

ct

# Carolina or taming a leopard

de  
Eva Hibernia

traducción de  
Iride Lamartina-Lens

*(fragmento en inglés)*

*To Carolina María de Jesús with gratitude for her faith in the word and for being a model of empowerment and inspiration.*

*To Kelly Lua who introduced me to her countrywoman and was complicit on this project.*

Characters:

Carolina María de Jesús

Clotilde, her chicken

## CAROLINA MARÍA DE JESÚS, The Last Day

*(Whenever it is indicated, the theater's bell will ring. They are the classic three calls for the actors before going on stage. The ring tone of these chords will change as the monologue progresses. DEATH, Clotilde's teacher, is the one knocking at the door. CAROLINA MARÍA DE JESÚS enters holding some garbage bags she's picked up. Clotilde, her chicken is waiting for her at home.)*

## CAROLINA

Clotilde! My sweet Clotilde! *(SHE sighs.)* Oh my... *(SHE whines as SHE touches her body.)* Oh my! Hold on a second, Clotilde, I'll be with you in a minute. I have to sit down and rest a bit. I've been running around all morning. *(SHE has a cup of coffee and sings.)* "É triste a condição do pobre na terra, é triste a condição do pobre na terra, rico quer guerra, pobre vai na guerra, rico quer paz, pobre vive em paz, rico vai na frente, pobre vai atrás, rico vai na frente, pobre vai atrás."<sup>1</sup> Do you like my song, Clotilde? I made a record. I never told you that, right? *(SHE sings.)* "Rico vai na frente, pobre vai atrás, rico vai na frente, pobre vai atrás."<sup>2</sup> You would've liked my record. I haven't sung for a long time. You're not much of a singer anymore either. But you really did your job well. You've been a great chicken for thirteen years. I've always been able to count on you, even after you stopped laying eggs, you were the only one I could trust. Always by my side. And now? *(Brief pause.)* As far as counting for something, I don't matter anymore. Did you hear the bell ring, Clotilde? *(Expectation.)* You're right, it didn't ring. I don't matter anymore for anyone. I'd really like Audálio to show up and knock on my door, knock, knock... did somebody knock on the door, Clotilde? *(Expectation.)* No, nobody counts on me anymore. I'm like a cracked pot. A cracked poet. But my poetry didn't crack. It's just that I don't say what they expect to hear. So, back to garbage. Everything starts with garbage, remember that Clotilde... that's how the Poor People's God created the world of the poor. In the beginning there was garbage. And there I was in the middle of all that magnificence—busted tv's, cans, condoms, bottles, foul meat, scraps, cartons, and then Audálio came up to me, *Miss, what are you looking for? (The chicken clucks.) Paper? (The chicken clucks.) Blank paper? (The chicken clucks.) But you can't eat paper, and you can't wear paper, and paper rips easily, and there's no money in the resale of scrap paper. Why are you wasting your time with paper, Miss? (The chicken clucks.)* That's exactly what I said, Clo. For me, paper is gold because I write on it. Audálio's eyes widened like saucers, he was so young and good-hearted back then, he could still be amazed by life. A "favelada" who writes! Clotilde, I am a never-before-seen, poor, semi-illiterate black woman that clings to words and arranges them so they last forever. I'm a colored phenomenon on the front page of the newspapers. *(The chicken clucks.)* Yes, a phenomenon like the three-headed woman in the circus. First, I'm amazing, then I'm scary

<sup>1</sup> Carolina María de Jesús wrote and sang the song, "O Pobre E O Rico". Here is the English translation of the Portuguese chorus of the song: *The condition of the poor on earth is sad, the condition of the poor on earth is sad; the rich want war, the poor go to war; the rich want peace, the poor live in peace; the rich go ahead, the poor go behind; the rich go ahead, the poor go behind.*

<sup>2</sup> English translation: *The rich go ahead and the poor go behind; the rich go ahead and the poor go behind.*

and then I'm ridiculous. As long as I am able to amaze, everything goes great, Clotilde. Audálio was amazed and I showed him my diaries so he could see that I'm for real, and that every day I tell my story to myself and to the things in the favela... I tell my story for me 'cause I don't matter for anyone else, only for my children because they're hungry and cry out, *Food, mama! Food, mama! Food, mama!* When my children see food, they clap their hands, but the show lasts only a short time 'cause the food is soon gone and they start to scream all over again. My children are always screaming because they're hungry, and the *favela* drunks are always screaming because they're possessed by the devil, and the women waiting on line for water are always screaming, *Did you take a look at Mrs. Binidita's swelling belly? Who did Binidita fuck for her belly to be swelling like that? That old woman is at least 82 years old, how is her belly gonna swell up like that? Oh yeah, you'd better believe that witch was fucking around and now she's even seven months pregnant! It's the end of the world, I tell you! Must be the devil's child. We'll have to bring some baby clothes to the devil's child!* And Mrs. Binidita also screams when they bring her baby clothes, *Miserable sluts! Hunger must've sucked your brain out! Can't you see that I'm a mother who's been taken off the market? So, how am I supposed to have a baby, huh, you crazy bitches?* Everyone screams in the *favela*, their shouts get tangled up in garbage because everything is garbage, my mother had a garbage-baby, born dead and already rotting, his skin was decomposing and stank and people didn't stop crossing themselves and screaming out that they'd never seen anything like that before, so I write about it, so that they stop screaming in my head and I let them scream on paper...let them live on paper with all their screaming, without exaggeration...that mother that screams because her child found a piece of tainted meat and ate it and the child got worms...she screams just as loud as hunger lets her, it's not like in the theater where the actress is strong because she ate and she can scream louder than she ought to and she can cry prettily and make you cry prettily... I don't write about hunger, I write from the depths of hunger. It's not the same thing.

(...)