

THROWING GASOLINA

by

Jeff Storms

4815 Juneau Lane North  
Plymouth, MN 55446  
Work: 612.333.9536  
Cell: 612.201.9638  
jsstorms@gmail.com

Fade In:

EXT. HAVANA SEAPORT - DAY

SUPER: "Havana, Cuba 1924."

The sun shines over the seaport.

EXT. SAN CRISTOBAL CATHEDRAL - DAY

A dozen children wearing red shirts and carrying baseball gloves run through a market place in front of the cathedral. Several of the children steal fruit from one of the carts, and the cart's OLD MERCHANT chases them.

NOTE: For the first 9 pages, dialogue is in Spanish with English subtitles, unless otherwise noted.

OLD MERCHANT

Come back here, you thieves!

ALEJANDRO, 9, dark-skinned, chubby, lags behind the group, waddling quickly and holding up his pants so they do not fall. FRANCISCO BELLAN, 9, lighter-skinned but not quite Caucasian, sees Old Merchant close in on Alejandro.

Francisco hides behind a cart, waits for Alejandro to pass, then trips the Old Merchant so Alejandro can escape. Francisco laughs while the Old Merchant winces.

Francisco turns to rejoin the group but is apprehended from behind by a SECOND MERCHANT. The Old Merchant removes the belt from his pants, snaps it in his hands, and approaches Francisco with a toothless grin.

OLD MERCHANT

You little shit.

EXT. SUGAR CANE FIELD - DAY

The children play baseball in an empty space carved into a sugar cane field. Francisco is the left-handed pitcher and Alejandro is the catcher for the red team. The opposing team, in blue, taunts Francisco.

OPPOSING TEAM MEMBER #1

Hey Francisco, how does your ass feel?

OLD MAN #1 and OLD MAN #2 place side bets on the action with pieces of "ten," the currency of the time.

A SMALL CHILD keeps score with chalk on the pavement: "Red 5 - Blue 4, bottom of the 9th Inning."

Runners at second and third. Alejandro holds up two fingers. His belly hangs from the bottom of his shirt.

ALEJANDRO

Two down!  
 (to Francisco)  
 Come on Cisco, one more out.

JOSE, an intimidating child, steps into the batter's box.

OPPOSING TEAM MEMBER #2

Jose is going to spank your ass  
 harder than that old fart did!

Francisco delivers a quick fastball for a strike as ADOLFO BELLAN, 45, light-skinned, arrives wearing a crisp suit, sharp hat, and carrying a brief case.

OLD MAN #1

Two pieces of ten says the kid  
 throwing gas gets the strikeout.

ADOLFO

I'll take that bet.

OLD MAN #2

Even money?

ADOLFO

Straight up.

OLD MAN #1

Deal!  
 (laughing)  
 I'll buy myself a nicer tombstone!

Francisco delivers a fastball that Jose fouls straight back. Jose looks at Francisco and gestures with his thumb and pointer finger, suggesting he was "this close."

OLD MAN #1/OLD MAN #2

(in chorus)  
 Gasolina! Gasolina!

ADOLFO

Francisco, come here.

Francisco runs to Adolfo and Alejandro follows behind. The opposing team SNICKERS at the break in the action.

ADOLFO

He just missed that pitch. You  
 can't throw him another fastball.

FRANCISCO  
I throw too hard for him.

ADOLFO  
Apes throw hard, but it's still  
shit. Pitchers pitch.

FRANCISCO  
But. . .

Alejandro pulls Francisco by his shirt sleeve.

ALEJANDRO  
Come on, it's going to get dark.

Francisco sulks back to the mound, throwing the ball in-and-out of his mitt.

Alejandro returns to home plate. He looks at his swollen and bruised hand. He gives it a shake, throws his glove back on, and assumes the catching position.

Alejandro signals for different pitches, but Francisco stubbornly refuses. Adolfo shakes his head in frustration. Alejandro signals for a fastball and Francisco agrees.

Francisco delivers a fastball and Jose smacks it for a home run. The opposing team celebrates. Alejandro throws his mitt to the ground. Francisco defiantly looks at Adolfo, who jingles his newly won change in his hand.

EXT. ALMENDARES BALLPARK - DAY

SUPER: "Almendares Ballpark - Havana, Cuba 1934."

The atmosphere is festive as everyone prepares for the big game. Poor folk gather outside of the stadium hoping to catch a glimpse; some climb trees. The upper class arrive in their finest clothes. People place bets everywhere.

INT. HABANA LEONES DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS

Francisco wears his red Habana Leones baseball uniform and stands like a conqueror: chest out; hands on hips; head held high; left foot on the bench. He fields questions as a BEAUTIFUL WOMAN ties a red silk scarf around his neck.

REPORTER #1  
If you win this game you clinch the  
League. Are you nervous?

FRANCISCO  
About the game? No.

Francisco grins and motions to the beautiful woman.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)

About her breathing in my ear? Yes.

The reporters LAUGH.

REPORTER #2

People say you rely too much on your fastball.

Alejandro, now a large, dark-skinned man wearing catcher's equipment, strolls up behind the group of reporters.

FRANCISCO

(smiles)

And my good looks.

The reporters LAUGH. The woman finishes tying the scarf and kisses Francisco on the cheek. Alejandro rolls his eyes.

ALEJANDRO

Hey, big shot! Time to go.

Francisco winks at the reporters and smiles.

FRANCISCO

Enjoy the show.

He sprints to the field. The crowd erupts with CHEERS.

EXT. HAVANA CITY STREETS - CONTINUOUS

IRWIN ROTHSTEIN, 55, a nerdy man in glasses donning a frumpy seersucker suit with a white straw hat, fumbles with a large map as he navigates the Havana streets. The streets are flooded with music and people wearing red and blue.

INT. SALOON - CONTINUOUS

Irwin stumbles through the door. He approaches some tough-looking patrons dressed in red, drinking and carousing.

IRWIN

(in broken Spanish)

Excuse me, could you please tell me how to get to the baseball park, er, Almendares?

PATRON #1

What do you care about the game?

IRWIN  
 (nervously)  
 Well, I--

PATRON #2  
 Which team are you rooting for,  
 little man?

PATRON #1  
 The Lions or the Scorpions?

IRWIN  
 The, um--

Irwin scans the patrons and sees a lion patch.

IRWIN  
 (nervously)  
 The Lions.

The group stares at Irwin for a beat. They CHEER and raise their glasses. Several patrons rush Irwin, hoist him over their heads, and stomp towards the door.

PATRONS  
 Habana! Habana! Habana!

EXT. ALMENDARES BALLPARK - DAY

The patrons drop Irwin off at the entrance to the stadium.

IRWIN  
 (trying to yell over  
 the noise)  
 Thanks!

Irwin adjusts his attire and marches into the ballpark.

INT. ALMENDARES BALLPARK - CONTINUOUS

The game is underway. Irwin sits and takes notes. A HABANA BATTER hits a home run. The ALMENDARES PITCHER throws his glove and follows the batter around the bases.

ALMENDARES PITCHER  
 Hit another one. I dare you. On my  
 mother, I will throw the next pitch  
 at your fucking throat.

Irwin smirks.

IRWIN  
 (laughing to himself  
 in English)  
 Well, that's unorthodox.

The Almendares Pitcher strikes out the next batter.

IRWIN  
 But effective.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

Francisco strikes out several Almendares batters.

Alejandro smacks a home run. He claps his hands and pumps his arm in celebration as he runs the bases. The Habana fans CHEER while the Almendares fans BOO.

The scoreboard reads, "Habana 2, Almendares 1, bottom of the 5th Inning."

Francisco strikes out several more Almendares batters. Irwin scribbles furiously in his notebook, intrigued by Francisco's dominant pitching performance.

The scoreboard reads, "Habana 2, Almendares 1, bottom of the 9th Inning, 2 outs."

The next Almendares BATTER hits an easy ground ball to the short stop, MANUEL, but Manuel clumsily allows the ball to roll between his legs and the batter is safe at first base.

Francisco, angry, hits the next batter with a wild pitch. With runners on first and second, Francisco is visibly nervous. He hits the next batter and fills the bases. Francisco kicks up some dirt from the pitching mound.

FRANCISCO  
 God damnit!

Alejandro runs to the mound to cool-down Francisco. Both players cover their mouths with their gloves.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)  
 (glaring towards  
 Manuel)  
 What is Manuel's problem?

ALEJANDRO  
 Calm down. We just need one out.

FRANCISCO  
 No shit.

Irwin studies Francisco under pressure.

ALEJANDRO

Everyone in the stadium knows you're going fastball. Throw something else.

Francisco stares at the Almendares bench.

FRANCISCOO

(yelling)

No! I'm ramming this thing down their throat.

ALEJANDRO

This is not about you.

Francisco turns back to Alejandro and shakes his head.

FRANCISCO

You are such a whiner.

ALEJANDRO

The team wants to win.

Francisco puts his hand on Alejandro's shoulder and smiles.

FRANCISCO

Then go back there, and catch my fucking fastball.

The men stare at each other for a beat and LAUGH. Alejandro shakes his head and returns to home plate.

A HUSKY BATTER, sporting a large handlebar mustache, strides towards the batter's box. He spits, twists the ends of his mustache, rolls his neck, and steps into the box. He points his bat right at Francisco's head.

ALEJANDRO

(to the fielders)

Two down!

(to Francisco)

Put it in there.

Francisco throws a fastball and the Husky Batter swings and misses for strike one. Angry, the batter hurls his bat into the crowd. The fans put their arms up to shield themselves. A timid, young BAT BOY brings the batter another bat.

HUSKY BATTER

(to Francisco)

Bring that weak shit again pretty boy.

Francisco doesn't even look to Alejandro for a sign. Francisco holds up one finger to the batter, revealing that he's throwing a fastball.

Francisco lets his fastball fly but the batter clobbers it. The ball soars towards the fence but cuts foul at the last second. The batter looks at Francisco and smiles.

Francisco removes his hat and uses it to wipe sweat from his brow. He circles the mound.

FRANCISCO  
(mumbling to himself)  
Come on! Faster, faster.

Francisco returns to the mound. Alejandro gestures for Francisco to settle down. Francisco shakes off several of Alejandro's signals. Francisco stares the batter down and looks at Alejandro.

The fans chant: "GASOLINA! GASOLINA! GASOLINA!" Irwin smiles and joins in. Annoyed, Alejandro gives Francisco the middle finger. Francisco nods and smiles.

He throws a fastball. The batter hits it to deep center. It looks like it's going out, but the CENTER FIELDER makes a great catch at the fence, robbing the home run. Francisco drops to his knees and his teammates rush him to celebrate.

FRANCISCO  
(to Alejandro)  
I told you! I told you!

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Francisco walks in with a woman on each arm. The patrons CHEER his arrival. Several teammates hurry him to the bar.

TEAMMATE #1  
Bartender! Drinks for the world's  
best pitcher!

Francisco, already tipsy, downs another. He composes himself as a PRETTY WOMAN approaches holding a baseball bat.

PRETTY WOMAN  
For my brother. Will you sign it?

FRANCISCO  
Little brother or big brother?

PRETTY WOMAN  
(flirting)  
Younger but very, very large.

Francisco cozies up but Alejandro grabs him from behind.

FRANCISCO  
(annoyed)  
What!?

ALEJANDRO  
Cisco, it's Manuel. A man is  
hitting him outside.

Francisco, bat in hand, takes off for the door.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Francisco rushes out the door. MOBSTER, 25, a very large white man dressed in formal attire, sans jacket and with sleeves rolled up, wails away on Manuel with his fists.

Francisco cracks the Mobster across the back with the bat. The Mobster falls to the floor. Francisco, drops the bat, jumps on top of him, and starts punching him.

NOTE: Dialogue in scene in English unless otherwise noted.

BENNO (O.S.)  
Off!

A pistol FIRES. Francisco sees BENNO FEIN holding it.

Benno, 50, wears a beard and a flashy suit. Benno walks, always with a slight limp, towards the group of fighting men. He carries a cane with a brass handle in the shape of a skull wearing a shtreimel hat, a traditional Jewish hat.

BENNO (CONT'D)  
Do what I say, less people get hurt.

Francisco works his way back up to his feet.

FRANCISCO  
Who are you?

BENNO  
(mildly impressed)  
English, huh?

FRANCISCO  
(sarcastically)  
No, Dutch.

The Mobster punches Francisco in the lower back from behind. Francisco falls to his knees and grabs his back.

MOBSTER

You don't talk to him like that you  
rice-and-beans-eating piece of shit.

Benno pistol-whips the Mobster across the face, and he falls  
to the ground.

BENNO

Did I tell you to hit him?

MOBSTER

(holding his mouth)  
He was disrespectful.

BENNO

That's what the world needs, you,  
with the moral composition of Nero's  
pig, playing judge and jury.

Benno returns to Francisco, who works his way to his feet.

BENNO (CONT'D)

Nice game today.

A pause.

FRANCISCO

Why is your man beating my friend?

Benno motions with the gun towards Manuel, who tearfully  
tries to stop the blood running from his nose.

BENNO

Friend?  
(getting in Manuel's  
face)  
You hear that you bet-against-your-  
own-team-piece-of-shit! Your  
pitcher thinks you're his friend.

FRANCISCO

What are you talking about?

BENNO

Oh, you weren't gonna get a cut of  
the juice?

Benno puts his gun to the side of Manuel's head. Manuel  
cries harder and blood rushes from his nose. Francisco,  
panicked, steps towards Benno.

FRANCISCO

Wait!

BENNO  
This rat, who doesn't pay his  
debts...

FRANCISCO  
Put the gun down.

BENNO  
Placed a bet with my guy. You've  
met...

Benno motions his gun towards the Mobster, who is now  
standing, holding his head in pain.

BENNO (CONT'D)  
He bet that your team would lose.

FRANCISCO  
(taken aback)  
What?

BENNO  
After you won, he said he couldn't  
pay.

FRANCISCO  
(to Manuel in Spanish)  
Is this man speaking the truth?

MANUEL  
(crying, in Spanish)  
I'm sorry. My sister. She is very  
sick.

Benno smiles and offers Francisco the gun. Francisco looks  
at the gun and then glares at Manuel.

FRANCISCO  
(in Spanish)  
You son of a bitch!

Francisco punches Manuel in the face.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)  
You almost ruined my game! My game!

Francisco goes to punch Manuel again but Benno grabs his  
arm. Francisco turns and cocks his fist back as if to  
strike Benno. Benno shakes his head and waves the gun.

BENNO  
Not a wise idea. Come on, I'd like  
to introduce you to a few people.

FRANCISCO  
Leave me alone.

BENNO  
Etiquette dictates that when a man  
with a gun invites you to have a  
drink, you respond favorably.

Alejandro and several Habana players enter the alleyway.

ALEJANDRO  
(in Spanish)  
Is everything okay?

Benno puts his gun away.

FRANCISCO  
(in Spanish)  
Fine.

Francisco motions to Benno.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)  
(in Spanish)  
I'll deal with this guy.

ALEJANDRO  
(in Spanish)  
But Manuel?

Francisco spits at Manuel, who cries. Benno puts his arm  
around Francisco and they walk to the club.

BENNO  
Anyone ever tell you that you throw  
too many fastballs?

Francisco shoots Benno a look.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - CONTINUOUS

Francisco follows Benno to a table where JUAN and RAUL  
MENDES and ESTEBAN POMPEZ sit, drinking with high-end CALL  
GIRLS. Juan and Raul are short stubby twins in their 50s.  
Esteban, 40, is tall, muscular, and distinguished.

NOTE: Dialogue in this scene in Spanish with English  
subtitles unless otherwise indicated.

BENNO  
(to Francisco)  
Have a seat.

Francisco does a double-take, caught off-guard by Benno's well-spoken Spanish. Benno and Francisco sit. Francisco peers around the table at the men and cautiously sits.

BENNO (CONT'D)

Pitcher, these are...

FRANCISCO

My name is Francisco.

JUAN

Hey, hey, the Cisco Kid!

BENNO

(emphatically and  
annoyed)

All right, F-r-a-n-c-i-s-c-o...  
These are the Mendes twins, Juan and Raul. It is their distorted belief that Mexico will be home to the world's premier baseball league.

RAUL

We share a border with the States. Nice weather. Play year-round. And we let the blacks play.

BENNO

All of which would be dandy if ninety-nine percent of your prospective clientele didn't live in make-shift, adobe huts.

JUAN

Hey, if a Jew like you can grow up in a cardboard box in Brooklyn and make good, I have faith in Mexico.

Benno slightly raises his glass.

BENNO

(in Yiddish)

La Chaim, hey?

Francisco motions to Esteban.

FRANCISCO

And you are?

BENNO

Esteban Pompez. I own a Negro League team in the States, the New York Cubans.

FRANCISCO  
 (fascinated)  
 You play in New York City?

ESTEBAN  
 We actually play in New Jersey.

FRANCISCO  
 What is New Jersey?

RAUL  
 (laughing)  
 Exactly!

JUAN  
 Aside from not being in New York,  
 there's only two fucking Cubans on  
 the team!

FRANCISCO  
 (to Benno)  
 And are you a baseball man?

BENNO  
 Me? I'm a money man. Sometimes  
 that makes me a baseball man.

ESTEBAN  
 So what do you want, Francisco? It  
 looks like you've accomplished all  
 you can here.

FRANCISCO  
 I have other dreams.

Irwin creeps towards the table but stops short, hesitant to  
 interrupt the conversation.

RAUL  
 (laughing)  
 Uh oh, we have a dreamer.

Irwin approaches Benno from behind and tentatively taps him  
 on the shoulder.

NOTE: Dialogue returns to English until otherwise indicated.

BENNO  
 (hardly looking up)  
 Irwin Rothstein, you fat fuck.

IRWIN  
 (nervously)  
 Good to see you, Mr. Fein.

BENNO

I swear I didn't come all the way to Havana to look at your second chin.

Irwin motions towards Francisco.

IRWIN

I was hoping to have a brief word with your associate.

BENNO

Associate? I wouldn't say we associate. I'd say he was a guy I thought about killing but didn't.

Francisco is taken aback.

IRWIN

(nervously)  
Fortuitous for him.

BENNO

Or maybe you? Take him. I'm getting bored and...

Benno motions to the Call Girls.

BENNO (CONT'D)

We have pressing matters.

Francisco stands. Benno stands and grabs Francisco tightly by the shoulders and whispers in his ear.

BENNO (CONT'D)

(in Spanish)  
You do not hit my men, understand?

FRANCISCO

Yes.

BENNO

(smiling)  
Watch out for Irwin. He'll kill you slower than I would.

IRWIN

You just stole my sales pitch.

Francisco follows Irwin away from the table and to the bar.

IRWIN (CONT'D)

(in broken Spanish)  
Bartender, two beers.

FRANCISCO  
 (in Spanish)  
 One beer. Water for me.  
 (English)  
 What can I do for you, Mr?

IRWIN  
 You speak English. Good. It's  
 Rothstein. Irwin Rothstein.

Irwin offers Francisco his hand but Francisco ignores it.  
 Francisco motions to Benno, who is laughing maniacally.

FRANCISCO  
 Who is that crazy fuck?

IRWIN  
 They call him Benno "Safe Bet" Fein.  
 He's a New York, numbers racket guy.

FRANCISCO  
 Numbers?

IRWIN  
 He's a guy you don't want to know.  
 If you know him, don't cross him.

FRANCISCO  
 I have had enough of Americans  
 tonight. I am going to celebrate.

Francisco starts to walk away.

IRWIN  
 Yankees.

Francisco turns back.

FRANCISCO  
 What?

IRWIN  
 I scout for the New York Yankees. I  
 presume you know who they are?

FRANCISCO  
 Are you having fun with me?

IRWIN  
 We have a spot left on our spring  
 training roster. We start in a  
 week.

Francisco walks back and signals the bartender.

FRANCISCO  
 (in Spanish)  
 Scotch.

INT. BELLAN HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

An upper-class home.

NOTE: Dialogue in Spanish with English subtitles until otherwise indicated.

FRANCISCO (V.O.)  
 (yelling)  
 Father? Father, are you home?

Adolfo, now wearing a gray beard, looks like he's aged twenty years in the past ten. He sits in a chair reading, smoking a cigar, and drinking booze. He coughs loudly.

ADOLFO  
 (not looking up)  
 I know. You won. I heard you pitched like crap.

Francisco hurries in, followed by Irwin.

FRANCISCO  
 I gave up one run.

Adolfo takes his glasses off and looks up.

ADOLFO  
 Your point?

Adolfo notices Irwin.

ADOLFO (CONT'D)  
 Who is the fat American?

IRWIN  
 (in broken Spanish)  
 I am Irwin Rothstein. It is a pleasure to meet you.

NOTE: Dialogue in English until otherwise noted.

ADOLFO  
 Mr. Rothstein, you speak Spanish like a retarded child.

IRWIN  
 You're very kind.

FRANCISCO  
Mr. Rothstein works for the Yankees.

Irwin approaches Adolpho.

IRWIN  
Sir, I would like to give Francisco the opportunity to play professional baseball in the United States.

ADOLFO  
You play fast and loose with the word "profession." It is a game for boys, only from which scoundrels and cheats profit. Which are you?

IRWIN  
(defensive)  
Many ballplayers earn good, decent livings.

ADOLFO  
(voice raising)  
Those players are white, Mr. Rothstein. I was schooled in the States. My son is not white to you.

IRWIN  
He's mostly white-Spanish. He can probably play professional ball.

ADOLFO  
You parse your words. White is white is white in your country.

IRWIN  
I think--

ADOLFO  
My son will take over my legal practice and be a man of honor.

FRANCISCO  
Father, this is my dream. I--

IRWIN  
(trying to lighten the mood)  
Half my family practices law. Not sure honor is a prerequisite.

Unamused, Adolpho puts his glasses on and returns to reading.

ADOLFO  
See Mr. Rothstein out.

Francisco escorts Irwin out of the home.

EXT. BELLAN HOME - CONTINUOUS

FRANCISCO  
I will talk to him.

IRWIN  
(annoyed and raising  
his voice)  
Francisco, this is a small window  
and it is closing.

Irwin hands Francisco a card.

IRWIN (CONT'D)  
I'm staying at the Nacional, and I'm  
out on the first boat in the  
morning. I hope to see you there.

FRANCISCO  
I will try.

Irwin nods and walks away.

INT. BELLAN HOME, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Francisco storms back into the living room.

NOTE: Dialogue in Spanish with English subtitles until  
otherwise indicated.

FRANCISCO  
(angry)  
That man wants to help me.

ADOLFO  
He is just another ivory hunter  
looking to make a quick buck. That  
man cares nothing for you.

FRANCISCO  
And you do!? You have never  
supported my dream. I do not want  
to be stuck on this island.

Adolfo, drink in hand, rises from his chair.

ADOLFO  
What do you want, Francisco?

ADOLFO (CONT'D)  
To be a slave or a mascot for an  
American baseball team?

FRANCISCO  
I want to be the best pitcher the  
States has ever seen. Just because  
you weren't good enough--

Adolfo throws his glass against the wall and gets in  
Francisco's face.

ADOLFO  
You would be arrogant enough to  
think that.

Francisco swells his chest, not backing down.

FRANCISCO  
Then what is it about?

ADOLFO  
We have a name that people respect.

FRANCISCO  
(yelling)  
I am respected!

ADOLFO  
No!  
(softly)  
You're revered. That's the problem.

Adolfo, drunk, slowly and clumsily exits the room.  
Francisco kicks his father's chair onto its side.

INT. FRANCISCO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Francisco lies in bed. A KNOCK at his window. He peers out  
and sees Alejandro. Alejandro motions for him to come out.

EXT. BELLAN HOME BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Francisco and Alejandro sit on the ground against the house,  
smoking cigars and drinking.

ALEJANDRO  
I can't believe he bet against us.

FRANCISCO  
I could have killed Manny.

ALEJANDRO  
And now New York?

FRANCISCO  
What a fucked up night.

Alejandro smiles and raises his glass.

ALEJANDRO  
But we are champions.

Francisco raises his glass. He and Alejandro toast.

FRANCISCO  
Yes, we are.

ALEJANDRO  
When do you leave for the States?

FRANCISCO  
I'm not going.

Alejandro stands up.

ALEJANDRO  
What!?

FRANCISCO  
My father needs me here.

Alejandro turns and urinates.

ALEJANDRO  
Do you know what I would give to  
play for the Yankees? You and I  
have always dreamed...

FRANCISCO  
That's all it is, a dream.

Alejandro puts his cigar in his mouth and turns to  
Francisco, pointing to the dark brown skin on his arm.

ALEJANDRO  
(cigar in mouth)  
For a dark man like me, yes. For  
you, this is real.

FRANCISCO  
(laughing)  
Jesus, you're pissing all over  
yourself.

Alejandro finishes and removes the cigar from his mouth.

ALEJANDRO  
You have always been my brother.

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)

My successes have been because of  
you.

FRANCISCO

That's not--

ALEJANDRO

As your brother, I'm telling you  
that you have to go. Not just for  
you, but for me, for all of us.

Francisco puffs his cigar and stares at Alejandro.

INT. FRANCISCO'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Francisco lays awake in bed with a lamp on. He flips  
through a deck of baseball cards.

FRANCISCO

Charles Radbourn. Providence Grays.  
309 wins. 441 strikeouts in 1884.

Francisco moves the Radbourn card to the bottom of the deck.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)

Kid Nichols. Boston Beaneaters.  
361 wins. 222 strikeouts as a  
rookie in 1890.

Francisco rests the cards on his chest and closes his eyes.  
He breathes deep, pops up, and furiously begins to pack.

INT. BELLAN HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Adolfo sits on a chair in the dark. Francisco, duffel bag  
over his shoulder, tiptoes through the living room. Adolfo  
grabs Francisco by the wrist. The men glare at each other.

FRANCISCO

You can't stop me.

Francisco tries to pull back but Adolfo squeezes harder.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)

Stop!

Adolfo shoves a baseball into Francisco's hand. Adolfo  
takes his other hand and shapes Francisco's hand around the  
baseball. Francisco is confused.

ADOLFO

This is how I threw my change up.

ADOLFO (CONT'D)  
 You make your hand look like it's  
 saying, "okay." Hold it tight.  
 Same arm speed.

FRANCISCO  
 I know how to--

ADOLFO  
 Despite your talent, there is one  
 thing you do not understand.

Adolfo lets Francisco go, stands, and walks to the window.

ADOLFO (CONT'D)  
 Your fastball is only about you.  
 Your power, your will. The game is  
 much bigger than you.

FRANCISCO  
 I understand.

Francisco throws the ball back to Adolfo.

ADOLFO  
 No...You don't. But neither did I.

Adolfo throws the ball back to Francisco.

ADOLFO (CONT'D)  
 Keep it. It might come in handy.

Francisco examines the ball again, and sees an address on  
 it. He places it in his pocket.

FRANCISCO  
 Father, I have to go. I will make  
 you proud.

Adolfo nods. Francisco stares at his father, then runs out  
 the door. Adolfo picks up a picture of his wife, who is  
 clearly of African descent. Adolfo coughs violently. A  
 tear runs down his cheek.

EXT. HAVANA SEAPORT - DAWN

Irwin is on a boat docked at the seaport; its horn TOOTS.  
 He glances at his watch. Francisco sprints towards it.

IRWIN  
 Wait! Francisco, hurry!

A DECK HAND stops Francisco from coming aboard.

IRWIN (CONT'D)

It's okay. He's with me. Here is his ticket.

The Deck Hand lets Francisco on the boat.

NOTE: Dialogue in remainder of script is predominantly in English, except where otherwise indicated.

FRANCISCO

(out of breath)

I am ready.

IRWIN

(smiling)

I doubt it, but I'm glad you made it all the same.

INT. CRESCENT LAKE PARK FIELD - DAY

SUPER: "Crescent Lake Park Field, St. Petersburg, Florida."

Francisco peers through a fence, watching the Yankees players partake in spring training drills.

IRWIN (O.S.)

I didn't bring you here to watch.

Francisco turns. Irwin tosses Francisco a practice uniform. Irwin is accompanied by WAYNE HEATHERINGTON, 70s, a well-dressed man with a full head of well-groomed, white hair.

IRWIN

Francisco, this is Wayne Heatherington, the owner.

FRANCISCO

A great pleasure to meet you, sir.

Francisco offers Heatherington his hand but Heatherington stares at it. Francisco awkwardly returns it to his side.

HEATHERINGTON

So you want to be an American baseball player?

FRANCISCO

All my life.

HEATHERINGTON

You, and all the boys in this country.

A beat.

HEATHERINGTON (CONT'D)  
We'll throw you in the fire.

Heatherington turns and walks away.

FRANCISCO  
(softly to Irwin)  
Does he have a problem with me?

IRWIN  
Old money, Anglo-Saxon. Never  
hugged his own mother.

Irwin puts his arm around Francisco. They walk.

IRWIN (CONT'D)  
Are you excited?

Francisco stares at the field and smiles.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Francisco examines his uniform in the mirror. He takes his cap off and waves it in the air, pretending that a crowd applauds him. COACH HUNTER, white, late 50s, overweight, enters the room and sees Francisco.

COACH HUNTER  
I've never seen a man so proud of  
himself for getting dressed.

Francisco, embarrassed, puts his cap back on.

COACH HUNTER (CONT'D)  
You wanna keep playing with  
yourself, or try baseball?

INT. DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS

Two Yankee players sit in the dugout. SHIPP, white, mid-20s, an Adonis. DUKES, white, 30s, wearing a mustache. Francisco and Coach Hunter enter the dugout. Shipp and Dukes stop laughing and stare at Francisco.

COACH HUNTER  
Shipp, Dukes, this is Francisco  
Bellan. He's joining us from Cuba.

Francisco slightly bows his head.

FRANCISCO  
Hello.

Shipp and Dukes stare.

COACH HUNTER

Francisco, go stretch out. We'll have you throw some BP.

Francisco nods and jogs towards the field.

DUKES

Hey coach, not for nothing, but is that a nigger?

COACH HUNTER

Last I checked, Dukes, he was a ballplayer.

SHIPP

Yeah, but--

COACH HUNTER

I hear ya. He's supposed to be some hot shot Cuban pitcher. Given the way Hively pitched last year, we might need him in the rotation.

DUKES

A Cuban?

Dukes spits.

SHIPP

(to Dukes)

So does that make him a nigger?

Dukes shrugs his shoulders.

EXT. PLAYING FIELD - DAY

Francisco pitches to PATTY MILLS, late-teens, bright red hair, stocky. Francisco throws several fastballs to Patty, who misses all of them.

Coach Hunter evaluates Francisco with the pitching coach, SAM. Sam is lean, in his 60s, and always smoking.

SAM

Francisco, it's batting practice. Lay off the heat so we can see if the kid can hit.

Patty stares at the ground, visibly embarrassed. Francisco smiles and winks at Sam.

FRANCISCO

No problem, coach.

Francisco lobs a soft pitch. Patty, whose timing is now off, swings and misses by a mile, falling to the ground. Francisco smirks. Fuming, Patty throws his bat.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

The players board a bus. Coach Hunter stops Francisco.

COACH HUNTER  
Francisco, come here.

FRANCISCO  
Yes, coach?

COACH HUNTER  
You're a competitor, I like that.  
But I'm not going to have anyone on  
my roster showing up his teammates.

Francisco nods apologetically.

COACH HUNTER (CONT'D)  
(smiles)  
All right, get on the bus.

Coach Hunters slaps Francisco on the ass.

COACH HUNTER (CONT'D)  
Good first day.

EXT. THE PIER HOTEL - DAY

The bus pulls up to the downtown hotel. Bellboys unload the players' belongings. Reporters and photographers rush the players as they exit the bus.

REPORTER #1  
Dukes, a batting title this year?

HIVELY, 28, tall, lanky, face like a rat.

REPORTER #2  
Hively, is your place in the  
rotation in jeopardy?

Francisco exits last. The reporters get a glimpse of him. They abandon the other players and surround Francisco.

REPORTER #1  
Hey, kid, what's your name?

FRANCISCO  
Fran...

A flash blinds him, and he shields his eyes with his hand.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)

Bellan. Francisco Bellan.

Coach Hunter sees the mob around Francisco and hurries over.

REPORTER #2

Are you black Francisco?

FRANCISCO

Huh?

Coach Hunter steps in and puts his arm around Francisco.

COACH HUNTER

All right, vultures. Plenty of time  
for questions later.

Coach Hunter and Francisco begin to walk towards the hotel.

REPORTER #1

Coach Hunter, are the Yankees  
integrating?

COACH HUNTER

My guys need to get situated.

Coach Hunter and Francisco continue to walk.

REPORTER #2

But Coach!

Coach pulls Francisco aside once they are out of sight.

COACH HUNTER

(whispering to  
Francisco)

You don't talk to nobody 'til we get  
your story straight, understand?

Francisco nods.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Coach Hunter and Francisco enter the hotel with the rest of the team. They are greeted with APPLAUSE from the hotel staff. The MAYOR, a chubby 50 year-old-man in a cheap suit makes his way to the front of the crowd.

MAYOR

As mayor of St. Petersburg, I'd  
officially like to welcome the  
Yankees to our most dignified city.

The hotel staff applauds again.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

As...

The Mayor sees Francisco and is unnerved but stays on task.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

As a sign of our great affection for your team, Coach Hunter, I would like to present you and your Yankees with the key to our city.

The hotel staff APPLAUDS and Coach Hunter accepts the key, which is framed in glass. The Mayor, smiling in an attempt to conceal his anger, whispers in Coach Hunter's ear.

MAYOR (CONT'D)

A word. Now.

INT. HOTEL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Coach Hunter enters. The Mayor follows and slams the door behind him. Coach Hunter takes his cap off and sits. He places the framed key on the table. The Mayor paces.

MAYOR

My people will not stand for this.

COACH HUNTER

Mayor, with all due respect--

MAYOR

Shove your respect. You expect me to condone white and black players playing together in my city?!

The Mayor lights a cigarette.

COACH HUNTER

We provide a whole lotta revenue each spring. He's a Cuban player, and we're trying him out because we get to make that decision, not you.

The Mayor takes a drag of his cigarette.

MAYOR

I gave you the key to the damn city!

COACH HUNTER

Right.

Coach Hunter casually throws the frame against the wall behind him, shattering it. Coach Hunter and the Mayor glare at one another.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Patty unpacks his clothes with the help of a BELLBOY. Francisco enters with his own bags. Patty and the bellboy stop in their tracks. Patty slips the Bellboy a dollar.

The bellboy stares Francisco up and down, decides not to help. He leaves the room. Francisco throws his bag onto the empty bed.

PATTY  
We're roommates?

FRANCISCO  
Looks that way.

Francisco hops on the bed, sprawls out, and winks.

EXT. PRACTICE FIELD - DAY

Hively pitches while Patty catches. Shipp bats. Hively shakes off every pitch Patty calls. Hively finally delivers a pitch of his own choosing. Shipp crushes a home run. Coach Hunter storms onto the field.

COACH HUNTER  
(to Hively)  
You're already on thin ice. You think throwing like a 4-year-old crippled girl is gonna help?

Hively glares at coach, who turns to Patty.

COACH HUNTER  
And you, fire crotch. What kind of game are you calling back there?

Patty lowers his head.

PATTY  
(timidly)  
Coach, I--

COACH HUNTER  
This ain't the Boston recreational league!

Coach Hunter gets in Patty's face.

COACH HUNTER (CONT'D)  
Shape up, or you'll be back home  
eating potatoes with your eighteen  
brothers and sisters. You hear me?

Patty still looking down, nods.

DISSOLVE TO:

Francisco strikes Dukes out. Duke shoots Francisco an angry  
look. Francisco doesn't react; he's all business. Coach  
Hunter and Sam examine Francisco.

SAM  
Looks damn good, coach.

COACH HUNTER  
Yeah, but he's five shades of brown  
darker than when we started. Tell  
him to stay out of the sun when he's  
not pitching.

Sam chuckles.

COACH HUNTER (CONT'D)  
I'm serious. The goddamn mayor is  
going to throw us out of here for  
mixing players.

SAM  
Got it.

Sam heads off towards the mound.

COACH HUNTER  
And Sam.

Coach Hunter spits.

COACH HUNTER (CONT'D)  
Tell him to throw something other  
than a goddamned fastball. He's  
throwing nothing but gas all week.

Coach Hunter walks away.

COACH HUNTER (CONT'D)  
(mumbles to himself)  
Gonna blow his damn arm out.

SAM  
Francisco!

Francisco sprints over.

FRANCISCO

Hey, coach.

SAM

How you feeling, son?

FRANCISCO

Very good, coach. Real loose.

SAM

Listen, you can't be a one trick pony at this level.

FRANCISCO

Huh?

SAM

You're just throwing fastballs. Mix in some of your other stuff.

FRANCISCO

But it works.

SAM

It's gonna stop working once these guys start getting their timing down. All right?

FRANCISCO

Whatever you say, coach.

Francisco runs off.

SAM

(uncomfortable)

Also, when you're not pitching, stay in the shade. Sun sucks your energy.

Francisco, confused, nods his head.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

The team eats a meal. Francisco eats alone at a table in the corner. Patty sees Francisco sitting alone and joins him. Several of the players stare at Patty.

FRANCISCO

Aren't you breaking some sort of law?

PATTY

Can you help me?

INT. HOTEL COURTYARD - DAY

Francisco and Patty play catch. Francisco stops and motions for Patty to come over.

FRANCISCO

You must remember, a catcher is the boss.

PATTY

I'm a kid. Pitchers won't listen to me. You don't listen to me!

FRANCISCO

Make us listen.

PATTY

How?

FRANCISCO

Be prepared. Know everything about the batter. Then you earn trust. A pitcher must trust his catcher.

PATTY

If I do that, the pitchers will throw the pitches I call?

Francisco smiles.

FRANCISCO

Sometimes.

EXT. PLAYING FIELD - DAY

The Yankees play a series of spring training games.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

1. Patty signals for a curve ball. Francisco delivers and strikes out a White Sox batter.
2. Dukes hits a home run off a Red Sox pitcher. He comes into the dugout and high fives his teammates, but when Francisco approaches, Dukes walks right past him.
3. Hively gives up a home run against the Athletics. Hively throws his hat on the ground and kicks it. Coach Hunter and Sam look at Hively and then look over towards Francisco. They bring Francisco in from the bullpen.
4. Patty signals for a change-up. Francisco nods, grips the ball with the okay-change-up-grip, and delivers the change-up. The Oriole's batter strikes out to end the game.

Patty comes out and shakes Francisco's hand.

PATTY  
Nice change-up.

Francisco hits Patty in the chest with his mitt.

FRANCISCO  
(winking)  
Good call.

EXT. NEW YORK STREET - DAY

Heatherington walks and buys a newspaper from a PAPERBOY. On the cover is a picture of Patty and Francisco shaking hands. The paper reads, "Yankees Integrating?" Heatherington angrily crumples the paper.

INT. HOTEL DINING ROOM - DAY

The team eats lunch. Francisco eats by himself at a table in the corner. Dukes eats with Hively. Hively speaks with a southern accent.

HIVELY  
We're down to final cuts.

DUKES  
You'll make the team.

Hively motions with his head towards Francisco.

HIVELY  
It's down to me and the Cuban for  
the last spot in the rotation.

Patty walks towards Francisco.

DUKES  
It'll be you.

Dukes sees Patty.

DUKES (CONT'D)  
Hey, Patty!

Dukes motions with his head for Patty to join them. Patty looks at Francisco, and apologetically shrugs his shoulders. Patty sits with Dukes and Hively.

DUKES  
Sorry to steal you from your  
girlfriend.

PATTY  
What, him? I--

HIVELY  
You've been doing a good job the  
last couple of games.

DUKES  
You wanna long career in the bigs?

PATTY  
Yes, sir.

DUKES  
That's too bad.

PATTY  
(confused)  
Why's that?

DUKES  
You know, with wetbacks like your  
friend over there: Cubans; Puerto  
Ricans; Mexicans.

Patty uncomfortably shifts in his seat.

HIVELY  
(quietly)  
Even the fucking blacks one day.

DUKES  
They'll play for peanuts, Patty.  
And they'll be pretty good.

Dukes takes a bite of his meal.

HIVELY  
Ain't gonna be much of a need for  
old white guys. Heck, maybe no need  
for white guys at all.

Patty looks over at Francisco, who solemnly eats alone.

INT. PLAYING FIELD - DAY

The Yankees play the White Sox. Hively pitches. Runners  
are second and third. Coach Hunter motions to Sam down in  
the bullpen, where Francisco warms up.

SAM  
Francisco! Get ready.

Hively walks the next batter. Coach Hunter pulls Hively from the game. Francisco runs towards the mound. The crowd MURMURS as Francisco takes the field. Patty comes out and meets Francisco at the mound.

FAN

Get the nigger off the field!

Francisco glares at the Fan.

PATTY

Don't worry about him. One more out, and it's off to New York.

Francisco nods. Patty looks over at Dukes at first base. Dukes stares Patty down. Patty swallows and turns his attention back to Francisco.

PATTY

This guy can't hit heat. Nothing but fastballs and we're out of here.

FRANCISCO

Are you sure?

Patty smacks Francisco in the chest.

PATTY

(smiling)  
I'm the boss, right?

Francisco smiles and slaps Patty on his shoulder with his mitt. Patty jogs back behind home plate. Patty, his back still to Francisco, whispers to the WHITE SOX BATTER.

PATTY

You're getting nothing but ones.

The batter smiles. The umpire also smirks. Patty takes his place behind home plate.

UMPIRE

Let's go.

Francisco throws a fastball. The batter fouls it back. Patty gives the sign for another fastball. Francisco delivers. The batter crushes the ball but it hooks foul.

COACH HUNTER

(to Sam)  
What the fuck is he doing out there?

Francisco shoots Patty a look. Patty looks at Dukes who nods. Patty signals for a fastball.

Francisco shakes it off. Patty runs out to the mound. The men hold their mitts over their mouths while they talk.

FRANCISCO  
He's all over the fastball. Let's  
give him something else.

PATTY  
He got lucky.

Sam heads out towards the mound.

FRANCISCO  
Are you sure?

PATTY  
My job is to be sure. Your job is  
to listen to me.

Francisco nods. Patty turns back towards home plate, and crosses paths with Sam on his way back.

SAM  
We all right? He gonna mix it up?

PATTY  
All good coach.

Patty runs towards home plate. He looks at the batter and slightly nods. Patty takes his place behind home plate. Francisco delivers a fastball. The White Sox batter pounds it out of the ballpark for a grand slam.

Francisco falls to his knees, grabbing his left arm in pain. He grimaces and puts his head on the ground. Dukes nods at Hively. Hively smiles.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Patty and Francisco sit silently at their lockers, which are next to each other. The rest of the team changes and carries on. Francisco holds his injured arm. Coach Hunter storms in. The locker room goes silent.

COACH HUNTER  
That was some bush league shit!  
Three fastballs in a row to a  
fastball hitter.

PATTY  
I don't know what he was doing  
coach. I signaled for a change up.

Francisco looks at Patty in disbelief.

FRANCISCO

What?!

PATTY

He don't listen to nobody, Coach.

FRANCISCO

You said throw a fastball!

PATTY

He's a liar coach.

Francisco stands and glares at Patty. The team surrounds them.

FRANCISCO

(in Spanish)

Fuck your mother!

Patty stands, not backing down.

PATTY

I know you said something about my mother, brown boy.

Francisco tackles Patty and punches him in the face with his injured arm. Francisco grasps his arm in pain. Patty rolls on top of Francisco and punches him in the face. Coach Hunter and several of the players jump in and break it up.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Francisco, busted lip, left arm in a sling, sits alone in the back. He watches Coach Hunter speak with Sam. Coach Hunter looks back at Francisco with a downtrodden look and returns to his conversation with Sam.

INT. HEATHERINGTON'S OFFICE - DAY

Heatherington, wearing glasses, sits at his desk and constructs a ship in a bottle. A KNOCK at the door.

HEATHERINGTON

(stoic)

Yes?

Irwin enters.

IRWIN

You wanted to see me?

Heatherington continues to work and does not look up.

HEATHERINGTON

Sit.

Irwin takes a seat.

HEATHERINGTON (CONT'D)

Francisco is not going to make--

IRWIN

(assuring)

His shoulder will be fine.

HEATHERINGTON

We're cutting him.

Irwin shifts forward in his seat.

IRWIN

Excuse me?

HEATHERINGTON

He looked all right. Nothing special all things considered.

IRWIN

Besides being cheap labor, the team's broke camp, and he's here.

Heatherington peers over the top of his glasses at Irwin.

HEATHERINGTON

Instead of focusing on winning, we'll spend all season answering questions about whether we're putting a negro on the mound.

IRWIN

Coach won't--

HEATHERINGTON

Coach understands it to be a distraction and bad for team chemistry.

IRWIN

Francisco's not black!

Heatherington's ship collapses. Frustrated, he rips his glasses off and looks up.

HEATHERINGTON

I have affidavits from several owners who have researched the matter, and swear under oath that

HEATHERINGTON (CONT'D)  
he's not white. Say he has African  
heritage.

IRWIN  
We'll sell him as a foreigner.  
Exotic.

HEATHERINGTON  
(raising his voice)  
He's a nigger of sorts.

IRWIN  
A nigger of sorts? What does that  
even mean?

HEATHERINGTON  
It means the owners, the  
commissioner, and the fans will not  
stand for him playing on the same  
field as our boys.

IRWIN  
I'm a Jew. Does that make me "a  
nigger of sorts?"

Heatherington stares at Irwin, puts his glasses back on, and  
returns to building his ship.

INT. WAITING AREA - NIGHT

Francisco, arm in a sling, sits in a chair outside of  
Heatherington's office. Irwin enters.

FRANCISCO  
I am very sorry about the fight.

IRWIN  
It's done.

FRANCISCO  
Everything is okay?

IRWIN  
No Francisco, it's not. You  
embarrassed yourself. You  
embarrassed me.

FRANCISCO  
(disbelief)  
What?

IRWIN  
You're done here. Go back to Cuba.

Irwin turns and leaves. Francisco freezes.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Irwin stands in the hallway. He leans against a wall, and takes a hanky from his pocket. He hears Francisco SCREAMING and objects being thrown. Irwin takes his hat off and wipes his brow with the hanky.

IRWIN  
(to himself)  
Damn it.

EXT. YANKEE STADIUM - NIGHT

Two SECURITY GUARDS escort a resisting Francisco out of the stadium. They push him through a gate, throw his duffel bag at him, and lock him out of the stadium. Francisco stares back through the gate as the guards walk away.

FRANCISCO  
(yelling)  
Where am I supposed to go!?

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Francisco solemnly walks through the busy streets. He is pushed and shoved several times as he attempts to navigate his way. The skies open and it starts to pour rain. Francisco finally finds a seedy hotel.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Francisco approaches the counter. The sign at the desk reads, "\$1/Night". Francisco hands the CLERK one dollar.

FRANCISCO  
I want a room for the night.

The Clerk examines Francisco with a critical eye.

CLERK  
Two dollars.

FRANCISCO  
The sign says, "one."

The Clerk stares at Francisco, then lights a cigarette.

CLERK  
Old sign. Don't like it, you can  
sleep outside.

Francisco slams a second dollar on the counter. The Clerk stares at him, then firmly tosses a key at Francisco's chest. Francisco fumbles to catch the key because he is holding his duffel bag with his one good arm.

HOTEL CLERK (CONT'D)

Room 115.

The Clerk gestures with his head.

HOTEL CLERK (CONT'D)

That way. End of the hall.

Visibly angry, Francisco heads in that direction.

INT. MOTEL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Francisco makes his way down the dimly lit hallway. A drugged, barely conscious MAN wears torn clothes and sits on the floor in the doorway of his room.

MAN

You got a dime, man?

Francisco continues past him without looking or stopping.

MAN (CONT'D)

That ain't Christian of you.

As Francisco nears the end of the hall, he stares through an open door into the room next to his. A half-naked WOMAN sits on the edge of the bed drinking and smoking a cigarette. The woman makes a pathetic attempt to be sexy.

WOMAN

(intoxicated and  
slurring)

Wanna give it a go?

The woman vomits. Francisco shakes his head in disgust.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - EVENING

Francisco sits in his underwear. Lightning lights up the sky outside and thunder roars. The sounds of the woman next door having sex permeate through the room. Francisco lies in bed and flips through his baseball cards.

FRANCISCO

Cy Young. 511 wins. No hitter,  
September 18, 1897.

EXT. SOUTH STREET SEAPORT - DAY

Francisco, sits on a bench, arm in a sling and watching people board a boat. He stares at his ticket. He opens his bag, pulls out his Habana Leones hat, and puts it on.

Francisco digs through the bag again and finds the baseball his father gave him. He stares at the address on it, then stares back at the boat.

INT. DOWLING'S DRUG STORE - DAY

NORA DOWLING, 18, wipes the counter in front of the soda fountain. Nora is a plain but pretty woman, who moves with confidence. She wears a simple dress, and speaks with a faint Irish accent.

Francisco enters and surveys the store.

NORA  
How are you, fella?

Francisco looks around, taken aback by her friendliness.

FRANCISCO  
Fine.

Francisco sits at the counter. His eyes roam the store.

NORA  
Well, you can't just sit here.

FRANCISCO  
Give me whatever is good.

Francisco pulls some change from his pocket and places it on the counter. Nora turns and makes a soda. Francisco checks her out from behind. Nora turns her head back.

NORA  
Where you from?

Francisco quickly averts his eyes from Nora's backside.

FRANCISCO  
My father...

He pulls the ball from his pocket and tosses it to Nora.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)  
He gave me this.

Nora examines the ball.

NORA  
That's our address.

Nora tosses the ball back to him.

NORA (CONT'D)  
Who's your father?

FRANCISCO  
Adolpho Bellan.

NORA  
Doesn't ring a bell.

Nora points out the window.

NORA  
Maybe he knows something.

OUTSIDE

CHIEF DOWLING, early-50s, short and stocky with a thick mustache, dressed in police uniform. He argues with somebody, but we can't see who. The argument ends.

INSIDE

Chief Dowling enters, visibly agitated. Nora stands erect and salutes in a mocking fashion.

NORA  
Hello, sir.

Chief Dowling speaks with a pronounced Irish accent.

CHIEF DOWLING  
Father is fine.

Chief Dowling notices Francisco.

CHIEF DOWLING (CONT'D)  
(to Nora)  
Who's this?

Francisco stands.

FRANCISCO  
Sir, I'm--

CHIEF DOWLING  
I was speaking to my daughter.

NORA  
 Chief Dowling this is, well, I don't  
 know your name. His father is  
 Adolph something or other.

Nora organizes items behind the counter.

CHIEF DOWLING  
 Don't know any Adolphs.

FRANCISCO  
 Adolpho. Adolpho Bellan.

The Chief Dowling furrows his brow.

CHIEF DOWLING  
 Adolpho is your father?

FRANCISCO  
 Yes, sir.

The Chief looks Francisco up-and-down.

CHIEF DOWLING  
 (matter-of-fact)  
 Why the hell didn't you say so?

Chief Dowling slaps Francisco on the shoulder of the left  
 arm that is in the sling. Francisco winces in pain.

INT. DOWLING FAMILY KITCHEN - NIGHT

Francisco sits at the dinner table with Chief Dowling in the  
 Chief's modest home. Nora serves dinner.

CHIEF DOWLING  
 You should have seen your father  
 pitch.

NORA  
 (wryly)  
 I'm sure it was something.

Nora smiles and winks at Francisco. Francisco smiles.

CHIEF DOWLING  
 (in his own world)  
 He made some of the best hitters  
 I've ever seen swing out of their  
 shoes. His change up... Good  
 hitters would miss by a foot.

Nora takes a seat. Everyone eats.

NORA

Francisco, I'd like to thank you for giving my father yet another excuse to subject me to stories of his glory days.

CHIEF DOWLING

My glory days didn't start until you were born, sweetheart.

Nora rolls her eyes. The Chief chuckles.

FRANCISCO

How long did you play with my father?

CHIEF DOWLING

Just one season. The year after he graduated college at Fordham. Smart man. Dignified. Too proud to stand for the way he was treated.

Chief Dowling looks down and plays with his food.

CHIEF DOWLING (CONT'D)

(awkwardly)

Times were difficult for non...

NORA

(changing the subject)

You tried out for the Yankees?

FRANCISCO

Yes.

NORA

What happened?

Francisco looks at Chief Dowling.

FRANCISCO

Times do not always change with time.

Chief Dowling reflects and nods his head.

INT. STOREROOM - NIGHT

Francisco and Chief Dowling enter. Chief Dowling turns on the light to the small room. The room is filled with stock for the drug store. A mattress is on the floor.

CHIEF DOWLING  
Not much, but better than the  
street.

FRANCISCO  
It is very good. Thank you.

CHIEF DOWLING  
Nora could use an extra hand around  
the store if you'd like to earn a  
little change.

Chief Dowling motions to Francisco's arm.

CHIEF DOWLING (CONT'D)  
If you can.

FRANCISCO  
Just until my arm is better. Then I  
will find a team to play for.

CHIEF DOWLING  
Yeah...

Chief Dowling closes the door. Francisco sets his duffel  
bag down and glumly examines his new surroundings.

INT. STOREROOM - DAY

Francisco sleeps. Nora attempts to grab some supplies from  
a shelf above him. She accidentally drops a can on  
Francisco's head, which jars him from his sleep.

FRANCISCO  
(in Spanish)  
What the hell?

NORA  
I'm sorry, but it's time to wake up  
anyway, sunshine.

Nora sees that he's actually hurt.

NORA (CONT'D)  
(rolls her eyes)  
You okay?

FRANCISCO  
Fine.

Nora pokes Francisco's head.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)  
Ow!

NORA  
Time to earn your keep.

FRANCISCO  
(trying to be suave)  
Maybe you should hop in, and I'll  
get to work.

Nora smiles, leans in close, puts her hand on Francisco's face. Francisco closes his eyes and leans in for a kiss, but Nora rears back and slaps him across the face.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)  
Owww!

Nora exits the room. Francisco stares incredulously.

INT. DOWLING'S DRUG STORE - DAY

Francisco enters, and Nora throws a broom at him, which he catches with his good arm.

NORA  
Sweep.

Francisco looks at Nora, who glares coldly. He sweeps.

DISSOLVE TO:

Francisco finishes sweeping. Nora sits at the counter and writes in her journal.

FRANCISCO  
What are you writing?

Nora, without looking up, pushes some change on the counter towards Francisco.

NORA  
I'd prefer if you didn't come to dinner tonight. I'll tell my father you are ill. There are old canned goods in the storeroom you can eat.

Nora closes her journal and leaves the room.

NORA (V.O.)  
(raising her voice)  
Just let me know what you eat, so I  
can take it out of your pay.

INT. STOREROOM - CONTINUOUS

Francisco storms into the storeroom and throws his sling on the ground. He slams the door with his bad arm. Francisco grabs his left arm and bends over in pain.

FRANCISCO

Shit!

Francisco stares at his left arm. He surveys the room. He sees a large barrel and opens it. It is filled with rice. He rolls up his sleeve and works his arm up and down through the rice, strengthening it. He grimaces.

INT. DOWLING'S DRUG STORE - DAY

Francisco sweeps. Nora sits at the counter. She writes in her journal and reads her writing quietly to herself.

NORA

With the river my meekness shall go,  
societal prescriptions ebb and flow.

Nora smiles and puts her pen down. Francisco stops.

FRANCISCO

You are one syllable short.

NORA

Excuse me?

FRANCISCO

The first line in your couplet. It is only nine syllables.

NORA

What--

FRANCISCO

You are writing a Shakespearean sonnet, no? Both lines of the couplet should be ten syllables. Yours is nine.

Nora reads the line to herself.

NORA

(surprised)  
You're right.

Francisco winks and resumes sweeping.

FRANCISCO  
(without looking up)  
Also, that is just terrible poetry.

INT. STORAGE ROOM - EVENING

Francisco, shirtless, firmly works his arm up-and-down in the barrel of rice. Nora walks in and sees him.

NORA  
Not sure our customers appreciate  
you playing with their food.

FRANCISCO  
I am strengthening my arm.

Embarrassed, Francisco begins wiping the rice from his arm.

NORA  
I'm sure it cooks off.

Nora sits on a stool. She uncomfortably checks out Francisco's athletic physique. She intentional COUGHS and averts her eyes. Francisco looks down at his naked torso.

FRANCISCO  
Sorry.

Francisco wipes himself down with a towel.

NORA  
So how do you know about poetry?

Francisco puts his shirt on.

FRANCISCO  
Why should I not know? Because I'm  
Cuban?

NORA  
I didn't say that.

FRANCISCO  
Or because I'm a baseball player?

NORA  
(flustered)  
Just because.

FRANCISCO  
Why do you write poetry?

NORA  
It's just something I started when  
my mother died.

FRANCISCO  
Sorry.

NORA  
It was a long time ago.

Nora stands and turns towards the door.

FRANCISCO  
Have you written many poems?

NORA  
A few. I want to study it in  
college.

FRANCISCO  
(condescending)  
Practical.

Nora shoots him a look.

NORA  
Baseball?

FRANCISCO  
(laughing)  
Fair point.

Nora walks towards the door.

NORA  
Have a good night, Francisco.

FRANCISCO  
Goodbye.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREETS - DAY

Francisco, dressed simply, walks the streets in an upper class shopping neighborhood. He receives funny looks from folks walking by. Francisco stares longingly into a fabric store, where a man is being fitted for a suit.

PAPERBOY (O.S.)  
Yankees off to worst start in years!

Francisco flags down the PAPER BOY and buys one of the papers. He skims it, angrily crumples it up, throws it on the street, and continues on his way.

EXT. DOWLING'S DRUG STORE - DAY

Francisco looks in the window and sees WAXEY, 30s, huge and in a suit. He has a large scar above his right eye and is missing the top of his left ear. Nora stands behind the counter. Waxey is on the other side. Waxey and Nora argue.

INT. DOWLING'S DRUG STORE - CONTINUOUS

Waxey leans across the counter. Nora's lip trembles.

WAXEY

I don't care if your father is the  
king of fucking Austria.

NORA

(hiding her fear)  
You get near my till again, I'll  
bite your other ear off.

Waxey swipes items off the counter onto the floor.

WAXEY (CONT'D)

(yelling)  
Everyone pays!

Francisco rushes into the store. He glares at Waxey.

FRANCISCO

Is there a problem here?

Nora fights back tears.

NORA

Everything is fine, Francisco.

WAXEY

You heard the peach, chico.  
Everything is aces.

Francisco, trying to look calm, slowly walks towards Waxey with his hands up.

FRANCISCO

It looks like you are scaring the  
girl.

NORA

(forcefully)  
I'm fine, Francisco.

Waxey approaches Francisco.

WAXEY

What's it to ya?

Francisco, hands still up, inches towards Waxey.

FRANCISCO

I just wanted to...

Francisco attempts to sucker punch Waxey, but Waxey dodges the punch. Waxey counters, and strikes Francisco square in the face. Francisco falls to the ground.

NORA

No!

Francisco tries to come up to his knees, but Waxey kicks him in the ribs. Francisco collapses onto his stomach.

NORA (CONT'D)

Stop it!

With Francisco immobilized, Waxey stalks Nora.

WAXEY

You want it to stop?!

Waxey reaches across the counter and grabs Nora by the hand, twisting her arm. Nora grimaces.

NORA

Ow! Stop! Please!

WAXEY

Tell your old man he needs to pay.

CHIEF DOWLING (O.S.)

Tell me yourself.

Chief Dowling appears and points his pistol at Waxey.

CHIEF DOWLING

Waxey, you let her go, or I swear to St. Michael I'll put a slug between your eyes.

Waxey lets Nora go and raises his hands. Nora fights back tears as she grabs her wrist. Waxey smiles confidently.

WAXEY

Don't be stupid, Chief. You know who sent me.

Waxey slinks towards the exit. Chief Dowling circles away from the door, keeping his gun on Waxey.

CHIEF DOWLING

Tell your boss it takes a special kind of coward to send a man to intimidate a woman.

WAXEY

You're not gonna like the alternative.

CHIEF DOWLING

Get out!

Waxy blows a kiss at Nora.

WAXEY

We'll be seeing you, princess.

Waxy exits. Chief Dowling holsters his weapon. He looks at Francisco, who is still in a heap on the ground.

INT. STOREROOM - DAY

Francisco, shirtless, lies on his mattress shuffling through his baseball cards.

NORA (O.S.)

That was stupid.

Francisco looks up.

FRANCISCO

I was going for noble.

Francisco lowers the cards from his face. Nora sees his severely blackened eye and bruised face.

NORA

Oh my God!

Nora hurries towards Francisco's mattress and kneels beside it. She lightly touches his bruised face.

NORA (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

FRANCISCO

(smiles)

Don't worry. It is much worse than it looks.

Nora notices that Francisco's ribs are extremely bruised as well. She lightly touches the bruise on his ribs, but she presses too hard and Francisco flinches.

NORA

Sorry.

Nora moves her hand to Francisco's abdomen.

NORA

Why did you do that?

FRANCISCO

I thought he was going to hurt you.

NORA

It was brave.

FRANCISCO

Yes, it was.

Nora rolls her eyes and removes her hand from his stomach.

NORA

Why are you so arrogant? I'm here,  
trying to be...

Francisco grabs Nora and rolls her onto the mattress. He kisses her. Nora pulls away and stares into his eyes. She gently kisses him as they slowly embrace one another.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Nora and Francisco read a book together.

INT. DOWLING'S DRUG STORE - DAY

Francisco and Nora stock the shelves and make flirty faces at one another.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Nora and Francisco sit on a bench eating sandwiches. A COUPLE walks by and shake their heads with disapproval. Nora scoots closer to Francisco, puts her arm around him, and pulls him closer. Francisco smiles.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Francisco and Nora come upon black children playing baseball in the street. The baseball rolls towards Francisco and he picks it up. Francisco throws the ball hard back to the PITCHER.

The Pitcher winces, takes his glove off, and stares at his hand. Nora jabs Francisco in the arm. Francisco smiles, shakes his head, and puts his hand up apologetically.

Francisco waves the Pitcher over and shows him how to grip a ball.

DISSOLVE TO:

Nora bats. Francisco holds her from behind, teaching her how to hit. The Pitcher lobs one in and Nora hits it. Nora raises her arms in celebration, turns, and hugs Francisco.

INT. STOREROOM - DAY

Francisco and Nora lie on the mattress, naked under a blanket. Nora runs her finger along his chest. She notices the baseball cards beside the mattress.

NORA

What's the deal with the cards?

FRANCISCO

Those? Nothing. It's silly.

NORA

You look at them all the time.

FRANCISCO

It's personal.

Nora gestures to her naked body.

NORA

I think we're personal.

A pause.

FRANCISCO

My mother. She was sick for a long time when I was a child. It used to make me very sad.

NORA

Oh, I didn't...

FRANCISCO

When I would get sad, I would go in my father's study. He had all of this American baseball stuff. I used to daydream, forget about everything.

Francisco rolls over onto his side.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)

After my mother died, my father was very angry. He drank much.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)  
One night, he destroyed all of his  
baseball things.

Francisco picks the cards up.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)  
Except these. I had them.

Francisco rolls back over and looks into Nora's eyes.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)  
So now, when I get sad or nervous, I  
get lost in them.

Nora places her hand on Francisco's face.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)  
Most times, I dream about being  
great. Sometimes, just about being  
happy.

Nora wraps her arms around Francisco and pulls him close.

INT. DOWLING'S DRUG STORE - DAY

Francisco sweeps. Nora wraps her arms around him from  
behind.

NORA  
Think you can watch the store by  
yourself for a couple of minutes?

FRANCISCO  
Is there a reward for doing a good  
job?

Nora nibbles his left ear. Francisco smiles.

NORA  
There's a reward just for not  
burning the joint down.

FRANCISCO  
I make no promises.

Nora playfully pushes Francisco away and leaves. Francisco  
watches her and smiles. He resumes sweeping. Francisco  
hears the door open. Waxey enters and Benno follows behind  
him. Francisco turns away from the door.

FRANCISCO  
(to himself in  
Spanish)  
Shit.

Benno takes his hat off.

BENNO  
Where is that fat, flatfoot fuck?

Francisco nervously lowers his head so Benno won't recognize him. Waxey heads towards the cash register behind the counter. Benno approaches Francisco.

BENNO (CONT'D)  
I wasn't talking to myself, kid.  
Where's Dowling?

FRANCISCO  
(still looking down)  
I don't know.

Waxey fiddles with the cash register. Benno lightly slaps Francisco on the chin.

BENNO  
Is there a picture of a naked broad  
on the floor?

The cash register opens. Francisco snaps towards Waxey, whose hand is in the till.

FRANCISCO  
That's not yours!

Benno grabs Francisco's shirt. Benno is about to slap Francisco but he stops. Benno lets Francisco's shirt go and takes a step back. He points towards Francisco.

BENNO  
I know you.

Francisco looks down again.

BENNO (CONT'D)  
(smiling)  
You're the pitcher!

Benno looks at Waxey, who counts the money from the register.

BENNO  
Waxey, this is the pitcher from Cuba  
I told you about.

WAXEY

No kidding.

BENNO

Francisco, right?

FRANCISCO

(hesitant)

Yes.

Benno walks towards the counter.

BENNO

Why don't you head back there and  
make me an egg cream.

Francisco puts the broom down and reluctantly obeys.

BENNO (CONT'D)

Heard the Yanks cut you.

FRANCISCO

That's right.

BENNO

And this is the alternative?  
Jerking sodas and sweeping floors  
for pennies.

FRANCISCO

It is just temporary.

Francisco hands Benno the egg cream. Benno takes a sip.

BENNO

Sure.

Benno wipes the drink from his beard.

BENNO (CONT'D)

I'm just saying. You were a god, a  
titan. Now this?

FRANCISCO

These are good people.

WAXEY

The Irish - these are a filthy  
fucking people.

FRANCISCO

So you steal from them?

BENNO

Everyone pays, or before you know it, no one pays. But I tell you what. We'll leave the money, if...

Waxey shoots Benno a confused look. Benno motions for Waxey to bear with him.

BENNO (CONT'D)

You remember my friend Esteban from Havana?

FRANCISCO

The baseball owner?

BENNO

That's right. You play good ball for him in the nigger, excuse me, negro leagues, I'll leave your girlfriend alone and see to it that the Yankees come back begging.

Francisco examines Benno. Benno nods at Waxey, who starts putting the money back into the cash register.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Francisco and Nora walk hand-in-hand through the park. They get odd and disapproving looks from passersby. Nora grips Francisco's hand harder with each foul look.

NORA

Who is this friend?

FRANCISCO

I told you, someone I met playing ball in Cuba.

NORA

But what about going to school?

FRANCISCO

Baseball is my dream.

NORA

Barnstorming around the country...  
(lowers her voice)  
...in the Negro leagues?

A beat. Francisco lets that comment pass.

FRANCISCO

I know you cannot see it, but much of what I am doing is for you.

Nora stops walking and puts her hands on his arms. She fights back tears.

NORA (CONT'D)

For me? I'll never see you. You'll always be on the road.

Francisco pulls Nora closer and smiles confidently.

FRANCISCO

You will always know where I am. Just look for the sexy Cuban man winning all the baseball games.

Francisco smiles. Nora playfully pushes him in the chest. Francisco pulls Nora to him and kisses her.

INT. HINCHLIFFE STADIUM - DAY

SUPER: "Hinchliffe Stadium, Paterson, New Jersey, Home of the New York Cubans."

Francisco exits the tunnel into the stadium with his mitt in his hand. He sees the team hanging out by the dugout with packed bags.

Esteban, dressed in a fancy suit and smoking a cigar speaks with COACH TUBBS, 65, a short black man with thick gray hair. Esteban motions for Francisco to come over.

ESTEBAN

Francisco!

Francisco jogs to Esteban. They shake hands.

ESTEBAN (CONT'D)

It has been too long.

Francisco nods.

FRANCISCO

Good to see you again, sir.

ESTEBAN

Coach Tubbs, this is Francisco Bellan. Your new star pitcher.

COACH TUBBS

You speak English and Spanish?

FRANCISCO

Yes.

COACH TUBBS

Thatta be a big help. We're mostly American Negroes on this team, but some speak Spanish.

Francisco looks over and sees a group of three men wearing Almendares Scorpion hats. They give Francisco a dirty look.

Two arms wrap around Francisco and lift him from behind.

FRANCISCO

Hey!

The arms release Francisco. He turns to see Alejandro with a big smile on his face.

ALEJANDRO

Cisco!

Francisco's face lights up.

FRANCISCO

Ali!

They hug.

ESTEBAN

We thought you might like to have a catcher you know.

ALEJANDRO

Very good to be seeing you, my friend.

FRANCISCO

Hey! Your English is good.

COACH TUBBS

(yelling to the team)

Let's load on up!

FRANCISCO

Load up?

ESTEBAN

We got a series in Pittsburgh that starts in two days, then Homestead, Kansas City, and back through Columbus.

Francisco's jaw drops.

FRANCISCO

I haven't thrown in a year.

ESTEBAN

Good.

Esteban puts his cigar back in his mouth and smiles.

ESTEBAN (CONT'D)

You'll be fresh.

Alejandro, smiling, slaps Francisco on the back. Francisco stands still, at a loss for words.

INT. TRAIN - NIGHT

Francisco sleeps in a seat. Alejandro sits behind him. Alejandro leans over his seat.

ALEJANDRO

Cisco? Cisco?

Francisco opens his eyes.

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)

You sleeping?

FRANCISCO

Was.

ALEJANDRO

What happened with the Yankees?

FRANCISCO

Later, my friend.

WILSON, 20s, black and good looking, walks past Alejandro and Francisco and makes his way up to the front of the bus.

ALEJANDRO

New country. New League. Same result. We will be champions once again.

Alejandro leans back in his seat and smiles.

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)

No one fucks with champions.

Francisco turns around.

FRANCISCO

How is my father?

The smile leaves Alejandro's face. He puts his hand gently on Francisco's shoulder.

ALEJANDRO

No one knew where you were.

A look of realization comes over Francisco.

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)

After he passed, the new government  
came in and seized the estate.

Francisco closes his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

Wilson sits in the seat behind Coach Tubbs, who is reading.

WILSON

Hey, coach.

Wilson motions with his head towards Francisco.

WILSON (CONT'D)

What the hell are we doing with a  
white guy?

Coach Tubbs takes his glasses off and stares at Wilson.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The team dresses for their game. Francisco sits at his  
locker. He holds the ball with Nora's address on it.

Coach Tubbs bursts into the locker room.

COACH TUBBS

Listen up!

Francisco kisses the ball and puts it away in his locker.

COACH TUBBS (CONT'D)

I gotta new toy and I wanna play  
with it tonight. Francisco, you're  
pitching.

Wilson nudges JACKSON, 20s, a large black man.

WILSON

That's fucked up.

COACH TUBBS

Wilson, you got something?

WILSON

I said that's fucked up. Jackson is  
a damn fine pitcher.

Coach Tubbs gets in Wilson's face.

COACH TUBBS  
 Last I checked, I was the manager  
 and you were the center fielder.  
 You gonna disrespect that?!

WILSON  
 No, sir.

COACH TUBBS  
 Good. Go get 'em Francisco.

Francisco nervously nods.

EXT. AMMON FIELD, PLAYING FIELD - DAY

SUPER: "Ammon Field, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Home of the  
 Pittsburgh Crawfords."

The New York Cubans take the field. The fans, who are all  
 black, BOO the Cubans. Several of the fans notice Francisco  
 and point.

FAN #1  
 They got a goddamn white boy!

FAN #2  
 Get the cracker off the field!

FAN #1  
 We can't play in their league!

Alejandro and Francisco meet between the mound and home.

ALEJANDRO  
 I do not know what they say, but it  
 is not sounding good.

FRANCISCO  
 I'm too black. I'm too white.  
 Wherever I go, no one likes me in  
 this fucking country.

ALEJANDRO  
 (smiles and winks)  
 I like you.

Francisco lets out a brief laugh, but then looks around at  
 the JEERING crowd like a deer in headlights.

DISSOLVE TO:

Francisco walks three Crawfords batters in a row.

ALEJANDRO  
 (to the Umpire)  
 Timeout.

Alejandro runs out to the mound. Francisco paces.

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)  
 Okay, you got 'em right where you  
 want them.

FRANCISCO  
 Dick.

ALEJANDRO  
 (smiling)  
 Throw your fastball. Open it up.

Francisco nods. Alejandro returns to home plate.

ANNOUNCER  
 Ladies and gentleman, Josh Gibson.

JOSH, a short, very stocky, clean shaven black man comes to  
 the plate. The crowd CHEERS loudly.

FAN #1  
 Come on, Josh!

Alejandro gives Francisco the fastball sign. Francisco  
 nods, rears back, and delivers a fastball. Josh crushes the  
 ball out of the stadium for a grand slam. The crowd CHEERS.

Alejandro walks out towards Francisco. Coach Tubbs leaves  
 the dugout and motions towards the bullpen for a relief  
 pitcher.

FAN #2  
 Wait! Leave the white boy in!

The fans LAUGH.

FRANCISCO  
 I just can't throw--

Alejandro slaps Francisco in the face. The crowd LAUGHS,  
 HOOTS, and HOLLERS. Francisco holds his face and glares at  
 Alejandro. The two men stare each other down.

COACH TUBBS  
 Okay--

ALEJANDRO  
 He is staying in coach.

Francisco stands and swells his chest.

COACH TUBBS

It's--

FRANCISCO

(defiantly)

I am staying in.

Coach Tubbs glances back and forth at the two men, who are still staring one another down. Coach Tubbs signals for the bullpen to hold off on a reliever.

COACH TUBBS

You don't find your stuff, this is your last batter.

Alejandro walks back to home. The next batter comes up.

FRANCISCO

(to himself)

I am a fucking god.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

1. Francisco rears back and delivers a hard fastball. The batter swings and misses. Alejandro takes his mitt off and shakes his hand. He looks up at Francisco and smiles. Francisco's face is focused and expressionless.

2. Francisco strikes out several batters.

3. Alejandro smacks a double and several Cubans score.

4. Wilson makes a great leaping jump to stop a home run from going over the wall. Francisco points to Wilson and Wilson points back.

5. The scoreboard reads, "Cubans 4, Crawfords 4, bottom of the 9th, two outs."

Josh comes to the plate. Alejandro signals for a fastball. Francisco nods. Francisco delivers. Josh smashes the ball for a home run. The fans CHEER.

Francisco stands on the mound in disbelief as his team makes their way in. Wilson slaps Francisco on the ass.

WILSON

Way to fight back. That was a real fine pitch.

FRANCISCO

I have never seen a ball hit so far  
in my life.

WILSON

Josh could give the Bambino lessons,  
but you'll get him next time.

Francisco nods. Wilson jogs away and turns back.

WILSON (CONT'D)

Glad we got you, man.

EXT. MUNICIPAL FIELD - DAY

SUPER: "Municipal Field, Homestead, Pennsylvania, Home of  
the Homestead Grays."

Series of shots, where Francisco and his teammates make good  
plays. The scoreboard reads, "Cubans 11, Grays 3."

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Nora buys a paper and opens it to the sports section. There  
is an article with a picture of Francisco that reads,  
"Cubans 7, Monarchs 1: Cuban Hurler Shines."

INT. TRAIN - NIGHT

Francisco writes a letter.

INT. NORA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Nora reads Francisco's letter, and opens a package with a  
bat inside. She smiles.

EXT. REDBIRD STADIUM - DAY

SUPER: "Redbird Stadium, Columbus, Ohio, Home of the  
Columbus Redbirds."

Series of shots: Francisco mows down several batters;  
Alejandro clobbers a home run; Wilson robs a home run at the  
fence; and the scoreboard reads, "Cubans 6, Redbirds 0."

INT. TRAIN - NIGHT

Series of shots in the train: Francisco has fun drinking,  
playing cards, and shooting dice with his teammates.

INT. BENNO FEIN'S STUDY - DAY

Benno sits at his desk, writing in his ledger. There is a  
KNOCK at the door. Benno peers over the top of his glasses.

BENNO

Come in.

Waxey opens the door and pops his head in. He looks serious and gives Benno a slight nod. Benno, stone-faced, nods. Waxey closes the door. Benno stands and buttons his jacket.

The door opens and Waxey invites in ABE and SOLOMON, two Hasidic Jews. Abe is small and in his 60's. Solomon is a large man in his 40's. Benno shake's Abe's hand.

BENNO

Shalom aleichem.

ABE

Aleichem shalom.

Benno extends his hand to Solomon, but Solomon simply stares at Benno. Abe seats himself.

ABE

Solomon is a man of few words.

Benno looks Solomon up and down. Benno gives an uncomfortable laugh. Benno walks back towards his desk.

BENNO

Good. People talk too much.

Benno sits. Solomon stands directly behind Abe.

BENNO

What can I do for you, Mr. Goldstein?

ABE

Abe is fine. And I'm here because your...

(reflecting on his  
word choice)

Investment packages come highly recommended.

BENNO

We consider them depression-proof.

Solomon reaches into his breast pocket, which causes Benno to shift in his chair. Solomon pulls a piece of paper out and hands it to Benno.

BENNO

(trying to stay calm)  
That's a lot of salad. Why now?

ABE

Recent events in Eastern Europe have made it increasingly clear that our people need a place of their own. A real home.

BENNO

(laughing)

Bring 'em all to Brooklyn.

Abe and Solomon remain stone-faced. Benno recognizes that his humor is not appreciated.

ABE

Myself and other...community leaders are taking it upon ourselves to raise funds to aid in such a cause. But given what we perceive to be the dire nature of the present circumstances, yields on traditional investment avenues are insufficient.

BENNO

Understood.

SOLOMON

Failure is not tolerated.

A beat.

BENNO

Never is.

ABE

So do you have any ideas?

Benno rocks back in his chair and puts his hands behind his head. He looks down at his desk, and sees a picture of Francisco in the newspaper.

EXT. PATERSON RAIL STATION - DAY

SUPER: "Paterson, New Jersey."

Francisco exits the train and surveys the station. Francisco sees Nora holding the bat he sent her. He smiles. Nora, smirking, taps the bat repeatedly against her hand. Francisco walks towards Nora. Nora points the bat at him.

NORA

I thought pitchers didn't know how to use these.

Nora playfully pokes Francisco in the chest with the bat.

FRANCISCO

(slyly)

I can handle my stick.

Francisco kisses her. She squeezes his face in her hands.

NORA

I cannot believe that I have fallen  
for such a creepy, creepy man.

They kiss again, but are interrupted by a COUGH off-screen.  
Nora and Francisco turn to see Alejandro timidly waiving.

FRANCISCO

Nora, this is Alejandro, my best  
friend from Cuba.

(slower)

Ali, this is Nor...

With a big smile, Alejandro drops his bag and hugs Nora,  
lifting and spinning her. Nora goes with it.

NORA

Nice to meet you Alejandro, best  
friend from Cuba.

ALEJANDRO

It is all the pleasure of mine.

EXT. PATERSON CITY STREET - DAY

Francisco, Nora, and Alejandro walk along the street.  
Francisco reads a piece of paper.

NORA

(tired)

Where are we going?

FRANCISCO

The team bought us an apartment. We  
should be...

Francisco looks at a worn-down building and then back at his  
piece of paper. Depressed, he looks back at the building.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)

Here.

INT. FRANCISCO'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Francisco opens the door to the small and dingy apartment.  
Alejandro runs past Francisco and jumps onto a couch.

ALEJANDRO  
This is good, no?

Nora looks at Francisco.

NORA  
Storeroom's available.

Francisco shoots Nora a look.

INT. FRANCISCO'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - DAY

Francisco and Nora lie in bed naked.

NORA  
So how was it?

FRANCISCO  
(wryly)  
You've been better.

Nora playfully pinches Francisco's nipple.

NORA  
I meant the trip, you jerk.

FRANCISCO  
(laughing and  
fighting her off)  
I know.

Francisco pauses to reflect and motions to the room.

FRANCISCO  
This is not what I dreamed of when I  
came here. But it is baseball.

There is a KNOCK at the door. Francisco looks up.

INT. FRANCISCO'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Francisco, shirtless, opens the door and sees Benno. Benno grins, removes his hat, and walks right past Francisco and takes a seat on a chair in the living room. Benno picks lint from the exterior of his hat.

BENNO  
Heard you pitched well on the road.

FRANCISCO  
I was okay.

BENNO  
Only a man's failures should be  
modest. You controlled the games?

FRANCISCO  
I did.

Nora appears covering herself with a blanket.

BENNO  
Am I late for the party?

Nora glares at Francisco and storms back into the bedroom.

BENNO (CONT'D)  
Something I said?

EXT. FRANCISCO'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Francisco follows Nora into the bedroom. He grabs her arm  
from behind. She shrugs it away.

NORA  
What is that animal doing here?

FRANCISCO  
It is nothing.

NORA  
That man is a thug and a killer.

Francisco stares at the ground

FRANCISCO  
He helped me get this job.

NORA  
He was the old...  
(fingers in quotes)  
Friend that you ran into?

FRANCISCO  
I did not want to upset you.

NORA  
Well, how did that work out for you?

Francisco reaches to grab her arm with his hand again.

FRANCISCO  
Nora, please.

Nora shrugs him off.

NORA  
No, I'm leaving.

Nora looks over Francisco's shoulder at Benno.

NORA (CONT'D)  
You walk this road alone, Cisco.

INT. FRANCISCO'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nora storms through the apartment and slams the door.  
Francisco puts his hands on his hips and stares at the door.

FRANCISCO  
(to himself)  
I did it for you.

Francisco turns and looks at Benno. Benno smiles and opens his arms as if he is ready to embrace him.

INT. FRANCISCO'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Francisco sits on his couch. Benno sits in the chair.

BENNO  
You're a hero on Friday, a son of a bitch on Saturday. Embrace it.

FRANCISCO  
(unamused)  
Why are you here, Mr. Fein?

Benno digs through his pocket for cigarettes.

BENNO  
Why are you so charming with the ladies, but it's always brass tacks with me?

Benno offers Francisco a cigarette. They light up.

FRANCISCO  
Maybe it is just anatomical.

BENNO  
No. I think you don't like authority figures.

Francisco chortles.

FRANCISCO  
Do you?

BENNO

I don't have any authority figures.

Benno puts out his cigarette.

BENNO (CONT'D)

I bet you and your father don't get along so good.

FRANCISCO

He's dead.

Francisco takes one last drag of his cigarette.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)

Again, I ask you, why are you here?

BENNO

I just wanted to stop by and make sure you were doing okay.

FRANCISCO

That's it?

Francisco puts his cigarette out. Benno stands up.

BENNO

That's it.

Benno looks down in disgust as if his suit got dirty. He swats it off and walks towards the door. He stops.

BENNO (CONT'D)

You ever look around at all this...

Benno motions with his head around the apartment.

BENNO (CONT'D)

...and ask, "Why the fuck did I leave Cuba?"

Benno puts his hat on. He flips a card onto the table and leaves. Francisco glumly looks around his apartment and then stares down at the card on the table.

EXT. HINCHLIFFE STADIUM - DAY

The Cubans finish a game. The scoreboard reads, "Cubans 2, Dodgers 0." Francisco shakes hands with his teammates. While they are all smiles, Francisco is expressionless.

RADIO BROADCASTER

Your New York Cubans pick up the victory on the back of a another

RADIO BROADCASTER (CONT'D)  
 fine pitching performance by the  
 Cisco Kid. With this win, your  
 Cubans stay on track to win the  
 second half of the Negro National  
 League season.

Francisco, Wilson, and Alejandro walk off the field.

WILSON  
 Hey Cisco, you want to come with  
 Alejandro and me into the city  
 tonight? I know an underground jazz  
 club where they let everyone in.  
 Whites. Blacks. White ladies who  
 like blacks.

ALEJANDRO  
 They will love black Latins.

Alejandro does a small dance.

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)  
 The ladies love big papi.

WILSON  
 With good reason, you sexy bastard.

Wilson slaps Alejandro on the ass.

FRANCISCO  
 Not tonight guys. I have to take  
 care of something.

Alejandro whispers into Wilson's ear.

WILSON  
 Oh, you gotta go beg that little  
 white girl to take you back.

Francisco gives Alejandro the finger.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Francisco sits on a train. A white HUSBAND and WIFE sit  
 across from him with their toddler DAUGHTER. The Daughter  
 waves at Francisco. He smiles and waves back. The Daughter  
 covers her eyes to play peekaboo. Francisco plays back.

The Wife whispers into her Husband's ear. He looks  
 Francisco up-and-down and picks his Daughter up over his  
 shoulder to move further down the train.

The Daughter waves goodbye over her father's shoulder.  
Francisco sadly waves.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Francisco exits and purchases a bouquet of flowers.

INT. DOWLING'S DRUG STORE - DAY

Nora sits behind the counter reading a book. Francisco holds the flowers up in front of his face and enters the store. He lowers the flowers.

FRANCISCO  
(smiling)  
Boo.

Nora closes the book and walks towards the storeroom.

NORA  
We're closed.

FRANCISCO  
Nora, please.

INT. STOREROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nora enters the storeroom and takes inventory.

FRANCISCO  
I am sorry.

Still staring at her pad.

NORA  
For what, Francisco? For  
associating with a gangster? For  
lying to me about it? Or just  
getting caught?

FRANCISCO  
You don't understand!

Nora turns around.

NORA  
(raising her voice)  
Oh, I understand it. You want this  
thug to make you famous.

FRANCISCO  
That's not it.

NORA  
Big star, Francisco.

FRANCISCO  
(frustrated)  
I did it for you!

NORA  
What?

Francisco puts the flowers down and gently puts both of his hands on Nora's arms. Nora steps back.

FRANCISCO  
He said he would leave you and your father alone, if I did this. Yes, a part of this is for me. I love baseball. But I also love you.

A tear runs from Nora's eye. Francisco lightly touches her cheek with his hand. She rests her hand on his.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)  
For the first time in many years, I was happy off the field. You gave me a home.

They kiss. A gun points against the back of Francisco's head. The CLICK of the gun being cocked interrupts.

INT. DOWLING'S DRUG STORE - CONTINUOUS

Francisco backs through the store with his hands in the air. Chief Dowling holds him at gunpoint.

CHIEF DOWLING  
I invite you into my home. I give you food, a bed. And this is how you repay me? You take advantage of my little girl.

NORA  
Father, stop!

FRANCISCO  
Chief, I mean you no disrespect.

CHIEF DOWLING  
You can stick whatever explanation you're going to give me up your ass.

NORA  
Father, please. I love him.

CHIEF DOWLING

(softly)  
Oh, you do?

Chief Dowling lowers his gun.

FRANCISCO

You, what?

NORA

I do. I love him.

CHIEF DOWLING

Well...

Chief Dowling raises the gun again.

CHIEF DOWLING (CONT'D)

I could give the world's smallest fuck what you think you feel for this cockroach. I did not work my ass off to raise my daughter so she could marry some no future, Negro League ball player.

He motions the gun at Francisco.

CHIEF DOWLING (CONT'D)

And you. I haven't seen your father in years, but I know he wanted better for you than kicking around with Negros.

FRANCISCO

(defensive)  
My mother was African.

CHIEF DOWLING

It is not the same in this country!  
(calming)  
And you're smart enough to know it.  
Now, get out of my store and my daughter's life.

Francisco looks at Nora, who sobs. Nora mouths, "I'm sorry." Francisco stares at Chief Dowling. He turns and storms out of the store, slamming the door on his way out. Chief Dowling lowers his gun and then lowers his head.

EXT. HARLEM STREETS - EVENING

Francisco, disheveled, flounders down the street. He takes a swig from a bottle of booze. Francisco sees a sign for a club called, "The Cotton Club." Rich patrons enter.

Francisco Finishes the bottle and throws it down an alleyway. He adjusts his clothing and walks to the club's entrance. He is stopped by a BOUNCER, who puts his hand on Francisco's chest.

BOUNCER  
Whoa, where do you think you're going, fella?

FRANCISCO  
I am following the pretty ladies.

BOUNCER  
It's a three dollar cover, and...

The bouncer squints at Francisco.

BOUNCER (CONT'D)  
I'm not sure this is the right club for you.

The bouncer signals to TOMMY, who is management.

BOUNCER  
Tommy, come here!

Francisco fumbles through his pocket digging for change.

FRANCISCO  
(oblivious)  
I think I have that much in here somewhere.

The bouncer leans in to Tommy.

BOUNCER  
Is this a fucking black guy?

Tommy looks Francisco up and down.

TOMMY  
Hey buddy, where you from?

FRANCISCO  
(slurring)  
Cuba.

Tommy whispers to the Bouncer.

TOMMY  
Fuck it. Charge him double if he has it, and we'll throw him out after he's in.

The Bouncer smiles. Francisco sees a PRETTY WOMAN walk past him with her husband.

FRANCISCO

Hey lady, you like Latin men? We do things these white guys can't.

Francisco rolls his tongue. Tommy looks at the Bouncer and runs his finger across his throat. The Bouncer pushes Francisco away from the entrance.

BOUNCER

Your night's over, pal. Scram.

Francisco slugs the Bouncer and is then swarmed by several bouncers. The bouncers strike Francisco until he falls into a heap. They drag Francisco to a nearby alley.

EXT. ALLEY - MORNING

Francisco lies on his back in the alley. His face is bloodied, swollen, and bruised. A cat crawls on top of him, licking the blood from his face. Francisco shoos the cat away and sits up. Francisco feels around his face.

FRANCISCO

Jesus Christ.

He slowly stands up and checks his pockets in search of money but finds none. He only finds Benno's card, which reads, "744 West 147th Street, Harlem."

INT. BENNO FEIN'S STUDY - MORNING

Waxy lets Francisco in. Benno sits at his desk. Francisco meekly walks in and takes a seat across from Benno.

BENNO

Piss.

FRANCISCO

Excuse me?

BENNO

You smell like piss. Don't get me wrong, you look like shit too. It's just the piss smell that's particularly pathetic.

FRANCISCO

I need your help.

BENNO

There's an understatement.

FRANCISCO

I need to get back across the bridge  
for practice this afternoon, but I  
have no money.

Benno reaches into his desk drawer and pulls out a pistol.  
Francisco flinches. Benno puts the gun down and goes back  
into the drawer. Benno pulls out some bills and throws them  
across the desk at Francisco.

BENNO

Is that all?

Francisco stares at the ground.

BENNO (CONT'D)

Come on kid, I got things to do.

Francisco looks up.

FRANCISCO

Is there a way I can make more?

Benno smiles smugly.

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

A fat ITALIAN BARTENDER walks with a NUMBERS RUNNER through  
the bar. The Numbers Runner is a black, teenage male.

ITALIAN BARTENDER

So you'll be running numbers for us  
and related work.

The Italian Bartender opens a hidden door in the back of the  
bar and the Numbers Runner follows him through.

INT. BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The Italian Bartender and Numbers Runner walk through a room  
where several people are seated at tables counting money.

ITALIAN BARTENDER

Back here is the game's policy bank.  
It's a penny to play. Each person  
picks three numbers. You pick the  
right three numbers, ring-a-ding-  
ding. That simple.

The Italian Bartender continues walking until he gets to a  
safe in the back. He starts to open it.

ITALIAN BARTENDER (CONT'D)

Some call it the numbers game, some the Italian lottery, some the nigger pool.

The safe opens and the Italian Bartender turns around.

ITALIAN BARTENDER (CONT'D)

No offense.

Numbers Runner shakes his head as if "no offense taken."

NUMBERS RUNNER

Where do the numbers come from?

The Italian Bartender turns around and hands the Numbers Runner a pad of slips.

ITALIAN BARTENDER

Used to be a wheel. Now, it's all sorts of public numbers, so everyone knows that it's...

(fingers in quotes)

"Fair." A number might be the handle at Saratoga, the last couple numbers of the U.S. Treasury's daily balance, or a number from a sporting event.

INT. BENNO FEIN'S STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Francisco smokes a cigarette.

FRANCISCO

So I wouldn't have to lose?

BENNO

Shouldn't. You just need to make sure that you give up the number of runs that I say. My handicappers are the best. Won't pick a number so low you're feeling heat. Won't pick a number so high your team will lose. Probably somewhere between three and five, since you've been holding teams to less.

FRANCISCO

Three and five?! How do I get back to the Yankees if I'm giving up that many runs a game? I need to be throwing shutouts.

Benno thumbs through a stack of bills.

BENNO

Do you want to get on the mound knowing that you have to throw a shutout to stay in my good graces? If you want the Yankees, I'll take care of you later - if that's what you want.

Benno hands Francisco a large stack of bills.

BENNO (CONT'D)

But you might find this endeavor to be more rewarding.

Francisco flips through the bills.

BENNO (CONT'D)

Do we have a deal?

Francisco lets out a deep breath.

FRANCISCO

Yes.

BENNO

You'll hear from my people.

Benno turns his attention to matters on his desk, and Francisco stands up and heads for the door. He stops.

FRANCISCO

But my number is just one of the three. How do you fix the others?

BENNO

That's my problem. You've got your own fucking problems now.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Francisco sits next to Alejandro at their lockers. Francisco's face has started to heal from the beating.

ALEJANDRO

You looked good this week. You have your no-hitter stuff.

FRANCISCO

I always have no hitter stuff.

ALEJANDRO

(laughing)

Your face still looks like shit.

FRANCISCO

(smiles)

Your face always looks like shit.

Alejandro punches Francisco in the arm and Francisco punches him back. Esteban, dressed in a suit, walks in.

ESTEBAN

Francisco, I have a young fan who would like an autograph.

FRANCISCO

Can we do it after the game?

ESTEBAN

I think it is better that you do it now.

Francisco nods and Esteban allows the Numbers Runner to enter the locker room. The Number Runner walks up to Francisco, and hands Francisco a piece of paper. Francisco starts to sign it and looks up.

FRANCISCO

Am I your favorite player?

NUMBERS RUNNER

This is for my sister. She likes white boys.

(motioning his head  
towards Alejandro)

I like the catcher.

Alejandro shoots his finger like a gun.

ALEJANDRO

Fucking right.

The Numbers Runner secretly slips Francisco another piece of paper with his left hand. Francisco looks down. Esteban catches it but looks away. Francisco hands the boy the autograph, and the boy turns to leave.

FRANCISCO

Say "hi" to your sister for me...

(under his breath)

You little shit.

Francisco looks at the piece of paper and sees, "4."

INT. HINCHLIFFE STADIUM - DAY

Top of the ninth inning. The scoreboard reads, "American Giants 2" and "Cubans 9." Francisco is on the mound.

RADIO BROADCASTER

Two down here in the bottom of the ninth. Two strikes, no balls on the batter. Bellan winds up, and...

Francisco throws a wild pitch, hitting the batter.

RADIO BROADCASTER (CONT'D)

Oh, and he hits him. That wasn't even close to the plate. I have no idea why he was throwing him that hard inside with two strikes.

Alejandro takes his mask off.

ALEJANDRO

(to the umpire)

Time out.

Alejandro runs out to Francisco.

ALEJANDRO

What are you doing? These guys cannot hit the side of a barn today.

FRANCISCO

I noticed.

Francisco looks into the stands at Benno, who shakes his head in disapproval. Esteban, also seated in the stands, observes this exchange.

ALEJANDRO

Just throw your gas down and away and get out of here.

FRANCISCO

Relax. I can't lose in this bullshit league.

ALEJANDRO

(offended)

Bullshit?! Because blacks like me play in it?

FRANCISCO

I didn't mean...

Pokes Francisco in the chest.

ALEJANDRO

If you feel that way, we do not need you.

FRANCISCO

That's not what I meant.

Francisco looks again at Benno and Alejandro notices.

ALEJANDRO

What the fuck is going on with you?

FRANCISCO

Nothing, I am good. Sorry for being a dick.

Alejandro pauses for a beat, then slaps Francisco on the ass and runs back to home plate. Francisco winds up and lollipops one right over home plate. The batter slams it for a home run, making the score 9 - 4.

ALEJANDRO

(removing his mask)

What the hell?!

Coach Tubbs starts to head out of the dugout, but Francisco waves him off. Coach Tubbs stays in the dugout. Francisco throws three quick, hard strikes and the game is over. Wilson runs past Francisco.

WILSON

(smiling)

Where was that shit all game?

Francisco looks at Alejandro, who is angry.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

The Numbers Runner hands Francisco a piece of paper with a "5" on it. Francisco shakes his head.

EXT. HINCHLIFFE STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

Series of shots:

1. Francisco walks a batter.
2. Francisco throws a wild pitch.
3. Several opposing players run across home plate after hitting a home run.
4. The scoreboard reads, "Stars 4, Cubans 0."
5. Francisco and Alejandro argue in the dugout.
6. Wilson bats with bases loaded and hits a grand slam.

7. Francisco pitches with the bases loaded in the top of the 9th. He walks a batter in, making it "Stars 5, Cubans 5."

8. Francisco nervously paces in the dugout in the bottom of the 9th.

9. One of Francisco's teammates hits a two run double to give New York the win. Francisco pumps his fist.

INT. FRANCISCO'S APARTMENT BEDROOM - DAY

Francisco lifts up his mattress. He pulls an envelope out from underneath. He thumbs through the money in it.

EXT. STUNSHEAVER'S HABERDASHERY - DAY

Francisco stands outside, staring at the fancy suits. He walks into the store.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Francisco arrives at the station to meet his team for a road game, wearing his fancy new suit.

WILSON

Damn, are you getting a take of the gate now?

FRANCISCO

What, this?  
(looking at his suit)  
It is no big deal.

ALEJANDRO

Is that silk?

Alejandro paws at it and Francisco smacks his hand away.

COACH TUBBS

Let's go, boys!

The team boards and Francisco walks by Coach Tubbs.

COACH TUBBS

Snazzy suit, Cisco.

FRANCISCO

Thanks, Coach.

COACH TUBBS

Who'd you have to kiss off for it?

FRANCISCO  
 (defensive)  
 No one.

COACH TUBBS  
 Yet.  
 (motioning with his  
 head)  
 Get on.

INT. TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

Francisco enters and sees Esteban seated. Esteban looks him up and down. Francisco gives Esteban a slight nod and walks. Esteban reaches out and grabs Francisco by the arm.

ESTEBAN  
 Dance with the devil and you'll  
 burn.

He lets Francisco go. Francisco continues down the train, stopping briefly to look back towards Esteban.

INT. TRAIN - EVENING

Francisco writes a letter while traveling on the train.

INT. DOWLING'S DRUG STORE - DAY

Nora thumbs through the mail. She opens an envelope, pulls a piece of paper from it, and two tickets fall out.

INT. TRAIN - EVENING

Francisco writes.

FRANCISCO (V.O.)  
 Dear Nora, out of respect for your  
 father, I have made no efforts to  
 contact you.

EXT. SCHORLING PARK, CHICAGO - DAY

SUPER: "Schorling Park, Chicago, Illinois, Home of the American Giants."

Alejandro hits a home run. He runs around the bases and smiles. Francisco strikes out several batters. The scoreboard reads "Cubans 4, American Giants 3."

FRANCISCO (V.O.)  
 I am having much success.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Francisco takes a number from the Numbers Runner.

INT. STREET - DAY

Francisco pulls up in front of his apartment in a new car.

INT. TRAIN - EVENING

Francisco writes.

FRANCISCO (V.O.)  
But it all feels absent meaning  
without you.

EXT. PASSON FIELD, PHILADELPHIA - DAY

Super: "Passon Field, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Home of the Philadelphia Stars."

Francisco sits in the dugout emotionless, as his team celebrates a victory on the field.

FRANCISCO (V.O.)  
I know that we have tried and  
failed, but I want to try once more.

INT. TRAIN - EVENING

Francisco folds two tickets into the letter.

FRANCISCO (V.O.)  
Here are two tickets for Friday's  
game. If we win, we play for the  
pennant. Please bring your father  
with you, and let us see if I can  
convince both of you at the same  
time.

Francisco reaches into his pocket. He pulls out an engagement ring and stares at it.

INT. DOWLING'S DRUG STORE- DAY

Nora reads the letter and smiles.

FRANCISCO (V.O.)  
P.S. The tickets are too good to  
waste.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Francisco exits and waves goodbye to his teammates.

INT. BENNO FEIN'S STUDY - DAY

Benno sits at his desk with Abe and Solomon across from him. Benno examines a piece of paper. He peers over his glasses.

BENNO  
This is a significantly larger sum  
than you've been investing.

ABE  
The window is closing on another  
opportunity. My current funds are  
insufficient. I need to double that  
amount in two weeks.

Benno snorts.

BENNO  
Two weeks? How much risk are you  
willing to take?

Abe pauses.

ABE  
Zero. I need a sure thing.

Benno shakes his head.

BENNO  
Can't be done.

Solomon leans over and whispers into Abe's ear. Abe stares at Solomon then nods his head.

ABE  
You get ten points on the earnings.

Benno SIGHS, leans back, and stares at the ceiling.

BENNO  
Fifteen points up to double.

Benno looks at Abe and holds up the piece of paper.

BENNO (CONT'D)  
Anything I make above double, I get  
20 points on.

SOLOMON  
What happened to, "it can't be  
done?"

BENNO  
You motivated me.

ABE  
Ten and fifteen. No more.

Benno smiles and nods.

INT. FRANCISCO'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - DAY

Francisco and Alejandro enter, LAUGHING. Benno sits, reading a newspaper. Waxey stands in the corner. Francisco and Alejandro are caught off-guard. Benno lowers his paper. Alejandro turns to Francisco.

ALEJANDRO  
(in Spanish)  
What's this?

BENNO  
(to Francisco in Spanish)  
Get rid of the ape.

Alejandro steps towards Benno.

ALEJANDRO  
(angry)  
Do not call me a monkey.

BENNO  
I called you an ape.

Waxey flashes a pistol. Alejandro steps back.

BENNO (CONT'D)  
(emphatic)  
Ape.

Alejandro stares Benno down. Francisco grabs Alejandro.

FRANCISCO  
Ali, go for a walk.

Benno shoos Alejandro off with his hand. Alejandro looks at Francisco and storms off. Benno motions for Waxey to leave the room and he does, closing the door behind him.

FRANCISCO  
(raising his voice)  
You come into my home flashing a gun?

BENNO  
Spare me your indignities. Take a seat.

FRANCISCO  
I am fine standing.

BENNO  
(yells)  
Sit down!

Unnerved, Francisco takes a seat. Benno lights a cigarette and hands Francisco a piece of paper. Francisco opens it. It reads, "6." Francisco stares at the paper for a beat.

FRANCISCO  
Is this what I think it is?

BENNO  
I can't risk you missing the number.  
I know you can hold them to six.

FRANCISCO  
There's no guarantee that we can put  
up more than six runs.

BENNO  
That may be.

Francisco stands up and starts to pace.

FRANCISCO  
If we lose this game, we lose our  
shot at the pennant.

Benno starts to stand.

BENNO  
We all make sacrifices.

Francisco walks towards Benno.

FRANCISCO  
If I give up that many runs in a big  
game, the Yankees will never take  
me. I need to be ten times better  
than everyone else just to have a  
shot. I'm just a nigger to them.

Benno lightly slaps Francisco on the face and smiles.

BENNO  
You're not just a nigger.

Benno walks towards the door.

BENNO  
You're my nigger.

EXT. DOWLING'S DRUG STORE - DAY

Nora stares at the tickets in her hand.

CHIEF DOWLING (V.O.)

Nora. What are you doing?

Nora quickly hides the tickets in her purse.

NORA

(smiling)

I'm just waiting on Helen. She's going to mind the store for me this afternoon.

CHIEF DOWLING

(suspicious)

And where are you going? You're not going near that Francisco kid. You know I want you to have nothing to do with him.

NORA

You've made that clear, father. There's a poetry reading at the Met this afternoon. Would you like to go with me?

CHIEF DOWLING

I can think of nothing I'd like to do...

(a pause)

Less.

Chief Dowling smiles at Nora.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Francisco sits at his locker, looking glum. He flips around the ball his father gave him with Nora's address on it.

EXT. PATERSON STREETS - DAY

Nora attempts to navigate her way to the field. She looks left and right. She stops and looks around, obviously lost.

EXT. HINCHLIFFE STADIUM BULLPEN - DAY

Francisco, expressionless, throws warm-up pitches to Alejandro. He stares at Nora's empty seats.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Nora walks down an empty alley. She hears a noise and quickly turns around. Nothing is there. She exhales.

Nora turns around and is confronted by a HOMELESS MAN. He is white, mid-fifties, dirty, with nappy hair and a large, mangled beard. He grins, revealing dirty and missing teeth.

HOMELESS MAN  
Wrong turn, darling.

Nora SCREAMS, but the man shoves his hand over her mouth.

EXT. HINCHLIFFE STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

Francisco pitches with the bases are loaded.

RADIO BROADCASTER  
The Cisco Kid is off to a shaky start in this critical, regular season finale.

Francisco lobs a pitch right over home plate, and the batter clobbers it for a grand slam. Francisco does not even turn around to watch the ball. He looks at Nora's empty seat.

The scoreboard reads, "Dodgers 4, Cubans 0, bottom 2nd."

Francisco sees Benno in the crowd. Benno slightly nods in affirmation. Coach Tubbs catches this exchange.

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

The Homeless Man pulls at Nora's purse. Nora pulls it away and strikes him in the head.

INT. HINCHLIFFE STADIUM DUGOUT - CONTINUOUS

Francisco sits by himself at the end of the bench. Coach Tubbs and Alejandro stare at him and confer with one another. Alejandro looks back at Francisco in anger. Francisco catches the look and lowers his head.

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

The Homeless Man pins Nora to the ground. Nora frees her mouth from his hand.

NORA  
(screaming)  
Help!

The Homeless Man strikes Nora across the face.

EXT. HINCHLIFFE STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

Wilson runs across home plate where he is greeted by a teammate, who gives him a high five.

RADIO BROADCASTER

The Cubans have somehow managed to claw their way into the lead.

The scoreboard reads "Dodgers 4, Cubans 6, bottom 8th."

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Nora bleeds from her mouth. Her eyes roll into the back of her head as she begins losing consciousness. There is a WHACK. The Homeless Man slumps over. Nora faintly opens her eyes to see a LARGE BLACK MAN, holding a metal pipe.

EXT. HINCHLIFFE STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

Francisco pitches. Runners on second and third base.

RADIO BROADCASTER

The Newark Dodgers have runners on second and third in the top of the ninth. Two down. If the Cubans hang on, they will play for the pennant.

Francisco looks at Benno, who is angry. He looks at his teammates, who encourage him. He stares at Nora's empty seat.

FRANCISCO

(to himself)

What's the fucking point.

Francisco looks in for the pitch. He nods. He rears back and throws a wild pitch. The runner scores from third, and the runner on second advances to third.

Coach Tubbs steps out of the dugout, but Francisco quickly gets another ball from the umpire and goes back to the mound before Tubbs can take him out. Coach Tubbs looks over at Alejandro, who nods as if everything is okay.

RADIO BROADCASTER

Runner on third. One ball, no strikes, two out. Dodgers have made this a one run game after Francisco Bellan's wild pitch.

Francisco winds up.

RADIO BROADCASTER (CONT'D)

He winds up, and...

Francisco throws what appears to be another wild pitch. Alejandro dives after it. The runner from third takes off towards home. Alejandro pops to his knees and turns. He has the ball. The runner retreats.

Alejandro throws a bullet to third. The runner is out. Francisco's eyes open wide. He drops to his knees.

Benno stands up and throws his scorecard to the ground. Francisco looks at Benno, absent expression. The team mauls Alejandro in celebration. Alejandro shoots Francisco an angry look and shakes his head. Benno storms off.

EXT. PATERSON CITY STREET - NIGHT

Nora sits on the curb with a blanket over her shoulders. POLICE OFFICER #1 and POLICE OFFICER #2 confer with one another away from Nora.

POLICE OFFICER #1

Her father is the chief across the river. I'm going to give her a ride to her friend's place here.

POLICE OFFICER #2

What do you want to do with him?

Police Officer #2 motions towards his police car, where the Large Black Man is seated in the back.

POLICE OFFICER #1

(matter-of-fact)

A black kills a white. There are going to be questions.

The officers look at the dead Homeless Man.

POLICE OFFICER #1 (CONT'D)

I'm going to bring him in and let the courts sort it out.

Nora waves at the Large Black Man and mouths, "thank you." He lifts his handcuffed hands and waves back at her.

INT. FRANCISCO'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Francisco lays on his couch shuffling through his baseball cards. There is a loud KNOCK at the door that startles him. Francisco sits up.

FRANCISCO

Who is it?

Silence. Another loud KNOCK at the door. Francisco stands up and slowly approaches the door.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)

Who is there?

No response. Francisco stares at the door. He unlocks the door and opens it slowly. Wilson's face appears in the crack, startling Francisco.

WILSON

Party time, mother fucker!

Francisco exhales and lets Wilson in.

WILSON

Let's go, I've got some women waiting down at the club.

FRANCISCO

I'm going to stay in.

WILSON

The fuck you is. I'm sick of this pouty bullshit. We're playing for the pennant, and we're going to party about it. Where's that fat ass roommate of yours?

Francisco points towards Alejandro's bedroom. Wilson walks over and opens the door.

WILSON

Get your big butt up. Time to dance.

ALEJANDRO (V.O.)

Fuck off, I'm sleeping.

A shoe flies out of the room towards Wilson's head. Wilson moves and it just misses him.

WILSON

All right. We'll see you later.

Wilson closes the door and turns back towards Francisco.

WILSON (CONT'D)

Just you and me, amigo. Come on.

Francisco puts his cards down on the table.

FRANCISCO

Fine.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - EVENING

Francisco and Wilson enter the music-filled club.

WILSON

I'm gonna go find Sugar.

Wilson leaves. Francisco heads towards the bar. He looks off into the far corner and sees Benno at a table with Esteban. Benno berates Esteban.

A hand grabs Francisco from behind. He turns to see Wilson and SUGAR, a beautiful black woman in her 20s, and a SECOND BEAUTIFUL BLACK WOMAN in her 20s. Francisco's jaw drops.

WILSON (CONT'D)

Come on, we got a table.

Francisco and the women follow Wilson. Francisco looks at Benno, who slams the handle of his cane against the table.

INT. FRANCISCO'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is dark. There is a KNOCK at the door. Alejandro emerges from his bedroom.

ALEJANDRO

(yelling)

Wilson, I told you to fuck off.

Alejandro opens the door. Nora appears with Police Officer #1 behind her. Tears run down Nora's face. Alejandro gives her a hug.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Francisco and the women sit at a table listening to Wilson.

WILSON

So, the ump tells the guy, drop your glove like ten times. He finally does, and a nail file falls out. He's using a goddamn nail file on the ball for seven innings before he gets caught!

Francisco and the women LAUGH. Francisco looks up to see Benno standing in front of him. Benno's presence kills the laughter. Francisco starts to stand, but Benno subtly slaps Francisco's leg with the handle of his cane.

BENNO

Please, don't get up, I'm only passing through. I just wanted to stop and congratulate you boys on your victory today.

WILSON

Mighty kind of you, sir. Now if you don't mind...

BENNO

(cutting him off)  
I just can't believe...

Benno focuses in on Francisco.

BENNO (CONT'D)

They put up that many runs. I thought you might even give up another.

FRANCISCO

Sometimes you just don't have the stuff.

WILSON

But we still won.

Benno puts his hat on and starts to back away.

BENNO

That you did. And you seemingly live to fight another day.

Benno tips his cap, turns, and walks away.

EXT. JAZZ CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Benno bursts out the door of the club and continues down the street. Nora and Alejandro blow past Benno without noticing him. Benno catches Alejandro out of the corner of his eye.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Alejandro and Nora enter. They peer around the room.

ALEJANDRO

He should be here somewhere.

Nora looks over and sees Francisco sitting next to Sugar. Sugar plays with his hair and smiles. Francisco turns his cheek, asking for a kiss. Sugar grabs his face, turns it forward, and plants a big kiss on Francisco's lips.

Alejandro sees Sugar kiss Francisco. Grasping the problem, he turns back to Nora, who is gone. Alejandro surveys the room and doesn't see Nora.

Alejandro walks over to Francisco, who smiles when he sees Alejandro. Alejandro leans in and whispers into Francisco's ear. A look of concern comes over Francisco's face. He pops up and heads for the door.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Francisco runs out onto the street.

FRANCISCO  
(yells)  
Nora!

He turns and looks in the other direction.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)  
(yells)  
Nora!

Francisco turns the other way, runs, and looks around. People stare at him. He stands still and puts his hands on his hips for a beat.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)  
(screaming)  
Fuck!

INT. BENNO FEIN'S STUDY - EVENING

Benno walks into his study and turns the light on. Waxey rests in the chair behind the desk. He is blown back with a bullet hole between his wide-open eyes. Blood is splattered across the wall behind him.

Benno takes his hat off and walks towards Waxey. A letter opener is stabbed into Waxey's chest, run through a piece of paper. In blood, the paper reads, "1 Week." Benno's face grows angry.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - LATER

Francisco sits at the table solemnly drinking. Wilson is passed out face-down on the table. Alejandro, drunk, approaches the table with his arms around Sugar and the other women.

ALEJANDRO  
Cisco, let's go. Sugar is going to  
cook us breakfast.

FRANCISCO  
 You go without me.  
 (motioning towards  
 Wilson)  
 I'm going to take care of Senor  
 Party over here.

Alejandro leans in to Francisco. He thinks he is  
 whispering, but he is not.

ALEJANDRO  
 (emphatically)  
 Nora...she is a girl. These are  
 women.

Francisco looks at Sugar who rolls her eyes and shakes her  
 head. Francisco smiles and slaps Alejandro on the cheek.

FRANCISCO  
 I think you are enough man for the  
 two of them.

Alejandro stands back up and puts his arms in the air.

ALEJANDRO  
 That I am!

He puts his arms back around the women, and they head for  
 the door. Alejandro turns back to Francisco.

ALEJANDRO (CONT'D)  
 (loudly)  
 And I told you my friend, champions  
 once again!

Francisco salutes him with his drink and smiles.

FRANCISCO  
 Always, my friend.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Alejandro stumbles along the street with the women holding  
 his arms, essentially carrying him.

ALEJANDRO  
 Do you live in fucking Mexico?

SUGAR  
 We're almost there, baby.

ALEJANDRO  
 (singing loudly)  
 I love America!

Alejandro sees an alley. He lets go of the women and wanders away.

SUGAR  
Where are you going?

ALEJANDRO  
Man stuff. I will be right back.

Sugar and her friend shake their heads at one another.

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Alejandro walks and undoes his pants. He wobbles while trying to piss against the wall. There is movement in the shadows, but Alejandro is too drunk to notice.

Alejandro tries to close his pants back up when a knife is UNSHEATHED. Alejandro turns and a hand drives the blade into his stomach. Alejandro grabs it with both hands. Alejandro and his assailant both fall to their knees.

The knife is attached to Benno's cane handle.

BENNO  
(whispering in  
Alejandro's ear)  
I call the pitches in this game.

Benno jams the knife harder into Alejandro's stomach and twists it. Alejandro's eyes open wider. He falls onto his side. Benno removes the knife, and wipes it against Alejandro's lifeless body. He sheathes the knife.

SUGAR (V.O.)  
Hey, what's going on down there?

Benno turns and walks briskly away from Sugar's voice. Sugar sees Alejandro lying on the ground.

SUGAR (CONT'D)  
(annoyed)  
Great. How the hell am I going to  
get your big ass home?

She bends over and shakes Alejandro's arm.

SUGAR (CONT'D)  
Hey...

Sugar finally sees the stab wound and SCREAMS. Alejandro lays in the alley, lifeless, blood pouring from his stomach and his mouth.

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Francisco bangs on Alejandro's door.

FRANCISCO  
Ali, time to go!

Francisco knocks on the door again.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)  
Ali?

Francisco opens the door, and sees that Alejandro is not there. He smiles and shakes his head.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)  
You dog.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - MORNING

Francisco bursts into the locker room with a big smile.

FRANCISCO (CONT'D)  
(yelling)  
Has anyone seen my fat fuck catcher?  
He had two girls last night, two!

The seated team is silent. Coach Tubbs and Esteban stand in front of the room. Everyone turns to Francisco. Coach Tubbs looks down. A grave look comes over Francisco's face.

INT. ESTEBAN POMPEZ'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Esteban stands against his desk. Francisco sits in a chair with his head in his hands, choking back tears.

FRANCISCO  
You know who did this.

ESTEBAN  
Francisco...

FRANCISCO  
(louder)  
We have got to do something!

ESTEBAN  
There's nothing...

Francisco stands up and gets in Esteban's face.

FRANCISCO  
(yelling)  
No! You are a coward!

Esteban grabs Francisco by the throat and runs him into a wall. He points in Francisco's face with his other hand.

ESTEBAN

You did this! Your friend is dead  
because of you!

Esteban pushes against Francisco's neck, then lets it go. Francisco, crying, slides down the wall to the ground. Esteban walks away and stares out his office window.

ESTEBAN (CONT'D)

I let this go on because we were  
winning. Nnow there is nothing I  
can do.

INT. DOWLING'S DRUG STORE - DAY

Nora reads the newspaper. An article reads, "New York Cuban's Catcher Murdered." There is a picture of Alejandro. Nora puts her hand over her mouth.

NORA

Oh my god.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Francisco enters his apartment. Benno sits on the couch. Francisco sees him.

FRANCISCO

You mother fucker.

Francisco starts towards Benno, but a gun is cocked in Benno's hand.

BENNO

Easy chico.

FRANCISCO

(yelling)  
I'll kill you!

Benno stands up and walks towards Francisco.

BENNO

I don't think you're in a position  
to make threats.  
(raising his voice)  
So you will do what you are fucking  
told!

Benno points the pistol against Francisco's head. Francisco swallows.

BENNO (CONT'D)  
You ungrateful cocksucker.

FRANCISCO  
Tough man with a gun.

Benno pistol whips Francisco. Francisco falls to his stomach. Benno kicks Francisco in the side. Francisco YELLS in pain, and squirms on the ground. Benno gets down, straddles Francisco, and leans in close to his ear.

BENNO (CONT'D)  
Here's what you're gonna do. You are going to lose this game. None of this land on the number bullshit. You are going to lose. Lose! And if you don't...

Benno shoves his gun into Francisco's side.

BENNO (CONT'D)  
You'll be the next one wearing your guts for garters.

Benno pushes off of Francisco and stands. Francisco weeps.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Francisco, expressionless, lies in bed flipping through his cards.

INT. STREET - DAY

It's pouring rain. Francisco numbly walks down the street. He comes across a church and enters.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Francisco kneels on his bed, flipping through his cards.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Francisco kneels at the altar. Head in hands, he cries.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

A very young Francisco sits with his MOTHER on her deathbed. She smiles and wipes his hair away from his eyes. Francisco looks over at his father, Adolpho, who weeps while sitting in a chair in the corner. A PRIEST delivers last rites.

PRIEST  
Per istam sanctan unctionem et suam  
piissimam misericordiam...

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Francisco pulls his stack of baseball cards from his pocket.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY

A young Francisco runs towards home plate. Alejandro blocks home plate and takes a throw from the field. Alejandro catches the ball, and prepares to tag Francisco. Francisco dives into him and the boys fall to the ground.

Alejandro shows Francisco that he held onto the ball. Francisco swats at it. The boys LAUGH and wrestle.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Francisco stares at the sculpture of Jesus on the large crucifix hanging above the altar.

FRANCISCO  
(quietly)  
Cruciatu in crucem.

Francisco stares a beat and then throws his cards at Jesus.

FRANCISCO  
(yells)  
Cruciatu in crucem!

Francisco turns and walks out of the church.

INT. BAR - DAY

Benno sits down with the Italian Bartender.

ITALIAN BARTENDER  
What can I do for you, Benno?

BENNO  
I need your help with a wager.

Benno hands over a piece of paper.

ITALIAN BARTENDER  
(whispers)  
I can't get anyone to take that action on a nigger league game. Everyone knows they're too easy to fix. Only reason we got any play on the numbers is no one believes one player can control a score.

BENNO  
You're resourceful. And you owe me.

ITALIAN BARTENDER

Even if I could, and I'm not saying  
I can, I would need to hold half the  
cabbage for collateral.

BENNO

A third.

Benno stands up.

BENNO (CONT'D)

Get it done.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO HINCHLIFFE STADIUM - AFTERNOON

The rain subsides. Reporters interview players from both  
teams. Francisco approaches and everyone stops.  
Francisco walks through the silenced crowd into the stadium.

EXT. LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Francisco sits, wearing only his underwear and Alejandro's  
catcher's mitt. Catatonic, he pounds a ball into the mitt.  
Coach Tubbs hesitantly approaches him. He is accompanied by  
NIXON FATS, a large black man in his 20s.

COACH TUBBS

Francisco.

Francisco does not look up.

COACH TUBBS (CONT'D)

This is Nixon Fats. He's going to  
man home plate for us tonight.

Nixon offers his right hand.

NIXON

We gonna get this thing done here  
tonight?

Francisco continues pounding the mitt. Coach Tubbs looks at  
Nixon and shakes his head.

NIXON (CONT'D)

That's all right brother.

Nixon slaps Francisco on the shoulder. Francisco pops out  
of his chair and pushes Nixon. Coach Tubbs gets between the  
two of them, and points in Francisco's face.

COACH TUBBS

I need to know that you've got a handle on this, or you ain't going out there tonight.

Francisco sits back down.

FRANCISCO

I am good.

Francisco pounds the ball into the mitt again.

NIXON

(smiling)

It's all good coach. He'll be all right.

COACH TUBBS

He better be.

Nixon and Coach Tubbs walk away. Nixon stops.

NIXON

Gimme a moment, coach.

Nixon walks back over and whispers into Francisco's ear.

NIXON (CONT'D)

Benno sent me to mind you, so you better not try no bullshit today.

A look of anger comes over Francisco's face. Nixon steps back, smiles and winks. He backs away from Francisco, and triggers his thumb and finger like a gun.

NIXON (CONT'D)

You're the man, Cisco kid.

Nixon turns and puts his arm around Coach Tubbs and walks. Coach Tubbs, confused, turns back and looks at Francisco.

EXT. HINCHLIFFE STADIUM BULLPEN - AFTERNOON

Francisco lifelessly goes through the motions of warming up. Coach Tubbs and Esteban look on with concern.

EXT. HINCHLIFFE STADIUM - LATER

The crowd filters in for the game. Francisco throws warm-up pitches on the mound. Benno takes his seat near the field. Francisco sees him and seethes with anger.

RADIO BROADCASTER (V.O.)  
 Game 1 of 9 for the Negro National League pennant. The Cubans are the heavy favorite here, given their strong second half, but the Pittsburgh Crawfords do have the better record on the year.

Francisco and his teammates finish their warm ups.

RADIO BROADCASTER (CONT'D)  
 The Cubans are at a disadvantage due to the tragic death of their starting catcher, Alejandro Gomez.

The umpires prepare to start the game, and a CRAWFORDS BATTER comes towards the plate.

RADIO BROADCASTER (CONT'D)  
 The Cubans signed little known Nixon Fats to fill the void. It will be interesting to see how the Cisco Kid responds to the loss of his friend.

EXT. HINCHLIFFE STADIUM - LATER

The Crawfords have runners on first and second. Francisco throws ball four to load the bases. He looks over at Benno, who smiles. Coach Tubbs catches this exchange.

COACH TUBBS  
 (to the umpire)  
 Time out.

Coach Tubbs runs out onto the field. He motions for his entire infield to join him at the center of the mound. He gets in Francisco's face and pokes him in the chest.

COACH TUBBS (CONT'D)  
 You listen to me. I don't know what's going on here.

He glances briefly at Nixon and then back to Francisco.

COACH TUBBS (CONT'D)  
 Maybe you're in hot water. Maybe you just don't care about any of us, because you think you're above this. That this is nothing, B.S. nigger baseball. But this game means something to these men.

Coach Tubbs motions to Francisco's teammates.

COACH TUBBS (CONT'D)

This meant something to Alejandro.  
And it should mean something to you.

Francisco looks around at his teammates. Wilson nods his head in encouragement. Francisco stares at Benno.

FRANCISCO

(determined)

Let's go.

EXT. HINCHLIFFE STADIUM - LATER

SERIES OF SHOTS:

1. Francisco mows down batter after batter.
2. Francisco sits by himself silently in the dugout.
3. Benno looks on in anger.
4. Wilson steals home plate.
5. The scoreboard reads, "Crawfords 0, Cubans 1, bottom of the 8th inning."

EXT. HINCHLIFFE STADIUM - LATER

Francisco runs onto the field.

RADIO BROADCASTER (V.O.)

The Cisco Kid heads back to the mound here in the top of the 9th.

Francisco quickly strikes out two batters. He sees Nora sitting near the field. Their eyes meet. Nora waves at him. Francisco waves back. Benno catches this exchange.

Francisco turns and sees Benno. Benno points over at Nora, and runs his finger across his throat.

FRANCISCO

(to himself)

Shit.

Francisco looks around at his teammates. Francisco looks back at Nora. Nixon runs to the mound.

NIXON

You've had your fun. Time to swallow ya pride.

FRANCISCO

We're one out away from winning.

NIXON

You're one out away from getting a  
bullet in your ass.

FRANCISCO

I'm not worried about me.

Francisco looks back towards Nora, and then back to Nixon.  
Nixon motions to the CRAWFORDS BATTER coming to the plate.

NIXON

Throw one right down the middle for  
him. He'll hit it.

Defeated, Francisco nods.

NIXON (CONT'D)

Cheer up, Paco. I hate losing too.  
But I like not dying better.

Nixon runs back to home plate.

NIXON

Hey, hey Cisco, bring it on home  
now.

Francisco throws an easy pitch over the plate. The  
Crawfords Batter clobbers it into right field for a double.

RADIO BROADCASTER (V.O.)

The Crawfords now have a runner in  
scoring position with two down, here  
in the bottom of the ninth. And  
they have their slugger, Josh  
Gibson, coming to the plate.

Josh bats. Francisco throws another easy ball. Josh  
clobbers it, but it slices foul at the last moment.  
Francisco throws another that Josh hits deep but foul.

RADIO BROADCASTER (V.O.)

Well, lightening does strike twice.  
Two times he got his pitch, but  
couldn't make Cisco pay. The  
Crawfords are down to their last  
strike.

Francisco steps off the mound. He starts to pace. The  
crowd chants FRAN-CIS-CO, FRAN-CIS-CO. Francisco looks into  
the crowd. He looks at Benno, who shakes his head, "no."

Francisco looks at Nora with her hands clasped, cheering him  
on. He sees she is now accompanied by Chief Dowling, who  
tips his cap at Francisco. Francisco nods.

He looks around at Wilson, Esteban, and Coach Tubbs, all cheering him on.

Francisco takes his place on the mound. Nixon signals for a fastball. Francisco agrees. He closes his eyes and reaches his hand into his mitt, instead grabbing the ball with the okay-change-up grip his father taught him.

Francisco rears back and delivers. Josh hits it for a sharp single into the outfield towards Wilson. Francisco stares in disbelief. Wilson charges the ball.

Nixon stands at home plate, waiting for the ball from the outfield. The Crawfords base runner rounds third, heading home. Francisco looks over at Nixon who flashes Francisco a quick smile. Francisco takes off for home plate.

The ball, base runner, and Francisco all converge on home plate. Francisco shoves Nixon out of the way and fields the ball on a hop. He swipes his mitt down just as the base runner slides into home plate.

Francisco, Nixon, and the base runner are piled up at home plate. Francisco looks up at the umpire hovering above him.

UMPIRE

(yells)

You're out!

Francisco closes his eyes.

EXT. HINCHLIFFE STADIUM - EVENING

Francisco exits the empty stadium. He looks back at the scoreboard that reads, "Crawfords 0, Cubans 1."

EXT. PLAZA OUTSIDE HINCHLIFFE STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

Francisco looks around and sees nothing. He walks.

EXT. PATERSON CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Francisco, eyes roaming, continues down the empty street.

BENNO (O.S.)

Defiant until the end.

FRANCISCO

I have my pride.

Benno shoots Francisco in his left, pitching arm.

BENNO

That's all you have.

Francisco falls to the ground.

FRANCISCO  
Hijo de puta!

Benno stomps towards Francisco and grabs his hair.

BENNO  
Out of sheer benevolence, I made you  
from mud! This is my thanks!?

Francisco spits in Benno's face.

FRANCISCO  
Thank you.

Benno wipes his face, pistol-whips Francisco, then hovers  
over him, pointing the gun at his head.

BENNO  
Tomorrow's headline: nigger pitcher  
wins game; nigger pitcher shot dead.

ESTEBAN (O.S.)  
Accompanied by dead thug.

Benno turns and aims at Esteban, who aims a gun at Benno.

BENNO  
I've made you too much money.

ESTEBAN  
I've wagered away every piece of  
self-respect I had to get it.

BENNO  
You never complained before.

Esteban motions towards the members of the Cubans team, who  
come out of the shadows and surround Benno.

ESTEBAN  
We are tired of you.

Benno keeps his gun fixed on Esteban, while several of the  
Cubans players put themselves between Benno and Francisco.

BENNO  
You ingrate niggers. No one gives a  
shit about your sideshow of a  
league. Monkeys with mother fucking  
mitts. People watch you because  
men, men, like me make it worth  
their while.

ESTEBAN

Not any more.

The Cubans players slowly close in on Benno.

BENNO

I own you! I own all of you!

ESTEBAN

Not any more.

A police car arrives on the scene and the players back away from Benno. They are the same officers who assisted Nora.

POLICE OFFICER #1

Drop the guns!

Benno and Esteban place their revolvers on the ground. Police Officer #2 approaches Benno and handcuffs him. Benno rolls his eyes.

BENNO

(unconcerned)

Exercising your futility, boys?

POLICE OFFICER #2

You're under arrest for the murder of Alejandro Gomez.

BENNO

Blah, blah, blah.

The officers walk Benno towards the car. Benno smiles at Francisco.

BENNO (CONT'D)

Hey cripple, when your arm heals, I'd use it to row a boat back to Cuba, cause you're fucking dead.

Benno turns to Esteban.

BENNO (CONT'D)

(smiling)

See you soon.

INT. POLICE CAR - CONTINUOUS

Benno is in the back of the car.

BENNO

You Jersey boys know who I am. You can't prosecute me.

POLICE OFFICER #1  
Wouldn't even think of it.

They drive past the police station but do not stop.

BENNO  
(confused)  
Where the hell are we going?

POLICE OFFICER #2  
Like you said, we know who you are  
and know who you know.

The police car pulls into a vacant alley.

BENNO  
What are you doing?!

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

The officers park the car and drag Benno out.

BENNO (CONT'D)  
(screaming)  
You dirty swine!

Police Officer #2 strikes Benno with a billy club. Benno falls over. He works his way up and sees Chief Dowling.

BENNO (CONT'D)  
You can't do this. I have friends!

CHIEF DOWLING  
Generous ones.

Chief Dowling pulls an envelope of money from his pocket. He hands some to both officers then stuffs the envelope back into his pocket. A look of fright comes over Benno's face.

CHIEF DOWLING  
Cuff 'em to the post.

The officers beat Benno into submission, strip him naked, and cuff him to piping running along the side of a building. Chief Dowling and the officers walk away.

BENNO  
Dowling, you won't know your first grandchild because I'm going to kill you before I rape your whore daughter.

Chief Dowling shakes his head and exits the alley. Benno pulls at his handcuffs to free himself when a car arrives.

Abe and Solomon exit the car and approach Benno. Solomon carries a container of gasoline.

BENNO (CONT'D)

(begging)

I'm going to get you your money.  
I'll get you more. Ten on the  
dollar. Two weeks. I gotta guy.  
Safe bet.

Solomon hands Abe the gasoline and punches Benno in the face. Abe douses Benno with gasoline as Benno madly tries to free himself. Abe lights a match and throws it.

BENNO (O.S.)

No!

Benno burns in the shadows.

EXT. SEAPORT - DAY

Francisco, duffel bag in hand, prepares to board a boat.

IRWIN (O.S.)

Hope you're not leaving for long.

Francisco turns and sees Irwin.

FRANCISCO

The devil reappears.

IRWIN

(smiling)

I bear gifts.

FRANCISCO

(motioning to the  
City)

This apple's sour.

IRWIN

Some game you pitched. Bet your  
team would have won the series if  
you could have played.

FRANCISCO

My boat is about to leave.

IRWIN

Take a few months then give us  
another chance.

FRANCISCO

I wasn't good enough before I had a  
bullet in my arm.

IRWIN

Arms heal.

FRANCISCO

I can't paint my skin white.

Francisco turns and walks towards the boat.

IRWIN

(shouts)

I can make you a god here yet,  
Francisco, if you let me!

Francisco smiles, shakes his head, and boards the boat.

INT. BOAT - CONTINUOUS

The horn TOOTS. Francisco leans against the rail and looks  
back at New York. He walks towards the boat's cabin.  
Francisco takes a baseball out of his pocket and stares at  
its blank side. He flips it and stares at Nora's address.

EXT. SEAPORT - CONTINUOUS

From afar, we see Francisco run off the boat and head back  
towards New York City.

FADE OUT.