

Empty bottles

Oscar Sanz Cabrera

Translated by Matthew Ward

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CHARACTERS

LUCAS, son. 40 years old

LUISA, mother. 62 years old

MARÍA, daughter. 25 years old

ESTEBAN, eldest son*. 44 years old

Autumn. An old and dreary flat in the Sant Antoni area of Barcelona.

A spacious kitchen-diner occupies the whole stage.

The walls are stained with damp and there are exposed electrical cables.

At the back and on the right there are the usual kitchen appliances, cooker, sink, fridge, cupboards and shelves. Everything is old and coated in oil and grease.

From the wall behind, a hallway leads to the front door on the right, and on the left to a passage leading to the bathroom and the bedrooms.

Off the hallway we can only see a coat hanger on the wall with the odd jacket and an umbrella.

In the centre are a table and three chairs.

On one side up against the wall are a couple of chairs piled high with dirty and crumpled clothes. On the other side stands a bookshelf packed with old books.

The third scene takes place in a hospital room.

*It is important that the character of Esteban does not have an overly effeminate manner.

1.

First day, in the afternoon. LUCAS, 40 years old. He has a week's stubble and is barefoot and wearing a moth-eaten vest and threadbare cotton underpants. He is sitting on a chair with an empty bottle in his hand. His mother, LUISA, 60 years old, enters. Her hair is clumsily tied leaving several strands loose. She is wearing an old knee-length coat and underneath it a stained kitchen apron over a nightdress. She is carrying several plastic bags. She walks with difficulty. LUCAS appears not to see her.

LUISA: Can't you see there's none left you wretch?

LUCAS: Where were you?

LUISA: I'm not buying you any more.

LUCAS: Where've you been?

LUISA: Unless you have a bath there won't be any more booze in this house.

LUCAS: Have you been shopping?

LUISA: Since when have you been interested in what I do? And I'm not talking about when I'm cooking.

LUCAS: I'm not hungry. Have you been to see her?

LUISA: Of course you're not hungry, you haven't eaten a thing for two days. It's normal.

LUCAS: You've been to see her, haven't you?

LUISA: If you don't eat your stomach closes up.

LUCAS: Answer me!

LUISA: I don't have to tell you anything.

LUCAS: I knew it, you've been to see her. It's obvious, I can tell.

LUISA: Is that right?

LUCAS: Yes, I can tell by her rat's smell.

LUISA: Talking of smells do me a favour and have a bath for God's sake.

LUCAS: You've seen her, haven't you?

LUISA: Even if it's only a quick shower. I'm sure you'll feel better at least a little cleaner.

LUCAS: I'll never be clean if you don't stop going to visit her.

LUISA: Listen your lordship I'll tell you something. Nobody's got the right to tell me where I must and mustn't go. Understand? She's my granddaughter, you bloody drunkard. I'll give you a kick in the liver if you start ordering me about again. You got that? And go have a shower for fuck's sake. You're disgusting.

LUCAS: She doesn't need anything from you. She doesn't need anything from anyone. She's a rat and rats know how to survive on their own.

LUISA: Look what I've got (*takes out a bottle from one of the plastic bags*).

LUCAS: Give it here.

LUISA: Give it here? Is that how you ask for something?

LUCAS: You love torturing me!

LUISA: You've seen it, haven't you? Well I'm not even going to give you the cork.

LUCAS: Why are you doing this to me?

LUISA: Not a drop not a miserable drop. Not until you have shower.

LUCAS: Fuck off.

LUISA: Fuck off yourself.

LUISA takes off her coat and leaves it on the hanger.

LUCAS: What did she say?

LUISA: Not a bit of shame! After eight years without seeing her...

LUCAS: That's a lie I've seen her. At a distance at her mother's funeral, at her bitch of a mother's funeral.

LUISA: Shut it you wretch! You're nothing more than a sack of worms. Not a thought of her in eight years and only then to insult her and...

LUCAS: What the hell did she say?

LUISA: So now you're interested what your daughter has to say?

Short pause.

LUCAS: No.

LUISA: So come on, the shower. Your sister'll be here in a minute.

LUCAS: Oh yeah? (*Crosses his arms and puts his feet on the table*) Well, good-o.

LUISA: Look son if you don't want to have a shower don't have a shower. It's all the same to me but at least do me the favour of putting on a shirt and trousers. I don't want your sister seeing you like that. Do me that favour.

LUCAS: Give me a drink and your wishes will be my commands.

LUISA: If I give you a drink will you have a shower?

LUCAS: I'll be a good boy.

LUISA: You sure?

LUCAS: Of course. Don't you trust anyone?

LUISA: Not even my own shadow.

LUCAS: Relax your shadow doesn't trust you either.

LUISA: Alright, I'll give you just a little.

LUCAS: That's right a drop of petrol and the little car will be on its way.

LUISA: Here.

LUCAS: A drop more.

LUISA: No, with what I've given you you've enough to reach the bathroom. After you've had a shower I'll give you as much as you like.

LUCAS: Don't make promises that you're not going to keep.

LUISA: Shut up you wretch!

LUCAS knocks back the brandy his mother has given him. He gets up and walks towards the bathroom.

LUCAS: I'll be right back. Pour me another one, I won't be long dear.

LUCAS enters the bathroom and closes the door.

LUISA: Use the yellow towel! It's already dirty and ready for the wash.

LUISA touches her forehead with her hand and closes her eyes a moment. She sits down and she pours herself a little brandy and knocks it back it one. The front door bell rings.

LUISA: It's open.

MARÍA, 25 years old, enters.

MARÍA: Why are you always leaving the door open?

LUISA: To let a little air in.

MARÍA: Hello.

LUISA: Hello sweetie you're so early! I still haven't had time to make lunch.

MARÍA: Not to worry, I've already eaten. Anyway, it's four o'clock.

LUISA: I know it's four. Are you going to start criticising me?

MARÍA: If it's not a good time I'll be off.

LUISA: Come here silly. Give your mum a kiss.

MARÍA gives her a peck on the cheek and looks at the bottle.

MARÍA: I see you haven't changed your perfume.

LUISA: And tell me, how's work?

MARÍA: Fine, I'm fine.

LUISA: They haven't sacked you at the cake shop.

MARÍA: I said I'm fine.

LUISA: Look what a figure she's got! Shame you haven't got a bosom. Me at your age I was just as good-looking but with more bosom. Don't pull a face, do you think I was born looking like this? No sweetie no. You'll end up like this as well so make the most of it while you can before the veins start climbing up your legs. Don't you want me to make you something to eat? Come on sit down.

MARÍA: Mum I've got something I have to tell you.

LUISA picks up the bottle and pours herself a drink.

LUISA: Sit down sweetie and make yourself at home. That's it. Do you fancy a drink? I mean something else, water, milk... well I don't have any milk. Would you like me to pop out and buy you some juice?

MARÍA: I don't want anything. Don't bother, there's no need. I don't want anything.

LUISA: Not even a little water?

MARÍA: OK, a little water.

LUISA: It'll have to be from the tap.

MARÍA: From the tap is fine.

LUISA: Wait a moment, I'm going to wash a glass. Where the fuck is the scouring pad?

MARÍA: It doesn't matter I'm not thirsty.

LUISA: No it can't have gone far.

MARÍA: Honestly mum I don't want anything.

LUISA stops searching and fills one of the dirty glasses and sits down. She takes out a bottle of pills from her pocket. She opens it and she pops a couple into her mouth and drinks the glass she has filled. She makes a grimace of disgust.

MARÍA: What are you taking?

LUISA: Calm down. They're for my head though I don't know why the hell I take them. They don't do anything. My head's been splitting for a week. What about you? Have you got a boyfriend or something?

MARÍA: Do you want me to go out the way I came in?

LUISA: Calm down sweetie and relax. When I say boyfriend I mean to say if you're with someone who cares about you. Even if she's a tart. That's the only thing that matters that they care about you. I don't like you being on your own.

MARÍA: I am on my own mum. I've always been on my own.

LUISA (*Pours herself a drink*): So you're not going to have anything?

MARÍA: Any news of Lucas?

LUISA: I like you asking about him.

MARÍA: How's he getting along?

LUISA: Fine, really fine. You'll see for yourself in a minute.

MARÍA gets to her feet.

LUISA: Sit down and calm down. He's having a shower.

MARÍA: You didn't tell me he was here.

LUISA: He'll be very pleased to see you.

MARÍA: Why didn't you warn me he was at home?

LUISA: You didn't ask me sweetie. Sit down and calm down.

MARÍA: When did he come back?

LUISA: He's having a shower. When I told him you were coming he went to spruce himself up.

LUISA takes a swig. MARÍA hesitates a moment and sits down.

MARÍA: How is he?

LUISA: Better, much better. He has his days but he's better. What he needs is a job. Hey you couldn't get him in where you are?

MARÍA: Are you mad or are you back on the pills?

LUISA: Why sweetie anyone would think.

MARÍA: Tell me the truth, can you imagine Lucas selling cakes in a cake shop?

LUISA: Sweetie as a shop assistant no but I'm sure you need someone to scare the flies away or take out the rubbish and that kind of thing.

MARÍA: I came to tell you something.

LUISA (*Standing up*): OK sweetie OK. You can be really snappy when you want to be. You're like your father, may he rest in peace.

MARÍA: Do you reckon he deserves to?

LUISA: He deserves what?

MARÍA: It doesn't matter. Sit down. Please.

LUISA: OK OK I'll sit down, I'll sit down.

MARÍA: Look mum you know I've never asked you for anything...

LUCAS comes out of the bathroom with his hair wet and uncombed. He is barefoot and is wearing dark trousers with braces and the same vest as before.

LUCAS: Well look who's here, my dearest sister.

MARÍA: Hello.

LUCAS: Mum, the bottle.

LUISA: Give your sister a kiss, won't you?

LUCAS: You promised that you'd give me the bottle if I had a shower!

LUISA: Take it you brute!

MARÍA: I think I'll be off, OK? I'll come back another day.

LUISA: No María darling sit down and don't pay him any mind. You know what he's like. (*Moves towards the hallway*) I'll be back in a minute. I'm going to look for something to eat. It's been ages since we all had lunch together all three of us... I'm going to make a potato omelette.

MARÍA: Mum please don't bother I've already eaten and it's five o'clock. I have to go. I've got to talk to you please mum.

LUISA (*Putting on her coat*): Back in a minute.

LUISA exits.

LUCAS: Bring some beer!

Silence

LUCAS: Don't think that I'm not happy to see you, eh?

MARÍA: You say such sweet things. You've always been a poet. .

LUCAS: I mean what I say. You're looking good. It's a shame you're a dyke.

MARÍA: What are you doing here? Aren't you ashamed of yourself?

LUCAS: I'm in my home. I was running around here before you were born, a long time before. So it should be me asking you what the fuck you're doing here.

MARÍA (*Standing up*): I'm off. Tell mum that I'll pop in another day, I don't know... I'll talk to her another time, OK? (*Moves towards the hallway*).

LUCAS: You leaving already? Well, that's fine. Don't think I'm going to stop you. You can throw yourself out the window for all I care. Come to think of it if you're in such a hurry it'll be the quickest way down.

LUCAS laughs to himself at his own joke. MARÍA stops turns around slowly and returns to the table.

MARÍA: How is your daughter?

LUCAS: What?

MARÍA: Your daughter.

LUCAS: Fuck off!

MARÍA: Mum says she's doing really well at college.

LUCAS: I haven't got a daughter.

MARÍA: You're right you haven't. You had one but now you haven't. You've got nothing left.

LUCAS: You're wrong! I've got a bottle and a thumping headache. You haven't got any painkillers, have you?

MARÍA: You're pathetic.

LUCAS: Sit down for fuck's sake! The one day we see each other. Bloody hell! You're so uptight your arse squeaks! Do you fancy a drop?

MARÍA appears to laugh. She sits down reluctantly.

LUCAS: And to what do we owe the pleasure of your visit?

MARÍA: Nothing, I just wanted to see mum.

LUCAS: Well mission accomplished, no? Now you've seen her.

MARÍA: I've got... a matter I need to talk to her about.

LUCAS (*Pours himself a drink*): A matter hum... sounds mysterious. You want some?

MARÍA: The only mystery is how you can keep on drinking without your liver exploding.

LUCAS: Our family is made of iron. Rusty and twisted maybe but pure iron.

MARÍA: Yeah and how are things with Esteban?

LUCAS: How's it going to be with him... the lucky-arse? He's got no worries. He gets paid every month... with his boyfriend the cobbler.

MARÍA: Is he still seeing Mr Tomás?

LUCAS: Like two lovebirds. I'm sure they'll be celebrating their silver wedding anniversary soon.

MARÍA: But the old boy must be getting on a bit, isn't he?

LUCAS: Yes, I don't know.

MARÍA: Has he still got the heel bar?

LUCAS: No way, he retired. It seems he wants to go back to his village in Camona and wait for it... he's asked Esteban to go and live with him.

MARÍA: Well, that's what he should do.

LUCAS: But he won't. Esteban is a ladies man he can't leave mum. It's like he's still got his fucking umbilical cord.

MARÍA: And is he still at the Sant Antoni market?

LUCAS: Of course. What else is he going to do?

MARÍA: True enough. I forgot that 'he doesn't drink'.

LUCAS: He spends the day looking for old books in rubbish bins or with his little chums at the Arenas cinema. You know how much he's always liked the cinema though he spends half the film with his head between his legs... I mean someone else's legs.

MARÍA: What's he got to say about you being back here?

LUCAS: What's he going to say? Not a peep.

MARÍA: I only ask because he was running around this place a long time before you were born.

LUCAS: What a bitch! You're a sharp one eh? I've always thought you got the best of the genes.

MARÍA: Compared to you that is obviously the case.

LUCAS: Maybe sperm is like wine it gets better with age.

MARÍA: That'll be it.

LUCAS: Then it's clear that Esteban prefers a young wine.

LUCAS roars with laughter. MARÍA cannot contain herself and joins in. The door opens and ESTEBAN enters.