

Buda Errante (Wandering Buda)

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Abstract

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Buda Errante (Wandering Buda) is a solo performance inspired by the life of the Chilean poet and Nobel Prize in Literature (1945), Gabriela Mistral, in conversation with the personal experiences of the creator of this piece. The play explores “missing,” such as missing an accent, childhood, friends, lovers, children, and a country. By encouraging participation, this solo show invites the audience to connect with the characters and their stories through the use of humor, all in an attempt to find light and lightness even in the most difficult moments in life.

Iveliz Martel

Graduate Thesis — *Buda Errante (Wandering Buda)*

Jeffrey Fracé

April 6th, 2023

When embarking on the process of creating a solo show some of the early questions a creator or theatermaker faces are, what do I want to say? And what's the story I want to tell? The possibilities are then infinite. Whatever the answers to these questions are, the challenge that is hard to escape—like in any creative process—is finding ways to invite the audience to care about the message and story being told. As a creator, I believe the only possible way is to offer one's own vulnerabilities in service of the piece; thus, the audience members can recognize themselves in those vulnerabilities and care about the human being in front of them telling a story on stage.

The idea of creating a solo show inspired by the life of the Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral—the first Latin American person to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1945—is a response to my own need to tell the story of someone with whom I—the creator and actor of the piece—could connect with in different levels. Mistral grew up immersed in my culture, surrounded by my people, and inhabiting the Chilean territory, framed by Los Andes mountains.

However, this solo show couldn't only be about Gabriela Mistral. Whether I wanted it or not, I had to put my own life experience in service of the story, as we usually do as actors. I had to ask myself what my current struggles are and had to dig into my experience as a Chilean woman in the United States, in my thirties, with an accent, without family in the country, and trying to become an actor.

During my time as a student in the MFA in Acting program at the University of Washington School of Drama, I learned that every character I embody on stage must have my identity as a starting point. I first approached this idea in the concept of ‘biopsychosocial history’ taught by Cathy Madden in the Alexander Technique class. Madden says that people’s biopsychosocial backgrounds “encompass the interaction of biological, psychological, and social elements in our coordination.”¹ By “coordination”, Madden refers to the “harmonious organization of the whole self to the parts and the parts to the whole self,”² which is a concept that proved to be an essential tool in the whole creative process of this piece. In general, coordinating the relationship between the artist’s head and spine supports the decision-making process any creative endeavor requires, in particular when the work is entirely done “solo.” In this case, coordinating the whole self to the parts and the parts to the whole self during the creative process helped me welcome the uniqueness of my own story and transform my “limitations” (accent, nationality, gender, age, etc.) into the creative soil needed to harvest a unique story.

Identifying and appreciating the creative possibilities of my Chilean background was also a tool I learned in our Business of Acting class with Carol Roscoe. By thoroughly analyzing my social identity (race, ethnicity, language, national origin, religious or spiritual affiliation, age, physical, emotional, developmental dis(Ability), sexual orientation, sex, gender, and social economic status), I started to understand what makes me unique and, therefore, what makes any character I am embodying unique as well. Similarly, in our dialect and speech classes with Bridget Connors and Scott Hafso, I learned to recognize and appreciate an aspect that is essential to whom

¹ Cathy Madden, *Teaching the Alexander Technique: Active Pathways to Integrative Practice*. (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2018), 40-41.

² Cathy Madden, *Teaching the Alexander Technique: Active Pathways to Integrative Practice*. (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2018), 41.

I am as an actor and theatermaker: the sounds of my own dialect. I learned that identifying my own pronunciation and the musicality of my Chilean accent is essential to learn a new dialect. By seeing, hearing, and recognizing my own sounds, I can work with more ease and pleasure than by trying to quiet that part of who I am.

Understanding all those aspects was a starting point in the creation of *Buda Errante* (*Wandering Buda*). As with any play, I had to spend a good amount of time doing dramaturgical research. I needed to learn who Gabriela Mistral was and the key events of her life. I had to read and discover her poetry and find pieces that have been translated into English. I had to feel her verses in Spanish and English, and then find the poems that would help me support the story. I also spent time hearing Gabriela's voice in audio recordings of her reading her own poetry, singing, and engaging in quotidian conversations. Even though the sound of her voice wasn't explicitly part of *Buda Errante* (*Wandering Buda*), it was a fundamental research tool to connect with her humanity and her unique voice as a poet.

In terms of character analysis, I spent time exploring Gabriela Mistral's struggles, or obstacles, as we call them in terms of acting methodology. I also analyzed her motivations and what she wanted in life –super objectives and objectives– and I identified those people who were part of her most painful and joyful moments. I examined the stories of the human beings to whom she missed throughout her lifetime and who served as motivation for her poetry. In other words, I studied the people, places, and things that were at the center of her experience of “missing” as a writer, teacher, woman, partner, and mother.

This piece could not only be a static, historic recount of Mistral's life and her experience of missing. Because it needed to be a conversation with my own story as a creator of the show, I had to ask myself, “What am I missing in my own life?” “What have I been missing during my

thirties and recently in my time in the United States?” The answers to those questions were multiple: By being a Chilean actor in the U.S., I felt for a long time that I was missing, for example, the “right” accent (even though we learned in our voice and speech classes that there is no such a thing as a “neutral American accent”), my family, the experience of motherhood, my roots, my country, and even the view of Los Andes mountains in the horizon. Identifying the people, places, and things I am “missing” allowed me to have a dialogue with Mistral’s life. I discovered that some of her obstacles were also my obstacles and the struggles of many Latina women living in a country that is not theirs.

But obstacles could not be the only bone in the spine of this show. Even though at the beginning of my process I thought this would be a purely dramatic piece, I realized later that humor was essential to provide the story with dimensionality and to take the audience on a journey where sadness was not the only stop. Skills I received during my time in the MFA in Acting program at the UW School of Drama became key in the process then. In our Play and Clown classes with Jane Nichols and Bradley Wrenn, for example, I learned how much joy I find in comedy, how much of a clown sprouts in my acting, and how much pleasure and fun I find playing characters who are innocent and clueless kids. In my acting training during the program, I understood that plays, even tragedies, cannot only be one thing: pure drama and sadness. The same as many different notes make a music piece dynamic and compelling, this solo show could not be reduced to a sad story. I felt the urgency, then, of adding humor to it and applying what I learned in those classes to the process. In that exploration, the first question I had to ask myself was: what do I enjoy doing on stage? My answer to it was clear: I enjoy playing characters who allow me to behave in ways I don’t in my everyday life, such as being childish, mean, or loud.

I started writing the script with the idea of embodying characters with those qualities. The Mean Girl, Romelio Ureta, and Yin Yin were all born as a response to my desire to play kids and share my clown acting spirit with an audience. The writing of the script was also influenced by my admiration for Anna Deavere Smith, whose transformational work I learned during my first year in the program, precisely, in our Play class. In my second year, in our studio class with Amy Thone, we also read and analyzed her book *Letters to a Young Artist: Straight-up Advice on Making a Life in the Arts-For Actors, Performers, Writers, and Artists of Every Kind*.

As seen in Anna Deavere Smith's plays, embodying different characters in the same piece requires an intentional use of the actor's voice and physicality. Every character needs their own vocal and movement qualities and, therefore, actors must use their voice training to find where those characters live. I learned in our Linklater voice class with Bridget Connors how the vibration of the sounds in my body can be placed in different resonators, meaning the voice of every character can live in different parts of the actor's body. In my instrument, for example, the Mean Girl lives in my throat; Romelio Ureta lives in my chest and heart center; Yin Yin- little boy lives in my nasal area, and Yin Yin-teenager lives in the shoulders and the upper back.

Once I had a draft of the script, and I started putting the piece on its feet, the question that guided the next part of the process was: Where is the game? How can I find the game, so that I can play? That's when the need of interacting with the audience emerged. If I was able to find the games in the piece, the audience could go with me—the actor—in this journey of unfolding Gabriela Mistral's pain. But, most importantly, they would have the space to see themselves in her struggles and the struggles of the creator of the piece at the same time. Adding moments of connection with the audience forced me to cut off almost half of the script in order to respect the 20-minute limits as much as possible. Sacrificing that material was key to having time to invite the audience to be

part of the world of the play. The intentional action of inviting the audience to be with me while I am with them is also another tool I learned from Cathy Madden in her Alexander Technique class.

When inviting the audience into the piece, the question of ‘presence’ became palpable: How to be present with the audience during the performance of the piece? According to Deavere Smith, “presence is an invitation.”³ Therefore, in my mind as an artist, this solo show was not ‘solo’ anymore. Interacting with the audience through questions and listening to what they are responding was and is crucial since, in this case, the actor and the audience share the same theatrical time-space. The audience must be invited to be part of the world of the play. The audience becomes the actor’s scene partner, and the skill of listening becomes more crucial than ever to be able to react to what was happening in the moment. As we heard so many times during our training in the program, acting is reacting. For the actor, every performance is similar to going on a date with a new person every night. Every person (meaning the audience in this case) will spark different reactions and feelings in the actor. This is true for every type of performance, but when a piece such as *Buda Errante (Wandering Buda)* relies so heavily on the audience’s participation, the innocence of the future—another acting skill I received during my training in the program—stops being a mere concept and becomes an urgent need. There is no way to anticipate how the audience will react to the piece every night.

Presence—a skill so longed for all actors—is, thus, crucial when establishing a relationship with the audience. Presence, which Ana Deavere Smith describes as the capacity “to absorb the world around you by being fully in its presence, with all that is beautiful, troubling, and mundane. It is your ability to absorb and to transmit what you have absorbed, with the simplest of gestures,”⁴

³ Anna Deavere Smith, *Letters to a Young Artist*. (New York: Anchor Books, 2006), 108.

⁴ Anna Deavere Smith, *Letters to a Young Artist*. (New York: Anchor Books, 2006), 206.

becomes essential to move in response to the audience. As Smith suggests, presence is the joy and desire of the actor to be in the presence of an audience, “even if you dread it up until the moment you are literally shoved onto the stage.”⁵ Ultimately, *Buda Errante (Wandering Buda)* is an opportunity for the actor to exercise their presence and have joy on stage. It is a chance to perform in communion with the audience while both—the actor and the audience—reflect on what they are missing in their lives in this moment in time, maybe with sorrow but also with humor.

⁵ Anna Deavere Smith, *Letters to a Young Artist*. (New York: Anchor Books, 2006), 151.

Buda Errante (*Wandering Buda*)

A Solo Play

By Iveliz Martel

TIME:

Now

PLACE:

The stage of any theater or performance venue.

CHARACTERS:

THE CREATOR. A woman from Chile in her thirties.

THE MEAN GIRL

ROMELIO URETA

YIN YIN little boy

YIN YIN teenager

NOTE: All characters are played by the same actor by adding a few accessories or clothing pieces.

BUDA ERRANTE (WANDERING BUDA)

Before entering the stage, we already hear the Creator complaining and mumbling words in Spanish. Seconds later, she enters the space as herself, hat covering her eyes, her usual raincoat, backpack, and several bags hanging from her arms. What a disaster! She is not a character in the play, or at least she doesn't think so. She is the Creator of the story, but she doesn't want to mention her name in the piece, nor she wants to talk about herself. She calls herself "The Creator." How presumptuous! Maybe, she believes she is the creator of some kind of world. Like God! God! But, whatever, she didn't come here to talk about herself. She came here to deal with this "irritating assignment." She enters the space carrying also a box full of books. But, because of her hat, her bags, her everything, she can barely see where she is going and drops her stuff everywhere. She IS a disaster.

THE CREATOR: *[off stage] Uitch! Qué rabia esta gente que me hace hacer cosas que yo no quiero. [The Creator enters the stage and addresses the audience] Good evening [or Good afternoon, depending on the time of the day]. I don't want to talk about myself. Okay? I just need to deal with this irritating assignment. I want to talk about someone whose life is inspiring, with whom I can relate somehow, someone who has overcome obstacles and has faced conflict in multiple ways.*

Also, I don't want to work on a character whose dialect is different from mine. Okay?

[To an audience member] Do I have an accent?

[Maybe the audience member says "yes."] Ohhh rude!

[Or maybe the audience member says "no"] Liar!

[To the audience member] Do you have an accent?

[Maybe the audience member says "no"] Oh liar.

[Maybe the audience member says "yes"] I like you.

But, I have more than this accent. I have many accents.

[To the audience member] Do you want to hear my British accent? *[The audience member has no choice but to say “yes.” And the Creator starts speaking in RP]* Cecily, surely such a utilitarian occupation as the watering of flowers is rather Molton’s duty than yours.

[To an audience member] How was it?

[Maybe the audience member says it was good] Liar!

[Or maybe the audience member says “It was okay”] Rude! But you know what? I have another accent.

[To another audience member] Do you want to hear my Southern accent?

[The audience member has no choice but to say “yes.” And the Creator starts speaking in a Southern accent] They caught Billy heading back over Mount Airy driving so fast they thought, this boy must be crazy, this boy wants to end it here and now cause he is gonna die the way is going.

[To an audience member] How was it?

[The audience member maybe says it was good] All of you bunch of liars. You don’t like my accent. Jesus. I hate having to put an accent on top of my accent and end up speaking like a dialectic Frankenstein. That’s why I thought this assignment has to be about someone from my country.

[To the audience] But, do you know where I am from?

[Audience members try to guess. She addresses a few of them individually. But they fail at identifying her country] I am from Chile. Do you know anything about Chile? *[The audience probably doesn’t know what to say]* Like its wine? Observatories? the desert? Anything? *[Nobody knows anything. So, she addresses the audience with the following questions and makes an error buzzer sound every time an audience member doesn’t respond correctly]*

Do you know the name of the **driest place** on earth?

[Audience members say the wrong names] It is the Atacama desert, and it is located in Chile.

[The Creator makes the audience repeat the word Atacama as if she was teaching kids] Everybody repeats after me A-TA-CA-MA. Atacama desert.

Now, what’s the name of the **oldest mummy** *[she imitates a mummy]* in the world?

[The audience members have no clue] They are the Chinchorro mummies, and they were found in Chile.

[The Creator makes the audience repeat the word Chinchorro] Everybody repeats after me CHIN-CHO-RRO. Chinchorro. Great!

Do you know who **Gabriela Mistral** is? Raise your hand if you know Gabriela Mistral. Don't be afraid if you don't know. Don't lie to me "mentirosillos." *[Nobody or very few people raise their hands]*. There is even a cosmic Nebula that has her name.

Do you know **Pablo Neruda**? Who is he? *[A few people know he is a Chilean poet]* Ahh so you do know who Pablo Neruda is: a *man*, Chilean poet, also a Nobel Prize recipient. But you don't know who Gabriela Mistral is. Jesus. This country.

[An alarm, a timer, goes off. The Creator is running out of time]

Mi Dios. This assignment is due in 20 minutes. This is a disaster. Okay, it is not your fault that you don't know anything about Gabriela Mistral because there are only a few translations of her poetry into English. Gabriela Mistral is a Chilean poet who was the first Latin American person to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, in 1945. So, I decided to base my assignment on her, so you can get to know her. I went to the library and checked out dozens and dozens of books about her and her poetry, so I could do this assignment. Hours of *Yiu Yiu Yiu [she makes the sound of a scanning machine and invites the audience to make the same sound while she starts scanning books]*. Everyone, please, help me out, make these sounds with me, "Yiu, yiu, you, breh, brih, zih, zuh, zah, yiuuuuu" *[She is pressing buttons, then she realizes that something is off; she looks at the scanner]* Puf, puf, puf, paf" *[Something is wrong. The machine is not working]*

[To the audience] Stop!

Oh no. Oh mi Dios. I don't know what happened. But Oh my God. Puff. Gone. Everything is gone! Ay mi Dios, what do I do now? Dios mío. Where do I start? Breathe in, breathe out, and just coordinate. *[She looks at the audience anxiously]* You are gonna have to help me scan her whole life again. *[She gathers herself, opens a book, and places it in the scanning machine.]* Let's start with Book 1: Gabriela Mistral's childhood at her school in El Valle del Elqui.

Gabriela Mistral's real name was Lucila Godoy Alcayaga. She was born in 1889 in a little rural town in the northern part of Chile, and now we are going to go and meet one of the mean classmates she had to deal with at her rural school in El *Valle del Elqui*.

[The actor playing the Creator becomes a little girl. She touches and smells pieces of colored paper. She realizes she is being observed]

THE MEAN GIRL: Hi... Do you like my pieces of paper? Son lindas! Oh wait a second. Am I speaking English right now? Wow! *[She tries to pronounce these words multiple times]* Hamburger, hamburger, hamburger, cow, chaos, cow, chaos *[To the audience]* Can you understand what I am saying? I don't know how it is happening, but it is happening. I love my paper. Lucila or Gabriela, or whatever you call her, took this paper from me. She is one of my classmates here at the little school in El Valle del Elqui. *[To the audience]* Do you know where that is? *[No answers from the audience. The Mean Girl starts dancing as if she was dancing Cueca, Chile's national dance. She recites this poem while dancing]*

In the lovely Valley of Chile
two weathers blend together;
it's heroic and it's gentle,
as old Homer was.

[To the audience again] And now, do you know where Valle del Elqui is? *[No answer from the audience again]* Oh Dios. This country. Never mind. Well, this paper was supposed to be mine, but Gabriela stole it from me! She said her sister gave it to her. But that's a lie. This paper is mine! Thank God the headmistress kicked her out of the school, so that weirdo won't be sitting with me anymore. *[She starts throwing balls of paper to an imaginary Gabriela in the audience]* Ladrona! Ladrona! Ratera! ¡Andate! Mala clase! Eres una débil mental! You are feeble-minded!

[Her braids and headband fall to the ground. The Mean Girl disappears. Now it is the Creator who starts reorganizing the books as if she was in a valley of books]

THE CREATOR: Gabriela was expelled from her school after these accusations, and she never came back to the formal education system. But her curious mind found shelter in a local library. With discipline, she taught herself to write and became a teacher herself. There, surrounded

by mountains, La Cordillera de Los Andes, and mountains of books, she discovered the writing of Gabriel D'Annunzio and Frédéric Mistral. *[To the audience]* Do you know who they are? *[no answer from the audience]* Did you ever go to school? *[Irritated]* **Gabriel D'Annunzio** and **Frédéric Mistral** are writers who inspired her pen name: **Gabriela Mistral**. Gabriela found shelter in these books, and they were her motivation to write. And, of course, love, or the lack of love, was part of her poetry. Let's scan our next book Gabriela's Painful Love. *[The Creator places another book on the scanning machine and invites the audience to make the same scanning sound as she did earlier, "Yiuuuu"]* Now we'll meet one of Gabriela Mistral's first lovers: Romelio Ureta.

[The Creator becomes Romelio Ureta]

ROMELIO URETA *[Always galán]:* I met Gabriela when she was a rural schoolteacher in Northern Chile. *[He addresses a woman in the audience as if she was Gabriela]* She speaks poetry. When she talks everything seems celestial, even the dust and the rocks of the mountains. I see her writing poems and letters to me. *[He starts seducing another audience member]* La veo en mi memoria, asi como tu... joven, alta, con la mirada ausente, inteligente, gentil. But, I couldn't love her enough. I had to marry another woman, one that my brother chose for me. *[He sees Gabriela in the distance]* No, no, no, no, no. Stop! Don't look at me Gabriela! I can't look you in the eyes. The shame, me duele.

I am ashamed of my sad mouth,
My harsh voice, my rough knees.
When you looked at me and came to me
I knew myself poor, felt myself naked.

[Romelio starts placing his head on the scanning machine. He is going to kill himself. A buzzer sound goes off and stops him from going all the way down to touch the scanning machine glass. Romelio vanishes. Now, it is the Creator again]

THE CREATOR: Oh sorry! I almost forgot: trigger warning. I am not sure how to tell you this part of the story because yes it is a sensitive topic, but that's life. *[The Creator takes Romelio's clothes off and places them on the floor]* This is the part where Romelio commits suicide. Depressed, overwhelmed by debt, and accused of stealing money, Romelio Ureta, one of Gabriela's first lovers, killed himself. Gabriela didn't just cry his death with tears. She was not like me: I lost almost 70% of the water in my body just crying after ending a very long relationship a few years ago. But! I don't want to take about myself! No, Romelio's death was the painful but fertile soil for one of Gabriela Mistral's most famous poems, The Sonnets of Death.

[The Creator grabs a book with all Gabriela's poems in it and reads these few verses to the audience as if she was reading a short story to children]

I will lay you in the sunny earth with the
sweetness of a mother for her sleeping child,
and the earth must be the soft cradle
to receive your broken childlike body.

Me alejaré cantando mis venganzas hermosas,
¡porque a ese hondor recóndito la mano de
Ninguna bajará a disputarme tu puñado de huesos!

You know what? Let's forget about romantic love, too depressing. *[The Creator takes another book and scans it]* Let's move on and scan our next book: La Maternidad. Motherhood. The sweet flame of her life. *[The Creator invites the audience to make the sound of the scanning machine "Yiuuuu"]*. Now, we need to meet Yin Yin, who was her nephew, or... her son?

[The Creator becomes Yin Yin little boy]

YIN YIN little boy: Hola, como están? *[His football ball falls from his arms. He looks at it and looks back at the audience; then he addresses an audience member]* Hi! do you know how to play football? *[Maybe the audience member says, "yes," or maybe they say, "no"]* Really? Oh no,

wait. I am not talking about your American football, that weird slow thing YOU in this country put in a big bowl or a super bowl with Rihanna and stuff. No, no that football. I am talking about real football, the one all the rest of the world calls football because we play it with our feet.

[To another audience member] Hi, do you know how to count?

[Audience member says, "yes"] Okay, so you are gonna count every time I hit the ball. I am going to teach you how to play football. I am very good at this.

[The audience member counts in English 1,2,3] No, no, no, wrong, wrong, wrong. You have to do it in Spanish because I play real football, so it has to be in Spanish. Do you know how to count in Spanish? *[Audience member says, "yes," or maybe, "no." In any case they start counting while Yin Yin hits the ball]* Uno, dos, tres, cuatro... Veinte, cuarenta, cincuenta. Gané. I won!

[He gets exhausted and approaches the audience member who was counting for him] I like you. You won a prize. I'll give you Gabriela's poems for free *[He starts taking paper planes with Gabriela's poems written on them out of his backpack and throws them to the audience. Some audience members start reading them]*. But don't read them now. I am playing with you. Ohh I forgot to tell you my name. Hi again, my name is Juan Miguel, but Gabriela calls me Yin Yin, which means *fiel*, which means loyal in your language *[He means English]*.

[He takes a drawing of a buda and puts it on stage and sticks a picture of Gabriela's head on it] I call Gabriela, "Buda" because every time I come back from school, I find her sitting in the same place I left her, always writing on a piece of paper over her knees.

[Beat]

[To the audience] Can I tell you a secret? *[He checks if someone is coming or hearing outside the space]*. Some people say that I am not just Gabriela's nephew and that she adopted me. Some people say that I am her real son. I heard people saying that my real father is French. Oh! wouldn't that be fun? *Bonjour Mademoiselle. Je sui Miguel.* That would be cool. But who knows? It could be possible because mamá Gabriela has been sent by the Chilean government to different countries. She is a diplomat, who knows what that means, but she has lived in different places in Europe. She is wandering, *errante*. She is a **Buda errante, a wandering Buda** I like to say. And, and, and I love it, love it, love it here in Europe. But. It is not safe anymore because *[he makes war sounds]*... because of the war. So, wandering Buda, I mean, mamá Gabriela and I, are going to Brazil.

[He dances a Brazilian song, dances with the Buda, and invites the audience to clap. They have fun for a moment. A timer goes off; the party stops; Yin Yin little boy vanishes. Now it is the Creator who comes back again]

THE CREATOR: Oh no! Stop the party. What time is it? Oh my God. I have 10 minutes left to turn this assignment in! I need to hurry up. Oh mi Dios, we really get distracted with motherhood, don't we? Well, when you are in your thirties, and the biological clock starts clicking, you start asking yourself whether you are mother material. And you know what, I think I am. But I have decided not to have kids. It is too late for me now. I have a passion for things that don't bring me money like acting or journalism. "I love being poor," my mother says. And that's right, I can barely take care of myself. I can't fit a kid into this *[She gestures her life, which is as disastrous as the literal mess on stage at this point]*. But I don't want to talk about me! I have to turn this assignment in. So, different from me, Gabriela really wanted to be a mother, and Yin Yin filled her life with love and purpose. In 1940 they moved to Brazil. And here we need to jump on the story into the future because I am late with this assignment. In Brazil, Gabriela lost something that can't probably be described with words. To know about it we need to go and meet Yin Yin again, now as a teenager. Next book: The forever pain. *[The Creator invites the audience to make the sound of the scanning machine "Yiuuuu."]*

[The Creator becomes Yin Yin teenager]

YIN YIN teenager: Life in Brazil hasn't been easy for me. Some classmates at school bully me because I live in a nice house with my mother. She makes a decent salary. But we are not rich. She works a lot even though sometimes she is very sick. I have so much rage in me. I have spent most of my life in boarding schools. I am tired of being alone. *[He picks a paper airplane from the backpack he used to wear when he was a kid]*. I wanted to be a pilot, but now I am 17 years old, Yin Yin, a boy with no cause, no history, no family, and no dreams. Who is my father? Who is my mother? *[He approaches the Buda drawing with Gabriela's head attached to it and leaves the paper airplane by its side]* Where is home? I am missing so many things.

[To different audience members] What are you missing? [He listens and responds to the audience's answers] I am missing so much. I'll do better by leaving things the way they are now.

[The voice of the Creator's nephew starts playing. He is reading in Spanish the letter Yin Yin left to Gabriela before he killed himself. While the audience listens to the voice of the Creator's nephew, Yin Yin teenager writes the words "Mamá Gabriela" on the ground or the drawing of the Buda. This is Yin Yin's letter, which the Creator's nephew is reading in Spanish: "Querida mamá: Creo que hago mejor en abandonar las cosas como están. No he sabido vencer. Espero que en otro mundo exista más felicidad. Cariñosamente, tu Yin Yin. Un abrazo a Palma." When the voice of the Creator's nephew stops, Yin Yin teenager repeats some parts of the letter now in English]

YIN YIN teenager: Dear mamá, I think I do better by leaving things the way they are now. I haven't been able to defeat. I hope that, in another world, there is more happiness. *[He goes to the scanning machine]* With love, your Yin Yin.

[Yin Yin teenager starts placing his head on the glass of the scanning machine. He is about to kill himself. He stops. He vanishes. Now it is the Creator again talking to the audience].

THE CREATOR: Yin Yin...And please, we don't need a trigger warning for this! Because life doesn't do *[The Creator imitates the buzzer sound]* "Gehhhh" when things are about to fall apart. Yin Yin poisoned himself with arsenic when he was 17 years old. Gabriela never accepted the idea that his son had killed himself. She insisted he was murdered. Two years after Yin Yin's death, Gabriela won the Nobel Prize in Literature, in 1945. But people said that after Yin Yin's death, Gabriela was nothing but a living ghost.

[The Creator grabs the book with all Gabriela's poems in it and reads these few verses to the audience as if she was reading a short story to children]

Still it feels strange to me
to not section your oranges,
not eat up the bread you left,
and not unlock and lock
your house with my keys.

Still I haven't got back
my body, my walk.
Still I'm with you,
Stopped, fixed in your trance,
Both of us stalled, as on a bridge,
You undecided to go on,
I unwilling to go back.

THE CREATOR: The little voice you just heard was Agustin reading the letter Yin Yin wrote to Gabriela before killing himself. Agustin is my five-year-old nephew and the kid I love the most. I imagine the love mothers have for their kids must be something similar to the love I feel for Agustin. He and I use to make paper planes when I was in Chile. *[The Creator picks up the paper plane Yin Yin teenager left by the Buda drawing earlier and holds it]* He would try to make them fly over and over again, and I would celebrate each one of his attempts. "Sí mi niño hermoso. Muy bien!" There is no morning in which I don't think of him, whether he is happy or sad, whether he is playing or fighting. I close my eyes and imagine that my love is like a ray of light that crosses the whole continent, gets to him and protects him there, at the edge of the world. In my country. The long and narrow Chile.

*[The Creator throws the paper plane as if she was sending it to her nephew in Chile.
Darkness.]*

END OF PLAY.

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