



DID YOU REALLY KNOW ALL YOUR  
CHILDHOOD FRIENDS?

# THE GIRL

*a short suspense story by*

ARLENE SABARIS

Arlene Sabaris

**The Girl**

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## The Girl

Series: Mysteries from the Colonial Zone

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### Foreword

Our scene? The Colonial Zone of Santo Domingo, a city founded by Bartholomew Columbus in the year 1496. It was the first city on the American continent, and was central headquarters of the New World administration. The city houses over 300

historical monuments, from churches, forts and monasteries, to the original homes of the great characters of that time. It is said that, despite the fact 500 years have gone by and the city is now a world heritage site, some of those characters cling on to the legendary city, and find themselves distinctly out of place.

This story speaks of childhood innocence and the simplicity of friendship at a period of life when it is pure and without questioning. It also speaks of eternity and of a time when there was no room for any traditional prejudices.

### The Girl

Her pale pink dress looked a lot like the dresses my mother made me wear to church. When I saw her climbing a tree in the park, I was surprised by how agile she was, despite her wearing a skirt. I was ten years old and just coming out of Mass that summer Sunday. The heat was relentless and despite my white dress, the material seemed to be woven with strands of pure heat and I could not wait to get home and get it off.

I put my discomfort to one side for a moment, and again stopped to admire the fearless girl climbing higher and higher up the enormous tree, the shade of which was cast over a few of the church's park benches. My mother told me to keep up and I obeyed, but my curiosity was sparked.

We had not done much the day before. We had come from Barahona to the capital, Santo Domingo, to spend the holidays with our grandmother. My brother Danny was two years older than I was and already had good friends in the Colonial Zone whom he would spend the whole vacation with. In my case, it was the first time I would be allowed to stay the whole vacation, usually I would have gone back to Barahona with my mother after dropping Danny off.

My grandmother lived right in front of the church, which had a large park, on a quiet street in the Colonial Zone. The pigeons were permanent tenants of the old building, whose pompous design reflected the height of the colonial period. The park was often busy; it had bushy trees and inviting benches. It was where never-ending stories were made up for the local children who were busy jumping rope, where

couples escaped from prying eyes and where grandparents passed away the years reading or filling in crossword puzzles. That Sunday people noisily filed out the church, and once we got home we had a family gathering of cousins, uncles and neighbours, which took up the rest of our Sunday. Afterwards we had to say goodbye to my mother who was going back to Barahona.

Her eyes betrayed mixed feelings. On the one hand, I am sure in those days it was a relief to have a break from her mischievous children, but on the other hand, she had a sad and melancholy look which told me this was not something she particularly wanted to do. That first night, lying in bed, I said to Danny, "Tomorrow I am going to climb that tree like that girl did today and pick the best mangoes!" Danny had become an expert in ignoring me and I had become an expert on persisting.

Therefore, I pressed the subject a little more, before finally drifting off to sleep.

The next day, Monday, my grandmother left early for the market. My brother and I stayed at home with Sylvia, who helped my grandmother with chores. I told her I was going to play in the park. Therefore, that morning before the clock struck nine, I was already trying to hoist myself into the tree from the nearest bench. I had just reached the first branch, when I was disappointed to see that this was not actually a mango tree. Looking around, the girl from the day before walked by and again grabbed my attention. She slowly walked over and sat down on the bench I had just used to

hoist myself up. She was wearing the same dress as the day before. We exchanged the same look of curiosity, but she kept her lips tightly shut. “She is shy,” I thought. Her hair was long, about waist length, and completely straight. I had very black, very curly hair and girls with straight hair always caught my eye. Hers was light

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