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Ransack

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traducción de
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(fragmento en inglés)

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Traduced by David George

To Josep Lluís Sirera. I will await your non-criticism.

CHARACTERS

ROSA

She is past retirement age. She still has the gaze of a young woman, except when she loses it as she looks into space. In another period, and in certain very limited social spheres, one would have said that she dresses very tastefully. She hides her white hair beneath an unconvincing reddish dye.

VERO

Half way through her life, if we accept 80 as life expectancy. Tiredness built up over time makes her seem older than Rosa. She wears a shabby, dirty tracksuit. She hides anger beneath an apparent patience.

January 2015.

Winter sky.

Intermittent but constant sound of waves on a Valencian beach. Living room of top-floor apartment in a block built illegally near the sea. On one side, natural light filtered through the glass of a door made translucent by the salt of the sea, opening out onto a small balcony. It does not need to be decorated with vulgar marine motifs mixed with an unexpected taste for Castilian rustic furniture imported from China. A wheelchair, another ordinary chair, an old landline phone and an inflatable children's swimming pool, with little or no water, will be sufficient.

It is cold.

1

7.47 Breakfast

Rosa, wearing slippers and a smock which look like they were designed by Ágatha Ruiz de la Prada, contemplates the sea from her wheelchair. Her cup of cold latte is on the floor, next to a wobbly pile of Marie biscuits.

ROSA

So much suffering, so much suffering, and for what? *(Pause)* My shoes are too tight. I can feel them making my feet swell. When they're big enough, I'll squash you.

VERO

(Offstage) What do you want? Did you say something?

ROSA

So much cruelty, so much... *(Pause)* I just want to leave this world. I just want to! That's what I want... I need to leave this world soon! I could have left it so many times before... And I didn't! *(Pause. She looks anxiously at the sea)* And the whale? Where is the whale? *(Pause)* Where is the whale?!

VERO

(Enters. She looks at the cup and biscuits) You haven't touched your breakfast.

ROSA

I can't reach it. And the whale? It's been days since it's lived in the next life, but it was there, on the beach. Why didn't you take me down so I could see it close up?

VERO

Because it was dead.

ROSA

I know! A whale that's been out of the water for three days suffocates. I'm not afraid of looking death in the face. I just wanted to ask it... to know... Where did you say it is?

VERO

Dead, it's dead. Even if it was alive, I wouldn't have told you.

ROSA

They're the most intelligent animals in the world. They return to where they were born to die.

VERO

Do they? Is it possible to return to your mother's womb? That's the first I've heard of it.

Pause

ROSA

I've attended the best cocktail receptions in the best contemporary art museums. The best contemporary art galleries have opened up for me like starving prostitutes with children. I know everything about animals.

VERO

They should have put you in a zoo.

ROSA

I told you, and you didn't take any notice. I lived a few yards from a zoo for years. I just had to open a window to go to the zoo. And they were all down there, the living and the dead. At times they smelt the same as the whale... Can't you smell it? How can't you?

VERO

Because it's not there. They had to chop it up.

ROSA

I've got a chopped-up whale in my nasal passage. I'm breathing for her, out of the water. Take me to the edge of the sea, take me tonight, I can still swim.

VERO

Like when you told me about that oven business, that you wanted to bake a cake. No.

ROSA

Then give me a rope.

VERO

No. *(Pause)* Why do you want a rope?

ROSA

I want it. You asked me if I wanted something. You asked me, earlier. I want a rope, one of those thick ones.

VERO

You're incapable of getting up onto a chair. Or are you planning to escape via the balcony? We're on the 30th floor here, we haven't got a long enough rope in the house.

ROSA

In the house? This isn't your house... You don't know what it's like to own a house.

Pause

ROSA

You should have skipped more often when you were a little girl. You'd be stronger now.

VERO

I didn't need to play with anyone. That's what made me strong.

ROSA

Give me a rope.

VERO

You want a rope?

ROSA

What language am I speaking? I'm trying to speak a language you understand. I could speak to you in seven different languages and I don't. I've spoken with all the important world figures in contemporary art, the best, and they understood me. 20,000 euros. 200,000 euros. 2,000,000 euros. They understood me.

Pause

VERO

Very well, you want a rope? You shall have a rope.

VERO leaves

ROSA

It's all heading for disaster (*Pause*) It's a disaster, what's happening with my feet, a disaster. I've always had strong ankles, very soon they'll be two whale's tails. At least then I'll be able to walk on the sea, barefoot. We should never have come out of the sea, never.

Vero returns with a rope.

VERO

Here you are, a rope. (*She throws it to her*).

ROSA
Hold it at one end.

VERO
I'm not taking part in any of this.

ROSA
Take it!

VERO
(She takes one end of the rope) Now what?

ROSA
Step back a bit and shake it. Not like that... Turn it! To the right!

VERO
What are we doing?

ROSA
I want to play today like I never did when my daughters were little. *(Pause)* Jump! Why don't you jump? Jump!

Vero shakes the rope but she doesn't jump.

ROSA
(Sings) The moon, the prune, all dressed in black. Her father has hit her, but mother holds back...
Jump!

VERO
(stops shaking the rope) That's enough! We've played enough for today. Eat your breakfast.

Rosa continues looking at Vero and squashes the pile of biscuits with her foot. Then she kicks the cup. They stare at each other for a moment. Darkness.

2

11.23. Bath

The same room. VERO uses the inflatable pool, which has almost no water, to wash Rosa's naked body with a damp cloth. When she stops at her breasts, Rosa smiles.

ROSA
You like them, do you? These two could still drive men and women of any age or class crazy... Do social classes still exist? Well-rounded breasts! That's what the idiot called them. He confessed to me that's what he first thought when he saw them. The stupid fool did make me laugh. Young! Why

call them well-rounded when they were just young? He didn't know then what "well-rounded" meant, *he* was young. I leant over for a second while I was scrubbing hard and my boobs rocked back and forth like a pair of empty swings. If it wasn't for that moment, you wouldn't exist.

VERO

That's why I've never had kids, because I've never swung my well-rounded boobs when I was cleaning windows in front of a half-drunk man twice my age.

ROSA

What really surprised me about him were his legs, which were still well-rounded. They were always sturdy, a shire horse's legs. Pity he didn't like dancing. When I found out he was ashamed to dance, I should have let him leave. But I thought, he'll learn. He'll learn, you'll see, I told myself. Until your wedding night.

Pause

VERO

What wedding?

ROSA

Didn't you get married?

VERO

Me?

ROSA

Well, one of your sisters' weddings, it's all the same. The important thing is he danced with another woman that night, a friend of the bride. Young, very young, just fallen off a swing. And it didn't look like your father was very ashamed, on the contrary, he showed off his great dancing skills, no holds barred.

VERO

Can you stop talking while I'm bathing you? I don't want to know anything else, about you or him.

ROSA

You're not bathing me. You're scrubbing my body with a wet, stinking cloth. Are you afraid the water might shrink me even more?

VERO

I don't want any more scares in the bath.

ROSA

Scares? But you don't want me, you want me dead, just as your father did. But I loved him so much he died first.

VERO

He wasn't my father.

ROSA

This fixation of yours that you're living in a soap opera! It's true, reality does sometimes resemble a crappy soap, but other people's reality, not yours.

VERO

And you are not my mother.

ROSA

The night you were conceived your father was like that horse we bought you when you were little. Do you remember? He didn't want to get into the horse box and he kept bashing the doorframe with his head, over and over, in his fury, and his eyebrows were bleeding. We called him Boxer, he nearly went blind. *(She laughs)* All night long in the stable, whinnying and banging the walls. We didn't sleep a wink. Later, neither you nor your sisters wanted to ride him, you were afraid to. Your father really was scary, but he didn't frighten me. He never frightened me, he was afraid of *me*. *(She laughs)*

Silence

ROSA

Why do you look after me if you've never loved me?

VERO

Because I've nothing better to do and because you're alone.

ROSA

No, you're the one who's alone.

Silence.

ROSA

Did I ever tell you I was born here?

VERO

You what? This apartment must be less than thirty years old.

ROSA

Under this block of flats there's a fishing village. The beach bar where I met your father was just a few yards from here. Where those rusty public showers are now. That's why I've come back, your grandad taught me to fish right here. In later years, whenever I got into a luxury yacht, I missed the smell of rotten wood in your grandad's boat. Roots... We can't forget our roots.

VERO

Nobody could teach you to fish here now. Now only semi-rotting whales come here to the seaside, so some of you, at least, can feel ashamed of what you've done.

ROSA

Your grandad taught me a trick to catch cuttlefish. He kept a female cuttlefish in the freezer and

used it as bait every summer. The males are so smart they'll even shag a dead female. Some nights, when your dad stirred himself to shag me, I used to think of that cuttlefish. Your grandad taught me everything.

VERO

He wasn't my grandad.

ROSA

We are from humble origins, my girl. We should never forget how much we can learn by observing animals.

Silence. VERO drops the cloth. The two women observe each other for a while.

VERO

Why do I look after you...?

ROSA

Because a doctor told you I've got dementia and you enjoy watching me disappear.

VERO

You haven't got dementia. You may fool the doctor but you can't fool me.

ROSA

I've always been like this. Since I met your father.

Silence.

VERO

Get up. You're clean.

ROSA

Already...?

VERO

Yes, come on... I'll put your nappy on.

ROSA

No! *(Pause)* I don't want to be born again.

Rosa gets up slowly, bashfully hiding a breast with one hand and her pubis with the other. She is a Venus emerging from a Botticelli inflatable shell. VERO, on the right of this surprising painting, holds a towel with floral motifs. A gentle breeze enters through the door of the balcony and blows Rosa's hair. The breeze gradually changes into a gale. Darkness. The sound of the wind blends with the noise of a hairdryer.