

SCENE ONE

1985.

Lights up.

The exterior of an immaculate cerulean beach house, constructed of solid wood. It stands proud. Amongst it, a forest of tropical plants. A walkway, hugged by green shrubs, leads to the porch.

Rafael, paints the patio deck white with a brush and bucket. On the deck are two old white wooden rocking chairs and a small table.

The sounds of this landscape swell: the ocean. distant rumba music. people laughing. kids playing together.

AMANI (OFF STAGE)

(sorta shouting)

...so then I told him that I wouldn't go over 30 pesos. For some meat? That's insane.

Amani comes out onto the deck, with a glass of water.

RAFAEL

Honestly that's a pretty good price. Next time you see Javi tell him this. "Me prestas dinero. Estoy arranca'o"

AMANI

And what does that mean?

RAFAEL

(wiping sweat)

"I'm broke."

AMANI

Very funny - Here.

Amani hands him the glass, Rafael takes it and gulps it in one big swig.

AMANI

Worked up a thirst haven't ya? If I didn't know any better, I'd say you're a fish.

RAFAEL

No more thirsty than a sailfish in a salty sea - and yes.

A beat.

AMANI

It's been 6 months...and I still feel like a foreigner.

RAFAEL

Just give it time.

AMANI

Guess you're right.

(she observes the deck)

I don't know why you keep painting this old thing. You've already done so much for us.

RAFAEL

This is just who we are, we take care of each other. Always have and always will. Even when I was a kid - if something in my house broke - guess who fixed it?

AMANI

You?

RAFAEL

That's right. My mama used to say "all rivers started as streams". So if it doesn't get fixed now...

AMANI

Well your mother seemed to have some sense about her. Let me make it up to you. Stay for dinner.

RAFAEL

It's okay - really.

AMANI

No please. It's the least I can do. Thanks to you...

Amani takes in the house.

AMANI

I get to feel the warmth of the sun. When I got locked up...it was the little things I missed like the sun and the fresh air!

(She takes a deep breath)

So much better than solitary confinement.

RAFAEL

I'm sure less bugs too.

Amani inspects his work.

AMANI

(crouching down)

How's it looking?

Amani grabs the brush and kneels, unafraid to get dirty.

RAFAEL

(trying to stop her)

Cuidado señora! The paint.

AMANI

(shoos his hand away)

Let the dress get dirty! I can always wash it.

She paints a spot.

AMANI

Besides, you missed a spot.

RAFAEL

A woman who knows what she wants. We need more of ya here.

AMANI

Look again - there's plenty of strong women here. They're perfect and beautiful.

RAFAEL

Well when you find them let me know.

The sound of kids gleefully playing becomes louder.

AMANI

You hear that?

RAFAEL

The kids?

AMANI

(nodding)

Ya, they're so happy.

RAFAEL

How's little Eli?

AMANI

She's...holding up.

RAFAEL

And your husband? Does Eli know that he's // gone?

AMANI

No...not yet. But she will - when she's old enough. I'd like her to be my little girl for just a little longer.

RAFAEL

She should know Amani.

AMANI

Honesty ages you. What she doesn't know won't hurt her. I can bare that for her.

A moment.

AMANI

I miss Zayd.

Amani begins to cry. Rafael is unsure what to do. He pats her back.

RAFAEL

It's ok.

She shakes her head no.

AMANI

It's not.

RAFAEL

You can choose to be happy. I mean look where you are. It's not perfect and we don't have everything America has but at least you're not in prison anymore.

AMANI

Ah Rafael, if only it was that simple. For three years, in that cement box, I only heard two things. You want to guess what they were?

RAFAEL

Guards and roosters?

Amani takes a seat next to Rafael. He continues to paint.

AMANI

Prayers for deliverance and crying for forgiveness.

Amani gets up and walks down to the flowering shrubs in front of her home. She picks a guava flower and rips it from its mothering body, cupping it in her hands.

AMANI

The only sanity that came from confinement was keeping the time. *Days* turned to *months* turned to *years*. All I could hear were wails and sorrow.

She offers the flower in her palms to Rafael.

AMANI

Here, touch it.

Rafael obeys but as he reaches for it, she crushes the flower in her hands.

AMANI

Still, the spirit dies long before the body.

RAFAEL

You don't miss it?

AMANI

(disbelief)

Prison?

RAFAEL

No - of course not. I mean America. Home.

AMANI

I have no home. But maybe, with enough time...

(signaling to the house)

This could be my new home.

(looking out to the horizon)

And this water, I've never seen anything shine so brightly.

A moment.

AMANI

Thank you, Rafael. You're a good person.

There's a tender pause between the two. Rafael leans in to kiss her but Amani recoils.

AMANI

Rafael. It's just..I didn't think//this was-

RAFAEL

I'm sorry, I just thought that//

AMANI

You're a very sweet gentleman.

RAFAEL

It was stupid of me to think that you would /// want me.

AMANI

No. Really. I'm serious.

RAFAEL

Amani it's okay. You don't need to do this, I can handle the truth.

Rafael starts to gather his items.

AMANI

You're very kind, and you've welcomed me much more than anybody here.

RAFAEL

But//...what?

AMANI

But this is a great friendship and I don't want to ruin that.

RAFAEL

I have many friends already.

AMANI

And what's one more?

RAFAEL

I understand. I'm too old.

AMANI

Oh hush now. Rafael, look at me.

Rafael stops. He looks at her.

AMANI

You're a wonderful gentleman and you will find a nice wife.

RAFAEL

I get nobody wants a rotten fish like me.

(joking)

It's fine - I'll just go die alone.

AMANI

Wait wait wait - don't die just yet.

Amani goes inside the house. A pause. Rafael starts to paint again.

Amani comes back out, book in hand.

RAFAEL

What's this?

AMANI

A piece of me you didn't ask for.

RAFAEL

So-..Sonny's Blues?

AMANI

By Baldwin. It's a fantastic story.

RAFAEL

But I don't know how to read English.

AMANI

That's okay, we'll help each other. You teach me Spanish and I'll read this to you.

RAFAEL

(disappointed)

....okay.

AMANI

Believe it or not, I'm letting you in somewhere no man has gone before.

RAFAEL

And where would that be?

AMANI

My mind.

Beat.

AMANI

Now, take good care of it.

From inside the house.

ELI (OFF STAGE)

Mama! I'm hungry!

AMANI

Come on out now and greet our guest! Didn't I show you any manners?

Eli comes out.

AMANI

(to ELI)

Is your tongue not working?

ELI

(looking into his mom's dress)

Hello Mr.Rafael.

Rafael looks down to Eli.

RAFAEL

Hello Eli. How are you?

ELI

Good.

RAFAEL

You like the paint job I'm doing here?

Eli nods yes.

RAFAEL

(hands over the paint brush to Eli)

You wanna help me with it?

Eli nods.

RAFAEL

(to Eli)

Hey, do you know what I used to be?

ELI

No.

RAFAEL

A fisherman!

ELI

So.

RAFAEL

...tough crowd. Well...do you know what fisherman do?

AMANI

Come on Eli you know this.

RAFAEL

They fight creatures from the sea! And sometimes catch fish.

Amani sits in the rocking chair, enjoying the view.

AMANI

Come here.

Eli sits on Amani's lap, resting her head on Amani's chest.

RAFAEL

The seas are a young man's journey - and the fish can be as huge as this!

Rafael stretches out his arms.

RAFAEL

Imagine that. And then they come and get you -

Rafael lunges and tickles Eli.

Are you my new dad?
ELI

Amani and Rafael awkwardly laugh with one another.

Sweetie, he's just a friend.
AMANI

ELI
(to Amani)
Where's dad? I want dad. You said he would be here by now.

AMANI
He'll be here. Soon enough.

Amani and Rafael share a concerned look.

RAFAEL
Look. You're a young woman right?

Eli nods.

RAFAEL
Well your mom needs you to be strong and mighty - for her - like those fish from the sea.
Think you can do that?

ELI
(head down)
...okay.

Rafael looks around - trying to think of a way to cheer him up.

RAFAEL
You wanna hear a story?

AMANI
Oh come on Eli - you know Rafael has the best stories.

ELI
...okay.

RAFAEL
Alright! Well - believe it or not - I once was a young man, with hopes and dreams of leaving the island.

As the lights dim, a moving constellation appears. The
sounds of a boat swaying in the ocean rise.

RAFAEL

But at some point every man must meet his maker.
Face god in the eye and tell that fucker. Shit. Sorry. Tell that *man* who is the boss.
Well I never dreamt of being a fisherman, but when my mama got sick,
I had to do what was right. Make sure she didn't become a river and stood a stream.
Now I never thought I would meet god out on sea but boy was I wrong.
See god is not some man or some creature.
God is the silence that lives in the still waters.
The tiny voice that calls to you, the deepest of truths.
And it's our job to trust it and face it.
Cause when we do, we become new people of this earth.

Lights fade.

