

Soliloquoy on Ma

by Bobbi Lurie

Ma warned me about women. Ma could be disarming and disturbing but she believed in spoiling me and my sister because she was Cuban and Cubans believe you need to spoil children to give them happy memories to fall back on when life turns into LIFE, the way my mother saw it: through cancer, mental breakdown, institutionalization. I did visit her there but my sister didn't. My sister had moved to Cuba with one of our cousins by then. The restless spirit of an older sister can be a confusing distraction for someone as attached to family as I am. "Your sister is a slut," said Ma to me over supper. I think that may be a reason why I tried to hide my interest in women from Ma. "They'll always disappoint you," she said. "All my women friends stopped calling after I got sick." She never got over this. Dad tried to call her friends back to her but Ma broke down before anything could be done. Sarah, my sister, was already long gone. "Me duele el corazon pensando en ella," mother used Spanish, the language of compassion, for all emotional statements.

