ALAN: No. Mariam. It was you I wanted. All the time, I wanted you.

(ALAN goes to her and HE holds her and comforts her.)

MARIAM: It's too hard.

ALAN: I know that, believe me, my dear one, my daughter, my child, I do understand.

CHARACTERS

BERTO (20), an Hispanic man dating Mara; LISETTE (18), also Hispanic, Mara's younger sister

SCENE

Outside Lisette's apartment building in an inner-city neighborhood

TIME

The present

BERTO and Mara have been fighting and Lisette has been eavesdropping. As Berto comes back to try and make up with Mara, Lisette seizes her opportunity.

BERTO: Mara!

(The door to the fire escape opens and LISETTE steps out onto the fire escape balcony.)

LISETTE: Stop yelling. You're so loud you don't even realize.

BERTO: What? Were you listening in to our fight?

LISETTE: Hell, yes. This shit is way better than what's on TV right now.

BERTO: Where is Mara?

LISETTE: Not coming. She said to take those tickets and—

BERTO: Ah, crap. I should have known. She's been like this for the past couple of weeks. You're the smart sister. What's her problem?

LISETTE: I don't know. She and I don't really chat it up like homegirls.

BERTO: I treat her nice, don't I?

LISETTE: Like a queen. A lot of girls would love to have you as their man.

BERTO: Yeah, right.

LISETTE: No, it's true. I hear girls talk about you all the time at school. How hot you are. They fantasize things about you all the time.
BERTO: What kind of things?

LISETTE: How you are in bed. Your size. Lots of stuff I would be embarrassed to say.

BERTO: You don’t seem embarrassed so far, and you’re saying a lot.

LISETTE: That’s cause I ain’t easily shocked like my sister. And fantasies are interesting.

BERTO: Well. Girls can say what they want. None of it’s worth a damn. Especially all that flowery poetry bullshit. Nothing a girl has to say is worth listening to, far as I’m concerned.

LISETTE: I agree. Girls do way too much talking.

(Pause.)

BERTO: You’re strange.

LISETTE: Is that bad?

BERTO: I didn’t say it was bad. Just different. I never figured you and your sister would be so different, but you are.

LISETTE: Good. I don’t want to be like her. She’s annoying. And she’s fat.

BERTO: Listen to you.

LISETTE: It’s true. You weren’t lying to her. She just didn’t want to hear it. And not just from you—I try to tell her she’s gaining weight and she gets all crazy with me, too. (LISETTE unties and reties her hair over the next few lines, arching her back as SHE does this.) You see, it’s all because our mother was fat, rest her soul. We loved Mama, but as kids Mara and I used to promise each other that we would never get fat. I’m keeping my promise. Mara... Mara’s pissed off at herself and at the world. I don’t need to hear her mouth any more than you do.

BERTO: She used to have your body, you know. When we first met.

LISETTE: She was hot, wasn’t she? I used to think she was so pretty.

(LISETTE begins stretching, dancer-like, using the bars of the fire escape. SHE’s very flexible. BERTO is awestruck.)

LISETTE: She’s still pretty. But it’s like, she’s let herself go, you know? It’s like she doesn’t care about pleasing you anymore.

BERTO: Yeah.