

EL CANTO DE LOS COQUIS
(THE COQUÍ SONG)

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EXT. GARCÍA HOME - SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO - DAY

A suitcase's wheels **RATTLE** against uneven gravel. A dirty pair of red, blue and white Converse trail ahead.

COQUÍ FROGS SING. The feet approach a faded wooden door.

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK.

A pair of black *chancletas* (flip flops) appear past the door.

ELENA (O.S.)

¡Tíaaaa!

ELENA ELENA GARCÍA (22), throws her arms out in a heartfelt embrace. Her aunt VALERIA (50), stands before her. Rigid.

ELENA (CONT'D)

It's so nice to finally meet you!
You look *just* like in *mami's* old pictures. And look at this place..!

INT. GARCÍA HOME - CONTINUOUS

Elena makes her way into the house. Valeria stands motionless. Overwhelmed by her niece's excitement.

ELENA

Just like I imagined. Is that *abuela*?

She approaches a wall full of rustic family pictures. An old woman in a small, faint photograph. Elena smiles to herself.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Her visits used to be the one thing I looked forward to all year.

She tries to grab the portrait. Valeria gets in her way.

VALERIA

Don't!

Elena steps back. Surprised. Valeria takes a breath.

VALERIA (CONT'D)

We don't touch the wall.

Elena tucks her hands in her pockets. A loud chuckle:

LUIS (O.S.)

Is that my favorite niece?

They turn to LUIS (45), a sickly, yet muscular man. He walks with a cane. Elena goes to him elated.

LUIS (CONT'D)
My sister didn't mention you'd be arriving today.

VALERIA
Se me olvidó.

LUIS
All Valeria does is tell me do this, do that... She forgets about the important things.

ELENA
Good to see you, *Tío Luis*.

He holds Elena tenderly. Valeria cuts in.

VALERIA
Estás muy débil para caminar.

Elena watches them. She doesn't follow.

LUIS
Estoy bien, Valeria.

VALERIA
Get. Back. In. Bed.

Luis glares at his sister. Elena cuts in.

ELENA
It's okay, *tío*. See you at dinner?

Luis breathes. Smiles. Nods.

LUIS
See you at dinner, *chica*. Happy to have you here.

ELENA
Happy to be here.

He walks away. Valeria makes her way to an open kitchen.

VALERIA
¿Hablas Español, Elena?

She **CHOPS** green plantain into thin slices.

ELENA
Un poquito.

VALERIA

Guess your mom didn't see much point in teaching you while living in New York.

Elena nods quietly. She takes in her surroundings.

CHOP, CHOP, CHOP. Valeria tosses the plantain into a pot of scalding hot oil.

INT. GARCÍA HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

ELENA

So I said, "No professor. *Taíno* is the name given to the indigenous group native to Puerto Rico. *Tahini* goes well with falafel."

Luis and Elena laugh. A Puerto Rican feast on the table.

Valeria sips water. Her plate of *tostones* barely touched.

ELENA (CONT'D)

Thank you for the wonderful meal.

VALERIA

I guess you taught the class from then on?

Elena blushes.

ELENA

I don't know nearly enough. Puerto Rican studies are my passion but it's hard to feel *truly boricua* living so far away. I've always wanted to see the land myself.

VALERIA

Inspiring.

Luis munches on a final piece of *chicharrón*.

LUIS

It truly is. You know you're always welcome here.

Elena smiles back. Valeria clears the table.

VALERIA

Well I don't have nearly enough time to show you around.

ELENA
Oh, I was thinking I'd just show myself around.

VALERIA
You? Alone? *Nena*, you can't even thank me for dinner in Spanish.

Elena's face falls. A tense silence. **KNOCK, KNOCK.**

ALEJO (O.S.)
Buenas noches...

ALEJO (23) makes his way in. He catches Elena's glance.

ALEJO (CONT'D)
Is this the guest of honor?

Luis walks towards Alejo.

LUIS
Elena, this is Alejo. A friend of the family and a lover of the land.

ALEJO
Mucho gusto.

ELENA
"Lover of the land?"

Valeria washes plates beyond them.

VALERIA
Alejo owns a farm. Those *tostones* you ate-

ALEJO
I grew them myself.

They smile at each other. Luis catches the drift.

LUIS
I know! Alejo could show you around the island tomorrow.

ELENA
Oh, I don't mean to-

VALERIA
Luis, Alejo is busy enough as is-

ALEJO
Of course! I would love to.