

Grito

By

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Cast of Characters

John: mid-20s, English tourist

Francisco: older than John, Portuguese farmer

1950s rural Portugal. A simple bedroom with a bed, a jug of water and a basin, etc.

JOHN is in bed in his underwear, watching FRANCISCO get dressed. Their clothes are on the ground around the bed.

JOHN

Must you go?

FRANCISCO

Yes.

JOHN

It's not been two hours yet.

FRANCISCO

Yes. I count.

JOHN

You counted? Well, that's flattering.

FRANCISCO

I got to help my father with our field.

JOHN reaches into his jacket pocket, on the floor, and pulls out some banknotes. He counts them ostentatiously.

JOHN

You could earn an extra 5,000, easily.

JOHN waves the note playfully.

FRANCISCO considers it. He returns to getting dressed.

FRANCISCO

Winter is near. We need food.

JOHN

Darling, honestly -

FRANCISCO

Hey.

JOHN

- I'll pay you and you can buy food, no need to wreck your/ back

FRANCISCO

Don't call me darling.

JOHN

Hm?

FRANCISCO

You don't call me darling. I'm not a girl.

JOHN

'Darling' isn't just for girls. Don't be silly, Francisco.

FRANCISCO

What that means? Silly?

JOHN

It's what you're being. You know. Acting like an idiot.

FRANCISCO

Okay. Then you are silly. You know it's the harvest and still you come.

JOHN

(patting his lap)

Barely.

He snorts at his own joke.

FRANCISCO

You think coming now is a good idea, so you think I should stop my life and do what you want. *Foda-se*, I wait *all Summer* and you don't visit me!

JOHN

I was busy.

FRANCISCO

I also, now!

JOHN

Look, before I left last time, I asked your mother if I could visit later in the year, and she said yes!

FRANCISCO

John, you know she don't speak English. She don't understand.

JOHN

I think you're rather selling her short. She's clever. Soon as she saw me in town, she knew what I was after. And she knows what you're worth, too.

JOHN looks at him meaningfully. FRANCISCO faces him.

FRANCISCO

Give the money, please.

JOHN takes a note from the bundle and holds it out. FRANCISCO goes to grab it - and JOHN pulls it away, laughing. There's a sense that this happens a lot.

JOHN holds out the note and pulls it away again.

JOHN

Come and get it.

JOHN puts the note between his teeth and wriggles his eyebrows.

FRANCISCO reaches, and JOHN pulls him by the arm, wrestling him until he's on top of FRANCISCO, pinning his arms down. He lets the note drop from his mouth.

JOHN

Ah-hah! British army training, best in the world!

FRANCISCO

Let me.

JOHN

Let you...?

FRANCISCO

Let me, John!

JOHN

Let you what? Ask nicely, *darling*.

FRANCISCO spits on his face.

JOHN gets off FRANCISCO.

JOHN

You are no fun today.

FRANCISCO

You English! You think everything is about you. Making you happy. Making you rich. Making you feel good and, and important. And us? You *fuck* us.

JOHN

Who's been teaching you that language?

FRANCISCO

You think you're the only English I know?

JOHN

FRANCISCO

JOHN

Your mother's found you some more *friends*, has she?

FRANCISCO

She know what I'm worth.

FRANCISCO puts on his shoes.

JOHN

You haven't been seeing Clyde?

FRANCISCO

Me? No. But Paulo has.

JOHN

Right.

FRANCISCO

Why?

JOHN

Well, he's rather a brute, that's all. I don't want you getting hurt.

FRANCISCO smiles.

FRANCISCO

You have jealousy.

JOHN

You don't *have* jealousy. You *are* jealous. We, they, you, *are*, he, she, it, *is*, and I *am* not. I'm just concerned. That means worried. Scared for you. Some of our boys do things here they wouldn't at home. They think they can get away with it, and they're right. I've heard horror stories.

FRANCISCO

I think you have jealousy.

JOHN

JOHN

Yes, alright, I have jealousy.

He kisses FRANCISCO.

FRANCISCO pockets the money.

JOHN gets dressed.

FRANCISCO

What will you do?

JOHN

Probably motor down to the beach with the lads.

FRANCISCO

Ah, I love the sea.

JOHN

Hm. Honestly, I'm rather running out of things to do around here. I wish they'd build a theatre or a dance hall or something. It's a wasteland. My wife can't understand why I keep coming back. I tell her it's for the charming locals.

JOHN kisses FRANCISCO again, tenderly. FRANCISCO responds, then quickly moves away.

JOHN stretches.

JOHN

You know what? I might go into the city for a few days. Buy some wine. Best thing to bring back while we work on bottling that sunshine. What's red wine in Portuguese, again?

FRANCISCO

Vinho tinto.

JOHN

(not really trying)

Vinho tinto. And how do you say 'Port wine?'

FRANCISCO

Vinho do Porto.

JOHN

And how do you say 'I love you?'

FRANCISCO

JOHN

FRANCISCO

Vai á merda. (Fuck you.)

JOHN

Now that doesn't sound right.

FRANCISCO makes to leave. JOHN grabs his arm.

JOHN

I don't want you seeing any other men while I'm here.

FRANCISCO

You are silly.

JOHN

Francisco.

FRANCISCO

I have to help my father. I go now.

JOHN

I'll pay you. You won't lose any money. It'll be like a, a salary, almost/ it'll help

FRANCISCO

No!

JOHN

Why not?! You want to sell yourself to any idiot who looks your way? Just - just stick with me! We'll have fun together!

FRANCISCO

JOHN

JOHN

JOHN gets dressed faster.

JOHN

Damn you. I've always been far more generous than you deserve.

FRANCISCO

Okay.

JOHN

You're all like that. *Ungrateful*. Talk about getting *fucked*, that's what you people do best. You try to fuck us over Africa, you fuck us over the war, and now you fuck me after three years of taking my money.

FRANCISCO

I don't fuck you.

JOHN takes the notes from the bed.

JOHN

This? This is enough to support you for *months*. The 10,000 I gave you, that's the price of a cup of coffee where I live. That's what you're 'worth,' Francisco. You're not a girl, you're much, much worse. So don't go thinking you have some sort of *pride* when your livelihood depends on getting a cock up the arse.

FRANCISCO

JOHN gets his things in order.

JOHN

(muttering)

Stupid...

FRANCISCO

FRANCISCO stands by, awkward, wanting to communicate.

FRANCISCO

When... when I am more young, I want to be a sailor.

JOHN pauses.

FRANCISCO

It's in Portuguese blood. So many of us die, and the ocean is our tears, but after a long battle, we tame the sea.

JOHN

What are you -

FRANCISCO

Please. I want you understand.

JOHN sits and listens.

FRANCISCO

We go everywhere, and we fight, and we win. Everybody knew Portugal. Everybody respect us, and trade with us, and want to be our friend - or are scared of us. You know this also, yes? This feeling? People do what you like. It feels good.

Pause.

FRANCISCO

In my army service, I leave my village for the first time and I go to Lisbon. I think I fight for my

(MORE)

FRANCISCO (cont'd)

country. Maybe I can be a sailor. I am excited! But I talk to others. They say we don't have enough food. They miss their families. They say if you become a sailor, you go to Africa, and you are killed. One soldier says his aunt live in Angola, and she come home from the market and find her policeman husband in the bed, cut in pieces. The bedroom is a red lake. The people in Africa, they hate us. They want to be free. To be free... I never think of that. What that means. So I start to think what does it mean? I ask the soldiers, but they not want to talk. What if the police hears? So I say nothing.

FRANCISCO takes the money out of his pocket.

FRANCISCO

In Lisbon, I see foreigners for the first time. It is just after the war so it is all English, drunk from winning from the Germans. They drink other things, too. They shout against us, they fight. They do what they like. Maybe they are free. They like our bodies. Dark skin, dark hair. They think we are happy, and... silly. I am hungry, but I try every day to work for my country. One night I am looking for food on the street and a foreign come to me. Now I know he says, 'do you speak English?' but then I not know, so I -

FRANCISCO shakes his head.

FRANCISCO

He laugh and speak slow and loud, with some Portuguese words, and I understand that he will give me money if I suck him. My stomach feels like a storm. I am scared for the police but I suck a long time. He is drunk. I try but nothing happens and he gives me no money. So I am hungry for my military service and I don't understand why I am there. I think about being a sailor and go far away, but if I go, I go to Africa, and in Africa, they kill me. So I stay.

FRANCISCO toys with the money.

FRANCISCO

After two years I go home. My father can't walk because he falled from our tree getting oranges. That was one year back. My money from army is not enough. My mother can't do all his work. So I ask her how she pays all this time? She cries. It is just after the war, so foreigners are visiting us in the country also. They like us, our bodies. Her body. My body.

FRANCISCO drops the money.

FRANCISCO

Before, we had money. We had land. Everybody is scared of us or want to be our friend. We are kings of the sea. Now I let you fuck me so my family can eat. Time is like waves, up and down and crashing. It will happen to England too.

JOHN

JOHN

Are you done?

FRANCISCO

FRANCISCO

If I stay, you give me more money?

JOHN

Yes.

FRANCISCO

If I don't see others, you give me more money?

JOHN

Yes.

FRANCISCO

Okay.

FRANCISCO pushes JOHN down onto the bed and straddles him.

FRANCISCO

I wish I could be a sailor. But it would just be the same somewhere else.

JOHN embraces him hard.

End.