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Este es el Colmo

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Este es el Colmo

Senior Project submitted to
The Division of Languages and Literature
of Bard College

by
Reet Rannik

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Esta colección de relatos se la dedico a mi padre, de él heredé la sensibilidad y sin la sensibilidad no se puede escribir, también me dio la mejor educación posible. A mi madre por darme la vida, el regalo más increíble y extraño que me han dado y por darme hermanos prodigiosos. A mi abuela, Nani, la que me apoyó desde el inicio cuando dije que quería ser escritora. A mi hermana mayor Mencía Zagarella, mi inspiración más grande, la que siempre me empuja a ser mejor persona y artista, sin ti hermana mía, queridísima, no sería la persona que soy hoy, gracias por existir. A Marien Zagarella, genio creativo, creador de mundos, el mejor hermano mayor que alguien pudiese tener, I have some big shoes to fill in. A mi hermana menor, Krista Rannik, sigo aprendiendo de ti cada día, gracias por ser mi mejor amiga, por ayudarme a ver el mundo de una manera distinta, eres pura luz. A Patricia Mejía, por darme amor de madre, por ser mi guía espiritual, por siempre querer lo mejor para mi, eres mi lucero. A Mariano Brazoban, Rosa, Belkis, Doña Emma, Josi, Isabel, Edelmiro y Eddy quienes moldearon mi infancia, recordarlos es un hermoso lugar. A mi Quisqueya la bella, sin ella esta colección de relatos no pudiesen existir.

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Este es el Colmo

Aunque te escribo en inglés,
pienso en español,
así mi alma no te traiciona
aunque lo hagan mis palabras.

Maria Cristina Guizado de Carías



I.

Richar en el País de las Maravillas

When the plane landed everybody started clapping and thanking God as if it was by God's grace that the plane had held itself in the air and not by modern technology. "Gracias al señor," the lady who was sitting next to me said, touching her forehead, her chest, her two shoulders, and to top it off, kissed her fingers. I had never traveled outside of North America before and I thought the Dominican Republic was a good start, a couple of my co-workers said that they love gringos there. I had seen pictures of it and it seemed like paradise, south of the Tropic of Cancer, surrounded by white sandy beaches and suffocating with culture. The lady sitting next to me offered me a piece of gum, and when I accepted she took one herself and proceeded to take off the bobby pins that wrapped her hair around her head. A whole army of

them fell on her lap and onto my seat, she flashed a smile at me with one of the pins between her teeth as she continued to disarm her hair. People seemed anxious to get out of the plane. The guy sitting next to me in the window seat hurried past me to stand in the aisle, it seemed like a competition to get out of the plane and I was losing. No one knew about plane etiquette or, if they knew about it, didn't seem to give a shit.

The lady next to me now revealed straight black hair that framed her face. She put some perfume she bought in the duty-free on her neck and armpits. She seemed really excited, maybe a lover was meeting her at the airport and she wanted to look her best, maybe not smell her best, but definitely look it. *Tengo pajón?* she said and with her finger she made a circle around her face and moved her body pointing towards me. I couldn't understand even though I had been reading an English-to-Spanish dictionary the whole flight, but I smiled and nodded and she fixed her hair some more, smiled really hard and clapped excitedly, her acrylic nails clapped too.

I helped her get her bag from the baggage compartment and let her go ahead of me. Her ass and her belt were on the verge of exploding, requesting a divorce from the jeans, I was rooting for the belt to give up but it didn't, it held on good, gave me a little inspiration. As I stood in the aisle waiting for people to move, I observed with interest the people who surrounded me. Many were on their phones letting their loved ones know of their arrival or sending them to hell for all I knew, others complained about the line not moving and yelled *Saqueños de aquí!* My eyes were drawn to reading this guy's text conversation; he was sitting while I was standing next to his seat. He took a photograph of himself and sent it to someone, a girl from the looks of it,

and sent *llego tu feo mami* along with the picture. I believe he was referring to himself as Ugly and that Ugly had arrived. It was very humorous until I saw him text the same thing to two other girls. I had encountered a true Dominican manwhore and I admired him for being able to be so ugly and get multiple ladies even if it was only in chat. Some got off the plane with those small pillows and blankets that they give you, at some point, a woman gave me her baby to carry while she searched for diapers and whatnot until finally I reached the door of the plane, thanked the pilot and the stewardess, and returned the baby.

When I got out of the plane I was received by warmth. Bright sunlight cascaded into the hallway through the dirty glass and staff from the airport smiled at me and welcomed me in broken English. When I got to the baggage claim I stood there for a good hour but my bag never showed up. I walked towards the first person that looked official and explained that my luggage never arrived, and they put me in a room that they called *El Cuartico* and had me fill out forms with my address so they could potentially send out my bag.

When I was finally let out I came across what seemed to be a runway. Alongside it, families impatiently waited for the arrival of their loved ones with balloons and signs with names on them. There were people holding babies, dogs, and beer, it seemed like picking people up from the airport was a whole event, a social outing if you will. I searched the faces of the crowd half expecting to find my own family. I'd never had any family member receive me at the airport, I always took cabs or the subway to and from. In this airport, they had complete sets of nuclear families and when they saw a family member come out from those double doors they ran

onto the runway to kiss and hug and hug and kiss. It must feel nice to be received that way. I even saw a lady cry when she saw her daughter, must have been ages since they'd seen each other, I could tell by the length of the hug. Must be hard to send your daughter out into the United States to make something of herself and just wait and wait until they have enough money to come back. There are so many Dominicans in New York but those are a different breed, a cross breed if you will. They are too Americanized, they lack that warmth and benevolence that seems to overflow here. I see it in their eyes, in their smiles, and in their touches. They touch so much! I saw the lady who had sat next to me on the plane running towards a man, she even left her luggage right smack in the middle of the runway to go hug him. She put her arms around him and kissed his face continually as if she could absorb him and all the moments they hadn't spent together with each kiss.

He held her round ass with his two hands and smelled her neck, you could tell from the embrace the different parts of each other that they missed from one another. I wondered if he could smell the perfume on her pits and whether he thought it was a good move or not.

When I walked out the humidity hit me in the face the way a woman slaps her cheating husband in the telenovelas. Five men with yellow polo shirts huddled around me yelling "Taxi! Taxi!" and I said "Yes, please" and they started arguing amongst themselves about who would be the one to take me into the commotion and chaos of Santo Domingo city. A guy with a beer belly and two chins told me I was going with him and took my backpack, so I followed him.

–*Cómo te llamas?*

–Richard.

–Richard, *un placer yo me llamo Cristiano, Bienvenido a la Isla de las Maravillas.*

Two butterflies glided past us on cue as he said this, each taking turns to chase one another, spiraling into the sun. The cab didn't have any signs indicating that it was for sure a taxicab but the guy was wearing a yellow polo so I put my trust in him. On the highway we were driving next to the water, there was nothing but blue on the horizon and I couldn't tell where the sea ended and the sky began. Palm trees framed the view, each one seemed to be planted so carefully, their distance from each other exact. There were cars filled with up to seven people all squished together converging and coexisting. A car in front of us had the words *Todo lo puedo en Cristo que me fortalece* on its windshield. The driver said it meant that we can do anything if we believe in God who gives us strength. Many automobiles bore Bible quotations, the buses had them in the front and in the back, advertising their beliefs twice as much in fonts of all sorts.

Countless motorcycles sped past us. On one of them rode three adults and a baby in between them with her limbs dangling and face forced to look one way. On another motorcycle rode two men, one of them had his arms crossed instead of holding on to the driver's waist. There was another guy on a motorcycle wearing his helmet as a hat, and between his legs, was a goat with its forelimbs tied to the handle of the *motoconcho* so it looked like really it was the

goat that was driving. There was fiction in every corner of the island. It was no wonder they called it *la Isla de las Maravillas*, and I could already feel her seducing me into her ways.

It took us an hour to get into the city. *Jodio' tapone del diablo* the driver kept on saying. The rosary hanging on the rear-view mirror kept swinging back and forth to the rhythm of the reggaeton. Christ died on the cross to dance *perreo* above the dashboard of a moving car. Cristiano changed the station and said, *This is merengue mi hermano*, you ever heard of Omega? Cristiano turned the volume up on the radio and his whole body from the waist up moved to the beat. I thought Omega was a vitamin, I wasn't wrong though, it seemed to nutrify Cristiano in the same ways. He wasn't the only one in the *tapon* getting down. In the car next to us in the *tapon*, almost everyone had their arms up, fingers snapping, shoulders pushing back and forward and music blasting.

The tunnels in the city seemed to be the modern cave. The tiles that made up the walls of the cave had immense Taino symbols painted in a thick red. It was like the blood the Taino's shed after the genocide remained and the contemporary Dominican, ignorant of its past, used it aesthetically to decorate some tunnel. Or maybe it was a way of saying, fuck you to the new world, letting it know that the Taino culture still persists. Spain, the crown, Europe, and the church killed an entire race but he wasn't able to kill the essence of it. It was still in place in some way or the other, even if it was just tucked away in some modern cave, barely noticed by the people whom it was designed for. People sped past it, rushing towards an unknown destination unknown.

There were many construction sites, and on their walls were written the words *Cristo viene ya! Arrepíentete!* and *Sálvense! La Isla se hunde* with a phone number for swimming lessons on the bottom of it. Women with *rolos* walked the streets and ignored the construction workers' "lovely" compliments and kisses. Pickup trucks passed us by with loads of plantains, stacked up as high as the Pico Duarte, it was the Banana Republic in its fullest glory. A kid in a pitcher's stance pretended to throw a rock at a truck driver causing the truck to swerve. A couple of the plantains fell on the street and the accomplices hurried to pick those plantains that weren't trampled by the passing cars. After the ephemeral view, I imagined the kids giving the plantains to their mother for her to cook lunch. I commented this to the taxi driver, proud of my thought process and capability of creating such an imaginative scenario, but he said that if they were to do that, it was so they could keep the money their mother had given them to buy the plantains from the colmado in the first place. It was still a beautiful sight, it all happened so swiftly and smoothly, as if it had been carefully planned and practiced.



When I arrived at the hotel, Cristiano told me to give him *seis mil pesos* for the ride, which I later discovered was about a hundred and twelve dollars and therefore, a complete rip-off. I felt stupid for trusting him and was totally misled because by name. Turns out he kept God in the

heart and money on the mind. The hotel, curiously enough, was located inside of a mall. It didn't say so on the website so I was thrown off and thought Cristiano was stabbing me in the back twice. Two little kids outside of the mall tried to clean my shoes. One threw liquid soap on my sneakers before I could react and the other rubbed at my toe cap with a nasty rag. When he finished he held out his hand and said *Dame algo pa' la comida*. I gave him a hundred pesos and told him to split it between the two of them, but he ran away, across the street to the Taco Bell, and the other kid chased him. Inside, I went past multiple stores in search of the hotel elevator. All the big brands were there. I felt a little guilty about how comfortable I felt seeing the familiar labels. Malls made it so easy for one to feel at home even though you could be somewhere foreign. There were chairs and tables in the middle of the mall improvising what seemed to be a restaurant. People dined, wearing colors derivative of various labels, as if they were sponsored by such brands. They talked at each other with wandering eyes, sipping their espressos and looking over other people's tables checking each other out, giving each other fake looks of approval. They seemed to be completely oblivious of the poverty that was present right outside of the mall. Maybe all the plastic surgery had made them blind.

Finally, I reached the hotel's elevator. It had a little black carpet and velvet rope dividers that led up to it. A huge guy in a suit who looked like a bouncer stood next to the elevator, pushing buttons for people. I pointed up and he pushed the going down button so I continued pointing up to clear up the confusion but he said that you had to call the elevator down so that's why he pushed the 'down' button. I tried to explain to him, that you push the buttons according to where you are going, but I don't think he understood my gringo Spanish lingo so I rode the

elevator to the parking lot and back up again, pissed at his imbecilic method. To think he got paid to send people down to go up really blew my mind. The concierge spoke enough English, so I explained to him that my luggage never arrived but that it should be sent to the hotel in a few days and to please let me know when it did. He was awfully nice and said he would send it up to my room once it arrived. I couldn't wrap my head around what must of have been alluring enough to steal inside my bag except for the bag itself. My mother had given it to me a couple Christmases ago. She always thought people could tell a lot about you from the type of suitcase you carried and I guess she was right, it made it real easy for the staff at the airport to know from which bags to steal. But mine was deceptive: from the outside my luggage could trick people into believing I had expensive belongings when in fact I just had clothes from Michael's and Fruit of the Loom underwear. It kind of humored me to imagine the people opening my bag up and getting angry once they realized all I had was cheap underwear and socks. No Jordans there.

I wanted to relax, so after checking in, I went up to the hotel pool to lay on the lounge chairs. I felt like I was on top of the world. The pool butler asked me what I wanted to drink and within minutes I was served my margarita. Beneath my feet stretched an infinity pool with the whole city underneath it, cradled by mountains. Cumulus clouds spread sporadically across the blue sky and the sun teased the sunbathers with its irregular presence. The pool had a section made of glass that gave me and anyone else on the terrace visibility to the swimmers' bottoms and legs. I watched them tread water for some time and drifted into sleep. I awoke to the spitting sound of a sunblock bottle being squirted on top of my bald head.

–Te estas quemando, she said, BURN! and pointed to the top of her head.

–Oh, thank you, I said, *gracias*, and I tried to turn to look at her better.

Her head was blocking the sun, making her radiate. A glow hovered an inch above her skin. She held the sky and the day together, and her eyes were as dark as the night to come. Her bracelets jingled as she spread the cream on my head, it was so cold, I must have been really burnt. I was completely startled by her touch but if you saw this woman's curves you wouldn't complain about her brazenness at all, you would invite her to continue like I did.

–Why you wear khaki to the pool? Where are your *traje de baño*?

–I just came from the airport and my suitcase never showed up, I said.

She laughed maliciously, with her mouth open revealing gold teeth for molars. My misfortune humored her.

–In *this* country, that's how you pay for your tourist card. You didn't know?

–You are Dominican?

I looked her up and down. She was wearing a leopard print bikini and high heels to the pool, of course she had to be Dominican.

–*Si*, I'm staying here until my house is finished. It's being remodeled. And you are *americano* yes?

–Yes, I came from New York but I am originally from Wisconsin.

–Wisconsin? What is *Wisconsin*?

–Wisconsin, it's in the middle part of America.

–It's always been a dream of mine to go to America. What's your name?

–Richard, pleasure to meet you, what is yours?

–Richar, *así se llama un primo mío*, my name is Yomaris, *el placer es mío*. Now tell me Richar, what is your job?

–I am a consultant.

–What do you consult?

–Well, basically I tell people how to make money, I said, and I handed her my business card.

–Oh money, yes very important job. “Richard Daniels” she read, that just sounds like two names put together!

–What do you do?

–I worked the counter at a nutritionist center, you know those doctors that tell you what to eat... But I quit, it wasn't really for me.

–Well you are still young, you got some time to figure it out. I went through all kinds of jobs before I landed this one.

–It's true we still have time, me more than you, but it's true. What should we do with all this time?

–Well *I am* going to the finest beaches this island has to offer.

–In khakis to the beach? No, no that can't be! Tell you what, let's go downstairs and find you a *traje de baño pa' que no ande como un pariguayo por la playa*.

–What is a *pariguayo*?

–A person in khaki pants at the beach... a whole term to describe people like you.

Yomaris walked over to her lounge chair and I watched her go, I watched her bend over to pick up her stuff, I watched her slip on her dress and yes, I watched her as she walked back to me as well. She was as tight as a horse, with sculpted thighs and straight black hair. You are like a horse, I told her, and she laughed and said, *Así me dicen, La Mujer Potra*.

We went downstairs to look at the shops and I ended up buying some swimming trunks at a business whose name I couldn't pronounce. Yomaris' card didn't go through, so I bought her a swim suit too. Poor girl, I felt sorry for her having no job, and all; she was really happy when I bought her the bikini. She even gave me a kiss on the cheek. Yomaris said she wanted to repay me by being my tour guide around the city, so we went to the *Zona Colonial*. She said it was the only worthwhile place to go see in Santo Domingo. She didn't know much Dominican history, so truthfully she wasn't the best tour guide, but she was definitely good company. She did know where Christopher Columbus' house was though, so we went there. To her it was just a pile of rocks assembled gracefully and I couldn't agree more.

We walked around the plaza, sat on the cobblestone steps and watched how the night slowly swallowed the day. There were kids running around and blowing bubbles into each others faces, and their mothers sat next to us on the steps watching their kids gorge on their youth. It

was a beautiful tropical night, with the warm breeze blowing and bringing us the salt it collected from the nearby sea. I appreciated the smell the wind brought, but more than anything I appreciated its ability to dance with Yomaris' dress, revealing tiny moles or rather islands from which I would soon be a castaway. I traced them with my finger and she said they were called *lunares*. It is interesting to note the heavy contrast between English and Spanish. In English we say "mole" which is a word that is coarse, unappealing, hinting at imperfection while in Spanish they say *lunares*, insinuating more than imperfections, they are miniscule moons that ornament our bodies.

–I thought you were the day– I said– but now I think you are night, for you are as dark as she is and dark moons orbit your skin.

I don't know if she understood my poetic intent but she came real close to my face and kissed the corner of my mouth.

We had dinner in one of the restaurants facing the plaza, or rather I had dinner because Yomaris said she had to keep her figure and that she never ate anything after lunch. I didn't know if she was serious or if she didn't want to eat because she wouldn't be able to pay for it later. I didn't want to offend her by saying "You know *I am* going to pay anyways," so I let it be. When the waiter came by she ordered *una vestida de novia* without making eye contact with him.

–What did you order?

–*Cerveza*– she said, if you want it ice cold you have to say, *vestida de novia*.

–*Vestida de novia*, I practiced.

–It means that the beer is so cold that the ice clings to the bottle making it look as white as a bride on her wedding day.

When my food came, I offered some to Yomaris but she said that she was fine, that in fact beer had the twenty-seven nutrients you needed for the whole day anyway. As I ate, Yomaris drew figurines on the bottle with her long nails. The ice melted to her touch.

–You are an artist, I told her.

–*Tu no sabe na*’ she said as she lowered her face.

Yomaris looked like a cat ready to pounce, with her snake eyes and her acrylic nails that could be mistaken for claws. Maybe this was the woman my mother was referring to when she told me to be careful. For once, I didn’t want to be careful. A woman like this one could bring a little adventure into my life, which was exactly what I needed. It is hard to be careful when there is a beautiful woman stroking your thigh under the table, giving you the little eyes.

–I want you to come with me to the beach tomorrow.

–*Ay Richar, pero sin pensarlo do'vece'.*

–What does that mean?

–It means yes, without even having to think twice about it!

–That makes me so happy, Yomaris. I usually like traveling alone, but I couldn't imagine roaming around the island without you.

–Me too papi, me too.

The waiter came by and said something that I did not catch to Yomaris. She shoed him away. When I asked her about it, she said that he was asking if we wanted anything else.

–Do you know him?

–*No ombe*, what are you talking about? Come, my pink man, let's go for a walk.

I looked at my reflection in the spoon and a bald man glowing like a lobster looked back at me. I didn't understand how a woman as beautiful as Yomaris could go for a man like me, it

was one of those hidden mysteries of the earth. I knew for a fact she thought I was funny, because she laughed at everything I said and she stroked me an awful lot. Maybe she wasn't one of those superficial ladies. Maybe she saw beyond my bald head and pink skin.

We took an Uber back to the hotel and when we got in the car the driver said, *Otro gringo? Muchacha deja eso, que Dios te va a castigar*, but Yomaris turned the volume up on the radio and drowned his voice.

–You know him too?

–No, he's talking to himself, besides...I only want to pay attention to you I don't have time for *demagogos*.

Before I could finish asking her what the hell that meant she started kissing me hungrily.

Yomaris told me to hold her hand as we went past the lobby. She didn't raise her head until we got to the elevator where we continued kissing. Between the tongue swirls she said, Let's go to your room, *mine's* a mess.

–*Sin pensalo'do'vece'* I said, proud that I could reciprocate her language.

Yomaris laughed tipping her head back revealing her golden teeth in the back of her mouth, she seemed like she could eat my whole face up. Her thigh clung to mine, she bit my lips and grabbed my nonexistent ass with one hand, my neck with the other. She was fierce, definitely a man-eater, no wonder she didn't eat anything at the restaurant, I thought.

When morning came Yomaris looked too pretty asleep to wake up, so I left without her to go rent a car so we could drive to the beach. I left her some money for breakfast on the night table and a little note saying that I would be back, signed, Richard. When I returned she kept saying Richard! Richard! with an American accent.

–This whole time I was saying “Richar,” *que estúpida dio' mio'*.

I laughed and told her, Call me whatever you want.

–*Ta' bien papi...* Look it, I went to the salon *pa' ponerme bonita*.

–You went to the beauty salon?

–Well yes, of course, if we are going to the beach I needed to get a manicure, a pedicure, a wax and my hair done. I hope its okay... I used your money, since breakfast was already included.

–Yes, that's fine I guess. There's none left?

–*Claro que no papi*, its expensive looking *this* good.

She did look good. I kissed her and we ended up making love or was it sex? Maybe it was too soon to call it love, but I definitely felt something churning inside of me.

She said, baby I think I love you! You make my pussy tingle!

I couldn't blame her, after all men acted according to what their phalluses felt too.

Yomaris was surprisingly, all packed and ready to go. She had a Gucci weekend bag and Gucci flip flops, big ass hoops and full on makeup.

–Yomaris, we are going to the beach you don't need to wear all that make up.

–Whatever are you talking about Richar? This is my face, yes I am this beautiful. I know it is hard to comprehend.

We went downstairs to the lobby to check out but according to Yomaris she had already done so and wanted to look at the shops. We grabbed a quick lunch in one of the improvised restaurants in the mall, only we sat outside in the balcony part that faced the Taco Bell the young

boys ran to yesterday. I told Yomaris about it and she said, Those are *limpia-botas!* And *cien pesos?* That's too much *papi, pa' eso damelo a mi*, I shine your shoe for free!

Yomaris wanted to take many pictures. She had me take pictures of her eating at the restaurant first, wearing sun glasses, then without the sun glasses; Then with the food and without the food in the frame. And when I showed her the car, it was a bonafide photoshoot.

She said, Baby! This is *our* car? Omaigah! *Huye tomame una foto.*

She had all sorts of poses down and each accentuated different parts of her juicy body. I wasn't mad at all. I said, send me those.

I had done some research and through word of mouth heard that the best place to go to was Capcana, a resort in Punta Cana. Yomaris seemed very happy that we were going there. She said that it was unexplored territory, that Boca Chica was more her thing but that no, no that we shouldn't go there. I was hoping we'd get to know each other a little more in the car ride but Yomaris talked on the phone the whole time. She was speaking super fast Spanish, so I didn't get much. I think I caught a few things, what wasn't in the dialect anyways, but nothing that I could put together and make something out of.

On the phone, Yomaris said something like, *Si Capcana mi helmana! Ya tu sabe! Pronto sacamo visa!*

–What are you talking about a visa?

–Visa? I didn't say no nothing about a visa... I said *Visca* baby, you got me cross-eyed!

With love, I mean!

–That's sweet Yomaris, I've never heard that expression but you too, I gotta say, I'm really glad a met you.

She gave me a smooch and continued yapping on the phone, *El que? Nada 'mija, el gringo ete' que quiere que le de sabrosura!*

–Hey, I said, would you mind? Can we talk for a bit?

–*El* what?!

–*Hablar*, let's *hablar*. *Tu y yo* Yomaris.

–*Pero* of course *papi*. She ended her call. Wachu wanna talk about?

–Well, I don't know, I want to get to know you, like for example, how do you know English?

–English? Is somethin’ I picked up on the way, you know. I met a lot of guys, um- a lot of people, because of my job, and most of them were all *Americano*, so I kind of felt forced to learn the language.

–Oh cool, I didn’t know a lot of Americans came to the nutritionist center you worked at.

–Of course, *papi*, gringos gotta get nutrified too!

–Ok. Tell me about how you grew up, or like what are your interests or hobbies?

–Growing up? Nobody want to talk about *that*. It's not all rainbows and butterflies. It may look it from afar, but growing up is the hardest, especially in this country. C’mon, baby let’s live in the present.

–Ok. Well, I’ll tell you how I grew up then. You know, in Wisconsin there’s not much to do, so one time me and my friends we had a party at my uncle’s and we burned the whole house down! Now that’s a true story!

I turned to look at her and she was absorbed looking at her phone. She said, Yeah? That’s great, Richie.

From that point on I made up my mind *not to* mind the little things. We were having fun, why get into a whole argument? Besides maybe she wasn't looking for anything serious, maybe we could just keep it physical. Nothing wrong with that.

When we got to the hotel we were greeted with mimosas and flower necklaces. From the hotel lobby you could see the sea. The staff danced merengue, the typical dance, in clothes the same colors as their flag. The women wore skirts that elongated with each swing and twirl, like birds of paradise showing off their feathers in pursuit of a mate. The men wore hats made of palm leaves, handkerchiefs tied around their necks, and exaggerated smiles. Yomaris loved it, she wanted to join in, but I told her I couldn't because of my feet.

–What's wrong with them?

–They were made in America.

With that I lost her to one of the male dancers. They held each other tightly, becoming one with each pirouette. It was as if a string tied each foot to the butt cheek directly above it, causing them to move rhythmically and therefore, in full sync. I felt left out so I tried dancing with one of the girls, but my strings were all knotted up and I couldn't follow the flow. So I simply let go and just watched. At least I was good at that. When the next song came on, the dancer handed me Yomaris' hand and went back to his original dancing partner. Their hips

locked together naturally as if they had never separated, as if they were born to dance merengue with each other in that hotel lobby.

–I thought I was never going to get you back, I said.

–Because of him?

–Just the way you were dancing together, it seemed like you had something going on.

–No, *cariño*, I'm just that good of a dancer, besides he's not my type.

–What's your type then?

–*Morenos* are not my type, I like them *blanquitos* like you.

She winked and kissed me as if we shared some kind of secret.

Our hotel room was so complete I never felt the urge to leave it unless it was to go to the beach. It was like a room that belonged to a colonial castle. A modern one at that, “*mejor que la casa del pariguayo ese Colón*” was the way Yomaris put it. It had an ocean view and a salt water pool that surrounded the castle with a furnished terrace. This time Yomaris pulled out a digital camera and it was a photoshoot all over again.

–*¡Me encanta!* Yomaris said, *¡Está todo muy bonito!*

Yomaris commented that luxury really put her in the mood, which would put me in the mood. With her, I didn't even have to use the pill like I regularly did. But Yomaris did start to complain, said she was getting all sore and needed a day to herself at the spa or else I wasn't getting any. I complied and spent the day at the beach laying around and reading my book. A couple local girls sat at the end of my lounge chair at the beach asking about my plans for the night, but I felt like I had something good going on with Yomaris and I didn't want to spoil that, so I rejected them. It did wonders for my self esteem though, people here found me attractive, or maybe it was the whole being American thing. I thought to myself that I should come here more often. For once I was seen as *exotic*. Back in America I was just a regular white fella but here I felt like could run the whole show. For lunch I had fried whole fish and *tostones* right there on the beach. I felt like I could wake up at any moment and find myself that it was all just a dream.

When I came back to the villa, Yomaris was in a bathrobe and slippers, barely visible in the bed if it hadn't been for her black hair.

–How was the spa, Yomaris?

–Oh, the most relaxing...

I jumped into bed with her and started pulling off her robe.

–*Muchacho* can't you see I'm watching my *telenovela*? Leave me alone. Not when I'm watching my *novela*! She turned up the volume and redid her robe.

–Oh okay, okay, sorry. I'll jump in the shower then.

When I came back I told her about the ladies in the beach in hopes of getting her jealous, let her know that there might be some competition.

–Who are they? What they look like? I'll take their eyes out Richar! *Yo no toy relajando*. They need to know not to mess with my man.

I laughed and leaned in for a kiss and she gave me one but with strange side eyes that clung to their corners.

–I guess I have to be more attentive of my man! C'mon let's go to a really nice restaurant. I'll even have dinner with you.

I took her out but I almost didn't want to. I had to walk directly behind her so men wouldn't look at her butt, which would almost creep out of her skin-tight dress with each step she took. She wore high heels that made her as tall as I was and went really heavy on the

perfume and makeup. When we got to the restaurant she ordered champagne and wanted a picture with the bottle when it came to our table. Hell, she took more pictures than I did and I was the one on vacation. After the bottle and a three-course meal, Yomaris was nicer, real caring, real touchy.

–See, you’re nicer when you have something in your stomach.

–Yes, nicer but also *fatter!*

–That’s okay, I like a little more meat on the bones, I said, and I grabbed her by the waist and kissed her hand.

–You so silly Richar, I’m not trying to please you, I’m looking after myself, she said, and she flipped her hair into my face.

–Well, that’s fine, I said, removing a few of her hairs from my mouth, I’m just saying you are beautiful and that wouldn’t change with a few extra pounds.

The next day I found Yomaris in the terrace sunbathing in her leopard print bikini. Her fake breasts looked like mountains right in front of her. She probably couldn’t even see her belly button from that angle.

–*Buenos días*, I said in the best Spanish I could manage.

Yomaris gave me a look as if she'd killed my cat.

–What's wrong? Did something happen?

–Look it... I need some money but I can't tell you why just now. I just found out I am in a bit of trouble and I need you to help me. Will you? Please?

–Well... how much do you need? What sort of trouble are you in? Is it trouble with the house?

–The house? Oh! Yes! Yes! The house...water! It flooded! Oh my gosh! And with the renovations! I need to get that fixed or else I won't be able to relax.

–Oh Yomaris, I'm so sorry this is happening to you. Here, I'll write you a check, how much do you need?

–I need twenty-five thousand pesos.

–That much?

–Well I need more...but I don't want to make you go through much trouble.

–No, it's no trouble really, how much you need?

–Richar, I really need fifty thousand pesos.

–Fine. It's all fine. Just pay me back when you can. I ripped out the check and handed it to her.

–Ok. *Hay gracias papi!* You really are helping me you know that!

She started packing her stuff and putting on her clothes.

–Wait. You're leaving?

–*Pero* of course *Papi* I need to fix my house! I need to take care of all of that, but don't you worry I'll come back. I'll take the bus and I'll come back.

–I can come with you. I can help out, I told her.

–*Ay no!* You came all this way... enjoy your vacations please! I'll come back in a few days when I leave things settled.

–My flight is in three days. Now if you can't come back before then, please call me. You have my card. If you can't come back I can come down to Santo Domingo and we can have a final day together, you know, to say goodbye.

I dropped her off at a bus stop in Veron, about half an hour away from Punta Cana. She left in such a rush, I realized, I didn't even have her phone number. We hadn't spent any time apart since we met so I'd never felt the need to ask her for it. She did know where our hotel was and she had a key to the room. I called the front desk and asked them to please call my cell if she showed up at the lobby. That reminded me that maybe over at the hotel in Santo Domingo they probably had her contact. I called and asked but they said that there was no one under the name Yomaris registered and that even if there was, that they were not allowed to give out that sort of information. They did say however that they had my suitcase and that it would be available to pick up at anytime that I wished. I would have to return a day sooner to Santo Domingo, I thought. In order to pick up my luggage and hopefully kiss Yomaris goodbye.

I didn't hear a word from Yomaris, she never called or even sent a miserable text. I spent the next couple days going to the beach in front of the hotel and laying around in the sand. I felt as useless as one of those whales that wash up on the shore. I would let the waves roll me and un-roll me around the shoreline. I wondered how many sand dollars it would take to get Yomaris back. Maybe she had lost my card and had been trying to call me all this time. But if that was the case, she could have called the hotel and get the call transferred to my room. Maybe she was

busy with the house; but it hadn't rained around here, how much water could there have been down in Santo Domingo?

The day of my flight, I drove back to the capital early in the morning to retrieve my luggage from the hotel. All of my belongings were there except for my sunglasses, the only thing of value really besides the bag itself. I didn't even care, I felt like an entire different person. I couldn't feel attached to the things inside of my bag. I had already gone this far without them. I dragged it around with me nonetheless.

I showed a picture of Yomaris to the hotel receptionist from my phone and asked him if he had seen her.

–Yomaris? Yeah come with me.

He led me up to the pool area and there she was, in the bikini I had bought her a few days back. Bending over some guy's lounge chair, rubbing sunblock on his chest. I swear to God, the guy looked just like me: bald, white, maybe a few pounds lighter and a couple inches taller. I felt like I was having a *déjà vu*.

–Yomaris, what are you doing with this guy? What happened? You never came back.

Yomaris looked at me as if suddenly she had forgotten English.

–Yudelka, do you know this guy? Why is he calling you *Yomaris*?

Yomaris shook her head, *No lo sé, estará perdido el tigre...*

–Of course she knows me! Tell him Yomaris!

–No, I don't know this man.

The butler came up to us and told me I had to leave since I was no longer a guest of the hotel, I could not have access to the pool. I whacked the sunblock out of Yomaris' hand and walked off into a power stride, even though I felt like I had none. That's when I realized Yomaris was not mine. Yomaris was never mine to begin with. All she had given to me was a farce, a projection of the man she wanted me to be. And for a moment I was that man, but how much of a man could I be, if conceived by a charlatan? She had introduced excitement into my life, no, worse, she had made me feel like I was special. Yomaris had made me king of her republic but really all I was, was king of Nothing.

I took the elevator back to the lobby and complained to the receptionist about Yomaris' operations. I think this guy was getting a cut out of Yomaris' little performances. He seemed

unbothered when I told him, he asked how much she took and then said that it sounded like something the police would be interested in.



When the plane landed on U.S. soil nobody clapped. People got out of the plane in an orderly fashion and my suitcase arrived safely with the rest of my belongings. When my co-workers asked about my trip I said that it had been wonderful and was very careful not to mention Yomaris. I was ashamed. After all, I had been played.

I met my friend Onessimo at a Dominican restaurant in Queens called “La Brisa del Cibao.” He chose it. Onessimo was Dominican second generation, his parents came to New York when he was just a baby. He was the one who had recommended me to go to the island for vacations and wanted to hear all about my trip.

–It was great!

–Cut the crap my friend, now tell me how it was. You don’t have to lie to me. I’m from there.

I told him everything that had happened with Yomaris. How she lured me like a stranger with candy. How she broke my heart and took my gold.

–*Te chapearon mi 'elmano!* You fell for a CHAPIADORA?

–You knew this was going on in your country and you didn't warn me?

–To be honest, I had only heard about them like I've heard about *ciguapas*, you know like a mythical creature.

–What's a *ciguapa*? What's a *chapiadora*?

– *La ciguapa* is a mythical creature, a beautiful woman with backwards feet who lures men into the sea, to drown them. It's an old story grandmas tell you to scare you, like *el cuco*. Now a *chapiadora* is what you met. They make you think they are into you but they are only into the money you can provide. The word translates to 'grass cutter'—sort of like a lawnmower, because they leave you grassless. That country keeps changing, I can't keep up with it. But I have to say... your face right now is making me glad I didn't think about warning you! That shit's priceless. I bet you got a thing for Dominican women now. That's the thing about them. They are *diablas*, but they keep you coming back for more.

When I went to bed that night, I dreamt I was back on the island. Bats were flying around diving into the night and eating stars off the sky. The only source of light was the moon which crowned over Yomaris' head. The wind was blowing hard enough so that the palm trees were forced to dance with one another. Yomaris, fully nude, stood on the shore, luring me into the water with her finger. She had backwards feet and long hair that caressed her buttocks.

Slowly I made my way to her. The closer I got to her, the warmer the water got. I laid my head on her breasts and smelled them. She had this power over me and it felt nice to succumb to it, to let myself drown into her skin.



II.

A Day in Boca Chica

I usually don't like riding the bus, but this time I don't mind it since I'm meeting my dad and my sister at the beach. The bus driver is an unofficial therapist. People always stand beside him and talk and talk and tell him all about their problems even though there is a poster above the seats that says you shouldn't talk to the driver unless it's bus related, such as routes or destinations or how good you are with the time. I don't know his name yet because I guess we are not there yet in the bus driver and bus rider relationship, but he looks like a Harry. So, one time Harry was really tired of this individual and he said: "Look, lady. I'm no psychiatrist or bartender. I can't help you with your problems."

But the lady didn't care. She went on and on. I wish I could tell you what her problems were but usually when things are not important I don't really remember them.

The bus fare is twenty-five *pesos*, but sometimes Harry lets me pay ten *pesos* or seven *pesos*. One time I paid twenty *pesos* and he told me I had to pay the rest but I didn't have change so I had to give him a whole extra ten *pesos*, and the machine ate it all, and this machine never returns your change, so it really bummed me out.

When I get out of the bus I always say thank you because those are the magic words, and I'm sure it makes Harry feel better and makes it worth his while even with all of his bus patients.

The sun kisses my face as I step out and I see my dad and sister near the shore with a small little boat, which we call a *yola*. We hug and we kiss lots because we only see each other on weekends because my mom and my dad no longer love each other. My dad now loves another woman and I love her too because she is very sweet and sometimes she paints my fingernails. I never tell that to my mom because my mom doesn't love her and she says that my stepmom is a witch. What I think is, it really does not matter if she is a witch, because she's a good witch like Glinda in The Wizard of Oz. I wish I was a witch.

My dad, sister and I get on the *yola* and we go to where the sailboats are, which is very far away from the shore. There is a sailboat race going on and we float along and we watch. This usually gets my dad all nostalgic and he talks about his windsurfing days and how he won the regatta several years in a row back in college. When my dad was in college he used to wear three shirts to look thicker because he was skinnier than average.

There is almost no wind today and the sailboat race is a bust.

“Look!” my sister says, pointing at some floating flowers near the *yola*, and she picks them up.

“Let’s give it to the winners!” I say.

“Yeah! Let’s give it to the wind Gods!” my dad says.

Sometimes when I say something and someone else hears something else I usually don’t correct them because most times what they mistakenly hear is better than what I actually said.

My dad takes the flowers and he closes his eyes for a while, and then he lets go of them and on they float again, in the deep blue.

My dad is very spiritual and I’m glad he is because now I am too, and the world makes better sense now. He believes a lot in energies and in the law of attraction. It is very simple. Take me, for example. I have always wished for a little brother. I mean, *always*. Upon a star, after blowing off dandelions, birthday wishes. Every time I would ask for a little brother. And now that my dad and my stepmom married it means that her son is my brother, so I finally have a little brother!

I am so glad things are going well now. Before it was pretty hectic. I didn't understand what was going on when things were bad, but I knew something was off because when you see your mom cry it's never a good sign.

One time my parents were fighting and I started crying and they noticed me. They stopped fighting and they looked at each other and I know that they knew they thought they had to stay together for me. Then they took me to eat fried chicken and everything seemed good. Looking back, I wish I hadn't cried, I wish they had continued fighting because maybe they would have arrived at the place we are now much sooner. I didn't understand it before. I wanted them to stay together, but they are happier loving other people now. I am happy too because now I have more parents and there is more love to go around.





III.

Perla Costa

Pearls are formed when an irritant, usually a parasite, becomes trapped inside an oyster, clam or mussel. As a defense mechanism, the mollusk secretes a smooth crystalline substance called ‘nacre’ to coat the irritant. Layer upon layer of this coating forms a lustrous pearl within several years. Perla Costa was born in a similar way. Her father put an irritant in her mother’s clam and she coated this irritant with many layers of intention, fluids and love. Thomas originally had been intrigued by Lucille’s older sister, Miguelina, but that all changed as soon as Thomas saw Lucille dancing. You see, Lucille wasn’t as beautiful as Miguelina, but she was much more quick-witted. Many say she even conceived *tigueraje*, others are certain that she didn’t, but that she definitely embodied the term.

One night Miguelina and Thomas were getting ready to go out and Lucille desperately wanted to join them. Miguelina would have rather died than be seen out and about with her younger sister, so she refused.

– Luci, you are *too* young to be out in *discotecas*. *Verda' mami?* Miguelina yelled to her mother on the couch.

–According to whom? Lucille said.

– Listen to your sister, their mother said, without raising her eyes from her book.

Lucille nonetheless followed them all the way to the discotheque on her bike. Now, if you've ever driven in Santo Domingo you know what a *bendito peligro* this is, but Lucille's mother, Cesarina, never paid attention to anything but the characters in her books or her column. Even Doña Hermenegilda (Doña Herma for short), the woman who raised all of Cesarina's children, was too busy watching her favorite *telenovela* to notice Luci leave. This was partly because Doña Herma listened to the *tele* too loud and also because Luci knew how to open the locks without making any noise by pushing the door with her body weight and twisting those three locks ever so slowly.

When Lucille got inside the *discoteca* she started dancing, *dando golpe de barriga* like her life depended on it.

– Miguelina, isn't that your sister? Thomas asked.

Miguelina pulled Luci by her hair and asked her, *Que tu hace aquí? Dando asco en la discoteca?*

– *Dejame tranquila!* Luci responded, you're not my mother.

Lucille pulled away and continued dancing. Many men approached her to offer her drinks which she would accept. She was *un figurín*, only four-feet-eleven, but she was like a tank, she could drink anyone under the table. Miguelina did not want to be in the same social setting as her sister, so she left to go to the bar next door. Thomas was too busy watching Lucille dance to notice Miguelina ever left. As soon as a guy started dancing *perreo* with Lucille, Thomas pulled her away and took her home.

When Lucille got home, her father was waiting for her with the dog's chain in his hand. *La dejó morada*, to say the least. This man was very serious, he rarely smiled, so in effect he had a beautiful complexion, no lines to reveal his age.

When Thomas would phone the house Doña Herma would always call out to Miguelina to pick up the phone and he would have to hang up before she ever got to it. He kept trying until Lucille picked up the phone. It took him about a week, which was good because by then the

bruises on her skin had vanished almost entirely. They made plans to go to the Port of Caucedo where Thomas worked handling cargo and shipping containers. To Lucille it wasn't very interesting but she liked being next to the ocean and she liked how excited Thomas got talking about containers. He was part of the Salvatierra family. They were one of the first families to get into the maritime industry on the island so Lucille knew this guy was well off.

Lucille did the math and decided Thomas was the right kind of man for her. When Thomas said he had to move to Liverpool, Lucille decided that she should go too. And when Lucille thought that they should have a baby, they did that too.

Lucille was in line for cigarettes when the doctor called and gave her the big news. She celebrated with a cigarette and gave the rest of the pack to someone else in line. Lucille went home and set the table with a silver platter, the pee stick (+), and a plate cover on top. When Thomas got back from work and received the news, he was both happy and hungry. After all, Lucille hadn't cooked anything. They took themselves out to an oyster bar, drank champagne and shared the crab salad. Thomas was eating an oyster when he almost choked on something. He spit it out on a his hand to find a little black pearl. Thomas, amidst the candelabra lighting, the champagne and opportunity, held the pearl out and proposed to Lucille.

-Before I say yes, I have to tell you something.

-You are already married?

-No, it's not that. I have two kids.

-Two? When did you have two kids?

-I was very young. I couldn't raise them so they went to live with their father in Viterbo. But now that we are going to have get married and have a baby, I want them to come live with us. I want us to be a family. What do you think?

-Why didn't you say something sooner?

-I didn't want to scare you off.

-I am not scared. I'm just surprised, I want to meet them. How old are they?

-Caonabo is six and Anacaona is three.

-You gave them Taino names?

-Yes, their father loves the Taino culture. He wanted to name Caonabo "Andrea," but in DR that wouldn't work, a boy with a girl's name, he would of gotten bullied in school. So we settled for the name Caonabo. So, what do you say?

-Well, of course they can come live with us. Send for them. What about their father?

Won't he have anything to say about this?

-I am sure it will be fine. He works a lot, besides they are my kids after all. If I can finally take care of them I should be able to.

-Está bien.. Te quieres casar conmigo?

Lucille swallowed the little black pearl in response. In effect Perla Costa was born with Heterochromia. At least that's what Lucille says. The Salvatierras believe it was the wine and cigarettes. They never really approved of Lucille but she won them over with Perla, for she gave them their first grandchild.

When they got back to Santo Domingo they got married in a church. Thomas never did his confirmation, so we don't know how official this marriage ever was. After all, one must get baptized, do their first communion, and confirmation in order to get married in a church in the Dominican Republic. In the ceremony, Anacaona was the flower girl and Caonabo the ring bearer. Anacaona was very happy to be the flower girl, she was the center of attention, with her little peach-colored dress and a bow the size of her head. Caonabo was not too happy that Lucille had found another man to love. Since he was a bit older, he was able to think for himself but nonetheless, he was still a child and rooted for the love between his mother and his father. After

the wedding the Salvatierras joined the Ramirez family at their house for the festivities. It was an event for the books, anybody who was anybody was there, except for Augusta, one of Lucille's sisters. Augusta and her mother, Cesarina were constantly arguing so she decided to move to Hawaii with her *marido*. It was a beautiful celebration nonetheless, Even Doña Herma got dressed up, but only to the extent that Cesarina allowed, so that she wouldn't be confused as a guest. When Caonabo or Anacaona misbehaved, Doña Herma would run after them screaming, *Sigan portandose mal pa' que vean! Voy a buca una varita que tenga hormiga de la roja pa' que lo piquen!* But Doña Herma was too plump and had huge cankles so she could never run for too long, much less catch them.

Five months after the wedding, Lucille gave birth to Perla Costa. Anacaona was really sketched out and never got too close to the new baby. But soon enough she warmed up to her, and always wanted to be with Perla. One time when Thomas was changing Perla's diaper, he was singing to her and kept saying "my baby, my baby" but Anacaona said, "that's not your baby! That's my daddy's baby" and Thomas said, "No, no this is my baby! *You* are your daddy's baby." Anacaona was really confused. She always called Thomas: *papi*, and Caonabo would get really mad and yell at her, "that's not your *papi!*" Anacaona would argue against this and say, "yes he *is* because he lives with *mami*." So they ended up calling him Tio Thom to clear the air. This only made it even more confusing for Anacaona, she called him Tio papi, or papi Thom. She only got it right when she got a little older. Her father, Filadelfo, ended up moving back to the Dominican Republic. He installed himself in Juan Dolio where he would get to see Caonabo and Anacaona every other weekend. Filadelfo was infatuated with Taino artifacts, he even had a dealer to buy

the pieces off the black market. His Taino collection was so extensive it took most of the space in his house, which he constructed with his own hands. His house could of easily been a museum if only he charged at the door.

It took Thomas three years to get enough money to buy a house. It was partly because he was able to get a generous discount since the previous owner happened to be his own uncle. The architect was really into Picasso's Cubism when he designed the house, so from the outside the house looked like the head of a robot. From the street, it was as if the eyes of the house were the windows to the main room. The mouth of the robot was the garage and his tongue was the driveway. The house was part of a gated community called *Cuesta Hermosa II*. Originally it was not a gated community, but Lucille put the gate in. She didn't have a job, so she made it her job to make the community what it is today. Lucille didn't really belong there and since there wasn't anyone in charge she put herself in charge and made it her kingdom. The members of the community respected her but it was mostly out of fear than out of love.

Cuesta Hermosa II curiously enough had a *barrio* inside of it, and I say curiously because most of the residents in the community had mansions and fancy cars. It was a gated community meant for doctors, bankers, ambassadors, businessmen, lawyers and their housewives. So I guess you could say it was a *barrio fino*. The *barrio* inside of *Cuesta Hermosa* started with somebody's gardener. He built his house out of wood on a 2,000 meter lot next to the mansion he worked at. He had kids and their kids built houses on the lot too, and then their kids built more houses, so it turned into a *barrio*. Lucille never got rid of them though, she didn't think it was fair to relocate

them just because they were poor. She wanted them to have the decency to live in a gated community, where it was safe. She arranged for each of the houses to get showers, toilets and most importantly, electricity. Lucille even got some kids from the *barrio fino* into public schools. Every year before Christmas she would hire some women from the *barrio* to arrange Christmas baskets for Lucille to send to each neighbor as a gift, so in a way she even created jobs for them.

Most of the *muchachos de servicio* in the house came from that *barrio fino* that was inside the gated community of *Cuesta Hermosa II*. There was Eddy the gardener; he was the youngest of them all. Eddy wanted to be a *bachatero*, but he settled for singing to the roses in the garden and dancing with the rake. He would spend all day singing in that garden. The flowers grew the tallest during the time he worked in that house. It was like a tropical jungle in that backyard; *tupido de verde*. There were palm trees, *Flamoyan* trees, an avocado tree and a mango tree from which Perla Costa could pick *mangos bajitos* herself without having to make too much of an effort to reach since its branches were so close to the ground. There were iguanas, rabbits, dogs, parakeets, and occasionally cats. Lucille would rescue cats from the streets and release them in the community to get rid of rats. There was also Celinda Suero; she renamed herself Joselyn but everyone called her Josi. People from outside of the capital often changed their names to avoid voodoo or *brujería*. Josi was from San Juan de la Maguana not too far from Haiti. She was very tall and skinny like a model and she always spoke so sweetly to the children and never hit them, unlike Doña Herma.

Eddy and Anacaona had *el verdadero amor del negrito*. When Anacaona came home from school she would play with Eddy and the *guachimán* in the trampoline. They invented a game called *el juego de la pelota*, in which the ball could not touch the trampoline so they would dive, jump and do anything that was necessary to avoid the ball touching the trampoline floor. One day Anacaona and Josi were sitting on the swing-set in the garden and Josi said ¡*Mira, un Salta Cocote!* and pointed to the iguana that would often frequent the garden. Anacaona knew very well that it was not a *salta cocote*; the lizard-looking creature that is infamous for jumping on people's throats, but she wanted to play along so she said,

¡*Diantre si, un Salta Cocote!* C'mon Eddy kill it!

To please Anacaona, Eddy drew out his *machete* and whacked the iguana with it. When Lucille found out about this she stayed in bed for a week mourning the death of her dear iguana. She didn't fire Eddy, but she made Anacaona write an essay on iguanas and that was how the fear of the *Salta Cocote* finally left their heads.

There was also Mariano Brazoban, the kids' chauffeur. He would drive Caonabo, Anacaona and Perla Costa to school everyday, always with Josi by his side riding shotgun. Even though Lucille requested that Mariano play one the many CDs she made composed of classical music, he always played *merengue*, *bachata* and *salsa* for the kids. Mariano Brazoban had a legendary laugh, similar to that of a parrot mocking a human's laughter. It was so loud and resonant it would shake and rattle the truck. The kids had to drive around in an old Nissan pickup

truck. Thomas arranged it that way, since the Vicinis, the wealthiest family in Santo Domingo had their kids drive around in what looked like a *carro publico*. Whilst on the road Mariano would take sharp turns on the curves so that in the back seat Caonabo, Anacaona and Perla would smush together from side to side laughing hysterically. After school on their way back home, Mariano would buy sugarcane off the street for the kids and say, *¡Eto limpia lo diente!* as he sank his teeth into the *caña*, chewed it like gum and spit it out on the plastic bag it came in. Mariano would also buy them, *chicharrónes* and make the kids promise they wouldn't tell Lucille that he was feeding them meat from the street. He would say, *No le digan na' a Doña Luci que me matan si se entera que le toy dando carne de la calle!* And the kids would laugh and say, *nunca* and “pass me the bag.” It was probably thanks to Mariano Brazoban that the kids developed strong stomachs and could sober up by eating *chimis* after going out to *discotecas* when they came of age.

Caonabo and Anacaona would fight like *gato y perro* and one day instead of hitting Caonabo, Anacaona slapped Mariano by mistake. As a punishment Lucille made Anacaona bake a carrot cake using the expired cereals from the pantry to bring to Mariano's family and she also had to bring books to read to Mariano's kids. It was the first time Anacaona ever saw Mariano out of his uniform and it was the first time she ever went to a *barrio*. Anacaona had biked past the *barrio fino* inside of *Cuesta Hermosa II* countless times but she had never stopped to explore. Doña Herma had prohibited her and warned her that they would take her big brown eyes or her *riñones* to sell in the black market.

It was shocking for Anacaona to see that Mariano had a life and six kids of his own. For some reason Anacaona thought that Caonabo, Perla and herself were his only kids, after all he spent more time with them than Thomas or Lucille ever did. On their way to Mariano's house, Anacaona saw houses made out of scrap wood and rusted tin roofs. Kids were running around barefoot after chickens and playing *bitilla* which is like baseball but instead of a bat they use a stick and instead of a baseball they use a bottle cap. That's why Dominican Republic exports baseball players like rum or tobacco. They start them young, but most of all they start at a very difficult level so by the time they play with the real instruments needed for baseball, they literally knock it out of the ballpark.

Mariano's house was painted pink with yellow shutters. It was made out of cement and had a roof made out of dried palm leaves. Anacaona was relieved to see his house was a little better looking compared to the rest of the houses in the *barrio*. When they went inside she discovered that he owned only the second floor of the house and it had merely three rooms. Mariano's three daughters were very fond of Anacaona. While Anacaona read to them, the girls fought over whose turn it was to play with her hair. *Tu si tiene lo moño bueno muchacha*, they kept saying, impressed at Anacaona's straight long hair. Anacaona tried to explain to them that the quality of hair had nothing to do with its straightness but the three of them just laughed at her like she was crazy. *Tato si*. They kept calling her *Rubia* despite the fact that Anacaona had dark colored hair like them. They assumed people with light skin to be *Rubia* or *rubio* automatically. But look, Anacaona said putting her hair next to theirs, *e'lo mismo!* After spending a day with Mariano's family, she saw him with a different set of eyes. She grew more humble and

appreciative of his presence. Anacaona understood that Mariano took after her and her siblings not because he wanted to, but out of necessity. When she got back home and saw her bedroom she cried. Anacaona felt terrible that she didn't have to share her room, her bathroom or her queen-sized bed.

With the birth of Socorro came the arrival of Ramona and even Doña Herma deserted Cesarina to help out and cook for the kids. Cesarina didn't mind, *porque solo comía libros* and fruits that she could peel for herself. Ramona raised Socorro until the baby was five. She even breastfed Socorro since Lucille was too busy going to law school and bossing everyone around in *Cuesta Hermosa II*. Socorro and Perla Costa were always together and in no time were a *compinche*, always making fun of Ramona calling her *¡La Mona! ¡La Mona!* They were always dressed the same, as if they were twins, and were always bathed together in the same big blue tub up until the day Socorro started pooping in it.

Since Socorro had very blonde hair, Lucille made Ramona bathe Perla with chamomile shampoo to lighten her hair. When they went fishing on the boat Lucille would religiously spray Perla's hair with some product that worked with the sun, to make her blonde. Perla would run around the boat crying trying to escape until Lucille pulled her by her hair and yanked her to sit her down. Perla would cry while her mother massaged her hair with the spray. "You are going to look so beautiful, you will see" *Dejala ombe*, Thomas would say but nothing would stop Lucille from getting what she wanted. She wanted blonde daughters, so she got them. Then she would

parade Socorro and Perla around saying, “look at my *rubitas poderosas!*” It made Anacaona feel like the black sheep in the family, so on occasion she would apply the spray on herself too.

Lucille called Socorro “her most expensive baby” since Socorro often had to be taken to the hospital for stitches or broken limbs costing them *una fortuna* in hospital bills. She could never manage to stay still. Socorro was always running around and climbing walls, she even threw herself off the roof one time and landed luckily in the pool. Socorro hated eating too; she found it very boring. Doña Herma had to get really creative to get her to eat. Doña Herma would leave the fork with food on top of a magazine on the table and say, “Oh, I’m going to leave this fork right here. I sure hope no one eats this *arroz con habichuela!*” Socorro would take the bite of food and hide under the table saying, “I wonder who ate the food! Where is the food?! There must be a mouse on the loose!”

Socorro always wanted to rewatch Alice in Wonderland, specifically with Doña Herma since she was the plumpest, the best at cuddling and *ñoñerías*. When Socorro and Doña Herma would finish watching the movie she would take her out into the garden to avoid another rerun. They would go out into the darkest and deepest nooks in the garden to try and find Alice.

As Caonabo grew up he started practicing magic and he would do elaborate magic shows in the backyard for the whole neighborhood to watch. Lucille loved this for it was the perfect opportunity for her to climb the social ladder. She was so good at this she could have easily gotten a diploma if they offered social climbing in school. If someone in the room didn’t know

who she was, Lucille would immediately make herself known. She would go up to the person and ask if she or he is the daughter or son of whomever and if they said yes, then Lucille would say that she and their parents are *great* friends. If they would say no, then Lucille would respond, “Oh! You look just like her! What's your name? And your last name? Pleased to meet you I am Lucille Salvatierra” and if they had a Spanish accent she would put on one too or if they had a Mexican accent she would create one for herself as well. At first it would stress her kids out to witness this, but nowadays they marvel at their mother’s enigma and they make fun of her too but the woman is unbothered, she’ll even play along to her kids’ jests.

Before the magic shows Caonabo would vent to his mother about the stress he was feeling. Caonabo would get really worried about the rain since the shows were always outside so Lucille, to bring him peace, would tie three rocks together with some string and tie it around a tree. She assured Caonabo that it wouldn’t rain and it never did. Lucille had to do this for all four of her kids’ birthday parties or else they would throw fits. She would try to explain to them that a little water on their birthdays was a blessing but no one seemed to care. The only consolation Perla accepted was one Josi offered, that if it rained while the sun was out it meant a witch was getting married. It brought her comfort that witches could get married and that they were getting married on her birthday meant it was a special day.

Every Wednesday the Salvatierras had family dinner. They would take turns to decide what the family was going to eat that night. If it was Thomas’ turn they would go out on the terrace and have a barbecue. Perla Costa always chose Chinese take out on her nights. If it was

Socorro's turn she always chose grilled cheese and everyone else had to eat grilled cheeses too. For Caonabo it was always either pasta or pizza and Anacaona never kept it consistent which was nice. One time Caonabo was late for a family dinner and Lucille locked all the doors to the house, she even put down the shutters to keep him out. Lucille was very serious about her made up tradition, she even had napkins made with each of the family member's names embroidered on them. Next to each plate there was a laminated playlist with the music that was going to play that night. Occasionally she would invite a guest over (they got an embroidered napkin too with the words 'honored guest' on it) and she would quiz her kids and ask them, "What song is playing?" The kids always got it right for it was the same playlist each night. Lucille would then say, "See? My kids are cultured. They *know* classical music."

When I finished writing this scene, Perla Costa got up from the table and went to her room. Doña Herma found her laying on her bed *boca abajo* with the drapes closed and the lights off.

–What's the matter Perla Costa?

–I have been mocked! They have made a fool out of me!

–What are you talking about?

–I have been ridiculed! They want to demonstrate that... I don't know... that I don't exist!

–Who? Who wants to do such thing?

–The author of this.... This narration!

–Well, if you have been mocked, then you should mock back.

–But how? By killing myself?

–*Mire muchachita! No me venga con esa vaina.* That won't solve anything. Tell me, in what way have you been mocked?

–This entire story was supposed to be about me, I am after all, Perla Costa! But I am barely even in it hence, I don't exist! I have been used as a vehicle, as a puppet! Just like my mother always did. It never ends! That's why I must end my own life. I will never be made a fool again!

–Look, I know you are upset but you know what the answer is? Distraction. You must distract yourself. Everyday I am made a fool too for I don't know anything about life, all its

questions remain unanswered and there is no way to find out what it really is until the day we die and I keep going on through life working hard you don't see me talking about no suicide.

–Easy for you to say! You have been mentioned in this story more than I have! They should have name it Doña Hermenegilda not Perla Costa! Now there's a title!

–*Ay mija*, please settle down. You exist just as much as I do. There's a philosopher Cesarina is always reciting and he says something like.... If you think, you exist! Or I think it's more like 'I think so I am' You think don't you?

–Only up to the point my creator permits! Don't you see, I am nothing, I am empty, a mere outline of what I should be!

–No, I don't think that, I think it's up to you to decide what you are.

–Then it's decided. I am nothing and that is that. I will go visit this so called writer and tell him to remove me out of his narration entirely, that it is better off without me. And that if he doesn't it reflects poorly on his part as a writer.

–What writer? Do you mean God? I think for now you should rest, when I have thoughts like these a good night's sleep always seems to fix it. Sleep now child... tomorrow you will see you will feel much better.

Doña Herma left Perla Costa so that she could rest. But Perla Costa *no pego ni un ojo*. All night she pondered on her existence and her place in this world. The next day Perla Costa was certain she would take her own life but felt the need to consult it with me, the author of this story.

When Perla Costa came to my house in *Piantini* I was very happy at her arrival and she was surprised to see I was a woman, not a man. I had her sit down and made her some *café con leche* and made sure she was comfortable. Perla Costa proceeded to tell me about her life and her problems but I stopped her and informed her that I very well knew every little detail in her life for I conceived them. I proved it to her by telling her the most intimate details of her life, things she thought were a secret. Perla Costa trembled and looked at me with both fear and admiration.

–It can't be! It can't be! Is this a dream?

–Well, for one to dream one must first be alive.

–What! So, have I died?

–No. You are not alive nor dead. Perla, you are not dreaming, but you are also not awake.

You are in what they call a limbo.

–You are confusing me! No! Wait! You are the one who is confused! Look I just came here for one purpose.

–Yes, to ask for my permission to commit suicide.

–Permission? I don't need your permission! I didn't come here for permission! I came here to ask you to remove me from your story. There is no purpose in having me in it, I am not the protagonist! So what's the point? What's the point in naming your story after me and then barley even having me in it! Tell me!

–So you have come here to ask *me* to kill *you*?

–No!

–But that's what that means my dear Perla Costa. That's what you are asking of me. You can't exist if you are not in my story. You are a product of my imagination, a fictive entity.

–Then why didn't you write about me in your story? And I mean really write about me not just throw my name around here and there?

–I wanted to. I was inspired by you... but then when I started writing about your life I couldn't help but develop everyone else that seemed to be around you....

–Why is that? Am I not interesting enough? Am I not complex enough?

–You are! That’s just it! You are *too* complex. It was just too hard.

–Some writer you are! Why don’t you finish what you start! How selfish of you to have me in this limbo.

–I am sorry... I didn’t mean for it to be like this! It was just hard writing about you because.... because.... we are so similar you see... it's easier writing about people who are different than me. No matter what I wrote about you, Perla Costa it would never do any justice to your persona.

–Similar? We are not similar you and me! I am braver than you, I came here to confront you! You can’t even confront yourself. Have you even begun to contemplate who you are? I have! I have asked myself all the questions! And I have come here seeking answers! You... you are too afraid of looking within yourself!

–Look, you are really getting on my nerves... what am I going to do with you? How about this... I will have you killed.

–Have *me* killed? *Este es el Colmo!*

–Well, yes isn't that what you wanted? There, you got it! I'll have you killed. Once you leave this house and go back to *Cuesta Hermosa* you will die.

–*No!* Never mind. I change my mind. You can use me in your story. I don't mind being an underdeveloped character just keep me in it. I'm fine with it.

–It's too late. It's all said and done.

–But I want to live! I want to be Perla Costa, I want to live in *Cuesta Hermosa*, please!
Let me be! Let me be!

–I am truly sorry Perla Costa but your time has come. Please leave.

When Perla Costa got home she found that everyone was asleep except for Doña Herma who was in the kitchen fixing herself a midnight snack.

–Doña Herma, ¿*Que haces?* What are you making?

–*Habichuelas con dulce*....you want?

–*Si, por favor.* I am so hungry.

After finishing the bowl, Perla Costa requested another one. Doña Herma poured her another bowl happily since Perla Costa never wanted to eat her *Habichuelas con dulce*. Perla thought *habichuelas* were not meant to be a dessert, that they were only meant to be eaten with *arroz*.

–Ay, Doña Herma, I am going to miss you.

–Miss me? Where are you going?

–I just have this feeling that I am going to die. I feel so weak.

–Die? *Déjate de boberías*. Here, have some more *habichuelas*. *Habichuelas* make you strong! People who eat *habichuelas* never die, they make you immortal! Look how good I look!

Perla Costa had another bowl. After she finished she asked Doña Herma to boil some *platanos* to make *mangú* and fry some eggs with *salami*.

–*Asi me gusta!* Perla, Eat, Eat! You are too skinny. The *platanos* will give you your strength back. I can assure you that.

–I feel a little better now, but I am still hungry! Doña Herma give me some *pasteles en hoja!* Make me some *sancocho!* Fry some yucca and some *quesito San Juan!* Where is the *mofongo?* Make *Yanikeke!* ¡*Quiero moro de guandules!*

–Immediately! Here have some *pastelitos* in the meantime.

Perla Costa ate everything Doña Herma prepared and when Doña Herma was too tired to make more dishes she went to bed. Perla Costa grabbed a *morir soñando* from the fridge. She couldn't bring herself to go up the stairs so she went to Doña Herma's room and cuddled up in her bed.

–Who is there?

–It's me. Move over.

–Don't you dare spill that *mori-soñando* on my bed! Why are you still eating? *Te va a dar una vaina si sigues así!*

–*Pues si me voy a morir, quiero morir soñando.*

Perla Costa drank the *mori-soñando* slowly, savoring the last drops of the beverage and went into a profound and peaceful sleep as Doña Hermenegilda hummed and stoked her hair.

La Ñapa

Glossary

A

- **Arrepiéntete:** Repent
- **Así se llama un primo mío:** “My cousin has that name.”
- **Así me dicen, La Mujer Potra:** “That’s what they call me, lady horse.”
- **Amor del negrito:** Unconditional Love
- **Arroz con habichuela:** Rice and beans, the typical dish in the Dominican Republic. No matter how rich or poor, everyone has the same thing for lunch.
- **Así me gusta:** That’s the way I like it.

B

- **Blanquitos:** Blanco means white. In Spanish, when “ito” is at the end of a word it means “small.” For example: barco means boat but *barquito* means little boat.
- **Buenos días:** Good Morning
- **Bendito:** Holy
- **Barrio:** Hood
- **Bachatero:** A musician who sings bachata. Bachata is a musical genre originated in the Dominican Republic. The king of bachata is Romeo Santos, the lead singer in the band Aventura. Listen to “Obsesion” you’ll thank me later.
- **Brujería:** Witchcraft
- **Boca abajo:** Face down

C

- **El Cuartico:** El Cuarto means the room. In Spanish, when “ico” is at the end of a word it means “small.” So, cuartico means little room. This neologism was created by my mother. When we would travel, sometimes they would put us in El cuartico; a small room in the airport and the airport staff would do background checks on us.

- **Cómo te llamas:** What is your name?
- **Cristo viene ya:** Christ is coming now!
- **Cerveza:** Beer
- **Claro que no:** Of course not
- **Cariño:** Sweetheart
- **Cuesta Hermosa:** “Beautiful hill”
- **Carro público:** Public transportation in the Dominican Republic. Almost like a taxi, but imagine a car falling apart and about eight people in it without seatbelts.
- **Chicharrón:** Fried pork belly or fried pork rinds.
- **Chimis:** Short for Chimichurri. Chimichurri burgers are the Dominican version of the burger but instead of a bun they use pan de agua (water bread) it has meat, tomatoes, a special pink sauce and shredded cabbage instead of lettuce. Usually after a night of heavy drinking you go to a chimi (an improvised food stand on the street) and eat a chimichurri burger to sober up.
- **Cafe con leche:** Coffee and milk.

D

- **Dame algo pa’ la comida:** Give me money for lunch.
- **Demagogo:** A hater and a hypocrite.
- **Dio’ mio:** My God
- **Discotecas:** Discotheque
- **Dando golpe de barriga:** When you dance so intensely your belly jerks.
- **Dando asco en la discoteca:** “Causing disgust in the discotheque”
- **Dejame tranquila:** Leave me alone.
- **Diantre:** Devil
- **Diablo:** Devil
- **Dejala ombe:** ‘Dejala’ means leave her and ‘ombe’ is short for hombre (man). “Dejala ombe” is similar to saying, “let her be man.”

- **Déjate de boberías:** Don't be silly.

E

- **El placer es mío:** The pleasure is mine.
- **Estupida:** Stupid female. “Estupido” is the male version of stupid.
- **El que?** What?
- **Ete:** Dominican slang for “Este” meaning “this” or “this one.”
- **¡Está todo muy bonito!** Every thing looks beautiful!
- **Está bien:** Similar to saying “fine” or “okay.”
- **¡Eto limpia lo diente!** Eto is slang for “Esto.” Esto limpia los dientes, means this cleans your teeth.
- **E' lo mismo:** E is slang for Es. Es lo mismo means, “its the same thing.”
- **Este es el Colmo:** Almost like saying, “this is the last straw.” Let's say you buy pizza for your whole family and then you go to the bathroom for a second and when you come back there is no pizza left for you to eat, this would be the perfect time for you to say “Este es el Colmo” or “Esto es el Colmo.” Or if your best friend sleeps with your girlfriend, or if you studied all night for a test and fail it.

F

- **Figurín:** A figurine
- **Fino:** Elegant
- **Fortuna:** Fortune

G

- **Gracias al señor:** Thank God
- **Guachimán:** Watchman or security guard. A Guachimán is supposed to sit outside your house and guard the house and the people in it. In the Dominican Republic they mostly sleep on plastic chairs outside of your house and get payed.
- **Gringo:** Slang for, “American man.” *Gringa* would be the female version.

H

- **Huye tomame una foto:** “Hurry take a picture of me.”
- **Hablar:** Talk
- **Habichuelas con dulce:** Dominican dish that is a spin off of beans, eaten as a desert. Typically spiced with cinnamon and nutmeg. It has coconut milk, evaporated milk and a ton of sugar. If you eat this everyday you’ll end up like Doña Herma.

I

- **La Isla se hunde:** “The island is sinking!”

J

- **Jodio’ tapone del diablo:** Jodio’ is slang for *Jodido* which means fucked. You can add “del diablo” at the end of anything really if you want to express how fucked up something is. For example: Muchacha del diablo. *Del diablo* just means from the devil. Here, Cristiano is saying the traffic jam is so fucked up it must of come from the Devil.
- **Juego:** Game

K

- **Klk:** Slang for "que lo que" literal translation is, "what is what" meaning what's up?

L

- **Limpia-botas:** Person who shines shoes for a living.

M

- **Motoconcho:** Like a taxi but instead of a car, a motorcycle.
- **Mija:** Slang for "Mi hija" meaning my daughter.
- **Merengue:** Typical dance in the Dominican Republic.
- **Moreno:** Term of endearment meaning, brown.
- **Mejor que la casa del pariguayo ese Colón:** "Better than the house of that idiot Christopher Columbus."
- **Morada:** Purple
- **Marido:** Husband
- **Muchachos de servicio:** The people who help out in somebody else's house.
- **Mangos bajitos:** Mangos that can kiss the ground.
- **Mona:** Monkey
- **Mire muchachita! No me venga con esa vaina:** Similar to saying, "look here little girl, don't start with me, with that shit."
- **Mangú:** Similar to mashed potatoes but made instead with plantains. A typical breakfast in the Dominican Republic includes Mangú, fried eggs, salami and fried cheese.
- **Mofongo:** Mofongo is made with green plantains. First you fry them, then you mash them and you combine in a mortar and pestle: garlic, salt and oil. You can add whatever you want to it like cheese or shrimp or chicharrones.
- **Moro de guandules:** Rice with pigeon peas.

- **Morir soñando:** Typical beverage in the Dominican Republic made with condensed milk and passion fruit juice or orange juice, usually people have it as a dessert. The literal translation of the name is, “die dreaming.”
- **Mujer:** Woman

N

- **Nada:** Nothing
- **Novela:** In this case it is short for telenovela. In Spanish, a Novela, is a Novel.
- **No lo sé, estará perdido el tigre:** “I don’t know, he seems lost.”
- **No pego ni un ojo:** Dominican expression meaning that someone couldn’t shut their eyes (couldn’t sleep).

Ñ

- **Ñoñerías:** The act of engaging in cuddling, spooning, getting your back or your hair stroked all that good stuff.
- **Ñapa:** The ñapa is a little extra. Dominicans are known for their generosity, in cafeterias when you are served food you can request “la ñapa” and Dominicans will always give you a little more. Maybe they’ll throw in a couple extra Tostones or some Chicharrones. Yummy.

O

- **Otro gringo? Muchacha deja eso, que Dios te va a castigar:** “Another American? Stop that lady, God will punish you.”

P

- **Perreo:** A form of dancing that originated from Puerto Rico, almost like having sex with your clothes on, on the dance floor.

- **Pariguayo:** Loser
- **Pa'** Slang for “Para” meaning “To”.
- **Pa' Ponerme Bonita:** “To look pretty”
- **Pero:** But
- **Pelota:** Ball
- **Poderosa:** Powerful female
- **Plátanos:** Plantains
- **Pasteles en Hoja:** The Dominican version of Tamales. Instead of cornflour we use yuca or plantain.
- **Pastelitos:** Like mini empanadas with shredded chicken inside or cheese filling.
- **Potra:** Female Horse
- **Peligro:** Danger

Q

- **Que Haces:** What are you doing?
- **Quesito San Juan:** Similar to Halloumi cheese. Cheese for frying.

R

- **Riñones:** Kidney
- **Rubia:** Blonde
- **Rolos:**



S

- **Saquenos de aqui:** Get us out of here!
- **Sálvense!** Save yourselves!
- **Sabrosura:** Tasty, savory, yummy.
- **Seis mil pesos:** Six thousand pesos. (Roughly about one hundred and twenty dollars.)
- **Si, Capcana mi helmana! Ya tu sabe! Pronto sacamo Visa!** “Yes, Capcana sister! Now you know, before you know it I’ll have a Visa”
- **Sigan portandose mal pa’ que vean! Voy a buca una varita que tenga hormiga de la roja pa’ que lo piquen:** “Keep on misbehaving you just wait and see. Im going to get a stick with fiery red ants so they sting you.”
- **Salta cocote:** A cousin to the Lizard, known for jumping on peoples throats.
- **Sancocho:** Dominican version of stew. It has yuca, yautia, batata, potato, platano, corn, avocado, meat, chicken, ayuyama (squash), ñame (yam). Eat on rainy days with a side of rice.

T

- **Tengo pajón:** “Tengo” is to have. Pajón is when your hair is messy.
- **Tapon:** Traffic jam.
- **Traje de baño:** Swim suit
- **Tu no sabe na:** “You don’t know anything”
- **Ta’ bien papi:** Ta’ is slang for “esta”. Esta bien means, its fine.
- **Tostones:** Get some green plantains, cut them horizontally about an inch apart, fry them until golden, then take them out, take one of them and put them on a cutting board, take a plate and press it down and throw it once more in the fryer. Do this to all of them until golden brown.
- **Telenovela:** Soap Opera
- **Tigueraje:** Street smart, quick-witted, cunning. (Everyone in the Dominican Republic is born with tigueraje, I swear.)
- **Tigre:** A man with Tigueraje. Or sometimes simply can mean a guy. Also means tiger.

- **Tele:** Short for television.
- **Te quieres casar conmigo?** Do you want to marry me?
- **Tupido de verde:** Tupido means “thick” and verde means “green”.
- **Tu si tiene lo moño bueno muchacha:** “You have good hair, girl.”
- **Tato si:** “Uh-huh yeah right.”

U

- **Un placer yo me llamo Cristiano, Bienvenido a la Isla de las Maravillas:** “A pleasure my name is Cristiano, Welcome to the Island of enchantments.”

V

- **Visca:** Cross-Eyed.
- **Verdadero:** True, real.

Y

- **Yo no toy relajando:** “I am not playing.”
- **Yanikeke:** “Johnny’s cakes” snack composed of fried dough.

Z

- **Zona Colonial:** Colonial Zone. The first city in America. Originally called “Ciudad Nueva” (New City) by Christopher Columbus.

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