

Red Sky at Night

by
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CHARACTERS:

MAYRA
VINICIO
LINDA

STAGE SET:

Lower level of a luxurious yacht anchored at high sea.

SETTING:

All action takes place at night (after midnight) at high sea, two hundred miles from the coast, in the midst of a storm and a raging sea.

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(Sea sounds. VINICIO, at the helm of the Solitary Moon.)

VINICIO:

(voice over)

In the Caribbean islands, the rain and the storms are strange. The sunstroke is severe out here. Along with the saltpeter and wind and strong color contrasts and solitude and silence and intense blue horizon, a traveler is prone to certain disorders, can become disoriented, unbalanced, and see illusions and memories in the seascape, much like those that occur in the desert. Yes, that's it. These Caribbean islands are like the desert. They just seem a little lonelier.

(A storm begins. Then, a loud noise. Lights out abruptly. When the lights come back on, VINICIO is no longer on stage.)

(Night time. A sea breeze comes in through the ship's right porthole. The right door opens, and two women appear. The heavier one carries a flashlight. She shines it on all of the objects. Someone is vomiting. The ship is in disarray. Sea sounds.)

MAYRA:

Can't you make it to the bathroom?

LINDA:

The entire Atlantic is my bathroom.

MAYRA:

Here. Wipe your mouth.

LINDA:

What can you vomit when you haven't eaten for three days?

MAYRA:

In your case, it must be nicotine.

LINDA:

I'm bringing up little chunks of something.

MAYRA:

You have no manners, child. Just like your father.

Where is he?

(She presses a switch. The scene is completely illuminated.)

LINDA:

(Loudly)

Daaadyyyyyyyy!

(Silence. They look at each other.)

MAYRA:

I don't know. (Loudly.) Vinicio!

(Silence.)

LINDA:

I can't hear a thing.

MAYRA:

Everything is all over the floor.

LINDA:

It's so weird. Do you think he...?

MAYRA:

My god!!

LINDA:

(picks up a bottle and drops it.)

We shouldn't have left him alone last night.

MAYRA:

Control yourself.

LINDA:

How do you expect me to control myself? I've been trying for three months to figure out how to control myself. And I can't. Mother, I'm on the verge of... I can't.

MAYRA:

If he has fled the scene, he did it inconspicuously.

LINDA:

Please don't use that phrase.

MAYRA:

What phrase?

LINDA:

"Fled the scene." You sound like a journalist.

MAYRA:

There are no journalists out at sea, thank god.

LINDA:

I think he threw himself overboard.

MAYRA:

Vinicio isn't suicidal.

LINDA:

Do you suppose there's any aspirin on this ship?

MAYRA:

You do it on purpose.

LINDA:

What?

MAYRA:

Your humor. You know I hate it.

LINDA:

It's not humor. (Lights a cigarette.) It's sarcasm. And I use it when I'm nervous.

MAYRA:

And now you start smoking like a chimney...

LINDA:

Don't worry. I'm almost out.

MAYRA:

Good.

LINDA:

Quaker Oats. Now what do you suppose a can of oats is doing sitting on top of the short wave radio? How do you make this?

MAYRA:

With milk.

LINDA:

Milk? Oh well, I hate oatmeal anyway. (Looks at the can.) And ants. How do ants find their way into a can of oats in the middle of the Atlantic? Damn insects.

(Goes to the porthole and throws the container into the sea.)

LINDA:

Let the fish eat them. (Pause.) Maybe the police found Daddy.

MAYRA:

The police can't even find themselves.

LINDA:

Or the coast guard. They came, arrested him, and took him away.

MAYRA:

And we were spared because we got lucky? Or maybe it's a trap.

LINDA:

A trap?

MAYRA:

They're watching us. They've got the place bugged.

LINDA:

Who has?

MAYRA:

Waiting for us to say something compromising to get some evidence against us.

LINDA:

They don't need any more evidence, Mother. This case is open and shut.

MAYRA:

Nobody has anything on me.

(Sea sounds.)

LINDA:

I don't like the sound of that.

MAYRA:

What?

LINDA:

The sea. It sounds different today.

MAYRA:

No it doesn't. It sounds the same. It sounds like the sea, just like any other.

LINDA:

What are we going to do?

MAYRA:

Make contact with Iron Lady. Go ahead with the plan.

LINDA:

What plan? You don't know anything about "the plan." They didn't tell us anything. Maybe there is no plan.

MAYRA:

I'm sure we'll be fine.

LINDA:

That's what you think.

MAYRA:

I said I was sure.

LINDA:

I think this ship is going to sink.

MAYRA:

No it won't.

LINDA:

Oh no?

MAYRA:

(Goes over to the radio) I have the manufacturer's warranty.

LINDA:

Oh, great. You can show it to the ocean on our way down.

(MAYRA turns it on; it makes normal shortwave noises.)

MAYRA:

(Into the microphone)

This is Solitary Moon, over. Come in Iron Lady... Come in Iron Lady (Noises.)

Attention Iron Lady. This is Solitary Moon. If you can hear me I will switch to the agreed upon frequency... Repeat:

If you can hear me I will switch to the agreed upon frequency. (Noises.) Do you read me Iron Lady?

(Louder noises.) Iron Lady come in!

(The noise becomes unbearable. MAYRA tries to turn off the radio but cannot. Finally she yanks the wires out. The noise ceases.)

MAYRA:

If we at least had a map.

LINDA:

I'd prefer a jet or a submarine.

MAYRA:

We must be about at the rendezvous point.

LINDA:

So turn the steering wheel in that direction and let the sea take us there.

MAYRA:

I can't.

LINDA:

Why not?

MAYRA:

First of all, because it doesn't have a steering wheel, it has a helm...

LINDA:

You sound like a sex ed teacher.

MAYRA:

Secondly, in case you hadn't noticed —and there's no need to start screaming like a madwoman— I have to tell you that the ship is at a standstill.

LINDA:

(Frightened) What!

MAYRA:

It's not moving.

(Pause. They look at each other.)

LINDA:

It's true!

MAYRA:

Your mother doesn't lie, dear.

LINDA:

The anchor?

MAYRA:

Two rocks. We've run aground.

LINDA:

(Nervous) But... Why? You didn't tell me anything... Let's get out of here... Get the lifeboat... Let's go...

(Becomes nauseated again.MAYRA takes off her belt.)

MAYRA:

Vomit and I'll hit you.

LINDA:

...we've stopped...

MAYRA:

Don't do it again. Don't. No, no, no... no....

(LINDA stops.)

MAYRA:

That's better.

LINDA:

So?

MAYRA:

So that's that.

LINDA:

Really?

MAYRA:

Really.

(Pause. LINDA vomits.)

MAYRA:

She did it, the little bitch!

LINDA:

Run aground....(Vomits again.)

MAYRA:

How perfectly disgusting, god forgive me...

LINDA:

...the ship...it's not moving (Vomits.)

MAYRA:

At least we won't sink. The ship is secure on two big rocks. What we have to do is stick with the plan, as I more or less remember it. We must make contact with Iron Lady. Find your father. We're here now, we just have to wait.

LINDA:

I've never trusted ships. Or the sea either.

MAYRA:

It was the safest way.

LINDA:

I would have preferred a jet, like the Azocars did.

MAYRA:

They got caught.

LINDA:

But they're alive.

MAYRA:

And in jail. All the borders were crawling with police. Your father made such a mess, he insulted journalists, he even called the Supreme Court justices

MAYRA: (Con't)

a bunch of "old bitches." If he had kept his mouth shut, we could have fled unnoticed.

LINDA:

It's not his fault.

MAYRA:

No, it's my fault. I told him we should leave the country long before he started showing up in the newspapers.

LINDA:

I feel like I still am in the country.

(MAYRA gives LINDA a tremendous slap and turns her towards the audience.)

MAYRA:

You spoiled little child. Take a look out there. That's water. Sea. The sea. Not that shitty country. International waters. Atlantic Ocean. Two hundred miles away from the nearest port. There are no patrols, no planes, no Supreme Court, no police, no reporters, none of that. Just fish. Water, fish, and night. Nothing else. What do you see? What do you see other than nothing?

LINDA:

Ghosts...

MAYRA:

I saved you from jail. So you can just thank me or else keep your mouth shut, you brat.

LINDA:

Okay, okay. I thank you. I revere you more than the Virgin Mary. We're not in the country. But where are we? North, south, east, west? There's got to be some

LINDA:

goddamn coordinates. A map. Some stars, or something like that. Because they said exile, we paid these damn Americans to give us asylum.

LINDA:(con't)

You have to understand me, Mother. I'm not as unflappable as you are. My head and my bones ache. I'm sick of hearing this damn sea. And I have a lot of questions.

MAYRA:

What would you like to know?

LINDA:

You won't answer.

MAYRA:

Try me.

LINDA:

Okay. Where is Daddy? Why are we on top of a rock? What the hell is a rock doing in the middle of the ocean? Why is the ship full of ants? Where are our contacts? Why do I see ghost captains and ships hovering around the ship? And above all, how the fuck are we gonna get out of here?

MAYRA:

You're very demanding.

LINDA:

Can you answer me?

MAYRA:

Not yet.

LINDA:

What do I have to do, make an appointment? For next Tuesday, maybe?

(MAYRA exits.)

LINDA:

Where are you going? Don't leave me alone.

(MAYRA leaves through the left door.

We hear her going down some stairs.

Pause.)

(LINDA remains motionless for a few moments. She is cold. She tries to close the center porthole but cannot.

Walks towards center stage until she is in front of the door to the basement. Stumbles over another whiskey bottle, and backs up a little. She walks stage right.) (VINICIO enters.)

LINDA:

Daddy!

VINICIO:

Is she gone yet?

LINDA:

Where were you?

VINICIO:

I'm thirsty. And my head is killing me. You haven't seen any Johnny Walker around here, have you?

LINDA:

Who?

VINICIO:

Whiskey, goddamn it, whiskey. How can a citizen like you, educated in the finest dumbass catholic school in the continent not have the slightest fuckin' idea what Johnny Walker is?

LINDA:

Whiskey for a headache?

VINICIO:

Hair of the dog. All the bucks we invested in your education went down the tubes. What the fuck did you major in?

LINDA:

Nuclear physics, Daddy. Physics. So that I could attempt to discover with the most powerful microscope whether there exists any subatomic particle in your head that may be even remotely human and not from a gorilla, like the rest of you, Daddy.

VINICIO:

...some social bullshit is what you studied. Where did you get that degree again— a TV game show?

LINDA:

Yeah, the same one you got kicked off for being drunk.

VINICIO:

Well, allow me to give you my three opinions about that:(VINICIO belches three times.) What do you think of that?

LINDA:

You look awful, Daddy.

VINICIO:

Awful? I probably do, honey. Eating fish can burn anybody out. The phosphorous is too nutritious and it overloads your fuses. Your neurons explode and you get a short circuit.

(Pulls a book out of his waistband and gives it to LINDA.)

Is says so right here in Reader's Digest, December. It's two months old, but it's the only trash you can read on this ship. We forgot to bring reading material. If you get bored, there's just three things you can do:

drink whiskey, fish, or read the only available issue of Reader's Digest in the Caribbean Sea.

LINDA:

We're in the Atlantic.

VINICIO:

Oh, are we? Says who?

LINDA:

Mother.

VINICIO:

That shrieking shrew knows as much about geography as you do about literature.

LINDA:

We're out of here, we've fled.

VINICIO:

Wrong. The country is still there. Watching us. Pointing at us with their microphones, with their sunsets, their cemeteries, their fireflies and their fish.

LINDA:

They can't catch us now, we're in international waters.

VINICIO:

Two miles.

LINDA:

Two what?

VINICIO:

Two miles. We're two miles short of international waters.

LINDA:

(Nonchalant) Liar.

VINICIO:

Look out the window and see for yourself. Shit-colored water. That means we're still in the country. International waters are multi-colored, green, yellow, red, with stars...

LINDA:

What do you take me for, an idiot?

VINICIO:

Do I have to answer that?

LINDA:

No.

VINICIO:

Just as well.

LINDA:

So we're still in the country? I knew it!

VINICIO:

Of course.

LINDA:

We have to flee.

VINICIO:

We can't.

LINDA:

Why not?

VINICIO:

Because of the sea.

LINDA:

What about it?

VINICIO:

There's a storm coming.

LINDA:

It doesn't seem like it.

VINICIO:

But it's coming.

LINDA:

They forecast clear skies for tonight.

VINICIO:

And you believe what some Third World meteorologist says?

LINDA:

I'd rather be anywhere but here, on this ship.

VINICIO:

What's wrong with it?

LINDA:

I have a feeling it's going to sink.

VINICIO:

No, your mother has the manufacturer's warranty, I heard her say so.

LINDA:

We're in trouble.

VINICIO:

And how did you figure that one out? A Masters or a Doctorate from London?
You got any cigarettes?

LINDA:

We've run aground at sea.

VINICIO:

Nooooooo. And how does one run aground on land? Come on, doctor, with that fancy scholarship I got you so you could study abroad with the best talent in the world and acquire all that high-class British knowledge, tell me: how does one run aground on land?

LINDA:

Don't make fun of me. The sea is dangerous today. As if it were angry. With me.

VINICIO:

(Loudly) "If nature opposes..." Who said that? How can you possibly not know? In my day that was the first thing we were taught. They taught us things with simple examples:hens, chickens, fish... They would theorize about philosophy and you'd end up not understanding a goddamn thing, but you knew for sure that it was all very important...

LINDA:

I bet you never learned a thing.

VINICIO:

Never. But I learned to value knowledge. It's kind of like... like god. Even if you've never seen him, you're careful about insulting him, it gives you butterflies in the stomach.

LINDA:

I wouldn't know. I've never insulted god.

VINICIO:

You must have said something to him some time, or you must've challenged him, saying "OK, God, I think you're a pussy. I dare you to mess with me. I bet you won't pulverize me. Bet you won't come down and punish me. Come on, I bet you won't knock this chip off my shoulder, assface." Why can't god be an assface, huh?

LINDA:

I never imagined you ever thought about god.

VINICIO:

That's true, I never do. Only when I'm terrified, or drunk, or thinking about your mother.

LINDA:

Mother makes you think of god?

VINICIO:

When I think about the imperfection of...

LINDA:

Of Mother?

VINICIO:

No, of god. ...To have created such a being, so sick... As a sociopsychopsychiatrist, you ought to know that your mother is sick.

LINDA:

No she isn't.

VINICIO:

She's not? Then how come whenever she goes to bed with me she gets a headache?

LINDA:

Because she doesn't like you anymore and she has other men.

VINICIO:

No man in his right mind would go to bed with a shrew like her... that man-eating, treacherous woman, that evil, thieving, vicious...

(MAYRA enters. Lightning.)

LINDA:

You were here!

VINICIO:

...charming, delightful, sincere...

LINDA:

Good thing you came upstairs, because I want you to hear it straight from him.
Go ahead, Daddy, tell her.

VINICIO:

I wonder why the sea sometimes gets so furious, and then so calm.

MAYRA:

Tell me what?

LINDA:

Tell her.

VINICIO:

As if it were something else. It never seems to have a purpose. It doesn't want to do anything. How very strange the sea is, don't you think?

LINDA:

OK, I'll tell her myself. Not only have we run aground, but we are still in the country.

LINDA: (Con't)

He says we are in national waters. He says we still have not escaped. Isn't that right? Isn't it?

MAYRA:

You didn't have to tell her.

LINDA:

See!! You lie to me. You lie to me every five seconds. You both told me not to worry, that we would be fine. Golden exile and all that. Well now I don't know how you're going to do it but you've got to get me out of here.

MAYRA:

Vinicio, tell me:

what was the plan? What were we supposed to do once we got here?

VINICIO:

What plan?

MAYRA:

You idiot! THE PLAN! The map.

VINICIO:Map? I thought I left it somewhere around here.... (Goes toward the radio.) Have you guys seen a.. a... a can of oats full of ants?

LINDA:

You put the map in the can of oats?

MAYRA:

(To LINDA) And you didn't see it?

LINDA:

You know ants disgust me.

MAYRA:

Forget the map. It's out at sea.

VINICIO:

You lost the oats?

MAYRA:

Your daughter threw them out the window.

VINICIO:

So now what are we gonna eat?

LINDA:

They were full of ants and worms.

MAYRA:

Who says there's anything wrong with ants? I've been having them for dessert, after my fish...

VINICIO:

You've been eating ants?

MAYRA:

Vinicio, let's... let's forget about everything else. We'll take care of it in the states. If you want we can get divorced. You'd like that...

VINICIO:

I don't know...

MAYRA:

I would. That doesn't matter. We'll split the money and go our separate ways. But first we have to get out of here... I want you to tell me the plan.

VINICIO:

Why?

MAYRA:

Because there's a storm coming. Because there is no food and because the ship is leaking down below. Because we've run aground. So tell me:

what was your arrangement with Gustavo? When do we meet up with Iron Lady? What are we supposed to do now?

VINICIO:

(Pretending to eat an ant) Here's one... Some stay alive in your stomach and run around until the gastric juices destroy them. Ants are rich in vitamins, for your information. The Indians from I-don't-know-where-the-hell eat them with green salad, and they live longer than anybody.

MAYRA:

Vinicio, I have no more patience for this. What about the plan? Tell me why this ship isn't moving. Where are we? Where is Gustavo? And what is the plan to get out of here?

(MAYRA grabs VINICIO by the throat and chokes him, then throws him to the floor.)

VINICIO:

(After a pause) Last night... night fell for the first time.

LINDA:

What are you talking about, Daddy? We've been at sea for two weeks.

VINICIO:

Night fell, like never before. Night time. It was silent, BUT you could hear the horns of ghost ships, the yawns of their captains, the howling of the darkness.

(Sea sounds.)

VINICIO:

Then, they appeared. Them. Lost ships dragged along by the tide in a drowned country. And when I heard them coming, I was frightened.

LINDA:

I don't understand.

VINICIO:

I mean, I realized that we were about to leave the country and its national and underwater and terrestrial waters.

LINDA:

Waters are not terrestrial.

MAYRA:

Would you please shut up?

VINICIO:

The young are so impatient. You don't know, dear daughter, because you haven't lived at sea. But the waters of the sea are terrestrial. (Pause.) In the terrestrial waters of the night, and with the fish and the ants, I was scared shitless... So then, so then... Dear...

MAYRA:

(She punches VINICIO in the balls. He falls.) Look here. You better start telling me the plan you made with Gustavo and the Americans and stop playing games and talking about ghosts and ships and fish and the moon because I have no more patience, no scruples and no feelings. All I want to do is survive. At any cost. Understand? Survive. So tell me:
what are we going to do? Huh???

(At that moment the radio sounds.)

VOICE OF
GUSTAVO:

Solitary Moon, come in Solitary Moon. Are you there? Are you still there?

LINDA:

It's Gustavo!!!

MAYRA:

We've been saved!

(LINDA goes to the radio.)

LINDA:

We're here! I read you... I read you... I read you... over...

VOICE:

I can't hear anything. If you can hear me, we are on our way there. We're leaving now. Everything will be ready in a few hours. Repeat: we are on our way there. Do not panic.

LINDA:

We've run aground!

VOICE:

I can't hear anything. We are on our way there... We are on our way...

(Black out. Radio noise.)

2

WE HEAR THE SEA

LINDA:

(On the radio) Attention, I'm attempting to find a short wave frequency for an emergency transmission. If anyone can hear me, please go up to 4 or 27.

Repeat:

go up to F-4 or F-27 (Trying to remember.) 45456, attention, calling 4546. No, 45456. Do you read me, Buzzard's Nest? Over. (Noises.) Attention, calling 45456, Buzzard's Nest, this is Solitary Moon. Will go up to the agreed upon frequency. Repeat:

I will go up to the agreed upon frequency... (Noises.)

RADIO:

This is Buzzard's Nest, calling Solitary Moon...

LINDA:

Finally! Someone's answering!

VOICE:

What the hell are you doing, Solitary Moon? Why are you calling me? Do you want to drag me down, too? Over...

LINDA:

We're in trouble, Buzzard...

VOICE:

Don't call me again, Solitary Moon. We're going ahead with the plan as it was, and...

LINDA:

We've run aground. We can't get to the rendezvous location, Buzzard.

VOICE:

Things are really hot here. The bank has been taken over and they have overrun the TV station.

LINDA:

We've run aground at high sea! Are you listening to me?

VOICE:

...Don't worry about it. They don't know where you are. Iron Lady is on the way. Give me your coordinates.

LINDA:

My what?

VOICE:

The coordinates, you idiot.

LINDA:

What are those?

MAYRA:

(Takes the microphone away from her) Between 10 and 12 degrees north latitude and 60 and 73 west longitude. Repeat:

(She repeats.)

VOICE:

I copy you. I copy you. We will send a speedboat to pick you up and continue the trip. But don't call any more.

LINDA:

(Taking the microphone away) Darling!

VOICE:

DON'T CALL ME THAT, YOU BITCH!

LINDA:

But, at least say something sweet to me. Do you hear me? Buzzard... Buzzard... Gustavo...

VOICE:

There's nobody by that name here. Goodbye.

LINDA:

Did you hear that?

(Communication is cut off.)

Damn! Five days ago he said they were on their way here and they still haven't arrived. Where are they looking for us? In the Indian Ocean? After all the shit I've been through for that man, and he can't even fake a few kind words over the radio. When I see him the first thing I'm going to do is slap him one, and see what he thinks of that.

LINDA: (CON'T)

(Looks at herself in the mirror.)

Although I really should get in shape before I see him, because I'm too thin. How long have we been here? Fifteen days? Twenty? I could really afford to gain a few pounds. Mama.

MAYRA:

You're strange. Nobody wants to gain weight nowadays. Men like women with bodies like yours.

LINDA:

Gustavo likes his women plump.

MAYRA:

Thin arms, thin legs. So they'll remind them of little girls when they're in bed.

LINDA:

He has no shortage of little girls at the TV station. He's been with all of the child actresses.

MAYRA:

He doesn't like them smart. Which you're not, lucky for you. What was your major again?

LINDA:

Psychopedagogy.

MAYRA:

What good is that?

LINDA:

Do you have a cigarette?

MAYRA:

What good is it?

LINDA:

No good at all, as you know.

What would you have liked to be?

(LINDA takes the bottle and drinks from it.)

MAYRA:

Me?

I'd be... a fisherwoman... A woman with callouses on her hands. Who goes out early to get the fish while they're asleep.

MAYRA: (Con't)

To deceive them with the motion of the water. And make them dizzy with the waves. The best nights on earth are nights at sea, "Red Sky at night, sailors delight. Red sky at morning, sailors take warning", my mother used to say. Such clear nights, desert-like when the moon wants them to be. At sea, the night is an awesome event, so sublime and mystic and weird and I don't know... It has a strange vibrating quality about it, such immensity...

(VINICIO enters, somewhat drunk.)

VINICIO:

I heard voices.

LINDA:

Gustavo says they're coming for us.

VINICIO:

Again? They keep looking for us so much they're gonna find us in their soup.

LINDA:

Mother gave them the coordinates, just as the plan said.

MAYRA:

Assuming the plan you told me about is the real plan.

VINICIO:

There is no other. Just one plan. One perfect plan. One mathematical, surprising plan.

LINDA:

What's wrong with you, Daddy?

MAYRA:

Nothing. He's drunk, dear. You know that.

VINICIO:

This witch shriveled my balls like two raisins in the refrigerator.

MAYRA:

Drunk. Just like he's always been. He was drunk when I met him, he was drunk when we got married. Your grandmother died, and he ended up drunk. You were born, and he got so royally smashed he went down in history. Drunk. That's why he never got to be President. He was presidential material until one day he barfed on a TV camera. They showed it on the ten o'clock news. A nice close-up shot of your father vomiting right on the camera, and the screen got blurry. It was disgusting.

VINICIO:

I had eaten peas.

MAYRA:

And you spewed them before the entire country.

VINICIO:

And I ask, what the hell was that camera doing in my way?

MAYRA:

There was no more talk about him running for President.

VINICIO:

It was an anti-historic conspiracy.

MAYRA:

He was the butt of all the jokes for a month.

VINICIO:

...fuckin' reporters...

MAYRA:

"What has two legs, a green and white shirt...

VINICIO:

All presidents are drunkards.

MAYRA:

...and crawls around on the carpet?"

VINICIO:

All human beings vomit at some point in their...

MAYRA:

But you do it in the middle of the town square...

VINICIO:

Vomiting is the family curse, right honey?

LINDA:

It's hereditary.

MAYRA:

Maybe on your side, because there's none of that on my side of the family.

When one of us threw up they'd cut our ear off.

VINICIO:

Lowlife morons.

MAYRA:

It's called manners, my dear.

VINICIO:

Oh yeah? Lemme see your ears.

MAYRA:

Keep away from me!

VINICIO:

I'm still your goddamn husband!

MAYRA:

You stink like a pig!

VINICIO:

Let me see... I demand to see your ears...

MAYRA:

That won't be necessary. They're both there. I always behaved properly.

VINICIO:

You glued that one back on.

LINDA:

Good thing you didn't raise me that way.

VINICIO:

Thanks to me, honey. Once you pooped in your pants and she went for her knife...

LINDA:

For pooping my pants?

MAYRA:

You were twelve years old!

LINDA:

Oh!

VINICIO:

Even so. Goddamn, you don't go cutting people's ears off just because they shit in their pants or puke on their shirt or eat their boogers...

MAYRA:

Stop being so disgusting! Good Lord!

VINICIO:

Or for scratching their ass. You have to respect people's privacy, you know?

LINDA:

You were going to cut my ear off?

MAYRA:

Your grandfather would have cut your leg off, dear.

VINICIO:

In other words you should thank her.

LINDA:

I would never train a child that way.

MAYRA:

Don't worry, you're sterile.

LINDA:

Mother!

VINICIO:

The snake has spoken. (Drinks.)

LINDA:

There's no need for you to say things like that to me. Even though you always do, when we're at home in front of friends. Even though you were the one who said that to Gustavo when I had asked you not to. Even though you always say that, this isn't the time. We've been here for three weeks. Without food.

VINICIO:

I fish for the family every day.

LINDA:

The ship's battery is failing and the nights are getting darker.

VINICIO:

The stars illuminate us!

LINDA:

And we're not moving.

VINICIO:

Of course not. I know what I'm doing!!!

LINDA:

You do?

VINICIO:

I pointed the wheel directly at two huge rocks that were sticking up out of the sea, and KA-BLAMM! we ran aground. "If nature opposes..." What was it that what's-his-name said... Who said that?

MAYRA:

Vinicio, why?

VINICIO:

Because whoever said that was a major figure in...

MAYRA:

Why did you run the ship aground? Explain to me why a man who flees the country decides to run aground at high sea with no chance of getting free...

VINICIO:

Don't you know?

MAYRA:

No.

VINICIO:

(To LINDA) You do, don't you honey?

LINDA:

No Daddy, I don't get it.

(MAYRA takes out a revolver and aims it.)

MAYRA:

He crashed the ship. As if this weren't our only way out. He did it on purpose. On purpose... Fine. Now tell us why. Why did you do it? And if you don't start explaining, I swear I'm going to put a bullet right between your eyes.

VINICIO:

(After a pause) I was sailing along and then I remembered that we were supposed to meet up with these other scum... What is their name?

MAYRA:

Iron Lady.

VINICIO:

Right. So I was sailing towards Iron Lady, and then... I turned on the TV to see if we were still in the country. And then...

(The TV news turns on.)

BROADCAST:

"Four warrants have been issued for the arrest of the Alcántara family, owners of Alcántara Industries Incorporated, for crimes committed during the previous administration, including embezzlement of over 60 billion pesos of public funds. Former Minister of Communications Vinicio Alcántara arranged a deal with an American company to purchase a fleet of naval vessels in which the government was overbilled by up to 13 million pesos per unit. The ex-minister is believed to be with his family, including his wife Mayra Alcántara, for whom two arrest warrants have been issued in connection with an alleged fraud against The Children's Foundation, where she held the post of Vice President. His daughter, Linda Alcántara, a stock broker and wife of the president of Banco Latinoamericano and Channel Five, Gustavo Buitrago, who is allegedly behind the wave of terrorist attacks designed to destabilize the financial system..."

MAYRA:

How many times have you heard that?

VINICIO:

They play it every day after the national anthem. It's the nation's favorite news.

LINDA:

You heard it and you rammed the ship into two rocks. You were drunk, Daddy, you were totally and completely...

VINICIO:

No. No I wasn't.

MAYRA:

I don't understand.

VINICIO:

I don't want to flee.

MAYRA:

What?

BROADCAST:

Law enforcement officials believe that the Alcántaras have fled by boat and are heading for the US...

LINDA:

They've spotted us.

MAYRA:

They haven't said that.

LINDA:

But they know we fled by sea.

VINICIO:

I don't want to flee.

MAYRA:

What do you want?

VINICIO:

We have to pay. A nation is pursuing a man. Not a bill collector or the police, chased by ships, by the sea, the dead, even the moon is pursuing us, Mayra, don't you see? Birds, memories. An entire country. To think that... there are fish, and then of course there is the sea. Don't you understand what I'm talking about? ...What I mean is, memories persist. Memory is the best known story. About people. To speak of people is to remember them. And I...

MAYRA:

Fine. You want to turn yourself in? That's fine with me. But do it alone. We want to flee.

MAYRA: (CON'T)

You can always jump overboard and swim all the way to jail. Or surrender at the Embassy or keep your mouth shut and leave everything to me and let me save your life one more time. But not us. We're not going to pay.

VINICIO:

You don't care at all about what I just said, do you?

MAYRA:

No. You have to be really drunk to say what you just said. (Pause.) Either drunk or crazy. Or both.

VINICIO:

Don't you care about the country?

MAYRA:

I don't give a fuck about the country. Or you.

(She puts the revolver in VINICIO's mouth.)

LINDA:

Mother! What are you doing?

MAYRA:

Goodbye. Give my regards to the ants.

(A thunderclap is heard. Black out.)

3

(Linda enters dressed as a cheer leader.)

LINDA:

S.O.S! Help!!!!

MAYRA:

(Drinking) One day I asked my mother why our country was so beautiful when there was nothing, when it looked so lonely, in the mountains, on the plains, or by the sea. And she used to say it was because of its nature. It was its nature to be empty.

LINDA:

Gimme an S! Gimme an O! Gimme an S! What's that spell? Help!!!

MAYRA:

She used to say that here in this country, people were unnecessary. "Things have their nature," my mother used to say. "Everything takes its time to reproduce and grow. There are times of plenty, and times of scarcity." Have you seen the moon? How come you don't ask me what the moon has to do with fish? Come on, Linda, ask me.

LINDA:

What — hey! Does the moon — ho!
Have to do — hey!
With! The! Fish!

MAYRA:

Each species of fish has its moon, which is when they don't come to the surface. Fish don't like the light. They only come out when it's dark. The fishermen catch them at night and in the wee hours of the morning... When it's light out, the fish don't come out, so they survive and grow. On moonless nights the fish come out, so they get caught and they die.

LINDA:

Mama, what if we go back?

MAYRA:

We can't.

MAYRA:

But if we could.

MAYRA:

That's the last thing we would want to do.

LINDA:

What would happen to us?

MAYRA:

I suppose we'd be arrested.

LINDA:

And go to jail?

MAYRA:

Back to the tabloids, the midnight phone calls, the fear. Traveling in stinking police cars surrounded by equally stinking journalists.

(Sudden thunder. Lights out for a moment.)

LINDA:

What's going on?

(The image of VINICIO appears in the shadows.)

LINDA:

Daddy??

(The lights come back on. VINICIO is dressed as a soldier, but he is wearing fins and carrying a harpoon.)

VINICIO:

When I was in the army they used to call me "Vinicio the Singer." I always had a great ear for music.

(They stare at him. Pause.)

They also used to call me Dead Dog Puke. Because of my face. I had a lot of pimples. I joined the Army at a very young age. I think I was fourteen.

LINDA:

Nobody joins the army at fourteen.

VINICIO:

I did.

LINDA:

You were special.

VINICIO:

Nobody loved me at home. They said I was bad. That I was disobedient. So they sent me to a military academy. In the army you learn to be a man.

MAYRA:

Either you flunked out, or your whole story is a complete lie.

VINICIO:

You don't believe me? In the army you stand tall, like this.

(VINICIO stands and marches as if on parade.)

One two three four... About FACE!

MAYRA:

I've known you for twenty years.

VINICIO:

I had my life before that.

MAYRA:

You had nothing when I met you.

LINDA:

What did you have, Daddy?

VINICIO:

My life in the army.

MAYRA:

You were never in the army.

VINICIO:

They'd make us repeat:

"Long live the country." (In a military voice.) "You, soldier, Alcántara" "Sir! Yes sir!" "Do you think that because your uncle is a colonel, you won't have to do what others have to do?" "Sir! No sir!" "And do you think you can pull strings here in the Armed Forces?" "Sir! No sir!" "Then repeat after me." "Sir! Yes sir!" "Goddamn it, repeat after me:
My country, right or wrong!"

LINDA:

And you would repeat that?

VINICIO:

Damn right I would. Loud and clear. It'd make you feel better...(He takes a drink.) You'd say, "god damn, I have my country. I'm not all that fucked up. They can take my house, my money, my woman, but I still have my country."

MAYRA:

That's absurd!

VINICIO:

To you maybe it is. Sure, in a country where everyone weasels out of doing military service. Where nobody wants to be a soldier... Where nobody has kissed the flag.

MAYRA:

Oh please. Don't tell me you used to kiss the flag.

VINICIO:

I was ordered to. They'd say, "Kiss the flag... Kiss the goddamn flag."

LINDA:

And you would kiss it?

VINICIO:

Passionately.

LINDA:

How long were you in the service?

VINICIO:

I was, ah, I was... I don't know.

MAYRA:

Of course you don't, you jerk. You know why you don't know? Because you have never, ever served in your country's armed forces in your life. I know the story. Your uncle was connected. You got out of it, just like everyone else. You turned eighteen and you went to the capital. You joined the party and that was the end of your worries.

VINICIO:

You want proof? Okay, I'll prove it to you. Take a look at this.

(In one quick motion VINICIO takes off his shirt. He has the national flag wrapped around his naked body.)

LINDA:

What is that?

VINICIO:

A patriotic symbol.

LINDA:

(Laughing) Of what?

VINICIO:

Of our country.

LINDA:

Why do you have it tied around yourself?

MAYRA:

Please, don't show us your underwear... You might have our national seal or a portrait of some founding father right on the crack of your ass.

VINICIO:

I want to have it near me.

LINDA:

You're supposed to hang it on the starboard stern bow, Daddy.

VINICIO:

But it's hard to kiss it there.

MAYRA:

You'd kiss that shit?

VINICIO:

Don't call it that. You ought to kiss it, too. (In an abrupt movement he pulls out an Uzi and points it at them.) As a matter of fact, under the circumstances I think it would be the most ethical and moral and patriotic thing you could do. To redeem yourself.

(MAYRA tries to grab the weapon, but VINICIO prevents her. He aims at both of them.)

MAYRA:

Vinicio, it's been six weeks since you got us into this mess. You ran the ship aground, and they can't find us. We are in serious trouble. That's why I've taken over, because of your condition, because you're having problems... I'm doing the best I can. What do you want me to do?

VINICIO:

Kiss it.

MAYRA:

Kiss

(VINICIO grabs her roughly and rubs the flag in her face.)

VINICIO:

Kiss, kiss, kiss, kiss it. Say "Long live the country."

MAYRA:

You're hurting me!

(VINICIO grabs her by the throat.)

VINICIO:

Say it.

MAYRA:

No.

VINICIO:

Then I'll kill you.

MAYRA:

Never!

VINICIO:

Kiss it!

(MAYRA does so.)

VINICIO:

Very good. Now say "Long live the country."

MAYRA:

Long... live... the country.

VINICIO:

Say our country is the best on earth.

MAYRA:

Don't be ridic—

VINICIO:

That god put there what others do not have...

MAYRA:

Don't even...

VINICIO:

Say it, bitch, say it!

MAYRA:

...our country is...

VINICIO:

The best.

MAYRA:

The best.

VINICIO:

Now kiss.

MAYRA:

I'm kissing.

VINICIO:

Now say:

I am shit.

MAYRA:

I am not!

VINICIO:

I am shit.

MAYRA:

Okay... you are shit.

VINICIO:

(Threatening her with the harpoon)

No joking around!

MAYRA:

I am shit.

VINICIO:

I steal from the country.

MAYRA:

I steal...

VINICIO:

And I want to pay.

MAYRA:

I won't!

VINICIO:

I want to pay back...

MAYRA:

No!

VINICIO:

Every last cent...

MAYRA:

Pay...

VINICIO:

All that I took.

LINDA:

You're hurting her.

VINICIO:

Because I am a real piece of shit.

MAYRA:

Vinicio.

VINICIO:

A total and complete shit.

LINDA:

Please!

VINICIO:

Will you pay?

MAYRA:

I'll pay...

VINICIO:

(To LINDA) And you?

LINDA:

(Taking out her checkbook) Do you take checks or credit cards?

VINICIO:

The trouble with you women is that you never serve in the military and don't learn to love your own country. Have you ever been to the endless plains? Have you ever visited the lovely east? Ever admired the virgin Amazon? Have you ever actually seen any of the strange animals of our country? Our music... our... our... our cities...It's beautiful. So very beautiful.

MAYRA:

The country is a piece of shit.

VINICIO:

You don't value what is yours.

MAYRA:

I've seen firemen raping nine-year-old girls. Nuns dealing drugs. Police robbing banks and innocent little old ladies stealing public funds. So don't give me that bullshit, Vinicio. Don't be such an idiot.

VINICIO:

And that's why you stole from it?

MAYRA:

I didn't steal.

VINICIO:

You didn't?

MAYRA:

I did what everyone does. I don't owe anybody. That's just the way it was. People would tell me, "you're doing fine." And I... I did it. There is no paying. They won't let you pay. The flag is a bunch of shit, the national anthem is shit and you're an idiot.

VINICIO:

Must be your teachers' fault. My teachers taught me that the motherland was to be revered above all things.

LINDA:

I didn't have teachers, I had (In the snottiest English public school accent.) tutors, darling, tutors.

MAYRA:

Teachers have nothing to do with it. My teachers were a bunch of hairy old ladies who would spend the whole class talking about each other. They say to us, "the science teacher is a slut," and in science class we'd be told the opposite. My teachers used to spend hours imagining the failures that their students were destined to become.

VINICIO:

No glorious stories of patriotic heroism?

MAYRA:

No. They'd tell us, "You, Miss Carrera. You will get married to the blacksmith and have countless children. You, Miss Ramírez, you will see the error of your ways and become a nun. And you, Mr. Carreño, will die young. And you will be a failure, and you will have a dozen kids, and you will be a loser, and you will be miserable, and all of you will be unhappy, every last one of you."

VINICIO:

(To LINDA) And what did they tell you?

LINDA:

The same thing, only in the Queen's English.

VINICIO:

My teacher was a patriotic woman. She taught me to adore the founding fathers, the signers of our declaration of independence, the Battle of Fool's Run.

MAYRA:

There's nothing glorious about it, Vinicio. Do you know how many people died at the Battle of Fool's Run?

VINICIO:

Do I know how many...? Sure I do... It was, ah... Two armies, one right on top of the other. How many died?

MAYRA:

Two hundred.

VINICIO:

Don't say that...

MAYRA:

It's believed to be less.

VINICIO:

You're making that up.

MAYRA:

Two armies, one right in front of the other, thousands of soldiers, and barely a hundred died.

VINICIO:

Goddamn it... don't say that. That can't be true.

MAYRA:

Of course it is.

VINICIO:

Why so few?

MAYRA:

Because they didn't want to die. They were waging a battle not to get killed. They spent the whole afternoon hiding. Finally they surrendered, and we won.

VINICIO:

Fuck! But... are you sure?

MAYRA:

It's history.

VINICIO:

In-fuckin'-credible.

MAYRA:

Every time I'd go into the Children's Foundation and see that line of people, waiting to be served, I would remember that anecdote. I'd say to myself, these poor people have come here to beg. And you reject them, you give them the run-around, you do everything you can to discourage them and yet they still keep coming. And do you know why? Pride. They come back out of pride, because they are proud to have been born in this country as descendants of its founders and that stupid battle, which was really more a farce than anything else.

(The sound of a ship approaching.)

LINDA:

What's that?

(Silence. A ship.)

LINDA:

Iron Lady. It's Gustavo. They've found us!

MAYRA:

Gustavo? Can you see him?

VINICIO:

I refuse to be rescued by thieves! I want to pay!!

MAYRA:

Shut up, you idiot.

(The ship stops in front of them.)

Linda, go have a look. Be careful, it might be the police.

(LINDA goes to the window.)

LINDA:

It's a small boat. Fishermen, maybe. They're looking at us. What should we do? Should I call them?

MAYRA:

They could help us get out of here.

LINDA:

What about Iron Lady? And the plan? Gustavo said they were coming for us.

MAYRA:

Hey! We're over here! Help! Help us get out of here!

LINDA:

Don't you think we should wait? Mother. We have to wait for Gustavo.

MAYRA:

Gustavo is a lie. We've been betrayed. They're not going to come get us.

LINDA:

Why not?

MAYRA:

Because we've been double crossed. Because they sold us out to save their own skins. And because they're going to leave us holding the bag so the others can get away.

LINDA:

Even so. He said he would come. Gustavo has never kept me waiting — not for anything.

VINICIO:

Gustavo has stood you up for a porcupine. Ask your mother, she knows all about that.

MAYRA:

I don't know what you're talking about.

VINICIO:

Sweetheart, even when they pull the wool over your eyes you can figure out what's going on.

LINDA:

Mother, what is this about Gustavo?

VINICIO:

And how do you think she got the funding for the Children's Foundation?

LINDA:

I can't believe— Mother. Don't tell me it's true.

MAYRA:

Gustavo never loved you.

VINICIO:

Didn't you know the role that sex plays in politics?

LINDA:

Then we have to call the fishermen! Hey! Wait up! We're over here! This might be our last chance to escape.

(The ship goes away.)

LINDA:

And it was such a pretty ship.

MAYRA:

I thought you didn't like ships.

LINDA:

But this one looked so good...

(Sea sounds. LINDA grabs the gun.)

MAYRA:

Put that down!

VINICIO:

You don't know how to handle it!

(She aims at them.)

MAYRA:

What are you going to do?

LINDA:

Imagine we're on a cruise ship, sailing around the Caribbean, at random, like a roulette wheel, visiting strange islands and forgettable cities.

(Taking aim at VINICIO.)

MAYRA:

She wouldn't dare. She doesn't have the guts.

(She pulls the trigger. Nothing happens.)

MAYRA:

Dear god in heaven!

(She aims at herself.)

MAYRA:

Don't do it!!!

(She pulls the trigger. Nothing happens.
She aims at her mother.)

MAYRA:

Not me! Not me!!!

(She pulls the trigger. The gun fires.
MAYRA falls.)

LINDA:

On moonless nights the fish come out, and then they get caught and they die.

(Black out).

4

(MAYRA onstage, in bed.
Everything else is dark.)

MAYRA:

If I die, the world will end.

Things will cease to be and nothing will work. If I die there will be no tomorrow, and the cities and the fish and the night and the sea will disappear.

I can't die because if I do, I don't know what I'm going to do tomorrow.

I don't know what I'll do if I die.

Because when you die, you're dead for too long. So I can't die. I have too many appointments to keep.

Ah....

I have to go to the Foundation on Friday. I have to sign some important checks.

I have to go to the party meeting and the women's committee meeting. No. I must not die.

I have to send some letters. Go to the gym. Pay the staff. I have to shred some documents.

I keep forgetting that I have to get rid of the documents, because I'm not going to be around forever. If I die, if I actually die, somebody will read it all and find out about something.

LINDA:

(Voice of LINDA in the distance) Are you better? (Pause.) Are you better?

MAYRA:

They'll find out about everything.

LINDA:

It's all been found out already, Mother.

MAYRA:

Let me be buried wrapped in the flag of Mali.

Let them play the Moroccan national anthem.

Let the French military give me a twenty-one gun salute.

Let my picture be taken at Miami Beach.

MAYRA: (CONT)

Let me elected Miss New York, let me be crowned Miss Argentina.

But get me out of here.

Get me out of here.

I don't want to live in this country.

I don't want to be from here.

I want to be from anywhere else. Anywhere but here.

VINICIO:

We could throw her overboard. So the sharks will eat her.

LINDA:

Daddy, please!

VINICIO:

Don't gimme that, you're the one who shot her.

MAYRA:

So I came straight home.

I didn't stop to see what was happening

What happened?

The police were there.

I didn't see them.

They've been there for an hour.

What happened?

Somebody ran over a motorcyclist. The person who did it was speeding a bit, running away from something or someone. I don't know. I don't care.

Whoever it was didn't bother to see who they'd run over.

I got nervous and tried to escape.

I lot of people try to get away after they run somebody over. You... you... you get arrested and you really suffer.

I came... ah... ah... a different way.

My bones ache.

VINICIO:

If they follow your tracks, if they find the car, if you don't wash off the blood and guts that got stuck to your grill,

VINICIO:(CON'T)

then you are going to have a bad time of it, Mayra, because not only did you kill him, you fled, and worst of all, you denied it to me, and I have friends in the government and can help you. So cover your tracks. Get undressed and go to bed. Murderess.

LINDA:

Don't call me that.

VINICIO:

What do you want me to call you?

LINDA:

Mother?... Mother?

MAYRA:

No, no. No. I have to go to the gym. And work out. See that new movie. Visit London. Skydive. Read the book someone recommended to me that I can't remember the name of. I have to learn English. Write my memoirs. Finish a letter. Kiss the messenger. Try black vodka. Make a lasagna. Ice skate. Have an orgasm. Gamble in a casino. And watch my soap opera. Dream.

(MAYRA tossing and turning. LINDA holds a book about the islands of the Caribbean.)

LINDA:

Mother?... Mother?... Mother? I think she's dreaming.

(MAYRA suddenly gets up.)

MAYRA:

Where am I?

LINDA:

We're out at sea.

MAYRA:

And I thought it was all a dream.

(MAYRA vomits.)

LINDA:

OK, Mama, that's OK. It's all right. Nobody is watching us. Who were you dreaming about?

MAYRA:

Nobody. It was a memory.

LINDA:

a memory? Of what?

(MAYRA vomits again.)

5

(Onstage, VINICIO and LINDA playing dominoes.)

LINDA:

I don't know what to play.

VINICIO:

The two-blank.

LINDA:

What makes you think I have it?

VINICIO:

Because this is a counting game.

LINDA:

You want to see my dominoes?

VINICIO:

So where is it, then?

LINDA:

I don't know, but you counted wrong, as usual.

VINICIO:

I count like a Japanese calculator.

LINDA:

How many days have we been here?

VINICIO:

Thirteen.

LINDA:

Thirty. a whole month, Daddy. You don't now how to count. You don't know where the two-blank is. I can play the double blank. Okay?

VINICIO:

Okay, play it. Thirty days? I've never been with your mother in any one place for so long. Where is she, the wounded shrew?

LINDA:

Fishing.

VINICIO:

Fishing? You've got to be kidding. What does she know about fish?

LINDA:

Quite a lot. It's all she talks about. Schools of fish, species, tides. She said they grow when the moon is out. That she wanted to be a fisherwoman. We talked about dreams. My dream was to become a cheer leader. She dreams about the fish in the sea.

VINICIO:

You could've been a sharpshooter.

LINDA:

You do a lot of dreaming at sea.

VINICIO:

Where'd you put your cute little gun, killer? It's useless now. You know you used up all our ammunition? And stuck here in this neighborhood with no bullets, that's not exactly safe. A sea serpent might come along, or a shark. These waters are full of sharks.

LINDA:

What did you dream about, Daddy? What did you want to be?

VINICIO:

A dangerous shark. Quiet. Alone. Staring coldly, swimming silently through the darkness. A moonless shark.

LINDA:

As a human.

VINICIO:

As a human... I would like to have been the Magallanes bat boy.

LINDA:

The what?

VINICIO:

Magallanes. You know, baseball... I've dreamed I was playing with the Magallanes team of 1949, when Lázaro Salazar was manager. And we won the championship twice. And I would wear my uniform and feel like I would never do anything but baseball.(Plays a domino.)One day, when I was in the dugout, I met Vidal López.

LINDA:

Vidal who?

VINICIO:

You don't know who Vidal López was?

LINDA:

No. Should I?

VINICIO:

You ignoramus.

LINDA:

Don't tell me he fought in the Battle of Fool's Run or won a bronze medal in the Olympics of ancient Greece?

VINICIO:

No, better than that. He pitched two no hit shutouts.

LINDA:

No hits?

VINICIO:

Perfect games. No runs, no hits.

LINDA:

Is that a big deal?

VINICIO:

When I met him, I thought this was the greatest country in the world... Because to throw two games like that, one against Santa Marta and the other... I forget who the other game was against... I thought only a world-class country could do something like that. I asked him for his autograph.

LINDA:

And he gave it to you and you nearly fainted.

VINICIO:

Wrong. I did faint. The great Vidal López, a true Magallanero. Why did I quit baseball?

LINDA:

Daddy, it's a dream.. Like my dream. I've never been a cheerleader.

VINICIO:

Shit, I don't know. Maybe I was too ambitious... but I should have stuck with it. Maybe I'd be a coach by now. Goddamn, wouldn't that be nice. a coach. a third base coach or something.

(MAYRA enters with her fishing pole.)

VINICIO:

Were they biting?

MAYRA:

The fish aren't coming.

LINDA:

Shall we post a sign for them?

MAYRA:

Besides, there's no bait left.

LINDA:

Mama, the fish are supposed to feed us, not the other way around.

VINICIO:

The bigger the bait, the smaller the fisherman.

MAYRA:

You guys have given up. You have no more future than the sea weed.

(LINDA rises and takes the fishing pole.)

LINDA:

Okay, I'll fish.

MAYRA:

All you know how to do is shoot people and then play dumb. You couldn't fish your way out of a paper bag.

LINDA:

Daddy. How do you... how does this thing move?

VINICIO:

First of all, you're holding it by the wrong end.

(Goes with LINDA to the fishing place.)

Very good. You cast all the way to the bottom, where the good fish are.

The meatiest ones. You'll feel it when they bite. Don't let the fish or the wind fool you. Let them eat a little bit.

LINDA:

a little bit.

VINICIO:

When they bite, they really bite, and then you hook 'em.

LINDA:

What if they don't bite?

VINICIO:

Then you have to pray.

LINDA:

That's nonsense, Daddy. I'm not going to do that.

VINICIO:

You have to pray for them to bite. Pray three times “by the sign of the holy cross....” The bit about “Our enemies” and all that. Then say an “Our Father,” and pray to your guardian angel, and if they still don’t bite, sing the national anthem.

LINDA:

That’s too long.

MAYRA:

The national anthem? Give me a break!

VINICIO:

The national anthem puts the fish to sleep so they just give themselves up to the national fisherman. Just ask anybody. When I fish, I pray to my guardian angel. The Our Father and the National Anthem. That’s all. And I even catch swordfish.

(LINDA goes off to fish. Sea sounds.)

MAYRA:

Vinicio, do you think we’re going to die?

VINICIO:

Some day.

MAYRA:

I mean, from this. Maybe we’ll never get out of here and we’ll die and the world will end. And to think that we have so much money in that New York account and here we are, unable to enjoy it.

MAYRA:

Maybe some ship will come by and rescue us. And we’ll escape. How long have we been aground here?

VINICIO:

Maybe sixty days. Maybe a year. I don’t know any more. We forgot to bring a calendar. We forgot everything.

MAYRA:

You don’t care. But it doesn’t much matter in your case, Vinicio. You’re dead anyway. Even if you stay around annoying people for five hundred years, you are dead. Deader than this ship.

VINICIO:

Dead?

(VINICIO approaches her and kisses her neck lasciviously. MAYRA laughs.)

MAYRA:

You've been watching too much TV.

(VINICIO suddenly thrusts his hand
between her legs.)

MAYRA:

Where did you learn that idiocy? ...You're clumsy... You don't know... You
don't now how to do it. Leave me alone. I said leave me alone.

VINICIO:

Don't you like it? Tell me you don't like it.

MAYRA:

Of course I don't.

VINICIO:

Hold still. Don't talk.

MAYRA:

But.. Let me go!

VINICIO:

Be quiet!

MAYRA:

Let go of me!

VINICIO:

I want to fuck you.

MAYRA:

You'll have to rape me.

VINICIO:

That's what I'm gonna do.

MAYRA:

I'll scream.

VINICIO:

No one will hear you.

(He tries to take her clothes off.)

MAYRA:

Okay, all right, go ahead, let's see if you can.

VINICIO:

Take it easy... just take it easy...

MAYRA:

You won't be able to do it. You can't get it up.

VINICIO:

I'll show you, you whore.

MAYRA:

You won't have any staying power. You'll come right away.

VINICIO:

Shut the fuck up.

MAYRA:

You can't satisfy me.

VINICIO:

Shut up!

MAYRA:

You can't do it, you can't, you won't be able to.

VINICIO

Don't scream, shut up. Let me do it... Goddamn it, don't say that, wait, shut up... I can't when you're— please shut up... I said shut up...

MAYRA

You can't do it with me. You won't get it up. Look how small it is. And limp. That won't do anything for me. You're worthless... That's not big enough for a little girl.

(Enraged, VINICIO shoves her away.)

VINICIO:

Goddamn it, I can't do it like that.

MAYRA:

I knew it.

VINICIO:

Not with you going on and on like that.

MAYRA:

You haven't been able to for years. Yours is strictly FUO.

VINICIO:

FUO?

MAYRA:

(Laughing) For urination only. How long has it been since we last made love? Five years? Six? Wasn't the last time back when we were in Miami?

VINICIO:

It hasn't been that long... Has it?

MAYRA:

You were drunk.

(MAYRA sprinkles some cocaine on the table and starts cutting lines with her American Express card.)

VINICIO:

...In Miami...

MAYRA:

I had been eyeing some sailor and you were jealous. I liked that. You had never been jealous of me before. So that night you took your shirt off — you didn't wear the flag in those days — and you tried to make love to me, Hollywood style.

VINICIO:

And did I?

(MAYRA nods.)

That's a relief.

MAYRA:

Although you were a little bland.

VINICIO:

You might have had something to do with that.

MAYRA:

Of course. I didn't love you. I've never felt anything for you.

VINICIO:

Ever?

(MAYRA shakes her head.)

At all?

MAYRA:

Not even a little. Maybe once, when the warrant for your arrest was issued and all your friends abandoned you. When you made statements to the press, thinking that would help you. How could you believe that? The one thing you can count on in this country is ingratitude. Never forget that. That is the hallmark of our nation. Ingrates, every one of us.

VINICIO:

You could have left me, too.

MAYRA:

I felt sorry for you. Besides, I had my lovers. I didn't need to leave you. But I got tired of them, too. I don't like love.

VINICIO:

Mayra... I'd like you to... Could you tell me one thing? Just one.

MAYRA:

What?

VINICIO:

Have you ever liked anyone in your entire life?

MAYRA:

Just one person.

VINICIO:

Who?

MAYRA:

No, it's silly.

VINICIO:

Tell me, tell me. The truth. I need to know.

MAYRA:

What for?

VINICIO:

Who is he? Who is that man?

MAYRA:

(Snorts a line) Gustavo.

VINICIO:

Gustavo. Right. Now there's a man with character. A real stand-up guy.

MAYRA:

The thought of him still gives me gooseflesh.

VINICIO:

Despite what he did.

MAYRA:

Gustavo did what he had to do. Nothing personal. He put us —or me, at least— on our way to exile.

VINICIO:

You?

MAYRA:

I'm not like you, Vinicio. You're a thief and a bribe-taker, an idiotic politician. I was into something else. And in the cartel you pay with your life. Gustavo acted like a man. He saved my life.

VINICIO:

Mayra, what are you talking about?

MAYRA:

What do you mean?

VINICIO:

What's this about the cartel?

MAYRA:

Didn't you know?

VINICIO:

Didn't I know what?

MAYRA:

For chrissakes, Gustavo told me you knew about...

VINICIO:

About what? (Shouting.) KNEW ABOUT WHAT??!!

MAYRA:

You know... Gustavo's TV station... the attacks and the business with the Banco Latinoamericano...

VINICIO:

Yes, but what does one have to do with the other?

MAYRA:

Drugs, my dear, everything boils down to drugs. Didn't you know that? How could you be so stupid? It's all about drugs. The station, the bank, the ministry. The whole country.

I can't believe you're so naive. You never knew? What did you think Iron Lady was all about? What do you think we're carrying in those crates of whiskey? Where do you think I got all the money to buy the judges and the protection? Where, Vinicio?

(Long pause. Sea sounds.)

VINICIO:

And here I was thinking about the sea, and the landscape and all the rest. Here I was thinking I had seen a heavenly vision that night. And that the country was god and I was its guardian angel. Remember when I told you about the fish, the phantom ships, the visions, and the reasons why I ran the ship aground? Well, with what you're telling me now, it all makes sense.

MAYRA:

What are you talking about?

VINICIO:

I didn't run the ship aground.

(Long pause. Sea sounds. We hear
LINDA, saying the Our Father.)

Don't you get it? Gustavo sent us to our death. There are no drugs on board
this ship. We're full of gunpowder. And I didn't know why, until now.

(LINDA finishes her prayer.)

MAYRA:

No, it isn't true. It can't be, it can't be...

LINDA:

(Offstage) Mother, how does the national anthem start?

MAYRA:

What?

LINDA:

How does the national anthem start?

MAYRA:

"Glory be to our brave people..."

LINDA:

Oh, that's right.

(LINDA sings the national anthem. All
stage in red)

VINICIO:

We're sitting on a bomb, Mayra. And if we haven't blown up yet, it's just luck.
Blind luck. They sent us to be slaughtered.

MAYRA:

Shut up! It can't be!

VINICIO:

Disillusion. Disillusion is good for the inhabitants of the country. There is no
Iron Lady, no rescue, no Gustavo, no divine justice. There is no national flag,
no courageous founding fathers, no heroic patriotism. I can't pay, they won't
let me. They don't want me to pay. I'm a pawn. There is no dignity, my veins
have been ripped out. I don't know where I'm from. Mayra, I'm afraid again.
I'm very afraid.

(There is a sudden, deafening noise. The
light of a helicopter illuminates them.)

HELICOPTER'S

RADIO:

This is Civil Defense 760, Captain... We have found the wreckage of the Solitary Moon. Over. (Interference.) Situation normal, over. (Interference.) No, just as we reported yesterday. Over. ...The ship has sunk, Captain, not a trace of it left...

RADIO

VOICE:

Any survivors?

HELICOPTER'S

RADIO:

That's a negative, Captain. Negative.

VOICE:

Do you see any bodies?

HELICOPTER'S

RADIO:

I see dead fish and the same three bodies as the past two months, Captain. They are badly decayed. There's hardly anything left of them. The fish have eaten them. I don't think they'll be able to find them. The sea is taking them away, Captain. Request permission to withdraw.

(The helicopter flies off. The three of them stare at each other in terror. Lights out.)