

D O W N
A B O V E

by **JUANLUIS MIRA**

TRANSLATION: JOHN D. SANDERSON

DOWN ABOVE

CHARACTERS

PIT is well over thirty, but his mental clock stopped far earlier and left some naivety in his face. He has trouble looking into somebody else's eyes. He talks with difficulty, but can read aloud fluently. When he is not worried there is half a smile in his mouth, like a nervous twitch.

THERESA is not thirty yet. Actress.

MÁÑEZ is fifty, but looks older.

VIDAL is an old prompter. He knows the theatre underworld as nobody else does.

A MAN IN A DARK COAT.

*... and legs, calves, shoes, voices of actresses and actors who are performing **THREE TOP HATS** on the stage of Theatre Princesa.*

STAGE

Three separate levels which are connected.

UP on the roof of a building in the city centre.

DOWN in a small, old cellar which, under the stage of the theatre, is a hideout for the prompter as well as a store-room.

THE HIGHEST, the prompting shell where the prompter does his job in the Theatre Princesa. Next to it we can only see a small part of that imaginary space beyond the battery of footlights.

A cyclorama closes and brings together these three spaces. Over it we will see some images through binoculars and the telescopic sight of the shotgun.

We are in Valencia, 1954.

Dead of night. Up there, standing in front of the audience, dressed in a long coat, a cap, gloves, somebody is putting together pieces of a shotgun with a knowing routine. The scarce light, some of it intermittent, is a reflection from the outside.

The sniper sometimes has a fit of cough, so he stops and pops a sweet into his mouth.

He looks through his binoculars at the stalls.

We hear far away a train arriving at a station.

Voices, a whistle, footsteps in a hurry.

He puts the binoculars down and finishes putting the shotgun together.

Secures it to his shoulder. Firm pulse.

Aims down thoroughly, moves up slowly, with precision, a few centimetres.

Spits out the sweet. Takes a deep breath. Waits.

Noise of footsteps get louder till they suddenly stop.

Silence.

He shoots once.

Again. Routine.

Silence.

Train starts off on its journey to nowhere.

Dark.

DOWN THE BOTTOM (ARSE) OF THE THEATRE

Only a tiny part of the stage is lit, where we can see striking shoes, lovely legs in panties almost to the limit of what an audience should be allowed to see. Male trousers perfectly ironed, everything fashionable of the mad 1920`s . Happy voices, movements and steps of characters playing the end of the first act of Three Top-Hats.

DYONISOS No. I'm sorry. Actually I've made a mistake. He is no idiot. He is black...so he's got a temper. But it's not his fault. He, what could he do once he had fallen off the bicycle? It would have been far worse if he had lost an arm. And this lady has told him... and, well, he's really mad...What else...?

Little by little the prompter's cellar is lit; we see the long coat, cap, a scarf on a hanger. Pit is in the prompter's shell with his libretto, following the scene. Once in a while he coughs and even laughs at the comedy above. He can't help it. When Paula – Theresa's voice – speaks, he stops reading the texts and looks at the stage, whispering her lines by heart.

DYONISOS No, I've just finished...

FANNY You are both always the same... You are stupid, Paula.

BUBY So much the better if I am!

PAULA-THERESA exits. PIT follows her with his gaze, and the text with the corner of his eye. A door is slammed on stage. The comedy goes on with PIT watching and not realizing PAULA is coming down the spiral staircase.

BUBY And if I am rude, so much the better!

Another door is slammed on stage, just like the first one. THERESA approaches PIT behind him and puts her hands on his eyes. PIT suddenly turns round, frightened, and starts coughing.

- PIT *(With an affected voice)* ;Theresa!
- THERESA What a face you're making!
- PIT Shhhh! Don't... speak so loud!
- THERESA *(With an affected voice as well, imitating him.)* It's alright! I have frightened you, haven't I? As if I was a phantom!
- PIT *(Can't help smiling).* The actors can...not be here.
- THERESA What about *the* actresses?
- PIT Don't be silly. You know they can't. I need to...go on with...
- THERESA Don't worry. They do know it. It would be ludicrous if after two months we still made bloopers.
(PIT and THERESA look at each other and smile. A voice from stage demands 'prompt'. PIT breaks the spell and looks awkwardly for the line. He reads it aloud, very professional.)
- PIT. Do you have a match, sir? Do you have a match, sir?
- FANNY'S VOICE Do you have a match, sir?
(The scene goes on, opposite the prompt shell.)
- THERESA I forgot that big Claramunt has the memory of a goldfish.
- PIT *(Smiling).* One never knows.
- THERESA But she has pretty legs, don't you think? *(Pause. Pit follows the text.)*
Do you like them?
- PIT What?
- THERESA From up the on stage I had never imagined what a smashing view you have from down here.
(PIT goes on with his prompting.) You surely satiate yourself seeing the girls so young and pretty, don't you?
(PIT avoids answering. He smiles.)
And my legs, do you like them?
(PIT turns round a second and tries to look into her eyes but cannot. Still smiling, he looks back at the stage.)
- PIT If I don't cue now it will cost me a leg.

THERESA See? We show you our legs, soon you will have to give us yours!
(PIT smiles innocently, once again he tries to concentrate on the text.)
 I'm sorry, Pit, I just wanted...well, I just wanted to see you and...

PIT And...

THERESA And ... see your hideout, if you like.
(THERESA looks around. PIT checks her out while still following the text. THERESA turns on the desk lamp. Some angles of the basement are lit up. She feels the sofa's softness. Sees a briefcase, under the table.)

PIT *(Still with the text).* Shouldn't you be up there by now?

THERESA There are still seven pages.

PIT Six pages.

THERESA And then comes the interval.

PIT But...you have eight lines before that..

THERESA So many?

PIT Yes.

THERESA There I go.
PAUSE.
(Pit goes through the dialogue between Fanny and Dyonysos.)

FANNY But do they applaud him?

DYONYSSOS Not much. Not really... Everything is so expensive.
(A phone rings very loudly. Theresa stands up stunned. Then she realises it is on stage. She smiles and sits down again.)

THERESA The truth is it was okay for me to escape. From Mañez, you know. He's becoming tedious now. Look. *(She shows him a ring she is wearing. PIT does not look back.)* I'm sorry. I think I'd better go now.

PIT *(Still looking at the stage.)* Stay! I... was listening to you. The...ring.

THERESA You didn't even look.

PIT Of course I did. It really suits you.
PAUSE. The crazy 'BALLET GIRLS OF BUDDY BARTON' have just come on stage. Pit smiles, still looking at the text.

THERESA Young tender calves.

PIT The girl... that plays Carmela...is new.

THERESA Let me see.

Goes up the steps that lead to the prompt shell. Gets as close as she can to PIT to have a better view and looks around.

She is a young girl! And she has hardly rehearsed. Skunk will do anything just to save a penny.

PIT *Feels very well close to Theresa. Looks at the back of her neck and forgets the text for a few seconds.*

Sss...skunk?

THERESA *She realises Carmela needs prompting, and helps her*

...And he has even fallen in love with me...! *(Not loud enough.)*

PIT *Louder*

... And he has even fallen in love with me!

CARMELLA And he has even fallen in love with me!

Show goes on.

THERESA You're stunning at what you do_

PIT feels flattered. THERESA goes down the steps and sits on the chair.

You'll see, you're going to end up learning every role. It must be difficult. *(Imitates the actress)* And he has even fallen in love with me!

PIT Who?

THERESA ¿Who? Oh, Skunk, I assume.

PIT ¿Skunk?

THERESA Well, that's what he says, but what I know is that the only thing he has on his mind is to grope me and whenever he fancies it he leaves some gift or another on the table in my dressing room while I'm on stage. Take this one it must have cost him a fortune. And that's what I find really strange - knowing his penny-pinching ways.

She shows ring as proof.

PIT It does...shine.

Show goes on above, with entering and exiting, doors opening and closing, music playing on a gramophone, absurd dialogue.

Who is...Skunk?

THERESA *(Laughs.)* Don't tell me that at this point you still have no idea of who we all call Skunk!

PIT looks at the stage and helps Carmela with her final lines.

Oh yes, how would you know, down here. This place is worse than a sewer!

PIT *(Laughs)*. Vidal calls it the bottom (arse) of the theatre.

THERESA Vidal has always been so accurate, even more nowadays. It is a great place to hide, though. What's there at the back? Another room?

PIT does not answer

And I'm sure there are rats.

PIT nods in agreement.

So what? They're upstairs too. Everytime I put make up on in my dressing room a tiny one comes out to visit me. I think she wants to learn how to look pretty. But what am I saying? These rats must be far more intelligent than us. I'm sure they don't need to put make up on their puss to get their mice, don't you think?

PIT seems to be focusing exclusively on stage.

Skunk Mañez. Who else could we be talking about? He is a dirty rat! Is there anyone that smells worse than he does? Everytime he enters my dressing room I have to ask Claramunt for some perfume to spray it all over the room, otherwise you simply can't stand the smell. And not mentioning...eh...you know what. Pit...?!

PIT Mmm...

THERESA *She sounds uneasy.*

The truth is that I have a special favour to ask you, this is why I came here; however, I don't think this is the time, with all the fuss...

PIT Madame Olga, Madame Olga is on stage. The prompter wants you... up there!

THERESA Ok, I'm on my way. You do love your job...Man, you're crazy about it.
She stands up grudgingly postponing her request. Reads aloud the title of the book on the table. 'Hunter tales' ...Starts going up the spiral staircase.

PIT Theresa...

THERESA Yes.

PIT . I like the ring. I... really do.

THERESA I don't, I mean, I don't like it because it's him who gave it to me, well, I assume it was him - I don't know any other man who could spend money

so lavishly. But it's pretty, I must say. It doesn't smell good though, you understand.

PIT So why do you wear it?

THERESA I have my reasons. However, I won't wear it for a long time. Perhaps I will sell it. These are bad times for jewellery and, besides, there are people in need.

She says this before going upstairs.

PIT What was it... that.. you wanted to ask me for?

THERESA Maybe some other time, yes, some other time will be better.

PIT As Dyonyos puts it (*Imitates his voice*) ~Good! (*Smiles*) ...Listen... (*Coughs.*)

THERESA Yes...

Stops coughing.

PIT Thank you...

THERESA What for?

PIT For the visit.

THERESA smiles back, a farewell, then hurries up; she is on. PIT concentrates on the text. A phone rings several times on stage. Somebody answers it., PAULA/ THERESA enters and chats with Dyonyos, the final lines of the first act which PIT listens to with great pleasure. He says her final lines by heart, simultaneously.

PAULA/PIT Please, come in...I'm asking you to...Be nice, please. Buby is here and Buby annoys me. If you come in, it will change, sir... I'll be pleased if you are here, sir... I'll be pleased with you, sir! Would you like some?

DYONYOSOS Good.

PIT imitates Good! Phone rings again, insistently „Good!“Repeating, somewhere between parody and game. Curtain starts coming down, first applause from audience.

3.

UP: A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Theatre applause fuses with a more distant bullfight applause.

Afternoon into evening. PIT sees through his binoculars how the crowd leaves the bullring, way down. Shotgun ready, looks for his target, regulates lens, moves binoculars away. Final sun rays emphasise his silhouette and should help him track down his chosen human lump. Suddenly, he hears footsteps nearby, takes his shotgun and aims at where the unexpected visitor will turn up.

MÁÑEZ walks in, tired of so many steps. Pit puts down the shotgun.

MÁÑEZ False alarm, the bird has flown.

PIT Has he already left? I saw ... you alone, so ...

MÁÑEZ He has not even come, someone must have tipped him off, dammit. What I wouldn't give to find out who the hell it was. I don't understand ... a mole ... it must have been a mole, I'm sure of that ... but who? And where? *(He has trouble breathing, either because he is angry or tired)* Damn. Do you even know what a mole is?

PIT I have never ... hunted one.

MÁÑEZ That's all I needed today I don't mean that kind of mole. I'm talking about someone who found out about our plan and warned our bird. *(He breathes his fatigue heavily, sits on the edge of the roof)*

PIT You could ... have taken ... the elevator. *(He dismantles the gun.)*

MÁÑEZ No elevators, I've already told you for no one. I don't trust all that modern junk.

PIT Me ... neither. I'm ... afraid of them.

MÁÑEZ The more discreet we are, the better. Listen to me you are in no danger, we'll see who has the guts to report us ... you ... but we either do it well

or we don't do it at all. There is a reason why we earned the reputation for being the best organization in the country. They even talk about us abroad. Do you know how they call us in Madrid? The Raid brigade. *(He imitates the spraying sound.)* The Raid brigade we are as discreet as we are effective. No one escapes. Do you follow me?

PIT No. *(Mañez stares at him)*

MÁÑEZ Of course you don't. *(Puts the half-smoked cigar back into his mouth and lights it again)* Maybe the bastard knows a thing or two about bullfighting and therefore knew what was going to happen. Smelt a rat *(That reminds PIT of something, and he starts sniffing blatantly next to MAÑEZ)* What a boring bullfight that was! Outrageous If the great Dominguín had to face a real bull he would shit his pants! Not one brave pass. Didn't you hear the booing from up here?

PIT Yes. *(He goes on sniffing.)*

MÁÑEZ What the fuck are you doing, boy?!

PIT Smelling.

MÁÑEZ You're not going to tell me that the smell of cigars bothers you, are you?

PIT No.

MÁÑEZ What is it then? *(PIT does not answer; he can't help smelling and realises THERESA was right).* You're even worse than I thought ...

PIT Yes.

MÁÑEZ Go ahead, smell all you want. I know I have a special smell. Some women say I give off a distinctive, strong smell, typical of machos. I suppose. They like it, that's for sure. Wait a minute, you're not ... are you?

PIT What?

MÁÑEZ You like women, don't you, just like everybody else?

PIT Not ... all of them.

MAÑEZ finally laughs. He feels great laughing at fools. PIT smiles with him, but is not sure why. Mañez mutters as well, without being concerned whether PIT can hear him.

MÁÑEZ Asshole! *(Pause)*

PIT And the ... applause?

MÁÑEZ What applause?

PIT There was a loud applause ... at the end. You could hear it from here.

MÁÑEZ How should I know? I suppose because the whole thing was over and, for a beginner, he handled himself quite well; As for the rest what a load of rubbish! *(Looks below.)* Good thing I have a Government pass, if I had to pay ... Well, they'd have it with me. People are still coming out of the arena. *(Looks around at the different places you can see from the roof).* You can't complain.

PIT What?

MÁÑEZ The view, you won't find it anywhere else in the city. From here you control everything, the station, the bullring, the hotel, the park ... the movie theater ... Don't you feel just a bit ... how shall I put this ... a bit, I hope He will forgive me for saying this, like God?

PIT No.

MÁÑEZ The dream of every hunter every prey in its place.

PIT I ... prefer ... hunting grounds.

MÁÑEZ I mean this, the urban landscape. It wasn't easy to find, you know. I spent almost a month looking for a place like this. And what's more, a few stories below, on the fifth floor, the Department of Information and

Tourism has just moved in, what a cover up!. And on top of it, on this side of the roof, a little stairway, like American apartments have, in case you have to rush off. These modern buildings are equipped for anything. Everything close at hand. But I still think it's a bit high to ...

PIT No, it's ... okay. I used to shoot from much further ... in my village.

MÁÑEZ And did you always hit the mark?

PIT Almost always.

MÁÑEZ Almost is not good enough here, you know that now you always have to hit the target.

PIT But there I used to shoot ... bareback (without any help).

MÁÑEZ Bareback? You mean without telescopic sight?

PIT Yes ... bang ... bareback.

MÁÑEZ The rifle and that's it.

PIT Not rifle ..., shotgun ...

MÁÑEZ What difference does it make?

PIT Without ... this.

MÁÑEZ Telescopic sight ...

PIT What for ... A partridge. ... Bang.

MÁÑEZ But you have to make sure you don't miss these belong to another class. We hunt big game.

PIT Okay.

MÁÑEZ Those bastards are sucking the life out of Spain. Here.

(He hands him an envelope.)

PIT But if ...

MÁÑEZ It's your job. You have been here for over two hours. You'll see that it's not the full amount, it's less. When you are through with the job you'll get another one. Another envelope I mean. In any case, there are fewer and fewer of them left, which is good for everyone. And partly thanks to you, to your shooting. (*PIT puts away the envelope.*) One day, when you get older, you'll think about all this and heave a sigh of pride, like this (*he inhales and exhales from his cigar*). You'll tell your grandchildren I purged the motherland of vermin.

PIT I ... have to go, there's ... a show on.

MÁÑEZ Calm down, you still have time. You have my permission to arrive a few minutes late.

PIT It's just that ... there are a lot of people down there. It's going to take me some time ... to cross the street to ... the theater and ... they won't start until I ... arrive.

MÁÑEZ You are what you are, but nobody can beat you at being professional ...

PIT I ... like to be there a bit early ... you know ... to get everything ready.

MÁÑEZ And what do you spend the money on? Whores?

PIT No.

MÚÑEZ God knows what you do with it. Do you send it to the village?

PIT I've been doing that ... now for ...

MÁÑEZ Pardon, for how long?

PIT Almost ... a year.

MÁÑEZ I see. (*Pit does not answer; he wants to leave*). I don't care what you do, as long as you, as el Generalísimo says ... You know who I'm talking about, don't you?

PIT I think ... I do ... well, more or less ... People talk a lot about ... him.
That ... short man with his moustache ... who likes reservoirs...
Mañez smiles

MÁÑEZ Him, yes, follow the orders of that little but great man el Generalísimo.
You should do what he does: not get involved in politics. If we just
followed his advice these things wouldn't be happening and you and I
wouldn't be talking here, on this roof, hunting down undesirable
elements. Listen to me, we still have a long way to go if we want to re-
build this nation that a few wanted to sink in poverty. There's more to it
than just purging it of vultures, as some think, but together, and with your
help ... What do you call this (*the shotgun*), I always forget?

PIT Sarasqueta.

MÁÑEZ That sounds Basque.

PIT I don't know ... It ... was a gift from my uncle ... a long time ago.

MÁÑEZ With the help of your Sarasqueta we'll get there.

PIT (*Imitating Dionysus, again*) Okay! (*He is going to leave.*)

MÁÑEZ Just one more thing don't think we'll just forget about this bird he is a
big shot, smarter than the rest, that's why he is one their leaders. Doesn't
make any difference to me, he won't escape us, I bet my balls he won't.
Be ready! All right? As soon as I know something we'll meet where we
always do and I'll inform you. (*PIT agrees.*) So you like my smell...
well, well.

*PIT smiles; he knows a smile always pleases everyone. He leaves with
his briefcase. Mañez stares at him, puffs at his cigar and looks at his
favourite landscape: everything at his feet, under control.*

DOWN: THE BOTTOM (ARSE) OF THE WORLD'S BOTTOM

Vidal, an old prompter, has switched on the table lamp and is browsing through the book which is on the table. Next to him, he has put a small packet. The performance has not started yet, the stage curtain is down. The audience can be heard, starting to fill the stalls.

Theresa is going down the spiral staircase, already dressed as Paula. She is carrying a bunch of daisies put in a small vase. She is taking the steps in a rush, thinking that she is going to meet with Pit.

THERESA Vidal!

VIDAL Come, come, my sweet muse. What a surprise!

He stands up. They embrace each other warmly.

Regarding the flowers

Are they for me?

Theresa places them next to the book.

THERESA If I had known you were here, I would have brought some more. I just wanted to see if they could bring a bit of happiness to this dump... anyway... which way did you come in? I haven't seen you passing through the dressing room.

VIDAL My sweet Theresa... There are no secrets for me in this theatre.

THERESA Don't tell me there are some secret doors leading to this place...

VIDAL ...and secret passages, and a very handsome phantom who is longing for actresses who are old enough to...

THERESA Don't be silly... Listen, you look terrific, I still find you so young.

VIDAL How well can actresses lie... You are beautiful as always, slightly slimmer, I still find you so gorgeous.

THERESA Honestly, I think you look really well, it is obvious, when you lead a healthy life and do not even condescend to visit us once in a while...

VIDAL Don't think that I didn't want to... I have told you many times that theatre is bad for health. Well... for some of us, we can't help it...

THERESA Then why you haven't dropped by since the season has started... you're such a bad friend... if you only knew how some of us have missed you...

VIDAL I was in the village, because of Wizner. Since I hadn't been able to say goodbye while he was alive, I did it by bringing him some things to his

grave. I owed him a proper visit. ... And would you believe it... I did the whole season there... until the cold started breaking my bones. Talking of Wizner... Where the hell is Pit hiding?

THERESA That is what I would like to know. I came here to see him as well.

VIDAL How is he?

THERESA As usual. When I saw him for the last time, he still had this heart of gold. And he is still so good.

VIDAL What is it that makes him so good?

THERESA What do you have on your dirty mind, you naughty boy! He is like a kid.

VIDAL A kid with a man's body, don't you forget it.

THERESA You know I was referring to everything that you have taught him. He is almost as good a prompter as you are. You know how hard he finds it to speak; however, he goes up and leans out of the box and his voice won't even quiver a little.

VIDAL (*He is showing her a book*). Do you see this book?

THERESA I discovered it a few days ago.

VIDAL You might find it difficult to believe, but this is the only one he has read in his whole life. He knows it from cover to cover. Wizner told me he taught Pit how to read with it. Obviously it is about hunting, the stories of the hunters of the Russian steppe, nothing else. Every day his uncle would make him read a few pages aloud. All his training comes from this book. Nothing more is needed. That's why I have no doubts that he will be a good prompter.

THERESA He had the best teacher.

VIDAL I taught him four things. When good, old Wizner told me that he was going to pass away and I should give his nephew a hand, I thought that a storm was coming over me. When I saw Pit for the first time, I wondered what the hell I could do with him. I know my village very well: it has only given birth to simple and ignorant beasts. But Pit, because of what he's been through... The thing is that, at first, he might look dumb, but it is misleading. He is a brain box, better than the two of us together.

THERESA And with such a good heart...

VIDAL He takes after his uncle in that... May he rest in peace.

THERESA I think I should go up and call the prompter in the wings.

VIDAL Something must have kept him busy. Don't worry, he knows he needs to be here half an hour before...

THERESA And he always is. Before make-up he is already down here to prepare his things. I'll go up there for a moment and be with you in a second. I don't go on stage until page ten.

VIDAL Don't say anything. They won't notice, and then he'll skip the fat man's screams. What are you doing tonight?

THERESA You haven't seen it at the entrance?

VIDAL No.

THERESA Well... how did you get in?

VIDAL Through the backstage. How would I otherwise...?

THERESA Liar, I would have seen you. (*The elder man smiles*). *Three Top-Hats*, but you know the Skunk, we have taken four more plays of repertory and alternate them. That's when we don't have to stay to rehearse in the evening.

VIDAL That's great. Don't you ever forget that repertory is the prompter's daily bread. The day it ends, the cue card (prompter) will be the first on the street, and our trade will have come to an end. So the more repertory, the more work.

THERESA I am not complaining about it, Vidal, but you might know what kind of repertory we are dealing with...

VIDAL *Don Juan...*

THERESA Can you imagine...

VIDAL For sure *A Saint in the Hurry*.

THERESA And the rest is more less the same, just to tell you that we withdrew *Passion Flower* because the censors pulled a long face the day they saw it in rehearsal. We'll be on this diet for many years.

VIDAL What can we do about it?.

THERESA Put up with it. (*She looks around and notices how squalid it all is*). This is the second time I've visited your 'bottom's bottom'. You chose a good name for it.

VIDAL The bottom (arse) of the bottom's end, yes my lady. Theatre is already the world's bottom, so this... You can imagine.

THERESA And for sure you made up Pit's name as well .

VIDAL Nobody has made it up. Pit is his name .

THERESA Isn't it a nickname?

VIDAL No, his uncle gave him that name when he rescued him from that damn black cesspit. Hasn't he told you about it?

THERESA You know that he doesn't talk that much.

VIDAL Pit couldn't be more than three years old. His mother must have left him there, one of those shallow pits you see a lot of in the countryside. And good, old Wizner, he told me this himself, one night, when he was coming back from hunting, he heard something like a groan. He said it seemed more like a meowing of a crying cat. And there was this kid, frozen to death, with hardly any breath left to cry. Since Wizner has always lived like a lone wolf; he took the kid to his house, looked after him and, among other things, found him a name: Pit. Creativity was never his forte. Thanks goodness he didn't find him in a toilet, he might have called him John. Who knows how long that poor kid had been lying there. He could not speak for the following two years. He does really well, considering the circumstances.

THERESA So... his uncle Wizner is not his *real* uncle.

VIDAL Winzer has been his uncle, his father, his teacher and his mother who gave birth to him. The soil is for those who work it, don't you agree?

THERESA Certainly. Now I understand why he feels so comfortable in this lion's den.

VIDAL It's as good a place as any other. You get used to it after a while.

THERESA I hope he will like the daisies. (*Pause*). So, till Pit gets back, Princesa theatre proudly presents his precious replacement, the best prompter in Valencia! The best in Spain!

VIDAL Whose eyesight gets worse by the day, but I will manage. (*Theresa gives him a kiss on his forehead*). And you, do you still see red?

THERESA In my own way...

VIDAL There are few of you left.

THERESA Still enough.

VIDAL Be careful, it is getting more and more dangerous.

THERESA I know Vidal, I know, but it is always better to do something than to sit on our hands and do nothing.

VIDAL There isn't much to do. This is more like a bad play still being staged without anybody knowing why. So many of us would like to change it, but the theatre manager doesn't want to, and you end up giving it all up. And it may reach a thousand performances or more.

THERESA God forbid it.

VIDAL No, the worst thing is that He is on his side.

THERESA And what is left from this old scatterbrained anarchist who turned my head?

VIDAL The same that is left for everybody else: resignation, and dreams. I have fought enough. Everything I loved has died on me or has been killed, what am I going to tell you, you know it all, even a son. Now I believe only in miracles.

THERESA You? Miracles?

VIDAL A miracle, there is an earthquake and... I don't know why the hell, it only swallows the fascists who live on the face of the Earth, and the rest is left as if nothing has happened. Call it a dream if you want. I already know that it is not going to happen but I need something to keep me alive.

(Pause.)

THERESA Don't think that I do that much, either, but I can always lend a hand.

(Pause. They smile and look at each other).

VIDAL The next staging...

THERESA A conference, the fifth I believe, but don't take me too seriously, they won't let me get into any troubles, and might be even better if you don't know either. They've shrouded it in mystery, they are making preparations. They say it's better not to know a lot, in case they catch you. The secret police are artists at making you squeal.. .

VIDAL Yeah, they could make you squeal *La Traviata*...

THERESA The most I manage to do is to pass information, if there is a chance to.

VIDAL That is good enough. And how do you get it?

THERESA Putting up with smells, among other things.

VIDAL Yeah. *The Skunk*.

THERESA You already know who eats the stage; he is like a termite. Just when you left the Brigade paid him a visit. Now, we don't have any more doubts,

he is one of them and uses theatre to do his wheeling and dealing. And here I come in, you men loosen your tongues in bed. As you just said; what can we do? We women have dynamite between our legs. (*A bell rings twice*) Three minutes left.

VIDAL Well, I will start preparing myself.

(*He is looking for a libretto of Three Top-Hats*).

THERESA Then, is it true that there are secret passages here and...?

VIDAL A few. Do you really want to know about them?

THERESA Yes.

VIDAL You need to speak to him about it.

Pit has suddenly appeared, like a ghost. He has gotten rid of the briefcase and coat he had in the previous scene. He seems to have been running the marathon. He coughs twice.

THERESA (*After the fright.*) Pit! I haven't seen you coming down...! This time it was you who scared me...!

PIT Was it the last call?

VIDAL You arrive on time, fellow; the first has just rung.

PIT Thank God...Hello...Theresa. Hello, Vidal... how are you?

VIDAL I'm fine. I'm fine, and you?

PIT Sweating...because of...the running around. (*He does not know what to do. He feels like hugging him. Vidal stands up and, after a brief gesture, they hug.*) Where...have you been?

VIDAL In the village, visiting your uncle.

PIT Are there any flowers?

Vic. All the time.

PIT Gertrude. I told her to go there every week...to put them.

VIDAL Smell! (*Shows him the parcel of pastry on the table*).

PIT Winds!

VIDAL From the chapel's oven.

PIT Can't find this pastry in Valencia

[*He looks at Theresa. Sees the flowers*]

THERESA I have brought you these flowers.

PIT They are...very nice.

VIDAL I will go upstairs. Got a lot of people to say hello to. I'll be back in a moment.

PIT In the interval. And we shall eat all the winds.
VIDAL kisses THERESA. He wants to go upstairs but stops after looking at her. He tells PIT...

VIDAL Theresa is reliable. And I am too old for this stuff.
(He leaves through a side door, we hear the sound of a door opening, door which is concealed among heaps in the basement)

THERESA This basement is quite something. *(PIT smiles.)*

PIT Nobody knows about it... practically.
[A long ring. The last call. Show is about to begin. Pit takes the libretto]
Thirteen pages.

THERESA Enough for us to have a little chat.

PIT I have to... follow the text.
(In the corner of the stage that we can see, the curtain goes up and light comes through. We hear some applause from the audience when the actors playing Mr. Rosary and Dionysos enter.)

MR. ROSARY'S VOICE Come in, Dionysos. We have put your luggage in this room here.

DIONYSOS' VOICE Well, it is a very nice room, Mr. Rosary.
(Dialogue continues. Pit is hidden under the shell, following the text. Theresa, by the stairs, whispers...)

THERESA These two never mess it up.

PIT Just in case. Don Manuel may forget, he is... very old.

THERESA Definitely not. I've known him for quite a long time

PIT And Tony?

THERESA That bighead? He has the brains of a toad but the memory of an elephant.
[Pause] I have to talk to you. Now. I'm sorry.
(Pit looks at Theresa and realises she's going through bad times. He goes down a couple of steps to get closer to her. He wants to follow the performance and look into her eyes. Impossible.) I need you.

PIT Me?

THERESA Yes. I need you to do me a favour, a really big one.

PIT What favour?

THERESA That you hide a friend.

PIT A friend...

THERESA Yes.

PIT Your boyfriend.

THERESA No.

PIT You...like him a lot.

THERESA Yes.

PIT But he is not your boyfriend.

THERESA No!

PIT Your...brother...

THERESA I said he's a friend, a very special one. Don't you ask me any questions, please!

[Pause]

PIT Hide him?

THERESA Yes.

PIT He can come to the hostel...with me... As for Mrs. Remedy... probably...she won't mind.

THERESA No, I don't mean that type of hiding-place. It would be a suicide for everyone, and I don't want this to affect you, either. What I want is, that you hide him here. For sure there must be a corner for him to stay. This is full of twists and turns.

PIT Of what?

THERESA Of places where he could spend some days while...

PIT What?

THERESA If we don't hide him now, he won't be able to hide ever again, I think.

PIT And why does he want to hide? Has he done anything wrong?

THERESA No! Quite the contrary.

PIT ...

THERESA He is a good guy and is fighting for freedom, for all of us...

PIT For me?

THERESA For you as well.

PIT But I am...free.

THERESA There are many kinds of freedom, Pit. One day you will understand.

[Pause]

PIT All right.

THERESA I knew I could count on you. *(As PIT is looking at the stage she kisses him slightly in the back of his neck)*

PIT When?

THERESA Tomorrow, or the day after. Right now he is going here and there, trying to cover his tracks. They are dogging his heels.

PIT Who?

THERESA Please, don't make it any harder for me. You are better off not knowing, okay?

PIT Okay.

THERESA I will let you know

PIT You will...let me know. I will look for a...twist and turn for him...there in the back.

THERESA You are such a sweetheart! [...*She shows him a scarf before leaving*] Look. *(Pit turns round and sees it. She puts it round her neck)* I found it on my dressing table a while ago. The latest gift from Skunk, I suppose: it suddenly appeared. If he goes on that way, he'll go bankrupt. It is made of Chinese silk.

PIT You are...very beautiful.

THERESA You think so?

PIT Without the scarf...you are...also...very beautiful.

THERESA That is how *you* see me, as a good friend that you are.

PIT Yes. *(She smiles at Pit's innocence. PIT smiles back. He goes back up the two steps. She is about to leave.)*

THERESA You are lovable, Pit. Very much so.
(He pretends not to be listening, but a shiver goes up his spine. On stage, Mr. Rosary is still looking after his customer. Some laughs can be heard from the audience. THERESA goes up the spiral staircase. She stops for a few seconds to open the trap-door that closes the basement. PIT turns round and looks at her lovely calves magically lit by two beams coming from above. The prompter tries to concentrate on the text. It is getting darker in the basement. Last thing to disappear are Theresa's legs. Action continues on stage, light is getting brighter. Dialogues mix with cheerful music coming from the gramophone because we are now in the

ball, way into the party opening the second act. We see Theresa's calves again, now dancing on stage, now moving away, leaving room for the actress playing Fanny.)

FANNY'S VOICE Come on , you stupid fool.

AGED SOLDIER'S VOICE Oh, how funny, how graceful you are, pretty Miss.

(Military boots come very close to the high heels dancing charleston. The old soldier treads on a dead rabbit the hunter has just left there. Playwright's originality. The soldier kicks the rabbit. The basement is lit again. VIDAL is next to PIT. They watch the party. Pit holds the libretto with one hand and nibbles the pastry he has in the other one. Vidal and Pit are also having a party)

VIDAL We shall know them by their calves. *The* book of Adam, first versicle, final chapter. Calves are the women's thermometer. Bear that in mind. Consider this. Look. *[Calves of the actresses pass by in front of them]* The Claramount: nothing special. Look a bit further up the heel. What do you see?

PIT Some little holes.

VIDAL Weakness. Too bony, no class, ungraceful. What else do you see?

PIT I...don't know.

VIDAL Colour.

PIT White.

VIDAL There are a lot of types of white: they can be pale white, purple white, cinnamon white or...even...like snow. Did you know that Eskimos can tell apart I don't know how many types of colour in the snow?

PIT In the Negral woods there are as well lots of colours in the soil, and foreigners can't see them.

VIDAL So, you have to learn to recognise the colours of your actresses' calves. That's quite important. Like snow, or the ochre of the Negral woods. Then...which white?

PIT White...white

VIDAL Fine. That means bad tempered and fussy. Run away. Don't trust her. Danger. She looks as if butter would not melt in her mouth but she'll end up sucking your blood.. Get away. Let's go to another. That one:

PIT Madame Olga. Felicity Espuch.

VIDAL I will start: athletic and mature.

PIT And they've got blue dots.

VIDAL That's right, you are learning. Actually, they have lost a bit of their lushness, but still she is the same female. Look how perfectly they contrast with the instep, as it should be. If I told you half the story: she has had the whole company; male, that is. I was first. Those calves, still full of life; no matter how many varicose veins they have. The best merchandise; kind and generous all in one. Reliable. The Espuch! (*It's Teresa's turn now*) Teresa, Teresa my dear. Let's see.

PIT: ...Beautiful.

VIDAL: Obviously. They are like an open book.

PIT: You, Vidal, you ...you know... something's happening to me.. I don't know how to..

VIDAL: You feel a tickling rising from the stomach. When I was young this happened to me as well.

PIT: And also down here. Here.

Vidal looks at Pit's crotch and bursts out laughing, and then puts his hand over his mouth so that they won't hear him upstairs. Pit swallows up the piece of 'wind' he had left, and puts his now free hand over his crotch

VIDAL: That's wild, son. That's already another story. Step on the break, boy, cool down.

PIT: This ... only happens ... with Teresa's calves..

VIDAL: And when a slut comes on stage without her knickers on?

PIT: Without her knickers on?

VIDAL: Don't you tell me you haven't noticed?

PIT: Not me ...no. I don't look above the ...knee...

VIDAL: Look above, son, look above. It's worth it. What a great show you'll see! But, of course they are doing it for us. They know that we're the only ones who have access to their hidden... treasures. And, as well, that's their way of saying they want some butter.

PIT: Butter?

VIDAL: In a figurative sense.

PIT: Oh yeah...! I understood it right... butter. *(He makes a pubic movement innocently. Vidal smiles)*

VIDAL: The problem is when two of them leave their knickers in the dressing-room at the same time. Or three. Then a choice has to be made. And you have to pay attention to the text, don't forget that either. And they say we don't work hard. You'll find out.

PIT: In my case...it only happens with... Teresa.

VIDAL: It has struck you hard, hmmm? It will go away.

PIT: No. *(He still tries to cover his crotch with his hand.)*

VIDAL: You don't have to be ashamed. Some kind of privilege we as prompters should have, don't you think?

PIT: Tell me about... her calves. I... like it. Teach me.

VIDAL: Rosy, tight, rising curve... you can't even imagine what that means...

PIT: What?

VIDAL: Her tits stick out. They are not hanging down. Did you get to meet Fuensanta in our village? *(Pit nods affirmatively)* That woman could read

the lines of your palms like no one else. I read women's calves. Believe me. I don't make mistakes.

PIT: I want you to teach me.

VIDAL: Time will teach you.

PIT: Go on.

VIDAL: Where were we?

PIT: With her...

VIDAL: Right, exactly, that they don't hang down, you bet!

PIT: More.

VIDAL: She's intelligent and sensitive, even though she's a little stubborn. Passionate, very passionate. *(Pit is so absorbed that he does not realise that someone on stage is asking for a prompt. Vidal helps and the scene continues. Pit takes the libretto and tries to follow the text.)* Now you have to tell me something about Teresa's calves. It's your turn, tell me something, the first thing that comes to your mind. And so we get to the end with this lesson.

PIT: *(Still looking at the libretto.)* Marzipan.

VIDAL: It's true; they are edible. Tell me more.

PIT: One morning hunting.. in springtime...my dog Chufa by my side... and the sun rising slowly... through the wickerwork.

VIDAL: Not bad, not bad at all. Boy, you're a hunter with balls.

PIT: Yes.

VIDAL: When I was in the casino in our village, I saw a photo of you with your dog and Wizner... the day they gave you the prize. You weren't more than 15 years old and already a first-rate hunter. You look like Buffalo

Bill after having killed a hundred buffalos. I imagine you miss that... the hunting, I mean. In Valencia there are good hunters as well... you could go out with one of them one day.

PIT: I... I'm already doing that, Vidal, I am.

VIDAL: And where do you go to?

PIT: I don't know, high, real high.

(Pause. The second act continues. Vidal takes out a silver necklace and wants to give it to Pit.)

VIDAL I'd forgotten this. A woman I met by chance at the graveyard gave it to me to hand it over to you when I saw you again.

PIT: What was she like?

VIDAL: Tall... mourning for someone.. and she never looked into your eyes, just like you.

PIT: Keep it. I... I don't want it.

VIDAL: Do you know her?

PIT: Slightly.

VIDAL: She could be your mother..

PIT: My... mother was called... Wizner.

(Vidal puts the necklace back into his pocket. Pit goes on to the next page. He looks serious now. It is getting dark in the box. Voices and noise decrease gradually. Dionysos is ending his monologue.)

DIONYSOS' VOICE: ...I want somebody to tell me why this black man is sleeping in my bed! I don't know why this black man or this bearded woman have come in here...!

PAULA'S VOICE: Dionysos! Toninii! What are you doing?

DIONYSOS' VOICE: I've been talking to this fiend of mine. I'm not Tonini, and I'm not this dead kid... I don't know you... I don't know anybody...
Bye... good night...

(The audience applauds, not very enthusiastically, when Dionysos leaves the stage, and you can hardly hear Paula/Theresa's voice trying to stop him. The gramophone plays music again, which dissolves with the final applause as the lights go out on the stage of the Theatre Princesa. This darkness coincides with the lighting of the box below. Mañez is standing, has just switched on the light, and looks at Pit sleeping on the sofa. The prompter opens his eyes. Mañez is wiping off some lipstick marks and a couple of slightly bleeding scratches with the scarf Theresa showed him earlier.)

MAÑEZ: I knew I'd find you here.

PIT: What... happened to you?

MAÑEZ: You see, you can't trust pussy cats. First they are flattering and cuddly and at the slightest neglect, zap, they stick out their claws...

PIT: *(He stands up.)* I... have fallen asleep.

MAÑEZ: The show finished two hours ago. There's nobody left upstairs. *(He can see leftovers of 'winds' strewn on the table.)* this place looks more and more like a pigsty. *(Pit starts tidying up.)* Business: Tomorrow. At about 10pm. The wise guy is apparently more stupid than I believed.

PIT: But... at 10... there's a performance.

MAÑEZ: Forget it. I've been talking to Vidal and he'll replace you. First things first.

PIT: You know.. I've never missed a...

MAÑEZ: Damn, Pit, it's almost two o'clock and I'm not in a mood for silly jokes. I'm talking to you about something that has to do with the security of the state and you worry about a fucking show... Tell me what the heck do I have to do so that you'll understand. *(Pause.)* – Tomorrow – Bang. And let's move on, with one asshole less getting on our nerves. The same guy who was joking about us will bite the dust this evening, crushed like a rat. There are still some who refuse to accept defeat, as if they couldn't admit the success of our glorious uprising. Well, they have been asking for it. *(Pause.)* I'm just asking you to shoot the way you always do, nothing else. *(Pit looks dumbly.)* All right?

PIT: All... right. *(Pause.)* There is... still some blood on... your face.
(Mañez touches his lip with his index finger and then puts it in his mouth. He tastes it.)

MAÑEZ: Tastes great mixed with lipstick. *(Throws the scarf on the floor.)* And now you've got to listen well: Don't take your eyes off the Hotel Metropol. You already know where the exit is, right? *(Pit nods.)* We do it like we always do. I come out first and light a cigar. And then – let's say fifteen seconds, no more: -the prey. This time we can't let him escape. You're too good a hunter to let such a lousy prey escape. *(Pit nods.)* Good boy. Even though you don't understand anything you are doing a great service to your country son. There are heroes in History books with capital letters: Franco, El Cid,... but for other people like you and me there are only footnotes; however, Destiny, God and, in one word, the History of this crusade in capital letters will appreciate it. Do you get the picture?

PIT: No.

MAÑEZ: Action speaks louder than words.

PIT: This... I do understand... I guess.

MAÑEZ: Then you do understand everything. (*Pit leaves through where Vidal has left earlier.*) At 10. Piece of cake. Moles to Mañez, ha, let them come! Afterwards return to the theatre, real cool. Easy man, no need to rush. Surely you'll be back before the show's over. And if you wish, you can take over from the old guy and that's it.

PIT: (*Pit is back with his briefcase. He smiles.*) I'll be back... at the end of the second act.

MAÑEZ: Of course, dude, of course. That's the way I like it. (*A couple of taps on his shoulder.*) Any further questions? (*Pit nods 'no'*) You won't let me down now, right? (*Pit insists: 'no'*) I've always trusted you. (*Pause.*) You lock the doors. I'm dead tired. (*Mañez puts into his mouth half a 'wind' that was left on the table.*) Fuck, they taste good these...

PIT: Winds... they... are called.. winds.

MAÑEZ: Winds? My god – you village people, are strange? See you tomorrow. (*Pit sees him leave through the false door. He picks up Theresa's scarf and smells it.*)

A very similar picture to the beginning, being composed gradually as the Town Hall clock strikes ten. Bright and cold night. Pit is above, facing the audience, shotgun is fixed, left leaning on the edge of the rooftop. Focuses binoculars on a specific point towards the door of the restaurant and waits for a few seconds. He coughs. We hardly hear any city sounds: a car, a lost voice, people entering or leaving the station... He looks at the clock: on the dot. He blows steam towards the stars as if it were Mañez smoking. He pretends to be smoking a cigar. More steam. Cough. Something draws his attention: the time has come. He leaves the binoculars and takes the shotgun. Regulates the telescopic sight and does 'bang!' with his mouth. He smiles.

He does it again: 'bang, bang!'

He unfastens the safety catch. He is serious now, stone-faced. He waits for ten seconds. He breathes deeply, balances his shoulder, presses the shot gun suitably against it. He starts pointing down and raises it a few centimetres.

He shoots once.

Again.

He leaves his shotgun and picks up his binoculars to check that he hit his target. More steam, he sees it go up to the stars and realises he must hurry if he wants to be on time.

He starts dismantling his Sarasqueta very skilfully and putting all its pieces in his briefcase. Below we here a distant rumour: surprise for a death that will never reach the newspapers.

It gets dark while Pit finishes fitting the pieces of his puzzle. It is a puzzle.

DOWN: DOWN BELOW

The second act is over. In the interval, Vidal is snoozing in one corner of the sofa, hugging the libretto. Pit arrives, coming in through the hidden door, and he has time to put away the briefcase, put still has his coat, cap and gloves on. Very carefully he takes the libretto from Vidal's hands and goes towards his working post. He is looking for the page where they have stopped. Vidal wakes up.

VIDAL You could have gone straight to the hostel. *(Pit hangs his clothes on the hanger.)* You must be tired. I did not even have to mutter a thing.

PIT And the new one?

VIDAL Terrible, but she knows the text *(Pause.)* And work?

PIT Fine.

VIDAL The boss told me he had taken you on.

PIT Yes.

VIDAL Extra money, isn't it?

PIT Extra...money.

VIDAL They haven't called from above yet, we still have a couple of minutes. But leave that libretto and look into my eyes. Some day you will have to start looking face to face.

PIT It is... difficult for me. *(He tries helplessly to look into Vidal's eyes.)*

VIDAL I am not that boar...

PIT He told you.

VIDAL Nothing you should be ashamed of. I asked him if he knew why you were always with your head down. That's no good, Pit, no good, you know how much I like you. That's how cowards look at you, or people who have something to hide. You are not one of those. And he told me. He told me that animal would have killed you if he hadn't been by your side. You couldn't shoot at it, and it was coming straight towards you. Wizner kept on screaming 'shoot, shoot!'. And you didn't.

PIT That animal was looking straight into my eyes... and it hurt.

VIDAL What hurt?

PIT Death. It was written all over it.

(In its eyes. In the boar's. Pit raises his head to show him, but lowers it again.)

VIDAL Well, if your uncle had not pulled the trigger, you would not be here now, telling me about it.

PIT Yes.

VIDAL Some of us haven't got death written in our eyes, son.

PIT I... know. *(Pit looks restless.)*

VIDAL All right. All right. Cool off, look at what you wish, as far as I'm concerned. I suppose what you do is normal. I also did it.

PIT *(Surprised.)* You did?

VIDAL Of course. How do you expect to survive with the shit they pay here to do this. How could I have fed my family otherwise? We all earn a living where we can or are allowed to.

PIT Where... we can.

VIDAL I was always with the odd job here and there. In the theatre: helping with the stage, giving the attrezzo people a hand, in the booking office, wherever. In the end you learn a bit of everything, you know, in the theatre, jack of all trades. Don't let that happen to you, Pit, don't let them push you around. If he wants to, he can make you work, but he must pay for it. Otherwise, you'll be his fool most of the time. We are artists. Remember lesson number one.

PIT Yes. At... the door of...

VIDAL That's it, I took you there. You were trembling when we got to that door and I told you to read:

PIT 'Artists'

VIDAL And I told you...

(It's like a memory game. Pit enjoys it.)

PIT 'Go in'.

VIDAL Those of us who go through that door are all the same, whether it is the usherette, the director, the first lady or the stage hand.

PIT Everybody?

VIDAL Even us.

PIT The prompters.

VIDAL At that moment the Skunk was walking by and then...

PIT Also Mañez?

VIDAL The exception to prove the rule, son. I don't think you understood that.

PIT Now... I do

VIDAL That's it. You are an artist. And don't let him push you around.

PIT He pays me well.

VIDAL The Skunk pays you well?

PIT Yes.

VIDAL That's strange. To do the odd job?

PIT We go out... hunting.

VIDAL At night.

PIT It depends... also during the day... or in the evening.

VIDAL If one feels peckish at any time of the day...

PIT Yes.

VIDAL Here. *(He is going to give him some money.)* They gave me this for the bracelet. I was not going to throw it into the dustbin...

PIT I don't want it, keep it.

VIDAL I need the money; you can't imagine how little I get from the union's pension... artists union... what the fuck... If they knew what a union is, and what an artist is. So don't tell me twice...

PIT Keep it, keep it... *(He smiles.)* I said it... twice.
(The old man smiles as well and keeps the money. Pause. The third act is going to begin. Pit is getting ready. Vidal remembers something important.)

VIDAL Bloody memory. Teresa has been here. She must be the only one who knew about the replacement. She had to talk to you right away, she was very nervous with all her business. I told her you might come back for the final act, and she told me that if you got here before it started, you should walk up to the shell while it was still dark.
(Pit goes up the step. There is no light yet on stage. In the darkness we see Teresa leaning on the shell and whispering.)

THERESA Vidal! Has Pit arrived?

PIT I am here, Teresa. What are you...doing there? We are going to... start now!

THERESA I've told the stage hands to give me a minute. I have no time to spare, Pit, listen, it is very important. Tonight, once the show is over. At the artists door.

VIDAL Wow!

THERESA What?

VIDAL A private joke of ours.

THERESA He has a beard and will be carrying a small bag. Here is a photograph of him; it is a bit blurred, though. Attention to the coat: he'll be wearing the same one. *(She shows the photograph to him. He takes it.)* Hide it well. In a few days I'll visit you. God, be very careful, Pit. They are looking for him everywhere. *(Theresa crawls back and hides under a bed. From there she raises her voice high enough so that Pit can hear her.)* Pit!

PIT What?

The gramophone starts playing on stage.

THERESA I like you a lot!

Music plays louder and light comes in. The angle of vision of the stage allows us to go on seeing Teresa's body, who is now Paula, once Dionysos tries to hide her under his bed away from Buby's pressure. Theresa sends Pit a kiss with her hand.

Mr. Rosary screams off stage.

MR. ROSARY'S VOICE Dionysos! Dionysos! Open, it's me! I am Mr. Rosary! I am Mr. Rosary!

DIONYSOS' VOICE I am coming.

Theresa smiles from her hiding place while the dialogue between Dionysos and his future father-in-law takes place. Pit follows the text. He has trouble keeping his eyes away from the girl. Vidal comes close.

VIDAL Has Mañez told you about the tour?

PIT What tour?

VIDAL The tour. You're going on tour.

PIT Where?

VIDAL Don't know; north, I think. Your first tour, the best.

PIT When?

VIDAL After this weekend. I envy you.

PIT Why?

VIDAL Because for a prompter there's nothing better. In that moment they can't do without us. You're going with a repertoire: in the afternoon you do one play, and in the evening you might do another one. Day after day. And that's when their memory starts going, and we come in. They know they are lost without us. You'll tell the difference.

PIT How?

VIDAL They look at you in a different way. You stop being the last shit; now you are valuable. Bloody well think so. And there's the odd allowance. And the hostels.

PIT The... hostels.

VIDAL At night, after the show. Not always, because sometimes you'll be travelling, or you'll spend the night at the station and you won't have time for a stop; but when you do stop, you stop well. And however mucky the hostel may be, there's always time for... For...

PIT Yes... butter. In a figurative sense.

VIDAL That's it, butter. You'll have more than you ever dreamt of. Keep an eye on the knickers. On those who don't wear them, I mean. And remember what I told you.

PIT I... don't...

VIDAL Who knows, Pit, who knows.

Pit looks at Theresa and then at the photograph for the first time. It reminds him of something. On the cyclorama, inside the circle, we see the tail end of a coat. Theresa looks at Pit and sometimes plays jokes on him making faces underneath. The space between both prompters goes dark. We then see Theresa's face, which looks doubtful. She doesn't know why she feels so sad. The picture disappears and the dialogue continues after it goes completely dark.

DOWN FIRST AND FINAL ACT

Without hardly any pause the telephone rings on stage, which is being progressively lit. We are back at the end of act one, in the performance of the following day.

VOICE OF DIONYSUS It's Margaret!

PAULA/ THERESA Do you want to come in?

VOICE OF DIONYSUS No.

There's an untimely pause, silence that should not be there. Theresa's voice has no brightness, she somehow feigns the fact that she can no longer be funny Paula.

PAULA/ THERESA Come in, we are inviting you, we'll have a pleasant time.

VOICE OF DIONYSUS I'm tired...No.

More silence, Paula cannot follow the pace of the dialogue. The prompt box is lit and we see pit prompting, trying to help Theresa. He is wearing a different shirt from the last scene, and his coat has vanished from the hanger.

PIT Anyway, anyway we're not going to let you sleep! Anyway!
Still more silence mixed with a buzz from the disapproving audience. Vidal turns up with a small bag with groceries. He approaches Pit, too worried about what is happening on stage. Paula finally gets started.

PAULA/ THERESA Anyway, we're not going to let you sleep!
Pit sighs with relief. he coughs, closes the booklet and follows Theresa's dialogue by heart

VIDAL What a nice projection, I always said you were going to be one of the finest prompters. And the stressing, perfect. I've come to say goodbye. Tomorrow you're closing down, right?
Pit keeps on looking worried at the stage.

VOICE OF DIONYSUS I'm tired.

PAULA/ THERESA Come in, I am asking you to... Be nice, please.
Pit says every one of Paula's words and Theresa follows his lead hypnotically

PIT/ THERESA Buby is here, Buby annoys me. If you come in it will be different with you. I'll be pleased , I'll always be pleased with you! Would you like to?

VOICE OF DIONYSUS Fine, alright.

A door closes on stage, we hear a phone ringing, some scarce applause while the curtain comes down.

VIDAL You know this by heart, don't you?

PIT Only...Theresa's lines.

VIDAL All of her repertoire? *(Pit nods. he has not changed his position, still looking at the stage.)* I have come to say goodbye. I've brought some biscuits, my wife made them for you. They'll keep fresh during the tour. *(Pit hardly pays any attention to him.)* Damn it, Pit, would you stop that for a second?

PIT Something's wrong...with her, something's wrong with her.

VIDAL There's nothing wrong with her, she is just looking forward to being on tour, just like everybody else.

PIT The tailor... upstairsat the entrance told me that...they are taking her to Madrid. They say that...that....that she is going to play an important role at the Teatro Circo.

VIDAL That's a big thing.

PIT *Young dame.*

VIDAL With the Ladrón de Guevara lady?

PIT I think so.

VIDAL Well then, don't go on. That's what's wrong with her, no need to be worried.

PIT It's like...it is the first time I have had to... prompt her.

VIDAL And the guy?

PIT Who?

VIDAL You hid him over there between the jelly and the lamps...No one could ever find him, that's for sure. *(He searches for him there.)*

PIT You mean Theresa's friend? He is not here.

VIDAL Has he already left?

PIT No.

Theresa walks down the stairs, she looks very affected. She embraces Vidal.

VIDAL Congratulations, baby. Are you going to Madrid?

THERESA *(She is about to cry.)* It seems as if everybody knows but me. Skunk has been telling everyone and the only thing I know is that he has already found a substitute for me but he never said a single word to me.

VIDAL It must be true then, little Theresa. You'll see; he'll be waiting till today's performance is over to tell you.

THERESA But I don't want that pig to talk to me ever again.

VIDAL That's life in show business. You're very talented and I'm sure that fascist pinches his commission percentage. But there is no need to get in a state either, you don't have to be afraid, sooner or later you'll get to the top. Madrid, get ready to find out what a great actress she is!

THERESA Vidal, that's not why I am feeling that way...
(She cannot stand it any longer. She starts crying)

VIDAL Darling, you should be jumping up and down in delight ...is there anything we can do for you?

THERESA Not any more. You know? Maybe you're right and there is nothing that can be done now, but I think I'll keep on trying. I'm sorry, would you leave me alone with Pit, please?

VIDAL Sure, no problem. No need to apologise. *(To Pit.)* There you have the cookies. Pit, I'm going upstairs for a moment.
He leaves. Pit gives Theresa a scarf, the same one Mañez dropped.

THERESA Thanks. *(She recognises the scarf)* Where did you get the scarf from?

PIT I found it...on the floor. It no longer has any blood on it.
He helps her wipe her tears.

THERESA Did you have to wait for a long time?

PIT Till dawn. *(He coughs again)*

THERESA It was very cold last night.

PIT A...a little.

THERESA Bloody damp. *(Pause.)* You don't have to go back to wait for him.

PIT But...we are leaving...the day after tomorrow... Tonight I can still...

THERESA Not tonight, not any other time. *(Pause. Theresa, with her watery eyes, looks at Pit who, for the first time, looks up at her and keeps on staring.*

Theresa notices this and smiles with relief.) A few morons, such as us, are still dreaming, but they abruptly wake us up on time. However, I've come down to thank you, I know I could count on you and I know that wherever I am I'm going to miss you. I swear I would love to go on tour with you...

PIT So, it's true then...that you are leaving?

THERESA I'll go some place, I guess. Though I have thought of sending everything packing and just quit this god damned job for good, this could be my big chance right now as well. I know it's not going to happen. Like Vidal says, theatre is dangerous for one's health, but some of us just can't live without it. And that is why I have to put up with the Skunk.... otherwise...

PIT I am not going to...see you any more.

THERESA If that's what you think...you're not going to lose sight of me that easily. If Madrid does work out, I imagine it will only be for a season and then I'll be back. They say that Amparo Ribelles has left for Mexico, maybe I have to replace her for a few months. I'm really drawn to this place and sooner than you think you'll be back prompting for me as the Princesa like today. Thank you, Pit. If it had not been for you, I would never have known how to get over this. I went blank. *(Pause)*

PIT You...loved him.

THERESA Yes. Many of us loved him, that's why...

PIT What?

THERESA They got rid of him. Two shots, right in the center. *(A bell rings.)* I need to get back upstairs to put some make-up on, I must look like shit.

PIT No. You're...like always.

THERESA Take it. *(She gives him the scarf back.)*

PIT No...it's yours.

THERESA I don't want anything from that nutcase.

PIT Keep it, please...do it...for me.

He notices she is wearing the ring

THERESA I didn't have time to sell it.

PIT No, don't sell it... it suits you...

THERESA I'll think about it, something tells me I shouldn't get rid of it, but I don't know why. And don't worry about the prompting. *(She is going to leave, she kisses him in the cheek.)* Thanks a lot, Pit. *(Vidal walks in.)* You're the best in this theatre.

VIDAL Do you feel any better?

THERESA Yes, far better.

VIDAL The stage manager is searching for you high and low.

THERESA I'm going. See you tomorrow...

(Pause)

PIT Tomorrow is... our... last performance

She goes up the stairs, with the hurry of someone who doesn't want to say one's goodbyes.

VIDAL With those calves, Madrid will bow down at her feet. Hey, Pit...

Pit doesn't say a word; he can't get the image of Theresa out of his mind.

VIDAL You know what I've just realized?

PIT What?

VIDAL That you're an idiot! If you look in Theresa's eyes...

PIT Yes?

But Vidal doesn't answer, he looks down and, at the same time, the gramophone begins to play. On stage, the audience applauds the beginning of the second act. It's getting dark in the prompt box. Dark for hardly two seconds; the stage is lit again, with a darker atmosphere. Pit comes back in his place, in the prompt box.

Meanwhile, Vidal, sitting at the table, is reading a segment of the book and eating a cookie. The performance is coming to an end.

MR. ROSARY'S VOICE Go out, quickly, Dionysos.

DIONYSOS' VOICE Yes! I'm going now...

MR. ROSARY'S VOICE No, no, in front of me... I'm staying behind you, waving the flag with one hand and blowing the trumpet.

DIONYSOS' VOICE It's just that... I want to say farewell, you know...

MR. ROSARY'S VOICE To say farewell to the room? Don't worry! In hotels, rooms are always the same. They never leave memories. Let's go, let's go Dionysos

DIONYSOS' VOICE It's that... Farewell.

MR. ROSARY'S VOICE Glory to love and flowers, lily bud!

We can see mr. Rosary's and Dioniso's feet coming in front of pit, and then they disappear in the background of the stage. One second later, we see Paula's legs going in the same direction, but then, they come back. Far away, mr. Rosary's trumpet is heard, playing a military march. Paula/Theresa leans down enough to let us see that, improvising, she has taken a top hat and she throws it at the sounding-board, as if she were aiming at a big basket. At the same time she makes a spectacular 'alehoop' to the audience, with a wink for Pit whom, despite the fact that the action was unexpected, had been able to catch the hat in flight. The curtain falls. The theatre is full of applause. The company comes back for an encore. In front of the prompt box, a row of legs stand in front of the enthusiastic audience. Pit shows the hat to Vidal but he is too focused on his book to see it, so pit goes to him and put the hat on his head.

VIDAL And, this?

PIT A gift... from Theresa...

VIDAL That girl is making up new things every day! Poor girl... she doesn't know that her fight is already lost. Damned stubbornness.
Pause. The applause continues.

VIDAL It seems that, after all, people did like the performance.
He takes off the hat and hangs it on the hat stand.

PIT Then... it was... like always.

VIDAL You know, I was reading the book, here, chapter 12, where they explain...

PIT The three rules of a good hunter...

VIDAL That's right
Remembering the text, he declaims without hesitating.

PIT First To feel your prey's move and to share her time.
Second To breathe so deeply that you can feel her heartbeat.

And third The important thing is not to shoot but to aim, to aim as if you could travel far away in one second till you're in your prey.

VIDAL (PAUSE). You understand?

PIT What?

VIDAL They are the same rules as the prompter's... The same rules I taught you the first day... That Russian must have worked in a theatre before becoming a hunter. Maybe it's why you learned so fast, don't you think, scoundrel?

PIT It might be.

At this moment, Máñez is coming down the spiral staircase really slowly.

VIDAL The sooner I talk about him... I'd better go. I won't come tomorrow, I'll have lots of things to do and I don't want to disturb you...

PIT You don't... disturb. (*He takes the book and gives it to him.*) Vidal, I want you to... do me a favour... Before you leave... give it to Theresa, leave it on table of... her dressing room, when she's not there...

VIDAL Your book?

PIT Yes

(PAUSE)

VIDAL That is a gift...

It's... the last...

Máñez is already next to them.

MÁÑEZ You, Vidal, once again here? I see you miss us!

VIDAL Not everybody, Mister Máñez, not everybody, but yes, as you know, this place..., I do like it!

MÁÑEZ And you know that here, it will always be your home. How is the family doing? All right?

VIDAL Yes, thank you very much. And work? I see that it is also all right!

MÁÑEZ I can't complain here – I mean, out of the theatre – there is more work than people think. You just have to search for it.

VIDAL Sure. I'm going now, I was here to say goodbye, for the tour.

MÁÑEZ Only for a few months.

He looks at Pit

VIDAL Take care of yourself, kid. And remember me when... the hidden treasures... And don't bother if they serve you butter for dinner! It suits the body very well!

Pit laughs about their complicity. They hug.

VIDAL I'll see you when you come back.

Vidal makes a slight sign of solidarity to Máñez and, as he does, leaves coming up the stairway.

MÁÑEZ I see you are not so glad, son. It's true you will have to work hard but you will have a great time and you will learn a lot. I would gladly go with you, but I have to stay here, ready to get down to the job. *(He smiles.)* By the way, perfect. *(He gives an envelope with money to him. Pit takes it and puts it away.)* The other day, what can I say, it was, like always! Chapeau, as the frogs say. Those above congratulated me, so it means that I have to congratulate you. We're a team. Spain is our club, remember it. Just like Valencia. You've heard that they have won the Generalissimo Cup! *(Pit hasn't understood, of course.)* You live in another world, son, in another world. You already know that I keep thinking it's less risky to aim at the head but, that's ok, you should know why you're doing it like that.

PIT The face... no. I've never aim at... the face...

MÁÑEZ I've always thought that's how the best do it, straight through the skull!

PIT I... aim... down... and I go up little by little... up till...

MÁÑEZ As you see, each genius has his way, as long as you keep working, with the same dexterity, go ahead!

Pit begins to tidy up. The audience is already gone. He drags the briefcase where he keeps the weapon from under the table and gives it to Máñez.

PIT Take it. I don't need it anymore.

MÁÑEZ Wait, son. It is just what I wanted to tell you about.

PIT Tomorrow... It's our last performance...

MÁÑEZ There is time to do what I'm going to ask you to.

PIT No, there's not...

MÁÑEZ Wait, Pit, wait. I am the one who gives orders here!

PIT It's just that, I only want to prompt, here, at the theatre.

MÁÑEZ Sometimes I wonder if you're really stupid or if you act as if you were!
PAUSE
Do you believe that what interests me is your gift for prompting? If you weren't that good with your rifle...

PIT ...shotgun...

MÁÑEZ ...you would still work here, as a prompter? Look at me, look at my face... Damn, look at my face... (*Pit doesn't look at his face*). Do you think I'm interested in so much bullshit of theatre and all that load of crap? I snap my fingers and I've got a lot of lazy men ready to go on stage or to come here if I need it, like you. Can't you see it? I can replace the first actress from one day to another. And nothing. You're all replaceable. The last shit of the last mangy dog. You're waste. Do you understand that word? Twig it. I can replace you in the prompt box whenever I want to. Tomorrow, if I'm in the mood. But you know, upstairs, in the terrace, it's there where you don't have a replacement, fix it in your mind. And thank God there is something above all this that makes it putting up with all that shit. Do you know what it is? The fatherland. Listen to that word and put it in your head for once. Fatherland. And if the fatherland wants you to do something, you shut up and do it, get it?

PIT I... it's that... I don't...
Máñez is losing his patience

MÁÑEZ Ok, it will be the last time, word of honour. Tomorrow. And you won't miss the last performance. You'll be on time, I swear. Maybe you will miss a small part, practically nothing. The performance of tomorrow will be very special, and you already know that last performances come always with lots of surprises.

PIT Surprises?
(He smiles)

MÁÑEZ Let's not get ahead of ourselves. Obey, period. (*PAUSE*) Or maybe you'd rather forget all about it forever, I'll put you on a train and send you back to your village. And there, it will be over, for real.
PAUSE

PIT What... I want... is... to keep working at the theatre...

MÁÑEZ And you can!

PIT The last time, the last. Promise it.

MÁÑEZ You offend me if you don't trust my word of honour.

PIT And after that, it's over, no more... hunting... upstairs...

MÁÑEZ No more manhunt. This is just putting an end to it. We have already broken their backs. Let's say this time it's more... personal.

PIT Personal...

MÁÑEZ And, if you want, when you come back from the tour, I promise you I will go with you to the hunting reserve of a good friend of mine and there you will have your partridges again, the true ones, the ones that fly.

(Pause) So you're ok? You're ok? (Pit sits down) At dusk. Of course, as always. An easy job. This time it will be at the cinema exit. I'll be there, next to the prey. We will stand there, as if we were waiting for someone. What he won't be aware of is that we'll be waiting for you. I will light a cigar, as always. And I'll go some meters away, as always. You count up to 5 and bang! As always. You have to finish him off, bang, bang. There may be more people than usual, it's Sunday night. And sorry to insist, I know you often do it, but, I repeat, sorry to insist: aim straight, for God's sake, aim as if there were no tomorrow. Any more questions?

PIT No (Pause.) And then, I'll come back to the theatre.

MÁÑEZ And you go on and on... You'll have plenty of time to get back... as long as you do your best, that you certainly will: no mistakes. You can't fail in your farewell... what would they do without you at the princesa? Pit gives up; takes the briefcase again. Good boy, pit, good boy.

It is getting dark while we can hear in the distance the sound of people walking, a horn blowing: the sounds of a Sunday evening which takes us to...

It is possibly a far too beautiful evening, even to go out hunting. That is what Pit thinks; he sees how the sun sets behind the buildings on the right.

In one hand he holds the gun, all fixed up, and in the other he holds the binoculars with which he is looking around where Mañez had told him.

Once in a while he looks back at the sun, shining on one of his sides.

The moment arrives. He puts down the binoculars and concentrates on the gun, regulating its telescopic sight.

He breathes deeply.

He repeats the ritual: fits in the butt, unlocks the safety catch, aims downwards and then slowly goes up.

But just when he starts moving upwards, even before he starts caressing the trigger, there is something that makes him stop. He could never have imagined what he is seeing.

We can see the cause of his surprise projected on the cyclorama. The circle of the sight shows a pair of high-heeled shoes.

He focuses the sight far more thoroughly, if possible. He raises the gun a few centimetres. The picture on the cyclorama shows Theresa's beautiful calves.

He drops the gun down. He smiles. Now he understands "this is personal". His eyes sparkle.

He takes the gun with determination. He tries to hold his breath, he lowers the gun and raises it again.

But this time he abruptly pans towards the left and, suddenly, he stops.

He points the gun.

He feels his prey's heartbeat, he remembers how he stinks.

He shoots once, no more shots needed.

The sudden screaming of people reaches us.

Pit takes his binoculars to confirm the target; he leaves them next to the weapon on the roof and is about to leave when he hears something; obviously he cannot escape through that door. He locks it, and searches along the sides of the terrace till he finds a small emergency staircase. He goes down and disappears behind the wall.

*In the meantime, a mixture of sounds: a police car alarm, or an ambulance, together with violent knocks on the door. That dissolve with the applause of the audience who are watching the final performance of *Three Top-Hats*.*

The laughter of the audience watching the play is mixed now with the music from the gramophone. The stage is now lit and we can see a limited part of it, only Dionysos' legs while he is sitting on his bed.

DIONYSOS' VOICE Well...

The prompt box is lit as well. Pit arrives, breathing heavily, sweating, he hangs his coat on the hanger; the top hat is no longer there. He imitates:

PIT Well...

He smiles. Suddenly, he anticipates something. Paula/Theresa's is taking too long to start speaking. Tense silence. He breathes more heavily. He looks up. Finally:

PAULA/THERESA No. Always. We'll talk to each other closely, always! It's better that way. The bad thing is...

Pit is smiling again. We can see Theresa's legs on the bed. Then she sits. Theresa and Pit say simultaneously:

PAULA/PIT The bad thing is that you will no longer be with us when you stop working here... and everyone one of us will go our own way.

Something else draws Pit's attention. On the table there is a book, his latest present. Somebody has left it there again. He goes towards it while Theresa goes on with the text.

PAULA/THERESA It's foolish to separate so soon, isn't it? Unless you needed a partenaire for your number.

Pit is sitting at the table, open the book and finds a daisy in it. He joins Paula's text, without projecting his voice, like a whisper.

PAULA/PIT We could spend more time together then. I could learn to juggle, couldn't I?

Theresa has left the scarf next to the flower. He smells it deeply.

PAULA/PIT And juggle with three top hats!

Someone starts coming down the stairs. Pit is unperturbed, as if he were expecting it. He comes down silently. On stage we can hear the sound of the rattle Dionysos is playing with. It does not work.

DIONYSOS' VOICE It has broken down.

Paula/Theresa takes it and tries to repair it. The man is on the last step. He is wearing a dark coat. He reaches for a gun in one of his pockets, fits on a silencer, pausing, like an executioner who can feel his victim surrendering.

Pit stands up. He was waiting for him.

Theresa/Paula manages to repair the rattle. It makes a hellish noise. At the same time, the shooter aims at Pit, he shoots, once, at his chest.

He then leaves up the stairs.

PAULA/THERESA It's a pity you don't need a partenaire for your number. it doesn't matter. these days we'll enjoy ourselves, you know? Look...come on, look...look at the ring, you gave it to me. How didn't I guess that it was you who filled up my dressing-room with presents?

Pit knows these sentences do not belong to the text. Wounded, he crawls to the prompt box, holding the bloody scarf in his hands. He looks at the stage. We can see Theresa sitting on the floor next to the bed and

showing him the ring. She has finally understood why she could not take it off. They smile. They say the text together, Theresa's brightness with Pit's loving whisper.

PAULA/PIT Tomorrow we'll go for a walk, to the beach...by the sea. the two of us alone! Like two kids, right?

Pit is quiet. Theresa delivers her text on her own, but not to the audience. She is looking at the prompt box, as a present to her prompter.

She raises her voice emotionally.

You are not like the rest of the men! There is no performance tonight!
We have the night for ourselves!

Pit's final breath is a smile and a dimmed insistence.

PIT I love you... I love you... I love you...

Theresa smiles. She does not know Pit is hardly a shadow in his prompt box, and she goes on with Paula's text about crabs and beaches and castles and volcanoes, while Pit prompts for a last time an "I love you" which is not in the text either before finally closing his eyes.

CURTAIN

JUAN LUIS MIRA
659274224
juanluis@jacara.info
jlmiral@vodafone.es