

From Migdalia Cruz's CIGARETTES & MOBY-DICK

ACT ONE: CHAPTER ONE

MIRANDA alone on a pier in Manhattan.
JOHN 1, 2, & 3 watch her and describe her actions.

JOHN 3

The serious girl with black braids streaked too early by gray, takes out a pair of scissors and cuts the middle out of a thick book...

MIRANDA

Good place to hide cigarettes.

JOHN 2

She tucks five cigarettes into the hole and closes the book...Herman Melville's Moby-Dick. Her wet fingers search her pocket for the last of her pack...

MIRANDA

Better light up before it rains again. It keeps raining again.

JOHN 1

The cigarette lights with a flash of orange showing the moonlight off her painted pearly coral fingernails...

MIRANDA

People don't look out for the details like I do. I got all the ammunition in myself to fight most anything. I got the smell of peaches on my brain so I won't ever go hungry. I got the feeling of a telephone in my hand so I can call anybody I want to—so I'm never lonely. I got the taste of uncooked meat in my mouth so I know when I'm bleeding.

JOHN 3

She takes a deep drag that she can feel in her toes...

MIRANDA

It's a red feeling. Deeper than I thought there was room to go. I feel long now. I can touch the top of anything.

JOHN 2

She keeps filling herself up with smoke.

JOHN 1

And silence.

(As MIRANDA speaks, the MEN act like they're friends at sea, JOHN 2 is the object of desire for the other two. A fight breaks out. The two suitors tear the clothes off the object of desire, who runs from them and tears the American flag off a flagpole and wraps it around his naked body. JOHN 1 & 3 push him to the ground and JOHN 2 rocks on the floor, crying softly, as JOHN 1 & 3 watch and cheer. It's timed to coincide with MIRANDA's telling of the events.)

MIRANDA

I almost finished reading this book, but it made me sad. Men almost always make me sad, when it's just them alone—without women. They always do crazy things when they're all together like that. Like pirates. I bet they did weird shit on the ocean. In the middle of the great big like that...they probably ate too much fish. I bet that did something bad to them. I bet they started to smell like fish and I bet a lot of fights broke out. Who stinks more than who and shit like that. I bet most of the fights were about smells...I bet there was one guy who smelled like a woman...He was a really busy guy. He drove all the other men nuts for his smell. They rubbed up against him, trying to steal his sweat, cop his smell. They put out long pieces of fabric for him to roll up in, naked. And leave his body stains there for them to raise like a flag. That was no ordinary Jolly Rogers on this pirate ship—this ship floated on the fluids of a man who smelled like a woman. It was a slow ship. Languid. It liked to take naps in the afternoon and make love for many hours at a time...I'm a pirate too.

(MIRANDA takes a cigarette from the inside of her copy of Moby-Dick, tears off the filter, sticks it roughly in her mouth and lights it.)

MIRANDA

I think I better buy another copy and finish reading it though. Commit it to memory. I have a feeling it's gonna save my life.

JOHN 3

Books can do that—for some of us they're the only way.

JOHN 1, 2, 3

Call me John.

(We hear Jackie Moore's "This Time Baby", as the lights follow MIRANDA as SHE crosses to the deck of the Staten Island Ferry. LILA joins her.)