

INT TONY'S SCHOOL -- MR. ZEPEDA'S CLASSROOM

Tony walks in late and Mr. Zepeda shoots him a look like -- *you better not fall asleep again*. Tony sits down, Mr. Zepeda ADLIB begins his lesson and Tony answers his questions and pays attention throughout class.

LATER AT THE END OF CLASS

The bell RINGS, and students walk out as Mr. Zepeda starts erasing the board. Tony walks up behind Mr. Zepeda.

TONY  
(tentatively)  
Mr. Zepeda?

MR. ZEPEDA  
Antonio?

Tony is hesitant with an expression like -- *how do I start?*

TONY  
Would I be a fool to deny Stanford,  
if they wanted to take me in?

MR. ZEPEDA  
You'd be a fool to not go to  
college, period. Where is this  
coming from?

TONY  
I don't know what to do. Stanford  
is so far away and my family needs  
me. *No los puedo dejar*.

MR. ZEPEDA  
Have you spoken to your mom about  
this?

TONY  
I told her, but she'd never tell me  
the truth and I know it. She'd  
never say how she needs me, and  
leaving them now would be  
devastating.

MR. ZEPEDA  
Look, Tony, I know how hard it can  
be. I was grew up without a father  
too.

TONY  
(angry)  
I wish I had.

MR. ZEPEDA

Well it made you into the strong young man you are today.

TONY

(hesitant)

Mr. Z, there's a reason why we came here last summer. I haven't told you the full story.

Mr. Zepeda gives Tony a face like -- *go on.*

TONY (CONT'D)

My mom and my sisters left right after Amalia was born, last year. We moved from El Paso, hoping he wouldn't find us.

(angry)

He would hit her...us -- My mom and me. And one day, *tuvo el nervio de levantarle la mano a mi hermanita* and my mom just wouldn't take it anymore. We left the next day. Since then, we've been toughing it out on our own. I'm the only man in the family and I can't leave now. They need me.

Tony starts to tear up and brings his hands to his face. Mr. Zepeda puts his hand over Tony's shoulder.

MR. ZEPEDA

Listen, Antonio. You sound like you have a very caring mother, and I'm sure she wants the best for you. But in the end, this really is your decision.

Tony takes a moment to wipe his eyes then looks up at Mr. Zepeda.

MR. ZEPEDA (CONT'D)

And whether that's a thousand miles from here or a few hundred it's what you think is best. You're a good kid, Antonio. A man, it seems, from all the responsibilities you have. I'm sure that whatever you choose, it will be the right one.

Tony smiles and then hugs Mr. Zepeda.