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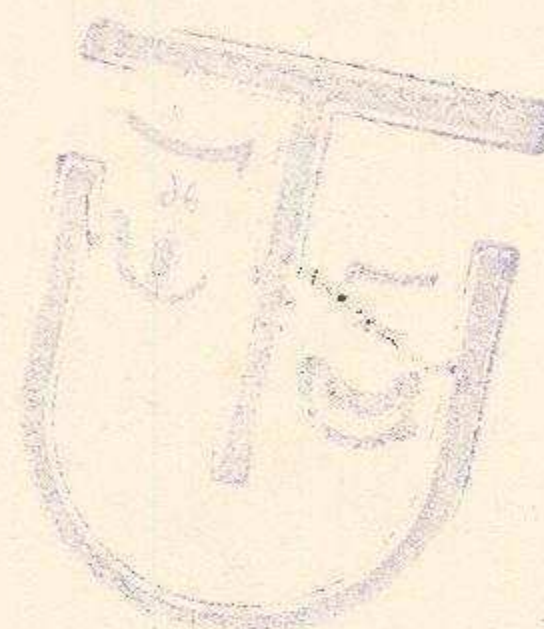
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Seminario de Dramá

T U R N P I K E U . S . A .



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T U R N P I K E U . S . A .

a play about a Puerto Rican
family in New York

by

M. Méndez-Ballester

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made by M. Méndez-Ballester of his original
play in Spanish "Encrucijada." Copyright
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THE CHARACTERS

Doña Patricia

Don Alfonso

Mario

Felipe

Marta

Jack

Antonio

Irma

Chana

Lorna

Tony

Luis

Man

A C T 1

The entire action takes place in ^{the} living-dining room
of a poor tenement apartment house in Harlem.

A C T 11

Scene 1	The following day in the morning.
Scene 11	Two weeks later. In the morning.
Scene 111	Two days later.

A C T 111

Scene 1	A month later in the fall. Afternoon.
Scene 11	The following day.
Scene 111	An hour later.

E P I L O G U E

Seven years later in the spring. Afternoon.

THE SCENE

The entire action of TURNPIKE U.S.A. takes place in the living room of a poor tenement apartment house in Harlem, New York, around the year 1950.

The living room serves also as dining room. Backstage there is a window overlooking the yard. You can see the fire-escape through it. There are two doors to the left. The first one leads to the bedroom of doña Patricia. The second one leads to the bedroom of don Alfonso and his sons. Between these two doors there is a small mirror hanging on the wall and below it a table with a victrola. To the right, front, there is a small window and below it a table with a lamp. Immediately after this window is the main door and farther back is a corridor that leads to the kitchen.

The furniture consists of an old couch (left) and an armchair (right). At back center there is a round table, and hanging on the back wall we see a guitar and a picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Through the back window you can see the buildings of the neighborhood with its simetric windows, its fire escapes and clotheslines.

A C T 1

As the curtain rises Doña Patricia is ironing on the table. She is sixty two years old, medium size. There is a stolid, earthy peasant expression in her. She has big, black eyes and white hair and complexion. Her nose is long and straight. In general, her face is reminiscent of her primitive Spanish beauty. Her voice is hard and commanding. Her speech has a strong Spanish accent. While the curtain is going up we hear a Puerto Rican plena (folk song) and the voices of several neighbors saying good-bye to a Puerto Rican migrant worker who is leaving for California.

VOICES

(out of scene.) Adiós, Cayetano! So long! Good-bye! Write to me when you get to California! Behave yourself, Cayetano! (laughs.) So long! Adiós!

Doña Patricia looks out the window.

VOICE

(Out of scene. Cayetano's voice,) Adiós, doña Patricia! Good-bye!

DOÑA PATRICIA

Good-bye! Adiós, Cayetano! Have a nice trip! (Goes back to the table and keeps on ironing.)

The main door opens. Don Alfonso, her husband, comes in. He is a man around seventy with some traits of the Puerto Rican mulatto type: broad nose, deep brownish skin and crispy, white hair. He is tall and thin and helps himself with a cane. He has about him a particular dignity conferred to him by his long years as a school teacher and principal.

-His clothes are old but clean and pressed. His English is fluent with some accent here and there. His dignity is mixed with streaks of humor and melancholy. He looks tired.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Hello, Alfonso!

DON ALFONSO

Hello! (He hangs his cane and hat on the hanger and places his hands over his hips.)

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Looking at him.) You are walking too much. You look tired.

DON ALFONSO

That staircase makes me tired.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Moistens one of her fingers with the tip of her tongue and tests the heat of the iron.) This old iron is no good.

DON ALFONSO

Any of the boys here?

DOÑA PATRICIA

No.

DON ALFONSO

(Looking out the window.) I just said good-bye to Cayetano. He got a job picking apples in California.

DOÑA PATRICIA

You know what he said to me yesterday? "Doña Patricia, I am going West to pick apples and learn English. There are too many Spanish people in New York."

DON ALFONSO

What a nerve! He doesn't know a single word in English.

DOÑA PATRICIA

So what? The Spaniards discovered the New World and they did not talk like the Indians.

DON ALFONSO

Por Dios, Patricia! How can you compare the Spanish conquistadores with this bunch of poor, ignorant Puerto Rican migrants. They make me feel miserable.

DO

DOÑA PATRICIA

Are you ashamed?

DON ALFONSO

Yes. I can't help it. (Sits down.) Every place you go you hear the same story: Puerto Ricans don't know English. They live in filthy houses. They are always shouting and kicking around and playing guitar. We are the laughing stock.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Because we are different. But nobody will laugh at our sons because they will grow up here... they will be Americans.

DON ALDONSO

I hope so.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Pause.) Alfonso.

DON ALFONSO

What is it?

DOÑA PATRICIA

I told the janitor to put a little sign saying that we have a room for rent.

DON ALFONSO

I saw it downstairs. Shortly we will be sleeping here like sailors: one on top of the other until we hit the roof.

DOÑA PATRICIA

It will be just for a short time... until Felipe gets a job.

DON ALFONSO

What about Marta and Mario?

DOÑA PATRICIA

Marta gives me every penny she earns. But Mario, you know...

DON ALFONSO

Yes, I know. What can you expect from a Nationalist patriot. What can you expect from a young man who spends his time and money talking and writing articles against American institutions? Thank God there is so much freedom in this country that you can even call the President sun-of-a-gun and nobody pays attention to you.

DOÑA PATRICIA

I do not understand politics.

DON ALFONSO

Well, I do. And I'm telling you that if Mario keeps on shouting against the Government he is going to land in jail all right.

DOÑA PATRICIA

When you were a young man like Mario you were always complaining about the Spanish government. You hated Spaniards as he hates Americans. Why is that?

DON ALFONSO

Oh, nonsense!

DOÑA PATRICIA

If you do not agree with his ideas, talk to him and show him the right way. That is your duty as a father.

DON ALFONSO

I'm sorry. The poor chap. He is always dreaming. I wish he were like Felipe, ^{/a} practical young man. You know what I mean.

DOÑA PATRICIA

I do not know what you mean. Felipe is gambling again.

A flute is heard playing the Puerto Rican song "Tú y Yo".

DON ALFONSO

(Stands up.) How do you know it?

DOÑA PATRICIA

The old man at the store told it to me.

DON ALFONSO

(Thoughtfully.) So he is gambling again. (Pause.) I guess he carries it in his blood like your father, Patricia.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Yes. Father liked gambling, but he raised a fortune working hard. He was a real business man, not a soft man like some people I know.

DON ALFONSO

(Harshly.) I made a mess out of your inheritance. Is that it?

DOÑA PATRICIA

Yes, Alfonso. And please do not raise your voice to me.

DON ALFONSO

All right. You win. (Pause. The flute is heard very clearly now.

He pays attention to it.) There's Mingo again rehearsing the song. (Pause.) He plays it better now.

DOÑA PATRICIA

It is time already. He has been rehearsing it for three months.

DON ALFONSO

(Starts singing in Spanish accompanying the flute.)

Tú sombra aérea,
que cuantas veces,
voy a tocarte,
te desvaneces
como la... como la... (He forgets
the song.)

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Smiling.) You will never learn it.

DON ALFONSO

(Laughing.) I guess not.

DOÑA PATRICIA

You started learning it when I was your sweetheart.

DON ALFONSO

(With pride.) I was strong and handsome in those days and
/as
you were beautiful as a sunflower.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Flattered.) I see you have not forgotten.

DON ALFONSO

(Sadly.) No, I have not forgotten you... nor your father.

(Imitating doña Patricia's father, a Spaniard.) "Hey you, ruffian! How dare you make love to my daughter! Get out of my coffee plantation!" I certainly got out of his plantation and helped out the American troops defeat the Spaniards.

VOICE

(A male voice from the neighborhood.) Hey, Mingo, will you stop that goddam music!

The flute stops.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(She sings softly to herself.)

El hijo del conde, caramba,
Me escribió un papel,
En que me decía, caramba...

DON ALFONSO

(He sits at the table thoughtfully.) Patricia, sometimes I wonder what are we doing here in New York.

DOÑA PATRICIA

We are doing what half a million Puerto Ricans are doing: living. It is a very powerful reason.

DON ALFONSO

We are not living. We are passing away. When I think what has become of our family, I feel like weeping for the good, old days when we lived in Puerto Rico.

DOÑA PATRICIA

You want a cup of coffee?

DON ALFONSO

No. (Looking at her.) And please don't change the subject.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Taking the bundle of clothes.) Alfonso, you never put an end to your conversation. You keep on talking and talking as if you still were a school teacher. I have a lot of work to do, you old parrot. (She goes out right.)

Don Alfonso laughs. The bell rings and he opens the door. Luis comes in with the grocery. He is a chap of about sixteen years. He wears a T-shirt and dungaree pants. He talks with impudence and without the slightest accent.

DON ALFONSO

Hello, Luis! (To doña Patricia.) Patricia, the grocery is here!

Doña Patricia comes in.

LUIS

(Puts the box of groceries on top of the table and hands on a note to doña Patricia. She gives him a quarter tip. Luis looks at the quarter and then at doña Patricia and says with impudence.) Come on! It's half a buck. Medio peso.

DOÑA PATRICIA

¿Medio peso? ¡Ave María! (She gives him another quarter.)

LUIS

O. K.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Say, Luis, please buy me a bottle of bay rum at the drug store.

LUIS.

Not me. I can't. No puedo. (He looks out the window.)
They're looking for me. Stinky guys. (To don Alfonso.) Hey, you, old man. Listen. The old lady wants me to go to the drug store and get a bottle of bay rum for her. But I ain't going. You know why? Because there's three stinky guys from Luca's gang waiting for me downstairs. The son of a bitches. Don't tell Ma about it, will you? (He goes down through the fire escape.)

DON ALFONSO

Well, what do you say?

DOÑA PATRICIA

He is always in trouble. I feel sorry for his mother. Poor Chana.

DON ALFONSO

(Molested.) I wish we could get out of this place.

DOÑA PATRICIA

You have been saying that every day for the past six months.

DON ALFONSO

(Pensively. Without paying attention to her.) To think that a few years ago I was a school principal in San Juan, an educator, an important man. I never thought about the future. I never thought about old age and death until I was requested to quit my job and get a pension. A cat's pension. This is awful. We depend on our sons for a living. What humiliation, Dios mío!

DOÑA PATRICIA

I do not feel humiliated. Our children are supporting us in the same way we supported our fathers. Mother lived with us until she died. :And your father too. That's the only reason why human beings live in families. To help each other to the end of their lives. (She goes into the kitchen.)

DON ALFONSO

(Humorous.) That's a stimulating idea. (Takes out his pocket /of

some sheets of paper and starts reading them.)

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Comes in from the kitchen.) Do you feel chilly, Alfonso?

DON ALFONSO

(Without paying attention.) No.

DOÑA PATRICIA

The weather is changing already. The summer is over.

DON ALFONSO

(Pensively.) Yes.

DOÑA PATRICIA

I hope the janitor will fix that rotten steam this year.

(Looking at don Alfonso.) What is the matter with you, Alfonso?

DON ALFONSO

(Suddenly.) There must be a newspaper in New York interested in publishing my memoirs about the Spanish-American war.

Don't you think so?

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Incredulously.) Who knows.

DON ALFONSO

You know it's a first rate account of the American expeditionary forces in Puerto Rico. (Remembering.) Fifty two years ago they landed in the southern coast of the Island. It seems to me as if I were looking at them right now. They established three beach heads and pushed swiftly towards the north. (Seeing that doña Patricia does not pay attention to him.) I guess I'll have to go out myself if I wish to sell this stuff. I have a hunch Mario isn't doing anything about it.

CHANA

(Out of scene.) Hey, janitor! Janitor! Yeah, you! Come over here and fix my sink, will you? It stinks! How many times do I have to tell you! Goddam it!..... Whaaat? Shut up you! What the hell's the matta with you! Come on! You act like a millionaire and you are just a tramp! (Pause.) Hello, don Alfonso! ¿Cómo está usted?

DON ALFONSO

(Looking out the window.) Hello, Chana!

CHANA

Excuse my language don Alfonso, but this janitor is a son-of-a-

bitch!

DOÑA PATRICIA

Ave María Purísima! She has a snake for a tongue.

DON ALFONSO

Why is she always in trouble with the janitor?

Mario comes in through the main door. He is about twenty years old. He is a tall, good looking fellow. He has big, dark eyes, aquiline nose and white complexion like his mother. He has an arrogant and disdainful attitude towards others when he talks politics. When expressing his political views he is sententious, irrevocable. He wears an old black suit that gives him a sinister look. He is full of vitality, is deeply attached to his mother and hates his father because he helped out the American Expeditionary Forces that landed in Puerto Rico in 1898.

MARIO

Hello, Ma. (Kisses her in the forehead and goes out left without looking at his father.)

Don Alfonso looks at Mario and then at doña Patricia with a negative sentimental gesture.

MARIO

(Comes in again without his coat bringing a pencil and some galley proofs in his hands. He gives some bills to doña Patricia.) Here, Ma.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Taking the bills.) What about you, sonny?

MARIO

Don't worry about me, Ma. (He sits on the sofa and starts reading and correcting the galley proofs.)

Doña Patricia goes out to the kitchen.

DON ALFONSO

Working hard, Mario?

MARIO

You know it. You know I wash dishes eight hours a day and spend my evenings working for the Party.

DON ALFONSO

You don't have to be so aggressive in your reply.

MARIO

My reply is not aggressive. It is objective.

DON ALFONSO

How many suscriptions you have already for your paper?

MARIO

Twenty five suscriptions and six advertisements. (Sarcastic.)

May I have your opinion?

DON ALFONSO

Well... frankly, a political newspaper has many limitations.

MARIO

I see.

DON ALFONSO

Specially when the stuff you publish is... hot stuff.

MARIO

Revolutionary stuff.

DON ALFONSO

Exactly. If you publish that, you have the law against you.

MARIO

The law? But you say this is a free country.

DON ALFONSO

It is a free country. But freedom is a limited right. You can't be free to destroy society.

MARIO

(Stops reading.) How many years did you work as a school teacher?

DON ALFONSO

Forty years, my son.

MARIO

When you talk of political rights you certainly have the

mentality of a school teacher.

DON ALFONSO

Does that mean that you have a very poor opinion of your father?

MARIO

Yes. Every time you praise American institutions.

DON ALFONSO

We are American citizens. It's our duty to defend this country.

Doña Patricia comes in and keeps
on busy.

MARIO

I don't consider myself a citizen of this country. I don't
fit in well in the American pattern of living. You know why?
Because I'm a catholic. Because I detest business. Because
I don't believe in the opinion of the man in the street.
Furthermore, I dislike cowboys.

DON ALFONSO

Stop your Nationalist propaganda!

DOÑA PATRICIA

Stop arguing both of you!

DON ALFONSO

I'm sorry.

MARIO

You loose your temper very easily.

DON ALFONSO

Yes. Every time you blow out with your silly propaganda.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Placatingly.) Mario, would you like to have dinner now?

MARIO

I better wait for Marta and Felipe.

DOÑA PATRICIA

What about you, Alfonso?

ALTONSO

I lost my appetite. I feel depressed and worn out. (Pause.)
I have spent nearly all my life among students and suddenly
I find myself in this awful place among vulgar people. Whenever
I start talking they disagree with me because they do not
understand me. Even my family disagrees with me. Either they

think one is high minded or reactionary or a sentimental parrot.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Moved by don Alfonso's words tries to change the conversation.)

Mario...

MARIO

Yes, Ma.

DOÑA PATRICIA

I have not seen your friend Sánchez for a long time.

MARIO

He is working in Venezuela.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Is he making good money?

MARIO

I guess not. He didn't care much for money.

DOÑA PATRICIA

He had a good job here.

MARIO

But he didn't like this country.

DON ALFONSO

By the way, Mario, did Sánchez do anything with my memoirs about the Spanish-American war?

MARIO

No. He gave them back to me. He didn't like them.

DON ALFONSO

Why?

MARIO

He had a different point of view. He thinks that the United States occupied Puerto Rico by means of force and violence. What have you got to say?

DON ALFONSO

Only one thing: that you and Sánchez are a couple of blockheaded fanatical nationalists.

MARIO

(Stands up aggressively.) I won't stand your insults! You old reactionary!

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Angrily.) Mario! How dare you! How dare you talk to your

father like that!

MARIO

(Repentant.) I can't control myself. I just can't.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Commandingly.) Tell him you feel sorry. (Mario doubts.)
Go ahead and do as I tell you.

MARIO

(Bows his head in front of don Alfonso.) I'm very sorry.

DON ALFONSO

That's all right, son.

Mario goes out to his room.

DON ALFONSO

(Weeping silently.) Thank you Patricia, Thank you.

The bell rings. Doña Patricia opens the door. Jack, the janitor, comes in. He is in his fifties and has a lean sloppy figure with red high cheekbones and a funny nose. He looks like an old horse. He is cynic and goes around quietly with a sardonic smile and paternalistic attitude. He wears dirty working clothes.

JACK

Hello!

DOÑA PATRICIA

Come in, mister.

JACK

How are you feeling today, don Alfonso?

DON ALFONSO

Fine. Thank you. (Coughs nervously.) Err... What can we do for you, Jack?

JACK

I just dropped in to collect the rent.

DON ALFONSO

Oh, yes. Will you please come back when Marta is here?

JACK

Oh, excuse me. I thought Marta was here.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Jack, please come over here to the kitchen. (Jack and doña Patricia take a look at the kitchen.) Take a look at that stove. It takes an hour to warm up. Soon I will be using it as a freezer.

JACK

O.K. O.K. I'll fix it later.

DOÑA PATRICIA

You should also fix the steam and the toilet.

JACK

O.K. doña Patricia. (Takes out from his pocket a piece of paper and a pencil and makes a note.) Now I won't forget.

The bell rings.

DON ALFONSO

Who is it?

CHANA

(Out of scene.) It's Chana, don Alfonso! Chana! Is the janitor in there?

DON ALFONSO

Jack, Chana is looking for you.

JACK

(Scared.) Shhhh. Please tell her I'm not here. (He rushes into the kitchen.)

Doña Patricia opens the door. Chana comes in. She is forty years old. Buxom type mulatto woman. She is vulgar but has a powerful personality and a youthful vitality. She is affectionate. Everybody is scared of her tongue but everybody likes her. Her Spanish accent is very strong.

CHANA

Hola! Excuse me! I'm looking for the janitor.

DOÑA PATRICIA

He is not here, Chana.

CHANA

The lousy tramp. I have searched the whole building looking for him. He's like a needle in a haystack. You never find him. Listen. We can't go on living like beggars in this dam building. In my apartment the windows do not work. The toilet do not work. The sink do not work. I myself do not work. And you never find the janitor. Ave María! What the hell's the matta! (Showing out one of her fingers.) Look. Look at my finger. A rat bite me last night while I was sleeping. What a rat! I tell you they are as big as Chihuahua dogs! (Swears with her fingers.) These rats they laugh at mouse traps and rat poisons. Guess what Luis my son is doing with these supermouses. I tell you. He bought a rifle and a head flashlight and he goes hunting rats every evening. Pin! Pan! Pin! Pan! (Laughs.) That's the only way: hunt them. Well, I think I'm talking too much. I will go on looking for the janitor. Adiós, my friends! (She goes out.)

DOÑA PATRICIA

Adiós, Chana!

CHANA

(Shouting out of scene.) Janitor! Janitor!

JACK

(Comes in.) Oh, boy! Oh, boy! That woman's on my tail. Every time she insults me I feel as if she were spitting on my face. Did you hear what she called me from the window? She called me a son of a ...

DON ALFONSO

Don't pay any attention to her.

JACK

I've got to, don Alfonso. I'm not a son of a... It's true that mother was some sort of a merry widow, but now she's a respectable old woman. I'm not going to stand any more insults from that wild stinky cat. You know I told the landlord to throw her out of this building. She's always shouting and complaining about everything. She thinks these are Park Avenue apartments. I'm telling you, don Alfonso, Chana is the type of woman that make people believe that Puerto Ricans

are a bunch of bastards. (Sneezes.) I guess I got a cold.
Positively.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Mister Jack, you like some rum with lemon for that cold?

JACK

Hey! That's a good idea. Rum with lemon. O.K. If you please. That's dam nice of you, doña Patricia. Yo siempre decir usted una mojer mu buena.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Please do not talk in Spanish. I do not understand you.
(She goes out to the kitchen.)

JACK

(He laughs.) Doña Patricia has no sense of humor but she is a very nice woman. Really, I don't understand how people like you are living in this place.

DON ALFONSO

My friend, the truth is that this life is destroying my wit, my intelligence. There are no cultivated people around to talk in Spanish. And whenever I start an intelligent conversation in English I feel dumb and confused as if my personality had been changed. I wish we could move to a better place. Our daughter Marta is doing her best to...

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Comes in interrupting the conversation. She brings with her a samll glass of rum and hands it over to Jack.) Here you are.

JACK

Thank you. Mochas gracias. (He drinks the rum and coughs.)
Good shot. Go on, don Alfonso. (He sits down near don Alfonso.)

DON ALFONSO

Oh, I was saying that Marta is trying to get for us a better apartment at West End.

JACK

Marta is a good girl.

DON ALFONSO

She helps us a lot.

JACK

(With roguery.) No sweetheart yet?

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Working on the clothes.) She has no need of a sweetheart yet.

JACK

Oh, don't say that, doña Patricia. Love is a very important thing for a woman. Very important.

DON ALFONSO

Anyway that's her concern.

JACK

(Smiling.) Positively. Well, how are the boys coming along?

DON ALFONSO

They don't have steady jobs yet.

JACK

No steady job? That's too bad. A man's got to work every day because he's supposed to eat every day!

DON ALFONSO

I agree with you.

JACK

And when a man don't get a job, he starts kicking around and looking for a racket.

DON ALFONSO

That's too bad.

JACK

Personally I hate any sort of racket, but you never know how other people feel about it. I know decent people who're willing to get into a racket rather than go hungry.

DON ALFONSO

I prefer to go hungry rather than live on a racket. I don't see how people can live outside the law.

JACK

Well, it all depends in how lucky you are. To me the law is a woman with one eye opened and another closed. Now, if you happen to be on the side of the opened eye you are lost, but if you happen to be on the side of the closed eye you're lucky. It's just a matter of luck. It's the only way you can explain yourself why there are racketeers and business men in jail and racketeers and business men out of jail. Let me have a cigarette, will you?

(Hands him the package.) Here.

JACK

Thank you. (Lights the cigarette.) Well, that's the way I see the law. I'll give you an example: I know a politician who owns five buildings in rotten conditions. The poor families living in these buildings have to pay him a very high rent. He's a lousy skunk, but he is on the side of the closed eye of the law. Another example. You know Las Vegas? I'll tell you. I've worked in Las Vegas. Gambling is protected by the law there. But if the policeman sees me shooting crabs on the sidewalk, he'll send me to jail. Is that clear?

DON ALFONSO

That sounds interesting but not convincing. I don't agree with you. You pick up a few exceptional cases and then make a sweeping, unfair generalization against the law. Man can not live without laws. Is that clear?

JACK

(Sneezes. Stands up.) Goddam cold. You know, these scientists, they invent the atomic bomb but they can't discover just a little pill against colds. Hey, doña Patricia, will you please give me another shot of rum with lemon?

DOÑA PATRICIA

Of course, but please do not call me dona. Call me doña.

JACK

(Trying to pronounce.) Don...don..dona. I can't pronounce it. Dam Spanish language. (He laughs and sits down again.) Don Alfonso, I've got something confidential to tell you.

DON ALFONSO

Go ahead.

JACK

It's about those birth certificates. Yesterday, a very well dressed man in a Cadillac came to see me. He made me a proposition... (Loud latin music is heard in the neighborhood. Jack stands up and goes to the window at right.) Hey, you, pipe down! For Christ sake! Don't make so much noise!

VOICE

(Out of scene.) Oh, shut your trap, you big sap! Cállate la boca, so chulo!

JACK

(Closes the window and goes back to his seat.) You know, I like music and dance, don Alfonso. I was a dance teacher years ago. But the way these people play music and dance is scandalous. You know who is the one making so much noise? It's the skinny Puerto Rican girl that moved here last week with eight children, her husband, her father and mother, and a blind uncle. All of them living in a single room.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Comes in with the drink.) Here you are.

Mario comes out of his room,
without being noticed by Jack.

He is watching Jack.

JACK

(He drinks the rum.) Well, as I was telling you, don Alfonso... This gentleman in the Cadillac came to see me. You know what he said to me? "Young man, I'm willing to pay a thousand dollars for a Puerto Rican birth certificate."

DON ALFONSO

A thousand dollars!

JACK

A thousand dollars. Yes sir. (He is surprised to see Mario behind him.) Oh, hello, Mario.

MARIO

(Aggressive.) Beat it!

JACK

(Stands up. Placatingly.) Mario, be sensible. What's the matter? ¿Qué te pasa?

MARIO

I know what's on your mind.

JACK

I just came in to collect the rent.

MARIO

That's a big lie! You came here looking for birth certificates.

JACK

I swear...

MARIO

Get out!

DON ALFONSO

Mario, please!

JACK

Take it easy, Mario. Don't get excited. (He moves toward the door.) Be careful how you talk.

MARIO

I know your racket.

JACK

You'll be sorry for this, Mario. (Opens the door.) You don't like me because I'm acquainted with what you are doing upstairs with that American girl. Be careful, Mario.

MARIO

Out! (Runs after him. Jack shuts the door and disappears.)

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Exchanges a puzzled look with don Alfonso.) What were you doing upstairs, Mario?

MARIO

I'm teaching Spanish to an American girl.

DON ALFONSO

I don't approve the way you talk to Jack.

MARIO

That man is a scoundrel. I'm telling you. He was the owner of that Latin Dance Saloon at 115 Street. The Police raided the Saloon two years ago. You know what they found out? He ran a white slave house. He provided "call girls" to Down Town hotels.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(She makes the sign of the cross.) Ave María Purísima!

Felipe comes in through the main door. He is about thirty five years old, brown skinned, heavy built. Broad nose. Thick lips. Prominent cheekbones. He looks hard and tough. He wears a jacket.

FELIPE

Hello, Pa.

DON ALFONSO

Hola, Felipe.

FELIPE

(Kisses doña Patricia in the forehead. Then looks at Mario.)
Mario, the janitor told me just now that you insulted him.

DON ALFONSO

(Conciliatory.) Forget about it boys.

FELIPE

What do you say, Mario?

MARIO

Jack was trying to buy father's birth certificate.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Felipe, is it true that Jack is an immoral man?

FELIPE

(Sardonic.) Who, Jack? He's a snake. But don't forget
he collects the rent in this building.

MARIO

So what?

FELIPE

To a dreamy boy like you, it means nuttin! To a practical
man like me, it means a lot. (Takes the guitar from the wall.)

MARIO

(Molested.) What a cynic guy you are, brother.

FELIPE

O.K. Mario. That's enough. (He sits on the sofa and
starts playing softly on the guitar.)

DON ALFONSO

How is everything with you, Felipe?

FELIPE

I got a job.

DOÑA PATRICIA

A job? Thank God!

DON ALFONSO

Where?

FELIPE

At a gasoline station in the Bronx.

DON ALFONSO

Congratulations, my son! You deserve that.

DOÑA PATRICIA

I feel happy. Do you want to have dinner now or do we wait for Marta?

FELIPE

Let's wait for Marta. (Plays softly.) Ma.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Yes, Felipe.

FELIPE

I saw a sign downstairs -- a room for rent.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Oh, I forgot to tell you.

FELIPE

There are only two rooms in this house: one for yourself and Marta and another for father, Mario and myself. Where's the room for rent?

DOÑA PATRICIA

My room.

FELIPE

I thought so. I don't like it.

DON ALFONSO

It's just for a short time... till things get better.

MARIO

(Sardonic.) I wonder when things will get better in this house. I just wonder. For six months, since we came from Puerto Rico, things have been worst and worst. No steady jobs for any of us. No money to buy food. No money to pay the rent. And what do we do? A loan here, a loan there. We only have debts and words. We keep on talking and talking the whole day. Why don't we admit frankly that we have failed, that this country is no place for us and that we should go back to Puerto Rico?

FELIPE

(Mockingly.) Mario, crack another joke and make me laugh.

MARIO

What?

FELIPE

We're all fed up with your patriotic stuff.

MARIO

(Angrily.) You,.. stupid!

DON ALFONSO

(Conciliatory.) Come, come, boys.

FELIPE

My dear brother, you want to solve every family problem by going back to our beautiful and crowded little island.

MARIO

How would you solve it, wise guy?

FELIPE

Struggling, fighting all the way through.

MARIO

Then go ahead, you struggling donkey.

FELIPE

(Facing Mario with controlled anger.) I oughta bust you in the nose.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Out loud.) Stop it boys!

FELIPE

I'm sorry I got sore. (He sits back on the sofa and goes on playing softly on the guitar a gay American song of the fifties, while don Alfonso keeps on talking.)

DON ALFONSO

(Stands up.) I think this is a great country for young people who are willing to work hard. For old people like me, it's a tough life. When winter comes, I start dreaming about the warm, bright, long days in the Caribbean. I feel sad and bored. When the snow falls down I grow drowsy and sleepy like a hibernating old bear. I'm telling you boys, if I ever get a chance to go back to Puerto Rico, I won't miss it. I'll go down there and rent a small apartment in the old, romantic, Spanish section of San Juan. We will live near the Cathedral

so that Patricia can go to mass every day and I can go to the plaza to talk with my friends in the evenings. Of course, I... (He glances around and sees that nobody is paying attention to him and goes out through the main door saying:) I'm going downstairs to buy the paper.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Poor Alfonso. He do not feel well in this country.

FELIPE

What a queer family I have. I sacrifice myself buying airplane tickets on credit for every one of you to bring you here and what have you done? Waste your time talking and wishing to go back to Puerto Rico. Will you tell me what are you going to do there? (Pause.) You're no immigrants. You're a bunch of sentimental people. When European immigrants come here, they come here to work, to live, to stay for good. That's the way I feel about it. I'm not going back. This is my country.

MARIO

It's a pity you have such a rotten English.

FELIPE

Brother, one of these days you and me are going to blow up like a bomb.

DOÑA PATRICIA

All right, boys. That will do.

MARIO

What have you got to say, mother?

DOÑA PATRICIA

I think Felipe is right. We can not go back to Puerto Rico.

FELIPE

This is a hell of a country. Opportunities everywhere. You know how they say here: "The sky is the limit." You can make yourself a rich man if you want to. Let me tell you one thing. Last week, the owner of a small garage in Brooklyn, he went on vacation to the country. You know what he discovered? A big deposit of uranium, you know, that stuff they use for atomic bombs. Well, he made himself a millionaire in a couple of days. How do you like that?

DOÑA PATRICIA

You only think about money. You are not like your father,

FELIPE

The poor old man.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Please do not call him poor old man.

FELIPE

He's a failure, Ma. Let's face it. What did he do with your inheritance?

MARIO

Throw it away.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Yes. It is true. We lost the farm and the house.

FELIPE

What did he do with the little money that was left?

DOÑA PATRICIA

We had to meet our expenses. His salary was never good. Afterwards, he bought a printshop and he failed too. He is not a business man. (She goes out to the kitchen.)

MARIO

He's a crank.

FELIPE

Yeah. But he won't admit it. He thinks he's a personality, a wise man. (Imitating him.) "I was a U.S. captain during the Spanish-American war and a close friend of General Miles."

MARIO

Do you really think he was a captain?

FELIPE

He was just a sergeant.

MARIO

Mess sergeant.

They both laugh. Doña Patricia comes in with two dishes on her hands and stops when Felipe and Mario start singing the Puerto Rican "plena" with the following words;

What an intelligent sergeant
 What an intelligent sergeant
 What an intelligent sergeant
 Used to have General Miles.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Angrily throws the two dishes on the floor.) Do not dare laugh at your father!

MARIO

Please, Ma.

FELIPE

It's just a joke.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Shut up! Never in your life try to make a joke at your father. You hear me? I will not tolerate it. It is true that he was an incompetent business man, but it is also true that he was a captain -- not a sergeant. a captain of the United States Army and the personal friend of General Miles. I know that because Alfonso himself introduced me to the General in Ponce. And more than that, Alfonso was a teacher, an educator. He has spent his whole life teaching, giving himself to others, sacrificing himself to give both of you a profession. And now you laugh at him. Dios mío! How on earth can you or anybody else laugh at a man like that!

FELIPE

Ma, I...

DOÑA PATRICIA

You. You do not know how much he loves you. He wept like a child when the Army reported you missing in the battle of Iwo J^Ima. He tried to make an engineer of you, but you failed him.

MARIO

Ma, you're going too far.

DOÑA PATRICIA

And you, Mario, you would not be so arrogant if you knew what he did for you when you were a sick, paralytic child. He went up the stairs of the Church of Porta Coeli on his own bare knees praying to the Lord for your health. (To both of them.) I am proud of my husband. You can not measure a man with a dollar

bill. You have to measure him in terms of love, and kindness and generosity, in his own efforts. Your father was the son of a poor, ignorant farm-worker and by his own will he is a man of learning. I am not worth half of him. I am just a hard working peasant woman from the coffee mountains of Puerto Rico. That's all. (She goes to the kitchen.)

MARIO

(Ashamed.) Well! How do you feel?

FELIPE

I feel like a wet hen.

Doña Patricia comes back with a broom. Mario takes the broom from doña Patricia and starts sweeping the floor. The door bell rings. Felipe opens the door. Irma comes in. She is about thirty, medium size, heavy built and sexy. She is provocative and has an air of femme fatale about her. She wears expensive clothes in very loud colors and talks with impudence. She has no accent at all.

IRMA

(She gives Felipe a penetrating look,) Hello, Phil. (Glances around.) ¿Qué hay doña Patricia!

DOÑA PATRICIA

Glad to see you, Irma. How are you?

IRMA

So. So. (Sees Mario,) Hi, Mario. I didn't know you were here.

MARIO

(Indifferent.) ¡Hola!

DOÑA PATRICIA

How is your husband, Irma?

IRMA

Bill is on his way to Frisco. They made him a good business proposition.

MARIO

(Sardonic.) What kind of business?

IRMA

(Confused.) Oh, let me see...

MARIO

Drug... business?

FELIPE

Cut it out, Mario.

IRMA

He thinks he is funny. (Glances around.) I don't see Marta and don Alfonso around here.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Alfonso just went out and Marta has not come in yet. Please sit down.

IRMA

Gracias, doña Patricia. (To Felipe, With coquetry.) I just came down to ask a favor from Phil.

FELIPE

What can I do for you?

IRMA

The light in my room just went off and I can't find the janitor. I think it's a short circuit. Will you please fix it for me, Phil?

FELIPE

Of course.

DOÑA PATRICIA

You are living alone now, Irma. Watch yourself.

MARIO

(Sarcastic.) A lady should always watch her reputation.

FELIPE

Mario, I said cut it out.

IRMA

Come on, Phil. Let's go. (To Mario with sarcasm.) Mario, you smell like a he-goat. Sorry. I can't help you. (Felipe laughs out loud.) Hasta luego, doña Patricia. (They exit.)

DOÑA PATRICIA

Adiós. (Pause.) Mario, I can see you do not like Irma.

MARIO

Ma, that woman is in the dope business. (Keeps on sweeping.)

DOÑA PATRICIA

It looks like everybody has an illegal business in this place.

The door opens. Marta comes in. She is a beautiful girl of twenty-five with a slim, trim figure, white complexion, dark, curly hair. She wears a tailor-made suit. She is well mannered and affectionate in normal circumstances. When things get tough for her she becomes harsh and aggressive. She walks and moves around gracefully.

MARTA

(Worried. Kisses doña Patricia.) Hello, Ma.

MARIO

(Putting the broom on his shoulder.) Hey! No kiss for me?

MARTA

(With a forced smile.) You big revolutionary. (Kisses Mario on both cheeks and goes to the small table at the left looking for the mail.)

MARIO

That's the French diplomatic style of kissing. We are Spanish descendants.

MARTA

(Looking at the mail.) Spanish and African descendants. Don't forget it, Mario.

DOÑA PATRICIA

There is no mail for you, dear.

MARTA

(Thoughtfully.) I thought so. (She goes into the room at the right.)

MARIO

(To doña Patricia.) She looks worried.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Because the man over there do not write to her.

MARIO

You mean that fellow... I thought she had dropped the whole thing.

DOÑA PATRICIA

You do not drop love like that. Love either fades away or keeps on burning.

MARIO

Doesn't she realize he is a married man?

DOÑA PATRICIA

Of course, you silly boy. But you can not solve a problem of the heart with questions like that.

Marta comes in again. She lights a cigarette.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Marta, please do not smoke now. Yow will loose your apetite. Dinner is ready.

MARTA

Where's Pa? (She sits down on the sofa.)

DOÑA PATRICIA

He went downstairs for the newspaper.

MARTA

Anybody to see the room?

DOÑA PATRICIA

Nobody. Do not worry, dear. There are half a millon Puerto Ricans in this city. There must be one at least looking for a room. (She goes out to the kitchen.)

MARIO

(To Marta.) You can't break her optimism.

MARTA

(Smoking nervously.) Mario, I lost my job today.

MARIO

They fired you? Why?

MARTA

My accent. I speak English with Spanish accent.

MARIO

They told you that?

MARTA

Yes.

MARIO

That's a goddam lie. They fired you because you are a Puerto Rican.

MARTA

I don't think so. My pronunciation is awful. The people at the restaurant make fun of me.

MARIO

The bastards. (Sarcastic.) The American way of living...

MARTA

Shut up! You live in this country and you're always complaining about it. Where's Felipe?

MARIO

Upstairs, with Irma.

MARTA

We must get together, the three of us. It's the end of the month and we have to pay the rent, the grocery and the rest of the bills. How much have you got?

MARIO

I have two dollars left. I gave five to Ma a while ago.

MARTA

You are a real help in this house.

MARIO

(Ashamed.) I'm sorry. I'm always broke. (He sits down worried.)

MARTA

(Stands up and looks at Mario with tenderness.) You look like a hairy ape. Why don't you tell Pa to give you a haircut?

MARIO

I feel like an orphan when he cuts my hair.

MARTA

(Mussing affectionately his hair.) You old fashioned politician.

DON ALFONSO

(Comes in with the newspaper.) Hello, Marta. (He kisses her in the forehead.) How are you feeling?

MARTA

Wonderful.

MARIO

What's the news?

DON ALFONSO

War news. Cold war news.

MARIO

Imperialism and exploitation always bring war. The world needs a war once in a while. The last two World Wars virtually destroyed the British and French colonial empires.

DON ALFONSO

The last two great wars also brought slavery and hunger to millions of people.

FELIPE

(Comes through the main door.) Ma, I'm back again! Let's have dinner! (Caressing Marta.) Hello, sister.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Comes in with a tureen and a big spoon.) Supper is ready, boys! Supper is ready! Come on! Sit down everybody!

They all sit down at the table except doña Patricia who is serving. There is a short silence. Don Alfonso makes the sign of the cross and the rest do the same. Then they start eating.

FELIPE

Say, Marta, did you know that Mike O'Hara closed his coffee shop yesterday at 110th street?

MARTA

Yes. He moved to Brooklyn.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Old man Goldstein also closed his butcher shop last week.

MARIO

Everybody who is not a Puerto Rican is moving out from Harlem. They're leaving the place free for us.

DON ALFONSO

Why is that?

MARIO

(Angrily.) Because we stink!

DON ALFONSO

Stop it!

MARIO

That's the story we hear all over the city. "The lousy Puerto Ricans. They stink. Throw them out." They call us spiks! Spiks! Goddam it!

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Loud.) That's enough, Mario!

Brief silence. A knock is heard at the door. Mario opens the door. Antonio comes in. He is a man of about forty, tall, slim. His face is sun tanned, rugged. He wears an old suit and his shirt is opened down to the chest. His hair is dark and curly and entangled. His general appearance is that of an intelligent, adventurous, eccentric type of man. He has a poker face, well mannered and moves around quietly. He comes in with a leather bag. He speaks English with accent.

ANTONIO

Good evening. Is there a room for rent here?

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Gay.) Yes, of course. Come in. Buenas tardes. ¿Cómo está usted? Please follow me. (He follows doña Patricia to the door at the left.) This is the room. Go ahead. Take a look at it.

A flute is heard playing the Puerto Rican song Tú y Yo to the end of the act.

ANTONIO

(After taking a look to the room.) I like it. How much is it?

DOÑA PATRICIA

Ten dollars a week in advance.

ANTONIO

I will be here for a short time. Will you rent it for three weeks?

Doña Patricia hesitates and looks at don Alfonso.

DON ALFONSO

It's all right with me, Patricia.

DOÑA PATRICIA

All right with me too.

ANTONIO

Thank you. (Puts the bag on the floor, and takes his purse out and pays to doña Patricia.)

DOÑA PATRICIA

Your name, please.

ANTONIO

Antonio Benitez.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Feel yourself at home, Antonio. (She goes back to the table.)

Antonio takes his bag into the room and comes out immediately.

DOÑA PATRICIA

You like to have dinner with us, Antonio?

ANTONIO

Thank you. I will sit down for a while. (He crosses to the right and sits down.)

DON ALFONSO

Excuse me, young man. Where do you come from?

ANTONIO

Puerto Rico.

MARIO

(Looking at Antonio in a funny way.) Hum! (In a low voice.) Another one.

DON ALFONSO

So you are stopping in the city for a few days.

ANTONIO

Yes. I am in my way to the Pacific.

They all look to each other puzzled.

DON ALFONSO

That's a long way from here. Have you any parents over there?

ANTONIO

Two brothers. One in Iwo Jima and one in Guadalcanal.

DON ALFONSO

With the Army?

ANTONIO

They were with the Army. They are now dead.

The curtain falls while the flute
keeps on playing softly.

E N D O F A C T 1

ACT II - SCENE 1

The following day. Sunday morning. Same place. When the curtain raises, doña Patricia comes in from the kitchen, crosses to the left and talks to don Alfonso, who is in his room.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Alfonso, please wake up! (Pause.) What do you say? (Pause.)

Yes, we still have time to go to mass! (Pause.) No, Mario and Felipe have not come yet! I wonder where they have spent the night! (Pause.)

All right! I am going downstairs to buy some milk! (She crosses to the right and stops.) Oh, Marta! Please watch the boiling water for the coffee! (She goes out.)

MARTA

(Out of scene.) Está bien, mamá! (Comes in/ her bathrobe, picks up a sheet of paper and a pen on the table at left, sits down by the round table and starts writing when Antonio comes in from his room.)

ANTONIO

Good morning!

MARTA

Did you sleep well?

ANTONIO

Like a god.

MARTA

Would you like a cup of coffee now?

ANTONIO

Very much.

Marta goes out to the kitchen and Antonio looks out the window when don Alfonso enters in his robe and a towel on his right shoulder.

DON ALFONSO

Antonio, how are you feeling this morning?

ANTONIO

Excellent.

DON ALFONSO

(Looking out the window.) This is a beautiful morning. The sun is bright and warm and the sky is blue. Let's open the windows and let in the sun and the air. (He takes a deep breath) I will go to mass now, and later I'll go to Central Park and take a nice stroll watching the boys.... and

the girls too. Why not? (He exits into the kitchen. He is heard in the kitchen laughing and talking to Marta.)

Marta enters with a cup of coffee.

ANTONIO

(Taking the cup of coffee.) Thank you. That's very nice of you. (Looks intensely at her.) Don't you recognize me?

MARTA

(Puzzled.) I think so. (Pause. Suddenly.) Wait. Are you the man that says compliments to me when I go to the drug store?

ANTONIO

Yes.

MARTA

Who are you anyway?

ANTONIO

(Smiling.) A travelling philosopher.

MARTA

(Ironic.) A travelling philosopher? How romantic. How long have you been in that profession?

ANTONIO

Ten, fifteen, twenty years. I don't know.

MARTA

You are not certain of it?

ANTONIO

I'm not certain of anything at all.

MARTA

Please stop acting and tell me who are you.

ANTONIO

What shall I tell you? I have been a newspaper man, a migrant worker, an altar boy. (He sits by the table.)

MARTA

An altar boy?

ANTONIO

Yes. I was raised by a priest. The catholic priest in my home town. Mother was a poor woman. She had three sons. Two died at war. I was left to save the world.

MARTA

I suppose you are a very religious man.

ANTONIO

I am not.

MARTA

Don't tell me you are an atheist, a communist.

ANTONIO

No. But if you wish to classify me, you might call me an skeptic.

MARTA

How did you get that sickness?

ANTONIO

Catholic, christian teaching. It consoles you with immortality but it makes a sad man out of you. In the words of Saint Paul every man is a liar. There is not one just man. There is none who does good. Man is worthless and wicked, the slave of sin, the slave of the flesh. Hebrew-Christian religious tradition has made the world sick for two thousands years. It's horrible.

MARTA

Will you tell me what has all this religious stuff to do with your coming to this house?

ANTONIO

(Smiling.) I am looking for love.

Latin music is heard in the neighborhood.

DON ALFONSO

(Comes in from the right.) What a terrible noise. This place is dreadful. Sometimes I wonder why poor, uneducated people have to be noisy and vulgar. My dear Antonio, that's why I have always insisted that education is the only means by which we can liberate ourselves from the vulgarity of the masses.

MARTA

Pa, in a place like this you have to get used to a number of things.

DON ALFONSO

Yes, I realize that animals have to adapt themselves to their environment or else perish. But you can be sure of this: I will not perish in this place. You know why? Because I was raised among poor ignorant peasants. That's enough. (He goes out into his room.)

MARTA

(To Antonio) Father is always like that.

ANTONIO

I like him. He is a typical middle class Puerto Rican from the old

generation. (Thoughtfully.) I wonder if my father was a man like him.

MARTA

What do you mean?

ANTONIO

I don't know who's my father. The priest with whom I lived told me once that probably I was the son of an American sailor.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Comes in through the main door with a bottle of milk.) Good morning, Antonio! I hope you like this place.

ANTONIO

(Stands up.) I really like it, doña Patricia.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Gracias. (Goes out into the kitchen.)

DON ALFONSO

(Comes in from the room with his coat on his arm. He is fixing his vest and is all mixed up with the buttons.) Marta, please. My vest. (He puts his coat on the couch.)

MARTA

(Teasing him.) You should be ashamed, father. (She starts fixing his vest.)

DON ALFONSO

Why should I? I'm not a dandy. When you become old, you become a nuisance. What do you say, Antonio?

ANTONIO

Life has many compensations, don Alfonso.

DON ALFONSO

I'm sorry to disagree with you. They say that life compensates bitterness with happiness, losses with profits, evil with goodness, youth with ignorance, old age with wisdom and patience. That's a false statement. I know many old people who have no wisdom at all, no patience at all, including myself. Life is a game without definite rules, young man.

MARTA

(She has already finished fixing his vest.) All right, professor. I fixed your vest.

DON ALFONSO

Thank you, dear. My coat, please.

ANTONIO

Let me help you. (Antonio picks up the coat from the couch and helps don Alfonso to put it on.)

MARTA

(Picking up the hat and the cane from the hanger.) Here is your cane and hat.

Don Alfonso puts on his hat and looks himself on the mirror.

MARTA

(Teasing.) You look youthful, Pa.

DON ALFONSO

I don't look youthful. I look like an old, poor, a respectable man.

Mario and Felipe come in through the main door. They have spent the whole night dancing and drinking. They both look tired. Felipe is still groggy. He comes in with his guitar talking out loud and in a gay mood. Don Alfonso stares at them. Doña Patricia comes in from the kitchen.

FELIPE

Qué viva la fiesta! Qué viva el amor! (He embraces don Alfonso.)
Good morning, father!

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Annoyed.) Where did you spend the night?

FELIPE

(Embraces his mother.) Good morning, mother. We were in a wonderful party, in a wonderful fiesta with wonderful girls. (He sits down on the couch.)

DOÑA PATRICIA

Next time do not take Mario with you. Do you hear me, Mario? You are too young to spend the whole night in a fiesta.

MARIO

(Protesting.) I'm a full grown man.

DOÑA PATRICIA

I don't care if you think you are a full grown man. You do as I tell you.

MARIO

I'm sorry, Ma.

DOÑA PATRICIA

You are not going to kiss me? (Mario smiles and kisses her.) (She puts on her scarf.) One thing has nothing to do with the other. Marta!

MARTA

Yes, Ma.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Please serve the coffee to Mario and Felipe and take a look at the kitchen.

MARTA

I will, mother.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Alfonso, I am ready. (To the boys.) Is any of you boys going to mass?

Mario makes a negative gesture.

FELIPE

(Stands up.) Ma, if I go to mass, I'd feel I was committing a sin. I haven't been inside a church for fifteen years. (He hangs his guitar on the back wall)

DOÑA PATRICIA

The grace of God be with you. Let's go, Alfonso.

Don Alfonso, in a very dignified manner, tends his right arm to doña Patricia and they both go out.

ANTONIO

(Comes in from his room and says to Mario.) I'm going for the paper downstairs. Do you want me to do anything for you?

MARTA

No, thanks.

Antonio exits.

MARIO

(With curiosity.) I wonder who's that guy.

FELIPE

May be he is a Russian spy with a Puerto Rican profile.

MARIO

No kidding. He looks suspicious to me.

FELIPE

Anyway he is helping to support this house. What do you say, Marta?

MARTA

He looks all right to me.

FELIPE

Is he your type?

MARTA

No, he is not my type. (She goes into the kitchen.)

FELIPE

(Sitting at the table.) Hey, brother. That was a hell of a party. I had about twenty drinks. Scotch, rum and brandy, all mixed up. I feel like an H-bomb.

MARIO

(With abstraction.) I can't forget that beautiful girl from Mayaguez.

FELIPE

The one with the.... (He describes the bosom and hips of an imaginary well-shaped girl with his hands.) Is that the one?

MARIO

(Laughing.) You always look at the flesh, brother.

FELIPE

(Anusingly.) I tried to see her spirit but I could'nt. So I had to fit my eyes to her body.

MARIO

You mean the girl to whom I recited the poem?

FELIPE

Yeah. That girl should carry a sign hanging from her neck with the following inscription: "Keep off the grass." (They laugh.)

... Say, how's that poem you recited to her?

MARIO

Oh, cut it out!

FELIPE

Please, Mario. I never heard such a beautiful thing in my life. Whose poem is it?

MARIO

It's a poem by Shelley: "I fear thy kisses."

FELIPE

Say it again, Mario. Come on.

MARIO

(Recites.)

I fear thy kisses, gentle maiden;

Thou needest not fear mine;

My spirit is too deeply laden

Ever to burthen thine.

I fear thy mien, thy tones, thy motion;

Thou needest not fear mine;

Innocent is the heart's devotion

With which I worship thine.

FELIPE

(Applauds.) Bravo! Bravo! You know, brother, you've got a lot of sensibility, a lot of talent. You're wasting your time in politics. Why don't you get out from your head that crazy revolutionary stuff?

MARIO

You'll catch a cold if you don't shut your big mouth.

FELIPE

You think you're a genius, huh?

MARIO

You're drunk. (Stands up.)

FELIPE

(Stands up. Aggressive.) I'm not drunk! I'm just groggy! (Pause.)

Anyway, you never take me seriously. You think I'm just a vulgar, stupid, bloody veteran.

MARIO

I think you're a hell of a nice brother when you're not talking politics.

FELIPE

Don't be a hypocrite! Deep in your heart you despise me, just as you despise father and everybody that don't think like you. You think you're a patriot, a great revolutionary, huh? You're just a silly, ignorant kid, a trouble maker.

MARIO

(Patiently.) Take a bath and go to bed.

FELIPE

(Without paying attention to him.) You want me to talk frankly to you?

MARIO

You don't know how to talk. (He sits on the couch and slumps back.)

FELIPE

What a fraud. You've been deceiving me ever since you were fifteen years old, when you decided to be a Nationalist cadet. I remember how your friends laughed at you when you and your comrades used to go goose-stepping on the streets carrying wooden guns. I was mad every time somebody laughed at you or said anything against you. I was really proud of you. Thank God I realized pretty soon how much silliness and bigotry there was in you.

MARIO

I suppose you changed your mind when you got into the U.S. Army.

FELIPE

(Firmly.) Yeah, when I got into the Army, when I had a chance to get a look at the world, and meet people like you every place I stopped. They were loaded with Nationalism. They were arrogant and fanatical. They despised every one who wouldn't think like them. They thought their country was the best in the world, They thought the rest of the people were just bastards.

MARIO

You know nothing about politics.

FELIPE

I don't know nothing about politics, but I have seen lots of places and people. I was in Berlin after the fall of Hitler. I was in a bar drinking beer with a crowd of Russian and American soldiers when a young Russian soldier stands up and shouts: "Americans are a bunch of capitalist pigs." Wow! I wish you'd seen what happened to that Russian soldier. A Texas cowboy knocked him down. He broke his jaw.

MARIO

Will you do me a favor?

FELIPE

Go ahead.

MARIO

Please stop talking about war!

FELIPE

(Without paying attention.) You also remind me of an American soldier in Morocco. This guy used to get sore every time he couldn't find chewing gum and Coca Cola. So, one day he got into a bar and says: "Hey, you got

chewing gum and Coca Cola?" The barman says: "Sorry, mister". And the sailor says: "Goddam backward country. Why don't you close this filthy place"? You know what they did to him? They stripped him off his clothes and kicked him out stark naked. (He laughs derisively.) Every time I met a guy like you, who thought his country was the best in the world, he got into trouble. Stick it in your head, Mario. You're free to work for your cause, for your party, for your country, but don't insult the people. Don't step on their toes. They resent it. They walk on two feet and have a heart just like you and me.

MARIO

(Stands up.) Marta, will you bring us the coffee?

MARTA

(Out of scene.) Wait a minute, will you? This is not a restaurant!

FELIPE

(Thoughtfully.) I always remember grandma. The old hypocrite. She was always telling me: "Felipe, you should follow the steps of Mario. He's an educated young man." (He sneers at her. Then changes his attitude towards Mario.) Hey, Mario!

MARIO

(Sits at the table. Smiling contemptuously.) Any more insults from you?

FELIPE

(He sits at the table in front of Mario.) Sorry, kid. Listen to me. You know Betty, that Irish girl at 14th Street?

MARIO

Yes.

FELIPE

I'm going out with her tonight. You wanna go out with her sister?

MARIO

I haven't seen her. How does she look?

FELIPE

Just your type, boy. (He describes her bosom and hips with his hands.)
What you say?

MARIO

I can't make it.

FELIPE

Why? What's the matter.

MARIO

I have a Party meeting tonight.

Antonio comes in from the street. He crosses to the left and stops to hear the conversation for a minute.

FELIPE

(Disdainfully.) Oh!

MARIO

Why don't you come along with me? You'll meet important people there.

FELIPE

I know all those guys. I've heard them before. They say you the same old things all over again. (Imitating them.) "Comrades: The time is ripe to destroy American imperialism and fight for Puerto Rican independence". The pack of liars! What the hell is Puerto Rico going to do with independence? Tell me.

MARIO

We will be a sovereign country.

FELIPE

So what? We'll be a sabrin country as you guys say, but at the same time we'll go hungry.

MARIO

(Resentfully.) I rather see my country going hungry than be a colony.

FELIPE

You can tell that to me, brother, but don't ever tell it to the folks down there 'cause they'll shoot you. After all, Puerto Rico a'int a colony. Bet you never been in one, huh? Well, I have. I've been in sev'ral English and French colonies in Africa and Asia. They live in the filth, in ignorance. Those people they a'int free. I'm telling you, Puerto Rico is a free country, as free as any state under the American flag.

MARIO

You talk like a yankee.

FELIPE

Because I like'em. I like'em from the heels up to the top. And I don't feel ashamed about it. I'm not like you, Mario. I'm a simple guy. I hate double talk and double ways. You're always praising the Spaniards,

their honor, their dignity, their way o'life, but you keep on with your American citizenship. You keep on drinking whisky and eating hot dogs and going out with American girls. Lorna is an American girl.

MARIO

(Stands up. Upset.) You better stop meddling in my private life!

Antonio nods his head and goes into his room.

FELIPE

(Stands up. Placatingly.) I feel sorry for you, Mario.

MARIO

Don't waste your pity on me.

FELIPE

You know what's the matta with you, kid? You're high-roofed. You'd give anything in the world to be a Spanish aristocrat. You tell everybody that mother's father was a Spaniard, but you won't tell who was papa's father because he was an ignorant, poor mulatto farm worker. (Mario stares at him, controls himself and covers his face with his hands. Felipe sees that and he pulls himself up. He feels sorry.) I'm awfully sorry, Mario. I didn't mean to hurt you. (Pause.) I'm a sun of gun! (He slumps on the couch.)

MARIO

(Gets up.) You have no feelings at all. The American way of life has completely destroyed your personality the same way it has been destroying one Puerto Rican generation after the other. You've lost your values. You only care about money. You only read the comics. You like gambling. You despise educated people. How can you be so mean and vulgar.

Marta comes in with the coffee.

FELIPE

Did you finish?

MARIO

Yes.

FELIPE

Will you do me a favor.

MARIO

I certainly will.

FELIPE

(Loud.) Go to hell! (Laughs.)

MARTA

Hey, stop it! (Facing Felipe.) Will you shut your mouth!

FELIPE

Take it easy, Marta. Take it easy.

MARTA

(To both of them.) You boys are turning this house into a political club. There are other things more important than politics. Why don't you talk about the ways of raising money to pay our bills. This is the end of the month and we do not have the money to pay the rent and the grocery bills.

MARIO

I give mother five dollars every week.

MARTA

(Sarcastic.) You certainly are a help. Five dollars a week. You should be ashamed! What do you do with the rest of your money?

MARIO

That's not your concern.

MARTA

You throw it away. You give it to the Party, to the Movement. What about your family? You should be ashamed of yourself. And that goes for you too, Felipe.

FELIPE

You leave me alone, kid.

MARTA

Leave you alone so you can throw your money away in a gambling house.

FELIPE

Shut up!

MARTA

We cannot leave you alone. We have to stick together. This is a tough city.

MARIO

(Worried.) Is he gambling again?

MARTA

Yes. He is back at it again. He lost twenty dollars last night in that gambling house upstairs.

FELIPE

I say shut up! I'll get the money to pay the rent and the grocery bills.
I don't need your help, Marta:

MARTA

I am glad to hear it. I lost my job yesterday. What are we going to
do now, Felipe?

FELIPE

(Bitterly.) I think we better move to Texas and buy an oil well.

The door bell rings. Marta opens the
door. Jack comes in.

JACK

Hello everybody!

MARTA

Hello. You coming for the rent?

JACK

That's right.

MARTA

Can you wait till next week?

JACK

Next week?

MARTA

After all this is the first time it happens to us.

JACK

I know, Marta. I know, but the landlord don't care about that.

MARTA

May I talk with the landlord?

JACK

I wouldn't do it if I were you, Marta. He lives in Coral Gables, Miami.
He's a high hat Puerto Rican.

FELIPE

(Laughs loudly.) Well! That's a good one!

MARTA

(Subdued.) I don't know what to do.

FELIPE

(Commandingly.) Hey, Jack, come here! (Jack goes up to him. Listen,
Jack, I'll pay you the rent next Saturday. O. K.?)

JACK

O. K., Phil. Your word is good to me.

A hot mambo music is heard in the neighborhood. Jack hears the music, smiles and starts dancing alone. He really enjoys dancing.

JACK

(Dancing alone.) That's it boy! What a hot mambo!

MARIO

(To Jack. Repressing his anger. After a while.) You tramp!

JACK

(Smiling sardonically.) Please, Mario. I love dancing.

A VOICE

(From the neighborhood.) Hey! Please stop that music! We are praying!
The music stops.

MARTA

You dance very well, Jack.

JACK

I'm a professional dancer, Marta. (Opens the door.) All right. So long! (To Mario.) Adiós, Mario! (Closes the door.)

MARIO

(Angrily.) A man like that. This is humiliating.

FELIPE

We have to be nice to him. Don't you think so, Marta?

MARTA

Yes, He collects the rent.

FELIPE

You people hate everything in this damned place. I don't blame you. What about the apartment you were looking for at West End, Marta?

MARTA

I was too late.

MARIO

That's a lie. It's still vacant. I'll show it to you. (He gets the newspaper from the desk at the right.) Look. Here it is. (Reads.)
"Apartment for rent!" What do you say now?

MARTA

What can I say?

MARIO

You know why they don't rent it to you? Because you are a Puerto Rican, Segregation. Discrimination.

MARTA

Please, Mario. (She goes out into the kitchen.)

MARIO

They hate us. Listen, Felipe.....

FELIPE

I won't hear your sermonizing any more.

MARIO

You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

FELIPE

I oughtta burn myself for having a brother like you.

MARIO

You have deserted your people.

FELIPE

I'm no Moses. What do you want me to do?

MARIO

Have you ever chased a cat into a blind-alley?

FELIPE

(Shouting.) No! Have you?

MARIO

Yes, I have. It's just what they're doing to Puerto Ricans in this city. They're chasing us. You know what the cat does, what the people do when they chase them into a blind-alley? They fight it out like hell!

FELIPE

(Gets near him. Perplexed.) What do you mean, Mario?

MARIO

(Challenging.) We've got to fight it out. Like the Puerto Rican kid in Riverside Drive. The boys didn't want to play with him. So he went up to his father's room, took up his gun and fired a shot to the air. What happened? The kids got scared and they played with him afterwards. We've got to fight it out the same way.

FELIPE

Just a moment! You don't mean that. That's terrorism. Cut it out! You'll get the whole family in trouble.

MARIO

You yellow coward!

FELIPE

grasping him by the shirt.) Me, a coward? You know damned well what they did to me in Iwo Jima. They tied me up to a tree with a bayonet. They made a cross on my chest with a knife. I stayed bleeding the whole day while the ants were covering my body, drinking my blood. And you call me a coward. (He pushes him.)

Mario recovers. Suddenly, enraged and out of control, he throws himself against his brother hitting him hard against the couch. Marta screams and takes hold of Mario. Antonio enters. He holds Felipe while Marta pushes Mario out through the main door. Felipe gets loose from Antonio and rushes toward the door. Marta stands up against the door with her arms opened.

FELIPE

(Stops in front of Marta. He is too angry to control himself. He closes his right fist and shouts desperately:) I can't hit him! I can't! He's my brother!. (He hits the round table with a terrible blow.)

Curtain.

ACT II - S C E N E 11

Two weeks later. In the morning. Marta is seated darning Mario's pants while he waits impatiently with a towel around his waist as if wearing an apron.

MARIO

(To Marta.) Hurry up with my pants, will you? I look as if I were heading for the Olympics.

MARTA

Why such a hurry?

MARIO

(Looking at his wrist watch) I have a meeting. A Party meeting.

MARTA

Where were you last night, Mario?

MARIO

(Evasively.) I was talking to the President of the United States.

MARTA

Come on. The truth.

MARIO

(Impatiently.) I was upstairs with Lorna.

MARTA

The American girl?

MARIO

Yes, the americana. Have you seen her?

MARTA

Of course. (Pause.) She is pregnant.

MARIO

(Worried.) I know.

MARTA

What are you going to do about it?

MARIO

Marry her.

MARTA

When?

MARIO

I can't tell you right now. I'm too busy with the Party.

MARTA

She comes before the Party. Do you hear me? (Finishes her work and stands up.) Here, your pants. And hurry up. I'll serve your coffee

right away.

Mario exits to his room. Marta goes out into the kitchen. She is heard singing in Spanish.

MARTA

(Out of scene) Mario, would you have toast?

MARIO

No, I just want coffee!

MARTA

(Out of scene) I feel happy this morning, Mario! I wonder what's going to happen! (She starts singing again.)

MARIO

(Comes in adjusting his coat.) Say, that's the way a soprano start

MARTA

(Enters with a cup of coffee.) One of these days I'm going to sing in the Spanish amateur hour on T.V. They do it worse.

Mario takes the cup of coffee on his hands and sits down. Marta watches him.

MARTA

Be careful, Mario. Don't get yourself in trouble.

MARIO

(Stands up.) O.K., Marta. (Kisses her in the forehead.)

MARTA

Wait. (She fixes his tie and takes a look at him from head to feet.) Your shoes. Clean them.

Mario cleans his shoes with his handkerchief. The door bell rings.

MARTA

Who is it?

CHANA

(Out of scene.) It's meee, Chana!

MARTA

I'm coming! (Opens the door.)

CHANA

(Enters with a package in her hands.) Hello, Marta. (Mario crosses to the main door and Chana takes a look at him and smiles.) Ave Maria! What a rooster! I wish I had eighteen years!

MARIO

(Smiling.) Good-bye Chana. (Exits.)

CHANA

God bless him! (To Marta.) Where's doña Patricia?

MARTA

She is out with father.

CHANA

Here. I brought these mangoes for her. (Gives her the package.)

MARTA

(Happy.) Oh, mangoes. I love them. Where did you get them, Chana?

CHANA

From Puerto Rico.

MARTA

How's that? They won't let you bring mangoes to New York.

CHANA

Immigration authorities don't let mangoes come in, but they have to let books come in. So I tell mother every time I want mangoes: "Mother, send me a box of round yellow books by air mail." She understands all right.

MARTA

(Laughs.) How old is she?

CHANA

She's so old that her face looks like a tortoise shell. I guess she must be a hundred years already. Every time I ask her how old she is she says to me: (Imitating her.) "When the Spanish-American War I was living with my eight husband."

MARTA

She married eight times?

CHANA

That's a lie. She never got married. But she got nine husbands all right. (Confidentially.) Number nine was an American soldier from Boston. (Pause. Looks at her.) No; he's not my father. (Pause.) Father came later. (Pause.) God bless her. She wants to come to New York.

The door bell rings.

MARTA

Who is it?

JACK

(Out of scene.) The janitor!

MARTA

It's Jack, the janitor. (Opens the door.)

Chana is in love with Jack but he does not pay attention to her. Chana fixes her hair and dress and pretends she is looking out the back window.

JACK

(Comes in with a tool kit in his hands.) Hello, Marta. Please show me the lock that don't work.

MARTA

(Pointing to the second door at left.) That one over there.

JACK

(He is shocked at seeing Chana and he crosses to the left without looking at her.) Hum!

CHANA

Hey, you! What's the matta with you! Do I look like a painting on the wall?

JACK

Leave me alone, will you?

CHANA

You think because you're American you can look to me over your shoulders.

JACK

I'm sorry.

CHANA

You better look at me when I speak to you. Do you hear me? (Jack faces her.) What a monkey face!

JACK

Don't think you're the smiling Mona Lisa.

CHANA

Lemme tell you one thing, mister. I'm an American citizen just as you are.

(To Marta, tenderly.) Good bye, Marta dear. (She opens the door.)

Marta, you better watch that guy. (Jack looks angrily at her and she says to him:) So long, pretty boy! (Exits.)

JACK

Godam it! What a woman. Excuse me, Marta. Nobody home?

MARTA

No.

JACK

(Takes out his cigarettes.) Want to smoke?

MARTA

(Takes a cigarette.) Thank you. (Goes to the table.)

JACK

Wait. (Lights up his lighter.) Here. (Blows out the light, and looks at her.) Marta, Phil hasn't pay the rent yet. He's broke. (Goes back to the door he is fixing.) That's too bad.

MARTA

I only got part of the rent.

JACK

Marta, the landlord don't want excuses. He wants money.

MARTA

This is awful.

JACK

(Goes back to her.) Marta, you're a nice looking girl. Now, don't get me wrong. If you don't mind, I can lend you some money.

MARTA

Can you lend me fifty dollars?

JACK

Oh, no, Marta. Fifty bucks is a lot of money. I can lend you ten, fifteen dollars. (Pause.) Why don't you ask for that money right where you work?

MARTA

I have no job. They fired me.

JACK

For Pete's sake!

MARTA

Jack, you know any place where I can work?

JACK

Well. Lemme tell you. There's a job waiting for you.

MARTA

Waiting for me? Where is that?

JACK

It's a dancing school.

MARTA

Dancing school? What am I suppose to do?

JACK

Teach dancing.

MARTA

Me?

JACK

Positively. I know what I mean.

MARTA

There must be hundreds of really good dancing teachers in New York.

JACK

Not like you, Marta. I mean it.

MARTA

What have I got that the others don't have.

JACK

Rythm. The wonderful latin rythm. Put on the music, please.

MARTA

(Flattered.) Really, I love dancing. (Moves to the left and starts looking at the records on the table.) When I was living in San Juan, I used to take classes in Spanish ballet. (Puts on the victrola.)

The music is "Capullito de Alelí" by Rafael Hernández.

JACK

That's the stuff they like here. Come on, Marta. (Marta dances alone.)

That's it. Boy, oh boy! That's it. (He goes on dancing with her in a fancy comical way.)

MARTA

How do I dance?

JACK

Like a goddess, Marta. Your rythm, it's wonderful. (Pause. they dance. He looks at her sexily.) You know, Marta, you've got just one thing that'll make you a top dancing teacher.

MARTA

What's that?

JACK

(He stops and looks at her lasciviously.) Your body: It's loaded with sun. Your body. It's beautiful. Believe me, Marta. It's beautiful.

MARTA

(Embarrassed.) Jack, I don't like that. (She crosses to the left and puts off the victrola.)

JACK

Don't get sore, Marta. What's wrong with a beautiful girl?
After all, I'm telling you the truth.

MARTA

(Thoughtfully.) How much do they pay in that job?

JACK

Well... about fifteen bucks per day.

MARTA

(Shocked.) Fifteen dollars?

JACK

Fifteen plus the tips you get.

MARTA

Tips?

JACK

Yeah. Tips from the gentlemen that take dancing lessons with you. You understand what I mean?

MARTA

Yes. You expect me to sleep with the customers.

JACK

Let's face it, Marta. Lots of men take dancing lessons just looking for a chance to have a nice time with a girl.

MARTA

Shut up!

JACK

All right. But don't get excited. (Goes back to the door he is fixing.) That lock is no good. I'll have to get a new one. (Closes the tool kit and gets ready to leave. Marta is looking out the back window. Jack goes to her, offers her a cigarette. She rejects it. Jack throws the package on the table.) I'll leave you the package. (Pause.) Marta, I got a swell business proposition to make you.

MARTA

You ought to be working in Wall Street.

JACK

I'm willing to spend some money in a dancing school of my own. I'll make you my partner in the business and we split fifty-fifty. What' you say?

MARTA

You picked the wrong girl, Jack. Your dancing school sounds immoral.

JACK

I don't understand this moral stuff. Morals is a double-dealing business. Think about it. A woman loses her reputation if she sleeps with more than one man. On the other side, a man can enjoy his life with a hundred

women and he don't loses his reputation. That's positively unfair for women. Its' a double faced morality. Women should have the same sexual privileges as men. Just as the French lady downstairs always says: "Men and women are birds of the same feather. C'est la vie".

MARTA

You have no morals, Jack.

JACK

Oh, yes, I've got my own morals. A poor guy morals. The one that fits me best to survive in this tough place. We're living in a jungle, Marta. All I'm telling you is this: Wake up. Don't let yourself down. Don't go hungry. Make use of that beautiful body which God gave you.

MARTA

(Repressing her anger.) That's enough.

JACK

O.K. (Takes up the tool kit from the table.) Sorry, Marta. (Pause.) Anyway, think about it. You could make easily a hundred bucks a week. May be more, if you're willing to give private dancing lessons.

MARTA

Get out!

JACK

(Opens the main door.) Think it over, Marta. (Exits.)

Instantly, Pérez Prado's mambo "Qué

Rico Mambo" is heard in the neighborhood. Marta moves to the back window attracted by the music. Slowly she starts following the rhythm with her body until she is completely enthralled by the music and starts dancing alone. Subconsciously she is feeling her own beauty and considering the possibilities of becoming a dancing teacher. She stops in front of the mirror and looks at her face, her neck and hair. Suddenly she realizes the meaning of her thoughts, turns around thoughtfully, sits down on the couch, slumps back and starts weeping in silence while the mambo music goes on to a climax.

C U R T A I N

S C E N E III

Two days later. Evening. Antonio is looking out the back window. The door bell rings.

ANTONIO

(Opens the door.) Hello.

Enters Jack.

JACK

Hello, Antonio. Marta here?

ANTONIO

No. Would you like to leave a message for her?

JACK

Please tell'er I can't wait any longer for the rent. (Makes a negative gesture with his head.) You know if she's got a job already?

ANTONIO

I don't think so.

JACK

That's too bad. What the hell's the matta with these people? They're broke and they waste their time discussing politics as if they didn't have enough headaches already. You know what I mean.

ANTONIO

(Understandingly.) Yes, I know.

JACK

I'm sorry for them. I like'em... You know why? They remind me of my family. Irish immigrants. We were always discussing Irish politics, fighting each other. My old man-he was always planning to go back, just like don Alfonso. You know, Felipe is the only one in this family with his head on top of his ears. But Mario, he's upside down. He's fanatic. Waht you say?

ANTONIO

We are all fanatics, Jack. Everybody thinks he is on the right track.

JACK

(Shocked.Cinically.) That's a hot one. (Respectfully.) Say, what's your job, mister?

ANTONIO

Thinking is my job.

JACK

(Smiling.) Well, you must be a hell of a wise guy to make a living on that. So long, Antonio. (Exits.)

Antonio smiles. The music of Summertime by Gershwin is heard softly in the neighborhood. Antonio walks to the back window and listens to the music. Few moments later, Marta comes in through the main door. She looks tired. She doesn't see Antonio and sits down on the chair at the right.

ANTONIO

Good evening.

MARTA

(Scared.) Oh! I didn't know you were here. Anybody home?

ANTONIO

Only you and me. (Hands a letter to Marta.) A letter for you. I picked it up downstairs.

MARTA

(Surprised and happy, she opens the letter.) Excuse me. (As she reads the letter her face takes an expression of anguish. Finally she crushes the letter and remains silent.)

ANTONIO

Bad news?

MARTA

(Thoughtfully.) I was expecting it.

ANTONIO

Family affairs?

MARTA

Love affairs. (Sardonic.) Go on.

ANTONIO

Please, Marta. Don't get sore.

MARTA

I am not sore. I feel tired, dissatisfied.

ANTONIO

What's the story, Marta.

MARTA

He is a married man. About forty I met him when I was a school teacher in the mountains of Puerto Rico. He was extremely unhappy with his wife. (Pause.) He promised to get a divorce and marry me two years ago. Now he sends me a letter saying that it's impossible because of the children.

(Weeps silently.) Don't you think I have a strong reason for weeping?

ANTONIO

You have all the reason in the world, Marta.

MARTA

Is it true that weeping is a sign of weakness?

ANTONIO

It's a sign of human vitality.

MARTA

You are very kind. Are you doing social work at present?

ANTONIO

At present I'm in love with you.

MARTA

(Stands up.) This is the second time you tell it to me. The third time I'll tell it to my father.

ANTONIO

You're impulsive.

MARTA

Please do not discuss my personality. Let's discuss yours. What are you planning to do?

ANTONIO

I usually work during the summer and then I take a long rest... thinking and reading.

MARTA

That's a waste of time.

ANTONIO

I enjoy it a great deal. I spend most of the time with Bobo.

MARTA

Who is Bobo?

ANTONIO

A chimpanzee at the zoo. It's a good animal. There's no evil in it. I guess man was just like that in the beginning. Perhaps he's still good in the depth of his soul.

MARTA

You are an unusual person. You seem to be attracted by almost everything you find in your path whether it's a preacher, a woman or a chimpanzee.

Am I wrong?

ANTONIO

May be. I don't know. I feel enthusiastic about life in general. I like

thinking and talking about things nobody cares about. But because I am strongly inclined toward intellectual exercises, the people think I am a lazy fellow.

MARTA

You are not fitted to live in this big, steel, noisy city. Why don't you pack and go away?

ANTONIO

Will you go away with me?

MARTA

I'm not an orphan. I have to take care of father and mother. I don't trust Mario and Felipe. They are a pair of wild cats. Sometimes I dream we're all in a lifeboat.

ANTONIO

Sometimes I dream I'm walking with a crowd along a huge, long, turnpike and everybody talking a different language.

MARTA

(Pause.) One of these days I'll be doing an awful thing.

ANTONIO

(Lovingly.) Marta.

MARTA

Don't look to me like that, Antonio.

ANTONIO

(Gets near her.) Marta.

MARTA

Don't do it, Antonio. You'll be sorry.

ANTONIO

(Looking at her insistently.) I love you, Marta. I feel it all over me.

I want you ever since I saw you. I want you every minute of my life. (Holds her by the waist and tries to kiss her.)

MARTA

(Slaps him on the face.) Stop it!

ANTONIO

I'm sorry.

MARTA

I think I misjudged you. You're a rotten egghead.

ANTONIO

I couldn't control myself.

MARTA

You're just like the rest of them. You start talking nice and soft and then suddenly you show up your claws.

ANTONIO

I'd always looked at you from the distance. I never dreamed of having you so near to me. I still have a strong desire to be near you, to touch your hands, your face, your lips.

MARTA

You're looking for a woman. I can see it in your eyes, in your lips. They are trembling.

ANTONIO

I want you.

MARTA

(Bitterly. Weeping.) All right. You want to sleep with me.

ANTONIO

Pull yourself, Marta.

MARTA

(Disregarding what he said.) Let's make a deal. I'm willing to... for fifty dollars.

ANTONIO

(Shocked. Stares at her.) Marta!

MARTA

(Hysterical.) Do you hear me? For fifty dollars! (Antonio shakes his head with pity and she throws herself on the couch weeping.)

ANTONIO

(Tenderly.) Marta, let's make a deal. (She stops weeping and stares at him.) I'll give you fifty dollars right now just for one single word.

MARTA

What word is it?

ANTONIO

The word "NO". Answer "NO" to this question. Do you really think I am a rotten man? (Pause.) Look at me. (She looks intently at him.) Am I?

MARTA

(Sincerely.) No.

ANTONIO

(Takes out his purse and sits down on the couch.) I wish I were a clown with a big mouth and a round nose like a tomato.

MARTA

Why?

ANTONIO

To make you laugh.

MARTA

You're a sad fellow,

ANTONIO

Don't get me wrong now, Marta. Close your eyes. (Marta closes her eyes.)
Open your hands. (She opens her hands and he puts into them a few dollar
bills.) Open your eyes now but don't look at your hands.

MARTA

(Opens her eyes and looks into her hands. Surprised.) I don't want that
money.

ANTONIO

We made a deal. You must stick to it. Smile. (They both smile.)

Mario comes in abruptly through the main
door and stares at them. Marta and Antonio
stand up.

MARTA

Hello, Mario.

MARIO

Has anybody been here looking for me?

MARTA

No. What's the matter.

Mario looks nervous.

ANTONIO

Something wrong, Mario?

MARIO

(Defiantly.) Yeah.

ANTONIO

Can I help you?

MARIO

(Sardonic.) Of course: The police is following me.

ANTONIO

Why?

MARIO

Because I'm a Nationalist. Can you help me?

ANTONIO

That's a tough job you've picked, Mario.

MARIO

Don't start sermonizing me.

ANTONIO

May be a little sermonizing could be useful to you.

MARIO

Shut your mouth, will you?

ANTONIO

Mario, I was a Nationalist like you.

MARIO

(Interested.) You? A Nationalist?

ANTONIO

Yes. (Pause.) I quit yeess ago.

MARIO

(Disdainfully.) Yes, I know.

ANTONIO

(With serenity and respect toward Mario.) I was just like you, Mario. Ideas burned in my head. Like explosions in the Sun. One day they ordered me to throw a bomb...

MARIO

And you got scared and quit.

ANTONIO

No. (Pause.) I threw the bomb.

MARIO

(Impressed.) Really?

ANTONIO

(Thoughtfully.) I hurt badly a man and a boy. They had nothing to do with the Nationalists.

MARIO

You know what we do with sentimental guys like you? We kick'em out.

ANTONIO

You won't get any place kicking people around. People don't like being kicked.

MARIO

Are you a preacher?

ANTONIO

No. I don't preach anything. You, for example. You believe in violence.

MARIO

To question what?

ANTONIO

The things in which they believe. You, for example. You believe in violence

MARIO

Yes. As a means to an end.

ANTONIO

What's the end of a cigarette butt, what's the end of you, what's the end of life? Who knows? Tell me now how can anybody kill people as a means to an end.

MARIO

Sometimes violence is justified as a political weapon.

ANTONIO

You know what was Ghandi's weight? Seventy pounds. Seventy pounds that shocked the British Empire with the most original political weapon man ever invented. Peaceful resistance.

MARIO

You're the perfect egghead. You got your brain full of words. You think you'll save the world with your theories, uh?

ANTONIO

The world has never been saved and will never be saved by a single man. It's a big job that takes in all the people living in the world. You can be sure of this, Mario. The world will never be saved with a blood-bath.

MARIO

You, coward! (Sends a jab to Antonio but Antonio grabs his wrist and twists his arm.)

ANTONIO

(Dominating Mario with a Jiu-Jitsu trick.) Don't worry. I'm not going to hit you.

Felipe comes in through the main door.

FELIPE

Hey, what's going on?

ANTONIO

(Holding Mario.) Mario got sore. That's all. (Lets him loose. Mario tries to fight with Antonio but Felipe holds him.)

FELIPE

Easy, Mario.

MARIO

(Struggling.) Let me go!

FELIPE

You can't go away. There's a Nationalist riot in the street. They are looking for you.

LORNA

(Shouting out of scene.) Mario! Mario! Mario!

Felipe opens the door and Lorna enters.

Lorna is an American girl about twenty.

She is pregnant and looks frightened.

LORNA

(To Felipe.) Is Mario here? (When she sees Mario she embraces him.) Mario, I was looking all over for you. Somebody told me that you're in trouble... that you're a Nationalist.

MARIO

Please, Lorna, don't follow me. Leave me alone, will you?

(He walks to the back window.)

LORNA

(Following him.) Mario, what are we going to do?

MARIO

Don't get mixed up in this. Go to your room. (He intends to escape through the window.)

LORNA

Please, Mario... the baby...it's coming soon.

MARIO

(Shocked.) The baby. (Pause.) I'm sorry, Lorna. (He embraces her.)

Instantly, Luis rushes in through the main door.

LUIS

Watch out, Mario! They're looking for you! Beat it!

Mario tries to escape through the window but

Lorna holds him.

LORNA

(Struggling with Mario!) Mario! Mario! Don't! Mario!

Felipe and Marta take hold of Lorna. Mario

gets loose from her and finally escapes through the window.

LORNA

(Shouting.) Mario! Mario! Don't let him go away! Mario! Mario!

Stop him! Let me go! (She tries to follow him.)

FELIPE

(Struggles with Lorna.) You can't go away like that! (He holds her firmly and forces her to sit down on a chair near the table.)

LORNA

(Weeping. She recovers herself.) I'm sorry. (Pause) I'm Lorna. (Pause.)
You are Marta?

MARTA

(Tenderly.) Yes, Lorna. I'm Marta.

LORNA

Mario is a Nationalist. You know it?

FELIPE

Yeah. We know it.

MARTA

(Stands up.) Why don't you do something about it?

FELIPE

It's useless. He won't pay attention to anybody.

LORNA

(She throws herself on the couch, weeping.) Oh, my Lord! He didn't tell me a single word. He kept it secret all the time and now...what can I do? I'm pregnant. (Pause.) I don't care what happens. I love him. I love him. Oh, Marta.

MARTA

Come on, Lorna. I'll take you to your room. (They exit.)

There is a long pause. Felipe lights a cigarette and offers one to Antonio.

FELIPE

Love is a blind affair, Antonio. Look at Lorna. She's pregnant and during all that time she didn't know Mario was a Nationalist. (He sits down on the couch.)

ANTONIO

She's more generous and human than the bunch of us.

FELIPE

Why do you say that?

ANTONIO

Because she loves Mario now more than before in spite of everything.

FELIPE

(Thoughtfully.) I wish I had a spark of intelligence once every month. 13

(He looks worried.)

ANTONIO

What's worrying you?

FELIPE

I get excited every time I see a beautiful woman. I start saying compliments.

ANTONIO

You better stop it. It's an old Spanish custom which people here don't like.

FELIPE

You telling me? I lost my job at the garage on account of that.

ANTONIO

You fool.

FELIPE

I couldn't control myself. It's part of my nature. I was selling gasoline outside when a beautiful woman driving a sports car stops at the garage. She steps out and says to me: "Fill it up." I couldn't. It was incredible.

ANTONIO

What?

FELIPE

Her bosom. Italian style. You know. So I stared at her like this. (He mimicks.) And she says to me: "You're drilling my chest with your eyes, young man." (Gallantly.) Oh, boy! These words made me feel I was Superman. So I take off my hat, take a bow and say to her: "God bless you, my lady."

ANTONIO

(Laughs.) Bravo!

FELIPE

I wish the owner of the garage had said bravo too. He took the gasoline hose out of my hands and says to me: "Get out here, you lousy Communist." (Antonio laughs again.) Can you beat that? Calling me a communist because I like beautiful women.

ANTONIO

I like your mood.

FELIPE

Lemme tell you. There're two things I don't like in this country. First. Men don't pay compliments to women. You find in the streets of New York the most beautiful women in the world and the men pass along as if nothing was happening. My Lord! It's incredible. And second: They call you a comunist for saying compliments to women.

ANTONIO

The meaning of comunism and democracy is getting more confused every time. A while ago I heard Jack the janitor calling Chana a communist because she was throwing garbage out the window. You know what Chana answered him: "I throw away the garbage where I please. This is a free country."

FELIPE

(Stands up thoughtfully.) I'm fed up, Antonio. I've been struggling all my life and what've I got?

ANTONIO

You have lived. Whatever that means.

FELIPE

What's the meaning of life for a guy like me always hunting for a job, always taking care of my family? Have you got an answer?

ANTONIO

I can answer you with another question. What's the meaning of life for a man who spends his best/^{years}making money and dies of a heart attack?

FELIPE

I can't argue with you, Antonio. You're always questioning other people's belief and you never get an answer for anybody. If you'd led the kind of life I've led you certainly wouldn't be philosophizing all the time. A guy hasn't got time for deep thinking when he ain't got a job and lives in a big city like New York. Sometimes I feel as if I had the Empire State on top of my head and the people pushing me around.

ANTONIO

I understand.

FELIPE

Well, I don't understand what's happening to me, what's happening to the bunch of us Puerto Ricans. I hate to think that Mario is right. I love this country. I want to live here for the rest of my life. I want to marry here and raise my children like my Italian friends. But it's getting worse for me every time.

ANTONIO

That's a tough job for Latin immigrants. We've got to break the ice.

FELIPE

(Desperately.) You tell me now how we're going to break the ice.

ANTONIO

Easy, boy.

FELIPE

We only get the lowest type of work when we get it.

ANTONIO

Our people know how to work the land. But don't forget this is an industrial city.

FELIPE

All right. But that's no reason to despise us, to give us the hard look. We can't live in decent places. They sneer at us. If you talk out loud it's undignified. If you play the guitar on the street you're a queer fellow. If you talk in Spanish, they resent it. And if you talk in English they laugh at us. They call us spiks. Spiks!

ANTONIO

It happens all over the world, Felipe, when people of different cultures get together. They resent each other. It's a primitive attitude of civilized people.

FELIPE

Goddam it! What can we do about it?

ANTONIO

Get into the melting pot. Keep on or quit and go back home.

FELIPE

(Stubborn.) Listen. I'm not going back. I'm not going back!
Do you hear me? Even if I've ^{got} to sell my soul to the devil.

ANTONIO

(Impressed.) That's the spirit!

The bell rings. Antonio opens the door.

Irma enters.

IRMA

(To Antonio, with coldness.) Hello. (To Felipe.) Hello, honey!

(Crosses to the left.)

ANTONIO

Excuse me.

IRMA

I hope you ain't leaving on account of me.

ANTONIO

(Cortiously.) Oh, no. Not at all. I was just going out anyway.

IRMA

Nobody home? (Takes a look at the kitchen.)

ANTONIO

Felipe.

FELIPE

So long, Antonio.

ANTONIO

Don't sell your soul to the devil. (Exits.)

IRMA

(Looking at Felipe who is in a passive mood.) What's the matta?
You and that guy were praying?

ANTONIO

Cut it out.

IRMA

Will you be my business partner or not?

FELIPE

I haven't made up my mind yet.

IRMA

You don't have to skip your dates with me just because you haven't made
up your mind. You kept me waiting last night.

FELIPE

I'm sorry.

IRMA

Who's holding you?

FELIPE

My conscience.

IRMA

I never pay attention to it. That guy, Antonio, I don't like his remarks
when he left. "Don't sell your soul to the devil." What the hell does he
meant by that?

FELIPE

Ask him.

IRMA

What's his racket?

ANTONIO

Are you in the F.B.I.?

IRMA

No.

FELIPE

Then stop your questioning.

IRMA

May be Antonio is in the F.B.I.

FELIPE

So what? He's an educated man, a nice, decent guy.

IRMA

He must be from Mars.

FELIPE

You don't trust nobody. You think every man is a wolf, a tramp.

IRMA

I got my personal reasons for not trusting nice, educated people.

FELIPE

Baby, you must have lots of experience with men.

IRMA

(She sits down on the couch and slumps back.) One man is enough if it hurts you. The first guy that made love to me was a decent, educated guy as you say. I was seventeen and he was a rich Puerto Rican sugar cane farmer. Father and I used to live in his farm as sharecroppers. You know the way he seduced me? He sent father away to another farm. He told Papa he was gonna put me in charge of a needlework shop he had in town. (Sadly.) I never saw the needlework shop. I never saw Pa again. (Pause.) Guess how much the goddam farmer had to give me to shut my mouth. (Pause.) Fifty bucks and a boat ticket to New York. (With a forced laugh.) What a deal! (Pause. Looks at Felipe who is in a pensive mood. She caresses him but he pays no attention to her.) Well, since you've got the blues, I better leave you alone. (She makes a move.)

FELIPE

(Holds her by the wrist.) Wait.

IRMA

(Passionately.) Phil, I want you to come along with me. I swear I got nothing to do with Bill O'Hara anymore. He was just my business partner. I'll give you anything you ask me.

FELIPE

I hate to make a living that way.

IRMA

What's wrong with the dope business? I know two doctors and a rich man living in Park Avenue that make a living out of it.

FELIPE

It's against the law.

IRMA

To hell with the law. Is there a law gainst the big guys that make and sell ammunitions? Is there a law against the big guys that sell war machinery to Latin dictators to kill people?

FELIPE

Irma, it's easy to do a wrong thing if you take the example of what other people are doing wrong.

IRMA

You're a hard egg, boy.

FELIPE

I have a family, Irma, a respectable family.

IRMA

(Takes out a package of cigarettes from her purse.) What do you mean a respectable family? You're living in Harlem. You got no money, no steady job. Nothing. Where's the respectability?

FELIPE

(Nervous.) All right.

IRMA

You're nervous. Have a cigarette. (She lights a cigarette for him.) I feel sorry for your family, Phil. (Felipe gives her a hard look.) Don't give me the hard look. I mean it. I've got a heart too. It breaks my heart to see your old man dreaming the whole day about his past, talking nonsense about his big friend the American general I don't know what the hell's his name.

FELIPE

Shut up!

IRMA

You know it's the damn truth I'm telling you. The same thing with your mother. She's always complaining about the old man throwing away her fortune when the only thing she inherited was an old house and a piece of land.

FELIPE

Who told you that?

IRMA

The old man that sells lottery tickets. He's from your home town. He gave me the whole story.

FELIPE

All right. Let's have it. Spit it out. You want me to get down on my kness?

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IRMA

Why should I? I just feel sorry to see your people trying to keep alive the old times, the happy ways of living in Puerto Rico. Those days don't come back anymore. It's true you were a respectable family, but that don't mean a thing here. This city is full of tough people who never dream. What counts here is money. I can help you.

FELIPE

I don't want your help!

IRMA

'Cause I come from a poor family of sharecroppers?

FELIPE

You know damn well that's not the reason! It's because you're...

IRMA

O.K. Phil. That's enough. I know my place. You feel you're better than me. If that's true, I'd give my whole life to be on the same level with you. (Picks up her purse from the table.) So long, Phil.

FELIPE

Don't go, Irma. Please. (He walks to her, stops in front of her and bends his head.) I need your help.

IRMA

How much? (Opens her purse.)

FELIPE

A hundred dollars. To pay the rent and the grocery.

IRMA

Give me your word.

FELIPE

I swear.

IRMA

Here's fifty dollars. (Hands him the bills. Opens the door.)

FELIPE

What about the rest?

IRMA

(Smiling, coquettish.) Upstairs.

FELIPE

(Subdued.) What time?

IRMA

Any time. (Exits.)

Felipe looks completely defeated. He sits down on the arm chair with the bills in his hands. Don Alfonso and doña Patricia enter from the street.)

DOÑA PATRICIA

Oh, Felipe is here, Alfonso. (She goes to the kitchen.)

DON ALFONSO

Hola, Felipe. Errr... Did you go to the grocery store?

FELIPE

I got the money here, father.

DON ALFONSO

(Gaily.) Fine! Did you hear that, Patricia?

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Out of scene.) What is it?

DON ALFONSO

Felipe has the money to pay the grocery. We don't have to worry any more.

Don Alfonso goes into his room and starts singing a Spanish song. Felipe stands up and leaves the bills on top of the table. Then he opens the main door, looks upstairs and exits.

C U R T A I N

T H I R D A C T

S C E N E 1

A month later in the fall. Don Alfonso has just finished giving a haircut to Antonio.

DON ALFONSO

(Taking off the towel from Antonio's neck.) Why are you leaving New York so soon?

ANTONIO

I want to see Chicago and then the Pacific islands.

DON ALFONSO

Can I ask you a personal question?

ANTONIO

Of course.

DON ALFONSO

Are you in love with my daughter?

ANTONIO

Yes, sir. But she's not in love with me.

DON ALFONSO

Why not? You're an intelligent young man. Is she expecting to marry the Prince of Asturias?

ANTONIO

She has the right to pick up the man she likes.

DON ALFONSO

(Thoughtfully.) I know what's the matter with her. She's still thinking about that man. (Suddenly.) I'll talk to her.

ANTONIO

Don't try to force me on her.

The bell rings. Antonio opens the door. Doña Patricia enters with two grocery bags in her hands. She looks nervous.

ANTONIO

Let me help you. (He takes the bags into the kitchen and comes back.)

DON ALFONSO

You're late, Patricia.

DOÑA PATRICIA

I had to walk to Third Avenue. (Nervously.) Is Mario here?

DON ALFONSO

(Looking at her.) What's wrong, Patricia?

DOÑA PATRICIA

Rumors. (Pause.) They were saying downstairs the Nationalists attacked the Governor's House in San Juan.

DON ALFONSO

(Incredulous.) Hum! How can you believe that, Patricia?

DOÑA PATRICIA

Oh, I feel awful.

DON ALFONSO

(Placating her.) Come on, Patricia. Don't pay attention to rumors. You know how people are down there. They see fireworks and they say it's a revolution. Come on. Get me some coffee, please.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(She goes to the kitchen saying:) I wonder where Mario is.

DON ALFONSO

(Looks at Antonio who is looking himself into the mirror.) I say, Antonio, that a revolution of the people is impossible in Puerto Rico because the people themselves are in power. Say, how's that haircut?

ANTONIO

Perfect.

DON ALFONSO

That was my first occupation. I will never forget it.

ANTONIO

(Takes out from his pocket a dollar bill.) Here you're.

DON ALFONSO

(With dignity.) You're offending me, my boy. I do that just for fun. (He starts putting his instruments inside the kit.)

ANTONIO

Thank you, sir. (Crosses to the door.)

DON ALFONSO

So long, Antonio.

ANTONIO
Don Alfonso, please don't say a word to Marta about me. (Exits.)

DON ALFONSO

Talking to himself.) Hm! I certainly will talk to her. (He goes mumbling into his room with the barber kit and reenters.)

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Enters from the kitchen.) You are talking alone, Alfonso.

DON ALFONSO

Oh, I want to talk to you about Marta and Antonio.

DOÑA PATRICIA

I know. (Sits down on the couch.)

DON ALFONSO

Well, if you know already, what do you say?

DOÑA PATRICIA

There is nothing to say. Marta does not love Antonio.

DON ALFONSO

The little fool. Don't you think we should try to convince her?

DOÑA PATRICIA

I talked to her a few days ago and she said nothing. This love affair reminds me of our own love affair.

DON ALFONSO

What do you mean?

DOÑA PATRICIA

When I was in love with you, father wanted me to marry the son of don Fulgencio, the landowner.

DON ALFONSO

Don't say that. Our case was different. I was a single man.

DOÑA PATRICIA

A single man, yes, but you were always chasing Ramona, that plump little widow.

DON ALFONSO

(Simulates being offended.) You're embarrassing me, Patricia. Suppose I recall now the evening I saw you kissing good-bye that American officer I forgot his name.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Stands up, offended.) Alfonso, you should remember very well that Lieutenant Billy Carson was my fiancé at that time. (Goes

into the kitchen.)

DON ALFONSO

(With a hearty laugh.) Dear Patricia, you don't have the slightest sense of humor.

Marta comes in from the street. She looks tired.

DON ALFONSO

Hello, Marta.

MARTA

(Takes off her coat and kisses don Alfonso.) Hello, Pa. How are you feeling today?

DON ALFONSO

I feel I'm getting older and wiser. How about you?

MARTA

Sick of teaching the mambo. Where's Ma?

DON ALFONSO

She's in the kitchen. (Calling.) Patricia! Marta is here! (Pause.) My darling daughter, I don't understand how decent people are interested in a sexy primitive dance like the mambo.

MARTA

Thanks to that sexy, primitive dance I'm making a living.

DON ALFONSO

That's an unnecessary remark. (Pause.) Why don't you teach Vienesse waltzes and minuets?

MARTA

Because we're living in the atom bomb age.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Enters with a glass of milk in her hands.) Hello, Marta.

(She kisses her.) Here's your milk.

MARTA

(Takes the glass of milk.) Thanks.

DON ALFONSO

(Forcing the subject of Antonio into the conversation.)

Oh, what a memory I have! I remember now I had something very important to tell Antonio.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Trying to make him change the subject.) Why don't you go out and look for him.

DON ALFONSO

I guess I'll have to hurry before he leaves. (Pause.) Er... You know, Antonio is leaving the city. It's a pity. Such a nice fellow.

MARTA

Pa, don't worry about that. Antonio is not leaving. He's staying in this house.

DON ALFONSO

(Stands up.) Well! How's that?

MARTA

I just talked to him downstairs.

DOÑA PATRICIA

What did you tell him?

MARTA

A few words: I'll marry you, Antonio.

DON ALFONSO

(Bursting with happiness.) Congratulations!

DOÑA PATRICIA

How nice of you, Marta. (Kisses her.) You can both be very happy.

MARTA

(Weeping.) I don't need happiness. I need security. I'll marry him because I need him. I feel insecure in this place, in this city. I need a man to protect me. Otherwise I'll go wild, crazy. I'll learn to love him. There's nothing else I can do.

The bell rings.

CHANA

(Out of scene.) Doña Patricia! Doña Patricia!

Don Alfonso opens the door. Chana rushes in with Lorna. They both look nervous. Lorna goes to Marta and embraces her.

CHANA

(Shuts the door rapidly and makes a sign to keep silence.)
Shhh... Listen to me. The Police is looking for Mario and if they see this girl they'll start making a lot of questions to her.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Tenderly.) So, this is the young girl...

LORNA

I am Lorna.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Extending her arms.) Come to me, my daughter.

LORNA

(Embracing her.) Mother.

CHANA

Come on! Hurry! Take her away to that room and close the door. She's cold and scared to death. (Takes her shawl and puts it on Lorna's shoulders.) Here, /That's better. Take her away, Marta.
darling.

Marta and Lorna go out.

DON ALFONSO

Listen, Chana, what's all this?

CHANA

The Police, Shhh...

DON ALFONSO

I don't like it. I'm a law abiding citizen. Why should I be hiding anybody from the Police?

CHANA

Don't you see that girl is pregnant? If the Police starts making questions to her she'll get scared and may be she looses the baby.

AGENT

(Out of scene. Knocking at the door.) All right! Open up!

DON ALFONSO

There's the Police.

CHANA

Shhh...

DOÑA PATRICIA

My Lord. What are we going to do?

CHANA

You leave it to me. (With comic self-assurance.) I'll take care of the Police. (She stands by the door and puts on the door latch.)

AGENT

(Knocking at the door.) Open up, I said!

CHANA

(To the agent.) All right! Pipe down! What do you want?

AGENT

(Out of scene.) Is there a guy by the name of Mario here?

CHANA

Mario is not here! He's out!

AGENT

We want to see Mario's parents!

CHANA

Oh, what the hell do you want from two old people? Leave'em alone! They no speak English!

AGENT

Is there a girl by the name of Lorna inside?

CHANA

Lorna no live here! (She starts raising her voice, shouting phrases in English and Spanish.) What's the matta with you! We're decent people! All right, shut up! Etcetera.

C U R T A I N

S C E N E 11

Next day in the morning. Antonio comes out of his room. He is wearing sun glasses and adjusting his coat when Felipe comes in. He looks ill-humored.

ANTONIO

Hey! Where have you been?

FELIPE

I was in New Jersey with Irma.

ANTONIO

Don't give me that. Irma was here a short while ago looking for you.

FELIPE

(Pause.) Where's the old man?

ANTONIO

At the Police headquarters with the rest of the family. They're questioning everybody around here about Mario. You're supposed to be there too.

FELIPE

Oh, hell! I'm not going.

ANTONIO

I'd go if I were you.

FELIPE

What for? I'm not going up there to say Mario is a Nationalist and declare a lot of things against him. I better cut my tongue. I don't like what Mario is doing, but he is my brother after all. Anyway they'll catch him all right.

ANTONIO

Where's Mario?

FELIPE

I don't know.

ANTONIO

I saw you last night with him. You know where he is. You're hiding him.

FELIPE

(Grabs him by the coat lapel.) You better shut your mouth,

ANTONIO

(Looking straight at him.) Get your hands off me.

FELIPE

(Ashamed.) I'm sorry, Antonio. I don't know what to do.

ANTONIO

Answer me. Where's Mario?

FELIPE

He was hiding Down Town. He ran away this morning. I spent with him the whole night begging him to quit the Nationalist Party.

ANTONIO

He won't hear anybody. I talked to him yesterday. Look what I got. (Takes off his sun glasses. He has a lump under his right eye. Felipe touches Antonio affectionately on his shoulders and crosses to the left.) I'm going Down Town for a marriage license.

FELIPE

(Surprised.) What?

ANTONIO

Marta and I are getting married this afternoon.

FELIPE

Gee! You're a fast worker. (Pause. They look each other. They shake hands.) You're a swell guy. Do us a favor, Tony. Take her out of here and give her a little happiness. She deserves it.

ANTONIO

So long, tough guy. (Pause.) I know you'll take care of Mario. (He exits.) Felipe takes up his guitar and starts playing softly a Puerto Rican "danza". A minute later, the bell rings and Irma enters.

IRMA

Darling. Where have you been all night?

FELIPE

(Ill-humored.) With Mario. Now don't make any more questions. (He sits on the couch.)

IRMA

Just one. Did they catch him?

FELIPE

No. I suppose they will.

IRMA

Sorry, Phil.

FELIPE

Soon they'll be looking for me and for you too if we don't get the hell out of the dope racket.

IRMA

I don't like that remark.

FELIPE

That business makes me feel like a criminal. God knows I'm doing it for my family.

IRMA

(Sardonic.) Just for the sake of your family?

FELIPE

You don't believe it.

IRMA

No. I know you very well. You're talking too much about your family and forgetting yourself.

FELIPE

I don't get you.

IRMA

You're gambling with my money and you're taking your family as an excuse.

FELIPE

(Stands up.) Don't you ever mix up my family with you.

IRMA

Don't give me the air with your family. You're on the same boat with me. You're a goddam gambler.

Felipe slaps her in the face and she falls down on the couch.

IRMA

(With anger.) You coward. You hit me because I told you the truth. (She stands up and Felipe turns his back ashamed.) You

hit me because I teared down your mask. You hypocrite! (She hits him hysterically on his back.) You liar! (She turns him around.) Look at yourself now!

FELIPE

(Turned down. He slumps himself on the couch.) All right. I'm a gambler. That's the damn truth. But I'm not a liar, a hypocrite as you say. You don't understand what I mean. (Pause.) Yes, I liked gambling since I was in college. I was a student of engineering in Mayaguez. Father used to send me thirty dollars a month to cover all my expenses. How ridiculous. I started playing poker to get more extra money. I was lucky most of the time. But one day, they threw me away from college. I had to keep on gambling and working. That way I helped father and paid all expenses to Marta and Mario at the University.

IRMA

(Ashamed. She kneels down on the couch.) Phil, I didn't know that.

FELIPE

I haven't finished. You should know the whole story. I've been a slave to my family all my life. I haven't even had a chance to get married. When I was younger, I had to support the family. Now I can't leave father and mother alone because they are too old. Marta is getting married to Antonio. And Mario... God have pity on him. I guess I was born condemned to be taking care of my folks all my life. There's always a strong reason against my personal liberty. There's always something that makes me feel as if I were in a chain gang.

IRMA

Forgive me, Phil.

FELIPE

I've sacrificed every single moment of my life to my family. What have I got in exchange? Just one word, the only word I get from my friends : "gambler". But that gambler isn't lucky anymore. That's the reason I had to quit gambling and get together with you in the dope racket. Now you tell me I am a

liar, a hypocrite. My Lord! (He weeps.)

IRMA

I'm sorry.

FELIPE

(Abruptly, standing up.) I don't need your pity! God dam it! Why did I ever come back to civilized life! I should've died like a beast in the jungle of Iwo Jima! Get somebody else to be your partner! I'm quitting that racket for good! You hear me? Get out of here! (He grabs Irma with violence by her arm.)

IRMA

(Holding desperately to him.) No, Phil! Don't leave me alone! I love you, Phil. I'll get out of that racket. I'll look for a decent job. I'll help you. I'll do anything in the world to please you. (Weeping.) Anything you wish, but don't go away from me! I love you!

FELIPE

(Pause. Looks at her with deep compassion and embraces her.) Help me out, Irma! By God, help me out!

C U R T A I N

SCENE III

An hour later. Don Alfonso is looking out the window when Jack comes in from the kitchen with his tool kit.

JACK

(Putting the kit on the table and lighting a cigarette.) The toilet is O. K. now don Alfonso.

DON ALFONSO

Thank you, Jack.

JACK

Please tell doña Patricia I'll fix the window tomorrow. Gosh! I got a lot of work to do. This building is going to pieces. (Pause.) How are things coming out, don Alfonso?

DON ALFONSO

In a very bad shape. They could worse. Have you seen Mario around?

JACK

No, sir. (Pause.) Is there anything I can do for you?

DON ALFONSO

No, thank you.

JACK

Is Lorna living in this house?

DON ALFONSO

Yes, she's living with us.

JACK

Things are getting tough for you, don Alfonso. Positively.

CHANA

(Out of scene.) Jack! Jack! Where are you, Jack!

JACK

(Rushing to the window at right.) Here I am, darling!

CHANA

(Out of scene.) Come over here, will you, darling!

JACK

(Smiling.) Rightaway, baby! (He throws her a kiss.)

DON ALFONSO

(Looking humorously at Jack.) Hm! (He sits by the table.)

JACK

(Comically.) Don't look at me like that, don Alfonso. Things change. You know, When Chana came to this building six months ago, she looked at me as if I was a duplicate of Frankenstein. And now she loves me as if I was Clark Gable in his best times. (He sits down by the table.) I'll tell you a personal secret, don Alfonso: Chana wanna marry me. Can you beat that? It's silly.

DON ALFONSO

I don't believe marriage is a silly affair.

JACK

For people like me and Chana, marriage is just an unnecessary luxury. Take Chana for instance. She lived with three different guys in Puerto Rico. One at a time, I mean. Well, suppose she gets tired of me in the same way she got tired of the other guys. If we were married, she'd have a hell of a time to run away from me and I from her. If you look at it that way, marriage is slavery. It's against our liberty. That's why I always tell my friends: This is a free country. Don't get married if you can get a mistress.

DON ALFONSO

(Stands up. III-humored.) That's enough!

JACK

(Following him.) Excuse me, don Alfonso. My experience is.....

DON ALFONSO

I won't stand any more of it.

CHANA

(Out of scene.) Jack! Jack, honey! I'm waiting for you!

JACK

(Rushing to the window at right.) I'll be with you in a second, darling! Excuse me, don Alfonso. Maybe Chana is not the educated type, but she's certainly a hell of a woman when she's in bed. (Exits.)

Don Alfonso walks back and forth when Mario enters through the back window.

DON ALFONSO

Mario!

MARIO

Anybody home?

DON ALFONSO

No. (Pause.) The F. B. I. is looking for you.

MARIO

I know it.

DON ALFONSO

Mario, it's time to face it.

MARIO

Leave me alone. I'm tired. (He sits down on the couch.)

DON ALFONSO

You can't run away from the law, my son. Sooner or later they'll get you.

MARIO

You sound like a preacher reading the Bible.

DON ALFONSO

I sound like your father.

MARIO

Don't get sentimental, will you?

DON ALFONSO

All right. I'll talk to you as a man now, not as a father to a son. Perhaps we might be able to understand each other this way.

MARIO

(Defiantly.) What do you want from me?

DON ALFONSO

Why do you despise me?

MARIO

I don't despise you. I despise your ideas. They make me sick. I know darn well if I start talking to you I won't be able to control myself. We'll both be sorry at the end.

DON ALFONSO

I don't care. Let's talk freely no matter what happens. Let's do it even if we tear down to pieces the whole building.

MARIO

(Standing up.) If that's the way you feel about it, you'll have to listen now every word I tell you.

DON ALFONSO

You hate my sight. Why?

MARIO

Because I hate all petty bureaucrats like you. Men like you have kept our country enslaved to American imperialism for the past sixty years, spreading the poison of propaganda among our people. The bunch of you started it with the Spanish-American war offering yourselves as troop guides to the American expeditionary forces. Am I right or wrong?

DON ALFONSO

Wrong! I hated Spanish colonial system. I had no reason at all to fight for it.

MARIO

Why didn't you fight for Puerto Rican independence?

DON ALFONSO

A single man can't start a war. You ignorant. There was nobody fighting for independence. At the beginning of the war all politicians were in favor of Spain, but when the American soldiers were defeating the Spaniards, everybody was for the Americans. That's the naked truth.

MARIO

You're distorting the facts.

DON ALFONSO

Facts are facts. They can't be distorted. I had to choose. Spaniards or Americans. You can't have both ways in a war. I choosed the Americans because our people needed protection and liberty.

MARIO

Don't repeat that worn out stuff! We had an autonomous government with a voice in the Spanish parliament. We also had a Revolutionary Party. I bet you don't know the commitment that the American General Staff made to us before that war started. Of course, you don't. You better listen to it. The Revolutionary Party gave the American General Staff secret copies of the Spanish military fortresses in San Juan. In exchange of that they were supposed to hold a plesbicite in our country and let our people have the government they wished. But they didn't keep their word. Your good, old friend General Miles, established a military government in Puerto Rico. They made fools of us. They laughed at us. It was a cheap, brutal trick. You understand now why I am still a revolutionary, a Nationalist?

DON ALFONSO

That may be true, my son. That's the idealist part of that war. But you forgot to mention the practical, brutal side of it. War is an inhuman affair. People at war become birds of prey. They kill and conquer. That's why General Miles established a military government. It only lasted one year. Today, after 60 years, there's plenty of freedom and food and schools in our country. I'm proud I helped out American troops in the Spanish-American War.

MARIO

You have your intimate personal reasons for doing it and you know it.

DON ALFONSO

What do you mean by personal reasons?

MARIO

Because grandfather was a Spaniard and you hated him because he never consented mother to marry you.

DON ALFONSO

(Shocked.) Don't you dare talk about that. What do you know about your grandfather?

MARIO

One thing I know about him. He didn't want to bring into his family the son of a peon.

DON ALFONSO

(Thoughtfully.) Now I understand why you despise me. (Pause.) Touched.) Yes. It's true. I am the son of a peon, the son of a poor, coffee worker. What can I say? I...I don't know. I have no words for you. I just feel sad, terribly sad.

MARIO

Let's drop out this story.

DON ALFONSO

(Recovering his firmness,) No. I'll finish the whole story for you, I'll get you acquainted with the real story of don Felipe, your grandfather, your hero. He was a young man when he arrived in Puerto Rico. You'll be surprised. He was a mule driver.

MARIO

(Surprised, angrily.) That's not true!

DON ALFONSO

You can ask your mother. A mule driver. But a very wise man. He married the daughter of a rich coffee farmer up in the mountains of Adjuntas. When the old man died he was the biggest landowner in the region. He became a respectable gentleman and the most hateful slave driver the people ever heard off. He had ten bastard children with slave women he possessed.

MARIO

Stop it!

DON ALFONSO

I told you were going to talk freely even if we had to tear down to pieces this building.

MARIO

All right! Let's tear everything down.

DON ALFONSO

Your mother still thinks her father was a great business man. He was not. You ought to know how he doubled his fortune. He was an unscrupulous money leader. What a shark! His favorite food was the small coffee farmer. He ate them by the dozens. I'll tell you more. He used to keep in stock quantities of rice and codfish during the rainy season. You know what for? To sell them at rocket prices to the poor folks.

MARIO

Have you finished?

DON ALFONSO

Just one more thing about your famous grandfather. He worked closely together with the Spanish military authorities. They crushed every liberal man who dared talk about freedom for our country. For God's sake! How could any decent citizen fight for a rotten government like that! That's the only reason I joined the American Army. My life is as clear as the sky. I'm proud of my job, of myself, of my family.

MARIO

You shouldn't feel so proud.

DON ALFONSO

How's that?

MARIO

(Defiantly.) I'll say it again. You shouldn't feel so proud of your family. Your family is being supported with illegal money.

DON ALFONSO

(Astonished.) What?

MARIO

The money Felipe brings into this house comes out from Marta and Felipe. They're in the dope business.

DON ALFONSO

That's a lie!

MARIO

You know how Marta was making her living and helping you out? Rubbing her neck with every fellow in a cheap dancing school.

DON ALFONSO

(Defeated. Crushed.) No. (He stares at Mario and bends his head.) I don't feel well. (He sits down on the couch.)

MARIO

(With repentance.) I knew it! By God, I knew it! I couldn't control myself!

DON ALFONSO

That's the end of the story, I suppose.

MARIO

(Nervously watching his father. Apologetically.) I'm terribly sorry, father. Whenever I discuss politics I get mad. Mad! Mad! Please forgive me.

VOICE

(Out of scene. Shouting.) Mario! Mario! The Police! La Policía! La Policía!

Mario takes out his pistol and rushes to the back window. He looks wild.

DON ALFONSO

(Stands up.) Mario! Don't shoot!

Mario shoots down three times. At the fourth time the pistol fails and the voice of an agent is heard.

AGENT I

(Paternaly.) All right, kid! Stop it!

Mario feels desperate. He looks at his pistol, at the window, at his father. He does not know what to do.

AGENT II

(Out of scene. Knocking at the door.) Open up! (Knocks again.)

Open up!

VOICES

(Out of scene.) La Policía! The Police! Don't give up, Mario!

Mario opens the door.

AGENT

(Out of scene.) Drop that gun!

Mario drops the gun. The agent comes in, picks up the gun and puts the handcuffs to Mario.

AGENT

(Looking at don Alfonso.) I'm sorry. (To Mario.) All right. Come on and behave yourself.

Mario looks at his father and bends his head pathetically. Don Alfonso is standing up like a statue.

AGENT

Come on! Come on! (They exit.)

DON ALFONSO

(As Mario goes out.) Good-bye, my son. (He slumps in a chair by the table.)

NEIGHBORS

(Chana, Jack, Luis and several neighbors rush into the living room through the back window and through the main door making comments. They all feel sorry for what has happened.) They took him away! I told him! What the hell! All right, don Alfonso! Pull yourself, will you! I'm awfully sorry, don Alfonso!

C U R T A I N

E P I L O G U E

Seven years later, in the spring. Afternoon. The same place. The general appearance of the living-dining room is cleaner and better. The furniture is new.

When the curtain raises don Alfonso is reading. He is seated on his old armchair near the small window at the right. There is a new character in the play. This is Mario's son, a boy of seven. His name is Tony. He wears a cowboy dress and looks like a boy of ten physically speaking. Tony is playing "cowboys" with some of his friends. They are playing out on the corridor and making a lot of noise. The door is half open.

TONY

(Near the door. Shooting.) Pif! Paf! Pif! Paf!

DON ALFONSO

(Stops reading and nods his head.) Tony!

TONY

Yes, grandpa!

DON ALFONSO

You don't have to make so much noise!

TONY

O.K. grandpa. (He goes out into the corridor and keeps on playing.) Pif! Paf! Pif! Paf! You're dead Billy! You've got to fall down! (The noise of the kids goes up again. It stops suddenly and Tony comes in crying out loud.)

DON ALFONSO

(Stands up.) What's the matter, Tony?

TONY

I had a fight with Billy.

DON ALFONSO

Why did you fight with Billy? What did you do to him?

TONY

I didn't do him nothing.

DON ALFONSO

Are you sure?

TONY

I swear, grandpa.

DON ALFONSO

Talk to me in Spanish, will you?

TONY

(Tony starts explaining himself in English and Spanish.) Billy and I were playing cowboys...

DON ALFONSO

In Spanish.

TONY

Billy y yo estábamos jugando a los vaqueros. Then I shot him down and he wouldn't fall dead. How do you say that in Spanish?

DON ALFONSO

Go on.

TONY

So he wouldn't fall dead and I pushed him down and he said to me". "You lousy Puerto Rican." (He starts crying again.)

DON ALFONSO

Now, Tony. Come on.

TONY

So I said to him: "I'm not a Puerto Rican. I'm an American. It's grandpa who's a Puerto Rican." And zip, I knocked him down like this. (He mimics.)

DON ALFONSO

(Enthusiastically.) Good!

TONY

Gee, grandpa, you're a swell guy. (He kisses him.)

DON ALFONSO

All right, Tony. But you shouldn't fight anymore with your friends.

TONY

You won't tell mother?

DON ALFONSO

No, I won't say a word about it. You go now to your room and clean your face and comb your hair. Your mother will be here any minute.

TONY

Where's mother?

DON ALFONSO

She went out with grandma to see your father.

TONY

To see Mario?

DON ALFONSO

Don't call him Mario. He is your father. And remember, Tony, I want you to talk in Spanish when you are at home.

TONY

Grandpa, you know I can't talk very well in Spanish.

DON ALFONSO

IF you don't talk in Spanish, you'll never learn it. Go on to your room now.

TONY

I want to play just a little more.

DON ALFONSO

No, sir. You've played enough for today.

TONY

(Annoyed.) O.K. grandpa, if you won't let me play anymore, I will not speak Spanish. (He makes fun of him and goes out to his room at left.)

DON ALFONSO

(Laughs. Crosses to the right and closes the door. He talks to himself.)

Tony. Hm! He's just like his father. A rebel. (He sits down on the chair at right and goes on reading the newspaper.)

TONY

(Reenters. He is combing his hair with his hands. He does not know what to do. He takes a comic book and sits by the table. He takes a look at it and throws it away. Then he looks at don Alfonso, takes out his play gun, starts walking on tiptoe toward don Alfonso and starts shooting at him.) Pif! Paf! Pif! Paf! Paf!

DON ALFONSO

Tony, please, Tony! (Stands up.)

TONY

Pif! Paf! Pif! Paf!

DON ALFONSO

(He starts playing with Tony.) Pif! Paf! Pif! Paf!

TONY

You've got to fall dead, grandpa! Say, grandpa, you've got to fall dead! Come on!

DON ALFONSO

(Pretends he is dead and falls down on the floor.) Oh!

TONY

(Victoriously.) You asked for it, boy!

Lorna and doña Patricia enter and stare at don Alfonso and Tony.

LORNA

Tony, darling!

DOÑA PATRICIA

Alfonso! (Making the sign of the cross.) Ave María Purísima! How many times I tell you not to play cowboys with Tony. (He helps don Alfonso to stand up.)

DON ALFONSO

Well, I couldn't help it, Patricia.

LORNA

(Kissing don Alfonso on his forehead.) Grandpa, we've got big news for you. Mario will be free next month.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Thank the Lord! After seven years.

DON ALFONSO

(Thoughtfully.) Seven years. I remember when they took him away in this same place seven years ago.

LORNA

Mario and I are leaving for Miami as soon as he comes out.

DON ALFONSO

(Happy.) I don't know what to say. This is really big news.

LORNA

Well, I have to go shopping right away.

TONY

May I go with you, mother?

LORNA

No, Tony, you stay here. (She kisses Tony and goes out.)

Tony sits down on the armchair at right and starts reading a comic book.

DON ALFONSO

(Sits down on the couch.) Well, Lorna and Mario are going away. We'll be left alone, Patricia.

PATRICIA

(Sits down on the couch.) We could go for a short time to live with Marta and Antonio.

DON ALFONSO

In Chicago? No. It's too cold over there.

PATRICIA

Well, let us go for a couple of weeks to the Bronx with Irma and Felipe.

DON ALFONSO

No. We better stay here.

DOÑA PATRICIA

I want to go out of here for a while, Alfonso. Why don't we make a trip to Puerto Rico.

DON ALFONSO

(With sadness.) I don't know.

DOÑA PATRICIA

I don't understand you, Alfonso. We bring you good news and now you feel sad. What's the matter with you?

DON ALFONSO

I feel as if I were at the end of a very long journey. The only thing that really makes me feel sad is Tony. He's leaving us. (He calls Tony.) Tony, come over here. (Tony goes over and sits down on the couch in the middle of don Alfonso and doña Patricia.) Tony, how would you like to live in Miami?

TONY

Who? Me? I'm not going to Miami. No, sir. (He starts crying.)

DON ALFONSO

Come on, Tony. Come on. Don't cry. (To Patricia.) You see, he doesn't want to live in Miami. I don't blame him. Tony, how about going to Puerto Rico? (Tony stares at him.) It's a nice tropical island.

TONY

Are there elephants and cannibals in Puerto Rico?

DON ALFONSO

(Amused. Starts laughing.) Oh, no, Tony!

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Shocked.) Elephants and cannibals! Alfonso, I do not see any joke in that. As a matter of fact, I do not like the way Tony is growing up. He knows nothing about our country. He do not speak Spanish. His manners are rough. He thinks and acts in such a way that he do not seem to be part of our family. He is like a stranger in this house.

DON ALFONSO

(Philosophically.) Perhaps it's you and me who are strangers in this place. Let's face it, Patricia. We must see life straight, just as it is. We belong

to a generation that's fading away like an old star. It's passing away with all the things that were dear to us. Tony is coming up in a different world. A new generation of Puerto Ricans under the American way of life is growing up. They're bold, healthy, practical, with a different approach to life. What will become of our Spanish heritage, of our language, our religion, our traditions, nobody knows. We, the old ones, are dwelling by the twilight.

DOÑA PATRICIA

Well, you better stop grieving and start teaching Tony something about our country.

A knock is heard at the door.

DON ALFONSO

Who is it?

CHANA

(Out of scene.) It's Chana, don Alfonso!

DON ALFONSO

Oh, it's Chana. Please open the door for her, Tony.

Tony opens the door. Don Alfonso and doña Patricia stand up.

DON ALFONSO

Hello, Chana!

Chana comes in with Jack. She is dressed with extravagance. Jack is holding a big leather case. He wears a tight, old fashioned suit and a new hat. Chana and Jack look awfully funny.

CHANA

We come to say good-bye.

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Looking at her.) Well, you look wonderful, Chana.

CHANA

(With coquetry.) Really? Jack told me I look terrific. I don't know what he had in mind when he said that. (Looking at her dress.) Anyway I think it's a hell of a dress for three bucks.

DON ALFONSO

Please, sit down.

JACK

Thanks, don Alfonso. We're in a hurry. They ^{plane} leaves in an hour. Come on, Chana.

CHANA

(Sharply.) Wait a minute, old man.

JACK

You're bothering don Alfonso.

DON ALFONSO

Oh, no, it's a pleasure to have you here.

CHANA

(To Jack.) You can't say just good-bye to old friends like don Alfonso and doña Patricia.

JACK

That's enough. Come on, Chana.

CHANA

(Sharply.) Shut your big mouth and don't hurry me, will you? You go ahead with the luggage and wait for me downstairs.

JACK

O.K. (He shakes hands with doña Patricia, don Alfonso and Tony.) Good-bye and good luck!

DON ALFONSO

Adiós, Jack!

CHANA

That American husband of mine is like a wild horse. We've been married for five years and he doesn't know yet how to talk to decent folks. He's got no manners. The son of a gun.

DON ALFONSO

I'm sorry I forgot to give Jack a shot of excellent rum I have here.

CHANA

You better gimme that shot, don Alfonso.

DOÑA PATRICIA

How do you like it, Chana?

CHANA

On the rocks.

DOÑA PATRICIA

What's that?

CHANA

Plain rum with ice, doña Patricia.

Doña Patricia goes out to the kitchen.

CHANA

(Opening her purse.) Tony, darling, come here. Here's some chewing gum for you.

TONY

(Takes the chewing gum.) Thank you, Chana.

CHANA

(Raising Tony in the air.) Atta boy! Porto Rican-American boy! Half and half! (Tony runs away.) Don Alfonso, what's that I heard about Mario?

DON ALFONSO

He will be set free next month.

The people in the neighborhood start calling Chana and making noise.

CHANA

Fine! (Listening to the noise. She crosses to the back window.) Listen to my people shouting and singing! Hello everybody! ¿Qué pasa en la Isla? (She laughs. She turns to don Alfonso and says with emotion.) Goddam it! I'm gonna miss this place!

DOÑA PATRICIA

(Enters with two glasses of rum. Gives one to Chana and the other to don Alfonso.) Here you are.

CHANA

(Takes a toast.) To a long and happy life for both of you! God help me! (She drinks.)

DON ALFONSO

(Takes a toast.) To a happy trip to Texas. (He drinks.)

DOÑA PATRICIA

What place in Texas are you going, Chana?

CHANA

We're gonna work in a big hotel in San Antonio. The three of us. Jack is gonna work as an elevator man. My son Luis will work as messenger boy. (To herself.) And this baby here will do mop work. I hate to leave New York. This is a big, great city. It gets into your heart no matter where you live. I love it and I leave it. That's a tough one. I guess that's the way life is to everybody: tough. But I got another word to match that one: fight. It's the only way out. When I was a kid like Tony, a big

tropical hurricane blew away the little hut where Papa and I lived. The crops and everything was lost. Guess what papa and I did. Next day we were cleaning the place and working like hell. till we got out of the gutter. We fought it out! (She looks at her wrist watch.) It's getting late. Well, I'll say good-bye now. (She embraces doña Patricia, don Alfonso and Tony. The folks in the neighborhood are calling Chana and singing. Chana stands by the door. She is really touched and shouts with enthusiasm.) So long, my friends! Hasta luego!

There is a riot of voices in the whole place saying good-bye to Chana, while the music of the Puerto Rican "plena" Arizona comes up covering the voices.

T H E E N D