

From Migdalia Cruz's SALT

ACT ONE/SCENE 4

CUT-CUT

Christmas Eve. Night. The Salt Mounds.
BELEN is rocking LUCIA on her lap and telling him a story. They are both heavily made-up and dressed in once fancy little girl dresses which have been altered to make them more sexually revealing.

LUCIA

Tell the pieces one, Belly. I love cut-cut pieces.

BELEN

Okay, Lulu. But then you gotta go to sleep.

LUCIA

No sleep. Monsters come. Click, click, Belly. Belly beautiful. Tell cut-cut please.

BELEN

Lulu beautiful too.

(SHE strokes his face and kisses him gently on the forehead.)

Okay...There was a time when everyone's heart went blind and the sky turned black. It was the beginning of the judgement and every one who did not fear God was to be destroyed. A certain, evil woman with five children saved herself from the angel of destruction by offering pieces of her children to Heaven. She took an ear from one, an arm from another, and so on for every child she had. And so her children didn't look like other children. Oh, not at all.

LUCIA

Not at all.

BELEN

And she crossed the state line into Indiana, leaving them to find their own way in what was left of the world. These little ones looked different—their eyes never closed, and smelled different—like dried blood and dirt, and even sounded different—more like dogs than children. They howled and ran in packs, sniffing the ground underneath them, always searching for their missing parts—never able to stop and close their eyes until they found them. They looked under train tracks, and inside buses. They swam along the edge of every body of water, looking for themselves on the bottom. They dug caves in the sides of mountains. Their eyes were always searching. They even tried to make new parts from the loose pieces of wood and metal they found. But no luck. Nothing ever fit.

LUCIA

Nothing ever fits right.

BELEN

After years and years of searching, they grew so tired that they had to lie back on the ground and rest. That was the first time they looked up into the sky. And when they did, it opened up and snowflakes fell slowly down to them. They opened their mouths and captured them on the edge of their tongues. As they swallowed the snowflake, each one thought of the beauty of the snow. For the first time, they thought about something other than themselves. And smiled. And thought, "I am no greater than a snowflake, or a drop of rain, or a grain of salt. Everything is a gift from God."

BELEN, cont'd

With that, they each suddenly grew their missing part. The snowflakes were a reminder to never forget the power of Heaven.

(LUCIA closes his eyes.)

And the children finally closed their eyes and slept.

(Pause; then LUCIA suddenly opens his eyes.)

LUCIA

Did their mom cut them up?

BELEN

Yeah, I guess so.

LUCIA

With what?

BELEN

I don't know.

LUCIA

Why did she leave them behind?

BELEN

Because she could run faster without them.

LUCIA

Where is she now?

BELEN

Someplace dark. Someplace without children.

(LUCIA closes his eyes and finally begins to sleep.)

That's right, Lulu-Lucia. Gotta take sleep when it comes. It's nice when it's only sleep that takes you.

(CUSTOMER ONE, whose face is masked in dark gauze, enters and beckons to BELEN. SHE gently places LUCIA's head on a mound of salt and walks to CUSTOMER ONE, slowly removing her blouse as SHE moves. CUSTOMER ONE fondles her breasts, and suckles them, reaching beneath her skirt.)

CUSTOMER ONE

(Almost a whisper)

Who taught you to move like that? You move from the inside out. You move like sweet air over wildflowers. I could come just feeling you move like that. Don't gotta get inside that. So small and delicate. I don't think I could get inside there. Can I get inside there?

(BELILAH enters.)

BELILAH

You ain't paid for that.

CUSTOMER ONE

You said I could be alone with her.

BELILAH

That was before you started talking about entering. Entering costs.

(To BELEN)

Get your blouse back on.

(SHE quickly does so.)

Your time's up, pal. I'm saving her for something special.

(BELEN moves to LUCIA and curls up beside him.)

CUSTOMER ONE

She's no innocent. No one moves like that is innocent.

BELILAH

I trained her well. But she's still got the membrane—last time I checked.

CUSTOMER ONE

I got a fifty.

BELILAH

Not enough. You could have one of the boys for that.

CUSTOMER ONE

No. The last one shit all over me. What do you feed them anyway?

BELILAH

I don't like cursewords in my house. Time for you—

(Taking out a knife)

to go.

CUSTOMER ONE

Don't expect me back here.

BELILAH

I have no expectations. That's why I'm happy. People think happiness is something you work for. Like a goal. Don't have any, so whatever I get is right. That's the only justice I know.

(CUSTOMER ONE exits. BELILAH sits across from LUCIA & BELEN.

GRACE watches from the shadows.)

Lucia don't sleep like that when you're not around. You got powers, and I'm gonna get them outta you, girl, and put 'em into me. Don't think I'm gonna let you keep them forever. And once I know there's no telling what might happen.

(SHE digs in the salt and pulls out a sleeping bag, shakes it out, and places it over LUCIA & BELEN.)

Sleep tight. It's almost Christmas.

(BELILAH sings, GRACE disappears from view.)

"It came upon a midnight clear, that glorious song of old.
From angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold!
Peace on the earth, goodwill toward men, from Heaven's all gracious King!
The world in solemn stillness lay, to hear the angels...sing."
You sure are two pretty children...

(Calling to VASQUES, who appears from inside a salt mound.)

VASQUES! Keep an eye on them.

(HE nods. SHE exits.

Lights cross to GUADALUPE & GRACE on the bridge.)