IN THE HEIGHTS

Written by

Quiara Alegría Hudes

Based on In the Heights
by Lin-Manuel Miranda and Quiara Alegría Hudes

Previous rewrite by Marc Klein

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IN BLACK--

Tranquil sounds of a beach. We hear a child’s voice, with a strong accent, some mix of Dominican and Nuyorican –

KID’S VOICE
Hey mister, what does sueño mean?

And then the good-natured response –

MAN’S VOICE
It means “little dream.”

FADE IN:

EXT. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. BEACH. DAY.

Señor Usnavi, 40s, a jokester with a heart of gold, relaxes on the sand. An igloo cooler is his chair. Some kids gather, donning bathing suits and beach gear. They lean in, all ears.

KID 1
That’s it? No story?

KID 2
Can we go in the water now?

SHY GIRL
Let him explain.

We linger on this girl. Eyes bright, full of curiosity. The kids wait. Finally--

OLDER USNAVI
Once upon a time there was a handsome bodega owner.

INSERT: Brad Pitt, teeth sparkling, at a bodega counter.

KIDS (O.S.)
No!

BACK TO: The beach. The kids relish the hyperbole.

OLDER USNAVI
Once upon a time there was a moderately attractive bodega owner. In a far off place called Nuevayol. In a disappearing neighborhood called Washington Heights. Say it, so it doesn’t disappear.
EXT. WASHINGTON HEIGHTS AT DAWN.

As seen through an opened tenement window. The streets below are a collection of battered brownstones and prewar apartment buildings. In the distance, twinkling car lights crawl across the George Washington Bridge.

OLDER USNAVI (V.O.)
Oye... the streets were made of music.

SOUNDS EMERGE from the landscape. A cement mixer becomes a scratching turntable. Apartment windows open like drumbeats. Lights flip on to a CLAVE RHYTHM. Thump-thump reggaetón from a bike messenger. MUSIC continues as we

REVERSE ON - USNAVI DE LA VEGA - YOUNGER

Now in his late 20s. Usnavi lies in bed in his modest room, brow dripping with sweat, wide awake, pensive. But he’s not looking out the window. Instead he’s looking at --

A PAINT CHIPPED WALL

On it are several FRAMED PHOTOGRAPHS. They are BEACH SCENES from the Dominican Republic. Snapshots from the halcyon days of Usnavi’s youth. Among the photos are--

--Usnavi as an infant, playing in the white sand, his parents hovering above him.

--Usnavi at age 5, learning to swim in the turquoise Caribbean with the help of his mother.

--Usnavi at age 8, piggybacking on his father’s shoulders, wrapped in a flag, celebrating Dominican Independence Day.

Usnavi is completely lost in the memories.

USNAVI
Morning, mom. Morning, pop.

But his reverie is SHATTERED by his radio alarm --
RADIO ANNOUNCER
1010 WINS time, 5:30. Brownouts continue in the Bronx and upper Manhattan as the Mayor urges residents to limit air conditioner use. Tonight’s Annual Uptown Jam has some residents excited and others fretting -

Usnavi sits up and steels himself for the day ahead.

INT. USNAVI’S KITCHEN. DAWN.

MUSIC continues as: Abuela Claudia, mid-70s, pulls candles from a junk drawer. She adds them to a pile of batteries, flashlights, and hand fans on the table. Despite her frailty, ABUELA CLAUDIA is in constant motion.

Usnavi passes through the kitchen and offers a cheek kiss.

USNAVI
Bendición. You’re up early.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
Preparing, mijo. If the blackout comes, estamos listos.

USNAVI
Sonny’ll bring your cafecito.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
My knees are cooperating. I’ll come by.

Usnavi grabs his Kangol cap from a hook by the door and the MUSIC becomes

“IN THE HEIGHTS”

EXT. USNAVI’S BLOCK. DAWN.

A GRAFFITI ARTIST sprays a BODEGA AWNING with breathtaking skill. He’s got earbuds and is krumping to a hidden hip-hop beat. Usnavi sees this from his stoop.

USNAVI
Yo!

Usnavi charges at Graffiti Pete, who quickly disappears into an alley.
USNAVI (CONT’D)
LIGHTS UP ON WASHINGTON HEIGHTS AT THE BREAK OF DAY
I WAKE UP AND I GOT THIS LITTLE PUNK I GOTA CHASE AWAY
POP THE GRATE AT THE CRACK OF DAWN, SING
WHILE I WIPE DOWN THE AWNING
HEY YA’LL, GOOD MORNING

The stubborn gate rolls up noisily. Usnavi looks DIRECTLY AT US and welcomes us into --

INT. USNAVI’S BODEGA. CONTINUOUS.

Fluorescent lights flicker on, illuminating a somewhat outdated bodega. Duct tape holds some fixtures together.

Shelves stretch floor to ceiling with a dizzying array of Goya foods, toilet paper, detergent, cookies. The COLORFUL LABELS and SUN FADED POSTERS create a dazzling GRID, many of them depicting TINY SCENES OF PARADISE.

Behind the counter: a faded WALL-SIZED MURAL of a Caribbean beach bar and a bartender in a guayabera shirt.

USNAVI
I AM USNAVI AND YOU PROB’LY NEVER HEARD MY NAME REPORTS OF MY FAME ARE GREATLY EXAGGERATED EXACERBATED BY THE FACT THAT MY SYNTAX IS HIGHLY COMPLICATED CUZ IMMIGRATED FROM THE SINGLE GREATEST LITTLE PLACE IN THE CARIBBEAN

He points to the MURAL on the wall.

USNAVI (CONT’D)
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
I LOVE IT JESUS, I’M JEALOUS OF IT AND BEYOND THAT, EVER SINCE MY FOLKS PASSED ON I HAVEN’T GONE BACK GODDAMN, I GOTA GET ON THAT

He grabs milk from the fridge, sniffing -

USNAVI (CONT’D)
Fo!
THE MILK HAS GONE BAD, HOLD UP JUST A SECOND
WHY IS EVERYTHING IN THIS FRIDGE WARM AND TEPID?
I BETTER STEP IT UP AND FIGHT THE HEAT CUZ I’M NOT MAKIN ANY PROFIT IF THE COFFEE ISN’T LIGHT AND SWEET!
ABUELA CLAUDIA (O.S.)
Ooo-oo!

Abuela Claudia scuttles in.

USNAVI
Damn. I’m two fridges down. I got cafe, but no “con leche.”

ABUELA CLAUDIA
Try my mother’s recipe: condensed milk.

USNAVI
(smiling)
Your lottery tickets.

He hands her several LOTTERY TICKETS. A daily ritual. As she goes, he grabs condensed milk from a shelf.

USNAVI (CONT’D)
THAT WAS ABUELA, SHE’S NOT REALLY MY ABUELA
BUT SHE PRACTICALLY RAISED ME
THIS CORNER IS HER ESCUELA, NOW
YOU’RE PROBABLY THINKING, “I’M UP SHIT’S CREEK
I’VE NEVER BEEN NORTH OF NINETY-SIXTH STREET!”
WELL YOU MUST TAKE THE A TRAIN
EVEN FARTHER THAN HARLEM TO NORTHERN MANHATTAN AND
MAINTAIN
GET OFF AT 181ST AND TAKE THE ESCALATOR
I HOPE YOU’RE WRITING THIS DOWN
I’M GONNA TEST YOU LATER
I’M GETTING TESTED TIMES ARE TOUGH ON THIS BODEGA
TWO MONTHS AGO SOMEBODY BOUGHT ORTEGA’S
OUR NEIGHBORS STARTED PACKING UP AND PICKING UP
AND EVER SINCE THE RENTS WENT UP
IT’S GOTTEN MAD EXPENSIVE
BUT WE LIVE WITH JUST ENOUGH

EXT. BODEGA. CONTINUOUS.

Pedestrians head to the bus stop.

Usnavi swings out the bodega door and finds Abuela waiting. He delivers a cup of coffee into her hands and flips the sign to OPEN.

PEDESTRIANS
IN THE HEIGHTS
I FLIP THE LIGHTS AND START MY DAY
THERE ARE FIGHTS AND ENDLESS DEBTS
AND BILLS TO PAY
IN THE HEIGHTS
I CAN’T SURVIVE WITHOUT CAFE
CUZ TONIGHT SEEMS LIKE A MILLION YEARS AWAY
EN WASHINGTON--

KEVIN ROSARIO steps through the door. Kevin’s in his late 40s and wears his evergreen outfit: a crisp white shirt and tie.

INT. BODEGA. CONTINUOUS.

USNAVI
FIRST UP TO BAT IS ROSARIO
HE RUNS THE CAB COMPANY
HE STRUGGLES IN THE BARRIO
SEE, HIS DAUGHTER NINA’S OFF AT COLLEGE
TUITION IS MAD STEEP
SO HE CAN’T SLEEP
EVERYTHING HE GETS IS MAD CHEAP!

KEVIN
GOOD MORNING, USNAVI.

Usnavi hands him a bag and a coffee.

USNAVI
PAN CALIENTE, CAFE CON LECHE!

KEVIN
PUT SEVEN DOLLARS ON TODAY’S LOTTERY.

They exchange cash and lottery tickets.

USNAVI
TAKE FIVE, PICK SIX.

KEVIN
HEY, A MAN’S GOTTA DREAM.

EXT. THE BLOCK. SAME.

DANIELA sashays around the corner. Squeezed into a fitted black dress, her sneakers are a necessary compromise for a woman who works on her feet. Always a few steps behind her is CARLA, her loopy assistant in skin tight jeans.

DANIELA
SO THEN YESSENIA WALKS IN THE ROOM

CARLA
Aha...

DANIELA
SHE SMELLS SEX AND CHEAP PERFUME!
CARLA
Uh oh...

DANIELA
IT SMELLS LIKE ONE OF THOSE TREES THAT YOU
HANG FROM THE REARVIEW!

CARLA
Ah, no!

INT. BODEGA. CONTINUOUS.
Daniela and Carla head to the lone working fridge. They grab
an assortment of diet shakes.

DANIELA
IT’S TRUE! SHE SCREAMS, “WHO’S IN THERE WITH YOU
JULIO?”
GRABS A BAT AND KICKS IN THE DOOR!
HE’S IN BED WITH JOSE FROM THE LIQUOR STORE!

CARLA/USNAVI
No me diga!

Usnavi has their lottery tickets ready.

CARLA/DANIELA
THANKS, USNAVI!

SONNY, 15, speed-walks in. A BLACK LIVES MATTER decal covers
his headphones. Usnavi’s not pleased.

SONNY
My bad, the protest ran late.

USNAVI
Fridge one and two broke.

They fist bump as Sonny tends to the fridge.

USNAVI (CONT’D)
ME AND MY COUSIN RUNNIN’ JUST ANOTHER DIME-A-DOZEN
MOM-AND-POP STOP-AND-SHOP
AND OH MY GOD IT’S GOTTEN TOO DARN HOT
LIKE MY MAN COLE PORTER SAID

EXT. BODEGA.

Usnavi hoses down the sidewalk.

USNAVI
PEOPLE COME THROUGH FOR A FEW COLD WATERS AND A
LOTTERY TICKET, JUST A PART OF THE ROUTINE
EVERYBODY’S GOT A JOB, EVERYBODY’S GOT A DREAM
THEY GOSSIP AS I SIP MY COFFEE AND SMIRK
THE FIRST STOP AS PEOPLE HOP TO WORK
BUST IT I’M LIKE

INT. BODEGA.

Usnavi wades through a crowded aisle toward the register,
anticipating the needs of a SURREAL TIDE OF CUSTOMERS.

USNAVI
ONE DOLLAR, TWO DOLLARS, ONE FIFTY, ONE SIXTY-NINE
I GOT IT, YOU WANT A BOX OF CONDOMS WHAT KIND?
THAT’S TWO QUARTERS, TWO QUARTER WATERS
THE NEW YORK TIMES, YOU NEED A BAG FOR THAT?
THE TAX IS ADDED, ONCE YOU GET SOME PRACTICE AT IT
YOU DO RAPID MATHEMATICS AUTOMATICALLY
SELLING MAXIPADS AND FUZZY DICE FOR TAXICABS
AND PRACTICALLY EVERYONE’S STRESSED, YES,
BUT THEY PRESS THROUGH THE MESS, BOUNCE CHECKS
AND WONDER WHAT’S NEXT

EXT. BODEGA.

A LIVERY CAB stops at the hydrant and BENNY BRYANT gets out.
He is Usnavi’s closest friend, African-American, 20s, and has
spent a lifetime trying to fit in among his Latino neighbors.
He loosens his tie and goes into--

INT. BODEGA. CONTINUOUS.

BENNY
YOU AIN’T GOT NO SKILLS!

USNAVI

BENNY!

BENNY
LEMME GET A-

USNAVI

MILKY WAY

BENNY
YEAH, LEMME ALSO GET A-

USNAVI

DAILY NEWS

BENNY
AND A-

USNAVI

POST

BENNY

AND MOST IMPORTANT, MY-

USNAVI

BOSS’S SECOND COFFEE, ONE CREAM

USNAVI/BENNY

FIVE SUGARS!

BENNY

I’M THE NUMBER ONE EARNER

USNAVI/SONNY

WHAT!

BENNY

THE FASTEST LEARNER

USNAVI/SONNY

WHAT!

BENNY

MY BOSS CAN’T KEEP ME ON THE DAMN BACK BURNER!

USNAVI

YES HE CAN

BENNY

I’M MAKIN MOVES, I’M MAKIN DEALS, BUT GUESS WHAT?

USNAVI

WHAT?

BENNY/SONNY

YOU STILL AIN’T GOT NO SKILLS!

USNAVI

HARDEE-HAR

BENNY

VANESSA SHOW UP YET?

USNAVI

(tensing)

SHUT UP

BENNY

HEY LITTLE HOMIE DON’T GET SO UPSET

SHOW VANESSA HOW YOU FEEL
BUY THE GIRL A MEAL, ON THE REAL
OR YOU AIN’T GOT NO SKILLS

Usnavi STIFFENS when VANESSA’S VOICE drifts inside.

    VANESSA (O.S.)
    NOOO!
    NO NO NOOO!

EXT. STREET. SAME.

Dragon green high tops march down the block. Above them, a
green miniskirt. VANESSA, mid-20s, is a verdant stripe of
life. She is tough as the acrylic nails she works on-- a
fighter who’s had to battle for every inch and opportunity.

    VANESSA
    (into the phone)
    NO NO NOOO, NO NO NO!
    NOOO, NO NO NO!
    NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO NO!

INT. BODEGA. CONTINUOUS.

    VANESSA
    (into the phone)
    MR. JOHNSON I GOT THE SECURITY DEPOSIT
    IT’S LOCKED IN A BOX IN THE BOTTOM OF MY CLOSET
    IT’S NOT REFLECTED IN MY BANK STATEMENT
    BUT I’VE BEEN SAVING TO MAKE A DOWN PAYMENT AND PAY
    RENT
    NO NO, I WON’T LET YOU DOWN

    BENNY
    (aside, to Usnavi)
    YO HERE’S YOUR CHANCE ASK HER OUT RIGHT NOW!

    VANESSA
    (into the phone)
    I’LL SEE YOU LATER, WE CAN LOOK AT THAT LEASE!

Vanessa hangs up, hopeful, on the brink of some victory.

    BENNY
    (aside, to Usnavi)
    DO SOMETHIN, MAKE YOUR MOVE, DON’T FREEZE

    USNAVI
    HEY!

    VANESSA
    YOU OWE ME A BOTTLE OF COLD CHAMPAGNE!
USNAVI
ARE YOU MOVING?

VANESSA
JUST A LITTLE CREDIT CHECK AND I’M ON THAT DOWNTOWN TRAIN

USNAVI
WELL YOUR COFFEE’S ON THE HOUSE

OKAY!

BENNY
(nudging him)
USNAVI ASK HER OUT

SONNY
(aside)
NO WAY!

Usnavi stands there, starts to speak... but nothing comes out.

VANESSA
I’LL SEE YOU LATER, SO...

And she’s gone. Usnavi has missed his moment. Again.

BENNY
OOH SMOOTH OPERATOR, AW DAMN THERE SHE GO
YO BRO TAKE FIVE, TAKE A WALK OUTSIDE
YOU LOOK EXHAUSTED, LOST, DON’T LET LIFE SLIDE
THE WHOLE HOOD IS STRUGGLIN, TIMES ARE TIGHT
AND YOU’RE STUCK TO THIS CORNER LIKE A STREETLIGHT

Benny heads off.

EXT. BODEGA. SAME.

Usnavi stands frozen in the door frame.

USNAVI
YEAH I’M A STREETLIGHT CHOKING ON THE HEAT
THE WORLD SPINS AROUND WHILE I’M FROZEN TO MY SEAT
THE PEOPLE THAT I KNOW ALL KEEP ON ROLLING DOWN THE STREET
BUT EVERY DAY IS DIFFERENT SO I’M SWITCHIN UP THE BEAT
CUZ MY PARENTS CAME WITH NOTHING
THEY GOT A LITTLE MORE AND SURE WE’RE POOR BUT YO
AT LEAST WE GOT THE STORE
AND IT’S ALL ABOUT THE LEGACY THEY LEFT WITH ME
IT’S DESTINY
AND ONE DAY I’LL BE ON A BEACH WITH SONNY WRITIN
CHECKS TO ME

He watches the local businesses in action:

--ROSARIO CAR SERVICE, across the street. Kevin sits at the
dispatch mic, a Puerto Rican flag on the wall behind him.

KEVIN/COMMUNITY
IN THE HEIGHTS
I HANG MY FLAG UP ON DISPLAY

USNAVI
WE CAME TO WORK AND TO LIVE AND WE GOT A LOT IN
COMMON

--ROSA LINDA SALON, a few doors down. Daniela, Carla, and
Vanessa prep for their first appointments.

DANIELA/CARLA/VANESSA/COMMUNITY
IT REMINDS ME THAT I CAME FROM MILES AWAY

USNAVI
DR. PR, WE ARE NOT STOPPIN

--ABUELA/USNAVI’S FRONT WINDOW. Abuela Claudia sits at her
fourth-floor windowsill, fanning herself.

ABUELA CLAUDIA/COMMUNITY
IN THE HEIGHTS
EVERY DAY, PACIENCIA Y FE

USNAVI
UNTIL THE DAY WE GO FROM POVERTY TO STOCK OPTIONS

COMMUNITY
IN THE HEIGHTS
I’VE GOT TODAY

USNAVI
AND TODAY’S ALL WE GOT SO WE CANNOT STOP
THIS IS OUR BLOCK

The block animates in time-lapse ribbons of movement. It’s a
colorful panorama around Usnavi’s door frame.

COMMUNITY
IN THE HEIGHTS
I HANG MY FLAG UP ON DISPLAY
IT REMINDS ME THAT I CAME FROM MILES AWAY
IN THE HEIGHTS
IT GETS MORE EXPENSIVE EVERY DAY
AND TONIGHT IS SO FAR AWAY

USNAVI
BUT AS FOR MAÑANA MI PANA
YA GOTT A JUST KEEP WATCHIN
YOU’LL SEE THE LATE NIGHTS
YOU’LL TASTE BEANS AND RICE
THE SYRUPS AND SHAVED ICE
I AIN’T GONNA SAY IT TWICE
SO TURN UP THE STREET LIGHTS
WE’RE TAKIN A FLIGHT
TO A COUPLE DAYS IN THE LIFE OF WHAT IT’S LIKE

USNAVI/COMMUNITY
EN WASHINGTON HEIGHTS!

As the song ends we hear

OLDER USNAVI (V.O.)
See? Streets made of music.

EXT. BEACH. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. DAY.

The kids are seated in the sand now. They’ve made themselves comfortable around Older Usnavi. The SHY GIRL beams.

KID 1
Cool.

KID 2
Yo it’s hot. Can I get a malta?

Señor Usnavi reaches into his igloo and tosses around juices.

OLDER USNAVI
The block was vanishing and so was the music. But it all sped up when Nina returned from college...

EXT. BODEGA. DAY.

A livery cab pulls into the hydrant spot and NINA ROSARIO, 19, steps onto the curb. She’s weighted down by large duffel bags. Nina’s nerdy-bohemian, with a fierce inner strength and an earthy warmth. But she seems weary beyond her years.

USNAVI (O.S.)
She made it back!

Usnavi sweeps Nina into an adoring embrace. Sonny emerges and daps Nina.
SONNY
Nina! We ready? You game the system from the inside. I bring the guerilla tactics. Blao, barrio revolution!

NINA
(wistfully)
They don’t teach revolution at Stanford.

SONNY
What do they teach?

NINA
Western Civ. Global economies. How to act poor when you’re rich.

Usnavi and Nina have the warm rapport of an adoptive brother and sister. Arm-in-arm, they scan the block.

NINA (CONT’D)
Look at this ghost town.

USNAVI
(teasing)
God willing I’ll close next!

Nina shoves him: “Not funny.”

USNAVI (CONT’D)
I’m not trying to have “Bodega Boy” written on my tombstone.

Nina observes the block’s economic struggles, storefront by storefront.

First, she notices a boarded-up travel agency. An eyesore.

Next, she watches as Daniela tapes a FINAL DAY sign in the salon window.

Vanessa swings out the salon door, calling out.

VANESSA
What what?? Come by, free trim!

Nina waves hi as Vanessa disappears back into the salon.

Finally, Nina trains her glance on Rosario Car Service. Beside its timeworn facade, a new dry cleaner/tailor boasts GRAND OPENING! Nina’s face burns with rage.
NINA
I begged my dad, do not sell.

USNAVI
Bright side, kid, he kept half the storefront. But the new cleaners? Nine bucks a shirt.

NINA
Ouch.

Usnavi’s phone buzzes. He shows her the text.

USNAVI
Benny says hi...

She can’t help but smile at the message: “ASK NINA: LUNCH DATE?” She notices BENNY IN THE DISPATCH WINDOW, seated at the mic, grinning at her. She offers a timid flirty wave, but also seems confused.

NINA
Why’s he on dispatch? Did my dad lay off the managers, too?!

USNAVI
Hey. We missed you. Breathe, okay?

And Nina does, grateful for the reminder.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

A magnificent stove top feast. Seven pots are stacked on four burners. Nina peeks under mismatched lids as steam curls: it smells amazing. Arroz con pollo. Ropa vieja bubbling. A delicate flan on a double boiler.

Abuela Claudia emerges from a closet with a small bundle. She pulls a LACE NAPKIN from the bundle. Vintage and yellowing at the edges, but well-preserved.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
Hand-embroidered by your mother. May she rest in peace. We’ll use them tonight.

NINA
Would you be mad if I canceled the party?

ABUELA CLAUDIA
Porque? You want all that food to yourself?
Nina thumbs the napkin tentatively.

NINA
What do you do when you leave everything you know for some promise land? And then you get there and it’s like, “Oh, this promise land? This is for other people’s promises.”

ABUELA CLAUDIA
Stanford was difficult?
(then:)
When my mamá came from Cuba, she felt very small, like one tiny grain of sand from the beaches we left behind.

NINA
What did she do?

ABUELA CLAUDIA
She bought a winter coat. And a pair of velvet gloves. Her hands were cracked from all the cleaning fluids, but the gloves hid that. We had to assert our dignity in small ways. That’s why these napkins are beautiful. That’s why my mother’s gloves were beautiful. Little details that tell the world, we’re not invisible.

Abuela puts a plate atop the double-boiler like a lid. Holding the dishes together, she carefully flips it then lifts the bowl. Voila: the perfect caramel dome of a flan.

EXT. ARTERIAL STREET. WASHINGTON HEIGHTS. DAY.

Broadway in the 170s is lined with budget storefronts. Street vendors peddle used shoes, picture books, mangos, piraguas.

Nina eyes it all like an outsider, the bustle of life seen at a remove.

A piragüero recognizes Nina and she waves back timidly. A bolero playing on his cart radio becomes...

“BREATHE”

RADIO VOICE
SIGUE ANDANDO EL CAMINO POR TODA SU VIDA
RESPIRA

NINA
BREATHE...

RADIO VOICE
Y SI PIERDAS MIS HUELLAS QUE DIOS TE BENDIGA
RESPIRA

Nina stops at a discount store. Her DISTORTED REFLECTION MORPHS INTO--

A MEMORY-- Nina as a younger teen, studying. Books piled high, margins marked. Her father brings coffee.

Nina sees her past, framed in the window.

NINA
THIS IS MY STREET, I SMILE AT THE FACES
I’VE KNOWN ALL MY LIFE, THEY REGARD ME WITH PRIDE
AND EVERYONE’S SWEET, THEY “YOU’RE GOING PLACES!”
SO HOW CAN I SAY THAT WHILE I WAS AWAY I HAD SO
MUCH TO HIDE?
HEY GUYS IT’S ME! THE BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT YOU
KNOW!
THE KID COULDN’T HACK IT, SHE’S BACK AND SHE’S
WALKIN REAL SLOW. WELCOME HOME
JUST BREATHE...

A customer leaves, walking right through Nina’s reflected memory.

RADIO VOICE
SIGUE ANDANDO EL CAMINO POR TODA SU VIDA
RESPIRA

NINA
BREATHE...

RADIO VOICE
Y SI PIERDAS MIS HUELLAS QUE DIOS TE BENDIGA
RESPIRA

Nina notices PICTURE FRAMES in the window, one with a stock photo of a graduate. In her imagination, it ALMOST LOOKS LIKE HERSELF.

NINA
AS THE RADIO PLAYS OLD FORGOTTEN BOLEROS
I THINK OF THE DAYS WHEN THIS CITY WAS MINE
I REMEMBER THE PRAISE “AY TE ADORO, TE QUIERO”
THE NEIGHBORHOOD WAVED AND SAID NINA BE BRAVE
AND YOU’RE GONNA BE FINE
AND MAYBE IT'S ME BUT IT ALL SEEMS LIKE LIFETIMES AGO
SO WHAT DO I SAY TO THESE FACES THAT I USED TO KNOW?
"HEY I'M HOME..."

We travel INTO THE PHOTO, and INTO NINA’S PAST--

INT. HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM. ONE YEAR EARLIER.

Standing room only. Every seat filled with adoring families in their Sunday best.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
MIRA, NINA!

KEVIN/ABUELA CLAUDIA
NO ME PREOCUPO POR ELLA!

NINA (V.O.)
THEY’RE NOT WORRIED ABOUT ME

KEVIN/ABUELA CLAUDIA/USNAVI
MIRA, ALLÍ ESTÁ NUESTRA ESTRELLA!

NINA (V.O.)
THEY ARE ALL COUNTING ON ME TO SUCCEED

Younger Nina takes the stage in cap and gown and receives her diploma.

KEVIN/ABUELA CLAUDIA/USNAVI/VANESSA
ELLA SÍ DA LA TALLA!

NINA (V.O.)
I AM THE ONE WHO MADE IT OUT!
THE ONE WHO ALWAYS MADE THE GRADE
BUT MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE JUST STAYED HOME...

BACK TO:

EXT. ARTERIAL STREET. WASHINGTON HEIGHTS. PRESENT.

In reality, the frame’s STOCK PHOTO is sun-faded and doesn’t much resemble her. Nina walks away but can’t escape the memories. Every REFLECTIVE SURFACE frames scenes from her youth.

--In a furniture store mirror: NINA LEARNING TO RIDE A BIKE. Her dad letting go, as she balances and soars.

--In a barber shop vanity: NINA TUTORING SONNY at the bodega.
--In a church’s dark stained-glass: NINA AT A FOOD DRIVE, handing out canned food.

**NINA**

*WHEN I WAS A CHILD I STAYED WIDE AWAKE*

CLIMBED TO THE HIGHEST PLACE

*ON EVERY FIRE ESCAPE, RESTLESS TO CLIMB*

I GOT EVERY SCHOLARSHIP, SAVED EVERY DOLLAR

*THE FIRST TO GO TO COLLEGE, HOW DO I TELL THEM WHY I’M COMING BACK HOME WITH MY EYES ON THE HORIZON JUST ME AND THE GWB ASKING “GEE, NINA, WHAT’LL YOU BE?”*

Nina arrives at Caridad Restaurant. Through her ACTUAL REFLECTION she sees Kevin seated, eyeing a menu.

**NINA (CONT’D)**

*STRAIGHTEN THE SPINE, SMILE FOR THE NEIGHBORS EVERYTHING’S FINE, EVERYTHING’S COOL*

*THE STANDARD REPLY: LOTS OF TESTS, LOTS OF PAPERS SMILE WAVE GOODBYE AND PRAY TO THE SKY, OH GOD... AND WHAT WILL MY FATHER SAY?*

**COMMUNITY (V.O.)**

NINA!

**NINA**

*CAN I GO IN THERE AND SAY--*

**COMMUNITY (V.O.)**

NINA!

**NINA**

*I KNOW THAT I’M LETTING YOU DOWN...*

She taps on the window. Kevin looks up and sees her with joy. He comes outside, offers an embrace.

**KEVIN**

NINA...

**NINA**

*JUST BREATHE...*

As they go in, the door closes behind them and the song ends.

**OLDER USNAVI (V.O.)**

*Our scheming came in all sizes, and was mutually beneficial. I had a quaint little sueñito. Make it back to the Dominican, retain my roots.*
EXT. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. BEACH. DAY.

OLDER USNAVI
Nina had a sueñon. A super sized California-king dream. If she became Mayor of Nuevayork, we had the power of self determination.

A JOGGER runs up, waving a dollar bill. Older Usnavi fishes a water from his cooler and tosses it to the jogger.

JOGGER
Telling stories again? Don’t believe a word he says.

SHY GIRL
Did you know Washington Heights disappeared?

JOGGER
Sounds serious.

The jogger takes a seat, resting after the run.

EXT. BODEGA. DAY.

HONK HONK! A beer delivery truck cruises to a stop in front of the bodega. Usnavi walks to the back of the truck and greets--

USNAVI
Hector!

Early 60s and graying, HECTOR is as wide-eyed and exuberant as the day he first stepped foot onto American soil.

HECTOR
Usnavi! Help an old geezer down.

Usnavi helps him down to the street and they embrace.

HECTOR (CONT’D)
Crazy scary. You look more like your old man every day. Listen, you got somewhere we can talk?

CUT TO:

SEVERAL PHOTOS

Of a run down BEACH HUT on a beautiful beach in the Dominican. OVER:
USNAVI (O.S.)
It’s incredible. Where is it?

EXT. BODEGA. BACK ALLEY. SAME.

Hector leans against the graffiti-riddled wall (compliments of Graffiti Pete). Usnavi stands across from him, looking through the photos.

HECTOR
Puerto Plata. About five miles from where your dad and I grew up. I know you’ve been itching to find a reason to move there. Here it is.

USNAVI
It could use a paint job.

HECTOR
It could use more than that. The pipes are all rusted. The electric is shot. But check this out...

Hector shows him another photo.

INSERT - AN OLDER PHOTO OF THE BAR

With Usnavi’s FATHER standing behind the counter next to a MUCH YOUNGER HECTOR.

USNAVI
You worked there with my father?

HECTOR
Nope. I worked for your father. He owned it... Built it with his own two hands.

This stops Usnavi cold. He looks more closely at the photo.

USNAVI
Wait a minute. The mural --

Usnavi peeks through the back door and into the bodega. He sees the FADED MURAL on the wall behind the counter. IT’S A DUPLICATE OF THE PHOTO HE’S HOLDING. The BEACH BAR and the BARTENDER. Usnavi’s stunned.

USNAVI (CONT’D)
All these years... I’ve been standing right in front of him and never knew it.
HECTOR
When your mom got pregnant, your dad packed up and sold. He thought America would offer the family a better future. But New York never agreed with them. Your mom was homesick, and your old man had a bad case of seller’s remorse. He offered to buy the place back, but the owner was never interested... until now.

USNAVI
(to himself)
“El Sueñito.”

HECTOR
What?

USNAVI
When I was a kid my father used to talk about “el sueñito.” His “little dream.” This must be it.

HECTOR
The price is right -- it’s gonna move fast. I need you to let me know now: are you interested?

Usnavi glances at the photo again. Then, he looks up at Hector with resolve and a smile.

INT. EL NUEVO CARIDAD RESTAURANT. DAY.

NINA pushes mangu around her untouched plate.

NINA
The first day of classes, I knew. Freshman seminar, kids were dropping political philosophy I had no clue about. They ran circles around me on day one. These kids were theory monsters.

KEVIN
I didn’t know how isolated you felt, mija.

NINA
It was like everyone I love-- you, Abuela Claudia, Usnavi... You pushed me into the world like, “Go make our people proud!

(MORE)
Go assimilate! Go integrate!" But it’s complicated. Not knowing the basics, being laughed at—out loud—when I asked “Who’s Nietzsche?”, being the only roommate with two jobs, the only one who got ID’d in the library... The Dean invited me to this diversity dinner, for big donors, and I was wearing a black cocktail dress so maybe it looked like a uniform, but I was walking to my seat and one of the patrons shoved her plate into my arms, like, “I ordered the vegetarian option!” I was holding her plate like, “I don’t work here.” That was an insult on you, on Usnavi, and Sonny, and Vanessa--

KEVIN
Mija, take these things like water in a basket. Let ‘em slip away.

She’s barely able to muster the words--

NINA
I dropped out.

It nearly knocks the wind out of Kevin. He can barely speak.

KEVIN
Because of one ignorant lady?

Nina proceeds cautiously.

NINA
You’re under real financial strain. In part because of me.

Kevin tenses. Finances are a sensitive subject.

NINA (CONT’D)
If you fall behind on tuition they put you on bursar’s hold.

KEVIN
What about the extension they gave us?

NINA
There’s no extension, dad.

Kevin fumes at the lie.
NINA (CONT'D)
My second job covered expenses for
a while...

KEVIN
If you need money you ask me!

NINA
When you’re downsizing by half?

KEVIN
Who’s the parent here?! You?

Nina motions for him to lower his voice.

KEVIN (CONT’D)
Keep insulting me, Nina. Lie to me again.

NINA
(gently)
I noticed Benny on dispatch. Did you lay off your managers, too?

KEVIN
(standing, motioning)
Check!

The waitress approaches. As Kevin hastily pays and goes, Nina realizes: EVERYONE’S STARING.

INT. TENEMENT BASEMENT. DAY.

Abuela Claudia struggles down the steps, clutching the bundle of lace napkins and laundry detergent in one hand, clinging to the railing with the other.

But a sign taped to the laundry room door reads “CLOSED, CONSERVE ELECTRICITY, UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.”

A FEW MINUTES LATER.

A hairpin twists in the laundry room lock.

USNAVI (O.S.)
Breaking and entering, nice.

Claudia sees Usnavi standing in the stairwell.

USNAVI (CONT’D)
Come home, I’ll do laundry tomorrow.
ABUELA CLAUDIA
But these are for tonight.

USNAVI
Paper napkins will be fine. Come upstairs, family meeting.

She notices a sparkle in his eye.

INT. USNAVI’S ROOM. MOMENTS LATER.

Abuela and Usnavi face his wall of beloved family photos. He tapes the new pictures, of the BEACHSIDE BAR, alongside them.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
I’ll go.

USNAVI
(stunned)
For real?

ABUELA CLAUDIA
Thanks for the invitation.

USNAVI
Abuela! I was sure you’d be like “no way!”

She turns her attention to the window and the street below.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
The block has changed a lot, no? Many old friends have passed. Many businesses are gone. Plus, my knees, carajo, this city is made of stairs. A fourth floor walk-up. The subway steps... But mostly, you need a change! Always working, same as my mamá. You know what she used to say?

INSERT – a SEPIA-TONE MEMORY. Claudia’s mamá, beautiful but bone tired, leaning in, intoning

MAMÁ
Paciencia y fe.

BACK TO – Abuela Claudia and Usnavi, present-day.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
“Patience and faith.” Morning and night, year after year, to what end?

(MORE)
ABUELA CLAUDIA (CONT'D)
To wake up and do it all over again, until the day she died. Mamá never lived, Usnavi. There is such a thing as too much patience and faith. You’re gonna live. In the Dominican, you can enjoy the fruits of your labor.

Usnavi’s moved by her generous spirit.

ABUELA CLAUDIA (CONT’D)
Mira, decades of my life are on that block. I did ok, no? I took care of my community, no?

USNAVI
Yes.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
So have I earned an adventure?

USNAVI
You have earned an adventure.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
You have, too.

They stand in the window frame, unified and resolute.

INT. BODEGA. LATER.

Usnavi lays on the floor, struggling to fix the broken fridge. Sonny covers the register, overwhelmed.

CUSTOMER 1
Lemme get six C-batteries, two flashlights, and some candles?

SONNY
All out.

CUSTOMER 1
Of candles?

SONNY
Of everything, papa.

Another customer scans the soda shelves. Sees an empty space where water should be. Sonny notices.
SONNY (CONT’D)
No more water gallons. Anything related to a power outage: we do not have it.

Usnavi emerges from the fridge, covered in grease and sweat.

USNAVI
Ya’ll know the drill. Blackout paranoia, gotta act fast. Sorry.

The customers leave, annoyed. Usnavi takes advantage of the lull.

USNAVI (CONT’D)
So?

SONNY
What?

USNAVI
Did you put any thought into it?

SONNY
Over the last ten minutes?

Usnavi points to the faded mural.

USNAVI
We’ll leave at the end of August, in time for you to start school in the Dominican. That gives you all summer to close up shop here.

SONNY
Nah.

Usnavi’s not exactly surprised.

USNAVI
That’s it? “Nah?”

SONNY
Yup. Nah.

The phone rings, interrupting them. Usnavi answers it as Benny comes in, holding the door open for a young EUROPEAN TOURIST COUPLE behind him.

BENNY
(to Sonny)
I’m running on fumes, son!
SONNY
(re: Benny’s pit stains)
And emitting them too.

FEMALE TOURIST
Is this You-snavi Bodega?
(off Sonny’s nod)
Two coffees. “Light and sweet.”

BENNY
Heading up to the Cloisters?

FEMALE TOURIST
No, we want famous You-snavi coffee!

She shows her phone to him.

BENNY
“Forget five dollar lattes. A buck gets you the best café in NYC, brewed by legendarily long-winded bodeguero, Usnavi.”

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. DAY.
The kids crack up.

KID 2
Legendarily long-winded!

JOGGER
The Guinness Book’s holding a spot for you!

KID 1
“You talk too much, and you never shut up.”

OLDER USNAVI
Yeah yeah.

BACK TO:

INT. BODEGA. SAME.

BENNY
(still reading)
“Order it ‘light and sweet’ for an authentic Dominican sugar coma.”
SONNY
(handing them coffees)
Two sugar comas.

They taste it and go, pleased. Benny watches the door close behind them, then -

BENNY
You wrote that review, didn’tchu?

SONNY
#hustle

Usnavi hangs up the phone with a stupefied expression.

USNAVI
That was the lottery office. We sold a Take Five winner yesterday.

Sonny’s eyes widen. Benny pulls out his wallet, feigning disapproval.

BENNY
The lottery’s a tax on working people and the unemployed poor!

USNAVI
You want to hear the winning numbers or not?

BENNY
Shoot.

Benny has found YESTERDAY’S TICKET in his wallet.

USNAVI
Eighteen.

 Nope. Benny crumples the ticket and tosses it at Usnavi’s forehead. Direct hit.

BENNY
Like I said, the lottery is a tax on working people--

SONNY
What’s my cut?

USNAVI
Half of mine. Which is zero.

BENNY
What’s the payout? Don’t tell me no five hundred dollars.
The DING of the register becomes--

"96,000"

USNAVI
NINETY SIX THOUSAND.

SONNY/BENNY
DAMN...

USNAVI
NINETY SIX THOUSAND.

SONNY
DOLLARS? HOLLER.

USNAVI
NINETY SIX THOUSAND.

Graffiti Pete comes in, helps himself to a candy bar.

GRAFFITI PETE
THAT’S A LOTTA SODA.

USNAVI
(confiscating the candy)
NINETY SIX THOUSAND.

Benny eyes the cigar case. He stacks cigars, one at a time, into Sonny’s mouth, fat cat style.

BENNY
YO IF I WON THE LOTTO TOMORROW WELL I KNOW
I WOULDN’T BOTHER GOING ON NO SPENDIN’ SPREE
I’D PICK A BUSINESS SCHOOL AND PAY THE ENTRANCE FEE
THEN MAYBE IF YOU’RE LUCKY YOU’LL STAY FRIENDS WITH ME
I’LL BE A BUSINESSMAN RICHER THAN NINA’S DADDY
DONALD TRUMP AND I ON THE LINKS AND HE’S MY CADDY
MY MONEY’S MAKING MONEY, I’M GOIN’ FROM PO TO MO
DOUGH
KEEP THE BLING I WANT THE BRASS RING LIKE FRODO

Usnavi plucks the cigars from Sonny’s mouth, one by one.

USNAVI
OH NO HERE GOES MR. BRAGADOCcio
NEXT THING YOU KNOW YOU’RE LYING LIKE PINOCCHIO

BENNY
WELL IF YOU’RE SCARED OF THE BULL STAY OUT THE RODEO
PETE
YO I GOT MORE HO’S THAN A PHONE BOOK IN TOKYO

USNAVI
OOH, YOU BETTER STOP RAPPIN YOU’RE NOT READY
IT’S GONNA GET HOT AND HEAVY AND YOU’RE ALREADY SWEATY

PETE
Y-Y-Y-O-Y-O-Y-O-

USNAVI
YO-YO! I’M SORRY IS THAT AN ANSWER?
SHUT UP, GO HOME, AND PULL YA DAMN PANTS UP!
(to Benny)
AS FOR YOU MR. FRODO OF THE SHIRE
NINETY SIX G’S AIN’T ENOUGH TO RETIRE

BENNY
I’LL HAVE ENOUGH TO KNOCK YOUR ASS OFF ITS AXIS!

USNAVI
YOU’LL HAVE A KNAPSACK FULL OF JACK AFTER TAXES.

EXT. THE BLOCK. MOMENTS LATER.
Abuela Claudia reads the Bible at her window. Sonny runs by, calling up.

SONNY
NINETY SIX THOUSAND!

ABUELA CLAUDIA
AY, ALABANZA!

INT./EXT. THE SALON. SAME.
Sonny throws open the door and shouts inside.

SONNY
NINETY SIX THOUSAND!

DANIELA
NO ME DIGA!

Daniela unzips her pocketbook, feeling lucky.

SONNY
NINETY SIX THOUSAND!

VANESSA
I never win shit.
SONNY
NINETY SIX THOUSAND!

INT. BODEGA. SAME.

Benny grabs a car air freshener from a shelf. He sidles up to Usnavi, his hand on an IMAGINARY STEERING WHEEL.

INSERT - BENNY'S FANTASY. He and Usnavi in a RIDICULOUS pimped-out ROYCE STRETCH CONVERTIBLE.

BENNY
FOR REAL THO, IMAGINE HOW IT WOULD FEEL GOIN
REAL SLOW DOWN THE HIGHWAY OF LIFE WITH NO REGRETS
AND NO BREAKIN YOUR NECK FOR RESPECT OR A PAYCHECK
FOR REAL THO, I'LL TAKE A BREAK FROM THE WHEEL AND
WE'LL THROW THE BIGGEST BLOCK PARTY, EVERYBODY HERE
A WEEKEND WHEN WE CAN BREATHE, TAKE IT EASY...

BACK TO - REALITY. Usnavi plucks the air freshener from Benny’s hand and places it back on the shelf.

INT. DANIELA’S SALON. SAME.

DANIELA
(on the phone)
YO MA IT’S ME, CHECK YOUR TICKET.

Carla’s face emerges from the pages of a Spanish tabloid. She eyes a DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER AD.

CARLA
CHECK ONE TWO THREE
WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH NINETY SIX G’S?

DANIELA
WHO ME?

CARLA
I MEAN IF IT’S JUST BETWEEN YOU AND ME?

DANIELA
ESA PREGUNTA ES TRICKY!

CARLA
I KNOW!

Daniela turns the page. A LIPOSUCTION AD beckons: “QUIERES CURVAS?” Bingo. Daniela IMAGINES HERSELF as the WOMAN IN THE AD, with an ABNORMALLY HUGE ASS. She winks at her magazine self. Her magazine self WINKS BACK.
DANIELA
WITH NINETY SIX G’S
I’D START MY LIFE WITH A BRAND NEW LEASE
ATLANTIC CITY WITH A MALIBU BREEZE

CARLA
AND A BRAND NEW WEAVE

DANIELA
OR MAYBE JUST BLEACH

VANESSA
Ya’ll are freaks.

EXT. THE BLOCK. CONTINUOUS.

Refusing to get caught up in the craziness, Vanessa drifts outside. Usnavi tends to a small crowd of ticket holders.

USNAVI
IT’S SILLY WHEN WE GET INTO THESE CRAZY HYPOTHETICALS
YOU REALLY WANT SOME BREAD THEN GO AHEAD CREATE A SET OF GOALS
AND CROSS THEM OFF THE LIST AS YOU PERSUE ‘EM
AND WITH THOSE NINETY SIX I KNOW PRECISELY WHAT I’M DOIN’

VANESSA
WHAT YOU DOIN’?

USNAVI
WHAT’M I DOIN’? WHAT’M I DOIN’?
IT TAKES HALF OF THAT CASH JUST TO SAVE MY ASS FROM FINANCIAL RUIN
SONNY CAN KEEP THE COFFEE BREWIN’
AND I’LL SPEND A FEW ON YOU
CUZ THE ONLY ROOM WITH A VIEW IS A ROOM WITH YOU IN IT
AND I COULD GIVE ABUELA CLAUDIA THE REST OF IT JUST FLY ME DOWN TO PUERTO PLATA
I’LL MAKE THE BEST OF IT
(to Sonny)
YOU REALLY LOVE THIS BUSINESS?

SONNY
NO.

USNAVI
TOUGH, MERRY CHRISTMAS.
YOU’RE NOW THE YOUNGEST TYCOON IN WASHINGTON HIZNITS!
All eyes are on Sonny. He spots a BLACK FIST decal on a newspaper machine.

SONNY
YO, WITH NINETY SIX THOUSAND I’D FINALLY FIX HOUSIN’
GIVE THE BARRIO COMPUTERS WITH WIRELESS WEB BROWSIN’
YOUR KIDS ARE LIVIN’ WITHOUT A GOOD EDUMACATION
CHANGE THE STATION, TEACH ‘EM ABOUT GENTRIFICATION
THE RENT IS ESCALATIN’

Graffiti Pete rolls a newspaper into a makeshift megaphone.

GRAFFITI PETE
WHAT?

SONNY
THE RICH ARE PENETRATIN’

GRAFFITI PETE
WHAT?

SONNY
WE PAY OUR CORPORATIONS WHEN WE SHOULD BE DEMONSTRATIN’
WHAT ABOUT IMMIGRATION? ARIZONA BE HATIN’
RACISM IN THIS NATION’S GONE FROM LATENT TO BLATANT!

GRAFFITI PETE/OTHERS
WHOO!

SONNY
I’LL CASH MY TICKET AND PICKET, INVEST IN PROTEST
NEVER LOSE MY FOCUS TIL THE CITY TAKES NOTICE
AND YOU KNOW THIS, MAN! I’LL NEVER SLEEP
BECAUSE THE GHETTO HAS A MILLION PROMISES FOR ME TO KEEP!

Vanessa yanks Sonny down for a cheek smooch.

VANESSA
You are so cute!

SONNY
Straight off the dome, baby.

USNAVI
(to Vanessa)
96K. Go.

All eyes are on Vanessa. She spots a LUXURY LOFTS billboard advertising a lap pool, jacuzzi tubs, city views.
She imagines herself in the billboard, soaking in the spa, relaxing in the pool, taking in the views.

Vanessa
If I win the lottery you’ll never see me again.

Usnavi
Damn we only jokin’ stay broke then.

Vanessa
I’ll be downtown
Get a nice studio, get out of the barrio
If I win the lottery you’ll wonder where I’ve been
I’ll be downtown
See you around!

Usnavi tapes a number to the bodega window: 18.

Dania/Carla
Check one two three!
With 96 G’s
Between you and me

Ticket Holders
Why-oh!
And with the dollah dollah
We get to holla holla holla

Usnavi tapes the next number: 7. People dance with anticipation.

Quick flashes—hands pulling lottery tickets from pockets, fingers pointing to lottery numbers with excitement.

Vanessa
I’ll be downtown

Usnavi/Sonny
We could pay off the debts we owe

Dania/Carla
We could tell everyone we know

Usnavi
I could get on a plane and go

Sonny/Benny
We be swimmin’ in dough yo

Ticket Holders
No tip-toein’
We’ll get the dough ‘n
Once we get goin’
We’re never gonna
More numbers have been posted: 34 and 41. There are two remaining POSSIBLE WINNERS.

TICKET HOLDERS (CONT’D)
96,000! 96,000! 96,000! 96,000!
WE’LL GET THE DOUGH ‘N
ONCE WE GET GOIN’
WE’RE NEVER GONNA STOP!

Usnavi posts the final number: 38. The song ends.

In the ensuing stillness, a voice cuts in -

KID 3 (V.O.)
So? Who won?

- as the final candidates crumple their tickets. The crowd disperses and we CUT TO

EXT. BEACH. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. DAY.

The kids are wide-eyed with anticipation.

OLDER USNAVI
The ticket remains unclaimed to this day.

KID 1
Whaaaaa?

KID 2
Aw hells no.

The kids are scandalized by the curse word.

KID 3
Someone got that money. Fess up, old-head!

OLDER USNAVI
The point is not who won...

INT. ROSARIO CAR SERVICE. BACK OFFICE. DAY.

Kevin’s on the phone.
OLDER USNAVI (V.O.)
...but that we all had a sueñito.
And when it comes to dreams,
there’s no shortcuts, no easy
fixes.

Kevin listens, jots numbers onto a scrap paper: “STANFORD BURSAR” is written at the top.

KEVIN
(into the phone)
...are you sure there’s no payment plan? No other possible extensions?

PHONE VOICE (O.S.)
Outstanding tuition plus half next year’s balance is past due...

INT. LOCAL BANK. LATER.

Kevin negotiates with the Latino BANK MANAGER.

OLDER USNAVI (V.O.)
The truth is, you could play by the rules, work hard all your life, and still never achieve your sueñito.

KEVIN
How about some loyalty? To one of your first customers?

BANK MANAGER
The fundamentals of your business don’t justify a loan this large.

INT. IRISH PUB. LATER.

Kevin nurses a beer. Signals “another” to the TATTOOED BARTENDER. Fishes an old photo from his wallet: his WEDDING DAY. Whispers a prayer to his deceased wife--

KEVIN
Help me.

INT. ORGANIC TAILOR/DRY CLEANER. DAY.

In contrast to the block’s outdated interiors, this place gleams with steampunk style-- raw wood shelves, steel racks. High-end dummies sport tailored blazers. PIKE PHILLIPS, the white 40-something owner, inspects a lace napkin.
ABUELA CLAUDIA
For a special event tonight.

PIKE
Wow. The stitch work...

ABUELA CLAUDIA
You’re looking at a piece of Puerto Rican cultural history. Made by an old friend. When agriculture declined on the island, home embroidery became big. That way, families earned a little extra.

PIKE
(enchanted)
How much would you take for them?

ABUELA CLAUDIA
(beaming)
Not for sale.

PIKE
I love this neighborhood. Culture and history everywhere you turn. I’ll clean them today, no rush fee. They’ll run twelve apiece. Are you paying now or at pickup?

Suddenly embarrassed, she returns the napkin to the bundle.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
Bueno, let me think about it.

PIKE
Of course.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
(kindly)
Welcome to the block.

And she turns to go.

INT. ROSA LINDA SALON. DAY.

Through swirls of heat, we see a blow dryer BLASTING, a hot wax tub DRIPPING, a curling iron SINGEING. The salon is cramped with beauty supplies and people. Everyone in line for their final appointment. The radio blasts.

SALSA RADIO VOICE 1
...hottest night of the year, ya’ll! Annual Uptown Jam!
SALSA RADIO VOICE 2
Mm-mm, people get too hype,
shooting off fireworks. I’ma lock
my door and shut the lights!

SALSA RADIO VOICE 1
Come on, there’s twelve clubs
participating! Forty eight dj’s!

Daniela and Carla maneuver through the standing-room-only
crowd, tending to multiple clients-- pinning curls, folding
foils.

CRANKY VIEJA
Don’t take it personal, I’m just
saying-- you sold out.

DANIELA
Grisel, I been doing your
highlights for how long?

CRANKY VIEJA
Twenty years.

DANIELA
Twenty three. My investment
appreciated. You bet your ass I’ma
cash out!

CRANKY VIEJA
You say that now. Wait till they
flip it for ten times what you
made.

A RECEPTIONIST, dressed for work, waits in line.

RECEPTIONIST
Daniela, I come on my lunch break.
The Bronx is too far.

DANIELA
One: swipe the fare card. Two: ride
three stops. Three: arrive at my
new location. Ten minutes, max!

Carla pats a WAX STRIP onto A BORICUA COP’s upper lip.

BORICUA COP
Ten minutes? What are you riding, a
time machine?

RIP! The strip comes off.
BORICUA COP (CONT’D)

Diablo!

DANIELA
Our people survived slave ships. We survived native genocide. We survived conquistadores and dictators! You telling me we won’t survive the D train to Grand Concourse?!

FREEZE ON - Daniela’s exasperated expression.

OLDER USNAVI (V.O.)
Burning hair spray. Toxic polish remover. Hundred decibel gossip. The salon made Madison Square Garden seem like a Buddhist temple.

WHIP ZOOM TO - Daniela’s left eyebrow, raised.

OLDER USNAVI (V.O.) (CONT’D)
Daniela’s eyebrows had multiple scandal settings. From “no me diga!”

WHIP OVER TO - her right eyebrow, raised HIGHER.

OLDER USNAVI (V.O.) (CONT’D)
To “Whatchu talkin bout Willis?”

UNFREEZE as Nina comes in and people greet her.

DANIELA
Mira quien es! Tell them, Nina. Will you come to the Bronx when we move?

NINA
You’re the only one who touches these eyebrows.

DANIELA
So I see. Tweezers!

Carla passes the tweezers as ladies crack up.

DANIELA (CONT’D)
Vanessa took a long lunch. She’ll do your hair when she gets back.
EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK. DAY.

Vanessa walks along, navigating on her phone. She’s not familiar with the West Village. Looks up to see where she is and instead sees--

PEACE. A verdant lawn with readers, students, artists stretched out on the grass.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET. WEST VILLAGE.

The cobblestone and cast iron rails harken back to another era. A HIPSTER UNICYCLIST rides by. Vanessa rings a doorbell, utterly charmed, and is buzzed in.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT. OPEN HOUSE. WEST VILLAGE.

It’s the size of a postage stamp, but Vanessa runs her hand along the exposed brick wall, seeing only possibility.

AGENT (O.S.)
Without a good credit check, I don’t see how it’s possible.

Vanessa turns her attention to the REAL ESTATE AGENT who’s scanning her credit application.

VANESSA
I have bank checks, as good as cash. First month, last month, and security.

AGENT
Maybe your parents could co-sign? Assuming they can prove an income forty times the rent.

Vanessa blanches.

AGENT (CONT’D)
If you can get it to me by five pm I’ll stop showing it.

A HIPSTER COUPLE appears at the door. One holding a unicycle. The agent swoops in their direction.

AGENT (CONT’D)
Open house? Please sign in.

Vanessa ponders the SLIVER OF SKY visible through the lone window. To her, it’s enough to hang a dream on...
“IT WON’T BE LONG NOW”

Vanessa

The elevated train by my window doesn’t phase me anymore.
The rattling screams don’t disrupt my dreams.
It’s a lullaby in its way.
The elevated train drives everyone insane.
But I don’t mind, oh no.
When I bring back boys they can’t tolerate the noise.
And that’s OK cuz I never let them stay.
And one day I’m hoppin’ that elevated train.
And I’m riding away!
It won’t be long now...

EXT. THE BLOCK. WASHINGTON HEIGHTS. DAY.

Vanessa soldiers down the sidewalk. Graffiti Pete and his buddies fall in step behind her, ogling.

Vanessa

The boys around the way holler at me when I’m walking down the street.
Their machismo pride doesn’t break my stride.
It’s a compliment so they say.
The boys around the way holler at me every day.
But I don’t mind oh no.
If I’m in the mood it will not be with some dude.
Who is whistling cuz he has nothing to say.
Or who’s honking at me from his Chevrolet.
And one day I’m hoppin’ in a limousine.
And I’m driving away.
It won’t be long now!

She pauses at a window Box Fan, enjoying the breeze.

USNAVI’S POV - Vanessa’s tresses wave in a Romantic Halo around her face.

Usnavi

Good morning, Vanessa.
If it isn’t the loveliest girl in the place.

Vanessa

You’ve got some schmutz on your face.

INT. BODEGA. MOMENTS LATER.

As Usnavi pours Vanessa a coffee--
USNAVI
Maybe it wasn’t the right place for you.

VANESSA
But there was exposed brick. Like, on purpose.

She drops her credit application into the trash. Usnavi makes a note of it. Sonny pulls Vanessa aside for a heart-to-heart.

SONNY
Uh, my cousin over there has been meaning to ask what a lady such as yourself might be doin tonight?

VANESSA
Does your cousin dance?

SONNY
Like a drunk Chita Rivera.

VANESSA
It’s the **Annual Uptown Jam**. After Nina’s dinner, we can hit a few clubs and check out the fireworks.

She plucks her coffee cup from Usnavi— who’s FROZEN, STUPEFIED— and goes.

USNAVI
OH SNAP WHO’S THAT DON’T TOUCH ME I’M TOO HOT YES! QUE PASO? HERE I GO! SO DOPE Y TU LO SABES! NO PARE—

USNAVI/SONNY
SIGUE SIGUE!

USNAVI
DID YOU SEE ME

USNAVI/SONNY
FREAKY FREAK IT!

USNAVI
WHAT A WAY TO BEGIN THE WEEKEND
SONNY ANYTHING YOU WANT IS FREE, MAN
AND MY DEARLY BELOVED DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
I HAVEN’T FORGOTTEN—

USNAVI/SONNY
YOU!

USNAVI
GONNA SEE THIS HONEY, MAKE A LITTLE MONEY
AND ONE DAY I’LL HOP JET-

USNAVI/SONNY
BLUE!

USNAVI
BUT UNTIL THAT FATEFUL DAY I’M GRATEFUL
I GOT A DESTINATION
I’M RUNNING TO MAKE IT HOME AND HOME’S WHAT
VANESSA’S RUNNING AWAY FROM...
I’M RUNNING TO MAKE IT HOME AND HOME’S WHAT
VANESSA’S RUNNING AWAY FROM...

INT. SALON. MINUTES LATER.

Vanessa swirls a comb in disinfectant, then begins to cut Nina’s hair. She sees Nina’s reflection with envy.

VANESSA
THE NEIGHBORHOOD SALON IS THE PLACE I AM WORKING
FOR THE MOMENT
AS I CUT THEIR HAIR LADIES TALK AND SHARE
EVERY DAY, WHO’S DOING WHO AND WHY
THE NEIGHBORHOOD SALON DOESN’T PAY ME WHAT I
WANNA BE MAKING BUT I DON’T MIND
AS I SWEEP THE CURB I CAN HEAR THOSE TURBO ENGINES
BLAZING A TRAIL THROUGH THE SKY
I LOOK UP AND THINK ABOUT THE YEARS GONE BY

A nearby client browses a fashion magazine. An ad catches Vanessa’s eye: DIRECT FLIGHTS TO PARIS. She IMAGINES HERSELF in the ad, comfy in first class, a BLUE SKY beckoning out the cabin window.

VANESSA (CONT’D)
BUT ONE DAY I’M WALKING TO JFK AND I’M GONNA FLY
IT WON’T BE LONG NOW
ANY DAY...

IN REALITY - the client turns the magazine page, ending the reverie and the song. Vanessa returns to Nina’s haircut.

KID 2 (V.O.)
One question.

EXT. BEACH. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. DAY.

Kid 2 raises his hand, elementary school style. Usnavi calls on him.
KID 2
Um, who’s Chita Rivera?

Older Usnavi’s dismay is evident.

KID 3
Ain’t she the banana hat lady?

OLDER USNAVI
That’s Carmen Miranda.

KID 1
Chita’s unibrow artist lady.

OLDER USNAVI
What are they teaching you during Hispanic Heritage month? Listen up and repeat after me -

INSERT - PICS OF FAMOUS LATINAS, appearing in time with -

OLDER USNAVI (V.O.)
Chita, Rita, Frida, Celia, Sonia, Dolores, Isabel, Sandra, Julia, Rigoberta, Mirabal.

BACK TO - the beach.

OLDER USNAVI
Ready, go!

KIDS
Chita Rita Frida Celia Sonia...

SHY GIRL
Dolores Isabel Sandra Julia Rigoberta Mirabal.

OLDER USNAVI
Ding ding ding!

He grabs her a pop ice from his cooler. The kids are jealous.

INT. ROSARIO’S CAR SERVICE. DISPATCH STATION. DAY.

Benny rubs his eyes. A few empty coffees and red bulls are on the desk.

BENNY
(answering a call, in shaky Spanish)
Rosario’s, where are you? Donde estas? Tu destinacion?
(MORE)
BENNY (CONT’D)
Diez minutos.
(another call)
Rosario’s, where are you? What airline? What are you wearing?
(into the mic)
Two pickups: Broadway two-twelve two-thirteen and JFK terminal three, purple dress.

Another DRIVER enters, taps Benny’s shoulder.

DRIVER
Nap time.

BENNY
Driving since sunrise, then this.

The driver slips into the dispatch chair as Benny walks down the hall, taps on the office door.

BENNY (CONT’D)
Heading out, boss.

Cracking open the door, Benny discovers Kevin and PIKE PHILLIPS, who owns the dry cleaners, going over paperwork. Benny does a double-take. It’s a strange sight, interrupted when Kevin walks over and CLOSES THE DOOR.

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH. DAY.

Frozen in marble, the Virgin Mary peers down with sadness. Abuela Claudia lights an altar candle, whispering prayers as PADRE CARLOS, a middle-aged pastor, approaches.

PADRE CARLOS
Doña Claudia, buenas tardes. Anyone I should hold in prayer today?

ABUELA CLAUDIA
(embarrassed by her answer)
Me. I’m scared of flying.

PADRE CARLOS
Ah! Where are you traveling to?

ABUELA CLAUDIA
Pues, for today, just uptown, running errands.

PADRE CARLOS
You’re the fountain of youth. I don’t know how you do it.
ABUELA CLAUDIA
Paciencia y fe.

PADRE CARLOS
Patience and faith.

He turns and goes.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
Padre...

She wants advice but thinks twice of it. Covering, she grabs a paper fan from the altar.

ABUELA CLAUDIA (CONT’D)
Nice to see you.

INT. SUBWAY ENTRANCE. DAY.

Abuela Claudia pulls a MetroCard from a mini Bible and passes through the turnstile. Two escalators descend, vertiginously steep, out of order. No choice but to walk.

Someone cuts around, skipping down. Claudia grasps the rail, taking it slow. Only a few steps down, she’s fatigued.

“PACIENCIA Y FE”

ABUELA CLAUDIA
AY MAMÁ... THE SUMMER’S HOTTEST DAY
PACIENCIA Y FE, PACIENCIA Y FE
AY CARAJO, IT’S HOT!
BUT THAT’S OKAY
MAMÁ WOULD SAY, “PACIENCIA Y FE”

INT. SUBWAY CAR. DAY.

Claudia sits. In the window, work lights zoom past.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
IT WAS HOTTER AT HOME IN LA VIBORA
THE WASHINGTON HEIGHTS OF HAVANA
A CROWDED CITY OF FACES THE SAME AS MINE
BACK AS A CHILD IN LA VIBORA
I CHASED THE BIRDS IN THE PLAZA
PRAYING, MAMÁ YOU WOULD FIND WORK
COMbing THE STARS IN THE SKY FOR SOME SORT OF SIGN...
AY MAMÁ, SO MANY STARS IN CUBA...
EN NUEVA YORK WE CAN’T SEE BEYOND OUR STREETLIGHTS
TO REACH THE ROOF YOU GOTTA BRIBE THE SUPA’
AIN'T NO CASSIOPEIA EN WASHINGTON HEIGHTS
BUT AIN'T NO FOOD IN LA VIBORA

The subway window animates with SEPIA SNAPSHOTS of historic Cuba: derelict colonial structures, horse-pulled carts, a square rife with pigeons. We ZOOM IN to the images.

ABUELA CLAUDIA (CONT’D)
I REMEMBER NIGHTS, ANGER IN THE STREETS
HUNGER AT THE WINDOWS
WOMEN FOLDING CLOTHES, PLAYING WITH MY FRIENDS
IN THE SUMMER RAIN
MAMÁ NEEDS A JOB, MAMÁ SAYS WE’RE POOR
ONE DAY YOU SAY, “VAMOS A NUEVA YORK”
AND NUEVA YORK WAS FAR BUT NUEVA YORK HAD WORK
AND SO WE CAME

PAN BACK from the window to reveal

INT. AN OLDER SUBWAY. FROM AN EARLIER ERA. 1943.

Claudia is now a passenger through her own memory. Opposite her, a majestic OX OF A WOMAN holds tightly to a girl’s hand. It is YOUNGER CLAUDIA and her MAMÁ.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
AND NOW I’M WIDE AWAKE
A MILLION YEARS TOO LATE
I TALK TO YOU, IMAGINING WHAT YOU’D DO
REMEMBERING WHAT WE WENT THROUGH
NUEVA YORK, AY MAMÁ!
IT WASN’T LIKE TODAY, YOU’D SAY
“PACIENCIA Y FE”

The subway stops and the car floods with old New Yorkers in winter coats. They JOSTLE into the crowded car.

OLD NEW YORKERS
PACIENCIA Y FE.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
PACIENCIA Y FE.

OLD NEW YORKERS
PACIENCIA Y-

ABUELA CLAUDIA
FRESH OFF THE BOAT IN AMERICA
FREEZING IN EARLY DECEMBER
A CROWDED CITY IN 1943!
LEARNING THE ROPES IN AMERICA
EN ESPAÑOL I REMEMBER
DANCING WITH MAYOR LA GUARDIA
ALL OF SOCIETY WELCOMING MAMI AND ME
HA!

Young Claudia and Mamá weave to the door, hostile faces blocking their path.

OLD NEW YORKER 1
YOU BETTER CLEAN THIS MESS!

ABUELA CLAUDIA (O.S.)
PACIENCIA Y FE...

OLD NEW YORKER 2
YOU BETTER LEARN INGLES!

ABUELA CLAUDIA (O.S.)
PACIENCIA Y FE!

OLD NEW YORKER 3
YOU BETTER NOT BE LATE!

OLD NEW YORKER 4
YOU BETTER PULL YOUR WEIGHT!

OLD NEW YORKERS
ARE YOU BETTER OFF THAN YOU WERE WITH THE
BIRDS OF LA VIBORA?

BACK TO:

INT. 207TH ST SUBWAY PLATFORM. NOW.

The doors slide open and Claudia exits onto the platform. She rests on a bench, tossing bread crumbs to a pigeon.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
SHARING DOUBLE BEDS, TRYING TO CATCH A BREAK,
STRUGGLING WITH ENGLISH
LISTENING TO FRIENDS, FINALLY GOT A JOB
WORKING AS A MAID
SO WE CLEANED SOME HOMES, POLISHING WITH PRIDE
SCRUBBING THE WHOLE OF THE UPPER EAST SIDE
THE DAYS INTO WEEKS, THE WEEKS INTO YEARS
AND HERE I STAYED

OLD NEW YORKERS (V.O.)
PACIENCIA Y FE
PACIENCIA Y FE
PACIENCIA Y FE

ABUELA CLAUDIA
AND AS I FEED THESE BIRDS MY HANDS BEGIN TO SHAKE
AND AS I SAY THESE WORDS MY HEART’S ABOUT TO BREAK
AND AY MAMÁ, WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOUR DREAMS COME TRUE?
I’VE SPENT MY LIFE INHERITING DREAMS FROM YOU
WHAT WOULD I DO WITH A WINNING TICKET?
WHAT WOULD I DO BUT PRAY?

EXT. 207TH ST SUBWAY ENTRANCE. INWOOD.

A Latino neighborhood north of Washington Heights. Claudia leans on a street light, catching her breath in the blazing sun.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
I BUY MY LOAF OF BREAD
CONTINUE WITH MY DAY
AND SEE YOU IN MY HEAD
IMAGINING WHAT YOU’D SAY
THE BIRDS, THEY FLY AWAY
DO THEY FLY TO LA VIBORA?

At the end of the block she IMAGINES them again: Young Claudia and her Mamá, hand in hand. Mamá turns back and nods directly to Claudia-- a blessing, a sign.

ABUELA CLAUDIA (CONT’D)
ALRIGHT MAMÁ, OKAY.
PACIENCIA Y FE!

OLD NEW YORKERS (V.O.)
CALOR, CALOR, CALOR

The song ends as the memory FADES and street sounds resume.

SALESWOMAN (O.S.)
Señora? Estás bien?

Claudia gets her bearings. She’s besides a home goods store. An OVERSIZED SUITCASE on the sidewalk catches her interest. The price tag says: “Venta!”

ABUELA CLAUDIA
Si, estoy bien, gracias. ¿Se puede entregar? (“Do you deliver?”)

SALESWOMAN
Claro.

INT. DOMINGUEZ DRY CLEANERS. INWOOD. MINUTES LATER.

The place is crammed with sewing supplies, reams of fabric. DOMINGUEZ, an elderly tailor, hems pants at an old Singer.
SPANISH NEWS ANNOUNCER
(in Spanish)
Everyone’s panicking. There’s a run for blackout supplies and there’s not even a blackout yet. Caller number three?

CALLER NUMBER THREE
(in Spanish)
This happens every year and the politicians do nothing.

A bell dings. Dominguez takes off his glasses and recognizes -

DOMINGUEZ
Doña Claudia! So you brought the treasures for me to inspect?

MOMENTS LATER. Abuela Claudia stands at the counter, clearly fatigued. Dominguez, who speaks with the cadence of an old world gentleman, inspects the lace napkins.

DOMINGUEZ (CONT’D)
Son maravillosas! Unfortunately, I cannot clean them today, my dear.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
No me diga.

DOMINGUEZ
But to make it up to my old compañera, I will clean and deliver them gratis. Is next Tuesday acceptable?

ABUELA CLAUDIA
Sí. Mind if I sit?

EXT. CHITTENDEN AVENUE. WASHINGTON HEIGHTS. DAY.

A one-way cul-de-sac. Apartments on one side, the Hudson opposite. Nina perches on a stone wall, researching on her phone and taking notes.

BENNY (O.S.)
Summer break and guess who’s doing homework?

Nina looks up and sees Benny seated on the hood of his parked town car. He nibbles a sandwich, his white dress shirt drenched in sweat. Nina closes her notebook, catches Benny’s eye. Where to begin?
NINA
Did dad tell you?

BENNY
Tell me what? He’s in a mood today.

NINA
How many drivers did he lay off this year?

BENNY
Seven.

NINA
Managers?

BENNY
Both of them.

NINA
So who’s running dispatch?

BENNY
He is. We help out. Mi español está... improving.

NINA
Mejorando.

He hops onto the wall beside her. The chemistry is palpable, as is the tension.

BENNY
How was it?

NINA
Lonely.

He traces his fingertips along hers. A welcome bit of tenderness, though she’s exasperated by it.

BENNY
I missed you, too.

NINA
Then why’d you break up with me?

BENNY
It was mutual.

NINA
Not really.
BENNY
So you could have the full Stanford experience!
   (lightly)
The reality of my life is blue collar.

She pulls her hand away. They’ve had this conversation before and she dislikes it every time.

BENNY (CONT’D)
“Lonely.” Got any details?

NINA
Want to go dancing tonight?

BENNY
Why you always gotta ask me out?!
   (swallowing his pride)
Yes.

They relax a bit, looking out at the George Washington Bridge. A barge pushes through the water below.

“WHEN YOU’RE HOME”

NINA
I used to think we lived at the top of the world
when the world was just a subway map
and the one slash nine climbed a dotted line
to my place

BENNY
There’s no nine train now

NINA
Right.
I used to think the Bronx was a place in the sky
when the world was just a subway map
and my thoughts took shape

NINA/BENNY
On that fire escape

NINA
Can you remind me of what it was like
at the top of the world?

BENNY
Come with me...
EXT. BENNETT PARK. LATE AFTERNOON.

As children play in the summer heat, Benny points Nina’s attention to A MEMORY: TEEN BENNY jacking open a hydrant.

They approach the MEMORY, so close they can almost touch it.

BENNY
WE BEGIN JULY WITH A STOP AT MY CORNER FIRE HYDRANT

NINA
YOU WOULD OPEN IT EVERY SUMMER!

BENNY
I WOULD BUST IT WITH A WRENCH TIL MY FACE GOT DRENCHED TIL I HEARD THE SIRENS THEN I RAN LIKE HELL

NINA
YOU RAN LIKE HELL!

BENNY
YEAH I RAN LIKE HELL!

NINA
I REMEMBER WELL!

BENNY
TO YOUR FATHER’S DISPATCH WINDOW “HEY LET ME IN, YO! THEY’RE COMING TO GET ME!”

NINA
YOU WERE ALWAYS IN CONSTANT TROUBLE.

BENNY
THEN YOUR DAD WOULD ACT ALL SNIDE BUT HE LET ME HIDE YOU’D BE THERE INSIDE

NINA
LIFE WAS EASIER THEN

BENNY
NINA, EVERYTHING IS EASIER WHEN YOU’RE HOME THE STREET’S A LITTLE KINDER WHEN YOU’RE HOME CAN’T YOU SEE THAT THE DAY SEEMS CLEARER NOW THAT YOU ARE HERE OR IS IT ME? MAYBE IT’S JUST ME...
EXT. BIKE PATH. MOMENTS LATER.

Sunlight dapples through the canopied trees as Nina and Benny follow switchbacks down to the river. On a bench, they spot another MEMORY: their YOUNGER SELVES, seated flirtatiously--she studying SAT PREP, he studying STREET MAPS.

**BENNY**
WE GOTTA GO I WANNA SHOW YOU ALL I KNOW
THE SUN IS SETTING AND THE LIGHT IS GETTING LOW

**NINA**
ARE WE GOING TO CASTLE GARDEN?

**BENNY**
MAYBE, MAYBE NOT, BUT WAY TO TAKE A SHOT
WHEN THE DAY IS HOT I GOT A PERFECT SHADY SPOT
A LITTLE WAY’S AWAY THAT OUGHTA COOL US DOWN

**NINA**
COOL US DOWN

**BENNY**
WELCOME BACK TO TOWN!

Farther down, a group of HIGH SCHOOLERS pop and lock. This is also a MEMORY. YOUNGER NINA, YOUNGER BENNY, and YOUNGER USNAVI surround GRAFFITI PETE as he battles some B-GIRLS.

**NINA**
NOW BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL WHEN IT DARKENED
YOU’D HANG OUT IN BENNETT PARK AND

**BENNY**
USNAVI WOULD BRING HIS RADIO!

**NINA**
AS I WALKED HOME FROM SENIOR STUDIES
I’D SEE YOU RAPPIN’ WITH YOUR BUDDIES

**BENNY**
WITH THE VOLUME HIGH

**NINA**
I WALKED ON BY

**BENNY**
YOU WALKED ON BY

DANCING TEENS
NO PARE, SIGUE SIGUE!
NO PARE, SIGUE SIGUE!
NO PARE, SIGUE SIGUE!
NO PARE, SIGUE SIGUE!
EXT. BEACH. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. DAY.

The kids are pretty good dancers themselves.

KIDS/OLDER USNAVI
NO PARE, SIGUE SIGUE!
NO PARE, SIGUE SIGUE!
NO PARE, SIGUE SIGUE!
NO PARE, SIGUE SIGUE!
NO PARE, SIGUE SIGUE!

BACK TO:

EXT. HUDSON RIVER’S EDGE. LATE AFTERNOON.

Water splashes on the river boulders. Nina and Benny hop from rock to rock, past fishermen, picnickers, and past A MEMORY--as teens, they toss crumbs to ducks swimming in the river.

BENNY
WHEN YOU’RE HOME
OH, THE SUMMER NIGHTS ARE COOLER WHEN YOU’RE HOME

NINA
NOW THAT YOU’RE HERE WITH ME

BENNY
AND THAT SONG YOU’RE HEARING IS THE NEIGHBORHOOD JUST CHEERING YOU ALONG

NINA
(sensitive)
DON’T SAY THAT

BENNY
WHAT’S WRONG?

NINA
DON’T SAY THAT
WHEN I WAS YOUNGER I’D IMAGINE WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF MY PARENTS HAD STAYED IN PUERTO RICO WHO WOULD I BE IF I HAD NEVER SEEN MANHATTAN IF I LIVED IN PUERTO RICO WITH MY PEOPLE? MY PEOPLE...
I FEEL LIKE ALL MY LIFE I’VE TRIED TO FIND THE ANSWER WORKING HARDER, LEARNING SPANISH, LEARNING ALL I CAN I THOUGHT I MIGHT FIND THE ANSWER OUT AT STANFORD BUT I’D STARE OUT AT THE SEA THINKING, “WHERE’M I SUPPOSED TO BE?” SO PLEASE DON’T SAY YOU’RE PROUD OF ME WHEN I’VE LOST MY WAY
BENNY
THEN CAN I SAY: I COULDN’T GET MY MIND OFF YOU ALL DAY
NOW LISTEN TO ME.
THAT MAY BE HOW YOU PERCEIVE IT
BUT NINA PLEASE BELIEVE THAT WHEN YOU
FIND YOUR WAY AGAIN
YOU ARE GONNA CHANGE THE WORLD AND THEN
WE’RE ALL GONNA BRAG AND SAY WE KNEW YOU WHEN
THIS WAS YOUR HOME

CAMERA SPINS AROUND, revealing the HISTORIC RED LIGHTHOUSE behind them.

AT THE TOP - YOUNGER BENNY and YOUNGER NINA stand at the railed gallery, fingers woven together. His face burrows into her neck, offering a delicate kiss.

AT THE BOTTOM - Nina and Benny, present-day, relive the scene. The interwoven fingers. The neck kiss. Less starry-eyed, more earthbound.

NINA
I’M HOME...

BENNY
WELCOME HOME!

NINA
WHEN YOU’RE HERE WITH ME...

BENNY
WELCOME HOME!

NINA
I USED TO THINK WE LIVED AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD...

BENNY
WELCOME HOME-

NINA
I’M HOME-

BENNY
YOU’RE FINALLY HOME-

NINA/BENNY
I’M/YOU’RE HOME!

The CAMERA LIFTS OFF from them, toward the steel spires of the GW Bridge. Benny and Nina are swallowed by Washington Heights, which is just slipping into DUSK, as the song ends.
INT. BODEGA. EVENING.

Sonny and Pete, alone at the bodega, flip through a graffiti magazine.

NEWS RADIO VOICE (V.O.)
After last year’s Annual Uptown Jam turned dangerous, the mayor has announced harsh penalties for residents caught lighting fireworks tonight.

MAYOR’S VOICE (V.O.)
(from a press conference)
Arrests will be made. Perpetrators, charged. Our great city can celebrate joyously and safely.

SONNY
You better be careful.

ANGLE ON a bunch of ROMAN CANDLES in Pete’s backpack.

A courier enters with a large shrink-wrapped suitcase.

COURIER
Usnavi de la Vega?

SONNY
I can sign.

Sonny signs, puzzled by the suitcase. He finds a delivery slip, with a note:

“FOR OUR ADVENTURE. LOVE, ABUELA CLAUDIA.”

Sonny’s face changes. He can’t help but feel left out.

INT. HOUSING PROJECTS. LOBBY. EVENING.

Usnavi’s slick evening getup is out of place in this dilapidated hallway. The elevator is taped off and a sign reads: TAKE STAIRS IN CASE OF BLACKOUT.

INT. HOUSING PROJECTS. LIVING ROOM. EVENING.

Old sheets hang like curtains. There’s enough empty beer cans to burden a recycling center. The ballgame is on, volume blasting. GAPO, late 30’s, wears an undershirt and jeans.

GAPO
Have a seat, cuz!
He tosses a beer to Usnavi, who places it down, uninterested.

**USNAVI**
Sonny’s been out late four nights this week.

**GAPO**
Summer break. At least the kid ain’t dealing.

Usnavi cringes.

**USNAVI**
The wine coolers I found in his bag. Did you talk to him?

**GAPO**
Sit down, relax. Don’t be hovering.

Usnavi sits. He hates it here but opts for diplomacy.

**USNAVI**
I already have him working twelve hour days.

**GAPO**
And the other twelve hours he don’t listen to shit I say.

**USNAVI**
What if it wasn’t your problem? What if I took him to D.R. and put him in school there?

**GAPO**
You still dreaming bout that?

**USNAVI**
The wheels are in motion.

**GAPO**
Well, Sonny ain’t goin witchu.

Gapo opens a beer, gulps it like water. Usnavi mutes the TV, a bid for attention.

**USNAVI**
I’ll send him back here on holidays. Christmas, summers.

**GAPO**
It’s not in the cards.

Usnavi’s disappointed, but still determined.
INT. ROSARIO HOME. EVENING. LATER.

Abuela and Nina prep for the party, slicing a gargantuan avocado.

NINA
What genetic modification did that involve?

ABUELA CLAUDIA
This is how they grow en el campo!

Usnavi brings in a stack of platters. He places them alongside the elegant dinner spread.

USNAVI
Sonny and Benny are bringing up the rest.
(to Nina)
Did you get my text?

NINA
(eyeing him curiously)
Yes. But tell me why...

INT. NINA’S ROOM. MOMENTS LATER.

Nina and Usnavi look at her notebook. A hand-drawn chart says “HIGH SCHOOLS, D.R.” at the top

NINA
This column is public schools, this one is private schools. All within a ten mile radius of Puerto Plata.

USNAVI
How’d they seem?

NINA
I found test scores for three of them, which weren’t stellar. The others had no info. But this one...
(she has starred a square)
...has a bilingual program and a good college placement record.

Usnavi taps the star, his dream palpably close.

INT. ABUELA’S KITCHEN. SAME.

Two stories down from the Rosario’s, Sonny and Benny wrap food platters with foil.
SONNY
A’ight. Let’s roll.

They head out the door and up to -

INT. ROSARIO LIVING ROOM. SAME.

More folks have gathered. Daniela and Carla put out napkins. Benny pours wine glasses. In the kitchen, Sonny and Usnavi remove lids from the food trays.

SONNY
(covering his agitation)
So this D.R. plan, is it for real?
Or you just blowin hot air?

Usnavi pulls the SCHOOLS CHART from his pocket, shows it.

USNAVI
Colegio Adventista. They have a dual language program. Let me enroll you for the fall.

Sonny recoils.

SONNY
Do me a favor. Don’t be planning my life around your dreams, ok?

USNAVI
Three month trial. If you hate it, I’ll bring you home.

Sonny goes.

USNAVI (CONT’D)
Hey... Sonny!

LIVING ROOM. Sonny pulls on headphones and slouches in a chair, sullen. But before Usnavi reaches him, Vanessa appears in the front hall, her green dress all but painted on.

VANESSA
Hi, Usnavi.

USNAVI
That’s a nice piece of silk. What keeps it up?

VANESSA
Innocence.
LATER. Daniela, Carla, Benny, Nina, Usnavi, and Abuela Claudia dance to an old bolero, crooning along.

ALL
NO TE VAYAS
SI ME DEJAS
SI TE ALEJAS DE MI
SEGUIRAS EN MIS RECUERDOS PARA SIEMPRE

The record hits a skip, but Claudia’s prepared.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
PARA SIEMPRE-
PARA SIEMPRE-
PARA SIEMPRE-
The scratch in the record is my favorite part!

Kevin comes in, pausing to appreciate the scene, as everyone greets him warmly.

KEVIN
Did I miss the record scratch?

LATER. The feast is underway. The dining table is at max capacity, chairs squeezed together, plates and platters everywhere. Some guests perch on the sofa, eating. With a formal tap of his wine glass, Kevin stands.

KEVIN (CONT’D)
When I was a boy...

USNAVI
Now it’s a party.

KEVIN
I took an old rag and coffee can, walked to the plaza in Arecibo and shined shoes for a nickel. I made thirty five cents, invested it in shoe polish. Now I had a business!

(turning to Nina)
At your age, your mother and I, may she rest in peace, came here. We emptied our bank accounts and bought Rosario’s.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
Two burgundy Cadillacs. That was your whole fleet!

KEVIN
Nina, you are everything. I see her in you every day.

(MORE)
Entonces, today I made my next investment. I cashed in, mija. So you can go back to Stanford.

No one’s sure what to make of the announcement.

USNAVI
Was going back in question?

CARLA
(socially tone deaf)
You didn’t hear? She flunked out.

USNAVI
What?!

Sonny pulls off his headphones, listening.

KEVIN
A B-average is not flunking. This was a financial issue. I met with Mr. Phillips, the guy that owns the dry cleaners. When he first approached me about buying, he wanted the whole space. Now it’s his.

DANIELA
Felicidades!

But the rest of the table falls silent.

BENNY
(to Kevin)
“No more layoffs.” Your words. I turned down a management position.

NINA
(to Kevin)
Why on earth wouldn’t you ask me first?

KEVIN
For permission to be your father?

ABUELA CLAUDIA
Nina. Say, “thank you, papá.”

VANESSA
Seriously. Some of us can’t afford two semesters at CUNY.

Nina’s rage bubbles just below the surface.
NINA
(re: Abuela Claudia)
I may not have immigrated here as a child.
(re: Kevin)
And I haven’t labored for decades. But I have earned some dignity. Not the campus police stopping my buddies like, “Who’s got the weed?” Not my roommate’s parents searching my drawers because she lost her necklace. Emptying my closet in front of my face, with the RA watching the whole thing. Every manicured pathway made me think of Sonny. How he wouldn’t see himself in the faculty, the students. He’d see himself in the guys who trim hedges and vanish before dawn. Is that worth everything you’ve worked for, dad? Is it worth your blood, sweat, and tears?

VANESSA
Pobre Nina. Sounds really rough.

Benny twists a KEY off his ring, slides it across the table to Kevin.

BENNY
This is yours. It was nice working for you.

As Benny goes--

DANIELA
Kevin paid his dues in the community. Good for you, Kevin!

But the door SLAMS behind Benny. A BEAT BEGINS.

SONNY
(to Nina)
Your roommate’s parents? Special place in hell for ‘em.

Sonny pulls his headphones back on. Volume high. Higher. The beat TAKING OVER, BECOMING -

LIVE SALSA MUSIC
EMCEE VOICE (V.O.)
Annual-annual! Uptown-uptown!
Jaaaaaaam!

CUT TO:

EXT. BOUNCER LINE. NIGHT.

A green stilleto taps with agitation. Usnavi and Vanessa’s date is off to a tense start.

VANESSA
Two classes at Community, two A’s.
My college career in a nutshell.
And now I’m supposed to cry a river
cuz shit ain’t fair? Do me a favor.

Usnavi’s all ears.

VANESSA (CONT’D)
Drag Sonny to the DR kicking and
screaming. His dad acting like
Coors Light is some health drink.
It happens so quick. One or two
bills missed, one or two paychecks
guzzled by your parent, and bam,
you’re stuck as gum in the street.

USNAVI
I’ve sometimes gotten the
feeling...

Usnavi stops, not sure if he should continue.

USNAVI (CONT’D)
You’ve got seniority at the salon
but you’re always the last one
there. Are things getting worse
with your mom?

Stunned by his perception, Vanessa softens.

VANESSA
I’m not a sob story. I’m a brown
belt in kick boxing.

She plucks the ID from him and swivels toward the bouncer.

INT. SALSA CLUB. NIGHT.

Vanessa scans the dance floor, the music washing over her.
USNAVI
Have you been here before?

"THE CLUB"

CLUB PEOPLE
VANESSA!

VANESSA
Just once.

And she’s off, weaving through the dancers, as Usnavi tries to keep up.

USNAVI
DAMN THIS IS NICE
I REALLY LIKE WHAT THEY’VE DONE WITH THE LIGHTS
SO THE HOT CLUB IN WASHINGTON HEIGHTS
YOU MIGHT BE RIGHT, THIS MUSIC’S TIGHT
YO DID I MENTION THAT YOU LOOK GREAT TONIGHT
BECAUSE YOU DO YOU REALLY–

VANESSA
USNAVI, RELAX!

USNAVI
RELAX, QUE RELAXED? I’M RELAXED!

SEXY COUPLE
WEPA, VANESSA!

USNAVI
SO YOU’VE BEEN HERE BEFORE
I DON’T GO OUT I GET SO BUSY WITH THE STORE
Y CADA DÍA IT’S A BRAND NEW CHORE
MY ARMS ARE SORE, NO TIME FOR THE DANCE FLOOR
BUT MAYBE YOU AND ME SHOULD HANG OUT SOME MORE
I’M SUCH A DORK BUT I–

VANESSA
LET’S GO GET A DRINK.

USNAVI
SOMETHING SWEET?

VANESSA
YOU KNOW ME, A LITTLE BIT OF CINNAMON...

CLUB PEOPLE
WEPA, VANESSA!

AT THE BAR
Empty shot glasses reflect the swirling lights. Usnavi approaches and Benny signals “two more” to the bartender.

**BENNY**
HERE’S TO GETTING FIRED!

**USNAVI**
TO KILLING THE MOOD!

**BENNY/USNAVI**
SALUD!

They clink and gulp. Shots appear in tempo with the music.

**BENNY**
WITHOUT SO MUCH AS A THANK YOU!

**USNAVI**
AFTER ALL THESE YEARS.

**BENNY/USNAVI**
CHEERS!

**BENNY**
TO FINALLY GETTING VANESSA
MAN FIX YOUR COLLAR

**BENNY/USNAVI**
HOLLER!

**BENNY**
TO DOING SHOTS ON A WEEKEND!

**USNAVI**
AS LONG AS YOU BUY EM, L’CHAIM!

Vanessa emerges from the crowd and Usnavi hands her a drink. Jose, a club regular, handsome and brash, taps her shoulder.

**JOSE**
HEY, YOU!

**VANESSA**
WHO?

**JOSE**
YOU!

**VANESSA**
WHO, ME?

**JOSE**
YOU WANNA DANCE?
VANESSA
NAW, MAN.

JOSE
OKAY, I TOOK MY CHANCE.

USNAVI
IT’S COOL, IT’S COOL, HEY IF YOU WANT TO...

VANESSA
(“What the hell?”)
YOU DON’T MIND?

USNAVI
I’M FINE, I’M FINE.

Vanessa, not amused, follows Jose into the dancing crowd.

BENNY
YO!

USNAVI
YO.

BENNY
WHO’S VANESSA TALKING TO?

USNAVI
SOME DUDE.

BENNY
SOME DUDE?
THAT’S MESSED UP, SHE’S TRYIN’ TO MAKE YOU JEALOUS.

USNAVI
JEALOUS, I AIN’T JEALOUS
I CAN TAKE ALL THESE FELLAS, WHATEVA’!

ON THE DANCE FLOOR

Usnavi pushes through the crowd and sees Vanessa at the nucleus, CLUB GUYS orbiting her. Usnavi has time to make a move, but he wilts against the competition. Jose swoops Vanessa into a dervish spin, her hair WHIPPING Usnavi’s face.

IN A HALLWAY

Benny waits by the men’s room, his head protesting against the alcohol. Nina pushes through the crowd.

NINA
BENNY, CAN WE TAKE A WALK OUTSIDE?

BENNY
AND THERE SHE IS.

NINA
I’M SO SORRY, I DIDN’T KNOW.

BENNY
WHO LET YOU IN?
YO THIS IS THE GIRL WHO COST US OUR JOBS TODAY!

NINA
I’M GONNA MAKE IT RIGHT.

BENNY
A TOAST TO THE END OF ALL I KNOW.

Benny yanks a random CLUB GIRL’s hand, pulling her onto THE DANCE FLOOR

But Benny’s wobbly on his feet, tipsy. Nearby Jose outshines Usnavi with virtuosic salsa moves.

CLUB GUYS
VANESSA, LET ME GET THE NEXT ONE
VANESSA, LET ME INTERJECT SOME
THE WAY YOU SWEAT, THE WAY YOU FLEX ON THE FLOOR
IT MAKES ME WANT YOU MORE! (REPEAT)

THE BAR

Dejected, Usnavi finds a ferocious WOMAN IN RED where Benny had been.

USNAVI
BARTENDER, LET ME GET AN AMARETTO SOUR
FOR THIS GHETTO FLOWER, HOW ARE YOU SO PRETTY?
YOU COMPLETE ME, YOU HAD ME AT HELLO
YOU KNOW YOU NEED ME, TRULY, MADLY, DEEPLY
LET’S GET FREAKY!
OH I GET IT YOU’RE THE STRONG AND SILENT TYPE
WELL I’M THE CARIBBEAN ISLAND TYPE
AND I CAN DRIVE YOU WILD ALL NIGHT
BUT I DIGRESS, SAY SOMETHING SO I DON’T STRESS

WOMAN IN RED
NO HABLO INGLES.

USNAVI
YES!

He takes her hand and leads her to THE DANCE FLOOR
Despite dancing with the woman in red, Usnavi can’t stop staring at Vanessa and Jose. Meanwhile, Nina searches for Benny but is intercepted by Jose, who’s now spinning two women at once!

Annoyed by Benny’s obvious jealousy, the club girl pairs off with someone else, leaving Benny and Usnavi side by side.

Usnavi busts a nerdy move, culminating with a hat trick: FAIL. Vanessa scoops the Kangol off the floor and takes Usnavi’s hand, charmed by the dorkdom. They dance together, reunited at last, having a blast.

Jose, left alone with Nina, grinds on her a little too hard. Benny tries separating them, but Jose slaps his hands. Fists start to fly. It’s hard to tell what’s going on when suddenly-

THE POWER GOES OUT.

EXT. MANHATTAN. BIRDSEYE VIEW. NIGHT.

Big patches of the city’s northern electrical grid BLINK OFF.

INT. SALSA CLUB. SAME.

Complete darkness. Nervous gasps, scattered voices cutting through. A flurry of cell phones light up.

“BLACKOUT”

CLUB GUY
OYE QUE PASÓ?

USNAVI
BLACKOUT, BLACKOUT!

BARTENDER
VINO EL APAGON, AY DIOS!

CLUB GUYS
OYE QUE PASÓ?

USNAVI
BLACKOUT, BLACKOUT!

JOSE
VINO EL APAGON, AY DIOS!

USNAVI
YO I CAN’T SEE
QUIT SHOVIN’ MOTHERFUCKER IT’S AN OVEN
AND WE GOTTA BACK OUT
THIS IS A BLACK OUT
CHILL, FOR REAL, OR WE’RE GONNA GET KILLED!

INT. ROSARIO’S CAR SERVICE. NIGHT.
Kevin flips on a backup generator and grabs the dispatch mic.

KEVIN
CALLING ALL TAXIS, EVERYONE RELAX PLEASE!
CALLING ALL TAXIS, EVERYONE RELAX PLEASE!

INT. BODEGA. NIGHT.
A car’s high beams send a streak of light into the bodega.

SONNY
WHAT’S GOING ON?
WHAT’S GOING ON?
SUDDENLY I FIND THE ELECTRICITY IS GONE!
NOTHING IS ON!
NOTHING IS ON!
GOTTA FIND USNAVI TELL HIM WHAT IS GOING ON!

INT. SALSA CLUB. NIGHT.
Bottlenecks form as people push their way blindly to the two exits. Nina is swallowed up by the stampeding crowd. Usnavi stands atop a massive speaker, scanning the darkness.

BENNY
NINA, WHERE’D YOU GO?

NINA
HAS ANYONE SEEN BENNY?

USNAVI
VANESSA, VANESSA, VANESSA!

VANESSA
USNAVI HELP ME!

INT. DISPATCH STATION. NIGHT.

KEVIN
PLEASE FIND NINA! BUSCA MI HIJA!
IF YOU SEE MY DAUGHTER BRING HER HOME!
INT. SUBWAY. NIGHT.

A conductor walks through the motionless car, his flashlight beam sweeping past Daniela and Carla.

DANIELA/CARLA
WE ARE POWERLESS, WE ARE POWERLESS!
WE ARE POWERLESS, WE ARE POWERLESS!

EXT. BODEGA. NIGHT.

Some folks stroll along, enjoying the novelty of a blackout. Others run, panicking. A few, amped up, are looking for trouble. Sonny struggles to close the roll gate but it’s stuck. Graffiti Pete runs up.

GRAFFITI PETE
THEY THROWIN’ BOTTLES IN THE STREET
PEOPLE LOOTIN’ AND SHOOTIN’
SONNY THEY WANNA SEE A ROBERRY
WE GOTTA KEEP MOVIN’

SONNY
NAW MAN, I CAN’T LEAVE I GOTTA GUARD THE STORE

GRAFFITI PETE
THEY GONNA BOMBARD THE STORE
UNTIL YOU AIN’T GOT A STORE NO MORE

SONNY
I GOT A BASEBALL BAT ON A RACK IN THE BACK

GRAFFITI PETE
I GOTTA COUPLE ‘A ROMAN CANDLES
WE CAN DISTRIBUTE THE VANDALS

SONNY
HEY YO I SEE SOME THUGS COMIN’
MAN WE GONNA GET JACKED UP

GRAFFITI PETE
GIMME A LIGHT, I’LL BE RIGHT BACK
BACK UP BACK UP BACK UP!

Graffiti Pete strikes a match on his fly then lights a roman candle, holding it out like a weapon.

EXT. SALSA CLUB. NIGHT.

People flood out of the club’s main entrance. The dark sky now a rainbow of color and light.
ESCAPING PEOPLE
LOOK AT THE FIREWORKS!
LOOK AT THE FIREWORKS FLY!
LIGHT UP THE NIGHT SKY!
LIGHT UP THE NIGHT SKY!

Vanessa takes refuge on the curb. She abandons a broken spike heel and hobbles away.

VANESSA
OH GOD SO MUCH PANIC, THE CROWD WAS MANIC
WITH EVERYBODY SCREAMING AND SHOVING AND SHOUTING
AND SLAPPING AND EVERYONE FRANTIC
I DON’T KNOW WHAT TO DO

EXT. ANOTHER STREET. NIGHT.

During the INSTRUMENTAL BREAK Vanessa struggles to stay balanced, a phone pressed to her ear.

OPERATOR VOICE
All lines are busy...

A few DRUNK PRANKSTERS charge at her, taunting, and run off laughing when she flinches.

A PIERCING WHISTLE cuts through the noise. Vanessa fumes and spins, ready to punch cat-caller, but it’s Usnavi.

USNAVI
Give me the other one.

She pulls off the intact stilleto. With some effort, he BREAKS OFF THE HEEL. She slips into the makeshift “flats” as he yanks her hand, running. But she slips, unsteady.

USNAVI (CONT’D)
Sonny’s alone at the bodega.

VANESSA
Go. I’m fine.

Usnavi offers his own shoes instead. She has to tie the laces tight, but even so she can hardly run in them.

VANESSA (CONT’D)
I’ll take it slow. Go on.

He kisses her cheek and runs off barefoot. Not the romantic flourish she hoped for.
INT. CLAUDIA’S KITCHEN. NIGHT.

The walls are bathed in soft light. Claudia scuttles around, matches in hand, lighting candles on the table, counter, windowsill.

Usnavi runs in.

COMMUNITY (V.O.)
LOOK AT THE FIREWORKS!

USNAVI
ABUELA ARE YOU ALRIGHT?

COMMUNITY (V.O.)
LIGHT UP THE NIGHT SKY!

ABUELA CLAUDIA
THE STARS ARE OUT TONIGHT.

COMMUNITY (V.O.)
LOOK AT THE FIREWORKS!

USNAVI
YOU’RE NOT ALONE TONIGHT.

COMMUNITY (V.O.)
LIGHT UP THE NIGHT SKY!

USNAVI/ABUELA CLAUDIA
YOU’RE NOT ALONE TONIGHT!

EXT. SALSA CLUB. BACK ALLEY. NIGHT.

Nina escapes with a small crowd through a second story back exit. They rush down the fire escape as Benny rounds the corner.

BENNY
NINA THERE YOU ARE!

NINA
I’VE GOTTA GO!

BENNY
I’LL GET YOU OUTTA HERE TONIGHT.

NINA
I DON’T NEED ANYTHING TONIGHT I CAN FIND MY WAY HOME

BENNY
THEN FIND YOUR WAY HOME!
NINA
WITHOUT YOU-

BENNY
WITHOUT YOU-

CUT TO:

A LIT FIREWORK. A FIST LAUNCHES IT LIKE A GRENADE.

EXT. BODEGA. NIGHT.

The roman candle “bomb” hits the window with a burst, sending glass raining down onto Sonny. In the BG, some teens run away as a glowing ember brightens and the awning catches fire.

COMMUNITY (V.O.)
LOOK AT THE FIREWORKS!
LOOK AT THE FIREWORKS!
LOOK AT THE FIREWORKS!
LOOK AT THE FIREWORKS!
LIGHT UP THE NIGHT SKY!
LIGHT UP THE NIGHT SKY!
EN WASHINGTON--

Usnavi races out his door as colorful bursts of light flash overhead. He stops in his tracks when he sees--

The bodega awning, ENGULFED IN FLAMES. The blaze starting to spread inside...

He grabs the hose, but it’s SCORCHING HOT. Drops it, helpless.

INT. BODEGA. MOMENTS LATER.

Flames lap the shelves, but the fire extinguisher is accessible. Usnavi wraps his hand in a rag and BREAKS THE GLASS, but as he jostles the extinguisher from the case, the HEAT and SMOKE overwhelm him. He retreats.

EXT. BODEGA. MOMENTS LATER.

Sonny’s CUTS from the broken window are bleeding now. And Usnavi’s just a silhouette, set against the raging fire. Watching his life’s work disappear.

COMMUNITY (V.O.)
LOOK AT THE FIREWORKS!
LOOK AT THE FIREWORKS!
LIGHT UP THE NIGHT SKY!
LIGHT UP THE NIGHT SKY!
EN WASHINGTON HEIGHTS!

FADE TO BLACK.

IN BLACK--

KID 2 (V.O.)
Did he require stitches?

EXT. BEACH. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. DAY.
The children are HORRIFIED.

OLDER USNAVI
He had a millipede-shaped scar up his arm.

KID 2
Did he get general anesthesia?

OLDER USNAVI
Nope.

KID 2
A blood transfusion? A liver transplant?

OLDER USNAVI
What tv shows are you watching?

INT./EXT. EMERGENCY ROOM. THE NEXT MORNING.

Usnavi paces in the dim emergency lighting. Crowded as the ER is, there’s an eerie quiet to the place. Sonny emerges through the triage doors, sucking a lollipop, his forearm wrapped in a bandage.

SONNY
Nurse even kissed my boo boo.

Relieved, Usnavi envelopes Sonny in a barrage of noogies.

USNAVI
Free sodas for life. And free Chipwiches in heaven.

They head out to the curbside drop-off and slide into a cab. Usnavi pulls the seat belt across Sonny’s shoulders.
SONNY
Cuz? We tight. But I can buckle myself in.

But Usnavi clicks it anyway. He really loves this kid.

USNAVI
(to the driver)
181st and Fort Washington.

The cabbie turns up the radio as he pulls away.

SALSA RADIO VOICE 1 (V.O.)
Does the community even respect itself? Someone burned a bodega!

SALSA RADIO VOICE 2 (V.O.)
You’re talking one incident of accidental arson.

SALSA RADIO VOICE 1 (V.O.)
Arson can’t be accidental. That’s what arson means, look it up!

EXT. BODEGA. MINUTES LATER.

A pair of firefighters climb into their truck. The engine roars to life and the truck pulls out revealing -

THE DESTROYED BODEGA. The awning a charred steel skeleton. Glass shards crunch underfoot as Usnavi heads inside.

INT. BODEGA. CONTINUOUS.

Sunlight barely illuminates the damage. Shelf after shelf of burnt inventory. Products dripping wet from the fire hoses. Sonny pokes around as Usnavi contemplates the DESTROYED MURAL. It’s COVERED OVER, BLACK. He tries to wipe some soot away, but instead cracks a big paint chip off the wall.

PETE (O.S.)
Daaaamn. They got you good.

Backlit in the doorway, Graffiti Pete is dismayed at the damage. Usnavi charges, white hot, grabbing his collar -

USNAVI
Stay the hell away from my store!

With a violent SHOVE Usnavi storms past him and out the door.
EXT. ELEVATED 1 TRACKS. MORNING.

Workers monitor a screeching train, testing the backup power system. Below the tracks, Usnavi knocks at a front door. It opens enough to reveal Vanessa, not enough to let him in.

VANESSA
Thought that might be you.

USNAVI
You got home okay?

VANESSA
Slower I walked, clearer I became.

USNAVI
About what?

VANESSA
Not wanting to be someone’s second, third, tenth call in an emergency. First call. That’s what I’m holding out for.

She rests Usnavi’s shoes on the stoop, goes to close the door, but he stops it.

USNAVI
Vanessa--

VANESSA
Third grade. Principal’s office. First time we spoke.

USNAVI
You remember that? I was getting busted for my used pencil cartel.

VANESSA
I was on probation for vandalism. You know what I had etched into my desk?

(he doesn’t)

“Vanessa Ramirez. Lone warrior.”

And she’s gone, the door swinging closed, her footsteps echoing up the stairs.

INT. VANESSA’S STUDIO APARTMENT. MOMENTS LATER.

Vanessa’s MOM snores on the sofa. Vanessa SNATCHES the empty liquor bottle from her mother’s passed-out grip.
Tosses it in a recycling bin piled with empties. Out the window, the metallic brakes of the 1 train rattle her bones.

CUT TO:

HANDS WRINGING **FILTHY WATER FROM A RAG**

One drop **PLUNKS** into a bucket, creating a **piano note**. It becomes

"**EL SUEÑITO**"

**INT. BODEGA. DAY.**

Lit by a flashlight’s paltry beam, Usnavi’s attempts at cleaning seem futile - a mop and rag are no match for the extensive fire damage.

Usnavi **WET VACS** the flooded basement. He stuffs **BURNT PRODUCTS** into a trash bag. He sweeps **GLASS** off the floor. He **BOARDS UP** the broken window.

**USNAVI**

I **GOT A FLOODED BASEMENT SHELF**, a **BUSTED WATER MAIN VANESSA’S WALKIN BY HERSELF, SHE’S SITTIN BY THE TRAIN WITHOUT ME**

I **WANNA SHOUT, “LET’S GO OUT, V, I’LL BUY THE CHAMPAGNE.”**

**ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER DOLLAR DOWN THE DRAIN**

**MY PARENTS CAME FROM PARADISE TO START A BETTER LIFE**

**HAD ME AND BATTLED, GOT SADDLED WITH DEBT INSTEAD OF LIFE**

**BREATHE. I KNOW I’LL SEE EM IN THE NEXT LIFE**

**RIGHT NOW I’M CLEANIN OUT DAMNED SPOTS LIKE I’M MACBETH’S WIFE**

**AND EVERY TIME I’M CLOSE TO SOMETHING I LIKE**

**IT’S LIKE THE LIGHTS GET BRIGHT THEN LIFE SAYS SIKE!**

**AND SNATCHES IT BACK AND SPLASHES MY ASS WITH COLD WATER**

**SWEAR TO GOD I’M GETTIN SICK OF BEIN GOD’S PIÑATA**

**MY FATHER HAD A PLACE IN PUERTO PLATA**

**I’VE GOTTA GET BACK HOME, NO IMPORTA SI ME MATA**

**I KNOW IT’S WHAT HE WANTED AND I’M HAUNTED BY THE BREEZE OFF THE BEACH**

**I CAN ALMOST HEAR HIM SINGIN TO ME BUT I CAN’T REACH THE SHORE**
Usnavi rests against the BLACKENED mural. The image is destroyed, but he IMAGINES it with photorealistic precision. He spots himself IN THE IMAGINED MURAL. On the beach. SOOTY SHOES in the sand.

USNAVI (CONT’D)
A LITTLE SUEÑITO, BLINK AND YOU MISS IT
RIGHT BY THE SHORE... COOL BREEZES BLOW...
AND THE PICTURE BEHIND ME IS FADED BUT THE PLACE
ITSELF HAS WAITED
A LITTLE DREAM OUT THERE WITH MY NAME ON IT
I CAN’T WAIT FOR THE DAY I CAN SAY, HEY PAPI I MADE IT

INT. USNAVI’S BATHROOM. DAY.

Bathroom floor. Filthy clothes tumble onto the tile.

Shower drain. Dirty water swirls down.

Soap dish. The hand soap is darkened by dirt.

Soot is in Usnavi’s hair, under his fingernails. He scrubs, washes, sponges.

USNAVI
MAMI, PAPI I AM SO MUCH MORE THAN A CORNER STORE
THESE EMPTY POCKETS ARE NOT WHAT YOU CROSSED THOSE
BORDERS FOR
I WANNA FEEL THE BREEZE ON MY FACE,
I WANNA TASTE THAT OCEAN FOAM
SO I GOTTA MAKE MIRACLES HAPPEN
I SCRAPPIN I’M PACKIN I’M GOING BACK HOME

I’M SICK N TIRED OF BEIN SICK N TIRED, SO I’M TAKIN
MY TIME
PUTTIN THIS DREAM ON LAYAWAY
AND I’M GONNA LAY AWAKE EVERY NIGHT TIL THE FATEFUL
NIGHT
MY FLIGHT’S JUST A DAY AWAY
HEY WAIT JUST A COTTON PICKIN MINUTE
YO I GOTTA TAKE IT IN AND TAKE IT ALL IN STRIDE
EVERY DAY I’LL PUT AWAY ANOTHER DOLLAR TO THE SIDE
ALRIGHT, TRY TO KEEP IT ALL INSIDE

INT. TENEMENT. BEDROOM.

Usnavi towels off, eyeing the FAMILY PHOTOS. Abuela approaches him, the beachside bar beckoning to them.

USNAVI
WHEN I FLY TO MY FOLKS’ HOMETOWN
WHO KNOWS HOW MY SHOWIN UP’S GONNA GO DOWN?
THE THOUGHT ALONE GIVES ME BUTTERFLIES
AND ABUELA SAYS I’VE GOT MY MOTHER’S EYES
WILL THEY RECOGNIZE ME DESPISE ME ADVISE ME
I GOTTA SEE MI GENTE
WAIT FOR THE MOMENT WHEN THEY
HAND ME A COLD PRESIDENTE

EXT. BEACH. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. DAY.

Usnavi’s INSIDE THE PHOTO now. In his New York clothes. An incongruous fantasy. Joined by Abuela Claudia and Sonny, who also wear their street clothes.

USNAVI
“VENTE,” THEN THEY
TAKE ME TO A BEACH WITH A LOTTA SPACE
“SAY THIS USED TO BE YOUR FATHER’S PLACE.
ANYONE EVER TELL YOU, YOU GOT HIS FACE?”
YES. EVERY DAY IN THE MIRROR I SEE HIS FACE A LITTLE BIT MORE
STEP BACK FROM MY SETBACK, GOTTA GET BACK ON THE HORSE, SELL THIS STORE AND HIT THE SHORE

Farther off, OLDER USNAVI sits with the KIDS, watching the STORY UNFOLD BEFORE THEIR EYES. OLDER USNAVI and KIDS POV –

USNAVI (CONT’D)
A LITTLE SUEÑITO, BLINK AND YOU MISS IT
RIGHT BY THE SHORE...

OLDER USNAVI/USNAVI/SONNY/ABUELA CLAUDIA
COOL BREEZES BLOW...

USNAVI
AND THE PICTURE BEHIND ME IS FADED BUT THE PLACE ITSELF HAS WAITED
A LITTLE DREAM OUT THERE WITH MY NAME ON IT
SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE DAY I CAN SAY HEY, “PAPI, I MADE IT...”

As the tide WASHES OVER Usnavi’s sneakers, a door buzzer shatters the fantasy and the song ends.

INT. TENEMENT. SAME.

BUZZ BUZZ. Usnavi answers the door to find Hector there. Sweaty from climbing the steps.
USNAVI
Thanks for doing business on a holiday.

HECTOR
Not much else to do in a blackout. I saw the bodega. You got insurance on that?

USNAVI
Yeah but I doubt I’ll reopen. Just sell as-is and fly.

Usnavi has a check at the ready.

USNAVI (CONT’D)
My deposit.

INT. BENNY’S KITCHEN. MORNING.

In a freezer full of melted and dripping products, Benny forages a minor miracle: a sliver of ice.

EXT. FIRE ESCAPE. MINUTES LATER.

An oversized tee drapes lazily on Nina, her makeshift nightgown. Benny glides the ice along Nina’s neck. It feels really good.

NINA
My dad texted.

BENNY
You tell him where you are?

NINA
Yeah. It’s gonna be a day. Fights on toppa fights.

BENNY
You just reminded me of someone.

Nina’s all ears.

BENNY (CONT’D)
Nina with a clipboard standing on the corner. Remember her?

NINA
Circa 2008?
BENNY
Registering voters. You were too young to vote but Abuela Claudia pulled that lever for the first time, because of Nina with a clipboard. Thought I glimpsed that Nina for a second.

The ice is tiny now. They watch it swim in Benny’s palm, then melt away completely.

NINA
Not sure I’d recognize that Nina if she walked right up to me.

BENNY
I would. Girl was unforgettable.

NINA
What would you see?

BENNY
Love that won’t back down. Anger without retreat. Anger because of love.

INT. DANIELA’S SALON. AFTERNOON.

A potted plant wilts. Carla and Vanessa droop, too. Daniela plops some un-taped boxes onto the floor.

CARLA
(overheating)
I’m seeing double.

DANIELA
You say that every time you wear those tight jeans.

Vanessa gets to it, assembling the first box.

VANESSA
Working on the fourth of July.

DANIELA
Coño, then shoo! Go play!

VANESSA
Where? No trains running. No buses without traffic lights.

Daniela snatches the tape gun from Vanessa.
DANIELA
We’ll pack tomorrow.

EXT. THE BLOCK. MOMENTS LATER.

Out on the block, the ladies are greeted by a pathetic tableau: catatonic neighbors splayed on stoops, benches, folding chairs.

VANESSA
It’s Gilligan’s ghetto island.

ANGLE ON a group of teens. GRAFFITI PETE cracks an egg on the street. It actually SIZZLES.

SONNY
This is your brain on the blackout.

ANGLE ON the Piragua guy. No ice. Licking his parched lips.

ANGLE ON a domino table. Players move the tiles, sloth-paced.

DANIELA
Mira pa’lla. Some send off.

CARLA
What would Jesus do?

DANIELA
If he was Puerto Rican? He’d make some noise, mami.
(calling out)
It’s the fourth of July, people! Show some [BLEEP] spirit!

Quick CLOSE UPS:
- Graffiti Pete clicks his teeth
- Piragua Guy’s shoe sticks in melted tar
- Sweat plummets from a cuatro player’s nose onto his instrument.

"CARNIVAL DEL BARRIO"

DANIELA (CONT’D)
HEY! HEY!
WHAT’S THIS TONTÉRIA THAT I’M SEEING ON THE STREET?
I NEVER THOUGHT I’D SEE THE DAY
SINCE WHEN ARE LATIN PEOPLE SCARED OF HEAT?
WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL GROWING UP IN THE
HILLS OF VEGA ALTA
MY FAVORITE TIME OF YEAR WAS CHRISTMAS TIME
ASK ME WHY.

CARLA
WHY?

DANIELA
THERE WASN’T AN OUNCE OF SNOW
BUT OH, THE COQUITO WOULD FLOW
AS WE SANG THE AGUINALDO THE CARNAVAL
WOULD BEING TO GROW!
BUSINESS IS CLOSED, AND WE’RE ABOUT TO GO...
LET’S HAVE A CARNAVAL DEL BARRIO!
CARNAVAL DEL BARRIO
CARNAVAL DEL BARRIO

Daniela cues Piragüero. He bangs out a rhythm on his cart.
The cuatrista plucks out a riff. It’s enough to make a song.

DANIELA (CONT’D)
CARNAL DEL BARRIO
CARNAL DEL BARRIO
WE DON’T NEED ELECTRICIDAD!
GET OFF YOUR BUTT, AVANZA!
SACA LA MARACA, BRING YOUR TAMBOURINE
COME AND JOIN THE PARRANDA!

Cued by Daniela, neighbors perk up and join the song.

PIRAGÜERO
Wepa!

NEIGHBORS
CARNAL DEL BARRIO!
CARNAL DEL BARRIO!

CARLA
OOH ME ME ME, DANI I HAVE A QUESTION
I DON’T KNOW WHAT YOU’RE CANTANDO

DANIELA
JUST MAKE IT UP AS YOU GO
WE ARE IMPROVISANDO
LA LA LO LA LO LA LO
YOU CAN SING ANYTHING
CARLA WHATEVER POPS INTO YOUR HEAD
JUST SO LONG AS YOU SING

CARLA
UH MY MOM IS DOMINICAN–CUBAN
MY DAD IS FROM CHILE AND P.R. WHICH MEANS
I’M CHILE–DOMINI–CU–RICAN.
BUT I ALWAYS SAY I’M FROM QUEENS!
The domino players form a rhythm section. Scraping water bottles like güiros. Clicking the tiles like claves.

Nina and Benny round the corner, joining the celebration. Usnavi comes out from his apartment building, dancing.

At the corner, Sonny and Graffiti Pete tape off the street, blocking car traffic.

NEIGHBORS
CARNAVAL DEL BARRIO!
CARNAVAL DEL BARRIO!
CARNAVAL DEL BARRIO!
CARNAVAL DEL BARRIO!
DEL BARRIO--

VANESSA
YO, WHY IS EVERYONE SO HAPPY?
WE’RE SWEATING AND WE HAVE NO POWER!
I’VE GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE SOON
THIS BLOCK’S GETTING WORSE BY THE HOUR
YOU CAN’T EVEN GO TO A CLUB WITH A FRIEND
WITHOUT HAVING SOMEBODY SHOVE YOU

DANIELA
AY POR FAVOR!
VANESSA DON’T PRETEND THAT USNAVI’S YOUR FRIEND
WE ALL KNOW THAT HE LOOOOOVE YOU.

CARLA
WOW, NOW THAT YOU MENTION THAT SEXUAL TENSION
IT’S EASY TO SEE

VANESSA
YO THIS IS BOGUS.

DANIELA
HAVEN’T YOU NOTICED YOU GET ALL YOUR COFFEE FOR FREE?

An impromptu dance-off takes hold. The old domino players show off traditional, subtle moves. Graffiti Pete and friends have an explosive street style.

Neighbors appear in windows waving various flags: keychains, airbrushed fingernails, dominos, bandanas, t-shirts - everyone has patriotic tchotchkes!

COMMUNITY
ALZA LA BANDERA
LA BANDERA DOMINICANA!
ALZA LA BANDERA
LA BANDERA PUERTORIQUEÑA!
ALZA LA BANDERA
LA BANDERA MEJICANA!  
ALZA LA BANDERA  
LA BANDERA CUBANA!  

PIRAGÜERO  
PA’RRIBA ESA BANDERA!  

COMMUNITY  
HEY!  

PIRAGÜERO  
ÁLZALO DONDE QUIERA!  

COMMUNITY  
HEY!  

PIRAGÜERO  
RECUERDO DE MI TIERRA  

USNAVI/PIRAGÜERO  
ME ACUERDO DE MI TIERRA  
ESA BONITA BANDERA!  

COMMUNITY  
HEY!  

USNAVI/PIRAGÜERO  
CONTIENE MI ALMA ENTERA!  

COMMUNITY  
HEY!  

USNAVI/PIRAGÜERO  
Y CUANDO YO ME MUERA  
ENTIÉRRAME EN MI TIERRA!  

SONNY  
HOLD UP, WAIT A MINUTE  
USNAVI’S LEAVING US FOR THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC?  
AND BENNY WENT AND STOLE THE GIRL THAT I’M IN LOVE WITH?  
SHE WAS MY BABY-SITTER FIRST!  
LISTEN UP IS THIS WHAT YA’LL WANT?  
WE CLOSE THE BODEGA, THE NEIGHBORHOOD IS GONE  
THEY SELLIN’ THE DISPATCH AND THEY  
CLOSIN’ THE SALON AND THEY’LL  
NEVER TURN THE LIGHTS BACK ON CUZ  

SONNY/VANESSA  
WE ARE POWERLESS, WE ARE POWERLESS.  

SONNY  
BUT YA’LL KEEP DANCIN’ AND SINGIN’ AND CELEBRATIN’
BUT IT’S GETTIN’ LATE AND THIS PLACE IS DISINTEGRATIN’

SONNY/VANESSA
WE ARE POWERLESS, WE ARE POWERLESS.

USNAVI
ALRIGHT WE’RE POWERLESS, WE’LL LIGHT UP A CANDLE
THERE’S NOTHING GOING ON HERE THAT WE CAN’T HANDLE
MAYBE YOU’RE RIGHT SONNY, CALL IN THE CORONERS
MAYBE WE’RE POWERLESS, A CORNER FULL OF FOREIGNERS
MAYBE THIS NEIGHBORHOOD’S CHANGING FOREVER
MAYBE TONIGHT IS OUR LAST NIGHT TOGETHER, HOWEVER
HOW DO YOU WANNA FACE IT?
DO YOU WANNA WASTE IT WHEN THE END IS
SO CLOSE YOU CAN TASTE IT?
YA’LL CAN CRY WITH YOUR HEAD IN THE SAND
I’M ‘A FLY THIS FLAG THAT I GOT IN MY HAND!

PIRAGÜERO
PA’RRIBA ESA BANDERA! Álzalo donde quiera!

COMMUNITY
HEY!

USNAVI
CAN WE RAISE OUR VOICE TONIGHT?
CAN WE MAKE A LITTLE NOISE TONIGHT?

COMMUNITY
HEY!

DANIELA/PIRAGÜERO
ESA BONITA BANDERA CONTIENE MI ALMA ENTERA!

COMMUNITY
HEY!

USNAVI
IN FACT CAN WE SING SO LOUD AND RAUCOUS
THEY CAN HEAR US ACROSS THE BRIDGE IN EAST
SECAUCUS?

DANIELA/PIRAGÜERO
ESA BONITA BANDERA CONTIENE MI ALMA ENTERA!

USNAVI
FROM PUERTO RICO TO SANTO DOMINGO
WHEREVER WE GO WE REP OUR PEOPLE AND THE BEAT GO

COMMUNITY
CARNAVAL DEL BARRIO!

USNAVI
VANESSA, FORGET ABOUT WHAT COULDA BEEN
DANCE WITH ME ONE LAST NIGHT IN THE HOOD AGAIN

DANIELA/CARLA

Wepa...

Vanessa imitates Usnavi’s dorky moves, adding a little spice, as they fall into step together.

COMMUNITY
CARNIVAL DEL BARRIO! CARNIVAL DEL BARRIO!

DANIELA
P’ARRIBA ESA BANDERA! OYE!

COMMUNITY
CARNIVAL DEL BARRIO!

DANIELA
Y CUANDO YO ME MUERA, ENTIÉRRAME EN MI TIERRA!
DEL BARRIO!

COMMUNITY
ALZA LA BANDERA, LA BANDERA DOMINICANA!
ALZA LA BANDERA, LA BANDERA PUERTORIQUEÑA!

DANIELA
ADIOS, ADIOS, ADIOS!

COMMUNITY
ALZA LA BANDERA, LA BANDERA, LA BANDERA!
ALZA LA BANDERA!

Abuela Claudia waves a Cuban flag in her upstairs window. Nina and Usnavi see this.

NINA
That woman owes me a dance!

USNAVI
Grab her a folding chair.

INT. TENEMENT KITCHEN. MOMENTS LATER.

Party music bleeds inside. Nina holds the door for Claudia.

ABUELA CLAUDIA
A gozar!
INT. STAIRWELL. CONTINUOUS.

Nina carries a folding chair down, feeling her way in the dark. Claudia’s candlestick offers a flicker of light, but she **loses her grip** on the railing, steadies herself.

    NINA
    You ok?

Abuela **drops the candlestick**. The hall is swathed in DARKNESS.

    NINA (CONT’D)
    Abuela?

Abuela’s foot misses the edge of a step. Her fingertips catch then **slip from the railing**...

LATER.

HUSHED VOICES IN THE UNLIT STAIRWELL. Whispered panic.

    USNAVI (O.S.)
    Call your dad!

    NINA (O.S.)
    His phone must be dead.

    USNAVI (O.S.)
    Where the hell is the ambulance?

EXT. WASHINGTON HEIGHTS. DAY.

A hush permeates the afternoon streets. Traffic lights remain off at an empty intersection. A ball lies motionless in a vacant handball court.

INT. ROSARIO’S CAR SERVICE. DISPATCH STATION. DAY.

A FLIP SWITCHES. The emergency generator hums to life. Kevin tests the mic. It’s live.

"**ATENCIÓN**"

    KEVIN
    ATENCIÓN, ATENCIÓN
    ROLL DOWN YOUR WINDOWS
    TURN UP YOUR RADIOS
    UN MOMENTO, POR FAVOR
    ATENCIÓN, ATENCIÓN
    PLEASE DRIVE SLOW
LET EVERYBODY KNOW
DOÑA CLAUDIA PASSED AWAY
AT NOON TODAY
AND SHE WAS AN EXTRAORDINARY WOMAN
SHE WAS HERE BEFORE US ALL
MANY KNEW HER AS THE WOMAN WHO FED THE BIRDS
BUT SHE WAS SO MUCH MORE
AND SO I HUMBLY ASK FOR YOUR

We INTERCUT between the DISPATCH and VARIOUS LIVERY CABS. Drivers hear the news and pass it along via radios and open car windows.

KEVIN (CONT’D)

ATENCIÓN

DRIVERS

ATENCIÓN

KEVIN

ATENCIÓN

DRIVERS

ATENCIÓN

KEVIN

ROLL DOWN YOUR WINDOWS

DRIVERS

ROLL DOWN YOUR WINDOWS

KEVIN

TURN UP YOUR RADIOS

DRIVERS

TURN UP YOUR RADIOS

KEVIN

UN MOMENTO, POR FAVOR

DRIVERS/PEDESTRIANS

ATENCIÓN, ATENCIÓN

KEVIN

FORT TRYON PARK CANDLELIGHT VIGIL AT SUNSET
DOÑA CLAUDIA PASSED AWAY AT NOON TODAY

EXT. FORT TRYON PARK. DUSK.

The vigil. Flickering candles cast a warm glow on the crowd. A flagpole is piled with mementos and flowers. Usnavi hands out candles, his face a mask of numbness.
KEVIN
I REMEMBER WHEN I ARRIVED FROM PUERTO RICO
SHE WAS THERE WITH OPEN ARMS
AND I’LL REMEMBER HER AS THE WOMAN WHO PAVED THE WAY
THAT WE MIGHT ACCOMPLISH MORE
TONIGHT WE’LL TAKE A MOMENT FOR...
ATENCIÓN...

CLOSE ON a framed black and white photo of a much younger Abuela Claudia, which leans on the sign pole. She’s in Cuba, a suitcase at her feet, about to leave for the U.S. Her eyes filled with dreams for a better future.

NEWS RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
...in what is believed to be the first death caused by the blackout.
Residents want answers and ConEdison faces mounting pressure.
The Mayor will hold a press conference tomorrow...

The RUMBLE OF THUNDER ends the song and carries us to

VARIOUS SHOTS OF WASHINGTON HEIGHTS

Rain slashes the streets, steam rising from the pavement.
Relief at last.

INT. SALON. DAY.

Rain beats against the fogged windows. Vanessa wipes away a circle of condensation and peers at a van out front, Daniela directing movers like an army general. Carla holds an umbrella above Daniela’s head. Vanessa notices Usnavi farther off, scraping the charred bodega awning.

EXT. SALON. MINUTES LATER.

Usnavi approaches, takes a soggy box from Daniela’s arms.

USNAVI
Can I bother you for a minute?

INT. MOVING TRUCK. MINUTES LATER.

USNAVI
One thing survived with no damage. I think the trash can flipped over and kept it safe...
Usnavi reveals an APARTMENT LEASE. The one Vanessa had thrown out.

    USNAVI (CONT’D)
    I called. Apparently it’s still available but Vanessa needs a cosigner. And not one who’s about leave the country. Would you do it? As a personal favor?

But before Daniela can respond they’re interrupted by -

    MOVER
    Ma’am? I think that’s everything.

MOMENTS LATER.

The salon is empty now. The truck pulls away. Usnavi watches it go then posts a BUSINESS FOR SALE sign on the plywood “window.”

Across the street, OLDER USNAVI talks to the KIDS. His igloo cooler now planted on the curb. The kids gathered in their (now incongruous) beach gear.

    OLDER USNAVI
    Pay attention. Notice anything different?

The kids study the scene.

    KID 2
    No music?

They all realize how strange that is.

    SHY GIRL
    So what were the streets made of that day?

    OLDER USNAVI
    Concrete.

EXT. ALLEYWAY. DAY.

Graffiti Pete balances precariously atop a fire escape, spraying a mural. He pulls the bandana away from his mouth and breathes.

    PETE
    Did you get it?
Below him, Sonny is a guerrilla filmmaker, capturing the work-in-progress on his phone. He notices the time.

SONNY
Shoot, I gotta jet.

Sonny climbs down and sees Usnavi in the alleyway below.

USNAVI
Family meeting. And he’s not family.

Graffiti Pete pulls on headphones, offering "privacy."

USNAVI (CONT’D)
You okay? I missed you at the vigil.

SONNY
I was there.

Usnavi shows his phone. On the screen: an E-TICKET to the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC.

USNAVI

SONNY
Sonny ain’t goin to no island.

USNAVI
Give it a month. If you hate it, I’ll fly you home.

SONNY
Are we done yet?!

USNAVI
It’s what Abuela wanted. And I can’t do it without you. What do I have left here, Sonny?

Sonny bristles, looks up to make sure Graffiti Pete isn’t listening.

SONNY
How do I like to get paid?

USNAVI
Cash.
SONNY
You never put two and two together on that? If I go to the Dominican, ain’t no return trip for me. I got no papers. Which means no reentry. No reentry means no leaving.

USNAVI
But my dad paid an immigration lawyer when you arrived.

SONNY
Yeah, enough to get fake IDs and fake socials. Don’t tell nobody, a’ight? Bon voyage. End of an era.

Sonny turns and goes.

EXT. CITY COUNCILMAN’S OFFICE. MINUTES LATER.


ELDERLY ACTIVIST
Te conozco... We registered voters together! Keep raising hell!

Nina beams as Sonny emerges through the crowd. They dap.

NINA
Just in time. We’ll have to march side by side.

She hands him a sign. Held next to hers, they read: “RIP CLAUDIA.” A BULLHORN squeaks on.

PROTEST LEADER
We ready to make some noise?

People shake maracas, blow whistles, bang pots, etc.

PROTEST LEADER (CONT’D)
Now when Councilman Rodriguez comes outside for his press conference, we’ll show those cameras what a united barrio looks like! El pueblo unido nunca jamas vencido!

ALL
El pueblo! Unido! Nunca jamas vencido!
INT. USNAVI’S LIVING ROOM. EVENING.

Stuff is everywhere – decades of mementos, sorted into piles. Emptying a closet, Usnavi finds a box of paper slips, the ink on them faded.

USNAVI
Losing lottery tickets. Trash.

He puts them into a discard pile. Another box is more promising: an old report card, art projects. He ponders a book report, deciphering the writing.

USNAVI (CONT’D)
“My Abuela’s front door is busted-ed. Because so many people comes over to see her...” A check minus was generous.

Nearby, Nina fishes through film strips as Kevin ponders an aged Polaroid.

INSERT - ROSARIO CAR SERVICE, FROM AN EARLIER TIME. AN IRISHMAN OUT FRONT, ARM AROUND KEVIN. Over:

KEVIN (O.S.)
Mr. O’Hanrahan sold me the business. Back then, half the block was Irish.
(cought in the memory)
I felt pulled in two directions: island me, city me. But Mr. O’Hanrahan bled green. He said, “Kevin, it’s not here or there. It’s here and there.”

In the bg Benny comes in, Chinese takeout in each hand.

BENNY
General Tso’s and tostones! Hey, there’s a package at the door.

EXT. HALLWAY. MOMENTS LATER.

A dry cleaning package rests on the floor. The delivery slip says “CLAUDIA VALDEZ.” Peeling away the cellophane wrapping, Nina discovers the LACE NAPKINS, beautifully cleaned.

ABUELA CLAUDIA’S VOICE
(whooping from the past)
We had to assert our dignity in small ways. That’s why these napkins are beautiful.
(MORE)
That’s why my mother’s gloves were beautiful. Little details that tell the world, we’re not invisible.

INT. USNAVI’S LIVING ROOM. MOMENTS LATER.

Absorbed in more photos, Kevin realizes Nina’s standing above him.

NINA
So if I go back... what’s your next move?

KEVIN
Do you trust me enough to let me figure that out?

NINA
Those Stanford kids knew a lot. But I had a master teacher.

Benny watches in the bg as Nina sits, leans into her father’s shoulder. Clutching a napkin.

NINA (CONT’D)
Thanks, dad.

A truce. Kevin exhales, relieved.

LATER. Benny, Nina, and Kevin eat right out of the cartons.

BENNY
(calling out)
Yo Usnavi! Tostones are getting cold!

But Usnavi’s IN CLAUDIA’S BEDROOM, standing before the very Catholic, very Afro-Cuban altar. He removes the cross from the wall. Slipping it delicately into a box, he is overcome with grief. He weeps quietly so no one will hear.

NINA (O.S.)
Usnavi! Come eat!

Then suddenly

THE POWER RETURNS

DEAFENING SPANISH EXPLODES from the end-table TV. The lights FLASH ON. The ceiling fan jolts and SPINS.

Usnavi startles. Can’t help but laugh through the tears. Nina, Benny, and Kevin scream their delight in the bg.
USNAVI
Ever the jokester...

EXT. WASHINGTON HEIGHTS. VARIOUS SHOTS. SAME.

Sounds of neighbors cheering as -

A neon sign blinks on: LO MEIN, TOSTONES.

A rat, illuminated by a streetlight, scurries away.

A traffic light turns GREEN. Cars honk with celebration.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE. "AUGUST."

INT. CITY COUNCILMAN’S OFFICE. LATE AFTERNOON.

Staff members pass around cake slices. A group of local college-aged INTERNS wear party hats.

COUNCILMAN
Last but not least... They didn’t name a storm after her on accident. Hurricane Nina, our resident force of nature.

Nods of agreement, some friendly prods and chuckles.

COUNCILMAN (CONT’D)
Next summer if you re-up, the corner office is yours. Cuz when you fight on the phone, you fight loud. And when you gather students in town halls? You Town Hall loud. In fact, let me shut up. Nina?

NINA
I feel like I should whisper now. We raised some alright hell this summer. Food drives. The college fair. Going up to Albany with the PS 218 kids. Buying suits for them to testify in. They looked sharp.

Snaps of approval.

NINA (CONT’D)
Intern Brigade Three...
The interns listen with affection. Clearly a tight group.

NINA (CONT’D)
Years from now, may we still be
dreaming and scheming.

INTERN 1
Yes.

INTERN 2
Count on that.

As they toast, the sound cuts away and we hear –

OLDER USNAVI (V.O.)
Yup, Nina met some fellow
travelers. Kids with one foot in
the neighborhood and one foot on
the horizon. As for me...

EXT. BODEGA. DAY.

A new sign replaces the BUSINESS FOR SALE posting. It says
PRICE REDUCED.

OLDER USNAVI (V.O.)
I kept myself busy getting ready
for the big move.

INT. TENEMENT FOYER. DAY.

A new flier replaces an APARTMENT AVAILABLE posting. It says
RENT REDUCED.

OLDER USNAVI (V.O.)
That way I could ignore my cold
feet about leaving.

INT. USNAVI’S APARTMENT. DAY.

It’s empty. No furniture, no tchotchkes, just boxes. Usnavi,
seated atop one, sighs.

EXT. ALLEYWAY. FIRE ESCAPE. DAY.

SOUNDS drift in from open windows. A tv set. A radio. An
electric bassist, practicing. The bass line becomes

"WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN"
Nina and Benny perch on a fire escape. She unwraps a present: two clipboards.

BENNY
His and hers.

NINA
(playful, curious)
What do you need a clipboard for?

Benny grins: he’s got plans. Kevin appears at the door.

KEVIN
Ready?

INT. STAIRWELL. MOMENTS LATER.

Nina, Benny, and Kevin carry suitcases and duffel bags down the steps. The BASS LINE continues.

EXT. STOOP. MOMENTS LATER.

Kevin loads up the car as Benny and Nina linger at the door.

BENNY
WHEN YOU’RE ON YOUR OWN
AND SUDDENLY WITHOUT ME
WILL YOU FORGET ABOUT ME?

NINA
I COULDN’T IF I TRIED

BENNY
WHEN I’M ALL ALONE AND I CLOSE MY EYES

NINA/BENNY
THAT’S WHEN I’LL SEE YOUR FACE AGAIN

BENNY
AND WHEN YOU’RE GONE
YOU KNOW THAT I’LL BE WAITING WHEN YOU’RE GONE

NINA
BUT YOU’RE HERE WITH ME RIGHT NOW

INT. SEMINAR ROOM. STANFORD. THE FUTURE.

Nina holds her CLIPBOARD and looks through notes. She raises her hand, begins to pontificate. She’s got the attention of the room.
BENNY (V.O.)
WE’LL BE WORKING HARD BUT IF WE SHOULD DRIFT APART

NINA (V.O.)

BENNY-

BENNY (V.O.)
LET ME TAKE THIS MOMENT JUST TO SAY

NINA (V.O.)
NO NO

INT. BENNY’S UBER. THE FUTURE.

Benny leans his CLIPBOARD on the steering wheel, filling out a BUSINESS SCHOOL application. The back door opens and a client slides in.

BENNY (V.O.)
YOU ARE GONNA CHANGE THE WORLD SOMEDAY

NINA (V.O.)
I’LL BE THINKING OF HOME

NINA/BENNY (V.O.)
AND I’LL THINK OF YOU EVERY NIGHT
AT THE SAME TIME

BACK TO:

EXT. STOOP. NOW.

BENNY
WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN

NINA
WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN

BENNY
WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN

Nina gets into her dad’s car. The engine’s ZOOM ends the song as Benny watches them drive away.

INT. ABUELA’S BEDROOM. EVENING.

The room is empty except for a bare mattress and frame. Usnavi vacuums. Pushing the bed aside, he spots a slip of paper. It’s a LOTTERY TICKET, dated July 3. Handwriting at the top reads “FOR USNAVI DE LA VEGA.” He notes the numbers.
A MEMORY FLASHES - posting “18” to the bodega window.

ANOTHER FLASH - 7

THEN - 24 41 38

Usnavi turns off the vacuum. Confused. Stunned.

USNAVI
Ha. Haha. Hahahahahaha. Abuela!!!!

He moonwalks, runs in place Flashdance style, busts a touchdown dance. Then STOP. Eyes lighting up with an idea...

LATER. Usnavi paces, excitedly, on the phone.

USNAVI (CONT’D)
What time do you close today?

PHONE VOICE (O.S.)
Six o’clock.

He hangs up, determined. Grabs his Kangol and throws open the door open revealing

VANESSA. Poised to knock. Startled.

VANESSA
Whoa!

USNAVI
Hi!

They haven’t seen each other in a minute.

VANESSA
I heard your flight’s tomorrow.

USNAVI
Nine am.

He pockets the lottery ticket, checks his watch.

VANESSA
Is now a bad time?

USNAVI
No, I have a minute. Come in!

She does. But the empty apartment’s a killjoy. They speak at the same time -

USNAVI (CONT’D)
How’s the new apartment?
VANESSA
(overlapping)
Ready for your flight?

This is awkward.

VANESSA (CONT’D)
My new place... There’s the elderly
neighbor who roams the hall in his
bathrobe. At least I assume he
lives in the building. There’s the
drummer who lives directly above
me. Oh, and there’s this nifty
thing called a door. It opens and
shuts. My very own door.

“CHAMPAGNE”

VANESSA (CONT’D)
SO I BOUGHT YOU A PRESENT
I’VE BEEN MEANING TO GET IT
DOING ANYTHING TONIGHT?

USNAVI
CLEANING.

VANESSA
YOU’RE DONE FOR THE DAY.

USNAVI
NO WAY.

VANESSA
CUZ WE GOT A DATE.

USNAVI
OKAY!

VANESSA
BEFORE YOU BOARD THAT PLANE
I OWE YOU A BOTTLE OF COLD CHAMPAGNE!

She pulls a glistening bottle from her tote bag.

INT. STAIRWELL. MOMENTS LATER.

Champagne in hand, Vanessa leads Usnavi up the steps.

USNAVI
NO...

VANESSA
YEAH! COLD CHAMPAGNE.

USNAVI
DAMN THE BOTTLE’S ALL SWEATY AND EVERYTHING
YOU WENT AND GOT THIS

VANESSA
POP THE CHAMPAGNE

USNAVI
I DON’T KNOW IF WE HAVE COFFEE CUPS
OR PLASTIC CUPS, I ALREADY PACKED THE CUPS

VANESSA
TONIGHT, WE’RE DRINKING STRAIGHT FROM THE BOTTLE

They go out to –

EXT. ROOFTOP. CONTINUOUS.

Viewed from the top of Usnavi’s building, Manhattan is a 360
degree sweeping vista. CAMERA ARCS AROUND revealing
Washington Heights, the Hudson, and the GW Bridge.

VANESSA
USNAVI?

USNAVI
YEAH?

VANESSA
DANIELA TOLD ME WHAT YOU DID FOR ME
AND IT’S HONESTLY THE SWEETEST THING
ANYONE EVER DID FOR ME, NOW
WHAT CAN I SAY OR DO TO
POSSIBLY REPAY YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS?

Usnavi tries to open the champagne – a novice.

USNAVI
HOW DO YOU GET THIS GOLD SHIT OFF?

VANESSA
USNAVI?

USNAVI
YEAH?

VANESSA
BEFORE WE BOTH LEAVE TOWN
BEFORE THE CORNER CHANGES AND THE SIGNS ARE TAKEN DOWN
LET’S WALK AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD
AND SAY OUR GOODBYES.
USNAVI, ARE YOU ALRIGHT?

USNAVI
I’M FINE, I’M TRYIN’ A OPEN THIS CHAMPAGNE.
SEE THE TWISTY THING IS BROKEN
BUT I’M GONNA OPEN THIS DAMN CHAMPAGNE!

VANESSA
LEMME SEE IT-

USNAVI
NO I GOT IT!

VANESSA
YO USNAVI, DROP THE CHAMPAGNE!

USNAVI
I MEAN YOU WENT TO ALL THIS TROUBLE
TO GET US A LITTLE BUBBLY

VANESSA
AND IT’S GONNA BE OKAY.

USNAVI
I’M SORRY IT’S BEEN A LONG DAY.

VANESSA
YOU OUGHTA STAY.

USNAVI
WHAT?

VANESSA
YOU CAN USE THAT MONEY TO FIX THIS PLACE.

USNAVI
HA HA, VERY FUNNY.

VANESSA
AND IT’S NOT LIKE SONNY’S GOT ROLE MODELS-

USNAVI
ROLE MODELS?

VANESSA
STEPPING UP TO THE PLATE.

USNAVI
YO WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

VANESSA
I’M JUST SAYING, I THINK YOUR VACATION CAN WAIT.
USNAVI
VACATION? VANESSA YOU LEFT US, TOO.

VANESSA
AND I WENT DOWN TO WEST FOURTH STREET
YOU CAN TAKE THE A.

USNAVI
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?

VANESSA
YOU’RE LEAVING THE COUNTRY
AND WE’RE NEVER GONNA SEE YOU AGAIN.

USNAVI
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?

VANESSA
YOU GET EVERYONE ADDICTED TO YOUR COFFEE
THEN OFF YOU GO.

USNAVI
VANESSA, I DON’T KNOW WHY YOU’RE MAD AT ME.

VANESSA
I WISH I WAS MAD!

She pulls Usnavi close and kisses him. They melt into it, a
perfect match. But she gently pulls away.

VANESSA (CONT’D)
I’M JUST TOO LATE.

Usnavi glances at his watch. Doesn’t want this moment to end.

VANESSA (CONT’D)
You have somewhere to be.

EXT. ALLEYWAY. EVENING.

Pete and Sonny chill in the shade. An UBER rolls up and the
window lowers. Benny’s in the driver seat, Usnavi beside him.

USNAVI
Sonny! Hop in.

Sonny makes a real show of ignoring Usnavi.

USNAVI (CONT’D)
Let’s go, we have three minutes!
EXT. LAW OFFICE. MINUTES LATER.

Usnavi bangs at the door, jostles it. Locked.

    SONNY
What’s going on? They’re closed.

There’s a light on in a back office. Usnavi bangs louder. A LAWYER peeks out from the back.

    LAWYER
Come back tomorrow!

But Usnavi recognizes her.

    USNAVI
Soy milk no sugar...
    (banging, calling out)
Soy milk no sugar! Soy milk no sugar!

She approaches, chuckles when she recognizes Usnavi. She grabs the office keys.

INT. LAW OFFICE. MINUTES LATER.

Sonny fills out a “personal information” form.

    USNAVI
How long does the process usually take?

    LAWYER
From the original application, court appearances, appeals, to a final decision? Years. For a good result or bad one.

    USNAVI
Then we start today. I don’t know your fee.

Usnavi places the lottery ticket on the desk before her.

    USNAVI (CONT’D)
This is worth ninety-six thousand. How much fight will that buy?

Sonny’s jaw drops. The lawyer pulls on her reading glasses, eyes the ticket.

    LAWYER
Payment in check is more common.
USNAVI
I leave in the morning. No time to cash in.

The Lawyer scrutinizes Usnavi for a second. Turns to Sonny.

LAWYER
This will be an emotional roller coaster. It may end in heartbreak.

SONNY
But there’s a chance, right? A shot at a green card?

LAWYER
Yes.

ON SONNY, resolute and moved, we -

FADE OUT.

A BEAUTIFUL URBAN SYMPHONY, PLAYED IN DARKNESS

The steam pistons of a garbage truck. A car horn. The subterranean rumble of the subway. A kneeling bus.

OLDER USNAVI (V.O.)
Hear that? Voices of the gods.

EXT. BEACH. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. DAY.

More kids have joined. Usnavi’s tale has amassed quite the youthful crowd.

OLDER USNAVI
My final morning. The 1 train sounded like Mozart. The garbage, piled high as the Empire States, smelled like Coco Chanel.

INT. USNAVI’S ROOM. DAWN.

The URBAN SOUNDS are drifting in from Usnavi’s opened window.

Usnavi sits on his bare mattress, dressed, suitcases beside him, gazing out the window. His reverie is SHATTERED by-

BENNY (O.S.)
Just like a girl, huh?

Usnavi turns. Benny’s in the doorway, twirling his car keys.
BENNY (CONT’D)
Always prettiest when you’re saying goodbye.

As his last act, Usnavi walks to the wall of FRAMED PHOTOS.

USNAVI
Here I come, pop.

Pulling the frames down from the wall, Usnavi drops one. It falls to the floor and shatters. Usnavi kneels down and fishes the PHOTO from the cracked glass. He notices handwriting on the white backing of the photo. The words are faded but distinct: “Mi sueñito.” Usnavi flips the photo over and sees it’s an IMAGE OF HIMSELF AS A CHILD. He shudders.

USNAVI (CONT’D)
It was me. I was his little dream. Not the bar.

Benny takes a beat. Pats Usnavi on the shoulder.

BENNY
We better go --

INT. USNAVI’S APARTMENT. HALLWAY. CONTINUOUS.

Usnavi passes Abuela’s empty room. He stops and looks in. IN HIS MEMORY, a needle lands on a record as a bolero echoes.

“FINALE”

BOLERO SINGER (V.O.)
NO TE VAYAS. SI ME DEJAS.
SI TE ALEJAS DE MI.
SEGUIRÁS EN MIS RECUERDOS PARA SIEMPRE
PARA SIEMPRE, PARA SIEMPRE...

ABUELA CLAUDIA’S VOICE
(echoing from the past)
The scratch in the record is my favorite part!

Usnavi looks directly at us.

USNAVI
LIGHTS UP ON WASHINGTON HEIGHTS
AND NOW THE CRACK OF DAWN
POWER’S BACK, AND LIFE GOES ON AND ON AND ON
PACKED MY BAGS, GOTTA TAKE OUT THE TRASH
AS I THINK ABOUT THE PAST WITH A SACK FULL OF CASH
ABUELA REALLY WANTED ME UP ON A BEACH
A VOICE drifts in from the sidewalk.

CARLA (O.S.)
THE HYDRANTS ARE OPEN, COOL BREEZES BLOW

Usnavi goes to the window, looks out and there they are: Kevin, Vanessa, Daniela, Carla, Piragüero-- joined by Benny.

DANIELA/CARLA
THE HYDRANTS ARE OPEN, COOL BREEZES BLOW

KEVIN
GOOD MORNING.

PIRAGÜERO
PIRAGUA, PIRAGUA
NEW BLOCK OF ICE, PIRAGUA
SO SWEET AND NICE, PIRAGUA
PIRAGUA, PIRAGUA

VANESSA
I’LL BE DOWNTOWN, IT WON’T BE LONG NOW!

Usnavi’s touched. He grabs his Kangol and heads downstairs.

EXT. THE BLOCK. CONTINUOUS.

The block is almost unrecognizable. Where Rosario’s once was, the organic cleaner’s has taken over. A beer garden stands in the salon’s old spot – hipsters crowding sidewalk tables. A yoga studio has replaced the boarded-up travel agency.

Usnavi emerges from his building and greets his extended family of neighbors. They wait for words of farewell from their beloved “leader.”

USNAVI
THERE’S A BREEZE OFF THE HUDSON
AND JUST WHEN YOU THINK YOU’RE SICK OF LIVING HERE
THE MEMORY FLOODS IN
THE MORNING LIGHT OFF THE FIRE ESCAPES
THE NIGHTS IN BENNETT PARK BLASTING BIG PUN TAPES
I’M ‘A MISS THIS PLACE, TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH
KEVIN DISPENSIN’ WISDOM FROM HIS DISPATCH BOOTH
AND AT DAWN, VANESSA AT THE SALON, WE GOTTA MOVE ON
BUT WHO’S GONNA NOTICE WE’RE GONE?
WHEN OUR JOB’S DONE, AS THE EVENING WINDS
DOWN TO A CRAWL, SON, CAN I EASE MY MIND?
WHEN WE’RE ALL DONE, WHEN WE’VE RESIGNED
IN THE LONG RUN, WHAT DO WE LEAVE BEHIND?
MOST OF ALL I MISS ABUELA’S WHISPERS
DOIN’ THE LOTTO PICK SIX EVERY CHRISTMAS
IN FIVE YEARS WHEN THIS WHOLE CITY’S
RICH FOLKS AND HIPSTERS
WHO’S GONNA MISS THIS RAGGEDY LITTLE BUSINESS?

Sonny and Graffiti Pete emerge from the bodega.

PETE
What it do? Great sunlight this morning.

USNAVI
Yo what did I tell you about this punk?

SONNY
You have to commission an artist while his rate is still good.

PETE
First work in my new series.

Pete leads them all into--

INT. BODEGA. CONTINUOUS.

Darkened walls and shelves are lingering evidence of the destruction. But amidst the fire damage, a few bare bulbs illuminate -

A NEW GRAFFITI MURAL. It sparkles where the old one was destroyed. The same beachside bar is rendered in bolder hues. Usnavi traces his fingers along a new element: “EL SUEÑITO” in big bubble letters at the top. The mural’s unfinished, but it’s stunning.

PETE
He hates it.

SONNY
Sh. He’s forming an artistic opinion.

USNAVI
YOU DID THIS LAST NIGHT?

GRAFFITI PETE
YEAH.

USNAVI
THERE GOES MY FLIGHT.

SONNY

WHAT?

Usnavi empties his wallet, shoves a wad of cash into Graffiti Pete’s hands.

USNAVI

GRAFFITI PETE YOU’RE GONNA NEED SOME NEW CANS
HERE’S SOME MONEY, FINISH UP
THERE’S BEEN A SLIGHT CHANGE OF PLANS

GRAFFITI PETE

NICE!

USNAVI

LISTEN UP GUYS, YOU GOT A JOB, I’M NOT PLAYIN’
YOU GOTTA GO NOW, TELL THE WHOLE BLOCK I’M STAYIN’!
YA’LL GO AHEAD, TELL EVERYONE WE KNOW!
SONNY... ALRIGHT GO.

Sonny pumps his fist and practically flies out the door.

USNAVI (CONT’D)

YEAH I’M A STREETLIGHT, CHILLIN’ IN THE HEAT!
I ILLUMINATE THE STORIES OF THE PEOPLE IN THE STREET
SOME HAVE HAPPY ENDINGS, SOME ARE BITTERSWEET
BUT I KNOW THEM ALL AND THAT’S WHAT
MAKES MY LIFE COMPLETE

COMMUNITY
WE’RE HOME!

USNAVI

AND IF NOT ME, WHO KEEPS OUR LEGACIES?
WHO’S GONNA KEEP THE COFFEE SWEET WITH SECRET RECIPES?
ABUELA REST IN PEACE, YOU LIVE IN MY MEMORIES
BUT SONNY’S GOTTA EAT AND THIS CORNER IS MY DESTINY

Sonny reappears at the door, holding it open as neighbors file in to see the mural.

SONNY
WE’RE HOME!

USNAVI
BRINGS OUT THE BEST IN ME, WE PASS A TEST AND WE KEEP PRESSIN’ AND YES INDEED, YOU KNOW I’LL NEVER LEAVE
IF YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES THAT HYDRANT IS A BEACH
THAT SIREN IS A BREEZE, THAT FIRE ESCAPE’S
A LEAF ON A PALM TREE

SONNY/COMMUNITY
WE’RE HOME!

USNAVI
ABUELA, I’M SORRY
BUT I AIN’T GOIN’ BACK BECAUSE I’M TELLIN’ YOUR
STORY!
AND I CAN SAY GOODBYE TO YOU SMILIN’
I FOUND MY ISLAND
I BEEN ON IT THIS WHOLE TIME I’M HOME!

The music pauses. The image freezes.

The bodega transforms. The fire damage disappears as GLEAMING SHELVES and NEW PRODUCTS appear in its place. The unfinished graffiti mural completes itself. The refurbished bodega sparkles.

ZOOM IN ON food labels and posters that depict little scenes of paradise. Everyday items that, when seen together, create a collage version of Older Usnavi’s beach. Indeed, “the beach” is just how Older Usnavi sees the world. In reality, it’s comprised of the mural and the everyday objects around him.

Older Usnavi is at the counter, the kids in swim gear crowded around him.

OLDER USNAVI
That’s what sueñito means. My little dream. And this bodega is mine.

SHY GIRL
Can we go in the water now, papi?

OLDER USNAVI
Ask your mom.

The kids run out to—

EXT. BODEGA. FUTURE.

Older Vanessa is there.

SHY GIRL
Mami, can I get wet?

OLDER VANESSA
Sure, mi’jita!
Older Usnavi jacks open the hydrant. The kids rush into the water as Older Usnavi embraces Older Vanessa, laughing. The SPRAY HITS THE CAMERA, sending us back to -

EXT. BODEGA. BEFORE. BURNT.

COMMUNITY
THE HYDRANTS ARE OPEN, COOL BREEZES BLOW!

USNAVI
THIS IS A WONDERFUL LIFE THAT I’VE KNOWN
MERRY CHRISTMAS YOU OLD BUILDING AND LOAN!
I’M HOME!

COMMUNITY
THE HYDRANTS ARE OPEN, COOL BREEZES BLOW!

USNAVI
ABUELA THAT AIN’T A STOOP, THAT’S YOUR THRONE!
LONG AFTER YOUR BIRDS HAVE ALL FLOWN, I’M HOME!
WHERE THE COFFEE’S NONSTOP AND I
DROP THIS HIP HOP IN MY MOM AND POP SHOP, I’M HOME!
WHERE PEOPLE COME, PEOPLE GO
LET ME SHOW ALL OF THESE PEOPLE WHAT I KNOW
THERE’S NO PLACE LIKE HOME!
AND LET ME SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT
I’M STEPPIN’ TO VANESSA, I’M GETTIN’ A SECOND DATE!
I’M HOME!
WHERE IT’S A HUNDRED IN THE SHADE BUT WITH
PATIENCE AND FAITH WE REMAIN UNAFRAID
I’M HOME!
YOU HEAR THAT MUSIC IN THE AIR?
TAKE THE TRAIN TO THE TOP OF THE WORLD AND I’M THERE
I’M HOME!

CLOSE ON Shy Girl, splashing in the spray. A glimpse of the future, shining in the present. She is the embodiment of Usnavi’s hopes and dreams.

OLDER USNAVI (V.O.)
They haven’t kicked me out of paradise yet.

TITLE: “EL FIN”

TITLE: “COLORÍN COLORADO, MI CUENTO SE HA ACABADO”