

CHAPTER 9: DEDÉ, 1994 AND 1960

Back in the present, night starts to fall, and Dedé quotes some poetry that Minerva used to recite when her husband was in jail. Jaimito was the only husband never in jail and Dedé chose to follow her husband unlike her other sisters. She tells the interview woman that she didn't get involved until "it was already too late."

Minou shows up and Dedé admonishes her for driving after dark. When Dedé introduces Minou, the interview woman becomes ecstatic, as she has now met both the daughter and sister of the famous Minerva. The interviewer leaves. Minou says that she had gone to see Fela, but Fela said she couldn't elicit a response from the sisters, who seemed to "finally be at rest." Minou asks Dedé the question Dedé has felt and avoided her whole life – why didn't Dedé go along with her other sisters?

Dedé then remembers a day in 1960 when her three sisters came to see her. Dedé is working in her garden, and Jaimito is away. Lately they have been having marital troubles, as Jaimito has grown bossy and demanding.

Months earlier Patria had come to Dedé asking to bury some boxes, and Dedé had suspected that Minerva put her up to it. Patria looked disappointed when Dedé said she had to ask Jaimito first. Patria explained that she had joined the movement and then convinced Pedrito. After that Dedé had talked to Jaimito, but he had become enraged saying he wouldn't tolerate her having any part in the rebellion. Dedé had considered leaving Jaimito then and joining her sisters, but instead she followed her husband.

When the sisters arrive Minerva says "the goat is going to die" sometime in the next three weeks. The sisters say that together they are a cell, but they want Dedé to join too. They tell her to sleep on it and decide in the next week. Dedé mentions Jaimito, and the other sisters say that she should use her discretion around him, as they don't know his politics. Dedé defends Jaimito, saying he is no more a "trujillista" than Papá was. Minerva responds that Papá was a "trujillista" in his own way. Dedé admits that Jaimito has threatened to leave her if she joins her sisters.

After they leave, Dedé decides that she will leave Jaimito. She plans out the arguments she will use, and she thinks about her lingering affection for Lío. Minerva tells her that he is still alive, and to listen to a certain forbidden radio station to hear him. Dedé then starts sneaking off at night to listen. She imagines Lío's reaction when he learns that she joined her sisters.

The day Dedé had planned to leave Jaimito approaches, and she starts to get cold feet. She worries about losing her three sons, and about leaving them alone with the temperamental Jaimito. She decides to go to see a new priest, Padre de Jesús, for guidance. When Dedé arrives at the rectory, she sees Padre de Jesús unloading a truck of boxes. They look the same as those Patria was looking to hide. Dedé construes that Padre de Jesús is "one of them."

When she returns home, Jaimito and the boys are all gone. Dedé panics, and the maid says that they went off to Jaimito's mother's house. Dedé saddles the horse and rides off to Mamá's. The other sisters are there too for a meeting, but Dedé frantically says she needs to get a ride. Manolo and Minerva drive her, and on the way she explains. They reach Jaimito's mother's house and Jaimito, who is in a pernicious mood, meets them. Dedé demands to see her children. The boys and Doña Leía (Jaimito's mother) greet Dedé happily, so Jaimito clearly hasn't told them anything is wrong. Jaimito accuses Dedé of joining Minerva's group, but Manolo assures him that she has never been to a meeting. Minerva and Manolo suggest that Dedé and Jaimito take a honeymoon trip to rekindle their romance. So Dedé ends up taking a boat trip with Jaimito instead of leaving him and joining the resistance.

A week later the SIM starts rounding up members of Minerva's group. Leandro is arrested first. The family gathers at Mamá's house, and Mate tearfully explains what happened: the SIM broke down their door,

dragged Leandro away, trashed the house, and drove off in the family's car. Mamá finally gets suspicious of her daughters' activities and demands an explanation.

Then Patria and her family arrive crying desperately. Patria tells her story: some neighbors warned Pedrito and Nelson that they were about to be arrested, so they hid in the hills. Patria answered the door for the SIM and told them her son and husband were away, but they ransacked the place anyway. They dug up the fields and found the boxes of weapons. Then they tore the house apart and set fire to the wreckage. Nelson and Pedrito saw the flames from their hiding spot, so they ran down from the hills and were then arrested. Patria screams "I've been good!" to the sky.

Dedé calls Minerva, and when Dedé first hears her voice she recognizes that no matter what choice she makes, her life will always be inextricably bound with her sisters' lives. Minerva confirms that Manolo was arrested the night before. Minerva sounds anxious but firm, and she refuses to come home and "run scared." A few days later, Minerva gets arrested and Dedé promises to come get Minou.

Dedé first goes out to find Jaimito in the fields. Jaimito joins her, and she feels the "passionate project" of saving her sisters drawing her and Jaimito back together.

The couple drives to Mamá's house first, but they find the SIM already there. Captain Peña, head of the northern SIM, is there to arrest Mate. They go to the police station and learn that Mate has been moved to the capital.

Dedé and Jaimito return home, where Mamá is wailing and praying. Dedé suggests they go inside because she sees spies in the hedges. They all go in and pray to the Virgin.

That night Dedé cannot sleep, and she tells herself to have courage. It is the first time she truly understands the word. To calm herself, Dedé practices reliving a happy memory.

The present-day Dedé realizes that this exercise of reliving a happy memory actually came much later – it was something Minerva taught her after she got out of prison. Dedé remembers frantically worrying about Minerva and arguing with her. In those days people would always whisper to Dedé about the "butterflies," pledging their support.

Minerva had refused to hole up though, as she thought that it was not feasible that Trujillo would "murder a defenseless woman and dig his own grave." Whenever Dedé would start weeping with worry and fear, Minerva would teach her the exercise she developed in prison, of reciting a poem over and over. In her memory, present-day Dedé had then conflated that exercise with the one of inhabiting a happy memory, as they were both necessities during times of great stress.