel a quick embrace. He helps them carry their things and settles them in one of the guest rooms.

INT. ALEXANDER'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

Juan and Alexander sit down on the couch.

ALEXANDER

Everything alright?

JUAN

The police came to my house.

INT. ALEXANDER'S GUEST ROOM

Benita runs her fingers through a startled Isabel. She tears up.

ISABEL

Do we really have to leave?

Benita hesitates to answer.

BENITA
It's for the best

ISABEL
I can just tell the police it
wasn't *papi's* fault. They'll

BENITA
Isabel, Isabel, dear... it's not
that simple. Besides, this is a
brand new chance for us. We-

ISABEL
Nothing's wrong with me!

She begins to cry.

BENITA
She won't bother you anymore. The
lady won't bother you-

ISABEL
You're not listening to me!

Benita hangs her head in defeat.

CUT TO:

EXT. MALECON RESIDENCE- THE NEXT MORNING

The family and Alexander pack their things into a pickup
truck. The sun shines bright as the ocean moves more calmly.

INT/EXT. PICKUP TRUCK

Alexander drives the pickup truck on the highway as Isabel
sits on Benita's lap in the passenger seat. Juan sits on the
cargo bed lightly holding on to the group's luggage, still
cautious of the stakes.

EXT. SHORELINE OUTSIDE OF HAVANA - MOMENTS LATER

Alexander drives the pickup truck off the road and into a
spot on shore where we see a boat and another man. The family
hop out of the truck and immediately unload their luggage.

Alexander's associate comes over to greet them. Turns out
it's Ralph from earlier. He shakes Alexander's hand:

RALPH
Glad you could make it. This is
your friend's family?

He shakes Juan's hand and then turns to Benita. They both
share a moment of recognition.

RALPH (CONT'D)
What a coincidence!

JUAN
(to Benita)
You two know each other?

RALPH
Your wife helped me get some
medication at the hospital.

BENITA
Yeah.

RALPH
Alright, so look...

He shows them the boat and shows them the ropes.

Benita takes Isabel aside.

BENITA
You have to be brave for me,
Isabel. Can you do that?

ISABEL
Okay.

Minutes later, the group pushes the boat on to the ocean.
Benita and Isabel are at the front, prioritized to get on
first.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
I'm having second thoughts.

BENITA
Isabel, cono!

As the friction of the sand underneath the boat decreases,
Benita tries to pick up Isabel but she resists.

JUAN
Isabel, listen to your mother!

Isabel retires into her mother's right arm as she vaults her
over and then hops into the boat. Ralph gets on next as Juan
and Alexander continue pushing.

The boat finally slides onto the ocean as Alexander and Juan dip their lower halves in the water. Alexander gives Juan a boost onto the boat and Juan promptly helps him up.

The sun shines bright as they sail out.

Alexander drives the boat with a compass in hand.

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN - ON THE BOAT - MOMENTS LATER

The land is no longer visible on the horizon. It's just the ocean now.

It's quiet, except for the slight rumble of the motor engine.

SUPER: DAY 1, 90 MILES FROM FLORIDA

The sun shines bright as Benita brushes Isabel's hair to soothe her. Ralph holds up some crackers to them.

RALPH
(to Isabel)
Want some? Not good to run on an
empty stomach.

Without saying anything, Isabel takes on and starts eating it.

BENITA
Thank you.

Benita points at the sun.

BENITA (CONT'D)
(to Isabel)
Look at that, *mi amor*. Look how
pretty the sun looks today.

Even the group makes note of its radiance.

ALEXANDER
They still got good sun up there in
Florida. What's everyone's plans
when we get there?

JUAN
Well, you know our reason already.

ALEXANDER
Yes! So let's start with you Ralph!

RALPH

Well... I wanna be an actor. They got a bunch of Spanish shows over there, I think I could give it a shot. They make a show for everything nowadays. And they need Spanish-speaking actors. You know, I could be the next Andy Garcia.

ALEXANDER

If your ass actually learns English, that is.

The group laughs.

RALPH

So how about you, hotshot? You got any bright ideas for the new land?

ALEXANDER

You bet your ass I do... I'm gonna be an entrepreneur. I'll be pumping out new ideas every single day. You know me, I can get around. Get in contact with the right people. Free enterprise, *hermano*. It'll take you places.

RALPH

Interesting.

ALEXANDER

They don't know what they're in for.

DARK clouds roll in, extinguishing the sun's comforting radiance. The setting noticeably dims.

The clouds appear thicker and darker as they get closer to the group with a threatening aura.

We see lightning strike, distant yet ever-present.

We hear rumbling THUNDER.

Isabel screams:

ISABEL

AAAGGGH! *Mami*, I can't take it!

BENITA

It's okay. It's okay. It's just lightning. It's nowhere near us. It's fine.

ISABEL

It's gonna catch up to us! I can see the clouds.

ALEXANDER

Isabel, *mi amor*. *No te preocupes*.

He turns on the engine, driving the boat away from the dark clouds. They glide seamlessly through the water as the ocean amicably embraces their passage.

The distance from the climatic turmoil decreases.

RALPH

Alex, I think we should be good here.

Isabel starts to calm down, her breathing becoming more neutral.

ALEXANDER

Just a little bit more.

The water gets a little choppier as the boat slightly wobbles. Alexander slows it down.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

Okay, we'll stop for now.

The group looks back at the clouds. Mild waves continue to ripple underneath the boat.

ISABEL

I don't think it's over.

JUAN

What are you talking about?

BENITA

JUAN!

It starts raining, its intensity immediately and exponentially increasing as violent waters emit even more intense, large waves.

The clouds now ENSHROUD the sky above them, the rumbling getting closer and closer.

Benita holds on tight to Isabel, but the waves wobble and tilt the boat.

Some ration containers fall off into the ocean. Ralph immediately goes to scoop them back on to the boat, but Alexander pulls him by the shirt.

ALEXANDER

Ralph, hold on.

The boat tilts against Alexander's tug and Ralph crashes onto him. Alexander manages the weight properly.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

You're lucky I'm strong.

He pats him on the shoulder.

A large wave CRASHES against the boat and unlatches Benita's grasp on Isabel.

She rolls past Alexander and Ralph who have just recovered. Alexander tries to quickly grab Isabel by the arm, but narrowly misses.

The boat jolts suddenly and flicks her off...

SPLASH into the ocean.

BENITA

NOOOOOOOOO!

As she laments, another wave almost washes her away, but Juan quickly holds on to her and uses his brute force to withstand the wave.

They're soaked as he confirms his wife is out of harm's way.

EXT. UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS

Isabel sinks into the ocean as she desperately flails her arms around, unable to swim.

As she sinks deeper, mysterious voices harmonize into a Yoruban chant.

The voices' diegetic status is unknown and bewilderingly underscores this aquatic descent.

As she sinks deeper, it becomes impossible to see anything.

DARKNESS.

Even immersed in the water, any indication of Isabel is hopeless...

For just a moment.

Suddenly, the LIGHTNING FLASHES.

Each lightning strike temporarily illuminates the desperation.

FLASH!

Juan dives in with surprising dexterity. He breast strokes further into the ocean with all of his might.

FLASH!

We see Isabel screaming, her hair spreading out in every direction, much like the tragic woman who met her fate the exact same way.

FLASH!

Several hands latch onto her body and pull her further in.

FLASH!

WIDE ANGLE -

The distance between Isabel and Juan worryingly maintains itself as the attempt is made harder by-

More HANDS pulling her down further into the abyss.

Juan descends further and the lightning stops.

Another moment of DARKNESS.

SILENCE.

All we hear is rain softly patting the surface of the ocean.

One last FLASH reveals Juan reaching Isabel, no longer surrounded by the aforementioned hands.

He successfully retrieves his daughter and swims up to the surface.

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN - ON THE BOAT - CONTINUOUS

Juan and Isabel emerge out of the water, gasping for air.

Benita is visibly and immensely relieved as Juan composes himself to give Isabel a boost up on the boat.

Benita pulls Isabel on to the boat and holds her tight, sobbing in relief.

The water unwinds, but its choppiness brings up a wave that smacks Juan in the face as he attempts to mount the boat.

Juan coughs and wipes the saltwater off his face. His exhaustion almost gets the best of him right before Alexander and Ralph swoop in to grab him and pull him into the boat.

Juan lays on his back, coughing out a considerable amount of water and letting out one last gasp in relief.

The malicious clouds retire away into the evening sky.

The ocean still wobbles and trembles, but not as intensely.

Alexander examines this, taking a good look at the water ahead and the sky. As he refers to his compass, he steers the boat with the motor once more.

ALEXANDER

Everyone, hold on!

He gradually throttles the engine as they evade the rougher waters, expertly adjusting his speed as he deems fit.

A larger wave approaches them, but he narrowly avoids it.

Everyone else holds on for dear life. The group's clenched-up tension slowly comes to a halt as the boat now glides over a more uniform body of water.

He settles the boat at a safe point of the water. Everything returns to a relatively more laid back configuration.

Benita bemoans at the narrow loss of her daughter.

BENITA

I'm so sorry, *mija*! I thought I lost you. It's my fault, I wasn't holding on tight en-

ISABEL

Don't beat yourself up, *mami*.

Juan finishes recomposing himself and gathers in a tender embrace with his family.

JUAN

My girls!

Benita clenches her hand on to Juan in response. This is the most thanks she can muster at the moment, but it's meaningful.

Alexander gives the family a moment to huddle in and center themselves. He plants a hand on Ralph's shoulder in the same way a mentor would.

ALEXANDER
How you holding up?

RALPH
A little shaken, but I've been
worse.

He scrambles through what's left of the rations and eats some soggy bread.

RALPH (CONT'D)
Dios, this shit really cut down on
our rations

ALEXANDER
As long as we have the compass,
we're good.

He gestures up to the sky.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)
Bendiciones.

He kisses the compass. Isabel notices a crack of sunlight shining through the distant clouds.

ISABEL
(pointing at the sun)
There's an angel watching over us.

Benita erupts into a bittersweet relief of tears.

BENITA
Your father's the real hero here.

Alexander crouches over to them, closely approaching Isabel. He taps into his child-like charisma to engage with her.

ALEXANDER
Ahh, Bella. An angel, you say?

ISABEL
Yup.

ALEXANDER
What's it like?

ISABEL
I think it's misunderstood.

ALEXANDER
How so?

ISABEL
It protects me from the worst
version of myself.

ALEXANDER
(smiling)
So like a guardian angel?

ISABEL
Yes, exactly.

ALEXANDER
It seems like they gave your father
the strength to rescue you. You
guys are a very special family.

ISABEL
How come you don't have a family,
Alex?

RALPH
He drives away every woman he
meets.

ALEXANDER
Man, shut up!

Another moment of much-needed laughter erupts among the
group.

PUSH IN on Isabel's face. We can tell just by her radiant
smile that she's reached a silver lining in her seemingly
bleak journey.

ALEXANDER (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)
(singing)
Eres una interesa, bruuuuta

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN - ON THE BOAT - SUNSET

The group mostly gets some rest as Alexander sings and Ralph
lightly drums along to it.

The sun glazes the horizon as Alexander continues:

ALEXANDER
(singing)
Mentirosa y arrastra, bruuuuuta

ISABEL
You have a very nice voice, Alex.

He turns around.

ALEXANDER

Thank you. I like singing. The
silence would kill me otherwise

ISABEL

Yeah, I don't like being alone too
often. I start to get nervous.

ALEXANDER

You don't ever try to sing?

ISABEL

Does it help with the monsters?

ALEXANDER

Monsters, huh? Maybe you could sing
them a nice little tune and they'll
go away... Who knows.. maybe
they're not monsters... just
misunderstood.

ISABEL

Yeah.

She yawns.

ALEXANDER

We've had a long day, Isabel. You
should get some rest.

She retires to a cozy position next to her parents and
quickly falls asleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ICE CREAM PARLOR - NIGHT (DREAM SEQUENCE)

Isabel's at the same parlor her dad took her to, but this
time it's dark and deserted. She walks over to the selections
at the counter and leans in her head to see through the
glass.

She pivots her head around and notices that it's all empty.

A group of police officers bring in a resistant cuffed man
with a bag over his head and throw him down on the ground.

The SLAM on the ground catches Isabel's attention. She turns
around and notices the bloody shirt.

It's her father.

PUSH IN on his covered head. His breathing intensifies, contorting the fabric of the bag in and out.

The glass behind Isabel shatters. Isabel whips around to see that the ice cream slots are now filled with firearms.

An overwhelming amount of men in military uniform come from seemingly nowhere and each acquire a rifle from the slots.

Isabel opens her mouth to scream, but nothing comes out.

She tries to take action, but she can't move.

She closes her eyes, hoping for it to all go away.

EXT. HAVANA PAVILION - CONTINUOUS (DREAM SEQUENCE)

She opens her eyes and now see a dozen or so tourists gathered across the pavilion, grimly spectating the whole affair.

The men chain Juan to a post in the center of the pavilion.

They all get in formation as a fully armed firing squad and ready their rifles.

Isabel watches hopelessly as they aim their rifles.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Silence as the gun smoke wistfully blows in the night.

A look at Juan reveals a lack of wounds. He still breathes slowly under the bag.

Isabel looks over to the tourists.

Their eyes leak blood, but strangely enough they all smile.

They erupt into thunderous applause. It grows louder and louder as Isabel approaches Juan.

Isabel takes off the bag and reveals a hideously mutilated head.

EXT. BOAT - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Isabel wakes up in a cold sweat, hyperventilating. However, she stops and settles down after a few seconds.

She looks around to see everyone else sound asleep and her mother with her head leaned against Juan's shoulder. She rummages through the rations and eats some plantain chips.

CUT TO:

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN - ON THE BOAT - THE NEXT MORNING

Isabel wakes up, stretching out her arms and yawning. The sun shines bright as the group gets acclimated to a new day.

SUPER: DAY 2, 60 MILES FROM FLORIDA

Ralph takes out his container of glucose pills and downs two of them with some water. Benita takes note.

BENITA
(teasingly)
Bet they're worth the price now.

He smirks.

RALPH
We'll see.

JUAN
(to Alexander)
Como va todo? Are we on course?

ALEXANDER
We're headed in the right direction.

JUAN
How far out is Florida?

Alexander sighs.

ALEXANDER
Not sure. Could be anywhere between 60 to 75 miles.

JUAN
Ralph, you said we were down on rations?

RALPH
Yeah.

JUAN
I mean, we'll all be able to get fed, right?

RALPH

Yes.. it's just.. we're not really gonna feel satiated. We're going to have to eat less.

BENITA

Isabel gets worse when she doesn't have enough to eat.

RALPH

The girl will have enough to eat.

BENITA

Are you sure?

RALPH

Yes.

BENITA

(pointing to his container)
Your pills.. how much do you have left?

RALPH

Not much. I'm gonna need most of them.

BENITA

They help with fatigue, I was just wondering if we could sh-

JUAN

Benita, one sec. Alex, how longer do you think we'll be out at sea?

ALEXANDER

If the engine doesn't fail us, we shouldn't take more than 2 or 3 days.

BENITA

(to Ralph)
Exactly how many pills do you have left?

RALPH

Wait, why don't we just figure out how much food we can divvy up first?

BENITA

You just said we don't have much left.

RALPH

Well, we don't have much of anything left. I need the rest.

ALEXANDER

Everyone, relax. Look, we make sure Isabel gets her proper serving first. Then Ralph, you can divide your pills with Juan and Benita. I won't ask for much, just give me some protein and whatever bread you have left. At the end of the day, we have some water left and that should be enough.

They settle down.

RALPH

This sure beats your days as a fisherman, huh?

Alexander chuckles.

ALEXANDER

No me diga.

Alexander throttles the engine in full force. We see the boat drive at a decent pace across the water.

He continues driving the boat as rays of sunshine glaze over the group, some saltwater occasionally splashing up.

A couple of hours pass. Alexander throttles the engine at a lower rate. The engine hums in the background.

RALPH

That engine was a pretty good investment.

ALEXANDER

Yup.

A pause.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

When we went fishing on the malecon, some of us would take some condoms, blow them up real big like a balloon and attach them to the line.

Isabel giggles to herself.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

They actually worked like a charm.
They let the line go further along
the water and kept the bait high.
Plus, we saved money too.

RALPH

I never knew that.

ALEXANDER

I remember Juan would come along
sometimes. The balloons would help
the line resist against the bigger
fish like red snappers and uhh...

He snaps his fingers, trying to remember.

JUAN

The *bonitos*.

ALEXANDER

Yeah, that's right. Coño, how they
fought back. But that dollar a
pound price tag was more than worth
it.

BENITA

How much do they weigh?

ALEXANDER

Around twenty, almost up to thirty
pounds.

BENITA

I should've been a fisherman.

They laugh.

THWACK!

The boat jumps for a moment, bumping everyone over.

BENITA (CONT'D)

What was that?

ALEXANDER

I don't know.

He stops driving the boat.

Juan spots a shark's fin navigating past them.

JUAN

It's a shark.

Isabel groans. The shark comes back around and heads for the boat.

RALPH

Alex...

ALEXANDER

I see it.

The shark bumps into the boat again, jolting everyone on board once more.

BENITA

What are you doing? Take us away from it.

ALEXANDER

I can't overwork the engine right now.

BENITA

It might kill us if we stay here.

ALEXANDER

It's not. It's probably just agitated from when we hit it.

The shark grazes the boat this time, but they still tremble.

Isabel tenses up, but attempts to center herself with deep breathing.

BENITA

Just move it, Alex!

ALEXANDER

We move it now, we risk fucking up the engine!

JUAN

He's right. Calm down, because sharks can sense our fear.

BENITA

Ay Juan, por favor. That's a myth!

The shark smacks against the boat again.

BENITA (CONT'D)

It's a big shark. That's the fact, *carajo*.

RALPH

We gotta listen to Alex here.
Nobody likes this situation we're
in, but-

FROM ISABEL'S PERSPECTIVE:

They continue debating the stakes at hand as Isabel looks away and meditates on the sight of the ocean.

The argument drowns out.

She breathes in.

We hear the group's voices raising, but they're muffled.

She breathes out.

THUMP... the shark again.

This intrudes on her focus as she opens her eyes to see something bubbling up to the water's surface.

A man's corpse reveals itself, its head full of hideous cavities. Its filthy blemishes expose themselves as the rest rises up. Its epidermis is littered with greenish-black marks.

THUMP.

Another corpse, of a woman, surfaces. Most of the body is stripped down to the bone.

THUMP.

The corpse of a child surfaces up, one of its hands and both its feet severed.

They reanimate, startling Isabel.

They gasp for air, as if they haven't for a very long time.

They yell out and mutter to themselves.

MAN'S CORPSE

Auxilio!

CHILD'S CORPSE

Take me home!

More corpses rise to the surface and their groaning and audible desperation grow to an intense threshold.

Their voices cry out and overlap each other. More and more corpses surface until Isabel looks around and sees nothing but a huge crowd of corpses, yelling and reaching out for help.

The commotion becomes unbearably loud for Isabel as she covers her ears.

She leans over the edge of the boat and throws up. The vomit trickles down into the ocean.

The shark finally swims away, no more corpses to be seen.

As the group settles down, Benita goes over to comfort Isabel.

BENITA

It's over, *mija*. It's gone.

ISABEL

What if we end up just like them?

BENITA

Like who?

ISABEL

The ones that never made it.

BENITA

We're gonna be fine. We have each other. That's what matters.

Everyone else finishes settling down.

We see the boat from a top-down perspective. We PULL BACK, letting the boat become a small dot on the vast, endless ocean.

A little speck in the middle of the profoundly blue sea. Sheer isolation.

The lonely silence bleeds into an ominous white noise.

CUT TO:

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN - ON THE BOAT - SUNSET

Isabel snacks on some Cuban crackers as Juan and Benita each take a glucose pill for themselves.

Benita briefly washes her face with the ocean water.

They get quietly settled as Alexander softly throttles the boat ahead.

Isabel lays on Benita as she brushes her hair, soothing her.

BENITA

(singing)

*Las días de vacaciones se
aprovechan, cada cual se divierte a
su manera, uno salta, uno corre y
otros juegan, frente al televisor
muchos se quedan, siempre al fin,
hay que descansar, a dormir, tengo
sueño ya.*

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. ISABEL'S BEDROOM - YEARS EARLIER

A younger Isabel sits in her room watching *La Calabacita*, the little girl on the TV sings the same song.

Benita enters her room wearing scrubs and the Yoruban necklace.

BENITA

How was school today?

ISABEL

Fun, I played chess with Raul today!

BENITA

That's nice! You feeling better today?

ISABEL

Yeah, I'm just nervous. What if the monsters come tonight?

BENITA

I'll tell you what.

Benita removes her necklace and gives it to Isabel.

ISABEL

Wear this and you'll always be safe. The spirits will protect you.

She kisses Isabel on the forehead and closes the door.

The song continues playing in the background as it lulls Isabel to sleep.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. BOAT - MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Isabel wakes up in the same position, but no one else is on board. She jolts up to check the rest of the boat.

There's only a container of rations left, no traces of anyone else. The sea around her is muddled with mysterious fog.

She cups her hands around her mouth to call out:

ISABEL
Mamiii! Mamiii! Papiiii! Papiiii!

Nothing.

ISABEL (CONT'D)
Alex? Ralph?

A light pierces through the fog every now and then. The boat floats closer to it.

From the fog emerges a very small, seemingly uninhabited island. A lighthouse stands tall, its beam rotating a full 360 degrees.

We can hear a slight buzzing coming from within the lighthouse.

The boat washes up on the shore.

EXT. ISLAND

Isabel hesitates, but ultimately sets foot on this new land. She walks up a small hill to the entrance of the lighthouse.

INT. LIGHTHOUSE

She pushes the door open and sees a spiraling staircase leading up to the light source.

The wind blows the door shut behind her. She turns around and to her dismay, no door appears. Just the curved wall of the lighthouse.

There's no way out.

She swings around to discover the staircase melting away from the light, turning into mere strings.

An enormous wave of ocean water crashes into the building, spilling over to the top platform of the beam.

The water extinguishes the bright light with mystical ease.

DARKNESS.

We hear something scratch around the walls. A sparked match illuminates the enclosed space.

Isabel looks up and sees a dozen slaves hung on rope. She stands there in absolute shock.

One of the slaves catch on fire, causing a chain reaction that lights up the entire inside of the building.

CLOSE ON Isabel's face reflecting light from the flames. She cries hysterically as she is engulfed by the fire.

CUT TO:

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN - ON THE BOAT - THE NEXT MORNING

Isabel wakes up suddenly, but doesn't let the nightmare startle her this time.

Her rise from slumber is made all the more pleasant from a half of a ham and cheese sandwich that Juan hands her.

Alexander ties his shirt around his head like a bandana and confidently stretches his arms.

SUPER: DAY 3, 30 MILES FROM FLORIDA

Ralph raises his hand to his head, slightly moaning.

BENITA

What's wrong?

RALPH

Just feeling a little lightheaded.

He takes a look at his container of pills.

RALPH (CONT'D)

I don't have much pills left, I'm gonna have to keep the rest to myself.

BENITA

Of course.

Juan pats a hand on Ralph's shoulder.

JUAN

Rest up, Alex and I got it from here on out.

He lays back on the boat.

ISABEL

(to Benita)

Is the American Dream worth it?

Benita is taken aback by the question.

BENITA

Well... we won't know for sure until we get there...

A pause.

BENITA (CONT'D)

What matters most is your health. It'll all be worth it at the end.

ISABEL

What happens once I'm okay?

BENITA

We get a second chance at life.

Alexander starts the engine again and throttles ahead. The boat makes its way across the ocean.

The group calmly ride out for a considerable amount of time.

After traveling a long distance on calm waters, Alexander stops the boat, giving the engine a moment.

The engine emits a concerning sound as the boat settles.

JUAN

Should we be worried about that?

Alexander inspects the engine for a moment.

ALEXANDER

It's starting to get a little worn out, but she's still kicking.

He points at a pouch at the front of the boat.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

Juan, get me that bag over there and help me out here. Probably gonna have to clean this out a bit and just maintain it a little.

Juan gets the pouch and heads to the back to help Alexander with the engine

With Ralph still resting, Isabel and Benita have a moment to themselves.

BENITA

How are you feeling?

ISABEL

I think I'm alright.

BENITA

You've been very brave.

ISABEL

But I'm scared. What am I supposed to do in a new home? What if the kids over there think I'm weird?

BENITA

It shouldn't matter what the other kids think. You're destined to be a great young lady.

ISABEL

You think so?

BENITA

Your *abuelita* would have been proud to see the intelligent, talented girl you're becoming.

ISABEL

What was *abuelita* like before she died?

BENITA

She worked hard, that woman. She had night terrors too.

ISABEL

Did she see stuff?

BENITA

She used to work at a coffee field when she was coming of age.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. SIERRA MAESTRA, CUBA - 1959

Pico Turquino, Cuba's highest point, looms formidably over a mountain range of green fields and highly vegetated plantations.

We push in on a field where Isabel's GRANDMOTHER, a black woman about 20 years old, harvests ripe coffee cherries.

Kneeled down, she calmly and carefully hand picks from the plants.

It gets a little darker outside as a slight breeze blows over the field.

BENITA (V.O.)

She spoke of a strange presence she felt around her when she did her work on the camp.

A large shadow creeps up behind her.

She turns around and sees nothing.

BENITA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

She felt as if something was following her.

EXT. CONCRETE SURFACE - MORNING

She spreads out the coffee cherries on a huge tarp, raking them and turning them over to make sure they are dry.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE CAMP

Alongside others, she helps export coffee beans. She finishes tying up a large sack of coffee beans and loads it into a cart.

BENITA (V.O.)

She kept fulfilling her duties in the camp and made sure she followed her routine.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE CAMP - CHICKEN COOP - NIGHT

She picks up a chicken and breaks its neck, setting it down and picking up another to do the same thing.

As she continues, she looks out into the outskirts of the camp, where a dark figure amidst the trees catches her attention.

BENITA (V.O.)

One night, she spotted something...
or someone outside of the camp.

She starts to walk over to the trees, but a dog at the camp loudly BARKS at her, almost as if warning her.

She looks at the dog and shushes it.

She turns around and no longer sees the figure.

BENITA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Nobody believed her when she told others. They thought her to be dramatic. Once she had me, she never spoke of seeing such things again.

END FLASHBACK.

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN - ON THE BOAT

Ralph bleeds from his nose and stands up. His eyes roll into the back of his head as he foams at the mouth.

Isabel and Benita yell in terror. Ralph walks off the boat and into the water.

Alexander and Juan turn around and rush over to help him up.

EXT. UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS

The blood dissolves into the water as Ralph floats there for a moment. He regains consciousness and starts to recover himself.

A shark creeps its way closer to him.

EXT. BOAT - CONTINUOUS

Alexander extends his hand out as Ralph emerges from the water.

Ralph latches on to Alex's hand. Juan grabs his shoulder and helps lift him up.

The great white shark emerges out of the water and sinks its teeth into Ralph's knee.

Juan kicks the shark in the eye and it lets go.

Ralph yells out in anguish, but they manage to pull him up on the boat.

Juan gives Alexander space to put Ralph on his back.

Alexander lightly slaps Ralph's face.

ALEXANDER

Come on, stay with me.

He wraps his shirt around his leg.

Juan takes his shirt off and gives it to Ralph

JUAN

Here, bite on this.

Ralph bites down on the shirt.

Juan throttles the engine and steers them away from the shark.

Benita clutches onto Isabel, covering her eyes.

Some blood leaks onto the boat, but Alexander continues to apply pressure on the wound.

We hear a distant squawking. Alexander points up to the sky.

ALEXANDER

Look, over there....

The group sees its a flock of birds flying over the ocean.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

We're close to the shore. Juan,
floor it!

Juan throttles the engine at full speed.

The boat speeds up as the flock of birds fly overhead, most fly past while others change their direction at the sight of the group.

The shore of Key West peeks over the horizon.

Isabel stays in the protective clutch of her mother. Benita continues to stroke her daughter's hair. She shares a melancholic glance with Juan.

Juan looks towards the horizon with a profound eagerness.

Alexander continues taking care of Ralph. He eases up a little.

The water underneath them now has a lighter blue to it as they get closer to a beach in the distance.

The horizon is now populated with palm trees, sand, and people at the beach.

BENITA

(to Isabel)

It'll all be over soon. It's okay.
We're gonna be okay.

Isabel cries and fidgets with her necklace.

They all look out to the horizon and notice the prominent walkway of Higgs Beach.

ALEXANDER

Juan, aim for that walkway!

Juan steers the boat, setting up the trajectory towards the walkway, but the engine sputters, shifting them to the right.

JUAN

The engine's faltering, Alex.

A certain side of water before the walkway is littered with wooden pillars. They get dangerously closer to them.

ALEXANDER

Everybody, lean to the left.

They lean.

Juan simultaneously sways to the left and attempts to slow the engine down. It won't budge, letting the boat maintain its higher velocity.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

Despacito, loco!

The engine continues sputtering.

JUAN

The engine's shot.

ALEXANDER

Shit!

The boat hits a pillar and jolts up, tossing off Benita and then Isabel off the boat. It continues crashing into the rest of the pillars which puncture the vessel.

EXT. HIGGS BEACH MEMORIAL PIER

Beachgoers on the walkway witness the commotion, alarmed. They gather on the walkway as they see the family split up by the incident

They are all merely yards away from the walkway.

Alexander grabs on to Ralph as the puncture capsizes the boat. Juan gets up, having just been slammed on the raft from the impact.

Juan jumps into the water and swims towards Isabel.

Isabel stays afloat, taking big strides with her arms to stay alive. She heads towards one of the pillars.

She struggles to swim towards it, gulping some water along the way, but still makes it to the pillar.

She tries to get a good grip on the mossy, dirty pillar, but resorts to embracing it to make sure she doesn't drown.

Juan catches up to her.

JUAN

Isabel, thank god. You alright?

ISABEL

I'm okay. Where's *mami*?

They spot her a few pillars behind gasping for air.

JUAN

Stay put.

Juan quickly swims towards his wife and latches onto her.

JUAN (CONT'D)

Don't let it go.

Juan, holding on to Benita, comes over to Isabel. She latches onto him and they swim out to the walkway.

He uses all his might to bring his family to safety. A man on the walkway bends over and extends his hand out to them.

Juan gives Isabel and Benita one last boost for them to reach the walkway and collapses in exhaustion.

Other people on the walkway assist the man in pulling Isabel and Benita out. As she gets pulled out, she looks back helplessly to see her father sink into the ocean.

A lifeguard sprints on the walkway and gracefully dives into the water to retrieve Juan.

EXT. UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS

The lifeguard descends and grabs on to Juan.

EXT. HIGGS BEACH MEMORIAL PIER - WALKWAY

The beachgoers assist Isabel and Benita down the walkway. The lifeguard uses one of the ladders connected to the walkway to bring Juan up.

He recovers himself and puts his arms around his family. They make their way down the walkway.

Alexander catches up to them in the distance, carefully dragging in Ralph.

EXT. HIGGS BEACH

Alexander and Ralph wash up on the beach. He lays on his back, coughing out water and catching his breath.

Juan runs over to Alexander and kneels down to him.

ALEXANDER

I see you brought some friends with you.

They take a look at the Americans gathered around the commotion, the pending lifeguard closest to them. Benita holds Isabel's hand as the tide touches their feet.

CUT TO:

INT. FLORIDA HOSPITAL - LATER

The four of them sit in a larger hospital room, immediately evident that nobody else faces life-threatening injuries.

Alexander has some stitches above his eyebrow.

Juan presses an ice pack against the back of his head.

Isabel sips on a juice box. Benita rests her head softly on Isabel.

They wait there eagerly for an update

A nurse walks in and talks to them:

NURSE
(in English)
English or Spanish?

BENITA
Spanish, please.

NURSE
I'm sorry to inform you, but your
friend Ralph lost too much blood.
He's gone.

Alexander breaks down in tears. Juan comforts him.

Isabel tunes out as she looks up at the TV in worry.

The TV reads: "**PRES. OBAMA ENDS 'WET FOOT, DRY FOOT' POLICY**"

Alexander weeps as the nurse continues talking to Benita.
Isabel covers her head with her hands.

The nurse guides Benita out of the room for something.

Time passes. The group takes this time to collect themselves
and reorient.

ISABEL
I'm sorry, Alex.

Alexander looks at Isabel.

ALEXANDER
It's alright. He knew the risk.

ISABEL
Did he have a family?

ALEXANDER
He had a couple siblings back home,
but don't you worry about that, *por*
favor.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY

Benita approaches a wired telephone at the lobby. She gestures to the nurse.

BENITA
Thank you!

She starts to dial a number on the telephone, but stops.

BENITA (CONT'D)
Mierda.

She scratches her head, trying to remember the number.

She clicks the switch hook in frustration.

She dials the number again, finishing it this time.

The phone rings for a moment before:

IVAN (V.O.)
Hello?

BENITA
Ivan, it's Benita.

IVAN (V.O.)
Oh hey, are you good? What happened? I tried calling you guys a few days ago.

BENITA
We're here, Ivan. In Florida.

IVAN (V.O.)
Wait, how'd you get up here?

BENITA
On a boat that a friend of ours had ready.

IVAN (V.O.)
Christ, okay... where are you guys right now?

BENITA
At a hospital.

IVAN (V.O.)
Okay, what's the name?

BENITA
One second.

She looks around for any signs. She spots a poster with the name "Homestead Hospital" at the top.

BENITA (CONT'D)
(in English)
Homestead Hospital.

IVAN (V.O.)
Say it again.

BENITA
(in English)
Homestead Hospital

IVAN (V.O.)
I'm not sure where that is, but-

BENITA
There's a number on the poster I
can read out.

IVAN (V.O.)
Yeah, that would help.

BENITA
Okay the number is... 786.

IVAN (V.O.)
Uh-huh.

BENITA
243.

IVAN (V.O.)
Okay.

BENITA
8000.

IVAN (V.O.)
Got it... okay *hermana*, just stay
put. I'm gonna drive over there.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

Benita is seated with the group again. Isabel has her eyes on the TV, which is now playing cartoons.

Alexander scratches slightly around his stitches.

Juan brushes up lovingly against Benita.

Two police officers walk in. Benita turns down the volume on the TV.

BENITA

Spanish?

OFFICER RAMIREZ

Yes, don't worry. My name is Officer Ramirez. This is my partner, Officer DeSanta.

OFFICER DESANTA

Hello.

They shake hands with the adults in the group.

The officers sit down across from them.

OFFICER RAMIREZ

Bueno, you guys made it safely to the United States. I'm glad you're all alright... my partner and I just have some questions about the situation here.

OFFICER DESANTA

We're very sorry about your friend, by the way.

OFFICER RAMIREZ

I can imagine you're all pretty shaken up so we wanted to give you a moment. You guys ready to talk now?

They all look to each other and nod.

OFFICER RAMIREZ (CONT'D)

You guys had some items that were lost during the arrival. Were you intending on bringing any tobacco products?

JUAN

No.

OFFICER RAMIREZ

Any weapons?

JUAN

No.

OFFICER DESANTA

Thank you for answering.

ALEXANDER

Any idea what they're going to do with my friend's body? He's got family that needs to know, too.

OFFICER DESANTA

His body will have to be sent back to Cuba. I'm not sure who will notify and WHEN, because of messy bureaucracy, but I can assure you all of that will get handled.

OFFICER RAMIREZ

What all of you need to understand is that there's a new policy change from the president and we're unsure of what that means for your current immigration status.

BENITA

So what? Does that mean we can get sent back? After everything we've been through?

OFFICER RAMIREZ

I'm not saying that's the case, I'm just saying-

ALEXANDER

It's possible?

They don't say anything for a moment.

Ramirez's walkie goes off.

DISPATCH (V.O.)

Calling any available units. Need backup on standby for an altercation in front of Homestead Hospital.

The officers look at each other, then to the family.

OFFICER RAMIREZ

We're gonna have to take this. Just stay put and we'll have more information of what to expect.

They exit.

Exasperated by the news, they shuffle in place and Benita paces back and forth.

BENITA
Mi amor, how bad was the shootout?

JUAN
Why bring this up now?

BENITA
Because we might get sent back home, Juan!

He holds on to her.

JUAN
Listen, we're not gonna get sent back home. This is all procedure. It's always strict, but we should be in the clear.

ALEXANDER
The police mentioned a new policy, Juan. It's like I said, there were bound to be changes.

JUAN
It can't be that big a deal that they're gonna send us back.

BENITA
Right now, we have to be prepared for anything... but to go back after all the shit we went through, god forbid.

She exchanges a sad look with Juan.

The nurse walks back in:

NURSE
Miss, you have a phone call.

BENITA
I'll take it, thank you.

She walks out.

Juan puts his hand on Isabel's shoulder.

JUAN
How are you doing, *mija*? I know this hasn't been easy.

ISABEL

I'm okay, *papi*. I've been learning to be more brave. To let go of my fears.

JUAN

You've been doing an amazing job.

ISABEL

What if they don't like us here?

JUAN

Isabel, this country was built by immigrants. We're going to fit in. I mean, the cops were speaking Spanish for crying out loud.

ISABEL

I just hope we'll be happy here.

JUAN

We'll take it one step at a time.

ISABEL

I want to apologize.

JUAN

How come?

ISABEL

I was stubborn and rude to you. I know you only wanted to help, but I was going through so much *locura* in my mind. I'm sorry.

JUAN

It's alright, *mija*.

Juan kisses Isabel on the forehead.

ISABEL

I'm gonna go use the bathroom.

JUAN

Alright.

She walks over to the back of the room and enters the bathroom.

Benita comes back in.

BENITA

Where's Isabel?

JUAN

She went to the bathroom right over there. Did Ivan call?

INT. HOSPITAL BATHROOM

Isabel washes her hands at the sink. She cups some water in her hands and washes her face.

After she comes up from washing, she looks into the mirror and sees the dark-skinned woman again.

Transfixed to the mirror, she's no longer scared this time.

The woman seems cleaner and more lively. There's a less menacing look to her now that Isabel isn't tensed up.

In the reflection, the woman grazes her hand around Isabel's necklace. She lightly tugs at it.

Her hands don't show in Isabel's non-mirrored reality and the necklace stays untouched as well.

Regardless, Isabel and the woman share a silent, yet understanding glance. The woman nods.

The hospital's lights go out. Isabel hears the commotion outside and promptly exits the bathroom.

INT. FLORIDA HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Isabel runs out to them, spotting everyone else in the darkness.

ISABEL

Let's leave.

BENITA

What?

ISABEL

My guardian angel. She needs us to leave. It's safe for us.

JUAN

Why not just stay put and wait for the police?

ISABEL

Papi, you have to trust me.

She looks towards Alexander.

ISABEL (CONT'D)

The angel knows, Alex. She knows our destiny.

Alexander lights up and ponders for a moment.

ALEXANDER

I think we should go. Why the hell not?

JUAN

But the police..

BENITA

It sounds crazy, Juan... but we have a chance. My brother's coming any second now.

A pause.

JUAN

Fuck it. Let's go!

They run out of the room and into the

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They speed walk down the hallway as the backup lights fail to fully turn on. They flicker sporadically as the group makes their way through the hospital.

In the middle of the hall, two nurses help an older woman sit on a wheelchair.

Isabel seamlessly navigates in between them. The adults slow down and wait for the nurses to bring the patient in to the adjacent room.

Isabel looks back curiously. The flickering lights briefly highlight the child-like optimism in her eyes.

She spots a stairway exit and points at it.

ISABEL

Come on, this way!

INT. HOSPITAL STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Isabel holds the door open for them.

ISABEL

Come on come on!

They all file through and as she lets the door close, they're enveloped in darkness.

BENITA

Isabel!

ISABEL

I'm here, *mami*. Follow my voice!

Not much can be seen in the darkness, but Alexander guides them down the stairs.

ALEXANDER

Follow my lead.

They hold on to each other as they carefully make it down the stairs. They hear the commotion from downstairs and make it closer to the exit.

Isabel reaches the exit and opens the door. Light pours in.

INT. HOMESTEAD HOSPITAL - FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The stairwell door opens and out comes the group. They quickly walk over to the

INT. HOSPITAL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

There's a commotion among the people in the lobby waiting to be seen. A receptionist tries to settle everyone down.

RECEPTIONIST

(in English)

Everyone, please. The emergency generator should be kicking in soon enough. Just stay put.

They walk through the crowd. Isabel and Benita hold hands. They occasionally graze past some disgruntled visitors.

Ivan emerges from the crowd, spots them, and swiftly approaches them.

IVAN

Hermana.

BENITA

Ivan!

They hug for a moment. He shakes Alexander's hand.

IVAN
I'm Ivan, Benita's brother.

ALEXANDER
Alex, nice to meet you.

He turns to Isabel.

IVAN
Hey!

ISABEL
Hola, tio!

Ivan hugs Juan.

IVAN
Buenvenido, cuñado.

JUAN
Good to see you, Ivan.

IVAN
Alright listen guys, there's some
fight going on outside, but I have
the car parked out there. Let's go!

Ivan guides them out to the front.

Police lights shine through the revolving doors in front of
them.

IVAN (CONT'D)
Go through this door.

Ivan opens another door to the left of them. They exit the
hospital.

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

On the sidewalk across from them, several men are in the heat
of a fight. Two men wrestle each other to the ground.

Ramirez, DeSanta, and other officers proceed to break up the
fight.

This continues in the background as the group finds Ivan's
car double parked by the entrance.

He opens the car and unlocks all the passenger doors, letting
them in.

They drive off with Benita in the passenger seat and Juan, Isabel, and Alexander in the back.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Ivan softly drives the car out of the hospital. As he pulls out, the fight in the background settles down for a bit.

EXT. SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Ramirez puts a man in handcuffs while DeSanta helps another officer hold back an agitated man.

UNRULY MAN

(in English)

Hey, get the fuck off of me, man!
This motherfucker over here laid
his hands on me first.

The other man being held back by DeSanta spits at him, but it lands on Ramirez's face instead.

The crowd roars at the chain of events.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Isabel watches this unfold from the backseat window. As they ride off down the street, Isabel makes eye contact with Ramirez.

Ramirez locks eyes with her for a moment, but quickly dismisses the interaction.

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - LATER

Ivan calmly drives through the highway.

Isabel looks through a tourist brochure she picked up at the hospital. Her eyes light up at the appealing images of theme parks like Disney and Universal.

Ivan glances at Isabel through the rearview mirror.

IVAN

Pues dimelo, sobrina. You like what
you see?

ISABEL

Yeah, Disney looks fun.

IVAN

It most definitely is.

He puts his eyes back on the road.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Alex, I'm sorry about your friend. I'm sorry all of you had to endure that. I'll make sure you guys are taken care of from here on out, alright?

BENITA

Thank you, *hermano*.

JUAN

Thank you again, Ivan. I'm just worried about the police. It sounded like they were considering taking us back.

IVAN

Listen, that's beyond their control. They were probably just waiting to get told what to do. This new policy's just fresh. Nobody's talking about it. You know how many goddamn Cubans come here by the boatload?

A police cruiser casually slips into their lane, settling right behind them. None of them notice at first.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Besides, if anything comes up, I know people. Immigration attorneys. You guys have rights.

The police siren blares out, the indistinguishable red and blue lights flash behind them.

IVAN (CONT'D)

Shit.

He pulls the car over into the highway shoulder and stops.

He sets both his hands on the steering wheel.

IVAN (CONT'D)
(to everyone)
Just don't say anything and remain
calm. I got this.

EXT. HIGHWAY SHOULDER

A deputy sheriff sits in the cruiser, using his laptop for a brief moment.

He hops out the car. He sports sunglasses and a large sheriff hat.

He walks up to the car window. Ivan rolls it down to face the sheriff.

The sheriff speaks with a stern voice of authority and a southern drawl.

SHERIFF
(in English)
Good afternoon, sir. May I just see
your license and registration for a
moment?

IVAN
(in English)
Of course.

He swiftly pulls out the corresponding documents out of the glove compartment and hands them to the sheriff.

From the backseat, Isabel studies the dark reflection on his sunglasses.

The sheriff looks over Ivan's documents, taking his time.

He looks at the people in the backseat.

SHERIFF
This your family?

IVAN
Yes sir... uhh what seems to be the
problem, officer?

SHERIFF
Are you aware that you're driving
with a broken tail light?

IVAN
No. I'm sorry, officer.

SHERIFF

It's particularly dangerous to drive around on the highway without one. However, I know you're a Florida resident and you have a clean record. So I'll chalk it up to an honest mistake.

He hands Ivan back his papers.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

I'm letting you off with a warning. Do me a favor and get that fixed as soon as you can.

IVAN

Of course. I appreciate it.

SHERIFF

Just making sure my residents are safe out on the road. You and your family have yourselves a nice day, Mr. Martinez.

He tips his hat.

IVAN

Thank you. Have a nice day.

The sheriff walks back to his cruiser, gets in, and drives away.

Ivan hits the road again.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

The group is relieved after the exchange.

ALEXANDER

I almost shit my pants

Isabel laughs her heart out.

CUT TO:

EXT. IVAN'S RESIDENCE - EVENING

The sun hides behind soothing clouds, its rays glistening on the couple of palm trees outside Ivan's apartment building.

Ivan pulls into the back of the building and parks it.

Ivan gets out of the car and motions towards them.

IVAN

Come on.

INT. IVAN'S APARTMENT

Ivan brings them inside a surprisingly dense, but tidy space.

He gets them all water from the refrigerator and heats up leftover food.

INT. IVAN'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

He motions for them to sit on the cozy, ample couch across from the flat screen TV.

He turns on the AC at a low setting and leans against a dresser across the room.

IVAN

So what brought you guys here in such a hurry?

JUAN

I was framed, Ivan. They were gonna put me away for killing some cop. I had nothing to do with it.

IVAN

Fuck...

JUAN

Yeah.

IVAN

You'll be safe here. All of you.

He looks at Isabel.

IVAN (CONT'D)

We're going to make sure you get better, Isabel.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL MRI ROOM - WEEKS LATER

Isabel lays back on a sliding table hooked to an MRI machine. A radiologist gives her headphones to put on.

The radiologist goes into the operating room on the other side of the glass window overseeing the machine.

A sign overhead that reads "Magnet In Use" lights up, glowing red.

We see Isabel close her eyes as the machine scans her. The headphones shield her ears from the aggressive pumping, mechanical noise of the machine.

Although muffled, the noise almost triggers a panic within her, but she ultimately perseveres and lets the process play out.

The scan is done.

Isabel looks through the window and sees the radiologist pointing out something on the computer screen to Juan and Benita.

We don't hear what's said, but as she finishes explaining, Juan looks through the window and gives Isabel a thumbs up.

Isabel shoots him a faint smile back.

MONTAGE - ISABEL GETS BETTER AS SHE SETTLES IN AMERICA

A. School- Isabel raises her hand in the middle of an ESL class. On the board is information on English syntax.

B. Ivan's Dinner Table- The family passes around food that Benita has just cooked. Isabel reads an American novel, but Juan motions for her to put it down and eat.

C. Therapist Session- Isabel plays a memory card game. She enthusiastically makes her choices at a good pace.

D. Outside- Isabel rides her bike down the street with some new friends.

E. Ivan's Balcony- Isabel calmly meditates, breathing in and out.

END MONTAGE.

INT. LATIN-AMERICAN RESTAURANT - SUMMERTIME

The Perez family eat from various dishes at a table. They seem happier and more relaxed.

Alexander passes by in a busboy uniform carrying a considerable amount of finished plates and cup to the kitchen.

He comes back out and spots them from across the restaurant.

SUPER: SIX MONTHS SINCE ARRIVING

Alexander walks over and talks to the family briefly:

ALEXANDER
Dimelo, familia!

JUAN
How's it going?

ALEXANDER
They got me working, that's for damn sure!

BENITA
You got the muscles for the job. I don't see the other busboys keeping up.

ALEXANDER
I might just be overqualified.

He chuckles and looks over at Isabel.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)
You did good in school, Isabel?

ISABEL
Yeah!

ALEXANDER
That's great. You just needed to put that big brain of yours to good use.

ISABEL
So what's your first big invention gonna be?

ALEXANDER
I got some. Don't want you stealing any ideas, though.

He winks at her.

CUT TO:

INT. IVAN'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Juan, Isabel, and Benita arrive home with some food in a to-go box.

Benita sees Ivan writing a paper on his laptop and hands him a box.

BENITA
Brought you something.

IVAN
Thank you. Alex like it there?

BENITA
He seems to be doing alright.

INT. ISABEL'S BEDROOM

Isabel is in her pajamas now, getting ready to go to sleep. Her room is lightly furnished with a desk where her homework lies on, some dressers, and a mirror.

She takes off her necklace in the mirror and places it on her night stand.

She turns off the lights across the room and gets into bed.

Benita opens the door, checking in on her daughter.

BENITA
Hey, you going to sleep?

ISABEL
Yeah, I'm tired.

BENITA
How do you feel about falling asleep?

ISABEL
Pretty good, I won't have any nightmares.

BENITA
Okay. *Buenas noches.*

ISABEL
Buenas noches.

She closes the door.

Isabel falls asleep.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT - (DREAM SEQUENCE)

The moonlight glistens over the Atlantic Ocean. Mild waves softly crash against the sand.

The remnants of water just barely creep up to a young black boy sitting down.

A closer look reveals: it's just the young orphan from the very beginning.

Enter Isabel, the most calm and level-headed she's ever been navigating her sub-conscious.

She sees the boy sitting on the beach, watching the horizon.

She sits down next to him and joins him in admiring the ocean's mesmeric rhythm.

Nothing is said. All that's heard is the water rushing ashore.

After a long moment, they turn to look at each other.

FADE OUT.