

# The Mercurian



*A Theatrical Translation Review*  
Volume 9, Number 4 (Fall 2023)

Editor: Adam Versényi  
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*The Mercurian* is named for Mercury who, if he had known it, was/is the patron god of theatrical translators, those intrepid souls possessed of eloquence, feats of skill, messengers not between the gods but between cultures, traders in images, nimble and dexterous linguistic thieves. Like the metal mercury, theatrical translators are capable of absorbing other metals, forming amalgams. As in ancient chemistry, the mercurian is one of the five elementary “principles” of which all material substances are compounded, otherwise known as “spirit.” The theatrical translator is sprightly, lively, potentially volatile, sometimes inconstant, witty, an ideal guide or conductor on the road.

*The Mercurian* publishes translations of plays and performance pieces from any language into English. *The Mercurian* also welcomes theoretical pieces about theatrical translation, rants, manifestos, and position papers pertaining to translation for the theatre, as well as production histories of theatrical translations. Submissions should be sent to: Adam Versényi at [anversen@email.unc.edu](mailto:anversen@email.unc.edu) or by snail mail:

Adam Versényi,  
Department of Dramatic Art, CB# 3230,  
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3230

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## Editor's Note

Welcome to the Fall 2023 issue of *The Mercurian*!

We begin the issue with May Farnsworth, Camila García, and Erin Griffis' collective translation of Argentine playwright Malena Sándor's 1946 play, *Penelope No Longer Knits*. As the translators point out in their introduction, Sándor creates a feminist paean to female desire and autonomy at a time when that was far from the lot of Argentine women. The introduction also describes Farnsworth, García, and Griffis' approach to translation as a feminist practice, perhaps presenting a model for other translators to follow.

After *Penelope No Longer Knits* comes another translation collaboration, Carolyn Malloy and Georgina Whittingham's translation of Mexican playwright Hugo Salcedo's play *The Children of La Malinche*. Salcedo's play is a rapid satirical ride through Mexican history, politics, and culture connecting the present to the past as it portrays the Mexican populace as a whole as the descendants of La Malinche, Hernán Cortés' translator, concubine, and mother of his child.

*The Children of La Malinche* is followed by Magda Romanska's translation of the great Polish filmmaker Andrzej Wajda's stage adaptation of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment* from 1984. As Romanska discusses in her introduction to the translation, while Wajda's stage work was extensive it is little known outside of Poland and we are pleased to publish an example of it here. Having first read Dostoyevsky's novel in Polish translation as a teenager in Poland, Romanska also places Wajda's work in context for us, both in 1984 and 2023, arguing that in both time periods it can be seen as an anti-imperial project against Russian aggression, but in the 1984 context Wajda necessarily had to focus upon the psychological game of cat and mouse between Raskolnikov and Petrovich, the detective investigating his crime of murder.

The issue concludes with two book reviews: Katherine Nigh's review of Cristina Perez Díaz' translation of Peruvian José Watanabe's *Antígona: A Bilingual Edition with Critical Essays*, and Brenda Werth's review of Sophie Stevens' *Uruguayan Theatre in Translation. Theory and Practice*. Faithful readers of *The Mercurian* will recall that we have published some of Stevens' early work with her essay "Distancing and Proximity in Analysing and Translating *Bailando sola cada noche*" in Vol. 6, No. 2 (Fall 2016), and her translation of Uruguayan playwright Raquel Diana's play *Her Own Eyes* in Vol. 8, No. 2 (Fall 2020).

Back issues of *The Mercurian* can be found at under the "Archives" tab on our website: <https://the-mercurian.com/>. As the theatre is nothing without its audience, *The Mercurian* welcomes your comments, questions, complaints, and critiques. Deadline for submissions for consideration for Volume 10, No. 1 Spring 2024 will be February 15, 2024.

—Adam Versényi

## **Advisory Board**

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## **Penelope No Longer Knits (1946)**

**By Malena Sándor**

**Translated from Spanish by May Farnsworth, Camila García, and Erin Griffis**

At a time when indissoluble marriage was the law of the land, Argentine playwright Malena Sándor embraced feminine desire and autonomy. In Sándor's imaginative play, *Penelope No Longer Knits*, female icons are portrayed as clever goddesses looking down from Heaven at modern feminist women in approval. The heroine of the Odyssey insists on defending her legacy of fidelity while the other iconic women in Heaven pity and mock her, calling her unwavering loyalty to Ulysses naive and out of touch. Since these women (Helen of Troy, George Sand, Mata Hari, Juliet, The Lady of the Camellias) impacted culture/history without denying themselves earthly pleasures, they think Penelope should recover lost experiences. They entice Penelope by telling her that she ought to teach modern women a lesson about fidelity. In reality, the plan is to convince Ulysses's wife to finally let down her guard (and put down her knitting).

We approached our translation as feminist practice. All three of us worked together to transcribe, translate, and interpret the playtext. Every decision was a collective one. We found that working collaboratively was the best way to capture the lively, frank and humorous conversations among the women, reproducing their incisive, thought-provoking banter. Throughout the translation process, we tried to best preserve the play's Argentine origins while still making it sound natural in English. We encountered grammatical challenges when characters switched rapidly between usage of the informal (*tú*) and the formal (*usted*) pronouns. At the end of Act 1, for example, Arturo flirts with Penelope and insists that she use *tú* with him. He describes the forming of the word *tú* as a puckering of the lips. Because there is no direct translation for *tú/usted* in English, we looked for a creative way to interpret the line while maintaining the sexual innuendo. In the end, we decided to focus on the character's first name: Arturo. This way, we could convey the message of familiarity and invite a puckering of the lips: "It's like getting your mouth ready for a kiss: Ar-tu-ro." Additionally, we had to make collective decisions on the spelling of the names. We decided to use the standard English spelling for classic names, such as Ulysses, Penelope, Telemachus, and Helen. But we used the original spelling for the Argentine characters' names (Arturo, Roberto, Octavio, Suzy, Trinidad, etc.).

We are grateful to Meryem Boumalak and Tvene Baronian, who joined us in a series of dramatic readings, which helped us fine-tune the play's witty dialogue. When we heard the laughter and gasps of our volunteer actors at just the right moments, we knew we had struck the correct note. *Penelope No Longer Knits* stands out for its originality and humor—even though it's been more than seventy-six years since Sándor wrote the script. It represents an important contribution to historical feminist theatre studies in general and Argentine feminist theatre in particular.

**Malena Sándor** (1913-1968) was born María Elena James de Terza in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Her first play, *Yo me divorcio, papa* (*Daddy, I'm Getting a Divorce*, 1937), depicts a debate between a young feminist and her father, an anti-divorce senator. Sándor's subsequent plays also offer feminist perspectives on women's experiences in pre-divorce Argentina. In 1938, Sándor

won the “Premio Nacional de Cultura” for *Una mujer libre (A Free Woman)*, which was later turned into a film. Sándor lived in Europe in the 1940s and 1950s, serving as a foreign correspondent for newspapers in Mexico and Argentina. Silvina Bullrich edited a posthumous collection of Sándor’s eleven plays, *Teatro completo* (1969), one year after the playwright’s premature death from an acute asthma attack. This translation of *Penélope ya no teje* (1946) refers to the script published in Bullrich’s collection.

**May Farnsworth, Camila García, and Erin Griffis** collectively translated *Penelope No Longer Knits* at Hobart and William Smith Colleges (HWS) in the summer of 2022. Farnsworth is a professor of Spanish and Hispanic Studies and the author of *Feminist Rehearsals. Gender at the Theatre in Early Twentieth-Century Argentina and Mexico* (U of Iowa P, 2023). García and Griffis are both currently residing in Spain; García is completing her undergraduate Spanish major through a semester abroad in Sevilla and Griffis is working as an *auxiliar* at the Instituto de Escuela Secundaria José Caballero in Huelva. Additional translations of feminist theatre by Farnsworth, García, and Griffis are published on the HWS Spanish and Hispanic Studies Digital Gallery ([galeriahispana.omeka.net](http://galeriahispana.omeka.net)).

## **Penelope No Longer Knits**

**Written by Malena Sándor**

**Translated from Spanish by May Farnsworth, Camila García, and Erin Griffis**

1946

*Almost a farce in two acts, a prologue, and an epilogue.*

### MEMORIES OF FORGOTTEN STORIES

**PENELOPE:** Ulysses' wife. He left her and little Telemachus in order to help the Greek princes avenge HELEN'S kidnapping. Ulysses took twenty years to return. PENELOPE waited for him. She wove a tapestry during the day and unwove it each night so that she would never finish. This kept her from having to choose a new husband from among her suitors. She symbolizes fidelity.

**HELEN OF TROY:** Wife of Menelaus, king of Sparta. She was kidnapped by Paris, the son of the Trojan king. This caused a war that kept Troy under siege for ten years. At the end of the war, HELEN had to return.

**LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS:** A courtesan named María Duplessis who inspired Alexandre Dumas to write the immortal love story about Margarita Gautier in the century of romanticism.

**MATA HARI:** A famous dancer who betrayed all through her beauty and art. In a trial that shocked France, she was found guilty and sentenced to death.

**GEORGE SAND:** Writer whose real name was Aurora Dupin. She dressed in very masculine clothing. But, when it came to love, she showed her feminine side.

**JULIET:** Romeo's lover. Need we say more?

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

Penelope  
Helen of Troy  
Mata Hari  
Lady of the Camellias  
George Sand  
Juliet  
Angel  
Gloria Warren  
Susy  
Sra. Alex  
Woman 1

Woman 2  
Trinidad  
Ludovico Aldana  
Teddy  
Octavio Lastra  
Roberto Casal  
Marcelo Urdániz  
Count Enrico Enzolaro  
Soldier 1  
Soldier 2  
An employee  
A bellhop  
Arturo Ulises Aldana

*The costumes for the Prologue and Epilogue are the same. PENELOPE: chiffon peplum, in fuchsia with silver laces. HELEN: bolder peplum in a green color. MATA HARI: dress and red cape; the belt and the fringe of the cape embroidered with rhinestones. LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: Light blue taffeta dress. GEORGE SAND: Beige pants and vest, brown jacket and top hat. JULIET: gold lamé suit: hairnet in gold and stones.*

## **Prologue**

*The action takes place in any corner of Heaven. It is a kind of detour that all roads lead to. There are some chairs, plants, and clouds. Heavenly music is playing.*

*When the curtain rises, PENELOPE and MATA HARI are present. An ANGEL from the feminine sex contemplates them. She is lying on her stomach in a cloud two meters high. PENELOPE plays solitaire. MATA HARI knits clumsily with two needles.*

ANGEL: Penelope...

PENELOPE: Don't interrupt me.

ANGEL: I want to play with you...

PENELOPE: Leave me alone.

ANGEL: How come you don't talk to the other angels that way?

PENELOPE: Because you're the most annoying. Mata Hari, I don't have the ace yet. Where do I put the king?

MATA HARI: This has nothing to do with the game. *(Sighing.)* Oh! It was so much harder to

meet men in my time on Earth. Why can't I seem to do it now?

ANGEL: Mata Hari...

MATA HARI: Yes?

ANGEL: Doesn't that get boring?

MATA HARI: No, I've never done something so calming and entertaining. It's been two days since Penelope taught me how to knit.

ANGEL: *(To PENELOPE.)* But that's not how you used to knit.

PENELOPE: It's true. I used to just turn the spindle and the tapestry would magically appear. Now I've learned how to use needles.

ANGEL: *(To PENELOPE.)* Do you like playing cards?

PENELOPE: I do. They help me pass the time. Time goes by so slowly here.

MATA HARI: That shouldn't bother you. You were the queen of patience.

ANGEL: *(Looking around, as if she saw someone arrive)* Do you know who's coming?

MATA HARI: It would be embarrassing if they found our secret refuge.

ANGEL: The Lady of the Camellias.

PENELOPE: Of course it's her. The one who moved so many men with all her frilly silks. She must be close.

MATA HARI: Why do you talk like that? Couldn't you hide your contempt a little better?

PENELOPE: *(Putting down the cards. Outraged.)* Why?... Why? Because she was an easy woman?

MATA HARI: *(Abandoning her knitting.)* What do you mean by "easy woman"?

ANGEL: She's probably referring to those who eat very little and exercise a lot.

PENELOPE: *(Outraged.)* Yes... exercise... What type of exercise?

ANGEL: *(Candid.)* Breathing exercises.

PENELOPE: I'm talking about the women who have had a lot of men in their lives.

ANGEL: How terrible!

MATA HARI: *(To PENELOPE.)* Jealous...

PENELOPE: *(As if she didn't hear.)* I heard she inspired a whole book about love and sin.

MATA HARI: Hey...Haven't they told you anything about me yet?

PENELOPE: *(Naive.)* No. Why? Do they have something to say?

MATA HARI: *(Mocking.)* Of course not. I've been a very good girl.

ANGEL: That's obvious. *(LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS enters.)*

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: *(Moving gracefully with her frilly dress.)* Hi! You really have found the most beautiful place around. This corner is neither paradise, nor purgatory, nor hell... What are you doing?

MATA HARI: Penelope learned how to play solitaire.

PENELOPE: *(With dignity.)* I got tired of knitting. I'd been doing it for so long. Now, Mata Hari's the one who knits.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: Using two needles is the latest fashion, right?

PENELOPE: The new arrivals always bring news.

MATA HARI: Why don't you try updating your clothing a little too? You must be tired of always wearing the same thing.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: You're right. Those rags aren't exactly "dernier cri".

PENELOPE: *(Agitated.)* Do you really think your dress is any better?

ANGEL: *(Consoling.)* Don't forget that you've been ordered to wear your favorite dresses.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: What did we do to deserve such a cruel punishment? Don't they realize that the most daring fashions go out of style over night?

PENELOPE: *(To MATA HARI.)* That shouldn't bother you too much because they say capes are back in style.

MATA HARI: *(Looking at her figure.)* I adore these clothes. *(Pause.)* They called me the red dancer.

PENELOPE: *(Curious.)* Tell me about your life.

MATA HARI: When I was little, I danced on the banks of the Ganges. After I learned the rites in the pagoda of the Kanda Swany.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: What a sweet name! Kanda Swany...

MATA HARI: Sweet but awful, just like my death. They wouldn't pardon me.

PENELOPE: What happened to you?

MATA HARI: I was shot by a firing squad. They weren't gallant with me. (*Pausing to remember.*) But I went into it with my eyes open. With a smile on my face. The soldiers' rifles pointed at my heart and I kept dancing in front of them with my golden nudity.

ANGEL: That's shameless...

PENELOPE: Was anyone in love with you?

MATA HARI: I've been loved by more than one.

PENELOPE: And did they love you intensely?

MATA HARI: Crazyly.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: Has a man ever lost himself for you?

MATA HARI: All who have ever crossed my path have lost themselves in me.

PENELOPE: So you were a monster?

ANGEL: You're going to corrupt me.

MATA HARI: I was a woman.

PENELOPE: (*Enraged.*) Lies. (*HELEN OF TROY arrives and listens from the entrance of the door with a mocking expression.*) I was a woman too, but I could never have caused that kind of harm. I waited almost a lifetime for my husband to return.

HELEN: (*Insidious approaching.*) You must've been so bored!

ANGEL: If only Ulysses could hear you...

PENELOPE: Helen... You came just in time... Tell them it's all true...

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: (*To MATA HARI.*) Is she the one from Troy?

HELEN: (*While MATA HARI is nodding.*) Yes, but you were stupid to wait. Men aren't worth

waiting for and sometimes it's better to see what other men are like.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: But you wouldn't have known what it felt like even if you had wanted to.. You were kidnapped. That's the story we were told.

HELEN: History sometimes twists things around.

ANGEL: Helen...The academics are going to demand an account of your words.

HELEN: The truth is that Paris was very handsome like no other. The truth is that in order for me to know whether or not I was kidnapped, I'd have to remember how much I resisted my beautiful bandit at the time.

MATA HARI: If you left happy then perhaps you could've cleared up a few things. You started a war that laid siege on Troy for 10 years.

HELEN: (*Violent.*) You took part in another that cost the lives of millions of men.

MATA HARI: You knew about that?

HELEN: Yes, but I would never hold it against you. It was more their fault than anything. I even admire you. In Greece there were only four columns. We needed a fifth. Otherwise...

ANGEL: That's too much.

HELEN: Who knows...Didn't you ever get bored, Mata Hari?

PENELOPE: (*Outraged.*) Helen!

HELEN: (*Defiant.*) What?

PENELOPE: How can you talk like that? Is that the way you tell your story now? And I had to wait 20 years just so Ulysses could come and find you!

HELEN: In the end after all the waiting you learn that there is nothing more absurd than wasting your time.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: What a rude Greek woman!

PENELOPE: (*Furious.*) I have never heard words so cynical.

HELEN: I'm tired of your solemnity.

MATA HARI: Now I get why Troy burned...

ANGEL: How could it not burn with this girl around?

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: (*Contemptuously.*) None of this sounds very romantic!

MATA HARI: (*Aggressive.*) Why? Because we didn't end up like you, pining away in the Magdalena church, in a cliché that made the older generations cry?

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: You're cruel.

MATA HARI: Cruelty makes women stronger.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: That's why camellias are brought to my tomb by lovers from Paris and why yours has nothing but dry grass.

MATA HARI: Why does that matter? My time on Earth ended with me. But when I left, there were many who cried over the memory of Kanda's bayadere.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: Maybe not as many as you expected...

HELEN: (*Mischievously.*) You're going overboard.

MATA HARI: What?

HELEN: Such vanity.

MATA HARI: You're wrong. I'm not vain.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: Forget about it. Time will smooth out your arrogance.

ANGEL: When the ones campaigning for the vote come up...

PENELOPE: Come, Mata Hari... take up your knitting again. You still don't know how serene and comforting it is to work with your hands... (*She hands her the knitting and stands next to her.*)

HELEN: (*Mocking.*) ...while the brain continues drawing its fantastic web of memories and dreams.

PENELOPE: (*Really close to MATA HARI. A little hesitant. In a confidential tone.*) Don't listen to anyone else. Talk to me. Tell me... Why... Why do women always talk so badly about men? And if women don't like men, why don't they try falling in love as little as possible instead of falling as hard as they do? How does this make any sense?

MATA HARI: You'll get lost in all this curiosity. The difference between me and you is that you ask me these questions. I asked the women directly.

ANGEL: What did they say?

MATA HARI: *(To the ANGEL with sarcasm.)* I can't tell you. *(JULIET enters.)*

JULIET: *(Timid.)* Am I interrupting? I was looking for a place with shade.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: *(Approaching her.)* Juliet...I've never seen you like this, so close up. You're just a child.

HELEN: That's what saved her in love and in legend.

JULIET: I don't understand.

HELEN: How old were you when you fell in love with Romeo?

JULIET: Thirteen.

MATA HARI: How many nights of love did you come to know?

JULIET: *(Embarrassed.)* Only one. It was my betrothal.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: And you had the courage to kill yourself over Romeo's corpse. How wonderful.

HELEN: Thirteen years old. One night of love and then killing herself over a dead lover. But, could that really be true? And if it is true, don't you understand that that's the only reason their romance was able to last?

MATA HARI: The thing is, Juliet, you didn't manage to satisfy anything or anyone.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: Don't make her think too clearly. It was a divine blindness. You're a romantic creature...

MATA HARI: Romanticism is the plague that has decimated women the most.

ANGEL: If she stays any longer, you'll turn her into Messalina. Juliet...There are too many bad winds here. Why don't you look for shade someplace else?

JULIET: I promised Romeo that I would wait for him.

ANGEL: Then come closer to me. I'll serve as your shield. *(JULIET sits near the ANGEL.)*

PENELOPE: Juliet doesn't interest me. *(Now close to the LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS.)* I want you to tell me how men love and why...

HELEN: They love... *(To PENELOPE.)* Do you think that when a woman has had so many lovers, that she understands love? It must be a little confusing.

PENELOPE: Why don't you shut up!

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: Deep down, there's only one true love.

PENELOPE: Not so deep down that it's hard to find, right?

HELEN: Unless it's a bottomless pit.

ANGEL: *(To JULIET.)* Do you understand any of this?

MATA HARI: *(To PENELOPE.)* Why do you have this unhealthy curiosity?

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: In my life there hasn't been anyone but Armando Duval. The rest of them have been forgotten in the shadows.

MATA HARI: Maybe you're right. And maybe I can only pronounce one name, Pedro... Pedro of Mortissac.

HELEN: My modesty stops me from telling you all the names of my husbands. My husband is Menelaus, but when I'm alone, the name Paris escapes my lips...

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: Who's Paris?

HELEN: The one who kidnapped me.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: Oh! *(To MATA HARI.)* Isn't it true that there's nothing as intense as feeling consumed with an emotion of love.

PENELOPE: *(In the middle of the scene. As if in a dream and to herself.)* My God! And if love is so wonderful, why did I spend almost 20 years knitting?

HELEN: I don't want to think the wrong thing... but you did have a lot of suitors and you didn't really do anything to make them leave you alone.

PENELOPE: You know perfectly well that they pursued me relentlessly and that I held them back with the promise of choosing a new husband when I had finished weaving a shroud for old Laertes. What no one guessed was that I was weaving during the day and unweaving at night so that it would never end.

HELEN: *(Maliciously.)* Did you unweave it alone?

PENELOPE: What a busybody!

HELEN: No, I really don't want to think the worst. Maybe you were just scared of the dark. And maybe some soldier with broad shoulders and light in his eyes was able to illuminate your shadows...

PENELOPE: You're offending me.

HELEN: When Ulysses left you, you were very young. It's true that you waited for him and it's also true that history needed a symbol of fidelity. It found you. But here, just between us, I can assure you that I would never put my hands in the fire for you.

PENELOPE: (*Arrogant and constrained.*) I hate you.

HELEN: I also think that you were jealous of me for getting kidnapped.

PENELOPE: I would've rather died than let another man take me away.

HELEN: How stupid...

ANGEL: Juliet, are you cold?

JULIET: No.

ANGEL: Are you even listening?

JULIET: I'm thinking about him.

PENELOPE: (*Approaching MATA HARI.*) What was Pedro like?

MATA HARI: (*Enlightened.*) Cynical, bold, beautiful and brave. He loved me with all the power in his young veins. The memory of him still hurts.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: Did he forgive you?

MATA HARI: For him it was the last letter that I wrote in the prison of San Lazarus.

PENELOPE: What a shame to have gotten yourself into so much trouble.

HELEN: Well down there, it's the only thing that's a little bit entertaining.

PENELOPE: (*Approaching the LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS.*) What was your real name?

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: Maria. But. Margarita Gautier is the novel based on my life.

PENELOPE: Why did they call you the Lady of the Camellias? Was it Armando who gave you that name?

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: No. It was my florist. She didn't know who I was and she would see me every afternoon looking for camellias.

PENELOPE: And if you loved Armando so much, why did you leave him?

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: The hour of sacrifice had come.

PENELOPE: And when you left him, who did you want?

MATA HARI: What an obsession!

HELEN: As usual. Women who have nothing to do, stick their noses into other people's business. The others are too busy trying to live full lives. You're unbearable. Why do you care? You're the woman of unsuspected purity, the dark enigma of souls that have been shamed for being impure?

PENELOPE: They have been redeemed.

HELEN: Then just leave them alone.

PENELOPE: (*Candid.*) It's by helping them dive into the depths of their conscience that I'll help them recognize evil and ward it off forever.

MATA HARI: (*Bad-tempered.*) On Earth they started to call that something like psychoanalysis...could you have been the harbinger...

HELEN: Do you know what came before it? Unweaving...

PENELOPE: And you? All the ships left the island, right? When they returned everyone acted like nothing ever happened.

HELEN: I think your obsession with what you don't know about is even more perverse. You want everyone else to tell you what you were missing out on. It's because love left you young and found you again already old. But twenty years repressed—If they really were repressed—suffocated—if they really were suffocated. That's why you want to listen.

PENELOPE: (*Enraged.*) Lies...

ANGEL: Lower your voices. If you don't, this conversation is over.

HELEN: That's the truth. And the contempt you always had for me is envy. Envy. If you could go down to Earth now and start all over again... you'd laugh about Troy.

PENELOPE: (*At the peak of indignation.*) You lie...you lie...

ANGEL: Don't make so much noise. You guys look like the representatives of a peace congress... (*GEORGE SAND enters at that moment.*)

GEORGE: And that yelling?

HELEN: (*Quickly.*) We were talking about the latest fashions.

GEORGE: *(Smiling.)* Is that still important here?

HELEN: We also tried to convince Mata Hari to show us one of her dances.

ANGEL: You lie just like the minister of information.

GEORGE: That's not a bad idea.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: I would like to see you dance.

PENELOPE: Are they classical dances?

HELEN: Not that classical. Will you be quiet?!

MATA HARI: I've never done them here.

GEORGE: There always has to be a first time.

MATA HARI: *(To GEORGE SAND.)* I'll do it in your honor.

HELEN: *(To the LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS.)* At least we've seen a pair of pants. Even if they are on George Sand.

MATA HARI: In India there is an evil god called Shiva. He has 100 arms. *(She sits up. As she speaks, she takes off her cape. She is almost naked.)* A purity offering is made to him. We perform the arabesques of our dances for him. More than dances, these are rites, and more than rites, these are submissions of our will to the desire of the implacable god... *(She begins to dance. The ANGEL covers JULIET's face with her wing and covers her eyes with her hand. But JULIET immediately begins to peer through the ANGEL's fingers. Then, JULIET pushes the ANGEL's hand away and starts watching the dance with eyes wide with astonishment. When MATA HARI finishes, everyone except JULIET applauds. MATA HARI puts on her cape.)*

GEORGE: Bravo! Very interesting.

ANGEL: Overall, very educational.

MATA HARI: I was the sacred bayadere in the pagoda of Kanda Swany.

HELEN: If I knew how to dance like that, they would've had so much fun with me in Troy!

PENELOPE: I doubt they got bored much.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: *(Approaching GEORGE SAND.)* How is it that you, in love with men, dress the same as them? Why did you hide Aurora Dupin under the guise of George Sand.

MATA HARI: I would like to know that too. I will never be able to understand such eccentricity.

GEORGE: (*Composed.*) And why must everything be explained?

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: How did wearing pants make you feel when you were around men? (*She says this agitatedly looking at her own frilly skirt.*)

GEORGE: (*Puzzled.*) Beyond, or beneath if you prefer, these clothes, true femininity is always revealed.

HELEN: But I don't understand the desire to want to disguise your femininity.

GEORGE: It's a statement like any other. Like the monocle. Like the mouthpiece. Sometimes that's what it takes for people to have personality.

ANGEL: So many masks!

HELEN: And you, dear imposter?!

GEORGE: As for the rest of your questions...go ahead and ask Chopin...win the trust of Musset...They loved me. They know all about it.

MATA HARI: (*Seductive.*) No one else other than them?

GEORGE: (*Mocking.*) I thought no one would be keeping score up here! What a mistake! Men don't keep track. One lover or 20. Love is all that matters. And only love's to blame when it happens to men. Because there is no kiss better than the first...

MATA HARI: (*With interest.*) They told me that you have talent.

GEORGE: Is that all they told you? That's not all. When we are talking about intelligent women, we usually have more to say.

MATA HARI: (*With admiration.*) You must have had to be strong to resist so many admirers.

GEORGE: Oh! There's no woman strong enough to resist the man she yearns for.

PENELOPE: What did you look for in men?

MATA HARI: Tell us something we haven't already heard. Because, for her (*pointing at the LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS*), until she met Armando, it was all about the price of her flowers, her jewels and her furs. I was cunning and I liked playing a hidden game. I made them think I loved them and then I took their secrets. I want to know what men meant to you.

GEORGE: Emotion. Poetry. I had the gift of newly found sound and of brilliant rhymes. It was as if they were emerging from a hot furnace. I wanted men to be vibrant. And they made me vibrate.

ANGEL: Juliet, let's go. The temperature is changing too much around here.

JULIET: What if Romeo doesn't find me?

HELEN: *(A little savage.)* I promise not to touch him. I'll tell him that you have left and I'll tell him from afar.

MATA HARI: Have we frightened you?

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: *(In a softer tone.)* It's normal for her to be like that. She never got to experience life. Is there anything better than that?

HELEN: She must've gotten something out of life. But, what about what she missed out on?

GEORGE: *(Tenderly lifting JULIET'S chin.)* Go on ahead, Juliet. If you were to change, what would they do with the golden statue that immortalized the lovers of Verona? Go...*(The ANGEL and JULIET walk out hand in hand.)*

PENELOPE: *(Right next to GEORGE.)* Tell me. Did you really love your poet?

GEORGE: *(Very condescending.)* What do you care? You're the worst. If you hadn't invented fidelity, it would've never occurred to anyone to judge women for being unfaithful.

PENELOPE: *(Offended. Looking her up and down.)* Sir...Madam...

HELEN: *(Playfully.)* Why won't you just admit it? You didn't like any of your suitors...

PENELOPE: *(Proud and solemn. A bit declamatory.)* You're mistaken. I didn't lay my eyes on any one of them, I believe that women were made to maintain their modesty through all temptations. Because for me, women are a wonderful receptacle of the love that's poured into them. They should not let a single drop evaporate...

GEORGE: That'll depend on the strength of the sun that burns them.

PENELOPE: *(Without being interrupted.)*...Because when a woman loves someone, she should do it the way I did. Faithful, loyal, true till the...*(Her exaltation is cut short by the arrival of a pretty girl dressed in the latest fashion trends.)*

GLORIA: *(Amusingly.)* I've lost my way in this labyrinth...

HELEN: *(Approaching her with curiosity.)* When did you arrive? I've never seen you before.

GLORIA: Just now. *(Everyone surrounds her.)*

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: Who are you?

GLORIA: Gloria Warren. Hollywood actress. I was on a pleasure trip through South America. A trip in a car with an Argentinian man who was a little crazy. We crashed.

PENELOPE: Did you love him?

HELEN: (*Brushing aside PENELOPE and pointing at GLORIA's outfit.*) Is that what you all wear down there today?

GLORIA: Isn't it bold and showy? Of course, in Hollywood we are ahead of the fashion trends. (*Looking at everyone with interest.*) You are...

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: Is there not anyone to introduce us?

MATA HARI: We would need an introducer of ambassadors.

GLORIA: Diplomats, no, please. Down there, they're the ones who make all the messes.

GEORGE: (*Sarcastically.*) Helen should introduce us. Her trip to Troy lent her diplomatic credentials.

GLORIA: (*With curiosity.*) Wasn't she kidnapped by a Greek gangster?

HELEN: Historical gossip. It was like yours. A pleasure trip. But that was before things were so exaggerated.

PENELOPE: (*Quietly.*) If Ulysses had not come to look for you...

HELEN: (*Same tone.*) If Ulysses had taken a little longer... (*Out loud and boldly.*) This is Penelope, the grand symbol of fidelity.

GLORIA: Fidelity? Is that a word in a dead language?

GEORGE: I don't remember if it appears in dictionaries today.

HELEN: It does appear but you must've overlooked it. (*Pointing to GEORGE.*) George Sand was the name she used to sign her books but her name was really Aurora Dupin. What she hasn't told us was if the men that were in love with her called her Aurora or George. (*Pointing to the LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS.*) Maria Duplessis, who left on Earth the ineffable mark of the Lady of the Camellias. (*Pointing to MATA HARI.*) An Asian sphinx who maddened men by dancing and was known as Mata Hari. And I... You know. The one from Troy.

GLORIA: How wonderful! This must be more fun than that...

GEORGE: Don't be ungrateful. You look like someone who lived a pretty easy life...

GLORIA: I won't deny it. But here it is different.

MATA HARI: Always thirsty for more adventures?

GLORIA: Always.

HELEN: (*Sighing.*) That's what it was like in my time too.

PENELOPE: (*Sarcastically.*) That was obvious to everyone around you.

HELEN: (*Spiteful.*) And there are people who will never forgive me. Isn't that true?

PENELOPE: (*Now very close to GLORIA.*) I suppose the only thing that hasn't changed is love...

HELEN: She's preaching again. I can't stand it.

GEORGE: (*Sarcastically.*) You're right, Penelope. Love still hasn't changed. It's still the same, but you never gave it a chance while you were waiting so tirelessly.

GLORIA: Why do you talk to her like that?

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: You're all being unfair. She is the only one who was really faithful to love.

GEORGE: And what does fidelity have to do with love? On the contrary, I think sometimes love grows stronger when one is brave enough to be a little unfaithful.

GLORIA: Oh, Penelope! What an impression a woman like you would make on Earth today! They would put you on display right away... And you'd get contracts left and right...

PENELOPE: Tell us about yourself. (*In a most intimate tone.*) Tell me about yourself...Did you ever fall in love?

GLORIA: (*Amusingly.*) Many times.

PENELOPE: (*In amazement.*) You too...? And why so many times?

GLORIA: Because there is no sport as fun as love.

HELEN: (*Perversely.*) Penelope, do you see what you were missing?

PENELOPE: (*Frightened.*) Oh, no! That's not for me.

GLORIA: Life now, down there, has a vertiginous rhythm. Things change as fast as a movie. The same goes for men. There's no time for sentimentality or nostalgia. It's one image after another, one memory after another. One man...

PENELOPE: (*Interrupting GLORIA.*) Shut up. That's blasphemy.

GLORIA: No, it's a vindication. Women learned how to handle men just as easily as they learned how to play golf.

GEORGE: (*Disdainful.*) They always knew how to handle them. They just didn't know it was like handling golf clubs because golf hadn't been invented yet.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: Gloria, don't lie to us. Love has always been the same and it will never change.

GLORIA: Poor Lady of the Camellias...the girls today can't help but laugh about your drama.

HELEN: Have I gone out of fashion too?

GLORIA: No. But that's because they think you probably kidnapped Paris.

PENELOPE: (*Outraged.*) So now the Earth is an orgy...

GLORIA: No, not exactly. They invented a little atomic bomb and that is no orgy.

GEORGE: They're just as uncaring as they've always been.

PENELOPE: What a shame... So many centuries later and they still haven't changed...

HELEN: (*Mocking.*) Preaching out loud from all the way up here sure will do a lot of good.

MATA HARI: (*Following the game.*) Wouldn't it be better to try to go down there to teach them all a lesson?

GLORIA: (*Naturally.*) I bet you'd have no trouble going down to Earth now. There is so much movement and so much confusion...

PENELOPE: (*Outraged.*) I would go down there and show women how to behave...if I thought Ulysses wouldn't notice if I was gone.

HELEN: Would you let me help you do that?

PENELOPE: (*Arrogant.*) No. I'm the only one that was called to do it. There's no one else like me. That is why history chose me.

MATA HARI: What if you fall in love?

PENELOPE: (*With disdain.*) That would be absurd!

GEORGE: But... suppose you go back to Earth and fall in love...

HELEN: Would you still be faithful to your husband?

PENELOPE: (*Fiercely.*) As faithful as I was back then.

GLORIA: I assure you, Penelope, that's not possible.

PENELOPE: For me it is...

HELEN: By weaving and unweaving...

PENELOPE: (*Motioning to leave.*) Enough with the jokes. I'm done.

GLORIA: I have an idea. (*These words are holding PENELOPE back.*) Wouldn't one of you like to go down to Earth?

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: (*Interested.*) You can't be serious.

GLORIA: Yes, I'm serious. There's so much chaos and confusion down there that there should be no problem for you to slip through...

PENELOPE: Have you left some great romance? Would you like someone to go and send a message?

GLORIA: I never had the time to let my romances go that far.

HELEN: (*Anxious.*) Could I go down?

GEORGE: This really only applies to Penelope. None of us wasted time the way she did. None of us deserve to go back as much as she does. None of us have as much of a right for a do-over.

PENELOPE: (*Frightened. Trying to leave.*) Are you making fun of me...?

GLORIA: You just have to go to the hotel where I lived when my time came. Plaza Alvear Hotel. Room 123. I don't have any friends or relatives who will ask about me. You can go and say that you are a close friend and that you are going to take care of all my things.

PENELOPE: You're all crazy. No. No. Not me...

HELEN: Did you leave nice things behind?

GLORIA: They were marvelous. Outfits, furs, and jewelry. A fortune.

HELEN: And why can't I be the redeemer?

MATA HARI: No. It's Penelope who should go to Earth and show modern women the stupendous lesson of incorruptible love.

PENELOPE: (*Weakly.*) Not me...

GEORGE: It's a noble mission.

PENELOPE: (*Even more weakly.*) I...

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: Don't be scared. Go...

GLORIA: I'll lend you my clothes. Your absence will go unnoticed. But you'll have to come back soon...

HELEN: If you're not back soon, I'll go get you.

GEORGE: You'll always find an excuse to travel.

MATA HARI: We'll give you one year.

PENELOPE: (*Frightened.*) A year? And what will I do for a year?

GEORGE: Wasn't it you who found a way to fill twenty...?

GLORIA: Let me give you a useful tip. If you get lonely, let a compact or a tissue fall to the ground. Then you won't be lonely, you'll see... (*Everyone gathers around PENELOPE in a coordinated conspiracy.*) We're going to change outfits. Let's see if they help us. Soon... (*The others stand around PENELOPE and GLORIA, forming a screen in front of the public.*)

PENELOPE: And if Ulysses or my son ask for me?

MATA HARI: We'll say that the doctor told you to rest.

PENELOPE: But what if I get bored and want to come back?

GEORGE: You won't because you would be ashamed to admit defeat. You have to show the world who Penelope really was... The goddess carved in marble!...

PENELOPE: I won't be able to walk in heels?

HELEN: Your purity will give you balance. Even though it's a false sense of balance. But it wouldn't hurt to fall for once...

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: When you return don't forget to bring me back a camellia. (*The handsome figure of a man passes in the distance.*)

HELEN: (*Who is the first to spot him.*) Look who's there... The beautiful Brummel... (*She runs to look at him and the others after her. Also, GLORIA walks by clumsily wearing PENELOPE's tunic. PENELOPE stays in the middle of the scene wearing a hat, jacket, gloves and shoes. She*

*tries in vain to pull down her short skirt in order to modestly cover her bare legs.)*

## CURTAIN

### Act 1

*Hall of a large hotel. The front desk. Armchairs. Smoking tables. An employee. A BELLHOP. In an armchair in the foreground, PENELOPE, showing her legs, crossing them and then uncrossing them, not knowing the correct posture. She observes everything with curiosity and slyness. She seems more at ease than before. She takes a powder compact out of her purse two or three times. Whenever a handsome man passes by, she drops it on the ground. No one notices the game. It suddenly falls, unintentionally, and an old man with a well-kept beard gives it back to her.*

PENELOPE: *(Scared. Rushing to grab the compact.)* Oh! Excuse me. This time it was unintentional.

LUDOVICO: *(Distracted.)* Let me get you your powder, miss. *(Grasping what PENELOPE just said.)* Wait, why this time? And what about the other times, then?

PENELOPE: *(Embarrassed.)* It was unintentional those times too. *(Very quietly.)* Another bearded man, no...

LUDOVICO: What a shame!

PENELOPE: I don't understand, sir.

LUDOVICO: I know what you're up to, young lady.

PENELOPE: *(Maliciously.)* I can't believe this. *(Taken aback.)* Don't think badly of me. *(A BELLHOP approaches PENELOPE.)*

BELLHOP: The elevator operator wants to know if the lady wants to go back up.

PENELOPE: No, thank you. I went up 15 times in a half an hour. *(LUDOVICO looks in amazement at PENELOPE.)*

BELLHOP: Alright, but if you want to keep going up and down, it doesn't bother us.

PENELOPE: Oh, you're so nice. *(The BELLHOP looks at her with tired eyes. PENELOPE notices LUDOVICO's surprise.)* It's so much fun.

LUDOVICO: Do you live here...?

PENELOPE: Yes. But I come from very far away. *(Sitting down.)*

LUDOVICO: *(Also sitting down on the arm of the chair.)* You're from abroad?

PENELOPE: Even further.

LUDOVICO: Excuse me...?

PENÉLOPE: You could say that it's...the furthest corner of the Earth.

LUDOVICO: *(Suspiciously)* For example...?

PENELOPE: I just went around the world.

LUDOVICO: In that case, I forgive you. I love far-away places and travel.

PENELOPE: You wouldn't want to travel as far as I did, that was a little tiring.

LUDOVICO: If they had allowed me to choose my destiny, I would've been a road builder. But nobody asked me. It doesn't matter: my son's a pilot and he'll support both of us.

PENELOPE: You have a son who's a pilot? *(As she says these words, a young handsome man enters the hall in official uniform. PENELOPE looks at him dazzled. Discreetly and without the bartender noticing, she drops her makeup powder on the floor again.)*

LUDOVICO: Yes, ma'am. He's already spent two thousand hours in the air. And his name is Arturo... But... I'm forgetting my social formalities. *(Standing up.)* I can't blame my age, but I didn't even introduce myself yet. Forgive me. I am Professor Ludovico Aldana. *(He takes PENELOPE's hand, which she stretched out to him without taking her eyes off the stranger. He takes a deep bow.)*

PENELOPE: *(Standing up as if in a dream, as if her spirit was lifted.)* This must have been what Paris, Romeo and Armando were like ... *(The professor looks at her as if he had seen madness on her face, but he follows her gaze and sees the young officer. ARTURO does not notice the compact that rolled to his feet. But he does notice the professor. They run towards each other and hug. PENELOPE picks up her compact.)*

ARTURO: Papá, you splendid old man.

LUDOVICO: Young man...

ARTURO: I made you come here because I wanted to see you before anyone else. I arrived a half hour ago. The first order I have to carry out is to introduce myself to the Colonel. He is living in this hotel. But I've already let myself give you a hug. *(PENELOPE observes them sympathetically.)*

LUDOVICO: Oh, I forgot. I was talking to the young lady.

PENELOPE: (*With grace and flirtation.*) Penelope García.

LUDOVICO: My son (*Proudly.*), Captain Arturo Ulises Aldana.

ARTURO: (*Shaking hands with PENELOPE.*) Pleased to meet you, miss. (*Very close, captivated, attentive.*) I've never seen eyes as blue as yours.

PENELOPE: (*Attracted.*) And I never thought eyes could be as dark as yours.

ARTURO: (*Without looking away from her.*) Papá... You met this marvelous creature and you never told me about her?

PENELOPE: (*Without looking away from him.*) Is there some reason I shouldn't be doing this?

LUDOVICO: I had never met her before. (*Trying to leave with his son.*) Miss, excuse us for leaving you so quickly.

ARTURO: No, papá. I don't think you'll be able to tear me out of here.

LUDOVICO: You have to go see the coronel. And then your mother will be waiting for us.

ARTURO: Tell mamá that I'm going to be late.

LUDOVICO: But you were the one who asked me to come get you.

ARTURO: Sometimes Heaven sends us a new plan.

PENELOPE: (*Smiling like an angel.*) Are you referring to me?

ARTURO: (*Enchanted.*) Yes.

PENELOPE: No. You're the one who came from Heaven. Didn't you come by plane?

ARTURO: Have you ever flown, miss?

PENELOPE: (*Slyly.*) Sort of. I've been up above.

ARTURO: Then you know how to land. But this time, I feel like I've landed on clouds. Are you real or is this a dream?

LUDOVICO: Arturo Ulises...

ARTURO: Penelope...

LUDOVICO: (*Offended that the couple is ignoring him.*) Miss, best wishes.

PENELOPE: Don't be angry with him, Señor Aldana. Even though his uniform makes him appear important, he's still just a boy...

ARTURO: (*Still absorbed in contemplating PENELOPE.*) I never knew that dreams could come true. But now I know that I have waited for you all my life. (*LUDOVICO bows with exaggerated circumspection and leaves.*)

PENELOPE: He seemed a little irritated when he left.

ARTURO: (*Laughing in enjoyment.*) He looked at me like I was going crazy. But you have to go a little crazy to get what you want.

PENELOPE: Did you want something?

ARTURO: I wanted him to leave. Humanity never invented a better pretext than madness for its desires.

PENELOPE: (*Flirtatious.*) And what desires are we talking about now?

ARTURO: I want to fall at your feet.

PENELOPE: (*Sits down.*) Struck by cupid's arrow?

ARTURO: (*Acting it out in front of her.*) I got hit hard. Modern steel is certainly strong.

PENELOPE: (*Flattered.*) This must be what they call love at first sight....

ARTURO: Why they? Why not us?

PENELOPE: Because I'm from another...

ARTURO: (*Taken aback.*) From what....?

PENELOPE:...from another planet. (*Laughing.*) I come from very far away. And there are things that I don't understand. (*Two men enter. They sit down further away, smoking.*)

ARTURO: I'd like to teach them all to you.

PENELOPE: My ignorance doesn't scare you?

ARTURO: When a man is with a woman he likes, he likes everything about her, even her ignorance. But when he's with a woman he doesn't like, even her best isn't good enough.

PENELOPE: You know so much!

ARTURO: (*Humbly.*) I know a little.

PENELOPE: (*Privately.*) What do you think about modern women?

ARTURO: They're obnoxious, but I love them.

PENELOPE: (*Frightened.*) All of them?

ARTURO: Which is like not really loving any of them.

PENELOPE: And women from the past?

ARTURO: Which ones? Are they any different than the ones I know?

PENELOPE: I'm talking about the ones from history and legend.

ARTURO: They're lovely. (*Pause.*) But they should stay in the past and in legends. They'd be unbearable in this day and age.

PENELOPE: (*Amused.*) Really?

ARTURO: Yes, really. But, back to you, Penelope. (*Realizing the significance of her name.*) Penelope... but, wasn't she....?

PENELOPE: Yes. Of course. There was already one before me.

ARTURO: The one who was knitting... fake knitting...

PENELOPE: Yes...

ARTURO: (*Full of pity.*) And why did they punish her like that, condemning her to perpetual fidelity?

PENELOPE: (*Fiery.*) I don't believe it was a punishment.

ARTURO: (*Still full of pity.*) Who would do that to her?

PENELOPE: My mother. And Penelope's fate wasn't a bad one.

ARTURO: But it wasn't a good one either. Some myths don't age well.

PENELOPE: (*After some silence.*) Don't you believe in fidelity, Arturo Ulises?

ARTURO: (*Merciful.*) Penelope... (*A BELLHOP approaches them.*)

BELLHOP: Are you Captain Aldana? (*ARTURO makes an affirmative gesture.*) Coronel Saravia

is waiting in his room.

ARTURO: That's great. Thank you. (*The BELLHOP walks away.*) What are you doing here? Where do you live? Where can I come back to see you?

PENELOPE: I can't answer all of your questions at once.

ARTURO: Then answer the most important one, where do you live?

PENELOPE: Here.

ARTURO: With who? Alone, married, divorced, widowed?

PENELOPE: Alone.

ARTURO: Are you waiting for someone?

PENELOPE: (*Jokingly.*) Yes. For you.

ARTURO: I am going up to see my boss and I'll come back in a few minutes. Do you promise to wait for me?

PENELOPE: If you don't trust women, why would you trust me?

ARTURO: My coming back doesn't mean I trust you.

PENELOPE: And if I do wait, what does that mean?

ARTURO: That you're different from anyone else and that you're the woman of my dreams. Do you promise? (*Getting up and starting to walk away.*)

PENELOPE: Sure, as long as it doesn't take as long as last time...

ARTURO: (*Stopping, surprised.*) What...?

PENELOPE: (*Smiling naively.*) Nothing. I didn't say anything. (*ARTURO moves away.*) Will I only have one destiny? And this time with still hands... (*Crossing and uncrossing her legs. She takes out a tissue from her bag, She throws it on the ground, then picks it up. The two men that entered observe with impertinence.*)

OCTAVIO LASTRA: I like this woman. There's something different about her.

MARCELO URDANIZ: She's just like all the rest. If you notice anything different about her, it must be your imagination.

OCTAVIO: You're such a skeptic. How do I introduce myself?

MARCELO: You don't even know if she's alone?

OCTAVIO: She looks like an independent woman.

MARCELO: What about the official who was with her? Maybe he's her husband.

OCTAVIO: Her husband? Have you never seen a husband up close?

MARCELO: You're annoying her with your incessant staring. (*PENELOPE notices the stranger's attitude and feels uncomfortable.*)

OCTAVIO: Now let's see...(*Gets up and boldly walks towards PENELOPE.*) My dear Señora Chostakova...For a moment I was afraid that it wasn't you. But it's because I've never seen you look so beautiful.

PENELOPE: (*Surprised.*) Sir...

OCTAVIO: (*Taking her hand and kissing it respectfully.*) You don't recognize me? It was in Paris during the year of the Grand Exposition. The Count Villa de Noirsis introduced us one night in the Cremaillère...

PENELOPE: (*Naive.*) I think you must have me confused with someone else.

OCTAVIO: That can't be. You haven't changed. You're unforgettable.

PENELOPE: But I was never in Paris.

OCTAVIO: That's not possible. You must have been (*He immediately takes out a cigarette case. He offers her a cigarette and PENELOPE shyly takes it.*) Do you smoke?

PENELOPE: I assure you, sir, that...

OCTAVIO: (*Taking out a lighter.*) Want a light?

PENELOPE: But, sir...

OCTAVIO: Octavio Lastra. If I'm mistaken, I beg you to forgive me. What an uncanny resemblance... (*PENELOPE chokes on cigarette smoke.*)

PENELOPE: I try to smoke as little as possible.

OCTAVIO: Do you sing?

PENELOPE: No. I knit.

OCTAVIO: (*Surprised.*) What...?

PENELOPE: (*Starting to get annoyed.*) Nothing.

OCTAVIO: Would you allow me to introduce you to a friend? We could celebrate this happy accident with a cocktail...

PENELOPE: I can't. I'm so sorry. I'm waiting.

OCTAVIO: Why do it alone? Time goes by faster when it's spent with more people.

PENELOPE: (*Proudly.*) I'm used to it.

OCTAVIO: That is a bad habit. Women shouldn't have to wait for anything. Men should wait for them.

PENELOPE: (*With a tender look towards the place where ARTURO disappeared.*) But...if it's love we're waiting for?

OCTAVIO: Are you sure you're not mistaken?

PENELOPE: (*With a deep sigh.*) No, that's impossible. Love is always easy to recognize.

OCTAVIO: (*Amazed.*) Your expression isn't common. You're not a woman of this world.

PENELOPE: (*Jokingly.*) How'd you guess?

OCTAVIO: (*Smugly.*) But my dear...

PENELOPE: (*More than mocking.*) Penelope. Penelope García. (*At this moment a woman enters with a beautiful dog. While the woman asks the doorman for the key, the dog gets loose. PENELOPE calls the dog to cut off this conversation, which she's no longer interested in.*)

OCTAVIO: May I greet you whenever I meet you?

PENELOPE: (*Distracted by the dog.*) Why yes... Yes of course... He's beautiful... What's his name? (*OCTAVIO LASTRA feels he has been dismissed. He makes an exaggerated bow.*)

OCTAVIO: It's been a great pleasure... (*PENELOPE waves goodbye distractedly with a slight nod. OCTAVIO LASTRA moves away closer to MARCELO URDÁNIZ, who has had an amused expression for the entirety of the scene. The two men leave. The dog's owner approaches PENELOPE.*)

SRA. ALEX: Do you like dogs?

PENELOPE: A lot. They're excellent companions.

SRA. ALEX: I love them so much... Because they don't talk. And because they let me talk

about myself.

PENELOPE: All the advantages.

SRA. ALEX: Sometimes there are disadvantages. (*In a quiet voice.*) The housekeeper in my suite complains.

PENELOPE: That doesn't matter. She'd complain even if you didn't have a dog. And if he makes you happy...

SRA. ALEX: I don't have children. I couldn't decide between buying a dog or adopting a boy. I decided on this. (*Smiles.*) Children are not all the rage.

PENELOPE: (*Amazed and naive.*) Not all the rage?

SRA. ALEX: You're very nice. And very elegant. I've seen you a few times around here. You've caught my attention. Lately, my friends have been complaining that I don't have enough pretty women at my table. Do you want to have dinner with me tonight? I'm having some guests over. There are around ten of us.

PENELOPE: I don't know if I can. I have another commitment. But, anyhow, I really appreciate it, señora.

SRA. ALEX: Leave your answer later with the doorman later under the name of Alex. I'll ask about you.

PENELOPE: You're very kind. I won't forget you.

SRA. ALEX: See you later. (*To the dog.*) Totó... Here, Totó. (*To PENELOPE.*) That was the name of my first husband... Come, my darling... (*She walks away murmuring endearing words to her dog. She leaves and two young people enter from the opposite side. They are around the same age, wearing exercise clothes. They see PENELOPE who moves back to the foreground.*)

SUZY: (*Slyly pointing at PENELOPE.*) This is Gloria Warren's friend. She came to take care of her things.

TEDDY: (*Sighing.*) She's just the kind of person I need to add to my inferiority complex.

SUZY: Is she as rich as Gloria?

TEDDY: All I know is that she's very pretty.

SUZY: Pretty! Pretty! That is not important. There's only one sign that matters these days. The dollar sign!

TEDDY: You're so materialistic, sister...

SUZY: I am your salvation, brother. You play polo, sail a yacht, and spend summers on the ranch, because I know how to choose your friends. Our bank accounts left us high and dry a long time ago.

TEDDY: You're not bad at taking care of both of us, since you enjoy the good life too.

SUZY: I'm your ticket to success.

TEDDY: So much generosity would move me if you didn't seem so cynical.

SUZY: Cynical? I'm a businesswoman. And social ambition is a business that hasn't been fully explored.

TEDDY: What do you want?

SUZY: *(Dragging out her words.)* Money and influence.

TEDDY: But, back to this blonde angel...

SUZY: Let me do it. Pretend to be distracted. Stay here and smoke. *(She heads towards PENELOPE.)* Excuse me, miss. I just found out that you were Gloria Warren's friend. I can't imagine the pain caused by this tragic accident.

PENELOPE: *(Surprised.)* It was truly painful. You met her here, right?

SUZY: Yes. But we became great friends instantly.

PENELOPE: How strange! She told me that she didn't have any friends here.

SUZY: *(Puzzled.)* How could she have told you that?

PENELOPE: *(Afraid that she said too much.)* No...Roughly speaking... In the last letter that I received from her...

SUZY: She was a lovely woman. Everyone tried to get to know her and honor her *(Pauses.)* Are you also North American? But no, what a silly question...you speak our language too well.

PENELOPE: I learned it when I was very young.

SUZY: Can I ask where you're from?

PENELOPE: The sky.

SUZY: *(Laughing.)* How original....

PENELOPE: They say that telling the truth will help us believe in it.

SUZY: My boyfriend tells me the same thing when he lies.

PENELOPE: (*Looking at TEDDY.*) He's a handsome guy.

SUZY: That's my brother. My boyfriend's in Brazil.

PENELOPE: Are you getting married soon?

SUZY: Yes, that is, if I haven't already married someone else by the time he comes back.

PENELOPE: (*Surprised.*) Miss...

SUZY: Call me Suzy.

PENELOPE: And you can't wait for your boyfriend to return?

SUZY: He's taking so long. I'm not very patient. Life goes on and I have to keep moving forward.

PENELOPE: (*A bit declamatory, as if she remembered the promised lesson.*) But there's nothing more beautiful than waiting for the return of the man that you love. His absence is full of memories, nostalgia, of small details that accumulate and join into a single emotion every time you hear his name.

SUZY: (*Disrespectful and sarcastic.*) Are you ok?

PENELOPE: Who?

SUZY: I thought you weren't feeling well.

PENELOPE: (*Naive.*) I'm fine, thank you. (*Pause.*) And then when the time comes for his return... You know, there was once a woman named Penelope...

SUZY: Oh! Yes. I already know. I learned about her in high school. But, what if what happens to her happens to me? They say her husband took several years to return. And they also say that she waited for him without cheating even once.

PENELOPE: That's the absolute truth.

SUZY: Such self-control! But who's to say his conduct was equally irreproachable?

PENELOPE: (*Reacting.*) Oh, Ulysses...!

SUZY: (*As if she didn't hear.*) Because you can't convince me that a man knows how to wait. And if he doesn't wait around in despair, why should a woman allow herself to grow old and grey without enjoying some of life's little pleasures?

PENELOPE: (*A bit disturbed.*) Naturally...there is some truth to that (*immediately scared*)... No, it can't be true...fidelity....

SUZY: I have a feeling that you are a bit...shy... You talk too much about fidelity. Let me introduce you to my brother. I'm sure you'll hit it off right away. Gloria Warren had come to think highly of him. (*PENELOPE nods with an evasive gesture.*) Teddy....Teddy.....Come here... (*TEDDY approaches.*) Miss...

PENELOPE: Penelope García. (*The siblings look surprised.*)

SUZY: (*Disappointed.*) García? (*Pauses.*) My brother.

TEDDY: It's such a pleasure to meet you.

PENELOPE: (*Already a bit tired.*) Thank you. But I must excuse myself. I'm waiting for a friend. And I want him to find me...

SUZY: He'll find you here right away.

PENELOPE: I know. But...I need to take care of some things.

TEDDY: We can see each other later.

PENELOPE: Another time. It was a pleasure to meet you. I would like to continue teaching this young woman a lesson that she hasn't learned yet.

SUZY: Do you want to join us tomorrow for a polo game?

PENELOPE: Tomorrow? I don't know if I can...

SUZY: I'll call you on the phone in the morning.

PENELOPE: Great. You have no idea how much that device amuses me.

TEDDY: (*Astonished.*) What...?

PENELOPE: (*Understanding her gaffe.*) No. Nothing. I meant to say.... (*To SUZY.*) Let's talk about the benefits of fidelity.

SUZY: Wouldn't it be nicer if we didn't? Ever since I was little, I've hated fairy tales.

PENELOPE: (*In a hurry.*) All right... See you tomorrow.

SUZY: (*Exaggerating her affection.*) My dear friend...

TEDDY: Miss...

PENELOPE: *(She holds out her hand. TEDDY looks at her rings and takes a deep breath.)* Goodbye. *(The siblings walk away, PENELOPE looks relieved.)* It's so hard to be alone!.....Also, if I'm all alone I won't be able to fulfill the mission that brought me to Earth. *(Pause. While remembering.)* So, Ulises, huh?.. But how would I...?. *(At that moment ARTURO returns impetuously.)*

ARTURO: *(Almost jumping.)* Penelope... You've waited for me... It's so late... I thought the boss would never let us go.

PENELOPE: Hadn't I promised?

ARTURO: I never took promises that seriously.

PENELOPE: Then it's time to consider taking them more seriously.

ARTURO: With you? With you, Miss Penelope? Can we be informal with each other? Let me address you on more familiar terms. I feel like I met you centuries ago. There is something that is pulling me to you from the beyond.

PENELOPE: You're making me dizzy, mister.

ARTURO: You don't have to be so formal with me. Call me Arturo.

PENELOPE: *(Shy.)* I don't know...

ARTURO: It's like getting your mouth ready for a kiss: Ar-tu-ro.

PENELOPE: I can't. I'm scared too...

ARTURO: Scared of what?

PENELOPE: An hour ago you didn't exist.

ARTURO: Time's not important. Either we meet right away or we don't meet at all. Either we fall in love right away or we don't fall in love at all. Listen, the boss has just chosen me to carry out a mission abroad. I have to leave in fifteen days. Don't you understand that these fifteen days will be my life? I'm going by plane. You never know what could happen in the air. So I'm focused on the next fifteen days. Fifteen, Penelope. Every minute for me is a whole day for others. I've known you for thirty minutes. So, it's thirty days. In thirty days a man can know if he loves a woman...

PENELOPE: *(Almost convinced.)* Yes...

ARTURO: I love you, Penelope.

PENELOPE: That's awful.

ARTURO: What's awful?

PENELOPE: (*Dream-like.*) I forgot to ask if I can get married again.

ARTURO: (*Shocked.*) You have a husband?

PENELOPE: (*Embarrassed. Hesitating.*) I mean... I was married...but now...I'm divorced.

ARTURO: Who cares about that? I wasn't even thinking about that....

PENELOPE: (*Startled.*) What?

ARTURO: (*Revealing his carelessness.*) Oh, I'm so sorry.

PENELOPE: (*In a reproachful tone.*) Oh! What a bad opinion you've formed of me! I am not like Helen of Troy! I don't just go on trips and pick up men.

ARTURO: You've gotten sidetracked my love.

PENELOPE: People talk badly about her.

ARTURO: (*Without trying to understand.*) Penelope, would you like to marry me?

PENELOPE: I'm stunned. Let me think about it. (*Talking to herself.*) But, if I don't get married, how will I preach fidelity?

ARTURO: Let's not overthink things. That won't do any good. Listen, Penelope. When a man is like me and is named Arturo Ulises Aldana, the woman who meets him must fall into his arms.

PENELOPE: (*Hesitant.*) Arturo Ulises....Ulysses... (*Determined.*) May my destiny be fulfilled. (*Standing up.*) So I can teach the women of today how they should love and wait for their men.

ARTURO: (*Also standing up.*) Shall we go to my house to share the news?

PENELOPE: (*Sitting back down, disheartened.*) I don't think your father likes me.

ARTURO: (*Also sitting.*) Why not?

PENELOPE: He caught me dropping my compact.

ARTURO: Poor Papá. He's getting old.

PENELOPE: Would your mother like to meet me?

ARTURO: She's always accepting of everything. I'm her only child.

PENELOPE: That reminds me of a friend who only has one child. She loves him very much. But she has had to go far away and she has begun to forget about him a little. She is absorbed by the mission she must fulfill for humanity.

ARTURO: (*Solemn.*) You're delightful, Penelope. I adore you.

PENELOPE: Arturo, are you sure about what we're going to do?

ARTURO: Yes. Because I believe in you. And because I believe in your name.

PENELOPE: An hour ago you didn't believe in any woman.

ARTURO: I never thought I would find someone named Penelope. Because also... you can't tell anyone. There is nothing I'm more afraid of than an unfaithful woman.

PENELOPE: You're wonderful.

ARTURO: The only wonderful thing that the universe invented is you.

PENELOPE: How will I know how to make you happy?

ARTURO: If you're by my side I'll be happy. (*He stands up and holds out his hand out to PENELOPE.*)

PENELOPE: (*Also standing.*) In your absence I will wait for your return counting the moments that separate us with each and every stitch.

ARTURO: (*Reaching out to her.*) I've never seen eyes as blue as yours.

PENELOPE: And I've never seen eyes as dark as yours... (*They walk away blissful and happy.*)

CURTAIN

## Act 2

*The scene takes place in PENELOPE and ARTURO's home. It is a luxurious room full of flowers. When the curtain rises, no one is on stage, TRINIDAD immediately enters, ushering in OCTAVIO LASTRA.*

OCTAVIO: And Mrs. Aldana?

TRINIDAD: She hasn't returned yet. She went out to buy some things. She told me that if anyone arrived before she got back, they should wait for her.

OCTAVIO: (*Observing her, trying to get closer.*) Has anyone ever told you that you're a beautiful *criolla*?

TRINIDAD: (*Embarrassed.*) Sir...you're trying to flatter me....

OCTAVIO: No, not at all. I like to be nice to you because I have never been treated more differentially anywhere else.

TRINIDAD: I treat you differently, because not everyone's the same.

OCTAVIO: (*In a sudden movement.*) And I would even like to repay you with a small gift for your kindness. (*He takes a banknote from his wallet and puts it in the maid's hands.*)

TRINIDAD: No, sir. I shouldn't...

OCTAVIO: (*Making her take the money.*) What should be done isn't always done. Take it. Buy yourself something nice.

TRINIDAD: Oh! The gentleman is very generous.

OCTAVIO: Don't give it a second thought.

TRINIDAD: Would you like me to get you anything, sir?

OCTAVIO: Yes... that would be nice... maybe a whiskey.

TRINIDAD: I'll bring out the ice right now. (*She leaves for a moment. OCTAVIO looks at the flowers and reads the cards with an expression of disdain. TRINIDAD returns.*) Pretty flowers, right? The lady's friends are very nice. Almost every morning they add more to this garden. (*Serving him a glass of whiskey.*)

OCTAVIO: (*Taking the glass.*) Do you know if news has arrived from Captain Aldana?

TRINIDAD: (*Sadly.*) Nothing, Poor thing! She hasn't even been married for a year and she already has to pick out her funeral attire. Because, you know, neither the newspapers nor the government have managed to find any trace of him.

OCTAVIO: He must have been lost at sea.

TRINIDAD: That's what I told the lady last night. Out of sheer clumsiness, because my desire was to comfort her. But, I shouldn't have said anything. (*Confidentially.*) It must have upset her because I saw the light on in her room all night. And this morning, when I brought her breakfast, the first thing she said to me was: You know what, Trinidad? I stayed awake and finished it. I don't know why, but from her tone she sounded pretty happy to me. And there's nothing happy about it... (*The doorbell rings repeatedly.*) That must be her. She forgot the key again. (*She exits. A second later, PENELOPE enters. Very elegant, more flirtatious, more audacious, more*

*sociable.*)

PENELOPE: (*Holding out her hand to OCTAVIO.*) My dear friend.

OCTAVIO: (*Kissing her hand.*) Penelope. I tried to get here before the others so I could be alone with you. I need to talk to you.

PENELOPE: (*Smiling.*) This again?

OCTAVIO: Again. I can't wait any longer, Penelope. I feel devoured by a passion so immense and only you can save me.

PENELOPE: (*Weakly defending herself.*) But Octavio... be reasonable... What am I supposed to do? I don't even know what my true status is yet.

OCTAVIO: You have to be brave and accept it. Your husband isn't coming back. Three months without any news gives us an exact idea of what has happened.

PENELOPE: The remains of his plane would have been found at least....

OCTAVIO: (*Solemnly.*) He must have been pulled into the bosom of the ocean.

PENELOPE: (*Joking.*) I don't think it's right for him to be pulled to anyone else's bosom.

OCTAVIO: You have to get used to that idea, Penelope.

PENELOPE: At first I cried a little. But now I'm worried about getting wrinkles. My massage therapist says that crying will ruin my looks.

OCTAVIO: (*Close to her.*) Accept the love that I offer you. It's intense.

PENELOPE: But I have to know my true marital status first.

OCTAVIO: Answer me seriously.

PENELOPE: Why should I be serious? (*Laughing.*) Isn't my smile sweet?

OCTAVIO: (*Impetuous. Trying to kiss her.*) Yes, but it could still be sweeter.

PENELOPE: (*Jumping back just in time.*) No...No...No (*From a distance. Insinuating and flirtatious.*) You bad boy.

OCTAVIO: Bad... And yet the memory of that kiss burns me...

PENELOPE: Your memory baffles me.

OCTAVIO: I think you must be in love with someone else.

PENELOPE: I'm in love with everyone and no one in particular. (*Reading the cards in the flowers.*) Teddy. Roberto. Casal. Marcelo Urdaniz. Octavio Lastra. Oh! Thanks, Octavio. They're beautiful. Count Enrico Enzolaro. How thoughtful you all are!... I don't know how I'll ever repay all these men for their kindness.

OCTAVIO: You know that each one of them is waiting for you.

PENELOPE: (*Complaining. In a farcical tone.*) But I still don't know where my husband is. If they continue to harass me like this, I will also have to undo at night what my hands do during the day.

OCTAVIO: You're such an adorable liar... Your days are full of different activities. I bet you haven't even started your knitting you were planning so you could be like the other Penelope.

PENELOPE: (*Slyly.*) Don't be so sure. You might be surprised... (*TRINIDAD enters, ushering in SUZY and TEDDY. They all greet cordially, indicating their mutual trust.*)

SUZY: (*Hugging PENELOPE.*) My dear friend... We were invited out on a yacht but we decided to come and spend the afternoon with you instead.

PENELOPE: Thank you, Suzy. You're so nice. (*Somewhat mocking.*) Sometimes I worry that you'll get tired of visiting me every day.

TEDDY: (*To PENELOPE.*) She knows that I am only happy when I'm here.

SUZY: How was dinner last night at the Mendizabals'?

PENELOPE: Good. It was an intimate group. But we danced until very late.

SUZY: Do you have any regrets?

PENELOPE: Just that I'm not officially a widow yet.

TEDDY: Were they flirting with you a lot?

PENELOPE: I know how to defend myself. I have thick armor.

SUZY: I believe you... Teddy was the one who was worried, he was upset that he wasn't invited... (*ROBERTO CASAL enters accompanied by two women. Greetings. Familiarity.*)

ROBERTO: How's our beautiful Penelope?

PENELOPE: You're such punctual friends.

WOMAN 1: I don't know what kind of spell your house puts on all of us. Look how we're all drawn to it.

ROBERTO: (*Very close to the mistress of the house.*) Penelope, these people get in my way. When will I be able to see you alone?

SUZY: (*Close enough to ROBERTO to hear him.*) Are there really people here who get in the way? Last night, when you drove me home in your car, you told me quite the opposite. You said that I was the only good part of this Volga boatman's chorus. I guess Penelope must be the boat. (*PENELOPE laughs. ROBERTO is annoyed. SUZY is amused.*)

PENELOPE: My friend, words are double-edged swords. Even our own words turn against us and threaten to cut off... our breath. (*She walks over to the little table on wheels that the maid brings.*) Help yourselves to whatever you like. There's something for everyone. I don't want to have to take care of you, I want you all to take care of me. (*They all come closer and serve themselves. Laughs. Ruckus.*)

SUZY: Should we form a bridge table later?

WOMAN 2: I'd rather we pick a game that we all can play.

OCTAVIO: Is anyone else coming?

PENELOPE: It'll be the same ones as usual.

WOMAN 2: We'll need a pallet and cards. We should play Baccarat. I'm tired of playing Bridge.

ROBERTO: (*To SUZY, separately.*) Why are you being so indiscreet?

SUZY: Why are you being so stubborn? That woman won't be yours.

ROBERTO: Jealous?

SUZY: Of you? Why would I want to be with a man who's part of another woman's fan club?

ROBERTO: What if I dedicated myself only to you?

SUZY: (*Sarcastic.*) Maybe all I want is for you to drop out of the competition.

ROBERTO: I don't understand. Which competition?

SUZY: Penelope. Haven't you noticed that she favors Teddy?

ROBERTO: Oh! I get it. It's not me you're after.

SUZY: You're so pretentious. I love the diamonds... on her. *(She walks away from him.)*

PENELOPE: Teddy, we're out of whiskey. Come open this bottle.

TEDDY: *(Closer to her.)* I could open the doors of Heaven just for you.

PENELOPE: Don't do it. They'll give me a hard time.

ROBERTO: *(Close to PENELOPE again.)* I need to see you alone. Let me leave and come back after everyone's gone.

PENELOPE: Have you forgotten that I am a faithfully married woman?

ROBERTO: A married woman that doesn't know if she has a husband. This is your life. Don't waste it.

PENELOPE: What about Arturo?

ROBERTO: I don't think he's coming back. And if he does come back, too bad for him. I would've known not to leave you if you were mine.

PENELOPE: Arturo has faith in me.

ROBERTO: That's even more foolish.

PENELOPE: *(In a disapproving tone.)* Roberto... Arturo was a very good friend of yours.

ROBERTO: Exactly. No one has more of a right than me to inherit his property. *(MARCELO URDANIZ and COUNT ENRICO ENZOLARO arrive. They greet each other.)*

COUNT: *(Kissing PENELOPE'S hand.)* The hours between yesterday and today seemed endless.

PENELOPE: But Count... You left me at three o'clock this morning at the door of my house.

COUNT: You are a woman that no one would ever want to be separated from.

PENELOPE: Do you want to help yourself to anything?

COUNT: Your love, without ice.

PENELOPE: *(Kidding around.)* You just asked me for something I don't have in my cellar.

MARCELO: Then I'll be less demanding. A smile from you and a sherry.

WOMAN 2: Definitely, Penelope. Your court of admirers has decided to ignore us.

WOMAN 2: I know you're charming but I wonder what else is making you so intriguing and appealing. Maybe it's this absent husband of yours. Or could it be the thrill of getting caught if he does return?

PENELOPE: (*Interrupting her.*) This doesn't faze me. I've heard worse. Let's talk about something else, something other than me.

MARCELO: But your beauty reigns supreme, Penelope.

WOMAN 1: You're an abandoned woman. We're all inspired by your fidelity.

WOMAN 2: To be honest, I would be more inspired by your infidelity.

PENELOPE: I don't think I can forget my husband.

OCTAVIO: Until when?

ROBERTO: It's a secret. Don't tell him Penelope.

COUNT: You promised us you would decide once you finished knitting.

SUZY: Penelope, the one from the story, she knitted.

COUNT: Can't we update that story a little?

PENELOPE: (*Shy, solemn. Lowering her eyes.*) But the truth is that, last night, I finished my knitting.

ROBERTO: Penelope... I don't even care that everyone's here now. I would be honored to ask you for your hand.

PENELOPE: (*Pleasant laugh.*) Roberto... let's call a truce for a few minutes.

TEDDY: This joke is going too far... I propose that... (*The phone rings. SUZY picks up the receiver. She signals the others to be quiet.*)

SUZY: (*A little tipsy from the drink.*) Who is it? Yes, this is Aldana's wife's residence—A friend. And you are? An admirer? Another one? But we already have five here... Do you want to court her too? (*She laughs wildly and the others with her.*) No, no. The lady is busy. Don't tell anyone. It's a secret. She is very busy, but Penelope no longer knits... (*She hangs up and everyone laughs.*)

MARCELO: Penelope, it's so cruel of you to act like this when there are so many of us who are vying for your attention.

WOMAN 2: Gentlemen... Are there no other women here besides Penelope? (*Ostentatiously*

*crossing her legs.*) Why am I not getting through to anyone?

WOMAN 1: I propose a somewhat unusual game for people our age. It will reveal your destiny. Blind Man's Bluff. Penelope will be blindfolded and she'll choose her next lover. The king is dead! Long live the king!

PENELOPE: Are you going to blindfold me?

ROBERTO: Yes, that way you can't just choose your favorite...

PENELOPE: I don't have a favorite.

OCTAVIO: Or the one who loves you the most.

PENELOPE: Everyone loves me.

TEDDY: But you have to pick one. Only one, do you understand?

PENELOPE: What a pity! You've all taken such good care of me...

ROBERTO: *(Almost secretly)* Penelope, I can't give you up. Just cheat. You'll recognize me by my cologne. But choose me...

PENELOPE: *(Very funny.)* Who will lend me a scarf?

OCTAVIO: I will. On the condition that you come straight to my arms.

PENELOPE: You're so greedy *(SUZY ties the scarf around PENELOPE's eyes... The game begins. Laughs. Uproar. When she bumps into women she rejects them. When she bumps into a man, she doesn't recognize him. Finally, she takes one man's arm.)* Octavio... No, it's not Octavio. Marcelo... No, it's not Marcelo either... *(The game takes her to ROBERTO, she recognizes him.)* Roberto...

ROBERTO: *(Radiant.)* Yes...it's me... *(The women applaud. The other men grumble resentfully but happily.)*

PENELOPE: *(Taking off the blindfold.)* Oh!

ROBERTO: *(Taking her in his arms and looking into her eyes.)* Penelope... I am the happiest of the mortals.

TEDDY: We have to know how to lose. Let's toast... *(Each one looks for his glass. They all rise in a boisterous toast. PENELOPE and ROBERT stand in the middle of the scene, almost embracing. PENELOPE still holding the blindfold in her fingers. At that moment, ARTURO arrives violently and before entering, he pauses on the threshold of the door, indignant, out of breath.)*

EVERYONE: (*Except PENELOPE.*) The....

PENELOPE: (*Flustered.*) Arturo...

ARTURO: (*At the height of excitement.*) So five suitors, huh? So Penelope doesn't knit anymore, does she? So my good friends waited desperately for news of my disappearance... Out... Everyone out... (*With a dismayed expression they all start to leave. ROBERTO stops for a moment in front of him.*)

ROBERTO: Arturo, I...

ARTURO: Shut up. You're worse than anyone... Go away...I don't want to hear from any of you again. Everyone out... like dogs... (*Only PENELOPE and ARTURO stay. PENELOPE's face changes.*)

PENELOPE: Arturo...

ARTURO: You had already stopped waiting for me. I was already dead to you. I was already buried and now you raise your glass to another man... You're a bad woman...

PENELOPE: (*Whimpering.*) Arturo, I'm so happy to see you that I won't even try to defend myself. You're back, Arturo... (*She approaches him as if she is going to hug him.*)

ARTURO: You are, huh? You want to hold on to me now, but you couldn't hold on to my memory. After only three months, your memory of me had faded into the background while you were entertaining others.

PENELOPE: Blame them!

ARTURO: And what about you?... You're an innocent victim, right? A helpless creature that tried to stay alone to mourn the absence of her beloved. And they call you Penelope.

PENELOPE: But I assure you that I've done nothing wrong. They came every day to spend a few hours with me. They played....

ARTURO: They drank... And... What is that handkerchief still in your hand?

PENELOPE: (*Hesitant.*) Blind Man's Bluff ...

ARTURO: (*Furious.*) Blind Man's Bluff? Oh I could just kill you...

PENELOPE: (*Scared.*) But I didn't do anything.

ARTURO: You didn't do anything?

PENELOPE: (*Whimpering.*) Not yet.

ARTURO: (*Dumbfounded.*) Yet? (*Sarcastic.*) Boy am I lucky. Naturally... And, like the other Penelope, you haven't finished your knitting either, right?

PENELOPE: (*Naive, with her eyes wide open.*) I did finish. Last night...

ARTURO: (*In the height of despair.*) No! I can't believe it. (*Calling the maid with intemperate cries.*) Trinidad! Trinidad! (*The maid appears and is terrified when she sees Arturo.*)

TRINIDAD: Souls of purgatory...

ARTURO: Yes. Souls. But from the Earth.

PENELOPE: (*Lovingly.*) It's the gentleman who has returned. Trini... Hey... Do you want to go to my room and bring me the box of knitting supplies? (*She gestures with her hands a large sized box.*)

TRINIDAD: Yes ma'am. Right away. (*She exits looking at ARTURO as if she doesn't believe her eyes.*)

ARTURO: The tender promise that you made me was adorable, you said you'd wait for me like the other Penelope and to distract your suitors by knitting and unknitting a piece that you would never finish. Penelope... What have you done with our lives? (*He falls down in an armchair.*)

PENELOPE: (*With pity.*) Arturo, I haven't stopped loving you...

ARTURO: You never loved me.

PENELOPE: (*Behind him. Resting a hand on his shoulder.*) And I still love you with all my soul.

ARTURO: Your soul must be no bigger than a grain of corn. And easy to peck at. (*Getting angry.*) But you were playing Blind Man's Bluff.

PENELOPE: It's not what you think. We played it to distract ourselves. (*Reacting.*) How do I know you weren't cheating on me?

ARTURO: (*Bitter.*) You didn't waste any time, just in case...

PENELOPE: (*Conciliatory.*) Let's not torture ourselves, Arturo. (*Making her voice tender.*) Come here, by my side, and tell me what happened to you. Tell me where you were hiding, and how you managed to save yourself. (*TRINIDAD enters with the box of knitting supplies, much smaller than PENELOPE's hands had suggested. She exits immediately, still looking at ARTURO suspiciously.*)

ARTURO: (*Amazed at the small size of the box.*) Is this all?

PENELOPE: (*Lowering her eyes.*) Yes... (*ARTURO opens the box and pulls out a knitted*

*square, no larger than a woman's handkerchief.)*

ARTURO: And this...?

PENELOPE: A scapular, to hold your portrait.

ARTURO: (*Sarcastically.*) I hope you didn't tire yourself out working so hard, you poor thing...

PENELOPE: (*Naive.*) No...

ARTURO: I can't decide whether to laugh or strangle you.

PENELOPE: But I didn't have time to make anything better. (*Tearful.*) I made it for you, after all, and you're being ungrateful.

ARTURO: So now it's my fault.

PENELOPE: (*Whimpering again.*) You don't understand, Arturo. You don't want to understand. A woman shouldn't be left alone. Right after you left, the idea of not seeing you again drove me crazy. But when I didn't hear from you, I thought you were gone forever.

ARTURO: (*Sarcastic.*) Since you thought I died, your pain grew stronger and stronger...

PENELOPE: No, I became resigned to it, I learned to accept it, but I wanted to keep on living... I didn't want to waste my life.

ARTURO: (*Hurt.*) That's enough.

PENELOPE: (*Close to him again.*) I want you to understand me, Arturo. I didn't do anything compromising. And besides, I'm so glad to see you... (*Pause.*) Tell me where you were and how you survived.

ARTURO: (*Giving in. But in a spiteful tone.*) In the Pacific... After a horrible storm. We ran out of gas...

PENELOPE: (*Very serious and bourgeois.*) It also ran out here.

ARTURO: (*As if he hadn't heard.*) We had to land on an unknown island. No one saw our smoke signals until two days ago. They found us. We had to fight off the islanders who kept trying to cut the wings off the "bad bird." I couldn't talk to the press or call you because my trip was a state secret. And when I got here I wanted to surprise you...

PENELOPE: You should never do that. You never know who will end up being surprised.

ARTURO: I was so sure of your love. Ours was a union so different from all the others. We met and we fell in love like two creatures in a dream...

PENELOPE: *(Repentant.)* Arturo...

ARTURO: You didn't know how to wait for me.

PENELOPE: I know... But...

ARTURO: You didn't know how to be faithful while I was gone.

PENELOPE: I assure you that I was...

ARTURO: *(Getting worked up.)* You have become unfaithful to me... To me... To your Arturo... Unfaithful... Unfaithful... Unfaithful despite your name...

PENELOPE: I told you, Arturo, that I never...

ARTURO: *(More worked up.)* Who were you with? I want to know who it was and I want to know now.

PENELOPE: With no one. I'm asking you to believe me. Forget those bad thoughts. *(Trying to hug him.)* Kiss me, Arturo...

ARTURO: *(Defending himself.)* No. I want the truth.

PENELOPE: It's what I told you.

ARTURO: You're lying.

PENELOPE: *(Crying.)* I swear to you, my dear Arturo, that during my time on Earth, I haven't loved anyone else but you... Kiss me, Arturo... *(Forcing him to kiss her.)* Kiss me...

ARTURO: *(Brutally rejecting her.)* You're a bad woman. An adulteress...

PENELOPE: *(Crying harder.)* I love you, Arturo... *(He rejects her again and she falls into a chair. She bows her head, defeated. Three strong knocks on the wall completely wake her up.)* Did you hear that? Did you hear that banging Arturo?

ARTURO: What banging? What is it, an earthquake?

PENELOPE: My God... has my time come? *(She stands up as if receiving an invisible presence.)* Who is it? *(ARTURO looks at her strangely.)*

VOICE FROM THE AFTERLIFE: *(And if possible, the illuminated projection of Telemachus. Three meters high. Robust and bearded. A harp in hand.)* Mother... mother... It's me...

PENELOPE: Telemachus...

VOICE FROM THE AFTERLIFE: Your friends sent me to let you know that your time is up. And that father has been asking for you impatiently.

PENELOPE: Arturo... Did you hear that, Arturo? It's all over.

ARTURO: What the hell are you talking about? There's no one else here.

PENELOPE: (*Fading away.*) Arturo...

ARTURO: (*Naturally, he cannot hear the VOICE FROM THE AFTERLIFE and he looks at PENELOPE as if he's watching her go crazy.*) Penelope... Penelope... (*He runs towards her and takes her lifeless body in his arms. He lightly taps her to see if she'll regain consciousness.*) What happened to you, my love? Yes... my love... I've already started to forget everything... answer me.... Don't be afraid. I forgive you... I forgive you... see how I'm holding you in my arms? (*He touches her forehead.*) It's cold... Can you hear me? You asked me to kiss you. And I'll kiss you... (*He kisses her.*) Have I lost you? Penelope... Penelope...

## CURTAIN

### Epilogue

*(The action takes place again in the same place as the prologue. Heaven. The same characters as the prologue and the same last scene that led to the exchange of costumes between PENELOPE and GLORIA.)*

PENELOPE: (*Dressed in a tunic. Sitting down on a bench, exhausted.*) Oh! What a shame...! What a shame...!

HELEN: We're so anxious to know the story of everything that has happened to you. But don't lie to us!

PENELOPE: I can't, I can't do it right now. I'm exhausted. It all ended so badly.

GLORIA: Well, then. Tell us how it felt to be down there.

PENELOPE: (*Exhausted.*) Tomorrow... Later... I have to rest.

GEORGE: What happened to that poor boy?

PENELOPE: (*Frightened.*) You knew about that?

MATA HARI: Don't forget that we know more than we would like to here.

HELEN: I bet you won't look at us anymore with such hatred... so incorruptible, so honest...

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: You definitely forgot about my camellias...It doesn't matter. Now you have to tell us if you fell in love with him.

PENELOPE: *(Recalling.)* Oh, he was so beautiful! Poor Arturo!

GEORGE: But getting married wasn't part of the plan. That was too personal an investment.

PENELOPE: It was an adorable investment... it was also the only way to put my fidelity to the test.

HELEN: We have reason to believe that it was pretty precarious.

PENELOPE: *(Upset.)* Well, it was a little difficult...

GLORIA: Times have changed, haven't they?

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: But, what about the mission you accomplished on Earth? How did it go?

PENELOPE: *(Acting strange)* The mission? Oh, right! The mission...

MATA HARI: Did modern women learn anything from you?

PENELOPE: Let's just say that...

HELEN: Don't tell us you failed.

PENELOPE: It's just that women today have very little free time on their hands. Even I couldn't keep up with them. And...

GLORIA: Shopping... having cocktails... flirting...

PENELOPE: *(Timidly.)* No. I was trying to talk to them...

HELEN: Remember how heroic you felt when you set out on your journey...

PENELOPE: They made fun of me. And they told me that my name symbolized customs that are dead in today's civilization.

GLORIA: *(Laughing.)* What a naive little dove!

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: So you had to console yourself.

MATA HARI: Did you at least like your... consolation?

PENELOPE: *(Stumbling over words in her candidness.)* When I accepted the assignment, I thought that I would be allowed to start a new life...

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: And you traded Ulysses for...

HELEN: That was worse than my kidnapping.

PENELOPE: It's just that... When I met Arturo... *(Pause.)* It turned out that... *(Pause. Whimpering.)* I liked him a lot... *(Her voice is lost in the memory.)* Then... *(In that moment, like answering the call, ARTURO ULISES ALDANA appears. In a military uniform.)*

ARTURO: Penelope. What a maze! I thought I'd never find you... *(All the women look at him in awe and admiration.)*

PENELOPE: *(Flustered.)* Arturo... No. Not, here. When did you arrive?

ARTURO: *(Trying to hug her.)* Just now. Almost right after you. I went on a plane to say goodbye to you from Heaven. There was a problem with the motor...

GEORGE: *(Guessing.)* You killed yourself so you could be with her, didn't you, my friend?

ARTURO: Why is this man acting like we're friends? *(To the rest.)* I would make the world turn for her.

GEORGE: It's too late. The world already turns on its own.

ARTURO: *(Hugging PENELOPE.)* What happened, my love? It was all my fault. Because of a damn misunderstanding. Suddenly, you were cold and... Penelope... My love...

PENELOPE: *(Frightened.)* No... No... We can't do this here...

ARTURO: Who's stopping us from continuing our romance in the afterlife?

PENELOPE: *(With a vague waive of her hand.)* Ulysses...

ARTURO: *(Smiling at the ladies timidly.)* Did you forget my first name? My name's Arturo Ulises...

HELEN: *(Flirting.)* Do you remember if your third name is Paris?

GEORGE: As you can see, we do things differently here. *(To PENELOPE.)* There's no way out of this mess.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: Someone's going to have to explain this all to him.

ARTURO: The only thing I want to do is live with... I mean, be... close... to Penelope.

MATA HARI: Hey, man. You have to forget about her. This was all just a joke.

ARTURO: (*Dumbfounded.*) A joke?

PENELOPE: (*Taking too long to confess.*) Don't listen to them, Arturo.

HELEN: (*To ARTURO.*) So you didn't know that we sent her to Earth to teach women a lesson about fidelity?

ARTURO: (*Bursting out laughing.*) You sent her? (*To PENELOPE.*) But don't you see? They have you confused with someone else. (*Taking PENELOPE by the arm.*) This is Penelope García. Tell them that they're crazy. That you are the delicious being that I met in a hotel lobby. The woman that I adored up until the time I had to leave. The wife who waited for me... Did you see the way she waited for me? I'll have to clear up this confusion. I'll have to tell you what happened, so that you'll leave me and my Penelope alone. You'll see that this Penelope has absolutely nothing, nothing at all, to do with the other Penelope...

PENELOPE: (*Fainting.*) Arturo...

ARTURO: (*Addressing everyone.*) I came back after being gone for three months. And as far as I could tell, fidelity was not exactly the symbol that guided my Penelope in her solitude. She was surrounded by male friends, she was almost in another man's arms... (*PENELOPE is ashamed as she listens, with her head down. ARTURO grows angry as he remembers what happened. He takes her one more time by the arm, shakes her, forgetting that the other women are still there.*) Tell me... I want to know if Roberto Casal was the man you cheated on me with. I want the truth. I have forgiven you. I'm here to show you that I'm willing to forget it all. But all I want to know is who it was...

PENELOPE: (*Muffling ARTURO's shouting with her hand.*) Don't yell, they'll hear you.

ARTURO: (*Yelling louder.*) And why should I care? Aren't I your husband? Who has more of a right than me?

PENELOPE: (*Desperately.*) Oh! I feel like I'm going to die...

ARTURO: You're already dead.

HELEN: For the second time. Are you thinking about going on another trip? I think that would be very beneficial. I'd love that.

GEORGE: (*To GLORIA.*) You're the one who started this mess. You're the one who should fix it.

HELEN: Would you like me to take him aside and tell him everything?

MATA HARI: No because you might take too long and, this time, we don't want Ulysses to go

looking for you. That would complicate things.

ARTURO: I'll have to admit that I don't understand anything.

GEORGE: Maybe it's best if you explain things to him, Penelope. *(Poking fun.)* It is not convenient for strangers to interfere in a couple's affairs. We'll leave you alone with him.

HELEN: But, stop lying to him. And make sure he leaves you alone. There's a special place in Hell for bigamy.

PENELOPE: *(Feeling cornered.)* Arturo, I...

HELEN: *(In a cruel tone.)* You have to carry out your mission to the end... *(She starts to leave.)*

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: Invoke your love. He'll end up forgiving you. Let's go ladies... *(They all start leaving, except for PENELOPE. ARTURO keeps glaring at them.)*

ARTURO: Those ladies!

PENELOPE: *(Running towards MATA HARI, who has not come out yet.)* Go find Ulysses. Keeping him busy. Don't let him come over here.

MATA HARI: *(Smiling.)* I will dance in front of him the way I did in the temple of Khali... *(Leaving.)*

ARTURO: I'm worried that this is serious...

PENELOPE: Come, Arturo. Sit here. Next to me. *(They sit next to each other.)* I'm going to tell you a story about a good woman...

ARTURO: No. Talk to me about yourself.

PENELOPE: Let me tell you. There was a time...In Greece's history...

ARTURO: *(Indignant.)* Oh! No...Not that...If it's the story of that Penelope again...

PENELOPE: Don't interrupt me. You know that Penelope had a husband named Ulysses and a son named Telemachus. You know that Ulysses left and didn't come back after 20 years. You know that Penelope waited for him knitting all day and undoing her work every night, so that she would never finish, because she knew she would have to pick a new husband when she stopped knitting. You know that Ulysses returned and that Penelope was showered with praise for her fidelity. But what you don't know is that, later, they came to Heaven. She made many friends here, but some were just pretending. Everyone said that her life was full of love and romance. She was proud of her achievement. But, deep down, she was haunted by the feeling that she had wasted her life by waiting around for no good reason. Her pride always ended up banishing those dark thoughts. But, one day, her friends came up with a secret plan to send her back to Earth.

Penelope went back down... (*PENELOPE stops talking and lowers her eyes, hoping ARTURO will guess the rest.*)

ARTURO: (*Reacting.*) Tell me that that's not true. That you're not talking about yourself...

PENELOPE: It is true.

ARTURO: Now what?

PENELOPE: You'll have to forget about me.

ARTURO: But I love you, Penelope.

PENELOPE: I also loved you.

ARTURO: In the past?

PENELOPE: The present doesn't fit here. You'll have to give up on me.

ARTURO: I can't. My feelings for you are too powerful.

PENELOPE: Arturo... If you stay you'll lose me...

ARTURO: How could you have played with me like that?

PENELOPE: You seemed like you were just an impulsive boy. I didn't think you were capable of taking love seriously. I'd been told that love was no longer in vogue. Now I know that that was a lie.

ARTURO: In that case, you must not have planned on falling in love with me either.

PENELOPE: I don't know what I was planning. But I know it didn't take long for me to fall in love with you.

ARTURO: Penelope, I'm suffering horribly.

PENELOPE: (*Tenderly.*) It's worse in the beginning. You'll feel more at peace as time goes on...

ARTURO: If only I could have your face close to me, your hands, your... (*In a fit of rage.*) Penelope... How could you forget about the wonderful times we had...?

PENELOPE: (*Putting her fingers over ARTURO's lips to silence him.*) Arturo... My sweet boy...

ARTURO: Penelope... (*He slips out of his chair till he is on his knees. He kisses PENELOPE's*

*hand.)*

PENELOPE: This is our goodbye. I have to go back to being the woman I always was.

ARTURO: I'm afraid you won't be able to anymore.

PENELOPE: *(With strength.)* I'll have to try.

ARTURO: Your soul is young again, it has a new rhythm.

PENELOPE: It was a dream. Help me forget.

ARTURO: You'll never forget. Because that's the dream that keeps our hearts beating ...  
*(Trying to kiss her.)*

PENELOPE: *(Rejecting him.)* Go...

ARTURO: *(Reacting violently.)* I don't want to. You're my wife. Your other marriage expired.

PENELOPE: Arturo... You can't stay at my side. Heaven is immense. You'll find your place...  
*(LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS enters. She is agitated.)*

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: Ulysses is coming this way. We can't keep holding him back.

ARTURO: *(Yelling.)* Let him come. I'll wait for him here.

PENELOPE: *(Desperate.)* No. I'll be the one that goes looking for him. *(She is ready to go out.)*

ARTURO: *(Trying to hold her back.)* You're staying here, with me...

PENELOPE: *(Escaping.)* Arturo, I can't. There were too many centuries of customs that led me to Ulysses and all of history... *(As she leaves, she bumps into MATA HARI who has just entered.)*

MATA HARI: We've exhausted all our resources entertaining your husband.

PENELOPE: Now try to take care of this one. He's even younger and surely more sensitive...  
*(She leaves.)*

MATA HARI: *(To ARTURO. Acting like a vampire.)* You're complicating our peaceful world.

ARTURO: *(Still furious.)* Who are you?

MATA HARI: *(Insinuating.)* The bayadere of Kandi. Mata Hari...

ARTURO: The spy?

MATA HARI: I've left other marks on the Earth.

ARTURO: I don't know about that. What I do know is that you cost the lives of many soldiers.

MATA HARI: Would you forgive me if I danced for you?

ARTURO: Did you dance for them too?

MATA HARI: *(Proudly. Taking off her cape.)* Look at me. Like in the pagoda of Kanda Swany... *(She dances. When she finishes, ARTURO and the rest of them celebrate her. MATA HARI covers herself again with her cape.)*

ARTURO: You drive a pretty stylish tank *(Noticing the LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS.)* You're also very beautiful.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: *(Flirting.)* Have you heard of the Lady of the Camellias?

ARTURO: The one who was stripped of love like a daisy? *(HELEN, GEORGE, and GLORIA arrive.)*

GLORIA: When he saw her, he calmed right down.

GEORGE: That man is incomprehensible. He was gone for 20 years and he didn't seem too bothered. Now, it's only been a year and he's beside himself.

HELEN: We could not find more excuses for Penelope's absence. *(Everyone surrounds ARTURO.)*

ARTURO: Now you won't even let me get close to her?

HELEN: *(Suggesting.)* Couldn't you try to forget about her just a little?

ARTURO: Tell me your name.

HELEN: Helen of Troy.

ARTURO: *(Looking at her up and down.)* Now I understand everything. *(To GEORGE SAND.)* And you, why did you dress up like a man?

GEORGE: Because I liked to write when I was on Earth. And so that the men would not feel threatened, I tried to resemble them as best I could. So they criticized me for my pants instead of my skirts.

ARTURO: *(To GLORIA.)* I recognize you. Every poster highlighted your smile.

GLORIA: *(Following the same insinuating game that they are all playing.)* See how easy it is to

forget when you're with us?

ARTURO: If only I didn't have this pain of love...

HELEN: A new love will help you get over it.

MATA HARI: Or at least distract you.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: You can't be happy without someone else's help.

GEORGE: I can assure you that it's necessary to have many lovers... Even if it's just to get to know which one is the real one. *(Two men appear dressed in uniform, they demand respect even though neither explains where they are coming from.)*

SOLDIER 1: *(With a military salute.)* Captain Arturo Ulises Aldana?

ARTURO: *(Standing up quickly. Responding to the salute.)* Here...

SOLDIER 2: There's been a mistake. You don't belong here.

ARTURO: *(Looking sadly at the women.)* Where am I supposed to be?

SOLDIER 2: For now I bring just one order: to return you to Earth. You're seriously injured but it's not fatal.

GLORIA: *(With annoyance.)* You're taking him back?

SOLDIER 2: Yes. On the spot.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: We have to let Penelope know.

HELEN: I'll go and look for her. *(Sighing.)* What a shame! *(Leaving.)*

ARTURO: I'm so sorry. I was starting to like this. *(Remembering.)* Penelope... Where is Penelope? I want to say goodbye to her.

GEORGE: Helen will bring her soon.

ARTURO: *(To the soldiers.)* Will you wait a moment?

SOLDIER 1: Yes, but not too long because down there they are waiting for you anxiously. *(PENELOPE arrives right behind HELEN.)*

PENELOPE: Then it's true...?

ARTURO: Yes, they're taking me. It seems that I have come before my time.

PENELOPE: Oh! Arturo...

ARTURO: Spare me another lie.

PENELOPE: To be honest I don't know whether to be saddened or excited. Because, after all, we would have not been able to see each other again. At least not the way you would have wanted...

ARTURO: Before leaving, I want to tell you that you have made me feel great love and great sorrow.

PENELOPE: *(Hugging him in front of everyone.)* Forgive me, Arturo. Don't go without forgiving me... *(The two SOLDIERS stand behind ARTURO as if inviting him to leave.)*

ARTURO: *(Tenderly staring into her eyes)* I've never seen eyes as blue as yours...

PENELOPE: *(Remembering that those were the first words he said.)* And I've never seen eyes as dark as yours...

SOLDIER 1: Captain Arturo Ulises Aldana...

ARTURO: Penelope...

PENELOPE: Goodbye, Arturo...

ARTURO: Goodbye, my love...*(He leaves followed by the two soldiers, after having bowed reverently to the other ladies. On the way, he bumps into the ANGEL, who has just entered.)*

ANGEL: Who's that?

HELEN: An official who confused Heaven and Earth.

ANGEL: *(Taking the same stance she took in the prologue.)* What did he want?

MATA HARI: He asked George Sand something.

GEORGE: I didn't hear him. But it seemed to me that he was talking to Lady of the Camellias.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: No, not me. I saw him talking to Gloria.

GLORIA: He wanted to know where he could find a certain García who arrived a few moments ago...

ANGEL: Well, I imagine that none of you trusted him enough to tell him anything. *(They all shake their heads. A pause.)* We haven't seen you in a while, Penelope...

PENELOPE: I had a cold...

HELEN: (*Within intention.*) Penelope... What do you think of women who cheat on their husbands?

PENELOPE: (*Distant.*) He was as handsome as a young pagan god.

GLORIA: (*To HELEN.*) She can't hear you.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: Penelope's eyes gallop in a cloud that takes her back to a memory.

HELEN: Those are the advantages of travel.

GEORGE: Rather than looking back, I always like to look forward. That whets my appetite.

HELEN: Now that it's so much easier to travel than it was before I could travel all the time.

MATA HARI: (*Ironically.*) Travel where?

HELEN: I would go from Troy to Sparta and from Sparta to Troy.

GLORIA: Those places don't exist anymore. You'll have to change the itinerary.

HELEN: (*To PENELOPE.*) You wouldn't mind accompanying me, right Penelope? You'd be a delightful travel partner now... (*PENELOPE doesn't hear them. She's absent, rigid, distancing herself from them.*)

MATA HARI: They're destroying your legend, Penelope.

GEORGE: On the contrary, Ulysses had his Odyssey. All that was left was yours, Penelope. They can start writing yours now.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: Don't beat yourself up about it. Your love for that man absolves you of all guilt.

GLORIA: Don't feel bad. The guilt of all women absolves you of your love.

ANGEL: I don't understand what women are talking about these days.

LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS: (*Taking pity on PENELOPE's painful silence.*) What are you thinking about? (*JULIET enters timidly, as if in a dream.*)

JULIET: Would you be able to tell me if Romeo came by here?

HELEN: No, he hasn't been here. Do you think that if he had come this far, he would have wanted to leave? (*JULIET looks at her in astonishment and goes out the other way.*)

GLORIA: *(Touching PENELOPE'S shoulder to wake her up.)* Come back to us...

PENELOPE: *(After a long pause, as if coming out of a lethargy, quickly and hurriedly.)* Mata Hari... Quickly! Lend me your fabric. *(MATA HARI hands her the work that was abandoned on a bench.)* I should've never stopped knitting... *(Her hands clumsily begin to perform the work. The others watch for a moment and they are distracted. MATA HARI takes the cards and plays solitaire. The LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS strips the petals off a daisy that she has cut from a plant. GEORGE takes a book and reads. HELEN looks at herself in a hand held mirror. GLORIA looks for a point that has been smudged in her stocking. The ANGEL watches everyone. HELEN suddenly sees in the mirror the shadow of a figure passing in the distance. She turns quickly.)*

HELEN: Oh! It's the beautiful Brummel passing by again...! *(Everyone, except PENELOPE and the ANGEL, stop what they were doing and run towards him.)*

PENELOPE: *(Without moving. Abandoning her work for an instant. With a sorrowful face, almost tearful face and a deep sigh.)* Arturo...Arturo Ulises...If I could only forget...

CURTAIN

## **The Children of La Malinche**

**By Hugo Salcedo**

**Translated from Spanish by Carolyn Malloy and Georgina Whittingham**

We are delighted to present our English translation of “Los hijos de la Malinche,” a theatrical masterpiece authored by the renowned Mexican playwright Hugo Salcedo. A leading figure in the Mexican theatrical world, Salcedo is widely recognized for his other dramatic works such as *El viaje de los cantores*, *La bufadora*, *Nosotras que los queremos tanto*, *Música de balas*, and *Bárbara Gandiaga*. “Los hijos de la Malinche” utilizes various theatrical styles and strategies to showcase unforgettable characters from key moments in Mexican history, politics, and literature.

The play employs satire in several vignettes to expose and ridicule the greed and stupidity that has impoverished the Mexican nation and subjected its people to untold forms of violence from pre-Columbian times until today. One notable example of this theatrical approach is the linguistic dialogue composed of pidgin English, French, and Spanish in the third vignette. This effectively portrays the United States foreign policy towards Mexico during the country’s struggle against the rule of French Emperor Maximilian. However, this linguistic blend presented unforeseen translation challenges. We worked tirelessly to maintain the translation’s fidelity to the source text while preserving linguistic nuances and theatrical styles that make the play unique. We thank the translation reviewer and Tracey K. Lewis for their excellent suggestions.

Similarly, the fifth vignette was also challenging due to character wordplay involving political in-jokes that may be difficult for non-Mexican audiences to comprehend. To overcome this obstacle, we sought the invaluable assistance of Rafael Madrid, who helped clarify the significance of various puns. After careful consideration, we added a footnote to explain the connection between the wisecracks and the political corruption and ineptitude in Mexico’s past and contemporary history. We found this method to be the most advantageous solution.

Hugo Salcedo is a remarkably gifted playwright renowned for creating immersive theatrical performances that delve into historical, political, and literary themes. His theatrical works typically feature satire, which he uses to expose the foolishness and flaws of individuals, resulting in humor that is both cutting and hilarious. Salcedo’s repertoire showcases admirable heroes and remarkable everyday citizens who strive for the betterment of their nation, as well as antagonists who perpetuate the legacy of colonial exploitation, looting, and violence that has significantly impacted modern Mexico. His theatrical productions are a testament to his expertise in the art form and skill in captivating audiences with thought-provoking performances.

We sincerely hope that our translation of “Los hijos de la Malinche” brings this groundbreaking theatrical work to a broader audience beyond the Mexican stage and the country’s borders. We firmly believe this invaluable contribution to dramatic arts and cultural exchange is worth experiencing abroad, regardless of linguistic and national boundaries.

**Hugo Salcedo Larios** is a full-time theater professor at the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City, holding a doctorate in Philology from the Universidad Complutense in Madrid, Spain. He also completed postgraduate studies in "Theory and Criticism of Theater" at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain, and holds a baccalaureate from Universidad de Guadalajara. In addition to his academic career, Salcedo is a prolific playwright and essayist. He has received numerous national and international awards, including the prestigious Tirso de Molina award in 1989 for his groundbreaking work, *El viaje de los cantores* (The Troubadour's Journey). Salcedo's plays have won first place in various competitions and have been translated into several languages, such as English, French, German, Persian, Korean, Czech, and Hungarian. Through different literary and theatrical styles and strategies, Salcedo's works address issues of violence, sexual and racial discrimination, political corruption, and ineptitude in Mexico's past and contemporary history.

**Carolyn Malloy** is a Professor of Spanish at Siena College, New York, currently teaching in the Department of Modern Languages and Classics. She holds a B.A. and M.A. from the University of Connecticut and a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin. Dr. Malloy's scholarly work includes presenting and publishing articles on Mexican theatre, with a particular focus on the works of prolific dramatists such as Estela Leñero, Guillermo Schmidhuber, Victor Hugo Rascon Banda, and Ariel Dorfman. Additionally, she has co-translated plays by Hugo Salcedo.

**Georgina Whittingham** (B.A. Queens College, M.A. Stanford University, Ph.D. Rutgers University) is a Professor of Spanish and Chair of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at the State University of New York at Oswego. She is the author of the book *Gilberto Owen y la crisis del lenguaje poético* (Gilberto Owen and the Crisis of Poetic Language), published by Mexico's Autonomous State University Press. Her areas of expertise include Latin American poetry, theater, narrative, gender studies, cultural studies, and US-Mexico border environmental studies. Her scholarly articles have been featured in journals such as Latin American Theatre Review, Latin American Literary Review, and Texto Crítico. In addition, she has collaborated in translating theatrical works by Hugo Salcedo.

**The Children of La Malinche**

**By Hugo Salcedo**

**Translated from Spanish by Carolyn Malloy and Georgina Whittingham**

*In a sense, we all are,  
by the mere fact of being born of a woman,  
children of la Chingada.*

(...)

*the true children of La Malinche,  
who is La Chingada herself.*

Octavio Paz

**VIGNETTE TITLED ZERO: In the Postmodern Style**

**History**  
**Diddy (History's cousin)**  
**Government Official**  
**Chico**

*A large area on a hill and facing the audience: the Precipice.  
Everything is clean, green, and clear. From time to time, the wind is heard —  
a few small clouds in the background. The heads of the characters begin to appear: first  
History's, then Chico's, next Diddy's, and behind them, overwhelmed, the Government Official's  
head emerges.  
All wear high-mountain climbing gear.*

**History:** Here it is. Right here.

**Diddy:** Finally, we arrived! We will have to celebrate with a toast of Dom Perignon.

**Chico:** From up here, everything looks like a movie.

**History:** Spectacular, like a 3-D movie.

**Diddy:** You did a magnificent job, cousin! All this is... beautiful, infinite, green, gorgeous.

**History:** So, you agree the climb, sweat, and fatigue were all worth it? We could not have made

it here with the Cheyenne, even with its 4 x 4 dual traction! The ascent with the truck would have been impossible with so many rocks and boulders. The incline is so steep... Come closer, Official! Don't be afraid! You won't slip!

**Official:** I'm so exhausted! My heart and my head are about to explode!

**Diddy:** Take a deep breath. (*She does so, then the others follow.*) Inhale, exhale. Ahhhh! It feels great. Stretch out your arms, everyone. Inhale, exhale. That's it. Oxygenate, Official! So, they say, right?

**History:** Something like that, cousin, more or less.

**Diddy:** The air is so clean, not even a speck of dirt.

**Official:** Hey, Diddy, you're both in great physical shape and have plenty of energy to keep going. You never get tired.

**Diddy:** Official, it is my cousin, History, who never gets tired. At times I feel "deflated."

**History:** I never get tired. History always looks forward and never pauses. On the contrary, it advances with more and more haste. I learn from past mistakes and make headway steadily. (*Remembering times past*) Before, when there were oxen and carts, everything moved with the turn of the wheel; what a hassle! What else could one do in those times? Later, everything became faster with the steam engine and electricity.

**Diddy:** That's right, cousin. Technological advances have changed everything, breaking even the digital divide!

**History:** Now, with fiber optics, we have revolutionized communication via the information superhighway, almost at the speed of light. What existed yesterday is a thing of the past. Now, we have heat and electromagnetic waves, algorithms, and, tomorrow, teleportation.

**Chico:** Like on *Star Trek*!

**History:** Exactly!

**Official:** I wonder if it will ever be a reality.

**History:** Teleportation? Of course!

**Diddy:** If we don't annihilate each other first...

**History:** (*With mild reproach*) Diddy, don't be so Didactic with all that moralizing!

**Diddy:** It is the truth, and let the truth be told. Period.

**Official:** Are you going to start again? Since we began climbing, you have continued to repeat the same thing. You are going to end up boring our Chico, that's if he isn't already bored.

**Chico:** Me? No, I am not bored. I continue learning from our teacher, History, and Miss Didactic.

**Diddy:** Call me Diddy! It's shorter, and it sounds sexier!

**Chico:** OK, Diddy.

**Diddy:** Thank you.

**History:** The expanse you see below, now overpopulated, was originally an endorheic basin of the huge Texcoco, Chalco, and Xochimilco lakes connected by underwater tunnels. Above, wild ducks, herons, reeds and reedbeds populated the bodies of water.

**Diddy:** Now everything has been destroyed by urban sprawl.

**History:** The bodies of water I mentioned were fed by runoffs and filtrations from nearby mountains, such as where we are now. From here, the continuous thaws fed the estuaries that flow into our "great lakes:" Texcoco, Chalco, and Xochimilco.

**Diddy:** Like Lake Michigan!

**History:** We must consider the lakes' unique proportions and distances, of course. We are in Mesoamerica, not in Chicago.

**Diddy:** Of course...but it is now common to confuse the "Mexican Basin" with the "Valley of Mexico." The Valley of Mexico sounds nicer.

**Official:** Sexier?

**Diddy:** Yes, Official. It sounds like meadows and forests, trees, and streams... and deer... (*Smiling*). So, you get my point.

**Official:** Always so didactic, Diddy.

**Diddy:** I appreciate the compliment, my dear Official.

**History:** From here, we have a panoramic view. It is as if History were passing right before our eyes in an Omnimax movie or when turning the pages of a photo album.

**Official:** I understand you are referring to Official History, right? Now, you are not going to...

**History:** Of course not, Official! Don't worry. I am a hundred percent official –more official than legal-sized paper or any City Hall stamp. Official History endures, like the history carved in the Mayan stelae or the stelae that adorn the entrance to "The Temple of Heaven" in Beijing. Diddy, do you remember when we were there as part of an entourage? When you got lost in that Hutong, we searched and searched for you.

**Diddy:** OK. Enough with that tall tale. Forgive me for living!

**History:** It was just an example...but, as I mentioned, Official History is similar to the information inscribed on the sarcophagi of Egyptian pyramids or the codices elaborated by imperial order. It is Official History as it appears in school textbooks, repeated in speeches, and included in commemorative dates on the calendar. In short, it is History that makes us great.

**Chico:** And the other History?

**History:** What other History?

**Diddy:** There is no other.

**Official:** No, of course not.

**Chico:** Yes, there is! It is the History written in small letters in the margins of a page or on prison walls; it is kept alive in memories, tattooed on skin, and crossed out or erased from monuments. This History passes from elders to children by word of mouth, speaks of minorities, uses unsanctioned languages, and is excluded from official speeches.

**Official:** Careful, young man!

**Chico:** I apologize... I meant to say...

**Official:** It is very clear what you meant to say.

**Diddy:** Extremely clear!

**History:** Don't argue! Remember, we are dealing with a young person—an example of a whole generation that must be taught, in almost a whisper, not to compare apples and oranges, because otherwise, this generation is likely to rebel and be destroyed. That's why we are here! Do not scold him. Let's be patient...tolerant.

**Official:** At times, young people are the worst. They are like larvae with their naive faces full of pimples. They go here and there asking awkward and somewhat stupid questions.

**History:** It is as natural for them to pose rather stupid questions as to have pimples, acne, and blackheads. Remember, once upon a time, although it was a long, long time ago, you, too, were young.

**Diddy:** History, what you just said is not SEXY! How can you equate pimples with apples?

**History:** You are very sensitive today, cousin.

**Diddy:** So, what! I have the right to be!

**Official:** Pardon me for butting in now, good Diddy, but it is at this moment when you lose your rights; you are nothing more than a mere strategy of History and, frankly, a boring strategy.

**Diddy:** You are an *officializing* bureaucrat; that is what you are!

**History:** Enough! For the last time, Diddy, stop! Official, you're confusing our boy with your chatter.

**Chico:** No, not really... but I am enjoying myself a lot...

**History:** They are confusing you! I am History, and if I say they are confusing this larva of a boy, that is the case. He is just a tadpole!

**Official:** Very well said.

**Diddy:** How categorical, how square, how uncouth!

**History:** *(A long pause)* The expanse of the horizon is marvelous: forests, rivers, jungles, and mountains. Villages, foundations, narratives, efforts... *(Profound)* Someday, child, everything you see, as far as the eye can reach and beyond, will be all yours.

**Chico:** What? And the Cheyenne?

**History:** What?

**Chico:** *(Pouting)* What I want is the truck.

*Stunned looks among the group*

*Darkness*

## **FIRST VIGNETTE: A Conquest**

**Young woman**  
**The other woman**  
**Old woman**

*Outlying, unpopulated area*

**Young woman:** Run! Don't let them catch you!

**The other woman:** I can't go any farther! My feet hurt. Look at them! They are so red! I didn't wear any shoes!

**Young woman:** It's just that you need to walk carefully. You must watch where you step, as I do.

**The other woman:** Since I was a child, my feet have always been like this. The heat makes them swell, and the cold makes my skin crack.

**Young woman:** It is delightful to walk. (*She does so.*) Feet are a marvel. With the tips of your toes, you can feel the cold water that flows from the springs, enjoy the damp earth and the sand hidden between your toes...

**The other woman:** ...and experience the sharp stones cutting you when you walk, the earthworms in the damp soil you squish unintentionally... thorns that make you bleed...

**Young woman:** That, too, is a delight!

**The other woman:** Yeah, of course ...

**Young woman:** You complain about everything.

**The other woman:** That's not true! Not everything.

**Young woman:** Look...no one is here!

**The other woman:** We knew there would be no one.

**Young woman:** Where have they gone?

**The other woman:** The men are panicking. They have orders to go from one place to another to prepare their weapons, sharpen lances, and tense bows while others plead with the gods, burn incense to their stone idols, and bleed parts of their bodies. It's not surprising they didn't notice us when we first arrived.

**Young woman:** The men know everything.

**The other woman:** You're right.

**Young woman:** I have never seen them so blinded by fear for so many reasons...

**The other woman:** Such things have never happened before...

**Young woman:** I am frightened.

**The other woman:** Change is always good. You'll see.

**Young woman:** What about those of us who do not want change?

**The other woman:** It's so boring if everything always stays the same!

**Young woman:** I'm not so sure...

**The other woman:** Then, you must deal with it!

**Young woman:** It will no longer be as it was before. I close my eyes, and the nightmares begin; hundreds of warriors, crushing my skull, pull out from my swollen belly a half man, half coyote. The moment it is born, the monstrous creature devours first my face, tearing my skin with its

long fangs.

**The other woman:** I, too, am afraid...of other things...

**Young woman:** Shhh...They may hear you! *(In a low voice)* If they do, they are capable of...

**The other woman:** *(Suddenly very sad)* I don't want to die as if I were a criminal who betrayed her family.

**Young woman:** Don't say that. It makes me dizzy, and I feel like vomiting.

**The other woman:** They must already know! When I go to the market to buy vegetables, people gossip. They see me and whisper. Their piercing stares are like darts. *(She forces Young woman to come closer.)*

**Young woman:** You are hurting me!

**The other woman:** Then, look at me! What do they say to you? Have you told them anything?

**Young woman:** No! I haven't.

**The other woman:** What do they say? What do they know?

**Young woman:** They say a woman met the men who arrived on the seashore. She fell in love with the strongest, a captain... and she taught all the men our customs and languages, so we would understand when they cursed us.

This woman, whose hushed voice is like a river that sings among the stones, is ashamed of being like us, the color of earth. She is a treacherous and evil woman – a resentful traitor, who turns her back on her own people. Don't make me say these things! *(She cries.)* I love you, but I can do nothing for you.

**The other woman:** I love you, too!

*She kisses her on the cheek.*

*A long silence*

**Young woman:** They say you are a little like that woman...

**The other woman:** They will kill me...

**Young woman:** Before they do anything... they are going to... The elders are afraid.

**The other woman:** They will kill me.

**Young woman:** You already know, and you make me repeat it!

**The other woman:** I would like to rise above all who arrived on our shores, to understand the enigmas! Is that so terrible? With my stubby fingers, I would like to touch their long, slender

hands, lips, and manes and serve them when they rest with no reward other than the close warmth of their large white bodies.

**Young woman:** You frighten me...! You must not think of lying with the demon and smiling with complicity and pleasure. You baffle me.

**The other woman:** Shooting so many arrows is also inhumane!

**Young woman:** The purpose is to defend us.

**The other woman:** What about the tributes we all must pay?

**Young woman:** Those are economic issues I don't understand!

**The other woman:** And the sacrifices? The blood? We lose family, friends, and children because of so much brutality!

**Young woman:** Our cosmogony requires sacrifices to redeem ourselves in the universe!

**The other woman:** We are all war-like tribes who delight in oppression and misfortune!

**Young woman:** Quiet! You terrify me!

**The other woman:** Do you know who will lead the imminent battle? My father and brother, as well as your father and brother... Do you know who will survive? Not your father nor your brother, not my family nor yours. No one!

**Young woman:** Quiet! Bite your tongue! Don't repeat what we already know! I want to pretend it is nothing more than a bad dream.

**The other woman:** Perhaps, I am still too young to understand the contempt people have for one another! I hate the disdain among the tribes, the stones stained red, the disgusting smell of blood that lingers after the sacrifices... People secretly howl from fear and sadness. Terrified of our leader, they choke silently on their tears.

**Young woman:** I would like to say you are mistaken...

**The other woman:** I would, also, but soon, not even we will be here. Should we be destroying one another like evil predators biting each other's flesh to the bone? Both sides are arrogant and contemptuous. Our leaders oppress smaller tribes, and the foreigners destroy our homes.

**Young woman:** I do not want to listen to you!

**The other woman:** I want to say out loud what I believe. I want to live, whether reviled or enslaved. Either is better than death!

*Old Woman, expressionless, appears.*

**Old woman:** Come with me.

**The other woman:** Mother!

**Old woman:** They are waiting for you.

**The other woman:** Mother!

**Old woman:** Do not touch me! For some time, you have been dead to me as a daughter. Do not pretend you do not hear me! ... Leave if you don't want me to drag you by the hair. Get out! There is no name for what we all know you are. Damn you! You are like the other woman who met them on the seashore! You're like a child, Malintzin, a whore, so young and confused! Get out! Leave now!

*The other woman leaves quickly.*

*Immediately, her friend follows.*

*Silence, then the sound of a drum...*

**Old woman:** No one is larger than life, not even men. Patriarchal society will destroy you and your dreams. As an elderly mother, I can do nothing to protect you. Finish her off, once and for all. Throw her to the hungry pigs as they do with criminals. Let them have a feast of gold. I will not allow them to see me broken. I will not falter nor claim the body of my daughter. It will be crueler to hear their reasons because they will not relinquish their mean-spirited behavior. Here, the one who dreams is considered a criminal.

May she die quickly, her name ignored and forgotten. Let there be no stelae nor codices to remember her. Stone her to death! Hit her between the eyes and end her madness. Men will come who are capable of dreams, not absurd ones that provoke nightmares. Shoot an arrow in her side, draw blood, and drink it while it is still warm; then, offer it to our capricious gods. My child: avoid the gaze of the butchers, the devourers of people and dreams. Close your eyes and forget the pain. Rest, sleep, dream...

*Slowly it gets dark.*

*A horrible shriek...*

*The drums disappear.*

## **SECOND VIGNETTE: The Insurgency**

**Doña Maria  
Beatriz  
Marcos**

*Inside a modest thatched hut...*

**Doña Maria:** Quince jelly, dragon fruit, eight tortillas, cheese, stewed prickly pears, nopales with cilantro and tomato...

**Beatriz:** (*Entering*) I am here, doña Maria.

**Doña Maria:** Beatriz, child. I thought you weren't coming...it's so late...

**Beatriz:** My mom was getting difficult. She didn't want me to leave her alone.

**Doña Maria:** Poor woman! How is her leg?

**Beatriz:** Not well. It is more and more difficult for her to stand. That is why she complains and becomes so unbearable... But she is resigning herself.

**Doña Maria:** Damn resignation! I'm not saying it because of your mom, of course. I'm saying it for the whole bunch of underdogs and conformists.

**Beatriz:** Yes. I know, doña Maria.

**Doña Maria:** Did you bring what I requested?

**Beatriz:** Yes. Here are the pork rinds and a pitcher of mezcalito I brought from the store. The young men may crave it. Who knows when they will taste it again?

**Doña Maria:** Yes. Who knows? (*Pause*) But at least it will give them courage, right?

**Beatriz:** (*She nods her head in agreement.*) And what does Marcos say?

**Doña Maria:** I agree with what he says. He is my only son, and he knows why he will join don Miguel Hidalgo.

**Beatriz:** Frankly, I feel like crying, not only for your son but for all who will be leaving. Even don Nicanor, the old apothecary, who is not doing badly with his business, will go with them.

**Doña Maria:** That's how it is. All our efforts are directed toward overthrowing once and for all the Spanish gachupines. The snooty Spaniards still get angry because we call them that: gachupos, gachupines, pines, gachupines! (*They both laugh.*) Pines, gachupines, pines! We have been enslaved in a country plundered for three hundred years...

**Beatriz:** We've put up with so much...

**Doña Maria:** Yes, but no longer! (*Transition*) Don't worry! I know our men will return sooner than we expect. You'll see!

**Beatriz:** The men have composed a short festive song that even the women in the Red District sing...

**Doña Maria:** How much do you know about that "animated" district?

**Beatriz:** Please, Doña Maria.

**Doña Maria:** Don't let the guards hear you singing that song!

**Beatriz:** They never come around here. You can see they are afraid and sense something is happening. Everything is changing. Everything. (*Marcos enters.*)

**Doña Maria:** Marcos! Here are the provisions we prepared for you.

**Marcos:** Thank you, Mom.

**Doña Maria:** I put aside some quince jelly so you may give it to the priest Miguel Hidalgo on my behalf. I don't think he has had quince jelly, at least not as tasty as mine. Don't you eat it; give it to him!

**Marcos:** Surely, don Miguel has tasted quince jelly! Thousands of parishioners love him...

**Doña Maria:** Of course, and that's why we're going to be independent, because of the combined strength of so many barefoot Indians... But make sure you save the quince jelly and give it to him from me!

**Marcos:** (*To Beatriz*) Now what? Why are you crying? (*He hugs her.*) Nothing bad will happen to us.

**Doña Maria:** What time do you leave?

**Marcos:** As soon as it gets dark. (*Pause*) Don't cry. Come, let me hug you.

**Doña Maria:** Commend yourself to the Virgin of Guadalupe, and may God be with you.

**Marcos:** Thank you, Mom.

**Beatriz:** (*Beatriz begins to sing; Marcos and doña Maria accompany her.*)

Today, joyous Valladolid  
Recognizes its advantages.  
A great man has arrived,  
Who will not relinquish the struggle.

His entrance occurred  
In eighteen hundred and ten,  
October seventeenth.  
It has been concurred.

Before entering, he ordered  
The bars, windows, and locks opened,  
All prisoners released,  
And the prison destroyed.

Valladolid awaits  
Recognizing its advantages.

If your faith is strong, Valladolid,  
Let us say, Hail Mary,  
And long live the great leader  
Who will not relinquish the struggle.<sup>1</sup>

*The scene gradually brightens with an unusual glow...*

*Suddenly, darkness.*

### **THIRD VIGNETTE: Interventions**

**France**  
**The United States**  
**Mexico**  
**Vendor**

*In the background of a lavish office, a huge map displays the Mexican Republic in the 1840s.*

**The United States:** *Is very long, long and extenso el Mexicano territorio. Miles and miles of square millas of arid desert are not even exploited here en el norte of the country. (With a long wooden pointer, he indicates the place on the map.) You need to look to the futuro!*

**France:** *Je suis d'accord avec vous.*

**The United States:** Thank you, Miss Francia.

**France:** *Madame, not Miss... s'il vous plaît...*

**Mexico:** You'll see, gentlemen. If what you say is true, why not invest your capital, dollars, and francs in this northern part of Mexico.

**The United States:** *Escuuuuuse me? Permiteme to "intervenir," not "invertir."*

It's a fact that economic recovery is *imposibol*. The per capita income is falling, destabilizing the New York stock market, while the brain drain exacerbates tensions in Bosnia and Sarajevo...  
*¿Comprehendeme?*

**France:** *Oui!* The same is true of Ruanda and Crimea, the Foreign Legion in Algeria, the Battle of Annual in the Rif, François Hollande, and climate change!

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<sup>1</sup> Anonymous ballad titled *Hoy, Valladolid gozoso (Today, Joyous Valladolid)*. A musical recording is available by Jorge Buenfil.

**The United States:** Macroeconomics, mi dear neighbor, macroeconomics *ES NO UN GAME de SALOON*. Foreign investment *minimizar the effects* of financial exchange, which reduces the *circulacion* of foreign currency. What is the *monetario precio index*? How mucho, mio Mexicano, is the current monetary economic flow? How *afectados are el* peso-dollar exchange rate and the balance of payment?

**Mexico:** But...

**The United States:** *Tener uste idea of the efecto per capita* income *en la balance* de payments and cuanto es *un ounce* of silver? Do you know the boiling point of water on the centigrado scale? Is Prince Felipe now King? Will Leonardo di Caprio *ganar el Oscar*?

**Mexico:** Gee, ni idea...

**France:** *Je suis d'accord avec vous.*

**The United States:** Comprehende, *mi* dear neighbor. These are *drastico*, but *necesario* measures. The livestock that *abunda* in Texas *con sus* cows, baby goats, and sheep will end up dying of thirst because the right technology *es no inventado* to transport water and make the *desierto* bloom. (*He sings.*) Tell me what you want me to be, except a little leafy plant in the middle of a desert of stones, tralali, tralalala...

**Mexico:** Mmmm.... you'll see...we were thinking about bringing all the cattle here, to the Cuchillo dam, where there is a lot of water. You agree?

**The United States:** What about the tomato crops?

**Mexico:** Well...we were thinking about installing one of those little factories for canning the product and selling in *supermercados*. The little red cans look so cute, all lined up one next to the other on the shelves, like in Carrefour!

**France:** Carrefour!

**The United States:**... and how are you going to take care of the cotton *plantaciones* in Upper California? Don't be such hoarders!

**Mexico:** Gee... I didn't think of that...

**The United States:** And the oil fields in the *Mexico Golfo*? They are useless if you are *distruidos* and don't exploit them as you should.

**France:** *Je suis d'accord avec vous.*

**Mexico:** As you put it... I guess I'm also *d'accord*.

**The United States:** Any way...take this *checkecito* as your *compensacion*.

**Mexico:** No! That is treason, betrayal of the Homeland! As a result, we are portrayed very badly in elementary school books. I cannot accept that check...

**The United States:** Eeeeeasy! *With un pequeño parte of this compensacion*, you can pay someone to write any little thing your heart desires in textbooks—tailor-made and *perfecto* according to *necesidad!*

**Mexico:** Will it work?

**The United States:** Pleeese! That's how we do everything! Of course, it will work!

**France:** *Oui!*

**The United States:** Listen to me.... Pretend you know *nothing de nada*. Let us, as Madame Francia and I always do, *interferir* in your country... and kill two or three dirt-poor souls...

**France:** *Les Miserables! Vive la France! Oh-la-la.*

**The United States:** Don't interrupt me!

**France:** Pardon ...*Excusez moi...*

**The United States:** You *and todos los Mexicanos* work with us and we, in turn, will prepare *los documentos* to leave you in *pis* in exchange for *territorios that* I show you. It is a strategic tactic—an exemplar mechanical modelo: few deaths, *mucho* world attention, *no mucho* casualties, *mucho* gains, such as the emergence of heroes *nacionales*, whose *cabezas*, crowned with olive branches, are *essential* for your *futuro*. Just imagine – the loud roar of drums, war cries, parades, honor guards, memorials, coin and bill effigies, etc., etc. *Du yu* understand me? Everybody *feliz*, everybody *contento!*

**France:** *Je suis d'accord avec vous.*

**Mexico:** Seeing it that way...

**The United States:** We will also give you a lifetime pass for *visitar las estrellas de Hollywood Bulevar los weekends*, and *caminar* on them. Imagine – sauntering on the sidewalk full of luminaries, *visitor* Las Vegas casinos, even *Magico Mountain, Seis* Flags, and Disneyland *Aventura* in California.

**Mexico:** Don't forget! You promised me Lady Gaga's autograph!

**The United States:** Sure! *Claro!*

**Mexico:** In that case....

**France:** *¿D'accord o no d'accord?*

**Mexico:** You really convinced me.

**France:** *D'accord! Merci!*

**Mexico:** So...when will this famous "intervention" take place?

**The United States:** Not so *rapido, amigo mio!* *We'll take it easy.* Does *tomorrowito* sound good?

**Mexico:** *Tomorrito?*

**The United States:** *Mañana*, then.

**Mexico:** So, the two countries together as one, right?

**The United States:** *Noooooo. Jesuuuus Criiiistoooo!* We are not *primitivos!* First, *uno* country, and then the other.

**Mexico:** Ah, OK. We appreciate it. You are so considerate.

**The United States:** *Sí, mucho considerados.* Aren't we?

**Mexico:** Listen, mister...don't take it badly. Now, I have a simple question...if you don't mind...how should I put it? A personal question...

**The United States:** OK. *Say me* your question?

**Mexico:** Santa Claus? Does Santa Claus really exist?

**The United States:** *Whaaat did you saaaaaay!!*

**France:** *Plopp!!*

Astounded, France plops on the floor!

*They freeze.*

*A vendor enters the scene.*

**Vendor:** Tiiiiickets! Tiiiiickets! Todaaaaaay, the execution in Cerro de las Campanas! Few front-row seats are left! The last tickets! Right here, don't miss the execution of Maximillian of Hapsburg, the final invader of independent Mexico, and the traitors Miguel Miramon and Tomas Mejia! Only one ticket for the three acts! Let the invaders of Meeeeeeexico perrrrrrish. The M of Mexico is supreme in contrast to the M of Maximillian, Miramon, and Mejia. Let them all die!

**France:** *Maximilien, mon fils!*

**Vendor:** Do not waste any more time! Execute him!

**France:** *Maximilien c'est moi!*

**Vendor:** Blindfold him!

**France:** *Je suis Maximilien!* I am France, Austria, the Archduke Maximillian, my cousin Charlotte's husband, or whatever, who cares!

**Vendor:** Screw the Emperor Maximillian of Hapsburg, the intruder on Mexican soil!

**France:** Don't screw with me!

**Vendor:** Blindfold the transgender Emperor!

**France:** No, do not block my view of my beloved Mexico. I wish to take this image with me for eternity!

*The United States places the long blond cascading beard on France.*

**France:** I will die for a just cause: an Independent and Free Mexico. I hope my death ends the misfortunes of my new Homeland!

*Drumroll...*

**France:** Allow me to part my beard. I beg you, aim directly at my chest!

**Vendor:** Firing squad! *Ready! Aim! Fiiiierrrr!*

*Gun fire*

*France falls dead.*

**The United States:** *He is deeeeeaaaad. Maximiliano is deeeeeaaaad. (A malicious smile) This is excellent: America ONLY for Americans! Viva los Yankees. America for the Americans.*

#### **FOURTH VIGNETTE: Revolution**

##### **Attorney Botellas**

*A lamppost on a street corner.*

**Attorney Botellas:** *(Staggering and talkative)* The Revolution is gonna hit us right between the eyes, Botellas, and neither you nor anyone else is going to be able to do anything about it, much less in these conditions, right? Cheers! *(He drinks, laughs, combs his hair to one side, and holds up a bottle.)* I don't know... I don't know anything or know so little about this matter, sir. If there are copies of *El hijo del Ahuizote* at home, I want to assure you I haven't the faintest idea how they got there... No, don't laugh, SIR!

They are going to "revolutionize our entire country." Everything will be a circus here. One and all will succeed in getting a tiny or a big fat slice of the pie. Neither the dictator Porfirio Diaz, who will soon arrive in his adored France, nor Mr. Madero could foresee the looting to come with the revolution, which begins here at this moment in history in 1910.

No, I am referring to those who could foresee the looting to come – sackers who sell the motherland – the cursed descendants of the poor stereotyped woman La Malinche. We have a

horde of motherfuckers, beginning with Victoriano Huerta, and, from there, the list goes on forever...

As mushrooms after a heavy rain, they make their flamboyant appearance, multiplying like rabbits. From first to last or last to first: Piña Nieto, Calde-Ron, Foxy-foxy, Ernesto Cepillo...

From last to first or first to last: Santa Anna, Miramon, Porfirio Diaz... and in the middle: Elias Calles, Miguel Aleman... Or even before, Diaz Ordaz, Lopez Por Pillo... and so on.<sup>2</sup>

And not all are men, noooooooo! Corruption, betrayal, and deception have gender equality! Here are a few examples: Marta Segun de Fox-fox, Rosario Muebles, Elbester Portiyo, Ivon Ortiga, Alejandra Jota. All of them, sons and daughters of the bulging bellied Malinche, all with the “M” as a sign of the Prehispanic curse on their foreheads.

In this magical country, all good people with a bit of power change, transform, *metamorphosize* and *performatize*. The problem is in their genes – corrupt politicians who rob you blind.

Consider the following examples for practical use, not only in politics but also present and rooted in daily life:

“The one who does not steal does not advance.”

“It is an error not to live under the umbrella of the corrupt government’s budget.”

“Me first, then me, and finally me”

“The devaluation of the peso in December”

“In the year of Hidalgo: whoever does not rob is fucked.”

“The dead in Acteal and Piedras Blancas do not cast their vote in elections.”

“Olympic and Bloody Tlatelolco”

“The train, La Bestia, full, full of...”

“The train of death”

“Narco graves and drug cartels”

“Narco juniors”

“The Lord of the Leagues or the Dandy of las Lomas”

“FOBAPROA, or rather, the Savings Bank Protection Fund”

“El *SENTE*, the teachers’ union, la *CENTE*, the workers’ commission, and Pemexgate”

“Towelgate and the presidential family”

“Telecommunication Laws and Secondary Laws”

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<sup>2</sup> Translators’ note: Attorney Botellas’ satirical wordplay highlights the theme of looting, sacking, and pilfering of the motherland. He traces the corruption to the conquest, false Revolutionary leaders, and the former presidents who perpetuated or failed to stem Mexico’s extreme income inequalities and poverty. Botellas cites numerous well-known examples of fraudulent presidential conduct and extravagant display of wealth. *Towelgate* describes the purchase of excessively costly towels by Vicente Fox’s wife for the presidential mansion. *Pemexgate* alludes to the Mexican political party PRI’s misuse of petroleum revenues during Ernesto Zedillo’s tenure to support an election campaign, underscoring a very unfair election system. *The Mexican White House* illustrates Enrique Peña Nieto and his wife’s suspected unlawful acquisition of a luxurious residence (*white house*) in Lomas de Chapultepec—Mexico’s presidential house is pink. Botellas ridicules the former presidents by linking their names to some fruit, an alcoholic beverage, a brush, and instances of conniving (*foxy/sly*) behavior and bribery. Jose Lopez Portillo (1976-1982) becomes “Lopez Por pillo” – a scoundrel/rascal/ thief (*pillo*). Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000) is compared to a brush (*cepillo*) for sweeping heinous acts under the rug. Vicente Fox (2000-2006) becomes “Foxy-foxy.” Felipe Calderon (2006-2012), a drunkard, is allied with rum (*ron*). Enrique Peña Nieto (2012-2018) is associated with a pineapple (*piña*). Piña is Mexican slang for a lie.



*Plaza of the Three Cultures, no number  
Tlatelolco Neighborhood  
Cuauhtemoc District  
Mexico, Federal District*

Three cultures anointed in blood  
The confluence of three Mexicos simultaneously:

### **PREHISPANIC MEXICO**

of the poet Nezahualcoyotl and teponaztli drums, chirimia woodwind instruments, mockingbirds,  
human skull-racks, and the Aztec flower wars:

*Then, where will we go?  
Will we go to a place  
where death does not exist?  
Will I always shed tears?  
Let your heart learn to accept*

*no one lives here eternally.  
Even princes come here to die.  
The deceased are cremated.  
Let your heart learn to accept  
no one lives here eternally.<sup>3</sup>*

*¿Can nelpa tonyazque  
cannon aya micohua?  
¿Ica nichoca?  
Moyoliol xi melacuahuacan:*

*Ayac nicam nemiz  
Tel ca tepilhuan omicoaco,  
Netlatiloc.  
Moyoliol xi melacuahuacan:  
Ayac nicam nemix.*

### **COLONIAL MEXICO**

of the cross brandished in fire  
of the Juanes:  
of Juan Ruiz and Sor Juana, the muse with a Spanish demeanor on mestizo soil,  
a prodigious mixture in a cauldron equally prodigious,  
who writes in Mexico and premieres in Madrid:

*Noble Mexicans,  
Whose ancient lineage  
Originates  
in the Clear rays of the Sun.  
Come decorated with your insignias,  
For today is the year,  
The joyous day,  
The greatest Relic  
Will be consecrated.  
Let merriment join devotion  
As we celebrate in splendor*

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<sup>3</sup> From the poem beginning with the words “¿A dónde iremos?” (“Where will we go?”) by Nezahualcoyotl

*the sublime God of Seeds!*<sup>4</sup>

### MODERN MEXICO

of oil and telecommunications,  
of the XEW and the Olympics, the Mexico of Carlos Fuentes,  
Octavio Paz and Elena Garro.

I escape along a chair's backrest.  
I look at my image in the buried mirror of the centuries.  
The same face  
A nation, an amalgam of nations  
A shadow passes.  
Here, the fiesta goes on and on:  
It is the carnivorous feast that tears our children apart.

A bloodied triple plaza:

Prehispanic  
colonial and modern

An open vein of Latin America  
Of our America of José Martí

A bloodied public square  
bloodied atrium  
bloodied condominium

a triple stone altar ready for sacrifice

Suddenly, from all directions, a rain of bullets sprays thousands of us, who were young at the time.

“Paquita, where are you my dark-skinned beauty?”

Sartre and his existentialism  
Che and his humanism  
China and its Maoism

Bakunin and his anarchism, collectivism and atheism.

“It is forbidden to forbid.”  
“*Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be.*”

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<sup>4</sup> De la “Loa” para el auto de “*El Divino Narciso*” (From the “Loa to the Divine Narcissus”), an allegorical play by Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz

- It is Wednesday, October second,
- five thirty in the afternoon.
- Only ten more days until the inauguration of the modern Olympic games in the Aztec nation.
- The government suppresses the student protest.
- Tlatelolco becomes a massacre.
- Paquita, where are you, my dark-skinned beauty?
- A flare in the sky,
- and suddenly,
- only the sound of crossfire and machine guns is heard.
- shouts, fear, horror
- Twenty-nine minutes of intense gunfire from the buildings
- gunfire from every side
- bullets from all sides
- dead and wounded everywhere:
- in the central military hospital
- in the Red Cross
- in the Green Cross
- And my Paquita?
- There are detainees in military camp number one.
- Paquita is missing. She is nowhere to be found.
- Paquita will no longer appear...
- I would like to tell you, Paquita, I had never loved before knowing you.
- I love your dimples and how they look when you laugh,
- and your anger when I tickle you.....
- But I will no longer be able to tell you...
- because you vanished without a trace
- I let your hand go for only a moment, and I could not find you among all the shouting...
- You disappeared among the thunder of rifles
- when the inconceivable nightmare began...

Five Olympic rings that hide the bloody deed!  
 Light the cauldron!  
 Have everyone be silent and not push!  
 Asshole, asshole, asshole, asshole government!

*“Today, October twelfth, Nineteenhundredsixtyeight,  
 I declare open the games of Mexico celebrating the nineteenth Olympiad  
 of the modern era.”*

**SIXTH VIGNETTE: *Brevis interruptus***

**History**  
**Diddy, her cousin**  
**Official**  
**Chico**

*On the hill*  
*There is an open parasol and a canvas chair.*

**History:** During almost nine thousand years there were no great civilizations in the Valley of Mexico until the rise of Tlacuilco and Cuicuilco, the first major civilizations in the central area of ...

**Chico:** I understood that! It was clear to me from the beginning. You keep repeating it like a singsong...

**History:** What?

**Diddy:** I toast with Dom Perignon! Bubbly and happy champagne. Cheers!

**Chico:** Enough of this! You all are beginning to bore me.

**Diddy:** Who do you think you are to say that? Take a hike, kid!

**Official:** I told you both! Your experiment, History and Diddy, will not work. This kid is already corrupted, damaged; nothing can be done to save him. Your project is worthless. Today young people are clueless from the day they are born. Don't speak too loudly to them, don't raise your voice because they'll rebel! It would be better...

**Diddy:** Don't say it, Official! Don't even hint that human rights are for the birds...!

**History:** None of you is of any help to me. Each to their own! You're not team players, Official.

**Official:** Who, me? If it were up to me, I would already be building a huge pyre that could be seen from outer space, to put an end to all the young kids who throw tantrums... Mexican history has shown the way – burn, erase, disappear; disappear, burn, erase.

**History:** And you, cousin, are not thinking clearly either. You're already more inebriated than a fumigated cockroach!

**Diddy:** The altitude affects me. (*She hiccups.*) That's it, hip, hip; it is my health. I mean, the height.

**Official:** I am going to look for a bathroom; I have to piss. (*He leaves.*)

**Chico:** I want my truck, the Cheyenne, the one you promised me! You took me out of class to

bring me here! Keep your promise! I have put up with everything you wanted to teach me Miss Historic or Hysteric, or whatever your name is! I want my truck!

**Official:** I'll be back. I'll piss and then return.

**Diddy:** Cheers, Official; see you later!

### SEVENTH VIGNETTE: Migrations

I'm going north.

We're going north. Pack your suitcases; it's decided.  
There's no longer any work here, and there's more violence every day.  
Here, there is more and more corruption and no work.

I'll go, work, make money, and return.  
I'll go, work, make money, and no fuckin' way will I return!

I'll go to East LA.  
I'll go to Pueblayork,  
to Portland,  
to Minnesota, Minneapolis, or Madison, all with a capital M,  
a capital M like the tall towers of a cathedral,  
like the two entrance doors to worldly Paradise.

I'm going with the Carolinas or the Virginias.  
I'll go to Canada: to Winnipeg, Montreal, or Toronto.  
Here, the minimum wage makes it more difficult to make ends meet.  
Drug violence, kidnappings, human trafficking, extortion, and crime rule the day  
while the government looks the other way, as if nothing were happening.

I'm going north, mamacita.  
I'm going north, papacito.  
I'm going north, virgencita.

I'll go, and later I'll send for you to join me soon, very soon. I'll get a place, settle in, and send you the first letter. Buy yourself a thick notebook, so you can write me a thousand letters for each of the thousands I'm going to send you.

I will send you letters, emails, and Facebook messages. I'll get settled in, and send you a money order from Bank Azteca or Elektra.

I'm leaving, and when I get there, I'll send and keep sending you money so you can pay the school bills for the children, the medicine for Grandma, monthly bills, and unpaid bills. You'll pay the telephone, cable, water, electricity, and internet. You may even save a little. With the money, you can continue working on the upstairs of the house and the patio, and also finish that smelly bathroom for us to enjoy when I return. You can even give money to the church. You'll decide how to best use the money. As simple as that! That's what we'll do!

I'll call you from Colorado.  
I'll send you an email, or we can talk on Skype.  
I will never return.

Don't wait for me because I will never return.  
You can stay with the handful of children I gave you, so ugly when they were born, so grumpy and ill-tempered. Where I am going, I'll have another family, younger and more hip.

I will go in search of Aztlan, the site of our origin.  
I am going to join a rock band that doesn't yet exist.  
I'll join a gang and take charge of the Latino narcotrafficking market.  
I'll triumph like a Hollywood star, like Dolores del Rio, Anthony Quinn, or Vicky Carr, like Salma Hayek, Alfonso Cuarón, la Barraza, Gael Bernal, Thalia or Patricia Manterola.  
I want to join the "Yes, we can, yes, we did" movement.

I want to earn dollars.  
I want a truck with chrome rims, even if it's not a Cheyenne.  
I want to be a co-star in a movie with Angelina Jolie.  
I want to be *the new kid on the block*.  
I want to be the employee of the month in a Walmart in Springfield.  
I want to learn to paint like Andy Warhol.  
I want to work as a housekeeper for someone in Palm Springs.  
I want to work selling lotions at Macy's in National City.

I want to work at the Dunkin' Donuts in Penn Station.  
I want to say whatever I think without being fired from my job.  
I want to say what I think and not end up disappearing or in jail...  
I want them to recognize my labor rights.  
I want them to recognize my human rights.  
Finally, I want them to recognize me, period.  
I want my taxes invested and not robbed.  
I want to learn English and get 700 points on the TOEFL exam.  
I want to write "Pedro was here!" in the public bathrooms in Central Park.  
I want to get a doctorate so they will offer me a position at a university.

I want to compose a song for the Billboard chart.

I want to have a tortilla shop in Manhattan,  
and a taqueria in the Empire State Building.

I will go, triumph, and return.  
I will go, triumph, and, like an idiot, return!

I will...

spend time outwitting the migra officers,  
climb the walls like Spiderman,  
jump the fence as my brothers did,  
hide in a train wagon,  
cross the border one night in the Sonora Desert,  
climb like a rider on the back of La Bestia.

I will...

swim across the Gulf or the river,  
or along the seashore in Tijuana,  
dye my hair and answer "yes, yes" to whatever they say,  
*disguise myself as a piece of furniture so I may cross in a pick-up truck,*  
emigrate so I may marry a gringo or a gringa,  
hide in a train wagon or a trailer truck, although I run the risk of being  
asphyxiated,

because I can take no more. Because  
we are screwed here,  
as someone already said,  
really fucked  
totally fucked and worse!

## **EIGHTH VIGNETTE and Finale**

**History**  
**Diddy, her cousin**  
**Official**  
**Chico**

*On the hill*

**History:** We were doing so well, cousin, and now look at you: you are more drunk than a fumigated cockroach. Drinking is not a pleasure for you, but rather a sickness.

**Diddy:** It is the altitude. (*She hiccups.*) That's it, hip, hip. It's my health. I mean, the height.

**Official:** I am going to look for a bathroom; I've had to piss for a while.

**Chico:** I want my Cheyenne! That's what I want!

**History:** Here there are no bathrooms, Official.

**Official:** Then I'll piss right here. But I don't want you to see my wiener!

**History:** There are no bathrooms Official, nor are there Cheyennes on the mountain, stupid kid!

**Chico:** My Cheyenne!

**Official:** A bathroom, please! A bathroom!

**History:** Look! Over there the mist is dissipating! (*Ecstatic*) What a treat! The mist reveals the tutelary volcano, The Popocatepetl, also known as Don Goyo! Look at it in its entirety! Grandiose, enormous, incomprehensible! The clouds crown it!

**Official:** The Popo, and I am peeing my pants! I'll take it out and piss right now. And I don't care if you see my "weenie." So, what!

*He pees copiously.*

**History:** How disgusting.

**Diddy:** So much Official foam!

**Official:** Exactly!

**Diddy:** Foam and bubbles like my Dom Perignon! Dom Perignon! (*She dances.*) Sea foam, celestial foam!

**History:** Rabid dog foam. Shaving foam. You are not poetic!

**Diddy:** Shall we dance, Official? Have you finished peeing?

**Official:** Done. Just let me shake it and put it away.

**Diddy:** Wow! How sexy! For me, leave it out; it looks so rigid.

**Official:** No, because it will get cold and get the sniffles.

**Diddy:** Hold me tight by the waist so I don't fall off the cliff. And let's dance close with the same rhythmic steps... That's it, like that, yes!

**History:** How the two, no, the three of you fuck around with witticisms!

**Chico:** Me too?

**Diddy:** Ha, ha, ha, you said some swear words, cousin!

**History:** Who the hell cares anymore? You are disrespectful drunkards!

**Official:** Same old History, saying shit!

**History:** Piss off, then!

**Diddy:** Go screw yourself! Damn you!

**History:** Bitch!

**Diddy:** You're a bitch!

**Official:** A pair of bitches!

*An extremely loud sound*

*The earth quakes.*

**Diddy:** What the fuck was that?

**Official:** Weren't you able to control your damn urges?

**History:** The earth is shaking, and all of you are fucking around. It is quaking! The volcano is vomiting, it's erupting!

**Diddy:** Shit! The lava is almost reaching us here!

**Official:** What? What the fuck is happening?

*The volcano is erupting!*

**Diddy:** Shit, it stinks!

**Official:** It stinks like sulfur.

**Diddy:** Nothing like ending up under a shit of fucking lava!

**History:** Fuck that cursed volcano!

**Official:** We are all screwed because of this volcano. Fuck history and didacticism and the experiment with the kid. Say goodbye to your fucking shitty life. The volcano fucked itself and us all!

**Chico:** (*Ecstatic*) Wow! How incredible! Really incredible!

*The smoke and tons of lava bury them.*

*Darkness.*

*The end*

## Crime and Punishment

By Andrzej Wajda

Translated from Polish by Magda Romanska

### Translator's Introduction: Decolonizing Dostoyevsky?

Andrzej Wajda (1926-2016), Oscar-winning, legendary Polish theatre and film director is considered one of the most prominent figures in Polish cinema and one of the most influential filmmakers of the twentieth century. Wajda's career spanned over six decades, during which he directed over forty feature films, numerous documentaries, television dramas, and theatre shows. Wajda was a member of the Polish Film School, a group of filmmakers who emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s whose work focused on psychologically complex situations, human emotions, and choices made in extreme circumstances. He was best known for his war trilogy consisting of the films *A Generation* (1955), *Kanal* (1957), and *Ashes and Diamonds* (1958), which explored the experiences of Poles, particularly Polish Underground Army (Armia Krajowa) during World War II and the post-war period. Wajda's films often dealt with social and political themes, and moral and political dilemmas faced by Poles and Polish fighters caught in a double bind of Nazi and Soviet occupations.

Not many people know that in addition to his prolific career as a filmmaker, Wajda was also a renowned theater director who directed productions at some of the most prestigious theaters in Poland, including the Stry Teatr in Kraków, the Teatr Powszechny in Warsaw, and the Teatr Współczesny in Wrocław. Wajda's approach to theatre was known for its elaborate psychology, moody and somber *mis-en-scène*, and heightened tension. Wajda directed his own adaptation of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment* in 1984 at the Stry Teatr im. Heleny Modrzejewskiej, in Kraków.<sup>5</sup> However, this was not Wajda's first encounter with Dostoyevsky; in 1971, at the same theatre, he directed *Demons*, adapted for stage by Albert Camus.<sup>6</sup> That staging was inspired by Pushkin and Japanese theatre. In 1977, Wajda also directed *Nastazja Filipowna*, based on Dostoyevsky's *Idiot*. The Dostoyevsky trilogy is considered a cornerstone of Wajda's theatre, and it's often referred to as the Theatre of Conscience.<sup>7</sup>

After successful run at Stry Teatre, Wajda's adaptation of *Crime and Punishment* was performed at theaters throughout Europe and the United States. The show was praised for its compelling visual imagery, minimalist staging and the use of light and shadow in exploration of the psychological and philosophical themes of Dostoyevsky's novel. Stylistically richer than the 1984 theatre version, the 1987 TV version was included in the top hundred theatre productions recorded by Polish television.<sup>8</sup> The adaptation was considered one of the most significant

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<sup>5</sup> "Zbrodnia i kara. Production History." *Encyklopedia Teatru Polskiego*, <https://encyklopediateatru.pl/przedstawienie/7622/zbrodnia-i-kara> Accessed 6 Aug. 2023.

<sup>6</sup> "Biesy. Production History." *Encyklopedia Teatru Polskiego*, <https://encyklopediateatru.pl/przedstawienie/9967/biesy> Accessed 6 Aug. 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Maciej Karpiński, (1989). *Dostoyevsky: Theater of Conscience: Three Stagings by Andrzej Wajda at the Stry Theater in Krakow*. Publishing Institute Pax.

<sup>8</sup> "Zbrodnia i kara. Production History." *Encyklopedia Teatru Polskiego*, <https://encyklopediateatru.pl/przedstawienie/7622/zbrodnia-i-kara> Accessed 6 Aug. 2023.

productions of the novel in modern times and a landmark of Polish theater. It contributed to Wajda's image as a visionary director in both film and theater, solidifying his reputation as one of the leading theater directors of his generation.

Dostoyevsky's novel, exploring the commandment 'Thou Shalt Not Kill,' follows the story of Rodion Raskolnikov, a poor student in Saint Petersburg who kills an old woman, a ruthless pawnbroker. He justifies the murder by a higher moral purpose: stealing a woman's money would allow him to escape poverty and go off to accomplish great deeds for humanity. After the murder, however, Raskolnikov is wracked with guilt and struggles to maintain the convictions he relied on to commit the murder. To cover up the crime, he further kills the pawnbroker's sister, a kind, innocent, and mentally challenged Lizaveta.

Wajda's adaptation is structured around the power struggle between the main character, Raskolnikov and his interrogator, the detective Porfiry Petrovich, who is investigating the murders. The dramaturgical framing of the adaptation focuses on the dialogue between the two men: "It is a battle of two protagonists, who in three long conversations, 'have something to take care of.'"<sup>9</sup> In the program note to the production, Wajda included a fragment from Bakhtin's text about the importance of Dostoyevsky's dialogue:

[T]he center of Dostoyevsky's artistic world must lie dialogue, and dialogue not as a means but as an end in itself. Dialogue here is not the threshold to action, it is the action itself. It is not a means for revealing, for bringing to the surface the already ready-made character of a person; no, in dialogue a person not only shows himself outwardly, but he becomes for the first time that which he is—and, we repeat, not only for others but for himself as well. To be means to communicate dialogically.<sup>10</sup>

Characters in Dostoyevsky's novels exist, Bakhtin argues, only through dialogue. In that way, by focusing on the dialogue between Raskolnikov and Porfiry Petrovich, Wajda wanted to distill the novel to its philosophical essence.

Despite the narrow focus of the adaptation, the critics observed that the production was faithful to the spirit and thematic elements of Dostoyevsky's novel. The astute examination of guilt, redemption, and moral responsibility was praised for its profound insights into the intricate workings of the human psyche. In addition to moral dimension of the story, however, Wajda was also interested in a psychological power game between Raskolnikov and Porfiry.<sup>11</sup> The set, sparse, dirty, and decrepit gave an impression that we're peeking into forbidden domain, someone's soul.<sup>12</sup> It blurred the line between audience and fictional space suggesting, as one

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<sup>9</sup> Jacek Cieślak. "Tragedie ludzi i ich sumień." [Tragedies of People and Their Conscience]. *Rzeczpospolita*. No. 238. October 11, 2016. <https://encyklopediateatru.pl/artykuly/229845/tragedie-ludzi-i-ich-sumien> Accessed 6 Aug. 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Michail Bakhtin (1984). "Discourse in Dostoevsky". *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Ed. Emerson, C., & Booth, W. C. University of Minnesota Press. Pp. 252.

<sup>11</sup> Dorota Krzywicka. "Zbrodnia i kara." [Crime and Punishment] *Echo Krakowa*. No. 25. February 5, 1985. <https://encyklopediateatru.pl/artykuly/45865/zbrodnia-i-kara> Accessed 6 Aug. 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Jan Bończa-Szabłowski. "Szaleństwo Raskolnikowa." [The Madness of Raskolnikov]. *Rzeczpospolita online*. May 14, 2010. <https://encyklopediateatru.pl/artykuly/94152/krakow-zbrodnia-i-kara-wajdy-w-tvp-kultura> Accessed 6 Aug. 2023.

critic pointed out, that potential pitfalls for anyone who would venture into Raskolnikov's moral universe.<sup>13</sup> The actors, Jerzy Radziwiłowicz and Jerzy Stuhr, titans of Polish film and theatre, received praise for their skillful portrayal of the two characters, with nuanced and commanding presence.

Radziwiłowicz's Raskolnikov tries very hard to hide his crimes, but his body language, facial tics and tone of voice gives him away. Despite trying his best, he is unable to control them. This portrayal was contrasted with Stuhr's aloof interpretation of Porfiry, who as one of the critics noted, plays with Raskolnikov like a cat plays with a mouse without revealing much of who he is himself. There is emptiness behind Porfiry's mask, and Stuhr fills it by becoming Raskolnikov's alter ego: "He is able to trap Raskolnikov because he knows his thoughts and feelings, and he knows them because they are his own."<sup>14</sup>

Porfiry empathizes with Raskolnikov's belief in his own intellectual superiority and moral right to do whatever he wants for his own benefit. This makes Porfiry absolutely in control of the situation: "Raskolnikov's experiment conducted on his own selfhood to answer the question about the limits of freedom and morality becomes for Porfiry a tasty morsel, like for a vulture, which he consumes slowly and methodically, eating up the entrails of his victim in order to reach the heart."<sup>15</sup> Another Polish critic, however, concluded that such interpretation of Porfiry's role was not effective as it overwhelmed the production, and overshadowed the figure of Raskolnikov himself: we seem to learn more about the detective than we do about the criminal.<sup>16</sup> Yet another critic pointed out that Porfiry's sadistic treatment of others, from which he seems to derive some sort of pleasure, is contrasted with Raskolnikov's cerebral, premeditated violence which he justifies intellectually but does not fundamentally enjoy. As far as that argument goes, Porfiry seems to be a better reflection of modern world, the critic notes.<sup>17</sup>

Like the novel, the adaptation asks the Machivellian question whether "the end justifies the means," whether "a grand vision can justify a murder."<sup>18</sup> Writing about Dostoyevsky's book, Wajda pointed out that it is a novel about ideological murder: "Raskolnikov hates people. Rejected and humiliated by his poverty, he nonetheless feels superior to everyone else. That is why in his article about the crime, he gives moral permission to certain individuals to spill the

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<sup>13</sup> Kazimierz Kania. "Sceniczny rachunek Raskolnikowa i Wajdy." [Scenic Reckoning of Raskolnikov and Wajda]. *Kierunki*. No 48. November 25, 1984. <https://encyklopediateatru.pl/artykuly/46209/sceniczny-rachunek-raskolnikowa-i-wajdy> Accessed 6 Aug. 2023.

<sup>14</sup> Jerzy Niecikowski. "Alter ego Roskolnikova." [Raskolnikov's Alter Ego]. *Film*. No. 22. May 31, 1987. <https://encyklopediateatru.pl/artykuly/45975/alter-ego-raskolnikowa> Accessed 6 Aug. 2023.

<sup>15</sup> Krzysztof Miklaszewski. "Syndrom Raskolnikowa." [Raskolnikov's Syndrom]. *Dziennik Polski*. No 254. October 26, 1984. <https://encyklopediateatru.pl/artykuly/46213/syndrom-raskolnikowa> Accessed 6 Aug. 2023.

<sup>16</sup> Olgierd Jędrzejczyk. "Zbrodnia i kara' bez Raskolnikowa?" ['Crime and Punishment' Without Raskolnikov?]. *Gazeta Krakowska*. No. 242. October 9, 1984. <https://encyklopediateatru.pl/artykuly/45863/zbrodnia-i-kara-bez-raskolnikowa> Accessed 6 Aug. 2023.

<sup>17</sup> Andrzej Wajda. "Zbrodnia i kara w inscenizacjach Andrzeja Wajdy." ['Crime and Punishment' According to Wajda]. *Tygodnik Powszechny*. October 21, 1984. <https://encyklopediateatru.pl/artykuly/46094/zbrodnia-i-kara-w-inscenizacjach-andrzeja-wajdy> Accessed 6 Aug. 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Jan Bończa-Szabłowski. "Szaleństwo Raskolnikowa." [The Madness of Raskolnikov]. *Rzeczpospolita online*. May 14, 2010. <https://encyklopediateatru.pl/artykuly/94152/krakow-zbrodnia-i-kara-wajdy-w-tvp-kultura> Accessed 6 Aug. 2023.

blood of others!”<sup>19</sup> To narrow down the large book, Wajda was inspired by Hamlet’s ironic lines: “I must be cruel to be kind,” focusing on the argument made by Raskolnikov to not just excuse his repulsive act but to make it, in fact, morally right. What is most fascinating and gruesome about Dostoyevsky’s novel, Wajda writes, is not the description of the murder itself, but the verbal duel between the murderer and his investigator.

*Crime and Punishment* is a novel about the crime of ideals and in that way, it reflects the murderous ideologies of the twentieth century, Wajda wrote: “How well I know this argument! – he wrote – From Nazi’s concentration camps to the newest political murders. All of them have been justified by the ‘permission to take blood’ – if needed (no longer even just when necessary) for the glorious progress of the humankind.”<sup>20</sup> Unlike most crime novels, *Crime and Punishment* doesn’t ask who killed, but why.

In the program of the production, Wajda also included 1957 essay by Stanisław Mackiewicz which considers *Crime and Punishment* a form of religious novel:

Dostoyevsky wanted to be a Russian writer, but he became a world's writer because the problem of his novel is a religious problem. Dostoyevsky arrogantly asks whether the rules of religious morality should truly be followed and then, repentant, concludes that, yes, they should. The commandment ‘Thou shall not kill’ can be lost in the chaos and arguments of the day that often deafen its meaning, but then, a new form of mysticism emerges, and without words, silently, but strongly makes all of us understand that murder for higher purpose cannot be, that it is nonsense, stupidity, sin. (translation from Polish mine).<sup>21</sup>

Wajda felt that as an adaptor, he had a moral responsibility towards Polish society to illustrate that fundamental moral core of Dostoyevsky’s novel.<sup>22</sup> Polish critic Ryszard Przybylski noted that “Wajda saw in Dostoyevsky’s work a vision of the collapse of the civilization of reason, which he himself wanted to build in the past. It was a vision of the world in which people who are incapable of distinguishing between good and evil began to kill each other due to their vanity and sense of impunity.”<sup>23</sup>

As of now, there hasn’t been any publication dealing with Andrzej Wajda as a theatre writer. Although he is well-known in the film and theatre world, scholars and students have not been able to access his texts and adaptations. This adaptation provides a glimpse into Wajda’s process and the structure of his dramatic writing. This translation was commissioned by the Polish Institute in New York a couple of years ago for the retrospective of Wajda’s films. It is based on

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<sup>19</sup> Andrzej Wajda. “Zbrodnia i kara.” *Teatr*. No 10. October 1, 1987.

<https://encyklopediateatru.pl/artykuly/46029/zbrodnia-i-kara> Accessed 6 Aug. 2023.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Program. *Crime and Punishment*, premier 7 October 1984.

[https://encyklopediateatru.pl/repository/performance\\_file/2016\\_10/80421\\_zbrodnia\\_i\\_kara\\_stary\\_teatr\\_krakow\\_1984.pdf](https://encyklopediateatru.pl/repository/performance_file/2016_10/80421_zbrodnia_i_kara_stary_teatr_krakow_1984.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Andrzej Wajda. “Zbrodnia i kara.” *Teatr*. No 10. October 1, 1987.

<https://encyklopediateatru.pl/artykuly/46029/zbrodnia-i-kara> Accessed 6 Aug. 2023.

<sup>23</sup> Krzysztof Miklaszewski. “Syndrom Raskolnikowa.” [Raskolnikov’s Syndrom]. *Dziennik Polski*. No 254. October 26, 1984. <https://encyklopediateatru.pl/artykuly/46213/syndrom-raskolnikowa> Accessed 6 Aug. 2023.

the TV version of the show presented at the event.<sup>24</sup>

Publishing the adaptation of Dostoyevsky's novel today, however, is fraught with one's own moral struggle. After Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Eastern European intellectuals and academics who research and write about Russian literature, particularly those living in the West, had to face a reckoning with the current state of Slavic studies and scholarship. Focused mostly on Russian literature and culture, Slavic departments across the landscape of Western universities continue to teach it from an imperial Russian perspective: "Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has led to widespread calls for the reassessment and transformation of Russo-centric relationships of power and hierarchy both in the region and in how we study it."<sup>25</sup> Although there have been a few attempts to analyze the imperialism of Dostoyevsky's political writings, most of Slavic and Russian literary studies have focused, as Wajda's adaptation, on the psychological and moral, not political, dimension of his novels. But as Olga Maiorova noted in her essay on Dostoyevsky and the empire, "Empire-building was not only history for Dostoyevsky and his contemporaries, it was the reality in which they lived."<sup>26</sup> Like most of his compatriots, Dostoyevsky supported the imperial project, embraced the Raskolnikovian sense of superiority towards the conquered nations, and wrote extensively about the virtues of Russia's civilizing mission.<sup>27</sup>

Elif Batuman, writing in *The New Yorker's* 2023 article, "Rereading Russian Classics in the Shadow of the Ukraine War," about her own struggle how to approach Russian literature post 2022 invasion, notes: "It was explained to me that nobody in Ukraine wanted to think about Dostoyevsky at the moment, because his novels contained the same expansionist rhetoric as was used in propaganda justifying Russian military aggression. My immediate reaction to this idea was to bracket it off as an understandable by-product of war—as not 'objective.'"<sup>28</sup> Ukrainian writer, Victoria Amelina, who was killed when the Russian rocket struck a café she was in, wrote: "The debate on boycotting Russian culture is not what western artistic and intellectual circles should be worrying about now. At least not if they have anything to do with Europe and its values of human rights, dignity and solidarity."<sup>29</sup>

Rather than trying to rethink Russian literature, the more urgent project of the moment is to

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<sup>24</sup> The film is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=244634197437383> Accessed 6 Aug. 2023.

<sup>25</sup> Todd Prince, "Moscow's Invasion of Ukraine Triggers 'Soul-Searching' at Western Universities As Scholars Rethink Russian Studies," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. Published Jan. 1st, 2023, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-war-ukraine-western-academia/32201630.html?>

<sup>26</sup> Olga Maiorova, "Empire," in *Dostoyevsky in Context*, ed. Deborah A. Martinsen and Olga Maiorova, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> See Razvan Ungureanu, "Russian Imperial Presence in Literature." Published April 3, 2007, <http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~sarmatia/407/272ungure.html>; Volodymyr Yermolenko, "From Pushkin to Putin: Russian literature's imperial ideology," Published June 27, 2022, <https://www.tbsnews.net/thoughts/pushkin-putin-russian-literatures-imperial-ideology-447998>. And "Yes, the Russian literary canon is tainted by imperialism," Published October 6, 2022. <https://www.economist.com/culture/2022/10/06/yes-the-russian-literary-canon-is-tainted-by-imperialism>

<sup>28</sup> Elif Batuman, "Rereading Russian Classics in the Shadow of the Ukraine War," *The New Yorker*, January 23, 2023, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/01/30/rereading-russian-classics-in-the-shadow-of-the-ukraine-war>

<sup>29</sup> Amelina Victoria, "Cancel Culture vs. Execute Culture: Why Russian Manuscripts don't burn, but Ukrainian manuscripts burn all too well," Pen Ukraine, Published April 1, 2022. <https://pen.org.ua/en/cancel-culture-vs-execute-culture-why-russian-manuscripts-don-t-burn-but-ukrainian-manuscripts-burn-all-too-well>

preserve and promote Ukrainian culture and literature, which is being systematically destroyed. It is easy to make an argument that there should be, if not a boycott, at least a temporary pause on studying and writing about Russian literature until the literary field can rethink and reinvent some new, decolonizing approach, which would contextualize it in a proper historical and political framework. That was my first impulse, too.

Yet, I chose to publish the translation of Wajda's vision of Dostoyevsky right now not so much as an artifact of Russian culture, but as an artifact of Polish culture, a legacy of a colonized society struggling to reconcile the many facets of its oppressor. Staged in 1984, only four years after the Martial Law was established in Poland, and only a year after it was lifted (from 13 December 1981 to 22 July 1983), Wajda's adaptation was a tacit commentary on Polish-Russian relations. During the Martial Law, the Polish society pondered with trepidation whether the Russian army would enter Poland and if so, what would their invasion entail. Wajda's adaptation of *Crime and Punishment* was not a rare event in Polish theatre after World War II. In fact, it was considered an obligatory reading in Polish society of that time. Many other well-known Polish directors before Wajda and after Wajda attempted to adapt the novel.<sup>30</sup> It is one of the reasons why Wajda's version could focus on selected scenes and didn't have to worry about the audience understanding the entire novel: every spectator would have had read it. Having grown up in Poland, I read it for the first time, in Polish, in high school. Polish fascination with Dostoyevsky's novels wasn't just part of the colonial project of Russification that we endured under Soviet occupation, which included obligatory learning of the Russian language. It was, in many ways, an attempt, to understand and grasp the workings of the Russian psyche. It was, I think, a survival strategy, a struggle of the subalterns to deconstruct and understand their colonizers.

There is dissonance in Wajda's work that reflects this struggle. In his theatrical treatment of Dostoyevsky's writing, Wajda considers him an international writer, avoiding any references to Russia or Dostoyevsky's imperial sympathies. In Wajda's films, however, Russia and Russians loom large as violent barbarians, whose psychology, Wajda sometimes seems to suggest, cannot be grasped; it is simple, guided by greed and sadistic, mindless impulse. While these references were often veiled in the movies made before 1989, in Wajda's later work, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, he becomes more open about his view of Russians. In his last film about the Warsaw Uprising, *The Crowned-Eagle Ring* (*Pierścionek z orłem w koronie*), released in 1992, a young and virginal girlfriend of the Polish partisan fighter, Wisia, is taken and brutally gang raped by a group of Russian soldiers. She is left shell-shocked and broken by the trauma. Such, accurate, portrayal of Soviet 'liberation' of Poland reflected the image of the civilizational divide between the Polish and Russian societies, particularly its men. In later years, the theme of Russian barbarism returns. One of Wajda's last movies, 2017 *Katyń*, is a historical drama about the 1940 mass execution of nearly 22,000 of Polish officers by the Soviet army.

How can the nation which produced *Crime and Punishment*, be so immersed in the centuries old brutal project of colonial conquest and so unaware of its implications? Which is the 'true' Russia? Which is the 'true' Dostoyevsky? For many Central and Eastern Europeans who grew up reading Russian literature, coming to terms with its legacy is a personal project. Wajda's

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<sup>30</sup> "Zbrodnia i kara. Production History." *Encyklopedia Teatru Polskiego*, <https://encyklopediateatru.pl/przedstawienie/7622/zbrodnia-i-kara> Accessed 6 Aug. 2023.

adaptation is an artifact of a particular historical moment in Polish history and culture, reflecting the tragedy of Central and Eastern European countries struggling to find and hold on to their national identities while also compulsively trying, over and over again, to understand its oppressor. This adaptation, when properly understood, is a form of Polish and by extension, Central and Eastern European artifact of its colonial history.

*Crime and Punishment* continues to be staged in Poland, with the same, now postcolonial, urgency to comprehend the oppressor through the prism of its most prominent writer, as if somehow Dostoyevsky's novels could provide a clue, could unlock the secret to who Russians are and what to do with them. 2023 production at Polish Theatre in the Underground in Wrocław (Polski Teatr w Podziemiu), entitled literally, *Crime and Punishment, Because of Russian Crimes Which We Can't Understand* (Zbrodnia i Kara. Z powodu zbrodni Rosjan, których nie potrafimy zrozumieć) weaves in the passages of the novel with documentary text taken from the various investigations of Russia's genocidal and war crimes against the Ukrainians.<sup>31</sup> Today, the name Dostoyevsky has become permanently tied to Russia's genocidal violence. Nobel Peace Prize winner, Oleksandra Matviichuk, speaking at the 2023 Warsaw Forum put it succinctly: "Russian culture for me is not ballet or Dostoevsky, it's about the bodies of dead civilians left in the streets by their troops. From Syria to Ukraine they think they can do whatever they want and impunity has become part of Russia's culture."<sup>32</sup> Like Raskolnikov...

**Magda Romanska** is Professor of Theatre and Media at Emerson College, Boston, MA, Faculty Associate at the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society at Harvard, and a Principal Researcher at metaLAB (at) Harvard. She is the author of five critically acclaimed scholarly books, including *The Post-traumatic Theatre of Grotowski and Kantor* (2012); *TheaterMachine: Tadeusz Kantor in Context* (2020); *Reader in Comedy: An Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (2016); and *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy*. She translated five plays from Polish of Boguslaw Schaeffer, and published, *Boguslaw Schaeffer: An Anthology* (2012). Romanska's scholarly research has received awards from the Polish Studies Association and the American Society for Theatre Research. As a playwright, she is a recipient of the MacDowell Fellowship, the Mass Council Artist Fellowship for Dramatic Writing, the Apothetae and Lark Theatre Playwriting Fellowship from the Time Warner Foundation, and PAHA Creative Arts Prize. She has taught at Harvard University, Yale School of Drama, and Cornell University.

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.teatrpolскиwpodziemiu.pl/pl/spektakle/zbrodnia-kara>

<sup>32</sup> Oleksandra Matviichuk, Warsaw Forum 2023. <https://twitter.com/MatteoPugliese/status/1709557128694825411>

**Crime and Punishment**

**By Fyodor Dostoyevsky**

**Adapted and Directed by Andrzej Wajda**

**Translated from Polish by Magda Romanska**

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**CHARACTERS**

Porfiry Petrovich (Порфирий Петрович)

Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov

Sofia Semyonovna Marmeladova (Russian: Софья Семёновна Мармеладова), variously called  
Sonia and Sonechka

Polunya, Sonia's sister

Alexander Grigorievich Zamyotov (Александр Григорьевич Заметов)

Dmitri Prokofich Razumikhin (Дмитрий Прокофьевич Разумихин)

Mikolka – Nikolai Dementiev (Николай Дементьев)

Mieszczynin

Koch

Proch

## SCENE I

### “You’re the Murderer”

MIESZCZYNNIN

Murderer . . . Murderer . . . .

RASKOLNIKOV

What are you talking about? Who’s the murderer?

MIESZCZYNNIN

You’re the murderer . . .

Murderer . . .

## SCENE 2

### “Koch’s Testimony”

KOCH

I was going to see Alyona Ivanovna. We had a meeting scheduled. I was standing in front of her door. I rang once, twice, but there was no answer. I pulled at the handle, ten times in a row.

Nothing. Alyona Ivanovna – I yelled – you old hag – nothing. Lizavieta – nothing. No answer. I rang ten times, nothing. Then someone behind me called: ‘Good morning, Mr. Koch’ – because my name is Koch.

PORFIRY

What?

KOCH

Koch.

PORFIRY

Koch . . . Koch . . .

KOCH

Nobody’s there? What the hell do I know.

How do you know me?

He says: ‘Not too long ago, in “Gamrymusie,” I won three rounds against you at billiards.’

I say: ‘Aha . . . .’

‘Wait’ – he screamed as I began to pull at the door again – ‘Look, there is a slit in the door when you pull it’ – he says.

‘So what?’ – I asked.

‘You don’t understand! It means that one of them is home. If both of them were out, they would have closed the door on the outside, with the key, and not on the inside, with the bolt. It’s clear. Either both of them fainted or . . .’

And then, I understood. He ran downstairs and I stayed by the door.

I rang gently and then, I carefully touched the doorknob, pulling and pushing it slowly.

Then, I looked into the keyhole, but I couldn't see anything. The key was stuck inside. I got scared and ran downstairs. We were going up when we passed the two screaming painters . . .

PORFIRY

Painters . . .

KOCH

Mikolka and Witka. When we got up, the door to the apartment was open. The two bodies, Alyona's and Lizavieta's, were lying there in a pool of blood.

/walks over/

If I have stayed there – he would have burst out and killed me with an ax.

**SCENE III**

**“Article about the Crime”**

RAZUMIKHIN AND RASKOLNIKOV IN THE BACKGROUND LAUGHING

RAZUMIKHIN

By the way, Rodya, you're a pig.

RASKOLNIKOV

What are you ashamed of? Romeo! Just wait, when I tell the story to everyone, haha!

RAZUMIKHIN

Listen, listen, listen, this thing with Dunia, it's serious. . . . I, brother . . . Eh . . . What a pig you are!

RASKOLNIKOV

Just look at you. You all cleaned up, nails and hair, and all! Haha!

RAZUMIKHIN

Pig!!! Not a word about it here, or . . . I'll break your head!

/breaks the glass/

Shit!

PORFIRY

There is no need to destroy furniture, Gentlemen. It's a loss to our national wealth.

RASKOLNIKOV

I apologize. My name is Raskolnikov . . .

PORFIRY

Not at all, the pleasure's all mine. You both came here looking all happy . . .

What? He won't even say hello?

RASKOLNIKOV

I just told him he resembles Romeo . . . Haha!

RAZUMIKHIN

Pig!

PORFIRY

He must have had a good reason if one word made him so angry.

RAZUMIKHIN

You, what's that to you, Detective? That's it! Ok, let's get to the point.

Here's my friend, Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov. For one thing, he has heard a lot about you and wanted to meet you. Two, he has a little favor to ask you.

Zamiotov? You're still here?

RASKOLNIKOV

I've heard you questioned the owners of valuables pawned with Alyona Ivanovna. She had something of mine as well. Nothing expensive, just a ring I got from my sister. She gave it to me as a goodbye present before I left for Petersburg. And my father's silver watch. These things aren't worth much, maybe five, six rubles, that's all. But for me, they have a sentimental value.

What should I do now?

I don't want these items to get lost, especially my father's watch.

It is the only thing I have left of him. My mother will be crestfallen if it's sold.

Women!

PORFIRY

What? Ah! This is what you should do:

You should go to the police and tell them that you have learned about this murder, and you would like to inform the prosecutor that these valuables belong to you, and you would like to buy them back. There should be no problem.

RASKOLNIKOV

Yes, it's just . . . I . . . I don't have much money now . . . not even to buy back such cheap items . . . I would like to . . . right now, I would like to just inform you that these things are mine and if only I had some money . . .

PORFIRY

It doesn't matter. You know what? Why don't you write me a letter: 'Learning about the murder, etc., etc., I would like to officially inform you that there are two items I pawned which I would like to' . . . etc.

RASKOLNIKOV

On regular paper?

PORFIRY

Sure! The most regular you can find!

RASKOLNIKOV

I'm really sorry to bother you with such silly things, but I got really worried when I heard . . .

RAZUMIKHIN

Rodia! So, that is why you looked so scared yesterday when I told you that Porfiry is investigating the owners who pawned their things with Alyona?

RASKOLNIKOV

I told you this watch is the only memento I have of my father. You can laugh all you want to.

PORFIRY

Hold on, hold on, hold on . . . . These things of yours cannot get lost. Anyway, I have been waiting for you.

RAZUMIKHIN

What? You've been waiting? You knew he pawned his things there as well?

PORFIRY

Both of your items . . . what was that? The ring and the watch were there wrapped in paper on which she clearly wrote your name and the date when you brought the things.

RASKOLNIKOV

You're very perceptive . . . .

I'm just saying, there are probably a lot of other owners . . . a lot of people who pawned their things . . . . It would be hard to remember everyone. And you, on the contrary, you remember all of them . . . and . . .

PORFIRY

We know almost all of them now. Actually, you are the only one we've been waiting for.

RASKOLNIKOV

I've been a bit sick lately.

PORFIRY

Yes, that's what I've heard. I've also heard you were incredibly irritable of late. Now, you're pale.

RASKOLNIKOV

I am not pale. . . . No! I am completely healthy now.

RAZUMIKHIN

"Completely healthy." That's a good one. Just yesterday, he was nearly hallucinating with fever. . . . Can you believe this Porfiry? He could barely stand on his own two feet, but when I turned around, he quickly got dressed and sneaked out of the apartment. He wandered somewhere all alone until midnight, in a complete daze. I repeat – i n a c o m p l e t e d a z e!

RASKOLNIKOV

Bullshit! Believe me!

Never mind, you won't believe me anyway!

RAZUMIKHIN

Rodia! Would you be leaving your apartment if you weren't nearly unconscious?

RASKOLNIKOV

I'm really sorry. We've been bothering you with such trivialities for half an hour now. You've had enough of us, right?

PORFIRY

Not at all. If you only knew how interested I am in you.

Yes, I'm very curious, watching, listening . . .

Well, after yesterday's party, my head is exploding . . . and generally, I feel like crap.

RAZUMIKHIN

What? Something interesting happened? I had to leave at the most interesting moment. Who won?

ZAMIOTOV

But nobody, of course.

RAZUMIKHIN

Imagine, Rodia, what topic they were discussing yesterday: does crime exist or not? I'm telling you. We laughed out loud.

RASKOLNIKOV

No wonder. Just the same old social nonsense.

PORFIRY

That's not how the question was formulated.

RAZUMIKHIN

Not quite, that's true. We began with Socialists: 'crime is just a protest against unjust social order, and nothing more.' No other reasons were given, and nothing . . .

PORFIRY

Ah. . . . You got things all mixed up!

RAZUMIKHIN

N-nothing else! . . .

PORFIRY

Just look at you, how you're getting carried away. I agree, the social environment plays a significant part, I agree to that.

RAZUMIKHIN

If you want, I can prove it to you now that your eyebrows are gray, based solely on the fact that Ivan the Great was six feet tall, and I'll prove it clearly, progressively, and with a liberal slant. I can bet you I can prove it.

ZAMIOTOV

I accept! Listen, Gentlemen, how he goes about it.

RAZUMIKHIN

Hell, are you kidding me? It's not worth talking to you, Mr. Detective . . .  
All your wisdom about the crime is based on one thing only: money. Prior to the crime, the man was poor as dirt and suddenly, he's a big spender. Where did his money come from?  
Eh, anyone who wants can play you like a child.

ZAMIOTOV

Well, the fact is they all are the same. He commits a clever murder, betting his life on one horse, and minutes later, he lets himself be caught at the local bar. Always, but always, they are caught spending money like crazy.  
Not everyone is as smart as you.  
And you? You wouldn't go to the bar?

RASKOLNIKOV

No. I wouldn't. I would do it like this: I would take the money and the valuables, and I would go straight to a secluded place that I'd found earlier, some abandoned garden or something like that. I would pick a big heavy rock, and I would hide both the money and the valuables under it. Later, I wouldn't touch it for one year, two, or maybe even three years. And you, you can search all you want.

ZAMIATOV

You're crazy!

PORFIRY

No, no, no. A very clever idea!

RAZUMIKHIN

Be careful. He's doing it all on purpose. You don't know him!  
Yesterday, he came to their side, just to fool them.

RASKOLNIKOV

You're really such a good actor?

PORFIRY

What do you think? Be careful, or I'll fool you as well.  
No, no, seriously now. Let's talk about your sociological divagations on crime. I'm thinking about the article you wrote . . . about crime . . . or something like that, I don't remember the title. I read it two months ago in the journal 'Periodic Word.'

RASKOLNIKOV

My article? In 'Periodic Word'? Right, indeed, about six months ago, after I left the university, I wrote an article. It was influenced by a book. But, I dropped it off at the 'Weekly Word' not the 'Periodic Word.'

PORFIRY

Well, it ended up at the 'Periodic Word.'

RASKOLNIKOV

But 'Weekly Word' ceased to exist. That's why they didn't print it then.

PORFIRY

'Weekly Word' merged with 'Periodic Word.' That's why your article was printed just two months ago in 'Periodic Word.' Here you go . . . your article . . . you can take a look. . . . You didn't know it was published? You live in such seclusion, you're unaware of things that directly pertain to you.

RAZUMIKHIN

Bravo, Rodia! I didn't know either! Let me read it!

RASKOLNIKOV

How did you know it was my article? I signed it with my initial only.

PORFIRY

The editor-in-chief told me two weeks ago. He's also very interested in you.

RASKOLNIKOV

If I remember it right, I analyzed the psychological condition of a criminal at the moment he commits murder.

PORFIRY

Yes, yes, yes, exactly. You also stressed that the crime is always followed by illness. Very, very original thought, but . . . I'm actually interested not in this part of the article, but in something else, one thought you included at the end . . . not a very clear one. . . . If you remember, you suggested that there is a group of people, who can – no, not just 'can' – they 'have the right' to commit the worst crimes imaginable because they are above the law.

RAZUMIKHIN

What? What? The right to commit a crime? But not because: 'It's the fault of the society. The society influences the individual, etc.'?

PORFIRY

No, not at all. According to your article, Raskolnikov, people can be divided into the 'ordinary' and the 'extraordinary.' Those 'ordinary' ones should follow and respect the law because, as you say, they are just 'ordinary' people.

But those 'extraordinary' ones can commit any crimes they want to, because they are, after all,

‘extraordinary.’

It appears it was your case as well? Ain't it the truth?

RAZUMIKHIN

What is it? It's impossible he wrote something like that!!

RASKOLNIKOV

No, no no! It's not quite like that. I admit you summarized my thought well, almost exactly. . . . But, there is one difference; I don't claim that the 'extraordinary' people are obliged to commit all possible crimes – as you suggest. I think that if this was what I actually claimed, they would not print my article.

I only mentioned that the 'extraordinary' individual has a right . . . maybe not a legal right . . . but a moral right, in his conscience only, to cross certain moral laws, and only if he has some higher ideals he strives for that would justify it.

Sometimes, maybe even salvation for all humanity.

You pointed out that my article wasn't quite clear. Let me clarify it for you, assuming that is what you want.

Here you go.

If the discoveries made by Kepler and Newton, due to some extraordinary circumstances, could not have been made but for the death of one man, or maybe ten hundred men, who stood in their way, Newton would be justified – even obliged – to . . . get rid of them, if that's what was necessary to make his discoveries known. . . . But, it does not mean that Newton would have a right to kill anyone he liked, or steal everyday whatever he wanted.

Furthermore, if I remember it right, I point out in my article that everyone . . . All of those whom we consider the founders and first lawgivers of humanity – starting with antiquity, through Lycurgus, Solomon and Mahomet, to Napoleon, etc. etc. – they all, without exception, could be considered criminals just because, by creating new laws, they had to break the old ones. The old laws that were given by tradition and their fathers. They also never shied away from spilling blood, if only it would help them. It is interesting to think that those beacons of humanity, lawmakers and founders, were often the cruelest ones. I argue that everyone – not only the great ones – but normal people who are somewhat special, who could say or create something new, extraordinary even, those people, just because of who they are and what they could do, could be considered criminal.

Otherwise, they would never emerge from the crowd, never get unstuck from the banality of their lives. And their nature would never, ever allow them to remain stuck. I would even add that they have an obligation, a responsibility not to let it happen.

As you can see, I'm not claiming anything new. These points were written and printed hundreds of times before. I admit, my separation of people into 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' is somewhat loose, but I'm not hung up on exact numbers. I do believe in my main thesis: according to the laws of nature, people can be generally divided into two categories: the lowest ones, who are, so to speak, raw material. Their only job is to procreate. The second group is the people proper. They have some kind of talent or skill which allows them to stand above the crowd and pronounce N E W W O R D. The first group, the raw material, are by nature submissive and they like it that way. I believe they should be submissive because that's what they were made for. There is nothing humiliating or disrespectful about it.

People who belong to the second group, they all break the law. They are the lawbreakers because

they can and should do it.

Their crimes are relative and varied. Most often they destroy the existing *status quo* for a higher better order. If such an extraordinary man needs to step over bodies, if he needs to draw some blood to accomplish his task, I think, he should, internally, and in peace with his conscience, allow himself such a march through blood, to overcome any moral obstacles. It depends, of course, on his ideals and their range. Those are the circumstances I talk about in my article when I write about 'the right to crime.'

But there is of course, nothing to worry about because the slums will not allow for the extraordinary to raise. They will cut them down. But of course, the next generation picks them up and puts them on a pedestal. The 'ordinary' ones are the masters of the present, but the 'extraordinary' ones are the masters of the future. The first group procreates and keeps us as we are. The second group pushes the world forward toward well-defined goals. But everyone in my theory has a right to equality. *Vive la guerre eternelle*, until the Judgment Day, that is.

PORFIRY

Well, well. So you believe in Judgment Day, after all?

RASKOLNIKOV

Yes, I do.

PORFIRY

And . . . do you believe in God? I'm sorry if that's too personal.

RASKOLNIKOV

Yes.

PORFIRY

And in the raising of Lazarus?

RASKOLNIKOV

Yes. Why do you ask such questions?

PORFIRY

Do you believe in it literally?

RASKOLNIKOV

Literally.

PORFIRY

Aha . . . Never mind that. Let's go back to our discussion. You know, sometimes those 'extraordinary' ones survive. On the contrary, sometimes, they . . . .

RASKOLNIKOV

They triumph during their lifetimes? Oh yes, some accomplish their goals in their lifetime, and then . . .

PORFIRY

Then, they themselves begin to cut down the others?

RASKOLNIKOV

If such a need arises, and you know, that's almost always the case.

That's a very clever point.

PORFIRY

Thank you.

Could you tell me how we should distinguish between the 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' folk? Maybe there are some signs when they are born?

You know, it would be helpful to be more detailed here, especially about the outward signs.

Forgive my concerns, the concerns of a practical and law-abiding man. Could we, for example, have them wear some kind of uniform, or maybe some emblems, or mark them somehow?

Because I have to admit, if there is a confusion, if a man of the lower class gets it into his head that he belongs to the other group, and goes all the way out to remove these 'moral obstacles' as you called it . . .

RASKOLNIKOV

That happens very often. And, by the way, this observation of yours is even more clever than the last one . . . .

PORFIRY

Thank you very much . . .

RASKOLNIKOV

You're welcome. Could you take under consideration, though, that such a mistake is dangerous only if made by the 'lower classes'?

Regardless of their innate subservience, and due to certain stubbornness that even cows have sometimes, there might be a large group of such people who would like to see themselves as the 'destroyers' of the old world order, who bring in the 'new word.'

And they would do it faithfully convinced that they are right. It seems to me though that there is no real danger on their part since they don't have the guts to go too far.

They can be chastised for their overzealousness once in a while to remind them of their proper place, but nothing more. Nothing else will have to be done because eventually, they'll chastise themselves, or each other. . . . They'll even feel compelled to do it in public because it looks appropriate and pedagogical. In other words, you shouldn't be concerned about this at all. . . .

That's the law of nature.

PORFIRY

Well, you calmed some of my fears. That's for sure. But, I have one more concern.

Could you tell me: how many of those 'extraordinary' ones who can kill all others are there? Of course, I'm willing to bow down to your idea, but you understand that I feel a bit uneasy, if there are going to be a lot of them. What do you say?

RASKOLNIKOV

In regards to this issue, you shouldn't worry. People who can claim any new thought, some talent or skill, well, there aren't that many of them born out there. I don't know what law there is, but there must some kind of law of nature, that we will know one day, a law that directs all of that. The human mass, mingling together, once in a while can bring forth one man who is extraordinary. One in a hundred thousands. Geniuses – there might be one in millions. Great geniuses – cream of the crop of humanity – maybe one in a hundred millions. I don't know how we would know who they are, but I stand by my point: there is and has to be a special law for them. There can be no accidents here.

RAZUMIKHIN

Are you kidding? You're fooling around, aren't you? You can't be serious. Talk, talk, one bullshitting the other.

Rodia, brother, you're not being serious? If you're serious . . . then you might be right that there is nothing new in this. It reminds me of other things I've heard or read before. Nonetheless, Rodia, there's something o r i g i n a l in it, something – and this thought really horrifies me – that something that belongs only to you . . . that would allow for murder in a c c o r d a n c e w i t h o n e ' s c o n s c i e n c e , and forgive me, Rodia, with such fanaticism . . .

So that is the main thought of your article.

Such permission to murder in a c c o r d a n c e w i t h o n e ' s c o n s c i e n c e . . . I believe, it is worse than if you would legalize it by official means . . .

PORFIRY

Yes! It is worse.

RAZUMIKHIN

No. You just got carried away! One cannot think like that . . .  
I have to read your article again.

RASKOLNIKOV

I didn't write all that in the article. I only mentioned it briefly.

PORFIRY

Yes, yes, yes, yes. Now, I know exactly how you feel about the crime. I have to say, you calmed my fears a bit about the accidental mix-up between the two classes, but I have one more question. Let's assume that some young man gets it into his head that he's Lycurgus or Mahomet . . . and . . . he goes ahead and starts to remove the 'moral obstacles.'

Here's an example: I'm planning a long trip. To be able to do that, I need money . . . a lot of money . . . so what do I do?

RASKOLNIKOV

That's unavoidable. Stupid and vain people often fall into a trap like that, especially if they're young.

PORFIRY

That's right. What then?

RASKOLNIKOV

‘Nothing.’ What happens then is not my fault or my worry. That’s just the way the world is, always was and always will be. Razumikhin just said that I condone murder. So what? The society is well-protected by police, detectives, courts, prisons, gulags. You have the power to find and punish the criminal.

PORFIRY

Yes, indeed . . .

And when we find him? What then?

RASKOLNIKOV

He deserves what he’ll get.

PORFIRY

Yes, that’s a healthy logic. What about his conscience?

RASKOLNIKOV

What’s that to you?

PORFIRY

Oh, it’s just my sense of humanity.

RASKOLNIKOV

Whoever has a conscience, let him suffer, once he realizes his wrongdoings. It’ll be his punishment.

PORFIRY

Don’t be offended, but I need to ask you one more question. I want to ponder one small tiny little idea . . . . Just so I wouldn’t forget about it later . . . .

RASKOLNIKOV

Sure, tell me about your small idea.

PORFIRY

You see, my small idea . . . is . . . how to put it . . . a bit flirtatious . . . psychologically. When you were writing your article, you must have considered yourself one of those ‘extraordinary’ men, bringing the ‘new word’ – as you put it . . .

RASKOLNIKOV

That’s a possibility.

PORFIRY

If you felt this way, is it possible that you could decide yourself that you were justified in committing a murder?

RASKOLNIKOV

Even if I'd crossed that line, I wouldn't have told you about it.

PORFIRY

No, no. I'm just . . . interested in your opinion, trying to understand your article better, from a literary point of view.

RASKOLNIKOV

You should have realized by now that I don't consider myself to be Mahomet or Napoleon . . . or anyone like them . . . so, I am unable to give you a proper answer since I don't know how I would have behaved if I considered myself to be like them.

PORFIRY

Hey, hey, my dear, who in today's Russia does not think he's Napoleon?

ZAMIOTOV

What? Maybe one of such Napoleons killed our Alyona Ivanovna?

PORFIRY

What? You're leaving already? What a pity. We were having such a nice talk. . . . It was a pleasure to meet you. . . . About your jewelry, just write me a letter, like I said. Or, you know what . . . why don't you drop by my office again soon . . . maybe even tomorrow? I'll be here around eleven, for sure. We'll take care of everything . . . we'll talk . . . . You're one of the last ones who were in their apartment. Maybe you can help us . . . .

RASKOLNIKOV

Do you intend to interrogate me officially?

PORFIRY

You misunderstood me. As you see, I'm very meticulous, and I talk to everyone. You, as the last person . . .

Wait, wait, I just remembered something! You were the one bugging me the other day about this guy, Mikolka. I know he's innocent, but I had to talk to him anyway . . .

Let me ask: you were there at eight o'clock, right?

RASKOLNIKOV

Eight.

PORFIRY

When you were going up the stairs, at eight o'clock, did you happen to see two painters on the second floor? They were working with the door opened in one of the apartments? It's very important for them . . . !

RASKOLNIKOV

Painters? No, I didn't see them. I don't remember. I didn't even notice any opened apartments . . . . But on the fourth floor, indeed, I remember some office worker was moving out from his

apartment . . . located right across from Alyona's . . . I remember this clearly . . .  
The soldiers were removing his couch and they pushed me to the wall . . . . But painters . . . . No,  
I don't remember . . . and an opened apartment . . . no . . . I'm sure there were no opened  
apartments.

**RAZUMIKHIN**

Porfiry! What are you talking about! The painters were there on the day of murder and Rodia  
was there three days earlier! Why do you even ask him such questions?

**PORFIRY**

Shit! Crap! I got all mixed up. Too much work.  
We really need to know if someone didn't see them there at eight o'clock.  
I got everything mixed up! Shit!

**RASKOLNIKOV**

You might try to focus more.

#### **SCENE IV**

##### **"Streetwalker"**

/Sonia and Koch/

**KOCH**

I had a meeting with Alyona scheduled.  
I rang the bell once, twice, but nobody opened. I rang again . . . ten times maybe. Then someone  
called: 'Mr. Koch' – because my name is Koch. Nobody's there. What the hell do I know. How  
do you know me?  
He says: 'Not too long ago, in "Gamrymusie," I won three rounds against you at billards.'  
I say: 'Aha. . . .'  
'Wait' – he screamed as I began to pull at the door again – 'Look there is a slit in the door when  
you pull it' – he says.  
'So what?' – I asked.  
'You don't understand! It means that one of them is home . . . .'

#### **SCENE V**

##### **"Mieszczynin's Testimony"**

**MIESZCZYNIN**

I asked – 'What do you want?'  
He didn't answer, just pulled the doorbell.  
'Who are you?' – I asked.  
'What do you want?'  
'I want to rent an apartment – I am just looking around.'  
Who rents apartments at night?

'I see the floor is all cleaned up. No more blood. Are you going to paint it?'

'What blood?' – I asked.

'The old hag and her sisters were killed not too long ago. There was a pool of bllll-oooood here.'

'Ok, but you are who?' – I asked again.

'I'm Rodion Raskolnikov. I live in the shelter, not too far away from here.'

## SCENE VI

### "Raising of Lazarus"

/Koch and Sonia are getting dressed/

KOCH

I began to push and pull at the doorknob. We went up and the door was half-opened. The two bodies were lying on the floor, in a pool of blood.

If I had stayed there, he would have jumped out and killed me too.

/Koch gives Sonia money and exits. Raskolnikov enters/

SONIA

O my God! It's you.

RASKOLNIKOV

It's late, I know. Eleven already?

SONIA

Yes. The clock just struck at the neighbor's.

RASKOLNIKOV

Why are you standing like that. Come, sit down.

Your hands are so cold. Fingers like a dead person's.

SONIA

I've always had such cold hands.

/Raskolnikov kisses her hand and kneels down/

What are you doing? What are you doing? Not in front of me! I'm . . . I'm a great sinner . . . without shame!

RASKOLNIKOV

I wasn't bowing for you. I was bowing for the entire suffering humanity.

It's true, you're the sinner –

Your greatest sin is that you've lost and betrayed yourself for no purpose. It's horrible that you live here in this squalor that you hate, and you know yourself that you are neither helping or saving anyone!

Just tell me, tell me, how such shamelessness and malice lives in you along with other, almost saintly feelings. It would be wiser and more rational just to drown yourself and get it over with!

SONIA

And what would then happen to my sister?

RASKOLNIKOV

Polunya will end up just like you!

SONIA

No. It cannot be! God won't allow it! God will protect her!

RASKOLNIKOV

What if God doesn't exist?

And you're praying to him so ardently, Sonia?

SONIA

What would I be without God?

RASKOLNIKOV

And what is it that God gives you?

SONIA

Be silent! Don't ask! You don't deserve to . . . !

RASKOLNIKOV

"That's it! That's it!" – I don't deserve to . . . !

SONIA

He gives me everything!

RASKOLNIKOV

/browsing the Bible/

Where is the passage about Lazarus? About the resurrection of Lazarus? Where is it? Find it.

SONIA

You're looking in the wrong place . . . It's in the Gospel of John . . .

RASKOLNIKOV

Find it and read it to me –

SONIA

You never read it?

RASKOLNIKOV

A long time ago . . . in school . . .

SONIA

You didn't hear it in church?

RASKOLNIKOV

I . . . don't go to . . . . And you? Do you go to church often?

SONIA

N-no.

RASKOLNIKOV

I understand . . .

SONIA

I went last week . . . for the funeral . . .

RASKOLNIKOV

Whose funeral?

SONIA

Lizaveta. Someone murdered her with an ax.

RASKOLNIKOV

Were you friends with her?

SONIA

Yes . . . . She was a just woman . . . . She used to come to visit me . . . not too often . . . it wouldn't look good. We used to read together . . . and talk. She will be talking to God face to face now.

RASKOLNIKOV

Read!

SONIA

What's that to you? You don't believe anyway . . . ?

RASKOLNIKOV

Read! I want you to! You've read with Lizaveta.

SONIA

"Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha . . ."

"And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming . . ."

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"Then Martha as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house. Now Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give You.' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha said to Him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who

believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him: Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.”

“Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. “

SONIA

That’s all about the raising of Lazarus.

RASKOLNIKOV

I need you. That’s why I’m here.

SONIA

I don’t understand.

RASKOLNIKOV

You’ll understand later. You also crossed . . . You also wasted life . . . your own. If you stay here alone, you’ll eventually go crazy, like me. We have to walk together, on one path! Let’s go!

SONIA

Why? Why are you saying things like that?

RASKOLNIKOV

Why? Because we can’t continue like this – that’s why! Finally, you need to think bravely and seriously, and not like a child, crying and whining that God won’t allow. He has already allowed many times.

Children? Children? What’s going to happen to children? They are the image of Christ: He asked us to love – theirs is God’s Kingdom. They are the future of humanity . . .

SONIA

What ought we to do?

RASKOLNIKOV

What ought we to do? Break what’s unbreakable, once and for all. Take on yourself the suffering! Do you understand? Freedom and power, but power foremost! Power over the entire slimy anthill of humanity! . . . That’s the goal! That’s a reason.

It’s possible that I’m speaking with you for the last time.

If I don’t come tomorrow, you’ll learn about me sooner or later. If I come tomorrow, I’ll tell you who killed Lizaveta. Farewell!

SONIA

You know who killed Lizaveta?

RASKOLNIKO

Yes, yes, I know and I will tell you. Only you! I chose you a long time ago. I won't come to ask you for redemption. I'll just tell you.

Farewell. Don't give me your hand. Tomorrow!

## SCENE VII

### "Surprise"

MIESZCZYNNIN

'What blood' – I ask – and he starts to pull the doorbell.

PORFIRY

What? He asked about blood? Pulled the doorbell?

What a scum!

/doorbell/

What again?

Sit here. Be quiet. I might call you.

## SCENE VIII

### "Interrogation"

PORFIRY

Come on in, young man! Welcome, welcome . . . Sit down brother! Oh, maybe you don't like to be called "young man" or "brother"? I don't intend to be disrespectful . . . Yes, here's the chair.

RASKOLNIKOV

I brought the letter you asked for.

PORFIRY

What letter?

RASKOLNIKOV

About the watch . . .

/Porfiry reads the letter/

Well-written?

PORFIRY

Letter, letter! Letter? Yes, yes . . . quite well. Should be sufficient.

RASKOLNIKOV

You were saying yesterday you wanted to ask me. . . . officially . . . about my acquaintance with that . . . killed woman?

PORFIRY

Yes, yes, yes! But we're in no hurry . . . we have time, plenty of time. Cigarette?

You have yours?

You know, I'm hosting you here, and my police apartment is just around . . . . It's all finished up.

I need to make a few small renovations . . .

Such a police apartment is a good thing, what?

What do you think? A good thing?

RASKOLNIKOV

Good, indeed.

PORFIRY

Good thing, good thing, indeed.

RASKOLNIKOV

You know what?

I've heard that there is this investigative trick you all are obliged to follow: start with something banal, even serious, but completely unconnected to the main investigation. Once the suspect feels all safe and comfortable – Wham! – suddenly, you whack him with an unexpected question. I've heard that this is standard procedure, recommended by every police manual. Isn't it?

PORFIRY

What? You think I wanted you to . . . with this apartment?

/They laugh and Porfiry throws up/

RASKOLNIKOV

You wanted me to come to see you to ask me some questions . . . . I'm here, and if you want something, ask. If you don't, let me go. I don't have time for this. I'm busy . . . I'm sick of all this. Do you hear me? Partially, that's what got me sick . . .

To sum it up –

To sum it up: you either ask me or let me go . . . and if you ask me, you need to ask me formally! I'm not agreeing to anything else. So, for the moment, I'm leaving. There is nothing we can do here together.

PORFIRY

My God! Why you got so offended? But it's all nonsense, my dear.

We have time. We have time. It's all nonsense.

I'm welcoming you here as a guest. Forgive me, Rodion Romanovich. Your name is Rodion, is it?

I'm very stressed out. Sometimes I get completely out of control . . . I shake all over. . . . For thirty minutes . . . With my complexion, it can lead to a stroke.

Sit down, please.

Sit down, or I'll think you're mad at me.

I have to tell you something about myself, Rodion Romanovich.

I am, you know, a bachelor, not a very social man, rather a hermit, a finished man – do you understand – yes, I’m an island unto myself. . . .

. . . . And . . . did you notice, here, in Russia, especially in Petersburg, when you have two people, who might not know, but who respect each other, and do what you will, they can’t find a common ground. They become, so to speak, paralyzed by each other’s presence. Why does this happen? Maybe because we’re too honest and don’t want to play games with each other. What do you think?

Put away your hat. It looks like you’re about to leave. . . . Stay, I’m very happy to see you here. I don’t dare to offer you a cup of coffee because we can’t do that here, but we can sit down for five minutes and have a friendly conversation, why not? . . . About those investigations – please, forgive me for pacing like that. I don’t want to offend you. I just need some exercise. I sit all the time, so it is nice to move around a bit . . . hemorrhoids . . . I thought about going to a sanatorium, exercise . . . I’ve heard that the generals, they all exercise, jumping up and down . . . yes, yes . . . . That’s progress . . . in our century . . . yes. . . .

Coming back to our investigative tricks – as you put it – I have to agree with you completely. Just think, what suspect – even the most uncouth and lowly individual – doesn’t know that he is going to be first lulled with irrelevant questions only to be hit unexpectedly with a sneaky one! You hit the bullseye with this one! So you really thought I wanted to lull you . . . ? Haha! You’re clever! I’ll stop . . . but . . . just by association, if I’m to describe the form of this interview . . . . What is a form?

Form is all nonsense. Sometime you can just chat, like this, friendly and without a form. What is a form?

Form shouldn’t limit us each step of the way. And being a detective is a bit like being an artist . . .

You’re completely right . . . completely right to mock so cleverly our strategies.

/sits down behind the desk/

Those tricks are laughable indeed, and they don’t bring any results. They’re too tied up in formality. Yes . . . form indeed. Well! They’re talking about the coming reform of the judiciary system. Maybe we’ll have different forms now . . .

Dear Rodion Romanovich. . . . Let’s assume that I suspect someone . . . or another, or other of a crime that I’m to investigate . . .

You are studying law, Rodion Romanovich?

RASKOLNIKOV

Yes, I did.

PORFIRY

Law. Let me give you one example. Just don’t think I’m trying to teach you something, a person who writes articles about crime and law! God forbid! I wouldn’t dare. I’m just curious to know what you think . . .

Let’s assume that I have one, or two, or three suspects, why would I use any tricks on them? To forewarn and scare them away? Even if I have proof of their guilt. Of course, there are people that I simply need to arrest, but there are others as well, who have a certain character. Why not let them walk free for a while? You see? You’re laughing! People vary and we shouldn’t treat them all the same. You say, ok, what about the leads, the proof? Well, that can be a problem. But

my job is to conduct the investigation carefully and precisely. I need to find such proof that would make the guilt clear, without a doubt, like two and two is four. If I make an arrest too soon, even if I myself was certain of his guilt, I might lose a chance to get the unbeatable proof. Why? If I try to get him too soon, he'll shut up, psychologically and literally, and I'll never get anything out of him. He'll understand that he is arrested.

But if I leave him roaming free – while letting him know that I'll watch him all the time, every day, every minute, every step – he will inevitably go crazy and come to me himself, or he'll make such a huge mistake, I'll have no problem proving his guilt once and for all.

Mathematically. A simple peasant can make a mistake, but even the most intelligent of them will make some mistake if he's under pressure. You see, the secret is to figure out the psychology of the criminal.

Stress, stress – you need to remember about the stress. Today, everyone's stressed out, confused, torn! . . . and bitter. How bitter they are. It's like a goldmine. I really don't need to worry about one or another criminal like that walking around town on the loose for a few days. Let him walk free, my poor little lamb. I know where he is and he won't get away! Maybe abroad? Maybe if he's Polish, but not Russian. Once he knows that I am onto him, he won't dare to escape. Where? Maybe deeper into the country? But the country is full of peasants, those traditional, uncouth, authentic Russian peasants. The city man, modern man, he'd rather go to prison than live among them. What does it mean 'to run away'? That's a shallow question. He won't run away, not only because he has no place to go, but he can't run away from me psychologically!

Nice, isn't it?

Have you ever seen a moth circling a candle? Like a moth, the criminal will be circling around me; he'll lose his taste for freedom; he'll become incoherent, confused. He will catch himself in the net, scared to death. . . . Even more: he himself will prepare for me the proof, the two-and-two-is-four certainty . . . He'll be circling and circling around that light, closer and closer, until WHAM! Right into my mouth he'll fall and I'll swallow him whole. That's going to be pure pleasure.

What?! What?! You don't believe me? You still think I'm just playing some innocent tricks? Yes?!

Of course, you're right. God gave me a posture that provokes laughter, doesn't it? I am right, but I have an open mind. Isn't it true as well? I'm giving you all this confidential information, without asking for anything.

What? What happened?

You can't breathe? Maybe I should open the window?

/he leans forward in his chair and looks at Raskolnikov carefully/

RASKOLNIKOV

No, don't bother. There is no need.

I can see clearly now that you suspect me of this murder. I have to tell you I'm completely fed up with this. If you think you can pursue me legally, please, do so. Arrest me. But, torturing and mocking me like that, I won't allow.

I won't allow it!

Do you hear it? Porfiry Petrovich? I won't allow it!

PORFIRY

Calm down!!!

RASKOLNIKOV

I won't allow it!

PORFIRY

Calm down!! Someone will hear you! They'll come here and what'll we tell them?

What? Are you ok?

You need some fresh air.

Some water, my dear, you need some water.

/running/

A little panic attack!

My dear, drink it up. Maybe it'll help. . . .

/Raskolnikov pushes away the glass./

It was just a little panic attack, Radion Romanovich! My dear! You should take better care of yourself. You can go mad if you don't.

You can get seriously ill.

You should know, I know about something else. I know you went back to her apartment, pulled the doorbell, asked about the blood . . . . You see – I know everything . . .

Sit down, my lovely, sit down, for God's sake.

Sit down.

It's not good, not good, if a man can't avoid the temptation to pull the doorbell, ask about the blood. I know psychology. Sometimes, you have this desire to jump out the window. Sometimes, strangely, it is a tempting . . .

Sickness, hallucinations! Daze! From the beginning to the end, terrible fever and daze . . .

RAKOLNIKOV

No! No! No! I wasn't in a daze! I wasn't hallucinating! It was real! I was conscious! Do you hear me?

PORFIRY

I hear you. I hear everything, whatever you're saying. But, Rodion Romanovich, my friend, have some mercy on me. If you were in any way connected to this murder, why would you claim that you did it while conscious and not in a daze or fever?

Just tell me, is it logical? Is it logical? On the contrary, if you felt guilty in any way, you would try to convince me that you were in a daze, unconscious, sick, unable to judge. Maybe not?

RASKOLNIKOV

You're lying. You want to prove to me that you saw through my game, that you're able to predict everything I'd say.

You're lying. You want to scare me . . . or you just mock me . . .

You know very well that the best defense for the killer is to tell the truth, to tell the truth whenever possible. I don't believe you.

PORFIRY

You don't believe me? This is some kind of obsession of yours. You don't believe me? You don't believe me? Well, you do believe me in part, and soon you'll believe me completely. And you know why? Because I like you and I honestly have your best interest in mind. I repeat –

Doorbell . . . such a jewel, such an important piece of information. I give it to you and it doesn't mean anything to you? You've lost your good sense and can't see clearly.

RASKOLNIKOV

You're lying. I don't know what for, but you're lying . . . . You just said something completely different . . . . I can't be mistaken . . . . You're lying!

PORFIRY

Am I? Am I lying . . . . Well, why then, I, the detective, tell you how to defend yourself: "illness, daze, hallucination, past suffering."

RASKOLNIKOV

All right, all right. Tell me then. Do you officially believe me to be free from suspicions? Tell me, now! Once and definitively!

PORFIRY

Don't shout! Be quiet!

Why do you want to know? Why do you want to know so much if so far, nobody even touched you!

Mister, why do you insist so much?

RASKOLNIKOV

I repeat, I won't tolerate this any longer!

PORFIRY

What? Uncertainty?

RASKOLNIKOV

Don't be such a snake. I don't want to . . . . Do you hear me? I won't . . . I won't and I don't want to . . . . Do you hear me!

PORFIRY

But be quiet, be quiet! I'm serious right now! I'm not joking! Be quiet.

RASKOLNIKOV

I won't let you torture me like that!

Arrest me, search me, ok. But you need to follow the legal procedures. Don't play with me!

Don't you dare play with me . . .

PORFIRY

And I invited him as a friend . . .

RASKOLNIKOV

I don't need your friendship. I spit on it! Do you hear me? That's it. I'm grabbing my hat and leaving.

Do you want to arrest me?

/Raskolnikov is about to leave/

PORFIRY

And you don't want to see the surprise?

RASKOLNIKOV

What surprise?

PORFIRY

Behind the door.

It's closed. Here's the key!

RASKOLNIKOV

You scumbag. You're lying! You want me to slip and betray myself . . .

PORFIRY

But you can't betray yourself more than you already did. You are mad. Fact. Don't scream or I'll call the policemen.

RASKOLNIKOV

Call, call, call all you want! Nothing will happen! You knew I'm ill. You wanted to drive me mad so I would betray myself. But it's all a joke. Show me the proof. I understand everything now. You don't have a thing, except your suspicions! . . . You know my character, who I am. You wanted to drive me crazy, knock me off with your tricks . . . . Bring your delegates. What are you waiting for? What are you waiting for? Go on!

PORFIRY

What delegates? Are you hallucinating again?

RASKOLNIKOV

They're coming! You sent for them . . . . You waited for them! You calculated it . . . go on! Bring them all! Delegates, witnesses, whoever you want . . . bring them all. I am ready, I'm ready! . . .

## SCENE IX

### **"I am the killer"**

PORFIRY

What?

PROCH

We have brought the arrested, Mikolka!

MIKOLKA

I am guilty! My sin! I'm the killer! I am guilty! My sin! I'm the killer!

I am guilty! My sin! I'm the killer!

PORFIRY

Mikolka, what are you saying?

MIKOLKA

/On his knees/

I am . . . the killer . . .

PORFIRY

Who did you kill?

MIKOLKA

Alyona Ivanovna and her sister, Lizaveta Ivanovna. I killed them . . . with an ax. I think it was madness, or something . . .

PORFIRY

What nonsense? What madness? Did I ask you if you were mad or sane?  
Come here! Who did you kill?

MIKOLKA

Alyona Ivanovna.

PORFIRY

How did you kill her?

MIKOLKA

With an ax. I took it with me.

PORFIRY

By yourself?

MIKOLKA

By myself. Mitka is innocent. He didn't help me with anything.

PORFIRY

Mitka – innocent? The porter saw both of you?

MIKOLKA

Because I . . . just . . . wanted to . . . confuse everyone . . . that's why I ran with Mitka the other day.

PORFIRY

You're repeating someone else's words.

My apologies, Rodion Romanovich! You can go now . . . See, what surprises . . . what surprises . . . who would have known! Well! Well!

RASKOLNIKOV

You didn't expect this? Did you?  
/They face each other across the desk/

PORFIRY

My dear, you also didn't expect it. How your hands are shaking!

RASKOLNIKOV

You are also shaking, Porfiry Petrovich.

PORFIRY

I am shaking. I didn't expect this!

RASKOLNIKOV

So, you won't show me your surprise after all?

PORFIRY

You talk, but your teeth chatter. Goodbye.

RASKOLNIKOV

Rather, farewell!

PORFIRY

God willing. God willing!

But, I will have to ask you a few f o r m a l questions at some point . . . so we'll see each other soon.

RASKOLNIKOV

Porfiry Petrovich, please, forgive me. I got carried away.

PORFIRY

Don't apologize. It's nothing.

Me too. I . . . apologize . . . I apologize . . . . I can be pushy sometimes . . . . I apologize! See you soon.

RASKOLNIKOV

So, we'll get to know each other really well?

PORFIRY

Yes, we'll get to know each other really well.

RASKOLNIKOV

I would wish you good luck, but you see for yourself how ridiculous is your profession!

PORFIRY

Why ridiculous?

RASKOLNIKOV

I can only imagine how you tortured and investigated – psychologically – this poor Mikolka! Day and night, night and day, you hypnotized him: ‘You’re the killer, you’re the killer. . . .’ And now, for the heck of it, you will be telling him: ‘You’re lying. You can’t be the killer! You can’t! You’re repeating someone else’s words.’

PORFIRY

So you heard what I just said: ‘You’re repeating someone else’s words’?

RASKOLNIKOV

How could I not?

PORFIRY

Well, well . . . . The incredibly clever mind of yours. You just hit the nail on the head . . . . Among writers, only Gogol had a similar skill.

RASKOLNIKOV

Yes, only Gogol.

PORFIRY

See you soon.

RASKOLNIKOV

See you soon.

PORFIRY

/To Mikolka, kicking him/

Get up.

/Opening door/

Get out.

/Eating soup/

Sit down.

You can go.

I’ll interrogate you some more. Talk.

MIKOLKA

I killed Alyona Ivanovna and her sister Lizaveta. I killed and robbed her.

**SCENE X**

**“Surprise apologies”**

MIESZCZYNNIN

I apologize.

RASKOLNIKOV  
What?

MIESZCZYNNIN  
I apologize . . .

RASKOLNIKOV  
What for?

MIESZCZYNNIN  
Bad thoughts.  
I feel bad. When you came over the other day, asking about the blood . . . I had a suspicion. I felt weird that they let you go thinking you were drunk. I couldn't sleep. We even came here yesterday, asking for you . . .

RASKOLNIKOV  
Who came?

MIESZCZYNNIN  
I did. I misjudged you.

RASKOLNIKOV  
So, it is you who live in that house?

MIESZCZYNNIN  
Yes, it was me who stood at the gates then . . . Don't you remember . . . I feel really bad . . .

RASKOLNIKOV  
So you told Porfiry Petrovich that I came over . . . ?

MIESZCZYNNIN  
What Porfiry Petrovich?

RASKOLNIKOV  
The detective.

MIESZCZYNNIN  
It was me. The porters didn't want to go, so I went to see him.

RASKOLNIKOV  
Today?

MIESZCZYNNIN  
Just before you did. And I have heard everything, everything, that he said to you.

RASKOLNIKOV  
Where? What? When?

MIESZCZYNNIN  
Behind the closed doors. I was hidden. I stood there during your entire conversation.

RASKOLNIKOV  
What? So you were the surprise?

MIESZCZYNNIN  
When they brought you in, he told me to hide and stay hidden no matter what. And when Mikolka came, he let you go first and then, he told me to go. He also told me he would be questioning me later on . . .

RASKOLNIKOV  
Did he question Mikolka in front of you as well?

MIESZCZYNNIN  
Right after he let you go, he let me go . . . . Please, forgive me for slandering you. . . .

RASKOLNIKOV  
God will forgive you . . .  
Now, we'll see who got what.

## **THE END OF ACT I**

### **ACT II SCENE XI "Now, He Came"**

SONIA  
Do you know who killed her?

RASKOLNIKOV  
I do.

SONIA  
They caught him, didn't they?

RASKOLNIKOV  
No. They haven't caught him.

SONIA  
How do you know?

RASKOLNIKOV

Guess.

SONIA

But . . . me . . . why . . . are you scaring me like that?

RASKOLNIKOV

You can't guess?

SONIA

N-no.

RASKOLNIKOV

Look carefully.

SONIA

Oh my God!

RASKOLNIKOV

You guessed.

SONIA

What did you do to yourself?

What did you do to yourself?

RASKOLNIKOV

How strange you are Sonia. You hugged and kissed me when I told you about it. You forgot about yourself.

SONIA

No, no. In the whole wide world, there is no one more unhappy than you!

RASKOLNIKOV

So you won't leave me?

SONIA

No, no. Never! I'll follow you anywhere! Oh, God . . . ! Poor me . . . ! Why, why I didn't know you earlier! Why you didn't come to me earlier? Oh God!

RASKOLNIKOV

I came now.

SONIA

Now? Together, together! I'll go with you to Siberia!

RASKOLNIKOV

How do you know, Sonia? Maybe I don't plan to go to Siberia.

SONIA

You, you. You couldn't . . . . You would dare do something like that? What are you saying?

RASKOLNIKOV

To rob! Stop it, Sonia!

SONIA

You were hungry! You wanted to . . . help your mother? Yes?

RASKOLNIKOV

No, no. I wasn't that hungry. Yes, I wanted to help my mother, but it's not quite like that . . .

I don't even know if there was any money there.

She had a little sack on her neck. I took it. . . . It was full, bulky . . . but I didn't look inside it. . . .

The sack and everything else – jewelry, all other valuables – I've hidden it under a huge rock in someone's garden . . . .

Everything is there.

SONIA

So why. . . . why? You said: to rob, and yet you didn't take anything?

RASKOLNIKOV

I don't know . . . . I can't decide if I should take this money or not. It's all nonsense. You know Sonia, I have to tell you something. If I only killed because I was hungry, I would be happy now!

You need to know that!

What would it help you? What would it help you? Even if I were to admit right now that what I did was horribly wrong? What would you do with this silly victory over me?

I called you up yesterday because you're the only one I have left.

SONIA

Where did you call me?

RASKOLNIKOV

I didn't call you to kill and to steal. Don't worry. We are too different. There was just one thing, just one thing I wished for. I wished you wouldn't leave me. You won't leave me, Sonia?

Why are you kissing me now? Because I couldn't handle this burden myself and came here to dump it on your shoulders: 'suffer like I do. It will make me feel better.' Can you love such a scumbag like me?

SONIA

Aren't you suffering as well?

RASKOLNIKOV

Sonia, I have an evil heart. Remember this. It explains a lot. I came here because I'm evil. There are some who wouldn't come. I am a coward . . . and scum! But . . . whatever! That's not it . . . . I should talk now and I don't know where to start. We are so different! So incompatible! Why, why did I come here! I'll never forgive myself!

SONIA

No, no. It's good that you came here! It's better that I know! Much better!

RASKOLNIKOV

Yes, indeed. That's what has happened! Listen! I wanted to be Napoleon, that's why I killed . . . . Do you understand?

SONIA

N-no. Tell me . . . tell me! I'll understand! I'll understand within me!

RASKOLNIKOV

You'll understand? Well, we'll see!

I asked myself this question: Let's assume that it's Napoleon who is in my place, and he does not have any money to start his career. He doesn't have Turin or Egypt, not even Mont Blanc. On the other hand, there is this little old lady, a widow that needs to be killed to get to her money. For the career! Do you understand?

Should he hesitate? Look for another option? Would he feel guilty that it was not grand enough? Or . . . sin? I'm telling you. I spent months thinking about this question. I'm ashamed to admit that I came to the conclusion that not only would he not feel guilty . . . he wouldn't even understand why he should feel guilty.

If he didn't have any other way, he would not hesitate to kill her, without any doubt – without pondering it too much!

So I gave up pondering . . . and killed her . . . following his example. I'm telling you exactly what has happened. Does it make you laugh?

Yes, that's true, Sonia. It is funny that that's exactly what happened . . .

SONIA

You should be straightforward . . . without examples.

RASKOLNIKOV

Sonia, you're right. It's all utter nonsense, such talk.

You see: my mother has nothing. She hangs all her hopes on me. I've studied, but I ran out of money, so I had to leave the University. If I could continue my studies, I could hope that maybe in ten, twelve years – if everything goes well – I could become a teacher or government administrator with salary of a thousand rubles . . . . I decided to take the old woman's money to use it for my studies, to help my mother, to stop being dependent on her. I wanted to get all this done on a grand level, to create a new life, new career for myself, to get on a new path to life . . . So . . . I . . . killed . . . the old woman, that's obvious, but . . . enough about it!

SONIA

No, no, no – it cannot be . . . no, no, no!

RASKOLNIKOV

You see for yourself now! . . . I told you everything, honestly, the whole truth!

SONIA

What truth is that?

RASKOLNIKOV

She was a louse, Sonia, a useless parasite. I killed a louse!!!

SONIA

You call a human being a louse?

RASKOLNIKOV

I know she's not a louse – I talk nonsense. Sonia, I've been talking nonsense for a long time . . . . That's not . . . . There were other motives, very different motives . . . . I haven't spoken with anyone for a long time, Sonia . . . . I have a terrible headache . . .

Sonia, no, no, it's not it!

It's not it! Rather . . . let's assume, let's assume, that I'm ambitious, evil and vindictive, and . . .

My mother could send me money to pay my tuition, and I could work to pay for other things, shoes, food, clothes. But I became evil and didn't want to . . . I became evil. I became a hermit.

Oh, how I hated my hole of a room! But I didn't want to leave it. I stayed there days and nights, not eating, not doing anything . . . I just lay on my bed . . . thinking, thinking constantly . . .

asking myself, if others are stupid and I know they are stupid, why don't I want to be smarter?

And now, I know Sonia, whoever is strong in character and spirit, he is the master. Whoever allows himself too much, he is right. Whoever can spit on everything, he is the lawgiver. He allows for himself more than anyone else, he is right! He is the master!

I understood then that power comes to the one who is not afraid to take it. There is just one, one condition: you need to dare to do it.

I . . . I dared and killed.

I just wanted to dare . . . Sonia. . . .

SONIA

Shut up! Shut up! You have abandoned God and God has abandoned you. He gave you up to Satan . . . !

RASKOLNIKOV

Yes, Sonia, when I was lying there in the darkness on my bed, thinking, I felt that perhaps the devil is talking to me . . . . what?

SONIA

Shut up! Don't laugh, you blasphemer. You don't understand anything! Oh Christ! He doesn't understand anything, anything.

RASKOLNIKOV

Sonia, I'm not laughing. I know very well myself, it was the devil. Do you think I would have ruined my life like that by myself? I went like a rational man, and that's what got me! Do you think I didn't know that just the fact that I began to ask myself if I have the right to power. This fact alone means that I don't. If I ask whether a human being is a louse, that fact alone, of me asking myself such question, it means that for me, a human being is not a louse.

The torture of my divagations . . . I wanted to shake it off. I wanted to kill without questions, for myself, for myself only!

I didn't want to lie even to myself.

I didn't kill to help my mother – that's nonsense. I didn't kill to become a humanitarian – with the money I would get. Nonsense! I killed only for myself, for myself only. I had to know, right away, whether I am – like everyone else – a louse, or a human being?

Can I cross a certain moral boundary, or can't I? Am I a pitiful fearful creature, or do I have the right . . . do I have the right . . .

SONIA

To kill? Right to kill?

RASKOLNIKOV

Sonia! Sonia! Don't interrupt me. Sonia! I just wanted to explain to you that it was the devil that led me there, only to tell me later that I did not have the right because I'm a louse like everyone else! The devil mocked me, so I came to you! Yes, yes, yes!

Welcome your guest! Welcome your guest!

If I wasn't a louse, would I come to see you?

When I went to the old woman's apartment, I went only to try. Remember that.

SONIA

And you killed! You killed!

RASKOLNIKOV

But who did I kill? Did I kill the old woman? I killed myself, not the old woman. Just like that, I killed myself forever! . . . It's the devil who killed the old woman, not me . . . No, that's enough, enough – Sonia, enough! What do I do now!

SONIA

What to do now!

Go now, this instant, go stand on the crossroad, kneel down, kiss the earth beneath your feet, the earth that you profaned. Kneel before the entire world, bow to all four directions and tell everyone loud and clear: 'It was me who killed!'

RASKOLNIKOV

Sonia, do you imply I should go Siberia? To the police? Are you saying I need to give up my freedom? I need to suffer?

SONIA

You need to admit your guilt and redeem yourself – that is what you need.

RASKOLNIKOV

No.

I won't do that, Sonia.

SONIA

What else? How are you going to live otherwise?

RASKOLNIKOV

Don't be a child, Sonia. Why would I give myself up? What is my guilt in relationship to them?

They kill people by the millions and think of it as a good thing. What do I tell them?

What do I tell them? That I killed, but I didn't have the courage to take the money? I hid it under a rock. They are going to laugh at me. They'll say I'm an idiot. Idiot and coward! They won't understand anything, Sonia, they're not capable of understanding me.

SONIA

You'll kill yourself. You'll kill yourself.

RASKOLNIKOV

Who knows, maybe I just libel myself. Maybe I am still a human being, not a louse. Maybe I'm too quick to condemn myself . . . . I will fight. . . .

SONIA

To carry such a weight! For an entire life . . . for an entire life!

RASKOLNIKOV

I'll get used to it!

Stop crying. Let's talk clearly. I came here to tell you that they're after me . . .

SONIA

Ach!

RASKOLNIKOV

Don't scream. Don't you scream. You told me I should go turn myself in. Now, you're all scared? Trust me, I won't give up. I will fight and they won't touch me. They don't have any proof. Everything they have is inconclusive, you know?

It means that the accusation can turn into my defense – get it? And I will turn it into my defense.

I know how . . . now . . . . But they'll put me in prison, that's for sure. But it's nothing. I'll stay there for a few days and they'll let me go . . . because they don't have real unbeatable proof, and they'll never have it, trust me.

Ok, that would be all. Are you going to visit me in prison?

SONIA

I will.

Do you have a cross?

No? You don't? Take this one . . . It's made of cedar wood. I have another one, made of brass. Lizaveta gave it to me. I will wear the one she gave me and you take mine. Take it . . . it's mine, mine!

RASKOLNIKOV

Give it to me.

No, no, Sonia. I'll take it later.

SONIA

Yes, yes, you're right. When you go to Siberia, you'll take it then. You will come to me, and I'll put it around your neck. We'll pray, and then we'll go together.

## SCENE XII

**"It was you who killed"**

/Raskolnikov's apartment/

PORFIRY

What? You weren't expecting a guest, Rodion Romanovich?

You don't lock your doors?

/Sits down/

I came to explain myself, Rodion Romanovich, explain myself! I owe you an explanation. I feel I wasn't fair to you. We didn't part on too good terms, remember? We were both shaking. It wasn't appropriate. I decided that we should be open with each other. We can't continue like we did. Thank God Mikolka came over and saved us. I don't know what would have happened if he didn't showed up. Do you know that this damned Mieszczyin was sitting behind the door?

Yes, you know about it already. I know that too because he came to me right after he came to talk to you. But what you thought earlier – that didn't happen. I didn't send for anyone then, and I didn't order anything. You will ask why I didn't order anything. To be honest with you, I don't know . . . This thought has crossed my mind, but briefly, like lightning. But you know, Radion Romanovich, I was really sure of myself that day. I thought, I had to give it a try, try this or that, see what sticks. I won't let it slip away. I won't let go what's mine. You understand? I won't let go what's mine.

You're very impatient and ill, Rodion Romanovich, of all things that I know about you. Of course, I should have known that it is not always the case that a man can stand up and shout out everything that burdens him. It does happen sometimes, especially when a person is pushed to his limits, but it's a rare occasion and I should have considered it. I counted on your personality, Rodion Romanovich. I counted on you.

RASKOLNIKOV

Why . . . what are you doing now . . . why are you talking like that. . . .

PORFIRY

Why am I talking like that? Because I came to explain myself. I want to explain everything, the whole story of my confusion. I've already let you suffer too much. I know, but I'm not a

monster. I understand what it means for a man who suffers, but he's proud, powerful and impatient.

You know, when I met you, I became attached to you. Maybe it sounds funny to you? Oh, well! I know you didn't like me from the start – there is really nothing to like about me. But I would like to prove to you that I'm a human being after all, with a heart and conscience. I'm being very open with you now. After all, it was me who ran into you that day. I remembered then about your little article. You remember, the one we talked about during our first meeting. I was joking, but to be honest, I wanted to get some information from you. And you're so impatient and so ill, Rodion Romanovich. I knew for a long time that you're brave, serious, arrogant, and . . . sensitive.

I have all the same feelings. When I read your article, everything sounded familiar. This article grew during sleepless nights, from too much pondering. You wrote it with a fluttering heart and subdued enthusiasm.

Oh, such proud, subdued enthusiasm of our youth is dangerous. Your article is gloomy, but it's good.

You know what? I've read your article and put it away, thinking . . . : Yes, this man won't be easy! Now, tell me, how could I – after reading your article – not get carried away by our conversation?

Oh, God, what am I saying? Am I trying to convince you of something? No, there is nothing there, absolutely nothing. It was really inappropriate of me to get carried away the other day. After all, I have Mikolka and I have proof! What? Maybe you think I didn't come here to search your apartment? When you were sick? I was here, but not officially and not under my name, but I was. Yes.

Everything was searched – completely! And then I thought: now, this man will come to see me, if he is guilty. If he is innocent, he won't. Some other man might not have, but he will.

So, I was sitting there, looking out, and suddenly, God brings you to my doorstep. My heart went wild, ah! Why did you come to see me?

And your laughter, oh, your laughter – do you remember how you laughed? It was then when I saw right through you, as if you were made of glass.

Rock, yes, the rock under which the money and jewelry is hidden, do you remember? You told me about the idea when we saw each other. When we began to analyze your article, I'm telling you, each word appeared so ambiguous to us. So, I come up against the last word, Rodion Romanovich, and it hit me.

/hits his forehead/

Hold on! – I think to myself. After all, if I wanted to, I could have explained it all completely differently, and it would sound as good. I had to admit to myself that it might look even better.

What torture! No, I think, I would prefer a little proof . . .

And it was then when I heard about you ringing the bell and all, and I froze: Yes, this is it. This is it, my little proof! So, I stopped thinking. I didn't want to have to think, deduct, analyze anymore.

I would have paid a thousand rubles then, just to see for my own eyes how you have walked past this apartment. When he threw in your face “murderer” and you didn't dare to ask him anything!

. . .

And constantly about these doorbells – in a fever daze?

How can you be surprised, dear Rodion Romanovich, that I started joking with you the last time?

Why did you come to see me, tell me! Why did you come to see me – it looked like someone was

pushing you from behind, I swear, and if Mikolka didn't come and break the tension . . . . You remember Mikolka? You remember him well? Like lightning from the sky! Like lightning! And how I welcomed him? I didn't believe him even a bit. Why? Because my certainty was stronger than diamond. Talk all you want Mikolka! What?

RASKOLNIKOV

Razumikhin told me just now that you do suspect Mikolka after all.

PORFIRY

Speaking of Mikolka, do you know what kind of man he is? He's a child; a coward but not a coward, somewhat of an artist. He has a heart, and imagination. Do you know that he belongs to a sect?

Something happened. He became scared, maybe even thought of hanging himself, or ran away. It's hard to change the perception of our court systems once people form their opinion. What am I saying. Some are horrified if they just hear the word 'sentence.' Do you know, Rodion Romanovich, what some people consider as 'taking someone's suffering'?

There is no one specific thing. Oh no! It's a very general concept of 'taking someone's suffering' upon oneself. It is more valuable if the suffering comes from the official power.

No, no, I came to like this Mikolka and I will interrogate him properly. Don't worry. My dear Rodion Romanovich, Mikolka is not the killer! This case is dark, a very complex story of our times, of our century. Yes, the human heart became confounded under the new slogan of 'blood cleanses it all.' We have here literary hallucinations, a heart torn apart by theory. We have here someone who decides to make the first step, but it is the decision of a special kind of man. He made the decision, but it's as if he fell down into the abyss, pushed there not by himself.

He forgot to close the door behind him, and he killed two people – for theory . . . . He killed, but was unable to take the money. It was not enough for him to sit there quietly when they were pounding on the old women's door, ringing the doorbell. No, it was not enough. He had to come back there! To hear that doorbell again, to feel the rush again, the cold tingle going down his spine. . . .

Sure, he can be excused by his sickness, but no. We have here something better. He killed because he thinks of himself as an honest man. Yet, he has nothing but contempt for people, walking around like a white angel . . . . Oh, no! That's not Mikolka!

RASKOLNIKOV

So . . . . Who is the killer?

PORFIRY

What do you mean who is the killer? . . .

But of course, Rodion Romanovich, y o u a r e the killer! You killed. . . .

Oh, your lips are quivering just like the other day.

RASKOLNIKOV

It was not me.

PORFIRY

Oh, Rodion Romanovich. It was you, no one else.

RASKOLNIKOV

Aren't you bored with yourself? The same old tricks, really!!

PORFIRY

Oh, give up. What do I need tricks for right now? I have certainty.

RASKOLNIKOV

If you have such a certainty, why aren't you arresting me?

PORFIRY

That's a good question, a very good question. Let me answer you: I come here with an open and honest proposal, to ask you to turn yourself in as a killer. It will be much better for you in the end, and for me too, to be honest. Do you know how it would affect your punishment? You would receive special consideration.

RASKOLNIKOV

Oh, no! Don't bother! I don't need your 'special consideration'!

PORFIRY

I don't need, I don't need.

Don't take your life so lightly! You have a lot of it ahead of you. I don't need. . . .

RASKOLNIKOV

I spit on it!

PORFIRY

Oh, yes, I 'spit'!

He came up with the theory and now is ashamed that it didn't work out. It came out as too unoriginal! It's good that you killed only these two old ladies. If you came up with another theory, you could have killed a hundred million!

We should thank God. Have a big heart and be less afraid. You are afraid you'll need to pay big now?

No, son, you don't need to be ashamed that you're afraid. If you decided once to take such a step, you need to pull yourself together now. That's justice. So do now what justice demands.

RASKOLNIKOV

Who do you think you are? From what moral heights do you give me your majestic proclamations?

PORFIRY

Who am I? I'm a finished man, no more. Maybe a man who knows something, feels something and has some empathy, but a finished man nonetheless. But if I'm a small man, or a decent man, well – that you have to decide for yourself.

RASKOLNIKOV

When do you intend to arrest me?

PORFIRY

A day . . . maybe two . . . I can give you two more days.

RASKOLNIKOV

And if I escape?

PORFIRY

Where? You don't believe in your theory any longer, so what would carry you to escape? You have nothing to escape with. You can't do without us now.

Do you want to take a little walk?

It's a nice evening.

RASKOLNIKOV

Porfiry Petrovich, just don't get this into your head that I've admitted something to you today.

You're a strange man. I was listening to you only because I was curious. But I didn't admit anything . . . . Remember this.

PORFIRY

Very well. I'll remember.

One more thing, a difficult but important thing. If by any chance, during the next 48 or 50 hours, you tried . . . to end it all . . . to kill yourself, please, just leave a small note? Two lines, no more.

Mention the rock if you can. It will be noble. Well, I wish you good thoughts.

### SCENE XIII

#### “Crosses”

/Sonia's room/

RASKOLNIKOV

I came to pick up the cross.

No, I won't go to Porfiry. I'm done with him. I prefer to go to my friend, Proch – he will be shocked!

Oh, my God! What has happened to me!

So, where is the cross?

Ah, it is supposed to be the symbol of everything that I'm about to take upon myself – eh!

As if I didn't suffer enough already!

Cedar, nothing special. The brass one, the one that Lizaveta gave you, you take upon yourself.

I remember two similar crosses, made of silver. I threw them on the old woman's chest. Too bad.

We could use them now . . . I could put it on . . . Don't mind me.

I talk nonsense. I keep forgetting why I am here. I'm scattered today.

SONIA

Cross yourself. Pray, just once.

RASKOLNIKOV

What for? Whatever you want! And with a pure heart . . . pure heart . . .  
Where are you going? . . . You stay here! Stay! I'll go by myself.  
I don't need any assistance!

**SCENE XIV**

**"I am the murderer"**

/police station/

RASKOLNIKOV

Nobody's here, haha.

PROCH

Who do you want to speak to?

Oh! It's you? It's you! Long time. . . . Come on in, come on in!

How can we help you? If you have business, it's a bit too early. I shouldn't even be here yet . . . .

But, nonetheless, I'm ready to help. Sit down. I need to confess – I'm sorry, I forgot your name .

..

RASKOLNIKOV

Raskolnikov

PROCH

Yes, Raskolnikov! I didn't forget! Don't think I'm completely . . . Rodionych, yes?

RASKOLNIKOV

Rodion Romanovich

PROCH

Yes, yes! Rodion Romanovich! Rodion Romanovich! That's what I meant . . . . You look very pale. Maybe some fresh air would be helpful . . .

RASKOLNIKOV

I should go . . . . I apologize, I shouldn't have bothered you . . .

PROCH

No problem at all. I'm more than happy to help! I'm very pleased to. . . .

RASKOLNIKOV

I want to see . . . Proch.

PROCH

Yes, yes, I understand. It is a great pleasure.

RASKOLNIKOV

Goodbye . . . goodbye. . . .

PROCH

You? Are you all right? You're not going to faint? Water! Please, drink up.

RASKOLNIKOV

It was me who killed and robbed the two women, Alyona and Lizaveta. I am the murderer.

SONIA

/reading/

“Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him: Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth.”

**Cristina Pérez Díaz. *Antígona: by José Watanabe – A Bilingual Edition with Critical Essays*. London and New York: Routledge, 2023. 157pp.**

**Reviewed by Katherine Nigh**

While taking notes for this review, auto-correct attempted to replace *Antígona* with *Antigone* on multiple occasions. This faux-pas on the part of my phone poetically illustrates many of the arguments of Cristina Pérez Díaz's book, *Antígona* by José Watanabe: *A Bilingual Edition with Critical Essays* published this year (2023) by Routledge as part of their *Classics and the Postcolonial* Series. The book, which includes a first-ever translation of Watanabe's text into English, in addition to two critical essays (all by Pérez Díaz), sets out to frame Watanabe's text both in and outside its relationship to the "original" – both the "original" Greek text by Sophocles and the "original" performance of Watanabe's text by Teresa Ralli (actress and member of Peruvian theater collective, Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani). I should mention, upfront that I am quite sure it is because of my relationship with Yuyachkani<sup>33</sup> that I was asked to write this review- however my background as a theater practitioner and scholar makes me in some ways an ideal reviewer of this book and at the same time leaves me unable to speak to its merit from a Classics standpoint and also causes me some discomfort in terms of the book's focus on moving away from performance studies.

As Díaz describes, Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani (a Peruvian theater collective that has been working with almost all of its original members since 1971) began working on an adaptation of Sophocles's *Antigone* in 1998 in response to the ongoing Internal Conflict that had caused political and personal devastation for nearly 20 years and, according to the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, resulted in the death of nearly 70,000 Peruvians. After some time, the group reached out to Peruvian poet, José Watanabe, to collaborate on a new interpretation and translation of the play which was first performed in Lima, Peru in 2000. Díaz, a poet, translator and scholar as well as PhD Candidate in Classics at Columbia University, first encountered the play when she attended a workshop led by Yuyachkani for international artists and scholars in 2014. The book responds to what Díaz identified as a need for an English translation of Watanabe's *Antígona*; to introduce this version of *Antigone* to classicists; and to write about the play/poem from the perspective of a classicist as opposed to a theater or performance studies scholar, such as myself, who Díaz feels have "dominated" the discourse on this adaptation of *Antigone*.

In Díaz's Introduction to the book, they provide a brief history of Yuyachkani as well as the Internal Conflict. In her Introduction, Díaz also covers the overall methodology of the group, providing a brief theoretical framework for understanding the group's placement within a history of Latin American theater groups as well as their relationship to more European theater aesthetics. She goes on to describe the collaborative process between Teresa Ralli and the group's director Miguel Rubio with Watanabe, destabilizing the idea of "authorship" not only in regards to this text, but also in general (although, as I mention later, the co-authorship that Díaz establishes, as I see it, becomes minimized later in the book). Díaz also utilizes the Introduction

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<sup>33</sup> I have worked with, including managing the archive of the group for the Hemispheric Institute's Digital Video Library, and written extensively about the group since 2004.

to compare other productions of *Antigone* in Peru, including *Antígona* (A poem in prose) by Jorge Eduardo Eielson and *Antígona* by playwright Sarina Helfgott.

The second part of the book is a translation of the text from Peruvian Spanish into English. The translation does not include any stage directions or descriptions of Ralli's physical actions during the performance which, for theater scholars and practitioners, is a deficit. The translation itself is excellent, [although at times it perhaps misses its own poetic license which would perhaps be more informed if Díaz was steeped in the subtleties of the context of Peru.]

In Part Three, "Angles of Memory in *Antígona: An aesthetic reading*", Díaz argues it is important to consider Watanabe's text "outside" of its geopolitical context and outside of its relationship to Ralli's performance of the text. They note, "My interest here is on textual aspects that have been disregarded in the scholarship, and because of that I will forego performance elements" (103). She argues that "the fact that the text lacks direct historical references to Peru becomes salient" and that it reflects Watanabe's poetic style which she describes in her Introduction as apolitical and "concerned with beauty and aesthetics" (17). To "justify" her decision to engage with the text outside of the historical context of Peru's Internal Conflict, Díaz points to the lack of specific references to Peru in Watanabe's text, as well as Watanabe's own comments (in interviews – not with Díaz) wherein he does not champion poetry's abilities to create social change. However, I would argue, that understanding the text within the context of its original performance can *also* provide an explanation for the lack of specific geopolitical references in Watanabe's text. The audience of Yuyachkani's performances in Lima would not need to know that the play is referencing Peru or the Internal Conflict because that reference is more than obvious to an audience who have gone through the traumatic events of that time – and, from a dramaturgical perspective, it is perhaps more powerful to *not* explicitly mention Peru, to *not* set the play in the 1980's, etc.. The lack of direct reference to Peru and political figures who played part in the Internal Conflict perhaps also allows both Watanabe and Ralli/Yuyachkani to say more than they could otherwise, given that the climate in Peru was still incredibly fraught at the time of its premiere and that members of Yuyachkani had been threatened on multiple occasions for their politically outspoken performances in the past. It is also impossible to know, without directly asking him, if Watanabe partnered with Yuyachkani because he *did* want his work to serve a political purpose. Either way, the fact that Watanabe does not identify as a political poet does not mean that this piece, as a whole, should be viewed outside of historical and political context.

In Part Three of the book, Díaz also highlights the ways in which *Antígona* both "remembers and forgets" Sophocles' *Antigone*, providing a close reading of specific examples when Watanabe/Yuyachkani's text diverts from Sophocles' version which she argues changes the "distribution of sympathy". She focuses particularly on the role of the narrator (who is revealed as Antígona's sister, Ismene) and places this difference within a framework of theoretical responses to Antigone's including Judith Butler and Tina Chanter. Díaz also points to the use of monologue versus dialogue as a unique and significant aspect of Watanabe/Yuyachkani's version of the myth of Antigone. Here again a geo-political context is quite important. The role of Ismene as witness in this adaptation is, as noted by Ralli and scholars including Francine A'Ness and myself, a thinly veiled metaphor for the role of witness in Peru both during and after the violence. The use of monologue versus dialogue is also difficult to remove from the

partnership of Watanabe and Ralli/Yuyachkani as they set out to create a one-woman show not only as a vehicle for Ralli as an actor, but also to mirror the experience of many in Peru who felt they had to take on the burden of memory, the burden of seeking justice and truth, at an individual and often lonely level.

Díaz asserts that many of the differences between Watanabe/Yuyachkani's *Antígona* and Sophocles' *Antigone*, were Watanabe's decisions but by her own admittance, there is a complicated sense of authorship of this piece (thus why I write Watanabe/Yuyachkani's version of *Antígona*, not just Watanabe's), however, at this point in the book, Ralli disappears as collaborator/author. If Díaz does have a reason for this certainty, she doesn't mention it and I am certainly curious what decisions and changes came from Watanabe and what came from Ralli/Rubio. I would also posit that in an artistic collaboration those decisions are made fluidly and sometimes without the ability to discern what ideas came from whom originally.

Overall, this book is an important contribution to the field of Classics; Comparison Literature and other fields and challenges scholars in these fields to consider this Peruvian adaptation of Sophocles' text in the larger canon of *Antigone* adaptations. The translation of the text itself into English will be useful for scholars and practitioners (theater and otherwise) who do not speak Spanish and would like to engage with the text. However, I would have liked to see Díaz make the points she feels have been missing from the scholarship on Watanabe/Yuyachkani's *Antígona* while still guiding the reader more than she does to the very important embodied elements and geopolitical context of its original performance. As someone who has spent nearly twenty years researching the Internal Conflict of Peru, and the ongoing attempts of activists including Yuyachkani to keep the memory of these events alive, and given the current return to violence in Peru and attempts from the political Right to silence narratives of remembrance about the Internal Conflict (see news on the recent closure of the Lugar de Memoria – Space of Memory – by the conservative Mayor of Lima), it makes me uncomfortable to see that part of the history of Peru diminished to the degree it is in Díaz's book.

**Dr. Katherine Nigh** (She/Her) is proud to serve as Chair of the Theater Arts and Dance Departments at Pasadena City College. She received her PhD in Theater and Performance of the Americas program at Arizona State University and an MA in Performance Studies at New York University. Her artistic and research practice focus on theater as a tool for social change/justice. She brings an international perspective of theater making and has collaborated and trained with groups including El Teatro Campesino; Cornerstone Theater and Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani of Peru. At PCC she has directed over ten productions and has had the honor of partnering with CORE (Community Overcoming Recidivism through Education), producing performances highlighting the experience of formerly incarcerated students and she plans to explore further collaborations with the diverse student body at PCC.

**Sophie Stevens, *Uruguayan Theatre in Translation: Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Leyenda, 2022.**

**Reviewed by Brenda Werth**

Sophie Stevens' *Uruguayan Theatre in Translation: Theory and Practice* is a welcome and much needed contribution to Uruguayan theatre studies and translation. Building on a growing interest in Spanish language plays in the UK, Stevens' book lends visibility to Uruguay's rich theater tradition, often overshadowed by theater hailing from neighboring Argentina and Chile. In dialogue with recent books on Uruguayan theater like Sarah Misemer's 2017 *Theatrical Topographies: Spatial Crises in Uruguayan Theater Post-2001*, Stevens turns our attention to translation "as practice and mode of analysis" as she guides us expertly through an exploration of useful frameworks for approaching the mobility of dramatic texts between source and target culture. Throughout the book Stevens reinforces links between scholarship, practice, and performance, deftly breaking down disciplinary boundaries between translator and scholar and troubling the binary between source and target text often theorized and reinforced in translation studies. Though not a guide, she affirms, the book's objective is "to identify strategies, techniques and approaches that can be adopted by other translators" (12). In her book she identifies key steps in the translation process (close reading, dramaturgical analysis, contextual analysis) and the collaborative work within and beyond the university that allows translators to negotiate between the "rootedness and possible mobility of the dramatic text" and ultimately brings a translation to fruition (6).

The book consists of six chapters, alternating between contextual and dramaturgical analyses of plays and full-stage ready translations of three of the plays, designed for a UK audience. The six plays included in the book were written between 1957 and 2008 and reflect a range of forms, styles, and themes of relevance to Uruguayan cultural production such as "bureaucratic disease, the intergenerational divides, and the types of violence and repression experienced in Uruguay" (184). In her analysis of each play, she reflects on how themes present in the original context might resonate with events and cultural phenomena in the UK context, citing the 2016 referendum on UK's membership to the European Union, bureaucratization, social assistance, and domestic violence, as some of the most prominent ones. Particularly enriching was Stevens' discussion of her multiple points of entry into the dramatic texts as script consultant, workshop facilitator, and her participation in rehearsals, table reads, and university seminars. Her rigorous approach to the translation process is informed by interviews and consultation with playwrights, actors and directors. Of note is her ongoing collaboration with Out of the Wings, a London based collective that fosters the translation of Spanish language plays from Spain, Portugal and Latin America.

The book's joint focus on critical analysis and translation is effective in bridging theory and practice. I found Stevens' choice of theoretical texts refreshing and productive in generating new perspectives on the relationship between source and translated texts. She engages a range of theoretical concepts including Patrice Pavis' theory of the preverbal; Antoine Vitez's notion of the stage as a laboratory; Jean-Luc Nancy's conceptualization of touch in establishing proximity and distance; Roland Barthes' metaphor of the network for the source text; and David Johnston's notion of "bold blend" to refer to the multiple types of audience engagement with a play that

incorporates both “familiar and remote cultural contexts” (143). Drawing on Walter Benjamin’s idea of the translation as an extension of the source text, Stevens elaborates the concept of “afterlife” to refer to the continued resonance of the source text in a translation that nonetheless becomes modified, transformed, or renewed (11). Her treatment of the “afterlife” is one of the most compelling theoretical contributions in the book, as it relates not only to the practice of translation but also to some of the most central themes of the plays dealing with disappearance, the passage of time, and death.

Chapter 1, “Frames of Analysis,” juxtaposes analyses of the plays *M’hijo el dottor* [My Son the Doc] (1903) by Florencio Sánchez, and *La biblioteca* [The Library] (1957) by Carlos Maggi. Guiding Stevens through the chapter is the question: “What is at stake in the dramatic text?” Her analysis of *M’hijo el dottor*, an established play in the Uruguayan canon, provides an introduction to *rioplatense* theater production and Uruguay’s national theater tradition. While this framework is useful to the reader, the chapter’s strength lies in her analysis of *La biblioteca*, a less known play she translates for the book (Chapter 2), for which she offers insightful accounts of the work she undertook to create a stage-ready English translation.

In Chapter 3, “Conceptualising Distance and Proximity,” Stevens follows a similar structure, pairing a well-known Uruguayan play, *Pedro y el capitán* [Pedro and the Captain] (1979) written by Mario Benedetti from exile during the civic-military dictatorship, with a less known play, *Bailando sola cada noche* [Dancing Alone Every Night] (2008), by Raquel Diana (translated in chapter 4). In this chapter, Stevens centers on how a play “might find a place in the target culture and she introduces Jean-Luc Nancy’s concepts of distance and proximity to discuss both the relationship between source and target cultures and the process of translation. Stevens’ expertise shines in this chapter, as her work as script consultant (together with Catherine Boyle) for the 2016 London staging of *Pedro el capitán* reveals how translation decisions affect stage direction and other aspects of the theatrical process. Her analysis brings two plays together in an exchange that might not seem intuitive at first glance, but which becomes clear through Stevens’ excellent discussion of afterlife both as it shapes the liminal experience of the protagonists in the plays and the translation process itself as it negotiates between cultures.

In chapter 5, “Form and Theatre Translation,” Stevens introduces two plays that “use theatre as a site of resistance” to Uruguay’s civic-military dictatorship: *El herrero y la muerte* (Death and the Blacksmith) by Mercedes Rein and Jorge Curi, premiered in Montevideo in 1981, and *Punto y coma* (Ready or Not) (2003) by Estela Golovchenko (translated in chapter 6). Stevens’ focus here is on form and how engagement with the folkloric (in *El herrero*) and the flashback (in *Punto y Coma*) in both plays leads to the exploration of translation strategies that resist form as a limitation and instead embrace the translation of form as a unique challenge with the potential to unleash creative possibilities. In this chapter Stevens engages with the rich literary and cultural heritage of the folkloric form and proposes ways of reshaping and recreating form for a new audience. In Stevens’ analysis and discussion of her translation of Golovchenko’s *Punto y coma*, Stevens offers enlightening firsthand account of the decisions she made as translator.

Stevens’ translations are thoughtfully crafted, beautifully articulated, clear, and amply tested for the stage. They reveal the careful and meticulous work of a researcher who has investigated thoroughly the context, formal aspects of language use, rhetorical devices, and style of the target

text in collaboration with playwrights, actors, directors, scholars and students in workshops, rehearsals, table readings and seminars. Virtually unknown to most English audiences, the translated plays included in this book are true gems and will be of great interest to theater scholars, students, and practitioners. Through juxtaposing analysis and translation of theater in one study, Stevens pioneers dialogue between the fields of Uruguayan theater and translation studies in a book that will hold great appeal to theater scholars, translators, students and practitioners.

**Brenda Werth** is Associate Professor Latin American Studies and Spanish at American University. She also co-translator and co-editor (with April Sweeney) of the anthology, *Fauna and Other Plays by Romina Paula* (Seagull Press 2023). Her current monograph, "Fictions of the Real: Synergies between Screen and Stage in Argentine Performance," examines the rich transfers between theater and film that are revitalizing the performance scene in Argentina.