

A Pursuit of Understanding Clifford Benjamin Brown's Death

By Genevieve Grace Estanislau

NAME: Genevieve Grace Estanislau

WHERE ARE YOU FROM: Somerset, NJ

BIO: Genevieve was born in Manhattan, NY and is currently quarantined in Somerset, NJ. Favorite Theatre Credits Include: Director/Choreographer "Smokey Joe's Café" (SVP), Director/Choreographer "Urinetown" (SVP), Choreographer "Titanic" (Villagers Theatre), Choreographer/Stage Manager "Pillars of NY" (St. Luke's Theatre). Theatre adjacent credits include teaching at European School of Dance (Fords), Kelsey Theatre- Tomato Patch Camp (West Windsor), Rutgers University (New Brunswick), and Main Street Dance and Music (Manville). When not doing theatre Genevieve enjoys eating Thai food and playing with her cat, Oswald Cobblepot. She is grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Bake-Off.

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WHAT IS KEEPING YOU POSITIVE: Prior to quarantine I felt very strained in my romantic relationship. We were both running ragged and this quarantine gave us the opportunity to breathe. We have been able to wake up together on our own time, go back to exercising together, cook together etc. I also have had quality time to spend with my Ozzy (cat). Like most cats, affection is on his terms but he's been nice enough to let me pet him for long-ish periods of time. I was also presented the opportunity to teach short virtual music lessons. My job was lucky enough to sustain a month of full time employment during this quarantine. Briefly in May, I researched a lot about music development in the infant-toddler brain for these virtual lessons. I love learning about the brain (psychology major) and this quarantine allowed me to shift a fleeting focus into this concentration I haven't truly delved into since college.

CAN WE PUBLISH THIS? Absolutely!

CHARACTERS

LUCÍA- A Puerto Rican woman in her mid-30s coping with loss. She is tired and can not find the time to reconcile her anger and resentment, mostly towards her grandfather.

JOSEPH- Lucía's husband, also mid-30s. He is non-Hispanic but knows more Spanish than Lucía. He was orphaned and found Lucía's grandfather to be a source of parental nurture. He focuses on the positive aspects of loss.

ABUELO- Puerto Rican grandfather of Lucía, early-80s. The main source of anger for Lucía's loss.

TIME

Present Day- Sunday Evening in the Span of a Few Hours.

PLACE

The modest living room/porch of Lucía and Joseph's house.

Lights up on a living room in present day. A small porch is adjacent stage right. *LUCÍA* is seated at a desk typing on a laptop. *JOSEPH* is laying down on a sofa watching *LUCÍA*. The living room is slightly disheveled as if someone was preparing to do some Spring cleaning. A pile of records are in the downstage right corner of the room. A trumpet is rested besides the entrance to another room, later to be discovered as the kitchen.

LUCÍA

It's a very, very fine trumpet.

JOSEPH

Say it with feeling.

LUCÍA

(Overly sarcastic) It's a very, VERY fine trumpet.

JOSEPH

Perfect!

LUCÍA

I can't wait until it's gone and out of this house for good. I'm tired of seeing it, I'm tired of pretending it isn't listening to me, it controls this whole place. I live around and according to this trumpet.

JOSEPH

A very, very fine trumpet.

LUCÍA

I don't want to oversell it's demonic aura. I need someone to actually bid on it and bring it to a nice farm where it can play with other trumpets in green pastures.

JOSEPH

Well, that's what your grandfather would have done.

LUCÍA

Yes.

JOSEPH

Stoic. Strong. A woman whose beauty is unparalleled by her stubbornness...

LUCÍA

(Cutting off on "ness" of "stubbornness") Abuelo isn't here and I don't appreciate you making light of my decisions on how to handle this mess. You loved him, I tried.

JOSEPH

I'm not making light.

LUCÍA
You are.

JOSEPH
Okay.

LUCÍA
And done. *(Finishes typing)*

JOSEPH
Twenty dollars?

LUCÍA
Yes?

JOSEPH
Isn't that a little low? It isn't broken, just normal wear and tear. I know you don't want it here but isn't making some money off of it sort of the point?

LUCÍA: Twenty dollars. *(Slight silence. LUCÍA is staring at the laptop screen)*

JOSEPH
A nice farmer will place a bid, I promise. You should distance yourself from the screen for a while.

LUCÍA
I want it gone the sooner the better.

JOSEPH
Step away. All screen and no play makes Lucy a dull girl.

LUCÍA
Too soon, not funny.

JOSEPH
I know you feel slighted but it will be okay. *(No immediate response from LUCÍA, she's still staring at the screen)* Remember how we used to make arroz con dulce? When was the last time you ate?

LUCÍA
I made it for the funeral and I don't remember.

JOSEPH
Everyone loved it?

LUCÍA
They did.

JOSEPH
There's some questionable meats in the refrigerator why don't you make yourself a sandwich at least.

LUCÍA
I will.

JOSEPH
You know how when you're eating out and the food arrives as you're in the bathroom? Step away.

LUCÍA
I will when it's gone.

JOSEPH
I can't make it for you.

LUCÍA
I know.

JOSEPH
Step away.

LUCÍA
I don't want to. ...Fine. *(She goes into the kitchen)*

JOSEPH
(Wandering around the room and then starts rummaging through records) Is there anything else you're going to list?

LUCÍA
(From the kitchen) I was debating a few records. I can't part with all of them but some just never belonged anyway.

JOSEPH
(Holds up a record) Like A "Puerto Rican Polka"?

LUCÍA
(From the kitchen) You were the one who knew the words. *(LUCÍA comes from the kitchen and sits on the couch with a sandwich)* I was completely useless when it came to speaking or understanding Spanish. One of the many reasons why Abuelo loved you more than me.

JOSEPH

He didn't love me more than you.

LUCÍA

(Swallowing) He used to correct me every single time I tried to be called Lucy instead of Lucía. You were an honorary Boricua in his eyes thus dubbed José which really confused the priest at our wedding.

JOSEPH

(Moving to the couch) That was the longest ceremony in the history of weddings. "We are gathered here today to witness and celebrate the union of Lucía and Joseph. ESO ES JOSÉ NO JOSEPH! Do you Joseph take Lucía to be your lawfully wedded- ESO ES JOSÉ NO JOSEPH!"

LUCÍA

I didn't know what to do. God, weddings are the worst. I just remember not knowing if I should stand there awkwardly smiling, ignoring him because everything is pressured into being picturesque and perfect. Or if I should leave the platform or whatever and ask him to stop or ask mom and dad to ask him to stop.

JOSEPH

I know! I remember wanting to look at you the entire time. It was our day and you were so beautiful but the moment he corrected him the first time I had to look down. That man looked after me in the most unusual ways sometimes.

LUCÍA

Well that didn't last.

JOSEPH

You need to forgive him. *(LUCÍA shakes her head no)*. Do you feel better now that you've eaten?

LUCÍA

Yeah I do, thank you.

JOSEPH

I didn't do anything.

LUCÍA

You're here and you're trying and I know I'm being stubborn but I'm incredibly angry. I feel hollow and lumbered all at once but also just feel happy you still love me. I'm not ready for love to stop.

JOSEPH

(Kisses LUCÍA on the head) I know you know that your grandfather was the closest thing I ever had to a parent. I know you know that I had a hard time not having people to talk to until college. I am eternally grateful for your support. I cannot imagine how life would have differed if I never

met you in Brown Hall. I would have probably ended up at a very unfulfilling job, no smart wife- no real travel experience. I got accepted and integrated into a real family. That is all I ever wanted. I know you know how grateful I am and I do believe you always came at a place of pure love and genuine concern and healing regarding that aspect of my life. Everyone experiences death differently but I hope you start relying on what I've been sending you. I really do know it wasn't until now that you really understand loss and I'm so, so sorry that you are going through what you are. I wish I can absolve all that pain. But I really do not want you to keep holding on to this anger for him. I won't be able to get rest if this continues much longer.

(SFX: Laptop Ding. LUCÍA leaves the couch to go check on the laptop)

LUCÍA

There is a bid. Twenty-five dollars.

JOSEPH

(Like an auctioneer) Twenty-five for the horn. When does the bid close?

LUCÍA

I have it set for midnight.

JOSEPH

Midnight tonight?

LUCÍA

Yes. I know you think I should get more money for it and extending the auction would probably accumulate more money but I just can't stand the sight of it. I would keep everything else if it meant I could get rid of this one thing. *(JOSEPH nods. SFX: Laptop Ding)*. Another bid- now it is up to thirty-five.

JOSEPH

Rich!

LUCÍA

Where should we go with this getaway money?

JOSEPH

Where did we go for the whale watching? Cape Cod or Cape May?

LUCÍA

Cape Cod.

JOSEPH

Massachusetts doesn't sound like a great getaway but I liked it there.

LUCÍA

Oh my god! There is a bid for fifteen-hundred. Oh my goodness I cannot believe it! Do you think

I can move the deadline up? The other bidders just did these small amounts. (*LUCÍA types*) I can just close it, yes! Carlitosway461940 you are an angel.

JOSEPH

Are you happy?

LUCÍA

I am, I really am. This thing plays day and night. I hear it all the time. I hear it when I turn over towards your side when I'm sleeping. I hear it when I'm doing laundry. It's so constant.

JOSEPH

Well then I'm happy. Let's celebrate. (*SFX: Laptop Ding after "happy"*)

LUCÍA

(*Cuts off on "celebrate"*)

I have a message from him. "Hi, I noticed where you were shipping from and I am in the same town. Could I just pick it up in person?" Is that okay?

JOSEPH

(*Standing up from the couch*) I don't know, there are a lot of creeps out there. Is there a meeting place you both can go to?

LUCÍA

Not much will be open now, it's Sunday night. I don't feel like going to a bar to meet up.

JOSEPH

What about leaving it marked on the porch after he pays? The doors will be locked.

LUCÍA

(*LUCÍA Typing*) Sure, I will leave it marked on the front porch. After you pay I will send you the address. Thanks! (*LUCÍA puts the trumpet in a box. JOSEPH walks over to the laptop, both are waiting for a response. SFX: Laptop Ding after a few silent moments*)

JOSEPH

Looks like it is good to go. (*LUCÍA puts the box on the porch*) Is this what you wanted? (*JOSEPH goes over to the records*)

LUCÍA

Absolutely!

JOSEPH

Let's celebrate! (*JOSEPH holds up the polka record. LUCÍA puts it on. SFX: Polka Music*)

LUCÍA

(*After the music starts*) This is awful.

JOSEPH

This was our fourth date?

LUCÍA

Third.

JOSEPH

Third. (*JOSEPH extends his arm and starts to dance with LUCÍA*) I remember you got a coffee and I got a tea and we walked downtown and stopped at that vintage store.

LUCÍA

I was looking at sunglasses and you wore that extraordinarily loud, Kangol type hat.

JOSEPH

Purple with lime green zig zags. Why didn't I buy that?

LUCÍA

We decided to pool our monetary assets together to buy this record that sat at the bottom of the pile.

JOSEPH

Good choice. Don't get rid of this one.

LUCÍA

Okay... Does it hurt long?

JOSEPH

Want to know the great secret?

LUCÍA

Yes.

JOSEPH

As long as you keep remembering and make more room in your body for love and not anger it isn't supposed to hurt for long. (*A knock is heard on the door. LUCÍA turns off the record and checks the door. JOSEPH goes to the kitchen. LUCÍA looking puzzled, stands for a moment and then opens the door.*)

ABUELO

Qué linda. How are you?

LUCÍA

I'm angry.

ABUELO

I know.

LUCÍA

You don't need to spend that much. I can give it to you for free.

ABUELO

I'm good to pay.

LUCÍA

No, you don't have to.

ABUELO

Can I come in?

LUCÍA

I don't want you to. (*LUCÍA nods and gestures for him to come in. ABUELO comes in while holding the box*)

ABUELO

Mira, I know you hate me and I know this may seem crazy.

LUCÍA

Yeah, Abuelo. It's pretty crazy.

ABUELO

But you don't return my calls or texts or emails. What was I supposed to do? José loved his trumpet. He was so good.

LUCÍA

Joseph.

ABUELO

Mira, I'm struggling too. José was like another son to me.

LUCÍA

Joseph.

ABUELO

You're not the only one suffering.

LUCÍA

ESO ES JOSEPH NO JOSÉ!

ABUELO

Su nombre era Joseph no José.

LUCÍA
What?

ABUELO
I was fixing your words, that's all.

LUCÍA
I want you to fix this (*Gesturing all around*).

ABUELO
I want to too. I wish I could. I can't if you don't let me. I know you think I'm responsible.

LUCÍA
How are you not responsible?

ABUELO
Mira, you...

LUCÍA
(*Cutting off after "Mira"*) Explain to me how Joseph would be here if you didn't ask him to come over and hang out that night.

ABUELO
Things happen. Horrible things happen. That comes with life. Death could have come for him the next day when going for a jog in daylight. I have to believe that things happen for a reason too. You think I want to bear that information? You think I haven't already sat with the possibilities of me killing him? We played, we drank, we danced, we celebrated. He didn't want to drive drunk. He didn't want me to drive drunk so he walked. I wish you would hate the other driver as much as you hate me. I'm trying to make peace with the idea that everything happens for a reason otherwise I won't live much longer either. When Abuela passed I talked to her every day out loud. She lived in the walls, I left her space on the bed, I still cooked for her. I danced with her. It's been enough time now that I still talk to her everyday but it's at least in my head. I know you hate me and I know everyone thinks of death differently but I can help you. Your father and mother don't know yet what it's like to lose your soulmate. I just want to be there for you. I want to be there for José because we are what he had. I want this trumpet. (*LUCÍA goes to the couch. ABUELO waits behind the couch for a few moments and then sits on the couch.*)

LUCÍA
We danced today. He told me to eat and we talked about our wedding and our third date.

ABUELO
Am I on his side? (*Gestures to the couch*)

LUCÍA
He usually sat on the right, slept on the right.

ABUELO

Did he talk about the trumpet?

LUCÍA

Not really. I think he didn't like me trying to get rid of it but there isn't much he can do to change me doing it. But I think you having it would make him happy. We also talked about you. He said I should forgive you.

ABUELO

You can do that on your own time. I am grateful for this, Lucy. (*LUCÍA goes to the records and puts one in. Trumpet music plays.*)

END OF PLAY