

Dreaming of Soulmates

By Lydia Isaales

She loved the early morning wake from her dreams, when she didn't have to get up for work. There was a coolness in the air, and she could snuggle under her spread. She could stay in bed, watching the twilight sky and run around the corners of her head, picking up fragments of her dreams. That is how she thought of it, almost like a delightful version of house cleaning. Seeing how many pieces of dreams she could sweep into her consciousness. The jagged pieces sometimes requiring such careful lifting or they would flit away, for other pieces it was like raising a boulder when it was just so much smoke. Evanescent and gone.

She never understood how her brother José Juan hated remembering his dreams. " Just disjointed nonsense, and they usually scare me. I don't want to know what my mind is trying to tell me. Let it stay in there," he would say. She couldn't get enough of whatever her subconscious wanted to send her way; it entertained her during the day to try to tease out what her dreams meant and why she had dreamt of a particular person or place. She shared this fascination with her dear Grandmother, her Abuelita, and they would often trade their dream fragments, like children trading their precious cards or marbles. A favorite fragment could be adopted and savored, some stories she had heard from her Grandmother felt as though they were hers. Her Abuelita said that dreams were predictors of the future. Alicia did not feel that way, but she had long ago stopped arguing the point with Abuelita. They could spend hours dissecting their favorite ones and couldn't wait to see each other to share new ones.

She never was sure what she was going to find until she concentrated. Some pieces burned like white hot flames. She knew it before she even got close to them but it didn't stop her from sweeping them up. Her mind would be scorched but she still didn't shy away from them. Some dreams she could hear from afar, wrapped in one of her favorite tunes and smelling wonderful, sometimes chocolate, or cilantro and garlic; sometimes soft and comforting Nenuco, the baby cologne she still favored. These harbingers meant they were going to be lovely dreams she would be finding.

Remembering a dream from beginning to end was rare for her. When it happened, she called her Abuelita to tell her a wonderful tale awaited. If it was a work day, they had to wait until the end of the day to see each other. But if it was the weekend, like today, she could just run next door to her Abuelita's house. Alicia was an early riser but Abuelita was always up before her, and the smell of rich, black, strong coffee, would greet her as she walked in the door.

And today there was such a spectacular dream to share. It was the dream of all dreams. It was so sonorous. It had segments of songs her Abuelita always played. She loved the music of her Grandmother's time. It also felt like it was of her time since she grew up listening to it. She ran next door, wrapped in her old but reliable scarf, and found Abuelita at the kitchen table, wrapped in her favorite sweater- one that Alicia had given her so many years ago. It was now threadbare and faded but Abuelita forbade Alicia from buying her a new one. She said she would never wear another one and not to waste her money. She said you couldn't buy a sweater as precious as hers, one that had lived so much, where the muted colors had earned their age and the softness of the material was unparalleled.

Alicia poured a cup of coffee into the cup she considered "hers", slid into the hard wooden chair across from her Abuelita and launched into the dream. "Abuelita, you won't believe it, I think it might be the best dream ever. It had all of our favorite music and wonderful smells... I felt like I was really there. At the end-"

Abuelita jumped in- "Wait a minute, who taught you how to tell a story, you start from the beginning. Now catch your breath and speak of this dream with the reverence it deserves. I might just

know where it ends better than you do, but we shall see."

While Alicia pondered Abuelita's strange comment, she took a deliberate, calming breath, the way her Papi had taught her; breathe very deep, in slowly and then pushing the air out of her lungs with her stomach muscles. It calmed her, and helped her gather her thoughts.

"Abuelita, you are right. Let me give this dream the respect it deserves. You see, it was like this. I was at work and it was time for lunch but my friends Nilsa and Vivian were not there. It so happens Abuelita, that next week, Nilsa will not be at work because she is going to training in Miami and Vivian has to help take care of her Papá who is having an operation, so they won't be there next week. My mind had already worked those details into the dream. Hey, do you think I dreamed of the future? Anyway, so there I was, lunch time alone, but not sad about it. You know I love to be alone and love to walk. It was hot of course but there was a delightful breeze and my lunch break had just started. I knew I had time to walk the park and really stretch my legs."

And as I was walking the plaza, dazzled by the blood-red orange colors of the flamboyán corner and with a lovely breeze drying a bit the sweat under the hair on my neck, I looked up and saw this young man walking toward me, intent on intercepting me. You know I am not scared of anyone, so I watched him approach. He came up to me, smiled and said, "You are a fellow walker, can I join you?" And I surprised myself by saying yes. He was very interesting, and we spoke about the town mostly. But I can't remember what he said his name was nor much of what he looked like... I've tried to remember but this man- his face, his height, really everything, remain out of reach. He was sweet and I felt as though our encounter had so much promise. I felt like I really connected with him."

"What do you mean?" interjected Abuelita.

"Well, our talk was so easy, we seemed to clue in on similar points, and although we spoke mostly about the town, we just clicked. It felt so comfortable, I don't know, it was like a safe haven talking to him."

Abuelita smiled. "Your soulmate?"

"Yeah, too bad it was just a dream, eh, Abuelita?"

"Tell me more about him." asked Abuelita.

"Well, as I said, I couldn't really see him well, he was always shrouded, but I knew he was a good person. The dream just petered off, I don't remember the ending, but I know it left me feeling happy and hopeful."

The two discussed her dream. As usual, Abuelita helped Alicia tease out additional details of her encounter in the park. Alicia recalled that the sky was partly cloudy but not with rain clouds, just large white puffy clouds, and that the kindergarten children were in the plaza feeding the palomas. The pigeons seemed strangely happy when the little kids came out. As though they knew they were guaranteed both exercise and treats.

"I could feel the heat Abuelita. And I could hear our songs. They were just there, in the background. Isn't it funny? Like a movie, with a soundtrack in the background."

Alicia suddenly recoiled when she heard stirring in Abuelita's living room.

"Oh, I'm sorry," said Abuelita, again with that odd twinkle in her eye, "I didn't tell you, I have a guest. You know my friend Ana, who moved to Philadelphia? She called me yesterday afternoon to tell me about her grandson, Manuel. Well, her grandson came to visit his family's town. He has never been here before. I insisted he stay with me."

"Well, given that introduction, I think it is time to join you in the kitchen and beg for some of that amazing smelling coffee," said Manuel.

"Come on in and meet my granddaughter, Alicia".

Alicia was taken aback, her dream-dissecting time with Abuelita was their time; she did not like

the interruption and was nonplussed as to what to say. A look of disgust remained on her face as Manuel entered the kitchen.

Abuelita quickly rebuked her about what Abuelita perceived as a breach of manners, “¿Nena, donde están esos modales? ¡Saluda hija!” Greet him girl, she reprimanded.

Alicia recovered sufficiently to welcome Manuel. ¿Hablas español? ¿Negro o cortado?” Alicia decided to start off with a challenge: do you speak Spanish? black coffee or with milk?

“Pues mira, hablo español pero nunca he visitado la isla hasta ahora. ¡Hay bellezas en todas partes! ¡Me deja boquiabierto!” Manuel asserted his Spanish speaking ability and made reference to the beauty he was encountering everywhere that left him awestruck. Alicia was impressed with his ability to speak Spanish and his effusive manner. Was he flirting with her though? She wasn't sure. It always seemed awkward for second generation children of Puerto Rican parents who grew up in the States and hadn't learned the language. As though a part of their soul was missing and they spent their life searching for it. A connection to whom they are, made more difficult to obtain with the language connection non-existent or lacking fluency. She was glad he was fluent, she also liked that he didn't plop down at the kitchen table expecting her to serve him.

“While I am staying with your delightful Abuela, I need to know my way around this kitchen so let me start by learning where the cups and spoons are.”

“Manuel came on an open ticket,” explained Abuelita. “He is hoping to find a job and spend the summer here. He already loves the island and wants some time to soak it all in. I have insisted he stay with me.”

Alicia had to hide her jealousy. She adored her Grandmother and loved their time alone. Would she be sharing Abuelita with Manuel all summer?

As if reading her mind, Manuel said, “Not to worry, I won't be monopolizing Abuelita. I need to find a job and plan to do lots of exploring and sightseeing on the weekends. I am hoping to visit many beaches.”

Alicia suspected that Abuelita had tied her dream to Manuel's appearance. Nonsense. She would have to put a stop to what would surely be Abuelita's latest attempt to find her a 'novio'. Alicia had no plans for a boyfriend anytime soon in her life.

“Well, I'm starting up courses at the university for the summer semester and I work full time so it's too bad I won't be able to help you with your sightseeing.”

Alicia refused to look at Abuelita at that moment; she knew there would be “that look.” The one that communicated disappointment and frustration all rolled into one. The one that was a huge visual sigh. Alicia knew to at least be polite, lest she incur Abuelita's wrath. “Do sit down, Manuel, and tell us what you want to see first,” she heard herself saying.

Manuel explained how he hoped to spend a few days exploring the town and looking for jobs. As he spoke, he looked out the window and saw the flaming orange flamboyán tree in Abuela's front yard.

“I didn't see that last night! That is a flamboyán tree, right? It is even more beautiful than in pictures! The brightness of the color almost blinds the eye! And it looks to provide great shade when that noon sun hits! What beauty!” Abuela explained how the flamboyán tree is originally from Madagascar but does so well in Puerto Rico, and that it is called “árbol de la llama.” “How appropriate, tree of the flame” murmured Manuel, still mesmerized by the tree. Alicia marveled at what a font of information her Abuela was. She just knew so much about so many topics! She was the original search engine! Alicia joined in the conversation by noting that she considered the flamboyán one of the island's delights. But there so many other delights to the senses. The trinitaria (or bouganvillea) the fragrance of the gardenias... Manuel found himself looking forward to beginning his town exploration, and was eager to start, but told them he would first get in a run. Alicia was pleasantly surprised and again, heard herself

saying- "What's your pace?" When Manuel replied he usually ran 8.5 minutes/mile pace for about 5 miles, Alicia said- "Well, speed it up to 8 minute miles and I'll run with you, say in about a half hour?" Manuel immediately agreed while Abuelita shot Alicia a pleased smile. Alicia knew she had passed the "be polite to our guests" test, at least for today. But she also knew Abuelita was thinking of rummaging through her closet for her carefully preserved wedding dress...

Alicia needed to slow her pace to run alongside Manuel but she was pleased to do so since it provided grounds for teasing him. "Not accustomed to the tropical sun are you? Y mira we are out early too. Early morning runs for you or you'll collapse and I'm not dragging you back to Abuelita's!" Manuel was good natured about it- "I bow to your island experience." As they neared Abuelita's house, he shouted, "I bet I can take you in a sprint to the finish!" and off he went. When Alicia caught up with him on Abuelita's porch, he was grinning away, but wasn't foolish enough to challenge her to race again.

They ran together every day that week and began spending a great deal of time together. Alicia enjoyed the company. Manuel was like a girlfriend and she, his island buddy. They had similar interests, and they quickly felt an instinctive trust in each other, as only good friends do. They talked about the absence of tension that happens between unattached folks and found themselves grinning at each other over Abuelita's head when Abuelita made what she thought were discreet remarks about the amount of time they spent together. But while Gradmother remained enthused about Manuel and Alicia spending time together, her Papá and Mamá remained wary. Even so, they were impressed enough with Manuel that they did not interfere with their spending time together. They were also relieved that José Juan often joined Alicia and Manuel for the morning run and reported that Manuel was a good guy.

As for a summer job, Alicia directed Manuel to the fast food joints and lunch counters in town. Within a few days, Manuel had a shift at the panadería, the bakery, making sandwiches at the counter. He came to like the rhythm involved in grilling medianoches and cubano sandwiches, along with grilled cheeses and tripletas, a three meat, tasty sandwich he soon came to love. He did not need to manage the cash register, which relieved him. He even learned to love the lunch time challenge, when the orders came in fast and furious.

Alicia and Manuel learned much about each other over the next few weeks. Manuel quickly discovered Alicia and her Abuelita's special bond; and found ways to disappear during their special times, knowing that in time she would call on him- to run or simply to share his company. She would often find him outside on the balcony or lifting weights under the flamboyán.

He learned she wanted to be a computer programmer, specializing in adaptive devices for the physically challenged. And Alicia peppered him with questions about his family and learned that he had two sisters both in high school, and a brother, who was a junior in college in Philadelphia studying to become an architect.

Nearing the end of the summer, Manuel asked Abuelita if his brother could possibly visit and also stay with her, for a week. His brother, Luis Antonio, had won an award at his summer job that provided one week paid leave at the end of his internship. His brother had heard so much about the beauty of Puerto Rico from Manuel that he wanted to come experience their parent's homeland himself.

Alicia dribbled coffee down her chin when Abuelita and Manuel told her Luis Antonio was coming for a visit. "You didn't tell me he was coming!" "Well, it just came up suddenly and I had to ask Abuelita first," explained Manuel. Abuelita appreciated Manuel's good manners. "Mija," that contraction used for 'mi hija' 'my daughter,' she said, "Leave him alone, Luis Antonio just asked him yesterday. And he did the right thing by talking to me first, don't you think?" That immediately quieted Alicia who had no choice but to agree. She then turned to Manuel full of questions; "when does he arrive, he is older than you, right, where do you plan to take him, what does he want to see?" Manuel laughed. "Girl, you are full of questions! He wants to see El Morro since I told him how impressive and historical the Spanish

fort is, the Cuevas de Camuy, the Fajardo Observatory, Playa Montones in Isabela. He is just thrilled to explore your 'Isla del Encanto' and what a land of enchantment it is. Otherwise, he wants to spend time with all of us.”

Alicia was pleased to hear that she would get to meet Luis Antonio and with Abuelita, made ready where he would sleep and what food they would be cooking. He was arriving the following weekend so that allowed time for Manuel to ask his boss to do extra shifts in the hopes of getting the time off for the five days that Luis Antonio would be on the island.

It was fair to say that Abuelita was perplexed; she had not anticipated a brother entering the scene. She had felt so strongly that Manuel and Alicia were destined to be together. She had not told Alicia but *she* had also dreamt of a visitor to her home in the days proceeding Manuel's arrival. She dreamt of him and clearly saw his face in her dream, and it was Manuel's face! And in her dream, Alicia and Manuel fell in love! How could her senses be so far off? In her dream, she had seen Manuel and then saw many collages of Manuel and Alicia in different surroundings; at the plaza holding hands, at the beach playing in the waves, on the couch in her house stealing a kiss when they thought no one was looking. It was perplexing! Because it was clear that although Manuel and Alicia adored each other, what they had found in each other was a terrific friendship. They were buddies who liked to hang out, she heard them discuss everything from the color of the hair of the guy they had seen on their jog and whether they thought it looked good on him to the meaning of the universe and everything in between. They were true friends, pals. But no romantic interest the one in the other! How could her dreams have misled her?

Alicia was confused. As they prepared for Luis Antonio's arrival and shared the cleaning and cooking chores, she could not help thinking about the dreams she had almost every night regarding a tall man, clearly her love interest and who was definitely the man she had seen in her dreams before Manuel arrived. Although she never saw him clearly, she thought he might look like Manuel. But it certainly couldn't be Manuel! She did not dare tell Abuelita of her dreams because she knew she would make a great big fuss about maybe Manuel being “the one.” Alicia was ecstatic to have found a great guy friend, it was hard to do. They really liked each other, but not “that way.” Their friendship was so easy, no romantic tension at all. They even talked about the fact that neither had been attracted to the other romantically and how great it was to find a great friend of the opposite sex. Manuel was a friend for life; they truly bonded. They were alike in many ways; their love of nature, their sensitivity, their love of music and family. It had truly been delightful to help Manuel learn even more of his culture. He had arrived feeling culturally connected thanks to his parent's efforts but having now visited, he felt a connection to the island that left him astounded as to its intensity. There was something about being Puerto Rican and being so proud to be Puerto Rican that he now understood better. It wasn't jingoistic in nature; it was simply a deep pride to be part of the people of Puerto Rico, “el pueblo de Puerto Rico.” Alicia was surprised at how immersed his upbringing had been in the Puerto Rican culture. He continually surprised her with his knowledge and deep understanding of the island. So okay, he had not been born on the island but he felt he had the next best scenario. He grew up feeling Puerto Rican. Knowing the language, eating the foods, and learning all the customs, including so many refranes! He loved popping off a saying, as appropriate, and see that look of pride in Alicia's eyes. When he went for seconds of red beans because he had rice left over:

“Estoy como el hombre velorio, ¿verdad?” They broke into laughter and continued planning for Luis Antonio's arrival, as they all thought of the man at the wake who served himself more beans, because he ended up with too much rice, and then had to return for rice, because he then had too many beans... and so on.

The big day arrived, Luis Antonio's arrival. The family went to pick him up at the airport; Papá, Mamá, José Juan, Alicia and of course, Manuel. But Abuelita stayed behind, she wanted to preserve her

strength and she also wanted to do last minute preparations.

It was a blistering hot day, but the air conditioning in the car kept them comfortable on the ride. Luis Antonio's flight was on time and they all huddled by the windows where they could see the passengers from innumerable flights streaming past. The area, as always, was so packed with families, all awaiting loved ones. Everyone was good-natured, asking each other if they knew from which city the current passengers walking past had come from. The taxi drivers were all out of their cabs, waiting for the tourists to stumble out laden by suitcases, looking for a cab as they blinked in the hot sun. Alicia and Manuel held up their welcome sign proudly, “¡Bienvenido Luis Antonio!” as they peered around the sign, gazing at all the passengers. Alicia had asked Manuel innumerable questions about Luis Antonio and he had shared some facts but seemed to be holding back. That he was older than Manuel, that they were the same height and both looked like their Mamá, that he studied pre-med, although his major was architecture at Drexel University. Manuel explained that Drexel had this co-op program that helped place him in his field of interest to work full time some quarters, thereby earning much-needed money and career experience. He was enrolled in the five instead of four year college program and he loved it, Manuel had told her. Manuel had set his privacy settings on his social media pages such that most of his friends were restricted from seeing most of his photos. The only pic Alicia had seen was his profile pic. He had promised a couple of times to lift the privacy setting but somehow it had not happened. Alicia was pondering if she would recognize Luis Antonio based on a family resemblance.

Alicia was the first to spot Luis Antonio. She was speechless at first, and then started making odd sounds that were words but were incoherent at best. “¡Pero, no! ¿Como? ¿Manuel? And her thoughts finally turned into sentences expressing her disbelief at what she was seeing and berating both Manuel and Abuelita for not telling her: “¿Manuel, como va a ser? ¡No lo creo! ¡No puedo creer lo que estoy viendo! ¡No me lo dijiste, ni tu, ni Abuelita!” Manuel was having a hard time holding up the sign, he was laughing so hard and was also trying to stay away from Alicia's rather strong punches and slaps. “What didn't I tell you?” he gasped, “Why are you reacting this way?” And, he could barely get the words out: “How did you know that guy is Luis Antonio?” he guffawed.

By this time, the rest of the family had also seen Luis Antonio, and were now reacting the way Alicia had. It was like seeing the same film again, but with different characters saying the same lines: “¿Pero? ¡No lo creo! ¡Jesús, María y José! ¡Madre de Dios!” their voices competed to be heard. It took them a bit longer than Alicia had to figure out what they were seeing. Or maybe they figured it out just as quickly, but the chaotic shouting that descended on the group prohibited any coherent exchange of ideas.

They all turned their attention to Manuel, exclaiming, shouting and laughing. He continued to laugh uncontrollably and had given up on holding up his side of the sign given the many punches that Alicia had landed. He tried to move away from the family a bit to avoid the additional shoulder slaps being directed his way, but the family had him well pinned in and would not allow him any escape room. He finally caught his breath. “Wait, what is the big surprise? Why are you all reacting this way? Bueno, a lo mejor se me olvidó mencionar que somos gemelos idénticos...”

“Yes, identical twins,” shouted Alicia. “And you never told us??!! Abuelita knew and didn't tell us?”

“I will explain all in due time. Let me hug Luis Antonio. Here he comes!”

It became a hug festival once Luis Antonio stepped out from the cold airport to the warm but shaded area where the family waited. The exclamations and laughter continued, with Luis Antonio joining in.

When they finally had all clambered into the car after walking to the parking lot, and saused the six of them into the car, Mamá demanded quiet and then turned to the brothers for an explanation.

Luis Antonio quickly shifted all blame to his brother, indicating he didn't know that Manuel hadn't told them they were twins.

Manuel launched into an explanation. "I couldn't help myself! When I arrived, I realized that Abuelita did not remember that my brother and I were twins. I had no plans at that time as to why I was going to keep that to myself, since I didn't know that Luis Antonio was going to come visit, but I decided to keep that little tidbit to myself. It wasn't that hard to answer the questions about him; yes, he is older than I am. Well, given that he was born 4 minutes before me, that is the truth. When Alicia asked how much older, I simply said my parents decided to have their kids close in age and that we were actually born in the same year. And so she assumed he was 10-12 months older! But I didn't lie! What fun this was! Your faces were so funny!"

When they arrived home, they all enjoyed seeing Abuelita go through the same emotions: shock, disbelief, slow realization, laughter. She hugged both Manuel and Luis Antonio at the same time, "Que niños traviesos!" "what naughty boys!" she chastised, while Luis Antonio again protested his innocence in the charade.

No one had really noticed how unusually quiet Alicia had become while they all worked together to cook and set the table. They all enjoyed the shared community of making a delicious meal together: some making salad, others starting the rice and beans, while Abuelita cooked the bistec con cebollas, a favorite with all of the family, skirt steak with onions. Manuel had become the resident tostonero, so he was in a corner of the kitchen frying the plantains.

Alicia kept on stealing glances at Luis Antonio and felt an anxiety she couldn't explain.

As the evening progressed, Abuelita took the floor and began to review the plans that were in place for Luis Antonio's visit in paradise. Alicia and Manuel had the next few days off, and even José Juan was able to shift his summer job schedule to join them for a couple of days of showing Luis Antonio the island. They were all excited to hear that his Spanish was as fluent as Manuel's, really, as theirs, and that his love and excitement for being Puerto Rican permeated his being as it did for all of them.

As cleaning up was being completed, Alicia asked if anyone wanted to take a short walk in the neighborhood. An evening walk was a household tradition initiated by Alicia, and those who could, joined in. Alicia made it a point to walk every night, and it was not unusual for her to walk alone. But tonight, only Luis Antonio joined her as the rest of the family wrapped up the chores.

Alicia could not figure out why she was so out of sorts. Luis Antonio seemed just as lovely as his twin. What was going on? As they started their walk, it slowly dawned on Alicia that she was having one of those moments in life. We all know them; unreal, somewhat out of body experiences where you are both present in the moment but also observing what is occurring and you know it is a momentous occasion. Graduation, giving birth to a child, getting married and so on. She struggled to remain in the moment and not have the dual universes occurring but it was impossible. Realization dawned on Alicia in stages, but the stages were fairly one on top of the other...this was the guy from her dreams!

She was hesitant to speak much, lest she give something away. It was so odd, although they were identical twins, Luis Antonio had an aura, a something, that spoke to her, so unlike how she felt with Manuel. But she was not going to have Luis Antonio thinking she was bonkers. As she continued to tune in to the moment, she glanced at him sideways and saw that he was also somewhat removed from the moment; he looked confused, deer in the headlights. "Hey, you okay there? The flight tired you out? We can head back anytime you want, let you catch up on your rest." Luis Antonio murmured quietly, "I'm ok. Actually, I'm terrific. And I like walking with you; I could do this all night."

Alicia turned to him and touched his forearm. "You seem dazed. You sure you are okay?" "I'm telling you, I'm more than okay, truly fantastic. I can't tell you more or you will run away from me. Need to keep my thoughts to myself."

Alicia hesitated. Could it be? Could he be feeling the same way? She was not a believer in fairy tales, or Prince Charmings or love at first sight. But she did believe in the power of dreams, and her dreams had brought Luis Antonio to her before meeting him in “real life”. Did her dreams foretell the future? Was that possible? She was so confused; she was tingling and her senses were electrified. She walked slower, as she usually did, when she was lucky enough to stroll past while Don Francisco played so many of her favorite composers 'old-time' music. As they continued, she could still hear the music coming from Don Francisco's house. It gave her such a thrill to share this evening routine with Don Francisco. She never mentioned to him that she tried to time her walks for when he was playing music; to talk about it would have tarnished the magic of it all. She thought he knew she walked past almost every night, but she was relieved that he also never commented upon it. It was a small, magical and unspoken experience they shared, one she knew was so precious and that she did not take for granted.

She could smell the trinitaria, almost a dizzyingly sweet, heady smell that grew wildly over Doña María's front wall; a slight evening breeze cooled her arms. She loved the scent of the trinitaria, reminiscent of madreselva, which she remembered had a funny name in English, honeysuckle. She looked about her and up to the sky and all was in sharp contrast. The beauty of her neighborhood and the stars felt special tonight.

She suddenly came to a decision; she had to share her feelings with Luis Antonio. She didn't believe there was only one true love for each of us out there; but she did believe that we are lucky if we are able to meet a truly compatible partner, and knew that Luis Antonio was part of her future.

“Luis Antonio, I need to tell you, I feel like I have met you before. You have been in my dreams...”

Luis Antonio was silent for a beat and then he started crying and laughing simultaneously. “I wasn't sure how to express myself. I thought you would run away from me!” I didn't dream about you, but as soon as I saw you and heard your voice, I just knew you were meant to be part of my life.” They were both then quiet and slowly reached for each other's hand. And they slowly continued their walk, savoring the moment, both secure and immensely grateful in the magic imparted to them by the universe to have found each other.

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As they entered Abuelita's kitchen, and she saw them holding hands, they burst out laughing when she sprang into some kind of victory dance all of her own. It was a basic salsa move but was enhanced by this exaggerated shrug she gave her shoulders as she danced. “I knew it, I knew it, I knew it! I forgot you and Manuel were twins. That is why I was so confused by both Alicia's and my dreams!” Abuelita demanded a hug while she welcomed him to the family: “¡Bienvenido a la familia, ven acá y dame un abrazo!”