

OBSOLESCE SWEET PEA

by

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INT. NYC APARTMENT - DAY

LENA, 6 , lays on a pillow by the fire escape window. Her mother, JAMILA, is outside caring for the plants.

LENA

Mama, are they dead yet?

JAMILA

Maybe next week.

More scenes of Lena and Jamila lounging and working in the garden, sense of it being Jamila's private thing.

INT. LENA'S APARTMENT – EVENING

Jamila sits at the kitchen island with papers spread out in front of her. She calls Mrs. Moreno.

MRS. MORENO

Hello?

JAMILA

Claudia, it's Jamila across the hall. How are you?

MRS. MORENO

Oh, I'm just lovely, Jamila. What can I do for you?

JAMILA

I...won't be able to care for Lena next week. I have some appointments and would rather she just stay home and do her schoolwork. I was wondering if you might be able to keep her with you?

MRS. MORENO

Certainly. Lena is a treat.

JAMILA

Thank you so much, Claudia. Lena will be very excited.

MRS. MORENO

Will you be at home, or is there a number to reach you at?

JAMILA

No, I...I would appreciate it if you wouldn't tell Lena this, but I am going to the hospital.

MRS. MORENO

Are you alright?

JAMILA

Everything will be fine. It's just some chemotherapy.

MRS. MORENO

Oh, sweetheart.

JAMILA

Thank you. So Lena can stay with you next week?

MRS. MORENO

You tell Lena that when she gets here on Monday there will be cookies and milk waiting for her.

JAMILA

Thank you, Claudia.

INT. LENA'S APARTMENT BUILDING – MORNING

Lena and Jamila head to school. Lena waves at Mrs. Moreno as they walk by, standing in the open door of her apartment.

INT. STAIRS OF LENA'S APARTMENT BUILDING – AFTERNOON

MRS. MORENO, Lena's neighbor, cares for Lena after school while her mother is out.

MRS. MORENO

Sweet girl, what's wrong?

LENA

Ginger died!

MRS. MORENO

Who?

LENA

Our goldfish! And Ms. Chekhov said Ginger was gone forever!

MRS. MORENO

She is right. You won't see Ginger swimming in her bowl again. But you know what? Can you close your eyes and see Ginger in your mind?

LENA (closes her eyes, sniffing, and nods, focusing)

MRS. MORENO

So she came back to life in your mind!

LENA is not convinced. But that is just my imagination.

MRS. MORENO

Hm. Your mama has a beautiful garden, no? Does she have any flowers, or just herbs?

LENA

We have...sage? And mint! And one that smells.

MRS. MORENO (shows her the picture of lavender in her herb book)

Lavender?

LENA

Mama says it helps her sleep.

MRS. MORENO

Herbs are very powerful. They are perennial, and after you plant them once, they come back every year even after winter.

LENA

Just one seed?

MRS. MORENO

Just one seed. It's not exactly the same plant, but it all came from the same seed, just like you came from your mama, but you are not your mama.

Camera sequence, imagination scene of how Lena applies this logic to Ginger, imagining her as a seed, sprouting sage leaves, being covered up with snow and coming back to life, or having a baby Ginger, dying, and then baby Ginger comes up when the snow melts.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK

LENA walks home from school and steps on dry leaves on the ground. She looks up to see the ones still attached to the tree. Curious.

EXT. WAY HOME FROM PLAYGROUND

LENA walks home after sunset from the playground and passes a cemetery. Curious.

INT. LENA'S APARTMENT, KITCHEN – AFTERNOON

LENA sits at the kitchen island as JAMILA prepares her a snack.

LENA

Mama, are the leaves on the ground dead?

JAMILA (still preparing the bread and honey and peanut butter snack)
They are.

LENA
But your plants aren't dead, right?

JAMILA
No, habibti, my plants are alright.
(Jamila turns to set the bowls in front of Lena, who digs in voraciously. Lena eats a few pieces, Jamila watching lovingly, and Lena gets tired and lays her head down on the table after looking outside).

JAMILA
Tired, Lena?

LENA
Are you going to take care of the plants today, Mama?

JAMILA
Actually, I need your help today. If you want.

LENA
But...you always say garden time is Mama time.

JAMILA
Tomorrow and many more days after that will be the same...but today is different. Okay?

LENA
Letsh-do-itsh (bread in her mouth).

FADE TO WHITE.