



Everything
is in
order

María José Sesma

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Every year in our town in Northern Mexico there is a Spanish dance recital. Every women in my family is part of the show, from my grandmother to my cousins and me. Rehearsals are fun because we get to play in the dark theater. We love go up to the third floor where we think there is a ghost.

The day of the show finally arrives, the costume I have to wear is complicated: tights, long socks, a skirt, an apron, a shirt and a vest. This year I am dressed as aragonesa. My hair is going to be pulled very tight in a bun, with extreme amounts of hair spray and lots of hair clips. I am five years old. My mom lifts me up to sit on her bathroom vanity so she can apply my makeup: blue or green eye shadow, a rim of black eyeliner on the upper lid, and then the lower one—which is always the worst part because my eyes always water.

“I told you not close your eyes!” my mother says. I try hard as I can, but it is impossible for me to keep my little eyes open. The makeup gets all messed up. She tells me to go to my room and to only return when my eyes stop tearing.

“I do not like the eyeliner on my eyes,” I say.
“That is the way it has to be.” she responds.

On the second attempt my eyes tear again, this time because of the mascara. I feel her breath on my face and an unbearable claustrophobia grips me. I wait, trying to be patient, but I can’t stand it. If I get desperate it will be worse. I keep my eyes open, trying not to move or breathe too much, because I know my breath disgusts her.



Is the darkest moment in the night, my grandmother's house is a black box. The drapes of the garden window are completely open, the atmosphere is dark and thick, there are no different densities or smells, just a translucent black. People here don't occupy an important place, I can feel their voids. I'm lying on a bed where it should be the dinner table, then the bed is now the dinner table. I get a bad feeling when I realize my head is facing the window and my feet facing the big mirror on the wall. There's something there. An intimidating dangerous presence, a dark air monster inhabits the rooms.

I open my eyes, I'm still over the table, I feel like I stopped breathing, that I became a furniture. I feel no response of my body, I've lost movement down the waist, my head is lower than my feet. I try to get up still numb, and I can see my sister and my aunt next to me in other tables, they look peaceful and fearless in deep sleep, living their lives somewhere in their imaginations.

I wake up in extreme fear, heavily breathing trying to exhale the fear out of my body.

- Is just a dream, everything's fine – I tell myself.

I hear my room door opens, the mirror is now closer to my bed. I try to focus my eyes and then I see the mirror is in its place and the door is closed.

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Every Sunday there is a family meal after church. One aunt in particular is always late which upsets everyone, especially during major holidays like Christmas. Family gatherings are full of tension. Sometimes the 5 sisters will go into a room to talk amongst themselves. When they eventually emerge they each have looks of disapproval and resentment. Suddenly one of the sisters will begin to cry, but somehow the scene remains below the surface. Their husbands do not notice it, and if they do they do not get involved. They are watching football and drink beer.







Patricia is my cousin. She is 3 years old and has bruises on her arms. It's 100 degrees out side but her mother insists that she wear her sweater during the party. She told me she has seen her mother crying while washing the dishes and reorganizing the refrigerator at 2 am. Sometimes my aunt comes to Patricia's room, scream and throw the toys away for no reason. Patricia was always rude, bossy and loud, but one day, she suddenly changed. She did not have one hair uncombed, her room was impeccable, she became all elegance and etiquette. She was only 7.



In my grandmother's house there is a room full of dresses and costumes. My cousins and I loved to lay dress up with them and play in the garden. There is a big metal double swing that sometimes is a time machine or a boat. The tickets to board the time machine-boat-swing are tree leaves. The one with has the biggest leaf gets to board first.

In the garden there is a thicket of bamboo, this is where the witch lives. There is also a real size doll house at the far side of the backyard, complete with two beds and a little bureau. When we get bored we climb onto the roof of the real house mostly just because we are not allowed to.

When we get to sleepover at my grandma's house, my cousins and I like to set the alarm for one am, we sneak into the closet and take my grandfather's ties which we use to make a rope so we don't get lost on the dark mid-night walk from the bedrooms to the kitchen. When we finally make our way down to the kitchen we creep into the pantry, sit huddled together on the floor and eat dry jello.





