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**LA HEMBRA EN LA UMBRA DEL HOMBRE (& VICE VERSA)**

BY MARC L. SCHNITZER

University Press

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"What you're telling me, old boy, is that you're such a stooge, such a patsy for the feminists, that you're no longer able to look out for your own self interest."

"Tell me -'young boy'- just what is it you're looking for in a woman? Someone to cook for you, clean for you, fuck for you, and shut up?"

"Let's not forget 'have fun with me,' 'entertain me,' and plus, she's gotta be good looking."

"In other words, you want a slave."

"Not at all, David. You obviously don't understand. A slave would serve me only because she would have no choice."

"So what you really want is a paid servant then, although you'd prefer not to pay, no doubt."

"You're still way off base. I'm not looking for a servant, or for a whore. What I want is a woman who wants to do all of that for me because of love."

"You want someone to *want* to do all that for you because she loves you."

"Or even 'cause she just likes me. Why not?"

"You're absurd, Frank. No one would *want* to wash your clothes and your dishes and cook for you and clean your house for nothing in exchange."

"Who said anything about nothing in exchange? I show my women a great time: Besides I'd be an excellent catch. Good income, prestigious job, socially uppercrust, and quite charming."

"Quite. And let's not forget modest."

"Let's not."

"You know, I think you're quite *nuts*. And revoltingly cynical."

"I'm not the least bit cynical. These women here *love* to do those things. It's in their very nature, in their blood."

"I can't believe you see women like that. Don't you realize they're human beings just like you?"

"Don't patronize me, you twit. Just wait till you've lived here a while, and we'll see which one of us is nuts. You're so used to those castrating American bitches that you're incredulous; you're *suspicious* of the warm, sensual femininity of the ladies of this tropical isle. But you'll change."

David left his business associate's plush penthouse apartment in a huff and drove back in the company car to his own temporary quarters, also furnished by the company. David felt sure that he would survive his stay in this country with his feminism intact, or even strengthened. David had become a feminist the hard way, watching his father abuse his mother almost constantly throughout David's childhood. Not that the old man had ever laid a hand on her. He merely belittled her, and so reinforced the self-image of helpless incompetence with which she had been raised. David never forgave his father for that, and when the "women's movement" pressed for political and social changes, David was among the earliest male proselytes.

David had been transferred down to the island to open a branch office on the Atlantic coast, once he finished his six months of orientation under Frank's tutelage at the Caribbean coast operation. He'd see Frank again at the office tomorrow morning, but at least there he wouldn't have to listen to any more of his sexist crap. All the women at the office—the receptionist, the secretaries, and the typists—appeared to be middle aged or even older-than-middle-age married women. And fat. It seemed that in this country corpulence came as an inevitable concomitant of maturity. Nobody seemed to care much about it. How different from the United States, where being fat seemed to be a worse crime than embezzlement, from the standpoint of its social consequences. Especially for women.

Fortunately, the young ones were invariably beautiful. The young women of this country seemed to range from eye-catching cuteness to the kind of delicious beauty that makes one stop breathing for a moment. There were blue-eyed ne-

gresses with perfectly straight black hair down to their waists, and there were doe-eyed blonds with tightly kinked curls, and all measure of racial combinations in between. And nine out of ten had exquisitely voluptuous figures.

Unfortunately, David hadn't seemed to be able to get to first base with any of them. Of course, not being able to speak the language was a major handicap, but even after he began to make himself understood fairly well, he could not penetrate the protective shells with which this country's beauties encapsulated themselves.

"It's just what they call a *racha*," said Frank, "a *stretch* of bad luck. Why don't you come along to a party I'm going to on Saturday night. You'll meet some girls, maybe something'll happen."

"That would be great. I've tried in bars. I've tried at the swimming pool at my apartment building. I tried a couple o' times on the bus. I've tried secretaries at various offices where I've had to wait. I even tried my luck on the street once or twice."

Frank laughed. You're going about it all wrong. For a Latin woman, the *context* is all important. Only a whore would let you pick her up on the street or the bus. If they meet you at a party, you'll be introduced by someone they know: It'll be much better."

"You think it's okay for me to go with you? I haven't been invited."

"No problem. I know the host pretty well. He's some kind of big-shot bureaucrat with the government agency that attracts businesses to the island. I'll tell him you're with the company and that you'll be coming. You really should get to know him anyway."

David did in fact meet some unattached females at the party who were willing to go out with him. The first one he went out with, Caridad, was one of the loveliest women he had ever seen. Rather tall, with dark wavy hair and a tiny lilting voice which carried impeccable educated Spanish, Cari was a secretary for the tourist bureau. Her English was fairly good and she invariably spoke it with David. He had taken her out four times before she let him kiss her. And even then, she did not really reciprocate. But anything was better than

nothing. She did, however, wash a sink full of dishes and clean up his kitchen the first time she visited his apartment. He had gone to the bathroom, and when he got back, she had gone into the kitchen and begun washing up.

"Hey! Cut that out! You're my guest. That's my job."

"¡Bendito, pobrecito! A young man all by himself with no one to cook or clean for him."

"Who do you have to cook and clean for you?"

"I do it myself, of course."

"Well?"

"But I am a woman. I was raised to do all those things. They are easy for me. They are my second nature."

"Well, when you come here, leave your second nature at home."

She was evidently miffed at his ingratitude: She refused to go out with him again. Not that David was particularly eager to continue in such a relationship.

Especially since there were now greener pastures.

Socorro, whom he also met at the party, now *she* was a little easier to kiss. But there was no chance of going beyond that.

"I am a beerjin and I am going to marry a beerjin."

"You want your husband to be virginal?"

"No, I want to stay beerjin until I marry."

One thing David would never be was a seducer. He considered it degrading. He was mentally scratching her off his list. She evidently could sense that.

"But there are many other things that one can do to please one."

"Such as?"

David presently found out. There are virgins and then there are beerjins, he thought.

Let us not forget to mention that Socorro finished up the evening by sweeping and mopping David's floor.

"Cut that out! I can't allow this." But he did not take the broom away from her.

"You need that some one do this more often."

"Why? I can do it myself."

"But you *not* do it yourself."

"That's my business."

"Not if you invite one to come here."

"Then it becomes 'one's' business. Is that it?"

"Yes. That's it."

Another young lady he met at the party was named Lourdes. She was definitely a heavy chick. In more ways than one. Physically rather buxom, she seemed extremely concerned about social and political issues, particularly in the U.S. Racism (anti), Nuclear Buildup (anti), Civil Rights (pro), Atomic Energy (anti), Gay Liberation (pro), American Imperialism (anti), Soviet Expansionism (anti). Heavy!

She had known David scarcely three weeks when she gratuitously washed his dishes, made his bed, and offered to do his laundry.

"But why?"

"Oh, I just feel sorry for you having to do these things for yourself."

"But don't *you* do them for *yourself*?"

"Not just for myself, but for my two lacy broders. Or at least one of dem."

"You live with your brothers?"

"With one. The youngest. I am the oldest and Bebo has always seen me as a kind of mother."

"Did you use to order him around when you were kids?"

She broke into a laugh. "On the contrary. I always was forced to obey my two broders when we were children."

"You had to obey your kid brothers?"

"Yes. Mamá always said I had to because they were boys."

"Wow."

"So I became used to making their beds and cleaning up after them and dusting and vacuuming their things."

"And so you just continue the way you always have."

"Except that now Mamá is gone. But there is nothing to it."

"And what about your other brother? Your older younger brother."

"Oh he is married. His wife takes care of all those needs for him, no doubt."

"No doubt? You aren't sure?"

"I have not seen Diosdado for over a year. I used to clean and cook for him before he married. His wife has a good job, I hear. She hates me."

"Why?"

"I really donno. I have the feeling that Diosdado is always comparing her to me. She is a lousy cook and I donno what kind of housekeeper."

"But you really don't mind doing all that work? And taking orders. I mean the idea of women always having to take orders from men. I mean *just* because they're men."

"Let me put it this way: I don't like the idea, in theory. But in practice, I am used to it and you cannot change the whole world."

"It's not like that all over the world. You know that."

"In my world, the one I live in, that is how it is. This is a more traditional, more conservative culture than the United States. Are you sure that you would not like me to clean your bathroom, at least the toilet and the sink, okay?"

Esperanza was another story. Frank had personally introduced her to David. Esperanza was a divorcee, and Frank had assured him that "once the virginity thing is no longer an issue, things really change." Esperanza had two sons, the older one old enough to babysit for the younger one while Mamá pursued an active social life. Esperanza's husband had divorced *her*.

"He could not stand the fact that I was more intelligent than he was."

"That was why you split up?" asked David.

"So it seems," she said ruefully.

"What you mean is you didn't like him bossing you around, telling you what to do, and he didn't like your attitude."

"No. It was not that. I was always a very obedient wife. But sometimes I would *suggest* other alternatives to his. That used to infuriate him. One time he threw a toaster at me."

"Were you hurt?"

"You see this here?" She lifted her bangs to reveal a scar from a row of stitches just at her hairline.

"So why didn't you leave *him*?"

"It is not done. And you know, in spite of it all, I loved him. And besides it would probably be no different with another. Perhaps I will have better luck next time."

"So you would get married again."

"I do not know. Perhaps. If I find the right man."

Esperanza turned out to be easy to take to bed, as Frank had assured him. In fact she seemed grateful for the favor.

"But you know," she said shortly after they had finished, "If you would move the bed over to this wall, it would be closer to the bathroom and much more convenient."

"But my stereo and my records are up against that wall," he protested.

"Well, you could move them over to that side."

"But then they would block the light from the window."

After she had washed the dishes, Esperanza suggested some other changes. In the arrangement of the kitchen.

"It would be much more efficient with the dishes in here, the pots in there, and the silverware in here. The way you have it, it is no wonder that your kitchen is such a mess."

"It doesn't bother me. Besides, women are always insisting on cleaning up for me."

"They are?"

"Yes, I would hate to deprive them of something they obviously need to do."

"I see."

"Nobody asked you to wash the dishes."

"If you want me to come here, you have at least to let me keep the place neat. And if I am going to do it you have to allow me to arrange things so that they are more easier. Also more attractive."

Esperanza was a relatively successful interior decorator. Although her services to David were offered free of charge, he considered the price too high.

But David was not to become entrapped by Esperanza's sexual favors: his girlfriend from back home was coming for a visit. They hadn't really broken up when he was transferred, but they hadn't really made a commitment either. They figured they'd just see how things worked out. It was kind of a surprise visit. Jane had quit her job to take a better one in another city. She had three weeks in which to relocate, and decided to spend two of them with David. Jane was very fond of David. But she was, evidently, more fond of her career. The two junior executives realized that it would be difficult or impossible to combine two careers "in the fast lane" with familial commitments. David respected that in Jane; but he *had* been

missing her a lot. Especially given the lack of suitable feminine companionship, which he sorely felt, in spite of the contacts he had made through Frank. He had really missed Jane. But he had not realized just how much till he went to pick her up at the airport.

There she was in a business suit, her long dark-blond baby-fine hair done up in an elaborate braided bun. She wore a gold brooch at the base of her neck and no other jewelry. It flashed through David's mind how good it was to spend time with Jane, how much *fun* she was. Fun was one thing he had been missing a lot.

Jane embraced and kissed him warmly, but not as warmly as he had anticipated. On the way back from the airport to David's apartment, all Jane could talk about was her new job and how excited she was about starting. She didn't even ask David about *his* new job, about how his orientation program was going. That wasn't the Jane that David remembered.

Things were clarified somewhat when they arrived at David's place and he wanted to get down to business right away.

"You just take off and move to a foreign country where I can't even speak the language..."

"I can't really speak it myself. In fact..."

"And you expect me, after you just take off without even considering me or my feelings, to just jump into bed with you, *immediately*, like some kind of machine, as if nothing had happened, nothing had changed."

"I thought we had talked this all out, that we had both decided that our careers came first, at least for now."

"I wouldn't have taken off half way across the globe."

"It's hardly halfway across the globe."

"And another thing; you expect me to get into *that bed*? When was the last time you changed the sheets?"

"Well, I..."

"How many women have you screwed here without even changing them?"

"Aren't we getting a little hostile over nothing?"

"Over nothing! This place is a pigsty! The sink is full of dirty dishes. There are roaches all over the place; I've already seen three or four in the fifteen minutes I've been here."

"But..."

"There's dust all over the furniture and the floor is filthy. This is some welcome! Do you expect me to believe you really wanted me to come?"

"Look, I'm sorry. I didn't realize. I've been very busy."

"Please get me reservation at a hotel and call me a cab. I'm not staying here a minute longer. You can pick me up at my hotel and take me out, if you wish. But I'm not staying here."

"Wait. I'm sorry, I really didn't realize. Why don't you go for a swim? I'll show you down to the pool. There's still at least three hours of sunlight. And I'll clean up. While you're basking in the sun, I'll get this place spic and span."

"You really think you can clean up this mess in three hours?"

"Sure. You'll see."

"I'm telling you, David. I'm *not* staying here if the place is dirty."

"Okay, okay!"

He tried. He really did, but he could see he would not make it on his own.

Use the telephone, he thought.

"Hello, Socorro, Listen, I know this is asking a lot, but my brother and my sister-in-law are coming down and I've got to get my apartment cleaned up right away. They're coming this afternoon. Do you think you could help me out?"

"Bendito. Don' worry. I will go right over. I will call up Caridad and find out if she can help."

"Caridad?"

"Caridad Dapena."

"You know her?"

"Of course. You did not know that she was my cousin? We talk about *you* all the time," she giggled.

"But she won't come over. She refused to see me again."

"Maybe you did not try hard enough."

Socorro came over with Caridad. The two of them swept and washed the floor; they washed and dried the dishes and

cleaned the kitchen and dining area. And they stripped the bed and changed the linens. And they dusted the furniture.

"But let me at least help!" David had said at the outset.

"Please. You will only be in the way," insisted Caridad.

"I know you must go soon to the airport. Let me take your laundry." Socorro.

"No no. I can do it."

"We can do it better, and you will have more time with your brother." The two girls laughed, a conspiratorial laugh, it seemed to David.

"But we'll probably be going out tonight."

"No problem. We leave the clothes with your neighbor."

"We should go now," said the other, "so that you can go to look for your family."

"You mean, 'pick them up'."

"Of course, 'pick them up'," repeated Socorro.

"But not too high," added Caridad.

"I'm *so* grateful," said David, entirely honestly, amid their laughter at Caridad's hilarious pun.

"No thanks."

"No thanks."

"But yes, *thanks*," said David, as the two girls walked out the door. All smiles and giggles, they had left a scant ten minutes before Jane's return, a 1.5 hour sunscreened tan upon her previously pallid countenance.

"Wow! You are amazing!" she exclaimed (as you could tell by the exclamation points). "I mean really amazing! I never would have believed you had it in ya, Davy boy. I'm amazed!"

Jane was obviously impressed, perhaps inordinately so, by the metamorphosis of David's apartment.

"I wouldn't have believed it possible," she went on. "You should open up a professional cleaning service. You have talent. I *mean* it."

"Thanks. Thanks a lot. *I mean* it."

"Hey, man. I didn't mean it as a putdown."

"Oh no?"

"No. I just really felt put off before. Like the state of your home represented the state of your mind. I mean as far as *I* was concerned. I see now that I jumped to conclusions."

She got closer to him.

"You know?" She pressed her chest and belly up against him. She was about four inches taller than he, which effectively enmeshed their respective concavities and convexities in a delightful formation.

"You know..." she repeated.

"What?"

"You had someone *in* here." David attempted to pull away, but she held him to her. He did not resist. "You hired somebody, right? Don't shit me."

"You're nuts. You just think I'm totally incapable..."

"Oh, I wouldn't say that."

"... of doing my own housework. Most women think men are incapable of it. It's a sexist attitude."

"Hah! That's a cheap trick, you chauvinist prick." With that she pushed him down on the bed and began to undress him. It was just what he wanted her to do. Just what he *needed*.

David and Jane spent a marvelous two weeks which were marred only by persistent requests by Socorro and Caridad to meet David's family. David was slick enough to put them off without arousing suspicion. But even if he had aroused suspicion, he would have remained aloof. He really didn't give a damn what Caridad and Socorro thought, those virginal air-heads. "Cleanliness is next to Godliness," that's what they say. For *those* two it should be "Godliness is next to (but running a rather distant second to) Cleanliness."

Jane's aggressive sex trip was a fantastic change for David. Even the horny Esperanza would lay back and wait for him to make the moves.

Even Evita! Even Evita was passive compared to Jane. Evita was, as she put it, his "most obedient servant." David met her a couple of weeks after Jane's bitterseet departure. (What a broad! but what a relief! -David) (I love him, but I don't trust him.- Jane).

Evita was a real turn-on. David was still kind of depressed over Jane's departure, when one day a very sexy lady picked *him* up. Or rather, she made it virtually impossible for him to avoid getting involved with her. That is, it sort of went like this:

He had seen her around the pool a few times with a couple of kids and a big dude. David had figured it was a family scene. One morning he saw her at the pool by herself. In fact, no one was there but the two of them and the lifeguard. She was practicing her diving. Or else doing an exhibition (She was good.). Probably for the lifeguard. She had a spectacular figure, which David duly noted and thought no more about, as he continued to mope about Jane.

But on Saturday afternoon a week or so thereafter, the woman (once again unaccompanied) called out to him from a deck chair, and asked him if he spoke Spanish. Upon finding that he spoke "a bit of Spanish," she broke into a big smile and asked all about him and told him a bit about herself. A nurse: not currently working. Divorced, two children. She had a friend who wanted to meet David, sitting on the other side of the pool. "Too timid to come over."

After a half hour or so, David felt it would be impolite not to say, "Let's go meet your friend."

The friend, Beba, wasn't bad, but not too exciting seen next to Evita, especially with both of them in bathing suits. Beba was very reserved and shy. Both girls lived in the same building as David and were each other's next door neighbors. Evita and Beba told David where they lived; David reciprocated and politely invited them to pop in some time for a drink. To his surprise, they both turned up at his apartment the next afternoon, both wearing tight sweaters and tight jeans—incongruous, even crazy in this torrid climate. Evita was accompanied by her two kids.

To her credit, the children were well behaved.

"Do you believe in free love?" Evita asked him out of the blue, to the obvious consternation and embarrassment of her friend.

"Claro que sí," responded David, Mr. Supercool.

"You do not have a novia?"

"A what?"

"No girlfriend?"

"Not really." Jane suddenly seemed to have lost much of her importance.

"And you live alone?"

"Yes."

"Oh."

Beba was at an obvious disadvantage to Evita in "personality," in beauty, in intelligence, and in sexiness. She beat the hell out of Evita in innocence. Also in her appetite for David's booze.

But David took Beba out. He really did. They went to dinner and to the movies and then for "a drink." She found him charming. He found her boring. And rather annoying. As it turned out, Beba's interpretation of "a drink" was rather different from David's. He had already noted this the day she showed up at his apartment with Evita, but at the time he had assumed that it was just her way of dealing with the embarrassment which Evita was obviously causing her. When he finally took her home from their date, Beba was stewed. David was not impressed by that sort of thing.

Well, what the hell. He wasn't going to see her again anyway. Why, one may ask, did he ask her to go out with him in the first place? Actually, he hadn't intended to. But Beba did not have a phone, and Evita magnanimously offered to take any phone messages David might care to leave for Beba. When David telephoned Evita, it was not in order to leave a message for Beba, but in order to get together with Evita herself. But Evita, in her exuberance over the call, made it clear to him that she, Evita, was living with a "fiancé," and that *Beba was enamorada* of David.

How could he invite Evita to go out with him under those circumstances?

In his embarrassment, David could think of nothing to say but, "And I of her."

"What? Do you know what *enamorada* means?" After all, his Spanish was none too great.

"Yes, I think so," he replied. In fact, he wasn't too sure but hadn't the vaguist idea of what to do to get out of this situation.

"So when shall I tell her that you shall take her out?" asked Evita, matter-of-factly.

"Tell her Thursday night at 7."

"Okay. I tell her."

And that was it. Although he had no intention of going out with Beba, Evita had effectively shut her own door and opened Beba's. Now David had no alternative, without appear-



ing a complete boor and at the same time making it totally obvious that Evita, the engaged one, was the one he was really interested in.

As it turned out, he really had nothing to be concerned about. In fact, going out with Beba may have made Evita feel somewhat jealous, or at least competitive. The day after his date with Beba, Evita telephoned David to invite him to play tennis with her.

"I don't play tennis," he replied.

"Well, you can learn. I teach you."

She arrived at this place somewhat after the appointed time, dressed in tennis shoes, shorts, and top, and carrying only her purse.

"Hi."

"*Hola.*"

"Where's the equipment?"

"Equipment?"

"Tennis balls. Tennis rackets. You were going to bring a racket for me too."

"Oh, I forgot them. But no matter. We can stop off at my place and get them on the way to courts."

"Oh."

"Aren't you going to invite me in?"

"Oh yeah, sure."

She had him in her clutches. Having made use of various crutches— tennis balls and rackets— her racket certainty would have been transparent, had she been Japanese. The old tennis racket.

But no, Evita was Latin. (Were she Japanese, she would have been 'rotten.')

A very healthy specimen. They did not get around to David's introduction to tennis right away. They did get around to some drinking (Evita abstained but served David) and to smoking pot (Evita did not indulge, but she had assumed that David did and brought along a bit for his enjoyment).

"I'm not going to be able to play tennis after this."

"Yes you will. By the time we get started, you will be fine."

And they listened to records, and they danced. And Evita insisted that David play his portable electric organ for her.

And he did. And while he was playing, Evita sat down next to him, and she let her breast brush up against his arm, and she let tongue brush up against the inside of his ear.

"Oh, do not stop, I love your playing."

She eventually tired of his amateurish though at the present moment most *inspired* organ playing, and manoeuvred him into her arms, and eventually, into the bed.

"Close the miamis."

"What for?"

"I do not want that you see my body."

"Why?"

"Because no. Because I am too horrible."

What could she be talking about? He has seen her in a bathing suite. Her figure was sensational. Still, he did as she asked, and then went to the bathroom. When he returned, Evita was huddled under the covers in the dark. He began to pull back the covers, but Evita resisted, seemingly intent on avoiding his gaze.

"Not yet. Lie down on top."

David gradually worked his way under the covers. And even more gradually into her body, following the longest, most *delicate* preliminary session he had ever experienced.

"Tú eres mío, querido. Eres mío. Háblame, mi amor. Habla. Talk to me."

She expects a running soliloquy while we're doin' it? he thought.

She lay in his arms, soft and warm.

"Deed you know that besides my ex-husband and my boy friend, that you are the only other man that I have ever made love with?"

"Really?"

"You do not believe me?" She sat up.

"Certainly. Why not?"

She snuggled back down.

Afterward, they took a shower. Separately. Evita would not let David into the bathroom until she had bathed and dried off and put her clothes on. After David took his shower, Evita did a thorough cleaning of the bathroom, despite David's myriad protests.

She then began to wash the dishes in the kitchen sink. David shut off the water.

"Stop it."

"Oh, but you do not understand. I *like* to do this. I like cleaning and cooking and washing clothes. I love a womanly domestic life." As she said the latter, she slid her thigh in between his two, and forced her wet lips to his mouth.

She must think that's what I'm looking for in a woman, he thought. What a disgusting ideal! That one could find that sort of thing attractive. *And* that she could believe that that's how I feel. It makes me wonder about what Frank said. Is it really how she is, or what she thinks I would like?

"I must go. My children will be returning home with my husband."

"Husband?"

"My boyfriend, I mean. Do not worry. We are not really married. When will I see you again?"

David was still dwelling on what Frank had said.

"Next week at the same time?" she suggested. Maybe next time we can get around to the tennis, no? She giggled.

The next time was lovely and relaxed and intense and relaxed and Evita did not insist on shutting the Miami windows. No one mentioned tennis.

"Do you take the pill?" A fine time to be asking, he realized.

"No."

"I.U.D.?"

"What?"

"What do you do for birth control?"

"Nothing. I do not believe in that."

"Nothing with your 'fiancé'?"

"He sometimes uses the sheaths."

"Oh shit."

"But do not worry. I am already pregnant. See?"

"She leaped out of bed and stood before him, the first time he had seen her entire body naked. Her abdomen protruded substantially.

"Just what is it exactly that you want from *me*?" he asked.

"Love." she said. "I am in love with you. Are you in love with me?"

"What about your 'fiancé'?"

"Oh, we do not have much to say to each other. He never talks to me the way you do. He never asks me about me or says me about him. We have no wonderful conversation like I have with you."

What the hell was she talking about?

He resolved right then not to see her again.

But this resolution was short lived. The arrangement was too good. Evita was great in bed, and she cleaned for him, cooked for him, even did his laundry. And demanded no commitment because she was living with another man and carrying his child. The advanced stages of the pregnancy and subsequent birth of the child would bring their relationship to a natural conclusion. Besides, nothing more interesting loomed on the horizon. Two evenings a week were added to the Sunday afternoon trysts.

"Where did you tell your boyfriend you were going tonight?"

"Oh. I tell Billy that I was taking an evening class to improve my English. In a way it is true."

"Billy? Is your boyfriend American?"

"Yes, of course. You did not know that?"

"No. I only saw him once or twice around the pool. And I didn't think he looked particularly American."

"Well I can assure you that he is."

"What does he do for a living?"

"I am not really sure. I told you, we do not talk very much. I love you, David." She said his name in the Spanish way, with a broad 'a' and the stress on the 'i'.

After weeks of this arrangement, and after many repetitions of her declaration, David finally replied to it with one in kind.

"Ah, at last," she replied. It was too late for him to take it back.

Shortly after, either the next day or the following, Evita telephoned David with an urgent message.

"Mi amor, you remember that I told you that I was pregnant? Well, it seems that that swelling in my abdomen was not that. It was from some kind of infection..."

Now that he thought of it, the size of her abdomen had *decreased* rather than *increased*.

"...But I went to the doctor today, and he tell me that now I *am* pregnant. About five weeks. I wanted you be first to know because it is your child. Is that not wonderful?"

Shit.

"How do you know it's *my* child and not Billy's?"

"Billy and I have not made love for two months."

Just about when she started seeing me, thought David.

"I don't believe you. You told me you were pregnant. That we didn't need to use birth control."

"I thought that I was pregnant. I was wrong. But now I *am*, and with your child. You told me that you loved me; I expected you to be happy."

"Look, I'm not ready to have a child. And I don't believe that it's my child."

"I can not talk now. We discuss it when I go to see you tomorrow."

"Look, um, I can't make it tomorrow. I was just about to call you to tell you. I have to work late."

"Okay then. Thursday."

"Okay. On Thursday, bye."

But on Thursday he made it his business not to be home. On Friday and Saturday he did not answer the door and he took his phone off the hook and left it off until Sunday afternoon, when he also made sure to be away from home. He felt like a fugitive. Also like a heel.

Back at the office, where David was completing his orientation program, Frank noticed something peculiar about him. He seemed preoccupied, and was not concentrating on his work, very unusual for David. Reluctantly, David confided in Frank.

Frank condescended. "You're like a babe in the woods compared to these hot Latin tomatoes. Don't you see you're a prime target?"

"I feel like such a fool. I've always been *real* careful about contraception. I don't understand what got into me."

"So... you're blaming it on evil spirits!"

"It's no joke."

"I know. You're no match for someone like Evita. These Latin babes really know how to use their sexuality. It's in their blood. Luckily for you, old boy, you're going to be opening the Atlantic Office week after next. She'll never find you."

"But what if she really *is* carrying my child?"

"Nonsense, man. Don't lose any sleep over it. Offer to pay for the abortion. Five'll getcha ten she's not pregnant. Probably just has a stretched belly from having two kids."

"It wasn't even noticeable except when she was naked. Not even in her bathing suit."

"Probably had some kind of girdle on. Women have all kinds of tricks to make themselves look as attractive as possible."

That evening, David put the phone back on the hook. Shortly thereafter, Evita called, as he had been expecting.

"Where have you been?"

"Oh I've been very busy, working overtime. Trying to get ready for a new business venture."

"Your phone has not been working. I tried to call you hundred times. I want to see you. I *must* see you."

"I'm sorry. I really can't. I think it's better this way."

"But your baby!"

"I think you'd better have an abortion. Don't worry. I'll pay for it."

She burst into tears. Through them she managed to say, however, "I have just one question."

"What?"

"Why did you lie to me?" Sobs.

He hung up. He realized at that moment that he did not know her last name.

But what's in a name?

"You're lucky to have gotten off this easy, old boy." Frank had been giving David a pep talk the eve of his departure for the northern coast. Frank had much more faith in David's business sense than in his savvy with the fair sex. "These women can be pretty tough customers. I'm surprised Evita let you off the hook so easily."

"I'll tell ya. I'm glad to be getting away to where I know she won't find me. If she looks for me she'll probably figure I moved back to the U.S."

"Too bad she was such a liar and a schemer. In many ways, she seems like the ideal mate."

"There you go again. Look, I don't want a woman who likes to clean and keep house and wash clothes and serve a lord and master. A woman is not a dog."

"Where can you find a dog who can cook and clean?"

"You know what I mean. I don't like to clean the house or wash clothes. It's a bore. And people who enjoy doing that are boring. To *me*, anyway. There's so much to life besides domestic tedium. The world is such a big place. There's so much to do, so many interesting things to see, hear, read. Even here on this little island."

"But look here, old boy, no one can serve *all* the needs of another person. Women are good for serving certain very important ones."

"True. But my most important needs, the ones which I would want my woman to serve do not include attending to my menial tasks."

Frank sighed a monumental sigh. "Your trouble, David, is that basically you don't like women."

"What crap! What I don't like are sycophants."

"You've got it all wrong! They aren't sycophants. They really enjoy serving their men, most of them. Especially these Latin women. It's in their blood. That's what makes them so much more feminine than American women."

"Frank, you know, I think your trouble is you don't think of them as persons."

"No? What do I think of them as? Aardvarks?"

"I mean, do *you* like to engage in 'household drudgery'?"

"I'm not a woman."

"See what I mean. You can't even imagine yourself in such a position."

"Neither can you. If you could, you'd realize that women, most of them anyway—we're not counting the 'lesboes'—most of them *enjoy* what you call 'drudgery' because it makes their man happy, it makes *them* feel feminine."

"If you can't imagine yourself in her position," continued David, "then you're not really thinking of her as a person."

"Oh really? Can you imagine yourself running around practically naked in the Kalahari Desert, eating lizards and insects?"

"Not really. So?"

"Don't you think of those Bushmen as people?"

"There's no comparison. That's a totally foreign culture."

"Isn't *this* a totally foreign culture? I mean for *you*?"

"Certainly not *as* foreign. You know what I mean! I can certainly relate to people here on many levels, even if my native culture is somewhat different."

"Well I, for one, cannot imagine being a woman," repeated Frank, "and on that score, I feel no compunction whatever."

"Are women really *so other* to you?"

"Of course. That's a major part of their beauty, of their allure. Mysterious. Incomprehensible. Unfathomable. If men and women are so alike, why have two sexes in the first place? If I wanted a woman who was like a man, I'd go for the real thing and get me a man. I'd be homosexual. I wouldn't go looking for women who were carbon copies of men. Like some people."

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"You certainly had an experience with Latin women when you first came down," noted Milagros, David's loving wife of three years, after he related to her all of the foregoing one morning over Sunday brunch. He had met Mili several months after having relocated on the Atlantic coast of the island to open a branch office. He had been taking a night course to improve his Spanish, and he met her as he was passing by her studio. Milagros was an artist and art instructor at the college where he was taking the course. As he passed her studio one evening, he peered in and was intrigued by what he saw on the easel, as well as by whom he saw holding the brush.

Mili had studied art in Europe, the United States, and India. Her English, though heavily accented, was quite correct. Her father was a well-known patriot and poet, and Milagros was a delight. She was *fun*. She made David laugh. And she let him make *her* laugh.

And she had *ideas*, she had feelings that went beyond the surface, she had "breeding," she had grace, she had, as David put it: "class."

"I'd never met an interesting businessman before you," she said. As she got up to take the brunch dishes to the sink (it being her turn to clear the table, David's turn to wash the dishes), she kissed him on the head and said, "All the men I'd ever met from the business world were only interested in interest rates and profits and losses, stock prices, and tax shelters. It was so great to meet a person in business who liked art and music and literature."

"After all those women I had met when I came down, I was just amazed to find someone like you," responded her husband.

"I must confess, though," she continued, "that after we started dating, it was all I could do to refrain from cleaning that pigpen of yours, especially that kitchen and that disgusting bathroom. If Paco had not warned me, who knows how things would have turned out."

"Who's Paco?"

"Francisco. Francisco Jones, your former boss. Or as we call him 'Paco Ho-nes'."

"You mean Frank, my supervisor?"

"Oh, of course. He *would* use the anglicized form of his name with you. But what's in a name?"

"How do you know Frank?"

"Darling, *everybody* knows Paco. At least all women in a certain age group."

"Hah! That Frank Jones sure does get around."

"Yes. He sure does. He told me about you years before I met you."

"Really? How come you never mentioned him before?"

Milagros stared at her husband, but said nothing.

"What did he say about me? David stared back at her face trying to interpret the enigmatic half smile which vaguely, almost imperceptively, altered the expression on her face in a way that made David decide that he did not really want to know.

Mili's ironic smile broadened as she finally spoke: "Don't you think maybe you ought to get started on those dishes?"

As he scraped the remnants of fried egg which had stuck to the pan because he had neglected to add enough oil, David wondered what he'd be doing right at that moment had it not been for Milagros.

Or Paco Jones.