2011

María La Mosca by the Spanish Playwright Miguel Sierra: A Translation with Critical Introduction

Henry Valentino Mannheimer
MARÍA LA MOSCA BY THE SPANISH PLAYWRIGHT MIGUEL SIERRA:

A TRANSLATION WITH CRITICAL INTRODUCTION

By

HENRY VALENTINO MANNHEIMER

A Dissertation submitted to the
Department of Modern Languages & Linguistics
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Degree Awarded:
Spring Semester, 2011
The members of the committee approve the dissertation of Henry Valentino Mannheimer, defended on March 25, 2011.

--------------------------------
Ernest Rehder
Professor Directing Dissertation
--------------------------------
Virgil Suarez
University Representative
--------------------------------
Brenda Cappuccio
Committee Member
--------------------------------
Juan Carlos Galeano
Committee Member

Approved:

--------------------------------
William J. Cloonan,
Chair, Department of Modern Languages & Linguistics
--------------------------------
Joseph Travis, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

The Graduate School has verified and approved the above-named committee members.
I dedicate this dissertation to Miguel Sierra.
If this English version of María la mosca plays well to an
English speaking audience,
the credit is largely his.
If it does not play well, the fault is mine.
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a translation and critical study of the play María la mosca by the Spanish playwright Miguel Sierra. The study is subdivided into three parts. The first provides an introduction to Sierra’s career and work. It identifies the playwright as one who wrote and produced his work in the new democratic Spain that emerged after the death of Franco. With the exception of one musical comedy, Sierra wrote in the tradition of social realism, exemplified by playwrights such as Buero Vallejo and Sastre in the early part of their careers. Sierra’s work is distinguished by its extensive use of humor, which he very often employs in the service of social satire. The second section of the study examines in depth María la mosca, a play that provides a graphic portrait of the world of prostitution in Barcelona during the early 1960s. The third and final section discusses some of translation theory’s major issues (such as equivalence, cultural translation and fidelity) and the translator’s application of them to the presented translation.
SECTION I

CRITICAL STUDY
Miguel Sierra, Post Franco Playwright

In the brief biographical sketch provided in the published version of *Lejos del Paraíso*, it says that Miguel Sierra was born in August, 1936 in the town of Peñaflor near Zaragoza, Spain (7). Sierra describes his village as being shaken by the Civil War, which left the town without youth. (The best source of biographical material is a letter from Sierra to Doctor Rehder. Unless otherwise specified, biographical information originates from that letter.) Sierra says of it: “…lo veo como un lugar triste donde la mayoría de la gente vestía de luto.” He was bitten by the theatre bug early. When he was eight or nine a travelling theatre company came to his town. He went every night to their performance and was impressed with how an actor could transform his personality to become a character. A few years later, as a young student, he began to produce and direct children’s theatre. Shortly afterwards, he went with his older and recently married sister to Barcelona to study for a high school diploma in music and was encourage by one of his teachers to write creatively.

As a young man, Mr. Sierra would frequent intellectual haunts. At age twenty-seven, he wrote a novel and submitted it for the prestigious Nadal prize. He says that his novel was among the finalists. However, his name does not appear in the list of finalists. In the mid sixties, seeking freedom from familial opposition to an artistic life, he left Spain for Rome. A few months later, he left for Paris, which proved more to his liking, in spite of having to live in a rough and tumble hotel.

He began writing his first play, *Alicia en el París de las maravillas*. This comedy, which would not find a stage until 1978, deals with the difficulties of Spanish immigrants living in Paris during the Franco era. Although a comedy with situations turning into outright farce at times, this play laments the tenuous situation of Spanish immigrants during Franco’s government.

This ability to mix comedy with serious drama in one seamless web is a characteristic of most of Sierra’s work and is evident in his next play *María la mosca*. I will argue that this play is a modern tragedy. Nevertheless, Sierra makes ample use of the comic. The play deals with prostitution in Barcelona in the early nineteen-sixties. *Alicia en el París de las maravillas* drew on his Parisian experiences in the middle and late 1960s. *María la mosca*
draws on his Barcelona experiences of the early to mid nineteen-sixties. The play had its debut in 1980.

Sierra describes his next play, *La noche de los espejos*, as dealing with a moral crime. It premiered in 1982. Mr. Sierra says the play explores:

…las obligaciones que nos impone la conciencia. Si salvamos una vida, tenemos una responsabilidad ante esa vida. Pero ¿cómo debemos reaccionar si esa vida destruye la nuestra?

…the difficulties that our conscience imposes on us. If we save a life, we have a responsibility towards that life. But what should we do if that life would destroy our own? (My translation)

Sierra’s next play, *Ana y Mariana*, opened in 1984. He describes the play as a robust farce that satirizes the bourgeois class. It portrays an encounter and conflict between two women in very different positions: one with power and one without, and it pits power against reason.

Sierra’s next play, *Lejos de Paraíso*, premiered in 1986. The playwright describes it as a comedy, although it mixes the comic and the serious and tragic. Moreover, with thirteen songs, it qualifies as a musical. In style, it seems to owe much to Lorca’s *La zapatera prodigiosa*, but it strikes out on its own path to create an identity all its own. It retells the Adam and Eve story, focusing on the fall of the first couple in the first act and Cain’s murder of Abel in the second. Sierra describes the writing of this work as a “labor of love.”

Sierra’s final work to date, *Las palomas intrépidas*, was staged in 1990. It is a comedy with a few serious moments that won the following prizes: Sociedad General de Autores, Medalla de oro de Valladolid and the Miguel Mihura.

According to the jacket for the published version of *Los palomas intrépidas*, Sierra has also adapted into Spanish Marsha Norman’s ‘*Night Mother*’ and works by Christopher Hampton, Michael Cristofer and David Mamet. Of his six produced plays, four have been published: *Alicia en el Paris de las maravillas, María la mosca, Lejos de Paraíso* and *Las palomas intrépidas*. This researcher’s efforts to acquire copies of the other two plays have been unsuccessful.
The central subject matter in all of Sierra’s published works is male-female relationships. With the exception of *María la mosca*, his attitude toward the subject is generally positive. In *Alicia en el París de maravillas* Alicia inspires Jeanne Phillip to become a successful writer, and the play ends happily when he realizes that she is his genie, and he has a genuine love for her. In *Lejos de Paraíso*, although Adam and Eve lose Abel by murder and expel Cain for his act, they console one another with the fact that that they still have each other: “solos los dos,/ solo tú y yo…” “Alone, we two, / Alone, you and I…” sing the couple as they exit comforting one another (73, my translation). In *Palomas intrépidas*, the menopausal Paloma apparently gets her young stud all for herself at the end of the play. Although the ending is flippant and contrived, the relationship between her and Bernardo has a chance to proceed without illusions. Paloma wants a sex toy and the ever-stumbling Bernardo needs someone to take of him in the short and long term (72).

Sierra’s attitude toward the sexes is consistent throughout the four plays. His women characters are more assertive, more practically intelligent, and generally more capable than their male counterparts. Alicia truly runs Jean-Philippe’s household, and he can only impotently complain about being overrun by her squatter family and friends. It is only when Jean-Philippe takes on an outside romantic interest that Alicia loses command of the situation. The relationship between Jordy and María is very complex and will be dealt with in the next chapter. Nevertheless, it would not be inaccurate to point out here that aside from an ability to seduce women so that he might live off them, Jordy has little else working in his favor. As the play progresses, he becomes more and more a passive object of events, until he is murdered by María. María, on the other hand, is a superstar among prostitutes and is much more capable than Jordy of surviving on her own. Her fatal flaw is her unwillingness to let go of her fantasy attachment to Jordy. By far the most assertive and capable character of the play is Doña Lola, the madam and boss of the saloon where María works. She has created a successful business in the height of the Franco regime depression, no small task. In contrast, her aged bartender, Pichuli, at the end of his life with no other prospects, has no choice but to allow himself to be verbally abused by his boss and to complain clandestinely about her treatment.
In *Lejos de Paraíso* the devil is Luci. Although she is supposed to be asexual, her gender identity is clearly feminine. Luci’s personality is too subtly drawn to fit neatly into categories of assertiveness and capability. However, we can contrast her with the two male angels who appear in the play: Aral and Omil. In the first act, they are passing through on their way to take a direct hand in the development of beings on a new planet. They are excited about their assignment, unlike Luci, who has been sent to earth as punishment for doing no more than to question some of God’s ways. Her assignment, which she accepts reluctantly, is to tempt Adam and Eve. After completing her mission, she is so struck by remorse that she leaves earth for the number of years it takes for Adam and Eve to have children (Cain and Abel) and raise them to young men. Meanwhile, Aral and Omil, now fallen angels like Luci, return from their assignment. They had made such a mess of things that God (who comes across as Draconian in this play) has punished them too and booted them out of heaven. The important difference between Luci and her two male colleagues is that God punishes her for the impertinence of questioning Him, while he punishes Aral and Omil for incompetence.

In addition, Luci has a strong moral sense. She does not understand the fairness in giving humankind the capacity for knowledge and then punishing them for choosing that capacity. (As it turns out, Adam and Eve do not see leaving Eden, where they are bored, as punishment.) At the end of the play, Luci and the two fallen angels sing a song of the future of humankind, a future, which, although it produces the Seven Wonders of the World, also produces mass destruction:

OMIL. Nacerán todas las ciencias de la Humanidad.
ARAL. Siete maravillas en el mundo habrá.
    Bombas y misiles se construirán.
OMIL. Y cuatro chalados al final harán
    Que estalle la guerra, guerra nuclear.
ARAL y OMIL. El mundo que viene será fascinante.
    Los hombres unidos saldrán adelante.
    El mundo que viene, qué mundo será.
    ¡Vaya una alegre verbena que organizarán!
OMIL. All the sciences of humankind will be born.
ARAL. There will be the Seven Wonders of the World.
    They will make bombs and missiles.
OMIL. And four madmen in the end
    Will ignite war, nuclear war.
ARAL y OMIL. The world to come will be fascinating.
    Men will go into it united.
    The world to come, what a world it will be.
    What a great festival they will put together!

(75, my translation)

However, Luci has a very different reaction to this vision.

Eso no es humano, es un gran error.
No puedo aceptarlo, no admitirlo, no.

That’s not humankind, it’s all wrong.
I can’t accept that, I won’t concede it.
(75, my translation)

The play ends with the two male devils following Adam and Eve, with the intention of participating in what they see as a great carnival. Luci, who has vowed to take care of humankind but has been rejected by Adam and Eve, follows after Cain.

In *Palomas intrépidas*, Sierra returns to the contemporary world of 1990. Although it has been twelve years since his first play debuted and much has changed in Spain, Sierra’s depiction of male-female characters remains strikingly similar. The two female characters (Rosa and Paloma) are successful professional career women. They are single but desiring sex. On the spur of the moment, they decide to get a man, with no more intention than seeking sexual satisfaction. However, the man they choose is a bungling mugger, whom Paloma chloroforms as he tries to hold her up. He is worsted in his mugging skills only by his lack of successful experience with women. He admits to having little luck with women (48). He has a son, but when he recounts the story of his relationship with the mother of his child, he does not seem to realize that at best he was tricked into marriage. He agrees to serve the two women sexually but retreats when Rosa proves to be overly physically aggressive.
As noted in the beginning of this chapter, Sierra was born during Spanish Civil War, which means that he was raised during Franco’s governance. Growing up in this environment was far from pleasant for Sierra. He describes that stage of his life in his preface to the published version of *Lejos de Paraíso*:

> Mi niñez la recuerdo como la época más triste de mi vida. Yo fui un niño vestido de luto: mi primer babi fue negro; mis primeros pantalones fueron negros; el traje de mi Primera Comunión, negro también—qué largos eran los lutos. El mío provenía de que al primero de mis hermanos—dieciocho años mayor que yo—lo habían asesinado los no-sé-por-qué llamados “nacionales”. Un niño, apenas, y el destino ya me había marcado. “El rojillo” me llamaban; porque el segundo de mis hermanos—éramos seis—me había enseñado, a escondidas, a cantar “La Internacional”. Y yo lo cantaba.

I remember my childhood as the saddest period of my life. As a small child I was dressed in mourning: my first bib and pants were black, as was the suit I wore for first communion. This time of mourning was interminable. The cause of all this sorrow was that my oldest brother, eighteen years my senior, had been killed by the so called “Nationalists”. Only a child and fate already marked me. They used to call me “the little red one” because my second oldest brother—we were six—secretly taught me “The International Hymn,” and I used to sing it. (My translation)

He knew no other environment until the mid-1960’s when he left the country to live first in Italy and then in France. He was in his early thirties at that time. Sierra’s experience of growing up in the Franco regime left a strong impression on the playwright, as this theme presents itself in each of the four published works. The impression was definitely negative. Nevertheless, Sierra never lets his distaste of Francoism overpower his art so that a play becomes a diatribe against this form of government. Rather, he lets the play tell its story through the words and actions of its characters, letting the audience draw its own conclusions on this theme. In *María la mosca*, for example, the name *Franco* is never uttered, nor are there references to the government or the regime. Instead, as will be detailed in the next chapter, we experience life in the regime through the eyes of the characters.

In *Alicia en el Paris de las maravillas*, Alicia must struggle against two separate but interrelated unjust systems: the economically sterile conditions existing in Spain during the 1960’s and the exploitive treatment of immigrants existing in France at the same time. Alicia, the play’s protagonist, used to work as a saleswoman in a perfume shop in Madrid.
In Paris she works as a maid. Her sister Mariló, an apparently intelligent young lady, must work below her capacity as a nanny taking care of a rich family’s children. As undocumented aliens, domestic work is all they can expect to have. This exchange between Jean-Philippe and Mariló puts the matter bluntly:

Jean-Philippe. ¡Usted no tiene derecho a nada! ¡Ni siquiera a estar en Francia!
Mariló. ¡Ah, no! ¿Quién me lo impide?
Jean-Philippe. ¡Mi gobierno! ¡Usted no tener papeles en regla!

Jean-Philippe. You have no rights, not even to be in France!
Mariló. Oh, yeh, who’s going to stop me?
Jean-Philippe. My government. Your papers are not in order.
(47, my translation)

However, as meager as their prospects are in France and as tenuous their status, they are no better in their home country. At one point, Alicia points out the options to Mariló if she should lose her job as maid: sleeping under a bridge or returning to Spain and becoming one of the more than a million people whose lives are going nowhere and have no options (72). The fact that Alicia’s mother and all her children have come to live in Paris is evidence of just how difficult life in Spain is. The play is a comedy and ends happily for this immigrant family but not before they almost wind up on the street, due to the understandable anger of Jean-Philippe (84-97), a stern reminder by the playwright of how precarious the lives of these Spanish immigrants are.

In Lejos de Paraíso the unjust system is none other than those created by God himself. Moreover, his governance negatively impacts angel and humankind alike. Luci tells Eva that she was sent to earth as punishment for expressing her opinion. God’s reaction is harsh:

“Yo soy Dios
no me puedes criticar.
Por amor te di,
Luz, gracia y belleza sin par.
te lo di, y ahora debo soportar
tu rencor, tu temor, tus celos.”

“I am God
You cannot criticize me.
Out of love I have given you
light, grace and beauty without equal.
I gave you these things and now I have to put up with
your rancor, your fear and your jealousy.”
(20, my translation)

Luci protested that she did not wish to hurt or argue but only to express her opinion. She
pleads for compassion, but God exiles her to earth, with a mission to tempt Adán and Eva.
Soon, she tells the couple, they must choose between happiness and misfortune and
disgrace. In the world that God created, says Luci, happiness is to be ignorant, to have no
ambitions and to always be satisfied. On the other hand, misfortune and disgrace are to
have known happiness (20-1). Adán and Eva, in their innocence perceive an injustice in
this trial and protest that have done nothing wrong. Luci can only say that they are the first
of their species, and God wants to see how the freedom of will that he gave the couple
works. Adán and Eva see further injustices in this explanation. If God is all-knowing and
loves them, as Luci says, could he not have given them happiness without having to put
them through a trial? Luci can only answer that God is a creator and artist, and he is not
satisfied without trying out his creations (21-2).

Later in the second act, two other angels (Omil and Aral) fall victims to what seems the
arbitrariness of a very temperamental God. In the first act, they were sent to another planet
to direct the development of life there. Apparently, out of incompetence rather than malice,
they made a mess of things, and God cast them out of heaven and converted them into
devils (62-4). This time, the questions is left implied: if God is all knowing and loves
them, why did he give them an assignment that they were not capable of handling, and why
did he punish them for not being able to handle it?

In the introduction to the published version of his play, “El autor y el Edén,” ‘The
Author and Eden,’ Sierra says that he was a questioner of the Biblical version of Adam and
Eve: Was there an Eden? What really happened there? Why did God want to test our first
parents? What wrong did they commit? Is it true that God knows everything? Then,
would he not also have known how they were going to react? Therefore, he decided to
write his own version of the Garden of Eden. His own version consists of taking the
fundamental Biblical version at face value in its major concepts and then poking fun at it.
His final play to date, *Palomas intrépidas*, takes aim at society also, but this time Sierra moves away from politics or religious doctrine (which in Spain is almost always politics) and focuses on sexual mores. This decision to change attention from the Franco years is understandable for a playwright and a public that no doubt had moved on from that painful past in many ways, and one welcomes an excursion into a new arena. However, *Palomas intrépidas* has been Sierra’s last play to date. Certainly Spanish theatre has not exhausted an understanding of the Franco era and its relevance to contemporary Spain.

*Palomas intrépidas* derives its humor and social insight from a switching of the traditional roles of the sexes. The women in the play decide to look for a man for the frank reason of sexual satisfaction. The humor heightens when Paloma, the protagonist, extemporaneously kidnaps a bungling mugger and brings him home, instead of paying for a male prostitute as originally planned. The humor heightens again as the audience learns that this mugger is as bungling socially with women as he is robbing them. Reviewers have seen this play as light fare. Eduardo Haro Tecglen, reviewing the play in 1990, called it “un chiste.” Marta Barron of *The Miami Herald*, reviewing another production in 2003, says of the play that it, “…never aims to be more than a light comedy.” I think that it would be more accurate to say that as the humor ratchets up, insight into the social reality that Sierra is examining does not likewise ratchet up. Nevertheless, judging from the reviews, this play works very well on stage.

To fully appraise Sierra’s artistry, one should see his work in its historical context. After the Spanish Civil War, dramatists, indeed all artists, were faced with certain harsh realities: they were writing in a country that was economically and intellectually isolated from its neighbors and the rest of the Western world; they had to submit their work to a censure disapproving of any material critical of Franco regime governance or values if they hoped to produce or publish it; and they had to perform their work before a conservative theatre-going public (Donahue, 354-8). These conditions left dramatists with some basic choices. They could write plays light in content, which even if they offended the censor in some aspect, could be more easily revised. They could produce and publish outside of Spain or, as in the case of Arrabal, they could live in exile. Finally, those who chose to write what López Mozo calls “…un teatro política o socialmente comprometido…agrupados en las llamadas Generación Realista y del Nueva teatro Español.”
In general, the movement held allegiance to Mathew Arnold’s concept of theatre (all art, really) as a critique of life. Spain’s version of this wider movement reflected the realities of having to deal with the official censure. López Mozo, writing from personal experience, relates that the dramatist had to develop specific strategies in order to get past the censure. Certain subjects were taboo: “…los referidos al gobierno y a los estamentos militar y religioso.” Donahue describes the work of Buero Vallejo in this context. Buero Vallejo is generally attributed with having set the standard for this type of theatre in Franco’s Spain:

Buero Vallejo and his followers generally use lower class characters in their home habitat. The protagonists struggle against something undefined and undetermined in the play. That something would be, in the normal play, the antagonist, and it would be specific. Not so here, because the antagonist in the Theater of Commitment is the establishment. To point out specifically the nature of that antagonist…would mean the play would remain unstaged. The antagonist does not appear onstage. It exists in the mind of the audience. The cause of the evil conditions remains unspecified, but implied: the Spanish Establishment.

As we see from this description, the major difference between this theatrical movement and the realism and naturalism of the nineteenth century is that very often the forces against which the protagonist must battle are not explicitly identified.

However, according to Alfred G. Cuzán, in the last decade of the Franco Regime, the government began to relax its censorship (19). Then came the death of Franco in 1975 and a series of enormous liberalizing changes to Spain in general and to its theatre. First, came the new constitution of Spain in 1978, Article 20 guaranteeing the right to expression and effectively annulling past censorship laws. In 1982, the citizenry elected a socialist government and Spain joined NATO. The rest of the decade would see steady efforts to integrate the nation with the rest of Europe. An anything-goes attitude now took hold of the artistic community. Revivals of long-banned works by such playwrights as Valle-Inclán and García Lorca were staged. Nudity decorated the Spanish stages. Plays voicing perspectives from the left and right could find a theatre (Londré).

In addition to a new constitution, 1978 saw the creation of the Ministry of Culture and the National Dramatic Center (CDN). The CDN became an international model for state-sponsored theatre. Madrid’s Teatro Español, destroyed by fire, was reopened and became a place for mounting lavish productions of classic as well as modern plays. In 1981, the
government subsidized the opening of regional theatre in Catalonia and additional regional theatres would follow. The new Socialist government increased funding for theatre, channeling the money through The National Institute of Theatre Arts and Music (INAEM). Two additional national theatres opened in 1984 and 1986: the National Center for New Directions in Theatre for experimental theatre and the National Classic Theatre Company. In 1980 the first International Theatre Festival in Madrid inspired similar ventures in a host of towns throughout the country. In addition to all this, small off the mainstream groups would perform in bars and other adapted facilities (Londré).

Miguel Sierra produced and published all his plays during this period, and his work reflects the forces in play in that epoch and the epoch immediately proceeding. His first two plays, Alicia en el país de las maravillas and María la mosca, are squarely in the tradition of social realism embraced by Buero Vallejo and Sastre during the earlier part of their careers. (Edwards does an excellent job of outlining the development of these two dramatists, as they moved from social realism to incorporating epic theatre and other non-realistic forms into their work (172-218 and 219-47). Alicia, concerned with the problem of Spanish immigrants in France during the Franco era, is also an indirect criticism of the economic difficulties in Spain that caused such migration. María la mosca concerns itself directly with Spain’s economic conditions during the same period. In both cases, these plays benefit from the style of realism they inherited from Sierra’s predecessors. As already noted, because of Franco era censorship, Buero Vallejo and his followers could not focus directly on the institutions oppressing the play’s characters. As a result, these plays would focus on the struggle of its characters. Although Miguel Sierra was not bound by the censorship restrictions of his predecessors, he too in these first two plays focuses on the struggle rather than details of the characters’ oppressors. A brief examination of how the process works in Alicia en el país de las maravillas will be followed by a more detailed analysis of this process in María la mosca in the next chapter.

First, there is not a world of difference between the social realism of Franco’s Spain and nineteenth-century realism. Plays like Historia de una escalera (Story of a Stairway) and Alicia have their action take place in one location. Usually, the action takes place in a type of locale frequented by ordinary people (a stairwell of an apartment building in Historia and the living area of an apartment in Alicia). If there are scene changes, they take place
between acts or, at least, formal divisions of scenes. Moving walls and furniture around in full view of the audience while it waits for the next scene, temporarily breaks the fourth wall between the audience and the actors. The fourth wall is a tradition critical for both types of realism, as the effect strived for is one of watching an event occurring in real time as it unfolds, as if captured by a camera. This illusion of objectivity is critical if the work is to have veracity for an audience. For this reason, much attention is given to realistic detail in sets and costumes. In *Alicia*, for example, an opening paragraph of ten lines is devoted to describing the set.

Plots usually revolved around a social issue that drives the motivation of the characters. Character and plot are bound up in one seamless web. For example, in Sastre’s *La tierra roja*, minors revolt against exploitative practices of the mining company. A young miner comes to displace an older miner from the company-provided living quarters. The question of what will become of the older miner, who will receive no pension, drives the rebellion. In *Alicia* security and survival also drive the actions of the characters. Alicia has worked as a live-in maid for Jean-Phillipe for quite some time. Her sister Mariló came eleven months earlier and is also living in the household; she works for a rich family as a nanny. Conflict erupts when the two sisters’ mother Adela arrives. Jeanne-Phillip has been barely tolerating Mariló’s presence; he insists that Adela cannot stay. The first act ends with the three women leaving the residence, making themselves homeless. Jeanne-Phillip runs after them to ask them to stay, only after he realizes that he needs Alicia for his creative endeavors. The second act continues in the same vein. The women worry that they will be displaced by Jeanne-Phillip’s new romantic interest. However, Jeanne-Phillip defends the women (especially Alicia) as being indispensible. The play comes to a crises and close when Jeanne-Phillipe discovers that Alicia’s brother Gaito has been staying in the residence on the sly. This upsets Jeanne-Phillip so much that he decides to eject the whole family. Once again they find themselves at the point of being homeless in a foreign country. At the last moment Alicia confesses her love to Jeanne-Phillipe, who reluctantly reciprocates.

In Sierra’s realism, however, the focus shifts somewhat from character as an instrument of social forces to character as a total person. Much attention is given to María’s attraction to Jeanne-Phillipe. She has read all his novels and has identified the reason he has not been published. She relates to him a country tale that he uses in his next and first successfully
published novel. In addition, Jeanne-Phillipe is conservative in his politics and general social outlook. María points out that it is this conservatism that weighs down his novels and makes them too artificial for anyone to want to read. Some might argue that these issues have little or nothing to do with the problem of Spanish immigrants in France during the Franco era. However, this attention to character broadens the perspective of the play and is an indirect comment that the salt-of-the-earth immigrants that came to France may have had something to offer French culture.

In the area of dialogue, nineteenth century and twentieth century realism have elements in common. Dialogue is in prose and is very natural, intended to reflect the rhythms and vocabulary of middle and lower class people. However, Sierra takes the imitation of common speech to a new level, by reaching back to nineteenth century practices of imitating dialects and accents. Adela speaks with an Andalusian accent and Jeanne-Phillip speaks with a French accent. However, it is not sufficient for Sierra to note these speech characteristics in the stage directions. The dialogue’s spelling and grammar reflect these elements. Here are some lines from dialogue spoken by Jeanne-Phillipe:

“¡Quiere usted hacer el favor de bajar volume…” (13) instead of, “haga el favor…”

“¿Y por qué su hermana tener relaciones con comunistas? A mi no me gusta que las personas que haber en mi casa tengan relaciones con comunistas.” (14) instead of, “¿Y por qué su hermana anda con comunista? No quiero en mi casa personas que anden con comunistas.”

However, it is in his use of humor that Sierra brings a new element to the social realism of Spanish theatre. His first play, *Alicia en el país de las maravillas*, as already noted, is a comedy. *María la mosca* will receive a complete treatment in the next chapter. Here, I would like to point out that this is a serious play in the social realism mode of Buero Vallejo that has many comic elements. In fact, Sierra relates in the preface to the published version of the play that the first producer to whom he brought the play wanted Sierra to rewrite it to have a happy ending.

There is much to make the audience laugh in *Lejos de paraíso*. A reluctant temptress Luci struggles to explain the results of obtaining knowledge to a couple who know nothing (23). Luci tries to explain how sex works to a couple who have never copulated (24-5).
Adán and Eva try to summon God, and a Figure comes in response, who turns out to be Luci in disguise (28-30). In the second act, a scandalized Luci listens as Eva innocently tells her that she has been having sex with Abel and Caín (53-4). However, the same play has the onstage murder of Abel by Caín (58-60).

Sierra’s last play *Palomas intrépidas* comes closest to falling into the category of “light comedy“. Yet here also, there are underlying social themes of the potential loneliness of menopausal women and the still current, though waning, taboo against women being the sexual aggressors.

With the possible exception of *Palomas intrépidas*, Sierra uses humor in much the same way that Buero Vallejo has used Brechtian techniques in the later stages of his career, which Donahue tracks in detail and concludes that the playwright was seeking means to balance and integrate Aristotelian techniques of emotional identification with distancing techniques of Brecht’s Epoch Theatre (172-218). In describing the techniques of Buero Vallejo’s *Las Meninas*, especially in its staging (191-6), Edwards also points out: “The revelation throughout the play of the range of passions and emotions described above involves the audience directly, drawing it into the play in a way which contradicts effects of distancing (196). Edwards concludes in the next sentence:

Buero Vallejo’s achievement is…to balance involvement and detachment, to express passion within a frame in such a way that the observer of the action can identify with the characters, feel for them, yet learn from the observation of the experience.

Sierra aims for a similar affect by balancing the comic with the serious, comedy and tragedy. Morreall points out in *Comedy, Tragedy, and Religion*:

Comedy encourages an emotional disengagement not only from the protagonist’s problems, but from our own, and from the problems of the whole human race. We are liberated from ordinary concerns about what is here and now and real and practical, so that we may laugh at our own situations and at the human condition. As emotions like fear, anger, ‘pity, sadness, and admiration are tragic paradigms for responding to real-life incongruities, so playfulness and laughter are comic paradigms for responding to real-life incongruities. (18)

As does Buero Vallejo, Sierra tries to strike a balance between emotional identification and emotional distancing, between laughing and crying. In the case of his comedies, he paints
vivid characters emotionally involved in their struggles, so that the audience can feel along with them as well as laugh. The audience feels Alicia’s plight as an immigrant as well as laughs at it. In the end, she resolves the situation by making an honest expression of love for Jean-Phillippe, rather than doing something witty, which is typical of comedy (Comedy Morreall 14). In the case of Sierra’s single published tragedy, the comic elements help the audience step back at times and laugh at the incongruities of Franco’s Spain and learn from the experience.
*María la mosca*, a Tragedy of Failed Relationships in a Failed Society

In *María la mosca* Sierra takes up his two chosen themes, the individual’s struggles against an oppressive authority and man and woman’s search for happiness together, and shapes his material in a socially realistic context. The setting is a bar in Barcelona that is really the center of operations for a group of prostitutes, managed by Doña Lola, who is also the owner of the bar. The time is 1960. Sierra’s selection of this year is not arbitrary, as a little background of the period’s economic history shows.

Until 1959, Franco had pursued an economic policy of isolation, and the results were disastrous. Almost all foreign trade was disallowed and black marketing was one of the few means to gain a reasonable livelihood. This period in Spanish history is often referred to as *Los años de hambre* ("Francisco Franco," Wikipedia). With Spain near bankruptcy, Franco acceded to internal and external pressures and opened up Spain’s economy to a free market system. The liberalization of the economy was not accompanied by a liberalization of the political system ("The Franco Years." *Library of Congress Country Studies: Spain*).

As a result of the implementation of these new policies (The Stabilization Plan of 1959), Spain’s economy began to grow rapidly throughout the sixties and seventies and resulted in the expansion of a larger and better educated middle class and a new urban working class that increasingly wanted more political liberty. Protests and strikes (alluded to in the play) became stronger and more frequent and would include more segments of Spanish society, most notably university students and younger members of the Catholic clergy. Eventually, these forces, along with the death of Franco in 1975, would lead to the democratization of Spain ("The Franco Years." *Library of Congress Country Studies: Spain*).

This very brief summary of the economic history of the period is necessary in order to understand Sierra’s placement of the play in 1960 to 1962. Because the new economic policies would not have taken hold yet and because there had been no loosening of the repressive measures of the Franco regime, Spain may have been suffering its most hopeless and inhibiting moments under Franco. Before going on I need to be clear; “hopeless and
Inhibiting” are not synonymous with “worst.” If one counts Franco’s civil war year, he was in power for almost forty years, and there were several epochs of brutality and repression that might qualify as the “worst,” including the years 1939 to 1943, where Franco consolidated his power, and as many as 200,000 may have been summarily executed (Francisco Franco Killer Files). But even in this period, there was resistance, and if there is resistance, there is hope. However, by 1960, Franco had not only consolidated his power, but he had put into place political and institutional tools that gave him absolute authoritarian control of Spain (“The Franco Years.” Library of Congress Country Studies: Spain). This reality coupled with a barren economic environment would have given most people in Spain little cause for realizing anything better.

The foregoing is a bird’s eye view of the play’s landscape. It is broad, conceptual, and removed. Sierra gives the audience a worm’s eye view. Franco’s society is seen from the perspective of its underclass, the people most adversely affected by it. At the start of the play, its protagonist, María has just arrived in Barcelona from the provinces. Her motives for coming to the city are economic. She is a poor peasant girl, living alone in a house that she would like to buy. She sees no other realistic means of attaining the money except to earn it as a prostitute: “…unos años de golfa y, después, señora para toda la vida” (21) ‘…a few years of being a whore and forever after a señora’ (64), she tells Doña Lola, proprietress of the bar and madam of the prostitutes.

María is not unique in coming from the country to the city in order to make a living as a prostitute. All the other women who work for Doña Lola also come from the provinces. Blondie comes from Andalucía (14), Dizzy from Galicia (15), and Mely originates from Catalan (16). In fact, Doña Lola (who also came from the provinces, thirty years earlier {25}) comments after meeting María for the first time, “…otra que emigra del campo. Pronto solo quedarán viejos y cabras” (23). “Someone else moving here from the countryside. Soon the only ones living out there will be the goats and old farts” (67). If Doña Lola is right, a glaring contradiction would have been held up to the Spanish audience of 1979, who would have known that the play was taking place at time referred to as los años de hambre: people were starving. It was a time that it made economic sense to stay in
the country and grow food, at least for oneself. However, economic conditions were so unfavorable that most of the population could not do even that.

Part of the answer lies in María’s story before coming to Barcelona. She wants to work as a prostitute in order to buy the small farm where she was raised. Her parents, as tenants, had worked its land all her life. The owners only now are willing to sell it because they are moving to Madrid to live with a son. María sees prostitution as the only way to raise enough money to buy the house (20). It would seem (if María’s case was not an anomaly) that the people favored under the Franco regime with land ownership were reaching a point where they were running out of people who could afford to buy or lease it. (María had only considered buying the farm when a new owner failed to present himself.) Apparently, there is almost no chance of making money in the country. When Pichuli accuses María of coming to Barcelona “…buscando la vida fácil” (17) ‘…looking for the easy life’ (59), María answers:

Fácil o difícil, no importa, pero que me compense. Porque para dejarme la vida, ganando una miseria me había quedado en mi pueblo. (17)

Easy or hard, no importa, as long as it makes money. If I wanted to be poor and miserable, I would have stayed in my home town. (59)

Economic misery is accepted by the play’s characters as a fact of life. When María first meets Jordy, and says that she has come to Barcelona to be a prostitute, Jordy (who survives by being a gigolo) answers matter-of-factly that, “Cada cual trabaja en lo que quiere” (35). ‘Everyone in Spain makes money however they can’ (90).

Some opportunities do exist, even in this Franconian landscape. Thanks to María’s ableness as a prostitute, she and Jordy are able to invest in owning a bar (50-6). Two years later, it fails, although it generated enough income to pay for María’s country house. Details are scant, but the failure seems to be caused more by the couple’s inability to work well together than any financial failure (59). I will have more to say about this further on.

Doña Lola’s bar is also a business success, in part because she understands the social norms within which she must work. She has sweetheart deals with the police, without whose cooperation she would not be able to stay in business (Gonzalez-Perez, 9-11). She
also knows that money can flow into her bar from only two sources: the more privileged of
the Franco regime and foreigners. The play displays little evidence of native Spanish
money flowing into the bar, although María does get a regular client of the landed class
who agrees to come to the bar and buy drinks for all the women. Nevertheless, Doña Lola
recognizes her principal source of income to be foreign money, especially United States
money.

Sierra’s audience would have been familiar with at least the broad historical outline of
Spain’s relationship with Europe and the United States, during the Franco era. Immediately
after World War II, Spain was isolated from these countries because of its pro Axis policy.
However, in 1953, Eisenhower, deciding that the United States needed Spain in the Cold
War, signed a mutual defense agreement with Spain, which in exchange for allowing
United States bases on Spanish soil, provided economic aid to the ailing country (Library of
Congress Country Studies: Spain). Along with this aid, came, of course, United States
sailors and money. Doña Lola acknowledges the importance of United States money when
she scolds Pichuli for complaining about making obsequious preparations for the arrival of
a fleet of United States ships in Barcelona:

Ni lo hago porque me gusta. Lo hago porque los yanquis son nuestra economía,
 nuestras vitaminas, nuestra coca-cola, nuestro Plan Marshall particular. Y si para
 que los yanquis vengan hay que decorar la taberna, se decora… (24)

Do you think I do these things because I like to? Who would like doing this? I do
these things because these Yankees are our economy, our vitamins, our Coca Cola,
our private Marshall Plan. And if to lure them here, we have to dress up the bar,
then we dress it up… (69)

To understand the full impact of these lines on Sierra’s audience, it is worthwhile to point

Pichuli also acknowledges the importance of foreign money to the bar. After the
United States fleet leaves, María comes to an empty bar. She asks Pichuli what is going on.

PICHULI. …Lo normal: empieza la crisis.
MARÍA. Crisis. ¿Qué crisis?
PICHULI. Aquí la abundancia nos llega de afuera: cuando lo de afuera se
termina, empieza la crisis. (43)
PICHULI. … Things return to normal: hard times.
MARÍA. Hard times? Why hard times?
PICHULI. Here in Barcelona, we make money only from foreigners. When the foreigners go, so does the money, and hard times are here again. (98)

Not only United States money comes to the bar. The French also bring their business. However, the women see the French as cultural elitists (64-5). Moreover, they prefer the United States sailors, whom they perceive as appreciative and better spenders, even if more rowdy (83-4).

Trying to survive in such a harsh economic environment is difficult in itself. Coping with these economic conditions in the oppressive Franco police state was even harder. In María la mosca a character representing the Franco regime never appears on stage. Nevertheless, the government’s presence is constant throughout the play. In the first act, the stage directions three different times inform the reader that police sirens are heard passing outside (25, 45 & 55). Two of the three times, the sirens are instructed to pass during relatively quiet moments in the play (25 & 55), as if to remind the audience that the police presence is constant, allowing no relief, like a chronic pain, always latent and ready to intrude itself into the lives of the characters. “Con tal de que no se acerquen por aquí.” (25) “…so long as they don’t come here.” (70) says Doña Lola on hearing a police car siren.

No such stage directions are given in the second act, no doubt because Sierra has already established the government presence by this and other means. Early in the first act, Dorita (Blondie in the English translation) announces she is leaving to demonstrate in a protest (14-15). Later, she returns badly roughed up by the police: “…la Policía desidió celebrar la suya manifestación. ¡Ay cómo cascaban!” (27). ‘The police decided to stage their own protest by breaking our skulls.’ (72). Apparently, this had been a protest of singing artists, taking issue with the pay scale for a performance. Without resorting to melodramatic spectacle, Sierra brings to the stage the Franco regime’s contempt for individual rights and public demonstration.

The audience learns of the corruptibility government officials when Doña Lola prepares María for initiation into a career of prostitution. One of the requirements for new prostitutes is to pass the personal inspection of the chief of police. If he is satisfied with her performance, then she has to provide sexual favors to a jeweler named Fernando. Besides
getting free sex, this jeweler has a sweetheart deal with the police and Doña Lola’s women. They are to come to his jewelry store with any clients wishing to buy them gifts (22).

In the first act Franco’s police state is established as a general presence, but in the second act it begins to influence directly the lives of the play’s principal characters. Its oppressiveness begins to adversely affect the business of the prostitutes. Blondie tells la Mareos (Dizzy in the translation) that they have not made any money the last couple of days because of arbitrary and repressive actions by the police:

…no sabemos qué andan buscando, pero la “secreta” no nos deja ni respirar. A poco que te descuides, te agarran, te rapan y te enchiranan. (72)

…we don’t know what the police are looking for, and the feds aren’t whispering their secret to us. But if you aren’t careful, they grab you up, shake you down and throw you in the cage. (140)

People are scared, say Mely and Dizzy, and there is a general feeling that something bad is going to happen, even though it never does. Nothing will ever change, concludes Mely, and Dizzy agrees.

Mely and Dizzy are only half right. Nothing changes on the grand scale, but the repressive force of the Franco regime can fall with all its weight on an individual life, as it does when Mely tells everyone that Jordy has been arrested. It comes as no surprise to Mely that Jordy was arrested. In fact, she had always said that Jordy would end up in jail, and she takes great glee in relating the circumstances of his arrest. However, she does not seem to consider (nor do any of the other characters seem to consider) that the police action is completely arbitrary in this instance and completely unjust. As Mely tells the story, a group of radicals robbed a bank, and Jordy (who was not involved in the robbery) was arrested for having been known to associate with them. The true bank robbers had families with money to bail them out of jail. Jordy did not. So he was the only person still in police custody.

María bails Jordy out of jail. When she asks Jordy his plans, he tells her that he must leave Spain. Once the police open a file on someone, he is a marked man who will be rounded up on the slightest suspicion. A word needs to be said about the method of getting
someone who has been arrested out of jail. The play uses the term “fianzas,” which generally is translated as “bail.” However, the system employed by the police in the play may not be the same system that we understand as bail. No reference is made to a trial, either before or after the “fianzas” are paid, and it seems from the discussion in the play that Jordy either pays his “fianzes” or he stays in jail.

The final reference to the police is made by Pichuli at the end of the play. He tells the audience that a little over three months after returning to her town, María was arrested by the police and after “muchos interrogatorios,” she confessed to the murder of Jordy. The audience or reader can only imagine the nature if these interrogations.

As noted, an official of the Franco government never appears on stage. However, the play does have a surrogate in the person of Doña Lola, proprietress of the tavern and madam of the prostitutes that work out of it. She has ties to the government, especially, with the chief of police. As cited, she has a sweetheart deal with that official and a friend of his, Fernando the jeweler. Towards the end of the play, when she calls police headquarters to lie about being robbed by Jordi, she easily is able to get the chief on the telephone, doing no more than mentioning her name.

There are other similarities between Doña Lola’s management style and Franco regime methods, one being her whole-hearted embrace of Catholicism and the seemingly oblivious disconnection between many of the things she does and her professed faith. When María comes to Doña Lola, looking for work as a prostitute, Doña Lola asks her directly:

DOÑA LOLA. Dime una cosa. ¿Tú crees en Dios?
MARÍA. Mucho.
DOÑA LOLA. ¿Vas a misa los domingos?
MARÍA. Sí, siempre que puedo.
DOÑA LOLA. Estupendo. En España se puede ser puta pero católica. (21)

DOÑA LOLA. Tell me one thing, do you believe in God?
MARÍA. With all my heart.
DOÑA LOLA. Do you go to mass on Sundays?
MARÍA. Yes, every Sunday that I can.
DOÑA LOLA. Estupendo! Only in Spain can a good Catholic girl can be a slut. (64-5)
Doña Lola, like the Franco government, exploits the people under her. One should say in her defense that prostitution is an exploitive profession and there are probably no humanitarian madams. Moreover, some of Doña Lola’s rules, given the context, seem reasonable enough; especially one requiring that the women have their clients meet them at the bar to buy them a drink before going to a room (44). Serving alcohol, after all, is her livelihood. At times, she seems protective of the women, as when she tries to ward off Jordy from María (37) or when she tries to shut up Mely for speaking to María too much about an obvious Jordy deception (76). (In both cases, Doña Lola’s motivation probably was as much covetousness towards Jordy as concern for María.)

These points made in Doña Lola’s defense, it is impossible to defend her verbal abuse of Pichuli, her aged bartender, whom she scolds for little cause several times. At the end of the play she calls the chief of police to falsely accuse Jordy of stealing from her. If Jordy had not been dead already, her action would have had catastrophic consequences for the young man.

Doña Lola’s bar is at once a metaphor for the Franco regime and a realistic portrait of how some aspects of that government manifested themselves in Spain’s daily life. That Sierra had a connection between the two in mind is evidenced by a scene between Doña Lola and Jordy. Jordy has invited one of the women to have a drink in another bar. Doña Lola objects, saying they should have that drink in her bar. An argument between the two ensues, resulting in this exchange.

JORDY. Es solo una copa.
DOÑA LOLA. Ni media.
JORDY. Pero—
DOÑA LOLA. ¡He dicho que no y basta! ¡No se habla más!
JORDY. ¡Como un dictador! ¡Siempre como un dictador! ¿Es que todo el mundo ha de hacer lo que usted manda?
DOÑA LOLA. ¡En mi casa, sí! ¡Yo gano lo mío!
JORDY. ¡Nadie somos suyos! (46-7)

JORDY. It’s just one drink.
DOÑA LOLA. Not even half a one!
JORDY. But—
DOÑA LOLA. I said, no, damn it! That’s enough!
JORDY. Like a dictator, always the dictator. Everyone has to follow your orders.
DOÑA LOLA. In my house, in my bar, yes! I rule here.
JORDY. None of us belong to you… (103-4)

At first glance, aligning Doña Lola with the Franco regime might seem to make no sense. She is a woman and a prostitute, two attributes that do not favor her in the Franco regime. Prostitution was officially illegal, and women were second-class citizens, who were not able to have their own bank accounts, unless cosigned by their father or husband (“Francisco Franco,” Wikipedia). However, Sierra’s decision to make Doña Lola an onstage variation of the Franco regime is inspired. First, it shows the hypocrisy of the regime, having one public stance (in this case against prostitution) and quite another stance in practice. It shows, too, Franco’s ability to reach and control even Spain’s underclass and its marginalized peoples, very often a place of last refuge for the dissenter. Finally, it shows how even the most wretched of the wretched in Spain could survive, only by aligning themselves with Franco’s police state.

This then is the social context in María and Jordy play out their story: a bar for prostitutes during the most economically hopeless years of the oppressive Franco regime. With this social context understood, we are better prepared to examine the core subject of this play, which is the narrative of the relationship between María and Jordy. Before proceeding, it is important to point out that the social context is more than just background for the lovers’ story. The economic and political realities are an integral part of the story. As already pointed out, forces from the greater society play critical roles in the progress of the play’s plot. On the other hand, neither is the social context the primary focus of this play. First and foremost, this is the story of a man and woman meeting, falling in love and failing tragically. Let us look at how this happens.

María meets Jordy for the first time just before she is to begin her new vocation as prostitute. There is no mention of any past relationships with men, and it is reasonable to assume that no important relationship preceded her coming. (In fact, María says at one point that she has never met a man that she liked{34}). Therefore, in spite her decision to become a prostitute; María is very inexperienced in male-female relationships. At first, María is distrustful and even hostile to Jordy’s advances. When Jordy tells María that,
“…tú y yo lo pasaríamos muy bien,” ‘…you and I would get along very well together’ (34), María answers, “…tú y yo no vamos a pasarlo de ninguna manera.” ‘…you and me aren’t going to be getting along in anything’ (83). Nevertheless, María does decide to continue with her conversation with Jordy, partly because he is willing to accept her as a friend in spite of her chosen line of work (35). Later, however, when María is defending her relationship with Jordy, her description of her original impression of Jordy is quite different from what the audience sees onstage:

Lo conozco, Jefa. Lo conozco desde que yo era niña. Siempre que pensaba en un hombre, era en él en que estaba pensando, siempre que me lo imaginaba, era a él a quien estaba imaginando. Cuando le vi, me dijo: “Dios mío, pero si es mejor que en sueños.” (42)

I know him, boss. I’ve known him since I was a little girl. Whenever I thought about my dream man, it was him I saw; in every way it was him. When I looked at him here for the first time, I said to myself, “My God, he’s even better than I dreamed.” (96)

Beside the contrast between what the audience sees and hears in the scene in which María and Jordy meet and María’s memory of it, one is struck by the puerility of María’s words. María gives no description of what her lifelong vision of the ideal man has been, but surely it could not have been that of a pimp. A breach has opened between how María sees Jordy and how the audience sees him.

This breach widens in the final scene of the first act. María shows Jordy the apartment that she has acquired with her money. Then Jordy tells María that he intends to work for a living. Initially, his announcement sounds out of character and even María cannot take it seriously (51). However, as Jordy explains his intention to work for a living, it becomes clear that what he is proposing is a business proposition in which María takes all the risk. He proposes that they buy a bar from a friend who is leaving the city. Admitting that endeavoring to go to “work” is an act out of character for him, Jordy gives as his motivation a changed attitude because of his relationship with her. Although one does not doubt the sincerity of his intentions, one doubts the force of his commitment. To buy the bar would require a sizable down payment that María would have to pay. Jordy, of course, promises to work in the bar, but this arrangement is little different than that of a pimp with
his prostitute. Not having committed anything, Jordy is easily cavalier about the fact that the two of them do not have experience in the bar business. Pointing out that his friend knew nothing about the business before starting, he is sure they will learn. María reminds him that her goal has always been to return to the country and extracts from him a promise to go with her to the country when the house and bar have been paid for. That Jordy is less than enthusiastic about spending the rest of his life on a small country farm is evidenced by his making the promise with the proviso that he will go with her provided that everything is going well between them. María has progressed so deep in a state of denial that she dismisses recognition of Jordy’s escape clause with, “Marchará, estoy segura que todo marchará” (54). ‘It will be; I’m sure everything will be fine’ (117). The scene and act end with María far more excited than Jordy about their new commitment, and in a moment symbolic of the true state of the relationship, she embraces him so strongly that Jordy complains of being suffocated and exhorts her to let him go (50-5).

Act Two begins in the same apartment. It is now two years later. The relationship has deteriorated significantly. Jordy is obviously unhappy and María is still in denial. She is intent on playing house: she asks Jordy to get his feet off the couch (57), turn off the radio so they can talk (57), notes that he is wearing a clean shirt (Is he going out early?) (58), that there is roast beef, cheese, and fruit in the refrigerator (58), and that he should not use ginger ale to treat a hangover in the morning (58). She does not seem to notice that Jordy (who never takes his eyes off the newspaper and answers her contentiously) is grudgingly tolerating her.

Apparently, the bar business has failed and María returned to prostitution six months earlier. However, the income from the bar enabled María to pay for her house. Strangely, there is no mention of moving to María’s town, Lorca, or why they felt that María had to return to prostitution. Moreover, the business does not seem to have failed financially. Rather, María insisted on being at the bar all the time and wore herself out physically. Jordy says she was trying to keep an eye on him. She says that she only wanted to help (59).
Perhaps the greatest show of denial occurs when María answers the telephone and hears a woman trying to imitate the voice of a man and calling herself Monty. Jordy says that Monty is a man and explains that he is a member of a group of two men and a woman that he met a couple of weeks ago. However, instead of questioning further why a woman would call trying to disguise her voice as male, she questions Jordy if he is planning to start another business. Finally, she proposes inviting the group over for dinner so she could meet them. Jordy goes through the motions of inviting them (59-64).

The relationship implodes when Jordy not only does not bring his friends to the birthday dinner party that María had prepared, but also does not come himself. He calls María to give an excuse that is so transparently artificial that it is worth relating to delineate María’s continuing state of denial. He says, first, that Pili, the female of the trio of new friends, was in an accident, and they were going to take her back to her home in the provinces. María asks if the three needed to take her. Apparently, not answering her directly, he says that Monty has to have dinner with his family. Again, María asks if only he and Pedro (the other male of the trio) planned to come to the dinner. Again, Jordy does not answer directly, saying that the last train back to Barcelona is at eleven P.M. Apparently, Jordy asks if they can do it the next evening, seemingly oblivious to the trouble María went through to prepare the meal. Instead of telling Jordy to stay in the provinces with his new friends for the rest of his life, María tells him she understands (70).

Several days later, however, Blondie tells María that she saw Jordy in a bar the night he was supposed to be in the provinces. When María confronts Jordy with this information, he admits that he came back late with Pedro to Barcelona. Jordy does not want to talk further but María finally pushes him into speaking as truthfully as he is capable of. He says that he is fed up with the relationship, and it is no one’s fault but his. María momentarily faces reality and reluctantly shows Jordy the door, but within moments after his leaving, she regrets her decision. It is worth examining what she says to herself. She is pondering going back to her hometown and living in the house that is now fully paid for.

…yo gusto a los hombres. Yo les gusto… Allí nadie sabe lo que he hecho. A mi no me ha visto nadie… Nadie. (Larga pausa. Transición.) Pero… ¿y si alguien me ha visto?… ¿Y si se ha corrido de boca en boca?… Me despcriarán, me señalarán con
la mirada: “Ahí va la puta” “Esa ha sido puta.”…Nadie querrá tratarme. Y tendré que vivir sola…¡Sola!…(Con voz temblorosa.) ¡No!…¡Yo no quiero vivir sola! ¡No quiero vivir sola! (Grita llena de temor.) ¡Joooordiiii!…¡No me dejes!…¡No me dejes! (83)

Men like me: they really like me…Out there, no one knows what I did here. No one there has seen me…No one! (A long pause and a transition in mood) But, what if someone has seen me and already has gone running off at the mouth? I won’t be able to show my face without them looking down on me and saying things like: “There goes the whore.” Or “Hats off to the wealthy, retired slut.”…No one will want anything to do with me, and I’ll have to live alone… Alone!… (With a trembling voice) No, I don’t want to live alone. (Shouting full of fear) Jooordy!...Don’t leave me!...Don’t leave me! (156)

A strange logic seems to have taken hold of María. She is afraid to go back to her home town, worried that somehow knowledge of her work as a prostitute will leak out. In some strange way, María sees Jordy’s presence as protection against that outcome, at the very least, an insurance policy against being left alone.

Instead of going home, María goes on a drunken spree for two months. However, she sees one more chance at reconciliation when she learns that Jordy has been arrested by the police. Interestingly, she blames Doña Lola (with whom Jordy has been living for the past two months) for Jordy’s arrest. After paying Jordy’s way out of jail, María proposes that they renew their relationship, but Jordy rejects any idea of staying in Spain. She then proposes that he wait while she sells her things and they go together. When he rejects that plan, she proposes that they simply go to France together. None of these proposals considers her keeping the house that she originally had come to Barcelona for. All of María’s identity seems wrapped up in her relationship with Jordy. Realizing that this will be the last time that she will see Jordy, she poisons him.

From a logical perspective, the murder makes no sense. If María wanted Jordy out of her life, she simply could have let him go. But conventional logic is not an issue here; María does not see the murder as putting Jordy out of her life. It’s worth quoting her final words to him as the poison puts him into a permanent sleep.

Descansa, amor mío, descansa… Te quiero, Jordi… Te quiero… Tú eres lo único que me importa en este mundo. La vida sin ti no tendría sentido… Tu fuiste el primero el primero y quiero que será el último… Quiero tenerte siempre a mi lado,
que lo compartamos todo… Descansa, mi amor… Descansa… Descansa… Descansa…

Rest, my love, rest…I love you, Jordy…I love you…You are the only one in this world who means anything to me. Life without you wouldn’t make any sense…You were my first and you will be my last…I want to have you always by my side, sharing everything together…Rest my love…Rest…Rest…Rest…

The audience is presented with the same strange duality in the relationship that has existed since its beginning. There is the Jordy that the audience sees, and there is the Jordy that María has created.

The duality is so wide that María’s murder of Jordy seems an act of emancipation. The moment she decides to kill him, María has the presence of mind to work on an alibi for his disappearance. She has him call his parents to say he is leaving the country and will not be heard from for some time. She decides to go back immediately to her paid for house in the province and asks Pichuli to come work for her. She even manages somehow to get Jordy’s body to the farm, where she buries it. In a very psychologically twisted way, burying him at the farm is a form of getting the idealized Jordy to be with her there forever. Nevertheless, at the end of the play, she does seem to retrieve part of her identity.

Sierra’s audience would have seen immediately the disparities between the official Franco endorsement of the traditional role of women as homemakers and the reality for many, as depicted in this play: men marrying for money and going to prostitutes for affection; women unable to find a husband to be a homemaker for and turning to prostitution and finding romance only with pimps and gigolos. However, one does not need to come from the Franco, post Franco environment to understand the wider issues of people trapped in roles that put them at odds with the stated ideals of a society, its reality, and their own illusions.

Sierra’s audience also may have noticed that the play’s male characters share the trait of being ineffective in their relationships with women. María’s regular client, incapable of forming any meaningful relationship after his wife’s death, must pay a prostitute, not only for sex but for companionship. Jordy is only effective in seducing women. After a short time in the relationship, Jordy appears sincerely moved by his feelings toward María to
want to “work.” However, his best effort is to have María invest her money in a business. Two years later, in the face of her smothering control, he is capable of only making terse remarks while he pretends to read a newspaper. Later, rather than telling María outright that he wants to leave the relationship, he relates a story about his dead brother that is really irrelevant but which he uses to get María to throw him out. (His general theme is: I am no good and you are better off without me.) After leaving María, the only way he can survive is to take up with another woman, this time with Doña Lola.

The only other male character is Pichuli. With the exception of Doña Lola, Pichuli’s relationship with the women is superficial. At the final stages of his life, he has few options, and one wonders what will happen to him when he gets too old to tend bars. In the meantime, he must tolerate Doña Lola’s relentless verbal abuse and work for a woman that he admittedly does not like. “¡Veinte menos, Jordi! ¡Si yo tuviera viente añitos menos!”

(30) ‘Twenty years, Jordy; if only I were twenty years younger’ (76).

As noted in the previous chapter, Sierra inherited a tradition of social realism which had to focus on the characters, not their oppressors. Even though the playwright was not answerable to the strict Franco censors that had forced this approach, he chose to continue in its tradition, no doubt, realizing that plays that focus too much on politics usually do not make for effective theatre. We, the theatre-going public and readers of drama, are better off for his decision. What Sierra has given us is a graphic portrayal of what life was like, at least, for some who lived in Franco’s Spain. The characters of this play find themselves in a universe where there is little hope for fulfillment with someone from the other sex. In one of the few moments of tenderness in the play, Dizzy reveals to Mely and Blondie that she is pregnant, and the three women contemplate how they will raise the child. No thought is given to a male surrogate, not even a Pichuli, to participate (89-90). Sierra has created a world where women sell their bodies but in which there is no real hope of even the most rudimentary emotional contact with men. It is a world in which, amidst the constant threat of police repression and arbitrariness coupled with economic oppression and uncertainty, a man and woman cannot even support and comfort one another.
This portrait of Franco’s Spain, although grim, does not leave the reader depressed. One reason for this effect is Sierra’s extensive use of humor, which appears in many different forms and has several purposes in this play. I have already referred to a section of the play, where Doña Lola is interviewing María, who wants to be a prostitute, and Doña Lola turns the questioning to María’s religious beliefs. I would like to return to that section, this time directing my attention to Sierra’s execution of humor:

DOÑA LOLA. Dime una cosa. ¿Tú crees en Dios?
MARÍA. Mucho.
DOÑA LOLA. ¿Vas a misa los domingos?
MARÍA. Sí, siempre que puedo.
DOÑA LOLA. Estupendo. En España se puede ser puta, pero católica. (21)

DOÑA LOLA. Tell me one thing, do you believe in God?
MARÍA. With all my heart.
DOÑA LOLA. Do you go to mass on Sundays?
MARÍA. Yes, every Sunday that I can.
DOÑA LOLA. Estupendo! Only in Spain can a good Catholic girl be a slut.
(64-5)

In this passage the verbal humor resides in juxtaposing being a prostitute with religiousness, so that words like *puta* and *católica* (*slut* and *Catholic*) are placed side by side and have an equal value in the minds of the speakers. Like much of the humor in the play, the intention here is satirical. Prostitutes, viewed as illegal by Franco and sinners by the Church, embrace the Catholic religion. In another section, Blondie returns badly beaten from a protest of singing artists. She explains what happened to her and her work companions.

DORITA. … Los artistas no estábamos de acuerdo con el sueldo base, y desidimos celebrar una manifestación.
DOÑA LOLA. ¿Y qué ha pasado?
DORITA. Que la Policía desidió celebrar también la suya. ¡Ay cómo cascaban! ¡Casi nos matan!... (27)

DORITA. … We artists weren’t happy with the minimum wage, and we decided to stage a protest.
DOÑA LOLA. So what happened?
DORITA. The police decided to stage their own protest by breaking our skulls. They were out to kill us. (72)
In this case Sierra employs humorous contrast, using in the same phrase, *celebrar una manifestación*, (stage a protest) for the very different actions of the protestors and the police.

A humorous contrast results when the audience knows something that the characters do not know or that some of the characters do not know. The reader will note in the following example, in form, there is no difference between this type of humor and dramatic irony. Rather, the difference resides in the attitude and tone the artist has toward the subject matter. In this example, the play opens with Pichuli onstage alone, complaining to himself about the imminent arrival of a fleet of United States sailors.

PICHULI. *(Malhumorado)* Y dicen que esta vez llegan siete mil. ¡Siete mil!... La madre que los parió… (13)
PICHULI. *(Ill humored.)* And they say, this time seven thousand are coming. Seven thousand…To hell with them and the mothers who gave them birth. (55)

A moment later, Blondie enters the bar. She has been absent for a while but enthusiastically tells him that she is returning to work: “Porque llegan siete mil, ¡siete mil! ¿Tú te das cuenta?...” (14). ‘…because seven thousand sailors are coming. ¡Siete mil! Did you know?’ (55). She leaves and shortly Dizzy enters the bar and happily reads an article from the newspaper, announcing the arrival of the United States fleet; then exclaims zealously, “¡Y llegan siete mil! ¡Estamos salvados! ¡Salvados!” (15). ‘Seven thousand are coming. We are saved. Saved!’ (57). She leaves and presently Mely enters and exclaims: “Ja són aquí! J’han arribat! Set mil. La mare que els va parir!...” (16). ‘They’re here. Los Yankees are arrived. Seven mil. Jesús bless them and the mothers who gave them life…’ (57). In this bit of comic business the humor is derived from the difference in attitude between the sour Pichuli and the enthusiastic expectation of the women, who have no idea how Pichuli feels about the upcoming event.

Character humor amuses the audience when there is a person who has a zany trait, habit or belief, or a character decides to do something eccentric. María’s initial decision to become a prostitute to make her house payments is an example of such humor. Sierra further develops the comic in this material when he has the inexperienced María turn into an incredible money-making sex machine. Dizzy’s hypochondria and her preoccupation
with herbal cures is another example of character humor. Again, in form, there is no
difference between these examples and dramatic irony. As with all things humorous, it is
the artist’s attitude toward his subject and the tone that he establishes that determines
whether the character’s behavior is laughably odd or seriously defective. Sierra’s election
to mix the comic with the tragic results in a work with a richer texture. It allows the viewer
to step back occasionally from the intensity of the tragedy. (Comic relief is what it is
sometimes called.) It also invites the viewer to think intellectually about the drama as well
as to feel.

Sierra is not above using physical humor in this play. For example, after being accepted
by Doña Lola to work as a prostitute, María leaves to get her hair done and buy clothing
more appropriate to her new calling. She returns later in the morning, looking more like a
tourist, with her hair dyed blond, wearing high-heels and loud clothing (31). A little later in
the act, the four women prostitutes begin a fight to position themselves advantageously for
the imminent arrival of a crowd of United States sailors. The fight is hilarious as the
women are fighting completely for status and ego rather than any monetary consideration.
In addition, to make the sailors feel at home, Pichuli had put on a record of the “The River
Kwai March,” apparently unaware that that song is from a British film and mostly about
British soldiers. Nevertheless, the women fight to the tune of the music until blackout (38-
9). In the next act, the women are again preparing themselves for the imminent arrival of a
crowd of sailors (this time French). Doña Lola positions them in front of the door and
gives the following instructions:

Pichuli, pon la música… Mely, colócate en la barra… Tú, María, ahí… Tú, Mareos,
al otro lado… Así, bien españoles… Y sonreir. Las chicas fingen una sonrisa.)
Pero con los ojos tristes. (Las chicas se ponen serias.) Pero sonreir. (Las chicas
fingen otra sonrisa.) Pero con los ojos tristes. (Se ponen serias.) ¡Pero sonreir,
leche!… Así, ¡Ay, si pudiérais estar con la peineta y la mantilla! ¡Eso sí que sería
negocio! (69)

Pichuli, put on the music…Mely, stand at the bar…You, María, stay where you
are…Dizzy, on the other side…Just like that…Okay, my Spanish honeys, now
smile. (They all put on deliberately false smiles.) But let the eyes stay sad. (They
all put on sad faces.) But smile. (They return to a smile.) But with serious eyes.
(They go back to serious expressions.) But smile, damn it…Just like that. What a
This could be a scene from a Marx Brothers movie, and Sierra is showing courage in using it in a serious drama. In the previous chapter, I mentioned that Sierra’s predecessors made little use of the comic in their serious dramas. However, if one truly considers the subject, few playwrights in the history of world theatre have felt comfortable mixing the two styles.

His willingness to weave the comic and the tragic, therefore, accomplishes several things. First, when skillfully handled, as it is in this play, it invites the audience to experience the drama intellectually and emotionally. Through identification with the characters, the viewer experiences what it felt like, at least for some, to live in this period. The audience gets a sense of the financial insecurity that drove María into prostitution, just so she could remain living the country home where she grew up. Later in the play, the viewer or reader sees how emotionally desperate her decision was when she contemplates returning to her home town under fear of being discovered as having worked as a prostitute. Alternately, the viewer can step back and laugh at the satire that reveals the hypocrisy of leadership that officially condemns prostitution but aids, abets, and participates in the institution at the ground level. Some might argue that mixing the two forms dilutes the tragic effect. I would argue in this play the tragic effect is strengthened by use of the comic. For one thing, the audience is held in suspense in this play as to how the play will be resolved, tragically or comically. To this point, Sierra relates in his introduction to the published version of the play that the producer wanted the ending changed to a happy one. Happily for the play, the playwright found another producer who had it staged with its tragic ending. Even though, from the perspective of the reader or viewer, the play seems as though it could go either way, tragic or comic; Sierra gradually isolates María from her society as the play progresses, a characteristic of tragedy; as opposed to integrating her into the group, which is the normal trajectory of comedy (Morreall 37). Therefore, the tragic ending is inevitable. Nevertheless, subjectively the audience is not quite sure; so when the tragic happens, it has even more impact than if Sierra had played it completely straight from beginning to end.
Sierra makes one more use of the comic to advance his tragic design: to identify Jordy as the object of the tragedy. Sierra finds it appropriate to use humor in this play referring to any theme or situation and involving almost any character. As noted earlier, there are jokes about prostitution and Catholicism, police brutality, and Dizzy’s use of herbs. Every character is involved in something humorous in the course of the play: Pichuli must listen to each of the women express excitement about the arrival of United States ships after he expresses annoyance; all the women, even Doña Lola, wind up acting like inadvertent clowns when Doña Lola tries to get them to pose in readiness for the arrival of French sailors—there are numerous examples. However, all signs of the comic disappear around Jordy. The effect is one of putting a frame around him or of having him dress in black when everyone else is clothed in colorful apparel. With this kind of artful foreshadowing, Sierra suggests that Jordy will be the scapegoat of this tragedy.
Translation Issues

In this section, I will define my positions on some of translation’s major issues and describe how they directed my strategies and decisions. It is not intended to be a thorough discussion of translation theory or the history of translation. When discussing literary translation theory and practice, there are five terms that need to be addressed: unit of translation, interpretation, fidelity, fluency, and equivalence. I will begin with a discussion of how I understand two terms: level of meaning and unit of translation.

The level of meaning refers to the denotative and connotative meanings, the cultural content, subjective references, imagery, sounds and rhythms, register and tone that might exist in a specified unit of translation. The unit of translation refers simply to the segment of text that I, the translator, have determined carries an indivisible unit of meaning. That unit of meaning can consist of all or any of the elements listed as level of meaning. Those elements can be combined in almost infinite numbers of ways. It is helpful to me to envision the units of translation as a horizontal line of fixed segments and the levels of meaning as a vertical line that intersects the horizontal line, constantly assuming new combinations as it moves horizontally. Applying “unit of meaning” to María la mosca, I see the possible units from smallest to the largest as the following: individual sounds, individual words, phrases, sentences, a group of sentences spoken by one speaker without outside interruption, a colloquy, a scene, an act, the entire play, and the intertextual relationship (written and verbal) of María la mosca with the larger domain of Spanish and European theatre.

The smallest units need no explanation. However, some of the larger elements, beginning with colloquy, need some clarification. A colloquy is a portion of dialogue between two or more characters on one theme. The colloquy ends when there is a change of theme, or focus shifts to a different combination of characters. A scene is a miniature version of an act, which is a miniature version of the play. Each usually has an identifiable protagonist and antagonist, and presents a problem that it resolves. The entire play and
inter textual units essentially are the focus of the first two chapters of this study, and, as one of their purposes, serve as tools for me, the translator.

As a rule of thumb, I try to use the smallest unit of translation practical. As a working matter for María la mosca, I usually made the phrase and sentence my units of translation. The reason for this decision is that it is more important to translate the connotative and emotional levels of meaning in a play than the literal. Ideally, I would like to do both, but as anyone with an intimate knowledge of more than one language can attest, one rarely can find a word in the target language that can do everything that the original word in the source language does, and even in those few times it is found, it is highly improbable that it will do the same thing with the word that came before and the word that follows. In ninety-nine percent of the cases, I found myself trying to group words into phrases or sentences that approximated as a group the original phrase or sentence. The authors of Thinking Spanish Translation offer a chart that is useful in this discussion, which I reproduce here.

\[
\text{SL bias} \leftarrow \text{--------------------------} \rightarrow \text{TL bias}
\]
\[(\ldots\ldots\ldots) \cdot \text{---} \cdot \text{---} \cdot \text{---} \cdot \text{---} \cdot \text{---} \cdot \text{---}\]
\[(\text{Interlineal}) \quad \text{Literal} \quad \text{Faithful} \quad \text{Balanced} \quad \text{Idiomatic} \quad \text{Free}\]
\[(\text{Semantic/Communicative}) \quad (13)\]

SL would be the source language, the text’s original language; TL would be the target language, the language the text is being translated into; the rest of the chart is self explanatory. Esteki points out that there is a correspondence between the length of the unit of translation used by the translator and the intent to render a literal or a free translation: the larger the unit of translation, the greater the intention to render a free translation and vice versa. I would agree with that observation but with the caution that the correspondence is not fixed. One cannot say that using the individual word as the unit of translation automatically renders a literal translation or that using larger units automatically leads to a freer translation. As already noted, individual words may correspond but when grouped together into a phrase or sentence, they may have a different significance, even on the
literal level. Conversely, on some occasions, sentences or even whole passages can transfer quite neatly into the target language.

More importantly, the units of translation are not mutually exclusive. If a translator chooses one unit of translation as his primary working tool, there is nothing stopping her from choosing a larger or smaller unit at any point in the text. In fact, I would argue that the translator should always be prepared to do that. I would like to give some examples from my translation. It can be deduced from what I said earlier that it has been my intent to render a translation that for the most part would fall on the “balanced” part of the scale presented above. However, I found myself presented above. I obviously would agree with that assessment. However, I found myself confronted with the following passage:

MARÍA. ¿Cómo se llama usted?
PICHULI. Juan. Pero aquí me llaman “Pichuli.”
MARÍA. ¿Pichuli? ¿Y eso por qué?
PICHULI. Me lo puso un extranjero borracho. El tío la tomó conmigo y se pasó la noche llamándome “Pichuli, Pichuli”.
MARÍA. (Riendo) Ay qué gracia.
PICHULI. Sí, a las chicas les hizo gracia y me quedé con el mote.
MARÍA. Claro, siempre ocurre igual. (18)

On first pass, I translated the passage in the following way:

MARÍA. What’s your name?
PICHULI. Juan, but they call me Pichuli.
MARÍA: And why Pichuli?
PICHULI. A drunken foreigner gave me the name. All night long, he was trying to get my goat, calling me “Pichuli, Pichuli”.
MARÍA. (Laughing.) Funny.
PICHULI. Yeh, all the girls found it funny, and the name has stuck to me since.
MARÍA. Pues, sometimes ya gotta takes things as they come.

This version closely followed the original. Nevertheless, it fails in an important respect. Apparently, there was something humorous about the nickname Pichuli that was immediately recognizable to a Spanish audience in the late 1970s. However, whatever that humorous something was seems lost to American speakers of Spanish, native or acquired. The word “pichuli” is not in the Diccionario de la lengua española (Segunda edición) of the Real Academia Española, nor in Diccionario panhispánico de dudas (Primera edición,
I also could not find “pichuli” in *Jergas de Habla Hispana*, a reputable site for finding the meaning of Spanish slang worldwide.

I did find a derivative of the name referenced in passing in a quotation within a paper on linguistics by Carlos Castilla del Pino. I reproduce in full here.

«Y ahora firma tu nombre y apellido y que le hiciera un dibujo. ¿por ejemplo, cuál?, cualquiera un torito, una florecita, una pichulita, y así se nos pasaban las tardes» De *Los Cachorros. Pichula Cuéllar.* (Barcelona, p.70.)

This quote provides a little but not a whole lot of help, as the author cited has the name “Pichula.” However, I did find a site *La Música Pichuli.* This site boasts presenting the music “más pichuli de todo primero.” A little further on they inform the reader:

En esta página os mostraremos el estilo de música más alternativo jamás encontrado en una soziedad llena de ignorancia músikal, con grupos pichicológikamente malos y rechazados por los buenos entendedores de música melódica.

On this page we show you a style of alternative music never found in a society full of musical ignorance with groups pichicologically bad and rejected by the lofty interpreters of melodic music. (my translation)

Above this sentence is a poster-like illustration with a dinosaur-like creature saying the word “PUNK.” In an Argentinean blog entitled *El Blog de Lulet*, the blogger writes an essay on words, phrases, and sayings she uses but has no idea of their origin. She then asks her readers to give examples of such expressions they use. One responder says the following: “…en el colegio se decía mucho el termín *chuli* y sus adaptaciones: pichuli chulis y chuliciente” (March 12, 2007 11:09 PM). Searching through the dictionairies, this time I got one almost perfect positive hit. *Vox Diccionario Actual de la Lengua Española* lists “chuli” as an informal variant of “chulé,” which is itself an informal expression for a Spanish coin of five pesetas. *Vox* also lists the verb “Pichulear” as a regional Latin American word meaning variously: (1) to cheat; (2) to do small time transactions; and, (3) to gamble small wages.

Armed with this information, I revised my translation of this section as follows:

MARÍA. What’s your name?
PICHULI. Juan, but they call me Pichuli.
MARÍA. And why Pichuli?
PICHULI. A drunken foreigner gave me the name. After I made him pay a nickel more that he owed for a drink, he snapped, “You know what word they use in South America when someone is being a cheapskate?: Pichulear. So I’m going to call you Pichuli, you cheap piece of crap.” Then, for the rest of the night, he tried getting my goat, calling me “Pichuli”, “Pichuli”.
MARÍA. (Laughing.) Funny; annoying but funny.
PICHULI. Yeh, all the girls found it funny, and the name has stuck to me since.
MARÍA. Well, that’s the way it is; sometimes, ya gotta take things as they come.

Admittedly, in searching for a reasonable interpretation of this passage, I had to go way beyond even the play as a unit. That said, my interpretation was not arbitrarily arrived at. It appears from all the examples above that the word can have a slightly negative or positive connotation, depending on the context. It is clear from the tone of the passage that the drunken customer meant to be slightly depreciative but not seriously so. I could make his intention understandable to an English speaking audience by tying the nickname to the verb “Pichulear.” However, this is a verb spoken only in certain regions of Latin America. The text gives a rationale for using this verb, by describing the drunken customer as a foreigner. Not only would it be reasonable for him to know the word but it would also be his motive for explaining it, as a Spaniard would not likely know its meaning.

Strict adherents of fidelity to the text will no doubt accuse me of adding what was not there and, thus, being “unfaithful” to the original text. They would argue in the absence of a strict construction of the nickname “Pichuli” to a generally recognized meaning, I should have stayed with the more literal translation that I had written first. My response to such a criticism is twofold. The original translation, although faithful to the passage’s literal meaning, communicates nothing but confusion. Something humorous was intended but what was it? I believe that I have a responsibility to my English-speaking audience to provide a reasonably constructed meaning that is in keeping with the play’s overall form and meaning. My second response is a question: just what is meant by faithfulness to the original? Am I being faithful to Sierra’s intention if I think he wrote something intended to be humorous, but do not communicate the humor because time has blurred exactly what that funniness was? Bartolini defines the issue in this way:
“Faithfulness” …is not a technical issue…yet in translation technical and ethical issues are somewhat blurred and definitively interconnected. I do not think that the problem confronting the translator can be resolved by replacing “faithfulness” with “equivalence”…In fact, I do not think that the translator can resolve this conundrum at all. The translator can only problematize the relationship between the original and the translation by questioning the meaning of “faithfulness”….Does one need to be faithful to the intention of the author, or to the spirit of the book or to the style and language, or the characters and their stories and lives, to the historical period?

The passage in question was one in which I felt that a unit of translation larger than the phrase or sentence was necessary in order to faithfully convey the author’s intention and a freer translation was justified.

Before moving onto another topic, I would like to return a moment to the chart presented by *Thinking Spanish Translation* showing the gradient range between literal and free translation; it is duplicated above. From the foregoing discussion the reader can probably deduce why I take issue with inserting the term “faithful” into this chart. A faithful translation can occur anywhere along the horizontal. Perhaps, the authors had in mind a term like denotative-connotative, which for a non-literary text certainly should be the goal for lending a faithful translation. However, as an example, I can envision a free translation of a Shakespearean play rendered into verse and poetical Spanish as being more faithful than the same play translated prosaically.

The foregoing discussion on unit of translation, literal verses free translation and fidelity, especially in the case of the origin of Pichuli’s nickname, brings into the forefront the issue of “equivalence.” Before entering into a more detailed discussion of the meaning of the term and as way of introduction to this topic; I would like to point out that we get an idea of how inadequate the term is for handling many translation problems when we review the issue of Pichuli’s nickname. In that case, I would like to ask, what equivalence am I supposed to be looking for? This translation problem is not that there is a meaning X that requires an equivalent meaning Y in the target text. Rather there is a meaning X, which does not exist for the modern reader in the Western Hemisphere. It is clear that María is responding to something funny, but what? Is there another concept that might help guide the translator better in situations where decisions of cultural issues need to addressed?
In addressing this issue, I will stay in the stated goals of this chapter and confine my observations to how I handled questions of dialect and regional accent in the play. As noted in the previous chapter dialects and regional accents do more than offer cultural color, they play an integral role in advancing the play’s theme. Dorita (Blondie) speaks with an Andalusian accent, which places her origins in southern Spain. La Mareos speaks with a Gallegan accent, which reveals her place of origin in the northwestern corner of the country. Mely not only speaks with a regional accent but also mixes Catalán and Spanish, giving her away as coming from Spain’s eastwest coast. In addition, María comes from Murcia, a province also on the east coast but below the area where Catalán is spoken. The only areas not represented by this group of women are the central and central north regions of Spain. Thematically, Sierra was showing that the economic conditions pushing women into prostitution were a nationwide phenomenon. This idea needed to be conveyed by the translation.

My first impulse was to identify three regional accents in the United States that corresponded to the three accents represented in the play. However, several difficulties presented themselves if I should adopt such a strategy. First, to my ear only two of the three regional accents in the United States are sufficiently distinct enough to be worthwhile to try to reproduce on stage: the New York accent and the Coastal Southern accent. These days, thanks to the centralizing affects of media and migration, the Western accent has been moderated so much as to cause it to lose most of its distinctiveness. I want to make clear that I am addressing only regional accents. True there are sociolectical accents that are distinctive, California Chicano, for example. However, such sociolectical accents are not sufficiently distinctive across regions to make it worthwhile to reproduce onstage (a Californian Chicano, a Georgian Chicano and a New Yorrican English, for example.) (A handy regional accent map can be found at Voices.com.)

One problem, then, is that there are too many accents in the original to find viable corresponding accents in the target language and within the United States dialectal regions. However, an even greater problem presents itself. Even if there were three sufficiently distinctive regional accents available, I am not sure what would be gained by reproducing them. To do so would be asking the audience or reader to make the connective
jump from the United States regional accents to the corresponding regions in Spain, a rather far-fetched expectation in my opinion.

Thus far, the problems I was experiencing in rendering dialects and regional accents in the original confirm the problem that the authors of *Thinking Spanish Translation* have with the term “equivalence.” First, they point out that often it is difficult to determine exactly what effect the source text has had on a source language audience (14). I do not dispute that criticism. Although in this particular case, I feel fairly certain that Sierra’s audience would have instinctively recognized the different accents coming from different areas of Spain. Whether, they would have had the same interpretation of that fact as I have, that Sierra was using the accents as a way of showing that economic conditions were nationwide is more difficult to say. However, interpretation by the audience is in my opinion not an important factor as long as I can recreate the idea that these women come from various regions of the country. The ability to communicate this idea to a monolingual North American audience, using equivalent effect was the issue giving me a problem. In the words of the authors of *Thinking Spanish Translation*:

…the principle of equivalent effect presumes that the theory can cope not only with ST and SL audience but also with the impact of a TT on its intended TL audience. Since on both counts one is faced with unrealistic expectations, the temptation for translators is covertly to substitute their own subjective interpretation for the effects of the ST on recipients in general, and also for the anticipated impact of the TT on the intended audience.

…this is not an *objective* equivalence, because the translator remains ultimately the only arbiter of the imagined effects of both the ST and the TT. Under these circumstances, even a relatively objective assessment of ‘equivalent effect’ is hard to envisage. (ST is ‘source text,’ SL is ‘source language,’ TT is ‘target text’ and TL is ‘target language.’) (14)

Another problem I was having with using ‘equivalent’ accents was that I felt that if I made the characters speak in native regional accents of the United States, I would lose completely the Spanish flavor of the original. The result would be a little like staging a flamenco dance, using polka music.

The authors of *Thinking Spanish Translation* are not completely opposed to the term ‘equivalence,’ if used in the sense of, “…a relativist attempt at minimizing relevant dissimilarities…” between languages and cultures, as opposed to an approach that attempts
to maximize, “…sameness to things that are crucially different…” As we see in this issue of ‘equivalent’ accents, the latter approach only leads to a false correspondence that serves neither the original text nor the potential audience. In addition, the authors of Thinking Spanish Translation elaborate on this idea of “minimizing relevant dissimilarities” and introduce a term and concept which they call ‘translation loss’:

…translation loss embraces any failure to replicate a ST exactly, whether this involves losing features in the TT or adding them. Our concept of translation loss is, therefore, not opposed to a concept of translation gain; where the TT gains features not present in the ST. (15)

The authors of this book see translation loss as inevitable, and it is the translator’s job to minimize the effects of this loss. How this process of minimization is done will depend on the translator and how he determines what elements are more important than others (16-7). For example, in the case of the origin of Pichuli’s name, there was going to be a translation loss no matter what I did. I could stay ‘faithful’ to the text as it has come down to me, with something obviously lost with the passage of time. Doing so, however, would leave the audience confused, and I find that unacceptable. Moreover, leaving the text as is would be unfair to the intentions of the author: why should the play suffer for a change brought about by an accident of time? I therefore decided to add a reasonably constructed section to the text to eliminate the confusion.

On the issue of dialects and regional accents, I employed several strategies to compensate for translation loss. First, for the reasons related, I gave up the idea of trying to duplicate ‘equivalent’ dialects and regional accents from one language to the other. To address the thematic issue of provincial origins, wherever reasonable, I would have the characters refer to provinces of origin. For example, this exchange between Pichuli and Blondie:

PICHULI. To protest what?
BLONDIE. No idea, but I promised to be there. Tell boss lady that I’m coming to work here, and for good; because mommy’s little Andalusian girl ain’t gonna be nobody’s mop. I’ll never go back to that cabaret.

(She throws him a kiss and leaves.)

PICHULI. (Sententiously.) She’ll go back. I’d bet anything that “mommy’s little Andalusian girl” will go back. She needs to sing like a frog needs water. (56)
Most monolingual speakers in the United States probably are not going to know where Andalusia is, and it is not important that they do. What they will get a sense of is that Blondie comes from someplace else in Spain different than where the action is taking place. Moreover, the Spanish place name reminds them that they are watching a play that takes place in Spain. In another place, I was able to attach to the regional reference more directly to the economic theme. Dizzy is exclaiming to Pichuli how excited she is about the imminent arrival of a United States naval fleet and how good it is for the economy. She refers to the sailors as “saviors” and says, “Who would have dreamed? What, with every Spaniard broke, all the way to the West Coast where I came from” (57).

Although this strategy addresses the economic theme in the play, it does little to address certain aesthetic issues that I consider important. First, this is a play in the realistic tradition. Sierra was also using regional accents to inform the audience that the women in this play are outsiders to the middle class, almost foreigners. It is useful to remember that the play takes place in 1960 Spain. Not only Spanish society but world society was not nearly as mobile as it is today. These women are marginalized not only by class and profession but also by regional origin. The situation would have been similar to a pre World War II United States when regional accents were more distinct and where a person of another region was a much rarer entity. To completely ignore this factor would have been a measure of translation loss that would have been unacceptable.

The strategy of using elements of the Spanish or other foreign language to, at least, give a hint that the audience is hearing or reading what is supposed to be the native language of a foreign country is not a technique that originated with me. In fact, the translating profession has already identified techniques with corresponding technology for translating cultural material into the target language. The authors of Thinking Spanish Translation present the following chart:

\[
\begin{array}{ccccc}
\text{Exoticism} & \text{Cultural} & \text{Calque} & \text{Communicative} & \text{Cultural} \\
\text{borrowing} & \text{translation} & \text{transplantation} \\
\end{array}
\]

(20)
Mizani presents the exact same chart and attributes it to Peter Newmark, *A Text Book of Translation*; Tehran: Adab, 1988. “Exoticism” is the process whereby the cultural unit is transferred to the target language verbatim with little or almost no phonetic or grammatical change. “Cultural borrowing” is similar to Exoticism and differs only in the degree in which minor alterations are made to the term. “Calque” is a process by which the cultural feature is translated verbatim, retaining as much as possible the grammatical structure of the original. A “Communicative translation” attempts to retain the elements of the source language feature but renders them more idiomatically compatible with the target language grammatical structures. Finally, “Cultural transplantation” is the process most target language biased; it represents a process whereby the cultural item is reworked entirely and paraphrased in a way that there is no longer a one-to-one correspondence between the elements in the two texts.

In his article “Globalization and Translation” Nico Wiersema argues that globalization makes it more feasible to incorporate more words directly from the source language. There is more contact between cultures, and the internet makes information more accessible to readers (and I might add that other media such as film and television also aid in the dispersing of information, especially of a cultural nature.) Wiersema gives the following advantages to exoticism:

a. the text reads more fluently (no stops)
b. the text remains more exotic, more foreign
c. the translator is closer to the source culture
d. the reader of the target texts gets a more genuine image of the source culture
e. the target text is more correct
f. globalization has made this option possible and more acceptable

I think that it is always a bad practice to overstate one’s argument. When done, there is going to be someone who will see the holes in it and use them to destroy the entire thesis. Therefore, I would like to address my areas of difference with Professor Wiersema before progressing to my own argument. First, I do not see how incorporating words wholesale from the source language would necessary lead to a more fluent target language text. In fact, I would think that such a technique would have the opposite tendency. The reader or listener is being asked to make a switch from the familiar to the unfamiliar and back to the
familiar again. This kind of code switching must be handled very delicately, or the translator runs the risk of confusing or even losing the reader or listener. I will have more to say about this a little later. Also, to assume that the target text will be more correct only because the source language word is being used is to oversimplify the entire translation process. Professor Wiersema seems to be using the word ‘correct’ in the sense of ‘faithful.’ I hope I have already shown source language literalness is not always the most faithful interpretation. For one thing, the reader or listener is left to translate the transcribed word or phrase, and their interpretation might not be anywhere near correct to the source language culture. In short, using a source language word or phrase is not always the best decision, and when used, it must be used with skill and sensitivity, as with any other translation technique.

With these considerations in mind, I have intended to render the dialogue of the play into a non-geographically centered form of English that might be spoken by a second-generation Hispanic who has learned English as a first language. This hypothetical speaker would be what is called a heritage speaker of Spanish, and whether or not she speaks Spanish well, engages in some code switching. Before describing further what I have attempted to do, I want to make clear some things that I have not attempted to do. As already noted, I have attempted to disassociate the dialogue from any region. I especially do not want the dialogue to sound like the hyped up “street” Spanglish that one might hear spoken by an actor in a television drama or in a film about Latinos from the hood. To this end, I have specifically avoided words typically associated that kind of talk or typically associated with North American Chicano Spanglish: “ese,” “holmes” or “vato,” for example. I also do not want the actors to talk English with a Spanish accent. Second and third generation Latinos have a distinct accent if they were raised in a Hispanic neighborhood in the United States, but that accent is one of a native speaker of English. It is the rhythms of such speakers above all that I have attempted to capture.

Not to try to capture such rhythms would be to ignore several generations of the close proximity of Spanish and English, while, at the same time, not take advantage of the sense of otherness that many monolingual speakers have of Spanish speakers and Hispanic culture. As Wiersema points out, the close proximity has enabled many monolingual speakers to have, at least, a passing familiarity with some Spanish words and culture,
making it easier to present such features in a text or performance. At the same time, Hispanics are the largest ethnic minority group in the United States and, as such, the target of ethnic phobias (“Hispanic and Latino Americans” Wikipedia). I believe that with a moderate dosage of Spanish language and culture, monolingual speakers will make, at least, an unconscious association with the marginalized characters of María la mosca.

I am not starting from point zero in this task to mimic the speech and rhythms of Latino English in the United States. A large body of Latino literature has emerged here, and I am further helped by a study of language of Latino literature by Ernst Rudin, who identifies and classifies incorporation of the Spanish language into English (tender accents of sound; Spanish in the Chicano Novel in English). He classifies the words incorporated in the English language Chicano novel into three major categories: loanwords, clichés: formulas and stereotypes, and etymological pairs. Loanwords are quite simply are words that have already entered the English language and are a recognized part of its lexicon. Pueblo, dona and siesta are examples (116-8). The next category, clichés, is comprised of perfunctory words and expressions of the type that are taught in a beginning language class: buenos días, gracias, bueno and adios are some examples (118-20). What Rudin calls etymological pairs, I know as cognates. These are words close in spelling and meaning in the two languages that need no explanation to be understood by all but the most obtuse monolingual speaker. Aeroplano, comunista, conquista, fiesta and idiota are a few examples (121-2).

It is important to note that Rudin’s study describes only the incorporation of Spanish into the novel. Therefore, many examples of technique that he cites are not transferable to drama. For example, using narrative to translate is a device less accessible to the dramatist. For that reason, I find his chapter on methods less satisfactory than that of types. Nevertheless, I will start with a summary of his analysis of methods to deliver Spanish into the English text and then give more detail on methods I have used. Rudin describes four methods of delivery; all of them have to do with translation: literal translation, non literal translation, contextual translation, and no translation. A good example of a literal translation in my play has to do with the play’s title María la mosca, which is María’s nickname and which I have not changed as a title. However, in the section where María
discusses the origin of her nickname, her name needed to be made comprehensible to the monolingual speaker.

PICHULI. And you, what’s your name?
MARÍA. María, but in my pueblo, everyone called me “La Mosca.”

PICHULI. The Fly?
MARÍA. They first gave that name to my grandmother who, they said, was small, dark and a stubborn pest, like a fly, una mosca. Since then, if a boy is born into the family, he’s a mosco, a male fly; if it is a girl, she’s a mosca. So me, everyone calls me María La Mosca. (61)

Another example of a direct translation is this exchange between María and Pichuli:

“MARÍA: (Approaching the bar.) Is this the taberna of Doña Lola? PICHULI: Her bar, yes” (58). ‘Taberna’ is, of course a very clear cognate with ‘tavern.’ Nevertheless, if there is a way to make the monolingual speaker feel more comfortable, why not use it?

In the previous examples the word is translated after it is introduced. However, another technique is to use the English word first and repeat the word in Spanish immediately after. For example, Doña Lola says to Pichuli, “A flag, get me una bandera” (69). In the original, the word for ‘flag’ (pendón) is repeated twice (25). Rather than repeat the word ‘flag’ twice, I decided to introduce variety with exoticism, but I used the more familiar, if less exact, word ‘bandera.’

‘Bandera’ is what Rudin calls a literal translation of ‘flag.’ However, ‘flag’ as a translation of ‘pendón’ might be what Rudin would call a non literal translation. Arguably, the word ‘banner’ might be more precise. Likewise, ‘bar’ is a non literal translation of ‘taberna.’ In both cases, I chose English words more appropriate to the environment of a bar that is the center of operations for prostitutes. María and Pichuli relating the origins of their names are examples of relatively rare opportunities (as compared to the novel) to use narrative as a tool of translation. However, the play does offer opportunities to more graphically illustrate the meaning of a word, using physical action and visual cues. In the case above of Doña Lola asking for a ‘pendón,’ Pichuli brings Doña Lola a banner (Or is it really a pennant?) and says, “Here’s your flag.” A clear example of a non literal translation is this line spoken by Mely. She is responding to Doña Lola, who just asked if María had come to see her: “Did she? When I saw that homely hick, I wanted to send her to the beauty parlor for a complete makeover. You think that campesina will make out okay?”
(71) In this example, I cue the reader for a general understanding of the word “campesina” by using the word “hick” in the previous sentence. I found that using this technique of preceding the Spanish word with the English word to be good for providing exoticism in an easily digestible manner and also providing repetition with variety: “María is my work-friend, my amiga…” (146). “Don’t cry, princess, no llores” (167).

In many cases, I offer no translation of the word at all, especially with words that are clear cognates or have found their way into the popular culture so that they are familiar to most monolingual speakers:

- I love you bandido… (130)
- Thanks, jefa. (132)
- Call me psychic: I know how to tell the futuro. (161)
- …he gave your address as residencia. (163)

As with all the techniques discussed, I tried to use this one with moderation, as I do not wish to make these methods the center of attention.

Moderation is the key term too in my use of the final technique described this discussion: Hispanicized English. The term, coined by Rudin (96-101), describes a technique that, “…operates on the syntactic level, consisting of Hispanicized syntax in direct speech. English phrases may take on a Spanish sentence structure:” (96). Some examples from my translation:

- “I grabbed my clothes and left me.” (Instead of, “I grabbed my clothes and left.” {55})
- “Call me. Hear you?” (Instead of, “Call me. Do you hear?” {57})
- PICHULI. Listen, you want some good advice? MARÍA. Tell me. (Instead of, “Yes” or “Sure.” {59})
- “And how much do you think I can make me in this line of work?” (Instead of, “And how much do you think I can make in this line of work?” {66})
- “Well, if you don’t stick the first nail in, you don’t have to drive it out. Simple, no?” (Instead of, “Simple, isn’t it?” or “Simple, don’t you think?” {122})
- “You liked Jordy a lot, no?” (instead of “You liked Jordy a lot, didn’t you?” {180})
I deliberately avoided using this and the other code-switching techniques during intense moments, as I did not wish to distract from such occasions.

Before closing this chapter on translation issues, I would like to say a word or two about the translation of humor and of vulgar and bawdy language. I group these two elements together because from the translator’s viewpoint they share the common characteristic of very often being impossible to translate directly. Moreover, much of the humor in María la mosca is of an off-color nature. Saying that something cannot be translated directly is another way of saying that the translator is faced with more than a little translation loss and, therefore, is taxed with minimizing that loss through compromise and compensation (Thinking Spanish Translation 27-32). In the case of translating Miguel Sierra’s humor, I had two standards for judging unacceptable translation loss: rendering something I found to be of a certain register of humor either not funny or of a significantly different register of humor (for example, rendering a passage that was intended to evoke a smile into one that evoked a guffaw would probably be unacceptable); or rendering a passage that did damage to the play’s thematic or artistic intent.

The same general standards might be said to apply to the translation of vulgar and bawdy language. However, there is an additional element to consider. When Sierra first presented his play, his language, although appropriate to theme and setting, was daring. However, there has been a tremendous liberalizing process in the use of such words in the media, and some words and expressions of the same register today would seem a little timid to a contemporary audience. In such cases, in keeping with the realism of the play, I found it appropriate, even obligatory, to use a slightly stronger word or expression.

This section of the study has attempted to outline some general principles I used to guide me in making translation decisions in this play. However, as useful as they have been to me, there has been another and overarching principle that has guided me and I find best expressed by poet and translator George Szirtes in describing his work: “As a translator I try to enter the spirit of the text (if I can locate it) then hope to travel through the English in a similar spirit. It is all travelling: travelling hopefully and never arriving” (“A faithful translation”).

Many scholars, including myself, prefer not using such terms as “spirit of translation.” It is really impossible to define. However, one can be competent in all the techniques of
translation and apply them ably to a work, but if one does not capture the spirit of the original (if it has one) then one will only create a corpse, having done no favor to the author of the original. Therefore, almost two years ago, I embarked on the journey, as Szirtes characterizes the process, of rendering the spirit of *María la mosca* into another language. Having come to a point where I must submit my work to the reader, I do so with an understanding, I think, of what Mr. Szirtes means by “never ending.” I began this project with a feeling of what the soul of this play is and did my level best to reincarnate it in another language. However, because of the nature of languages and cultures, one can never really claim that the last draft is a final product. There are always translation losses on the small scale and the large. Nevertheless, with the conviction that this draft is my best offering, I submit it to the reader, hoping it will awaken attention to a play that is deserving of more notice than it has had.
SECTION II

*MARÍA FALLING.*

A TRANSLATION OF MIGUEL SIERRA’S

*MARÍA LA MOSCA*
PART ONE

The stage is divided into two acting spaces. The downstage area represents a tavern in the Barrio Chino, Barcelona. Upstage, hidden by a curtain that doubles as a wall of the tavern, is the modestly sized living room of a small apartment. This living room is visible to the audience only at the appropriate moments. Its décor should be very simple: a sofa, a coffee table and a few cheap prints. In the tavern, the major items are: upstage, a door which is the entrance from the street; to the right, a doorway to the backrooms of the tavern; to the left, a door to the restrooms; tables, chairs, a bar, shelves with bottles, a cash register, a telephone, etc. On the wall are photographs of women with North American sailors. Very visible is a large and fancy calendar of the Virgin of Fatima.

The action begins on an early morning of a day in April, 1960.

(PICHULI, the tavern’s aged bartender, is refilling whiskey bottles and placing them on the shelves.)

PICHULI

(Ill humored) And they say, this time seven thousand are coming. Seven thousand…To hell with them and the mothers who gave them birth. And me with so little time left me.

(He takes a bottle out from under the bar, serves himself and drinks) Ah! Just what Doctor Viejo ordered. (Goading himself) Hang in there, Pichuli; ánimo. If the Wicked Witch of the North shows up and finds the bottles half ready, you’ll see how she gets on your ass.

(He resumes his task. BLONDIE enters from the street. A woman of easy virtue, she is very pretty and almost monkey-like in her animated expression. Besides being a member of the world’s oldest profession, she doubles as a singer in a low class cabaret. She is Andalusian.)

BLONDIE

Free! ¡Soy libre! Pichuli, yesterday, I kissed them goodbye. Do you know all that I have done for them? Good! Well, last night, I said to el jefe: “Oiga, Senior Pepe, can you be a little more generous with the whiskey, now that the navy boys are back in town?” And what do you think he answered me, the son-of-a-bitch: “Prices are frozen.” “Well,” I said back, “If prices are frozen, so’s my voice. I’m done with singing. Suck on that along with your frozen prices.” I grabbed my clothes and left me. This afternoon, I’m coming to work for you, because seven thousand sailors are coming. ¡Siete mil! Did you know? But I’m going out for right now, Pichuli. I have a high noon demonstration to be at.

PICHULI
Another one?

BLONDIE

Another one.

PICHULI

And what’s this one for?

BLONDIE

To protest.

PICHULI

To protest what?

BLONDIE

No idea, but I promised to be there. Tell boss lady that I’m coming to work here, and for good; because mommy’s little Andalusian girl ain’t gonna be nobody’s mop. I’ll never go back to that cabaret.

(She throws him a kiss and leaves.)

PICHULI

(Sententiously) She’ll go back. I’d bet anything that “mommy’s little Andalusian girl” will go back. She needs to sing like a frog needs water.

(He resumes his work. Enter DIZZY, a young woman who is thin and pale, with dark circles under the eyes. She carries a newspaper under her arm. She is Galician.)

DIZZY

I’m sick as a dog. Sick! (She leans on the bar.) Last night, I forgot to take my slice of rye bread, and this morning, with the hurries, I didn’t take my herbs. For sure, I’m coming down with something today. Quick, Pichuli, a bottle of orange drink! Let’s see if I can get over this.

PICHULI

(While serving her) If you’re feeling so bad, why did you leave your room?

DIZZY
Because I need to buy a pair of red panties before my special John comes. Oh, I’m sick as a dog. My liver is shut down, and my kidneys are on the skids. I’m dying. (Takes the glass served by PICHULI and repeats is if chanting a mantra) Make me well! Make me well! (She drinks, waits a moment and lets out a burp.) Already better. I got rid of some bad stomach gas. Pichuli, did you hear the news?...Mira...(She unfolds the paper and reads) “Today at 2 o’clock sailors of the United States Sixth Fleet will come ashore.” Seven thousand are coming. We are saved. Saved!

PICHULI

You talk as though our liberators have landed.

DIZZY

Better than liberators: saviors! Who would have dreamed? What, with every Spaniard broke, all the way to the West Coast where I came from. Well, I’m out of here, Pichuli. I need to see the herb druggist, the hair dresser and the dressmaker; if I can find the strength to get there. I’m dead! Dead! (Making her way to the exit, repeating to her self) I will get better. I will get better.

(She exits.)

PICHULI

She will get better. Some herbs and, bingo, she’s back to life.

(Enter MELY, a big woman. She is pragmatic and sincere. She is a Catalan who mixes the dialect of that region with Castilian Spanish. Here that will be shown by her mixing other languages with her English more than the other characters and by having her speak a vocabulary and grammar that is a little off-key. She is wearing slippers and a housedress.)

MELY

They’re here. Los Yankees have come. Seven mil. Jesús bless them and the mothers who gave them life. Now es time for dressing up. The bad is that my poor Teresina es mala; distemper, I think. I put her with Señora Rosa, because I can’t attend her. It breaks my heart, the poor dog. Escucha, Pichuli, if you hear her bark much, call me by teléfono to come get her, eh? Llámame. La Señora Rosa is almost deaf and won’t hear the barking. Call me. Hear you? Llámame. Bueno, muchacho, I’m gonna prepare me for looking good, so I can ease some money outa these Yankee johns. Seven thousand! Jesús bless them and mothers who gave them life!

(MELY exits. PICHULI places some bottles on the shelves and continues refilling others. MARÍA appears at the street entrance. She is about 28 years old. She is dressed in a
simple blouse and shirt and wears no makeup. Her hair is unkempt. She carries a suitcase and handbag.)

MARÍA

Good morning.

PICHULI

(Without looking at her) That depends.

MARÍA

How’s that?

PICHULI

It depends who you’re talking to: for some it’s a good day and for some it’s a bad one.

MARÍA

(Approaching the bar) Is this the taberna of Doña Lola?

PICHULI

Her bar, yes.

MARÍA

Can I speak with her?

PICHULI

Doña Lola hasn’t come in yet. What do you want to see her about?

(MARÍA becoming uneasily self conscience)

MARÍA

Es que…I’ve come looking for work.

PICHULI

Work?

MARÍA

Yes.
PICHULI

What kind of work?

MARÍA

Pues, work that doesn’t kill you and pays real good.

PICHULI

¡Vaya por Dios! Another one looking for the easy life.

MARÍA

Easy or hard, no importa, as long as it makes money. If I wanted to be poor and miserable, I would have stayed in my home town.

PICHULI

And where would that be?

MARÍA

Lorca, a pueblo 35 miles from Murcia.

PICHULI

Murciana?

MARÍA

Yes.

*(PICHULI looks her over studiously.)*

PICHULI

Listen, you want some good advice?

MARÍA

Tell me.

PICHULI

Go back home. The vocation you seek is a hard one, and I don’t think you’re cut out for it.

MARÍA
Easy, you don’t know me. What’s more, I’m thinking Doña Lola will help me. Is she as good a person as they say?

PICHULI

There are two different schools of thought on that: some say si; and others who know her well say she’s a hag who takes advantage of everyone.

MARÍA

And you’re of the last school.

PICHULI

It shows, no?

MARÍA

Just a little.

PICHULI

No surprise there.

MARÍA

What’s your name?

PICHULI

Juan, but they call me Pichuli.

MARÍA

And why Pichuli?

PICHULI

A drunken foreigner gave me the name. After I made him pay a nickel more that he owed for a drink, he snapped, “You know what word they use in South America when someone is being a cheapskate?: Pichulear. So I’m going to call you Pichuli, you cheap piece of crap.” Then for the rest of the night, he tried getting my goat, calling me “Pichuli”, “Pichuli”.

MARÍA

(Laughing) Funny; annoying but funny.
PICHULI

Yeh, all the girls found it funny, and the name has stuck to me since.

MARÍA

Well, that’s the way it is; sometimes, ya gotta take things as they come.

PICHULI

And you, what’s your name?

MARÍA

María, but in my pueblo, everyone called me “La Mosca.”

PICHULI

The Fly?

MARÍA

They first gave that name to my grandmother who, they said, was small, dark and a stubborn pest, like a fly, una mosca. Since then, if a boy is born into the family, he’s a mosco, a male fly; if it is a girl, she’s a mosca. So me, everyone calls me María La Mosca.

PICHULI

(DOÑA LOLA enters. A woman of severe character, she is about 50. However, she is well preserved, and her features still give proof that in times past she was a knock out.)

DOÑA LOLA

Buenos días, Picholi.

PICHULI

Good morning, boss.

DOÑA LOLA

Have you finished getting the bottles ready?

PICHULI
There they are. Arriba, two bottles of Johnnie Walker and two of Ballantine, genuine all. En el centro, three of Ballantine and three of Johnnie Walker, each half cognac and half whiskey. And below—

DOÑA LOLA

Good, but no mistakes. Serve the first drink from the bottles up top, the second from the middle, and the third from the bottom. If after the third drink, they don’t vomit and continue drinking, the fault is yours. Don’t let me down, Pichuli.

PICHULI

Don’t worry, I won’t let you down…Boss, this girl is asking for you.

DOÑA LOLA

What is it, child?

MARÍA

Are you Doña Lola Carreño?

DOÑA LOLA

Yes.

MARÍA

I bring a letter for you. *(She hands her a letter that she had taken out of her handbag.)* Margarita Soto gave it to me.

DOÑA LOLA

*(Lost)* Margarita Soto?... *(Falling into a chair and brightening)* Margot! You know Margot?

MARÍA

Yes, we’re from the same pueblo.

DOÑA LOLA

The ingrate! We haven’t heard a peep from her since she left…Let’s see what she has to say. *(She reads the letter.*) “Dear Doña Lola! The con artist! So formal after all the partying we’ve done together. *(Continues reading silently)* Well, by the Holy Virgin!
(She has finished reading the letter and looks at MARÍA.) So, you’ve come to work with us?

MARÍA

Si Señora, to work.

DOÑA LOLA

And you want to do the same work as Margot did?

MARÍA

Si Señora, the same.

DOÑA LOLA

Oye, pretty one, wouldn’t you rather work in a cafeteria or coffee shop for a steady wage?

MARÍA

No, a steady wage won’t do. I want to do what Margot did. I have plans and it’s the only way to make them happen.

DOÑA LOLA

Ah! What are your plans?

MARÍA

You see, since a little girl, I’ve lived in a house on the edge of town. It is a pretty house, and it has huge garden. Mamá and Papá worked and died there.

DOÑA LOLA

Vaya por Díos, I’m sorry.

MARÍA

Last summer, the owners decided to sell the house and go live with a daughter in Madrid. I stayed to take care of the place, waiting for the wicked day someone would come to put me out on the street. But seeing there was no buyer, I said to myself, “María, why don’t you decide to do something to keep this house that you love so much?”

DOÑA LOLA
And you bought it?

MARÍA

I spoke with the owners. They said I could pay for it in four installments. I took out a loan for the first. But come what may, I still need to earn enough money for three payments more.

DOÑA LOLA

Pues, hope and pray; or play the lottery; or—

MARÍA

No, no! I need to be realistic. I thought long on it and said to myself: a few years of being a whore and forever after a señora. That’s my plan.

DOÑA LOLA

This leaves me lost for--. It’s out of nowhere. You know what? I like you.

MARÍA

(Lighting up) Then I can come work for you?

DOÑA LOLA

Let me think, can I make you marketable? (Looking her over studiously) Your eyes are precious. Your figure is pretty good.

MARÍA

Bah! Average.

DOÑA LOLA

Tell me one thing, do you believe in God?

MARÍA

With all my heart.

DOÑA LOLA

Do you go to mass on Sundays?

MARÍA
Yes, all the Sundays I can.

DONA LOLA

Estupendo! Only in Spain can a good Catholic girl can be a slut.

MARÍA

(Decisively) When can I start?

DOÑA LOLA

This very day. (Dreamingly) This afternoon seven thousand sailor boys will come swarming out of their ships, thirsty for beer, whiskey, and a woman’s touch. Count your blessings, my pretty one. You couldn’t pick a better day for your debut. A blemish here or there, these navy boys won’t notice or care.

MARÍA

Don’t worry, when I make up my mind to do something—

DOÑA LOLA

Listen up! This house has its rules, and you need to respect them. Keep your clients happy, and make sure that they buy all their drinks here. Later, when you’ve gotten the hang of things, I’ll arrange a cozy little date between you and the Commissioner.

MARÍA

I have to make him happy too?

DOÑA LOLA

That’s the rule they put on all of us. We have to pass through the Commissioner’s arms. Think of it as an official inspection. If you make him happy, I’ll introduce you to his friend Fernando.

MARÍA

Another commissioner?

DOÑA LOLA

No, Fernando is a jeweler and pawn broker, a señor who will give you loans when you’re tight for cash. We also have an understanding that when a John wants to woo you with
gifts, you take him to shop at Fernando’s Jewelry and Loans. And if the present is something you do not like, you sell it back to him for half the price.

MARÍA

What a racket! You wouldn’t know a place where I could stay, no? A pension? A hostel?

DOÑA LOLA

Well…No…Right now nothing comes to mind.

PICHULI

(Intervening) Mely, Jefa.

DOÑA LOLA

That’s right! Our east coast ambassador bought a little place and wants to rent a bedroom. Pichuli, write down Mely’s address.

MARÍA

And how much do you think I can make me in this line of work?

DOÑA LOLA

That all depends on you, my child; yes, on you and your endurance. Listen, on days like this when boatloads of Yankee boys come ashore, Mely will make herself 160, 170 dollars.

MARÍA

160, 170 dollars?

DOÑA LOLA

But don’t think about that now. The first thing you need to do is fix your hair. Do you have any cash?

MARÍA

I’ve brought a little—

DOÑA LOLA

Hold on! Hold on!

MARÍA
I want to go, so I get back quick.

DOÑA LOLA

Easy, don’t be in such a rush. *(Taking out some bills)* Take it and pay me back when you can.

MARÍA

I won’t need any more. Thank you, Doña Lola.

DOÑA LOLA

And this is Mely’s address. *(She gives MARÍA the piece of paper written on by PICHULLI.)* You can live with her there on Paralelo. After speaking with Mely, go to a beauty shop so they can do—*(She looks at her head.)* so they can do whatever they can.

MARÍA

Thank you, Doña Lola, muchas gracias.

DOÑA LOLA

Oye, one more thing! Buy yourself a dress, something simple but striking. We start work at two.

MARÍA

Thanks again, Doña Lola, thanks a whole lot.

*(She gets her suitcase and leaves.)*

DOÑA LOLA

Do you see that, Pichuli? Someone else moving here from the countryside. Soon the only ones living out there will be the goats and old farts.

PICHULI

Do you think she has a future?

DOÑA LOLA

Yes, there’s something about her, something special. Did she say her name?

MARÍA
María, but she says in her pueblo they call her “María la Mosca”.

DOÑA LOLA

The fly? You see, none of these girls give their real name. They all say, call me “Kitten” or “Cookie”, names that don’t tell who they are or where they come from. This one, on the other hand, “María la Mosca”, is different. *(Looks at her watch)* Damn, the sailors! And we’re not ready! Set the tables, put out the street posters, tack up the photos, get the Yankee flags—Do something, coño!

PICHULI

*(Staying calm)* Which do I do first?

DOÑA LOLA

Bring the posters and flags. I’ll take care of tables. *(PICHULI exists to the backrooms. DOÑA LOLA starts arranging the tables.)* What a total waste of a man! He can’t think for himself. It’s me who has to do all the thinking. He only knows how to complain. That he does real well.

*(PICHULI returns with a rolled up posters and some United States flags.)*

PICHULI

The posters and flags, Jefa.

DOÑA LOLA

Gimme! *(She takes some.)* Puts some flags on those tables. And remind me when I go out to buy some lemons. Don’t forget. *(They put the flags on the tables and bar.)* Mother Mary, what a rat race! Put them right, coño! Make sure these Yankees can see the colors of their flag. I want them to feel like they’re sitting in a bar on Fifth Avenue.

PICHULI

And us to feel like we’re sitting in a bar in the Wild West.

DOÑA LOLA

What are you belly-aching about? Probably trying to keep your numb brain awake.

PICHULI
We have to decorate the tavern to make the Yankees feel as though they’re in their own country. We have to speak their language or they won’t understand us. Here you can’t tell the foreigners from the locals.

DOÑA LOLA

It’s easy to find fault. Do you think I do these things because I like to? Who would like doing this? I do these things because these Yankees are our economy, our vitamins, our Coca Cola, our private Marshal Plan. And if to lure them here, we have to dress up the bar, then we dress it up; if we have to drop our panties, we drop them. What counts are the results.

PICHULI

You want to know what I think?

DOÑA LOLA

Don’t even think about it! Come on, let’s put up the poster.

(They unroll the poster that PICHULI had brought out and mount it. It says, “Welcome to Barcelona.”

A flag, get me una bandera.

PICHULI

Going!

(He gets a United States flag and brings it to her.)

Here’s your flag.

DOÑA LOLA

There we are, big and beautiful! Alright, things are shaping up.—Oh, my back! It must be last night’s bad sleep. Too many years, too many aches and pains! It’s wearing me down. (She sits at a table.) Pour me a sherry. Maybe that will pick me up. And serve yourself one too, so you can get your nerve up to call me a selfish bitch.

PICHULI

Me? God forbid!

DOÑA LOLA
Yes, all of you have bad words for me. But no one knows what I had to go through to get where I am today. Thirty years ago, I came to Barcelona from Olviedo, in search of what? I don’t remember now. At any rate, I never found it.

(PICHULI serves two glasses of sherry and sits at the same table with DOÑA LOLA.)

PICHULI

(Offering a toast) To your health!

DOÑA LOLA

And to yours. (They drink.) We’re getting old, Pichuli.

PICHULI

For sure, time doesn’t stop. (A police car siren is heard.) Police cars again! I wonder where this one is going?

DOÑA LOLA

To put someone in the cage. Well, so long as they don’t come here.

PICHULI

It’s some day they’re having. They haven’t let up all morning.

DOÑA LOLA

(Takes out a cigarette) Well, give me a light.

(PICHULI lights up her cigarette and one for himself. They remain smoking in silence for a moment. The lights go up. DOÑA LOLA looks at her watch.)

I think this thing has stopped running. What time do you have?

PICHULI

Half past one.

DOÑA LOLA

We have a half hour more.

(MELY and DIZZY enter. If the actresses playing them are naturally blond or brunette, they now wear black wigs. DIZZY is carrying an overnight bag in place of a handbag.)
DIZZY

Hi, Pichuli.

MELY

Hola, Jefa.

DOÑA LOLA

Hola! Did the new girl come see you?

MELY

Did she? When I saw that homely hick, I wanted to send her to the beauty parlor for a complete makeover. You think that camposina will make out okay?

DOÑA LOLA

For sure with the foreign johns. The sailors and tourists are always eager for something different.

MELY

Well, these far-inars are gonna have to be very far-in.

DOÑA LOLA

I’m anxious to know, did you two work something out?

MELY

She’ll be staying with me. She strikes me as an okay chica.

DOÑA LOLA

That’s how she struck me. *(To DIZZY, who has sat down at the bar)* And you, my dizzy creature, how are you feeling today, okay or nauseous?

DIZZY

Fenomenal *(Spanish pronunciation)* jefa. This morning I felt like I was dying, but I ate a bowl of bitter mashed almonds with a little honey and brought myself back to life. Now, I feel like I could take on half of the sailor boys in that fleet, all by myself.

DOÑA LOLA
Good, let’s hope your high spirits last.

(BLONDIE enters, limping and her dress torn. She is wearing a black wig but it is disheveled and awry.)

BLONDIE

Oh! Oh! They can go to hell and their mothers too! Sons-of-bitches! Brain-bashers!

DOÑA LOLA

Blondie, my child, where were you?

BLONDIE

At a protesta.

DOÑA LOLA

A protest?

BLONDIE

Of artists. (On hearing the word “artists,” the other women make subtle fun of what BLONDIE is saying.) We artistas aren’t happy with the minimum salary, and we decided to stage a protest.

DOÑA LOLA

So what happened?

BLONDIE

The police decided to stage their own protest by breaking our skulls. They were out to kill us. I can’t work today, and why should I if they won’t give me the right to strike or protest. I can’t even sue no body for these injuries. Someone should pay. They’ve done me harm. They hurt me bad.

DOÑA LOLA

What a beating! They threw you away like a used up whore.

BLONDIE

And I wanted to be in shape to work with all of you.

DOÑA LOLA

72
With us?

**BLONDIE**

Didn’t Pichuli tell you? I left the Cabaret. Do you know what they were doing to me? They would make me sing six songs, and on top of that call for a round of drinks. And for all that, what did they pay me? Pennies! So I left them. I will be with you forever, Doña Lola; I swear it, forever!

**DOÑA LOLA**

Enough of that! Less promises and more action! Look at you; you look like something the storm blew in.

**BLONDIE**

And I feel worse than I look, Doña Lola.

**DOÑA LOLA**

Come on, fix up your hair. You look like a hippy.

**BLONDIE**

They really beat me up. Look how they beat me up.

*(BLONDIE, limping, goes to the rest rooms.)*

**DOÑA LOLA**

Our singer, do you see what they have done to our singer? *(To PICHULI, abruptly)* And the lemons? Have you forgotten about the lemons?

**PICHULI**

But you’re the one who buys them.

**DOÑA LOLA**

Yes, but I told you to remind me. What a poor excuse for a man! I can never trust you to do anything right.

*(She gets her handbag and exits for the street. MELY and DIZZY have taken seats at a table and are touching up their makeup.)*

**DIZZY**
Tell me Mely, what do you think, is my John coming?

MELY

(Looking at herself in the mirror) Which John is that?

DIZZY

That redhead who is crazy about me.

MELY

Which boat did he come off on?

DIZZY

Uh!—Well, I can’t remember.

MELY

Then, why the hell do you think I would?

DIZZY

You’re right. Some illness must eating up my memory; maybe, cancer of the brain.

MELY

Ya gonna turn green, worrying so much!

(JORDY enters. Good-looking and likable, he is between twenty five and thirty-years-old. He is carelessly dressed. On seeing the woman, he lets out a whistle.)

JORDY

What a stable of beauties! A-1 fillies!

DIZZY

(Brightening up and going towards him) Jordy, ingrate, where have you been hiding?

JORDY

How ya doing, baby. (He gives her a kiss.)

DIZZY

Have you seen boss lady?
JORDY

Yeah, I saw her going into a store.

DIZZY

She’s been asking about you all week. Where have you been?

JORDY

At Costa Brava.

DIZZY

The coast?

JORDY

Yeah, I hooked up with a little English lady who came to open a hotel.

DIZZY

What luck, chico, what luck!

JORDY

But yesterday she left for London.

DIZZY

So, God help you, you’re a single man again.

JORDY

Yeah!

DIZZY

So what are you going to do now?

JORDY

Don’t know; maybe, I’ll go to London. (He looks at MELY) Hello, Mely. (MELY acts preoccupied and doesn’t respond.) How are you doing my sensational Catalan?

MELY

(Gruffly) Fine, can’t you see, I’m fine?
(Catching her negative tone, JORDY shrugs his shoulders and addresses PICHULI) Hello, old timer, any messages for me?

PICHULI

Not a one.

JORDY

No one phoned me?

PICHULI

No one.

JORDY

Damn, the world has forgotten about me. And you, are you still working like a slave?

PICHULI

(Resignedly) What choice do I have?

JORDAN

Rebel, man; it’s time to rebel.

PICHULI

Rebel? And how do I do that?

JORDAN

Refuse to serve these bitches. Make them take care of you.

PICHULI

(Dreamingly) Twenty years, Jordy; if only I were twenty years younger.

(BLONDIE enters from the bathroom. On seeing JORDY, she brightens.)

BLONDIE

Jordy, you bandit, I haven’t seen you in ages.

JORDAN
(Kissing her) Hello, my golden-voiced Andalusian!

BLONDIE

And you’re looking good, spectacular even. (Complaining) Oh, my leg; my leg!

JORDY

What happened to you?

BLONDIE

What happened to me? Come, sit down, and I will tell you. (BLONDIE, JORDY AND DIZZY sit down at a table.) They bashed my skull…

(DOÑA LOLA enters with a bag of lemons. On seeing JORDY, her face lights up. But she disguises her initial reaction and says in a neutral voice)

DOÑA LOLA

Jordy, I thought something happened to you.

JORDY

To me? Why?

DOÑA LOLA

Where have you been?

JORDY

At Costa Brava.

DOÑA LOLA

With who?

JORDY

With an English lady.

DOÑA LOLA

An over-painted old mummy, no?

JORDY
Old mummy? Go on, she’s a woman more tender than a cooing dove. But she had to fly to London to reunite with her husband.

DOÑA LOLA

Bravo! Well done! Don’t jump into bed with any old whore, only those cheating on their husbands.

JORDY

If they’re married and willing, why shouldn’t I oblige them?

DOÑA LOLA

What a rotten waste of youth! What was done to you to make you so cynical? No matter, Pichuli, serve him something lively.

JORDY

(To PICHULI with bravado) And don’t be stingy.

BLONDIE

That’s just great! Jordy gets a drink. Me? I just get an ass-whipping.

(A blond burst through the door from the street. She is wearing a loud dress and high heels. She shyly goes to the bar and takes a seat without looking at anyone. One barely recognizes MARÍA. PICHULI approaches her and his eyes open wide.)

PICHULI

Whoa, I wouldn’t have believed it if I hadn’t seen it.

MARÍA

(Hurriedly) A cognac, Pichuli, a cognac!

DIZZY

Who is she?

MELY

(Recognizing her) The new girl. She just started living with me.

DIZZY
What a freak!

BLONDIE

Yeah, she looks like a tourist.

DOÑA LOLA

(Putting away the cup that PICHULI served up) You only get cognac when I offer to pay for it. (Looking at MARÍA’s hair) My child, what have they done to you?

MARÍA

Ugly as sin, no? When I looked in the mirror, I didn’t recognize myself; that’s how ugly they made me.

DOÑA LOLA

Ugly, no, but you’re a blond, and the Yankees who come to Spain like their women dark.

MARÍA

No, Mama mía, even worse! Now, what do I do?

DOÑA LOLA

Nothing, it’s too late to do anything.

MARÍA

But do you see how I look? Why did they bleach me blond? It’s horrible!

DOÑA LOLA

Hold on, let’s do the best we can with flowers to hide the blond hair. (Looks at her watch) We have 15 minutes.

MARÍA

Anyone sees me like this, won’t want anything to do with me.

DOÑA LOLA
Quit your crying child. Nothing bad has happened yet.

MARÍA

I’m afraid I won’t be able to do anything, my legs are shaking so much. I’m trembling like a cornered rabbit.

DOÑA LOLA

Mely, come here to calm her down. I’m going to the florist to buy some carnations. Always something!

(DOÑA LOLA leaves. MELY gets up and comes to MARÍA.)

MELY

Come now, no crying, no crying! And don’t be afraid, timid one. All of us women here have gone through something like this. Listen to what happened to me my first time. It was my luck to get an African who spoke Arabian or some other strange tongue that not even God can understand. I’m not making up nothin’ when I tell you that it took three hours just to agree on the price.

MARÍA

And the North Americans, what do they speak?

MELY

The Yankees? Why they speak no language at all. Their only words are “yes” and “whiskey”, and all you have to do is laugh. If they say “yes” to you, you answer, “Ha, ha, ha.” If they say “whiskey”, you also say, “Ha, ha, ha.” The simpler they think you are, the more they like you; and everyone is happy. Oh, and don’t forget, before going to a hotel with them, ask for 10 dollars North American. It’s the going price. So cheer up, pretty one. Tomorrow, you’ll have a funny story to tell me.

(BLONDIE gives her a pat on the back and returns to her former seat. JORDY gestures to BLONDIE and DIZZY to leave MARÍA alone. BLONDIE goes to the bar; DIZZY sits with MELY. MARÍA seems to have calmed down. She takes a sip of lemonade and looks toward the tables. Her glance falls on JORDY who smiles and gestures with his finger for her to
come to him. MARÍA looks at him briefly and then elsewhere. She takes another sip of lemonade and looks at him once more. JORDY repeats his gesture for her to come. She hesitates a moment; then finally deciding, she walks toward him, moving her hips sensually like a cheap street-walker.)

JORDY

No, no; never like that! You’re not doing yourself any good if you’re so obvious.

MARÍA

(Confused) What?

MELY

(Intervening) You need a smoother touch if you want to get them interested. That way you won’t make a cent.

JORDY

And who the fuck asked for your opinion, Mely.

MELY

You’re not fooling me, pimp. I see right through you.

JORDY

(To MARÍA) As you can see, she adores me. Have a seat. Don’t worry, you’re breaking no rules. Come on, sit down.

MARÍA

Okay, I’m sitting.

JORDY

What would you like to drink?

MARÍA
Nothing, I have a lemonade over there.

JORDY

Your name is María, no?

MARÍA

Yes.

JORDY

Do you have a boyfriend?

MARÍA

No.

JORDY

Are you married?

MARÍA

No.

JORDY

Then you must feel all alone.

MARÍA

Especially here: so many faces I don’t know; a lot of people in the street, who don’t even say hello.

JORDY

So, why did you come to Barcelona?
MARÍA

(Anxiously) Are you a cop?

JORDY

No way, do I look like a cop to you?

MARÍA

Then why are you asking so many questions?

JORDY

I’m curious to know if you are like I think you are.

MELY

(Intervening) Careful or he’ll suck you in.

MARÍA

So how do you think I am?

JORDY

Oh, I don’t know. You strike me as a simple but intelligent woman, who prefers a fourteen carat ring to flowers, and that you and I would get along very well together.

MARÍA

You’re wrong on two accounts. First, I don’t like rings of any kind, and, second, you and me aren’t going to be getting along in anything.

JORDY

Ouch, right between the eyes! Is it that you don’t like me?

MARÍA
Hell, the man hasn’t been born that I have found to my liking.

JORDY

Do you find me that bad?

MARÍA

I find you…I find you a little strange.

JORDY

And I am. But you are going to change me.

MARÍA

Me? And why would I want to change you?

JORDY

It’s a feeling that I have. I also sense that together there is something good for us in our future.

MARÍA

Such as?

JORDY

Do you like mysteries?

MARÍA

That depends.

JORDY

It’s a mystery that we can only solve together. But for the moment, let’s be good friends.

(MARÍA looks him over in silence.)
MARÍA

Listen, pretty boy, you’re making a mistake with me. I’ve come to Barcelona to make money, and a woman in my situation has only one way to make money. She sells—well, she makes herself a whore. Can’t you see the way I’m dressed?

JORDY

Everyone in Spain makes money however they can.

MARÍA

But a whore doesn’t need a “good friend.”

JORDY

There are no whores, María, nor pimps; only good people and bad ones. Many whores, as you call them, are better than respectable women. (Looking at MELY) Not all of them. (To MARÍA) But most.

MARÍA

(Not fully understanding him) Then, it makes no difference to you whether or not we’re friends?

JORDY

On the contrary, I think we will be great friends.

(MARÍA seems to relax her guard; her demeanor appears to be more open and trusting.)

MARÍA

Pichuli, bring me my lemonade here. (To JORDY) What’s your name?

JORDY

Jordan, but everyone calls me Jordy.
MARÍA

You’re Catalan?

JORDY

Yes.

MARÍA

I came to Barcelona just a few days ago. I live with Mely in Paralelo. You go up this street and—

JORDY

I know where Mely lives.

MARÍA

Do you have family?

JORDY

My mother and father, but we’ve gone separate ways.

MARÍA

Are you a university student?

JORDY

I was but I dropped out.

MARÍA

Why?

JORDY

Because studying sucks.
MARÍA

So what do you do now?

JORDY

Right now, I’m seeing for the first time that your eyes are green.

MARÍA

Why do you come to this bar?

JORDY

Because everything outside this part of town is pure shit. Here, I can breathe. I feel free.

MARÍA

But what do you do for work?

JORDY

Do you know your way around Barcelona?

MARÍA

No, I just got here this morning.

JORDY

Barcelona is dangerous, if you don’t have someone to show you around. You want me to take you on a little get acquainted tour?

MARÍA

That would be good, if you want to.

JORDY
Then we have a date. Tonight, I’ll come to pick you up. I’ll take you to Park Montjüich, or maybe we eat some Barcelona sea food. But don’t stand me up, eh.

MARÍA

I won’t.

JORDY

You’ll wait for me?

MARÍA

I’ll wait.

(DOÑA LOLA returns, carrying a bunch of carnations. On seeing JORDY with MARÍA, she frowns and says with a firm voice)

DOÑA LOLA

No, Jordy, not with her. I don’t want you using her like you have the others.

JORDY

(To MARÍA, as he gets to his feet) She is going to tell you bad things about me.

DOÑA LOLA

Leave her alone! Don’t even go near her!

JORDY

So long, Maria. Don’t forget our date.

(He looks at DOÑA LOLA and leaves.)

DOÑA LOLA

What did he say to you?

MARÍA

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(Distractedly) Nothing, he said nothing.

DOÑA LOLA

Did he propose anything?

MARÍA

No, nothing.

DOÑA LOLA

Don’t listen to him, child, not one word that comes out of his mouth. He’ll destroy every last one of your dreams.

(Voices are heard from the street. PICHULI looks out the door and shouts back in)

PICHULI

Here they come; here come the Americans. They’re coming up Las Ramblas.

DIZZY

They’re here!

MELY

(Complaining) Owe! My leg! My ass!

DOÑA LOLA

Time to go to work, girls. Pichuli, put the music on. Let’s go, gals, put a carnation in your hair. (The women do as she asks.) Take two, María, and put them on.—No, wait, give them to me. I’ll do it. Always something!

BLONDIE

Look at me: dressed and flowered like an Easter maiden!
MELY

Or a girl in a procession of virgins!

(One hears playing softly “The River Kwai March.”)

DOÑA LOLA

Mely, go to the bar…Blondie, stay where you are. Dizzy on the other side. María, get behind them.

MARÍA

Behind them? Why?

DOÑA LOLA

So that they don’t see you.

MARÍA

(Reacting strongly) What? They’re going to see me more than anyone else. Now everyone will see how I can say “yes” and “whiskey.” Me first! (She places herself near the door to the street.) Barcelona, get ready to meet María la Mosca.

BLONDIE

Whoa! How did the last one to get here become the first one in line?

DIZZY

That’s what I want to know.

BLONDIE

Well, if she’s parking her ass there, I’m parking mine here.

(BLONDIE puts herself in front of MARÍA.)

DIZZY
What’s good for you is good for me.

*(DIZZY puts herself in front of BLONDIE.)*

**DOÑA LOLA**

But what the hell are you doing?

**MELY**

Hold up! I’m the veterana here. Screw off, bitches!

*(She pushes them away.)*

**BLONDIE**

Don’t push, toilet twat!!

**MELY**

Toilet twat, your mother!

**BLONDIE**

Your mother!

**MELY**

I’m going to smash your ugliest face.

**BLONDIE**

Try it!

*(They grab each other by the hair.)*

**DOÑA LOLA**

*(Separating them) Enough! Enough! No fighting here! What a damn disgrace!*
MELY

Slut!

BLONDIE

Cunt!

MELY

Bitch!

BLONDIE

Pig!

(The two continue fighting. DOÑA LOLA tries to separate them. The volume of the music rises.
BLACKOUT.
After a brief pause, the lights come back up, showing the tavern again. The establishment is a mess. MELY, BLONDIE and DIZZY are collapsed in their chairs. DOÑA LOLA is reviewing bills. PICHULI is gathering up pennants from the floor. MARÍA is not onstage.)

BLONDIE

(Suspiring) Whew! They’re finally gone.

DIZZY

Now we can rest.

BLONDIE

Fifteen days of hustling from bed to bed.

DIZZY

Well, now they’re gone, and so is my Frank. Why did I have to meet you, Frank, if you would have to go? Why? Tell me why?
MELY

Because you’re a pathetic pushover, who falls in love with the first pair of pressed pants that step off a boat.

DIZZY

And you’re a hardcore materialist, Mely, with no feelings.

MELY

And what did you get for your feelings? You devoted day and night to your Frank. And how did he thank you when you took him to Fernando the jeweler, eh?

DIZZY

He only spent 50 dollars. But he left me with a lot of good memories.

MELY

Memories? Dingleberries! The banks don’t put in your account memories, only dollars. Keep on like this, and you’ll wind up mopping floors in ten years. The only free old people are dead old people.

DIZZY

How much did you make?

MELY

More than you would like to think. But it looks like María left me way behind. She would leave with one John and, presto, ten minutes later she’d be back for another, and ten minutes after that, back for another. She’s like a damned electric screwing machine.

BLONDIE

Tell me about it. She’s been on a freakin’ humping spree. Who would have thought she had it in her.
DIZZY

And she still finds time to play with her Jordy.

MELY

What a fast learner! She already knows how to work every major park.

DIZZY

She’s living proof that the sticks grow hicks packed with pep and staying humping power.

MELY

I guess so.

(BLONDIE stands up.)

BLONDIE

Well, I’m going to sleep all afternoon in my bed—and alone. Tonight, I’ll go by the Cabaret to get my back pay.

(DOÑA LOLA looks at BLONDIE.)

DOÑA LOLA

You’re going back to the Cabaret?

BLONDIE

To get what they owe me.

DOÑA LOLA

Come on, soon you’ll be singing a different tune.

BLONDIE
I’m going just to get my money, Jefa. *(To the other women)* Well, my weary doves, get a good rest.

*(She leaves.)*

**DOÑA LOLA**

To get her back pay! The only money she sees is the money she makes here.

**DIZZY**

She never changes. She comes here to make a quick buck and then she leaves.

*(MARÍA comes from the rest rooms. She has undergone a sea change. She’s well-dressed and wearing clothes that show good taste. Her hair is its natural color.)*

How much did you make María?

**MARÍA**

*(Not giving the issue much importance)* I don’t know. Jordy is in charge of our accounts, and I haven’t given him the last money I took in.

**MELY**

But how can you just hand over your money to that career pimp?

**MARÍA**

Careful, Mely. That’s the last time I want to hear you insult Jordy, eh. I’m sick and tired of living with you because my ears ache from hearing the same old tune: “Jordy is a pimp, Jordy is a gigolo. He is going to wind up in prison.” Enough! Take care of your house and we’ll take care of ours. Do you think we are going to live in the street? No, gorgeous! Today, I got keys to an apartment where we can live, and I won’t have to hear you anymore trashing Jordy’s name. So stick it!

*(On hearing the last words, DOÑA LOLA goes to MARÍA.)*

**DOÑA LOLA**
(Unsettled) You’ve gotten an apartment?

MARÍA

Yes, they gave me the keys this morning. Jordy doesn’t know yet. It’s a surprise.

DOÑA LOLA

And you’re going to live with him?

MARÍA

It’s what we want.

DOÑA LOLA

But that’s crazy. You don’t know Jordy. You have no idea what he’s really like.

MARÍA

I know him, boss. I’ve known him since I was a little girl. Whenever I thought about my dream man, it was him I saw; in every way it was him. When I looked at him here for the first time, I said to myself, “My God, he’s even better than I dreamed.”

DOÑA LOLA

Dreamed? But he isn’t the dream you came here for.

MELY

Leave it alone, boss. It’s already done. The day she’s least expecting it, he’ll skip out with all her money.

MARÍA

Oh, don’t you wish, Mely. Too bad for you, the money’s in a bank account in my name. And who told me to put the account in my name? Who? Jordy! The only thing for certain is that you have never really known him.

MELY
I know him well enough to say that he plans on picking you clean, and you don’t have a clue.

MARÍA

Picking me clean? Of what? Has he robbed something from me? Has he even asked me for anything? What then?

MELY

He’s using you. Using you.

MARÍA

But how is he using me?

MELY

He makes you go every morning to Plaza Cataluña. Or are you going to deny it?

DIZZY

(Flabbergasted) You’re also working plaza Cataluña?

MARÍA

Yes, but I go because I want to. I go to pamper the country boys. Four quick shimmies and, whoopee, they go trotting happily back to their pueblos.

DIZZY

But where do you get the stamina for doing so much work?

MARÍA

Work? Digging for potatoes in the field is work. You should have seen me do that.

DIZZY
Well, I must be a super wimp. Just thinking about it gives me the cardio-willies.

(DIZZY takes her pulse. A police car siren is heard in the distance.)

MARÍA

Well, isn’t anyone coming today? What’s going on?

PICHULI

(Who is putting the bar in order) Things return to normal: hard times.

MARÍA

Hard times? Why hard times?

PICHULI

Here in Barcelona, we make money only from foreigners. When the foreigners go, so does the money, and hard times are here again. (In English, this last phrase echoes the song “Happy Times Are Here Again.”)

MARÍA

No, I can’t afford hard times.

DIZZY

Then why don’t you high heel it over to whore highway in Las Rambles and pop a few corks over there?

MARÍA

But with all the men in Barcelona, none of them come here?

DIZZY

At night, maybe. But now. It would be a miracle.

MARÍA
Then there has to be a miracle. I need a miracle.

MELY

Look at this one; she’s ready to pray to Saint Anthony.

(The telephone rings. DOÑA LOLA picks it up.)

DOÑA LOLA

Hello, Lola’s Tavern. Yes…Yes, I can find her. You are in mourning? And what does that have to do with anything?…No, I am taking you seriously…Of course, I understand…Don’t worry, I’ll tell her right away. She’s right here…So long, and my condolences. (She hangs up.) María, the widower Martoreli is waiting for you in the pavilion in Las Rambles.

MARÍA

A miracle! The poor little widower. (She grabs her bag.) I knew I wasn’t going to have hard times.

DOÑA LOLA

Listen, Miss Hollywood, around here I make the miracles; for one thing, I pay for the phone. If someone wants to see you, they come here and buy you a drink. I’m not here to serve at your pleasure.

MARÍA

It’s that he’s very shy, and he’s in mourning—

DOÑA LOLA

Mourning, shy or horny; there are no free lunches here. Understand?

MARÍA

Okay, okay! From now on, I’ll bring him here. (To the other women) If Jordy comes, tell him to wait for me. And not a word about the apartment. It’s a surprise. I’ll be back soon.
(She leaves.)

DIZZY

But what does she do to them? What does she do, that even the widowers keep coming back to her? All the widowers I know want to play the field.

PICHULI

She gives them what Jordy has taught her: a little bit of happiness to cheer their sadness, a little bit of love to comfort a wounded heart. María is Jordy’s masterpiece.

DOÑA LOLA

Jordy’s masterpiece? Baloney! Who had faith in her? Who saw something in her from the beginning?...She’s my masterpiece. Mine!

MELY

And mine, boss, with all due respects. I’ve helped her with a lot with good advice.

DIZZY

Well, speaking for this girl, I also played a part. I talked to her about the mysterious herbs that come from China.

MELY

You know the conversation has gone too far when Doctor Whore Herbalist starts pissing in your ear.

DIZZY

Well, girly, no one can talk to you.

MELY

About that crap, no! You and your herb-shit give me a fucking headache.
(JORDY enters.)

JORDY

Hello, brother and sisters. (To DOÑA LOLA) So, how’s business been?

DOÑA LOLA

(Smiling) Hell, I can’t complain.

JORDY

Never lose that smile. You’re twice as beautiful when you turn it on.

DOÑA LOLA

There you go, charmer, there you go.

JORDY

(To the other women) And María?

DIZZY

She went out. She said that you should wait for her, that she’d be back soon.

MELY

I’m going.

JORDY

Are you leaving on my account?

MELY

(Disdainfully) You? Don’t kid yourself; I don’t even see you.

JORDY

101
There’s no need to be so bitter, Mely. *(Going towards her)* Listen, we had some good times together. Why do you go out of your way now to stomp all over what we had?

MELY

Oh, so I must be lonely and bitter now, living without a man? I’m just fine by myself, just fine.

JORDY

Not even rats can live alone. You’ve shut yourself in a stone tower and sealed all the doors. Open them, Mely. I think a lot of you, no lie. Look…Dizzy, you come too. *(He sits next to MELY. DIZZY joins them.)* On Calle Escudillers they’ve opened up a new bar. It’s probably a dump, but why don’t we go there for a drink on me?

DIZZY

Why don’t we; I’m feeling depressed right now.

JORDY

*(He puts his hand on MELY’s arm.)* What do you say, Mely?

*(MELY puts her hand on JORDY’s and keeps it there a moment, a seemingly minor gesture but revealing. Then, she withdraws her hand and stands up.)*

Thanks, I’ve had enough of bars this week.

DIZZY

Then take me, Jordy. If I go home, I’ll start crying, and when I cry, I can’t sleep.

JORDY

*(Standing up)* Fine, let’s go.

DOÑA LOLA

Where are you two going?
JORDY

To have a drink.

DOÑA LOLA

And why someplace else? Isn’t this place good enough for you?

JORDY

It’s that Dizzy knows where there’s a bar that just opened, and she’s depressed.

DOÑA LOLA

Depressed, my ass! Can’t you see how worn out she is? She needs to get some rest, or she’ll never pay back what she owes me.

JORDY

We’ll be right back.

DOÑA LOLA

No, she isn’t going.

JORDY

It’s just one drink.

DOÑA LOLA

Not even half a one!

JORDY

But—

DOÑA LOLA

I said, no, damn it! That’s enough!
JORDY

Like a dictator, always the dictator. Everyone has to follow your orders.

DOÑA LOLA

In my house, in my bar, yes! I rule here.

JORDY

None of us belong to you, and you’re too old to be telling us what to do.

DOÑA LOLA

(Wounded) Son-of-a-bitch! Old age and all, I still have what it takes to make people do what I say. Try me!

JORDY

The only thing you have is an ugly personality.

DOÑA LOLA

(Shouting) And you, you’re poison, pure poison.

DIZZY

Enough said! Don’t go on fighting over nothing. (Goes to JORDON.) No more fighting! Let it alone.

JORDY

Bah, it isn’t worth it.

(MARÍA enters.)

MARÍA

Jordy! Jordy!
DIZZY

(Flabbergasted) But you’re already done?

MARÍA

A miracle, a miracle has happened!

DIZZY

I believe it. No one could have turned a trick that fast without Divine help.

MARÍA

I have guaranteed work. The widower has contracted me for regular work. He’ll come here when he wants me, and he’ll pay for drinks. We made a deal.

DIZZY

But how did you do that?

MARÍA

When I reached the pavilion, he said only, “María.” I asked him, “What?” “Come with me.” “Where,” I asked. He pointed, “Over there.” I said, let’s go, and he took me to a patio where we sat down. He took out his wallet and pulled a photo from it. I looked at it and asked, “Your mother?” “Guess again,” he said, “my wife.” So I said, “She seems a woman of deep and rich character.” He answered, “She was a woman with a rich winery.” So I quoted a local country saying: “When the wine is thick, great loves come quick.” He answered, “Don’t joke, María. She was a saint, a pure saint...But now she’s gone to heaven and has left me here all alone, very much the widower; and there is nothing in the world lonelier than a widower. Can’t you comfort me, María? So I said, “Don’t I give you enough comfort now?” He answered, “With you it’s not comfort; it’s a race. You’re always in a rush. “Rush,” I said, If you think I rush with you, you should see me with the Americans.” So he said, “Listen, can’t we meet twice a week in a more casual way? I had him hooked and was winding him in. I said, “What you want is to make reservations.” “Yes,” he jumped, “exactly that.” So I told him that that comes with a high price tag. “How about 140?” he offered. I was going to ask 85, but when he asked 140, I said, 170. “Done,” he said, “but no hurrying, eh.” I told him to come for me here and to buy me and
my lady friends a drink, so no one will think we are going somewhere else to have a glass or two. He took out a stack of bills and gave them to me. I counted them and, presto, we had a deal.

DIZZY

What luck, girl, what luck!

MARÍA

(To DOÑA LOLA) Did you hear boss? He’ll be coming here and buying a drink for all of us.

DOÑA LOLA

(Solemnly) Yeh, I heard.

MARÍA

Is something wrong, Jefa?

DOÑA LOLA

No, nothing’s wrong.

MARÍA

Jordy, I have another surprise for you.

JORDY

Another one?

MARÍA

So, now I have you wondering, for a change. It’s an—Well, come see for yourself. She takes JORDY by the hand.) So long, boss, see you tomorrow. So long, girlfriends. So long, Pichulín.

(JORDY and MARÍA exit.)
MELY

Well, I’ll be going too. *(To DIZZY)* How about you, girlfriend?

DIZZY

Yeh, let’s go.

*(The two gather up their wigs and bags and leave. DOÑA LOLA looks at the door resentfully.)*

DOÑA LOLA

You prick, the next time you cross me, I’ll give you reason to be sorry you did.

PICHULI

It hasn’t been a good afternoon, has it?

DOÑA LOLA

It’s been a while since I’ve had a good afternoon.

PICHULI

Yeh, since then.

DOÑA LOLA

And what does that mean, “Since then?”

PICHULI

Since Jordy started coming here again. You brighten up when he’s around. You look forward to seeing him, and you’re always glad when you do.

DOÑA LOLA
No more; don’t say anymore. You’re making me see how weak I’ve been. If I had done what I needed to do, things would never have come to this. I should have stopped him from ever putting a foot in this bar, the first time he showed his face. And I wanted to do it, I wanted to throw him out, but he looked at me like a—I don’t know—like a lost puppy. I felt sorry for him. I wanted to help him, and that was my big mistake, my great big mistake.

(She has sat down at a table and remains silently lost in her thoughts. PICHULI looks at her and nods his head as though he can read her thoughts. A police car is heard passing. The lights blacken in the tavern and come up in the living room of MARÍA’s apartment. MARÍA and JORDY enter.)

MARÍA

Wait, don’t move. Just a second! (She turns on the lights.) What do you think? Do you like it?

JORDY

(Surprised) But—

MARÍA

It’s ours for the taking. Don’t you like it?

JORDY

Sure I do. But I’ve been here before.

MARÍA

No, it’s only that they make all these apartments the same. I can’t tell you how many I’ve seen, and they all look alike.

JORDY

So I see.

MARÍA
It has a bedroom, a bathroom and a kitchen. It’s small but ours.

JORDY

How much did you pay for this?

MARÍA

Nothing.

JORDY

How much?

MARÍA

Okay, 85 a month.

JORDY

85?

MARÍA

Yes, it’s furnished.

JORDY

You were robbed.

MARÍA

But the widower pays me 170 a month. We wind up 85 dollars ahead.

JORDY

You still were robbed.

MARÍA
I got it so we could live together, to make our life better.

JORDY

I also have a plan for making our life better.

MARÍA

A plan?

JORDY

Yes.

MARÍA

What plan?

(JORDY assumes a composed demeanor; determinedly)

JORDY

I’ve decided to get a job.

MARÍA

(Coming to him) Are you feeling okay, sweetheart?

JORDY

(Irritated) Stop kidding around! I’m serious.

MARÍA

Oops, muchacho, I’m sorry. It’s just that this comes out of the blue.

JORDY

You never let me finish.
MARÍA

You took me by surprise. What kind of work are you thinking of doing?

JORDY

Sit down. (They both sit on the sofa.) Look, until now I’ve turned my back on work, because I’ve always thought that no one should have to slave at something that he doesn’t like and that only makes him miserable.

MARÍA

For sure, no one!

JORDY

But since meeting you things have changed. I don’t want you to keep on in this work. I want to go into something that will keep us in style and let you save too for your house payments.

MARÍA

And what do you have in mind?

JORDY

A friend of mine has a bar in Barrio Horta, and—

MARÍA

You, a waiter?

JORDY

No, my friend is moving to Tarragona to take charge of some of his father’s businesses, and he asked me if I know anyone who could take over the bar.

MARÍA

And you told him that you would like to take it over?
JORDY

No, I said that you might be interested.

MARÍA

Me? But I don’t know anything about bars except how to take a john to one and get him to buy drinks.

JORDY

To serve whiskey, all you need is license to sell alcoholic drinks.

MARÍA

But you must need more than that, no? You need to know how to handle money, how to keep books for money coming in and going out. You need to know how to buy beer and whiskey in bulk and how to mix them. There’s a lot.

JORDY

When my friend started, he didn’t know anything, and now he takes in between one hundred eighty five and two hundred a day.

MARÍA

Hell, no!

JORDY

Hell, yeah, I’ve seen his books.

MARÍA

No! Now that’s not bad.

JORDY

It’s a great business.
MARÍA

But you need to work like a slave, I bet.

JORDY

Well, I plan on helping you.

MARÍA

We’d work together?

JORDY

Yes.

MARÍA

Me and you?

JORDY

Yes.

MARÍA

Jesus, what a dream come true: to live together, to sleep together, to work together! You’re killing me with happiness.

JORDY

You’d only have to help in the morning. I’ll take care of the rest. The papers will be in your name naturally.

MARÍA

No, no way; for sure, no way! If we share the work, we share everything.

JORDY

113
Impossible.

MARÍA

Why?

JORDY

Because then we’d be business partners, and I can’t go to bed with my business partner.

MARÍA

What a strange idea. You know what they say nowadays: “Make your lover a business partner and make bed and bankroll finer.”

JORDY

Okay, we’ll think about it. Right now, we have something more important to consider.

MARÍA

The price.

JORDY

Yes.

MARÍA

Okay, tell me, how much?

JORDY

He’s asking only twenty seven hundred.

MARÍA

Fuck, twenty seven hundred is a lot of “only”.
JORDY

You can give a down payment and give the rest in installments.

MARÍA

But, Jordy, soon we’ll be swimming in installments: installments for the house, installments for the bar, installments for God-knows-what.

JORDY

If everything goes as planned, in a couple of years, you’ll have the house paid for and the bar free and clear, without having to hustle johns again.

MARÍA

You’re saying, I’d be my own person.

JORDY

That’s what you want, no?

MARÍA

Well, kind of, yeah.

JORDY

What do you mean, “kind of”?

MARÍA

And once I’m my own person, once I’m free; then what?

JORDY

What more do you want?

(MARÍA looks at him a moment in silence.)
MARÍA

Look, Jordy, let’s be frank. I’d like to be rich…And be with you…And not have to sell my body to make a decent living. But each of us has a destiny, and as you say, “If the hand destiny dealt you isn’t what you want, change your hand.”

JORDY

Exactly.

MARÍA

You already know why I’ve come to Barcelona, and why I’m still here.

JORDY

You’ve told me, at least, a hundred times.

MARÍA

With good reason, so that one day you can’t claim you had forgotten.

JORDY

No way I could say that.

MARÍA

Well, my goal still is to return to Lorca and—

JORDY

(Interrupting her) And live there peacefully the rest of your life.

MARÍA

I see you understand.

JORDY

116
Even a mule would understand.

MARÍA

I’ll go in with you on the bar with one condition.

JORDY

What condition?

MARÍA

That when I’ve finished paying for the house, we leave everything here, and we go to live together in Lorca.

JORDY

Well… why not?

MARÍA

You will come live with me?

JORDY

If everything is fine between us.

MARÍA

It will be; I’m sure everything will be fine. And get ready to be amazed when you see the house. This apartment is nothing compared to it. The house is in the middle of the country and surrounded by a wall. Do you like grapes?

JORDY

I love them.

MARÍA
The orchard has rows of grapevines that grow the sweetest grapes you’ve ever tasted. And there are rose bushes…and geraniums…and orange trees. On spring nights the air is thick with the scent of orange blossoms. Have you ever smelled orange blossoms?

JORDY

Not that I can remember.

MARÍA

It’s like nothing else. You will come with me?

JORDY

I told you I would.

MARÍA

You promise?

JORDY

I promise.

MARÍA

(Embracing him passionately) You said it, Jordy; you promised me!

JORDY

Let me go! For God’s sake, you’re crushing me; I can’t breathe.

MARÍA

We’re gonna do this, Jordy; we’re gonna do this!

JORDY

But let me go! Let me breathe!
(MARÍA gets up and walks around the room excitedly.)

MARÍA

We’ll buy the bar. We’ll make a lot of money. A lot; a whole lot! Then we’ll leave it all. Together, we’ll leave it all to go live in our own house. It will be ours. Ours! All ours! Nobody will be giving us orders. No one will be telling us what to do. We’ll be our own bosses. We’ll paint the house. And—

JORDY

(Astonished by MARÍA’s sudden show of energy) You’re gonna blow a gasket.

MARÍA

We’re gonna do it, Jordy; we’re gonna do it.

(She comes back to him and embraces him again.)

CURTAIN
PART TWO

MARÍA’s apartment. There are a few changes to the décor to denote the passage of time. JORDY is stretched out on the sofa listening to classical music from a radio. MARÍA enters, dressed in a kimono and carrying a vanity case in one hand.

MARÍA

Sweetheart, can you take your hooves off the couch and put them on the floor?

JORDY

What for?

MARÍA

So I won’t have to clean the couch.

JORDY

But then you’ll have to clean the floor, so what’s the difference?

MARÍA

It’s not the same. Put them down!

JORDY

(Resignedly) Okay!

MARÍA

(Turning off the radio) And turn this junk off!

JORDY

Leave it on! (Turning the radio back on) Radio Free Spain is about to broadcast some straight up news.

MARÍA

(Turning it off again) I want it off. I’m going to fix myself up, and if you’re listening to the radio, you don’t listen to me. This is the only time we have to really talk.

JORDY

Why can’t you fix yourself up in the bathroom? Why the big itch to do it in here?
MARÍA
Because I can’t see you from there, and I love looking at you. *(Noticing his shirt)* Are you going out?

JORDY
No, why do you ask?

MARÍA
You’ve put on a clean shirt.

JORDY
Great! If I don’t change my shirt, you get on my back about that. If I do change it, I must be up to something. There’s no pleasing you.

MARÍA
But you always change at night when you come to get me.

JORDY
What difference does it make when I change? Or do I have to always do things the same time and the same way, by the clock?

MARÍA
Don’t get so worked up, man-cub! Jesus, you’re throwing a fit.

JORDY
It’s you who worked me into one.

*He snatches a newspaper and starts to read. MARÍA has opened her vanity case and starts applying makeup, looking in the mirror while she speaks.*

MARÍA
There’s roast beef, cheese and fruit in the fridge. If you don’t feel like having supper here, go to a restaurant, but don’t follow it up with a drinking binge, eh. I don’t want to have to wake you up tomorrow with a half of a glass of gin to chase away your hangover. You know, that’s something I’ll never understand: how do you get rid of a hangover with the same juice that gave you one?

JORDY

(Without taking his eyes off the newspaper) One nail drives out another nail.

MARÍA

Well, if you don’t stick the first nail in, you don’t have to drive it out. Simple, no?

JORDY

All right, stop the presses! Look who’s the new lady preacher.

MARÍA

Okay, you’re right. It’s just that waking up in that way isn’t healthy, no matter what they say. (The telephone rings. She picks it up.) Hello…Yes…Who’s calling…Just a moment. (To JORDY, tapping on the receiver) Monty, a lady friend of yours, who has a man’s name and tries to talk like one.

JORDY

Monty is a man…Gimme! (He takes the telephone from her.) Hi, Monty, what’s up?…Yeah…Yeah…I’m still not sure…Are you at your place?…I’ll call you soon, then.

(He hangs up. MARÍA has been observing him attentively.)

MARÍA

Who is she-he, this Monty?

JORDY

A guy I met a couple of weeks ago in Hollywood Oscar.

MARÍA

And why didn’t you tell me anything?

JORDY

There is nothing to tell. He was with some people. We had a drink together and talked a little.

MARÍA

About what?

JORDY
MARÍA
You’re not thinking of starting again, are you?

JORDY
Of starting what?

MARÍA
Another business like the bar, that “great” business opportunity that after two years has me tied to it, like a paralyzed and hopeless cripple.

JORDY
You tied yourself to it, making it a point to be there day and night so you could keep me under your thumb.

MARÍA
No one’s keeping you under their thumb. I’m trying to help you is all; and now I’m sorry for it.

JORDY
So what are you bitching about? When all’s said and done, we make enough to pay for the house. What more do you want?

MARÍA
What more? Barcelona is killing me, dragging me under. And if I died here, you couldn’t find a priest to mumble two words over my grave. I feel like I’m going nowhere these last six months, nowhere, having to go back to work for Doña Lola.

(JORDY has picked up the newspaper again and has begun reading it. He speaks without taking his eyes off the paper.)

JORDY
Well, if you think I like where we are, you doing all the work and me sitting around playing with myself, think again.

MARÍA
Sweetheart, a long time ago, before they had books, women used to do all the work.
JORDY
What the hell do you know about a long time ago.

MARÍA
I know; I heard tell. Then one day the men realized what was going on and said, no way. From now on, woman stay in the house to cook and clean, and we’ll take care of the rest. Even so, there is plenty of proof that God gave women more ability to work…And stop reading. I’m talking here.

JORDY
(Furious) God damn it! (He throws the newspaper.) I can’t even read anymore. I’m getting sick and tired of this shit, sick and tired.

(MARÍA looks at him with a horrified expression.)

MARÍA
Never say that to me, Jordy, not even in play. The only thing I’m asking is that you don’t work yourself into a fever over some new scheme.

JORDY
What are you talking about?

MARÍA
A business like you got me into.

JORDY
These guys hate business, and they could care less about money.

MARÍA
What do they live on?

JORDY
Monty is the son of a surgeon in Montivert, and Pedro, his friend, is the son of a diplomat. They rent a loft and share everything between them.

MARÍA
Sons of a surgeon and a diplomat?
JORDY
Yes.

MARÍA
And they know you live with me?

JORDY
Of course.

MARÍA
What I mean is, do they know—do they know what I do?

JORDY
Damn right; I don’t hide nothin’ from nobody.

MARÍA
And what do they say?

JORDY
They admire what you’re doing and say you’re waging your own personal revolution.

MARÍA
Me, a revolutionary?

JORDY
You’re revolutionizing your life; that’s what they say.

MARÍA
Well, that’s a new one, at least, for me…And have you seen much of them?

JORDY
Three or four times. They called me just now to see if we could get together later tonight.

MARÍA
And why did you hide this from me? Why didn’t you tell me before?

JORDY
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Oh, I don’t know. I thought you might feel bad about it.

MARÍA

Bad?

JORDY

There’s a woman in the group.

MARÍA

(Suspicious) A woman? What I thought…

JORDY

Pili, and you wouldn’t object once you’ve seen her.

MARÍA

Object? When did I ever stick my nose in your business? When have I ever questioned you? (Pause) What’s she like, this Pili?

JORDY

Well, she has a great personality but is ugly as sin and long and stringy. Not my type.

MARÍA

(Calming down) Okay, what does she do?

JORDY

She’s the daughter of a notary. She lives in Sabadell but visits Barcelona a lot and stays over in the loft.

MARÍA

Who does she sleep with?

JORDY

With the two of them.

MARÍA

No, I mean which one does she go to bed with?
JORDY
With the two of them. With them, there’s no yours and mine. They share everything.

MARÍA
Shit, the upper class has its own ways.

JORDY
They’re great people, open-minded and no bad attitudes.

MARÍA
Well, if they’re so great, why don’t you introduce me?

JORDY
Introduce you?

MARÍA
Yes, invite them over for supper. Look, the fourteenth is my birthday. That would be a good day.

JORDY
At three o’clock?

MARÍA
At three, and have them bring ugly-as-sin and not-your-type Pili. Do you know their number?

JORDY
Yes.

MARÍA
Then call them up and invite them. I’m going to finish fixing myself up.

(She gets her vanity case and exits through the hallway. JORDY hesitates a moment, then picks up the receiver and dials a number.)

JORDY

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(Into the telephone) Hi, it’s me. Is Pili there?...Listen, María asked me to invite you here to have dinner with us on the fourteenth...It’s her birthday...Yes...What?...Okay, wait a minute. (To MARÍA, raising his voice) Do you know how to do sausages Catalan style?

MARÍA

(Offstage) What?

JORDY

Do you know how to make sausages a la Catalán?

MARÍA

Of course, I know how to make them. Cooking is my thing. Only, I don’t have time anymore.

JORDY

(To the telephone) Listen, she says yes, she knows how to make them.

MARÍA

(Still offstage) But tell them, we’re not just talking munchies here. This is going to be a complete meal full of surprises.

JORDY

(Into the telephone) She says that she’s going to make a complete meal...Yeah...Yeah...Great, it should be lots of fun...I don’t know...No. I don’t know...I’ll call you.

(He hangs up. MARÍA enters while she finishes dressing.)

MARÍA

What did they say?

JORDY

That they can’t wait to come.

MARÍA

(Going into a flurry) Oh, Jesus, how am I going to get everything ready? How can I throw a party that’s up to these rich kids? I need to clean everything, go to the hairstylist, buy flowers—
JORDY
Don’t try to make yourself over. Just be yourself.

MARÍA
But, Jordy, think about who they are.

JORDY
It doesn’t make any difference. If they don’t like you, they can leave. (Affectionately) Besides, you’re gonna charm them out of their socks. Everyone likes you.

MARÍA
You mean it, you like me as much as I like you?

JORDY
I’ll prove it.

(He takes her in his arms and gives her a lingering kiss.)

MARÍA
(Separating from JORDY) Ooh, I’m going to be late; I’m going to be late…Hurry, zipper me up!...Whatta day it’s lining up to be.

JORDY
The Frenchies?

MARÍA
Yes, the Frenchies, but they don’t come off their boats until eleven o’clock at night. Now, tell me if anyone is going to feel like fooling around so late in the night?...Remember, Jordy, if you go out, don’t go to bars. If you go to a bar, don’t drink too much. If you drink too much, come home to sleep it off, even if the sun’s about to come up. I don’t have to tell you that I’ll be waiting.

JORDY
Don’t worry about me.

MARÍA
I love you, bandido, but I have to go to work. You’ll see what kind of a feast I’m going to make for your friends. We’re gonna eat like kings. *(She grabs her bag.)* Ooh, I’m going to be late. I’m gonna be late.

*(She exits. JORDY waits a moment, then picks up the telephone receiver and begins dialing a number.)*

Blackout on the apartment and lights up in the tavern. *DOÑA LOLA, PICHULI, MELY and DIZZY are putting out garlands and French flags.)*

DOÑA LOLA

I can hear the Frenchies now. They’ll say for sure, *(initiating a French accent)* “But what is this you put, mon bien-aimé, these petit flags and garlands.” *(DOÑA LOLA pronounces “flags” and “garlands” with a mock French accent.)* I bet my left boob they won’t like these ornaments, the mother fuckers.

DIZZY

Nothing pleases them, the Froggies; they croak about everything.

MELY

They’re a bunch of stuck up pricks.

PICHULI

Well, all you have to do is take care of them in bed.

DIZZY

They’re always putting us down. That we are a tenth rate country, which doesn’t know a flute from a dick.

MELY

The asshole of Europe.

DIZZY

Please them in bed, Pichuli? You should try. *(Imitating a French accent)* “Put yourself like this, mon sheree. Turn more that way”…I feel like I’m in a goddamned circus act.

MELY

Nit picking, hard-to-please pains-in-the-ass!
DOÑA LOLA

They want everyone to kiss their cans for creating the finer things in life: *(imitating the French pronunciation)* le champagne, le cognac, le pâté de foie.

DIZZY

*(Also imitating the French pronunciation)* And le ménage à trois.

*(BLONDIE enters from the street. She is in a bright mood.)*

BLONDIE

Oh, la lá! La France!

DOÑA LOLA

Get the hell outta my bar; I don’t want you here.

DIZZY

But I didn’t come here to ask you to take me in, Boss, only to tell you that they’ve hired me to sing in the Benidorm Festival.

DOÑA LOLA

They hired you?

DIZZY

Yes, me.

DOÑA LOLA

Holy Mother of God gone blind…and deaf!

MELY

They hired you?

DIZZY

Just to sing?

BLONDIE

Yes.
DIZZY

What luck girl, what luck!

BLONDIE

My manager tells me I have a great chance to win first prize, but he also says that my past life can hurt me. (To DOÑA LOLA) So I want to ask you to take down these photos of me. (She gestures toward the photos on the wall.) If I win, it wouldn’t be good to see my face showing in certain places.

DOÑA LOLA

Say no more. We don’t want the press getting a whiff of this story, least of all, the press. (Plucking the photos off the wall) Take them, your majesty, and keep them as reminders of your humble beginnings.

BLONDIE

Thanks, Jefa.

MELY

But tell me, my beauty, have they listened to you sing, or did they hire you sound unheard?

BLONDIE

They heard me in the Cabaret. I’ve been rehearsing for twenty days.

DIZZIE

What luck, girl, what luck!

BLONDIE

It’s crazy; I don’t know how all this came my way.

DIZZIE

It’s that God is great and God is good!

MELY

Very good, because without—

BLONDIE
Well, all my beauties, this is it; I wish you well.

MELY

And you knock’em dead. Let us know how you’re doing, eh?

BLONDIE

Oh, I think you’ll be hearing lot about me. Chiau!

(BLONDIE exits.)

DOÑA LOLA

Heaven help her.

DIZZY

You never know. One day a shack, a high rise the next. Ya’ know, I’ve heard her sing. She has a tiny voice, tiny but pretty.

MELY

Tiny voice? Well, for sure she’ll take all.

(MARÍA comes in, out of breath.)

MARÍA

Hell, what a rat race! I thought the Froggies would be here by now.

DIZZY

Where are you coming from in such a hurry?

MARÍA

I thought it would be fun to get all out of breath and sweaty…Hi, boss.

DOÑA LOLA

Hi. And Jordy?

MARÍA

He’s fine. He stayed home.

DOÑA LOLA

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Of course! Often—

MARÍA

I rushed myself for nothing. *(She sits beside DIZZY.*) And how’s it going with you?

DIZZY

Okay, but, for sure, I’ll be going downhill fast. It’s been two days since I had a bowel movement, and I am bloated like a sponge in water. I’ve taken psyllium, and nothing; I’ve taken snake weed, still nothing. I’ve taken aloe vera, and you guessed it…

MARÍA

Nothing. But how do you stay alive taking all that stuff?

DIZZY

It’s all that stuff that keeps me alive.

MARÍA

That’s crazy. *(She looks at her clock.*) Listen, it looks like the Frenchies are late.

DIZZY

So late, they might as well have stayed in their cabins.

MARÍA

You can’t mean that.

DIZZY

It’s all one crazy game. Since I already know what’s in store for me, I’m going to see how the workers’ movement is doing. *(She picks up a newspaper and opens it.*) Let’s see… *(Looking up and down a page)* The movement…The workers’ movement…But where the hell have they put news about the movement?...Here, now I have it. *(Reading)* “Protest Movement at the Ports. “Reliable sources inform us of a general strike being planned in our city’s ports.” Well, I’ll be a virgin all over again!

MELY

*(Uneasy)* Stop fucking around!

DOÑA LOLA
A strike?!

DIZZY

That’s what it says.

DOÑA LOLA

Give me! (She snatches the newspaper and begins to read.) Jesus Christ, it’s true!

DIZZY

Blessed Virgin, what’s to become of us?

DOÑA LOLA

I don’t want to think about it.

MARÍA

How long will it last, boss?

DOÑA LOLA

You can never tell. In 36 one started that was supposed to last two days; it went on for almost two months.

MARÍA

Damn! Bring it on. I’m ready.

DIZZY

Careful what you say; you don’t want this.

MELY

This sucks, this sucks real bad.

DIZZY

I’ve heard that they’re starving all the way to the other side of Spain, starving and living in misery.

MELY

War, there’s gonna be another war!
DOÑA LOLA

Enough! Shit, don’t be so morbid! Let’s see what else they say. (Reading) “The same source informs us that if a strike occurs, the military would force a resumption of services the following Thursday, the fourteenth. On that day, the arrival is expected of the following ships: three warships of the Italian Navy; two Egyptian merchant ships; a Turkish oil tanker and another from Holland; and the transatlantic cruiser “Mary-Honey.”

DIZZY

Whew, that’s a load off my mind!

MARÍA

Thursday, the fourteenth?

DOÑA LOLA

Yes.

MARÍA

But that’s my birthday?

DOÑA LOLA

Are you dropping a hint for a present?

MARÍA

No, what present? I’m having a dinner party for some friends of Jordy.

DOÑA LOLA

Well, call it off, child. That’s not the time for a dinner party.

MARÍA

We’ve already invited them.

DOÑA LOLA

Un-invite them.

MARÍA
That’s not an option. But I can’t be in two places at the same time. How am I going to do this?

(PICHULI has gone to the door to the street. He looks out and shouts:)

PICHULI

They’re coming; the Frenchies are coming. They’ve already reached Las Ramblas.

MELY

Here come the ménage a twits-shits

DOÑA LOLA

Come on, girls, let’s get to work. Hurry! (The women put carnations in their hair.) Let’s make it a night to remember.

MELY

They’ll never know what hit them. All of them are going down, every last snobby one of the sons-of-bitches.

DIZZY

Right on, we’re going to the mattresses. (In English, of course, the expression “to the mattresses” echoes the same expression from The Godfather.)

DOÑA LOLA

Pichuli, put on the music…Mely, stand at the bar…You, María, stay where you are…Dizzy, on the other side…Just like that…Okay, my Spanish honeys, now smile. (They all put on deliberately false smiles.) But let the eyes stay sad. (They all put on sad faces.) But smile. (They return to a smile.) But with serious eyes. (They go back to serious expressions.) But smile, damn it…Just like that. What a picture you’d make with ornamental combs and shawls! You’d really bring in some serious money. (“La Marseillaise” begins playing.) Get ready, girls. To the mattresses!

(The music swells in volume.

BLACKOUT AND SILENCE

Gradually and softly a music plays, a Sardana, a traditional folk dance in Cataluna. The lights come up in MARÍA’s apartment. It is nine o’clock at night. No one is on stage. The telephone begins ringing. MARÍA’s voice is heard from behind the door to the stairwell.)

MARÍA
(Offstage) Coming, coming, coming…gimme a minute…I’m coming…(She enters, carrying a huge bouquet of roses. She picks up the telephone, but it already stopped ringing.) For crying out loud, that was Jordy for sure. And I bet he was calling to say he was coming early…Fine, it doesn’t matter; they can come when they want. Dinner’s ready. (She reads a card that hangs from the bouquet.) “To María, with all my love, Jordy.” Will ya look at this arrangement; it’s precious…What a pity that you didn’t remember to send me these, that I had to buy them myself. But you have your hidden talents. (She puts the roses in a vase.) Like this, they can easily see the card. (She begins acting the scene as though the guests are there.) “No, no formalities; we are all friends here…And how is everyone?…You are Pili, no?…Happy to meet you. (As though kissing her on the cheek)…And you must be Monty. (She offers her hand,) Un placer. And you are—don’t tell me—you are Pedro, who loves all the ladies…Jordy told me. But sit down everyone; make yourself at home…What would you like to drink: a gin fizz, a dry Manhattan, a Long Street?…Do I speak good English? No, friend, I learned it in Berlitz. To learn it really well, you have to go to Gibraltar.” (The telephone rings. She picks it up.) Si? Oui. Hello?…Hi, sweetheart. I was practicing being a hostess. (Worried) An accident?…Was it serious?…That’s a relief…You’re taking her to Sabadell?…The three of you?…Monty has to eat with his family?…Then, you and Pedro are coming here?….The last train from there leaves at eleven?…But, Jordy, tomorrow isn’t my birthday, and I’ve already prepared everything….No, no, yes, I understand…Of course, don’t worry…So long. (She hangs up.) Sons-of-bitches!…They don’t know if they can come…After all this work, this is what I get: left in the lurch, like a bozo. Why did I have to do all of this? (Looking at the telephone as though it were JORDY incarnate) And you, Jordy, you could have insisted that the other one come back here with you. It wouldn’t have killed you to do that. But, no, you went with them. And do you expect me to stay here waiting to see whether or not you come tonight?…Uhuh, kiddo. I’m gonna eat. That’s what I’m gonna do. I’ll have my own private little party. (She goes toward the hallway, then stops.) But how can I eat, when I’m not hungry?…Fucked, you fucked me Jordy…This is your birthday present, and I didn’t see it coming. But it won’t happen again, I promise you that. From now on, I think about this sister only, solamente yo. You’ll see!…And the cake, what do I do with the cake? Save it for tomorrow?…Uhuh, I’ll start eating it now, right now. (She goes out to the hallway and returns with a cake topped with a burning candle.) Look at it, it turned out beautiful. (She sits down on the sofa.) A half an hour just beating on the eggs, and for what? For nothing…Why did you do this Jordy? You wanted to be with them more than with me. You went with them and left me here alone, and you’re not coming back…I know you’re not coming back…Not tonight!

(Swallowing her tears, she blows out the candle, and BLACKOUT)
The lights come up in the tavern. There are no special decorations. It is early morning. Pichuli is behind the bar. Blondie is at a table, talking with Mely and Dizzy.)

Blondie

You should have heard them clapping. No one has ever heard applause like that. People kept shouting from the tables, Bravo, Bravo. I trembled and chills went up my spine, and I said to myself, “Holy Mother of God” can this be happening to me? Then came the voting: the first round, I won first place; the second round, I won first place; the third round, I was eliminated.

Mely

That doesn’t sound right.

Blondie

That’s just how it went.

Dizzy

Who won then?

Blondie

A faggot!

Dizzy

No way!

Blondie

He keeps it hidden, but he’s a flaming faggot. That’s what my manager told me.

Mely

Well, as long as he keeps it hidden and doesn’t start acting prissy.

Blondie

And what’s worse, I lost out on the prize money. It makes me sick.

Dizzy

Don’t torture yourself like that. Easy, girl.
BLONDIE

I swear on the womb that gave me life that I sang like I never sang before. The audience was with me, but the judges were bought.

DIZZY

For sure, the pricks are everywhere, running everything.

BLONDIE

The pricks and the vultures. Everyone was saying that before one note was sung, the judges knew the winner.

DIZZY

People have no morals.

BLONDIE

I spent all the money I had. One more time I have to start all over again.

MELY

Well, pretty girl, you’re coming from getting shit on, and you’re arriving at being fucked over. The last couple of days you couldn’t feed a bird on what you made here.

DIZZY

Yeah, we don’t know what the police are looking for, and the feds aren’t whispering their secrete to us. But if you aren’t careful, they grab you up, shake you down and throw you in the cage.

MELY

They’ve got the johns too scared to come around.

DIZZY

People are scared stiff.

MELY

Having sex no longer is a crime; it’s a miracle.
DIZZY

Some are saying any minute now, something bad is going to happen.

MELY

But nothing ever does.

DIZZY

Who knows when things will change?

MELY

Change? What the hell is there to change? Nothing ever changes in Spain.

DIZZY

You’re right there. Nothing ever changes.

MELY

Never!

(MARÍA enters.)

MARÍA

Blondie, what are you doing here? I thought you’d be at the Benidorm song festival, celebrating your victory.

MELY

(Sarcasticly) Ah, yes, her victory.

BLONDIE

I was the winner, morally speaking.

MARÍA

You won then?

BONDIE

How could I win, when everything was decided by who you know; and my manager is an asshole, who only knows how to suck money out of me? All I won was a lot of grief. I don’t even want to think about it.
MARÍA
Girl, don’t take it so hard. There’s nothing you can do about it now.

BLONDIE
I couldn’t be in a worse spot. I’m broke and don’t have a job.

MELY
And no prize either.

MARÍA
(To BLONDIE) You spent so much?

BLONDIE
Add it up! I had to pay for rehearsals and buy me a dress; there were travel costs and a week in a hotel: yes, I spent so much.

MARÍA
Damn, I didn’t know singing cost so much.

BLONDIE
Now I’m going to have to start all over again and wait for another chance.

MARÍA
You plan on going on with singing?

BLONDIE
I must go on.

MARÍA
If it were me, I’d let it go. A dollar in hand is worth a hundred with wings.

BLONDIE
No! I know one day my turn will come. I’m sure of it.

MELY
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Just keep banging your head against the wall, girlie.

BLONDIE

(To MARÍA) And who are you to tell me how I should run my life? You can’t even end it with Jordy?

MARÍA

Don’t go there, gorgeous; you’re barking up the wrong tree...Why should we end it?...Since you brought it up, we’re doing better than ever.

BLONDIE

Uh huh!

MARÍA

Yeah, we had a fight a few days ago, but making up was so spectacular that I’ve decided to pick a fight with him at least three times a week.

BLONDIE

Uh huh!

MARÍA

And what does that mean, uh huh?

BLONDIE

Oh, nothing! It’s just that I saw him the other night at Oscar’s, playing the single guy.

MARÍA

At Oscar’s? When?

BLONDIE

Wait...What day was it? Oh, yeah, last Thursday.

MARÍA

Last Thursday! Impossible. You confused him with someone else.

BLONDIE
I’m saying I saw him. I was coming back from Benidorm with my manager. We had supper and went for a drink at Oscar’s. He was there at the bar with a woman. He was wearing a blue shirt.

(MARÍA reacts as though she were given a sharp blow.)

DIZZY

Just because you’re feeling bad, that’s no reason to mess with her.

BLONDIE

I’m not messing with her. I’m saying what I saw.

DIZZY

Well, if you’re going to put a razor on your tongue, stick it up your own ass. Don’t make others pay for your own bitterness.

BLONDIE

I’m not being bitter; I’m no grudge.

DIZZY

You’re a back-biting snake and a loser. Your story about losing the prize is pure bullshit.

MELY

So much bullshit that no one believes it.

BLONDIE

You—none of you—know what you’re talking about. You have no class, no culture.

MELY

Now, that’s too much! And what’s your claim to culture, Miss University, you, who every time you flop someplace else, come sliding back here to take work from us?

BLONDIE

I do this work only when I have to. I’m not like the rest of you.

MELY

No, you’re worse, a blood-sucking squatter, who comes to whore when it suits her.
BLONDIE

No, I’m no whore! I’m an artist! An artist! I’ve worked and practiced. I’ve travelled to towns to sing. I’ve been hungry…miserable…

MELY

And what have you gotten for your troubles?

DIZZY

She’ll wind up singing for pennies on some street corner.

BLONDIE

(Separating herself from the other women) No, I don’t want to do this forever, selling my body; I don’t want to, not forever.

MELY

You’d have to be born again in another body, with another voice, in a different country.

BLONDIE

I will be famous. I will succeed.

DIZZY

Not in a hundred years!

BLONDIE

I will…I have to!

MELY

But how are you going to be a famous singer, when you sing like a deaf-mute?

BLONDIE

(Swallowing her tears) I will make it. I will.

MELY

Keep on dreaming, fool!

BLONDIE

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I will have my day. You’ll see, I will.

*(BLONDIE exits humiliated to the bathrooms. DOÑA LOLA enters.)*

DOÑA LOLA

But what happened here? Can’t I leave you girls alone, even a minute?

DIZZY

Blondie said that last Thursday she saw Jordy in—

MARÍA

*(Cutting her off)* But if nothing happened. Can’t Jordy be seen in a bar with another woman?

DOÑA LOLA

In what bar?...With what woman?

MARÍA

It doesn’t matter.

MELY

Listen, it just came to me. Didn’t you say that Jordy had stayed over in Sabadell Thursday, because there was an accident?

MARÍA

*(Defiant)* Yeah, so what?

MELY

Uh-uh-uh, I smell a rat.

DOÑA LOLA

Shut up, Mely.

MELY

Why should I shut up? María is my work-friend, my amiga, and I’m looking out for her.

DOÑA LOLA
There’s nothing to be looking out for because you don’t know nothing, understand?

MELY

For sure, no, but it doesn’t take much imagination to figure out what’s going on. It would be no surprise that this bird, Jordy has found someone who better suits him, and he’s fixing to fly the nest. What I do know is his feathers haven’t changed.

DOÑA LOLA

You don’t know anything. And shut up!

MELY

I couldn’t know him better if he were my own flesh and blood.

DOÑA LOLA

For the last fucking time, shut up!

MELY

(Mildly) Easy, boss, don’t get all worked up, especially to defend him. It was you—

DOÑA LOLA

I’m not defending him, but you don’t need to be throwing your opinions around like drunken money; do you understand? And you’re not going to say one more word, not one.

(There is a brief silence. A sound is heard from the bathrooms.)

DOÑA LOLA

What was that?

DIZZY

Blondie!...Did she fall?

DOÑA LOLA

Go take a look.

(DIZZY goes into the bathrooms. From inside, she lets out a scream and comes out horrified.)

DIZZY
Dead! Dead! She’s dead!

DOÑA LOLA

(Frightened) Dead?

MELY

Muerta?

PICHULI

(Coming out from behind the bar) What are you saying?

(Everyone converges on the bathroom and enter. Their voices are heard.)

DOÑA LOLA

My God, what’s happened here?

PICHULI

Nothing, nothing; she’s fainted is all.

DIZZY

Yes, she fainted: she fainted.

DOÑA LOLA

Pichul, let’s get her out of here. Blesséd virgen, what troubles you lay at my feet, what troubles! Holy Mother of God, I am at the end of my rope.

(They have taken BLONDIE out of the bathroom and put her in a chair.)

PICHULI

She seems to be breathing.

DIZZY

Yes, she’s breathing.

DOÑA LOLA

Pichuli, a glass of water; please hurry, bring a glass of water. (She slaps BLONDIE on the cheeks.) Blondie…child...You’re all right…For God’s sake, don’t scare me like this! For God’s sake, don’t do this!
MELY

(With definite remorse) I didn’t mean to hurt her so much.

DOÑA LOLA

…I didn’t mean to hurt her so much.

DOÑA LOLA

…Blondie…(She takes BLONDIE’s hand and begins striking it to resuscitate her. She realizes there is something in her hand and opens it to find a flask. She looks at it, horrified.) My God, she tried to kill herself!

DIZZY

To kill herself?

MELY

Kill herself?

DOÑA LOLA

Quick, call a taxi! We have to take her to the hospital…Forget the water, Pichuli. We need to get her out of here.

(MELY and DIZZY have gone out to the street.)

DIZZY

(Offstage) Taxi!...Taxi!

DOÑA LOLA

Take hold of her, Pichuli, help me…Blondie, child, what have you done? Poor kid!...Good God, how awful! This is going to be the end of me, Pichuli…Dizzy, that taxi!

DIZZY

(Offstage) Taxi!...Taxi!

MELY

(Offstage) Stop, you prick, stop!

DOÑA LOLA

(With PICHULI, carrying BLONDIE to the door) Careful Pichuli; be very careful, please…Shit, you’re letting her fall. Get better hold of her…My God, what a poor excuse for a man…what a poor excuse!
(They have taken BLONDIE out to the street. MARÍA is the only one left onstage. There is a tense silence. MARÍA approaches a table and examines the flask that DOÑA LOLA had left. She looks at it for some seconds, then starts to walk slowly towards the exit. The lights go out in the bar and come up on the apartment. JORDY, wearing only pants, is drying his hair with a towel. MARÍA enters the apartment.)

JORDY

(A little surprised) You?...What’s going on?

MARÍA

(Without looking at him) Blondie tried to commit suicide.

JORDY

What?

MARÍA

They took her to the hospital.

JORDY

Why would she do something like that?

MARÍA

(Locking on him with a hard look) Where were you the night of my birthday? You didn’t go to Sabadell, did you?

JORDY

Yes I did.

MARÍA

You liar! You stayed in town.

JORDY

We went to Sabadell and left Pili there…Then we came back, but it was very late.

MARÍA

So you went whoring and screwed someone else that night.
JORDY
I didn’t screw anyone.

MARÍA
Another lie! You were seen at Oscar’s, talking with a bimbo.

JORDY
Bimbo, what bimbo?

MARÍA
You tell me.

JORDY
We went there, Pedro and me. It could be sometime in the night I spoke to someone, but I don’t remember now.

MARÍA
And why didn’t you come here, even though it was late?

JORDY
Let’s not talk about that now.

MARÍA
Let’s not talk about it? Like hell we won’t. Why didn’t you come here?

(JORDY is putting on his shirt and waits a moment to answer.)

JORDY
Because I didn’t want to.

MARÍA
You didn’t want to?

JORDY
You’re suffocating me, María: “Where are you going? What did you do? Who did you see?” I can’t live like this. I’ve had it.
MARÍA
You’ve had it?

JORDY
Yes.

MARÍA
There’s someone else.

JORDY
There’s no one else.

MARÍA
There’s someone.

JORDY
But why does there always have to be another woman? There’s no one.

MARÍA
Then, you’ve gotten tired of me?

JORDY
No! (Pause) I’ve gotten tired of myself.

MARÍA
Of yourself? But what are you saying? Look me in the eye, Jordy; what’s going on with you?

JORDY
I don’t know. But I’m screwed up, María, totally screwed up.
MARÍA

Is it my fault?

JORDY

No!

MARÍA

Your friends?

JORDY

Not them either! No one’s to blame but me. (Remorsefully) I never should have done it.

MARÍA

What do you mean, done what?

JORDY

Nothing, let’s leave it alone.

MARÍA

What are you hiding from me, Jordy?

JORDY

Nothing!

MARÍA

Jordy, it’s not like we’re waking up from a one night stand. If there’s something important to you, I should know it. What are you hiding from me. (JORDY does not answer.) Please, Jordy, I want to know. I need to know.
(JORDY looks at her in silence. It is hard for him to say what he is thinking; he speaks with a slow heaviness, almost in spite of himself.)

JORDY

I had a brother. He wanted to be a lawyer, but only my father was making any money, and it wasn’t enough by itself to pay for my brother’s studies. He was only nineteen when he died. All he ever knew was a life of sacrifice and poverty. My mother and father looked for comfort in their memories, and me, each day I felt more and more like a stranger. After thinking about it a lot, one day I decided to leave and never come back. I wanted to do what my brother never did: live. Live! But I’ve never had any idea what it is to live. I’m like a pathetic stray dog, sniffing everywhere and finding nothing.

MARÍA

(Looking at him, confused) But what am I in all of this?

JORDY

Something that has lasted a long time.

MARÍA

Do you love me?

JORDY

You’re the only woman I’ve ever loved.

MARÍA

Well, if you love me, let’s go from here; let’s get far away from all of this. Look, I’ve saved enough to pay the last installment on the house. If we don’t make this move now, we may never make it. Let’s go to my house, to our house. There, you’ll be far away from all of this, and can remake yourself into a new man.

JORDY

You can’t leave behind what you carry inside.
(MARÍA muses for a moment.)

MARÍA

And what are you asking of me, that I keep doing this filthy work?

JORDY

I’m not asking anything of you.

MARÍA

But what would happen to us if I didn’t work? You need money to live, pretty boy…And I’m fed up with going out every night and stripping down for the first asshole who waves money in front of me. No! I don’t want to go on like this!...(Coming toward him, pleading) I swear, I that won’t try to run your life, that—

JORDY

No, María, I’m just not cut out for living in a small town.

(Silence. MARÍA assumes a hardened look)

MARÍA

Then, I guess I’m going alone. What will you do?

JORDY

I don’t know.

MARÍA

One last time, Jordy.

JORDY

No, it would be a mistake that the two of us would be sorry for later.

MARÍA

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(Determinedly) Fine, stay here then! Stay and do whatever you want. Jump in the sack with her-ever, get drunk; these are the only things you like to do. Mely is right about you. You’re a bum, a drunk, a—

JORDY

Another fight! What a fucking life!

MARÍA

(Shouting) Yes, because you’re not going to tell me what I do with my life, do you hear?

JORDY

Nor you me! You’re no better!

MARÍA

Well, I’m not hanging onto nobody. If you’re not happy, look, there’s the door.

JORDY

Well, finally, we come right down to it. No more mental cat and mouse! (He goes towards the door, then stops and says before leaving) So long, María, it’s better this way.

(He leaves. MARÍA shouts after him)

MARÍA

Yes, because you don’t exist! You just died. (She slams the door shut.) Well, it’s done! Finished! To hell with it, you do your thing and I’ll do mine. No more of putting up with you: ironing your shirts, doing whatever for my pimp…It’s time to go to my house, to enjoy what’s mine…And I won’t have to beg for a man to look my way. Men like me: they really like me…Out there, no one knows what I did here. No one there has seen me…No one! (A long pause and a transition in mood) But, what if someone has seen me and already has gone running off at the mouth? I won’t be able to show my face without them looking down at me and saying things like: “There goes the whore.” Or “Hats off to the well-off, retired slut.”…No one will want anything to do with me, and I’ll have to live alone…Alone!... (With a trembling voice) No, I don’t want to live alone. (Shouting full of fear) Jooordy!...Don’t leave me!...Don’t leave me!
(She collapses to the couch in an expression of abandonment and desolation.

BLACKOUT

“The River Kwai March” is heard and the lights come up in the tavern. It is an hour when sailors change shifts for shore leave. BLONDIE and DIZZY are touching up their faces. DOÑA LOLA is putting out United States flags. PICHULI is placing garlands.)

DOÑA LOLA

Wild men, wild men and animals; and another herd of them will be coming any minute to make a second mess.

PICHULI

There’s no end to them, and they stick their paws in everything they look at.

BLONDIE

(Singing) “Oh, pretty honey; oh, pretty honey; with your legs wide open, you’ll make good money.”

DOÑA LOLA

Listen to our resident artist sing!

BLONDIE

Look what they did to my carnation: it’s all mashed up. All of them had to touch me. They’re in love with our flowers. (Said with the double entendre of flower and vagina.)

DOÑA LOLA

Our flowers and our wine and our beer and our whiskey. These Yankee boys love to drink. There’s no other crowd like them.

BLONDIE

Like them? They’ve always been the only real show in town.
DOÑA LOLA

But careful, right now. If the cops pinch you with one, swear up and down that the guy’s your fiancé, and you are applying for a marriage license. I don’t have to remind you how things are these days.

BLONDIE

Deadly! On Monday, they carried off two wagon-loads of working girls.

PICHULI

I heard that they are going to remove the Provincial Governor from office.

BLONDIE

And that they going after the Abbot Escarré.

DOÑA LOLA

If they go after abbots, what chance do we have?

PICHULI

(To DIZZY, who looks sickened) And what happened to you to make you look so jaded? Is the work getting to you?

DIZZY

Yeah, of course, it’s getting to me when I’m feeling bad to start with. The makeup won’t even stay on my face.

PICHULI

You take too many herbs. Keep it up, and you’ll change into a donkey.

DIZZY

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It’s not about that. Herbs have nothing to do with it. (She sighs.) I have a problem way beyond that.

(DOÑA LOLA has gone to the telephone and dialed a number.)

DOÑA LOLA

(Into the telephone) Hello, golden girl, it’s me again…No word yet? That’s strange; it’s been a long time…Yes…Yes…Okay, when you know something, call me…So long, gorgeous.

(MARÍA enters. Her hair is disheveled, and she has drunken more than her share.)

MARÍA

Down and out, I left that navy boy down and out. They dragged him and dumped him in the boat like a sack of potatoes. Pour me a whisky, Pichuli.

PICHULI

(Seriously) There’s no whisky.

MARÍA

No whisky?...What’s all this? (Gesturing towards the shelves.)

PICHULII

The bar’s closed.

MARÍA

You hear that, Jefa? He doesn’t want to serve me.

DOÑA LOLA

Girl, you can’t go on like this. Two months of hell and each day worse than the last one.

MARÍA
What of it? What harm am I doing anyone?

DOÑA LOLA

You’re killing yourself. You can’t keep this up.

MARÍA

(Overly bold) It’s my life and I’ll do what I feel like with it. If you don’t want to serve me, I’ll go someplace else.

DOÑA LOLA

Step back a minute, María, and look at how you’re letting yourself go under. Think of what’s good for you and try to forget.

MARÍA

(Bitterly) I can’t! I can’t!

DOÑA LOLA

Don’t you see, even if he came back, he’d just leave you again. Jordy was born to be unfaithful, the way some people are born with blue eyes. (Caressing MARÍA) Look, child, you feel lost right now, but listen to me. You have the house you came here for. Go back to your pueblo. Get far away from here. It’s the best thing you can do for yourself.

MARÍA

Pour me a whisky, Pichuli, or I’ll change the shape of your face.

(PICHULI looks to DOÑA LOLA for a decision.)

DOÑA LOLA

Pour her one!

(MELY enters dressed as a United States flag.)

MELY
Call me psychic: I know how to tell the futuro. I said I’d make a hundred bucks off the Yankee-chumps, and I made a hundred. I said that Jordy would wind up in jail one day, and that’s where he’s going. They nabbed him today.

(Everyone looks alarmed. MARÍA shudders.)

DOÑA LOLA

They arrested Jordy?

MELY

Yep, Fernando, the jeweler just told me.

DOÑA LOLA

Jesus, what happened?

MELY

Well, it turns out that this morning a car went speeding on Via Layetana, like a bat out of hell—

DIZZY

And went through a red light?

MELY

Guns, they were carrying guns.

DOÑA LOLA

(Dismayed) Guns?!

MELY

They just held up a bank.
DOÑA LOLA

Jordy held up a bank?

MELY

No, no, Jordy wasn’t in the car. They arrested him later.

DOÑA LOLA

But if he wasn’t in the car, why would they arrest him?

MELY

Because the ones in the car belong to an anarchist group, or some shit like that and Jordy does too. The others have rich daddies with enough green to buy their sons out of jail, but Jordy has no one. So the little fish is gonna’ pay for what the big ones did.

DOÑA LOLA

Does this anarchist group have a name?

MELY

You should know.

DOÑA LOLA

Me? And why is that?

MELY

Because Jordy lives with you; at least, that’s what Fernando says.

DOÑA LOLA

With me? You’re crazy.

MELY
At the police station, he gave your address as residencia. Should he have put something else?

(*MARÍA rivets her eyes on DOÑA LOLA.*)

MARÍA

With you, Jordy lives with you?

DOÑA LOLA

(*Uncertain*) Okay, true…But don’t think there’s anything going on between us. There’s Nothing.

MARÍA

Jordy is living with you.

DOÑA LOLA

No, one night he came to my place. He didn’t have a place to stay. I offered him a bed. But nothing’s happened between us.

MARÍA

Jordy has been staying with you?

DOÑA LOLA

I only wanted to help him.

MARÍA

Wanted to help him? You wanted him for yourself. I always felt in my gut you might, always, but I didn’t take it seriously. You and Jordy? A joke, a sick crazy joke!

(*DOÑA LOLA looks at her defiantly.*)

DOÑA LOLA
And why? You had your chance with him. All of you have. Why couldn’t I?

MARÍA

But I loved him.

DOÑA LOLA

Love, what the hell do you know about love? For you love is sex; when the sex goes, your love goes to pieces and it’s all over. You act as if Jordy was born the day you first came here. Well, he wasn’t; he was here long before you came. And I—(Her voice breaks.) I always wanted to help him, but he preferred all of you, so I had to keep my mouth shut and put up with it—Oh, fuck!

MARÍA

(With contempt) Whore, you rotten old whore!

DOÑA LOLA

Say what you want; it’s not getting to me.

MARÍA

It’s because of you that he wound up in jail.

DOÑA LOLA

Don’t worry, he won’t be there for long. I’m calling my lawyer right now. I’ll pay whatever it takes to get him out—

(She goes towards the telephone; MARÍA stops her.)

MARÍA

Not so fast, boss. This is my business. Mine! Back off and leave him alone. If you do anything, I swear I’ll kill you.

(She leaves to the street. DOÑA LOLA goes after her.)
DOÑA LOLA

(At the door) María…María…You won’t know what to do….María, come here…(Coming back in) She’s lost her head. She’s going to ruin everything. She won’t be able to get him out, and we won’t be able to do anything…nothing!…not anything!

(As if wanting to vomit, she hurries to the bathroom.)

BLONDIE

Nothing will ever surprise me again.

DIZZY

I thought I was going to have a heart attack, but I kept saying to myself, God is good.

MELY

Well, I was afraid something like this would happen, but no sense talking about that now. To each our own, and the next shift of sailor boys will be coming off their ships; they’ll be here soon.

DIZZY

(Erupting into a cry) Oooh! Oooh!

MELY

Now what are you crying about?

BLONDIE

What’s going on with them has nothing to do with us.

DIZZY

But I’m not crying for them; I’m crying for me.

MELY
For you? What’s going on with you?

DIZZY

I’m going to have a baby. I’ve been pregnant two months, and the midwife says that if I try to have an abortion, I’ll die along with the baby.

MELY

You’re going to have a baby?

DIZZY

Yes!

MELY

Are you sure?

DIZZY

Yes!

MELY

(Happy) A baby! A baby!

BLONDIE

What are you so happy about? A baby!...And who’s the father?

DIZZY

I don’t know.

BLONDIE

You don’t know?

MELY

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Of course not, how do you expect her to know? Maybe you know?

BLONDIE

Well, sometimes—

MELY

A baby, a baby! Don’t cry, princess, no llores.

BLONDIE

But having a baby is wonderful.

MELY

And even more wonderful if you don’t know who the father is. Way more wonderful!

DIZZY

But I won’t be able to work, Mely.

MELY

So what! Don’t worry about it. You can come live with me; I’ll put you up. And when the baby’s born, we’ll both take care of him.

BLONDIE

And I’ll buy the diapers.

MELY

And I’ll pay for his schooling. Don’t worry, princess, there are worse things in the world…Come now, dry your tears, the next shift of navy boys is about to come.

BLONDIE

And put on a little rouge; you look real pale.
MELY

Easy, Dizzy, easy; we’ll help get you through this.

BLONDIE

Sure we will. You’ll have everything you need, so long as there are Americans.

MELY

And the French.

BLONDIE

And the Germans.

MELY

Spain will go on.

BLACKOUT

(The music of another Sardana is heard. The lights come on in MARÍA’s apartment. Everything is as it was the first time the audience had seen the apartment. Articles that MARÍA had put over the last two years have been removed. JORDY is standing and silently looking over the apartment.)

JORDY

I can’t believe I’m standing here again, looking at all this…I have the feeling that any minute I’m going to wake up someplace else. (He takes off his hunting jacket and leaves it draped over the back of the sofa.) Ugh, what a meal! I can feel the lobster swimming still in my stomach. (He sits down on the sofa and looks toward the hallway.) What are you doing?

MARÍA

(Offstage) Wait a second! Here I come…(She enters the room carrying a bottle of champagne and two cups.) Champagne!
JORDY

More drinks? But we drank down two bottles of wine in the restaurant.

MARÍA

No champagne, no happiness! And today we have to be happy. *(She gives him the bottle.)* Open it.

JORDY

I’ll never be able to pay you back for what you’ve done for me.

MARÍA

*(As though to understate the importance)* Me? What did I do?

JORDY

You came to see me; you got a lawyer; you paid my bail—

MARÍA

Forget about it, sweetheart; it doesn’t matter. The only thing that matters is you’re out.

JORDY

No, if I live to be a thousand years old, I won’t forget what you did for me. I promise you that. *(Looking at the wall)* The paintings I bought you are gone. What did you do with them?

MARÍA

I packed them away.

JORDY

You packed them away?

MARÍA
Yes, after we fought, I thought I would go back to my pueblo, but in the end never could make up my mind.

JORDY

And you never put them back up?

MARÍA

For what, if there wasn’t anyone to see them? I packed them all and stored them. (JORDY has opened the bottle and filled the cups. MARÍA picks a cup and offers a toast.) To you, Jordy…You are free now.

JORDY

To the two of us!

(They drink.)

MARÍA

And you, what will you do now that you’re free? Do you have any plans?

JORDY

I told you before getting out; tomorrow, I’ll take a train to the French border, La Junquera. There, a friend of Monty will smuggle me into France.

MARÍA

(Attempting to dissuade him) We could start over and be like we were at the beginning, even better.

JORDY

No, María, I want to get out of Spain. Here, I have a record; I’m a marked man. From now on, if something happens, they’ll round me up and throw me in jail.

MARÍA

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If you don’t do anything wrong, they won’t do anything to you.

JORDY

Don’t be naïve. It’s like a Catholic marriage: once you have a record with the police, you’re theirs forever.

MARÍA

But why do you have to go so soon? Wait a little; I’ll sell what I have, and we can go together.

JORDY

(Sincere, caressing her) I would like to stay but I can’t. Monty’s friend has gone ahead, expecting me to be there tomorrow. If I don’t show up, it will be difficult to find him again, and I may never get out.

MARÍA

But why France? What will you do there?

JORDY

There are more opportunities there, more freedom…I know it will be tough at first, but I’ll get through it okay.

MARÍA

Then take me with you, Jordy. I’ll leave everything and go with you. I’ll leave it all.

JORDY

Leave together, you and me?

MARÍA

Yes.
(Thinking it over) That might not be a bad idea.

No, it wouldn’t be.

But you’d be taking a big chance.

(Vehemently) I’ll take the chance, happily. Take me with you, Jordy; I want to go.

Wait a minute!...No, no, this is too fast.

Take me with you, Jordy.

And if I don’t find work? And if things don’t work out, and I have problems?

I’ll help you. A woman can get work easier than a man,

No, I don’t want you going back to that kind of work. It’s better that you wait a while.

Now, Jordy, take me with you now.
JORDY

No, wait here.

MARÍA

Now!

JORDY

Try to understand, it makes more sense that I go alone to see how things go. If everything works out, I’ll call for you. Meanwhile, you can take care of things here. *(He caresses her.)* Trust me!

*(MARÍA looks at him in silence and gets up.)*

MARÍA

*(A sad tone in her voice)* You won’t send for me.

JORDY

I swear I will.

MARÍA

I know you won’t…Maybe, I’ll never see you again…Tomorrow you’ll go and leave me here alone, once again, alone, always alone…*(She is nearly overcome with emotion but suppresses her tears.)* No, no…Let’s be happy with what we have today. *(She takes up her cup.)* To you, Jordy, for the happiness you have given me.

JORDY

To what I hope to give you in the future.

*(They drink.)*

MARÍA

Are you going to call your parents?
JORDY

Bah, what for?

MARÍA

To tell them you are going, that you’re okay.

JORDY

They could care less.

MARÍA

(Giving him the telephone) Call them, Jordy; give them some peace of mind.

JORDY

(Giving in) Okay, if you insist…(He begins dialing the number.) Maybe they aren’t at home. (Into the telephone) Mom?…It’s me…Yes, me…Yes, I’m fine…Don’t worry…Yes, they let me out this morning…Yes, mama…Yes, mama…

MARÍA

(In a low voice) Tell her that you’re going to France.

JORDY

Listen, Mom…Listen, I’m leaving for France…With some friends…No, you don’t know them…Don’t worry, I’ll write…Yes, I’ll write…Yes…Bye, Mom.

(He hangs up.)

MARÍA

What did she say?

JORDY

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That I make them suffer.

MARÍA

Do you see how they love you?...They love you even though they try not to show it. And it hurts them not to have you with them. They suffer like I suffer when you’re far away...When I can’t see you...When...(Her voice has reached an emotional peak. She brings herself under control.) No!...No! (She refills the cups.) Champagne! Champagne!

JORDY

Hey, are you trying to get us drunk?

MARÍA

I want us to be happy today. (Offering a toast) Let no one or nothing come between us.

JORDY

And that you wait for me.

(They drink. JORDY puts the cup down and brings his hand to his forehead in a gesture of pain.)

MARÍA

What’s wrong, don’t you feel okay?

JORDY

My head again!

MARÍA

(Worriedly) Do you feel bad?

JORDY

I drank too much...What’s worse, I mixed wine and champagne...Damn!
MARÍA

I’m sorry, darling. It’s my fault. I wanted us to be happy, and I ruined everything…Come on, lie down on the couch…Lie down, and you’ll feel better. (She helps him to lie down on the couch.) You want me to get you an Alka Selzer?

JORDY

No, I’ll be okay.

MARÍA

Then take a little ginger ale, like you used to do.

JORDY

No ginger ale either. It’ll go away by itself.

MARÍA

Are you going to spend the rest of the afternoon like this?..Our last afternoon together?..Let me give you a couple of aspirin dissolved in water. It’ll help you feel better.

JORDY

(Giving in) Okay, I’ll give it a try. I don’t want to ruin the rest of the day. (MARÍA takes a few steps toward the hall, stops and takes a long look at JORDY, her face has an enigmatic expression.) What are you thinking?

MARÍA

That I have something to bring you.

(MARÍA exits through the apartment hallway. Shortly, she returns with a glass. She stops and again looks at JORDY, as if suspended in doubt. Finally, she seems to reach a decision and approaches him.)

Here you are, my love. Go on, drink it.

(JORDY takes the glass and drinks.)
JORDY

(With a shudder of disgust) Ugh, This is bad stuff!..What did you give me?

(MARÍA sits alongside JORDY so she can put his head in her lap.)

MARÍA

(Caressing him) Rest, my love, rest. You’ll be feeling better soon…It will all be over soon.

JORDY

(With a plaintive voice) I’m feeling really bad.

MARÍA

(Stroking him all over) I have missed you so much. I need so much to have you with me.

JORDY

I feel very heavy.

MARÍA

Sleep, my love, sleep. You need to sleep.

JORDY

I feel so bad.

MARÍA

Rest, my love, rest…I love you, Jordy…I love you…You are the only one in this world who means anything to me. Life without you wouldn’t make any sense…You were my first and you will be my last…I want to have you always by my side, sharing everything together…Rest my love…Rest…Rest…Rest…(JORDY’s arm falls inert. On seeing this, MARÍA shudders. She calls to him in a voice barely audible) Jordy…Jordy…Jordy…
(Seeing that he does not respond, she kisses him gently on the lips, gets up carefully, covers him with his hunting jacket and goes towards the exit.)

BLACKOUT

The lights come up in the tavern. PICHULI is finishing moving away the tables and begins to sweep the floor.)

PICHULI

As my mother is my witness, I sweep and clean, clean and sweep. Today is the same as yesterday and tomorrow will be the same as today…I’m sick and tired of so much sweeping. I can’t take any more. God himself couldn’t take any more. (MARÍA enters, completely undone. She goes to the bar and uses it to hold herself up.) You?...But you look like you’ve seen a ghost.

MARÍA

(Trembling) Some water, Pichuli…please.

PICHULI

(While serving her) What happened?

MARÍA

He’s gone, Pichuli.

PICHULI

Who?

MARÍA

Jordy…He’s gone…To France!

PICHULI

But when did he get out of prison?

MARÍA
This morning. We had dinner and he left for France. He’s going to try to cross the border.

PICHULI

I’m glad! I must have told him a thousand times: “Go to France; you’ll be way better of there.”

MARÍA

We won’t see him again…Never again!

PICHULI

Don’t give up on him! One day you’ll get a letter from him, asking you to join him there. I know that he loves you.

MARÍA

No, I’m leaving tonight too for my pueblo.

PICHULI

A quick decision! What’s the rush?

MARÍA

I thought it through, and decided I want to start a small farm and live my life in peace.

PICHULI

I envy you; it must be great living in a country town. No one likes living in this city and would choose the country in a second if they could.

(A pause while MARÍA studies PICHULI.)

MARÍA

Would you like to come with me?

PICHULI
Are you serious?

MARÍA

You liked Jordy a lot, no?

PICHULI

Sure, he’s a great kid; I wish him luck.

MARÍA

I’m going to need someone to help me; I can’t do all the work by myself.

PICHULI

Straight up, I’m still fit and up for any kind of work.

MARÍA

I’ll give you half of everything we make. Would you like that?

PICHULI

You still talking seriously?

MARÍA

Yes!

PICHULI

(Joyful) Then, I would like that a lot. I’d do it for even less…When do you want me to come?

MARÍA

Give me a few days to—to put some things straight. Come next Monday! How does that sound?
PICHULI

I’ll tell ya’, that sounds just fine. I have enough money saved to tell the boss today to stick this job.

MARÍA

Tell her goodbye for me, and all the girls too. The train leaves at ten, and I have some things to do first. Tell everyone that Jordy’s gone—to France, and I left too for my pueblo.

PICHULI

Don’t worry, I’ll tell her; that and a whole lot more…Listen, how do I find you?

(MARÍA takes out a piece of paper and writes.)

MARÍA

Follow these directions! The house is on the outskirts of the town, but everyone there knows me. Ask for “María la Mosco.” I can expect you Monday?

PICHULI

Yes, I’ll be there.

MARÍA

So long, Pichuli; see you Monday.

(MARÍA exits. PICHULI looks at the paper.)

PICHULI

I can’t believe it!...I’m gonna’ live in the country, in the free and open air...And my acid-mouthed boss always saying I would die a waiter...Blood sucking leach, worse than a blood sucking leach! You’ve treated me like a circus midget. You’ve squeezed my blood dry...It’s gonna’ give me a whole lot of pleasure to say, “Listen, mother whore—“

(DOÑA LOLA has entered.)
DOÑA LOLA

What? What do you want to say?

PICHULI

(Dissembling) Oh, nothing! Nothing!

(He stares at her studiously for a moment, then unbuttons and rolls up the cuffs of his shirt, and takes a seat on a bar stool.)

DOÑA LOLA

Are you tired already?

PICHULI

Yes, I am, señora, and I quit. I’m no longer working.

DOÑA LOLA

(Not taking him seriously) Come on, Pichuli, stop clowning around.

PICHULI

(Firmly) I said I quit…I’m going where I can walk on green ground and breathe the open air.

(Enter BLONDIE and DIZZY.)

BLONDIE

Whew, I’m off key today. Pour me a cognac, Pichuli.

PICHULI

(Brazenly) Ask your mother.

DIZZY

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And me, I’ll have a Santa Catalina.

PICHULI

Ask your mother’s mother.

DIZZY

(Surprised) Hey jefa, what’s gotten into him?

DOÑA LOLA

An attack of old age lunacy. For some it comes from entering their second childhood; for this one it comes from wanting to walk on grass…Lunacy!

PICHULI

Lunacy my ass! I’m going.

DOÑA LOLA

But where do you think you’re going, old fool?

PICHULI

To María’s pueblo! Here are the directions for getting there. (He shows the sheet of paper MARÍA gave him.) Jordy got out of jail this morning and is going to cross the border to France. María leaves for her pueblo tonight, and on Monday I’m going.

(Doña Lola snaps wide awake.)

DOÑA LOLA

Jordy is out of jail?

PICHULI

Yep, María came to tell us. She asked me to tell all of you goodbye; that her train leaves at ten, and she has some things to do before leaving.
DOÑA LOLA

(Unsettled) And Jordy has left for France.

PICHULI

Right, and he has no plans for coming back, ever.

DOÑA LOLA

That can’t be…It’s impossible.

PICHULI

Believe what you want, I quit. So you can pay what you owe me now, or I’ll come back for it tomorrow.

BLONDIE

Don’t go, Pichuli.

DIZZY

We love you.

PICHULI

You girls love everybody. It’s what you do for a living. (Looking at them) I’ll be getting my things.

(He takes off his apron and exits to the rest room. MELY enters.)

MELY

Where are we going with these prices? I just came from Pelayo, and the taxi cost me almost doble…(On seeing the serious look on everyone’s face) But what’s going on?

DIZZY

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(Sadly) Pichuli’s leaving us.

BLONDIE

And María too. Tonight she goes back to her pueblo,

DIZZY

And Jordy is out of jail and on his way to France.

MELY

Wow, it’s a freaking revolution.

DIZZY

They’ve left us all alone.

MELY

Alone? Who’s alone? Do you know how many ships will be here tomorrow? (She shows them a newspaper that she has been carrying under her arm.) Look and see.

(She sits at a table and opens the newspaper. DIZZY and BLONDIE come over to read. All the while, DOÑA LOLA has remained uneasy, as though struggling in a sea of doubts.)

DOÑA LOLA

(Speaking to herself, bitterly) Leaving for France, without telling me nothing! After all I’ve done for him; everything I put on the line for him!...The weasel, the miserable weasel!!...This is not the end of it. This is not going to be the end of it…I can’t let it end like this. (She goes to the telephone and dials a number.) Police?...This is Lola Carreño. I want to speak with the chief of police…Right now, please, it’s urgent. Transfer me right now…Chief?...Yes, it’s me. I was robbed this morning…In my home…Yes, all my money…Jordy, I’m sure it was Jordy. He had a key to my apartment…Yes, he got out of jail this morning, but he is trying to escape to France. He intends to cross the border…A friend told me he’s trying to escape…Yes, it was a lot of money. Arrest him, chief, arrest him. Yes, go after him…Get him…Get him.
(The women, astonished, look at DOÑA LOLA. DOÑA LOLA holds the telephone in her hand with an appalled expression, as though realizing what she has just done. PICHULI, jacket on shoulder, enters back onstage from the rest rooms. The actors maintain a tableau for a few short seconds. Then PICHULI steps forward to address the audience.)

PICHULI

María returned to her pueblo, where she lived a little over three months. One day the police came to arrest her. After many long interrogations, she confessed. They found Jordy’s body buried in María’s orchard. María, or, better said, the real life woman who inspired María’s character, was sentenced to twenty years in prison.

THE END
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Henry Valentino Mannheimer was born in Fort Polk, Louisiana on August 3, 1944 and was raised in New York. He has had a varied career in theatre. After graduating with a B.A. in English and a minor in theatre, he participated in several off-Broadway and off-off-Broadway productions, mostly in a technical capacity. He also completed an M.A. in English during this time. He then moved to Florida to work for the Tampa Arts Council, primarily as director of the newly renovated Tampa Theatre. In Tallahassee, Florida, he was a member of the Tallahassee Playwrights Association, for whom he directed a grant-funded production of a play about Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Zora Neale Hurston. From 1997 to 2000, he worked for the national universities of the Republic of Panama. He was a principal professor in the University of Panama’s first masters program in English as a second language. Mr. Mannheimer returned to the United States to study theatre and Spanish at Florida State University. During his time as a doctoral student, Mr. Mannheimer participated in university productions as an actor in principal roles and as a director. He wrote a play that subsequently was given a reading by the Leon County Cultural Commission. He wrote a plan for developing a theatre program in Panama’s far-west province, Chiriquí. He is now using elements of that plan to work with Chiriquian universities to develop theatre programs. He is married to Ivonne Ureña-Mannheimer, and they have one son Diego.