

# Night of the Assassins

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Translated by Sebastian Doggart

Oh so much! Oh so little! Oh the others!

Cesar Vallejo

... we are all dream monsters to ourselves.

Andre Malraux

... this human world penetrates us, participates in the dance of the gods, without looking back, on pain of  
being turned into our selves: into pillars of salt.

Antonin Artaud

Can we only love

Something created by our own imagination?

Are we all in fact unloving and unlovable?

Then one is alone, and if one is alone

Then lover and beloved are equally unreal

And the dreamer is no more real than his dreams.

T.S. Eliot

Characters:

LALO

CUCA

BEBA

## Setting

The 1950s. A basement or an attic. A table, three chairs, rolled-up carpets, dirty curtains with large floral-patterned patches on them, vases, a judge's gavel, a knife and various objects discarded in the corner next to a broom and a duster.

## Acting Note

While these characters play other characters, they must do so with the utmost simplicity and spontaneity. They must not use characterizing devices. They are capable of representing the world without any artifice. Bear this in mind for the production's staging and set. These characters are adults, but exhibit a fading adolescent grace. They are figures in a ruined museum.

## ACT ONE

LALO. Shut the door. (Beats his chest. Exalted, wide-eyed.)

An assassin. An assassin. (Falls to his knees.) CUCA (to BEBA). What's all this?

BEBA (indifferently, watching LALO). The performance has begun.

CUCA. Again?

BEBA (annoyed). Of course! It's not the first time.

CUCA. Please don't get upset.

BEBA. Grow up.

CUCA. Mum and Dad haven't gone out yet.

BEBA. So?

LALO. I killed them. (Laughs. Stretches his arms solemnly out to the audience.) Can't you see the two coffins? Look: candles, flowers... We've filled the room with gladioli. Mumi's favourite. (Pause.) They can't complain. Now they're dead we've made them happy. I myself dressed their stiff, sticky bodies ... And with these hands I dug a deep, deep hole. Earth, more earth. (Gets up quickly.) They still haven't discovered the crime. (Smiles. To CUCA.) What are you thinking about? (Caressing her chin as if she

were a child.) I understand: you're scared. (She moves away.) Oh, you're impossible.

CUCA (dusting the furniture). I can't stand all this nonsense.

LALO. Nonsense? You think a crime is nonsense? How cold you are, little sister! Nonsense? Do you really think that?

CUCA (firmly). Yes.

LALO. Then what is important to you?

CUCA. I want you to help me. We have to tidy up this house. This room is a pit. Cockroaches, rats, moths, caterpillars ...the whole bloody lot. (Takes an ashtray from the chair and puts it on the table.)

LALO. How far do you think you're going to get with that duster?

CUCA. It's a start.

LALO (authoritatively). Put the ashtray back in its place.

CUCA. The ashtray belongs on the table, not on the chair.

LALO. Do what I tell you.

CUCA. Don't start, Lalo.

LALO (picks up the ashtray and puts it back on the chair). I know what I'm doing. (Picks up the vase and puts it on the floor.) In this house the ashtray belongs on the chair and the vase on the floor.

CUCA. And the chairs?

LALO. On the table.

CUCA. And what about us?

LALO. We float with our feet in the air and our heads hanging down.

CUCA (annoyed). Fantastic! Why don't we try it? What would people say if they heard you now? (In a harder tone of voice.) Look, Lalo, if you keep being pushy, we're going to have problems. Leave me alone. I'll do what I can.

LALO (purposefully). Don't you want me to help you? CUCA. Don't mess things up.

LALO. Then don't mess with my things. I want the ashtray there. The vase there. Leave them where they are. It's you who's being pushy, not me.

CUCA. Oh right! Now it's me who's being pushy? Darling, that is priceless! Now it's me ... ? Look, Lalo, please shut up. Order is order.

LALO. There is none so deaf as she that won't hear.

CUCA. What?

LALO. You heard.

CUCA. Well, darling, I don't understand. That's the honest truth. I don't know what you're on about. It all sounds crazy. It gets me into an utter state. I can't say or do anything. And if it's what I think it is, then it's sick.

LALO. Scared again? Get something into your tiny little head. If you want to live in this world you have to do many things, and one of them is to forget fear.

CUCA. Doesn't that sound easy!

LALO. Well, do it then.

CUCA. Stop hassling me. And don't preach, it doesn't suit you. (Dusting a chair.) Look at this chair, Lalo. How long since it was last cleaned? There are cobwebs even. Ugh!

LALO. Shocking! (Approaching cautiously, purposefully.) The other day I said to myself: 'We must clean up'; but then we got sidetracked into some nonsense and ... Look, look at it. (Pause. Purposefully.) Why don't you help?

CUCA (almost on her knees next to the chair, cleaning it). Leave me out of it.

LALO. Go on.

CUCA. Don't push.

LALO. Just for a bit.

CUCA. I'm no use.

BEBA, who has been upstage cleaning some old furniture and pots and pans with a rag, moves downstage. She smiles. Her movements are slightly reminiscent of LALO's.

BEBA. Those corpses are unreal. Spectacular! They give me goose pimples. I don't want to think any more. I've never felt so happy. Look at them. They're flying, they're breaking up.

LALO (grandly). Have the guests arrived?

BEBA. I heard them coming up the stairs.

LALO. Who?

BEBA. Margaret and old Pantaleón.

CUCA doesn't stop her work, although occasionally she pauses to look at them.

LALO (contemptuously). I don't like those two. (In another tone of voice. Violently.) Who told them?

BEBA. I don't know! No, don't look at me like that. I swear it wasn't me.

LALO. Then it was her. (Points to CUCA.) Her.

CUCA (still cleaning the furniture). Me?

LALO. Yes, you. As if butter wouldn't melt in your mouth.

BEBA. Perhaps no-one told them. Perhaps they decided to come themselves.

LALO (to BEBA). Don't try and cover for her. (To CUCA, who gets up and mops her brow with her right arm.) You! You are always spying on us. (Starts walking around CUCA.) You watch our every step, every word we say, everything we think. You hide behind curtains, doors, windows ... (With a sly smile.) Ha! The spoilt brat plays detective. (Roars with laughter.) Two and two make four. Elementary, my dear Watson. (Suddenly.) Ugh! (Softly, like a cat watching its prey.) You're never satisfied. What do you want to know?

CUCA (fearful, not knowing what to do). Nothing, Lalo, nothing ... honestly ... (Sharply.) Don't get at me.

LALO. Then, why do you watch us? And why do you mix with such dreadful people?

CUCA (her eyes filling with tears). I didn't mean to ...

LALO. That's what I can't forgive.

CUCA. They're my friends.

LALO (with furious contempt). Your friends. You're pathetic. (With a triumphant smile.) Don't think you can fool me. You're being ridiculous. You resist, but you really want to run away ... little Miss Muffet. I already know you haven't got the guts to call things by their real names. (Pause.) If you're against us, show us your teeth. Bite! Rebel!

CUCA. Stop it.

LALO. Come on!

CUCA. You're getting on my nerves.

LALO. You can do it.

CUCA (choking). I'm sorry, I'm really sorry.

LALO. Come on, get up.

BEBA (to LALO). Don't torment her.

LALO (to CUCA). Look at me.

CUCA. My head hurts.

LALO. Look at me.

CUCA. I can't.

BEBA (to LALO). Give her a few moments.

CUCA (sobbing). It's not my fault. It's just how I am. I can't change. I wish I could.

LALO (irritated). What a dunce you are.

BEBA (to CUCA). Come on then. (Takes her aside and walks her over to a chair.) Dry your tears. Aren't you embarrassed? He is right you know. You're being difficult. (Pause. She strokes her hair.) There, there. (In an affectionate tone of voice.) Don't look so sad. Give us a smile. (In a maternal tone of voice.) You shouldn't have done it; but if you've started, you might as well finish. (Joking.) Your nose has gone all red, just like a baby tomato. (Tapping her nose with the index finger of her right hand.) What a silly-billy you are! (Smiles.)

CUCA (staying close to BEBA). I don't want to see him.

BEBA. Calm down.

CUCA. I don't want to hear him.

BEBA. He won't eat you.

CUCA. My heart... Listen to it, it sounds like it's going to explode.

BEBA. Don't be a cry-baby.

CUCA. I swear, I swear.

BEBA. Well, get used to it.

CUCA. I want to run away.

BEBA. It will pass.

CUCA. I can't stand it.

BEBA. It gets easier.

CUCA. I feel terrible.

LALO (holding a cauldron in his hand, making an invocation).

Oh, Aphrodite, illuminate this night of infamy.

CUCA (to BEBA, distressed). He's starting again.

BEBA (to CUCA, soothingly). Sshh. Don't pay any attention to him.

CUCA. I want to spit on him.

BEBA. Don't go near him. He bites.

LALO (as Roman emperor). Come to my aid; I'm dying of boredom.

CUCA, incapable of putting herself on the same level as LALO, reproaches him in a mocking tone of voice.

CUCA. What a performance! He's just like your uncle Chicho, don't you think, Sis? (In disgust.) You're a monster.

LALO (as important gentleman). When the gods are silent, the people shout. (He throws the cauldron downstage.)

CUCA (as mother. Sarcastically). That's right, smash the place up, you don't have to pay for it.

LALO (smiling, facing the door). What a delightful surprise!

BEBA (to CUCA). Are you feeling better? (CUCA nods.)

LALO (greeting imaginary people). Do come in ... (As if he were shaking their hands.) Oh, how are you? Hello!

BEBA (to CUCA). Sure? (CUCA nods.)

LALO (to BEBA). They've arrived.

BEBA (to LALO). Keep them at a distance so they will go away.

LALO (to BEBA). They've come to get us.

CUCA (to the imaginary people). Good evening, Margaret.

LALO (to CUCA). They've come to sniff out the blood.

BEBA (to the imaginary people). How are you both?

CUCA (to LALO). You and your suspicious mind.

BEBA (to CUCA, as mother). Don't make things worse. (To the imaginary people.) Asthma is such a pyrotechnic illness. It must still be wreaking havoc among the masses.

LALO (to CUCA). I won't forgive you for this.

CUCA (as if she were paying attention to what the imaginary people are saying. With a wicked smile to

LALO. Between her teeth). An eye for an eye ...

BEBA (as mother. To LALO, between her teeth). Pretend you didn't hear, son.

LALO (to BEBA). How rude. (In another tone of voice. With a hypocritical smile at the imaginary people.) And how are you, Pantaleón? It's been so long since I last saw you. Have you been lost?

BEBA (pestering the imaginary people). How's your urine? They told me the other day ...

CUCA (pestering the imaginary people). Is your bladder working OK?

BEBA (amazed). What? They still haven't operated on your sphincter?

CUCA (scandalized). Really? And what about the old hernia?

LALO (with a hypocritical smile). Margaret, you're looking terrific. Is that cancerous growth of yours still growing? (To BEBA.) You deal with them.

BEBA (to LALO). I've run out of things to say.

LALO (aside. Pushing her). Say anything. It doesn't matter. Goes upstage.

BEBA (looks at LALO, distressed. Pause. Immediately afterwards she throws herself into the fun of make-believing). How lovely you are ... It must be spring which gives you ... I don't know ... a special aura, a power... Oh, I don't know ... Oh, isn't it hot? I'm sweating absolute buckets. (She laughs.) Ohhh,



Pantaleón! Panties Pantaleón! You are a one! An absolute cad. Oh yes, you are. You can't play the fool with me. And that wart really has increased your pulling power.

LALO (as PANTALEÓN). Oh stop it, I don't believe a word of it. The years, my child, the passing years wither a man away and turn him into an old dish-cloth. (He laughs mischievously.) But if you'd seen me in my prime, in the good old days ... Oh, if only I could have them again ... But what's the point? That's asking for the impossible. (In a special tone of voice.) Today I have a little pain right here. (Points to his abdomen.) It's like a pin-prick ... (Sighs.) I'm old, a rusting wreck of a man. And it gets worse every day. Our children don't respect us, and they don't forgive us either.

BEBA (as MARGARET, annoyed). Don't say that. It's not fair. (Aside.) There's a time and a place for everything. (Smiling.) What will these kind, lovely children think? (To CUCA.) Come here, pumpkin. Why are you hiding? Who are you afraid of? Who's the bogeyman? (CUCA doesn't move.) Come on, what's the matter, am I an ugly old woman? Come here, don't be silly, my sweet. Tell me something: how are your mummy and daddy? Where's your mummy?

LALO (leaping up from his chair. Violently, to the audience). You see? What did I tell you. That's what they came for. I know them. I'm right. (To CUCA. Accusingly.) They're your friends. Get them out of here. They're trying to find out ... (Shouting.) Tell them to go to hell. Do you hear me? It's all over.

CUCA doesn't know what to do. She moves, gesticulates, tries to say something but is neither able nor dares to do so.

BEBA (as MARGARET. To CUCA). I don't want to leave just yet. We've come round for our regular visit. We've been meaning to come for weeks. And anyway, I'm feeling a bit woozy. Your mother should have some herbal tea.

LALO (frantically). Tell them to go, Cuca. Tell them to fuck off. (As if he were holding a whip and were threatening them.) Out. Get out of here. Into the street.

CUCA (to LALO). Don't be so rude.

BEBA (as MARGARET. Crying in outrage). I can't believe it. They're just throwing us out. It's outrageous. What beastly children.

CUCA (to LALO. In control of the situation). You have a terrible temper.

BEBA (to the imaginary visitors). I beg you to forgive him. CUCA (to LALO). They haven't done anything to you. BEBA (to the imaginary people). He has a terrible temper. CUCA (to LALO). You just don't think.

BEBA (to the imaginary people). The doctor says he needs plenty of rest.

CUCA (to LALO). So tactless, so ill-mannered, so... BEBA (to the imaginary people). Such an uncalled-for attack.

CUCA (to LALO, who is laughing slyly). God will never forgive you for this.

BEBA (to the imaginary people). Good-bye Margaret. Goodnight Pantale6n. Don't forget, Mum and Dad went away to the country and we're not sure when ... Oh, they'll be back pretty soon, I expect. Bye! Bye-bye! (Blows them a kiss with feigned tenderness. Pause. To LALO.) You made that really hard for me! (She sits down upstage and starts to polish some shoes.)

CUCA (subtly threatening). When Mum finds out...

LALO (angrily). Go on, then, tell her. (Calling.) Mum, Dad. (Laughs.) Mum, Dad. (Defiantly.) Don't wait. Go on. Run along and tell them. I'm sure they'll be grateful. Come on. Run, run. (Takes CUCA by the arm and leads her to the door. He returns downstage centre.) You're a disaster. You can never make up your mind. You want to and you don't want to. You are and you aren't. Do you think that is enough? If you really want to live, you always have to take risks. It doesn't matter if you win or lose. (Sarcastically.) But you want safety. The easy way out. (Pause.) That's where the danger lies. Because that's where you hang around, dithering, not knowing what to do, not knowing what you are and, worst of all, not knowing what you want.

CUCA (sure of herself). Don't puff yourself up too far.

LALO. You'll never save yourself, however hard you try.

CUCA. Nor will you.

LALO. It won't be you who stops me.

CUCA. Every day you will grow older... Here, here, here, shut up with the cobwebs and the dust. I know

it, I can see it, I can breathe it. (She smiles wickedly.)

LALO. So?

CUCA. You're going down, down.

LALO. That's what you'd like to see.

CUCA. Don't make me laugh.

LALO. It's the truth.

CUCA. I'll do what I like.

LALO. At last you're using your claws.

CUCA. I'm just speaking my mind.

LALO. You don't realize that what I am proposing is simply the only solution we have. (Takes the chair and moves it about in the air.) I want this chair to be here. (He suddenly puts the chair down in a particular place.) And not there. (He suddenly moves the same chair to another particular place.) Because here ... (Quickly returning it to the first place.)... it's more useful to me. I can sit down more comfortably and more quickly. And here ... (Places the chair in the second position.)... It's useless, just a silly whim ... (Puts the chair back to the first position.) Dad and Mum don't allow such things. They think that what I think and what I want to do are completely illogical. They want everything to stay where it is. Nothing must move from its proper place. And that's impossible. Because you and I and Beba ... (With a scream.) It's intolerable. And they think I'm just doing these things to contradict them, to fight them, to upset them...

CUCA. In a house, the furniture ...

LALO (rapidly, energetically). That's just an excuse. Who cares about this house, who cares about this furniture if we ourselves are nothing, if we simply pass through the house and between the furniture, just like an ashtray, a vase, or a floating knife? (To CUCA.) You could be a vase. Would you like to discover one day that's all you are? Or that you've been treated like a vase for most of your life? I could be a knife, couldn't I? And Beba, are you happy being an ashtray? No, no. That's stupid. (In a mechanical rhythm.) Come over here. Go over there. Do this. Do that. Do the other. (In another tone of voice.) I want my life.

Every day of it, every hour, every minute. I want to do what I want and feel what I want. But my hands are tied. My feet are tied. My eyes are blinkered. This house is my world. And this house is getting old and dirty and smelly. Mum and Dad are to blame. I'm sorry but that's how it is. And the worst thing is that they don't stop a moment to consider whether things shouldn't be different. Nor do you. And Beba's even worse. If Beba plays our game, it's only because she has nothing else to do.

CUCA. Why do you blame Mum and Dad for everything?

LALO. Because they made me into a useless thing.

CUCA. That's not true.

LALO. Why should I lie?

CUCA. You're trying to cover yourself.

LALO. I'm trying to be as sincere as possible.

CUCA. That doesn't give you the right to demand so much. You're terrible as well. Do you remember the games you made up? You destroyed all our dolls. You invented crazy games. You wanted us to live in your shadow - or worse, you wanted us to be just like you.

LALO. That was the only way to free myself from the burden they placed on me.

CUCA. You can't deny they've always taken care of you, that they've always loved you.

LALO. I don't want them to love me like that. I've been everything to them, except a human being.

From upstage, still polishing the shoes, BEBA imitates her father.

BEBA (as father). Lalo, from now on you will scrub the floors. You will mend my clothes and you will do so with great care. Your mother is not well and somebody has to do these things. (She continues polishing the shoes.)

CUCA. Mum and Dad have given you everything ...

LALO (to CUCA). At what cost... ?

CUCA. But what did you expect? Remember, Lalo, what Dad earned. Next to nothing. What more could he have given you?

LALO. Why have they always told me: 'Don't walk to school with so-and-so'; 'don't go out with what's-

her-name'; 'so-and-so is a bad influence.' Why did they make me believe I was better than anyone else?

Mum and Dad think that if we have a room, a bed and food, that's enough, that we should be grateful.

They told us a thousand times that very few parents did as much, that only rich children enjoyed the kind of life we had.

CUCA. Try and understand them. That's the way they are ... But sooner or later you were bound to try to get rid of them.

LALO. I couldn't. I believed in them too much. (Pause.) And what happened to my desires? My dreams?

CUCA. Since you were a kid, you always wanted your own way.

LALO. Since I was a kid, since I was that tall, they've been telling me: 'Do this.' And if I did it badly: 'You're useless.' And then came the beatings and the punishment.

CUCA. That's what all parents do. It doesn't mean you have to turn the whole house upside down.

LALO. I want things to have a real meaning, so that you, Beba, and I can say: 'We'll do this,' and we'll do it. And if it doesn't work, we can say: Too bad. Let's try again.' And if it does work, we can say: 'Great! Let's move on to the next thing.' Haven't you ever thought what it means to be able to think, to decide and to do things on your own?

CUCA. You know we can't just...

LALO (violently). We can't. We can't.

CUCA. Mum and Dad are right.

LALO. I'm right, too. Just as right as they are.

CUCA. Are you rebelling?

LALO. Yes.

CUCA. Against them?

LALO. Against everything.

At this moment BEBA repeats the imitation of her father.

BEBA (as father). Lalo, you will wash and iron. Your mother and I have agreed on this. There are the sheets, the curtains, the table-cloths and my office trousers ... You will clean the toilets. You will eat in a

corner in the kitchen. You will learn. I swear you will learn. Do you hear me? (She goes upstage.)

CUCA. Why don't you leave home then?

LALO. Where the hell would I go?

CUCA. Try.

LALO. I already have. Don't you remember? I always come home with my tail between my legs.

CUCA. Try again.

LALO. No ... I know I can't live on the streets. I get confused ... lost. I don't know what's wrong with me.

I seem to fade away. They didn't teach me. No, they just mixed me up.

CUCA. How can you be a leader if you yourself admit... ?

LALO. This house is what I know. I'm resigned to it.

CUCA. Are you ready to start again then?

LALO. As many times as it takes.

CUCA. And see it right through?

LALO. It's my only escape.

CUCA. But don't you think the police will find out?

LALO. I don't know. Maybe ...

CUCA. How can you win?

LALO. Wait and see.

CUCA. Well, I won't help you. Understand? I'll defend them tooth and nail if I have to. I'm not interested in any of this. I accept what Mum and Dad say. They don't interfere with me. They give me everything I need ... You're the pigheaded one, not me. Dad's right when he says you're like a cat: you close your eyes so you can't see the food they're giving you. (Steps forward.) Go away. I won't play your game. (To BEBA.) Don't you count on me either. (In another tone of voice.) Oh, God, get me out of this mess. (Pause.) They're older than us. They know more about life. They've struggled, made sacrifices. They deserve our respect at the very least. If something goes wrong in this house, it's because it was bound to... No, no, I won't fight them.

LALO (amused. Clapping). Bravo. A fine performance.

BEBA (amused. Clapping). You deserve an award.

LALO. We'll have to invent one.

BEBA. She's one to watch.

LALO. She's an imbecile.

BEBA. She's sensational.

LALO. She's an idiot.

BEBA. She's a saint. (They applaud furiously and mockingly.)

CUCA. Go on, laugh. My time will come. And then I'll show no mercy.

LALO. What do you mean?

CUCA. I'll do what I feel like.

LALO. You just try.

CUCA. You can't order me about. (She walks back a few steps, moving away from them.)

LALO (sarcastically). You're getting scared. (Laughs.)

CUCA (furiously). I've got hands, nails, teeth.

LALO (aggressively, defiantly). I'm in charge now.

CUCA. Don't come near me.

LALO. You'll do what I tell you. (Seizes her arm and they begin to fight.)

CUCA (furiously). Let go.

LALO. Will you obey me?

CUCA. Bully.

LALO. You'll do anything I tell you.

CUCA. You're hurting me.

LALO. Yes or no?

CUCA. It's not fair ... (Totally defeated.) All right, I'll do anything you tell me.

LALO. Quick. Get up.

CUCA (to BEBA). Help me.

BEBA walks towards CUCA. LALO stops her with one movement. CUCA pretends that she cannot get up.

LALO. Let her get up on her own.

BEBA (to LALO). Forgive her.

LALO (shouting). Keep out of this.

BEBA (desperately). Oh, you're always shouting! I can't stand it. I came here to help you or to have fun.

Because I don't know what else to do ... Round and round we go ... We get shouted at for anything: for a glass of water, a bar of soap on the floor, a dirty towel, a broken ashtray... Aren't there more important things to live for? I wonder sometimes what the clouds, the trees, the rain, and the animals are all for.

Shouldn't we stop and think about these things? And I run to the window and stick my head out... But

Mum and Dad start shouting again: 'What are you thinking of, child? Look at the dust and soot on the window. Get inside, or you'll catch a cold.' If I go to the living room and turn on the radio, they say:

'You're wasting electricity. Last month and the month before that we used so much and we can't go on like this. Turn it off. That noise is driving me crazy.' Or if I start singing that song you made up recently, The living room's not the living room,<sup>1</sup> the whole house explodes like an upturned ants' nest, and they start shouting again: Mum and Dad shout at Lalo, Lalo shouts at Mum, Mum shouts at Lalo, Lalo shouts at Dad, Dad shouts at Lalo, and I'm left in the middle. In the end I come and hide here ... But you don't even notice and carry on arguing, as if this house's problems could be solved with words. And now you two end up rowing as well. Oh, I can't bear it any more. (Determined.) I'm getting out. (LALO grabs her arm.) Let me go. I don't want to hear any more about it. Deaf, blind. Dead, dead.

LALO (tenderly but firmly). Don't say that.

BEBA. That's what I want.

LALO. If you helped me, perhaps we can save ourselves.

BEBA (looking up at him suddenly amazed). What do you mean? (She holds on to his arms.) All right, we can do it. Today.



LALO quickly picks up two knives. He examines their edges and starts scraping them against each other.

BEBA (to LALO). Are you going to tell the story again?

CUCA (to BEBA). Quiet, please.

BEBA moves about the stage. Each character takes up a distinctive position.

BEBA (as gossiping neighbor). Shall I tell you something, Cacha? It was in all the papers. Yes, dear, yes.

But you know old Margaret who lives at the corner, and Pantaletín, who's only got one eye? Well, they saw everything, and I mean everything. And they told me all about it.

LALO (scraping the two knives quite firmly). Ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac.

BEBA (as drunk shop-keeper). Old Pantaleón and Margaret know everything ... Bloody hell! Some mothers do 'ave em, I tell you. What is the world coming to ... ? Have you seen the photo on the front page?

LALO (scraping the two knives violently). Ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac.

BEBA (as MARGARET speaking to her friends). We dropped round there about half-past nine... The usual time. Well dear, the moment I walked in I said to myself: 'Goodness gracious me. Something's funny here.' You know me, I have a nose for these things, and sure enough. What a sight, dearie!

(Horried.) Blood all over the place. It was frightful. Look at my hair, it's still standing on end. Oh, it makes me shiver all over. I can't describe it properly, you should have seen the ... Ugh! It's horrible even thinking about it. A stream, incredible ... I think there were some syringes. Isn't that right, Pantaleón? And pills and ampoules ... Those children are wicked, and it's in their family. Oh, Consolación, ask Angelita what she saw a few days ago ... Awful! And such sweet parents, so self-sacrificing. It's that Lalo, he's the ring-leader. No doubt about it. It was him, him and no-one else... Ah! you should have seen his knife ... Dear Lord, what a butchers knife! LALO (in his own world). Ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac, ric-rac.

BEBA (as PANTALEON). I said to Maggie: 'Hold your horses, woman.' But she immediately started blathering on about the youth of today, and how awful they all are ... You know what a blabber she is. They ... No, I tell a lie. He, Lalo... Although at times I can't help thinking that... Well, goodness knows



If I've told you once, I've told you a thousand times: this is no time to come home. (She slaps him around.) When will you learn some respect? How do you think your mother feels? Eh? You're breaking her heart! Is that what you want? Do you want us both to die of broken hearts? You just don't think! And take that look off your face. (She pushes him towards the chair.) Sit down. Do you want me to ground you again? (LALO makes a gesture.) Don't answer back. Such insolence. I've given you everything. You brat you wicked, ungrateful brat It's me who makes all the sacrifices ... Yes, your mother gets at me for going out with my friends and the girls from the office. Well, more than one business deal has fallen through because of you and the rest of my family. Can't you see the sacrifices I've made? Thirty years ... Thirty years behind a desk getting ulcers from being pushed around by my bosses, doing without... I don't even have a proper suit or a decent pair of shoes. And this is how you pay me back! Thirty years is no joke. Thirty years working for my son, and today he turns out to be a good-for-nothing, a slob who doesn't want to work or study ... Well, tell me, what do you want? And what have you been up to?

LALO (trembling). We were reading ...

BEBA (as father). Reading? Reading what? What do you mean, reading ... ?

LALO (thoughtfully). An adventure magazine, Dad.

CUCA walks downstage centre confidently, with mischievous intent. BEBA goes upstage.

CUCA (as mother). Magazines. Magazines. Magazines. That's a lie. Tell us another. Tell us the truth.

(BEBA, as father, approaches LALO aggressively.) No, Albert, don't hit him. (To LALO.) Where is the money I hid in the sideboard? Did you take it? Have you spent it? Have you lost it? (With hatred.) Thief.

You little swine. You bastard. (Tears welling in her eyes.) I'll tell your father. No, don't say anything.

You're a disgrace. He'll kill you if he finds out. Holy Mary, mother of God, what have I done to deserve this? (Furiously, to LALO.) Come on, give me back the money. Give it back or I'll call the police ...

(Rifles through LALO's pockets. He submits completely. She screams.) Thief. You bloody thief. I will tell your father. I ought to beat you. Whip you. Put you in reform school. (LALO has his back to the audience.)

BEBA (from upstage, like a little child). Mum, mum, is this an elephant?

LALO (as father). Beba, come here. Show me your hands. (BEBA walks downstage centre. Shows him her hands.) Those nails must be cut. They make you look like a... (To CUCA.) Give me some scissors, woman. (CUCA goes up to LALO and whispers in his ear.) What? What's that? Really? And Lalo? Where's he gone? (CUCA and LALO look at BEBA with evil intent.) Is it true what your mother says? Come on, own up. Own up, or I'll... So you lifted your skirt and showed your knickers off to a bunch of perverts? Can this be true? (BEBA gesticulates silently.) You filthy creature. (CUCA, as mother, smiles.) I'm going to ... (LALO and CUCA corner BEBA.) Do you want to become a whore, is that it? Huh? (Shaking BEBA by the shoulders.) Well, not while I'm alive, do you hear? If I catch you doing anything sluttish, I'll kill you. Is that clear? (Pause.) Where is your brother. (Calling.) Lalo, Lalo! (To CUCA.) You say he's stolen some money from you?

BEBA (coming out of pan). I can't. My head's exploding. LALO (ordering). Go on, you can't stop. CUCA (sarcastically). Do what your master says. BEBA (agonized). Air, I need some air.

LALO (To BEBA.) The doorbell's ringing.

BEBA collapses on to a chair.

CUCA (as mother). Have you heard, Albert?

BEBA (desperately). Please, I think I'm going to be sick. LALO (annoyed). She ruins everything, she does.

CUCA (as mother). Sshh! Wait a second, children. There goes the doorbell again.

BEBA (as father. Greeting an imaginary person who comes through the door). Come in, Angelita. How lovely to see you.

CUCA (as mother. To BEBA). Tell me, poppet. Go on, you can tell me. What's wrong? (Feigning self-denial and concern.)

LALO (as father. To the imaginary person). Don't stand on ceremony, Angelita. (His tone of voice is convincingly cordial and spontaneous.) Make yourself at home. Please sit down.

CUCA (as mother. To BEBA). Make yourself comfortable, honey. Do you want a cushion? (Her words are heavy with sincerity.) Why don't you just lean back and relax?

LALO (as father). And Lalo? Where's he hiding? Oh, Angelita, you have no idea what those kids are like.

Only three of them, but it's still like living in a war zone.

CUCA (as mother. To LALO). Albert, I think ... (To the imaginary person.) I'm so sorry, Angelita, I'm not looking after you very well, but I think my little girl might be sick; she's got a tummy ache ...

LALO (as father). Have you taken her temperature? (CUCA nods.)

CUCA (as mother). How very embarrassing.

LALO (as father, to the imaginary person). You see what I mean? They're little devils. But I don't let them get away with anything. I rule them with a rod of iron, although not literally of course.

CUCA (as mother. Anxious. To LALO). What can we do?

LALO (as father). Does she have a temperature? (CUCA shakes her head.) Have you given her some chamomile tea?

CUCA (as mother). She doesn't want anything.

LALO (as father). Well, make her then.

CUCA (as mother). She'll be sick.

LALO (as father). Give her some normal tea then.

CUCA (as mother). Oh, Angelita, you can't imagine the suffering, the grief... Why did we ever have children?

LALO (as father. Forcing her to drink from a teacup). Drink. (BEBA rejects it.) Do what I say. Drink it all up.

BEBA (screams,- out of pan). Just leave me alone. (Gets up furiously. Centre stage.) You're monsters.

You're both the same. (Shouting upstage.) I want to go. Let me go. (CUCA and LALO try to stop her, but she gets to the door. Screaming.) Mum, Dad, get me out of here. (Falls beside the door, crying.) Get me out of here.

LALO (as father). What's going on?

CUCA. Nice performance. (Going up to BEBA.) You, it had to be you... You always push me into it: 'Go on, don't be wet. It'll be a laugh.' I can't believe it. Come on, up you get. (Helps her to get up. As mother.)

Remember we've got a visitor. (To the imaginary visitor.) They're so spoiled, it's exhausting ... (To BEBA. Taking her back to the chair where she had been sitting.) That's a girl, aren't you a good girl, well done...

BEBA (as little girl). I want to go.

CUCA (as mother). Where do you want to go, pet?

LALO (out of pan; violently). This isn't right. There's no point.

CUCA (as mother). Don't lose your temper, Albert.

LALO (out of pan). I feel like strangling her.

CUCA (as mother). Patience.

BEBA (crying). I'm scared.

LALO (out of pan). Scared of what? Why is she crying?

CUCA (as mother). Ignore it. That's the best way, Albert.

LALO (as father. Awkwardly). It's just that sometimes ... (Slapping his right knee.) You don't understand, woman.

CUCA (as mother). What do you mean I don't understand? (Sighs.) Oh, Albert, what a baby you are. Isn't he, Angelita?

BEBA (furiously. Gets up). I want to do something. I'm going to crack up. I want to go. I can't stand being shut up. I'm suffocating. I'm going to die and I don't want to be crushed, buried in this room.

Anything but that. I don't want any more of this. Please, please, please, let me go. CUCA goes up to BEBA and puts her arm around her. She feigns great tenderness with her expression and gestures.)

CUCA (as mother). Go if you must, my darling. You are a little worked up. (BEBA stays in the dark, upstage. CUCA returns with a smile that gives way to laughter.) Have you ever seen anything like it? It was as if we were torturing her. What imaginations these children have ... ! (Sits down and arranges her hair.) Look at me. I must look like a dog's dinner. I haven't had time to catch my breath all day. What an ordeal, Angelita, what an ordeal! I'm so sorry I've not been looking after you better ... (Listens to the imaginary person.) But you're like one of the family. (Smiles hypocritically.) All the same, I do like to do

things properly. Don't I, Albert? Don't lose your cool so easily, dear. We must stay perfectly calm and collected. (LALO gets up.) Where are you going? Think carefully before you do anything. (LALO looks at her pointedly.) Ah yes, I understand. (LALO walks to the dark side of the stage.) He's gone to keep an eye on what those little terrors are up to. You need eyes in the back of your head, or rather everywhere... You have to keep your ear to the ground. You always have to be on the watch, on the lookout, because they can be very, very naughty.

At this moment LALO enters with an old and dirty bridal veil. LALO imitates his mother in her youth, on her wedding day in church. In the background, BEBA hums the wedding march. LALO's movements should not be exaggerated. A certain ambiguity prevails on this occasion. LALO (as mother). Oh, Albert, I'm scared. The smell of the flowers, the music ... So many people have come, haven't they? Your sister Rose didn't come, nor did your cousin Lola... They don't like me! I know they don't, Albert! I know it! They've been saying horrible things about me, and about my mother too. Oh, I don't know! Do you really love me, Albert? Do I look pretty? Ah, my tummy hurts. Smile. There's that creep Dr. Nufiez and his wife ... Do you think people are counting the months? If they find out, I'll die of embarrassment. Look, Espinosa's daughters are smiling at you, those sluts, whoops, did I say that word ... ? Ah, Albert, I feel dizzy, my tummy hurts, hold me, don't tread on my train or I'll fall over ... Oh, honey, I want to get rid of this baby ... I know you're determined to have it, but I don't want it... Oh, I'm going to faint... Albert, Albert, this is ridiculous ... We didn't have to get married today, another day would have been better ... . Oh, that music and the smell of those flowers, ugh! And there's your mother, that bitch, whoops, did I say that word ... ? Ah, I don't know ... Albert, I can't breathe ... This damned brat! I'd like to rip it out myself... CUCA (as mother. Hatefully, biting the words). You make me sick. (Wrenching the veil off him.) I don't know how I gave birth to such an abortion. I'm ashamed of you, ashamed of your whole life. And now you want to save yourself? No way; forget about salvation ... Drown yourself. Die. Do you think I'm going to let you, you of all people, criticize me, in front of visitors? Don't you see what you are? You're a cretin! (To the imaginary person.) I'm so sorry, Angelita. Please don't go. (In her previous harsh and firm tone of voice.) I've been asking you to help me for ages. There are loads of things to clean in this house:

the dishes, the fridge, the dust, and those marks on the mirrors. So much to be done: mending, darning, sewing. (LALO goes up to CUCA.) Get out. You want to turn this house upside down and I won't allow it. Not over my dead body. The ashtray goes on the table. (Puts the ashtray on the table.) The vase goes on the table. (Puts the vase on the table.) Who do you think you are? I'll tell your father right now ... (With disgust and rancour.) You wretch, what would you do without us? What have you got to moan about? Do you think we are stupid? Yes? Well, I'll tell you, we're no better or worse than anyone else. But if you think we'll let you order us around, you're very wrong. Do you know what I've sacrificed to keep this house running smoothly? Do you think we'll just give it up like that? If you want to go, go. I'll pack your bags myself. There's the door.

CUCA stands with her back to the audience. LALO approaches the table and contemplates the knife with indifference. He picks it up and caresses it. He stabs it into the centre of the table.

LALO. How much longer? How much longer?

BEBA. Don't get impatient. LALO. If only we could do it today. BEBA. You're being stupid. LALO. Right now.

LALO grabs the knife from the table. He looks at his two sisters and rushes upstage.

BEBA. Don't do it.

CUCA. You'll be sorry.

BEBA. Be careful.

CUCA (sings weakly). The living room is not the living room. The two sisters are in position, BEBA stage right, CUCA stage left. They have their backs to the audience. Simultaneously, they utter a frightful, shattering scream. LALO enters. The two sisters fall to their knees.

LALO (holding the knife). Silence.

BEBA and CUCA (start singing quietly). The living room is not the living room, the living room is the kitchen. The bedroom is not the bedroom, the bedroom is the bathroom.

LALO. Now I feel calm. I'd like to sleep, sleep, sleep forever ... But I'll do that tomorrow. Today I have a lot to do. (The knife slips from his hands and falls to the ground.) How easy it all is ... ! You just walk



into the room. Slowly, on tiptoes. The slightest noise would mean disaster. And you move forward, hanging in mid-air. The knife doesn't tremble. Nor does your hand. You know what you're doing. The wardrobes, the bed, the curtains, the vases, the carpets, the ashtrays, the chairs: they all push you towards the naked, wheezing, sweating bodies. (Pause. Determined.) And now we must clean up the blood. Wash them. Dress them. And fill the house with flowers. Later on, we'll dig a deep, deep hole and wait until morning ... (Pensively.) So easy ... so terrible.

The two sisters have stopped singing. CUCA picks up the knife and starts cleaning it on her apron. Long pause.

CUCA (to BEBA). How do you feel?

BEBA (to CUCA). All right.

CUCA (to BEBA). It's tiring.

BEBA (to CUCA). The worst thing is, you get used to it. CUCA (to BEBA). But some day ... BEBA (to CUCA). It's like everything.

LALO. Open the door. (Beats his chest. Exalted, wide-eyed.) An assassin. An assassin. (Falls to his knees.)

CUCA (to BEBA). What's all this? BEBA. The first part has ended. Blackout.

## ACT TWO

As the curtain rises, LALO is on his knees, his back to the audience, his head hanging low. CUCA is standing up, looking at him and laughing. BEBA impassively takes the knife which is lying on the table.

CUCA (to BEBA). Look at him. (To LALO.) That's how I like to see you. (Laughing.) Now it's my turn. (Laughs long and hard.)

LALO (imperiously). Shut the door.

CUCA (to LALO, closing the door). I can't stand you!

BEBA (to CUCA, looking at LALO disdainfully). You're pathetic.

CUCA (to LALO). What's wrong with you? Listen, little one: we've got to carry on. We're not going to do

things by half this time. I'm fed up with leaving the job unfinished.

LALO (crestfallen). We always have to begin again.

CUCA. Fine. I agree. But I still say that today...

LALO (annoyed). Yes, yes ... Whatever you say.

CUCA. Whatever I say, no. Whatever must be. Or am I now the inventor of all this? That's a good one!

BEBA (annoyed. To CUCA). But you love ...

CUCA (offended). And what do you want me to do, little girl?

BEBA. Anything but that.

CUCA. No, my sweet, the time has come and I have to see it through to the end.

BEBA. You know I'm right.

CUCA. I don't care.

BEBA. Then I'm going.

CUCA. You're staying.

BEBA. You're trying my patience.

CUCA. Don't threaten me.

BEBA. I can scratch and kick.

LALO. That's enough arguing.

CUCA (to BEBA). That's right: pipe down.

BEBA. Hah! I don't believe it. I am not going to let myself rot away behind these walls. I hate this place.

You two like all this rubbish. But I'm young, and one of these days I'm going to get out of here and not come back and then I'll be able to do what I like. What do you think of that? (Pause.) You didn't want to do it at the beginning, did you? But now you're capable of killing to get what you want. It's as if the salvation of your souls were at stake ... Yes, your salvation ... Don't look at me like that. Salvation from what? Maybe you just want to save your own skin? (Deliberately.) That's why you called the police.

That's why you're about to start the investigation and the interrogation. Did you do this? No, no. You didn't do it? Hey, officer, how could I have done it? But we've found a clue. There are the fingerprints.

One of you committed the crime. Do you think you can fuck with us, eh? Do you think you can take us for a ride? I don't want to get involved in that.

CUCA. You have to see it through to the end.

BEBA. It never ends.

CUCA. Don't give up.

BEBA. I'm tired. It's always the same. Do this. Do that. Why do we go round and round like this ... ?

(More intimate.) Anyway, I don't want to get mixed up ... (Changes her tone of voice.) It's no fun.

CUCA. Everything you're saying is complete crap. (Like her mother.) A right little gem you've turned out to be! Do you think I'm just going to sit back and watch after what he has done? I will defend Mum and Dad's memory. I will defend them against anything.

BEBA. Don't touch me.

CUCA (as mother, with authority). Put that knife back where you found it. (BEBA obeys and drops the knife on the floor.) Not like that.

BEBA (furiously). You do it then.

CUCA (slyly, with a smirk). Control yourself. Come on, let's have everything back in its proper place.

(Changes her tone of voice.) The best is yet to come. (BEBA replaces the knife in a satisfactory way.) We must be very careful.

BEBA (furiously). Count me out.

CUCA (mentally arranging the room). The lamps, the curtains ... It's a mathematical question.

BEBA (furiously). Go and find someone else. Or do it all yourself.

CUCA. You've been in on it from the start. You can't pull out now.

BEBA. We'll see about that.

CUCA (authoritarian, as mother.) Nobody can foul up.

BEBA. Let's hope the unexpected happens.

CUCA. I'm depending on that as well. (To LALO.) Get up. (LALO doesn't reply.)

BEBA (furiously). Leave him alone. Can't you see he's suffering?

CUCA. Keep out of this.

BEBA. You should have waited. Maybe ... Just a moment.

CUCA. I know what I'm doing.

BEBA (with subtle sarcasm). It's all right by me. But remember I'm on my guard. Ready, at any moment...

CUCA (rapidly, furiously). To do what?

BEBA. To break out.

CUCA. Really? So you are against it... ? Well, listen very carefully to what I'm going to say: don't even think I'm going to let you interfere. You're just a tool, a cog, a screw ... You should be happy about that. (Pause.) Don't make that face. (In a threatening tone of voice.) All right, but you'll have to take the consequences. In this house, everything is part of the game. (She moves around, trying to arrange things, and listing them.) Vase, knife, curtains, glasses ... water, pills. The police will be here in a minute... Syringe, ampoules... All we have to do is disappear... vanish. (BEBA makes as if to leave. CUCA stops her.) No, my sweet. Don't be silly. You understand? (CUCA's sarcastic tone of voice makes BEBA flinch.) What? You don't like what we're doing? Do you want to throw a spanner in the works ... ? We'll be invisible. Do you have anything to add? We are innocent. Do you want to take sides? (To LALO.) Get up. It's late. (To BEBA.) Are you going to defend the indefensible? Perhaps he's not an assassin? (To LALO.) Tidy yourself up a bit. You look like a corpse. (LALO gets up clumsily. BEBA puts a pack of cards on the table and then spreads them out. To BEBA.) That would never have crossed my mind.

LALO (his back still to the audience. To BEBA). Bring me some water.

CUCA (imperiously). No, that's not allowed. (Approaching LALO, straightening out his clothes. Quite tenderly.) You have to wait. (As mother.) That collar is a scandal... You look like a tramp.

LALO. My throat is dry.

BEBA (as mother, quite tenderly). Did you not sleep well?

LALO. I need to go outside for a while.

CUCA (violently). You're not going anywhere.

LALO. Just for a minute.

CUCA. Absolutely not. Everything is ready. What are you trying to ...? Are you playing with me? Well, I won't let you.

CUCA tries to stop LALO, who moves to escape. She grabs him by his shin collar. They struggle violently. For a moment, BEBA just watches them in amazement. Then she becomes morbidly interested in the fight and starts to walk around CUCA and LALO.

LALO. Let go of me.

CUCA. No way.

LALO. Who do you think you are?

CUCA. Who do you think you are?.

LALO. You're scratching me.

CUCA. All part of the game. This is life or death. And you can't escape. I'll do anything to see you put away.

BEBA runs to the dark side of the stage where the door is. BEBA (screaming). The police, the police.

The two siblings stop fighting. LALO falls into a chair, beaten. BEBA stands beside the closed door.

CUCA stands on the other side of the door, also upstage.

CUCA (in her previous tone of voice, furiously). I'll never forgive you. It's your fault. All your fault. If you want to die, go ahead and die.

BEBA. Sshh! Be quiet.

Long pause. BEBA and CUCA start to move slowly, almost in slow motion. They are now the two policemen who discover the crime.

CUCA (as policeman 1). Very dark in here. BEBA (as policeman 2). Smells horrible. CUCA (as policeman 1). Bloodstains everywhere.

BEBA (as policeman 2). Looks like they've killed a couple of pigs.

CUCA (as policeman 1). It was pigs what did it.

BEBA (as policeman 2). Swine.

The two sisters walk as if in a darkened gallery. LALO remains in the chair. The sisters stop in front of him and pretend to shine a torch on him.

BEBA (as policeman 2). Got him.

CUCA (as policeman 1). What a fight he put up. (To LALO, violently.) Get up. Come on, move it, move it. (LALO tries to shield himself from the torch's glare.)

BEBA (as policeman 2). Hey, boy ... One move and I'll blow your head off.

CUCA (as policeman 1). Come on, get up.

BEBA (as policeman 2). It's curtains for you, boy. (LALO gets up and puts his hands up.) We'd better be quick.

CUCA (as policeman 1). Frisk 'im.

BEBA (as policeman 2). This guy is dangerous. (Frisks LALO's clothes and body.) Where are your papers? What's your name? (LALO makes no reply.) Can't you see you're under arrest? If an officer of the law asks you a question, you answer him. Now who screamed?

CUCA (as policeman 1). Have you killed someone?

BEBA (as policeman 2). Where's all the blood from?

CUCA (as policeman 1). Do you live with your parents?

BEBA (as policeman 2). Do you have any sisters and brothers? Answer.

CUCA (as policeman 1). You did 'em in, didn't you? Answer. It's in your own interest.

LALO (very vaguely). Don't know.

BEBA (as policeman 2). What do you mean, 'don't know'? Do you live on your own?

CUCA (as policeman 1). And all these clothes... ? Let him be. (Smiles.) He'll talk in the end.

BEBA (as policeman 2). Nobody can save him now, mate. (Smiles. Crudely.) He's a hard bastard. He probably started by robbing them. But that wasn't enough, so he decided to kill them. (To LALO.) Your own parents? I can hardly believe it. Did you poison them? (Holds up the box of pills and puts it back on the table.) How many pills ... ? (LALO doesn't reply. He occasionally smiles.) Come on, out with it... If you talk, it'll be easier for you. (To CUCA, showing her the syringe.) Look. He probably ...

CUCA (as policeman 1). It looks like this crime's a real whopper. (To LALO.) Where are the bodies? (To BEBA.) No sign of them.

BEBA (as policeman 2). Where did you hide them? Did you bury them?

CUCA (as policeman 1). We'll have to search the house from top to bottom. Comb it, every inch of it.

BEBA (as policeman 2). Why did you kill them? Answer. Did they abuse you?

LALO (dryly). No.

CUCA (as policeman 1). Time's up, sonny. Why did you kill them?

LALO (confidently). I didn't do it.

CUCA (as policeman 1). You've got a nerve!

BEBA (as policeman 2). Were they asleep?

CUCA (as policeman 1). Don't play tough-guy with me. So you didn't kill anyone? Not your parents? Not your brothers? None of your relations? (LALO shrugs his shoulders.) Then what have you done?

BEBA (as policeman 2). Did you smother them with their pillows?

CUCA (as policeman 1). How many times did you stab them?

BEBA (as policeman 2). Five? Ten? Fifteen?

CUCA (as policeman 1). You're not going to tell me this is all a game. There's blood all over the shop.

Look, you're covered in it yourself. How can you deny it? I've never seen such a crime. (Suddenly.)

Where are your parents? Stuffed in a trunk? (Pause. Reconstructing the scene.) You walked slowly, on tiptoes, so as not to make a noise ... Your parents were snoring. You were holding your breath and the knife in your hand didn't even tremble ...

LALO (proudly). Wrong. You're lying.

CUCA (as policeman 1). Then what did happen? (Exhausted.) Ah, this house is a labyrinth.

BEBA (as policeman 2. He has been examining the room). Here's the proof. (Points to the knife.) We're getting there. (Stoops to pick it up.)

CUCA (as policeman 1, shouting). Don't touch it.

BEBA. (as policeman 2). We have to check it for fingerprints. (Picks the knife up with a handkerchief and

puts it on the table.)

CUCA (as policeman 1). If he continues refusing to...

BEBA (as policeman 2). I'll sort him out in a moment. (To LALO.) Come here. You better talk or else I'll... Look. I don't want to have to resort to violence. But who do you think we are? We're not just here for decoration. (In a tone of voice which is both threatening and persuasive.) Talk, it's in your own interest. You've had plenty of time to think. (In a friendlier tone of voice.) Talk, come on, it's for your own good. (Looking at CUCA.) It'll all be taken into account, don't worry. (CUCA goes to the side of the stage, searching for clues.) You'll feel much better once you've told us all about it. It's very easy, very, very easy. (In an almost familiar tone of voice.) How did you do it? Why did you do it? Did they abuse you verbally or... ? Was there some kind of robbery? What really happened? Perhaps you've forgotten? Try and remember... Let's see, take your time.

LALO (very haughtily). None of you could understand.

BEBA (as policeman 2, persuasively, smiling). Why do you say that? (More intimately.) Come on, boy, own up.

CUCA (as policeman 1, offstage). Don't worry. I've found it. (Comes on stage, rubbing his hands together.) Just take a look! It's a disgusting sight! Horrible! It'd make anyone's hair stand on end. (Reconstructing the scene.) There's a pick and a shovel. He's dug this massive hole. I don't know how he did it on his own ... And there, at the bottom are two bodies with a little earth on them. (Going up to LALO and slapping him on the back.) So this young gentleman did nothing, did he? (BEBA goes over to the place from where CUCA has come.) Yes, yes, I understand. (With a smile of satisfaction.) The young gentleman is innocent. Well, well, well... (Stares at him disdainfully.) This young gentleman's days are numbered. (In a vulgar tone of voice.) You've signed your own death warrant, Sonny-Jim.

BEBA (coming on set, no longer as policeman 2). It's awful.

CUCA (as policeman 1, in a vulgar tone of voice). Don't get melodramatic.

BEBA. It made me go weak at the knees.

CUCA (as policeman 1). This kid is quite something.



BEBA. It was bloodcurdling.

CUCA (as policeman 1). Come on, pull yourself together. (To LALO, disdainfully.) You're a ... You make me want to... (To BEBA.) Let's draw up the charges.

BEBA. What? But he hasn't confessed yet.

CUCA (as policeman I). It's not necessary.

BEBA. I think it will be.

CUCA (as policeman I). We've got enough evidence.

BEBA. We should at least try ... (Going up to LALO.) Lalo, you must tell us. You must talk. Why? Why, Lalo?

CUCA (as policeman 1). Don't let up on him now.

BEBA. (To LALO, almost begging.) Don't you understand, it's a formality. We need a confession. Say whatever you like, whatever comes into your head, even if it's illogical or absurd. Please say something.

(LALO remains impenetrable.)

CUCA (as policeman I). Let's get back to the station. The charges. The report.

BEBA walks gravely over to the table and sits down. From this moment on, the stage should take on a new dimension, an eerie strangeness. The elements used are vocal sounds, beating on the table, and rhythmic foot-tapping, first by BEBA and then by both BEB A and CUCA.

CUCA (dictating, automatically). In the neighbourhood of this police station, and being the fifth day ...

BEBA (moving her hands over the table, automatically). Tac-tac-tac-tac. Tac-tac-tac-tac. Tac- tac-tac-tac.

CUCA.... in the presence of the duty officer, we the undersigned, Officer 421 Cuco and Officer 842 Bebo, brought in for questioning an individual claiming to be called...

BEBA. Tac-tac-tac-tac. Tac-tac-tac-tac. Tac-tac-tac-tac. (CUCA moves her lips as if she were still dictating.)

CUCA. ...The officers affirm that finding themselves in the area corresponding to their assigned patrol...

BEBA (beating her hands on the table with great sense of rhythm). Tac-tac-tac-tac. Tac-tac-tac- tac. Tac-tac-tac-tac.

CUCA ...heard raised voices and a public disturbance...

BEBA. Tac-tac-tac-tac. Tac-tac-tac-tac.

CUCA ...arguing and fighting ...

BEBA. Tac-tac-tac-tac. Tac-tac-tac-tac.

CUCA.... and having heard a cry for help ...

BEBA. (Beating her hands on the table and tapping her feet rhythmically and automatically.) Tac-tac-tac-tac. Tac-tac-tac. Tac-tac-tac-tac.

CUCA.... and upon entering the aforementioned house... BEBA. Tac-tac-tac-tac. Tac-tac-tac-tac.

CUCA.... discovered two bodies ... BEBA. Tac-tac-tac-tac.

CUCA ...with contusions and first-degree injuries ...

BEBA. Tac-tac-tac-tac. Tac-tac-tac-tac.

CUCA starts to beat on the table and to tap her feet like BEBA. The scene reaches a delirious climax which lasts a moment. Pause. BEBA and CUCA seem to return to normality. CUCA shows a piece of paper to LALO.

CUCA (authoritatively). Sign here. (Pause. LALO looks at the piece of paper. Looks at CUCA. Takes the paper with contempt and studies it closely.)

LALO (furiously, firmly, defiantly). I don't accept. Do you understand? This is all rubbish. It's disgraceful. (Pause. Almost mockingly.) I think it's splendid, terrific, that you should try and interrogate me using these appalling techniques. It's so logical. Almost... normal, natural. But what do you want? Do you think I'm going to sign this shitty piece of paper? You call this the law? You call this justice?

(Shouting. Tears up the piece of paper.) Crap, crap, crap. This is the dignified thing to do. This is the exemplary thing to do. This is the respectable thing to do. (Angrily stamps on the torn-up paper. Pause. Smiling bitterly, almost crying.) How nice, how dignified, how exemplary it would be if you were just to say: guilty. And be done with it. Next case, please. But to do what you're doing now ... (To CUCA.) Are you not satisfied with what has happened? Why are you trying to feed me with a pile of fictions? Do you think I'm a moron? (Mockingly.) Or do you think I'm trembling with fear. Well, let me say it loud and

clear: no. I am not afraid. (BEBA hits the table with the gavel.) I'm guilty. Yes, guilty. So judge me. Do what you like. I'm entirely in your hands. (BEBA bangs the gavel again. LALO's tone of voice becomes less violent, although he still acts arrogantly.) If your Honour will allow me ...

BEBA (as judge). The public will remain silent, or the court will be cleared and this hearing will proceed in camera. (To CUCA.) Prosecution may proceed.

CUCA (to BEBA). Thank you very much, your Honour. (To LALO.) The accused is aware of the difficulties we have encountered in our attempts to clarify the circumstances surrounding the events which took place on that ill-fated morning ... of ... (BEBA bangs the gavel.)

BEBA (as judge). I must ask the prosecution to be more specific and clear in the formulation of his questions.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). Excuse me, your Honour, but...

BEBA (moving her gavel). I must ask the prosecution to attend exclusively to his cross-examination.

CUCA (as public prosecutor. To BEBA). Your Honour, throughout all previous questioning, the accused has been exceptionally evasive, which has made it impossible to reach any ...

BEBA (as judge. To CUCA. Bangs the table hard). Keep to the point.

CUCA (as public prosecutor. Solemnly). Your Honour, let me repeat that the accused has systematically obstructed all attempts to arrive at the truth. For this reason, I submit for the consideration of the court the following questions: is he permitted to make fun of the Law? Should he make fun of the Law? Is not the Law, the Law? If we are permitted to make fun of the Law, does the Law stop being the Law? If we should make fun of the Law, is the Law something other than the Law? In short, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, do we all have to become mind readers?

BEBA (as judge. Implacable, hammering the table). I insist that the prosecution does not stray beyond its remit.

CUCA (as public prosecutor, showing off her theatrical abilities). Ah, ladies and gentlemen, the accused, like every guilty man, fears the weight of Justice ...

LALO (furiously, but containing himself). You're trying to trap me. I can see you coming. You're trying

to destroy me, I won't let you.

CUCA (as public prosecutor. Solemnly and furiously. To BEBA). Your Honour, the accused is behaving in contempt of court. In the name of the Law, I request that correct procedure be followed. What is the accused trying to do? Is he trying to disrupt proceedings? If that is his objective, we have to rule him publicly out of court. The processes of Law and Justice must remain logical. Nobody can complain about their methods. They were made to suit mankind. But it appears that the accused either does not understand, or does not want to understand, or perhaps he suffers from mental disorder... Or maybe he prefers to hide himself, to take cover behind a smokescreen of stupidity and aggression. I must ask every single member of this jury and the court in general to examine his attitude carefully and, at the appropriate time, to deliver a verdict which is both balanced and implacable. Ladies and gentlemen, on the one hand, the accused openly declares his guilt, that is, he admits that he has killed. This regrettable deed lies beyond the limits of normal behaviour and represents an intolerable threat to everyone who walks the streets of this city. On the other hand, the accused denies everything, in an indirect way of course, and seeks to muddle up the chain of events through a cunning combination of sophistries, contradictions, banalities, and absurdities. Phrases like: 'I don't know'; 'possibly'; 'maybe'; 'yes' and 'no'. Are these answers? Note also the frequent resort to: if I had a clear memory of events ... Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, this is all inadmissible. (Comes forward until he is centre-stage, with great theatrical effect.) The Law cannot stand idly by in the face of such a case, where degradation, malice, and cruelty are combined so horrifically. Standing before you, ladies and gentleman, you see the most repulsive assassin in all of history. Look at him. Could anyone fail to feel revulsion at this scum, this nauseating rat, this pool of phlegm? Doesn't he make you want to be sick, to curse him? Can the Law just stand by and watch? Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, ladies and gentlemen of the court, can we allow such an individual to share our hopes and ideals at a time when humanity, or rather our society is marching on the resplendent path of progress, heading towards a golden dawn? (LALO tries to say something, but the torrent of CUCA's oratory blocks any act, gesture or word from him.) Look at him. Indifferent. Relaxed. Immune to any feeling of tenderness, understanding, or pity. Look at that face.

(Loudly.) The cool face of a killer. An assassin. The accused denies committing the murder for money, either in order to steal or to inherit his parents' meagre pension. Why did he kill then? We cannot be certain about any of his motives. May we conclude that he did it out of hatred? Revenge? Or was it simple sadism? (Pause. LALO moves impatiently in his chair. CUCA continues in a measured tone of voice.)

Can the Law allow a son to kill his parents?

LALO (to BEBA). Your Honour... I want... I should like ...

CUCA (as public prosecutor). No, ladies and gentlemen of the jury. No, ladies and gentlemen of the court. A thousand times no. The Law cannot accept such contempt. The Law has created order. The Law is eternally vigilant. The Law demands good manners. The Law protects man from primitive and corrupt instincts. Can we have pity on a creature who violates the principles of natural law? I ask the ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I ask the ladies and gentlemen of the court: can we allow ourselves the indulgence of pity? (Pause.) Our entire city rises up in anger. A city of proud and silent men conies forward determined to claim for Justice the body of this monster... demanding that he be exposed to the fury of true human beings whose only desires are for peace and harmony. (Grandly.) And so, I demand that the accused help us establish the true course of events. (To LALO.) Why did you kill your parents?

LALO. I wanted a life.

CUCA (as public prosecutor, violently). That's not an answer. (Rapidly.) How did you do it? Did you give them some concoction, some poison? Or did you smother them with their pillows as they lay helplessly in bed? Where do the syringes and pills come in? Or are they just red herrings? Explain, prisoner at the bar. (Pause.) Did you kill them in cold blood? Was it planned step by step? Or was it a crime of passion? You tell us. Did you only use this knife? (Exhausted.) And finally, prisoner at the bar, why did you kill them?

LALO. I felt they were persecuting me, harassing me.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). Persecuting you? How? Harassing you? How?

LALO. They never let me alone.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). But the witnesses testify that...

LALO. The witnesses are lying ...

CUCA (as public prosecutor). Are you contesting the statements made by the witnesses?

LALO (Firmly). There was nobody there that night.

BEBA (as judge. To LALO). The accused must be more precise in his answers. This is absolutely necessary. Are you sure you mean what you've just said? The Court demands both truth and precision. The Court expects the accused to observe, without prejudice, these articles of procedure ... The prosecution may proceed.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). Let us now turn to your close relatives. Your grandmother, for example, your aunts and uncles, all your nearest and dearest. Did you see each other often? What kind of relationship did you have with them?

LALO. None.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). Why?

LALO. Mum hated Dad's family and Dad didn't get along with Mum's family.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). Aren't you exaggerating? LALO. None of our relations visited us ... Mum didn't want them to come round. She said they were jealous and hypocritical. Dad said the same thing about Mum's relations. And they wouldn't let us visit them either ... CUCA (as public prosecutor). This doesn't seem to have much basis in fact to me. Why ... ? LALO. They kept on telling us that we were better people, that they were all common, that they had no class ... CUCA (as public prosecutor). And you never tried to make contact with them?

LALO. I tried once, but it didn't work. CUCA (as public prosecutor). Do you know the witness Mrs. Angelita ... ? (To the audience.) Her surname, please. Thank you. The witness Angela Martínez.

LALO. Yes.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). Did she go to your house, either before or after the incident in question?

LALO. She did. Before. (Pause.) At around 6pm. CUCA (as public prosecutor). In her statement, she insists that you were all playing a strange game. What was the game that you played at home? (Pause.) Wasn't it a bit... unhealthy? (Pause.) Answer. Wasn't it a deviant game?

LALO (firmly). I don't know.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). Your parents, according to my understanding, complained about you.

LALO. All my life, as long as I can remember, I've been hearing the same complaints, the same sermons, the same nagging. CUCA (as public prosecutor). They must have had some reason for complaining.

LALO. Sometimes they did, sometimes they didn't... When a reason is hammered home over and over again, it stops being reasonable.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). Were your parents really so demanding?

LALO. I don't understand.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). The question is this: what kind of relationship did you have with your parents?

LALO. I'm sure I've told you already. They questioned me. They made demands on me. They spied on me.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). What questions did they ask? What demands did they make? Why were they spying?

LALO (desperate). I don't know. I don't know. (Repeating in a mechanical voice.) Wash the dishes, wash the tablecloths, wash the shirts. Clean the vase, clean the bathroom, clean the floors. Don't sleep, don't dream, don't read. You're useless.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, ladies and gentlemen of the court, do you believe these are motives strong enough to drive an individual to commit a murder?

LALO (stammering). I wanted ...

CUCA (as public prosecutor). What did you want? (Pause.) Answer.

LALO (sincerely). A life.

CUCA (as public prosecutor. Sarcastically). And did your parents take your life away from you? (To the audience.) Objection, m'lord, the accused is evading the question.

LALO (passionately). I wanted, I longed, I desperately longed to do things for myself.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). And did your parents stop you?

LALO (confidently). Yes.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). How?

LALO. They said I was a fool, a slob, a no-hoper.

CUCA (as public prosecutor. With great patience). And what were the things you wanted to do? Would the accused care to elaborate?

LALO (tormented, making a great effort, a little confused). It's very hard ... I don't know. Things. You know? Things. How can I put it? I know they exist, that they're out there ... I just can't at the moment.

(CUCA smiles maliciously.) Look ... I know it's something else, it's just that... (Confidently.) I tried every way I could to please them ... I caught pneumonia once and I... No, I can't tell you about that... I just... Things always went wrong for me. I didn't want it to be that way but I couldn't do anything else; and then...

CUCA (as public prosecutor). Then what?

LALO. They shouted at me, they hit me, they punished me, endless hours locked in my room. They told me a thousand and one times I was better off dead, that they wanted to see me leave home to see how I coped and whether I would die of starvation.

CUCA (with a cynical smile). Are you sure about what you're saying?

LALO. Yes.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). Go on, go on.

LALO. I was very unhappy.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). Why?

LALO. It felt like the house was caving in on me.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). I don't understand? Exactly what do you mean?

LALO. The walls, the carpets, the curtains, the lamps, the sofa where Dad took his siesta, and the bed, and the wardrobes, and the sheets ... the whole lot, I hated them, I wanted them to go away.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). You hated the whole lot. And your parents? You hated your parents as well, didn't you?

LALO (distracted). Maybe I should have just run away. Gone anywhere: to hell or Timbuktu.



CUCA (as public prosecutor). Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, ladies and gentlemen of the court...

LALO (continuing, as if hypnotized). One day, when I was playing with my sisters, I suddenly discovered... (Pause.)

CUCA (as public prosecutor). What did you discover?

LALO (in the same tone of voice as before). We were in the living room; no, I lie ... We were in the back room. We were playing ... Or rather, we were acting ... (Smiles foolishly.) You might think it silly but... I was the father. No, that's not true. I think at that moment I was the mother. It was just a game ... But there, right at that moment, I had this idea... (Smiles foolishly again.)

CUC A (as public prosecutor). What idea?

LALO (smiling as before). It's very simple, but it gets complicated. You never know whether you're saying what you feel. I... (Moves his hands as if he were trying to explain things with this movement.) I knew what my folks were offering me wasn't life, and could never be life. So I said to myself: 'If you want to live you have to ...' (Stops and makes a stabbing gesture or clenches his fists as if tearing something apart.)

CUC A (as public prosecutor). What did you feel at that moment?

LALO. I don't know. You tell me.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). Were you afraid?

LALO. I think I was, just for a second.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). And then?

LALO. Then I wasn't.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). You got used to the idea?

LALO. I got used to it.

CUCA (as public prosecutor). What? (Banging the table.) Ladies and gentlemen, this is unprecedented.

LALO. It's true. I got used to it. (As LALO progresses through the monologue, he becomes transformed).

It sounds terrible, but... It's not how I wanted it, but the idea kept on buzzing around in my head. At first, I wanted it to go away. Do you know what I mean? But it kept on telling me: 'Kill your parents. Kill your

parents.' I thought I was going crazy, I swear. I jumped into bed. I started getting the shivers ... I had a temperature. I thought I would pop like a balloon. I thought the devil was beckoning to me. I lay trembling under the blankets ... You should have seen me ... I couldn't sleep. Not a wink night after night. It was dreadful. I saw death creeping up on me from behind the bed, from between the curtains, from inside the wardrobe. It became my shadow and whispered to me from inside the pillows: 'Assassin.' And then, as if by magic, it disappeared. And I sat in front of the mirror and saw my mother lying dead in her coffin and my father hanging by his neck laughing and shouting at me. And at night I felt my mother's hands in the pillows, scratching my face. (Pause.) Every morning I woke up in pain. It was as if I were rising from the dead, clasped by two corpses which had been chasing me in my dreams. There were moments when I was tempted ... but no ... no ... Leave home? No way! I knew what I was up against... I would always come back and then I would promise never to do it again. By then I was determined never again to embark on that crazy adventure. Anything but that! Then I had the idea of arranging the house in my own way, of running things myself... The living room is not the living room, I said to myself. The living room is the kitchen. The bedroom is not the bedroom. The bedroom is the bathroom. (Short pause.) What else could I do? If I didn't do that, I would end up destroying everything. Everything. Because everything was complicit, everything was plotting against me; everything knew my every thought. If I sat down in a chair, the chair wasn't the chair but my father's corpse. If I picked up a glass of water, I felt that what I had in my hands was my dead mother's damp neck. If I played with a vase, an enormous knife would suddenly fall out of it. If I cleaned the carpets, I could never finish the job because they turned into an enormous clot of blood. (Pause.) Haven't you ever felt like that? I was suffocating, suffocating. I didn't know where I was or what it was all about. And who could I talk to? Was there anyone I could trust? I was stuck in a deep hole and there was no way out... (Pause.) But I had a strange idea that I could save myself... I don't know what from ... Anyway, it's just an expression ... You try to explain the whole thing and you almost... usually you can't... Perhaps I wanted to save myself from the suffocating, from being shut in ... Soon after, without knowing why, things began to change. I heard a voice one day, but I didn't know where it was coming from ... And then I heard my sisters laughing and joking all round the house.

And mixed in with their laughter I heard thousands of voices repeating in unison: 'Kill them. Kill them.'

No, I'm not just making it up. I swear it's true. (As if inspired.) From then on I knew what I had to do.

Gradually I realized that everything, the carpets, the bed, the wardrobes, the mirror, the vases, the glasses, the spoons and my own shadow, they were all murmuring, telling me: 'Kill your parents.' (He says it in an almost musical ecstasy.) 'Kill your parents.' The whole house, everything, everything was pushing me towards this heroic act. (Pause.)

CUCA (violently). I'm leaving. You're cheating. LALO. We've got to see it through to the end. CUCA. I can't let you ... LALO. You've tried to make it go your way as well.

CUCA. I can't believe you're doing this. We each have a part; we agreed.

LALO. Is that so? All right then ...

BEBA (as judge, banging her gavel). Order! Silence in court!

CUCA (as mother. To BEBA). Officer, forgive my interruption; but I must ask for a thorough investigation of this case, right from the beginning. I demand a retrial. That's why I'm here. I want to make a statement. My son is making himself out to be a victim, but that's the complete opposite of the truth. I demand that justice be done. (BEBA starts to repeat the tac-tac of the typewriter. Exaggerating.) If you knew what this beast has done to our lives. It's so dreadful, so...

BEBA (as officer. To CUCA). Go on ...

LALO (almost out of part). But Mum, I... (LALO feels cornered.) I... I swear ...

CUCA (as mother). Don't you swear at me. You want to come across as a fool, but I know your tricks, your games. I know them because I gave birth to you. Nine months of dizziness, vomiting, aches, and pains. And they were just the warnings of your arrival. Are you trying to confuse me? Why are you swearing these things to me? Do you think you've won over your audience? Do you think you can save yourself? Well tell me, save yourself from what? (Roars with laughter.) What planet are you living on, sonny? (Mockingly.) Oh, my little angel, I'm so sorry for you. You really are, well, I won't say what you are ... (To BEBA.) Do you know something, officer? One day he got it into his head that we should rearrange the whole house the way he wanted it... As soon as I heard this ridiculous idea, I refused to

listen to another word on the subject. His father hit the roof. You can't imagine what it looked like ... The ashtray on the chair. The vase lying on the floor. Awful! And then he started singing at the top of his voice, running all round the house: The living room is not the living room. The living room is the kitchen.' When that happened I pretended not to hear, as if I were listening to the rain. (To LALO.)

You've only told the bits which interest you. Why don't you tell the rest of the story? (Mockingly.) You've told them about your martyrdom, now tell them about ours, your father's and mine. Let me refresh your memory. (To BEBA, transformed.) Your Honor, if you knew the tears I have shed, the humiliation I have suffered, the hours of anguish, the sacrifices ... Just look at these hands ... It makes me sick to look at them. (On the verge of tears.) My hands ... If you had seen them before I got married ... Now I've lost everything: my youth, my happiness, all my little pleasures. I've sacrificed everything for this animal. (To LALO.) Aren't you ashamed? Do you still think you've done something heroic? (Disgusted.) You wretch. I don't know how I could have carried you for so long in my belly. I don't know why I didn't drown you at birth. (BEBA bangs her gavel.)

LALO. Mum, I...

CUCA (as mother). Shut up. Just shut up. You're not worth the bread we put on your plate. You're not worth one of the contractions I had giving birth to you. Because you, you are the guilty one. And no-one else.

LALO (Violently). Leave me alone. Just leave me alone.

CUCA (as mother. Violently). I'm getting old. Think about that and make some sacrifices. Do you think I don't have a right to live? Do you think I'm going to spend my whole life in perpetual agony? Your father doesn't care about me and neither do you. Where will I end up? Yes, I know you're waiting for me to die, but I won't give you that satisfaction. I'll shout to the neighbours, to everyone in the street. You'll see. That will be my revenge. (Shouting.) Help! Help! They're killing me. (Bursts into tears.) I'm a poor old woman dying of loneliness. (BEBA bangs her gavel.) Yes, your Honour, I'm imprisoned by these four dirty walls. I never see the light of day. My children don't care. I'm withered, wilting ... (As if she were looking at herself in a mirror. Starts stroking her face and ends up slapping it.) Look at this skin. Look at

these wrinkles. (Pointing to her wrinkles with rancour and disgust. To LALO.) You'll get them one day.

All I want is for you to go through the same as I have. (Haughtily.) Your Honour, I have always been an honest woman.

LALO (slightly mockingly). Are you sure? Think carefully, Mum.

CUCA (as mother). What do you mean? What are you suggesting?

LALO (sarcastically). I mean, I know you're lying. I mean, you once accused me of...

CUCA (as mother. Indignantly, interrupting him with a cry.) Lalo! (Pause. Gently.) Lalo, are you trying to say ... ? (Pause. Takes a few steps. She looks annoyed again.) This is just the limit! Your Honour ... (Almost sobbing.) Oh, Lalo ... (Wiping her tears away.) You say I... ? (With obvious doubt.) Is that possible? (With a faint smile.) Oh, I'm sorry, your Honour ... I could have done it... But it was just a silly mistake. (Laughs crudely.) I got completely hooked on this red taffeta dress I saw in the window of the New Bazaar. It was so divine. My husband was earning a pittance. You can't imagine ... I had to perform miracles every month just to make ends meet. So, as I was saying, your Honour, I was mad about that dress. I had to have it. I had dreams about it. I even saw it in my soup. At last, one day I decided to buy the dress with the housekeeping money. So I made up a story.

BEBA (as judge). What kind of story?

CUCA (as mother. With great self-confidence). When Albert got home, drunk as usual, I said to him: look, dear, will you have a word with your son ... (Goes up to BEBA to whisper in her ear.) Because I think he's stolen some money from us.

BEBA (as judge). Why did you do it?

CUCA (as mother. Vulgarly). I don't know ... It was easier that way ... (She finishes the story with a flourish.) So Albert took off his belt and beat poor little Lalo ... Oh, I hate to think how many times he beat him ... In fact, he was completely innocent, but... I wanted that red dress so much! (Going up to LALO.) Do you forgive me, my son?

LALO (hard). There's nothing to forgive.

CUCA (as mother. Slightly hysterical). Have some respect, Lalo. (In a dramatic tone of voice.) I've

changed. I'm fat and ugly now ... Ah, this body!

LALO. Don't think about it.

CUCA (as mother. With authority). Show some respect, I said.

LALO. I was only playing around.

CUCA (as mother. Hard and imperious). Well, don't play with me. Your father is an old fool who's chasing something which doesn't exist. So are you. Let him be a lesson to you ... He thinks he's Superman, but actually he's a nobody. He's always been a failure. He's always been all talk, and he thinks he can carry on like that. Sometimes I wish he'd lie down and die. Why did I have to get hitched to a man who couldn't offer me a better life than this? (Pause.) Come on. (Pause.) If it wasn't for me, your Honour, this house wouldn't even be standing ... It was all me...

LALO (as father. In an assured, almost frightening voice). She's lying, your Honour.

CUCA (as mother. To LALO). How dare you?

LALO (as father. To BEBA). It's true. She's trying to paint everything black. She sees only the moles in the eyes of others, not the beam in her own. I have been at fault at times as a parent. And so has she. (In a more assured tone of voice.) Like all parents we've done some things which have been unfair and other things which have been unforgivable.

CUCA (as mother). You used to come home with lipstick on your collar.

LALO (as father). Shut up. You don't want me to tell the truth.

CUCA (as mother). Your honour, he was always drinking, he used to bring his friends over at all hours of the night...

LALO (as father). Who wears the trousers in our house?

CUCA (as mother). I'm in charge of the house.

LALO (as father). There. 'I'm in charge of the house.' Yes, you, you're in charge all right. That's all your life comes down to. You've made fun of me. You've humiliated me. That's the truth. Domination. (Short pause.) I've been an idiot, a complete asshole, if you'll excuse my French.

CUCA (as mother). Well done. At least you admit it.

LALO (as father). What's the point of denying it? (Pause. Ordering his thoughts.) I went into marriage with few illusions. If I said I was pinning all my hopes on marriage, I'd be both exaggerating and lying. I went into it like most people, thinking that it would sort out a few problems: clothes, food, stability ... some company and... well... a few little liberties. (Kicking himself inside.) Idiot! You idiot! (Pause.) I never thought it would turn out like it did.

CUCA (as mother). You never thought, full stop. 'You take the low road and I'll take the high road.' That's what a lot of people think. But I was different.

LALO (as father). She's right there. She certainly was very different. The problems started a few days before the wedding: the church wasn't smart enough, the train on your dress wasn't long enough. And your sisters said this, and your mother said that, and your cousin said the other, and your aunt said something else, and your friends didn't agree at all, and your granny thought we should have invited the so-and-sos, and that the cake should have been ten rather than nine tiers high, and that your friends should come from better backgrounds ...

CUCA (as mother). Go on, go on. Spit it all out, get it all out of your system. At last I can see that you hate me.

LALO (as father). Yes, I do. And I don't know why. But I know I do. When we were just going out you went to bed with me because you knew that was the only way you could catch me. And that's the truth.

CUCA (as mother). Carry on, carry on. Don't stop.

LALO (as father). You didn't want kids. You hated them. But no way could you stay single. No way. You had to catch a husband. It didn't matter who. Having one was all that mattered.

CUCA (as mother. Going up to him furiously). I hate you, I hate you, I hate you.

LALO (as father). A husband made you feel secure. A husband made you respectable. (Ironically.)

Respectable ... (Pause.) I can't quite explain ... Anyway, life is like that, so if you want to...

CUCA (as mother). Lies, lies, lies.

LALO (as father). Will you let me finish?

CUCA (out of part). You're cheating again.

LALO (as father). You don't want people to know the truth.

CUCA (out of part). I'm talking about something else.

LALO (as father). You're scared of seeing it through to the end.

CUCA (out of pan). You're trying to crush me.

LALO (as father). And you? What have you been doing? Tell me. What have you done to me? And to them? (Mocking.) 'I'm growing ugly, Albert. I'm in the family way. We can't bring them up on your salary.' (Pause.) And I didn't know the reasons, the real reasons. And today, I say to you: 'Put your hand on your heart and answer this question: Did you ever love me?' (Pause.) Oh well, don't say anything. I can see clearly now. It's taken years to sink in. 'Albert, those children ... I can't handle them. You take care of them.' As time passed, your demands grew greater, and your selfishness grew with them. (Pause.) And me, in the office, with my figures, and the gossip and the friends who came up to me and said: 'How long are you going to put up with this, (mate?)'

CUCA starts singing: 'The living room is not the living room, the living room is the kitchen. The bedroom is not the bedroom, the bedroom is the bathroom. CUCA's singing and LALO's words should proceed in counterpoint. BEBA starts singing, first as a growl and then gradually becoming a sweet, simple, almost naive song.

LALO (continues, mockingly). And you? 'Your sister called today. She's so nosey. Oh, these children. Look at my hands: the washing up did this. I'm losing my mind, Albert, I wish I were dead.' And then came your tears and the children started screaming and I thought I was going mad and everything started spinning ... I used to escape from the house, sometimes at midnight, and go for a few drinks, and I felt like I was drowning, drowning. (Pause. Without taking a breath.) And other women were there and I didn't dare think about them ... And I felt a terrible urge to leave, to fly away, to break with everything. (Pause.) But I was afraid, and fear paralysed me and I couldn't make up my mind and I got stuck between two stools. I thought one thing and I did another. It's terrible to have to admit it. And only to realise at the end. (Pause.) I couldn't do it. (To the audience.) Lalo, if you want to do it, you can. (Pause.) Now I ask myself why I didn't live out all my thoughts, all my desires. And I have to reply: because I was afraid,



afraid, afraid.

CUCA (as mother. Sarcastically). Well, honey, you can't blame me for that. (Pause, defiantly.) And what did you want me to do? Those children were a nightmare. They turned my house into a pigsty. Lalo ripped the curtains and smashed the crockery. Beba wasn't content with tearing apart the pillows... And you expected to come home and find everything tickety-boo. Do you remember when Lalo peed all over the living room? You threw a fit and said. "That never happened in my home.' Was that my fault as well? Eh? I used to put a chair here. (Moves a chair.) And I would find it over here. (Moves the chair to another place.) What was I supposed to do?

LALO (as father. Beaten). The house had to be cleaned. (BEBA stops singing.) Yes ... The furniture had to be changed... (Pause. With great melancholy.) We really should have found a new house. (Pause. Slowly.) But we're old now and we can't. We are dead. (Long pause. Violently.) You always thought you were better than me.

CUCA (as mother). I've wasted my life away on you.

LALO (as fat her. Vengefully). You can't escape, love. Carry on. Carry on. Carry on.

CUCA (as mother. Sobbing). You pathetic pen-pusher. I wish you were dead.

BEBA (as LALO. Shouting and moving in circles around the stage). Throw out the carpets. Pull down the curtains. The living room is not the living room. The living room is the kitchen. The bedroom is not the bedroom. The bedroom is the bathroom. (BEBA and LALO are at opposite ends of the stage with their backs to the audience. LALO doubles up slowly with a piercing scream.) Ayyyyyyy! (Sobbing.) I can see my dead mother. I can see my father with his throat cut. Tear this house down.

Long pause.

LALO. Open the door. LALO falls to his knees.

CUCA slowly gets up, walks over to the door upstage and opens it. Pause. Goes over to the table and picks up the knife.

BEBA (in a normal tone of voice). How do you feel?

CUCA (in a normal tone of voice). Stronger.

BEBA. Satisfied?

CUCA. Yes.

BEBA. Really?

CUCA. Really.

BEBA. Are you ready to do it again?

CUCA. You know the answer to that.

BEBA. One day we'll do it for real.

CUCA (interrupting). Without anything going wrong.

BEBA. Were you surprised you managed to do it?

CUCA. Everything's surprising.

LALO (sobbing). Oh, Beba, Cuca, if only love could do it... If only love ... Because in spite of everything, I love them.

CUCA (playing with the knife). That's ridiculous. BEBA (to CUCA). Poor little thing, let him be.

CUCA (to BEBA. Laughing mockingly). Look at him. (To LALO.) That's how I like to see you.

BEBA (serious again). All right. Now it's my turn.

Curtain.