

*Seminario de Drama*  
*Colección*  
*Francisco (Paco) Prado*

RAMON FERREIRA

" THE IMMACULATE MAN " (\*)

A DRAMA IN THREE ACTS

Seminario Multidisciplinario Josemilio González  
Bachillerato de Estudios Interdisciplinarios  
Facultad de Humanidades  
Universidad de Puerto Rico  
Recinto de Río Piedras

It was written in 1958, during the last months prior to the fall of Batista. Was mounted in Havana in May, 1959, 5 months after Castro's arrival.

(\*) Dedicated to the Cuban students who died for democracy.

*Seminario de Drama*

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*Seminario de Drama*  
*Colectión*  
*Francisco (Paco) Prado*

RAMON FERREIRA  
2068 ESPAÑA STREET  
OCEAN PARK  
PUERTO RICO, 00911

TEL: HOME 727-6672  
OFFICE 767-2100

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*Francisco (Paco) Prado*

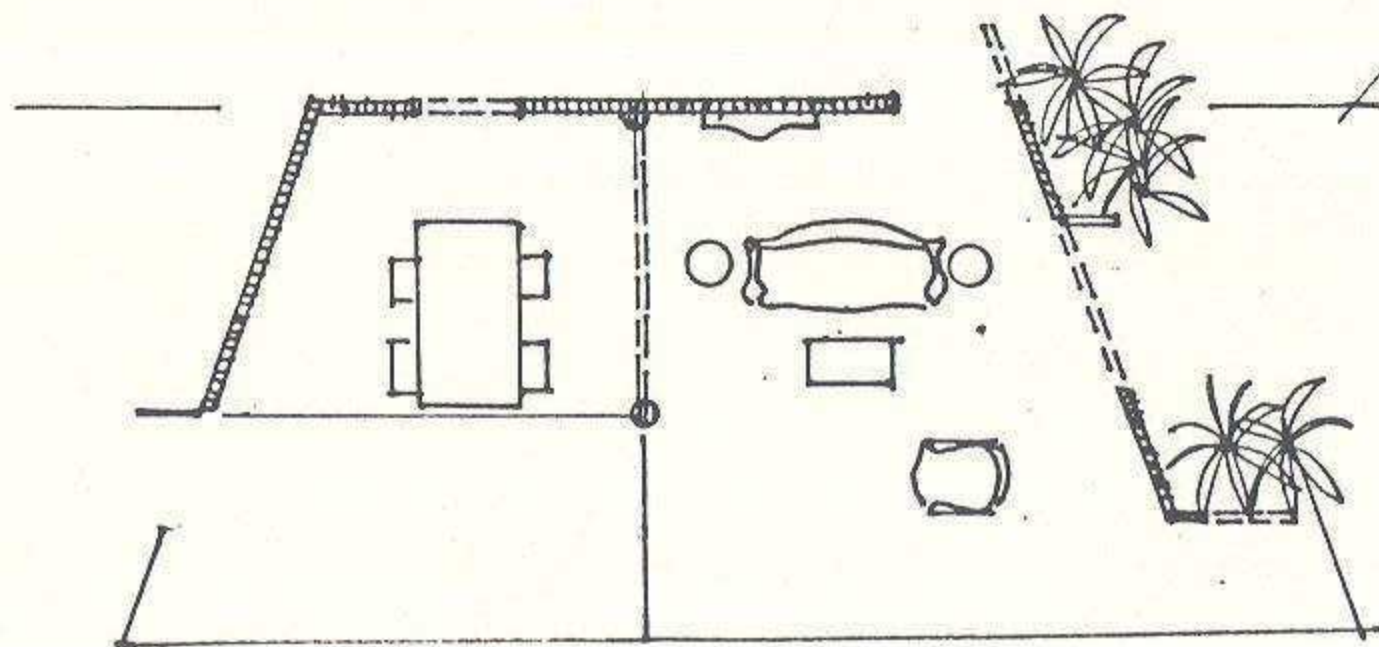
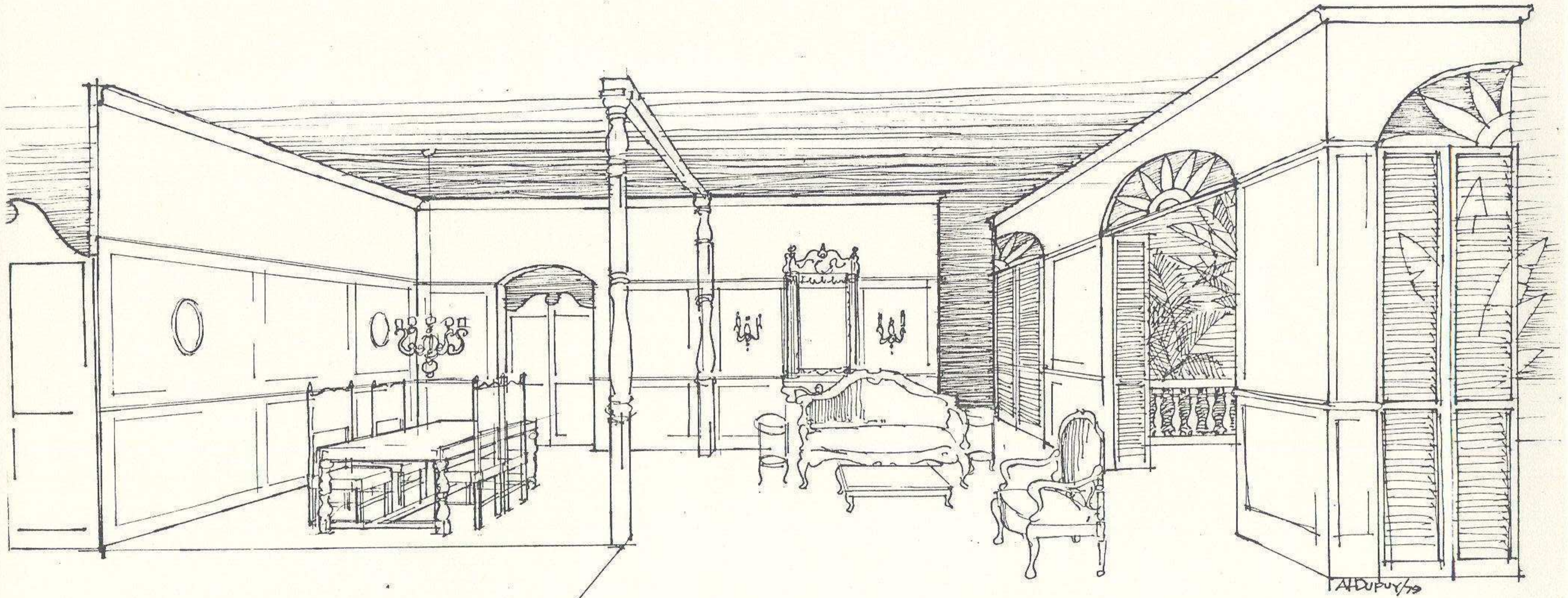
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EL HOMBRE INMACULADO

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THE CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

AMADA (40)	Inocencio's Wife.
ALICIA (35)	Amada's Sister.
INOCENCIO (45)	Amada's Husband.
JOSE LUIS (20)	Son of Amada and Inocencio.
A FRIEND (18)	Friend of José Luis.
ANA MARIA (19)	José Luis' Fiancee.
HERMINIA (70)	Inocencio's Mother.

THE ACTION TAKES PLACE IN THE  
LIVING ROOM OF THE FAMILY'S HOME.

ACT I - A morning.  
ACT II - An afternoon.  
ACT III - An evening.

## ACT I

It is the living room of the colonial home of a middle class Cuban family. It retains shades of its old comforts: Its large size living room and high ceiling. French windows open on the right side into the garden. Also at right-front the entrance to the house. A huge mirror over a large console with marble top at the back. On the back a double door with flap doors leads into the master bedroom; and a hallway into the other bedrooms. On the left side there is the dining table and chairs for six. On the right a colonial sofa with cushions and two side chairs. There is a central arch indicating the separation of both areas. On the left a double door shows the entrance to the kitchen. Through the open French windows we see a lush vegetation. The walls are white. The wood frames indigo blue. Next to the sofa there is a side table with a telephone. It is early in the morning. The sun has reached into the living room through the open French windows. The scene is empty. There is a pause before we hear Amada's voice coming from the bedrooms. She comes in.

AMADA:            (Calling) Alicia!

(She is about forty. She has regular features, plain but perfect. She holds her hair tied in a bun at the back of her head, and is wearing a house gown and holds herself with grace. However, there is a slight hesitation in her movements. She is partially blind. As she enters, she stops by the French windows. She has heard something in the garden. She turns her head towards the kitchen door and calls again).

Alicia!

ALICIA:

(She realizes she is alone, takes a few steps into the garden and stops. The sun falls on her, revealing her slender and serene beauty. She inhales deeply, embraces herself like she wanted to absorb the morning coolness but again is startled by something in the garden. She reacts to it but seems undecided. She takes another step into the garden but stops. We still see her. She mutters).  
Can it be possible?

(Now she disappears into the garden. There is a pause, she returns, excited. Now she calls with urgency).

Alicia! Alicia!

(She gets impatient. Takes a few steps into the living room. Shouts.)

Come here! Hurry!

(Alicia appears from the kitchen entrance. She is drying her hands in a towel. She is younger than Amada, but somewhat hard looking and with a sort of a feline grace. She is past her prime but not unattractive. There is something asexual in her manner. She wears her hair short and casual, parted in the middle, almost straight. She stays by the screen)

ALICIA:

What is it?

AMADA:

(Impatient) Come... you must tell me. (She makes a gesture towards the garden).

ALICIA:

The birds?

AMADA:

I heard them. Go and tell me.

ALICIA:

Of course... of course.

AMADA: Hurry! (She stretches her hand looking for Alicia. Alicia is going to hold her hand when Inocencio's voice comes from the *master bedroom*.)

INOCENCIO: Alicia!  
(Alicia stops and drops Amada's hand).

AMADA: Come!  
(Inocencio's voice is now louder).

INOCENCIO: Alicia!  
(Alicia turns her back on Amada).

ALICIA: (Shouts back) What is it?

INOCENCIO: The water is cold.

ALICIA: You have to wait.

AMADA: Come. (Walking into the garden)  
Tell me it is true.  
(Alicia follows her not before taking a look at the direction of Inocencio's voice).  
You see them?  
(Alicia has come close to Amada. Both look at something while we see them partially).

ALICIA: Oh, yes... yes... there they are.

AMADA: All?

ALICIA: I suppose.

AMADA: How many?

ALICIA: I only see their heads... two heads.  
(Inocencio's voice is now a shout)

INOCENCIO: What's the matter? Alicia... you hear me? The water is cold.  
(Alicia leaves Amada and enters the living room. She is angry).

ALICIA: Is nothing I can do.

INOCENCIO: Is the heater on?

ALICIA: Of course!

INOCENCIO: Go and see.

ALICIA: We were without electricity for two hours. Maybe that's it.



(Amada comes in. She is now almost solemn.)

AMADA:

He can't stand any delay. Is not his fault.

ALICIA:

(Snappish) Is it mine?

AMADA:

I didn't mean. It's no body's fault. No electricity.  
No hot water.

(Amada turns to the garden)

AMADA:

Alicia... are they alright?

(Alicia seems fascinated by the noise of the shower.  
She hasn't heard Amada).

I mean... will they survive? (Notices Alicia's  
silence) You're not listening. (Impatient). They  
must survive. Is the first time we get them.

(Alicia snaps out of her thoughts).

ALICIA:

Yes... yes...

AMADA:

You must watch them. They say... they could kill them.  
Will you watch them?

ALICIA:

What good would it do... watch... if they want to kill  
them.

AMADA:

They won't... if they have food, water, shelter.  
Please!

ALICIA:

I'll try.

AMADA:

Yes. It is the first time. It must be a good omen.  
(Inocencio's voice is heard singing).

I hadn't heard him sing in ages.

ALICIA:

Nothing to sing about.

(Alicia moves towards the kitchen. Amada makes a gesture  
to stop her).

AMADA:

Are they away from the sun?

ALICIA:

You are in the sun... better get inside.

(Alicia goes back to the kitchen. Amada comes in.  
She does not realize she is alone).

AMADA:

It is not hunger... it is out of love. Maybe that's  
why they sometimes kill them. They want to protect  
them from harm. Little animals. They don't know the  
difference... love... protection... death. (She pauses)  
Alicia! (She realizes she is alone). Inocencio's voice

is now louder. He is enjoying his bath. Amada listens. There is a certain tension in her stance. She looks towards the rooms. Now she turns towards the side table with the telephone. Looks back towards Inocencio's singing, then goes to the side table, sits down and dials. Alicia enters).

ALICIA: Who do you call?

AMADA: (Startled) I thought I better call her.

ALICIA: Why?

AMADA: I don't want her to call now... I want to talk to Inocencio first.

ALICIA: Cut it out!

(Amada hangs up the receiver)

AMADA: She is not home. (Alarmed) I hope she won't be coming here.

ALICIA: She knows there is nothing you can do.

AMADA: I promised to do something.

ALICIA: Better get it through your head. He won't help you.

AMADA: I must try.

(Inocencio has stopped singing. Now we hear his voice, impatient).

INOCENCIO: Where is my towel?

ALICIA: Hear? That's all he care about. His baths, his towels. (Turning to Inocencio's voice) Is there... use it!

INOCENCIO: I already have. Is wet.

ALICIA: (Moving towards the rooms) Three baths a day... three towels...

AMADA: (Interrupting her) You sound like it was a vice.

ALICIA: (Stops and turns around) Isn't a bit much?

AMADA: Cleanliness is a virtue... remember, mother?

ALICIA: But dirt can be a release.

INOCENCIO: (Screaming) Where is that towel?

ALICIA: Coming... coming! (Goes inside)

(Amada is now alone. There is a pause. She goes to the telephone, lefts the receiver and puts it on the table. We hear Inocencio and Alicia's voices).

ALICIA: Here...!

INOCENCIO: What's the matter with you?

ALICIA: I forgot.

INOCENCIO: Well... don't.

ALICIA: Excuse me!

(She returns, the used towel in her arm. Looks at Amada. She seems pensive)

Don't you worry. I'll take care of your canaries.

AMADA: Sorry, Alicia. You must forgive me.

ALICIA: What for?

AMADA: I am asking too much. The house, my son, now... the birds...

ALICIA: Stop it!

AMADA: And me... a coward sister going blind.

ALICIA: (Rushing to her) Stop it, Amada.

AMADA: You are still young... is not fair.

ALICIA: Look, all I have, all I want is here.

And you, yes, the only thing I have.

AMADA: But what is going to happen... to us.

ALICIA: We'll be together.

AMADA: Is this the end?

ALICIA: Look. You're going to promise me something too.  
Think about your appointment with the doctor...  
your health, what you can do about it... you know  
what I mean and... please, forget about the world outside.  
Promise?

AMADA: I want to help.

ALICIA: Is too late. (Rising and getting away  
from Amada). I also tried to help. (Looking at Amada).  
They don't listen. Violence. Bombs. Murder.  
That's the only words they know.

AMADA: And you tell me to keep quiet. I may not see enough...  
but I can tell what's right and wrong.

ALICIA: You must promise not to get involved.

AMADA: How could I?  
(Inocencio's voice interrupts)

INOCENCIO: Is breakfast ready?

ALICIA: I'll get his breakfast.  
(Goes into the kitchen. Amada rises and goes to the  
French windows. She listens, gets upset).

AMADA: Alicia... Alicia... come, quick!  
(Alicia comes out)

ALICIA: What is it now?

AMADA: (A terrified expression in her face) Stop it... hurry...  
they are killing them! (Alicia goes into the garden...)

returns)

ALICIA:

Feeding time. That's all.

AMADA:

(Fear vanishing) I heard screams.

ALICIA:

They have all the food they need.

AMADA:

Why do they shriek?

ALICIA:

They are blind... and hungry. Both want to be first.

(Is going away).

AMADA:

(Making a gesture) Wait! Let me talk to him first.

ALICIA:

About what?

AMADA:

That boy.

ALICIA:

(Returning, impatient). You must promise me... now.

AMADA:

I can't. (She rises, moves away from Alicia) I must help... in my own way. Maybe if I tell him I know...

ALICIA:

But you don't.

AMADA:

What they say... what she told me. The boy's mother. I believe her.

ALICIA:

Did you sleep last night? Well, I didn't. Those explosions, one after the other. ¡So near! Before, we read about it. Now they explode closer all the time.

AMADA:

That's why. I'll talk to him. I'll plead. Is not a favor I want... it is a life, a boy's life.

ALICIA:

Too much blood between us. Two sides fighting for survival.

AMADA:

We must survive... all. We are not barbarians. We'll show them with a gesture... a noble gesture. We've done it before. Father lost his rank, his career, his future... they put him in jail, an honorable, innocent man. He came out, not bitter, not hating... He accepted defeat with grace.

ALICIA: Father was a career officer. Inocencio is a policeman.  
Well, yes, a Captain, but a cop.

AMADA: You never approved my marrying him...

ALICIA: We accepted him. He had not participated in the coup.  
He was young. He loved you.

AMADA: He does.

ALICIA: He changed.

AMADA: Not his love.

ALICIA: Somewhere along the road... we lost him. He is not like  
father, ready to move over... with grace.

AMADA: He'll show you... he'll show them... and me, he will prove  
you wrong.

ALICIA: I don't want you hurt again. Love is an unreliable weapon.

AMADA: Is all I have. (Hesitating) His love... (Reacting) for  
his son.

ALICIA: You leave José Luis out.

AMADA: I'll use him if all fails. He would listen to José Luis.

ALICIA: He won't listen to anybody but himself, his instructions.  
He follows orders from above...

AMADA: Yes. He should talk to his father. What's going on between  
them?

ALICIA: You imagine things.

AMADA: They don't talk anymore. I see Inocencio trying... reaching  
out to him. José Luis evades him... doesn't even look at him.  
Something has happened.

ALICIA: Inocencio won't listen to him either.

AMADA: He must listen to somebody.

ALICIA: Yes. His own instincts.

AMADA: (Turning to Alicia, exasperated). He arrested the boy... is under his custody... nobody knows where. I'm not going to ask why he arrested him... I don't care what the boy did... he is a kid. He should turn him over to the authorities.

ALICIA: Inocencio is the authority.

AMADA: There are laws...

ALICIA: Inocencio is the law.

AMADA: (Moving away, not wanting to face the truth) Stop it. You go and wake José Luis. Why is he in bed yet?

ALICIA: The university is closed.

AMADA: He has other things to think about... his wedding... that should keep him awake.

ALICIA: Leave him out of this.

AMADA: Doesn't he care... about that boy. His dear friend... Why... why on earth doesn't he talk to his father; ask him to let the boy go. Inocencio loves him... yes... is the only thing I know truly... his love for his son... and how he suffers seeing José Luis moving away from him. Just one word... and José Luis will get anything from his father. I'll wake him up.

ALICIA: (Stopping her) José Luis won't do it.

AMADA: What is it, Alicia. Do you believe those stories...? They have reached me... yes. You don't read me everything in the newspapers anymore... I know that much. I hear your odd

conversations on the telephone... you trying to give meaning to unconnected words... avoiding answers, going over and over the same thing... not wanting me to know. But I pick up the threads... one word here, another there... what the maid almost says... what I feel, when old friends don't come to the telephone. I have been left alone in a world full of gossip... that's all there is to it... gossip, and hatred. I know they hate us... want to get rid of us. But why the violence.

ALICIA: They say... yes, that's what they say. we shot our way in.

AMADA: We?

ALICIA: Batista.

AMADA: No one was hurt.

ALICIA: Something was destroyed.

AMADA: No... no... no... something was gained, peace. Don't you remember, the clamor... yes, those same people who hate him today, how they wanted law and order again. A change.

ALICIA: Batista decided the kind of change we needed. It was not peace he gave us.

AMADA: The opportunity... that's what. Why did they begin... shooting.

ALICIA: Wouldn't you... if you found a burglar in your room.

AMADA: (Hesitating) You seem to believe what you hear.

ALICIA: (Seeing the opportunity to clarify herself) I'm only trying to help you... make you understand that there is nothing you, José Luis or I can do, nothing. Not that I believe what I read between lines in the newspapers, or what the maid says



she hears in the street. I don't care if our friends have stopped calling or pretend I don't exist when they see me... I only care about us... José Luis, you, me..., the family... and the violence getting closer to this house...

AMADA: (Questioning) You don't care about him.

ALICIA: All... I said all... the family.

AMADA: (Resentful) You, too, are moving away from Inocencio, leaving him alone. Now, when he most needs us... all, as you say.

ALICIA: (Disappointed) I'll get him his breakfast.

AMADA: (Ashamed) I didn't mean that... I know how much you do for him, also. But it is not as before.

ALICIA: (Irritated) There are things I cannot do anymore.

AMADA: (Resigned) True. It's my job. Something even a blind woman should be able to do. I will try.

ALICIA: (Disarmed) Poor dear sister.

AMADA: (Reacting, proudly) Don't you say that!

(Alicia hesitates, then turns and goes into the kitchen. Amada does not realize it).

I'm not an invalid... yet. My world is as valid and real as the world outside. Yours is outside. I understand. You could have deserted... that's not the word... you could have gone and live your own life. You had so many opportunities... Instead, my illness... I know, Alicia, it was my illness...

(Inocencio comes through the bedroom's door. He is a tall, athletic man in his late forties. His features are regular

but somewhat soft under the apparent stern look. There is some gray in his hair, but his mustachio is black. He comes in trying to put on a pink necktie. The shirt is white, as are the trousers and the shoes. There is an air of neatness and detachment about him, like his attire was a means of detecting the slightest pressence of dirt and a warning against all possible human contact. He stops to listen to Amada. A half smile shows in his face without erasing the feeling that he is not even listening. Amada goes on)

Don't go. I know you don't want to admit it is my fault. I won't insist. I only want you to know how much happiness you have saved for me... for us... yes, Inocencio included.

(Inocencio turns around and faces the large mirror. He is at a loss trying to put on the necktie. She hears the movement).

Please... don't go. (Reflexive) I want to save whatever is left like it was: Our home. So real to me. I can feel it. Touch it.

(She makes a wide gesture and upturns a flower vase. It crashes to the floor. Inocencio turns around and half laughs).

Oh, it is you!

INOCENCIO: Yes, in one piece.

(Alicia rushes in)

AMADA: It was not in its place. (Bending over)

ALICIA: Don't. I'll do it.

INOCENCIO: Let her. She doesn't need help for that.

AMADA: (Rising) Of course, Alicia. I'll do it. Go and get his breakfast.

ALICIA: Alright... but don't you hurt yourself.  
(Alicia returns to the kitchen. Inocencio goes back to his necktie).

AMADA: I am sorry about the vase... you gave it to me. So long ago. (Animated) Well, it could be an excuse to buy me a new one. (She hesitates) Our anniversary perhaps... what better excuse. (Realizing he is not replying).  
Are you struggling with your tie?

INOCENCIO: (Turning around) I'll be damn.

AMADA: (Going towards him) You never could... you never will.  
Let me!

INOCENCIO: (Moving out of her path) ¡Your hands..!

AMADA: They are clean.

INOCENCIO: Never that clean.

AMADA: I wasn't going to touch you. (Moving away) Only wanted to help.

INOCENCIO: You have other things to do. And so do I. Where is that coffee?  
(Sits to the table, tie undone)

AMADA: In a minute. (Calling, softly) Alicia!

INOCENCIO: (Loudly) Alicia!

AMADA: (Raising her arm) Please, not so loud.

INOCENCIO: (Hitting a glass with the knife) Alicia...!  
(Alicia comes in, coffee pot in hand)

ALICIA: You'll have to let it cool. (Puts the pot on the table) *Serve him*  
(Amada looks on).

AMADA: Did you get his toast?

ALICIA: Yes!

AMADA: Butter?

ALICIA: (Snappy) Everything!

AMADA: (Ashamed) Sorry. (She moves away towards the French windows)

INOCENCIO: (Trying ~~serve~~ <sup>sip</sup> the coffee) Too hot.

ALICIA: Let it cool. Can't you ever wait?

AMADA: (Absentmindedly, looking out) I wonder if those birds...  
(Turning to Inocencio) I didn't tell you... my canaries, at last... (Inocencio interrupts her. Turning to Alicia)

INOCENCIO: Every minute counts. Here, fix me the tie.  
(He turns around in his chair, legs apart. Alicia doubts)

AMADA: (Without even looking) Are your hands clean?

INOCENCIO: (Sarcastic) I can see they are. (To Alicia) What are you waiting for?  
(Alicia gets closer. She seems uncomfortable standing between Inocencio's legs. Bends over, slightly, and fuses with the tie).

ALICIA: There!  
(Turns away)

INOCENCIO: Clean and fast. ¡Such hands! (Rises and goes to the mirror)

Perfect. (Turning to Alicia, ironic) Thank you,  
Miss Alicia.

AMADA: Don't, Inocencio. She doesn't like that.

INOCENCIO: Why don't you?

ALICIA: I don't mind... there are worse things.

(She turns around and goes to the kitchen. Inocencio  
sits down and begins to eat his breakfast. Amada turns  
around)

AMADA: I heard you singing. Are things any better?

INOCENCIO: They can't get worse.

AMADA: Well... sometimes you don't even wait for breakfast...  
or lunch... certainly not for dinner. (Advancing) I'm  
not complaining. I am happy to see you happy. You sang...

INOCENCIO: You call that singing?

AMADA: Anyway... you seem to have a little time. I wish you would  
let me... I mean, listen to me.

INOCENCIO: (Suspicious) What is it you want?

AMADA: (Evasive) Did I ever ask for anything? All I have... you  
gave me. It is not me.

INOCENCIO: I wish it were you.

AMADA: (Coming over and sitting) I know, I know... you would  
give me anything.

INOCENCIO: You don't want to go to the doctor... is that it?

AMADA: Oh, yes, I will... I will. But that can wait. No miracles  
involved. The worse that can happen is that he leaves me  
as I am.

INOCENCIO: The doctor says...

AMADA: (Cutting him) I know what he says. (Afraid) Sorry.  
(Going back to her thoughts) Forget our anniversary...  
forget the doctor. It is much simpler. (Rising) This  
morning... I got a call. (Turning to Inocencio) You will  
remember her... when I tell you.

INOCENCIO: You won't.

AMADA: Let me finish.

INOCENCIO: You have. (Pushing the chair aside and rising) Nothing  
said... nothing remembered... nothing to forget.  
Understand?  
(Alicia comes in, stares at both. Turning to Alicia)  
I told you. No visits. No phone calls. No messages.

ALICIA: (To Amada) You hear?

AMADA: (Moving away) Is all I do... hear. What he says... what  
you say... but there is something else.

INOCENCIO: Nothing anyone can fix.  
(Inocencio sits back and returns to his breakfast)

AMADA: I'll have to buy a new vase.

ALICIA: (Going over to her) I'll buy it for your birthday.

ALICIA: (Pressing Alicia's hands) Make it plastic. I want it  
to last after all else has been broken.

INOCENCIO: (Pausing, but not looking at Amada) Stop it... or I'll  
vomit my breakfast.

ALICIA: (Turns to him with repressed anger) Couldn't you...  
for once... listen...

INOCENCIO: (Slapping the table) Is all I do... here... in the radio...

at headquarters. If I watch television I can even see it.  
No running away. No peace. Can't I have peace in my own  
home?

AMADA: You're so right. (Breaking away from Alicia) I promise...

INOCENCIO: (Evading her touch) Don't promise anything. Just shut up.

AMADA: (Moving away) I'll try.

ALICIA: You come and sit down. I'll pick the broken pieces.

AMADA: Later. (Refusing to sit down) I'll wake José Luis.

ALICIA: Let him sleep.

AMADA: Didn't hear him come in. Is time to gets up.

INOCENCIO: What's the matter with the boy? Almost never see him.

Yes, wake him up.

AMADA: I'll do it.

ALICIA: (Standing firm) No solution, Amada.

INOCENCIO: What the hell is going on?

ALICIA: Nothing. She is nervous... so many things... and now...  
the birds. The canaries. Yes, tell him.

AMADA: Is not important.

ALICIA: It is. For you. Maybe even for him.

AMADA: (Hopeful) Finally... yes... we have two new canaries... born  
in captivity.

ALICIA: Isn't that amazing!

INOCENCIO: You won't touch them... they transmit diseases.

ALICIA: Ridiculous. Anyway, she won't. I promised to take care of  
them.

AMADA: Is not the birds.

INOCENCIO: Give me more coffee. *Francisco (Paco) Prado*  
(Alicia serves him another cup)  
Go and wake him up. I want to talk to him.

AMADA: I said I'll do it.  
(Moves towards the rooms)

ALICIA: Is not fair, Amada.  
(Amada stops)

AMADA: You are so right.

INOCENCIO: Don't waste my time. What is it?  
(Amada moves away, undecided)

AMADA: (Evasive) The birds... can you hear them, Alicia?

ALICIA: Alright. Let's get it over with. (Turning to Inocencio)  
She has something... to ask you.

INOCENCIO: Like I didn't guess.

ALICIA: She must know what to expect.

INOCENCIO: I wish I knew myself. What does she want?

ALICIA: Is somebody else.

INOCENCIO: Damn that somebody else.

AMADA: (Interrupting) I'll do it, Alicia.

ALICIA: (Reflecting) I didn't mean it.  
(Alicia goes to the kitchen. Amada stands where she is.  
Takes a glance towards the garden)

AMADA: She says they shriek when hungry. You hear them?

INOCENCIO: What is it now?

AMADA: I won't touch them. You heard Alicia. She'll take care of  
them. I... (vacillates)... I have other things I can do.



INOCENCIO: (With irony) Such as?

AMADA: (Relieved) You know.

INOCENCIO: Not what you want.

AMADA: A very important gift... and so inexpensive. (With decision)  
Bermúdez. ~~His release.~~ *Let him go!*

INOCENCIO: (Calculating) You call that inexpensive. For who?

AMADA: ~~A few words... that's all it will take. You can even do it  
over the telephone. (Realizing she is gone too far) Not  
that urgent... but something must be done. You can do it.~~

INOCENCIO: How much do you know?

AMADA: What she told me. His mother.

INOCENCIO: I see. Mothers exchanging snapshots of their offspring.  
Like they didn't grow up. Like they didn't become men.

AMADA: He is a kid... you/son's friend. They went to the University  
together... they would still go... if only it was open. But  
the doors are closed to them... all doors... even ours. No  
one comes anymore.

INOCENCIO: Let me ask you a favor too. When are you going to the doctor?

AMADA: I have an appointment... as I promised you. Not that I have  
any faith.

INOCENCIO: But you have faith in me.

AMADA: Yes... yes... yes... you always gave me anything I could wish  
for. Never had to ask.

INOCENCIO: You do, now.

AMADA: Is not me.

INOCENCIO: You must have faith in your doctor first... get your eyes back...

see things as they are... Yes even with your eyes open is not enough. Not in this world of mine. Yours is smaller, you can watch it all at a glance. All you need is wish... as you say... and there are gifts... flowers, candy, dresses, furs, trips... and even children... everything in its day and in its place. The only disaster can be a broken vase...

(Rising)

Let me tell you... unless I look further... there may be an end to all that... even to replacing a glass vase with a plastic one.

AMADA:

(Defensive) I don't want anything... Glass or plastic... I want to help that mother get something she can't live without.  
¡It's not me!

INOCENCIO:

¡Worse! Because you ask for what I cannot give you. I can change your car every year... take you to the nightclubs to show your furs... to Miami to buy the things you don't need... have two policemen by your door night and day to let you sleep in peace. I can give you all that. (Ironic) Of course, you don't need anything. You had to invent something cheaper I could not give you. That's what it is. Cheap. To ask me to set free that man. ~~who wants to kill me.~~

AMADA:

(Screaming) Is a boy!

INOCENCIO:

A man. <sup>full of hatred.</sup> ~~the man who can kill your husband...~~ <sup>He</sup> who can stop all your wishes forever with one bullet.

AMADA:

~~There is something~~ I must <sup>not</sup> never lose... <sup>my faith</sup>

INOCENCIO:

I'll take care of that... keeping myself alive.

(Goes to the table. Takes a sip from the cup. Is empty.)

Sits down)

More coffee.

AMADA: I'll ask Alicia.

INOCENCIO: You see enough for that. The shape of things...  
that's what the doctor said. Come!

(Amada hesitates, then walks towards the table. She  
stumbles on Inocencio's knee. He doesn't move)

Can you see the pot?

AMADA: Barely.

INOCENCIO: Alright. Let's start recuperating.

(He puts the cup next to the pot)

Take your time.

(She extends her hand and turns over a glass of water  
on Inocencio's lap.)

INOCENCIO: Goddamit! (Pushes the chair back. Amada feels for a  
napkin. Tries to wipe the water from Inocencio's pants:  
He rises, violent)

Stop it. Don't mess it up. Don't touch me.

(Reels and the chair falls back)

(Amada, at a loss, screams)

AMADA: Alicia!

(Alicia comes in. Inocencio stares at her)

ALICIA: Is only water. Let it dry.

AMADA: Thank God it was not coffee.

(Alicia rushes to her side to help her up. Inocencio  
looks at his pants)

INOCENCIO: I'll have to change. (Goes inside)

ALICIA: (To Amada) Here. (She helps her up) Why didn't you call me?

AMADA: I am not that inept.

ALICIA: Of course, but next time...

AMADA: There won't be any next time.

ALICIA: Let me do these things.

AMADA: (Resigned) Nothing I can do for him... anymore. Nothing.

ALICIA: Yes... yes... you can...

AMADA: Nothing to wait for.

ALICIA: ~~Let~~'s not exaggerate.

AMADA: I still love him. (Moves away) I thought he... (Turning)  
Don't say it. I won't believe it.

ALICIA: He loves you too.

AMADA: (Bitter) Thank you. No.

ALICIA: Yes.

AMADA: I have waited for years... for a gesture, however small.  
Not gifts. Not words. A gesture. Unexpected. In silence.

ALICIA: Sometimes I feel sorry... for him. His kind of life.  
Knowing he is hated by all... even by those he is paid to  
protect. Why has he taken it upon himself?

AMADA: You too, love him.

ALICIA: (Startled) I understand the... horror... yes... the horror  
of his life. Not the reason for that kind of life. There  
should be a time when...

AMADA: ...We do something to escape that horror. That gesture, I  
was telling you about.

(She picks the receiver she had unhooked)

I must tell her to forget me... not to forgive, she never will. To forget we were friends.

ALICIA: Don't. I'll talk to her if she calls.

AMADA: I must do it.

ALICIA: Wait. He didn't say...

(Amada hangs the receiver)

AMADA: She must try elsewhere. Where, Alicia, where can he turn?

ALICIA: Shhhh! She won't call. She will try... there are other people... She won't call anymore.

(The telephone rings)

AMADA: There she is. (She doesn't move. Makes a gesture. Alicia stops her)

ALICIA: I'll do it.

(Picks the receiver)

Yes, it is me... I know, we had a long distance call...

I don't know if she can come to the telephone... she is

lying down... I understand... you don't have to tell me, I

know... yes, yes... your son... I tell you, she'll do anything

she can... don't you cry now... no... no... I won't hang up...

I'll listen... yes, yes...

(She puts the receiver against her body)

I must hang up.

(Amada moves forward, gropes for the telephone. Alicia gives it to her)

*Seminario de Dramá*

*Colección*

-25-

*Francisco (Paco) Prado*

AMADA:

Hello, Cecilia... yes, Amada. No, nothing serious. Another headache. Of course, I did. How could I forget? Come, don't you start thanking me for it. Well... I did ask, I mean, I tried to find out... You must understand his position... you know how people are, how they interpret things... This... it seems to be serious. But maybe it can be arranged... I say... maybe... how would I know. You tell me... then, he tells me... I listen to all. I believe you, I do, I do. We have a son his age. And he is a good father. And a good husband. He wouldn't deny me this favor... He won't...

(Alicia tries to stop her)

No, he did not promise. But I think he will.

ALICIA:

(Whispers) Stop it!

AMADA:

(Pushing her away) Don't... don't you thank me... I'm only telling you what I think... but... but... If that makes you happy, yes, he'll let him go. I must leave you now. You wait.

(She hangs)

ALICIA:

What have you done?

AMADA:

(Realizing) Hold on to hope. Is that so terrible?

(Inocencio returns. He is totally dressed in white, coat and all. He has a cigar in his mouth, unlit. Looks at the women. Alicia moves away to clean the table)

INOCENCIO:

I need a match.

ALICIA:

There (She points to a drawer)

AMADA:

I'll get it. (Walks to a drawer)

INOCENCIO:

(Ironic) Let's not have another disaster?

ALICIA:                    Alright. (She goes to the drawer and takes the matches)  
Here!

INOCENCIO:                You light it. I must learn to help myself.  
(Struggles with the tie while waiting for the light.  
Alicia lights the cigar. Inocencio puffs at it)  
Thank you... little Alicia.

AMADA:                    (Amada interrupts) Pay no attention, Alicia.

ALICIA:                    I couldn't care less.  
(Alicia goes back to the table)

INOCENCIO:                Is a nice role... "little" Alicia.

AMADA:                    Stop it!

INOCENCIO:                She likes it.

AMADA:                    Please!  
(Alicia picks the dishes and leaves to the kitchen)

INOCENCIO:                She is getting edgy.

AMADA:                    No reason to make fun of her sacrifices.

INOCENCIO:                Is that what she calls it?

AMADA:                    What would I do if she leaves.

INOCENCIO:                She has left me... long ago. I wonder why?

AMADA:                    I couldn't do without her.

INOCENCIO:                She has dropped me on the way, though.

AMADA:                    She loves you too.

INOCENCIO:                Can't imagine when. Well, I'm getting used to it.  
Being dropped by people. First it was names. Now  
it is names and faces.

AMADA:                    (Seeing an opening) Maybe you don't have time to listen.

INOCENCIO: I see what they do.  
You can't change what people do. (Remembering) I heard you on the telephone. Was it your doctor?

AMADA: No.

INOCENCIO: What about the appointment?

AMADA: Yes... yes... I promised.

INOCENCIO: You will see him... you will follow his plan to the end... is that it?

AMADA: I made another promise.

INOCENCIO: That's all I care. I want you to realize that there is something you can do... for yourself.

AMADA: My eyes will take time. What I need now can't wait.

INOCENCIO: Let's have first things first. I want to know what the doctor says. I'm going to see that you face the facts. You can get your sight back... if only you do your part.

AMADA: I need help.

INOCENCIO: If he isn't good enough, I'll take you anywhere... You know that.

AMADA: Yes... yes... yes. That's what I mean. You help me, here.

INOCENCIO: Don't Amada. I won't hear about something I cannot do. My job is to put an end to disorder. To stop disorder in its tracks... come from where it may. Do you understand?

AMADA: Not anymore. Not when I know that to help me... to help others... all you need is give an order... a few words...



even on the telephone, now. The simplest cure for the most horrible disease in this world.

INOCENCIO: We are not the disease.

AMADA: Stop it, then... if that is your job.

INOCENCIO: Over the telephone, that simple. Let me see if I follow your instructions. I go to the telephone, pick up the receiver (he does), dial a number I know and wait (Pause) Ring... ring... ring... I can hear it, but no one answers.

(He hangs up)

What next?

(Alicia comes in. Interrupts the scene. Is going to go back. Inocencio stops her)

INOCENCIO: You stay. Maybe you can help. Isn't that what you do best?

(Alicia turns around)

Your sister needs help. (Alicia stops)

ALICIA: Nothing I can do.

INOCENCIO: Oh, yes, you can. You can take sides.

ALICIA: Leave me out of this.

AMADA: Please, Alicia!

ALICIA: (Going to Amada) Why, Amada, why... you don't even know...

AMADA: I do.

INOCENCIO: Tell her... what Bermúdez did.

AMADA: I know what his mother wants.

INOCENCIO: There are other mothers, Have you thought of that?

AMADA: Who started all this. Not Bermúdez. Not a 20 year old boy.

INOCENCIO: Murderers have no age... just victims, ageless victims.

AMADA: Who made him a murderer?

INOCENCIO: Why don't you ask me what he did, instead of why.

ALICIA: (Interrupting, angry) Are you so sure?

INOCENCIO: (Turning on her) Can you change my version of the facts.  
Were you there?

ALICIA: Neither were you. Why do you chose to believe he did?

INOCENCIO: (Calmly) They brought him in. He had the gun... but not the  
bullets... They found them in his victim's body. (Turning to  
Amada) A policeman, protecting a threatened man... I suppose  
you want to know why was the man threatened. Should we start  
there?

AMADA: You want me to go back to the doctor.

ALICIA: (Rushing to her) Of course, that's the most important thing  
now.

AMADA: (Pushing her aside) But I made another promise.

INOCENCIO: Reckless. You should be able to have what you promise.

AMADA: I promised myself. Yes... I would go back to the doctor.  
He gave me hope. Enough, I suppose, something to hold on.  
Well, I would go... let him experiment. But... (She turns  
towards Inocencio, pleading)... why should I want to see...  
such cruelty.

ALICIA: (Reassuring) No one is going to change the world for you

INOCENCIO: But you are both wrong... I'm trying... is all I do, day and  
night... try to put the world in shape.

AMADA: No. No use going to the doctor unless I can face myself.

INOCENCIO: So, you won't do what you promised.

AMADA: It is time I get something I really need.

INOCENCIO: That I cannot give you.

ALICIA: (To Inocencio) What difference does it make. You don't even have to do it yourself... let somebody release him. Who cares?

INOCENCIO: You can call that justice?

ALICIA: Who cares... who murders who, who is free, who is in jail...

AMADA: We must care.

INOCENCIO: See... at least she has her own beliefs.

ALICIA: (Turning away) I'm fed up with words. Don't know what they mean anymore.

INOCENCIO: Maybe there is something I can do... to please all.  
(Turning to Amada) You... (to Alicia)... you... and me.  
That is, all. Is that fair?

ALICIA: As long as you let him go.

AMADA: Yes... yes... a beginning, who knows, maybe if you show them... me...

INOCENCIO: Wait... wait... wait.. it has to be all. Remember?  
Justice for all.

ALICIA: (Suspicious) Yes! Do it! ¡Whatever!

AMADA: I'll get well. ¡Faith! That's what you all say... I must have faith. What better proof... have something for all to see... that boy and his mother, together...

ALICIA: Amada, listen...

AMADA: You are right, Alicia. Not words. I won't need them to know that he (she turns around towards Inocencio) that you still... care... as I do. (There is a long pause. Inocencio has turned his back. Alicia is expectant) You will let him go?

INOCENCIO: (After a long pause)  
I'm afraid it will have to be words. A deal. We have a dead cop. A hated man to some. A pillar of the community to others. His job? Protect people, all people, even fanatics like Bermúdez. Well, this cop was shot dead while protecting a Senator... because Bermúdez didn't want him to be reelected. Elections? Don't make me laugh.

ALICIA: You prefer bullets?

INOCENCIO: I told you I don't care. Let's get it over with...

AMADA: Alicia, please... let him...

INOCENCIO: (To Alicia) I'm sure you will understand my deal. Is practical. It will satisfy you too.

AMADA: (Hopeful) It must... it must...

INOCENCIO: (Retracting into his own thoughts) Everything you buy has a price. Nothing... nothing is free. The best you can hope for is a bargain.

AMADA: Well, darling, you must agree there are things... feelings...

INOCENCIO: (Smiling) Feelings? That's an open faucet with an abyss for a mouth. Let me tell you about things concrete... things you must buy, whatever the cost... exactly what you want, the freedom of that murderer. It does have a price.

ALICIA: Don't say it.

AMADA: Let him.

ALICIA: Amada, listen to me. You must realize...

AMADA: I must know. (To Inocencio) What is it?

INOCENCIO: We are talking about power. No bargain here. It is all or nothing.

ALICIA: (To Amada) You see...

AMADA: Then, what?

INOCENCIO: I can show them there is no deal... with them, by making one with you. (Satisfied with himself) Yes... letting Bermúdez go.

AMADA: Oh, thank you... thank you...

INOCENCIO: (Interrupting) Provided...

AMADA: I'll call Cecilia...

INOCENCIO: I said... provided.

ALICIA: Amada, listen... please... please...

INOCENCIO: ...We all agree.

ALICIA: (To Amada) No use. Face it.

AMADA: (Angry with Alicia) He says he'll let him go.  
(To Inocencio) May I call Cecilia?

INOCENCIO: Then... you agree.

AMADA: Yes... yes... yes...

ALICIA: (Holding Amada by the Arm) Please listen to him...

INOCENCIO: She has agreed.

ALICIA: No, she hasn't...

AMADA: (Realizing something is wrong) What is it... that I agree?  
(Reacting) Of course I do. I'll do anything you want...

go to the doctor... get operated on... transplanted... torn to pieces... all will be justified by this gesture of yours. Talk about faith?... I'll begin to live again. Maybe even you and I...? (She reaches for Inocencio. He reacts)

INOCENCIO: Don't you spoil my clothes.

AMADA: I didn't mean...

ALICIA: (To Inocencio) Let's hear your deal.

INOCENCIO: Everybody knows that a policeman was killed. Bermúdez was arrested. He had the gun. It was in the newspapers. People don't like Senators being murdered... or banks robbed... or bombs exploding while they shop. People want arrests, convictions and peace. We have the killer, the proof...

ALICIA: What about the conviction... the verdict... the sentence...?

INOCENCIO: You know we are close to a civil war.

ALICIA: We still have the law.

INOCENCIO: You can't have a trial during battle. First we must have peace. Then, maybe then, we'll all listen.

AMADA: What is it, Inocencio.

INOCENCIO: No sacrifices on your part. No risks. No loss of faith. Simply... realize... that the victim had a mother and a family... That family... his own children... want justice... or they'll take it into their own hands. Like everybody else, I also have a family, and the right to protect them. Imagine... if I lose control.

AMADA: What must I give you.

INOCENCIO: Only your consent.

AMADA: You have it.

ALICIA: No... no... no.. you can't.

AMADA: Details... what do I care... so long as I see he lets the boy go.

ALICIA: But you must know the conditions. (To Inocencio) Who will it be?

INOCENCIO: (To Alicia) You would make a great prosecutor. You may even get your chance. Just keep your nose clean and wait.

AMADA: She is right... as usual. What's it, Inocencio. Tell me.

INOCENCIO: (Reflecting) We must make it clear that we are releasing a killer... but not condoning the crime. There are ugly words for this kind of business. But it is more than they would do for us. Yes. I'll let the killer go. But the crime remains. A dead policeman. A family destroyed. A killer at large. We have other killers. Of course... not so well connected.

AMADA: (Trying to get away from the revelation) Alicia...

ALICIA: (Going to Amada) Listen to him.

AMADA: You'll call Cecilia. I'm not feeling well.

(She moves away. Inocencio stops her)

INOCENCIO: You want Bermúdez.

ALICIA: (Firmly) Yes.

INOCENCIO: I am asking her.

AMADA: (Afraid) Must I know the details?

INOCENCIO: You wouldn't care. It will be anybody from the pile. They all

look different. But they think alike. One track minds... like beasts with one single appetite. Hunger. For power. Yes. Any will do. By one door Bermúdez goes to his mother. By another a "volunteer" takes his place. He must go elsewhere.

ALICIA: To the end of the world... for all I care.

INOCENCIO: Closer. To the empty chair. I'm running out of policemen.

ALICIA: Alright... spare the details. Just do it.

INOCENCIO: Not so fast. It wouldn't be fair... she must know the details.

AMADA: Will they... (Stops)

INOCENCIO: What?

AMADA: Will they kill him?

INOCENCIO: Who knows? I wouldn't. You see... like you, I hate details. Like you I love order. Like you I'm willing to sacrifice anything to live in peace. I don't go after the cleaners. Check that they leave no traces of dirt behind.

AMADA: Then... what will they do?

INOCENCIO: I don't care. It depends on whose turn it is to do the cleaning. Some people are more thorough than others.

ALICIA: But you can guess.

INOCENCIO: Yes. They may take him to the place where our man was shot. Sometimes they do it. Just to scare the beginners, before sending them home with a good spanking. But sometimes... it could happen, yes, they may put a rope around his neck and... zas!... up, like a warning flag.

AMADA: (Moving away) I will call Cecilia now.

ALICIA: Wait. (To Inocencio) But you can stop it... you can make sure that is only a warning.



INOCENCIO: You don't understand. I'm a busy man. The minute I get to the office I have to handle a load of work. Roberies, accidents, suicides, rapes, drugs, you name it, and lately a new type of social disease, terrorism. It comes in many shades. It strikes in many different ways. Only this desease is spreading this way... our way... I try to keep clean... a doctor free of germs if I must obliterate the disease.

(Amada has gone to the telephone. Alicia notices. Stops her)

ALICIA: Wait, Amada. Maybe he... (turning to Inocencio) maybe you can give specific instructions. Order the patient back.

INOCENCIO: I would have a waiting line to the end of time.

ALICIA: (Holding the telephone in Amada's hands) Listen, Amada. Don't call Cecilia. There is nothing you can promise or regret. Give him a chance. (Turning to Inocencio) I know you will ask them to bring him back. You don't have to promise. I know. (She takes the receiver away from Amada and hangs it) We won't be asking about him... like frantic parents or friends.

Please!

INOCENCIO: You learn something everyday. After years of struggling I have finally managed my own tie. (Pulls at his knot). And then... new enigmas arise. Why, Alicia, you want it all?

ALICIA: (Bitter) Not what I really wanted ¡Ever!

AMADA: We know, Alicia.

ALICIA: Is not that.

AMADA: Your love for us.

ALICIA: Is not that, either.

INOCENCIO: (Intrigued) Well... I must go without a deal.  
(Looks at himself on the mirror. Turns around.)  
My son? What's the matter with him? (Looks at his  
watch) If I come in, he leaves, When I ask, he is not  
in. Is he avoiding me?

AMADA: (Walking towards the hallway) You should talk to him.

ALICIA: (Standing on her way) You must answer him.

INOCENCIO: What about it?

AMADA: (Walking away) A warning flag. Is all I'll ever see... no  
matter who goes free... a human being... a flag. (Turning  
around, almost defiant) Let it be your vision.

INOCENCIO: (Stops by the door) No help. I should know better. I must  
do what I have to do.

ALICIA: (Stopping him) Inocencio! (He turns around) You know what  
will happen.

INOCENCIO: The hell I do.

ALICIA: If this goes on. If you let them decide... if you don't act...  
Someone must take the responsibility. I mean, what will happen  
to you. (She turns around, almost ashamed)

INOCENCIO: (Surprised) Well, Alicia. That's good of you... to include me  
in your thoughts.

ALICIA: (Pleading) Please. Do something. Stop it.

INOCENCIO: (Reflecting) A traffic light. Stop. Go. Yes, I suppose I  
could. For a while. But traffic must move. (Looks at his  
watch again) It's been on hold for too long. I must get back.

EXITS

AMADA: (There is a long pause. Goes to the French doors and looks out).

It was so far away... so distant I couldn't hear it. The explosions. Even the people... they were faceless, had no homes. Now, I hear the explosions and people have faces and names and addresses. Some are even friends. Were friends. (Turns around to face Alicia) How long have they deserted us?

ALICIA:

(Coming to her) Don't look back.

I must (Returning to her memories) Those photographs in the newspapers. Dead bodies. Face up or face down, clothes torn, blood spreading to where life stopped. It was something I could not understand. Why didn't they have faces, or names, or addresses? Where did they come from... that we had to stop them this way? Terrible, undestructible creatures.

ALICIA:

(Trying to stop her) Won't do you any good. Must do as I try to do. Forget.

AMADA:

How can one forget! One day... one of those bodies in the newspaper had a name. You couldn't see or recognize the face... but I knew who he was, how he looked... and I saw his home and his family and how once we even had laughed together...

ALICIA:

Yes... yes... I know. Now we know who they are... those terrible creatures.

AMADA:

I began to look for the reasons behind this insanity... I could not understand the footnotes under the photographs... all I understand was that now I knew who these people were... and I stopped reading, listening to the radio. I wanted to talk... to someone who could explain... but more and more calls went unanswered. I was left alone.

ALICIA: You are not. We are together. We'll stay together.

AMADA: (Suddenly) I'll go to the doctor.

ALICIA: That I like.

AMADA: I must get my sight back.

ALICIA: That's the way to talk.

AMADA: (Getting excited) The only way... if I want to see him come back to me. I must look him in the eyes, search in his eyes for whatever love is left.

ALICIA: (Alarmed) You mustn't...

AMADA: What do you mean?

ALICIA: No conditions. No deals. You'll get well because you want to be well... no matter what. No matter whether there is anything to see, good or bad... whatever. Understand?

AMADA: If I see. If I understand. If I can put names on things... then... maybe all this... this confusion around us... will stop. I may be able to say... you don't do that because... because... it is... bad... it is a crime. (Begins to sob)

ALICIA: (Embraces her) Don't... don't.. he will be alright... I have the feeling... he will let him go. Bermúdez is a student... has a name and a respected family... has other friends besides us... it would be stupid, yes stupid, give the revolution a known face, a martyr. Yes... he'll let him go... and we will have time... more time...

AMADA: For what?

ALICIA: There must be a way out.

AMADA: What now?

ALICIA: We must go on. Maybe all this, in the end, could be a way out...  
for all.

(Reacting) Now... first things, first. I must start fixing  
lunch. (Kisses Amada and goes to the kitchen)

AMADA: (Looking towards the hallway leading into José Luis bedroom)  
You are right. Let's hope. What else is left. (Realizing  
she is alone) Yes... sleep sound, my boy...

(Going to the kitchen)

I'll help you Alicia. You must let me help you. I insist.

(Enters the kitchen. There is a long pause. Through the  
garden José Luis comes in. He is a handsome youth of 20.  
He wears a sport jacket. He stops before entering the living  
room, hesitates, listens for sounds, realizes the women are  
in the kitchen, enters. Suddenly, Amada comes out of the  
kitchen, stops)

AMADA: José Luis!

(He stays silent. Alicia calls from the kitchen)

ALICIA: You come back and finish. You call that help?

AMADA: Enough is enough... he must get up. (Walks towards the  
hallway) José Luis!

(José Luis removes his jacket. Alicia comes in from the  
kitchen. Face each other. José Luis puts a finger to his  
lips. There is a gun in his belt. He removes the gun and  
puts in his pants pocket. Amada's voice is heard from the  
inside.

¡José Luis!

(Alicia is going to say something. José Luis motions her)

JOSE LUIS: Later!

(Amada comes in. José Luis reacts)

I'm here, mother.

AMADA: (Relieved) Oh, God... what scare. The bed made up and you gone.

JOSE LUIS: I made it myself.

AMADA: But where were you...?

ALICIA: (Interrupting) In the garden... looking at your birds.

JOSE LUIS: Yes.

AMADA: Did you see them... the little ones?

(Alicia motions José Luis)

JOSE LUIS: Oh, yes.

ALICIA: (To José Luis) Too late for breakfast... maybe you'll stay for lunch.

JOSE LUIS: No. I must go.

AMADA: But where, darling... there is no school... and Ana María is calling constantly. Whatever are you doing with your time?

ALICIA: Come, Amada, you must finish in the kitchen.

(Exits)

AMADA: Sure... sure.. (To José Luis) Did you hear us?

JOSE LUIS: What do you mean?

AMADA: Your father.

JOSE LUIS: No... no.. I over slept.

AMADA: Nothing wrong with that... but... have you been awake long.

JOSE LUIS: I just woke up.

AMADA: Good. Do stay for lunch. I must talk to you.  
(She goes into the kitchen. José Luis goes now into his room. There is a long pause. He comes out, another gun in his hands. Goes to the French windows and a young man, about his own age, appears. José Luis hands him the gun)

JOSE LUIS: (Whispering) We must get the bullets.

FRIEND: Where?

JOSE LUIS: We'll find out. Now go.

FRIEND: (Looking back, apprehensively) Those cops outside?

JOSE LUIS: Hide that gun. That's it.

FRIEND: But those cops?

JOSE LUIS: They saw you come in with me. Smile and say so long. Go.  
(The Friend leaves)  
(José Luis collapses on the sofa. Is exhausted. Begins to fall asleep. Alicia comes out of the kitchen. He can barely keep his eyes open).

JOSE LUIS: Tell mother I'll stay for lunch.

ALICIA: What about... Bermúdez?

JOSE LUIS: You wake me.  
(He falls back, asleep) (Alicia looks at him expressionless. She presses her blouse as the curtain falls)

CURTAIN

"ACT II"

Same place. One afternoon. The stage is empty. Inside, Amada is playing on the piano Ernesto Lecuona's "La Comparsa". After a few moments, Ana María comes in from the street. She is a young woman of about 20, slender, vivacious, strong. She is carrying a shopping bag. Darts into the living room, throws the shopping bag on the sofa and walks towards the French windows, staring out, oblivious of the piano.

José Luis enters after her. At hearing the piano he stops to listen. There is a pause. Ana María turns around, aggressive.

ANA MARIA: Well... I made up your mind.

JOSE LUIS: (Signals her to keep quiet) Shhhh!

ANA MARIA: (Lowering her voice) I have decided we must go.

JOSE LUIS: (Ignoring her) Listen! Mother hasn't played for ages.

ANA MARIA: (Irritated) You are not listening to me.

JOSE LUIS: (Turning to Ana María) She'll get well.

ANA MARIA: (Annoyed) Yes... yes. What I want to know is that you agree.

JOSE LUIS: Oh, stop it.

ANA MARIA: I am talking about our wedding... our honeymoon.

JOSE LUIS: Who cares where we go.

ANA MARIA: You should.

JOSE LUIS: I do. That's why we must stay.

ANA MARIA: You hate Miami.

JOSE LUIS: Has nothing to do with Miami.

ANA MARIA: We can go to Tampa. Palm Beach... we have friends there.



JOSE LUIS: We can go to Varadero.

ANA MARIA: I'm up to here with Varadero. When you marry you are supposed to go away.

JOSE LUIS: (Listening to the piano). She is going to the doctor. She will get well... won't she?

ANA MARIA: You were not listening.

JOSE LUIS: You are the one who is not listening. I told you. We marry. We move into our own apartment. We go anywhere you chose, but here...

ANA MARIA: There is no place to go anymore. Not even Varadero. We wouldn't be safe.

JOSE LUIS: Things are going to be alright.

ANA MARIA: That's not what father says.

JOSE LUIS: What does he know?

ANA MARIA: He's your father's boss. He ought to know.

JOSE LUIS: Well, they don't.

ANA MARIA: Do you?

JOSE LUIS: It will stop. This terror.

ANA MARIA: See? That's what I mean. It's bad enough we cannot marry in the cathedral. Will we be any safer in that small church here?

JOSE LUIS: Don't worry. You'll have your police scort.

ANA MARIA: What about later... our honeymoon... will they be there also.

JOSE LUIS: Oh, come on.

ANA MARIA: They follow me everywhere. I don't like it.

JOSE LUIS: We'll stop it.

ANA MARIA: We?

JOSE LUIS: Somebody. Your father... my father... they must face it... reality.  
They cannot protect you anymore.

ANA MARIA: Me?

JOSE LUIS: Us. Everybody.

ANA MARIA: You agree, then... we must go away from this... this... inferno.  
They are even putting bombs in the movies, the stores... all over...  
what about churches. Why not in churches?

JOSE LUIS: You don't understand.

ANA MARIA: Should I?

JOSE LUIS: (Irritated) Yes!

ANA MARIA: You mean... you agree..?

JOSE LUIS: (Screaming) Sometimes... yes... sometimes I do...

(The piano stops)

(Going to Ana María) Look, let's drop it. I've things to do.  
You think about it... we may not even be able to marry on  
schedule... (Seeing her face of disgust). I mean, things are  
getting out of control. Who knows?

(Ana María moves away)

ANA MARIA: I do. And I am not going to let this madness get in my way.  
You decide what is more important.

(Picks the shopping bag)

The date is set. The invitations are out. But I won't stay in  
this fight one minute after the wedding. Is none of my business.  
I hope is none of yours... either.

(Amada comes in. She is dressed to go out)

Oh, Amada!

(She rushes to Amada)

AMADA: What is it?

ANA MARIA: He won't listen to me.

JOSE LUIS: I told her... I tell her now... we marry the day she wants, in the church we can afford.

ANA MARIA: He wants to stay here. Can you imagine. What are we going to do. Watch television with a policeman at the door?

AMADA: Come... come... your wedding is the important thing. We must adapt... well, that may not be the word, but we must not plan too far ahead. You'll see... sometimes the unexpected turns out to be the best.

JOSE LUIS: Tell her you never had a church wedding. Did it matter?

AMADA: (Evasive) I didn't care then.

JOSE LUIS: (Interrupting) Yes. She married in an office and in private. You want to be seen and envied... wearing that silly costume.

ANA MARIA: Did you hear?

AMADA: He'll love you in your wedding gown. All men do, no matter what they say. (Turning away) He'll remember, always.

ANA MARIA: (Going to her) Thank you, Amada. You'll see the dress. I'll bring it over for a last try. Want you to see it... I mean... I want your approval. It is a little modern... well... the neckline is a bit lower than mother wanted. Is stunning!

AMADA: Yes. You must have your own wedding. Not like mine. Everybody had a say. Papa and mama because they thought we were different and should show it. Inocencio's mother because she wanted all to see her son was different. Neither had the money to choose... I had to settle for what his salary could afford. (To Ana María) Times have changed. We have the money now. You can chose.

ANA MARIA: I want to go to Miami for the honeymoon.

(Anticipating a reaction) I believe we should go.

AMADA: Well... you two must decide on that.

ANA MARIA: He won't hear of it. He wants to stay and... I suppose...  
pretend to study, be ready for the exams. What exams, I ask,  
if the University is closed... is going to be closed...

JOSE LUIS: Who says?

ANA MARIA: Father says.

JOSE LUIS: He's trying hard, but let me tell you, we know better....

AMADA: Wait... wait. Ana María is right. How can resume classes if... if..

JOSE LUIS: If what?

ANA MARIA: If instead of studying you are learning to hate. That's what.

JOSE LUIS: (Annoyed) I'll drop you home.

ANA MARIA: I can walk, thank you.

(Picks the bag and searches inside)

There are things here I won't need anymore.

(Pulls out a few packages and drops them on the sofa)

I needn't tell you what they are.

(José Luis goes over, takes the bag away from her and returns  
the items)

JOSE LUIS: Here. Let's go.

(Ana María holds the bag. She drops it)

ANA MARIA: Is all you are always ready to do. Take me home. Leave me there  
wondering waiting for a phone call.

(Turns to Amada)

Well, if he calls at all, you can guess what it is. He can't

make it... he has to study... day and night. Well, maybe you should finish whatever you are studying....

AMADA: (Trying to interfere) Ana, be patient.

ANA MARIA: Why not him? Why can't he see I am thinking for both.

JOSE LUIS: You get things ready... let me do the thinking.

(Ana María starts pulling at her engagement ring )

ANA MARIA: I'll give you something to think about.

(She can't pull it off)

JOSE LUIS: (Going to her) ¡Stop it!

ANA MARIA: (Frustrated) It won't come off.

(Rushes over to Amada and kisses her)

I am choosing Amada. Thank you.

(Rushes to the door)

JOSE LUIS: (Half mocking) You forget your shopping.

ANA MARIA: You keep it. I won't be needing your gifts.

(Pulling at her ring)

Don't worry. I'll send your ring back... if I have to cut off my finger.

(EXITS)

(José Luis hesitates. He is about to follow Ana María when Amada, who is looking out into the garden says)

AMADA: My little birds. Hear them? They can't be fed at the same time.

(Turns around)

What are you doing there... go get her... try to understand.

(José Luis now walks in, like that's exactly what he expects, understanding. Questioning).

JOSE LUIS: What about me?

AMADA: I try. Your father tries. If only you could tell us what's happening...

¡To you! Why do you dissapear for hours...? There are no classes. You used to study here...bring your classmates here. Where do you study now... what's keeping you away all the time...

JOSE LUIS: (Impatient) Mother... mother...

AMADA: (Reaching to him) I understand. You are a man now.  
(She searches for him. He extends his hand reluctantly.  
She grabs it, then pulls him to her, embraces him)  
Yes... grown up...  
ready to fly.  
(Pulls him back trying to see him face to face)  
But my baby still. You must tell me what you need... always.

JOSE LUIS: (Breaks lose) My life, mother, my own life, my own decisions.

AMADA: No age for that. You'll always need us. Understand. You will still be part of us... the best. Whatever you are it is us. Whatever you do it is us.

JOSE LUIS: Yes... but one day... I can't remember when, maybe after reading something, or hearing something, maybe when I saw injustice... yes, injustice, and I understood the word... injustice... sounds so remote in books, but when you see it, is a terrible thing to feel. It changes you. It parts you with all who don't see it your way.

AMADA: (Evasive) You are not ready for that. The world will be there.

JOSE LUIS: I am here... and I can't stand what I see.

AMADA: (Moves away) We all have nightmares. You can wait for yours.  
(She goes to him) Can't you see... you'll never change the world. Only your life... make something out of your life... marry, have children, give me grandchildren... be happy...

JOSE LUIS: That's what we all want. If the world would let us. (Turning aggressive) Can't you see, we must change the world... if I must make you happy.

AMADA: You will. Ana María... your children.

JOSE LUIS: That's why I must do it my way.  
(Moves away)

I won't be home for dinner.

AMADA: Where are you going? Your father will ask.

JOSE LUIS: I have things to do.

AMADA: I should be able to know.

JOSE LUIS: You wouldn't understand.

AMADA: Then... it is wrong... whatever you have to do. (Turns her back)

(José Luis hesitates, torn by doubts)

JOSE LUIS: I don't want to involve you in my... nightmares.

AMADA: (Turns around) You always did... whenever you woke screaming. I was there. You went back to sleep.

(She opens her arms. José Luis rushes over and lets her embrace him).

You tell your mother.

(Pushes him away and searches in his face)

No matter what, I will see it your way.

(He breaks loose. Walks away)

It will be our secret. We can have our own little secrets, can't we?

JOSE LUIS: (Coming closer) Is no secret, mother. It is simply... do you feel what I feel...? everybody knows what happens. We all see it everyday. The problem is... nobody cares.

AMADA: But I do... I do...

JOSE LUIS: Alright! You remember Tony?

AMADA: (Evasive) What Tony?

JOSE LUIS: Yes, you do.

AMADA: (Making an effort) I remember him.

JOSE LUIS: Do you know where he is?

AMADA: Why should I?

JOSE LUIS: Is all I hear. Why should I? Of course, you don't have to know. But his mother does. That's all she hears... why should I know? (Raising his voice) Someone should!

AMADA: (Tearful) You'll wake your father.

JOSE LUIS: Tony's gone... disappeared... Not found, not even dead... like so many others.

AMADA: Please!

JOSE LUIS: You said you wanted to know.

AMADA: Later, later...

JOSE LUIS: It might be too late. There are others. I know where they are. I want to make sure they stay where they are...¡alive!

AMADA: I won't listen to gossip...

JOSE LUIS: Is not gossip... it's death. But I won't waste your time... You are right. Why should you know. I should ask others.

AMADA: (Fearful) You mean... your father?  
(Pleading) You must understand .... there are other people involved.

JOSE LUIS: But one has the answer. Maybe I should ask him. Not about Tony. Too many people have already.

AMADA: (Impatient) Why should he know?

JOSE LUIS: You see mother... I have no place to go and ask. Not about my friends gone. But you must know that I'll defend the ones alive... Yes... Bermúdez.

AMADA: (Terrified) You won't do anything. Listen. I have asked. I know where he is. Is that good enough?

JOSE LUIS: (Surprised) Will he let him go?

AMADA: (Irritated) Why he... he... why do they all ask him... pester him with questions about everything. Did he start all this?

JOSE LUIS: I don't care who did. All I care is that I feel hatred... and I can't live with it. Bermúdez is alive. We all know where he is. I have asked. You have asked. Someone must have an answer.

AMADA: We will... soon. He promised.

ALICIA ENTERS FROM THE STREET. SHE SEEMS DEVASTATED.  
MECHANICALLY SHE GOES TO A CHAIR AND COLLAPSES.  
There you are. I've been ready for hours. Where have you been?  
(She does not reply. Seem lost in her own thoughts)

JOSE LUIS: (To Amada) Don't wait for me. Tell father anything. But I won't be home for dinner.

AMADA: (Pleading) Where are you going?  
(José Luis stops)



JOSE LUIS: What difference does it make.  
(Alicia reacts)

ALICIA: (Absent mindly) None.

JOSE LUIS: (Takes a step towards Alicia)  
You wait. You say tomorrow. Then you say maybe... Is time  
I do something...

ALICIA: (Rising, hurt) We must think... yes... think... not react...  
think. There must be something we can do... all of us.

JOSE LUIS: I know what I can do, myself.

ALICIA: (Desperate) ¡I've been there!

AMADA: (Irritated) What's this... Why these riddles in front of me?  
It's bad enough having your own private signals behind my back.  
¿What is it, Alicia?

ALICIA: I told you. We must think.

JOSE LUIS: (Realizing) I see. Later. Tomorrow. Maybe.  
(He rushes out)

AMADA: (Alarmed) Get him back!

ALICIA: (Resigned) I'm going to lie down for a while.

AMADA: (Impatient) Where is he going?

ALICIA: (Defeated) Makes no difference. (Noticing Amada is all dressed  
up) I forgot we have an appointment.

AMADA: It was you who made it. And here I am, not knowing where I  
should go. Does it make any difference, Alicia?

ALICIA: (Reacting) Oh, yes, it does... to me.

AMADA: I am ready.

ALICIA: (Looking at Amada) You must get well. I want to see you  
well again. (Rushes to Amada) Like old times... when we  
didn't even know words like hope, promises, existed.  
Well, now is all we have, words like hope... promises.  
Words, words, words...!

AMADA: (Suspicious) We are not going?  
Is that it?

ALICIA: (Doubting) You should not go... not today.

AMADA: (Irritated) This is absolute madness. First you all gang up  
on me, leave me without strength to refuse... when I give up...  
you tell me I should not go to the doctor.

ALICIA: See... you do it to please us... You would sacrifice yourself if necessary. But you don't believe in miracles. (Searching for a way out) Well, miracles ended centuries ago...

AMADA: I must see again... whatever there is to see.

ALICIA: You would offer your illusions in exchange for someone's life. How simple. I give you something, you give me something. But... suppose they lied to you... not the doctor, not even yourself... if he lied to you...  
(Amada turns away. Alicia holds her by the arm)  
Yes... he... Inocencio.  
(Amada breaks loose, mad)

AMADA: How dare you? Talking like a stranger.  
(Alicia turns away)

ALICIA: No. No more miracles! Why did we stop believing in guardian angels? Maybe when we suffered for the first time and no one came to our rescue. Remember? You and I, two rich and pampered little girls. Father proud and protective in his officer's uniform. Mother a tower of strength. Our world a castle surrounded by inaccessible walls.

AMADA: So long ago... why remember?

ALICIA: To understand! To find the day when our secluded world ended.  
(Going back to her memories) Over those walls there was another world... tin roof shacks made of discarded things... inhabited by children like ourselves, but half naked, dirty, hungry, afraid...

AMADA: Don't, please... let's not look back...

ALICIA: (Relentless) You and I, sneaking out of our castle, hand in hand, trembling, carrying our discarded toys, scraps of food, the candy we couldn't eat, dresses we no longer used... gifts from heaven brought to those poor kids by angels...  
(Turning to Amada)  
The truth is not so pretty.

AMADA: We meant well.

ALICIA: They were not satisfied. We were giving what we didn't want. They wanted what we could not give.

AMADA: We tried. Yes, that much I remember, how more and more we tried to make them happy. More. They wanted more.

ALICIA: A final gesture of kindness... we gave them our own clothes.

AMADA: You were first... took off your dress. I ~~took~~ off mine. No need to explain. They gave us theirs.

ALICIA: How we laughed... dressed up like beggars. We danced and sang imaginary songs. Then we cried. I still see the maid, her horrified face, her panic, seeing her world upturned, screaming...

AMADA: We too. The children ran away terrified. We were taken home punished. You took it upon yourself... always wanted to protect me, like you are doing now. Why?

ALICIA: (Looking at her) I was maybe ten. Yes, you were two years older, but it was I who became an adult that day.

AMADA: I kept believing in miracles. Is that it?

ALICIA: You musn't.

AMADA: There is no cure for people like me... I suppose,

ALICIA: Yes... Yes.. yes there is. But let's hold on to what is ours. You'll go to the doctor when it is your eyes you want back.

AMADA: (Tentative) He.. Inocencio... won't do it... as you hoped... as I prayed... he won't keep his promise...

ALICIA: Only his deal... is all he ever promised.

AMADA: No miracles, then. (Turning, defiant) Suppose I tell you I still believe

ALICIA: In him?

AMADA: Miracles. I'll get my sight back... I'll keep on giving, not discarded things... important things without which I could not live, my trust. Tell me I am wrong...  
(Alicia starts back)

ALICIA: I only meant...

AMADA: To make me an adult? Well, let me tell you... you know when you were ten. Suppose I don't want to be an adult, ever...  
(Alicia has been cornered. There is no way out but the truth. She cannot say it)  
You can't find the magic words. I'll wait for my own revelation.  
(José Luis enters from the street. He is almost in tears)

Now, should I wait for that day to see the doctor?

ALICIA: I'll be ready in a minute.

JOSE LUIS: (Irate) You never will!

(Alicia takes a finger to her lips)

First you didn't know. Then you were not ready. What is it now that not even mother can get out of you?

AMADA: What's come over you?

JOSE LUIS: (Dismayed) ¡Silence! That's what would stop it all... is that it, Alicia!

ALICIA: Is better than human noises.

JOSE LUIS: They frighten you... they are getting closer... almost next door...

AMADA: I won't listen to your enigmas anymore. I made a promise and I am going to keep it. Alicia... you don't have to take me to the doctor. I won't ask why not (Turning to José Luis) You may excuse yourself. I don't want explanations. One of the guards will take me. They get paid for that. Well?

(There is a pause. Then Herminia appears. She is Inocencio's mother, maybe 70, still erect, though she helps herself with a cane. She handles it like it could become a weapon. Enters)

HERMINIA: Good afternoon! Hope I'm not interrupting. (Looking around) A place where I can die in peace.

(Taking a look at the tense scene)

What's the matter. You look like you had seen a ghost. I am still alive. Where do I drop dead?

AMADA: (Taking a step forward) Good afternoon, Herminia. (To José Luis) Take grandmother to her seat.

(José Luis goes over and tries to help her to the sofa. She rejects the help and walks alone).

HERMINIA: Thank you...I know my way.

(She collapses)

You, come back here. Where is my kiss?

(José Luis returns and bends over to kiss her)

You call that a kiss?

(She grabs him by the arm and forces him to lean over. Now holds his face in her hands).

You get colder everyday... and more beautiful. Why are you not more like your father... more beautiful and kinder?

(Pushes him back)

AMADA: What can we offer you, Herminia?

HERMINIA: Anything would be better than watching this funeral. Get me my coffee... as usual... hot, black and sweet... very sweet. Yes... that's the way I like it.

AMADA: Alright, alright...

ALICIA: It will take a minute.

(She exits into the kitchen)

JOSE LUIS: You want some water?

HERMINIA: You sit down. I have to talk to you. (Looking at Amada) Why are you so dressed up. Don't tell me you were going out.

AMADA: Well... yes...

HERMINIA: Where is my son?

AMADA: Taking a siesta. I was going out.

HERMINIA: You can do that tomorrow. The minute I get here you all have to go somewhere. I won't be leaving unless I am thrown out.

AMADA: I have an appointment with the doctor...

HERMINIA: Doctor? You look healthy enough to me. He'll wait for you. Go and get him up.

AMADA: I rather let him sleep... he doesn't get enough....

HERMINIA: I am the one who is not getting enough sleep... or anything else a human being needs... like affection from one's own...

(José Luis is going to get up)

You stay where you are. We have to have a man to man talk.

JOSE LUIS: I'll be back.

HERMINIA: You are back. Stay where you are. (To Amada) Get him up. He should not be sleeping at this hour. Everybody else is awake... talking, scheming, destroying...

AMADA: Will tell him you are here.

(Herminia dismisses her with a gesture. Amada exits).

JOSE LUIS: (Rising) Will get your coffee.

HERMINIA: I can wait. You come here!  
Ana María called me.

JOSE LUIS: Well... she doesn't waster her time.

HERMINIA: Exactly. Nothing worse than wasting one's time. How old do you think you are?

JOSE LUIS: (Ironic) You know better than I... you buy me a present every year. I am old enough...

HERMINIA: (Emphatic) You don't want to go to Miami.

JOSE LUIS: No need to go anywhere.

HERMINIA: Newly weds go away...

JOSE LUIS: To come back.

HERMINIA: Yes. To find that home is the best place in the world... when you see it from a distance.

JOSE LUIS: It may not last that long.

HERMINIA: It will be here when you return, A much better place  
(She signals him to get closer) Come!  
(José Luis sits)  
We will be here... unchanged... your family.  
(José Luis rises abruptly)

JOSE LUIS: There are other families...

HERMINIA: I care about mine. You care about yours. That's the rule of nature.

JOSE LUIS: What about the rule of law...

HERMINIA: Look here, silly boy... first you graduate from law school... life will teach you a few lessons later... You'll learn to balance in between.

JOSE LUIS: You don't want to understand.

HERMINIA: (Trying to rise) Understand? (Collapses) Arrogant word, meaning nothing. Look at this house, my boy, built by your mother's parents... you have seen the one your father built for me... look at you, what you are... a part of this world built by your family. Understand? You better. It is all you have... your only weapon in life... our existence... our reality.

JOSE LUIS: What about my own?

HERMINIA: Inherited reality. You don't give it away. It has been here ever since Cuba was called a pearl, or something... it will be here after this fight is over... we are not going to exchange it for somebody else's reality.

JOSE LUIS: It may be wrong to accumulate the past.

HERMINIA: (Rising with difficulty. Standing erect). Only if you hate what you are. If you hate us.

JOSE LUIS: I don't want to hate them, either.

HERMINIA: Then, go... before you have to chose sides. It could be a mortal sin. To defend your enemies.

JOSE LUIS: I'll stay and defend myself.

HERMINIA: With bombs?

JOSE LUIS: With words. Making people understand... yes, even you understand... only that no one likes what it means... well, it is very simple, it means moving out of the line once you get what you are entitled to. No reason to stay in front, pretending there is no one behind.. Yes... grandmother, there are millions behind, waiting, but only one, if there was only one waiting... should be enough to make us move.

HERMINIA: Idiot boy... It's worse than I had thought... you have been contaminated... will send you away to prevent contagion... I must alert your father.

JOSE LUIS: You leave him out of this.

HERMINIA: He will have to ask you what I don't dare.  
(Alicia comes in with the coffee)  
You... go and tell Inocencio I can't wait.

ALICIA: (Placing the coffee on the table)  
He just went to bed... may be Amada will let him rest.

HERMINIA: I'll get him out of bed.  
(She takes a few steps)

ALICIA: Please, don't.  
(Turning to José Luis)  
Tell her... your father... (She stops)

JOSE LUIS: My father was out... all night... Is that it, Alicia?

ALICIA: You go to Ana María... now...

JOSE LUIS: I must stay. I may want to ask a few questions myself.

ALICIA: You won't... there is no answer.

JOSE LUIS: Yes, there is. Who did it?

ALICIA: Shut up!

HERMINIA: (Interrupting) You, viper... you are the one... you have poisoned his mind. What is it that you want from us. You came in as an orphan and now we have a parasite. Is it our blood you need now?

ALICIA: Don't you pretend to be my godmother... I know who you are.

HERMINIA: Look at her... our lady of the despossessed... She... she doesn't even have a bastard child to feed. Yes, you, arid bitch. I also know what you pretend to be. Get out my way.

JOSE LUIS: (Intervening) Stop it!

HERMINIA: (Pushing him aside) Yes, look at her. That's the stuff revolutions are made of. People like her. They earn nothing. They want it all. Is that what will make you a wife, a mother, a woman?

ALICIA: Not what you are... despite all those labels... because you are illegal... all you are was stolen... You and your Sargeants, shot your way into our lives...

HERMINIA: We deposed Machado... a tyrant.

ALICIA: To stablsh the dinasty of the barracks. That's what you all are... seargents in royal rags. You are afraid... it is time you take them off.

HERMINIA: I told him to throw you out of this house...

ALICIA: Your power can't reach that far. He lives here... my parents home (She turns away... surprised by her own revelations) I'm still here. (Facing Herminia) It's you who is going. (Herminia rises her cane to strike Alicia. José Luis moves to protect her. The doors to the bedroom open. Inocencio comes out. He has taken a shower. Is only clad in a towel. He is startled by the scene).

INOCENCIO: What's this... a battle in my own home? Can't I even take a shower in peace?

(Alicia reacts and exits into the kitchen. José Luis is going to follow)



You pick up that cane.

(José Luis picks the cane and hands it to Herminia. She grabs it and thalf threatens to strike José Luis. He doesn't move)

Now... mother... Let's have peace.. for a while.

(She opens her arms. Inocencio goes and embraces her, picks her up and turns her around)

Smile... let me see you smile.

HERMINIA:

Put me down... you brute.

(He puts her down. She drops the cane again. José Luis is going to the kitchen. Inocencio stops him)

INOCENCIO:

Your grandmother needs your help. (José Luis picks the cane. Herminia doesn't even see him. She is entranced in Inocencio's arms. José Luis drops the cane on the sofa, moves away).

You stay here... she may need more help.

(Pushing Herminia aside)

Now... what can be so serious. Haven't see you in ages.

You look great... hope you are not having an affair.

(She beats him on the chest)

HERMINIA:

Don't make me laugh.

INOCENCIO:

You could... but let me not find out. I'm very jealous, you know?

HERMINIA:

(Laughing, pushing him away)

You don't change.. I am an old woman now... an institution.

(Moving to get her cane. Inocencio looks at José Luis.

He takes it from the sofa and hands it to Herminia. She glares at him and takes the cane).

For some I should be something you visit on all saint's day.

JOSE LUIS:

I'll be in the kitchen.

INOCENCIO:

Here... I want to talk to you.

HERMINIA:

Let him go. Later.

(José Luis goes to the kitchen. Herminia leans on the cane with both hands)

They'll have to wait. I'll do the visiting for some time yet.

INOCENCIO:

Of course.

HERMINIA: (Raising one arm to have him come)  
No one will touch you.

INOCENCIO: (Embracing her) You know how I hate it. Hypocresy. It shows on your clothes. Now, why this honor, at this hour?

HERMINIA: Is the only way to know you are still alive... seeing you.

INOCENCIO: Don't you worry about that.

HERMINIA: Can't reach you on the telephone any more. I follow you through the news.

INOCENCIO: Well, here I am... no matter what the news say... What is it... you want me to take you to a night club?

HERMINIA: I want you to take care of yourself. Night clubs? Those sisters of yours... they still go... no matter the bombs. Now people get killed in nightclubs.

INOCENCIO: They will be safe again.

HERMINIA: Like old times... ¿remember?... Tropicana... The trees, the lights, those girls walking down from the stars.... the music... myself... feeling to be part of the fantasy.

INOCENCIO: We'll save the fantasy, mother.

HERMINIA: You must... no matter what cost.  
(Looking at him, intently)  
Before it is lost forever.

INOCENCIO: I know.

HERMINIA: How much do you know?

INOCENCIO: Only what I have to do. It is them or it is us. Easy. Don't you worry about me.

HERMINIA: That boy... I wonder... who is he going with? No school, no lessons... even Ana María asks me if I know where he is. You must talk to him.

INOCENCIO: I'll fin the time.

HERMINIA: Today. He must go away after the wedding.  
(Amada walks in from the bedroom. She carries a white bathrobe)

AMADA: Here is your robe... you could catch a cold.

HERMINIA: (Slapping Inocencio on his chest) Machos don't catch colds. Look at him. Well, no need to, I suppose. Give me that robe.  
(Amada holds on to it)

AMADA: I see enough for that, thank you.

INOCENCIO: Don't be rude. Mother wants to help.

HERMINIA: Help? She doesn't need help... she needs advice.. Yes, go to your doctor... you'll get well, he told you. Enjoy your life... your husband. Here... hand me the robe.

AMADA: You said it. I can manage.  
(She walks to Inocencio and offers to help him to it)

INOCENCIO: (Ironic) You give it to me. No need to fuss over it.  
(He takes it with some impatience)  
I'll put it on. Thank you.

HERMINIA: (Hitting the floor with the cane) Is all I need, to be treated like an intruder. Suppose I should wait for an invitation before ever coming to this house again... I'll...

INOCENCIO: Now, now, calm yourself. Here.  
(He gives her the robe)  
You do it... wrap your baby, put him to bed...  
(Herminia throws him the robe)

HERMINIA: (Laughing) You devil... you. If I were only younger.  
(Slaps him on the chest again) Now, put it on... before I tear that silly towel off.  
(She reaches for the towel)

INOCENCIO: (Protecting himself) Mother, don't... I am naked.  
(They laugh)

AMADA: (Turning away towards the French windows)  
Hear the birds... hear them? (Screaming) José Luis... hurry...  
(She stumbles and falls. José Luis comes in followed by Alicia. He rushes to her mother. Inocencio and Herminia stare at Alicia. She hesitates. Returns to the kitchen. José Luis helps his mother)

JOSE LUIS: You hurt?

AMADA: There (pointing to the garden) See if they are alright.  
(José Luis looks in the direction)

JOSE LUIS: Of course they are. Come.  
(He holds her up. Herminia is helping Inocencio with the robe)

AMADA: (Confused) You must excuse me... but sometimes, I could swear it is voices I hear...

JOSE LUIS: Want something?

AMADA: I am alright. (Turning to Inocencio and Herminia) See if Herminia wants more coffee.

HERMINIA: I better go now. I think Amada could have another crisis. It won't be my fault.

INOCENCIO: (Seeing José Luis is going to return to the kitchen)  
You take grandmother to her car.

HERMINIA: We are not in speaking terms. Not until he returns from his honeymoon.

INOCENCIO: I'll take you.

AMADA: You should dress.

HERMINIA: He is not naked, dear. That imagination of yours. Better get well and see things as they are.  
(Amada is hurt. Turns her face away. José Luis goes to her. She holds him by the hands. Herminia takes a few steps holding Inocencio's hand. Stops.)  
I don't think I should be coming back... unless I am asked. Anyway, I assume, the wedding will be an exception. I'll have to go.

INOCENCIO: You come any time, any hour. Let me get dressed and I'll take you home.

HERMINIA: You stay and do some asking yourself. And you come see me. It'll be better for all. But don't let me waiting for the check.

INOCENCIO: I gave you one on the fifteen.

HERMINIA: That was fifteen days ago... your dear sisters have no idea of dates or money. Every day is a holiday... expenses paid.

INOCENCIO: Tell them to stay inside. I am getting too many unpaid checks.

HERMINIA: You tell them.

INOCENCIO: I can't have my men protecting those whores all over town.

HERMINIA: You do that, too. Should hear what they call you when the check is late. A kiss.

INOCENCIO: Two. (He kisses her, hugs her, makes her laugh).

HERMINIA: Stop it. (Pushes him away)

(To Amada) You take care of that imagination of yours. If we lose the mind, nothing is worth saving. (Turning to Inocencio) Don't you work too hard now. To chase criminals any cop will do.

(José Luis stands up. She looks at him)

Don't bother... I rather wait for that kiss.

(Inocencio walks her to the door. She turns around. To José Luis)

Better go back to your books. Learn something. It takes time to get there. And, you'll find out, time always needs more time. You just wind the clock.

(Now to Inocencio)

My extra kiss.

(Inocencio leans over. She holds his head with one hand, kisses him on the lips. Abruptly she exits)

(Inocencio stands there, looking at his son. José Luis seems uncomfortable)

AMADA: (Noticing the tension) Tell Alicia I am ready.

JOSE LUIS: She is preparing dinner.

AMADA: Well, then you take me to the doctor.

JOSE LUIS: I can't.

AMADA: (To Inocencio) You hear that? What am I supposed to do? (Trying to look unconcerned) Well, darling, you have one of the guards take me.

INOCENCIO: (To José Luis) Come here!

JOSE LUIS: (Looking at his father, not moving) I'm sorry. I have other things to do.

INOCENCIO: (Insisting) ¡Come here!

AMADA: (Conciliatory) Go to your father.

JOSE LUIS: (Raising his voice) I hear him.

INOCENCIO: Well, I'm waiting.

AMADA: José Luis, please...

JOSE LUIS: Alright... alright... (Takes a few steps)  
What is it?

INOCENCIO: Look at me... it is your father you are talking to.

(José Luis raises his head) I want to see what you are thinking when you say you can't take your mother to the doctor.

JOSE LUIS: Nothing.

INOCENCIO: The reason?

JOSE LUIS: No reason.

INOCENCIO: Then, you take her.

AMADA: The guard will take me. It's a tedious wait for a boy.

(Going to José Luis) You see if Alicia needs something.

INOCENCIO: (Relentless) I told you to come here. (José Luis hesitates. Takes a few steps)

JOSE LUIS: What is it?

INOCENCIO: You are talking to your father. Is that the way?

JOSE LUIS: What is it... father?

INOCENCIO: Closer. (José Luis faces his father) That's better.

(Looks away) Look at me.

(José Luis looks straight at his father)

Yes... you are as tall as I am. You will grow taller and wiser, I suppose. But you are still my son... neither taller nor wiser.

(Inocencio opens his arms)

Come... give me an embrace (Amada, instinctively gestures to draw them closer. José Luis doesn't move. Struggles with his feelings)

You aren't too old for that.

(Inocencio takes a step and embraces José Luis, caresses his hair... José Luis stays limp)

You won't.

(Moves him away)

Maybe you are... you are ashamed of your feelings... or is it your father?

AMADA: (Pleading) He loves you.. say it darling... say it.

JOSE LUIS: (Chocking) I do... I do... but I can't... (Turns to his father) say it.

AMADA: (Persistent) Yes, you can. (Tries to push him towards his father. Inocencio reacts)

INOCENCIO: Leave him alone.

AMADA: We are a bit nervous, that's all.  
(Reacting) Let's get it over with. Tell one of the guards to take me to the doctor.

JOSE LUIS: ¡Mother... you shouldn't go!

AMADA: (Raising her voice) But why, why... why!

JOSE LUIS: (Rushing to her) He lied to you.  
(José Luis reacts, frightened by his own revelation)

AMADA: (Incredulous) You mean, the doctor... lied... to me.

JOSE LUIS: (Trapped in his own words) Suppose he did... even the doctor.  
(Desperate) Everybody lies.  
(Inocencio has turned his back)

AMADA: I'll find out by myself.  
(José Luis goes to his mother)

JOSE LUIS: Don't ask, mother, please.

AMADA: (To Inocencio) Should I go to the doctor?  
(Inocencio turns around)

INOCENCIO: Nobody has lied.

AMADA: (Reassured) Thank you.  
(José Luis reacts like a wounded animal)

JOSE LUIS: Bermúdez is dead!  
(Goes to his father, faces him)  
They killed him... who lied?  
(Inocencio slaps him across the face. José Luis reels back and falls.)

INOCENCIO: Get up. I'll show you who has lied.  
(Amada rushes to José Luis. Embraces him)

AMADA: Shhh! Shhh!  
(José Luis rises. Amada tries to hold on to him. He rejects her, gently)

JOSE LUIS: Let me go, mother.

AMADA: Ask your father to forgive you.

JOSE LUIS: Sure. On my knees. (To Inocencio) Would that change anything?  
(Inocencio is returning from far away thoughts)

INOCENCIO: Watch what you say. There is no returning from some words.

AMADA: You will forgive him... It is just another slander...  
Bermúdez is alive. Is he?

INOCENCIO: I gave orders to send him home.

JOSE LUIS: They did. (to Amada) I won't tell you how...

AMADA: Please... you mus'nt say anything.

JOSE LUIS: (To his father) Tell her.

AMADA: Why listen to slanders... lies...!

JOSE LUIS: Worse, mother... the truth.

INOCENCIO: And what is the truth?

JOSE LUIS: The result of your orders. You told them to take him home...  
alright...Did you check that they did?

INOCENCIO: Is all I do the minute I get to the office. I have orders to  
follow. Orders to give. It is the chain of life. The  
innocent free, the guilty punished. It seems that Bermúdez was  
not innocent.

JOSE LUIS: Who decided that..?

INOCENCIO: I can send him home, I can even ask for a written report to see  
that my orders are carried out. Can anybody do more... arrest  
the criminal, take him to the judge, see that he gets a fair  
trial, release if found innocent, follow him home, make sure  
he gets behind safe doors, stay there, watching that he gets the  
sleep he needs... to find, after all, that there were other people  
watching, people who have a victim on their minds, yes, waiting to  
avenge their lost. Bermúdez was not innocent. I could not protect  
him from his acts.

AMADA: (Returning from a trance) Nothing to wait for. All lost. Why?

JOSE LUIS: He had ideals. Terrifying word. Ideals. We all are born with  
our own, but we clash, the minute we arrive in the world we  
inherit. Yes, mother, Bermúdez wanted to be heard... he called  
things by their real name: corruption, vice, tyranny... clear  
words to define how we live. To change the way we live. Why  
should these words frighten people?

INOCENCIO: He killed a policeman. Murder is what frightens people. Ideals  
with weapons.

JOSE LUIS: They took the law away from them. All they have now is weapons.



AMADA: What can your father do?

JOSE LUIS: Act! Not wait for reports. Act. (Turning to his father)  
I know you sent him home... I know you expected to be obeyed.  
But there is no law to make them do it. You just look on.  
Not seeing what they do with their own weapons. Someone must  
take them away! The law.

INOCENCIO: What a good lawyer you'll make. I can see you arguing my  
case. Only you wouldn't have me as a witness. I wonder if  
your love of law would let you see how dead I was. Or that  
you cared. Is it the law or your blood that counts? Is it  
them or me? Is it me or you?

AMADA: We are not involved in this. These people out there are our  
enemies. Why should we fight among ourselves. Stop it.

JOSE LUIS: Too late... when our own friends are being murdered. When  
we can't stop that. (To Inocencio) You could have. Yes, by  
making sure Bermúdez was not killed on the way home, delivered  
to his mother like a laundry bag, filthy, tortured, dead!

AMADA: (Screaming) ¡I don't want to know!

JOSE LUIS: That's what they did. That's what orders do... (To Inocencio)  
You were innocent when you gave the order. But orders must  
be legal... must be seen obeyed.

INOCENCIO: Like I was better than God. I got the cream of the survivors  
of the flood. What a bunch. Thieves. Whores. Murderers.  
It has rained a lot since... but there they are... multiplying  
and unrepentant... screaming for their filthy rights. (He  
takes a few steps)  
There are worse. A new breed, waving little flags... killing  
for rights I cannot grant... my surrender. They even have a  
date for that. July 26. They want Christmas in July.  
(Now facing his son)  
They are different. They don't plead innocent when arrested...  
they don't beg for release... they look you in the face, like  
you were the thief, the whore, the murderer. Some even take  
your place and strike first.  
(Moves to the French window, looks outside, remembering)  
And that's it. You strike back. I saw it only once. I was

a plain cop then. They were drilling a terrorist. They caught him with the little flag wrapped around a bomb. He played dumb and deaf. They put some pressure on him. No words... no signs of pain... All you heard were the blows... how they hit and hit with no response. They put him up against the wall trying to see if he was dead. And then it happened. He spit the policeman in the face. (He turns around and faces Amada and José Luis)

There is no water enough to wash that shame. There was a little pause... like the policeman was waiting for the spit to reach the shame. Well, it did. It is frightful when it does. Shame overflows like boiling blood scalding the body until it leaves it naked of flesh... just human nature... raw... vengful.

(Turns his back)

First the policeman spit back on him... then he pushed him gently against the others... sure that he would get him back. Funny... they began to smile, like kids playing football... smiling and pushing him around. They got tired. They stopped smiling and pushing. They knew what was demanded. One held him from behind. Another tore down his pants. I saw the offended one reach for his pocket. I didn't wait to see what was it he was reaching for. I walked away... wanted to go behind a wall or something... far away... not to hear the screams.

(Now faces <sup>them</sup>/again)

I can't stop that... human nature.

AMADA: Not if they hate us so... if they won't plead for mercy... it is something human nature saves for times like this.

JOSE LUIS: They do. It was the regime first. Batista. His cronies. Those who let him come back to rule us... like we were endangered sheep.

AMADA: You stay out of this...

JOSE LUIS: We can't. It is us now. They hate us... because we look on... we let things happen... that kind of thing.

(Facing his father)

I want to help you stop it father.

INOCENCIO: With words?

JOSE LUIS: Is all I have.

INOCENCIO: I hope it is all you ever use.  
(Exits)

AMADA: Will you see if my birds are alright?  
They are so quiet.

JOSE LUIS: I must go now.

AMADA: Yes, you go and see Ana María. You must agree. You can go  
anywhere you prefer. I'm sure she won't object. As long as  
it is away from here... until... until... we get back from  
hell!  
(She collapses on the sofa, crying)

JOSE LUIS: (Rushing to Amada) I can't take you with me... I can't leave  
you here... in this place... if it is hell.

AMADA: You must go. It is us who lit the fire. We must face the  
results.

JOSE LUIS: You said it. Whatever I am it is us. Whatever I do it is  
us. We are here. We stay here... whatever place this is.  
(Alicia comes in from the kitchen)

ALICIA: (To Amada) We can go to the doctor now. I'am ready.  
(Amada rises and goes to the French windows. Looks out)

JOSE LUIS: You take her.

ALICIA: Where are you going?

JOSE LUIS: You ought to now.

ALICIA: Please... wait.

JOSE LUIS: What! A miracle?

ALICIA: You have other things to do.

JOSE LUIS: You take mother to the doctor. I'll do just that... what  
I have to do.  
(Exits)

AMADA: (Without looking back) ¡You come back here!  
(Alicia rushes to the door)

ALICIA: José Luis. You hear your mother?  
(No reply. Alicia reenters)

AMADA: Get him back.

ALICIA: He's gone. Now, don't you worry. He's very upset... but he'll be back. No matter what... we forget... yes... we must forget.

AMADA: (Turning around) They won't let us. Those voices. You hear them? Out there... in the garden. It is not the birds screaming for food. It is human voices. ¡You hear them!

ALICIA: Yes. But what can we do... other than go on. Come, let's go to our appointment. One thing at a time.

AMADA: (Unbuttoning her jacket) All I can do is wait. No illusions, Alicia. For reality. I'll see it soon enough.

ALICIA: (Trying to stop her) But now you know. Now it is you what's important. Your life. Please. Let's go.

AMADA: (Brushing her aside) See if he needs anything. That tie of his.

(Inocencio enters fully dressed in white, tie in place.

Alicia rises to go into the kitchen)

INOCENCIO: Aren't you going to congratulate me?

(Alicia stares back)

Look at this knot. I don't think I'll be needing your help anymore. I am on my own.

(Alicia exits. Inocencio notices Amada has taken her jacket off)

What's the matter? You cancelled your appointment?

AMADA: Yes.

INOCENCIO: Is it my fault?

AMADA: No.

INOCENCIO: What are you going to do?

AMADA: Wait.

INOCENCIO: Well, I can't afford that luxury. If I get any calls don't say I am on my way. I can't trust my own telephone number anymore.

(Exits)

(Amada remains seated. She looks at the telephone. Makes a gesture to reach for it. Pauses. The telephone rings. She retracts her gesture ever so gently and rises. The telephone rings. Amada walks towards her room as the curtain falls).



ACT III

Same place. One evening. Ana María stands on a stool dressed in her wedding gown. Alicia is fussing with the hems.

ANA MARIA: (Impatient) Will you finish?

ALICIA: Nothing to alter. Is perfect.  
(She steps back to take a total look)  
You'll be stunning!

ANA MARIA: Truly?

ALICIA: I suppose you always say it. Yes. Truly.

ANA MARIA: Thank you, Alicia. I will step down. Am dying to see it by myself.

ALICIA: Wait. You must have the veil on. I won't let Amada see you until you do.

ANA MARIA: Why won't she come to the wedding?

ALICIA: Well... she knows there won't be any of her old friends. You don't care... do you?

ANA MARIA: (Snaps her fingers) This!

ALICIA: Good. You have your own.

ANA MARIA: No, I don't. I thought I had too many. Now, with this situation going on nobody visits anymore... Everybody is afraid of something. Even given parties. Is not done anymore. Imagine, New Year's Eve and we have to stay home. No one we know is having a party. I even doubt José Luis will come. He promised. Oh, Alicia, he doesn't keep his promises anymore. What's come over him?

ALICIA: You said it. We are all afraid.

ANA MARIA: Why us? We are going to marry. Should be celebrating... having parties... instead, we are not even sure there will be a wedding. Oh, Alicia, I am scared. (Makes a move to step down)

ALICIA: (With a gesture) Don't you move. I'll run the iron over the veil. It will take a minute. (Exits).

ANA MARIA: You hurry.  
(Ana María looks at the distant mirror over the console. Steps down cautiously and walks towards the mirror. She gazes at herself. Inocencio enters).

INOCENCIO: From hell to heaven. What a celestial vision.  
(Ana María turns around, startled. She proceeds back to the stool. Tries to step up. Hesitates).  
Let me help you get back to heaven.  
(She holds her dress with both hands, refusing his aid).

ANA MARIA: Thank you... no need.  
(She gets up, unsure. Inocencio gestures to protect her. She opens her arms).  
I am alright. See!

INOCENCIO: Yes you are. No vision. Flesh and blood. ¡Beautiful!

ANA MARIA: The material is so delicate... I am afraid to touch it myself.

INOCENCIO: My hands are clean.

ANA MARIA: (Confused) Of course... only that...

INOCENCIO: My reputation is not. You don't like me.

ANA MARIA: Why do you say that?

INOCENCIO: The halo around my head. That ring of light saints carry instead of hats. I never wore a hat. Maybe my halo shows.

ANA MARIA: You'll make me laugh.

INOCENCIO: Would be better than make you afraid. Why can't we be friends? You avoid me.

ANA MARIA: But we are... we are.

INOCENCIO: I should be gaining a daughter... not losing a son.

ANA MARIA: Of course. (Reflective) I do like you... maybe I shouldn't say this... but... I do admire you. Only that...

INOCENCIO: Yes, I know... only that.

ANA MARIA: I don't care what others say.

INOCENCIO: About my halo, you mean. The horns under the halo.

ANA MARIA: (Chuckling) Don't make me laugh.

INOCENCIO: Do. It will be refreshing... to see a happy face.

ANA MARIA: (Getting serious) I am not happy... but I want to be. Yes, I am afraid. We all are. I know that you and papa will try to protect us. I want you to make sure that José Luis leaves with me after the wedding. To Miami. To Madrid. To the end of the world. If all should fail. Will you.

INOCENCIO: He planned to go away. He promised his mother.

ANA MARIA: Not me. He insists that here is where *we* should stay. What for? To count explosion<sup>s</sup>. To see how many more innocent people are killed every day.

INOCENCIO: Who are those innocent people?

ANA MARIA: Let's not get into that. I don't care who is innocent or guilty. I am innocent. I want José Luis to be innocent. Someone started this. You finish it.

INOCENCIO: Bravo! Bravo! At last an impartial witness... someone who does not pretend to have been there... when it all started. This business of guilt and innocence. You are right. If something justifies to end this mess is to make sure that you are not touched... that the dirt doesn't reach you... that you remain innocent to give us a different breed.

ANA MARIA: (Afraid) I didn't mean to upset you. I only want your help. He is your son. You know, as well as I do, that he must go. Those friends of his... students... dreamers, politicians, instead of men. Running their lives. I won't let them ruin mine. Will you make him go?

INOCENCIO: Well... I have gained a daughter. I must see I don't lose a son.

ANA MARIA: Make it clear. The dangers. He respect<sup>s</sup> you.

INOCENCIO: Strange ways to show it.

ANA MARIA: He is confused. His friends have deserted him. He could take sides. He musn't.

INOCENCIO: You mean... their side.

ANA MARIA: Our side. His and mine. Before it is too late.

INOCENCIO: Why do you think he'll obey me?

ANA MARIA: You can make him...(considering).. as a father.



INOCENCIO: It is too long since I stopped being his father. I often wonder what he sees in me now.

ANA MARIA: Don't be an officer.

INOCENCIO: He is a man now. It maybe too late.

ANA MARIA: Then... you never were his father.

INOCENCIO: How right you are... I must find the words fathers use. Hope I haven't forgotten.

ANA MARIA: Please... Try!  
(Amada enters from her bedroom)

AMADA: I can't wait any longer. What difference does it make... veil or no veil...  
(Ana María is hanging on Inocencio's reply)

ANA MARIA: (To Inocencio) Please... do.

AMADA: Am I interrupting?

ANA MARIA: I was asking Inocencio he should come to the wedding even if you insist... in staying here. Oh, Amada, won't you both come?

AMADA: (To where she thinks Inocencio is) I didn't hear the car. Is everything alright?

INOCENCIO: Came to take a bath. Must go back. Could be a busy night. I want to be ready for the new year. Want to celebrate the New Year.

AMADA: Will get you a towel.

INOCENCIO: I know where they are.

AMADA: How do you like her dress. Isn't she beautiful. (Takes a few steps towards Ana María) Veil or no veil. She is getting married. That's enough.

ANA MARIA: It is beautiful. If you could only see it. (Startled)  
I mean... you can feel it... can't you?

INOCENCIO: It is too delicate... for that... you said.  
(Amada is going to touch it. Stops)

AMADA: No need to see or touch. We are talking about love... feelings... deep inside... protected from harm... A white flame, protecting you, keeping harm away.

INOCENCIO: I do need a bath... if I must keep such company.

(Is going to enter the rooms. Alicia appears holding the veil in her extended arms)

INOCENCIO: Here is the bride.

ANA MARIA: Hurry!

INOCENCIO: Yes, do. (Stepping aside) The world is waiting. Aren't you marrying the world? (He laughs and exits)

ALICIA: Now, you bend a little... but don't touch it.  
That's it.

(Ana María stands erect)

ANA MARIA: May I see it now?

ALICIA: You said you wanted Amada's approval.

ANA MARIA: (Looking at Amada. Then to Alicia) What about you. Is it too modern?

ALICIA: Different. That's all.

ANA MARIA: The neckline?

ALICIA: I wouldn't know. (To Amada) Maybe you can tell her.

ANA MARIA: Mother insists it is too low. She is upset. She threatens to stay away if I don't raise it... (making an exaggerated gesture to her neck) ...up to hear. You decide, Amada.  
Come. Touch it.

AMADA: No need to (Moves away) Is perfect. Like all illusions. It should be seen with the mind... not the eyes. That's what I see. Not a dress. A new life... a gift. Who cares about the wrapping.

ANA MARIA: You are crying.

AMADA: No. Remembering. My own wedding dress... so different... and yet... the same. You'll never take it off.

ALICIA: (Going to her) You are right. Different... but perfect. You had a lovely wedding.

ANA MARIA: (Impatient) Help me down.  
(Alicia helps her get down from the stool)

ALICIA: This mirror is too high. Go inside and take a good look. You are the most beautiful bride I ever saw.

ANA MARIA: Thank you... thank you... I would love to believe you. If only Amada gave me the approval.  
(Amada goes to her and extends her arm. Ana María grabs it)

AMADA: You tell your mother the dress is a dream. Don't you wake up, ever.  
(Ana María fusses with the veil)

ANA MARIA: I can't kiss you. All this cloth. How can you manage?  
(Takes Amada's hand to her lips, through the veil. Kisses it)

AMADA: Don't rush... that's all. Slowly... slowly... you'll get there.  
(Ana María walks with difficulty towards the rooms. Alicia shows the way)  
There is no return from where you go.  
(Alicia and Ana María exit. Amada remains alone. After a pause she walks to the garden and exits. Alicia returns. Notices Amada's absence. Goes to the French windows)

ALICIA: There you are. Come! Is too cool outside.  
(Amada comes in)

AMADA: The birds. So silent. They must be asleep. They are alright, aren't they.

ALICIA: They go to bed early.

AMADA: Most people won't go to bed... tonight.

ALICIA: They'll have to. (Apprehensive) It is getting worse. Last night... did you hear the explosions?

AMADA: They are getting closer.

ALICIA: (Going to the French windows) Such a beautiful night!

AMADA: If it would only bring us a better year.

ALICIA: (Hoping) It will... it will! We can't go on like this. Parties have been cancelled... no families getting together tonight... Yes... people will go to bed early... like the birds... to wait for that better year. (With premonition)  
But not all. Some will stay awake.

AMADA: He will work all night.

*Seminario de Dramá*  
*Colección*  
*Francisco (Paco) Prado*

ALICIA: I didn't hear his car.

AMADA: Now, not even I know when he arrives.  
First it was his car. I used to hide behind the blinds when I heard him come. Don't know when... I stopped watching. Began to listen for his steps on the hall. First it was the wheels of the car... then, the steps. Now it is useless. No signs of his arrival. He just comes and goes... can't tell anymore.

ALICIA: It was **three cars**.  
I thought they came to change the guards. At this hour? Well... they are waiting for him.

AMADA: (Evading the implications) I didn't tell you... One of the birds died. Went to change the water... there it was... a little lump of flesh... soft and cold... there is only one left. Maybe I won't get my birds. Think we should let them go?

ALICIA: (Looking out) I wonder what happened. They looked so alive.  
(Reacting) No... you cannot let them free. They would all die.

AMADA: You don't think they killed it.

ALICIA: They have all they need. Why should they?

AMADA: But I heard that sometimes... the parents...

ALICIA: (Going to her) Nonsense. Don't you worry. You'll get this one. It happens... sometimes only one survives. This one will survive.

AMADA: (Changing, abruptly) I don't hear him. Is he taking his bath?

ALICIA: I had the heater on... the towel ready. Maybe he is taking a nap.

AMADA: I don't like this silence.

ALICIA: He is worried. (Evasive) He should rest a while.

AMADA: I know how much you love him. I mean, how much you care for him.

ALICIA: I do... I do.. but...

AMADA: You should be able to love or care without thinking... without sharing that love with anybody but him... yes, him... The one you choose. You must choose, Alicia. You are still young... It's all <sup>my</sup> fault... My dependance on you. Is not fair. Is time we all face reality. Is time I go back to my duties.

ALICIA: I am happy as I am.

AMADA: You can't be... until you look back and realize that you lost it. (Going to Alicia) I want you to be happy now, to have total happiness... even if you lose it later... to be resigned, like I am.

ALICIA: You have everything. You have lost nothing. Your eyes... well... we'll go to the doctor... when you feel like it... when you decide... as you say, to resume your duties in this house. Then, maybe, I'll leave you... I'll go out in the world on my own.

AMADA: He loved me once. I was happy once. Now I remember. The same memories every day. And it must be enough. To see him asleep by my side. Knowing I cannot touch him. If I could only do... without waking him. No. You cannot awaken the past.

ALICIA: (Evasive) I think <sup>I</sup> better help Ana María with the dress. No need to have the dressmaker come again. Is perfect as it is. (Walking away)

AMADA: I must ask you something.

ALICIA: We'll wait for the New Year here... the two of us, if you care to stay awake. Let me help Ana María.

AMADA: Where is my son?

(Alicia stops)

He should be here... if he is going to be with her. He should care to stay awake. Maybe he told you where he went. Lately I think he keeps things from me.

ALICIA: (Hesitating) I can only guess.

AMADA: Should he hide from me too.

ALICIA: Well, you know, kids his age..they may be doing some celebrating ahead of time. Is early. He'll be back in time to change. Don't you worry.

AMADA: You don't seem to be.

ALICIA: Of course not. Why should I?

AMADA: Maybe there is something you don't know... in spite of your secrets.

ALICIA: What secrets?

AMADA: What we blind people see. The clues we can find in the dark.

ALICIA: What do you want to ask me?

AMADA: I needed a clue... I found it in the dark. Now I know... what you know. You must stop him. You must bring me back the gun.

ALICIA: What gun?

AMADA: I never showed it to you. I bought it for Inocencio in Miami. (Remembering) We went on our honeymoon. I was waiting for him in front of a gun shop. He was a lieutenant then. Tall, handsome, loving. I was so proud of him. I saw this gun, there, among dozens. It was different. It seemed harmless... a toy... with an ivory handle incrustated with rubies. I couldn't resist. In no time I was back, waiting for him, with this unique present in my purse. Back in the hotel I waited for him to come out of his bath... his second bath that day. I remember wondering... I hadn't realized it was not the sightseeing, the shopping, the heat... it was part of his nature... to be clean... immaculate... it would be a ritual from then on. I had put the gun on the pillow. He had to follow my eyes. But he didn't react... I had to go over and pick it up, wave it at him, show it to him, explain it was a gun. "I thought it was a toy" he said. Yes, yes.. That's what I want it to be..., a toy. Don't you like it? He looked at me like I was talking forbidding games... and smiled. He said it very softly, like he was talking a child out of misbehaviour. Guns... he said... are for aggression or for defense against aggression. I am a cop. I must defend myself. You keep your toy. (Turning to Alicia) Is not there.

ALICIA: You never told me.

AMADA: I was so embarrassed. I thought I had hidden it forever... under my personal things.. ¡Is gone!

(Ana María re-enters dressed in street clothes. She is in a rush)

ANA MARIA: I put it back in the closet. Suppose that's it. No more alterations. I'll tell mother that Amada finds it perfect, that's the word. (To Alicia) You don't think that neckline... we could... now that everybody agrees... lower it a little?

ALICIA: You said that it is... perfect.

ANA MARIA: Yes... but if it was a little more... you know what I mean. I don't want to look provincial.

ALICIA: You wouldn't... even if you went dressed as a rural girl.

ANA MARIA: Now, Amada, what are we going to do about our boy? Why isn't he here?

AMADA: He'll be in anytime now.

ANA MARIA: Better not let me waiting tonight. I'm going to unhook the telephone. Don't want excuses... won't accept excuses. If I don't see him tonight... he will be waiting for a new bride tomorrow. You tell him. I better go. Mother is a bundle of nerves. These bombs! Do you hear them?

(Goes to Alicia)

Happy New Year, darling. Call you as soon as I get up tomorrow. Maybe we can do something about the neckline. Don't say no. I have an idea...

ALICIA: Silly. You go.

ANA MARIA: (To Amada) Happy New Year... mother. (They kiss)

AMADA: Don't unhook the telephone. One never knows.

ANA MARIA: I must do something to show him. Worse. I'll tell the guards not to let him in... if he is late. When Papa leaves the house not even José Luis can come in. Only I and he should understand this... only I can open the gate for him. Now, I must rush before those bombs begin. (Blows them kisses) Happy New Year!

EXITS

(The two women stand there in silence for a few instants. Alicia reacts)

ALICIA: Are you sure.

AMADA: I has always been there. Inocencio would never think of using it... or give away, without asking me. It was my toy, It was

what I wanted guns to be. Toys. (Reacting) José Luis...  
he is too old for games. Where is he?

ALICIA: (Trying to put her thoughts together)  
You are going to stay calm. I don't know where he is... I can  
only guess. (Remembering) Oh, my God!

AMADA: You do know. Is he in danger?

ALICIA: No, no. I'll find him. (Turning to Amada) Listen, please  
listen, I think I can find him... his club... yes, his club...  
maybe, you see, they all are students without classes... they  
get together, talk, plan... yes, he'll be there.

AMADA: Go. Get him. Bring him home.

ALICIA: Yes. You stay calm. You don't know anything about that gun...  
you have forgotten about that gun. (Holding her by the arms)  
Even if Inocencio should ask. Understand?

AMADA: Hurry... ¡Stop him!

(Alicia rushes into the rooms. Amada is desperate, alone)

(In agony) ¡Are we all going mad!

ALICIA: (Re-enters with the car keys. As she exits) Please, remember.  
(Exits)

AMADA: Yes... yes I'll forget everything. I have forgotten. It is just  
another day. I'll go about my duties. Yes! Everything is in  
its place. Alicia is preparing dinner. Inocencio is taking  
his shower. José Luis... he is in school. Yes. In school.  
Not much to do except... my birds... my last little bird.  
I'll see that he is alright.

(Exits into the garden. There is a pause. Inocencio enters  
from his room, dressed in white, pulling at his tie)

INOCENCIO: I guess I'll never learn. (Calling) ¡Alicia! (Realizing he is  
alone) ¡Amada! (Goes to the mirror and tries to fix the knot)  
Damn it! (Turns around. Shouts)

¡Alicia!

(Amada enters from the garden. In her closed hands she holds  
the last canary, dead)



AMADA: I cannot help you.

INOCENCIO: Is alright. I am learning how to do it myself. (Calling)  
Alicia!

AMADA: She is out. She can't help you, either. (She sits, holding  
her hands clasped).

INOCENCIO: All I want is some ice. I think I'll have a drink before I  
go. Everybody will be celebrating. I must be sober then.

AMADA: You'll have to get it yourself.

INOCENCIO: What's the matter with you? Maybe you should have one too.  
(Goes to the console) Straight will be better. Direct to  
the lungs. You breathe better. What do you want? It's New  
Years eve... we haven't been able to celebrate it... for how  
long?

AMADA: I have forgotten that also.

INOCENCIO: (Serves himself a drink) Who cares. To be there, on New Year's,  
is what matters. (Raising the glass) Well, here it is...  
to us. Happy New Year. (Gulps the drink)

AMADA: I would like a present.

INOCENCIO: I haven't forgotten that. You'll get it in due time. It's been  
ordered.

AMADA: Now. I want it now.

INOCENCIO: Unless it is a kiss... I don't see what I could give you...now.

AMADA: More important.

INOCENCIO: I see. My stock keeps going down.

AMADA: (With sudden anguish) Let's go!

INOCENCIO: (Puzzled) I'm sure it is not... out... where you want to go.  
Where would you go?

AMADA: Now. Let's go, now.

INOCENCIO: We cannot afford travelling these days... if that's what you have  
in mind. You don't leave the house when you know there are  
burglars in the neighborhood waiting to break in.

AMADA: Let them ramsack the house... steal... destroy... raze the place  
to the ground... let's take our lives only, our child...

INOCENCIO: Do you know when we could find him... in such a rush?  
(Noticed her clasped hands)  
What is it you hide?

(Amada raises both hands, opens them)

AMADA: Is dying. I can hear its little heart throbbing. The parents are silent. They don't seem to care.

INOCENCIO: Throw it away.

(Amada rises)

AMADA: I'll put it back... is still alive.

INOCENCIO: It is dead for all I care...and filthy. Throw it away!

AMADA: (Closing her hands over the bird) I won't. It may survive.  
Is still warm.

INOCENCIO: (Grabbing her arm) You throw it away... all those birds... they are dangerous.

AMADA: (Struggling) Don't... don't... let me put it back...

INOCENCIO: (Grabbing both wrists)... You stop this nonsense... playing with diseased animals... throw it away...

AMADA: I won't... I won't!

INOCENCIO: (Pushing her to the floor. She opens her hands to protect herself from the fall. Inocencio kicks the bird out into the garden)  
¡There!

AMADA: (Searching the floor with her hands)  
Is gone... is dead.

INOCENCIO: (Helping her up) There. Is over now. No more animals in this house. You get rid of the rest. I need peace in my own house, I want order... I want freedom from filth... understand?  
I want... (Stops. Goes to the console and helps herself to another drink. Gulps it. Turns to Amada).

Yes... I want a present also. Now. See if you can please me.  
And it is not a kiss. (There is a pause) I want my son back.  
(Amada moves away)

The bird is dead. You listen to me.

AMADA: (Turning) I want to bury it.

INOCENCIO: What about my gift.

AMADA: How can I give you something you can take, now... by the asking...  
by telling your son you love him.

INOCENCIO: You took him away from me. You never let go of him. Even now, you want to get hold of him... keep him under your skirts... you try to run away with him. Where do you want to hide him?  
From what?

AMADA: You left him on his own. Your work... your hours... you were never there when he woke up screaming. I tried to see what was so frightening.

INOCENCIO: Do you know?

AMADA: Yes. You.

INOCENCIO: I saw it happen... fear... coming between us. Not the date... the instant... in his eyes. He was reading the paper... I was watching him. His face. There was a frown over it... like he was trying to go through a dark alley... not wanting to get hurt... it was no longer my kid reading the funnies. It was a man's face looking at reality. (Pause) I only read the headlines looking for my name. It will be me that day... if I make the headlines. He was reading it all... the news... the gory details of violence... the victims... not the executors, the victims. He looked at me. I kept the stare. He was not asking... not even expecting an answer... he was telling me who the murderer was... with his eyes, forever.

AMADA: Your silence was worse.

INOCENCIO: I had no names to give him. In his eyes... I was the murderer.

AMADA: A victim. That's what you are. The must understand. Let's go away... show him that you are not part of this madness. You are paid to do a job... not to save mankind.

INOCENCIO: I'll never get him back.

AMADA: Yes, you can, because you never lost him. He will see you as you are... a wall between him and evil. Tear it down. Be his father. Let him see you as his father... not like a jailer behind a wall... He is coming home. Alicia went after him. Just wait. They'll be here any minute now. We'll be together, all of us, even if only for a while... we'll have a drink, together, wish happy new year to each other, embrace, yes, embrace, and kiss... forget for a while about right and wrong, clean and dirty, hatred and love. Love... love... love... Only love. (Turning to him) I love you!

(Inocencio is alert, like before a new danger)

INOCENCIO: I wish I was as brave.

AMADA: You loved me... until that day...

INOCENCIO: There is always... "that day". Only I thought it had not arrived between us.

AMADA: (Looking at him intently) Maybe it is you who is blind. We have been loving each other in the dark. Must it be that way?

INOCENCIO: I never changed. How could I now?  
(The telephone rings)  
I am not in. No matter what. I am going to wait for my son.

AMADA: (Answer) Yes... He is not in... No, I don't expect him... Oh, no... no... no... don't tell me... I don't know where to reach him... yes, it is horrible.

INOCENCIO: What is it?

AMADA: (Turning the telephone to Inocencio) They have killed the senator.  
(Inocencio grabs the receiver from her)

INOCENCIO: It is me. What is it?... Sonofabitches... they did it... they finally did it... I see... I see... three... you followed them to the church... yes, yes.. they are inside... sure, sure... you saw them... ¿Instructions?... You get them out... Fuck the priest. Fuck the witness. Get them out... Yes, promise... use the loud-speaker... promise anything but get them out...don't want another son of a bitch running away under the skirts of a priest... I hear you. Yes... yes... take them to headquarters. I don't care... Depends...yes, if possible... alive... yes... if possible... but listen to me sargeant. Let's make sure we are not finding pretexts to let them scape... the sonofabitches... the murderers... is happening too often now. They get away... I understand... I do... but remember... it is your choice... dead or alive...

AMADA: Stop them. (Rushes to Inocencio)  
You can't say that.

INOCENCIO: (Holding her at a distance) Yes, Sargeant. Make sure we are on the same team. I'll be there... as soon as I can.  
(Hangs the receiver. Amada moves away)

AMADA: It will never end. Only God can stop it.

INOCENCIO: I see you understand.

AMADA: No running away... no place to go. I don't think we'll be celebrating anything. It will be a sad eve for all. I'll go and

and bury my bird. I will find it. (Turning to him) Don't you worry about us. I'll wash my hands afterwards. No chance of contamination... ever.

(She goes into the garden. Inocencio is left alone. He helps himself to another drink. He turns the radio on: )

RADIO: You were listening to the latest news bulletin. Stay tuned for more news. Now enjoy our special program of music for the the New Year....

(He gets startled, like he has heard an explosion. The lights blink several times and go off. Also the radio. He goes to the French windows.)

INOCENCIO: (To Amada) Get inside. The electricity is gone. Will tell the guards to be in touch with you.

(EXITS)

(The moonlight dims to a blackout. There is a pause. The moonlight begins to increase, coming through the open French windows to bathe the living room. Some time has elapsed. Amada is lying on the sofa. She hears something and rises, fusses with her hair and dress, faces the entrance. Alicia enters and stops by the door to touch the light switch.)

AMADA: There was an explosion... Looks bad... there is no water. (Impatient) Is he parking the car?

ALICIA: The neighborhood is in darkness. The guards are gone.

AMADA: I know. I called to see if they needed anything... (Rising her voice) Why does he take so long?

ALICIA: I'll bring a candle.

AMADA: You saw him? You talked to him?

ALICIA: Yes... I mean, no!

AMADA: Are you crying?

ALICIA: (Astonished) I don't feel anything.

AMADA: (Trying to change her own thoughts) I buried the last canary. Tried to keep it alive. I did, but... (Returning to her fears). He'll come later. Is that it?

ALICIA: I want to be dead myself.

AMADA: (Searching for the meaning of the word) Dead?

ALICIA: (In anguish) Yes, dead!

AMADA: The canary... my son...

ALICIA: It can't be...

AMADA: But it is... the canary is dead... but my son... you say it... is well...say it. He is alive... (She extends her arm, searching blindly, around the room stumbling)

Where... I want to go there... Where is he?

I'll be there. I'll go and get him.

(Screaming) Where are you?

(She falls down)

ALICIA: (Screaming) He is dead.

AMADA: (Falling on her knees) No, God, no... no... no... no...

(beating the floor with her fists) He is alive... alive... alive!

ALICIA: (Rushing to her) You must say it... Dead! Say it. Dead! My son is dead!

AMADA: (With fury) No... no... never....

ALICIA: Murdered! Say it! My son has been murdered... by his father.

(There is a pause as the two women are huddled together. Amada rejects Alicia with violence.)

AMADA: Don't say that. Don't blame him for your own hatred! Take me to my son. Let's go... let's go get him. Hurry... hurry....

(Grabs Alicia)

ALICIA: (Inmobile) I don't know where he is. I can't remember.

AMADA: You must take me to him. (Collapses) He musn't die.

ALICIA: I must see him... die again.... see him die and not run away. There is no place to go. I must not lose my mind. I must suffer... I must go back and save him from the bullets or die with him. I got there in time. (Remembering) The police cars, the crowd, the loudspeaker promising they should surrender alive... The church door lighted. He was still alive. I was there in time to save him. They came out, the two of them blinded by the lights and stood there, hands half raised, the eyes questioning, the bodies tense. I felt the crowd stirring... sending a shield of mercy to protect them. Yes. He was safe. I was going to call his name... tell them it was I who armed him. (She collapses) That it was I who should be there.

AMADA: (Remote) Dead... dead... my life ended. They kill me.

ALICIA: (Slowly) I pushed my way to go to him... I was going to be there with him... when somebody shouted... "long live free Cuba"... just that... and their bodies sprang to life... They ran... so sudden... so fast... followed by the searching lights... by the screams of the crowd... by my shouts... Run... run... run... Then, the guns exploded. I saw the bullets stop them... hold them up... twist them around... tear them to the ground. I too began to run... not knowing where to go... looking for someone I could ask to stop it... it all had ended. No one could change it.

AMADA: (Rising) Orders from above. I'll go in now. I don't need you. I know where he is. I'll find him in the dark. (EXITS)

ALICIA: Yes.. lie down... We'll wait for Inocencio.  
(Exits to the kitchen. Returns with a candle. Places it on the table. She stands alone in the semi-darkness of the moonlight)

ALICIA: (With a premonition) Amada! (Rising her voice) Amada!  
(Moving towards the rooms, disappearing, inside) Amada!  
(Alicia returns and rushes to the telephone. Struggles to get a number. Gets it.)  
It is an emergency. Hello! Hello!  
(Inocencio walks in. He seems tired, expent. Holds the coat in his arm. The tie is undone. Alicia see him)  
Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! Amada !  
(Inocencio exits. Alicia goes back to dialing. Inocencio returns)

INOCENCIO: Put it down. Nothing to do. She is gone. Is too late.  
She used my razor.

ALICIA: (Covers her face) I won't see it... I won't see it. Oh, God, why don't you blind me too!

INOCENCIO: Stop it. Let's think. I must think. Let's see where we are.  
(Surprised) Where am I?  
(Inocencio goes to the French windows, looking out. The moonlight outlines him against the darkness of the garden)

There must be something I can do... (Turning to Alicia) For who?

ALICIA: (Turning away) I won't hear you.

INOCENCIO: Don't go. (Takes a few steps inside) In the car... coming over... I closed my eyes and forgot my name. I am dead, I thought. And I felt good. No name... nothing to remember. Absolute peace. Alive but without memory. I felt happy for the first time in my life. I was nobody. Yet, the whole empty world was mine. (With a sudden fear) I opened my eyes... wanted to see that world... free from any obligation to change it. I was ready to face the results...

ALICIA: (Hating) The people you killed

INOCENCIO: (Not listening) The stars... that's what I saw... and the tree tops passing over my grave. Beautiful. I was ready for burial, waiting to feel the earth on my face, waiting to be buried so deep that no one could ever reach me with my name. (Returning to reality) My driver did. He woke me up. (Remembering) Captain... he said... you are home. (Trying to smile) Raised from the dead. Resurrected. (Tormented) Cruel miracle. (Turning to Alicia, pleading)  
For what?

ALICIA: To face what you are.

INOCENCIO: That's not my name. Captain... Captain who?

ALICIA: Murderer!

INOCENCIO: No... no.. no. I haven't killed anyone. I always got there... afterwards.

ALICIA: You were there when your son was killed... here, when Amada killed herself. (Moving away, hating) Years ago... when you killed me too.

INOCENCIO: I wasn't there... ever. I wasn't there when Abel was slain.

ALICIA: Worse. You killed for power...

INOCENCIO: To protect you all from the Cains of this world.  
Why me?

ALICIA: It was your own choice... to reward and to punish...  
on this earth. Something not even God tried.

INOCENCIO: Someone must do it. Stop this killing. Make it one side instead of two. (With a sudden revelation) Maybe you should try.



ALICIA: I must... that much I know...  
(There is a pause. Inocencio looks at his gun. Takes it and offers it to Alicia)

INOCENCIO: Here. One bullet will do it.  
Take it!  
(Alicia hesitates, then takes the gun)  
Just lift your arm at eye level. Point it at my head.  
(Alicia raises her arm as told)  
Here (He points to his temple) Get closer.  
(Alicia, hypnotized, takes a step)  
Now hold it with both hands. You can't fail. Pull the trigger, gently. Do it.  
(Alicia struggles with herself)  
Come out of the dark. Let out your hatred... that virus in your blood. Strike. Can't you see I am weak. Nothing to defend... only my life... and you have the gun.  
(With increased fury)  
Shoot, you coward. Prove your courage.  
(Alicia drops the gun slowly)

ALICIA: Never had it... to love or to hate.  
It would be another crime.  
(Throws the gun on the sofa)

INOCENCIO: If you win, the rabble would call it justice. But you won't fight. You'll go back to the dark and wait.  
(He picks the gun)

ALICIA: It must be an act of justice... if we are to live like God intended.

INOCENCIO: You'll wait for the end. I will find you on the winner's side.  
(Reflecting) Talk about my guilt... you are as guilty as I'll ever be. You knew all along what was going on... you encouraged all with your silence from the dark.

ALICIA: Wanted to protect them as much as you ever did. But no use...  
I must cross that line.  
(She reacts, looks at Inocencio free for the first time)  
I can see it now. I can see you.  
(She walks towards the garden)

INOCENCIO: Where do you think you are going?

ALICIA: (Stops) I had this date... for so long. I kept saying... I must think about it... I'll let you know. I wasn't sure where to go. Now I do.

INOCENCIO: I can stop you.

ALICIA: (Turning around) Another crime?

INOCENCIO: Justice... if I win.

ALICIA: This time there is no one to do it for you... it will have to be you... But you won't pull the trigger. You are also a coward. (Inocencio takes his hand to the gun) It is true... you were never there to witness the first murder. Now you must. (She raises her head) Prove your courage. (Inocencio doesn't move. Is petrified by his own inertia) Your world is gone. Only one job left. Kill yourself. I'll let the birds go. No one to care for them anymore. They must be free to survive whatever is out there.

INOCENCIO: Wait! Please wait!

ALICIA: Don't you worry. I'll be back... with a gun. (Alicia exits. Inocencio stays by the French windows, watching her go. There is a long pause. His back is turned. He raises the gun to his temple. He struggles, unable to act. Then drops the arm until it hangs limp by his side. The telephone rings. He goes to answer it and throws the gun on the sofa)

INOCENCIO: Yes... I hear you. I was going to call myself. Listen!... No, you listen to me... Stop it... Fuck the radio... I don't care about the news... listen to me... I must tell you... about my son. Can't you hear what I say. Listen to me... is an order... That's it... don't say anything... let me finish. My son... I must tell someone about my son. How I got there late... to tell him how much I loved him... to take him home with me. Are you listening? I got there late, too late. They had taken the body away. He was not there... just his blood on the sidewalk. The only thing I'll remember. His blood. In the morgue... he was not my son, never.. not that torn flesh... those bulging eyes... the broken limbs... The blood, yes.. on the sidewalk, forever. And now... (He drops on the sofa)... here, home, where I wanted to take him... to his mother... she, what does she do... spit his blood in my face. She is dead. Who killed them, can you tell me?

(There is a growing rage)

I'll find them... the murderers. I'll kill... kill... kill...

to the last. You hear me? Hello... hello... ¡say something!

I need your help. Are you there? Where are you... help!

(He drops the receiver on the sofa next to the gun. The lights come on. With a sudden gesture of terror he covers his face with both hands. The radio comes on, gradually, as he removes his hands from his face. Noticing the lights)

¡And there was light!

(The radio comes on louder. He listens)

RADIO:

"... you must remain inside. Don't go out. No one should go out. Stay calm and keep turned to the news. We will tell what to do. We repeat, stay inside..."

(Inocencio goes to the radio and raises the volume)

...It has been confirmed. Is true. Batista is gone. He has flown out of Cuba with his family and friends. But the enemy is still behind. Unidentified cars are racing through the streets shooting at people. Don't go out. We repeat. Batista is gone... forever. Cuba is free. Long live free Cuba..."

(The Cuban National Anthem comes on. Inocencio turns off the radio, goes to the sofa and collapses. He lifts the gun and checks that it is loaded. He makes an effort and rises. Looks around trying to focus his mind).

INOCENCIO:

Must go back. (Realizing is all he can do) I'll take a bath.

(Walks towards the rooms. He stops, frozen by the sudden memory. He can't go through those doors. Reels back until he stops against an imaginary wall. Turns around and faces the audience and himself) No... no water.

(Looks at his bloodied shirt and pulls at it. Needs both hands. Drops the gun. It won't do anymore. With both hands he tears off his shirt. Then his flesh, trying to rub off the blood)

It won't wash off. ¡Ever!

(Falls on his knees, defeated. Opens his arms in a pleading gesture) God... Why did you rest on the seventh day?

Why didn't you finish?

(He collapses into a fetal position)

CURTAIN