

ALAMAR

Scene 1: Ritmo Cubano

June 1981. First we hear water. Waves rush against a shore. And then, a Cuban guitar lick as “Yo Soy el Punto Cubano” (Celina Gonzalez version) kicks in. It’s a party and a promenade and all is right in a sunny sunny world.

A scrim tells us where we are: Havana.

VIVIAN enters, notepad in hand. She is dressed for tropical weather. Makes sense—she is patrolling her apartment complex, Alamar, which sits seaside. She hums along.

She inspects us as if we are part of the complex. Leans in a little to check out something. Scribbles a note. Moves along the perimeter of the stage. But doesn’t disappear, just keeps inspecting around the space.

The scrim: Boston

YANNI enters, a faux leather bookbag slung over one shoulder, and a slide carrel cradled in one arm. She wears a digital wristwatch and clutches a Milk Street Café coffee cup, which she sips from between practice speeches. She is running through a class presentation she has memorized and every now and then, she pauses, makes a hand gesture, pretends to hear a response. At one point, she gestures with her coffee hand and reacts as if she has spilled some—she instinctively checks to make sure her color block sweater and jean skirt are ok. And then laughs with relief. Keeps practicing, staying where she is.

The scrim: Miami

IGNACIO comes out in a white tank and several thin gold chains. His polyester pants are beltless and snug. He is trying to sweep while not relinquishing the beer he holds in one hand. This is not effortless. He really likes that beer.

Near us, he finds a sticky spot that won’t sweep away. Stares at it. Sweeps the spot harder. Nope. This really irks him and he uses the other end of the broom to jab at it. The anger he carries is directed at this blemish.

The scrim: New York City

ANGEL wears a white tank top, tucked into high waisted jeans, atop white sneakers. He swings a gym bag as he

bops along listening to a song the headphones of his Walkman. His route will take him past VIVIAN, who does not see him, and then by IGNACIO who doesn't either.

For a moment, we see them all at once. Have fun with this. Nosy VIVIAN inspecting...YANNI miming out a presentation for all she's worth...IGNACIO on his knees staring at his foe...and ANGEL treating the East Village like the soundstage to his own movie. It's like a Rube Goldberg perpetual motion machine.

When he dances close to us at the edge of the stage, ANGEL stops. His tape ended. Damn. He takes the tape out, flips it over, presses play, and get his groove back. He runs offstage.

YANNI suddenly thinks to check the time and is startled. She's going to be late. She hurries off, keeping the cup a safe distance from her outfit.

IGNACIO is inspired. He pours out a splash of beer and uses his foot to move the liquid around. Is it working? He shrugs. Swigs. Sweeps away and offstage.

VIVIAN does a final loop, and eyes us once again. She sees something she does not like. She purses her lips, narrows her eyes, leans toward us for a better look. And then scribbles furious notes in her notebook, which she finally closes with a snap that times out crisply to the last notes of the music.

We hear again only the ocean and it takes the fire out of her. She relaxes into the sound, closing her eyes for a moment. She draws in a deep breath and releases it. She smiles.

VIVIAN

It is good to be home.

Scene 2: Discursos

Boston. A university classroom.

YANNI faces us, a plastic clicker in hand; we imagine it to be attached to a slide carousel. Behind her, light suggests a slideshow screen that changes when she clicks. The screen glows but maybe not as much as she does. I mean, she's on fire!

YANNI

The infant mortality rate is the lowest in North America! (Clicks)

The average life expectancy is the highest in the Caribbean and on par with the United States, despite spending a 1/10th of the amount of money per patient! (Clicks) By 1990, it is estimated that Cuba will have as many as four times the number of doctors per capita as the US. By the 21st century, it will lead *the world!* (Clicks) And that is possible because university, like all other schooling, is free, with no student loans required! (Sees looks of surprise in the class) I know, right? On an island where quality health care was once reserved for the rich and the foreign, health care is now a birthright. (Sees and ignores a raised hand.) Questions are for later. (Clicks) Cuba is not keeping this excellent health care to itself: The state sends its doctors to Latin America and Africa to fight outbreaks of infectious disease, despite being subject to an *unjust embargo cruelly* designed to isolate it completely. (Again, sees a classmate's hand) QUESTIONS ARE FOR LATER, ANTHONY! (Click)

When I was a little girl in Miami, we had almost nothing. I lived with my father and sometimes his girlfriend Nena in a two-room apartment on NW 5th. Papi worked for a garage but they could not hire him full time so we never had health insurance. I almost died from appendicitis because he didn't dare take me to the hospital. I laid on the pull-out couch wishing I was with my dead mother, wherever she had gone, because it hurt so bad. I ended up in the hospital anyway. We just finished paying for it in installments last year. In *America*. (She knows she has them with her now. But she is half in Miami on a pull-out in her mind and she doesn't click. A beat. Brings herself back. Clicks.)

In conclusion, as our nation looks at its future health, we can learn a lot from our neighbor—our *sister*—to the south. With all our resources, stories like mine shouldn't happen. If we apply the Cuba model, imagine all America can do! Thank you! (Beams.)

Dark on Yanni.

Lights up on ANGEL in New York city, in the bathroom of Escuelita, a gay bar. We are the mirror he peers into. The duffel bag is at his feet. Someone raps on the bathroom door.

ANGEL

Ay, cabron! Five minutes!

He snakes off the jeans and pulls off the tank top, and produces, from the bag, a white prom dress of terrifyingly shiny material. He pulls out make-up and starts to do VERY dramatic full face as quickly as he can.

ANGEL

(Batting eyes. Crooning to an imaginary lover) "Querrido...Leonardo...you like?"

He produces a clip-in hair extension that adds curls atop his head, and then a pin with silk flowers and a swath of maribou. He does a quick updo, folding the curls into a crown on his head and sticking flowers into the array.

"Your mother, I think, would not approve." (Dons huge fake eyelashes.) "But your mother is not here." (Fairly purrs) You are.

Bats eyes and traces a finger down his chest.

“Ay, Leonardo, what a savage! To bring the bullwhip to the party?” (Batting eyes as imagined Leonardo demurs) “Si, claro—it is in your breeches.”

A pleased smile. More batting.

“Tu madre calls me ‘hijo de le gran puta.’ But she is wrong! *Soy de gran puta.*” (Furious eyelash batting. One comes loose. He chases it.) Oh no! (A beat, chewing his lip. An idea. He can use this.) Maybe it’s funnier? (Tries a new line) “For you, *querrido*, I bat off my lashes.”

A pounding on the door.

Hector! I go on in two minutes! You can hold it!

Crams his street clothes into the bag. For a moment looks very tired. Shakes it off. Pulls out a bottle of glitter spray. Spritzes himself.

A mal tiempo, bueno cara.

Blows himself a kiss.

Dark on ANGEL.

IGNACIO has added a silk shirt, worn open over the tank top. He is trying to show off an apartment.

RENTER follows him around, looking noncommittal.

IGNACIO

If you take it, you can move in a week early, because I move with my sister July 1. Free one week! Pretty good, no? You hear the children? This is a happy place. A courtyard for quinces and every Sunday the picnics...(RENTER looks hesitant) You think it’s small? No—look it has a big window on this end, so light come in. This room is so big you can have a table and couch. (A shift) And Fernando is from Cuba. Cuba *vieja*. He take care of you. (Gestures toward the audience) I’m taking the playas and banana in the pots. You keep the refrigerator. The stove no is good. (Shrugs) I don’t cook. There is a microwave. Almost new. (Pauses) What part of Cuba are you from? (Gets to the real question: is this guy a Marielito?) You been here a long time? (Doesn’t get an answer.) I’m just asking. The people in this building watch out for each other. No *escoria*. (RENTER starts to simmer) I didn’t say *you* were! But...the people here don’t mess with *basura*.

RENTER

Basura? BASURA?

Dark on IGNACIO and RENTER.

VIVIAN paces around her apartment, on the phone. We hear only her side of the call.

VIVIAN

Estefania? Yes, it’s me. I have been home for two days now. You didn’t know? Well. They’ve called me back. The numbers have dropped to about 1,000 cases a day on the whole island, and Havana has patients too. (Beat) The children were the worst. Clutching at their eyes as if to hold the pain in. Blood filling their mouths. It is enough to see a grown man suffer, but the children...(Beat.) Of course I worry.

We wear the gloves and the masks, and wash continually. It is my duty to our country. Which is why I am calling. (Steely) I did a little inspection this morning and when I made the rounds—(Beat) Of course I made the rounds. I didn't give up the committee when they sent me to Trinidad. I made the rounds of Zone 8 and found that Blocks 44 and 51 both have barrels out to collect rainwater. (Beat) Yes, it is fresher. But what of it? There is no need for this in Alamar—we are not in the hills! They can turn on a faucet if they need cooking water. And if their plants are thirsty, it's all the same rain as fills the barrels. (Beat. Irritated that she must explain.) Fania! Standing water is an invitation to the mosquitos. It beckons them: Lay your eggs here! Raise up an army! Send forth the soldiers of Dengue. What would we tell El Lider? "We're sorry that we're not committed to the battle--but the water, it was so fresh!" (A beat. Hears what she wants.) Excellent. (Bossy voice switched off. Real warmth returns.) Let's get in a good visit this afternoon. I've missed you.