

TROPICANA PILOT

"Venti demento"

Written by

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(4th DRAFT)

EXT. SUGAR CANE FIELD - CUBA - DAY

Miles of sugar cane sway under a midday sun--a fever dream of green under the blazing heat.

CLOSE-UP - A ROUGH MALE HAND

sweeps a machete through the parrot-green reeds. We RISE UP to...

DIEGO'S FACE (60s)

Eyes yellowish. Skin waxy. He falters. Drops.

WIDE SHOT - SUGAR CANE FIELD

TWO WORKERS help Diego to a tented area where MEN IN WHITE SUITS sit in cane chairs, fanning themselves. ONE OF THOSE MEN (the foreman) rises in irritation.

FOREMAN  
(to approaching workers)  
Go back to work. No break for an hour.

Diego can hardly stand. He's supported by the two other workers.

WORKER #1  
(broken English)  
He has the fever.

DIEGO  
(mutters)  
Venti demento.

Another CRISP-LOOKING AMERICAN has joined the foreman. They talk quietly in English. We hear: "Venti demento... Malaria."

JAVIER, the second worker (15-years-old) steps forward.

JAVIER  
From the rains. My uncle needs quinine.

FOREMAN  
No quinine. Tell him we have no quinine.

Javier gestures at a white building in the distance.

JAVIER  
(eyes blazing)  
You have quinine in your medical supply shop.

FOREMAN  
Not for Cubans. Give him a drink of water and tell him to go back to work.

EXT. SUGAR CANE FIELDS - MOMENTS LATER

Javier helps Diego... literally doing the sweeping *for his uncle* who can hardly stand. A PIERCING WHISTLE sounds.

FAR OFF, the foreman has used his fingers in his mouth to WHISTLE.

FOREMAN  
 (shouts it)  
 We pay for two workers, not one!!!

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL NEAR PLANTATION - ATERNOON

American SHOUTS. American LAUGHTER. Uniformed AMERICAN BOYS are pouring out of the school.

AMONGST THEM, 15-year-old DANNY ROOSEVELT--a thin, lively, inquisitive kid.

DANNY'S POV - Across the road, he spots a bunch of violets tied to a mango tree. Danny grins. The violets, a signal.

Danny quickly separates himself from his teasing, jeering comrades. Moves past the violets into...

THE FOREST

where 16-year-old SONIO MERERO emerges from behind some hedges--a beautiful Cuban girl, with a touch of the wild in her. Tear-drop beauty-mark under her left eye.

Sonio and Danny can't stop smiling at each other--two teenagers in love. Danny takes her in his arms, but she pulls away.

SONIO  
 (warmly)  
 I will kiss you later.

She leads him off. An urgency to her manner today.

DANNY  
 What's going on?

SONIO  
 My uncle is sick.

EXT. ROAD - AFTERNOON

Sonio and Danny (walking hurriedly along a dusty road), pause before a grand mansion.

DANNY  
 (off her look)  
 My father might be home.

But Danny hesitates, wanting so much to invite her inside...

THE MANSION sits amongst lush towering ferns and banana trees. A deer grazes at the edge of the large two-acre lawn. It's like the Garden of Eden.

Sonio finally breaks the silence.

SONIO  
 (catch in her voice)  
 It's okay, I'll wait here.  
 (beat)  
 Hurry.

Danny nods, runs off into the mansion.

Sonio squats tomboyishly at the side of the road. Eyes full of hurt. A girl locked out of paradise.

And suddenly Danny is exiting the house, grinning, running toward her, holding a mess of keys.

EXT. MEDICAL SUPPLY SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Danny and Sonio open the door with one of the stolen keys. A sign on the door reads, "Whites only."

INSIDE THE DUSTY SUPPLY SHOP

Danny climbs a ladder, pulls down a box labeled "QUININE." He hands it to Sonio.

CUT TO:

ON SONIO

running through a warren of tin huts crisscrossed with flapping laundry, holding the box of quinine...

... She stops at one of the huts and hurriedly knocks. Javier opens the door.

SONIO  
I have quinine. For Diego.

Javier's eyes are emotional. On the verge of tears.

JAVIER  
It is too late.

Beyond Javier, we see a clothed Diego laid out on the table, Diego's grieving family surrounding him.

Javier notes the quinine in Sonio's hands.

JAVIER (CONT'D)  
(contempt)  
You were at El Chairman's house.

SONIO  
I wasn't--

But Javier's revulsion and anger makes him immune to words. Javier SLAMS the door in his sister's face.

SMASH CUT TO:

CLOSE-UP - DIEGO'S SUN-LINED FACE

Eyes open, but glassy. Face slack. He is dead. We've never seen anyone more dead. We are:

EXT. SWAMP - LATE NIGHT

SEVERAL WORKERS (including Javier) are carrying Diego's corpse to the edge of a swamp.

The workers talking angrily, Javier with angry tears in his eyes, saying, "Mosquitos will bite kings as well as workers." Worker #2 (laughs), "Communiste bugs!"

The men are all drunk, passing around a bottle of rum.

THE CORPSE OF DIEGO is laid on the bank of the swamp. Worker #3 yells out at the mosquitos.

WORKER #3  
(booming voice)  
C'mon, communistes! C'mon, comrades!

He CRACKS UP as DOZENS OF MOSQUITOS descend on the corpse.

CLOSE-UP - MOSQUITO

It drills its needle into Diego's sunburned neck. Malarial blood bloats the mosquito's translucent body. All over Diego's body, other mosquitos are also drinking his blood.

A thin-meshed net is thrown over Diego's body.

ANGLE ON NET

bobbing and BUZZING as it is walked through the woods--a noisy thing filled with BLOOD-BLOATED MOSQUITOS.

EXT. ROOSEVELT'S LARGE COLONIAL MANSION - NIGHT

The same house Sonio was not allowed *into*. A house for a king.

SIDE OF HOUSE

Javier and the other workers move quietly to a half open window. They put the net to the window and open it wide... letting the blood-filled mosquitos into the house.

WORKER #3  
Venti demento, El Chairman.

JAVIER  
(rage in his eyes)  
Enjoy, puta madre.

INT. MANSION - SAME TIME

Full-sized banana trees flank the doorway. A grand piano gleams in a corner.

A LOUD BUZZING fills the room.

Deadly, weaponized insects flying through the opulence.

INT. STUDY

El Chairman himself, VERN ROOSEVELT, sits in a cane armchair reading the paper--an American in his fifties with a florid face, and mutton chop side-burns.

A mosquito lands on his cheek and he slaps it. Blood splats on his cheek.

Vern picks up a fly-swatter and begins to go after the mosquitos, unaware how close he came to contracting a deadly disease.

INT. DANNY ROOSEVELT'S ROOM - SAME TIME

DANNY (Vern's son) sleeps in his king-sized bed, the picture of youthful health. A blood-bloated mosquito lands on his forehead.

Danny slaps it away in his sleep.

ANOTHER MOSQUITO lands on his hip (where his pajama bottom has slipped downwards).

EXTREME-CLOSE UP - MOSQUITO (belly filled with Malarial blood)

The mosquito adjusts its position on Danny's young flesh. Its drill touches skin. *Pierces through...* literally injecting Malaria into this innocent, sleeping 15-year-old boy.

EXT. WORKER HOUSING - DAY

Just women and children around during the day. Kids playing barefoot in the dirt. Amidst the tumult...

SONIO MERRERO dances immersively to a Cuban jazz song on the communal wind-up phonograph.

She sashays sexually to the music, breasts showing through her sweaty blouse... as two four-year-old boys stare.

LOUD MALE VOICES interrupt the moment. It's the workers coming home from the fields, amongst them Javier.

JAVIER

Your boyfriend has the fever. He goes  
"Sonio, Sonio, where is my Sonio?"

SONIO

(eyes flash)  
What did you do to him?

JAVIER

He got a bite. A love bite.

Sonio kicks her brother in the shin, goes for his face.

SONIO

What did you do?!

Javier lifts her up, laughing, pinning her arms.

Sonio's will is greater than Javier's strength. She gets her arms free, hits him in the face, flails at him, tears in her eyes.

SONIO (CONT'D)

What did you do?! What did you do?!

CUT TO:

DANNY

jolting up in bed, blue eyes staring in terror. He says something incomprehensible.

DOCTOR'S VOICE  
He is hallucinating. It is a  
symptom of the disease.

We are:

INT. DANNY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The blurry figures of Vern Roosevelt and A DOCTOR hover over the possibly dying Danny.

DOCTOR  
His fever is very high. If he  
survives, he will have outbreaks  
the rest of his life.

THE CUBAN MAID in the background crosses herself.

MAID  
Venti demento.

VERN  
(voice breaks)  
Will my son survive?

DOCTOR  
His fever must go down.

The maid presses a wet sponge to Danny's fever-flushed face.

ON DANNY - sitting up in bed, trembling all over. As if a hundred tiny earthquakes are happening all over his body. The only thing still in his body are his blue, blue eyes.

The eyes staring intently at something. Something that isn't there. The eyes alive with flickering candle light.

Nope, not candle light. It's *the flickering light* from a projected movie.

OUR VIEW loosens to reveal we're looking at the eyes of AN ADULT DANNY (we've jumped forward fifteen years), in a plush seat. We are:

INT. SCREENING ROOM IN BATISTA'S PALACE - EVENING

Men and women are watching a movie on the screen before them.

THE BLACK-AND-WHITE FILM shows the skyline of Havana. Skyscrapers punctuating the palm-filled landscape. Stately Cuban jazz plays on the soundtrack.

The music fades as OUR VIEW now drifts (the camera mounted on a moving car) through the teeming streets of daytime Havana.

AN AMERICAN VOICE comes on the sound track. A trustful, (old-fashioned) radio-honed voice.

## NARRATOR

A growing modern city, Havana (with its constant activity), looks like any busy American street. Let's learn more about this tropical island and its people.

THE SCREEN - we now see A HANDSOME, SWARTHY MAN with a pencil mustache standing at the harbor in a white suit.

## NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Those descended from the original Spaniards.

On the screen, we now see a BLACK MAN, looking poorer than his Spaniard countryman.

## NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Those descended from slaves brought to the island.

As the narrator goes on about the wonders of modern Cuba. "Highest per capita income of all Hispanic nations", etc., A CAPTION comes on screen.

**PRESIDENT BATISTA'S PLACE  
HAVANA - 1956**

OUR VIEW takes in the audience through a haze of cigarette smoke (the pre-cancer era). The audience packed with wealthy Cubans and Americans, many of whom will be important characters in our show.

On one side of Danny Roosevelt, sits Vern Roosevelt (late 60s now), his muttonchops now completely white.

THE MAN BEHIND HIM

is MEYER LANSKY, black eyes filled with a fervid intelligence (with a hint of amusement). He sits beside his wife THELMA.

A few seats down from Lansky and Thelma sits...

... SENATOR RENFIELD HATCH (50s). Athletic body gone to hard pudge. Face retaining the all-American eye-crinkles that got him girls in High School and connections in politics...

## NARRATOR OF FILM (OS)

Cuba's largest industry is sugar cane. It is so large that the American company, United Fruit, which owns most of the sugar cane fields is known by the locals as "El Colossal." "The giant." But El Colossal is a benign giant.

Hatch glances at his expensive gold watch. Part of his job to watch this film of course, but it *IS* long.

THE SCREEN - We see Cuban sugar-cane workers in the fields.



NARRATOR

Much of the sugar cane crop is harvested by hand-laborers who use sharp knives called machetes.

The narrator carefully pronounces the word the Cuban way. *Ma Chay Tees.*

NARRATOR

Let's meet one of the workers in the fields. His name is Jose Fernandez.

ON SCREEN, Jose Fernandez (the ideal worker) chops sugar cane.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

He swings his machete again and again, cutting just the right stalks. Jose and the other workers...

(Jose now ambling away from the field.)

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

... do not work during the hottest part of the day. From noon until four o'clock, they go to their homes to rest, or as they say, "take a siesta."

ON DANNY

Ironic smile in his eyes. He fidgets with a wooden match, twirling it unconsciously from finger to finger.

THE SCREEN - We see Jose heading toward a picturesque cottage. His pretty wife exiting to greet her hard-working husband.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Jose and his family live in a cottage called a "bohio." Jose owns a goat, some ducks and a few chickens which his wife cares for.

The narrator pauses as (on screen) Jose's cute children join their mother and father before their large cottage.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

As in most tropical countries, life is easy and pleasant.

Jose and his family go inside their cottage to take their siesta.

INT. BANQUET AREA IN PRESIDENTIAL PALACE - MINUTES LATER

The guests from the screening mill about as TUXEDOED CUBAN WAITERS pass with glasses of champagne. Twin terraces look out at the turquoise sea.

In the center of the room, A LONG TABLE is laden with succulent lobster, venison, quail, wild boar and heaps of black caviar in ice.

A LITTLE MAN, very handsome and dark-skinned (dressed in a general's full military uniform) enters the room--FULGENCIO BATISTA, president of Cuba.

BATISTA  
(passing Vern and Danny)  
Business is good, I hear.

VERN  
Yes, the weather is cooperating  
this year.

BATISTA  
(smiles)  
Yes, we gave it strong orders.

Batista moving on, a smile for everybody.

SENATOR HATCH sidles over to Vern and Danny Roosevelt and vigorously shakes Vern's hand.

SENATOR HATCH  
How the hell is United Fruit? Still  
own half of Cuba?

VERN  
Only the good half.

Gestures at Danny.

VERN (CONT'D)  
Senator Hatch, this is my son, just  
back from the states.  
(pride and condescension)  
I spent a fortune sending him to  
Harvard and he comes back and plants  
black radishes.

DANNY  
The radishes put nitrogen back in  
the soil.

Danny puts his arm around his father.

DANNY (CONT'D)  
My father distrusts modernization.  
He prefers hand plows and sixteen  
hour work days.

SENATOR HATCH  
My motto too. If it ain't broke,  
don't fix it. Harvard, huh? I'm a  
Yale man myself.

DANNY  
(affable confidence)  
Then we're enemies.

SENATOR HATCH  
I like this guy.

DANNY  
 (glances at Batista)  
 Fact is Cuba *is* broken. It's a  
 country run by gangsters. Batista  
 will fall. It's inevitable. But it  
 won't be because of the rebels.

SENATOR HATCH  
 You have an interesting take. What will  
 make it fall?

Danny smiles an incredibly confident smile.

DANNY  
 The modern world.

A DELICATE CLINKING interrupts the moment.

BATISTA (in the center of the room) CLINKS his fluted  
 champagne glass with a tiny silver spoon. A spoon he uses  
 only for toasts perhaps.

BATISTA  
 (full-throated Cuban accent)  
 Thank you. I see a few old friends  
 and also some who I hope will be  
 new friends. Thank you for watching  
 our film, which I fear is both too  
 big and too short--something for  
 which I have been often accused.

A chuckle passes through the crowd.

BATISTA (CONT'D)  
 Too short, I am talking about the  
 film, because, amigos, friends, it  
 is not possible to show in 45  
 minutes all we are doing in Cuba to  
 make our country an inviting place  
 for our friends, *the Americans* to  
 come, do business and...  
 (pointedly to Hatch)  
 ... please, have *fun*...

LAUGHTER from the guests.

ON MEYER LANSKY (not listening to the toast)

His black, intelligent eyes tracking Senator Hatch as Hatch  
 makes his way to the wet bar. He stares almost hungrily at  
 Senator Hatch. *He clearly wants something from him.*

THE BAR AREA

Senator Hatch pours his third Scotch of the day. Meyer Lansky  
 spritzes soda water into his own glass from a cobalt blue bottle.

Lansky gestures to Batista who is still giving his toast.

LANSKY  
 He will go on for a half an hour.

The senator turns his crinkles on Lansky. Who is this little  
 man with dark eyes?

LANSKY  
 (reading his mind)  
 Meyer Lansky. I am an American  
 businessman, retired to Havana.

Senator Hatch shakes his hand, grins a disarmingly delighted grin.

SENATOR HATCH  
 I know your name well. I hear you  
 know everyone eyeball to asshole.  
 Including my own senate.

LANSKY  
 I have, with rumors, a habit. I  
 believe what is good. What is bad,  
 for that I must see for myself.

SENATOR HATCH  
 Good rule, I can't place your  
 accent.

LANSKY  
 It is Yiddish. From Poland to New  
 York.

A held moment. Semite staring at anti-Semite.

HATCH  
 I like the Jew. He knows how to get  
 what he wants.

LANSKY  
 We are not one person. But yes,  
 some of us, a very few, get what we  
 want.

As the two move off into the party.

LANSKY (CONT'D)  
 Cubans are a special people. They  
 do not judge. It is a good place  
 for a Jew. The Cubans are a people  
 devoted to pleasure. The Cuban  
 people have made pleasure an art.

Hatch's eye crinkles get crinklier. Okay, he'll take the bait.

SENATOR HATCH  
 Where can I best experience *this*  
*art*, Mr. Lansky?

Lansky stares at him with his shrewd, black eyes.

LANSKY  
 The Tropicana first and last and *in*  
*the middle*.

SMASH CUT TO:

OUR VIEW glides through the *prado*--the main street of Havana.

(As in the propaganda film, the camera is mounted on a car.)

## DRIVING THROUGH NIGHTTIME HAVANA

is like moving through *JOY*.

Nightclubs, lit by watery neon, blur past--walls painted in ochres, blues and sunset reds. Old-school glamour. MUSIC is everywhere. It comes from bands inside hotels...

... from drummers and trios on the sidewalk...

The crowds on the streets are in a roar of weekend revelry, dressed to the nines, some dancing to the music of street bands.

*Everyone in the mood for pleasure.*

## EXT. TROPICANA HOTEL - NIGHT

A GOLD ROLLS ROYCE stops before the Tropicana Hotel--the most sumptuous building on the street.

## MEYER LANSKY AND SENATOR HATCH

exit the car. It's a drizzly night and, as they walk...

## CUBAN VALETS IN WHITE TUXEDOS

hold over their heads giant yellow umbrellas.

## INT. TROPICANA NIGHTCLUB - SECONDS LATER

We're now in the center of Havana nightlife.

Like Rick's bar in CASABLANCA, the richest men, the greatest thieves, the most beautiful women, all congregate here. It is the center of 1950s Cuba...

... and it is the center of our show. Right now, photographers are flashing bulbs at a grinning SAMMY DAVIS JR, on the arm of a beautiful Cuban woman.

## ON LANSKY AND HATCH

as they amble through a marble-arched doorway... into an area that resembles a tropical rain forest.

## INT. CABARET AREA OF TROPICANA - SAME TIME

Open to the sky, the cabaret area is built around the tropical landscape that preceded its construction.

## TUXEDOED AND GOWNED GUESTS

move between palms and towering banana trees. The parabolic concrete arches are covered in dazzling green vines popping with purple flowers.

## THE STAGE ITSELF

is a circular orb of inlaid wood like the gigantic stump of some fantastical tree. Behind the stage looms a landscape of giant ferns and orchids. Glass staircases and catwalks rise from the stage and disappear into the tops of swaying trees.

## ELEGANTLY DRESSED GUESTS

are literally drinking and laughing inside a wild jungle. It's like something out of a Magritte painting.

And out of this indoor tropical landscape comes...

... A VERY TALL, HANDSOME CUBAN MAN with a wide grey mustache. (Honest grey-blue eyes a blind against his essential dishonesty). This is MARTIN FOX, Cuban owner of The Tropicana.

FOX  
(to Lansky)  
Meyer, my friend, it is luck to see you...  
and skill to be your great friend.

The two hug and kiss Cuban-style.

LANSKY  
(to Hatch)  
I introduce you to the owner of The Tropicana, Mr. Martin Fox.  
(turns to Fox)  
This is my friend, Senator Renfield Hatch. Head of the senate's armed services committee in the U.S.

Fox makes a big show of being startled.

FOX  
You are too young for such a position, no? Such power in such youth. Only in America.

HATCH  
(to Fox)  
You got a good show for us tonight, buddy?

Dignity and honor in Fox's grey eyes.

FOX  
Always.  
(beat)  
Tonight we are honored by our greatest dancer, Sonio Merero.

Reacts to a vague tumult in the background.

FOX (CONT'D)  
It takes thirty minutes for her to cross the room, every guest must have a word with her.

Hatch turns to stare at Sonio's journey across the room.

## ANGLE ON SONIO MERERO

passing through the jungle foliage, greeted and accosted by many.

*(The same Sonio from the opening of the pilot.)*

Sonio has ripened into a gorgeously regal, sexual creature, dark eyes lit with an almost Eva Perone-like force of will... tempered by something hot and emotional.

*(The tear-drop beauty mark under her left eye--so pronounced when we saw her as a teen--just adds to her beauty now.)*

Keeping up with her is Sonio's cousin CLARITA--a pretty girl/woman (could be 16, could be 18) who appears both delighted... and a little scared.

ON LANSKY, HATCH AND FOX

all staring at the glamorous Cuban celebrity making her way through the jungly outdoor space.

HATCH  
She's something.

LANSKY  
Yes, she's very something.

Lansky very aware how taken with her *his new friend is*.

LANSKY (CONT'D)  
(to Fox)  
You will ask maybe, she is not too tired, she may join us after the show. We are old friends.

FOX  
I am aware of your deep friendship.  
I will ask and she will agree.

Meanwhile:

FOLLOWING SONIO (and Clarita)

as they move through the chaos of the backstage area.

IN A CONTAINED SPACE

A TRAINER works with A TIGER. Making the tiger LUNGE, pull back... LUNGE again.

RODRIGO NERA (50s) oversees tiger and trainer. Nattily dressed (silk scarf tied as an ascot), he is tragically *ugly*. Squashed-looking, face pockmarked, left ear half-rotted off.

Notes an approaching Sonio and Clarita and vents his anger.

RODRIGO  
They give him tranquilizer.  
(working himself up)  
He has no teeth, no claws, All he can do is hug! And they drug him. This is your cousin, no? She looks scared.

Clarita, pretty as a buttercup, *does* in fact look nervous as hell.

SONIO  
It is her first time in the city.

RODRIGO  
 (to Clarita)  
 Welcome to Havana.  
 (looks her over)  
 Show me your tits.

Clarita flushes toes to ears.

SONIO  
 It is okay, he is an old woman.

Clarita removes her shirt to reveal her young firm breasts. Rodrigo touches them as if judging the ripeness of a mango.

RODRIGO  
 She can dance?

With a look from Sonio, Clarita begins to dance, shimmying prettily. Rodrigo stares intently at her.

RODRIGO (CONT'D)  
 (commandingly)  
 Clarita? Look here.

RODRIGO'S DEEP BROWN-GREEN EYES are in fact beautiful.

RODRIGO (CONT'D)  
 (quiet)  
 Make me want to *fuck* you.

Clarita stares into his eyes. Her dancing becomes more of a full body thing, dancing to the thrall of his eyes.

RODRIGO starts to dance with her, body pressed to her from behind. The confidence of a man who was once admired for his grace.

*(Though well past his prime, Rodrigo's still a hell of a dancer.)*

RODRIGO (CONT'D)  
 (whispers in her ear)  
 Make my dick stand up in my watch pocket.

Clarita is caught in some sort of spell, shimmying against him, transported.

RODRIGO (CONT'D)  
 Yes, yes, let your blood glow.  
 Young blood is meant to rise.

Unlike Clarita, *Rodrigo's eyes* are wide open. His gaze fixed on a boy--RUPO--in the background, who smiles back at him. *Some kind of contract has been made.*

Lithely dancing, body still pressed against Clarita from behind, Rodrigo continues to stare at the boy... but talks to Sonio.

RODRIGO (CONT'D)  
 Our great hero is scared of our tiger.  
 He has taken three shits in an hour.

We glimpse TILO (a male dancer in tight black trousers and no shirt) pacing nervously.



RODRIGO  
Nothing but problems tonight. You  
talk to him.

SONIO  
(amused)  
Yes, I *talk* to him. I will get  
dressed first.

INT. JUST OUTSIDE SONIO'S DRESSING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Sonio approaches her dressing room, reacts to the sight of a  
smooth-skinned Cuban businessman (CHULEK), waiting for her.

SONIO  
A banker comes to my dressing room,  
this is like being visited by death.

CHULEK  
I hope this isn't a bad time.

SONIO  
It is a bad time.

She moves into the dressing room.

INT. SONIO'S DRESSING ROOM - SAME TIME

Chulek trails behind Sonio, who immediately starts getting  
undressed, treating him like a eunuch.

CHULEK  
You are three months in arrears with  
the bank. This is very serious.

Sonio slowly turns to him.

SONIO  
I have never been behind in my  
payments. What are you up to?

Chulek is cool as a cucumber. Lying is not a problem for him.

CHULEK  
There is a new bylaw at the bank.  
If the debtor is in arrears for  
three months, the bank can seize  
the property.

SONIO  
I am not in arrears.

CHULEK  
It is my unfortunate duty to inform  
you that unless we receive full  
payment by the end of the week, the  
bank will seize--

SONIO  
(a storm in her eyes)  
First you hold my payments, then  
you create a new bylaw.

Sonio advances on him, eyes flashing.

SONIO (CONT'D)  
All so you can sell my nightclub  
out from under me.

CHULEK  
(cooly)  
Your nightclub is half built. It is  
an eyesore on the Prado.

SONIO  
(hits her)  
You have a new buyer who will pay  
more. Who is this man?

CHULEK  
I do not know these things. I am  
just an emissary.

SONIO  
(eyes flash)  
An emissary of whom?

Chulek doesn't respond.

SONIO (CONT'D)  
Who owns you? The new buyer? The bank?

Chulek's slick face shows a hint of hostile amusement.

CHULEK  
No one owns me. I am just an  
emissary.

SONIO  
No, you are owned by monkeys. You  
are a monkey owned by monkeys.

Chulek turns his back on her and coolly leaves the dressing room.

CHULEK  
Three days.

SONIO  
Yes, come back here in three days I  
will give you a banana!

But Sonio's face is pale. Rattled to the core.

INT. BACKSTAGE AREA - SECONDS LATER

Sonio charges through the back stage area and then goes  
still. For a moment, it's just Sonio. All sound drained.

And then suddenly, Rodrigo's ugly/beautiful face is before her. It  
takes her a second to register him... and that he is talking.

RODRIGO  
Whatever it is, let it go.

An intense anger in his eyes.

SONIO

I am fine.

But said with a *fuck you* look.

RODRIGO

Emotions are smoke. You hold them  
in, they choke you. You let them  
go, they disappear into the sky.

(an order)

Let them go, you are on in two minutes.

Sonio lets it go. We can see the physical transformation.  
Rodrigo gives a fierce glance toward... A SCARED TILO  
(staring fearfully at the tiger).

RODRIGO (CONT'D)

I have enough problems tonight.

(walks off muttering)

Everyone has nerves. Everyone  
always has nerves.

Over this, we hear the SOUND OF DRUMS.

ANGLE ON DRUMMER (beating out a drum roll)

The drum roll growing in quickness and loudness. We are:

INT. CABARET AREA OF TROPICANA - A LITTLE LATER

The drum roll quiets, as if responding to the hushing of the room.

ANGLE ON LANSKY AND HATCH (at a table close to the stage)

Hatch (a naturally garrulous man) turns to Lansky.

SENATOR HATCH

Jesus, is that Marlon Brando?

LANSKY

(glances over)

Yes, he is a regular.

We glimpse Marlon Brando at the far side of the room at a  
table with several Cuban girls.Hatch starts to talk more. There's A SUDDEN CLASH of cymbals. The  
room grows completely silent.

THE STAGE

THE TIGER wanders onto the stage. Deep in the jungle landscape, he  
looks like he *belongs here*. THE TIGER turns (almost lazily) as...

TILO enters from the opposite wing, dressed in tight leotards.

TILO begins to dance, his movements sensual, challenging as  
THE TIGER prowls around him--a predator surveying his prey.Tilo dances close to the tiger and the tiger charges him.  
Tilo dodges away with a dancer's agility.

The audience APPLAUDS... But we sense some apprehension.

CLOSE ON SENATOR HATCH - His attention... *caught*. Eyes lit.

The whole room now in the thrall of this strange man/tiger dance.

THE STAGE

Tilo dances right up to the tiger, dodges a lunge. Tilo turns and gives a quick bow to the audience. The tiger ROARS and LEAPS.

Tilo (a nano-second too slow) is tackled by the tiger. A GASP goes through the audience.

And everything goes crazy.

STAGEHANDS rush on stage. Guests SCREAMING in horror as...

THE TIGER (mouth grasping Tilo's chest)

thrashes Tilo about as if he were a rag doll. BLOOD pours from Tilo's chest.

HATCH rises to his feet, panic in his fired-up eyes.

STAGE HANDS pull the tiger from Tilo, manage to drag him off.

THE AUDIENCE is in chaos. Guests rising from their seats. People shouting for a doctor...

... and, amidst all the hubbub (Tilo lying mangled on his back on stage), unbelievably, shockingly...

THE ORCHESTRA starts up again, playing a dirge-like tune. ON THE STAGE, a mangled, bloody Tilo lies perfectly still on his back.

A held moment. The audience doesn't know what to make of this. All eyes on the lone dead man on stage and then...

SONIO

enters from one of the wings. Queenly. She doesn't dance exactly. It's more of a regal dance/walk toward Tilo.

*A woman who demands full attention... even from the dead.*

THE AUDIENCE is beginning to sit back down, still unsure.

And Sonio, MUSIC rising around her, begins to dance for the dead Tilo.

She kneels before Tilo, drifting her thin fabric over him.

CLOSE ON SONIO AND TILO - Sonio whispers into his ear... drifts her own silk scarf, nipples showing through gossamer fabric, over *the dead man* on stage.

She rises... makes a sweeping dance move over Tilo, then stands back and stamps one foot.

TILO stirs. She STAMPS her foot again. Holds out her hand and Tilo allows himself to be dance/lifted to his feet.

THE AUDIENCE goes wild.

Hand in Sonio's (*Alive now*), TILO dances, shimmies sexually.

While dancing, Tilo removes Sonio's fabric and Sonio is all but naked. Tilo and Sonio do a wild sexually transported dance.

ON A SCREEN BEHIND THEM (like something from their unconscious) the silhouette of the tiger prowls back and forth.

The orchestra SWELLS. TRUMPETS jutting out right in our face.

ON STAGE - OTHER SCANTILY-DRESSED GIRLS (amongst them CLARITA) enter from the wings....

Tiger prowling, dancers strutting up catwalks, dancing now in the treetops above the stage.

TRUMPETS jutting and blaring... the dancers in a frenzy.

*A hymn to wildness and sexual abandon.*

ON HATCH - He stares from the audience, eyes *lit by lightning*. Lansky lights a cigar, leans toward Senator Hatch.

LANSKY (CONT'D)  
Welcome to The Tropicana.

CUT TO:

INT. SONIO'S DRESSING ROOM - JUST AFTER THE SHOW

Sonio stares at her reflection in the mirror. She stares and stares, a deep emotion in her eyes. It's as if she's trying to figure out her own self.

Finally, she gets up and leaves the dressing room.

INT. LOBBY OF TROPICANA - SECONDS LATER

Sonio (in her regal persona) heads toward a bank of elevators.

INT. TOP FLOOR OF TROPICANA HOTEL - SECONDS LATER

Sonio exits the elevator and her manner changes. She hesitates a moment, then heads down the wide, plush-carpeted hallway.

INT. HOTEL ROOM IN THE TROPICANA - A LITTLE LATER

OUTDOOR MUSIC AND LAUGHTER (from the revelers on the street) seeps into the large, exquisitely furnished hotel room.

DANNY ROOSEVELT (hair slicked back)

in crisp pin-striped pants and blazingly white shirt downs his second drink. Cuban music plays on the radio. He checks his watch and, just a little irritated, starts to leave...

... when the hotel room door opens and Sonio enters.

DANNY  
You came.

SONIO  
You're surprised.

DANNY  
Sometimes you come, sometimes you  
don't.

SONIO  
I am not fickle. I have to get used  
to you being back. Six months is a  
short time.  
(quiet)  
You've been gone ten years. College,  
University.

She sits on the bed. Danny sits beside her. He begins to  
unzip her dress. Sonio allows this, but remains stiff.

SONIO (CONT'D)  
You are fast tonight.

Finally she twists away from him, re-zips her dress.

SONIO (CONT'D)  
I will not sleep with you tonight.

DANNY  
The first time we made love, I was  
fourteen, you were fifteen. It's  
like shaking hands for us.

SONIO  
I do not want it to be like shaking  
hands.

Sonio very internal right now. Something burning inside her.

SONIO (CONT'D)  
(voice breaks)  
I have something to ask of you.

Danny is all attention. But Sonio, seeing him before her,  
wavers. Changes the subject.

SONIO (CONT'D)  
When you were in America, you wrote  
beautiful letters. Now you are back  
and we hide in the shadows. You are  
less real than in your letters.

DANNY  
It is the realities of Cuba.

SONIO  
Yes, a white man and a Cuban woman would  
be a scandal. We can't have a scandal.  
(beat)  
The people who listen to the  
realities are the ones who *create*  
the realities.

She turns to look right at him. A storm in her eyes.

SONIO  
I'm sorry I am a scandal to you.

DANNY  
You're not a scandal. You're a  
*potential* scandal.

SONIO  
You are not going to seduce me with  
Harvard wit.

DANNY  
I'm sorry. That was glib.

Danny walking to the wet bar to make drinks.

DANNY (CONT'D)  
You know how I feel about you.

SONIO  
This said with your back to me. I  
say to your back, *I don't know*.

Danny returns with drinks for both of them. His manner is genuine. We can't help but believe him.

DANNY  
I don't think an hour goes by when  
I don't think of you. I've known  
you my entire life. We are like two  
trees that have grown beside each  
other. The wood has combined.  
Sometimes I don't know what leaves  
are yours and what leaves are mine.

SONIO  
It's a pretty metaphor... for  
keeping a mistress.

DANNY  
What do you want? For us to get  
married? We can live in a shack on  
the beach eating plantains and rice  
and beans.

SONIO  
(eyes flash)  
I do not want to marry you.

DANNY  
What do you want? You're  
impossible.

SONIO  
I want to be impossible.

DANNY  
Why'd you come here?

She turns to face him, flushed and angry...

SONIO  
To fight.

... and Danny pulls her toward her. They kiss an inevitable, passionate kiss. Both consumed by it.

It becomes a fury of arousal on both sides. Her dress unzipped... blouse off. With huge effort, she pulls away. Her shirt is off, breasts exposed. Her neck is flushed.

SONIO (CONT'D)

Now I am aroused. Good. What I have to say is better said aroused. We are not having sex tonight. I would feel like a whore. I have come to ask a favor of you.

DANNY

(quiet)  
Anything.

SONIO

You do not know this but I am building a nightclub. For myself. Now the bank comes to take it away, unless I pay in three days

Disappointment in Danny's eyes... easing toward sadness.

DANNY

You are asking for money.

SONIO

You are the last person I want to come to. But you are also the only one.

Sonio stares intensely at him.

SONIO (CONT'D)

I was born onto land owned by El Colossal. El Colossal owned my father, my mother, my brother. I have always been owned.

(quiet)

But I will own my own piece now.

DANNY

Piece of what?

SONIO

(smiles)

The pie. The pie of blood.

Danny is thrown by the conversation. He opens the terrace door, letting in a rush of noisy revelry from outside.

DANNY

You want me to help you build a whore house on the Prado.

SONIO

(voice trembles)

It is not a whore house.

Danny is literally staring at the Prado. Finally he turns to her.



DANNY

My father is turning seventy this Saturday. There will be a party for him at the house. He's tired. He wants to turn over the company to me. He will make an announcement then. I would like it if you came.

Tears of anger (and something deeper) in Sonio's eyes.

SONIO

Yes, so I can witness your coronation. But I cannot touch, I cannot speak to you. I will be your secret.

DANNY

I will be the new head of El Colossal. I can bring medical care to the workers. I can shorten their days. I can modernize. I can reform Cuba.

SONIO

And my favor I have asked of you?

A long beat. Sonio gets it. Her voice goes quiet.

SONIO (CONT'D)

You cannot be seen giving money to a whore house.

DANNY

It would jeopardize everything. It would be like giving money directly to Batista and Lansky. It would make me a hypocrite.

She begins to get dressed, hurriedly. Not looking at him.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Come to the party. You don't need a nightclub. I will take you out of the shadows. Soon.

SONIO

(furious)

I am not *in* the shadows. You act like I'm a ghost...

Angrily snaps her fingers.

SONIO (CONT'D)

... *flickering* along the wall.

She stops at the door.

SONIO (CONT'D)

I have known you my entire life and I have never set foot inside your house. This is your choice. It is not the entirely the world's.

(quiet)

I will not come to your house for the first time as your mistress.

And she storms out.

CUT TO:

FOLLOWING SONIO

as she strides through the JOYFUL NIGHTTIME CHAOS of The Prado.

OUR VIEW moving shakily around her (profile, back, front) as if OUR VIEW is caught in her own tempestuous emotions... We glimpse a shell of a building--*HER UNBUILT NIGHTCLUB*.

SONIO'S EYES flash (you can see right through the structure to the ocean) and then she becomes aware of A ROLLS ROYCE keeping pace with her on the street. The Rolls comes to a stop.

INT. LANSKY'S ROLLS ROYCE - SAME TIME

Lansky sits in back, watching Sonio with his intelligent gaze.

Sonio strides toward him as Lansky opens the rear door.

LANSKY

Come on in. Have a cigar.

Sonio hesitates, then slides inside the Rolls next to Lansky.

IN THE BACK OF THE SWANK ROLLS ROYCE

Lansky and Sonio light up cigars.

LANSKY (CONT'D)

You did not join us after the show.  
At our table. You were asked.

SONIO

Is that why I am in your car to be  
chided like a school girl?

LANSKY

I know better than that.

A second passes without them talking. But the silence doesn't bother them. They have known each other too long.

LANSKY (CONT'D)

You were just with Danny Roosevelt,  
no? I saw him leaving the hotel  
just after you.

SONIO

(still pissed)  
Yes, he invited me to a party.

LANSKY

It is a special occasion, this  
party?

SONIO

His father is turning seventy and  
wants the world to celebrate his  
decline.

LANSKY  
 The high and mighty anyway.  
 (amused)  
 I guess they don't invite Jews.

Lansky's mind roiling.

LANSKY (CONT'D)  
 Much security will be needed for  
 such an event. Mr. Roosevelt will  
 pull men from his fields. His  
 guards.

Sonio stares shrewdly at Lansky, knowing he's up to something.

LANSKY (CONT'D)  
 I asked you to join our table  
 because an important guest was  
 there. He was very taken with you.

SONIO  
 Senator Hatch.

LANSKY  
 You know everything of course. I told  
 him I would importune you to be his  
 guide. You could show him parts of  
 Cuba only a native would know.

SONIO  
 (quiet)  
 I know what you want from him.  
 America has an arms embargo on  
 Cuba. But you want him to arrange  
 selling in quiet.

Beat.

SONIO (CONT'D)  
 So I am to sleep with him. You  
 should know better than that too.

LANSKY  
 Castro is in the hills, the  
 forests, he is an animal coming  
 toward us. I want mister Senator to  
 learn to love Cuba and then to fear  
 its loss. I do not want you to  
 sleep with him.

Lansky's eyes intense now.

LANSKY (CONT'D)  
 I want you should be his guide.  
 That's all.

We can hardly see Lansky's eyes in all the cigar smoke.

LANSKY (CONT'D)  
 Take him around. Find out what pops  
 his trouser buttons. Cuba must  
 become his mistress.  
 (quiet)  
 I understand you are in need of  
 money.

SONIO  
I need twenty five thousand.

LANSKY  
I will give you five.

SONIO  
Ten.

LANSKY  
Seven. And another five, we are successful in our quest with the senator.

Sonio takes a big drag on the cigar, inhales through her nostrils. She grows quiet, increasingly thoughtful.

SONIO  
Why such trouble for more guns? The rebel force is small. They are nothing. Batista's army is huge.

Lansky stares out the window of the car, as if staring at the forces of Cuba.

LANSKY  
Castro was in jail for a twenty year sentence. Why do you think Mr Batista freed him? Castro is a communist. He is the voice of the rebels and yet Batista let him go.

SONIO  
I do not know.

Lansky's eyes glitter. He loves his own shrewdness. Maybe also, a little bit... *he loves Sonio.*

LANSKY  
El Presidente wants some fear in his country and Castro serves this purpose. *Just enough.* El Presidente wants his people, his troops, the police, to feel they need a strongman. And so, Castro gets to wage a little war.

SONIO  
(getting it)  
But he has gotten too strong.

LANSKY  
So, we need some more arms. It is just *business*. Put more fear in Castro... and his potential converts. We keep the balance. Business is about balancing greed with fear. Always.

SONIO  
What do you get out of it?

LANSKY  
I get a few nickels to rub  
together. We are old friends, no?  
This is another subject.

Sonio waits for the other shoe to drop.

LANSKY (CONT'D)  
This girl you bring in tonight, she is  
your cousin? She is very beautiful.

SONIO  
She is an innocent.

LANSKY  
And I am what? A devourer of  
innocents. I should like for us, me  
and your innocent cousin, to have a  
dinner together. That is all.

SONIO  
At your house in Havana?

LANSKY  
Yes, at the cottage. You have been  
there often.

*A pointed reminder.*

SONIO  
(eyes fiery)  
I will ask her.

LANSKY  
And you tell her, which is the  
truth, it is not for sex.

SONIO  
It *IS* for sex. Just not the usual  
kind.

LANSKY  
For Sunday. 7PM.

Something threatening in Lansky's eyes now. He's given an  
order. He does not like his orders refused.

SONIO  
(eyes burn)  
I will ask.

LANSKY  
My only request, that you ask.

Lansky's eyes burn. Clearly, this isn't an ask. It's *an order*.

INT. RODRIGO'S PENTHOUSE SUITE IN THE TROPICANA - NIGHT

OUR VIEW is on plates of desiccated lobster, caviar on ice, soup  
tureens. A consumed feast for kings. OUR VIEW drifts to...

A KING-SIZED BED - RODRIGO lies on his back on the bed, head  
up on satin pillows. Just a towel around his waist.

RUPO (the boy Rodrigo met back stage) flops down facing him (naked as nature)... touches Rodrigo's chest.

RODRIGO  
What do you see in me? I am old and ugly. I am rotting.

RUPO  
I like your mood.

RODRIGO  
I am always cheerful after a show. If it is successful. During the day, I mutter curses and yell at dancers.

RUPO  
I had an uncle when I was a boy.

Rupo mischievously removing the towel from Rodrigo.

RUPO (CONT'D)  
This uncle had bees. He would bring us honey. He told me once that bees can see a color that humans can't see.

RODRIGO  
Ultra-violet maybe. A wavelength we cannot see.

RUPO  
(mischief in Rupo's eyes)  
When I see your shows, I feel I'm being shown a new color. It makes my heart beat faster.

RODRIGO  
What do you want? You want me to hire you as a dancer? You want to be part of a new color?

Rodrigo gets up from the bed, letting his towel slide off.

RODRIGO (CONT'D)  
It's okay. You can love someone and also want something from him.

Rodrigo heading out onto the terrace, Rupo following.

RODRIGO (CONT'D)  
You are a beautiful boy. You want to be seen. It is no shame.

ANGLE ON RODRIGO AND RUPO (viewed from behind) - A naked older man and a naked boy, both looking out over the terrace railing.

SEVERAL STORIES BELOW - is The Prado, bustling with NOISY LIFE.

RODRIGO (CONT'D)  
Smell the Havana air.

Rodrigo inhales a deep breath.

RODRIGO  
It smells like pussy.

RUPO  
I've never smelled pussy.

RODRIGO  
Then you were *hatched*... not born.

ON THE STREET BELOW

A BLACK CUBAN MAN is drumming like a man possessed (on a set of bongos). Drumming for a cluster of tourists... but also clearly for *himself* as well.

RODRIGO (CONT'D)  
This won't last. The forests are thick with rebels.

Rodrigo gestures toward the jungly hills in the distance.

RODRIGO (CONT'D)  
We are dancing on the edge of a volcano.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP ON THE DRUMMER BELOW - Sweat is flying from his naked torso. Off the wild staccato movements of his whipping face and hands, we...

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE HAVANA - DAY

A YELLOW CONVERTIBLE roars along the two-lane road at top speed, Sonio behind the wheel.

AHEAD OF HER - A ROW OF ARMY VEHICLES

A determined look comes into Sonio's eyes. She floors the accelerator. Passes the army vehicles. Leaves them in the dust.

EXT. HAVANA UNIVERSITY - A LITTLE LATER

A huge student demonstration is taking place, wild and raucous. We glimpse A BURNING EFFIGY OF BATISTA. Students holding placards showing Karl Marx's face.

A STUDENT SPEAKER stirring the crowd in ANGRY, RAPID SPANISH. SONIO pushes her way through the rally.

NEAR THE PODIUM (at the center of the demonstration)

SOME STUDENT LEADERS stand talking to A FEW HARDENED-LOOKING MEN with sunburned faces (clearly rebels).

Amongst the students, JAVIER (Sonio's brother from the opening), bespectacled now, intellectual-looking. Javier spots Sonio...

... pushes his way over to her.

SONIO  
 (hurried)  
 I have come to warn you. A  
 crackdown is coming. I do not know  
 why I bother, but I have come.

JAVIER  
 I see... Your gangster friends  
 whisper this in your ear.

SONIO  
 An American senator is visiting. It  
 is what happens. You have seen it  
 many times. A politician comes and El  
 Presidente cracks down.

JAVIER  
 We do not take orders from Batista--

SONIO  
 Okay, I do my duty. I warn my pig's  
 asshole of a brother. Now I go  
 about my day. I see you are also  
 with gangsters now.

Javier was just about to head away, He turns.

JAVIER  
 (eyes burn)  
 You are referring to our comrades  
 from the hills?

He glances at the *rebels* near the podium.

JAVIER (CONT'D)  
 Yes, they are my friends. Alejandro,  
 the one with the scar, is a great  
 fighter. We drink rum together many  
 nights. He wants me to join them in  
 the hills. Maybe I will.

SONIO  
 Good, you can read books to them  
 while they shoot at rabbits.

Sonio angry and upset at the same time. They hate and love  
 each other. Both of them.

We hear THE RUMBLE of trucks. Both look. The army trucks  
 Sonio passed on the road... barely a thousand feet away now.

SONIO (CONT'D)  
 I passed them on the road. Hurry.

Javier gives Sonio a fervent, complex look. Apologetic,  
 thankful and still with a touch of anger... and then moves  
 off through the crowd.

SONIO steps away from the rally. Eyes looking for her brother.

Her glance finds Javier as he reaches the podium area, where  
 the rebel soldiers stand. Javier talks quickly to the rebel  
 with a scar. ALEJANDRO.



ALEJANDRO turns to glance out at the crowd. His eyes meet Sonio's. He neither smiles, nor *doesn't* smile. But he looks amused.

Alejandro and the other rebels move off with Javier. They disappear into the outer fringes of the crowd as, all around us...

THE ARMY TRUCKS

SCREECH to a stop. And everything is in chaos. POLICEMEN in riot gear rushing the crowd. Smashing heads. Arresting. Beating.

EXT. COUNTRY CLUB IN HAVANA

Nothing but the POK POK POK of lawn tennis... the very rhythm of upper class tranquility.

We're watching a game of doubles. Danny and Senator Hatch on one team, Hatch trying too hard, already looking exhausted.

EXT. GRASSY AREA JUST OUTSIDE TENNIS COURT - A LITTLE LATER

A sweaty Danny and Hatch, pitcher of icy lemonade, between them, sit at an umbrellaed table.

HATCH

You could go days here not worrying about the rebels in the hills, can't you?

LAUGHTER from two pleasant-looking ladies playing tennis.

DANNY

Some have gone years.

Senator Hatch turns his crinkles to Danny, getting to the pith of why he came to Havana.

HATCH

But not you.

DANNY

I always worry. It's an essential component of any endeavor. Worry plus *preparation*.

(beat)

Paying our workers better. Cross-breeding the crops. Bringing in technology. United Fruit employs a quarter of the population. Cuba needs us.

HATCH

And the rebels?

DANNY

I worry about them too. But I don't lose sleep.

(beat)

We've beefed up our security force. I trust our men more than Batista's soldiers.

HATCH  
Why's that?

DANNY  
(grins)  
Because we feed them.

Hatch chuckles at this. He takes a long sip of Scotch. He's gone a bit internal.

HATCH  
Everyone thinks like you.

DANNY  
What?

HATCH  
That they're on the right side of history.

Off Danny's confident... and *slightly* worried reaction:

CUT TO:

A GIANT WHOOSH OF FIRE

being breathed out by A PROFESSIONAL FIRE-BREATHER. We are:

INT. LOBBY OF THE TROPICANA - NIGHT

A lobby filled with pre-entertainment *entertainment*.

Fire-breather, magician, A TAN BUICK revolving on a moving pedestal--the *prize for the weekly jackpot*.

OUR VIEW now moving with the crowd into the jungly, indoor/outdoor cabaret area. OUR VIEW drifting to...

SONIO (on stage)

SINGING the heart-wrenching Spanish song, "Concoruccuco Paloma."

SONIO'S POV - BACK AREA OF CABARET

... Where we see Chulek deep in conversation with TRAFFICANTE.

Trafficante (an Italian gangster from Tampa who will play a big part in the show) glances up at Sonio, doesn't look away. His expression kinda saying *fuck you*.

SONIO registers the moment and makes it part of the emotionality of her song. Sonio's eyes moist, blazing, voice rising.

*Nothing will stop this woman*. With the SONG soaring over the soundtrack, we...

CUT TO:

IMAGES OF DAYTIME HAVANA (Windy as hell today)

GIANT WAVES batter the sea wall on the northern edge of city. Ocean water gushing onto the streets themselves.

CUBAN STREET-KIDS (with nets)

catch fish in the streets, grinning and laughing with the surreal delight of it all.

*Fish in the streets.*

SONIO'S SONG rising (like the voice of Cuba), OUR VIEW now moving through the bustling Prado...

... catching up to SONIO... strutting past A YOUNG AMERICAN MAN quickly pocketing A PACKET of powder from a dark-skinned Cuban.

OUR VIEW now moving into the yawning black depths of a club called "The Shanghai."

INT. SHANGHAI NIGHTCLUB - SAME TIME

It's like Gomorrah here. BEAUTIFUL CUBAN WOMEN pass in spectacular gowns and high heels. People openly doing drugs.

DEEP IN THE DARKNESS (beyond the bar area)

we glimpse people fucking. Men with women. Men with men. A swirl of naked limbs.

And into this dark-lit debauchery... enters SENATOR HATCH. Sonio is immediately at his side, leading him to a table.

HATCH  
Level with me, did Mr. Lansky pay  
you to *be my guide*, tonight?

SONIO  
I would not take money for  
something I enjoy.

The two sit across from each other at a table for two.

HATCH  
Just to make things clear. I don't  
want any false expectations.

TWO GREEN DRINKS (absinthe) are put before them. Hatch waits for the waiter to leave. He seems nervous.

HATCH (CONT'D)  
I'm am a member of the John Birch  
society. We are great believers of  
separation between the races.

Hatch takes a sip of the drink, is thrown by the taste... but takes another gulp anyway. *Man likes to drink.*

HATCH (CONT'D)  
Lansky is the Jewish devil  
whispering in my ear.  
(frank stare)  
To me, sleeping with you would be  
like having sex with an orangutan.

SONIO  
Anything is possible in Cuba.

HATCH  
I wasn't saying--

Realizes she's fucking with him.

SONIO  
(quiet)  
Do you sleep with your wife, or is she an orangutan too?

HATCH  
What are you implying?  
(red in the face)  
Leave my wife out of this.

SONIO  
Nevermind then. Much as you tempt me, I will keep my hands away from you. We will keep the races pure. They are very pretty though, the orangutans on stage.

ON STAGE (in full view of Hatch)

is a live show. TWO NAKED CUBAN WOMEN are kiss/dancing. Bodies shimmering together.

Hatch turns away from the image, unphased.

HATCH  
What the hell is this place?

SONIO  
Your Christianity is very strong.  
(beat)  
It is Gomorrah.

HATCH  
I know what Batista and Lansky want of me.

SONIO  
I do too.

HATCH  
But I don't give two boiled eggs about Cuba. My interest is only with my American friends who have businesses here.

SONIO  
Of which there are many.

HATCH  
And they seem to have things well in hand. You can tell Lansky that. You can tell Lansky that he is wasting his--

Hatch stops in mid-sentence, distracted by...

## THE STAGE

A TALL AND STARK NAKED CUBAN MAN, oiled head to toe, stands with his back to us. Even if you're not gay, you have to at least... admire *his physique*.

SONIO  
They call him "Superman." He's very famous here.

ANOTHER YOUNG MAN comes on stage... beckoned by "Superman" from the audience.

HATCH  
Jesus.

SONIO  
He makes an impression, superman, huh?

HATCH  
It's disgusting.

But Hatch can't take his eyes from "Superman" dancing slowly with the male audience member. Sonio clocks his *interest*.

SONIO  
It is no shame here. Pleasure is pleasure.

Watching Hatch.

SONIO (CONT'D)  
Sex is just communication. The communication of giving and exchanging pleasure. Sex, to us Cubans, is about communication from before we had words.  
(smiles)  
When we were all orangutans.

Hatch downs his drink. Takes another look at the stage. Turns back to Sonio. She's smiling at him.

SONIO (CONT'D)  
Another drink?

Hatch flushes. He rises, twisting away from her as he does so (maybe hiding an erection).

HATCH  
This is degenerate and repulsive.

Storms off.

BAR AREA OF THE SHANGHAI NIGHTCLUB - MOMENT LATER

Sonio has just dialed a pay phone. Reacts to MUTED VOICE.

SONIO  
Meyer Lansky, please.

*SUPERMAN* passes, in a bathrobe now. He and Sonio recognize each other, kiss.

SONIO  
You smell like banana oil.

A MALE VOICE comes on the other end of the phone.

SONIO  
(smiling)  
Hello, Jewish devil.

CUT TO:

INT. BACK STAGE AREA OF TROPICANA - EVENING

ON MEYER LANSKY, in bow-tie and pin-striped suit--an incongruous figure moving through the feminine tumult of half-dressed show-girls. He steps into...

INT. SONIO'S DRESSING ROOM - SAME TIME

Sonio is putting on lipstick before her mirror.

LANSKY  
(enters talking)  
I heard a story about you. Tell me if it is true. I hear one afternoon, as a child, you wished to go out to play, but were told no. You stamped your feet so hard, you gave yourself a hernia. A hernia from wanting.

SONIO  
I have told this story many times. And now you repeat it back to me.

Lansky sits, making himself at home. He pulls out an envelope filled with cash.

LANSKY  
So, Senator Hatch is maybe a fagela. What else?

SONIO  
He doesn't think United Fruit is at risk from the rebels.

LANSKY  
(pissed but not surprised)  
So we alter his perceptions on this.

SONIO  
At Vern Roosevelt's party, huh?

Lansky glances sharply up at her but doesn't answer.

SONIO (CONT'D)  
I work on the stage. I understand illusion.  
(beat)  
Guards will be moved from the fields to protect the guests.  
(MORE)

SONIO (CONT'D)  
 You will have your men set a small  
 fire... make it look like the  
 rebels did it.

Lansky's black eyes flash. He stares at Sonio for a long  
 moment. Finally he pushes the envelope of cash toward Sonio.

LANSKY  
 So you don't get another hernia.

Sonio looks through the money as Lansky heads to the door.

SONIO  
 This is not enough for my needs. I  
 think you know that.

Lansky turns at the door.

LANSKY  
 It is the amount we agreed on.

Sonio changes the subject... kind of.

SONIO  
 I saw Trafficante last night. He  
 was talking to a banker named  
 Chulek. A banker I am doing  
 business with.

LANSKY  
 I do not keep track of Trafficante.

SONIO  
 (eyes flash)  
 I don't believe that. You brought  
 him here from Tampa... where he was  
 wanted for murder.

LANSKY  
 So I brought.  
 (a beat)  
 I tell you this as a friend. Trafficante  
 is only part human. The other part, the  
 part that is *not human*... you do not  
 want to see this part.

Lansky's eyes full of menace.

LANSKY (CONT'D)  
 He has his business, I have mine.  
 We stay out of each other's way.

Lansky heads out. Sonio stares after him. Her eyes burn with  
 suspicion... with the (for her) agony of *not knowing*.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTDOOR CAFE/BAR ON PRADO - DAY

Sonio sits alone at an umbrellaed table, drinking rum and  
 staring at...

HER UNFINISHED NIGHTCLUB (across the street)

CHULEK (in a chocolate brown suit) stands before the nightclub smiling and vigorously shaking hands with TRAFFICANTE.

Chulek leads Trafficante into the skeletal structure... showing him around.

SONIO (brimming with anger)

downs her rum. She rises, charges into the interior of the cafe.

INT. CAFE REST ROOM

Sonio stops before the sink, splashes cold water on her face. Stares at her reflection in the mirror. She stares for a long time. And then something changes in her. And...

... (quick as the thought comes to her) she PUNCHES the mirror as hard as she can.

The mirror shatters. She puts her cut fist to her mouth. Sucks off the blood.

INT. SONIO'S CONVERTIBLE - DRIVING

SONIO drives fast out of Havana. Glances at her face in the rear-view mirror. Sees the blood...

... violently wipes it off... as if angry at her own face. She continues driving, a storm in her eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - AFTERNOON

A world of green. Sugar cane fields as far as the eye can see. The silence is palpable.

A HUMMING in the distance... Growing louder.

SMASH CUT TO:

CLEAVING THROUGH THE GREEN (on a dirt road)

A motorcycle ROARS past, kicking up dust. THE RIDER is Danny, looking cool as shit in his aviator-style sunglasses.

He reacts to something and brakes to an elegant, dusty stop.

THE CLEARING DUST

reveals A ROUND-FACED SWEATY PEASANT beating the shit out of his horse who has strayed with his cart into a ditch.

Danny heads toward him (caring *and unflappably American*). He talks in Spanish to the peasant who shrugs and talks back.

Danny takes out a wad of cash, thrusts it toward him.



EXT. ROAD JUST OUTSIDE ROOSEVELT MANSION

Danny chugs slowly into frame on his motorcycle. Attached to a long rope behind him...

... comes the ambling, lame horse he saved.

A YELLOW CONVERTIBLE - pulls to a stop on the shoulder. Sonio in the driver's seat.

CLOSE ON SONIO - She stares emotionally as Danny leads the nag toward his stables. The moment somehow emblematic.

*Danny, a man who will save a lame horse out of pure generosity.*

SONIO'S CONVERTIBLE - drives off... becoming a dot of yellow in the green, green landscape.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD IN OUTSKIRTS OF HAVANA - SAME AFTERNOON

An entourage of SPECTACULAR CREAMY VEHICLES winds around a bend in the hills...

... to enter the gates of Meyer Lansky's estate.

EXT. LANSKY'S ESTATE - DAY

Lansky, his back to a spectacular ocean view, sits by his swimming pool. He takes off his sunglasses as...

BATISTA (in his general's uniform)

heads toward him, poker-faced.

Alongside him is ROLANDO MASFERRER--a strikingly handsome man, with a pencil-thin mustache a la Clark Gable.

BATISTA  
(thick irony)  
You have summoned the president and  
the president comes.

LANSKY  
Meyer Lansky welcomes you.

BATISTA  
I hope you don't mind, I have  
brought Senor Rolando Masferer, my  
good friend and the new head of my  
private police force.

Masferer gives the shortest of nods.

LANSKY  
He's in costume.

Masferer wears cowboy boots and cowboy hat. He stares at Lansky, exuding threat and machismo.

MASFERRER  
You can speak directly to me. I'm  
not a potted plant.

BATISTA  
 (quickly)  
 It is not costume for him. He's  
 spent some years in Texas. He even  
 sings County Western songs.

LANSKY  
 Maybe he will sing to us now.

MASFERER  
 I did not bring my guitar.

ON MASFERER'S FOREFINGER is a ring studded with human teeth.  
*The whole tableau lunatic and scary in a bright, sunlit way.*

LANSKY  
 (to Batista)  
 I've been reading the paper. You  
 are making many arrests. Breaking  
 up student protests. You think this  
 is a good time for a crack down?

BATISTA  
 Our American senator must see the  
 threat.

LANSKY  
 He must see the *pleasure*. Pleasure  
 unattainable in the states...

Gestures at a burning-eyed Masferer.

LANSKY (CONT'D)  
 ... where they only have Hank  
 Williams and beer.

BATISTA  
 Entertaining only goes so far.

LANSKY  
 America is not afraid of jailed  
 university students. No more  
 arrests.

BATISTA  
 (bristles)  
 You are talking to the leader of  
 Cuba's armed forces.

LANSKY  
 It's a question of timing. I have  
 great respect for your army and  
 for...

Gestures at Masferer.

LANSKY (CONT'D)  
 ... your police.  
 (beat)  
 I will provide the pleasure and you  
 will provide the fear. But at the  
 right time.

BATISTA  
What time is that?

LANSKY  
Is your man capable of setting a  
fire?

BATISTA  
My man is capable.

Masferer alert now.

LANSKY  
I'm told the smell of burning sugar  
cane is like the smell of blood.

CUT TO:

EXT. SONIO'S HOME TOWN OF PADILLA - LATE AFTERNOON

RUSTED TIN HOVELS are criss-crossed with flapping laundry. We  
recognize *the worker housing* from the beginning of the pilot.

A MANGY DOG lies asleep under the shadow of a church.

INT. SONIO'S FAMILY'S TIN SHACK

Sonio's father YIANDRO sits gloomily at a half-broken wooden  
table He is always gloomy. He stares fiercely at...

Sonio's mother YANET and Sonio, backs to him. Yanet stirs a stew.

CLOSER - SONIO AND YANET

Sonio surreptitiously gives her mother money, which Yanet  
shoves into her apron.

SONIO  
For Javier's university.

YANET  
The stove is half broken. We could  
use another one.

Sonio gives her a look; she's so used to being asked for money.  
Through the window, we see JAVIER heading toward the house.

SONIO  
I have to have a word with Javier.

OUTSIDE THE SHACK - Yanet follows Sonio out.

YANET  
I'm worried about your brother. He  
goes to protests. All he talks about  
is revolution.

SONIO  
I will talk to him.

Sonio heads away from her mother to intercept Javier...

... who approaches, carrying books in a satchel tied with string.

SONIO  
How is my rebel brother?

JAVIER  
Leave your condescension in Havana.  
Here we work and we *fight* while you  
strip for Batista.

SONIO  
You are becoming pompous, Javi.

The two have stopped in the semi-shade of a mangy banana tree.

SONIO (CONT'D)  
You are not cold-blooded. It is the  
cold-blooded who *WIN* revolutions.  
People like Batista. Like Masferer.

JAVIER  
(incensed)  
Masferer is the head of the secret  
police. He will be the first one killed.

SONIO  
Who will kill him? You?

JAVIER  
Yes.

SONIO  
No, the man who will kill him will  
be just like him.

JAVIER  
What do you want?

SONIO  
I want to meet some of the men who  
would kill Masferer. I want to meet  
your friend. Alejandro.

JAVIER  
What do you want from him?

SONIO  
Money.

JAVIER  
Then you are his enemy.

SONIO  
I'm happy to take money from my enemy.

Off Javier's fierce look:

INT. LOCAL BAR - NIGHT

The "pub" is a single, dirt-floored room with a few tables,  
at one of which sits Sonio and a nervous Javier.

The door opens and FOUR REBEL SOLDIERS ENTER--tough-looking  
sun-burned men in their twenties. They take seats at Sonio  
and Javier's table.

A BLACK CUBAN WOMAN with a hard face (she looks like she eats sand) comes over and puts a bottle of rum on the table...

... then goes back to standing behind the cracked counter.

THE TABLE

There seems to be a competition over who speaks first. The leader of the rebels, ALEJANDRO (who we glimpsed at the rally), stares sleepily at Sonio.

Alejandro is half black, half Spanish. Scar across his face. Pale blue eyes fiery and charismatic. He looks hard to kill.

ALEJANDRO  
(finally)  
We are told you have information.

SONIO  
I need five thousand dollars.

Alejandro shows no reaction. His eyes bore into Sonio's.

ALEJANDRO  
Is it worth it?

SONIO  
It is worth it.

Again, the long stare. Alejandro appears to size up legitimacy by staring into a person's heart.

ALEJANDRO  
(finally)  
Okay.

SONIO  
Okay?

Whatever he sees in Sonio's eyes, it makes him smile. *Just a bit.*

ALEJANDRO  
We will give you the money. What is the information?

Now Sonio stares into Alejandro's eyes. Can she trust him?

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)  
I operate with honor. It is not because I am honorable. It is because it is the only way to keep trust with the people.

Sonio nods, believing him. Something going on between these two.

SONIO  
Tomorrow night, there will be a party in the big plantation house. It is Vern Roosevelt's birthday.

Alejandro now staring at Sonio just to stare. Liking her.

SONIO

At a party such as this, some security is always pulled from the fields to protect the guests. Batista's men intend to use this opening to fake a rebel attack. They will set fire to a small portion of the field.

ALEJANDRO

Why would they do this?

SONIO

There is a man at the party they want to impress with the danger against American interests.

ALEJANDRO

Senator Hatch, huh?

Sonio nods.

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)

It is a funny name, no?

Turns to his men.

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)

Like he is commanding a hen to lay an egg. Senator...

Shouts out the command.

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)

... HATCH!

The others crack up. Alejandro turns his pale-blue (and now amused) eyes to Sonio.

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)

You know all this for a fact?

SONIO

I am sure of it.

Good enough for Alejandro.

ALEJANDRO

What part of the field do they intend to burn?

SONIO

The North-east field is close to the road. You can drive off fast.

Alejandro seems to be taunting her with his stare now.

ALEJANDRO

So what do we do with your information?

Sonio stares at him. Does he really want her to tell him guerilla strategy.

SONIO  
 (finally)  
 I would attack the secret police  
 before they torch the sugar cane.  
 You prevent the arms deal and maybe  
 you get Masferer himself.

Alejandro gives Sonio one of his stares. Finally he nods.

ALEJANDRO  
 It is a good plan.

Pours rum for himself and Sonio. Gulps his down.

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)  
 We will get the money for you in  
 two days.

SONIO  
 (quiet)  
 I will come for the money.

ALEJANDRO  
 We will bring it to you.  
 (glances at Javier)  
 We will give to him. He will give  
 to you.

SONIO  
 (eyes flash)  
 No, he is left out of this.

JAVIER  
 It's okay. It's good.

Alejandro's eyes sear into Sonio.

ALEJANDRO  
 We pay because we are honorable.  
 But you do not come to us again.  
 You are famous in Havana. You may  
 be followed.  
 (smiles)  
 Maybe I come to you. One night. Like  
 an alley cat. I meow, you let me in.

SONIO  
 Your eyes have death in them. I do  
 not want to sleep with death.

ALEJANDRO  
 It's the death of others you see.

There's power in Alejandro's eyes. Sonio is wary but pulled in.

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)  
 I will tell you the most important  
 truth in Cuban history.

He pours rum for everyone. Enjoying himself. Getting drunk.

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)  
 All the people who have ruled Cuba  
 in the past and in the present.  
 (MORE)

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)  
 Batista, Masferer, your American friends, all they care about is money. They are willing to kill for money. That is easy. Killing. But they are not willing to die. They would rather leave with their money than die. And that is why we will win. We are willing to die.

He seems to have lost interest in the conversation.

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)  
 They will flee before they die.

He CLINKS his glass with hers and drinks down his rum.

EXT. ROOSEVELT'S MANOR - EVENING

SERVANTS hang candle-lit orbs in the trees.

Colored lights flicker over the terraced gardens and fountains fronting the house.

(The house where the workers let in the Malarial mosquitos)

INT. HOUSE - SAME TIME

Danny stands against a marble pillar smoking. Watching his father Vern Roosevelt sitting in a cane armchair reading the paper.

Cuban servants bustle about, preparing for the party.

DANNY  
 (finally)  
 Next week, I want to lay in the aquifer system. The rains are coming.

VERN  
 I don't know what an aquifer system is, but we have already spent too much on other *improvements*. We must wait until we sell the new crop.

Looks up at Danny.

VERN (CONT'D)  
 You must learn to be patient.

DANNY  
 I don't want to get used to waiting. Waiting can become a habit. An addiction.

Clearly referring to his complacent, plump father. Something a bit amped up about Danny today.

DANNY (CONT'D)  
 And then you die without having accomplished anything.

VERN  
 (concerned)  
 Are you okay, son?



DANNY  
 Just a touch of fever.  
 (half smile)  
 Venti demento.

Vern rises, suddenly very worried.

VERN  
 You must take some quinine. I'll  
 get it.

DANNY  
 Don't bother, it's just a touch.

Outside, we hear the freaked out NEIGHING of horses.

DANNY (CONT'D)  
 I'll be right back.

EXT. MANSION - SAME TIME

Danny pushes himself against the strong wind to get to the stables. Must be the wind disturbing the horses.

INT. STABLES - SECONDS LATER

The nag Danny rescued earlier is going crazy in his stall, bucking and neighing and kicking at the door... agitating his neighbors.

Danny tries to shoosh him. The horse calms a little. Danny pulls an apple from his pocket. Gives it to the horse.

The horse NEIGHS wildly and bites Danny's arm. BLOOD spurts.

Quick as a flash, Danny pulls out his gun. Puts the gun to the horse's head. His hand trembles.

DANNY'S EYES are yellowish and wild. But he doesn't shoot. He comes incredibly close to shooting...

... but doesn't. A feverish tremble in his features.

EXT. PROMENADE AREA OF HAVANA - EVENING

CLARITA (Sonio's cousin) walks nervously up to a pleasant, modest cottage facing the harbor. She rings the bell. Adjusts her hat.

The door is opened by a female servant in an apron.

INT. COTTAGE - SECONDS LATER

The servant leads Clarita into a medium-sized dining room.

SERVANT  
 You are to wait here.

Alone in the room, Clarita sits down at the dining table (set for two). Then feels this may be presumptuous. She stands up...

... as Meyer Lansky enters the room. She smiles at him, all but curtsies.

LANSKY  
Clarita, right? Nice of you to come.

CLARITA  
Thank you.

LANSKY  
Sonio, your cousin, thinks highly of you, so I do too. She is an old friend. She has been here many times. What did she tell you about me?

CLARITA  
She said you were the most powerful man in Havana.

LANSKY  
I have a cat. I tell the cat, *come*. He doesn't come. I tell the cat, *sit*. He doesn't sit. The most powerful man in Havana, and his own cat ignores him.

He steps back, enjoying looking at her.

LANSKY (CONT'D)  
Tells you something about power. If I were a leopard, maybe my cat would respect. Take off your clothes please.

CLARITA  
(beat)  
Is that what Sonio did when she came here?

Hint of a nod in Lansky's eyes. Lansky is dapper in his bow tie and dark suit. But he is not handsome.

She begins to undress. Lets her skirt drop to the floor. Removes her blouse. Stares up at him. Okay?

LANSKY  
The underwear and brassiere too, please.

She removes her brassiere and panties. Stands before him completely naked. His deeply intelligent eyes take her in. Looking her over top to bottom...

... making her flush. A naked woman before a fully clothed man.

Lansky sits at the table, rings a bell.

SERVANTS

come in with dishes. Fish, stew, delicious steaming platters.

Clarita finally gets it. She's supposed to sit (naked as Eve) and have dinner with a fully dressed Lansky. She sits.

A servant offers Lansky food, but he holds up his hand.

LANSKY (CONT'D)  
No, no, I'm not hungry.

Not for food anyway. But he seems to be really enjoying Clarita eating.

LANSKY (CONT'D)  
Go on, eat, eat.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROOSEVELT'S MANOR - NIGHT

A PROCESSION OF CARS, all spankingly new, all driven by CUBAN DRIVERS choke the circular driveway of the estate.

It's like something out of "The Great Gatsby."

Inside the house, a small band plays tasteful Cuban jazz.

MORE CARS arrive, passing rows of ARMED GUARDS lining the drive.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. LANSKY'S COTTAGE - DINING AREA - SAME TIME

We're back to the strange tableau of NAKED GIRL and CLOTHED MAN eating at a medium-sized table. Clarita and Lansky.

Clarita breaks the silence.

CLARITA  
You've already eaten?

LANSKY  
I don't have so much an appetite.

CLARITA  
So you don't like food?

LANSKY  
I eat when I need to. It is fuel.

CLARITA  
(making conversation)  
What do you like?

LANSKY  
I like to make things happen. It is not selfless, because I benefit. But it's what I like.

He pours her some wine.

LANSKY (CONT'D)  
I give money to Israel. They don't want me, but I want them. And they take my money, of course.

CLARITA  
So, you *like* Israel.

LANSKY

I like the *idea* of Israel. A place for Jews to go when they are in danger. It happens you know, to Jews?

Clarita actually doesn't really know.

LANSKY (CONT'D)

It is always okay to hate the Jews. Any era. Now or before. And I'm guessing, in the future too. So... Israel.

He watches a naked Clarita drink her wine. She is strikingly gorgeous in her private/public nakedness. Perfectly comfortable being naked before him now.

Like she's alone in her own bedroom.

LANSKY (CONT'D)

In the tenements, I was called a dirty Jew. I was small. I took knocks. I had my first girl in a stairwell. She was blind but that's another story. And in that moment. On top of her I was no longer a Jew. And she was no longer blind. An outcast. She was transported. But I didn't carry through...

Clarita smiles. She's starting to like this strange older man.

CLARITA

Why?

LANSKY

I had a notion, bigger than this one moment in a tenement stairwell. I knew what bound all men together.

CLARITA

Screwing.

LANSKY

Pleasure.

He watches naked Clarita eat. He *really* enjoys watching naked Clarita eat.

LANSKY (CONT'D)

It's an *idea*. Pleasure. For me, a concept. Everyone wants it. We kill for it if it's taken away. And so much of it is illegal. In America we get thrown in jail for giving people pleasure.

CLARITA

So... Cuba.

LANSKY

Yes, like Israel.  
(smiles)

Pleasure needs its own state.

His eyes lit with an internal fire.

LANSKY  
 Don't eat so much pinto, it'll  
 give you gas.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOSEVELT'S MANSION - NIGHT

The party is in full swing. Band playing swing music. People dancing with liquid grace.

OUR VIEW drifts over a mountain of caviar in ice, thin sliced roast beef.

*The party a love song to the very idea of pleasure.*

EXT. MANSION - SAME TIME

Sonio's convertible pulls up in the circular gravel driveway and the door is immediately opened by the valet.

SONIO steps out of the car, looking regal and beautiful in a midnight-blue dress and mink stole. She moves into the party, eyes alert.

She moves toward the front door, eyes on high alert. This is the first time she's entered the house. It's a huge moment for her.

INT. PARTY - SAME TIME

Sonio's eyes dance as she moves through the opulent world that is Danny's life.

It's strange and unreal for her. The grand piano, the indoor banana trees. The tuxedoed band.

GRANDLY DRESSED GUESTS

glance sharply as she passes. The only Cuban guest in the room.

SONIO moves forward, trying to ignore the looks. But...

THE CUBAN *HELP* (passing waiters, bartenders)

stare as well. Their stares deeper... *more complex*. A hint of hostility.

Her eyes meet Danny's... talking to a sycophantic businessman, Danny rudely breaking away, coming toward her.

DANNY  
 (urgent)  
 I'm glad you came.

SONIO  
 I wanted to see. Now I have seen.

DANNY  
 Come, dance with me.

He almost forcibly leads her onto the dance floor.

SONIO  
 Your father is staring.

DANNY  
I don't care.

His staring father quickly turns to go back to a couple of rich looking men. Trying to ignore the moment. But definitely worried.

ON DANNY AND SONIO - dancing together.

SONIO  
(quiet)  
This is the last time we dance.

DANNY  
Why?

SONIO  
Because I am *impossible*. Like you said.  
(beat)  
We are impossible.

DANNY  
Once I am the head of United Fruit, I can do what I want.

SONIO  
Once you are the head of United Fruit, your wants will change. You will have United Fruit wants.

She allows herself to be held by him, caught in the thrall of his body. A storm in her eyes.

SONIO (CONT'D)  
Everyone's watching us by the way.

It's true. Danny dancing with the gorgeous Cuban lady has made an impact.

DANNY  
To hell with them. I don't want you to be a secret. We can do whatever we want, I didn't realize it before, but we can do anything.

SONIO  
You're drunk.

DANNY  
I haven't touched a drop.

She presses her hand against the back of his neck.

SONIO  
(shock)  
It's the fever.

DANNY  
Venti demento.  
(laughs)  
It lies in wait for me, and I wait for it. I wait too. I count the seconds until it comes.

SONIO  
Why?

DANNY  
Because I see you.

SONIO  
Listen. Stop this.

All but drags him off the dance floor.

DANNY  
What do you see out the window?

Sonio has been darting quick looks out the window.

DANNY (CONT'D)  
(staring)  
A cat without eyes in the dark.

SONIO'S POV - THROUGH WINDOW

By the north-east corner of the field, A TRUCK is pulling to a stop, headlights *NOT ON*.

SONIO  
It's the fever.

But Danny keeps staring.

EXT. NORTH-EAST CORNER OF FIELD - SAME TIME

THE ARMY TRUCK pulls to a jolting stop and MASFERER (Batista's head of the secret police) jumps out. He holds a lit torch.

Other POLICE move onto the field with torches.

INSIDE THE FOREST (across the road)

TWO OF ALEJANDRO'S MEN are staring at Masferer. One points a rifle on him. He mimes shooting.

REBEL  
(grins)  
Pow.

As Masferer lights a patch of sugar cane with his torch, the OTHER REBEL talks furtively into a walkie-talkie... and the two scatter off into the woods.

EXT. FAR END OF SUGAR CANE FIELDS - SAME TIME

Alejandro talks quickly into *his* walkie-talkie. He also holds a lit torch. Dips it onto the sugar cane.

OUR VIEW whips to another section of the field... where another rebel is lighting the sugar cane on fire.

OUR VIEW whips to another part of the field... and another and another.

*All around us, rebels are lighting up the sugar cane fields.*

Everything going very fast now.

MASFERER

speeding off with his men in his car... suddenly SCREECHES to a stop.

What he sees makes all the blood leave his face.

MASFERER'S POV - THE FIELDS

The small fire they just set is miniscule compared to the DOZEN OTHER FIRES springing into being across all the other fields.

MASFERER  
Fuck, fuck, fuck.

He ROARS OFF in his car.

INT. ROOSEVELT'S HOUSE - PARTY

The guests (unaware of what's to come) continue their revels.

ON SONIO AND DANNY

Sonio trying to get Danny out of the room before everyone notices how crazy he's acting.

SONIO  
You must rest. I'll get you a doctor.

Sonio glancing at the windows looking out into the fields.

DANNY  
What's going to happen?

Forboding in his feverish eyes.

SONIO  
You are okay. You can get quinine. My uncle was not so lucky. You are rich. You have everything.

DANNY  
Not everything.

But the moment is interrupted by...

VERN ROOSEVELT

clinking his champagne glass. He is standing on a chair. Senator Hatch stands just below him, holding his pants' cuff... spotting his friend.

*An emblematic image.*

ROOSEVELT  
I and my son thank you for coming here tonight. I toast you, all my friends.



He lifts his glass... as do all the guests.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)  
I must here confess a deception.  
You have been invited under false  
pretenses.

Sonio and Danny stand close together... a fact that disturbs Vern greatly, but he goes on.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)  
I am at an age when a birthday is  
no longer a cause for celebration.  
Each year is an increasingly  
faltering footstep toward my grave.

There's a MURMUR of "No, no..." "You will live to ninety."  
Roosevelt holds up his hand.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)  
I believe in staring reality in the  
face and when you can no longer out-  
stare it, you look elsewhere. You look  
to the young. In this case, my son,  
Daniel Hatch.

Everyone turns to Danny. Sonio tries to step back... but  
Danny takes her hand.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)  
(trembling slightly)  
I have watched my son grow into a  
man. He is sometimes impetuous,  
but he is also honest. He is  
capable. He is also kind, this he  
got from his late mother. And he is  
a modern man. Times have changed. I  
believe it is time for new  
techniques. Modernization. And so,  
I intend to retire at the end of  
the month...

A MURMUR goes through the crowd.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)  
... and give over the company--

The moment interrupted by A SCREAM from one of the guests.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)  
--to--to--

But the party has erupted in tumult. Everyone reacting to...

VIEW THROUGH WINDOWS

A ROARING FIRE is consuming the sugar cane fields.

Roosevelt stumbles on his chair. Hatch helps him down. ACRID  
SMOKE making its way through the house now.

ON HATCH (staring at the burning fields)

Sadness and rage in his bloodshot eyes. *He's seeing Cuba burn.*

THROUGH THE CHAOS of scrambling guests...

DANNY (still as a statue) stares at Sonio.

SONIO stares back, trying to say everything with her eyes. Apology, compassion... And something deeper.

ON DANNY - He knows, he just *knows* she is responsible for this. A hint of hatred in Danny's eyes.

Danny charges off through the party. Sonio goes after him, but loses him in the tumult.

EXT. BURNING FIELDS - SAME TIME

A hellish burning landscape, through which a feverish Danny stumbles forward.

AHEAD OF HIM - workers and guards have formed a fruitless bucket brigade.

DANNY comes to a faltering stop. His pale, feverish eyes staring at something that is not there.

THE BURNING SUGAR CANE FIELDS - ANOTHER ANGLE

A WORKER in the fire brigade, spots something that disturbs him. It's Danny, standing right smack in the burning fire.

The worker shouts out to his friends. Others turn.

DANNY'S CLOTHES have caught fire. He stumbles forward. A WORKER tackles him. Someone else throws a blanket over him, snuffs out the flames.

WORKER

Loco.

Danny has been *put out*... A second later and he would be dead.

WORKER (CONT'D)

Loco.

ON DANNY - His eyes burning with fever, lost in another world.

DANNY

(mutters it)

The devil.

DISSOLVE TO:

HELL

A smouldering, endless vista of charred sugar cane fields. Here and there, pockets of flame. Smoke everywhere.

We hear A LOW GROWLING NOISE. The sound grows louder and louder... like some horrific predator loping toward us. And suddenly:

THROUGH THE ACRID SMOKE

come THE HEADLIGHTS of a canopied TRUCK. It ROARS past us (an army truck), followed by another... and another.

CUT TO:

ONE OF THE ARMY TRUCKS

stops abruptly before a sprawling country house and A DOZEN POLICEMEN pour out of the canopied back of the truck.

INT. HOUSE

POLICE kick in the doors.

The INHABITANTS (a motley crew of ragged university students) react as the police knock over book shelves, tear open couches.

A student steps forward and is hit in the face with the butt of a rifle.

EXT. SONIO'S PARENTS COTTAGE - SAME TIME

ANOTHER ARMY TRUCK skids to a stop before the tin hut.

INT. HUT

The door is kicked in. Javier steps forward, pale as death. Police are everywhere.

A POLICEMAN presses him against the wall, truncheon against his neck. Javier's screaming mother is knocked away by another policeman.

INT. JAVIER'S BEDROOM

A POLICEMAN has ripped open Javier's mattress. He pulls out A THICK WAD OF MONEY. SHOUTS OUT to his comrades.

CUT TO:

A RED CORVETTE

ROARS past the town church. The car bristles with machine guns, permanently mounted from every window, front, side, back.

*Like something out of MAD MAX.*

THE TERROR CAR skids to a stop before Javier's house and...

MASFERER steps out... Pushes his way through the policemen holding A BATTERED JAVIER by the mangy banana tree.

MASFERER

Who gave you the money?

JAVIER

No one. I saved it from working in the fields.

Masferer makes a fist (we glimpse the ring of human teeth) and PUNCHES Javier so hard in his forehead that Javier drops.

INT. MASFERER'S CAR - DRIVING

AN UNCONSCIOUS JAVIER is slumped between the driver and Masferer. Masferer pouring water over Javier, SLAPPING him.

Javier's puffy eyes open.

MASFERER  
Our plans were secret. We light a little fire. That's it.

Javier stares at Masferer with eyes full of hate.

MASFERER (CONT'D)  
Who told you the secret?

JAVIER  
I guessed.

Masferer punches him on the cheek. We glimpse bone through the gash.

MASFERER  
It is someone close to us? Who is it?

JAVIER  
Fuck you.

MASFERER  
You know where we are going? We are going to my grandfather's farm. He keeps blue pigs. They are called *Choats*.

JAVIER  
You are a blue pig.

The car, off the road now, bumps like crazy in the uneven terrain.

MASFERER  
My grandfather loves his *Choats*, but he is old. So I take care of the pigs.

Masferer takes off his cowboy hat to wipe his hair with a bandana. Hot as hell out today.

MASFERER (CONT'D)  
But I am so often in Havana, I neglect them. I feel very bad for the *Choats*. They get so hungry, they will eat anything.

MASFERER'S CAR screeches to a dusty stop in the middle of a field.

He pushes Javier out of the car. Nearby, we hear WILD, DERANGED SNORTING.

MASFERER  
 You hear them? They smell me. They  
 know I am bringing them food.

THE PIG PEN

THREE BLUISH PIGS scramble hungrily over one another in the  
 muck to reach their snouts toward...

MASFERER who has pushed Javier right to the edge.

MASFERER  
 (to Javier)  
 Who gave you the information? It is  
 someone from Havana, no?

Javier stares in white-faced terror at Masferer.

MASFERER (CONT'D)  
 All you have to do is nod. Is it  
 your sister? She comes to visit you  
 often. Is it Sonio? Just nod.

Javier's lip trembles. He is scared to fucking death. And all  
 he has to do is nod.

MASFERER (CONT'D)  
 The pigs will rip you in pieces.  
 Believe me, I have seen it.  
 (off Javier's terror)  
 Your arm here, your dick there.  
 They make your body communistic.  
 They free up its parts.  
 (quiet)  
 Or you go back to the University.  
 Study Lenin.

Javier is torn in two by terror. And then, impulsively, he  
 spits at Masferer.

ON MASFERER - Something like delight in his eyes. He was  
 kinda hoping Javier wouldn't talk.

MASFERER (CONT'D)  
 So, the pigs eat.

He shoves Javier into the pen, steps back to watch.

THE PIG PEN

THE BLUE PIGS are immediately all over Javier, fighting each  
 other over him. A pig RIPS OFF a SCREAMING Javier's ear.

Another rips into his arm... Making a HUGE GASH. Another pig  
 pushes the pig aside, also going after the arm.

MASFERER (CONT'D)  
 (to his men)  
 I won't have to feed them for a  
 week now.

He turns, his men following, and heads to his car.

## THE PIG PEN

Javier fights for his life with the starving pigs. But he's no match, the pigs are strong and ravenous.

Off-screen, we hear the car SKIDDING OFF with a RAT-TAT-TAT of celebratory machine gun fire.

ON JAVIER - almost losing consciousness. TWO PIGS are gnawing at his leg, the spilling blood attracting them to this vulnerable mass of pulp.

Javier (eyes on fire) grabs his own leg and, with wincing pain... rips it off. He SCREAMS in agony.

But the ploy has worked... for a moment anyway. All three pigs now fighting and biting each other over his severed leg.

With all the strength he has left... Javier hauls himself out of the pen.

A depleted Javier lies on his back in the blazing sun, breathing heavily.

But he knows he will die here if he doesn't keep moving.

JAVIER forces himself onto his stomach, pulls himself forward with his hands.

JAVIER'S POV - ABOUT A THOUSAND YARDS AWAY

we make out the church steeple from the town of Padilla. Javier drags himself toward the church.

CLOSE ON PIGS (in their pen)

gnashing at JAVIER'S SEVERED LEG, grunting, chewing jostling. A pig rips off a toe. In seconds the leg will be gone.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH IN PADILLA - EVENING

A PRIEST (wrinkles like gullies in hard rock) walks with bowed head along the vestry. He stops at an old-fashioned wooden-based phone attached to the wall.

His face is pale. He begins to dial. His fingers tremble.

INT. BACKSTAGE AREA OF THE TROPICANA - MOMENTS LATER

Through the backstage chaos, we see Sonio hanging up a modern pink telephone. She is pale as a shirt button.

She moves to go but Rodrigo stands before her. He's seen how emotionally rattled Sonio is.

His eyes seem to convey compassion. *Something* deep anyway.

RODRIGO

You have a show tonight.

SONIO  
I can't make it.

RODRIGO  
(quiet)  
This thing I do, it is everything to  
me. I am a tyrant for it.

He has an uncanny ability to read people... and to *know* things.

RODRIGO (CONT'D)  
You are replaceable. Don't forget  
that. I say this because it is true  
for me too.

SONIO  
Is that a threat?

RODRIGO  
No.

Even though it kind of... *is*, but mostly, he is just one  
artist talking to another.

RODRIGO (CONT'D)  
You are very smart. The smartest  
lady I know. But sometimes you let  
your emotions rule you.

A dark, strange emotion in his eyes.

RODRIGO (CONT'D)  
Don't let the weak people you love  
pull you under. You are not weak.

Sonio walks off. But she doesn't strut. She moves haltingly.

EXT. CHURCH IN PADILLA - NIGHT

Sonio's car comes to a stop before the Church. It remains parked  
for a long moment. We don't see Sonio's face, but we know she's  
thinking in there. Thinking hard.

Finally she gets out.

SONIO (eyes harrowed) passes A BOY frantically sponging off a  
trail of blood that leads right up the church steps.

INT. BASEMENT OF CHURCH - MOMENTS LATER

With the help of the priest, Sonio heaves her MOANING BROTHER into  
a wheel barrow.

PRIEST  
I can do no more. Sorry. I have  
already done too much.

She gives him a look of exhausted contempt.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Sonio pushes the wheelbarrow containing her MOANING, delirious brother over the bumpy field toward the woods.

JAVIER  
I didn't tell, I didn't tell--

Sonio, sweating from the effort, exhausted...

SONIO  
I know you didn't. Keep quiet. Save your strength.

It's almost pitch dark. Only a sliver of a moon tonight.

JAVIER  
Leave me, I am dying.

SONIO  
You aren't dying. Does a beetle die when you pull off a leg?

JAVIER  
I'm not a beetle.

SONIO  
(happy to be squabbling)  
You *are* a beetle. A *dung* beetle.

Javier smiles, WINCES from the pain as she goes over a bump.

INT. WOODS - SECONDS LATER

With incredible effort, Sonio now wheels Javier through the woods. She is sweating head to toe.

JAVIER  
Here.

JUNGLE GROWTH all around us. We could be in the middle of the Amazon. Javier can barely talk.

He pulls himself off the wheelbarrow and onto the soggy earth. Faints for a second.

SONIO kneels by him. Pours water on his lips and forehead. He stirs.

JAVIER (CONT'D)  
Go now.

Sonio answers by sitting down, her back to a mangrove tree. She takes a long drink of water.

Javier knows better than to argue with her. He cups his hands to his mouth and lets out AN OWL-HOOT.

Remarkably life-like.

Then he lets out another. TWO IN A ROW. There's AN ANSWERING HOOT from not far off.



Javier closes his eyes. He's done. Used his last bit of energy. Sonio goes up to him. Shakes him. He stirs a bit, then closes his eyes again.

Definitely close to dying.

A RUSTLING nearby. Sonio turns to see TWO MEN in camouflage emerge from the bushes. They see Javier and Sonio. One WHISTLES...

... and immediately SEVERAL OTHER REBELS come forward, amongst them, Alejandro. Alejandro feels Javier's pulse.

ALEJANDRO  
He is alive.

Alejandro comes over to Sonio.

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)  
It is okay. He's with us now.

SONIO  
He needs a doctor.

ALEJANDRO  
We have a doctor.

Sonio follows Alejandro's glance.

TWO REBELS

One of the rebels is leaning over Javier. He makes a quiet remark and immediately Javier's half-ripped off leg is lifted. Logs put under it.

Another whispers something to this man who seems in control and the man looks up toward Sonio. He is CHE GUEVARA. His eyes ragged and sleepy. Javier holds little interest to him.

Che heads toward Sonio and Alejandro. He talks to Sonio but his words are for Alejandro.

CHE  
A moment alone.

Alejandro hesitates, then moves off.

Che kneels beside Sonio. A man used to talking while sitting on his heels.

CHE (CONT'D)  
Do you know who I am?

SONIO  
Che Guevara.

CHE  
Just Che.

No pleasantness in his tone. Or unpleasantness either.

CHE (CONT'D)  
Your brother has lost a lot of  
blood. But he may live.

He stares sleepily at Sonio.

CHE (CONT'D)  
He cannot go to a hospital. He will  
be going right into the hands of  
the secret police.

SONIO  
(urgency in her eyes)  
You are a doctor. You can save him.

CHE  
There is something I need from you.

She glances in Alejandro's direction.

CHE (CONT'D)  
My friend Alejandro is a *pure*  
fighter. He sees sugar cane, he  
burns it. But to me, guns are  
better than burned sugar cane. You  
can grow more sugar cane. You  
cannot grow guns.  
(beat)  
Our rifles shoot peas. We could use  
some new ones. This arms deal.  
Between Batista and the Americans. I  
want those guns but I need information.

He stares at her with his *almost-sleepy* eyes.

CHE (CONT'D)  
You can give this information to  
me. From your gangster friends who  
run our country.

SONIO  
What if I refuse?

CHE  
Your brother may live or your brother  
may die. His condition is brittle.

Anger in Sonio's eyes. She sees where this is heading.

CHE (CONT'D)  
He is no use to us as a soldier  
either way. He would slow us down.  
Here in these woods, we live in a  
world of harsh realities.

SONIO  
(voice breaking)  
What do I get in return for getting  
you information?

CHE  
We will not kill you after the revolution.

SONIO  
 There won't be a revolution. You  
 are a tribe of pygmies eating nuts  
 and berries.

Che takes her hands in his own.

CHE  
 It's been a long time since you've  
 been touched by a working man's  
 hands, huh?

She tries to take her hands from him, but he holds them in a  
 vice grip. Tears of rage in Sonio's eyes.

SONIO  
 I think you are the biggest  
 gangster of them all.

CHE  
 Maybe, but I am the future of Cuba.

Che still gripping her hands.

CHE (CONT'D)  
 It's okay. You will do what I want. In  
 exchange for your brother's life.

She spits at him. It seems to have no effect.

CHE (CONT'D)  
 You can hate me but you will be my  
 little spy. You will be my puta in  
 the city.

SONIO  
 You are all the same. You are not  
 Cuba. You will never be Cuba.

CHE  
 What *is* Cuba?

SONIO  
 Cuba is a woman.

SMASH CUT TO:

CLOSE-UP - SONIO

We hear the NOISE and CHATTER of the Tropicana around her.

But really, there is just Sonio right now. Her expression  
 containing all the events of the episode.

Eyes feverish and black, Sonio steps onto the stage. She lifts the  
 mike to her mouth to sing... And we cut to BLACKNESS.

END OF EPISODE