

DULCE

by Ramón Esquivel

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CHARACTERS

MEMO, a chubby boy, 9

LUISA, his mother, 35

CECI, his sister, 14

ABUELITA, his grandmother, 55

TERE - Abuelita as a girl, 15.

TERESA - Abuelita as a young mother, 35

LUISITA - Luisa as a girl, 15.

NOTES: Actor playing CECI also plays TERE and LUISITA, and actor playing LUISA also plays TERESA.

English translations of Spanish words and dialogue appear in [brackets]. These are included for the benefit of actors, directors and readers. The translations must not be used for subtitles or to substitute the Spanish dialogue in production.

SETTING

Time is the present, Labor Day weekend. Action occurs in a bedroom in the Mendoza family's home in a working class suburb of Seattle. The bedroom has a grand bed that dominates the room, a wardrobe, dresser, and rocking chair. There is a window, a closet, and a door to the hallway.

NOTE ON SET DESIGN

The box set should convey a small and cramped space, yet also provide enough space for actors to dance, climb on top of things, and generally create safe chaos. Also, the script calls for a photograph to be projected above the bedroom.

(Late morning light shines through window. Projected above the bedroom is a black and white photograph of an old woman making tortillas. This is ABUELITA.

Photo fades as we hear MEMO's voice)

MEMO (offstage)

Abuelita!<sup>i</sup>

(tries locked door, calls off)

Mom, why's the door locked?

LUISA (offstage)

Come 'ere, *mijo!*<sup>ii</sup>

MEMO (offstage)

--Be right back.

LUISA (offstage)

Give me a hug at least, you've been gone for -- wait!

(Sounds of a lock being jimmied and opened. MEMO bursts in)

MEMO

I'm home!

(MEMO turns on light, but nobody is there. There are four cardboard boxes sitting on the grand bed. One stands out. LUISA enters)

LUISA

Memo ...

MEMO

--Where's Abuelita?

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<sup>i</sup> *abuela / abuelita* – grandmother or grandma; *abuelita* is a more affectionate version.

<sup>ii</sup> *mijo / mijito* – contractions for *mi hijo*, or “my son.” *Mijito* is a more affectionate version. Feminine forms of *mija* and *mijita* are used for daughters.

LUISA

--I locked the door for a reason.

MEMO

She in your room?

(MEMO bolts from the room again)

LUISA

Ay!

(LUISA runs after him)

*Mijo*, slow down. Slow down!

(MEMO re-enters bedroom and starts to explore the cardboard boxes on bed, pulling out a shawl from one. He smells it. LUISA enters winded and flustered)

LUISA

Memo, stop moving. Please.

MEMO

Mom, where's Abuelita?

LUISA

(to herself about her husband)

Ay, Guillermo, when you get home ...

(beat)

We need to talk, *mijito*. Your dad was supposed to tell you in the car, but ... he couldn't. He's late for work, so ...

MEMO

---So you're gonna tell me.

LUISA

Yes. Come here.

(LUISA pulls MEMO close to her; she takes the shawl and wraps it around the two of them)

MEMO

Is she back in the hospital?

LUISA

No, no more hospitals, thank God.

LUISA (cont'd)

Memo ...

MEMO

--Abuelita died. Didn't she?

LUISA

... Yes. Your grandmother -- *mi mamá* -- is gone. She went to sleep one night, and then didn't wake up the next morning. It was very peaceful.

MEMO

When?

LUISA

Two weeks ago. August 15.

MEMO

Two weeks! Why didn't --- why didn't you tell me? Before?

LUISA

We were going to, but we talked it over and ...

MEMO

--I would've come home ...

LUISA

--We didn't want to spoil your trip. Dad's cousins said you were having so much fun with them in Arizona.

MEMO

Did Manuel and Vera know too?

LUISA

Dad called ...

MEMO

--Why didn't they ...

LUISA

--And he asked them not to tell you. We wanted to tell you in person, when you got home.

MEMO

August 15. You know what I did on August 15? I remember exactly what I did that day. Manuel and Vera took me to the waterslides at Wild Surf.

LUISA

Dad asked them to take you somewhere fun, *mijito*.

MEMO

You did?!

LUISA

There's nothing wrong with that.

MEMO

Yes, there is! I didn't think about Abuelita at all that day, and that was the day she died. I didn't even know! What if she was up in Heaven watching me? She saw me having fun and laughing on the day she died. You should've told me.

LUISA

I'm sorry, *mijito*.

CECI (offstage)

Where is everyone?

LUISA (calling off)

In here, Ceci.

MEMO

I bet Ceci knew.

(CECI enters)

CECI

Hey, Memo. Welcome home.

MEMO

Thanks.

CECI

You okay?

MEMO

No.



MEMO

--You didn't want me to get in the way.

LUISA

No, that's not it.

MEMO

Did you bury her?

LUISA

... Yes.

MEMO

I couldn't even be here for that?!

LUISA

Ay, *mijo*. You don't have to feel that kind of sadness yet.

MEMO

But I am sad.

LUISA

Don't be sad, *mijito*.

MEMO

Aren't you sad?

LUISA

Of course. She was my mom. But I'm trying to be strong, for all of us. You have to help me be strong, okay? And I'll help you. We'll all help each other. That's what Abuelita'd want. If she can see us now, and I believe she can, she'd want us to be happy, and not make such a fuss about her.

MEMO

I guess.

LUISA

Remember how much Abuelita loved to see you laugh?

MEMO

Yeah.

(LUISA tickles MEMO, he starts to giggle)

LUISA

You'd laugh, then she'd laugh, then you'd laugh more ...

MEMO

--And then she'd laugh even harder ...

LUISA

--Of course, then I'd get going ...

MEMO

--Yeah, you go next, and then Dad ...

LUISA

--And last of all, your sister.

MEMO

Ceci always tries not to laugh.

LUISA

But she always does.

MEMO

Remember when Ceci wet her pants from laughing so hard?

LUISA

Which time?

(LUISA tickles MEMO more. CECI re-enters)

CECI

Sounds safe to come in now.

LUISA

Ceci, we were just talking about you!

CECI

And laughing too. That makes me feel good.

LUISA

Come here, sour apple.

(she holds both MEMO and CECI)

Oh, I thank God every day for my beautiful babies.

MEMO

Mom!

CECI

Memo's taking the news well.

LUISA

That's 'cause he's strong, like we all should be.

(to MEMO)

You gonna be alright? Want to talk some more?

MEMO

I'm okay.

LUISA

Then we've got work to do. I'll go make room in the garage for this chair and these boxes. Memo, help your sister.

(LUISA exits with rocking chair. As CECI and MEMO converse, CECI transfers Abuelita's clothing from dresser to boxes)

CECI

Take that box to the garage, it's pretty full.

MEMO

Why're we moving Abuelita's stuff out?

CECI

'Cause I'm moving in here.

MEMO

No-you're-not.

CECI

Yes. I am.

MEMO

But this is Abuelita's room.

CECI

Wait. Didn't Mom just tell you ... ?

MEMO

--Yeah.