

I CARRY YOU WITH ME

(TE LLEVO CONMIGO)

Written by

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This is a majority Spanish language film.
Italics reflect lines that are spoken in English

EXT. A FIELD IN MEXICO - DUSK

IVÁN (24, handsome, intense) walks in a purple field of flowers.

EXT./INT. THE G TRAIN, NEW YORK - NIGHT

IVÁN (45) descends into the subway. He's more worn than his younger self. As he rides the train he hears an old Mexican song, "La Boa," in his head.

The majority of dialogue is in Spanish with English subtitles. Any English dialogue will be indicated in italics.

IVÁN(V.O.)
I had that dream again. I have it
all the time.

EXT. STREETS OF MEXICO CITY, 1982 - DAY

YOUNG IVÁN (10, serious), rides on the handle bars of his dad's tamale cart, day-dreaming.

IVÁN (V.O.)
It's so real.

Young Ivan's father, MARCOS (late 30s, wiry), smacks him on the head to get his attention.

MARCOS (O.S.)
Iván!

Iván turns to smile at his dad.

IVÁN (V.O.)
I'm in Mexico. My home. I've
returned.

INT. THE G TRAIN, NEW YORK

The train goes into a tunnel. In the reflection of the window Iván (45) sees a reflection of his 24-year-old self.

IVÁN (V.O.)
My eyes are open.

EXT. STREETS OF PUEBLA, MEXICO - NIGHT

Iván (24) walks at night.

IVÁN (V.O.)
And there I am. My younger self.

INT. SUBWAY STATION, NEW YORK - NIGHT

Iván (45) walks alone through the subway station toward the exit.

IVÁN (V.O.)

This dream always ends the same way. I wake up in my bed soaked in sweat. And I realize I can't go back. And if I left here, what was it all for?

INT. LA DOÑA ANA - NIGHT

A cozy restaurant in New York City. Iván (45) carefully puts on his chef's uniform and apron. He ties a red bandana around his head, checks himself in the mirror and enters his kitchen.

INT./EXT. QUÉ ONDA PUEBLA, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Iván (24) is wearing the same bandana as his older self but the modest uniform of a kitchen runner. He moves fast, racing into to the alley to fetch a heavy box of supplies, hauling it back to the kitchen pantry and unloading it. He takes a jar of crema from the box and rushes it to the busy cooks. He then heads back to the dishwashing station and begins washing dishes.

MAIN TITLE:

"I CARRY YOU WITH ME" (TE LLEVO CONMIGO)

INT./EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX, PUEBLA - NIGHT

TITLE: PUEBLA, MÉXICO 1994.

CU: Iván (24) carries his son RICKY (5, adorable) up a narrow stairwell. Ricky's face has been painted like a cat, and he is fast asleep. They make it up to a shabby corridor and walk toward an apartment door.

INT. PAOLA FAMILY APARTMENT

PAOLA (25) opens the door. She's vaguely annoyed.

PAOLA (O.S.)

Why so late?

IVÁN

There were so many lines. Sorry.

Iván walks into the modest apartment. PAOLA'S MOM (55) is putting some food into plastic containers on the kitchen table.

PAOLA

Mom, I told you not to give him juice.

PAOLA'S MOM

It's water. Paola, I left some chicken in the fridge for you. There's enough for Ricky's lunch tomorrow.

Iván stands there, holding Ricky, uncomfortable.

IVÁN

Good evening, ma'am.

PAOLA'S MOM

Good evening.

IVÁN

I'm going to take him back.

Iván walks through the dark living room where PAOLA'S DAD (60) is on the sofa watching an old cowboy movie.

IVÁN (CONT'D)

Evening, sir.

Paola's dad barely registers Iván.

PAOLA'S DAD

Good evening.

IVÁN

Excuse me.

Iván goes into a small bedroom crowded with two twin beds. There is a cross on the wall and some piles of neatly folded clothes.

INT. RICKY'S BEDROOM

Iván tries to lay Ricky down on his bed but he won't unclasp his hands from Iván's neck. Iván awkwardly lays Ricky down on the bed. Ricky springs up and roars playfully. His face is painted like a tiger's.

IVÁN

You tricked me, huh? Sit up. Let's clean you up. And then it's time for bed, okay? Let's see.

Iván's eyes scan the room that Ricky shares with his mom: it's clean but spartan. He grabs a tissue and starts to rub Ricky's face paint off.

IVÁN (CONT'D)

Let's see if this comes off. Does it hurt?

RICKY

No.

Paola appears in the doorway.

PAOLA (O.S.)

Iván.

IVÁN

Hey. Thanks for letting me spend some time with him. When can I see him again?

She pauses. It's hard to tell what she's thinking.

PAOLA

He needs new sneakers.

IVÁN

I know that.

INT./EXT. PAOLA FAMILY APARTMENT, DOORWAY

Iván takes out money from his pocket.

IVÁN

Take this, too.

PAOLA

You'll have enough for the bus?

IVÁN

Yes, don't worry. When they pay me I'll buy the shoes.

PAOLA

Take care of yourself.

He pauses for a beat outside the door. The family parakeet chirps at him from the small cage which hangs outside the door.

INT./EXT. QUÉ ONDA PUEBLA, KITCHEN - DAY

Iván sweeps the floor of the busy restaurant while curiously monitoring the action in the kitchen.

He sees an opening and pops in to chat with one of the cooks, BETO (30, a know it all), who puts the final touches on a chicken with mole dish.

IVÁN
It smells good, man.

BETO
Who do you think made it?
Yours truly.

IVÁN
You're still using the mortar and pestle?

BETO
Of course. That's how you make mole.

IVÁN
I told you to try it with the blender.

BETO
That'll make it bitter.

IVÁN
No. Wanna know my dad's secret?

BETO
What?

IVÁN
As soon as you take the tomatoes out of the pan you blend them right away and it's not bitter. It's faster. Try it and see it for yourself.

Iván's BOSS rushes into the kitchen in a huff.

BOSS
Iván. Toilet handle's broken again.
Fix it.

IVÁN
Yes, Boss.

Iván dashes off toward the bathroom.

INT. QUÉ ONDA PUEBLA, BATHROOM

Iván repairs the toilet. He sees the boss head for the exit. It's now or never.

INT./EXT. QUÉ ONDA PUEBLA - MAIN ENTRANCE

Ivan runs down the steps to catch up.

IVÁN

Sir!

BOSS

What's up? Did you fix the toilet?

IVÁN

Yes, it's working.

BOSS

Great.

IVÁN

Sir, remember telling me about the kitchen position? That when Pedro left it was my turn.

BOSS

Can you believe it? My nephew just moved back here and I had to give the job to him. Gotta help the family, you know.

IVÁN

But I've been waiting a year.

BOSS

Yeah, but some people wait 4 or 5 years to set foot in the kitchen. Deal with it. That's all.

IVÁN

But I have a diploma. - I went to the culinary institute.

BOSS

Yes, I know. Just be thankful that you have a job. Some people have nothing. You lack patience.

BOSS (CONT'D)

Patience. I'll catch you later.

EXT. DOWNTOWN PUEBLA - NIGHT

Iván lights a cigarette as he makes the long walk home. He carries some food from work in a small plastic bag.

EXT. STREETS OF PUEBLA - LATER

A sparsely populated part of town. Iván crosses the street and heads for a slightly run down apartment building.

EXT./INT. INNER COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

As Iván heads to the stairway he hears a familiar voice.

SANDRA (O.S.)
Chulito!

Iván looks up, startled. Standing on the landing is SANDRA (25, chubby). She wears a radiant smile. He's thrilled to see her.

IVÁN
Chulita, you're early. How'd you get in?

SANDRA
I gave your landlord a hand job.

IVÁN
I didn't know the old lady liked that.

SANDRA
You don't know my skills.

Iván bounds up the stairs towards her.

INT. IVÁN'S APARTMENT

It's a bit of a dump. Iván washes his face in the bathroom sink while she sits on his bed and takes it all in.

SANDRA
So this is your new hideout. On the phone you said it was like a sardine can.

IVÁN
It's not?

SANDRA
No! It's more like...a smelly shoe box.

Iván laughs. She's right.

Iván grabs a cheap bottle of tequila from the kitchenette and pours two shots. They sit on his bed, ready to toast.

IVÁN

Cheers.

Iván sees a small bruise on Sandra's face. He touches it lightly.

IVÁN (CONT'D)

Babe. I thought you dumped that idiot.

She's not going there.

SANDRA

Remember Janeth?

IVÁN

Who?

IVÁN (CONT'D)

From Building 21? The slutty one. Sluttier than you.

SANDRA

Than you!

SANDRA (CONT'D)

She crossed over.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

She left with a guy from Building 21. They have some easy job in a flower shop or something. And she sends a lot of money to her family. Her dumbass brother bought a truck in Ecatepec. And his wife dyed her hair blonde.

They look at each other, remembering their favorite ad for Mexican hair dye Manzanilla Grisi.

IVÁN

"Because a natural blonde..."

IVÁN AND SANDRA

"...always attracts attention!"

They drink to that.

SANDRA

They went to New York, Chulito.

Damn. New York.

IVÁN

Fucking amazing.

SANDRA

So? - Where am I taking you to get
shit-faced?

Iván plucks a button down from the makeshift cloths line in
his room.

IVÁN

Let me change real quick.

SANDRA

Is it cool or what?

IVÁN

I've never been. But they say it's
cool.

EXT. A REMOTE PART OF PUEBLA - NIGHT

There's nobody around except a lone tamale salesman pushing
his cart up the street, headed for home.

EXT. BAR FRANCO

A partly boarded up 17th century mansion. It definitely looks
abandoned.

Iván and Sandra tentatively open a rusty gate and enter the
house.

INT. BAR FRANCO

As they open the door to the mansion, pumping 90s dance music
can be heard in the distance.

They pass a towering Jesus statue that's been tricked out
with spooky green lights. Sandra reflexively makes the sign
of the cross.

SANDRA

No fucking way.

A variety of men flirting, drinking and enjoying this secret
space. Everyone they pass greets Iván and Sandra with
friendly looks.

They continue deep into the interior of the old mansion. A DJ
in a caftan spins vinyl for a dancing crowd. "Dejame Entrar"
by Moenia thumps loudly.

INT. BAR FRANCO, BAR AREA

Sandra and Iván knock down tequila shots at the bar. Iván starts to relax a little, trying to play it cool.

Out of nowhere, a jittery red light dances on his leather jacket.

SANDRA
(startled)
What's that?

IVÁN
What?

SANDRA
Do you see that?

IVÁN
What?

Iván looks down at his hand. The light races around his palm.

IVÁN (CONT'D)
What the fuck is this?

They scan the room and spot GERARDO (25, small, cute and mischievous). He has a laser pointer in his hand (the kind teachers use in lecture halls) which he quickly pockets.

SANDRA
Over there, look. He's handsome.

IVÁN
But it's not him.

Gerardo smiles and disappears out of view.

SANDRA
Yes, it is. He's got his briefcase
and everything. Go on. Talk to him.

Iván takes a motivational shot of tequila and stands up. Sandra grins mischievously.

INT. BAR FRANCO - BATHROOM

A giant bathroom with cracked tiles and an ancient tub. Iván and Gerardo study one another for a beat.

GERARDO
You must be lost. I don't know if
anyone told you but this is a GAY
bar.

Iván ignores this. He sits on the sink in the bathroom.

GERARDO (CONT'D)
How come I haven't seen you before?

IVÁN
What, you know everyone here?

GERARDO
Pretty much.

IVÁN
Then you must know who I am.

Gerardo heaves a sigh and gives him a once over.

GERARDO
You're from Mexico City. You've
been living here for a couple of
years.

Busted.

GERARDO (CONT'D)
You're...What are you?

There's a lot of heat between these two.

INT. BAR FRANCO - LATER

"Amorcito Corazon" by Pedro Infante plays. Sandra is happily slow dancing with a new friend she's met.

INT. BAR FRANCO - BATHROOM - LATER

A clap of thunder. Iván and Gerardo are pretty tipsy now and barely notice the rain water dripping from the ceiling.

IVÁN
(laughing hard)
I don't believe you. That must have
gone over real well in Guerrero.

GERARDO
Chiapas.

IVÁN
Even worse.

GERARDO
Let's just say I made it out alive.

IVÁN

If I had been there, I could have taught you how to pass.

GERARDO

So where were you in 1985 when I really needed you?

IVÁN

Jerking off. To my Tom Cruise poster.

They laugh hard at this.

GERARDO

You really never ran into trouble with anyone?

IVÁN

I know how to pass.

GERARDO

You're obviously really good at it.

Iván decides to let that comment go.

INT./EXT. BAR FRANCO ROOFTOP - PRE-DAWN

Iván and Gerardo wander onto the rooftop, finally all alone. A church bell rings in the distance. Below them, all of Puebla can be seen, threatening to awaken.

IVÁN

You see that convent over there?

GERARDO

Yeah.

IVÁN

That's where they invented chiles en nogada.

GERARDO

No way. Really? And how did it happen?

IVÁN

I moved to Puebla to learn how to cook. And when I got here, I went to that convent. And a nun opens the door. She says, "God bless you, brother, but this place is for women only. You can't be here."

GERARDO

So you told her you were gay and they let you in, right?

They chuckle.

IVÁN

I told her that I wanted the original recipe. And I could offer a donation. She said, "How much?" I told her a thousand. And she slams the door in my face.

GERARDO

No way.

IVÁN

Yeah. So she comes back about 10 minutes later. She opens the door and says, "Mother Superior says 2,000 or no deal."

GERARDO

Those are some sneaky nuns.

IVÁN

Yeah and I'm sneaky to because in the end, I got that recipe.

Iván and Gerardo share a look. Under the purple dawn sky Iván leans in and kisses Gerardo. It's a slow, epic, and blissful kiss.

INT. BAR FRANCO VESTIBULE - DAWN

They are the last ones left in the bar. Just outside the door, Puebla stirs.

IVÁN

I have to go.

GERARDO

Give me your number.

IVÁN

I don't have a phone.

Gerardo studies him skeptically.

GERARDO

But I'm going to see you again, right?

Iván hesitates.

IVÁN

Yeah.

Iván leaves quickly, leaving the door to the mansion ajar. Gerardo is left alone in the vestibule.

EXT. MERCADO DE CHOLULA - MORNING

Iván is in the vegetable market, carefully selecting green peppers and tasting pomegranate arils. The vendor puts the peppers in a plastic bag and hands it to him.

IVÁN

Thanks.

SALESMAN

Have a good day.

IVÁN

See you soon.

Iván leaves the market.

IVÁN

See you tomorrow, Don Pedro.

INT. IVÁN'S APARTMENT/KITCHENETTE - DAY

Iván is chopping tomatoes and roasting green chiles on a makeshift gas stove. We hear a conversation between Iván and his mother, ROSA MARIA.

ROSA MARIA (O.S.)

You sound different. I can almost hear you smile. Tell me who the lucky girl is?

IVÁN (O.S.)

Mom...

ROSA MARIA (O.S.)

So is it serious? Tell me. What's she like?

INT IVÁN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Iván has prepared a "picnic" for Gerardo on the floor of his apartment. He sprinkles the fresh pomegranate arils atop two perfect plates of chiles en nogada. Gerardo watches, impressed. We continue to hear the phone call between Ivan and his mom.

IVÁN (V.O.)
It's...It's too early to know.

Iván waits expectantly for Gerardo to try his food. Gerardo loves it.

ROSA MARIA (V.O.)
What does she look like?

INT. IVÁN'S APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

He lies on the bed thinking about his wonderful afternoon.

IVÁN (V.O.)
She looks just like you.

ROSA MARIA (V.O.)
God forbid!

IVÁN (V.O.)
Ma, my break is over. I'll call you later, okay? Take care of Dad. Do what you can.

FLASHBACK:

EXT. MARKET IN MEXICO CITY, 1983 - DUSK

Young Iván (10) sits at a makeshift table in a dusty parking lot, ready to sell tamales. Iván's dad Marcos is taking a large swig of rum from a bottle. Iván looks worried.

Marcos picks up the megaphone, ready to rock.

MARCOS
Hello! Testing! Testing! Good morning, ladies and gentlemen! Hey you, fatty! Don't you want a tamale? To keep up those curves! Fatty!

Iván smiles nervously at his dad's antics. It's a little embarrassing.

INT./EXT. IVÁN'S CHILDHOOD APARTMENT - MORNING

A helicopter passes high above a modest block of Mexico City.

Young Iván makes tamales in the cramped kitchen. His mom Rosa Maria (late 30s) sits at a sewing machine and puts the finishing touches on a fluffy yellow quinceañera dress.

ROSA MARIA (O.S.)
Not too much meat. It's expensive.

Iván walks toward her sewing room.

INT. SEWING ROOM

Rosa Maria holds a finished dress up, yellow and frilly.

IVÁN
Wow, Ma. It's looking awesome.

Iván touches the ruffles. She slaps his hand away softly.

ROSA MARIA
No dirty hands.

IVÁN
Julissa should pay you double!

ROSA MARIA
It's her party. She should look beautiful.

IVÁN
Can I have one too?

ROSA MARIA
A quinceañera party?

ROSA MARIA (CONT'D)
It's only for girls, Iván. Don't start that again. It's only for girls.

INT. IVÁN'S CHILDHOOD APARTMENT - LATER

Rosa Maria shushes Iván's baby sister Rosy. Iván gives Rosa Maria a basket of tamales. She kisses him and whispers a short prayer over him.

ROSA MARIA
I'm leaving you in charge.

IVÁN
Good luck.

He watches her go.

EXT. APARTMENT ALLEYWAY

YOUNG SANDRA (10, chubby) zig-zags out of control on new roller-skates. She's wearing a "Frankie Say Relax" T-shirt.

SANDRA

Oh crap.

She loses control and face-plants.

INT. IVÁN'S CHILDHOOD APARTMENT

Iván, watching from a window in his house, laughs at the scene and shouts for her attention.

IVÁN

Sandra, are you ok?

She gets back on her feet again and looks up at him cheerfully.

SANDRA

Wait for me, Chulito!

INT. IVÁN'S CHILDHOOD APARTMENT

Iván appears in the doorway with the yellow quinceañera dress.

SANDRA

No fucking way!

He gives her a mischievous look.

INT. IVÁN FAMILY HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Sandra, face caked with '80s makeup and wearing giant pink hoop earrings, applies copious amounts of blush to Iván's face. He's wearing the yellow dress.

IVÁN

Not too vulgar.

SANDRA

But that's how Madonna does it.

Sandra plasters yet another streak of red lipstick on Iván. She beholds her handiwork, makes a face.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

For such a handsome guy, you make a pretty ugly girl.

He looks in the mirror and likes what he sees.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. PUEBLA - MORNING

It's a glorious colonial era town. Churches as far as you can see.

INT. UNIVERSITY OF PUEBLA CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gerardo sits on his desk and mindlessly plays with his red laser pointer while about 30 students finish an exam.

Gerardo
Time's up, guys. No one should
still be writing. Time's up.

Through the classroom window, Gerardo spots his friend CUCUSA (27, a queen in every way), who mimes a blow job. Gerardo stifles a laugh and puts up two hands as in "wait ten minutes." Gerardo picks up the exams from the students.

GERARDO (CONT'D)
Because I'm in a good mood, here's
a chance for extra credit. What's
the natural tendency of every
business?

STUDENT (O.S.)
To slowly go bankrupt.

GERARDO
I think I'm going to have to make
the exam harder. You're doing them
too quickly.

EXT. DOWNTOWN PUEBLA - EVENING

Gerardo and Cucusa are shopping near the Plaza Victoria. They spot a window filled with wedding dresses and tiaras. Cucusa sees the tiaras and gets excited.

CUCUSA
Look. Look at these. But they're
too big, right?

GERARDO
Let's ask.

INT. A WEDDING SHOP - CONTINUOUS

CUCUSA
Look! This one's amazing.

The SHOPKEEPER eyes them suspiciously from a distance.

SHOPKEEPER

Good evening.

GERARDO

Good evening.

SHOPKEEPER

We're about to close.

CUCUSA

But it's still early. Can you show us one of these real quick?

GERARDO

Yes, real quick.

SHOPKEEPER

We're closing. I can't help you.

Gerardo and Cucusa get the message, loud and clear.

GERARDO

Thank you.

As they leave the shop, Cucusa looks stung.

EXT. STREETS OF PUEBLA - LATER

A sexy young woman breezes by them.

CUCUSA

I know I've got a great ass. But how much do you think a figure like that would cost me?

GERARDO

Like that? Well that would definitely require a trip to Thailand.

CUCUSA

Shut up, asshole!

GERARDO

And for that butt maybe a trip to Brazil too.

CUCUSA

Imagine all the fags who'd come to my show.

GERARDO

So many.

CUCUSA

Of course. We'd have to add more tables.

GERARDO

You'd look gorgeous too.

Gerardo is only half listening. He's spotted someone.

GERARDO (CONT'D)

Son of a bitch.

POV GERARDO: Iván is holding a balloon. His son Ricky sits on Paola's lap, chatting away. He looks like a traditional dad.

CUCUSA

That's your Mr. Nobody, right?

GERARDO

Yeah.

Ivan looks up and sees Gerardo staring at him. He freezes.

CUCUSA

Would you look at him. It's so typical.

Gerardo and Cucusa begin to approach Iván and his family, taking their sweet time to pass by. Iván looks mortified.

AUDIO PRELAP: "Piel Canela" by Eydie Gorme.

INT. DRESSING ROOMS - JALEOS - NIGHT

Jaleos is a clandestine gay nightclub in a shuttered an old movie palace. Paint peels off the walls in the basement dressing rooms where performers are getting ready for their shows.

In the main dressing room, Cucusa has transformed herself into her drag alter ego "Cucusa Minelly," an over-the-top queen in a full-length red evening gown. She adjusts her curly blonde wig in the mirror and spins around.

INT. JALEOS - STAGE

MONTE (23, dancer) lip synchs the words to "Piel Canela" while giving an esoteric rollerskating performance alongside two cute shirtless boys.

INT. JALEOS - BAR

Gerardo, looking blue, sits with Cucusa. They each down a shot for good luck.

INT. JALEOS - BACKSTAGE

Cucusa dramatically swishes down a long hallway toward the stage.

EMCEE (O.S)
 Good evening bitches and boys.
 Please give a big welcome
 to the grand diva of
 Puebla...Cucusa Minelly!

Cucusa makes her way onto the stage.

INT. JALEOS - STAGE

Cucusa performs her big drag number, "El Me Mintió" by Amanda Miguel. The people are rapt.

Gerardo takes his beer and wades into the crowd, where several men greet him happily.

CUCUSA
 (lip synching)
 He lied to me / He told me he loved
 me and it wasn't true / He lied to
 me / He didn't love me, he never
 did / He let me adore him,
 he lied to me / He lied to me / It
 was only a game / It was a cruel
 and vain game / He lied to me / My
 heart is broken / My face full of
 tears / I'm so wretched I'd rather
 die / Lies, it was all lies / Words
 to the wind / Just the whim of a
 little boy.

Cucusa vamps for her big finish and the crowd goes wild.

CUCUSA (CONT'D)
 Okay, that's enough. Alright,
 welcome my friends. So nobody here
 is gay, right? But I support you, I
 do. I put on heels and stuff
 just so you don't feel so bad.

EXT. JALEOS NIGHT CLUB - MUCH LATER

Gerardo exits with Monte and Cucusa who's out of drag but wearing a dramatic post performance robe. Cucusa sees something across the street.

CUCUSA
 Oh no.

POV GERARDO: Iván is standing across the street, in the rain.

MONTE
 (to Gerardo)
 You love to get hurt, huh?

Monte pats him on the shoulder at leaves.

GERARDO
 Take care.

CUCUSA
 I'll let you take care of your
 business.

Cucusa disappears back inside the club. Gerardo turns to face Iván.

GERARDO
 Hey.

IVÁN
 Hey.

A noisy city bus pulls up.

GERARDO
 This is my bus. You better have
 exact change.

INT. A MOVING BUS

They sit next to each other on the empty bus.

GERARDO
 Does she know about you?

IVÁN
 No. I can't tell her. You know how
 people are here. If she finds out,
 I'll never see my son again. She's
 the one who decides whether I get
 to see him or not.

GERARDO
 So what are you going to do?

IVÁN
 I'm not sure. For starters I need a
 job where they pay me more.

He hesitates to tell him the rest.

IVÁN (CONT'D)
 I've been thinking about crossing
 over.

Gerardo grimaces at the suggestion.

GERARDO

You'd make a pretty complicated
boyfriend.

EXT. STREET CARNIVAL - NIGHT

Kids and families frolic under the blinking lights of a local carnival. Iván watches his son Ricky ride the carousel. Ricky waives at his dad. Iván smiles but seems distracted.

EXT. APARTMENT COURTYARD - DUSK

A quinceañera party is in progress. Pink and white balloons decorate the modest courtyard, The birthday girl, dressed in an elaborate pink dress, dances with young men in tuxedos, her *chambelans*.

Iván and Paola look on as Ricky jumps into the action for a quick dance with the girl of honor as the audience laughs and cheers him. Ricky proudly runs back to his parents.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD COURTYARD - NIGHT

The crowd gathers around the birthday girl and chants "we want cake!" She's flanked by her parents and takes a bite. The guests applaud.

Iván, Paola, and Ricky eat cake at a folding table. Iván looks a bit bored with the whole thing.

EXT. THE SIDEWALK OUTSIDE THE COURTYARD - LATER

Gerardo, making sure not to be spotted by anyone, waits outside. Inside, a dance party is in full swing. Iván spots him and quickly says his goodbyes. As Iván hurries to leave, Paola catches a glimpse of Gerardo waiting for him outside.

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD IN CHIAPAS - DAWN

A windy day. A minibus rolls to a stop. Iván and Gerardo get out.

EXT. A GOLDEN FIELD IN CHIAPAS - LATE MORNING

Iván and Gerardo are walking through a pristine field carrying backpacks. The view of the mountains is breathtaking.

IVÁN (O.S.)
Does all this land belong to your
family?

GERARDO (O.S.)
Yes. It belonged to my great-
grandfather.

They walk through a herd of cows and head to Gerardo's family ranch.

INT. RANCH LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gerardo and Iván are in a sitting room. Gerardo's mother MAGDA (50) approaches excitedly with a big wrapped box.

MAGDA
Eyes closed!

GERARDO
They are!

Gerardo opens it and pulls out a plush red velvet robe. It's a bit on the garish side.

GERARDO (CONT'D)
Wow... Ma.

He stands and models the robe.

GERARDO (CONT'D)
How do I look?

MAGDA
Wonderful.

IVÁN
It looks great.

MAGDA
You look so elegant!

Iván watches, charmed by Gerardo's banter with his mom.

GERARDO
Thanks a lot, Mom.

MAGDA
It looks beautiful.

GERARDO
Very elegant.

MAGDA
Magnificent.

Iván and Gerardo share a look, trying not to laugh.

INT. IN THE RANCH ATTIC - LATER

An attic with a very low ceiling. Daylight comes flooding in from the holes in the cinder block wall. There's a small mattress and a tiny chest of drawers that seem to have been there forever. Iván plays a few notes on a dusty toy piano.

GERARDO

Pretty, right?

Iván starts going through the drawers, producing various items from Gerardo's past. Iván takes out a pair of old glasses and places them gently on Gerardo's nose.

IVÁN

I bet you spent all your afternoons here.

Iván slides an old lady's beaded bracelet on Gerardo's wrist.

GERARDO

I wore this around when I was 8 years old. Can you imagine?

Suddenly from down below, the sounds of an argument. Iván and Gerardo crouch low and peer out to see what's going on.

IVÁN AND GERARDO'S POV: Gerardo's dad CÉSAR (55, scary) is reprimanding a ranch hand who repeatedly apologizes. César stalks off.

IVÁN

He has a bad temper, huh?

Gerardo ignores this, and begins to undress Iván. Iván whispers in Gerardo's ear.

GERARDO

What's that?

IVÁN

Your father's going to catch us.

Gerardo reaches down to unzip Iván's pants.

GERARDO

He's too old. He wouldn't make it up the stairs.

They make out intensely.

INT. RANCH GUEST ROOM - EVENING

Iván changes his clothes.

INT. RANCH DINING ROOM - LATER

The dinner table is a rush of activity. Gerardo's brother PACO (10) and sisters ANGÉLICA (8) and ALMA (16), sit at a table adorned with fresh beans, tortillas and queso fresco.

Gerardo is wearing his new red velvet robe over his clothes. He looks happy. Magda passes a tortilla to Gerardo.

GERARDO

Thanks, Mom.

Gerardo's father César and Gerardo's older brother HUGO (28) appears. They are both still in their ranch clothes. The room gets quieter.

MAGDA

You're late.

César holds his hand out to Iván, giving him a very macho shake. Iván does his best to return it.

CÉSAR

Good evening.

IVÁN

I'm Iván.

CÉSAR

Good evening.

GERARDO

Hi, Dad.

He looks at Gerardo with disapproval and he and Hugo take their places at the table.

PACO (O.S.)

He's Gerardo's best friend.

César digs into his food and turns to Hugo.

CÉSAR

How many cows gave birth today?

HUGO

Two, Dad.

CÉSAR

The black one's about ready, keep an eye on her.

HUGO
Yes Dad, I'll check her.

César sips his coffee.

CÉSAR
The coffee's cold. You know I like
it burning hot.

Magda, trying to keep the peace, quietly takes the cup and goes to the kitchen. She returns quickly with the new coffee. The kids are silent. Iván takes it all in.

CÉSAR (CONT'D)
(to Gerardo)
What's that you're wearing?

GERARDO
(fucking with his dad)
You don't like it?

CÉSAR
No.

HUGO
(to Iván)
What do you do for work?

GERARDO
He's a chef.

IVÁN
No.

GERARDO
He's a cook. No. I help out in a
kitchen. I wash the dishes...

Hugo and César snicker.

ANGÉLICA
In my house, the maid washes the
dishes.

ALMA
Angélica...

CÉSAR
That's woman's work, right?
(to Gerardo) When are you leaving?

IVÁN
(holding back anger)
Early tomorrow.

Magda reacts in disappointment.

CÉSAR

Let them be. They probably have things to do.

IVÁN

Yes, ma'am, we have to go back to work.

EXT/INT. GERARDO'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gerardo, upset, slowly walks down the hallway of the house. He enters his childhood bedroom and lays down on the bed. He stares at the ceiling, remembering...

FLASHBACK:

INT. GERARDO'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

YOUNG GERARDO (10) is asleep in his bed. Just outside the window, a flatbed truck comes screaming into the driveway. Gerardo's father, César (as a younger man in his 30s) gets out of the truck, leaving the passenger door open and the engine on. The headlights beam into the room. Young Gerardo sits up in bed, confused.

INT. GERARDO'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

César stomps in, grabs Young Gerardo in a vise grip and roughly drags him out of bed.

CÉSAR

Let's go.

Young Gerardo is confused and afraid.

CÉSAR (CONT'D)

Get up. Get up!

YOUNG GERARDO

Dad?

CÉSAR

Shut up!

EXT. THE RANCH, DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

César drags his son out a side door and towards the truck, and roughly jams him in the passenger side.

INT. FLATBED TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

César is drunk. He stares straight ahead and drives dangerously fast up a winding dirt road.

YOUNG GERARDO
Where are we going?

CÉSAR
I said shut up.

EXT. A CORNFIELD ON THE RANCH - CONTINUOUS

They arrive at a clearing. César leaves the engine running and throws Young Gerardo roughly on the ground. The mist rolls over the cornfield, the two lit only by the headlights of the truck.

CÉSAR
Are you going to tell me? Aren't you a man? Don't you think I'm ashamed that everyone in the village is saying this shit?

César smacks the ground loudly with his belt. Young Gerardo trembles in fear.

CÉSAR (CONT'D)
Didn't I teach you to be a man? Why do you act like a fucking little girl? Everyone is saying you're a faggot. Is that what you are?

YOUNG GERARDO
No, Papa.

CÉSAR
So why are they saying it?

YOUNG GERARDO
I don't know.

CÉSAR
Do you know what happens to people like you? They get killed. And they get tossed into the mountains. Is that how you want to end up?

YOUNG GERARDO
(whimpers)
No.

Gerardo's father looks at him with a maelstrom of love and rage in his heart.

CÉSAR

Stay here and learn what'll happen
if you keep acting like this.

César suddenly gets back in the truck, slams the door and peels out down the hill, into the distance.

Young Gerardo is left alone on the cold ground in the darkness.

EXT. A WINDING PATH - DAWN

Young Gerardo walks alone, in shock, slowly down the hill. He's covered in mud.

INT. GERARDO'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - LATER

Gerardo looks in the mirror at his dirty face and matted hair. He slowly cleans the dirt off his face as tears roll down his cheeks.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. THE RANCH - DAWN

Through a window, we see Gerardo outside looking at the mountains, contemplating his memory.

INT. A SMALL BUS - AFTERNOON

Gerardo and Iván ride alongside the locals in a taxi van.

INT. IVÁN'S APARTMENT - EARLY EVENING

It's raining hard.

The door opens to Iván's apartment, and Gerardo and Iván enter, soaking wet. They throw their bags from their weekend in Chiapas on the bed.

Iván sees the blinking red light on his answering machine. He hits the button.

LANDLORD (O.S.)

Iván, it's Francisco. I'm looking
for you. It's about the rent.

Iván quickly switches the machine off.

GERARDO

Iván...you still haven't paid him?

IVÁN
(annoyed)
I'm on it.

GERARDO
I told you I can lend you the money
again, no problem.

IVÁN
And I told you no.

GERARDO
Well, it's up to you.

Gerardo pulls out a bottle of Pox from his bag. He grabs two glasses from the kitchenette.

The doorbell buzzes. Iván goes to his balcony and looks down on the street below. He quickly comes back inside, trying to hide his panic.

IVÁN
It's my mom.

GERARDO
Your mom, here in Puebla?

GERARDO (CONT'D)
She's here with my kid and Paola.

GERARDO (CONT'D)
So?

IVÁN
They're going to want to come up.

GERARDO
I'm your friend from work, right?

ROSA MARIA (O.S)
Iván!

Iván slips on sandals, opens the door and walks out of the apartment. He descends the stairs.

INT. IVÁN'S APARTMENT, VESTIBULE

As soon Iván opens the front door, his stomach sinks: His mom, Paola and Ricky stand there, soaking.

IVÁN
Hi, Mom!

Iván sees that Ricky is wearing a small plaster cast on his hand. He kneels down to Ricky's level, worried.

IVÁN (CONT'D)
Ricky, what happened?

RICKY
I fell at school.

IVÁN
Does it hurt?

RICKY
Yeah.

ROSA MARIA
Where were you? He fell on Thursday
and broke his arm.

PAOLA
I panicked so I called your mom.
Where were you?

IVÁN
Some friends from work invited me
to Hidalgo. It was a last minute
thing. I'm sorry. I should've let
you know.

ROSA MARIA
The boy's better now. But he
insisted on seeing you. He wanted
to see his dad.

Iván looks at the shoddy-looking cast and his son's innocent
face.

IVÁN
Ricky, how about we go to Sanborns
and get an ice cream?

A loud thunder clap and flash of lightning makes this
suggestion even more absurd.

RICKY
Yes, ice cream!

ROSA MARIA
It's raining.

PAOLA
(suspicious)
Can we use your bathroom? Ricky
needs it.

IVÁN
It's broken. It's not working.
There's no water.

Paola studies him, noticing his panicked face. She sees right through him.

ROSA MARIA
Iván, why can't we come in?

PAOLA
Who's up there? Is it that guy
you're always with?

Rosa Maria looks concerned. Iván is trapped.

IVÁN
What are you talking about?

Rosa Maria, visibly upset by this conversation, takes Ricky by the hand and turns to leave.

ROSA MARIA
Let's go.

RICKY
But I want my ice cream.

ROSA MARIA
It's late. Come on. Come.

She gives Iván a withering look.

IVÁN
Mom, wait.

She ignores this and pulls Ricky into the street.

He is alone with Paola, who seethes.

PAOLA
I knew it. I don't want you coming
near Ricky or me.

IVÁN
(pleading)
Paola, he's my son.

PAOLA
You have nothing to offer us.

With that, they are gone. Iván does not try and stop them.

He slowly closes the door.

INT. IVÁN'S APARTMENT, HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Iván heads back to the stairwell. Gerardo is sitting on the landing. He's heard everything.

GERARDO
I'm going home.

INT. IVÁN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Iván sips tequila in the dark. The rain falls hard. He catches his reflection in the mirror and remembers...

FLASHBACK:

INT. IVÁN CHILDHOOD HOME - AFTERNOON

Young Sandra (10) and Iván (10) are dressed up and wearing garish makeup. They're sweaty from dancing. Iván is wearing the yellow dress his mom made for the neighbor's quinceañera.

Iván's father Marcos, is standing in the doorway. The kids freeze.

Marcos slowly walks toward Iván. He's disgusted. After a pause that feels like an eternity:

MARCOS
Take that off. Your mother worked
hard on it.

Marcos takes a tussle of Iván's hair tenderly, then suddenly roughly pushes him back hard. He exits the living room, enters the bedroom, and shuts the door.

Iván stands there, in the oversized dress. Gutted.

END OF FLASHBACK

EXT. EMPTY STREETS - NIGHT

Iván walks quickly along the rainy streets of Puebla.

INT./EXT. A CONVENIENCE STORE - CONTINUOUS

Iván enters the small store. Sandra is surprised to see him.

SANDRA
What's going on, Iván? What are you
doing here?

Sandra's rude boyfriend is sitting, doing a crossword. He stands and interrupts, ignoring Iván.

SANDRA'S BOYFRIEND

(to Sandra)

What time are you coming home?

SANDRA

Late. I told you I have to wait until my boss gets back from Cholula.

SANDRA'S BOYFRIEND

Ok, I'll be waiting. Don't be late.

He leaves. Sandra looks at Iván, embarrassed. She sees there's something very wrong.

SANDRA

(to Iván)

What is it, Chulito? What happened?

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE, BACKROOM - LATER

Iván and Sandra are talking. We cannot hear what they are saying. Iván looks distraught.

INT. QUÉ ONDA PUEBLA, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Iván is washing dishes. He looks resolute.

GERARDO (O.S.)

What? And what will you do over there? Pluck chickens?

EL MÍSTICO TACO STAND - EVENING

Iván and Gerardo are sitting in the corner of a local joint. Gerardo looks dumbfounded.

GERARDO

Pick grapes or whatever the fuck they pick in California? Avocados? Iván... We're gay. We don't pick avocados.

Iván laughs softly at this.

IVÁN

I could become a real chef. There are better opportunities for me there. I have better opportunities there to become a chef. I'm talented. And they love talent over there.

GERARDO (V.O.)
We're fine here.

IVÁN (V.O.)
No, we aren't fine. You're fine.
Come with me.

GERARDO
They hate us over there.

IVÁN
Then why does everyone who goes
there end up staying?

GERARDO
This whole bullshit dream is just
because your mom caught you with
your boyfriend. Grow up.

Iván's face is filled with frustration as he holds back
tears.

IVÁN
I need to move Ricky forward. I
need to move myself forward.
I need to leave.

INT. IVÁN'S APARTMENT - DAWN

They both look spent. They sit on the bed in silence.

GERARDO
You could die. Haven't you seen the
photos? That place destroys people
with loneliness.

A long silence hangs in the air.

IVÁN
Gerardo... You're going to be proud
of me.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

They shower together. The steam rise as they breathe each
other in and kiss deeply.

IVÁN (V.O.)
I love you.

GERARDO (V.O.)
I hate you.

IVÁN (V.O.)
One year.

GERARDO (V.O.)

One year.

EXT. IVÁN'S APARTMENT - BALCONY - DAY

From his balcony, Iván takes a last look at Puebla.

EXT. PICK-UP TRUCK - DUSK

Iván and Sandra ride in the back of the truck along with several other migrants. Tall cactuses cast foreboding shadows as the Chihuahua Desert unfolds before them.

IVÁN (V.O)

Do you believe in destiny? I've always believed that we all have something special waiting for us. It's like life has a surprise for each one of us. You are my surprise. But you arrived a little too soon.

Two dogs chase the truck as it turns onto a narrow road surrounded by tall cactus. The dogs suddenly stop. They watch the truck continue into the dusk.

EXT. THE DESERT, AN ABANDONED STORAGE DEPOT - NIGHT

Iván, Sandra and about 20 migrants stand nervously in silence. The COYOTE (38, lizard-like, all business) opens the back of a large box truck.

COYOTE

Everybody listen up. Starting now you're going to do what I say.

The group nods yes.

The COYOTE'S SON begins calling out names. One by one, the migrants turn over their cash and get inside the back of the dark, dank vehicle.

COYOTE'S SON

Iván and Sandra Campos.

The two approach the coyotes and hand over their money.

COYOTE'S SON (CONT'D)

Is this for both of you?

Iván nods yes. The coyote studies them.

COYOTE

Your wife's too fat, no?

IVÁN

Excuse me?

COYOTE

She's not going to make it.

SANDRA

Yes, I can.

She smiles weakly.

COYOTE

She'll fall behind, man.

IVÁN

No, she can do it.

SANDRA

I can.

Iván holds his gaze, but the coyote won't look away. The others help Sandra climb into the dark container. Iván climbs in after her. The coyote's son continues checking the names on the list.

The coyote shuts the door of the container. Sandra and Iván sit in silence. What the hell have they gotten themselves into?

EXT. THE DESERT - NIGHT

The group walks in a single file line. Sandra lumbers along slowly. She and Iván are at the back of the line, the coyote's son holding up the rear.

SANDRA

(breathing heavily)

Jesus, there's a ton of thorns!

IVÁN

You all right?

SANDRA

Yeah. He said it was like 4 hours, didn't he?

IVÁN

Yeah.

SANDRA

So It's like watching two movies in a row.

EXT. THE DESERT - LATER

Sandra is wheezing audibly.

IVÁN
What's wrong?

SANDRA
I feel sick. I'm already exhausted.

IVÁN
Take a second to breathe. Let's go
or they'll leave us. You can do
this. Come on.

EXT. THE DESERT - EVEN LATER

The group is walking in the brush when they suddenly hear a helicopter. Everybody freezes.

COYOTE
Watch out! Fucking run!

Everybody runs like crazy. Iván grabs Sandra's hand but in the chaos, he lets go.

EXT./INT. A TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

They all race into a tunnel. Lights from the loud helicopter start to scan the area. Sandra comes last, shrieking with fear. She barely makes it and falls into Iván's arms.

Sandra passes out cold.

IVÁN
Are you alright? Sandra!

The group is stopped in the tunnel, watching them.

IVÁN (CONT'D)
Sandra, get up! Chula. I'm begging
you, please.

SANDRA
I can't.

IVÁN
Get up.

COYOTE
I've had enough of this fucking fat
ass. We can't wait anymore.

Iván looks up at him, alarmed.

COYOTE (CONT'D)

I told you.

Iván continues to tend to Sandra as the coyote surveys the situation. He turns to address the group.

COYOTE (CONT'D)

Alright, guys. Let's go. If we hurry up, we'll make it before dawn.

IVÁN

Hold on. My wife needs five minutes. Please, just five minutes!

COYOTE

No, there's no time to lose. I warned you, motherfucker.

The coyote begins to move. The group is conflicted. RAFA (50), a kind father traveling with his daughter tries to intervene.

RAFA

We can't just leave her here. She could die.

COYOTE

Who the fuck are you? Because of these assholes, we're all going to get caught. Come on, let's go.

The group begins to follow him out of the tunnel.

IVÁN

(shouting)

Please don't go. Give us five minutes. Please, sir! Just five minutes, please! Wait for us!

The group continues to walk away.

COYOTE

To the left.

Iván is terrified. He panics.

IVÁN

They're leaving. Stand up.

SANDRA

(mumbling)

I can't. I can't. Just go. Go. Let them catch me and send me home. I can't do it.

Sandra closes her eyes. Iván looks in the direction of the group, now out of view. Frantic, he kisses Sandra on the forehead and runs after them.

IVÁN

Wait for me! I'm coming!

Ivan disappears from view. Sandra is all alone in the tunnel. A single tear rolls down her face.

An endless minute goes by. But then: **Iván reappears in the tunnel.** He runs to her side.

IVÁN (CONT'D)

Chula! Chula!

Sandra looks up wearily at Iván, tears streaming down her face. He's filled with shame.

IVÁN (CONT'D)

Forgive me.

They look at one another with profound love. Iván holds her shoulders and looks her in the face.

IVÁN (CONT'D)

We're not going to die in the
fucking desert.

EXT. THE DESERT - THE DARKEST HOUR

It's freezing cold. Sandra walks at a snails pace, Iván dragging her along. She groans with each step.

HALLUCINATION:

A red laser dot appears on Iván's neck. The dot dances along his hand and lands on the ground. The desert landscape turns blood red. Iván looks to his side and Sandra has disappeared. He begins to walk, then run, through the red desert, a crazy smile on his face.

END

HALLUCINATION

EXT. DESERT - DAWN

The sun is high in the sky. The desert is still. Iván and Sandra are asleep on the ground under a scrubby tree.

EXT. THE DESERT - MOMENTS LATER

The distant sound of a car engine. Iván's eyes flash open. He runs up a hill and spots a beat-up station wagon coming his way on the road down below. His mouth is so dry he can barely speak.

IVÁN
(waving his arms)
Hey! Over here!

He runs like mad toward the road, waving his hands to get the car to stop. The car comes to a halt. JIMENA (55, kind) is inside.

JIMENA
My God. Are you ok?

IVÁN
I am. But my friend isn't. Are we still in Mexico?

JIMENA
No, son. You're in the United States.

Iván crumbles with relief, an outpouring of emotion. They've made it.

IVÁN
Thank God. Can you give us a ride? Anywhere. Please.

Jimena scans the landscape for a millisecond.

JIMENA
It's too dangerous. But look... Take this road for 40 minutes. Stay close to the shoulder because immigration comes through here. At the end of the road, you'll find the San Luis Middle School. The janitor's name is Sid. Tell him Jimena sent you. He can help you.

IVÁN
Are you sure you can't take us?

JIMENA
Honestly, I can't. But look. I can give you this. Here.

Jimena pulls out some brown bananas, a brown paper lunch bag, and a gallon jug of water and gives them to Iván.

IVÁN

Thanks.

JIMENA

May God bless you. Good luck.

IVÁN

Thank you.

Jimena drives off. Through her side window we see Iván, totally spent, slowly walking, getting smaller and smaller in the frame.

FLASHBACK:

RICKY (V.O.)

But I don't want you to go.

EXT. PAOLA'S FAMILY APARTMENT - DAY

Iván squats near young Ricky in front of the building.

IVÁN

But listen to me. I'm coming back soon.

He hugs his son briefly trying to act casual.

IVÁN (CONT'D)

You're going to be late for school.

Ricky won't let go. He holds his dad's neck tightly and lays his head on his father's shoulder.

Iván is anguished.

FLASH FORWARD:

INT. NYC SUBWAY - THE PRESENT DAY

Iván (45) is standing with other passengers, looking at photos of older Ricky (now 20) in his iPhone.

IVÁN (V.O.)

Dear son... We said goodbye 14 years ago. I remember your innocent face. I told you I would come back. I never came. Now you know the truth. If I leave here, I can never return. When you dream, it all happens so fast. Like flashes.

The subway makes it's way above ground as the cold winter light of New York City floods the car.

IVÁN (V.O.)

The American dream happens in slow motion. I came here to accomplish something. Don't lose faith in me.

END FLASH
FORWARD

INT. BOARDING HOUSE IN QUEENS, NY - MORNING

Iván (25) is in his tiny room, drying his hair with a towel. There is a photo of him and Ricky tucked in the mirror. He puts on a shirt, takes a quick look at the New York City skyline (including the Twin Towers) in the distance.

EXT. CAR WASH, QUEENS - AFTERNOON

Iván is madly scrubbing and hand-drying cars. He is surrounded by other immigrant men doing same job. It's freezing cold.

CAR WASH WORKER

Moving it. Ready?

Iván uses a soapy rag to wash the car windows.

IVÁN

Hold on.

Iván climbs a ladder and uses the long brush to wash the top of the car. It's hard work.

EXT./INT. BODEGA IN QUEENS - NIGHT

All manner of hurried New Yorkers pass by.

Iván, still in his work clothes, walks up to the Sikh owner behind the counter.

IVÁN (CONT'D)

(in broken English)

You have any phone cards?

DELI CLERK

I have two, five, or fifteen.

Iván refers to the loose cigarettes on the counter for sale.

IVÁN

How much is it?

DELI CLERK
Two for one dollar.

IVÁN
And one?

DELI CLERK
Fifty cents.

EXT. A PHONE BOOTH IN QUEENS - NIGHT

It's cold as hell. Iván can see his breath as he waits in line to use a single pay phone. A woman exits the booth in tears and walks away.

GERARDO (PRELAP)
 An hour later than we agreed.

IVÁN (PRELAP)
 We finished late at work.

EXT/INT. A PHONE BOOTH IN QUEENS - CONTINUOUS

Iván enters the booth and shuts the door.

GERARDO (O.S.)
 So? How's the new job going?

IVÁN
 (hesitates)
 Good. Just great. Everything is super. I cooked today. I made enchiladas.

GERARDO (O.S.)
 With chicken or pork?

IVÁN
 With chicken.

GERARDO (O.S.)
 And?

Enjoying the idea of being a real chef in New York, Ivan gains enthusiasm with the fib.

IVÁN
 Everyone loved them. But the chef was really impressed. He said he hadn't tried them before. And that I have a unique talent.

GERARDO (O.S.)
 It surprised him?

IVÁN

I told you they're really weird here. They don't use cilantro. They put parsley in everything.

GERARDO (O.S.)

I told you the United States is a barbaric place.

Iván laughs.

GERARDO (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I'm proud of you.

Iván, guilty.

IVÁN

I miss you. I miss you a lot.

Silence.

GERARDO (O.S.)

You've been gone for more than a year.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Iván leaves the phone booth and walks away.

GERARDO (O.S.)

I'm not as good as waiting a I thought I was. Iván... I'm coming.

Iván is disappearing into the night.

IVÁN (O.S.)

No. You can't come. This isn't for you. Gerardo... You have to forget about me. For a while.

INT. SUBWAY - NIGHT

Iván rides a packed train. He looks at himself in the reflection, lost.

EXT. AMERICAN EMBASSY - MEXICO CITY - DAY

Behind iron gates, Gerardo waits in a line with many others. The vibe is tense. One by one, they are let inside.

CONSULAR OFFICER (O.S.)

Age?

INT. AMERICAN EMBASSY - MEXICO CITY - CONTINUOUS

Gerardo is standing at a plexiglass window talking to a no-nonsense CONSULAR OFFICER.

GERARDO

Twenty six years old.

CONSULAR OFFICER

Properties here in Mexico?

GERARDO

I have an apartment in Puebla.

CONSULAR OFFICER

Value?

GERARDO

Eight thousand dollars.

CONSULAR OFFICER

Any other properties?

GERARDO

Well, my family has a ranch in Chiapas. A cattle ranch.

CONSULAR OFFICER

(reading the application)

Teaching assistant at the University of Puebla?

GERARDO

Yes. *I'm graduate student.*

CONSULAR OFFICER

Have you travelled internationally before? Outside of Mexico?

GERARDO

No. Never.

CONSULAR OFFICER

Do you have children in Mexico or in the U.S.?

GERARDO

No. No.

CONSULAR OFFICER

Family members or loved ones in the U.S.?

GERARDO

(hesitates)

No. No one.

The officer studies him before loudly stamping Gerardo's papers. Denied.

CONSULAR OFFICER

Sorry.

Gerardo looks crestfallen.

CONSULAR OFFICER (CONT'D)

Next!

EXT. STREETS OF PUEBLA - LATE AT NIGHT

Cucusa and Gerardo are walking home. Cucusa is wearing a touch of eye shadow and carrying a small purse. Gerardo is a drunken mess.

GERARDO

I'm going to tell him.

Gerardo pulls his phone out, fumbles. Cucusa grabs the phone from him and puts it in her purse.

CUCUSA

No, that's enough.

Gerardo stumbles.

CUCUSA (CONT'D)

Get yourself together, queen. Look what happens when you drink like this.

Just ahead of them, a group of DRUNK MEN appear, walking in their direction. Cucusa tries to keep her head down but the drunks have already zeroed in.

DRUNK #1

Faggots.

DRUNK #2

Look at the little homos.

DRUNK #3

Little faggots.

Instead of moving along, Gerardo talks back. Before you know it, fists fly. Gerardo connects on one punch, but is quickly knocked over.

Cucusa uses her purse to hit a few of the men. She is rapidly thrown hard to the ground. The drunks laugh and keep moving, leaving the two laid out on the sidewalk.

EXT. RANCH - DUSK

The sun is setting. Gerardo walks quickly across his family ranch in Chiapas.

Over this, we hear a hushed conversation between Gerardo and his mom.

MAGDA (V.O.)

He should come back here. You have a profession here. Everything you've built, son.

GERARDO (V.O.)

I want to be with him.

MAGDA (V.O.)

You could die. Think it through, son.

INT. RANCH, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT.

Magda is asleep on the sofa. Gerardo watches her affectionately. An old Maria Felix film plays on the television.

EXT. WILLIAMSBURG BRIDGE, BIKE PATH - NIGHT

Iván is riding a delivery bike stacked high with plastic bags across the bridge. It's freezing.

EXT. A SMALL STREET IN LOWER MANHATTAN

Iván is walking his bike, looking at addresses. He cannot find the right house number. He rings a bell but there is no answer. A group of three college students stumble by.

COLLEGE DUDE #1

Hey, you got a pizza for me? Hey!

COLLEGE DUDE #2 (O.S.)

(to his friend)

Does that look like a pizza to you, idiot?

Iván ignores them, hops back onto his bike, and keeps moving.

EXT. A SMALL HOUSE IN NEW JERSEY - AFTERNOON

Iván is knocking on a glass door. A pit bull bounds down the stairs and pounces on the glass door. Iván jumps back. CHACO (29, delinquent) answers the door.

CHACO
Hey, it's the Mexican!

JANETH (O.S.)
What's wrong with that fucking dog?

Chaco holds the dog back with one hand. The dog lunges for Iván.

INT. THE BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

More like an overcrowded boarding house for young immigrant women. One girl makes her bed, the other does laundry, and another listens to music on the top bunk. Iván greets them.

IVÁN
Chula?

Sandra comes out of the bathroom toweling off her hair. She's wearing a nail salon uniform. They embrace.

IVÁN (CONT'D)
Chula. What's up? Are you going out?

SANDRA
(annoyed)
I have to go to work in half an hour, remember?

INT. SANDRA'S MICRO BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sandra's room barely fits her twin bed. She's decorated the spot cheerfully with photos from home.

Iván reaches into his messenger bag and pulls out a container of soup.

IVÁN
I made you pozole.

SANDRA
I'm not hungry. Leave it there.

IVÁN
You okay?

Sandra's eyes are full of worry.

SANDRA
Janeth told me that her friend went to Miami on vacation, and she got picked up at the airport. She got deported, just like that.

IVÁN

At the airport? Chula, it's going to pass.

SANDRA

They hate us here. I want to go back.

IVÁN

But you're doing fine. My mom said she saw your mom in a new car.

SANDRA

You know what my mom said? That she'd rather sit across from me in the kitchen than drive around alone in that car. And it's used. The car. It's a 12-year-old Toyota Camry.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

Everyone's over there. And you and me over here? And your mom? And the kid? Is Gerardo gonna wait for you forever?

Iván does not have an answer for that.

SANDRA (CONT'D)

I'm leaving. Let's go.

He studies her face, deeply saddened.

IVÁN

(convincing himself)

No. No. We came here to do something. We have to do something.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - NIGHT

It's raining. Iván comes walking up the street towards his boarding house. He rounds the corner **and sees Gerardo sitting on the stoop.** Iván stops cold.

Gerardo stands up, his clothes dirty, a backpack slung over his shoulder. He has clearly been through some ordeal.

Iván runs towards him and up the stairs. They embrace at length. After a moment Iván pulls back to study Gerardo's face, deeply moved. His eyes fill with tears.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE, STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Gerardo follows Iván up a long flight of stairs. They pass a bedroom where a few rough dudes are smoking blunts. They enter Iván's tiny, dim room.

Gerardo sits on the bed, taking it all in.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE, IVÁN'S ROOM - MORNING

Iván and Gerardo sit on the bed. Gerardo holds a Spanish-English dictionary. Iván writes each new word he learns on a sticky note and tapes it to the window.

IVÁN

"Ventana?"

GERARDO

"Ventana..."

GERARDO (CONT'D)

"Window," no?

IVÁN

Window?

GERARDO

Window.

Iván writes "guindou" onto a piece of paper and tapes it to the window.

IVÁN

Like this. Window.

GERARDO

I don't think that's how you write it.

IVÁN

How do you say "oven"? How do you say "grill"?

GERARDO

Look "parrilla" is "grill".

IVÁN

Spell it. Wait there's a word I can't remember. It was "mushrooms".

GERARDO

What's that?

IVÁN

Mushrooms. Mushrooms. Mushrooms?

GERARDO
Iván, doesn't that mean "hongos"?
"Mushrooms."

IVÁN
(mad at himself)
What a dumbass. How do you spell
it?

GERARDO
Champ-iñ-on-es.

IVÁN
(laughing)
No, in English!

GERARDO
Mushrooms.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - IVÁN'S ROOM - LATER

Gerardo is on the bed counting a small wad of money,
including coins.

GERARDO
We've got a total of \$212 dollars
between us.

They look at each other. What next?

EXT. WILLIAMSBURG BRIDGE BIKE PATH - NIGHT

Iván rides his delivery bike over the bridge.

INT. LA TERNANA, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Iván walks into the busy restaurant kitchen. He sneaks a look
at what the cooks are up to. He's checking which bags are
ready for delivery when an argument erupts.

CHEF (O.S.)
Start it over. Just start it over.

SOUS-CHEF (O.S.)
What's that, boss?

CHEF (O.S.)
Start it over!

A crash as a pan is thrown to the floor.

CHEF (CONT'D)
Pick it the fuck up.

A fight breaks out between the wild-eyed CHEF (30s, definitely on coke) and his sous-chef.

CHEF (CONT'D)
You don't put your fuckin' hands on me? You burn my fucking shit? Stupid motherfucker, I swear to god, get the fuck outta my restaurant!

Iván watches the scene, frozen.

CHEF (CONT'D)
Back to work! Let's go.

After a beat, the kitchen swings back into action, tense.

CHEF (CONT'D)
All right, come on guys, come on. We're a man down. Go down to the window. Yes, you, over there. Go now. Pick it up.

Iván works up his courage. It's now or never. He steps forward toward the chef.

IVÁN
 (in broken English)
Yo. Me. I can help.

Chef doesn't even look at him, keeps working.

IVÁN (CONT'D)
Cooking school, in Mexico, Puebla. Iván.

The Chef looks up quickly at him, annoyed.

CHEF
For Chrissakes. The fuckin' delivery guy. Go on, get him a fuckin' apron. Let's go. Let's go. Go.

The dish washer behind him grabs Iván an apron and gives him an encouraging pat on the shoulder.

INT. LA TERNANA, CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Iván suits up quickly, an excited smile begins to emerge on his face.

CHEF (O.S.)
Hey you, Eric. You, come over here.

Iván comes right over. He'll answer to Eric if necessary.

CHEF (CONT'D)

*Go to the walk-in right now, okay?
You need to get me eight zucchinis,
okay? One large butternut squash.
And you need to get me bella
mushrooms. Go, go! And parsley!
Finely chopped!*

Iván hesitates then runs off.

INT. LA TERNANA, WALK-IN FREEZER - CONTINUOUS

Iván fills his apron with vegetables, pausing to sniff some of them and make sure they are what the chef asked for. He's determined.

INT. LA TERNANA, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Iván is furiously chopping. It looks beautiful. He finishes the job, cleans up the work station and turns to the chef.

IVÁN

It's ready, chef.

The chef hurries over to take a look.

EXT. THE EAST RIVER - NIGHT

Iván sits on a bench, facing an awesome view of Manhattan. He breathes deeply for the first time in a year.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE, IVÁN'S ROOM - LATER

Gerardo is sleeping. Iván sits on the floor watching him. Iván is filled with tenderness.

A tiny red laser dot appears on Gerardo's face. Iván, across the room, is pointing the light at various parts of Gerardo's body.

IVÁN (V.O.)

I'll take care of you.

Gerardo awakens. They hold each other tightly.

IVÁN (V.O.)

*You came to me. You left
everything.*

EXT. NEW YORK CITY, PRESENT DAY - NIGHT

The Empire State Building, lit up like a rainbow for Gay Pride, comes into view.

FLASH FORWARD:

EXT. THE WEST VILLAGE, NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

Iván (45) and Gerardo (46) are walking in the street, holding hands.

From this point on in the script, these older versions of the characters will be called THE REAL IVÁN and THE REAL GERARDO, as they are the actual men the film is based on.

Scenes featuring them are taken from observational documentary material filmed over time.

IVÁN (V.O.)

Now we are intertwined. They say
that here we'll have to live in
hiding.

EXT. THE EAST RIVER, FOURTH OF JULY - NIGHT

The Real Ivan and The Real Gerardo watch an elaborate fireworks display explode over the city.

IVÁN (V.O.)

But I just want to live.
Can we just live?

Their faces are lit by the red lights. It's a suspended moment of bliss...

END FLASH
FORWARD

INT. SMALL MEXICAN RESTAURANT, KITCHEN - DAY

A small neighborhood restaurant in New York. Gerardo (27) comes barreling down the stairs carrying a bucket of dirty dishes. He's the fastest busboy in New York.

INT. SMALL MEXICAN RESTAURANT, STAIRWELL - DAY

On his break, Iván (26), wearing an apron, watches a grainy video message from Sandra on his phone.

SANDRA

(on the phone)
Chulito, how are you?
(MORE)

SANDRA (CONT'D)

Everything's great here in Chiapas.
Gerardo told me that you finally
got into a real kitchen. I'm so
proud of you! Sending you kisses.

INT. SMALL MEXICAN RESTAURANT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Iván, the head cook, is expertly putting the finishing touches on a myriad of beautifully presented Mexican dishes.

IVÁN

(to the other cooks)
Another order of tacos, please.

Gerardo, looking spiffy in a velvet jacket takes the dishes, smiles at Iván and rushes off.

MONTAGE: 20 YEARS IN NEW YORK CITY.

While the 1971 Mexican garage band track "Un Dia de Tantos" plays, we see 20 years pass before our eyes, as Iván and Gerardo experience life and work in New York City. The sequence is a combination of the actors and The Real Iván and The Real Gerardo.

- Gerardo (27) stands in front of a mirror in a pink jacket, tying a tie.

- The Real Gerardo (47) stands in front of a mirror, in the same clothes, and ties his tie.

- The Real Iván, in his chef's whites, manages a busy kitchen. He drizzles fresh pomegranate arils on his signature dish, chiles en nogada. He's fully in charge.

- The Real Iván and Gerardo, dressed to kill, hail a cab.

- They attend a joyful quinceañera party. A girl in a yellow dress dances gleefully.

- A holiday party inside one of their restaurants. The Real Iván and Gerardo tease a blindfolded friend as she attempts to hit the piñata.

- Day of the Dead: The Real Iván and Gerardo finish applying Day of the Dead makeup and pose with the kitchen staff.

- Gay Pride Parade, West Village: The Real Iván and Gerardo waive a rainbow flag, and kiss in the street.

- Fire Island: The Real Iván and Gerardo, in drag, primp in front of the mirror. They do a hilarious runway performance with friends, cracking up the whole time.

- A New York snowstorm: The Real Iván and Gerardo throw snowballs for their adorable bulldog, Cajeta.
- New Years Eve: They sing karaoke at a friend's house.
- They move into a bigger apartment with a view of Manhattan.
- The Real Gerardo FaceTimes with his mom, who waves at him. He looks touched to see her.
- The Real Iván Skypes with his sister. He looks homesick.

END MONTAGE.

TITLE: PRESENT DAY, NEW YORK CITY

EL ALQUIMISTA, DINING ROOM - DAY

The Real Iván and The Real Gerardo check out the progress of construction on their third restaurant in New York City. They inspect a stack of mirrored tiles.

THE REAL IVÁN

I like it.

THE REAL GERARDO

Nice, combined with black. Let's put these over there. Come with me, Iván.

INT. EL ALQUIMISTA, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The two check out a large, almost finished kitchen. They examine the lights hanging above the main kitchen station.

THE REAL GERARDO

Iván, there were four.

THE REAL IVÁN

No, only three.

THE REAL GERARDO

When are you going to clean everything?

THE REAL IVÁN

They'll clean this part. Can you believe that Matt wanted to remove these red lamps? He said they were ugly. I told him no way.

Iván climbs up onto the counter and slides one of the lights towards him.

THE REAL GERARDO
There's no bulb, Iván.

Iván inspects the socket.

INT. EL ALQUIMISTA, DINING ROOM - DAY

Iván is on a ladder near Gerardo, painting the ceiling of the restaurant. Employees bustle around to get the place ready. Iván sits for a moment and looks around with great satisfaction.

EXT. STREETS OF MEXICO CITY - DAY

An iPhone video. Ricky, now in his 20s, is walking down the street, staring at the camera. He looks frustrated.

INT. RICKY'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Ricky speaks into the iPhone camera, directly to his father.

RICKY
How's it going, Dad? I just left the embassy. They won't give me a visa. I'm tired of it, you know. I don't know what's happening. They won't approve me and they're super strict with the papers and everything. So that's it. I give up. Are you planning on coming back? Or are you going to stay there forever?

INT. LA DOÑA ANA, CHANGING ROOM - DAY

In his original restaurant, The Real Iván puts on his chef's jacket and walks up the stairs towards the kitchen. His son's words still ring in his head.

REAL RICKY (V.O.)
I haven't seen you in 20 years and... You know that time's passing.

INT. LA DOÑA ANA, KITCHEN

He begins to expertly sharpen a knife.

IVÁN (V.O.)
Twenty years. How many shifts? I've lost count.

Ivan quickly peels a pile of roasted green chiles by hand. He turns and stirs a vat of mole. He's in his element.

IVÁN (V.O.)

Janitor. Dishwasher. Line Cook.
 Chef. Owner. Father. Immigrant.
 Mexican. I have memories that are
 fading away. I can't remember the
 name of my dad's favorite chile.
 What else is fading away? Am I
 disappearing to them?

INT. LA DOÑA ANA, BOOTH - DAY

The Real Iván and Gerardo sit across from one another. It's tense.

THE REAL GERARDO

And if you decide to go back to
 Mexico, what will you do there?
 You'd be returning to a terribly
 unstable country where there isn't
 any work. Where you'd have to
 figure out what to do. It's like
 starting from scratch.

The Real Iván looks at his hands.

CUSTOMER (O.S.)

You're not open?

The Real Iván gets up from the table to talk to a customer.

THE REAL IVÁN (O.S.)

No, sorry. We open at five o'clock.

CUSTOMER (O.S.)

Oh, okay.

THE REAL IVÁN (O.S.)

Sorry.

He sits back down. He and The Real Gerardo stare at each other in silence.

THE REAL GERARDO

Iván... I don't see myself living
 in Mexico right now. I just can't
 see it.

They just look at each other. The Real Gerardo is incredulous. How is this happening again?

FLASHBACK:

INT. RANCH, GERARDO'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - MORNING

Gerardo (26) closes a small travel bag. He walks out the door into the courtyard of the home.

INT./EXT. A LOCAL TAXI - CONTINUOUS

Gerardo gets into the back seat of the taxi.

GERARDO

The central bus station.

As the car pulls way, Gerardo sees a strange sight in the driver's side mirror: the child version of himself, wearing a spiffy blue suit. Startled, Gerardo turns to look out the back window, but there is nothing there besides the empty road.

INT. THE BACK SEAT OF A MOVING VAN - LATER

Gerardo looks nervous. A flock of black birds flies past the window.

EXT. EL PASO INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE - AFTERNOON

Cars that are in line to cross from Mexico into Texas inch along toward the border patrol check points.

Gerardo stands next to a GRINGO COYOTE (20, dumbass), who hurls a rope over the top mesh portion of the bridge. The other end of the rope is fastened to the fence.

Gerardo grabs the rope and hoists himself over the side of the bridge. Gerardo dangles for 25 feet, then begins to slowly lower himself down. But after a few seconds he just can't hold himself up, and falls hard to the ground.

The Gringo Coyote throws Gerardo's backpack over the side of the bridge and runs.

On the ground, a YOUNG COYOTE (16) grabs Gerardo's backpack and helps him up. He'll take it from here.

YOUNG COYOTE (O.S.)

Let's go! Run!

They run towards a tunnel, Gerardo gripping a badly injured knee.

END FLASHBACK

INT. EL ALQUIMISTA RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The grand opening celebration of their third New York City restaurant. The Real Iván is wearing his sparkling chef whites. The Real Gerardo is in his favorite pink linen jacket. He holds a microphone. A crowd of friends eggs him on.

THE REAL GERARDO

Hey. Uh, just- I want just to be very quick, so quickly. No, just-- And-- You know, I going to practice my Spanglish. So, uh, thank you so much for being here, all of- I, so many beautiful faces since like uh, ten years ago like uh, before the Twin Towers. I can see friends like, when we were working together in different restaurants like twelve years ago, cleaning tables. And I still cleaning tables, but your tables! We are here because Iván's- Iván's food, I think.

The Real Gerardo passes the microphone to The Real Iván. He beams with pride.

THE REAL IVÁN

Tonight... I've achieved one of my dreams. Which is to see this place filled with our friends. We created this place not just with ourselves in mind. But thinking about the neighborhood, thinking about our friends and our families. And for the Mexicans who came here seeking opportunities... Thank you, thank you, thank you!

THE REAL GERARDO

Salud!

INT. A TAXI - NIGHT

The Real Iván looks out the window. The city rushes by.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

The Real Iván sits on a sofa, staring at the iPhone he holds tightly in his hand.

CLOSE ON: A grainy video of The Real Iván's father in a hospital bed. He's hooked up to a ventilator, tubes sticking out from everywhere. The Real Iván's sister Rosy is there.

ROSY (O.S.)

Dad... I'm making a video for Iván.
 Brother... We're going to change
 rooms. Mom already called the
 priest. I will let you know if
 anything changes.

The video cuts out abruptly. Iván puts the phone down. The Real Gerardo stands in the kitchen, looking concerned.

THE REAL IVÁN

This is so painful. It's really
 killing me. Not being able to say
 goodbye to him. To my own father.

EXT. A CEMETERY IN TENANGO - DAY

A single red flower growing in a barren landscape. THE REAL IVÁN'S MOM (65) looks across the gravestones toward the mountains.

FANTASY
 SEQUENCE:

INT. PULCHERIA LA OFICINA, MEXICO CITY - DAY

Iván (24) enters the dimly lit bar where a few day drinkers linger over their pulche. He sits down across from his dad.

INT. PULCHERIA LA OFICINA, MEXICO CITY - CONTINUOUS

For a split second, we see Iván as his 10 year-old self sitting across from his father.

INT. PULCHERIA LA OFICINA, MEXICO CITY - CONTINUOUS

Iván (24 again) takes his father's hand. They know it's goodbye.

END FANTASY
 SEQUENCE

INT. EL ALQUIMISTA RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The Real Iván lights candles on an altar he has built for his deceased father. Iván stares at the photo of his dad.

EXT./ INT. OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE CHURCH - NIGHT

A popular Mexican church in Manhattan. Hundreds of mostly Mexican immigrants line up outside in the cold December air.

As they enter the church they sing "Las Mañanitas" to the Virgin of Guadalupe. Families and children mill around, many holding paintings of the virgin and handfuls of flowers to place on the alter.

FATHER RUBIO (75), an old school priest in heavy vestments, leads the congregation. We spy The Real Iván and Gerardo in the crowd.

FATHER RUBIO

For our families who stayed behind
in our countries. We ask You, Lord,
please don't let us forget them.

The Real Iván looks pained by these words.

FATHER RUBIO (CONT'D)

We ask that You bring hope and
patience to our illegal brothers
and sisters. Grant us the strength
to overcome the abuses of racism.
We pray to You. Long live the
Latino immigrants! Long live all
the immigrants in this country!

CROWD

Viva!

EXT. MANHATTAN BRIDGE - DAY

Heavy snow blankets the East River.

INT. APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

The Real Iván and Gerardo sit nervously at their kitchen table with a kind female immigration LAWYER (35).

THE REAL IVÁN

I have a son in Mexico who is 20
years old. And so I want to travel
to Mexico. I haven't seen him in
many years. So... I don't want to
leave this country forever because
I have the businesses, because I
don't want to close the restaurants
and leave 80 people without a job.

She nods her head, encouraging him to continue.

THE REAL IVÁN (CONT'D)

I'm not asking for residency or citizenship. All I want is permission to travel, and return here to continue working.

They look at her expectantly. It's clear she does not have good news.

LAWYER

But even with all that, even though you have a business and employees... Because you entered without documentation, and because you've been here illegally, there's no path.

The lawyer looks at them both sympathetically.

INT. APARTMENT - LATER

The Real Iván and Gerardo are sitting in silence.

THE REAL IVÁN

It's like you're trapped in a cage. Honestly... I'm not happy. I'm not.

THE REAL GERARDO

But there are many other people, Iván... whose lives are destroyed, and with much worse problems than us. There's nothing else to do but to go on.

The Real Gerardo wipes a tear from his eye.

IVÁN

It can't be that a country can destroy the bond between a father and a son. Or between a family. I don't think it's worth it. And it's going to split us apart.

They look sadly at each other, remembering a better time.

FLASHBACK:

INT. BAR FRANCO - NIGHT

We're back in the old mansion on the night they first met. Iván and Gerardo (in their 20s) have tuned out all the revelers in the bar. They are lost in one another. Gerardo takes Iván's hand.

END FLASHBACK

INT. APARTMENT - EVENING

The Real Gerardo watches The Real Iván closely. There is a sense of finality in the air.

EXT. DOWNTOWN MEXICO CITY - DAY

From the inside of a car, the brilliant chaos of Mexico City rushes by.

INT. A MOVING CAR - DAY

The Real Iván looks out the window. It is not clear where he is.

IVÁN (V.O.)
Have you ever had that dream where
you're back in Mexico?

A FANTASY:

INT. TAXI, MEXICO CITY - DAY

Iván (24) is riding in a taxi, gazing at his city, mesmerized. The colorful chaos of Mexico City buzzes by outside the window.

IVÁN (V.O.)
I have it all the time.

Iván smiles. He's home.

IVÁN (V.O.)
The jacaranda blossoms strewn in
the street.

INT./EXT. MARKET IN MEXICO - DAY

Iván checks out the fresh fruits and vegetables. He picks up a tiny red pepper and smells it.

IVÁN

IVÁN (V.O.)
The colors of the market. I can see
them. It's so real.

Young Iván (10) makes his way through the maze of stalls.

IVÁN (V.O.)
There are days when the feeling
doesn't leave me.

EXT. MEXICO CITY - DUSK

Young Iván (10) is on the tamale cart with his dad, careening
around a corner. He looks blissful.

IVÁN (V.O.)
I carry it with me, wherever I go.

INT. IVÁN'S FAMILY HOME - MORNING

Iván's mom consoles his baby sister Rosy in her arms while
Young Iván looks on.

EXT. IVÁN'S FAMILY HOME - AFTERNOON

Young Iván and Young Sandra are in dresses and makeup. They
dance with abandon.

IVÁN (V.O.)
Sometimes I confuse my dreams with
memories.

INT./EXT. PAOLA'S FAMILY APARTMENT, HALLWAY - MORNING

Ricky (5) comes bombing out of the house, dressed for school.
He runs fast through the corridor.

IVÁN (V.O.)
Because a part of me is still
there.

EXT. PAOLA FAMILY APARTMENT, ENTRANCE - AFTERNOON

We're back to the day that Iván and young Ricky said goodbye,
all those years ago. Ricky runs off as Iván watches him go.

IVÁN (V.O.)
I'm sorry.

END FANTASY
SEQUENCE

EXT. THE WILLIAMSBURG BRIDGE, PRESENT DAY - NIGHT

The Real Iván walks across the bridge. The above ground subway races by on the track next to him.

IVÁN (V.O.)
I don't know if destiny exists.

INT. THE L TRAIN - NEW YORK CITY - AFTERNOON

The Real Iván rides the subway. It's the same shot from the start of the film.

IVÁN (V.O.)
But what I do know is that life
gives us all a surprise.

We pull away to see that The Real Gerardo is sitting next to The Real Iván on the train. They share a tender look between them.

IVÁN (V.O.)
You're my surprise. And I am yours.

INT. BAR FRANCO - DAWN

We are back in Bar Franco, the night they met. Iván and Gerardo (in their 20s), walk through the empty mansion. They hold hands.

IVÁN (V.O.)
And we are here. You and me.
Together.

Iván and Gerardo stop in the vestibule. The real world is just outside the door. They share a long and tender kiss. They pull away and look at one another, bonded for life.

IVÁN (V.O.)
Still dreaming.

THE END