

EXT. HACIENDA -- NIGHT

It's dark and stormy, thunderclaps and lightning flashes over a dark tropical estate barely glimpsed in the darkness.

INT. KITCHEN -- NIGHT

A TV set on, an old black & white horror movie. Zombies attacking a similarly old decrepit house.

A steady thumping noise growing louder and louder as --

CLOSE ON HANDS

preparing a meal of Malungguay soup, cutting up leaves of the stuff. Cutting up and squeezing Calamansi fruits into juice in almost fetishistic detail. Pill bottles are opened, pills lined up. The hands are young and feminine, belonging to --

ANGELICA, mid-20s maid, provincial looking Filipina.

VOICE (O.S.)

(shouting)

ANGELICA! ANGELICA!

ANGELICA

(Tagalog, subtitled)

COMING!

(To herself)

...you old bitch.

She puts the juice and soup on a tray.

INT. HALLWAY -- NIGHT

It's dark and murky, the walls lined with junk and trash. Rats and cockroaches scuttling about.

Angelica ascends a long winding gothic staircase to the second floor.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM -- NIGHT

as Angelica enters, we finally see the origin of the noise.

An old blind woman, MARIA, pounding her ornate wooden cane against the wall. Her eyes pure white.

MARIA
ANGELICA!

ANGELICA
(Tagalog, subtitled)
Here, ma'am.

MARIA
(Subtitled)
Took you long enough! I should've
known better than to hire the
mother of a freak.

ANGELICA
(spitefully)
I'm sorry ma'am, your calamansi
took a while to prepare.

MARIA
God, you're stupid too. I didn't
ask for Calamansi, I asked for
Dalandan!

ANGELICA
We were all out of Dalandan, ma'am.

Maria reaches out for one of several ropes lined along the
walls, Angelica reaches out to help.

MARIA
I'm fine. Leave the food, take the
leftovers already. I can smell its
stench.

Maria grabs the rope and moves for the bathroom. She turns
on the turntable on her way - classical music echoing out.
Vivaldi: Nisi Dominus - Gloria Patri.

Angelica takes one of the many treys of rotting food piled
up and leaves.

INT. BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Maria enters the dingy, disgusting bathroom, feeling around
everywhere. The sink is filled with old disgusting looking
bottles of creams and cosmetics, decades old.

She turns on the faucet, brown water pouring out. She washes her face with it.

She opens the mirror cabinet, feeling around inside. Cockroaches and dirt. She finds an old facial wash and closes the mirror cabinet again. We see thru the mirror A DARK FIGURE STANDING RIGHT BEHIND HER.

INT. HALLWAY -- NIGHT

Angelica is watching TV next to a stack of rotting treys.

Suddenly, the music cuts out, Maria SCREAMS from upstairs.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM -- NIGHT

An old woman in tattered rags is standing over Maria's lifeless body in bed. CALISO. The window is broken from the outside, rain pouring in. The lights flicker, the turntable is at the end of the record, tapping empty.

She hears the footsteps running up the stairs outside and runs out.

Angelica enters seeing -- Maria's face, blood streaming from every orifice -- Angelica SCREAMS!

BLOODLINES

EXT. FERRY -- DAY

Uneasy murky waters passing below us, cloudy skies above.

NINA, mid-20s, is standing on deck looking out. Filipina, but raised in the US, she's quiet, introverted. Concerned.

RYAN wraps his arms around her from behind. Italian-American, ex-US Army. Pragmatic to a fault, but a loving husband nonetheless.

NINA

King of the world?

Ryan laughs, kissing her neck. She smiles.

NINA

We can still back out of this, go home...

RYAN

And miss out seeing where you were born, where you're from? She was your grandmother, your family.

NINA

If you could even call it that. Last I saw her I was five. After what happened with mom... I'm sure she hated me anyway. Not one phone call or letter since the day we left.

RYAN

She didn't know you. Anyone who would could never hate you.

Nina turns to face him.

NINA

You sure you're okay with this? Coming here to the Philippines, tropical paradise of malaria and corruption... It's a long way from Jersey.

RYAN

(flirtatiously)

The only problem I have is everyone looking at me like I'm a sex tourist standing next to you.

We see a few other passengers, locals, eyeing them and Ryan suspiciously.

NINA

I bet they wouldn't think that if they saw mew retching in the bathroom two minutes ago.

RYAN

(suddenly hopeful)

You're nauseous?

NINA

Relax, tiger, I think I'm just seasick.

Ryan smiles sheepishly. Nina turns back toward the fast oncoming island in the horizon. A dark tropical ink blot against the endless waters.

NINA

You know at night, there used to be
so many fireflies, The Spaniards
called it Isla del Fuego.

RYAN

What's that?

NINA

Island of Fire.

EXT. HARBOR -- DAY

A short, mustached Filipino, 40s, in a cheap suit stands smiling on the shore as the ferry approaches. VENTURA.

VENTURA (O.S.)

Mrs Moore? I'm Miguel Ventura, I
was your grandmother's legal
counsel. Have you eaten?

INT. KARINDERIA -- DAY

It's a small, dingy place with cheap electric fans and cafeteria food displays. Ventura signals the WAITER for the menu.

VENTURA

I know it's not much, but this is a
small island with not many options
for dining out. Besides, it has a
certain local flavor, wouldn't you
say Mr. Moore?

Ryan swats away a fly.

RYAN

Ryan. Yes, definitely.

NINA

It's fine, my mother used to take
me to places like this all the time
before we moved to New Mexico.

The waiter hands them menus. Ryan looks at it confused as Ventura and Nina point out their orders.

RYAN

What's the house specialty?

The waiter looks confused. Ventura translates it to Tagalog.

WAITER

Kamaru.

RYAN

Yeah, I'll try that.

VENTURA

Mrs Moore --

NINA

Nina.

VENTURA

-- as you may know, your grandmother was a pretty stubborn woman, despite her age she insisted on not making out a will. As she had no other children and both her sisters are believed to have died --

NINA

Believed?

VENTURA

Local customs haven't always been up to speed with census taking. In all likelihood they passed away sometime before your mother was born. As such, you're her only known living relative, you are legally entitled to the entirety of her estate, which consists of...

Ventura starts rifling through papers. The waiter comes with the food, handing Ryan a big bowl of FRIED CRICKETS. Ryan tries to hide his disgust.

RYAN

You know what? I think I'll just have some soup.

NINA

(Tagalog)

What are your soups?

VENTURA

(Tagalog, subtitled)

I wasn't aware you spoke Tagalog?

NINA

Just a bit. My Spanish is better.

WAITER

Beef Mami, Sinigang na Liempo,
Sotanghon, Soup number five --

RYAN

That! I'll have that. Soup number five. Sounds good.

VENTURA

The estate includes the contents of your grandmother's BPI savings account, amounting to fourteen thousand nine hundred forty one pesos, or...

(Using a calculator)

Three hundred fifty six US dollars.

There's also the contents of her storage space in Quezon City containing nine hundred and forty six original vinyl records and other miscellaneous music paraphernalia--

RYAN

Wow.

NINA

Yeah, I remember, she loved classical music. She used to play the piano, sometimes all night.

VENTURA

As well as the entirety of her property located here, including but not limited to her childhood home, the hacienda and the surrounding --

The waiter serves Ryan his soup. Some suspicious looking meat floating in it.

NINA

Oh. I'm so sorry sweetie, I should've warned you. It's made of bull, uh, genitalia.

Ryan lifts up a bull penis from his soup and looks at it disgusted before pushing the plate away. Ventura tries his best from stifling a laugh.

RYAN

It's alright, I wasn't really that hungry anyway.

VENTURA

-- Twenty four acres of land, comprising the majority of the island.

NINA

Wait, you're telling me I own land the size of twenty football fields?

VENTURA

Something like that, yes.

RYAN

Exactly how much of a majority?

VENTURA

Eighty percent. Including most, if not all property excluding the town. Mind you, the vast majority of which consists of undeveloped rainforest. The material value of which is difficult to appreciate as-is, but could potentially be worth a lot if developed into a possible resort.

RYAN

Potentially?

VENTURA

Yes, well, the island doesn't get much tourism but given the right kind of foreign investment and publicity...

NINA

We don't have much means or connections for that I'm afraid.

VENTURA

What do you do, if you don't mind my asking?

RYAN

I'm a carpenter and part-time mechanic.

NINA

I was a hotel receptionist for a while.

RYAN

Would it be possible to attract local investors to the land? Maybe to at least build around the main building?

VENTURA

I highly doubt it, given the present state of the house.

NINA

Well, can we see it?

EXT. HACIENDA -- DAY

Ventura's car pulls up outside, amidst tall grass, mud and trash surrounding the house.

Nina looks on in awe of the hacienda towering over her, overgrown and delapidated.

INT. HALLWAY -- DAY

Rattle of keys and the massive front doors open. Ventura enters first, holding the keys, followed by Nina and Ryan. It's big but run-down and packed with old junk.

VENTURA

The house has a total of six bedrooms on top of the master bedroom, kitchen, a formal dining room, a living room, a den, a small office space, maid's quarters and an attic. Feel free to look around.

NINA

There's a maid?

VENTURA

Was. Angelica, local girl. She discovered the body. Not much of a maid if you ask me.

Nina heads upstairs, Ventura follows Ryan into...

INT. LIVING ROOM -- DAY

The TV is off, curtains drawn.

RYAN

The old lady was a hoarder I take it?

VENTURA

Hoarder by accident. Advanced stage diabetes had turned her blind as a bat, hence all the handrails and ropes. She didn't leave this house since then.

RYAN

Since...?

VENTURA

Twenty-five years.

Ryan flips the lightswitch, it flickers on, revealing more trash, piles of magazines and vinyl records --

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY -- DAY

Nina's stalking the halls as the lights start flickering.

VENTURA (O.S.)

The electrical systems could use some work, it was retrofitted onto the place in the sixties. The house itself dates back to the eighteen sixties. The land itself belonged to the church before being bought by a Spaniard who built the house as a wedding gift to his young wife...

Nina approaches...

INT. MASTER BEDROOM -- DAY

Nina creaks open the door. It's just as it was earlier, with the exception of the bed being stripped, the mattress stained with BLOOD. Nina looks queasy, turns back. The cane still leaning against the wall.

INT. KITCHEN -- DAY

Ryan and Ventura tour through the kitchen area, Ryan looks through cabinets and cupboards. Rotting food and cockroaches.

RYAN

How did the old bat die anyway?

VENTURA

I was told it was a stroke. Her health had been failing for many years, she didn't have much to cling on to.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY -- DAY

Nina leans against the wall, trying to suppress a gag reflex.

While the lights flicker, for a split second we catch a glimpse of a DARK FIGURE down the hall before it's gone.

She looks over in the same direction, seeing -- one of the other doors slowly creaking open, light flooding the hallway. She approaches, mystified.

INT. OFFICE -- DAY

Ryan enters, seeing one of the ceiling beams cracked in the middle.

RYAN

What's that?

VENTURA

Reportedly, the Spaniard who built this house hung himself after discovering his wife, a local, was having another man's child.

RYAN

No one thought to repair it?

VENTURA

Supposedly they did. This is a superstitious country, Mr. Moore, every old house has a story... I am, however, obligated to tell you the Spaniard and old Mrs. Lopez aren't the only ones to pass away on the premises.

RYAN

Why, how many others?

VENTURA

Since its construction... Fourteen. Give or take.

Ryan looks at him in disbelief.

INT. CHILDREN'S ROOM -- DAY

Nina enters, cautiously stepping into the brightly lit room, bright clean walls, toys neatly stacked on the floor, a bed and a crib by the curtain-draped window.

Her eyes well up as she approaches the dresser by the bed.

Alphabet blocks on the floor spell out "HI IM NINA".

She opens a music box, a broken ballerina figure twirling inside.

INT. CHILDREN'S ROOM -- DAY [FLASHBACK]

Old and grainy video, VHS quality.

Young Nina, 5 years old, playing with the blocks. Maria, in her mid-50s here, playing with her.

Nina's MOTHER, in her mid-20s is staring out the window blankly, rubbing her temple, cold and distant.

Maria notices the mother's fingers rubbing her temple RAW and BLOODY.

INT. CHILDREN'S ROOM -- DAY [PRESENT]

Nina cries softly and picks up a picture from the dresser. A family photo, Maria, her mom and herself as a baby.

The mother's face has been SCRATCHED OUT.

INT. DINING ROOM -- DAY

Through big heavy wooden doors, Ryan enters, Ventura in tow. The neatest room yet, by far. No trash, no piles of magazines and newspapers, no old vinyl records.

Instead a long, grand dining room table of dark wood, a silver candleholder centerpiece and lace tablecloth. Along the walls, shelves of the most beautiful china set you could imagine. All in pristine condition, except covered in a thick layer of dust.

RYAN

Whoa...

Ryan wipes off a bit of dust from the dining room table with his finger.

VENTURA

Yeah, as far as I could tell, the maid was never allowed in here for some reason.

On one of the walls, a giant portrait of a Spanish priest, circa 1570. Cold, dead eyes and stern-faced, the priest seems almost inexplicably menacing.

VENTURA

That would be Don Jeronimo de Guevara, one of the first Jesuit priests to come to the Philippines on the Legazpi expedition which first colonized the islands.

Contrary to popular belief, Don Jeronimo was actually the one was largely responsible of Christianizing the region. I believe Mrs. Lopez was a distant relation.

Ryan suddenly spots a bizarre large old stain on the thick carpet by the head of the table.

RYAN

Lemme guess, bloo--

VENTURA

I should tell you, Mr. Moore, that there is a prerequisite to the inheritance.

RYAN

What's that?

VENTURA

We need to legally be assured of your kinship to Mrs. Lopez by means of a DNA test.

RYAN

That's gonna be a problem, my wife is severely phobic --

Nina cuts him off, standing in the door, photo in hand, eyes still red.

NINA

I'll do it. This was my home. I want to know my grandmother again.

She sets down the photo on the table.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY

Nina is sitting on the bench, Ryan by her side, inspecting old anatomical drawings lining the walls as artwork.

A middle-aged female doctor enters, DRA GARCIA. She flashes a friendly smile and disarming demeanor. She could be your aunt.

DRA GARCIA

Now this won't hurt one bit.

NINA

Just make it quick, please.

Nina grips Ryan's hand tightly, looking away as Dra Garcia plunges in the needle into her arm, drawing blood.

DRA GARCIA

There, that wasn't so bad, was it?
Have a lollipop.

Garcia hands her a lollipop.

RYAN

Excuse me, doctor...

DRA GARCIA

(merrily)

Garcia. You can call me Imelda.

RYAN

How long until we have the results?

DRA GARCIA

I have to ship it to the lab in Cebu, but it should be back in a few days. It's just a formality as far as I'm concerned. You look like her, you know. Your grandmother.

NINA

You knew her?

DRA GARCIA

As well as anyone could. Angelica, her maid, is my daughter. But I knew her long before that. I remember you and your mother too.

RYAN

I guess you've been here a while?

DRA GARCIA

Far longer than I care to remember.
You know how it goes... You
planning on having kids?

RYAN

Yeah.

NINA

Maybe.

DRA GARCIA

Well, this is as good a place as
any to raise a child, take it from
me. Meanwhile, my cousin runs a
motel across the strait if you want
to stick around until the results
come in.

NINA

Everyone's related to everyone
here, huh?

DRA GARCIA

Just about, blood is thicker than
water. Your grandmother's wake is
tonight by the way, if you want to
go.

INT. MOTEL ROOM -- NIGHT

Ryan is sitting on the toilet, staring at a pregnancy test
as Nina is getting dressed.

RYAN

Has it been three minutes yet?

NINA

Honey, it's too soon to tell. You
can't trust the local brands
anyway, probably made in some
Manila sweatshop somewhere.

RYAN

(bitterly)
 Sorry for being the only one to get
 sick of waiting.

NINA
 What's that supposed to mean?

RYAN
 What's maybe supposed to mean? I
 thought we talked about this.

NINA
 Oh c'mon, you know how people are.
 They get wind that we're trying
 and we'll never hear the end of it.
 "Are you? Are you? Do you have a
 name in mind? A school in mind? A
 career in mind?" Soon questions
 turn rhetorical and the judgment
 begins. You know what your dad was
 like, you understand.

RYAN
 I guess...

Nina kneels down by him, holding his hands, assuringly.

NINA
 I said ok, didn't I?

RYAN
 Not exactly ringing endorsement,
 wouldn't you say?

NINA
 Hey. Even when you were fresh out
 of a job, not a friend in the world
 and we were up to our necks in debt
 and just making it until the
 morning was scary, I married you.
 What makes you think I would be
 able to brave all that fear and
 uncertainty and not this?

Ryan smiles and throws the test.

RYAN

Sorry, for ever doubting you. Can you wait for a bit? I could really use a shower. And a shave.

NINA

Of course. I think I saw your razor in the black suitcase.

RYAN

Thanks.

Ryan gets up past her, her smile fades.

The test is in the trash - negative.

INT. CHURCH -- NIGHT

Ryan enters, dipping his fingers in holy water and crossing himself in front of the cross muttering quietly --

RYAN

-- et nomine patri, et filii, et spiritu sancti.

Nina walks in past him, in a daze, fixed at the open casket, seeing her grandmother...

Just as she is about to approach, a priest steps in her way, hand out reached. DON SALINAS. Shaved head, late 30s, thin and all smiles, albeit respectfully so.

DON SALINAS

Hi, I'm father Salinas. You must be Nina.