

LEAVING, BUT CAN'T LET GO

by **Lupe Gehrenbeck**

CHARACTERS:

ELVIRA

Venezuelan, housewife, 65 years old, lives in Caracas.

ALBERTA

Colombian, 65 years old, works as a domestic help at Elvira's house.

CAROLINA

Oldest daughter of Elvira, 35 years old, lives in Miami.

CANDELARIA

Elvira's youngest daughter, 33 years old, lives in Caracas.

TONY

Alberta's only son, 22 years old.

GUSTAVO

Elvira's tenant (always OFF)

TANIA

Elvira's neighbor (always OFF)

... to Karina ...

NOTE:

A VAGUE SILHOUETTE APPEARS AND DISAPPEARS EVERY NOW AND THEN. THAT SHADOW SEEMS TO BE OBSERVING EVERYTHING FROM THE DARKNESS. NOBODY NOTICE IT.

BLACK OUT.

THE SOUND OF A SKYPE CALL. THE SCREEN FROM A LAPTOP LIGHTS UP. ELVIRA ENTERS, WEARING A ROBE AND SLIPPERS. SHE ANSWERS THE SKYPE CALL.

CAROLINA ENTERS. SHE IS WEARING AN APRON FROM A RESTAURANT.

ELVIRA:

Hello my love...

CAROLINA:

Did I wake you?

ELVIRA:

No, *mija*, I already had breakfast. I was reading the newspaper.

CAROLINA:

I don't know why you still read the newspaper, mom, it only worries you.

ELVIRA:

Not knowing what happens is what worries me.

CAROLINA:

And what did you discover this morning?

ELVIRA READS A PIECE OF AN OLD AND WRINKLED NEWSPAPER, SHE WAS USING TO WRAP A GLASS CUP.

ELVIRA:

That "the National Guard ordered to have the fish removed from the beaches."

CAROLINA:

What? Only in Venezuela!
It surpasses any reach of the imagination...

ELVIRA:

That's why you have to read the paper:
to know about the unexplainable.

ELVIRA:

A pile of dead sardines were found on the beach and the pictures are terrible.

ELVIRA:

The government doesn't know if the expensive yacht clubs are responsible, or if it's the result of an environmental crisis.

CAROLINA:

And what do sardines have to do with yacht clubs?

ELVIRA:

The same fucking thing they have to do with the price of tea in China!

CAROLINA:

Mom! Remember you're a grandmother!

ELVIRA:

I'll be buried with a curse on my lips. It doesn't hurt anyone!

So tell me, what am I good for?

CAROLINA:

Should I buy your ticket for the end of the month?

ELVIRA:

For the end of the month?

No, Carolina, it's too soon! I still have so many things to do.

ELVIRA GOES BACK TO WRAPPING THE GLASS CUP WITH THE NEWSPAPER AND PLACES IT A CARDBOARD BOX.

CAROLINA:

What do you have to do besides pack your suitcase and dad's? You don't need to take care of everything at once.

ELVIRA:

I can't leave things pending, because I won't be able to sleep.

CAROLINA:

Candelaria could deal with it if anything comes up...

ELVIRA:

You know your sister. She has no time for anything.

CAROLINA:

I know, she only has time to care for the poor... but not for her own family... When was the last time she visited you?

ELVIRA:

She always comes for lunch.

CAROLINA:

When was the last time?

A month ago, when she told you she didn't agree with you coming, right?

ELVIRA:

I talk to her several times a day, every day.

CAROLINA:

You can do that from New York too.

ELVIRA:

Don't start fighting about your sister.

CAROLINA:

Candela is selfish, masquerading as a socialist. She only thinks of herself. But since you've always protected her...

ELVIRA:

Leave me alone, Carolina!

PAUSE. SILENCE.

CAROLINA:

How did the garage sale go?

ELVIRA:

I was going to get to it now.

CAROLINA:

Oh, mom, you were supposed to do it yesterday!

ELVIRA:

I didn't have time.

CAROLINA:

It is not so complicated: you put a price on things,
and that's it. It's all right if you don't sell everything though.
You could also hire someone to organize it for you.

ELVIRA:

Do you really think that just anyone can come along and
decide what's important, and how much my memories are worth?

Come on, Carolina!

I already have enough on my plate just getting rid of my things...

CAROLINA:

You don't have to sell what you don't want to sell.
You might sell only the things you haven't used for a long time.

ELVIRA:

They're not just things! It's is my life that is being put on sale!
Even though I haven't used it in years.

CAROLINA:

Oh, no, mom, that's too much drama.
If you're so tied to the old, to the past,
you won't be able to open yourself to the future...

ELVIRA:

Your dad's the only old thing I'm tied to.
What other future? After a certain age,
the past and the future go together,
if not, you're lost. You carry your baggage wherever you go,
the older the heavier.

CAROLINA:

You need to look on the bright side.
Just think that everything that happens is for the best!
I just don't want anything bad happening to you in Venezuela.

ELVIRA:

Whatever was supposed to happen to me already did,
and nothing happened.

CAROLINA:

So, what are you suggesting?
That we wait until something bad happens to you?
That would kill dad!

ELVIRA:

The only thing that worries you about me dying
is that your dad dies.

CAROLINA:

Mom!

ELVIRA:

At least my wake might help you to reconcile with
your sister.

–You need to look on the bright side... right?

CAROLINA:

Why are you being so aggressive with me?

Because I want to have you close to me...

Because I need you,

because I'm worried about what might happen
to you in Venezuela...?

ELVIRA:

No, Carolina, I understand all that but give me time.

It is not easy to let go of the only life I know.

NEIGHBOR: (OFF)

Elvira ... Elvira...!

ELVIRA:

Yes, Tania, *mi amor*...

CAROLINA:

Why do your neighbors never use the phone, mom?

NEIGHBOR: (OFF)

There's cooking oil! But only one bottle per person.

So, you better come and stand in line,

do you want me to wait for you?

ELVIRA:

Yesterday I found butter in the market down the street,

and since there were no sardines,

I bought meat to make *carne mechada*,

I don't need the cooking oil.

Thank you, Tania, anyway.

If you want, come later and try it.

TANIA:

And how are you going to fry the plantains?

ELVIRA:

If the country isn't the same, our national dish has to adapt.

If there's no oil we'll boil the plantains!

CAROLINA:

It's healthier. Frying is the worst!

TANIA:

And how do we fry our fish, the *tequeños*, our arepas and *perico*...?

What's going to be on the menu now in this changed country?

CAROLINA:

That's why your cholesterol is so high.

ELVIRA:

You know what, Tania? Get in line and I'll meet you later.

Waiting is also on our menu now.

CAROLINA:

... I'm going to put you on a diet here!

ELVIRA:

There's no need. We're already on a forced diet.

CAROLINA:

I talked to my dad yesterday. He told me that he was
eating oatmeal and had lost some inches off his waistline.

ELVIRA:

Yes, that's what he says.

CAROLINA:

He already spoke with *señor* Pablo in New York who invited him to play dominoes with all his *compadres*.

You see? That's looking on the bright side-

Think of it as a long vacation, mom. That's it!

And then we'll see. It doesn't have to be a trauma. Forget the sale.

ELVIRA:

No! I really want to sell. We need more space here.

CAROLINA:

But the house is too big for the two of you.

ELVIRA:

Precisely.

CAROLINA:

Don't tell me you're going to keep renting rooms in the house?

ELVIRA:

Why not?

CAROLINA:

Oh, mom, because it's dangerous to rent to strangers.

Besides, the way things are going,

you don't know if you can make them leave later.

What does my dad say about it?

ELVIRA:

This house is too full of things to clean.

And I'm the one doing the cleaning, not your dad.

CAROLINA:

The house has always been that way

That's its charm. I don't understand why it bothers you now.

ELVIRA:

Because what's not in use, should find a place elsewhere.

A new life in someone else's house.

CAROLINA:

You talk about objects as if they were people.

They're just objects, mom.

Besides, here you'll be able to buy anything you can think of, even things you didn't know existed.

You won't need anything except...

ELVIRA:

...money to buy it, right?

And where's the money coming from?

CAROLINA:

You don't need to rent rooms to survive, mom.

Don't you rent two studios already?

ELVIRA:

Yes, but from your room and the terrace, and the TV room, we can make another studio.

CAROLINA:

Are you going to dismantle my room?

ELVIRA:

...So then...? Who's the one who won't let go of the past?

CAROLINA:

Why don't you use Candela's bedroom for the new studio?

ELVIRA:

Candela's bedroom is full of things;
it's become a storage room.

CAROLINA:

Well, those nick-knacks are the first things that you have to sell!

ELVIRA:

I'm working on that, getting rid of things, little by little...
it's been too many years forgotten inside the silence of these
four walls... and it hurts.

CAROLINA:

Why? Haven't you had a happy life?

ELVIRA:

Precisely, it's because I've had a happy life.

CAROLINA:

I can't imagine how things must have changed.
I don't think I would be able to return.
I'd rather remember the house as it was.
All I ask is that you don't sell my books, mom.

ELVIRA HIDES THE BOOKS SHE WAS ABOUT TO PUT IN A BOX, FEELING GUILTY
FOR HAVING HAD THE IDEA OF SELLING THEM.

CAROLINA: (REMEMBERS)

SECRETS OF A FISHERMAN

Once upon a time, a fisherman, Joselo,

Had a son, Manuelo.

Who wouldn't think,

That the child would go fishing like his father?

Every day at dawn,

Joselo, departed with his hooks,

And always returned with fish,

To teach Manuelo what he knew.

Secrets of the craft,

It was Manuelo's turn,

To take them on.

Poor Manuelo, didn't sleep,

As dawn approached

To the sea he would not go,

Even when his father looked for him,

To journey on.

ELVIRA: (READS)

To avoid going sailing,

Manuelo's excuses were unfailing:

*His belly ached...
Or sleepwalking he did feign.
3 x 4 was 9, his math was failing...
Any excuse was good not to go sailing.*

ELVIRA TAKES OTHER BOOKS FROM THE SHELF AND QUICKLY GOES THROUGH THEIR PAGES.

ELVIRA:

These schoolbooks only bring back bad memories;
she failed math every year, never memorized the 4s table.
Carolina... only liked to read stories,
anything that would take her away from reality.
She wanted to escape since she was little...

ELVIRA DECIDES TO PUT THEM IN A CARDBOARD BOX.

ELVIRA:

These books are good for Tony...

ELVIRA KEEPS THE FISHERMAN TALE BOOK AND READS.

CAROLINA:

*Manuelo did not open his eyes,
Although Joselo called him,
He said he was blinded,
Dazzled by the sun*

*Joselo was already tired,
Of so many lies and lack of reason,
It was not a matter of choice:
Fishing was a must,
For those who lived near the sea.*

*Manuelo wanted to explain,
But his father turned a deaf ear:*

ELVIRA: (READS)

*"Not another word boy,
Tonight, you come with me.*

CAROLINA:

*Manuelo cried,
He could not escape the sea.*

ELVIRA: (READS)

*Carmen Teresa,
His beloved mother,
Wanted to comfort him,
And find out why Manuelo,
Was so afraid of the sea.
"It's better to tell the truth.
To be able to reason",
son, she told him.*

CAROLINA:

*Manuelo searched and searched,
For an answer, a lie, an excuse,
But he had run out of stories.
Then, at last, he confessed:
"I'm afraid of the sea ...
because I want to return."*

ELVIRA CLOSSES THE BOOK. SHE THINKS FOR A MOMENT.

ELVIRA:

I'm going to take this book to my grandson Santiago...
so that he learns to speak Spanish ...
so that he learns how to return.

ELVIRA TALKS TO THE LAPTOP AGAIN.

ELVIRA:

I'm taking your grandfather's chair.

CAROLINA:

Which one? The wicker chair painted blue?

ELVIRA:

The very same!

CAROLINA:

Oh, mom, do you know how much a wicker chair costs at IKEA?!
\$25!!! Then you can paint it any color you want.

ELVIRA:

But the \$25 IKEA chair isn't the one your grandfather used
to sit on to fill out crossword puzzles and munch on nuts.

CAROLINA:

Do you know that it has been discovered that the nuts
are very good for you?

ELVIRA:

Your grandfather already knew it.

CAROLINA:

Yes ... coming!

Well, mom, when do I buy you the ticket?

ELVIRA:

I don't want to bother you.

CAROLINA:

Oh, Mom, we're not going back on that!

We discussed that already and agreed.

And for the rest, as it comes, we'll play it by ear.

ELVIRA:

Precisely, I'm trying to look ahead so see what might happen.

Do you understand?

CAROLINA:

Coming in a sec! I'm just saying good-bye...

Mom, I have to leave you, the patients are here. I'll call you later. Kisses.

CAROLINA EXITS.

ELVIRA:

Kisses my love...
Damn, always so ready to go somewhere else.

FULL LIGHT ON STAGE. WE DISCOVER THE TYPICAL MIDDLE CLASS HOUSE, FULL OF PORCELAIN OBJECTS, PAINTINGS OF LANDSCAPES, ETC. A DOLL HOUSE LAYS IN THE CORNER. IN THE MIDDLE THERE IS A TABLE FULL OF OBJECTS. ELVIRA SEES EVERYTHING, WITH NOSTALGIA. SUDDENLY SHE DECIDES TO UNHANG ONE OF THE PAINTINGS.

ELVIRA:

It doesn't hurt me at all ... not at all...
On the contrary: I'll finally be able to get rid of you!
I never liked this painting. But since Hortensia wanted
to be an artist, we couldn't let her down...
Solidarity, bound by family ties.
And I've had to live with this painting my whole life,
hovering in the background at every lunch like a critic,
witnessing every breakfast... If those oranges could speak,
they could tell the story of this family,
with all its pride and indiscretions...

ALBERTA ENTERS.

ALBERTA:

You've got to have great imagination, to say that that mess is a plate
full of oranges on a printed tablecloth.

ELVIRA:

There is something for everyone in this world.
Who knows, maybe someone will like it.

ELVIRA:

I would give it away for nothing.
But since no one appreciates giveaways...

ALBERTA:

Whoever buys it didn't know Hortensia,
they don't have to hate the painting...

ELVIRA:

If they give me 300, I'll be happy...
Forgive me, Ramón Antonio, but I won't discuss it.
I know you loved Hortensia very much.
But I doubt there has ever been a more bitter
and embittering sister in law than Hortensia.

ELVIRA PUTS THE PAINTING ON THE TABLE WHICH IS FULL OF OBJECTS. SHE TAKES A LITTLE PORCELAIN DOLL.

ELVIRA:

This little porcelain doll didn't have many friends
in this house, either. From the day she gave it to me ...
what was her name? Jessica...

ALBERTA:

...Elizabeth?

ELVIRA:

...Jacqueline...

or any other of those strange names in American films
that husband's secretaries are called.

Candelaria, who always speaks her mind, said it was corny.

Carolina, much more practical and ready to get rid of things,
suggested to gift wrap it and give it to aunt Hortensia as a Christmas
present, - she would be certain to like it.

ALBERTA:

She had no shame, not even with her dad.

ELVIRA:

I did what I could, in case Stefanie showed up one day and...

ALBERTA:

Stefanie!!!

ELVIRA:

Yes, Stefanie...!

... Just in case she came to visit one day to find
the porcelain doll gone.

I gave you a place all these years, but...

I can't carry you with me to the North. I'm sorry...

poor little thing. It saddens me, a little...

But you know? It gets cold up there...

ALBERTA:

And she doesn't speak English!

ELVIRA:

300! But if I get 100, you're gone!

ELVIRA PUTS THE DOLL BACK ON THE TABLE AND TAKES A PORCELAINE DOG.

ELVIRA:

This dog is something else. I love it...

ALBERTA:

It even had a companion...

ELVIRA:

But it lost an ear, then the tail, a paw, and so on...

until I had to throw it because it did not even stand up.

ALBERTA:

It survived because I put it inside the cabinet.

ELVIRA:

It was a miracle, he survived your cleaning, Alberta.

Well this noble little dog,

which does not bark or shit,

is worth some money...

ALBERTA:

It is *capo del Monte*!

ELVIRA:

Capodimonte, Alberta!

ALBERTA:

What happens is that people nowadays

are not interested in these delicacies...

ELVIRA:

Nobody have time to stare at a porcelain puppy,
which reminds you of anybody...

ELVIRA IS ABOUT TO PRICE THE LITTLE DOG BUT SHE CHANGES HER MIND,
WRAPS IT IN NEWSPAPER AND PUTS IT IN A SUITCASE.

ELVIRA:

Life is so unfair... Clemencia didn't deserve that horrible cancer.
This little dog weighs nothing, and fits anywhere.
So, I can take my friend's memory,
she gave it to me with so much love
and it's a way to keep her alive, may she rest in peace.

LIGHTS TURN OFF.

ELVIRA:

Coño!

ALBERTA:

The power's out again.

ELVIRA:

And Carolina says that I don't do the sale
because I don't want to.

ALBERTA:

The country doesn't let us.

THE SOUND OF A MUSIC BOX. ELVIRA TRIES TO FOLLOW THE SOUND IN THE
DARKNESS, UNTIL SHE FINDS THE MUSIC BOX AND OPENS IT.

ELVIRA:

Where did my youth go? ...
I can still hear the sound of what's possible
taking place outside the house and school,
life and its mysteries, infinite,
the happiness that I can still imagine as the music plays...
what if I'd been a dancer? ...
My mom would close the music box
because there's school tomorrow and it's too late
and there's no money for dancing classes.

ELVIRA CLOSES THE MUSIC BOX.

ELVIRA:

Illusions, innocence, Prince Charming stories and boat trips,
the world and its wonders... still here, with its music, intact.

SUDDENLY, THE SOUND OF A SMALL VOICE (ALBERTA).

PORCELAIN DOLL:

Elvira... Elvirita...

ELVIRA:

Who is it?

ALBERTA TAKES A PORCELAINE DOLL FROM THE TABLE AND APPROACHES
ELVIRA.

PORCELAIN DOLL:

*If you leave, don't leave me behind.
 What else would force you to pronounce the man's name
 who gave me to you because we looked alike?
 Gilberto... don't kill him.*

ELVIRA TAKES THE DOLL IN HER HANDS AND BRINGS HER CLOSE TO HER EAR TO HEAR BETTER. ALTHOUGH A LITTLE BIT ASHAMED, SHE CONFESSES.

ELVIRA:

Sometimes I go to Gilberto's brothers' bakery
 and buy pink and green meringues...

PORCELAIN DOLL:

*All his meringues bear your name.
 And the golfeados, the chocolate cake...
 If you leave me, no one will know
 that it was the young baker who taught you
 the sweetness of love.*

ALBERTA EXITS.

LIGHT RETURNS.

ELVIRA IS HOLDING A PORCELAINE DOLL NEXT TO HER EAR, TALKING TO HER. SHE FEELS KIND OF SURPRISED AND ASHAMED OF HERSELF. SHE LOOKS AT THE DOLL WITH STRANGENESS. THE DOLL DOES NOT SPEAK ANY MORE. SHE RETURNS IT TO THE TABLE OF OBJECTS THAT ARE ON SALE. SHE THINKS AND DECIDES TO WRAP IT WITH A NEWSPAPER AND PUT IT INTO THE SUITCASE. A REMOTE MELODY IS HEARD. CAROLINA ENTERS.

CAROLINA:

*I'm afraid of the sea ... because I want to return.
 Your dad always comes back, what makes you hesitate?
 If I want to go back, why should I leave?*

*To bring the fish for the soup,
 And a star born in the water,
 The tale of the three-footed fish,
 And other mermaid songs,
 The secrets you'll be able to tell
 To all who want to listen.*

*It was so that Manuêlo,
 Lost his fear and threw himself into the sea,
 Searching for stories to tell.*

*he had a secret as well:
 A girl, very pretty, Margarita,
 whom with these tales,
 he wanted to impress.*

CAROLINA TALKS TO HER SON.

CAROLINA:

Santiago... do you know where Venezuela is, my love?
 It is not in the Caribbean nor in the north of South America.
 That's what people believe who don't know
 that Venezuela is here, in the heart.
 No matter where you are. You're Venezuelan,
 because my affections and your smiles are made of just that.
 Because you fall asleep with the same story
 my grandmother told my mother.

CAROLINA TURNS OFF A LITTLE LAMP NEAR BY AND EXISTS.
 ELVIRA TAKES A PHOTO FROM A FRAME.

ELVIRA:

I'm going to give these photos to the girls.

ALBERTA SPEAKS FROM SOMEWHERE BEHIND.

ALBERTA:

Who else would be interested in the day
 she married Mister Ramon Antonio?

ELVIRA:

It was a simple ceremony...

ALBERTA:

... But heartfelt...

ELVIRA:

Everyone was happy, but there was no dancing...

ALBERTA:

Because it's bad luck...

ELVIRA:

Well, except for Maria Eugenia...

ALBERTA:

...The mysterious cousin.

ELVIRA:

Ramon Antonio has never wanted to tell me,
 but I'm sure there was something going on.

Otherwise why did she have that long face all night?
 Anyway, it didn't matter, because no one said anything...

ALBERTA:

They all pretended...

ELVIRA:

...Because they were all in on it or because no one cared for the cousin...
 Anyway, Ramon Antonio was so happy, that his mustache curled up.

ALBERTA:

And that sign never lies.

ELVIRA:

The scratchy tickle on my lips, his sinful kisses that made me faint.
 When Ramon Antonio wants, his mustache curls up.
 From the day I met him at Mrs. Agustina's funeral...
 until we filled up all these rooms and walls on the land of this house...

ALBERTA:

...With such effort and love...

ELVIRA:

How can you ask me to leave now?
if Ramon Antonio's mustache still curls up?

ALBERTA ENTERS.

ALBERTA:

Hello, hello... you got up early! Have you had breakfast?
What's wrong?

ELVIRA:

Nothing... or a lot, worth nothing.
Because when you abandon your possessions, they lose their value.

ALBERTA:

It's the trip that's making you nervous.

ELVIRA:

What happened to Tony?

ALBERTA:

Yes, they released him. But I haven't seen him yet.
He's celebrating. As soon as he gets tired he'll end up home.
I'll be waiting for him there.

ELVIRA:

As long as he doesn't insist on making bad choices...

ALBERTA:

Oh, you can't imagine how much I pray to God, Doña Elvira, to guide him.
We're yet to see if he's learned his lesson.
Because it was hard for him in there...
Is this what you're selling?

ELVIRA TAKES ANOTHER PHOTO OUT OF ITS FRAME. ALBERTA STARTS
CLEANING THE OBJECTS FOR SALE ON THE TABLE.

ELVIRA:

This was the first time I saw the snow...

ELVIRA LAUGHS.

ALBERTA:

He who laughs alone...

ELVIRA:

...The day I skied in the Maritime Alp.

ALBERTA:

I know that story already.

ELVIRA:

All fiction! I couldn't even stand on those skis.

ALBERTA:

Don't tell me that!

ELVIRA:

I put on the ski suit the hat, and I posed, and took the picture,
only thinking about my living room,
and people asking me to tell them
the story of the day I skied in the Maritime Alps.

ALBERTA:

Oh, Mrs. Elvira, what a sin!
To think that all these years I've been dusting
a picture that's just a lie!

ELVIRA:

And Ramón Antonio who always listened to me as if it was
the very first time. He loved to watch me trick
my friends with my winter accomplishments.

ALBERTA:

At the end, you were this close to becoming an Olympic champion.

BOTH LAUGH.

ELVIRA:

Ramón Antonio was wonderful, he never said anything.

ALBERTA:

I never would have imagined Mr. Ramón as an accomplice.

ELVIRA:

He had no need to lie, because his family had money and took
him to Europe when he was a child. That's why
he took me to Paris on my honeymoon.

That's why he never said that the Alp's story was a lie.

ALBERTA:

Everything is beautiful over there, right?

ELVIRA:

It's different.

LOUD REGGAETON CAN BE HEARD FROM THE STREET.

ALBERTA:

(SCREAMING AT THE WINDOW)

Turn that noise down... That's not music!

NEIGHBOR: (OFF)

Come and do it yourself.

ALBERTA:

I'm going to call the police!

NEIGHBOR: (OFF)

You better find a crook to defend you!

ALBERTA:

I'm sure you don't hear this kind of music
over there in Europe.

MUSIC FADES OUT SLOWLY.

ELVIRA:

Everything is muted, people talk softly and
they don't look at you...

As if you were invisible. So, you start feeling guilty,
for being an uninvited guest.

After the dream of being in Paris is over
and you're back you realize that they're the invisible ones.

ALBERTA:

But New York is different because a lot of people speak Spanish

and that helps... and Carolina and your grandchildren live there...
You'll relax and forget everything.

ELVIRA:

That's what worries me! I don't want to forget.

ALBERTA:

What is it that worries you so much? We've emigrated from here
anyway. Don't you realize that people no longer resemble what
they were? After a lifetime of *good morning, good afternoon...*
we don't recognize ourselves, and we're so scared
that we shut ourselves up. Isn't that forgetting?

ELVIRA:

But if we all leave, who's going to tell the story?
When you belong, no matter how much changes take place,
you belong, you're part of the story.
But in a different landscape with strange people,
who'll remind us who we are?

ALBERTA:

Don't you want an herbal tea, instead?

ELVIRA PULLS OUT ANOTHER PICTURE.

ELVIRA:

This was when Carolina turned six.
But the one who's looking at the camera,
with that look she has when she knows perfectly well
what she's doing, is Candelaria, stealing the spotlight
from her sister, how sly. Such beautiful eyes filled
with sparkles. She still looks like that, my Candelaria...

PHONE RINGS.

ELVIRA:

¡Palabra cierta! It must be Candela,
nobody calls me at this time but my daughters...
when they call me.

(AT THE PHONE) Hello, sweetie... yes... Well, of course,
I have *carne mechada*, I'll make some rice...
and I've cooked some delicious black beans!

At what time are you coming?

I boiled the plantain because I didn't want to wait on line
at the supermarket to get a small bottle of cooking oil.

ALBERTA APPROVES WITH A GESTURE AND STAYS NEXT TO ELVIRA TO
BETTER LISTEN TO THE CONVERSATION. ALBERTA GESTURES ACCORDING TO
WHAT SHE HEARS, EXPRESSING HER OPINION.

ELVIRA:

As soon as I get *apio* I'll make *buñuelos* for you, my love.

ALBERTA DISAPPROVES; SHE IS THE ONE WHO MAKES THE *buñuelos*.

ELVIRA:

The sale is tomorrow and I haven't priced things yet...

It's not Carolina's doing...
I put the ad in the paper already so now I can't back down!
I can't clean so many things anymore...

ALBERTA DISAPPROVES AGAIN; SHE IS THE ONE WHO CLEANS. ELVIRA TURNS
AND GOES EVEN FURTHER.

ELVIRA:

Alberta is worse than ever, and you know how she is...
It's best if she doesn't clean.

ALBERTA:

Ok, here we go, now it's my turn!

ELVIRA:

Oh, Candela, leave me alone, we're busy here...

ALBERTA:

What are you saying about me, Candela?

Behave, bad girl!

... She's just like her mother... she loves fiction.

ELVIRA:

... So, Candela, what's that speech all about?

You can't accuse me of that... it's not fair.

Look, mijita, I was the first one to tell you about Marx,
so, don't give me that catechism...

I know, my love, that you're struggling, and I acknowledge
your work... Your dad too... don't say that.

I know, many good things have been accomplished, it's true...

No, it's not that. It's also so I can be with your sister
and help her with the children. I hardly know Santiago!

That's her right: she wanted to leave just like you want to stay...

Don't talk like that about your sister!

Well, should I wait for you to have lunch or not?

Ok, if you're angry, all the worse for you.

Now you're going to have to let it go!

ELVIRA HANGS UP THE PHONE, UPSET.

ALBERTA:

Candelaria is also right: if everybody leaves, who'll be left here?

ELVIRA:

I'm not everybody, Alberta.

And I'm not leaving it's just that to see
my grandchildren I need to take a plane.

Later I'll be too old to fly,

and you know old parrots don't learn to speak.

ALBERTA:

Ay, Mrs. Elvira, but you already speak English!

Don't give me that!

ELVIRA:

I can barely read the medicine labels, that's all.
And I'm too old now to be treated like I'm worthless
for speaking poorly in a foreign land.

They don't know anything about Venezuela either,
 only about Chavez, in favor or against; it doesn't matter...
 and about the beauty contests,
 because nobody comes to the beaches anymore,
 since it's so dangerous here...

ALBERTA:

One can hardly hear the Caribbean Sea anymore,
 with so much *bachata* and *reggaeton*.

ALBERTA:

Carolina is stubborn and after the kidnapping she's concerned,
 of course, she worries... she has her reasons.

ELVIRA:

The kidnapper also had his reasons...
 and the bankers and the ministers... But... what about my reasons?

ALBERTA:

Mr. Ramón Antonio almost died of fright.

ELVIRA:

Poor soul... my dear Ramon Antonio...

ALBERTA:

... And your daughters... and me! It was a miracle that they let you go,
 because Mr. Ramón Antonio had no money to pay that ransom...

ELVIRA:

Yes ... it was a miracle.

ALBERTA:

I'm still paying for it.

ELVIRA:

What?!!!

ALBERTA:

I asked so much of the *Virgencita del Carmen*, that I still owe her.

ELVIRA:

What did you promise her?

ALBERTA:

That if they released you safely I wouldn't eat rice for a year.

ELVIRA:

No wonder your waistline has shrunk, Alberta!

ALBERTA:

And apparently, I'm going to end up in a beauty contest,
 because now I owe some more. What can one do?

If you don't pay for your miracles, your future catches up with you.

ELVIRA:

It's better to pay back your miracles than to go on useless diets.

ALBERTA:

Now that my Tony came out of jail,
 which is another miracle, no more rice for another year.

ELVIRA:

You said it: Tony was the miracle.

ALBERTA:

And with my taste for rice and chicken, rice pudding...

ELVIRA:

And you make it so well, Alberta, what a sacrifice!

ALBERTA:

For that very reason, Doña Elvira, it's best if you go to New York because it's scary going to the beach with so many hoods around here. And for you living far from the sea is worse than living without rice.

ELVIRA:

Because I'm from the Caribbean... That's my reason.

ELVIRA PULLS OUT ANOTHER PHOTO.

ELVIRA:

She was just a little girl when she graduated as a sociologist. That day, Ramón Antonio told her that she had turned out a communist like her mother. But she seems to have forgotten that... Candelaria is such a case!

PHONE RINGS.

ALBERTA:

There she is again!
She doesn't even stay angry for ten minutes.

ALBERTA TAKES THE PHONE AND PASSES IT TO ELVIRA.

ELVIRA: (AT THE PHONE)

Aja, what happened? Are you going to come for lunch? ...

I'm not selling the furniture ... No, *muchacha!* ...

But Candelaria, what do you want the silver tea set for?

That's not too posh, *mija?* ...

Yes, but your granny is also Carolina's granny ...

And what does it matter if she drinks coffee? ...

No. I'm not going to give it to Carolina either...

Let the fight with Carolina go, she hasn't asked for anything, she's happy with her IKEA stuff, she doesn't even remember the tea set ... I'm not leaving you without memories, don't say that. They were my memories before they became yours too, Candelaria.

Do you think it doesn't hurt? ...

It hurts the one leaving and it hurts the one who stays,
please stop messing with Carolina! ...

Well, if you're so worried about what I'm going to sell,
why don't you come, see what you want and take it? ...

Well ... Sure! Where will I go?

I'm going to be here all afternoon...

ELVIRA FEELS TIRED.

ELVIRA:

...

For the rest of my life...

ALBERTA:

Muchacha, always spitting fire, she hasn't changed a bit.

ELVIRA:

It saved me that she's driving and there was a traffic cop
so she had to hang up, because Candelaria can drive you crazy!

ALBERTA:

Well, you know she's very stubborn.

ELVIRA:

She's been a fanatic since she was a child.
If she was being Little Mermaid she wanted to sleep with her tail on;
when she started reading poetry, she recited everything...
But not all is bad there nor is everything good here.

ALBERTA:

Well, the political situation, the insecurity ...
I've already gone through that. I know that story too.

ELVIRA:

Emigration is erasing the past. Although in the first world,
IKEA is leaving people without roots, without memories.

ALBERTA:

And what is that IKEA you talk so much about? ...
The US emigration services?

ELVIRA:

It's a store, Alberta. That makes all households look the same...
the same cutlery, the same trashcan, the same bathroom rug...
(SCREAMING, URGENT) No! Don't put that teapot on sale!

ALBERTA DROPS THE TEAPOT. IT BREAKS.

ALBERTA:

Ay, Mrs. Elvira, what a pity, how can I repair it?
This teapot has lasted for so long...

ELVIRA:

Precisely, it was a miracle!

ELVIRA TRIES TO PUT THE PIECES TOGETHER. ALBERTA IS ASHAMED.

ALBERTA:

This time it's for sure,
I won't break anything else, I swear, Mrs. Elvira.

...

I'm going back to Cuba.

ELVIRA:

Oh, God, that hurts.

ELVIRA STARTS CRYING, STILL WITH THE TEAPOT PIECES IN HER HANDS.

ALBERTA:

Don't feel like that, please, I'll buy you another one...
please don't cry, that makes me feel so bad...

ELVIRA:

No, Alberta, what are you thinking?
Ramón Antonio gave me this teapot
when we went to Paris on our honeymoon.
You can't buy the memory of those days we spent together...

ALBERTA:

...Being invisible?

BOTH LAUGH, NO MATTER THE SADNESS.

ELVIRA:

I'm crying because you're leaving...
because I am leaving...
leaving, but we can't let go...

THEY EMBRACE. THEY CRY.

ALBERTA:

Tony needs a change.
They say things are better in Cuba than in Venezuela.

ELVIRA:

So, your mind is made up... Why didn't you tell me before?

ALBERTA:

For the same reason... because it hurts.

ALBERTA:

Maybe we can glue it with Crazy glue, or will the water leak?

ELVIRA:

Yes, maybe, if we find all the pieces.
What can't be glued are the things that you leave behind...
That puzzle, your life, can never be put together again.
Every object is a piece of that puzzle.
With each piece you leave behind, a part of you stays as well.

ALBERTA:

After so much care... cleaning, putting everything back in
the right place...

ELVIRA:

Imagine if the teapot, instead of breaking,
ended up in the hands of strangers in exchange for some bills.
Those people would never be able to tell the story of the teas
and cookies of our lives. Abandoned things become only objects,
without a soul, without history. It's sad. It's better that it broke.

ALBERTA:

Because it's not the objects that matter, but the memory, right?

ELVIRA:

Yes ... Don't you hear them crying?

SOUND OF DISTANT MOANS. ELVIRA LOOKS AROUND, LISTENING TO THE
LAMENT COMING FROM THE OBJECTS. ALBERTA DOES NOT HEAR ANYTHING.

ALBERTA:

I think it's time for a chamomile...

ALBERTA EXISTS BUT ELVIRA DOESN'T NOTICE IT AND KEEPS TALKING TO
HER.

ELVIRA:

I do hear them; it's not an invention.
There's a Nobel Prize who says that everything the potters said
at the beginning of the world, was engraved in the soft clay

of the vessels that were molded with their hands and their conversation.

ALBERTA ENTERS WITH A CUP OF CHAMOMILE TEA FOR ELVIRA.

ELVIRA:

I don't want to leave.

Carolina lives far away and imagines that things are worse here than they are. In addition, Venezuelans exaggerate too much: no matter if you weigh a hundred kilos, you wear patterned leggings. Flowers, dots or planets, stretch and tremble to the rhythm of the curvy women butts that everyone turns to see.

ALBERTA:

But that's what those leggings are for, right?

So that everyone looks at you?

I doubt that in any other country leggings are as successful as they are in Venezuela.

ELVIRA:

We are passionate about everything.

I can't live without that joy.

ALBERTA EXISTS WITH THE TEA CUP.

ELVIRA:

The idea of the sale is good but: *Mami, don't you dare to sell this... don't sell that either, please ...*

The room stays the same, as the song says, as if it was a museum, and I'm part of the collection.

ELVIRA STAYS LIKE A STATUE. ALBERTA ENTERS WITH A FEATHER DUSTER AND CLEANS THE STATUE WHICH IS ELVIRA. ELVIRA JUST MOVES HER LIPS.

ELVIRA:

Hello, my love, I love you and your dad loves you too, this is the house of happiness, *piñatas*, Christmas and *hallacas*, lunch on Sundays and fights on Saturdays when the girls arrived at dawn.

Everything is intact, nothing changes, you can be sure of it...

ELVIRA STARTS MOVING AGAIN.

ELVIRA:

Lies! Nobody is safe in their homes.

If I leave everything in its place, everything will end up covered with dust and dirt, just like the people in the houses full of absence.

ALBERTA SHAKES THE DUSTER AND EXITS.

GUSTAVO: (OFF)

Alberta! ... Alberta!

ELVIRA:

Who is it?

GUSTAVO: (OFF)

It's Gustavo, your tenant, Mrs. Elvira...

ELVIRA:

Oh, Gustavo, how are you?

ELVIRA APPROACHES THE DOOR TO HEAR BETTER. SHE FIXES HER LOOK, FLIRTY, ALTHOUGH SHE TALKS THROUGH THE CLOSED DOOR.

GUSTAVO: (OFF)

There's no hot water, Mrs. Elvira.

I'm sorry to bother you but...

ELVIRA:

Don't worry; it's no bother...

GUSTAVO: (OFF)

Could you let me use your hot water heater?
so I can take a shower while the problem is solved?

ELVIRA:

Yes of course. I'll open it for you.

GUSTAVO: (OFF)

Could you ask Mr. Martin to repair my water heater?

ELVIRA:

Alberta told him already.

But you know, Martin starts drinking on Friday
what he's earned since Monday, so we have to wait till Tuesday
for him to recover. But in the end, he always shows up,
don't worry. I'm sorry if I don't open the door, but
I'm I'm a mess cleaning here.

GUSTAVO: (OFF)

Don't worry, Mrs. Elvira. Sorry for the interruption.

ELVIRA:

Don't worry. Come back whenever you want for a cup of herbal tea.

GUSTAVO: (OFF)

Oh, that would be nice...

ELVIRA:

Too much work?

GUSTAVO: (OFF)

On the contrary, too little...

ELVIRA:

I can hear your stress from behind the door.

GUSTAVO: (OFF)

Dollars are complicated.

ELVIRA:

Now you have to have dollars
although our currency is *Bolívares*.

GUSTAVO: (OFF)

That's why now we need more than an herbal tea;
we at least need Valium to keep going!
Anyway, one of these afternoons I'll visit you.

ELVIRA SIGHS, WATCHING HER OBJECTS ON SALE PLACED ON THE TABLE.

ELVIRA:

How many dollars for my treasures?

Will it be enough to go a couple of times to the supermarket
in New York? How many dollars for the little cups I bought
on credit, one by one, until I completed the set...
how many boxes of Corn Flakes in exchange?

PAUSE.

ELVIRA:

But if my grandchildren continue to grow far away,
they'll never love me... Also, I'm forgetting everything lately...
how do you say grandmother in English?

(CALLING) Alberta... Alberta...!

Let the hot water through for Gustavo to take a shower!

ALBERTA: (OFF)

Coming...

CANDELA ENTERS FROM BEHIND. SHE IS BRINGING FLOWERS.

CANDELA: (MISCHIEVOUS)

Who's Gustavo?

ELVIRA:

The new tenant.

CANDELARIA:

And why is it your problem whether Gustavo takes
a shower or not?

ELVIRA:

What if he were my lover?

CANDELA:

Oh, mom! You love to talk nonsense!

CANDELARIA LOOKS FOR A VASE FOR THE FLOWERS, IN THE MIDDLE OF THE
CHAOS OF OBJECTS.

ELVIRA:

Do you know why Gustavo is renting here?
Because your dad didn't see how good-looking he is.
Otherwise he would have looked for another tenant.
With all the years we've been married and how old I've become.

CANDELA:

He always finds you beautiful, mom.

ELVIRA:

Because I take care of myself!
Ramón Antonio Quintero has never seen me in a mess!
Love is a matter of two, *mija*. You can't blame men for everything.

CANDELA:

Well, today you don't look very well put together, I would say.
Do you really think that if I'd looked good all day,
Carlos would have stopped drinking?

ELVIRA:

Ramón Antonio left early this morning to get his visa
and this sale is driving me crazy.
Carolina calls, the neighbor knocks on the door,

the cooking oil's arrived, and the tenant claims
he doesn't have any hot water...

CANDELARIA NOTICES THAT THE DOLL HOUSE IS EMPTY. ALL ITS FURNITURE
LAY IN A BOX NEXT TO IT.

CANDELARIA STARTS TO PUT EVERYTHING INSIDE THE DOLLS HOUSE.

CANDELA:

That's because you decided to rent out part of the house.
I don't understand why you insist on hiring Martin
if you know he's not reliable.
Why don't you hire one of these plumbing companies?

ELVIRA:

They are too expensive and they are not reliable either.
Luckily, I have Martin to solve any problem with this house!

This morning the Water Company came
to remove the water meters from all the houses.
You know why? Because they're stealing the meters
that are made of bronze, to do business.
The government's going to replace them
with some Chinese plastic meters.

When? Nobody knows. Certainly, they won't be enough...
for sure the Chinese won't be bringing new plastic meters
until the government pays what it owes.

So, those bronze meters that are still functioning
are going to be stolen, probably sold back to the Chinese.

In the meantime, water is being wasted, falling...
through the hands of the government, the Chinese,
the thieves or the people? Answer that!

You know so much about politics!

CANDELA:

Now I understand the cement in the main entrance.
Martin is very careless.

ELVIRA:

Hydrocapital left a hole and Martin fixed it.
If it wasn't for Martin this house would have fallen to pieces,
because you know that your father isn't very talented
with a hammer or saw.

CANDELA:

Now that he's retired, Dad could entertain himself
helping around the house.

ELVIRA:

And who are you to decide what entertains your father?
He likes to play dominoes and watch Animal Channel.

CANDELA:

That's because you never wanted to have pets.

ELVIRA:

I had enough with you two and your father,
to look for more pets to take care of.

CANDELA:

I have an idea! I'm going to give dad a dog
on Father's Day.

ELVIRA:

Is that what you came for? To pick a fight with me?

CANDELA:

Mom, I don't think you're allergic to dogs.
No one is allergic to dogs. A cat, then... what about a canary?

ELVIRA:

What part of "we are going to New York", didn't you
understand, Candela?

UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCE. WITH SADNESS, CANDELA LOOKS AT THE PRICED
OBJECTS EXPOSED ON THE TABLE.

CANDELA:

Are these the things you plan to sell?

ELVIRA:

Yes.

CANDELA:

Are you going to sell the silver bowl with the family
monogram, mom?

ELVIRA:

Do you want it? Take it.

CANDELA:

Aunt Hortensia's painting! Don't you care?

ELVIRA:

Oh, yes, I care...
finally, I'm free from it!

BOTH LAUGH.

CANDELA TAKES ANOTHER OBJECT.

CANDELA:

Oh, Mom, this is your wedding picture frame ...
Where is the photo?

ELVIRA:

I kept it... to give it to you ... after I die.
For now, I need it to remember... just the photo.
I don't need the frame.

CANDELA:

Do you really think you could move to New York?
You're not going to stand it, mom, Carolina either.

ELVIRA:

Don't start. I don't want you to talk about your sister.

CANDELA:

How do you want me to say nothing?
Carolina left to go live the American dream,
but from being a dentist she ended up serving drunks
in a bar, walking dogs and babysitting!

ELVIRA:

You should acknowledge her merits of finally becoming

a dentist assistant instead.

CANDELA:

After six years of suffering! Did you know that she used to go
to the department store with the children
and told them they could put everything they wanted in the cart,
made them imagine that they used all those things
until they went bad... Then she would leave the cart in the store,
went back home empty handed?

With just the feeling of having bought something...
because in the North, if you don't buy you don't exist.

ELVIRA:

Poor thing... she didn't say anything to anyone ...
She's like me. She doesn't like anyone to give her anything.
I found out that she was getting a divorce, when Fermin's mother
told me. Carolina has never been much of a talker. She's like her father.

CANDELA:

It's not Carolina. No one tells the truth when they leave.
Everyone is doing great: those who deliver pizzas on a bike,
say they bought a pizzeria; the dog walkers say they're veterinarians...
I don't know how Venezuelans, who are so pretentious,
have ended up being such conformists. Cowards!
If you think that the country is in need of honest,
hard-working people, why don't you stay and help, then?
They prefer to go to Miami and spit out their demons
talking badly about the government on Facebook. Pathetic!

ELVIRA:

I don't want to talk about politics.
We've never talked politics in this house.
Not even when your dad was a democrat
and I was from the Communist Party.

CANDELA:

You started it. And I don't talk about it;
I work hard, every day, to make this country a fairer place,
with equal opportunities for all.
You are aware of the social debt here, mother.
But it's as if you forgot...

ELVIRA:

Let's go one step at the time, I really don't know if it's Marx,
Carolina, the tenants or Father's Day. To begin with,
the tenants keep us company, fill the house with noise,
and keep it alive. Because the house, which was big to begin with,
became huge when you left. As for the pets,
do you know how much a bag of canary food costs??
Not to mention dogs or cats! At least we have a TV set.
Since we can't go out, at least we can watch the soap operas
and as for pets, you just switch to Animal Channel.
Because you coming twice a month for lunch, isn't enough.

Is that all?

CANDELA:

I don't say you shouldn't go out;
just that you have to be careful. You're arbitrary, mom.

ELVIRA:

Arbitrary, no! When the refrigerator no longer makes ice,
you have to buy everything the same day because,
do you know what a new refrigerator costs, *mija*?

CANDELA:

So, what ... in USA they give them away for free, the refrigerators?

ELVIRA:

Don't be cynical or superficial, Candela.
Show me some respect; I'm your mom till the day I die.

CANDELA:

Carolina blackmailed you with your grandchildren.
Do you know what happened to Juliana when she arrived
in Canada? It wasn't a modeling agency at all, it was a brothel!

ELVIRA:

I know the story; you don't need to scare me with it.
I know that the so-called equality of opportunity
is nothing more than the standardization that annihilates
the will of individuals, and thus control any possibility of social
cohesion and free will...

CANDELA:

Wow...

ELVIRA SITS. SHE DOES'NT FEEL WELL. SHE USES A PIECE OF NEWSPAPER AS
FAN.

ELVIRA:

This is an endless story... the end will be when I die, *mijita*.

CANDELA WORRIES.

CANDELA:

No, mom, you still have much love to give us.

ALBERTA ENTERS BRINGING A TRAY WITH A BOTTLE OF SCOTCH AND TWO
GLASSES.

CANDELA:

Let's have a drink to lower our blood pressure.

ELVIRA:

Stopping the fighting lowers blood pressure as well.
It's too early to drink.

ALBERTA EXISTS.

CANDELA:

It's late enough.

ELVIRA:

Oh, don't say it's late if you want my blood pressure
to come down.

CANDELA:

I mean, it's already 11, so we can have a drink.

ELVIRA:

11:00 already?

Oh, my God, your dad is going to come and see
the state I'm in! Where did I leave the brush?

ELVIRA SEARCHES WITH URGENCY.

CANDELA FINDS THE BRUSH. SHE COMBS HER MOTHER'S HAIR.

CANDELA:

What I don't want is for you to have a bad time there.
Carolina's very selfish, as a good capitalist should be.
She wants you to be her babysitter, now that her husband left her.

ELVIRA STOPS CANDELA, WITH LOVE.

ELVIRA:

Why are you so angry with your sister, Candela? That's bad.
That poisons your blood, which is the same as hers, *hija*.

CANDELA:

Maybe it's because you have always preferred her?
"Candela is strong; she knows how to defend herself.
The one that needs support is Carolina..."
So now Carolina is going to take my mom and dad away.

ELVIRA:

It's only a vacation.

CANDELA:

Haven't you though that the ones that act stronger,
are weaker, more sensitive? That it's a defense mechanism,
used by those weaker inside, afraid of anyone harming
them. You've never thought about that?

ELVIRA:

I love you both the same. Carolina has been away for almost
eight years now, we hardly see them once a year for few days.
Spending time with them is a joy.

CANDELA:

Some joys are sad.

ELVIRA:

You could also take a vacation.

CANDELA:

In that case, I'd go to China or Egypt, mom, not New York.
And how long is that vacation of yours?
I know she wants you to stay for good.

ELVIRA:

Carolina never asks for anything, she doesn't complain.

CANDELA:

So, you're considering it?

ELVIRA:

They're my grandchildren.
They deserve the opportunity of a better life,
with more security. And Carolina needs help.

CANDELA:

So, you're considering it!
To go live as an undocumented migrant,
taking care of little children...

ELVIRA:

My grandchildren!

CANDELA:

You've already raised your daughters!
Now it's your turn to enjoy life, mom.

ELVIRA:

Precisely, spending time with my grandchildren.
Because if I wait for you to have kids...

CANDELA:

Let me tell you that I'm dating a Cuban I met at the congress...

ELVIRA:

Oh, what good news that he's Cuban!

CANDELA:

I don't understand.

ELVIRA:

Well, because as soon as he can, he'll escape to Miami
and then we'll all be in the same country!

CANDELA:

I won't fall for your provocations.

Tell me once and for all: are you planning to move to New York?

ELVIRA:

I already told you: no!

CANDELA:

But you don't sell everything to go on vacation or to
grandchildren. I can't believe Dad agrees. Or do I have to
ask Carolina? Because she's the one behind all this, isn't she?
Making the decisions... Where is the tea set?

ELVIRA:

I'm going to give it to Alberta; she's the one who has kept it polished
all these years... so she can pay for her trip to Cuba.

CANDELA:

But, mom, Alberta died years ago!

ELVIRA FEELS VERY CONFUSED.

THEY BOTH START SEARCHING FOR THE SILVER TEA SET.

ELVIRA:

Could it be that someone stole it?

CANDELA:

When was the last time you saw it?

ELVIRA:

Since when, I don't remember. Your dad says that tea
keeps him awake, and chamomile tastes like medicine.
So, I just drink chamomile in my cup, we haven't use the tea set
in a long time. The British are the ones who drink tea.

CANDELA:

That tea set belonged to the poet Ramos Sucre, your

great-uncle, mom! Where could it be?
What you inherit isn't stolen.

ELVIRA THINKS FOR A MOMENT.

ELVIRA:

That is not the meaning of that saying. Although said like that,
changes it. You turn everything around at your
convenience, with such intelligence!

ELVIRA NOTICES THAT THE DOLL HOUSE IS FULL OF ITS FURNITURE AGAIN.
SHE STARTS PULLING OUT THE LITTLE FURNITURE, PUTTING IT INSIDE A
CARDBOARD BOX.

CANDELA:

It's true; I inherited it from you.

ELVIRA:

You can't say I'm a liar. Nor a cheater!

CANDELA:

And how are you going to get a resident visa if it is not cheating?
They don't want more Latinos in the USA, much less old ones.

ELVIRA:

Leave the USA where it is, Candela.
We're fine right here, enjoying the fresh afternoon,
the breeze that comes down from the Avila...

CANDELA:

Tell me, what are you willing to do to get a visa?
You could divorce and remarry ...
as more than 40% of immigrants do ...
who get the visa by spreading their legs.

ELVIRA THROWS WHATEVER SHE IS HOLDING, WITH VIOLENCE, INTO THE
BOX.
PAINFUL SILENCE.

CANDELA:

Forgive me, mother.

ELVIRA:

You talk too much bullshit, Candela.

CANDELA:

I don't want you to leave.

CANDELA CRIES. THEY HUG EACH OTHER.
A SKYPE CALL SOUNDS. ELVIRA GETS NERVOUS, LOOKS TO CANDELA AS
WARNING HER, NOT TO FIGHT WITH HER SISTER.
ELVIRA ANSWERS THE CALL ON THE LAPTOP.
CAROLINA ENTERS.

CAROLINA:

Hi, mom. I couldn't call you before
because we had one patient after another.
Tell me, is the sale ready to go?

DOORBELL RINGS.

CAROLINA:

What's that? The door?

Don't open it without asking who it is... it could be a thief.

CANDELA PASSES BY THE LAPTOP CAMERA. SHE GOES TO OPEN THE DOOR.

SELLER: (OFF)

Cheese! ... Fresh, cheese!

ELVIRA:

Oh, it's the cheese seller, it doesn't matter, I still have some left. Leave it, Candela. He knows that if I don't open the door is because I still have some.

SELLER: (OFF)

Buy it now; it won't last till tomorrow... Cheese!
I have cheese!

CANDELA COMES BACK.

CAROLINA:

Hi Candy, Candy!

CANDELA:

Don't call me like that, fuck!

ELVIRA SIGHS, DISILLUSIONED.

CAROLINA:

Well, you always say what's on your mind,
no matter how it affects others.

CANDELA:

That's what's happening? So, let me ask you something that I've been wondering about: why the United States has one of the highest number of prisoners per capita in the world? Seven times more than in Venezuela!

CAROLINA:

Because here you pay for what you do.
It's a non-impunity system. If you don't break the law, you live in peace. Not like in Venezuela where criminals are free while honest people live locked up in fear.

CANDELA:

You call white people honest people, I suppose.
Since the majority of prisoners are black and Latino.
What a coincidence! That's proof that whites are better, right?

CAROLINA:

I won't argue with you.

CANDELA:

What I'm saying is: what is the point of leaving Maracaibo to keep praying to La *Chinita* with a bunch of *maracuchos* in Texas?

CAROLINA:

Because it's not the same sleeping over at a friend's house, after a party, so they don't fine you for driving drunk back to your house, than to have to stay over until dawn to avoid

getting killed. You choose, being fined or murdered...

CANDELA:

Oh, Carolina, you're watching too much CNN.

It's much more complicated than that.

CAROLINA:

Mama! ... Enjoy Candelaria's visit, since she doesn't visit frequently... I'll call you tomorrow morning, okay? Besitos.

CAROLINA EXITS.

ELVIRA: (TO THE LAPTOP SCREEN)

Goodbye, my love, see you tomorrow...

CANDELA:

There're not 25,000 deaths per year; lies of the opposition.

ELVIRA:

11,000 are not just a few either, truths of the government.

CANDELA:

Did you know what happened to Margarita Cardenas?

ELVIRA:

Her mom told me she was doing great.

She already has a good fulltime job, a home...

Well, I know Carmencita exaggerates a lot,

and Margarita is a spoiled brat but...

CANDELA:

Margarita works reading the tarot; she doesn't even have a tourist visa. It turns out that she had a client who didn't like the future she predicted for him in one of her readings, and he beat her to death, he almost killed her, she ended up in a hospital. That's how it is in the North.

Do you know what they have a lot of out there?

Crazy people! Enough to give away!

CANDELA TAKES A COUPLE OF CANDLESTICKS FROM THE TABLE.

CANDELA:

But, mom, are you going to sell the silver candlesticks?

To buy what: a peanut butter jar, a bottle of apple juice,

a box of Corn Flakes, skim milk for breakfast

and a few Milky Ways for your grandchildren?

CANDELARIA DISCOVERS A LITTLE BOX AMONG THE THINGS ON SALE ON THE TABLE. SHE TAKES IT WITH GREAT CARE. SHE OPENS IT WITH PARSIMONY, AND BEGINS TO PLAY WITH COLORFUL CANDY WRAPPERS, THAT WERE CAREFULLY KEPT IN THAT LITTLE BOX. SHE REMEMBERS.

CANDELA:

But, Mommy, after eating the chocolate,

I can't throw this beautiful paper in the trash.

I can't be so unfair. The chocolate came wrapped.

I can't be so ungrateful after eating it.

CANDELA PUTS BACK THE COLORFUL WRAPPERS IN THE BOX. ELVIRA TAKES THE BOX AND PUTS IT BACK ON THE TABLE.

ELVIRA:

Ramón Antonio is right: Candela was born worried.
Always aware of others, she never liked being alone.
While Carolina was so self-absorbed, dreaming of living a
different life, like a princess or a mermaid in another world
with other people... What was it that she didn't like about her real life?
That took her far away. Although Candela is also gone,
living a better future that doesn't exist.

CANDELA EXITS.

ELVIRA LOOKS TIRED AND SAD.

NEVERTHELESS, SHE TRIES AND TAKES HER ROBE OFF, FIXES HER HAIR...

ALBERTA ENTERS.

THEY START TAKING OBJECTS FROM THE TABLE.

THEY TALK TO THE PUBLIC, OFFERING THE DIFFERENT OBJECTS ON SALE.

ALBERTA:

It's not expensive, look underneath, it's signed!
This porcelain doll is so beautiful... Authentic Lladró...

ELVIRA:

300 is OK, take it...

Yes, it's big, and it became bigger after the children left...
I have two, one is out of the country, and the other works here...
two grandchildren, one of 12 and one of 4...

ALBERTA OFFERS THE ROBE ELVIRA WAS WEARING UNTIL NOW.

ALBERTA:

That's 100% silk, Chinese, ancient, Chinese, authentic, almost new,
nobody has ever used it... How much? ... Nooooo, 100 is too little...

ELVIRA:

This frame is perfect for a wedding photo, or a
graduation photo... It's pure silver...

ALBERTA:

Don't you see the oranges?

ELVIRA:

It's true, it's a bit abstract, but here's the plate, you see?

ALBERTA:

And this is a printed tablecloth, like an Indian print...

ELVIRA:

She's not famous but you know, you never know,
art sometimes gets revalued and surprises you...

ALBERTA:

Give me 50 then, I'm not going to argue.

ELVIRA:

Hello, Carmencita, what's up? Have you heard about Margarita?

... I'm glad ... Yes, of course we'll call her...

No, it's only for a few months, to give it a try, you know...

Oh, I still have too much stuff...

The silver tea set? Oh, I'm sorry, I already offered it...
Don't you like the tureen... or the candle sticks?

ALBERTA EXITS.

ELVIRA SITS IN A CHAIR, EXHAUSTED, SHE IS FEELING "SOLD OUT".
SHE COUNTS THE MONEY FROM THE SALE, AND PUT IT INTO HER SHOE.
SHE FALLS ASLEEP.

DOWN THE LIGHTS, IT IS EARLY EVENING.

ALBERTA COMES WITH THE SILVER TEAPOT, AND PLACES IT ON THE SIDE.
SHE EXITS.

A MASKED MAN COMES IN. HE GOES DIRECTLY TO REMOVE THE SHOE TO GET
THE MONEY INSIDE. ELVIRA WAKES UP.

ELVIRA:

Hey... what's the matter...
Tony?!!!

TONY PULLS OUT A GUN.

TONY:

Shhhhh... Don't make noise, old lady, you're already gone.
Whoever leaves town, I forget, I don't know you.

ELVIRA:

But I've known you since you were a child.

TONY:

Stop recognizing and give me the money,
you're not going to do anything with those *Bolívars* in the U.S.

ELVIRA:

Tony... I know you took part in the kidnapping...

TONY GETS CLOSER TO ELVIRA, THREATENING.

TONY:

I didn't, don't make it up.
Go on your trip and nothing's happened here.
Give me the money!

ELVIRA PULLS OUT THE MONEY FROM HER SHOE AND HANDS IT TO TONY.

ELVIRA:

I know you were in the kidnapping. It was your voice...

TONY:

Oh yeah? And why didn't you say anything, then?

ELVIRA:

Because I love Alberta.

TONY:

That's paid for. Why do you think they let you go?
You are so stupid.

ELVIRA:

They let me go, but you're going to kill your mother.

TONY:

Shut up!

TONY HITS ELVIRA IN THE HEAD, SHE FAINTS.

TONY RUNS OUT, ON HIS WAY OUT HE TAKES THE SILVER TEAPOT. A LITTLE PIECE OF PAPER DROPS FROM IT.

TONY EXITS.

LIGHTS FADES IN SLOWLY.

ELVIRA WAKES UP, VERY CONFUSED. SHE FEELS PAIN IN HER HEAD.

SHE LOOKS AROUND, EVERYTHING LOOKS THE SAME, BUT A LITTLE PIECE OF PAPER, CAREFULLY FOLDED IN THE FLOOR. SHE TAKES AND UNFOLD IT. SHE READS IT. IT IS CUT FROM AN OLD NEWSPAPER.

ELVIRA:

Mrs. ALBERTA SUAREZ has passed away.
Her son Tony Suárez, Elvira Gutiérrez de Quintero,
and her daughters Carolina and Candelaria...

ELVIRA CRIES SILENTLY.

ELVIRA:

Your family, Alberta... We are your family, Tony...
wherever you are.

SOUNDS OF HONKING.

ELVIRA REACTS, COMING BACK FROM HER MEMORIES.

SHE SAVES THE OBITUARY INSIDE HER CLEAVAGE.

QUICKLY, SHE REPAIRS HER APPEARANCE.

HONKING AGAIN.

ELVIRA:

Come on, what an annoying taxi...
Hurry up, Ramon Antonio, the airport taxi is here!

ELVIRA TAKES THE SUITCASE SHE WAS FILLING WITH SPECIAL OBJECTS.

ALBERTA WAITS FOR HER AT THE DOOR.

THEY STARE AT EACH OTHER FOR A MOMENT. ELVIRA EXISTS. ALBERTA EXITS AFTER HER.

ELVIRA ENTERS AGAIN, IN A RUSH.

SHE TALKS TO THE OBJECTS SHE IS LEAVING BEHIND.

ELVIRA:

I'm going to come back... don't worry...
If you're nothing without me, I'm no one without you.
I'll be back. The center of my world is still in Caracas.
I can't change that. I'm leaving because I'll return.
I'm the country and it's right here, even if I leave...
I am a fish of this sea, even if the coastguards want me picked up.

ELVIRA EXITS.

THE END.

