

HUMBOLDT PARK

by

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October 19, 2007

State Street Pictures
10201 W. Pico Blvd.
Bldg 52, Ste 123
Los Angeles, CA 90064

BEGIN MONTAGE

EXT. RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

A modest, well kept, two story house trimmed with Christmas lights. EDUARDO, early 60's, proud, conservative, teeters on a ladder trying to drape a "Welcome Home Freddie" banner to the front of the house. ANNA, late 50's, dyed, strawberry blonde hair, still kind of sexy, her plump figure encased in a brightly colored, patterned wool track suit gives orders from below gesturing with exaggeration.

INT. AIRPORT - MEANWHILE

FREDDIE RODRIGUEZ, 26, a Marine with a patch over his left eye and two soldiers look at the departure board. The two soldiers hug Freddie and leave. Freddie lingers behind unsure of how to move forward. He looks lost in the crush of people.

INT. EDUARDO'S CAR - DAY

Eduardo drives through the streets of Humboldt Park, a working class Puerto Rican neighborhood. It's Puerto Rico with snow. SALSA blares. Signs in Spanish. Vendors sell treats, DVD's, MUSIC. People sashay down the street. Eduardo waves at drivers and pedestrians. This is clearly Eduardo's town.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - LOS ANGELES - MEANWHILE

The place is more shabby than chic. ROXANNA RODRIGUEZ, 31, sexy, gorgeous sits on her luggage smoking a cigarette and applying clear nail varnish to a hole in her tights. The coffee table is littered with the faces of famous actors peering up from the covers of magazines. A horn HONKS. She peers out the window to a waiting airport shuttle van.

INT. TOWN CAR - LAGUARDIA - MEANWHILE

An impeccably dressed, handsome couple, SARAH (31) AND MAURICIO (35) RODRIGUEZ ride in the back. Sarah types on her computer TALKING into her earpiece. Mauricio reads the "Wall Street Journal." Sarah nudges Mauricio out of her way to pull out spread sheets. Mauricio is squashed into the corner.

INT. SECURITY CHECK - AIRPORT - MEANWHILE

Freddie sets off the metal detector. He hands a letter to the TSA AGENT. Freddie can't help, but notice people staring at him. Some eye him with sympathy, some with pity, others with just plain curiosity. The agent hands him the letter and waves him through.

EXT. BODEGA

Eduardo puts the key in the padlock that locks the iron gates guarding the front of the store. The key sticks in the lock. As if performing a ritual, Eduardo ever so slightly jiggles the key twice and it pops right open. Eduardo pushes back the metal gates. As Eduardo enters the store...

PULL BACK TO:

The sign, "Rodriguez Market" perched above the door.

END MONTAGE

INT. LAGUARDIA - MEANWHILE

Mauricio and Sarah stand waiting with other frustrated PASSENGERS to board their plane.

MAURICIO

Why does travelling have to be
such a pain in the ass?

SARAH

It'd be whole lot more bearable if
we were staying at the Drake
instead of your mother's house.
Just think we could relax, get spa
treatments.

Sarah's cell phone RINGS. She still has her earpiece on.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Hello.

She signals to Mauricio that she has to take this and jumps out of the line. Mauricio frowns as she walks away.

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SARAH (CONT'D)

Yes, I've read the offer Mr. Kravitz. It's a very generous package, sir.

Sarah LISTENS. It's clear that Kravitz is persuasive.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I understand that you can't wait forever. I promise I'll have an answer for you after Christmas.

Sarah hangs up the phone and composes herself before she returns to Mauricio who is irritated.

MAURICIO

Like a spa treatment is going to get you to relax.

(beat)

It's the first time we've all been together in three years. Is it so bad at my parent's house?

SARAH

It's great. We get an exfoliating treatment every time we sleep on those poly blend purple flower sheets.

Mauricio whispers in her ear suggestively.

MAURICIO

That's not all we can do on those purple flower sheets, mi amour.

Sarah GIGGLES as Mauricio nibbles at her ear.

INT. ECONOMY - AIRPLANE - MEANWHILE

A WOMAN with a SCREAMING BABY and an OBESE GENTLEMEN SNORING sandwich Roxanna in the middle row of the middle aisle. Roxanna tries to LISTEN to JOSH, her agent's assistant on the airplane phone.

ROXANNA

Hey Josh. I know I'm being a pain -
- If Roger had heard something he would have called me -- You would have called me, right?

JOSH (O.S.)

Yes. Remember what Carla says in yoga --- Breathe let go ---

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROXANNA

I'm sure that's what you're thinking when you're checking out her ass. What more do these freakin' TV execs need to make up their minds? DNA samples. My first born child.

JOSH (O.S.)

Roxanna, it's a big part ---

ROXANNA

I'm playing the seventh lead.

JOSH (O.S.)

This other chick's got name recognition.

ROXANNA

She didn't even make it past the second round in "How To Marry A Millionaire."

JOSH (O.S.)

Hey Steve's back in AA again. He says he'll be designated driver to Bart and Cynthia's orphan Christmas Eve thing ---

ROXANNA

I'm on my way home --- to Chicago.

JOSH (O.S.)

(taken aback)
You have a family?

ROXANNA

Immaculate conception is a myth, Josh.

JOSH (O.S.)

We've spent three Christmases together and you never mentioned them. They illegal or something?

ROXANNA

Puerto Rico is part of the U.S., you moron. My brother is just coming back from being injured in Iraq.

(sighs)

It would be nice to bring home some good news for Christmas.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOSH (O.S.)

Please, they've got a wounded war hero. No one is going to care about you. I'm slammed. Gotta jump. Call you later.

Josh hangs up. A STEWARDESS stops her trolley at their row. She eyes Roxanna strangely.

STEWARDESS

Don't I know you from somewhere?

Roxanna puffs up like a peacock, but feigns modesty.

ROXANNA

I did a guest spot on ER....

STEWARDESS

No ---

ROXANNA

I've done a couple of independent films. Did you see ---

STEWARDESS

The dry cleaners. Don't you go that place on Pico?

ROXANNA

(deflated)

No.

STEWARDESS

Oh. What can I get you?

ROXANNA

A vodka and OJ. Make that two.

INT. CHICAGO O'HARE OUTSIDE BAGGAGE CLAIM - MEANWHILE

Freddie scans the crowd of uniformed DRIVERS holding up discreet signs that read SMITH, ANDERSON, etc to a sign that reads "SEX MACHINE." He's taken aback and then smiles when he sees that it is JOHNNY and OZZY. Johnny is a slicked back, primped playboy. OZZY is street, edgy. The guys hug.

JOHNNY

Wait they're shooting Pirates Of The Caribbean 4 in Chicago?

Freddie rips off the patch and tosses it in the garbage. His eye is a little red and puffy.

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FREDDIE

Like I need to hear you going on about it. 'Supposed to come off tomorrow anyway.

OZZY

Good to have you back home, man.

FREDDIE

Good to see you too, man.

JOHNNY

You guys done with the sappy shit 'cause it's Happy Hour!

FREDDIE

It's eleven o'clock.

JOHNNY

Not in England. Time to party.

Freddie and Ozzy exchange a look. Some things never change.

INT. ESCALADE - STREET - LATER

TUNES BLARE out of the state of the art sound system in this fully loaded and pimped out ride. Freddie stares out the window taking everything in with a bit of culture shock and apprehension. Johnny fiddles with the controls. Suddenly they HEAR a cheesy radio ad jingle.

SINGER

(on the radio)

You ain't complete with a wall so not neat ---

Johnny turns up the volume.

JOHNNY

This is it! This is my new ad for my stores.

ANNOUNCER

(on the radio)

Get absolute rock bottom prices at Johnny's Home Media Emporium!

JOHNNY

Ain't that the shit. You gotta come check out the honies I got for the TV spot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Johnny licks his lips lewdly. Freddie watches him with amused detachment.

OZZY
(singing to the tune
of "Goldfinger")
Gold diggas. The 'hos. The 'hos
with the Midas touches. They want
his dollars in their clutches.

JOHNNY
Just 'cause your minimum wage ass
can barely afford to supersize
your date's big mac.

Ozzy shrugs off Johnny. Freddie eyes him sympathetically.

FREDDIE
How's it going down at the bodega?
My old man treating you alright?

OZZY
Can't complain. Wait to you see
what we've done to the store.

Freddie shifts uncomfortably. He sees Humboldt Park. A light bulb goes off.

FREDDIE
Turn down division ---

OZZY
Where we going? You want your ma
to kill us. You know they're
waiting for you.

FREDDIE
Come on ---

JOHNNY
Yeah what's the rush. It's not
like he's got a girl to come home
to.

Freddie's stares out the window. Ozzy tags Johnny in the arm.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)
What?! Let's check out the Score
Club. I know they ain't got strip
joints in Baghdad. Welcome Back to
the land of the free, baby.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FREDDIE

That ain't what I had in mind.

OZZY

Yeah that place is depressing in the day. All they got is them chicks with the National Geographic titties.

Ozzy motions to stringy boobs hanging down to his waist. Johnny CRACKS up. Freddie looks at Ozzy, bemused until he sees something ---

FREDDIE

Stop the car ---

JOHNNY

Here?

FREDDIE

Stop the car ---

Johnny breaks and follows Freddie's gaze.

JOHNNY

Oh no. Are you kidding? You know how freaking cold it is outside?!

INT. TOWN CAR - MEANWHILE

Sarah and Mauricio peer out the window at Humboldt Park. The roofs of the houses are strung with twinkling lights. Plastic Santa's, reindeer and Nativity scenes grace the lawns.

MAURICIO

Oh look there's a new Walgreens on the corner. Neighborhood looks good. Real festive.

Sarah keeps her mouth shut. If you can't say anything nice ---

MAURICIO (CONT'D)

Look I know Christmas is not your thing, but can you at least get into the spirit.

SARAH

What do you want me to do? Break into "Silent Night" with a back band of archangels.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAURICIO

You know what I think? I think we should tell my folks we're trying to have a baby.

SARAH

(incredulously)
A baby! Are you high?

MAURICIO

We've discussed this.

SARAH

No we're still in discussion about this.

MAURICIO

What are we going to say when my ma's like ---

(imitating his
mother)

Ay Dios mio, I'm getting so old when am I going to have grandchildren? My mother had ten grandchildren at my age. All of my friends have grandchildren.

SARAH

We'll say my uterus is none of her concern.

MAURICIO

Come on it's Christmas. It would make them so happy.

Sarah's face clouds with hurt.

SARAH

What about what would make me happy?

MAURICIO

Well wouldn't having a child with your husband make you happy?

Mauricio touches her tenderly. Sarah yanks herself away.

SARAH

(explodes)
Why do you always pick a fight with me just as we're about to arrive at your parents house.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAURICIO

Look I'm sorry --- I didn't mean --

-

The driver pulls up to the Rodriguez house. A banner reading, "Welcome Home Freddie" now drapes the front. Gracing the lawn is an elaborate and festive Nativity scene and smack in the middle is a large old, gnarled tree.

SARAH

It's like you want to give your mother another reason not to like me.

MAURICIO

She likes you. She just doesn't understand you.

Sarah storms out of the car.

SARAH

Like mother like son.

EXT. RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

The door opens to Mauricio and Sarah with plastered fake smiles.

SARAH AND MAURICIO

Merry Christmas!

Anna SCREAMS with abandoned excitement. Sarah has to almost jump out of the way as Anna suffocates Mauricio with hugs and kisses.

ANNA

Ay mi nino, mi vida, mi amour, mi precioso.

Anna turns to Sarah not letting go of Mauricio. She composes herself and takes her energy level way down. She air kisses Sarah on both cheeks still holding Mauricio's hand.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Hello Sarah.

SARAH

Hola, Anna.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNA

You're speaking a little Spanish now.

SARAH

Si un poco.

Mauricio rolls his eyes. Why does she try so hard.

ANNA

Pues ven aca, mi nina.

SARAH

Sorry, could you say that a bit slower and enunciate more clearly.

ANNA

I could if I knew what you just said.

MAURICIO

She just asked you how you are.

SARAH

(still trying too hard)

Oh, muy bien.

Anna eyes her up and down.

ANNA

Hmm 'cause you look like you lost a little weight.

(in Spanish to Mauricio)

I know she doesn't cook, but she could at least eat.

Sarah looks at Mauricio to translate.

MAURICIO

She says you look great.

SARAH

(beaming)

Thanks, I've been doing Pilates.

ANNA

Ay Dios mio, I'm getting so old when am I going to have grandchildren? My mother had ten grandchildren at my age. All of my friends have grandchildren.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Sarah wants to kill both her and Mauricio. Suddenly, Eduardo appears at the door.

EDUARDO
Anna, leave the children alone.
You want to run them back to New
York?

Eduardo pushes Anna aside and wraps Mauricio and Sarah in his arms. Anna glares at Eduardo.

MAURICIO
Anybody else here yet?

EDUARDO
Our Hollywood star should be
pulling up in a limo any minute.

INT. AIRPORT SHUTTLE VAN - MEANWHILE

Crowded with holiday passengers and luggage, it's the shuttle that stops every stop. Roxanna smokes a cigarette and loses herself in her iPod as she looks out the window at the same street that Sarah and Mauricio stared at earlier.

ROXANNA
Hey, you can stop here.

VAN DRIVER
But the house is another block
away.

ROXANNA
I just need some fresh air.

EXT. STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The airport shuttle van pulls away. Roxanna wheels her luggage on the icy sidewalk. She slips in high heel shoes, but rights herself before she crashes down. She continues on with determination.

EXT. RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The door opens to Roxanna beaming as hard as she can.

ROXANNA
Merry Christmas!

Eduardo smothers her in a hug.

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CONTINUED:

EDUARDO

If it isn't my little movie star.

Anna, Mauricio and Sarah appear at the door. They take turns hugging her and helping her with her things.

ANNA

We didn't hear you pull up?

ROXANNA

My town car just took off. He had another pick up at the airport.

(changing the
subject)

Freddie here yet?

EDUARDO

Johnny and Ozzy went to go pick him up.

ROXANNA

He'd be safer in Iraq.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - PUBLIC PARK

A baseball almost hits Freddie in the head.

FREDDIE

What the ---- ?

On the mound blanketed with snow, Ozzy, in an enormous puffy down jacket, stands exhaling frost. He has a beer in his hand and a six pack at his feet.

OZZY

Sorry, man.

In the outfield, Johnny, in an expensive cashmere overcoat and scarf puffs on a cigar while holding onto his beer. On his other hand he wears a baseball glove.

JOHNNY

He just wanted to see how quick your reflexes got from dodging insurgents.

OZZY

I can't concentrate. My nuts are so cold. They're about to freeze off and be squirrel food.

FREDDIE

Just play ball.

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CONTINUED:

Ozzy, still holding onto his beer, throws Freddie a fast ball. Freddie connects, sending it soaring into the outfield straight to where Johnny is standing. Johnny sees the ball and makes no attempt to catch it. It lands right at his feet as he puffs on his cigar. Ozzy and Freddie shake their heads.

JOHNNY

What?

FREDDIE

The ball you idiot. It's right by your feet.

Johnny looks down at the ball by his expensive shoes. He throws it to Ozzy. It whizzes past Ozzy, who is looking elsewhere.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Some thing's never change.

Freddie runs after the ball. His feet crunch on the hard packed snow. He goes to throw the ball to Ozzy.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Ozzy --- Ozzy ---

Freddie follows Ozzy's gaze to ALEXIS, a rugged street thug covered in tats and his boys cruising by in a tricked out SUV. Ozzy looks like he's been struck by lightening. Freddie and Johnny share a look of concern.

INT. ESCALADE - STREET - TWILIGHT

Freddie looks out at the same street that his siblings took home earlier that day. The Christmas lights and decorations are now illuminated. Ozzy stares straight ahead, stone-faced.

OZZY

(seething)

No, I didn't know that punk ass, Alexis, was out. Motherfucker off's my brother and 8 years later he's out on a joy ride. He better be careful I don't take his plea bargain and shove it up his ass.

FREDDIE

Ozzy, don't do nothing stupid.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNNY

(sternly)

Seriously, you better listen
Freddie.

They pull up to the house. The "Welcome Home Freddie"
sign looks even more exaggerated with the lights.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

(chuckling)

Got your name all up in lights
like you're Trinidad coming back
to fight in the Garden. Shit,
whole neighborhood gonna be lining
up to see the war hero.

Freddie looks toward the house apprehensively, not quite
sure if he's ready for all this.

EXT. RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Johnny and Ozzy, stand behind Freddie. Before Freddie can
say a word, Anna has him clasped against her bosom.

ANNA

Ay Dios mio. Ave Maria Purisima.
Bendito se a Dios. Oh my baby. Mi
vida, mi preciouso is home. I
can't believe it. Gracias a Dios.

She pulls him away from her to see him. Anna sees his eye
is red and puffy.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Your eye!

FREDDIE

It's gonna be fine, ma.

Anna clasps Freddie again against her ample bosom.

ANNA

Praise Dios that you never have to
go back to that awful place again.
If I ever get my hands on those
people that hurt my baby, I swear
I'll kill them.

EDUARDO

If you don't do it first. Let the
boy breathe, you're smothering
him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Eduardo steps in between them. Anna glares at Eduardo. Eduardo doesn't care. He is choked up with emotion seeing his son. Freddie struggles to keep his emotions in check as Eduardo salutes him. They embrace.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)

Good to have you back, son.

FREDDIE

Good to be back.

Eduardo leads Freddie inside. Anna, Johnny and Ozzy follow them. Through the doorway, we can see Freddie embraced by his siblings and Sarah. The family is all together.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE

A Christmas tree sags underneath lights and ornaments. Nativity scenes. Santa's Village with reindeer. Salsa plays in the background. A basketball game plays muted on an old TV. Eduardo adjusts the picture with the rabbit ears. Anna brings in a tray filled with cups of coquito. Mauricio gets up to help his mother pass out the cups.

MAURICIO

(proudly)

Did Sarah tell you that she made coquito for her office Christmas party?

ANNA

(incredulous)

You did?

SARAH

I googled the recipe.

ANNA

You should've called me instead of this google.

SARAH

It's a search engine ---

Anna looks at Sarah like she's from another planet.

SARAH (CONT'D)

I needed it quick. I thought it would be fun. There are some Puerto Ricans who work at the firm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNNY

(joking)
What as janitors and shit.

SARAH

Ah Jose is an analyst.
(searching)
And there are also a couple who
work in the back office and
security. I was telling them about
how we do the parranda where we go
house to house and sing Christmas
carols to surprise the neighbors.

JOHNNY

Hey, Mauricio, didn't know your
girl was so down with the peeps.

Johnny does a black power fist. Sarah sees that Mauricio
is embarrassed. Eduardo raises his glass. Everyone joins
in.

EDUARDO

Here's to having my family home ---
especially Freddie. Salud!

Everybody says Salud!

JOHNNY

Freddie --- You see some messed up
Black Hawk Down shit over there?

Every one looks at Freddie expectantly. Freddie looks
down into his coquito. He's not ready for this.

FREDDIE

I dunno ---

Awkward SILENCE. Eduardo puts his arm around his son.

EDUARDO

You don't want to talk. You don't
have to talk til you're ready.

Anna struggles with her emotions knowing Freddie hurts
inside. She gets up and flees into the kitchen.

ANNA

I have to check on the rice.

JOHNNY

(breaking the
tension)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

So Eduardo, when you gonna come down and let me set you up with a beautiful plasma flat screen with HDTV compatibility?

EDUARDO

This TV is perfectly fine.

JOHNNY

Why? You still making the payments? I didn't know they had 20 year layaway plans.

EDUARDO

(changing the subject)

Roxanna, so tell us what's going on in Hollywood.

JOHNNY

Yeah who's gay now?

ROXANNA

You, you stupid ass.

JOHNNY

You wanna come over here and find out?

ROXANNA

I'd rather sit on a thumb tack.

EDUARDO

So have you heard back from the TV show?

ROXANNA

(playing it up)

Yeah, they haven't decided, but the producers said I brought an organic vulnerability to the character that plays as cultural.

JOHNNY

You're Puerto Rican.

EDUARDO

So what is this a mid season replacement?

OZZY

Listen to Mary Hart over here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ROXANNA

A mid season replacement, but
they're running it after Desperate
Housewives.

SARAH

Oh my God are you going to meet
them?

ROXANNA

Uh, I might ... actually -
(not wanting to talk)
So how are things with you? How's
work?

Roxanna goes for a glass of Coquito.

EDUARDO

Yeah Sarah, how's Wall Street?

JOHNNY

How you two's gonna have any time
to make some sortericans?

MAURICIO

(stammers)
We are --- I mean ---

Sarah glares at Mauricio.

SARAH

I should see if Anna needs help in
the kitchen.

Sarah leaves.

OZZY

Man, why can't you just keep your
trap shut.

JOHNNY

What? It just seems to me it would
be hard when you have two
successful people in a marriage ---

Mauricio puffs up. This is his chance to shine.

MAURICIO

Actually, they're starting to talk
partnership.

EDUARDO

Work. Work. Work. Let's stop with
all the work talk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Mauricio deflates.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)
Who cares. All that matters is
that everyone is home.

Eduardo squeezes Freddie's shoulder. Mauricio looks on
enviously.

ANGLE ON

Roxanna hunched over in the corner of the room on her
cell phone.

ROXANNA
(whispering)
Josh, please tell me you heard
something?
(listens)
Yeah, I can hold.

DOORBELL RINGS

INT. FRONT DOOR - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - MEANWHILE

Freddie opens the door to MARISSA, sexy, Latina. They
look like they've both seen a ghost.

FREDDIE
Hey.

MARISSA
Welcome back.

Marissa and Freddie hug awkwardly. Suddenly Freddie
notices HECTOR, a two year old boy clutching Marissa's
hand.

MARISSA (CONT'D)
This is Hector. Say hi, papi.

HECTOR
Hi.

FREDDIE
Hey man. Give me five.

Hector gives Freddie five. Freddie gazes at Hector and
Marissa. So much has happened since he's been away.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
Good looking kid.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly, FERNANDO, a handsome, solid guy from the neighborhood breaks the spell by coming to the door and putting his arm around Marissa.

FERNANDO
Had to circle the block two times
to find a spot.
(to Freddie)
Hey welcome back, man.

ROXANNA
(excitedly)
Hey girl!

The two women scream excitedly and hug each other.

MARISSA
Hey, mami!

Suddenly Freddie finds Marissa swept away into the house by his family, who emerge to greet her.

ANNA
Let me see that baby. He might be
the closest thing to a grandchild
I'll ever have. Come here, papi.

Mauricio looks at Anna sweeping up Hector longingly. He shoots a look at Sarah. Sarah shrugs it off.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Que lindo, mi nino.

Anna hands Hector to Sarah. Sarah holds him awkwardly.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Isn't he adorable?

SARAH
Very cute.

Hector wriggles out of her arms much to Sarah's relief. Mauricio is dismayed and a bit embarrassed. Anna picks Hector back up and cuddles him. Eduardo gives Marissa a warm hug.

MARISSA
You remember Fernando. Ramirez Dry
Walling over on Halstead.

Eduardo and Fernando shake hands. Eduardo's cell RINGS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

EDUARDO

Of course, how's your ma doing? Is she in PR or here?

Eduardo looks at the number RINGING on his cell.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)

Excuse me. I have to take this.

Eduardo leaves and goes into his office and closes the door.

MAURICIO

What was that about?

ANNA

(yells at the closed door)

Whoever it is, they must be more important to him than his own family!

Anna walks away.

MAURICIO

Ma ---

ANNA

I have to finish dinner.

ROXANNA

Want any help?

ANNA

No!

Anna slams the door to the kitchen behind her.

INT. ROXANNA'S ROOM - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

Framed pictures celebrate the stages of Roxanna's success: prom queen, school plays, drama school, off off Broadway plays and signed pictures of her with B Actors. Roxanna and Marissa lie on her pink bed covered with stuffed animals drinking wine.

ROXANNA

We had three bottles of Dom Perignon --- The man spent more in one night than I do on rent and he doesn't even call me back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARISSA

Watch him come crawling out of the
woodwork when you get this big TV
show.

ROXANNA

I'd kick his ass off the red
carpet. Men.

(carefully)

You and Freddie. You cool?

MARISSA

I ain't sweating it. Things are
really working out with Fernando.
He's good to me. He's good to
Hector. After all the drama with
Hector's father I finally feel
like things are turning around for
me.

ROXANNA

I'm happy for you girl.

MARISSA

Things are going to turn around
for you too. Just gotta stay
positive.

ROXANNA

If I don't get this gig, I don't
know how much longer I can hang
on. Even doing temp work, I'm
barely scraping by.

MARISSA

Does your family know?

ROXANNA

No.

Johnny opens the door and sticks his head in.

JOHNNY

Were you two kissing?

Roxanna throws a stuffed animal at Johnny.

ROXANNA

Shut up Johnny!

JOHNNY

You're not gonna let me watch?

Marissa throws a stuffed animal at Johnny.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARISSA

Please, we ain't those skanky 'hos
you run with.

Johnny beams them with a stuffed animal. It's on! A full throttle stuffed animal fight. Suddenly Freddie and Ozzy walk by and join in on the fun. Freddie and Marissa end up having a stuffed animal volley. The fight breaks up with everyone out of breath and LAUGHING.

EXT. LAWN - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - MEANWHILE

The guys sit on plastic lawn chairs in the snow huddled over a coal barbecue smoking cigars, drinking beers.

EDUARDO

Tomorrow you boys need to help me
cut down this tree.

MAURICIO

What?

JOHNNY

I know you ain't used to hard work
no more lawyer boy.

MAURICIO

I work out.

JOHNNY

Please with your \$65 trainer
boyfriend.

MAURICIO

Like you're putting 60" plasmas in
the back of people's cars.

JOHNNY

You ain't gonna see my ass out
here with no axe tomorrow.

FERNANDO

I could come by tomorrow. Got a
couple of chain saws.

EDUARDO

Thanks, Fernando.

OZZY

I could come by too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDUARDO

Thanks Ozzy, but I need you down at the store.

MAURICIO

He's still got your ass lifting boxes. Remember when we were eight and he'd make us stack the boxes? We'd stack 'em and say we were done. Then he'd come in and say, "know you're not". Knock 'em down and tell us to do it again.

EDUARDO

It kept you locos off the street.

FREDDIE

Why you wanna cut down the tree, pops?

EDUARDO

It's old. The roots are weak. One big blow in the wrong direction and it could come down on the house.

JOHNNY

Ugly old tree anyway.

FREDDIE

Remember we tried to tie a tire swing to it and the branch broke.

MAURICIO

Ma's always wanted a view.

OZZY

Nothing like seeing Mr. And Mrs. Henderson trying to get it on in the big bay window.

The guys all laugh.

INT. DINING ROOM - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - LATER

Family are gathered around the table. Nothing fancy. Disposable plates and cutlery. Soda cans mingle with wine glasses. Platters of decimated lechon, chicken, rice con gandules, tostones, fried bread. Everyone is TALKING LOUDLY and on top of one another.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAURICIO

I saw they put a Starbucks
where that Botanica used to
be on Wabash.

FREDDIE

You did not get to second
base with Vanessa Delveccio

EDUARDO

It was a mattress store.

ROXANNA

(to Johnny)
In your dreams.

MAURICIO

(getting louder)
I used to go there to get
the stuff for ma's
headaches.

JOHNNY

(getting louder to
Freddie)
You were not there ---

ROXANNA

(loudly to Mauricio)
Is that what she told **you**
they were?

OZZY

(loudly)
We both were there ---
Behind The Morris Brother's
deli.

ANNA

(**really loud**)
Roxanna!

JOHNNY

(really loud)
At the Taste ---

EDUARDO

(**shouting**)
That place is over on
Halstead.

FREDDIE

(shouting)
You did not take her there.

Sarah leans over and WHISPERS to Mauricio.

SARAH

Why is everyone fighting?

MAURICIO

We're not fighting.

Sarah will never get these people.

EDUARDO

Fighting? I'm so happy to have you
all home. It's the best Christmas
present I could have --- us being
together as a family. I just have
something I'd like to say ---

Eduardo struggles to keep from CHOKING UP. He begins to
rise and is about to continue when Anna cuts in.

ANNA

Well I have something to say ---
I'm divorcing your father.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Everybody LAUGHS except Eduardo. Eduardo, blind sided, looks at Anna to see if she is serious. Her steely look confirms that she is. The kids realize that their parents are not LAUGHING. LAUGHTER Stops.

JOHNNY

Cono.

He falls backwards off his chair. Roxanna, Freddie and Mauricio stare at their parents in disbelief.

MAURICIO

Why? You guys have been married
for 36 years!

ANNA

So.

MAURICIO

So you're old.

ANNA

Who are you calling old? Let me
tell you, I have a lot of life
left in me yet. You think I need
him?

Eduardo struggles with the thoughts racing through his head, but then finds calm.

EDUARDO

If that's what you want to do, who
am I to stop you.

Johnny recovers from his fall.

JOHNNY

I'm going out for more booze.

Johnny leaves.

OZZY

I better help him. I don't think
he's in any shape to drive.

Ozzy follows Johnny out. Mauricio glowers at his father.

MAURICIO

(to Eduardo)
Did you cheat again?

Marissa and Freddie look shocked.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARISSA

Papi you cheated?

SARAH

You never told me that.

MAURICIO

(snaps)

Stay out of it.

Sarah looks like she's been slapped in the face.

MAURICIO (CONT'D)

Did you, Dad?

EDUARDO

Is that what your mother thinks?

MAURICIO

Ma.

ANNA

Mysterious phone calls all the time. He disappears in the middle of the day. I may not be able to see him, but God does and he will punish him and so will I.

ROXANNA

Ay Papi, how could you?!

EDUARDO

Don't raise your voice to me in my house.

MAURICIO

(losing it)

Well this is crazy. What are you going to do? Date other people.

ANNA

For starters.

Roxanna fake up-chucks in her mouth.

ROXANNA

Ay Mami, vomite en mi boca.

MAURICIO

(to Freddie)

Aren't you going to say anything?

FREDDIE

It's their life.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MAURICIO

Three years in Iraq and that's all
the insight you have to offer.

(to Eduardo)

How can you do this to us?!

FREDDIE

This is not about you, Mauricio.

MAURICIO

Take dad's side. You guys can go
become roommates and hang out at
Starbucks together like a couple
of homos, since you both fucked up
the best thing you ever had!

Freddie cannot even look at Marissa he is so embarrassed.
Marissa gets up with Hector. Fernando follows.

MARISSA

I gotta get Hector to bed. Thanks
for dinner Mr. and Mrs. Rodriguez.

Marissa glares at Mauricio and follows her out.

MAURICIO

(to Freddie)

Look man ---

FREDDIE

I think you've said enough.

Freddie clears some plates off the table and leaves.

EDUARDO

How could you call your brother
out like that after everything
he's been through. Maybe you
should start concentrating on your
relationship instead of worrying
about everybody else.

Eduardo leaves the table.

MAURICIO

Well Merry Goddamn Christmas!

ANNA

You said the Lord's name in vain.
Go to your room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MAURICIO

(to Sarah)

Maybe we should see if they still
have availability at the Drake.

SARAH

I haven't finished eating yet.

Mauricio storms off. Just Anna and Sarah now. LONG BEAT.

ANNA

Did you like the tostones?

SARAH

They were delectable.

ANNA

Flan de Coco?

SARAH

Love some.

They break into a smile. For the first time, they bond.

INT. MAURICIO'S ROOM - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - LATER

Mauricio, on his cellphone, paces the room like a caged
animal. Sarah walks in. She HEARS Mauricio...

MAURICIO

(on the phone)

How about the Marriot? The
Radisson? Motel 8?

SARAH

Have you gone off your meds?

Sarah grabs her blackberry and lounges on the bed
checking her e-mails. Mauricio realizes that he's getting
nowhere.

MAURICIO

(getting off the
phone)

Thanks for all your help.

(to Sarah)

Give me your blackberry. Maybe
hotels.com has something.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH

Look, honey, I know you're freaked out about this divorce thing, but don't you think we should stay here and be supportive.

MAURICIO

Supportive of them throwing 36 years of marriage down the toilet! Give me that blackberry.

Sarah holds the blackberry away from him.

SARAH

You want to make it harder on your mother than it already is? Her husband cheated on her.

MAURICIO

I'm not condoning what he did, but after 36 years you work it out.

SARAH

What does time have to do with it? If you're unhappy, you're unhappy.

MAURICIO

Great advice coming from the woman who had two rows reserved at our wedding for her parent's exes.

SARAH

At least when my relatives come over we don't have to hide the china.

MAURICIO

Just give me the blackberry.

SARAH

No. We're staying here.

MAURICIO

(loudly)

Oh yeah when you've been begging me for months to stay in a hotel --

-

SARAH

(whispers)

Shut up. You want them to hear you.

Mauricio lunges for the blackberry. Sarah moves it away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAURICIO

(even louder)

Because she thinks the place
stinks of fried pig.

Mauricio grabs the blackberry. The blackberry chimes. Sarah has an e-mail. Mauricio looks. The subject reads "Christmas Present." The sender is bkravitz@zenithcapital.com. Mauricio's eyes narrow with surprise and suspicion.

MAURICIO (CONT'D)

Why are you getting an e-mail from Barry Kravitz? I thought you turned down their job offer months ago. Crazy hours. Too much travelling.

SARAH

(blanching)

They sweetened the deal and offered to back me and Brian Donaldson in our own hedge fund. We'd be managing 300 million just to start.

MAURICIO

(reading the e-mail)

And access to the corporate jet.

(bitterly - tossing
it back)

Congratulations. When were you going to tell me?

SARAH

I needed time to think it over alone. It's the chance of a lifetime. What's waiting two or three more years to have kids?

Sarah goes to hug Mauricio. Mauricio pulls away.

MAURICIO

I'm starting to think that we don't want the same things anymore.

SARAH

We do Mauricio. Just maybe not for the same reasons.

INT. FREDDIE'S ROOM - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE

Freddie lies in bed listening to his I-Pod. Eduardo barges in without knocking. He juggles a glass of water, bottles and a magazine. Freddie goes to help him. Eduardo salutes him.

EDUARDO
Requesting a bunk, lance corporal.

FREDDIE
(surprised,
perturbed)
You're gonna sleep in here?

Eduardo places his stuff on the night stand.

EDUARDO
Your ma kicked me out of the room.

FREDDIE
You act surprised.

EDUARDO
Life is full of surprises.

Eduardo takes off his robe only to be left in a pair of tight white briefs and an undershirt. Not the prettiest sight.

FREDDIE
Some which are better left to the
imagination.

Eduardo sits down on the opposite twin bed and begins to unload his belongings onto the night stand.

EDUARDO
Anyway it'll give us time to catch
up. Everybody down at the bodega
are dying to lay eyes on you.

Eduardo takes his false teeth out and brushes them. Freddie looks on grossed out.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)
(gummy and
unintelligible)
Wait until you see the new organic
section we put in for those
yuppies buying up all those
Victorians along Kedzie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FREDDIE

Dad I can't understand you.

Eduardo puts his teeth back in and SIGHS.

EDUARDO

Your ma can make out what I say
with or without my teeth.

FREDDIE

I'm worried about you and ma.

EDUARDO

We're more worried about you.

FREDDIE

I'm fine.

EDUARDO

Look, I know you went through a
lot out there. Your ma and I
rented Coming Home.

FREDDIE

Oh Jesus --- I'm surprised you
didn't rent Taxi Driver.

EDUARDO

We rented that too. It's not good
to keep things bottled up inside.
I know you saw stuff over there ---
bad stuff.

FREDDIE

It's a war.

EDUARDO

But you were one of the good guys
I just want you to remember that.

FREDDIE

Yeah, well, I wish it were that
black and white dad, but it's not.

EDUARDO

You did the best you could.

Freddie doesn't buy it.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)

You did.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FREDDIE

(sarcastic)

If my best means getting my friend
killed, then I guess you're right.

EDUARDO

It was just his time. We never
know when our number is up.

FREDDIE

It should've been me not Lenny.

EDUARDO

Beating yourself up is not going
to bring him back. Lenny would
want you to move on.

FREDDIE

And his folks? Can't imagine they
are having many laughs now.

EDUARDO

Have you called them?
(pregnant pause)
It might help.

FREDDIE

Look Dad, it's late. I'm getting
kind of tired.

EDUARDO

Yeah okay. I'm always here if you
need to talk.

Freddie watches his father plop his teeth in a glass of
water on the night stand and rolls over to go to sleep.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)

(gummy)

Good night.

Freddie shakes his head as he has to lean over the teeth
and water to turn off the light.

INT. ATTIC

The place has not changed from the teen hangout it was a
decade ago. Early nineties music PLAYS on an old CD
player. A banged up coffee table. A lazyboy salvaged with
duck tape. Some one startles Roxanna as she fumbles for
the light. It's Mauricio on the worn out couch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROXANNA

Jesus Mauricio you scared me. What are you doing up here?

MAURICIO

Trying to be alone.

Roxanna pulls a bottle of tequila out of her backpack.

ROXANNA

I got tequila.

MAURICIO

Fine. You can stay.

Roxanna hands Mauricio the tequila. Mauricio takes a swig.

ROXANNA

What a night.

Roxanna takes the pack of smokes out and lights up.

MAURICIO

Oh no. Come on.

ROXANNA

It's ten below outside. You know Ma won't let me smoke inside.

MAURICIO

This is inside.

ROXANNA

Just crack open a window.

Mauricio lifts open a small window. Freddie walks in.

FREDDIE

How come I didn't get an invite?

ROXANNA

None needed. Come on down.

Freddie and Mauricio nod to each other. There is still a little tension left from earlier. Freddie throws himself on the lazy boy. Roxanna slides the tequila toward Freddie. Freddie takes a swig, checking the place out.

FREDDIE

God it's like all I need is a flannel shirt and a bong. I lost my virginity on that couch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ROXANNA

Me too.

Mauricio leaps up disgusted and switches places with Freddie.

MAURICIO

(to Freddie)

Move.

FREDDIE

Just 'cause you were up here playing dungeons and dragons.

MAURICIO

I had fun. I just didn't get caught. Not like when Dad caught you two and your friends playing strip poker in your underwear.

FREDDIE

I forgot what it's like seeing Dad in his. Not pretty. Dad's sleeping in my room. Ma kicked him out.

ROXANNA

He deserves it. God Mauricio, how come you never said anything about him cheating before?

MAURICIO

I didn't actually see anything, but I caught him once in the store room with Rosa Salgado. He gave me 20 bucks and made me promise to keep my mouth shut.

ROXANNA

You'd think he'd be too old for that shit now.

MAURICIO

Viagra. There's a reason why Nature makes a man's sex drive go down as he gets older. So he won't mess up his marriage.

ROXANNA

We're gonna be those kids that have to shuttle between houses at Christmas.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MAURICIO

Houses? What houses? They'll sell this place and move into their own apartments.

ROXANNA

And what? We'll have to stay in a hotel when we come to town.

FREDDIE

I know Mauricio and Sarah wouldn't mind that. The walls are thin, bro.

Mauricio shots him a dirty look.

ROXANNA

Ma's always talking about how she wants to move back to Puerto Rico. She might actually do it.

FREDDIE

It'd be kinda sweet to have a place to stay down there.

MAURICIO

(disbelief)

So you're okay with Dad living in a studio heating up leftover mac and cheese from the store on a hot plate?

ROXANNA

Don't you kid yourself, every single woman over 45 will be coming over to cheer him up with a dish of carne guisado.

FREDDIE

45. Try 35.

ROXANNA

Ewww.

FREDDIE

He'll probably knock up somebody before Mauricio does.

Mauricio shoots daggers at Freddie.

MAURICIO

This is not a joke.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ROXANNA

Do you realize this is probably
the last Christmas we'll spend
together? It's not like we could
leave either of them alone for the
holidays.

Freddie's grin fades to a frown. The three of them
SILENTLY take in the fact that their lives are about to
change. They pass around the bottle of tequila.

MAURICIO

It just seems crazy to me that mom
and dad would throw it all away.

FREDDIE

He broke her trust. How can she
forgive him for that?

ROXANNA

Yeah Ma has every right to leave.

MAURICIO

Look you guys aren't married.

Roxanna and Freddie roll their eyes.

MAURICIO (CONT'D)

(exploding)

Just listen to me for once.

Mauricio gets Roxanna and Freddie's attention.

MAURICIO (CONT'D)

Sometimes when you're married, you
feel like you don't want the same
things and you're at each other
all the time, but you hang in
there and then one day you fall in
love all over again. That's
marriage. So you're gonna tell me
that after all these years of
doing that, mom and pop don't have
a little love left for each other?

Roxanna and Freddie have never seen this side of
Mauricio.

ROXANNA

You really think they could get
back together?

MAURICIO

I hope so.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

ROXANNA

Me too.

FREDDIE

It would be weird them not being together.

The kids contemplate their family's fate.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

(joking)
Plus I don't need anymore siblings.

Mauricio and Roxanna playfully throw things at him.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON CAR WINDOW

Anna checks out her reflection. She pulls her stomach in to make herself look skinnier. Suddenly ---

Eduardo walks up to Anna. He sees her checking herself out while juggling a tray of donuts and cups of coffee.

EDUARDO

Let me help with that.

Anna, startled, pretends not be looking at herself, but she knows that Eduardo caught her.

ANNA

(coldly)
No.

Eduardo watches sadly as she blows by him, to where Mauricio and Freddie help Fernando unload chain saws out of the back of his truck. Eduardo joins the guys. Anna walks over to Marissa and Hector who watch the activity.

ANNA (CONT'D)

How about some hot chocolate and a donut hole for mi nino.

MARISSA

Thanks, Anna, but that's a lot of sugar.

ANNA

Oh let me spoil him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Anna gives Hector and Marissa hot chocolate and donuts, then continues on past Eduardo to Mauricio and Freddie, who look haggard from the night before.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Oh mis preciosos, you look tired.
(to Eduardo)

Was it really necessary to drag
these boys out of bed. 35 years
I've been begging you to cut down
this ugly tree and now all of
sudden you have to do it right
now.

Before Eduardo can say anything...

MAURICIO

Don't worry ma. We're fine.

Sarah, in her jogging clothes, looking fresh as a daisy bounces over to them.

ANNA

Coffee? A donut?

Sarah keeps jogging in place.

SARAH

I'm going for a run.

ANNA

How are you going to have a baby
with all that bouncing around?
You're already too skinny. You need
to eat.

Anna shoves a donut in her hand. Sarah glares at Mauricio. Mauricio shrugs helplessly. Roxanna, in big sunglasses, walks over looking just as hung over as her brothers. She swipes coffee and a donut off her mother's tray.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Your agent called while you were
asleep.

ROXANNA

He did! Why didn't you wake me?!

ANNA

I was just joking. You'd think it
was the second coming. It's just
your agent. Isn't it his job to
call you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ROXANNA

(covering, rambling)

It's just a drag playing telephone tag --- especially when I'm on set --- not that I am now, but still --
- What?

Anna gives Roxanna a strange look.

ANNA

Are you still drunk? I can't believe you kept your brothers up all night drinking. The house smells like an ashtray.

(sweetly to Fernando)

Coffee?

Fernando is the only energized one in the bunch.

FERNANDO

Thanks. I'm all set, Mrs. Rodriguez.

Eduardo goes to take the last cup of coffee off the tray, but Anna takes it for herself. The kids share a look. They are too hung over to deal with drama this morning. Fernando, oblivious, turns on a chain saw with gusto. It ROARS to life, causing everyone to jump.

FERNANDO (CONT'D)

(shouting)

This is a Wood Boss SR36. It's got an "easy2start" system. It's also got a carburetor preheat shutter for summer/winter operation and my favorite, a forged connecting rod with caged needle bearings just like professional loggers use.

Fernando hits the throttle for effect. Everyone wants to strangle him.

EXT. LAWN - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - LATER

The women and Hector sit on lawn chairs warming themselves by a barbecue filled with wood. Roxanna watches Fernando easily wield his chain saw.

ROXANNA

(suggestively)

Your man sure's good with his tool.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARISSA

Mmm hmm. He's good with his hands too.

Roxanna and Marissa exchange a smile. Anna clutches Hector.

ANNA

Marissa! Que paso? Don't you see you have a child here?

Roxanna lights a cigarette.

ROXANNA

He's two, ma. He don't get innuendo.

OVER BY THE TREE

Fernando takes the chain saw to the tree. It glances off without making a dent. He applies more pressure. Again he can't get traction. He applies even more pressure. Nothing.

Freddie walks over to Fernando and grabs the chain saw.

FREDDIE

Maybe it's the blade. Lemme try.

OVER BY THE WOMEN

Roxanna gives Marissa a look.

ROXANNA

Now that's an innuendo, girl. Twenty dollars says my boy Freddie gets that tree down.

SARAH

I'll take Fernando.

Everybody looks at Sarah with surprise.

ROXANNA

(to Marissa)
Oooh you better watch out for Angelina Jolie over here.

SARAH

Look, I didn't mean --- It's just he's so big --- I mean his muscles

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sarah decides to keep her mouth shut. Marissa and Roxanna
CRACK UP.

MARISSA
Give you a cosmo and I bet you go
all Carrie Bradshaw.

Sarah gives a sly smile.

SARAH
More like Miranda.

ANNA
Who are these people?

The women all LAUGH.

OVER BY THE TREE

Freddie gives a couple whacks at the tree. No luck.
Freddie gives up reluctantly. Fernando feels vindicated.

FERNANDO
Mr. Rodriguez mind giving me
yours. Maybe that one works.

Eduardo hands Fernando the chain saw.

EDUARDO
Maybe it's just too cold.

MAURICIO
Where's global warming when you
need it.

Fernando tries again. A piece of bark flies off. Fernando
uses everything he's got. The chain breaks on the saw.

FERNANDO
Son of a bitch.

Mauricio grabs a chain saw.

FREDDIE
(to Mauricio)
Give me that.

MAURICIO
What makes you think I can't do
it?

Freddie gives him a look. Everyone else rolls their eyes.

OVER BY THE WOMEN

ROXANNA

Oh no, he isn't.

MARISSA

(chuckling)

You gonna put money down on your man.

SARAH

On whether he's gonna seriously hurt himself. Twenty bucks. Sure why not.

Anna looks at Sarah agape. Anna leaps up.

ANNA

Mauricio, put that thing down.

OVER BY THE TREE

The guys look at Anna gesturing wildly for Mauricio to stop.

EDUARDO

Will you just listen to your mother?

MAURICIO

This red thing must be the pull cord.

Mauricio pulls it and goes flying back onto the ground. Part of the chain saw hits his hand, but the blade misses it all together. Mauricio still SCREAMS.

OVER BY THE WOMEN

Anna runs toward her son.

ANNA

(wailing)

Mi nino, mi nino.

Sarah coolly collects twenty bucks from Roxanna and Marissa, who LAUGH.

EXT. BODEGA - LATER THAT DAY

As Roxanna, Freddie and Eduardo approach the bodega, they spot a freshly painted sign reading, "Rodriguez and Son." Freddie is overwhelmed, speechless.

EDUARDO
What do you think?

FREDDIE
I don't know what to say.

Roxanna shoots Freddie a look.

ROXANNA
It looks great, Dad.

INT. BODEGA

The Bodega is bustling with customers in the pre-Christmas rush. TINA, the cashier, 40's, African-American, big hair and big mouth, leans over the counter as she pushes a customer out of the way and smothers Freddie in a hug.

TINA
God bless you, baby. You know I
prayed for you every day. Had to,
I know how the military is.

She addresses the store.

TINA (CONT'D)
My baby was on the front line. (to
Freddie). Weren't you?

Freddie nods.

TINA (CONT'D)
Figures. They like to cut the
dark meat first if you know what I
mean.
(conspiratorial to
Freddie)
I'll tell ya what it is, It's
Uncle Sam targeting ya'll Latinos
by promising you citizenship. You
know you don't have to have a
green card to serve?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CUSTOMER

(offended)

There are a number of different nationalities on the front line.

TINA

(to customer)

I know that! But none of them is my baby Freddie.

(to Freddie)

Love ya baby. I'll talk at you later.

Freddie gives her a hug and heads for the back office.

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

This ain't Wal-Mart! Keep the line moving.

INT. OFFICE - BODEGA - A LITTLE LATER

Eduardo sits in front of a brand new computer staring at a screensaver image of him and Anna on a cruise.

FREDDIE

See Tina's as crazy as ever.

Eduardo quickly starts typing and pretends to be working. The screensaver is replaced by an invoice.

EDUARDO

Yeah, yeah.

(re: computer)

Look, your old man finally modernized. The new system even lets you know how much you're wasting so you cost things out better. I was able to lower pork chops 3 cents a pound.

FREDDIE

You actually know how to use that?

EDUARDO

Not really. Ozzy usually prints everything out for me. I want a well oiled machine for you to have when you take over.

Freddie shifts uncomfortably.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDUARDO (CONT'D)
You'll have this place figured out
in no time. And you always got
Ozzy. So when do you think you'll
start?

Freddie blanches. He's been dreading this moment.

FREDDIE
Ah dad --- Look ---

EDUARDO
It might help you take your mind
off things.

Freddie winces.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)
Look. I'm sorry. You barely got
home for Christ sake. You rest up
and when you're ready, you'll come
to work.

Johnny pokes his head in.

JOHNNY
Am I interrupting something?

EDUARDO
(playfully)
What else is new. Come on in.

INT. BODEGA

Johnny opens up a bag of chips and begins eating them.
Freddie grabs the bag and eats one.

FREDDIE
You better pay for those asshole.

JOHNNY
Why don't we go downtown and hook
up with some of those high class
honeys.

FREDDIE
Nah I'm cool.

Johnny looks at Freddie askance.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHNNY

I saw the look.

FREDDIE

What look?

JOHNNY

Don't do it, bro. Marissa's cool and she's still fine even after all her baby mama drama, but it ain't worth it, man. A Puerto Rican woman is never gonna forget that you dumped her. You guys get back together, even if she seems nice to you, she's gonna make you pay for that shit every day. A million years from now aliens could resurrect her ass and the first thing she would say is, where's that son of a bitch Freddie.

FREDDIE

We can be friends.

JOHNNY

Did you see "When Harry Met Sally"?

FREDDIE

It wouldn't be like that.

JOHNNY

Don't do nothing stupid.

EXT. MAGAZINE RACKS - BODEGA

Roxanna, with a magazine in her hand, gapes at a pimply faced, white STOCK BOY (15) TALKING a mile a minute.

STOCKBOY

When you were that corpse. What did you do to prepare for that shit? --- That was that De Niro shit --- the --- the Method --- you're probably wondering how I know this --- well it's 'cause I'm an actor --- As soon as I'm eighteen I'm out. I'll probably stay with you for the first two years ---

Roxanna looks at him dumbfounded.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STOCKBOY (CONT'D)

(backpedaling)

Naw, naw not like that --- It'd just be platonic like --- But you never know, one night we could be practising some lines losing ourselves in the characters like -- - I mean hell that's like three years from now --- I'll be eighteen. You'll be --- uh -- uh -- older.

Ozzy slaps the stock boy upside the head.

OZZY

Get back to work. The tortilla chip display is jacked up again.

(to Roxanna)

Sorry about that. You finding everything?

ROXANNA

(relieved)

Thanks. Yeah. Vanity Fair. Vibe. Metropolitan Home. These must be your touches 'cause I know the only thing my pops reads is the Sun Times and La Opinion.

Ozzy grabs a magazine and hands it to her.

OZZY

You wanna see something cool. It's this new magazine that came out all about what's happening underground with music, art, theatre --- none of that commercial Lion King crap.

ROXANNA

I was in the Lion King.

Ozzy feels weird.

ROXANNA (CONT'D)

I'm just playing with you.

(re: magazine)

This is cool. I like the graphics. I did try out for the Lion King.

OZZY

You must have been desperate because you know you can't sing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Ozzy and Roxanna LAUGH. The flow between them is suddenly interrupted by an SUV BUMPING with TUNES, stopped in front of the store at a red light.

Ozzy and Roxanna glance at the passengers in the SUV. It's Alexis and his crew. Alexis looks out the window and sees Ozzy giving him a stone-cold stare. Recognition shoots through Alexis like a lightening bolt. Roxanna looks at Ozzy with concern.

A CAR HORN BEEPS prodding the SUV that the light has changed to green. Alexis and his boys pull away. Roxanna observes Ozzy. The light in his eyes is gone.

ROXANNA

You okay?

OZZY

Yeah, yeah.

Roxanna does not look convinced.

INT. MARISSA'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Hector sleeps on the couch. Marissa sits next to him paying bills. Suddenly the LOUD ROAR of a motor outside disrupts the tranquil SILENCE. Hector wakes up CRYING.

Marissa grabs Hector, trying in vain to comfort him. She looks out the window and sees Freddie operating a giant snowblower. He waves when he spots her. Marissa glowers at him.

EXT. OUTSIDE MARISSA'S APARTMENT BUILDING

Marissa, with Hector in her arms, storms out, pissed off, to confront Freddie.

MARISSA

(shouting over the
blower)

Are you crazy?

Freddie struggles to turn the blower off. It's stuck.

FREDDIE

(shouting)

What?

Freddie continues to struggle with the blower. Finally, Marissa reaches over and pushes a button Freddie missed. The blower shuts off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Hi.

MARISSA

What are you doing? You woke up Hector.

FREDDIE

Sorry papito.

(to Marissa)

I thought I could help out --- you know, around the neighborhood.

Marissa looks around. Her's is the only lawn touched.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Your yard looked like it needed doing most.

MARISSA

(pointed)

I already got a guy who does that.

FREDDIE

I know.

(beat)

Look, can we quit acting like we barely know each other.

MARISSA

A lot has changed.

FREDDIE

So you're gonna tell me that you still don't secretly like Celine Dion, that your favorite ice cream isn't still pistachio and you still don't like to walk barefoot in the house no matter how cold it is because you like to feel the earth under your feet.

MARISSA

Why are you trying to mess with my head?

FREDDIE

I'm not. It's just I miss talking to you. It's so weird being back and all this stuff going on with my family. You're one of the few people who really knows them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARISSA

I'm sorry about your folks, the divorce, but you can't come back here and expect me to be your shoulder to cry on.

FREDDIE

You're right.

They share a moment of SILENCE. Neither wants to leave.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Everyone's going down to Julio's. Maybe you and Fernando wanna hang out with us?

MARISSA

Fernando's gotta poker game.

FREDDIE

Come on, come by the house at 9. Roxanna's going. We can all go in Johnny's car.

Freddie smiles. Marissa tries not too, but it's hard.

MARISSA

I just want to make one thing clear, Freddie. We can only go forward not back.

FREDDIE

How about sideways?

Marissa gives him a look.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

(a little ruefully)
I know.

HECTOR

Snow, mommy.

They all look up and see snow falling from the sky. Freddie holds out his hand and shows it to Hector. Freddie smiles at him fondly and looks over to Marissa tenderly. So this is what they missed.

INT. FRONT DOOR - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - LATER

Freddie hangs up his coat when Mauricio bursts in on him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAURICIO

Where have you been?

FREDDIE

Out.

MAURICIO

Father Torres is here. I asked him
to speak to Mom and Dad.

FREDDIE

Seriously?

Mauricio ushers Freddie into the living.

MAURICIO

Yeah, while you were out
gallivanting, I was actually doing
something to help this family.

Mauricio and Freddie enter the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM

FATHER TORRES, eating an egg roll, sits in a chair
facing the family, except for Anna, who are sprawled
about the living room also picking at food. Everyone is
trying to put on a good front for the priest.

FREDDIE

Hey Father Torres. Good to see
you.

FATHER TORRES

Nice to have you home, son.

FREDDIE

Ah --- Where's ma?

ROXANNA

She went out for happy hour with
Monica and Gladys.

Freddie looks a little shocked.

EDUARDO

She wants to go out, she can go
out. She's a grown woman.

Roxanna's cellphone RINGS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAURICIO

Can you turn off your phone? We're
trying to have a family meeting.

Roxanna picks up the phone.

ROXANNA

I'm expecting a work call.

(into the phone)

Hello.

(pause)

Hey girl, can I call you back?

Mauricio rolls his eyes at Roxanna. Mauricio spots
headlights stopping in front of the house.

MAURICIO

It's ma.

FREDDIE

(whispers to

Mauricio)

You know she's gonna kill you,
right.

Mauricio flees to intercept her.

INT. FRONT DOOR - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE

Mauricio opens the door to Anna as she's waving good-bye
to her girlfriends. Anna, made up, dressed to the nines,
trying to look hip, has had a little too much drink. She
throws her arms around Mauricio. Her speech is slightly
slurred.

ANNA

Hola, mi amor.

MAURICIO

Ah ma, Father Torres is here.

Anna crosses herself and stumbles a little bit.

ANNA

Ay Dios mio. Who died?

MAURICIO

Nobody. Look ma, I brought him
here to talk to you and Dad, you
know, about the divorce.

Suddenly sober, Anna whacks Mauricio up side the head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNA

Stupido.
(catches herself,
lowers her voice)
How could you do that? Did your
father put you up to this?

MAURICIO

No. I just think you and Dad
should think this through.

Anna weaves toward the kitchen.

ANNA

I haven't even made him anything
to eat.

Mauricio physically redirects her to the living room.

MAURICIO

Sarah ordered some Chinese food.

Anna slaps his hands away.

ANNA

(horrificed)
She gave him take out. Oh no. This
is not possible. Barbarosos.

She takes a moment to collect herself, but she still
can't handle her booze as she stumbles to the living
room.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Anna enters with a pasted smile. Father Torres stands up.

ANNA

Father Torres. So nice of you to
stop by. Do you have enough to
eat? I could fix you something
else if you'd like?

Anna hiccups. She plays it off.

FATHER TORRES

I'm fine, Anna.

As Anna takes a seat, she glares at everybody, especially
Eduardo. She turns and smiles, swaying at the priest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FATHER TORRES (CONT'D)

Your son tells me that you are
contemplating divorce.

ANNA

Oh no. I'm getting a divorce
father. My husband has broken his
vows and sinned against God.

Eduardo shifts uncomfortably.

EDUARDO

(to Father Torres)

Like I said earlier, it's the
holidays. Perhaps this is not such
a good time.

ANNA

Well, when would it be convenient
for you to pay for your sins.

FATHER TORRES

Anna I think we need to remember
that Jesus was born to save us
from our sins. Repent and thou
shalt be forgiven.

ANNA

I'm not changing my mind. Now, I'm
sorry that you came all the way
down here to eat greasy Chinese
because none of these lazy
muchachas can cook. No wonder I
don't have a grandchild. That's
what you can do for me father.
Pray that I will hold my
grandchild.

SARAH

Here we go again.

FATHER TORRES

I'm sure you have good reasons for
waiting to have children.

ANNA

She'd rather take care of this
hedge fund than a baby.

SARAH

(shocked to Mauricio)

You went crying to your mother.

Mauricio, sheepish, can't look Sarah in the eye.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ANNA

Can you blame him? With all the travelling and the long hours with this new job. The only sex he'll be having is on the phone. Excuse me, father.

Nobody knows whether to LAUGH or run for cover.

SARAH

He'll be lucky if he gets that! The only reason he wants a baby now is so he can one up Freddie in pleasing you and Eduardo.

Sarah runs out. Father Torres doesn't know where to start.

FATHER TORRES

Well ah --- Eduardo and Anna you must think about your family.

FREDDIE

We'd be fine.

MAURICIO

We would not be fine.

ROXANNA

(taunting)

Oh please, you'll still have your mommy to take care of you.

MAURICIO

Hey, listen daddy's girl, I know I'm not the only one that sends you money.

Anna glares at Eduardo. Eduardo throws his hands in the air.

EDUARDO

She needed new head shots.

ANNA

(to Eduardo)

You sent her money behind my back!

(to Father Torres)

See the lies that I have to put up with.

(to Roxanna)

Like Roxanna can't afford new head shots. She's a star.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Everyone looks at Roxanna. She hesitates.

ROXANNA

(blurting)

I'm not a star! Everybody just thinks I have this glamorous life in Hollywood when I can barely afford my dumpy studio and the payments on a 1999 Kia. Sometimes I wish I could come home and have my life handed to me on silver platter like Freddie.

MAURICIO

The prodigal son returns.

FREDDIE

(flabbergasted)

Is that what you two think?!

EDUARDO

I think we all need to calm down.

FATHER TORRES

There's a passage ---

FREDDIE

(ignoring him)

Why don't one of you come home and take care of the bodega?

Eduardo shoots Father Torres an "I told you so" look.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

No, you guys are too busy off living your lives. What about my life? I try to get out of here and do I end up in LA or New York? No, I end up in fucking Iraq. And what do I gotta show for it. A body full of shrapnel and a head full of bad memories. And you think I can just waltz home and run the bodega.

Everybody is too scared to speak.

FATHER TORRES

Bodega's are a good business.

FREDDIE

(screams)

I'm not gonna run the bodega!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

FATHER TORRES

Perhaps we should say a prayer.

THE FAMILY

Shut up!

Anna looks at her husband with concern. This is not what anybody expected, especially Eduardo. He takes a moment to collect his thought.

EDUARDO

What are you going to do?

FREDDIE

I'm going back to Iraq. I'm going to sign up for another tour.

Suddenly everyone forgets about their differences. Murmurs of shock, outrage and sadness fill the room. Anna WAILS. Freddie looks up and sees Marissa staring at him with disbelief and disappointment. With her are Johnny and Ozzy.

Eduardo stares at his son with sympathy. Freddie knows his father is the only one that knows what he is going through.

EDUARDO

It's not going to change anything.

FREDDIE

Maybe, but at least there I feel like I have a purpose.

Anna, crying, embraces Freddie. He untangles himself.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

I think we could all use a drink.

FATHER TORRES

(traumatized)

Yes. Any coquito?

INT. KITCHEN - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - LATER

Anna cries at the table. Eduardo looks completely dejected.

ANNA

What if he doesn't come back this time?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDUARDO

We can't think about that.

ANNA

How can we stop him?

EDUARDO

We can't.

ANNA

I wish we had never let him sign up in the first place.

EDUARDO

How were we to know that there would be a war in Iraq?

(pause)

There's a lot of things I wish I hadn't done.

ANNA

(angrily)

Well you can't take them back.
What's done is done.

Eduardo watches helplessly as Anna breaks out into a fresh torrent of tears. Eduardo goes to console her, but Anna moves away from him. Sarah enters sheepishly.

SARAH

Where's Mauricio?

Anna sobs even harder.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Look, ah, I'm sorry about what I said. I do want to have a baby, but why does it have to be now, when I've got my big shot. I'm not stupid. I know I can't have it all, that at 31 my fertility is going into a free fall and I may have to use the eggs of an attractive Ivy League college student who wants to get ahead on paying off her loans. Look, I'd be happy to adopt, although Mauricio, being Latin, doesn't feel the same way. Anyway, I promise you, we will have children, maybe not right this second, but one day.

Sarah sees Anna still crying.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SARAH (CONT'D)

Doesn't that make you feel better.

EDUARDO

(tearing)

Freddie is going to sign up for
another tour in Iraq.

Sarah feels terrible. She puts her arm around them.

SARAH

I'm so sorry.

EDUARDO

Mauricio and the kids are down at
Julio's bar. You want me to take
you down there?

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Sarah sits shotgun next to Eduardo. "Alma con alma," a
soulful, romantic Puerto Rican ballad PLAYS on the CD
Player. Eduardo SINGS to the MUSIC. His lovely baritone
brims with nostalgia.

SARAH

This music is so beautiful.

EDUARDO

It's Tito Rodriguez. Anna and I
danced to this the first night we
met. Mauricio was conceived to
this song.

SARAH

I don't think I needed to know all
that.

Sarah and Eduardo exchange a smile. The SONG ends.

EDUARDO

Mind if we hear it again?

SARAH

No, not at all.

Eduardo PLAYS the SONG again. Suddenly, Eduardo coughs,
thumps his chest and tries to concentrate on the road.
Suddenly his head slumps and the car almost goes into
oncoming traffic. Sarah rights the steering wheel.
Eduardo pulls over to the side of the road. He is
breathing heavily.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDUARDO

(wheezing)

In the glove compartment, there's
some medicine.

Sarah tries to open it, but it's locked.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)

The key's under the mat.

Sarah frantically opens up the glove compartment. There are a couple of bottles of prescription medicine, as well as piles of paper. One reads, "Northwestern Cancer Center." Sarah tries to stay focused.

SARAH

Which one?

EDUARDO

Green cap.

Sarah opens the bottle with the green cap. The pills spill all over the place. Eduardo takes one and gulps it dry. He catches his breath and lets the medicine do its work. Sarah picks up the pills and returns the bottle to the glove compartment. She glances at the "Northwestern Cancer Center" papers. Eduardo sees her.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)

Don't tell anyone, please.

Sarah starts to tear up.

SARAH

Does Anna know?

Eduardo shakes his head no and SIGHS. Sarah squeezes his hand.

EDUARDO

I just want to enjoy Christmas
with my family. Not that they make
it that easy.

INT. JULIO'S BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Salsa PLAYS. Sarah holds Mauricio in a long warm embrace. Mauricio, taken aback, stares at his siblings, Johnny, Ozzy and Marissa and shrugs. They are all surprised.

SARAH

You know how much I love you? That
I'd do anything for you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAURICIO
(baffled)
Yeah.

Sarah grabs Freddie and gives him a big hug.

SARAH
Oh Freddie, Freddie, Freddie. This
family does need you.

Freddie doesn't know what to say. He looks to the others
for help. They are just as baffled as he is. Suddenly,
Roxanna finds herself embraced by Sarah.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Oh and Roxanna... I'm buying a
round for everyone.

Johnny, chuckling, whispers, leaning over to Freddie.

JOHNNY
Love it. JAPS gone wild.

INT. JULIO'S BAR

The SALSA has been cranked way up. Sarah downs a shot of
tequila without even a flinch. Everyone, sitting at a
booth, looks at her in shock, except for Mauricio who
looks like the cat that ate the canary. Sarah grabs
Mauricio and leads him into the middle of the bar to
dance. It's as if she has transformed into a different
person. She is amazing!

JOHNNY
Holy Shit!

FREDDIE
(re: Sarah)
Maybe he slipped her a hit of E.

ROXANNA
Think he wants a kid that bad?

OZZY
All you gotta do is look at a
Puerto Rican girl to knock her up.

Roxanna pushes Ozzy with disgust.

ROXANNA
Cono.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARISSA

Believe me, it ain't that easy.

Johnny saunters over to the table with two trashy hotties, a BLONDE and a BRUNETTE.

JOHNNY

(to Freddie)

This is what women look like without a burkha. The American dream. That's what you fought for!

(to the trashy hotties)

You go, ladies, wrap this soldier boy up in some red, white and blue.

BLONDE

Your friend says you were shot up pretty bad.

JOHNNY

He lost his dick, but they replaced it with a bionic one. He can jack up a car and change a tire with it.

BLONDE

(incredulously)

Really?

Johnny slaps Freddie on the back. Freddie tries to hide his embarrassment. Roxanna and Marissa roll their eyes.

JOHNNY

I'm just kidding. He's still got all his factory parts.

BRUNETTE

You wanna dance?

FREDDIE

Nah. I'm cool.

JOHNNY

Come on, man. What you waiting for?

Freddie looks at Marissa. Marissa looks Freddie in the eye.

MARISSA

Yeah, what you waiting for.

(to Roxanna)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARISSA (CONT'D)

I'm gonna put some money in the jukebox.

Marissa slides out of the booth. Roxanna joins her.

ROXANNA

I'll come with you.

ANGLE ON:

Framed photos of Michael Jordan, Walter Payton, John Belushi and Roxanna Rodriguez. Roxanna, mortified, turns to the BARTENDER.

ROXANNA

Can you please take that thing down?

BARTENDER

Why? You're the biggest star to come out of this neighborhood. Can I buy you a round?

ROXANNA

(giving up)

And some change for the jukebox please.

As the bartender gives Roxanna the change, Marissa's eyes wander over to Freddie dancing with the Brunette. Roxanna notices Marissa watching them.

ROXANNA (CONT'D)

Is there something that you wanna tell me?

Roxanna hands Marissa a couple of dollar bills.

MARISSA

No. Is there something that you wanna tell me?

ROXANNA

About ----?

MARISSA

About Ozzy. He's been vibing you all night.

ROXANNA

Oh yeah.

MARISSA

You gotta admit he's hot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROXANNA

He's a thug.

The bartender hands them some drinks.

ROXANNA (CONT'D)

Thanks.

MARISSA

He ain't been messed up in all that since that shit with his brother.

ROXANNA

Yeah, well we were hanging out in front of the store today and he saw Alexis. I swear if he had a gun, he would a blown his head off.

MARISSA

That asshole killed his brother. Doesn't mean he's going to do anything about it.

ROXANNA

Here I was feeling so good to be home. Then seeing that shit made me remember everything that happened. Paquito dying, the gangs. I feel lucky that I didn't end up -- That things worked different.

MARISSA

You were going to say end up back here like me.

ROXANNA

No I wasn't.

Sensing Marissa doesn't believe her, Roxanna gives her a reassuring squeeze.

ROXANNA (CONT'D)

I wasn't. I swear. I should be so lucky to have a good guy like Fernando. My phone's vibrating.

Roxanna fishes it out of her bag and looks at it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ROXANNA (CONT'D)

Oh shit, I gotta missed call.
Private caller. Could be my agent.
I better go outside and call.

MARISSA

Good luck.

Roxanna smiles weakly and walks away.

EXT. JULIO'S BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Roxanna lights up a cigarette. She takes a moment to collect herself before dialling her phone.

ROXANNA

(into the phone)

Hey Josh, it's Roxanna. Was that you that just called?

JOSH (O.S.)

Yeah. They called.

ROXANNA

(into the phone)

And?

JOSH (O.S.)

Roger was rushing out to his anger management class and didn't say anything.

ROXANNA

(into the phone)

Is that it?

JOSH

You told me to call if I heard anything. If you don't ---

ROXANNA

(into the phone)

No I do. I do. I do.

JOSH (O.S.)

Maybe they were calling about something else?

ROXANNA

(into the phone)

Or he doesn't want to ruin my Christmas?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOSH (O.S.)

Please, he just told a client that
she'd better liposuction her ass
if she wanted a part. Look girl,
I'll hit you later.

Josh hangs up. Ozzy joins her. Roxanna is not in the
mood.

OZZY

This ain't Cali. They ain't gonna
arrest you for smoking inside.

ROXANNA

I needed some fresh air.

Ozzy looks at her cigarette and shrugs. Roxanna looks in
the window and sees Freddie and Marissa at the jukebox
together.

ROXANNA (CONT'D)

Oh shit. I knew this was coming.

OZZY

Maybe we better give them some
space. You wanna go for a walk?

INT. JULIO'S BAR - MEANWHILE

Freddie stands next to Marissa at the jukebox. She tries
to ignore him as she flips through the menu idly.

FREDDIE

They still got Peaches and Cream?

MARISSA

Why don't you go back to your
girlfriend?

FREDDIE

She's not my type.

Marissa looks around the bar. She sees Johnny chatting up
the blond and the brunette. Sarah and Mauricio make out
like teenagers back in the booth.

MARISSA

Where are Ozzy and Roxanna?

EXT. JULIO'S BAR

Marissa exits the bar. Freddie follows her. There is no sign of Roxanna and Ozzy.

MARISSA
I can't believe they just left.

FREDDIE
Maybe they went to get smokes?

Marissa starts walking down the street.

MARISSA
I'm outta here.

Freddie stops her. Marissa fumes.

FREDDIE
You're not walking.

Marissa yanks his arm away.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)
It's dangerous. Look I'm gonna go
inside and get the keys to
Johnny's car. Wait here. Okay?

Marissa storms off. Freddie runs inside.

EXT. OUTSIDE OUTDOOR SKATING RINK - A LITTLE LATER

Ozzy and Roxanna walk up to the rink. The place is closed and empty. Ozzy points to a locked up zambione.

OZZY
Remember the time Junior caught
Johnny, Freddie and I smoking a
joint behind the concession stand?
We were so high he chased us all
over the ice with the zambione.

Ozzy LAUGHS. Roxanna remains glum.

ROXANNA
And you all are still stupid.

OZZY
I guess Hollywood stole your sense
of humor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROXANNA

It didn't look like you were
smiling much when you saw Alexis.
You better watch your step.

OZZY

It's cool.

ROXANNA

Yeah right.

OZZY

(snaps)

Like you know where my head is at.
This is your first time back in
three years. I may not be out
there making it big, but I'm at
peace with where I'm at. I don't
think you can say that?

Roxanna goes quiet.

OZZY (CONT'D)

Look, I'm sorry. I didn't mean ---

ROXANNA

(deflates)

No, I'm sorry I was out of line.
To lose a brother and you and
Paquito went through so much
together, you know, when your ma
died. I don't know what's wrong
with me.

Ozzy suppresses the pain welling up inside. Roxanna sees
how hurt and vulnerable he is. She feels terrible. Ozzy
doesn't want to talk about it.

OZZY

So why haven't you been back in
three years?

ROXANNA

You know ... it's been crazy busy.
If it's not one thing, it's
something else.

Ozzy doesn't react. He just looks at her with sympathy.

ROXANNA (CONT'D)

Shit. Who am I kidding? I'm sure
you've heard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

OZZY

Yeah.

Roxanna sits on a bench. Ozzy sits next to her.

OZZY (CONT'D)

Hey. You'll get your big break.
Just hang in there.

ROXANNA

But what if I'm waiting for
something that never happens? How
much more time should I waste? A
year, two, ten? Stuck in the same
place while everybody else's life
moves forward.

OZZY

(joking)
So what, you're going to move back
home?

ROXANNA

Maybe. I don't know. There could
be worse things.

OZZY

(astonished)
Never thought I'd hear that coming
from you.

ROXANNA

I'm 32. I'm sick of someone else
deciding my fate, when I'm just as
good if not better than most of
the actresses out there.

OZZY

You're good. Like when you played
that homeless chick in "One Way
Ticket."

ROXANNA

(flabbergasted)
You saw that?

OZZY

Your folks made us all come over
to the house to watch the DVD.

They share a LAUGH.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ROXANNA

Look don't tell nobody what I said. I'm all over place right now.

OZZY

I'll think about it.

ROXANNA

Ozzy, don't make me kick your ass.

OZZY

You gotta catch me first.

Ozzy runs out onto the ice. Roxanna chases after Ozzy as they both run and slide on the ice.

ROXANNA

You better not let me get you.

Ozzy runs and slides really far. Roxanna follows him. Ozzy falls on his butt. Roxanna slides into him, landing on the ice. They both BUST UP LAUGHING out of breath.

INT. ESCALADE - STREET - NIGHT

Freddie drives down the street looking for Marissa. He sees her and pulls up alongside.

FREDDIE

Marissa.

Marissa doesn't look at him. She keeps walking and cuts into the park. Freddie throws the truck in park and leaps out.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Freddie runs and catches up with Marissa.

FREDDIE

Are you crazy? I'm just trying to help you.

MARISSA

I thought I could do this friend thing, but I can't. Five years together and you break up with me in a letter. You didn't have the guts to tell me before you left?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FREDDIE

You think I knew what the hell I wanted. I was 19. Claustrophobic. Mauricio and Roxanna were off doing their thing. I just wanted to get out too. It seemed that all of my life's major questions had been answered. I had you. I had the bodega. And then I got over there. I just wanted to come home, but it was too late. If I was gonna make it over there I had to move on and I knew that you did too.

MARISSA

You ripped my world apart and there was nothing I could do. You were over there. I couldn't beat you up. Key your car. Talk to you.

FREDDIE

You gotta believe me. If I would've known how things were gonna turn out, I wouldn't have gone.

Marissa turns and faces him with venom.

MARISSA

Then why do you want to go back?

FREDDIE

I can't leave the guys in my unit.

MARISSA

How fucking noble of you.

FREDDIE

(getting angry)
It's not noble, trust me.

MARISSA

(angry, frustrated)
I suppose I can't even get mad at you because you're a goddamn war hero.

FREDDIE

(angrier)
I'm not.

MARISSA

Oh please.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FREDDIE

(bursts out)

A guy in my unit died because of me!

Marissa is completely caught off guard.

MARISSA

What?

Freddie deflates. This not where Freddie intended the conversation to go, but he realizes that he must come clean. Freddie and Marissa sit down on a nearby bench.

FREDDIE

We had just taken up a position in this abandoned house. Insurgents had left all this food behind. We'd been living off MRE's for a week and we were hunkered in there for the night so Whitey our squad leader said he'd treat us to a home cooked meal. I was on look out at the window when Whitey called everybody to eat. Lenny made me switch with him 'cause he said he'd rather eat an MRE than burn his mouth off on Whitey's rice and beans. So I switched places with him. I maybe had three bites when some motherfucker sent an RPG through the window, and Lenny's body was blown back to the table. I didn't feel any pain. You know how I felt? I was happy! I almost laughed I was so happy to be alive. Then his head fell into my lap. I guess the glass from the window cut straight through his neck. When I came to at the hospital, Whitey told me that I screamed like a bitch, running around in circles, until I passed out.

Marissa stares at Freddie in sympathy and in awe.

MARISSA

I'm so sorry.

FREDDIE

Don't be. I was the lucky one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARISSA

Yeah.

(pause)

His poor family.

Marissa looks up and sees Freddie staring out glumly.

FREDDIE

He was their only son.

MARISSA

It wasn't your fault.

FREDDIE

(unconvincing)

Yeah.

MARISSA

Do you think they blame you?

Freddie shrugs.

MARISSA (CONT'D)

Have you talked to them?

FREDDIE

It won't change anything.

MARISSA

And you think that going back over there and getting yourself blown up will.

FREDDIE

I dunno.

MARISSA

So you're really going to go back?

FREDDIE

I can't just sit around here and live a normal life after what Lenny did for me.

Marissa's eyes well up with tears. Freddie looks at her full of regret and longing.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Can't you see I gotta go back?

Suddenly, a figure emerges from the shadows. It's Fernando. Fernando eyes them suspiciously.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MARISSA

Hey.

FREDDIE

Hey.

FERNANDO

Johnny said that you were on your way home. I saw the Escalade and I pulled over. I was worried.

MARISSA

I'm sorry.

FREDDIE

We were just catching up.

FERNANDO

(to Marissa)

You ready to jet.

Marissa gets up from the bench and walks toward Fernando.

MARISSA

Yeah, sure.

Freddie stands up too.

FREDDIE

Well thanks for listening.

MARISSA

Yeah sure. Well, night.

FREDDIE

Night.

Fernando puts his arm around Marissa and leads her away, but not without leaving Freddie with a menacing stare. As Freddie watches Marissa and Fernando recede into the distance, he balls up snow and throws it with frustration toward them. Fernando, feeling something barely miss his ear, looks around to Freddie. Freddie, smiling to himself, pretends like he had nothing to do with it.

INT. KITCHEN - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - MORNING

Anna and Eduardo watch the kids, except for Sarah, completely hung over, scarf down a greasy breakfast. Sarah, looking green, crawls in completely dishevelled.

ANNA

No jogging today? Coffee?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH

Please.

ANNA

Some fried eggs?

Sarah shakes her head no, turning greener.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Boiled Plantains? Ham? Bacon?

Sarah shakes her head turning greener and greener. Anna, oblivious, presents her with a half eaten fish head and all.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Salt fish?

It's the last straw. Sarah races out of the room. OFF SCREEN We HEAR RETCHING. Anna looks up to God thankfully.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Gracias a Dios. She's pregnant.

FREDDIE

No, ma, she's hung over. But from the sounds I heard coming from their bedroom, there was some baby making going on alright.

Mauricio turns red with embarrassment. Anna swats Freddie.

ANNA

Don't be so vulgar. What they are doing is sacred.

(re: Eduardo)

Even if some people don't see it that way.

FREDDIE

He was tongue wrestling with his girl in a bar.

ROXANNA

Just 'cause you ain't getting none.

FREDDIE

Like you are? Or, is that what you were doing slinking off with my boy Ozzy?

Everybody looks to Roxanna with surprise.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ROXANNA

Oh, come on. He's like my brother.

FREDDIE

It's cool. You're tired of all those chumps in Hollywood. You need yourself a little thug love.

ROXANNA

Oh, please. What were we supposed to do, sit around and watch you sweat Marissa all night?

FREDDIE

I wasn't sweating her.

ROXANNA

Gazing at her like a lost seal pup.

Mauricio makes SEAL PUP NOISES. Roxanna LAUGHS. Freddie fumes.

FREDDIE

Well, you should a heard you and your girl.

(imitating Sarah)

Oh pookie, oh pookie give me a baby. Give me a baby.

Mauricio sees Sarah standing in the doorway, red with embarrassment. Mauricio lunges toward Freddie.

MAURICIO

Asshole.

Suddenly, Eduardo's hand comes from the middle of nowhere and pulls Mauricio back in his seat.

EDUARDO

Callate! All of you.

(gently to Sarah)

Sit down and have some coffee.

Sarah scurries to the table.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)

(with disgust)

Cono. It's Christmas. We're family. Can't we just enjoy each other?

Eduardo gets up from the table, taking his paper.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MAURICIO

Come on, Pop. I'm sorry.

EDUARDO

I gotta do my morning absolutions
before the landscapers arrive to
take down the tree.

FREDDIE

Got the big guns coming?

EDUARDO

Had to. Since my big two hulking
sons can't help me.

Eduardo exits the room, leaving Freddie and Mauricio
feeling like losers.

INT. MAURICIO'S ROOM - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

Sarah looks in her diaphragm case. Her diaphragm is still
there.

SARAH

We didn't use protection?

Mauricio comes in behind her and nuzzles her neck.

MAURICIO

You said you wanted to make a
baby.

Sarah pulls away angrily.

SARAH

I was completely loaded.

MAURICIO

In vino veritas.

SARAH

Yeah, and I probably told the
bartender he was the nicest person
in the world.

MAURICIO

(deflates)
You did, actually.

SARAH

(panicking)
What's the date?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAURICIO

December 23rd.

(sarcastically)

Two days 'til Christmas.

Sarah flips through the calendar on her blackberry.

SARAH

And that fund raiser for the
Public Library was --- I had to
change dresses 'cause I just got
my period ---

(finds it)

December sixth. Eighteen days.

Okay, okay we should be okay here.

I hope. Goddamn it, Mauricio how
could you take advantage of me
like that?

MAURICIO

So you don't want a baby?

SARAH

I think it's something we
should've discussed when I was
sober!

MAURICIO

Okay, you're sober now. Do you or
do you not want to have a baby?

SARAH

Do we have to talk about this
right now? I feel like shit.

Sarah crawls into the floral sheets.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Oh God, the colors in this room
are inducing me into a migraine.

Mauricio storms out of the room.

INT. STOOP - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - MORNING

Roxanna sits, bundled up with a parka over her pj's
smoking a cigarette. Anna hands her a coffee and takes
the cigarette out of her hand and tosses it.

ROXANNA

Ma!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNA

(re: the cigarette)
Is it really worth it? To freeze
your butt off.

ROXANNA

I really don't need a lecture
right now.

ANNA

I'm your mother. If I can't say
something who can?

Roxanna wishes her away.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Why didn't you tell me that things
out there were so bad? Why didn't
you come to me?

ROXANNA

I don't know. I guess I always
kept thinking that things would
get better.

(beat)

I wanted you to be proud of me.

Anna pulls Roxanna's hair back off her face.

ANNA

I am, miija.

Roxanna takes a sip of her coffee.

EXT. LAWN - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - LATER

Eduardo, Mauricio and Freddie watch REYNALDO FLORES, a
Mexican landscaper, kick the tree. His WORKERS stand idly
by.

REYNALDO

Big tree. Bigger than I thought.

(pause)

I'm going to have to charge you
extra. Shall we make it \$800?

EDUARDO

(incredulously)

You quoted me six.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REYNALDO

It's gonna take more time. I gotta pay my guys, then workman's comp, insurance. We're totally legit.

FREDDIE

It is a big tree, Dad.

EDUARDO

(getting fired up)
These guys low ball you so you get them to come out and then they jack up the price.

MAURICIO

Look Dad, it's Christmas Eve. Let me give you an early present and take care of it.

EDUARDO

It's not the money. It's the principal.

MAURICIO

I was just trying to help.

EDUARDO

(snaps)
I don't want your help. I want your respect.
(to Reynaldo)
The deal is off. Any of your guys come near that tree, they're dead.

Eduardo storms off. Mauricio and Freddie are left stunned.

INT. BODEGA - LATE AFTERNOON

The store is closed. The employees try to be festive. Freddie looks bored. Roxanna walks around filling up cups of coquito. Eduardo is about to hand out the Christmas checks when his cell RINGS --- He looks at the number.

EDUARDO

I'll be right back.

Roxanna offers some coquito to Tina.

ROXANNA

More coquito?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TINA

Oh no. You think I don't know that every year ya'll get me drunk at the Christmas party so I don't notice how light my envelope is. Let me tell you, this year I'm sober. I ain't gonna have a drop until I see the size of my Christmas bonus.

INT. OFFICE - BODEGA

Eduardo LISTENS to "Alma con Alma" and gazes at a faded photograph of a young Anna standing on a pier in Puerto Rico.

FREDDIE (O.S.)

Dad --- Dad ---

Eduardo looks up and sees Freddie at the door. Eduardo discretely tucks away the photo. Freddie looks at his father with concern.

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

Ah Dad --- The Christmas checks?

EDUARDO

I got it. You go -- go hang out with Johnny or something. Don't feel like you gotta stick around here.

FREDDIE

Look Dad, I know you're not happy about me going back.

EDUARDO

Of course I'm not. I'm your father. I want you here. Safe.

FREDDIE

I'm sorry. How can I make you understand?

EDUARDO

You can't.

Freddie doesn't know what to say.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)

Just like I can't make you stay. What can I say mi hijo?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDUARDO (CONT'D)

There comes a point when all a father can do is step out of the way. In the end, it's your life. You are the one that has to live with the choices you make.

Eduardo tries desperately to keep from choking up.

FREDDIE

Thanks, Dad.

EDUARDO

Now, I better go give out these checks before Tina starts a revolution.

EXT. BODEGA - MEANWHILE

Roxanna freezes her butt off as she smokes and checks the text messages on her phone. Ozzy joins her.

OZZY

Any word?

ROXANNA

No. I'm just texting my girl.

OZZY

Telling her how much fun you had last night in the fine city of Chicago?

ROXANNA

No, I'm telling her how fucking freezing it is here. Jesus, it's cold.

OZZY

Cali's made you go all soft, girl. You'll be wearing hot pants in this weather, you move back here.

ROXANNA

Yeah well, hopefully I'll get this show.

OZZY

(trying to be
supportive)

Yeah.

ROXANNA

Look, it was cool hanging out with you last night ---

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OZZY

I had a good time.

ROXANNA

Me too. I just don't want you to
get the wrong impression.

Ozzy conceals his hurt and tries real hard to act cool.

OZZY

Please, you're like a sister.

Roxanna forces herself to be relieved.

ROXANNA

That's what I told Freddie this
morning. You know what I mean,
that you're like a brother.

A FINE GIRL walks by them. She ogles Ozzy sexily.

FINE GIRL

Hey, papi.

Ozzy makes a point of acknowledging her equally as
lustfully.

OZZY

Hey, girl.
(to Roxanna)
I better get back to work.

As Ozzy leaves ---

ROXANNA

I'll see you later at the
Parranda.

But Ozzy is already inside. Roxanna groans with
frustration.

TINA (O.S.)

(knowingly)
Mmm hmm.

Roxanna turns to see Tina smoking in the corner, sipping
coquito. She tosses Roxanna a box of condoms.

TINA (CONT'D)

Merry Christmas. They're on the
house.

INT. ANNA AND EDUARDO'S BEDROOM - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE

Anna sits at her vanity rifling through her jewelry box and trying on earrings to go with her outfit. Suddenly, she comes across a locket. She opens it. Inside is a bit of beach sand.

Anna sees Eduardo gazing at her sadly from the doorway. She quickly puts the locket away.

EDUARDO

I was just looking for my grey sweater.

ANNA

It's on top of the dryer downstairs.

Eduardo wishes he could say more, but instead he turns on his heels and walks away. Anna fights back her tears.

INT. BASEMENT - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE

Sarah takes clothes out of the dryer when she hears Eduardo walking downstairs SINGING "TEMPORAL." She smiles and finishes SINGING the last words of the SONG with him. He returns her smile, impressed.

EDUARDO

I see you've been practicing for the Parranda.

SARAH

I'm trying. I didn't exactly grow up singing Christmas carols.

EDUARDO

You're doing great. You don't know how much it means to me. I look forward to the Parranda all year.

Sarah smiles at him, then changes the subject to keep the sadness from welling up inside her.

SARAH

You must be looking for this.

Sarah hands him his sweater. Neatly folded. Eduardo takes her hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDUARDO

Thank you. And thank you for
keeping my secret.

SARAH

Look Eduardo, I really appreciate
your trust in me ---

EDUARDO

(keeping it light)
Who else can I trust? You're the
only one that's not Puerto Rican
in the house.

SARAH

I just feel that you need to tell
them.

EDUARDO

They'll know soon enough.

Sarah looks doubtful.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)

Life is short and precious, Sarah.
I don't want anything to get in
the way of making it good for
them.

FREDDIE (O.S.)

(yells)
Hey Dad! Where are the mitt
warmers?

EDUARDO

(yells back)
I'm coming!

Eduardo smiles at Sarah fondly, then hastens upstairs.

INT. ENTRY WAY - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE

There is a flurry of activity as the family dons their
coats and mittens. Suddenly, SALSA MUSIC coming from
outside fills the room. Freddie opens the door to Johnny
and Ozzy SINGING PUERTO RICAN TUNES on a portable karaoke
machine.

EXT. RODRIGUEZ HOUSE

The family files out and joins Johnny and Ozzy in song. They finish LAUGHING. Freddie slaps Johnny playfully on the back.

FREDDIE

You got a karaoke machine for the Parranda this year.

JOHNNY

Merry Christmas! I had a guy program in all the songs.

EDUARDO

Now no one has an excuse to forget the words.

EXT. MARISSA'S APARTMENT BUILDING

The Rodriguez family, joined by a couple of other families, serenade Marissa, Hector and Fernando standing in the third story window. Freddie gazes up to her longingly. Marissa smiles. However, she looks away quickly to make sure that Fernando doesn't see. Roxanna makes fun of Freddie pretending to be a seal pup. Freddie nudges her playfully toward Ozzy. Roxanna exchanges an embarrassed look with Ozzy.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING

The Rodriguez family, now joined by many families including Marissa, Hector and Fernando, are parading and dancing through the street. Alexis and his CREW hang on the stoop, watching them go by. Ozzy and Alexis's eyes lock. Nervous glances are exchanged by everyone. Freddie and Johnny quickly approach Ozzy, leading him away from Alexis with the throng. Freddie and Marissa's shoulder's touch. An electric shock of attraction runs between them. Fernando notices and gives Freddie an evil stare.

EXT. HOUSE

A CROWD, including the Rodriguez family, SINGS one final song to a family standing at the front door. Ozzy is absent. The family claps as the crowd finishes its SONG.

FATHER OF THE HOUSE

Bienviendos a todos. Come on in!

INT. HOUSE

PUERTO RICAN MUSIC plays loudly. The place is packed with people eating, drinking, dancing SALSA and just hanging out.

ON THE DANCE FLOOR

Freddie, Johnny, Roxanna, Marissa and Fernando kick it up.

ON THE SIDELINES

Sarah, Mauricio and Eduardo watch the revelers. Eduardo watches Anna on the dance floor with a SUITOR. He pretends not to care. Sarah and Mauricio look at him with worry.

EDUARDO

Why don't you two dance?

SARAH

(re: good dancers)

And try and compete with that? No way.

Mauricio smiles a thank you to Sarah. She tries to hide her sadness. Suddenly, Eduardo is alarmed when he sees the suitor, put a coat on Anna. He makes his way over to her.

OVER BY ANNA

Eduardo approaches Anna. He glares at the suitor.

EDUARDO

Where are you going?

ANNA

Midnight mass.

Suddenly GLADYS, the same age as Anna, joins them.

GLADYS

Hey, Eduardo. I see you met my new novio. You coming to church?

Eduardo immediately decompresses. Anna tries not to smile.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNA

Please, the man hasn't been to
midnight mass in 20 years.

EDUARDO

I'd love to come.

Anna looks at Eduardo with surprise.

ON THE DANCE FLOOR

The kids wave goodbye to Anna and Eduardo, then exchange a little smile. Perhaps there is some hope for their parents' marriage after all. The party's just getting started. Everybody is dancing with everybody. Sweat and bodies collide. Lost in the moment, Freddie and Marissa begin to drift toward each other.

MARISSA

So, you still got some moves.

FREDDIE

Depends on who my partner is.

MARISSA

I'm sure you said that to all the
boys on the base.

FREDDIE

Come here.

Freddie pulls her close. Marissa does not fight him. She lets the MUSIC draw them more and more in sync with one another until they are lost in each other's allure.

Suddenly, Freddie feels a slam against his face. His knees buckle. He looks up and sees Fernando staring angrily at him.

FERNANDO

Stay away from my girl.

MARISSA

Leave him alone. We were just
dancing.

Freddie sees red and his Marine instincts unleash on Fernando. Everyone freezes. He's on the edge. Freddie stops and pulls himself from Fernando. Johnny looks around the room and sees Roxanna.

JOHNNY

Get Ozzy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Roxanna looks frantically around the room. Ozzy is not there.

EXT. HOUSE

Roxanna rushes outside. A couple of PARTY-GOERS are gathered.

ROXANNA
Anyone seen Ozzy?

PARTY GOER
No.

Roxanna sees the apartment building

ROXANNA
Oh, shit.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - LATER THAT NIGHT

Like a hunter watching his prey, Ozzy watches Alexis approach the building. He notices a WOMAN, early 50's, walking with him. Alexis is holding a bag of groceries.

INT. LOBBY

Alexis and the Woman get onto the elevator.

ALEXIS'S MOM
You should apply at the post office. They hire extra people at the holidays.

ALEXIS
Sure, Mom.

Ozzy gets into the elevator. Alexis knows who it is.

ALEXIS'S MOM
Press eight, please.

Ozzy presses the button.

ALEXIS'S MOM (CONT'D)
You having a nice Christmas?

Ozzy nods. He steps back against the wall. His hand is tucked in the pocket of his coat. The elevator door closes.

INT. ELEVATOR

The elevator rises. Alexis is just waiting for the inevitable shot. Finally, the eighth floor. Ozzy reaches in his pocket.

ALEXIS'S MOM
We're here. Merry Christmas.

Alexis's Mom steps off the elevator.

ALEXIS
Hey, Mom. You go ahead. I forgot to check the mail.

ALEXIS'S MOM
It can wait. You know it's just bills.

Alexis hands her the bag of groceries and steps back in.

ALEXIS
It's Christmas. Maybe there's a card. I'll be right back.

Alexis presses the button to close the elevator doors. The elevator door shuts.

ALEXIS (CONT'D)
Can't let you kill me in front of my mom.

Ozzy swallows hard, takes out the gun and presses it against him.

OZZY
So you know why I'm here.

ALEXIS
I guess it's pay back time. I'm ready. Had ten years to be ready.

OZZY
Press basement.

Alexis presses the button. His hand trembles. The elevator descends. Alexis stares at Ozzy resigned to his fate. His resignation rattles Ozzy. Ozzy cocks the gun, slamming the bullet into the chamber and places it to the front of Alexis's head. Alexis breaks into a sweat and he waits for the gun to go off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OZZY (CONT'D)

He was like a father and mother to me. He was all I had. I got nothing now. Nothing.

ALEXIS

It was either him or me. It could've gone either way, but I got lucky. But now my luck's run out, it was only a matter of time and now it's my turn. So go ahead and do what you gotta do.

Ozzy's head reels. This is not what he expected to hear. Ozzy and Alexis stare at each other for what seems like an eternity as the elevator descends.

Suddenly Ozzy's cell phone RINGS. It RINGS, RINGS, RINGS. The elevator reaches the basement. The doors open.

Abruptly Ozzy pushes Alexis out of the elevator onto the basement floor.

OZZY

Merry Christmas.

Ozzy and Alexis stare at each other until the elevator doors close.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING

Roxanna stares at her cellphone in defeat. She looks up and her eyes meet Ozzy's as he exits the building.

OZZY

Was you calling me?

ROXANNA

Yeah --- Ozzy what the hell?

Ozzy embraces Roxanna like a drowning man on a life raft.

EXT. BRIDGE

Roxanna watches Ozzy hurl the gun into the river. Roxanna shivers. Ozzy puts his arm around her.

OZZY

You must be cold.

ROXANNA

I'm fine. You okay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OZZY

I feel lucky. You calling --- it's like Paquito is still looking out for me.

ROXANNA

I'm sure he is.

Ozzy looks at Roxanna tenderly.

OZZY

He sent me an angel to protect me.

Suddenly Ozzy feels himself swept up in a kiss with Roxanna.

INT. ANNA AND EDUARDO'S BEDROOM

Eduardo takes his pajamas out of the chest of drawers. Anna watches him as she sits on her bed taking off her earrings. When Eduardo turns, she quickly looks away. Eduardo gazes at her tenderly. He approaches her and puts his hand on her shoulder. Anna struggles not to concede to the warmth of his touch, as much as, Eduardo fights back his longing for her.

EDUARDO

Good night, Anna.

Eduardo makes a move to go. Anna takes his hand.

ANNA

How could you do it? I thought we were happy.

EDUARDO

You are the only woman that I have ever loved.

ANNA

And this Susie Lou?

Eduardo looks at Anna with surprise.

ANNA (CONT'D)

(bitterly)

You think I don't know her name.

EDUARDO

Let's just enjoy the kids --- Christmas. We'll have plenty of time to talk about this after the holidays.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNA

After the kids leave, I never want
to talk to you again. Get out!

Eduardo leaves reluctantly.

INT. - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - NIGHT

Eduardo nurses a drink contemplatively LISTENING to "Alma
Con Alma." Freddie and Mauricio stumble in LAUGHING,
drunk. They try to straighten up when they see their
father.

FREDDIE

(surprised)
Dad, you're up.

MAURICIO

Everything okay?

EDUARDO

Better than you fools. Heard you
got into a fight with Fernando.

FREDDIE

Look -- Pop ---

EDUARDO

When you love a woman, you would
do anything for her.

FREDDIE

Ah --- well ---

EDUARDO

Mauricio knows what I'm talking
about. Never forget that feeling,
son.

Eduardo and Mauricio share a smile. Eduardo points to a
small scar above his eye.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)

You know how I got that?

Freddie and Mauricio heard this story a million times.

FREDDIE

Wrestling Manuel Santos on the
pier in Ponce.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EDUARDO

He was the feather weight champion
of the world, but I was not going
to let him steal my girl.

(deflates)

And now I can't get a tree down to
give her a view. I should've paid
the guy the extra money.

MAURICIO

You were right. The guy was
gouging you. We don't need him
anyway. We can get that tree down
ourselves.

Eduardo lights up like a Christmas tree.

EDUARDO

I got some chain in the garage.
Let's do it. Right now.

Freddie and Mauricio catch Eduardo's enthusiasm like the
plague.

FREDDIE AND MAURICIO

Yeah!

ANGLE ON:

Mauricio ties the chain around the tree.

EXT. RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - NIGHT

Freddie attaches the end of the chain to the back of the
truck. Eduardo sits in the cab waiting.

FREDDIE

It's ready.

EDUARDO

Let me know when it's tight.

Eduardo puts the car into drive and eases forward, slowly
tightening the chain. Freddie signals him to keep going
until the chain is taut.

FREDDIE

Stop.

Mauricio walks to the driver's window of the truck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAURICIO

Sure you don't want me to drive?

Freddie joins Mauricio and Eduardo.

EDUARDO

I got it. Just wait 'til your ma wakes up tomorrow and sees this.

FREDDIE

(chuckles)

She's going to freak.

Freddie bangs on the truck for good luck. Freddie and Mauricio high five as they get out of the way.

Eduardo puts the truck into drive and hits the gas. The truck doesn't move. He keeps the foot on the gas. The truck strains against the chain and the tree until--SNAP--the chain breaks. The truck, unprepared for its sudden lightness, hurtles across the street, crashing into a fire hydrant. Water shoots up in the air over the truck. Eduardo is slumped over the steering wheel. Freddie and Mauricio rush toward him.

FREDDIE AND MAURICIO

Dad!

EXT. RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - LATER

An ambulance and fire truck are parked outside. PARAMEDICS wheel Eduardo toward the ambulance on a gurney. Mauricio and Freddie escort him anxiously.

EDUARDO

So I'm a little banged up ---

Anna, hastily dressed, rushes to his side.

ANNA

You could've killed yourself! What were you thinking?!

EDUARDO

You wanted a view. I was going to give you a view.

FREDDIE

I shouldn't have helped him.

MAURICIO

I helped too. Jesus, do you have to blame yourself for everything?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As the paramedics place Eduardo in the ambulance ---

EDUARDO

(to Anna)

Don't listen to them. I would a
done it anyway. I'm gonna get that
tree down, just you watch me.

As the paramedics help Anna into the ambulance ---

ANNA

(to the paramedics)

You'd better make sure that you
have his head examined.

As the ambulance doors are about to close, Sarah rushes
up to Anna and hands her a plastic bag full of
medication.

SARAH

This is his medication. They might
need this.

Anna, looking confused, takes the bag and gets into the
ambulance with Eduardo.

INT. WAITING ROOM - HOSPITAL

Anna sits alone. Tears run down her face unabated. When
she sees Freddie, Roxanna, Ozzy, Mauricio and Sarah
approach, she wipes the tears from her eyes and collects
herself. However, her children are not fooled. As soon as
they see her, they know something is wrong.

MAURICIO

Ma, what's the matter?

ROXANNA

Is Dad okay?

ANNA

Sit down, all of you, please.

The family takes a seat and look at her anxiously. Anna
takes a breath.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Your father has cancer.

The family all register shock and devastation. All except
Sarah, who tries to blend into the metallic chair.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROXANNA
(in complete
disbelief)
Cancer!

MAURICIO
(to Anna)
Are you sure?

The tears begin to well up again in Anna's eyes.

ANNA
Yes.

FREDDIE
He seems so fine.

ANNA
(losing it)
And here I was going to leave him!
God is punishing me.

Anna sobs. Roxanna comforts her. Roxanna looks to her siblings, her eyes tearing up. Mauricio and Freddie look lost.

ROXANNA
Come on, we got each other. We're
gonna help Daddy fight this thing.

Mauricio and Freddie look at their sister and mother grieving and know that they have to pull it together.

MAURICIO
What kind of cancer is it?

ANNA
I don't know. They're calling his
doctor in.

An idea begins to dawn on Mauricio.

MAURICIO
He has a doctor? You mean he knew.

Anna looks at Sarah who sinks in her chair.

FREDDIE
(flabbergasted)
What? Why didn't he say anything.

Anna continues to look at Sarah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ANNA

I don't know.

FREDDIE

Didn't you speak to him?

Anna still looking at Sarah ---

ANNA

No.

Mauricio observes Anna's steely gaze at Sarah and is immediately suspicious.

MAURICIO

Then how did you find out about this?

Anna still looks at Sarah. Mauricio joins her with a questioning gaze. The others notice Anna and Mauricio looking at Sarah. Sarah feels all eyes on her.

SARAH

(sheepishly)

Me.

INT. CAFETERIA - HOSPITAL

Sarah and Mauricio gather pastries and coffees for the family.

MAURICIO

How could you not tell me?

SARAH

And betray his trust?

MAURICIO

How about my trust? You didn't tell me about the job offer and now my dad?

SARAH

When are you going to trust in the fact that I love you. Your dad loves you, Mauricio. Just 'cause I love my job doesn't mean I love you less. Just 'cause your Dad has other kids, doesn't mean he loves you less. You'll see, when one day we have kids.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAURICIO

I'm starting to wonder if that's
ever going to happen.

SARAH

I want to start trying right away.

Mauricio examines her carefully.

MAURICIO

Really? You're not just saying
that to make me feel better?

Sarah lets out an exasperated GROAN.

SARAH

I'm supposed to be the neurotic
one in this relationship and
you're the one that's supposed be
racked with guilt. Life is short
and fragile and if you keep
waiting for the right time to do
something, that time may never
come. So I figure you might as
well just do it.

MAURICIO

What about the job?

SARAH

I'm still going to take the job.

Mauricio gauges Sarah. He knows she's not going to budge
on this. He takes a moment and then realizes ----

MAURICIO

When it happens, we'll just figure
it out.

Mauricio embraces her. Sarah melts in his arms. Those
were just the words she wanted to hear.

INT. ROOM - HOSPITAL - LATER

Everyone struggles to put on a brave face for Eduardo.
Johnny gives him a warm embrace.

JOHNNY

The tree looks worse than you do.
But it didn't go down, so you
better not go down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A smile spreads across Eduardo's face. DR. SUSAN LIU, Chinese, mid 40's, attractive, walks in. All eyes turn to her expectantly.

EDUARDO

(fondly)
Hey Susie Liu.

Anna looks at Eduardo. Fresh tears spring to her eyes. So this is Susie Liu. Eduardo smiles at her sheepishly.

SUSAN LIU

Hey, Eduardo. How you holding up?

EDUARDO

As well as can be expected.

SUSAN LIU

(to the family)
I'm Dr. Liu. Your Dad's oncologist. It's nice to finally meet you all. He's told me so many great things about you.

Anna and Eduardo are lost in each other's gaze. There is so much they want to say.

MAURICIO

What's the prognosis?

ROXANNA

Has he started chemo?

FREDDIE

Or radiation?

SUSAN LIU

Look, I know you have a million questions and I am more than happy to answer them. I've got another patient to see and I think your Dad needs some rest. Why don't we meet down at the cafeteria in 20 minutes?

Susan Liu leaves. Anna and Eduardo still have not taken their eyes off each other.

ROXANNA

She seems nice.

JOHNNY

Hot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Everyone shoots Johnny a look except for Eduardo and Anna. Without taking his eyes off of her ---

EDUARDO

Why don't you kids head down to
the cafeteria? I need a moment
alone with your mother.

Everyone is moved, even Johnny, as they see the love between Anna and Eduardo. The kids leave. Anna embraces Eduardo.

EDUARDO (CONT'D)

Mi amor.

Anna slaps him playfully, but with sad frustration.

ANNA

Stupido. Why didn't you tell me?

EDUARDO

I wanted us to enjoy the time we
have.

ANNA

How is me thinking that you are
off with some other woman
enjoyable?

EDUARDO

I'm sorry, it's just that when you
started going on about the divorce
I thought maybe this is good.
Maybe she will see that she will
be happy without me around.

Anna's eyes well with tears. She strokes his hair.

ANNA

Like that's possible. You silly
man, what am I going to do with
you?

Eduardo draws her to him.

EXT. RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - DAY

Freddie and Mauricio uncoil the chain from around the tree. Mauricio touches the bark where the chain was once tied. It is unscathed.

MAURICIO

Not even a dent.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Freddie and Mauricio shake their heads and look up in awe at the tree.

INT. KITCHEN - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE

Sarah peels a mound of green bananas. Anna shows Roxanna how to make incisions on a huge hunk of pork shoulder.

ANNA

And after you're done, really make sure you get the salt in there.

(to Sarah)

And don't forget the plantains.

ROXANNA

We got it, ma. Now go back to the hospital.

Anna gazes at Roxanna and Sarah.

ANNA

I'm glad you all are home.

Roxanna's cell RINGS. She doesn't want to pick it up.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Is it your agent?

ROXANNA

Yeah.

Roxanna leaves the kitchen. Anna looks up to the heavens.

ANNA

Por favor Dios. We need some good news today.

SARAH

Amen.

Sarah and Anna share a little smile, but their smile fades when they see Roxanna walk through the door downcast.

ROXANNA

I didn't get the part.

Anna rushes over to comfort Roxanna.

ANNA

Mi pauvrecito bebe ---

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH

I'm sorry.

ROXANNA

It's okay. I think there's going to be plenty for me to do around here.

It dawns on Anna what Roxanna's is thinking.

ANNA

We'll be fine. We don't need your help.

ROXANNA

Yeah you do, ma.

Roxanna hugs her mother. Anna relents. Sarah watches, misty eyed. Roxanna pushes Anna out the door.

ROXANNA (CONT'D)

Now go and I promise we won't screw up.

EXT. RODRIGUEZ HOUSE - NIGHT

Roxanna sits on the stoop and smokes a cigarette. She takes in the tree in the front yard, the people, the cars on the street, the neighborhood. Ozzy pulls up and joins her.

OZZY

How are you holding up?

ROXANNA

If I see anymore sofrito, I think I'll scream. I don't know how my ma does it.

Ozzy hands her a pack of cigarettes.

OZZY

Thought you could use these.

Roxanna opens the pack of cigarettes.

ROXANNA

I should probably quit now with the whole thing with Dad.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OZZY

Today might not be the best time.
(beat)
I heard you didn't get the part.

Roxanna lights her cigarette.

ROXANNA

It's like Puerto Ricans got DSL
hooked up to their lips.

OZZY

It's Humboldt Park. You know
everybody hangs real tight around
here.

ROXANNA

(chuckles)
That's why I love it.
(beat)
I got the part. I just didn't take
it.

Ozzy looks at her agape.

OZZY

Wow.

ROXANNA

It was for the seventh lead in a
TV show that'll probably be off
the air in three episodes. It
weren't all that.

OZZY

Yeah it was.

Roxanna shrugs. She has made up her mind. There's nothing
more to say. Ozzy gets in closer to her.

OZZY (CONT'D)

I can't say I'm mad at you.

Roxanna's leans in to kiss him.

ROXANNA

You better not be.

The door opens. Freddie steps out to see Roxanna and Ozzy
making out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FREDDIE
(pleasantly
surprised)
Whoa. What do we have here?

Roxanna and Ozzy look up at Freddie sheepishly.

ROXANNA
Get a life, Freddie.

Freddie continues on, smirking. He turns back only to find them making out again. He smiles wistfully.

EXT. STREET

Freddie wanders. He takes in the sights and sounds of the neighborhood, the MUSIC, the people hanging out on the stoops, street vendors. He finds himself in front of a vendor selling toys and stops in front of a large fire engine.

EXT. OUTSIDE MARISSA APARTMENT

Freddie bangs on the door. Marissa opens the door.

MARISSA
'Nando?

She sees Freddie and the present now wrapped. She wasn't expecting this.

MARISSA (CONT'D)
Hey.

She gives him a hug.

MARISSA (CONT'D)
How's your Dad?

FREDDIE
He's okay for now, but it's cancer.

MARISSA
I'm so sorry, Freddie.

FREDDIE
Thanks.
(beat)
So, Fernando's not here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARISSA

He's at his cousin's house. He's coming by soon. He's not gonna be happy if he finds you here.

FREDDIE

(re: gift)

I just came by to bring this.

MARISSA

You didn't have to ---

Marissa smiles when Freddie approaches Hector, who is in his pjs, mesmerized by the TV.

FREDDIE

Hey papito, I brought you something.

Hector takes his eyes off the TV. Marissa takes a seat on the couch and watches Freddie help him unwrap the gift. Hector's face lights up when he sees the fire truck.

MARISSA

Say thank you.

HECTOR

Thank you.

Hector plays with the truck. Freddie joins Marissa on the couch.

FREDDIE

I know things got messed up with the fight, but I was hoping you'd still stop by tomorrow.

MARISSA

I can't.

FREDDIE

But you got to. You always bring the flan.

MARISSA

We're going to Fernando's parents place.

FREDDIE

Oh.

Freddie gazes at Marissa and realizes that this maybe the last time he has to set things right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FREDDIE (CONT'D)

I'm looking at you and I realize
the one thing that I haven't said
to you is that I'm sorry. I'm
sorry, Marissa.

Marissa smiles sadly.

MARISSA

Look, Freddie, when we fall in
love we take a chance that we
might get hurt, but we make a
choice to do it anyway. Just like
with Lenny. When he switched watch
with you, he knew he was taking a
risk, but he chose to do it
anyway. It was his choice,
Freddie, not yours.

Freddie tries to keep from getting choked up.

FREDDIE

It's like I don't have any control
over anything --- And now this
thing with Dad.

MARISSA

Life happens, Freddie. Lenny took
your place and you're still here.
You have to let go of this guilt.
He gave you a second chance and
you owe it to him to make the best
of your life. Why would you want
to throw that away?

The phone RINGS. Marissa picks up.

MARISSA (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

Hey.

(pause)

Could you pick up some milk?

Thanks.

(to Freddie)

That was Fernando.

Freddie gets up from the couch, reluctantly. Marissa
follows him to the door.

FREDDIE

I'm glad you found someone to make
you happy.

(pause)

I just wish it could've been me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARISSA

Me too.

Marissa and Freddie share a sad smile. Freddie wants nothing more than to kiss her. Marissa wishes she could return his embrace. Instead, she opens the door.

MARISSA (CONT'D)

You'd better go.

FREDDIE

Good-bye, Marissa.

MARISSA

Good-bye.

Freddie realizes that this is it. He leaves.

EXT. STREET

Freddie exits Marissa's building. He walks away in the falling snow and sees a pay phone across the street.

INT. PHONE BOOTH

Freddie stands in the booth. The phone stares back at him. He takes out a little book. He looks up a number. He hesitates at the phone. He starts to lose courage and then psyches himself up. Freddie dials a number. It RINGS and RINGS. He is about to hang up, reconsiders, and then is about to hang up again when finally...

MRS. BREWER (O.S.)

Hello?

FREDDIE

(nervously)

Ah -- Hi. Mrs. Brewer. Ah -- It's Freddie. Lenny's friend ---

A beat.

MRS. BREWER (O.S.)

I'm so glad you called.

Relief floods Freddie's face.

INT. FAMILY ROOM - RODRIGUEZ HOUSE

It's Christmas Day. Salsa BLARES. The Christmas celebration is in full swing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Freddie enters, double fisting, a pitcher full of coquito in one hand and cup of it in the other.

FREDDIE

Who needs more coquito?

Ozzy wades through the debris of wrapping paper and presents toward him, eating an empanada. He takes the pitcher from Freddie.

OZZY

When do we ever not need more coquito?

Roxanna takes the empanada and takes a bite.

ROXANNA

Dinner's almost ready. You better slow down.

Freddie pulls her toward him in a little dance step.

FREDDIE

Leave the man alone.

OVER BY THE COUCH

Sarah pulls a christening robe out of the box.

SARAH

A christening robe?!

ANNA

Mauricio told me about your plans.

Sarah shoots Mauricio a look. She wants to kill him, but can't help but smile.

SARAH

(to Mauricio)

We never discussed anything about a baptism.

MAURICIO

What, so he or she is going to have a bar mitzvah? Whoever heard of a Puerto Rican Jew?

FREDDIE

Geraldo Rivera.

ROXANNA

Juan Epstein.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAURICIO

Juan Epstein is a TV character.

ANNA

Actually, in San Juan there are a lot of Puerto Rican Jews.

Sarah looks at Anna gratefully.

JOHNNY (O.S.)

Freddie, Ozzy I need a little help over here.

SARAH

That's a beautiful necklace Eduardo got you.

Anna fingers a small diamond cross on her neck. Eduardo comes and embraces Anna from behind.

EDUARDO

(suggestively)
That's not all she's getting.

Anna swats Eduardo playfully.

ANNA

Cono.

Eduardo LAUGHS.

EDUARDO

I meant the tree. I'm getting you that view. I'm going to have that guy come take down that tree right after the holidays.

ANNA

Don't you touch that tree. It's old. It's ugly. It's stupid roots are ripping up the concrete, but it's my tree and I love it and who needs a view anyway? Like I don't know what's across the street.

EDUARDO

Whatever you wish.

Eduardo and Anna hug. Suddenly, Johnny, Ozzy and Freddie walk through the door carrying a 42" plasma flat screen with a big bow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOHNNY

Look what fell off the back of the truck.

Everyone laughs. Freddie walks over and cranks up the stereo.

FREDDIE

Time to bring the Rodriguez Christmas up to a respectable level.

Mauricio does a Salsa step, grabs Sarah and begins dancing. Everyone joins them. We PULL BACK to show the entire family dancing and SINGING. The beauty of a Latin Christmas.

We continue to PULL BACK to reveal the revelry of the family in the house, then the house, then tree.

We PULL BACK even further to reveal the neighborhood as the Christmas celebrations spill out through windows and doors, onto stoops and sidewalks. This is Humboldt Park. This is family.

EXT. BODEGA - EARLY MORNING

A crystal clear day, yet freezing. The snow is crunchy and hard. Everything is covered in a layer of ice. Eduardo's car pulls up. The passenger windows are frosted over. The driver side opens. Eduardo exits and briskly heads to the store.

The passenger door opens. Freddie exits the car and falls in line behind Eduardo. They stop at the front of the bodega.

Eduardo takes the key out of his pocket with his gloved hand. He puts the key in the padlock to the iron gates guarding the door of the store. The key sticks in the lock. Eduardo begins to jiggle the key.

EDUARDO

When it's cold like this. You gotta jiggle the key twice in the lock or else the lock sticks.

Freddie puts his hand on Eduardo's shoulder.

FREDDIE

I got it, Dad. I got it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Freddie jiggles the lock twice ever so slightly. The lock opens. Eduardo smiles.

EDUARDO

I know you do, son.

Freddie pushes back the iron gates. Eduardo claps him on the back. They head inside the store. As the lights turn on inside the store....

PULL BACK TO:

The sign, "Rodriguez and Son" perched above the door.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END