

**FUR**  
A Play in  
Nineteen Scenes

**Migdalia Cruz**



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**THE WRITER SPEAKS**  
**Migdalia Cruz**

beauty \byüt-e\ n 1 : loveliness; elegance; grace; a beautiful woman . . .

In my work, I define beauty as the transformation of women from sexual object to spiritual being. The protagonist in *Fur*, Citrona, though considered a disposable piece of human sideshow flesh, comes to realize her own power through the act and reaction of love. Citrona is both the beauty and the beast defining her own postapocalyptic fairy tale. The other two characters, Michael and Nena, also take turns being the ideal of physical beauty—but acting in “beastly” ways to get the object of their affections to love them. Until each character achieves her or his own spiritual enlightenment, true beauty is inaccessible to her or him. In *Fur*, true beauty is the goal of each of my characters—who each feels like a beast—either because of unrequited love or physical attributes outside the norm.

<sup>1</sup>body \bād·ə\ n 1 : the trunk of an animal; main part; matter; a person; a system; strength; reality; any solid figure. <sup>2</sup>body vt 1 : to give a body to; to embody . . .

Women who inhabit my plays often use their bodies as their sole commodities. It is through their bodies that they feel power. And when the body is less than ideal anguish overcomes them. If the only thing society judges you on is your body, then the body becomes your only access to happiness, mental health and success. When Miriam of my play *Miriam's Flowers* becomes hypersexual, it is not because she loves sex, but because that is all she feels she has to offer anyone, and to replicate a bodily wound helps her to soothe her sorrow over her brother's accidental death. In *Fur*, each character lusts for the character most likely not to give them what they want or need. Physically ideal and seemingly angelic, Michael lusts for Citrona, a hirsute woman who has been sexually mutilated by her mother and sold to him like a dog. The beauty Michael sees in Citrona is about her otherness, her exoticness, her Latina-ness. Citrona lusts for Nena, another woman who could be her twin—if only Citrona were as hairless as she. The physically perfect Nena yearns for Michael—her male counterpart in physical terms. Each character in the play is at first repulsed by the one who loves them most, but in the end learns something about the true nature of love.

“I shall not let you die!” cried Beauty.  
“You shall live and I shall be your wife.  
I know now that I love you and  
I cannot bear to lose you.”  
Scarcely had she spoken than  
there was a sudden flash of brilliant light;  
and there before her  
stood a handsome young prince.  
—from *Beauty and the Beast*



### Characters

**CITRONA**, a hirsute young woman whose age is hard to tell; a good sense of humor; a great sense of loneliness.

**MICHAEL**, a handsome man, older than he looks and acts, who is searching for true love; the owner of Joe's, a pet shop in the desert suburbs of Los Angeles, California. Whenever Michael can, he watches and listens.

**NENA**, a woman that other people think is pretty, thirties, an animal trapper; Michael's servant.

### Time

Summer, in the near future.

### Place

A desert suburb of Los Angeles.

Prologue: A carnival sideshow.

Scenes One through Nineteen: The basement room under Joe's Pet Shop and its adjoining corridor and window. Also: No-Space, an elevated space which represents the outside world and the passing of time where a three-bladed fan spins until the characters begin to lose hope. (A place conceived by Joel Klaff, Juan A. Ramirez and Brendan McCarthy of Latino Chicago Theater Company during the play's first production.)

As time goes on, a pile of fur pelts, thrown to one side of the cage in the basement, piles higher and higher. Sand visible at the window also piles higher and higher as the play progresses.

**Prologue**

*In a sideshow carnival tent. In front of a moving image of sideshow freaks, all mutations of humans with animals, such as a snakeskin man, a woman with the head of a pig, a dog-faced boy, etc. The sound of sand and wind compete with the human voices. Nena gazes at Michael who watches the images, enrapt in them.*

NENA: Hey! Hi. You come to these things often?

*(Michael stares at her. No response.)*

Hey. Oh, hey. I'm sorry. Can't you—Oh, wow, are you one of them? Is that why I see you around all the time?

*(Michael stares at her. No response.)*

It must be really hard not to be able to talk . . .

MICHAEL: I talk only when I need to.

NENA: Oh . . .

MICHAEL: There's a new one today. I haven't seen her yet, but I bet she's a beauty.

NENA: There's some think I'm a beauty.

MICHAEL: Oh? People are so easily fooled, aren't they?

*(He walks off into the images. She watches him go.)*

NENA: So who was that? A vision or something! I looked into his heart and felt it throbbing between my legs. I was sexualized today . . . Maybe he'll be my Valentine . . . maybe not.

*(Blackout. Lights up in the basement hallway of Joe's Pet Shop.)*

**Scene One**

*In the darkness, we hear the Beatles' song "Birthday." Lights come up on Michael, who speaks to a large, unseen animal in a sack. He is standing outside the entrance to the basement room.*

**MICHAEL:** C'mon beauty. Let me stroke you. Let me rub my hands against your fur. I like furry things. They keep you warm. You could keep me warm.

*(He takes out a vial with some water) Here you go . . . (He pours it onto the ground)*

Clean water. Drink it. Go ahead, beauty. It's for you. It's fresh beautiful water. I collected it. It's rainwater. It'll make your fur shine and your eyes will go white if they're red when you drink this. All for you. All yours. It's straight from God. Now that you're home with me, you can be my lady friend. You are so pretty. You have soft eyes—soft brown eyes. You make me melt with eyes like that—when you look at me like that. You know things about me. You know how to make me feel better. We could get away, beauty. Go somewhere . . . I'm not letting anything stop me, if I'm with you. You don't have to be afraid. No one will touch you . . . no one but me. I won't let anyone harm you anymore. When you're at Joe's nobody can hurt you. Animals are the business of my inheritance. Joe left this shop to me. You'll make me happy. I know you will. I never would have guessed that love would cost so little . . . Your mother doesn't have a mind for business. She told me to keep you in a cage. "She's a wild one," she said. But if you'll love me—I'll set you free. Love me and I'll build you a palace.

*(A scream from the sack. Lights cross to the basement window. Nena stands behind it and starts to speak.)*

**Scene Two**

*Nena outside the basement window. She holds a rabbit in a small cage.*

**NENA:** I've been watching him. I see how he treats the bunnies I bring to him. He stares at them and pets them and he always knows

just what to call them . . . I find them in the wild. I have a talent for finding them—they trust me. Because they are beasts and beasts are awed by me. I speak to them and they come right into my arms. And then I sell them . . . to him. He doesn't know my name—and I wonder what he thinks of me . . .

*(Lights up on Dream Michael in the No-Space.)*

DREAM MICHAEL: She's so good at bringing in the animals. She has a gift. I can never remember her name—but I remember the gift.

*(Lights on Michael fade.)*

NENA: He's like God to me . . . well, maybe not God, himself—I mean, really I'm not sure I believe in one person like that. I mean, really, too many friends have died for me to believe that—really. But he's a person surrounded by white light . . . Not like a clown or a mime—I mean, I hate mimes—but he's a different kind of white . . . like light, I mean. And I don't just mean the clothes. He wears white, of course, and so few people can, I mean and do it well—but he's light on the inside. I think it's because he cares about animals so much. And I attract animals—without traps or mechanical snares—I just look at them and they're mine . . . And I give them to him—I would do it for free except I don't think he'd respect me for that. So I put a price on it, and he appreciates that . . . I think. I think with a price he's assured of their value. Nothing wrong with that—I don't think . . . I think I love him.

*(Lights cross to the basement room.)*

### Scene Three

*Lights dimly reveal a cage in the basement room which has one small window in one corner. The cage is large enough for a person to stand in. It's top is solid, the sides are barred. The front of the cage is hinged at the top, so the front can fall straight down if opened. Citrona is squatting in one corner, her back to the audience. She shakes uncontrollably.*

*Michael enters. He sits next to the cage, mirroring Citrona. He is holding a framed photograph. He watches Citrona. He rocks with her.*

*She doesn't look at him. She whimpers and sighs. He whimpers and sighs . . . and slowly hands her the photo. It is a photo of him as a child.*

MICHAEL: You see? I was alone too . . .

*(Citrona lays flat at the bottom of the cage, arms extended out through the bars. Michael mirrors her. When the tips of their fingers meet, Citrona pulls away in fear and makes herself as small as possible against the bars of the cage. It goes from night to day as Michael slowly exits. Sand begins to pour in through the window.)*

#### Scene Four

*It goes from day to night. Citrona speaks from her cage, in the darkness.*

CITRONA: People say you can't get used to some things—but you do. Like the smell of your own shit. You sit in it long enough and you want to feel it on your legs. You smear yourself. Because it keeps you warm. It's familiar. It's like your family. My shit and urine is my company. I check it all the time. I look for signs of life. I look for light. I sleep with my face toward the light. I keep track of myself. When I feel the light, I count my fingers. I count them out loud, because numbers are a comfort.

*(Long pause. Michael watches Citrona from the basement window.)*

You know what? Sounds get bigger when you're alone. Everything gets bigger. Everything is bigger than you. You know, I can hear the light coming in through that window up there. Before I can feel it. It sounds like the buzzing of a bee. It goes in and out at first. Buzz—nothing buzz—nothing. Then it's buzz-buzz—nothing. Then it's buzz-buzz-buzz—then it's a long screaming buzz. A "zzzz" that fills me up. It comes between my legs and it stays there until night. And in the night I wait for it to start again.

*(She listens in silence.)*

I'm waiting now. But you know, it's not so bad to wait. In the dark. When it's dark nobody can see me. I'm not ugly in the dark. I can touch myself then. I can stand to let my fingers part



myself and touch my crown. You know what? That's the only thing I touch. I don't touch my arms or shoulders. And never my face. I can't stand to sneeze or yawn or belch. Or any of those things that make you put your hand to your face. If my fingers get too close to my mouth I will have to bite them off.

*(Michael speaks from the window.)*

MICHAEL: What do you want?

*(Lights up revealing Citrona fully for the first time.)*

CITRONA: Something pink.

*(Lights cross-fade to No-Space as the fan goes on.)*

### Scene Five

*In the threshold of No-Space. Michael interviews Nena for the job of caretaking Citrona.*

MICHAEL: I need a trapper—I prefer women. A gentler touch. There's so few things one can trap anymore . . .

NENA: I know . . . I'm good at it though. I mean—so I've been told. I mean, I brought you catches before.

MICHAEL: But that's only one part of the job. I also need you to clean. Can you clean?

NENA *(To herself)*: He's looking for a wife—maybe. A wife figure anyway. Or a partner. I could be his partner.

MICHAEL *(Handing her a basin of water and a sponge)*: Clean something.

*(Michael looks at his watch. Nena kneels in front of him.)*

NENA: I saw this in a movie once.

*(She takes off his sandals and washes his feet. She does one foot at a time, very meticulously, going between the toes last. When she's done, he checks his watch again, then holds out his wrist. She winds his watch. He speaks.)*

MICHAEL: Good. You clean very well, uh, Nena. It's Nena, isn't it? If it isn't it should be.

NENA: Yes, Nena.

MICHAEL: You need certain skills for this job. It's not an easy job. Like you're used to. But I know you like to serve.

NENA: Yeah, sure. I'll serve. I can always serve. That's one thing I'm sure of—serving.

MICHAEL: Good. You gotta clean the cage and feed the animal. Do you like animals?

(*He begins to play with her hair*) You don't have much hair—so I'm worried.

NENA: What do you mean?

MICHAEL: People who like animals usually have a lot of hair—you don't. I mean it's kind of thin.

NENA: I just washed it. That's what happens when I wash it. Usually it's very thick.

MICHAEL: Oh . . . so tell me how you feel about animals.

NENA: I like them. And they like me. I had two squirrels I trained once to dance to John Philip Sousa marches. Rodents like marches, I find . . .

MICHAEL: I hate marches. You won't bring any with you, will you? I don't want them in my house.

NENA (*She nods no*): Oh, no, no. I never travel with them . . .

MICHAEL: Good . . . Good. Well, okay. Nena . . . well, welcome aboard.

NENA: Oh! Gosh . . . Thank you for taking me on.

MICHAEL: I like to give people a chance. That's how I got Joe's Shop. He died. That gave me a chance to have a store. All important historical events happened by chance.

NENA: I wouldn't know about that . . . I don't know any history.

MICHAEL: You will. We need a rabbit by six o'clock. Think you can catch one?

NENA: I know I can. But—

MICHAEL: Yes?

NENA: Didn't I bring you enough last week?

MICHAEL: That was last week. This week I've got another mouth to feed. Okay?

NENA: Okay.

MICHAEL: What do you think of my suit?

NENA: It's ugly—but it looks good on you.

MICHAEL: Bring back a pretty one, okay? She likes pretty ones . . . all I want is to make her happy. I feel so lucky today. Today, I found my soul mate.

NENA: Oh . . .

MICHAEL: I wasn't looking for love. I wanted to see the sights. The ones I never saw before. That's what sideshows show you. Things, people, you'd never otherwise see.

NENA: I've seen things there too—you found an animal there?

MICHAEL: I found my wife. My woman. When she sang "I Wanna Hold Your Hand"—the world stopped moving on its axis. For a moment. For a moment, I felt her hand in mine and when I touched her I felt happy.

*(Citrona sings "I Wanna Hold Your Hand" from her cage in the basement.)*

I mean, I imagined I touched her. Other people laughed—looked at her and laughed. Her mother laughed the loudest. That's when I knew . . . I had to save her. Help me, Nena.

NENA: Sure . . . I can always help.

*(Michael exits.)*

When he moves away from me, I have memories.

*(Pause.)*

I wonder what it would mean to feel his lips on my stomach, in the folds of my lower back, behind my right knee. And then I wonder why he'll never love me. He's made his family—bought it. Bought the love of a freak. Maybe there is a woman under all that fur—but who has the time? Life is short—doesn't he know that? Doesn't he know it grows shorter now? I mean for all of us . . .

*(Lights cross to the window light in the basement room.)*

### Scene Six

*Michael watches from the window as Nena enters Citrona's room.*

MICHAEL: I've always liked sideshows. And the ones we have now are truly the best ever—in my memory anyway. So many different things to see. I once saw a human baby born without eyes—in their place, he had small wings. He didn't fly or anything, but he had these feathers where his eyes should have been—these white pieces of fluff. I could see history through those feathers. We animals are all born with everything—with the possibility of

everything—of being anything. Fish-fowl, man-woman . . . I like seeing those too, those man-womans . . . You see the separation is not complete in them. In them, the sex organs both develop—sometimes overdevelop—often dysfunctional. I'd like to see them . . . function. I've dreamt of that—of holding one. Kissing both a man and a woman through one set of lips. It's a strange dream, I think. I think it has to do with my father—even though I don't remember his face. When it got blown off I tried to save it. I wanted to sleep with it over my eyes, so I could have his dreams. But the pieces weren't big enough . . . so I let the animals eat them.

### Scene Seven

*Nena enters Citrona's room carrying a rabbit on a tray. Citrona sings the Beatles' "Yes It Is" to her as she puts down the tray and moves it to the cage with her foot.*

CITRONA:

Please don't wear red tonight,  
this is what I said tonight.  
For red is the color that will make me blue,  
In spite of you, it's true.  
Yes it is, it's true,  
yes it is, it's true . . .

*(Citrona grabs her ankle.)*

Fine bones. The bones of a well-bred lady. A sweet high-born beauty. Ankles of ivory. An elephant would kill for your tusks, baby. Hey, hey, I know I got a bad skin condition, but the hair covers it right up. Touch it. My face is smooth for something covered in thick, black fur . . . Hey, hey, wanna hear a joke? What do you call a woman without an asshole? Single! I like that one a lot.

*(Nena breaks away and runs out the door.)*

Hey, I'm sorry . . . I'm sorry you're so beautiful . . . Tell Michael I approve.

*(Citrona sings the Beatles' "Yes It Is" to the animal she is tearing apart and eating. Her body gets soaked in its blood.)*

Please don't wear red tonight,  
 this is what I said tonight.  
 For red is the color that will make me blue,  
 In spite of you, it's true.  
 Yes it is, it's true,  
 yes it is, it's true . . .

*(She speaks in a rush)* Look, I'm wet with you. It's too bad. It's too bad I don't have a cup. Then I could collect you and drink you. You know what? Then I'd drink you. I can only lick you now. And I don't like doing that, you know, because . . . You know, the hair thing. Listen, you were very tasty. I bet you're the tastiest thing ever. I bet you appreciate how I appreciate you.

*(Long pause; as she continues to eat.)*

I don't like the furry parts. The parts that still have fur. I mean, I do, the stuff right there next to it—that's the good stuff, but I'm too afraid to eat it. Because if I eat it I might find fur in my mouth. And I couldn't stand that. I would choke. I would choke and die. I don't feel like dying anymore.

*(Pause.)*

You know what this room needs? It needs a fan. Yeah, get air moving in here. Yeah, that would be good.

*(Pause.)*

And a view. It's so hard not to be able to look straight up. Like most persons. Most persons can lie on their backs and look straight up and see something. See the sky . . . I can't do that. All I see is concrete. But I don't know . . . You know what? It's getting prettier. I can change it. I can make it any color. I close my eyes and try to breathe and I can smell green or blue or pink. Pink's good because it's bubble-gum smell and I don't get much of that. You know what's best? Bazookas. With that cartoon and the fortune. I liked that guy with the turtleneck. He was funny. I remember all my fortunes. You know what? You know what's fun to do? When you get one of those fortunes—now I overheard this once—you take the fortune and you add "in bed" to the end of it and it's kind of amazing because it always works. Like, "You will be complimented by your peers—in bed." And,

"You will be a great success and make a lot of money—in bed."  
 And, "You will find the answers to your questions—in bed."  
 And, "You will receive a surprise visitor—in bed." You know?  
 See what I mean? See, see, see. See?

*(Long silence. Nena enters. She sees that Citrona is still eating and turns to leave. Citrona grabs her arm with a bloody hand.)*

Hey, hey, baby. Talk to me today. You gotta talk or I won't let go. And I'm strong.

*(Lights cross to Michael listening to them on the other side of the door. He listens in silence for a moment, then he speaks.)*

MICHAEL: There was a time when I could only imagine what two women did when they found themselves all alone, together. I imagined first that they would talk about men. They would yearn for men together. They would devise plans and systems on how to catch and confine men, and how also to do it so carefully that the men would never know they were caught . . . All each man would know would be that he was in love with a beautiful girl. That's what I imagined . . .

*(Pause.)*

I thought they would talk about me . . .

*(Lights fade. Nena jerks away from Citrona and runs out the door that Michael is hiding behind. The Beatles' "For No One" plays softly as Michael quietly enters the room. He watches Citrona fall asleep, then climbs above her cage and sleeps in the same position above her. Sand pours in through the window. Lights cross to the hallway.)*

### Scene Eight

*Nena in the hallway, her back against the wall. She has spread food out around her. She sits waiting to catch small rodents.*

NENA: When you want to trap an animal, you feed it first. You watch it and find out what it likes to eat and then you give it what it likes . . . for a time. Slowly, the animal gets to know you. You get a little closer every day. You leave a trail of food which leads directly

to you. At first, it doesn't come that close. But as time goes on it comes closer and closer. One day, it's in your lap and you're stroking it and it is eating out of your hand. One day, as you are stroking it, you let your hand close tightly around its neck. You stroke its jugular until its heart slows down, until it's so calm that it falls faint—a deep sleep. Restful, trusting sleep. Then you kill it.

*(Speaking to a small animal in a sack that she raises above her head)* Do you think I'm beautiful? When you look in my eyes or smell my smell, do you think I have the look and smell of beauty?

*(Nena takes the small rodent out of the bag and places it on a silver tray. She enters Citrona's room carrying the stunned animal on the tray. Citrona pretends to be sleeping. She watches Nena watch her in silence.)*

CITRONA *(Jumping up)*: Yummy, yummy, yummy! Fresh food for my tummy! That's a beauty!

*(She extends her arms, reaching for the animal on the tray)*  
Ooooh, so soft. These kind are always so soft. Don't you think? Don't you think they're soft?

*(Nena throws the tray down hard and exits.)*

You really should get a hobby or something . . . Stress can kill you.

*(Nena returns with a mop, a sponge and a bucket of water. She cleans the blood and organs of Citrona's meal from the floor and walls. The smell of blood and shit and urine make Nena gasp and gag.)*

Hey . . . hey. Talk to me. Talk to me. Hey—you know what? You're beautiful. You smell good. You smell like rain. You bring rain with you when you come here. You bring cold, hard rain. I like that. You know what? I like that. You spray me when you come in. You spray me like grass. I'm grass that's not supposed to be alive. Like there's concrete covering me, so people think I'm dead. But I'm not because you get here and then I feel the blood in my arms again. It all starts to move. It moves and it feels like it's gonna come out through my fingertips. The tips get real hard and red. And I think I'm just gonna burst outta them—all of me reaching through myself and exploding. And you know what? It's not like this— *(She points at the pieces of animal on the floor)* I'm white inside. I'm a moon and I want to orbit you. Okay?

You know, orbit? Bit. Let me bite you. You're so beautiful. I could eat you right up. You know what? I get so wet when you come here. Because you're rain, right. Is that why? Is that why I keep hoping? I got too much hair on my arms probably . . . For you to love me.

*(Michael enters carrying a brush. He sends Nena away. Citrona turns her back on him but doesn't move away.)*

MICHAEL: You're still afraid of me. That's good for now, but soon you'll learn how not to be. Soon, you'll love me. I'm good to all my treasures. I'll be good to you because you are a treasure. You're a beautiful seed—someone should have buried you a long time ago . . . and then there'd be trees of you. Big ones. And branches would drop you, many yours like ripe, yellow fruit.

*(He brushes the hair on her back.)*

There. I'll touch you. You like to be touched. I can tell. You like me to run my fingers down your spine, around your neck.

*(Citrona faints. Michael kisses her hand and exits. Lights cross to the hallway. Nena sits there waiting for Michael.)*

NENA: You were in there a long time.

MICHAEL: No, I wasn't.

NENA: Yes, you were. A real long time. If I had a watch I would have broken it by now.

MICHAEL: You need a vacation.

NENA: But if I go, she'll stop eating.

MICHAEL: Just two weeks. In just two weeks no one could starve. I could bring her food.

NENA: If she dies, there's no job for me. She only wants young, beautiful girls to bring her flesh—

MICHAEL: You're not so young . . . but you are beautiful.

NENA: I don't want to go away. If I go away, I'll forget how to come back.

MICHAEL: I understand that.

NENA: Sit down with me.

MICHAEL: Can't. Linen. Wrinkles. *You* know.

NENA: Oh . . . you don't ever sit down?

MICHAEL: I lean.



*(He pulls Nena to her feet and kisses her.)*

That's enough. Leave your "vacation" address by the terrarium.

NENA: You'll come?

MICHAEL: There's a chance . . .

*(He kisses her again.)*

NENA: History . . .

*(Citrona bangs on the bars of her cage. Nena exits. Lights cross to Citrona's room.)*

### Scene Nine

*Michael enters Citrona's room. He carries a map of the pet shop building.*

MICHAEL: I'm going to give you this map. It'll tell you where to find me. This building is big, so you'll need it if you're going to find me. Not that you can really ever find me, but you'll always know where I am by listening to the sound of my footsteps. Follow them on the map and then you'll know exactly where I am. And if you don't stop banging on your cage I'll cut your hands off. Okay?

CITRONA: Oh, I've always hated my hands. I have these great big knuckles—see?

*(She shows her hands to him.)*

See? The hands of a monster. You should be afraid of these hands.

MICHAEL: That cage is the biggest cage you've ever been in—doesn't that tell you a little something about my intentions? About how I feel?

CITRONA: When do I eat?

MICHAEL: You just ate.

CITRONA: That was yesterday . . . or maybe two days ago. I don't know. I lose track of time. It wasn't today though. I know that. I know how hungry I am . . .

MICHAEL: You're not the only one who gets hungry.

CITRONA: You want to fuck me, don't you? I don't know why. That's a sickness. To love an animal. I'm not clean inside. Inside I'm

like rotted link sausages. Parks. Green and brown. Who'd want to poke into that? You must be crazy.

**MICHAEL:** Love's like that. You pick up your lover's vomit and treat it like a jewel. I'm going to call you . . . Beauty.

**CITRONA:** My name is Citrona. That's all I answer to. That's all I'll ever answer to.

**MICHAEL:** I brought you something else . . . *(He takes out ring)* Put out your hand.

*(She does so, he puts the ring on her finger.)*

When you take off that ring, you'll die. That ring is attached to your heart.

*(He exits. Citrona stares at the ring in silence. Then she speaks to the pile of fur pelts she has accumulated by her cage.)*

**CITRONA:** I wanted love and I used to dream about that. I had dreams where my mother would hold me. I had dreams all the time. I don't dream anymore. I don't remember how to sleep. I don't sleep because I'm a monster and monsters are hard to love. Look at Frankenstein's monster. The one thing that loved him—that innocent little girl—he goes and throws her down a well. Well, that's not gonna make life any easier. It's really not. Makes people afraid of us. They always expect us to kill the things we love. And there's some truth to that too. Because when I love someone I know she'll never love me back and so I want to kill her. Like those little girls who'd come to my mother's house and throw peanuts at the window—I loved them all and I wanted them dead. They made fun of my dresses—I liked pink dresses, pink satin. People said I should be on a TV show for gifted animals. I knew the words to every Beatles' song ever written and I could divide big numbers in my head—it was a gift. I was born with a caul—that's a sign of prophecy. People used to steal them to steal the power of the child and the mother. My mother kept mine in a glass case. It looked like a rotting cobweb. But it kept Mother from killing me—that's what she told me anyway. She knew I was here for a purpose—even though I was too ugly to love. That birth sac was my strength. My survival. Mother waited for me to tell her the future. I could only see what would happen after she died. She didn't like that.

She hit me so many times on the head that I lost my gift. I lost my hymen too. Mother thought it best. She pierced me with a letter opener made of wood, then she sold me.

*(She touches the ring on her finger)* I could never say no to a thing of beauty.

*(Lights fade to the window light. The window light fades. Lights up on the doorway and the cage. Michael enters carrying a barbecued chicken on a tray. He hands it to Citrona. She pretends to be interested in it and then tosses it back at him.)*

I don't eat barbecue.

MICHAEL: I thought it would be good for a change. A little change is good. It's very good chicken. I made it myself—my own special sauce. It's a sauce with an edge. A big, spicy edge. Don't you even want to try it? It'll wrap itself inside you like a snake.

CITRONA: The only thing I want wrapped inside me is gone. Where'd you send her? Where are you meeting her? I know you go to meet her. You go at night. You see her in a cheap motel and she puts on a wig and dances for you. She bends over and shows you her panties. She shows you her everything. She never bends here—she crawls and kneels. But I like her like that—then she's on my level. But with you, she could never be on your level. You give her things and that makes her love you . . . I can't believe you brought me barbecued chicken! Don't they sell live poultry anymore?

MICHAEL: Not around here. You can pick it out live, but then they kill it. They insist.

CITRONA: I hate when the world changes.

MICHAEL: It changes all the time.

CITRONA: I hate the world. When is she coming back?

MICHAEL: I don't know.

CITRONA: I liked the way she cleaned my room. I liked her on all fours. Her neck arches like rubber when she wipes my floor. I like the way she moves the air around her. Is she coming back?

MICHAEL: I don't know.

CITRONA: How does it feel to touch her? To press your body up against her? What does she taste like? Is it like paradise?

MICHAEL *(Picking up the scattered chicken)*: Paradise tastes like barbecued chicken. You should have eaten it.

*(He begins to exit.)*

CITRONA: I didn't memorize her face yet—I thought I had time.

MICHAEL (*Turning back*): You always think that. And the next thing you know . . . somebody's dead.

*(He closes the door and locks them both in.)*

I worked in this pet shop. My first job. The guy who owned it—his name was Joe. I felt tender about his lips. I watched him talk. He especially talked to the rabbits. I don't know why. He liked rabbits, I guess. He liked the straw they lived in. He used to stick pieces of it up his nose. I laughed when he did that. Then he stuck the rabbit down his pants once. With some straw. I thought that was funny too. But it bit him. And he got some weird infection. And then he died. That's what I heard. That he died from this weird thing. But really what he died from was from being too close to a rabbit. People aren't supposed to be that close to rabbits. You see, working with Joey taught me a lot. About animals. We had a spider monkey once . . . she climbed all over me and gave me lots of kisses . . . and then she died too. She had that same weird disease. All the other animals started to drop, like dominoes, in a spiral. I got out of its way. I made it stop. I didn't want that disease on me . . . so I bought a wife. Will you marry me?

*(Pause. Citrona stares at him in silence then begins to laugh.)*

CITRONA: You bought a nothing.

MICHAEL: You could be my legacy, if only you would touch my face . . .

CITRONA: It's her face . . . I'll die soon . . . and in my dreams—she'll die first.

*(He touches her head. We hear the Beatles' "Wait." Lights cross to the hallway.)*

### Scene Ten

*Citrona's dream (to be performed in either English or Spanish, the author prefers Spanish).*

*Citrona is lying at the bottom of her cage, looking dead. Dream Nena is taking her pulse. Dream Michael enters.*

DREAM MICHAEL: ¿Qué pasa?

*(What's wrong?)*

*(No response.)*

¿QUÉ SUCEDE?  
(WHAT'S WRONG?)

*(No response.)*

¡Dime! ¿Que has hecho? La has envenenado. ¡Maldita! La has matado!

*(Tell me! What did you do? You poisoned her. You bitch! You killed her!)*

*(He grabs Dream Nena and throws her against the wall.)*

Yo la amaba . . .

*(I loved her . . .)*

DREAM NENA: Yo la amé más. Ella me amó más. Más que tú jamás hubieses podido.

*(I loved her more. She loved me more. More than you ever could.)*

*(She takes out a gun and shoots him.)*

¡Al fin Citrona querida! Está extinto.

*(There. Citrona, honey. He's dead.)*

CITRONA *(Getting up and shaking off the blood)*: No puedo creer que lo hiciste. Y por mí.

*(I can't believe you did it. And for me.)*

DREAM NENA: Claro, querida. ¡¿Qué más podría haber hecho?! Te Amó! *(Sure, honey. What else could I do? I love you!)*

*(They embrace through the bars of the cage. Dream Nena slowly pulls away from Citrona into darkness.)*

CITRONA: Dag . . . nice while it lasted, huh?! Is this what happens when you're going crazy?

*(Dream Michael, isolated in a pool of light, speaks to Citrona. He stands over a smoldering pile of pink rags that was once Dream Nena.)*

DREAM MICHAEL: La mate. Ahora podremos estar juntos para siempre. Ella no te merecía. Yo sabía que me amabas. Lo vi en tus ojos . . . no tuviste que decir ni una palabra . . .

*(I killed her. Now we can be together forever. She didn't deserve you. I know you wanted me. It was in your eyes . . . you didn't have to say a word . . .)*

CITRONA: I have nightmares too . . .

## Scene Eleven

*Nena enters the hallway. She looks disheveled. She's coated with sand. She's been crying. She's panting, out of breath.*

*Michael crosses from the room into the hallway and sees her, checks his watch.*

MICHAEL: So . . . good weather?

NENA: Yes, for a while. For a while it was beautiful and then we had a sandstorm. I still have bits of sand in my eyes. They don't stop tearing. They're always red now . . .

MICHAEL: They're not too bad. If you rinsed them in clean water, they'd get better fast. Why don't you go rinse them?

NENA (*Holding up a sack*): I brought dinner.

MICHAEL: Good.

NENA: She'll never love you . . .

MICHAEL: I'm patient, Nena. I've held a gun.

NENA: I know. I've seen you do it.

*(Lights cross to the room and the cage. Citrona lies flat in her cage. She's facedown, her arm extended from the cage.)*

CITRONA: Somebody's dead . . . that's me . . . Can't cry anymore. My tears are stones that pierce my skin. I'm tired of bleeding.

*(Nena enters carrying the animal sack.)*

Oh . . . I thought—where'd you go?

NENA (*Handing her an animal from the sack*): Vacation.

CITRONA: Where to?

NENA: The beach. I like to burn.

CITRONA (*Moving into Nena's shadow*): I like the shade.

NENA: I brought you a present.

*(She takes a pink satin robe from the sack.)*

I'm tired of seeing your naked butt.

CITRONA: This covers more than that.

NENA: Put it on.

*(She does so.)*

Looks . . . comfortable.

CITRONA: Oh, yes. It's delicious. But it'll get soaked in "you-know-what" now that it's dinnertime.

NENA: Take it off then.

*(During the following monologue, Nena is mesmerized by Citrona, pulled physically closer and closer until a kiss is almost possible.)*

CITRONA: If you were my girl, I'd treat you nice. You wouldn't have to wear lipstick for me. You could go natural. A natural girl. Been a long time since we seen one of those. I mean, besides myself, of course. I can't really wear makeup. It sticks to my beard, and when I cry or sweat it flakes off into my eyes and makes them screaming red . . . but you. I bet you could wear it all the time. I bet it even looks good when it melts off you onto white sheets. That's how I want you, baby. On white sheets, not off-white or gray-white, but white-white. Whiter than the hottest sun. Whiter than Caribbean sand. Whiter than the Holy Spirit—than the heart of Christ. Pure, simple . . . white. I'll stop being messy if you kiss me . . . If you kiss me, I'll eat cooked meat. You could cook it for me . . . you could make us happen, baby. Baby, baby . . .

*(She sticks her lips and tongue outside the cage bars. This breaks the spell on Nena.)*

Kiss, kiss, baby, kiss me. Let me kiss you.

NENA: You'd have to kill me first. It would kill me to kiss you. I'd throw up on myself, into your mouth. You'd make me so sick. You make me sick. I thought I could stand to come back here as long as you wear that robe sometimes. As long as a part of you wasn't showing. So long as I didn't have to see your nipples harden every time I walked into the room.

CITRONA: But that's the best part. The part where my nipples harden and you bend over in front of me, to clean my floor, to feed me warm animals, full of red life. I squeezed myself red for you while you were gone.

*(She sings the second verse of the Beatles' "Girl" to Nena:)*

When I think of all the times she *(Replacing "I" with "she")*  
 tried so hard to leave me *(Replacing "her" with "me")*  
 She will turn to me and start to cry.  
 And she promises the earth to me and I believe her.

After all this time I don't know why.

Ah, girl, girl, girl . . .

NENA: You can't love me.

CITRONA: Nena, will you marry me?

*(Citrona reaches out her hand and Nena slaps it and runs out.)*

Watch . . . I'll put it out again . . . It was good to feel your white skin beating against mine. Your skin is like Jersey corn—milk and honey. So sweet you can eat it raw. You take a kernel and put it between your teeth and chew it down to nothing but liquid that travels down your throat like an express train through the Swiss Alps. A long, fast ride into darkness.

*(The recording of the Beatles' "Girl" comes up as the lights fade.)*

### Scene Twelve

*Lights up on the hallway. Michael and Nena sit with their backs against the wall. They smoke cigarettes.*

MICHAEL: You know what I hate? Those black cigarettes. So stuck-up.

NENA: And they taste like shit.

MICHAEL: You tasted them?

NENA: Yeah . . . Like shit.

MICHAEL: I could never actually smoke them.

*(Lights up on the cage. Citrona speaks to the door, like she's engaging Michael and Nena in conversation.)*

CITRONA *(Holding up a piece of her hair)*: Look! Come over here. I want you to look at something. See this?! I can't believe it!

MICHAEL: That kind of tobacco gives me a headache. But this stuff, I love . . .

CITRONA: A gray hair! I must have hundreds of them—in places I can't even see. Pull them out for me! Take them out. Take a pair of scissors and cut them and—

NENA: Me, too. Imported ones always taste better. Did you notice that? The farther they have to travel, the higher the quality.

CITRONA: And then take a match to the follicle and burn the fucking thing right out of my scalp! Quick, quick! They're taking over. Gray kinky hair. Shit. That's all I need . . . Shit . . .



MICHAEL: Well, I guess I'd agree with you. But that's true about everything—not just cigarettes. The more different it is—the more beautiful it can be. The potential for beauty increases proportionate to the oddity of the substance.

*(Michael takes a Bazooka bubble gum out of his pocket.)*

This for instance, is an unnatural product, based on a natural thing. It's color isn't found in nature—but gum is—the sap of certain trees becomes gum. It was chewed throughout history. Even while chasing bison, I think.

NENA: I love bison. I love things with heads as big as my body. It's something to count on.

CITRONA: Black and wavy was bad enough, but this I won't stand for. I will not let myself live long enough. I refuse to live long enough. I'll kill myself before I'm forty if this goes on.

I don't want to kill myself—I want to dance . . .

MICHAEL: Bison are the biggest-headed animals, I think. I wish I could buy one. They're protected, you know . . . Like the new saber-toothed tiger.

NENA: New?

MICHAEL: Yes, of course. Don't you read? That tiger has evolved four times. And each time, one part of it is different.

NENA: Wow! I guess some things just keep coming back.

CITRONA: Tell me about it.

MICHAEL: This time, it's bald.

CITRONA: I'd rather be bald than go gray. I've often prayed for baldness. Baldness would be bliss.

I wouldn't have been tied up in the gym for the boys to throw balls at, if I'd been bald. Boys like that hairlessness, especially as a girl gets older. No-hair-shows-all. Shaved pussy is always a turn-on.

NENA: I love protected things. They're always so beautiful.

MICHAEL: It has to do with their habitats. Their habitats are always so small. The smaller the habitat, the rarer the species. Those snakes that Marlon Perkins always had around his neck, those poor animals had the smallest habitats of all—the back of Marlon's van!

NENA: You're kidding!? That dirty old man!

MICHAEL: Yes . . . and then he almost always killed them after.

NENA: Wow . . . what a monster . . . Is that true?

MICHAEL: It's what I heard. How much of what you hear is ever true? People come to this pet shop to buy their pets. Especially at Christmas and Easter. People get pets then because they think it will help them be reborn. They think they'll get holier by buying an animal—that they'll be more like God, by feeding and stroking a little hunk of fur and flesh. And if they need to . . . a lot of stress can be relieved with a pet. Or through a pet. Or on a pet. They can relieve certain types of pain. But is that true for every type of pet? Or only the ones with fur? Like I said, how much of anything is ever really true?

*(He exits handing Nena a piece of bubble gum. Both Nena and Citrona put a piece of gum in their mouths and begin to chew.)*

CITRONA: I want to go to a dance. I wanna go to a dance and dance until midnight with the girl of my dreams . . .

NENA AND CITRONA: I have this fantasy sometimes. About my love . . . My love and I buy a trailer and watch sunsets all over these Americas.

NENA: We would buy as opposed to rent because we would decide to open our hearts and commit.

NENA AND CITRONA: He'd-she'd look exactly like me—

CITRONA: Except without the hair. None—smooth, hairless, except on her private part. That would be covered by a thick mat of soft down, like a feather pillow to rest on a while . . .

NENA AND CITRONA: And he-she has no ambitions—except to be with me . . . and watch the sunset.

NENA: He has very red lips.

CITRONA: And a very pink tongue . . . Of course, this is all a dream. There are computers out now that are better-looking than me.

Probably kiss better too. Everyone betrays me—

NENA: I'd lay him on white linen sheets . . . His soul is white too.

*(Nena plays with her breasts as Citrona continues to speak.)*

CITRONA: When you're like me, no one thinks they can betray you because no one takes you seriously, because no one thinks you're human. I had a half-sister, Minda. She was very beautiful . . . Her beauty was dark though. Full of secrets. I found a birth certificate once . . . and a picture. It was all I could do to keep from crying. I hated knowing for sure that she was only a half-sister. I liked having a sister who looked like her. I told myself I

could look like her, if I just shaved. I tried it once, but my hair was so thick, I had to peel away the skin to remove it. It hurt a lot and it made me look even worse because my purple-red flesh was exposed like a dead flower after a heavy rain.

NENA: I have no family. Michael is raising me now—but not like family. I have to do things for him. I turn his pages when he reads a book and I wind his watch. And in return, he taught me a skill—gave me a purpose. I have memories with him now . . . He was the one who taught me how to love the animals I trap . . . I build all my own cages. I know how much space every species needs. And how much water. It rains here sometimes. Sometimes there's so much rain, nobody goes out. And burrowing animals die because their holes get plugged up. You see them floating the next morning in the rancid water—blood on their teeth and in their pupils. I have a theory: I think they try to bite their own brains out. That's why their eyes fill with blood. Better to kill yourself than let nature drown you. Better to make a choice.

CITRONA (*To Nena through the door*): You could be my sister . . . She could've grown up to look just like you. You're beautiful.

You have long, thick fingers, like a man . . . What do you get up to with those fingers? I want to sit on those fingers and rotate. I bet you feel like me inside . . . I bet we're twins.

*(Lights fade on Citrona. Michael enters with a bowl of water. He places it by the doorway, and kneels beside it, ignoring Nena, who tries to get his attention. She begins to masturbate as she speaks.)*

NENA: I keep all my hot books in my closet in a plastic bag from Passport Foods. It used to be called Fancifoods, but it changed its name. I guess because it sounds more foreign with the passport in it. Anyway, I use these books to masturbate. I like the bondage ones—not that I want anybody doing that stuff to me, you understand, but I feel sort of like it's interesting to look at people looking for pain. Their nipples are always erect and their mounds do seem to glisten . . . And I wonder about my life, about my pain, and my come. And—are you listening to me? I could sit here with baby chicks coming out of my nose and you still wouldn't listen, would you? They could come flying right out of my nose and shit on my arm and still you wouldn't notice. You wouldn't notice because you don't love me . . . You're not my family.

*(Nena exits.)*

*Lights cross to a dimly lit cage. Michael enters, leaving the bowl of water within Citrona's reach. He quietly climbs the cage and rests above it. She plays with the water, sprinkling it on the floor. It makes her hands blood red.)*

CITRONA (*Quietly*): You shouldn't always listen to the sound of another's voice. Sometimes you should just store it, save it on the celluloid of your mind so you can play it back when you're most alone. That's when you appreciate that voice. You can't appreciate it when you fear it. When it bores a hole through your brain. When you look into that voice and see yourself there. You hear yourself falling. You hear yourself not being able to stop falling . . . Falling so fast.

*(She begins to cry.)*

MICHAEL: Don't do that . . . What do you want?

CITRONA: A love that smells of fire . . . and bubble gum.

MICHAEL: I'll find more gum for you. You know I'll always provide.

CITRONA: I know . . . and I also know it won't ever be enough.

*(Nena is about to enter the room. Lights cross to tight spots on each one of them.)*

**Scene Thirteen**

*Nena is in the hallway. Michael and Citrona are in the basement. They each talk to themselves.*

NENA: I begin to understand my own poison. I poison myself with love . . .

MICHAEL: Rat poison . . . Vitamin K—the "K" stands for kill. Anti-coagulant. Bloodletting. Let the blood flow without stopping. It's a feeling that's a lot like love. I don't let myself love rodents.

CITRONA: I wish I knew how to let his love wash over me. The many mes I want to be . . . but the me I am won't let me. If her kisses were mine, I could be beautiful. I could feel inside, the way she looks—outside. I'd stop being a monster. I could sail on her love.

MICHAEL: I don't believe in poisons. Not the best way. There are other ways . . . I try to understand—but I don't. She's beautiful because she has nothing to hide. I hide all the time. I listen for the

heat. I have sand in my shoes that won't ever go away. Sand under my toenails, inside my ears. Hard, crusty bits of sand. Sand blows into my house. My footsteps are dry . . . Poisons can flow out through your eyes—but I keep mine inside. Inside my eyes don't stop crying. If I keep my poisons inside, then I don't need love to replace it. That's the only thing that takes away the poisons.

NENA: If he loves her . . . and she loves me . . . Then I know how to hurt him. I could let her love me. She understands love. She loves me like I want to be loved. From her heart to her tongue. I wonder if there's a difference between the tongues of men and women. I imagine his longer, of course, and deeper—an oddly welcome-invader, a tonsil-tickling tongue. Hers shallow, wide, flat like an island. Safe. Protected. Surrounded by water . . . I can never accept the love given me. I always want what I can't have. If it's good for me, I'm bored. You have to work at not being bored in this life . . . You have to find the time not to be. I need to find the time for love. He'll be so jealous . . . I think it's time.

*(Nena enters Citrona's room as Michael exits. He pulls the door closed behind him and listens to Nena and Citrona through the door.)*

#### Scene Fourteen

*Nena and Citrona in Citrona's room. Dusk.*

CITRONA: Chow time? So soon? I'm not complaining. You can come see me—

NENA: I want to ask you something.

CITRONA: Anything, baby. Ask a—

NENA: Do you really love me?

CITRONA: Oh, yes. Really. Truly. Forever. Why do you ask?

NENA: Just . . . asking.

CITRONA: Oh.

*(They stare at each other a moment, in silence.)*

NENA: If I fell down a hole, would you pull me out?

CITRONA: Yes.

NENA: If I was hungry, would you share your food?

CITRONA: You could have it all.

NENA: If my eyes went blind, would you see my thoughts?

CITRONA: I see them now.

*(Citrona closes her eyes and play-swoons.)*

NENA: I'd—I'd like to visit you . . . I mean, inside—there.

CITRONA: Why? Don't come in pity, dear heart. I've got enough of my own.

NENA: Not pity.

CITRONA: Not pity?

NENA: No.

CITRONA: When?

NENA: To . . . morrow—um, maybe. Maybe tomorrow. I might be . . . I could . . . come tomorrow.

CITRONA: Okeydokey.

NENA: At sunset.

CITRONA: How . . . romantic.

*(Nena exits.)*

What will I wear?

*(Pause.)*

Oh . . . no . . . only Michael can let her in. I'll just have to ask him. I'll beg him. Anything to touch her without metal between us . . . Michael! *(She pounds on the bars)* MICHAEL!

*(Michael enters.)*

You have to let me love her, for one day, let me have her.

MICHAEL: If I do this, you must promise. If this happens you'll love me or I'll die of a broken heart. I'll die and I'll take you with me.

You wear my ring.

CITRONA: I haven't forgotten. My finger bleeds from that place.

MICHAEL: That's so you know you're alive.

CITRONA: I'd know that anyway. I know all about pain . . . It's a deal, then?

MICHAEL: Sure . . . one night—and then you're mine.

CITRONA: Sure . . . one night.

*(They sing the Beatles' "Here, There and Everywhere" as the lights fade.)*

To lead a better life, I need my love to be here.

MICHAEL AND CITRONA:

Here, making each day of the year.

Changing my life with the wave of her hands;

Nobody can deny that there's something there . . .

MICHAEL (*In the darkness*): Marry me . . .

### Scene Fifteen

*Lights first on the window, then on No-Space where Nena stands, wearing a beautiful pink dress. Citrona waits for her in the cage below.*

NENA: I saw this movie once, about this girl, who was dying. She coughed a lot and looked so pretty—dying against her pink pillows . . . I mean, it was a black-and-white movie but I knew they were pink, because when I looked at her I thought about love . . .

*(Pause.)*

He'll see me now. *(Pause)* Although, when light travels it changes the colors it touches. The colors become a reflection of the light that is being beamed out like lasers at your eyes. I was born with brown eyes. But in the light my eyes could be violet. My pupils change with the light—everybody's does. But mine are especially violet. My name should be Violet when I'm in the light. But I never wear purple because it's such a dark color . . .

*(Michael enters quietly behind her.)*

And I don't appreciate darkness—not the way other people do. And Violet really is a black woman's name, a black woman especially from the Southern United States. So that's not even rational—as a name. Not at all. He would never love a girl named Violet . . .

*(Michael picks Nena up and carries her off toward the cage. Lights fade. The sound of bubble gum popping.)*

### Scene Sixteen

*Citrona readies her cage for Nena's visit. She piles all her animal pelts in one corner, very neatly and methodically. A basin of water and a sponge is at the foot of the cage.*

CITRONA: I'm gonna weave a spell around her. I'll make a bed of fur for her. To lie on and dream . . . of me. *(She picks up two pelts with the*

*heads still on and puts them on her own side of the cage) Then she'll have to love me . . .*

*(Pause.)*

It's times like these I wish I knew some Marvin Gaye songs.

*(Collecting the leftover bones) I could make her something. A chair, maybe. Ladies like to sit. (She piles them up neatly) There. Looks comfy. I think. A chair, a bed . . .*

*(She dips the sponge into the water and washes herself.)*

I never thought I'd really want someone to smell my real smell. I thought if I covered it up, built a cloud of other animals' smells over me, then I could save the real me—the real smell of me—for someone I thought could love me . . . And could stand that smell—maybe even want it on her. Maybe even long for it . . .

#### Scene Seventeen

*Lights up on Nena straining not to be put into the cage. Michael is holding her tightly. Citrona watches.*

NENA *(To herself)*: I thought I could, but—I feel like I'm going to explode now. My teeth and gums and nose and eyes will fly all over the room. My smaller parts will slip through the bars and scar the walls. There won't be anyone to scrub me out with "Bon Ami." You'll have to tear down the walls to get me out. Or else you'll have to lick me off, because spit melts everything. Especially flesh. You'll help me disappear into the air, and then the air will be full of me. And my arms will attach to her chest. I'll make a new kind of monster out of her. My mouth will grow out of her stomach . . . it'll rest on her pelvic bone, and when I lick my lips—I'll lick hers too. Let's see how she likes that. *(Pause)* Oh . . . no . . . I bet she'll like that . . .

*(Nena tries to rock in Michael's arms, but she can't.)*

I'm locked in this space. I can feel the floor on the bones of my feet. She thinks she can love me, but she's wrong. My life is just beginning—I'm doing this for you. *(Kissing Michael)* I still love you.

*(Lights out as the cage door opens.)*



## Scene Eighteen

*Lights up on Nena and Citrona in the cage. Michael watches them from the window. Sand swirls around him. Citrona wears the pink robe.*

CITRONA: Well . . . well, well, well. Welcome aboard. I mean, to my house.

NENA: Did Michael clean up?

CITRONA: I did it. Myself.

*(Silence.)*

I made you a place. Right here. On top of all these warm furs. Sit down. Please.

*(Nena sits on the bone chair instead of the pelts.)*

NENA *(To herself)*: It's not so bad in here. I thought her smell—so close on my skin—would kill me—but it didn't.

CITRONA: Are you hungry? I told Michael to bring us something nice, something—cooked.

NENA: What are you going to do to me?

CITRONA *(Avoiding the question)*: I wrote you a poem.

NENA: A what?

CITRONA: A poem.

*(Pause.)*

NENA: Oh . . .

CITRONA: Would you like to hear it?

NENA: I guess so . . . What's a poem?

CITRONA: Oh . . . It's a . . . well, it's a family of words you put together that says what's in your heart.

NENA: Oh.

CITRONA:

Before I met you, I dreamt of your face.  
It was the face of love in an hourglass, pouring over me.  
Sand filling me up, drawing out my darkness.  
If I could rest my head between your legs—I could sleep.

*(Silence. Michael disappears from view.)*

Anyway . . . that's a poem.

NENA: Wow, well, I never knew words could be put together like that. It's beautiful, I think . . . Something new, every day . . .

CITRONA: Yep. Something new.

*(Michael enters with some chicken on a tray, a lit candelabra, a bottle of wine and two glasses.)*

MICHAEL: I thought a little romance was in order. A little mood modification.

*(He puts down the tray. Pause. Pretending not to care.)*

Okay. Don't ask me to stay. Please. I wouldn't let you even—

NENA: Michael, I—

MICHAEL: Don't. You say things I can't even hear.

*(He exits, closing the door behind. Lights come up on him having a romantic dinner for one on the other side of the door, as the scene between Nena and Citrona continues.)*

CITRONA: He's watching us. He listens. I know he does.

NENA: Really?

CITRONA: He watches everything I do.

NENA: Really?!

CITRONA: Yeah. Don't turn red for him, Nena. Not when you're with me.

NENA: At least, I'm here.

CITRONA: At least.

*(Nena pulls the food through the bars. She fills up a plate for herself and then hands it to Citrona.)*

I'm not very hungry.

NENA: No? It's delicious.

CITRONA: I'll pass.

NENA: You have to eat something.

CITRONA: Yes . . . I know . . . So did you like your poem?

NENA: Yes. Nobody ever wrote me one of those before.

CITRONA: You're happy then?

NENA: I'm not afraid anyway. I thought I'd be afraid, but I'm not.

CITRONA: Brush my hair?

NENA: Which hair?

CITRONA: On my back. Nothing kinky. Just a kind, gentle brushing . . .

NENA: Okay.

*(Citrona hands her a brush. Their fingers touch, Nena exclaims:)*

Ohh!

CITRONA: Electricity. Hard to keep it away with all this hair. I walk through clouds of static.

NENA: I never seen clouds.

CITRONA: Me neither. But I can imagine them. Like I can imagine a house. A little house for two. With a swing on the porch. And special wind chimes hanging from the ceiling to announce the arrival of all changes. All weather is recorded in those chimes. All life.

NENA: What are wind chimes?

CITRONA: Don't you read?

NENA: No. I was born in the desert. Our books would burn when we opened them. When we held them open too long, the pages would flame up. If we loved a book, we couldn't open it. If we read it, it would be destroyed. So I had many books. But I didn't read them. Except for the sex books. For some reason, they never burned.

CITRONA: Maybe it was the paper.

NENA: Maybe.

CITRONA: Kiss me.

NENA: Not—yet . . .

CITRONA: What's your favorite color?

NENA: Purple.

CITRONA: Oh . . . Purple and pink go good together.

NENA: Yes, I mean, I never thought about them together.

CITRONA: Yep. I'm good at that. Putting things together.

NENA: Yes.

CITRONA *(Patting the fur pile)*: Sit over here. On your bed.

NENA: Where are you going to sleep?

CITRONA: Over there.

NENA: Oh . . .

*(They eat in silence as lights come up on Michael on the other side of the door.)*

MICHAEL: I didn't think dinner could be so complicated. One night. One day. What does it matter? It's just animal instincts. Basic human needs.

*(Pause.)*

91.

But I feel those poisons again, behind my eyes. I feel the blood pumping out of me. The poisons might escape now. I feel my eyes full and wet. I wish someone had taught me how to cry. I think it wouldn't hurt so much then. It wouldn't burn on the inside like this. Inside my skin and my bones. Inside my heart.

*(Pause.)*

They still don't ever talk about me . . . I'm nothing to her. I don't want the girl. I want the woman. The woman hidden behind long black hair. I think of it as hair. Others might say fur. But to me she's like Lady Godiva. A beauty covering her naked flesh in black tresses.

*(Pause.)*

Why does she love that—that pink thing? It makes no sense to me. She needs a darker color to love . . .

*(Lights cross back to the women.)*

CITRONA: Good?

NENA: Yes, I was hungry.

CITRONA: Me too. I mean, I wasn't. I mean, I can wait. Don't have to eat. Not at all.

*(Citrona's stomach growls. She clutches it in embarrassment)* Oh, excuse me . . .

NENA: What do you usually do after dinner?

CITRONA: Talk to myself. Tell myself stories . . .

NENA: Oh . . .

CITRONA: Your eyes are very beautiful. You have a beautiful face.

NENA: Thank you.

CITRONA: I'm being good, aren't I?

NENA: Very.

CITRONA: Wanna sleep now?

NENA: I don't sleep very well.

CITRONA: Oh, I gotta cure for that. Go ahead and lie down.

*(Nena lies down tentatively but defensively on the furs. Citrona pulls out two animal skins with the heads still attached and performs a puppet show, alternating voices to suit the characters. As she does this, a light comes up on Michael in the hallway, performing his own puppet show in silence.)*

This is the story of Moo and Chew. This is Moo:

*(A girlish voice)* "Hello. I'm Moo."

*(Back to regular voice)* And this is Chew:

*(In a low, spooky voice)* "Yum, yum, yum. I'm Chew."

*(Regular voice)* Moo and Chew were enemies for many centuries. Moo wanted to wear nice clothes, eat at fancy restaurants and receive deliveries of flowers daily. Chew wanted to run naked, tear up her meat with her hands and dream about the death of her enemies. Moo avoided Chew like the plague:

"I hate that Chew. She's a pig-dog from Hell. She doesn't understand fashion or personal grooming."

And Chew followed Moo like a shadow:

"I say I hate her, but I really love that Moo. She could teach me things about the world. She could teach me how to feel beautiful. If I follow, maybe I'll become just like her."

Well, this following stuff really bothered Moo:

"Why don't you go home, you dumb freak midget?"

Chew said nothing. She just kept following Moo around, until one day, Moo came to a place that was burning. She knew that if she entered that place she would be consumed by flames. So she waited and waited and waited and waited . . . and waited . . .

*(Nena falls asleep. Citrona continues in a whisper)* And then she turns to Chew and says: "Marry me. Don't let me burn. I would stop breathing if I didn't have my shadow beside me."

And she took Chew's hand . . . and they walked together into the flames.

And you know what? You know what?

*(She lies down opposite Nena, imitating her sleeping posture. She puts out her fingertips and touches Nena's hand.)*

The fire went out.

*(Citrona closes her eyes. We hear the Beatles' "Here, There and Everywhere" as they both sleep.)*

*Michael enters quietly, climbs the cage and sleeps above them, also in the same posture.*

*Sand pours in through the window. It goes from night to day.*

*Michael moves to the hallway which is filling with sand, and closes the door behind him.)*

MICHAEL: It's getting hard to walk. *(He kneels by the door)* The sand gets so thick when it's wet. And not just with blood—but with water. It's thicker when the water comes from behind your eyes . . .

*(He cries silently as he listens at the door. The fan in No-Space stops spinning.)*

### Scene Nineteen

*Lights up on the cage. Both Nena and Citrona are in the cage. Citrona is naked on top of Nena.*

CITRONA: You look like summer in that dress. You remember summer? It's the season after next. Maybe we'll spend it together. Go to the beach. Maybe South . . . I want to turn brown with you and nest inside your brownness. A pretty girl like you has been kissed by Apollo . . . Don't be afraid. Meet your destiny. I'll hold your hand. I'll take you there. I'll even lick your ass.

*(Nena wakes up.)*

I bet you're surprised.

NENA: I don't like you. I thought I could like you—but I can't. You rape me. All the time. You rape me with your eyes. With how much you want me. I thought it was love, but it's rape. Today, you smell bad to me. You smell like a slaughterhouse. You got the entrails of many different animals inside your blood and your skin sweats piss.

CITRONA: You got *me* pegged.

NENA: You're a beast . . . A beast will only harm you if you move. If you stay perfectly still, most wild animals will go away—

CITRONA: Unless you've got your period. More menstruating teenage girls have been lost to wild animals than any other single population group.

*(She tries to kiss Nena.)*

You're moving.

NENA: I can't help it. I don't want your lips on me. I don't want to feel the wetness of your mouth.

CITRONA: What you think will happen will—in bed.

*(She kisses Nena who faints.)*

That wasn't supposed to happen. Michael! Michael, you didn't tell me this would happen!

*(Michael enters holding Citrona's mother's wooden letter opener.)*

MICHAEL: Great restraint is called for—in bed.

CITRONA: This isn't working. She has to look at me. She has to let me kiss her sweetly. She has to kiss me back.

MICHAEL: I can't do that. I can't do miracles.

CITRONA: I thought you could. I trusted you.

MICHAEL *(Hands her a lipstick and a brush he takes from his pocket)*: Try these. A little M.U. never hurt anybody.

*(Citrona puts on the lipstick and begins to brush her hair.)*

Not like that. Let me. *(He gently brushes her hair and puts some lipstick on her cheeks like rouge)* There . . .

CITRONA: She won't ever love me, will she? I thought she could begin to love me . . .

MICHAEL: No. She'll submit. Most people do. But love? No. No love . . . Beauty-Girl.

CITRONA: You do . . . sometimes kill the thing you love the most. Look at Frankenstein's monster.

MICHAEL: He kills the girl by the well. His only friend—besides the old blind peasant who feeds him that soup. That soup didn't look very good either . . . Why did he kill the girl and not the bad cook? I never understood that.

CITRONA: Kill me, Michael.

MICHAEL: You shouldn't be so afraid. Don't you see? Love doesn't have to kill you.

*(He tries to hand her the letter opener. She recoils from it.)*

CITRONA: That was my mother's.

MICHAEL: Yes. Some things must be opened to be seen, don't you think?

*(He holds the opener out to her again.)*

You control your own heart.

*(Citrona slowly takes the opener realizing that she must kill Nena in order to have her. She uses the letter opener like a stake and pounds it into Nena. Blood oozes from the wound. Nena dies.)*

CITRONA: My mother's name was Ada. She was always cooking. She told me I could only cry if I was hungry. Nothing else should make me cry because nothing else was as important as food. She called me a bitch and sold me like a dog. I think she must live in Europe now. All those rude people move to Europe. Especially Switzerland. They all ski.

*(She rips into Nena and eats a piece of her.)*

MICHAEL: I told you. I told you you could have Nena if you really wanted her.

CITRONA: You told the truth.

MICHAEL: Of course. Angels always tell the truth.

CITRONA: Bring me to Paradise.

*(She stands in the cage. Michael pulls the front of the cage open. It drops to the floor with a bang. Citrona steps out.)*

I am the beast that was . . .

MICHAEL: I loved you as the beast . . . Marry me?

*(He kisses her hand. She lifts his face to hers and moves to kiss him. Blackout.*

*Michael screams in the darkness. The Beatles' "Birthday" plays loudly.)*

END OF PLAY