

GRITERÍA Y LUZ / howls and light

by linda maria girón

characters:

luz benavides // late-teens, nicaragua-born US immigrant, youngest daughter of three.

she is capricious as any young teen but kind-hearted and wise.

marylin benavides // late-sixties, nicaragüense, luz's grandmother. still living in

nicaragua, marylin is a natural storyteller, patient and grounded with a sharp sense of humor.

rina benavides // late-thirties, luz's mom, always working.

pronunciations:

griteria (gree-teh-REE-yah)

luz (loose)

purisima (poo-ree-see-mah)

marylin (marie-LEEN)

óstin (ohs-teen, like a spanish Austin)

time/place:

between a non-pandemic future and a reminisced past. 2007 - 2021.

the virtual space between transcontinental daughters of nicaragua / california.

I. **LA PURISIMA / THE PUREST ONE**

(Dec 7th, 2017. Video of the [Festival de la Purisima in Nicaragua](#) plays. La Gritería begins. Over loud speaker, a priest cries out: “QUIEN CAUSA LA ALEGRÍA?” A crowd responds: “LA CONCEPCIÓN DE LA VIRGEN MARIA!” Fireworks, shouts, sirens and all kinds of festive clamour commences.)

LUZ.

(v/o)

La Purísima. The Purest One.

I don't believe in God.

But I do believe in Maria.

Her Miracle. Her Purity. Her Love.

I. **EI PRIMERO “ESKYPE” / THE FIRST SKYPE**

Dec 7th, 2018. Skype tone rings. On screen LUZ waits impatiently. She is holding a gold, hand-decorated statue of the Virgin Mary. A trophy. MARYLIN logs on.

MARYLIN.

(muted.)

Alo?

LUZ.

No te oigo!

MARYLIN.

(muted.)

Ay mi reina, que alegre- O?

LUZ.

(overlapping)

Abuelita, ¿no te oigo! ¿Está conectado su Audio? Su Audio, Abuelita.

MARYLIN disconnects.

LUZ.

(Looking off-camera)

No, I don't know. She just disconnected. Mom, I know.

I told her to connect both Audio AND Vid-

MARYLIN reconnects.

MARYLIN.

Lucita, nena! Que grande estas!

LUZ.

Hola Abuelita! Feliz Semana Santa!

MARYLIN.

Si, mija! Felicidades y gracias a Dios que conectamos.
Haces mucho tiempo sin verte. You are so big now!

LUZ.

Si! I know.

MARYLIN.

¿Y tu mama, donde esta?

LUZ.

Cooking dinner.
(calling off-screen)
MAMA!!

MARYLIN.

Is that your Maria??

LUZ.

(showing off the statue)
Yeah! I won her at church yesterday.

MARYLIN.

Won her?

LUZ.

En la fiesta de la purísima, the church had an altar contest to see who could make the best altar for La Virgen Maria and this year, I won!

MARYLIN.

Como no! An artista like you? I have all your paintings in the kitchen.

LUZ.

Really?!

MARYLIN.

On the wall to remember you everyday when I make my cafe. So your new church is celebrating Semana Santa también?

LUZ.

La Purisima, La Griteria-

MARYLIN.

Griteria tambien?

LUZ.

Yeah! Kind of. Less like our parties at home, like, for example, we don't go house to house to see alters because some people live very far, no singing parade, no fireworks-

MARYLIN.

No fireworks?! Ay que perro.

LUZ.

It's okay. They said it's because the gringos will call the police about noise complaints and the church could get in trouble. They only let you have fireworks for the Fourth of July, or else it's illegal.

MARYLIN.

(laughing)

Illegal! Imagine telling the people that fireworks are illegal?

LUZ.

Remember grandma!?! The last Griteria before Mom and me came here?

MARYLIN.

Ay dios, *pura locura!* It almost sounded like we were having a war again!

MARYLIN + LUZ.

Pam! Pa-pa-pa-pam!! Pam pam!!

MARYLIN.

Well, I am happy you and Mami have good people to celebrate with. Maybe someday we'll come to visit you. Grandpa and I miss you a lot.

LUZ.

We miss you too, grandma. *(beat)* Can I show you the altar we made?!

MARYLIN.

Claro!

(LUZ brings the laptop around, we see glimpses of their small apartment. Then a swish of candlelight. As the camera steadies, we see a grand altar dedicated to La Virgen Maria. Blue and white, the colors of Nicaragua, cascading around the stand.)

MARYLIN

Guau, que bonita, Luz!

LUZ.

And now we can put the two Maria's together. *(LUZ giggles as she places the trophy next to their Maria.)* She's so little next to that one!

MARYLIN.

Ah! Just like you and your mama!

LUZ.

(to Mom off-camera)

Look Mami! Grandma said it's like you and me! Grandma can you show us your altar?

MARYLIN.

It's the same as every year...

LUZ.

I want to see!

MARYLIN.

Bueno, I'll text you a picture, okay? Ahorita sounds like Mami is finished with dinner so it's time for you to eat. I let you two go eat.

LUZ.

Okay!

MARYLIN.

Okay, chao nena! / Dígale "bye" a tu mami too. Hasta luego!

LUZ.

Bye! / Okay, bye! Hasta luego, te quiero!

(End of call.)

LUZ VO: She called us every year after that. We shared altars every year. Until . . . I don't know. We just stopped. I guess I just got older and busy. Not to mention college.

II. **BAILE DE LAS LLAMADAS PERDIDAS / DANCE OF LOST CALLS**

(MARYLIN appears on screen. We hear ringtone. No answer. MARYLIN disconnects. After a beat. MARYLIN appears. We hear ringtone. No answer. MARYLIN disconnects. Another beat. MARYLIN appears. We hear ringtone. RINA appears.)

RINA.

Hola Mami!

MARYLIN.

Mija, hola!

RINA.

Feliz dia de Concepción, Mami! Como estás?

MARYLIN.

Bien, bien, hija. Gracias a dios. Y tu?

RINA.

Tambien.

MARYLIN.

Y Lucita?

RINA.

Luz no está. En clase todavía.

MARYLIN.

Ay que lastima. Pero bueno hija. Dale mi bendiciones.

RINA.

Si, claro. No vemos en Christmas.

MARYLIN.

Vaya. Chao.

Call ends.

LUZ VO: From then on it's just quick calls on Christmas, New years. La Virgen sits on my dresser collecting dust. Every year I move apartments and every year I look at Maria trying to decide if this is the year I truly minimize my life and toss her in a donation bin. Semana Santa. La Purísima. Las Griterías. All distant memories. A life before America.

And then a year like 2020 happens. I don't believe in God but. . .

III. **LA CHIQUITITA GRITA / THE LITTLE CRY**

(LUZ appears. She is holding La Virgen Maria. We think she may have been crying. Ringtone. Ringtone. No answer. LUZ texts MARYLIN then tries again. Ringtone. No answer.)

LUZ.

Okay. Makes sense.

(Then, a return call. MARYLIN appears, in PJs, hair disheveled.)

LUZ.

Abuelita!

MARYLIN

Luz nena, ¿qué pasa? Estas bien?

LUZ.

Oh no, I'm sorry I woke you up!

MARYLIN.

It's nearly midnight, but nena, is everything okay?

LUZ.

Yeah, I was just calling because it's . . .
I wanted to see if you were all still celebrating?

MARYLIN.

En la pandemia mija?

LUZ.

Right. Are you safe? Is everyone okay? Healthy?

MARYLIN.

Your grandpa and I are safe. We are okay. One of your cousins got sick, el Ostin-

LUZ.

Oh no!

MARYLIN.

Appendicitis. Not el virus. He is recuperando. Todo bien. And we are okay. We are staying inside. Some not so smart people are out using fireworks but it's very quiet here still. People are more worried about the Hurricane coming than la Corona.

LUZ.

Oh God... I feel so helpless being here.

MARYLIN.

We will be okay. It doesn't look like it's coming this way. Maria is watching over us.

LUZ.

Maria? And God?

MARYLIN.

Pues, si. Dios tambien.

LUZ.

So shouldn't it be God is watching over us?

MARYLIN.

You don't believe Maria can protect us too?

LUZ.

Well God supposed to be the one with all the powers-

MARYLIN.

Noooo. God is the hurricane. But Maria is the protector, you see?

La poder de Maria is the power of the mother.

LUZ.

But all she did is give birth to Christ.

MARYLIN.

Si. And? Without Maria's conception AND her mothering, what happens? There is no Jesús to die for our sins, there is no messenger of God's word, no hope. . . Yo creo que la poder

de Maria is in the nurtured soul of Jesús Christo. I would like to see God alone keep a baby child alive and well-fed! Sin mama? No Señor! Maria is the holder of hope for all humanity. Without Maria, without la Madre, how are we to know that the power of God is always inside us? From the mother, we learn to nurture, love and protect ourselves and each other. That's what we make fireworks and music, joy and celebration. And why we prepare food and gifts for everyone en el mundo. Don't you remember all this from La Purisima? No you were too young, you just wanted to eat candies all night long and scream! *(She laughs. Beat.)*
Nena? I think you froze.

LUZ.

No.

MARYLIN.

O. . . estas bien mija?
Lucita, talk to me, what's going on?

LUZ.

I'm just sad. I miss you. I miss mom. I want to go back home. I don't want to be in school anymore. I want to quit everything. I just want to go back. I want everything to go back to how it was when we were in Nica and I was a kid and everything was easy.

(LUZ moves off-camera for a minute to blow her nose. When she returns:)

MARYLIN.

I know, mija. It's okay. We stay safe as long as we have to and soon we can be together again. If you have to go back home con tu mama, I'm sure she will be happy to have you with her as long as you need. You know?

LUZ.

Yeah.

MARYLIN.

You remember the words of Tierna Madre?

LUZ.

The song?

MARYLIN.

You have candles somewhere?

LUZ.

Si.

MARYLIN.

Bring them. Let's have una gritería chiquita.

(Swiftly and quietly they light candles. MARYLIN turns her lamp off, LUZ follows.)

MARYLIN.

Escuchad oh tierna madre

MARYLIN + LUZ.

de tus hijos el clamor-
(lagged and awkward.)
te pedimos, nos protejas-
(They laugh.)

LUZ.

Let's try taking turns.

MARYLIN.

te pedimos

LUZ.

nos protejas

MARYLIN

con tu manto

LUZ.

con tu manto salvador.

MARYLIN

Pobre el hombre que no alcanza

LUZ.

tu divina protección

MARYLIN.

y tu nombre no ha grabado

LUZ.

en su pobre, en su pobre corazón.

(Together they blow the candles out. BLACKOUT/The Call Ends.)

LUZ VO: So, I dropped out. Not really. I deferred a year. And moved back in with my mom. It's okay. It's not every lifetime you experience a pandemic, right? So I'm learning. I'm learning to care and love over solitude and guilt. I'm learning to keep Maria close. I've decided, wherever I go, she goes. To remind me that my family is my light. After all, even the furthest light can bring a galaxy of illumination.

IV. **LUZ / LIGHT**

LUZ appears. A new beautiful altar for Maria glows behind her. Ringtone. Answer MARYLIN. She is skyping from her phone, somewhere outside, a lit sparkler in hand and a mask hanging from her ear.

MARYLIN.

Quién causa tanta alegría!!!

LUZ.

La Concepción de la Virgen Maria!! Abuelita!

MARYLIN.

Que felicidad nena!

LUZ.

Donde estás Abuelita? It's dark outside where you are!

MARYLIN.

Si, I know!! That's why I have the light so you can see me. *(LUZ looks confused)* El ventana nena! Check outside the windows. . .

LUZ.

YOU'RE HERE?!?

MARYLIN.

Si! Ponga tu mask!

Right as LUZ disconnects, we hear some type of delighted shout.

MARYLIN.

Mi Luz! Mi Corazon!

(The call ends. End of play.)