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The Calderón house. Miami. 1966.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO and his wife, ROSA, are
with his cousin ELISIA and Elisia's husband,
RAMON.

ELISIA

(reading the newspaper aloud)

“When Batista was overthrown, people escaped by the skin of their teeth. Now Castro has given them a free pass, and we're up to our armpits in refugees.”

ROSA

Alejandro, I don't think we'll fit in here.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

Nonsense. There are thousands of Cubans here.

ROSA

But we're Jewish.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

There are thousands of Jews here, too.

ROSA

But we're Cuban.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

Yes, yes — well, there are also five thousand *Jewish* Cubans, right here in Miami. Isn't that right, Elisia? *Sephardic and Ashkenazi*. They've formed quite a social circle.

ROSA

Together?

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

Yes, imagine that. *Turcos and polacos* having mixers. In Cuba, they wouldn't even look at each other. Here, they get married.

ROSA

Elisia took it a step further. She married a Gentile.

RAMON

I guess I was more persuasive than God.

ELISIA

(fixing his lapel)

Well, you had more money.

The others laugh.

The big Jew here is Bernardo Benes. He helped start the Cuban synagogue, he's found jobs for new arrivals...

ROSA

Ale, maybe he can get *you* a job.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

Perhaps. But — Ramón, did you talk to your family?

ELISIA

Alejandro, there's been some difficulty.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

Look, I know I've never worked in import-export, but I'm a fast learner, I'm committed —

ELISIA

It's not that.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

Then *what?* You said Ramón could ... Ramón?

RAMON

Alejandro, my family is willing to help anyone, provided he's decent and trustworthy...

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

I *am* trustworthy.

RAMON

Of course you are. But there's been some talk — and mind you, this is what others have been saying —

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

What?

RAMON

They're concerned about your political affiliation.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

What political affiliation? We've been here two days.

RAMON

Not here. In Cuba.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

Well...

ELISIA

You were — Alejandro, you were a member of the Orthodox Party, as well as some other —

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

Of course! I wanted a free and democratic Cuba.

ELISIA

Yes.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

Not Castro's brand of authoritarian socialism.

ELISIA

We know that.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

(a joke)
Getting rid of class hierarchies to make sure we're all equally miserable! You don't believe me?

ELISIA

No, *I* believe you. *We* believe you.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

But other people ...?

ELISIA

Well ...

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

Who are these people?

RAMON is flipping through his little black book, which he always has with him.

RAMON

Alejandro, did you know a man by the name of Fredo Hernandez?

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

Yes, of course. We were neighbors.

RAMON

And Pepe Castilla?

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

An old classmate, yes. But what — what did they say?

RAMON

There are certain concerns ...

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

Concerns? You mean accusations?

RAMON

Now, calm down a minute. Nobody's making accusations.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

I'm not a communist!

RAMON

Good, good. That's what they need to hear.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

But Fredo Hernandez — ? He knew me in Camagüey, for God's sake! And anyway, I didn't have any "political affiliations" until I went to college in Santiago. Anything he says is rumors and hearsay.

RAMON

Alejandro, why did you wait so long to leave Cuba?

ELISIA
Ramón ...

ROSA
My husband is not a communist!

YOUNG ALEJANDRO
We wanted to leave ever since April 16, 1961. The day Castro declared himself a Marxist-Leninist. But it was impossible. Even now — he's allowed these “freedom flights,” but men of military age, anyone with skills, could end up waiting three years till they find replacements.

ELISIA
People are cautious, that's all. You just need to give them something to put their minds at ease.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO
Like what? WHAT? It sounds like their minds are made up. For God's sake, have they *seen* what the country looks like now? Informants on every block. The finest restaurants now rundown cafeterias. Women marching with AK-47s. And a giant statue of Lenin where children play!

RAMON
Yes, but you have to understand how *angry* the exiles are.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO
I am angry too, Ramón!

RAMON
(encouraged)
Good, that's good.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO
My parents now sit in prison for “anti-government sentiments.” If we hadn't left, I would be there too!

RAMON
Alejandro, you're overreacting.

ELISIA
All we're saying is you have to denounce Castro.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO
I'm here, aren't I?

RAMON
Yes, but for all they know, you're profiteering.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO
What?

RAMON
You weren't making any money in Cuba, you heard it was better here ... so you packed up and posed as a dissident. Or worse, you're a spy.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO laughs, then sees RAMON isn't kidding.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO
Castro *broke* from the Orthodox Party, remember?

RAMON
His ideology was the same. Only his methods were different.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO
His methods *became* his ideology! "Socialism or death" — well, why don't we all die and get it over with? I never supported him.

RAMON still isn't quite convinced.

It's the people from Immigration, isn't it? They interviewed me yesterday. I was completely honest with them, damn it!
(pause)
Then *what*? What am I supposed to do?

ELISIA
You need to put something in writing.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO
What, a contract? An oath of loyalty? What?

ELISIA
In a manner of speaking. What we were thinking was ... perhaps you could write something for the *periodiquitos* — Ramón can get it published — so the exiles will believe you're serious.

RAMON
I'll do everything I can to put you in good standing. Everything. But I need your help.

RAMON looks at ROSA to assure her as well.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO
One article? That's it? One editorial denouncing Fidel?

RAMON nods. YOUNG ALEJANDRO considers.

RAMON
I told people you're a journalist of sorts. Who knows? Maybe there's some longevity in this.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO
(intrigued, but wary)
Yes, yes ... *maybe*.
(looks at ROSA, then the others)
Very well.

RAMON
Excellent. See if you can get it to me by Friday. Oh, and ... if I can get any word on your parents ...

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

Thank you.

Good-byes. RAMON and ELISIA leave.

ROSA starts to tidy the place up.

ROSA

This is almost as shabby as our apartment in Santiago. That's all right; I don't want to get too comfortable. Once Fidel is gone ...

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

And if he lives forever?

She looks at him.

ROSA

Our children will be born in Cuba.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO is quiet; he knows not to argue. He watches as she resumes tidying up. After a moment, she stops and looks at him.

What.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

I was thinking the same thing.

(approaching her)

WHAT is this lovely creature doing in my living room? WHAT must I do to keep her? WHAT, in the name of all that is good and holy, could she have possibly *witnessed* in me to land her here in the first place? WHAT, I ask you? WHAT WHAT WHAT?

She is laughing as he engulfs her. Pause. They settle down.

First I loved you from a distance. A poor student come to borrow money from the local lender, the lender's daughter more stunning than all the riches in the world.

ROSA

I thought you married me so he'd forgive your debts.

YOUNG ALEJANDRO

I would have sold him my soul for your hand. I started taking out loans just so I'd get a chance to see you. You remember that day? When you first agreed to take a walk with me? One of those long summer afternoons when the island seemed bathed in a perpetual sunset. I waited on your doorstep for fifteen minutes, right below your bedroom. Heaven right above my head. Finally you came down, in a light blue dress, radiating elegance — the modest maiden no more. And I was terrified. You, looking the way you did, with your mother and aunt and all your cousins smiling these huge, proud, *intimidating* smiles ... I said to myself: Am I a big enough adventure for this woman? Could I possibly be?