

Lamp Lady

Marta Aran

Translated by Elena Igartuburu

Characters

Alba, 30 years old
Gemma, 27 years old
Maurici, 34 years old
Lídia, 30 years old

1. Cerulean Blue

An art gallery in a large city. Three paintings hang on a white wall. Two sisters: Alba and Gemma. It's been a long time since the last time they saw each other. Alba, the older sister, is five months pregnant.

GEMMA: Can I?

She motions to touch Alba's belly.

ALBA: Yes.

GEMMA: It's weird...

ALBA: Yeah. *(Pause)*. Want something?

GEMMA: No, thanks.

ALBA: Ok.

GEMMA: It's so big...

ALBA: Too big.

GEMMA: Really!

ALBA: Yeah, apparently, I have a lot of amniotic fluid, but everything is ok. It's different for every woman.

GEMMA: Everything is alright, then?

ALBA: Yes, yes, great. Everything's great... Yeah... Yesterday I got an ultrasound. I could only see the feet. In the first ultrasound it looked as if the baby was flying...

GEMMA: What do you mean?

ALBA: It looked like an alien.

GEMMA: Have you thought of a name?

ALBA: Alien.

Pause.

GEMMA: And you, how are you?

ALBA: Tired.

GEMMA: It's heavy, isn't it?

ALBA: Yes, I just get so tired. It's hard to do things...Everything's harder.

GEMMA: And does it move?

ALBA: Like the devil. And you, how are you?

GEMMA: Alright.

ALBA: That's great. And how's everything?

GEMMA: Great. And you?

ALBA: Great, great. And you?

GEMMA: Great!

ALBA: I'm happy for you. I'm glad you're doing well. It's great...

They laugh.

GEMMA: Yes! Yeah...

ALBA: Enjoy it while you can... Because after... Well, you see what happens!

GEMMA: But isn't it beautiful?

ALBA: I don't know...

GEMMA: I'd love to be a mother.

ALBA: It's a myth, all that talk about the happiness of pregnancy...

GEMMA: Yes, you told me on the phone.

ALBA: Yeah, true. It's the only thing I talk about. Sorry! I'm getting so annoying. I know.

GEMMA: It's ok.

ALBA: It seems that there's this hormone that fills you up with this energy, you know?

GEMMA: Yeah...

ALBA: And you become really strong...

GEMMA: And the happiness...

ALBA: So you don't believe it either! Where the hell is it, this shitty hormone?

Pause.

ALBA: Want me to bring the papers?

GEMMA: Later, maybe?

ALBA: Yes, later... Sure... Are we? The...

Alba points at her belly.

GEMMA: Oh, of course! Sorry.

ALBA: I'm a cow, you know?

GEMMA: You look pretty.

ALBA: Gemma...

GEMMA: I'm lying.

They stare at each other. Alba smiles shyly.

ALBA: You're the one who's looking gorgeous.

GEMMA: Do you really mean it?

ALBA: Yes. Very pretty. So beautiful. (*Pause.*) The jacket is...

GEMMA: Cute?

ALBA: And you changed your hair, right?

GEMMA: Yes. You too.

ALBA: No, I did not dye my hair. It's different.

GEMMA: Oh.

ALBA: I don't like hairdressers, you know? They scare me. That smell... I can't. I suffocate when I'm in there.

GEMMA: I see.

ALBA: Does it look terrible?

GEMMA: No, no...

ALBA: I get dizzy...

GEMMA: I see...

ALBA: You must think I'm exaggerating...

GEMMA: No!

ALBA: Yeah, people think that. It's ok

GEMMA: I don't.

ALBA: I would think that too...

GEMMA: Well I don't!

ALBA: It's horrible, this whole pregnancy thing.

GEMMA: Yeah?

ALBA: Horrible.

Silence.

GEMMA: But I guess that when you're finally a mother, you'll forget all of this... Crazy, right? All this. Becoming a mother...

ALBA: Oh, yes! Like mom! Crazy.

GEMMA: Like mom...

Pause.

ALBA: But I just don't know what's wrong with me, I don't feel motherly at all, you know? No instinct... Are you sure you don't want anything? I bought a ton of stuff... Maybe when he comes all these hormones will kick in, but I don't know... It's so hard!

GEMMA: Well, but nature's wise. It gives you a few months to get used to the idea...

ALBA: Well, for me, a day would be enough to get used to the idea! I don't know why I have to have this thing inside me for such a long time... Well, enough about... And you, how are you?

GEMMA: Ok. Working a lot.

ALBA: Are you still going back to China?

GEMMA: Japan.

ALBA: Oh, yes, Japan.

GEMMA: Yeah, but this time I'm thinking of settling down here. With everything that went down with mom's house... And the Japanese want a representative for the company here. It's a good opportunity.

ALBA: Damn, great! Isn't it? It sounds important.

GEMMA: I'm happy. And you? Are you happy?

ALBA: Why?

Gemma points at her belly.

ALBA: Very happy! Everybody congratulates me. There's not end to it. A lot of people think that this is something to be thankful for.

GEMMA: And isn't it?

ALBA: Not at all...

GEMMA: At least people will let you sit down on the bus, right?

ALBA: Oh, no. As soon as they see me, people turn their faces. You can see how they cling to their seats as if their lives depended on it. And I hate those fucking grannies, don't you?

GEMMA: Sometimes.

ALBA: Want some coffee? Tea, juice, soda?

GEMMA: No, thanks.

ALBA: Are you on a diet?

GEMMA: No.

ALBA: Not that you're fat. No, no... (*Pause.*) One day, you know what happened to me? On a bus actually. I get on, right? And this old lady tells another granny to give up her seat, because, clearly, I look like a fucking cow. Oh, I know I am, don't worry! It's ok! It's...! And I thought, ok, at least I get some benefits from this huge fucking belly. And you know what she said, the lady? Yes, she said that she wouldn't stand up because I might be pregnant but she could have a heart attack at any moment... Bitch... So, you see, not even on the bus is it worth being pregnant. Fuck...

GEMMA: But you want to have it, right?

ALBA: What do you mean?

GEMMA: Do you want to have a baby?

ALBA: Yes, yes, of course. It's his dream... It was all so fast... It's like at that moment, when you get pregnant, right? What keeps you from having a kid?

GEMMA: I don't know... You sound like you don't want a baby.

ALBA: It's never a good time to have a baby, don't you think?

GEMMA: It depends.

ALBA: Don't fool yourself.

Pause.

GEMMA: And, besides that, is everything alright?

ALBA: Yes, great. A lot has changed though... We wanted to get married quickly, before mom... but we didn't make it on time.

GEMMA: Yeah. It's on the nineteenth, right?

ALBA: Exactly. The nineteenth. Well, anyways she would've cried... It's for the best. It would've been a waste of money.

GEMMA: Always so practical.

ALBA: It would've been so sad.

GEMMA: Yeah.

Is that the engagement ring?

ALBA: Yes.

GEMMA: Lovely.

ALBA: Gemma, I would've sent you an invitation. I just thought you wouldn't... With you going back to China...

GEMMA: Japan.

ALBA: Yes, yes. Japan. I didn't know if you'd be able to...

GEMMA: Oh, don't worry about that. It would've been really weird! It's been so long since...

ALBA: Yeah, right? Believe me, that's just what I was thinking. I'm glad we agree. I didn't mean to bring up the subject. I talk too much.

GEMMA: It's ok.

ALBA: I don't want to spoil things, you know?

GEMMA: You didn't, really.

ALBA: You seem different. So different.

Pause.

GEMMA: Getting married while you're pregnant is such a beautiful thing.

ALBA: Marrying with a belly? It's kind of trailer trash.

GEMMA: What do you mean?

ALBA: That's what people did in the 50s... When there wasn't decent birth control... Look at this...

Alba points at her belly.

GEMMA: I still think it's beautiful.

ALBA: I would never waste fifteen thousand dollars on a party just to look like a whale and, on top of it all, have a ton of photos to prove it. No, no.

GEMMA: Ok, let's drop the subject.

ALBA: Yes, there's no point in talking about it. None at all.

They look at each other, looking for something to talk about.

GEMMA: And you got that grant, right?

ALBA: Yes, but... no.

GEMMA: I'm so sorry.

ALBA: It's ok... Really.

GEMMA: Yeah, but I know it was important to you.

ALBA: At the beginning I was in shock, but not anymore. That's the way life is, isn't it? After years pursuing that grant... I get it right when I can't accept it.

GEMMA: Can't you apply for it again?

ALBA: No, it was only for people up to thirty. It was now or never. It seems that once you're thirty, the whole entrepreneur thing is over.

GEMMA: Damn...

ALBA: Sometimes I think about what would happen if I were to travel around with that money...

GEMMA: Where would you go?

ALBA: My thing is coordinating contemporary art fairs, so Switzerland, Hong Kong, Miami, New York. Two years traveling the world...

GEMMA: God!

ALBA: Yeah. But, at the end of the day, I'm creating a new life! What's more important than that, right? *(Pause.)* It's fine, I'm doing great, don't think I'm not... Maybe I do have some of those hormones after all...

GEMMA: Really?

ALBA: No. But it's true that... No, it's ok.

GEMMA: Tell me.

ALBA: It's nonsense.

GEMMA: C'mon.

ALBA: No, really, Gemma, it's nothing.

GEMMA: Tell me!

ALBA: We're seen each other again.

GEMMA: Yes.

ALBA: And we hadn't for so long...

GEMMA: No, we hadn't.

ALBA: Exactly. I'm glad we...

GEMMA: Yeah.

ALBA: Want some coffee?

GEMMA: No, thanks.

ALBA: You're so skinny, drink something.

GEMMA: How are you guys doing, with the gallery?

ALBA: Great. Really great. My boss, Carles... He's retiring.

GEMMA: Is he?

ALBA: Yeah, and he's doing really weird things. He asks me questions, he watches me... And, just this year, he's asked me to curate two weeks for the art fair.

GEMMA: That's great, isn't it?

ALBA: Yes! He would never do such a thing if he didn't have something in mind...

GEMMA: And what do you think that is?

ALBA: I think he wants me to succeed him as art director. But he's testing me first. When he told me I would be in charge of the program for the art fair, I was so happy! But then all of this happened, and I kept my mouth shut, you know? Since nobody could see it yet...

GEMMA: Why would you do that?

ALBA: Who would give that kind of responsibility to a pregnant woman? I had to give up my dream, I'd like to, at least, keep this opportunity. It's the last chance I have to be someone.

GEMMA: You're someone.

ALBA: Not yet.

GEMMA: Yes.

ALBA: No.

GEMMA: It's not that bad.

ALBA: I have to be perfect, you know? Oh...

GEMMA: Are you ok?

ALBA: Sorry, I'm going to...

Alba runs offstage.

GEMMA: Go, go.

Sounds of someone vomiting.

GEMMA: Oh God...

ALBA: Oh no, the artichokes... I knew it! I knew it wasn't a good idea...

GEMMA: Thanks for the info.

ALBA: Can you bring some baby wipes? Please.

GEMMA: Where are they?

ALBA: In my bag.

GEMMA: You still don't have the baby and you're already carrying baby wipes?

ALBA: One should always carry baby wipes. Above all if you puke everywhere you go. I'm developing a taste for throwing up anything I eat.

Gemma goes to the bag and a bunch baby magazines fall from it as she looks for the wipes.

GEMMA: And how's the fair thing going?

ALBA: Basically, I'm behind in everything. But I guess that soon enough I'll stop feeling like shit and I'll be able to catch up.

GEMMA: And how do you manage when customers come, and you need to...?

ALBA: I've developed a code with Maurici. If I say "it seems someone's knocking," he distracts the customer while I escape.

GEMMA: And does it work?

ALBA: Oh, it sure does! Wow! It's so late! People coming to the opening will be here any minute now and here I am...

GEMMA: Do you need any help?

ALBA: No. I can do it on my own. Thanks.

GEMMA: Do want me to go?

ALBA: No! But I can't be with you all the time... I'm sorry. Don't worry about me. Maurici will be here in a minute and he'll help me out.

GEMMA: Oh, no problem, I'll wait. I'll finally meet the famous Maurici. Mom loved him.

Pause.

ALBA: Sure! He'll be here in no time. He's helping me deal with all this work during the pregnancy. He's unemployed...

GEMMA: And what exactly is it that Maurici does?

ALBA: Everything I can't do. He's gotten into it with such energy... But I'm still the one in charge, you know?

GEMMA: I would expect nothing less.

ALBA: I have to put up these signs with the names of the painters. That's all.

GEMMA: Ok. Go do it.

Alba tries to lift a painting that's on the floor. Gemma helps her.

ALBA: I can do it. Thanks.

GEMMA: It's ok, I'll help.

ALBA: I'll do it. Thanks.

GEMMA: Ok.

MAURICI, offstage: Hello? I'm here!

ALBA: Look, Maurici!

MAURICI, offstage: I already have the design for the catalogues! I've been talking to the Arts Council's Executive Director and I've set up a meeting with him to talk about the fair.

ALBA: Oh, good.

MAURICI, offstage: I told him you wouldn't attend. In your condition and since yesterday you wouldn't stop... You don't disagree, do you?

ALBA: No, no...

MAURICI, offstage: Can you imagine that you started puking at the meeting? It would be too much!

ALBA: Can you come here please?

Maurici enters.

MAURICI: Oh, sorry, I didn't know you had company. I meant...

ALBA: Maurici, this is Gemma.

MAURICI: Hi, Gemma. *(He starts off to shake her hand.)* Nice to meet you.