

VANNA VINCI

# FRIDA.

THE STORY OF HER LIFE



PRESTEL





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PRESTEL

MÜNCHEN · LONDON · NEW YORK





FRIDA...  
FRIDA...

GO ON, TELL ME...

TELL ME ABOUT WHEN  
YOU WERE A LITTLE GIRL...

TELL ME ABOUT  
YOUR LIFE...

BUT WHAT'S THE POINT... ?

I KNOW...

YOU ALREADY  
KNOW EVERYTHING  
ABOUT ME...

I KNOW...

YOU ALREADY KNEW EVERYTHING  
BEFORE WE EVEN BEGAN...

BUT NOW I WOULD LIKE  
TO REMEMBER...

I KNOW SO MANY  
PEOPLE'S STORIES...

SO MANY  
I CAN'T REMEMBER  
THEM ALL...

BUT I MIX UP THE DETAILS,  
WHICH ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING...

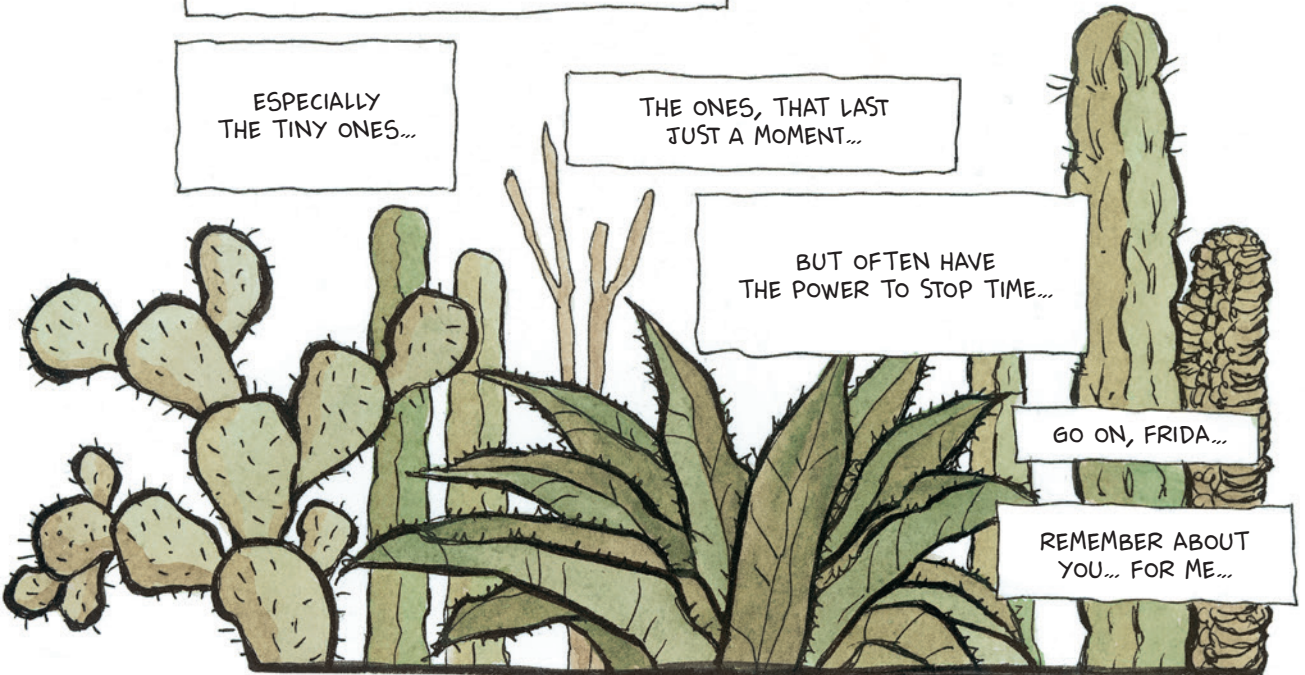
ESPECIALLY  
THE TINY ONES...

THE ONES, THAT LAST  
JUST A MOMENT...

BUT OFTEN HAVE  
THE POWER TO STOP TIME...

GO ON, FRIDA...

REMEMBER ABOUT  
YOU... FOR ME...





ALL RIGHT THEN, FROM  
THE BEGINNING... LIKE  
WEAVING ON A LOOM...

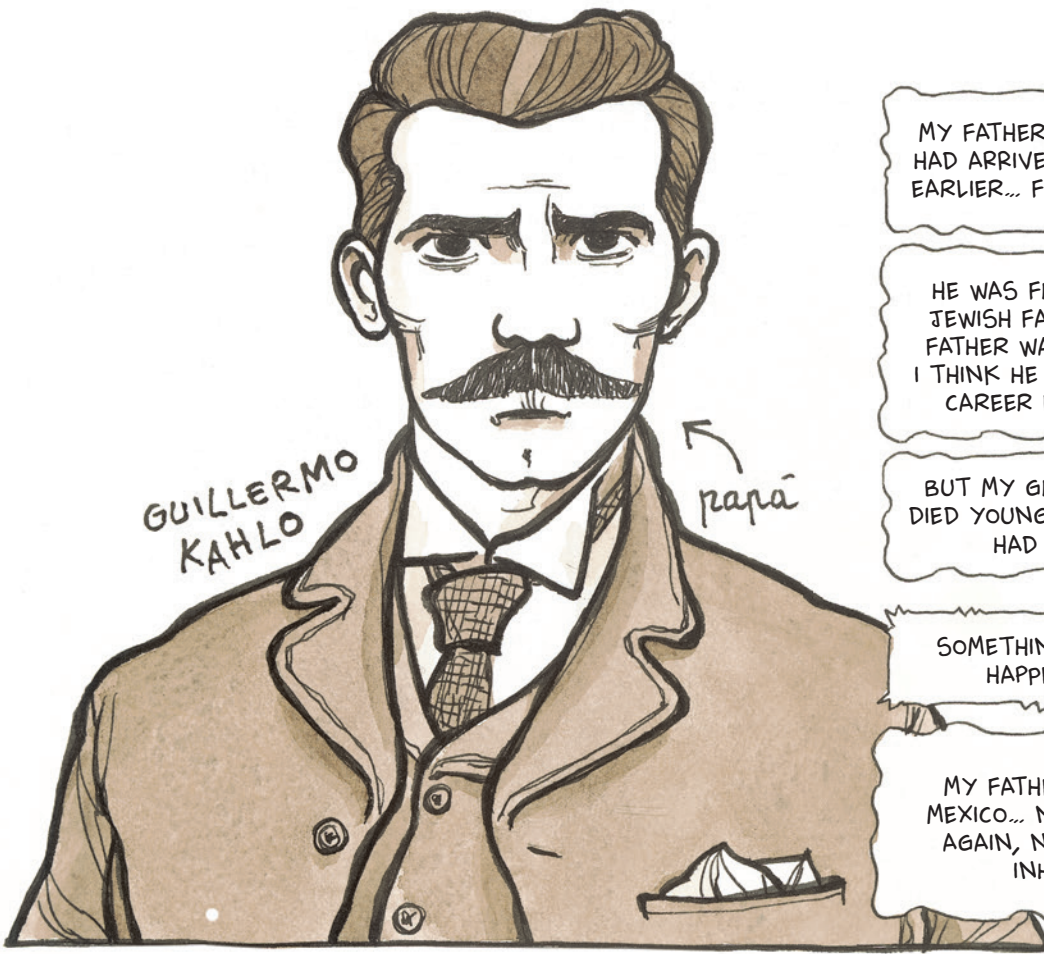
YES... RIGHT,  
AS WE DO WITH  
IMPORTANT  
STORIES...

SO, I WAS  
BORN HERE...

IN THIS HOUSE, BETWEEN  
CALLE ALLENDE AND  
CALLE LONDRES...

AND THIS HOUSE,  
"LA CASA AZUL" ...  
HAS ALWAYS BEEN  
MY EMPIRE.





MY FATHER GUILLERMO KAHLO HAD ARRIVED THIRTEEN YEARS EARLIER... FROM BADEN-BADEN.

HE WAS FROM A HUNGARIAN JEWISH FAMILY... MY GRANDFATHER WAS A JEWELER AND I THINK HE HOPED FOR A GOOD CAREER FOR MY FATHER...

BUT MY GRANDMOTHER HAD DIED YOUNG... AND SOMETHING HAD HAPPENED...

SOMETHING OFTEN HAPPENS...

MY FATHER HAD LEFT FOR MEXICO... NEVER TO GO BACK AGAIN, NOT EVEN FOR HIS INHERITANCE...

GUILLERMO...

YOU WERE HIS FAVORITE... THE BOY HE WOULD HAVE LIKED TO HAVE... THE ONE WHO MOST RESEMBLED HIM... THE MOST INTELLIGENT...

I REMEMBER HIM, A SILENT AND BITTER MAN... HE WAS AN...

EPILEPTIC.





HE ALREADY HAD TWO DAUGHTERS  
... HE HAD BEEN MARRIED TO A  
WOMAN WHO DIED IN CHILDBIRTH...

THEN HE FELL IN LOVE WITH  
MY MOTHER. MAYBE HE WAS  
ALREADY IN LOVE WITH HER  
WHILE HIS OTHER WIFE WAS  
ALIVE... THEY WORKED IN  
THE SAME JEWELRY STORE...

THEN HE STARTED  
HIS CAREER AS A  
PHOTOGRAPHER...

YES  
... A CAREER HE HAD CHOSEN  
BY HIMSELF. CERTAINLY LESS  
SECURE THAN BEING AN  
EMPLOYEE... BUT WITH MORE  
SATISFACTIONS.

I THINK MY FATHER AS  
A YOUNG MAN WAS ALSO  
A BIT OF A REBEL... AND  
OUTSIDE OF SOCIAL  
CONVENTIONS.

HE WAS HANDSOME.  
LIKE YOU, HE WAS  
INTERESTED IN THE ART  
OF SELF-PORTRAIT.

HE ALSO RECORDED  
HIS CHANGING  
APPEARANCE, WITH  
HIS CAMERA...

ALL OF HIS SNAPSHOTS OF HIMSELF ARE A SORT OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN PICTURES.  
AS MY SELF-PORTRAITS ARE FOR ME... A WAY OF STUDYING ONESELF AND HOLDING ON  
TO CERTAIN MOMENTS OF ONE'S LIFE.

DE CUANDO EN CUANDO  
RECUERDENSE DEL CARINO  
QUE SIEMPRE LES HA TENIDO  
SU PADRE *Guillermo Kahlo* 1925

para





WELL... IT CAN'T HAVE BEEN EASY FOR HIM, MOVING TO A FAR-OFF AND COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PLACE, WHILE STILL TRYING TO MAINTAIN HIS OWN ROOTS...

CERTAIN PROPENSITIES PUSH PEOPLE TO FALL BACK ON THEMSELVES...

IT'S TRUE THAT GUILLERMO WAS A MAN WHO REALLY LOVED HIS FAMILY... BUT HE WAS ALSO VERY SOLITARY...

AN INTROVERTED AND MELANCHOLY CHARACTER, AS ONE CAN ALSO SEE FROM HIS PHOTOGRAPHS...

PAPA LOVED TO SPEND TIME ALONE.

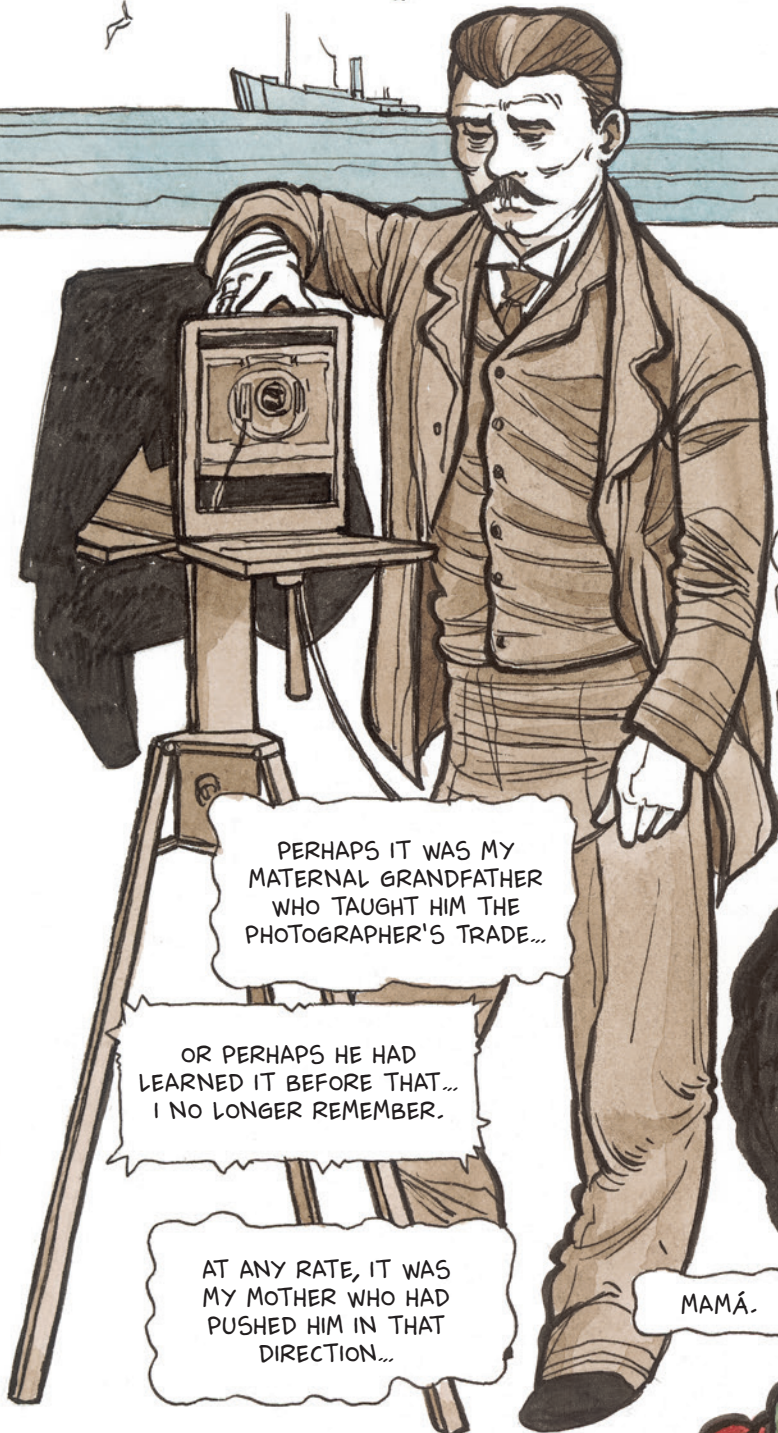
AS THE YEARS PASSED HE WITHDREW TO AN INCREASINGLY SMALL SPACE... A ROOM... WITH HIS BOOKS IN GERMAN, HIS MEMORIES... HIS CHESS SET...

PERHAPS IT WAS MY MATERNAL GRANDFATHER WHO TAUGHT HIM THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S TRADE...

OR PERHAPS HE HAD LEARNED IT BEFORE THAT... I NO LONGER REMEMBER.

AT ANY RATE, IT WAS MY MOTHER WHO HAD PUSHED HIM IN THAT DIRECTION...

MAMÁ.





MY MOTHER, MATILDE CALDERÓN, WAS MEXICAN.

HER MOTHER, MY GRANDMOTHER, WAS THE DAUGHTER OF A SPANISH GENERAL.



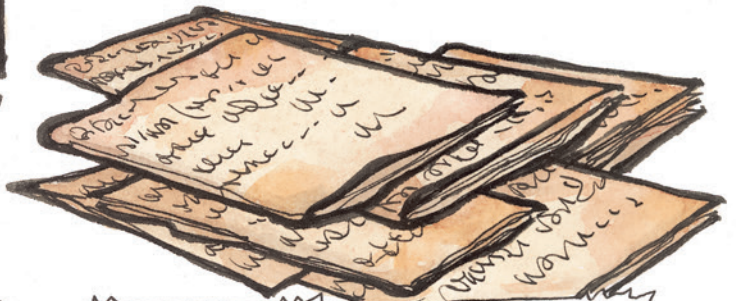
AND HER FATHER, MY GRANDFATHER, WAS A PHOTOGRAPHER OF INDIGENOUS ORIGINS.



SHE WAS THE TYPICAL MEXICAN BEAUTY, STATUESQUE, BIG BLACK EYES! FULL LIPS, WILLFUL CHIN!

BUT SHE WAS IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE ELSE... ANOTHER GERMAN... WHEN I WAS ELEVEN SHE TOLD ME SHE STILL KEPT HIS LETTERS IN A BOOK, BOUND IN LEATHER...

ANOTHER... YES... A CERTAIN LUDWIG BAUER...



HE HAD KILLED HIMSELF IN FRONT OF HER... THAT I REMEMBER... TO PROVE HIS GREAT LOVE...





BUT IN THE END SHE HAD MARRIED MY FATHER... EVEN IF PERHAPS SHE DIDN'T LOVE HIM...



FEBBRI 1898

SHE HAD CONVINCED HIM TO BECOME A PHOTOGRAPHER... THAT IS HOW HE HAD STARTED TO WORK FOR THE GOVERNMENT AND TO PHOTOGRAPH LANDSCAPES.

AND HE HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL... MADE MONEY...

FOR AS LONG AS IT LASTED...

GUILLERMO WAS A METHODOCAL MAN... SOLITARY AND SEVERE...

HE SPENT ALL DAY WORKING, THEN, ONCE HOME, HE ATE BY HIMSELF... ALWAYS AT THE SAME TIME AND IN SILENCE...

WHILE MY MOTHER KEPT HIM COMPANY, WATCHING HIM EAT...

AND HE PLAYED THE PIANO, HE HAD ALWAYS LOVED BEETHOVEN...

AND "THE BEAUTIFUL BLUE DANUBE" ...

HE HAD ALSO KEPT HIS GERMAN ACCENT... SO STRANGE AND EXOTIC-SOUNDING...



HE ALWAYS REMAINED A ROMANTIC GERMAN.



MATILDE ON THE OTHER  
HAND REALLY HAD THAT  
GREAT CHARACTER OF  
MEXICAN WOMEN...

STRONG, TO A FAULT...

WITH MY MOTHER I ALWAYS HAD  
A STRANGE RELATIONSHIP... BUT I  
THINK IT WAS SHE WHO TRANSMITTED  
TO ME, FROM THE BEGINNING, THE  
LOVE FOR THE INDIGENOUS,  
AUTHENTIC CULTURE... AND  
FOR TRADITIONAL DRESS...

ONE OF THE TYPICAL  
TEHUANA WOMEN...  
BEAUTIFUL, INTELLIGENT,  
STRONG AND INTRANSIGENT.

WHO MANAGED THE  
ENTIRE FAMILY FROM  
INSIDE THE HOME...

THE REAL  
MISTRESSES OF  
EVERYTHING...

YES...

THE STRENGTH OF  
A SUBTERRANEAN  
MATRIARCHY...

MATILDE GAVE BIRTH  
TO FOUR DAUGHTERS.  
NOT COUNTING ONE SON,  
WHO DIED PREMATURELY.

MATILDE  
CALDERÓN





AND SO, AFTER MATI AND ADRIANA AND BEFORE CRISTINA... ON JULY 6, 1907, YOU WERE BORN...

I WAS BORN ON JULY 6, 1910...

I KNOW THAT ON THIS POINT IT IS USELESS TO CONTRADICT YOU...

IN ANY CASE, RIGHT AFTER YOUR BIRTH YOUR MOTHER GOT SICK.

AND IN FACT, I WAS NURSED BY MY BELOVED INDIGENOUS NURSE.

AHHH... HER LARGE INDIGENOUS BREASTS...

TO HAVE SUCKED THE MILK OF THOSE BREASTS WAS FUNDAMENTAL TO ME.

LIKE SUCKING TRUE MEXICAN SAP...

... FROM THE GREAT NIPPLES OF MOTHER EARTH.

