

## Memories of Lucinda Eco

**Scott T. Barnes**

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*A girl comes into her inherited power by taking great risks in the mystical novel Memories of Lucinda Eco.*

In Scott T. Barnes's powerful fantasy novel *Memories of Lucinda Eco*, a teenager encounters dark magic and fights to protect her family and friends by realizing her bruja powers.

In Baja California, fifteen-year-old Lucinda leads a modest, somewhat strict existence, going to church on Sundays and wishing she were allowed to join the theater troupe with her best friend, Eva. With her father traveling to and from the US for work and her mother working long hours at the cannery, Lucinda is most influenced by her grandmother, Herminia, who exposes her to brujería magic and helps her find her power and purpose.

During the town's annual parade, which celebrates the burning of witches, Lucinda and her grandmother encounter malicious El Jaguar. Twisting Lucinda's mind, he isolates her in the street. Only Lucinda's grandmother knows how to defeat him. Their battle precipitates more attacks on Lucinda's family, though; her grandmother is cursed, weakened, and depleted of her memories. Lucinda receives a single clue; if she follows it, she will anger her parents and risk her life.

Throughout the book, young women struggle against patriarchal cultures past and present. Both traditional beliefs and Indigenous mysticism are represented well, as are the women's cultures and intergenerational challenges. In the past, Herminia is seen as a free-spirited teenager, taking Americans on tours to see cave paintings while learning to assert her magic and meeting with a witch, Don Esteban, near the mountains. In the present, Lucinda advocates for Herminia and, with her friends Eva and Mateo, practices using mortar-and-pestle concoctions to travel into the Beyond to uncover Herminia's memories and find nontraditional ways to heal her. Faustino, Herminia's love interest, also has a complex backstory; his poor opinion of Americans is based on their greedy influence on the local Mexican mining company.

The book's mystical elements are detailed in colorful, imaginative, and sometimes dense terms, including with winding explanations of the brujos and brujas traveling into caves and with interpretations of Herminia's memories on multidimensional levels. People bond with animals to practice mental, spiritual, and physical magic, too. The related scenes are intriguing, if not always clear, as with a peculiar description of traveling through the Baja landscape: "It seemed so liberating, like the wind in her hair and the thundering of the Jeep in her thighs."

In the timeless fantasy novel *Memories of Lucinda Eco*, a teenager encounters dangerous supernatural forces and pursues her spiritual awakening.

CLARISSA ADKINS (September 3, 2024)

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