

From Migdalia Cruz's CIGARETTES & MOBY-DICK

CHAPTER TEN

In the apartment. LILA sits with her head in MARILYN's lap. SHE reads to LILA from a thick book. JOHN 3 sits reading a book to himself, mouthing the words.

JOHN 3

This is where Lila begins to understand something and Marilyn gets to talk a little about something she loves.

LILA

It's so nice of you to do this.

MARILYN

Oh, I love to read.

LILA

I thought you did. I knew you were more than beautiful...I read all those stupid stories about you—about how you posed once with a book turned upside down. And the photographer had to tell you to turn it around. I didn't believe it though.

MARILYN

Yeah. I was just nervous. I knew how they were just trying to make fun of me—so I had just picked it up and opened it and then, snap, the picture got taken. That was my favorite book too—"Ulysses". Wooh! Ever read any of his stuff?

LILA

Harry gave me a copy—but I didn't understand it.

MARILYN

I don't think there was anything to understand really. I mean, maybe I missed something, but that book does not have a plot. I mean but that's what I kinda liked about it, it just washed over you like a wave, the rhythms of the language like a great big wave that comes over you and on top of you over and over again. Those Irish guys can be so cute, you know. But they just don't always make sense. I have a weakness for them.

(Pause)

Who's Harry?

LILA

My father.

MARILYN

Your father? And you called him by his first name? That's so...progressive.

LILA

Yeah, well. His real name was hard for a child to pronounce. I still don't know what it was exactly. He died before I was bold enough to ask him.

MARILYN

Ahhh...that's too bad, honey. But people do die sometimes. They get diseases or—

LILA

He cut me with a razor and then hanged himself in front of me. Read, please.

MARILYN

Oh...well people do that too.

(Meaning the book to be read)

What's your pleasure, honey?

LILA

This one.

(Hands her MIRANDA's copy of *Moby-Dick*)

It's hers.

MARILYN

Oooh! This is a good one too. I liked that cannibal guy.

LILA

Queequeg?

MARILYN

Yeah.

(Reading from *Moby-Dick*)

“Chapter Eighty-nine: Fast-Fish and Loose-Fish. Perhaps the only formal whaling code authorized by legislative enactment, was that of Holland. It was decreed by the States-General in A.D. 1695. Yes, these laws might be engraven on a Queen Anne's farthing, or the barb of a harpoon, and worn round the neck, so small are they.

(JOHN 3 softly reads along with MARILYN.)

I. A Fast-Fish belongs to the party fast to it.

II. A Loose-Fish is fair game for anybody who can soonest catch it.

LILA

How do you turn a Loose-Fish into a Fast-Fish?

MARILYN

I guess you kill it first, so it belongs to you and nobody can take it away because it stays by your side because you can tie it to your ship.

LILA

You've read this book before.

MARILYN

Oh, sure...When I used to read. I miss it so much. My real, real real favorites were Shelley, Whitman, Keats and Rilke—you know them? They're like poets and anyway, so reading them made me feel all in love with myself—not how I was but how I was going to be. You ever feel like that?

LILA

In love with myself? Never. Never used to anyway.

MARILYN

Oh, you will. Just learn your own rhythm and you'll find your emotion, don't you think? Just don't move your lips when you read to yourself—then they might put you away because many crazy people do that. I used to do that—until somebody told me that. So be careful!

(JOHN 3 looks chagrined and pulls up the book to cover his face.)

LILA

Sometimes I just wish she was dead—It hurts so much...

MARILYN

I know. You just want them dead for a little while and in the morning you can get up again and everything will be like normal—but better.

LILA

I daydream about it.

MARILYN

I daydream chiefly about beauty, other people's beauty. A new face I can put on over my own that makes me somebody else—now that would be a gift. My face covered in something...

(MARILYN exits to look in the bathroom mirror. LILA puts on a tape—it's Connie Francis singing "Who's Sorry Now?", picks up a book and begins to read as MIRANDA enters.)