

DONDE VIVE LA MEMORIA

A Short Film

Written by Juan C. Rodriguez

For ENEIDA MALAVÉ

FADE IN:

TITLE CARD

Para Eneida Malavé — tu amor vive en mí.

INT. GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE – LATE AFTERNOON

A warm Puerto Rican home. Plastic-wrapped furniture covers the couch, soft lace curtains sway in the window, and shelves overflow with angel figurines — small ones, tall ones, chipped ones, shiny ones — all glowing in the afternoon sun.

A pot on the stove clicks and cools.

The home feels like a hug.

JUAN, now 30s, enters quietly with a grocery bag and a small branch of flores de maga.

He takes a deep breath — this is the house that raised him.

JUAN

(soft)

Hola, Mami Eneida...

ENEIDA MALAVÉ, older, fragile, drifts in her armchair. Her eyes search slowly through the haze of Alzheimer's.

ENEIDA

(confused)

¿Mijo?

...Do I know you?

A small ache in him. He kneels by her.

JUAN

You know my corazón. That's enough.

He kisses her forehead tenderly.

INT. KITCHEN – FLASHBACK (YOUNG JUAN)

The kitchen is alive: the smell of pasteles, sofrito sizzling, plantain leaves stacked everywhere.

YOUNG JUAN (8) stands on a chair, tying string clumsily around a pastel.

ENEIDA (YOUNGER)

(laughing)

¡Ay, bendito! No tan fuerte, mijo — the pastel can't breathe!

He giggles. She kisses his cheek, proud.

ENEIDA (YOUNGER) (CONT'D)

We sell these, okay? Para pagar los biles...

But don't tell nadie I put extra meat in yours.

She winks.

BACK TO PRESENT – LIVING ROOM

Juan sets flowers into a cup of water, surrounded by her angels.

JUAN (V.O.)

She made magic out of nothing.

Pasteles paid half our rent... and those angels?

Some of them I gave her cuando estaba en la escuela elementál.

She kept every one.

Eneida notices the flowers.

ENEIDA

Qué lindas...

Did you bring those for... someone special?

JUAN

(smiling sadly)

Sí, para ti.

She blushes lightly, unsure why.

INT. LIVING ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Juan takes out a small container of food.

JUAN

I made arroz y habichuelas...

but don't compare it to yours, por favor.

Eneida laughs — a tiny spark of the woman she was.

ENEIDA

Mm... let me see.

He feeds her gently.

She touches his hand.

ENEIDA

Gracias, señor.

You're so good to me.

The word señor slices through him, but he stays composed.

JUAN

Siempre.

INT. LIVING ROOM – FLASHBACK – NIGHT

A younger Eneida and little Juan dance in the living room.

Sábado Gigante blares from the TV, Don Francisco announcing the next segment.

Eneida spins him around, both laughing.

ENEIDA (YOUNGER)

¡Vamos, baila conmigo, mijo!

He steps on her foot.

JUAN (YOUNGER)

¡Ay!

They laugh harder. The whole house feels alive.

INT. LIVING ROOM – PRESENT

Eneida stares at the TV, blank and distant.

JUAN (V.O.)

This house used to be... pure alegría.

Warm, loud, full of music.

Now it's quiet.

Too quiet.

He notices dust on one of the angel figurines and gently wipes it off.

INT. KITCHEN – FLASHBACK – MORNING OF 9/11

Little Juan sits at the table eating cornflakes.

The TV shows the burning towers.

Eneida is frozen, hand over her mouth.

ENEIDA (YOUNGER)

(sobbing)

Ay Dios mío...

All those souls...

Juanito, ven acá.

He comes to her. She holds him tightly.

ENEIDA (YOUNGER) (CONT'D)

We pray, mijo. Siempre oramos por los que sufren.

They bow their heads.

BACK TO PRESENT – LIVING ROOM

Juan watches Eneida softly drifting asleep in her chair.

JUAN (V.O.)

She taught me compassion without ever using the word.

She showed me what a corazón puro looks like.

INT. BATHROOM – MOMENTS LATER

Juan splashes water on his face. His breath trembles.

JUAN (V.O.)

They say “don’t take it personal.”

But cómo no...

when she's the woman who saved my life?

He steadies himself... then hears something.

A familiar melody.

INT. LIVING ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Eneida hums a soft Spanish lullaby, the one from his childhood.

Juan freezes.

JUAN

You... remember that?

ENEIDA

(confused)

No sé...

Sometimes songs just... come to me.

But her voice carries the memory.

JUAN

(smiling through tears)

That song raised me.

She touches his face — searching, unsure.

FLASHBACK – CHRISTMAS – LIVING ROOM

The house glows with warm lights, a tiny árbol decorated with handmade ornaments. Pasteles steaming, coquito chilling.

Eneida wraps gifts on the floor while Juan watches excitedly.

ENEIDA (YOUNGER)

(whispers)

Don't tell nadie, but Santa needed help this year.

The room feels magical.

INT. LIVING ROOM – SUNSET

The golden light pours in.

Juan sits close to her.

She studies him — something familiar stirring.

ENEIDA

You feel...

como familia.

He exhales shakily.

JUAN

Soy tu familia, Mami.

Her hand rises — trembling — and rests on his cheek in the same gesture she used his whole childhood.

A spark. A beam of recognition.

ENEIDA

(soft, breaking through)

Mi niño...

Aquí estás.

Juan's soul shatters and heals all at once.

He leans into her touch.

JUAN

Estoy aquí, Mami Eneida.

Siempre aquí.

She smiles, relieved.

ENEIDA

I didn't want... my boy to be alone.

INT. LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

Eneida sleeps peacefully.

Juan covers her with a blanket — tucking it under her chin just like she once did for him.

He kisses her forehead.

JUAN (V.O.)

Her memory fades.

But her love...

eso nunca muere.

The house glows with warmth — angels watching.

JUAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Her love lives in my hands when I cook for my kids...

in my voice when I tell them "todo va a estar bien"...

in every soft place she planted in me.

JUAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

This home...

this woman...

this love...

is where my memory lives too.

FADE OUT.

TITLE CARD

EN HONOR A ENEIDA MALAVÉ —

Y TODAS LAS ABUELITAS BORICUAS QUE NOS CRIARON CON AMOR.

END.