

# **Mi Boca**

the autobiographical concert

by Elisha Nain

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*Characters*

Elena Booker – Alto I /  
Melanie Booker – Alto II  
Simon Booker – Tenor  
Sanja Kumar  
Los Hermanos  
Los Besos de Tios y Primos / The Suburbanites  
Grandma Susan / Mrs. Law  
The Landlord/The Librarian / The Speech Teacher / Emerson

*Settings*

Kitchen / Living Room / Front Porch

Cafeteria / Classroom / Park

Age 6  
Columbia, Maryland  
Apartment

Age 9 - 14  
Winchester, Virginia  
House  
elementary / middle school

Age 15-18  
Winchester, Virginia  
House  
John Handley High School

// - overlap in conversation, the proceed character starts talking when they see the double dash in the above line

MONTH ##### - all month and year headings must show up on projection in the living room / classroom in 1990s camcorder font.

## SCENE 1

Home

February 11, 2000 – AFTERNOON

Columbia, Maryland

*[600 sq.ft. apartment. Open layout with kitchen stage right and living room stage left. Elena [6] dances in front of the television to “God Help the Outcasts” in her pajamas. She mimics Esmerelda’s sweeping operatic number. Melanie [28] washes a pot of rice in a metal pot. It sounds like a cabasa. Their backs are too the audience until VRRREEEP - ... “God Help the Outcast” VEARS out as the VHS tape fades into white & black lines. Elena freezes. She turns to Melanie with a pout. They talk/rap to the rhythm of the cabasa. Elena stutters—]*

ELENA: Ma! The-th-the tape es bbrooken- c- c- c- c- can you fix it?

MELANIE: *[hiding sadness]* slow down, hija, forget about the tape –

ELENA: B-b-but –

MELANIE: I’ll get your father to fix it, go get dressed or you’ll be late.

ELENA: B-b-but –

MELANIE: *[speaking]* slow down, hija.

ELENA: *[inhala, exhala melodies]* I want to sing my song for Grandma Susan today.

*[Melanie shakes slow. Then slowssss then stops. She turns to Elena.]*

MELANIE: Even if you mess up, I know she would like it anyway... Now hurry, get dressed before Dad gets home for your birthday.

*[Melanie turns on the stove. She cooks the rice. Elena pulls out the VHS tape... the film is stuck... she keeps pulling it out... the film keeps coming out. Oops. Melanie doesn’t see... Elena wraps herself in the film like a “dress.” She sings about her dreams as she gets ready for the party.]*

ELENA:

I can be a singer on the television

I’ll help Mom and Dad so they won’t work to the bone

LA is far away, but for now, there’s nowhere else I’d rather beeee....

Then in myyyyyy

Home  
En mi casa, comida, familia  
Home  
Where the music plays  
Home  
With my leggoos and the playstation  
Where mi gente stay

[CUATRO LOS HERMANOS [5/4] BURST out of a bathroom door in their pajamas. They dance around her.]

MIS HERMANOS: HEY!

ELENA: [*speaking*] Hola, m-mis hermanos!

ELENA:

[*singing*] Just know, te amo,  
I might be on the TV  
but I'd rather be home  
in my home  
with my home.

MELANIE: ELENA! [*Elena and Los Hermanos all freeze dance*] I will not ask you all again. Go get dressed.

ELENA: Y-y-y-ess, Ma.

[*Elena untangles herself and rushes into the bathroom with her 4 hermanos: faucet on. Shower runs. Chicken sizzles. Rice boils. All of these elements are the instruments for Elena's song. Elena changes her clothes. She continues singing as she brushes her teeth.*]

ELENA:

Home  
Where el baño esta armario – but it's okay.

MELANIE:

[*Speaking*] Stop running my water!

ELENA:

[*She gargles, spits, turns off the faucet*]  
Home  
Estamos juntoos, en mi corazon,  
Don't want it any other way.

MELANIE:

BOYS! Take your medicine!

*[Elena and Los Hermanos jump out of the bathroom, all dressed all clean. Elena sings the solo. Los Hermanos sing the chorus –]*

ELENA:

All we need is Abuela,  
Then my birthday will be great  
She will always be  
Home  
In my home  
With my home –

LOS HERMANOS:

En mi casa, comida, familia  
Where mi gente staaaaay

*[Simon [27] enters with Elena's birthday cake! And oh baby, it's cold outside. The sound of the afro-latino salsa band LOS BESOS DE TIOS Y PRIMOS can be heard in the distance. Simon shuts the door. He shakes off the snow.]*

ELENA AND LOS HERMANOS:

Daddy!

SIMON: *[speaking]* Rugrats! Happy Birthday, princess *[He kisses Elena on the forehead]*. Go find the candles. And fast!

*[He kneels to their height. He looks to the door with "fear." He looks back at his kids –]*

SIMON Cont'd: Go! The stampede is coming!

*[The kids get giggly, excited! They run around the house frantically looking for candles. Simon places the cake on the dining room table, center upstage. Melanie is peeved... Simon notices]*

SIMON Cont'd: What!? It's a party!

*[Elena finds birthday candles in the kitchen junk drawer. Los Hermanos follow her to the dining room table. She places 6 on her cake. She looks at the cake face.]*

ELENA: *[speaking]* ¡¡¡it's Esmmamamarelda!

*[Melanie "completes" the arroz con pollo... there is one already made for the stage. LOS BESOS get closer-]*

MELANIE:

*[to Simon, whisper singing with the same Elena beat]*  
I thought you said that  
We'd keep this between us –

SIMON:

*[sing/rap response]*

Thought you'd like the quiet  
Like the peace,  
And overall you need the sleep –

MELANIE:

I didn't get more plates  
Cook more food  
Or get more drinks, though –

*[Melanie rushes to find more paper plates and cups. Simon gets his camcorder ready to film. LOS BESOS GET LOUDER. Elena and Los Hermanos wait by the door to greet them, giggling giddy.]*

SIMON:

Tio Malo says he's got it  
Trust me, babe, I'm working on it.  
Elena will never know,  
We've always had a happy home  
Remember what she always told us  
Fill their souls with celebration –

*[Melanie and Simon lock trusting eyes. KNOCK KNOCK KOCK. LOS BESOS go quiet. The Booker kids look at their parents]*

MELANIE: *[speaking, comforting]* go ahead, open it.

*[Elena opens the door and BLAM! LOS BESOS DE LOS TIOS Y PRIMOS rampage through the door with Latin food (platanos y charizo, cold cow foot, collard greens, ox-tail) and salsa instruments (guitars, bongos, macarenas, etc.) They greet the family with hugs and besos! Los Primos run toward the TV to play video games. The leader of the band, TIO MALO comes in last with his guitar. He hoists Elena on his shoulders, playing as they sing the home song.]*

EVERYONE:

En mi casa, comida, familia  
Home  
Where the music plays  
Home  
With my leggoos and the playstation  
Where mi gente stay

EVERONE:

HEY!

ELENA

[*solo.*] Just know, te amo,  
I might be on the TV  
but I'd rather be home  
in my home  
with my home –

[*Elena sits in the middle of the table in front of her cake. Los Besos place the food on the table and surround her. Los hermanos stand in front of Los Besos*]

LOS BESOS:

Con tus tias tus tios tus primos  
Tu estas salva  
Tenemos tapas - de Panama  
y Ruben Blades  
Sabe, te amo,  
No importa que paso  
Estas casa a mi  
Estoy casa a ti  
Casa aqui

[*Melanie holds the arroz con pollo in one hand and a cabasa in the other. She places the pot stage right of Elena. Simon videotapes the festivities and stands stage left of Elena. They all sing the final end chorus together. Elena y Los Hermanos in Spanglish, Melanie y Los Besos in Spanish*]

ELENA Y LOS HERMANOS:

Just know, te amo  
I might be on the TV  
But I'd rather be  
Home  
In my home  
With my home –

MELANIE Y LOS BESOS

Sabe, te amo,  
No importa que paso  
Estas casa a  
mi  
Estoy casa a ti  
Casa aqui –

[*KEY CHANGE.*]

ELENA: [*Stutter.*] GR-GRANDMA SUSAN, ARE YOU WITH ME?

[*Pause. Silence. Elena looks about. No Grandma Susan. The adults in the room look at Melanie to respond. She picks up a box from under the table. She opens it frantically. She opens the box to reveal a pen. Melanie sings -*]

MELANIE:

Elena,  
Here's a pen for your thoughts and your fears... [*speaking*] Aye Dios, no puedo hacer esto –

*[Melanie exits to the kitchen. More silence. Simon puts the pen in Elena's hands. He rap/sings.]*

SIMON:

Grandma Susan, uhhh  
Wants you to have this.

**She knows you have a way with words,**

Now we can see it.

*[Speaking]* She's sorry she couldn't come.

*[Elena is sad. Simon eyes the cake, then his sad daughter, he sings in her beat -]*

SIMON:

Make a wish.

*[He eggs on everyone to join him. Los Hermanos sing "home," climbing the scale. Los Besos sing the hook as Elena watches lovingly-]*

LOS HERMANOS:

Hooooooooooooome...

LOS BESOS:

En mi casa, familia, comida  
Where the music plays  
With my legooooos and the  
playstation  
Where mi gente stay

SIMON:

Make a wish  
Make a wish  
Make a wish  
Make a wish

*[Blackout. Spotlight on Elena with her cake. She clasps her pen like a microphone to her mouth. She whispers her wish -]*

ELENA:

Just know, te amo,  
I might be on the TV

*[Elena blows out the candles. The blackout gradually fades, revealing her family as she sings the home lines. They sing the hook -]*

ELENA:

But I'd rather be home

In my home

With myyyyyyyyyyyyyy hooome.

BESOS, HERMANOS, Y SIMON:

En mi casa, comida, familia

Where mi gente // stay –



TIO MALO:

*[speaking. Patwa]* Okay, okay dis es sum gud sentimentalieeee en wat not but, we dun know, yeh?

*[Uncle Malo turns on the television. He turns to a Reggae Dancehall channel.]*

TIO MALO:

BRRRRRRRA-BRA-BRA! FELIZ CUMPLENOS ELENNNNAAAAAA!

*[Everyone breaks into the food and the dance moves – except Simon...]*