

LAS HERMANAS PADILLA

(The Sisters Padilla)

By Tony Meneses

Characters:

Mari, the one who quietly leads
Carmen, the one who drinks
Chave, the one who cooks
Alejandra, the one who's expecting
Lucha, the one who keeps a secret
Marta, the one with faith
Lucy, the one who laughs
Fidela, the one who's taciturn
Cristina, the one who's young
Blanca, the one on the outside

Setting:

Mexico

Author's note:

These women can be a mix of any race, shape, age; as long as they are, above anything else, sisters.

Scene One.

Where Carmen Padilla Dances With Bottles and Cigarettes.

(Five women stand on chairs, skirts lifted to their knees, each cautious of the floor. These women are Marta Padilla, Lucy Padilla, Cristina Padilla, Alejandra Padilla, and Carmen Padilla.)

(After a moment, there is a loud crash from off, followed by the sudden flurry of three women running into the room, chasing after a mouse. These women are Mari Padilla, Fidela Padilla, and Chave Padilla.)

MARI.

(Carrying a broom.)

Oh! There it goes, there it goes!

CHAVE.

I see it I see it I see it!

(They run into another room, after the mouse. Another crash is heard. Carmen gets down from her chair, goes to pour herself a drink, calmly. She goes back to stand on her chair, drinks. All the women look at her, she notices. She cleans the corner of her mouth with her finger.)

CARMEN.

... I'm sorry, did you want one, too?

(Another crash. They all look.)

MARI.

By the dresser! The dresser!

MARTA.

Oh, be careful!

LUCY.

Was it the milk or the gas? The truck that killed your cat?

CARMEN.

Neither. She drowned in the kitchen sink.

CRISTINA.

She drowned?

ALEJANDRA.

That's terrible.

MARI.

Go! Under the bed!

LUCY.

I thought she was hit by a truck?

CARMEN.

No. She died while I was washing dishes one afternoon; I had stepped away for a cigarette--

MARTA.

You really should quit.

CARMEN.

I stepped away for a cigarette--

(Looks at Marta, pointedly.)

Smoked two, came back, and she was in the water, floating face down in the suds.

ALEJANDRA.

I'm sorry.

CARMEN.

Don't be. I'm pretty sure she did it on purpose.

MARI.

It's crawling up the curtains!

LUCY.

I could have sworn she was hit by a truck.

CARMEN.

Not my cat.

LUCY.

What am I thinking of then? Something got hit by a truck sometime back. No?

MARTA.

... Wasn't it your great aunt?

LUCY.

Oh... I think you're right.

(She laughs.)

By the milk truck. It was the milk. I remember now. Well anyhow, a cat would be handy right about now. To catch the mouse and all. Too bad yours chose suicide.

CARMEN.

Too bad.

(Another crash, something glass breaks.)

ALEJANDRA.

Is everything okay?

MARI.

We have it cornered!

CHAVE.

One two THREE!

(A scuffle. Silence.)

CARMEN.

... Mari?

MARTA.

Is it dead? It's probably dead.

ALEJANDRA.

Poor little mouse.

MARTA.

I'll pray for its soul.

(Marta pulls out her rosary and begins to pray. Chave and Fidela return, the latter with her hands cupped together.)

CHAVE.

We got it.

CARMEN.

Oh, thank god.

(She steps down from her chair. The other women follow, save Marta, busy in prayer. Lucy and Cristina help Alejandra down from her chair.)

CHAVE.
Careful with her. Grab her arms.

ALEJANDRA.
I'm fine.
(To Lucy and Cristina.)
Thank you.

LUCY.
What broke?

FIDELA.
A liquor bottle.

CARMEN.
Was it empty?

MARI.
(As she enters.)
The one on your nightstand, yes. I cleaned it up, don't worry. Where does your broom go?

CARMEN.
Oh, anywhere really.

(Mari goes to put the broom away, Carmen goes to make herself another drink.)

MARI.
--Is something burning?

CHAVE.
Son of a bitch!

(Chave rushes to the oven. Mari looks up at Marta, still standing on her chair, in prayer.)

LUCY.
She's busy.

MARI.
So I see.

CHAVE.
(Removing a tray.)
Is she not here yet?

CARMEN.
Who?

CHAVE.
Lucha. She said she'd be here at eight. It's nine-thirty.

ALEJANDRA.
I passed by her house on the way here. The lights were on.

LUCY.
Maybe she's just tired. She did say she hasn't been sleeping well lately.

CARMEN.
Hnh. None of us have...

(All the women look at her.)

CRISTINA.
I had a dream last night. A good dream I think.

LUCY.
About what?

CRISTINA.
I don't remember exactly. I saw his face though. Is that a good sign? A sign that he's safe?

MARI.
Do you think so?

(Cristina thinks. She nods.)

MARI.
Then he probably is.

CARMEN.
I dreamt my hair was made of shoe strings. What do you think that means?

MARI.
What's the matter with you?

CARMEN.
(About to say something, possibly relevant.)
-Pay me no mind, no mind at all.

(Chave brings the tray to the table.)

LUCY.
Are they ruined?

CHAVE.
A little bit around the edges. Center's good.

ALEJANDRA.
Do they have cinnamon? The baby never lets me sleep when I eat cinnamon.

CHAVE.
Just sugar, don't worry.

(Alejandra eats a sopapilla. Cristina tries one too. Carmen lights a cigarette.)

CHAVE.
Carmen!

CARMEN.
What?

CHAVE.
You have to ask?

CARMEN.
I'm going, I'm going. Hold your breath, Alejandra. Don't want that baby coming out with a taste for vice.
(She goes to her room.)

CRISTINA.
Why did we have to come here?

ALEJANDRA.
She's lonely.

CRISTINA.
Lots of people are lonely. And they don't act that way.

MARI.

It's because she's losing hope.

LUCY.

Do you think?

MARI.

She's family. I can tell.

CHAVE.

What a night, huh?

LUCY.

No kidding.

(She laughs.)

ALEJANDRA.

I think I might head home actually. She obviously wants to be alone.

MARI.

Are you sure?

ALEJANDRA.

There's no reason why we should force our company on her if she doesn't want it. I could use some rest anyway.

LUCY.

Here, I'll walk you home.

CRISTINA.

I'll go too.

LUCY.

Are the kids still at that birthday party?

MARI.

Around the corner, yes.

LUCY.

(To Alejandra.)

I need to get my girls.

ALEJANDRA.

I can go with you, I don't mind.

LUCY.

I hope they haven't kicked any boys in the balls. They think it's really funny.

(She laughs.)

It might be. I haven't decided.

MARI.

Tell Romy I'll be there soon.

LUCY.

Sure will.

(Carmen returns, with her cigarette and a bottle.)

CHAVE.

I thought that bottle broke?

CARMEN.

I found another inside the mattress stuffing. Lucky me. Where are you going?

ALEJANDRA.

Home.

CARMEN.

What? You just got here.

LUCY.

She's tired. I think we all are.

CARMEN.

I'm tired! You don't see me going to bed. Who needs beauty rest, Alejandra? You weigh more than a whale on land and you're still the gorgeous one.

CRISTINA.

(Not picking up on the joke.)

She isn't fat, Carmen. She's expecting.

CARMEN.

I could be too. You don't know.

(Drinks.)

Come, let's sit down, just us girls, and talk the night away. What do you say? Doesn't that sound fun? We can talk about art and culture, share anecdotes, or we can talk

about how much we wish our husbands didn't die today. That is what you want, no? Isn't that why you're here?

MARI.

That's not what why we're here.

ALEJANDRA.

I'm going. If Lucha shows up, tell her I'm sorry for leaving so early.

CARMEN.

Alejandra, come now, I didn't mean-

ALEJANDRA.

You've been drinking. So I forgive you. But I'm tired now. You can talk to me tomorrow if you want. When you're not being so thoughtless.

CARMEN.

Don't leave, come on.

(She starts to cross over to her, she stumbles, recovers her footing.)

CARMEN.

I'm not falling; I'm dancing.

(She does a little sway.)

CARMEN.

Always dancing in this house...

(They all look at her dance. It is simple, and naked. It says more than any of her words could right now.)

MARTA.

Amen.

(She steps down from her chair. Carmen snaps out of her dance.)

MARTA.

I trust that although it is a dirty and unattractive creature, its spirit will still be guided to salvation. I prayed that it will.

CARMEN.
How very beautiful.
(Drinks.)

MARTA.
No living thing in this world is beyond God's reach,
Carmen. I don't know how many times I have to remind you.

CARMEN.
Why stop now?

FIDELA.
It's not dead.

ALEJANDRA.
What?

LUCY.
What do you mean?

FIDELA.
The mouse.

MARTA
Where is it then?

FIDELA.
(Lifts her cupped hands.)
Here.

(All the women who were on chairs take a
step back, away from her.)

CHAVE.
Fidela, you can let it outside now.

FIDELA.
Oh.

MARI.
I'll get the door. Come on, Fidela.

(Mari and Fidela cross to the door, Mari
opens it. Lucha stands in the doorway.)

LUCY.
Lucha.

CARMEN.

Hey, look who's here at last!

(Lucha doesn't move from the doorway.)

MARTA.

Are you going to come in?

CHAVE.

Lucha?

MARI.

... What happened?

LUCHA.

I got his name.

ALEJANDRA.

What?

LUCHA.

(Holds up a small slip of paper.)

That's his name. It gave it to me. It flew in and, and gave me his name.

(Chave takes the slip of paper from her, reads it.)

LUCHA.

That's his name?

(Chave glances at all the women. Mari looks at Lucha, goes up to her. She pulls a feather out of her hair. After a moment, Fidela giggles. They all look at her.)

FIDELA.

The mouse is tickling my fingers.