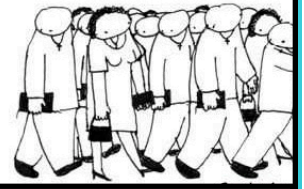


Chapter 8: Almost Free

THE FIRST TIME I SAW THIS AFTERNOON PARADE, I WAS SURPRISED TO RECOGNIZE SEVERAL MEN FROM THE GROUP THAT GATHERS AT OUR HOUSE EVERY NIGHT TO TALK ABOUT GETTING RID OF EL JEFE.



"IT'S SCARY BEING THE ONES LEFT, DON'T YOU THINK?" OSCAR IS SAYING.



IT'S AN ODD MOMENT TO BE GETTING MY FIRST KISS!



IT ISN'T THAT I'M SORRY HE KISSED ME. I JUST CAN'T FIND THE WORDS FOR THE MIXTURE OF CONFUSION AND PLEASURE I'M FEELING.



"ALL CITIZENS ARE FREE TO EXPRESS THEIR OPINIONS, TO VOTE FOR THE CANDIDATE OF THEIR CHOICE, TO RECEIVE AN EDUCATION..."

Long Live the Butterflies!



PAPI'S FACE IS FLUSHED AND HAPPY. "IT IS TRUE, CARMEN, TRUE, TRUE, TRUE. AFTER THIRTY-ONE YEARS, WE ARE FREE AGAIN!"



"IF WE DON'T FIND PUPO, IT'S EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF," PAPI EXPLAINS, LOOKING FROM ONE FACE TO ANOTHER. EVERYONE SEEMS TO UNDERSTAND.



"NO, DONA CARMEN. IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT. WHY, MUNDIN IS ALREADY A MAN! HE HAS FLOWN THE NEST."