

PROJECT BLANCA

"PILOT"

Written by

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CONTEXT (if you're into that sort of thing)

LANGUAGE - only Spanish is spoken between Puerto Rican characters unless otherwise specified and is subtitled in English. Spanish-language dialogue is indicated in [brackets]. English dialogue is indicated in *italicized red*. We won't hear English unless Americans from the Mainland are on screen. English will, and should, feel intrusive.

CASTING - all characters are Puerto Rican-born unless otherwise specified. Those with an ethnicity specified are usually from the Mainland. **PLEASE NOTE:** Puerto Ricans come in all shades/types. Where it matters for story, a Puerto Rican might be described as having "light skin," "olive skin," or being "Black," or "Asian." Otherwise, Puerto Ricans should be a diverse mix.

HISTORY - The stuff that actually happened:

1930s-1960s - the FBI surveilles, "disappears," and tortures thousands of "subversives" to suppress Puerto Rico's Nationalist Party and independence movement.

1930s-1970s - to reduce Puerto Rico's population, women are steered toward sterilization, which becomes so common, it's known simply as 'La Operación,' (the operation). Women are often not fully informed about what's being done to them.

1950 - violent revolution sweeps Puerto Rico. Nationalists attempt to assassinate President Truman. The U.S. deploys 5,000 troops and bombs two towns--the only time the U.S. Military has ever bombed its own citizens.

1954 - Puerto Rican Nationalists open fire on the floor of the U.S. Capitol, demanding Puerto Rico's immediate independence. They are speedily arrested and imprisoned.

1956 - Drs. Gregory Pincus and John Rock test the first birth control pill in Puerto Rico after initially testing them on mentally ill women in a Worcester, MA asylum. It's not made clear to the Puerto Rican women that it's a trial of an unapproved drug. Three women die. No autopsies are performed.

This story begins in 1956.

INT. BLANCA CLINIC - RIO PIEDRAS, PUERTO RICO, APRIL 1956 - DAY

We'll see this gritty clinic later--looking more presentable. But this is what it looks like behind locked metal doors.

MONTAGE - A DAY IN THE LIFE AT THE 'BLANCA CLINIC'

TITLE: RIO PIEDRAS, PUERTO RICO, **APRIL 1956**

HALLWAY -- A dazed female patient with olive skin, CURLY HAIR (20s, athletic), wearing a UNIFORM of green culottes and a loose, white blouse is led down a hallway by a FEMALE NURSE (30s, white).

EXAM ROOM -- A MALE DOCTOR (50s, white) forces an LSD tab into Curly Hair's mouth.

MEDIA ROOM -- Curly Hair sits at one of several classroom desks alongside OTHER FEMALE PATIENTS (20s-30s, all light-skinned), wearing the same culottes and shirt uniform. They blankly watch a PROPAGANDA FILM extolling the virtue and industry of the United States.

EXAM ROOM -- Doctor shoves more LSD into Curly Hair's mouth.

OBSERVATION ROOM -- a GROUP OF MEN (20s-40s, white), in SUITS W/BLACK TIES, LAB COATS, or GUARD UNIFORMS watch as Curly Hair FIGHTS A HUGE PUERTO RICAN MAN (30s, Black). She shouldn't stand a chance, whatever her level of fighting skill -- but she's exhibiting UNUSUAL STRENGTH.

She stops at intervals, out of breath, then tenses. Suddenly, her ARMS AND LEGS GLOW FROM WITHIN, her veins coursing with YELLOW-GREEN FLUORESCENCE. Each time this happens, she's rejuvenated and comes back for more.

Each time, Curly Hair is increasingly fierce, until finally, she's pummeling her opponent into a bloody pulp.

DOCTOR
(*spoken English dialogue*)
Self-defense is easy as pie.

Curly Hair keeps PUNCHING, her fists get bloodier.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Easy as pie!

She doesn't stop.

DOCTOR COLLINS
Somebody stop her!

TWO GUARDS try to grab her, but she brutally FIGHTS them off.

OTHER GUARDS attempt to grab her, but she FIGHTS her way out of the mob. She gets to the door and runs out.

EXT. BLANCA CLINIC - ALLEY - DAY

Curly Hair bursts out a rear entrance into an alley. She runs down the alley toward the main street.

She's almost there! She's free!

BANG! BANG-BANG-BANG!

Blood seeps into Curly Hair's blouse from four bullet wounds.

She DROPS to the ground.

A MALE FBI AGENT (40s, white) is behind her, gun still smoking.

He lowers the gun and sighs, then turns to walk back to the clinic as other MALE AGENTS (20s-40s, white) run out.

FBI AGENT

Get her out of there, please.

Curly Hair's dead eyes as she lies on the ground.

The agents' feet surround her. They flip her onto her back, taking her wrists and ankles. They leave her eyes open.

They lift her. Her head hangs back as they carry her away.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE (ON BLACK): PROJECT BLANCA

INT. THE BIG HOUSE - MARIANA'S BEDROOM - GUAYNABO, PUERTO RICO - MAY, 1956 - MORNING

The modest, 1950s bedroom of a woman in her early 20s. A housedress hangs on the back of a closed door with A CHAIR PROPPED UP AGAINST IT.

TITLE: GUAYNABO, PUERTO RICO - ONE MONTH LATER

A desk covered in framed photos of a vibrant young woman with her siblings, her parents, random friends. A nightstand with a lamp on it has ONE FRAMED PHOTO THAT IS FACE-DOWN.

Over the muffled sounds of a HOUSE FULL OF PEOPLE getting ready in the morning, we hear MARIANA'S HEAVY BREATHING.

MARIANA CABASSA (21, mercurial), the vibrant, light-skinned woman in all the pictures, is on her twin bed on her hands and knees. Actually, one hand holds her up while the other is under her nightdress between her spread thighs.

Her hips swerve up and down as she tries pleasuring herself. She's having a hard time. She can't focus. This isn't working. She stops and takes a deep breath.

Mariana starts again, a little more relaxed. Her breathing becomes SOFT MOANS.

Her head tilts back, eyes closed, alternating between biting her lip and parting them. Whatever she's doing differently feels good. She's getting there...almost there--

--suddenly, THE DOOR OPENS, allowing a narrow gap. The chair was not placed well. **OSCAR RODRIGUEZ** (5, Black) peers into the room. He pushes the chair as far as it'll go, squeezes through the gap in the door, and enters.

OSCAR
([subtitled Spanish])
[Titi Mariana--]

Mariana SHRIEKS and pulls her blanket over her head, a pile of embarrassment.

Oscar approaches her and pokes the pile with his finger.

Mariana's head emerges to look at him. The side-eye would burn if the kid were old enough to discern side-eye.

OSCAR (CONT'D)
[Mami said you should come get
breakfast.]

MARIANA
(annoyed)
[I'm coming! Well, I was about
to...]

She looks at Oscar. The double-entendre is lost on him.

MARIANA (CONT'D)
[I'm coming. Now, go and close the
door. Next time you want to come in
someone's room, knock and wait
until they say it's okay. OK?]

OSCAR

[Okay.]

He leaves, knocking over the chair as he opens and closes the door behind him.

Mariana pulls the blanket back over her head and releases a FRUSTRATED GROAN.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Mariana emerges from her bedroom dressed for the office: stylish and well put-together. She narrows her eyes at a lingering Oscar.

He runs away.

Mariana enters--

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

--the very busy living room of a large, but modest home--the Cabassa family home, AKA 'The Big House.' She feels a tug on the hem of her dress and looks down.

Oscar's little sister, **DELIA RODRIGUEZ** (3, Black), her clothes askew, tries to get past Mariana.

DELIA
(too loud)
[Excuse me!]

Mariana grandly steps to the side and bows, allowing Delia to toddle past. She smiles as she watches Delia go.

MARIANA
(to herself)
[At least she's polite.]

The house is a flurry of CHILDREN (toddler to tween) and ADULTS, as they get ready for work or school.

Mariana enters the--

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

--where her mother, **DOLORES CABASSA** (48, epitomizes 'tough love'), an olive-skinned woman with the weariness of a woman twice her age, has started clearing the kitchen table of a breakfast spread.

Mariana approaches her from behind.

MARIANA
[Bendición, Mami.]

Dolores turns to look at Mariana, scanning her up and down.

DOLORES
[So. You are going to work today.]

MARIANA
[Mami, of course. I always--]

Dolores stops putting food away and leaves the plates on the counter--presumably for Mariana. Not that she says that.

Mariana sighs.

MARIANA (CONT'D)
[Mami, I need someone to install a doorknob with a lock on my door. Oscar just barged in while I was...trying to get ready, and--]

Dolores starts to leave the room.

DOLORES
[When you're married, you can have a lock on your door.]

MARIANA
[Mami...]

Dolores walks into the living room.

Mariana rolls her eyes. She grabs a *maduro* [fried, sweet plantain] off a plate, and angrily shoves it into her mouth.

INT. GUAYNABO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Mariana stands alone in an elementary school principal's office. Eyes closed, lips moving. Rehearsing.

Her eyes snap open as PRINCIPAL LOPEZ (40s, generic) enters behind her. He gestures for her to have a seat as he sits behind a large desk.

MARIANA
[Thank you so much for seeing me. My sister said that you were looking for a new secretary--]

PRINCIPAL LOPEZ

[--any friend, or family, of Lucy's is a friend of ours. Mrs. Baez is a favorite here, of both the children and the staff.]

MARIANA

[She always did a good job teaching me when I was growing up.]

Mariana pulls a folded piece of paper out of her purse and places it on the desk, flattening it open.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

(rehearsed speech mode)

[As you can see on this resume, I have valuable secretarial experience. Recently, I worked for the law office of Acevedo, Valle y De La Cruz, who handle housing cases, trying to get people back into their homes or onto their land. I wanted to continue to use my skills to serve the community, and I can't imagine a more perfect place for that than education--]

PRINCIPAL LOPEZ

[--Miss Cabassa--]

MARIANA

(smiles)

[--please. Call me Mariana.]

PRINCIPAL LOPEZ

[Miss Cabassa. Why are you no longer working at Acevedo, Valle y De La Cruz?]

The cheer slowly evaporates from Mariana's face.

MARIANA

[I had to take a leave of absence. When I returned, they'd decided they didn't need as many secretaries in the pool, so they didn't hire me back.]

PRINCIPAL LOPEZ

[I understand that you were out of town for about...nine months or so?]

MARIANA

[Principal Lopez, I'm a good--]

PRINCIPAL LOPEZ

[--I agreed to meet with you as a courtesy, because we value your sister. But I have to be honest, it wouldn't be appropriate to have you here. This is a school. There are families of young children in and out all the time. If they heard one of our girls was unmarried, went away pregnant, and left it--]

MARIANA

[--I didn't leave it! That's not...I didn't do that. Its father has it now. Him...and his wife.]

A tense pause.

PRINCIPAL LOPEZ

[I'm sorry, but there's no way any of this looks good. As much as we'd like to help you.]

Mariana stands, about to crumble.

MARIANA

[Thank you for your time.]

She walks toward the door, but turns back before opening it.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

[Lucy didn't know I was coming. I wanted to do this on my own without her getting involved, so--]

PRINCIPAL LOPEZ

[--there's no reason for her to know you stopped by.]

Mariana nods, then leaves the room.

EXT./INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL/CABASSA TRUCK - DAY

Mariana hurries away from the school in tears. She walks toward a Chevrolet pick-up truck where her brother **CARLITO CABASSA** (32, a gentle giant) sits in the driver's seat.

Mariana opens the passenger-side door and gets in, slamming the door behind her.

MARIANA
[Take me home, please.]

CARLITO
(cheerful)
[Does my brilliant little sister
have a new job?]

Mariana slowly turns her head toward him in tears.

MARIANA
(incredulous)
[No.]

Carlito's face fills with pity. Then determination. He gets out of the truck and walks around to the passenger side.

He opens the passenger side door and gestures for Mariana to get out.

MARIANA (CONT'D)
[What are you--?]

Carlito gestures again. Mariana jumps down from the cab.

Carlito closes the passenger side door--and clasps Mariana in a tight bear hug, lifting her off the ground a little. She's surprised at first, but then closes her eyes and lets herself be wrapped up. He gives the best hugs.

CARLITO
(as he releases her)
[Sorry. But you can't hug people
right doing it across the seat, you
know?]

MARIANA
(smiles)
[You take such good care of me,
Carlito. Thank you. And thank you
for driving me. I hate that I had
to ask you.]

CARLITO
[Of course, Mari! Don't feel bad. A
lot of people have lost their jobs
lately. Maybe you can help Mami
with her clothes!]

MARIANA
[I'm not working for Mami. That's
the last thing I want.]
(folds her arms)
[I can do better.]

(MORE)

MARIANA (CONT'D)

I just thought I'd have something by now. But I don't want to tell the rest of the family I lost my job until I find a new one, okay? Promise you won't tell?]

CARLITO

(crossing his heart,
heavily accented English)
Cross my heart and hope to die!

Mariana smiles at this rare attempt at English.

MARIANA

[Wepa! You're getting better!]

CARLITO

[You'll find a new job soon. You're smart, and pretty, and nice. You're my Mariposa! Your wings will take you someplace even better.]

Carlito opens the passenger side door for her and bows, chivalrously. Mariana giggles as she curtsies before getting back into the truck.

Carlito closes the door and jogs back to the driver's side.

EXT. RIO PIEDRAS CLINIC - RIO PIEDRAS, P.R. - DAY

A single-story, non-descript building in Rio Piedras, part of the Puerto Rican capital city of San Juan. The streets are teeming with LABORERS and SHOPPERS.

TITLE: RIO PIEDRAS, PUERTO RICO

Two white men stand outside, waiting.

GREGORY PINCUS (50s, prickly) fans himself with a magazine, wearing a suit slightly too heavy for the climate.

JOHN ROCK (60s, approachable) stands in rolled-up shirt sleeves, suit jacket flung over his shoulder. Silver fox.

ROCK

You'll need to address the work at the Worcester asylum at some point, Greg.

PINCUS

(indicates magazine)
I'm not dignifying this.

(MORE)

PINCUS (CONT'D)

We're on the verge of something huge, and some panty-waist so-called doctor's clutching his pearls about--

The magazine cover: a 1956 issue of *Lancet* medical journal.

PINCUS (CONT'D)

(rolling it up)

--we are helping women.

RICE-WRAY (O.S.)

[You're helping entire communities!]

EDIE RICE-WRAY (50s, white), an intelligent, confident woman completely at ease here, approaches.

With her is **CELSO-RAMÓN GARCÍA** (30s, white, suck-up), who walks ahead to shake Pincus' hand. Pincus pats him on the shoulder. García shakes Rock's hand. They know each other.

GARCÍA

John? Greg? This is Dr. Edie Rice-Wray, Medical Director of the Puerto Rico Family Planning Association, distinguished professor at University of Puerto Rico School of Medicine--

RICE-WRAY

[You forgot to mention 'champion doscientos player.']

They both chuckle.

ROCK

I'm sorry, Ma'am. But we don't speak Spanish.

RICE-WRAY

Not even a little?

PINCUS

Well, that's why we have you.

RICE-WRAY

(deadpan)

I thought you had me, because you needed a doctor who knew what they were doing.

Awkward silence. Suddenly, Rice-Wray laughs. She walks toward the clinic entrance.

RICE-WRAY (CONT'D)

Only joshing, boys. Let me show you how we're distributing your miracle drug.

As the others follow, we see a FEMALE VENDOR (50s) at a cart.

Also at the cart, **FBI AGENT THOMAS GOODWIN** (40s, white, menacingly snarky) watches them go. He hands the vendor cash.

INT. RIO PIEDRAS CLINIC - WAITING AREA - DAY

An overcrowded municipal clinic that's surprisingly inviting. FEMALE PATIENTS (15-60s) - some with CHILDREN, others not, all low-income - chat in the waiting area, talk to the NURSING STAFF (women, 20s-50s) in a separate room off to the side, or talk to the FEMALE RECEPTIONIST (20s) at the front desk. It's very busy. SPANISH FILLS THE AIR.

Rice-Wray leads the other doctors through the room on a tour.

RICE-WRAY

This is the waiting area. We try to make them as pleasant as possible in each clinic. Toys for the children and all that.

(indicates the other room)

That's the intake room, where patients sit with a nurse and discuss their needs.

ROCK

It's amazing that the island has such a robust clinic network.

RICE-WRAY

Thank FDR and the New Deal. The U.S. saw a need in Puerto Rico. And that need has grown.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Rice-Wray leads the group past exam rooms.

RICE-WRAY

Six exam rooms, a rotating nursing staff of eight, three gynecologists and 2 primary care doctors.

ROCK

For all those people out there?

GARCÍA

This is why what we're doing is so important, John. That crowd will be cut in half once this really gets going and we don't have to fit women for caps or diaphragms. Or refer them for sterilization.

PINCUS

Seems like the easier thing, if you can't afford children.

Rice-Wray stops to turn and look at Pincus.

RICE-WRAY

Okay. How about you get your boys snipped, and you can tell me how that goes?

PINCUS

Now, hold on--

Rice-Wray turns and keeps walking.

Rock follows. Pincus and García follow behind him.

INT. WAITING AREA - DAY

As the group comes back into the waiting area, they notice Agent Goodwin standing near the entrance eating an ice cream-like treat out of a plastic cup.

The women in the waiting area eye him with nervous suspicion as he licks what has dripped down the side of his hand.

AGENT GOODWIN

(re: the snack)

Limber. Did you know that this is named after Charles Lindbergh? I'm sorry--

(mocking accent)

Ees name after Sharles Limber.

(chuckles)

Pretty funny.

RICE-WRAY

What do you want?

AGENT GOODWIN

(licking his fingers)

Oh, I'm sorry. Let me introduce myself to the new kids.

He digs into his jacket pocket with his free hand and pulls out a BADGE. Flashes it.

AGENT GOODWIN (CONT'D)
Agent Thomas Goodwin, FBI.

An audible current of concern shoots through the waiting room. Agent Goodwin turns toward the women there.

AGENT GOODWIN (CONT'D)
*Don't worry, ladies. I'm not here
for any of you--
(turns back to group)
--yet.*

He winks. No one in the group finds this charming.

ROCK
(extends his hand)
Agent Goodwin, my name is--

AGENT GOODWIN
*Oh, I know who you are. All the way
from Worcester, Massachusetts, Drs.
John Rock and Gregory Pincus. Big-
time science guys, apparently.
(gestures at Rice-Wray and
García)
These two and I are already
acquainted.*

PINCUS
*I assure you everything we're doing
here is strictly within the law as
permitted by--*

AGENT GOODWIN
*--I'ma stop you right there, pal.
I'm with the FBI, not the FDA. I
don't give a shit about whatever
drug operation you've got going
here. But I would like a word with
you somewhere more private.*

INT. INTAKE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rice-Wray lets the last nurse exit, before closing and locking the door behind her. Only the doctors and Goodwin remain.

RICE-WRAY

*Agent Goodwin, I can explain
our...arrangement to our guests.
There's really no need to--*

AGENT GOODWIN

*--what kind of neighbor would I be
if I didn't make sure everyone
who's new to the neighborhood feels
welcome?*

Agent Goodwin walks to the opposite wall and pats a LARGE,
METAL DOOR WITH A GREEN STRIPE PAINTED DOWN THE MIDDLE.

AGENT GOODWIN (CONT'D)

*And as it happens, we are
neighbors. Uncle Sam has set up
shop next door.*

ROCK

What for?

AGENT GOODWIN

*That. Is classified. You folks are
trying out that oral birth control
thing, right?*

PINCUS

Why--?

AGENT GOODWIN

*--We're not interested in your
trials. We are interested in some
of your subjects. We'll be in here
checking out the merchandise. When
we see one we like, you folks make
like you wanna offer them a
different version of the drug, and
send them to us next door.*

Rice-Wray tenses. Rock and Pincus share a concerned look.

EXT. THE BIG HOUSE - EVENING

A single-story house with a tin roof that's been expanded
haphazardly throughout the years, with rooms added to
accommodate a growing family. A dirt road out front leads
into a large driveway where the Cabassas' Chevy truck sits.

There are other, smaller homes scattered on the land around
The Big House, most on cinder blocks. Several ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN run around from house to house.

Mariana's sister, **ELENA RODRIGUEZ** (23, matronly), a young, Black woman whose fire has been extinguished, emerges from the front door carrying **MARÍA RODRIGUEZ** (1), on her hip.

ELENA
 [Oscar! Delia! Come say goodnight
 to Grandma and Grandpa! We're going
 home!]

Elena looks out and sees--

--Mariana walking up the driveway from the road. She stops and looks at Elena.

ELENA (CONT'D)
 [We didn't wait for you to eat.]

Elena goes back in the house.

INT. THE BIG HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mariana opens the front door and is assaulted by the cacophony of her large family. As she centers herself before entering, she feels a familiar tug on the hem of her dress.

Delia, her clothes even more disheveled than they were that morning, tries to get into the house past Mariana.

DELIA
 (still too loud)
 [Excuse me!]

Mariana lets Delia through. Oscar immediately follows, racing into the house just as Mariana was about to close the door.

OSCAR
 (without looking at her)
 [Hi, Titi Mariana!]

As she steps into the living room, she's stopped and greeted by several children, each calling her '*Titi Mariana.*'

It's not clear which children belong to which adults, or which family members live here. Like, ever. Like, even to the people who actually live here.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Mariana enters as the women of the Cabassa family are wrapping trays and pots of leftover food in aluminum foil.

LUCY BAEZ (31, schoolmarm) guards a tray of pork on the counter.

LUCY
 (calling across the room)
 [Mami, can I take this pernil? I can use it for Nelson and the kids for sandwiches.]

DOLORES (O.C.)
 [Leave half for Carlito. He'll want some to take to work tomorrow.]

Mariana approaches Dolores, who is hugging Delia and Oscar goodbye.

Elena watches from the sink.

MARIANA
 [Bendición, Mami.]

DOLORES
 (to Oscar)
 [Did your Mami let you take home a piece of flan?]

Oscar nods wildly. Dolores chuckles.

MARIANA
 [Bendición, Mami.]

Dolores straightens up to look at Mariana.

DOLORES
 [You're finally home. In time to eat dinner, but not in time to help make it.]

MARIANA
 [Mami, I'm sorry. I had a really long day...at work.]

DOLORES
 [That's right. La Jefa is too busy to do menial tasks like cooking. Don't worry. Your sisters, who also have jobs, managed to help me. Who also has a job.]

MARIANA
 [Mami--]

DOLORES
(to the children)
[--let's say goodbye to Grandpa.]

Dolores takes their hands and walks away from Mariana, leaving the room. Mariana watches her go, hurt.

Elena steps toward her and puts her chin on Mariana's shoulder, wrapping her arms around her from behind.

ELENA
[I made you a plate. It's on the
back burner of the stove covered in
Reynolds Wrap.]

Mariana turns around and hugs Elena tightly.

INT. BATHROOM - LATER

Mariana enters the bathroom wearing a housedress and slippers. She closes the door behind her.

In a wicker basket of toiletries on a shelf, there is a SMALL DRAWSTRING BAG.

Mariana reaches up and takes the bag out. She opens it.

She removes a PLASTIC DIAPHRAGM CASE and opens that. Inside is a tightly packed WAD OF MONEY. She unrolls the bills and counts them. Whatever she counts isn't enough.

She packs the money back into the diaphragm case and snaps it shut. Frustrated and weary, she puts the cover of the toilet seat down and sits, the diaphragm case still in her hands.

Anger, sadness, and bitterness flicker across Mariana's face. She starts to cry.

Suddenly, Elena opens the door without realizing it's occupied.

MARIANA
(annoyed)
[I'm in here!]

Elena gasps, and quickly closes the door.

Then, slowly, she opens it again--first poking her head in, then entering and closing the door behind her.

MARIANA (CONT'D)
[God, I can't get any privacy in
this damn house.]

ELENA

[Lock the door, then, if you don't want anybody coming in.]

Silence. Elena sits on the edge of the bathtub, across from Mariana. She notices the diaphragm case in Mariana's hand.

ELENA (CONT'D)

[Marianín. Is there someone you're--?]

MARIANA

[No! I threw the diaphragm out after--]

An uncomfortable silence.

Mariana opens the case, revealing the cash.

ELENA

[Bank not good enough?]

MARIANA

[Most of my pay goes in the family account, but I've been putting a little to the side every week. This money is mine. Just mine. And no one's gonna look in here.]

ELENA

[What's it for?]

MARIANA

[I have to get out of here, Elena. Out of this house. Out of Guaynabo. I need to start over away from here.]

ELENA

[You were just away. For months. But this is home. You're home now.]

MARIANA

[Lydia moved to New York, and you didn't try to convince her this was 'home.']

ELENA

[That's different. She left with her husband. Also, she's not my favorite sister. You are.]

Mariana smiles. She reaches her foot out and affectionately touches it against Elena's leg. The smile quickly fades.

MARIANA

[Now that I'm back? The way people look at me? Everywhere I go, I'm a 'scandal.' It's even affecting...my job search.]

ELENA

[You have a job.]

Mariana's pleading eyes reveal the truth.

MARIANA

(fresh tears)

[Don't tell Mami or Papi, Elena. Please.]

Elena leans over and takes Mariana's free hand.

ELENA

[What happened?]

MARIANA

[They wouldn't take me back. Somehow they found out why I had to go away, and when I came back they said that they couldn't have anyone working there that would 'damage the firm's reputation.']

Elena sighs in disgust.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

[I've been applying to jobs for the past week and a half, and it's the same everywhere. People talk. And they all think that I'm some kind of...]

ELENA

[People need to mind their damn business. As if they're so perfect. And how dare they think less of you when you didn't...it wasn't even--]

MARIANA

[That shouldn't matter! How it happened shouldn't matter! No one should be punished forever.]

Mariana angrily reaches for the cloth bag she left on the counter and jams the diaphragm case back into it.

MARIANA (CONT'D)
 [And you don't have to remind me
 what it was.]

More silence.

Mariana leans closer to Elena.

MARIANA (CONT'D)
 [I made an appointment for next
 week. At the Rio Piedras clinic you
 told me about.]

ELENA
 [For the new pill? Good! They made
 me throw up at first, but the nurse
 said it's just our bodies getting
 used to it. It shouldn't be like
 that for long.]

MARIANA
 [All I want is to be able to decide
 for myself. That can't be a bad
 thing to want...]

Mariana is overcome with sadness. She buries her head in her
 arms and cries.

Elena leans over her and holds her.

EXT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAYS LATER

A bright Sunday morning in Guaynabo. Congregants enter the
 church. The double-digit Cabassa clan approaches the church
 in small groups.

Mariana walks with Elena, who pushes a baby stroller with one
 hand and holds Delia's hand in the other.

Near the church entrance, Mariana sees **ESTEBAN CRUZ** (28,
 dangerously handsome). Standing beside him is his wife, **ADELA
 CRUZ** (25, confident), who is holding a NEWBORN BABY. They
 greet friends who coo at the child.

Mariana's body lurches forward, but Elena lets go of Delia's
 hand to grab Mariana's shoulder.

ELENA
 [Don't.]

MARIANA
 [I'm not gonna say anything.]

ELENA
[Mariana, I'm serious.]

Mariana looks at Elena, deep sadness in her eyes. She looks back at Esteban and his family.

MARIANA
[I know.]

Once Esteban and Adela have entered the church, Mariana begins walking again.

As she does, **LUÍS RODRIGUEZ** (30, perpetually angry), Elena's blue collar husband drags Oscar to her and practically flings the child at her.

LUÍS
[Will you deal with your son?]

ELENA
[What? What happened?]

LUÍS
[He's running around in the street like a crazy person...]

ELENA
(under her breath)
[I love how he's my son when he needs discipline.]

Luís hears this. He comes closer to her.

LUÍS
[What?]

ELENA
[Nothing.]
(to Oscar)
[Come here. Hold Delia's hand.]

Luís stops her from walking.

LUÍS
(harsh whisper)
[You saying I'm a bad father?]

ELENA
[No, I'm not. It's just--]

LUÍS
[You trying to embarrass me in front of your family? Huh?]

Mariana has noticed that Elena is no longer beside her and turns around. Seeing the hostile scene, she walks over.

MARIANA
[We better hurry and get inside if
we wanna sit together!]

She picks up Delia and takes Oscar's hand.

Luis breaks away from the group and storms toward the church, leaving the women and children to slowly follow behind.

They walk.

MARIANA (CONT'D)
(looking straight ahead)
[Anything you wanna tell me?]

ELENA
(also looking ahead)
[No.]

They keep walking.

As they continue forward, they pass the entrance to--

EXT. SERENITY GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

--a small, empty area behind a gate to the side of the church. A non-operational stone fountain sits surrounded by plants and several benches.

ONE SIDE OF THE FOUNTAIN HAS COMPLETELY COLLAPSED and is now a pile of rubble in the surrounding plants.

MERCEDES HERNANDEZ (20s, athletic), an olive-skinned beauty with an incisive mind panics as she sits on the farthest bench from the fountain, wearing A DARK, LONG-SLEEVED CARDIGAN AND DARK STOCKINGS that are out of place on a sunny day in May.

She takes deep breaths, trying to calm herself. She looks around to see if anyone is nearby.

Confident she's alone, Mercedes rolls up her sleeve and HER ARM IS GLOWING GREENISH-YELLOW.

She quickly pulls the sleeve back down and looks around again, hoping no one saw.

RAFA (O.C.)
[There you are!]

Mercedes turns and sees her husband, **RAFA HERNANDEZ** (20s, earnest) and her son, **JOSÉ HERNANDEZ** (5), walk into the garden toward her. She straightens her clothes.

José runs to her and climbs up on the bench.

RAFA (CONT'D)

[What happened? We were waiting for you inside.]

MERCEDES

[I'm not feeling well. Can we go home?]

RAFA

[What's wrong?]

MERCEDES

[It's just--I have a headache, and I'm feeling...]

(gestures vaguely at her whole body)

Can we just go home?]

RAFA

[You don't think you can make it through the mass?]

MERCEDES

[I don't think so.]

José climbs onto Mercedes' lap, and she stands, carrying him.

RAFA

(sighs)

[I think it's that new drug. My sister said she didn't like the side effects.]

MERCEDES

[Maybe.]

JOSÉ

[But Mami, we have to say hello to Jesus. Maybe he can make you better!]

Mercedes smiles and kisses his temple.

MERCEDES

[The beauty of Jesus is that he's everywhere. We can pray and say hello to him at home, too.]

They start to leave the garden. Rafa turns to Mercedes.

RAFA

[Do you want me to take him? If you're not feeling well...]

Mercedes nuzzles José's head, which rests against her shoulder as she carries him.

MERCEDES

[It's okay. I've got him.]

Rafa looks past Mercedes, noticing the broken fountain.

RAFA

[The pastor should do a fundraiser or something. This place is falling apart.]

Mercedes looks back at the fountain, then quickly walks past Rafa toward the garden exit. Rafa follows.

INT. THE BIG HOUSE - DAY

The house bustles with post-church activity as people of all ages occupy every nook and cranny, plates piled with food at tables, or balanced on their laps.

Dolores entertains a GROUP OF CHURCH LADIES (40s-60s, gossipy) in the living room. They take turns correcting the occasional child who runs through the room.

Mariana stands near the head of the dining room table where her father, **FELIX CABASSA** (52, jovial), a charming, intelligent Black man, sits glancing at his dominoes as some of his sons and sons-in-law sit around him in mismatched chairs.

Luís holds dominoes in one hand, and a glass of rum in the other.

Felix and Mariana both look at the dominoes out on the table as they talk and others take their turns.

MARIANA

(to Felix)

[Papi, why can't I just borrow the car? I have a doctor's appointment in Rio Piedras tomorrow.]

FELIX

[You don't need it. You take the bus to work, and one of us can take you anywhere else you need to go.]

MARIANA

(mutters)

[I shouldn't have to rely on someone else to get somewhere.]

HECTOR CABASSA (26, stocky), Mariana's brother, looks at her.

HECTOR

[Buy your own car then.]

MARIANA

[Why don't you, Hector?]

When Mariana turns back to her father, Felix is about to reach for a domino from the boneyard. Mariana puts her hand on his shoulder. She points at a domino in his hand.

He sees the move. He puts the domino down. The other players GROAN. Felix and Mariana smile at each other.

FELIX

(to Mariana)

[How do you expect to meet the future father of your children if you're always running between work and other obligations?]

HECTOR

(glib)

[Job didn't stop her before!]

The table gets quieter as Mariana straightens up.

Another brother at the table SLAPS Hector's arm with the back of his hand.

Mariana's face hardens, trying not to show she's wounded.

FELIX

(stern)

[Hector--]

Lucy pokes her head into the room and calls Felix.

LUCY

[--Papi? There are two guys outside for you? From work?]

Felix stands quickly.

FELIX

[Ah, yes! Thank you, Lucy. Tell them I'll be right out.]

He begins to step away, then turns back to Mariana. He holds her face and kisses her forehead before leaving the room.

Mariana stands in silence for a moment.

HECTOR

(softer)

[Hey, Marianín. I didn't mean--]

MARIANA

(leaving the room)

[--Forget it.]

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

As Mariana walks down the hall back toward the living room, she's stopped by the sight of Dolores through the open bedroom door. Dolores rummages in a dresser drawer.

Mariana steps into the bedroom.

MARIANA

[Bendición, Mami.]

Silence. Mariana steps closer.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

[Bendición--]

DOLORES

[--I heard you. "Bendición" is you asking for a blessing. That means I decide if I want to give it.]

MARIANA

[Okay!]

More silence.

Dolores continues to rummage until she finds the prayer book she was looking for. She pulls it out and flips through it.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

[Can you at least look at me?]

Dolores makes a production out of turning and staring at Mariana's face.

DOLORES

[Like this? Is this good?]

MARIANA

[Mami, stop!

(crying)

I just went through the hardest thing I've ever been through in my whole life. I've been back in this house for two weeks, and you're still acting like--]

DOLORES

[It didn't have to be hard. You could've brought that baby back to this house.]

MARIANA

(too loud for Dolores' comfort)

[No I couldn't! That's not what I want! Not right now. Maybe ever.]

Dolores storms toward the open bedroom door and closes it.

DOLORES

(voice lowered, but angry)

[I don't have a flashy or easy life, but I put a teacher, seamstresses, a secretary, a nurse, cane farmers and construction workers into the world. Twelve children into God's world, all while taking care of your father. I work every day making clothes people need--]

MARIANA

[--I know, Mami--]

DOLORES

[--Do you know how small you made me feel when you told me what you were going to do? As if having a baby were the worst thing to happen to you. As if ending up with a life like mine was the worst thing in the world.]

MARIANA

[Mami, I--]

DOLORES

[You are so smart, but you are so stupid about things that matter.]

She turns toward the bedroom door.

DOLORES (CONT'D)

[Now, I have a grandchild out there, and I don't even know--
(her breath catches)
My friends are waiting for me.]

She leaves the room. Mariana wraps her arms around herself.

EXT. THE BIG HOUSE - LATER

Elena emerges from the Big House carrying María on her hip and walks to the narrow green home on its right--her house.

INT. ELENA'S HOUSE - DAY

A much smaller two-bedroom home. Simple, but well cared for. Neat, despite three children living here.

Elena goes to a playpen set up in the living room and gently places María in it. María immediately starts bouncing up and down.

ELENA

[Glad to be back in your own playpen, huh? Away from all that noise? I'm gonna get you some food, because you were too distracted to finish your lunch at Grandma and Grandpa's!]

She gives María kisses, then walks over to the kitchen area to prepare food for her.

Luís enters the house and sees Elena in the kitchen. He smirks, sneaks up behind her, and wraps his arms around her waist.

She jumps, and she's not amused. She's mildly annoyed.

LUÍS

[Come here beautiful.]

ELENA

[I'm making lunch for the baby.]

Luís turns her to face him.

LUÍS
 (smiling)
 [I'm hungry, too.]

Luís pulls her close and starts sloppily kissing her neck. She's squirming and pulling her face away.

ELENA
 [Luís. You smell like a bar. Let me finish this.]

LUÍS
 [The baby's not going to starve. Come on.]

Elena debates what to say next. Finally...

ELENA
 [I didn't take my pill today.]

Luís stops and steps back. Elena straightens her shirt.

ELENA (CONT'D)
 [I'm sorry. I went to go help Mami get the food ready this morning and it got really busy--
 (a small, flirty smile)
 I'll make it up to you tomorrow. Promise.]

As Elena turns to open a cabinet door, Luís raises a the back of his hand and--

--SLAP. María flinches, wide-eyed.

Elena holds the side of her face, backs up a little.

LUÍS
 [The kids are supposed to go to your mother's on Sundays. This is our time. Or do you not wanna be my wife anymore?]

ELENA
 [I never said that! I just didn't have time--]

LUÍS
 [--you say I'm not a good father, you don't honor me in my own house--
]

ELENA
[--I'll be back on schedule
tomorrow, okay? I just--]

Luís steps toward her. Presses her against the counter.

LUÍS
[No. This is our time. And I put up
with a lot in this house.]

He starts kissing her again, putting his hands up her shirt.
Elena continues squirming.

ELENA
[Please. We can't afford another--]

Luís stops.

LUÍS
[What? Another baby? The babies we
keep having because you're too
stupid or lazy to deal with your
birth control? Whose fault is
that?]

Luís turns, suddenly remembering there's a baby nearby. He
remains nonchalant.

LUÍS (CONT'D)
(grabbing Elena's arm)
[Come on. I don't want to fuck with
a baby in the room. It's weird.]

He marches Elena down the hallway toward their bedroom.

INT. THE BIG HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Mariana wanders into the kitchen and notices that the back
door is open. Curious, she goes out back.

EXT. STORAGE AREA - CONTINUOUS

Mariana walks around to the side of the house where a
makeshift wooden awning has been built, along with a large,
wooden table and lots of shelving where a variety of
textiles, sewing supplies, tools, and other items are stored.

Felix sits under the awning with TWO YOUNGER MEN on folding
chairs. They are huddled together and whispering.

MARIANA
[Papi?]

The three men jerk away from each other and look over at her. One of the young men brightens at the sight of her.

FELIX

[What is it, Mi'ja? What do you need?]

MARIANA

[Nothing. I mean, I wanted to talk, but if you're busy--]

CHAGO (20s, scrawny, charming), leaps out of his seat to offer Mariana his hand. **DANIEL** (20s, rough around the edges) pulls him back by his shirt.

Mariana notices and smirks, but remains silent.

FELIX

(to Mariana)

[What did you need to talk to me about?]

MARIANA

[Never mind. It can wait. I didn't mean to interrupt.]

CHAGO

[It's okay. We could use a breath of fresh air like you.]

Felix good-naturedly rolls his eyes.

FELIX

(to Mariana)

[I'll be in in a little while, Mi'jita.]

Mariana nods. She turns and walks toward the back of the house.

Before going all the way around back, she stops and looks back at the men. Daniel shows Felix a LARGE DUFFEL BAG she didn't notice at his feet before.

Daniel unzips the bag, allowing Felix to look inside. Felix nods and gestures that he should close it again.

Felix looks out at the road. It's empty.

Satisfied that they're not being watched, Felix takes the duffel bag and slides it into the narrow space between the bottom of one of the shelving units and the floor. He then motions for the young men to get up, and proceeds to talk to them about various baskets of cloth.

Mariana cocks her head to the side, confused.

Off her expression--

CUT TO:

INT. RIO PIEDRAS CLINIC - INTAKE ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

ON MARIANA as she sits at a small table across from **NURSE CAMPOS** (30s, warm).

NURSE CAMPOS (O.C.)
[What brings you in today?]

The room is full of small tables, each with two chairs on either side, where nurses sit with patients.

MARIANA
(leans in, voice lowered)
[My sister told me you have a pill that can stop me from getting pregnant?]

Nurse Campos smiles and leans in, placing her hand on Mariana's.

NURSE CAMPOS
[Nothing to be shy about. And yes, we have a new pill that makes diaphragms and spermicides a thing of the past.]

MARIANA
[That doesn't seem possible.]

NURSE CAMPOS
[It is. You have to take them every day, but one pill a day, and you don't have to worry about getting pregnant before you want to.]

MARIANA
[And...they're free?]

NURSE CAMPOS
[Absolutely. Not everyone wants... 'La Operación.' And now there's an alternative. We want the women of Puerto Rico to have choices. Are you married?]

MARIANA
 (hesitant)
 [No.]

NURSE CAMPOS
 [Ah.]

A pause.

Then--

NURSE CAMPOS (CONT'D)
 [Do you work?]

MARIANA
 [Um...I'm a secretary.]

NURSE CAMPOS
 [I bet those cramps during your
 period make it difficult to work,
 don't they?]

MARIANA
 [My cramps aren't actually that--]

NURSE CAMPOS
 (pointed)
 [--those debilitating cramps make
 it really difficult to work. Don't
 they?]

MARIANA
 [...yes.]

NURSE CAMPOS
 [This new pill should help. Let me
 grab you some information.
 (she stands)
 It's a shame. Married women get all
 the contraceptive options they
 want, but unmarried women have to
 have a medical reason.
 (winks)
 Luckily, you do.]

She leaves the room.

Mariana overhears a conversation behind her--in English.

NURSE KAVANAUGH (O.C.)
Is that her?

DOCTOR COLLINS (O.C.)

God, I hope so. My kingdom for someone who's not completely slovenly.

NURSE KAVANAUGH (O.C.)

She's on the list. I'll double-check.

DOCTOR COLLINS

We'll talk to Campos when she gets back. This one might be a good candidate for the other...birth control option.

Mariana turns to see **NURSE MOIRA KAVANAUGH** (30s, white, pompous) and **DR. GEOFFREY COLLINS** (50s, white, smarmy) beside the metal door with the green line, which is now ajar. Each wears a crisp, green medical uniform unlike the rest of the Rio Piedras clinic staff.

MARIANA

(confident, accented English)

There's another option? What other option?

Kavanaugh looks up at Mariana, pleasantly surprised.

NURSE KAVANAUGH

You speak English! And so well.

DR. COLLINS

Even better.

INT. BLANCA CLINIC - WAITING AREA - DAY

Kavanaugh escorts Mariana into a clinic that's cleaner, quieter, more spacious, and more antiseptic than the other one.

Mariana looks around at the CLINIC EMPLOYEES (men and women, 20s-30s) seated at desks scattered around the room, working quietly. The waiting area is empty.

NURSE KAVANAUGH

Your last name is Cabassa, right? Are you related to Felix Cabassa?

MARIANA

That's my father. Do you know him?

NURSE KAVANAUGH

My husband does! He's a foreman at the tobacco factory where your father works. Talks about him all the time. Says, 'that Felix Cabassa knows how to inspire all the younger guys. Makes them twice as productive as I can!'

MARIANA

Sounds like my father should be the foreman.

Kavanaugh lets out a hearty laugh and pats Mariana's arm.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

(steering the convo)

So, how is this birth control different than the pills?

NURSE KAVANAUGH

Oh, it's much better. Same medication, but at a higher dose. So, you only have to come in once a month.

MARIANA

Come in? My sister told me a nurse brings the pills to her and she gets a check-up at her house.

NURSE KAVANAUGH

That's the one drawback. Since this is a stronger version of the drug, we want the women using it to come in so we can make sure they're okay.

MARIANA

Why me?

NURSE KAVANAUGH

What?

MARIANA

Why me? How did I get picked for this?

NURSE KAVANAUGH

(slightly hesitant)

Well...you asked about it, right?

MARIANA

Yes, but only after I heard you talking. You said, 'She's on the list.' What list? You were talking about me, right?

Kavanaugh straightens up and smiles, but with a closed mouth.

NURSE KAVANAUGH

You don't miss a trick, do you? Yes, we had you on a list.
 (leaning toward her)
Most of the women who come in are housewives or factory workers. Women who benefit from a regular routine. Women who can be home to receive a nurse's visit. But you--

Kavanaugh gently places her hands on Mariana's shoulders.

NURSE KAVANAUGH (CONT'D)

--we've tried to get to know more about the women in the communities we serve, and based on what I've heard, you are an ambitious young woman. Working at a legal office, looking to better herself before starting a family. You are a woman of the future--

MARIANA

[--La mujer del porvenir.]

NURSE KAVANAUGH

Exactly. The perfect person for
 (correct but lifeless Spanish)
['la pais del porvenir.'] I love that phrase.

Mariana steps away from Kavanaugh and wraps her arms around herself. She looks out at the neat office, the orderly workers - a space very unlike the other clinic. Or her home, for that matter.

She lowers her arms and smooths her dress with a free hand. She stands a little straighter.

MARIANA

So? Where can I get this injection?

Kavanaugh smiles.

INT. EXAM ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Kavanaugh enters and gestures toward a chair where Mariana can sit.

NURSE KAVANAUGH

*You can have a seat right there.
Doctor Collins will be with you
shortly.*

Kavanaugh leaves, closing the door behind her.

Mariana fidgets with her purse while she waits. Suddenly, a WOMAN'S GUTTERAL SCREAM pierces the silence. Her eyes widen.

When Dr. Collins enters, Mariana is startled.

DR. COLLINS

*Sorry about that. Didn't mean to
scare you.*

MARIANA

What was that screaming?

DR. COLLINS

*Oh--poor woman's appendix burst, if
you can believe it. We're going to
have to get her to a hospital.*

MARIANA

That sounds terrible.

Dr. Collins cocks his head to the side to look at Mariana.

DR. COLLINS

Aren't you a pretty thing.

Mariana looks up at him. Stiffens.

MARIANA

Thank you.

Collins removes a vial from a small cooler, and alcohol, cotton balls, a syringe, and bandages from a cabinet.

DR. COLLINS

*No wonder you're looking into your
options. Pretty thing like you? You
probably have to beat them off with
a stick.*

He pulls a rolling stool over to Mariana and sits, spreading the injection paraphernalia on a nearby counter.

DR. COLLINS (CONT'D)

Remember, you'll have to come here every month to get your shot in order for it to remain effective.

(takes her wrist, smiles)

So you and I will get to know each other very well.

Mariana smiles politely as Collins grabs the rubbing alcohol.

She looks straight ahead as he takes too long slowly rubbing alcohol on her upper arm.

Collins injects her, places cotton at the injection site.

For a moment, he holds the cotton against her arm while slowly grazing her shoulder with one of his other fingers.

MARIANA

So...that's it?

Collins puts the syringe back on the tray, grabs a bandage, puts it on her arm.

DR. COLLINS

That's it. For the next month, you can't get pregnant. You won't even have a period.

Collins stands and opens a black folder on the counter, writing on a sheet of paper in there.

DR. COLLINS (CONT'D)

I'm scheduling you for a month from now. It's here on this appointment log. Hold onto it.

(closes folder)

The rest of this is information on the medication and potential side effects. It's very important that if you experience anything out of the ordinary, that you come in immediately. Understand?

Collins holds out the folder. Mariana stands and takes it.

MARIANA

Yes, of course. Thank you, Doctor.

DR. COLLINS

I'm looking forward to seeing you again.

Mariana leaves the room.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

As Mariana leaves the exam room, she shudders.

EXT. THE BIG HOUSE - EVENING

The Cabassa truck approaches the house from the road and pulls into the driveway. Parks.

Carlito and Mariana emerge from the cab.

MARIANA

[Thank you for picking me up.]

CARLITO

[You know as long as I'm around,
I'll always take care of my
Mariposa.]

Mariana smiles at him. She looks at the house, and her face drops. She folds her arms.

MARIANA

[I'm not ready to go inside yet.
I'm gonna take a little walk.]

CARLITO

[Do you want me to come with you?
It's getting really dark.]

MARIANA

[I'll be fine. I'm just gonna walk
down to the bottom of the hill and
back. I won't be too long.]

CARLITO

[Okay. Be careful.]

MARIANA

(as she walks away)
[I will. Don't eat all the rice and
beans!]

CARLITO

(climbing the front steps)
[I can't make promises!]

Mariana giggles as she walks to the dirt road.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - LATER

Mariana walks, breathing deep and hanging her head back, enjoying the cool night air. Moonlight and the occasional streetlight illuminate the road.

As she turns a bend--

MERCEDES (O.C.)
[José! Come inside, it's almost
bedtime!]

JOSÉ (O.C.)
[I wanna fly one more time!]

EXT. MERCEDES' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mariana arrives at Mercedes' house as Mercedes plays with her son in their front yard. The remnants of a dinner picnic are spread out on a blanket along with some toys.

Mariana stops on the far side of the road to watch them play.

MERCEDES
[Okay, one more time, then we're
going inside.]

José runs to Mercedes and holds up his arms. Mercedes lifts him and starts throwing him up in the air and catching him. José GIGGLES up a storm. Mercedes smiles and laughs.

Mariana smiles at the scene, then the smile suddenly disappears. She wraps her arms around herself.

Mercedes throws José higher and higher...and higher.

MERCEDES' ARMS AND LEGS START TO GLOW GREENISH-YELLOW.

Mariana notices. She crosses the road toward the house.

Mercedes throws José once, twice, three times--and on the next one, José flies over her head like a shot and SLAMS HEAD-FIRST INTO THE HOUSE. His lifeless body falls to the ground with a heartbreaking THUMP.

Mariana gasps, stopping in her tracks.

Mercedes whirls around, to see where José landed. Her eyes widen when she spots him, and she starts shaking.

Mariana approaches, the CRUNCH of her feet on twigs announcing her arrival to Mercedes. Mercedes turns.

MERCEDES (CONT'D)

[I didn't mean to! I don't know what happened! Oh my God, I don't know what happened!]

MARIANA

[Mercedes, right? I've seen you and your family at church. I'm Mariana. Let's check on him, okay? He might still be breathing.]

They go to José, and when they see his condition, Mariana covers her mouth, and Mercedes WAILS, dropping to her knees.

There is no way José is alive. Skull crushed, neck not aligned, blood leaking from his head.

Shaking off her shock, Mariana gets on her knees with Mercedes. Mercedes is wild-eyed.

MERCEDES

[I don't know what happened! I don't know what happened! I didn't mean to do that! I don't know how that happened!]

MARIANA

[Is your husband home?]

Mercedes hyperventilates.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

[Mercedes! Is someone else home?]

MERCEDES

[N--n--no! It's just us. My husband waits tables, and he usually comes home late. Oh God, my baby! My baby! I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry! Oh God!]

Mercedes is all panic and sorrow. Mariana is on the verge of tears herself, but she tries to keep it together.

MARIANA

[Do you have a phone? We should call an ambulance or something.]

Mercedes nods. Suddenly, she clenches Mariana's arms - TIGHT.

MERCEDES

[I killed my son. I killed my son! I'm a murderer! I killed my son!]

MARIANA

[I'm not reporting you, okay?
Breathe. I saw what happened--]

Mariana lets the enormity of the situation sink in.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

[--and I can't explain what I saw,
but I know it was an accident. If
you tell people that you--they'll
think you did it on purpose, or
that you're crazy--]

Mercedes lets out a PRIMAL SCREAM. Mariana grabs Mercedes' face.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

[This was an accident. I don't know
what I saw, but I know you didn't
do this.]

Mercedes crawls closer to José, puts her head down on his chest, and weeps.

Mariana stands and scans the house. There is a HUGE SPOT OF BLOOD on the concrete fascia of the roof where José hit.

She notices the tree in the front yard. A makeshift ladder is nailed into it, for easier climbing. She notes the distance from the tree's largest branches to the roof.

Mariana goes back to Mercedes and gets down on one knee.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

[You went inside to get something,
and he climbed the tree, tried to
jump onto the roof, but misjudged,
went into the side of the roof, hit
his head, and fell.]

MERCEDES

(despondent)

[That's not what happened.]

Mariana puts her hand on Mercedes' shoulder.

MARIANA

[Mercedes. What happened?]

MERCEDES

(spent, staring blankly)

[I--I turned my back for a minute.
And I didn't see him climb the
tree.]

As she says the words, sadness overtakes her again.

MERCEDES (CONT'D)

[He tried to jump and fly out to the roof like Superman. He loved the idea of flying. When I saw and tried to stop him it was too late. He jumped with his arms out, but he didn't clear the roof...]

She looks at Mariana.

MERCEDES (CONT'D)

[And my neighbor was walking by, and she saw, too.]

Mercedes looks up and notices DOÑA JUANITA (70s, busybody in a housedress) shuffling over from the house next door.

DOÑA JUANITA

[Mercedes! What's going on? I heard screaming, and--]

She notices José's limbs splayed out behind Mariana. She stops in her tracks, gasping.

MARIANA

[There was a horrible accident. I'm going to go call an ambulance.]

Doña Juanita stumbles over to Mercedes in disbelief. Mercedes shatters into sobs again.

MERCEDES

[I'm a terrible mother. I'm a terrible mother!]

As Mariana stands, Doña Juanita approaches and gingerly gets onto the ground beside Mercedes to hold her.

Mariana hurries toward the front door, but stops and looks over her shoulder at a grieving Mercedes before going inside.

EXT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - DAYS LATER

A procession emerges from the church entrance and four PALLBEARERS carry a child-sized coffin - it's José's funeral.

Behind it are Rafa and Mercedes, completely distraught. Rafa openly weeps as he holds his wife close. Mercedes is practically catatonic, on auto-pilot as she walks.

Mariana is in the crowd. As she steps forward to try and offer Mercedes and Rafa condolences, she notices that Adela - Esteban's wife from earlier - and the baby are there, and they get to Mercedes first.

Mariana's face: *They know each other?*

MARIANA'S POV

Adela is offering condolences to Mercedes and Rafa, but Mercedes can't take her eyes off the baby in Adela's arms. As Adela talks with Rafa, Mercedes' breath starts coming faster and faster, until--

--she SCREAMS. Then she runs toward the serenity garden, FASTER THAN SHE SHOULD BE ABLE TO.

END POV

Mariana hurries toward the serenity garden as Rafa CALLS OUT TO HER.

MARIANA
(as she passes him)
[I'll get her.]

The world enters SLOW-MOTION as Mariana and Adela's eyes meet. Neither one speaks. Mariana glances down at the baby. Adela pulls the blanket over the child's head, depriving her of a view. Mariana turns away.

She runs toward the serenity garden--not as fast as Mercedes, but FASTER THAN SHE SHOULD BE ABLE TO.

EXT. SERENITY GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Mariana approaches Mercedes, who stands motionless at the far gate, staring out at the street.

MARIANA
[I am so, so sorry.]

Silence. Mercedes keeps staring.

MARIANA (CONT'D)
[You and your husband need each other, now more than ever. Why don't we go back over there, and--]

MERCEDES

[--he doesn't know what I did.
He'll never know, and I'll always
know, and I don't know how I'm
going to--]

MARIANA

[--you'll remember that it was a
tragic accident. That you adored
your son and gave him a wonderful
life. And if you ever need someone
to remind you of that--someone who
saw what happened and can tell you
in all honesty that you didn't do
anything wrong--I'm here.]

Mercedes turns and starts to walk back to the front of the church. She allows Mariana to put an arm around her and take her hand as they walk.

They pass the BROKEN FOUNTAIN, which hasn't been cleaned up or repaired. Mercedes glances at it and starts to cry again.

MERCEDES

[I ruin everything.]

INT. BLANCA CLINIC - JUNE, 1956 - DAY

Mariana emerges from an exam room pulling the sleeve on her blouse down over her upper arm where she's just received her second injection.

She hears SLOW SHUFFLING coming from down the hall.

TITLE: RIO PIEDRAS, PUERTO RICO - ONE MONTH LATER

Mariana turns her head to see a dazed Mercedes shuffling down the hallway wearing slippers and a hospital gown.

MARIANA

[Mercedes? What are you doing here?
Is something wrong?]

No response. Mercedes keeps shuffling forward. Mariana tries pushing against her to stop her from walking--but she can't.

As she strains to stop Mercedes a YOUNG DOCTOR (30s, newbie), pokes his head out from behind a large metal door with a green stripe at the end of the hall. He sees Mercedes and hurries toward her.

MARIANA (CONT'D)
 (to Mercedes)
 [What's wrong? Talk to me. What's
 happening?]

YOUNG DOCTOR
Nothing to worry about!
Everything's right as rain.

Mercedes stops pushing forward so abruptly that Mariana
 stumbles a bit. Mariana looks at Mercedes, then the doctor.

YOUNG DOCTOR (CONT'D)
 (to Mercedes)
*You need to finish telling me about
 the daisies. Why don't you come on
 back?*

Mercedes turns and walks toward the doctor and the door at
 the end of the hall.

MARIANA
 (to the doctor)
*This woman is a friend of mine. Can
 you tell me what's wrong with her?*

YOUNG DOCTOR
*I'm sorry, but...doctor-patient
 confidentiality. Excuse us.*

The doctor escorts Mercedes down to the end of the hall.

Mariana watches as the door CREAKS open and CLANKS shut
 behind them.

INT. ELENA'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY

Luís leans over the sink, fuming.

ELENA (O.S.)
 (outside the door)
 [It'll be okay. We'll figure
 something out until you find work
 again.]

Luís looks over at the counter and notices a COMPLETE package
 of birth control tablets.

ELENA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 [I've been doing piece-work with my
 mother. She's on deadline for the
 factory, and I know she could use
 more help with those dresses.]

LUÍS
[When did the nurse come to bring
your pills?]

ELENA (O.S.)
[Day before yesterday?]

LUÍS
[Why hasn't this pack been opened
yet?]

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Elena winces, quietly backing away from the door.

LUÍS (O.S.)
[Elena?]

Elena tip-toes down the hall to the living room and lifts María out of her playpen. Delia is on the floor coloring while Oscar sits on the couch eating a snack.

ELENA
(insistent whisper)
[Oscar, get up. Take María. You and
Delia go to Grandma's okay?]

LUÍS (O.S.)
(louder)
[Elena! Did you forget to take your
pill yesterday like a fucking
idiot?]

Oscar and Delia's eyes get wide.

ELENA
(to Oscar)
[Hurry up! Here.]

She hands him María, then takes Delia's hand and pulls her up.

ELENA (CONT'D)
[Come on.]

As Elena hurries the kids to the front door, she hears THRASHING from the bathroom, Luís taking his anger out on their toiletries.

Elena opens the door, then gets down to her kids' eye level.

ELENA (CONT'D)
 [Don't tell Grandma about Papi
 being mad, okay? Just say you
 wanted to go play.]

DELIA
 [You come too!]

ELENA
 [I'll be over there later, okay?
 Go, go, go!]

As the kids toddle out of the house, Luís THROWS open the bathroom door and STOMPS down the hallway.

LUÍS
 [All the pressure's on me, right?
 I'm the one who has to worry about
 supporting everyone, and you can't
 do the one thing I need you to do!]

Elena closes the front door, turns to face him.

ELENA
 [I'm sorry! I'm still getting used
 to them. They make me sick--]

THWACK. Luís slaps her across the face, then grabs her by the shoulders, shaking her.

LUÍS
 [It's one pill a day! It's one
 fucking pill a day!]

EXT. ELENA'S HOUSE - DAY

MUFFLED SCREAMS and THUMPS as the children run to the Big House.

INT. THE BIG HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dolores hands Mariana a stack of sewing patterns. Mariana reluctantly takes them.

DOLORES
 [How long did you think you were
 going to be able to keep it from
 us?]

MARIANA
 [I thought I would've found
 something by now.]

(MORE)

MARIANA (CONT'D)

(annoyed)

I also thought I could trust
Carlito not to tell you.]

Dolores sits at her sewing machine, set up in a corner of the living room, surrounded by baskets of fabric.

DOLORES

[He didn't. I asked him if he drove
you to work yesterday, and he said
no. That he took you to the
library. You know that boy doesn't
lie.]

Mariana smirks. Yup, that sounds like Carlito.

Dolores points at a particular basket of fabric.

DOLORES (CONT'D)

[You're cutting each of those into
that fabric 25 times. 25 dresses.
I'll give you 10 percent of what I
get for each dress.]

Silence. Mariana kneels beside the basket, sets the patterns down, and begins spreading a square of the fabric out on the floor. She stops.

MARIANA

[Mami? Thank you.]

A small smile at the corner of Dolores' lips.

DOLORES

[You're welcome.]

Oscar, Delia, and María enter the house. Dolores' face brightens.

DOLORES (CONT'D)

[Look who wants to spend time with
Grandma!]

Mariana smiles at the sight of them, but the smile fades when she notices that they're being unusually quiet and still.

She stands and takes María from Oscar.

Dolores stands and waves Oscar and Delia over. They run to her for a big hug.

Mariana glances out the front window in the direction of Elena's house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Dolores sits sewing.

DOLORES
[Marianín!]

Mariana pokes her head out from the kitchen.

Dolores kicks the enormous basket of fabric closest to her on the ground.

DOLORES (CONT'D)
[Your father brought this in for me, but it's the wrong kind. Put it back and get me the dress material.]

MARIANA
[If Papi had to bring it in here, what makes you think I can bring it out?]

DOLORES
(without looking up)
[I have faith in you.]

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Mariana drags the heavy basket along the floor through the kitchen toward the back door.

Suddenly, the strain lifts. The basket SEEMINGLY GETS LIGHTER, and Mariana pulls so hard the basket slides toward her easily, quickly, and she falls backward onto her ass with a THUMP.

DOLORES (O.S.)
[What did you do?]

MARIANA
[Nothing! I just...tripped. I'm okay.]

Mariana gets to her feet and lightly tugs on the basket. It slides toward her with ease. She does it again, and the same thing happens.

Finally, she grabs both handles on the basket and lifts, expecting it to be difficult. It isn't.

Surprised, she carries it toward the back door.

EXT. STORAGE AREA - CONTINUOUS

Mariana carries the basket to the side of the house, puts it down, and spots a basket with brightly colored crinoline.

A STACK OF PAPER peeks out from under the fabric.

She pushes the fabric to the side, revealing stacks of flyers that read [JOIN THE PUERTO RICAN NATIONALIST PARTY!] and feature a Puerto Rican flag beside the Nationalist Party flag. Below that, information about a meeting.

Mariana's eyes widen. She continues to rummage and removes a single flier from a second stack. She reads:

[WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST! THIS IS YOUR FIGHT, TOO!]

Puerto Rico needs YOU for the Daughters of Freedom, the Cadets of the Republic, and the Youth Cadet Corps!]

There are details in smaller print about various meetings.

Mariana looks terrified. Then, she has a thought.

She steps back and looks down at the space under the shelving unit where her father stowed that mysterious duffel bag. Its handle protrudes out from under the shelf.

FELIX (O.S.)

[What are you doing, Mi'ja?]

Mariana spins around and sees Felix standing there, calm. He doesn't seem angry. He doesn't step toward her. He is too nonchalant for Mariana's liking.

Mariana continues digging through other baskets. More FLYERS in one. A FOLDED PUERTO RICAN FLAG in another.

MARIANA

(re: flag)

[This is illegal.]

Finally, she kneels and sticks her hand under the shelving unit, pulls out the duffel bag and opens it: VARIOUS GUNS AND BOXES OF BULLETS. She jerks her hand away and stands, as if burned by a flame.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

(re: guns)

[These are even more illegal!]

FELIX

[Mariana--]

MARIANA

[--how long have you been involved in this?]

FELIX

[Long enough.]

MARIANA

(stepping closer)

[This is our home. There are kids here, Papi! What if--]

FELIX

[--we kept this at the factory. But the writing has been on the wall for a while. I knew I wouldn't have a job much longer, so the boys started moving things here temporarily. We'll find somewhere else--]

MARIANA

[What if something happens to you?]

Felix gently places his hands on Mariana's shoulders.

FELIX

[Puerto Rico needs me. She needs all of us. After everything that happened six years ago, and still nothing changes--]

MARIANA

[Mami needs you. I need you. Puerto Rico isn't your family!]

FELIX

[Puerto Rico is the most important family we have.]

A beat.

MARIANA

[Does Mami know?]

FELIX

[She's not involved, but she knows how important this is. I've never had to bring it home before. We've been careful. Now, we have to find alternatives. And no one else in the family knows. It has to stay that way.]

He tilts her head up by her chin.

FELIX (CONT'D)
[Can you trust your Papi?]

Mariana jerks away from his hand and backs up.

MARIANA
[This is selfish. And now you're making me lie. And an accomplice!]

FELIX
[Mi'ja--]

MARIANA
[--I'm helping Mami, and she needs the crinoline in that basket. So, put your stuff someplace else so I can bring that in.]

Felix backs away and turns to remove the flyers from the basket. As he does--

FELIX
[I'll buy more baskets, and tie a black ribbon around the handles of my baskets and bags so you can tell the difference. And I'll put everything on the higher shelves so the kids can't get to them.]

MARIANA
(as she storms off)
[You can bring that basket in when you're done.]

EXT. MERCEDES' HOUSE - NIGHT

Mercedes sits on her front steps in the dark and wearing a housedress, bedraggled and expressionless.

Rafa sadly peers out at her from the open living room window.

RAFA
[I'm going upstairs. I hope you'll come to bed soon.]

No response.

RAFA (CONT'D)
[I love you.]

No response.

He sighs and retreats from the window, closing the curtain. The lights in the living room go out, but the porch light goes on, illuminating Mercedes.

Mercedes remains expressionless, numb.

A BLACK CAR pulls up to the front of the house and parks.

Agent Goodwin and TWO LARGER MALE AGENTS (40s, white) emerge and approach the house. While the other agents remain at the front gate, Agent Goodwin enters and approaches Mercedes.

AGENT GOODWIN

Mercedes Hernandez.

Hearing her name snaps Mercedes into reality. She looks up.

MERCEDES

(accented, but confident
English)

Who are you?

AGENT GOODWIN

*You might not remember me, but
we've met. Several times, in fact.*

MERCEDES

*I've never seen you before in my
life.*

AGENT GOODWIN

*Aw, now come on. That hurts my
feelings.*

Mercedes stands.

MERCEDES

*Sir, I don't know who you are, but
it's late. Come back in the daytime
with whatever you're selling.*

AGENT GOODWIN

*Afraid I can't do that. I'm here to
retrieve something very important.*

MERCEDES

(tensing)

*My husband is right upstairs. If
you don't leave right now--*

AGENT GOODWIN

*That's cute. Even now you're
threatening to call your husband.
As if you need him to protect you.*

Mercedes starts to say something else, but--

AGENT GOODWIN (CONT'D)
*--relax! Everything will be right
as rain.*

Immediately, Mercedes relaxes and she stares straight ahead.
 A robot.

Agent Goodwin stands to the side, opening the gate for her.

AGENT GOODWIN (CONT'D)
*C'mon, Honey. You can tell me all
 about the daisies in the car.*

Mercedes walks through the gate and stops at the car.

One of the other agents opens the passenger-side door, but before he can do anything else, Agent Goodwin is there, taking her hand and helping her into the back seat, shielding her head to ensure she doesn't hit it against anything. Once she's secure, he steps back, and allows the agent to get in next to her. The other agent gets into the driver's seat.

Agent Goodwin returns to the gate and closes it, looking back at the house, noticing the light on in the bedroom window.

Satisfied that he hasn't drawn attention, he gets into the passenger's seat. The car drives off.

INT. MARIANA'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Mariana sits up in bed staring at a [WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST!] FLYER she snuck away from Felix's stash. Finally, she folds the flyer and sticks it into her nightstand drawer.

She glances at the FACE-DOWN FRAMED PHOTO that's sat on the nightstand for months and picks it up to look at it.

It's a photo of MARIANA AND ESTEBAN - the father of the baby she's been seeing at church - LAUGHING AT A BAR during a Christmas party. Mariana is sitting on his lap, toasting the camera with a glass of coquito. Esteban has his arms around her waist, his chin on her shoulder. Intimacy. Ease.

Mariana shoves the frame into her nightstand drawer, SLAMMING it shut. She turns her lamp off and lays down.

After a moment of lying still, she begins tossing and turning. She starts to whimper - first in discomfort, then in outright *pain*. Soon she SEIZES with muscle spasms.

For a brief, bright moment, HER ARMS AND LEGS GLOW GREENISH-YELLOW - the way Mercedes' did. The way Curly Hair's did. She sits up and watches it happen--

--and just like that, it stops.

Mariana's panicked face: *What the hell?*

END OF PILOT.