

GORDITA CHRONICLES

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. DOMINICAN REPUBLIC - OUR LADY OF GRACE - DAY 1

Clouds cover the sun as an afternoon shower rolls in. PAN DOWN TO the entrance of a posh, mission-style CATHOLIC PRIVATE GIRL'S SCHOOL. PUSH INTO:

2 INT. OUR LADY OF GRACE - CLASSROOM - DAY 2

At the front of the class, SISTER OFELIA points to a list of ENGLISH WORDS on the board labeled: "VOCABULARY, THE LETTER 'H'": HIDEOUS, HINDRANCE, HOMESICK, etc.

CHYRON: SANTO DOMINGO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, 1985

SISTER OFELIA
Repeat after me: Hideous.

CLASS
Hideous.

SISTER OFELIA
Hindrance.

CLASS
Hindrance.

SISTER OFELIA
Homesick.

CLASS
Homesick.

TALL GIRL
¿Y que quiere decir eso?

SISTER OFELIA
This is English class, no Spanish!

TALL GIRL
What is the meaning of 'homesick'?

CUCU (O.S.)
Homesick...

The class turns to see **CARLOTA "CUCU" CASTELLI (12)** -- a chubby, biracial, willful Dominican girl with delusions of grandeur. She enters with the MOTHER SUPERIOR.

CUCU (CONT'D)
(perfect pronunciation)
It's when your home is sick.
(MORE)

CUCU (CONT'D)

Like when your *papi* drinks too much
Presidente and *mami* gets mad or
 when your sister throws a tantrum
 because she thinks one of her eyes
 is bigger than the other. The home
 feels sick. Home...Sick.

PIGTAILS GIRL

(aside to a friend)

Cucu knows everything.

Cucu radiates wisdom as she moves to the head of the class.
 ADULT CUCU, our clever and droll narrator, joins in --

ADULT CUCU (V.O.)

That little know-it-all was me,
 Cucu Castelli, three decades ago.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

(to the class)

Niñas, today is Cucu's last day.
 It's time to say *adios* to our
 beloved *gordita*.

ADULT CUCU (V.O.)

Gordita means little chubby. And in
 my homeland, it's a term of
 endearment.

TALL GIRL

Don't leave us, Cucu. We need you.

PIGTAILS GIRL

Who will stop the Deacon from
 drinking the communion wine?

TALL GIRL (CONT'D)

Who will play *La Virgen* on
 our patron's saint's day?

The Girls are sad. Even Sister Ofelia is a little teary-eyed.

MOTHER SUPERIOR

¡Basta! We are losing Cucu --
 (eyes crucifix on wall)
 -- not *Jesus*. (pronounced Hey-sus).

CUCU

I must spread my wings and fly
 away, first class, on Starboard
 Air. My *papi* was transferred to
 Miami to promote Santo Domingo to
turistas americanos.

(a beat)

It's okay. We can hug goodbye.

As the girls pile on a group bear hug, we PUSH IN on Cucu's
 goofy, solemn mug, getting buried in all the hugs.

ADULT CUCU (V.O.)

Back then, I was the queen bee. But my life was about to take a turn, and I would soon learn the real definition of 'homesick'.

As the girls release Cucu from their embrace --

CUCU

Chicas, you all have an invitation to visit me in Miami. And we can go to Disney World together!

The girls CLAP and CHEER! There's hope! Pigtales Girl marches up to Cucu and places a PAPER CROWN on her head.

PIGTAILS GIRL

¡Viva Queen Cucu!

Through the window, we see the clouds part. A ray of sunlight illuminates Cucu's chubby face, making her look regal.

CUCU

I promise to be the most beloved Dominican in all of Miami, the most beautiful city in the world.

OFF Cucu, grinning wide.

HARD CUT TO:

3

EXT. HOWARD JOHNSON'S MOTOR LODGE - DAY

3

With the paper crown still on her head, Cucu's smile dissolves into a frown --

CUCU

This is not the most beautiful city in the world. It's hideous, h-i-d-e-o-u-s, hideous.

REVERSE to REVEAL Cucu standing on a PIER across from a Howard Johnson's, flanked by dilapidated buildings, fast food restaurants, liquor stores and pawn shops. A TAXI drives off.

PULL BACK to INCLUDE her entire family:

DR. VÍCTOR CASTELLI (41) -- her preachy, worldly, light-skinned, Dominican-Italian dad;

ADELA CASTELLI-TORRES (37) -- her slender, dark-skinned, brash, and vivacious Dominican mom;

EMILIA CASTELLI (14) -- Cucu's gorgeous and slim older sister, a wallflower verging on rebel.

With their 80s Samsonite luggage, they take in their surroundings. They all look delighted, except Cucu.

CUCU (CONT'D)

Papi, our hotel looks like a giant fruit stand.

VÍCTOR

(Euro-Latino accent)

Don't you like fruit?

CUCU

Yes. I also like dancing, but I don't want to live in a disco.

VÍCTOR

Niñas, did you know that Mr. Howard Johnson invented the hotel-restaurant franchise model and --

ADELA

(unimpressed; thick accent)

-- AND we will only be staying here a few days. Very soon we will find our dream home, in the "suburbs", which means sidewalks, lamp posts, and green lions --

The girls look confused. *Green lions?*

VÍCTOR

You mean, lawns, Adela. Green lawns.

ADELA

That is what I said.

(distracted)

What is that?

Adela spots a milk carton on the ground and picks it up. She sees a photo of a missing child.

ADELA (CONT'D)

They put photos of missing children on their *leche*?! The Americans think of everything.

VÍCTOR

This country is incredible! A modern-day *Roma*...

As Víctor continues to philosophize, Emilia gawks at her surroundings: RETIREES in tacky loungewear, HOMELESS in cut off jeans and LADY JOGGERS in headbands and leg-warmers.

EMILIA

Look at how everyone dresses... The joggers wear bands of fabric around their legs? So modern.

CUCU

Too bad you can't jog with your big *tetas*, you'd knock yourself out.

EMILIA

You're just jealous, *Boobidoo*.

CUCU

Boobidoo? What is *Boobidoo*?

EMILIA

It's when your belly sticks out farther than your boobies do.

Cucu is angry and hurt. Adela steps in --

ADELA

¡Niñas, basta! Or you'll both end up on a box of *leche*.

Just then, an ELDERLY COUPLE passes and glares at the family -

OLD MAN

Just what we need, more Cuban refugees.

CUCU

(with pride)

We're from the Dominican Republic, not Cuba. Two different countries separated by a sea, and you know, Haiti?

INSERT: Animated MAP showing Cuba and the Dominican Republic with Haiti between them.

Víctor sees an opportunity, pulls out a travel brochure --

VÍCTOR

If you'd like to see for yourself, Starboard Air can get you to the Dominican capital in under two-hours and --

The couple walks away. Cucu scowls.

CUCU

I don't like it here, *papi*. When can we go back to Santo Domingo?

ADELA

Go back?! You know how many
Dominicans would love to switch
places with you?

CUCU

How many?

MARTI

I can't think of any.

ADELA

(taken aback)

My cousin María who wants her nose
fixed; boys with baseball dreams;
los criminales.

Emilia eyes Cucu's half-cocked paper crown, with sarcasm --

EMILIA

I think you need to forget your
Dominican kingdom and "rule" this
new land instead, Queen Cucu.

Cucu saddens. Víctor picks up on Cucu's unease.

VÍCTOR

There is an American saying, "Leap
and the net will appear." Your
mother and I wanted a better life,
and we took a huge leap.

CUCU

Oh really? You want me to leap,
too? Okay, *papi*, I'll leap.

Cucu runs off the pier and cannonballs into the sea. SPLASH!!

ERNESTO

CUCU!

ADELA

NOOOOOOOO!

As Cucu disappears beneath the surface, her paper crown is
all that remains, floating in the water.

ADULT CUCU (V.O.)

I didn't really jump. I was jet-
lagged, not insane.

We REWIND Cucu's jump into the ocean and return to a dry Cucu
standing on the pier. She spots a BURGER KING.

CUCU

If we have to stay here, can we at
least go meet the King of the
Burger?

(aside; to her parents)

Do you think we're dressed okay?

Off Víctor's smile --

4 INT. BURGER KING - LATER

4

Cucu and family chow down on Whoppers, cokes and fries.

ADULT CUCU (V.O.)

My whopper combo didn't cure my homesickness. But at least I'd found something to love about my new city: Flame. Broiled. Meat.

CUCU (FULL MOUTH)

This. Is. Delicious.

EMILIA

I don't like ground up cow parts, I want *carne guisada*.

CUCU

If you don't like your burger, I'll eat it.

Cucu reaches for Emilia's burger. Emilia grabs her hand. They lock eyes and Cucu lets go, defeated.

VÍCTOR

Niñas, did you know Burger King is an international chain started right here in Florida? In fact...

We fade out Víctor as the V.O. takes over...

ADULT CUCU (V.O.)

So, 1980's Miami may not have been the most beautiful city in the world...

Under Adult Cucu's V.O., Cucu spots a cardboard "Burger King crown." She swaps her home-made crown for the upgrade.

ADULT CUCU (V.O.)

But hey, it was only my first day in America, and I already got a new crown.

Off a smiling, crowned Cucu, the TITLE CARD flies in:

GORDITA CHRONICLES

FADE IN:

5 EXT./INT. MIAMI PALMS JUNIOR HIGH - MORNING

5

Dozens of PARENTS drop off 7TH, 8TH and 9TH GRADERS on a sunny Monday morning. Cucu and Emilia emerge from a rental car and wave goodbye to Adela.

ADULT CUCU (V.O.)
Miami Palms Junior High was nothing
like the elite girls school I left
behind...

The loud TRUMPETS of Gloria Estefan's *Conga* startle Cucu as she approaches the school entrance and sees:

A GRUFF CUBAN BOY blasting *Conga* from a giant boom box;
TEENAGE LATINAS in skin-tight designer jeans and HEELS; WHITE
ROCKER KIDS smoking cigarettes; A BLACK TEEN COUPLE
breathlessly making out.

ADULT CUCU (V.O.)
The girls dressed like hookers, the
boys were out of control, and there
wasn't a nun in sight to spank us.

Cucu looks miserable, but Emilia is all smiles. Like many of the girls, she's got the Madonna-look, including lace gloves.

EMILIA
Finally... No more uniforms. Like
Madonna, I can "express myself."

Emilia and Cucu pass a few boys flanking the entrance. ROCKER KID calls out to Emilia --

ROCKER KID
Yeah baby! I like that bounce!

CUCU
Thank you.

Cucu gives a booty bounce, with *extra flair*. The boys laugh.

EMILIA
They're not talking to you.
(under her breath)
Boobidoo.

LATIN BOY
¡Oye mami! ¡Que rica tu esta'!

Emilia's surprised by the cat calls. A gloved hand extends in front of her. It's CHAD, 15, a cute Michael Jackson wanna-be.

CHAD
Hi, I'm Chad. I'm, um, on the, um,
school's *welcoming committee*. Can I
escort you to homeroom?

Emilia nods timidly. Chad offers up his arm. Emilia takes it without looking back, leaving a stunned Cucu behind.

CUCU
Welcoming committee?

Cucu looks about, taps LONG-HAIRED ROCKER on the shoulder.

CUCU (CONT'D)
Are you my escort?

LONG-HAIRED ROCKER
Back off, FAT SO!

The words echo in Cucu's ears -- FAT. SO.

CUCU
My name is not fat-so. It's Cucu.

Long-Haired Rocker guffaws. LATIN BOY chimes in --

LATIN BOY
It means *gordita*, *GORDITA*!

Cucu is completely crushed. She ambles by the boys, deflated.

6 INT. SEDAN - DAY

6

After-school, Cucu sulks in the back as Adela drives. Emilia changes the radio station, landing on a Gloria Estefan tune.

CUCU
Mami, did you know that *gordita* is
an insult here?

ADELA
What are you talking about?
(distracted by traffic)
Did you see that?!

Adela gestures to a truck stopping at a four-way stop sign.
The driver politely gestures for Adela to go forward --

ADELA (CONT'D)
The drivers here are so polite.
(then)
Cucu, Boys love plump girls with
nice big legs and hips to grab.

CUCU
Not in our new school. They like
girls that look like boys. Like
Emilia.

EMILIA
Shut up, Boobidoo!

CUCU
Don't call me that!

Adela abruptly stops the car in the middle of the street. A driver HONKS and flips Adela the bird.

CUCU (CONT'D)
(re: middle finger)
I hope that means something
different in this country.

Adela turns back and realizes she missed the stop sign.

ADELA
Look what you girls made me do! No
more talking! Cucu, once the boys
get to know you, they will love
you.

ADULT CUCU (V.O.)
That's when I realized, *mami* was
right. They only called me *gordita*
because they didn't know me yet.
Once they did, I'd be *la reina* once
again. And yes, I was naive. But I
wasn't the only one...

7

INT. MIAMI PALMS JUNIOR HIGH - CAFETERIA - NEXT DAY

7

TIGHT on Emilia, with Chad, who leans on the plexiglass that separates the kids from the steaming trays of food --

CHAD
They mix liver into the meatloaf,
so bring a sandwich on Wednesdays.

EMILIA
Good to know. Thanks.

CHAD
We have P.E. after lunch. Tell the
coach you have your period and you
can sit out.

EMILIA
What is P.E.?

CHAD
A waste of forty minutes.
(off Emilia's confusion)
P.E. stands for... Pain and
Exhaustion.
(then)
I have a fake doctor's note for a
twisted ankle, so we can hang
instead...

8 EXT. MIAMI PALMS JUNIOR HIGH - FIELD - DAY

8

Emilia and Chad watch as a group of 7th and 8th GRADERS, including Cucu, run laps. Cucu is the slowest runner. She does a double-take when she spots Emilia on the side-lines.

CUCU

Hey! Why aren't you running? Is it because you're worried about your --

Cucu makes a "big floppy boobs" gesture.

EMILIA

Shut up!
(then, to Chad)
I should be running with them.

CHAD

I have a better idea...

Chad takes Emilia's hand and leads her towards --

9 EXT. MIAMI PALMS JUNIOR HIGH - BLEACHERS - MOMENTS LATER

9

As Emilia and Chad stroll under the bleachers --

CHAD

...So, are all Dominican girls as beautiful as you?

Emilia bashfully looks down. He moves in for a kiss.

About fifty yards away, Cucu stops to catch her breath. Then, under the bleachers, she spots: Emilia making out with Chad. Her jaw drops.

CUCU (PRE-LAP)

What would the nuns think?!

10 INT. MIAMI PALMS JUNIOR HIGH - HALLWAY - DAY

10

After school, Cucu, ranting, walks beside a blissful Emilia.

CUCU

It's a *pecado!* You kissed a boy before marriage!

EMILIA

Do not tell *mami*... Did you hear me?!

CUCU (CONT'D)

We went to an all girls school. I mean, yes, sister Ofelia had a mustache and a crew cut, but --

CUCU (CONT'D)

-- how do you even know about boys?
You learned Biology from nuns and
still got a C. Tell me right now:
Where's the *vas deferens*?

EMILIA

If you tell *mami*, I will make sure
the whole school calls you
Boobidoo.

CUCU

If I were you, I'd pray at least
twenty *Ave Marias*' and hope you
don't end up in hell.

Emilia ignores her sister --

CUCU (CONT'D)

Fine. Then, just tell me, what does
his tongue taste like?

The camera pulls out to reveal Emilia walking hand in hand
with Chad -- he's been there the whole time.

CHAD

I'd actually like to know that one.

Then something catches Cucu's eye. A SIGN: DANCE COMMITTEE
SEEKS VOLUNTEERS FOR "UNDER THE SEA" DANCE. APPLY INSIDE."

CUCU

Under the Sea dance? They have to
let me help! I'm from the Caribbean
-- I know what's under the sea!
Kelp. Lots of kelp. And jellyfish.

EMILIA

(not listening)
Um hum.

CUCU

If I get on that committee, my
classmates will see that I am the
best thing to come out of the
Dominican Republic since *dulce de
leche* and --

As Cucu speaks, she looks back at her sister who's once again
making out with Chad. Cucu shrugs and pushes inside --

Cucu tiptoes in. The six COMMITTEE MEMBERS look down from the
stage at the volunteers, like a pre-teen Congressional panel.

YOSHY (O.S.)

I came on the Mariel boat-lift, so
I have been over and under the sea.

YOSMEL "YOSHY" HERNÁNDEZ (12) -- a rail thin, earnest and pragmatic Cuban refugee boy with a slight accent -- pleads his case.

YOSHY (CONT'D)

My step-father is a fisherman. I
can borrow his equipment for
decorations and turn the gym into a
mini Miami River...

(re-thinks)

Minus the sewage... and dead bodies.

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Safi, what do you think?

Everyone turns to **SAFI**, the committee chair, 13, Cuban-American, a pretty, 13-year-old *Tracy Flick* who rules the dance committee like a teenage-mobster.

SAFI

Yoshy, you're in. But the gym
better only look like the river,
not smell like it.

A fascinated Cucu claps for Yoshy. He turns and smiles at her. An instant connection.

SAFI (CONT'D)

Ashley Bell, start talking.

ASHLEY BELL (13) -- a needy, go-getter American girl desperate to fit in -- steps up enthusiastically --

ASHLEY

I can lead a group dance. I know
every move to Thriller.

(demonstrates each one)

And the Electric Slide? YMCA? I
even know the chicken dance!

As Ashley attempts to demonstrate, Safi is unimpressed.

SAFI

NEXT!

Off the committee's scoffs, Ashley slinks away, defeated. The Committee Members turn to Cucu, the only one left.

SAFI (CONT'D)

New girl, any ideas?

CUCU

Oh, yes -- so... many... ideas.

Cucu grows anxious. Then Gruff Cuban Guy passes by the room blasting Conga from his boom box. Cucu, suddenly inspired:

CUCU (CONT'D)

I can... I can get the one and only Gloria Estefan to perform at the dance.

SAFI

(dismissively)

Yeah, right. They couldn't even get her for 'We Are the World.'

CUCU

Yes, but -- she's my -- ah -- aunt.

The committee is bowled over. Even Ashley's impressed.

SAFI

Wow, okay. New girl, you're in! But if you don't deliver, the entire committee will do the chicken dance... on your face.

The meeting ends. An elated Yoshy rushes to Cucu's side.

YOSHY

I LOVE Gloria. And I see a resemblance, if I squint and step back a little bit... Well, maybe a little bit more.

(steps back, then)

I can't believe she's your aunt!

CUCU

Me neither.

(off his confusion)

But she is -- I swear!

YOSHY

Whatever you need, I'm at your service. Except Sunday evening -- that's when *abuela* and I dance *boleros* on the rooftop. We move as one.

OFF Cucu, grinning on the outside, terrified on the inside.

12

INT. HOWARD JOHNSON'S MOTOR LODGE - BATHROOM/BEDROOM - NIGHT

Adela is on her hands and knees washing clothes in the bathtub while Víctor shaves in front of the mirror.

VÍCTOR

Do you know how fortunate we are to have Starboard Air paying for these accommodations?

ADELA

(unimpressed)

I am washing your underwear in a motel bathtub. We will not be truly American until we can wash our underwear in our own bathtub in our own home --

VÍCTOR

Adela, mi amor. We don't want to live beyond our means.

As she takes out her frustration on a pair of tighty whities, we see that the bathroom door is open and Cucu is observing from afar as she eats a bag of Cheetos. Just then, Emilia enters the hotel room, in a huff --

EMILIA (O.S.)

I can't believe you!

CUCU

(re: Cheetos)

I saved you some crumbs. And you can lick my fingers?

Cucu displays her orange fingertips, coated in Cheeto powder.

EMILIA

The stamp on your Dominican passport isn't dry yet and you're already pretending to be Cuban and related to Gloria Estefan?!

CUCU

Gloria lives in Miami. I just need to find a way to reach her. How could she say no to me?

ADELA (O.S.)

Who is going to say 'no' to my daughter?

Adela and Víctor emerge from the bathroom. Cucu clams up.

EMILIA

Crazy Cucu told the kids at school that she could get her aunt, Gloria Estefan, to sing at the dance!

ADELA

An American high school dance? Like in the movie Grease? I have always dreamed of a dance like that.

EMILIA

Mami!

ADELA

Cucu, is this true?

Cucu nods sheepishly.

ADELA (CONT'D)

We are so proud of you!

Cucu exhales with relief while Emilia gawks at her parents.

EMILIA

She lied and you're happy?!

VÍCTOR

You're right, Emilia. Lying is bad. Americans value honesty. Their heroes are honest: George Washington, Honest Abe, Superman.

ADELA

Yes, yes, lying -- not good. But like *papí* and me, Cucu made a leap. She is now a bold American.

VÍCTOR

Cucu, would you like my help? We can write Ms. Estefan and her Machine of Sound an invitation to the dance.

CUCU

Yes, *papí*! Please.

Cucu grabs a pen and notebook. Víctor dictates --

VÍCTOR

'Impressionable students will gather in her name to celebrate Cuban culture through dance.'

CUCU

(as she writes)

And since I read in *The People Magazine* that guavas are your favorite food, we'll provide all the guava *pastelitos* you can eat!

Behind Cucu, Emilia pretends to smother herself with a pillow. Adela places an arm around Víctor and Cucu.

ADELA

Your father was right, our lives
are already improving. And
tomorrow...

(pointedly at Víctor)

We all go house shopping!

Víctor gives Adela a look -- she just trapped him.

13

EXT. MIAMI PALMS STREET - DAY (NEW DAY)

13

Freshly-cut lawns with Rain Bird sprinklers. Carefree WHITE
KIDS on Huffy bikes cruising down tree-lined streets.

ADELA (PRE-LAP)

We belong here.

14

INT. SEDAN - CONTINUOUS

14

Adela looks out at the sub-tropical, white, suburban
paradise, AKA MIAMI PALMS, as a doubtful Víctor drives.

VÍCTOR

...Where are the *merengues*? And
it's so quiet. I want to hear joy,
not sprinklers.

ADELA

Joy is the sound of a washing
machine.

From the backseat of the car, Cucu asks --

CUCU

Can I have a bike?

Adela turns to face her daughters with her own question --

ADELA

Niñas, what do you think of the
neighborhood?

EMILIA

It's like *sancocho* with no
seasoning.

CUCU

I love it here, *mami*.

ADELA

Cucu, you get a bike.

Cucu does a happy dance. Adela shifts focus to Emilia.

ADELA (CONT'D)

Emilia, do you still want purple velvet for your leggings?

EMILIA

You said it was a waste of money.

ADELA

It is a waste of money. Who pays full price for half pants?

(a bribe)

I'll buy you two yards of fabric.

EMILIA

I love it here, *mami*.

Adela, satisfied, turns to a defeated Víctor.

ADELA

Three against one.

Víctor half-smiles, irritated yet amused by his wife. They pull to a stop in front of a home with a "For Sale" sign.

15

INT. HOME FOR SALE - MOMENTS LATER

15

Big bathrooms. Big bedrooms. A wood-paneled living room with an open kitchen filled with state-of-the-art (for 1985) appliances. A housewife's dream.

VALERIE -- confident plus-sized realtor with plus-sized 80s hair -- shows the home to the Castellis.

VALERIE

The range, washing machine and dryer are all brand new.

ADELA

Did you hear that, Víctor?

VALERIE

There's also central air conditioning.

ADELA

(excitedly)

No more sleeping with frozen bags of *chícharos* on hot nights!

VÍCTOR

You know, the invention of central air is what drove the population boom here in the 1960s --

Adela nudges Víctor. *Please no more stories.* Adela is saved by -- BEEP BEEP. Víctor checks a square contraption clipped to his belt, aka a PAGER.

VÍCTOR (CONT'D)

Excuse me, I need to use a phone.

VALERIE

In the kitchen.

As Víctor steps away, Valerie, concerned, turns to Adela.

VALERIE (CONT'D)

Is your husband a physician?

ADELA

(not understanding)

No, he's a Catholic.

VALERIE

I meant... He has a pager, so what does he do for a living?

CUCU

He travels a lot. He gets beeps all the time. Sometimes, he even has to get on a plane after a beep.

ADULT CUCU (V.O.)

Back then, only doctors and drug dealers had pagers. And it was Miami in the eighties, so if he wasn't a doctor...

INSERT: Overlapping TV news clips of COCAINE BUSTS.

ADULT CUCU (V.O.)

You can only guess what the real estate agent concluded.

INSERT: Rapid shots of stereotypical LATINO DRUG DEALERS.

BACK TO SCENE: Valerie's eyes widen. After a few uncomfortable beats, she hesitantly asks --

VALERIE

Would you like to put in an offer?

ADELA

Yes. Ten percent under the asking price.

VALERIE

Come to my office Friday, I'll have the paperwork ready.

Valerie heads off. Adela, blown away, turns to her girls.

ADELA

Diantre. Look what just happened.
In America, you say what you want
and they give it to you.

(off Cucu's curious look)

Cucu, maybe the same will happen
with Gloria Estefan? The American
dream is happening for us.

Cucu smiles wide -- she's feeling her mom's optimistic vibe.
MATCH CUT CUCU'S SMILING FACE WITH:

16

EXT. MIAMI PALMS JUNIOR HIGH - CAFETERIA - DAY

16

GLORIA ESTEFAN'S FACE, ON A POSTER. PULL BACK TO FIND Cucu
and Yoshy putting up "Under the Sea" dance posters, featuring
Gloria Estefan, by the lunch line.

YOSHY

¡Está volaó!

(explains)

Your posters are fabulous. Love the
glitter.

(points)

And that bowtie? Totally glam.

CUCU

It's actually a fish? I'm trying to
stay on theme.

Emilia and Chad pass by with their lunch trays --

EMILIA

Hi Cucu.

(Cucu looks to Emilia)

My little sister spent all weekend
making those posters. She thinks
the dance will make her popular.

CHAD

(quietly, to Emilia)

What a dork.

CUCU

I'm a dork? You wear one glove.
What happened to the other one?

(sotto to Emilia)

I have a friend who's a boy, too.

YOSHY

You probably heard of me. I'm the one who wrote the article in the school paper about how they should allow Tic Tacs in the library. They're not really food.

Emilia groans and leads Chad away from Cucu. Cucu and Yoshy turn their attention back to the posters --

YOSHY (CONT'D)

(pointing)
Does that fish have a third eye?

CUCU

(confused; inspects)
Oh... That's a red bean. I was eating *moro* while drawing.

Cucu flicks the poster and the red bean flies off. Ashley, the girl rejected from the dance committee, approaches --

ASHLEY

You're putting your posters in the wrong places.

CUCU

Where would you put them?

ASHLEY

Where the surfer girls smoke.

Cucu and Yoshy exchange confused looks.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

If the surfer girls come to the dance, then the rockers will come. And if the rockers come, then the bubblegum girls come. And if the -- bubblegum girls come, well, everyone shows up... Including a bunch of guys who already graduated.

CUCU

What's a bubblegum girl?

Ashley points to a group of Latina girls in heels and skintight bubblegum jeans smacking wads of gum:

ASHLEY

Behold, the bubblegums. They think their lady *caca* smells like Bubblelicious... And the boys on that bench are BROS.

Angle on BROS -- cocky and macho Latino boys in tighter pants than the bubblegum girls.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

The cool Latin guys. Their favorite words are "bro" and "broder."

YOSHY

I could totally be a "bro".
(calls out)
Hey Bro!

The Bros ignore him. In no world is Yoshy a 'bro'.

CUCU

Of course you could.

Cucu and Ashley exchange a covert look. Then, we PAN to SURFERS, blondes with mushroom cuts and the ROCKERS, bandanas and chains.

ASHLEY

And then there's the surfers and the rockers. They hated each other til they discovered they both love the Beach Boys.

Cucu and Yoshy are in awe of Ashley's insightful logic.

CUCU

You're like a beautiful walking encyclopedia of American culture!

Ashley shrugs like it's no biggie, loving the attention.

ASHLEY

Come on, I'll show you where to put your posters.

As the threesome heads off --

ADULT CUCU (V.O.)

And just like that *dos* became *tres*.

17

EXT. MIAMI PALMS JUNIOR HIGH - GIRLS' BATHROOM - DAY

17

Cucu, Yoshy and Ashley tape a poster to the last stall.

YOSHY

I still can't believe Gloria is coming to our school. My cousin says don't meet your heroes, but he lost a finger feeding a gator so we don't trust his judgement anymore.

ASHLEY

It's gonna be so rad.

CUCU

Rad?

ASHLEY

It's like cool, but cooler.

CUCU

In the Dominican Republic, we say
bacano or *esta encendio*.

YOSHY

Wait, aren't you from Cuba?

CUCU

I'm Dominican.

YOSHY

I mean, Gloria is your aunt, so --

CUCU

(covers)

Yes! She's my aunt by -- ah --
marriage.

YOSHY

You're so lucky. No one in my
family knows anyone famous. Unless
you count my *tía* Isabel who went to
jail for saying Fidel needed a
haircut.

Cucu and Ashley exchange a look, and then crack up.

PRELAP: the BELL RINGS.

INT./EXT. MIAMI PALMS JUNIOR HIGH - HALLWAY - DAY

The school day's done. STUDENTS spill out of classrooms.
Emilia sees Chad with his TWO BUDDIES and approaches --

EMILIA

Hey, wanna walk me to my mom's car?

CHAD

Uh, I got football practice. But
we'll hang at the dance, alright?

Is he blowing her off? We're not sure and neither is Emilia.
She covers her disappointment with a forced, antsy grin. Chad
takes off just as Cucu joins Emilia. Nearby, Chad's buddies
talk loudly to each other, wanting to be overheard.

BUDDY #1
 (re: Emilia)
 I heard the *hot tamale* touched
 Chad's Oscar Meyer wiener.

BUDDY #2
 I heard she wouldn't let go of his
Der Wienerschnitzel.

They bust out laughing as they leer at Emilia, who doesn't quite follow, but Cucu does.

CUCU
 Emilia, you're the *hot tamale* and
 they're saying you touched Chad's --
 Cucu looks downward and Emilia quickly gets it.

EMILIA
 NO!
 Cucu opens her mouth to retaliate against the boys, but --

EMILIA (CONT'D)
 Don't say anything!
 Emilia holds back tears as the sisters speed walk toward the exit in silence. Then, once clear of their classmates --

CUCU
Now do you miss the nuns? Sister
 Ofelia would've choked him with her
 rosary.
 Emilia glares at Cucu. The sisters turn the corner and bump into Adela as she exits the Principal's Office.

CUCU (CONT'D)
Mami?

EMILIA
 Why aren't you waiting for us in
 the car?

ADELA
 I was talking to your principal.
 Your father and I are going to
 chaperone the dance.

MARTI
 WHAT?!
 That's rad. CUCU

ADELA
 (dreamy)
 It is going to be just like Grease.
 (MORE)

ADELA (CONT'D)

Maybe I should dress like a Pink Lady?

EMILIA

Please don't. I beg you.

The sound of KISSY NOISES distracts Adela. It's Chad's buddies. At the sight of an adult, they instantly stop.

ADELA

Emilia, are those skinny boys making that 'mua mua' noise at you?

EMILIA

Can we just go, please?

ADELA

You can not let boys disrespect --
ite tienes que dar a respetar!

ADULT CUCU (V.O.)

My sister would rather die than admit to my mom she was hurting.

Emilia holds back tears, about to fall apart.

PRELAP: Gloria Estefan's *Conga*.

18

INT. HOWARD JOHNSON'S MOTOR LODGE - ROOM - NIGHT

18

Find Cucu, in front of the TV, where MTV plays *Conga* and Cucu copies all the dance moves. It's comical as Cucu has zero rhythm but compensates with amazing enthusiasm.

PAN TO: Adela and Emilia. Adela tries to get Emilia to open up.

ADELA

You must defend yourself. I heard the *kissy, kissy*. It is not okay. The first time a boy tried to kiss me, I slapped him in the face.

EMILIA

Why would you do that?

ADELA

What? I should have hit him with a ruler?

EMILIA

Mami, please. I don't want to talk about the *kissy, kissy* --

ADELA

Oh we are talking about the *kissy*
kissy! I saw those boys. The way
they looked at you.

Just then, Víctor enters. He holds a letter in his hand.
Adela and Emilia fall silent.

VÍCTOR

Cucu, a letter just arrived. It is
from the office of Gloria Estefan.
Did you know the Postal Service is
the most successful public-private
partnership --

Cucu snatches the letter from Víctor, rips it open and reads
it. Her face falls, tears in her eyes.

CUCU

Gloria's not coming to the dance.

VÍCTOR

Your classmates will understand.

EMILIA

Yeah, teenagers are very
understanding.

CUCU

(sarcastic)

Sure, just like the Americans
understood Benedict Arnold.

VÍCTOR

(confused)

Mr. Arnold had to escape back to
England.

CUCU

That's my point, *papi*.

EMILIA

Cucu should start packing now.

ADELA

No one is packing. Cucu, just tell
your classmates that your *tía*
Gloria is a very busy lady.

Víctor shoots Adela a look. *This is a teachable moment.*

ADELA (CONT'D)

Or... Tell them the truth. You got
excited and told a little lie.
Everyone makes mistakes.

VÍCTOR

Maybe you can entertain your classmates another way. Ooh! I can bring them all Starboard Air wing pins. They're a collector's item! Or I could offer a lecture on the history of the conga?

Adela and the girls think that's a terrible idea.

ADELA

Or I host a dance contest! Like in Grease.

EMILIA

Or we can move far away and start all over at another school.

VÍCTOR

Did you know that in the 1950s, Batista outlawed the conga? But how did things reach that point? First, I take you back a hundred years --

As Adela, Víctor and Emilia debate, Cucu heads to the bathroom and slams the door, devastated.

19

INT. HOWARD JOHNSON'S MOTOR LODGE - ROOM - NIGHT

19

It's dark and everyone but Cucu is asleep. She tosses and turns in the bed she shares with Emilia. In hushed whispers:

EMILIA

You're keeping me awake.

CUCU

I'm just breathing.

EMILIA

Then stop.

CUCU

This is the worst thing that's ever happened to me.

EMILIA

What about when you peed your skirt during the Christmas concert?

CUCU

You said you'd never mention that again.

EMILIA

Oh my God. You really are a queen.
A drama queen. It's going to be
fine. It's just a stupid dance.

CUCU

Yoshy and Ashley are going to hate
me when they find out I lied.

EMILIA

Cucu, want some advice? The best
way to fit in... is by blending in.

CUCU

Why should I pretend to be someone
I'm not? In Santo Domingo everybody
loved me. For being Cucu.

ADELA (O.S.)

Niñas, silencio.

PULL WIDE TO REVEAL: Víctor and Adela in the next bed, just
feet away from the sisters.

ADELA (CONT'D)

You can be Cucu in the morning.
Right now, be asleep.

CUCU

Sorry, *mami*.

Adela and Emilia close their eyes, but Cucu stays wide awake.

CUCU (CONT'D)

Is it too late to invite Madonna?

ALL

CUCU!

20

INT. MIAMI PALMS JUNIOR HIGH - CAFETERIA - DAY

20

At school the next day, Cucu quietly eats her fish and chips,
flanked by Yoshy and Ashley.

ASHLEY

You haven't said a word all lunch.
And the fish sticks aren't that
good.

(off her silence)

Is it me? My mom said I needed to
start wearing deodorant, but --

CUCU

It's not you.

YOSHY

I can't wait to meet Gloria! You think she will sign my *guayabera*?

ASHLEY

Is that Cuban for a boy part? If so, I touched my cousin's *guayabera* once. By accident.

YOSHY

(ignores Ashley; sings)
Rhythm is gonna get you, rhythm is gonna get you, rhythm is gonna get you!

Cucu squirms in her seat. Ashley joins in --

ASHLEY & YOSHY

The rhythm is gonna get you, tonight!

CUCU

THE RHYTHM IS NOT GETTING ANYBODY!
GLORIA ESTEFAN IS NOT COMING!

ASHLEY

What?

YOSHY

But she's your *tía*?!

CUCU

Not exactly --

ASHLEY

So you don't even know her?!

CUCU

(shakes her head, then)
What are we gonna do?

ASHLEY

WE? I'm outta here.
(to Yoshy)
If the "rhythm doesn't get you,"
Safi will!

CUCU

The committee chair?

ASHLEY

She's got connections. Her dad owns a window company. Every time there's a hurricane, he makes like a million dollars.

YOSHY

Plus she's worn a bra since the fifth grade.

ASHLEY

If she doesn't like you, you'll never get to work on another school event. Ever.

YOSHY

In Cuba, our only school event was Fidel's birthday. No cake, but there was a really big parade.

Again, Cucu and Ashley just share a look.

CUCU

Ashley, Safi knows we've been working together. If we go down, you go down.

ASHLEY

Is that a threat?

CUCU

Of course not. That is not what I meant. It's just... You are so smart. We need your help. Please.

ASHLEY

(softens)

It's true. Without me, you don't have a chance.

Cucu takes a leadership role.

CUCU

Do any other pop stars live in Miami?

ASHLEY

Barry Gibb... From the Bee Gees?

(sings, does disco dance)

Ah, ah, ah, ah. Staying alive, staying alive!

YOSHY

My cousin's dentist is a Gloria Estefan impersonator.

CUCU

And you waited all this time to tell us?!

Cucu gapes at Yoshy, who shrugs. Ashley's not sure.

ASHLEY

You really think that's a good --

CUCU

-- Let's do it!

OFF Cucu, re-energized.

VÍCTOR (PRE-LAP)

I am not sure about this...

21

INT. REAL ESTATE OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

21

A restless Víctor paces the length of a swanky office. At the table, Adela plucks a muffin from a muffin basket.

VÍCTOR

...Buying a home feels irresponsible. Fifteen percent of mortgages end in foreclosure.

ADELA

Víctor, relax. Have one of these little baby cakes.

Valerie arrives. She's accompanied by a SECURITY GUARD!

VALERIE

Hello. Nice to see you both.

VÍCTOR

Why did you bring a sentry?

ADELA

(jumps in)

This must be how they sell real estate in America.

VALERIE

Considering your husband's line of work, I want to be safe.

VÍCTOR

(confused; then angry)

My line of work?

He digs in his pocket. Valerie raises her arms --

VALERIE

Don't shoot! I'm a single mom!

The Security Guard turns towards Víctor, but steps back when he sees what's in Víctor's hand -- his BUSINESS CARD.

VÍCTOR

I am a Public Relations Executive!

ADELA

Wait a second, do you think he is a drug dealer?!

VALERIE

Nooo... But, you and your daughter said --

VÍCTOR

(irate; eyes Adela)
What did they say?

ADELA

(whoops)
I said you make a LOT of money and she did not have to worr... Oh.

VÍCTOR

(to Valerie, fuming)
So you believe that because I am a dashing Latino of means that I must be involved in the cocaine trade?!

VALERIE

Have you seen the news lately... Or Miami Vice?

VÍCTOR

(deeply insulted)
Let's go, Adela.

Víctor and Adela exit. Then Adela steps back inside --

ADELA

We will not buy the house. But I will take these baby cakes. They are so moist.

PRELAP: Tears For Fear's *Everybody Wants to Rule The World*.

22 EXT. MIAMI PALMS JUNIOR HIGH - PARKING LOT - NIGHT 22

BOYS and GIRLS in their Sunday best head inside under a banner that reads: UNDER THE SEA DANCE TONIGHT!

23 INT. MIAMI PALMS JUNIOR HIGH - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT 23

Cucu and Emilia hurry in, as if escaping something.

EMILIA

... For the record, your plan is insane and I hope you fall flat on your face so I can laugh at you.

CUCU

Thank you. By the way, your left eye is bigger than the right. And it's really obvious.

Emilia gasps. But Cucu races off and Emilia does the same. Then, we see they're rushing away from: Víctor dressed like Danny Zuko and Adela in a poodle skirt, *a la* Sandy.

VÍCTOR

You make a beautiful Sandy.

Adela looks away -- there's sadness in her eyes.

VÍCTOR (CONT'D)

Adela...

ADELA

We lost a beautiful home because you are too sensitive. I hope you like dirty underwear because I am not washing yours -- ever again.

VÍCTOR

You wanted that house so desperately that you misled that woman into thinking we were transcontinental criminals.

ADELA

(for the umpteenth time)
It was a misunderstanding! Some Americans do not talk good English.
(exhales, brushes it off)
I am going to go chaperone.

Left by his lonesome, Víctor gravitates to the refreshments.

24

DANCE FLOOR -

24

Adela walks between Boys and Girls while making her rounds, until she spots Emilia in a corner kissing a boy -- Chad!

ADULT CUCU (V.O.)

I know what you're thinking: *why would my sister go back to Chad after he started a rumor that she touched his wienerschnitzel?* Give it a minute, you'll see.

Adela rushes towards them and dramatically pulls Emilia away.

ADELA

Emilia, how could you!

EMILIA

Mami, please! Leave me alone! Who I
kiss is none of your business.

ADELA

(loudly)
But you are sick and you just
exposed this boy to the very
dangerous --
(extra loud)
'*Aliento de perro*' flu!

Chad's eyes bulge with fright. He backs off. As he runs from Emilia and Adela, he bumps into a group of BUBBLEGUM GIRLS.

BUBBLEGUM GIRL

(chewing gum)
What's your problem?

CHAD

(freaking out)
I -- I have -- "*Aliento de perro!*"

Emilia saunters over --

EMILIA

It's Dominican for 'dog breath' and
it's true.
(holds her nose)
Pee-Yew!!

The Bubblegum Girls crack up. Chad turns red, now it's his turn to be mortified. Emilia leans in and whispers --

EMILIA (CONT'D)

I can start a rumor too, *dogbreath*.

Chad's speechless. He lowers his head as the Bubblegum Girls point and laugh at him as he slinks away.

Then, to our surprise, Emilia struts over to Adela, they high five. We realize they planned this revenge idea together.

EMILIA (CONT'D)

Chad's an idiot.

ADELA

At this age, they all are.

Adela eyes Víctor, who puts a pretzel stick in his mouth like a cigarette and slicks his hair back like Danny Zuko.

ADELA (CONT'D)

Also when they are older.

OFF Emilia, appreciating her mom.

25

ANGLE ON: THE STAGE

25

The space has been decorated to look like a riverside village. Cucu and Ashley tack up a fishing net. Yoshi approaches with a person we can't quite see yet --

YOSHY

Girls, I would like you to meet the finest Gloria Estefan impersonator north of Havana.

Red lips. A beauty mark. Long, curly black hair. The person before Cucu looks a lot like the real-life Gloria Estefan.

GLORIA IMPERSONATOR

Nice to meet you.

The Impersonator's voice is deep and low -- it's clearly a MAN in Gloria drag. Cucu takes a beat. We're not sure how she'll respond, then --

CUCU

(eyes Yoshi; impressed)
He looks more like Gloria Estefan than Gloria Estefan!

A grateful Cucu throws her arms around Yoshi.

CUCU (CONT'D)

Thank you for being such a great boyfriend!

YOSHY

Boyfriend?

From the other side of the curtain, the crowd chants: "GLORIA! GLORIA!" Cucu releases Yoshi.

ASHLEY

I think it's showtime?

Cucu nods, takes a deep breath and dims the lights.

CUCU

(crosses herself)
Virgencita, please help us.

Yoshi lifts the curtain to reveal the Impersonator in full Gloria Estefan splendor. Conga starts to play and he launches into his well-choreographed routine.

GLORIA IMPERSONATOR

Come on shake your body, baby do that Conga! I know you can't control yourself any longer!

Cucu peaks out from behind the curtain and sees the students cheer -- THEY'RE BUYING IT! Beside Cucu, Yoshy shimmies his shoulders to the beat. Cucu sighs with relief.

CUCU
He's fantastic!

YOSHY
He's an artist. He also does really good dry wall.

ASHLEY
I thought he was a dentist?

YOSHY
Yes. It's important to be good at many things. It's why I'm learning needlepoint.
(then, offering)
Who wants a Tic Tac?

As they help themselves, Víctor spots Adela and walks towards her, both are confused:

ADELA
Is that Gloria?

VÍCTOR
Maybe she changed her mind...

Until the cheers stop. The crowd GASPS and 'boos'. Cucu sees "Gloria's" wig is caught on a fishing pole. The ruse is up!

CUCU
Oh God!

Crowds of BOYS and GIRLS point and laugh at the wig-less Impersonator who, like a true pro, continues his performance.

GRUFF CUBAN GUY
Gloria's a dude!

Adela and Víctor gaze at the Impersonator.

VÍCTOR
He makes a very pretty woman.

ADELA
I wonder where he bought that lovely wig?

Yoshy runs onstage to detangle the wig from the pole, which makes the crowd laugh even harder.

GLORIA IMPERSONATOR
*Everybody gather 'round now. Let
your body feel the heat.*

Suddenly, Cucu's cornered by a livid Safi.

SAFI
This is a bait and switch! I'm
going to make your life a living
hell!

CUCU
(scared)
No. No. I did not 'bait and switch'
-- I don't even know what that
means!

Yoshy discretely hands the wig back to the Impersonator. He quickly puts it back on -- but it's too little, too late. The BOOS grow louder. Cucu's heart breaks for the Impersonator. Ashley approaches sympathetically --

ASHLEY
Don't worry, by the time we're 40,
no one will remember this.

YOSHY
Cucu, what do we do now?

Cucu is uncharacteristically speechless. Desperate, she considers her next move.

GLORIA IMPERSONATOR (O.S.)
*Don't you worry if you can't dance,
let the music move your feet.*

As she listens to the song, she's suddenly inspired. She races to the middle of the dance floor and starts to march to the beat of the music -- one, two, three -- then she thrusts her arms forward. She's doing a one-woman conga line!

GLORIA IMPERSONATOR (CONT'D)
*Come on, shake your body, baby do
that Conga! I know you can't
control yourself any longer!*

The other students stare and mock Cucu, but she's undeterred.

ASHLEY
What the heck is she doing?

Cucu motions for Ashley and Yoshy to join her. A beat, as they consider. Finally, they join in, latching on to Cucu's waist. The other students continue to laugh at the sad conga line.

In the crowd, Cucu spots Emilia, who actually feels for her sister. The sisters lock eyes, and then Emilia makes her first selfless move in America.

EMILIA

Can't believe I'm doing this.

Emilia grabs a Surfer Girl and the two of them join the conga line. Then the Surfer Girl motions to a Rocker Kid. Then a bunch of BUBBLEGUM GIRLS hop on and within a minute, half the auditorium joins in, including Víctor and Adela!

The huge conga line -- led by Cucu -- snakes through the auditorium. The Impersonator has the crowd on his side again. Cucu's thrilled! She waves at Safi and the angry Committee Members as she congas past them. The dance is saved!

DISSOLVE TO:

26

INT. MIAMI PALMS JUNIOR HIGH - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

26

The party's over. Everyone's gone except for a few stragglers who are busy cleaning up: Yoshy, Ashley, Adela, Víctor and a handful of PARENTS and TEACHERS.

Emilia finds Cucu sulking in a corner by her lonesome.

EMILIA

You did it, Cucu.

CUCU

But the dance committee's gonna make my life 'a living hell.'

EMILIA

So what? Everyone had a good time. And in your first two weeks of school, you made two new friends.

Cucu follows Emilia's POV to find Yoshy and Ashley. He sweeps the floor while Ashley supervises him.

CUCU

(as her mood lifts)

I did make two friends. And if I can make a new friend every week, by the end of the year...

EMILIA

Why do I even bother?

CUCU

...I'll be queen of the school!

OFF Cucu, back to her grand ideas and 100-percent cheered up.

27 EXT. HIALEAH APARTMENT BUILDING - NEXT DAY 27

A low-rent, puke-green apartment building bustles with the sounds of WORKING-CLASS CUBAN FAMILIES and SALSA music.

VÍCTOR (O.S.)
Hialeah is Miami's biggest suburb.
Full of hard-working Cuban-
Americans...

PUSH INTO A SECOND STORY WINDOW:

28 INT. HIALEAH APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY 28

Adela, Víctor, Cucu unpack boxes. Emilia holds up paint swatches to the wall.

VÍCTOR
And by renting, we can save money.

ADELA
Everybody here speaks Spanish. My
accent will never go away.

VÍCTOR
Is that a bad thing? I love your
accent. And I love you.

As Adela melts, Cucu finds her Burger King crown in a box and places it on her head. Víctor eyes both his daughters --

VÍCTOR (CONT'D)
For now, baby steps will help us
adjust to our new life.

Adela appreciates the sentiment and parental care. However --

ADELA
Fine. Baby steps. But soon -- a big
house with a central hair
conditioner.

The girls looks at their mother. Hair conditioner?

VÍCTOR
Air conditioner. Not hair.

ADELA
That is what I said.

Just then, from outside, Cucu hears familiar loud laughter. She exits the apartment to investigate.

29 EXT. HIALEAH APARTMENT - 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY 29

With her crown on, Cucu steps outside the apartment. She looks over the railing to the dingy pool below and sees --

CUCU

Yoshy?

A boy in the shallow end of the pool, turns around -- *it's him alright.*

YOSHY

What are you doing here?

CUCU

We just moved in. We're going to be neighbors!

YOSHY

Come on down! The water smells a little like feet, but it's warm!

Cucu smiles and races downstairs. As she runs --

ADULT CUCU (V.O.)

Yoshy saved me from my Gloria Estefan fiasco AND he lives in my building?! He was destined to be *mi amor*, or so I thought...

30 EXT. HIALEAH APARTMENT - 1ST FLOOR POOL - CONTINUOUS 30

Cucu sprints toward the pool, kicks off her shoes, removes her crown, and leaps -- clothes and all -- SPLASH!

ADULT CUCU (V.O.)

This time, I really did jump. In fact, I was jumping into a new life full of H words.

Yoshy splashes with Cucu.

ADULT CUCU (V.O.)

And not just 'homesick.' But a life with hurdles, humiliations, heartbreaks, and hope.

Under heartbreaks and hope, Cucu looks right at a smiling Yoshy who splashes water at her. Meanwhile, Adela, Víctor and Emilia arrive down at the pool, having followed Cucu.

Cucu beckons Emilia. Emilia kicks off her shoes and steps into the shallow end. Víctor lovingly puts his arm around Adela. The scene is vibrant, full of promise -- love, family, future. We feel it all. Cucu submerges herself --

ADULT CUCU (V.O.)

And like many immigrants, I would
learn that you can make a home
anywhere, as long as you're
surrounded by the people you love.
People who will make blind leaps in
the hopes of always landing in a
metaphorical net.

As Cucu comes up for air, she turns to her mother --

CUCU

Mami, am I still getting a bike?

ADELA

Not now, Cucu.

As the family unit bonds, the sun sets behind them.

END OF PILOT

*
*