

VEIL ' D

by

Monet Hurst-Mendoza

ELLIOT: I didn't know what you liked, so I just brought a pizza from Luigi's around the corner.

Speedo does an aerial flip above the tank behind Elliot. Dima notices and urgently signals Speedo to act normally.

DIMA: Pizza's good.

ELLIOT: Excellent. And for your choice of beverage, I brought us something super special.

Elliot pulls out two cans of beer.

ELLIOT: PBR!

DIMA: What is it?

ELLIOT: It's beer!

DIMA: Beer?? You bought... beer-like real beer?

ELLIOT: Yeah.

DIMA: Are you 21?

ELLIOT: Technically? No.

DIMA: How old are you?

ELLIOT: 18. But, I have a fake. Here.

Elliot hands Dima the beer can and keeps one

for himself. Dima hesitates.

ELLIOT: What's the matter? You have had beer before... haven't you?

DIMA: Uh, well, not exactly.

ELLIOT: Oh.

DIMA: It's just my parents don't drink beer, so it's never been around for me to try.

ELLIOT: Well, I can go get you something else if you want... I just thought "pizza and beer." It's an unbeatable combination.

DIMA: What if I don't like it?

ELLIOT: Then you don't like it. But I think you will. PBR is a must on the list of things you have to try before you die.

DIMA: Couldn't we get in trouble for this?

ELLIOT: With whom? You said your parents never come in here.

DIMA: That's true.

ELLIOT: You see! You've got nothing to worry about. How about it? Just for today, shall we live adventurously?

Dima still hesitates.

ELLIOT: Dima, you don't have to drink it if you don't want to.

DIMA: No.... I suppose I could have a sip or two.

ELLIOT: Rebel girl.

DIMA: What does it taste like?

ELLIOT: Like bittersweet paradise in your mouth. It's light and crisp.
I could drink, like, 20 of these

and still ride my bike over the Williamsburg Bridge without breaking a sweat.

DIMA: Wow! What kind of bike do you have?

ELLIOT: You're stalling.

DIMA: I guess there's a first time for everything.

ELLIOT: That's the spirit.

They pop open their cans.

ELLIOT: To our new-found secret friendship.

DIMA: Cheers!

Dima lifts the can to her mouth and stops, embarrassed. She needs to unveil.

DIMA: Um-- I'm sorry-- would you mind?

ELLIOT: Oh! Of course. Sorry.

Elliot turns away, giving Dima her privacy. She unveils so that she can drink her beer. Elliot and

Dima are now sitting back to back, and remain this way until she covers her face again.

Polite disgust washes over Dima's face as she drinks.

DIMA:Mmmm.

ELLIOT: It's delicious, isn't it?

DIMA: *(panicked)* The bubbles are burning my throat. Is that supposed to happen?

ELLIOT: That's just the CO2. You'll get used to it.

DIMA: It's... not bad.

She silently gags and sets the beer aside.

ELLIOT: Here. Try this. It's Eggplant, my favorite.

DIMA: On pizza?

ELLIOT: It's the only way to have it! Take a bite and see for yourself.

Dima eats her slice.

ELLIOT: Well?

DIMA: It's good!

ELLIOT: See? Luigi's is the best.

DIMA: Do you think sharks like eggplant?

ELLIOT: Umm...?

Dima goes over to Speedo and drops a piece of her slice in the tank.

DIMA: Here you go, Speedo.

ELLIOT: You named him!

DIMA: You could say that. And it's *her*, actually.

ELLIOT: Oh, I didn't realize.

DIMA: That sharks can be girls?

ELLIOT: I guess so.

That's sounds so stupid in retrospect, doesn't it?

DIMA: Sounds like you have a lot to learn.

I can teach you.

ELLIOT: I can live with that.

So... how's *her* adjustment been?

DIMA: She seems to really like it. It's nice to have someone here. I hate sitting in this room alone.

ELLIOT: I guess you're not alone anymore.

Smiling, they finish their slices and Dima covers herself again.

DIMA: OK. I'm done. You can turn around again.

ELLIOT: Do you have to do that every time you eat?

DIMA: Yes.

ELLIOT: Doesn't it get hot in there? It's like 90 degrees outside.

DIMA: We have air conditioning.

ELLIOT: But still. I mean, I'm only wearing this and I'm sweating like crazy.

Sorry, I probably shouldn't be asking you these kinds of things.

DIMA: No, it's OK.

ELLIOT: It's just, you fascinate me.

DIMA: You don't think I'm weird?

ELLIOT: Not at all.

DIMA: Ask me anything you want.

ELLIOT: Really?

DIMA: Shoot.

ELLIOT: OK. So, do you always keep that on?

DIMA: No. I take it off when I shower.

ELLIOT: You know what I mean. Haven't you ever wanted to take it off?

DIMA: No.

ELLIOT: Never?

DIMA: Not really.

ELLIOT: Why not?

DIMA: Because.

ELLIOT: Because...?

DIMA: Just because! Do you always leave that hat on?

ELLIOT: 99.9% of the time.

DIMA: Why?

ELLIOT: It's my favorite thing—part of who I am.

DIMA: Well, this is part of who I am. It was my mother's.

ELLIOT: And the polka-dots and stripes? Were those your mom's, too?

DIMA: No. These are all me. This burqa feels... right. When I wear it, I feel better. About everything.

It makes me feel safe.

But... I do have this dream: I've always wanted to swim in the ocean.

ELLIOT: You've never gone swimming before?

DIMA: That involves going outside, remember?

ELLIOT: Right.

DIMA: But, If I could go, I'd have to take the burqa off. And it would be worth it.

If only I could just sprout fins and go for it!

ELLIOT: Like a mermaid?

DIMA: *(excitedly)* Like a shark!

But... that kind of thing doesn't happen in real life.

ELLIOT: Hey, you never know.

DIMA: The ocean's probably cold. Salty. Refreshing. Like drinking lemonade on a sticky summer

day. I imagine that it smells like lavender.

(beat)

What about you? What's your dream?

ELLIOT: Oh, you don't want to hear about that.

DIMA: I do!

ELLIOT: Nah, I bet you'll think it's really ridiculous.

DIMA: Try me.

He is silent.

DIMA: You're not afraid to tell me, are you?

ELLIOT: No!

DIMA: Then, come on!

ELLIOT: Alright, alright, I'll tell you!

(taking a deep breath to center himself)

Remember, Jack Kerouac? Well, he wrote this book called "On the Road," and in it he travels across the country eating nothing but pancakes, and drinking coffee, and just living life.

And with hardly any money, too! Just the clothes on his back and a notebook in his back pocket.

That's my favorite book.

One day, I'm going to make that same trip. Straight through to San Francisco. But, I hate pancakes, so I'll eat apple pie and ice cream instead. I'll call it "The Great Apple Pie Tour of North America."

DIMA: That's sounds amazing! But, won't your parents get upset if you just leave like that?

ELLIOT: My parents and I don't exactly "get" each other.

DIMA: What do you mean?

ELLIOT: They want me to go to some fancy college, and be a lawyer. Make lots of money. Get married, have kids, and live in a modern-

looking apartment with a doorman who pretends to like me, but really just talks a lot of shit behind my back.

Just be a little carbon copy of them.

DIMA: That doesn't sound so bad. Except the doorman part. That's a little mean.

ELLIOT: It's not that impressive, really.

They have the best of everything, and they're still miserable. I want to live, you know? Can't do that if I'm sitting behind a desk in a stuffy office somewhere, pretending to care about something I don't really believe in.

DIMA: I guess you have a point.

This Jack Kerouac guy sounds pretty cool. I'm going to have to order one of his books.

ELLIOT: I'll loan you my copy.

Hey, I got an idea: you should come with me! We'll pool our money together, buy some old beat up car, and just drive—I can teach you. Oh, and we can take Speedo with us, too! Head straight for the Pacific Ocean, and when we get there, we'll go swimming.

DIMA: Elliot, you know I won't be able to.

ELLIOT: Maybe. Maybe not. We'll see.

Elliot smiles. They're lost in each other.

DIMA: Well, you better get going. My mother is probably on her way back.

No one moves.

ELLIOT: OK...

Can I see you tomorrow?

DIMA: Sure. I'd like that.

ELLIOT: Great. I'll just wait till your mom goes out again.

Don't get up. I'll show myself out. Until tomorrow, Princess.

He hands her a single flower from somewhere on his person.

Elliot exits through the window.