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SF PERUSALS

Samuel French Acting Edition

El Nogalar

by Tanya Saracho

SAMUEL FRENCH

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EL NOGALAR premiered in a production by Teatro Vista at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago, Illinois, in March 2011. The performance was directed by Cecilie D. Keenan, with sets by Brian Sidney Bembridge, and costumes by Christine Pascual. The stage manager was Rita Vreeland. The cast was as follows:

ANITA . . . . . Christina Nieves
MAITE . . . . . Charín Alvarez
VALERIA . . . . . Sandra Delgado
DUNIA . . . . . Yunuen Pardo
LOPEZ . . . . . Carlo Lorenzo Garcia

CHARACTERS

MAITE: a landowner

ANITA: Maite's daughter, twenty-three

VALERIA: Maite's eldest daughter, thirty-three

DUNIA: a maid

LOPEZ: a "merchant"

SETTING

A pecan orchard in Northern Mexico

TIME

At the dawn of the takeover by the Northern Cartels

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Every time Dunia and Lopez have a scene, the whole thing should technically be in Spanish. However, this play was created for an English-speaking audience, so a device was employed where the Dunia/Lopez scenes begin in Spanish, but then switch to English with the changing of a light source (such as clicking on a light). It's kind of like clicking on the "English Mode" or turning on the "English dial." It's just for the benefit of an English-speaking audience and should not be noted by the actors in the performance – they should seamlessly continue their Spanish action and dialogue into English

Also, / denotes a place of overlapping. The next line must come in at the /. Please observe.

Scene One

(Natural light; however, much is able to seep in through the closed drapes. **DUNIA** *is in the middle of changing the bed. She sprays air freshener as she goes in the closet to put away clean, fancy dresses, which she inspects. She comes outside and sprays some more. She is about to leave when she remembers to take* **MAITE***'s earrings and bracelets out of her pocket and very carefully puts them back in their proper place. As she is doing this,* **LOPEZ** *enters, carrying a book.)*

LOPEZ. ¿QUÉ HACES, DUNIA? */ [What are you doing, Dunia?]* Qué tanto buscas, ¿eh? *[What are you doing here in the dark, huh?]*

DUNIA. *(Quickly, startled.)* Ay, CHIHUAHUAS. ¡Me espantaste! *[Oh, jeez! You spooked me!]*

LOPEZ. A verda', mente cochambroza. / ¿Qué tanto esculcas? *[Ah, you see, guilty mind. What is it you're looking for?]*

DUNIA. ¿Mente que? ¡La tuya fijate! *[Guilty what? Up yours!]*

(She throws something at him.)

LOPEZ. ¿Qué buscas? *[What are you looking for?]*

DUNIA. ¡Cállate tu! ¡A ver sacate de aquí! *[Shut up! Come on, get out of here!]*

*(***DUNIA** *threatens to throw something else,* **LOPEZ** *ducks. He clicks on the lights.)*

(Sound: Translated World.)

LOPEZ. Hey, why is everything in this house always pitch dark? / Don't you think it's a little…

DUNIA. My chest is thumping. Look at that, tun-tun, tun-tun.

(Beat.)

LOPEZ. Hey, you're not mad at me anymore! You're talking to me again.

*(***DUNIA** *remembers that she's supposed to be ignoring him. Oh, shoot. A gesture.)*

See, I still don't understand what I did wrong! I said, "Right now is not a good time to let her go work on the border." It's the truth. You go work in one of those maquilas and what will happen? / Oh, man, I don't even want to think about it. You're better off staying here for now.

DUNIA. My mom was this close to letting me go too! *This* close. Oh, I hate you so much! Everybody wants me to be here stuck to a post. My worst nightmare is me growing old here, nailed to one of those damn pecan trees out there. I hate you so much.

LOPEZ. Don't say that, Dunia.

(Pause.)

You know, I kind of have a duty / to –

DUNIA. A duty to nothing.

LOPEZ. I only said that to your mother for your own good. A young woman alone on the border –

DUNIA. I was going with Neli, the two of us together, I wasn't going alone.

LOPEZ. Neli? That little thing with the scared little pigeon eyes?! Like sending two baby calves to a slaughter house. Like putting a sign on your forehead, "Come kidnap me and rape me, cut me into little pieces."

DUNIA. …I hate you so much.

LOPEZ. Ah, Dunita. Come on.

*(***DUNIA** *opens the curtains; the Nuevo Leon hills and an orchard of pecan trees is revealed; both sun-beaten but splendid.)*

DUNIA. If Valeria walks by and sees us in here in the lady's room she's going to say something. Especially with us using up the electricity in the middle of the day. Well, she might not say something to you, but to me, she will say something.

LOPEZ. It's a sad state of affairs when the Galvans have to save their pennies and watch how much light they fucking use.

DUNIA. Well, it's a sad world right now.

LOPEZ. That it is.

(Beat.)

So why is your mom so formal with me all of a sudden? Last time I came to your house to visit with her, she was really quiet. She was just different. You too. Being so formal with me. Everybody's being so formal with me lately.

DUNIA. …

LOPEZ. What is that face? I'm one of us, Dunia.

DUNIA. Is that right?

LOPEZ. What do you mean, "Is that right?" Am I the guy who…who taught you how to swim when you were this big? Am I the guy who –

DUNIA. My brother taught me how to swim.

LOPEZ. Your brother and who else?

(Beat.)

Your brother and who else?

(Beat.)

DUNIA. You.

LOPEZ. So why is everyone treating me differently then?

DUNIA. Well, why do you walk around like someone put a crown on your head?

LOPEZ. A crown? You got it all wrong, little girl. I don't wear the crown. I'm just the court fool trying to keep the balls up in the air.

DUNIA. Well, you must be a very funny fool for the king on that hill to keep you around then and not cut off your head.

LOPEZ. Come again?

DUNIA. Nothing.

LOPEZ. Is that what people think of me?

DUNIA. I better finish spraying. The whole upstairs smells like a funeral home.

(Starts to go.)

LOPEZ. Fine. Then if you won't keep me company, I'm going to sit in this chair and read this book. I came up to get one of these books they have up in the study. But I thought I remembered there being more books.

DUNIA. Valeria put most of them in boxes. Who's there to read them now?

LOPEZ. She's probably read them all. She's smart that way.

(He settles in the chair to read.)

DUNIA. So you're set on reading in this room then?

LOPEZ. Yes, is that a problem?

DUNIA. No, no. I mean, if you want to sit in your dirty boots in the lady's room, / then you go ahead and sit, you know?

LOPEZ. My boots are not dirty… You like these boots? I just got them last week. You like these boots, don't you?

DUNIA. I thought by now, you'd be at the airport in Monterrey waiting for them, not sitting around reading books but what do I know.

LOPEZ. Their flight's delayed. Apparently, New York is under twenty centimeters of snow. Can you believe that? Twenty centimeters.

DUNIA. Yes, I saw it on the television.

LOPEZ. That doesn't even seem possible to me.

DUNIA. Oh, snow is like nothing to them up there.

LOPEZ. *(Takes out BlackBerry and looks at flight information.)* Then tell me why their phones are down and why this

flight is two hours late, if it's like nothing to them, huh? /

(Looking for flight information.)

It says here it won't land for two more hours.

DUNIA. Show-off. You see how you are? Always showing off your new things.

LOPEZ. Oh this? You like this, huh? You want one of these don't you?

DUNIA. Show-off.

LOPEZ. See, you can look up the weather and flight info. You can look up just about anything.

(Handing it to her.)

Go ahead, look.

(She won't take it. But she wants to.)

It has a camera. And a chatting thing.

DUNIA. *(Snatches it from him.)* Let me see that thing! The things they invent nowadays. If one's got the money to buy it, you can have just about anything you want.

LOPEZ. Money is not everything.

DUNIA. *(Lowers her voice.)* Ooh, you know who you sound like?

LOPEZ. *(Lowers his.)* No I don't. I won't ever end up worried about what lights I turn on and off. And do you know why? Because I save, I save and I plan. I don't just go around wiping my ass with money like these people do!

DUNIA. *(About BlackBerry.)* Oh, you don't wipe your ass with your money? Look at you in your new snake skin boots.

(Beat.)

I don't know much, but I'd be afraid to be such a show-off around here. Find yourself shot in the back of the head. End up with your head on a post by the highway. / Aren't you scared of them, Memo? They change their mind on a whim.

LOPEZ. *(A shift, he's not joking anymore.)* Hey! Stop talking like that. You understand me, you stop talking like that. What happened to your brother – Martin was my friend, Dunia.

DUNIA. I know.

LOPEZ. He was my friend.

DUNIA. Well, your friend went and got himself killed by the maña.

LOPEZ. Don't say that word out loud, Dunia!

DUNIA. Well, he did. Got his head peeled like an apple. / Put it on a stick like a lollipop.

LOPEZ. I mean it. Don't be joking like that! What's wrong with you? What is… You need to learn to have more respect for…for things. How are you going to joke like that about your own brother? / Oh, man…that little head of yours.

(Beat.)

DUNIA. What else can you do but joke? What are we all going to do? Spend the day crying? Well, no. Nobody around here cries either. They don't even let us cry. We all just walk around like we're a movie on mute. You can see people's mouths moving but all you hear is the static.

LOPEZ. I think you're a little affected in the head, baby girl. Maybe you should go talk to Father Miguel.

DUNIA. Father Miguel is the biggest Mafioso in this town! Well, besides that man on the hill up there.

LOPEZ. I'm telling you Dunia, your mouth is going to get you in a –

DUNIA. Why are you the only one they leave alone, Memo?

LOPEZ. …

DUNIA. All the men your age. Killed. Why Memo?

LOPEZ. *(Beat.)* Because I know when to keep my mouth shut which is not something I can say for you, little girl.

DUNIA. So that's all it takes to be best of friends with the maña? That doesn't seem so hard to do.

LOPEZ. For you that'd be an impossible thing to do. I need to buy you a zipper to sew on that little mouth of yours.

DUNIA. I'm going to figure out a way, Memo.

LOPEZ. Oh, no. Listen to me, don't go thinking that you're smarter than everybody else because you're not, you're just a silly little thing and I'm telling you, it will end up bad for you. Are you listening to me?

DUNIA. …

LOPEZ. This is not a game.

DUNIA. I know this is not a game! Why do you always think I'm just so stupid? I know it's not a game. But people have to do something.

LOPEZ. Dunia!

DUNIA. Wait, I'm not trying to be a hero. I don't mean *something* like that! Believe me I'm not trying to end up dismembered by a landfill. All I'm trying to do is learn to swim in it like you. Without drowning.

LOPEZ. Understand that in all of *this*, there is no way for girls like you to "figure it out." Women are zeros, you understand me? Zeros to the left. I don't want to have to start worrying about you, you hear me Dunia? I already got these fucking women coming in today and I'm going to have enough with making them get that they just can't come in here and parade about the way they used to. I'm going to have a hard enough time making them understand that we are under an occupation.

(Beat.)

Fuck, my stomach. Fuck.

(Beat.)

I send Maite email after email explaining the situation. I mean, I'm explaining it the best way I know how. With no flowery language. I am bluntly telling her that it is life or death here and every time, either she ignores it – as in she won't even reply to my fucking email or she just sends some reply asking about the river or the

fucking pecan orchard or some silly ass shit like "Does Mrs. Garcia still make the pecan candy we love so much?" This is some serious fucking shit we are dealing with here and she keeps replying with questions about pecan candy!

(Beat.)

Maybe I'm just not explaining it to her correctly. But doesn't she watch the news?!

DUNIA. Who would believe the news? To me, when I see it, it all seems like a movie. They say on the news, "Two men found shot to death by Los Nogales," then I walk outside and sure enough, there they are: Two corpses by the gates. And neither the thing I'm looking at with my own eyes, nor the television showing close-ups of their dead bodies – neither of those things seem real to me. Who believes us when we tell them?

LOPEZ. Well, she better believe it or she will lose the little she's got left. If we don't negotiate now while I got… *The Man on The Hill* in a good mood, they will just come down from the mountains and take it all by force. Why am I telling you this? This is none of your business.

DUNIA. *(She starts to exit.)* And really, it's none of yours either…if you think about it.

(She exits.)

End of Scene

Scene Two

*(***LOPEZ** *settles into the chair again.)*

LOPEZ. You're right about that. This is none of my fucking business. Ah, my fucking stomach. They need to make an actual medicine that works.

(Takes out some Mexican antacid.)

You know why I end up worrying about other people's shit? Because people don't know when to shut the fuck up around here, that's why. If I have nothing to say, I don't open my mouth. That has been my greatest gift. Zip it. Laugh when everyone else is laughing, even if you don't understand the joke, laugh anyway. And then shut your mouth. Nowadays if someone sees you open your mouth, even to take a breath, a black truck with tinted windows will come driving down the road and carry you off to the most unfortunate corners of the hills. So everybody should just shut their mouths. Half the shit people say is stupid anyway. Half the shit that people write too.

(To himself. Looking down at his book, leafing through it.)

People and their words. Words are for idle people. People who don't have to earn a living.

(Long pause as he decides on a page and attempts to read. He then becomes distracted by the room.)

This was the last room I got to see inside this house… we were never allowed upstairs. Well, the playroom, we were only allowed inside the playroom if we were bringing things up or moving furniture, but never the master bedroom. I always thought this room would be bigger, with draperies everywhere and maybe with gold things on the walls or something. But when I finally made it upstairs and came in to see it…

(Beat.)

Yeah, you always think things are better on the other side when the door is closed on you. You imagine it in your head with more color or something. Like this bed. Everyone talked about this bed so much…the *Porfirio Díaz Bed! It belonged to Porfirio Díaz… Porfirio Díaz himself slept on it!* So you think "Oh, well the bed of a president must be better and bigger than normal people's beds," you know? It must be embedded with gold, dripping with diamonds and shit. But then you finally see the bed and well, it's just a bed. It's a nice bed. It's big and with a nice design. But it remains just an old bed.

(He goes to it and tests it. Bounces on it a bit then lies on it, book on his chest.)

The Porfirio Díaz bed…

(He begins to doze off as lights transition to the next scene.)

End of Scene

Scene Three

*(***VALERIA** *is in the playroom; at least we think it's the playroom, because it seems to also serve as some kind of storage room. There are boxes everywhere, and things under sheets and tarps. One of those covered treasures is a rustic rocking horse, made of porous pecan wood.* **VALERIA** *is sitting with these covered artifacts, looking out the window, fingering a ring of keys. The lights are not on, and the only light coming in is natural light seeping through the windows.* **DUNIA** *enters, carrying the rag and spray bottle she had with her in the master bedroom. She clicks on the lights [Real World: English/Spanish].)*

VALERIA. ¡CÚANTAS VECES LES TENGO QUE DECIR QUE NO PRENDAN LA LUZ / SI TODAVÍA HAY LUZ AFUERA! *[HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU NOT TO TURN ON THE LIGHTS IF THERE IS STILL LIGHT OUTSIDE!]*

DUNIA. ¡Ay, oiga! ¡Ay, no asuste! ¡Ya pues, la apagamos entonces! *[Oh, don't scare me. Alright then, we'll turn it off then!]*

(Makes a big gesture of turning off the light. [Trans: English])

There, light off.

(Holding on to the threshold.)

VALERIA. How many times do I say it? We don't need all the lights in the daytime.

(Notices **DUNIA** *hasn't come in.)*

What are you doing?

DUNIA. *(Shakes her head to say "Nothing.")* …

VALERIA. Duniacomehere.

DUNIA. …huh?

*(***DUNIA** *goes to* **VALERIA**.*)*

VALERIA. What did you do to your face?

DUNIA. Nothing.

VALERIA. What did you do?

DUNIA. I didn't do anything to my face.

VALERIA. You look like a cockroach in a bakery.

DUNIA. I just put on a little powder.

VALERIA. You look like you dunked your head in flour.

DUNIA. *(Politely.)* I do not. My cousin Mila brought it from McAllen from a department store. It's made for my color.

VALERIA. Yes, but you have to go and test the colors on your face, she can't just read a color that sounds like it might go with your skin and hope it works. You have to try it on.

DUNIA. Mila and I are the same color, and it looks perfect on her. I don't think it looks bad.

(Beat.)

Just that nobody around here ever fixes themselves up so you're not used to it.

(Beat.)

VALERIA. Well, you look ridiculous.

DUNIA. Well…

(Better she shut her mouth.)

VALERIA. The flight is delayed. Now they'll get here when it's dark and we'll have to drive through their checkpoints in the dark – because now these people have decided to erect checkpoints wherever they please! Oh, God I did not want to drive back in the dark.

DUNIA. Yeah, Memo told me the airplane is delayed two hours.

VALERIA. He did? Is he here?

*(***DUNIA** *nods.)*

You shouldn't call him that.

DUNIA. Everybody calls him that.

VALERIA. Yes, but I don't think he likes it anymore. I think he wants us to call him by his name now.

DUNIA. That is his name. That's what anyone's ever called him and now he wants us to start calling him something else?

VALERIA. Just say Guillermo. Better yet, call him Mr. Lopez.

DUNIA. I'm sorry, but I'm not going to call him Mr. Lopez. You know what Mr. Lopez is doing right now? Mr. Lopez is currently in the master bedroom sniffing around.

VALERIA. He's what?

DUNIA. I found him there roaming like he was *Peter through his house.*

VALERIA. What is he doing up here?

DUNIA. That's what I wanted to know. He said he was looking for a book to read. Ha! Like he's ever read a book in his life.

VALERIA. Dunia.

DUNIA. I'm sorry but you know you think the same as me. I'm just saying what I see.

VALERIA. Well…stop seeing things…and go and tell him that…ah, go and ask him if he wants a drink.

DUNIA. You go ask him.

(A look from **VALERIA**.*)*

I mean, maybe *you* should ask him, you know? So the two of you can –

VALERIA. So we can what?

DUNIA. You know…so you two can *talk.*

VALERIA. And what will I say to him? I'm already thinking about this agonizing drive we're going to take to Monterrey. He never says a word!

DUNIA. I don't know…maybe ask him to teach you again about how to chat on the computer.

VALERIA. No. We treat him as if he still worked here. And it's absolutely embarrassing. We should have the money to have people do these things.

(Beat.)

VALERIA. What are you looking at me like that for?

*(***DUNIA** *makes an "I'm not looking at you" gesture.)*

You look ridiculous with your hair like that.

DUNIA. Like how? This is how they wear it on MTV.

VALERIA. You watch the satellite too much.

DUNIA. Not anymore. No more satellite. Now how else am I going to learn about the world in this little town?

VALERIA. Enough talking! Go and make sure you sweep all around the house. Especially the porch.

DUNIA. Fulgencio already went around doing that in the morning.

VALERIA. Poor old man, you let him bend his back to do that?

DUNIA. He wanted to do it. You know he's hungry for something to do. He sits by the front door like this *(Demonstrates.)* just looking ahead like one of those London soldiers.

VALERIA. Still you should supervise him so he doesn't break a hip.

(Beat.)

Should I change? Maybe I should change into something else. No, this is fine.

DUNIA. Maybe put on something more lively?

VALERIA. Like what?

DUNIA. I don't know. Like with color. Or like with flowers or something.

VALERIA. I'm not going to go around looking like I belong in a circus, thank you very much.

(Exiting.)

No, I think this will be fine…

*(***VALERIA** *exits.)*

DUNIA. *(Straightening up.)* Please, they wouldn't even let you sell tickets at the circus. You'd depress the clowns, make the monkeys cry. Please, God, if I ever look like that when I'm her age and let all this go to waste *(Referencing her body.)* shoot me like that, in my head.

(Shoots her head with her finger.)

End of Scene

Scene Four

*(***LOPEZ** *enters.)*

LOPEZ. I fell asleep in there. That Porfirio Díaz bed is a trap. / You sink right in.

DUNIA. *(Under her breath.)* …Shameless. So shameless.

LOPEZ. How long was I down for? Why didn't you wake me up?

DUNIA. Oh, now I'm your alarm clock too? You weren't even asleep for ten minutes you just –

(A great commotion is heard. We hear dogs barking, car doors opening and closing, a bag being dropped, and just the general feel of an arrival. **LOPEZ** *goes for his piece. Yes, old boy is packing, okay? But just don't make a big deal out of it ever. This is just what the men do now.* **DUNIA** *notices.)*

DUNIA. NO. I think that's them. Put that thing away!

LOPEZ. How is that them? That can't be them, their flight is –

DUNIA. I don't know, / but I think it is!

*(***LOPEZ** *hides the gun again and runs down the stairs. On the way down, he meets* **VALERIA** *on the landing, who's just appeared. They kind of awkwardly greet each other, and he exits out the front door. Guess it has started to get a little dark without us noticing. [Still English].)*

VALERIA. Memo, I didn't know you – I mean Guillermo. Oh yeah. Go, go.

LOPEZ. Eh, I'm going to help with the –

(Dusk. There are no lights on inside the house, but something's going on outside with the car's headlights. **DUNIA** *puts down the rag and the Febreze bottle, and as she's about to go out the door,* **VALERIA** *stops her. All this happens fast and has a tinge of chaos.)*

VALERIA. What's going on?

DUNIA. I think it's them. I think they got here early after all.

(Beat.)

VALERIA. But they were delayed two hours!

*(***DUNIA** *shrugs her shoulders.)*

Well, go help them with their things! And turn on the lights for God's sake!

*(***DUNIA** *turns on the lights. [Real Time: Spanish/ English].)*

DUNIA. Ah, sí ahora sí prendemos la luz, ¿verdad?

VALERIA. ¡Ándale / ve!

*(***VALERIA** *comes down the steps slowly as we hear the next exchange of voices coming from outside.)*

LOPEZ. A ver, ¡Fulgencio! Las maletas. Yo les ayudo con esto, no se preocupen, yo les ayudo.

MAITE. *(Offstage.)* ¡Memo! ¿Eres tú Memo? No te reconozco… Anis, do you remember Memo? Dios Santo, look at my orchard Anita! I feel like running / por El Nogalar this instant. ¿Y estos perros? I don't recognize these dogs. Oh, your allergies are going to kill you if he's an inside dog Anita.

ANITA. *(Offstage.)* Mom, seriously don't start with that. Mom…Mom please don't start. Jesus Christ! Can you just stop acting crazy and come inside with us please? Can somebody please go make sure she doesn't fall flat on her ass please? However you say it…¡ve con ella! Please.

*(***ANITA** *enters the foyer;* **DUNIA** *trails her with bags.)*

Oh, God…it's just like…like a fucking freak show everywhere we go. And there goes that little old man chasing after her. He's going to break something.

DUNIA. Salio volando la Señora.

(Beat.)

ANITA. Yeah.

(Beat.)

VALERIA. Anita.

ANITA. Oh, my God, Vale.

(They hug long and hard.)

Vale…

VALERIA. Párale si no voy a llorar, eh.

ANITA. Vale…

VALERIA. *(Tenderly.)* ¿Ya, no? Anita…

(They have a little moment. These sisters haven't seen each other in a while.)

¿Y Mami?

ANITA. She ran off like a maniac of course. Oh, God Vale, she kept crying and acting crazy at the stopover in Houston so I gave her a little pill to calm her down but I think it just made her more crazy.

VALERIA. ¿Cómo qué se fue corriendo? She can't go out like that when it is getting dark.

ANITA. Well, I don't know. Go get her then.

VALERIA. Ay, ya empezamos. Ahorita regreso. Dunia, lleva esto para arriba, por favor. *[Ah, here we go. I'll be right back. Dunia, take this upstairs please.]*

DUNIA. Sí para alla iba. *[Yeah, that's where I was going.]*

VALERIA. Ya estás en casa hermanita.

(Exit.)

ANITA. Am I? I guess this is home now, huh?

(A pause. **ANITA** *contemplates the house. The exhaustion is super evident; she is mad tired. After a while she notices* **DUNIA**.*)*

Hola.

DUNIA. Hello.

ANITA. Nice. Hi.

(Beat.)

Warning, *Hola* is as much as you're going to get from me, okay? My Spanish is… No hablo el Español muy –

DUNIA. Ah, don't worry. Do not worry you. I have been practicing very much.

ANITA. Great. Awesome. I mean, I'll understand everything you say, I just can't… Yeah.

(Beat.)

I'm beyond tired. Do you know which room I'm –

DUNIA. Oh, yes. Come, te instalamos in the pink room. Vale she said the pink room.

ANITA. I don't care where you put me at this point, as long as there's a freakin' bed.

DUNIA. Ah, pues…la Señorita Valeria. This is the room of boxes now.

ANITA. The room of boxes? Why is this the room of… Oh, I can't think about it right now. I'm seriously dying of exhaustion. I just want a bed and I want sleep.

DUNIA. You would like a coffee?

ANITA. No, thank you Dunia. Then I won't sleep. I want to actually sleep.

DUNIA. I can't…even laugh that you are here. You left when you were more young but I have very pretty memories of when we played.

ANITA. What? You don't have to speak… I mean, you can say it in Spanish. I understand everything, I just… I'm self-conscious about my accent.

DUNIA. No, you are my only opportunity to practice. I tell you that I want to have a proficiency.

ANITA. Alright, you can practice with me so you can have your proficiency.

DUNIA. Oh, that's very good. I have not before told you but I want to leave from here and go to live in the United States.

ANITA. Why? Don't you know we're all coming back?

I'm hungry. I want some flautas. The food is like one of my constant…it's the thing I remember the most. And this room. Will you go and ask what's her name for me, please Dunia?

DUNIA. The cook, Tere? Ya no está Tere. *[Tere is not here anymore.]*

ANITA. Where did she go?

DUNIA. Se murió – *[She died –]* ah, she died the last year.

ANITA. Oh, no. That's terrible. Nobody tells me these things.

DUNIA. Yes, the last year. Of neumony.

(Beat.)

Pulmony?

ANITA. That's so sad.

DUNIA. Yes.

(Beat.)

ANITA. *(About a typical Mexican toy.)* Wow. Look at this thing. I always used to get these ribbons tangled when I was a kid. God, it's like time skips over this house. Everything stays the same.

DUNIA. Not everything. Everything is different now. In the town, in Los Nogales. It is different.

ANITA. Different how?

DUNIA. I let Valeria or somebody tell. Wait a minute, I will get the hang. You know I wasn't waiting until you come so I practice the English.

ANITA. Look how tall the trees look from here.

DUNIA. Yes, they are tall now. Nobody who cut them.

ANITA. They're not as green as I remember. Even though I never thought… I never thought this orchard was much to look at. It was fun to hide in and run through, but…but it's what we've got, right?

(Beat.)

Oh, my God I'm exhausted.

DUNIA. Entonces is good you come early, ¿verdad?

ANITA. Totally. We would have been like stranded for two hours if it wasn't for that guy Pedro who was so sweet to bring us all the way home.

(She's uncovered a doll.)

Oh, my God. This was my doll!

(Beat.)

DUNIA. Pedro Treviño?

ANITA. Yeah, that's his name, right? Pedro. The teacher guy.

(Beat.)

Rosita! This doll's name was Rosita!

(Intimately to the doll.)

DUNIA. Pedro Treviño is not a teacher guy anymore.

*(***VALERIA** *has entered. She's not too happy with* **DUNIA***'s talk of Pedro.)*

VALERIA. Dunia. A Mami se le antojo cafe. Con canela, como le gusta. Ándale. *[Go make the coffee, go on. Mami has a taste for it – Go.]*

DUNIA. Voy. *[Going]*

(Exits with a knowing look to **ANITA**.*)*

VALERIA. No la aguanto. Es insoportable. *[I can't stand her. She's insufferable.]*

(Beat.)

ANITA. Look, Vale! This was my favorite doll.

VALERIA. They are all here. Every one.

ANITA. Why are they all in boxes? Why does this make me want to cry?

VALERIA. You are tired.

ANITA. We haven't slept. Mami was on an *up* the whole way.

VALERIA. *(Lovingly grabbing her face, petting her hair.)* You are home, hermanita – Look at you, Anis. You are here.

ANITA. Yeah.

VALERIA. I know it has been so very hard for you this year. Let me tell you, it was the loneliest Christmas here.

ANITA. See…don't say those things to me, Vale. It makes me feel guilty for getting to be over there, closer to Mami.

VALERIA. No, no te lo digo por eso, Chiquita. *[No, that's not why I say it, baby girl.]* It's just the way it is, right? I am just… I am just happy to see you. It has been such a long time without seeing you.

ANITA. Vale, you see me when we Skype.

VALERIA. Oh, I hate that thing.

ANITA. It was a hot mess, Vale.

VALERIA. No, me lo imagino. *[No, I can imagine.]*

ANITA. No one has gotten any sleep with this big final opus of a fight she had with *you know who.*

VALERIA. Te hacemos un tesito. *[We can make you a bit of tea.]*

ANITA. No, Vale. I'm trying to tell you that she's not okay. I don't see her for almost six months, we hardly talk on the phone even and then out of the blue, one day she comes to get me at school.

She comes on a random Tuesday with no warning. Wild eyed and super hyper and she just goes and pulls me out of school, just like that. We drive into New York and her mouth doesn't stop. We get there and she's living – because I don't know if you know, Vale, but she lost the loft downtown. She sold it and still managed to have no money for my tuition. You think I don't know that this is why she took me out of school?

VALERIA. Anis –

ANITA. Why is she always a fucking mess?! She lost her passport, now the cell phone, we almost didn't have money to get here. We had to fly economy class! / I don't even want to tell you where we were staying. This man she's living with, he pretends to be this

intellectual, but he's just a fucking meathead. He treats her like a servant. He says things about her being Mexican. Things like I've never heard before about us. People don't talk about us that way.

VALERIA. I'm sorry, Anis.

Please, don't tell me these things.

ANITA. He does. When he says the word "Mexican" it sounds like he's saying a bad word. Like he's saying "shit" or something. I don't know how to explain it.

VALERIA. You know he means other kind of Mexicans. You know what he means. He doesn't mean us.

ANITA. Fucking idiot.

(Pause.)

Vale, I think Mami stays because she has no other place to go.

VALERIA. No me digas eso, por favor.

ANITA. I'm worried, Vale. He took all our money. / He drained her. Oh, don't cry Vale. I'm not saying it so you'll cry. I'm saying it because I haven't been able to talk to anyone about this. I'm saying it because, because I'm home right? I'm home and just want to sleep for two days and go back to being myself. Go back to not worrying about anything.

(Beat.)

VALERIA. *(Starts to cry.)* I know… I know.

You should rest.

(Pause.)

ANITA. Has he proposed to you?

VALERIA. ¿Quién?

ANITA. What do you mean "quién?" Memo.

*(***VALERIA** *shakes her head.)*

Well, what are you waiting for?

VALERIA. What can I do? Propose to him myself? Oh, the whole thing is so embarrassing. Every woman we know

is married, it seems. I'm the only…hasta a Dunia le han propuesto matrimonio. *[Even* **DUNIA** *has had offers of marriage.]* She's got an accountant, a butcher and a man who fixes cars, after her. Like flies she's got them after her. ¿Y yo? I do not even have this one man that everyone says…this one man who is the whole reason I stayed in Los – Oh, it makes me sick to be around him. I start shaking. I don't know if it's anger or just pure – I don't know.

ANITA. He loves you, Vale. It's always been so obvious. And the way he's kept watch over you and over Los Nogales. It's obvious.

VALERIA. Is it? If it is so obvious, what is he waiting for? No, he doesn't even notice I am alive. No sé… When Papi died, I came here because there was something safe about knowing Memo would be around but –

ANITA. Okay, let's not talk about dads in this room. It makes me miss mine. Why do men die?

VALERIA. *(A moment of tenderness between them.)* Sometimes I think I imagined the whole thing. All those letters.

ANITA. Letters are so romantic. Who writes letters anymore?

VALERIA. Well, he wrote letters. The entire time I lived in England, he wrote me. He wrote me these long – well, I've shown you, these long nonsense letters that maybe you'd think a fourth grader had written, but to me they were…they were Los Nogales to me. Pedacitos de él, de esta tierra, del aire.

(Beat.)

Ey, Anita, por favor no le comentes – *[Hey, Anita, please don't tell –]* don't tell Mami about the letters okay?

ANITA. Okay.

VALERIA. She's always been strange about Memo… I don't know.

ANITA. Yeah, I know.

VALERIA. I'm not imagining it, right?

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