ACT ONE

Scene 1

(It is very close to Midnight on December 27th. The sounds of coquis are heard. NORMA enters.)

MANOLO. You didn’t knock.

NORMA. I don’t have to, it’s my house.

MANOLO. Did she arrive?

NORMA. Iris and Victor went to pick her up.

MANOLO. I can’t wait to see María.

NORMA. I don’t know why she’s coming here for. (NORMA holds up tea to MANOLO’s lips.)

MANOLO. Ah not again! (MANOLO will not open his mouth.)

NORMA. You will keep drinking this orange tea until you’re cured.

MANOLO. I’m dying Norma, nothing is good for me.

NORMA. You just decided to give up and die...

MANOLO. Everyone dies.

NORMA. (She takes out a bottle of beer from underneath his bed.) This is what is killing you! Who’s bringing it to you? If you die, it’s not my fault... (The sound of a car arriving is heard.) They’re here... God protect the person who brings you the beer.

(NORMA exits with the bottle of beer. Lights shift. The slam of a car door is heard, and a very irate IRIS storms in.)

IRIS. Your niece, Miss Puerto Rico, is here. Today was the most embarrassing day of my life! Mami she took pictures of everything. She took a picture of the guy who picked up her bags. And then she made me take a
picture of her kissing the ground, oh no, the sacred Puerto Rican ground!

NORMA. Iris she’s never been to Puerto Rico before. She grew up as an Americau.

(Through the door bursts MARÍA ELENA GARCIA. She has on a hat and a jacket with a Puerto Rican flag on them. She is carrying a suitcase.)

MARÍA. Hold it! Hold it! (She puts her suitcase down and begins taking pictures. Speaking in incorrect Spanish.) No tea, don’t look at me. No me mires.

IRIS. (Correcting her Spanish.) No me mires. Don’t look at me!

MARÍA. I want a spontaneous, I mean a natural picture!... Ah... anyway how are you tia Norma?

NORMA. Fine. (NORMA is very cold to MARÍA. MARÍA kisses her, but NORMA doesn’t reciprocate the kiss.)

MARÍA. Wow, I’m so psyched! ¡Qué maravilla! (She takes a deep breath.) Smell the air, it’s so pure. OH Listen to the COQUIS. (She stands still to listen and take it all in.) Coquí... coquí... That’s excellent!

IRIS. Virgen María.

MARÍA. It’s like listening to a symphony.

IRIS. A symphony of squawking little big-eyed frogs is not music to my ears.

MARÍA. Iris, coquis are not frogs.

(VÍCTOR enters.)

VÍCTOR. Look Norma, she looks exactly like Olga. The exact same face.

NORMA. Hm!

VÍCTOR. How’s Olga?

MARÍA. Mami’s fine... she’s doing really well.

VÍCTOR. Very good.

MARÍA. She’s good, and papi’s good too... everybody’s great... um... um... Is tio Manolo feeling better?

VÍCTOR. No mama, he is very sick.

MARÍA. (Speaking in incorrect Spanish.) Mami digaba... um... that Manolo has been sick.

IRIS. (Correcting her.) Dijoi! Said!

MARÍA. What?

IRIS. Mami “dijo”... that Manolo is sick...

MARÍA. Spanish is so confusing. I confuse the verbs. I want to learn to speak Spanish really well. I studied it in the university, but I need more practice.

VÍCTOR. That’s wonderful. You should learn your language. And you speak it well for an American.

MARÍA. Thank you. (She takes a picture of VÍCTOR.) I can’t believe I’m here in Puerto Rico. This place is more beautiful than I ever imagined. I don’t know of any other place more beautiful... Oh... I forgot I have gifts for everyone.

NORMA. Save the gifts for tomorrow. You will sleep in the room next to Iris’... she will show you. Pues... let’s go to sleep Víctor.

MARÍA. Thank you for everything.

VÍCTOR. Our pleasure m’ija.

MARÍA. Bendición Tía y Tío.

NORMA & VÍCTOR. Que la Virgen te acompañe.

(VÍCTOR hugs MARÍA. NORMA exits without hugging MARÍA. MARÍA and IRIS remain staring at each other.)

MARÍA. It feels great to be with my people. I want to see everything on the island, not only the buildings... (Looking for the word in Spanish.)

IRIS. Edificios. I speak English.

MARÍA. Good you can help me... um... okay, edificios. I want to get close to the land, (MARÍA swats a mosquito away.) I want to bond with Puerto Rico.

IRIS. You’ll bond with your sacred Puerto Rican land by tomorrow morning, when the mosquitoes discover new meat, boom – you’ll be bonded.

MARÍA. When the plane was descending, I saw San Juan... the lights looked like stars in the universe. It was beautiful. Oh, here I have something for you.
IRIS. Chica you didn’t have to… what did you get me?
MARÍA. Here. (MARÍA gives IRIS a bottle of perfume.)
NORMA. (O.S.) Iris, go to sleep!
IRIS. I’m coming… I don’t want to hear my mother’s voice.
Oye thank you.
MARÍA. You’re welcome… Buenas noches Iris!
IRIS. Good night!

(IRIS exits. MARÍA takes a deep breath.)
MARÍA. I love it here… No in Spanish… Me encanta estar aquí.
(Lights shift.)

End of Scene 1

Scene 2

(The next morning. The radio is on. VÍCTOR enters with new hankies, with his initials on them.)

MARÍA. GOOD MORNING!
VÍCTOR. María, I like the hankies you gave me… Gracias, but they are too nice, I can’t blow my nose in them.
MARÍA. I’m glad you like them. (MARÍA looks out into the audience, as if she’s looking out through a window.) Isn’t there supposed to be a brook out there? Mami said she swam in a brook right outside of the house when she was little.
VÍCTOR. That brook dried up years ago. Iris was a little girl.
(NORMA enters.)
NORMA. Look Víctor, I got some yerba buena for Manolo. Doña Fela made the tea for me.
MARÍA. Bendición Tía!
NORMA. Qué la Virgen te acompañe. María please turn off the radio!
VÍCTOR. It’s okay, I’ll do it. (VÍCTOR exits off-stage to turn off the radio.)
MARÍA. I made some coffee.
NORMA. I know you were being helpful, but this is my kitchen.
MARÍA. I didn’t mean any harm.
VÍCTOR. (VÍCTOR re-enters.) Don’t worry mi’ja. Gracias por el café. I am going into town now to buy the part my truck needs.
NORMA. I told you to get one of those new Mitsubishi trucks last year… but you don’t listen to me.
VÍCTOR. I’d rather shoot myself. The truck will work with that part. See you later.
(VÍCTOR exits. PAUSE.)
NORMA. I don’t like people cooking in my kitchen. María, this morning you took too long in the shower. I know people from New York are used to wasting everything, but water costs money here... and I don’t want to hear music in this house.

MARÍA. Okay Tía, I’m sorry. (MARÍA picks up a gift from the table.) I have your gift here.

NORMA. Not now, I have to give Manolo his tea.

MARÍA. I’ll bring him his tea.

NORMA. He’s not up for visits.

MARÍA. I want to... cheer him up.

NORMA. ¿Anímarlo?

MARÍA. Yes, and I also wanted to give him the gift I brought for him. It’s always nice to have visitors when you’re sick. If he doesn’t want me to stay, I’ll leave. I promise.

NORMA. Make sure he drinks the tea.

MARÍA. Okay.

NORMA. Don’t stay there too long.

MARÍA. Yes tía. (MARÍA exits with the tea and his gift.)

(Lights shift.)

End of Scene 2

Scene 3

(Lights up on the margueina. MANOLO’s room is still dark. MARÍA knocks on the door.)

MANOLO. Come in. (MARÍA enters.) Olga... Olga...

MARÍA. No tío Manolo, it’s me María, Olga’s daughter.

MANOLO. Turn on the light.

(MARÍA turns it on. MANOLO sits up with difficulty. MARÍA sees a great many theatre posters. African Style. Comedy and Tragedy masks. shelves of records and an old record player. clothes everywhere and books on the floor.)

María? You look exactly like your mother. You’re all grown up.

MARÍA. Yes. I’m twenty-two years old... How do you feel?

MANOLO. I feel old, like rotten junk, but now that I see your beautiful face, I am very happy.

MARÍA. Here is your tea and I have a gift for you.

MANOLO. Give me the gift.

MARÍA. You have to drink your tea first. That’s what Tía said.

MANOLO. Nah... What did you bring me?... Tell me...

MARÍA. ...Okay... (MANOLO tries to open the gift but his hands are a bit stiff. MARÍA helps him open the gift.) Here.

MANOLO. Thank you. (MANOLO holds up two eds.) Beethoven and La Lupe... my favorites.

MARÍA. Mami knew you would like them.

MANOLO. How is my sister and the man who kidnapped her to New York?

MARÍA. My mother and father are doing well... they send their love. Your tea...

MANOLO. Yuch!... how about some big, fat, juicy pork chops?

MARÍA. There’s no way tía Norma will let you eat pork chops. Come on. (MANOLO doesn’t want to drink the tea.) Tía allowed me to come here on the condition that you would drink your tea.

MANOLO. You can drink it and tell Norma I did.
MARÍA. Ave María.
MANOLO. I'm not a baby.
MARÍA. You’re acting like a baby. Why do men always act like babies when they’re sick?
MANOLO. I’m not sick, I’m dying.
MARÍA. You shouldn’t say that.
MANOLO. Why not, it’s true. We all have to die.
MARÍA. Well you’re alive now, drink your tea. (MANOLO lets MARÍA put the cup to his mouth. He drinks the tea.)
MANOLO. No more… YA!
MARÍA. (MARÍA looks at all of the theatre posters.) Did you see all of those plays?
MANOLO. Some… I performed in others.
MARÍA. As an actor? I don’t believe you.
MANOLO. Don’t believe me.
MARÍA. What about Hamlet?
MANOLO. That one I saw.
MARÍA. Life is a Dream?
MANOLO. I did lights for that one.
MARÍA. Don Juan Tenorio?
MANOLO. I did the props.
MARÍA. You told me you were an actor!
MANOLO. You didn’t point to the play I was in.
MARÍA. Which one?
MANOLO. ..."Romeo and Juliet."
MARÍA. What part?!
MANOLO. Romeo of course.
MARÍA. (MARÍA laughs.) No way! I bet you only know “Romeo, Romeo, where art thou Romeo… "
MANOLO. "O Romeo, Romeo, whereFORE art thou Romeo?"
MARÍA. “Deny thy father and refuse thy name; or if thou wilt not be but sworn my love, And I’ll no longer be a Capulet…”
MANOLO. “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose By any other name would smell as sweet…”
MARÍA. You really played Romeo?
MANOLO. For one performance. I used to work backstage… but one night Romeo got sick and I knew the part, so I went on as Romeo. Everyone said I was the best Romeo they had ever seen. You’d make a great Juliet.
MARÍA. I played Juliet once.
MANOLO. Are you an actress?
MARÍA. I did a couple of plays in college.
MANOLO. Then you are an actress.
MARÍA. I wanted to study theatre, but Mami says it’s not a stable career.
MANOLO. So you studied something stable?
MARÍA. I double majored in Business Administration and Puerto Rican Studies. I really loved my Puerto Rican Studies classes.
MANOLO. (Laughs out loud.) Puerto Rican Studies, ¡qué bobería!!
MARÍA. It wasn’t silly. I wanted to learn about my culture, there’s nothing wrong with that.
MANOLO. You speak Spanish pretty good for a gringa.
MARÍA. I’m not a gringa!
MANOLO. Oh, okay, sorry. Mira, go over there… that bag… look inside. (MARÍA does so.) I bet you didn’t study this in Puerto Rican Studies.
MARÍA. (MARÍA looks in the bag.) A güiro… do you know how to play it?
MANOLO. …Of course I know how to play it!
MARÍA. Play something.
MANOLO. The last time I played it was a long time ago. I don’t know if I can. Here, you play it. Take the pick and scrape the side. (MARÍA moves to play the güiro.) AH NO! Stop, stop… give it back to me. (MANOLO plays a short rhythm with difficulty. When he gets the rhythm, he stops playing and rubs his wrists.)
MARÍA. Ah... that's excellent.
MANOLO. I used to play better... you just have to know the rhythm. I love playing it. I made this one.
MARÍA. Teach me how to play it.
MANOLO. Not now m’ija. I’m a little tired.
MARÍA. Okay. (She gets up to leave.)
MANOLO. Thank you for the gift María.
MARÍA. If you need anything just let me know.

(MARÍA exits and as lights fade on MANOLO’s room, the playing of a güiro is heard.)

End of Scene 3

Scene 4

(IRIS enters. She’s dressed very well.)
NORMA. What smells so good?
IRIS. The perfume Tía sent me.
NORMA. Oh...
IRIS. Mami, did you open the gift that Tía Olga sent you?
NORMA. Uh... I haven’t had any time...
IRIS. Help me with this.

(NORMA helps IRIS with a necklace. MARÍA enters.)
NORMA. Did he drink the tea?
MARÍA. Yes tía.
NORMA. How is he feeling?
MARÍA. He’s weak, but he looks good. You look great. Where are you going?
IRIS. I have a job interview.
MARÍA. Think positive... um... feel... positivo, you’ll get the job.
IRIS. This is my third interview for a pharmaceutical company in two weeks.
NORMA. Don’t worry, you’ll get something.
IRIS. When? There’s got to be some company somewhere on this island that can hire me.
MARÍA. Why would you want to work for a pharmaceutical company? They pollute the environment.
IRIS. They pay really good. You know this is not New York, where there are jobs everywhere.
MARÍA. It’s just as difficult to find jobs in New York. (MARÍA is scratching her arms.)
IRIS. You bonded with Puerto Rico already?
MARÍA. Hmm?
IRIS. The mosquitos branded you like one of abuela’s cows!
MARÍA. I wasn’t bitten, I see it more like an initiation into the tribe... Mami sent a rosary for Abuela. I want to hang it on her headstone.
NORMA. She's not buried here. Your mother moved mami to Rincón, which is four hours away, on the other side of the island. Didn't your mother tell you that?

MARÍA. Yes, but the island is small. (Taking out a map.) We can drive straight across to Rincón.

IRIS. It looks like you can cross the island, but you have to drive through the central mountain range and that takes hours, up and down mountains... or you can drive on the coast, around the mountains, but it takes just as long. Going to abuela's grave is a whole day adventure that begins at dawn.

MARÍA. I have so many plans for my visit and I wanted to begin with abuela... I want to experience my homeland and abuela's part of my history. From there to El Morro... and all of Old San Juan – I want to see El Parque de las Palomas, the Pablo Casals Museum, and of course I want to see Cataño. Then the ENTIRE ISLAND.

NORMA. María, we're not on vacation.

MARÍA. Um... I was thinking Iris and I could visit these places... and since you're not working right now...

IRIS. María, remember my job interview in San Juan...

MARÍA. Tomorrow? Nice island drive... two cousins driving on the coast, smelling the ocean, checking out Puerto Rican men...

NORMA. She has a boyfriend.

IRIS. Yeah, but Ricardo doesn't own me. The problem is that I only have his car until tonight. He lent it to me to go pick you up and for my job interview today.

MARÍA. Okay... um... I can go with you to your job interview and then we can go to El Morro and walk around Old San Juan.

IRIS. I'm really not in the mood to see things I didn't like the first time I saw them. AND I can't think about seeing Puerto Rico now. I'm very nervous about the interview, if I don't get this job... I can't handle another rejection.

MARÍA. I'll help you do breathing exercises. I know a really good one. Try this – breathe in, then release with a uuuuuuu... to help you relax... uuuuuuuummm...

IRIS. NI ÍEEE, NO HU!

MARÍA. Okay forget about the breathing exercises... A trip to San Juan might be good for you, you can relax there... please Iris... please, please... I'm only going to be here for two weeks... we only have the car today...

NORMA. Iris, take her to San Juan.

IRIS. Okay, okay, okay I'll do it.

MARÍA. Thank you!! Thank you!!

IRIS. Fine. (MARÍA puts on her jacket with the Puerto Rican flag on it.) Take that off!!

MARÍA. It's my favorite jacket.

IRIS. I'm not walking around San Juan with you in that jacket!

MARÍA. Nobody is even going to notice it... Trust me!

IRIS. We're all Puerto Rican in this island we don't have to advertise it.

MARÍA. Okay, okay... (MARÍA takes off her jacket.) Got my camera. I'm ready.

IRIS. Bendición mami.

MARÍA. Bendición tía.

NORMA. Qué la virgen a acompañe.

(MARÍA and IRIS exit.)

End of Scene 4
Scene 5

(iris and maría enter and find norma.)

iris. ay! my feet are killing me? we walked all over old san juan. and we had to stop every five seconds to take a picture of a puerto rican moment...

maría. don't complain, you had a great time.

iris. she took pictures of el morro, facing the water, then facing inland; all the taino statues in the museum. you know your niece wanted me to go into one of those jail cells and put my hands in the irons and pose for her stupid camera. i told her forget it! then she went in there and started acting like she was being tortured and i had to take a picture of her. a natural picture. i almost left her in the jail!

(beethoven's ninth symphony, "ode to joy," fourth movement is heard.)

iris. what's that?

maría. i think it's beethoven.

iris. from where? (she listens for a second.) mami it's coming from manolo's room.

norma. really? it can't be.

maría. oh, i like beethoven... look tía, i bought a miniature figure of a coquí. it's so cute. (the music continues for a beat then stops.)

iris. mami do you know esta loca here gave up a trip to europe to see this puny island?

maría. mami and papi wanted me to see europe. they felt a trip to europe would make me a well-rounded person... how do you say that?

iris. una persona más completa...

maría. yes, exactly... i felt it was more important to visit my country. connect with my ancestors... my grandmother, my great-grandmother... my family...

iris. antecesores.

maría. exactly... mami is always talking about puerto rico and i wanted to see it for myself. i have the rest of my life to see the world. i dreamt about puerto rico for such a long time... el morro was more than i expected. i felt a true sense of history. while i was walking around, i had this feeling of... of... peace. as my feet touched the stones, it felt right... i was hypnotized by the sound of the waves crashing against the fort's walls... i realized then that i had come home... the sound of the coquis, the smell of nature, the sun that burns your skin in one day...

iris. the mosquitos.

maría. even the mosquitos bites... all are signs of welcome... i can't go back to new york. this is my home. i'm staying in puerto rico.

iris. you have a life in new york.

maría. i don't have anything there. i mean, i have mami and papi, but i could visit them.

iris. how about your boyfriend?

maría. we broke up a month ago.

iris. don't you have a job in new york?

maría. i'll quit and look for a job here.

iris. wake up maría, i can't even get a job. my name's on every waiting list from here to the san juan.

maría. i'll try... we'll try together... we'll both look for jobs.

iris. great, more competition! what if it takes you two or three years?

maría. i have faith that it won't.

norma. what is your mother going to say about this?

maría. ... mami will understand...

norma. i'm not sure about that... and the interview, iris?

iris. they liked me, i'm very educated but i have to wait for an opening... the same as always. i have a bachelor's degree and a teaching license and i can't get a job. unless i want to work in a factory, which according to the classifieds, pays more.
MARÍA. The job situation is the same in New York... although you’d have better luck in New York, there’s a shortage of qualified bilingual teachers in the public schools. You’d get a job immediately.

NORMA. Iris, you don’t have to go all the way to New York to find a job.

IRIS. How’s the money?

MARÍA. Pretty good, $35,000 a year starting salary, better than in private schools.

IRIS. What? That’s great.

NORMA. Iris, New York is very expensive!

IRIS. So is Puerto Rico.

NORMA. People in New York live like animals.

IRIS. Mami, people here act like animals driving on the highway.

NORMA. New York is also overcrowded and full of drugs.

IRIS. So is San Juan.

NORMA. But not where we live... and it’s very cold in New York.

IRIS. I’d love to see snow sometime in my life.

MARÍA. You should just imagine it Iris.

NORMA. When you marry Ricardo, he’s not going to live in New York.

IRIS. As long as we have jobs here, otherwise we become the last Puerto Rican immigrants looking for work... and he doesn’t give me permission to do things. I do what I want to do.

MARÍA. Just like when mami left Puerto Rico looking for work.

NORMA. Your mother didn’t leave to find work, she left because she wanted to do it.

MONCHI. (off-stage) Buenos días.

(MONCHI enters.)

NORMA. Buenos días Monchi.

MONCHI. Buenos días. I have some plátanos, ñames, and grapefruits for you.

NORMA. Gracias Monchi.

IRIS. Oye, Dr. Jibarito, what are you doing here? Aren’t you supposed to be collecting worms?

MONCHI. Buenos días cousin-in-law.

IRIS. You’re not my cousin-in-law yet.

MONCHI. When you marry Ricardo, you are going to be the most beautiful cousin in the family.

IRIS. I can’t believe you’re related to Ricardo.

NORMA. Have some coffee Monchi.

MONCHI. Muchas Gracias, señora. Too bad your daughter is not as good a hostess as you are.

IRIS. Oh excuse me, María I want you to meet the last hillbilly, el último jíbaro – Monchi. Monchi this is my cousin Miss Puerto Rico.

MARÍA. Hi Monchi... ignore my cousin, my name is María.

MONCHI. Don’t worry about it, nobody listens to Iris... I’m Ramón, but everybody calls me Monchi. (She picks up a grapefruit.)

IRIS. He’s a bit unusual like you. He got this scholarship to study engineering but he became a farmer – a high class hick, with an agricultural degree.

MARÍA. Iris, living off the land is noble.

IRIS. I like my food the gringo way, in plastic or in cans.

MARÍA. Hmm... these grapefruits smell so good. Puerto Rico is perfect, the mountains, the coquis and my people.

MONCHI. Are you here on vacation?

MARÍA. Yes and no... I want to discover my roots.

IRIS. You wanna a root, here’s a root. (IRIS hands MARÍA a ñame.)

MARÍA. Thanks Iris.

MONCHI. Oye prof (slang for “professor”), mind your business.

IRIS. ¡Bahócate! (“Choke yourself!”)

NORMA. Ave María, how’s business Monchi?
MONCHI. Good, too good! I can't keep up. During Christmas I expected to sell a lot, but not this much. I don't have time to do everything I need to do. If I'm delivering, I'm not gathering; if I'm gathering, I'm not planting... How's Manolo doing?

NORMA. The same.

IRIS. María, Monchi owns his own farm. Ooooh!

MARÍA. I think it's great that you own your own farm.

IRIS. Miss Puerto Rico defends Doctor Jibarito.

(VÍCTOR enters.)

NORMA. What happened? You came back early.

VÍCTOR. Carmelo couldn't get me the right part for the truck, ¡qué chavienda!... Monchi how are you?

MONCHI. Good. How are you?

VÍCTOR. Muy bien. Did you meet my beautiful niece?

MONCHI. Yes I did. Victor if you need anything you can use my volki.

IRIS. Forget it!

VÍCTOR. Gracias Monchi, maybe another day.

MARÍA. What's a volki?

IRIS. Monchi's car of death, with no breaks.

MONCHI. I have an old volkswagen I use to take my fruits and vegetables around. I'm saving for a truck.

VÍCTOR. Don't worry Monchi, when my truck is working you can use it.

IRIS. Don't hold your breath Monchi.

MONCHI. Gracias, Víctor.

MARÍA. It can't be that bad if it's working.

MONCHI. It takes me where I need to go.

MARÍA. Maybe he can take us to Rincón...

NORMA. NO! (Everyone looks at NORMA.) Monchi just said he was very busy and the car can't travel so far.

MONCHI. The volki has never gone that far... but... I'm so busy now.

IRIS. I know, María why don't you help our jibarito?

MARÍA. That's a fantastic idea.

IRIS. Por favor María! I was just kidding.

MARÍA. Working on a farm is a great way to learn about the land.

MONCHI. You can't spend your vacation picking plátanos.

MARÍA. Why not? I insist... really... you need the help and I'm offering... I want to do it... that way you'll have some free time.

MONCHI. ...I do need the help... uhmm... okay...

MARÍA. Perfect.

MONCHI. Okay... tomorrow morning at dawn.

MARÍA. I'll be there.

MONCHI. Adios... I have to go into town.

VÍCTOR. Adios Monchi... take it easy.

NORMA. Regards to your family.

(MONCHI exits.)

IRIS. Now you're going to dig your hands into real Puerto Rican land.

MARÍA. I'm going to commune with Mother Nature!

End of Scene 5
Scene 6

(MARÍA is up late in the evening speaking to her mother on the phone.)

MARÍA. Mami I'll find a job here. I'm sure I will... I hate that job... they won't care... I'll mail in my resignation... I don't have to give them two weeks notice! Believe me, they won't miss me at all... I don't care if he doesn't give me a reference!... What do you mean I can't live here?!!... You can't tell me that, I'm twenty-two years old, I can do whatever I want!! Mom, mom, mami, let me speak, (MARÍA holds the phone away from her.) Mami, are you finished? You're not even giving me a chance to... okay, okay, because I love it here, I love Puerto Rico, do you understand that? I want to live in Puerto Rico, mom... you're always talking about how much you love Puerto Rico, your childhood... It's not different for you. Your love for Puerto Rico is more than memories... Well then I want my own Puerto Rican memories... mom forget it... you never listen to me... anyway mom... okay mom, I have to go. Long distance is expensive, bye... What? Yes everybody loved the gifts... tía Norma... yes I gave her the gift you sent her... I don't know if she opened it... she didn't say anything to me. Okay... bye. (MARÍA hangs up.) ARGH!!!

End of Scene 6

Scene 7

(MONCHI and MARÍA enter. It is very early morning in the morning.)

MONCHI. Okay... now pick the yucca, and put them in the sack. I'll get the yautía...

(There is one sack half full.)

MARÍA. Which one is the yucca?

MONCHI. This brown vegetable, it's really a root... you see it looks like it has hair on it.

MARÍA. Okay... I brought coffee. Do you want some?

MONCHI. Not now, we have only two hours to get the yucca, yautía, and the plátanos, and the gandules, we can't forget those. We have to bring all this to town and deliver them to the stores that ordered them. (MONCHI works very quickly, but MARÍA picks up one yucca at a time.) I have more sacks when you've filled that one.

MARÍA. Okay. (MARÍA is trying to pull up a yucca, very daintily and it won't come out. MONCHI sees how MARÍA is working, he laughs.) What's so funny?

MONCHI. The yucca isn't going to bite you.

MARÍA. Don't make fun of me. It won't come out... it's stuck.

MONCHI. You have to stick your hand in the Earth and pull up the root. (MONCHI grabs her hand and plunges both of their hands into the dirt. PAUSE. MARÍA freezes. They look at each other.) Your hands are going to get dirty.

MARÍA. I'm not afraid of dirt.

MONCHI. Good... and you have to work faster, we don't have a lot of time. (MARÍA tries to pick up one of the sacks. It's very heavy.) I got it.

MARÍA. No, I can do it. I said I would help you.

MONCHI. Okay... bring it to the volki. (MARÍA tries to pick it up again but she can't. MONCHI picks up the sack.) It's okay, I'll take this. You keep picking the yucca and I'll get the plátanos. (MONCHI exits with the sack.)
MÁRIA. (Extremely exhausted.) Whatever you say.
MONCHI. (O.S.) Oh carajo!
MÁRIA. What happened?
MONCHI. They're yellow! (MONCHI re-enters.)
MÁRIA. What are?
MONCHI. The plátanos. The plátanos are yellow. I can't sell them like that.
MÁRIA. People like ripe plátanos.
MONCHI. Not for pasteles, people need green ones to make pasteles or acaparríñas. What a waste?!
MÁRIA. Don't you have more green ones?
MONCHI. Yeah, up the hill. There's no time now to get them... That's it, I'm ruined!
MÁRIA. How can you be ruined? You have so many more green plátanos.
MONCHI. In two or three days all of those plátanos will be yellow, then I won't be able to sell them, unless I get people to help me pick them, but that's not going to happen because no body wants to work on a farm.
MÁRIA. I'm helping you.
MONCHI. It's not enough... Mária I have two cousins that were laid off and I offered to PAY them to work for me and they refuse to do it.
MÁRIA. Some people are not cut out for farming.
MONCHI. I can't even get people to pick up the vegetables for free. They could be starving and they'd rather buy two plátanos for a dollar in the supermarket... Unbelievable!
MÁRIA. Want some coffee now?
MONCHI. Sure. (MÁRIA pours coffee, they sit down and drink.) I'm sorry I blew up.
MÁRIA. I understand... you must feel overwhelmed.
MONCHI. I didn't realize that running a farm would be so hard...
MÁRIA. But it's so peaceful.
MARÍA. Until then, I suggest you guys get some help or you won’t make it to the center of the island. AH!!
MONCHI. What happened?
MARÍA. Something’s in my hair. AH!!
MONCHI. Stay still!
MARÍA. It’s scratching me!! AH!!
MONCHI. ¡Espérate!!
MARÍA. Get it off... AH!!
MONCHI. There I got it.
MARÍA. AH!! ... What was it?
MONCHI. A lizard, you scared it.
MARÍA. I scared it?! It was digging into my head Monchi.
MONCHI. Yeah, I can see your brain through that big hole in your head.
MARÍA. Ha, ha, very funny. (MONCHI caresses her hair.)
MONCHI. You have beautiful hair.
MARÍA. Thank you. (MARÍA moves away from him.)
MONCHI. Sorry... you have a boyfriend, right?
MARÍA. ...No... I... not anymore.
MONCHI. But you still think of him, right?
MARÍA. I don’t want to go through that again.
MONCHI. This guy sounds like a big mamacito (" jerk"). I bet he works in an office. (MARÍA laughs.) He pushes paper right! I knew it, he has soft hands... see my hands, dirty, hard, and calloused. I make my living with these hands.
MARÍA. My hands are dirty too.
MONCHI. (Touching her hands.) Those are the prettiest, dirtiest hands I’ve ever seen.
MARÍA. More coffee?
MONCHI. Yeah.
MARÍA. (MARÍA pours coffee.) What about you?
MONCHI. What?
MARÍA. Do you have a girlfriend?
MONCHI. How many women do you know want to go out with a farmer?
MARÍA. Why not?
MONCHI. If I’d become an engineer that would have been a different story. Everybody thinks I’m crazy. Nobody believed that I could give up such a great future to do this. The only people that supported me were Manolo and Norma.
MARÍA. Norma? My tía Norma?
MONCHI. She understood my love of seeing things grow.
MARÍA. I can understand Manolo, but Norma?
MONCHI. I used to help her with her flower garden. She taught me alot.
MARÍA. She’s not very affectionate with me.
MONCHI. That’s the way she is. But she takes very good care of Manolo and she paid for Iris’ school. She’s your aunt, but she’s also a stranger to you... it takes time to get to know someone... Come on, we have to get to town. (They grab the sacks and exit.)

End of Scene 7
Scene 8

(Later that evening. MARÍA enters MANOLO’s room. She is walking slowly and in pain.)

MANOLO. What happened to you?
MARÍA. I’m in love.
MANOLO. With Monchi? I knew it.
MARÍA. NO! With my beloved island...
MANOLO. Oh, Síentate. (She walks, with great difficulty to the chair and sits down.)
MARÍA. I was picking gifts from the Earth. AH!! Beautiful jewels brought forth from Mother Earth.
MANOLO. Vaya regalito. ("go precious gift")
MARÍA. Everyday I feel closer to Puerto Rico. I know for certain this is where I belong.
MANOLO. Planting yucca?
MARÍA. I’m trying to be serious! AH! My whole body’s in pain.
MANOLO. You only worked one day.
MARÍA. Even the muscles behind my ears are sore.
MANOLO. You need a hot bath.
MARÍA. Ah... I can’t move... I really found Puerto Rico today.
MANOLO. Where? I’ve been looking for it for a long time and I haven’t found it.
MARÍA. In the ground, in the trees, in the yucca... there’s something spiritual about collecting food that people are going to eat... Oh, oh, you know tío Victor gave me a rabbit... beautiful, grey, with green eyes. I named her Stella. What a wonderful day. I’m going to help Monchi again tomorrow.
MANOLO. I think it’s because you like him.
MARÍA. NO!! I don’t hate him. I mean I like him, I just don’t like him like that.
MANOLO. If I were a girl, I’d go out with Monchi.
MARÍA. You’re not his type.

MANOLO. At least you won’t starve to death.
MARÍA. I don’t want to go out with anyone for a very long time.
MANOLO. AH!! Somebody broke your heart.
MARÍA. That’s in my past. I don’t want to talk about that.
MANOLO. That means your heart was really broken, aba- ratao, torn apart, aplastao!!
MARÍA. Drop it! I told you that’s all part of my past... I put my heart back together. Today I was reborn.
MANOLO. You can’t forget the things that happened to you.
MARÍA. Yes I can... I just did... See? (She snaps fingers.) I’m the new and improved María.
MANOLO. Those things you want to forget brought you to this point right here at, this moment.
MARÍA. The new and improved María doesn’t look back with anger! I told you my past is my past! ... Damnit! AH!
MANOLO. Um, hm...
MARÍA. Stop looking at me... ARGH... we did “Romeo and Juliet” together in school, okay!
MANOLO. Who?
MARÍA. The guy!
MANOLO. Who?
MARÍA. The guy, the guy... the guy, you know, the guy we’re talking about, THÉ GUY...
MANOLO. Hm, the guy. Did he play Romeo?
MARÍA. NO! He played Tybalt.
MANOLO. At least he gets killed!
MARÍA. I was madly in love with ‘the guy’ – he was Sicilian-American. He told his family I was also Sicilian because they were racists AND I went along with it like a big pendeja!
MANOLO. “Love Be Blind, cannot hit the mark!”
MARÍA. Blind, deaf and dumb. Then he breaks up with me!
MANOLO. Why don’t you just date Puerto Rican guys?
MARÍA. Because the Puerto Rican guys I know, want to date Barbie dolls. The curious thing was that Peter...
MANOLO. Who?
MARÍA. The guy... he looked Puerto Rican and even danced a mean salsa.
MANOLO. You went out with him because he looked Puerto Rican and he went out with you because you didn’t look Puerto Rican... ¿qué reguero! Sorry María... you cannot hide the rice and beans in those eyes! I don’t know how he missed them.
MARÍA. Sometimes I feel Puerto Rican and sometimes I don’t. These last couple of days I have felt so Puerto Rican... like never before. It’s all so confusing in New York... mami and papi never taught me Spanish. I had to learn it in school. They kept me sheltered in private schools. They wanted me to be American, to succeed. I’m glad I went to those schools but I don’t have any roots, a tree cannot live without roots...
MANOLO. Nobody can take your roots away from you. Even the smallest plants have roots.
MARÍA. Not me. I’m rootless, like when a yucca is plucked from the Earth.
MANOLO. If you think you’re a yucca now, coño you’re really confused.
MARÍA. If I were a yucca everyone would know who or what I was. Then I’d have no problems.
MANOLO. You should find a vegetable psychiatrist.
MARÍA. Very funny Manolo... I don’t know where I belong... I need to know who I am.
MANOLO. There’s no doubt that we are related – we’ve both been in the theatre – we are a dramatic family. Everyone has talent, except Inez, she’s my second cousin, or maybe third, she has the worst voice on Earth... even the priest stopped her from singing in church because he said she scared the heck out of the holy spirit. (MARÍA laughs.) I never let her sing with me. Who I did let sing with me was Norma. She has a beautiful voice.
MARÍA. Norma?
MANOLO. She sings real good. She was in a jíbaro band. Some guy came by one day and wanted her to make a record. Your grandmother said no.
MARÍA. Mami is like Abuela. She loves to say no to everything.
MANOLO. Like Norma.
MARÍA. Ooh listen to the coquis...
MANOLO. You like them?
MARÍA. They make a wonderful sound. Love should be like this sound, calm, soothing, peaceful.
MANOLO. Do you understand what they’re saying?
MARÍA. I hear them.
MANOLO. No, no, listen closely... They’re singing a song. Let’s go outside.
MARÍA. You can’t go outside.
MANOLO. Come on, (MANOLO struggles to get up.) I want to get fresh air... I feel good today... I want to hear the coquí song under the stars... (He stands up.)
MARÍA. Slowly, slowly... (MARÍA helps him. MANOLO takes small steps.)
MANOLO. Allí está. Listen carefully for their song... The song is very soft and powerful at the same time.
MARÍA. My yoga teacher said Puerto Rico is a power vortex. It could be from the coquis.
MANOLO. Sh! Listen.
(NORMA enters and watches them for a beat. She is in shock.)
NORMA. Manolo... Manolo!
MANOLO. Norma, mi amor, come listen to the song of the coquis.
NORMA. Manolo... how did you get outside of the room?
MANOLO. I walked.
NORMA. Don’t lie to me Manolo... María did you do this?
MARÍA. Tía, I swear he got up on his own.

NORMA. He's been stuck in a bed for five years and TODAY he decides to stand up... (MANOLO finds difficulty balancing himself. MARÍA helps him.) Guidao... Oh my God... (NORMA grabs his arm.)

MANOLO. I'm fine... You see... Maybe those teas are working...

NORMA. ...Maybe... Let's go inside now.

MANOLO. I haven't been outside in a long time. (NORMA helps MANOLO back into his room.) María, you have to listen very carefully to understand their song.

(NORMA and MANOLO exit. MARÍA remains trying to listen to the coqui song as the lights fade.)

End of Scene 8

Scene 9

(It is New Year's Eve.)

MARÍA. Something smells good.

NORMA. Víctor is a great cook.

IRIS. María look who's here?

(MONCHI enters.)

NORMA. Felicidades Monchi!

MONCHI. Felicidades! Hola María.

MARÍA. Hí Monchi...

MONCHI. Hello cousin... (He kisses IRIS on the cheek.)

IRIS. What was that for?

MONCHI. Greetings from my cousin.

IRIS. You don't have to do me any favors... I'll see him in the casino later on tonight... why was he invited?

NORMA. Because he's family.

MARÍA. Something smells really good.

NORMA. Víctor made this special for you. María. His favorite dish.

VÍCTOR. (VÍCTOR enters with a plate.) ¡Ay qué bueno... ay qué bueno está este guiso! Your rabbit.

MARÍA. My rabbit... (pause) This is Stella?!

VÍCTOR. In my special sauce.

IRIS. I love the rabbit papi makes.

NORMA. Víctor you outdid yourself this time.

MARÍA. You cooked Stella AH!!!! I just fed her this morning.

NORMA. María, Víctor cooked it especially for you, as a gift.

VÍCTOR. M'ija, what's wrong, you don't like rabbit?

MARÍA. Yes, but I can't eat Stella. She was my pet. You gave her to me.

VÍCTOR. No, I did give it to you, but to cook her. I should have told you.

MARÍA. Yes tío.
NORMA. She doesn’t understand, she’s not from here.

VICTOR. I’m sorry nena, you don’t have to eat it.

MARÍA. No, I’m sorry tío. Thank you.

(MANOLO enters singing the Christmas song. “El Camello del Melchior” (“Melchior’s Camel”) to NORMA. He walks with a cane.)

MANOLO. Coño, something smells good... smells like rabbit, give me a leg.

NORMA. Manolo, what are you doing outside of your room?

MANOLO. I want to celebrate the New Year. And I’m hungry, I could eat a bull, but I’ll settle for rabbit.

NORMA. No señor, no solid food for you. You’re not breaking your diet. Were you drinking?

MANOLO. No... I’m high... (He laughs)... I’m high on life. It’s a wonderful thing.

NORMA. You shouldn’t be walking around!

MANOLO. Oye, Víctor “El camello de Melchior está barato…” (“Melchior’s camel is broken.” MANOLO continues singing the song.)

VÍCTOR. Norma I didn’t believe you when you said Manolo could walk.

IRIS. Tío Manolo’s cured!

MANOLO. I love life. Life is beautiful Norma... Feel it all around you... Monchi, hombre if my niece doesn’t go out with you I will.

MONCHI. Thanks for the offer.

NORMA. Víctor help me bring him downstairs.

VÍCTOR. Norma, he’s getting better, he’s walking.

NORMA. I don’t care what he’s doing, walking, standing, jodiendo, he has to go back to bed!

VÍCTOR. Norma, it’s New Years, let him stay.

NORMA. Can’t you see what is happening to him?

IRIS. Mami, he’s getting better.

NORMA. We don’t know that!! The doctor is the one that says he’s getting better.

VÍCTOR. Norma this is a party!

NORMA. I know we’re having a party but he belongs downstairs. Let’s go Manolo.

MANOLO. No. I am going to celebrate the New Year. (To IRIS.) I gave you life. I am the reason that you are alive.

IRIS. I thought Mami gave birth to me.

MANOLO. It was me that introduced your father and mother Smarty pants. Remember Víctor? We working on the cana. Where’s María? Did you take pictures of the sugar cane? That is the really Puerto Rico. Sing, something Norma.

NORMA. Manolo leave me alone, just stop it!

MANOLO. (To IRIS.) You’re still so beautiful. Dance with me.

IRIS. I don’t dance with old men.

MANOLO. The wind is older and it still blows.

IRIS. Mami, it’s almost 12:00...

MANOLO. ¡FELIZ AÑO NUEVO!

IRIS. Not yet tío.

EVERYONE. 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1

(MANOLO counts but he is not in sync with everyone else.)

¡¡FELIZ AÑO NUEVO!!

(MANOLO sits down on a chair. He loses all of his energy.)

VÍCTOR. Let’s bring him to his room.

NORMA. This would not have happened if he was downstairs... Manolo get up.

MANOLO. Hm... ya... ya...

NORMA. Get up! You have to go downstairs... Coño if I found out you were drinking... (NORMA and VÍCTOR pick him up.)
MANOLO. Hm... “El Camello del Melchior pasó la inspección” (“Melchior’s Camel passed the inspection.”)
VICTOR... Victor...
MANOLO. Vamonos Manolo...
VICTOR. Victor?
MANOLO. Tell Norma to sing... I want to hear Norma sing.
NORMA. Forget about singing, you have to go downstairs.
(NORMA and VICTOR have him, he trips and IRIS, MARÍA and MONCHI run to help.)
IRIS. I got him... it’s okay...
MARÍA. You sure?
IRIS. Yeah.
NORMA. Buenas noches Monchi.
VICTOR. Felicidades hombre.
MONCHI. Buenas noches.
IRIS. Good night, my cousin the jíbaro and Marí... (VICTOR, NORMA, MANOLO and IRIS exit.)
MARÍA. My cousin isn’t very discreet.
MONCHI. Then she wouldn’t be Iris. (pause) It’s unbelievable, Manolo’s has gotten better since you’ve been here.
MARÍA. Yeah...
MONCHI. Happy New Year. (He approaches MARÍA.)
MARÍA. Happy New Year. (He tries to kiss MARÍA, but she backs away.)
MONCHI. I have to go now.
MARÍA. Yeah...
MONCHI. Good night.
MARÍA. Good night.
MONCHI. Are you still going to help me tomorrow?
MARÍA. Of course... I’ll see you at 5:00am sharp.
MONCHI. Looking forward to it. (MONCHI exits.)

End of Scene 9

Scene 10

(Early morning. A figure enters dragging a huge sack of plátanos. It is IRIS.)
IRIS. Ah! Carajo! (She kicks the plátanos. MONCHI enters, also carrying two sacks of plátanos on his shoulders.) This farming jíbaro thing stinks.
MONCHI. You’re looking for a job, I have one for you.
IRIS. “Job?!” Hah! Monchi this isn’t a real job with opportunities.
MONCHI. Oh yes it is. And the pay is good.
IRIS. I’m not going to be a professional jíbaro thank you. I wasn’t made to work the land... (IRIS takes off her gloves.) See! I broke a nail!
MONCHI. So you prefer a factory that pollutes the environment?
IRIS. Don’t get all righteous on me... I prefer the classroom!
MONCHI. You’ll always have a job. People need food every day.
(NORMA enters.)
NORMA. Ah, Dios mio, Monchi, this is wonderful. We have more than enough to make the pasteles. What do you think of one dollar a pastel?
MONCHI. Perfect. (NORMA takes money out of her pocket.)
NORMA. Here.
MONCHI. Don’t worry about it.
NORMA. MONCHI... HERE... (She places the money in his hands.) Iris we have to bring the plátanos upstairs.
IRIS. Mami I can’t move.
NORMA. We have to grind the plátanos.
(MARÍA enters the kitchen. She’s in a floral dress.)

MARÍA. Hi Monchi.

MONCHI. Hi María.

MARÍA. Iris thank you for the dress. Did tío finish fixing the truck?
(IRIS. Just because he said he found the part doesn’t mean the truck is going to work. María that truck hasn’t worked for years…)

NORMA. The last trip that truck made was to take Olga to the airport.

MARÍA. I trust tío.

MONCHI. I can’t believe you got an interview so fast.

MARÍA. The job is for the Hato Rey office of the American company I work for in New York. I hope I get it, then I can move down here immediately.

IRIS. Monchi has a position available in his company… since you love the land so much…

MARÍA. Ha, ha… (The sound of an engine starting is heard.) Yes!! Thank God! (But then the engine dies.) But he said he found the part!

IRIS. Maria, papi can say what he wants, the truck is ready for burial.

(VÍCTOR enters.)

VÍCTOR. I’m going to kill Carmelo, the part he gave me is a piece of junk, now the puñetera truck doesn’t work… I’m sorry María, and Carmelo just left, he could have taken you. I’m sorry.

NORMA. No interview today.

MONCHI. I’ll take you. I finished my errands.

MARÍA. Thanks Monchi.

(MANOLO enters dressed in a nice guayabera – Caribbean style dress shirt. He is walking much better and is healthier.)

MANOLO. Buenos días todo el mundo.

VÍCTOR. Manolo…

IRIS. Tío, you’re looking really good.

MONCHI. We have to warn the world that Don Manolo is back.

NORMA. Manolo… get back into bed.

MANOLO. Why? I feel great…

NORMA. Why are you dressed up?

MANOLO. I am going to Hato Rey with my niece.

NORMA. You’re not going anywhere.

MANOLO. I am wearing my guayabera, and I shaved, so I am going out… I haven’t been to town in years and after my niece gets the job, we’ll go to Loiza Aldea, where Yuissa lives. I want to see my favorite cacique, Taína chief of El Yunque… who loves me just as much as Atabay.

IRIS. Good luck in Monchi’s sarcophagus.

MONCHI. Atabay is with us.

NORMA. You’re not going anywhere!!

MANOLO. Of course I am. (to MARÍA) Let’s go.

MARÍA. Okay.

NORMA. Manolo wait… It’s been along time since you’ve gone out.

MANOLO. I know Norma, it’s been along time, and I have alot to do.

(MARÍA, MONCHI, and MANOLO exit.)

VÍCTOR. Don’t worry Norma, he’s getting better…

(Lights fade)

End of Scene 10

END OF ACT 1
ACT II

Scene 1

(It is several hours later. NORMA and IRIS are waiting for MARÍA.)

IRIS. Do you think she’ll get the job?
NORMA. She studied business.
IRIS. And now a gringa comes here and gets the job she wants. If this situation continues, I’m going to New York.
NORMA. And where are you going to stay? With Olga? She’ll throw you out as soon as you get there. She took Mami away from me, she’s not going to get you too. Olga just picked up and left to New York City, when we were dealing with your grandfather’s death.
IRIS. Mami, she left for economic reasons.
NORMA. It’s true, we were poor, but we survived. She didn’t have to go to New York.
IRIS. I am sure Tía didn’t want to abandon her family to go to a strange country.
NORMA. As soon as she had the chance to leave Puerto Rico, she left. We needed her here, not in New York. But that’s how Olga is. When your abuela died, Olga wanted to bury her in Rincón, where her family is from. I wanted to bury her near our house. Ah Dios mío, ¿para qué fue eso? Olga called crying, she said mami wanted to be with her family in Rincón, not here. I told her to mind her business, since she lives over there in New York.
IRIS. Mami, maybe that’s what Abuela wanted.
NORMA. So you think that Olga, who lives in another part of
the world, knew what Abuela wanted better than me?

IRIS. I'm just saying that it's logical that she wanted to be buried with the rest of her family.

NORMA. I'm also her family.

IRIS. I'm not saying that. I understand Abuela's desire to be with her brothers and sisters.

NORMA. So I was wrong?

IRIS. No, mami, I...

NORMA. Your Tía Olga came for the funeral and with all of her money had her moved to Rincón. I'll never forgive her for that. I was so mad at her I didn't let her step foot in this house. And then she had the nerve to get mad at me.

IRIS. I don't blame her. This is the family house.

NORMA. Olga doesn't think like that. She told me that this house is hers, she paid for it with the money she made working in New York and that if she wanted to, she'd throw us out and then sell the house.

IRIS. She can't do that. Abuela put in her will that the house can't be sold, only passed down through the family.

NORMA. Olga doesn't understand family... She paid for the house, but I built it with my own sweat and blood. I told her to go to hell and that as soon as I can I will pay her back every single penny she sent to us! Olga thinks I'm stupid.

IRIS. Mami, Tía Olga is not that way.

NORMA. You don't know her the way I do. And now María... first, she wants to go to the cemetery to see Abuela, knowing that it will annoy me and all these pictures she's taking of the house are not to show her friends how beautiful Puerto Rico is... they're for Olga, who wants to come back to Puerto Rico and live in the house! She's going to have a fight on her hands. I'm NOT leaving!!

(MARÍA enters crying.)

MARÍA. Iris, thank you for lending me your dress, I'll give it back to you as soon as I clean it.

IRIS. Don't worry about it.

(MARÍA exits. MANOLO enters.)

NORMA. Manolo, what happened?

MANOLO. Ay Dios mio! She's a mess.

IRIS. What happened?!

MANOLO. The guy who interviewed her told her she can't work there because she's not a Puerto Rican national. ¿Para qué fue eso?! She left the office crying. Monchi and I took her to the beach to cheer her up. But she wouldn't get out of the car.

IRIS. I told her it wasn't easy to get a job in Puerto Rico.

(MARÍA re-enters with her jacket with the Puerto Rican flag.)

MANOLO. Sh!

MARÍA. Iris, I promise I'll clean your dress.

MANOLO. Maria don't let people tell you who you are!

MARÍA. He said I wasn't a Puerto Rican.

IRIS. But you are American.

MARÍA. (to MANOLO.) You see?

MANOLO. She's Puerto Rican.

MARÍA. Here's the flag of your country!! (She throws her jacket at IRIS.)

IRIS. Tío Manolo, she's American!

MARÍA. In New York City I was hired as the token Puerto Rican!

IRIS. You were born and raised in America, so you're American.

MARÍA. You were born and raised in an American colony. Does that make you a gringa?!

IRIS. I was born here in Puerto Rico! And your first language is English, you are AMERICAN!

MANOLO. Speaking Spanish doesn't make you Puerto Rican.
MARÍA. I'm not accepted in America... There is no place for me!! I am a foreigner in my place of birth. I am exotic, I am from the island, I'm an immigrant who's taking American jobs away from Americans, I am a welfare burden!! A Spic!

IRIS. If your mother had moved to France and if you were raised there speaking only French, you would be French.

MANOLO. If a cat gives birth in an oven, what is born, kitten or bread?

IRIS. That has nothing to do with what we're talking about!

MANOLO. Divide and conquer... united we stand, divided we fall. With that attitude you're helping the powers that be keep us apart. If the Puerto Ricans all over the world united, our culture would never die.

IRIS. Then we should accept every gringo as a Puerto Rican?!

MARÍA. Stop calling me a gringa... can't you get that through your head, jibara?

IRIS. Me, jibara? Jibaro is that plátano boyfriend of yours.

MARÍA. I'm Puerto Rican enough to be dumped by Peter.

IRIS. Who?

MANOLO. The now-defunct boyfriend.

MARÍA. Who dumped me because I am Puerto Rican, not a GRINGA! First, I'm rejected by Peter, then by my own people.

IRIS. I'm only saying the truth.

MANOLO. The truth is that she's Puerto Rican. She really wants to know about her culture. Most people here don't even care about Puerto Rico.

IRIS. Just because somebody read a book on Puerto Rico doesn't mean that they're Puerto Rican... but she comes down here thinking that she can just stake her claim the way the Americans do.

MANOLO. She has every right to be here.

IRIS. Not on my island!

MARÍA. I came down here to bond with my island, my people, my family... I never expected that they would betray me.

IRIS. You can't expect to abandon Puerto Rico and then take it back when you want to.

MARÍA. I didn't abandon Puerto Rico.

IRIS. Your family left Puerto Rico.

MARÍA. My parents left to find work... believe me they didn't want to leave Puerto Rico.

IRIS. Well, when they left, they gave up all their rights to the island.

MANOLO. If that were really true, there would be no Puerto Rico left! Puerto Ricans were taken all over the world to work, hata Hawaii. Those people had children, and those children had children who are still Puerto Rican.

IRIS. No they're not! They have no connection to Puerto Rico.

MARÍA. God forbid those Puerto Rican-Hawaiians should want to connect with Puerto Rico... they'll be kicked right in their ass.

IRIS. OH, how beautiful you speak... María you live in New York, with a great job, why would you want to live here?

MARÍA. Because this is a part of who I am.

MANOLO. Iris what are you protecting? You don't care about Puerto Rican culture. You only buy American things, clothes, food; you don't want to take her around, "I saw it before... it's boring..." According to you our culture is boring. She loves our culture, our history, our music... she's looking for her roots, you can not say NO to her!

IRIS. Ah no, (To MARÍA.) NO!!

MARÍA. Well, YES!!

MANOLO. María doesn't have to be born in Puerto Rico to be Puerto Rican. She will always be Boríena! Discussion over!
IRIS. Well you're wrong!

MARÍA. Fine! If I'm not Puerto Rican then we're not family. Then I'm just an unwanted guest.

IRIS. You said it, I didn't.

MANOLO. You (to MARÍA) belong here, in your house. This house is for the whole family.

IRIS. Manolo, please, this has nothing with the house.

MANOLO. Of course it does, María has every right to be in this house, just like Olga.

NORMA. Olga will never step foot in my house!

MANOLO. Without Olga there would be no house.

NORMA. We built it.

MANOLO. With her money.

NORMA. Our blood, our sweat built this house! Olga doesn't know anything about pain and suffering.

MARÍA. The money that mami and papi sent back is full of their blood and sweat. You think they had it easy? They worked 12 hours a day, two jobs each. New York isn't for lazy people.

MANOLO. Mami left this house to the whole family, the whole family Norma!

NORMA. Don't raise your voice to me! This is my house! Now go to your room!

MANOLO. I'll leave, not because you threw me out, but because I am pissed off!!

(MANOLO exits. Lights fade.)

End of Scene 1

Scene 2

(It is very late that evening. VÍCTOR sneaks into MANOLO's room.)

MANOLO. You didn't bring me anything?

VÍCTOR. Since you're not dying, I didn't bring you beer.

MANOLO. Hermano, the whole world is dying.

VÍCTOR. I know that, but at least you don't have one foot in the grave.

MANOLO. You really didn't bring me anything? (VÍCTOR takes out a bottle of mavi.) AH! Mavi. (VÍCTOR takes out some plastic glasses and he pours the mavi. They toast.)

VÍCTOR & MANOLO. ¡Salud!

MANOLO. ¡Qué bueno! The drink of the caciques. I haven't had mavi in a long time.

(MANOLO drinks.)

VÍCTOR. Enjoy it!

MANOLO. That was the worst thing about being sick, not being able to eat and drink the things I loved... orders from General Norma.

VÍCTOR. Except the beer, I sacrifice everything for a great friend.

MANOLO. You're a saint... the daring chances you took for me right under the general's nose... if she only knew...

VÍCTOR. We would have known if she knew, believe me...

MANOLO. That wife of yours...

VÍCTOR. That sister of yours... Pues, you know how Norma is, she really believes that Olga wants the house. And Iris and María are not talking to each other. La pobre, María didn't even eat dinner.

MANOLO. Some vacation María had. She'll never come back.

(MARÍA knocks. She's off-stage.)

MARÍA. (O.S.) Manolo... Manolo... Tío...
MANOLO. It’s only María. Yes?
MARIÁ. (O.S.) Hi, were you sleeping?
MANOLO. No. Come in.
MARIÁ. (O.S.) ...I’ll leave as soon as you get sleepy.
MANOLO. Come in.

(MARIÁ enters the room.)

MARIÁ. Tío Victor! What are you doing here?
VÍCTOR. Like they say in New York, I am hangiando with your tío.
MARIÁ. I’m sorry to interrupt your hangiando BUT... (She starts to cry.) I really need to talk to somebody... I don’t want to be alone.
MANOLO. I think you should try to get some rest tonight.
MARIÁ. I am leaving tomorrow.
VÍCTOR. What?
MARIÁ. I’m leaving this place tomorrow.
MANOLO. Damn.
MARIÁ. It’s true, by 6:00pm tomorrow night I’ll be on flight 601 returning to New York City.
MANOLO. How can you leave like that?
MARIÁ. Easy. I called for reservations.
MANOLO. What did your mother say?
MARIÁ. Nothing. She said she knew I wouldn’t find a job here and that she’d pick me up from the airport.
VÍCTOR. I can’t believe you want to leave. Don’t let Norma and Iris push you out... it’s not personal.
MARIÁ. Of course it’s personal, they don’t want me here. Anyway, I hate it here, It’s too hot, too humid and too many mosquitos.
VÍCTOR. But you love the mosquitos.
MARIÁ. They keep biting me. I thought they’d stop biting after they get used to me, but they keep attacking me. Damn vampires.
MANOLO. You have sweet blood.

MARIÁ. I think they bite me so I can leave. The mosquitos are the true defenders against invaders. I guess they don’t think I’m Puerto Rican either... the people at the job don’t think I’m Puerto Rican... my OWN family doesn’t think I’m Puerto Rican. You know what? I’m not Puerto Rican! I can’t even hear the coqui song.
MANOLO. You’re touched by Puerto Rico today. You’ll never be the same.
MARIÁ. I was slapped by Puerto Rico.
MANOLO. Babies are slapped when they’re born. You were born today.
MARIÁ. One birth per lifetime is sufficient.
MANOLO. You’re born hundreds of times throughout your life. Everytime you have an experience you’re born.
MARIÁ. How many times do I have to be slapped?
MANOLO. In your case, it might be more than a million.
MARIÁ. Oh great!
VÍCTOR. Listen to your Tío, he knows what he’s talking about.
MANOLO. Oye, mind your business.
VÍCTOR. María is also my niece and I want to help her.
MANOLO. But I’m giving her advice now.
VÍCTOR. And I can’t say anything?
MANOLO. When I’m speaking, NO!
MARIÁ. I thought you were best friends.
MANOLO. Some best friend, he marries my sister.
VÍCTOR. You introduced us.
MANOLO. For that I am sorry hermano. I must have been crazy.
VÍCTOR. Ah Manolo, Norma, she was so beautiful and so kind... when Manolo and I worked on the sugar cane fields, she would come everyday and bring Manolo and his father la fiambrera...
MARIÁ. ¿Qué?
VÍCTOR. Aluminum pots with food. After working really
hard all morning under the sun, dead tired, to see Norma walking toward the caña, with her long hair blowing in the wind, as if she was coming from the sun... she left me speechless.

MANOLO. Ave María... that’s why I had to introduce him to Norma, if not I had to listen to Víctor talk about Norma ALL DAY LONG! Then Víctor got worse when she started bringing him mangoes from our tree. ¡Olvidate!

VÍCTOR. And the best thing was when she sang to me... like an angel.

MANOLO. Ay dios mío, then I had to live with angels, the stars, the moon and the sunrays... I had to listen to the worse poetry I’ve ever heard in my life... Sorry Víctor.

VÍCTOR. Look who’s talking? At least I fell in love with a beautiful woman.

MANOLO. Don’t start.

VÍCTOR. María, your uncle always liked the ugly ones...

MANOLO. Víctor!

VÍCTOR. Much older...

MANOLO. Víctor, don’t exaggerate!

VÍCTOR. I remember that your specialty were widows.

MARÍA. Oh no! That’s horrible.

MANOLO. I can’t believe you would dare to criticize the beauty I brought to those women’s lives.

VÍCTOR. Ugly... ¡Feisimas! (MARÍA laughs.)

MANOLO. Oye... that’s not nice to say about people... “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder... “ Anyway they were lonely, someone had to give them love. I’m an artist.

VÍCTOR. Now the real Manolo comes out.

MARÍA. Were they much older than you?

VÍCTOR. By twenty or thirty years.

MARÍA. They could have been your mother.

VÍCTOR. Grandmother.

MANOLO. I can’t help it if they fell in love with me...

MARÍA. You could have said NO.

MANOLO. And break their hearts... NEVER. Besides older women are faithful. They never leave their men.

VÍCTOR. Mierda! They all threw you out!

MARÍA. You never married any of these women?

MANOLO. There was a woman I almost married... she was only five years older than me...

MARÍA. And?

MANOLO. I wasn’t her type: stable, and practical... She was jealous of my intimate relationship with Arabey. Anyway I loved her too much to torture her by being married to me... (pause) But my hermano here found the great love of his life. I was very pleased when they started going out; it was only a matter of time before the magic wore off and the fighting would begin.

MARÍA. You’re bad. It’s nice to hear about people who really love each other.

VÍCTOR. We didn’t go out immediately. We were friends first. She came to talk to me when her mother didn’t let her sing with that group. Norma was destroyed. She thought no one understood her.

MANOLO. (to MARÍA.) Your mother and I told her to go sing with the group anyway but she didn’t want to disobey mami.

VÍCTOR. Then we fell in love. She used to sing to me... but not anymore.

MARÍA. Well Norma was slapped by that experience, I don’t see how she was re-born.

VÍCTOR. Norma had the desire and the talent but fear stopped her.

MARÍA. I’m not scared of being Puerto Rican.

MANOLO. Why are you running back to New York... afraid of being slapped?

MARÍA. You might like being slapped but I don’t.

MANOLO. That’s why you’re going to bury yourself in the
insurance company forever instead of chasing your dreams of acting.

MARÍA. You didn’t follow your dreams, you gave up on them.

MANOLO. But I tried! You don’t know how hard it was for a country boy to leave his house in the mountains to go to La Perla Theatre in Ponce to become an actor. I had to give up my job at the sugar cane. Mami and papi were upset, we needed the money. My father told me “if you leave, don’t come back.” ¿Te acuerdas Víctor?

VÍCTOR. Ah sí.

MANOLO. He threw me out of the house.

VÍCTOR. He stayed with me, then Indio...

MANOLO. Indio... I’ve never forgotten him. An old man who used to give fruits to... he was a wise man, a philosopher... I told him what happened to me and he told me something very profound; “if you want fish, your ass is gonna have to get wet.”

MARÍA: What?

MANOLO. To get anything in life, you have to take risks, you have to stop living life so safely. That’s when I went to Ponce. When “Romeo and Juliet” went to San Juan, my father died and I had to go back home.

MARÍA. I’m sorry... Real life gets in the way of dreams.

MANOLO. But I took the risk.

MARÍA. I know... I really could use a drink.

MANOLO. I have mavi... the caciques loved it.

MARÍA. I can’t drink that, I’m not Puerto Rican. I need a gringo drink.

MANOLO. Stop talking all that garbage.

MARÍA. I’m leaving Puerto Rico forever and I’m never coming back.

MANOLO. Before you leave try some mavi.

MARÍA. (MARÍA tries the mavi.) Hmm... It’s good! (MARÍA finishes her glass.) Oooh, I want some more...

VÍCTOR. Ah she likes it!

MARÍA. Nobody cares about the history of Puerto Rico... or about seeing the beautiful things here.

MANOLO. Being Puerto Rican is not about seeing places. Tourists do that.

MARÍA. So now I’m a tourist! Adios Boriquen!

MANOLO. NO!... you are and will always be Puerto Rican!

MARÍA. So I’m a Puerto Rican tourist in Puerto Rico... All I wanted to do was touch my land, be a part of Puerto Rico. It’s not that much to ask for. I’m more confused now than when I’m in New York, I used to feel Puerto Rican. Now I realize that I am nobody wherever I go.

VÍCTOR. Don’t say that m’ija, I accept you.

MARÍA. It doesn’t matter anymore. I am nobody, everywhere – no roots, no home...

MANOLO. Tomorrow we go to Abuela’s grave so that you can leave her the rosary on her tombstone.

VÍCTOR. We have to leave very early.

MARÍA. We don’t have a car.

VÍCTOR. I can ask Carmelo to lend us his truck.

MANOLO. No, I want Monchi to take us.

VÍCTOR. In that volki? We all don’t fit in there.

MANOLO. You’re not going with us.

VÍCTOR. Why not?

MANOLO. You have to protect us from Norma.

VÍCTOR. What luck!

MANOLO. If we are going to get María to the cemetery, it has to be like this. Tomorrow morning I’ll get Monchi and we leave before dawn.

MARÍA. Are you sure?

MANOLO. Of course I am... Get up early and don’t let anyone see you leave.

MARÍA. I don’t think anyone will care... believe me.

(MARÍA exits. Lights shift.)

End of Scene 2
Scene 3

(Very early the next morning. MARÍA is waiting for MANOLO and MONCHI. She has a rosary with her.
NORMA enters.)

NORMA. María.
MARÍA. Tía Norma?
NORMA. What happened?
MARÍA. Nothing, you just scared me. (She hides the rosary.)
NORMA. What are you doing up so early?
MARÍA. I couldn’t sleep.
NORMA. So you got all dressed up and came downstairs.
MARÍA. I... needed to get some fresh air.
NORMA. Perhaps, if you try going to sleep now, after all of this fresh air, you’ll fall asleep.
MARÍA. I, I... um, um... I’m wide awake now. You know when you wake up, you’re up for the whole day...
Besides it’s my last day in Puerto Rico. I just want to absorb everything.

(VÍCTOR enters with a thermos of coffee.)

VÍCTOR. I prepared you some coffee... ¿coño Norma... a surprise!
NORMA. Víctor, buenos días... you’re up early.
VÍCTOR. Carmelo and me, are going... to... pick up some new tools... for... for our garage.
NORMA. What time is Carmelo going to be here?
VÍCTOR. Very soon. (A car is heard pulling up.)
NORMA. I imagine that’s Carmelo.
VÍCTOR. Si... Okay we’ll see you later, bye.
NORMA. María is going with you?
VÍCTOR. Since it’s her last day, I want to show her the garage... so she can see it.

(MONCHI enters.)

MONCHI. María let’s go. We have to leave... Norma!

VÍCTOR. Monchi... good morning. How are you?
MONCHI. Víctor... Norma, Good morning. What a surprise!
NORMA. Yes, the morning is just full of surprises.
MONCHI. Yeah.

(MANOLO enters rushing.)

MANOLO. I said, as soon as you hear the car pull up...
NORMA. Norma!
NORMA. SURPRISE!
MANOLO. Absolutely!
NORMA. You couldn’t sleep, and you’re waiting for Carmelo... Monchi, you SHOULD be on your farm and
Manolo should be in bed, where he belongs. But instead everybody is here. Well?
MANOLO. Norma, you win first prize if you guess right here on SUPER SÁBADO! (NORMA does not laugh.)
MARÍA. It’s okay, I’ll tell her... Tío Manolo uhm... has agreed to take me to see Abuela’s grave.
NORMA. Behind my back.
MARÍA. We all know how you feel about that and since I’m leaving tonight, it’s only fair that I have a chance to
pay my respects.
NORMA. You’re sneaking around behind my back; do you think that’s fair?!
MANOLO. It’s not a big deal Norma.
NORMA. Of course it’s a big deal!
MANOLO. She wants to see her grandmother and I’m going to take her. Monchi, María, let’s go. We don’t have
time to waste.
VÍCTOR. María here’s some coffee. (He hands MARÍA the
thermos.)

(MANOLO, MARÍA and MONCHI exit. NORMA and VÍCTOR are left alone.)

NORMA. Is Carmelo coming over, Víctor?
VÍCTOR. Later on.
NORMA. Why are you against me?
VÍCTOR. Norma, por favor, she just wants to see her grandmother’s grave.
NORMA. You’re supposed to be on my side, but instead you made her coffee for the trip.
VÍCTOR. This has nothing to do with you.
NORMA. You’re right, this is about how you’re joining the others to hurt me.
VÍCTOR. Norma, listen to me... I think it’s right that María should go to her grandmother’s grave.
NORMA. Who are you to give permission to go to the cemetery?
VÍCTOR. You’re not the owner of the cemetery. People can visit their family whenever they want.
NORMA. It’s easy for you to say that, your mother is buried in this town. You can see her whenever you want.
VÍCTOR. Norma, I can take you to see your mother whenever you want.
NORMA. You don’t understand, I want the grave near me.
VÍCTOR. It’s not near you Norma. And you just have to understand that and accept it.
NORMA. Stay out of my family business.
VÍCTOR. This is my family too.
NORMA. You’re only part of this family because of me, and I’m telling you to stay out of our business.
VÍCTOR. I am sick and tired of you yelling about the “house” and the “grave.”... Ya, stop the nonsense already!
NORMA. This ‘nonsense’ is the only thing I have left. Olga took mami’s grave away from me, she’s not getting my house!
VÍCTOR. I’m tired of you saying that this house is yours. I helped build this house. (pause) Norma, I am so tired of your all your pity and complaints... You’re making me hate the house. I hope it blows up!
NORMA. That would be the last straw – to destroy my family! I know you were the one giving alcohol to my brother.

I can’t believe you gave a dying man beer.
VÍCTOR. Yes, he was dying, so it didn’t matter if he drank beer, tea or medicine. He should enjoy his last drink... since he’s gotten better I stopped bringing him beer.
NORMA. So the beer cured him?
VÍCTOR. The important thing is that he’s better.
NORMA. Oh what a miracle! One day he’s dying, the next day he’s running around like a little boy.
VÍCTOR. I can’t believe you’re upset because he’s better.
NORMA. Don’t tell me he’s better, you’re not a doctor. You’re a mechanic. If Manolo was a car then I would believe you.
VÍCTOR. He’s walking, he’s eating after being stuck in a bed for five years. That’s proof enough for me.
NORMA. Ah yes, señor, Mister Doctor, the doctor who quit school in fourth grade; the doctor who worked on the sugar cane fields, the doctor who’s a mechanic who can’t even fix his own truck, who has a garage with no customers.

(PAUSE. VÍCTOR storms out.)
NORMA. Victor, Victor...

(NORMA is left standing alone as lights fade.)

End of Scene 3
Scene 4

(MARÍA enters the cemetery first.)

VOICES. ...María... María...

MANOLO. (O.S.) I don't think it's this way.

MARÍA. She's nearby I know it...

MANOLO. (O.S.) Esperé María, wait for us.

MARÍA. She's right here... I sense it... (Looking around.)

Here. (She finds the grave.)

(MANOLO and MONCHI enter.)

MANOLO. I haven't been here in so long I forgot where...

MARÍA. FELICIDAD COFRESÍ SANTOS Manolo, here is Abuela.

MANOLO. This is my mother.

MARÍA. I remember her braiding my hair when I was little. I always looked forward to her visits during the summer. She always brought us something—mangoes, quenepas, pasteles... and she'd tell us about Puerto Rico. I really missed her when she got sick and stopped coming to New York... Mami keeps it beautiful. I like the flowers. The woman who gave birth to my mother is here. If it wasn't for her I wouldn't be alive. The woman in here carried you in her womb for nine months.

MANOLO. Eight months. I was premature.

MARÍA. ¡Jodón!... but you were inside of her. And now you're here.

MANOLO. One day you're here, then you're gone. But she's here, she's not just dust. She's in me, she's in you. She still lives in us.

MONCHI. It's like she never died.

MANOLO. (MANOLO over to the adjacent grave.) Come over here María. Read the name.

MARÍA. EMILIA SANTOS TORRES.

MANOLO. My grandmother.

MARÍA. She's buried next to her mother... That's why abuela wanted to be in Rincón.

MANOLO. And that's why Norma wants her to be close to her.

MARÍA. I can understand that.

MANOLO. Her whole family is here, her father, her brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles... We are like these beads on this rosary. (MANOLO takes the rosary MARÍA has with her.) We will always be connected, it doesn't matter where we are.

(MARÍA goes over to Abuela's headstone, places the rosary in front of it and kisses it.)

MARÍA. Bendición Abuela.

MANOLO. María, I want to show you something else... Monchi come over here. Look.

MARÍA. ¿Qué?

MANOLO. This is where I will be buried.

MONCHI. Manolo.

MARÍA. Stop talking like that.

MANOLO. María, we're all going to die one day.

MARÍA. I know but talking about it is kind of morbid.

MANOLO. Abuela visited this area before she died. She bought all these plots so her family would be together.

MARÍA. Mami knew this.

MANOLO. Of course she did... she'll probably be over there by the shade. She hates the sun. Norma we will put her far away! (MARÍA laughs.) María, where do you want to be?

MARÍA. I can barely manage my life, I won't even try managing my death.

MANOLO. Good to be prepared.

MARÍA. You don't have to worry about that anymore.

MANOLO. Whether I die today, tomorrow, next year, it doesn't matter. I like my spot... Monchi, you're almost family, you wanna spot?

MONCHI. Okay, but I want a spot next to María... The Earth is amazing isn't it. It gives us food, fruit and flowers... life...
MANOLO. Then it reclaims us.
MARÍA. In New York it's difficult to think about our relationship to Mother Earth.
MANOLO. When I am buried here I am going to be part of the Earth. And the first apple tree in Puerto Rico will grow out of me.
MARÍA. When I have my children I'm going to bring them here.
MANOLO. I want to bring you some place else.
MARÍA. Where?
MANOLO. Let's go. Can the volki handle another trip?
MONCHI. Depends where.
MANOLO. Vámonos.
MARÍA. But where?
MANOLO. Come on.
(They all exit. Light shift.)

End of Scene 4

Scene 5

(Lights up on El Yunque – the rainforest. MARÍA, MONCHI, and MANOLO enter)

MANOLO. Atabay, I'm sorry I haven't been here for a long time... I've been sick, una jodienda, but I'm better now.
MARÍA. I can't believe I'm in El Yunque. (Thunder and lightning are heard.) Oh no, it's going to rain.
MANOLO. It's Atabay, she's greeting us. (Thunder and Lightning get louder. The sound of rain is heard.)
MARÍA. Let's leave before the storm comes.
MANOLO. No! Atabay is welcoming you. She never welcomes anyone on their first visit, except for me of course.
MARÍA. She's welcoming me? (Thunder and lightning get louder.)
MANOLO. Yes... (The sound of rain becomes louder. MARÍA begins to be immersed in DRY rain. She feels herself getting wet.)
MARÍA. The water is so warm... (MARÍA enjoys the DRY rain falling on her.)
MANOLO. She's opened the door for you.
(MARÍA bathes in this water. She savors it as it goes down her face, then neck, chest, stomach, waist... she slowly sinks down to the ground as the water goes down her legs... She lays on the ground. PAUSE. The thunder and lightning subside.)

MANOLO. My turn to receive Atabay's blessing. You wanna come Monchi? Atabay can turn herself into four women; one for you and three for me.
MONCHI. No thank you. Just tell her to send water to my farm.
MANOLO. I'm off to the waterfall.
(MANOLO takes off his clothes. He exits off stage.)
MARÍA. Hmm...
MONCHI. It feels strange...
MARÍA. A little. (MARÍA seems to come out of a trance.) But I am not wet.
MONCHI. That’s how it is. You look different... You’re glowing.
MARÍA. I feel different... I feel so high and lightheaded... it feels so good... it’s beautiful here. It’s so quiet. Where’s Manolo?
MONCHI. He went to the waterfalls, to see Atabay.
MARÍA. You can’t hear anything... (The sound of a waterfall is heard.)
MONCHI. We’re pretty high up.
MARÍA. I do hear a water fall.
MONCHI. First time here and Atabay took you in. She knows you’re special. I felt the same way you feel now, when it happened to me. Although I first came here as a boy, ‘this’ didn’t happen until I returned the second time with Manolo. I was never the same after that.
MARÍA. In what way?
MONCHI. Stronger... Less afraid.
MARÍA. I also feel strong... I feel whole.
MONCHI. After that experience I knew I could start a farm. I never looked back.
MARÍA. And you did it... but... what if you’re hit by a hurricane?
MONCHI. I have nothing to worry about if they come from the East.
MARÍA. Why?
MONCHI. El Yunque protects me.
MARÍA. How?
MONCHI. She won’t let the hurricane pass. She uses her body to shield the rest of the island from danger.
MARÍA. What if the hurricane comes from the West?
MONCHI. Then I’m screwed... (They laugh.) Those things are inevitable; mosquitos, storms, the government, but the food will grow again. (pause) I’m going to miss you.
MARÍA. Me too... you were very kind to me. Thanks for the use of the “volki.”
MONCHI. It was my pleasure. Thank you for helping me on the farm.
MARÍA. I had a great time and I learned alot.
MONCHI. Good... I have to be honest, I don’t want you to leave.
MARÍA. Monchi I can’t promise you anything.
MONCHI. You’re still in love with that guy, right?
MARÍA. ...No...
MONCHI. That didn’t sound like a No.
MARÍA. It’s definitely a NO. I feel like I wasted all this... I don’t know... all this love from my heart, and now my heart is dead.
MONCHI. Where there is death there will be life. (PAUSE.
MONCHI kisses MARÍA very gently on the lips. They continue kissing as MANOLO walks in dripping wet from his swim -- his communion with Atabay.)
MANOLO. ¡Qué lindo! (MONCHI and MARÍA quickly separate.) Atabay blesses both of you.
MARÍA. Manolo are you alright?
MANOLO. Of course, I saw my beloved Atabay. She forgave me for not seeing her all those years. And she accepted my niece with love.
MONCHI. Manolo, put your clothes on.
MANOLO. Ay no! I feel younger than I’ve ever been... Atabay liberated my spirit. I can go home a free man. (MANOLO hears the coqui song.)
MANOLO. Do you hear anything María?
MARÍA. What?
MANOLO. Listen. The song of the coqui.
MARÍA. I just feel an amazing sense of inner peace.
(They exit as lights fade.)

End of Scene 5
Scene 6

(Later that evening. NORMA is waiting for MARÍA and MANOLO.)

NORMA. Where is María? Look how late it is!

(MARÍA and MANOLO enter.)

NORMA. Where have you been?

MANOLO. We went to see the antecedents.

NORMA. I know that. Look at the time. Do you know what time it is, María?

MARÍA. I don’t know, maybe um...

NORMA. It’s 6:45. Were you supposed to be on a flight to New York City at 6:00 pm?

MARÍA. Oh my God, I totally forgot.

NORMA. You forgot?! Or you didn’t care.

MANOLO. We both forgot.

MARÍA. Tía, I swear, the day went by so quickly, we lost track of time.

NORMA. I’ve been waiting for you all day... I even packed your bags, and you decided to stay all day in a cemetery.

MARÍA. That’s not what happened.

MANOLO. We went to receive Atabey’s blessing for María.

NORMA. What? Where?

MANOLO. We went to her altar, en El Yunque.

NORMA. El Yunque? Are you crazy taking him there? Don’t you know how sick he is?

MARÍA. Tía, he’s cured.

NORMA. He could get pneumonia.

MARÍA. He doesn’t belong locked up. Look what happened to him when he came out of his room. fresh air, sunshine... he came back to life.

MANOLO. I’m like the Phoenix, I rose out of the ashes.

NORMA. That Phoenix didn’t fill his belly with alcohol and that Phoenix didn’t spend five years in a bed. You went to El Yunque because you wanted to go María.

MANOLO. I wanted to go to El Yunque and give my niece a gift before she left Puerto Rico.

MARÍA. It’s this girl here... (To MARÍA.) You do whatever you want, you expect your own private chauffeur; you put on music at all hours of the day; you leave a mess everywhere you go; you take Manolo out of his room and drag him to Rincón and El Yunque. You get everything you want... you’re just like your mother. She wanted to leave Puerto Rico, and she left. I know what you’re up to! You want to get a job here so that you can keep an eye on the house for Olga, before she comes here and takes it.

MARÍA. If mami wanted the house she would have been here already.

NORMA. Why does she want pictures of the house?

MARÍA. She wants the pictures to see the house, Puerto Rico... that’s all... to see Puerto Rico, she misses it very much.

NORMA. If she misses Puerto Rico so much, why doesn’t she move back home?!

MARÍA. You just said you didn’t want her here.

NORMA. ...I mean... I wanted to take care of my mother’s grave.

MANOLO. I don’t know why you don’t accept mamá’s wishes. Thank you for ruining a beautiful day.

NORMA. Get out of here!

(MANOLO and MARÍA exit. PAUSE. IRIS enters.)

IRIS. Mami we have to finish the pasteles.

NORMA. Don’t tell me what I need to do... When are you off to New York City?

IRIS. I’m not moving to New York.

NORMA. I thought you were going there to get a teaching job.

IRIS. It was just talk. I don’t want to live in a strange country.
NORMA. Just go to New York with your cousin and enjoy yourself. Don’t bother with the pasteles. I don’t need your help.
IRIS. Fine.

(IRIS exits. NORMA is left alone then VICTOR enters.)

VICTOR. Has it been that bad?
NORMA. What?

VICTOR. Your life. You should hear yourself! You’re always complaining about being stuck here, taking care of the family and everybody else getting what they want... I’m sorry you didn’t become a singer or go to New York, BUT so what if we stayed behind? We’ve had a pretty good, healthy life. We have a beautiful daughter and a beautiful home. You complain about what you don’t have, BUT you’re so blind to what you do have... look around you Norma, you have love... everyone in this house loves you very much. And you won’t take their love because you feel the world has been terrible to you. If you don’t accept people’s love, one day they’re going to stop giving it.

(PAUSE. VICTOR and NORMA hug. Lights fade.)

End of Scene 6

Scene 7

(Later that evening. MANOLO and MARIA are in front of his room in the marquesina, listening to the coquis.)

MANOLO. It’s a beautiful night, like the calm after the storm.
MARIA. Listen to the coquis... but I still don’t hear the song.

MANOLO. You will.
MARIA. I’ll be in cold New York soon... I feel ready to go back... Can’t say my vacation wasn’t interesting.

MANOLO. I’m going to miss you.
MARIA. Me too... I have something to show you... Look... (MARIA shows MANOLO a shoebox.) I got my box of grass for the Three Kings and their camels.

MANOLO. Very nice. (He inspects it.) Put it in front of my room. The Three Kings never forget me. (MARIA does so and finds MANOLO’s güiro.)

MARIA. Look what I found... (She shows MANOLO the güiro.) My only regret is that I didn’t experience a parranda.

MANOLO. ¡Ah parrandas!... They were great celebrations. Mami was a great cook. Everyone came to our house for her’s roast pork, rice with gandules, pasteles, and your mother, she made the best arroz con dulce.

MARIA. She still does.

MANOLO. Hmmm... and of course everyone wanted to hear me play the güiro and Norma sing. She sang bombas like no one else could... she sang aguinaldos, coplas, boleros... The whole town stayed at our house all night... “Quié no...”

MARIA. Oh, I know that one... “qué no... qué no”

MANOLO / MARIA. “Qué no, qué no, no me da la gana, qué no me voy de aquí hasta por la mañana... (“No I don’t feel like leaving here and I will not leave until the morning.”)

(IRIS enters.)
IRIS. I thought Mami was here...

MARÍA. Iris, can I talk to you for a second? (pause) I didn’t come here to hurt anybody nor to be hurt... there are many things that separate us and there are many more that unite us. I’m choosing the things that unite us... and I’m telling you now that if you ever come to New York, whether it’s to visit or look for a job, to see the snow... whatever, you have a place to stay. That’s all.

IRIS. We are family, and that is very important to me. Blood is thicker than... than... geography. You shouldn’t go to New York angry about a fight that’s about neither here nor there. And you know what, even though you’re a Gringa, you’re still Puerto Rican.

MANOLO. How are the pasteles doing?

IRIS. I finished wrapping them.

MANOLO. I would really love some of those pasteles.

MARÍA. Me too.

IRIS. But mami said we’re selling them.

MANOLO. We have to try them out first.

IRIS. They were actually pretty fun to make.

MARÍA. I love pasteles. Every year mami makes pasteles. It’s my favorite part of Christmas.

IRIS. I hate Christmas.

MARÍA. Oh no! Christmas is my favorite time of year.

IRIS. When Abuela died, Christmas also died in this house.

MARÍA. Why don’t we have a parranda?!

MANOLO. Why not?

IRIS. I don’t think so. Especially after what just happened with mami.

MANOLO. Let’s do it! (MANOLO plays the güiro.) Come on, María, sing a bomba with me.

MARÍA. I don’t know any.

MANOLO. Iris does.

IRIS. That was a long time ago.

MANOLO. You loved to sing bombas.

IRIS. ¿Tu estás loco?... although I loved the one you used to sing about the lemon.

MANOLO. “Oye lo que te voy a decir.” (‘Listen to what I’m going to tell you.’) “Ayer pasé por tu casa; me tiraste un limón; el sumo me dio en los ojos, y el golpe en el corazón.” (“Yesterday I passed by your house; you threw a lemon at me; the juice/zest hit me in my eye and the pain in my heart.”)

IRIS. BOMBA! You’re supposed to say that after every verse.

MARÍA. Okay, Bomba.

MANOLO. Louder

MARÍA. BOMBA!

IRIS. You got it.

(MANOLO stops playing the güiro. MANOLO gets up to hug them both. They stare at him very strangely.)

IRIS. What happened?

MARÍA. Play something.

MANOLO. My two nieces... you’re going to be okay. I am proud to be your uncle.

IRIS. Just one bomba did this to him. I’m afraid to sing another one.

MARÍA. Let’s go for it.

MANOLO. “Oye lo que te voy a decir... Ayer pasé por tu casa; y me ladraron los perros; me doblé a cojer una piedra, y se me cagaron los dedos.” (“Yesterday I passed by your house; the dogs barked at me; I bent down to pick up a rock and I got dog poop on my fingers.”)

MARÍA & IRIS. BOMBA!

(MONCHI enters.)

MONCHI. Buenas noches, Felicidades.

MANOLO. Monchi, come, we’re throwing a parranda! Why don’t you sing a bomba?

IRIS. Ah Monchi doesn’t know any.

MONCHI. “Oye lo que te voy a decir... En el patio de mi
casa, hay una mata de rosa y un letrero que dice el que no besa no goza" ("In the patio of my house; there is a rose bush and a sign that says—whoever doesn’t kiss, doesn’t enjoy themselves...")

EVEYONE. BOMBA!

MANOLO. Oye lo que te voy a decir... Decirme que soy viejo, es cosa que no me inca, pero todavía tumbo caña y te vendo cualquier finca..." ("To call me old, doesn’t bother me at all, because I can still cut sugar cane and harvest any field/farm.)

EVEYONE. BOMBA!

(NORMA enters.)

NORMA. "Ni por bonita dichosa..." ("Whether it is good fortune..."")

IRIS. Maní...

MARÍA. Tía.

(They freeze.)

NORMA. "Ni por fea desgraciado..." ("Or rotten luck...")

NORMA & MANOLO. "que la suerte de cada cual, Dios se la tiene guardado." ("...the fate of each person is reserved for by God.")

EVEYONE. BOMBA! "La Bomba hay que rica es, le sube el ritmo por los pies, por los pies, Mulato traiga tu trigueña, pa' que baila bomba, bomba puertorriqueña."  
BOMBA! ("La Bomba, how wonderful it is, the rhythm rises from your feet, mulatto bring your mulata, to dance the bomba, the Puerto Rican Bomba.")

MANOLO. Norma, bienvenidos a la parranda de Manolo!

NORMA. Muchas gracias. It’s like returning to the family.

MANOLO. Somebody’s missing.

NORMA. Verdad, where’s Victor? He’s not home yet?

MANOLO. I’m talking about Olga.

NORMA. ...You’re right... I really do miss her... (to MARÍA.)  
  When we used to swim in the brook, Olga always dove into the water from the highest rock, I wasn’t as brave as she was.

MANOLO. Give her a call.

NORMA. Yes... You look so much like your mother... Ah María, please forgive me. I know I didn’t treat you very well.

MARÍA. Tía I know I wasn’t an easy person either.

NORMA. You belong here with your family. And you can stay as long as you want to...

MARÍA. Gracias.

NORMA. (NORMA hugs MARÍA.) Oye play something... "Oye lo te voy a decir. Ayer me dijiste que hoy, hoy me dices que mañana, y mañana me dirás se me quitaron la gana..." ("Yesterday you told me today, today you tell me tomorrow and tomorrow you’ll tell me that you are no longer in the mood.")

EVEYONE. BOMBA!

MANOLO. María, it’s your turn. (MANOLO hands MARÍA the güiro.)

MARÍA. I don’t know how.

MANOLO. Come on María, play something... you’re ready.

NORMA. Go on María, don’t be afraid.

MARÍA. Okay. (MARÍA starts playing the güiro for a couple of beats. She hears the coqui song that MANOLO only heard.

MANOLO disappears up-stage, without anyone noticing.)

Manolo I hear something... (She stops playing the güiro.)

IRIS. What happened?

MARÍA. The coquis. I hear it... I hear the coquí song...

NORMA. You hear it.

MARÍA. Yes.

NORMA. That’s good. I hear it too. (The sound of a truck starting is heard.)

NORMA. Victor!

IRIS. The Truck?

MARÍA. It started.

IRIS. I can’t believe that piece of junk is working.
NORMA. Víctor said it was going to work. (*The engine sounds mad strong.*)

MARÍA. Manolo, isn’t it great that tío Víctor’s truck is working? Manolo... Manolo! (*MARÍA exits looking for MANOLO He doesn’t answer.*) Manolo... Are you okay? Manolo? Manolo wake up! TÍA... TÍA... (*MARÍA re-enters.*)

NORMA. María what happened?

MARÍA. Tía... Manolo...

NORMA. Manolo... Manolo... Ah Dios mio... Víctor!!

(*They all exit.*)

End of Scene 7

Scene 8

(It is the middle of the night, approaching early morning January Sixth, *The Epiphany*. NORMA is sitting alone in the kitchen. She opens the gift that Olga had sent to her. It’s a framed photograph.)

NORMA. Ah Olga... (*PAUSE. She picks up the phone and dials.*) Hello, Olga... it’s Norma. I woke you up, right? I’m sorry I’m calling so late but... no... no... no... María is okay... she’s beautiful... she’s grown up to be a wonderful woman. You did such a good job with her... no she didn’t swim in the brook, it dried up... it’s only mud... It’s Manolo,... Olga he died tonight... (*NORMA breaks down.*) I am not sure what happened. He was getting better and then he died, just like that... I’m okay... Mami was sick for so long and we knew she was going to die, but he was getting better Olga... and then he died. No, we’re going to have him in the house... OF COURSE you can come here... you stay in OUR house. I really want you to... we have a lot to talk about, and I’m... I’m sorry Olga for everything. No you don’t have to be sorry... okay, okay you’re sorry too... You’ll come tomorrow. Let me know what time, and we’ll pick you up. No, I don’t need anything, thank you; you just come... okay. Bye. Olga... I love you very much and thank you for the photograph, it’s beautiful... bye bye.

(*MARÍA enters.*)

MARÍA. Tía, I really thought he was getting better.

NORMA. Your mother arrives tomorrow.

MARÍA. I wish Manolo didn’t have to die for her to come.

NORMA. Me too... but I’m happy she’s coming anyway. Just like I am happy that you came here.

MARÍA. Me too.

NORMA. (*NORMA shows MARÍA the photograph.*) Your mother sent me this picture. Manolo’s birthday. He turned 7 that day. Your mother was already a teenager here and
I was still a girl, holding her hand... and the old house, it doesn’t look so bad, strong and solid. Look how Manolo stands, straight and proud. Buenas noches.

MARIÁ. Bendición Tío.

NORMA. Qué la Virgen te acompañe.

(NORMA exits. A light appears on MARIÁ’s face and darts all over the room. It is MANOLO’s spirit.)

MARIÁ. Oh... I know you’re here... I feel it. I’m really going to miss you. The coquí song is beautiful. Thank you for helping me understand. Heaven must really be an interesting place by now. I know you’ve probably found Atabey... Well good night Tío Manolo.

(A light shines on the shoe box that MARIÁ placed in front of MANOLO’s room. She opens the box and pulls out MANOLO’s güiro.)

MARIÁ. Gracias Tio.

(The lights slowly fade as the Coquí song is heard.)

END OF PLAY

DEFINITIONS

ATABEY – (Also - Atabex, Atabei, Atabeina) One of the five names given to the highest Taíno Goddess. Referred to as “Mother of the Waters” and/or “Mother Earth.”

BENDICIÓN – A request for a blessing.

COQUÍ – A small frog-like animal, indigenous only to Puerto Rico. Makes the sound coquí!

COQUÍ SONG – This is a magical song that is a spiritual connection. Ideally the song is lyrical and played on a string instrument.

GÜIRO – A percussive instrument, which is commonly made out of a gourd. A pick is used to scrape the side of the gourd to yield its sound.

JIBARO – Farmer, peasant who works the land.

MARQUESINA – Many houses in the hills of Puerto Rico are built on cement stilts. The cars are parked underneath the house. This area is the marquesina. Manolo has an apartment right next to the cars.

EL PARQUE DE LAS PALOMAS – The Park of the Pigeons.

YÚSICA – One of the known female Taíno caciques (chiefs) of the area known now as Loiza Aldea. It is also believed her control reached to El Yunque, the National Rain Forest, which lies to the south of Loiza Aldea.

FOOD

ACAPURRÍAS – Fritters made from plátanos, stuffed with meat or crabs.

ARROZ CON DULCE – Rice pudding, with coconut, milk, sugar, raisins and cinnamon.

ARROZ CON GANDULES – Rice with pigeon peas.

BACALAO – Codfish fritters.

BAVI – Birch beer.

NAME – Edible tuberose root of the yam family.

PANAPÉN – Bread fruit.

PASTELERÍAS – Rectangular shaped patties stuffed with meat, olives, beans, raisins and other assorted foods. They are usually wrapped in plátano leaves or wax paper.

PERNI – Roast pork.

PLÁTANO – Plantain.

YAUTÍA – an indigenous root.

YUCCA – an indigenous root.