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The birth

de
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traducción de
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(fragmento en inglés)

Characters:

Montse: big sister. About 30.

Jaume: Montse's boyfriend.

Lali (Eulalia): Montse's younger sister.

Jorge: Lali's Madrid-born husband.

* Note: the play's characters switch smoothly between two languages (Catalan and Spanish), according to the background of each member of the family, and the relationships established between them.

Space: The stage has two areas: one is the corridor of the neonatal floor of the hospital, and the other is inside a room on the same floor, which contains flowers and baby items. At times, the action takes places simultaneously in both areas.

1.-

In the hospital corridor: Montse and Jaume come on to the stage. She carries a bunch of flowers and walks fast, while he, a little behind her, doesn't take his eyes off the mobile phone.

MONTSE

...I'm sure I told you as I was at the door: "Hey, grab the bag." And then I went to the lift. As long as we didn't leave it out there on the landing... But what I'm really sorry about is coming here empty-handed. And by the time we see them again, the baby will have grown out of them. That really annoys me!

JAUME

Me too!

MONTSE

They were really sweet outfits.

JAUME

Aunt Mercè hasn't looked at her WhatsApp yet!

MONTSE

Come again?

JAUME

She may well be sleeping off her hangover... and you can't say I didn't tell her, eh! «Auntie, we have to vote all together, first thing!».

MONTSE

Really, Jaume...

JAUME

All our eggs are in this basket!

MONTSE

Look, if I'd known you'd be gazing at the phone the whole time...

JAUME

(Doing his own thing) But yesterday she just had to go to play bingo with her friends... to put her eggs in a different basket!

MONTSE

Quite frankly, instead of this, I'd have done better to come on my own.

JAUME

(Jolting back to reality) Come again?

MONTSE

I told you clearly.

JAUME

What?

MONTSE

That if coming here was to be such a sacrifice, you were free to stay, but that if you came...

JAUME

Come on, come on. I'm here, aren't I?

MONTSE

Your may be in body...

JAUME

So what more do you want? Don't expect my spirit to be here as well!

MONTSE

May I remind you we've come to a birth, not a funeral!

JAUME

No worries, I'll bear that in mind when I see my nephew.

MONTSE

Your niece.

Pause.

JAUME

I know...

MONTSE

Yeah. I'm sure you do!

JAUME

Look, Montse, believe it or not, I really am looking forward to meeting the baby...

MONTSE

Well I hope you drag your eyes off the mobile to be able to see her face.

JAUME

You're so nice when you want...

MONTSE

Though if the poor child has to see yours...

JAUME

Sweet through and through!

MONTSE

Oh, and if you can, please put on a pleasant face when we see Eulalia. Giving birth last night wasn't my sister's fault!

Silence.

MONTSE

What?

JAUME

I didn't say anything...

MONTSE

What do you think? That they planned this, or what?

JAUME

You said it, not me..

MONTSE

Then maybe it was Jorge's fault for planning the right day to get her pregnant so Eulalia would give birth today?

JAUME

Oh, that's not what I said...

MONTSE

Come on, man, don't be so childish!

JAUME

I didn't say anything of the sort!

MONTSE

But it's what you think!

Pause.

JAUME

Well, you know what? Maybe you're right.

MONTSE

I knew it!

JAUME

I wouldn't be surprised! I wouldn't put it past that jerk. Just to put a spanner in the works...

MONTSE

Would you please get those ridiculous ideas out of your head?!

JAUME

I bet you a meal on it!

MONTSE

You? You wouldn't even bet on a coffee.

JAUME

That isn't true!

MONTSE

Seriously, Jaume. Give up your paranoias and behave like a grown-up.

JAUME

Okay. It may not have been quite like that, but... it is such bad luck, isn't it! Precisely on Referendum day... The most decisive day for Catalonia, and here are we, in Madrid! Get bloody screwed!

MONTSE

Could you watch your language just a little bit?

JAUME

Hell, Montse! You know exactly what this means! And not for me - I got in the car off my own bat -, or for the *Assemblea* - they can't believe I'm not there right now - ... what this means for the country, dammit!

MONTSE

Oh, don't get started. Besides, you've already voted, haven't you? And I have too. So...

JAUME

But it's all on the line for us today!

MONTSE

Listen to me carefully, Jaume: We're about to enter a room where there's a woman who's just given birth, who just happens to be my sister, who I can't get to see very often, and quite frankly, I'm in no mood to go on there with long faces...

JAUME

Hell, look what's at stake for us!

MONTSE

I know...

JAUME

It's now or never!

MONTSE

I know. But today...

JAUME

(Solemn) Today may be the most important day in our lives.

MONTSE

We haven't gone in yet, and I'm already regretting having come. *(Pause)* Jaume, I only ask you one thing: today, in there, I don't want a single word on the subject.

JAUME

What subject?

MONTSE

You know what subject I mean.

JAUME

But he's the one that always brings it up! He likes to play out of tune. He winds me up... He provokes...

MONTSE

Then don't reply! Don't even frown. Or raise your eyebrow the way you do.

JAUME

What way?

MONTSE

Outside, say whatever you want. But in here, mum's the word, okay?

JAUME

(Trying it out) I raise my eyebrow? Which one?

MONTSE

Would you please take what I say seriously?

JAUME

Okay. That is, so long as that jerk doesn't wind me up...

MONTSE

And stop calling him a jerk!

JAUME

It's a joke, woman. You don't have much of a sense of humour!

Pause.

JAUME

By the way, what did you say they're calling the baby?

MONTSE

They don't know yet.

JAUME

Oh. And what are they waiting for?

MONTSE

Shall we go in, once and for all?

JAUME

Hang on, let me see what people are saying in the group...

MONTSE

(Reluctantly) Well, I'm going to the loo, to cool off a bit.

Montse dumps the bunch of flowers on him and leaves the stage (to the imaginary toilet). Jaume grabs it any old how.

JAUME

Delightful girl.

Jaume is caught off guard, with the bouquet in his hand; he leaves it on one of the seats in the corridor and then stares into the phone once more.

2.-

In the room, Lali, who has just given birth, is in bed. Jorge is at her side, holding her hand affectionately.

JORGE

My mother says she's giving us the earrings, but she wants to know which we want. Diamonds or pearls?

LALI

Maybe we don't want her to wear earrings, my love.

JORGE

Darling, how could she not wear earrings?!

LALI

What's the matter? She doesn't have to.

JORGE

We can't do this to my mother: if we christened her without earrings she'd die of grief.

LALI

Who said we're going to christen her?

JORGE

How could we not christen our daughter?!

LALI

Okay, let's talk about it later: my sister and Jaume are about to arrive.

JORGE

Yes, but the earrings...

LALI

Jorge...

JORGE

Okay, okay.

Pause.

LALI

They should be here by now. Though I suppose that with all the traffic in the centre of Madrid at this time of day...

JORGE

I think something's happened to them on the way.

LALI

Jorge!

JORGE

What's wrong?

LALI

Don't put a jinx on 'em!

JORGE

Maybe the Civil Guard has stopped them, Jaume's gone all stubborn on them and they've got into trouble...

LALI

Don't say that, honey...

JORGE

Stubborn, blockhead, dimwit... take your choice.

LALI

Jorge...

JORGE

But you know your brother-in-law well enough, sweetheart! He'll speak to them in Catalan in Leon, in Soria or on the Castellana in Madrid.

LALI

He's not that...

JORGE

He is, he is. And given the mood he must be in, having to come to Madrid today of all days...

LALI

Come off it, they're dying to meet their baby niece...

JORGE

Having his *Madrileña* niece being born today must have well and truly pissed him off!

LALI

No, come off it. Jaume's a full-grown adult.

JORGE

It's not a matter of age, Lali, what weighs him down are his extremist ideals!

LALI

Look, Jorge... Let's just keep the party going today, alright?

JORGE

Of course, my love.

LALI

Let's steer clear of the subject. That way we can avoid any squabbling. Do you agree?

JORGE

Okay. I won't be the one to start anything...

LALI

Sure? Do you promise me?

JORGE

Do you doubt it? Look how good I am with your sister. I never get into arguments with her...

LALI

Of course; she always avoids it.

JORGE

And why doesn't he do the same? He couldn't even keep his mouth shut on our wedding day!

LALI

Weeeeeell...

JORGE

My cousin Borja still remembers the performance he put on...

LALI

Well your cousin Borja is hardly one to talk, is he?

JORGE

Are you telling me he's the radical?

LALI

All I'm saying is today do not touch the subject. It's not the day for squabbling about politics.

JORGE

No, love, no. You know me!

LALI

It's precisely because I do know you.

JORGE

I couldn't care less about politics.

LALI

Ha!

JORGE

As long as *Jauma* doesn't get pig-headed...

LALI

Well, no-one can beat you at being pig-headed...

JORGE

What do you mean by that?

LALI

Nothing, nothing...

JORGE

Out with it, come on, out with it.

LALI

Well... I just told you, my love. When certain topics crop up...

JORGE

What topics, what topics?!

LALI

You are a bit...

JORGE

A bit what, huh?! What? As if I had something against Catalonia!

LALI

That's not what I said...

JORGE

Do you also think I have something against Catalonia?

LALI

Of course not...

JORGE

But your brother-in-law does! He's always thought that!

LALI

Jorge, Jorge, please!

JORGE

What?!

LALI

Take it easy, okay?

JORGE

Okay...

Pause.

JORGE

Besides... Deep down, I get on really well with Jauma! It's just that he's a bit... pig-headed. What was the word in Catalan?

LALI

Capsigrany.

JORGE

Ah, yes: *capsigrany*. I like the word!

Lali sighs. Suddenly, Jorge bursts out laughing.

LALI

I don't think it's that funny, myself.

JORGE

No, it's just that... if you stop to think... it is quite amusing. Our little princess being born today of all days...

LALI

Well, ya... very timely...

JORGE

I'm sure the guy thinks we did it on purpose...

LALI

How could he think that!

JORGE

Well, I'll tell you this: it's ace timi ng all right!

LALI

That's true...

JORGE

A leopard can't change its spots!

LALI

Hey, my love, why don't you go and ask when they're going to bring her? I already miss her.

JORGE

Right away, babe.

Jorge rises, kisses him and leaves the room. Lali lets out a sigh of relief.

3.-

In the corridor: Jorge appears and bumps into Montse, who has only just come back from the toilet, while Jaume is still stuck to his mobile on one side of the corridor.

MONTSE

Brother-in-law!

JORGE
Hey there! At last!

MONTSE
What a joy! Congratulations!

JORGE
Thanks, sister-in-law!

MONTSE
How's the baby?

JORGE
Aaaaah, out of this world!

MONTSE
Woooooow, what a proud dad!

JORGE
Believe me: she's the prettiest baby in the hospital!

MONTSE
Is she in there?

JORGE
Not yet, but I was on my way to ask when they're going to bring her.

MONTSE
Ah, then I'm going to hug the super mum!

JORGE
Of course! Hey... Where's Jaume?

Montse's expression changes completely.

MONTSE
Can you see that statue of a man stuck to a phone?

They stare. He is absolutely immersed in his mobile.

JORGE
Aha. Why, he looks like a real statue!

Jorge goes in his direction.

JORGE
Jauma, feller!

JAUME

Hey, Jorge. I didn't see you.

JORGE

Quite understandable....

JAUME

Congratulations on becoming a father.

JORGE

Thanks, old man. Do you want to come and see the baby?

JAUME

Oh no, I'll see her later...

MONTSE

Jaume...

JAUME

The thing is I'm being bombarded by WhatsApp messages.

JORGE

Forget it then. You just answer the bombs. I'll be back in a jiffy.

Jorge leaves.

MONTSE

(To Jaume, in a temper) You really are, aren't you!

Montse huffs and hurries towards the room.