

"SUGAR"

by

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PLEASE NOTE: Unless otherwise specified, when we are in the Dominican Republic, all dialogue will be spoken in Spanish with English subtitles. In the United States, characters will speak in Spanish where appropriate.

1 **EXT. ACADEMY FIELD - DOMINICAN REPUBLIC - DAY** 1

A high angle looking out over a well-manicured baseball field carved out of a tropical jungle. A game is currently in progress.

A1 **ON THE FIELD** A1

Wearing KANSAS CITY KNIGHTS uniforms, mostly Black and dark-skinned Dominicans as well as several lighter-skinned Venezuelans (17-22 years old) are set in their positions, poised for the next pitch.

CLOSE ON the pitcher, MIGUEL SANTOS (aka AZÚCAR/SUGAR - 19, lean, Black and handsome). Sweat drips down his face in the oppressive midday heat. He steadies his glove and ball at his chest, peeking over at the RUNNER on first base. Miguel lifts his leg high into the air, rears back his right arm, and FIRES the ball toward the plate.

THUD! A cloud of dust pops off the CATCHER'S mitt as the ball slams inside.

UMPIRE

Strike three!

The BATTER lowers his head, helpless in the face of Miguel's overpowering fastball.

FROM THE DUGOUT, Miguel's TEAMMATES CHEER him on. HEAD COACH REYES (dark-skinned, 30s) nods approvingly, CLAPS.

BEHIND THE HOMEPLATE BACKSTOP, a dozen rookie players also in Kansas City uniforms cheer for their team. Two YOUNG PLAYERS clocking Miguel's pitches look at each others' radar guns, which read 92 and 93 MPH.

As the next batter steps up to the plate, Miguel's catcher, JOSE (18), taps his index finger on his thigh, calling for an outside fastball.

The next pitch is popped up on the infield between first and home. Miguel locates the ball, points to the sky, but Jose and first baseman, PEDRO BERROA, nearly collide, as the ball lands between them and the runners reach base safely.

B1 FROM THE OBSERVATION TOWER, the ACADEMY'S DIRECTOR, LEANDRO ALVAREZ (light-skinned, late 50s) and several other COACHES and SCOUTS jot down notes on their clipboards. B1

C1 ON THE FIELD, Miguel glares at Pedro, who averts his eyes, and C1
kicks the dirt.

Miguel looks in for the sign from Jose, nods, and delivers a tight fastball that sends the batter stumbling backwards to the dirt.

Some players LAUGH and heckle the batter. Others point angry fingers at Miguel, who greets the batter back to the plate with a friendly, but authoritative, grin.

He sends in the next pitch and the batter swings right through it, getting nothing but air.

2 **INT. ACADEMY DINING ROOM - NIGHT** 2

The TEAM (about 35 young men) gather around several tables for their standard baked chicken and rice lunch. The mood is friendly and playful as players tease each other across the tables. Miguel, sitting with his friends MARCOS (2nd base) and ALFONSO (3rd Base), works on a second helping of dessert.

MARCOS

Check out Sugar... Puts on twenty pounds in two months; now he's going for twenty more.

MIGUEL

(mouth full of food)
All muscle, baby. Rock solid.

For some NEW PLAYERS, distinguishable in the sea of BLUE uniforms by their BLACK "tryout" jerseys and ragged sneakers, it is their first healthy meal, and they eat as if it were their last. One of them, SALVADOR (Black, scrawny, 17) holds his plate up to his mouth, shovelling food down his throat.

PEDRO

Slow down, kid, it ain't going nowhere.

A few of the guys LAUGH.

MIGUEL

(to Pedro)
If you hustled half as much as him, maybe you'd be hungry too.

The other guys "ohhhh" Miguel's insult, as Salvador and Miguel exchange subtle grins.

3 **INT. ACADEMY CLASSROOM - SAME DAY**

3

Kids crowd around in a circle, repeating after the animated English instructor, SEÑOR SANCHEZ, who goes over some English BASEBALL TERMS in the center. As he repeats the terms, he enthusiastically pantomimes the meanings of each.

SANCHEZ

Fly ball.

CLASS

Fly ball.

SANCHEZ

Line drive.

CLASS

Line drive.

SANCHEZ

Ground ball.

CLASS

Ground ball.

SANCHEZ

Home run!

CLASS

Hone rone!

CLOSE ON Miguel, repeating the strange words.

4 **INT. RECREATION ROOM - SAME NIGHT**

4

It's dark, and most of the team sits around an old TV set watching the climactic final scene of *Field of Dreams* dubbed in Spanish. Kevin Costner asks his father to play catch in a voice that sounds nothing like Kevin Costner.

Miguel passes through the room, and we follow him out of the rec room down a hall, and into...

5 **THE WEIGHT ROOM**

5

...where he sits down at the bench press, lowers his head in thought. TRACK IN CLOSE as he crosses himself, mouths a prayer, then leans back onto the bench.

TRACK OUT as he lifts the bar, and begins a set of presses.

FADE OUT.

6 **EXT. ACADEMY FIELD - DAY**

6

The Kansas City Director of Minor League Operations, RUDY HUBBARD (white, 40s), watches a TRYOUT SESSION, where TWO SKINNY TEENS in worn street clothes pitch to uniformed catchers. Their AGENT talks on a cell phone nearby.

Alvarez, the academy director, approaches one of the kids, whispers in his ear. The kid smiles tentatively.

Alvarez joins Rudy and they speak in English.

RUDY

What'd you tell him?

ALVAREZ

I told him to grip the ball more gently. Like a tit.

They both crack up.

FROM THE TRYOUT MOUND. The kid looks over to the two men pow-wowing about him. He breathes in, nervous...

7 **BATTING CAGE - MINUTES LATER**

7

Pedro, sweating hard, takes a few cuts, but only seems to be hitting weak ground balls and foul tips.

ALVAREZ

Pedro Berroa. Third year. Hasn't developed like we hoped.

RUDY

How much he sign for?

ALVAREZ

Forty-five.

RUDY

Jesus. These kids keep getting more expensive. How much did you sign for back in the day?

ALVAREZ

3000. When I was fifteen.

Rudy smiles and moves on. Alvarez follows. Pedro watches the men as they walk away.

8 **BULL PEN MOUNDS - MINUTES LATER**

8

Alvarez and Rudy approach a PITCHING COACH instructing Salvador. Miguel warms up next to him.

ALVAREZ

Salvador Torres. Been practicing with the team for almost a week. Still raw, but he's got a lot of potential.

RUDY

We gonna sign him?

ALVAREZ

Soon. Soon. We want to play it low-key, see what his agent says.

RUDY

How much you think?

ALVAREZ

They've gotten two offers from other clubs. Agent says they were around a hundred.

Rudy raises his eyebrows.

ALVAREZ

(firm)

He's good.

Rudy looks over to Miguel.

RUDY

What about him?

ALVAREZ

Miguel Santos. Great arm. We signed him two years ago for fifteen.

Miguel fires in a pitch. Rudy nods, impressed.

RUDY

Good deal. He throw any junk?

ALVAREZ

(in Spanish)

Sugar!

Miguel looks over, sees the American with Alvarez.

ALVAREZ

Show us your curve.

Miguel nods, nervous, focuses. He pitches. The ball curves very subtly over the plate for a strike.

RUDY

Not bad. Mind if I try something?

Miguel looks back to the men.

RUDY
Hey, kid, do you mind? May I?

Miguel stares blankly at Rudy, not understanding.

ALVAREZ
(in Spanish)
Give him the ball.

Miguel hands Rudy the ball, and Rudy demonstrates how to handle a knuckle curve ball, which looks strangely unorthodox, with the index finger tucked against the baseball.

RUDY
Spike curve. Gives you more rotation,
more movement.
(hands Miguel the ball)
You try.

Miguel struggles to emulate Rudy's grip, so Rudy maneuvers his fingers into the correct position. Alvarez laughs.

ALVAREZ
Vamos! Let's go! Pitch it!

Miguel looks over to his catcher, Jose. Winds up the next pitch, and soars it 5 feet wide of the mark.

Rudy and Alvarez laugh. Miguel looks back over his shoulder.

RUDY
It's okay, son, these things take time.
You'll figure it out.

Rudy pats Miguel on the back and walks off with Alvarez. Miguel stares at them hard as they go. He turns back to his catcher, determined, squeezes the ball in spike curve formation. Delivers.

Misses badly again. JUMP CUTS take us through a half-dozen more bad curve attempts, as other players take notice and gather around, some laughing, until...

...finally a perfect curve twists dramatically through the air, landing centered in Jose's mitt.

The other players erupt in amazement, while Miguel stares straight ahead. After a beat, he smiles wide.

9 **INT. ACADEMY CLASSROOM - DAY**

9

Sr. Sanchez stands in front of a chalkboard, reading off lines of a scripted ENGLISH DIALOGUE for the class to repeat. The class' version of the words are jumbled and incomprehensible.

SANCHEZ

I want to talk to you.

CLASS

I want talk to you.

SANCHEZ

Your performance in the mound is not as good as last year. What is the problem?

CLASS

Your performance in the mound is not good as last year. What is problem?

SANCHEZ

I don't know. Maybe my mechanic.

CLASS

I don't know. Maybe mechanic.

SANCHEZ

I want to give you a chance. It is up to you...

CLOSE ON Miguel focused on the baseball in his hand. He practices his knuckle curve grip, not participating in the lesson.

CLASS

I want to give you a chance. Is up to you...

10 **EXT. BASEBALL ACADEMY - MORNING**

10

Miguel walks down a dirt road with his duffel bag. He exits past the gate, waving goodbye to the SECURITY GUARD.

A10

Beyond the manicured lawns and landscaped gardens of the Academy, Miguel passes through the overgrown, undeveloped land where neighborhood CHILDREN play among grazing goats. He continues down the dirt road towards a paved highway in the distance, as bachata music fuels the sound track, and carries over the following...

A10

11 INT. MOVING BUS - DAY 11

Thick stalks of sugarcane race through the frame. CLOSE ON Miguel staring out the bus window. On his way home, he passes...

A11 --half-clothed children flying a homemade kite. A11

B11 --a truck of bananas barreling by with a boy perched on top. B11

C11 --an old man sitting by the street, looking straight at Miguel. C11

D11 --flaming sugarcane alongside the road. D11

E11 --three children wedged between their parents on a motorbike. E11

F11 --the tall, wheezing smokestack of the Cristobal Colon sugar refinery. F11

12 EXT. STREET - SAN PEDRO DE MACORIS - DAY 12

Miguel hops off the bus with his duffel, climbs the pedestrian walkway passing over dozens of rusty railroad cars used for transporting sugarcane to the refinery. We PAN Miguel across the bridge, revealing burning smokestacks in the distance.

13 EXT. SIDE STREET - MINUTES LATER 13

Modest homes line the neighborhood, fashioned from corrugated tin, painted in bold colors, no two houses alike. A skinny pig roams a barren lot. A group of WOMEN with their hair in curlers sit on crates around a dominoes table. They wave their hellos to Miguel, who smiles back.

Local KIDS play stickball in a trash-strewn clearing with makeshift mitts fashioned from old milk cartons or cardboard. They see Miguel and rush toward him as he paces up the block, SHOUTING his name.

As Miguel approaches home, he makes eye contact with a girl, ERICA (15), buying water from a delivery truck. She smiles.

With the kids still clamoring around Miguel, he stops, unzips his duffel and hands out some used baseballs. The kids grab the balls, then run off to play.

Miguel approaches Erica. She puts down her water bucket, gives Miguel a hug.

MIGUEL

How are you, sis?

ERICA

Any news about the States?

MIGUEL

Is that all you have to say?

Miguel helps Erica with the water bucket and walks with her towards their home - a small wooden construction with peeling paint and a rusted aluminum roof. On the lot next to their house, the cinder-block frame of their future home dwarfs the others on the block.

14

INT. MIGUEL'S HOME - NIGHT

14

Miguel and Erica enter the house, where their brother LUIS (7) watches an enormous television, which feels incongruous in the middle of the tiny, dilapidated home. The reception is still crappy, though.

Miguel's grandmother, ABUELA, sits upright on her mattress in the corner of the room.

MIGUEL

Hello, Abuela. You're looking beautiful.

She smiles big at her oldest grandson, opens her arms for a hug. Erica sits at the kitchen table, where her schoolbooks lay open.

MIGUEL

What's up my people? How's the TV?

LUIS

Erica won't let me watch baseball.

ERICA

Not during American Idol, anyway.

Miguel's mother, CARMEN (late 30s) emerges from behind a hanging bed sheet, which acts as a "wall" separating two rooms.

CARMEN

Buenas, Miguelito! Do you have any good news for your mother?

MIGUEL

As a matter of fact, yes.

CARMEN

You're going to the United States?!

MIGUEL

Not yet, ma... But I learned how to throw a knuckle curve.

CARMEN

A knuckle curve? What's that?

A GROUP of KIDS gather at the window.

KIDS

Sugar, come out and play!

15 **EXT. STREET - NIGHT** 15

Gathered under the only functioning street lamp, Miguel rears back and throws in a swooping curve, that causes the BATTER to flinch out of the way, as it breaks perfectly over the plate.

Carmen, Luis and the rest of the barrio ONLOOKERS, "oooohh", the impressive curve.

Miguel notices a group of GIRLS eyeing him from across the street. His eyes stop on one, SOFIA (17). They exchange grins.

16 **INT. MIGUEL'S HOME - NIGHT** 16

Miguel's family - minus Miguel - watches a soap opera. Carmen and Erica are in dialogue with the TV.

The CAMERA PANS away from the family, out the back window, where the new home is being constructed. We ZOOM IN on the structure covered in plastic tarp.

17 **INT. CONSTRUCTION LOT** 17

Amidst tools, dry cement, a half-finished wooden dining table, and other assorted construction materials, Miguel has sex with Sofia on a work table.

18 **INT. CONSTRUCTION LOT - LATER** 18

Miguel throws on his t-shirt. Sofia looks at the wooden dining table. It's artfully done, with details etched into the legs.

SOFIA

When will you finish this?

MIGUEL

Soon. It's just hard to find the time.

SOFIA

It's pretty.

MIGUEL

I'm trying to match the chairs my dad made, but I can't get it right.

SOFIA

Well, I think it's perfect.

MIGUEL

I'll make you another when I'm done.

Sofia smiles, kisses Miguel on the cheek.

SOFIA

And the rest of the house? How long till it's done?

Miguel hesitates.

MIGUEL

Um, another month, maybe two... You know we just did it where Abuela's room is going to be...

SOFIA

(laughing)

Don't tell me that!

MIGUEL

Why not? We can do it in mom's kitchen next. Right over there.

SOFIA

(getting serious)

I hope you make it to the States this year.

MIGUEL

You hope? C'mon, there's nobody better, baby.

SOFIA

(smiling big)

Okay, how about: I KNOW you'll make it.

MIGUEL

Now you're talkin'. And when I do, I'll buy a Cadillac, drive it through the ocean, and bring you back with me.

SOFIA

You can't drive a Cadillac on water.

MIGUEL

Yes! In the States they make cars that drive on water.

SOFIA

You're crazy.

MIGUEL

You'll see who's crazy. Just watch.

SOFIA

I want to see the snow. Does it snow in Kansas City?

MIGUEL

I don't know. But I'll take you to New York City. Yankee Stadium. It snows there. You wanta see me play in Yankee Stadium?

SOFIA

It doesn't snow during baseball season, silly.

MIGUEL

So we'll go for Christmas.

SOFIA

Promise?

MIGUEL

Next Christmas, we'll sail into Yankee Stadium in my Cadillac car-boat. Deal?

SOFIA

You are crazy!

They kiss.

19

EXT. MALECÓN - NIGHT

19

Miguel, Sofia, JAVIER (Black, 22) JAMIE (Black, 26) and ALEXANDRA (one of Sofia's friends) hang out by the malecón (waterside), drinking rum and dancing to merengue that blasts out the open doors of a nearby car. The mood is festive.

JAVIER

(mid-story)

I liked her, but she asked me to cut my hair. I thought about it. She was cute, but... I liked my hair more.

SOFIA

I liked it too, Javi.

MIGUEL

Then why'd you cut it last week?

JAVIER

I thought it was time for a new look.

MIGUEL
Or a new girl.

Sofia punches Miguel in the arm.

MIGUEL
Watch it, baby, that's a million-dollar
arm you're messing with.

JAVIER
He's right! All hail the golden arm.

Javier and the girls drunkenly salute Miguel's arm, pretend to
dust dirt away, but Jaime doesn't play along. He looks on, a
little jealous.

JAIME
You call that flabby rubberband an arm?

JAVIER
Oooh...

MIGUEL
This flabby rubberband can throw 95.
What can yours do?

JAIME
I threw 98 in double-A Portland.

MIGUEL
98? Then why you washing windshields
now? I saw you try and bumrush Javy at
the stoplight last week.

Everyone cracks up laughing, including Jaime, as Miguel grabs
Sofia, and leads her in a dance.

His smile fading, Jaime looks out over the water. Miguel
notices this. Hold.

20

EXT. SAN PEDRO TOWN - MORNING

20

Various Sunday morning images establishing Miguel's hometown:

--A dewey mist covers an empty baseball field, surrounded by
acres of tall sugarcane.

--Women hang laundry on the line to dry.

--A rooster walks alone through a graveyard.

--People spill out of church into the road.

--MIDDLE-AGED MEN drink beer in the dugout during a softball game.

21

EXT. EMPTY LOT FIELD - DAY

21

A makeshift diamond is overrun with weeds, ditches, stones, and trash for bases. Donkeys graze in the outfield, unphased by the LITTLE KIDS (10-14 years old) playing around them.

A YOUNG PITCHER fires in a fastball that BEANS the YOUNG HITTER in the back.

IN THE BLEACHERS, TWO MIDDLE-AGED MEN drink beer and occasionally heckle the kids.

HECKLER #1

You're supposed to aim for the head!

Nearby, Miguel sits beside his old coach, FRANK (early 40s), watching the kids play. One of the local SHOE SHINE BOYS cleans Miguel's shoes with an old toothbrush as Frank cracks open a beer. Frank points out one of the kids on the field.

FRANK

I like this one. Good bat speed. Only twelve years old, out here four, five hours everyday. His mom tells me he's missing school. I say, yeah, but... have you seen his swing?

They laugh.

FRANK

I'm showing his older brother to the Yankees on Monday.

Miguel nods, a hint of disappointment in his eyes.

FRANK

(seeing this)

They don't know what they missed with you. It's cool though. They'll be knocking on your door, offering millions when you turn into a superstar. You'll see...

Miguel nods, appreciating the vote of confidence.

MIGUEL

Have you been to New York?

FRANK

(nodding)

Nothing like playing for a crowd of New Yorkers. They're even louder than Dominicans.

MIGUEL

What's the city like?

FRANK

It's great. But you need to get to Kansas City before you start thinking about New York. Know what I mean?

MIGUEL

You hear anything about spring training yet?

FRANK

Yep.

Frank sips his beer.

MIGUEL

And?

Frank shrugs, as Miguel's sister calls out from the street--

ERICA

Miguel, Luis! Dinner is ready!

MIGUEL

You'd tell me if you knew.

FRANK

Maybe.

Miguel shakes his head, gets up.

MIGUEL

Wanna join us for dinner?

FRANK

Not tonight. But give your mom a kiss for me, okay?

Miguel gives a coin to the boy who's been cleaning his shoes before heading off with his little brother.

Frank sips his beer, calls out to the field--

FRANK

C'mon, Nelson! Fire it in, baby!

22 **EXT. ACADEMY FIELD - EARLY MORNING** 22

A mist hovers over the empty field.

23 **EXT. ACADEMY ENTRANCE ROAD - SAME TIME** 23

A group of Academy EMPLOYEES shuffle down the dirt road on foot.

24 **INT. ACADEMY DORMITORY - SAME TIME** 24

Miguel, laying awake in the upper bed, hears his bunk-mate, Alfonso, stirring beneath him. Miguel peers over, sees Alfonso discreetly pop several pills from a plastic baggy. They make brief eye contact before Alfonso heads out of the room.

25 **INT. ACADEMY KITCHEN - DAY** 25

Several middle-aged women sit on buckets near an open door, peeling yucca. A man fries eggs at the grill, preparing breakfast for the players.

26 **INT. ACADEMY DINING ROOM - DAY** 26

The players eat breakfast. The mood is strangely quiet.

27 **INT. ACADEMY CLUBHOUSE - DAY** 27

The signed players sit around in uniform, while the unsigned "trial" players wear their black jerseys. Coach Reyes addresses them in mid-speech.

REYES

A lot of you are thinking about your families right now. Your girlfriends, sisters and brothers, grandparents. You're feeling the pressure. But, I'm going to tell you something very important, gentlemen... forget it. You've got to think about yourselves. Put all your energy into your game, into your development as a player. Forget about everything else in your life... and just play ball. You wanna succeed, you gotta be like a racehorse, focused on your goal. It's up to you.

28 **EXT. ACADEMY BUILDING - DAY** 28

Several players work out on bars attached to the side of the building.

As Miguel lowers himself after a set of pull-ups, he notices a shiny, black, luxury SUV drive into the academy parking lot.

Miguel watches as Alvarez gets out of the driver's seat, doing business on his cell phone.

29 **EXT. ACADEMY FIELD - LATER**

29

Miguel exercises his pitching arm by stretching an elastic tube tied against a chain-link fence. As he stretches, he watches a group of players line up for a sprint drill, sizing up his future competition.

Salvador, wearing his black jersey, races for his life, beating all the others.

30 **EXT. ACADEMY FIELD - LATER**

30

The sweat-drenched players line up according to their positions, waiting their turns to participate in a double-play drill, where the pitchers cover first base.

Miguel awaits his turn, watching another pitcher, EDDY, run to first to receive a throw from second base, but before Eddy can catch the ball...

...he twists his ankle tripping over the bag.

The coaches rush over to Eddy, who is on the ground wincing in pain. Miguel and the rest of the team watch in nervous anticipation as Eddy struggles to his feet, limps off the field with the aid of another player.

REYES

Next up, Miguel! Here we go!

The ball is hit on the ground to first base, where the fielder quickly throws it over to second. Miguel charges over to first, stutter steps as he nears the base, and receives the throw just in time to beat the hitter and step out of the way. He exhales in relief.

31 **INT. CLUBHOUSE SHOWERS - DAY**

31

The players shower after a gruelling day of workouts.

32 **INT. CLUBHOUSE - DAY**

32

Miguel lounges with an elaborate ice-wrap around his shoulder and upper arm as other players get dressed into street clothes. Coach Reyes comes in, spots Pedro.

REYES

Berroa, see Alvarez when you're dressed.

Pedro nods. Miguel and Marcos exchange knowing glances.

33

INT. ACADEMY DINING ROOM - NIGHT

33

The team eats dinner. At Miguel's table, we catch the punchline of a joke...

MARCOS

So the Dominican's like, 'Fuck, what am I gonna do?' He stays there, points up to the sky and says. 'Look! There's a plane... Right THERE!'

Everyone laughs hysterically, as...

...the young rookie, Salvador, grabs a seat next to Miguel at an adjoining table.

SALVADOR

Hey, Sugar! They made me an offer.

Miguel smiles, but hesitates for a beat as Pedro walks past them and over to an empty table in the corner of the room. Miguel turns back to Salvador, pats him on the head.

MIGUEL

Good for you. Congratulations. How much they offer you?

SALVADOR

(with a big smile)

115,000.

(sensing the other players surprise)

But, you know, my manager's taking, like, forty of it... What'd you sign for?

MIGUEL

Oh, you know, more or less the same. Did you get any other offers?

SALVADOR

Yankees and Seattle, but not as much.

MIGUEL

Just don't get cocky. No one likes a dickhead... Welcome to the team.

Salvador smiles.

SALVADOR

So, why do they call you Sugar?

PEDRO (cont'd)

No more curfews, nobody tellin' me what to do and how to do it. For real, I'm glad this shit's over. I'm a free man.

Awkward silence. The players look at Pedro with pity, unsure how to respond. After a beat, Miguel mocks coach Reyes and the others follow suit, mocking Alvarez and the other coaches.

MIGUEL

(snatching Pedro's cap)

No caps indoors, son!

ALFONSO

Cut the meat with your knife; eat the meat with your fork. NEVER eat the meat with your knife.

MARCOS

Or you'll chop off your tongue.

MIGUEL

Ten p.m. lights out!

PEDRO

(in broken English)

"Tay me outta the ball game, tay me outta the crowd..."

The other players laugh, join Pedro in a loud whisper...

ALFONSO/MIGUEL/MARCOS/PEDRO

"...buys me so peanut and crackay-yacks. I doe-care if I never get back. Roo, roo, roo for home teams, we doe-win is a shame..."

Pedro breaks off from the song, looks out over the field, on the verge of crying. One by one, the other players take notice and stop singing. Silence. Hold.

38

INT. ACADEMY BATHROOM - DAY

38

Hungover, Miguel vomits in the toilet. Reyes opens the stall.

REYES

Santos, what the hell's wrong with you?

MIGUEL

I think I have the flu, coach. I can't pitch today.

Reyes glances over to Marcos and Alfonso standing nearby. They lower their heads in embarrassment like two kids busted by dad.

REYES

You've got five minutes to get out on that mound, Santos.

Reyes marches off.

39

EXT. ACADEMY FIELD - DAY

39

Miguel on the mound. Takes a deep breath. He utilizes every ounce of strength to deliver a pitch, and...

CRACK! The visiting Detroit Academy HITTER knocks the ball over the left field wall for a homerun, wherein...

BLAH! Miguel throws up on the mound. All the players gasp in disgust, but Reyes just laughs.

Miguel looks over to Alvarez, sitting under an umbrella with a clipboard, then to Reyes, hoping he'll yank him out of the game, but Reyes just claps.

REYES

Feel better now? Let's go!

Miguel tries to shake off the cobwebs, steps on the rubber, stares down the next hitter.

CLOSE on his hand revealing the knuckle curve grip. He tosses in the next pitch, which arcs into Jose's glove for a...

UMPIRE

Strike!

Reyes' smile fades, stunned by the beautiful curve.

A SERIES OF JUMPCUTS take us through the next three batters, as Miguel makes quick work of them, mixing up his nasty curve with a blazing fastball.

After the third out, Miguel walks back to the dugout. He takes a seat on the bench, smiles smugly.

REYES

Wipe that smile off your face.

And he does.

40

EXT. ACADEMY FIELD - SUNSET

40

Miguel, Alfonso, and Marcos run laps around the field as punishment for the previous night's activities. They look as if they could pass out at any moment.

FADE TO BLACK.

41 INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

41

Miguel and Marcos sit on a couch in a bare-walled waiting room outside Alvarez's office. They sit quietly, like two kids waiting for the principal.

Coach Reyes pokes his head out of Alvarez's office, motions them inside.

42 INT. ALVAREZ'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

42

Miguel and Marcos stare straight ahead, nervously. Alvarez stares at them, icy cold. After a beat...

ALVAREZ

I am very disappointed. Just when I was starting to like you guys, you go and do something stupid. What do you have to say for yourselves?

MARCOS

But Alfonso was there too--

ALVAREZ

--No excuses. This is unacceptable behavior. You guys need to learn discipline.

Miguel and Marcos lower their heads.

REYES

You need to remember that you still have a long way to go, a lot of hard work ahead of you before you make it. First, there's getting your shot in the American Minor Leagues: rookie ball, single, double, triple A - all that before you even set foot in a major league ballpark. So, you better pull it together quick...

ALVAREZ

Because nobody's gonna take this shit from a couple Dominican rookies when you go to the U.S. for Spring Training this season.

They glance up, eyes wide. Did he just say...

REYES

You've been invited to Spring Training.

Everyone smiles (even Alvarez).

43 **INT. TEXTILE FACTORY - DAY** 43

CAMERA follows behind the FLOOR MANAGER, as he passes rows of WOMEN of all ages, working on sewing machines for an American underwear company. He stops behind one woman, taps her on the shoulder. The woman removes her earphones, turns around. It is Miguel's mother, Carmen.

FLOOR MANAGER
Phone call. He said it's important.

44 **INT. FACTORY HALLWAY** 44

Carmen picks up the phone.

CARMEN
Hello?

Hold on her reaction shifting from that of concern to elation. She struggles to contain her joy.

45 **INT. MIGUEL'S HOME - NIGHT** 45

Miguel opens a new bottle of rum, pours shots for everyone. The whole family and all of Miguel's neighbors are jammed inside the tiny house and spilling out into the street. Merengue blasts from the new home stereo system.

FRIENDS and FAMILY pat Miguel on the back. He smiles, basking in the glory of success. Erica kisses Miguel on the cheek.

ERICA
Don't forget to call everyday. I want to know everything!

MIGUEL
Everything?

ERICA
You know what I mean, dummy.

MIGUEL
Of course I'll be calling to keep you in check, make sure your grades don't slip.

ERICA
Look who's talking.

Carmen interrupts, drapes her arms around Miguel, kissing him repeatedly. As Erica looks on, we get the sense that she's used to being on the outside of this kind of attention.

CARMEN

You are my hero!

Carmen pulls Miguel close, takes something from her pocket, puts it in his hand.

CARMEN

It was your father's. I want you to take it with you...

Miguel looks at the cross, kisses his mother on the cheek. As he looks up, he notices Erica slip away.

CARMEN

You've been given a wonderful gift, Miguelito. And God willing, you will continue to do great things with it. I love you so much.

She kisses him on the forehead.

A SERIES OF JUMPCUTS present a variety of family and friends introducing themselves to Miguel.

UNCLE ANGEL

Miguelito! You gonna remember your uncle Angel when you're all big and famous? Don't forget your family, kid. Never forget where you came from.

JUMP CUT TO:

COUSIN LUPE

Lupe! Cousin Lupe! Remember that time we went skinny-dipping at the Malecón?

MIGUEL

When?

JUMP CUT TO:

COUSING FELIPE

You were eight years old! Hated the goats so much. You would cry and cry and cry and cry. What a baby you were. Do you remember?

JUMP CUT TO:

MIGUEL

What's your name?

AUNT LOLA
Lola! Your aunt Lola!

JUMP CUT TO:

UNCLE JEFFE
Uncle Jeffe!

JUMP CUT TO:

NEIGHBOR ANA
Your neighbor Ana. I grew up around
the corner from here.

Ana lays a juicy kiss on Miguel. He smiles.

JUMP CUT TO:

FRANK
Don't give me any shit, kid. I taught
you everything you know.

Miguel gives Frank a big hug.

FRANK
I'm damn proud of you, kid. Your
father would be, too.

MIGUEL
Thanks. I owe it all to you.

FRANK
Not all. Just forty percent.

Miguel smiles, as Frank leans close.

FRANK
I spent the best years of my life
playing in the States. Life gives you
a lot of opportunities, but baseball
only gives you one. Enjoy every minute
of it.

Miguel nods.

FRANK
How's your new curve?

MIGUEL
It's pretty sweet.

FRANK
Good. Here...

Frank hands Miguel a pen.

MIGUEL
What's this for?

FRANK
Your autograph.

Miguel seems puzzled, but searches for something to write on.

FRANK
I'm kidding, you arrogant prick. It's
so you can write your family... and me,
too... if you feel like it.

Miguel gives Frank another hug.

46 **INT. MIGUEL'S HOME - LATER** 46

Miguel dances salsa with Sofia, and then switches partners,
dances with Carmen.

As he dances close with his mother, he catches a glimpse of
Erica standing with some friends off to the side.

47 **EXT. CONSTRUCTION LOT - LATER THAT NIGHT** 47

Miguel and Erica stand in silhouette, isolated from the party
raging outside. Miguel sands one of the legs of the dining
table.

MIGUEL
Where's your boyfriend?

ERICA
Which one?

MIGUEL
I don't know; the ugly one.

ERICA
Hector?

MIGUEL
Okay, where's Hector?

ERICA
(shrugs, then)
Some other party.

MIGUEL
So what about the good-looking one?

ERICA

Mmm, Fernando... I think he's out there dancing with Sofia.

Miguel's eyes get big for a second, until Erica smiles. He's been had. He smiles back. A beat.

MIGUEL

I'm proud of you, sis. You're going to do great things too. We all know it.

ERICA

I'm gonna miss you...

She kisses Miguel on the cheek.

ERICA

C'mon, let's dance.

MIGUEL

Go on, I'll be out in a minute. And tell Fernando to keep his dirty hands off my girl.

Through cracks in the tarp, Miguel watches Erica join the dance party in the street.

Savoring this rare moment alone, he breathes deep, blows wood dust off the table leg, and continues sanding. Hold.

FADE TO BLACK.

48 **INT. AIRPLANE - DAY** 48

Miguel looks out the window over the dry, Arizona desert.

49 **INT. AIRPORT BAGGAGE CLAIM - DAY** 49

A duffel bag emerges from the luggage shoot, and slides down to the rotating conveyor belt, where an AMERICAN TOURIST grabs it and exits frame. PAN OVER to Miguel, Marcos and several other DOMINICAN PLAYERS (including ANTONIO and JULIO) excitedly waiting for their bags. Miguel perks up upon seeing his, quickly snatches it off the belt. The others smile and APPLAUD.

50 **EXT/INT. AIRPORT SHUTTLE BUS - LATE AFTERNOON** 50

The other Dominican players goof off, while Miguel stares out the windows at the rocky suburban Phoenix landscape. He catches wide-eyed glimpses of wacky shaped cacti, strip malls, and, of course, a drive-thru Starbucks.

ON THE RADIO, a conservative talk show host warns listeners about the evils of Iran, suggests war as the only solution.

53 **EXT. ALL NIGHT DINER - NIGHT** 53

Through the window we see the players sitting in a corner booth. A semi truck BLASTS through the frame.

54 **INT. ALL NIGHT DINER** 54

Over beers, the players study their menus in confusion, as Jorge does his best to explain how things work.

JORGE

Never, never, never, drink from the hotel mini bar. That shit is expensive. You want beer, buy it at the store. You wanta see titties? They got magazines for that. Don't pay in the hotel.

A WAITRESS approaches.

WAITRESS

You boys ready?

JORGE

The greatest thing about the States? You can order breakfast 24/7. French toast is the best. It's nothing like Dominican toast.

(in English to waitress)

French toast please.

The players stare at Jorge, a little intimidated.

WAITRESS

Who's next?

After a beat, the players respond in unison...

MIGUEL/MARCOS/ANTONIO/JULIO

French toast.

The waitress nods and leaves, wherein the players crack up laughing at their first English language dining experience.

55 **EXT. SPRING TRAINING FIELD - DAY** 55

FROM THE OBSERVATION TOWER, we look down over the multiple-field spring training complex, where the MINOR LEAGUERS work out. The vast facilities are triple the size of what we saw in the Dominican Republic.

A55 ON THE FIELD, Miguel, Marcos, and Jorge stretch out on the grass. A55

Jorge, wearing an elastic knee brace, points out a young, AFRICAN-AMERICAN GUY running wind sprints across the field...

JORGE

Brad Johnson. He just signed for a million dollars out of college.

Miguel and Marcos watch Brad with fascination, searching for some sort of physical representation of his wealth.

JORGE

There's a lot of guys like that. But you can't let that intimidate you. Everyone knows Dominicans rule the game.

Two Venezuelan players, ORLANDO MATO (23, catcher) and ED POVEDA (22, center field) step up.

ORLANDO

What's this about Dominicans ruling the game?

ED

No, he must've said Venezuelans.

Jorge stands up, exchanges hugs with Orlando and Ed as they continue their debate over which Latin country has the best players.

JORGE

Sammy, Manny, Pedro...

ED

Santana, Zambrano, the Guillens!

JORGE

Are you guys all from the same family?

ORLANDO

Look who's talking... Are these your brothers?

JORGE

What, all Dominicans look the same, now?

They all smile, stop razzing each other momentarily to meet the new players.

JORGE

This is Miguel and Marcos. Up from Boca Chica.

(to Miguel and Marcos)

(MORE)

JORGE (cont'd)
Orlando and Ed. We all played in
Bridgetown together before I moved up
to Double A and left these fools
behind.

ORLANDO
But you couldn't hang in Wichita.

JORGE
I injured my knee, asshole. But I'm
healthy now. You'll see.

ORLANDO
Fifty bucks you're back in Iowa next
month.

JORGE
Fifty bucks you're still an asshole
next month.

They all LAUGH.

56

ON THE FIELD - LATER

56

Pitching coach, STU SUTTON (white, 40s), addresses the minor
league pitching staff in mid-speech.

STU
You've gotta show us your best game
here. Remember that, until you reach
the top, there's always guys above you,
hustling to keep you here. And guys
below you pushing to take your job. We
have 75 pitchers in this camp competing
for less than 50 positions come April
3rd. So you gotta work hard...

While all the players respectfully listen to Stu, it is clear
that very few of the Latino players can understand him.

57

LATER ON THE PRACTICE MOUNDS

57

Miguel stretches his arm, while observing another group of
PITCHERS throwing in the bullpen. He stares at them with
intensity, sizing up his new competition.

58

LATER ON THE FIELD

58

Miguel faces off against a HITTER in a simulated game scenario.
One, two, three, he strikes him out on three straight pitches.

Stu and another COACH exchange impressed looks.

STU
Bring over Leonard.

The other Coach calls over to the adjoining field.

COACH
Bring over Leonard!

59 **ON THE FIELD - MINUTES LATER** 59

ON major league all-star ROB LEONARD in the batter's box, awaiting Miguel's pitch.

Miguel takes a deep breath, psyches himself up. He puts everything he has into a hearty fastball, which...

...sails right over the plate for a STRIKE, as Leonard calmly watches and readies himself for the next one.

Feeling confident with his stuff, Miguel fires in the next pitch, and...

WHACK! Leonard sails it over the right field wall.

Stu Sutton smiles at Miguel.

STU
Welcome to America, kid.

60 **INT. ALL NIGHT DINER - NIGHT** 60

CLOSE ON a plate of french toast. Miguel, Marcos, Antonio, and Julio all chow down on french toast again. They eat in silence for a few beats, until...

ANTONIO
I have to admit... I'm getting a little sick of the french toast.

The others nod in agreement, but continue eating.

61 **INT. HOTEL LOBBY - PAY PHONE - NIGHT** 61

Miguel talks on the phone to Sofia.

MIGUEL
I pitched against Rob Leonard today.

A61 We INTERCUT with Sofia, at her home in the Dominican Republic. A61

SOFIA
No shit! You strike him out?

MIGUEL
Yeah.

SOFIA
Liar!

MIGUEL
You don't believe me?

SOFIA
No.

MIGUEL
Well, I got one strike at least.

Sofia laughs.

SOFIA
So, do you like it there?

MIGUEL
Mmmm... It's different.

SOFIA
Different how?

MIGUEL
I don't know. Just different. Like
the food is really sweet.

SOFIA
I thought you liked sweet things.

Miguel smiles.

MIGUEL
All the players are really good.

SOFIA
But not like you.

MIGUEL
No, not like me. Of course not... But
they're pretty good.

Another beat. Sofia looks down at her bare feet, scrunches her
toes.

SOFIA
I miss you.

MIGUEL
I miss you, too.

62 **INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT** 62

Marcos tries to sleep, while Miguel channel surfs through the late night infomercials and reality TV dating shows.

After a few beats of this...

MARCOS
(annoyed)
Turn it off.

And he does.

63 **EXT. SPRING TRAINING FIELD - SUNRISE** 63

Miguel runs laps along the outfield wall in the empty stadium.

64 **EXT. SPRING TRAINING FIELD - GAME DAY** 64

The Kansas City B-squad is facing off against the Los Angeles B-squad, which is rallying in the top of the 9th.

65 **IN THE BULLPEN** 65

Miguel warms up, glancing over to the action on the field between pitches. He sees...

...Los Angeles gets another hit, scoring another run, so...

...Stu Sutton walks out to the mound, signals for Miguel.

Miguel throws one more warm-up toss and sprints onto the field.

66 **ON THE MOUND** 66

Miguel arrives, ready for action. Stu hands him the ball, while the catcher, Orlando, translates.

STU
Just relax. Know your pitches. And take it easy. Ground ball. Okay?

ORLANDO
(in Spanish)
Just relax. Ground ball.

Miguel nods. As he tosses a few more warm-up pitches from the mound, Stu goes back to the DUGOUT where Marcos and Julio anxiously await Miguel's spring training game debut.

The BATTER steps in and Miguel steps on the rubber, touches his father's cross around his neck, tucks it in his jersey. He looks to Orlando, and nods at his request for a fastball. He throws it in...

UMPIRE

Strike!

Stu exchanges impressed glances with another COACH.

Miguel sends in the next one, and...

...the HITTER checks his swing, but goes too far.

UMPIRE

Two!

IN THE DUGOUT Marcos gets to his feet, clapping for encouragement.

Miguel nods to Orlando, delivers again...

CRACK! The ball is smoked toward Brad Johnson at second base. He leaps out, body fully extended, and makes a fantastic catch. But he's not done yet...

The runner at second is too far off the bag, so Brad hops to his feet, and fires a laser beam to second, finishing off one of the sweetest double-plays you'll ever see.

Miguel pumps his fist into the air, and the team runs to...

67

THE DUGOUT

67

Marcos and Julio are the first to greet Miguel with high-fives. Orlando, Ed, and Jorge, coming off the field, follow in suit. Miguel awaits Brad's return to the dugout and high-fives him too, but they soon return to their segregated places on opposite ends of the bench.

68

INT. CLUBHOUSE - DAY

68

Most of the players are gone or heading out when Miguel approaches his catcher, Orlando, a few lockers away.

MIGUEL

Where did you learn English so good?

ORLANDO

Back home in Caracas.

MIGUEL

Like in high school, or something?

ORLANDO

Yeah, but it's still hard though.
People talk fast.

Miguel agrees, as an ASSISTANT COACH finishes handing out checks to the remaining players.

Miguel sits on the bench near his locker, opens his envelope to find...

INSERT: a check for \$502.18.

He SMILES.

69 **INT. CLASSROOM - LATE AFTERNOON**

69

The ENGLISH INSTRUCTOR goes over baseball related vocabulary off-screen, while Miguel glances through his "English for Baseball Players" notebook.

He finds a page with pictures of different foods along with their English names. He looks at all the foods, stops at an image of a fried egg. He circles the word "egg."

The instructor finishes up class, and the exhausted Latino players get up to leave. Marcos stands, leans over to Miguel.

MARCOS

C'mon. Let's grab some dinner.

MIGUEL

Nah, I'm gonna stay and work out a little. I'll catch up later.

70 **INT. WEIGHT ROOM - NIGHT**

70

Miguel does bicep curls alone in the weight room, when...

...Brad Johnson enters. They exchange hello gestures, and proceed to workout on opposite sides of the room. After finishing his set, Miguel turns to Brad.

MIGUEL

(struggling in English)
Good catch.

BRAD

Thanks... I got lucky.

They continue with their respective routines.

71 **INT. WESTERN UNION - NIGHT**

71

CLOSE ON Miguel's hands counting out seven fifty-dollar bills.

He approaches the CLERK behind thick, bullet-proof glass, and slides the money and routing slip through a retractable tray.

He smiles BIG at the clerk. Proud.

72

INT. ALL NIGHT DINER - NIGHT

72

The usual waitress hovers over Miguel, alone at the usual booth.

WAITRESS
French toast, right?

MIGUEL
No... Egg. Egg, please.

WAITRESS
Eggs. No problem. How would you
like'm?

Miguel stares at her.

MIGUEL
Yes.

WAITRESS
Um, okay, uh... Scrambled? Over easy?
Sunny side up?

A beat... He didn't count on this part. He thinks hard,
pressure mounting.

MIGUEL
(giving up, embarrassed)
French toast.

WAITRESS
No eggs? You sure?

MIGUEL
French toast.

WAITRESS
(disappointed)
Alright, honey. French toast it is.

As she leaves, Miguel shakes his head, dejected. Stares out the
window.

A72

MINUTES LATER. The waitress returns with french toast and
another plate with samples of different eggs.

A72

WAITRESS
Okay... This is scrambled. Scrambled.

MIGUEL
Scrambled.

WAITRESS
(pointing on plate)
Over easy.

MIGUEL
Over easy.

WAITRESS
(and finally)
This one's tricky... Sunny-side-up.
Sunny...

MIGUEL
Sunny...

WAITRESS
Side...

MIGUEL
Side...

WAITRESS
Up...

MIGUEL
Up.

WAITRESS
Sunny side up... On the house.

MIGUEL
Thank you.

WAITRESS
(smiling proud)
You're welcome.

Miguel gets to work on his food, feeling good.

FADE OUT.

73 **EXT. CLUBHOUSE ENTRANCE - DAY**

73

Miguel leans against the wall, eyes closed. He whispers a prayer to himself, then heads inside the...

74 **INT. CLUBHOUSE - DAY**

74

...where he passes a dejected-looking Antonio, on his way out. Antonio avoids eye contact, and Miguel understands what's happened.

He sees Marcos, Julio, and a few other players lingering near the bulletin board. He approaches, cautiously.

MARCOS

They're sending Antonio back.

MIGUEL

Shit. What about you guys?

JULIO

We're staying here. Rookie ball.

Miguel nervously glances over to the list.

MARCOS

Go take a look.

Miguel goes to the board scans the names on a roster, finds his.

INSERT: We PAN from his name to "(A) Bridgetown, Iowa"

MIGUEL

I'm not with you guys?

MARCOS

Straight to Single A, bro. With Jorge.
Congratulations.

MIGUEL

Where is Iowa?

75 **EXT/INT. MOVING BUS - IOWA HIGHWAY - DAY**

75

Various images of vast Midwest farmlands... corn country.

Miguel looks out the window at the passing landscape.

76 **EXT. BRIDGETOWN, IOWA BUS DEPOT - DAY**

76

Bridgetown's number one baseball fans, EARL HIGGINS (70) and his wife HELEN HIGGINS (also 70) watch as the bus pulls into the depot. They're holding a sign that says: "Miguel Santos #1"

About a dozen young players hop off the bus and grab their bags. Some of them jump into waiting taxis, but Miguel sees his name on the Higgins' sign.

MIGUEL

Can't I stay with you guys?

JORGE

Don't worry, Sugar. The Higgins are good people. I stayed with them last time I played here.

Jorge walks over towards the Higgins with Miguel.

MIGUEL

Then why don't you stay with them again?

JORGE

They have a no girls policy.

HELEN

Jorge! Good to see you back in Bridgetown!

Jorge hugs Helen, shakes hands with Earl.

JORGE

Thank you. This is Miguel.

Orlando whistles to Jorge from a taxi.

JORGE

I go now. Take care of my friend.

Jorge waves goodbye to the Higgins, pats Miguel on the back, and hops in a cab with Orlando and Ed.

Awkward beat, as Miguel, Earl, and Helen stand in silence.

77

EXT/INT. HIGGINS CAR - DAY

77

Earl and Helen ramble on in English, while Miguel spaces out the back window at the passing corn stalks, which are strikingly similar to the sugar cane stalks back home.

HELEN

We've had Dominicans, Venezuelan boys, a Colombian, one from Panama, blacks and some Americans. Mostly Spanish boys, though. Johan Santana, Mendy Lopez and Ramon Martinez all stayed with us. Years ago.

EARL

Last year we had this boy, Junior Sanchez. Nice boy. Decent with the glove, but couldn't bunt to save his life.

HELEN

Two-for-twelve in sacrifice situations.

EARL

Cost the team at least two victories.

HELEN

Oh, that's being generous! I'd say
four or five.

78 **INT. HIGGINS FARMHOUSE - DAY** 78

Miguel, Earl, and Helen enter the old, crickety home.

HELEN

Put your things down. I'll show you
around.

79 **INT. KITCHEN** 79

HELEN

This is the kitchen. Help yourself to
whatever you'd like. You can make a
list of special foods you like to eat
and put it here.

Helen points to a grocery list tucked under a broccoli magnet.

HELEN

Oh, and over here, this drawer is a
little funny.

She pulls open the silverware drawer.

HELEN

You have to be careful or...

She pulls it a little too far and it falls off its rail. Miguel
nods.

80 **INT. WASHER/DRYER ROOM** 80

HELEN

This is the washer and the dryer. For
your clothes. You put the soap in this
one. Sopa.

Miguel looks at her, confused. Did she just say "soup"?

HELEN (CONT'D)

The other one's just hot air.
Caliente.

A80 **INT. STAIRCASE** A80

Miguel follows Helen up the stairs.

HELEN

Your room is up here.

84 **EXT. HIGGINS PORCH - DUSK**

84

Helen brings a large glass of lemonade to Miguel gently swaying on the porch swing.

MIGUEL

Thank you.

She nods, looks out over the landscape, and for the first time we see...

...an EXTREME WIDE SHOT of the Higgins house, which seems to be situated in the middle of nowhere. The low sun casts a dreamy *Days of Heaven* glow over the image. A tiny Helen Higgins returns inside the house, while Miguel continues to sway on the porch swing, alone. Hold.

FADE TO BLACK.

85 **INT. MIGUEL'S HOME (DOMINICAN REPUBLIC) - DUSK**

85

Carmen talks into the phone.

CARMEN

Everyone is so proud, Miguelito. It's all we can talk about.

A85 We INTERCUT between Carmen and Miguel IN HIS NEW IOWA BEDROOM. A85

MIGUEL

Did you get the money?

CARMEN

Of course.

MIGUEL

Good. And Victor? Can he start construction on the house again? I'll be sending money every two weeks now.

CARMEN

We just paid him. He's coming next week.

MIGUEL

What about you? You get something for yourself like I said?

CARMEN

Me? What do I need?

MIGUEL

C'mon, mom...

CARMEN

What?

MIGUEL

You didn't get anything?

CARMEN

Well, maybe I got some new shoes, but I'm not telling.

Erica strolls by, yells into phone...

ERICA

Three pairs, Miguel! But who's counting?

Miguel laughs on his end.

MIGUEL

Good for you, mom.

HELEN (O.S.)

Miguel! Time for dinner!

MIGUEL

I have to go, mom. The lady is calling me. Smells like dinner.

CARMEN

Dinner? Don't forget who your real mother is, Miguelito. Are you going to prefer her cooking to mine now?

MIGUEL

Impossible... I love you, mom.

CARMEN

Everyone loves and misses you. Strike one out for me, okay?

86

INT. HIGGINS DINING ROOM- DUSK

86

The Higgins' son, MICHAEL (40s), and his wife, HILARY (40s), and their daughter, ANNE (17), join Earl and Helen for Miguel's first dinner in Iowa.

Helen leads the table in grace...

HELEN

Dear Lord... Thank you for the meal we are about to eat. And for blessing us with our new guest. And guiding him safely on his journey from the Dominican Republic to Bridgetown...

Miguel glances around the table. Everyone's head is bowed and eyes closed.

His eyes stop on Anne, seated across from him. She's an attractive all-American girl, but would never dream of flaunting her good looks. After taking her in, Miguel closes his eyes.

HELEN

...And finally, Lord... Please look kindly over the Swing this season. May all the players stay healthy and... well, why not?... if there's anything you can do to help us win another championship, we'll take that too... Amen.

The table laughs, followed by a chorus of Amens. Miguel opens his eyes, greeted with smiles. He smiles too, as everyone passes dishes around the table.

MICHAEL

So, Miguel... Do - you - eat - meatloaf - back home?

HELEN

I already told you, Michael, he doesn't speak any English.

MICHAEL

I know but... I'm curious to know what he thinks of the meatloaf.

EARL

What do you care? You didn't cook it.

HILARY

(to Michael)

I doubt they have meatloaf in the Dominican Republic, dear.

ANNE

I bet they have something similar. They probably just have another name for it.

All eyes are on Miguel as he nervously takes a bite.

A suspenseful beat, until...

...he smiles and nods.

Everyone sighs, smiles, and nods back.

MICHAEL

This is good old-fashioned American home cooking, Miguel. Welcome to America.

MIGUEL

I like. Thank you.

EARL

Well, very good, Miguel. De nada to you, mi amigo. De nada to you.

Anne smiles at Miguel, a little embarrassed by her grandpa. Miguel smiles back, then gets back to his meatloaf.

87

INT. BRIDGETOWN SWING CLUBHOUSE - DAY

87

The team's CLUBHOUSE MANAGER (19, redheaded freckle face), hands out schedules to a handful of returning players.

CLUBBY

If you guys ever need tickets for family or friends, just let me know two days ahead of time. Thursday's opener is already sold out, but I saved one row, so you need to speak up now...

Miguel enters the room, looking for his locker. The Clubby takes notice.

CLUBBY

Santos - you're over there.

Clubby points Miguel in the right direction, where he finds his locker and several pressed jerseys waiting for him. Miguel takes his practice jersey, sits down in front of the locker, as...

BRAD (O.S.)

(in bad Spanish)

Que pasa, hermano?

Brad pats Miguel on the back. Miguel is excited to see a familiar face.

MIGUEL

(in bad English)

What up, Flaco?

BRAD

Dude, I was totally psyched when I saw your name on the squad. Good times.

MIGUEL

Yeah, okay.

Brad finds his locker, and they both suit up.

88 **INT/EXT. UNDERGROUND CORRIDOR - MINUTES LATER** 88

We follow Miguel through the tunnel, which leads out to the...

89 **BRIDGETOWN SWING BALL PARK FIELD** 89

A stunning little park that sits at the Mississippi River's edge, underneath the Crescent Bridge. A dozen scattered players warm up on the lush green grass.

A wide-eyed Miguel steps onto the field for the first time and takes it all in. Hold.

FADE TO BLACK.

90 **INT. WESTLAND MALL - DAY** 90

Miguel and Jorge stroll through the mall. Miguel notes the steady barrage of discount signs, plastic jewelry kiosks, and product samples.

91 **INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - MINUTES LATER** 91

Miguel follows Jorge through the men's section when a rack of Hanes underwear catches his eye. He turns a package over.

INSERT: in a little corner of the package Miguel reads, "MADE IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC".

He checks the price tag.

JORGE

C'mon, bro, let's find you a suit.

MIGUEL

I can't afford a suit.

JORGE

I didn't say buy a suit. I said find a suit. So when you make it big, you'll already know what looks good.

92 **INT. DEPARTMENT STORE SUIT SECTION - NOT MUCH LATER** 92

Miguel emerges from the dressing room in a white suit and electric blue collared shirt.

JORGE

Hot damn! That's what's up!

MIGUEL
You like it?

JORGE
I love it! You look like an all-star,
bro.

Miguel admires himself in the mirror.

JORGE
(in a fake announcer
voice, in English)
"Starting pitcher for American
League... from Kansas City... Miguel...
'Sugar'... Santos."

Jorge fakes massive crowd applause. Miguel laughs.

MIGUEL
What about you, man? You try one.

Jorge shrugs, smiles.

JORGE
Me? Nah... I'm all washed up.

MIGUEL
C'mon...

Jorge gets distracted by a pack of TEENAGE GIRLS cruising by.
They smile at the players, who smile back.

MIGUEL
Very nice.

JORGE
Dude. You have no idea. Just wait
till we go to Big Muddy's.

MIGUEL
Big Muddy's?

Jorge reaches into his wallet, removes his ID, hands it to
Miguel.

JORGE
You gotta be 21 to drink there. This
is my old license. They won't know the
difference.

Miguel looks at Jorge's ID photo, cracks up.

97 **EXT. ON THE FIELD** 97

As a YOUNG LADY begins singing the Star-Spangled Banner, Miguel takes off his hat, looks out to the American Flag. Hold on his solemn expression.

98 **EXT. IN THE DUGOUT** 98

We STAY ON Miguel for the game's highlights, JUMP CUTTING his reactions to the best plays of the game.

PLAY 1: he casually spits sunflower seed shells, then CLAPS the final out of the inning, high-fiving players returning to the dugout.

PLAY 2: chats to Jorge, when they react to the CRACK of the bat, leap to their feet, eagerly anticipate an umpire's call, and CHEER when the call goes their team's way.

PLAY 3: grimaces at the sight of a hit-by-pitch.

PLAY 4: leaps to his feet, CLAPS.

PLAY 5: leaps to his feet, doesn't clap. Sits back down.

PLAY 6: Miguel and Jorge sway to the seventh inning stretch classic "Take Me Out to the Ball Game."

PLAY 7: sitting with Brad, they both point to something on the field and crack up laughing. Of course, we don't see what they're laughing at.

PLAY 8: standing with Jorge and the rest of the players, the mood is tense. The players react to a hit ball, as their heads jerk toward the outfield, waiting, waiting, waiting, and...

A98 CELEBRATION! Whatever happened, the game is over and we follow A98 the players out onto the field to mob Brad, who just scored the winning run.

99 **EXT. BIG MUDDY'S FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT** 99

The BOUNCER examines Miguel's photo ID, which is actually Jorge's. He shoots Miguel a suspicious look, but hands it back and lets him through.

100 **INT. BIG MUDDY'S - NIGHT** 100

Some of the Swing players celebrate their first victory with beers at the local bar/dance club. A few of the guys dance with LOCAL GIRLS, but Jorge and Miguel stand against the wall, beers in hand, as they watch the MTV-inspired GRINDING and FREAKING unfolding before them.

MIGUEL

You think they know how to salsa?

JORGE

(smiling)

Go for it, bro. But remember, just cause they dance with you, doesn't mean they want anything else.

Orlando and Ed approach with a couple brews.

ORLANDO

Not from you, anyway.

Miguel notices Brad stroll by, calls him over.

MIGUEL

Yo flaco!

BRAD

What's up fellas? Good game.

They all toast beers.

BRAD

What's with the flaco? I mean...

(flexing his arm)

You call this flaco?

Everyone laughs, as Jorge eyes TWO WOMEN on the dance floor.

JORGE

You ready?

MIGUEL

Let's do it.

101

INT. BIG MUDDY'S DANCE FLOOR

101

Jorge whispers in one of the girls' ears and the two of them begin dancing with him and Miguel. At first cautious, Miguel and his partner ease closer, until Miguel's hands are on her hips, leading her in rhythm to the hip-hop jam, while mixing in some Latin moves as well.

As Miguel and Jorge carve and twist with their partners, several local bar PATRONS begin to take notice of their fancy footwork. But Miguel might be dancing too well for one DRUNK JACKASS in particular, who...

...wanders over, gets in Miguel's face.

JACKASS
(barely audible)
Careful, Paco. This ain't the jungle.

Miguel stares him down. A few clubbers in the immediate vicinity stop dancing, observe. Jorge steps between them, and...

...apparently, drunken egos speak the same language everywhere because Jorge and the Jackass start jawing back and forth in their native tongues. Both seem to be understanding the other, though the MUSIC is too loud to hear anything specific.

Brad and the Venezuelans run over to break it up before anything serious starts. They all hustle out to...

102 **EXT. BIG MUDDY'S PARKING LOT - NIGHT** 102

The Latin players spill out into the brisk night air with Brad and the Swing's designated hitter, JEFF ELKS.

They all pile into Brad's car, as a few locals stand near the club's entrance, watching them go.

103 **EXT. HIGGINS FARMHOUSE - NIGHT** 103

The car pulls up near the house and Miguel stumbles out, as the wild bunch inside HOOT and HOLLER.

The car backs down the road and the players' voices fade out with the hum of the engine.

An upstairs light goes on. Miguel looks up to the Higgins' bedroom where Helen's silhouetted figure lingers in the window. He tiptoes inside.

The sound of a CHURCH CHOIR fades in, and carries over to...

104 **INT. CHURCH - DAY** 104

With the exception of Miguel, the all-white congregation sings hymns about Jesus and the Lord. He tries to suppress a yawn when he sees Anne Higgins singing in the choir. She notices him as she sings. A smile.

Miguel perks up.

105 **EXT. CHURCH PARKING LOT - DAY** 105

CHURCHGOERS flood out of the church after the service. Anne walks alongside Miguel.

ANNE

How'd you like the service?
(off his blank stare)
Our church? Hope it wasn't too boring
for you. Did you go to church in the
Dominican Republic?

He shakes his head.

MIGUEL

I am sorry. I do not understand.

ANNE

S'okay. You understand more than a lot
of folks around here I bet.

He nods, still unsure.

ANNE

So listen, me and some friends are
hanging out later. You should stop by
my house after the game. It's gonna be
super chill. Grandma can take you
there, but here...

She stops a random CHURCHGOER...

ANNE

Can I borrow a pen real quick?

The churchgoer hands over a pen, and Anne writes her address on
Miguel's forearm.

ANNE

After the game. My house... Good
luck, tonight.

Anne runs off. Miguel looks after her, mystified.

106

INT. SWING CLUBHOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

106

Half-uniformed players hang out, eating sandwiches, passing
around a PLAYBOY magazine, signing souvenir baseballs, and
talking at full volume. Hip-hop BLASTS from a stereo, competing
with an old DUKES OF HAZARD rerun on the TV. HARDY, the
Bridgetown Swing mascot, passes through with his enormous monkey
head under one arm.

Miguel sits at his locker, psyching himself up for his first
start. He touches Luis' drawing, which is taped to the inside
of his locker. Closes his eyes, takes a deep breath.

107 **EXT. BRIDGETOWN SWING BALL PARK - LATE AFTERNOON** 107

ON THE MOUND. Miguel opens his eyes, as the LEAD-OFF HITTER steps into the batter's box. He takes a moment, crosses himself. Play ball.

Miguel nods to his catcher, Orlando, then fires in the first pitch high for a ball.

When he gets the ball back, he looks to the stands, where...

...Earl, Helen, Michael, and Hilary sit uncomfortably close to the field in choice box seats.

He takes a nervous breath, fires in the second pitch. Ball two. Same for the third. And forth.

The batter jogs to first, and the crowd GRUMBLES.

108 **INT. RADIO ANNOUNCERS' BOOTH** 108

Jack Jefferies does his thing on the mic.

JACK JEFFERIES

Santos, apparently feeling the butterflies on his first professional outing. Hailing all the way from the Dominican Republic, Santos wowed the club with his power during Spring Training. But he's off to a rocky start tonight.

109 **ON THE MOUND** 109

Jorge comes over from third base as the batter walks to first.

JORGE

Relax, Sugar. It's the same game we played back home. That's all it is. Just a game, man. So relax. Let's have some fun. Okay?

Miguel nods. Jorge points out the next batter. Another Dominican.

JORGE

See? Just like home.

Jorge runs back to his position at third. Miguel tucks his index finger into his knuckle curve grip. Delivers...

UMPIRE

Strike!

JORGE

That's it! There it is!

And the next pitch...

...is hit sharply to Jorge at third, who fires it over to second for one, and on to first for a double play.

The crowd goes WILD and Miguel finally exhales.

One, two, three... he mows down the next BATTER on three consecutive strikes. More APPLAUSE.

110 **IN THE DUGOUT** 110

Orlando hands him his first strikeout ball. Miguel takes a seat, wipes the sweat from his head, then looks down at Anne's address scribbled on his forearm.

111 **SCOREBOARD - LATER THAT NIGHT** 111

We PAN RIGHT across six innings of zeroes. The Swing are leading 4 to nothing in the top of the 7th.

112 **ON THE FIELD** 112

THWACK! The HITTER smokes a double off the left-center wall.

113 **INT. RADIO ANNOUNCERS' BOOTH** 113

JACK JEFFERIES

Nearly unhittable for the first 6
innings, that was only the second hit
allowed by Santos tonight.

114 **BACK ON THE FIELD.** 114

The next BATTER dribbles a spinning groundball at Jorge, but it squirts through his legs into left field, allowing the runner to score an unearned run from second.

Stu walks toward the mound, signals for the bullpen. He and Orlando greet Miguel on the mound.

STU

Good game, kid. Enjoy this...

ORLANDO

(in Spanish)
Nice work, Sugar.

MIGUEL
(in Spanish, to Orlando)
But that wasn't my fault. I can go
longer.

ORLANDO
(in Spanish)
Take it easy; it's your first game.

Though he doesn't speak Spanish, Stu knows exactly what's
happening. He takes the ball from Miguel with a smile, but
Miguel doesn't move, still reluctant to leave the mound.

As the FANS begin to cheer his stellar debut...

STU
You hear that? It's for you, kid.

Orlando smiles, pats Miguel on the butt, and Miguel finally
starts his slow walk off the field. As we follow him off, the
FANS rise to their feet and Miguel approaches the dugout to a
standing ovation. On his way in, he's greeted by his teammates
with congratulatory high-fives.

AT THIRD Jorge stares at the dirt, frustrated by his misplay.

115 **EXT. BRIDGETOWN SWING BALLPARK - AFTER THE GAME** 115

FIREWORKS EXPLODE in the sky as the kids in the crowd watch
excitedly.

116 **IN THE DUGOUT** 116

Miguel and a few other players hang over the railing, enjoying
the awesome display.

117 **EXT. ANNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT** 117

Miguel rings the doorbell, waits. He's holding a baseball.
Anne opens the door.

ANNE
Hey Miguel. C'mon inside.

He hands her the ball like it's a rose.

MIGUEL
(in rehearsed English)
My first... strike-out.

ANNE
Oh, Miguel... you're so sweet.
Congratulations, I heard you pitched
awesome.

118 **INT. ANNE'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER** 118

Some kind of casual teenage party is in effect. Pizza boxes are spread around the living room and everyone (12-15 WHITE KIDS) are drinking soda from plastic cups. No booze.

ANNE

Hey everybody, this is Miguel. He's from the Dominican Republic, and now he pitches for the Swing.

Everyone manages to say "Hi Miguel" at the same time.

119 **GAME ROOM - A LITTLE LATER** 119

Two guys, RANDY and TRAVIS, play a spirited game of foosball, while Miguel looks on, fascinated.

RANDY

What's up, man?

TRAVIS

Wanna play?

MIGUEL

No. Thank you.

TRAVIS

It's like soccer. You play soccer?

MIGUEL

Soccer? No. Baseball.

TRAVIS

Well this is called foos-ball. Foos-ball.

MIGUEL

Foos-ball?

TRAVIS

Yeah, you got it.

Miguel looks for Anne, sees her going over some papers with another kid. She sees Miguel, waves, then gets back to her conversation.

RANDY

I used to be a pitcher. In little league. I wasn't very good though.

Miguel nods, and another girl, WENDY, chimes in.

WENDY

I heard that the beaches in the Dominican Republic are really beautiful.

Miguel nods again. They stand in silence for an awkward beat, sipping from their red, plastic cups, until...

ANNE

Hey guys, let's get started. Everyone grab a seat.

The teens crowd into the living room, squeezing together on sofas, recliners, and desk chairs. Miguel sits behind the majority of the group, not sure what's going on. Anne stands before them...

ANNE

I'm so glad you all came. Last year, we didn't have half as many people in our group. So, I think this just goes to show the great work we've been doing in spreading the word. But this year, I want us to work harder. Now, I know a lot of you are studying for SATs or working on college applications. And all of that is important, but we need to remember that our spiritual accomplishments are more important. What we do in school or for a job... that's just a small part of who we are. We're only here by the grace of God, so let's get out there and share that grace.

Miguel watches, still unsure what's going on.

120

LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

120

Anne leads the group in song, while Randy plays the piano. Miguel watches; he's the only person not singing.

THE GROUP

(singing)

One there is above all others,
Oh, how He loves!
His is love beyond a brother's,
Oh, how He loves!
Earthly friends may fail or leave us,
One day soothe, the next day grieve us;
But this Friend will ne'er deceive us:
Oh, how He loves!

Miguel observes, a little disappointed, as this is not quite the date he was hoping for.

121

EXT/INT. MOVING BUS - DAY

121

Miguel and Brad are side by side in neighboring aisle seats, while Jorge and Jeff catch some Zs against the window. Miguel's "English for Baseball Players" workbook is on his lap, but he and Brad discuss language that won't likely be found there...

MIGUEL

Mamañema. Very bad. Very bad word.

BRAD

Mama-ñema? What's it mean?

MIGUEL

Mmm... Like--

Miguel mimes fellatio.

BRAD

Cocksucker?

MIGUEL

Cock-sucker?

BRAD

Yeah, we say cocksucker.

MIGUEL

Okay, cocksucker.

BRAD

Mamañema.

They laugh.

BRAD

(in bad Spanish)

Who is your favorite player?

MIGUEL

(in bad English)

Robinson Cano for the Yankees. I know him brother. And you?

BRAD

Roberto Clemente.

MIGUEL

Who is that?

BRAD
What? You don't know about Clemente?

MIGUEL
Is Dominican?

BRAD
Puerto Rican. I can't believe it. This
is tragic. Do you know who Babe Ruth
is?

MIGUEL
Baby Ruth? El chocolate?

Brad stares at Miguel for a beat, and they both crack up.

BRAD
Hey, how'd it go with that girl the
other night?

MIGUEL
Girl?

BRAD
Yeah, didn't you have a date, or
something?

MIGUEL
Oh, she no es my girl.

Brad senses Miguel's disappointment in the matter.

BRAD
No sweat, bro. We'll find you a little
honey on the road.

Miguel smiles. Brad picks up his mp3 player, searches the menu
for something.

BRAD
You like The White Stripes?

MIGUEL
I don't know.

BRAD
Check it out.

Miguel grabs his portable CD player, hands it to Brad, trading
music with him. As Miguel places Brad's Bose headphones over
his ears, The White Stripes' "Seven Nation Army" infuses the
soundtrack and leads us through the following...

At the other end of the dugout, some of the American players listen to a Sunday morning sermon in English.

B127 --TRACK IN on Miguel as he fires in another strike. B127

128 --A KID hands Miguel a baseball card and pen for his autograph. 128
Miguel coolly obliges like he's been doing this for years.

129 --IN THE RADIO BOOTH, after a game, Jack Jefferies, interviews 129
Miguel with Orlando acting as translator.

JACK JEFFERIES

At what point in the game did you realize you had your best stuff?

ORLANDO

(doing his best)

When did you know you were going to be a good pitcher in this game?

MIGUEL

I knew from the time I was very young I would be a good pitcher. Ten, eleven years old. Thanks to God, I have had the opportunity to develop my talents.

ORLANDO

(translating in English)

He knew very early that he was going to pitch good. Eleven years.

Jack Jefferies nods, confused. Miguel and Orlando look at each other, unsure.

END EARLY SEASON SEQUENCE.

130 **INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT** 130

Miguel checks his appearance in the bathroom mirror, while Jorge talks on the telephone with somebody back home. Jorge appears anguished, as he struggles to speak.

JORGE

It's not good. Because I haven't been playing good... No. I'm working hard, but, I don't know... I think they might...

(Jorge glances back toward Miguel)

Listen, I can't talk now.

Miguel gets the hint, steps out of his room into the...

131 **MOTEL HALLWAY** 131

...and we follow Miguel through the lobby, which opens up into an enormous arcade with blinking neon lights, and whistling machines everywhere. His senses on the verge of overload, he continues through the arcade, which then opens up into a...

132 **FUN CITY BOWLING ALLEY** 132

Miguel notices Brad bowling with some GIRLS and other players. Miguel watches for a beat as they laugh at one of the girl's gutter balls. He thinks about going over to say hello, but decides against it, heads back toward the arcade.

133 **INT. MOTEL ROOM - LATER** 133

While Jorge sleeps, Miguel carves a small piece of wood with a swiss army knife. Stops when he hears a burst of MALE AND FEMALE VOICES coming from down the hall. He, goes to the door, listens...

The drunken giggling VOICES get louder as they approach. Miguel looks through the peephole, sees...

...Brad and Jeff with TWO LOCAL GIRLS disappear into their room across the hall.

Miguel puts his ear to the door again, but can't hear anything, so he returns to the desk, begins carving again.

134 **EXT/INT. MOVING BUS - DAY** 134

Orlando and Ed play a spirited game of Casino on a Gatorade jug in the aisle while Miguel, Jorge and Brad chat about movies.

BRAD

Did you ever see "Y Tu Mama Tambien"?

MIGUEL

Y tu mama what?

BRAD

Y Tu Mama Tambien... It's Mexican.

Jorge laughs, shakes his head.

MIGUEL

No, I don't know this.

BRAD

What are your favorite movies?

JORGE

Terminator.

MIGUEL
I like Matrisse.

JORGE
Oh, Matrisse. Very strong.

BRAD
Matrisse? What's that?

MIGUEL
He doesn't know Matrisse?

JORGE
You don't know The Matrisse?

BRAD
The Mattress? I don't know.
(turns to Jeff, beside
him)
Dude, do you know a movie called The
Mattress?

JEFF
The Mattress?

JORGE
With Keanu...?

JEFF
Keanu Reeves?

BRAD
Oh, shit! The MATRIX!!

MIGUEL
Matrisse!

BRAD
Yeah, yeah, the Matrix is badass. I
was like, Mattress? What?

135

INT. MIGUEL'S BEDROOM - DUSK

135

He finishes up a birthday card to his sister Erica, encloses it in a padded envelope along with the wooden etching he carved earlier - a pendant with a cornstalk design. The NYC calendar on the wall in the background indicates we are now in JUNE.

When he's done, he goes to his duffel, pulls out his English language workbook.

Miguel sits on his bed, opens the book.

136

EXT. BRIDGETOWN SWING BALL PARK - DAY

136

A batter swings and misses for strike three. The catcher throws the ball around the horn.

Miguel steps off the mound, grabs the rosin bag for traction, gets the ball back.

His next pitch is hit on the ground toward the first base line, where the first baseman makes a nice back-handed play...

Miguel sprints over to cover the bag, receives the toss, but...

OUCH!

...the RUNNER storms into Miguel before he has time to pull his foot off the bag, knocking them both hard to the ground. The runner is called out, but Miguel is slow getting to his feet.

Stu and the TRAINER run out to check on him. Jorge rushes over from third, and Orlando also comes to help translate.

STU

Nice play, kid. How's your foot?

JORGE

You okay?

Miguel nods, but he's limping back to the mound.

STU

Take it easy. Don't force it. How's it feel?

ORLANDO

(translating)

Don't push it. Does it hurt?

MIGUEL

I'm okay.

STU

Let him toss a few warm-ups.

The umpire grants Miguel a few "test" pitches.

Visibly shaken, Miguel sets up for a warm-up pitch, breathes deeply, and delivers. He lands gingerly on his right ankle, makes a face.

Stu and the trainer exchange glances. Miguel notices this, as he sets up for another pitch. The trainer shakes his head, no.

STU

All right, kid. Give it a rest.

As Stu reaches for the ball, Miguel pulls it away.

MIGUEL

I am okay. Please.

Stu and the trainer sense Miguel's anxiety. Stu puts his arm on Miguel's shoulder for comfort.

STU

You're okay, I know, but let's just be sure... Give me the ball, son.

Miguel sizes them up, reluctantly hands the ball over, and limps off the field with Stu and the other players looking after.

137

INT. ANNE'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

137

The whole family, with a couple new additions, sit around the table in mid-meal: Earl, Helen, Anne, Michael, Hilary, Jorge, Brad and Miguel. Miguel wears a big blue boot on his injured foot, and a crutch leans against the wall behind him.

HELEN

You've been pitching so well... it's a real shame.

EARL

Don't worry, Miguel, you'll bounce right back.

Miguel pokes at his food, avoids eye contact.

HILARY

Where'd you say you were from, Brad?

BRAD

Berkeley.

MICHAEL

Oh, different world out there, huh?
You like to surf?

Brad smiles.

BRAD

Uh, no, I've never tried it. But maybe someday.

JORGE

Your parents visit here?

BRAD

Yeah, I hope so. Maybe when they get some time off this summer.

ANNE

How about you, Miguel? What's your family like?

MIGUEL

My family?

ANNE

Yeah. Like, who do you live with back home?

MIGUEL

I live with my mother, sister, brother... and Abuela?

Miguel looks to Jorge for help.

JORGE

Grandmother.

MIGUEL

And grandmother.

MICHAEL

How about your father, Miguel?

MIGUEL

My father, uh...
(searching for the word)
He die.

Anne nudges her dad under the table.

HELEN

Oh, Miguel, honey. I'm so sorry.

Miguel nods, takes a bite of potatoes. There is an awkward beat as everybody chews.

Miguel musters all his language skills to break the awkward silence.

MIGUEL

(to Michael and Hilary)
You have other child...?

HILARY

Yes, we have a son. Anne's older brother.

ANNE

He's in Iraq.

Brad pauses from chewing, looks around, and nods. More awkward silence. Hold.

138

EXT. ANNE'S PORCH - NIGHT

138

Miguel and Anne sit alone on the porch. We can hear CHATTER from inside, where the others are clearing the table.

ANNE

You like it here in Iowa?

MIGUEL

Yes. I like... Many new things.
(thinks for a beat)
Very different.

ANNE

I bet. You've traveled a long way,
huh? God must have something special
in mind for you...

Anne points out a small scar on Miguel's scalp.

ANNE

What happened there?

MIGUEL

(struggling)
Uh... When I boy... Um... I don't know--

ANNE

Tell me in Spanish.

MIGUEL

(in Spanish, no subtitles)
Okay... When I was little, I wanted to
eat some cherries from a tree. It
wasn't our tree, and there was a fence
to keep us kids away.

Anne hangs on his every word as if she understood perfectly.

MIGUEL

So I climbed up the fence to knock down
some cherries with a stick, but I when
I took my first swing-- whoosh. I
fell. There was a lot of blood.

Anne reaches out, lightly touches his scar. Her hand lingers for a beat, until...

...Miguel leans in and kisses her. She kisses him back for a beat, but when he puts his hand around her waist, pulling her closer, she resists. They separate.

Anne looks down at her feet, uncomfortable.

ANNE

Sorry, I just... Sorry.

Miguel looks on, confused, as she stands. They lock eyes for an awkward beat.

ANNE

I should help clean up...

On her way back inside...

ANNE

We have another meeting Thursday... If you can come.

Miguel nods. Anne leaves him on the porch alone. He looks out over the corn fields.

139

INT. SWING CLUBHOUSE - DAY

139

Miguel enters the near-empty room limping on his blue boot, finds Jorge wearing street clothes and packing up personal things from his locker. Miguel knows immediately what's happened.

They make eye contact from across the locker room. Nobody moves. After a beat...

JORGE

I had a good run.

MIGUEL

What happened?

JORGE

It's over.

MIGUEL

Why?

JORGE

You know the drill. I'm not playing well, so they'll bring up somebody who is.

MIGUEL

What about your knee? You just need some more time... You're recovering.

JORGE

Sugar...

Miguel relents.

MIGUEL

When do you leave?

JORGE

They want me to fly back tonight.

MIGUEL

Tonight?!

JORGE

But I'm not going back...

A beat as Miguel lets this sink in.

JORGE

I gotta cousin in New York.

MIGUEL

You're going to New York?

JORGE

Where else? There's no work back home.
My bonus won't last forever...

Miguel looks off. Jorge senses his anxiety.

JORGE

Relax Sugar, I'll see you at Yankee Stadium someday... when the Knights come to town. I'll be in the front row, getting drunk, and cheering the loudest.

Miguel smiles.

JORGE

Not for you though. Yankee fans are crazy. I can't take the risk... I'll call you.

A beat as Miguel looks at Jorge with concern. Jorge shakes it off.

JORGE

You worry too much, Sugar. I'll be okay. I mean, it's just a game, right?

Miguel nods.

140 INT. SOFIA'S HOUSE (DOMINICAN REPUBLIC) - NIGHT 140

A140 Sofia on the phone. We INTERCUT between her and Miguel IN HIS A140
BEDROOM, his injured ankle elevated on a pillow.

SOFIA
How'd you play tonight?

MIGUEL
(hesitant)
Good, good.

SOFIA
I bet you have lots of groupies waiting
for you after your games.

MIGUEL
I have a few.

SOFIA
A few?

MIGUEL
Just kidding. I mean I would, but none
of these white girls speak Spanish.
Marcos plays in Arizona. Lots of
Mexicans; everyone speaks Spanish. He
has like fifteen girlfriends.

SOFIA
Shut up!

MIGUEL
He's probably lying though.

SOFIA
I bet he's lying.

A beat, as Miguel shifts gears...

MIGUEL
Jorge went to New York.

SOFIA
To the Yankees?

MIGUEL
No. Our team cut him loose. He's got
a cousin there... I don't know what
he's going to do...

SOFIA
Shit... What about his family?

MIGUEL

(his mind somewhere else)
It's not right. He got injured playing
for them. They owe him another chance.
He's worked too hard for too long... I
mean he's not a horse.

Miguel drifts off, and they sit in silence for a beat.

SOFIA

But you can't let it get to you.
You've got nothing to worry about.
Just keep playing well, and things will
be okay.

MIGUEL

Yeah... I know. Things will be okay.

Miguel looks off, not so sure.

141 **INT. SWING CLUBHOUSE - DAY**

141

Players lounge in uniform, relaxing before tonight's game. Brad
reads on the sofa across from Miguel, who is in his street
clothes, his crutch by his side.

MIGUEL

What is your book?

BRAD

Welcome to the Terrordome. It's about
sports and politics.

MIGUEL

You study at, um, university?

BRAD

Yeah, I went to Stanford. Studied
history and baseball. Did you go to
school back in the DR?

MIGUEL

Yes. Little. Secundaria?

BRAD

High school?

MIGUEL

Yes. A little of... high school. But
I sign when I have sixteen years.

BRAD

You signed at sixteen? Wow. So you
didn't finish school?

Miguel shakes his head, no. After a beat...

MIGUEL

If you no play baseball... what you do?

BRAD

Um... it's hard to say for sure, but I like history, so I'd probably go to grad school... maybe teach someday.

VOICE (O.S.)

Brad! We're up for B.P. Let's go.

Brad gets up, taps Miguel on the shoulder on his way out. Miguel sits alone on the couch in the empty room, when he looks off, sees...

IN THE BATHROOM doorway-- Jeff Elks discreetly hands ANOTHER PLAYER a prescription pill bottle, exits.

Miguel takes note of the transaction, leans back, looks at the ceiling fan.

142 **INT. HIGGINS FARMHOUSE - DAY** 142

Miguel watches "When the Levees Broke" playing on HBO-Latino.

ON THE TV, one image of the hurricane's devastation gives way to another. An AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMAN stranded on the roof of her house. A YOUNG BOY who's lost his mother.

Miguel looks on, moved by the tragedy.

143 **INT. WASHER/DRYER ROOM - DAY** 143

Miguel takes the initiative and attempts to do his own laundry while on the disabled list.

He stuffs his clothes into the washer, scrutinizes the instructions, turns the knobs, and presses the buttons.

144 **INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY** 144

Miguel studies his English Language workbook on the couch. He glances at the wall clock.

145 **INT. KITCHEN - DAY** 145

As Miguel opens the faulty utensils drawer, the folded paper towel holding it in place pops out. Miguel catches the drawer from slipping too far, takes out a fork.

146

INT. KITCHEN - DUSK

146

Miguel sits at the kitchen table with the broken drawer and several small tools in front of him. He readjusts the wooden rails on the faulty side of the drawer by sanding them down and re-gluing them into place.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

FRONT DOOR. Miguel hobbles over, opens it to find Anne, carrying a casserole dish and a couple empty platters.

ANNE

These are grandma's from the other night.

Miguel lets her pass into the kitchen, put the dishes on the table. They stand awkwardly for a beat, looking at each other.

ANNE

We missed you at our meeting, Thursday.

MIGUEL

Sorry. I forget.

ANNE

It's okay, maybe next time.

MIGUEL

You want sit?

ANNE

I gotta go actually, so--

MIGUEL

Okay, go.

Miguel sits, gets back to work on the drawer. Anne looks at him for a second, then exits.

Miguel glances out the window, watches Anne climb into a pickup truck idling in the driveway. Anne and Miguel make brief eye contact before the truck speeds away, a trail of dust following it into the distance.

A146

EXT. CORN FIELDS - DUSK

A146

Miguel walks down a path in the middle of the Higgins' corn field. He finds a cob of corn, removes the leaves, and examines the kernels up close.

ZOOM IN to ECU of a single kernel.

Miguel stares at the raw corn with strange fascination.

FADE OUT.

147

INT. SWING CLUBHOUSE - DAY

147

Miguel walks in without crutches, looking healthy. He pounds a few players hello, then freezes upon seeing Brad's empty locker.

Stu approaches Miguel...

STU

There was an injury to the Wichita right-fielder. They called up Brad this morning... He left you this...

Stu hands Miguel an old paperback book.

INSERT: a Spanish-language version of Roberto Clemente's biography. Miguel opens to the first page, where Brad has inscribed a note, "See you in Kansas City, Mamañema!"

Miguel smiles, bittersweet, when a familiar VOICE calls out...

SALVADOR

Yo! Sugar!

Miguel turns around to find Salvador Torres (the once scrawny kid from the Academy) running at him. They hug.

MIGUEL

Holy shit! How'd you get here?

SALVADOR

On a airplane, motherfucker.

Miguel playfully flips Salvador's cap bill down over his face for being a smartass.

STU

Great, you guys know each other. Sal's our new middle-relief man. Throws a nasty cutter. You could learn a thing or two from him, Santos...

MIGUEL

Okay.

Stu walks back towards the coaches' office.

SALVADOR

What he say?

MIGUEL
(not sure himself)
Don't worry about it... Good to see
you.

SALVADOR
Good to see you, too, Sugar.
(a beat)
I'm a little nervous.

MIGUEL
Look, just remember... it's the same
game we played back home. Same rules,
different place. Just have fun. It's
only a game.

148 **EXT. BRIDGETOWN SWING BALL PARK - NIGHT**

148

CLOSE ON Miguel swearing at himself, clearly not following his
own advice.

A RUNNER circles the bases after hitting a homerun.

JACK JEFFERIES (V.O.)
Santos allows his second homerun of the
game. First night off the DL, and not
looking so sharp.

The SCOREBOARD indicates the Swing losing 5-2 in the 4th.

Miguel glances out of the corner of his eye to...

THE DUGOUT

...Stu is scribbling on his scorecard.

MIGUEL quickly sets up for his next pitch, but Stu is on his way
out to the mound. Miguel glances back to the bullpen, where
Salvador is warming up.

Stu signals for Salvador to come in, and we follow Miguel off
the field to scattered applause.

A148 IN THE RADIO BOOTH Jack Jefferies continues his play-by-play of
the game. A148

JACK JEFFERIES
Sutton makes the call to pull Santos
here in the 4th, bringing in rookie
reliever, Salvador Torres for his
Bridgetown debut.

B148 IN THE DUGOUT. Miguel sits on the bench, throws a towel over
his head. B148

ON THE MOUND. Salvador warms up, looking a little freaked.

Players and fans marvel over Sal's unorthodox, side-armed delivery. His form is reminiscent of A's legend, Dennis Eckersly, but without the grace.

MIGUEL peaks through his towel at the action...

ON THE FIELD. Salvador takes a deep breath, delivers his first pitch...

UMPIRE

Strike!

Salvador seems to relax. Winds up his next pitch, and...

...the ball appears to zig-zag across the plate, freezing the hitter in confusion.

UMPIRE

Strike two!

MIGUEL can't watch, hides behind the towel again. SLOW ZOOM IN on Miguel's head, hidden.

UMPIRE (O.S.)

Strike THREE!

Miguel removes the towel, sees...

...SALVADOR smiling big as he comes off the field. Orlando pats him on the back, hands him his first professional strikeout ball.

C148 IN THE RADIO BOOTH

C148

JACK JEFFERIES

A stellar debut for Torres, who records the final out, baffling Josh Lansford with a nasty side-armed cutter.

D148 FROM THE DUGOUT, Salvador arrives to a congratulatory standing ovation from the fans and his teammates. D148

STU

Welcome to America, kid.

Salvador sits next to Miguel on the bench, admiring the ball.

MIGUEL

Just do me a favor... don't give it away to the first white girl you meet.

Salvador laughs, but Miguel is serious. He gets up and heads for the showers.

149 **INT. HIGGINS CAR - NIGHT**

149

Helen and Earl drive Miguel home after the game. ON THE CAR RADIO, we can hear a news report of a suicide bombing in Iraq. Helen turns it down.

HELEN

You started dropping your arm in the third. I think that was your problem.

EARL

He lost control of his breaking pitches and they just zeroed in on the fastball, which isn't as fast as it used to be.

HELEN

Earl...

EARL

Don't matter, he can't understand anyway.

Miguel stares out the window in the backseat.

150 **EXT/INT. MOVING BUS - DUSK**

150

CLOSE ON corn stalks passing through frame. Miguel stares out the bus window. Salvador jokes around with Orlando and Ed about whether Dominican or Venezuelan girls are better.

151 **INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

151

Miguel tries to sleep, while Salvador watches "Sponge Bob" on the Spanish channel.

152 **EXT. VISITING BALL PARK - AFTERNOON**

152

Miguel walks out onto the field, notices Stu working with Salvador in the bullpen. Out of nowhere, Stu mimes the chicken walk to Sal, and they both laugh.

153 **EXT. VISITING BALL PARK - DUSK**

153

Miguel runs videotape behind homeplate as Salvador strikes a batter out.

154 **EXT. VISITING BALL PARK - NIGHT** 154

Miguel throws in a pitch, which is lined directly over his head for a base hit. He swears to himself as he sprints over to back up home plate where the runner scores easily.

155 **INT. VISITORS' CLUBHOUSE - NIGHT** 155

Miguel storms into the empty clubhouse, grabs a bat from the wall rack, and smashes a water dispenser unit to the ground, spilling water everywhere. As he observes the mess, his breathing steadies, and...

He glances over to the entrance, where the clubhouse manager stares at him, disapproving.

156 **INT. VISITING COACHES' OFFICE - DAY** 156

Miguel sits across from Stu, staring off, embarrassed.

STU

I know it's hard when you don't perform up to your own expectations for yourself. But you need to learn self-control. Can you understand what I'm saying? You need to learn that your actions have consequences. So we're gonna take the cost of the water unit you broke out of your next check... That's not something your family back home's gonna be too proud of... Is it?

Miguel turns his gaze to Stu. Though he doesn't fully understand what he's saying, Stu's intention is clear.

STU

So you should think real hard next time. Think about channeling that frustration you're feeling onto the field. Into practice. Channel it into working harder--

MIGUEL

--I am work hard! Everyday I work hard.

STU

So work harder, goddamnit! You think you're the only one on this team works hard?

MIGUEL

(in Spanish)

I don't understand you. You speak too fast. I just don't understand!

STU

Look, you may think I don't know what you're going through, but I do. I've been on the mound; I've played through pain. I've been in your exact situation before. I've struggled too... I've...

As Miguel glances away in frustration, Stu stops himself. They sit in silence. Hold.

157 **EXT. PEORIA CHIEFS' PARK - EVENING** 157

Pouring rain. The few remaining FANS head for the exits. The players pack up their gear in their respective dugouts.

SLOW ZOOM IN on MIGUEL, staring at the falling rain.

158 **INT. MOTEL LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT** 158

CLOSE ON about ten pills in Miguel's palm.

Jeff Elks instructs Miguel, alone, in the small room with a flickering fluorescent light.

JEFF

Listen, your first time, take a half. Okay? No more. You gotta ease into it. Half.

Miguel nods.

JEFF

And anyone finds these, you didn't get them from me, okay?

Before Miguel can respond, Salvador enters with his dirty laundry. Miguel hides the pills.

SALVADOR

What's up?

JEFF

What's up, Sal?

Jeff heads out. Miguel resumes folding his clothes.

SALVADOR

Did you hear I made player of the week?

MIGUEL

You told me last night.

Salvador examines his detergent options from the dispenser machine.

SALVADOR

Which one do you use?

Miguel eyes the bleach. Can't help himself.

MIGUEL

That one.

SALVADOR

Thanks.

Salvador inserts coins into the machine, pulls the bleach lever.

159 **INT. SWING CLUBHOUSE BATHROOM STALL - THE NEXT EVENING** 159

Miguel pops two pills. Exits out into the...

160 **SWING CLUBHOUSE - CONTINUOUS** 160

...where Salvador undresses out of his bleach-stained street clothes. Miguel walks past without acknowledging him.

161 **EXT. BRIDGETOWN SWING BALL PARK - LATE AFTERNOON** 161

THE CAMERA eerily floats toward and around Miguel on the mound. He stares down the HITTER, totally focused. He touches his cross, whispers a prayer to himself.

Winds up, throws, and...

THUD!

...a cloud of dust pops off the catcher's mitt, just like the old days. Miguel's "stuff" is back. And he knows it.

A161 **IN THE STANDS.** Earl and Helen settle into their box seats eating caramel corn and cola. A161

B161 **RADIO ANNOUNCERS BOOTH.** Jack Jefferies at the mic... B161

JACK JEFFERIES

Miguel Santos appears to be in top form tonight, striking out two of three in the first. I don't want to jinx it, but this sure looks like the Santos we knew earlier this season.

C161 IN THE DUGOUT. There's an intensity we haven't seen before in Miguel. We get the sense he's treating this game like it could be his last. C161

162 **ON THE MOUND - 2ND INNING** 162

CLOSE ON MIGUEL. Sweating more than he should at this point in the game, but...

...who cares? He continues to dominate opposing hitters, striking out two more in the 2nd.

A162 IN THE STANDS. Earl and Helen CHEER for their Miguel. A162

163 **IN THE DUGOUT - LATER THAT NIGHT** 163

Still sweating, Miguel is now shifting his jaw back-and-forth. The SOUND FADES LOW, as he stares onto the field, sees...

...the teams changing sides between innings, everyone moving in subtle SLOW-MOTION (36 fps).

Stu approaches Miguel, puts his hand on his shoulder. We see him mouth the words, "You okay?", but NO SOUND comes out.

Miguel nods, yes.

164 **BACK ON THE FIELD - 5TH INNING** 164

And back in real time (24 fps). Miguel fires his first pitch over the head of his catcher and all the way to the backstop. Orlando motions for him to calm down.

The next pitch is closer, but still high.

And the next pitch BEANS the hitter in the thigh.

Miguel swears at himself, tries hard to calm down, but his heart is racing.

A164 **IN THE RADIO BOOTH** A164

JACK JEFFERIES

Top of the fifth and Santos is showing some control issues. Not sure what's going on down there, but he seems to be talking to himself.

B164 ON THE MOUND, Orlando runs out to Miguel. B164

ORLANDO

Don't worry about it. You're all good. Just relax. Throw strikes. They can't touch you. Just throw strikes.

Miguel nods. Orlando goes back behind the plate.

Miguel glances to the runner at first, then delivers...

UMPIRE

Strike!

Orlando nods, encouraging. Throws the ball back.

Miguel takes another deep breath. He whispers a prayer to himself, grabs the ball in his spike curve grip, and...

...his next pitch is ROCKED to deep left field.

Miguel immediately lowers his head, unable to watch. We HOLD on his anguished reaction, as the hitter circles the bases.

STU shakes his head in disappointment.

C164 FROM THE BULLPEN, Salvador watches, concerned. C164

D164 FROM THE STANDS, Earl and Helen clap for encouragement. D164

E164 MIGUEL does his best to shake it off, but he keeps muttering to himself, which makes him look crazy. E164

Another deep breath. Another pitch...

UH-OH.

This one almost finds the batter's head, as he falls to the dirt to avoid contact. It's on.

UMPIRE

(ejecting Miguel)

You're outta here!

The batter leaps to his feet, walks out toward the mound, pointing his finger at Miguel, PISSED.

Miguel opens his arms, inviting a fight. Orlando steps between them.

BATTER

Fucking Puerto Rican piece of shit!

MIGUEL

(in English)

Fuck you, cocksucker!

Both benches clear, as players rush out onto the field to restore order.

Miguel and the batter continue jawing at each other, while the other players swirl around them, creating little sub-conflicts of their own. It's a mess.

The sound FADES TO SILENCE and the image blends to SLO-MO again. There's something poetic about a bunch of men in child-like baseball uniforms, screaming at each other in silence.

Miguel looks around, perhaps recognizing this for himself... Hold, until...

...he calmly walks off the field, leaving the chaos behind.

165 **INT. SWING CLUBHOUSE SHOWERS - A LITTLE LATER** 165

Miguel showers alone.

166 **INT. HIGGINS KITCHEN - NIGHT** 166

Miguel eats a late dinner at the table. Earl sits at the other end, sipping some tea, while Helen does dishes at the sink. The mood is uncomfortably tense. Nobody says a word, until Miguel musters up the courage.

MIGUEL

I'm sorry.

Helen turns off the faucet, turns around. Earl methodically sets down his mug, stands up, and crosses to Miguel. Puts his arm around his shoulder, wherein...

...Miguel breaks down, hugs Earl around the waist, his face pressed against his stomach. He's crying. Hold.

167 **INT. BRIDGETOWN SWING BALL PARK - COACHES' OFFICE - EVENING** 167

Stu addresses Miguel before the game. Though his words are encouraging, his tone is detached, cold. Miguel senses this, listens, dejected.

STU

You played with your emotions, and your emotions got the best of you. Happens to everyone. It's just a nasty part of the game. Nobody likes to admit it, but it is. The true test of our character as athletes... is how we come back. It's up to you.

Stu notices Hardy, the Swing mascot, pass by his office door.

STU

Hardy! Don't wander off; I gotta talk to you about that accountant...

168 **EXT. BRIDGETOWN SWING BALLPARK - NIGHT** 168

Miguel sits out in the bullpen with the other relievers, while Stu continues in V.O.

STU (V.O.)

So, um, anyway, I'm bumping Sal into your slot in the rotation. I'd like to see how you handle a relief spot.

A168 ON THE MOUND, Salvador fires in the opening pitch. A168

B168 IN THE RADIO BOOTH, Jack Jefferies does his play by play. B168

JACK JEFFERIES

Moving up from relief, Torres makes his third start for the Swing. I tell ya, this lanky kid from the Dominican Republic has surprised us all with his unique delivery and precision. Reminds me of a young Pedro Martinez... Hey there Bees fans, don't forget, closing night is approaching fast and tickets are selling out. So pick yours up at the box office today...

169 **IN THE BULLPEN** 169

Similar to an earlier sequence of JUMPCUTS on Miguel reacting to the game from the dugout, we now HOLD on Miguel, solemn and detached, from the bullpen.

NOTE: the frame for the following images contains the first 3-4 rows of FANS seated behind the bullpen, so we can also use them to gauge what might be happening on the field.

PLAY 1: Miguel, the FOUR RELIEVERS, and the fans clap for a nice play.

PLAY 2: The fans jump to their feet as a ground ball passes through frame, followed by an outfielder in hot pursuit.

PLAY 3: A reliever warms up in the foreground. Miguel stares ahead, deadpan, while the others chat and spit chewing tobacco.

PLAY 4: A new reliever warms up, then runs out onto the field, leaving only two others with Miguel.

PLAY 5: Miguel stares ahead, while the crowd does the "Chicken Dance" behind him.

PLAY 6: The fans leap to their feet in applause. The two relievers high-five. Miguel CLAPS, going through the motions.

PLAY 7: Miguel chews and spits sunflower seed shells as the fans sing along to "Take Me Out to the Ball Game."

PLAY 8: Another reliever runs out onto the field, leaving only Miguel and one other guy.

PLAY 9: Miguel is finally warming up, ready to enter the game, but...

...the fans leap to their feet, CHEERING victoriously. Game over. The only other reliever grabs his jacket, and heads out onto the field.

As the players and fans head for the exits, Miguel remains on the bullpen mound for a beat. He nods to himself, oddly at peace with the moment. Miguel steps off the mound and we PAN with him, as he crosses frame, and makes the long walk to the dugout. Hold.

170

INT. MIGUEL'S BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

170

Miguel grabs a slip of paper from his nightstand. His large duffel bag is packed full in front of him. On the wall, his NYC calendar is turned to AUGUST.

He goes to the phone. Dials...

After a long beat he hangs up.

171

INT. HIGGINS FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - EVENING

171

Helen walks in to find Miguel washing the dishes in the sink.

HELEN

Oh, honey, you don't have to do that.

MIGUEL

(his English better than
ever)

No problem. I want to help.

HELEN

Well, thank you, Miguel.

Helen grabs a dish towel. They do the dishes together in silence. After a beat...

MIGUEL

Thank you, Helen.

Helen smiles, pats Miguel on the back. HOLD.

172 **EXT. BRIDGETOWN SWING BALL PARK - EARLY MORNING** 172

Earl drops off Miguel near the team bus, as players and coaches load their gear in, and get on.

Miguel cautiously approaches the bus, sees Salvador, hesitates...

MIGUEL

I forgot something in the clubhouse.
I'll be right back.

As Miguel turns, Salvador grabs his bag, which is still on his shoulder.

SALVADOR

Here, I'll load your bag.

Miguel grips his bag tighter and the two of them lock eyes. Salvador senses his intensity, releases the bag. Miguel backs away with Salvador looking on.

ED

Where's he going?

SALVADOR

Bathroom.

AT THE CLUBHOUSE ENTRANCE Miguel turns back to the bus, sees...

...Salvador eyeing him from the open bus window. Sal raises his hand, very subtly waves goodbye.

Miguel continues on his way.

173 **EXT. BURLINGTON BUS DEPOT - MINUTES LATER** 173

A local taxi pulls up, and Miguel hops out with his duffel bag.

174 **INT. BUS - DAY** 174

Miguel steps on, moves past the other PASSENGERS, finds an empty seat towards the back. He sits down, catches his breath, and whispers a prayer to himself. When he's done, he looks across the aisle, where an OLD LADY is staring at him.

He shoots her a cautious smile.

175 **INT. MOVING BUS - DAY/EVENING** 175

Miguel stares, wide-eyed, out the window at the shifting landscapes, daytime into evening...

--cornstalks.

--bridges and rivers.

--city lights.

He sleeps against the window, his Clemente book open on his lap.

176 **INT. MOVING BUS- LATER** 176

From the New Jersey turnpike, Miguel sees the approaching Manhattan skyline in the early morning light. He sits up straight, looks attentively at the city emerging in the distance.

177 **INT. TIMES SQUARE SUBWAY STATION** 177

Morning COMMUTERS push past Miguel, as he looks around, lost in the cacophony of the swirling rush hour environment.

He locates a giant subway map on the wall, the various subway lines reaching into the outer boroughs like colorful tentacles. His eyes scan the map, and we follow his finger up the green line's numbered stations, stopping on 161ST/YANKEE STADIUM.

Miguel smiles.

AT THE TURNSTILES. Miguel inches forward, observes people passing through after swiping cards. He notices a line behind a Metrocard vending machine nearby.

178 **AT THE MACHINE - SECONDS LATER** 178

Fortunately, there is a Spanish option, so after a few touches and BEEPS, he's got his card.

179 **AT THE TURNSTILE** 179

He swipes the card, tries to pass through, but the turnstile won't budge. He studies the message: "SWIPE AGAIN AT THIS TURNSTILE", but can't make sense of it. Miguel tries again, this time very slowly, but still can't get through.

An IMPATIENT COMMUTER behind him SIGHS loudly.

Miguel steps out of the way, let's the commuter pass.

After the commuter goes through, Miguel tries again.

180 **INT. SUBWAY PEDESTRIAN TUNNEL** 180

As Miguel strolls through the underground hallway that connects the various Times Square subway lines, he sees...

--a TEAM OF BREAKDANCERS performing for tips.

REYNA

Oh. The ballpayer... He left about two weeks ago.

RAFAEL

I think he drives a car now.

MIGUEL

Do you have a phone number for him? His old one isn't working.

Reyna shrugs, looks to Rafael.

RAFAEL

(shaking his head)

Sorry... But I think he was staying down at concourse village on 156th.

REYNA

He still comes in to eat sometimes.

Miguel nods, looks off, a little anxious.

184 **EXT. 156TH STREET - DAY**

184

Miguel glances up at the dozens of high-rise apartment buildings in every direction.

He walks away, discouraged.

185 **OMITTED**

185

186 **EXT. (ANOTHER) STREET - DAY**

186

Miguel continues to follow the elevated subway tracks, which lead him straight to...

...YANKEE STADIUM. He looks up at the park's grand exterior with wonder. Approaches to get a closer look.

The Stadium is closed today, so Miguel struggles to catch a glimpse of the field through an iron fence. He grabs hold of the bars, attempts to climb just enough to get a better view, but...

SECURITY GUARD

(in English)

You wanta see the inside, you gotta buy a ticket, pal.

MIGUEL

(jumping down)

Sorry.

187 **EXT. SOUND VIEW PARK - LATE AFTERNOON** 187

With his duffel on his lap, Miguel sits on a bench overlooking a community baseball field, where local KIDS play for fun. He stares off blankly, preoccupied with other things.

A188 **EXT. PARADISE HOTEL - DUSK** A188

Miguel stands before the old transient hotel.

188 **INT. PARADISE HOTEL LOBBY** 188

Miguel sidesteps a nodding JUNKY on his way to the front desk, approaches the toothless Russian clerk, NIKOLAI (late 50s).

MIGUEL

One room.

NIKOLAI

For how long?

MIGUEL

I don't know.

NIKOLAI

Two hundred a week. First week in advance.

As Miguel tries to piece together what was just said, he notices a rack of condoms beside a set of long distance calling cards on the front desk. The name of the calling card is ALÓ MAMÁ!

NIKOLAI

Two hundred now.

Miguel reaches for the calling card.

MIGUEL

This also please.

189 **INT. PARADISE HOTEL HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER** 189

As Miguel looks for his room, he passes another room's doorway, where a middle-aged JOHN gives a woman a kiss goodbye. Miguel makes brief eye contact with the woman, RAQUEL. She smiles.

190 **INT. PARADISE HOTEL ROOM** 190

Miguel turns on the light to find a small bed in the corner of the room. There's also a desk with a phone. Miguel puts down his duffel and sits at the desk. He examines the calling card for a beat, then goes to the window, looks out. Hold.

191 **EXT. 163RD STREET - NEXT DAY** 191

Miguel strolls by various stores and restaurants. He passes outside a WOODEN CABINET STORE, where 5-6 Dominican men, ranging in age from 20 to 50 years old, make furniture in the shop. He stops for a beat, watching the men work.

192 **INT. CABINET STORE DISPLAY ROOM** 192

Miguel approaches a man, OSVALDO (late 50s), who works at his desk on the computer.

MIGUEL
You speak Spanish?

OSVALDO
Of course.

MIGUEL
Is this your place?

OSVALDO
Yeah. Can I help you?

Miguel glances around at the various wooden furniture items for sale.

MIGUEL
I like your work.

OSVALDO
Thanks. What are you looking for?

MIGUEL
Oh, no, I mean... I don't know. I was passing by and thought maybe you might need some help. I know how to make furniture, and--

OSVALDO
--I don't have any work right now.
Sorry.

MIGUEL
Right. Okay, thanks for your time.

Oswaldo gets back to his computer, but Miguel lingers...

MIGUEL
Do you know any other places like this where I might find work?

OSVALDO
Have you checked the classifieds?

193

INT. EL CARIBE RESTAURANT - LATE AFTERNOON

193

Miguel sips soda from a straw as he leafs through the classifieds in a Spanish-language daily.

INSERT: Various employment ads, requiring experience, fluency in English, working papers, etc.

Miguel glances up, stares out the window. Rafael, the busboy from the other day, wipes down the table next to Miguel.

RAFAEL

If you leave a number, I'll give it to him next time he comes through.

194

INT. PARADISE HOTEL BEDROOM - EVENING

194

Miguel braces himself, dials on the phone, waits... His NYC calendar (turned to the Statue of Liberty month) hangs on the wall in the background.

MIGUEL

(into phone)

Erica?

A194

We INTERCUT between Miguel and his home in the Dominican Republic.

A194

ERICA

Miguel! My God, where are you?

Carmen snatches the phone from Erica, who stays close, trying to listen in.

CARMEN

Miguelito, what is going on? Frank called last night. Where are you?

MIGUEL

New York.

CARMEN

Oh, my God! What are you doing in New York? I don't understand. Your team is looking for you.

MIGUEL

I can't play anymore.

CARMEN

Are you hurt? What does that mean, you can't play?

MIGUEL

No. I'm fine. It just--

CARMEN

We've been working for this your whole life, Miguelito. Oh, my God! You're so close. I don't understand...

MIGUEL

Don't worry, mom. I have some money. We're going to be okay.

CARMEN

You have to go back. Listen, Miguel, my sweet sugar, call Frank. They'll take you back.

MIGUEL

I can't go back--

CARMEN

Did I raise you like this? Did I raise you to give up?

MIGUEL

I didn't give up. I'm starting something new here.

CARMEN

What? What are you starting?

MIGUEL

I have to go mom. The card's almost out of minutes.

CARMEN

Where are you even staying? Miguel--

MIGUEL

Don't worry. I'm staying with a friend. I have a new job. It's all good. I'm sending money tomorrow.

CARMEN

Miguel--

MIGUEL

I love you. I'm sorry.

Miguel hangs up, stares off.

198

INT. EL CARIBE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

198

Miguel and Rafael sit next to each other in the back, eating dinner.

MIGUEL

Do you know anybody with a room for rent?

Rafael shakes his head, no.

RAFAEL

But I'll ask around, let you know if I hear of anything.

Miguel nods, gets back to his food.

RAFAEL

You and Jorge used to play baseball together?

MIGUEL

Yeah, you like baseball?

RAFAEL

It's okay. I'd rather watch soccer though... Have you found him yet?

MIGUEL

Not yet.

RAFAEL

He'll be through sooner or later.

MIGUEL

How long have you worked here?

RAFAEL

Two years.

MIGUEL

Do you have family here?

RAFAEL

No. My wife and kids are still in Mexico.

MIGUEL

My family's in the Dominican.

Rafael nods, and they continue eating.

MIGUEL

My dad. He was a carpenter in San Pedro.

OSVALDO

Is that where you're from?

MIGUEL

Yeah.

OSVALDO

I grew up in Santiago. What are you doing in New York?

MIGUEL

I came to work. I used to play baseball.

Oswaldo nods, understanding.

OSVALDO

The whole world plays baseball. My son's sixteen. Won't touch a piece of wood that's not a bat. I never cared for the game, myself. Too slow.

Miguel laughs.

OSVALDO

Your mom still in San Pedro?

MIGUEL

Yeah. With my sister and brother.

OSVALDO

So, you're telling me that you want to make a table for your mom, then mail it back to her in the Dominican?

Miguel nods. Oswaldo smiles, finally warming up.

OSVALDO

What's your name?

MIGUEL

Miguel.

They shake hands.

OSVALDO

Oswaldo.

201 **INT. EL CARIBE RESTAURANT - DAY** 201

Miguel performs his new work routine: mopping floors, washing dishes, accepting deliveries. He seems to be getting the hang of things.

202 **INT. EL CARIBE RESTAURANT - LATER** 202

As Miguel eats from a heaping plate of beef and mashed yucca, he watches Reyna chatting up a customer from behind the counter.

203 **EXT. STREET - NIGHT** 203

Miguel passes a Western Union, looks inside, but keeps going.

204 **INT. CABINET STORE - NIGHT** 204

Miguel finishes work on his table for the night, covers it with a blanket, and proceeds to sweep up. Osvaldo works at his desktop computer from across the room. They don't speak.

205 **INT. PARADISE HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT** 205

Miguel sits at the desk, talks into the phone.

MIGUEL

Hello... Is Sofia at home?... Yeah,
it's Miguel again... Can you tell
her... Just tell her I called...

Miguel hangs up.

206 **INT. LAUNDROMAT - NIGHT** 206

Miguel leans against the counter, staring at his clothes twirling in the dryer, when...

...he notices Raquel unloading her clothes a few dryers away. She pushes her laundry cart to the opposite side of his counter, begins folding.

Miguel stares at her out of the corner of his eye, taking special notice of her diverse underwear collection ranging from lacy thongs to the standard cotton variety. She catches him peeking.

RAQUEL

(with a mysterious Eastern-
European accent)

You just going to watch or you going to
help me out?

Caught off guard, Miguel smiles awkwardly, turns away. After a few beats, a flying sock lands on his shoulder.

He turns back to find several random items of her clothing on the counter in front of him. She smiles, keeps folding.

Miguel sorts through the items: socks, underwear, t-shirts. He looks back to her, then begins folding, as the laundromat's machinery reverberates around them. They exchange brief grins.

MIGUEL
Where you from?

RAQUEL
Ukraine.

Miguel nods, and they continue folding in silence. Hold.

207

INT. CABINET STORE - NIGHT

207

Miguel carves wood, while Osvaldo looks on from his desk. They exchange glances, until Miguel breaks the silence.

MIGUEL
So you never liked baseball? Not even
as a kid?

OSVALDO
It's okay. Sometimes during the
playoffs I'll watch a game or two.

MIGUEL
Who's your favorite player?

OSVALDO
I don't know enough to have a favorite.

MIGUEL
C'mon, everybody has a favorite player:
Juan Marichal, Pedro Martinez?

OSVALDO
Fine. Jose Canseco.

MIGUEL
Jose Canseco!? That's the best you can
do?

OSVALDO
Okay, what about you?

MIGUEL
Roberto Clemente.

OSVALDO
(pushing his buttons)
Never heard of him.

MIGUEL

Shut up.

OSVALDO

What's so special about Clemente?

MIGUEL

I read this book where he said something like, "If you have the opportunity to help someone and don't, then you're wasting your life." And he was a carpenter too.

OSVALDO

Get out of here.

MIGUEL

For real. He used to make furniture during the off season.

OSVALDO

Are you fucking with me? Cause you know I can google this fool right now.

MIGUEL

Google?

OSVALDO

The internet. Don't worry, I'll teach you someday.

A beat. Miguel continues his work.

OSVALDO

When did you get released?

MIGUEL

They didn't release me. I left a few days before the season ended.

OSVALDO

You left? When was this?

MIGUEL

About two weeks ago.

OSVALDO

Holy shit. Where are you staying?

MIGUEL

Oh, you know, with a friend. But if you know somebody who needs a roommate...

Oswaldo nods and they continue working.

OSVALDO
(after a beat)
Why'd you leave?

Miguel hesitates, unsure where to begin. Oswaldo senses his discomfort with the question.

OSVALDO
Do you have any family here?

MIGUEL
(shaking his head)
But I'm okay... I have some money
saved, a couple friends. I'll go home
to visit soon.

Oswaldo doesn't quite buy it, but nods anyway.

MIGUEL
Do you know a place called Ukraine?

208 **INT. PARADISE HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT**

208

Miguel attempts to slip past Nikolai, who is currently checking in another GUEST, but...

NIKOLAI
Hey! You owe money. Full week!

MIGUEL
I know. I have tomorrow. No problem.

NIKOLAI
Yes, problem. You pay tomorrow or you
have big problem.

Miguel continues up the stairs.

209 **INT. MIGUEL'S BEDROOM - LATER**

209

Unable to sleep, Miguel lies in bed, staring at the ceiling, when he overhears a commotion from across the hall.

After a beat, he hears a door open and SLAM SHUT.

He goes to the door, listens close. It's quiet, until...

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

Miguel flinches. Then slowly cracks open the door to find...

...Raquel standing before him with a small leather duffel bag.

RAQUEL
(handing him the bag)
Love, keep this in your room for me.
Just a few hours. Til morning. I'll
be back.

She forces the bag into his hands, kisses him on the cheek, and retreats into her own room.

Miguel closes the door, still holding the bag. He sets it on his bed, stares at it. After a few beats, he grabs it, stuffs it under the bed, out of sight.

He sits down at the desk, stares at the bed, when he hears SHOUTING from the hall. Again, he goes to the door, listens.

Another MAN POUNDS on Raquel's door, SCREAMING in Ukrainian, while Nikolai YELLS at the man in English, though Miguel can't make out exactly what's going on. The shouting intensifies until a SCUFFLE breaks out. A woman SCREAMS. Miguel reaches for the door handle, but stops himself.

He steps into his BATHROOM, shuts the door, sits on the toilet. The muffled SHOUTING continues. Miguel waits.

FADE OUT.

210 **INT. MIGUEL'S ROOM - LATER** 210

Now quiet, Miguel stares at the mysterious bag on his bed, then heads for the door with his packed duffel over his shoulder. He puts his ear to the door, then exits, leaving the other bag behind.

211 **INT. PARADISE HOTEL HALLWAY** 211

Miguel tip-toes down the hall. He stops in front of Raquel's room, leans down, and slides his room key under her door. Continues down the hall.

212 **EXT. STREET - PHONE BOOTH - EARLY MORNING** 212

Miguel dials his calling card number into the phone, listens...

MIGUEL
Frank... It's Miguel.

We hold on Miguel, though we can hear Frank's muffled voice through the receiver.

FRANK (O.S.)
Jesus, Miguel, what the hell happened?

MIGUEL

Sorry for calling late. I'm in New York.

FRANK (O.S.)

I heard. You're making me look bad. What are you doing there?

MIGUEL

I got a job, but I don't know if I'm going to stay...

FRANK (O.S.)

Where you gonna go? The season's over... Your visa's expired.

MIGUEL

I know, but I thought maybe I could...

A beat, as Miguel drifts off.

FRANK

I can talk to Alvarez... But I don't know. Nobody's happy about this.

Miguel bites his lip. A police SIREN flies by.

MIGUEL

I know. Sorry.

FRANK (O.S.)

Look, Miguel--

Miguel hangs up the phone.

213 **EXT. ALL NIGHT CAFE - NIGHT** 213

Through the window, we see Miguel seated at a corner table. He stares out at the early morning traffic.

214 **EXT. ALL NIGHT CAFE - SAME ANGLE - EARLY MORNING - DAY** 214

Miguel is asleep at the same table. A WAITRESS comes by with a fresh pot of coffee, wakes him up. He declines another cup.

215 **INT. EL CARIBE RESTAURANT - DAY** 215

Exhausted, Miguel goes through his usual work routine: bussing tables, washing dishes, stocking the kitchen...

216 **INT. CABINET STORE - NIGHT** 216

Miguel approaches Osvaldo with his duffel bag. He looks a mess. Osvaldo glances up from his work.

OSVALDO

Hey, Miguel.

Miguel doesn't respond. Osvaldo notices his packed bag and worn expression. Both men stare at each other for a long beat.

MIGUEL

I don't know where to go.

Osvaldo approaches, takes the duffel from Miguel's shoulder.

FADE OUT.

217

EXT. STREET - OUTSIDE EL CARIBE RESTAURANT - DAY

217

Now wearing a Fall coat, Miguel crosses the street on his way to work, when...

BEEEEEEEP!

...he's startled by a loud car horn coming from a black livery cab parked at the curb.

MIGUEL

(giving the finger)

Fuck you, man!

Miguel keeps walking, but stops upon hearing...

JORGE

Fuck you too, bro!

Miguel turns to find Jorge, leaping out of his car, and running at him. They hug.

MIGUEL

What happened to you?

JORGE

Me? What happened to you?

MIGUEL

I been looking for you for weeks.

JORGE

I know. Rafi said you took my old job.
Welcome to New York!

218

INT. EL CARIBE RESTAURANT - DAY

218

Jorge eats at the counter, while Miguel stands on the opposite side, in his apron.

JORGE

I called the Higgins to give my new number, but they said you split. I couldn't believe it, man, I had no idea.

MIGUEL

Things got a little ugly after you left.

JORGE

We all go through slumps you know.

MIGUEL

It wasn't a slump.

JORGE

What was it then?

MIGUEL

I don't know, but I wasn't gonna wait around for them to throw me out.

Jorge looks at Miguel for a tense beat.

MIGUEL

I'm just saying...

JORGE

Whatever, man, you wouldn't be saying that shit if you made it.

Miguel smiles, shrugs.

REYNA

(from across the room)

Sugar! Rafi needs you in the kitchen!

JORGE

They call you Sugar?

On his way to the kitchen...

MIGUEL

What can I say? The name sticks.

As Miguel slips past Reyna on his way to the kitchen, they exchange flirtatious smiles.

219

INT. UPTOWN CLUB - NIGHT

219

Merengue fuels the packed club tonight, as the mostly Latino crowd gets down on the dance floor.

AT THE BAR. Miguel, Reyna, Jorge, and his girlfriend, MONICA, drink beers, enjoying the party.

JORGE

They got all kinds in this league, bro. Like fat cats in their forties, kids like you and me, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, even some white boys. I got this fifty year old catcher on my team, used to play for the Dodgers. Can't run for shit, but he's out there every week. Belly out to here. My man can still go deep though... You ever hear from that kid, Brad?

Reyna leans close to Miguel, says something in his ear, and he smiles, as she leads him out onto...

- 220 **THE DANCEFLOOR** 220
- ...where they carve up some fast and fierce moves. Miguel grins wide, having a great time. At this point the sound FADES LOW and the image blends to SLOW-MOTION, their bodies gliding through the frame, soothing and peaceful. Hold, as Jeff Buckley's "Hallelujah" FADES UP and carries over...
- 221 **EXT. EL CARIBE RESTAURANT - MORNING** 221
- A DELIVERY MAN puts boxes on a ramp, which go from his truck down into...
- 222 **INT. EL CARIBE RESTAURANT BASEMENT** 222
- Miguel takes the boxes off the ramp.
- 223 **INT. EL CARIBE RESTAURANT - DAY** 223
- Miguel and Reyna eat together, smiling.
- 224 **INT. WESTERN UNION - NIGHT** 224
- Miguel hands the teller two fifty dollar bills.
- 225 **EXT. STREET - NIGHT** 225
- Miguel floats down the street among a packed block of Bronx pedestrians. He blends in now, just another face in the crowd.
- 226 **INT. WOODEN CABINET SHOP - NIGHT** 226
- Oswaldo helps Miguel work on his coffee table.

227 **INT. WOODEN CABINET SHOP - LATER THAT NIGHT** 227

Oswaldo teaches Miguel how to use the internet.

228 **INT. OSVALDO'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM** 228

Miguel, Oswaldo, and his wife, ESTELLA, eat dinner at the table. The music continues under the following scene...

OSVALDO

I did some research and I got a new favorite player now.

MIGUEL

Okay, good.

OSVALDO

Vic Power. You know him?

Miguel shakes his head, no.

OSVALDO

You ought to. Greatest Puerto Rican first baseman ever. But that's not why he's my favorite player... Back when he first arrived, 1951, 52, he was playing in the minors. Little Rock, Arkansas. So the story goes, one day before a game, Vic stops into this diner for lunch. Hadn't been here long, so he knew very little English. Didn't even notice the "whites only" sign hanging in the window. And Vic was Black. I looked him up on Google. I mean Black like you. So he sits down at the counter and the little waitress comes up to big Vic and says, "I'm sorry, we don't serve colored people."

Oswaldo pauses for dramatic effect, as Miguel and Estella eagerly await what comes next.

OSVALDO

So he leans close to the waitress, tells her in his best English, "That's okay, I don't eat colored people."

After a beat, Estella laughs, but Miguel is unsure. Oswaldo does his best to explain the joke in Spanish.

229 INT. OSVALDO'S APARTMENT - SPARE ROOM - NIGHT 229

A229 We INTERCUT between Miguel and Carmen in the DOMINICAN REPUBLICA229
She sits at her table in the same old house. (We can see
through the window that the new one is still unfinished).

CARMEN

I got the photos you sent, but you'll
have to send more.

MIGUEL

Okay, mom, but you know it would be a
lot easier if you opened an email
account.

CARMEN

Email? I don't even know how to use
the TV!

Miguel smiles.

MIGUEL

I'm making a new table for you. It's
going to be real nice.

CARMEN

I'm sure I'll love it. Thank you.

MIGUEL

How's Erica?

CARMEN

She's good. Got a job at the factory.
Just part-time, though, so she can keep
up with school.

Miguel removes the phone from his ear for a beat.

MIGUEL

And Luis?

CARMEN

He's pitching now. You should see him,
Miguel, got an arm like his brother.

MIGUEL

Yeah, but can he throw a knuckle curve?

Carmen laughs. After a beat...

MIGUEL

I miss you, mom. But, I'm working
hard. I'll be home soon. Give
everyone a hug for me.

CARMEN
I will, Sugar. I love you.

MIGUEL
I love you, too.

She nods, hangs up, and looks over to...

...LITTLE LUIS, watching her from across the room.

230 **EXT. ROBERTO CLEMENTE FIELD - BRONX - DAY** 230

CLOSE ON a Dominican flag being waved by a TODDLER. A WIDER ANGLE reveals him in the packed bleachers with a diverse CROWD of FANS and FRIENDS: Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Anglos...

The mood is festive. A VENDOR sells mangos on sticks. Merengue MUSIC blasts from a portable stereo in the stands. FANS drink Presidente beer out of bottles.

231 **ON THE FIELD** 231

Uniformed PLAYERS of all ages, races, shapes, and sizes warm up before the game (though the majority are Dominican).

Jorge introduces Miguel (also in uniform) to the other players.

JORGE
Caballo! This is Miguel from San Pedro.

CABALLO
The new guy. You ready to pitch?

MIGUEL
I think so.

CABALLO
It's been a while, no?

JORGE
Don't worry; he's ready.

JUMP CUT TO:

Jorge introduces Miguel to...

JORGE
Felipe! Meet Miguel. They call him Sugar.

FELIPE
What's up, Sugar?

JORGE
Felipe played for the Dodgers Triple-A
team. Hit a dinger off Pedro once.

FELIPE
Twice.

JORGE
Twice.

JUMP CUT TO:

More intros...

DIEGO
I played for the Yankees.

JUMP CUT TO:

JOSE
Cubs.

JUMP CUT TO:

ADRIAN
Padres.

JUMP CUT TO:

GERONIMO
Kansas City.

MIGUEL
Me too! Bridgetown.

GERONIMO
I was there in 96. I lived on a farm.

MIGUEL
With the Higgins!

GERONIMO
Yeah!

Miguel smiles big, just as the UMPIRE calls out...

UMPIRE
Vamos! Let's play ball!

232

ON THE MOUND - MINUTES LATER

232

We TILT UP from his cleats to reveal Miguel looking in for the
sign from his catcher. He nods. And delivers.

The ball is SMACKED toward third, where Jorge makes an awkward lunge for the ball, manages to stop it with his foot. By the time he gets his hand on it, the RUNNER has made it to first.

The fans and some of the players laugh at Jorge's ugly mistake.

OLD MAN HECKLER

(from the stands)

This ain't soccer! You can use your hands!

MIGUEL

(smiling)

Just like old times.

But Jorge shrugs and laughs it off. No pressure here. It's only a game.

Miguel buckles down, delivers a monster fastball.

UMPIRE

Strike!

He gets the ball back, looks to the stands, and sees...

...Monica waving to Jorge at third.

Miguel's new friend, Osvaldo, is also there with Estella. Miguel smiles to them.

Miguel fires in the next pitch, even faster, and the batter swings straight through it.

UMPIRE

Strike two!

He gets the ball back, lowers his head and whispers a prayer to himself. Looks back to the runner on second. Comes to the set position, and...

...floats in a vicious, swooping, knuckle curve, that causes the batter to flinch out of the way, before breaking back over the plate for...

UMPIRE

Strike three!

All the fans and players in attendance go NUTS over the awesome pitch, as we follow Miguel off the field to a mini-standing ovation. He tips his hat to the crowd. Just like old times.

233

IN THE DUGOUT

233

Miguel takes a seat as TEAMMATES pass through the frame and pat him on the back.

The SOUND FADES LOW as we start a SLOW ZOOM IN on Miguel. He takes in the moment as we get closer, and his smile gives way to a beat of quiet introspection. Hold.

He looks out across the field. CLAPS for encouragement.

FADE OUT.