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# Three Top Hats

Miguel Mihura

Translation by Julio Pérez García

Cover : *Le Barbare*- René Magritte, 1938

## About this Translation

Evidently, Mihura wrote in different times. Contemporary sensibilities both in his home country and abroad have changed since. In the original text, Mihura plays with racial tropes of 20<sup>th</sup> century Spain. In *Three Top Hats* racism is concentrated around its one black character: Buby Barton. Buby is the black owner of the circus most female characters work in. This circus is, however, also a cover for his underground prostitution network. Buby extortions his female workers and forces them to partake in sexual relationships with old rich gentlemen.

In this translation, I offer the reader alternatives to potentially offensive humour while retaining the original in brackets besides. My goal has been to minimise the impact such changes may have. Given Buby's questionable role as a pimp, I have decided to shift the hatred he inspires due to racist prejudices to that for being a pimp. The only additional characterisation has been to present Buby as tattooed. In early 20<sup>th</sup> century Spain, tattoos were mostly reserved for sailors, criminals, and, precisely, the circus. It is not outrageous, then, for the black owner of a circus to be heavily tattooed. In this way, I have replaced racial comments meant to be laughed at by the audience by comments about his tattoos. Note that not all racial tropes have been supplanted. Buby is aware of these stereotypes and participates in them himself, as evidenced in his monologue to Paula, in these cases I have decided to stick to the original. I too have kept the racist joke made by the hateful gentleman, as he is meant to be hateful and hated by the audience.

I hope the reader will understand such changes and will forgive me for any impoverishment of the original text I may have caused.

## First Act

Second-rate hotel room in a provincial capital. On the left, in the foreground, a closed single-leaf door leading to another room. A backstage door leading to a corridor. The bed. The mirrored wardrobe. The folding screen. A sofa. On the bedside table, on the wall, a telephone. Next to the wardrobe, a small table. A toilet. At the foot of the bed, on the floor, two suitcases and two tall top hat hatboxes. A balcony, with curtains, and the sky behind it. Hanging from the ceiling, a lamp. On the bedside table, another small lamp.

*(When the curtain rises, the scene is lonely and dark, until, through the backstage door, enter DIONISIO and DON ROSARIO, who switches on the light in the centre. DIONISIO, in street clothes, wearing a hat, greatcoat and scarf, holds a hatbox in his hand, similar to the ones on stage. DON ROSARIO is your typical good old man with a long white beard).*

DON ROSARIO. Come in, Don Dionisio. Here, in this room, we've left your luggage.

DIONISIO. What a lovely room this is, Don Rosario.

DON ROSARIO. It's the best room, Don Dionisio. And the healthiest. The balcony overlooks the sea. And the view is beautiful. *(Going towards the balcony.)* Come closer. You cannot see them properly in the night. But, nevertheless, look over there at the little lights of the lampposts in the harbour. They make a very nice effect. Everyone says so. Do you see them?

DIONISIO. No. I don't see anything.

DON ROSARIO. You seem dumb, Don Dionisio.

DIONISIO. Why do you say that, geez?

DON ROSARIO. Because you don't see the little lights. Wait. I'll open the balcony. That way you'll see them better.

DIONISIO. No. No, sir. It's freezing. Leave it. *(Looking out again.)* Ah! I think I see something now. *(Staring through the glass.)* Ah, now I think I see something. Those three little lights over there in the distance?

DON ROSARIO. Yes, those! Those!

DIONISIO. They're beautiful! One of them is red, right?

DON ROSARIO. No. All three are white. There is no red.

DIONISIO. Well, I think one of them is red. The one on the left.

DON ROSARIO. No. It cannot be red. For fifteen years I've been showing every guest, from this balcony, the little lights of the port's lampposts, and no one has ever told me there were any red ones.

DIONISIO. But you don't see them yourself?

DON ROSARIO. No. I don't see them. I, because of my weak eyesight, have never seen them. This my dad told me. When my dad died, he said to me: "Hey, kid, come here. From the balcony in the pink alcove, you can see three little white lights from the distant harbour. Show them to the guests and they will all get very happy..." And I always show them.

DIONISIO. Well, there's a red one, I assure you.

DON ROSARIO. Then, from tomorrow, I'll tell my guests that three little lights can be seen: two of them white and one red... And they will get even happier. Isn't it a charming sight? It's even lovelier during daytime!

DIONISIO. Of course, in the daytime we'll see even more little lights...

DON ROSARIO. No. In the daytime they put them out.

DIONISIO. How unfortunate!

DON ROSARIO. But it doesn't matter, because in its place, you can see the mountain, with a very fat cow on top, which little by little, is eating up the whole thing...

DIONISIO. That's amazing!

DON ROSARIO. Yes. Nature on the whole is amazing, son. (DIONISIO *has now left the hatbox with the others. He now opens the suitcase and takes out some black satin pyjamas, with a bird embroidered in white on the chest, from it, and places it, stretched out, at the bed's footing. And then, while DON ROSARIO speaks, DIONISIO takes off his overcoat, scarf and hat and puts them in the wardrobe*). This is the most beautiful room in the whole house.... Now, of course, it's worn out from the hustle and bustle from all these years... So many guests come here in the summer!... But even the wooden floor is better than that of the other rooms.... Come... Take a look... Not this bit right in the middle, because it's worn out from so much stepping on it... But look under the bed, where it's better preserved... Look at that wood, son... Do you have any matches?

DIONISIO. (*Approaching DON ROSARIO*) Yes, I have a box of matches and tobacco.

DON ROSARIO. Light a match.

DIONISIO. What for?

DON ROSARIO. So that you can have a better look at the wood. Bend down. Get down on your knees.

DIONISIO. I'm coming.

(*He lights a match and the two of them, on their knees, look under the bed*).

DON ROSARIO. What do you think of it, Don Dionisio?

DIONISIO. That it is magnificent!

DON ROSARIO. (*Screaming.*) Ouch!

DIONISIO. What's the matter?

DON ROSARIO. (*Looking under the bed*) There's a boot over there!

DIONISIO. Gentleman's or lady's?

DON ROSARIO. I don't know. It's just a boot.

DIONISIO. My God!

DON ROSARIO. Some guest must have left it behind.... And those cleaning ladies haven't even seen it!... Would you say that's nice of them?

DIONISIO. I don't know what to tell you...

DON ROSARIO. Do me a favour, Don Dionisio. It's impossible for me to bend down any further, because of my waist... Would you be so kind to grab the boot?

DIONISIO. Just leave it there, Don Rosario... It doesn't bother me... I will be going to bed soon, and I won't pay any attention to it...

DON ROSARIO. I wouldn't be able to sleep peacefully knowing that there is a boot under your bed... I shall call a maid at once.

*(He takes a bell out of his pocket and rings it).*

DIONISIO. No. Ring no more. I'll get it. *(He goes partly under the bed)*. Done. I've got it. *(He comes out with the boot.)* Actually, it's a very nice boot. It's a gentleman's...

DON ROSARIO. Do you want it, Don Dionisio?

DIONISIO. No, by God, thank you very much. Leave it...

DON ROSARIO. Don't be silly. Go on. If you like it, keep it. Surely no one will reclaim it... Anyone knows how long it's been there...!

DIONISIO. No. No. Honestly. I don't need it...

DON ROSARIO. Come on. Don't be dumb... Do you want me to wrap it in paper, pretty face?

DIONISIO. Well, as you wish...

DON ROSARIO. There's no need. It's clean. Put it in your pocket. *(DIONISIO puts the boot in his pocket.)* Like that....

DIONISIO. Do I get up now?

DON ROSARIO. Yes, Don Dionisio, get up from there, you're going to ruin your trousers...

DIONISIO. I cannot believe my eyes, Don Rosario. A telephone?

DON ROSARIO. Yes, sir. A telephone.

DIONISIO. But is it one of those telephones you can call the fire brigade with?

DON ROSARIO. Yes, sir. And the undertakers....

DIONISIO. But this is going all out, Don Rosario! *(While DIONISIO speaks, DON ROSARIO takes out of the suitcase a jacket, trousers and boots and puts them in the wardrobe)*. It's seven years that I've been coming to this hotel and every year I find new

improvements. First you removed the flies from the kitchen and moved them to the dining room. Then you took them out of the dining room and into the living room. And the other day you kicked them out of the living room and took them for a walk, to the countryside, where, at last, you were able to give them the slip... It was magnificent! Then you turned the heating on... Then you did away with that quince jelly that your daughter used to make... Now the telephone... From a second-rate inn you have turned this place into a comfortable hotel... And the prices are still cheap... You will go broke like this, Don Rosario...!

DON ROSARIO. You already know me, Don Dionisio. I can't help it. I'm like that. Everything seems too little for my dear guests...

DIONISIO. However, you exaggerate.... It's not right that when it's cold you shove bottles of hot water in our beds; nor that when we have a cold you lie down with us to make us warmer and sweat; nor that you kiss us goodbye when we go away on a trip. It is not right either, when a guest cannot sleep, for you to come into the bedroom with your trumpet and play romances of your times, till they fall asleep... It's too much kindness at that point...! They are taking advantage of you...!

DON ROSARIO. Poor things... Let them be..., almost all those who come here are travellers, employees, artists... Lonely men... Motherless men... And I want to be a father to them all, since I couldn't be one to my poor child... That kid of mine who drowned in a well...! (*He gets emotional.*)

DIONISIO. Come on, Don Rosario... Don't think about that...

DON ROSARIO. You already know the story of that poor boy who drowned in the well...

DIONISIO. Yes. I know it. Your child gazed into the well to catch a frog... And the child fell in. He went "ping!", and that was the end of it.

DON ROSARIO. That's the story, Don Dionisio. He went "ping!", and that was the end of it. (*Painful pause.*) Are you going to bed?

DIONISIO. Yes, sir.

DON ROSARIO. I'll help you, you little flowerpot. (*And as they talk, he helps him undress, put on his pretty black pyjamas, and change his shoes for slippers*). I love all my guests, and you too, Don Dionisio. You've been so nice to me ever since you began coming here, it's been seven years now!

DIONISIO. Seven years, Don Rosario! Seven years! And since I was relocated to that melancholic and weeping village which, fortunately, is close to this one, my only joy has been to spend a month here every year, and to see my girlfriend, and bathe in the sea, and buy hazelnuts, and walk around the bandstand on Sundays, and to whistle *Las princesitas del dólar* in the avenue.

DON ROSARIO. But tomorrow a new life begins for you!

DIONISIO. From tomorrow onwards everyday will be summer for me!... What's that? Are you crying? Come on, Don Rosario!...

DON ROSARIO. To think that your parents, may they rest in peace, can't be with you on a night like this... They would be so happy!...

DIONISIO. Yes. They'd be happy to see that I am. But let's stop the sadness, Don Rosario... Tomorrow I'm getting married! This is the last night I'll spend alone in a hotel room. No more guesthouses, no more cold rooms, no more drops of water flowing out of the basin, the no more napkins with a pencilled initial, no more wine bottles with a pencilled initial, no more toothpicks with a pencilled initial... No more minuscule eggs, always fried... No more poultry croquettes... No more pretty views from the balcony... Tomorrow I'm getting married! All this ends and she begins... Her!

DON ROSARIO. Do you love her very much?

DIONISIO. I adore her, Don Rosario, I adore her. She's the first girlfriend I ever had and also the last. She's a saint.

DON ROSARIO. You must have been there, in her house, all day!...

DIONISIO. Yes. I arrived this morning, I sent the luggage here, and had lunch with them and dinner too. The parents love me very much... They are so nice!

DON ROSARIO. They are great people... And your fiancée is a virtuous young lady... And, despite being from a wealthy family, she is not at all proud... (*Cheeky.*) Because she has money, Don Dionisio.

DIONISIO. Yes. She has pennies, and she knows how to make some very cute crafts and delicious apple pies.... She's an angel!

DON ROSARIO (*About a hatbox.*) And what are you carrying here, Don Dionisio?

DIONISIO. A top hat, for the wedding. (*He takes it out.*) My father-in-law gave it to me today. It's his. From when he was mayor. And I have two others (*He takes them out.*) Look at them. They're very pretty. Above all, you can see at once that they're *top* hats, which is what's needed... But none of them suit me... (*Trying them on in front of the mirror.*) Look. This one is too small... This one makes my head look massive... And this one my girlfriend says it makes me look like a salamander.

DON ROSARIO. But a Spanish salamander or a foreign salamander?

DIONISIO. She only said salamander. By the way... because of this, I left her angry... She's so innocent... Is the telephone working? I'm going to see if her mood is over... It'll make her happy...

(*The last top hat has been left on his head and he will continue to wear it until indicated*),

DON ROSARIO. Call downstairs, the handyman will put you in communication with the street.

DIONISIO. Okay, sir. (*To the device.*) Yes. Will you do me a favour and connect me to the street? Yes, thank you.

DON ROSARIO. Maybe they've already gone to bed. It's already late.



DIONISIO. I don't think so. It's not eleven yet. She sleeps in the room next the telephone ... There. (*Dials.*) One-nine-o. That's it. Hi! It's me mister Dionisio. May Miss Margarita get on the phone? (*To DON ROSARIO.*) It's the maid.... She's coming... (*To the device.*) Love bug! It's me. Yes. I'm calling you from the hotel... I have a telephone in my own room... Yes. Cinderella Incarnate... No... Nothing... So you see that I think of you... Hey, I'm not going wear the hat that makes me look like a chubeski<sup>1</sup>... It was a joke... I only do what you tell me to... Yes, my love... (*Pause.*) Yes, my love... (*Suddenly, he shrinks one leg, covers the receiver with his hand and lets out a small scream.*) Don Rosario... Are there fleas in this room?

DON ROSARIO. I don't know, my son...

DIONISIO (*To the device*) Yes, my love (*He covers the receiver again*). Your dad, when he died, didn't he tell you anything about there being fleas in this room? (*To the device.*) Yes, my love....

DON ROSARIO. Actually, I believe he told me there was one....

DIONISIO (*Still scratching one calf against the other, in despair.*) Well, it's devouring my calf.... Do me a favour, Don Rosario, you scratch... (*DON ROSARIO scratches him.*) No; further down. (*To the device.*) Yes, my love... (*Covers the receiver.*) Higher! Wait...Take this.

(*He gives the receiver to DON ROSARIO, who puts it to his ear, while DIONISIO looks for his flea, very nervous*).

DON ROSARIO. (*Listens through the device, where the bride is supposedly still talking, and takes on the sweetest expression*). Yes, my love... (*Very tenderly.*) Yes, my love...

DIONISIO. (*Who, at last, has killed the flea.*) That's it. Give me... (*DON ROSARIO gives him the receiver.*) Yes... I will also sleep with your portrait under my pillow.... If you wake up, call me. (*Scratching again.*) Goodbye, my lovebug. (*Hangs up.*) She's an angel...!

DON ROSARIO. If you'd like, I'll tell them downstairs to leave you in communication with the street, so that you can talk as much as you like...

DIONISIO. Yes, Don Rosario. Thank you very much. Perhaps we'll talk more...

DON ROSARIO. What time is the wedding, Don Dionisio?

DIONISIO. At eight. But they'll come to pick me up earlier. Make them call me at seven just in case it takes me a while. I'm wearing a *chaquet*, and it's very difficult to go in *chaquet*... And then there's those three top hats....

DON ROSARIO. May I give you a kiss, my rosebud? It's the kiss your father would give you on a night like this. It's the kiss I will never be able to give to that child of mine who fell into a well...

DIONISIO. Come here, Don Rosario...

(*They hug emotionally.*)

DON ROSARIO. He gazed into the well, went "ping!", and that was the end of it.

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<sup>1</sup> Kind of cylindrical stove.

DIONISIO. Don Rosario!...

DON ROSARIO. Well, I shall leave. You'll want to get some rest... Do you want me to bring you a glass of milk?

DIONISIO. No, sir. Thank you very much.

DON ROSARIO. Would you like me to bring you some salted tuna?

DIONISIO. No.

DON ROSARIO. Would you like me to stay here until you fall asleep, so you don't get nervous? I can bring my trumpet and play.... I'll play "The Carnival in Venice", I'll play "Toselli's serenade"... And you just sleep and dream...

DIONISIO. No, Don Rosario. Thank you very much.

DON ROSARIO. Tomorrow I'll get up early to see you off. We'll all get up early...

DIONISIO. No, for God's sake, Don Rosario. Not that. Don't tell anyone that I'm getting married. It'd make me very embarrassed.

DON ROSARIO (*Now at the backstage door, on his way out.*) Okay, if you don't want us to, we won't all see you off at the door... But it would be so beautiful... Anyway... you stay there on your own. Think that from tomorrow on you will have to make a virtuous lady happy... You should think of her alone...

DIONISIO. (*Who has taken a wallet out of his blazer pocket, from which he takes out a portrait, which he contemplates captivated, he shoves the wallet and portrait under the pillow and says, very romantically:*) For seven years I have thought only of her! Night and day! Every hour... In these hours left until my happiness, who could I think of? Until tomorrow, Don Rosario...

DON ROSARIO. See you tomorrow, honeybun.

*(He bows. He goes out. He closes the door. DIONISIO closes the suitcases, while whistling an ugly out-fashioned song. Then he lies down on the bed without taking off his hat. He checks his watch).*

DIONISIO. A quarter past eleven. There's barely nine hours left (*Winding the watch.*) We should have got married this afternoon, that way we wouldn't be apart tonight... Tonight is unnecessary... It's an empty night. (*Closes his eyes.*) Babe! Babe! Margarita! (*Pause. And then, in the next room, a door slam and a loud murmur of conversation, which grows increasingly louder. DIONISIO gets up.*) Come on, man! An argument now! What a time for a row... (*His sight stumbles upon the mirror, where he sees himself with the top hat on his head and, sitting on the bed, he says:*) Yes, now it seems to be making my face look like a steamroller...

*(He gets up. He goes to the small table, where he left the other two hats and, once again, tries them on. And when he has one on his head and the other two one in each hand, the door on the left quickly opens and in walks PAULA, a wonderful blonde eighteen year old girl, without noticing DIONISIO, shuts the door again in a slam and, facing the closed door, talks*

*to the person who is supposed to have remained inside. DIONISIO, who sees her reflected in the mirror, very bewildered, does not change his attitude).*

PAULA. Idiot!

BUBY. (*Inside.*) Open!

PAULA. No!

BUBY. Open!

PAULA. No!

BUBY. I said open!

PAULA. I said no!

BUBY. (*All very fast.*) Asshole!

PAULA. Wanker!

BUBY. Stupid!

PAULA. Moron!

BUBY. Open!

PAULA. No!

BUBY. I said Open!

PAULA. I said no!

BUBY. No?

PAULA. No!

BUBY. All right.

PAULA. That's right. (*She turns around. And as she turns, she sees DIONISIO.*) Oh, sorry! I thought there was no one here...

DIONISIO (*In the same attitude in front of the mirror.*) Yes....

PAULA. I leaned against the door, and it opened... It must not have completely fitted... And without a key...

DIONISIO. (*Dumbfounded.*) Yes...

PAULA. That's why I came in...

DIONISIO. Yes...

PAULA. I didn't know...

DIONISIO. No...

PAULA. I was arguing with my boyfriend.

DIONISIO. Yes...

PAULA. He's an idiot...

DIONISIO. Yes...

PAULA. Did our shouting bother you by any chance?

DIONISIO. No...

PAULA. He's rude...

BUBY. (*Inside.*) Open!

PAULA. No! (*To DIONISIO.*) He's very ugly and very dumb... I do not love him... I'm teasing him... It amuses me a lot to tease him... And I'm not going to open...He can screw himself in there... (*To the door.*) Go on, go on, screw you...

BUBY. (*Knocking*) Open!

PAULA. (*Same game.*) No!... Of course, now that I notice, I've stormed into your room. Forgive me. I'll be going. Bye. Bye.

DIONISIO (*Turning and facing her*) Goodbye, good night.

PAULA. (*Noticing his strange attitude with the hats, which make him look like a juggler.*) Are you also an artist?

DIONISIO. Very much so.

PAULA. Like us. I'm a dancer. I work at Buby Barton's ballet. We're making our debut tomorrow at the New Music-Hall. Do you too make your debut tomorrow at the New Music-Hall by chance? I haven't seen the programme yet. What's your name?

DIONISIO. Dionisio Somoza Buscarini.

PAULA. No. I say your theatrical name.

DIONISIO. Ah, my theatrical name! Just like everybody else's!...

PAULA. What is it?

DIONISIO. Antonini.

PAULA. Antonini?

DIONISIO. Yes. Antonini. It's very easy. Antonini. With two n's...

PAULA. I don't remember. Do you juggle?

DIONISIO. Yes. Of course. I juggle.

BUBY. (*Inside.*) Open!

PAULA. No! (*Turning to DIONISIO.*) Were you rehearsing?

DIONISIO. Yes. I was rehearsing.

PAULA. You do the number on your own?

DIONISIO. Yes. Of course. I do the number by myself. As my parents are dead, evidently...

PAULA. Were your parents also artists?

DIONISIO. Yes. Of course. My father was a major in the infantry. I mean, no.

PAULA. He was in the military?

DIONISIO. Yes. He was in the military. But very little. Almost nothing. When he was bored only. What he did most was swallowing sabres. He liked very much to swallow his sabre. But of course, that's what everybody likes...

PAULA. It's true... Everybody likes that... So, everyone in your family have been circus performers?

DIONISIO. Yes. Everyone. Except for granny. Because she was so old, she was no good. She would always fall off the horse... And they would both spend the whole day arguing...

PAULA. The horse and your granny?

DIONISIO. Yes. They both had a terrible temper... But the horse made many more sassy comments...

PAULA. There are five of us. Five *chicas*. We've been going with Buby Barton for a year now. And also with us comes Madame Olga, the bearded-woman. Her number is quite popular. We arrived this afternoon to make our debut tomorrow. The others, have stayed in the café downstairs after dinner... This town is so sad... There's nowhere to go and it's always raining... And the café plan bores me... I'm not a girl like all the others... And I went up to my room to play my gramophone a bit... I adore gramophone music... But my boyfriend came up after me, with a bottle of liquor, and he wanted to make me drink, because he always drinks... And that's why I've been scolding him..., and for something else, you know? I don't like him to drink so much...

DIONISIO. It's very bad for the liver... A man I used to know...

BUBY. (*Inside.*) Open!

PAULA. No! I'm not opening! Now I'm going to sit down so that he'll get annoyed. (*Sits down on the bed.*) Am I bothering you?

DIONISIO. I don't think so

PAULA. Now that I know you're a fellow, I no longer mind being here... (BUBY *hits the door.*) He must be furious.... He must be blind with rage...

DIONISIO (*Fearful.*) Listen, I think we should open the door....

PAULA. No. We are not opening.

DIONISIO. Okay.

PAULA. We're always fighting.

DIONISIO. Have you two been together for long?

PAULA. No. I don't know. Two days. Two days or three. I don't like him. But one gets so bored on these trips around the provinces... The thing is he's nice, but when he drinks or when he gets angry, he goes berserk... It's scary to see him like that.

DIONISIO. (*Very cowardly.*) Listen, I'm going to open now...

PAULA. No. We are not opening.

DIONISIO. But he's going to be very angry and he's going to take it out all on me...

PAULA. Let him be. I don't care.

DIONISIO. But maybe mum will tell you off you for doing this.

PAULA. What mum?

DIONISIO. Yours.

PAULA. Mine?

DIONISIO. Yes. Your dad or your mum.

PAULA. I don't have a dad or a mum.

DIONISIO. Well, your siblings then.

PAULA. I have no siblings.

DIONISIO. Then who are you travelling with? Are you going alone with your boyfriend and those people?

PAULA. Yes. Of course. I'm going alone. Can't I go alone?

DIONISIO. To me, up to you...

BUBY. (*Inside, now raging.*) Open, open and open!

PAULA. I'm going to open now. He's too angry.

DIONISIO. (*Even more cowardly.*) Listen. I don't think you should open...

PAULA. Yes. I am opening (*She opens the door and BUBY, a black dancer, enters, with a ukulele in his hand*) There you go! What's up? What is it? What do you want?

BUBY. Good evening.

DIONISIO. Good evening.

PAULA. (*Introducing.*) This gentleman is a juggler.

BUBY. Oh! A juggler!

PAULA. He also debuts tomorrow at the New Music-Hall ... his dad swallows sabres...

DIONISIO. Excuse me for not shaking your hand... (*Because of the hats, with which he continues in the same attitude.*) Since I have this..., well I can't.

BUBY. (*Dismissive.*) A colleague! Come inside, Paula!...

PAULA. I'm not going in, Buby!

BUBY. Won't you come in, Paula?

PAULA. I'm not going in, Buby.

BUBY. Well, I'm not going in either, Paula.

*(They sit on the bed, one on each side of DIONISIO, who also sits down. And who is feeling more and more bewildered. BUBY starts whistling an American song, accompanied with his ukulele. PAULA follows him, and also DIONISIO. They finish the piece. Pause.)*

DIONISIO. *(To break, gallantly, the violent silence.)* Have you been tattooed [black]<sup>2</sup> for a long time?

BUBY. I don't know. I have always seen myself like this in the mirror.

DIONISIO. Gosh! When a misfortune comes, it never comes alone! And how did you end up like this? From some fall?...

BUBY. That must have been it, sir...

DIONISIO. From a bicycle?

BUBY. That's it, sir...

DIONISIO. That's why you shouldn't buy children bicycles! Right, miss? A man I knew...

PAULA. *(Who, distracted, pays no attention to this dialogue.)* This room is better than mine...

DIONISIO. Yes. It is better. If you would like we can exchange it. I'll go to yours and you two stay here. It's no effort for me... I'll pick up my four rags... In addition to being larger, it has a magnificent view. You can see the sea from the balcony... And in the sea three little lights... The floor is also lovely... Do you want to have look under the bed?...

BUBY. *(Dry.)* No.

DIONISIO. Go on. Look under the bed. You may find another boot... There must be many...

PAULA. *(Who is still distracted and without paying much attention to what DIONISIO says, always bewildered.)* Do some exercises with the hats. That would entertain us. I love juggling...

DIONISIO. Me too. It is admirable to throw things into the air and then catch them... It looks like they're going to fall and then it turns out that they don't fall... Such a flop!

PAULA. Go on. Play.

DIONISIO. *(Very puzzled.)* Me?

PAULA. Yes. You.

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<sup>2</sup> As discussed in "About this Translation", I give alternatives to potentially offensive racial comments while keeping the original in brackets besides.

DIONISIO. (*Going all in.*) Here I come. (*He gets up. He throws his hats into the air and, naturally, they fall to the floor, where he leaves them. And sits down again*) That's it.

PAULA. (*Clapping her hands.*) Oh, that was good! Let me try! I've never tried before (*She picks up the hats from the floor.*) Is it hard? Is it done like this? (*She throws them in the air.*) Hoop!

(*And they fall.*)

DIONISIO. Just like that! Just like that! You've learnt in no time! (*He picks up the hats from the ground and offers them to BUBY.*) And you? Do you want to play a bit too?

BUBY. No. (*And the telephone rings.*) A bell?

PAULA. Yes. It's a doorbell.

DIONISIO. (*Puzzled.*) It must be a visit.

BUBY. No. It's in here. It's the telephone.

DIONISIO. (*Pretending, because he knows it's his girlfriend.*) The telephone?

PAULA. Yes.

DIONISIO. How weird! It must be some kid who's playing, and that's why it's ringing....

PAULA. Check who it is.

DIONISIO. No. Let's piss them off.

PAULA. Do you want me to check?

DIONISIO. No. Don't bother. I'll check. (*He looks through the receiver.*) No one can be seen.

PAULA. Say something.

DIONISIO. Ah! True. (*He fakes his voice.*) No! No!

(*And hangs up.*)

PAULA. Who was that?

DIONISIO. No one. It was a poor man.

PAULA. A poor man?

DIONISIO. Yes. A poor man. He wanted me to give him ten cents. And I told him no.

BUBY. (*Standing up, outraged.*) Paula, let's go to our room.

PAULA. Why?

BUBY. Because I say so.

PAULA. (*Shamelessly.*) And who are you?

BUBY. I'm the one who has the right to tell you that. Get inside at once. This is over. It can't go on like this any longer....



PAULA. (*Standing up, declaiming, facing BUBY, and catching DIONISIO in the middle, who is very annoyed*) That's true! I've had enough of putting up with your rudeness... You're unbearable, like all tattooed [black] men. And I loathe you... You understand? I loathe you... And this is over... I can't look at you... I can't stand you...

BUBY. I, on the other hand, adore you, Paula... You know that I adore you and that you're not going to play me. You know I adore you, my chirimoya flower!....

PAULA. So what? You think I can fall in love with you? You think I can fall in love with a [black] man with tattoos? No, Buby. I'll never be able to fall in love with you... We've been together for a while... That's long enough. I've been your girlfriend out of pity... Because you looked sad and bored... Because you have tattoos [you're black]... Because you sang those sad plantation songs... Because you told me that when you were little mosquitoes would eat you up, and monkeys would bite you, and you would have to climb palm trees and coconut trees... But I never loved you, nor will I ever be able to love you... You must understand... Loving you! For that I'd love this gentleman, who's better looking... This gentleman, who is polite... This gentleman, who is not tattooed [black]...

BUBY. (*With hatred.*) Paula!

PAULA. (*To DIONISIO.*) Is it not true, that no one can fall in love with a [black] man with tattoos?

DIONISIO. If he's honest and hard-working...

BUBY. Get inside!

PAULA. I'm not going in! (*She sits down.*) I'm not going in! You know that? I'm not going in!

BUBY. (*Sitting down too.*) I'll wait till you get tired of talking with that paleface....

(*Another violent pause.*)

DIONISIO. Would you like us to whistle another little something? I know *Marina* too.

FANNY. (*Inside.*) Paula! Where are you? (*Leans out of the door on the left.*) What are you doing here? (*Enters. It's another cheerful "chica" from the ballet.*) What's the matter with you? (*Nobody speaks.*) What's wrong with you? What happened? Have you argued again already...? I bet you're having fun... We, on the other hand, are having a great time... There are some gentlemen downstairs, in the café, who now want to invite us to a bottle of champagne... The others have stayed downstairs with them and Madame Olga, and now they'll be coming upstairs and we'll sing and dance till dawn... You don't speak? You really are the life of the party.... (*About DIONISIO.*) Who is this gentleman...? Can't you hear? Who is this gentleman...?

PAULA. I don't know.

FANNY. You don't know?

PAULA. (*To DIONISIO.*) You tell him who you are!

DIONISIO. (*Standing up.*) I'm Antonini....

FANNY. You alright?

DIONISIO. Yes. And you?

PAULA. He's a juggler. he also makes his debut tomorrow at the New Music-Hall.

FANNY. Okay..., but what's wrong with you?

PAULA. There's nothing wrong with us.

FANNY. Come on. Tell me. What's wrong with you?

PAULA. This gentleman can explain it to you.

FANNY. Explain it to me...

DIONISIO. But I will explain it very badly...

FANNY. It doesn't matter.

DIONISIO. Well, anyhow... It's just that they're a bit upset... But it's nothing. It's just that this [black] man is an idiot...

BUBY. (*Threateningly.*) Liar!

DIONISIO. No. Excuse me. If I've made a mistake... He's not an idiot. It's just that as he's tattooed [black], he's got a little temper... But it's not the poor guy's fault... What can he do, if he fell off a bicycle?... It would have been worse to have been left one-armed... And this lady has told him so... and, well! He has gone, like really gone...

FANNY. And what else?

DIONISIO. No; that's that....

FANNY. In summary, the same old story... You're dumb, Paula.

PAULA (*Standing up, shamelessly.*) Well, if I'm dumb, so much the better!

(*And she leaves goes off the left.*)

FANNY. It's your fault, Buby, for being so rude....

BUBY. (*Same game.*) Well, if I'm rude, so much the better!

(*And he also goes off the left.*)

FANNY. (*To DIONISIO.*) In that case I'll also get going...

DIONISIO. Well, if you're leaving, so much the better....

FANNY. (*Changes her mind and sits down on the bed and takes a cigarette out of her bag.*)  
Do you have a match?

DIONISIO. Yes.

FANNY. Give it to me.

DIONISIO. (*Who is bewildered and distracted, puts his hand in his pocket and, without noticing, gives her the boot instead of the matches.*) Here.

FANNY. What is this?

DIONISIO. (*Even more bewildered.*) Ah! Excuse me. This is to light them up. I have the matches here (*He lights a match on the sole of the boot.*) You see? It's done like this. It's very practical. That's why I always carry it... No need for those lighters when there's a boot around!...

FANNY. Sit down here.

DIONISIO. (*Sitting down beside her on the bed.*) Thank you. (*She smokes, DIONISIO stares at her, very puzzled.*) Do you know how to blow it out of your nose too?

FANNY. Yes.

DIONISIO. (*Enthusiastically.*) What a woman!

FANNY. What do you think of these two?

DIONISIO. That they're very good looking.

FANNY. Isn't that right, Tonini? (*And, affectionately, she pushes him backwards. DIONISIO falls on his back on the bed, with his legs in the air. The whole thing bothers him a little, but he says nothing. And sits down again.*) She doesn't love him... But he does... He loves her in his own way, and pimps [black men] love in a very passionate way... Buby loves her... And you can't play around with Buby, because when he drinks, he's mean... Paula was wrong to get involved in this. (*She notices a handkerchief that DIONISIO is carrying in his pyjama's chest pocket.*) This handkerchief is cute (*She takes it.*) For me, isn't it...?

DIONISIO. Do you have a cold?

FANNY. No. It's just that I like it! (*And gives him another push, DIONISIO falls into the same ridiculous position. This time the joke annoys him more, but he says nothing either*) Paula is not like me... I'm way more fun... If I like a man, I tell him... When I stop liking him, I tell him too... I'm sassier, my dear! Oh, how supersassy I am! (*She stares at DIONISIO's eyes intensely.*) Hey, you've got very pretty eyes....

DIONISIO. (*Always absent-minded.*) Where?

FANNY. In your little face, witling!

(*And gives him another push. DIONISIO reacts angrily this time, like a child, and now says, half crying.*)

DIONISIO. If you give me another shove, goddamnit, I'm going to slap you in the face, goddamnit, one that you won't forget, goddamnit!

FANNY. Oh, dear! What a temper! And will you be making your debut with us tomorrow?

DIONISIO. (*Angrily*) Yes.

FANNY. And what do you do?

DIONISIO. Nothing.

FANNY. Nothing?

DIONISIO. Very little... As I'm starting now, of course..., what am I going to do?

FANNY. But you' must do something... Tell me about it...

DIONISIO. But it's very silly... You'll see... Well, first, you go and play some music for a bit... Like this... Parapapa, parapapapa, parapapapa, parapapapa...! And then, then, I go, and I go out... and the music stops... (*At this point doing everything very fast and messy*). And you don't do parapapa or anything anymore. And I go, goes I, I go out and I go hoop...! And I go hoop...! And I quickly leave, and I go inside... And that's it...

FANNY. That's very nice...

DIONISIO. It's worth nothing...

FANNY. And is your number popular?

DIONISIO. Ah! I that I don't know...

FANNY. But do they cheer you?

DIONISIO. Very little... Hardly at all... As everything is so expensive...

FANNY. That's true... (*The telephone rings.*) Ringing? The telephone?

DIONISIO. Yes. It's a poor man...

FANNY. A poor man? And what's his name?

DIONISIO. None. Poor people don't have a name...

FANNY. But what does he want?

DIONISIO. He wants me to give him some bread. But I have no bread, so I can't give it to him. Do you have any bread?

FANNY. Let me see... (*Looks in her bag.*) No. I have no bread today.

DIONISIO. Well then, screw him!

FANNY. Do you want me to send him my prayers?

DIONISIO. No. Don't bother. I'll do it. (*In a loud voice, from bed.*) God be with you!

FANNY. Did he hear you?

DIONISIO. Yes. The poor hear everything.

(*And through the door on the left, in street clothes, and with packages and bottles, enter TRUDY, CARMELA and SAGRA, who are three cheerful and crazy "chicas" from BUBY BARTON'S ballet.*)

SAGRA. (*Still inside.*) Fanny! Fanny!

CARMELA. (*Now entering with the others.*) We have arrived.

TRUDY. And we've got cakes!

SAGRA. And ham!

CARMELA. And wine!

TRUDY. And even a cake with *biscotto*!

THE THREE. Larala! Larala!

SAGRA. The gentleman from the café has asked us out...!

*(They begin to leave their packages and coats on the sofa).*

CARMELA. And we'll be having a good time together here!

TRUDY. He's ordered oysters...!

SAGRA. ... And expensive champagne...!

CARMELA. And he's even fallen in love with me....

THE THREE. Larala! Larala!

TRUDY. *(Pointing to the room on the left.)* We'll leave more things there!

SAGRA. We'll prepare everything there!

CARMELA. Take these packages!

*(Giving her some packages.)*

TRUDY. Help us! Come on!

FANNY. *(Cheerfully, with the packages, exiting through the left.)* Will we have fun?

SAGRA. We'll have fun!

CARMELA. You'll see!

THE THREE. Larala! Larala!

TRUDY. *(Noticing the top hats, which DIONISIO left on the little table).* Look at these hats!

SAGRA. They belong to this gentleman!

CARMELA. He's the juggler Paula told us about!

TRUDY. Shall we play with them?

SAGRA. *(Throwing them up.)* Up! Alay!

CARMELA. Hoop!

*(The hats fall to the ground and the three idiotic girls, always laughing, leave by the door on the left. DIONISIO, who is very sad about these things, takes advantage of the fact that he has been left alone and, very slowly, goes and closes the door that the girls left open. Then he goes to pick up the hats, which are on the floor. He drops them and, for increased comfort, puts one on his head. At this point someone knocks the backstage 's door).*

DON ROSARIO. *(Inside.)* Don Dionisio! Don Dionisio!

DIONISIO. *(Hastily placing the two hats on the small table.)* Who is it?

DON ROSARIO. It's me, Don Rosario!

DIONISIO. Ah, it's you!

*(And he lies down, very hurriedly, getting under the sheets and keeping his hat on).*

DON ROSARIO. *(Entering with his trumpet.)* Are you not asleep? I figured your neighbours wouldn't let you sleep. They are very naughty, and they make a mess of everything...

DIONISIO. I haven't heard a thing... It's all very quiet...

DON ROSARIO. Nevertheless, I, from below, can hear their voices.... And you need to sleep. Tomorrow you're getting married. Tomorrow you have to make a virtuous young lady happy... I'm going to play my trumpet so you'll fall sleep... I'm going to play "Toselli's serenade"...

*(And, standing in front of the bed, facing DIONISIO and with his back to the audience, he plays, absorbed in his art. Shortly afterwards, FANNY opens the door to the left and enters straight ahead to pick up some packages from the sofa. She crosses the scene through the front, that is, behind DON ROSARIO, who does not see her. She picks up the packages and turns around to leave the same way. But while at this, she notices DON ROSARIO and asks DIONISIO, who is staring at her):*

FANNY. Who is that?

DIONISIO. *(Very quietly, so that DON ROSARIO can't hear him):* It's the poor man....

FANNY. How annoying, isn't he...?

DIONISIO. Yes. He's very annoying.

FANNY. See you later.

*(And she leaves through the left.)*

DIONISIO. Goodbye.

*(Shortly after, enters and crosses the scene, in the same manner as FANNY, and with the same object, THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN, who is wearing a bowler hat. Once he has picked up a package and is about to leave, he sees DIONISIO and greets him, very politely, taking off his hat).*

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Goodbye!

DIONISIO. *(Also taking off his hat to greet him.)* Goodbye. Good night.

*(THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN leaves. Then MADAME OLGA, the bearded woman, enters and plays the same game).*

MADAME OLGA. *(As she leaves, very affectionately, to DIONISIO)* I am Madame Olga...

DIONISIO. Ah!

MADAME OLGA. I know you are an artist...

DIONISIO. Yes...

MADAME OLGA. Well, I'm glad... DIONISIO. Thank you very much...

MADAME OLGA. Until later...

DIONISIO. Goodbye!

*(MADAME OLGA leaves and closes the door. DIONISIO closes his eyes pretending to be asleep. DON ROSARIO finishes his piece and stops playing. And stares at DIONISIO)*

DON ROSARIO. He has fallen asleep... He's an angel... He'll dream of her... I'll turn off the light... *(Switches off the light in the centre and turns on the socket on the bedside table. Then he goes up to DIONISIO and kisses him on the forehead)*. He sleeps just like a little birdie!

*(And tiptoeing carefully, he goes out the door to the backstage and closes the door. But now the telephone rings. DIONISIO gets up and rushes to it).*

DIONISIO. It's Margarita...!

*(But the door on the left is opened again, and PAULA gazes out, standing by the doorjamb. DIONISIO has already concluded his telephone trip).*

PAULA. Aren't you coming in?

DIONISIO. No.

PAULA. Come in... You're invited. You'll get distracted...

DIONISIO. I'm sleepy... No...

PAULA. We won't let you sleep anyway...

*(Because of the murmur of joy inside.)*

DIONISIO. I'm tired...

PAULA. Come in... I'm personally asking... Be nice... Buby is there, and Buby annoys me. If you come in, it's different... If you're there I'll be happy... I'll be happy around you...! Will you?

DIONISIO. *(Always that same boy with no force of will.)* Okay.

*(And goes towards the door. They both enter. They close the door. And the telephone bell continues ringing for a few moments, uselessly).*

CURTAIN

## Second Act

The same decoration. Two hours have passed and there is an awkward atmosphere at the party. The door on the left is open and inside the music of a gramophone is playing, making us listen to a French *java*<sup>3</sup> accompanied by a sailor's accordion. Characters enter and leave familiarly through this door, as the gang is supposed to freely move between the two rooms. The scene is disorganised. There might be papers on the floor. There might be bottles of liquor. There too might be empty tin cans. There are many characters on stage. The more we see, the more fun we will have. Most of them are old strangers who don't talk. They only dance with each other, or, perhaps, with happy girls whose origin we don't know, nor should we care too much. Among them is an old sea dog in sailor's clothes... There is an Indian in a turban, perhaps he is an Arab. It is, in short, an absurd and extraordinary chorus that will for a few minutes set the scene, since, a few moments after the curtain rises, they will gradually disappear through the door on the left. Also, among these gentlemen, the main characters are on stage. Buby, lying in bed, monotonously tunes his ukulele. The hateful gentleman, leaning on the left doorjamb, stares at Paula with voluptuousness. Paula dances with Dionisio. Fanny, with The military elder, completely bald and with the breastplate of his uniform full of decorations and crosses. Sagra dances with the clever huntsman, who, hanging from his belt, carries four rabbits, each with a small tag, on which the price might go. Madame Olga, in gown and slippers, is seated on the couch. Next to her, standing, is the handsome lad, with a bottle of cognac in his hand, invites her to a drink from time to time, constantly gazing at her with provincial admiration and respect...

*(The curtain has risen. The chorus, always dancing to the music, has been evolving until it disappears through the door on the left).*

SAGRA. *(Speaking as she dances.)* So did you hunt those rabbits long ago?

THE CLEVER HUNTSMAN. *(Drunk, but always proper.)* Yes, Miss. It's been a fortnight since I fished them. But I'm always so busy that I can't even find five minutes to eat them... Whenever I fish rabbits, it's the same thing...

SAGRA. I have a dress similar to yours. Only instead of hanging those things around, it has bananas. It makes it prettier...

THE CLEVER HUNTSMAN. I never manage to fish bananas. I only manage to fish rabbits.

SAGRA. But are rabbits hunted or fished?

THE CLEVER HUNTSMAN. *(More proper than ever.)* That depends on how drunk you are, Miss....

SAGRA. And are they not annoying for dancing?

THE CLEVER HUNTSMAN. Atrociously, miss. With your permission, I'm going to throw one to the floor...

*(He detaches a rabbit from his belt and drops it on the floor.)*

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<sup>3</sup> Dance of French origin popular in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is a faster type of waltz.



SAGRA. My pleasure.

*(They continue dancing, and the place they used to occupy is now taken by THE MILITARY ELDER and FANNY.)*

THE MILITARY ELDER. I assure you, Miss, I shall never forget this lovely night. Won't you say something?

FANNY. I've already told you that what I want is for you to give me a cross...

THE MILITARY ELDER. But these crosses I cannot gift, golly...

FANNY. And what do you want so many crosses for?

THE MILITARY ELDER. I need them myself, golly.

FANNY. Well, I want you to give me a cross....

THE MILITARY ELDER. It's impossible, Miss. I have no objection to gift you a hat, but not a cross. I can also give you a light thingy for the dining room...

FANNY. Get lost, idiot. You have no more thoughts in your head than a bathing woman.

THE MILITARY ELDER. Oh, how very funny you are, pretty lady...!

*(As they have been dancing throughout the whole dialogue, now THE MILITARY ELDER trips over the rabbit the huntsman threw and, with a kick, sends it under the bed).*

FANNY. Huh? What's that?

THE MILITARY ELDER. No, nothing. The cat!

*(And they go on dancing, until they disappear to the left.)*

MADAME OLGA. Oh, I'm a great artist! I have been exhibited in all the circuses of all the cities... With the old bear, with the sad goat, with the disjointed children... *Une grande attraction!* I'm a great artist...!

THE HANDSOME LAD. Yes, sir... But why don't you shave that beard?

MADAME OLGA. My husband, Monsieur Durand, would never have consented... My husband was a very good man, but he had old-fashioned ideas.... He could never stand those women who pluck their eyebrows and shave the back of their neck...! The poor man always said: "Those women who shave look like men to me!"

THE HANDSOME LAD. Yes, sir... But at least you could dye your hair blonde...Where there's a woman with a good blonde beard...!

MADAME OLGA. Oh, my husband, Monsieur Durand, would not have consented to that either. He only liked beautiful women with a black beard.... Of the Spanish type, isn't it? Andalusian<sup>4</sup>! Gypsy! *Viva tu padrrre!* Give me another drink.

THE HANDSOME LAD. And your husband was an artist too?

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<sup>4</sup> Referring to people from Andalusia, in southern Spain.

MADAME OLGA. Oh, he had great luck...! He had the head of a cow and a crocodile's tail... He made a fortune... What happened to the drink?

THE HANDSOME LAD. (*Overturning the bottle, which is now empty.*) There is no more.

MADAME OLGA. (*Standing up.*) Let's go and get another bottle then...

THE HANDSOME LAD. (*Gallantly.*) May I have your arm, little *bailaora*<sup>5</sup>?

MADAME OLGA. With pleasure

(*And, arm in arm, they leave through the left.*)

DIONISIO. (*Dancing with PAULA*) Miss.... I need to know why I am drunk...

PAULA. You're not drunk, Toninini....

(*They stop dancing.*)

DIONISIO. I need to know why you call me Toninini...

PAULA. Didn't we agree that I should call you Toninini? It's very funny that name, isn't it?

DIONISIO. *Oui*.

PAULA. Why do you say *oui*?

DIONISIO. Miss..., I too would like to know why I say *oui*.... I'm very afraid, Miss...

PAULA. You're a wonderful guy!

DIONISIO. Well, you're not one-armed yourself either, Miss!

PAULA. what special things you say...!

DIONISIO. Well, you don't suck your thumb yourself either...!

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. (*Approaching DIONISIO.*) Are you tired?

DIONISIO. Me?

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. May I take a walk with this young lady?

PAULA. (*Rude.*) No!

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. I'm the richest man in the whole province... My fields are full of wheat!

PAULA. No! No and no!

(*And he leaves through the door on the left. DIONISIO sits on the sofa, half asleep. And the gentleman goes after PAULA.*)

THE CLEVER HUNTSMAN. (*Always dancing.*) Miss... would you allow me to throw another rabbit to the floor?

SAGRA. With pleasure, sir.

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<sup>5</sup> Flamenco dancer.

THE CLEVER HUNTSMAN. (*Throwing it this time under the bed.*) Thank you very much, miss.

(*And they also dance off to the left. At this point there is only in the room BUBY, on the bed, and DIONISIO, who is talking about the music of the record that is still spinning inside.*)

DIONISIO. I'm drunk... I don't want to drink... My head is buzzing... Everything is spinning around me... But I'm happy! I've never been so happy...! I'm the white horse of the great Main Circus! (*He stands up and takes a few steps pretending to be a horse.*) But tomorrow... tomorrow. (*Suddenly, noticing BUBY.*) Do you have anything interesting to do tomorrow...? I do... I'm going to a party! A massive party with flowers, with music, with little girls dressed in white..., with old women dressed in black...With altar boys... with lots of altar boys...With a million altar boys! (*Underneath the bed a man's voice sounds, singing "Marcial, you are the greatest..."*). DIONISIO bends down, lifts the mattress and says, looking under the bed:) Sir, please come out. (*And THE JOYFUL EXPLORER comes out, very serious, with a bottle in his hand, and goes off to the left side.*) And then, a train... And a kiss... And a tear of joy... And a home! And a cat! And a child...! And then, another cat... And another child... And a child... And another child... I don't want to get drunk...! I want her...! (*He stands in front of the wardrobe. He listens. He opens it and says to TRUDY and THE ROMANTIC LOVER, who are making love to each other inside.*) Will you do me a favour and get out of there! (*And the loving couple walk out, arm in arm, and go off, very infatuated, to the left, plucking a daisy.*) I need to know why there are so many people in my room! I want someone to tell me why this [black] man is lying on my bed! I don't know why this [the black] man came in here or why the bearded woman came in here...!

PAULA. (*Inside.*) Dionisio! (*Exits.*) Toninini! (*And goes towards him.*) What are you doing?

DIONISIO. (*Transition, and in a low voice*) I was here talking to this friend... I am not Toninini nor am I that dead boy.... I don't know you... I don't know anyone... (*Very serious.*) Bye, good night!

(*And he goes off to the left.*)

PAULA. (*Trying to stop him*) Come here! Dionisio!

(*But BUBY has got up and stands in front of the door, blocking PAULA's way. He has completely changed his expression and speaks to PAULA in an urgent tone.*)

BUBY. Anything?

PAULA (*Upste*) Oh, Buby...!

BUBY. (*More energetic.*) Anything?

PAULA. He's a colleague... He will be working with us...!

BUBY. And what does it matter? I know that! But colleagues also sometimes have money... (*In a low voice.*) And we need the money by tonight... You know that... We owe everything... We need that money, Paula... Otherwise all is lost...!

PAULA. But he's a colleague... It was bad luck... You must understand, Buby...

(*She sits down. So does BUBY. Short pause.*)

BUBY. It really has been bad luck that this room should be taken by a cute fellow... Because he is cute, right? (*Always ironic, mocking and sentimental*). Yes. I know he's cute... It's been bad luck!... It's not at all easy to open a lock from the inside and make a good scene, only to find that inside the room there is not a good fat traveller with bucks in his wallet, but a bad juggler with no weights on his little vest... It really has been bad luck...

PAULA. Buby... This thing we're doing isn't all that funny...

BUBY. No. Frankly, it is not all that funny, is it? But what can we do about it?... Buby the black can't dance well... And you *chicas* dance too badly!... (*At this moment, in the room right next, the CHORUS OF OLD STRANGERS begin to sing, very much like a choral society, "The Reliquary". For only a few seconds. Over the last voices, now very piano-like, BUBY continues to speak.*) It's difficult to dance, isn't it? Your legs always ache and, when you finish, your heart feels exhausted... And yet, dreamy pretty lasses have to devote themselves to something when they don't want to spend their lives in the workshop, or in the factory, or at the clothing warehouse. The theatre is nice, right? There is freedom for everything! Parents have stayed at home, far away, with their misery and sorrows, with their pot on the stove... No need to take care of little siblings, who are many and who cry all the time. The sewing machine was left behind in that corner! But dancing is difficult, isn't it, Paula...? And employers don't pay too much to those artists who are not liked enough... We are always short on money!... And the lovely lasses die of grief when their hat is rendered tacky! Death before a tacky hat! Death before a cheap suit!! And life itself for a fur coat (*Inside, the CHOIR OF OLD STRANGERS sings again some bars of "The Reliquary"*) Right, Paula? Yes. Paula already knows about that... And it's so easy for a pretty girl to run away from her boyfriend into the room of a gentleman who is about to sleep.... It's so boring to sleep alone in a hotel room! And fat gentlemen always take pity on girls who run away from pimps [black men], and, sometimes, they even gift them notes of bright colours if the girls get touchy... And one kiss is of no importance... Nor two, either..., right? And then... Ah, then, if they feel let down, it's not easy for you to complain... The fat bourgeoisie don't want scandals, more so, when they know that a [black] man with tattoos is a friend of the lass'! A black man with good fists who would beat them up if they tried to exceed themselves!...

PAULA. But he's not a fat gentleman! He's a colleague!

BUBY. (*Looking towards the door on the left.*) Shut up!

(*And THE MILITARY ELDER and FANNY go out arm in arm and stroll. FANNY is wearing one of THE MILITARY ELDER'S crosses on her breast.*)

THE MILITARY ELDER. Miss, I have already given you that beautiful cross... I hope you will now give me some hope.... Would you want to run away with me...?

FANNY. What I want is another cross...

THE MILITARY ELDER. But that's impossible, miss. You must understand the sacrifice I have already made by giving you one.... It took me a lot of effort to earn them... I recall once, fighting with the Sioux Indians...

FANNY. Well, I want another cross...

THE MILITARY ELDER. Come on, miss... Let's leave this and answer my pleas... Do you consent to run away with me?

FANNY. I want you to give me another cross...

*(They have crossed the scene until they reach the balcony, cross it again in the opposite direction, and now disappear where they came from).*

BUBY. It really has been bad luck to find a fellow in the next room... But Paula, things can still be fixed... Life is good! That which we weren't expecting has happened! A little dance at the hotel! Some gentlemen are inviting you...! Paula, among these gentlemen there are those who have money... Look at Fanny. Fanny is clever... Fanny doesn't waste time... The military man has gold crosses and even crosses with precious stones... And there's also a rich gentleman who wants to dance with you..., who has invited you a hundred times to dance with him...

PAULA. He's a hateful gentleman...!

BUBY. Pretty Paula ought to dance with that gentleman... And Buby would be more cheerful than a sparrow on an acacia tree and a quetzal on an ombú<sup>6</sup>!

PAULA. *(Smiling, amused.)* You're a cynic, Buby....

BUBY. Oh, Buby is always a cynic because he gives good advice to the girls who go with him! *(Ironically.)* Or is it that you fancy the juggler?

PAULA. I don't know.

BUBY. It would be sad if you fell in love with him. Girls like you should not fall in love with men who don't gift jewellery or beautiful bracelets for your arms... You'll waste your time. We need money, Paula! We owe everything! And that gentleman is the richest man in the whole province!

PAULA. Tonight I don't feel like talking to rich gentlemen... Tonight I want you to leave me alone... Sometimes these things amuse one..., but at other times, they don't...

BUBY. Thing is, if you do not, it's all over... We'll all have to split up... Buby Barton's ballet ended in a province!... *(Inside, the CHOIR OF OLD STRANGERS now performs a few bars of "The Volga Boatman")*. I'm not asking for myself... A black man lives no matter how... But a cute lass... Cheap suits and tacky little hats await you...! The sewing machine that was left in that corner! Or is it that you have the hope that you'll find a handsome groom and have him dress you in white...?

PAULA. I don't know, Buby. I don't care... I never cared about that...

BUBY. Oh, my Paula...! Gentlemen want you, but they marry the others... *(Looks to the left.)* Here comes this gentleman...! *(Close beside PAULA. Very hypocritical.)* You're an touchy girl, Paula! Hooray for touchy girls...! Hurrah for touchy girls...!

*(Entering from the left, THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN.)*

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<sup>6</sup> Quetzals are birds in tropical America, and an ombú is a tree in meridional America. Here, Mihura is reinforcing the fact that despite Buby being black, he does not .

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. It's too hot in the other room! Everyone is in the other room... And they've had so much to drink, that they're as wild as dogs...!

BUBY. (*Very kind. Very sweet.*) Oh, sir! But sit down here! (*Beside PAULA, on the sofa.*) Here the air is much purer.... Here the air is so clear that every now and then flies a birdie singing, and butterflies come and go, resting on the curtain flowers.

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. (*Sitting down next to PAULA.*) Are you finally making your debut tomorrow?

PAULA. Yes. Tomorrow we make our debut...

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. I'll go to watch you, to have a laugh... I have a subscription to a seat at the proscenium<sup>7</sup>... I've always got a subscription and I always see the little girls who work there around here... I'm the richest gentleman in the whole province...

BUBY. To be rich... it must be beautiful, mustn't it...?

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. (*Proud. Hateful.*) Yes. It's very good times.... One has real estate... And ponds, with fish in them... One eats well... Chicken, mostly... And lobster... One also drinks good wines... My fields are full of wheat...

PAULA. But why do you have so much wheat in your fields?

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. You got to have something in the field, miss. That's what they're there for. And one usually has wheat because having it in the house is very annoying...

BUBY. And, of course..., being so rich..., women must always love you...!

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Yes. They always love me... All the birds that have passed through this Music-Hall have always loved me... I'm the richest one in the whole province... It's only natural that they love me...!

BUBY. So much is clear... Poor girls always love educated gentlemen...They are so sad... They need the affection of a man like you... For example, Paula. Pretty Paula is bored... She, tonight, can't find any good friend that will say nice words to her... Sweet little words of love... They are always around people like us, who have no fields and who constantly travel, from one place to another, passing through all the tunnels of the Earth.

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. And is it from passing through so many tunnels that you have turned so black? Ha, ha!

(*He laughs exaggeratedly at his own joke.*)

BUBY. (*As if suddenly noticing an imaginary butterfly, and as if trying to catch it.*) Silence! Oh! A cute butterfly! What beautiful colours it has! Silence! Now it's going that way...! (*Through the door on the left, where he is already preparing to leave.*) I'm going to close the door, and inside I'll catch it! I don't want it to get away from me! With your permission, sir!

(*BUBY is gone, leaving the door closed. The gentleman comes closer to PAULA. There is a brief, violent pause, in which the gentleman does not know how to start the conversation.*  
*Suddenly*)

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<sup>7</sup> Area of the theatre right in front of the stage

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. What colour are your garters, Miss?

PAULA. Blue.

EL HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Light blue or dark blue?

PAULA. Dark blue.

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. *(Taking a pair of garters out of a pocket.)* Will you allow me you to gift you a pair of light blue ones? They are some of the most elastic ones.

*(He stretches them out and gives them to her.)*

PAULA. *(Taking them.)* Thank you very much. Why did you bother?

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Don't even mention it. I have more at home...

PAULA. Do you live in this town?

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Yes. But every year I go to Nice.

PAULA. And do you take the wheat with you or do you leave it here?

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Oh, no! I leave the wheat in the field... I pay some men to keep it for me, and I go to Nice in peace... In a Pullman, needless to say!

PAULA. Don't you have a car?

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Yes. I have three... But I don't like cars, because it bothers me that the wheels are always going round and round... It's monotonous... *(All of a sudden.)* What is your size for stockings?

PAULA. Six.

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. *(Pulls a pair of stockings out of a pocket, untied and everything, and gives them to her.)* Pure silk! Stretch them!

PAULA. No. There's no need.

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. For you to see.

*(She takes them and stretches them, so much so that the stockings split in half).*

PAULA. Oh, they broke!

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Doesn't matter. Here's another pair.

*(She throws the torn ones on the floor. He takes another pair out of a pocket and hands them to her).*

PAULA. Thank you very much.

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Don't mention it...

PAULA. So, you go to Nice every year?

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Every year, miss... I have a farm there, and I have a great time watching the cows being milked. I have a hundred of them. Do you like cows?

PAULA. I like elephants better.

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. I, in India, have four hundred.... By the way I've now put trunks on them and all. I've spent a big load of money... (*Suddenly.*) Pardon, miss; I forgot to offer you flowers.

(*He takes a bouquet of flowers from the inside pocket of his blazer and gives it to her.*)

PAULA (*Accepting.*) Delightful.

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Don't mention it... They are made of cloth. Now, the cloth is of the best...

(*And he comes closer to PAULA.*)

PAULA. Are you married?

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Yes. Of course. All of us gentlemen are married. Gentlemen are always married... By the way, tomorrow, precisely, I must attend a wedding... The daughter of a friend of my wife's is getting married, and I have no choice but to go...

PAULA. A love wedding?

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Yes. I think the two of them are very much in love. I will be going to the wedding, but then I'll be off to Nice as soon as I can...

PAULA. How I'd like myself to go to Nice too!

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. My *finca* there is beautiful. I have a large swimming-pool, in in which I bathe five or six times a day... Do you also bathe frequently, miss?

PAULA. (*Very naive*) Yes, but of course not as much as that aunt of yours does....

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. (*Somewhat puzzled.*) Of course! (*And takes out of his pocket a bag of chocolates.*) Chocolates, miss? This bag's for you...

PAULA. (*Accepting them.*) Thank you very much.

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. For God's sake... And what do you put in the bath water?

PAULA. "*Papillons de Printemps*". It's a nice perfume!

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. I throw seals in mine. I'm so used to bathing in Norway, that I can't be in water without having a couple of seals beside me. (*Noticing that PAULA is not eating chocolates.*) But don't you eat chocolate? (*Taking a sandwich out of his pocket.*) Would you like this ham sandwich?

PAULA. I'm not hungry.

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. (*Taking another sandwich out of another pocket.*) Would you prefer one with caviar?

PAULA. No. Really. I don't want anything.



THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. (*Putting them away again.*) That's a shame. Anyway, miss... (*Drawing closer to her.*) May I give you a kiss? After such a pleasant conversation, it seems that we were born for each other....

PAULA. (*Turning away*) No!

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. (*Puzzled.*) Not yet? (*And then, from another pocket, he pulls out a ratchet.*) With your permission, I am going to take the freedom of giving this to you. It's not worth anything, but it's entertaining....

PAULA (*Taking the ratchet and putting it down on the sofa*) Thank you very much.

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. And now, may I give you a kiss?

PAULA. No.

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Well, I'm very sorry, but I have no more gifts in my pockets... Now that, if you'd like, I can go to my house for more....

PAULA (*Pretending to be very melancholic*) No. Don't bother.

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. You seem to be upset... What's the matter?

PAULA. Yes. I am sad. I'm horribly sad...

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Have I committed some impropriety, miss?

PAULA. No. I'm very sad because there's something terribly wrong with me... I am very miserable!

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Everything can be fixed in life, baby girl...

PAULA. No. This has no fix. It cannot be fixed!

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Is it that your shoes have broken?

PAULA. Something else more terrible has happened to me; I am very miserable!

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Come on, Miss. Tell me what the matter is...

PAULA. Picture this, we arrived here this afternoon, on a trip... And I was carrying a wallet and inside it I had a few savings... A few notes... And it must have been on the train... No doubt while I was asleep... The point is that when I woke up I couldn't find my wallet anywhere... Imagine how upset I was... I needed that money to buy a coat... And now it's all gone. I'm so miserable!

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. (*Now on guard.*) Well, well.... And you say you lost it on the train?

PAULA. Yes. On the train.

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. And did you take a good look round the room?

PAULA. Yes, and around the corridors.

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Did you also look in the engine room?

PAULA. Yes. I also looked in the engine....

*(Pause.)*

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. And how much money were you carrying in your wallet?

PAULA. Four notes.

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Small ones?

PAULA. Medium.

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Well! Well! Four notes!

PAULA. I'm very much upset, sir...!

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. *(Ready to give her anything.)* And you say that there were four notes?

PAULA. Yes. Four notes.

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. *(Smiling cheekily.)* One goes every year to Nice and knows these things, miss... Of course that if you were affectionate!... Although you must take into account that I've already given you several presents...

PAULA. I don't understand what you're trying to say... You speak in a way...

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. *(Taking a note out of his wallet, and very mischievous.)* Who's this little note for?

PAULA. Don't bother, sir.... It is possible that I may still find it...

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. *(Placing the note in her hand.)* Take it. If you find it, you'll give it back to me... And now .... May I give you a kiss?

PAULA. *(Still turning away.)* My upset is so great! Because imagine, it isn't just one note... It's four...

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. *(Taking out his wallet again and from it three more notes).* Well, well... *(Very touchy.)* Who are these notes for?

PAULA. *(Taking them, and now affectionately)* How nice of you! *(And he gives her a kiss. Then he gets up and pulls the latches on the doors. PAULA goes on guard.)* What have you done?

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. I've locked the doors...

PAULA. *(Standing up.)* What for?

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. So that neither birds nor butterflies can come in... *(He moves towards her and embraces her. He has now lost all his fake politeness. He wants to reap his money as soon as possible.)* You're very pretty!

PAULA. *(Angry.)* Open the doors!

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. We'll open the doors later, won't we? There's always time to open the doors!

PAULA. (*Now offended, and trying to free herself from the arms of THE HATED GENTLEMAN.*) Get off me! You have no right to this! Open the doors!

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. I don't spend my money for nothing, babie girl...

PAULA. (*Furious*) I didn't ask you for that money! You gave it to me! Get off me! Get out of here! Get out! I'm going to scream!

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. I gave you four notes... You have to be nice to me... You're too pretty for me to let go...

PAULA. I didn't ask for them! Leave me alone! (*Shouting.*) Buby! Buby!

*(The gentleman, rough, insists on embracing her. But BUBY has opened the door on the left and contemplates the scene, cold. The gentleman sees him and, sweaty, discomposed, out of his mind, turns menacingly to PAULA).*

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Give me that money back! Quick! Give me back that money! You scoundrels!

PAULA (*Throwing the money at him, which the gentleman picks up*) There goes your money!

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Give me my stockings back!

PAULA. (*Throwing him the stockings*) There go your stockings!

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. Give me my flowers back!

PAULA. (*Throwing them at him*) There go the flowers!

THE HATEFUL GENTLEMAN. You scoundrels! What did you think? (*He gets closer to the backstage door and opens it.*) Did you think you could deceive me, between the two of you? Me! Me! Scoundrels!

*(And he leaves.)*

BUBY. (*Coldly.*) Did you have any qualms?

PAULA. Yes. He had thought the wrong thing. He's a barbarian, Buby...

BUBY. You'd probably like it better for the juggler to kiss you....

PAULA. (*Nervous.*) I don't know! Leave me alone! Go away too! Leave me alone, all of you!

BUBY. Pretty Paula... You should remember what I tell you, no? You've ruined everything... Everything! You'd better stop thinking about that boy, or else I'll kill either you or him... Do you understand, Paula? Long live those girls who listen to what Buby says!

*(And he leaves through the left. PAULA sits down on the sofa with a disgruntled frown. and, from the left, FANNY and THE MILITARY ELDER enter again, as before, arm in arm and strolling, they cross the scene from one side to the other. But this time FANNY has all the crosses pinned to her chest. THE MILITARY ELDER has only one left. The biggest one)*

THE MILITARY ELDER. I have already given you all the crosses. I have only one left. The one that I've worked the hardest to earn... The one I won fighting the Cossacks. And now, will

you agree to run away with me? Come with me. We'll go to America and we'll be happy there. We'll put up a big ranch and raise little chickens...

FANNY. I want you to give me that other cross...

THE MILITARY ELDER. No. This one I can't give you, miss...

FANNY. Well, I'm not going with you then...

THE MILITARY ELDER. Oh, miss...! And if I gave it to you...? *(They leave by the left.. But after a few moments they come out again, her with the big cross, a suitcase, hat and coat, and him with a coat, a cape and a feathered military headgear. And, very infatuated, they head to the backstage door.)* Oh, Fanny imagine we had a blonde kid...!

FANNY. For God's sake, Alfredo!

*(And they go out of the backstage door. PAULA continues in her same thoughtful attitude. And now, from the left, DIONISIO enters with sleepy eyes. And he stares at PAULA, who may have tears in her eyes, from her pride.)*

DIONISIO. Are you crying?

PAULA. I'm not crying.

DIONISIO. Are you sad because I didn't come? I was there sleeping with some friends... *(PAULA remains silent.)* Did you argue with that boyfriend of yours[the black man]? We must lynch the pimp [black man]! It's our duty to lynch the pimp [black man]!

PAULA. A lot of people have to gather to lynch a pimp [black man] ...

DIONISIO. I'll organise a subscription...

PAULA. No.

DIONISIO. But I don't mind...

PAULA. *(Affectionately.)* DIONISIO ....

DIONISIO. What?

PAULA. Sit here..., with me....

DIONISIO. *(Sitting down next to her.)* Well.

PAULA. We must stay good friends.... If you only knew how happy I've been since I met you...! I was so lonely...You are not like the others! With others, sometimes I'm afraid. With you, I'm not. People are evil..., the fellows at the Music-Hall are not as they should be... The gentlemen outside the Music-Hall are not as gentlemen should be... *(DIONISIO, distracted, picks up the ratchet that was left over there and begins to play it, much amused)*. And yet we have to live with people, otherwise one would never be able to drink champagne or wear pretty bracelets on one's arms... And the champagne is beautiful... and bracelets always fill one's arms with joy!.... Besides, it is necessary to have fun... It is very sad to be alone... Girls like me die of sadness in these hotel rooms... You and I stay good friends... Do you want to drop the formalities between us...?

DIONISIO. Well... But just for a little while...

PAULA. No. Always. We'll talk to each other without formalities, always! It's better... The bad thing..., the bad thing is that you won't stay with us once we're done working here... And we'll each go our own way... It's stupid, that we have to part ways so soon, right...? Unless you needed a *partenaire* for your act... Oh! That way we could spend more time together...! I'd learn to juggle, no? And play with three top hats too!

(DIONISIO'S ratchet has broken down. It doesn't ring any more. Because of this, he gets sad).

DIONISIO. It's fallen to pieces...

PAULA. (*Taking the ratchet and fixing it*) It's done like this (*and gives it back to DIONISIO, who continues to play it, so amused*). It's a shame you don't need a *partenaire* for your number! But it doesn't matter! We'll have a great time these days, you know...? Look... Tomorrow we'll go for a stroll. We'll go to the beach..., by the sea... Just the two of us! Like two little kids, you know? You're not like other gentlemen! There are no shows until the night! We've got the whole afternoon to ourselves! We'll buy crabs... Do you know how to clean crab legs properly? I do. I'll teach you..., we'll eat them right there, on the sand... With the sea in front of us. Do you like playing with the sand? It's wonderful! I know how to make little castles and a bridge with a hole in the middle where the water flows through... And I know how to make a volcano! You put papers inside and you burn them, and smoke comes out...! Don't you know how to make volcanoes?

DIONISIO. (*He's now put down the ratchet and is getting livelier little by little.*) Yes.

PAULA. And castles?

DIONISIO. Yes.

PAULA. With a garden?

DIONISIO. Yes, with a garden. I put trees and a fountain in the middle and a staircase to go up to the castle tower.

PAULA. A staircase made of sand? Oh, you're a wonderful boy! Dionisio, I don't know how to make them...

DIONISIO. I do. I also know how to make a boat and a train... And figures! I also know how to make a lion...

PAULA. Oh! That's great! You see? You see, Dionisio? None of those gentlemen can make volcanoes, castles or lions out of sand! Nor Buby either! They don't know how to play! I knew you were different... You'll teach me how to make them, right? We'll go tomorrow...

(*Pause. DIONISIO, hearing the word "tomorrow", loses his joy and his enthusiasm for the games by the sea all of a sudden.*)

DIONISIO. Tomorrow...?

PAULA. Tomorrow!

DIONISIO. No.

PAULA. Why?

DIONISIO. Because I cannot.

PAULA. Do you have to rehearse?

DIONISIO. No.

PAULA. Then, then, what do you have to do?

DIONISIO. I have... to do.

PAULA. Just leave it for another day! There's plenty of days! Who cares! Is what you have to do very important?

DIONISIO. Yes.

PAULA. Business?

DIONISIO. Business.

*(Pause.)*

PAULA. *(Suddenly.)* You don't have a girlfriend, do you?

DIONISIO. No; girlfriend, no.

PAULA. You mustn't have a girlfriend! What do you want a girlfriend for? It's better for you to only have a good friend, like me... We'll have a better time... I don't want to have a boyfriend... because I don't want to get married. Marriage is ridiculous! So stiff! So pale! So dumb! How funny, right...? You plan to ever get married?

DIONISIO. More or less.

PAULA. Don't ever get married... You're better off like this... You're more handsome like this... If you get married, you'll be miserable... And you'll get fat under the dining room screen... And, besides, we couldn't be friends anymore... Tomorrow we'll go to the beach to eat crabs! And the day after tomorrow you'll get up early and so will I... We'll meet downstairs and then we'll leave to the harbour in no time and we'll rent a boat... A boat without a boatman! And we'll bring our swimming suits and we'll swim far away from the beach, out of our depth... Do you know how to swim...?

DIONISIO. Yes. I swim very well...

PAULA. I swim more. I have a lot of resistance. You'll see...

DIONISIO. I know how to play dead and dive...

PAULA. I do the silly salmon... and, from the springboard, I can do the angel...

DIONISIO. And I can pick up ten cents from the sea bottom with my mouth...

PAULA. Oh! Good for you! What a great day tomorrow! And the day after! You'll see! Dionisio, you'll see! We'll toast ourselves under the sun!

SAGRA. *(From the left side, with coat and hat on.)* Paula! Paula! Come! Look! You know what? We've decided to go all together to the harbour to watch the sunrise! The harbour is

close and it is almost daylight. We're taking the remaining bottles with us and we'll drink them there with the fishermen who are going out to sea... We'll have a good time! Let's all go and watch the sunrise!

*(People start coming out from the room on the left. MADAME OLGA is already dressed up. THE HANDSOME LAD, TRUDY and THE ROMANTIC LOVER. THE EXPLORER. And the CHORUS OF OLD STRANGERS. Last, THE CLEVER HUNTSMAN, with four tied dogs, that would be lovely were they not barking. They're all in a row and arm in arm. They all carry bottles in their hands).*

THE HANDSOME LAD. *(Almost singing.)* Let's go watch the sunrise!

ALL. Let's go watch the sunrise!

THE ROMANTIC LOVER. Facing the waters of the bay!

ALL. Facing the waters of the bay!...

THE EXPLORER. And then we'll throw every empty bottle into the sea...!

SOME. *(Leaving through the backstage door.)* Let's go watch the sunrise!

OTHERS. In front of the waters of the bay!

*(And they all leave.)*

PAULA. *(Cheerfully)* Should we go, DIONISIO?

DIONISIO. What time is it?

PAULA. It must be close to six...

DIONISIO. Nearly six?

PAULA. Yes. It'll be dawn soon....

DIONISIO. It can't be... Six o'clock! It's nearly six!

PAULA. But what's wrong, Dionisio? Why are you going like this? Let's go with them!...

DIONISIO. No. I'm not going.

PAULA. Why?

DIONISIO. Because I'm sick... I have a bad headache... I drank too much... No. This is all absurd. I can't do this... It's nearly six!... I want to be alone... I need to be alone...

PAULA. Come, Dionisio... I want to go with you... If you're not going, I'll stay too... here, next to you... I can't be away from you! *(She comes very close to him, lovingly).* You're a very wonderful guy! *(She rests her head on DIONISIO's shoulder, offering him her mouth.)* I like you so much!

*(And they kiss very passionately. But BUBY, silently, has come out from the left and has seen this marvellous kiss. And, coldly, he walks over to them and gives a strong blow on the back of PAULA's head, who falls to the ground, giving a little scream. Then, very quickly, BUBY flees through the backstage door, closing it on his way out. PAULA, on the floor, eyes closed,*

*does not move. Perhaps she has fainted, or died. DIONISIO, terrified, goes from one door to the other, at times running, at other times very slowly. He looks more grotesque than ever).*

DIONISIO. What is this? What is this, my God? It can't be possible!... *(And suddenly, the telephone rings. DIONISIO picks up the receiver and speaks.)* Eh? Who is it? Yes. It's me, Dionisio... No, nothing has happened to me. I'm fine. Did you get scared because I didn't answer when you called? Oh, no! I just had a bad headache and I went out! I went out into the street to get some fresh air. Yeah. That's why I couldn't answer when you called... What did you say? Huh? Your father's coming? What for? But there's nothing going on! It's stupid that you made him come!... Nothing's going on... Nothing's going on... *(And there's a knock on the door of the backstage .)* Ah! *(On the telephone.)* Someone's knocked at the door... Yes... it must be your father... Yes...

*(As he nervously goes towards the door, he pulls the receiver and breaks the cable. He tries to fix it. He can't. He becomes even more bewildered).*

DON SACRAMENTO. *(Inside.)* Dionisio! Dionisio! *(DIONISIO, receiver in hand, and all very quickly, runs towards the door. He doesn't know what to do. He goes towards PAULA and kneels beside her. He puts his ear on PAULA's chest, trying to hear her heart. He makes a panicked gesture. And now he puts the end of the telephone cable, which he holds in his hand, next to PAULA's heart and listens through the receiver, "like a wise doctor".* DON SACRAMENTO, *inside, knocking)* Dionisio! Dionisio!

DIONISIO *(Also answering through the receiver)* Give a moment! I'm coming!

*(And grabbing PAULA from under her arms, ungracefully, ridiculously, he tries to hide her behind the bed, while before them falls the*

COURTAIN.)



### Third Act

Same decoration. The action of the second act continues, one minute after it was interrupted.

(DIONISIO *has just hidden PAULA's body behind the bed and the folding screen, while DON SACRAMENTO continues calling him. DIONISIO, once he's made sure PAULA is hidden properly, goes to open*).

DON SACRAMENTO. (*Inside.*) Dionisio! Dionisio! Open! It's me! It's Don Sacramento! It's Don Sacramento! It's Don Sacramento!...

DIONISIO. Yes... I'm coming... (*Opens. DON SACRAMENTO comes in, in frock coat, top hat and umbrella.*) Don Sacramento!

DON SACRAMENTO. Sir! My little girl is sad! My little girl has called you a hundred times, with no answer from your part. My little girl is sad and cries. My little girl thought you had died. My little girl is pale... Why do you torture my poor little girl?...

DIONISIO. Don Sacramento... I already told her... I went out to the street... I couldn't sleep...

DON SACRAMENTO. My little girl fainted on the lavender sofa in the pink room... She thought you had died! Why did you go out to the street to stroll under the rain...

DIONISIO. I had a headache, Don Sacramento....

DON SACRAMENTO. Decent people don't go out at night to stroll under the rain...! You're a bohemian, sir!

DIONISIO. No, sir.

DON SACRAMENTO. Yes! You're a bohemian, sir! Only bohemians go out for a stroll in the streets at night!

DIONISIO. But my head ached so bad!

DON SACRAMENTO. You must have put two slices of potato on your head...

DIONISIO. I didn't have any potatoes...

DON SACRAMENTO. Decent people should always carry potatoes in their pockets, sir... And they should also carry taffeta for their wounds... I bet you don't carry taffeta...

DIONISIO. No, sir.

DON SACRAMENTO. Can't you see? You're a Bohemian, sir!... Once you marry my little girl, you won't get away with such unorganized way of living. Why is this room in this state? Why is there mattress wool on the floor? Why are there papers? Why are there empty sardine cans? (*Picking up the ratchet that was on the sofa.*) What is this ratchet doing here?

(*And he keeps it, distracted, in his hand. And, from time to time, he will make noise with it while he speaks*).

DIONISIO. Rooms in modest hotels are like this.... And this is a modest hotel... That you'll understand, Don Sacramento!...

DON SACRAMENTO. I don't understand anything. I've never been in any hotel. There are only great European swindlers and international vampiresses in hotels. Decent people are at home and greet their visitors in the living room, where there is gilded furniture and old family portraits...Why haven't you put portraits of your family in this room, sir?

DIONISIO. I only intend to stay here tonight....

DON SACRAMENTO. It doesn't matter, sir! You should have put up portraits on the walls. Only murderers and counterfeiters don't have portraits on the walls...You should have put up that portrait of your grandfather in his teacher's uniform...

DIONISIO. He wasn't a teacher... He was a bookkeeper...

DON SACRAMENTO. Well, in his bookkeeper's uniform! Honest people must be portrayed in uniform, be they bookkeepers or whatever else! You should have also put up a portrait of a child in their first communion dress!

DIONISIO. But what child was I going to put up?

DON SACRAMENTO. It doesn't matter! It's all the same! Just some child. There are so many children! The world is full of first communion children!... And you should have put up stickers too... Why didn't you put up stickers? Stickers are beautiful! There are stickers in every house! "Romeo and Juliet talking on the balcony", "Jesus praying in the Garden of Olives", "Napoleon Bonaparte, in his exile on the island of St. Helena"... *(In another tone, with admiration.)* What a great man Napoleon, right?

DIONISIO. Yes. He was very bellicose... Was he the one who always carried his hand like this?

*(He puts his hand on his chest).*

DON SACRAMENTO. *(Copying him)* Indeed, he always carried his hand like this...

DIONISIO. It must have been very difficult, right?

DON SACRAMENTO. *(Rolling his eyes.)* Only a man like him could always carry his hand like that!...

DIONISIO. *(Putting his other hand behind his back.)* And he carried the other hand like this....

DON SACRAMENTO. *(Doing the same.)* Indeed, that's how he carried it.

DIONISIO. What a man!

DON SACRAMENTO. Napoleon Bonaparte!... *(Admiring pause, both pretending to be Napoleon. Then DON SACRAMENTO continues speaking in his previous tone).* You will have to be tidy... You will be living in my house, and my house is an honest one! You will not be able to go out at night to stroll under the rain! You, moreover, will have to get up at a quarter past six to have a fried egg and bread for breakfast at half-past.

DIONISIO. I don't like fried eggs....

DON SACRAMENTO. Honest people must like fried eggs, sir! My whole family has always had fried eggs for breakfast... Only bohemians have *latte* and bread with butter.

DIONISIO. The thing is I like them boiled better... Couldn't you make mine boiled...?

DON SACRAMENTO. I don't know. I don't know. We'll have to check with the missus. If she allows it, I won't have any objection. But I warn you that my missus does not tolerate whims in food!

DIONISIO. (*Almost in tears.*) But what can I do if I like them boiled better, man!

DON SACRAMENTO. No cinema, uh?... No theatre. No bohemianism... At seven o'clock, dinner... And after dinner, on Thursdays and Sundays, we'll have a little party. (*Cheeky.*) Because the spirit, too, needs to breathe, what the hell! (*At this point the ratchet, with which he was playing, breaks down. And he gets very worried.*) It's fallen to pieces!...

DIONISIO. (*Like Paula in the previous act, he picks it up and fixes it for him.*) It's done like this.

(*And gives it back to DON SACRAMENTO who, very happy, plays with it from time to time.*)

DON SACRAMENTO. My little girl will play the piano on Sundays, Dionisio.... She will play the piano, and perhaps, perhaps, if we're in the mood, perhaps we'll have a visit... Honest people, needless to say... For instance, I'll have Mr. Smith come... You will quickly befriend him and have a very good time chatting with him... Mr. Smith is a well-known person... His portrait has been in newspapers all over the world.... He is the most famous centenarian in town! He has just turned one hundred and twenty and he still keeps five teeth... You'll chat with him all night long!... And his missus will be there too...

DIONISIO. And how many teeth does her wife keep?

DON SACRAMENTO. Oh, she has none! She lost them all when she fell down some stairs and was left paralysed for life, not even able to get up from her wheelchair... You'll have great times chatting with this charming couple!

DIONISIO. But what if they die when I'm talking to them? What do I do, my God?

DON SACRAMENTO. Centenarians never die! Otherwise they wouldn't have any merit, sir!... (*Pause. DON SACRAMENTO sniffs*) But... what is that smell in this room?... Since I arrived here, I've been noticing a strange smell... It's a strange smell... And it's not at all pleasant!...

DIONISIO. They must have left the kitchen door open....

DON SACRAMENTO. (*Sniffing*) No. It's not that.... It's as if a human body was decomposing...

DIONISIO. (*Terrified. Aside*) My God! She's dead!...

DON SACRAMENTO. What smell is this, sir? There's a corpse in this room! Why do you have corpses in your room? Do bohemians keep corpses in their room?...

DIONISIO. There are always corpses in modest hotels....

DON SACRAMENTO. (*Searching.*) It's this way! Under here. (*He lifts the mattress and discovers the rabbits that THE HUNTSMAN threw. He picks them up.*) Oh, here they are! Two dead rabbits! That's what smelled so bad!... Why do you have two rabbits under your bed? In my house you can't have rabbits in your room... You can't have chickens either... They make a mess of everything!

DIONISIO. These are not rabbits. They are mice...

DON SACRAMENTO. They are mice?

DIONISIO. Yes, sir. They are mice. There are a lot of them here...

DON SACRAMENTO. I've never seen mice so big...

DIONISIO. It's because this is a poor hotel, that's how mice are... In fancier hotels, mice are much smaller... Same thing with baguettes...

DON SACRAMENTO. And have you killed them?

DIONISIO. Yes. I have killed them with a shotgun. The owner gives each guest a shotgun to kill mice....

DON SACRAMENTO. (*Looking at a rabbit's tag*) And these numbers on the neck, what do they mean? It says 3.50...

DIONISIO. It's not 3.50. It's 350. As there are so many of them, the owner has them numbered, to organize contests. And the guest who, say, kills number 14, is rewarded with a Manila shawl or an electric iron...

DON SACRAMENTO. What a shame you didn't get the shawl! We could've gone to the local fair!... And what do you plan to do with these mice?...

DIONISIO. I haven't thought about it yet... If you want, they're yours...

DON SACRAMENTO. Don't you need them?

DIONISIO. No. I already have plenty. I'll wrap them in paper for you.

(*He takes a piece of paper that is anywhere and wraps them up. Then he gives hands them over*)

DON SACRAMENTO. Thank you very much, Dionisio. I'll give them to my little nephews to play... It will bring them great joy!... And now, goodbye, Dionisio. I'm going to comfort my little girl, who must still lie fainted on the lavender sofa in the pink room... (*Checks his watch.*) It is six forty-three. In a bit, the car will come take you to church. Be ready... How emotional! In a few hours you will be my Margarita's husband!...

DIONISIO. But will you tell your missus that I rather like my eggs boiled?

DON SACRAMENTO. Yes, I will. But don't distract me. Oh, Dionisio! I can't wait to get home and give this to my nephews... The poor little children will weep for joy!

DIONISIO. And are you also going to gift them the ratchet?

DON SACRAMENTO. Oh, no! The ratchet is for me!

*(And he goes out the backstage door. PAULA pokes her head out from behind the bed and stares at DIONISIO upset. DIONISIO, who is closing the door, turns around and sees her).*

PAULA. Oh, why did you hide this from me? You're getting married, Dionisio!...

DIONISIO. *(Lowering his head.)* Yes...

PAULA. You weren't even a juggler...

DIONISIO. No.

PAULA. *(Standing up. Going to the door on the left.)* Then I shall go to my room...

DIONISIO. *(Stopping her.)* But you were hurt.... What did Buby do to you?

PAULA. It was just a blow, nothing more... It knocked me out. I must have blacked out for a few moments. Buby's so rough... He always beats me... *(Afterwards.)* You're getting married, Dionisio!...

DIONISIO. Yes.

PAULA. *(Trying again to leave.)* I'm going to my room....

DIONISIO. No.

PAULA. Why?

DIONISIO. Because this room is nicer. You can see the harbour from the balcony...

PAULA. You're getting married, Dionisio!

DIONISIO. Yes, I'm getting married, but just a little...

PAULA. Why didn't you tell me...?

DIONISIO. I don't know. I had a feeling that getting married was ridiculous... That I shouldn't marry...! Now I see I wasn't wrong... But I was getting married, because I've spent my life in a small, sad village and I thought that to be happy I had to marry the first girl whose chest beat with tenderness when we stared at each other... I adored my girlfriend... But now I see that she's not the happiness I was looking for... And my girlfriend doesn't like to eat crabs by the sea either, nor does she enjoy making volcanoes in the sand... And she doesn't know how to swim... She screams ridiculously when she goes into the water... She goes like this: "Ah!Ah! Ah!" And she only likes singing *El pescador de las perlas* by the piano. And *El pescador de las perlas* is terrible, Paula. She has the voice of an angel, and she goes like this: *(Sings.)* Lalalala... ping, ping, ping, ping... And I hadn't realised that angelic voices are full of vanity and that, on the other hand, there are gramophone records that are entitled "Love me in December as much as you love me in May", and which fill our spirits with simplicity and the desire to do a flip... I didn't know either that there were women like you, whose hearts do not beat when they speak, but whose lips beat in a constant smile... I didn't know anything. I only knew how stroll whistling by the bandstand... I was getting married because everybody gets married at the age of twenty-seven... But I'm not getting married anymore, Paula... I cannot have fried eggs at half past six in the morning...!

PAULA. (*Now seating on the sofa*) That man with the moustache has already told you that they'll make them boiled...

DIONISIO. But I don't like them boiled either! I only like *lattes*, with bread and butter! I'm a raging bohemian! And the funniest thing is that I didn't know that until tonight when you came... and the black man came... and the bearded lady came... But I'm not getting married, Paula. I'll go away with you and I'll learn how to juggle with three top hats...

PAULA. Juggling with three top hats is very difficult... They always fall to the ground...

DIONISIO. I'll learn to dance the way you and Buby dance...

PAULA. Dancing is even more difficult. Your legs hurt a lot and you hardly earn enough money to live on...

DIONISIO. I'll be patient and I'll manage to have the head of a cow and a crocodile's tail...

PAULA. That takes even more work... And then, the tail is very uncomfortable when you're travelling by train...

(DIONISIO goes to sit next to her).

DIONISIO. I'll do something extraordinary to be able to go with you! You've always told me that I'm a wonderful guy!...

PAULA. And you are. You're so wonderful, that in a little while you're going to get married, and I didn't know about it.

DIONISIO. We still have time. We'll leave all this behind and go to London...

PAULA. Do you speak English?

DIONISIO. No. But we'll go to a town in London. People in London speak English because they're all very rich and they have plenty of money to learn that nonsense. But people in the London towns, being poorer and with no money to learn those things, they speak like you and me... They speak like in every other town on Earth!... And they are happy!...

PAULA. But there are too many detectives in England!...

DIONISIO. We'll go to Havana!

PAULA. There are too many bananas in Havana...

DIONISIO. We'll go to the desert!

PAULA. Everyone who gets upset goes there, and now deserts are full of people and pools.

DIONISIO. (*Sadly.*) That means you don't want to come with me.

PAULA. No. Honestly, I don't want to go with you, DIONISIO ....

DIONISIO. Why?

(*Pause. She doesn't want to speak. She stands up and goes towards the balcony.*)

PAULA. I'm going to draw the curtains on the balcony. (*She does so.*) It must already be dawn... And it's still raining... Dionisio, they've already put out the little lights in the harbour! I wonder who's puts them out.

DIONISIO. The lamplighter.

PAULA. Yes, it must be the lamplighter.

DIONISIO. Paula..., don't you love me?

PAULA (*Still from the balcony.*) And it's cold....

DIONISIO. (*Taking a blanket from the bed.*) Come with me.... We'll both warm ourselves under this blanket... (*She goes and they sit down together, covering their legs with the blanket.*) Do you love Buby?

PAULA. Buby is my friend. Buby is bad. But poor Buby never gets married... And the others always get married... This is not fair, Dionisio...

DIONISIO. Have you had many boyfriends?

PAULA. A boyfriend in every province and a lover in every town! Everywhere there are gentlemen who make love to us... It doesn't matter whether it's November or April, whether there's an epidemic or a revolution! A boyfriend in every province...! To be honest it's good fun...! The bad thing is, Dionisio, the bad thing is that all gentlemen were already married, and those who were not married yet were hiding in their wallets a portrait of their fiancée... Dionisio, why do all gentlemen get married...? And why, if they do marry, do they hide it from girls like me...? I bet you, too, have a portrait of your fiancée in your wallet... I detest my friends' girlfriends...! It's not possible to go with them by the sea like this...! Nothing is possible like this...Why do all gentlemen get married...?

DIONISIO. Because always going to football is boring too.

PAULA. Dionisio, show me the portrait of your girlfriend.

DIONISIO. No.

PAULA. Who cares! Show it to me! You all show it in the end...

DIONISIO. (*Takes out a wallet. He opens it. PAULA inspects it...*) Look...

PAULA. (*Pointing to something*) And this? A curl of hair too...?

DIONISIO. It's not hers. Madame Olga gave it to me.... She cut it out of her beard, as a little souvenir... (*He shows her a photograph.*) This is her portrait, look...

PAULA (*She looks at it slowly, then.*) She's clapped, Dionisio...!

DIONISIO. Yes.

PAULA. She has too many moles...

DIONISIO. Twelve. (*Pointing with his finger.*) This here is another one....

PAULA. And her eyes are very sad... She's not pretty at all, Dionisio...

DIONISIO. It's just that in this portrait she looks very bad... But she has another one, with a Portuguese dress, if you saw it... *(Turning in profile with a forced gesture)* She posed like this...

PAULA. In profile?

DIONISIO. Yes. In profile. Like this.

*(He repeats it.)*

PAULA. And does she look better?

DIONISIO. Yes, because you can't see more than six moles....

PAULA. Besides, I'm younger...

DIONISIO. Yes. She's twenty-five...

PAULA. I, on the other hand... Well! I must be very young, but I don't know how old I am exactly... Nobody has ever told me... It's funny, isn't it? There's a friend of mine who got married and lives in the city... She used to dance with us too. Whenever I go to the city I give her a visit. And I mark my height with a line on the dining room's wall, and every time I mark the line higher and higher...! Dionisio, I'm still growing... It's lovely to still be growing...! But when the line no longer goes higher, that means that I have stopped growing and that I am old... How sad then, right? What do girls like me do when they get old...? *(Looks at the portrait again.)* I am prettier than her...!

DIONISIO. You're much prettier! You're prettier than any of them! Paula, I don't want to get married. I'll have ugly kids... and I'll breed uric acid...!

PAULA. It's daytime already, Dionisio! I feel like sleeping...!

DIONISIO. Put your head on my shoulder... Sleep beside me...

PAULA. *(She does so.)* Kiss me, Dionisio *(They kiss.)* Your girlfriend doesn't kiss you...?

DIONISIO. No.

PAULA. Why?

DIONISIO. She can't until we're married...

PAULA. But not even once?

DIONISIO. No, no. Not even once. She says she can't.

PAULA. Poor girl, right? That's why her eyes look so sad.... *(Pause.)* Kiss me again, Dionisio...!

DIONISIO. *(He kisses her again.)* Paula! I don't want to get married It's pointless! I'll never be happy! A few hours alone have changed everything for me... I thought I was going to leave here on the road to happiness and I'm going to leave here to the road of cheesiness and hyperchlorhydria...

PAULA. What is hyperchlorhydria?



DIONISIO. I don't know, but it must be something imposing? Let's go away together...! Tell me you love me, Paula!

PAULA. Let me sleep now! We're so good like this...!

*(Pause. The two, with their heads together, have their eyes closed. There is more and more light on the balcony. Suddenly, the sound of a trumpet is heard, playing reveille, getting nearer and nearer. Then there is the sound of knocking at the backstage door).*

DON ROSARIO *(Inside.)* It's seven, Don Dionisio! It's time for you to get ready. The car won't take long! It's seven, Don Dionisio!

*(He's left disconcerted. There is a silence. And she yawns and says).*

PAULA. It's already seven, Dionisio. You must get dressed.

DIONISIO. No.

PAULA *(Getting up and throwing the blanket to the floor.)* Come on! Are you dumb? It's time for you to go...!

DIONISIO. I don't want to. I'm very busy now....

PAULA. *(Doing what she says.)* I'll prepare everything for you.... You'll see... Water... Towels... Go ahead. Wash up, Dionisio...!

DIONISIO. I'm going to catch a cold. I'm very cold...

*(He lies down on the sofa and curls up).*

PAULA. It doesn't matter... This way you'll react... *(Lifts him up by force.)* And this will clear you up! Come! quick! A dip right now! *(She shoves his head in the water.)* There you go! You can't look sleepy... Otherwise, you'll be scolded by the priest... And the altar boys... They'll all scold you...

DIONISIO. I'm very cold! I'm drowning...!

PAULA. That's good... Now, dry yourself up... And you have to do your hair... Even better..., I'll do your hair... You'll see... Like this... You're going to look very handsome, Dionisio... Maybe now you'll get another girlfriend... But... Hey! What about the top hats? *(He picks them up.)* They're all broken...! None of them is going to fit you... But that's it! Don't worry! While you put on your suit, I'll find you one of mine. It's brand new. It's the one I wear when I dance the Charleston...!

*(She goes out the door on the left. DIONISIO hides behind the folding screen and puts on the trousers. Immediately, DON ROSARIO enters through the backstage, looking absurd in formal dress, with a trumpet in one hand and a large white flag in the other. And, as he speaks, he runs about the room like an idiot).*

DON ROSARIO. ¡Don Dionisio! Don Dionisio...! I've got everything ready! Hurry up and finish! Hurry up and finish! The corridor is decorated with flowers and chains. The maids are dressed in their Sunday clothes and will throw confetti. The waiters will throw breadcrumbs! And the cook will throw whole chickens in the air in your honour!

DIONISIO. (*Peeping over the screen.*) But why have you arranged this?

DON ROSARIO. Do not worry, Don Dionisio. I would have done the same for that boy of mine who drowned in the well.... I've invited the whole neighbourhood and they'll all be waiting for you at the door! Women and children! The old and the young! The police and the thieves! Hurry up, Don Dionisio! Everything's ready!

(*And he leaves again through the backstage; and with his trumpet, from within, he begins to play a lovely march. PAULA now comes out with a top hat in her hand.*)

PAULA. Dionisio...!

DIONISIO. (*He comes out from behind the folding screen, with his trousers on and his shirt tails out*) I'm ready!

PAULA. I've found the hat...! You'll see how nice it looks on you! (*He puts it on DIONISIO, on whom it looks very bad.*) You see, it's the one that suits you best...!

DIONISIO. But this isn't serious, Paula! It's a dancing hat...!

PAULA. This way, while you're wearing it, you'll think happy thoughts! And now, the neck! The tie!

(*She begins to put it on, all very badly.*)

DIONISIO. Paula! I don't want to get married! I won't know what to say to that centenarian man! I love you madly...!

PAULA. (*Wrapping the tie around his neck.*) But, are you crying now...?

DIONISIO. It's just that you're pinching me....

PAULA. Okay, done! (*She finishes. She puts his "chaquet" on him.*) And now the *chaquet*... And the pocket handkerchief! (*She examines him, now fully dressed.*) But what is this shirt? Do they wear it like this at weddings...?

DIONISIO. (*Hiding behind the folding screen to tuck in his shirt.*) No. The thing is...

PAULA. Listen, what's a wedding like? Do you know? I've never been to a wedding... I go to bed so late that I don't have time to go... But it must be like this... Come out now! (*DIONISIO comes out, now with his shirt in place.*) I'm the bride and I'm dressed all in white with a veil down to my feet... And holding your arm... (*She does so. And they walk around the room.*) And we'll go into the church... like this..., both very serious... And at the end of the church there will be a very nice priest, with his white gloves on...

DIONISIO. Paula... Priests don't wear white gloves...

PAULA. Shut up! There will be a very nice priest! And then we'll greet him... "Good morning. Are you well? And your family, are they well? How's the sacristan? And the altar boys, are they all good...?" And we'll give a kiss to all the altar boys...

DIONISIO. Paula! You don't kiss the altar boys...!

PAULA. (*Angrily*) Well, I will kiss all the altar boys, I'm the bride for a reason, and I can do whatever I want!

DIONISIO. It's just that... You won't be the bride.

PAULA. That's true! What a shame I'm not the bride, Dionisio...!

DIONISIO. Paula, I don't want to get married! Let's go to Chicago together...!

DON ROSARIO. (*Inside*) Don Dionisio! Don Dionisio...!

DIONISIO. Hide...! It's Don Rosario! He can't see you in my room!

(PAULA *hides behind the folding screen.*)

DON ROSARIO. (*Coming in.*) The car is waiting for you! Come out quick, Don Dionisio! It's a white carriage with two tanned drivers! And two little white horses with *latte* spots! What a pair of little white horses! The maids are already throwing confetti! And the waiters are throwing breadcrumbs! Come out quick, Don Dionisio...!

DIONISIO. (*Looking at the folding screen, not wanting to leave*) Yes..., I'm coming.

DON ROSARIO. No! No! Before me.... I'll go behind, waving the flag with one hand and blowing the trumpet ...

DIONISIO. But I... I want to say goodbye to...

DON ROSARIO. To the room? Don't worry! Hotels the rooms are all the same! They never leave memories behind! Let's go, let's go, Don Dionisio...!

DIONISIO. (*Without taking his eyes off the folding screen.*) But.... (PAULA *puts out a handover the screen, as if bidding him farewell.*) Bye...!

DON ROSARIO. (*Grabbing him by his "chaquet" and pulling himself after him.*) Long live love and flowers, little lily-bud!

*And he waves the flag. DIONISIO waves goodbye again. And so does PAULA. And DON ROSARIO and DIONISIO disappear through the backstage. PAULA comes out of her hiding place. She approaches the backstage door and looks out. Then she runs to the balcony and looks through the glass again. DON ROSARIO'S trumpet continues playing, further and further away, a beautiful military march. PAULA waves, behind the glass. Then she turns around. She sees the three top hats and picks them up... And suddenly, just when it looks as if she is about to get emotional, she throws the hats in the air and lets out the cheerful show cry: Hoop! She smiles, waves, and drops the*

COURTAIN

