

A DREAM IS LIKE A PHONE CALL AWAY

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Prior to COVID, my mom would wake up telling me about her dreams. “Hablé con mi mamá.” She had spoken to her mother, she said. I asked her what did her mom have to say? She said to keep an eye on your brother—or was it your sister? Dice que está bien, “She is doing well,” my mom usually said with a smile on her face. My mom Lucila spoke to me about her dreams and how through them, she communicated with her mother, as if she had just had a phone call with her. My mom, a curandera, a medium, a bridge maker between our world and the spiritual world. Lucila Dominguez Frias, also known as Lucy, Luz, Lucita y Luche, but mostly La hermana Lucy. She has the gift of tapping into another realm to communicate with others, while seeking guidance and channeling energy and wisdom to heal. Sometimes she communicates with her mother, Guillermina Frias Magdaleno who was also a curandera, a strong-willed spiritual woman, healer, and merchant. At other times, she calls on her spiritual leaders or guias espirituales to consult them on their great wisdom.

My mother Lucila talked to my grandmother Guillermina in her dreams mostly. Upon waking up, she would narrate her conversations with us as her kids, just like repeating what was communicated in a phone call she just received. I wanted to know what my abuelita had to say. Who was she following around these days? Whose movidas could she anticipate and let my mother know? Somehow, she always knew we were about to run into trouble. Did she mention me last night ‘ama? Damn, I can’t make a wrong turn, I have my abuela watching over me too. My grandmother and my mother seemed to

be with me all the time. After all, I was named after my maternal grandmother, Guillermina; she was a strong woman with such a strong character. She had a large garden where she harvested her flores and her hierbas to use in her curaciones. She also had an arsenal of weapons tucked under her mattress and in her ropero; she once followed a man who beat his wife while staying in our home down the national highway, slapping the flat side of a machete against her hand. She had a spiritual temple built next to her home and a small store built in the front of her house. She was a healer, a merchant, and a woman of faith and conviction, who was both feared and respected. She was most famous for her purgas, made from her concoctions to purge the person of toxins and their demons. I come from two generations of healers, curanderas, sanadoras y mujeres de fe.

The people who have known and been prayed over by my mother would often ask me, “How does she do that?” How does she know what she knows?” These are questions I remember people asking me as I grew up. “I don’t know, she just does. She’s been healing people since she was a young girl in the small rural towns in the Pacific coastline of Guerrero,” I would respond. “That’s her gift I guess; she sees things and just knows things.” I always imagined my mom had a third eye right on her forehead, el poder del ojo visor o ojo de la providencia that allowed her to see beyond this material realm. There were times only she could see things and know things that others could not. Perhaps it’s why I seldom let others touch me. “No, don’t touch me. Don’t go there, you can’t, my mom will find out,” I would say in a low voice. “But your mom is not here, how will she know?” “Ha! No, she’s not here, but somehow she can see things and she will find out.” She always did. She knew my friend from high school had an ulcer and that she had stopped eating, hoping the man she liked would like her in return. My mom told her “tienes una úlcera porque no quieres comer, no seas tonta hija, la persona que la quiere no se va a fijar en

que si estás flaca o gorda; la va querer por quien es, no porque estés flaca. Ya no te hagas daño y come bien.” “How did your mom know I had an ulcer, did you tell her?” she asked. “No, I did not even know you had an ulcer, she just knows stuff like that. I told you she’s got a third eye—el ojo visor—and sees things. That is her gift.”

As a curandera, my mother and grandmother were sought after by people in their village in Mexico. People would travel long distances from La Sierra in Guerrero to see them; people sought my mom in her home on the U.S.-Mexico border in Calexico, California or wherever she was on the migrant trail in California, Arizona or New Mexico. As a spiritual guide, people sought her for limpiezas and consejos, for consultas and for guidance; mostly they sought her out to be listened to and to seek her mediation in giving them hope through prayer. My mom always wore white, and later on in life, she began wearing scrubs like the ones medical personnel use in hospitals and clinics. She called on her guías as spiritual leaders to help guide her and to help lead the way for others. People visited my mom when they were at crossroads and did not know what to do while hoping she could help guide their next steps as a guía spiritual and as a sister in faith.

My mother had a consultorio outside our home in the back porch, where she had a desk and chairs. People would wait in line to see her, so we lined up chairs for them to sit on the right-hand side of our home while they waited their turn and gave the person before them space and distance for their private consultas. My mother never charged people any money and fulfilled her mission by working on donations based on whatever people gifted her. Based on the situation that people presented to her, she closed her eyes, went into a trance, and prayed over people. As she did, she swept her hands over people’s heads and upper bodies, sometimes with hierbas and lociones and sometimes

without them, while she called on her guías espirituales to lead her in giving the best guidance and advice. My mom called on La Virgen María for healing, for forgiveness, and for cases when people were broken hearted. There were times she called on Indigenous leaders, but I mostly remember her citing Benito Juárez and John F. Kennedy as two notable figures, whose names she would call on when people faced difficult legal cases. “These are good guides; they took on great challenges during their times,” she would say. Juárez was known to be a Zapotec healer and a leader among his people; he was also a spiritual man and guide.

During the pandemic, my mom fell into a deep sleep. She had been in the hospital fighting COVID-19 for more than three months. She then caught another infection while in the hospital. She is now recovering. The doctor said he tested her for COVID-19, and the virus has left her body. But the doctors are still trying to pull her off the breathing machine and are trying to get her to breathe on her own. She has not woken from her deep sleep yet. Perhaps, just perhaps, she’s hanging out with my dad or with her parents who are no longer with us. I hope that it is not her time yet and that the ancestors don’t call on her. I am hoping that it is not her time to cross over yet. She is no longer on sedatives, yet she is still in a deep sleep. Perhaps, she is in a state of dreaming, of consultation and of communicating with her ancestors.

In times of difficulty, a common consejo is to “sleep on it.” Perhaps, it is during this time of sleep that we can dive deep into our consciousness and into our dreams to hear our ancestors speak. I know now that if I can’t decide something, I need to sleep on it. This gives me time to rest and to call on my ancestors during my dreams. I am tired now. I need to rest and take a nap. I have not been able to sleep well since my mom has been in the hospital. It’s hard to focus when my mom is fighting for her life. I know she is strong and

is a woman of faith. I need to sleep now to go into a deep dream to call my mamá back and ask that she come home to us soon. I talk to her when I am outside in my garden deep in oración. I am hoping she hears my voice in prayer and those of her other four children. All the people she has helped heal who know she is ill are also praying for her. Lucila Núñez Dominguez, regresa a tu materia, we call on her spirit to come back to her body. I see my phone, hoping I can just call her once more for her consejos, her bendiciones, and to hear her voice again. Her newborn grandson is waiting for her warm embrace so she can hold him, bless him, and welcome him to this world.

At the time of this writing, Mom is still in the hospital recovering.

