

JEANNE RUCAR DE BUÑUEL

PROLOGUE

MEMORIES OF A WOMAN WITHOUT A
PIANO

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Jeanne's house is a quiet place in the middle of the roary Félix Cuevas and Insurgentes. Behind the metal gate, there is a brick house built thirty-five years ago.

Inside you can still feel the presence of Luis Buñuel. The "bar", a little room on the ground floor, has everything arranged just the way he liked it: it's the place where Jeanne feels the most comfortable. On the upper floor there is Buñuel's room and study. The room is Spartan: a wooden floor, windows without curtains, a bedside table with an alarm clock from the forties and an armchair. The study is the same, but with a desk in the center and a bookcase that covers an entire wall. The window overlooks a terrace that interacts with Jeanne's room. On the wall hangs a photo of Jeanne in an original frame: her face –beautiful– behind small iron doors that imitate an Arab or Sevillian balcony; next to it there is a tiny lantern. And this framework shows Jeanne's life with Buñuel, or Buñuel's attitude towards HIS wife: possession, jealousy, *apartheid*.

"Juana –her mother-in-law told her–, you are an angel that came down from heaven to take care of my son." It has not been easy to be the wife of such an extraordinary man, it never was.

There were two Luises: a public and a private one. He first began scandalizing with his first film *Un chien andalou*; He was a member of the surrealist group, whose ideals, to put it in Buñuel's words, were "Not to create a new literary, plastic, or even philosophical movement, but to blow up society, to change life itself..."; still he obeyed the rules of society by marrying civilly. Everything was allowed in his movies, but in his house no profanity or vulgarity was allowed. The woman was to stay in the house to dedicate herself solely to him and his children.

The house was his den: the doors were open to HIS friends, but to those of his wife and children, they remained closed: "They invade my privacy".

Buñuel never told Jeanne about his political ideas, or what moved him to write his scripts, nor did he talk to her about money or problems. Jeanne was his child-wife. He protected and loved her.

Their two children live abroad: Juan Luis in Paris and Rafael in Los Angeles. But Jeanne does not live alone: she is accompanied by two maids and León, who always comes out to greet me wagging his tail. Furthermore, Jeanne lives happily. She has a *joie de vivre* that gives her a sense of humor. When I met her, she greeted me with a shaky hand and immediately began to tell me things. She smokes – according to her Victor Hugo stated that "People who don't smoke are not worth it"–. And at ten o'clock in the morning she offers visitors tequila instead of coffee.

Jeanne has been losing her eyesight, which bothers her. Apart from her eye problem, Jeanne, at eighty-one years old, is in splendid health. She retains the agility of gymnastics, gets up and down, walks an hour a day, and she is aware of what is happening in the world. "Oh, how I would like to be young, to be seventy years old." she exclaims. She is a young woman of eighty-one years old.

Their marriage lasted fifty years, plus eight in engagement; from 1925, the year they met, until 1983. Jeanne lived for Luis and continues to live with him: "When I wake up in the morning and go to the bathroom, as I cross the hall, I notice the brightness of the open door of his room. My heart shrinks and I say to myself: 'It's true, Luis is dead'."

Because of her blindness, she no longer likes to go out. Life is paradoxical: now that Luis is no longer there to take up her time, or to prevent her from developing her talents, her lack of vision forces her to remain secluded.

Jeanne kept her skills in a trunk so as not to overshadow her husband. She was always faithful to him. She obeyed him and in exchange, Buñuel

couldn't live without her; without the certainty of her presence, always accessible to him, and of her good humor. A man of overflowing fantasy and of dreams sewed upon celluloid tapes; a man of private life, so private that he turned his house into an airtight castle and Jeanne to his lady prisoner.

Thanks to a woman like Jeanne, Buñuel could be BUÑUEL.

What's interesting about these memoirs is the contrast between the man who gives orders and commands, and the woman who keeps silent; who accepts and submits *voluntarily*. The contrast between public and private life, the frivolous and permissive world of cinema and between the moral and stern atmosphere of their home.

Perhaps if Jeanne had freed herself from Luis Buñuel she would have managed to stand out as a painter, sculptor or pianist. If Jeanne had said "Enough!" and would have ended the marriage, maybe she would have lost the joy that it reflects along the way. She regrets not having studied medicine, and also she regrets her lack of assertiveness. What she doesn't regret is having dedicated her life to being the wife of Luis Buñuel: "I loved him with all my heart".

Marisol Martin del Campo

Note to the edition: due to the loss of vision suffered by Jeanne Rucar, these memoirs, published in 1990, were made possible thanks to the transcription work of the Mexican writer Marisol Martin del Campo. Jeanne Rucar passed away on the 4th of November 1994 in Ciudad, Mexico.

Second note to the edition: due to the inability to find a copy in English, Kasper Köhlen, a filmmaker and a great fan of Buñuel, translated this book from Spanish to English himself. He is neither a translator nor a speaker of the Spanish language, which could explain possible impurities of the translation. With the help of Julia Forcada and Google Translate, he translated this book.

MEMOIRS OF A WOMAN WITHOUT A PIANO

FIRST PART

CHILDHOOD (1908)

I was born on the 29th of February, 1908. My father registered me with the date of February 28, so that means I am now twenty years old. I was born in the dining room of the house. Mama was alone because papa went out to look for the doctor and I had no patience. He never wanted to tell me the details of how I came into the world, as if he was scared or had pain to do so. But apparently it was an easy delivery. At birth I was put in the clean laundry bin and settled in an armchair. My father and the doctor did not take long to arrive. They were nervous. The doctor asked mama:

– Where is the mother in labor, madam?

– My mother answered calmly: “It is me and the baby is in that basket.

My presence caused great perplexity to my brothers; not even Georgette, my older sister of seventeen years old, had been aware of the pregnancy. At the beginning of the century people didn’t yet talk about “it”. In fact: it was considered bad taste if you did. Pregnant women tried to hide their bellies under enormous shawls and spend nine months of waiting and remaining unnoticed. Maurice, twelve years old and Gaston of ten years old were surprised to see me when they came back home from school. Gaston asked:

– Where did that girl come from?

– The doctor brought her here. Doctors bring babies in their black briefcases.

He got furious:

– Then all babies that the doctor brings us should be boys! We will not get along!”

My first memory is of my father. At night he turned in an elegant man, dressed in a jacket. He would disappear and go to the opera; mama didn’t like the opera so she stayed at home.

Sometimes my father took me to see the magicians. I still like them

today. I was holding his hand without daring to speak. I was very shy, just like him: a quiet man who disliked arguing or raising his voice. My mother was the one yelling at home. Father had to give her his full salary. He usually didn’t even have money to buy his cigarettes. The poor man had to suffer a lot because of her character. She was very severe on her children; very harsh with me, as I seemed to be a lying girl. She adored her brother and Laure, her niece, who was the only person who she went out with. Laure got married and had a daughter: Mimi. She often came to visit us with Mimi. I was much older than her, but I had my fun pretending that she was my doll. Who would have known that, for various reasons, we would both end up living in Mexico?

I barely remember Grandma Séraphine, papa’s mother. I do vaguely remember her funeral. I was about three years old. We followed the procession when I suddenly began to run after the coffin yelling: “Grandma, grandma!” I wanted to hug her and see her again.

My family is from Lille, in the north of France. Gray skies and rain predominate there. The houses match the climate: they are narrow, gray, with sagging eave roofs, crowded together. The streets are cobbled and without trees. The people there are cheerful, hospitable and open-minded. They like to get together and eat and drink. Perhaps they do so to forget about the horrible weather. The only beautiful building was La Savonnerie: a soap factory built at the end of the 19th century that produced excellent soaps, its specialty being black soap. The Lempereurs were the owners. They were my mother’s family. There is a legend about the origin of the Lempereurs: when Napoleon passed through Lille, he noticed a silly local girl. Silly but pretty. She was tall and blonde. The girl gave birth to a little dark haired boy. “Who is the father?” They asked. “*C’est le fils de l’empereur*” (It’s the emperors’ son), was her answer. As the boy did not look like the family –they were all tall and blond– they

believed her and they registered him with the surname Lempereur.

We lived in La Madeleine, five kilometers from Lille. You could go to Lille by tram, as it passed in front of our house. In winter times it was very cold. Before we got into bed, my mother ironed our sheets to warm them up. After the war, in Paris, since there was no money to buy woolen sweaters, we put newspapers in the lining of our coats so that we would not catch the flu.

My father was an accountant. He worked in a factory. My mother was dedicated to the household (what dishes she cooked!) Georgette went to college. Maurice and Gaston went to primary school. The dining room was the center of our house and in the evening, when the table was gas-lit, the family gathered around it. Papa read the newspaper, mama sewed, and my brothers did their homework. Life was different from now. We had time. No rush, radio, television, electricity or telephone. It is incredible how all these things change the quality of life. They fill us with a constant noise of foreign voices and faces, of world news and other distractions that prevent us from being with family, from talking or from reading. They accelerate the rhythm of the days and of life itself. Before the war, we never saw a carriage without horses. The tram that came from Lille was pulled by mules.

We had a maid: Maria Lost and Found, we used to call her, because she left the orphanage. At the time, because of my age, I thought she was big, but she must have been thirteen or fourteen years old. She was so small that mama had some ladders made by the carpenter so that she could reach the stove and charcoal burner. That is all I remember about Maria.

The war of 14 came. The "Great War" (it was called that until 1939). It was said that the Germans would take the men to forced labor in Germany, so my father left Lille with my two brothers. The women stayed

home: mama, Georgette, and me. The Germans occupied Lille three days after my father and brothers left. The atmosphere in La Madeleine and in Lille was one of fear. The enemy was in our city, among us. We had to live with these intruders whose boots echoed on the walls of the houses. "They are savages. Their cruelty is perverse. Watch over your daughters, Constance." My mother warned us: "Do not approach them, do not speak to them. You, Jeanne, do not take sweets from them. They may be poisoned." When a German officer knocked on our door, I thought my heart was going to break like a clock would break if you wound it up too much. It was beating and beating. "What if they came for me? –I feared– since my brothers are not..." I hid behind the curtains in the living room. My mother, before opening the door, took a breath and stood up.

– Good morning, madame –greeted the officer in impeccable French–. Our troops need to be housed and fed. Your house is large. How many men can you accommodate?

– I would prefer not to have strangers in the house, as I have two daughters.

– If you don't tell me how many you can accommodate, madame, I'll be the one to assign the soldiers here.

– If there is no other remedy, I will receive only one soldier. Only one.

Throughout the war a soldier lived with us, but not always the same one. I must admit that they behaved correctly and discreetly. Mama barely spoke to them. They tried to be helpful. We had a washing machine: a large wooden barrel where the clothes were thrown in. Heavy shovels were needed to get them out again. The Germans that stayed with us would help my mother. One of them became my friend. In his spare time he would run after me and when he caught me he would throw me into the air. He knew French:

–I miss my children –he told me, stroking my hair–. How would they be

doing? Believe me girl, we don't like to kill. I would prefer to stay home, grow vegetables and watch my children grow. In peace.

The days were interrupted by the wailing sound of sirens announcing enemy planes. We spent our days running to and within basements, waiting for the thud and the slight tremor of the earth as the bombs went off.

One morning, in front of the house, the German soldiers were lined up as a lieutenant was reviewing them. We watched it from the door. The lieutenant stopped in front of an older man who had one button unbuttoned. After yelling at him, he slapped him. A second later my mother shouted:

– *Vive la France!*

When the troops withdrew, the lieutenant approached my mother and said:

– Madame, why did you shout that?

– Because in France, monsieur, an officer would never dare to slap an old soldier, who just arrived from the front, for so little.

The war taught me the meaning of the word *panic*. One Sunday we were at mass when, without any warning, a bomb fell inside the church. I was six years old. I felt fear: "Then even in his house God can't protect us." I thought. I ran away like a frightened rabbit, not knowing where to go and unable to stop running. I was lost for I don't know how many hours.

Near Lille there was a village destroyed by bombing. My cousin Laure was a nurse and she went to help. Several bombs fell and Laure saw how one of them wounded a child. She carried him on her shoulders to take him to the German Red Cross. As the bombs kept falling, Laure ran to get there as soon as possible.

– Why do you bring this child here? They asked.

Along the way, a bomb had blown the boy's head off, but Laure hadn't

noticed.

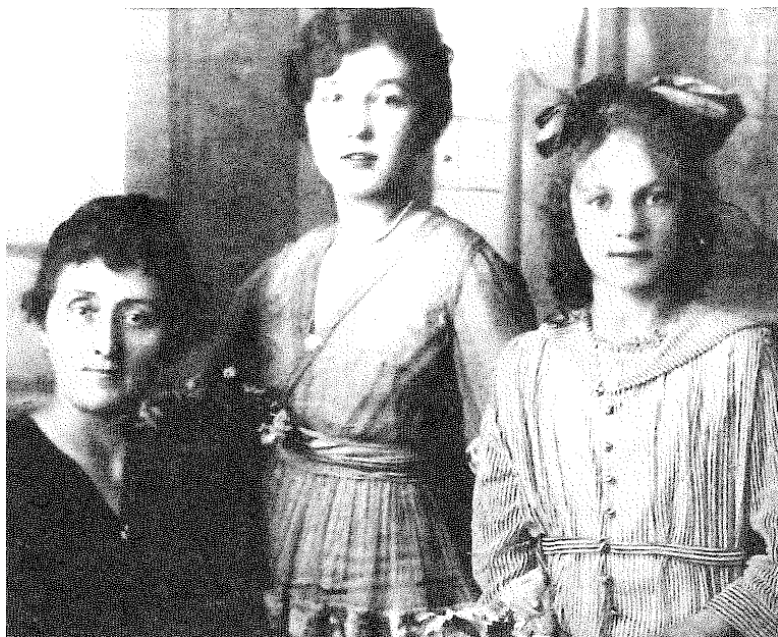
I grew up, from the age of six to ten, in the midst of bombs, smoke and destruction. Even playing in the garden wasn't safe. One afternoon, in which I amused myself looking at the clouds and imagining sheep, the sky was filled with English and German planes; I didn't have time to take shelter at home. A piece of shrapnel hit me in the thigh. It was a sharp blow, a quick pain. But at least the wound was small. The scar is still visible.

We were hungry. Our cat Gigi served me as a doll and mainstay. At dinnertime I would manage to steal something from my plate and give it to him. Gigi always waited for me at the same place: by the living room window, where the sun went down. One afternoon I couldn't find him. I looked for him under the sofa, in the kitchen, in my room and in the garden. Gigi seemed to be gone. I started to cry. My sister encouraged me: "Maybe he's in love! When cats fall in love they go to the street looking for a girlfriend. He will be back, Jeanne. Don't cry."

Later we found out that the neighbors ate him. I never greeted them again.

Someone told mama that in a town near Lille there were potatoes, lettuce and, hopefully, eggs. We decided to go on an excursion the following Sunday. We were walking on the banks of the river Deûle when we saw some soldiers on the other bank. They started shooting at us. Mama threw me onto the ground. I slipped on the wet soil and fell into the water. The river was not deep, but for my height, it was. When I tried to get out, I sank deeper and swallowed water. Neither my mother nor Georgette knew how to swim. They managed to hold hands and pull me out. Ever since then, water scares me.

In the summer of 1918 the war ended. And we had won it! Despite the



Mama, my sister Georgette and me.



My father and my brother Gaston.

destroyed houses, all of Lille was partying. My mothers' only thought was of reuniting with my father. She knew that he lived in Versailles. Reaching him was an odyssey: France was in ruins, direct access from Lille to Paris was impossible. It would be a long trip.

Mama and Georgette took a long time to prepare the luggage. "What are we going to take with us?" "We will need the iron." "They will rob the house when they see it's unoccupied." They opened and closed drawers, folded clothes into suitcases, changed their minds, hung them up again. They seemed so busy that I tried to help them. I put everything I saw into one suitcase: "Girl, go play over there. You're in the way!"

When the day of the trip arrived, the three of us were nervous. We said goodbye to friends and family and got on the train. We would cross Belgium and Germany in order to reach Switzerland.

At the age of eight, a girl's head is full of fantasy; mine was a mixture of emotion of going back to my dad, whom I hardly remembered (I spent four years without seeing him), of hugging my brothers and the adventure of the trip in general. I imagined that the new countries would be in different colors than Lille, with tiny people and spherical houses. The war was over and the elders infected me with their happiness. In reality I did not understand the word PEACE. In the world I grew up in, shortage of food, bombs raining down, and whispering as soon as the Germans passed us by were normal. The older people now smiled as they expected better times, but for me, everything was still the same.

The trip took several days. Mama had me by her side, not allowing me to wander around in the train. But I didn't care: I was by the window as the world paraded before my eyes.

I got sad when we passed through the villages: rows of recently freed French prisoners, who looked like beggars in dirt and rags, were looking at us. When the train passes through the towns, it slows down. We then

opened the window and threw out food, and then they would fight to get it and devour it without chewing.

I was glad to see the countryside: the mountains in the distance, the crossing of the valleys and the whistle of the train; we were going towards papa!

In Genève we were received by the Red Cross. They gave me chocolate and when I tasted it I thought: "If peace means chocolate, then long live peace!" We changed from the German train to a French train. The next stop would be Paris. Suddenly the passengers began to applaud.

– Why are you clapping, mama?

– We just crossed the border, we are in France now.

As we approached Paris the people talked loudly and laughed out loud. The only thing I saw in Paris was the train station. We immediately went to Versailles.

Mama knew papa's address. We got there by taxi. Before knocking on the door we straightened our hair and tried to straighten our clothes. Papa opened it and almost fainted when he saw us. I saw how they hugged each other, strong, strong. I felt their emotion.

– I didn't expect you so soon! How skinny you are! Jeanne, how you have grown! Come, give papa a kiss.

Before that stranger I had taken refuge behind the skirts of mama.

Georgette went to buy baguettes. On the way back she ate them all: she started with one bite and then another, and another. She could just not resist the smell of freshly baked bread. For three years we had not tasted white bread. That night my sister had indigestion, so we had to call a doctor.

And Gaston? And Maurice? They were not at home. They were French soldiers: Maurice was drafted in 1915, two years before the war ended. Military service lasted four years back then. Gaston was in Jerusalem and

Maurice was on the German front.

Of the armistice I remember the parade of the North Americans, who threw chocolates and chewing gum from their tanks; in return they received flowers and kisses. It was celebrated for three days. It was all dancing and dancing in the streets. It happened in October 1918.

We lived in Versailles for a short time. Papa and Georgette found work and we moved to Paris, to avenue Gambetta, at the corner of the rue Henri Dubouillon.

Maurice came home because of a lung disease. The Germans had released toxic gases: mustard gas that attacked the armpits and in extreme cases causing horrible sores; another that caused suffocation and blindness; and one whose consequences were nausea, sneezing and vomiting. Hundreds of thousands of men suffered from its effects, including Maurice. My brother was tall, and he and I were the only ones with blue eyes at home. He liked to play with me: he tickled me or carried me on his shoulders. His good mood brought joy to the house. At night he didn't sleep well because of his coughing. He didn't want to talk to us about the war: "It's over. We have to forget." He fell in love with a cheerful (like himself) girl and he soon moved in with her. My parents commented on the pleasure it gave them to see Maurice happy: "Perhaps this young woman relieves his lungs." This seemed not to be so. Maurice died in 1919 at the age of twenty-three. My mother's reaction terrified me: "God doesn't exist since he lets young people die." She took down the crosses and threw them in the fireplace, along with the bible and other religious images. She set them all on fire.

We tried to get Gaston out of the military hospital where he was recovering but they didn't allow us to do so. They did not release him until the end of his military service. My mother sent him north to his family in Escaudain, hoping the country air would help him to recover. The

poor thing was afraid that he would die too. Gaston not only recovered but also fell in love with Berta, our first cousin. Mama did everything to prevent the marriage: Berta was a widow and much older than him. They married, but none of us attended the wedding. A year later they moved to Paris and had a daughter: Denise. My mother always refused to see them or receive them at her house. Gaston, of course, was allowed to come if he was by himself.

During the war I didn't go to school. It was Georgette who taught me to read and write. My parents decided that the time had come for me to attend classes. School scared me: although I was the oldest and the tallest, my level of education was equivalent to that of children three years younger than me. How ashamed I was to be the silly giraffe of the class! (I was a very tall girl with big feet. French shoes gave me calluses; my mother used to check the newspaper to find outlets where they sold English shoes.) I was in school for four years. I didn't like it. I had difficulty learning to live along girls my age, as I was used to being the only girl among adults. At home I was told, from a young age: "Jeanne, what a fool you are!" They kept repeating this to me up to when I reached the age of eighteen. I thought that I was more shy than stupid, but at school it was too horrible to realize that I was stupid too. The best of those years was the piano; as they'd see my progress, my parents bought me one.

The school was run by nuns. They thought us catechism, morality and sacred history classes. Between the age of twelve and thirteen they prepared the girls who were to make their first communion. At home we were not practicing. Since Maurice's death, we hadn't set a foot in church, but they understood my desire to do so. One day they accompanied me. I wore the medal with great affection until one night Luis ripped it off me and threw it in the Seine, but that's another story.

I did not want to continue studying.

– Daughter, you can't stop studying!"

– I swear to you that I'm unhappy at school."

Georgette was a secretary at Irene Poppart's gymnastics academy:

– Why don't you seriously dedicate yourself to gymnastics?

It was the first moment that I felt at home. The gymnast companions and I have something in common: the love for gymnastics. In the academy one was neither stupid nor intelligent; one was only movement and rhythm. I was lucky to have madame Poppart as my teacher. The lessons lasted four hours. In addition to gymnastics, we learned anatomy to get to know our bones and muscles, and be able to get the most out of our bodies. We danced at the opera, in some theaters and even toured around the provinces.

– I was still incurably shy. At the end of the courses it was necessary to pass public and oral exams. Madame Poppart warned the teacher:

– It is better for Jeanne Rucar not to take the oral exam. She is so self-conscious that she will be unable to respond properly in public.

– I'm sorry, mademoiselle. No exceptions.

The teacher asked me:

– Mademoiselle Rucar, could you tell me what a nerve is?

I got up knowing that I was blushing, and with great poise I replied with the first thing that came to my mind:

– A nerve is a ringing string. When it is pulled, it sounds.

– Very well, mademoiselle.

My companions did not dare to laugh. The man was lenient. I passed.

The 1924 Olympics were approaching. At the academy, there was hardly any space for breathing: madame Poppart would select the students who would form part of the French Olympic team. I was chosen.

We would work hard and train eight hours a day. The athletes did not follow special diets, like they do now, and the French participants –being the hosts– slept in their respective houses.

I got the bronze medal and Madame Poppart got the gold. Time erases some sensations; in my memory there are no traces of what I felt when I was awarded (yes, as in a dream I relive the images of me competing without any nerves), nor of the emotion I felt when I saw the hoisted French flag. What I do remember (and feel) however, is the impression that Johnny Weismüller made on me: when I saw him, I floated in the air. He was handsome! His smile made you feel jingle bells in your soul. It made you want to be in his arms and imagine what it would be like to receive a kiss from him. All the girls of 1924 were in love with Johnny. I met him and they even took a picture of us together –unfortunately I lost it–. I was lucky that the pool where I trained –I won the gold medal in swimming at the Olympics' contest– was close to home.

I have another sensation of the Olympics: some of the companions and I rode on horseback at the opening of the games. Of course, we rode sideways, with long dresses and the wind raised my skirt...

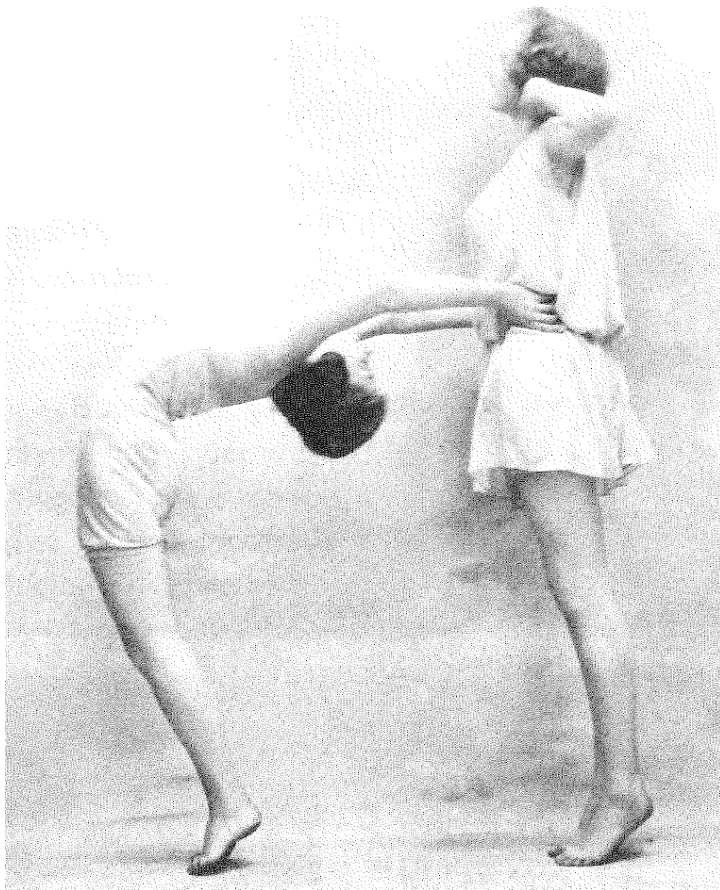
Another anecdote: president Millerand attended the gymnastics contest. I told my friends:

– I bet you that, during the closing ceremony, I will be sitting next to the president.

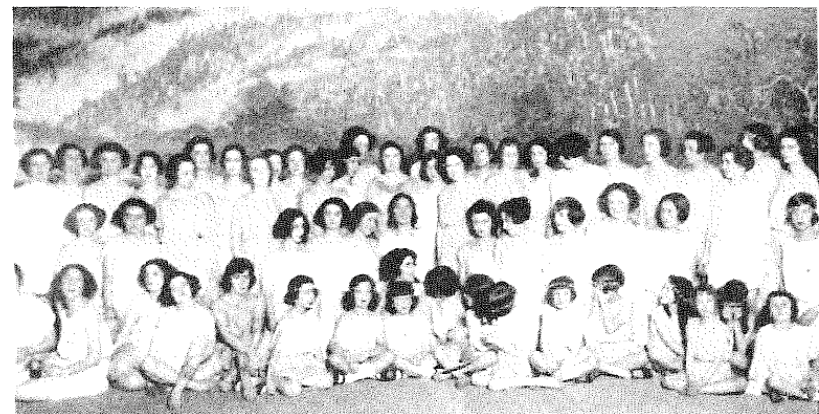
– Jeanne, you're crazy. You're so shy...

I don't remember how I managed to do it, but I was at his side. I won the bet.

Then the Olympics were over. With Johnny Weismüller, all the fuss and ceremonies went away. Paris became Paris again and life went back to normal. The classes in gymnastics, anatomy and piano continued. At the age of seventeen I started teaching private classes in gymnastics and also



With a friend from gymnastics class.



Above: Johnny Weismüller at the 1924 Olympics. Below: at the academy of Irene Poppart, 1923.

in a school for communist children in Meduon, on the outskirts of Paris. One morning one of my eight-year-old students raises a clenched fist:

– Comrade teacher, may I go pee?

I replied with my fist also raised:

– Yes, my comrade. Go to the bathroom.

In the building where we lived, our neighbors became great friends of us. Doctor Moschos was Greek, and his wife was German. They had ten children. The youngest being Hélène, who was my age, and we became inseparable friends.

Another Hélène (surname Tasnon) lived nearby. She was also a student of madame Poppart and taught at Meudon. Returning to Paris by train, before going home, we headed to Place de la République to eat *choucroute*. It makes my mouth water.

Rafaela, my mother's Spanish dressmaker, became friends with Georgette. She introduced us to Joaquín Peinado, who was a painter. At the end of the twenties, Paris attracted young people from all over Europe who came in search of bohemia, usually lacking resources. Peinado was a friend of another painter, Manolo Ortiz, and of Paquito García Lorca, brother of Federico. Hélène and I used to visit Joaquin in his studio. Peinado, Ortiz and García Lorca often ate at our home. They liked mama's food very much. How they feasted!

Angèle, my mothers' cousin, married Jean Sénechal. They wanted children but, unfortunately, they couldn't. When I was born my parents asked Jean to be my godfather. He gladly agreed. He was a rich man, who lived on his own income. Had I lived in France when he died, I would have inherited the castle of Vaucouleurs, in the south of France. It was not so. When I became eighteen, my parents sent me with Georgette to Genoa to

visit my godfather as a gift. What I remember of the visit is the comment that Jean made to Georgette. I commented on something and my sister, following the customs of the family, exclaimed:

– Jeanne, what a fool you are!

My godfather got angry:

– No Georgette, Jeanne is not stupid. She is smarter than you: she went to school and college. You may be better at spelling and have more knowledge, but that doesn't mean you're smart.

Dear godfather, your words took away my fear of expressing my thoughts out loud.

We were introduced to the viscount (I don't remember his name). We went out once. In Paris he looked for me: he invited me to the theater, the cinema, to eat, to walk through the Bois de Boulogne (always with Georgette as a chaperone). I had a good time with him. He made me feel important: for an eighteen-year-old girl to attract the attention of a thirty-year-old man is flattering. In reality the difference of twelve years is not so great, but it did seem that way for me at that age. That's why the afternoon he asked me: "Will your parents be able to get here within eight days so I can ask for your hand?" I was embarrassed.

On the appointed day, I ran to take refuge in the Moschos' house. Mama lied:

– Jeanne is already engaged. She has a boyfriend.

The viscount left, and I never heard from him again. I missed my chance to become a viscountess.

One of the Moschos' daughters, Myrsine, was the tutor of the princes of Cambodia: she was in charge of receiving the money, paying for the college, etc. The youngest was my age. He fell in love with me. He looked at me in ecstasy; he wanted to marry me. The sad thing is that I don't

remember his name. I do remember his looks: thin, dark, and a little shorter than me. He smoothed his black hair gel, in the style of Rudolph Valentino. His French was perfect:

– Jeanne, I want to talk to your parents. When will they be able to see me?

– Whenever you want. They are always home at night.

He arrived dressed in silk, with a bouquet of flowers for mama. He asked for my hand.

–We are honored to have you –papa responded–. I consider that both you and our daughter are too young to think about something as serious as marriage. You are eighteen years old! Also, what do your parents think?

My prince assured me that he loved me and would make me happy:

– I will know how to show you and to my parents that I’m capable of being Jeanne’s husband.

– We do not doubt it, but we ask you to give it some time.

– Would you allow me to continue visiting your daughter?

– Of course! This is her house.

His elder brother, who would later become King of Cambodia, wrote his parents about his concern that his brother desires to marry a French woman. The royal parents responded by saying that it was simply impossible. So I couldn’t be a princess. I, viscountess and princess, ended up, very happily, being the cook of Luis Buñuel.

Through the Moschos my world had access to the exotic. Myrsine herself was a lady-in-waiting to the wife of the ambassador of some maharaja of India, who gave her a many jewels. The ambassador also ate at the Moschos’ house. Hélène and I were fascinated to accompany him in his car because instead of a hat he wore a magnificent turban. We girls were proud to escort a man who seemed famous to us.

I was innocent and yes, why not, a little silly. Silent films did not attract my attention, except for the love scenes. A neighbor of ours (she was director of Telegraphs, spinster and possessor of divine, long, silky hair. I asked her secret: “I only wash it once a year; I take care of it daily by dusting it with a cotton pad and brushing it a hundred times”). She asked me: “Come on Jeanne, come with me to the movies”. I went from time to time.

One time at noon I bumped into Prince Ritarasi, uncle of my Cambodian lover, on the stairs of the house. He held me and kissed me strongly on the lips. He then kept going down like nothing happened. The world fell to my feet. I ran home to wash my mouth out with the first thing I found: coffee. I rinsed and washed. Full of disgrace, I stormed into the Muschos’ house. Wilhelmine, one of the daughters, was my confidant:

– Wilhelmine, I’m going to... have a child.

– What have you done, Jeanne, my God, are you sure?

– Yes. Prince Ritarasi kissed me on the mouth.

– And?

– And yeah, that’s it.

– Jeanne, you can’t get children from a kiss on the mouth.

– But of course, Wilhelmine; in the movies, they first kiss and then they have a child.

She took out a medical book from her father and explained the sexual act to me. I was quite scared. I found it disgusting and I was disappointed to think that my parents were capable of doing those things. In our home there was no talk of sex. Once, on the subway, a guy showed me his device. Out of the blue, he unzipped his fly and took it out. I got home agitated. In the living room mama and madame Moschos were drinking coffee by the fireplace. I told them what happened. They fell silent for a second: “Come on, Jeanne, go to your room.” Calmly, without

clarifying my doubts, they resumed the conversation.

A year later, Wilhelmine married René, a wonderful twenty-two-year-old boy with completely white hair. I was happy to see them together because they loved each other so much. She would soon find herself in a state of "expectancy"; her daughter was born without problems. She was a chubby and smiling baby. They put all their effort in their baby. Five months later it became ill and died. Wilhelmine got sick: she didn't want to eat, she didn't talk, didn't dress. In vain, her father prescribed her vitamins and walks. René no longer knew what to do to help her.

One Sunday she woke up happy. René heard her sing while she was taking a bath. She had breakfast with appetite. Halfway the morning she asked René: "Please *chéri*, bring me a cake from *Chez Boucon*". The bakery was at the opposite end of the city, but that didn't matter to René. Returning with the cake, he smelled gas as he was by the stairs. He then climbed the steps four at a time. The door of the apartment was not locked. He found Wilhelmine lying on the kitchen table. Dead. She left him a letter: "Forgive me René, I can't live without our daughter."

He took a red rose, that had just opened, and placed it on top of her.

SECOND PART

YOUTH (1925)

As I already said, when we got out of anatomy classes, we liked to visit Joaquín Peinado in his studio. One afternoon we were introduced to Herando Viñes, also a painter, and to Luis Buñuel, who had recently arrived in Paris. Luis was very happy to see three young girls in the studio. He thought we were prostitutes. In Spain, if three girls went out without a chaperone to see an artist in his studio it could only mean one thing. He immediately called Joaquín apart and he proposed in a low voice:

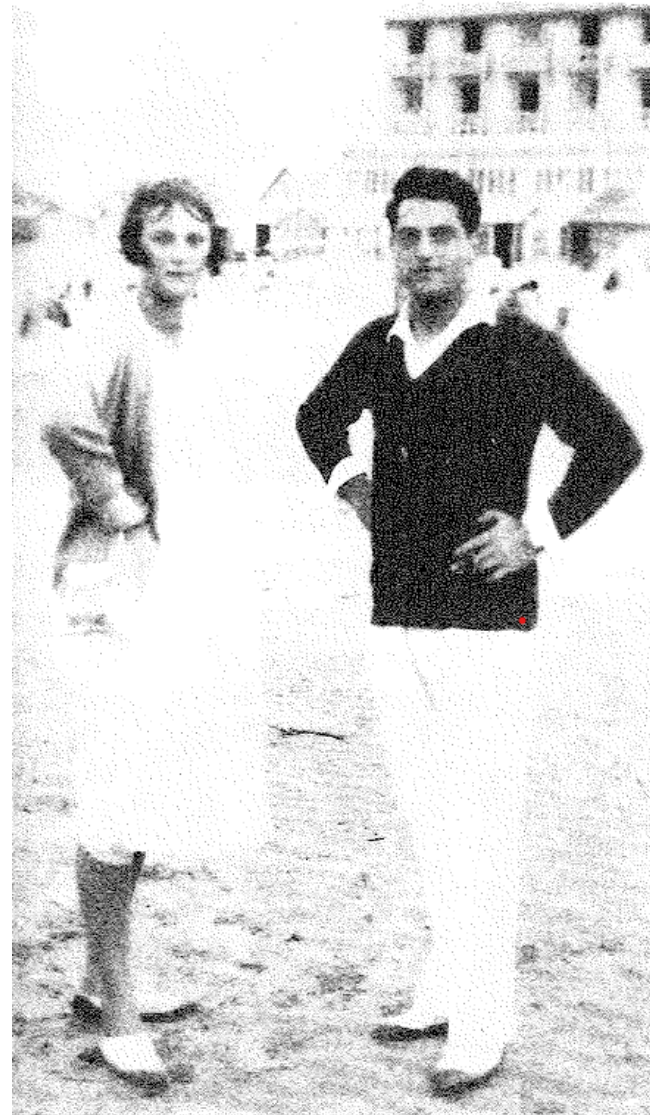
– I have some pills that dissolve in wine and excite women. Let's give it to them.

Joaquín was outraged:

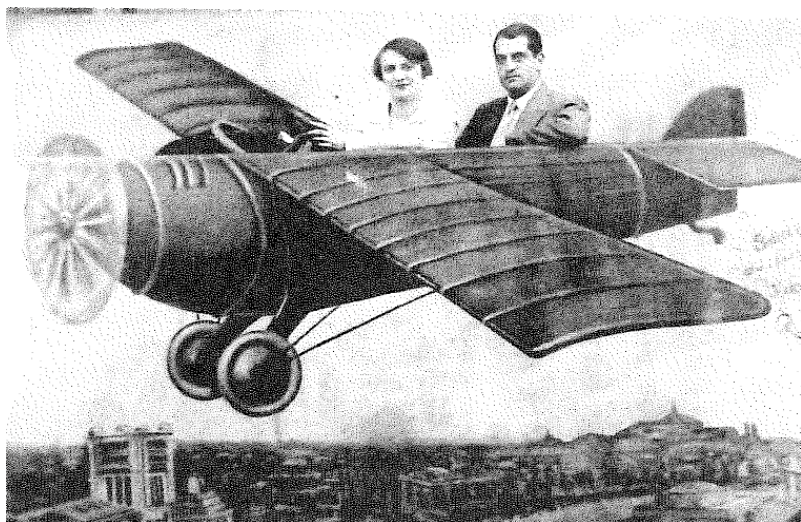
– These girls are respectable ladies, daughters of a family. Jeanne's parents are my friends.

From that moment on, Luis began to court me insistently. How handsome he was! Affectionate too. From that afternoon he attracted me. He got into my heart and my head. That's why I believe in what is called *le coup de foudre* (love at first sight) happened to us. He began to come to our home with Joaquín, Hernando and Vicente. My parents liked him. When he was still lacking confidence, his visits were short. But soon he began accepting my invitations to come over for dinner and he would bring his friend Salvador Dalí with him. Salvador was incapable of managing the simplest tasks in life. I think that's why he married Gala, a practical woman who was older than him, who was capable of managing his life and assets. But in 1926 Salvador did not yet know Gala, so Georgette became his nanny: she was in charge of accompanying him to the station, buying his ticket, and putting him on the train. She even reminded him of the day we live in and took him to the bank...

Luis asked my mama for permission to take me to the movies. We watched the same film several times. I was hardly allowed to go out with him at night. My sister suffered from mama's rigidity regarding permits.



Luis and I during our engagement.



That's why she gladly chaperoned me to avoid her excesses: "I don't want the same thing that happened to me to happen to you." The three of us left the house together and two blocks from home Georgette said goodbye to us. We arranged that we would meet at a time and a place so that we would return home together. Mom never suspected the deceit. Georgette told me that papa did the same thing with her. If she was walking with some boy she would be warned: "Your mother is waiting for you at the next corner..." Thanks to her Luis and I were able to walk alone and get to know each other better.

There was a ball once, and my mother didn't know it was a masquerade ball. At night the doorbell rings. Mama opens the door and meets a nun and a priest. Georgette and I walked in and when we saw Luis as a nun and Juanito Vicens as a father, we burst out laughing.

Luis and his friends had fun climbing onto buses dressed as priests. They chose a woman, attractive or ugly, and pinched her. They enjoyed putting two techniques into practice: the first would be the holy priests putting on a solemn face which resulted in the bewilderment of the woman; the second, when the pinched woman looked at them with a mixture of indignation and surprise, they gave her a complicit wink that, invariably, provoked the woman's indignation at the lack of respect and bad behavior of that priest. Oh! The youth...

In fashion were Charlestons, short hair on women, hems forty centimeters above the ankle and long strands of pearls. It was unthinkable to go out on the streets without a hat and gloves. So the first thing I did when I returned to Paris in 1959 was to go buy gloves.

Months went by. I was still a student and a gym teacher. Luis and I started dating. I was hired at a school in Deauville that turned into a vacation camp for English children in the summer. I would teach them



Above: with Luis in 1925. Below: Luis and I, Georgette and Juanito Vicens before going out to a masquerade ball.

rhythmic gymnastics. The day after I arrived, the director died and her husband begged me to stay until the last kid would be picked up. I met thirty kids who didn't speak French. Gymnastics saved us: I taught them to dance on the sand and to run gracefully. Dancing had always allowed my body to become one with the wind and experience freedom.

Once, Georgette accompanied me to an audition for the position of dancer at a theater (it was located on the Place de la République but I do not remember its name). The director saw me dance: "It's not bad. Now please undress". I left.

I love dancing. I taught Luis to dance tango in the kitchen of my house. The only tangos heard in Paris were Gardel's. We turned on the gramophone handle and, one, two three.. one, two, three... Even though Luis played the violin he had no feeling for rhythm. But we still danced fox-trot. The truth is that he didn't like to dance. He liked to have me in his arms and me to be in his.

Unfortunately, one day Luis accompanied me to madame Poppart's academy and went in to observe the class. Upon leaving, he seemed different, thoughtful. Hours later he forbade me to do gymnastics: "It's not decent Jeanne, your legs are visible. I don't like my girlfriend exposing herself". I foolishly kept quiet and obeyed.

He also escorted me to the door of where I had piano lessons and picked me up after. He met my teacher: he was an attractive man. I hadn't noticed that until Luis saw him. To me he was just the teacher. An "older" man in his forties.

- Who is with you while he teaches you?
- No one Luis, why?
- Out of curiosity. Is he married?
- Oh Luis, I don't know and I'm not interested.

That week, after eating at home, papa asked me: "Jeanne, play Luis some Strauss."

He tried to show off. At the end, Luis told me:

- To play like you play... It would be better not to play at all...

I closed the keyboard lid slowly, carefully fitting the green strip of felt perfectly. I got up from the bench. It was the last time I played the piano professionally. I wrote a note to the teacher letting him know that I would no longer be attending his classes.

I never dared to oppose Luis.

Juanito Vicens was the owner of the Spanish bookstore on rue Gay-Lussac. Luis put me to work there as a saleswoman. My salary was three hundred francs a month. One day, when reviewing the cash books, I did not see my salary listed:

- Juanito, why am I not on the payroll?'

He didn't look at me when answering:

- It's Luis who gives me your salary, Jeanne.

I felt sick in the stomach of anger. Of course, I didn't dare to say anything to Luis. I simply didn't accept another franc from him.

Later Georgette bought the bookstore and I stayed, working for her. I met many Spaniards there. One winter I had a cold and an old Spaniard told me:

- Mademoiselle, you are constipated. (Mademoiselle, vous êtes constipée)

I was surprised. I had never had been constipated. I asked him:

- How do you know that I am constipated?
- You have a red nose, mademoiselle.

Wow, I thought, how curious. It is that in French *constipée* means constipated. I didn't know that in Spanish it means to have a cold. As soon

as he explained it to me, I laughed a lot at the famous constipation.

Myrsine Moschos worked at the Shakespeare & Company bookstore for Silvia Beach, who owned it; it was in the rue de l'Odéon. Many of the writers of the "lost generation" came in there, including James Joyce. I had one occasion to chat with him; instead of talking to him about literature or his *Ulysses*, I told him stories about an umbrella. I think he liked them, because he smiled as he looked at me and he asked me: "What happened to the umbrella?" I don't remember those stories, but it must have been an interesting umbrella.

Myrsine had a lot of humor; she was a cultured woman, a great reader, well informed and intelligent. She never got married. She lived a full life, full of uncommon people. I'll always remember her and her good sense of humor.

On Easter Luis brought home a huge chocolate egg: it was half a meter! Mama had chocolate for a whole year. My maternal grandmother and Luis hit it off: she liked all his jokes and Luis was fascinated by her sense of humor. Once, after dessert, Luis proposed:

- Madame, if you eat a chicken leg now, I'll give you a bottle of champagne.

- I'd be delighted, Luis. Constance (my mother), please fetch me a chicken leg.

And she ate it. Luis immediately went to buy the champagne.

Around that time he began to film *Un chien andalou*. It was his mother who reluctantly gave him money to make the film. Back then, it was quite dubious to dedicate oneself to cinema as a profession. It was not considered an art. However, he managed to convince her.

I became his assistant: part of my job was to fetch the money from the bank to pay the actors. I had a fortune in my purse: thirty thousand

francs. First I took the subway, then a bus. I don't know how it's possible that I wasn't robbed. At every step I turned around to make sure there wasn't a possible thief behind me. When I got to the studio, I called mama: "I'm fine, I'm still alive." And my mother calmed down.

I loved the other part of my job: how fun it was to work as an extra with Dalí in the film. In the end, we went out running along the train tracks. I was also a seamstress: I made the jacket for Pierre Batcheff, the main actor. He began to look at me insistently. So when he was acting or in the studio, Luis decided that a lot of work awaited me in the office: "Jeanne, I'll lock you up so you won't be interrupted".

When the film was finished, Luis left for Spain. Before he left he came home to talk seriously with mama:

- Please madame, let Jeanne only go out with Rafael Sánchez Ventura and Salvador during my absence. They are the only friends I trust. Take good care of her.

My Moor quietly went to Spain: my mother would watch over me going out. I'm glad I wasn't born in the middle ages, because then Luis surely would have used the chastity belt.

I went out for a walk with Salvador. One afternoon he proposed to me:

- Jeanne, aren't you worried about knowing if there is an afterlife?

- I imagine there will be.

- Imagining is useless, it is necessary TO KNOW.

- Yes, you're right.

Dalí was delighted with my answer. He squeezed my arms with his hands and looked me straight in the eye:

- Look Jeanne, there is a way to find out.

- How?

- Death. We are going to do an experiment. If you agree, I will kill you right now and if there is an afterlife, you will appear before me and

confirm it.

– You're crazy! Why don't I kill you and you appear before me?

He didn't like the idea. In the end we decided that whoever died first would tell the other. It's been a year since he died and he hasn't appeared to me: either he forgot about the pact, or there is no afterlife...

I thought of Luis' certainty that if I was with Salvador Dalí nothing bad could happen to me.

Luis returned from Spain. We went to the premiere of *Un chien andalou*. Luis wanted to sit alone; he feared an unfavorable reaction from the audience, so he carried stones in his pants' pockets to be able to defend himself. Dalí and I sat together several rows behind Luis. We held hands during the film to support each other. We were also scared. The public loved it: they applauded and applauded. Luis got rid of his stones.

In 1930 he began to shoot *L'Âge d'or*. I became his assistant and an extra again. We went to Spain (Figueras) To finish filming Manolo Ortiz and his wife. It was there that I saved the life of my future dog. In one scene, Luis ordered the actor to "Kick the puppy". It was an intelligent and friendly puppy of the Samoyed breed. Without knowing the matter of the scene I opposed:

– What you ask is cruel.

– Do not mess up the scene. For the validity of the scene it is necessary that the dog be kicked.

However, the actor refused to do so. The cameraman did not want to film the scene either. Luis had to give in. In the end we invented a trick: we tied two ropes to the dog and, at the moment of kicking him, we lifted him up from both ends at the same time: he suffered from the pull but his life was saved. I kept him and named him Dalou. He was with me until after the birth of my first child; we went to Madrid then so he stayed with

my parents. The caretaker of the building was quite fussy and Dalou was not feeling at ease. My parents sent him to Lille to live with my mama's family. They say that when they took him out to the pen, if he stepped on chicken poop, he would lift his leg to be cleaned. That's why he was nicknamed Le Parisien. He died at the age of seventeen.

From Figueras we went to Cadaqués to spend a few days with Dalí. During the rest of the filming, nothing interesting happened.

We returned to Paris with the Ortiz and my Dalou. Since I could neither do gymnastics nor play the piano, I kept working at the Librería Española. I met dozens of Spaniards and, naturally, some of them asked me out. Knowing my boyfriend, I did not accept. Pepe Moreno Villa was very nice. We flirted with words:

– Oh Pepe, why don't you take me out for a walk?

– Don't even think about it, Juanita, with a man like Luis being your husband, I don't dare to do so. If I'd ask you he'll kill me.

He would wink at me before adding:

– Don't think that I don't think about it, woman, you are very nice...

Years later, in Mexico, Moreno Villa painted Luis and me. He was a splendid painter. (A year ago they asked me for the portraits for an exhibition in Spain. My son Juan Luis has them now.) He settled in Mexico and we saw him frequently. He continued with his compliments:

– Juanita, how beautiful you are!

– Pepe, why didn't you make a move back in Paris?

– Because of the monster you live with.

He lived in Mexico with a partner. They had a son. Pepe became ill (I think it was the kidneys), and ended up in the hospital. The woman had to go on a trip and asked me to take care of him:

– Jeanne, please go visit him for me. I don't want the poor thing to be alone.

I gladly accepted and went to visit him every morning.

– Pepe, what do you want to eat?

– Paella, Juanita, paella.

I would take it with me the next day.

But let's go back to Paris, 1930. Luis worked as an assistant to Jean Epstein, a film director. An occasion arose: one night it was late. Epstein offered me to drop me off at home in his car and I asked him:

– Luis Buñuel proposed to me. I am very much in love but his intelligence terrifies me.

– Jeanne, you are wrong. You are much more intelligent than that Spaniard Buñuel. It doesn't suit you. Don't marry him.

I loved Luis. We used to go to the movies and the opera. Sometimes alone and other times with his Spanish friends: Dalí, Vicens, Peinado, Moreno Villa, Paquito Garcia Lorca. I met his French friends without knowing them: he talked to me about them but we didn't go out with them. He was afraid that I would fall in love with some of them or that one would flirt with me. With his Spanish friends he did not feel endangered, as they had the same attitude towards women (the friend's girlfriend is untouchable).

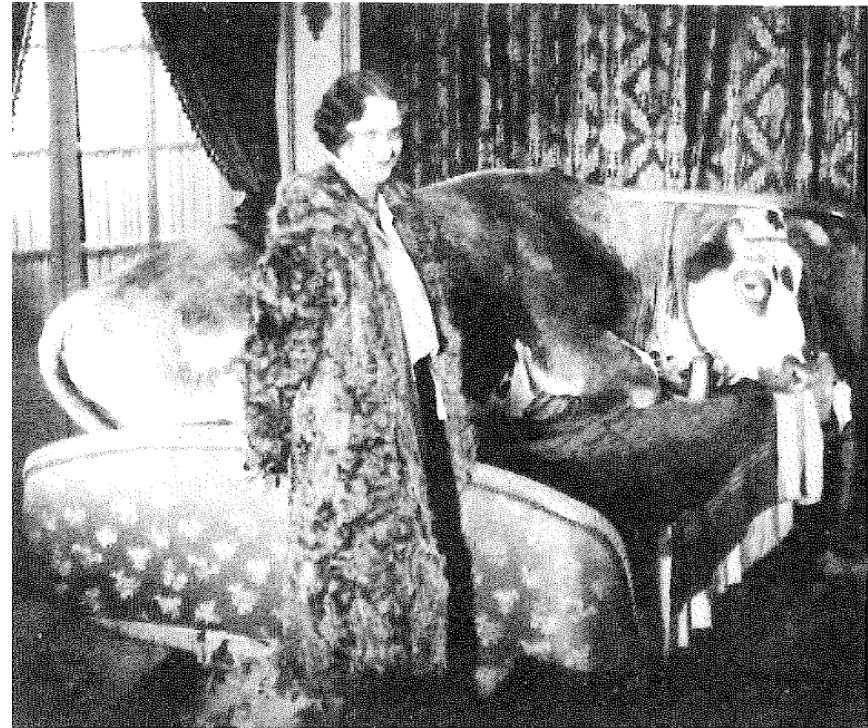
Luis was a surrealist. His French friends belonged to that group: Max Ernst, Paul Éluard, Tanguy, Máximo Alexandre, Breton. He became a good friend of Aragon, whose wife used to make beautiful metal bracelets. He took me to dinner at the Aragon's house. When they were talking about politics, I dared to give an opinion contrary to Luis's:

– Shut up, Jeanne. You know nothing. You say nothing but nonsense.

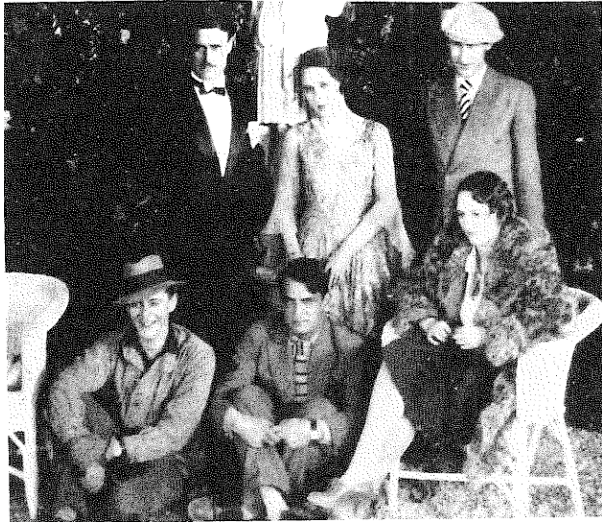
Aragon came to my defense:

– I disagree with you, Luis. Jeanne's ideas are original.

Luis remained silent.



On the set of *L'Âge d'or*. Paris, 1930.



Above: during the filming of *L'Âge d'or*. Below: with Luis, Dalí and Lya Lys (actress of *L'Âge d'or*).



Max Ernst, Pièrre Prevert and me with the film crew in Cadaqués, 1930.



Above: with Myrsine Moschos and Juanito Vicens at the Librería Española. Below: With my dog Dalou. Figueras, 1930.

When we left Aragon's house late that night, Luis was in a rather bad mood. We were walking along the banks of the Seine when he suddenly stood in front of me. He then ripped off my first communion medal and threw it in the river. I understood that Luis wanted to have a woman by his side that is incapable of questioning him. He never took me to the meetings of his French friends.

I didn't understand his jealousy. I never considered myself pretty. My mother commented: "This daughter of mine doesn't look at herself in the mirror". Luis didn't listen. He would only say: "You're so beautiful", or: "Your skin is so soft".

It seems to me that someone from Goldwyn Mayer offered Luis to pay him to go learn American filming techniques; he was going to Los Angeles for six months. I would stay in Paris; we were a couple and I couldn't go with him. Besides, he didn't propose to me. It saddened me to think about spending six months without seeing him. At twenty-two, six months seems like forever. I wasn't jealous, but Los Angeles was full of actresses like Marlene Dietrich, and it was across the Atlantic. I kept my thoughts to myself and helped him make his travel arrangements. He would go by the transatlantic ocean liner.

I accompanied him to Le Havre. I sent him off, crossing my fingers that he would come back and that he would do well. He was excited! He was going on an adventure, to America. Even before starting the trip, he had already left.

I continued working in the bookstore, hanging out with our Spanish friends, and the six months went by quickly. Joaquín Peinado accompanied me to pick up Luis. When I saw him I was stunned: I had forgotten how handsome he was and how he made me feel. I also made the same impression on him. I noticed it in his eyes. We embraced each other.

He spoke to me about New York, Los Angeles and the United States,

“It’s a wonderful country”. He told me how badly he behaved at Charlie Chaplin’s house on Christmas day: “We were having soup. I got up abruptly towards the Christmas tree and I threw it to the ground trying to break it. It’s hard to break a pine tree. Since I did not succeed, I started kicking it. I kicked the presents and jumped on the decorations...”

– Why did you do that, Luis?

– It was an impulse. I felt the need to demolish that tree because it represented complacency and Pharisees.”

– But what did Charlie and his wife do?

– The truth is that they did not pay attention.

THIRD PART

MARRIAGE (1934)

Shortly after, he went to Zaragoza to see his family. He wanted to make another film. I stayed in Paris studying stenography and typing and kept working at the bookstore. Luis managed to get money to make *Las Hurdes*.

Since we had been dating for eight years, we decided to get married. "It's a secret, don't tell your parents" he warned me. By coincidence, papa passed by the front of the mayor's office. He saw the paper that hung on the wall to announce the wedding and curiously began to read: "Mademoiselle Jeanne Rucar Lefèvre marries monsieur Luis Buñuel". He reread it several times; our address was on there. There was no doubt: the Jeanne Rucar in the ad was his daughter. He was furious. Fury gave way to sadness: he went into a *bistrot* and started drinking.

He came home drunk:

– Constance, Jeanne is getting married! And she has not deigned to tell us.

– She is already twenty-six years old. She can do what she wants.

I was sorry to hurt my good papa but I had promised Luis to keep the marriage a secret. Back then I didn't understand his attitude towards the wedding. Now I understand him: his surrealist ideas went against all social conventions, against society itself. The marriage was a convention, but even so he wanted us to get married civilly.

He was working in Spain and asked me to let him know the date of the wedding. He would only go to Paris for twelve hours: "enough time to get married". We got married in the town hall, Our witnesses were Viñes and Loulou, his wife, and also a stranger who passed by on the street. Luis objected to my family attending the wedding. Papa was left with the desire to take me to the altar in white and to have a wedding party with champagne.

There was no photographer, so we took some instant photos on one of



With Luis on our wedding day.



With my son Juan Luis in December 1934.

those new devices that were placed on some corners. We ate with the Viñesses in a restaurant near the Théâtre de l'Odéon. After the meal, Luis said goodbye to me. That same afternoon he returned to Spain by train. Of course he forgot to give me the wedding ring. The next day I went to a jewelry store to buy my ring. I was excited about it.

Thirty years later, Luis gave me a diamond from his father. A week later he convinced me to sell it: "it's worth a fortune, Jeanne". We sold it and with part of the money I bought a ring.

I stayed in Paris for a month to arrange the paperwork and to get my passport as Mrs. Buñuel. As soon as they gave it to me I went to Madrid. We lived in the student residence. Our companions were young people, unknown at the time, who later became famous Spaniards, especially in the field of literature. Among them was Federico García Lorca, who was a close friend of Luis.

I was pregnant and every so often I had to go to the bathroom. The table talk was endless there; they spent the afternoon drinking coffee and chatting. My Spanish was not good. Sometimes I got bored because I couldn't follow the thread of the conversation so the excuse of going to the bathroom was magnificent. One afternoon when I had gotten up about six times in an hour, Federico commented to Luis in disgust: "Okay you got married, all right. But can you explain to me why it had to be with someone pissing all the time?"

Luis's family was always very kind to me. My mother-in-law gave me a diamond bracelet, which is usually given in to the son's wife in Spain. My sister-in-law María asked me:

- Have you made love with Luis since you met?
- No María, Luis respects me during the courtship.

It seemed to them that customs in France, compared to Spain, were light and French girls were “easy”.

My mother-in-law’s advice was as follows: “Always tell Luis ‘Yes’ but do whatever you want anyway. That worked out well for me. My marriage was happy”.

Since Luis had to stay because of the film, I had to go to Paris to move out of his apartment. I was four months pregnant and, foolishly, was moving heavy furniture. When pushing a cupboard I felt a pain in my abdomen so strong that I could no longer straighten myself up. Georgette immediately took me to the gynecologist: “Ma’am, if you don’t lie down you could lose the baby. You need absolute rest”. I settled down in my parents’ house and stayed in bed for five months. It was horrible to be lying down all the time, without moving, without being able to meet with Luis. Every fifteen days I visited the gynecologist. After eight months he decreed: “She can get out of bed but shouldn’t leave the apartment”. I got up very happy and went straight to the kitchen to make a mocha cake.

I still had three weeks to go, so the morning I woke up because the bed was soaking wet, the first thing that came to my mind was: “How disgusting, I peed myself.” My belly hurt, but it wasn’t an excruciating pain. I called mama: “Jeanne, your waters have broken, I’m going to call the doctor.” They took me to the clinic. I expected the terrible pain of childbirth: all the women who had been mothers said that it was unbearable; the worst pain that could be felt. A first timer, my labor did not last too long and the baby was in breech position. The truth is that I didn’t suffer much. I gave birth to a precious boy on November 9, 1934.

A man appeared in my room with a huge book under his arm: “I’m a civil registry employee. What will be the name of the child?” I didn’t know what to name it. Luis had written a long list of possible names, all female. I thought: well I’m Juana, his father is Luis... “The boy will be called Juan

Luis.” Hearing myself saying the name out loud made me like it more: “Juan Luis, Juan Luis”. My family was delighted with the baby. Georgette wanted to be the first to tell the news and congratulate the new father. Luis suffered from sciatica. They did not allow him to leave the bed in order to be by my side during the delivery. The telephone was a luxury that, of course, the clinic did not have. It was not a necessity like it is now. Georgette left to phone Madrid (reaching long distances required time and patience. Today it is enough to dial the correct numbers and in an instant, voices are heard from the other side of the world).

– Luis, you have a son! Born on the 9th of November!

– Is it normal?

– Of course it’s normal and it’s beautiful.

– Congratulations, Georgette.

Georgette told me: “I wanted to congratulate Luis but he was the one who congratulated me.

I received a telegram from Luis. “Come.”

I stayed in the clinic for two more weeks. It was recommended that the woman in labor takes care of herself for forty days, the “quarantine”. That’s why I went to my parents’ house with my son. What happiness: I felt like a queen. Mama prepared delicious stews for me; “You must eat well so that you have good milk”; friends visited me and brought gifts for Juan Luis. Dalou settled in the room and became my guardian. Papa drank. If he didn’t arrive sober, Dalou would notice because of his difficulty of putting the key in the lock, and would not let him enter the room.

Luis often wrote to me: “Jeanne, come to Madrid with the boy. I can’t get out of bed”. I didn’t want to travel in the middle of winter with Juan Luis being so young. He insisted in all his letters: “Jeanne, come to Madrid”. I told him: “I’m leaving on March 1st, I want to spend my birth-

day with my parents”.

The first of March I took the train to Madrid. Georgette took it upon herself to send a telegram to Luis announcing our arrival. The trip seemed eternal for me with the four-month-old baby and the desire to see Luis. “Yes, Juan Luis, you’re going to meet Papa –I explained to him–, he’s Spanish, you’ll see.” We arrived in Madrid. The train stopped at the station. I looked out the window but I didn’t see my husband. Someone helped me take out the suitcases (I had several, all very heavy). I sat down with the baby in my arms to wait for Luis. “He’s probably late”. The station emptied and after a while filled with passengers again. The trains left and they arrived. Luis did not appear. I hardly spoke Spanish. I was happy to breastfeed my son; I had no problems giving him his meal. The hours on the station clock went by and I realized that Luis was not going to pick us up. Because of the fatigue of the trip and the nerves I forgot his address. What to do? Suddenly I remembered the street where his sister Conchita lived. I took a taxi and went to her house. They were stunned to see me with all our things and the baby in their dining room. They were dining with their children.

– Woman, you’re like an apparition, we thought you were in Paris!

I told them what happened. Conchita’s husband, Pedro García Orcasitas, allowed the nanny to accompany me to Luis’s house, which was luckily very close. I lost my suitcases on the way. We rang the doorbell. It took Luis a while to open.

– Jeanne! Why didn’t you tell me you were coming?

– Yes I did, I sent you a telegram.

– I never received it.

Luis was with a friend, who immediately left.

We hadn’t seen each other for seven months. Luis looked at the boy, who was sleeping. Exhausted, I asked him to tell me where we were going

to sleep. I fell asleep with the baby in my arms: the poor thing had no crib.

When I woke up I found out that we had a cook: Paquita. Luis brought me breakfast in bed. He kept looking at his son with a smile: “The boy is handsome!”

The apartment was big. Luis told me: “This is your room. Mine is next door.” Ever since then we would always sleep in separate rooms.

Our married life began. Luis filmed, saw his friends and went out at night from time to time (with whom?). I was at home with the child, adapting to the new life. Every day I took Juan Luis to the Retiro Park. There I saw Conchita with her children. She never came to our home or invited me to hers. Her husband forbade it. Her only outlet was when she took the children to the park. They had four children, all doctors: their father forced them to study medicine. One of them, Rafael, died of a stroke in Baltimore. The only one who lives in Saragossa is Pedro, the youngest. Now Conchita is eighty-four years old. Two years ago she fell and broke her leg: she was stranded for seven hours until she returned to Pedro’s house. Pedro’s daughter, Margarita, lives with her so that she is not alone. But at that time, 1935, Pedro had not yet been born. Conchita was a young woman: beautiful, elegant, and full of life. She was Luis’s favorite sister. We became friends.

Luis’s catholic education was so rigorous that as soon as he left his home he had a violent reaction against the church and the priests: “I don’t want my children to be catholic. I will not allow them to fill their heads with devils and hells.” I agreed. I was never pious myself.

One morning, very early, my mother-in-law called me (Juan Luis was seven months old):

– Juana, make the boy handsome. I’ll pick you up to go for a walk in an hour.

An hour later the driver called us. After driving for a while, the car stopped in front of a church. "Come Juanita, let's go see the father." I suspected something. She had everything planned to baptize my son. She herself would be the godmother and the priest the godfather. I started to cry:

– Please don't. Luis is adamantly opposed to it. In Paris I already had difficulties with my parents. They also wanted to baptize him but I refused: I gave my word to Luis that I would not do it.

– Look child, calm down. Luis doesn't have to find out. This child must be baptized; if he died, God forbid, he would go to limbo. He would not enjoy his grace. Do you want that for him? I am also his grandmother. I feel responsible before God to watch over him: he must be Catholic.

– But...

– Not another word.

They baptized him.

Back home my mother-in-law was satisfied. Before she leaved us she kissed me and assured me: "Don't worry child, we have done what is best for Juan Luis. Your husband doesn't have to find out about the baptism. Go on, relax."

I don't know what would happen to their conscience. The fact is that she called the same afternoon:

– Juanita, is my son here?

– Yes he is here.

– Please, tell him to get on the phone.

– Luis, your mother is calling.

I found out that she told him what happened because of Luis's reaction: he insulted his mother over the phone. I won't repeat his words; they were horrible. When he hung up, he turned his rage against me: he refused to listen to my version of the story. He stopped talking to me. It

was unfair. Knowing myself, how could I have supposed that he was able to oppose his mother if he inherited her obstinacy and strong character from her?

I don't know what I would have done if I hadn't had my son. Luis stopped eating at home. He only went home to sleep and take a shower. At night I would see him arrive: "perhaps he'll look for me" "or maybe look at me". I tried to get his attention: I put myself in his way, but for him I didn't exist; I was a ghost. I have read that this is the system obeyed by communist countries: that when a person falls out of favor with the government, at work no one speaks to him or looks at him anymore; he is declared a non-person. From experience I can tell that indifference is the worst punishment. I found traces of lipstick on his shirts. He had an actress friend.

I packed my suitcase and hid it behind the wardrobe in my room. It made me feel safe to have it ready to leave Luis. Why didn't I leave? Because I had no money? Because I was weak? Because I loved Luis too much? Who knows which one of these reasons weighed the most. I'm glad I didn't take the suitcase and my son and left; if I had done it, my life might not have been so happy. But I suffered a lot during those months; so far away from my family and friends and so abandoned by Luis.

Three or four months passed. One night a miracle happened. I think it was a miracle: at midnight a pain in my wrist woke me up. I turned on the light. It was the size of a tennis ball. I went to Luis's room crying. "It hurts me a lot." Luis got up, looked at the wrist and TALKED TO ME: "Poor thing, we're going to the doctor tomorrow." As soon as we arrived at the consulting room, the swelling in the wrist disappeared and the pain suddenly ceased. The doctor examined me thoroughly, from the shoulder to the hand: "I don't think it's necessary to take X-rays, there is nothing wrong ma'am."

Thanks to the wrist, my husband and I reconciled. We made love again. I recovered my *status* as a person.

The priest recommended my mother-in-law to go see Luis. She came home. Luis must have apologized for the insults and she for her meddling; they made up. She resumed her visits to our house and we ate at hers once a week. She pressured us to get married in church: "You must not live in sin." Luis refused. Years later he lied to her: "We got married in church." The poor thing was able to breathe calmly again. Her insistence did not bother me. I understood that her religion, the environment in which she was educated, and living in Spain made her feel responsible for the soul and the salvation of her children and grandchildren. It is necessary to have lived in Spain in the thirties, to have breathed the atmosphere, to understand the stance of my mother-in-law. Sometimes Spanish Catholicism is as vehement as its inhabitants. It's not for nothing that Spain was the cradle of the inquisition. It is precisely that vehemence and that passion that make the Spaniards so dear. My mother-in-law had an unusual human quality. For me she was always a loving support.

Life began to be good: we were young lovers; our son made us laugh; we chatted nonstop; we were doing well financially.

Luis was still filming. He kept seeing his friends, who were passionate about politics and the ideas that were in the air in Spain before the civil war.

I stood on the sidelines of politics. My life consisted of taking Juan Luis to the Retiro park every morning. Conchita introduced me to a French woman. We liked each other and became friends. She invited me to have a coffee at her house. I was delighted. I told Luis:

– I want to invite her to our house too.

– No way. You go to her house as many times as you want, but don't let her come here.

I felt such shame. How could I tell her that my husband didn't give me permission to invite her? I didn't have the courage to talk to her. From that day on, I avoided her by switching benches in the park.

Juan Luis learned to walk. Sometimes I took him to see his grandmother, whose house was close by. There was always a son visiting. Often our visits coincided with my brother-in-law Leonardo. Oh! I was always a little in love with him. We looked at each other a lot. At one of the family meals, my mother-in-law asked me:

– Juana, who is the most handsome of my children?

Of course, she thought my answer would be "Luis". But I answered without hesitation:

– Leonardo!

They all laughed in Luis's face.

Years later Leonardo came with Matilde to visit us in Mexico. The years hadn't taken away either his attractiveness or his likeability.

I accompanied Luis in a small town lost in Extremadura where he was filming. I remember the town being so miserable that it impressed me. A band of kids in rags became my escort. They were curious. They smiled when they heard me speak. I thought they were so skinny that I bought bread and gave it to them. They gratefully took it, but before eating it, they dipped in a puddle:

– Why do they dip it in that dirty water?

– To soften it, señorita.

– It's freshly baked bread! It is soft!

I tried one of them:

– It's true.

It made me sad to think that they were used to eating stale, old bread.

We returned to Madrid. The civil war was about to break out. We didn't know that, but there was heated talk about politics going on.

When Luis received his friends at home he would ask me: "Jeanne, go to your room or to the kitchen. Leave us alone." The tone of his conversations rose and I could hear: "The monarchy is...", "The republic is the solution to...", "If fascism arrives...", "Church and state do not..." Luis always kept me away from his intellectual life and from his friends, especially the first years of our marriage. He was so jealous! It was his house and his intimate life; nothing more and nothing less. My world was very small: it was reduced to Juan Luis, the house and my husband. However, politics reached my world too: a long corridor crossed the apartment where Juan Luis enjoyed running around. All of a sudden Juan Luis no longer wanted to be alone in the corridor. He insisted that I would accompany him. I told Luis and we decided to spy on him. We gave him a new toy to convince him to stay alone in the hallway and we went into a room, leaving the door ajar. Paquita left the kitchen, made sure the boy was alone, and hit him on the head. Juan Luis began to cry. Luis and I came out furious:

- Why did you hit the child, Francisca?
- Because he is a bourgeois pig, just like you.

At that moment we put Paquita the communist on the street.

Afterwards we laughed a lot at the incident and at being described as bourgeois, especially Luis.

I was not bored because I was in love with my son. When I found out that the nanny wasn't taking him for a walk but to a room where she was seeing her boyfriend, I kicked her out. I preferred to be without service than to have an irresponsible Paquita or nanny under the roof. I took care of Juan Luis. I was very much a mother. At night, Luis went out with his

friends. Without me, of course.

The only event outside of the everyday life (son, park, son, kitchen) was my godparents visiting us. I invited them to eat at our home and we visited Toledo and El Escorial. They filled me with news of my parents and nostalgia for the Parisian air.



Portraits of Jeanne made by Man Ray.



FOURTH PART
LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES (1939)

Before the train entered the station in Paris, I bathed my son and changed his clothes in the bathroom: he had to look handsome for his grandparents. My family was waiting for us on the platform. They were crazy for Juan Luis and he was crazy for them. They hadn't changed.

Juan Luis was about two years old. I felt the need to go to Paris: I wanted to see my family and my friends and that they could see Juan Luis. Luis agreed: our son and I would go on vacation for a month. Maybe Luis would join us later and we would return to Madrid together. He bought our train tickets and gave me money. I decided to take only one suitcase: my experience from the previous trip taught me to travel light.

What a pleasure it was for me to come home and smell the same scents of my childhood and see the same furniture and paintings. Mama put a bouquet of flowers and a bed for Juan Luis in my old room.

In the afternoons papa would take the boy out for a walk. From the window I could see them go out into the street: they were happy and holding hands. When he bumped into someone he knew, papa would introduce him: "He is my grandson." Mama called him "My prince". The boy let himself be loved.

Mama had a blind canary. She realized that it became blind because it jumped and crashed against the bars of the cage. One day she gave it to my son when she was going to clean it: "Hold it tight so it doesn't fly away. The poor thing is blind and can get hurt". Juan Luis squeezed it so much that he accidentally killed him. We buried it in a pot of tulips that was on the windowsill in the kitchen.

Three weeks after being in Paris, the war broke out in Spain. Once again we were separated by no fault of our own: it seemed that every time he or I traveled, fate put an obstacle in our way. Luis telephoned from Madrid (my parents already had a telephone at home):

– How are you?

- We are good. How are you? Are you not in danger?
- Don't worry, Jeanne. I'm fine. I'm calling you to tell you that it's better to not go back to Madrid for the time being. Let's see what will happen and how things will turn out.
- Are you going to come?
- I don't know when. I'll let you know. Greetings to your family and kisses to you and the boy.

Now, because we traveled lightly, the boy and I had no clothes. I left everything in Madrid.

Luis arrived in Paris in September 1936. Georgette lent us her apartment while we were finding a place to live. It was not easy: my husband worked for the secret service of the Spanish embassy and needed a secluded place. We got an apartment in Muedon, fifteen minutes from Paris. It was located in a three-story house that had been converted into three dwellings; the house was in the middle of a garden. I liked it.

– I don't want anyone to know where we live, it's dangerous. You can invite your parents and Georgette. No one else – Luis warned me.

His work allowed him only to come home for lunch on Sundays. Outside of that he was traveling abroad. I would invite my parents or Georgette for lunch. Sometimes I would go to Paris with my son and see my friends. We bought a little monkey that played with Juan Luis. On Sundays, Luis would take the boy on his lap by the window and teach him to shoot with pellets. The boy loved the lessons. In front of the house there was a very quiet park; only seldom did anyone walk in it. Luis would place empty canisters there to shoot them from the window. One sunny Sunday afternoon my sister came to eat. After coffee, Georgette and I decided to go for a walk in the park. "I'm not going along because I'm going to take a nap." Luis said. The evil man then shot Georgette in the

buttocks; it didn't hurt her but it scared her. Because of Luis working for the secret service, I imagined that a spy, mistaking her for me –although we did not look alike– wanted to kill her. Afterwards we laughed a lot: "What a joke, brother-in-law."

Franco had the upper hand: the Republic lost. Luis had worked for it and realized its failure. We couldn't go back to Spain, nor did Luis want to. His trip to the United States left him the desire to return: he thought it was a wonderful country. Los Angeles was the place for filmmakers. It had the techniques, money and opportunities. Someone suggested to Luis: "Go to the United States. There are magnificent opportunities there." He was drawn to the idea and wrote several letters. In the end, Pascua, an official of the Republic, proposed that he could go to the United States as a technical and historical advisor for the films that were produced with a Spanish theme. Rafael Sánchez Ventura lent us the money to buy the tickets. I packed my bags again. It is a good thing that one cannot predict the future: we (my parents and I) did not suspect that it would be the last farewell.

We went from Paris to London and from there to New York. As soon as I set foot on board I began to feel dizzy; I spent ten days of the crossing in bed, except for one afternoon when I was able to go out on deck. They gave the children slimy, transparent cupcakes. As they ate them I warned Juan Luis: "Don't eat that crap, it can harm you". An American listened to me: "Lady –she told me–, if he's going to live in America it is better that he gets used to it. It's called gelatin and it's excellent."

How dizzy I was! I have always been sensitive to movements, whether it be in a car, plane or boat. No tremor, however slight it may be, passes me unnoticed. It was a shame: I couldn't appreciate the food on the ship or the sunsets. The nausea gave me the feeling that death was waiting for

me on the high seas. The ship docked in New York. I was in such a bad state that I didn't see anything of the famous city. Luis's friends who were waiting for us at the pier must have thought I was rude as I hardly greeted them. As soon as we arrived at their house –where we would stay for the first two weeks– I went straight to bed without having dinner.

The dizziness lasted two days. On the third I recovered my well-being along with a good mood. I was grateful to our hosts and tried to help with the housework. Before breakfast, I started cleaning. She would look at me and one morning she took the vacuum cleaner out of my hands: "Thank you, Jeanne. You don't have to work so hard. Here in the United States the hose is cleaned only once a week." "Oh well –I thought– If they like to live that way..."

Luis couldn't get a job in New York: movies about the civil war were practically prohibited. He decided that we would move to Los Angeles. He bought a car (where did he get the money from?) and we started the journey across the country from east to west. I remember three anecdotes from the trip. The first: as we crossed the desert on the highway, a fire blocked our path. Luis decided to speed up and drive through the fire. The second: during a break, Juan Luis began to run around. He found a cactus and kicked it. It was very hot so he wore sandals: it cost me a lot of work to get the thorns out of his little foot. The third: at a gas station in Arizona we stopped to fill up the tank and drink a soda. A huge car parked next to us. A collie and its owners got out. The dog's tongue stuck out from the thirst he had. His master brought him a bucket of cold water and the animal drank it so fast that he immediately fell dead. We were impressed.

In Los Angeles, Luis was also unable to film so he had to settle for dubbing. I also worked on translations from English to French (My English was terrible, so Luis helped me a lot). We needed the dollars that they

paid me for each translation. Oh money! Because of it I couldn't in all those years be completely happy: lack of money makes one suffer. The times were so bad for us that I wrote my godfather, enduring my shame, to ask him for a loan. His answer was negative: "When I die I will leave you my money at the castle of Vaucouleurs. Not now. Besides, it is impossible to send it to you. It would be lost." My mother-in-law and a priest friend of hers sent us a package that did arrive. Receiving it gave us joy. Imagine: it could be money! We nervously opened it: it was the oil painting of the portrait of Luis painted by Dalí. A portrait that we loved but unfortunately couldn't eat ... When we were on the verge of being completely broke –we had no money for rent, telephone, clothing, etc.– we got a letter from Georgette with twenty dollars.

I would like to add that my godfather died shortly afterwards and I did not inherit anything. He left the famous castle to his nephews: "Jeanne lives too far away to take care of it." Why are old people like this with money?

Luis was always the same, with or without money. He worked a lot but he didn't earn enough to make a living. A family of Spanish refugees that we met and who were in the same conditions proposed to us: "We have the opportunity to use a mansion in Beverly Hills. It is lent to us and it's enormous. Come live with us: one day you will buy the food and the next day we will." We accepted. The house was a mansion with pool halls, a library and seven (furnished!) rooms. The neighbors owned a raging Great Dane. "Juan Luis, don't go near there. Watch out for the dog!"

I never liked English: I find it a horrible language and I'm unable to master it. I went to the butcher shop and with my best accent I ordered:

– Please, three lamb chops.

– Sorry ma'am, I don't understand you.

Three times I repeated to the man: "Please, three lamb chops." And

each time he gave me the same answer. In the end I raised three fingers of one hand, with the other I pointed to my ribs and I began to bleat aloud:

– Beeee, beee, beeee....

The fool, dying of laughter, then exclaimed:

– Oh, yeah, three lamb chops.

In her letters, mama advised me: “Keep speaking French to Juan Luis so that he doesn’t forget it and, so that when I meet him, we can talk. Above all, do not let him learn such an ugly language.”

My son didn’t call my mama; he called me by my name. one night –four months after leaving France– when I put him to bed, the boy burst into tears: “Jeanne, I don’t want *pépé* (grandfather in French) to die.” He was four years old. “Don’t be silly, my boy. *pépé* is very healthy in Paris.” My father died that day. Georgette warned Luis and begged him: “Don’t tell Jeanne: we think it’s better that she doesn’t find out now that she has just arrived in a new country with none of her friends around. The news would make her too sad.” They kept sending me the newspaper. I was surprised to see it folded in a different way than as he did, but I wasn’t suspicious. I heard the news six months later. It hurt me a lot: I would never see papa’s thin silhouette again, nor his shy smile. My mother was right: I would not have endured papa’s death as I just moved to this new country. Juan Luis’s presentiment impressed me. Was it feeling? Tele= pathy? Vibrations sent by my father to the grandson so dear to him? In life, things happen that have no logical explanation.

After six months, Luis realized that he would not have the opportunity to make films in Los Angeles. That, together with the fact that he wasn’t earning enough money from dubbing, he was convinced that it was better to try his luck in New York: “We have friends there. They can help me get a more interesting and better paid job.” He went ahead of us. As soon as

he was settled, Juan Luis and I followed. We stayed in the house of the Weber’s: some lovely French people.

I was pregnant. We created Rafael in the United States, in the shower. I forgot to wash myself. My two children are children of water: Juan Luis was conceived inside a bathtub in Paris. How we would liked to have a daughter! (Although I’m afraid that with a father as jealous as Luis, she would have turned out to be either a whore or a nun). Later, when we just arrived in Mexico, I was pregnant again –in each country we conceived a child– but we decided to abort: one more child would be an expensive burden. Isabel Custodio took me to her doctor. We went and returned on foot. In just one hour I was no longer expecting a child. I asked the doctor: “Tell me, was it a girl?” “We can’t tell, ma’am.” I think that if it was the girl I wanted and if I decided to keep her, I would not have been so alone. Although perhaps she would have decided to live in China. One cannot tell. For me, abortion is neither good nor bad. Sometimes it is necessary. After that Luis didn’t want any more children.

On 31 December 1939, I went to New York with Juan Luis. We spent New Year’s Eve on the train. People drank champagne. I accepted one glass, but I didn’t drink more because of the baby. Luis was waiting for us at the Grand Central Station. He was so handsome in his wool coat! It was very cold. He took us to the apartment of Alexander Calder, a German painter, for a few days. Alexander offered us to live with him; his apartment was huge. Alexander was like a bear: huge and warm. Sometimes I would sit and watch him work. Calder adored Juan Luis. Many of my son’s shirts are inheritance from Alexander: they are both huge.

Luis got a job in the film department of the Museum of Modern Art. He used to watch a lot of German cinema and he told me that it was of great

quality. He signed up for childcare classes: they taught how to change diapers, how to sterilize bottles, how to prepare the baby's bath, how to measure formula milk... Of course, he got bored and didn't finish the course. He also went to English classes.

My belly grew: the time of delivery was approaching. I asked Juan Luis: "What do you want, a little sister or a little brother?"

"Jeanne, you are going to get a big surprise: what's waiting for you is neither a sister nor brother. What is going to be born to you is a little monkey."

We were in the kitchen –I was cooking and Alexander making a sculpture for my baby– when I started having contractions. Luckily Luis was at home and immediately went out to look out for a taxi. Alexander stayed as Juan Luis's babysitter.

In the hospital a nurse insisted that I sat in a wheelchair in order to go to the room.

"I don't want to sit." "Sit down!"

Two hours later Rafael was born, weighing five kilos. "You have a beautiful baby", the gynecologist exclaimed satisfied. It was true, my baby was beautiful: unlike Juan Luis, who was born with a bald, he had his head covered with black fluff. He had fat, rosy cheeks. I wanted a girl, but when I saw him I fell in love with him.

We decided to name him Rafael in memory of Rafael Sánchez Ventura, who we thought died in Spain. Luckily we later found out that the information was not true.

I couldn't breastfeed the "monkey" because of the idiotic North American doctors: the bottle was in fashion in the United States. In that hospital, only two women chose to breastfeed our babies: an Italian woman and me. My breasts swelled, so they decided to put ice packs on



With Luis and my sons Juan Luis and Rafael in New York, 1940.

me. They cut off my milk. It's a pain worse than giving birth... I wept bitterly. The doctor was surprised:

– She is the first woman to cry because she is freed from the slavery of breastfeeding. Cheer up, the formula is the best for children and mothers.

I replied in French so that he would not understand me:

– You and all your colleagues are complete fools.

I breastfed Juan Luis for fifteen months. There was no other way. For Rafael it would be the bottle: the price of being American.

I stayed in the hospital for a week and another in bed; I couldn't afford the "quarantine".

We soon moved into a very small apartment on 85th street. It consisted of a living room, a kitchen, a bedroom and a bathroom. The boys and I would sleep in the bedroom and my husband on the sofa in the living room. We didn't mind living in a cramped place: it was our house!

Our friends gave us gifts for the baby: Rosita Díaz Negrín gave me a box of dresses, sweaters and diapers, all in pink, in the hope that it would be a girl; the Calders gave us a bathtub and lent us a crib and a stroller to walk him around.

We were so poor that one noon when I was washing the dinner dishes, Luis ripped the fabric from the back of my dress: "Come on, Jeanne, here's five dollars. Go buy yourself one or two dresses, woman." It was the only dress I had. I covered myself with a sweater and I happily went out to buy two dresses. Of course, I patched up the old one to use it when Luis wasn't around.

Juan Luis was both delighted and jealous of his brother. For five years and seven months he was the only child in the house and it was difficult for him to adapt to us having to share our attention. He got a mania: he didn't allow anyone to kiss him. We took him to school; his drawing teacher was a young Mexican named Rufino Tamayo. In the mornings,

after dropping him off at school, I would walk Rafael in Central Park. I bathed him in the kitchen: the bathroom only had a shower.

The Negríns, Juan and Rosita, lived in New York. Juan was a doctor and Rosita had been an actress. Poor Rosita: she was my age but it was taken away from her. She died in 1987. Juan was left alone. He lives in New York and he just sent me a book that they wrote about Rosita. She was a beautiful woman with personality. Luis loved her. They were friends of Luis before I met them in New York. Juan was the son of the Spanish Republican President Negrín. They had a lot of jewelry. We became intimate friends. Rosita taught me how to cook *tortilla de patatas*. My conscience still bothers me about one day when Rosita was sick and she asked me: "Please make me a spinach soup." I washed them on the run and the water was full of dirt; since I was in a hurry, I left it like that. One night when they were having dinner at home I proposed to Luis:

– Why don't we baptize Rafael? Juan Luis is already baptized. Let's give that pleasure to your mother."

The Negríns were enthusiastic:

– We want to be your godparents.

– Okay" Said Luis. "Let Rafaelito be baptized.

The next morning the child was taken to be baptized. Luis sent his mother a telegram to let her know.

I hardly ever went out: there was no money to pay for a babysitter; the children and the house took up all my time. I knew a black woman who cleaned our neighbors' apartment for a few days. She was a good person. When Luis invited me to have dinner at a restaurant with his friends, it occurred to me to hire that woman for that night. That day I was very happy at the prospect of going out with Luis. I got myself ready, put on lipstick and I was ready an hour before. I gave the children their dinner. Rafael fell asleep as usual but Juan Luis didn't want to; he stuck to me like

glue. At the time of saying goodbye, already at the door, Juan Luis told me without looking me in the eye: "A mother who abandons her children does not love them." I left crying. "Come on, Jeanne. Don't pay attention to the boy. Stop crying." The whole dinner I remembered his words.

In the restaurant (it was a good restaurant) I noticed that in many tables they drank milk instead of wine. In Toulouse, an American ordered a glass of milk with his meal. The waiter scolded him: "You can't drink milk with meat. Impossible." The American stormed out of the restaurant, looked for a policeman and complained. The policeman, like a good Frenchman, replied: "The waiter is right."

The Second World War had begun more than a year ago. At first we had no news of my mother or Georgette. I was worried. In New York life was still the same –when the United States joined the war they turned off the lights at night. Through the news we learned about the invasion of France and about the German occupation of Paris. How would my family be? Would they go hungry? I finally got a letter from them: "We're fine. We're not missing anything." Throughout the war we were able to correspond and, despite their affirmations regarding their "We are well", I remembered the difficulties and dangers of the Great War and spent the days thinking about them.

My friend Hélène Tasnon was married to a Jewish man. (Years later, when I met her again in Paris, she told me what happened.) He disappeared without a trace. He possibly died in a concentration camp. A Jewish friend of Hélène begged her:

– Hélène, you are safe. You are not Jewish. I know the Germans will come looking for us. Wouldn't you want to have my girl stay with you? Change her name, she is two years old. At least she may survive!
– Of course. From this moment on she is my daughter.

Her friend was arrested at midnight; they put her on a truck. In the neighborhood Hélène had told that she had adopted her little niece. Someone reported it. The Gestapo went after the girl and Hélène couldn't do anything to stop them from taking her away. She later found out that the girl died.

I am outraged by the persecutions: each person can, be and think what they want. I see no reason to kill someone because of one's race, religion or political beliefs.

Luis got sciatica again. He had to stay in bed, motionless. I played nurse: I carried him on my back to bathe him once a day. On one occasion someone called by phone around one in the afternoon. Juan Luis answered. "I want to talk to your mother." "She can't get on the phone. She is too busy washing papa's legs." "Boy, what strange customs do they have in your house."

Because of Salvador Dalí, Luis lost his job at the Museum of Modern Art. He made public that Luis was a communist and, in the United States, at that time, being a communist was equivalent to being expelled from the country. As a result of the declaration by Salvador, it would always remain difficult for Luis to obtain North American visa. Even years later, if he was passing through, they put him in a room to interrogate him. Luis never forgave Dalí for lying. Salvador went to New York and they met in a café. Luis told him about the serious problem he got into for the lies he wrote about him. Salvador didn't flinch. He took it lightly: "I did it for fun." They would never see each other again. Over the years, Luis received telegrams from Dalí: "Luis, I need to see you. Come." "Let his mother see him." Luis would exclaim before tearing up the telegram.

His friends from the museum told Luis that they were going to ask for his resignation. He went ahead. In New York all the doors were closed to

him. It was impossible for him to get a job. We lived in New York for five years; from 1940 to 1945. We returned to Los Angeles, again to try our luck.

We got a little house on fifty six forty two Fountain Avenue. Luis got his dubbing job back. I liked Los Angeles more than New York. Rafael was already five years old and Juan Luis was eleven. Taking care of them was easy. The house had a washing machine; doing laundry was less complicated. We had a garden and the weather was good. We met many French and Spanish refugees.

Luis's bosses invited us to eat. I don't know why but at the table I commented:

– How I would like to have a black son!

The owner of the house was scandalized:

– Jeanne, please don't say that, especially in the United States!

I soon understood: once I was on the bus and at a stop a pregnant black woman got on with a small child in her arms. I immediately gave her my place. The white passengers looked at me angrily and started to protest. With my best French accent I told them: "In this country they are inhumane. The lady is about to give birth. She deserves a seat."

I was able to hire a woman twice a week to help me clean the house. Most of the people who worked as servants in the United States were black. My helper was black. Yes, she was my servant, but I prepared her breakfast: eggs with bacon. Once, as I entered the kitchen, Rafael was giving her a kiss on the cheek. The poor thing got scared:

– Please, ma'am, I didn't ask him... It was the boy who kissed me...

– That's fine –I smiled at her–. Come on, Rafael, give her another kiss.

Much later, when we were already in Mexico, Juan Luis was studying in the United States and invited a black friend to spend the holidays with us.

I received him the same as any friend of my children, kissed him on the cheeks, "mua, mua". He was surprised:

– It's obvious that you are not an American madam.

– Thank god!

Juan Luis went to the school of the mothers of the Sacred Heart. He wanted to make his first communion. We didn't have enough money but a friendly neighbor lent us her son's shoes and white pants that were the same size as Juan Luis's. He was very enthusiastic, very devoted. They were given a "retreat" (intensive courses for three days before taking communion) and at the end the priest told each child: "Ask your father to bless you in the morning of the communion's day." Juan Luis obediently asked his father:

– Papa, give me your blessing.

Luis picked him up as he was hanging from the lapels of his jacket:

– I'll give it to you, but I'll kill you if you tell my friends...

In Los Angeles I learned to drive. How I like to drive! With the steering wheel in my hands I feel free. What hurts me most about losing my sight is not being able to drive. I almost failed the exam because I didn't speak English. Luckily a Canadian acted as a translator and I was able to get my license. Driving made me happy.

We were able to go on vacation to the sea for a week. Luis would pick us up in the weekend. We rented a room at the beach. We walked, sunbathed and built sand castles. I met a Turkish woman who taught me how to cook a liver stew with onions. Delicious.

Afterwards I returned to everyday life: doing the dishes, washing clothes, taking the boys to school. Luis was still dubbing.

One morning I found a pigeon in the garden with a broken leg. I cured it and it stayed to live with us. I brought it grain and little by little the

garden would be filled with pigeons. At one point, we had more than thirty. It was not possible to feed them all. We managed to put them in cages and took them to some mountains outside of Los Angeles. We opened the cages and they flew out. The next morning Luis woke me up:

– Jeanne, come.

All the pigeons were on the roof of the garage. They came home.

Juan Luis had a bicycle which he used to ride around with in the neighborhood. Unfortunately I saw an accident: a child with his bicycle was hit by a car. At home I punctured Juan Luis's tires. "No more bicycle."

We had fun going on a picnic in the mountains in the surrounding area. During the picnic, Luis lost his watch. The next day I went there again with the children and a broom to look for it. We walked around sweeping the ground with the broom. It occurred to me to pray to Saint Anthony: "I'll light candles for you if I find the watch." Juan Luis asked: "What is Saint Anthony, mama?" "He is a saint who helps you." At that moment I looked at the ground: there was the watch! When we were back in Los Angeles we lit four candles for Saint Anthony.

I preferred Los Angeles to New York: in New York I was always locked up at home with the children: in Los Angeles we had a garden and our friends. In New York we had made friends with the Delgado de Chalbots in a peculiar way. I was with Juan Luis on the bus when a woman and a girl got on. The girl was cross-eyes. Thinking they were Americans, Juan Luis told me in French:

– Look how ugly that girl is.

The mother replied in French:

– She is not ugly: she is cross-eyed.

From there, the friendship was born. Delgado de Chalbots was Venezuelan. He later would be president of the Venezuelan military council

and would be assassinated at the end of 1950. We used to spend vacations together in Vermont. After that, we would never see them again.

In Los Angeles the streets were full of couples kissing in the wind. Yes, there were condoms lying around all the banks. Juan Luis took one, thinking it was a balloon. "Boy, put that down!"

On another occasion, he was walking with his father and found a package on a bench. He opened it and there were thirty dollars in there (in 1944 thirty dollars was a fortune). Luis told him: "We will take it to the police. Surely the person who lost it will go and ask them." The police told them to come back after a week. If no one claimed it they could keep it. We don't know if Luis ever came back to recover it or that it was claimed.

I forgot something important: as soon as we moved to Los Angeles, Luis consulted a chiropractor recommended by René Clair: a wonderful woman who would take away his sciatica forever.

Luis was invited to go to Mexico. He would have the possibility to direct a movie there. He did not succeed. However, in Mexico he met Dancigers, who offered him to direct another. In his absence I fell ill with varicose ulcers in the legs. I was prescribed absolute rest. Juan Luis, who was twelve years old, became my angel: he would wash, go to the market, pick up his little brother from school, and cook. I was able to recover soon. When Luis came back to me, I had been cured. He returned enthusiastic: in Mexico he could dedicate himself to what he liked: directing movies.

– Jeanne, we have to pack everything. We are moving to another country!

FIFTH PART
MEXICO (1946)

It was the first time I got on a plane. The boys were happy and looking out the window:

- Look at the houses, mama. How small they are!”
- Papa, how fast is the plane going?”
- Mama, how does it go up if it weighs so much?”
- Let’s go through the clouds!”

Quick thoughts formed in my head like superimposed images: why did I get on this infernal device? Go slow and low! Oh, that noise: it’s breaking! Why jump? It will fall. It will fall. It will fall. My throat was in my legs and my stomach in my arms. An iron rod crossed my shoulders, crushing my muscles and the back of my neck. I want to get off. I want to get off... My mouth tasted like a desert of mustard. My armpits were soaked and it felt like little icy droplets were running down my back. I was unable to speak or move during the entire flight. My hands clung to the seat. An American woman exclaimed: “It’s wonderful! Wonderful!”. It was so “wonderful” that when we landed it took me several minutes to regain my movement. I was urged to get off the plane.

José Ignacio and Conchita Mantecón were waiting for us at the airport. I knew José Ignacio from Paris. I only met Conchita that day. Luis and José Ignacio went to the same school in Saragossa and they shared their youth at the university of Madrid. During the Spanish Civil War, José escaped to France. In retaliation, the Francoists put Conchita in jail, separating her from her two little daughters. She was imprisoned for two years. When she was released, she reunited with José Ignacio and their daughters in France and they went into exile in Mexico. We would become very close friends.

They got us a furnished apartment near the Chapultepec forest. For a change, we didn’t bring anything with us.

Later I met the Deltoros, the Custodios, the Pittalugas and Eduardo

Ugarte, a great friend of the Mantecóns.

The Deltoros decided to organize dinner even though there were only a few chairs in their apartment. To find a place to sit, I said:

– ¡En esta casa no hay cojones! (In this house, there are no balls!)

All the men shouted at the same time:

– Yes, Juana. Yes there are, and many.

A woman rebuked me:

– Juana, what you say is very ugly.

I did not understand. I explained what I meant. She clarified:

– It is pronounced co-ji-nes. (pillows)

I apologized to the men. They laughed a lot.

We knew many years of poverty. Luis gave me money for food and I tried to spread it over a longer period. I had no leftover money. That's why the day I found thirty thousand pesos in the park I was happy: that money was mine.

Soon we moved to a nice apartment. We had a costume party – throughout his life, Luis loved to dress up–. The men had to go as Juan Tenorio. I discovered the huipiles, the Mexican skirts with their colors as cheerful as the weather. I dressed as a Mexican and the children also dressed up. We had lots of fun.

Two days later Luis was sick with pneumonia. We met with doctor Puche, who taught me how to give injections to Luis: the penicillin caused a tremendous reaction. He got very sick.

Five months later we moved to another apartment on Nilo street. The Alcorizas lent us chairs and we started buying furniture. The concierge of the building was called don Lupe. He was charming.

On the floor above us lived Niñón Sevilla: she wouldn't let us sleep because she would throw scandalous parties every night. We had to get

used to falling asleep with rumbas and zapateados.

Luis Alcoriza always stood behind my husband. He was much younger than Luis. Luis loved him like a son. Alcoriza's parents were actors who did traveling theater. During the Spanish Civil War, Alcoriza worked as a porter in the market of Les Halles de Paris, but he grew up in the theater environment. He became an actor – he portrayed Christ in a movie. And later he would become a film director. He and his wife, Jeannette, met in New York. Jeannette's mother was a magnificent woman (she was the only person whose English I understood without difficulty). When she was widowed she came to live in Mexico with her daughter. She died at the age of ninety. Jeannette was a flamenco dancer known as Raquel Rojas: she was hired in Mexico and it was here that she fell in love with Alcoriza. She doesn't like to tell her age. I know because her mother told me, but I'll keep her secret. The Alcorizas have been married for many years. They live in Cuernavaca now; it seems to me that they have been happy together. Jeannette made her husband discover good literature: she gave him books by excellent authors.

We lived in Nilo when my mother died at the age of eighty-one. I received Georgette's letter in the afternoon. We had a dinner at home that night which was impossible to cancel. I didn't say anything to anybody... at the end of the dinner, when the last guest left, I started to cry. When someone as close as the mother dies and has not been seen for many years, the pain is great, very great. It is also full of nostalgia, of "if I had been with her...", "if I missed her during her illness...", "if...". The following afternoon Luis recommended to me: "Come on, Jeanne, go to the movies with the boys. That will distract you." It was a movie of the dog Lassie. I couldn't stop crying. I did not mourn. When my grandmother died, my mother spent six years wearing black and purple. Shortly after

her mourning was over my brother Maurice died. She then went back to mourning. She told me: "Jeanne, when I die, don't wear black." I obeyed her. When Luis died I wore red. What is the use of wearing black? Color is useless. I don't want my children to mourn me. When I die, I want them to cremate me and throw my ashes in the Cerrada de Félix Cuevas: I always see Luis here. He is here and I am here.

We had many meetings between friends, with a round table with our hands on top; "spiritual" sessions. Luis had the gift to hypnotize. With me, however, he never did. "I don't want to, I don't want to." I already obeyed him in everything. What would have happened to me if, in addition, he let me be hypnotized! He said that in Spain, before we got married, he hypnotized a girl through telepathy. He forced her to go to the café where he was with some of his friends. His brother Alfonso could also hypnotize and, on one occasion, put a friend to sleep that he would never be able to wake up. In Paris, Luis hypnotized Mrs. Tasnon, the mother of my friend Hélène:

– You are a puppy.

The lady began to bark on all fours.

Spirits and hypnotism interested us less and less. Later, our gatherings with friends consisted of getting together to eat and, in the afternoon, the men chatted and drank and the women played canasta.

When I recently arrived in Mexico I saw a boy in shorts in the Chapultepec park. I had just received a letter from my mother in which she harassed me: "Aren't you ashamed to dress your son the way the workers' boys dress, in long pants?" That's why the boy caught my attention:

– Look, Rafael, that boy must be French.

– Indeed ma'am –the father greeted me–. He is French. He was born in

France.

The children became great friends, as did I with the parents. They turned out to be Spanish refugees. Club Mundet was recommended to me. On weekends I made tortilla de patatas and I went to the club with the children. There we saw Jacky –his name was Santiago Pérez Antolinos– and his parents. Jacky now lives in Yucatán. He grows vegetables. Rafael goes to visit him whenever he comes to Mexico.

Forty years ago, Mexico City was wonderful: few cars, a blue sky and shimmering volcanoes. Félix Cuevas Street was almost on the outskirts of the city: in the distance you could see a small town, Coyoacán. All around there were large expanses of land where cows grazed. Herds of sheep wandered through fields planted with corn. A single tram dropped you off in the center. In 1952 we bought the land –Luis had already directed seven films in Mexico and was earning well–. It cost three hundred thousand pesos. At last we stopped being nomads and began to settle down.

I loved going to the studio to watch how they filmed. Very early I would prepare breakfast for Luis, which he then ate in the studio. I dared not to open my mouth. The actors were very punctual with Luis. He controlled them without raising his voice. The tone was enough. Mexican actors speak fast. Luis told them: "Pronounce well. Speak slowly."

I remember anecdotes with the actors. In *El bruto*, Pedro Armendáriz had to carry a heavy sack, which Luis had filled with stones. Armendáriz protested:

– It weighs too much. I'm going to hurt my back. Better to put in some papers instead.

– If papers were put on you, Pedro –Luis explained–, it won't weigh you

down. Your face won't reflect the effort. You have to carry a heavy bag.
Pedro had no choice but to carry stones.

During the filming of *Los ambiciosos*, the main actors were María Félix and Gérard Philippe. Shortly after getting started, Gérard came to Luis:

- Mr. Bunuel, I'm uncomfortable with the love scenes.
- Why?
- I don't like the kisses that Mrs. Félix gives me. She bites me. She sucks me. I can't continue like this.

- Don't worry Gérard, I'm going to fix it. –Luis reassured him.

In the following love scene, Luis explained to María:

- The kiss, María, let it be sweet, soft, without passion.

María Félix is very nice. At that time she was married to a Frenchman, Alex Berger. We often ate at her house. In it, María was completely natural and simple: she would get into the kitchen to supervise the food. Sometimes Alex had all the food brought from France by plane. María, although there were delicacies, she only ate a piece of boiled chicken.

- Why won't you try the food, María? Not even a piece of bread...

- Bread, paté and everything else go to the hips, Jeanne.

She quit tobacco. I was surprised because she smoked a lot:

–You don't smoke anymore? How did you do it?

- A base de huevos. (Huevos translates to eggs.)

- You eat eggs every time you feel like having a cigarette?

She laughed:

- No, Jeanne, in Mexico 'a huevo' means to have force of will.

I met all the actors, musicians, and set designers who revolved around Luis. He liked to film exteriors in the outskirts of the city. He was attracted by the landscapes of Cuernavaca, San José Purúa and Cuautla.

Miroslava was an actress who began to be successful in Mexico. She

was almost a girl, very beautiful. She had something fragile in her personality. I remember her because at another costume party we threw, Miroslava wore the most ingenious costume: from the front she was young and from the back an old woman. Awesome! Rosita Díaz came with a chastity belt. I dressed up as a cannibal. Two days before I bought a bone at the butcher shop. I received the guests with the bone in my mouth.

A month after the party Miroslava committed suicide. Perhaps it was because of an impossible love. I like to think that was the reason. The truth is that I don't know. She would be twenty-five years old.

One thing that impressed me was the visit her father paid to Jorge Negrete in the studio. When he saw him enter, Jorge got up and greeted him by kissing his hand.

- Why did he do that? –I asked Luis in a low voice.

- It's a sign of respect. That deference is used for elders here.

Jorge Negrete was handsome and gentle. The poor man died young, at the age of forty-two, in a hospital in Los Angeles.

Libertad Lamarque acted with Jorge Negrete in *Gran casino*. The last time I saw her in person was at the funeral of Dancingers. She is now eighty years old. She continues to sing well: I heard her on television.

Another actor I remember fondly is Manolo Fábregas. Once, many years ago, he was visiting a friend who lived on a street where there was a "bad" house. When I opened my car, which was parked in front of the house, I bumped into Manolo: he was coming out of there, covering his face with the brim of his hat. I recognized him:

- Jeanne! Please don't say you've seen me here. Don't say anything, nothing.

- Don't worry Manolo. My lips are sealed.

The same week we met at a party. Manolo, seeing me, ran to my side. "Hush" he whispered as he kissed me. His wife approached:

- How often does one kiss and whisper?
- We love each other very much, Lucy...

Last year I met them at Dr. Césarman's office. We greeted each other with love and pleasure.

In the sixties Silvia Piñal came into our lives. My dear Silvia. Regardless of her professional relationship with Luis, we became friends. We often ate at her house –unlike María, she did eat–. She cooked well. Sometimes she would call me to ask me for a recipe. I went to her house for gym class. The teacher commented: "The only one who does it well is Mrs. Buñuel."(!)

Silvia was Gustavo Alatríste's wife back then. Her daughter, Silvia repeated to me: "How I wish mom would change husbands!"

Of all Luis's films my favorite is *Viridiana*. I've seen it several times. Viridiana Alatríste was born, and Luis and I were the godparents. I have seen that the name is unlucky: our goddaughter died seven years ago in an accident. One year ago, Silvia Pasquel's little daughter died: Viridiana. She drowned in the pool at her house. But at that time we did not know of the bad luck of the name.

Viridiana had a Spanish nanny, who was smart and nice (she later became Alatríste's secretary). When we gathered with the Alatrístes we used to stay until dawn. One night, around twelve o'clock, Luis ran out of cigarettes. He asked me: "Buy me some." Viridiana's nanny accompanied me to look for them.

Alatríste and Silvia got divorced. He was a womanizer. Shortly after, he married Sonia Infante. Her father lived across the street. She didn't see him much. Luis and I witnessed her wedding. That day I told her:

"Congratulations, Silvia"; I immediately realized the mistake: "Sorry, Sonia, sorry." I don't know why, but I always made the same mistake. I called the poor thing Silvia. Is it because both names start with S and are two syllables, or is it due to some mysterious psychological process... Viridiana came to our house to visit us. She was a beautiful, intelligent girl.

Silvia married the singer Enrique Guzmán and they had two children. I changed diapers for both of them. Enrique was not very social; when Luis and I went to eat at their house, instead of exchanging ideas with Luis, he would go up to his room and start playing with planes or trains.

Now, someone told me that Alatríste lives with a young woman with whom he has a son.

Silvia calls me frequently; she is affectionate. I can't believe that she is a great-grandmother. Silvia, so young, a great-grandmother! At the Cineteca they paid homage to Luis and inaugurated a statue of him. Silvia called me: "Come on, Jeanne, cheer up. I'm going to pick you up." I said "No." I'm blind. I would need a guide. Also, I wouldn't recognize people. It's better that I'm here, at home in the "bar".

I also liked Raúl Astor, an Argentine actor who did good television shows.

We were invited to have a cocktail at the Russian embassy. They served us vodka; before emptied the glass, they filled it again. It was not possible to know how many glasses had been drunk. I got a jug of water to pour into my glass. They were surprised at what I endured. Among the guests there was a Mexican singer who, in the heat of the drinks, began to sing. He encouraged me and I also sang with great effort. In the middle of the song he fell silent.

- Mrs. Buñuel, I beg you not to sing. I do not mean to offend, but you

sing so badly that I'm out of tune.

I kept my mouth shut.

We hardly ever went to the movies. The movies we saw were private screenings: either in the studios or in the houses of the directors. In a film by Luis, there is a scene in which a man's feet are washed in blood. Visconti asked me:

– Does Buñuel behave like that with you ma'am?

– No, no –I laughed–, at home it's very serious.

And it's true. At home everything was conventional: we never washed our legs with blood or split our retinas with knives.

Once, Luis Alcoriza proposed to me:

– Jeanne, if you like movies so much, why don't you act in one of my films?

My performance was minimal: I had to observe, standing by a window, how some thieves stole something on the opposite sidewalk. I, instead of looking outside, looked at the cameraman. It was my debut and farewell to my career as an actress.

In several of Luis's films, the children and I appear. From afar, of course. For example, in *Los olvidados* I walk down the street.

When a foreign actor or actress came to film in Mexico and called Luis, we invited them to our home. Jeanne Moreau is a woman who at first gives the impression of being someone common, but after, by treating her, she becomes an interesting and attractive woman.

Brigitte Bardot came to our house with her father and her sister. Her father brought us some Parisian truffles, hmm! At the end of the dessert we turned on the turntable and began to dance, he danced very well.



Above: With Juan Luis and Rafael, Gustavo Pittaluga, Ana María Custodio, Eduardo Ugarte, Conchita y José Luis Mantecón and other friends at a costume party. Mexico, 1948. Below: during the filming of *Los olvidados*, 1950. To my right is the director of photography Gabriel Figueroa.



Previous page. Above: Brigitte Bardot came with her father to eat at our home. Mexico, 1961. Below: with Jeanne Moreau in Cuernavaca, 1961.
On this page: with Marilyn Monroe during the filming of *El angel exterminador*. Mexico, 1962.

SIXTH PART
ANIMALS (WITH YOU RATS AND MONKEYS)

I love animals. We understand each other. I like them all except for snakes. I have lived animals there since I was little. In Lille we had the well-known cat Gigi and throughout my life I have always had animals at home. How I would have liked to have a lion! When we lived in Los Angeles we went to the zoo one day to see the lion's cage. I jumped over the barrier to get closer to them and be able to put my hand between the bars to pet them. They put their backs on me and purred, just like cats. As soon as the guard saw me he started yelling at me in English. I didn't understand him, but I imagined he was telling me to get away because they could bite me; that it was forbidden to get so close. I didn't head back until he came up to me and grabbed my arm. Lions don't seem ferocious or scary to me.

At home I did not have lions, but I did have a monkey instead. We lived in Meudon and one night Luis brought him home. I fell in love with him. He was small and docile. Juan Luis loved it. They spent hours playing together. Unfortunately that winter was cold and the animal caught the flu. I didn't know how to take care of him and he died. All three of us miss him.

We also had a crocodile. When we just got to New York, we lived in a hotel and Luis gave him to me. It had just been born and it was beautiful. We accommodated him in the bathtub with a little water to make him feel comfortable. His life was brief: when we returned we found him dead. The maid found it when taking a bath and got scared. She poured boiling water over him in order to kill him. We moved hotels. It is not reasonable to stay in a hotel where crocodiles are killed.

I have had a bilingual toucan: if we asked him: "*Tu veux de la viande?*", he would answer: "*Non.*" "*¿Quieres carne?*", "*Si.*"

We also had two ducks but we gave them away because they were very dirty. And now I remember the miniscule shoes that mama made for

Dalou. She made them in order to stop bothering the concierge: when we got back from the street, we would put them on so that they wouldn't stain the wax on the steps of the building's stairs.

How I love parrots! The second one we had was brought by Luis. It was an actor in *Robinson Crusoe*. At the end of the film, Luis asked: "And what is going to happen to the parrot?" The owner gave it to him. He called me mama and imitated my sons. He lived in his cage. Luis always took him out at aperitif time to take him to the "bar". On one occasion we forgot to put him in his cage before going to the dining room. Mischievous that he was, he escaped through the window into the garden, climbed over the fence and jumped onto the street. I went after him, but my parakeet was gone. There was just a man running: he took it. I couldn't reach it. Shortly after, a parrot appeared on television saying: "Mama, mama". I went crazy: "Luis, it's my parakeet. He's looking for me." "Don't be silly, Jeanne. How can you know it's yours? Hundreds of parakeets say mama." Later we had fifteen more parrots. The one I remember most is Coco. Rafael and I bought it downtown when it was still very tiny. It cost us five pesos. I had a lot of patience and taught him to speak. Coco baptized me with the name of Jorgito. He foresaw my arrival ten blocks away and would say: "Jorgito, Jorgito is coming." Even now I don't understand how he could sense my arrival. Coco was like a person: he was in love with Rafael's female friends, but only the American ones. He climbed on their shoulders and gave them kisses. Once, a French producer came to our house. Coco climbed on his shoulder and bit his cheek, making the poor man bleed. It was the only time he behaved like this. At five in the afternoon he would yell at the cook: "Chole, Chole, my coffee." We gave him coffee with milk. He lived for many years and died of sunstroke.

I had an alcoholic dog: Vip. He loved whiskey.

Between dogs and their masters a very intimate relationship is esta-

blished. Without the possibility of spoken communication there is the expression of feelings: the dogs, after Luis died, no longer wanted to enter his room. While he was in the hospital (alive), they did enter his room. I don't know how they knew about his death, but from then on they didn't show their noses around there again. Luis always liked the little white rats. In Paris he had a cage with rats; he had to go to Spain and asked mama to take care of them. We put them in the dining room of the apartment. One night papa was woken up by a touch on his shoulder.

– Constance, do you want anything?

Mama didn't answer. She slept. Papa turned on the lamp and was perplexed: in the bed, next to the pillow, there was a rat. He woke up mama and they went to the dining room. The rats had opened the cage door; the cage was empty. They woke me up and in the middle of the night we started looking for rats all over the apartment. We managed to find them and return them to their cage. Papa placed an iron –back then they were really made of iron and were heavy– over the cage door so that they couldn't escape again.

Here in Mexico Luis had seventeen rats. He had a large cage made of about two meters by one fifty. The problem was that every six months the rats gave birth to six or seven rats each. I was tired of cleaning the cage. We decided to get rid of them. Luis bought a basket and a lot of cheese. We released them along the old Cuernavaca highway.

SEVENTH PART
LIFE AS A COUPLE (1926-1983)

Once, I said to Luis in all sincerity:

“Oh, Luis, how I would like to sleep with another man! To compare if there are different ways of making love.”

He got upset:

– Shut up, Jeanne. Don’t say such nonsense!

He liked to make love in the afternoons. He would close the bedroom door and put a sweater on the doorknob so that no one would look through the lock. When he came to visit his sister Conchita, Luis would invent something for her to go out in the afternoon:

– Concha, please go downtown to get me some book...

When the coast was clear he felt calm. He was very puritanical in matters related to love. I was never unfaithful to him: I loved him. However, I have always liked handsome men. I do still. I was in love with everyone; with pediatrician Rafael; with Moreno Villa; with Gustavo Pittaluga. Nothing ever happened because I had Luis by my side and I never wanted to hurt him. It was just flirting.

Pittaluga was a composer and did the music for some of Luis’s films. He was married to Ana María Custodio. They both died (everyone dies; I knock on wood). In addition to being attractive, Gustavo was also friendly. One morning when I was walking near his house and I had plenty of time, it occurred to me to stop by to say hello. Ana María had left. I chatted with Gustavo for a while and returned home.

– I came home from the Pittaluga house, Luis. Gustavo sends his regards.

Luis turned pale of rage:

– What are you saying, Jeanne? You slept with him!

– No man, calm down. How does it occur to you! I went to say hello, as Ana went out. I was only with Gustavo for a moment.

– Why did you have to go see him!

– Luis, if what you think had happened, do you think I would be dressed like this every day? And would I have told you where I came from?

Luis did not answer me. He went up to his room to look for a gun. He went down with it and called Gustavo on the phone in front of me.

– Gustavo, I’m going to your house right now to kill you.

Gustavo managed to calm him down but it cost him work to do so. That’s how jealous Luis was.

When we were just married, in Madrid, I am convinced that Luis had a girlfriend. Here in Mexico Luis was faithful to me. Federico, a film director, told me:

– Yes, Luis wanted to... he could sleep with most of the Mexican actresses: they all want to work with him.

Sometimes he would go to shoot in France, staying there for the duration of the filming. Because of my fear of flying, I preferred to stay at home. I no longer remember the year or the name of the actress who made me very upset. It happened a long time ago... I found out because, when he was filming in Cuernavaca, Luis asked me to open all his letters. In case that it was something important, I was to call him on the phone and read it to him. Among the letters there happened to be one from a woman who lived in Paris, in the Place des Vosges: “If you continue to ignore me”, the woman wrote to my husband, “I’m going to take your son as a lover...”. Juan Luis was twenty years old and lived in Paris. I turned into a lioness. I called Luis and I read him the letter. Luis came home immediately.

– Calm down Jeanne, please.

– If that woman touches my son I’ll kill her.

– She will not. I am writing to her right now. She wants to cause

problems between you and me. Let me fix things.

I calmed down. We did not discuss that issue again.

Luis was kind to me. He took care of me and knew how to love me. Our marriage lasted fifty years. Nowadays everyone is separated. My two children are divorced! Life as a couple also has its hard times and no one wants to suffer a little anymore. My parents didn’t get along; I remember that Georgette once asked to mama:

– If you’re always fighting, why don’t you get divorced?

– You shouldn’t deprive children of their father or mother – mama answered– you don’t do that. You have to be patient.

I think that the patience of the women of my mother’s time or mine was due to the fact that women did not work outside of the home: their job consisted of being good mothers and housewives. Now, women prefer to be independent and that is why they divorce.

I never thought of divorcing Luis; he was jealous and dominant, but also tender, had a sense of humor, and he was cheerful. Maybe my docile nature contributed to the fact that we almost never got upset with each other, or at least, that he never got angry with me. One of the biggest upsets was caused by a foolish thing: Luis, every time he came in from the garden, he was careful to clean the soles of his shoes. But this time he didn’t. I had just cleaned the carpet and he made it dirty again. For the first time I yelled at him:

– Look what you have done!

– It does not matter. This house is mine and I do what I want!

I was outraged...!

I obeyed Luis a lot. Sometimes, I think, it is a shame that I did not show character. I’ll tell the story of the piano as an example: Jeannette Alcoriza gave me a piano that we placed in the hall. When French friends came we

sang *La Marseillaise*. Every day I sat down to play; the music went up the hall and filled the house.

Months later, during a dinner, already at dawn and with enough drinks in her, Cotito, the daughter of the Mantecons, proposed to Luis:

– I'll trade the piano with you for three bottles of champagne.

I laughed at the incongruity of the proposal but Luis replied:

– Deal.

They closed the deal with a handshake.

I thought it would stay, that it was a joke. The next morning the doorbell rang: it was Cotito with a moving truck and the three bottles of champagne. I did not want to see how they took away my piano. I was furious for not daring to say: "This piano is mine and it will not leave this place." Of course I kept quiet.

Luis's conscience bothered him. Shortly after, he bought me a sewing machine and gave me money to buy fabric. He also gave me a very fine German accordion which I still have.

Luis did not like to talk about himself. He gave few interviews.

– Luis, this journalist is calling. He wants to see you.

– No, I will not receive him.

– Luis, if everyone refused to give interviews like you, the poor people would lose their jobs. It's their way of earning a living.

– It's true, it's true. –He answered– But I have nothing to say anyway.

I had to reject the interview. I understood Luis: he was reserved and jealous of his private life. He didn't even share it with us: his wife and his sons.

He locked himself in the study to read. He read a lot. Sometimes I would ask him to borrow a book: "Don't read that, Jeanne. You won't

understand it." (When I was little, I used to secretly read my parents' books. They were worried that I would read things that were inappropriate for my age. So to avoid being scolded I hid the book behind a painting in my room. I always liked reading. In Mexico Jeannette and I exchanged books.) He did not tell me about his readings.

He only traveled for work reasons –he was also afraid of the plane. Before getting on, he drank a martini–. He was a homebody, like me.

Since Madrid, Luis established the following rule: he had the right to have friends over at home and I did not. The boys were not allowed to invite their friends either. Luis's friends locked themselves in the "bar" with him and usually he asked me to leave them alone. I made friends with an Italian woman who started coming to the house. "Tell her not to come." One afternoon she came back: "Jeanne, I have brought you a present." How could one not invite her in? Ten minutes later Luis appeared:

– It's already seven.

– Oh, don Luis, don Luis, please, in a moment Pepe is coming for me.

– Good.

When her husband arrived to pick her up, Luis stepped outside. They knew each other. He invited him in and offered him a whiskey. But for my friend he didn't.

If I went out, I had to come home at five o'clock. He would invariably wait for me at the door if I spent a few minutes past five asking me for explanations.

He was jealous of my activities: I quit playing piano, I quit doing gymnastics, and when the children left and I discovered bookbinding, I also quit that. I bound several of his favorite books. I had fun designing the covers. Luis found the excuse for me to stop going: classes ended at seven in the evening. "I'm not calm if you're on the street at that time.

Something can happen to you, Jeanne. This city is not safe. I quit taking classes.

All my friends told me: “Only you can live with him”. (I think that, apart from me, his sister Conchita could also have been able to. She had practice with her husband, who was worse than Luis. In *Él*, Luis takes the subject of jealousy to the extreme.) I was always fine like this. It is now, when I look back, that I regret my weakness. I could have opened a rhythmic gymnastics school in Mexico. I might have become a sculptor. Since I was little I liked to sculpt: with the crumbs of bread I made figures of parrots, cats, dogs, lions. I let them dry in the sun and they looked good. I had ease of aptitude for everything manual. My two sons make sculptures, especially Juan Luis. They tell me: “It’s from you that we inherit the artistic, mama”.

Luis encouraged me in cooking and sewing. I inherited the cooking skills of my mother. I think I have become the best paella maker in Mexico. “Buy yourself pretty aprons.” He would ask me.

My happiness always consisted of Luis, the children, and the house.

He didn’t talk to me about money or anything related to it. We had an account in Switzerland –small, I think– and we lived comfortably. I am not a spendthrift woman. Perhaps because I did not grow up in a wealthy environment, or perhaps because, except for the hard times in America, money and spending it was never part of my thinking. If I needed something I would ask Luis for money. He would open his wallet and give it to me. I bought fabrics to make my dresses. When they were finished, Luis commented: “It suits you well!”. I like everything made of leather: bags, shoes, belts. With two bags –one for the day and one for going out– I’m satisfied. I also like jewelry. In stores I always stopped at the jewelry section; I spent pleasant moments looking, but I rarely buying anything.

Luis did not spend at all. Once, Lucero Isaac –Alberto’s wife– met him in Liverpool and bought him a white suit. Luis did not want to accept it:

– It’ll stay hanging on the hanger, Lucero. Thank you, but return it.

– I do not consent that you despise my gift, Luis. If you do not accept I am offended.

He only wore it once. He was not interested in clothes. He had a terrific tuxedo that he wore in Italy at the film festival. When he died, as it didn’t fit his sons, I gave it to the carpenter. The occasion where he would wear a tie was rare. He wore a sweater with the tie.

The only thing he spent money on was his collection of pistols. He came to have twenty.

We were not luxurious. We did not care about velvets, latest model cars, complicated electronic devices... We were satisfied with the house, simply decorated, and good food and drink.

I used to drive in Los Angeles: every morning I would drop the boys off at school. I then put my coat over my nightgown so that I could get back into bed afterwards. Mama had me get used to having breakfast in bed – she appeared with a tray on which were a cup of coffee with milk, croissants and jams–. I have never been able to get rid of that habit, so when I came back from the school, I would prepare breakfast and go back to bed to enjoy it. In Mexico, Luis bought a car, but for the first few months he wouldn’t let me drive it: “They drive differently here than in Los Angeles. It’s dangerous.” I gave it up and went by bus from then on, until one day Luis had a cramp while driving.

– Please Jeanne, you drive. Be very careful.

– Yes Luis, don’t worry. I know how to drive.

Of course we got home safe. Luis realized that I could drive in Mexico. I immediately went to get the permit and Luis bought me a car. How happy I was!

My husband didn't talk to me about politics. It seems to me that he was anti-everything: anti-Franco, anti-republican, anti-monarchist, anti-dictatorship. I don't care about politics. I remember the words of the German soldier in the war of fourteen:

– Why do we French and German men have to kill each other? I would like the leaders of our countries to kill each other and leave us alone.

I agree with him.

I never voted. I don't know if my passport is French or Mexican. I became a Mexican. Of the family, only my granddaughter and I are Mexican.

As a child I knew how to cry: if they scolded me, I would cry; if a story was sad, I cried; but Luis taught me not to cry: he hated crying. If tears slipped down my face, he would wipe them away with the back of his hand: "Don't cry, Jeanne". When he died I couldn't shed a tear: I had forgotten how. In the Gayosso funeral home I was running from one side to the other with my eyes dry. Now, the tears only come to my eyes when I hear the beating of the drums of the soldiers. Without the drums it is impossible for me to cry. Luis didn't cry either. The only time I thought I heard him sob was when he found out about the death of his mother. He got in the shower and I heard it.

Sometimes I wonder: if I were born again, would I marry again? Maybe not: I could live a life of my own, with all my likes and hobbies. But I don't know. I had a wonderful time with Luis. When taking stock of our long life together, I see that most of the time we were happy. We had joy. Mama was right: marriage lasts if you have patience and determination. Ours lasted because in addition to patience and commitment, there was always love.

EIGHTH PART

RETURN TO EUROPE (1959)

When I left Europe in 1939, I did not know that it would take twenty years before I could return. Luis was in Madrid; I would meet him there. I got so nervous on the plane that I sat in the first seat that I found. A kind stewardess came to look for me: "Are you Mrs. Buñuel? This is not your place ma'am. You travel first class." My flight companion turned out to be an American my age. I noticed how she squeezed her hands and often looked out the window. We hadn't taken off yet. I asked her:

– Are you afraid of flying?

– Oh, yes!

– Me too.

She then called the stewardess:

– One whiskey for the lady and another for me please.

We started drinking. It was a wonderful flight: my friend and I drove away our fear with alcohol. When I arrived at the Barajas airport I was so drunk that I didn't recognize my son Juan Luis. My friend and I said goodbye swearing eternal love to each other. We would never see each other again.

Upon arriving at the hotel I immediately went to bed. Everything was spinning and my side hurt. Luis soon arrived, and when he saw me like this he got scared. I confessed to him: "I've got a hangover and my back is killing me." Luis managed to get a doctor specialized in bullfighters to come over and examine me. "Ma'am, you should take off that iron girdle. It's outrageous: it's putting pressure on your liver and kidneys." I followed his advice and I felt better.

I used that girdle on the recommendation of doctor D'Harcourt –a Spanish refugee–, who treated me in Mexico. I went to his office once a week where he infiltrated my spine. To distract me he always told me stories that, according to him, were true.

A woman came to the consultation with her daughter:

– Doctor, I'm very worried. Look: my daughters' breasts are two little lemons (I felt the young woman's breasts). Mine, doctor, are like grapefruits (I felt the woman's breasts).

– Madam, you are right.

– What could this be, doctor?

– It is a fruit disease, ma'am.

When I returned from Europe I told him that I no longer wore his horrendous girdle. He agreed.

In Madrid I met Luis Miguel Dominguín's wife, Lucía Bosé. She worked with Luis on his film. They often invited us to eat at their house. Miguel Bosé was a rude boy who used horrible swear words. I remember him well: thin and blond, with the face of an angel and the vocabulary of a devil. Miguel expresses his worry to Luis about the filming of his wife's love scenes:

– Please, Luis, don't let Lucía kiss the actor on the mouth.

Luis understood Dominguín well. He was jealous like a Moor.

– Yes, I understand. Come on, man, don't worry. Lucía won't kiss anyone on the mouth.

Dominguín gave me a lot of prints that I found horrible. I threw them away. Later I found out that they were from Goya! Jeanne –I said to myself– what a fool you are! By the way, Dominguín's brother fell in love with a Mexican actress and went to Mexico, leaving everything in Spain so he could be with her. After some time she abandoned him. She left him for another man. He committed suicide.

Lucía and Dominguín were a close couple. Now, I found out that they separated years ago and that Dominguín has remarried. Little Miguel has become a famous singer.

We went to Saragossa to visit my mother-in-law. Her physical appearance was the same as before, but her mind had deteriorated: she suffered from dementia. She didn't recognize Luis. During the visit she showed me a photo of him and her: "Look, this is my son." Then she asked me to accompany her to her room: "Close that door well. That man who is in the living room is going to steal everything I have." That man was Luis.

We were told that they had to keep watch on her: she had left her house without being noticed. Since she did not know who she was or where she lived and she wandered around the city until she was recognized. They got pretty scared. She believed that everyone wanted to steal her stuff. She could read the same magazine over and over again without getting tired of it. She immediately forgot what she read. She occupied herself in knitting. Penélope, Leonardo Buñuel's wife, undid the fabric at night. Forgetful that she was, she started knitting all over again every afternoon.

When we said goodbye, she told me:

– Goodbye, Juana.

Leonardo got excited:

– She recognizes you!

We left the visit impressed. Luis was thoughtful. I understand his sadness: his mother was alive, but without memory it was as if she was dead. I went to Barcelona, to my sister-in-law Margarita's house... I had a great time! Barcelona is a city that embraces you; it's full of life. Margarita and I get along wonderfully. Five days later Luis called me:

– Jeanne, come to Madrid.

– It's so nice here, Luis. I want to stay a few more days.

– You can't, Jeanne. You need to be in Madrid tomorrow.

– Why?

– It's difficult to explain it over the phone. I'm just telling you that it's

urgent. Take the train tonight and I'll pick you up at the station. Kisses. Goodbye.

He hung up.

Without any alternative, I packed my suitcase. He was waiting for me at the station. Of course, I didn't understand the urgent need for my presence in Madrid: he simply couldn't live without me.

We arrived in Paris on the night of May 1st. I remember it very well: I immediately called Georgette and we agreed to see each other the next day. Since 1939, we had only seen each other once, when she visited us in Mexico. We took her to Acapulco then. "Jeanne, you live in paradise." The beer-drinking donkey from La Roqueta amused her. She also liked the Mexican beer.

On the 2nd of May I went to her house. When I went through the door, I went through twenty years: the dining room, the sofas, and the paintings were those of my parents' house. With the furniture, Georgette had caught the atmosphere of our childhood. My sister was not the same slim young woman she used to be. Her eyes no longer reflected illusions or desires. She liked to eat well and, in her solitude, she became addicted to alcohol; she had gotten fat. Her character had never been easy. In that she resembled my mother and several women from the maternal family. They say that my great-grandmother was so bad that her daughter, hoping to get rid of her, made her favorite cake full of broken needles. She didn't even get indigestion. Juan Luis lived with Georgette. He told me how sour his aunt's character was: "She has become very touchy."

Touchy or moody; Georgette was a second mother to me. Meeting her again was a great joy. Behind her harsh ways she did have a huge heart.

In the afternoon my husband calls me:

– Come to Hernando Viñes' house.

– I'm with Georgette.

– Georgette lives in Paris. You have a lot of days in which you can see each other. Viñes is leaving tonight and wants to see you.

– Agreed.

I regret having obeyed again. I hold that small grudge against Luis. I know he didn't do it on purpose: how could he have guessed what would happen?

– Georgette, I have to go. At what time will we meet tomorrow?

– Jeanne, I'll be at the hospital tomorrow.

– What?

– They are going to operate me.

– On what?

– The lung.

– Is it serious? Why didn't you write me about your illness?

– I didn't want to worry you. You were so far away...

– I'll pick you up. I'll be with you.

– Thank you. I'll wait for you at seven o'clock.

I left.

On May 3rd I took her to the hospital. I accompanied her to check in and took her to her room. I was surprised to see that the nurses were black. I helped her put on her robe. She was pale. Stretcher-bearers came to take her to the operating room. I hugged her:

– Have courage, Georgette. Everything will be fine. I'll wait for you here.

– Bye, Jeanne.

After an hour I started walking along the hallway: back and forth, back and forth. One cigarette after the other. Two hours later a doctor stopped

me.

– Excuse me, are you related to Georgette Rucar?

– Yes doctor, I'm her sister. How did the operation go? I was already worried.

The doctor took me by the arm:

– Come with me please.

He took me into a room at the end of the hall. It smelled like disinfectant. It had no windows, just a rectangular table with six chairs and screens on the walls to place X-rays. Two doctors entered.

– Take a seat ma'am. What we are going to tell you is painful. Your sister did not survive the operation. Unfortunately she died in the operating room.

I was slow to react. They offered me a glass of water. They repeated the news. Georgette could not die! We still had so much to talk about. It wasn't fair. At last I yelled:

– You killed her. You killed her. Killed her.

She died of lung cancer. She never smoked.

Poor Georgette. Her life was sad. In her youth she hardly went to parties; since she was seventeen years older than me, on many occasions, she was in charge of taking care of me when my parents went out. My mother was so harsh that she would wait for her when she was done working. Despite my mother's excesses, she managed to have an actual boyfriend. They would marry at the end of 1914. That year the war began. Her fiancée was called up: "We will marry in the summer of 1915 –he assured her–. By then we will have defeated the *Boches*." Georgette sewed her trousseau: she embroidered the initials on sheets and towels. They told her that her boyfriend died at the front.

She was twenty-three years old when the war began: old enough to be

aware and to suffer during that time. With our father so far away and our brothers being soldiers, my mother leaned on her. In 1918 it was Georgette who helped papa to maintain the house. Maurice and Gaston were sick and couldn't work.

I was lucky to be her younger sister: she protected me. "I don't want what happened to me to happen to you." She protected my courtship with Luis. Thanks to Georgette I entered madame Poppart's academy and I was able to have a normal youth.

She told me that before the Second World War she had another boyfriend: an American. "We were in love. He proposed to me and I accepted. He died in Switzerland of a heart attack."

I don't know if Georgette died a virgin: I hope she has known love. Two days after her death, her boss —she worked as a secretary for a politician— sent her a box of chocolates: "I hope you recover soon."

Of the family only Gaston and I remained. He lived in Paris with Bertha and their daughter. He was a hairdresser. His salon was in Ménilmontant. The first few years he did well. He progressed and managed to buy a car. In 1959 he complained that the new fashion for long hair had lowered his clientele: "They used to come once a week, religiously."

We had to dismantle Georgette's house. The owners of the apartment no longer wanted to rent it. Juan Luis had to find another place to live. Gaston was not interested in anything: "My house is small and those huge pieces of furniture don't fit me. Do whatever you want with the stuff, Jeanne." Mexico was so far away that it was impossible for me to transport the furniture. Besides, I was so distraught that it didn't occur to me to put the things in storage or take them with me by air cargo or by boat. Luis preferred not to get involved. Juan Luis couldn't help me either; he didn't know about those things.

I remember the dining room. My parents had it done before they got married: the oval table, two sideboards, and twelve chairs. All carved wood. I called an antique dealer to appraise it: "Ma'am, they are magnificent pieces. However, at this time they are devalued. They take up too much space for modern apartments." I gave the dining room to the janitor of the building.

Mama loved copper. The kitchen walls were lined with copper pots and pans; I also gave them away.

An enormous album with carved bronze covers disappeared. I don't know where the money went, it must have been stolen. Hidden among the sheets in the linen closet I found an envelope with fifteen Louis d'or's from 1850. I brought them to Mexico. I gave one to father Julián and another to Andrea Valeria.

Besidem the Louises, I only brought a knife to cut bread (the gift I gave my mother with my first salary as a gym teacher (it only cost me fifteen old francs); a small tablecloth and a pepper mill. That's what I have left of my parents' belongings.

Paris disgusted me. Of course Georgette's death contributed to my displeasure. It changed so much in my absence that I didn't recognize it: it wasn't my calm Paris. The Parisians became monsters of antipathy. Perhaps the Second World War killed their joy in living. The truth is that everyone seemed hateful and foolish to me: from the waiter in the *bistrot* to the shop assistants.

Only Héléne Moschos and Héléne Tasnon remained in my world. I tried to find Héléne Moschos, but no one could tell me where she lived. I returned to my street: some constructions had been replaced by modern buildings. The stores had different owners. The receptions had new concierges. There was not a single neighbor left who knew me.

The only satisfaction I got from that visit to Paris was seeing Héléne

Tasnou. For years we kept in touch by mail. I called her:

– Hélène, this is Jeanne.

– What a surprise! Where are you calling from? I can hear you perfectly.

– From Paris.

– You are here! Welcome! What a joy, come to my apartment.

Within ten minutes I was at her home. We had changed. In twenty-four years people change. We were both surprised to consider ourselves “well” aged. Hélène still had the same laugh and enthusiasm that she used to have. She showed me her refrigerator with pride. It seemed tiny to me. I thought of the difference between Europe and America. In Mexico the refrigerators did not draw our attention.

We talked non-stop. We remembered the jokes we used to make; the gym classes; the *choucroutes*; the boyfriends; my parents; her parents. The room was overrun by our youth.

She told me about her life in detail: the disappearance of her Jewish husband, the story of the little girl she tried to adopt. “I never got married again.”

She told me about loneliness:

– I’m alone now, Jeanne. The people I love the most are miles away: you live in Mexico, my brother Paul and his family in Canada, and Momo is a priest. Gymnastics helps me to live. I am a teacher and I supervise some academies.

– Tell me about Momo, how did he become a priest?

– Maurice, our Momo, is a cleric. A close friend died, and of course he went to the funeral. He wanted to accompany him until the last moment. He stood at the edge of the hole as they lowered the coffin. It was raining. Momo leaned out to see how they were throwing the first shovel of soil. He then slipped and fell on top of the coffin. Luckily he didn’t break

anything but he says he felt something in his soul, a “silent voice, a voice that called me. I knew that I was ignorant of heaven. God was asking me to leave my former way of life; so frivolous and banal. Having fallen into the grave meant that I had to bury that life; to be born again to God.” Momo looked for a priest and told him about his vocation. He had a hard time getting accepted, but he made it. He entered the seminary and after five years he was ordained a priest. He is happy.

– And Paul?

– Paul is married and has three children in Canada and has his business.

When Luis came to pick me up, he was surprised to find us in the dark: we forgot to turn on the light. We were in different times.

We parted with many kisses. We would not see each other again.

We did see Paul. He visited us in Mexico with his whole family. He is a grandfather now.

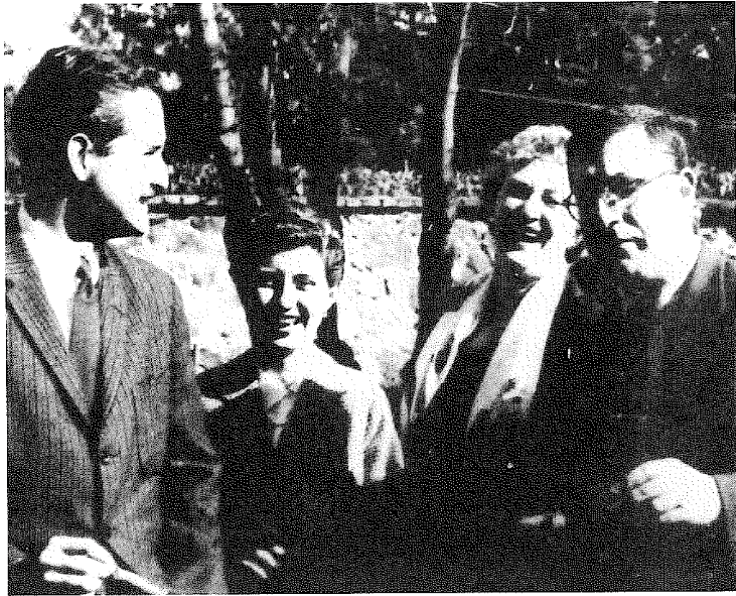
I recently received a postcard from Momo:

My dear Jeanne,

It saddens me to inform you of Hélène’s death. She left us in March 1989. She was eighty-one years old. I know the friendship that united you. I send you a very, very strong hug...

I would like to write him back to offer my condolences and to ask him to tell me how my friend died, but my eyesight is no longer any good.

We flew to Spain from Paris. Luis had to finish his film. Two weeks later we took the plane to return home.



Previous page. Above: With Carlos Fuentes and Juan Antonio Bardem.

Below: Margarita Buñuel laughs at my way of drinking cava.

On this page: With Luis at the Mexico airport on our return from Europe, 1960.

NINTH PART
DEATH OF LUIS (1983)

We met father Julián at the wedding of Alatríste and Sonia Infante. He is the son of Spaniards (his father had bakeries in Mexico). He became our friend, especially Luis's. The first time I saw him in his cassock was at his mother's wake, because he always comes home in lay clothes. He was very wonderful when Luis got sick; he came to see him every day. His visits did him a lot of good. At five in the afternoon, Luis looked at his watch. If his father had not arrived at five past five, Luis began to worry: "What time will he come?". He was rarely late. He knew the exact punctuality of Luis and tried to respect it.

Some people don't like father Julián. That's why they talk bad about him. They say he's "weird". I do not think so. If I thought like that, then Luis would also have been "weird": all his life he preferred chats between men and had his intimate friends –Dalí, Federico García Lorca, Peinado, etc.–. But Luis was not homosexual. On the contrary: beautiful women always made him sigh; he enjoyed making love. That he wasn't such a womanizer and was so faithful to me was because of his principles and the love he had for me.

It seems to me that the reason why he always excluded me both from his intimate conversations with his friends and his intellectual life was because of his machismo: Luis was a jealous macho. His wife had to be some kind of immature girl-woman. He never talked to me about his projects, dreams or scripts, about how to manage money, nor about politics or religion. We shared neither ideas nor responsibilities. He decided everything: where to live, the hours to eat, our trips, the education of the children, my affections and my friendships. I always celebrate my wits, the food that I prepared for him (daily, since we got married), and the clothes that I made. He encouraged me in embroidery and sewing: both are done at home. He was always affectionate and he protected me. I know that this type of relationship is no longer in style

among couples now; that young women would exclaim: "How horrible." For me it was not a horror, I was really happy. Who doesn't like being protected by the man they love?

Luis locked himself up to talk about religion with father Julián. "Juana, leave." If it wasn't for the father, I wouldn't have known what they were discussing. He told me: "Luis knows more about religion than I do: he discusses theology, saintology, Mariology. He has in depth knowledge of the history of the English and it's doctrines."

Up to the age of sixteen Luis received communion daily. In Madrid, he rebelled against the catholic English and its priests. He detested its spiritual power and its wealth. I already told you about the serious problem we had when baptizing Juan Luis. I don't think that he has confessed to father Julián in the past few months. He said: "I'm an atheist, thank God." Of course he didn't receive the last rites.

He began to get sick after President Miguel de Madrid visited him on February 22, 1983, Luis's birthday. I remember that I offered him:

– Do you want a square egg, Mr. President?

His companions, including Alberto Isaac, were stunned. Luis was the only one to laugh:

– My wife is the only one capable of making square hard-boiled eggs. I took the egg to Mr. De la Madrid. He ate it. They took several photos of us. They are the last ones of Luis.

Little by little he had difficulty walking. I tried to be next to him when he showered, in case his legs should fail. He placed one of his pistols in the nightstand drawer with a sealed envelope: TO BE OPENED WHEN I DIE. I imagined that he thought of suicide during his illness. We opened the envelope after his death. There was a note: "Don't blame anyone for my death. I am the only one responsible. Luis Buñuel."





Previous page. Above: with Octavio Paz. Below: with Miguel de la Madrid and father Julián at home, February 1983.

On this page: happy paella making for friends. Below: at home joking around.

He was diabetic. His health gradually worsened: his legs began to fail him and then his eyes followed. It irritated him that he couldn't read. We hired a nurse to help me bathe him and take care of him. He wouldn't let her bathe him. "Come on, don Luis, if you weren't born yesterday..." "No." Poor Luis: desperate, without books, and outings. He even had difficulties to speak. Only father Julián's visits have him the opportunity to escape for a while, every afternoon, from his illness. I tried not to go out. I knew that it was comforting for Luis to know I'm close. Once, taking advantage of father Julián's visit, I went out:

– Luis, I have to go to the doctor. It won't be long. I'll be back in an hour.

I kissed him. He began to cry. Those tears flooded into my heart. It was the second and last time I saw him cry. How weak he was! When our dog Tristana died, he commented to me: "It's funny, Jeanne. When I found out about my brother's death, I didn't cry. On the other hand, I did cry for Tristana. She lived with us for eight years." Life is sad.

About ten days before he died, Luis told father Julián: "I would like Jeanne to die before me. What is she going to do by herself, the poor thing?" And yes, how to imagine life without his support, without his presence? But I survived him, and here I am, in our house, alone. But I'm not alone, really. Luis is still present in my head and in my heart. I always see him here, at home. I don't quite encompass his absence.

Luis got worse. I received a telegram from Rafael: "I'm coming tomorrow to see papa."

– Luis, Rafael is coming to see you.

– Yes. He will come to see me die.

– What you say is stupid, Luis. He's coming on vacation, to be with us.

Rafael arrived in the morning. That same afternoon, Luis entered a diabetic coma. The doctor ordered for him to go to the hospital. They took

eighteen liters of water out of him. He was unconscious for more than twenty-four hours. At last he regained consciousness. He asked me:

- Jeanne, give me a cigarette.
 - There are no cigarettes, Luis.
 - Yes, there is tobacco in the drawer of the nightstand.
 - Luis, we're not at home. You got sick and we are in the hospital.
 - In which?
 - In the English.
 - How much will it cost the boys? (Luis always thought of his children.)
- Dr. Césarman stopped to see him.
- Doctor, I'd like a cigarette.
 - Of course, don Luis.
- The doctor offered him one. He smoked it with pleasure.

On July 29, 1983, in the morning, the nurse placed him on his side so that his body could rest from its previous position. I brought a chair to the head of the bed and squeezed his hands in mine. After a while I felt that something was bothering him:

- How are you Luis?
- I'm dying.

At that moment I noticed that his pulse stopped. Without letting go, I rang the bell and yelled for help. Within seconds, doctors and nurses entered the room. Nothing could be done: Luis was dead. I stayed by his side, holding his hands.

The wake was in Gayosso organized by Rafael. Juan Luis couldn't come. He was directing a film in Paris. Not anyone from the press or strangers was allowed to come in. De la Madrid sent as his representative Alberto Isaac, General Director of Cinematography, and a family friend.

It seems to me that I already told about my inability to cry. Perhaps,

when the whole body becomes pain, one is incapable of crying. I walked from one side of the wake to the other, dressed in red.

Anita Mantecón was sobbing, mourning. Several people went to offer their condolences to her, believing her to be his widow.

I went home with Néstor. Rafael ate with Alcoriza and joined me later. I no longer remember who came to see us or what happened in the first days. I couldn't get used to Luis not being at home or in the hospital. I couldn't think "He's dead, he doesn't exist anymore." Still, six years later, I can't think of it. Rafael told me:

- Mama, I have to leave now. I can't stay any longer.
- Go, go. I understand.

The children have their lives and their obligations. I had mine, without Luis. I still hear his voice: "Jeanne, where are you?"

Among his papers I found a letter that was written for me. I keep it with great affection. In it he tells me: "Jeanne, you have been the woman of my life."

TENTH PART
THE CHILDREN

Before we got married I went to Spain with Luis. He took advantage of the trip to take me to his house in Saragossa and to introduce me to his family. One afternoon when we were chatting in the living room, his brother Alfonso, the “señorito” (as single guys are called in Spain) rang the bell for the maid to come.

He was sitting on the sofa, smoking comfortably.

– Did señorito Alfonso call?

– Yes. Bring me the newspaper, please.

The maid took the newspaper from a side table next to the sofa and gave it to him:

– Is there anything else the señorito needs?

– No, thanks. You can leave.

I was stunned: Alfonso had forced the servant to come from the back of the house so that he did not have to stretch out his arm... I commented my impression to Luis later and he replied:

– You’re right, Jeanne. My children will not be señoritos. It’s not Alfonso’s fault. That’s how they brought us up. Imagine that at the age of twelve, when I went to violin classes in front of the house, the nanny accompanied me across the street so that I wouldn’t bother carrying the violin. That’s the custom in Spain. If I hadn’t left it would seem normal to me as well. I would do the same as Alfonso.

xl taught my children to make their beds, to wash their dishes and their underwear and too cook. Luis agreed. Although we had service in the house, they did not have the right to ring the bell to ask, for example, for a glass of water; they had to get it in the kitchen themselves. We were able to teach them these things because we did those ourselves as well. I think it helped them. They don’t have service now; they don’t need it. They learned to be self-sufficient and not depend on anyone to solve those little things in life. I already told how Juan Luis helped me in Los

Angeles when I got phlebitis: he was eleven years old and he was able to help me with the housework.

I am happy to say that they were well behaved children. Luis didn't allow swear words at home –he was the only one who rarely said “*coño*” and that was away from the ears of crazy guys–. My friend Jeannette Alcoriza was foul-spoken. Some swear words stuck with me that escaped me in front of Luis:

– Jeanne, you shouldn't say that.

– Jeannette says them...

– Yes, but you don't. It doesn't suit you. Its vulgar.

When we received friends –the Mantecóns, the Alcoriza's, the Deltoro's, etc. –, Luis asked Rafael:

– Go up to your room, it's a meeting for adults.

Rafael knew the reason why he was banished, so he went up. But from the top of the stairs he shouted:

– Papa, I know more swear words than José Ignacio!

Whenever he went out Luis would leave me a phone number where I could reach him. We lived in Los Angeles and he went to a dinner. I stayed in the house with the children because Rafael was still a baby. At some point I got an excruciating pain close to my heart. I was scared: “Juan Luis, there's the phone. Call papa. I'm dying, I'm dying.”

Luis came and brought a doctor. It was gasses that oppressed my chest. I am telling this because, when the children grew up, Luis demanded that they leave a telephone number where they could be reached.

I almost never hit them. It wasn't necessary. In addition, Luis was not violent. The first time he spanked the four-year-old Juan Luis was because the boy crossed the street without permission.

Juan Luis was very talkative and curious. At six years old he asked me:

– Mama, what do you do to have a child?

– It's like with plants, Juan Luis. A sprout comes from a seed.

– How, mama?

– The father has the seeds and he puts them in the mother.

– Ah.

A few seconds later:

– Where?

– That, Juan Luis, I don't know either.

Rafael was quieter than his older brother. He has always been very sweet. He never got angry. Because he was the second, I couldn't take care of him like I did with Juan Luis; there was less time I could spend on him. In Los Angeles I took him to the nursery. Rafael began to cry when he saw that I was leaving. The teacher told me: “Stay until the boy stops crying.” The next day I only stayed for a while and picked him up on time. On the third day he got used to it.

Luis called him Nene (baby in Spanish) and he stuck to the nickname. At fifteen, the Nene was a giant. I remember that there were some visitors at home and Luis said “Va a venir el Nene.” (The baby is coming). When Rafael appeared, they were dying of laughter: they thought he would be a kid. We called him Nene until he was sixteen. One day Luis called him: “Nene, Nene!”. Silence. We knew he was in his room. Luis called him again: “Nene!”. He didn't answer. Luis went up to Rafael's room:

– Why don't you answer?

– You called me?

– Indeed!

– I did not answer because my name is not Nene. My name is Rafael.

– Don't you want us to call you Nene anymore?

– No papa, it's horrible. I am older now.

– Okay, you're right.

We never called him that again.

Luis took great care of his children; perhaps too much. He rarely went out for a walk with them. He was so concerned about their physical well-being that throughout the walk he would warn them:

- Watch out, Rafael! Don't walk there. There is a hole.
- Be careful, Juan Luis! Don't run. You can fall and hurt yourself.
- Rafael! Mind that stick. You can poke an eye out.
- Juan Luis, don't climb the tree. It's very high!

If he had seen them on walks with me he would have had a heart attack. Perhaps it was better for them that their father did not take them for walks often.

He was serious; he did not know how to play with the children. We must bear in mind the difference between the education of the past and the current one: before, the parents were unattainable, like church saints. He came short on getting closer to them as children and adolescents, to spend more time with them. If they tried to interrupt him in his study, they would get the same answer as me: "Leave me, leave me. I'm busy." However, when they were older, they got along very well with him. They felt his immense affection.

When they were little they didn't get to see their father's films because they weren't suitable for children. But yes, I took them to the studios to see the filming. Rafael loved to go.

During the school holidays I was the one to take them on the summer holiday. Luis didn't come with us: "I have work to do." I suspect that it wasn't so much the work but more so the lack of desire. Despite my fear of water, I loved vacations by the sea. Sometimes I would go with a friend and her children. Other times, the three of us would go alone. In the beginning we would go to Veracruz. One of the vacations was a failure: it

didn't stop raining for two weeks. Conchita Mantecón and I spent the time locked in the room with the children playing charades. Later we discovered Acapulco with its constant good weather.

They both went to the American school. We chose it so that they wouldn't forget English.

Rafael did not want to make the first communion. Juan Luis joined the Boys Scouts: every week he was happy to learn how to make bonfires, leave clues in the forest, first aid and to live together with his friends. The children couldn't bring their friends home: Luis was bothered by the noise.

When they were adolescents, Luis was very strict with them. Before giving them permission, he would interrogate them:

- To whose house?
- Will there be an adult in the house?
- With how many people will you be?

If he agreed, he would give them authorization:

– Okay, but leave me the phone number and address. And I want you to be here at twelve o'clock. Understood?

If he did not agree, the "No" was resounding, and there would be no right to appeal. Once, Rafael arrived at seven in the morning. He tiptoed up to greet me:

– I'm going straight to bed, to sleep for just two hours.

He was not lucky, because Luis entered the room at that moment:

– Buenos días, Rafael! Man, you're up early!

The poor Rafael wasn't able to sleep anymore.

I was an accomplice of my children. Luis told them the time they had to return. He went to bed at eleven. Rafael would arrive at three or four in the morning and would go up without making a sound:

- Buenas mama, I'm home.
- What time is it?
- "X"
- What time will we tell dad that you arrived?
- At one.
- Good night son.

At seven in the morning Luis appeared in my room:

- Jeanne, can I borrow the nail scissors? (that was the usual pretext).

By the way, what time did Rafael arrive last night?

- At one.
- Good, good.

Juan Luis went out less than Rafael.

We took advantage of Luis' trips to have gatherings with the boys' friends. The only birthday party I organized was for Rafael when he turned five and we were living in Los Angeles. We usually did not celebrate birthdays with friends. We laughed a lot on February 29th. They didn't have birthday parties at my parents' house either. It's an American custom. At Christmas mama would prepare dinner well in advance. We could always taste the turkey stuffed with her stuffing beforehand.

Well, in one of Luis' absences, I invited the president of Oberlin College (the university that Juan Luis attended) and fifteen teachers to eat. Halfway through the meal the director asked me:

- Ma'am, don't you drink water?
- No, thanks. Water is for the ducks.

He was very amused by my answer. I have never seen a person laugh like that for so little.

During another absence of my husband, Juan Luis wanted to throw a party. Of course I said "yes". I invited all the musicians from the school.

They were great, especially the trumpet player: he made the trumpet sing. At lunchtime they put the instruments aside. I watched the trumpet for a while. I couldn't resist it: I took it and went to the kitchen. I blew. There was no sound. I blew harder. Nothing. It looked so easy with the trumpet player. I decided to bang out some notes. I took a breath and blew with all my soul. It made a sound! I made such an effort that I began to feel bad later. I felt so bad that the next morning I went to the doctor.

– Ma'am, you have a hernia that was caused by a great effort. What do you do for a living? Are you a loader?

- No doctor, I'm a housewife.
- Did you move any heavy furniture?
- No, doctor.
- It will be necessary to operate your hernia.

Despite the pain, it made me laugh. "Oh Jeanne, –I told myself– look at what happens to you for wanting to become a trumpet player." Luis was about to arrive. I decided to wait for him for the operation.

When they brought me to the recovery room I found the room full of little trumpets: Juan Luis and his friends stuck them on the walls, windows and doors.

Luis gave me four Centenarios. I kept them in an envelope in the drawer of the nightstand. The morning I was discharged, I picked up the envelope to take home and there were only three Centenarios left. It saddened me to know that someone was capable of robbing a patient in the same hospital.

Neither my husband nor my children did military service. Luis did not because he went to France. I don't know why Juan Luis didn't do it. Rafael did not have to do it because he had a heart murmur. In mama's time, military service lasted nine years. In my brothers' days it was four. Now, it is one and a half. I thank life that my children did not have to experience

wars or have to wear a military uniform or use weapons to take lives.

The first to leave the house was Juan Luis, who then was eighteen years old. He went to Ohio to study English literature. When he finished his degree, he went to live in Paris. At first, without thinking about it, I would go up to Juan Luis's room and only then would I realize that he no longer lived at home. I missed his presence so much. The house seemed to be empty.

Six years later Rafael left as well. He then left the house to be silent. For a full-time mother –like I was– in particular, it's terrible when the children leave. What is she going to do with so much free time? She uses it for sewing, embroidery, and inventing new recipes. Little by little I got used to the absence of my children. When I received letters from them it was on a holiday.

Luis sent them money to pay for their lodging, food and studies. He had no extras. The children learned to work: Juan Luis sold *bocadillos* and Rafael was a gardener for a painter who gave him his shirts.

Seeing me as an orphaned child, Jeannette Alcoriza made me discover bookbinding. I loved it: I designed book covers. The theme would inspire me. For example: if the theme was a movie then I would put a camera on it. Working with leather is a pleasure: diverting it, cutting it, gluing it, grooving, applying gold... I have always been creative.

Once they had finished their studies, my children returned to Mexico. They tried to work here, but they had problems doing so because they were not Mexican. For example: Juan Luis was not allowed by the Technicians' Union to gain entrance to a studio as an assistant. They both kept their nationality: Juan Luis was born on November 9, 1934 in Paris and therefore he is French; Rafael, born on July 1, 1940 in New York, is American. They ended up leaving for their native countries: Rafael lives in

Los Angeles. He writes and does theater; Juan Luis lives in Paris. He is a filmmaker. Both are sculptors.

Juan Luis met his wife, Joyce, in Mexico. Joyce came here to visit a friend. She speaks wonderful Spanish; very commendable for an American. Joyce's real father (her mother had remarried) fought in the Spanish Civil War. Joyce and Juan Luis got married in New York. We did not attend the wedding (no one from my family attended ours and we did not go to our children's). They came to live in Mexico; they rented an apartment right in front of the house. Joyce's parents often came to visit. Her mother was lovely. She died five years ago.

What joy the birth of Juliette gave us. I went to pick up Joyce from the hospital accompanied by Margarita, the maid. I held her in my arms, the tiny thing. I was the one to teach Joyce how to bathe her, change her diapers, and to prepare her food. We were crazy about our granddaughter: she took the place of the daughter we always wanted. I enjoyed making dresses for her and knitting her sweaters. Luis bought a swing and the garden was filled with Juliette's friends. She called me *Memée*. Since then all the neighbors call me that.

When she was five years old they went to live in France.

My husband loved Joyce very much. She is a nervous woman, full of words. She is cheerful and an excellent mother. Fourteen years ago Diego was born in Paris. Juan Luis and Joyce divorced. Joyce has been directing films lately. Juan Luis takes care of Diego when she works outside of Paris. Juliette is already twenty-two years old. She is an independent young woman. Sometimes she writes to me; with capital letters so that I can read them.

Dominique and Rafael met in New York. Rafael lived in Cuernavaca where he did theater. Dominique went to live with him there. By the way,

they bought a dog there that they called Nazarín, who just died: Dominique called me from Los Angeles, saddened, to notify me of the death of her dog. Rafael and Dominique got married in France. His mother-in-law said to Rafael on the wedding day: "From now on, dear Rafael, you can call me mother."

I lived less with Dominique than with Joyce, because we were never neighbors. She is a highly educated woman, a perfectionist, very French. Rafael and Dominique have two children: Marc, who is fourteen, and Clarisa, who is ten. They live in Los Angeles. They are in the process of divorce. Dominique wants to live in France to be close to her parents. It's understandable. However, Rafael objects, as the children would be too far away. We'll see what happens.

What would my mama say about her two divorced grandchildren? I don't meddle with such affairs: everyone should live their lives as best they can. We old people should not have an opinion, even if we do adore our children.

Of the grandchildren, my favorite is Juliette. I find it natural: she lived her first years here, near us. Since then we established a bond that has not been broken. When she comes to visit, unfortunately not very often, she tells me about her affairs.

Genes are curious. My children inherited the height of mama's family, the Lefèvres. The Escaudin's cousins were tall like my children: Juan Luis is 1,86 and Rafael is 1,96. At fifteen, Rafael grew as if they had stretched him on a rack. He returned from Valle de Bravo with a fever of 41°C. Cruz, the young woman, assured:

– These are the shivers of the black fever.

Doctor Puche, who was examining Rafael at that moment, answered Cruz:

– No, woman. Black fever does not exist. It's completely made up.

– What Rafaelito has is black fever –Cruz repeated aloud, without looking at us–, he must be bitten by a vermin.

– I know more than you, Cruz. Maybe it's malaria. We're going to analyze blood and urine to check.

Nothing came out in the analysis. Rafael did not get better. Cruz consoled us: "In four days he will be fine. That's how long the black fever lasts."

When he got up to go to the bathroom, I noticed he was taller: "Let's see, Rafael. I'm going to measure you on the wall and we're going to mark the height." "Oh, but mama, I feel bad." "It won't take long." The next day he had grown five centimeters and, the next day, five more centimeters. In total, on the fourth day, he had grown twenty centimeters!

On the fifth day, as Cruz predicted, the fever disappeared. Doctor Puche called her:

– Cruz, I beg your pardon. You know more than me.

Cruz's eyes were shining but she didn't say anything.

I said that genes are curious –my grandchildren have different heights: Juliette's height is common; her poor brother, Diego is 1,88 at fourteen years old. It terrifies me to imagine how tall he will grow. I hope he doesn't get Rafael's "black fever". On the other hand, Marc is not tall. Surely Napoleon's blood runs in his veins. He inherited the height of the Lempereurs along with my shyness. Clarissa, his little sister, is a smart and intelligent girl. It gives me great pleasure to see her when they come to Mexico.

What will my grandchildren be like when they grow up? I think of Vlad Dracul, *the impaler*, who stopped the advance of the Turks: when he needed faithful people he chose them from the town of Rucar. I think of Georges Rucar, who left for England where he became a millionaire with Rucar oil. I think of the Lefèvres and their strong character. And I think of

their grandfather Luis Buñuel.

My children, are they happy? I cannot tell, since I only see them twice a year. Each one comes to visit me once a year. They don't coincide. Every month they call me on the phone and ask me about my health and how I feel. Rafael always brings me some North American *gadget*. He knows what I like. Last time he brought me a flower that dances to music. How I wish they lived in Mexico!; that they would come to have dinner with their children on Saturdays and Sundays. The days of the week go by quickly. I don't feel alone, but during the weekends I realize how lonely I am. Completely alone.



Above: Luis and I with Rafael, Juan Luis and Tristana. On the next page: the family's "performers": Juliette and me.



ELEVENTH PART

PRESENT (1989)

Ana Deltoro called me this morning. She just turned eighty-one years old. She had a spinal surgery and she has to stay in bed. I had taken the dog for a walk and when I returned I saw her message and called her:

– Jeanne, you’re walking the dog at nine in the morning! You don’t know how that makes me envy you. I’m here in the hospital, in a cast from my armpits to my hips... And you’re walking so cheerfully down the street...

I can walk, I can eat almost everything (except chocolate, which is what I like the most), and I can get myself up and down. The doctor tells me that my heart is like that of a young woman. I can remember my childhood and early youth, but there is a cloud in the memories of ten, fifteen, twenty years ago. However, I lose my sight a little more every day. I can only see blurry figures now. With work and effort I manage to tell the time on the big black hands of my watch. The same goes for the phone numbers written in capital letters. I fear that in a few more months I won’t be able to do it. The other day I went to visit a new eye doctor. I brought him a supermarket bag full of old glasses. I went knowing the result of the consultation in advance: “There is nothing we can do for your eyes”. If I only had my sight! Now I believe in God because of my eyes. If he only could give it back to me... it’s a horrible disease. It started with a black spot in one eye. I’ve been blind for four years now. The lack of sight limits me. I can’t drive, I can’t go to the theater or to the movies and I don’t want to go out to eat –it grieves me that they see me throwing away food–. I can’t read, I can’t make dresses, I can’t go shopping, I can’t do bookbinding, I can’t sculpt, I can’t paint. I can’t cook the dishes I like – all my life I’ve set the table, cooked and done the shopping–. I made simple food, a lot of Spanish food, the stews that Luis liked, his vegetable soup, paella and croquettes. When Luis died –poor man, six years ago!–,

and Juanita arrived, I began to leave the kitchen. She asks me: “Ma’am, what do you want to eat?” “Whatever you want.” I don’t care. She doesn’t know how to make the dishes that I like, so I’m condemned to eat chili and chili. Juanita my cook loves it. I can’t invite friends to eat. They called me from the bank to tell me that they weren’t going to pay my checks anymore: the signature is different each time. Mr. Pacheco comes every month to write me the checks so that there are no more problems with the signature. All that because of the eyes. What I do is crochet. I make long scarves that I later give away in the winter. I listen to television and the radio. I talk on the phone with my friends. I get bored. Ana Deltoro tells me: “Play the accordion”. It is a magnificent accordion, German, but it’s too heavy. Juan Luis wants to buy me a piano: “No, Juan Luis. I can’t read the notes anymore.”

Jeannette Alcoriza lives in Cuernavaca. She also has a bad back. She says, like Ana, that she envies my health. Maybe at eighty-one years old one shouldn’t expect more... My neighbor Luisita Galán is paralyzed. She needs a nurse to do everything for her. “Jeanne – she tells me–, I’ll trade my illness for yours”. However, her memory is better than mine. The other afternoon she remembered that fifteen years ago she took her daughter Maribel to the theater to see a play of Manolo Fábregas. I do not remember that. I visit her in the afternoons. Before, we played cards. Now, we play “thought” cards; she, with her paralysis, cannot hold them; Me, with my blindness, cannot see them. María Luisa is always sad. Her husband Ricardo was healthy and died.

All my friends are sick. Why is old age like this? I wish we could grow old without a decline in physical capability. If I had good eyesight... you could see me dance and do amazing things. I would go for a ride in my car, I would invite my friends to eat and I would prepare food for them.

I dream every night, and when I wake up I remember them. For example: last night I dreamed that I was making croquettes and I was short of milk. I went to the market and bought artichokes and carrots... The day before yesterday I dreamed of Luis Alcoriza. One night I dreamed the same thing twice. Luis is always in my dreams. Dreams amuse me. Asleep I walk, I cook, and I'm with Luis.

I like life at home, the color green, champagne and tequila. I love tequila. I discovered it during Luis's illness. The patient fancied a drink at noon, so I accompanied him and I ended up preferring it to whiskey, to my whiskey soda, as I called it, because I used a little whiskey and a lot of soda. Juan Luis said:

- Be careful, mama. Don't drink too much.
- I take two glasses at noon, Juan Luis.

Also, tequila is excellent for perserving. Don't you see that in hospitals they preserve the organs in alcohol?

I like a bit of everything in music – especially the fox-trot and the tango. At home we had a record player. Papa bought classical music and opera records. Mama preferred popular music: Chevalier, Trenet. I liked to imitate Maurice Chevalier. When my parents invited friends over they asked me to imitate Chevalier and Georgette had to recite poetry. I loved the opera; as a couple, Luis and I often went to concerts.

As for the holidays I always liked the sea. (The mountains scare me: when Juan Luis was four years old I went skiing with him and the Viñes. I fell a thousand times. I tied a cowbell around Juan Luis's neck so I could hear him and not lose him.) When I was little they took me to the sea in Normandy. They gave us cheese with worms. It seems that it is good for your health. Here I was going to Acapulco. I never learned to swim, so I bathed there where my feet could touch the bottom.

As for cities, I like Barcelona. What a city! Now, the favorite and the one I

love most is Mexico City, where the Cerrada de Félix Cuevas is situated. I like the day more than the night and I like Chaplin and Laurel and Hardy. To eat, I like everything except pork hands: steaks, vegetables, French fries and chocolate. Planes and water scare me, as does the dark.

Traveling has not been an area of interest for me. I didn't need to know Africa or Japan or Egypt. The only country I would have liked to visit is Tahiti, where women undress and dance with their stomachs among snails. In Mexico I only know Cuernavaca, Acapulco, Puebla and Veracruz.

This house should not be called the house of Luis Buñuel, but the house of Juanita the servant: here I have her husband, daughter, son and her nephew. She cooks for them. I knock on wood: Juanita knows how to manage and make ends meet. She's looking out for me. I like to hear the voice of her four-year-old daughter. She brings life to the house; a house without children's voices is sad.

Every two weeks the doctor comes to visit me. He is very young; he must be forty years old. Before, I gave him ten thousand pesos; now, I give him fifty thousand. He is friends with father Julián. Four months ago, because of a rash, he forbade me to eat chocolate, pork and fish. I never had to diet in order to lose weight. In that I've been lucky. All my life I have been in good health: I haven't had the flu in thirty years. I think that's due to the glass of water with lemon juice that I drink every night. I have only had two operations: on the hernia and on the appendix.

I said that I believe in God because of my eyes, but I would rather believe in God if I were to recover my sight. The reality is that I believed for a very short time. When my brother Maurice died and my mother assured: "God does not exist." I believed her. I don't think there is an afterlife where I find myself with my family and with Luis. The dead are dead. Period. One dies and that's it. The problem is how death comes to us. I am afraid of death. When I die, what are they going to do with my fridge?

With my things? That worries me. Rafael's children do believe in God. Their mother is very Catholic. Juan Luis's children do not believe. Diego asked me once:

– Who invented God?

– I don't know. Ask father Julián.

My best friends were Renée Carré, Hélène Tasnon, the whole Moschos family, Rosita Díaz and a French woman in Los Angeles, but not so intimate. In Mexico it were Conchita Mantecón, Isabel Custodio, María Luisa Galán Giral and María Pérez.

I have lived a wonderful life. The only thing I feel sorry about is not having had a daughter. Suddenly I remember the nonsense I used to do: Luis bought me a little pistol so that I could scare the dogs that used to get close to mine. One morning I went to the bank. The doctor Luis Soriano was there with a lot of dollars. It occurred to me to play a joke on him. I pulled out my unloaded pistol: "Hands up." At that moment I felt a gun on my back and I heard an echo of my voice, only it was a male voice: "Hands up. Don't move." I turned around. It was the bank policeman. It took Luis Soriano and I a lot of work to convince him that it was a joke. It helped that the gun had no bullets. "Ma'am, don't do that again."

Another day, when I recently arrived in Mexico, I went to the *Puerto de Liverpool*, to the hardware department. I asked the seller:

– Sir, do you have a *coño*? (pussy in Spanish)

– M-m-madam...

– Yes, that thing that's behind the doors...

The man breathed:

– There, ma'am. What you want is a *cuna*! (cradle in Spanish)

– Yes. That.

If I were to be born again, I would go to med school. I have been cu-

rious about how the body works since I was little, which is why I was fascinated by the anatomy classes at madame Poppart's academy. I wanted to study medicine but papa was against it: "There should be no more women doctors. They are very bad." It is that the first child my parents had died during childbirth. Mama was taken care of by a female gynecologist who turned out to be a bad doctor. I settled for anatomy classes and giving massages to my friends; I would immediately find the pinched nerve.

I ask myself: Jeanne, why did it occur to you to release a book with your memories? To imitate Luis. Why don't I count, me too, my life? He wouldn't like anything about it: "*¡Es una tontería!*" (It's nonsense!) In his book, Luis says nothing about his family, or almost nothing. I'm sure he would have been furious about my book. That's how he was. But my children like it and these memoirs are for them and my grandchildren. I had a cherry tree that gave me eighty cherries. Luis ordered the gardener: "Remove the tree and throw it away." It hurt me. "Why did you have my cherry tree removed, Luis?" "It was ugly. It didn't bear cherries." "It was mine." I have a coffee tree for four years now. Now that it is grown, I hope soon to be able to drink its coffee. Memory is peculiar: why do I now remember the cherry tree when talking about my book? Why do I remember the three moments of anger I had with Luis: When he gave away my piano; when he dirtied the carpet; when he threw my cherry tree away. Indeed: in living together for fifty years, there were few things, mere incidents, which nevertheless still hurt me.

I got to experience surrealism. The truth is that everything they said seemed silly to me. I didn't understand anything. I was a daring young woman to marry Luis. He was brusque. He didn't talk to me about his films or his interests. I never asked him either since I knew I wouldn't get

an answer. I don't regret it. I was happy with him. I can't forget him: when I enter his "bar" I imagine him sitting in his chair. I can hear his voice: "Jeanne, where are you?"

For me the day begins at six in the morning. I take León out to the garden and go back to bed to wait for the cook to wake up. At seven thirty she brings me breakfast in bed. I share the toast with León. When the curtains and windows are opened I hear the birds chirping. At five to nine I get up, get dressed and make my bed, because I'm the only one to touch my bed. I take León for a walk. He knows where to go and where the holes are. I walk for about an hour. I then come home. At twelve I have an appetizer –a tequila– with some fries so that it doesn't fall on an empty stomach. On Wednesdays Andrea Valeria comes to visit me. She is both my mother and my daughter. She is always so full of life, so cheerful. At nine o'clock I eat: a soup, roast meat, vegetables and some fruit. At three I visit my neighbor María Luisa. I stay with her until five o'clock. Then I return home. Luis always expected me at that time. The time I like best is six in the afternoon: before six o'clock I take León out into the garden for him to pee for the last time. Then I have dinner: a slice of ham and papaya. I go up to my room, put on my nightgown and a robe to get into bed. It's where better off. I think about death: who is going to take care of my stuff? I turn on the television to listen to it. The servants come at seven to watch their soap operas. At nine thirty they retire and I go downstairs to lock the doors, check the windows and eat a yogurt with honey. Back in my bed I listen to the news and at ten thirty I turn off the television and the light. León lies on his sheet next to me and we fall asleep. At this age it is a great inconvenience to have to go to the bathroom every three hours. Sometimes when I have a hard time falling asleep, I think of names of people that begin with a letter. For instance N: Nora, Narciso, Napoleón, Nicanor... Other times, I think of what else to put in the book.

I would like León to die. He has changed since several months. He can't stand me touching him, he hates me. He's old. I would like to find a medicine so that he dies slowly, painlessly; not with an injection.

I would like my sons and my granddaughter to live in Mexico.

Now that I'm old, I would have like to be born later so I wouldn't be eighty-two years old but still young. But I loved my days: the twenties in Paris, the Charleston, the fox-trot, Luis, our love and the music. I love life. It is unpredictable and therefore mysterious. In January 1990 a big surprise came: Pablo! Juan Luis, at the age of fifty-five, became a father again and he gave me this fifth grandchild.

Sometimes I think that Luis left me blind by leaving. I can't do much anymore. Since Luis left, my life has ended.

