

# **memoria del silencio** en el país de la eterna primavera

*// memory of silence in the land of eternal spring*

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## THE CHARACTERS

<b>IRMA</b>	late 50s, cursed with disrupted memory.
<b>PACO</b>	late 50s, Irma's husband; a natural green thumb and intense optimist.
<b>MARI</b>	teens, Irma's niece; guarded and fiercely independent.
<b>LUPITA</b>	20s, Irma's eldest niece; a bride-to-be, fair and adored by all.
<b>CARMEN</b>	30s, Mari's mom, recently widowed, distant.
<b>LA NIÑA</b>	teens, a young thief with a secret; clever, headstrong.
<b>SANTA MUERTE</b>	600, saint of death, a spirit ancestor of the trees. trans/non-binary.
<b>LOS VIEJXS BOLOS</b>	40-60s, A chorus of old drunks. Messengers of hijinks, songs and magic. suggested Viejx ensemble tracks: <b>Viejx #1:</b> Mama Chelo, Doña Chon <b>Viejo #2:</b> Fernando, Carlos, Papa Carlos <b>Viejx #3:</b> Santa Muerte, Doctor

## SETTING

*The space should embody a dream-like delicacy as if the very ground were on the verge of fading away. It represents an aging pueblo that rests deep in the grassy highland regions of eastern Guatemala. This Guatemala lives in an endless spring; flowers grow large as cattle and ghosts may rise from nearby rivers seeking refuge from their eternal solitude. As the play deepens, the world surrounding la familia Noguera slowly forgets itself, little by little, peeling away into a mutation of memory.*

## NOTES

Character genders must not stay limited to conventions of the Spanish language and cis-het culture. A slash [ / ] indicates the point of interruption in which the next line of dialogue begins and overlaps. **Please mind the accent marks**, this Spanish is written to reflect a Guatemalan or Central American voseo's accent. Accent marks noted in the script will reflect accent stresses that change due to common use of vos/vosotros conjugation (i.e. 'Déjame' changes to 'Dejámé' or 'Qué quieres?', becomes 'Qué querés') [Colored text] serves solely as translation, not to be spoken out loud.

## n. prólogo / prologue

*Nighttime. Shadows of an old finca.*

*Moonlight over a towering bush of pink roses. La Rosas.*

*Underneath the roses' sits a tiny house. La Casa Noguera.*

*An occasional pop of overburdened wood echoes through the farmland.*

*From beneath the roses appears a child, LA NIÑA.*

*She cradles a small wooden box with a golden latch.*

*LA NIÑA sees us. The crickets wake.*

### **LA NIÑA.**

In full bloom they glow like the moon  
or giant pink stars tethered to earth.  
This, my home, where crickets croon  
And I grow old, the place of my birth.

Here, our old pueblito de Papalhuapa,  
Jutiapa sits por el lado de Agua Blanca  
aging and shrinking, forgetting itself. . .  
A tale of greed only ghosts can foretell.

Here, begins a curse and family story  
Here, beneath las Rosas de mi mama  
Here, is a land on the verge of fading,  
A stolen land known as Guatemala. . .

*In the distance, screams:*

*Ayuda! Ayuda! ¡Hay ladrones!*  
*Help! Help! There are thieves!*  
*Ladrón! Ladrón! ¡Me robaron!*  
*Thieves! Thieves! I've been robbed!*  
*Alguien! ¡Socorro! ¡Socorro!*  
*Someone! Call for help! Call for help!*

**LA NIÑA.** *to audience.*  
*Shh...*

*LA NIÑA flees.*

**ACT ONE****i. tierra / earth**

*As the voices near, the rumbling of a mob grows louder.*

*A torrential sound, like wildfire, or rattling carcasses.*

*Auxilio! Auxilio! Auxilio!*

*[Help! Help! Help!]*

*LOS TRES VIEJOS BOLOS burst into the night!*

*Jeering and howling, they play out shenanigans.*

**BOLO 3.**

AY! AUXILIOOOOOO!!!

*[AH! HEEEEEEELP!]*

**BOLO 1.**

*Shh! It's dark!*

**BOLO 2.**

NO! SOCORRRRRRO!!!

*[NO! CALL FOR HEEEEELP!!]*

**BOLO 1.**

Quiet that bark!

**BOLO 3.**

Is it already dusk?

**BOLO 1.**

No, it is *dawn!*

**BOLO 2.**

I think it is dusk.

**BOLO 3.**

How can you tell?

**BOLO 2.**

Well, I wake up at dusk  
and sleep after dawn.

**BOLO 1.**

No, you wake at dawn-  
and sleep after dusk.

**BOLO 3.**

So that means it's. . .

**BOLO 2.**

*Dusk!*

**BOLO 1.**

It means you're a  
Drunk.

**BOLO 2.**

ME!? A BORRACHO!?

[A DRUNKARD!]

**BOLO 3.**

¡QUE MAMARACHO!

[A DRUNK INDEED!]

**BOLO 1.**

¡Ya cállense, muchá!

[Y'all, shut up already!]

**BOLO 3.**

No, *you* shut it, viejo!

**BOLO 1.**

¡Debería darte un gran

[I oughta give you a big]

pencazo en el pecho!

[smack on the breast!]

**BOLO 2.**

You better watchale, vos!

They bruised my chi-chi

the last time I misspoke. . .

**BOLO 1.**

That was barely a poke!

**BOLO 3.**

I'm scared!

**BOLO 2.**

I'm sleepy.

**BOLO 3.**

This place is so creepy!

**BOLO 1.**

Ay! Have some respect.

**BOLO 2.**

Why?! Huele a pee pee.

[Smells like pee pee.]

**BOLO 3.**

Hey, I know it's not me.

**BOLO 2.**

Maybe it's all'us three?

**BOLO 1.**

Or the stain on your knee.

**BOLO 2.**

¡No, es just agua pura!

[No, It's just pure water!]

**BOLO 1.**

Estás segura?

[You sure?]

**BOLO 2.**

Pos no. . . but ¿si?

[Well no. . .but yes?]

**BOLO 3.**

Still thirsty homie?

*BOLO 3 hands 2 a drink.*

**BOLO 2.**

For aguita.

[For water.]

**BOLO 3.**

Tiene poquita. . .

[It has a little bit. . .]

**BOLO 2. *spilling all over.***

Ou! Ou! Ou! Ou!

[Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow!]

**BOLO 1.**

¡Ay! ¡Aguas! ¡Aguas!

[Ah! Careful! Careful!]

**BOLO 3.**

Shó! You spilt it all over!!

**BOLO 2. *hot mouth.***

Joo sed et wus wuhter!!

**BOLO 3.**

¡No! Dicho, *aguardiente!*

[*Noo, I said firewater!*]

*enter CARMEN, broom in hand!*

**CARMEN.**

OKAY, *ya viejos, vete!*

[*Okay! old men, go away!*]

**BOLO 2.**

I'm throwing this out—

*BOLO 2 starts pouring out liquor.*

**CARMEN.**

EY, NOT ON LAS ROSAS!!!

*Smack!*

**BOLO 2.**

OUCH! *Vieja dolorosa—*

[*Painful old woman-!*]

*Smack!*

**CARMEN.**

Ay! Don't call me *vieja!!!*

**BOLO 2.**

You could be my *abuela.*

**CARMEN.**

Shute-! [*Brat-!*]

*Smack, smack, smack!*

**BOLO 1.**

Wait, wait, please!

It's all a misunderstanding.

**BOLO 3**

See, we thought you were—

**BOLO 2.**

A different *vieja!*

**BOLO 1.**

But one less enchanting!

**BOLO 2.**

And incredibly angry!

**BOLO 3.**

Yes, a bitter old lady!

*What was her name?*

**CARMEN.**

La Senora Irma, mi estimada cuñada?  
 [That lady Irma, my esteemed sister-in-law?]

**BOLO 1.**

We meant no disrespect!

**BOLO 3.**

Not to you o a la Irma—

**CARMEN.**

I don't care, I don't care! Just  
 don't kill the roses or I *swear*. . .

**BOLO 2.**

I heard she'll rip the head off your hair.

**BOLO 1.**

What—??

**BOLO 3.**

Ay, but I thought she hated those roses!

**CARMEN.**

No importa, they're *her* roses to hate. *enter MARI.*

**BOLO 2.**

Esa planta could use a tall drink  
 If you ask me. Look how wilted. . . *BOLO 2 starts to pour over some tequila.*

**CARMEN.**

*Stop!* You'll burn the leaves with that!  
 Keep the basura [trash] in your mouth,  
 mejor, save your gut *¡y dejá de chupar!*  
 [better yet, save your gut, quit drinking!]

**MARI.**

Mom, what are you doing?

**CARMEN.**

I'm talking to the. . . gardeners.

**BOLO 2.**

I've never gardened in my life.

**CARMEN.**

Ay dios, Mari, go back inside—

**MARI.** *amused.*

Tia Irma said they're drunks.

**BOLO 2.**

We are people . . . of a drunken nature—

**BOLO 1.**

Some more than others.

**CARMEN.**

Inside, please estrellita.

. . . Pretty, pretty please?

**MARI.**

Fine. . .

*MARI exits.*

**CARMEN.**

Viejos bolos sin respeto. . .

[Disrespectful old drunks. . .]

**BOLO 3.**

We're not drunks!

**BOLO 2.** *drunkenly.*

Yeah! I'm drunk!

*CARMEN points them down with her broom.*

**CARMEN.**

¡Vergüenza de este país!

[Shame of this country!]

*CARMEN leaves. BOLO 2 awaits her full exeunt.*

**BOLO 2.** *mocking.*

"Vergüenza de este pipís"

[Shame of this pee-pee!]

*The BOLOS howl with laughter.*

**BOLO 1.**

Que preciosa.

[How precious.]

**BOLO 3.**

Que princesa!

[What a princess.]

**BOLO 1.**

You know what gets me, jefe?

**BOLO 2.**

Eh?

**BOLO 1.**

I kind of agree. . .

**BOLO 2.**

About my pipí?!

**BOLO 1.**

*Bruto, no!* This borracheria

[*Idiot, no! This drunkenness*]

It's shameful to see. . .

But she may not find better

in that land of the free. . .

**BOLO 2.**

Púchica. . . [*No way. . .*]

You think she's gonna leave?

**BOLO 3.**

But how can you tell?

**BOLO 1.**

I have my way of knowing

on the eve of a farewell.

**BOLO 2.**

Like that new car smell.

*CARMEN and MARI re-emerges from the home.*

**BOLO 1. cont.**

Vamonos, muchá, the sun comes up.

[*Let's go, friends*]

**BOLO 2.**

As does my acid reflux. . .

**BOLO 3.**

Yuck! Sos tan grosero.

[*Yuck! You're so gross.*]

**BOLO 2.**

Quiero echarme un pedo. . .

[*I wanna fart. . .*]

Me jallas el dedo?

[*Pull my finger?*]

**BOLO 3.**

Cochino!

[*Pig!*]

*VIEJOS shift into the tableau of a migrant caravan.*

## ii. raiz / the root

*As the sun rises, las rosas unfurl and breathe.*

*Pap! Pap! Pap! Roots crackle beneath the earth.*

*PACO and IRMA emerge from the home.*

### **MARI.**

What is that noise!?

### **PACO.**

Don't worry, don't worry! It's just the roots  
soaking up the first drop of morning dew. . .  
Think of it as the roses stretching their toes!

### **MARI.**

Mom, please don't leave me here. . .

### **CARMEN.**

No tenemos otra opción, hija.  
[But I have no other option.]

### **MARI.**

Why can't we just stay in the city?  
It was safe there, you even said!

### **CARMEN.**

We can't afford to stay there safely. . .  
Not anymore and so, while I'm away-

### **MARI.**

Then let me come with you!!

### **CARMEN.**

Tia Irma y Tio Paco are going to take  
great, great care of you here, okay?  
After all, this is where you were born  
Mari, si! I know you remember it, va?  
When you were born, your Papi said,  
"Sabes, if anything happened to us. . .  
I could leave Mari bundled up in one  
of those rosebuds and know she'd be  
in one of the safest places del mundo!  
Right here beneath Irma's gran rosal."

**IRMA.**

Well, if the roses could cook and clean  
that'd be true-

**PACO.**

. . .So, it's a good thing we do!

**CARMEN.**

Mil, mil, gracias hermano y Irma. . .  
I know I can't ever thank you enough.  
Bueno. Marialena. Te quiero mucho.  
And I'll only be gone for a short time.  
. . .Okay? Volveré por ti. Muy Pronto.  
[I'll be back for you. Very soon.]

*A final embrace.*

*CARMEN joins the VIEJOS.*

*ALL but MARI leave.*

*She takes in the roses. . .*

*And imagines climbing them. . .*

*Again, something the earth heaves.*

*MARI retreats.*

**iii. ramas / stems**

*Smack. Smack. Smack.*

*Sunlight over La Casa Noguera. Present day.*

*Smack. Smack. Smack.*

*IRMA dismembers a chicken with an abusive dexterity.*

*Smack. Smack. Smack.*

*Her pace is quick and methodical, humming to the National Anthem, keeping beat with each chop.*

*Chop. Chop— MARI enters.*

**IRMA.**

You're finally awake. ¿Dormiste bien?

[. . .Did you sleep alright?]

Did you eat? Hay huevo y plátano. . .

[There's egg and plantains.]

¡No seas tan tímida! Como ratoncita.

[Don't be so timid! Like a little mouse.]

You need to speak up, Marialena—

*An awkward quiet. . . IRMA snaps.*

**MARI.**

Just Mari. I don't like being called that.

**IRMA.**

Good. You're a fast learner. Mari it is.

*MARI picks something on her knee.*

**IRMA.**

What's that?

**MARI.**

A scab.

**IRMA.**

From what?

**MARI.**

I tried climbing up the roses yesterday.

**IRMA.**

¡Ay dios, deja de rescarlo!

[Oh god! Stop picking at it!]

It's going to leave a scar. . .

y va a ver fea. [It'll look ugly.]

And no more climbing. You'll

break the plant or worse. . .

**MARI.**

You don't even like the roses. . .

**IRMA.**

Speak up!

**MARI.**

Nothing.

**IRMA.**

¿Estás aburrida? You look bored.

Why don't you come and help me.

*IRMA drapes an apron over Mari. . .*

**MARI.**

With what?

**IRMA.**

Sit.

*. . . Then drops a dead chicken on her lap!*

**MARI.**

¡Uy, Tía, no!

**IRMA.**

No te preocupes. Solo es sangre.

[Stop worrying. It's just the blood.]

**MARI.**

Tia, it smells. . .

*MARI gags over the fowl's fumes.*

**IRMA.**

Ay, niña stop whining. It's normal.

**MARI.**

What am I supposed to do?!

**IRMA.**

Limpialo. And when you're done with that. . . *Irma exits.*  
 [Clean it.]

**MARI.**

Ok. . . *MARI wipes the chicken with a rag.*

**IRMA. offstage.**

I have another task for you to do, for Lupita. Who is being picky, as always, about fabric for the dress. But it's her wedding, asi que, whateeeever she wants, we will do it—  
*IRMA re-enters with dress fabrics.*  
 . . . Marialena, what on earth are you doing?

**MARI.**

You said to clean it. . .

**IRMA**

*Las tripas, niña. Empty them.*

. . .

Don't tell me you don't know—  
*Your mom didn't ever teach you?*

It's fine! It's fine! ¡No problema!

Today's your lucky day to learn.

It's easy. Mira. Just take the neck *Forcing MARI's arm inside the chicken*

and cut it. Then, pull las tripas. . .

Dump them, *chüp chüp chüp*, asi into the little bucket, just like that.

¡Y guau! Clean! Guau. ¿Qué fácil no?

[And wow! Clean! Wow. So easy huh? ]

Paco says I should bond with you.

So mirá. . . Now we are bonded. *MARI holds her bloody hands up in horror.*

**IRMA.**

¡Paco! You're late. *enter PACO dancing.*

**PACO.**

¡Ay, Mari! ¿A quién mataste?!

[Yikes, Mari! Who did you kill?!]

**MARI.**

I didn't kill anyone-

**IRMA.**

Ay! You're getting blood everywhere!  
Ten cuidado, Mari! Go wash up. Now.

*MARI exits.*

**PACO.**

So you are already putting Mari to work!

**IRMA.**

¿Lo ves? We're *bonding*. Mejores amigas.  
[You see? We're *bonding*. Best of friends.]

**PACO.** *laughing.*

That's not bonding, mi'amor, that's. . .  
No se, Irmita, una tortura de tripas!  
[I don't know, Irmita, torture by tripas!]

**IRMA.**

Dime, que hora es, Paco?  
[So tell me what time is it?]

*re-enter MARI.*

**PACO.** *Looking for the sun.*

Ay dios! The time! Where did it go?

**IRMA.**

You won't find time in the sky, viejo!

**PACO.** *Counting the sky.*

Sure I can. Uno. . . Dos. . . Tres. . .

**IRMA.**

¿Y qué pasó con ese reloj, I got you?  
[And what happened to the watch]

**PACO.** *Still counting.*

It broke. . .

**IRMA.**

Again?

**PACO.**

I can't believe I lost half the day again!

**IRMA.**

There's a much better way to keep time.  
It's called, not breaking your watches.

**PACO.**

O! I did buy a new one from the store!

**MARI.**

Why aren't the hands moving. . . ?

**PACO.**

Because it still needs the batteries.

**IRMA.**

So then where are the batteries, Paquito?

**PACO.**

Aaa. . . Se me olvido. I was distracted!

[Aaah. . .I forgot.]

**IRMA.**

Doing what this time? Ah, let me guess!  
Chismeando con las rositas por la calle?  
[Gossiping with the roses by the street?]

**PACO.**

Don't be silly, Irma, the roses are still too  
young to talk!

**IRMA.**

O, I'm being silly? Yet, he who  
dances in the garden and lets the fruit go  
bad because he take *forever* to pick them  
is the voice of reason. Meanwhile, silly me  
solo trabajando, limpiando, cocinando. . .  
[only working, cleaning and cooking. . .]

**PACO.**

I told you Irmita, you work too hard! Listen,  
If you had seen the sunrise this morning. . .  
¡Ay, Diosito! Bien dulcito— Gold, fat and ripe!  
[My dear God! Such sweetness— ]  
A big tomato feast for my eyes! ¡Fijáte, Mari!

**IRMA.**

Ay dios.

**PACO.**

¡Púchica! I've never seen a more handsomer sun!

**IRMA.**

Ya vas a ver, Paco. One of these days you won't

[You just wait]

be *seeing* anything at all.

**PACO.** *sweetly.*

*Ay!* Life is too small

Irmita, dance with me!

**IRMA.**

Enough Paco! I have heard  
enough nonsense— Suficiente por una eternidad.

[. . .—Sufficient for an eternity.]

**PACO.**

Bueno, then I will show Marialena how to dance—

**IRMA.** *to Mari.*

¿Y vos, que? Standing around con tu boca 'bierta?

[And you, what? Just standing, mouth wide open?]

Did you wash your hands?

**MARI.**

Yes, I washed my hands.

**IRMA.**

So what are you waiting for? The fabrics aren't going  
to sprout little patitas and walk themselves are they?

**MARI.**

I don't know how to get to Lupita's house from here.

**PACO.**

Irmita, why don't I show Marialena how to get there?

**IRMA.**

You can show *Mari* where to go but I need you to come right back to start pruning all the roses—

**PACO.**

Pruning!?! We don't prune the roses, Irmita, you hate those roses!

**IRMA.**

Ni modo! Lupita loves them and because she wants to have her perfect wedding under *las rositas lindas*. You will take Mari, hurry back with the all of the gallon buckets we have, fill them con un mezcló azur y agua—

**PACO.**

Sugar water!?

**IRMA.**

*Half and half*. I want petals large enough to sew skirts for the dancers—

**PACO.**

There's dancers!?! Where are we getting dancers, Irmita—!?

**IRMA.**

Ay viejo, callate, ya! All I hear is 'ta-ke-ta-ke-Dancers?'

[Be quiet, old man! It's only ever 'bla-bla-Irma!']

And 'ta-ke-ta-ke-Irmita!?' Instead of ta-ke-ta-ke-talking,

[Or 'bla-bla-my love! Instead of bla-bla-bla-]

Why don't you two hurry up and make yourself useful!

**PACO.**

Ay dios, Irma—!

**IRMA.**

CHHT!!

[SHUSH!!]

. . .A la gran puchica.

[No translation.]

*PACO and MARI scurry away.*

**iv. chupón / sucker; shoot**

*Busy market streets. La Plaza Central.*

*LOS VIEJOS stir under a noontime sun.*

*They sing a cacophonous rendition of “Luna De Miel En El Río Dulce” [Honeymoon in Río Dulce] by Paco Caceres.*

**ALL VIEJOS.**

¡EN GUATEMALA TIERRA LINDA  
 [IN GUATEMALA, BEAUTIFUL LAND,]  
 TIERRA HERMOSA, ME ENAMORÉ...  
 [LOVELY LAND, I FELL IN LOVE...]  
 DE UNA PATOJA SUGESTIVA Y CAPRICIOSA  
 [WITH A CAPRICIOUS AND SUGGESTIVE LADY]  
 QUE VI PASAR...  
 [I SAW PASS BY...]

*LUPITA enters.*

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

¡Púchica! Look who it is. . .  
 ¡La patojita canchita Lupi!  
 [The little blondie, Lupi]

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

Lupita la linda, the bride-to-be.

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

Or would luck have it that poor  
 Fernando is alone at the altar  
 cause you come to marry me?!

**LUPITA.**

¡Pícaros!  
 [Rascals!]

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

But am I right?

**LUPITA.**

¡Que no!  
 [Of course not!]

**ALL VIEJOS.**

¡Ay Dios!

**LUPITA.**

But, you're all invited to la boda!

**ALL VIEJOS.**

The whole pueblo y su abuela están invitados!

[town and his grandma are invited!]

**LUPITA.**

¡Y la fiesta va a ser bien finita! Así que,

[The wedding will be very refined! So,]

I don't want you coming todos borrachos!

[all drunk!]

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

But, Lupita, cerveza is my passion!

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

They say a borracho without chicha. . .

[drunk without corn beer. . .]

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

Is like a poet without poetry!

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

And a poet without poetry. . .

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

Is just a sad, lonely man.

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

Ghosts would smell our tears

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

All the way from Petén!

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

And no one likes ghosts at their boda,

Now do they?

**MARI.**

Ghosts?

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

¡Si, niña! The ghosts enjoy a sad parranda.

**LUPITA.**

Don't listen to them, Mari.

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

¿So, te llamas Mari como María?  
 [You're named Mari like Maria?]

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

¿O Marichuy?

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

¿O Marylin?

**MARI.**

No, just Mari.

**ALL VIEJOS.**

Sólo Mari. . . va pues!  
 [Just Mari. . . well then!]

**BOLO 1.**

And what brings you to town, Mari?

**LUPITA.**

We're headed to Doña Chon's today.

**VIEJO 1.**

The mean little dressmaker?

**VIEJO 3.**

No, don't! Come stay with us!

**VIEJO 2.**

Yeah, sit with us morons!

**VIEJO 1.**

We want to know where you're from!

**VIEJO 3.**

Dressmaking's no fun!

**LUPITA.**

Mari just moved here from la Ciudad.

**ALL VIEJOS.**

¡La Capital!

**MARI.**

From Zona Cuarenta. . .  
 [Zone 14]

**LUPITA.**

But she was born right here, first!

**VIEJO 1.**

So born in the fincas. . .

**VIEJO 2.**

But raised in the city. . .

**VIEJO 3.**

Así es como canciones empiezan.

[That's how some songs begin.]

**LUPITA. to MARI**

I doubt you remember any of it.

**MARI.**

I do a little, but it is really different. . .

**LUPITA.**

You left after your Dad was elected, no?

Well after he was . . .

**MARI.**

Asesinado, I know.

[Assassinated]

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

So, it is you, hija de Don Cornelio!

**MARI.**

You knew my dad?

**ALL VIEJOS.**

Aaa, Mari . . .

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

Many call us the eyes—

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

—and the ears—

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

—of el pueblo . . .

**MARI.**

That sounds nose-y. . .

**LUPITA.**

I would call them los chismosos  
if they weren't already los bolos—

**VIEJO 3.**

Borrachos!  
[The drunks!]

**VIEJO 2.**

Y mamarrachos!  
[And buffoons]

**VIEJOS 2 + 3.**

Los tres viejos bolos!  
[The three old drunks!]

**VIEJO 1.**

Let's have some self-respect!  
I never agreed on that name. . .

**MARI.**

How did you know him?

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

¿Tu papá?

**MARI.**

My mom said he died 'cause  
The people didn't like him.

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

No, nena, no.

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

Maybe *some* people.

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

But that man, your father. . .

**VIEJO 3.**

Was a man of *The People*.

**VIEJO 1.**

¡Y nunca tomé! ¡Ni un drop de liquor!  
[And never drank liquor! Not one drop!]

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

He would say: "My mind is the sword,

**ALL VIEJOS.**

"Y ese trago lleva fuego del diablo!"

[that drink is the devil's flame]

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

"I will not have poison dull my edge"

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

"or melt at my wits!"

**VIEJO BOLO 2. *proudly***

He said that to me more than all the rest!

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

Si, and I think we know why.

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

Your father was a good man.

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

A great man.

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

But even small towns have their fair share of ghosts. . .

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

The city may not seem as messy as Jutiapa—

**MARI.**

Messy?

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

Pues, desordenado. . .

[Well, disorderly. . .]

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

Desorganizado.

[Disorganized.]

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

Descombombulado.

[Discombobulated.]

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

But I think you will find a home here just the same.

**MARI.**

I don't want to live in a town full of ghosts. . .

**LUPITA.**

Well there's no ghosts here, cause they don't exist—

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

That statement is only partly true. . .

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

You won't have to worry about ghosts around *here*.

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

As most of them sleep far in the mountains. . .

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

Or wander alone deep en el bosque. . .

[in the forest. . .]

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

Buuut, once in a while they'll dance in plain view!

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

After all, they may look just like me and you.

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

Except they may speak in whistles like birds. . .

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

Or the chirps of a cricket . . .

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

Or in poetic words. . .

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

And if you sing the right tune, they'll come to you!

**MARI.**

The right tune? What's that, like their favorite song?

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

They say it's different for everyone.

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

It may be the song that lifts a spirit from their tristezas. . .

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

Or the melody that imprints onto a memory like glass.

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

Can you hear it?

**MARI.**

Mmm. . .

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

Mmm. . .

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

Mmm. . .

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

Mmm. . .

*Together their hums build harmony.*

**LUPITA.**

Uh. . .

Ok, Mari!

Time to go.

*The harmony breaks.*

**MARI.**

But—

**LUPITA.**

Mari, please.

We're gonna be late.

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

We'll walk with you!

**LUPITA.**

Oh, no thanks!

*LUPITA and MARI scurry off.*

**ALL VIEJOS.**

Adios Mari!

Til we see you again. . .

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

I don't think I remember my song. . .

**VIEJO BOLOS 3.**

'Tampoco.

[Me neither.]

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

Yo sí!

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

You lie!

**VIEJO BOLO 2.** *trumpeting.*

Tan-tan-tan-tan-tan

Ti-tan-taaaaan!

¡SÍ, PORQUE TOMO TEQUILA.

[YES, BECAUSE I DRINK TEQUILA.]

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

¡MAÑANA TOMO JERÉZ!

[TOMORROW I'LL DRINK JERÉZ!]

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

¡SÍ, PORQUE ME VEN BORRACHO!

[YES, BECAUSE YOU SEE ME DRUNK!]

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

MAÑANA YA NO ME VEN...

[TOMORROW YOU WON'T SEE ME AGAIN...]

**ALL VIEJOS.**

VALENTINA, VALENTINA

RENDIDO ESTOY A TU PIES!

[I AM WASTING AWAY AT YOUR FEET!]

SI ME HAN DE MATAR MAÑANA...

[IF YOU'RE TRYING TO KILL ME TOMORROW...]

¡QUE ME MATAN DE UNA VEZ!

[GO ON AND KILL ME RIGHT THIS SECOND!]

*As VIEJOS stumble off. . .*

*The song continues to play from a radio.*

*LA NIÑA appears and the music skips.*

*She picks up the radio, voices emerge:*

*Ayuda! Ayuda! ¡Ladrón--!*

[Help! Help! Thief--!]

*LA NIÑA drops the radio and runs.*

**v. espina / thorn**

*The dressmaker's house.*

*A terribly bored MARI slouches on the floor.*

*LUPITA stands on a chair.*

*Doña Chon drapes various fabrics over LUPITA.*

*LUPITA's gossip rides out her mouth like gunfire.*

*Doña Chon, listens with a mouthful of needles.*

**LUPITA.**

Ay pero que triste, esa Sandra.

*[Oh, but how sad that Sandra.]*

**DOÑA CHON.**

Mhm.

**LUPITA.**

To think that the man you love,  
tu esposo de quince años, dies.

*[your husband of 15 years]*

**DOÑA CHON.**

Mmm...

**LUPITA.**

¿Y por qué?

*[But why?]*

**DOÑA CHON.**

Hm.

**LUPITA.**

And you know esa Sandra, poor thing.  
She doesn't ask for any help, *nothing!*  
I've invited *everyone* else to mi boda—  
except her. ¡Es que me da vergüenza!

*[But it makes me feel so bad!]*

**DOÑA CHON.**

Hm!

**LUPITA.**

Is that wrong? It feels wrong, but I—  
It feels worse having a recent widow  
at a wedding! Y es *mi boda*, no less!

**DOÑA CHON.**

It would be bad luck not to.

**LUPITA.**

You think? . . . ¡Ay Dios! I don't know!  
I can't—I just imagine her big sad ojos  
lastimosos exploding in front of me—

**DOÑA CHON.**

Besides, you can invite her, it doesn't  
mean she will come. . . but imagine,  
the whole town is invited, but Sandra?  
Catching a curse could be even worse.

**LUPITA**

. . . ¡Mari! ¿Hay noticias de tu mamá?

[Any news from your mom?]

Ouch!!!

*DOÑA CHON pricks Lupita with her needle.*

**DOÑA CHON.**

Sorry. . .

**MARI.**

No, not yet.

**LUPITA**

Guau. . . It's been a while since she left, no?

*DOÑA CHON pricks Lupita with her needle.*

Ou!! Doña, cuidado.

[Ow!! Miss, be careful.]

**MARI.**

I don't really know how long it's going to take.

**DOÑA CHON.** *to MARI*

Que Dios se muestra compasión a tu mamá  
 [May God, show compassion to her on]  
 en su viaje y en medio de todos peligros. . .  
 [on her travels and in the midst of all dangers. . .]

**MARI.**

Gracias Doña.  
 . . . I heard you and Fernando are planning  
 to move up north after the wedding too, no?

**LUPITA.**

Si, Fernando and I have been talking about it. . .

**MARI.**

Handsome, rico y tiene papeles! Good for you.  
 [rich and has papers!]

**LUPITA.**

Ay gracias, Mari. Yeah, we're lucky.

. . .

Bueno--

**DOÑA CHON.**

No. Ay, no. This won't do. It is too short.

**LUPITA.**

Do we get more fabric?

**DOÑA CHON.**

Unless you are wanting to shorten those legs.

**LUPITA.**

Nope. . . Mari, can you ask Tia Irma if--?

**MARI.**

Yup!

*MARI runs off.*

**DOÑA CHON.**

Ay, como corre esa niña.  
 [Wow, how that girl runs.]

**LUPITA.**

Yeah, she's like a little roadrunner!  
 Let's hope she got it from her Mom.  
 Ou! I meant for her mom's sake--Ou!!

*DOÑA CHON pricks LUPITA.  
 And again!*

**DOÑA CHON.**

¡No seas tan maleducada!  
 [Don't be so disrespectful!]  
 Es una trauma inmensa.  
 [It's an immense trauma.]  
 Open your eyes. Ay Dios!  
 I know you are young but  
 you are not stupid, Lupita.  
 Bringing that up about her  
 mami abandoning--

**LUPITA.**

She's not abandoning Mari--

**DOÑA CHON.**

Tell that to Mari if that is how  
 you think she feels right now.  
 Aaa, you see? Acting like brat  
 and you know better than that.

**vi. foliolo / foliage**

*El bosque rosado. The pink forest.*

*Deep in the rose bush at La Noguera's property edge.*

*MARI enters, running, she trips on one of the roots.*

**MARI.**

Stupid root!

*MARI kicks the roses, the earth grows back.*

. . . Sorry!

*The air is tight. MARI tries to find her breath.*

*LA NIÑA sprints in, their little wooden box in hand.*

**LA NIÑA.**

It's a good hiding place, isn't it?

**MARI.**

Who are you?!

**LA NIÑA.**

I can't tell you.

**MARI.**

That's weird. . .

**LA NIÑA.**

I'm not *weird!*

**MARI.**

Where did you even come from?

**LA NIÑA.**

Over there.

**MARI.**

Where?

**LA NIÑA.**

How did you even find us here?!

**MARI.**

Who's us? I wasn't *looking* for you.

**LA NIÑA.**

Oh. . .

**MARI.**

Well. . . I wasn't looking for anyone, really.

**LA NIÑA.**

So you're lost.

**MARI.**

No I'm not, I'm. . .

**LA NIÑA.**

Smelling the roses?

**MARI.**

Something like that.

**LA NIÑA.**

It's hard not to, they're everywhere now!  
My gran'pa once tried to tear them down.  
Ever since the roses took over, everyone  
just gets lost, leaves, or never ever visits.

**MARI.**

That's so sad. . .

**LA NIÑA.**

Why?

Papá said the roses are here to guard  
our house, especially, mamita's huerta  
with all of her fruit trees and flowers. . .

**MARI.**

Guard your house from what?

**LA NIÑA.**

Anything. Everything! Especially. . .

*Mala gente. [Bad people.]*

**MARI.**

*Sure. . .*

You know, there's bad people all over.

**LA NIÑA.**

Everywhere! But they can't come here.

**MARI.**

Is that why you have that little box??

**LA NIÑA.**

What box?!

**MARI.**

So you're hiding it! What's in it, huh?

**LA NIÑA.**

It's a secret.

**MARI**

Is it stolen?

**LA NIÑA.**

No.

**MARI.**

. . . I don't believe you.

**LA NIÑA.**

I don't believe *you!*

**MARI.**

What??

**LA NINA.**

You're not smelling the roses, you're *lost!*

And if you don't find your way back soon

You'll be forgotten by the next full moon.

*MARI walks off.*

. . . Hey wait, ¿donde vás?

[Where are you going?]

**MARI.**

I don't talk to strangers.

**LA NIÑA.**

But I'm not a stranger.

**MARI.**

Then tell me your name.

**LA NIÑA.**

I can't say. . .

**MARI.**

I'll tell you mine.

**LA NIÑA.** *deflecting.*

Hey, be careful where you're standing  
'cuz when older rosebuds get too big  
they fall right off, smack on the ground!

**MARI.**

Is that why you won't tell me your name?

**LA NIÑA.**

¿Qué querés decir con eso?

[What do you mean by that?]

**MARI.** *snarky.*

Did one of the bulbs fall and hit your head  
on the way down? Cause if you don't know  
your own name you should just say so. . .

**LA NIÑA.**

I know my name!

**MARI.**

So say it.

**LA NIÑA.**

. . .

**MARI.**

That's what I thought.

*MARI ventures off again.*

**LA NIÑA.**

*Espera!*

[Wait!]

**MARI.**

Why should I?

**LA NIÑA.**

Because!

**MARI.**

*Because!?*

**LA NIÑA.**

We'll lose our path-  
See?

*The earth rattles.*

**MARI.**

If you're scared then leave.

**LA NIÑA.**

You're going too far. . .

*Cun...*

*Cun...*

**MARI.**

So stop following me.

*Cun...*

*Cun...*

**LA NIÑA.**

Pero no debes andar---!

*[But you shouldn't go---!]*

*Cun...*

*Cun...*

**MARI.**

Or what!? *¿'Voy a morir?*

*[I'll die?]*

*Toom! . . . A figure materializes.*

**LA NIÑA.**

Oh no. . .

**MARI.**

. . . What's that?

**LA NIÑA.**

Whatever you do. . .

**MARI.**

Wait where are you going?

**LA NIÑA.**

Do not touch them, o

Te pasarás La Muerte!

*[or you catch The Death]*

**MARI.**

. . . La Muerte?

**LA NIÑA.**

That's as much as I can say.

**MARI.**

Hey, wait—!

*LA NIÑA sprints away.*

*A small trinket falls behind.*

**LA SANTA.**

The little thief is fast on her feet.  
Yet clumsy with her hands, take it.

*LA SANTA picks up the jewel.*

*MARI eyes them suspiciously.*

**MARI.**

Who are you?

**LA SANTA.**

Who are you?

**MARI.**

. . .Mari ¿Y usted?

**LA SANTA.**

Mucho gusto, Mari.  
Me puedes llamar, Atit.  
[You can call me, Atit]

**MARI.**

Mucho gusto, Doña Atit?

**LA SANTA.**

Just Atit. It means grandmother.  
Solo no me llames Abuela.  
[Just don't call me grandma]

**MARI.**

You don't look like a grandma. . .

**LA SANTA.**

I have raised everyone here  
hasta abuelos y bisabuelos  
[elders and great grandparents]  
y tatarata-tatarata-tatarabuelos  
[to great-great-great grandparents]

**MARI.**

Doesn't that make you impossibly old?

**LA SANTA.**

Despite *mi vejez*, I have been known  
to make even young blood go cold.  
And you say you're called Mari?

**MARI.**

Marialena, but--

**LA SANTA.**

I like Mari, like the sea.

**MARI.** *sass.*

O, cómo la *amargura*. . .  
[No, like bitterness. . .]

**LA SANTA.** *chuckles.*

Who told you that?

**MARI.**

My Tia Irma. . .

**LA SANTA.**

Irrrrma! Now that is a bitter name. Mari?  
No, your soul is hardly one of bitterness  
Maybe some anger, yes, some sadness  
pero ni pinchura de *amargura* en la cara.  
[not a pinch of bitterness in your face.]

**LA SANTA.** *cont.*

I can see. But, something worries Mari. . .  
You are very, very far from home, no?  
Where is home, Mari?

**MARI.**

. . . I don't really know.

**LA SANTA.**

So here you are wandering and alone.

**MARI.**

I guess so. . .

**LA SANTA.**

Tell me then, what is it that you seek?

**MARI.**

I'm not looking for anything. . .

**LA SANTA.**

No?

**MARI.**

I just. . . I wanted to be alone.

**LA SANTA**

There is no true solitude in the nature,  
travel deep enough and you may find  
yourself in a spirit's lure. . .

**MARI.**

"Spirit" like a ghost?

**LA SANTA.**

More like. . . las líneas en tus dedos.  
[more like the lines in your fingers]

**MARI.**

Like fingerprints?

**LA SANTA.**

The spirits of memory wander through  
the forest just as they did years before.  
They cannot be spoken to or touched  
unlike ghosts. . .

**MARI.**

Then what's the point?

**LA SANTA.**

What is the point? To be lost, forgotten. . .  
or perhaps abandoned deep in the forest.  
Sound familiar?

**MARI.**

I'm not lost!!

**LA SANTA.**

Then why are you alone?

**MARI.**

Did you say ghosts can talk?

**LA SANTA.**

Why? Do you wish to speak to a ghost or two?

**MARI.**

Wait, are you a ghost!?

*The earth rumbles.*

**LA SANTA.**

No.

**MARI.**

So then what are you?

**LA SANTA.**

Not your concern. Go home. This path is much too dangerous for one so young as yourself. Greedier souls have travelled and perished in these parts chasing myths of ancient gold! And I warned them all, just as I will warn you only once: leave now and do not ever return.

**MARI.**

But I'm not looking for gold, I just want to—

**LA SANTA.**

I know it is not gold you seek, Marialena. . . . No one is born wanting gold, gold is merely The Price.

*LA SANTA offers MARI the trinket once more.*

**LA SANTA.**

Take La Muerte's word, before they take you. . .

*She takes it.*

**MARI.**

What is it?

*LA SANTA evaporates.*

**MARI.**

. . . Elia. . . Concepción. . . Huh.

*MARI holds the little gold necklace up to the light.*

*Birds whistle, crickets chirp. . .*

*MARI leaves.*

**vii. ramas / stems**

*Back at La Casa Noguera.*

*Something is lost.*

**IRMA.**

Where is it?

**PACO.** *jokingly*

Whatever it is could be in your nose by now.

Mira, you can fit papayas in those nostrils!

**IRMA.**

It's gone. . . No, no, no, it's gone!

**PACO.**

Mi'amor. . . let's relax for a minute, ah?

I don't even know what we're looking for.

**IRMA.**

La caja, la cajita de. . .de. . .

[The box, the little box of. . .of. . .]

It's all my fault, I hid it so, and then—

Ay! I don't know! I can't remember!

Ay, no, this can't be happening. . .

**PACO.**

So let's sit and try to remember together.

**IRMA.**

What if. . . what if somebody stole it?

Voy a llamar a la policía.

[I'm going to call the police.]

**PACO.**

Irma, por favor calmáte. Let's not panic so fast

Which box is it again? / What does it look like?

**IRMA.**

De mi mamá! / Una caja de madera, de mi mamá!

[Of my mom! My mom's wooden box!]

**PACO.**

That wooden box? Irmita, esa caja ya no existe,  
 [That box? That box doesn't exist anymore]  
 it was lost / years ago; it's been gone—

**IRMA.**

No! / No. It is not gone.  
 It can't be gone!

**PACO.**

Irma, mi'amor, you told me yourself—!

**IRMA.**

No, no, I don't remember. No!  
 Son mentiras. [They're lies.] You're lying!

*MARI enters.*

**PACO.**

I would never lie to you, Irmita. . . Mari—

**MARI.**

What's going on?

**IRMA. to MARI.**

You have to call the police! ¡Es Ladrón!

**PACO.**

No, Mari, don't call the police, Irma is. . .

**IRMA.**

No! I think you stole it! ¡Ladrón! [Thief!]  
 Give me my box—!

**PACO.**

I did not steal it, Irmita. Come, try to remember—

**IRMA.**

No! Let go of me! You stole it— where is it?  
 Please! Es de mi mamá!! Por favor, it's all  
 I have left—Let go!!

**PACO.**

Irmita, I never stole—!

**IRMA.**

Liar! Let go of me!

*IRMA pushes PACO down.*

**MARI.**

Tio Paco!

**PACO.**

No, Mari— Just go!

**MARI.**

But—

**PACO.**

Please just go NOW!

*MARI goes.*

*As PACO returns to his feet.*

*The scene shifts, a flashback weeks prior.*

*A doctor's office. cold and intrusive.*

*DOCTOR, enters*

**IRMA.** *to Doctor.*

*Mari?* No. Who is that—?

**PACO.**

Irma, please...

**IRMA.**

Where are we? Paco?

**DOCTOR.**

Señor Francisco, if you can sign this for me please.

**PACO.**

Claro.

[Of course.]

**DOCTOR.**

Gracias. Bueno, Señor Francisco...  
from what you have told me about  
la condición de Señora Irma.

**DOCTOR.** *cont.*

Given the regularity of her panic attacks,  
I believe perhaps Irma may have *TEPT*...  
just a mild form, unless— a, perdon  
Are you familiar with *TEPT*, Señor Francisco?

**IRMA.** *overlap*

I don't have my purse. Where is my purse?

**PACO.** ...No.

**DOCTOR.**

El trastorno por estrés postraumático, o *TEPT*,

[*Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD*]

is a mental disorder connected to ansiedad

usually we see it in soldados after war

other individuals with *TEPT* may have had What's your name?

historias traumático —puede ser un asalto,

[*traumatic histories — could be an assault*]

car accident, any near death experiences.

¿Si entendés? [*You understand?*]

**IRMA.** *to the Doctor.*

**PACO.**

Sí, my wife— Irma, where she grew up,

I can't remember the name,

Era un pueblito in Jocotán.

**IRMA.** *quietly.*

Paco. . .

**PACO.**

Do you remember it, Irmita—?

**IRMA.**

No, Paco. We can't tell *her*.

**PACO.**

No Irma, the doctor has to know.

**IRMA.**

No!

**DOCTOR.**

It's okay, Irma doesn't have to share.

Especialmente si la memoria es difícil.

[*Especially if the memories hurt*]

(*to IRMA*) I'm sorry.

**IRMA.**

Sorry?

**PACO.**

. . . Bueno, Doctor, are you saying este estrés  
– no trauma, is making Irma lose her memory?

**DOCTOR.**

Well, maybe? Yes and no. It's too early to say, but  
Panic attacks, flashbacks, even some memory losses  
pueden ser síntomas del *TEPT*. La pérdida de memoria,  
[can all be symptoms of PTSD. But this loss of memory]  
and this absent-mindedness you have described,  
I'm worried this too may be early symptoms of  
*demencia* or Alzheimer's— which may be linked.

**PACO.**

¿Por su estres?

**DOCTOR.**

Si.

**PACO.**

So Irma has . . . Alzheimer's?

**DOCTOR.**

Y *TEPT*. Sí. [And PTSD. Yes.]

**PACO.**

But there is medicine, no?  
A cure?

**DOCTOR.**

There's no cure necessarily, Señor. . .

**PACO.**

¿Irma? ¿Mi'amor?

**DOCTOR.**

I know this is difficult news. . .  
Si me permiten [if you'll allow me]  
There's some treatment options—

**IRMA.**

We don't need it. Paco, tell her to go.

**DOCTOR.**

Señora—

**PACO.**

Irma

**IRMA.**

Paco, no te estoy pidiendo!

[Paco, I'm not asking.]

I don't want her here!

**PACO.**

Irma, maybe we should listen—

**IRMA.**

No, Paco, ¡ya terminamos aquí!

[No, Paco, we are done here!]

**DOCTOR.**

Respectfully, Señor, this may not seem serious now,  
but without an early treatment she will only get worse  
and faster than you expect—

**PACO.**

Si Doctor. But, I must care for her  
in whatever way she sees fit.

*DOCTOR exits.*

**IRMA.**

No, Paco, tell Mari to go!

*The scene begins restoring back to the present.*

**PACO.**

I did Irma I did. . .

**IRMA.**

She can't know.

**PACO.**

I know Irmita. Escuchá. . .

[I know Irmita. Listen.]

No one is here, okay?

**PACO.** *cont.*

Just me. and You.

Respira y mirame.

[Breathe and look at me.]

Muy bien, just breathe. . .

*They breathe.*

Alright? . . . Don't worry Irmita.

This box, the gold, the money—

it is all just chicle [gum] money! Irma...

Irmita, mi'amor? Come here. Sit.

Let's see how the sun sets. . .

Mirá, como tomatío!

[Look, a little tomato!]

The riper it is,

the sweeter it lights.

*IRMA is remembering; she sees Paco.*

. . .

**IRMA.**

Paco. . . where is Mari?

**PACO.**

I told her to go. . .

**IRMA.**

When?

**PACO.**

Earlier—

**IRMA.**

Did she see me?

**PACO.**

No, no, Irmita.

Everything is okay.

You should rest.

I'll go find Mari

**IRMA.**

Check the roses, Paquito.

**PACO.**

I will.

*IRMA exits.*

**viii. las rosas / the roses**

*La Casa Noguera. Night, the air is purple.*

*Crickets purr softly and PACO waits. . .*

**PACO.**

Mari?

Tia Irma is already sleeping.

Mari, I want to apologize. . .

for yelling earlier, I was not--

I was afraid. . . but it was not

okay for me to raise my voice.

**MARI.**

. . . it's ok.

*MARI resurfaces from beneath the roses.*

**PACO.**

Irma said you would be in those

roses, I don't know how she knew.

. . .

We can talk now or are you tired?

**MARI.**

I don't want to sleep yet. . .

**PACO.**

Vaya pues. . . let's talk

**MARI.**

What's wrong with Tia Irma?

**PACO.**

I think. . . hay mucho estrés

[there's a lot of stress]

with the wedding coming. . .

**MARI.**

She's always so mad, I feel like

she hates me--

**PACO.**

No, Irma does not hate you. . .  
Irma can be tough, but she. . .

**MARI.**

It doesn't matter.

**PACO.**

Yes, it matters, Marialena-- Si.  
I am saying your whole name.  
Mira, look at the roses for me.

**MARI.**

Why?

**PACO.**

I want you to look, really look nena.  
In times I have been angry or sad,  
I remember to look up at the roses.  
They are beautiful, si. Y mas, esas  
Rosas, Mari, have a way of talking  
to me, showing me things, stories  
I tend to forget simply because. . .  
Ay, vida! Pero ellas me recuerdan.  
[Oh, life! But they all remind me.]  
See, many years ago my abuelo,  
and your bisabuelo, Papá Carlos,  
built this casita, piedra a piedra.  
Planted this garden, y la huerta,  
with every type of fruit tree, flor  
y verdura vegetal para la mamita.  
[flower and vegetable for my mom.]  
La huerta had everything mi mama  
had ever dreamed of growing, but-

*From the roses, PAPA CARLOS y MAMA CHELO incarnate.*

**MARI.**

No roses.

**PACO.**

No roses! *Can you even imagine?*  
So, one day, as Mama Chelo went  
out to the finca, to pick maíz, frijol

**PACO. cont.**

Todo eso. . . Papa Carlos stayed behind to plant a special little gift. Can you guess what it was, Mari?

**MARI.**

The roses.

**PACO + PAPA CARLOS.**

Las rosas!

**PACO.**

Tan alegre, he forgets every chore for the day! And instead he sits on the bench, and waits. He waits, and waits, and waits and waits— all day! Until, finally la mamita, returns home. But when she sees those roses. . .

**MAMA CHELO.**

¡Aaaay, qué feas! ¡Santo Dios, Carlos!  
 [How ugly! Sainly God, what did you do?!]  
 ¿¡Que hiciste?! Look, these roses have more wrinkles than my face, have more thorns than petals and that ugly pink!

**PAPA CARLOS.**

¡Pues. . .Sí! Pink to match the house!

**MAMA CHELO.**

Ah, yes! Our house that is the color of stomach medicine. They will say ¡Mira, la casita y rositas *Pepto Bismol!*  
 [The Pepto Bismol house and roses!]

**PACO.**

Then, Papa, con una cara bien roja says. . .  
 [with his face, very red]

**PAPA CARLOS.**

Pero, mi'amor, they said this type of rose can outlive me—!

**MAMA CHELO.**

¿Y eso qué?! What's the point  
if we have the ugliest roses on the street?  
Ah, I see it now! So we be the winners of  
"El Jardín Más Horrible" forever and ever!

**PAPA CARLOS.**

¡Ay no, mi'amor! What I mean is. . .  
they will live forever as a reminder of  
my love for you long after I am gone!

**PACO.**

A few years later Mamita Chelo got sick.  
It was something in her lungs. Pesticidas,  
From all those years in the fincas, I think.  
Y pues once Mamita Chelo passed away,  
Papa Carlos, con una tristeza *tan profunda*  
[Papa Carlos, with a sadness so profound]  
tried tearing out all the roses from the earth.  
Pero, la rosas had grown so thick, so strong  
That he could not even touch them without  
catching a handful of thorns! Ay Dios, Mari,  
I can still see the scars en todos sus brazos,  
wrists and hands, like the roses fought back!

**MARI.**

How did they get so big?

**PACO.**

I believe Papa Carlos gave all of his love de  
La Mamita, from all the years she was gone,  
to those rositas. Love is like sunlight, Mari.  
Y la Irma. . . to me, she is like those roses.  
Years ago, my father warned me, "Paquito!  
nunca te enamores con una mujer dura  
[never fall in love with a tough woman!]  
She will leave you nothing but heartache."  
I didn't listen! Irma era una belleza *fuerte!*  
[Irma was a fierce beauty!]  
She still is. Give her some time, si Mari?  
Give us some time. We are your family.  
Tú, Marialena Sarbelia *Noguera* Cornelio  
You, my sister-- tú mama, Lupita, Irma. . .

**PACO.** *cont.*

We are each other's sunlight and roses.  
It may feel like you have a handful of thorns  
right now, I cannot imagine what it is, but  
As long as you are here, Mari, sos familia.  
If you want to be alone, that's okay, but when  
you want, we can hold the thorns together too.

*The air exhales, MARI folds with it.*

**MARI.**

. . . I'm scared.

**PACO.**

¿Por tu mamá?

. . .

I'm scared too.

*MARI nods.*

**MARI.**

And I miss my dad.

**PACO.**

I do too sometimes, he was a good friend to me.

**MARI.**

I didn't know you and my Dad were friends. . .

**PACO.** *laughing.*

Si, we almost died together!

**MARI.**

What!?

**PACO.**

Climbing the roses! We wanted to see who could get  
to the top fastest, you're Dad got so close, then a leaf  
tickled my nose, I sneezed so loud, he jumped, then  
we're falling, just falling! It's a miracle we didn't die.  
But I remember, tu Papá bouncing and laughing over  
the petals, "¡Mirá, mirá, mirá, it's like a floor mattress!"

**MARI.**

That's so silly!

**PACO.**

Si. . .

*Beat.*

**MARI.**

Gracias, Tio Paco.

**PACO.**

Por nada. . . *[It's nothing. . . ]*

Without family, there is nothing.

Now, don't stay up too late, Mari.

Buenas noches.

**MARI.**

Feliz noche.

*Crickets chirp.*

*Dogs bark from a distance.*

*MARI dozes off. . .*

*A dream. The roses glow.*

*From the roses, enter CARMEN.*

**CARMEN.**

¿Mari?

**MARI.**

¡Mamá! You're back—!

*MARI rushes towards her.*

**CARMEN.**

No, Mari, wait! ¡Para, para!

*Krraaaak!!! The earth breaks apart.*

**MARI.**

AH—!!

**CARMEN.**

¡Cuidado, nena!

*[Look out, hun!]*

*MARI's feet ride the edge of a large chasm.*

**MARI.**

What's happening?!

**CARMEN.**

Just don't look down.

**MARI.**

What- what's going on?

**CARMEN.**

Está separando la tierra and

[The land is separating.]

the further I go, the worse. . .

Cement, desert, drying green.

Without living roots the land  
goes weak, starving, pobretín—

[. . .such a poor thing—]

*The earth groans, hungry.*

**MARI.**

Does that mean you're coming back?

**CARMEN.**

I don't know mija, I have to see—

*Dogs howl and bark.*

**MARI.**

What's that??

**CARMEN.**

I have to go now, Mari. . .

*Sirens.*

**MARI.**

Wait, but when—

**CARMEN.**

Te quiero, mija. Te quiero hasta

[I love you, my child I love you to

la luna y cada estrellita, don't forg—

the moon and every little star. . .]

*Blackout on CARMEN.*

**MARI.**

¿Mamá? ¡Mamá!

*MARI wakes. IRMA rushes in.*

**IRMA.**

¿Ay, niña qué pasó? Decíme.

[Child what happened? Tell me.]

What is it, Mari? Are you hurt?

**MARI.**

No nothing, I just, I fell asleep. . .

**IRMA.**

I heard yelling ¿Soñaste mal?

It's not good to sleep in chairs.

¡Y más peor, descalzada así!

[And worse, barefoot like that.]

Here, put some socks on. . .

*IRMA hands her socks.*

Do you have them a lot?

Nightmares?

**MARI.**

Si.

**IRMA.**

So did I. For a very long time.

I thought that I was cursed. . .

One time, mi mamá found me screaming, crying in the middle of the night and she yelled with her hands to God, scolding him:

“No más! ¡Ya es la última vez!”

[No more! This is the last time!]

She ran out, cut up un limón y pa!

She put the lemon in my mouth,

“Chupalo! La amargura,” she said,

[Chew on it for ten seconds]

“will scare all the demons away.”

**MARI.**

Was it a curse?

**IRMA.**

No, no. Las maldiciones son. . .

Pues, no son reales. Like magic.

[Curses. . . they just aren't real.]

Just stuff we make up in our heads.

**MARI.**

Did it work?

**IRMA.**

Did what work?

**MARI.**

The lemon.

**IRMA.**

O. . . Un poquito.

[Oh. . .A little.]

Do you feel okay going to bed?

**MARI.**

Yea. . . Feliz noches.

**IRMA.**

Si, nena, feliz— esperáte tantito!

[Yes, good— Wait a minute!]

Come back here. Let me see that.

Marialena, where did you get this?

*IRMA lifts the necklace from MARI's neck.*

**MARI.**

I. . . I found it.

**IRMA.**

You found it or you stole it?

**MARI.**

I found it!

**IRMA.**

Let me see.

*IRMA reads the inscription.*

How did you get this?

**MARI.**

I told you I found it.

**IRMA.**

HOW? DID? YOU? FIND? IT?

*For the first time MARI is afraid.*

**MARI.**

I was just walking around. . .

**IRMA.**

Where?

**MARI.**

Somewhere, out, I don't know!

**IRMA.**

Past the roses?! ¿En el bosque?

[In the forest?]

**MARI.**

No it was like *inside* the roses—

**IRMA.**

Mari, I told you not to go inside—

**MARI.**

You said to stop climbing them!

Nothing about walking / around.

**IRMA.**

No, I said, never to climb inside—

or to go into the— You know what

It doesn't matter what I said, but

don't you even think about going

back there.

**MARI.**

*FINE!* I won't go back.

**IRMA.**

You listen to me, if you ever use that

tone with me again

**MARI.**

Why should I listen?

You can't even remember half of the

things you say—

*IRMA raises her hand as if to hit— MARI jolts.*

**IRMA.**

Mari, I am so—

*MARI throws down the necklace and leaves.*

No. . . Mari, wait, please!

*MARI is gone.*

**IRMA.**

Ey! ¿Quién es? Hello?

*IRMA looks around. Everyone's gone to bed.*

. . .

*Then a patter of footsteps elsewhere. or Gunfire?*

No, no, no, not again. . .

*LA NIÑA appears, sprinting wildly through the roses.*

**IRMA.** *cont.*

¡EY! ¡No es hora de estar jugando! It's late!

[It's not time to play around! I already told you:]

No playing outside— What are you doing—

*LA NIÑA snatches the necklace and runs.*

Hey! Give that back— ¡Ay, Ladrón! Get back here.

¡Ladrón! ¡Ayuda, hay Ladrón! ¡AUXILIO! ¡AUXILIO!

[Thief! Help, there's a thief! Help! Help!]

*IRMA chases LA NIÑA thru the bones of an old church.*

*A megaphone rings.*

**MEGAPHONE.**

¡Residentes! salgan de sus casas!

[Residents! Leave your houses!]

. . . en el salón comunal de la iglesia. . .

[. . . in the church common area . . .]

. . . y autorización del Gobierno de Guatemala

[. . . and authorization of the Government]

nuestras fuerzas militares . . . pueblos en

[military forces . . . towns in]

asociación con grupos de la guerrilla. . .

[association with rebel groups. . .]

**IRMA.**

What going on? Wait no, come back!

*LA NIÑA flees.*

Can someone turn the light on! I can't see. . .

*IRMA wanders, lost amongst the roses*

MAMÁ!? PAPÁ!? ALGUIEN, AYUDÉNME. . .

*A blood-orange glow slowly fills IRMA's mind*

I can't see, I can't breathe, I can't see—

*PACO, tumbles inside the roses.*

*Then all at once the screams hush.*

*IRMA sits huddled, shaking.*

**PACO.** *Alarmed.*

Irma! Irma, what are you doing out here?

**IRMA.**

Don't yell. . .

**PACO.**

Perdón, ¿qué pasó? Are you hurt?

**IRMA.**

I— I lost them!

**PACO.**

Lost who?

**IRMA.**

Y mi mamá y papá. . .They disappeared!

**PACO.**

Disappeared?

**IRMA.**

I ran away. Our whole pueblo disappeared.

*She looks up at Paco, but her gaze is still elsewhere.*

**PACO.**

No, Irma. You're *home*, you're not there—

**IRMA.**

I was home but then. . . I left and then  
it just happened—

**PACO.**

It's okay Irmita, mírame, look at me.  
Can you remember where you are?

**PACO.**

It's all right, Irmita. Look at me.

**IRMA.**

No, no sé. . .

**PACO.**

Irma, we are home, under the roses—

**IRMA.**

No, I don't know. . . I'm lost. . .

**PACO.**

It's okay, Irma.

**IRMA.**

I don't know. . . Can you help me?

*PACO withdraws, we flashback to a very recent past.*

*Paco bursts into the Doctor's office.*

*Side by side, the memories play out.*

**DOCTOR.**

¿Señor Francisco?

**PACO.**

This is your fault!

**DOCTOR.**

¿Perdón?

[Excuse me?]

**PACO.**

It's your fault my wife is like this!

**DOCTOR.**

¿Señor Francisco, can you calm down?

Please, or I will have to call someone—

**PACO.**

I need help! Tenías razón. You were right.  
We were stupid not to listen the first time.  
But, my wife needs help. We need help.  
Dios, how stupid we must look to you—

**DOCTOR.**

No estoy pensando en nada.

[I'm not thinking anything of the sort.]

Por favor Señor Francisco, you need to relax.

Sit, tell me what's going on, what's changed?

*Beat.*

**PACO.** *Shaking his head.*

No podría decirle. . . the name of that stuff.

[I couldn't tell you everything.]

The flashes? They happen very often now—

**DOCTOR.**

Panic attacks?

**PACO.**

Ah! Yes. . . And she's forgetting a lot more.

**DOCTOR.**

So more acute memory loss. . .

**PACO.**

She will lose entire days sometimes.

Or she'll be unable to recognize who. . .

**IRMA. *Overlapping.***

Who. . . are you?

**PACO.**

Irma, it's me, Paco. . . Tu marido!

[Your spouse!]

**IRMA. *Embarrassed.***

No, señor, I don't have a husband!

**PACO.**

Irma—

**IRMA.**

Will you help me? Por favor, Señor.

**DOCTOR. *Beat.***

Vaya pue, tell me what happened.

**IRMA.**

Pues, al principio, todo estaba tranquilo. . .

[Well, in the beginning, everything was calm]

Then it happened, just like they had warned us.

I was home that night, I remember: *pap! pap! pap!*

I thought it was fireworks first, they sounded far

and would stop and go like *Pap. . . . pap! pap!*

but the dogs. . . it was like they knew all at once:

*Ou! ou! ou!* All the dogs: *Ou! ou!* Yelled and yelled.

*Get out! Get out!* —They tried to tell us early but. . .

**IRMA.** *cont.*

My parents didn't wake up until the people started yelling, llevando cosas y haciendo bulla en la calle—  
[people took things, making noise in the streets.]

**DOCTOR.**

You could hear her screaming? Hasta la calle?  
[As far as the streets?]

**PACO.**

Sí! I was walking home, después del trabajo. [after work.]  
I ran down the street, almost breaking the door—

**DOCTOR.**

What was she screaming about?

**IRMA.**

*The box! The box—!*  
*Where is the box? Hurry, we need to find it NOW!*

**PACO.**

It was this box her mom kept. . . with jewelry?  
Irma always said it was gold, but, her mind—

**IRMA.**

She refused to leave the house without it.  
So we ran. Together.  
We ran and ran and ran. . .

that niña was fast on her feet.

*Ojala que ella no me supere!*

[Hopefully she won't outrun me!]

It made me dizzy watching the  
little gold chain swinging around  
Then, someone grabs my arm  
y la niña's and they took us  
saying that our parents  
would be inside the church too.

**PACO.**

But when I got inside, all the lights were off.

**IRMA.**

That's where I lost her,

Chairs left in the air, breaking to windows. . .

I yelled, "Niña! Niña!" —I didn't even know her name!

The air was so dark that night, black and hot. . .

. . .but the floor. . . It. . . It glittered. . .

*I couldn't take my eyes off the floor!*

Y alguien gritó, "AYUDA! The doors are locked!"

Everyone begins to panic, pushing, shoving

empezaron a tratar de quebrar ventanas—!

[They started trying to break open windows—!]

**DOCTOR.**

She was on the floor?

**PACO.**

Sí, I found her lying there, temblando..

**IRMA.**

. . . I could feel the earth shaking. Or maybe,

I was shaking? . . .or maybe, I'm just dreaming!

I kept seeing estrellitas all over the tile floor.

My feet wanted to follow the little stars. . .

Pero de repente, alguien me empujó

[But suddenly, someone pushed me]

they pushed me hard then a door broke

swinging me

down, and I hit

every

little

star . . .

my face y mis manos,

My hands! They glittered como tenia miles de galaxias

dripping down my arms, if just one were to combust—

[thousands of galaxies]

**PACO.**

¡GASOLINA! ¡HAY GASOLINA! ¡AUXILIO AUXILIO!

[GASOLINE! THERE'S GASOLINE! HELP! HELP!]

And she just keeps screaming this— to nobody!

And of course, being the way she is, she doesn't

want the family to notice, so I say nothing, pero

**PACO.** *cont.*

Me da miedo y ahora we don't. . . we can't be—  
*[It scares me, and now. . .]*  
 together— in the same bed anym— I'm sorry I—

**DOCTOR.**

It's okay, take a breath. For as long as you need.

*IRMA and PACO breathe.*

**IRMA.**

. . .It was like God exhaling over my shoulders,  
 whispering, *¡Acá, acá! Come, look! A window!*  
 Right above an old pila. So I climbed up, into  
 the basin, where cold water gripped my ankles  
 and pulled myself onto the window ledge, too  
 scared to look anywhere else but the moon. . .  
 and I jumped.

**DOCTOR.**

Do you have a way of grounding her?

**PACO.**

Grounding?

**DOCTOR.**

Sometimes a gesture o un ruido, —something loud  
 can shake them out of whatever hallucinations. . .

**PACO.**

It can make them stop? Help her to come back?

**IRMA.**

I don't know if she came back. . .

**DOCTOR.**

She might. . . *present* Demencia that comes and goes  
 in her early stages, but the *condition* does not stop. . .

**PACO.**

What then?

**DOCTOR.**

Perdón?

**PACO.**

When it is no longer her early stages, I am to assume she will be lost completely, no?

**IRMA.**

Oh no! She could be lost.

**PACO.**

So I ask you, what do we do then? . . .What do I do?

**DOCTOR.**

You wait.

**IRMA.**

So I waited for her, I kept waiting. Even though her necklace never made it into mamita's box. I waited for her. . .

**PACO.**

¿Perdón? You just want me to wait?  
You were supposed to have treatment to offer!  
My wife, she can't keep fading away from me!  
With Mari staying with us, y la boda de Lupita?

**DOCTOR.**

Señor, any treatments we have to offer are only effective for early prevention, and it's still no cure. It only delays the inevitable. . .

**IRMA.**

So I waited for the smoke to lift. Even though the earth still scorched under the bones of our church. I waited for her. . .  
I waited for Mami. . .  
I waited for Papi. . .  
I waited, hoping, praying they followed the stars. . .

**PACO.**

What are you saying?

**DOCTOR.**

I'm saying. . .

**IRMA.**

Tal vez ellos siguieron otras estrellas;  
 [maybe they followed different stars]  
 and they followed those stars elsewhere  
 far, far, away from our pueblito destruido  
 [from our destroyed little town,]  
 más lejos, hasta las memorias del silencio.  
 [all the way towards the memories of silence.]

**DOCTOR.**

The best you can do is to keep her safe,  
 comfortable, happy; however that looks.  
 Cherish every lucid day Irma can share.  
 What do you think?

**PACO.**

I . . .

*The doctor exits.*

*The scene restores into the inevitable present.*

**IRMA.**

What do you think?

**PACO.**

What?

**IRMA.**

Do you think they followed the right stars?  
 Yo creo que sí. [I think so.]

**PACO.**

You need to get some rest, Irmita.  
 Look, it's already sunrise! Vamonos mi' amor,  
 Let's get you changed for bed.

*PACO extends his hand out to Irma.*

*The clock rings, shaking IRMA back into the present.*

**IRMA.**

What?

**PACO.**

It's past midnight, Irmita, let's go to sleep.

**IRMA.**

Midnight?! No but Lupita's dress isn't. . .

**IRMA.** *cont.*

I was supposed to finish Lupita's dress!  
No, it can't be. I thought I hemmed it—  
I *know* I did. No. . .No. . .Paco, I forgot.

**PACO.**

We have all been very busy, it's easy  
to lose track—

**IRMA.**

No, Paco, I forgot, completamente. . .  
I came here because Mari screamed.  
And I told her, go to bed, then I would  
. . .I would finish hemming the dress.

**PACO.**

Está bien, you probably just took a nap—

**IRMA.**

Don't do that, Paco!

**PACO.**

Irma—

**IRMA.**

FRANCISCO, *NO!*

*Beat.*

**PACO.**

We should do this tomorrow. I'm going to bed.

**IRMA.**

¿Mañana? . . . You want us to wait until tomorrow?  
So I can wake up tomorrow not knowing who I am?  
Or who you are? Con toda mi memoria destruida?  
[With all of my memory destroyed? You promised]  
Me prometiste. . . Paco, you *promised* you would  
fight me if I was losing my mind—

**PACO.**

Irma—

**IRMA.** *desperately.*

No, I want to talk about this *now*, Paco.

**IRMA.** *cont.*

I was wrong, Paco. The doctor was right.

I didn't want to believe it. Tan, tan estúpida.

**PACO.**

Irma, no.

**IRMA.**

You were right for wanting me to go back.

Paco, I'm losing myself. . . I'm losing. . .

*PACO embraces IRMA.*

**PACO.**

It's okay Irma.

*A long silence.*

**IRMA.**

Paco.

**PACO.**

¿Sí?

**IRMA.**

We don't dance anymore.

**PACO.**

No.

*IRMA turns on the radio,*

*"Aquellos Ojos Verdes," by Los Panchos plays.*

**IRMA.** *Smiling.*

¿Recordás esta canción, Paco?

[Do you remember this song, Paco?]

**PACO.**

*Aquellos ojos verdes de mirada de serena. . .*

[Those green eyes, the gaze of a mermaid. . .]

**BOTH.**

*Dejaron en mi alma eterna sed de amar. . . Beat.*

[They left in my soul an eternal thirst for love. . .]

**IRMA.**

Bailá conmigo, Paquito.

[Dance with me, Paquito.]

**PACO.**

Si, mi'amor.

*They dance quietly.*

*Blackout.*

**ACT TWO****ix. la boda / the wedding**

*Morning of Lupita's wedding under the Roses. . .*

*But las rosas are wilting. Petals fall like spring rain.*

*The Viejo Bolos assemble to sing, "Luna De Xelaju."*

*MARI sweeps a pathway amongst the fallen rose petals.*

**VIEJO 1.**

LUNA GARDENIA DE PLATA.

[GARDENIA MOON OF SILVER]

QUE EN MI SERENATA

[THAT IN MY SWEET SERENADE]

TE VUELVES CANCIÓN

[BECOMES A SONG]

**VIEJO 3.**

TÚ QUE ME VEZ HOY CANTANDO

[YOU THAT SEES ME SINGING TODAY]

ME VISTE LLORANDO

[HAVE SEEN ME CRYING]

MI DESILUCION...

[IN MY DESILLUSION]

**MARI.**

'Muy bonito. [It's very pretty.]

**LUPITA.**

For a bunch of drunks, I guess so.

Is that dress. . . made from roses!?

**MARI.**

Just before they started dying. . .

**LUPITA.**

My curse for not inviting Sandra, va'a?

**ALL BOLOS.**

LUNA DE XELAJUUUUU—!!!

[MOON OF XELAJUUU—!!!]

**LUPITA.**

¡¡Cállense ya viejos!! [Shut up!]  
Nobody asked you to sing!

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

We were told we're getting paid!

**LUPITA.**

No, you're not.

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

We're not?!

**FERNANDO.**

Déjenlos, Lupy.  
[Leave them be.]

*Lupita screams.*

**LUPITA.**

NANDO, MY DRESS!!

**VIEJO BOLO 1.** *Removing their shirt.*

¡Órale, Nando! What are you doing?

**ALL BOLOS.**

¡Mala suerte! [Bad luck!]

*They wrap the shirt around FERNANDO's eyes.*

**FERNANDO.**

Mi'amor it's fine. The wedding will be perfect.

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

Shut up, she's out of your league! Lupita!  
it's not too late to change your mind. . .

**LUPITA.**

Ew. Go away viejo.

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

She said "Ew. Go away viejo."

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

*I object!!!*

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

Calmate, jefa, sit down.

*A phone rings.*

**LUPITA.**

Fernando! I told you to turn that thing off.

**FERNANDO.**

I'm so sorry, mi cariño, it's important.

**LUPITA.**

More important than our wedding!?

**FERNANDO.**

No one's even here yet!

*FERNANDO heads out.*

**LUPITA.**

*Nando!!*

**FERNANDO.**

Lupita, I have to!

*Awkward. Tense. A viejo coughs.*

**LUPITA.**

Fine. Go.

*FERNANDO exits, a nosey LUPITA follows.*

**VIEJO 1.**

I'm telling you, Fernando is definitely a narco.

**MARI. *Laughing,***

No way! Lupita says he's just a businessman.

**VIEJO 3.**

And narcos aren't?

**MARI.**

Just because he has white pants?!

**VIEJO 1.**

White *linen* pants.

**MARI.**

So cliché!

**PACO.**

Mari, have you seen la Irma?

**MARI.**

No. . . Wait! Yes, she was over by the roses. Talking to them.

**PACO.**

Talking to them?

**MARI.**

That's what it looked like.

**PACO.**

She never talks to las rositas!  
Will you get her for me, Mari?  
I can sweep the rest of these.

**MARI.**

Okay.

*As MARI leaves.*

*The VIEJOS start a new song.*

**VIEJO 3.**

DUERMEN EN MI JARDÍN  
[IN MY GARDEN THEY SLEEP]  
LAS BLANCAS AZUCENAS,  
[THE WHITE LILIES]  
LOS NARDOS Y LAS ROSAS  
[THE TUBEROSE AND ROSES]

**VIEJO 1.**

MI ALMA MUY TRISTE Y PESAROSA  
[MY SAD AND REGRETFUL SOUL]  
A LAS FLORES QUIERE OCULTAR  
[IN FLOWERS IT WANTS TO HIDE]  
SU AMARGO DOLOR. . .  
[ITS BITTER PAIN.]

*Transition into the roses.*

*IRMA walks gingerly through the forest.*

*The chirps of children laughing fill the air.*

*Two young teens burst into the clearing, chasing, teasing and fighting over a small wooden box.*

**IRMA.**

Hey! That's mine!

**CARLOS.**

Give it to me!!

**LA NIÑA + IRMA.**

No Carlos! Let go!

*They all fight over the box.*

**CARLOS.**

Irma c'mon!

*CARLOS yanks harder.*

**ALL.**

AAAAA!!!

*IRMA, LA NIÑA and CARLOS all fall to the ground.*

**LA NIÑA.**

Ou! Carlos!

**IRMA.**

La caja!

[The box!]

*IRMA tries to grab the box, but LA NIÑA beats her to it.*

**LA NIÑA.**

Mirá, You could have broken it!

**CARLOS.**

Sorry!

**LA NIÑA.**

¡Tonto!

[Dummy!]

*She starts smacking CARLOS.*

**CARLOS.**

¡Ay! Irma, stop it! Irma!!

*Smack.*

**IRMA.**

¡Sos tan necio!

[You're so annoying!]

**LA NIÑA.**

¡¡Púchica, Carlos!!

[Dammit, Carlos!!]

**CARLOS.**

It wouldn't have happened  
if you just told me what it is!

**LA NIÑA.**

¡Necio!

[Brat!]

Smack.

**CARLOS.**

Stop hitting me!

**LA NIÑA.**

¡Bárbaro!

[Barbarian!]

Smack.

*They pick up the mess.*

**CARLOS.** *realizing the gold.*

A la gran. . . Púchica!!!

[Holy. . . F. . . freakin' damn!]

**LA NIÑA.**

Calláte, Carlos.

[Shut up, Carlos.]

**CARLOS.**

Is that gold?!

**LA NIÑA.**

What do you think?

**CARLOS.**

Is that REALLY gold?

**LA NIÑA.**

I *told* you it was full / of gold,  
you didn't believe me. And  
you went ahead / with your  
mono [monkey] hands  
and broke the whole box!!! /

**CARLOS.**

/ Irma, this looks like gold!

/ I can't believe it!!!

/ Pure gold!

**CARLOS.**

Where did you get this?!

Irma, did you steal this?!

*LA NIÑA smacks him again.*

**LA NIÑA.**

¡No, necio! I didn't steal it.  
And where I got it is none  
of. your. business.

**CARLOS.**

It'll be the whole pueblo's  
business if you don't tell!

*CARLOS starts to holler.*

**LA NIÑA.**

¡Shuté, Carlos! I'll tell you!  
Just stop yelling! ¡Callaté!  
But, I didn't steal it okay?  
I took it. . . from my house.

**CARLOS.**

No you didn't, mentirosa!

*He looks at her suspiciously.*

**LA NIÑA.**

I'm not lying!

**CARLOS.**

That's why you only have one  
pair of tennis [sneakers], right?  
There's nothing wrong with  
stealing. You're poor.

**LA NIÑA.**

*It belongs to me.*

*LA NIÑA shows Carlos an old letter, he reads it.*

**CARLOS.**

"Por favor perdonenme. . . .

[Please forgive me. . .]

By the time you receive this,  
I will be in the hands of God."  
Guau que drama. "if my sins  
against you and our daughter  
can be forgiven, let it be now.  
And though all the gold in the  
world cannot compensate for  
my . . .transgressions, please  
accept this. My most prized

possession and the least I can  
offer you and nuestra Irmita. . .  
Signed, Edbert. . . dos de Julio,  
mil novecientos sesenta y dos”  
[July second, nineteen sixty-two]

**IRMA.**

The year I was born.

**CARLO.**

Who’s Edbert No..se... ?

**LA NIÑA.**

Nosek. I think he’s my father.

**CARLOS.**

Is he still alive?

**IRMA.**

No.

**LA NIÑA.**

I don’t think so. I heard  
he was an old padre. . .

**CARLOS.** *scandalous.*

¡Púchica! ¿Un padre? Wait,  
Your mom married a priest?!

**LA NIÑA.**

My mom was already married.

**CARLOS.**

¡Púchica! Wait so. . . WHAT?!

**LA NIÑA.**

Can you believe she hid this?  
All these years, on her dresser!  
Yelling about how poor we are,  
how I should quit school after  
this year to work at the fincas.  
And for what? We could be rich!

**CARLOS.**

¿Qué vas a hacer?

[What are you going to do?]

**LA NIÑA.**

I'll take the gold into the city and  
sell it for all the Quetzales I can.

**CARLOS.**

To the city from here? You're crazy!  
That's a two and a half day's walk.

**LA NIÑA.**

Who said I was walking? Hay bús.  
Besides, I've gone to the city alone.

**CARLOS.**

That's perfect, a pretty girl alone  
on a bus, with a box full of gold.

**LA NIÑA.**

You think I'm pretty?

**CARLOS.** *Embarrassed.*

No! I don't know! I'm just saying. . .  
There'll be road blocks every mile  
El ejercito is everywhere now with  
the guerillas around Peten y Nebaj.

**LA NIÑA.**

Pero, how far is Nebaj from here?  
That all deep in the mountains. . .  
I heard el ejercito is just rebuilding  
pueblos to get roads y electricidad.

**CARLOS.**

I'm surprised you actually believe that!

**LA NIÑA.**

¿Por qué?

**CARLOS.**

Everyone knows your dad's a Communist!

Protesting that Ríos Montt from the start.

**LA NIÑA.** *Laughs.*

No, el es Socialista, no un Comunista!

**CARLOS.**

A Socialist family with a secret box of gold. . .

**LA NIÑA.**

You know what my mom said when I found it?

“No lo toques! All gold is cursed by blood!”

**CARLOS.**

So you stole it anyway.

**LA NIÑA.**

Not stolen, *es mio!* *[it's mine!]*

**CARLOS.**

What if it is cursed?

*Beat.*

**LA NIÑA.**

¡Si, y yo soy la bruja!

*[Yes, and I'm the witch!]*

Give me all your gold!

*They laugh.*

**CARLOS.**

Never!

*CARLOS and LA NIÑA. exit, running off excitedly.*

*Their echoing laughter morphs into the chirping of crickets.*

*MARI enters.*

**MARI.**

¿Tia Irma? ¿Tia Irma?

**LA NIÑA.** *giggles.*

Why are you calling me Tia?

**MARI.**

Hey, it's you. . . I'm looking for my Tia— Wait, Irma is your name?!

**LA NIÑA.**

Don't tell anyone!

**MARI.** *laughing.*

Okay! I won't. . .

**LA NIÑA.**

Why are you laughing?

**MARI.**

Irrrrrrma! Now that's a bitter name.

*The earth cackles.*

**LA NIÑA.**

Don't say that!

**MARI.**

I'm sorry. . . it's just reminded me.

*Cun. . .*

**LA NIÑA.**

You told them!

*Cun. . .*

**MARI.**

What? Who?

*Cun. . .*

**LA NIÑA.**

La Santa Muerte!

You told them where I was!

*Cun. . .*

**MARI.**

No I didn't!

*Cun. . .*

*Cun. . .*

**LA NIÑA.**

They're gonna find me. . .

**MARI.**

How was I supposed to know!?

*Toom! LA SANTA materializes.*

**LA SANTA.**

There's my little thief, all these years

Hiding away in the bushes, like a rat.

**MARI.**

Hey, don't hurt her! She's. . . my friend.

**LA SANTA.**

You have no idea, little one. . .

**MARI.**

I'm not little.

**LA SANTA.**

Neither is your friend. . .

**IRMA.**

¿Alo?

**MARI.**

¡Tía!

**IRMA.**

Who's there?

**MARI.**

It's Mari. Su sobrina.

**IRMA.**

Mari?

**MARI.**

Mande, tía.

[Tell me, tia.]

**IRMA.**

Come!

**MARI.**

¿Que?

**IRMA.**

I found it.

**MARI.**

What?

**IRMA + LA SANTA.**

La mamita's box.

**IRMA.**

It was right where I left it.

**LA SANTA.**

Clever girl. . .

*IRMA points to a rose bud.*

**MARI.**

*Inside* the rose? How!?

**IRMA.**

¡Ay, mis rositas! . . . Come, Mari. . .  
Paco is much better at this than me. . .  
But, if you learn to speak con las rosas  
You will find that they make the best  
keeper of secrets.

*IRMA guides her.*

*Irma whispers something into the rose.  
The petals unravel, at the center is a small box.*

**IRMA. cont.**

Here, Tómalo. . .

**MARI.**

What is it?

*MARI starts to open the box.*

**IRMA.**

Ten cuidado. . .  
[Be careful. . .]

*Irma grabs her hand. Her eyes pierced.*

**MARI.**

But is it—?

**IRMA.**

Sí. It's real.

**MARI.**

I thought you said it was lost. How—?

**IRMA.**

I spent my life trying to make it vanish,  
trying to forget its existence. Qué dolor.  
I cannot tell you the pain it gave me know  
that I could not bring myself to rid myself  
of that gold. There's something poison in it.  
My mother was right to hide it from us. . .

**MARI.**

Tía. . .

**IRMA.**

Get rid of it Mari.

**MARI.**

What—?

**IRMA.**

The gold, get rid of it!

Take it far away from here.

**MARI.**

But we could be rich!

**IRMA.**

No, Mari, no. Life makes us rich.

**IRMA. cont.**

El amor, la salud, nuestras memorias y familia,

[Our Love, our family, health, our memories]

Esas son las ricuras de vida que valen la pena.

[those are the riches of life worth our worries.]

Not money. Ni poder. Han sido años my whole

[Nor poder. It has been years, almost my all life]

Life fighting this curse, this greed, this. . . shame.

I want to tell you something important. When I stole la mamita's gold. I thought I was going to change everything. That our whole family would be rich, rich, rich. And we could be happy. . .

Instead I grew distrustful and afraid, a recluse.

I was so afraid of you turning into a recluse too.

But the roses have a way of hiding us, I think. . .

What is happening to las rosas? Casi se mueren.

[they're almost dead]

**LA SANTA.**

They will spring back. . .

**IRMA.**

A, ya es tiempo. . . [Ah, it's time. . .]

*IRMA gives the box a last goodbye, then embraces MARI.*

**MARI.**

Where are you going?

**IRMA.**

. . . A subir las rosas.

[. . .to climb the roses.]

**LA NIÑA.**

Don't worry, I'll watch her!

*IRMA rises, LA NIÑA follows close behind.*

**LA SANTA.**

Mind your Tia's wishes, Marialena. . .  
The curse of gold is a curse of blood.

*MARI opens the box. The earth quakes.*

*LA SANTA vanishes.*

*MARI closes the box.*

*PACO enters, then the entire wedding party. LUPITA,  
FERNANDO, LOS BOLOS. . .*

**PACO.**

Mari? Mari what happened?  
I thought I heard something---  
Que paso con Irma? Why is---

**MARI.**

It was hidden inside the roses.

**PACO.**

What?

**MARI.**

She hid it. Tia Irma hid it but  
she forgot and then just now.  
Tia Irma remember she'd hid  
it in a rosebud years ago but  
the roses grew so high, much  
higher than she remembered.  
So she climbed. . .

**PACO.**

No---

**MARI.**

She brought it back down, safe.  
To show me but then she was  
really tired--  
And so she was just resting. . .

**PACO.**

Let's bring her inside, then. Yes?  
Yes, okay.

**x. despues / after**

*The next morning. A brisk sunrise.*

*It feels as though time has suspended for a minute.*

*Then, howls of street dogs break the silence.*

*It grows into an orchestral swell of beastial keening.*

*MARI, LUPITA and PACO emerge from the home.*

*They sit together and the howls petter off into a melody.*

*LOS VIEJOS BOLOS enter in procession, humming  
"Cucurrucucú Paloma" even as one speaks, the others keep  
humming in tune.*

**VIEJO 1.**

We heard Doña Irma. . .

**VIEJO 3.**

So we've come to sing.

**VIEJO 2.**

And drink to her!

*VIEJO 2 offers a large jug of. . . something brown.*

**LUPITA.**

Hay, no, que asco—!

[Ugh how gross—!]

**PACO. Chuckling.**

Let them be Lupita. . .

Men with no family make a family con el mundo, va'a?

Es un gusto verlos, amigos. And thank you for this . . .

[It's good to see you friends.]

It looks. . . muy potente. Lupi, can you take this inside?

Or better yet, maybe take it to share with Nando, as. . .

I am not one to drink y Mari is, eh, not quite old enough.

**LUPITA.**

Nando left.

**ALL.**

What!?

*Hush*

**LUPITA.**

I . . . asked him to.

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

DICEN QUE POR LAS NOCHES

[THEY SAY THAT IN THE NIGHT]

NOMÁS SE LE IBA EN PURO LLORAR

[ALL HE DID WAS CRY]

**VIEJO BOLO 1.**

DICEN QUE NO COMÍA

[THEY SAY HE DID NOT EAT]

NOMÁS SE LE IBA EN PURO TOMAR

[ALL HE DID WAS DRINK]

**VIEJO BOLO 2.**

JURAN QUE EL MISMO CIELO

[THEY SAY THAT THE SKY ITSELF]

SE ESTREMECÍA AL OÍR SU LLANTO

[TREMBLED AT THE SOUND OF HIS CRIES]

CÓMO SUFRIÓ POR ELLA

[HOW HE SUFFERED FOR HER.]

**VIEJO BOLO 3.**

QUE HASTA EN SU MUERTE

[THAT EVEN IN HER DEATH]

LA FUE LLAMANDO

[KEPT CALLING AFTER]

**ALL BOLOS.**

AY, AY, AY, AY, CANTABA

[AY, AY, AY, AY, HE SANG]

AY, AY, AY, AY, GEMÍA

[AY, AY, AY, AY, HE LAUGHED]

AY, AY, AY, AY, AY, AY, LLORABA

[AY, AY, AY, AY, HE SOBBED]

DE PASIÓN MORTAL MORÍA

[OF MORTAL PASSION HE WAS DYING]

## xi. the beginning / el comienzo

*An airport, U.S. customs.*

*MARI waits on a bench.*

### **MARI.**

Tio Paco said "if you can't find your way  
Follow las rosas Nogueras back home . . ."  
It's hard to miss the giant pink roses.  
Like, pink from deep, deep in the earth.  
In full bloom they glow like the moon.  
A million pink orbs tethered to the earth.

And when I was born my Dad said,  
"Sabes, if anything happened to us,  
I could leave Mari bundled up in one  
of those rosebuds and know she'd be  
in one of the safest places del mundo!  
Right there beneath Irma's gran rosal.

See, those were roses raised to guard  
the house and all of la mamita's huerta  
protecting her fruit trees and flowers. . .  
ripe petals, fragrant rinds, even this air  
con colores tan ricos; de papaya-limón-  
-jacaranda-y melon-stained-glass-light  
pouring into the windows of our house.  
Like living in a hot pink kaleidoscope. . .

Those are just the seeds I wanted to keep.  
We can't bring them in. . . so they're in that  
gringos trash bin. But they let me keep these.

*A handful of gold coins glitters in MARI's palms.*

*The earth wakes.*

*BLACKOUT.*

*END OF PLAY.*