

# UC Merced

## The Vernal Pool

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Así Es y Así Será: A Memoir  
By Armando Lupian Granados

Worlds Covered in Mist

“Are you feeling okay today *Mijo*?”

That was the question *Mama* asked when she picked me up from high school that stormy afternoon.

“I’m fine *Mama*. Why?” I asked her.

“No reason *Mijo*. You just seem lost in thought ever since this morning. I was curious to know what you were thinking about,” she said.

“I’m fine *mama*, really. I was only thinking about how beautiful it looks when the water drops hit the window. The way it splats on the surface while the rainbow colors explode all over,” I replied.

“And I was thinking about the dream I had of *Abuela* last night,” I added.

I couldn’t look at *mama* after that statement was made. I could see her gaze right through the reflection on the window urging for more details as to why.

“Well it wasn’t really a dream. It was more of a memory,” I said.

A harshly unsaturated fragmented one. I found it funny how that memory seemed like a distant world covered in mist. *Mama* was wrong, I wasn’t lost in thought, I was attempting to remember the sounds, smells, tastes, sights, the emotions. I was trying to put everything in order right up to this moment.

“What did you remember about *Abuela*?” she replied.

“I remembered when *Abuela* came to stay at our home during the summer when I was seven years old. Back in the old place we lived in,” I said.

“*Aye demonios!* [Bloody hell!] You mean that old place?” she responded with contempt.

Back then we lived in a small, old decaying house with dirt floors. No one could blame my parents for having their children live in conditions like those. That little cocoon was all

*Mama* and *Papa* could afford for my younger siblings and I. *Mama* doesn't enjoy remembering that house. I never understood why. The happiest memories I have ever experienced came from that home. Like when the roof was leaking during a rainy night and we all got soaked. *Mama* and *Papa* made this tent out of plastic rags inside the house to cover us from the water dripping inside. *Papa* lit a candle inside the tent and told the adventures of him and *Mama* when they were children in Mexico. *Papa* and *Mama* always promised they would save enough money to provide us with an enormous and luxurious home to live in. I never once desired that though. I always thought fancy homes like that were the things keeping families far apart. At least in that small cocoon we were always close to one another, literally.

"What about *Abuela* were you thinking about?" *Mama* said; pulling me out of that memory and placing me back into the reality that I was facing.

"I remembered how hot it was one night in that house, and when *Abuela* left outside since she couldn't handle the heat in the house anymore," I said.

"I wasn't able to sleep either for the same reason. When I heard *Abuela* leave outside, I followed her. After all these years I still remember how bright the full moon was. The way the warm air brushed up against my skin, the smell from the avocado tree we had," I added.

*Mama* kept staring at me in wonder like if I was a book and she was reading the hidden chapter that she missed from my life.

"I remembered the feeling of *Abuela*'s hand brushing my hair as I laid my head against her lap," I concluded.

I could tell *Mama* was eager to know more about what occurred that night, so I proceeded to tell her everything that happened.

### *Children of the Stars*

"Why are you out here this late at night *Abuela*?" I said after sitting next to her at the back porch.

"It is way too hot inside that house *Mijo*. I couldn't stop sweating. I felt like a roasting *pollo*," *Abuela* responded.

I was too weak to hold back my laughter after *Abuela* made that statement. I was unable to stop myself from imagining *Abuela* as a *pollo* (with a head of a woman and body of a chicken).

“What’s so funny,” *Abuela* jokingly demanded.

“It’s funny thinking about how you would look like as a *pollo*,” I responded.

*Abuela* giggled when I told her the reason for my laughter. “Come on *Mijo*. You need to head back inside, you have school tomorrow,” she said.

“Don’t send me back inside *Abuela*, please. It’s very hot in there. I want to stay out here with you,” I responded.

“Alright, but you need to sleep. Come, put your head on my lap and try,” she replied.

I placed my head on *Abuela*’s lap. She then proceeded to brush my hair with her fingers. I couldn’t help but feel a sense of security when *Abuela* did that. It was a soothing feeling that spread throughout my body like wildfire.

“The sky is very wonderful don’t you think,” *Abuela* said after the short silence.

“The stars are pretty,” I responded.

“When I was a little girl my *mama* would tell me stories about how the stars were souls. That when a person dies their soul rises from their body and morphs into a star within the sky so that the spirit can continue to exist for billions of years,” *Abuela* said.

“That can’t be true *Abuela*. Stars die too you know. If stars die then what happens to the soul?” I responded.

“Stars don’t die *Mijo*. Nothing ever truly dies. It simply changes into something else and continues existing,” she replied.

“That doesn’t make any sense *Abuela*. Things die. Everything does,” I declared proudly (showcasing the astronomy lessons I had learned at school).

*Abuela* didn’t say anything after that.

*Abuela* simply brushed my hair and smirked until she finally said, “*Mijo*. Someday you *will* understand.”

“She said something else after that, but I fell asleep in the dream,” I said.

“Then I woke up. That was what I thought about all day *Mama*. I was trying to remember the last thing *Abuela* said that night,” I added.

*Mama* didn’t say a word.

She only held my hand and said, “I miss her too *Mijo*. Everyday.”

“I know you do *Mama*. That’s the reason why I didn’t want to say anything in the first place.” I responded.

### *La Serpiente que se Comió al Búho [The Serpent that Ate the Owl]*

The fact is *Abuela* had an enormous amount of love to give, but she was the first person who showed me the beauty of the world and its pain. I was seven when *Abuela* showed me how much beauty there is in the world, and I was fourteen when *Abuela* died and she showed me how easily that beauty could be swallowed up as if nothing was ever there to begin with.

“Where are you right now?” *Mama* frantically asked when she called me on my phone as I walked to school on a Wednesday morning.

“I’m almost at school *Mama*.” I replied. “I’m coming to pick you up *Mijo*.” *Mama* responded with a quivering voice.

“What’s going on *Mama*? What’s wrong?” I asked nervously.

“*Abuela* is in the hospital *Mijo*. She collapsed. We need to go see her now!” *Mama* bellowed.

*Mama*’s voice kept cracking, I could feel her dismay resonating within me. I always despised *Mama*’s crying. *Mama* was always a thick-skinned woman who ruled with an iron fist and rarely displayed any grieving emotions publicly. Anytime my siblings and I got into any obscene situations; she was never too “motherly” to employ corporal punishment in her disciplinary procedures. I can’t make sense of it; maybe it’s a primal thing, but the one thing that always had the power to shatter my being was hearing *Mama* cry. I couldn’t summon the courage to respond to *Mama* after she told me about *Abuela*.

“I can’t go with you *Mama*. I have to stay.” I responded hesitantly.

“Why *Mijo*, are you sure?” *Mama* demanded. I’m sorry *Mama*, but today is very important. I have a three tests, a lot of homework and papers I have to write, so I can’t miss school *Mama*. Go to the hospital with *Papa* and the kids, but I have to stay.” I frantically said.

“Okay, we probably won’t be back for a couple of days. I’ll call you once we are at the hospital to check up on you.” *Mama* replied with a melancholic tone.

“Alright *Mama*. *Adios*.”

For reasons unfathomable to me, I lied. I felt guilty, guilty because I didn’t feel anything. I didn’t cry, I didn’t pray, I didn’t worry, I wasn’t even frightened. I felt guilty because at that moment I thought about what kind of person doesn’t feel any emotions towards the death of someone they’ve known and cared for. I don’t know, maybe it was just me, maybe I thought that, somehow, someday, everything would turn out all right.

I was wrong, that idea was ignorant of me to believe. You can stand on the edge. Pretend that everything is going to be okay; but you can’t just wish things away.

“*Mijo*, *Abuela* has passed away.” *Mama* told me through the phone a few four days after she left for the hospital.

“How?” I respond.

“Cardiac arrest.” *Mama* said.

Her voice was raspy, I could tell that she had just been crying but was trying to come across as a composed, methodical and calculated woman.

“I understand *Mama*.” And that was that, nothing more, nothing less. *Abuela* was gone and didn’t feel anything towards it.

A few days passed after *Abuela*’s death when *Mama* told us that it was time to see her at the funeral home. *Mama* took me and my siblings. However, I didn’t want to attend, but *Mama* forced me this time. My siblings were crying and as I was seeing tear drops fall on their tiny chests I was feeling so many shapeless emotions. They were saddened by her passing. I felt isolated from everyone around me since I didn’t empathize with their emotions. I looked at *Mama* and could tell she was pretending not to feel very sad, but I knew inside *Mama* was broken. I couldn’t say anything from the

fear of hurting her more; so, I sat back, put my earphones on, and listened to the music in my iPod as the noise devoured the rest of the world.

When we finally got to the funeral home, I saw numerous people. People I knew, people I didn't. Walls of faceless ghosts as we got closer to the door. When we finally got to the room, the rest of my family entered... except me. I couldn't bring myself to enter the room, it was like a feeling of paralysis that came over me. No matter how much I wanted to. I believe a part of me questioned that if I entered and saw her lifeless corpse, that would be my last memory of her. I wanted the memory of *Abuela's* smiling wrinkled face to be the last one.

### *I Get It Now*

A few months past and I finally brought myself to arrive at the cemetery where *Abuela* was buried. I approached her grave, looked at the words and the picture embedded in the stone.

And at that moment, I finally remembered what *Abuela* told me on that hot summer's night.

And as I processed everything that was becoming clear to me I whispered to myself, "I finally *understand Abuela.*"

When those words vibrated out of my lips, I finally did it. I cried. I left the roses I had brought on her grave and left, as those words *Abuela* had told me during that night echoed in my brain.

*"Por favor no olvides lo que es ver el mundo como un niño.*

[Please don't ever forget what it is like to see the world as a child.]"