

James Miller

GIRL 3

(Luisa Valenzuela, *He Who Searches*)

“Look, you’re tired and I’m going to tell you everything as if it were a story. It will do you good, it will change your ideas and I’ll tell it to you in the simplest way even though you won’t believe me.” I nod, letting her chatter on. She’s a nervy, pretty little thing, her pale face turned up and open, her brown eyes wide with energy. “In the morning, you see, I’m suspicious, anxious and paranoid. Worms run like fingers through my brain and I recite from memory, forwards and backwards, the text of the invisible fathers. What can be happening to the invisible fathers? What makes them put the few sons they have adopted to such torture? What makes them send their daughters far away?” The question, I assume, is rhetorical. Once again, I’m impressed by her facility with different languages. Her dementia takes many forms but what really astonishes me are the things she seems to know. It’s incredible. I make a note on my pad. She really is a fascinating case. On the table beside us the tape recorder is running, capturing her every inflexion, every shift and drop of her accent. “In the morning the light is too bright and I squint through my eyes at the sun. Oh, these inhuman pains.” She sighs and stares at the light in the ceiling. “I have a recurring dream where I walk dripping wet and dazed with my limbs bent out of shape and shards of rope still hanging from my wrists and ankles and I go, walking to the Plaza de Mayo, where someone, some loving mother will tell me who I really am.”

She shakes her head, sighing again and I wait for her to speak. “At least that’s the idea. But that never happens. Whenever she is about to speak I wake up. I always wake up. Sometimes I think the bed will be damp with the waters of the Río de la Plata and I will find scraps of rope with me, buried like secrets among the sheets. But no... Oh come on, please don’t look at me that way. Please. *Todos nosotros sabemos lo que pasa...* And so, over cornflakes and tea I squint at my parents. The light is so bright and I look for clues. There should be blood all over the hands of the man who calls himself my father, their should be gristle under his fingernails. But I don’t see anything. With mother it’s even worse. I



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