

From ACT THREE/Night of Migdalia Cruz's
ANOTHER PART OF THE HOUSE

(The lights cross to MARIA JOSEFA's bedroom. MARIA JOSEFA is asleep in a chair. BERNARDA comes up behind her, watches her for a moment in silence, then notices the white lace she has draped around her torso. SHE slowly picks up that piece of lace and drapes it across her own torso—the same way MARIA JOSEFA had it draped. For a moment SHE pretends to be her mother, doing a slight twirl, her eyes filled with MARIA JOSEFA's joy for a moment, then SHE loses her balance slightly.)

BERNARDA

When I try to move like you, I always stumble.

(Pause)

What goes on in that head of yours when you're asleep? Watching your silence is waiting for a volcano to erupt. Even in your sleep. You're planning something. I know it.

(Pause)

So innocent now. I should have let you go a long time ago. But it wouldn't have been the proper thing to do—let your mother die—if you could stop it. Though it's what you always said you wanted.

(Pause)

It would be the merciful thing...like when evil women cry to be released from their pain—you've been so quiet since that happened. Maybe...now would be a good time. No pain in sleep.

(BERNARDA moves to touch MARIA JOSEFA who is awakened by the baa of the SHEEP, so BERNARDA stops.)

MARIA JOSEFA

(Sniffing the air)

Oh. It's you. What do you want now?

(Noticing the lace)

Didn't have the nerve to do it, did you? What a pity! I would have welcomed it! So what are you still here for? You didn't do what you came to do so go.

BERNARDA

How about a visit? Just a visit with my mother. It's been a long time since we've been alone together.

MARIA JOSEFA

Alone together? We're always alone together—it's just more unbearable when we're in the same room, Bernarda. What are you going to do with that lace now? It's mine, but I suppose you'll take it—a souvenir of another battle lost. Why not? You have everything else.

BERNARDA

I want you to stop talking to Adela. You fill her up with foolish ideas. She's a sensitive girl. You know we must be careful with her.

MARIA JOSEFA

Yes. I know. I know how to care for precious things. Adela is a brilliant jewel sprung straight from the earth, and you'll turn her into dust. If you really cared about her, you'd set her free.

BERNARDA

You are alive still because I took care of you. How many times did you try to throw yourself down the well?

MARIA JOSEFA

I'm one short of my goal.

BERNARDA

I should have let you drown. What were you always looking for in there?

MARIA JOSEFA

Something human.

BERNARDA

Yes. And now you have your lamb. I'm glad you found something to love finally. I always thought that one day, you would turn to me with love in your eyes. But I could never be a lamb.

MARIA JOSEFA

No...I gave birth to a leopard. Your smell shamed me. I heard you in my dreams...before you were even born. You were always talking to me—never let me sleep, always expected something. I'd look at my belly and see your fingers clawing the inside of my stomach. You'd claw from the point nearest my breasts, move them vertically down the center of my stomach, and when you reached the end, you would poke with each one of your fingers—one at a time into my skin—clawing and poking until I couldn't stand it anymore. My tears always calmed you down. My child liked to make her mother suffer right from the beginning. I should have killed you, but the priest wouldn't let me. How could I give birth to something that couldn't dance—wouldn't play? I never wanted to know you.

BERNARDA

That's why I had to fight for my life from the very beginning. Every second—even in my sleep I'm fighting. I have the same dream over and over. I dream that you hand me a silver comb and you say, "Here. Open me up. Here. Erase the dried-salt stench of men out of my hair. Take my secret out of me and swallow it whole." In my dreams, I start to choke. I wake up choking. You don't have to share your secrets with me or with Adela. Those are things that could kill her.

MARIA JOSEFA

What are you afraid of?

BERNARDA

Maybe I am the disease you always said I was.

MARIA JOSEFA

But you have a chance to change that now, and, finally, stop being so afraid. Let Adela go. It's not too late for her. She and I could leave right now—start again. There's so much I haven't taught her.

BERNARDA

Why won't you understand that those are things Adela doesn't need to know?! For Godssake, leave her alone before you turn her into a viper like you. Let her live a young girl's life—

MARIA JOSEFA

You call this living?! Trapped on a mountain with six shriveled up shrews? Adela's the only one worthy of my blood.

BERNARDA

Your blood?! Do you know how much I hate your blood?! Adela doesn't need lessons from a woman who had to sleep with her daughter's husband.

MARIA JOSEFA

Only the first one. And I didn't have to. I just had nothing else to do.

(BERNARDA pulls MARIA JOSEFA's hair, pulling her head back.)
Bite me, leopard! But if you bite me, tear my whole head off or I'll come back to life. That's the only way, Bernarda.

(BERNARDA lets go of MARIA JOSEFA.)

BERNARDA

I know, damn you! If your poison didn't run through my veins, you'd be dead by now. Leave Adela alone, mother. Leave her alone or you'll have the sound of my footsteps nailed into your head. I'll just keep coming back. And you know I can always find you.

MARIA JOSEFA

Yes...Unlike most of us who go in many different directions, you are a forward moving creature. You're like time. That's the scariest thing about you. Go away, tick-tock clock. Go away.

(BERNARDA exits slowly. When SHE gets to the door SHE suddenly turns back and takes the piece of lace with her out the door, locking it tightly behind her.)

MARIA JOSEFA

The more she marches forward, the further back I feel myself. Deeper and deeper into a dark, blank place. A place without music — without Adela.