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“Tírame una cañita”: este es el recuerdo mas remoto que yo tengo; mi casa que daba de una calle hasta la otra tenia al fondo las lineas de ferrocarril Lajas estaba situada en medio de una zona cañera y en época de zafra constantemente pasaban trenes con carros cargados de caña destinados a los ingenios cercanos. Los retranqueros, que viajaban sentados sobre las cañas, amablemente tiraban unas cuantas de las mejores. La casa donde nacimos todos era una casa enorme con no se cuantos cuartos una sala donde había doce sillas, ocho sillones una mesa con un gran espejo y muchas mesas de diferentes

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“Throw me a piece”: this is my earliest memory. The tracks of the Laja railway ran behind my house, which extended from one street to another. Lajas was located in the middle of a sugar cane growing region and during harvest season trains constantly passed by with cars loaded with cane for the nearby refineries. The workers who traveled sitting on top of the cane kindly threw us down a few of the best pieces. The house in which we were all born was an enormous house with I don't know how many rooms, a living room with a dozen chairs, eight rocking chairs, a table with a large mirror and many tables of different

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tamaños, a lado de cada sillón había una escupidera de porcelana que en este momento serian la delicia de un anticuario, en las mesas y en el suelo había plantas pobres para las ideas actuales pero que eran el orgullo de mi madre, del comedor no recuerdo mucho pero los muebles eran solidos y buenos y en una ventana que daba a la calle había cuatro sillones el patio debe haber sido grande y recuerdo una mata de güira y nada mas. Mi padre había muerto cuando yo tenia tres años y mi hermano solo tres meses. Sus padres ambos de Gran Canaria habían hecho fortuna y tenían cantidad

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sizes. Beside each rocking chair there was a porcelain spittoon that today would be the envy of any antique dealer. On the tables and on the floor there were plants which were actually in poor shape but were my mother's pride. I don't remember much about the dining room but the furniture was solid and good and by a window that opened to the street there were four rocking chairs. The patio must have been large and I remember a “*guira*” plant and nothing much else. My father had died when I was three years old and my brother only three months old. His parents were both from Grand Canary, having made a fortune and they had much

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de tierras dedicadas a ganado y cultivo de caña. A su muerte mucho antes de yo nacer la fortuna dividida no fue mucha y mi padre siguio dedicado a cuidar la herencia pero las guerras (1868-1878) (1880-1881) y la última la de la Independencia de España (1895-1898) empobrecieron tanto el país que fuera de las ciudades la vida era muy pobre. Mi padre se había casado a los 35 años la misma edad de mi abuela cuando mi madre tenia sólo 17 años y cuando murió a los <60 años después de una larga

enfermedad que termino con lo poco que quedaba de

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land dedicated to livestock and growing sugar cane. Much before my birth, upon my grandfather's death, the divided fortune was not much and my father dedicated himself to conserving his inheritance. But the wars (1868-1878) (1880-1881) and the last, the one of Independence from Spain (1895-1898) so impoverished the country that outside the cities life was very poor. My father had married at age 35, the same age as my grandmother, when my mother was only 17 years old and when he died at about 60 years of age after a long illness which finished with the little that remained, he left

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a mi madre con ocho hijos la mayor de 16 poco preparada porque en aquel entonces fuera de las grandes ciudades la mujer con que supiera leer bastaba y aunque era una mujer extraordinariamente inteligente, en aquella época a nadie se le hubiera ocurrido que una mujer trabajara fuera de su casa, en este momento terminaba el bloqueo de la isla y la reconcentración. Los americanos habían bloqueado la isla para terminar mas pronto la guerra y los españoles habían ordenado que todo el mundo abandonara los campos y se refugiaran en los pueblos para que no pudieran ayudar a los insurrectos.

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my mother with eight children the oldest 16, ill-prepared because in those days outside the large cities it was enough that women could read and although she was extraordinarily intelligent, in those times it would not have occurred to anyone that a woman work outside the house. At the same time the blockade of the island and the internment of the population in the cities was ending. The Americans had blockaded the island to end the war more quickly and the Spanish had ordered that everyone leave the countryside and move to the towns so that they could not help the insurgents.

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Los cuentos de mi madre eran espeluznantes, todas aquellas personas sin nada que comer llenos de enfermedades y miseria se refugiaron en los portales de las casas y en otros lugares donde podían guarecerse. Contaba mi madre que cuando iban a comer, lo poco que teníamos, tenían que cerrar todas las puertas y ventanas para que la gente de fuera no se entraran. Muchos murieron de hambre y mas de una vez mi madre encontró personas muertas en nuestro portal, nadie podía hacer nada porque nadie podía estar seguro de que tendrían suficiente

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My mother's stories were horrifying. All those people with nothing to eat, full of disease and misery took refuge under house porches and other places where they could take shelter. My mother said that before they ate, although they had little, they had to close all the doors and windows so that the people outside would not enter. Many died of hunger and more than once my mother found people dead in our entrance. No one could do anything because nobody could be sure that they would have enough

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para ellos. Mi tía Lolita estaba casada con un español comerciante y nos daba lo que podía, no era mucho pero subsistimos y al fin se acabó la guerra, los campesinos volvieron a sus casas y en lugar de bandera española estaba la americana, pero para nosotros la vida no cambió mucho seguíamos siendo una viuda de 43 años y ocho hijos teníamos la casa donde vivíamos y poco mas mi tía se había mudado a Cienfuegos y mi madre además de ser orgullosa para aceptar ayuda de los parientes, ??? todos estaban en las mismas

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for themselves. My aunt Lolita was married to a Spanish merchant and gave us what she could. It was not much but we survived and finally the war ended, the farmers returned home and instead of the Spanish flag there was the American one. But for us life did not change very much. We were still a widow of 43 years and eight children. We had the house where we lived and not much more. My aunt had moved to Cienfuegos and my mother besides, on top of being too proud to accept help from the {relatives} parents, knew they were all were in the same

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condiciones. Mi madre, no sé porque, nunca tuvo buenas relaciones con la familia de mi padre y al morir el casi terminaron. Yo no me daba cuenta de la situación pero sabia que había poco que comer, las demás necesidades no existían, la ropa, hasta yo de negro, podía durar, escuelas eran gratis y el medico recetaba medicinas que componían en la farmacia, muy baratas y el nunca cobraba . Todo los días venia a casa Tomas. Tomas era un negro que había sido esclavo pero que no aceptaba la independencia de la familia, hacia los trabajos mas pesados cortaba la leña para la

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situation. My mother, I don't know why, never had a good relationship with my father's family and when he died it nearly ended. I was not aware of the situation but I knew that there was little to eat, the other necessities did not exist, clothing, {(even I was dressed in black)} "*hasta yo de negro*", could last, school was free and the doctor prescribed drugs that were made in the pharmacy, very cheap and he never charged. Every day Tomas came to our house. Tomas was a black who had been a slave but who had not accepted independence from the family. He did the heaviest jobs – cutting wood for the

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cocina, sacaba el agua del pozo y ayudaba mis hermanas mayores en la cocina, recuerdo cuando terminaba al anochecer pasaba por la ventana donde mi madre se sentaba a dormir mi hermanito, e invariablemente su saludo era "Hasta mañana Doña Antoñica" y ella contestaba siempre igual "Si Dios quiere Tomas". Todos lo queríamos mucho y después que nos mudamos a Sagua todos los años nos visitaba Ines y Honorata también habían sido esclavas, Honorata siguió en la casa y fue mi manejadora pero

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kitchen, drawing water from the well, and helping my older sisters in the kitchen. I remember when he was finished in the evening he would pass by the window where my mother put my younger brother to sleep and invariably his greeting was “Until tomorrow, Dona Antoñica” and she always replied “If God wants, Tomas”. We all loved Tomas very much and after we moved to Sagua every year Ines and Honorata visited us also having been slaves. Honorata continued in the house and was my governess but

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cuando la situación empeoro las dos no dejaron pero vivían en frente y yo cuando me bañaban y vestían por la tarde iba a ver a Honorata que siempre tenia una golosina para mi. Cuando llegaron los americanos a Lajas en seguida abrieron una escuela publica, aunque yo tenia menos de cuatro años me llevaron a matricular me dieron un papel para ir al almacén y recibir cuadernos lapices una cartilla y una pluma, ¡Como la recuerdo! Era roja y no muy larga con puntos cambiables de metal, la conservé muchos años como un verdadero tesoro, desde primer momento

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when the situation got worse they left us but lived in front and when they bathed and dressed me in the afternoon I went to see Honorata who always had a sweet for me. When the Americans reached Lajas they immediately opened a public school. Although I was less than four years old I was taken to be enrolled. They gave me a piece of paper so that I could go to the warehouse to get notebooks, pencils, a primer and a pen. How I remember it! It was red and not very long with replaceable metal nibs. I guarded it for many years like a real treasure. School was a paradise for me from the start in spite of not having furniture and there weren't enough benches without backs and the youngest had to sit on the floor. My teacher's name as Maria Rodriguez, a very common name. My mother had promised me a prize when I learned my primer. First you had to memorize the lower-case letters, then the upper-case ones, double syllables, simple words split into syllables and finally speeches and paragraphs, some very funny such as “Yo niño bonito con mi cachuchita” (gorra) Juan el bobo”

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la escuela fue para mi un paraíso, a pesar de que aun no tenia muebles y los bancos sin espaldar no eran suficientes y los mas pequeños teníamos que sentarnos en el suelo, mi maestra se llamaba Ma Rodriguez, un nombre muy corriente, mi madre me había prometido un premio cuando supiera la cartilla, primero había que memorizar las letras minúsculas, después las mayúsculas, las silabas dobles, palabras sencillas divididas en silabas y finalmente oraciones y parrafos [parágrafos?] algunos muy cómicos como “Yo niño bonito con mi cachuchita” (gorra) Juan el bobo

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pescando la rana y el último y más difícil “Dile a Concepc (no se quien) que traiga el paraguas por que a Concepcion la mordió un ratón” Ya sabia leer de corrido! Además de ganar el premio prometido una caja de ? (maiz dulce) con sorpresas era el portento de la familia! Todo el que nos visitaba tenía que oirme leer en un libro 4º y por supuesto yo leía como una cotorra sin saber lo que estaba diciendo; pero leía!

Mi hermana Matilde había ido a pasar un temporada con otra tía Otilia y se estaba preparando en Sagua para pasar los exámenes de maestra y obtener una plaza que al fin obtuvo (the latter word crossed out) en Sagua. Nuestra vida seguía siendo triste, aparte de las escaseses el carácter de mi madre no nos daba felicidad ni seguridad siempre triste, mahumorrada

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...fishing for the frog” and the last, most difficult one: “Tell (I don’t remember the name) to bring the umbrella because a mouse has bitten Concepcion.” I had learned to read fluently! Besides winning the promised reward of ? <indecipherable word perhaps brand name of candy> (sweet corn confection) containing prizes, I was the marvel of the family! Everyone who visited us had to hear me read from the Fourth Grade reader; needless to say I parroted the words without understanding them—but I read!

My sister Matilde had gone for the holidays to our Aunt Otilia in Sagua where she was preparing to pass the teachers’ exams and to obtain a position, which she did eventually. Our life continued to be sad, beyond the scarcities, my mother’s character gave us no happiness or security for she was always worried and brooding about our situation.

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...hacia nuestra situación pero si nos compraba algo que necesitábamos por que siempre nos sermoneaba sobre el tiempo que tenía que durar y el sacrificio que significaba la quise mucho pero no puedo recordar un buen rato que me proporcionara. Tenía un alto sentido de su familia, sus antepasados habían fundado cinco ciudades principales en la provincial y su abuelo Mora a Lajas, estábamos relacionadas con familias muy distinguidas en el pueblo y en la provincia y no podía olvidarlo así que siempre a pesar de nuestra pobreza teníamos que sostener el parecer. No teníamos juguetes ni paseos, nunca cantábamos y reíamos poco, aunque sin mucha educación religiosa era muy austere. No recuerdo que se celebraran las Pascuas

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If she bought us something that we needed it was given to us accompanied by a lecture on how long it had to last and the sacrifice it had taken to buy it. I loved her very much but I can’t remember her offering me even one happy moment. She was very conscious of the status of her family; her ancestors had founded five of the principal cities of the province <Las Villas> and her Grandfather Mora had founded Lajas. We were related to very distinguished families in the village and the province and it was impossible for her to forget this so that on top of our poverty we had to constantly struggle to maintain

appearances. My mother had little religious background but was nevertheless very austere. We had no toys, never took trips, never sang and rarely laughed. I don't remember any celebration of Christmas but we didn't have abstinences during Holy Week.

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pero si teníamos abstinencia toda la S.S., no recuerdo haber ido a misa en Lajas y años despues cuando estabamos en un poco mejores condiciones solo ibamos a misa mayor, a la 8, cuando teníamos sombrero.

Al fin, cuando mi hermana empezo a trabajar nos mudamos a Sagua donde vivia una tia ya tenian la casa preparada con algunos muebles nuevos y los que traimos de Lajas, la casa era como casi todas las demás que vivimos después tenia la enorme sala el comedor con la cocina, y en el patio un excusado, para bañarnos usabamos un latón en forma de una gran palangana que poníamos en un cuarto y llenabamos de agua fría, demás esta decir que no lo usamos todos los días pero teníamos tres cosas maravillosas agua corriente, cocina de carbon vegetal y luz eléctrica, la luz solo duraba hast alas 11 y en cada cuarto había un candelero fósforos y vela y como yo era la mas pequeña todos los dias tenia que quitar las gotas

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I don't remember having ever having gone to church in Lajas and years later when we were in a slightly better circumstances we only went to High Mass at 8 when we had hats. At last, when my sister began to work we moved to Sagua where an aunt lived; the house was prepared for us with some new furniture to which we added those we brought from Lajas. The house was much like all the others in which we have since lived: it had an enormous living room, the dining room was with the kitchen and in the patio there was an outhouse. To bathe we used a large tin washbasin that we set up in a bedroom and filled with cold water; it goes without saying that we didn't use it every day. But, we had three marvelous things in our house: running water, coal stove and electric light. The electric light lasted only until 11 at night and so each room had a candlestick, matches and candles. Being the youngest it fell to me to clean the drops of candle wax on the floor every morning.

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de esperma del suelo, otra de mis ocupaciones, un poco más tarde era la limpieza de los orinales, las palanganas y cambiar el agua, teníamos una cocinera y una lavandera que se llevaba la ropa los lunes y la traia el sábado, el zurcido y remiendo de la ropa era una institución de la familia, teniamos varias sillitas de las que se usaban para llevar a la iglesia y nos sentabamos alrededor de nuestra madre, ella separaba la ropa y la repartia de acuerdo con la edad y destreza como yo era la mas pequeña me tocaban siempre las cosas peores y más sucias, cuando por la tarde se terminaba la tarea se separaban las piernas y se hacía el doble puntada, todo iba a la lavandera, vestidos finos, las medias, los paños de cocina; el sábado se distribuía la ropa y cada cual guarda la suya.

Nuestra vida era muy metódica a las siete mi madre nos despertaba nos vestíamos

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Another of my chores, a little later, was the cleaning of the chamber pots and emptying and refilling the washbasins. We had a cook, and a washer woman who took away the clothes on Monday and brought them back on Saturday. The mending and patching of clothes was an institution in the family, we had small slender chairs, the type used to take to church and we would sit in a circle around our mother. She separated the clothes and handed them out according to age and skill level. Since I was the youngest, I got the dirtiest and most worn items. In the afternoon when the task was finished we would part our knees and make a double<knot?>. Everything was sent to the washer woman, the fine dresses, the stockings, the dishcloths; on Saturday the clean clothes would be distributed and each of us would put our own away. Our life was very methodical, at seven mother would wake us up, we would dress

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y desayunabamos, café con leche, a Samuel le daban dos centavos con lo que compraba cuatro galletas, dos para él y una para Ñ y la otra para mi, a las 8 am todo el mundo tenia que estar en la escuela y la vida comensaba en todas partes, a las 10 am se terminaba la primera sesión despes de dos horas para almorzar volviamos hasta las 3 o 3½. Aunque yo sabía leer cuando llegamos a Sagua me mandaron al Kindergarten, las maestras eran dos americanas del sur y todo era en ingles para la gente era extraordinario que se mandara los niños a la escuela a jugar y cantar pero nosotros lo gozamos mucho a pesar de no entender nada, era muy distinto al K. actual era el Kindergarten original de Froebel con dones y ocupaciones juegos y cantos, Cuando llegabamos nos parabamos en un circulo pintado en el suelo, cantabamos el saludo y otras canciones y despues marchabamos a las mesas de trabajo, alli teniamos los “dones”

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and have café con leche for breakfast. Samuel was given two centavos with which to buy four biscuits, two for himself and one each for Ñ and me, at 8 am everyone had to be in school and life everywhere began. At 10 am the first session would be over and after a two-hour lunch break we would return until 3 or 3:30. Although I knew how to read when we arrived in Sagua they sent me to the Kindergarten All the teachers were Americans from the southern states and everything was in English. People thought it extraordinary that children be sent to school to play and sing but we enjoyed it enormously in spite of the fact that we understood nothing. It was very different from the K nowadays, it was the original Kindergarten of Froebel with “gifts” and activities, games and songs. When we arrived we stood in a circle painted on the floor, we sang the greeting and other songs and then we marched to work tables where the “gifts” were kept.

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esto era cajas con cuerpos geometricos que usabamos para construir cosas asi aprendíamos a distinguir cubos, conos, piramides, etc despues de los dones llevabamos las sillas marchando al son el piano y formabamos el circulo para los juegos el primero que corría el centro elegía el juego y eran muchos los apuros de las americanas cuando los cubanitos elegian algo tipicamente cubano pero con auxiliares cubanas se las

componían, después eran las ocupaciones llevabamos las sillitas otra vez a las mesas y trabajamos con barro, semillas, tejido de papel pintados, etc a la terminacion formabamos el círculo otra vez para la despedida a pesar de discrepar bastante de las ideas pedagogicas actuales era el K una gran cosa creo que mi poder de observacion y mi habilidad manual se debe a mi inicio, y mas tarde cuando fuí maestra notaba la diferencia enorme entre los niños que habian pasado por el K y los

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These were boxes with geometrically shaped objects that we used to construct things; this is how we learned to distinguish cubes, cones, pyramids, etc., after, we marched accompanied by the piano, carrying our chairs we formed a circle. The first to get into the centre of the circle had the right to choose the game we would play. If a typically Cuban game was chosen the American teachers would have to hurriedly learn the music to accompany it but in this they were helped by the Cuban assistants. After this we did the “occupations” –we would take the chairs again to the tables where we would work with clay, seeds, we would weave coloured paper, etc. following this we would, again, form a circle this time for the Goodbuy. Although it differed greatly from the contemporary educational thinking the K was a great thing. My observational skill and my manual dexterity stems, I think, from this initiation and later, when I was a teacher I could see the enormous difference between those children who had passed through the K and those who came directly from the home (I almost always taught Grade 1.)

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que habían entrado directa de la casa (casi siempre fui maestra de 1er grado)
Ya cuando cumplí seis años fuí todo el día a la primaria, las escuelas eran tan malas que nadie pasaba de un nivel de 4º grado a pesar de que la ley obligaba la asistencia hasta los catorce años . Los años ultimos en la escuela pública fueron un tormento había tres negritas odiosas que se burlaban de mi y abusaban de la diferencia de edad tenia que comer la merienda a escondidas porque si me veian me tocaban la mano y decían “capufloreando” y tenia que darsela, aun recuerdo sus nombres con aversion.
La vida seguia la misma rutina, en 1903 se caso Rosita (madrinita) mi hermana segunda, catorce años mayor que yo y que me quería y mimaba mucho y yo la correspondía, se fué a vivir a Cienfuegos pero en las vacaciones fui a visitarla fue una de las temporadas agradables de mi infancia la familia de su marido vivia en la playa y la comunicacion era por mar por la mañana

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When I turned six years old I went to full-day primary school. The public schools were so bad that no one ever got beyond fourth grade despite the fact that the law demanded attendance to the age of fourteen. The last years of public school were a torment for me, there were three black girls who were odious, they made fun of me and being older, bullied me in other ways—I was forced to hide to eat my snack because if they saw me they would demand it from me by touching my hand and saying “capufloreando.” Even now I hate the memory of them.

Life continued in the same routine, in 1903 my second sister Rosita (madrinita)<diminutive for godmother> fourteen years older than me, married. She had

always loved and petted me and I returned her affection. She left us to live in Cienfuegos but I visited her, and there, had one of the best vacations of my childhood. Her husband's family lived on the beach and the house was reached by water. In the morning

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venía un hombre con un bote a buscarnos y por la noche regresábamos en la misma forma, nos bañábamos en el mar, no en la playa, el baño era una casa de madera hecha sobre estacas a estilo indio y unida a la tierra por un largo puente, una soga atravesaba la casa y de ella podíamos sujetarnos los que no sabíamos nadar, desde entonces ha sido para mi uno de los mayores placeres un baño en el mar.

Mi hermana mayor se casó en enero de 1905 y el mismo año en noviembre murio al tener un niño fue una gran pérdida para la familia pues era muy buena y cariñosa yo no la recuerdo. Ya en el 1904 mi hermana Hortensia que había pasado los exámenes y tenía el título de maestro había sucedido a Matilde a los 16 años y con su sueldo vivíamos, además de una pequeña renta por la casa que dejamos en Lajas y unos terrenos que producían dos onzas al año (\$34) y mi madre hubiera sido mas practica no hubiera sido tan mal pero teníamos que tener cocinera y había que mandar a lavar la ropa lo unico que se hacía en la casa era coser y border al percado calados y punto de cruz pues toda la ropa de cama tenía que estar adornada y un juego

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a man would come out in a boat to bring us out and at night we would return in the same way. We would bathe in the sea, not from the beach but in a wooden bathing house that rested on posts in the Indian style and was connected to the land by a long bridge. A long rope went through the house and by holding it those of us who could not swim were able to safely be in the water. Since then it's been one of my greatest pleasures to swim in the sea.

My eldest sister was married in 1905 and the same year, in November, died in childbirth, it was a great loss for the family because she was a very good and loving person, I have no memory of her. Already in 1904 my sister Hortensia, having passed the teaching exams at age 16, succeeded Matilde and was able to bring in an income. We lived as well off the small rent for the house and the lands in Lajas for which we received two "onzas" (\$34) and, if my mother had been more practical it wouldn't have been so bad but she insisted on keeping a cook and sending our laundry out, the only thing done in the home was to sew, to do cross-stitch and to embellish borders with fancy needlework for in those days even the bedclothes had to be finished in this way.

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de cama consistía en una sobrecama con el frente adornado un ruedo tres lados alrededor de la cama y dos fundas de almoadas. A los cinco años me enseñaron a hacer punto de cruz y a los 9 había hecho un juego de cama completo despues hice otros dos podria repetir el dibujo a memoria además hice otras cosas como pañales para mis sobrinos pañuelos etc, para lograr esto cuando volvía de la escuela por la tarde tenía que hacer la tarea de costura y no podia jugar hasta que no la terminaba, la tarea del sábado era mayor lo mismo sino la acababa tenía que hacerlo el domingo a esto se debe que mi hija crecio

sin saber hacer nada, pues yo habia hecho el proposito que ella no sufriría la tirania que yo habia soportado, a pesar de todo esto siempre me gustaron los labores manuales.

Desde que recuerdo hasta que tuve catorze años los zapatos eran iguales unas botas con botones a los lados y puntera de charol algunas de mis amigos tenian sapatos bajos pero mi madre decia que las medias tenian que no ser remendadas los mismos zapatos eran para vestir y andar la diferencia era en el tiempo de uso las medias siempre negras eran tejidas un punto al revés otro al derecho hasta los seis o siete años eran a media pierna pero despues eran...

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A set of bedclothes consisted of a bedspread with a decorated centre, a bed ruffle that went around the bed and two pillow cases. At age five I was taught how to do cross-stitch and at 9 I completed a full set of bed-clothes and after this I did two more. I can do the pattern from memory with my eyes closed. I also made other items such as diapers for my nephews, handkerchiefs, etc. To achieve this I would have to sit down to do the sewing chores as soon as I came home from school. I was not allowed to play until it was done. On Saturdays there was the same sewing to do but there was more of it, what was not completed had to be done on Sunday. The outcome of this was that my own daughter grew up not knowing how to do anything due to my determination that she would not suffer the kind of tyranny that I endured. In spite of all this I have always loved handiwork. From when I could remember until I was fourteen years old the shoes were the same, boots with buttons on the sides and patent leather toes. Some of my friends had low shoes but my mother said that socks should not be mended. The same shoes were used for formal occasions and everyday the only difference was that the more worn pair was used for daily wear. The socks, always black, were knitted on a reverse pattern ?. These were worn to the knee until age six or seven and after this,

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... largas sujetas con ligas, la ropa interior consistia de pantalones con traje y la parte de atras podia bajarse, la sayuela de tela de algodón con vuelos y muy almidonada sujeta a la cintura con cinta de algodón o con traje; el vestido que despues de 8 o 9 años era siempre con la cintura apretada cuello alto y manga larga o al codo, nunca corta, abotonado y los domingos los vestidos eran blancos adornados de encaje y con una banda de cinta en la cintura; el sombrero solo se usaba para ir a la iglesia o embarcarse.

Usaba contra mi deseo el pelo largo cuando vino la influencia Americana muchas niñas tenian el pelo corto, pero no nosotras, todos los dias tenian que peinarnos partido el pelo al medio a los dos lados se hacian trenzas que despues de unidas se volvian a tejer con el resto en una sola trenza tenia mucho y muy largo el pelo y el peinarme era un martirio no menos era el lavado de la cabeza acostada en la mesa boca arriba y con la cabeza al aire mi madre me lavaba el pelo pero peor aun era desenredarlo asi fue hasta que tuve doce años entonces...

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stockings secured with elastic were used. The underwear consisted of the following set: pantaloons in which the back could be opened, ruffled cotton slip that was heavily starched attached at the waist with a cotton band ???. The style after age 8 or nine was always with cinched waist, high collar and long or elbow-length buttoned sleeve. Sunday dresses were white with embroidery and a waistband, hats were only used to go to church or on trips.

Against my wishes I had long hair, with the arrival of the American influence many girls wore their hair short, but everyday *we* had to comb our hair part it in the middle and make braids of both sides, the two braids were then woven into the rest of the hair to form a single braid. I had a very thick hair and a lot of it so that combing it was a martyrdom along with its cleaning which involved my lying face up on a table with my head over the side while my mother washed my hair, but even worse than that was the process of untangling it. This was the situation until I was twelve at which point

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...me dio escarlatina y como el día que me empezó tenía el pelo suelto por haberme lavado la cabeza el enredio fue tal que el médico exigio que me cortaran el pelo, cuando mi abuela se enteró puso un grito en el cielo y por supuesto se dejó crecer mi pelo pero ya no era tan largo y podía tenerlo suelto partido al lado y cogido con una cinta casi siempre negra.

En aquella época alrededor de 1905 las mujeres usaban el vestido tan largo que no se tenían que preocupar por las medias que casi siempre eran de hilo y algodón de color crudo y con franjas transversales de colores blancas, los zapatos avellana, beige o negros eran bajos o botas con tacon de diferentes tamaños, los vestidos eran saya y blusa con cuello alto y manga larga muchas veces usaban cintas o cinturones y hacienda juego en el cuello la misma cinta; como ropa interior usaban un largo camisón, mi abuela lo usó siempre con manguitas sobre el se ponía el corset de tela muy fuerte y con muchas ballenas que llegaba por detrás dos o tres pulgadas de la cintura para dejar libres las caderas, que cuanto más grandes mejor, y subía mucho delante con la forma de la mitad del seno así no era necesario usar sostenedores pero si eran gruesa usaban un

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I came down with scarlet fever and because the day that I came down with it I had been drying my hair from a wash it became so tangled that the doctor insisted that it be cut. When my grandmother found out she let out a huge cry. Although, of course, my hair grew it never became so long and I could wear it down, parted on the side and tied back with a ribbon that was almost always black.

In that era, around 1905, women used long dresses that were long enough so that one didn't have to worry about stockings which were almost always undyed (?) cotton linen with white horizontal stripes, the shoes were brown, beige or black, they could be shoes or boots with various sizes of heel; the dresses consisted of a skirt and blouse with a high collar and long sleeves; often a ribbon at the waist or a belt was used with a matching one around the neck; underwear consisted of a long chemise, my grandmother always used one with small sleeves over this would go the corset made with thick cloth and much whale bone, it came down two or three inches below the waist so that the hips flared out,

the bigger the better, at the front it rose high to half cover the breasts so that it wasn't necessary to support the breasts with anything else

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cobre corset ceñido y siempre uno adornado con encajes muchas mujeres usaban polizón, una almoadita en forma de media luna para aumentar el fondillo y tambien si no tenian bastante seno rellenaban el vacio en el corset; en esa epoca, 1900, las mujeres no usaban pantalones pues con el camisón, una o dos sayuelas y el vestido tan largo no era necesario, más tarde con la influencia Americana empezaron a usarse pantalones y se acortó el camison al las rodillas, para dormir todas usabamos ropones o camisas de dormir largas y con mangas Como abrigo se usaban capas poco mas abajo de la cintura a chaquetas pero dado el clima no eran muy necesarios.. Nunca se salia de dia sin sombrilla pues la sombrilla acompañaba en los primeros años del siglo ninguna mujer decente salía sola y cuando mi hermana iba a trabajar la acompañaba una muchachita que casi siempre teniamos

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but if they were large, a drawstringed corset cover {and always one} (usually?) covered with embroidery, was used. Many women used a "polizón," a little half-moon shaped pillow to add to their bums and if their breasts weren't large enough they stuffed the empty space in the corsets. In those days, around 1900, women didn't wear underwear because with the chemise, one or two slips and the dress it wasn't necessary. Later, with the American influence, the knee-length chemise became popular. To sleep we all used floor-length sleeved nightshirts or nightgowns. For coats we used capes that came down to the hips but because of the climate these were not very necessary. One never went out by day without a parasol because the parasol accompanied {...} in those first years of the century no decent woman went out alone and when my sister went to work she was always accompanied a girl who we almost always had...

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...para ayudar en los quehaceres, estas muchachitas eran casi una institucion, negras, casi siempre las madres las prestaban con gusto para ser alimentadas y vestidas, aprendían a cocinar y coser y adquirian buenos modales, cuando tenian 14 or 15 años ya podian trabajar como criadas o cocineras y ganar sueldo recuerdo la ultima que tuvimos, Maria, se casó con Benito el lechero, el trabajo domestico no era tanto pues la criada no cocinaba y la cocinera no limpiaba venía a las siete a las diez servia el almuerzo se iba a su casa y volvia a las dos para servir la comida a las cinco, la criada limpiaba y servia la mesa pero nada más, nosotros nunca tuvimos criadas, mis hermanas mayores y mas tarde Ñiquita y yo, limpiabamos la casa, el único trabajo que siempre he odiado. Mi madre nunca hizo nada en la casa se levantaba muy temprano a hacer el desayuno (hervir leche y hacer café) regar y atender a sus matas como el piso del patio era de ladrillo las plantas estaban en toda...

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...to help us in our chores; these girls were practically an institution, black—their mothers almost always happily lent them to us to be fed and clothed; they learned to cook and sew, acquired good manners and by the time they were 14 or 15 they could work as maids or cooks and earn money. I remember the last one we had, Maria, married the milkman, Benito. Domestic labour was limited because the maid did not cook and the cook did not clean. The cook arrived at seven and served lunch at 10. She went back to her house and returned at 2 to cook dinner for 5. The maid cleaned and served at the table, nothing more. We never had maids, my older sisters and then later Ñiquita and I cleaned the house, the only form of work I have always hated. My mother never did anything around the house. She got up very early to make breakfast (boil milk and make coffee) and to water and attend to her plants; the patio was laid with bricks and the plants were in all manner of...

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...clase de recipientes vi muchas veces en el campo orinales en su último destino, y naturalmente las plantas eran pobres, cuando lograba una rosa o dos era un acontecimiento, cuando veo las lindas flores de Canadá me acuerdo de ella con pena; cuanto hubiera gozado un pequeño jardín aquí!

Habia una coleccion de plantas dedicadas a adorning la casa y algunas noches había que sacarlas al patio a coger sereno. Cuando mi madre terminaba de hacer el desayuno, una taza de café con leche, que tomabamos de pie, se lavaba, cambiaba de ropa una blusa blanca y una saya negra que en todos los años que recuerdo siempre usó y se ponía a coser unas veces ropa otros labores en las que era muy diestra, nunca se hacia una pieza de ropa interior, cuando se recibía el dinero de los terrenos de Lajas compraba una o dos piezas de una tela inglesa de hilo Crea La Corona 30 varas costaba \$10.

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...containers, often I saw in the countryside, chamber pots in their final destiny, and naturally the plants were inferior, whenever they managed to produce a rose or two it was a great event; when I see the beautiful flowers in Canada I remember her with pity—How she would have loved a little garden here!

There were a collection of plants used to decorate the home and some nights we had to take them outside so that they could catch the dew. When my mother finished making breakfast, a cup of café con leche that we drank standing up, she washed herself, dressed—in a white blouse and black skirt, that according to my memory was the only thing she wore and she set to work sewing, sometimes clothing another task at which she was very skilled. Instead of a single item of underwear being made at a time, when the rent from the lands in Lajas came in she would buy one or two pieces of English linen cloth Crea La Corona. 30 “varas” cost \$10.

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... buscaba los diferentes moldes y cortaba camisones, pantalones y ropones para cada una segun la necesidad cada pieza se enrollaba y se ponía en una gaveta para hacer cosida en su oportunidad. A las 4 se guardaba la costura y se sentaba en la ventana de la sala

hasta la hora de comer a las cinco despues de comida lo mismo si no tenía que hacer una visita

Las visitas eran una institución de la época en los pueblos pequeños eran casi simper de noche. Cuando una persona se mudaba mandaba recado a todos los vecinos de la cuadra ofreciendo “la casa y una amiga” Cuando los vecinos se consideraban inferiores, negros o blancos muy humildes no aceptaban el ofrecimiento y se abstenian de visitar de lo contrario iban a la casa siempre de noche por una hora o mas y conversaban de todo más o menos

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She would find patterns and cut chemises, underpants and nightgowns for each one depending on what we needed. Each piece was rolled-up and placed in a drawer to be sewn according to the opportunity. At 4 the sewing was put away and we would sit at the living room window until dinner time at 5. After dinner, the same unless there was a visit to be made. Visits were an institution of the period in small towns they were almost always at night. When a person moved they sent a message to all the neighbours around the block offering “la casa y una amiga” {“a home and friend”}?. When the neighbours considered them selves inferiours, black or white, they would not accept the offer and would abstain from visiting {those on the other end}? would come to the house, almost always at night for one hour or more to converse about everything more or less.

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Estas visitas se devolvian o no, segun la aceptacion que tuvieran las personas todo el mundo de la casa estaba obligado a recibir la visita.

Otras veces eran visitas de devolución “hay que devolver la visita a fulana” alguien me tiene que acompañar y muchas veces eran los niños los acompañantes; que martirio!

Sentados muy tiesos luchando con el sueño y oyendo hablar de cosas que no entendíamos! Si por suerte había niños en la casa nos mandaban a jugar a la acera.

Siempre se aprovechaba visitar otras personas que estuvieran cerca y como no había teléfono se ??cara de improviso. Algunas veces, pocas, las visitas eran agradables, pero tenian que hacerse eran para ellos toda la distraccion pues en los primeros años del siglo no había cines, las compañías dramaticas...

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These visits would be returned or not based on the acceptability of the people. Everyone in the house was expected to be present to receive guests.

At other times there were return visits to be made “we have to return the visit of so and so” someone has to accompany me and often it was the children: what martyrdom!

Sitting tensely, fighting with sleep and hearing things that one did not understand! If, by lucky chance, there were children in the home we were sent out to play on the sidewalk.

One always took advantage to visit other homes close to the one being visited and because there were no telephones (se ??cara de improviso) {these were surprise “drop-ins”}. Sometimes, rarely, there were pleasant visits; but they had to be made—they were a central entertainment of life in those first years of the century there were no movie theatres, theatre companies...

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... o musicales nos visitaban una vez al año lo mismo que los circus y el carrousel por supuesto fuera de los circus y carrousel nada era para los niños pero siempre que había function en el teatro nos llevaba la cocinera a ver la gente entrar la iluminacion de la calle, y las negras hacienda empanadas para esto colocaban mesas en la calle y anafes, hacian la pasta y la rellenaban y freian, eran enormes—del tamaño de un plato y costaban 0.10ç no siempre tuve la suerte de comer una.

Había tambien los dos parques pequeños, una manzana uno de ello era una belleza con grandes arboles asientos de marmol con espaldar de hierro forjado pero estupidamente lo modernizarion y lo convirtieron en una plazaleta de cemento y bancos de madera. Estos parques eran la distracción del domingo, en el 1903 se fundo una banda infantil cosa muy en voga y daban retreta supongo la...

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...or musical ensembles perhaps once each year as well as the circus and the carrousel; of course besides the circus and the carrousel nothing was suitable for children, but everytime there was something playing at the theatre the cook would take us children down to watch people entering, lit by the street lights ?, the black women would be making empanadas, to do this they set up tables and portable stoves on the street, they would make the pasta, they would fill and fry them, they were enormous—the size of plates and they cost 0.10ç; I wasn't always lucky enough to eat one.

There were also two small parks, one, very beautiful took up a whole block and had large trees, marble seats with wrought iron backs, stupidly they modernized it and converted it into a little cement plaza with wooden benches. These parks were the main entertainment on Sundays; in 1903 they assembled a children's band, something that was in fashion, and they would give open-air concerts, I suppose...

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... música sería muy mala pero hacían ruido la gente se paseaba dando vueltas, las mujeres en una dirección, los hombres en la contraria y así por dos horas! Que maravilla! Por supuesto no todos los domingos me llevaban (algunos mese después) pero cuando ya tenía doce o trece años podia ir con mis hermanas mayores y allí reunirme con mis amigas a dar vueltas y vueltas, estas retretas al principio solo los domingos y despues los jueves también fueron mi mayor distracción hast que sali de Sagua en 1920 y uno de los recuerdos que me hace reir todavía es como los hombres que todavía usaban sombrero (hasta 194...) y paseaban hasta muchas veces de cuatro en frente se quitaban el sombrero al unisono y tambien al mismo tiempo lo ponían.

Ya cuando tenia 11 o 12 años empezaron los cines habia dos, y si no habia show costaba diez centavos pero

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...the music must have been terrible but at least they made noise, the people promenaded around the park, the women in one direction and the men in the opposite—and they did this for hours! How extraordinary! Of course, I didn't go every Sunday (a couple of months later) but when I was 12 or 13 I could go with my older sisters and there meet my friends to take a turn around the park, the open air concerts were at first only on Sundays

and after also on Thursdays and they were my main source of fun until I left Sagua in 1920 and one of the memories that still makes me laugh out loud is seeing the men, who still used hats (until 1940's) and often strolled in groups of four abreast, lift their hats in unison and put them back on again in sync.

Already, when I was 11 or 12 there were the first movie theatres, there were two and if there was no show they charged ten centavos but...

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...si habia coupletista variaba el precio hasta 40ç fue la epoca de las grandes coupletistas La Chelito, la Bella Otero, los couplets eran picarezcicos pero nunca obscenos y nunca en esa epoca habia peliculas que no pudieran ver todo el mundo. La función consistia de una pelicula principal y varias peliculas cortas y cuando se terminaba una parte habia que esperar que pusieran la siguiente, eran silentes y un hombre tocaba el piano muchas veces tan oportuno que me aminaba. La erupcion de un volcan o la muerte de una persona con un estridente two step. En esa epoca se celebraba en todo el pais el carnaval antes y al principio de la cuaresma. Había dos clubs, el Liceo y el Casino Español para hombres las mujeres sólo iban invitadas a los bailes, a pesar de que el unico entretenimiento que tenian era jugar cartas, billar o domino los hombres terminada la comida dejaban la mujer en la casa y se iban al club o al parque a reunirse con otros hombres.

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...if there was a "cupletista" (singer of couplets) the price went up to 40 ç. It was the age of the great Cupletistas: La Chelito, La Bella Otero, the couplets were ribald but never obscene and there were never any movies that everyone could see. The programme consisted of a main feature and several shorts and when each reel finished one had to wait for them to put the next one on; they were silent and a man played the piano, often with so much spirit that it made me excited: the eruption of a volcano or the death of a person was passed on screen in time to a loud two-step. At that time throughout the country carnival was celebrated before the start of Lent. There were two clubs the Liceo and the Casino Español, these were clubs for *men* and women went only invited to do so for dances in spite of the fact that the only entertainment they had in those places was cards, billiards or domino the men having finished their suppers left the woman at home and went to the club or the park to meet other men.

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En carnaval se celebraba todos los domingos un baile (6 o 8) cuando el casino tenia baile no habia en el Liceo. El Liceo era la sociedad de la aristocracia se pagaba \$3.00 mensuales, el Casino era más popular el elemento principal eran los españoles y con la cuota tenían de hecho a medico y hospitalizacion y aunque muchos españoles se casaban con cubanas no había en realidad mucha mezcla. Los bailes del Casino eran más divertidos pero las que podiamos estrenabamos los vestidos de baile en el Liceo. Aparte de los bailes de carnaval el Liceo tenia baile el 31 de enero, el 24 de febrero, el veinte de mayo, el diez de octubre fuera del 31 de diciembre las demas eran fechas patrioticas pues el Liceo era cubanísimo.

Mi primer baile formal fué el 20 de mayo de 1914 hasta entonces habia estado en luto por mi madre (+1912) mi hermana Lili que...

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During carnival there would be a dance every Sunday (6 or 8). When the Casino had a dance there was none at the Liceo. The Liceo was for the aristocracy, there was a monthly fee of \$3.00, while the Casino had the more popular following, the central element was the Spanish who, in fact, received hospital and medical services along with their membership. And, although many Spaniards married Cuban women there was really very little intermingling. The Casino dances were more fun, but those of us who could tried out our new dresses at the Liceo dance. Beyond the carnival dances the Liceo had dances on 31 of January, 24 February, 20 May, 10 October, and the 31st of December with the exception of the last, the dates are all national patriotic holidays for the Liceo was consummately Cuban.

My first formal dance was on the 20th May, 1914, until then I had been in mourning for my mother (+1912), my sister Lili...

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...nunca estuvo unido a mi madre se oponía pero yo me revelé pero tuve que hacerle la concesión de llevar flores de tela de color morado, el vestido era blanco de crepe de China de seda y era a media pierna, fui a bailes de carnaval al Liceo de turca, de japonesa y otra de chiffon rosado con un enorme sombrero de encaje rosado siempre formabamos grupos que llamabamos comparsa al casino solo fui una vez disfrazada un baile rojo que siempre había daban el día de la candelaria. En la puerta del club siempre había una comisión esperando y le daban el brazo a las muchachas para llevarlas al salon a sentarse entonces venían los muchachos con el carnet una tarjeta con un lapis y anotaba las punas (?) de baile en el carnet propio y en el de la muchacha aunque yo era muy mala bailando gozaba mucho los bailes

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...who had never been close to my mother, was opposed to my going but I rebelled. As a concession to her I was forced to wear purple fabric flowers on my dress which was a calf-length white Crepe de Chine. I went to carnival dances at the Liceo as a Turkish lady, a Japanese lady and in pink Chiffon with a large pink lace hat. We would go as a group calling ourselves a "comparsa." I went to the Casino <Casino Español> only once. On that occasion it was to the Red Ball that they gave every year for the Feast of the Candelaria. At the door of the club there was always a greeting party, these men would offer their arm to the ladies and escort them into salon to the seats. Then, the men would approach with their dance cards, little notebooks with pencils on which they would note the schedule of dances and partners and copy the information on their partners' cards. I danced very badly but I thoroughly enjoyed these dances.

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Esta demás decir que siempre ibamos chaperonadas aunque algunas veces el chaperon era el hermano de la amiga con quien ibamos. Solo usabamos chaperón para los bailes y fue grande mi sorpresa cuando fui a la Habana en el 1918 y encontré que de noche nadie salía sin chaperon esto duró casi hasta la revolución.

Volviendo al pasado en el 1905 hubo una grande inundacion Sagua esta situada en el lado mas bajo del rio que le da el nombre, todos los años el rio en época de lluvia crecía y se desbordaba, amenazando inundar la población todo el mundo tomaba precauciones poniendo en alto las cosas pero ese año la amenaza se realizo y el agua en algunos lugares subió hasta tres metros mi madre ayudada por algunos amigos pudo poner las cosas en alto y aunque era espantosa la peste y la suciedad despues de mucho trabajo quedo la casa limpia

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It goes without saying that we always went chaperoned even though sometimes the chaperone was the brother of the friend with whom we were going to the dance. We used chaperones only for dances so that I had a surprise when I went to Havana in 1918 to learn that the custom there was for all women going out at night to have chaperone; a tradition that lasted almost until the revolution.

Returning to the past: in 1905 there was a huge flood in Sagua— the city is situated on the lowest point of the river from which it takes its name. Every year during the rainy season when the river threatened to crest its borders people took precautions by placing things in high places but that year the worst fears were realized and the water in some places reached three metres. My mother, with help from friends was able to store our things safely high and in spite of the stench and dirt we were able to afterwards clean the house...

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pero habitable pero la gente pobre sufrio mucho, casi todos los vivieres almacenados se perdieron y por tres o cuatro dias hubo poco alimento.

Nosotros cuando el agua empezo a salir por el alcantarillado fuimos a casa de los Llorente, amigos que considerabamos como la familia que tenian dos cuartos altos en el fondo de la casa alli pasamos tres dias los hombres en un cuarto las mujeres en el otro durmiendo en el suelo y con la comida toda fría muy racionada pues no se sabia cuanto tiempo tendríamos que estar allí; una noche sentimos un ruido enorme tres casas que había en la calle de atras se fueron completas, gracias a la forma que se construye en Cuba no más episodios de esta clase (meses despues) En el 1910 el año del cometa Hayley? Cumpli 15 años pero seguia siendo una niña. En el año 1908 madrinita tuvo un hijo para mi fue una cosa extraordinaria, era mi primer sobrino y me sentia muy onrada(?).

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...and make it habitable again. On the other hand the poor suffered horribly and almost all the stabled livestock was lost so that for three or four days there was little food.

When we saw the water begin to flow into the gutters we went to the home of friends who were considered as close as family, the Llorente's, who had upper storey rooms at the back of their house. There, in two rooms, the women in one the men in the other, we spent two days, sleeping on the floor with the food served cold and strictly rationed because it wasn't known how long we would have to stay there. One night we heard an enormously loud sound—three houses in the street behind us had been swept clear away. Fortunately, construction methods in Cuba have changed since that time so that this type

of episode doesn't happen as often anymore. (months later) In 1910, the year of Hailey's comet? I turned 15 but I remained a girl. In the year 1908 "madrinita" <Rosita> had a son, this was an extraordinary thing for me, it was my first nephew and I felt deeply honoured (?).

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Creo que en el 1906 cuando mi madre decidió quittarme de la escuela y que mi hermana Hortensia me diera clases ya tenia que irme preparando para examinarme de maestra y suceder a mi hermana como sosten de la familia., esto fue un cambio radical en mi vida, me prepararon un horario que tenia que seguir rigurosamente, levantarme a las 7 limpiar los cuartos tender las camas y estudiar hasta las 10, almorzar, a las doze empezar a coser hasta las cuatro que venia Hortensia y empezabamos las clases las dos sesiones interrumpidas un cuarto de hora para tomar café con leche, La cultura de mi hermana no era superior a un 4° o 5° grado pero era muy inteligente y muchas veces cuando no sabia una cosa me decia "vamos a estudiar esto"

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I think it was in 1906 that my mother decided to withdraw me from school and my sister Hortensia was to give me classes in preparation for the teaching exams so that I could take over from my sister as the family breadwinner. This was a radical change in my life. They prepared a schedule for me which I was expected to follow rigorously. Waking at 7, clean the rooms, make the beds and study until 10, lunch, then at 12 begin to sew until 4 when Hortensia arrived and we would begin two intensive study sessions broken for a quarter of an hour to have a café con leche. My sister's educational level was no more than Grade 5 or 6 but she was very intelligent: often when she didn't know something she would turn to me and say, "we have to study this."

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Cuando cumplí los dieciseis años, edad necesaria para el examen había vencido los programas, la aritmetica completa, solo practia (?), gramatica bastante extensa, Historia de Cuba, Geografia de Cuba e universal, fisiologia anatomica, ciencias naturales, dibujo lineal y pedagogia (poca y mala, estabamos atrazados 50 años).

En el 1911 mi madre fue operada de cancer, en la Habana, y pocos meses más tarde se le reprodujo. En el 1910 Ñiquita se había comprometido y pensaba casarse en Easter de 1912 pero al volver a enfermarse mi madre mi hermana Hortensia que en realidad era el jefe de familia decidio de acuerdo con Miguel el novio de Ñ que se casaran en diciembre de 1911 y asi podiamos vivir todos juntos con la proteccion de un hombre, un mentecato de 24 años y que se sentia muy importante; unos meses después en abril murio mi madre y aunque nunca estuvo cerca de nosotros su perdida fue una pena muy grande para mi; enseguida se...

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When I turned sixteen, the minimum age for the teaching exams, I had absorbed the following programmes: full arithmetic (applied), extensive grammar, History of Cuba, Geography of Cuba, and the world, anatomical physiology, natural sciences, Line

Drawing and Pedagogy (the latter very little and of poor quality, we were 50 years behind in Cuba.)

In 1911 my mother was operated for cancer in Havana and a few months later it recurred. In 1910 Ñiquita had become engaged and planned to marry at Easter, 1912 but when my mother became sick again my sister Hortensia, who in fact was the head of the family, in agreement with Miguel, Ñ's fiancé, decided that they should marry in December of 1912 and, in this way, we could live together with the protection of a man, an idiot of 24 years who thought himself very important. Several months later, in April, my mother died and, although she was never close to us, her death was a very great loss for me. Immediately...

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... mudaron Ñ y M con nosotros y empezo una nueva epoca en mi vida. Mi hermana Hortensia era todo dulzura y bondad y esos meses fueron tal vez los mejores de mi vida como teniamos luto no salíamos y por la noche mientras ella leia en voza alta yo cosia y cuando ella se cansaba yo leia estabamos hacienda su trusseao pues poco dias despues de la muerte de mi madre se habia comprometido con Federico Fernandez de quien habia sido novia antes. Ya se estaban hacienda gestiones para cuando ella se casara ocupara yo la plaza habia muchos aspirantes pero mis padrinos eran fuertes y al fin el 20 de mayo de 1913 fue nombrada maestro. Hortensia se habia casado en febrero, como el marido no podia venir, esataba de administrador de un banco en Banes Oriente ella fue con Samuel y el padre de el y se caso alla esta fue una gran pena me parecia imposible vivir lejos de ella pero Samuel entonces 14 años necesitaba mas atencion y yo tenia seguridad de trabajar en Sagua como asi fue. Mi vida con Ñ no fue muy buena ella como siempre muy bondadosa pero Miguel jefe de familia estaba lleno de infulas (?) y se creia con derecho a gobernarme y yo, muy malcriada e independiente economicamente me revelaba no deben haber sido años muy...

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...Ñ y M moved in with us and so a new period in my life began. My sister Hortensia was sweet and generous and those months were perhaps the best in my life. We were in mourning so we didn't leave the house at night, while she read aloud I sewed and when she tired I took over the reading. We were making her trousseau because a few days after the death of my mother she had become engaged to Federico Fernandez with whom she had been going out. Preparations had been made so that when she left the teaching post I would take it over. There were many candidates but my sponsors were influential and, at last, on the 20th of May of 1913 I was given the post. Hortensia had married in February. Her husband was working as a bank administrator in Banes, Oriente, she went and married him there, taking Samuel with her to live with him and his father. This was very sad for me, it seemed impossible to me to live so far from her; Samuel who was then 14 needed more attention and I had the security of a job in Sagua so that's how things were settled. My life with Ñ didn't go very well, she as always was very giving but Miguel as head of the family was full of ?, thinking he had the right to set the rules for me while I, very spoiled and economically independent rebelled. These must not have been very pleasant years for...

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...buenos para la pobre Ñ.

Yo estaba muy ilusionada que en 1914 iria a pasar las vacaciones con mi hermana y en febrero tuve un golpe horrible. Federico habia hecho un desfalco y habían tenido que salir del pais en un barco platanero Banes era el Puerto de exportacion de platanos, despues no se como pudieron coger un lancha de vela y llegaron a Costa Rica de donde me escribio y no tenia mucha fé en la honrabilidad de F y me angustiaba horriblemente lo que le podría suceder pero poco a poco fueron hasta estabilizando y mediante mi tio Laureano tuve promesa de que no sería perseguido a condición de que no volviera a Cuba. Como un hecho significativo debo decir que H que no era tan buena como Lili y yo bordando a máquina pudo hacer dinero enseñando a border cosa que era desconocida allí Moraleja "Todo conocimiento puede ser util."

Estuvieron en Costa Rica hasta 1917 que el dueño de la hacienda de café donde el trabajaba muy querido y estimado se le ocurrió que podría hacer negocio con Cuba y quien mejor que él para iniciar las gestiones, salieron por el Pacifico y llegaron a San Francisco donde estuvieron hasta 1919 que ella salio en estado y el penso que era mejor volver, el banco donde trabajó había caido en crisis así no había peligro que se resucitara viejos asuntos.

Estaba escribiendo de Sagua y ahora estoy en un parque en Sharon Spring rodeada de judio Cuantos cambios ha habido en mi vida espero que me queden pocos a los 80 años.

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...poor Ñ. I was looking forward to being able to spend the holidays with my sister when, in February I had a terrible shock. Federico had defrauded the bank and in February had had to escape the country on a banana boat, Banes was the export centre for bananas. After that, I don't know how but the managed to get on a sailing boat headed for Costa Rica where she wrote to me. I worried for her for I had little faith in Federico's honesty but little by little the situation stabilized and eventually through the intervention of my uncle Laureano I was promised that he would not be arrested as long as he did not return to Cuba.

It's worth noting that even though Hortensia could never machine embroider as well as Lili and me she was able to earn money teaching this skill in Costa Rica where it was unknown. The moral of the story is: "All knowledge can prove useful."

They were in Costa Rica until 1917 when the owner of the coffee plantation where Federico worked, a highly regarded and respected man, thought that he might do business with Cuba and who best but Federico to set this up. They left by the Pacific and arrived in San Francisco where they stayed until 1919 when she became pregnant and he thought it might be a good moment to return because the bank he had worked for had fallen into crisis so that there was no danger that the old matters would be remembered.

I was writing about Sagua y now I am in a park in Sharon Spring surrounded by jews. How many changes there have been in my life, I hope that there are few left at 80 years.

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Luto!

Gran parte de mi juventud me pasé con luto. Había una costumbre casi ley que desfronía el tiempo que había que estar vestido de negro cuando se perdía un pariente, muchas veces poco querido o casi odiado como me puso con mi abuelos. Era establecido que por padres o hijos era un año de negro sin adornos, un año con encaje y seis meses de blanco y negro. A los hermanos y abuelos era justo la mitad y a los tios tres meses a los primos vestidos blancos y negro por poco tiempo.

A los tres años perdí mi padre, una bebita vestida de negro por un año, a los nueve mi hermana mayor, otro año, a los diecisiete mi madre, dos años y medio, cuando terminé este luto mi tía, tres meses a los 21 mi abuela un año a los 25 otra tía, a los 28 un hermano, despues de estos he tenido otros lutos pero ya las costumbres no eran tan severas y como era mayor no me importaban tanto.

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Mourning!

A great part of my youth was spent in mourning. There was a custom that was practically law that set out the amount of time one had to dress in black after the death of a relative, often someone little cared for, or even hated, as was my case with my grandparents. It was established that for parents and for one's children it was one year of black with no adornments, one year of lace followed by six months of black and white. For siblings and grandparents it was exactly half of this, for aunts and uncles three months and for cousins one wore black and white for only several months.

At three years I lost my father. I was a baby dressed in black for a full year. At age nine my eldest sister—another year; at sixteen my mother, two and a half years. Having just finished this, my aunt—three months, at 21, my grandmother—a year; at 25 another aunt; at 28, a brother. After this there have been other mourning periods but by then the custom was not so severe, and being older it did not matter so much to me.

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Las viudas, madres e hijos usaban guantes, cosa no acostumbrada, zapatos de piel mate y sombrero con pena, un largo velo que pendia detrás, como cosa curiosa sé de un caso que la abuela murió y la ropa del niño que no había nacido fué adornada con cintas negras, pero casi siempre en tales casos eran moradas o lila, colores que se consideraban casi de luto.

Los hombres, como siempre entonces, tenían la parte menos mala y su unico luto era la corbata negra y la cinta en el sombrero, las camisas eran siempre blancas. Cuando una persona se estaba muriendo los vecinos y amigos llenaban la casa, de todas partes traian sillas y cuando de la funeraria traen el sacófago, el muerto envuelto en una sabana, dado el clima el entierro tenia que ser en 11? horas, y los hombres solamente iban al entierro, alguien, la figura más prominente entre los presentes despedía el duelo, es decir recordaba todas las cosas buenas del muerto, pocas veces había servicio religioso. No se usaban flores naturales, eran coronas o cruces de flores de una porcelana muy fina, muy bellas, con cintas de ?raso negras, blancas or moradas con inscripciones Estas coronas se traian otra vez a la casa y el dia de los difuntos se llevaban otra vez al cementerio por el dia, mas tarde sanidad lo prohibio.

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The widows, mothers and children used gloves, which were seldom used, dark leather shoes and a hat with a long veil that hung behind and was called "pena." I know of a case in which upon the death of a grandmother, the clothes of the grandchild who had not yet been born at the time of her grandmother's death were embellished with black ribbons, (although usually in such cases the ribbons were lilac or purple, considered mourning colours.) Men, then as always, had the easiest part in the matter and their only mourning was the black tie and hat ribbon; shirts were always white.

When a person was dying neighbours and friends would fill the house, from everywhere they would bring chairs, and when the coffin was brought from the funeral home with the body wrapped in a sheet they would see it.(?) Due to the climate the body had to be buried within 11? hours after death. Only the men would attend the burial. Someone, the a prominent member of the gathering "despedía el duelo" this involved remembering the positive aspects of the dead person. There were rarely religious services. There were also no natural flowers rather the wreaths and flowers were covered with rather beautiful fine porcelain flowers and black or purple ribbons with inscriptions. These would be returned to the home after the burial and would be placed at the grave each year on the Day of the Dead. Later the Public Health Department prohibited this.