‘Amá’s Book

By
José Cruz González

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Commissioned by The Globe for Play At Home. José Cruz González © 2020
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Stage Note: Enjoy with your choice of beverage, food, s’mores, and whimsy!

Mi’JO, a man in his early 60s sits, enjoying a glass of red wine.

Mi’JO

(to AUDIENCE)
She came to me in a dream last night.

‘AMÁ appears. She is a lovely woman, 30s something.

‘AMÁ

Mi’jo...

Mi’JO

Like I remember how she was dressed when we would go to church on Sundays. It was the only time she wore a dress, high heels, and a mantilla. The rest of the week it was slim stretch pants, sneakers, and a blouse for work.

‘AMÁ

(searching)
Are you hiding from me?

Mi’JO

She was a 29-year-old mother with four little boys, 10, 5, and 4, which were the twins.

Are you in the closet?

‘AMÁ

Mi’JO

She moved from a small desert town to join her mother and father in a rich fertile valley of farmlands.

Where are you?

‘AMÁ

A little boy’s giggle is heard.

Are you under the bed?
MI’JO
We lived in old abandoned barracks from World War II that housed farmworkers from Mexico.

‘AMÁ
Are you in a kitchen cabinet?

Another giggle.

MI’JO
I don’t remember seeing her much during the week because of her many jobs.

‘AMÁ
There you are!

‘AMÁ laughs and a child’s giggles soar like birds into the sky.

MI’JO
Saturdays were cleaning days. She would pop a record onto the old Victorla player and Mexican music filled the house along with the scent of Pine-Sol and laundry detergent.

‘AMÁ
Come on, muchachos, pick up your clothes and put them in the basket!

MI’JO
When the house was spotless and everything in its place, we were treated to a drive-through meal.

‘AMÁ
Uh-lal-la!

MI’JO
Uh-lal-la!

‘AMÁ
Where shall we go today!?!

RONALD MCDONALD appears.

“McDonalds is your kind of place!”
(the clown bursts out laughing)

RONALD MCDONALD

COLONEL SANDERS appears and whacks RONALD
MCDONALD out with his cane.

COLONEL SANDERS

“It’s finger lickin’ good!”

A CHORUS of A&W WORKERS & A MARCHING BAND, enter, parading over COLONEL SANDERS.

COLONEL SANDERS

Aaagggghhh!!!

(singing)

Hey, let’s all go to A&W
Foods more fun at A&W
We’ll have a mug of root beer
Or maybe two or three
Or make the perfect size
From the burger family!

Hey, let’s all go to A&W
I can taste it now can’t you
Hop in the car,
Hop in the car
Come as you are,
Come as you are
To A&W!

Note: It’s a great jingle! I loved listening to it!

Suddenly the roof to your place is ripped open by MR. STAY PUFT MARSHMALLO MAN.

STAY PUFT MARSHMALLO MAN

Aaagghhh!!!

He stomps on everyone except for our beautiful and talented cast and audience! MI’JO snaps his fingers. STAY PUFT MARSHMALLO MAN melts away into tasty s’mores.

Note: Now, would be the time to enjoy one!

Addendum: If you’re an artist, may the creative gods
smile down upon you. That you never lack work, love, or friendship!

MI’JO

Sorry if my imagination bounces everywhere.

A large red ball bounces across the room. Beat. It’s still bouncing.

MI’JO

Sometimes my daydreaming gets the best of me.

Note: While waiting please freshen up with a beverage of your choice! Beat. Beat. Beat. Hurry up! I’m waiting!

MI’JO

Where was I?

‘AMÁ

We were going to get something to eat.

MI’JO

Yes, right, thank you, ‘Amá!

‘AMÁ

I’ll take you boys to get Chinese!

MI’JO

We’d never had it.

‘AMÁ

Just taste it.

MI’JO

No, we didn’t. ‘Amá asked the cook to make us hamburgers instead.

‘AMÁ

I was so embarrassed.

(beat)

What’s happening?

Note: The room walls begin to turn grey and then blue.
‘AMÁ

Mi’jo, why have you brought me here?

MI’JO
The doctor says this is the best place for you now.

‘AMÁ
But I want to be in my home.

MI’JO
This is only temporary until you get better.

‘AMÁ
Oh.

‘AMÁ suddenly ages from 30 to an 85-year-old woman sitting in a wheelchair.

MI’JO
(to AUDIENCE)
My ‘Amá doesn’t remember things anymore and she can’t take care of herself.

Raindrops of tears begin to drop from the sky. MI’JO opens an umbrella to shield ‘AMÁ from the rain.

MI’JO
Sorry about the rain. It comes when it comes. I can’t control it. Don’t taste the tears. They’re salty and will make you sad.

(beat)
I pray for her every night and ask myself why I failed her as a son.

‘AMÁ

Never, Mi’jo.

Sunlight floods the room with light.

MI’JO
Hey, ‘Amá, I came to visit you!

‘AMÁ

How are you boys and your beautiful wife?

MI’JO
They’re doing great and they send their love.
MI’JO, continued.

(to AUDIENCE)
I can only visit her every couple of weeks. It’s a long day of driving to see her. She loves breakfast, so, I roll her in a wheelchair to the Red Apple restaurant. She doesn’t engage like she used to. I do most of the talking. I don’t ask her any questions ‘cause she can’t remember.

‘AMÁ,
No, one comes to visit me.

MI’JO
(to AUDIENCE)
I know they do because my brothers tell me they do.

‘AMÁ
I want to go home.

MI’JO
Yeah, the doctor says you got to stay here until you get better.

MI’JO’s heart explodes in his chest and no one sees it.

MI’JO
I started printing out photos from our visits and placing them in binder for her. That way I could show that we were visiting and that she wasn’t forgotten.

A FOOT TALL CHEETO PUFF WEARING A RED TIE appears standing at a podium. Flashes of cameras explode everywhere.

FOOT TALL CHEETO PUFF WEARING A RED TIE
“We have it totally under control. It’s one person coming in from China. We have it under control. It’s going to be just fine. Did you know I was No. 1 on Facebook? I just found out I was No. 1 on Facebook. I thought that was very nice for whatever it means.”

Note: A VELOCIRAPTOR pops out of a book from your bookshelf.

FOOT TALL CHEETO PUFF WEARING A RED TIE
Aaaggghhh!!!

Exit FOOT TALL CHEETO PUFF WEARING A RED TIE, pursued by a VELOCIRAPTOR.

Note: They do exist, you know.
‘AMÁ
Why don’t you visit me anymore, Mi’jo?

MI’JO
I wish I could.

‘AMÁ
(like a game)
Are you hiding?

MI’JO
(to AUDIENCE)
The facility where she’s at is closed indefinitely to visitors until this pandemic is over. What to do? I worry. I know that she’s getting good care. They watch over all the patients 24-7, but it’s not the physical that I worry about, it’s her spirit.

‘AMÁ sings a lullaby. A CHOIR OF ANGELS join her.

‘AMÁ
_A la ruru niño_

MI’JO
_A la ruru ya_

‘AMÁ & MI’JO
_Duérmete mi niño_
_Duérmete mi amor._

‘AMÁ continues to hum to herself.

MI’JO
(to AUDIENCE)
She’d sing that lullaby to us when we were little. It made me feel loved and safe.

Photographs start to drop from the sky.

MI’JO
That night when ‘Amá came to me in a dream, I decided to make a book of memories for her. I’m working on the idea. ‘Amá always wished to travel the world, but she never got the chance. This will be a magical book that will have her visiting places she only dreamed of. It’s kinda like, “Where’s Waldo?”, you know?

‘AMÁ appears as a young woman standing on a sunny beach in a bathing suit with her husband. They smile and
wave to us.

Note: Please wave back.

MI’JO
I should add “Blackie,” her favorite dog.

BLACKIE happily runs into the image. He barks with joy to see ‘AMÁ. She hugs and kisses her childhood dog.

MI’JO
I love this image because I never saw a photo of ‘Amá and my dad together. They look so happy.

Another image with wings flutters onto MI’JO’s hand. It is with ‘AMÁ and her husband in wedding portrait.

MI’JO
That’s them in the wedding dress and suit at a church. They never did marry there. They eloped and never had a picture taken.

MI’JO sees a photograph under someone’s foot.

(to AUDIENCE MEMBER)
Excuse me, may I get that? Thank you.

MI’JO looks at the photograph. It glows. Sprinkles of rain begin to fall.

MI’JO
I’m going to include this photo, too.

It’s a family portrait in color of ‘AMÁ, her husband, and their young children.

MI’JO
That’s my family. We never had a picture taken together.

‘AMÁ appears in a wheelchair.
¿Mi’jo?

‘AMÁ

Yes, ‘Amá?

MI’JO

When are you coming to visit me?

‘AMÁ

MI’JO

Soon. In the meantime, I send you this magical book of places and faces that you carry in your heart.

A book appears in ‘AMÁ‘s hands. She opens and it glows. She smiles.

Note: End of play.