

In The Fort

by

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DESCRIPTION

At school someone calls Pablo's father a "wetback," but Pablo mis-hears it as "wetvac," which confuses him: his father a vacuum cleaner? Luz, his mom, soothes him but knows differently.

CHARACTERS

- LUZ, mother
- PABLO, son, 6-years old (can be played by an adult)

NOTE: The mother/son pairing can also be a mother/daughter pairing, with the name changed to MARIA-BEATRIZ for the daughter, with any gender references changed in the language. Which pairing depends upon who is available to cast the roles.

SETTING

- A backyard with PABLO's "fort." There is no actual fort, but LUZ should at all times respect its physical boundaries.

MISCELLANEOUS

- Cookies
- A toy sword of some sort: Star Wars laser sword, gladiator sword, etc. but flat at the end

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Lights discover PABLO holding a backpack, a jacket, and a cap. He slams each item onto the floor, then deliberately picks up the jacket and hurls it offstage. He does the same with the backpack, then the hat. If they don't make it off-stage on the first try, PABLO keeps throwing them until they do. Then he follows them offstage.

LUZ

(from offstage)

Pablo—

LUZ comes in, wearing a jacket, car keys in hand, purse over shoulder. PABLO re-enters, now holding a plastic sword and a bag of cookies.

LUZ ELENA

Pablo? What's the—

But PABLO ignores LUZ and steams past her to go “outside” to his “fort.”

LUZ

Pablo—

LUZ trails behind him and watches PABLO go inside his fort, where she loses sight of him.

Once inside the fort, PABLO plumps down and chomps on a cookie. He slams the sword against the stage, finishes the cookie. LUZ stares at his vapor trail.

LUZ

Hmm.

LUZ hesitates, then moves to follow PABLO, standing just outside the entrance to the fort.

PABLO sits cross-legged, glumly munching on another cookie.

LUZ

Hola.

No response.

LUZ

Hola.

No response.

LUZ

Como estás?

No response.

LUZ

May I come in, pequeñito?

No. PABLO

Okay. Okay if I sit down out here? LUZ

It's wet. PABLO

I'll put my jacket down. LUZ

PABLO considers.

That's okay. PABLO

You want to watch me, make sure I do it all right? LUZ

All right. PABLO

PABLO scoots to where he can see LUZ ELENA and she can see PABLO. LUZ takes off her jacket, swings it like a cape.

Olé! LUZ

LUZ spreads the jacket, sits on it.

Is this okay? LUZ

Okay. PABLO

PABLO scoots back. PABLO goes to eat a cookie, doesn't. LUZ looks into the sky.

LUZ

You like being inside your fort, huh? I never had a fort when I was growing up. Mi padre, tu abuelo, didn't think kids should have one—you know him—

LUZ imitates the gruff voice of her father.

LUZ

"They should work in the house and not be fooling around outside!" Kind of silly, huh? It's much better to be a fool outside, eh? I'm gonna move a little closer—that okay?

LUZ edges a little closer.

LUZ ELENA

Okay?

PABLO scoots forward again to see, nods yes, scoots back.

LUZ

Everything go okay in school today? Because you just went zoom right out of the car—

As an answer, PABLO whacks the floor with his sword and then eats a cookie. LUZ edges a little closer.

LUZ

Were you just hitting somebody with your sword or was that just a general whack—you know, like a fun whack? It was a pretty hard whack.

As an answer, PABLO hits the floor again.

LUZ

Ooh, a double whack. Somebody must have pissed you off.

PABLO

That's a bad word. Daddy said so.

LUZ

You're right. I forgot.

PABLO

You shouldn't forget.

LUZ

When you get angry, it's easy to forget your language and your manners. Discúlpeme.

PABLO

It's okay.

LUZ

Are you that kind of mad at somebody?

PABLO

Yeah.

LUZ

Wanna tell me who?

PABLO

No.

PABLO throws up a cookie in the air and tries to hit it with the sword. He misses, picks up the cookie and eats it.

LUZ

Boy, am I hungry.

PABLO considers, then balances a cookie on the end of his sword and reaches it out to LUZ. LUZ makes as if she can't reach it.

LUZ

I'll have to come closer. Is that okay?

LUZ scoots forward, gets the cookie; reaching for it brings her to the "entrance" to the fort.

LUZ

Gracias, querido.

PABLO

De nada.

They fall silent for a moment, LUZ chewing on the cookie, PABLO absently tapping the sword against the floor.

Mami? PABLO

Yes? LUZ

Do you like Papi? PABLO

Of course! He's the cream in my café! LUZ

PABLO takes this in.

Somebody— PABLO

Some somebody— LUZ

Somebody at school called him—something. PABLO

Something. LUZ

Yeah. Out at recess. PABLO

Can you tell me what the something was that somebody said? Do you want to say it? LUZ

You like Papi, right? PABLO

I love Papi, just like you do. You want to say it? LUZ

PABLO shakes his head no, at first, then yes, but he doesn't say anything. LUZ makes the sound of spitting.

LUZ

Escúpelo fuera, like that time I fed you lima beans. Remember?
You kept spitting them out, one by one? Bing! Off the ceiling. Bing!
Out the window.

PABLO

Yeah!

LUZ

Just like that.

LUZ makes a series of rapid spittings.

LUZ

C'mon, can you spit for me?

PABLO dry-spits.

LUZ

Good. Now, spit it out.

PABLO

Wetback.

LUZ

Wetback.

PABLO

Yeah.

LUZ

Do you know what the word means?

PABLO nods.

LUZ

Tell me what you think it means.

PABLO

Big voice?

LUZ

Use the big voice only if you want to use it.

PABLO indicates with his sword for LUZ to move closer. She does. He whispers in her ear. She can barely repress a smile.

LUZ

Are you sure?

PABLO

Yeah!

LUZ

Just checking.

PABLO

Well, isn't it?

LUZ

Isn't it what?

PABLO

Doesn't Papi have one in the basement?

LUZ

The WetVac.

PABLO

He uses it when he cuts wood, to clean up. And he used it when the hot water tank busted.

LUZ

Sí, he does. He does. So, you think someone called Daddy a vacuum cleaner?

PABLO

Wetback.

LUZ
And that's what made you mad?

PABLO nods.

LUZ
Fighting mad.

PABLO
No.

LUZ
So how did you feel?

PABLO shrugs.

LUZ
Tiny?

PABLO nods yes. LUZ stands.

LUZ
Hey, come out of there so I can give you a hug. Come on.

PABLO scoots out. LUZ hugs PABLO. LUZ pats her jacket for PABLO to sit next to her.

LUZ
Your dad will be very proud of you.

PABLO
Yeah?

LUZ
I know I am.

PABLO
Yeah? Why?

LUZ
Because you showed a lot of heart—you showed me your heart.
That is very good.

PABLO

I did want to slap him.

LUZ

He's just a lima bean in your mouth. Ready?

Together, they mock-spit.

LUZ

What d'ya say we get some milk to go with those cookies and get the lima bean out of our mouths?

PABLO

Okay.

LUZ

Go on—start pouring for both of us.

PABLO

Chocolate for me?

LUZ

Para ambos.

PABLO

Yeah!

PABLO gets up, starts to run off.

LUZ

Hey! The cookies!

PABLO

Oh, yeah.

PABLO comes back to get the cookies, and as he leaves, he gives LUZ another quick hug, which she returns. Then PABLO exits with the cookies. He leave his sword, which LUZ picks up.

LUZ stands, grabs her jacket, dusts it off, puts it on, takes her purse, slings it over her shoulder. She makes a few stabs and swipes with the sword as she speaks.

LUZ

We'll pretend, mihito—Mami and Papi will keep the sword—you be the keeper of the cookies—and together we'll pretend we can protect at least for a little while—for a little while longer.

LUZ holds the sword up to her face like a mock knight, dips it twice as if dubbing someone.

PABLO

(from offstage)

Mom!

PABLO runs in.

PABLO

Come on—got it all poured all by myself!

PABLO runs back off. LUZ extends her arm as if heading off into the battle.

BLACKOUT