

SWIMMING WHILE DROWNING SCENE 4 EXCERPT

Angelo, 15-year-old Puerto Rican boy, is in the room of an LGBT Shelter with his roommate Mila (short for Milagros), 15-year-old Black and Mexican boy.

ANGELO

(Beat) If I tell you a secret, will you promise not to tell?

MILA

I told you mine, you should tell me yours.

ANGELO

Not everything I said was true. I may have lied about something.

MILA

...Your name's not really Angelo, is it? I bet you got a embarrassing name like Reginald or Preston or Cornelius. Yeah, your name's probably Cornelius.

ANGELO

My dad didn't beat me.

MILA

What the fuck?!

ANGELO

I made it up.

MILA

That's messed up, man. You got a kid kicked out.

ANGELO

You don't know that for sure.

MILA

He's not here no more, but you are. And Trey really needed this spot.

ANGELO

I didn't have anywhere else to go. All of the shelters were full.

MILA

There's kids out here praying for a bed that you already had.

ANGELO

If you could've seen the look in his eyes... It was worse than a beating. He looked at me like he wished I was never born.

MILA
But he never hit you?

ANGELO
You're not listening to me.

MILA
Did he hit you?

ANGELO
He didn't have to. He gave me that look for sixteen seconds; he sucked the air out of the room.

MILA
You out here begging for help cuz your pops stared at you the wrong way?

ANGELO
That was no stare. Staring is something *humans* do. *This* was something else. *He* was something else.

Mila begins packing Angelo's bags.

MILA
(Beat) You should give Trey his spot back.

Angelo stops Mila.

ANGELO
You don't get it. It wasn't a choice. I did the right thing.

MILA
Poor you, your dad got mad at you.

ANGELO
I couldn't stay there. He stopped saying he loved me. *(Beat)* You should know better than anyone how it feels to be hated for who you are.

MILA
I should know better? *(Beat)* Why don't you tell me about the time you got fucked up by a gang cuz they found out you were a faggot... your own neighbors....same kids you used to walk to school with every day. And I bet you used to get the shit beat out of you for looking at some guy the wrong way, right? I bet you had yo ass knocked to the floor ...because your tía's boyfriend ...decided he liked you better than he liked your tía...No? Well, that's some people's story. That's some people's fucking poem, alright? *(Beat)* Out there you gonna go through some shit you got no control over. And there ain't no fucking superheroes to save you. *(Beat)* That's how it feels to be hated for who you are. So don't *ever* try to come at me like we got the same life.

ANGELO

That's not what I meant.

MILA

Then you shouldn't have said it.

ANGELO

I'm sorry.

MILA

I don't give a shit.

ANGELO

No, Mila, listen. I'm truly sorry, okay? You're right. I don't know what that feels like. The shit you've been through, I wouldn't wish that on anyone...ever. I guess I just wanted to connect with someone so badly that I ...

MILA

Lied.

ANGELO

Yes...It was fucked up. I understand that. I just needed a safe place. You know I wouldn't have done it if I didn't have to.

MILA

...You could've told me the truth.

ANGELO

I thought you wouldn't be my friend anymore. You didn't exactly welcome me with open arms.

MILA

So now I'm supposed to be your friend again? Cuz you're sorry?

ANGELO

From now on, I'm gonna be honest with you about everything.

MILA

I already trusted you once.

ANGELO

Mila, I'm never gonna lie to you again. I promise. Please. One last chance. If I lie to you or do anything bad to you I'll punish myself.

MILA

How?

ANGELO
...I'll hit myself.

MILA
Do it.

ANGELO
Right now?

MILA
Yeah. You lied. Hit yourself.

ANGELO
Okay...

Angelo smacks the back of his own head with his palm. A beat. Mila bursts out into laughter.

MILA
I can't believe you actually did it.

ANGELO
I want you trust me again.

MILA
(Playful) You still did it like a little bitch though.

ANGELO
So, you still mad at me?

MILA
Hell yeah I'm still mad at you. *(Beat)* But that don't mean I'm gonna be like your dad. Lying's fucked up, but you gotta do what you gotta do to make it out here.

ANGELO
Does this mean you're not gonna make fun of me anymore?

MILA
(Playful) I already said I forgive you; don't push it.

Angelo gets into bed.

MILA
Angelo? You don't gotta hit yourself next time, alright?

ANGELO
Good.

MILA

Cuz you're not gonna mess up ever again.

ANGELO

Right. *(Beat)* Hey, what are you gonna do with all that money?

MILA

I don't know yet.

ANGELO

I bet you could go anywhere in the world.

MILA

Why would I wanna do that?

ANGELO

(Getting out of bed) It's called travelling. It's what rich people do. They take a whole bunch of money and go somewhere...anywhere...and they can be whoever they want to be.

Both boys go to the window.

MILA

You been travelling?

ANGELO

No, but someday I will.