

ALMOST PARADISE

Teleplay by

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Based on the movie "How To Be A Latin Lover"
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EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN COASTLINE - DAY

AERIAL SHOT over the ocean toward a magnificent home on a beach bluff. We HEAR an upbeat Mexican song. One could swear we're on the shores of Acapulco. But actually, we are in...

CHYRON: **Malibu, CA. Present Day**

EXT. MAXIMO'S MANSION - BACKYARD - DAY

CLOSE ON a pair of polished tuxedo shoes. These belong to a uniformed WHITE BUTLER as he treks across a lavish poolside backyard. As he approaches the cliff, we see a MAN, cast in shadow, standing in a haze of ocean mist, looking outward - very Gatsby-esque.

The man turns to us and we see MAXIMO GALLARDO (Eugenio Derbez), 50s, tan and handsome, with a dazzling smile. But underneath this opulence we can detect a tinge of sadness.

OLDER MAXIMO

What is it, Rolf?

BUTLER

Your nephew is here, sir.

INT. MAXIMO'S MANSION - DAY

Older Maximo heads through his impeccable home. We can't help but notice that Older Maximo's walls are lined with photos of himself with celebrities, politicians, athletes, etc. Older Maximo's whole demeanor changes when he sees his relative.

OLDER MAXIMO

Hugo, my boy! So good to see you!

Maximo gives his nephew HUGO, 14, a hug. Hugo is nerdy, rather awkward and wears a large backpack.

OLDER MAXIMO (CONT'D)

What are you doing here?

HUGO

We made plans a week ago. You said -
"I'll put it down in my calendar so
I don't forget." Remember?

OLDER MAXIMO

Of course I remember!

(calling out)

Rolf - cancel my two o'clock
massage.

(then; thinking)

And my four o'clock massage.

INT. MAXIMO'S MANSION - DINING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Older Maximo and Hugo eat at opposite ends of a long table.

OLDER MAXIMO

So, what exactly do you need my help with, Hugo? Business advice? Women? It's not the birds and the bees talk is it?

HUGO

I already know about that. Mom gave me a book when I was nine.

OLDER MAXIMO

Two questions - does it have pictures and do you have it on you?

HUGO

(shaking his head)

I'm here because I'm supposed to write a report for school on the person I admire most and how they got to where they are today.

OLDER MAXIMO

And you picked me?

(off Hugo's nod)

Well, that's very flattering. Now here's my first piece of advice: *choose someone else.*

HUGO

Why would I do that?! You're one of the great rags-to-riches stories. A poor kid from the streets of Mexico, now a massive worldwide success!

OLDER MAXIMO

I mean, I like the way it sounds when you say it out loud like that. But still...

EXT. MAXIMO'S MANSION - POOL DECK - A LITTLE LATER

The two lounge in chaises sipping fancy fruity frozen drinks.

OLDER MAXIMO

Here's the truth, Hugo. Despite what it may look like on the surface, I'm a... problematic hero.

HUGO
 (in awe)
 The best ones are...

OLDER MAXIMO
 Sure, I have many houses, multiple cars sitting idly in the garage waiting for when they feature me in a reboot of *Cribs*... an all white butler. One hundred percent, too! I had him do a 23andMe.

Rolf nods as he massages Older Maximo's feet.

OLDER MAXIMO (CONT'D)
 But you have to understand all *this* only came through a series of bad decisions, questionable choices and moral compromises that forever altered the fabric of my soul.

HUGO
 That may be true. Or maybe you just did what you had to do to get ahead...
 (then; imploring)
 Tio, there's so much about you I don't know. So much you keep... hidden from the world. Please. Let me in. I'm *family*...

The word "family" seems to register with Older Maximo. He takes a beat. Then decides to tell his story.

OLDER MAXIMO
 Very well. But only because I love you. Just promise you won't turn this into a book--
 (before Hugo objects)
 -- without giving me a cut. Alright, like all great origin stories, mine starts off very depressing. Your mom and I grew up in the outskirts of Acapulco. Also known as the "piss poor" part of town.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - ACAPULCO - MORNING

ANOTHER AERIAL SHOT, this time we go past all the LUXURY RESORTS of Acapulco, through the glitz and glamour of the touristy part of town, and down into the lower income streets with shabby apartments. CHYRON: **Acapulco, 1984.**

INT. GALLARDO APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

A small apartment of pure '80s Mexico: furniture in plastic, knitted mat atop an old TV, Jesus portraits galore.

OLDER MAXIMO (V.O.)

Our dad died when we were young.
And my deeply religious mother -
your *abuelita* - had to work three
housekeeping jobs just to afford
food and a place for us to live.
Still, we didn't have gas to cook.

NORA, mid 40s, lights a RAG on fire, while SARA, 16, wearing a Che Guevara t-shirt, holds a water pot. However, Nora's sight is failing and she holds the fiery rag opposite of Sara. (*Note - italics are Spanish dialogue with subtitles.*)

SARA

Mom, over here.

Nora realizes, but when she adjusts, the flame burns out.

OLDER MAXIMO

But today was a very good day. Our
neighbor, Esteban, had given me my
first real job. And your *abuelita*
was over the moon.

NORA

(to Sara)

*Don't worry about the fire. Just
look at your handsome brother. Such
a good boy, talking to your father.*

ANGLE ON: YOUNG MAXIMO (19). Maximo is a charming, innocent, entrepreneurial, go-getter. He wears a short-sleeved shirt and tie while kneeling, hands together, in front of an elaborate religious shrine dedicated to his dead dad. He's a far cry from the older Maximo we just saw.

MAXIMO

*Well, Dad, the time has come. My
first day of work. At the bus
depot! Not exactly my "dream."
But... any words of wisdom for me?*

(silence; then)

*Okay, maybe next time. Just know
that in your absence, I've tried
very hard to be the man of the
house and make you proud. You are
proud, right?*

(more silence; then)

(MORE)

MAXIMO (CONT'D)

Anyway, will you do me a favor and watch over me today? I don't want to mess this up. For all of us.

He looks at the motionless portrait on the altar. Maximo gets up, goes to kiss Nora goodbye.

MAXIMO (CONT'D)

Bye, mom. I love you.

NORA

I love you too, Mijo. And even though he can't say it - we are both very proud. Good luck today!

MAXIMO

Bye Sara!

SARA

Enjoy being another cog in the capitalist wheel!

EXT. ACAPULCO STREET - A LITTLE LATER

As Maximo walks through the neighborhood, his best friend MEMO, 19, (overweight, perpetually exasperated) rushes up.

MEMO

Máximo! There you are! Guess what?! It... happened! The day we've been waiting for since we were twelve-years-old!

MAXIMO

You lost your virginity?! This is huge news! Who was it - your second cousin? Your third? Any less than third - we've got problems

MEMO

*No, I haven't lost my virginity. But this news is better!
(off Maximo, dubious)
Well... equally as good! My neighbor, Tito, has a friend, Jorge, who works down at the beach and he has a brother, Miguel, who's uncle, Rico parks cars near the resorts and he said that his buddy, Francisco told him that there was an announcement for potential job openings at Las Perlas Resort!*

Maximo stops in his tracks. This really is massive news.

MAXIMO

Seriously!? Las Perlas? Today?

MEMO

That's not all! I got us both interviews there this morning!

MAXIMO

Oh wow. That is incredible. But I can't...

Maximo starts walking again.

MAXIMO (CONT'D)

I'm on my way to start my first day of work at the bus depot. I already made the commitment. To Esteban. To my mother...

MEMO

But... this is everything we ever wanted! A chance to finally make something of ourselves. To follow in Don Pablo's footsteps!

OLDER MAXIMO (V.O.)

Memo was right...

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - ACAPULCO - DAY (FLASHBACK)

CYRON: **The 70s.** Paleteros push popsicle carts while KIDS play soccer and avión (hopscotch). Suddenly, DON PABLO, late-40's, handsome with an expensive suit, turns to walk down the street alongside his MOTHER, FATHER, and SIBLINGS - all dressed up and passing out AMERICAN CASH!

OLDER MAXIMO (V.O.)

Don Pablo Correa was a former street kid - just like us. Only he had charmed his way into a job at Las Perlas.

A TEN YEAR OLD MAXIMO AND MEMO rush over to him.

OLDER MAXIMO (V.O.)

That job lead to a better life for his whole family. Occasionally they'd all return to the old neighborhood and share in their good fortune. Memo and I had no qualms sharing in their bounty.

Don Pablo hands the boys a few bills. Their eyes widen.

BACK TO MAXIMO AND MEMO (END FLASHBACK).

MEMO

Come on! This is what we've been dreaming about forever! How are you ever going to buy your mom a giant mansion overlooking the ocean working at the friggin' bus depot?

Off Maximo's pensive stare... SMASH CUT TO:

INT. LAS PERLAS - LARGE WAITING ROOM - DAY

Maximo and Memo nervously sit in a CROWDED ROOM filled with other hopeful LOCALS all holding resumes. This is clearly the "workers" area of Las Perlas...

MAXIMO

I can't believe I'm doing this. My mom is going to kill me. I don't even have a resume!

Maximo looks down at Memo's resume and reads it in disbelief.

MAXIMO (CONT'D)

You were - "President of advertising for a major nighttime entertainment company?!"

MEMO

Sure was. What would you call handing out flyers for the city's best loved strip club?!

MAXIMO

This is lying, Memo.

MEMO

No, it's embellishing. There are hundreds of guys here interviewing for the exact same job. You're gonna have to wow them somehow.

RECEPTIONIST (O.S.)

Mr. Gallardo? Mr. Gallardo?

Maximo snaps to attention.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Go see Miss Garcia. Last office on the left.

Memo gives Maximo a "be strong" fist. Maximo nods and starts heading towards Miss Garcia's office.

OLDER MAXIMO (V.O.)

This was it. The moment of truth. As I walked past a bunch of other guys who looked just like me, I wondered how I could "stand out" from all the rest. And then, just like that, I saw my hero's name on a door...

Maximo passes a door with the name plate: DON PABLO CORREA, HEAD OF OPERATIONS.

OLDER MAXIMO (V.O.)

I don't know what came over me. Youth? Hubris? The stark reality that I had *nothing* to lose...

He doubles-back and without knocking - opens the door to discover DON PABLO (now in his 60's, dry, a bit regal, been there, seen it all) sitting at his desk.

MAXIMO

Excuse me, you're Don Pablo, right?

DON PABLO

Well, I sure as hell ain't Don Johnson. And he reminds me of that every time he visits.

MAXIMO

That's... very cool. Sorry to barge in like this. I just wanna say what an honor it is to meet you.

DON PABLO

And you are...?

MAXIMO

Maximo Gallardo. I'm interviewing for a job at the resort.

DON PABLO

Sorry, kid. I don't do interviews.

MAXIMO

Nor should you. But I'm wondering if you wouldn't mind making an exception just this once. I grew up on Arenal Street. Just like you. Still live there...

DON PABLO

My condolences.
(after a beat)
Let me see your resume.

MAXIMO

Well, see, I don't... have a resume. Or any hotel experience. Just a lot of odd jobs over the years. Selling coconuts, riding bike taxis, braiding tourists hair. I'd offer to braid yours, but...

Don Pablo is bald. And not amused.

MAXIMO (CONT'D)

Anyway, my English is as good as it gets thanks to watching many hours of American television.

DON PABLO

So what? Plenty of people applying for this job speak English. Now please stop wasting my time.

Maximo knows he has blown it. He starts to head out. But then - turns back around with a look of determination in his eyes.

MAXIMO

You've worked at Las Perlas since the day the gates opened on March 12th 1948. As groundskeeper and then "head of operations" you've been through four owners, three hurricanes, two renovations, the "Great Jicama Recall of 1972" and one awful bed bugs infestation. Rumor has it you've only missed one day of work - ever!

DON PABLO

(still pissed about it)
Would it have killed them to bury my Abuelo on a weekend? How do you know all that?

MAXIMO

It's been my dream to work at Las Perlas since I was ten years-old. Every possible thing I could find out about this place from outside those gates - I have. I may not have the experience you're looking for. But - what I do have is drive. And hunger. And if you hire me - I will never let you down. I will stay the same honest, hardworking, humble Maximo. Always.

Don Pablo takes in this green but very eager young man.

INT. GALLARDO APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Maximo arrives to see ESTEBAN (think Mel Rodriguez), 50s, overweight, underwhelming but kind-hearted, sitting with Nora and Sara, all giving Maximo a look of pure disappointment.

NORA

*Where have you been? Esteban says
you never showed up for work at the
bus depot!*

ESTEBAN

*I feared you got run over by a bus.
The irony would be terrible.... if
it weren't so common.*

MAXIMO

I know you're upset, but--

NORA

*Don't apologize to me! Esteban has
only shown this family kindness!
Apologize to him.*

MAXIMO

*Esteban, I'm so sorry. But what if I
told you all that I got another job
today... at Las Perlas Resort?*

NORA

*I'd tell you not to go anywhere near
that bastion of lust and sin...*

SARA

*... that exploits its workers and
fetishizes our culture...*

ESTEBAN

(impressed)

*You got a job at Las Perlas?! Are
they still hiring?*

A beat as they all look at Esteban. Then:

MAXIMO

*Mom, listen. At Las Perlas I can make
some real money and provide for this
family so you can stop working so
many jobs. Isn't it time we finally
take proper care of your eyesight?*

NORA

There's nothing wrong with my eyes.

MAXIMO

*Tell that to your latest batch of
handmade figurines.*

ANGLE ON: a counter full of little Jesus and Virgin Mary figures, all severely misshapen.

ESTEBAN

I think they're cute.

NORA

*Mijo, you have a good and honorable
career waiting for you.*

MAXIMO

*I understand - but think about Dad.
He worked himself to the bone
driving that truck and for what? He
fell asleep at the wheel and died.
Right now, he's looking down at all
of us and saying "here's a chance
to do more, to be more... than poor
Esteban." No offense, Esteban.*

ESTEBAN

*No, I get it. The suicide rate at
the bus depot is off the charts...*

MAXIMO

*You raised me to be a good person. And
I'll never do anything to jeopardize
that. Besides - Memo got a job there,
too. We'll watch out for each other.*

Nora is clearly not happy with this news.

NORA

*Very well, Mijo. But the moment you
feel that place is changing who you
are - on the inside - promise me
that you'll quit.*

Maximo nods. Nora goes to the shrine and grabs an escapulario (traditional cloth necklace with the Virgin Mary sewn in).

NORA (CONT'D)

*And wear your father's escapulario.
For protection.*

She places it on Maximo's neck and does the sign of the cross. Esteban puts his arm around Maximo.

ESTEBAN

The boy's working at Las Perlas!

INT. LAS PERLAS RESORT - BANQUET ROOM - MORNING

Maximo and Memo sit with a dozen NEW HIRES all wearing small white shorts and turquoise polo shirts. Their new uniform.

MAXIMO

I can't believe I'm sitting here!

MEMO

I can't believe I'm sitting anywhere.
My family just has the one chair.

The lights go out and a TELEVISION turns on. CLOSE ON TV: a video of the Las Perlas Resort, in full on 80's STYLE cheese - with radiantly out blown colors, synth-Muzak and in-camera graphics. One of those accidentally camp things of the time.

DIANE (V.O. IN VIDEO)

Hello, my fabulous darlings.
Welcome to the famous (and
infamous) Las Perlas Resort!

In frame walks DIANE, 50s, glamorous, intimidating, a crafty entrepreneur. Kim Cattrall in a high shouldered power suit.

CHYRON on TV: Diane Davies, Owner & CEO, "Las Perlas Resort."
She addresses the camera like Brenda Dickson in her infamous 80s lifestyle video (Google it - it's awesome)!

DIANE (CONT'D)

It's me, Diane Davies. You might
remember me from--

QUICK SHOTS: Diane in an 80s workout video... drinking her eponymous smoothie... then... numerous WOMEN reading her book
- DIANE DAVIES: FROM FITNESS QUEEN TO HOTEL KINGDOM.

DIANE (V.O.)

-- my famous workout videos, my line
of meal replacement shakes and my
best selling autobiography.

She looks to camera with too much joy, shows off the hotel.

DIANE

I bought this little slice of heaven
with two words in mind: *total*
excellence. So if you made it this
far, it's because my hiring staff
saw potential in you. Hooray.
(a beat)
You can clap now.

All the employees look at each other and then start CLAPPING.
ON THE TV: Diane is now in one of the LUXURY SUITES.

DIANE (CONT'D)
Each bungalow at Las Perlas is
furnished with the finest custom
made furniture from Italy and...

She opens the patio to a private pool and hot tub.

DIANE (CONT'D)
... its own personal oasis. I can't
wait to take a dip... Unfortunately,
use of the pools, spa, tennis courts,
gym, game room, conference rooms,
golf course, exotic bird habitat,
bars or any of our four in-house
restaurants is off-limits for all
employees.

Maximo and Memo exchange a look. This is awesome - and a
little odd. ON TV: Diane strolls the beach at sunset.

DIANE (CONT'D)
Las Perlas rests on some of the
most desired beach front in all the
world. The wealthiest and most
fascinating international jet-
setters come here to--

Suddenly, the screen FREEZES on Diane with one eye half-
closed and her mouth askew. It's not flattering.

CHAD (O.C.)
Damn Laserdisc...

The lights turn on. CHAD, 27, a good looking, faux-friendly,
entitled American- crosses to the TV and turns it off.

CHAD (CONT'D)
Hello, folks! My name is Chad and
as the General Manager it's my job
to protect the brand of Las Perlas.
And what is that brand you may ask?

CHAD moves toward some large DOUBLE DOORS.

CHAD (CONT'D)
Well, what are you waiting for?

INT. LAS PERLAS - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Chad leads everyone through a HALLWAY. It has upscale beauty,
while retaining a tad of its '50s modernist chic vibe.

CHAD

The number one thing we pride ourselves on is discretion. People come here to take a break from their lives. Not to have their lives splashed all over the Enquirer.

(points to a room)

So, sure, I could tell you about the many celebrities that had extramarital affairs in this suite.

(points to Memo's feet)

Or why there was a blood stain there that would have landed multiple parties in *la prision*. But I won't. Know why? Discretion!

Memo nods with enthusiasm. But Maximo has some hesitance in his "agreeing" with this way of doing things. He nods anyway.

CHAD (CONT'D)

Good. Now let's proceed...

Chad opens TWO LARGE DOUBLE DOORS that lead into--

INT. LAS PERLAS - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

-- the Las Perlas lobby. A fountain shoots water tall enough to touch the glittering chandeliers hanging fifty feet high. Crowds of attractive, fashionable GUESTS stream across shiny marble floors as BELLBOYS push carts with expensive luggage.

MEMO

Is this even reality?

But the sight that impresses Maximo the most is... JULIA, 22, stunningly beautiful with a friendly, approachable demeanor.

MAXIMO

No, Memo. It's Fantasy Island.

Maximo can't stop staring as she works the FRONT DESK.

MEMO (O.S.)

Come on!

Maximo jolts back from his daze to see the group moving on.

EXT. LAS PERLAS - POOL AREA - DAY

Chad leads the group to a breathtaking OUTDOOR AREA: an infinity pool adjacent to a serene private beach. Chaise lounges and exclusive cabanas abound.

CHAD

This is the epicenter of the resort. Where all the action is.

Maximo takes in the view: dozens of BIKINI CLAD WOMEN and speedo-sporting HUNKS; ARAB MAGNATES in thwabs apply tanning oil to BRAZILIAN MODELS; everybody sips champagne or fancy cocktails. In short, wealth and fame like he's never seen.

CHAD (CONT'D)

Maximo Gallardo? You're working here.

(reading)

"Memo Reyes?"

MEMO

That's me! Am I at the pool, too?

CHAD

Actually, your resume stated that you were the:

(skeptical)

"Chief Operating Officer of an International Garment Organization?"

MEMO

That's correct, sir.

(off Maximo's look)

What? My mom married a Dominican and she makes me fold my three step-siblings laundry every night.

CHAD

No Spanish around guests, *hermano*. Ever. And I felt only someone with your credentials could handle this very coveted assignment...

INT. LAS PERLAS - LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

A basement. Or dungeon rather. Memo stands amidst many LAUNDRY MACHINES. A scary, heavy-set, housekeeper, LUPE (50s), hands him a ton of dirty sheets.

LUPE

Linens first. Then the towels.

She takes a bite of a sandwich and some mustard falls onto some clean sheets.

LUPE (CONT'D)

Then these...

She adds them to the large pile. Memo sighs.

EXT. LAS PERLAS - POOL AREA - DAY

Chad shows Maximo around the pool.

CHAD

Whatever questions you have, Hector
can answer all of them.

Chad points to HECTOR - mid-30's, tall, wiry, upbeat, always
on the go. Chad calls to him as Hector races past.

CHAD (CONT'D)

Hector - help the new guy, will ya?

HECTOR THE PROTECTOR

No problem, boss.

Chad takes off with the other new employees. Hector doesn't
look at Maximo as they start to walk.

HECTOR THE PROTECTOR (CONT'D)

I'm Hector. But people call me
Hector The Protector.

A KID in the pool accidentally splashes a MEATHEAD in a
chaise. Hector instantly hands the Meathead a towel. The
Meathead thanks him, hands over a tip. Hector keeps moving.

HECTOR THE PROTECTOR (CONT'D)

We take care of everything and
everyone around here.

A TANNING WOMAN swats at a mosquito. With lightning reflexes
Hector pulls a small bottle of BUG SPRAY and sprays it.

HECTOR THE PROTECTOR (CONT'D)

That should get rid of him!

TANNING WOMAN

My hero!

She hands Hector some money. They keep walking.

HECTOR THE PROTECTOR

The key is to anticipate everyone's
needs. You do that - you're golden.

An OLDER AMERICAN MAN slips as he's coming out of the pool.
Hector is right there to catch him before he falls.

HECTOR THE PROTECTOR (CONT'D)

Not on my watch!

The Man pulls a TEN from his wife's purse. Maximo's in awe.

MAXIMO

Teach me everything, master.

HECTOR THE PROTECTOR

My pleasure. Stick by my side and--

LOUD HOTEL GUEST

Hector, help blow up this raft?

HECTOR THE PROTECTOR

Best of luck! Gotta go!

Hector instantly bolts. Maximo calls out to him.

MAXIMO

Wait! How do I--

(to himself)

Okay, Maximo. You got this...

EXT. LAS PERLAS - POOL AREA - DAY - MONTAGE

- Maximo brings a tray of drinks to a GROUP OF MEN playing poker. As he goes to serve, Maximo notices one of the PLAYERS pull an EXTRA ACE out of their shorts - causing Maximo to SPILL THE ENTIRE TRAY OF DRINKS. Everyone's furious.

- Maximo delivers an expensive plate of caviar to a WEALTHY FAT GUY. The wealthy fat guy hands the plate to his equally obese TEN YEAR OLD SON next to him. The kid chows down like it's a bowl of ice cream. Maximo's eyes go wide.

- As Maximo sets up an umbrella, he spots TWO GIRLS at the bar. They FLASH the HANDSOME BARTENDER, who laughs and gives them free drinks. Maximo accidentally lets the umbrella slip - and it falls onto TWO ANNOYED LOUNGING POOL-GOERS.

INT. LAS PERLAS - LOBBY AREA - LATER

Maximo stands in a corner with Memo, who's drenched in sweat and has added an '80s clip-on feather earring to his outfit.

MAXIMO

This place isn't exactly what I thought, Memo. Know what I mean?

MEMO

No, I don't. 'Cause I'm stuck in the dungeon while you're living the dream in paradise.

MAXIMO

Maybe. I just wasn't expecting "paradise" to be quite so... loose.

(MORE)

MAXIMO (CONT'D)

(then; noticing)

Where'd you get that earring?

MEMO

I found it in some bed sheets. What do you think?

MAXIMO

I think... we've become the two coolest guys in our neighborhood!

Maximo notices Julia returning to the front desk.

OLDER MAXIMO (V.O.)

Suddenly, like a vision, there she was again. Without warning, my brain forced my legs to walk straight in her direction.

MAXIMO

I'll be right back.

Maximo boldly crosses through the lobby and over to Julia.

MAXIMO (CONT'D)

Hi, I'm Maximo. Just started today.

JULIA

Nice to meet you. I'm Julia. What part of the resort are you working?

MAXIMO

Right now I'm a pool boy. But before you know it, I'll be the manager. And one day, maybe I'll own this place.

JULIA

I love the confidence. And your English is quite good, too.

MAXIMO

Thank you. I owe it all to American Television. *Mork and Mindy* - "Nanu, Nanu", *Different Strokes* - "What you talking about, Willis?"

JULIA

(laughing)

I learned English a similar way.

MAXIMO

Really? Which shows did you watch?

JULIA

Actually, I learned by reading the classics - Wuthering Heights. Pride and Prejudice. Great Gatsby.

(a beat; then)

But also, I was a big fan of *Happy Days* - so - "Heeeeeeeey."

OLDER MAXIMO (V.O.)

In that moment, it was clear Julia was "the one." I could tell just from the look in her eyes.

MAXIMO

You want to kiss me, don't you?

Julia nods. Maximo JUMPS over the counter, takes Julia into his arms and plants an epic, romance novel worthy kiss.

HUGO (V.O.)

Wait, wait, wait!

INT. MAXIMO'S MANSION - BACKYARD - DAY (PRESENT)

Older Maximo and Hugo now get mani-pedi's by the pool.

HUGO

You kissed her? Just like that?

OLDER MAXIMO

Okay, no. I'm just trying to spice things up. I know you kids need stuff to happen every two minutes or you start texting each other eggplant and frown emojis. But I did feel a connection.

INT. LAS PERLAS - LOBBY AREA - DAY

Julia smiles at Maximo.

JULIA

Well, until you own the place and tell me not to - I should get back to work.

As she leaves, Chad approaches, puts his arm around Maximo.

CHAD

Maximo, buddy? A word? Not sure if this got covered in your morning orientation or not - but no fraternizing with other employees during work hours.

MAXIMO

Sorry. I was just being friendly.

CHAD

Yes, friendly is great. We love friendly. Just - save it for the guests. Understand, amigo?

Maximo nods as Chad gives him a pat on the back and takes off. He passes by Don Pablo - who witnessed this whole thing.

DON PABLO

Bit of free advice, son?

MAXIMO

Yes. I'd love any advice from you!

DON PABLO

If you wanna keep this job - maybe don't hit on the boss's girlfriend.

MAXIMO

Julia is Chad's girlfriend?

DON PABLO

If it makes you feel better... you never had a shot anyway.

EXT. LAS PERLAS - POOL AREA - DAY

As Maximo passes out towels, he spots DIANE (the hotel owner) sitting at the BAR with a very rich and snobby couple, THE BENNETTS. Diane struggles to open a MODELO BEER BOTTLE. Sensing an opportunity - Maximo races over to them.

MAXIMO

Can I help with that, Ms. Davies?

DIANE

I don't know. Do you happen to carry a spare bottle opener on you?

MAXIMO

Unfortunately, I don't. But I don't need one!

Maximo takes out a DOLLAR BILL, folds it vertically and rolls it tightly. After folding it again he takes the beer, places the bent bill under the cap and pushes upward. It pops off!

MAXIMO (CONT'D)

It's an old trick I learned at *la tiendita*. I mean, the bodega. Of course, I've only done it with a soda.

Everyone is impressed, especially Diane.

DIANE
Are you new here?

MAXIMO
Today's my first day, actually.

DIANE
Well, you're off to a good start.
Guys, this is our new Hector the
Protector. I give you... I'm sorry,
what's your name?

MAXIMO
I'm Maximo the-- just Maximo.

DIANE
"Maximo the Just Maximo". That's
terrible. You'll have to work on
that. These are the Bennetts.
Friends of mine who just arrived
all the way from Minnesota. Take
very good care of them.

Diane gets up and leaves. Maximo turns to the Bennetts.

MAXIMO
Anything I can do for you?

MRS. BENNETT
Can you get us chaises on the beach?

MAXIMO
Absolutely. I'll find you the best
location on the sand. Be right back.

MR. BENNETT
Thank you, Maximo the Just Maximo.
(then; to Mrs. Bennett)
Must be a Mexican thing?

Mr. Bennett then slips Maximo a twenty!

EXT. LAS PERLAS - BEACH AREA -- DAY.

Maximo scours the beach only to find every chaise occupied...
EXCEPT FOR TWO. Maximo races over but at the last moment-
Hector appears, dropping two towels and RESERVED SIGNS.

HECTOR THE PROTECTOR
Sorry kid, I need to hold these.

MAXIMO

For who?

HECTOR THE PROTECTOR

Whoever needs them!

MAXIMO

Can I have them for the Bennetts?

HECTOR

I'd love to help. But I've got a reputation to uphold. I'm Hector The Protector. Not Hector The Man Who Can't Get You Chaises! Sorry, friend. I feel terrible. Truly.

Hector *truly* does not feel terrible. Off a concerned Maximo--

EXT. LAS PERLAS - LOBBY - MORNING

Maximo rushes up to Don Pablo.

MAXIMO

I need your advice again. There are no more beach chairs left, but I told the Bennetts I'd come through.

DON PABLO

The Bennetts? That's not good. You're in luck, though. I always keep a pool cabana open for VIP's.

MAXIMO

You'd do that for me?

DON PABLO

Of course. For twenty dollars.

MAXIMO

But... that was all the money Mr. Bennett gave me.

DON PABLO

Just teaching you how things work here. I don't even want the money. But I'd be doing you a disservice if I didn't take it from you.

Maximo pulls out a VELCRO MR. T WALLET (with the words "I PITY THE FOOL" on it) and gives him the twenty.

DON PABLO (CONT'D)

I see a lot of potential in you.

EXT. LAS PERLAS - POOL AREA - DAY

Maximo escorts the Bennetts to a fancy cabana by the pool.

MAXIMO

And voila! Your own private cabana.

MRS. BENNETT

This isn't on the beach.

MAXIMO

True. But here you have more privacy, a ceiling fan and a fancy stereo. You know Lee Majors? This is his favorite cabana. Some say he calls it - the Six Million Pesos cabana.

MR. BENNETT

Alright. You convinced me. We'll take it for the week.

MAXIMO

Great. You will have a fantastic time here. If there's anything else you need, just let me know.

MRS. BENNETT

Actually, we'd love some grass.

MAXIMO

No problem. Do you mean like from the golf course or front lawn or--

MR. BENNETT

No. She meant marijuana. Weed. Cannabis. Comprende?

MAXIMO

Oh. I see. So... drugs? You're asking me to get you drugs?

MR. BENNETT

We have five days without the kiddos and we're ready to zone out. So, are you gonna help us? Or should we just ask Hector to do it?

Suddenly, Hector appears out of nowhere.

HECTOR THE PROTECTOR

Need me?

MR. BENNETT

Do we, Maximo?

MAXIMO

Uhm... no. That just might not be as easy to come by as tacos or... cabanas. Do you need these... medicinal aids today?

MR. BENNETT

We can hold off for one night.

MAXIMO

Great! Shouldn't be a problem.

INT. LAS PERLAS - LAUNDRY ROOM - DAY

Memo is shoving loads and loads of sheets into the wash.

MAXIMO

Memo, I've got a very big problem!
(looks around)
Wow, it's terrible down here.

Memo gives him a look like, "I told you so."

MAXIMO (CONT'D)

How do I get some "marijuana?" This wealthy couple just asked me for it. It was either say yes or disappoint Diane and let Hector win. Now they're depending on me.

MEMO

You already met Diane?

LUPE (O.C.)

You're not going to find any weed down here. Anything I find - I smoke. That's just the rules...

They turn around to see Lupe, sitting in the corner. She points to a handmade sign - "ANYTHING I FIND - I SMOKE."

LUPE (CONT'D)

But you can get some at Palladium tonight when your shift's over. Once you're inside, just tell Tony I sent you.

MAXIMO

You want me to go to Palladium? The hottest club in Acapulco? How am I going to get in there?

LUPE

Not looking like that...

Lupe goes to a rack of dry cleaning and grabs some items.

EXT. PALLADIUM CLUB - NIGHT.

Maximo and Memo roll up to the door dressed like they just stepped out of *Miami Vice*. This is clearly where the 1% parties: Bentleys, Bugattis, etc are parked out front, while a line of hopefuls wait to get in.

MEMO

Are you sure about this?

MAXIMO

Not at all! But you wanted to work at Las Perlas, didn't you? Maybe this is what it means to work at Las Perlas!

MEMO

I didn't know it meant wearing other people's stolen clothes while waiting outside a club we'll never get into all so we could meet a dangerous drug lord!

MAXIMO

Hey, it beats all those years we stared at the stars through that hole in my roof, wishing we had more exciting lives, doesn't it?

MEMO

I'll tell you after we get out of jail and/or the hospital.

They get to the velvet rope. Random yet well-dressed civilians yell at the GIANT DOORMAN, but he keeps everyone away. But Maximo is determined and walks right up.

MAXIMO

Hi, how are you? So, anyway, kind of a long story. But--

DOORMAN

No.

MAXIMO

*-- we're not actually here to party. We're just here to...
(whispering)
... procure drugs. We're cool.*

The doorman just stares at them.

MEMO

(pleading)

Please, sir! I really, really need those drugs! I swear - we'll only be in there a couple minutes. We're over eighteen if that's the problem! Here! You can even hold my I.D.!

Memo fumbles to pull his identification out of his wallet. The doorman notices Memo's Las Perlas I.D. He's impressed.

DOORMAN

You work at Las Perlas?

(off their nod)

Next time lead with that.

The doorman lets them by. Surprised, Maximo and Memo walk past all the riff-raff and right into the club.

MEMO

I think that might be the greatest thing that ever happened to me.

INT. CLUB PALLADIUM - CONTINUOUS

Maximo takes in the gorgeous people dancing in their glitter, gold lamé and high style. People wearing sunglasses indoors in a time before it became declass  . Memo is in total awe.

MEMO

Wow! People really do wear sunglasses at night!

MAXIMO

(to a Waiter)

Do you know where we can find Tony?

The waiter points to a table with some BIG, BULKY, SCARY LOOKING DUDES.

MEMO

Yep. That's pretty much exactly what I was expecting...

Maximo gulps as they head over to the table.

MAXIMO

Uh, excuse me. Sirs?

The group looks up at Maximo - not in the mood.

MAXIMO (CONT'D)

I was wondering if you could tell me which one of you is Tony?

The men all look... at a WOMAN in her mid-70's sitting with them. (The woman was hidden by the men's bulk...)

TONI

I'm Toni.

TONI WALTERS is a rocking, cool, American lady (think "Disco Sally" from Studio 54 fame).

MEMO

You're Tony?

Toni nods. A wave of relief washes over Maximo and Memo.

MAXIMO

And here we thought Tony was a guy!

TONI

Well I'm Toni with an "I"!

MEMO

That's great. And so nice that the drug trade is finally allowing women in positions of power.

The table just stares at them.

TONI

Can I help you boys with something?

MAXIMO

Very much so. Yes. Lupe sent us. She said you could perhaps give us some of your, um, herbs.

TONI

You want pot? That's it? Sure, kid! Anything for Lupe!

She pulls a baggy with some joints in it from her cleavage and throws it on the table.

MAXIMO

Thank you so much, Miss Toni!

Maximo grabs for the baggy, but Toni puts her hand over his before he can take it.

TONI

There's just one thing you're gonna have to do first.

Maximo and Memo exchange a look. Uh oh...

TONI (CONT'D)
I never give anyone my stash until
they drink with me!

The burly guys line up a row of shots. A WAITER instantly appears and pours tequila shots. Toni grabs a shot. Hands two to Maximo and Memo. There's clearly only one way out of this.

TONI (CONT'D)
To Lupe!

EVERYONE
To Lupe!

They all do the shot. Toni instantly lines up another round.

TONI
Again!

The tequila continues flowing. As they grab another shot...

MEMO
How do you know Lupe?

TONI
(cheerily)
I have no idea!

They all down the second drink. CUT TO:

A SERIES OF QUICK SHOTS:

- Maximo and Memo continue drinking with the table.
- Memo breakdances on the dance floor. The crowd loves it.
- Maximo gets held upside down as a WAITRESS pours a shot in his mouth. She then closes his mouth and shakes his head.
- Memo laughs it up at the table with all the burly guys.
- Drunk Maximo slow dances in the middle of the dance floor with Toni. His head rests on her shoulder.

INT. GALLARDO APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's dark. A very drunk Maximo nervously tip-toes through the living room. Suddenly, A LIGHT GOES ON. It's Nora, still awake. Maximo jumps - startled.

NORA
*There you are! It's so late. I've
been praying to Saint Anthony...*

He looks over to see the statue Nora has been praying to.
It's a lucha libre figure. This woman really can't see well.

MAXIMO

Sorry. I had to work late.

OLDER MAXIMO (V.O.)

Technically, that was true.

NORA

On day one? Are you drunk?

MAXIMO

*No, no, no, no. Just a teeny bit
 tipsy. My new boss insisted we have
 one celebratory drink...*

NORA

Why's it smell like skunk in here?

MAXIMO

*Probably a... sewage back-up. Go to
 bed, mom. I love you.*

INT. GALLARDO APARTMENT - BEDROOM -- NIGHT.

Maximo sits on a tiny bed against a wall. He quickly hides
 the weed under a pillow. He lays down, staring up, pensive.

SARA (O.C.)

Do you have weed?

MAXIMO

No!

(then; disturbed)

*How do you know what weed smells
 like?*

We PULL BACK to reveal they speak to each other through a
 HOLE IN THE WALL existing between their two bedrooms.

SARA

*I go to an all girls Catholic
 school. That was basically week one.*

MAXIMO

*Well, it's not! And... don't say
 anything to Mom about it, okay?!*

Maximo's head hits the pillow. He's instantly asleep.

INT. GALLARDO APARTMENT - BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

THE ALARM BUZZES. 6AM. Maximo jolts up - super hungover.

EXT. LAS PERLAS - POOL AREA - MORNING.

Maximo, in sunglasses and with a splitting headache, reluctantly hands the drugs to the Bennetts.

MR. BENNETT

Thank you, Maximo.

MAXIMO

My... pleasure.

Mrs. Bennett CLOSES the cabana. Maximo stands - all alone.

EXT. LAS BRISAS RESORT - BEACH AREA - DAY

Maximo walks the beach, in deep thought.

OLDER MAXIMO (V.O.)

I felt terrible, Hugo. And not just cause of my hangover. I was deeply ashamed about what I had done. Getting drunk. Obtaining drugs. Lying to my mom for maybe the first time in my entire life. I took a walk on the beach to do some soul-searching and have a little heart-to-heart with the ol' man.

Maximo pulls out the *escapulario* around his neck.

MAXIMO

(aloud; to himself)

Hi, Dad. Me again. So, I got the job I wanted. I'm just... not sure I want it anymore. There's lots of people here doing things that make me uncomfortable and that Mom would never approve of. I know you can't talk. But now would be a great time for you to give me some sort of sign to let me know if I should stay at this job or not. Maybe have a seagull poop on me if you want me to quit. Or not poop on me if--

DON PABLO (O.C.)

Maximo?

Maximo turns to see Don Pablo behind him.

DON PABLO (CONT'D)

Everything all right?

MAXIMO

Yeah. I'm just... not sure I feel comfortable working here. I think I had this idea in my head of what it'd be like working at a place like this. But it's... not that.

DON PABLO

I see.

MAXIMO

How have you done it? I mean, the things you must have seen and been a part of here over the years.

Don Pablo thinks about this for a long beat. Then:

DON PABLO

It's been my greatest honor working at this resort. It gave me a life. Enough money so my family could leave Arenal Street and never go hungry again. Exposure to people I never would have met any other way. But my endless devotion to this place also cost me three marriages. Relationships with two of my children. Yet, somehow, I still feel lucky every day I'm here.

MAXIMO

Sounds like you've given up a lot to work at Las Perlas.

DON PABLO

Every dream has its price. I was willing to risk it. Are you?

Maximo stares out at the ocean, unsure.

EXT. LAS PERLAS - POOL AREA - LATE AFTERNOON

Maximo heads toward the cabana where Diane is socializing with the Bennetts...

MAXIMO

(to himself; practicing)

Thank you so much for this incredible opportunity, Ms. Davies. It really is a dream come true to work here. But I just don't think I can--

The Bennetts spot Maximo. They are in a GREAT mood.

MRS. BENNETT
There he is - Maximo the Just Maximo!

MR. BENNETT
I think I'm starting to like the name!

The Bennetts both laugh. They are clearly high.

MAXIMO
Good afternoon, Mr and Mrs. Bennett. If you don't mind, I think I'd like to talk with Ms. Davies.

DIANE
You... want to talk to me?

MR. BENNETT
Diane, this guy's amazing!

MRS. BENNETT
You're lucky to have him -- so hard working and committed. A real find!

Mrs. Bennett pulls out TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS.

MRS. BENNETT (CONT'D)
A little something... from us.

MAXIMO
(stunned)
Two hundred dollars?

MR. BENNETT
You earned it, my man.

DIANE
Maximo, did you have something you wanted to say to me?

OLDER MAXIMO (V.O.)
This was *the* deciding moment in my life. The money or my principles? Back to the bus depot or into the great unknown? My mother's derision or my family's entire financial future?

He looks at Diane. And then at the money. And then back at Diane again. He goes to open his mouth and we SMASH CUT TO:

INT. GALLARDO APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Maximo holding up a new pair of eye-glasses.

MAXIMO

Surprise!

He hands the glasses to a stunned Nora. She tries them on.

MAXIMO (CONT'D)

What do you think?

NORA

I can see again! Maximo - you're so handsome! And Sara... what happened to your skin?!

Sara glares at Maximo. This is all his fault.

NORA (CONT'D)

*Maximo, these are too expensive.
How did you get these?*

MAXIMO

*I told you I could make good money
at this job!*

SARA

Yeah - blood money.

MAXIMO

But these glasses are just a band-aid. We still need to get you to a proper eye-doctor.

NORA

Maximo, I can really look into your eyes now. So be honest with me. Did you do anything that I would not be proud of to earn this money?

MAXIMO

Mom, you know I can not lie to you.

A beat. Maximo looks directly at Nora. Then:

MAXIMO (CONT'D)

Not a single thing.

INT. MAXIMO'S MANSION - LIBRARY - DAY

Older Maximo and Hugo sit in Maximo's impressive library.

OLDER MAXIMO

*So, that's how my whole "journey"
began. Got enough for your report?*

HUGO

I don't know. Is the moral - "drugs pay and always lie to your mother?"

OLDER MAXIMO

You want a "moral", too? Look, if you need me to tie it up in a pretty little bow, the moral is - not everything's so black and white. And sometimes we do what we have to do for the greater good...

Hugo takes that in for a beat. Then:

OLDER MAXIMO (CONT'D)

I'm giving you gold here. Why aren't you writing this down?!

Hugo opens his backpack to get out a pen and paper. Older Maximo can't help but notice that HUGO'S BACKPACK IS FULL OF CLOTHES AND BATHROOM SUPPLIES.

OLDER MAXIMO (CONT'D)

What's all that? I thought you were only staying the afternoon?

HUGO

(zipping up bag)

I am! It's just... I thought maybe we'd go for a swim later...

Hugo knows he's been caught, but he isn't ready to tell the real truth to Older Maximo just yet. Maximo lets it go...

HUGO (CONT'D)

But that can't be it! I want to hear more! What happened with Julia? And Abuelita's eye problems? And your job now that you're clearly on Diane's good side.

Maximo smiles, he's actually happy to see his tale affected Hugo. He then casually walks over to his bookshelf, where he pulls out a very old, well-worn copy of *Jane Eyre*.

OLDER MAXIMO

Hugo, my boy, life often takes... unexpected turns.

INT. LAS PERLAS - STAFF LOUNGE - NIGHT

Julia is reading a book. Maximo approaches.

MAXIMO

I was thinking maybe I could read one of your books. It might take a while. Since the only books I've ever read are old *TV Guides*. But...

JULIA

(playful/judge-y)

I don't know. I'm not sure how I feel giving such prized possessions to a... pharmaceutical salesman.

MAXIMO

You heard about that? Listen--

JULIA

I know. You were only trying to make the guests happy. I don't even want to tell you what someone asked me to do the first time I delivered extra towels to their room.

MAXIMO

(yes, he can)

I... can't imagine.

JULIA

Just know - it's a slippery slope. And there are ways to stay above it.

MAXIMO

Well, I would like to. Do that. Stay above it, I mean. Way above.
(then; quoting)
"Better to be late Maximo Gallardo than the late Maximo Gallardo." I don't know why I said that. That's an old quote of my father's...

JULIA

Sounds like a smart man.

Julia smiles and hands over the book she's reading -- it's *Jane Eyre*, the same exact edition Older Maximo has at home.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Why don't you start with this one. If you like it, maybe we could start a book club or something?

MAXIMO

You and me? That sounds... nice.

Julia smiles. Maximo senses a tiny window of opportunity.

EXT. LAS PERLAS - VALET AREA - NIGHT

Maximo finds Memo and puts his arm around his good pal.

MAXIMO

Memo - working here - it's gonna be good for us, right?

MEMO

I mean, I coughed up an entire ball of drier lint earlier. But... sure?

MAXIMO

It will be. 'Cause one day I'm gonna buy one of those mansions in the hills. And you're gonna buy the one next to me. And me, you, my mom, Sara, your family, whatever cousin you decide on and Julia are all going to live happily ever after.

MEMO

It's possible. Maybe not the "Julia" part. But the rest...

MAXIMO

Why would you say that? 'Cause of Chad? Who's this "Chad," anyway?

ANGLE ON CHAD, who waits in the valet area as a black stretch LIMOUSINE pulls up. He turns, calling out--

CHAD

Mom! The car is here!

After a second... out walks Diane Davies. She hugs Chad.

MEMO

Did he just call Diane, "mom?"

MAXIMO

If he did, that would mean he's the heir to the hottest resort in all of Mexico. And that's no bueno.

MEMO

Shhh! We're not supposed to speak Spanish at the hotel. Remember?

And off Maximo's look of disbelief, we...

CUT TO BLACK:

END OF EPISODE