

Fourteen-year-old Clara journeys to Mexico to meet her grandparents for the first time. Read this excerpt from *What the Moon Saw* to find out what she discovers about these “strangers” and answer the questions that follow.

from **What the Moon Saw**

by Laura Resau

- 1 *Trees* were what my grandparents made me think when I saw them at the airport. Brown tree trunks, worn by the wind and sun and rain, solid and tough, scarred and callused. Their skin looked rough as bark, and their feet, in sandals, as leathery as Dad’s old boots.
- 2 The look in their eyes, though, was gentle. My grandmother’s—Abuelita’s—eyes were black, like shiny beans. And my grandfather’s—Abuelo’s—were like bits of wet sea glass, one brown and one green, I noticed, amazed. The way his face lit up when he spotted me reminded me of Hector,¹ bouncing up and down on his phone books, excited for dessert.
- 3 “*Mucho gusto en conocerla, Clara,*” Abuelo said, beaming. Good to meet you. They must have known it was me, since I was the only fourteen-year-old girl looking lost and alone.
- 4 Abuelita took a step toward me and touched my hand softly—not a handshake, but something more gentle, like stroking a puppy. Her touch calmed the wild jumping in my stomach.
- 5 On the way to the airport in Baltimore, I’d made a deal with Mom and Dad that if my grandparents were weird or mean I could go home after two days instead of two months. But I could tell already they weren’t weird or mean. Abuelita’s smile was full of light, like the ocean early in the morning.
- 6 We waited for my bags to appear on the conveyor belt, and Abuelo whispered to Abuelita in Spanish, “How she looks like you, *m’hija!*” And a moment later, “Clara! How you look like your grandmother, *m’hija!*” I’m not sure why he called us both “my daughter,” but it seemed nice, like how Mom called me and Dad sweet pea or sugar pie. I pushed my bangs behind my ears.
- 7 Then he burst out, “Your eyes! It’s your eyes, *mi amor!*”²
- 8 I hoped he wouldn’t bring up our cheeks, because my guess had been right; my squirrel cheeks came from her. On my grandmother, the rosy round cheeks looked cheerful, but mine made people think I was still in elementary school.
- 9 Abuelita looked at me with the hint of a smile, as though we shared some secret. Meanwhile, Abuelo talked and talked—about how good my Spanish was, how sorry he was he spoke no English, about how it was rainy season and he hoped I’d brought plenty of warm clothes (I hadn’t), about how sorry he was that the only phone in their village had been out of service for three months. “So you had better call your parents now, Clara,” he said.
- 10 Why hadn’t Dad warned me about the phone situation? Or about the rainy season? Maybe he thought I would have used them as excuses not to come. I would have.

¹ *Hector* — Clara’s brother

² *mi amor* — my love

- 11 Outside in the sunshine, we stopped at a bright blue phone booth. I dialed a whole string of calling card numbers, and then cradled the receiver and counted the rings. My grandparents watched me, Abuelita's face calm and curious, and Abuelo's straining with anticipation, like a little kid in line for a roller coaster ride. After six rings the voice mail came on and I heard my voice, sounding young and far away. I mumbled a quick message in English. "Well, I'm here. I'm fine. They seem nice." A lump began to form in my throat. "It might be a while before I can find a phone again," I added, forcing my voice to stay steady. Then, even though I was a little mad they hadn't been waiting by the phone for my call, I added, "Love you."
- 12 When I hung up, my grandparents looked crushed. "He didn't ask to talk to us?" Abuelo asked solemnly. So I explained voice mail, which they'd never heard of. Even after I cleared that up, they seemed disappointed. They'd wanted to hear Dad's voice as much as I had, I realized. It had been over twenty years since they'd heard his voice.
- 13 We carried my bags across the parking lot, toward the bus stop by a palm tree. As we waited in the shade, the sparkle came back into Abuelo's eyes. "And your hands, *m'hija!* How they look like your grandmother's!" I couldn't see anything our hands had in common. Hers were thick and huge, like a landscaper's, like Dad's. Mine were piano player's hands, Mom always said, even though I gave up the piano after four months of lessons. Long, slim fingers with the nails filed into proud ovals and painted blueberry.
- 14 I caught a whiff of a nice smell—soil, campfires, leather. It came from Abuelo. Then I noticed the smell that clung to Abuelita. She didn't smell like perfume counters in department stores the way other grandmothers did. She smelled like chiles roasting, chocolate melting, almonds toasting. And like herbs—the teas that Dad gave me when I was sick.
- 15 I must have been smiling just thinking about it, because Abuelo said, "And the same smiles!" He dropped my bags, and stood dramatically still, watching a grin spread over my face. Even though I tried to keep my mouth closed to hide my squirrel cheeks, I couldn't help laughing at how hyper my little grandfather was.
- 16 I snuck a closer look at Abuelita's dazzling smile. Did mine really look like that?