

LIVING MEMORY.

Adapt. Audio story Cu Salazar. Original The visit of
Esteban Hinojosa.

Voces: K'a'aseni (x3) Tene' kin kuxtal keen a ka'aásen

RIGOBERTO: No one, in their right state of mind could ever doubt that it was November 1st on that afternoon. From every kitchen in Campeche the sour essence of the achiote emanated, which, together with the smoke produced by the banana leaves burning underground, impregnated the clothes, hair and skin of the people. The streets, saturated with fumes of chocolate and coffee, turned pale. The sun had left, as a posthumous message, brushstrokes of golden and reddish light on the clouds; the candles lit on the altars were intended to match those tones.

RIGOBERTO: Candelaria's fixed gaze contemplated her outstretched hand, admiring the passage of time in the dramatic geography of her hands. It had been almost a year since young Rigoberto had installed electric lighting in the house, however, for no reason, Candelaria would not allow it to be used that night and the next.

ALEJANDRO: Mrs Cande!, Good evening!, Mrs Cande!

CANDELARIA: Coming, coming...

ALEJANDRO: Good evening Mrs. Candelaria.

CANDELARIA: How are you Alejandro? - Are you coming in?

ALEJANDRO: Thank you, Mrs. Cande, but no, I'm in a hurry. I bring this invitation to Rigoberto, do you know when he'll be back from camp?

CANDELARIA: He said before Friday, when is the invite for?

ALEJANDRO: Uuh until December 2nd, hahaha, it's the first one I'm delivering. I'm just letting him know with a lot of time in advance, to try to get him to go. I already told you that he is going to become a log from being at the sawmill so much.

CANDELARIA: It's in his blood.

ALEJANDRO: Listen, Mrs. Cande, my uncle Juan, the one who lives in Tabasco, is visiting and he brought us a lot of roasted cacao. Bring a dish so that I can give you some, it's already toasted!

CANDELARIA: All right, son.

ALEJANDRO: Well Mrs. Cande, I'm leaving now, I have more things to do before going to dinner... we are having chicken pibil, hahaha.

CANDELARIA: Thank you, son.

MARTA: Candelaria! Who was that?

Rigoberto: Candelaria went to the study. Her hands were groping for the matches on the table; but the little light that came from the candles in the oratory was not enough for her worn vision.

CANDELARIA: The errand boy from Mr. Jaime came to ask about Rigoberto.

MARTA: Did he leave a message?

CANDELARIA: Wanted to know when he'll be back.

MARTA: What have you told him?

CANDELARIA: That... he... will be back at the end of the month.

MARTA: Didn't you think it would be prudent to ask me before answering? I could have received a letter with news not yet known to you. This is what I get for telling you my whole life instead of treating you like a servant.

CANDELARIA: It will not happen again.

MARTA: Can't you see that I suffer enough?

CANDELARIA: Don't be sad, he will be back soon, you will be together forever.

MARTA: And how do you know that?

CANDELARIA: I know from his eyes. In them I can see the future, it is in your pupils where I appreciate that wonderful image of your reunion with him.

MARTA: I don't know if I miss him anymore, Cande. His involuntary parting keeps me confined to these four walls, sometimes I wish he would never come back, that he would die! How long would I have to mourn? A year or two maybe. But then I would be free. I wouldn't be one of those embittered widows who spend their lives locked up, mourning her dead husband. I have cried enough. I just love him so much! Do you know when I start to miss him? One day before he returns to camp, lying next to him, with my head on his chest, I shower his body with my tears. He never says anything, he doesn't ask the reason for my sadness. He does not promise me that he will soon finish, that he will leave that job that forces him to abandon me for so long. Sometimes I think the jungle has bewitched him!

MARTA: They, break and burn these stones!

CANDELARIA: But... The Mayan vestiges?... They are one of the few that...

MARTA: They are the culprits! They curse us. They should continue to be buried at the foot of the pagans.

CANDELARIA: He loves that land, it has given you a home and food. He loves you too, don't curse it.

MARTA: He loves that land? More than me?

CANDELARIA: He loves that land precisely because of you, because it allows him to give you the best and ensure you a good life.

MARTA: Good life!

CANDELARIA: That's right, it will be a wonderful life full of satisfaction.

MARTA: Don't let me infect you with my anguish, friend. You have always served me so faithfully! You have taken care of my son better than I have. Right now I don't know where he is and surely you have taken care of tucking him in, lulling him to sleep while I wear myself out in lamentations. It is that the confinement...! Don't you think it would be easier to cope with his absence if I were allowed to go out, have fun even without his company? But, I love him so much! I dare not act against him. Pray for me! Perhaps your half-breed fervor will convince God to forgive me for so much ingratitude... What day is it today?

CANDELARIA: Friday

MARTA: Friday! Tomorrow I have to make breakfast for the priests, I completely forgot. What will we prepare Cande?

CANDELARIA: There is freshly roasted cocoa, to prepare Chocolate.

MARTA: Freshly roasted cocoa... That's it Cande! That bitter essence is what has me like this. Who does not become aggressive before such an aroma?

MARTA: It just steals my sweetness and makes me cry!

CANDELARIA: Let's make the chocolate now. Let's go to the kitchen.

MARTA: Campeche, what a beautiful sky it has! Don't you think? How many times have I stayed up telling my wishes to the stars!

MARTA: Yes friend, pray... for me, ask for forgiveness for my blasphemy, I suppose it must be God and not the stars who are entrusted with dreams and desires, I feel so good while you pray!

MARTA: Wasn't it a night like this, so sensual and hot, that the engineer Armando came looking for my husband, knowing that he was in Mexico City?

MARTA: We drank! Don't you remember? You spied on us all night, from right here, while he and I finished off a bottle of Extabentún.

CANDELARIA: Xtabentún!

MARTA: Fermented honey and anise, I almost became a revolutionary! I say they lacked a cup of good chocolate. Don't you think, Candelaria, that a little cup of chocolate, of this kind, made by brave women, would have changed history? We should have run chocolate through the tunnels and drains of this city. Surely we would already have our statues in the main square.

CANDELARIA: Mején shulub!

MARTA: Candelaria and Martha are not soldiers but cooks and the good ones! Who nurtured their people with the spirits of cocoa and sea of chocolate. But no, we were not brave. Although I was reckless that night, letting the engineer in and getting drunk with him! I imagined you mortified, praying in front of these saints so that I would not sin more than I was already sinning hahaha. And I didn't! I did not dishonor my husband. That Engineer never imagined the iron woman who had opened the doors of her house for him, when he wanted to propose something else to me, I told him: "Look, engineer, I gladly opened the doors of my house and seriously, I really enjoyed your talk and by God I support the revolutionary cause, but before opening my legs, before that, my upbringing and I opened your belly and we threw it out with the insides right here in the well in the patio."

CANDELARIA: Yes, I was terrified the whole time that man was in the house, but I never doubted your loyalty, ma'am, I knew you would not dishonor your husband, and believe me, I already had a good grip on the knife, just in case.

MARTA: How many things have I lived under this same sky, so rarely did I leave Campeche! When there was an opportunity to move to Mexico, I told my husband that I was sure that the walls would collapse when I tried to cross them and we would both be buried there for having wanted to escape from this beautiful city. He can go wherever he wants, after all he is a foreigner, but for me it is different. My veins are like extensions of the underground of this city, the kind that were built to hide from pirates. But who does not submit to any prison when they are promised that it will be as beautiful as my city! Who even feels imprisoned before the immensity of the sea, so close, so calm and so welcoming!

MARTA: How long have we known each other Cande?

CANDELARIA: Uuuu, it's been a long time, ma'am, when we were girls and we watched the sunsets, but I soon discover that I'm not a girl anymore and neither are you...

MARTA: Sometimes I feel that I have only dragged you through the maze that has been my life and that I have rarely done anything for you. I feel confused, happy, but confused, I don't think I'm capable of repeating what I said a few minutes ago. What have we been talking about all this time? How long until vacation? When exactly is my son coming home from college? Ask my husband. He should be more aware of the date, he is always on the lookout.

CANDELARIA: He will be back soon.

MARTA: He left... he'll be back... I don't even want to remember those times when soon meant a month! My husband's letters, do you remember them?

CANDELARIA: How could I forget them! How many times did the water for the chocolate dry up in the fire, while we reread the Engineer's letters. Soaking the paper with tears and scaring the child with laughter.

MARTA: Oh my friend! Truly sometimes I feel that we are one. In the solitude of death I will miss you so much!

CANDELARIA: I will never abandon you ma'am.

CANDELARIA: Dear Martha:

My pretty little woman. I write to you to feel close to you.

RIGOBERTO: I write to you to feel close to you. I am sitting in the sunset of the day and I draw your beautiful eyes in the first stars of this warm night.

These last few days have been very long. The same thing always happens every time the day we see each other again approaches. It is the anxiety of having your hair in my hands, feeling the softness of your hands on my face. This causes me to be as I am today, outside of me, thinking elsewhere, it's not me if you're not here.

Things in the camp have started to improve in the last few weeks. Give Candelaria my thanks for the prayer to the aluxes that she sent me. It seems everything has improved and the strange things that kept us in suspense for weeks no longer happen.

Now I am about to leave camp. We discovered new cujos near the road. I am eager to discover new pieces buried under the stones. I send you all my love that you already know is yours.

I don't conceive what my life would be like without you, and I confess that since before leaving, my heart is invaded by the sadness of your eyes that tells me not to go.

I love you Martha and I always observe the parsimony ticking of the clock that traps me away from you, and it will not be long until our reunion, *take care of yourself and take care of our son, give him a kiss and tell him that...*

CANDELARIA: *Take care and take good care of our son, give him a kiss and tell him that I love him too. Forever yours. Rigoberto.*

MARTA: Cande, I feel better. You know me so well! What a blessing that you haven't married, you don't know how widowhood transforms you. It's as if someone plunged their hand into your guts and ripped out half of everything, what's left inside is barely enough to survive.

CANDELARIA: Soon you will see your husband again.

MARTA: Do you believe in those things? And if not...

CANDELARIA: You will see your husband ma'am.

MARTA: You say it with such certainty that I feel that I...

CANDELARIA: I'll put water to boil for a little cup of chocolate, like the kind your son likes.

MARTA: Very well! It will surely help me calm down. Poor thing my son with the wife he got himself! I'm sure she doesn't even know how to boil water. Here in Campeche, being from a good family does not mean not knowing how to do anything, what a woman!

CANDELARIA: Sofía is a good girl, madam, she loves your son very much. I know you don't feel comfortable with her, but let me talk to you as your friend... your daughter-in-law endures months of discomfort with her husband, going with him to the camps. She truly loves your son and makes him very happy, don't think about it anymore.

MARTA: It's so hard to watch your son give himself up to another woman's care. Knowing how well you and I treated him. How many times have we seen him fall asleep with our songs, while we rocked him in this very cradle! Can you sing me that lullaby? I'm crazy my friend, completely! But do me that favor.

CANDELARIA: Yan tu kiimil s'tila ka kuxtal until ak'm until kuxtal

In your hands is my life Lord, in your hands I put my existence

MARTA: Tell that woman how it cost me, it cost us, to give birth to what is now her husband. You looked like a pack donkey, carrying me to the house on your back, making your way through the people who, crowded on the escarpments, watched the cars decorated for carnival go by. It almost cost me my life.

CANDELARIA: It almost cost the child his life! And all because you wanted to attend that battle of flowers!

MARTA: But how can we miss it, if it's every year and we did it Cande! On the eve of his birth, I saw myself covered in colored tissue paper that melted with sweat on my body, surrounded by the shouting of people and the child in my womb, who was getting more and more desperate.

Tell her about my screams, and your efforts to tear him from me, to open the door to the world. Tell him about the tender face that we saw and that seemed to tell us: I'm fine...

CANDELARIA: Promise me that today when you go... when you go to bed you are going to trust your daughter-in-law! She will know how to take care of your son, I taught her the song to lull you grandson to sleep.

MARTA: Fine, I promise. But... How are you so sure of that love? Have you talked to her alone?

CANDELARIA: No. I have listened to her, talking to herself, while she looks at the bougainvillea in the patio, she says how much she loves her son.

MARTA: You are very gossipy, (*ríe*) how lucky that your purpose has always been good. (*Seria*) Tell her to take care of him, if not like us, at least the best she can!

CANDELARIA: She will take care of him ma'am. Let's go for the chocolate.

MARTA: Candelaria!

CANDELARIA: Jesus! It was the wind that blew out the candle and slammed the door

MARTA: No! Don't leave me here alone! How terrible! What kind of darkness is this? I don't know how to explain it to you, I felt lost, falling. I still feel weird, like...

CANDELARIA: There, there....

MARTA: The smells already intoxicate me, my hands feel eager to roast that chocolate as you taught me. My eyes want to see the stone soaked in the ground cocoa that will remain at the corner of my nails, blackening them, and in the pores of my skin, moisturizing them.

CANDELARIA: There is enough sugar to satiate Ek Chuah and gain his favor. Our chocolate will be delicious.

MARTA: Oh Cande! We sound like a couple of Mayan sorceresses, what an idea to satiate Ek Chuah, the ancestors would spit chocolate on our faces, God of Cocoa! Hahaha.

CANDELARIA: I am Mayan, I love our Lord Jesus Christ, but in my blood there are more Mayan legends than gospels I am a heretic madam, you should not have me in your house.

MARTA: You are a victim, Candelaria, that is what you are. As much a victim as I am, of this chocolate that invades our consciences.

RIGOBERTO: Both continue to grind cocoa in the metate. Marta stirs it with the sugar. They have removed unruly hair from their foreheads so many times that her faces look as black as her hands. The sugar began to adhere to the hands and arms of those women, forming a shiny glove. Doña Martha licks one of her fingers.

MARTA: Here is where chocolate is born. I'll save some for my son, he likes it so much, especially the one you prepare for him. Candelaria!, where are you!

CANDELARIA: Now, I am going to whisk this chocolate so that it has a lot of foam.

MARTA: Do you remember that prayer that Rigoberto took to the camp one day? Desperate to end a streak of "bad luck"? He almost had to force you to write it for him.

CANDELARIA: Hahaha, I remember it well, The one with the aluxes, a very innocent prayer.

CANDELARIA: "In the name of God, I am the one who enchants the bad winds and pains. I lend the 4 virgins to help me get the bad wind out of the "julano", and I throw it, I throw it, I throw it into the sea where the sun goes. Yaanten k'ub óol yéetel tulaakal in puksi'ik'al"

MARTA: I have faith with all my heart! hahaha

CANDELARIA: Here is your cup ma'am. I'm so glad to be your friend.

MARTA: Me too Cande, you are my sister, and you make delicious chocolate!

RIGOBERTO: Marta holds the cup with both hands. She looks like she wants to drink the steaming chocolate in the background, but she actually stops, just as the drink brushes against her lips, and she remains motionless. The steam from the chocolate envelops her, blurs her figure, she becomes a ghost. Candelaria opens the back room window.

MARTA: Is it true? Is it true what this chocolate is telling me? Is it true?

CANDELARIA: Yes ma'am, it is.

MARTA: I'm... I'm dead... dead. And how come...?

CANDELARIA: As soon as you cross the threshold again you will have better answers than the ones I can give you. I can only say that you come every year, on this same date, and I await your visit like nothing else in this world.

MARTA: And is it time to go?

CANDELARIA: Yes... it's time.

MARTA: Rigoberto my son is fine, right? Tell him that I love him.

CANDELARIA: You do ma'am. Here is your presence. Every time young Rigoberto walks through the door, the air he breathes is like a hug from you and he doesn't hesitate to exclaim: Thank you mom! Goodbye ma'am and thank you.

MARTA: Thanks to you, goodbye candelaria. Don't forget me, my friend, please.

CANDELARIA: Never ma'am. You know well taht if I live, I remember.

RIGOBERTO: Here I am Marta, let's go! Are you done?

MARTA: I think so

RIGOBERTO: How is our son?

MARTA: Very well

RIGOBERTO: And Candelaria?

MARTA: Candelaria... too. She has taken good care of the house.

RIGOBERTO-Of course, she keeps us alive in her memory.

The End.

