

ONE WAY

Written by

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EXT. CIBAO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - SUNNY DAY

The sun shines in a cloud-free sky. An airplane from American Airlines flies into frame and we follow it as it lands and stops to drop off its passengers.

A clump of people exit the plane and go through the airport process (checking in, picking up their luggage, etc.). The outer layer of the clump of people are stereotypical tourists with pink Hawaiian shirts and cameras around their necks.

CUT TO:

EXT. AIRPORT PARKING LOT - SUNNY DAY

ALBERT (12) is waiting eagerly outside the airport with his uncle MIGUELITO (late 20's). Albert, or Albe (AL-BEH) as his friends and family call him, finds that the smarter he gets, the less the world makes sense. Miguelito is crude and unschooled but he is a loveable goof.

They are standing in front of a 1985 Toyota Hiace. The Hiace is old but very well maintained.

The cluster of people exit the airport and all walk into a bus that is obviously too small for all of them. The frame of the bus expands as they all pile in.

As the last of the tourists get into the bus they reveal ALBERTO behind them, pushing a trolley packed with luggage. Alberto is a hardworking, loving, Dominican father in his late 30's.

The tourist bus slowly drives out of the parking lot, struggling with the weight of all the passengers. Camera flashes can be seen coming from the windows.

ALBE

Papi!

Albe runs towards his dad to hug him but ends up tackling him and his luggage to the ground.

MIGUELITO

I got it.

Miguelito starts picking up the luggage and stacking it in the van. Alberto picks up Albe and spins him in the air.

ALBERTO

Albe! Hola, m'ijito, como estas?
Look how much you've grown! Your
mom must be watering you well.

ALBE

You should see how far I can jump!
When we get back can I show you?

Miguelito struggles to carry and fit all the luggage into the van.

ALBERTO

Of course! In fact, I actually have
a surprise of my own to tell you
about.

ALBE

Really!? Did you bring me the chips
I like again?

ALBERTO

No. Well, yes, I did bring you them
but-

Albe dashes into the van where Miguelito is putting the last of the luggage in. Albe causes all of the luggage to fall back out of the van in his search, much to the dismay of Miguelito.

Albe's head pops out of the pile of luggage with a bag of purple Doritos in his mouth.

INT. ALBERTO'S HIACE - LATER

Albe, Alberto, and Miguelito are driving down a road. Alberto is sitting in the driver's seat, Miguelito is in the passenger seat and Albe is on his knees behind them on padded bench behind the two front seats. He is finishing another bag of Purple Doritos and throwing it into a pile of empty, crumpled up bags.

The inside of the Hiace appears much larger from the inside than the outside and there is a wall of luggage providing back support for Albe.

ALBERTO

Ahhh, it feels so nice to be back.
I get to drive my guaguita again,
just listen to her purr. And I get
see my wife. My girls cause you any
trouble while I was gone?

MIGUELITO

Well she would sometimes make some angry-sounding noises, not to mention that the exhaust would rumble loudly when releasing a terrible odor. The van was fine though.

Alberto and Miguelito share a look before snickering at each other. Albe rolls his eyes playfully.

They reach a stoplight, with the tour bus from earlier waiting at it, just as it turns green. The bus with the tourists continues down the well-asphalted road lined with palm trees and the van takes a left into a road filled with cracks and holes.

Both Albe and Miguelito look at the bus as it disappears down the other road with an elaborate & expensive gate closing behind it.

EXT. OLD ROAD - LATER

There are deep gutters on both sides of the road with little concrete arch bridges to help people cross them. The land on either side of the road is densely packed with foliage. However, several small wooden houses can be seen inside.

INT. ALBERTO'S HIACE - SAME TIME

Albe looks away from the bus and at his pile of empty Dorito bags.

ALBE

Soo... what was that surprise you were talking about?

ALBERTO

Ah, verdad, eso. I'm saving that announcement for the party.

ALBE

There's going to be a party?!

MIGUELITO

Your dad's back home in the Dominican Republic, Albe. Of course there's gonna be a party.

Just then the van reaches the end of the road and the forests on the sides of the road open up to reveal a bustling third world town.

There are people listening to music outside of small stores, women with buckets filled with clothes or fruit on top of their heads and other people carrying all sorts of animals and produce, all walking around with purpose. There are various old cars on the road alongside Alberto's Hiace, with each car being older and more worn down than the last.

Men of all ages are on Honda C70 motorcycles zooming through traffic and pedestrians alike.

Alberto gets greeted by many different people as he drives through the town. People wave from patios, storefronts, and car windows at Alberto, and he waves back happily.

EXT. LICEY - LATER

They make it through the town and drive into a much more rural area. They drive down a long and wide dirt road and stop at the last house.

EXT. ALBE'S HOUSE. FRONTYARD - LATER

Albe's house is small and simple. It has a little porch in front, it is painted a bright blue and it has a tin roof.

Albe's mom, JENNY, is in the front yard playing with Albe's little brother Alex. Jenny is an intelligent woman in her 30's with a keen eye for detail and Alex is a 7 year old boy that looks up to his brother.

Alberto parks the van and they all exit it. Miguelito goes straight to the back of the van and starts unloading the luggage.

Jenny sees this and starts walking over with Alex. Alberto opens his arms up expecting a hug.

JENNY

Mi cielo! Mi tesoro! Mi corazoncito
bello!

Jenny walks past Alberto and goes straight for Albe. She hugs and kisses him.

Alberto instead picks up Alex and hugs him.

ALBERTO

(to Alex)

Tu mama esta loca. She thinks Albe
is the one that's been gone for six
months.

Alex laughs.

JENNY
 (to Alberto)
 But I haven't seen him since this
 morning, to me that trumps your six
 months.

Jenny pinches Albe's cheek and then goes to hug Alberto. They share a short but passionate and loving hug. Alex and Albe share a similar, but miniature, hug.

JENNY (CONT'D)
 Bueno, you've kept a lot of people
 waiting for long enough. Come on.

Jenny grabs Alex's hand and walks him to the backyard. Alberto and Albe follow.

EXT. ALBE'S HOUSE. BACKYARD - LATER

The backyard is a big rectangular space with a granite floor. There is a large crowd of people and they all cheer as Albe comes out next to his dad. Albe and Alberto go around greeting everyone.

The party's music comes from speakers inside the house. The party consists of people drinking, eating, dancing, talking, and/or just having a good time. There are also several small animals harmlessly roaming around.

Alberto goes to greet a group of men standing around a Domino table and drinking beer. Jenny goes to help some women with the food and Alex goes to play with other kids his age.

EXT. BACKYARD. SIDE OF A TABLE - LATER

Albe spots his friend DARLIN sitting next to a long table where the food is being served. Darlin (12) is hyperactive, childish, and equally innocent. He is eating hungrily from a mountain of food on a flimsy paper plate when they notice each other.

	ALBE	DARLIN
Darlin!		Albe!

They try their best to shake their hands like businessmen, they're okay at it.

DARLIN (CONT'D)
 Where were you? I thought I'd find
 you here earlier but-

ALBE

Nobody told me we were having a party today. People aren't telling me a lot of things lately. So I went with Tio 'lito to pick up my dad.

DARLIN

Well, funny you mention that actually
 (Darlin gulps down a wad of food)
 I overheard your mom talking about an announcement your dad is gonna make.

Darlin takes a few big bites out of the food on his plate.

ALBE

Wait, you know what my dad is gonna say? Well spit it out!

Darlin starts to choke on his food. He pounds his chest and struggles to breathe.

DARLIN

I'm trying! I'm trying!

ALBE

Wait here, I'll get you something to drink.

EXT. BACKYARD. DOMINO TABLE - LATER

Albe goes to a cooler and fills a cup with soda and ice. Alberto sees him and calls him over. He is already a little buzzed from the booze.

ALBERTO

Albe! Mi'ijo! Ben aqui.

Albe walks over with the cup of soda in his hand.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

Listen everyone, this is my oldest son. He is one of the people that I love the most in my life...

(Alberto looks at Albe)

...and I want him in more of my life.

More people start to surround Albe and Alberto. The men look up from the Domino table. Jenny and Alex walk closer.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

I petitioned for my whole family to come with me to the U.S. three years ago. And three days ago I got the letter saying that they were finally approved!

Everyone claps loudly. Albe's clapping slows and his face becomes more inquisitive.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

All that's left to do is the interview.

Albe walks up to his dad to talk to him and Alberto picks Albe up and puts him on his shoulders.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

I will be leaving with Albe first. We're gunna go explore together. Pave the way for his mom and brother. Aren't you excited Albe!

People cheer. Albe doesn't look so sure himself.

ALBE

And uh, what if I don't want to go to U.S.?

MIGUELITO

(poking his head from the crowd)

Well you'd be the first Dominican to say that since Trujillo!

Everyone, except Albe, laughs.

Albe looks down at the cup in his hands. He then quickly remembers why he was there and jumps off of his dad's shoulders and runs to his friend.

INT. ALBE'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Albe's house is one big rectangular room. There are many colorful curtains that run longways through the house dividing it into two halves. The back of the house is the kitchen, there is no one there and everything is turned off. There is a small TV set sitting on a small table. In front of it is a lawn chair. Closer to the entrance there is a dinner table with four chairs. The house is small but, like the van, it appears much bigger on the inside.

They all enter. Alex crosses the wall of curtains and we can hear him PLAYING. Albe, Alberto and Jenny sit at the dinner table.

ALBE

Papi?

ALBERTO

Si, mi'ijito?

ALBE

Can you just remind me why we have to leave la Republica Dominicana?

ALBERTO

Albe, me and your mom are going through a rough time.

ALBE

Are you getting divorced?!

ALBERTO

No, no, no. Of course not. I mean, not yet anyway.

Alberto chuckles at his joke, the only one to do so. He notices and goes back to being serious.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

Um, no. I mean financially.

ALBE

Like, money?

JENNY

Yes. We aren't the most wealthy family in the world. But we do what we can to give you the best life possible.

ALBE

I know that. And I love both of you for it.

ALBERTO

Albe, I'm just going to tell you the situation. You're old enough for us to talk man to man. We're about to lose the house.

ALBE

What?!

ALBERTO

Wait, dejame explicartelo. This land was given to me by my dad but he only got it through a verbal contract.

ALBE

What's a verbal contract?

ALBERTO

It means that there's no proof he owns it. So there's no proof I own it. And the government thinks that this land belongs to no one and they're trying to make us buy it from them.

ALBE

That's not fair! They know we live here!

ALBERTO

Not on their papers.

JENNY

But it's okay. It doesn't mean we have to lose the house. We just have to get the appropriate paperwork in order.

ALBERTO

But that still costs money. So, I'm going to go back to America to make some extra cash.

ALBE

Well then why did we have that party if we could've just saved the money?

ALBERTO

Bueno, I suppose I like where your head is at. But we need more than a couple hundred pesos anyway. Your aunts and uncles threw that party for us anyway.

ALBE

Is there anything I can do?

ALBERTO

Yes, actually. You can come with me.

ALBE

Other than that... When would we have to leave?

ALBERTO

In a week.

Beat.

ALBE

I can't.

ALBERTO

And the day after tomorrow we're- what did you say?

ALBE

I can't. Not at least until I graduate.

ALBERTO

We can't wait that long. Do you want to lose the house?

ALBE

I'm not the one that's going to be working though. I can stay here and continue my school to become a business man.

ALBERTO

Schools in America are much better. You can learn so much more about whatever you want.

JENNY

I'm gonna make us some food.

ALBERTO

But we just ate at the party-

Jenny rushes to the kitchen.

ALBE

I don't want to leave. I'm not prepared.

ALBERTO

Albe, I would never do anything that wasn't for your benefit. This is a great opportunity, your friends would do anything for this chance.

ALBE

Well I don't. I mean, I do but just not now. I can't.

ALBERTO

Well, you have to. This isn't up for discussion. Me and your mom agreed on this months ago and we've already gotten all your documents ready. All you need to do is go to the interview in two days.

ALBE

I can't go-

ALBERTO

Albe! Lla te dije. Stop with this "I can't" and "I won't". You will, and that's that. Now go to sleep, you have your last day of school tomorrow. You see, you get a chance to say goodbye to all your friends.

ALBE

Pero-

Alberto gives Albe a look and Albe surrenders and gets up from the table a little annoyed. Jenny talks from the kitchen.

JENNY (O.S.)

You'll go to bed after you eat! I'm making your favorite, mi principe.

Albe sits back down but with a pouty face.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. ALBE'S HOUSE. BACKYARD - MORNING

The backyard shows all the classic signs that there was a huge party the night before. There are big piles of black plastic bags full of beer bottles and paper plates. Some trash also litters the floor and a stray dog is going around sniffing the floor.

Jenny then steps out from her house. She has a calm look on her face. She takes out big wooden spoon and a pan from behind her back and starts BANGING on the pan.

JENNY

Time to go everybody!

Nothing in the backyard moves aside from the dog that scurried away at the sound of the BANGING.

JENNY (CONT'D)

I'm going to bill whoever stays
another minute!

Suddenly, many drunk men start rolling over from their camouflaged positions amongst the rubble of the party. They sleepily get up and walk out in a single file, muttering "thank you's" to Jenny and other annoyances to themselves.

Jenny sticks her hand out to stop the last man in the line. She takes the lamp shade off his head and reveals Miguelito. Miguelito nods and smiles sleepily then walks back to the backyard and falls asleep.

Albe comes out of the house yawning, he sees his mom and hugs her. His eyes follow Miguelito.

ALBE

Good morning Mami.

Jenny hands Albe the lampshade and heads inside the house.

JENNY

Put this back, por favor.

Albe has a toothbrush in his hand, a blue towel around his neck, and now a lampshade under his arm. He traverses the obstacle course that is the backyard. Once he reaches Miguelito he places the lampshade back on his head.

ALBE

We don't even own one of those
lamps...

Albe walks over to the cylindrical outhouse.

INT. OUTHOUSE - LATER

The circular floor of the outhouse is divided in half. The back half is the shower and the other half has a toilet on one side and a sink on the other. It is very claustrophobic in there but Albe's small frame gives him plenty of room. Albe starts brushing his teeth.

EXT. ALBE'S HOUSE. BACKYARD - FEW MINUTES LATER

Albe exits the outhouse. The backyard is almost completely clean.

The only signs of a party is the tidy pile of black garbage bags that Miguelito is sleeping against. Jenny is seen throwing the last full garbage bag on the pile.

JENNY

Ponte tu uniforme, m'ijo. The bus
will be here soon.

Albe walks into his house.

INT. ALBE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Albe crosses the curtain wall.

INT. ALBE'S HOUSE. OTHER SIDE - LATER

This side of the house is much quieter and darker. On this side there is a queen sized bed, one twin sized bed, and a crib.

Alex is still sleeping in the crib. He is almost too big for it.

Albe quietly puts on his blue collar shirt and khaki pants. He grabs his backpack then kisses his brother on the forehead before crossing the curtains once again.

INT. ALBE'S HOUSE - LATER

Jenny is now in the kitchen finishing up breakfast. She turns around to see Albe.

JENNY

Ay, que lindo te vez.

ALBE

Just like every other school day,
Mami. What are we having today?

JENNY

Platanos, salami, huevos, y queso.
Just like every other morning.

ALBE

Perfect.

Albe sits at the table. Jenny places a plate with a mountain of food on it in front of Albe and he gets ready to dig in.

Miguelito drowsily stumbles into the house, his eyes barely open, and sits at the table.

Jenny places a plate of food in front of him too. Miguelito can barely hold his head up and it falls into the plate.

Albe looks at him but keeps eating.

CUT TO:

EXT. ENTRANCE TO ALBE'S FRONTYARD - LATER

Albe stands in front of the small metal gate that leads to his house, he has a very old backpack on. Jenny is next to him holding a sleepy Alex in her arms.

JENNY

Oh! Ahi viene!

An incredibly old and rusting Toyota Hiace comes chugging around the corner and stops in front of Albe and the door swings open.

DOMINICAN BUS DRIVER

Buenos dias, Albe!

Albe starts walking towards the door but Jenny stops him and starts hugging and kissing him. Albe loves/hates it.

JENNY

Que pases un bien dia, mi amorcito.
I love you.

ALBE

Okay I love you too, Mami. Bye bye Alex.

ALEX

Bye bye.

Albe climbs into the bus.

JENNY

(firmly)
Oye, tu, Chofer. Take care of my boy. Drive slowly, keep your eyes on the road-

DOMINICAN BUS DRIVER

(friendly)
Si, okay Jenny. I know.

Jenny gives him a menacing look. The bus driver gives her a scared smile and wave, then closes the door and takes off.

INT. DOMINICAN SCHOOL BUS - MORNING

The buses interior is much bigger than it seems from the outside. The seats are all from different car models. There are about 15 other kids talking amongst themselves and causing a general ruckus.

Albe walks down to the back of the bus where Darlin is waiting for him. Darlin is seating on a racing car seat next to the window. The seat next to him is a small, broken sidecar.

DARLIN

Albe! Hi! I saved your seat for you!

Darlin hops into the sidecar. Albe climbs over to his seat.

ALBE

(all business)

Darlin, we've got some work to do.

DARLIN

We do? It's not more homework is it?

ALBE

No, I need to learn more about this... visa thing.

DARLIN

Oh, I don't know anything about that.

Albe looks out the window in deep thought. Darlin looks at him a little disappointed in himself then his face lights up.

DARLIN (CONT'D)

Oh! I know! Our gym teacher Profe Lugo talks about visas a lot.

ALBE

You're right! Oh that's right! Good job, Darlin.

Albe is now grinning. Darlin also looks happier.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOMINICAN SCHOOL FRONT ENTRANCE - MORNING

The bus stops in front of the school. All the kids rush out of the bus and run off to various parts of the school.

Albe and Darlin are the last to get off. They are happily talking to each other as they enter the school.

INT. DOMINICAN CLASSROOM - MIDDAY

A ruler slaps a desk as a teacher yells at a student. All the desk and students are very neatly lined up in a perfect rectangle. Albe is sitting in the back. He is writing diligently and quickly. Darlin is sitting next to him, daydreaming and scribbling on his paper.

ALBE

Ah, dang it. BORRADOR!

Albe lifts his hand without lifting his eyes off his paper. Another student chucks an old, heavily used, really big, pink eraser straight at his hand. Albe uses it on his paper.

DARLIN

Hey Albe, can I see that?

Albe hands him the eraser. Darlin uses it and turns his entire paper into a big black smudge.

A bell rings and all the kids rush out of the classroom.

ALL STUDENTS

REECESS!

EXT. DOMINICAN SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - SUNNY DAY

The school's playground is an empty square lot with a cement floor. There is only a lonely old, metal slide in a random corner. There are many kids playing various games, talking, and just running around.

EXT. DOMINICAN SCHOOL PLAYGROUND. SLIDE - SAME TIME

Albe is standing on top of the slide. He is making fake binoculars with his hands and is looking around intently. Darlin walks up to the slide carrying a big stick. He rests it against the slide.

DARLIN

Whatcha think?

Albe takes off his fake binoculars.

ALBE

Whoa, what a beauty. What's the occasion?

DARLIN
I'm going for the record today.
Figure I'd find some nice big logs.

ALBE
My record?...

DARLIN
Yeah!

Albe thinks for a moment.

DARLIN (CONT'D)
Did you find him yet?

Albe shakes his head and snaps back into focus and into his fake binoculars.

ALBE
Huh, no, not yet- Oh wait, I think
I see him.

INSERT: ALBE'S HAND BINOCULAR VIEW

The gym teacher, PROFE LUGO, an early 30's skinny Dominican male yawns his way into the playground. He dresses like he is still 15.

END INSERT

Albe puts down his binoculars and points at Profe Lugo.
Darlin squints to see.

DARLIN
Oh, I see him.

Albe slides down the slide. He runs in Profe Lugo's direction.

ALBE
Go get the other stick and don't
start until I come back, okay?

DARLIN
Yeah, of course!

Darlin picks up his stick and rests it on his shoulder like a rifle, then marches away.

EXT. DOMINICAN SCHOOL PLAYGROUND. ENTRANCE - LATER

Albe runs up to Profe Lugo who is sleeping on a chair with his hat on his face.

ALBE

Profe Lugo!

Profe Lugo jolts awake.

PROFE LUGO

Huh? Dime? Que pasa? Oh, Albe!
Great party last night!

ALBE

Hey, Profe Lugo. What do you know
about visas?

PROFE LUGO

Ooooh, you wanna know about visas?
Bueno, dejame desirte. If you want
to get a visa then you gotta find
yourself an American girl, right,
and then-

ALBE

No, no, I *don't* want a visa. What
do I do to *stop* my dad from getting
me a visa?

PROFE LUGO

Don't want a visa? Eres un loco?
What are you gonna do? Stay here
your whole life?

ALBE

Yeah, what's wrong with the
Dominican Republic?

PROFE LUGO

Man, you gotta work all the time
here. Look at what I'm doing now!
I'm breaking my back watching over
you kids.

Profe Lugo leans back in his chair. An attractive woman walks past the other side of the entrance. Profe Lugo WHISTLES at her and wiggles his eyebrows. The lady LAUGHS and keeps walking.

Profe Lugo notices Albe is still there. Albe is smirking, his face is saying "Really?".

Profe Lugo acts like nothing happened.

PROFE LUGO (CONT'D)

I hear they just give you money in America. Like, just for being there! Can you imagine! Why would anyone ever work?

ALBE

So you don't know anything about not getting a visa?

PROFE LUGO

Oh, I know everything. I've been trying for years but they'll never give me one. I always fail at the interview. I'm starting to think that they just don't like me.

Profe Lugo leans back in his chair and picks at his teeth with his pinky. Albe looks at him inquisitively.

ALBE

I'm happy with what we have here. I mean, look, I go to the school with a slide.

Albe gestures at the slide.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. DOMINICAN SCHOOL PLAYGROUND. SLIDE - SUNNY DAY

The slide is in the center of the frame under a bright sun. A kid hops over the top and lands frozen in sliding position. Some sizzling is heard as small trails of white smoke appear from the kid's bottom.

KID

AAAAAAAAAAHHHHH-

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. DOMINICAN SCHOOL PLAYGROUND. ENTRANCE - SAME TIME

Profe Lugo and Albe are in the same positions we left them.

PROFE LUGO

Oh, ay si. Claro. You're just too young.

Profe Lugo takes off his hat and puts it on Albe's head.

PROFE LUGO (CONT'D)
 You'll see where I'm coming from in
 a few years.

Albe takes off the hat and looks at it. There is a patch
 stitched on it with a picture of rooster with plantains in
 its mouth.

PROFE LUGO (CONT'D)
 So what did you want to know-

ALBE
 Actually, I think you've helped
 enough already. Adios, Profe Lugo.

Albe runs off.

Profe Lugo waves goodbye then tries to drift off to sleep. He
 reaches for his hat and finds it's not there. He lazily moves
 his head from side to side looking for the hat before
 immediately falling back asleep.

FADE IN:

EXT. DOMINICAN SCHOOL PLAYGROUND. BACK CORNER - LATER

There are many boys making a big circle around Albe and
 Darlin and the two big sticks that Darlin collected. The
 sticks are parallel to each other and about 8 feet apart.
 Some boys have burn marks on their bottoms.

Albe is rubbing Darlin's shoulders and giving him a pep talk
 like boxer in his corner. Darlin is sitting on a small,
 wooden stool and there is white towel on Albe's shoulder.
 They both have their game faces on.

ALBE
 This is all you. This is what
 you've been training for. Who did
 nothing but squats each Saturday
 instead of watching cartoons?

DARLIN
 Me.

ALBE
 Who ran in circles until he broke
 his only pair of shoes?

DARLIN
 Me!

Darlin's knees start bobbing rapidly. His eyes are focused.

ALBE

Who's gonna sprout wings and fly?!

Darlin stands up, making the stool fall backwards behind him.

DARLIN

ME!

Darlin pumps himself up. The other boys surrounding them cheer him on. He does some light leg stretches then gets in position next to the stick closest to him. The second that he gets into the crouching position the crowd of boys goes silent.

Darlin looks at Albe. Albe nods.

Darlin then accelerates into a sprint instantly, leaving a cloud of dust behind him. He expertly leaps off the ground as close as possible to the first stick. The gap now feels like it's miles long.

The heads of all the boys follow Darlin across the air. Albe also looks on with close attention and a little bit worried.

Darlin easily clears the second stick by a few feet and lands expertly. All the boys, with Albe in front of them, rush over and congratulate Darlin. Darlin and Albe are laughing happily.

CUT TO:

EXT. LICEY, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC - LATE AFTERNOON

On the road there worn out cars and vans jostle for a lane as Darlin and Albe on a motorbike weave through the slow traffic. Darlin is driving while Albe is in the back giving directions.

They zip past a man carrying two buckets of water on a stick on his shoulders and a lady watering her garden. The kids almost crash into the man, causing the water to spill onto the women's garden, which delights her. But the water also splashes onto her cat and it starts to run, which attracts the attention of a stray dog who chases after it and tramples the women's garden.

ALBE

(reacting to the chaos)

Sorry!

Darlin grabs a banana off one of her trees.

DARLIN

Thank you!

They go off into the distance.

EXT. SIDE OF A ROAD - DUSK

Albe and Darlin stop alongside a dirt road laughing and talking. No one else can be heard. To the boys' right there is a dense woods with many different types of tropical trees. To their left there is a vast flat grazing field with some cows in the far distance. The sun is still a few hours from setting but the sky is already turning a little orange towards the horizon.

The boys get off the bike, Darlin props it up and gets out an old rice sack. Albe looks up at the coconut tree in front of them and sees many coconuts at the top. Darlin hands him a small knife from his sack.

DARLIN

This guy looks taller and taller everyday. You sure you wanna get up there?

ALBE

Of course, I'm sure. What's a few extra feet of climbing?

DARLIN

I'm just saying, we can find another tree.

ALBE

Look at all those coconuts. There's gotta be like sixteen of them up there. Huge too.

DARLIN

Hey, if anyone can do it, it's you. Just be careful, okay?

Albe starts climbing.

ALBE

Aw, you worried about me?

DARLIN

Worried about what your mom will do to both of us if you get hurt.

ALBE

That's true. If I fall I'll try to make it fatal for both of us.

Darlin sits under the tree and takes out a small block of wood and another knife from his sack.

DARLIN

Yeah- Oh you just reminded me. We have a test tomorrow, right?

ALBE

Oh yeah, should be easy though.

DARLIN

For you maybe. This is a big part of our grade. Might decide whether we graduate or not.

ALBE

We'll meet up tomorrow before school. Get some studying done.

DARLIN

Que bueno. Hey, you didn't tell me, did you figure out what you wanted to know from Profe Lugo?

ALBE (O.S.)

Well, not exactly. No surprise though, he's never any help. Here it comes!

A coconut falls on Darlin's head and lands in his lap.

DARLIN

That sucks. So what are you going to do?

Beat.

ALBE (O.S.)

I'm working on it.

Another coconut falls on Darlins head and lands in his lap.

DARLIN

To be honest Albe, I don't really get why you don't want to go. It could be like, tu sabe, a great opportunity or something.

Darlin finishes shaving the piece of wood into a top. He starts hammering a nail down the middle of it with a big rock. Another coconut falls on Darlin's head and this time lands in Albe's open bag. Albe slides down the tree.

ALBE

Nah man, look at all I'd be leaving behind. You? Our school? My mom and brother would join us eventually but what about the rest of my family?

Darlin hands Albe a coconut and the knife. Albe punches a hole in the coconut with the knife and starts drinking the milk. He finishes drinking and looks up from his coconut to see Darlin drinking from his, with milk running down his cheeks.

ALBE (CONT'D)

I could never leave *this* behind..

Albe sits next to Darlin and takes out his homemade top. It is painted red and blue. They both tie the string around the tops and battle them, facing the horizon.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. ALBERTO'S HIACE - MORNING

Alberto, Jenny, Miguelito, and Albe are in the van. While Miguelito is dressed as he always dresses, Alberto, Jenny, and Albe are all very well dressed. Albe's hair is combed to the side.

Alberto is driving, Jenny is in the passenger seat, Albe is kneeling on the padded bench behind them, and Miguelito is getting bumped around in the back. Jenny is carrying a big purse full of papers and manila folders. The papers look very organized and Jenny looks confident.

Albe taps his fingers nervously.

ALBE

You know, I just don't think I'm old enough for change like this. Sudden changes can be traumatic for a developing mind.

ALBERTO

That's not true, you're almost as old as me. What are you, like 11?

JENNY
 (robotically)
 Albert Monegro Diaz, date of birth
 June fifth two-thousand seven, is
 12 years old.

Alberto, Albe, (and Miguelito once he stops bumping off the walls) look at Jenny in confusion. Jenny snaps back and realizes everyone's eyes on her.

JENNY (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry, it just came out of me.
 Gotta be prepared, right?

Jenny laughs nervously.

ALBERTO
 How much coffee did you have?

ALBE
 Well, okay then, so I'm old. Old
 and mature enough to be able to
 stay behind with Alex and you can
 go with Mami.

ALBERTO
 Come on Albe, me and you, the
 perfect duo. America won't know
 what hit it. Besides, your mom and
 your brother will come right behind
 us. Don't you want to make sure
 that they have a nice place to stay
 when they arrive?

ALBE
 Isn't America already the best
 place to live or whatever? Why do
 we have to go to "make sure they
 have a nice place to stay"?

ALBERTO
 Don't mock me Albert. And no more
 questions, you're coming with me
 and that's that.

Albe looks down, frustrated. Alberto sees this and softens up.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)
 Look, papi, this is for the best.
 I'm doing this for you and your
 brother. Tu sabes que yo amo la
 Republica Dominicana.

(MORE)

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

And if I could provide everything for you here then I would stay in a heartbeat.

Albe looks up.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

But I can't, not by myself. The opportunities that someone as smart as you will find in America are... endless. You might even become President someday.

MIGUELITO

Only citizens born in the United States are eligible for U.S. Presidency.

Now Albe and Alberto look at Miguelito.

MIGUELITO (CONT'D)

I was helping Jenny study last night.

ALBE

(stern)

I don't want to go. Why won't you guys listen to what I want? I should be able to decide for myself.

ALBERTO

Albe, I told you-

JENNY

(to Albe)

Mi amor, please, trust us. We would only ever want what is best for you.

ALBE

Pero Mami-

The van comes to a screeching halt. They are a few cars behind a red stoplight at an intersection. Miguelito tumbles forward and hits the bottom of the bench Albe is kneeling on.

ALBERTO

(loud and angry)

Albert. Ya. Vasta. Stop being so ungrateful. You have no idea the work that went into this.

(MORE)

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

The amount of money and time that me and your mother have invested in this. You are being blessed with a privilege that any other kid out here would give literally anything for.

ALBE

Then why don't you take one of them!

ALBERTO

(furious)

Que-

A big soaking wet and soapy rag cuts Alberto off as it SPLASHES on the windshield. A man (40's?) quickly comes running from behind the other cars and starts wiping the windshield with the rag. He "finishes" in seconds, making the windshield dirtier than before, and then walks towards the driver's side window and sticks his hand out.

He looks really old and wrinkly but has the energy and behavior of a toddler. His clothes are all too small for him.

Alberto simmers down from his rage and gives the man a forced smile. He digs in the cupholders next to him and takes out a handful of random coins. He places it in the man's hand. The man grins from ear to ear as he looks at the money. He starts jumping and jittering around in excitement then takes his rag and runs off.

Alberto rolls up his window.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

Terminamos en la casa. As we pack your things.

Albe turns around and sits down on the bench pouting with his arms crossed. Miguelito pokes his head up from the floor and tries to give Albe a comforting smile.

Alberto now looks at the mess on his windshield in bewilderment. The light turns green and the cars start moving.

EXT. U.S. EMBASSY. PARKING LOT - DAY

Alberto's Hiace drives into the parking lot and stops at the entrance to the embassy. Alberto has the windshield wipers going and is still spraying wiper fluid to finish cleaning the windshield.

Once the car stops everyone comes out. Alberto and Jenny are each holding one of Albe's hands as they walk into the building. Miguelito waves from the side of the car then gets in and drives into the parking lot.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY. LOBBY - DAY

A pair of automatic doors opens and a family of four walk in. A mother carrying an infant boy, a father, and a toddler aged girl. As soon as they walk in their eyes widen and they all let out a sigh of relief, even the baby. They then proceed walking.

Now the automatic doors open to reveal Albe and his family. As soon as they walk in they too let out a sigh of relief.

ALBE

What... is that?

Albe has a pleasant look on his face as he feels the air around him.

ALBERTO

Air conditioning.

Alberto takes in a deep breath.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

Isn't it lovely? One of the many great things to be found everywhere in America. What do you think?

JENNY

We should really get something like this for the house.

Albe walks past them.

ALBE

Eh, it's alright I guess.

Alberto and Jenny walk along with him.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY. WAITING ROOM - DAY

Albe and his family are in the middle of a massive room filled with rows of small blue plastic chairs. Almost every chair has someone sitting on it. The people in this room come from all spectrums of wealth, setting, fashion sense, and hygiene practices.

The room is surrounded by tiny offices with people in suits behind desks. There are electronic signs above the doors displaying red numbers. All the people TALKING and the people in the offices SCREAMING out numbers makes the room very loud.

Albe is sitting uncomfortably between two people. Alberto and Jenny are standing in front of him.

JENNY

Me and your dad are going to find the bathroom and maybe something to eat. Esta bien? So wait here and don't lose our ticket. We'll be back before we get called.

ALBERTO

Si, porque yo tengo una sola hambre.

Alberto and Jenny edge their way out between all the people.

JENNY

(giggling)
Una sola?

Albe raises his hand to see the number on the ticket.

INSERT: TICKET

The ticket has a bold 2316 on it.

END INSERT

Albe looks around at all the doors and sees that they all have electronic signs above them displaying red numbers. The highest number Albe could find was 73. Albe waits to make sure his parents are gone then jumps off his chair and walks out of the crowd.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY. WAITING ROOM. OFFICES - LATER

Albe is walking past the open doors of the offices. He is trying to eavesdrop nonchalantly. The first door he comes across has a big, muscular DOMINICAN DAD and his SON that looks exactly like him aside from the father's big, poofy mustache. The son's voice is also very high pitched and young. They are standing to either side of the desk.

The MAN behind the desk is small and skinny. His suit looks too big for him and he is wearing big glasses. He looks very scared.

DOMINICAN DAD

What do you mean I need to prove
he's my son? Why don't you use one
of your four eyes?

The son starts excitedly pulling his pants down to show the man the back of his thighs.

DOMINICAN SON

Papi! Show him our birth marks!
Look, we have the same mark! Of
course he's my dad!

The dad also starts lowering his pants. Albe keeps walking.

The second door that Albe listens in on has the same family of four we saw earlier. They are talking happily to the man in this office. This man is bald and wearing a pink shirt with the top buttons undone. He is very friendly and feminine.

PINK SHIRT MAN

Oh. My. God. Can I hold your baby
again? He's just sooo gosh darn
CUTE.

The family hands him the baby. The baby tries it's hardest to be the cutest thing ever.

PINK SHIRT MAN (CONT'D)

I love hiiiiim. You guys are good
to go, just sign here aaand here.

The mom and dad sign eagerly while the pink shirt man continues to play with the baby. The mom and dad shake hands with the pink shirt man and exit the office cheerfully. As the mom and dad walk past Albe, and out of line of sight from the Pink shirt man, they high five their baby.

Albe walks past and peeks into a few more offices until he hears a loud and angry "NEXT!". Albe follows the voice to the office it came from.

In the office is NATHANIEL JOHNSENBERG (40's), a short, balding man with a bad comb-over sitting behind a desk cluttered with papers. He is typing angrily on his computer and pushing his glasses up his face. He has a very nasally voice and the wrinkles on his face look like they've never formed a smile.

Albe watches as a sweet, OLD LADY walks in cheerfully.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY. JOHNSENBURG'S OFFICE - DAY

OLD LADY
Good Mornin-

JOHNSENBURG
Sit!

The old lady sits quickly but remains as happy as ever.

JOHNSENBURG (CONT'D)
Let me see your papers.

The old lady reaches into her purse and takes out a stack of papers too big to fit in that purse. She hands them over and Johnsenburg snatches them from her hands.

He quickly starts flipping through all the papers as closely as possible. He adjusts his glasses, puts papers up to the light, and even uses a magnifying glass on some of them.

JOHNSENBURG (CONT'D)
Aha! Aha. Here we go, I knew it.
Miss, what is you full name?

OLD LADY
Eh, my name is Carla Calderón

JOHNSENBURG
And the O in Calderón has an accent, does it not?

OLD LADY
Eh, si, that's true.

JOHNSENBURG
(annoyed)
Then why, Miss Calderon, are there TWO instances in your papers where your name lacks the accent above the O?

OLD LADY
(becoming worried)
Well, I can just fix that right now-

JOHNSENBURG
Nope!

Johnsenburg shreds the papers.

JOHNSENBURG (CONT'D)

You know that once you've been rejected you can not reuse the same papers. These are void now. Too bad, better luck next time. Next!

Johnsenburg goes back to typing on his computer and he forgets all about the old lady.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY. WAITING ROOM. OFFICES - SAME TIME

Albe is excited, he looks up to the number above the door and sees a red 52 turn into 53. He looks around to the all the people in the waiting room and notices a ticket with a 53 on it. It is in the hands of a six and a half foot tall sleeping man.

Albe sneaks up on the man and quickly but successfully switches out the tickets.

Suddenly a hand goes on Albe's shoulder and turns him around. It's Alberto and Jenny.

ALBERTO

Aqui estas, we were looking for you. What are you doing here?

ALBE

Umm, I was looking for you guys, of course! Look!

Albe shows him the new ticket and the number above Johnsenburg's door.

ALBERTO

Oh, si. Mira que rapido.

JENNY

Okay, let's do this.

Jenny marches towards the office. Alberto follows but looks back to wait for Albe.

ALBE

Go on first, just going to tie my shoes.

INT. U.S. EMBASSY. JOHNSENBURG'S OFFICE - DAY

Jenny and Alberto walk in. Johnsenburg looks up from his computer indifferently.

JOHNSENBURG

Sit-

JENNY

Hello, my name is Jenny Diaz Monegro. This is my husband Alberto Monegro Diaz and we are here because my husband has filed an I-130 Petition for an Alien relative.

JOHNSENBURG

(annoyed)

And do you have the receipts for your fees?

JENNY

Yes.

Jenny hands Johnsenburg the papers she brought. Johnsenburg tries to snatch the papers but Jenny's grip is too strong, she eventually let's go.

JOHNSENBURG

And who will be taking legal and financial responsibility-

JENNY

His father. My husband.

ALBERTO

Hi.

JOHNSENBURG

So you petitioned for a child?
Where is it?

Albe walks in, his clothes and hair are messy and he is wearing Profe Lugo's hat.

ALBE

Dime, ke lo ke mani.

Jenny and Alberto are dumbfounded.

ALBE (CONT'D)

El diablo! Eta vaina si e chiquita!

ALBERTO

Albe! What's gotten into you?

Albe pulls over a chair and sits obnoxiously. A woman sits down in the waiting room outside the office. Albe whistles and wiggles his eyebrows at her.

The sleeping man whom Albe stole the ticket from pops his head up in search of the whistles origins. Albe hides his head in his hat.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

Lla! Deja el reloj.

JOHNSENBURG

This is who was petitioned?

JENNY

Yes.

JOHNSENBURG

(mumbling to himself)

Everyday it's something
different...

Johnsenburg looks through the papers, he looks at several polaroids of Albe, until he eventually lets out a big sigh.

JENNY

Is something wrong?

JOHNSENBURG

No! And that's exactly the problem.
Ms. Diaz, the documents you have
provided are flawless. I have never
seen such perfect penmanship, such
detailed data, and meticulous
margins.

Jenny looks a little proud of herself.

ALBERTO

So are you saying that-

JOHNSENBURG

Yes, yes, congratulations Monegro
family, you are approved for U.S.
residency. Now, I understand that
Albert will be-

Alberto and Jenny get up and celebrate and Johnsenburg lets them. But then Jenny looks at Albert, who is sadly kicking Profe Lugo's hat under Johnsenburg's desk. She kneels next to Albe.

ALBE

I already know what you're gonna
say and I-

Albe looks at Jenny and sees that she has tears rolling down her cheeks.

JENNY

Ay, mi hijito. A little part of me wanted you to convince your Dad to let you stay or for you to come up with a scheme or something to get out of it but... Now it's official. You're going to be so far away from me and...

Jenny holds Albe in close, lightly sobbing. Albe holds back tears as he lovingly hugs his mother back.

Meanwhile, Alberto is standing awkwardly as Johnsenburg looks at them with tears in his eyes.

FADE IN:

EXT. ALBE'S HOUSE. FRONTYARD - MORNING

Albe is sitting on top of his luggage in front of his house. He is hugging his knees and he is deep in thought.

Darlin rides in on his Honda C70 motorcycle. He is holding a sealed cup.

ALBE

Hey, Darlin. Sorry that I didn't meet up with you this morning.

DARLIN

Don't worry about it, I was probably going to fail it anyway.

ALBE

So you did fail...

Albe looks down, Darlin notices.

DARLIN

But forget about it, I'm here to help you! That's what this is for!

Darlin opens his cup to reveal that it is full of lizards.

DARLIN (CONT'D)

We put these in those bags and I'm sure that they won't let you on the plane.

ALBE

Hey, that's a great idea, but I made my decision.

DARLIN
You're going?

ALBE
Yeah... and Darlin I-

DARLIN
Wait! I have something else.

ALBE
Not more lizards, is it?

Darlin searches in his pockets and takes out the top that he made.

DARLIN
Take this with you.

Albe looks at the top.

DARLIN (CONT'D)
I bet that all those other kids can't make a top as good as this one. You'll need to show them a perfect example.

Albe's eyes water.

ALBE
Yeah, I know, that's why I was taking mine. Pero eh, this one's alright too, I guess.

DARLIN
Of course, of course, yo se.

They laugh and hug.

Alberto now walks out of the house with a suitcase in one hand and some papers in the other. Jenny is behind him carrying a sleeping Alex.

JENNY
Y ya tu sabe que no puedes dejar-
Oh! Darlin, como estas? When did you get here?

DARLIN
Hola, Jenny. Just got here.

ALBERTO
Vamonos, Albe. We're going to be late.

ALBE
 (irritable)
 I was waiting for you.

Albe walks past his father to his mother and brother. Jenny goes on one knee to talk to him.

JENNY
 Ay, mi vida, mi cielo. I'm going to miss you so much.

ALBE
 I'm going to miss you too. Te amo, mami.
 (whispering to Alex)
 Te amo, Alex.

Albe hugs his brother, and then Darlin one last time.

ALBE (CONT'D)
 Take care of yourself, Darlin.

DARLIN
 Of course!

Albe puts the top in his pocket, then picks up his luggage and walks next to his father to the car. Darlin gets on his bike.

START MONTAGE

- Albe looks sadly out the passenger window of his dad's van. They drive out of their house and see Jenny crying and waving goodbye to them. Darlin is behind them on his bike with the same happy grin he always has.

- Albe drives past his school. It is empty.

- Albe and his dad drive down the same road they drove on when Alberto was picked up. It is early in the morning so there aren't many people outside. Everything seems a little lifeless and gloomy.

- Albe and his dad reach the airport. Albe exits the van downheartedly and slides open the side door of the van. Miguelito falls out along with the rest of the luggage.

ALBE
 (startled)
 Tio 'lito? What are you doing here?

MIGUELITO

Huh? Oh, uh, well someone's gotta
drive the van back sooo...

Miguelito falls back asleep.

- Albe passes through security, and the airport check out system with an unwavering gloomy expression on his face. Him and his dad alternate turns pushing the luggage cart.

- Albe sits down in the window seat next to his dad on the plane. He has an unopened bag of purple Doritos in his hand. Alberto gives Albe a reassuring smile and thumbs up but Albe just looks out of the window.

- The plane takes off and Albe sees the Dominican Republic getting smaller and smaller until it disappears.

END MONTAGE

INT. COLORADO AIRPORT - DAY

Albe and his dad are waiting in line. They are the only people in the airport without coats on. Albe is looking up at the big Colorado Airport sign above them.

ALBE

Colorado, Huh? Makes sense cause
I'm probably going to come out of
this bruised up.

ALBERTO

Oye, no hables asi. You'll see
you're going to love it here.
Colorado won't know what hit it.

ALBE

Why are people wearing so many
layers? Just turn off this air
conditioning.

ALBERTO

(laughing)
No, not air conditioning this time.
It's just a little colder here
around this time.

The line moves up.

ALBE

Papi, look, even though I would want it to be different, we're here now, right? And I promise to try and make the best of this but only if you can promise me one thing.

Alberto goes on one knee to meet Albe at eye level.

ALBERTO

Of course! Anything! That's exactly what I wanted to hear from you. Name your price.

ALBE

As soon as things don't go well here, we have to go back. I wanna believe that this is for the best but-

ALBERTO

Mi'ijito. I would never do anything that wasn't the absolute best for you. I promise that as soon as I get the slightest whiff of things not going right, we're outta here.

ALBE

(smiling)
Great!

The line moves up again. A disgruntled airport employee calls Albe and Alberto over.

ALBERTO

Hello! Good morning! Here are our papers.

The airport employee casually glances over their papers. He looks over his desk to get a good look at Albe.

AIRPORT EMPLOYEE

Alberto? Step over here please.

ALBERTO

Is there a problem?

AIRPORT EMPLOYEE

Just follow me sir.

ALBERTO

But what about my son?

AIRPORT EMPLOYEE

He can wait for you outside the office.

Alberto looks at Albe with a shy smile and they follow the airport employee, Alberto still asking him questions that Albe can't hear.

INT. COLORADO AIRPORT. WAITING AREA - 2 HOURS LATER

Albe is sleeping, surrounded by his luggage, on a row of chairs just like the ones at the embassy. A woman walks up to him in airport employee uniform but with a blue suit jacket over it.

AIRPORT MANAGER

Excuse me, child. Are you lost?

ALBE

(Half asleep)

Huh? No, no. My dad was taken into that office. I'm just waiting for him.

Albe snuggles up with his carry-on bag.

AIRPORT MANAGER

Your dad, huh.

She glares at the office door.

AIRPORT MANAGER (CONT'D)

What's your name, sweetie?

ALBE

No, it's Albe.

They share a giggle.

AIRPORT MANAGER

I like that name better.

ALBE

Hey miss, why is my dad taking so long in there? What are you guys doing to him?

AIRPORT MANAGER

Um, well If I had to guess, your dad is looking at the vending machine in there and he is trying to decide what snacks to get you.

ALBE
Do you say that to all the lost
little boys?

AIRPORT MANAGER
Um...

ALBE
What's really going on in there?

AIRPORT MANAGER
Well Albe, I think we just had a
few questions for your dad. But
something tells me we're done now.
I'll go check.

The airport manager walks into the office. A few seconds
later Alberto walks out carrying many different vending
machine snacks.

ALBE
Welp, looks like we gotta go back.

ALBERTO
What do you mean?

ALBE
Your promise!

ALBERTO
No, this doesn't count. They always
do this to me. But from now on, no
more roadblocks.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLORADO AIRPORT - MOMENTS LATER

Alberto and Albe shiver in front of the airport entrance as
they wait for a taxi.

ALBERTO
(teeth chattering)
Okay, after we get some coats from
the gift shop THEN no more
roadblocks.

CUT TO:

INT. TAXI - MIDDAY

Albe's taxi enters the cul-de-sac. They pass a few multiple story luxury houses.

ALBE

Wow, look at these houses! Which one is ours?

ALBERTO

Uh, we're coming up on it now.

The car reaches the end of the cul-de-sac and pulls in front of the smallest, oldest house. The yard is very messy and there are piles of trash.

Albe and Alberto look at each other.

ALBE

I like it. It reminds me of...

The car stops. Albe exits and looks at the new house.

EXT. COLORADO HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Albe helps his dad with the luggage.

ALBERTO

You'll see, we're going to fix this place up. Better than all these other houses.

Alberto gestures around to the rest of the neighborhood. Albe looks around and spots a person looking at them from window of the house across from them.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

Now lets get all this stuff inside. And show you your room.

ALBE

Wait, when you say MY room do you mean-

CUT TO:

INT. COLORADO HOUSE. ALBE'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Albe's room is empty except for a single twin bed and a drawer. There is a single square window next to his bed.

Albe drops his stuff and walks around the room.

ALBE

Wow, my own room. I have so much space here!

ALBERTO

Si, just for you. I'll let you unpack your things and get settled while I go heat up some of the food your mom packed us.

ALBE

Esta bien, that airplane food was really bad. What's with that stuff?

Alberto closes the door and Albe starts eagerly unpacking is things.

INT. COLORADO HOUSE. LIVING ROOM - COUPLE HOURS LATER

The house is very empty aside from the couch that Albe and Alberto are sitting on. They are eating in silence but Alberto keeps glancing over to Albe.

ALBERTO

...eh, how's the food?

ALBE

It's alright.

ALBERTO

We have a big day tomorrow-

ALBE

Why's your room so far away from mine?

Albe looks at the door on the other side of the house opposite his room.

ALBERTO

Well, I didn't design the house.

ALBE

Yeah, I guess you didn't... I'm not hungry.

ALBERTO

But you still have so much-

ALBE

(voice cracking)
I'm tired.

Albe runs to his room without letting his dad see his face.

ALBERTO

Um, yeah, get some rest! We have a long day tomorrow! Te amo, Albe, que duermas bien!

Alberto looks down at Albe's plate in thought before continuing eating.

INT. COLORADO HOUSE. ALBE'S ROOM - SAME TIME

Albe, fighting back tears, climbs into his bed. He looks at his empty room and imagines his parents' old bed. He imagines Jenny sleeping with Alex in her arms. Albe then buries his face in his pillow.

INT. COLORADO HOUSE. ALBE'S ROOM - MORNING

The shine from the sun wakes Albe up. Once he is fully awake he realizes where he is once again. He gets up and walks out.

INT. COLORADO HOUSE. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Albe looks puzzled as he looks for his dad. The house is now looks much more lived in. There are pictures on the walls, the kitchen is stocked with supplies, there is a coffee table in front of the couch, and the house is clean from top to bottom.

Albe walks over to his dad's room and opens the door slightly. The room is dark and empty and the bed doesn't have any covers on it. Alberto is still in a deep sleep on top of it.

ALBE

Pa!

Alberto jumps up.

ALBERTO

Dama fue un ratico! Huh? Oh Albe, buenos dias. You need something?

ALBE

My toothbrush.

ALBERTO

It's in the bathroom already.

Alberto closes his eyes and hugs himself, getting more comfortable.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)
Y date prisa, we have a lot to do today. (yawn) No time to waste.

ALBE
Yeah, okay.

Albe walks away.

EXT. COLORADO HOUSE. FRONT SIDEWALK - HOUR LATER

The sun is shining bright and Albe and Alberto are wearing light sweaters.

ALBE
Why is it always so cold here?

ALBERTO
At least it's not as cold as- Oh finally! Here she comes!

ALBE
Who?

ALBERTO
Your Aunt, Miguelina. She's gonna let me borrow one of her cars until I can get my own.

ALBE
Miguelina... She sounds familiar. Wait a minute, isn't she-

An old Lincoln car pulls up in front of them and immediately comes out MIGUELINA (late 20's). She looks identical to Miguelito except for being a woman but she is very well educated and wealthy.

MIGUELINA
O-M-G! You are cuter in person!

Miguelina rushes over to Albe and hugs him and pinches his cheeks.

ALBERTO
I'm here too...

MIGUELINA
(to Albe)
Aren't you excited?
(MORE)

MIGUELINA (CONT'D)

You are going to love it here! The peace and quiet, the snow days, the different foods

ALBERTO

Albe's not that excited about being here.

MIGUELINA

What? Nonsense!

Miguelina picks Albe up with ease and swings him around as she speaks.

MIGUELINA (CONT'D)

After today, you are going to love Colorado. I'll make it my mission.

ALBE

(hesistantly)

I'm ready...

INT. MALL-MART - LATER

The Mall-Mart is the size of a small city. The isles go on seemingly forever and anything can be found for sale.

Albe, Alberto, and Miguelina enter through the front doors and Albe and Alberto are left speechless. Miguelina doesn't care.

MIGUELINA

Albe, you're going to be starting school soon so we need to get you- Hello? Yoohoo! You two still with me?

ALBE

Is this real?

MIGUELINA

Ha! It's just Mall-Mart. The one near my house is so much better but we're in a hurry.

ALBERTO

I could spend weeks in here just looking at the tools.

MIGUELINA

Well, while you do that me and Albe will go shopping for school supplies.

ALBE

Oh no, that's alright, I already
have a notebook and a pencil.

Miguelina laughs, Albe stares at her confused.

MIGUELINA

Oh god, that wasn't a joke. I am so
glad your dad brought you when he
did. I have a whole world to show
you.

Miguelina takes Albe's hand and pulls him deeper into the
Mall. Alberto starts to follow but notices a man carrying a
fancy drill.

ALBERTO

Excuse me sir, where did you find
that?

INT. MALL-MART. SCHOOL SUPPLIES SECTION - MOMENTS LATER

Albe and Miguelina turn the corner and find the school
supplies. Albe is overjoyed at the sight.

ALBE

Are these... Is that...

Albe runs over to the shelves with notebooks. He opens one up
and a bright, holy light shines from it.

ALBE (CONT'D)

These pages are so clean. White
like pearls, so soft to the touch
yet so strong.

Albe takes a big whiff of the pages and lets out an orgasmic
sigh.

ALBE (CONT'D)

Ah, so new.

Albe notices the pencils and runs over to them.

ALBE (CONT'D)

There's gotta be thousands, no
millions here! Packs of five, ten
50! I can have one for every day of
the year.

Albe runs to a row of giant baskets filled with single
pencils and dives into it like a pool.

He holds his nose and submerges himself then pops up in a different basket a few rows down. Once his head pops up he notices the wall of backpacks.

Albe eyes widen and he steps out of the basket without taking his eyes off the wall. He falls to his knees once he's in front of it and hugs the backpacks on the lowest row.

ALBE (CONT'D)

Where have you guys been all my
life?

He buries his face in them and whispers more loving sentiments to them. A family turns the corner and notices Albe, they then slowly back away, the parents covering the eyes of the children.

Albe steps back to admire the wall. He then sees a backpack all the way at the top of the wall with the most pockets and zippers, covered in pictures of a cartoon superhero.

Albe begins the climb up, jumping from backpack to backpack, using the unique gimmicks of some of the backpacks to help his ascension. He eventually makes it to the top in triumph and slides down with ease. He then notices the same backpack was already right next to him where he started climbing. He looks at it annoyed for a second before marching forward carrying his new backpack like a trophy.

Miguelina walks up to Albe with some beauty supplies in a shopping basket.

MIGUELINA

Oooh, someone looks happy.

ALBE

This place is amazing! I hope this
isn't too pricey.

MIGUELINA

Don't worry about it, sweetheart.
Take what ever you like. The look
on your face is... Ah!

Miguelina picks up Albe and hugs him.

MIGUELINA (CONT'D)

Now, lets go fill up that backpack.

ALBE

Okay!

Albe hurries off in front of her.

INT. MALL-MART. WORK TOOLS SECTION - LATER

The work tools section of the mall is decorated like a construction site. There is one grown adult dad that is crying and pulling on his wife's skirt while pointing to a fancy power drill.

Albe and Alberto spot and run to each other, Albe carrying a backpack filled with school supplies and Alberto carrying a basket overflowing with work tools.

ALBE ALBERTO
This place has everything! This place has everything!

INT. ALBERTO'S COLORADO CAR - SUNSET

Alberto is in the passenger seat, Miguelina is driving, and Albe is in the back eagerly going through all his school supplies. They are all themed with the same superhero that is on the backpack.

Alberto notices Albe and smiles.

ALBE
Pa, mira esto.

Albe takes out a pencil and an eraser cap. He slowly puts the eraser cap on the pencil then holds the pencil up.

ALBE (CONT'D)
It's an eraser... for my pencil... that already has an eraser. We are living in the FUTURE. I'm going to put one on every pencil.

ALBERTO
Sabes algo Albe, I'm so... relieved to see you this happy. I was beginning to doubt myself a little.

ALBE
If things keep improving at this rate, it's hard to stay mad.

MIGUELINA
Hey Albe, do you know where your bus comes to pick you up?

ALBERTO
Oh good call, it's not that far from our house. Just turn right before you go into our street here.

They drive past a small glass roof held up by four metal rods. There is a couple of benches under the roof. Albe sees this from his window.

MIGUELINA

There's going to be a group of kids here and others walking to it so you can just follow them if you get lost.

ALBE

I'm good at remembering where to go.

ALBERTO

Good, cause you start school tomorrow.

ALBE

Yes! I get to use these bad boys.

MIGUELINA

You need to teach my kids to be that happy about going to school. But make sure you wear a lot of layers tomorrow. It's going to be snowing all night and all day tomorrow.

ALBE

Snow?

ALBERTO

Ugh really? I hate snow so much.

MIGUELINA

Colorado snow is much better than New York snow.

ALBERTO

Snow is snow.

They pull up in front of Albe's house.

MIGUELINA

Well, here we are. Albe I am so happy to be here to welcoming you. You are a super cute and smart kid. Alberto, don't ruin him.

ALBERTO

What?

ALBE

Tia Miguelina, thank you so much.
For everything. I'm going to be
seeing you again right?

MIGUELINA

Yeah, I'll be back tomorrow to pick
up your dad and show him where his
job is. After that though, maybe
not too much. My job takes up so
much of my time.

Albe looks a little disappointed and Miguelina notices.

MIGUELINA (CONT'D)

But I'll find the time. I can't
stay away from you my sweet.

Albe gives her a tight hug from the back seat.

ALBE

Adios Tia, see you tomorrow.

ALBERTO

(mocking)
Adios Tia.

MIGUELINA

Get your tools out of my trunk. And
take care of my boy!

Albe and Alberto exit the car.

INT. COLORADO HOUSE. ALBE'S ROOM - MORNING

Albe wakes up with a yawn and looks out his window. It is
snowing heavily and there is about a foot of snow in the
ground. Albe looks at it in wonder.

CUT TO:

INT. COLORADO HOUSE. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Alberto is looking out a window with a grim expression. He
sips some coffee out of a mug and shakes his head. Albe comes
up behind him with his bookbag on.

ALBE

Buenos dias, papi. Is Tia Miguelina
here yet?

ALBERTO
Buenos dias-

Alberto turns around and looks at Albe.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)
Whoa, you are going to need a lot more clothes than that. It's like five degrees out there.

ALBE
But it's warm.

ALBERTO
Si pero only in here. Your aunt said she'll be running late so you won't see her today.

ALBE
(sadly)
Oh...

Alberto takes Albe back into his room.

FAST FORWARD:

INT. COLORADO HOUSE. LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Albe is ballooned up with many different layers of clothes that don't match.

ALBE
How do I look?

ALBERTO
Uh, warm. Now you said you remembered how to get to your bus stop?

ALBE
Yeah, it's only a couple minutes away.

ALBERTO
Then get on your way.

ALBE
You're not coming?

ALBERTO
Your aunt's not here yet.

ALBE

I know, I just thought you'd take me there the first day.

ALBERTO

Not in this snow. But you're a big man now, this is a good maturing opportunity.

ALBE

Yeah, I got this. I got this!

Albe opens the front door and a small blizzard blows him back. He closes the door immediately.

ALBERTO

You got this.

ALBE

I got this.

Albe opens the door again and marches out.

EXT. COLORADO HOUSE. FRONT SIDEWALK - MOMENTS LATER

Albe waddles his way out of his house and onto the sidewalk. The snow is coming down heavily and the snow on the ground is up to Albe's knees. He struggles with each step but his face is determined.

From the house exactly across Albe's another kid comes out. Albe and the kid look at each other and Albe waves. The other kid ignores him and keeps walking, with much more ease than Albe.

EXT. COLORADO SCHOOL BUS STOP - MORNING

Albe waddles his way to the bus stop. None of the other kids notice him until he's only a few feet away. They then stare at him and keep their distance. Albe is the only brown face in the group of kids.

Albe is confused by the stares and the silence.

ALBE

Yeah, I know, but my Ferrari's in the shop.

BRADY comes out from the group of kids, wearing a long men's dress coat and a silk scarf. He has well groomed blonde hair, and his lack of headwear in this weather is proof that he knows it.

BRADY
Are you lost?

ALBE
I sure hope not. This is the bus
stop right?

BRADY
Who are you?

ALBE
I'm Albert, but my friends call me
Albe.

Albert extends his hand for a shake. Brady flinches as if
Albe was going to hurt him.

BRADY
Well, Albert, you really put the
"new" in new kid. I mean- wait turn
around.

ALBE
What?

BRADY
Turn around, Albert. I wanna see
something.

Albe turns around hesitantly.

BRADY (CONT'D)
Oh my gosh, do you really have a
super hero themed back pack? How
old are you?

ALBE
You say that like it's a bad thing.
And I'm only eleven.

The kids start laughing at Albe.

BRADY
Oh wow, how childish. You're in the
fifth grade Albe. Why don't you
grow up?

ALBE
Wow, a ray of sunshine like you
could melt all this snow.

BRADY
And a little kid like you will play
in the puddles.

ALBE

Bet I could jump farther than you.

BRADY

You are just-

The yellow school bus pulls up at the stop. All the kids go in except Albe and Brady. Brady looks at Albe and rolls his eyes then gets in the bus. Albe looks back at his backpack then follows in.

The bus is very clean. The COLORADO BUS DRIVER is a gender ambiguous overweight person.

ALBE

Good morning!

COLORADO BUS DRIVER

Sit down, stay still, and be quiet.

Albe walks down the bus isle. Brady is sitting in the back, talking with his friends. Most seats are already taken, some kids put their backpacks on the empty seat next to them. Albe eventually finds a open seat next to a sleeping kid. Albe steps over him and sits next to the window. He looks out the window downheartedly then notices the kid from earlier in front of his house. The kid was hiding behind one of the pillars.

DEM takes off her hoodie and lowers her scarf. Albe continues to look at her and she notices him. She gives him a wink then walks quickly away. The bus takes off.

EXT. DENVER GREEN ELEMANTARY SCHOOL - MORNING

Several school buses stop in front of the entrance to the school. The Denver Green Elemantary School is a very wide one story building. The snow has stopped falling but the school is entirely surrounded by snow covered hills. There is no other structure in sight.

A few more school buses pull in and all the kids rush out. Albe is the last kid to come out from the middle bus. He looks around at the hundreds of kids walking around in groups and talking amongst themselves.

Albe notices another kid with light brown skin, CHRIS, and instinctually walks up to him and his group of friends.

ALBE

So does this snow thing happen often or is today special?

CHRIS
Huh? Do I know you?

ALBE
Probably not, I'm new here. My name
is Albe.

Albe extends his hand for a shake. Chris shakes it, a little confused.

CHRIS
Albe? That's a weird name.

ALBE
It's short for Albert. Which is
already short for Alberto, so it's
kind of weird.

CHRIS
Yeah...

Awkward silence.

ALBE
But seriously, this snow thing-

The door to the school open and MS. DONOVAN steps out. Ms. Donovan is very charismatic and polite. She blows a whistle and says:

MS. DONOVAN
Alright, everyone! Let's get you
out of this cold. Get into your
lines and come inside!

Albe turns back to Chris and sees that he's not there anymore. Suddenly all the kids around start forming into dozens of parallel lines with girls on one side and boys on the other. The lines form all over the school, at seemingly random places (out on the hills, the roof of the school, in the parking lot, etc.) and the kids bump into and shove Albe as they walk.

Albe tries to ask people where he should go but the shoves and the noise drown him out. Albe is pushed into the middle of the lot in front of the school when all the kids stop moving and all the lines are formed.

Albe looks around defensively, anticipating more shoves and movement. The lines of kids then walk past Albe and one by one very quickly walk into the building, leaving Albe completely alone outside.

Albe looks around, confused and depressed. Then the kid that was sleeping next to him on the bus walks past him, still sleepy and rubbing his eyes. Albe follows him inside the school.

INT. DENVER GREEN ELEMANTARY SCHOOL. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The school is very clean and square. There are many colors and pictures on the walls. Ms. Donovan is standing in front of the front desk talking to the secretary sitting behind it.

Both Albe and the sleeping kid walk in. The sleeping kid walks up with his eyes closed and raises his hand over the desk. The secretary hands him a piece of paper.

MS. DONOVAN

Late again?

The kid yawns and nods, then walks down the hallway to his class. Albe then walks up to Ms. Donovan.

ALBE

Hey, can I get one of those?

MS. DONOVAN

Are you late too-

Ms. Donovan looks down at Albe.

MS. DONOVAN (CONT'D)

Oh, hello. *gasp* You must be Albert, the new student! Oh welcome, welcome!

Ms. Donovan shakes Albe's hand eagerly.

MS. DONOVAN (CONT'D)

We've been waiting for you ever since your aunt called! We don't get many new students, especially not from outside of Denver let alone from outside the country! The other kids can learn so much from you.

ALBE

Learn from me? I don't have anything to teach. Isn't that your job?

MS. DONOVAN

(laughing)

Yes, yes.

(MORE)

MS. DONOVAN (CONT'D)

But I think this is going to be great for everyone. Kids here are so used to the same thing all the time, you're really going to shake things up.

ALBE

I just want to get to class.

MS. DONOVAN

That's perfect, because I am your new teacher. You can call me Ms. Donovan. Come on, this way. The class is waiting.

Ms. Donovan leads Albe down the hallway.

INT. MS. DONOVAN'S CLASSROOM - MORNING

Ms. Donovan's classroom is decorated the same way as the rest of the school. There are desks set up in circles on the left side of the room, and a big rug on the right with a small white board in front of it.

There is a wall of awards next to the door of the classroom and Albe sees the top student of the class is Brady.

ALBE

Of course, I knew this would happen.

MS. DONOVAN

Okay class, can I have everyone's attention. We have a new student, please everyone welcome Albert to our family!

ENTIRE CLASS

Hi Albert.

ALBE

Hello.

Brady walks in the door.

BRADY

Albert? What, did you follow me here?

ALBE

Yeah actually, I just wanted to say that your fly is down.

BRADY
Yeah right.

Beat. Albe and Brady stare at each other. Brady then caves and checks his pants.

ALBE
Made you look.

BRADY
I only looked cause I just came from the bathroom!

Albe smirks.

MS. DONOVAN
Do you two know each other?

No BRADY Yes. ALBE

ALBE (CONT'D)
Is that you up there Brady?

Albe points to the award wall.

BRADY
Sure is.

ALBE
You don't photograph well, do you? Don't worry though, I'll be taking your place soon and save you the embarrassment of everyone looking at that.

BRADY
As if. I got up there without even trying.

MS. DONOVAN
Okay everyone, you too Brady, get back to your seats. Albert, your seat is right over here.

ALBE
Please, Ms. Donovan. Call me Albe.

MS. DONOVAN
Oooh, I like it. Thanks for telling me.

Albe sits at his desk. The other kids at his table are visibly not very smart, but they don't mind Albe sitting with them. Brady sits at the table directly in front of Albe.

Albe takes off his backpack, and he can see Brady pointing and laughing at him with the other kids at his table. Albe looks at his backpack embarrassed. He then takes out his pencils and sees that they are also covered in cartoons.

MS. DONOVAN (CONT'D)

Okay class, we are going to start off with our multiplication exercises. Flip over the papers on your next when I say and do as many problems as you can.

Albe tries to cover as much of the pencil as he can with his hand, but the other kids have already noticed and Albe can hear their giggles. Albe's face turns red.

MS. DONOVAN (CONT'D)

Okay, flip your papers and get started.

Albe flips his paper with everyone else and starts writing. While others struggle, Albe gets through the problems with ease.

Brady raises his paper.

BRADY

Done!

Ms. Donovan is already looking at Albe's paper.

MS. DONOVAN

Wow, these are all correct. Well Brady, looks like you have some competition this year.

BRADY

Ugh, those superheroes probably came to his rescue.

Brady's table laughs, along with one kid from Albe's table who doesn't really know why their laughing.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - MIDDAY

Albe is sitting by himself at a table next to a window. He is looking at his superhero lunch box with disdain. There is nothing but snowy hills outside the window.

Brady walks up to Albe's table.

ALBE

Came to grab a seat? I think we can squeeze you in here. Right guys?

Beat.

BRADY

No don't bother everyone, I'm just passing by.

Albe smiles a little.

ALBE

Are you going to bully me then? You should know I'm just going to punch you in the face.

BRADY

Of course someone like you would start with violence. I actually came to tell you the opposite. Don't think that we're rivals or something. I want as little interaction with you as possible. I am not here to waste my time with-

Brady looks at Albe's lunchbox.

BRADY (CONT'D)

-childish games.

ALBE

Thank you for taking the time to tell me that.

BRADY

Heh, you think you're so smart. Why are you even here? Why can't you go back to where you came from?

ALBE

I don't want to be here. Everything about this place sucks.

BRADY

So go! We won't miss you. No one even knows you.

ALBE

Maybe, I will. I've tried to be happy about all this but it's not working.

BRADY

I'm glad we can agree on something.

ALBE

Then again, how would I take your place on the wall if I leave. Decisions, decisions.

BRADY

I don't care about that. I know I'm better and smarter and I don't need some stupid picture on a wall to tell me that.

Brady walks away. Albe stares at his food.

CUT TO:

INT. COLORADO HOUSE. LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Albe and Alberto are on the couch. Alberto is eating while Albe stares at his food.

ALBE

Pa, can we go back for more school supplies?

ALBERTO

Estas jugando, verdad? Your aunt just stocked you up for years on school supplies.

ALBE

I know, but, I don't like all the super heroes and cartoons on them.

ALBERTO

Then why did you pick them?

Beat.

ALBE

Pa?

ALBERTO

Que ahora?

ALBE

Do you remember the promise you made?

ALBERTO

Promise? Can you be a little more specific?

ALBE

The one we made in the airport!

ALBERTO

Oh yeah...Oh. Albe-

ALBE

You said that at the first sign of things not working we would go back. You promised!

ALBERTO

Si pero... There's no way things are that bad already.

ALBE

Well they are.

ALBERTO

Eat your food.

ALBE

I don't want to be here. The kids at school don't want me here. Do you feel like you belong here.

Alberto takes some time to think.

ALBERTO

Eat your food.

ALBE

Pero papi!

ALBERTO

Ya! Eh dicho!

Albe puts all of the food angrily in his mouth, puffing his cheeks out like a squirrel. He then gets up and marches to get his coat and something out of his backpack.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

Adonde vas?

ALBE

(mouth full of food)
To play with my top.

Albe puts on his coat and walks out the door.

EXT. COLORADO HOUSE. FRONT SIDEWALK - SAME TIME

Albe angrily wraps the string around his top. He then notices the same girl from this morning skateboarding on the driveway of the house across from him. Dem is wearing a black hoodie and has short black hair. They look at each other suspiciously for a few seconds before continuing what they were doing.

Dem does an ollie, Albe pretends not to notice. Albe then throws his top and makes it spin. Dem looks at it then looks away when Albe looks at her.

Albe picks up his top and starts wrapping the string around it again. Dem skates over to him.

DEM
What is that?

ALBE
This is a top. What is that?

DEM
What is what? My skateboard?

ALBE
Skateboard? How do you not fall off that thing?

DEM
This isn't what's weird. You were making that caveman looking thing dance or something.

ALBE
This is easy. You just yank on the string when you throw it.

Albe demonstrates. The top spins beautifully.

DEM
...can I try?

ALBE
(genuinely excited)
Of course! It's better with more than one because you can make them fight!

DEM
That sounds awesome. Do you have another one?

ALBE

Yeah!

Albe takes out the top Darlin made him. He looks at it for a beat, reminiscing.

ALBE (CONT'D)

Actually, here use mine. This one is... it's not as good.

Albe picks up his top and starts wrapping the string around it. He hands it over to Dem.

DEM

So... just yank back on the string?

ALBE

It's a little more complicated than that-

Dem throws the entire top dozens of meters away. Her and Albe watch it land in the snow at the entrance of the cul-de-sac.

ALBE (CONT'D)

Well good news, you have one heck of a throwing arm. Do you play baseball?

DEM

I got it.

Dem skates after the top. Albe watches her and can't help but form a smile on his face.

Alberto opens the door to the house and sticks his head out.

ALBERTO

Oye Albe, if you wanna talk-

ALBE

No, esta bien papi. We'll talk later.

ALBERTO

Okay pero don't stay out here too long, you'll catch a cold.

Alberto thinks for a little while then heads back inside. Dem skates back, top in hand.

DEM

One more try?

ALBE

As many tries as it takes. Then maybe later you can teach me some... skateboard... stuff.

DEM

Deal.

Albe teaches Dem how to wrap the string around the top.

FADE TO:

EXT. DEM'S HOUSE DRIVEWAY - SUNSET

Albe is trying his hardest to balance on the skateboard. Dem has her arms out at either side of him in case he falls.

ALBE

Alright, twelve time's the charm.

Albe rolls a few inches to the left very slowly.

ALBE (CONT'D)

Hey I think I'm getting the hang of this!

Dem braces for a fall.

ALBE (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

DEM

Oh? I don't know, people just usually fall after saying something like that.

Albe leans and rolls a few inches the other way.

ALBE

Hey, can I ask you something? Do you go to the same school as me? I haven't seen you there.

DEM

(sighs)

I don't like going to school.

ALBE

Well that makes two of us. But what's your reason?

DEM

It's stupid. I learn stupid things,
sit next to stupid people, and get
the same stupid reaction from my
parents no matter what grade I get.

Albe almost loses his balance.

ALBE

So you just stay out in the cold
all day?

DEM

Of course not, my dad is at work
all day so I just sneak back into
my house and play video games.

ALBE

(nonchalantly)

Video games? What are those?

Dem stares at Albe like he's from outer space.

DEM

What did you just ask me?

ALBE

(confused)

...What are video games?

DEM

Do you live under a rock? You have
to be shown the ways.

The sky darkens.

DEM (CONT'D)

Skip school with me tomorrow.

Albe almost falls off the skateboard.

ALBE

What? No, I can't. ...I can't.

DEM

Don't be a baby. What's one missed
day?

ALBE

It's complicated. Why don't you
come with me tomorrow?

DEM

Enticing, but Imma have to decline.

ALBE

No, trust me. It'll be fun. There's this kid, Brady-

DEM

Oh, I know Brady. His parents are good friends with my dad. They own the melding place he works at. Total ass. Are you in the same class as him?

ALBE

Yeah, he wasn't very welcoming. And I don't like how cool he thinks he is. What if we help him see what he's doing wrong?

DEM

I don't know if it's worth going to school for.

ALBE

Come on-

Albe loses his balance and Dem catches him. They look into each other's eyes.

ALBE (CONT'D)

One day?

Dem rolls her eyes and yanks the skateboard from Albe's feet. Albe falls in the snow.

DEM

(looking down at him)
One day.

Dem starts walking to her house.

ALBE

See you tomorrow!

Albe smiles, still on the floor.

EXT. COLORADO SCHOOL BUS STOP - MORNING

Albe walks up to the bus stop looking for Dem. He goes through the group of kids but doesn't find her.

BRADY

I thought you were leaving.

ALBE
I thought you weren't going to
waste time on me.

Brady scoffs then walks away. Albe looks disappointed as he realizes that Dem is not there.

EXT. COLORADO HOUSE. FRONT SIDEWALK - AFTERNOON

Albe is grumpily walking to his house. Dem is skateboarding in her driveway again. She sees Albe and skates to him.

DEM
Hey.

ALBE
...hey.

DEM
Are you seriously mad that I didn't
go to school today?

ALBE
No. Well, yes, a little bit. Maybe.

DEM
Why? It's just stupid class. It
wouldn't have mattered if I was
there.

ALBE
It would've mattered to me.

Beat.

DEM
Hey, check it out.

Dem takes out Albe's top and throws it, making it spin expertly.

ALBE
Wow, you did it!

DEM
I've been practicing literally all
day. I wanna see how you make them
fight.

ALBE
Well get ready to lose. Cause I'm
putting some today's anger into
this.

Albe takes out his top and starts wrapping the string around it.

INT. DEM'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM - HOUR LATER

Albe and Dem are playing video games. Dem is looking annoyed that Albe is winning.

ALBE

I think I can get used to this video game thing.

DEM

Yeah... Sure. That's enough gaming for today. My uh, system is overheating.

ALBE

Oh okay, hey actually I have one more question for you. The day we moved in, I saw someone looking at us through this window. Was that you?

Dem lays back.

DEM

No, that was definitely my dad. That house has been on sale for years, he was curious who would buy it.

ALBE

It was a little creepy.

DEM

Yeah well, my dad is a little creepy.

Keys are heard in the front door. Dem's Dad GARRET walks in. He is a huge man with a big beard and even bigger gut. He is carrying a bag of fast food. He was angry when he walked in, made worse by seeing Albe.

DEM (CONT'D)

(under her breath)

Oh crap.

GARRET

Dem. Who's your friend?

DEM

This is Albe. Our new neighbor.

Albe stands up and extends his hand.

ALBE
Hello, Mr-

GARRET
Garret. Call me Garret.

DEM
Dad I-

GARRET
Dem, what have I told you about...
boys.

DEM
You've let me bring Brady before.

ALBE
You've had Brady in here...

GARRET
Brady is a respectable young lad
whose parents sign my checks.

DEM
That's not fair!

GARRET
Albe, you should leave. Now. Me and
Dem are about... to have dinner.

Garret walks past them.

DEM
Dad!

GARRET
Enough!

Albe walks to the door. He turns back and sees Garret opening the door to the fridge and Dem walking angrily up the stairs. Albe exits.

INT. COLORADO HOUSE. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Albe walks with a confused look on his face. Alberto is messing around with some wires near the wall. He looks up when he hears the door close.

ALBERTO
Oye, y donde andavas?

ALBE

I was at a friends house. Our front neighbors.

ALBERTO

Oh, our neighbor huh... So that's where you've been hiding. And the look on your face tells me you met Garret.

ALBE

How did you know?

ALBERTO

He's my coworker. Met him the other day. Real piece of work.

Albe takes off his coat and sits on the coach.

ALBE

I'm hungry.

ALBERTO

Sorry but I haven't cooked anything yet. I've been working on the house a little.

ALBE

Yeah, I've noticed. This place almost looks liveable.

ALBERTO

Ay callate, it wasn't that bad. But hey, I have another surprise for yah.

ALBE

(Almost smiling)

It's always surprises with you. Why can't you just tell what the thing is.

Alberto stands up and grabs a box from the kitchen.

ALBERTO

Surprises are fun.

He sits it on a little table next to the wires he was working on.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)
 Anyway, the company said they
 couldn't be here for about another
 week because of the snow but, I
 knew you couldn't wait that long.

Alberto pulls the string and the box opens up to reveal a
 house phone.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)
 Ta-Da!

ALBE
 A phone?

ALBERTO
 Yes to-

ALBE
 Call Mami! Hurry! Hurry!

Alberto connects the phone and dials. Albe picks it up and
 listens to it ring. It rings for a long time.

Jenny picks up.

JENNY (O.S.)
 Hello?

Albe's eyes immediately tear up and he begins crying.

ALBE
 Ay, mami tu me as echo tanta falta.
 Yo quiero verte otra ves, no me a
 gustado nada-

JENNY (O.S.)
 Mi bebe, what have they done to
 you?

ALBERTO
 Maybe this wasn't such a good idea.

ALBE
 I just feel like no one wants me
 here.

JENNY (O.S.)
 I know, mi amor, it must be so hard
 for you. I can't even imagine how
 much this change is affecting you.
 Have you made any new friends at
 least?

ALBE
Well, there is one.

JENNY
Que bueno, papi! Espera... Alex!
Ben aqui! Come talk to Albe.

Alberto leans his head in to talk on the phone.

ALBERTO
Hola, Jenny, mi querida, you do
know I have to pay for every minute
for international calls right?

JENNY
(sternly)
Well crack open you piggy bank.

Alberto laughs nervously. Albe continues talking on the phone.

ALBE
Hola Alex! I miss you too buddy!

Albe continues talking on the phone while Alberto bites his nails.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. COLORADO HOUSE. ALBE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Albe is laying down on his bed looking up at the ceiling. When he closes his eyes he hears a tap on his window. He looks outside and sees Dem, waving shyly.

Albe opens the window to talk but she climbs in.

DEM
Hi.

ALBE
What can you possibly tell me now
that couldn't wait till morning?

DEM
I just wanted to see if everything
you owned was super hero themed.

ALBE
You noticed that...

DEM

But seriously, I just wanted to say sorry for the way my dad treated you. It wasn't fair.

ALBE

That's alright. I was in his house without permission. He was right to be angry.

DEM

It's not that simple. But anyway, the real reason I'm here now is because my dad doesn't want me seeing you anymore.

ALBE

Really? He was that angry?

They both lean against the wall.

DEM

Well, like I said. It's complicated. I still don't completely get it.

ALBE

I know one place we can still see each other.

DEM

I can't sneak into your room every night.

ALBE

In school.

DEM

Not this again.

ALBE

You're a couple years older than me aren't you?

DEM

Yeah, so?

ALBE

We're in the same grade. Don't you want to finally graduate?

DEM

No. I won't be able to stay at home as easily.

ALBE

I can help you. School here is easy. What would your dad say if you graduated?

Dem thinks for a second.

DEM

I'll go tomorrow. Not because you said so, but because I have to go some days of the week or they'll get suspicious.

Albe stands up in excitement.

ALBE

Yes! Wait, are you just lying to me again?

DEM

No. I've never told a lie in my life.

They smile at each other. Alberto opens the door with a power drill in his hands.

ALBERTO

Albe? You okay I heard some voices and-

He sees Dem.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

Oh okay, I see.

ALBE

Paaaa! It's not what you think.

ALBERTO

Whatever you say...

Alberto closes the door.

Dem looks at Albe with a smirk and Albe shakes his head in embarrassment.

INT. DENVER GREEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. CAFETERIA - DAY

Albe and Dem are sitting together. Albe is looking through a few of Dem's papers.

DEM

Well? Tell me Doc, am I gonna make it?

ALBE

Hmm, well you can definitely read... and write, a little. But your math uh needs some work.

DEM

Ugh, this is so stupid.

ALBE

You use that word a lot.

DEM

Fine, this is so dumb.

Chris walks up to their table.

CHRIS

Hey guys, mind if I sit with you?

DEM

Sure. Albe do you know Chris?

ALBE

We've met.

DEM

Chris is the one that marks me present in class everyday.

CHRIS

Yeah, and I overheard what you guys were talking about. And to be honest, I could use some tutoring myself. Is that okay?

ALBE

Of course. This is actually better because you guys can keep each other motivated.

CHRIS

Sweet! Cause I suck at those multiplication quizzes man.

Chris takes out his papers.

INT. DENVER GREEN ELEMANTARY SCHOOL. CAFETERIA - THE NEXT DAY

Albe, Dem, and Chris are sitting at their table. Albe is looking a paper while Dem watches him nervously.

ALBE
Hey you got one right!

DEM
I did! Let me see!

Dem knocks over Albe when she snatches the paper.

DEM (CONT'D)
Haha yes! I didn't even guess on
that problem!

Another boy walks up to their table and helps Albe up.

BOY
Albe, right? Chris told me you were
offering help on some school stuff.

ALBE
Yeah! The more the merrier.

The boy sits down.

INT. COLORADO HOUSE. LIVING ROOM

Albe and Alberto are eating at a table now. They are watching T.V.

ALBERTO
So how was school today?

ALBE
Really good, actually.

ALBERTO
Que alegria me da oir eso. You've
been a lot happier since you called
your mom. There I go making
everything better again.

Albe rolls his eyes.

START MONTAGE

-Albe's table at the Cafeteria gets more and more filled with kids.

-Brady's Top Student award gets replaced by Albe's and the students clap for him. Even Brady, albeit reluctantly.

-The snow starts melting as spring rolls around.

-Albe and Dem are waiting at the Bus Stop together.

DEM

Albe, you've never told me where you're from.

ALBE

I'm from the Dominican Republic.

DEM

Where's that exactly?

ALBE

In the Caribbean.

DEM

Don't people usually speak Spanish there? How come your English is so fluent?

ALBE

Well you see-

Albe voice is drowned out by the bus pulling up and the kids rushing in.

-Albe's lunch table is now packed and more tables are brought in closer.

ALBE (CONT'D)

Come one! Come all! Soon we will all be on that wall!

Albe sees Brady looking at him from across the cafeteria and gives him a wink and points at him with a finger gun.

-Albe is packing up his things in the class room when Ms. Donovan walks up to him.

MS. DONOVAN

Hey Albe, you have a minute?

ALBE

Sure, what's up?

MS. DONOVAN

I've noticed how you've been helping other kids during lunch break.

(MORE)

MS. DONOVAN (CONT'D)

And I just wanted to thank you. They're usually so unwilling to admit they need help so I don't really understand how they swallowed their pride and asked you for help.

ALBE

You don't need to thank me, Ms. D. And if I had to guess, they asked me because they knew I wouldn't judge them. My help is the only thing I can give them.

MS. DONOVAN

Albe, you came to late in the year for me to make you valedictorian, but I would still like for you to make a speech.

ALBE

The valedic- vale- whatever Brady is, right? I'm not good with speeches. I rather just give my time to him.

MS. DONOVAN

Are you sure? I want your help to be recognized.

Albe finishes packing up and zips up his backpack.

ALBE

I don't think it'll be a good look for you if everyone found out I was doing your job.

Ms. Donovan smiles sheepishly.

ALBE (CONT'D)

Just have Brady give me a shout-out. Goodbye Ms. D, see you tomorrow.

MS. DONOVAN

Goodbye, Albe.

Albe looks at the award wall, with now everyone's picture on it. Crowding around Brady's.

-Albe and Dem walk from the bus stop to the entrance of the cul-de-sac. They hug before separating and walking down their respective sidewalks, pretending not to know each other.

-Albe and Alberto are painting the front of their house the same shade of blue as their house in D.R. Garret watches them from his front yard on a lawn chair, sipping a beer.

-Albe and Dem get off the bus in front of their school. The school is covered in signs, decorations, and ribbons that show the school is getting ready for graduation. Albe and Dem smile at each other before walking down.

END MONTAGE

INT. DENVER GREEN ELEMANTARY SCHOOL. CAFETERIA - DAY

Albe is sitting at his table laughing with Chris.

ALBE

So I drew the line in the sand and bet him that he couldn't go under it.

BOY

What did he do?

ALBE

He dove head first onto the floor.

They all laugh.

ALBE (CONT'D)

Hey Chris, you seen Dem?

CHRIS

Nope, she wasn't in class today. Oh darn, I didn't even realize. I forgot to mark her present today. She's been coming so often.

Albe stares out the window, concerned.

CUT TO:

EXT. DEM'S HOUSE DRIVEWAY - AFTERNOON

Dem is skateboarding in her driveway when Albe walks up to her. Alberto is fixing up their house's fence.

ALBERTO

Hola, Albe! Como fue tu-

DEM
Uh, Albe. What are you doing? You know you can't be here.

ALBE
Why didn't you go to school today?

Dem ignores him and skates in a circle.

DEM
I don't want to talk about it.

ALBE
You were doing so well, why quit now?

DEM
I said I don't want to talk about it.

ALBE
Graduation is at the end of the month.

Dem gets off the skateboard and kicks it into the grass.

DEM
I'm not graduating.

ALBE
Wha-

DEM
You heard me. I'm not graduating. All that work we did was for nothing. Yesterday I got the same letter I've been getting the last two years. I'm not graduating.

Dem hugs her knees and starts to cry.

ALBE
Dem... I- You can still-

DEM
No! I tried for nothing! You got my hopes up for nothing! This whole thing was stupid!

ALBE
Even if you really can't graduate this year, we still made a lot of progress. You are set up to-

DEM

To what? To try next year? That's what I hear every year. And you know what? This is all your fault!

ALBE

You can't blame me for trying to motivate you. I did it because I li- because I cared.

DEM

No, you were suppose to be *my* friend. And help *me* out. But you stopped paying attention to me as soon as all those other kids starting hanging around you.

ALBE

I- I didn't- I wasn't trying to avoid or ignore you. They wanted my help. Those kids wouldn't even look at me when I first got to that school. But you did.

DEM

Yeah, looks like I shouldn't have. I thought you'd be different. I probably would've graduated if you didn't want to become Mr. Popular.

Garret walks out of the house.

GARRET

What's with all the yelling- You! I thought you were told to stay away from here!

Garret walks up to Albe menacingly but Alberto runs over and pushes him back.

ALBERTO

Hey! Garret! Watch how you talk to my son!

GARRET

How about you teach him how to follow orders! No wonder he's your son, acts the same way you do at the factory.

ALBERTO

Then he must be damn great cause our supervisors love me.

GARRET

Bah, all the guys know you're a bootlicker. You're the reason they laid me off.

ALBERTO

It's called working hard, Garret. You're all a bunch of lazy bums, mad that someone finally showed that place what a real worker is.

GARRET

I suggest you watch your mouth before-

DEM

Enough!

ALBE

Enough!

Alberto and Garret look at their children, then at each other.

ALBERTO

Perdon, Albe. I didn't mean for you to see me like this.

GARRET

Dem, get inside.

Garret and Dem go inside their house and Alberto and Albe cross the street.

INT. COLORADO HOUSE. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Albe and Alberto walk into their house, Albe is in low spirits while Alberto is riled up.

ALBERTO

Como se atreve ese hombre hablar me asi. I tell you Albe, some of the people here can-

Alberto sees Albe is not in the mood.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

Oye, mi'ijo. You don't have to be sad that you can't see your friend anymore. There's many more girls out there for you.

ALBE

That's not even close to why- You never actually listen to me or what's going on in my life.

Albe starts walking to his room.

ALBERTO

You're right. You're very right.

Albe stops and turns around.

ALBE

I am?

ALBERTO

Si, completamente. I have been treating you like a little kid when it's obvious to me now that you're a man. And if you have something to say then I should listen.

Alberto sits down on the couch and pats the seat next to him. Albe sits with him.

ALBE

Dem, that girl, she's a good friend. She was the first person that seemed like they actually wanted to talk to me. I really appreciated that, and I wanted to do something for her. And I failed.

ALBERTO

How did you fail?

ALBE

I was tutoring her to help her graduate, and she still won't graduate this year.

ALBERTO

Como? That's not your fault. You can't feel bad about that.

ALBE

But I gave her that hope. I made her think she could do it.

ALBERTO

Albe, if you got her to try then you already did your job. She has to graduate eventually, and it'll be because of you that she does.

ALBE

You really think so?

ALBERTO

I know so, I worked with her dad.
That man is not the best role
model, but you are. She needed you
to kick her butt into gear.

Albe smiles hopefully.

ALBE

How is your job going anyway?

ALBERTO

(sighs)

I didn't want to tell you before
because you were already so eager
to get out of here but, it's not
been very... welcoming.

ALBE

That's exactly how I felt at
school!

ALBERTO

Si, yo se. That's why I didn't want
to tell you anything. The pay is
great, in just the few months I've
been here made more than a year in
D.R. or New York. But the workload
is immense, and none of the other
workers want me there. I eat my
lunch alone everyday.

ALBE

Everyday?

Alberto can't hide his sadness from that statement.

ALBERTO

But it doesn't matter to me. You
know why? Because all I do is think
about eating dinner with you at the
end of the day. I think about all
the money I'm making for your mom
and brother. I think about why I'm
here, and that gets me through the
lonely lunch times and helps me
forget the things I hear people say
about me.

Albe gives Alberto a hug.

ALBE
 I'm sorry I've been so ungrateful.
 I promise that I'll be less of
 burden from now on.

Alberto soaks in the hug.

ALBERTO
 Es culpa mia tambien, Albe. I
 should've done this when we first
 got here.

Albe stands up from the couch.

ALBE
 Sooo you've been making a lot of
 money you say?

ALBERTO
 Oh here we go, igual a tu mama.

ALBE
 No, no, it's just that graduation
 is coming up and there's the
 pictures, the cap an gown, the ring-

ALBERTO
 Oh don't worry about that, me and
 your aunt will go all out on your
 graduation.

Albe gets excited and him and Alberto keep talking.

FADE OUT.

EXT. COLORADO HOUSE. FRONT SIDEWALK - AFTERNOON

Albe is in a dress shirt and pants as well as his dad. They
 are standing in front of their house and Albe is holding his
 cap and gown under his arm.

ALBERTO
 Que lindo te vez. I really messed
 up not getting a camera, your mom
 is going to kill me.

ALBE
 This collar is really
 uncomfortable, it's like made out
 of concrete.

ALBERTO
 You'll get used to it.

Dem's door opens and a women, DEM'S MOM, with soft, gentle eyes comes out. Behind her is Dem, with her hair done and in a black dress with Converse shoes. Albe doesn't recognize Dem until they walk up to them.

DEM'S MOM

This handsome little man must be Albe.

ALBE

Yeah um Hi. Are you Dem's mom?

DEM'S MOM

Yes, I am. And she's told me a lot about you.

Dem's mom looks up to Alberto.

DEM'S MOM (CONT'D)

I wanted to apologize for my ex-husbands behavior. He can be a little much sometimes, trust me I know.

ALBERTO

Ex husband, you say?

ALBE

Dad?!

ALBERTO

Just a joke. And eh, it was no trouble.

ALBE

(to Dem)

You look really nice.

DEM

Oh shut up, this dress is stupid. At least, I convinced her to let me wear my shoes.

ALBE

Did she force you to come?

DEM

No, I wanted to go. I mean, she did give me some really good advice.

ALBE

Don't tell me she thought you were graduating.

DEM

Yeah, actually she did. Me and my big mouth earlier this year. Plus, I needed her to do my hair 'cause God knows neither me or my dad know how.

ALBE

Well, she did a great job.

They blush.

DEM'S MOM

(to Alberto)

Is it okay if she tags along with you guys?

ALBERTO

Of course, we're just waiting for my sister to get here.

ALBE

Hopefully she won't be here for a while.

Albe runs into his house, then runs back outside with his two tops.

DEM

You read my mind!

EXT. DENVER GREEN ELEMANTARY SCHOOL. PARKING LOT - DUSK

The lot is full of cars and kids in their gowns walking with their parents. Alberto's car pulls into a free parking space and the four of them come out.

Miguelina takes pictures of Albe and Dem as they get out of the car and as they walk in the building.

INT. DENVER GREEN ELEMANTARY SCHOOL. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Albe and Dem run into Ms. Donovan, who is answering questions for another family.

ALBE

Hi, Ms. D! Can you believe it's today!

MS. DONOVAN

I know! I'm so proud of you but there was never a doubt that you'd make it.

Dem looks at the floor downheartedly. Ms. Donovan bends down to meet her gaze.

MS. DONOVAN (CONT'D)

You must be Demetria. Hi, I'm Ms. Donovan. I'm going to be your teacher next year.

DEM

Really? But don't you only teach the smart kids or something? The honors class or whatever?

MS. DONOVAN

Yes, that's why I'll be teaching you.

Dem looks at Albe and smiles, Albe smiles back.

ALBE

Demetria?

DEM

Shut up, Albert.

INT. DENVER GREEN SCHOOL. AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The auditorium looks like an old, priceless opera house and it is filled with people. Albe is walking to get his Diploma and Alberto, Miguelina, and Dem are cheering him on. They are getting many looks from all the other parents.

INT. DENVER GREEN SCHOOL. AUDITORIUM - LATER

Albe is sitting with the rest of his family. Albe sees Alberto pour something into his drink.

ALBERTO

Que? It's my son's graduation. I can celebrate a little bit.

Before Albe can respond, Brady is announced to make his speech.

Brady walks up to the podium with a confident grin and fixes the papers he has in front of him.

BRADY

Good afternoon, students, parents, teachers. I'm sure most of you already know who I am but in case you don't, I am Brady Crenshaw. My family owns the Crenshaw melding and steel company, and soon so will I. I am here making this speech today because I was at the top of my class. I have always been at the top of my class and I always will be. That is because I work hard to better myself, and lead the way for others to follow. Others like a good friend of mine, Albert.

Albe looks a little surprised.

BRADY (CONT'D)

Where is he? Oh, there he is. Albert, stand up will you? Let the people see you.

Albe begins to stand up, Dem holds his hand to try to stop him but he gets up anyway. He does not get friendly looks except from some of the teachers who clap for him.

BRADY (CONT'D)

Albe told me that he wanted to leave the first day he got here. He did not like all that we here in Denver Colorado had to offer.

Albe sits down.

BRADY (CONT'D)

But I showed him the light. I showed him that he had friends here, I even helped him with schoolwork. In fact, he did so well that I even gave up my top student position. Just ask all the other students that were inspired by my help.

Dem rolls her eyes. Albe smiles and shrugs.

BRADY (CONT'D)

For example, take my good friend Demetria, who with my help went from a deadbeat flunkie to an honor roll student.

Dem gets incredibly angry. Alberto gets up and yells:

ALBERTO

Oye! What does this have to do with graduation?!

Many of the parents turn around and shush Alberto. Miguelina also makes him sit back down.

BRADY

I'm just giving your son a shout out, Mister. Your son who couldn't follow me in my footsteps in tutoring other students well enough to help Dem graduate with us today. But me, and my parents, were able to convince the board to bump her up to a better class. Because, I care about all our students and even though some of us are born with innate talents, others can be positioned into their rightful place in society.

The auditorium claps, some families even give Brady a standing ovation.

As Brady is accepting his praise, someone throws a fake diploma at him and it hits him in his face.

BRADY (CONT'D)

Who dares to-

Alberto stands up!

ALBERTO

Wooo! Hahaha Toma!

Alberto throws Albe's fake diploma at Brady.

BRADY

Someone get this oaf out of here!

A man in a suit, BRADY'S DAD, walks up to Alberto.

BRADY'S DAD

Mr. Rodriguez that is my son you are bombarding. I suggest you control yourself.

ALBERTO

Bueno, Mister, your son is a bit of a prick.

BRADY'S DAD

Hmph! I knew I should have listened to what the other workers were saying. Don't bother coming to work tomorrow.

ALBE

Pa! You didn't have to do that.

ALBERTO

I didn't start it.

They look at Dem.

DEM

Don't look at me, I didn't have a fake diploma to throw.

BRADY

If this nonsense is over, I have seventeen more pages to get through-

Brady gets hit with another fake diploma. This time Chris stands up and laughs.

CHRIS

Ha! Got 'em!

Soon all the other kids that Albe helped tutor start throwing their diplomas at Brady and eventually it devolves into chaos as all the students start throwing whatever isn't nailed down.

BRADY'S DAD

(to Alberto)

Look at the mess you have caused! This was my boys special day and you ruined it!

ALBERTO

You should know this isn't the first time I've been yelled at by some dad. But this time, I'm done yelling.

Ms. Donovan gets in between them.

MS. DONOVAN

This is a special day for all graduating students. Now we don't know who started this but that doesn't mean we have to-

Ms. Donovan ducks down and a piece of food misses her and hits Brady's dad. BRADY'S MOM gets up and helps get some of it off.

BRADY'S DAD

(to Alberto)

Do not show up for work. I'll have someone mail you your last check later in the week.

(to Ms. Donovan)

And your school will be hearing from my people.

Brady's dad and mom leave the auditorium as more stuff gets thrown around.

MS. DONOVAN

Some people just don't know how to have fun.

ALBE

Yeah, but others do.

Albe gives Ms. Donovan a wink.

MS. DONOVAN

(smiling)

Whatever do you mean?

ALBE

Dem, how's about putting that throwing arm to work?

DEM

(snatching a kids diploma)

Way ahead of you, every hit on Brady is 5 points.

Brady gets pelted with everything in the room until eventually even he starts smiling and throwing things back.

EXT. COLORADO HOUSE. FRONT SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Albe and Dem are sitting on the sidewalk laughing covered in bits of debris from the auditorium.

DEM

Not gonna lie Albe, tonight was fun, but there's one big problem.

ALBE

What could be wrong with what happened today?

DEM

There is no way that my graduation next year is going to be as fun as this.

ALBE

True, true. But it'll still be special. Cause it will be your graduation. And if it sucks I'll promise to throw something at you.

They laugh again.

DEM

Albe, I'm really glad I was curious enough to ask you about that top.

ALBE

Yeah, me too. You have no idea...

Garret opens the door to his house.

GARRET

Dem! It's late. It's time to come inside.

Dem looks disappointed but gets up anyway.

DEM

He's right. I should go. Talk tomorrow?

ALBE

Of course.

Dem and Albe hug. Dem walks over to her house and steps past her Garret. Albe starts heading back.

GARRET

Hey Albe!

Albe turns around.

GARRET (CONT'D)

Uh, congratulations on your graduation.

ALBE

Thank you! Have a great night.

Garret grumbles something under his breath and closes the door.

INT. COLORADO HOUSE. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Albe walks in to see Alberto packing up their stuff.

ALBE

Woah, what's going on here? Where are we going?

ALBERTO

I'm keeping my promise. First sign of things not going our way we get out of here right? And I just lost my job so can't get much worse than that.

ALBE

But leaving so soon? Can't we stay a couple more weeks?

ALBERTO

I've been planning this for a while. La verdad es que... I hate it here. It's so quiet, everything is so far away and the people suck. We're going back to D.R. even if we lose the house.

ALBE

You didn't save up enough money.

ALBERTO

No. I spent too much money trying to fix this place up. Thought we'd stay a little longer but...

ALBE

When are we leaving?

ALBERTO

Tomorrow morning.

ALBE

Tomorrow?! I can't. I... I...

ALBERTO

I thought you'd be happy to leave? Your mom and brother are going to be so happy to see you again.

ALBE

Tomorrow morning is just so soon.

ALBERTO

I bought the plane tickets for the day after your graduation. As soon as we could leave because I thought that's what you wanted. And did you not listen? You'll see your mom and brother.

ALBE

(downhearted)

I know, I'm excited.

Albe walks slowly to his room.

ALBERTO

Actually Albe wait. There's one more reason why we're leaving so soon.

ALBE

What is it?

ALBERTO

Es tu amigo, Darlin. I was talking to your mother yesterday and she told me that he had an... accident.

ALBE

What are you talking about?

ALBERTO

Look, she didn't want me to tell you this so I'm sorry I kept it from you. But... Darlin crashed while on his bike. And um, died. But they say it was instant! Saying that sounded like a better idea in my head...

ALBE

Darlin... is dead. But I haven't- How could he...

ALBERTO

You won't get much time to grief. That is, if you want to be at his funeral. We can stay here a few more days if-

ALBE

No! No! I want to go, I have to be there. At least for that.

Albe rushes to his room.

EXT. DEM'S HOUSE DRIVEWAY - EARLY MORNING

Albe knocks on the door but gets no answer. Alberto honks the car horn as Miguelina hammers a for sale sign in front of their house.

MIGUELINA

Sabes algo Alberto, you really fixed up this house. It's at least doubled in value. Maybe tripled.

ALBERTO

Claro, fui yo que lo ise.

Albe takes out his top and leaves it on the doormat. He then walks back to the car.

EXT. CIBAO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT - MORNING

The airport is just as packed as ever. Albe comes out the main entrance with his dad. They only have one carry-on bag each while every other person has several massive luggage.

Albe looks around at all the happy families that are being reunited and then to his dad. The somberly walk over to the parking lot where Miguelito is waiting for them with the Hiace.

EXT. CIBAO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. PARKING LOT - SAME TIME

MIGUELITO

Hola muchachos! Great morning, huh?

Albe throws his bag in the back and hops in the van without saying a word.

MIGUELITO (CONT'D)

Ay, who died hambrecito?

ALBERTO

Miguelito! I told you!

Miguelito remembers and, embarrassed, steps into the passenger seat. Alberto gets into the drivers seat, and still caresses the steering wheel a little.

ALBE

Can we hurry up and go home. I wanna see Mami.

ALBERTO

Lo que tu quieras.

They drive off.

EXT. ALBE'S HOUSE. FRONTYARD - LATER

Alberto pulls into the frontyard and Jenny is already waiting for them. Miguelito can be seen talking to Albe. Before Albe even opens the door fully Jenny runs to him, picks him up, and smother's him in kisses.

JENNY

Ay mi'ijo, I know this isn't how you expected to come back but I sure am happy that I get to see you anyway.

ALBE

I'm happy to see you too, of course. I never want to be apart from you again. Where's Alex?

JENNY

He's sleeping. I didn't want to wake him so early.

ALBERTO

Hey, what about me? Where's my hug?

Alberto gets a harsh look from Jenny and ignored by Albe.

ALBERTO (CONT'D)

Okay, I was just joking.

ALBE

Can we go see Darlin's family?

JENNY

They are very busy right now, they've been getting the funeral ready. And I just don't think they're super ready to talk right now.

Albe looks like he's about to cry.

JENNY (CONT'D)

I have some food ready for you though.

Jenny starts walking inside the house.

ALBE

I'm not very hungry.

Jenny gives him the same look she just gave Alberto.

ALBE (CONT'D)
(intimidated)
I guess I could eat.

INT. ALBE'S HOUSE - 3 HOURS LATER

The house is dark. Jenny is buttoning up Alex's shirt and Alberto is fixing his tie in front of a window with Miguelito mirroring him on the other side.

Albe steps out from the curtain wearing the clothes he had for his graduation.

JENNY
Oh, que hombre. You look so handsome. And you've grown so much! How long were you away? A decade?

ALBE
This thing is still as uncomfortable as it looks.

JENNY
You still look great. Doesn't he Alex?

Alex hugs Albe.

ALBE
Is Alex coming with us?

JENNY
No, he's way too young to be at a funeral.

ALBERTO
Miguelito is taking him your grandma's. And we gotta go soon. We want to get there a little early because there are a lot of people that are going to want to talk to you.

ALBE
To me? You mean other than Darlin's parents? Those are the only people I want to talk to anyway.

Alberto turns to face Albe with a slight smile.

ALBERTO

Oh way more than just them. You're about to find out one of the worst parts about coming back to D.R.

Profe Lugo comes up behind Miguelito, pushes him aside, opens the window and sticks his head in.

PROFE LUGO

Hey there Albe! Looking good. Oye, so I heard you were back and I just wanted to ask if you can lend me a couple hundred-

Alberto closes the window.

ALBERTO

We should hurry.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Outside an old church. There are some people dressed in the closest thing to formal attire that they could find. Alberto's van drives up to the entrance.

ALBE

I hadn't noticed it in our house but were there always this many flies here?

ALBERTO

Yeah, there's no snowy winter to kill them all here. Besides, there's not that many flies.

A group of flies group together to form a shadow of Alberto saying that line.

ALBE

Let's go inside, this sun is cooking me in this suit.

ALBERTO

You sure are complain-ey today. You're acting like you weren't born here.

ALBE

Just getting used to it everything again, I guess.

A group of kids run up to Albe, startling him.

JENNY

Ay que bueno, go catch up with your friends and me and your father will see how things are inside the church.

ALBE

Um, I don't know I-

ALBERTO

Don't be rude Albe. We'll get you a seat under a fan.

Albe is rushed away by the group of kids while Alberto and Jenny walk into the Church.

ALBE

Okay guys, so I have a game for us to start out with. How about we go around reminding each other our names. I'll go first-

KID #1

No me diga, you already forgot about all of us. You're in New York for not even a year and you already think you're better than us.

ALBE

That's not true, I just never really knew you guys to begin with. And I didn't go to New York.

KID #2

Lies. All of it. Everyone goes to New York, that's America.

KID #1

My mom's boyfriend has only ever gone to New York. What other part even is there?

ALBE

Well, me and my Dad went to a place called Colorado.

KID #1

That sounds so made up.

Just then, Profe Lugo runs up to them out of breath.

PROFE LUGO

(panting)

I... am... so glad.

(MORE)

PROFE LUGO (CONT'D)

To catch up with you. Hi... Albe.
About my request earlier.

ALBE

Profe Lugo, I don't have any money.
Why would you think that?

PROFE LUGO

Well, you just got back from the
promised land. And if you remember,
I'm the one who got you there. And
I have a fee.

KID #2

Wait, so it's true? He really just
got back from America?

PROFE LUGO

Yup, followed him from the airport.

ALBE

You what?

KID #3

Oye Albe, I never doubted you. You
remember me right? I handed you the
eraser in class that one time-

KID #1

Oh, don't I feel silly now. I know
where Colo-rado is.

KID #2

Those shoes are looking really nice
Albe, I would really appreciate if
you left them here for me next time
you leave.

KID #1

Now way, don't listen to him. He
doesn't even know who you are.
Besides look, I need more shoes to
go along with my holes.

Kid #1 raises both of his feet.

ALBE

Whuao, si maybe I can ask-

KID #4

I actually really need another
shirt. I've been using the same one
since first grade.

ALBE

That's true, I'm sure I will-

PROFE LUGO

Don't forget me, I'm the one that started this whole thing.

ALBE

Oh, I haven't forgotten about you. I just can't figure out another way to say no, stop begging a little kid for money. Don't you have shame?

PROFE LUGO

Nope.

All the kids and Profe Lugo get closer, asking Albe for stuff and he gets overwhelmed. He starts backing away slowly then quickly. He makes it behind his dad's van.

ALBE

There aren't even that many flies.

The flies form a shadow of Albe and Albe pushes it in line of sight of the kids then runs away into the Church.

INT. CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

Old wooden Church. There are not that many people inside. The casket looks very cheap, almost homemade and the lid is closed.

Darlin's parent's are finishing talking to people when Albe spots them and walks up. DARLIN'S MOM is crying and DARLIN'S DAD is calm.

ALBE

Hola senior-

DARLIN'S MOM

Tu...

ALBE

What-

DARLIN'S DAD

Hola Albe, it's nice to see you.

ALBE

I'm so sorry about what happened.

DARLIN'S MOM

Oh, are you?

ALBE

Of course, Darlin was my best friend.

DARLIN'S MOM

That's funny, I don't remember you ever calling him while you were away.

ALBE

I was-

DARLIN'S DAD

Amor, por favor ahora no.

DARLIN'S MOM

I wasn't going to say anything. But after seeing you again... Darlin never stopped talking about you. Everyday he brought you up and waited for a call, a letter, anything!

ALBE

(on the verge of tears)
I'm sorry! I didn't realize!

Jenny and Alberto run to Albe's side.

ALBERTO

Hey! What's going on here? Que pasa Albe?

DARLIN'S DAD

Excusame Alberto, pero this is a tough time for all of us. My wife is just going through it at the moment.

DARLIN'S MOM

Don't talk about me like that. He's the reason my Darlin is dead.

JENNY

Don't say things like that!

At this point, everyone in the Church is looking at them.

DARLIN'S MOM

All Darlin would do was ride that bike so he could show you what he learned.

DARLIN'S DAD

Amor, you're being unreasonable.

DARLIN'S MOM

Mi Darlin didn't want you to think you were too cool and grown for him when you got back. And it kil-

ALBE

Darlin was my best friend. In fact, he still is and always will be. I'm sorry that life didn't go the way we wanted, I didn't even want to go America.

Albe walks up to the casket.

ALBE (CONT'D)

No one asked me how I felt or how I was doing when we got to the Church. They were all focused on themselves and what they wanted. Darlin here is proof that I can't help everybody. I can barely help myself. There are many things that I wanted to do that now I know I can't and I- But this isn't about me. This is Darlin's day. And I want to respect that.

Albe starts walking out the Church.

ALBE (CONT'D)

Mami, Papi, let's go.

JENNY

Claro, mi'ijito.

All three say their goodbye's to Darlin's Mom and Dad.

INT. ALBERTO'S HIACE - LATER

Everyone is quiet and feeling uneasy. Jenny breaks the silence with:

JENNY

Don't forget to pick up Alex.

ALBERTO

What? I didn't forget...

Alberto makes a sharp turn.

JENNY

Albe, we wanted to wait until later to tell you but I think some good news is what you need right now.

ALBE

Is it about the house? Because Miguelito might've spoiled the surprise for me already.

JENNY

That Miguelito... When I see him-

ALBE

No, it's okay, it was good that he told me because it got me thinking. I don't know if I want to stay in D.R.

ALBERTO

QUE?!

ALBE

I think we should use the money to all go to America.

JENNY

That's... a big decision Albe.

ALBE

Hey, you guys made me do it.

JENNY

Yeah but-

ALBERTO

So what you're saying is that, like always, I was right in bringing you along.

ALBE

Yeah yeah, I just want to see what else is out there. And with me actually wanting to be there I will be much more willing to learn.

ALBERTO

I don't know how I feel about you dismissing la Republica Dominicana so easily.

ALBE

I'm not dismissing it, I just want to have my own start. My way of doing things. But we have to ask Alex if he wants to go.

JENNY

He's not going to say no. He never wants to be separated from you again.

ALBERTO

Only thing is though, we'd only be able to afford one way tickets for everybody.

ALBE

That's perfect. When we come back to D.R., and I do want to come back, we'll be ready.

SHOT:

Alberto's Hiace drives down an old dirt road.

ALBE (CONT'D)

And since we already sold the house in Colorado, how about we go to.... New York?

THE END