

## **In The Fort**

by

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# In The Fort

## DESCRIPTION

To a nation of immigrants, who is "legitimate" and who is not takes on a great political weight and a sometimes deadly power. No wonder this is all confusing to a young Latino child when someone at school calls his father a name, and he is not sure if it is insulting. His mother, Luz, explains as best she can but knows that the poison of the world is coming closer to her son, and there is not much she can do to stem it.

## 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.

## TIME

- Present

## MISCELLANEOUS

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

## In The Fort

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 opens her purse, puts the keys away, closes the purse. She 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?

PABLO  
No.

LUZ  
Okay. Okay if I sit down out here?

PABLO  
It's wet.

LUZ  
I'll put my jacket down.

PABLO considers.

PABLO  
That's okay.

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

PABLO  
All right.

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

LUZ  
Olé!

LUZ spreads the jacket, sits on it.

LUZ  
Is this okay?

PABLO  
Okay.

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.

PABLO

Mami?

LUZ

Yes?

PABLO

Do you like Papi?

LUZ

Of course! He's the cream in my café!

PABLO takes this in.

PABLO

Somebody --

LUZ

Some somebody --

PABLO

Somebody at school called him -- something.

LUZ

Something.

PABLO

Yeah. Out at recess.

LUZ

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

PABLO

You like Papi, right?

LUZ

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

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.

PABLO  
You got your knees pn your jacket.

LUZ  
Doesn't matter -- come here.

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