

ARIEL DORFMAN

Ariel Dorfman, born in Argentina in 1942, is a Chilean citizen who was forced into exile after the 1973 coup that overthrew Salvador Allende. His numerous books have been translated into over twenty languages. Those available in English are, non-fiction: *How to Read Donald Duck* (with Armand Maletart), 1971, *The Emperor's Old Clothes*, 1983, and *Some Write to the Future*, 1991; the novels *Widows*, 1988, *The Last Song of Manuel Sendero*, 1986, *Mascara* 1988, *Hard Rain*, 1990; a collection of short stories, *My House is On Fire*, 1990; *Last Walk in Santiago and Other Poems of Exile and Disappearance*, 1988; and the plays, *Widows*, *Reader and Death* and *the Maiden*. Research Professor of Literature and Latin American Studies at Duke University, Dorfman is a regular contributor to *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Nation*, *The Village Voice* and many other papers worldwide. He lives with his wife and two sons in Durham, North Carolina, and in Santiago, Chile. He is presently working on a new novel and a book of essays, *Missing Continents*.

Some opinions on his work:

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Characters

PAULINA SALAS, around forty years old.

GERARDO ESCOBAR, her husband, a lawyer, around forty-five.

ROBERTO MIRANDA, a doctor, around fifty.

The time is the present and the place, a country that is probably Chile, but could be any country that has given itself a democratic government just after a long period of dictatorship.

The author would like to thank Linda Brandon and the ICA for bringing the play to the attention of the British public.

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This text went to press before the opening night on the Main Stage of the Royal Court Theatre and may therefore differ slightly from the play as performed.

ACT ONE

Scene One

Sound of the sea. After midnight.
The ESCOBAR's beach house. A terrace and an ample living/dining-room where dinner is laid out on a table with two chairs. On a sideboard is a cassette-recorder and a lamp. Window wells between the terrace and the front room, with curtains blowing in the wind. A door from the terrace leading to a bedroom. PAULINA SALAS is seated in a chair on the terrace, as if she were drinking in the light of the moon. The sound of a faraway car can be heard. She hurriedly stands up, goes to the other room, looks out the window, crouches, and as the headlights of the car sweep the living-room, she can be seen rolled into a foetus-like position. The car brakes, its motor still running, the lights blasting her. She goes to the sideboard, takes out a gun, stops when the motor is taken off and she hears GERARDO's voice.

GERARDO (*voice off*). You sure you won't come in?
(*Muffled reply*.) . . . But we must get together before I leave. I'm leaving . . . Monday. Let's make it Sunday?
(*Muffled reply*.) . . . My wife makes a margarita that will make your hair stand on end . . . I really want you to know how much I appreciate . . . (*Muffled reply*.) See you on Sunday then. (*He laughs.*)

PAULINA *hides the gun away. She stands behind the curtains. The car drives off, the lights sweeping the room again. GERARDO enters.*

GERARDO. Paulina? Love? God, it's dark.

He sees PAULINA hidden behind the curtains. He switches on a light. She slowly comes out from the curtains.

Are you . . . ? What're you doing there like that?
Sorry I took this long to . . . I . . .

PAULINA (*agitated*). Who was it?

GERARDO. It's just that I . . .

PAULINA. Who brought you?

GERARDO. . . . had an — no, don't worry, it wasn't anything serious. It's just that the car — luckily a man stopped — just a flat tyre. Paulina, I can't see a thing without . . .

He puts on another lamp and sees the table set.

Oh, love, look — it must've got cold, and you must have —

PAULINA (*very calm, till the end of the scene*). We can heat it up. As long as we've got something to celebrate, that is.

Brief pause.

You do have something to celebrate, Gerardo, don't you?

GERARDO. That depends on you.

Pause. He takes an enormous nail out of his jacket pocket.

You know what this is? This is the son of a bitch that gave me a flat. And do you know what any normal man does when he gets a flat? He goes to the boot and he gets out the spare. If the spare isn't flat too, that is. If his wife happened to remember to fix the spare, right?

PAULINA. His wife. Always got to be the wife who has to fix everything. You were supposed to fix the spare.

GERARDO. I'm really not in the mood for arguing, but we had agreed that . . .

PAULINA. You were supposed to fix the spare. I take care of the house and you take care of —

GERARDO. You don't want help but afterwards you . . .

PAULINA. — the car at least.

GERARDO. . . . afterwards you complain.

PAULINA. I never complain.

GERARDO. This is an absurd discussion. What're we fighting about? I've already forgotten what we . . .

PAULINA. We're not fighting, darling. You accused me of not fixing your spare . . .

GERARDO. My spare?

PAULINA. — and I told you quite sweetly that I —

GERARDO. Hold it right there. That you didn't fix the spare, *our* spare, that's open to discussion, but there is another little matter. The jack.

PAULINA. What jack?

GERARDO. Precisely. What jack? Where did you put the car jack? You know, to jack the —

PAULINA. You need a jack to hold up the car? And what are your strong arms for, my dear?

GERARDO (*embracing her*). For this.

Brief pause as they hug.

Do you know why you can afford to be so exasperating?

PAULINA. I can guess, but I'd rather you told me.

GERARDO. Because you know that the more you exasperate me, the more I love you. But what the hell did you do with the jack?

PAULINA. I gave it to Mother.

GERARDO (*leaving go of her*). To your mother? You gave it to your mother?

PAULINA. Well, lent it to her, yes.

GERARDO. And may I know why?

PAULINA. You may. Because she needed it.

GERARDO. Whereas I, of course, we don't. You just can't — darling, you simply cannot do this sort of thing.

PAULINA. Mother was driving down south and really needed it. You can always . . .

GERARDO. Get lost.

PAULINA. No.

GERARDO. Yes. I get a telegram. The President wants to see me. I have to leave for the city immediately for the most important meeting of my whole life and on my way back this son of a bitch of a nail is lying in wait for me – and there I was on the road, in urgent need of what any normal man would find in the boot of his car – a spare and a jack. Paulina, I don't know if you can get it into your pretty little head that . . .

PAULINA. My pretty little head knew that you'd find someone to help you out. Who was it? Was she also pretty?

GERARDO. I already said it was a man.

PAULINA. You said nothing of the sort.

GERARDO. Why do you always have to suppose there's a woman . . .

PAULINA. Why indeed? I just can't imagine why.

Brief pause.

The man who . . . ? Was he nice?

GERARDO. Terrific guy. Mind you, if it had been Count Dracula in person, I'd still have been grateful.

PAULINA. Well, there you are, you see. You always manage to fix things up so that everything turns out all right for you. But with Mother. If she had a flat tyre you can be sure it really would be Count Dracula who'd stop, you know how she attracts the weird ones, she's like a magnet . . .

GERARDO. You can't imagine how ecstatic it makes me to think of your mother exploring the south with my jack, free of all worries, whilst I'm stuck on the motorway for hours –

PAULINA. No exaggerating now . . .

GERARDO. Forty-five minutes. Forty-five. Road full of weekend people racing for the coast. The cars passed by as if I didn't exist. You know what I began to do? I began to move my arms around like a windmill to see if – but not a soul. What happened to ordinary

solidarity in this country? Lucky for me, this man – Roberto Miranda – I invited him over for a –

PAULINA. I heard you.

GERARDO. How's Sunday?

PAULINA. Sunday's fine.

Brief pause.

GERARDO. As we're going back Monday. At least I am. And I thought you might want to come with me, shorten these holidays . . .

PAULINA. So the President named you?

Brief pause.

GERARDO. He did.

PAULINA. The peak of your career.

GERARDO. I wouldn't call it the peak. I am, after all, the youngest of those he named, right?

PAULINA. Right. When you're Minister of Justice in a few years' time, that'll be the peak, huh?

GERARDO. That certainly doesn't depend on me.

PAULINA. Did you tell him that?

GERARDO. Who?

PAULINA. Your Good Samaritan.

GERARDO. You mean Roberto Miranda? I hardly know the man. Besides, I haven't decided yet if I should . . .

PAULINA. You've decided.

GERARDO. I said I'd need a day or so, that I felt extremely honoured but that I needed . . .

PAULINA. You said that to the President?

GERARDO. To the President. That I needed time to think it over.

PAULINA. I don't see what you have to think over. You've made your decision, Gerardo, you know you have. It's what you've been working for all these years, why pretend that . . .

GERARDO. Because first – first you have to say yes.

PAULINA. Well then: yes.

GERARDO. That's not the yes I need.

PAULINA. It's the only yes I've got.

GERARDO. I've heard others.

Brief pause.

If I were to accept, I must know I can count on you, that you don't feel . . . If you were to have a relapse, it could leave me . . .

PAULINA. Vulnerable, yes, it could leave you vulnerable. Stripped. You'd have to take care of me all over again.

GERARDO. That's unfair.

Brief pause.

Are you criticising me because I take care of you?

PAULINA. And that's what you told the President, that your wife might have problems with . . .

Pause.

GERARDO. He doesn't know. Nobody knows. Not even your mother knows.

PAULINA. There are people who know.

GERARDO. I'm not talking about those sort of people. Nobody in the new government knows. I'm talking about the fact that we never made it public, as you never – as we never denounced the things that they – what they . . .

PAULINA. Only if the result was death?

GERARDO. Paulina, I'm sorry, what do you – ?

PAULINA. This Commission you're named to. Doesn't it only investigate cases that ended in death?

GERARDO. It's appointed to investigate human rights' violations that ended in death or the presumption of death, yes.

PAULINA. Only the most serious cases?

GERARDO. The idea is that if we can cast light on the worst crimes, other abuses will come to light.

PAULINA. Only the most serious?

GERARDO. Those beyond redemption.

PAULINA. Only those beyond redemption, huh?

GERARDO. I don't like to talk about this, Paulina.

PAULINA. I don't like to talk about it either.

GERARDO. But we'll have to talk about it, won't we, you and I? If I'm going to spend the next few months listening to relatives and eyewitnesses and survivors – and each time I come back home I – and you wouldn't want me to keep all that to myself. And what if you . . . If you . . .

He takes her in his arms.

If you knew how much I love you. If you knew how it still hurts me.

Brief pause.

PAULINA *(fiercely holding on to him)*. Yes. Yes. Yes. Is that the yes that you wanted?

GERARDO. That's the yes that I wanted.

PAULINA. Find out what happened. Find out everything. Promise me that that you'll find everything that . . .

GERARDO. Everything. Everything we can. We'll go as far as we . . . *(Pause.)* As we're . . .

PAULINA. Allowed.

GERARDO. Limited, let's say we're limited. But within those limits there is so much we can do . . . We'll publish our conclusions. There will be an official report. What happened will be established objectively, so no one will ever be able to deny it, so that our country will never again live through those excesses . . .

PAULINA. And then?

GERARDO. I don't understand.

PAULINA. You hear the relatives of the victims, you denounce the crimes, what happens to the criminals?

GERARDO. That depends on the Justices. The courts receive a copy of the evidence and the Justices proceed from there to —

PAULINA. The Justices? The same Justices who never intervened to save one life in seventeen years of dictatorship? Who never accepted a single *habeas corpus* ever? The Justices who said that nobody had been kidnapped, that if some poor woman's husband was missing it was because he was tired of her and had found another woman? What did you call them? Justices? Justices? Justices?

As she speaks, PAULINA begins to laugh softly but with increasing hysteria.

GERARDO. Paulina. That's enough. Paulina.

He takes her in his arms. She slowly calms down.

Silly. Silly girl, my silly little kitten. I'm so sorry. This is all my fault. I shouldn't have made so much of the tyre and that stupid car jack. It just struck me, suppose it was you out there, caught on the road, the lights screaming by you, nobody stopping, suppose you'd have been alone in the —

PAULINA. Someone would have stopped. Probably that same — Miranda?

GERARDO. Probably. Seems to be his mission in life.

To rescue idiots and danseuls in distress.

PAULINA. Sounds familiar.

GERARDO. Yes, we're kindred spirits.

PAULINA. Must be nice then.

GERARDO. Couldn't be nicer. If it weren't for him... I invited him to come for a drink on Sunday. Was that all right?

PAULINA. Sunday's fine. I was frightened. I heard a car. When I looked it wasn't yours.

GERARDO. But there was no danger.

PAULINA. No.

Brief pause.

Gerardo. You already said yes to the President, didn't you? The truth, Gerardo. Or are you going to start your work in the Commission with a lie?

GERARDO. I didn't want to hurt you.

PAULINA. You told the President you accepted, didn't you? Before you asked me? Didn't you? I need the truth, Gerardo.

GERARDO. Yes. I told him I'd do it. Yes. Before asking you.

Lights go down.

Scene Two

One hour later. Nobody on stage. Only the moonlight, weaker than before, coming in through the windows. Dinner has been cleared away. Sound of the sea beyond. The sound of a car approaching. Then the headlights light up the living-room, are switched off, a car door is opened and closed. Someone knocks on the door, first timidly, then stronger. We hear the voices of PAULINA and GERARDO from their bedroom.

PAULINA *(voice off, whispering, terrified)*. Don't go.

GERARDO. Don't be silly. Nothing's going to happen, love.

A lamp is switched on from offstage and is immediately switched off.

PAULINA. They're coming for me, they're coming for me because I told you, because I didn't —

GERARDO. Easy, love.

The knocking on the door gets more insistent.

No one is coming to get you. No one knows —

PAULINA. Be careful. Promise me.

GERARDO. Nothing is going to — all right, all right, love, I'll be careful.

GERARDO comes into the living-room in his pyjamas from the bedroom. He switches on the lamp.

I'm coming, I'm coming.

He goes to the door and opens it. ROBERTO MIRANDA is outside.

Oh, it's you. Lord, you scared the life out of me.

ROBERTO. I'm really so sorry for this intrusion. I thought you'd still be up.

GERARDO. You must excuse me – do come in.

ROBERTO enters the house.

It's just that we are still not accustomed.

ROBERTO. Accustomed?

GERARDO. To democracy. Someone knocks on your door at midnight and is it a friend or one of –

PAULINA edges out onto the terrace from where she will be able to hear the men but not see or be seen by them.

ROBERTO. One of these sons of bitches?

GERARDO. And my wife has . . . she's been a bit nervous and . . . So you'll understand that – you'll have to forgive her if she doesn't . . . And if we lower our voices a little . . .

ROBERTO. Say no more, no more, it's my fault, I just thought . . .

GERARDO. Please sit down, please do . . .

ROBERTO. . . . that I'd stop by for a short visit to . . . Okay, but just a minute, no more than – but you must be asking yourself why this sudden visit . . . Well, you know when I drove on to our own beach-house, I don't know if you remember that I had the radio on, you may remember that . . .

GERARDO. Excuse me, would you like a drink? Sunday you can have one of my wife's famous margaritas, but I do possess a Cognac from the duty free that I –

PAULINA edges nearer and listens.

ROBERTO. No, thanks, I . . . Well, a teeny weeny bit.

So I had the radio on and . . . all of a sudden, it hit me. I heard your name on the news, the list of names the President's chosen for his Investigating

Commission, and they say Gerardo Escobar, and I said to myself that sounds familiar, but where, who, and it kept going round in my head, and when I reached our house I realised who it was. And I also remembered we'd put your spare tyre in the boot of my car and that tomorrow you'd need it patched up and also . . . the real real truth is, you want to know the truth? –

GERARDO. Nothing but.

ROBERTO. I thought to myself – this man is doing something really essential, crucial for the honour of the nation – so the country can come together again, can have some reconciliation, shut the door on the divisions and hatreds of the past and I've got his spare tyre. I thought here's the last weekend that he's going to be free of worries for – for who knows how many more months, right, because you're going to have to go up and down this land of ours listening to thousands of people . . . Don't tell me that this won't be the last weekend that you're going to . . .

GERARDO. That's certainly true, but I wouldn't go so far as to –

ROBERTO. So I thought the least I can do is drive over. Or find a garage for him. I mean, who has a phone out here. So he won't lose his time, I thought to myself, valuable time which could –

GERARDO. You're making me feel like a saint.

ROBERTO. No. This is straight from the heart. This Commission will help us close a very painful chapter in our history, and here I am, alone this weekend. So I said to myself, Dr Miranda to the rescue, this is a job for you, we've all got to help out – it may be a teeny weeny gesture but –

GERARDO. Tomorrow would have been fine.

ROBERTO. And you get up early. No car outside. You get to your car – no spare. Then you have to set out

and find me. No, my good man, – and then I thought what if I also take him to the garage tomorrow and I find him a jack. Which reminds me – what happened to your jack, did you find out what –

GERARDO. My wife lent it to her mother.

ROBERTO. To her mother?

GERARDO. You know how women are . . .

ROBERTO (*laughing*). I know all too well. It's the female soul. Utterly unpredictable. You know what Nietzsche once wrote? The female soul is never entirely ours, we can never entirely possess it. Or maybe he didn't write that. Though you can be sure that old Nietzsche would have if he'd been caught in the roar of the weekend traffic without a jack.

GERARDO. And without a spare.

ROBERTO. And without a spare. Which ditches it – I really must accompany you and we'll clean up the whole operation in one morning . . .

GERARDO. I do feel that I am imposing upon you – like helping people, – I'm a doctor, I think I told you, didn't I? – But don't imagine I only help important people.

GERARDO. If you had known what you were getting into you'd have pushed your foot down on the accelerator full blast, huh?

ROBERTO (*laughing*). Full blast. No, seriously, it's no trouble at all. In fact, it's an honour. In fact that's why I came here tonight, really. To congratulate you. You are exactly what this country needs, to be able to know the truth once and for all . . .

GERARDO. What the country needs is justice, but if we can establish at least part of the truth . . .

ROBERTO. Just what I was about to say. Even if we can't put these people on trial, even if they're covered by this amnesty they gave themselves – at least we'll see their names in print.

GERARDO. Those names are to be kept secret. The Commission is not supposed to identify the authors of crimes or –

ROBERTO. In this country everything finally comes out into the open. Their children, their grandchildren, is it true that you did this, you did what they're accusing you of, and they'll have to lie. They'll say it's slander, it's a communist conspiracy, some such nonsense, but the truth will be written all over them, and their children, their very own children, will feel sorrow for them, disgust and sorrow. It's not like putting them in gaol, but . . .

GERARDO. Maybe some day . . .

ROBERTO. Maybe if the citizens of this country get angry enough we may even be able to revoke the amnesty.

GERARDO. You know that's not possible.

ROBERTO. I'm for killing the whole bunch of them, but I can see that . . .

GERARDO. I'm afraid I have to disagree with you, Roberto, because in my opinion the death penalty has never solved –

ROBERTO. Then we're going to have to disagree, my friend. There are some people who simply don't deserve to be alive, but what I was really getting at was that you're going to have quite a problem . . .

GERARDO. Move than one. For starters, the Army is going to fight the Commission all the way. They've told the President it would be dangerous, yes, dangerous, because it will open old wounds. Thank God, the President didn't get cold feet, but we all know these people are ready to jump on us at the slightest mistake we make . . .

ROBERTO. Well, that was exactly my point, when you said that the names wouldn't be known, published, when you – that got me to thinking that maybe you're right, maybe we'll finally never know who these people really were, don't you see that they form a sort of . . .

frightened. Tomorrow you can make us a nice breakfast . . .
Only the sound of the sea in the semi-darkness.

Scene Three

A short time later. A cloud passes over the moon. The sound of the sea grows, then recedes. Silence.

PAULLINA (voice off, whispering). Gerardo? Gerardo?

There is no answer. PAULLINA comes into the living-room. By the light of the moon she can be seen going to the drawer and taking out the gun. And some vague articles of clothing which appear to be stockings. She stops. She thinks she hears GERARDO move in the bedroom. She is dressed.

Love . . . ? Love?

She crosses the living-dining-room to the entrance to ROBERTO's bedroom. She waits for an instant, listening. She goes into the bedroom. A few moments pass. We hear a confusing, muffled sound, followed by a sort of cry. Then silence.

In the half-light we see her come out of the room. She goes back to her own bedroom door. She opens it, takes a key from the inside of the door, locks it. She returns to the spare bedroom. We see her dragging something which resembles a body but we can't be sure. She moves a chair and hoists the body onto it, ties it to the chair. She goes into the spare room, returns with what seems to be ROBERTO's jacket, takes a set of car keys from it. She starts to leave the house. Stops. Turns back to look at the body which is now clearly that of ROBERTO. She takes off her panties, stuffs them into ROBERTO's mouth.

PAULLINA leaves the house. We hear the sound of ROBERTO's car. When the car's headlights are turned on, they sweep the scene and that stark brutal shot of light clearly reveals ROBERTO MIRANDA tied with ropes to one of the chairs, totally unconscious, and with his mouth gagged. The car leaves. Darkness.

Scene Four

Before dawn. ROBERTO opens his eyes. He tries to get up and realises that he is tied. He begins to roll over and desperately try to free himself. PAULLINA is sitting in front of him with her gun. ROBERTO looks at her with a terrorised expression in his eyes.

PAULLINA (very calm). Good morning, Dr . . . Miranda, isn't it? Dr Miranda.

She shows him the gun and points it playfully in his direction.

I had a chum from the University, name of Miranda, Maria Elena Miranda, you wouldn't be related to the Mirandas of San Esteban, would you? She had quite a mind. A marvellous retentive memory, we used to call her our little encyclopaedia. I have no idea what became of her. She probably finished her medical studies, became a doctor, just like you.

I didn't get my diploma . . . I didn't get too far with my studies, Dr Miranda. Let's see if you can guess why I didn't get my diploma, I'm pretty sure that it won't take a colossal effort of the imagination on your part to guess why.

Luckily there was Gerardo. He was – well, I wouldn't exactly say he was waiting for me – but let's say that he still loved me, so I never had to go back to the University. Lucky for me, because I felt – well, phobia wouldn't be the right word, a certain apprehension – about medicine. I wasn't so sure about my chosen profession. But life is never over till it's over, as they say. That's why I'm wondering whether it might not be a good idea to sign up again – you know, ask that I be readmitted. I read the other day, now that the military aren't in charge anymore, that the University has begun to allow the students who were kicked out to apply for readmittance.

But here I am chatting away when I'm supposed to make breakfast, aren't I, a nice breakfast? Now you like – let's see, ham with mayonnaise, wasn't that it? Ham with mayonnaise sandwiches. We haven't got mayonnaise, but we do have ham. Gerardo also likes

ham. I'll get to know your other tastes. Sorry about the mayonnaise. I hope you don't mind that this must remain, for the moment, a monologue. You'll have your say, Doctor, you can be sure of that. I just don't want to remove this – gag, you call it, don't you? – at least not till Gerardo wakes up. But I should be getting him up. Did I tell you I phoned the garage from the call box? They'll be here soon.

She goes to the bedroom door, unlocks it, opens it.

The real real truth is that you look slightly bored.

Takes a cassette out of her pocket.

I took this out of your car – I took the liberty – what if we listen to some Schubert while I make breakfast, a nice breakfast, Doctor? 'Death and the Maiden'?

She puts it into the cassette-player. We begin to hear Schubert's quartet 'Death and the Maiden'.

D'you know how long it's been since I last listened to this quartet? If it's on the radio, I switch it off, I even try not to go out much, though Gerardo has all these social events he's got to attend and if they ever name him Minister we're going to live running around shaking hands and smiling at perfect strangers, but I always pray they won't put on Schubert. One night we were dining with – they were extremely important people, and our hostess happened to put Schubert on, a piano sonata, and I thought, do I switch it off or do I leave, but my body decided for me, I felt extremely ill right then and there and Gerardo had to take me home, so we left them there listening to Schubert and nobody knew what had made me ill, so I pray they won't play that anywhere I go, any Schubert at all, strange isn't it, when he used to be, and I would say, yes I really would say, he's still my favourite composer, such a sad, noble sense of life. But I always promised myself a time would come to recover him, bring him back from the grave so to speak, and just sitting here listening to him with you I know that I was right, that I'm – so many things that are going to change from now on, right? To think I was on the verge of throwing my whole Schubert collection out, crazy!

(Raising her voice, to GERARDO.) Isn't this quartet marvellous, my love.

(To ROBERTO.) And now I'll be able to listen to my Schubert again, even go to a concert like we used to. Did you know that Schubert was homosexual? But of course you do, you're the one who kept repeating it over and over in my ear over and over again while you played 'Death and the Maiden'. Is this the very cassette, Doctor, or do you buy a new one every year to keep the sound pure?

GERARDO *enters from the bedroom, still sleepy.*

Good morning, my darling. Sorry breakfast isn't ready yet.

Upon seeing GERARDO, ROBERTO makes desperate efforts to wipe himself. GERARDO watches the scene with total astonishment.

GERARDO. Paulina! What is this? What in the name of . . . Roberto . . . Dr Miranda.

He moves towards ROBERTO.

PAULINA. Don't touch him.

GERARDO. What?

PAULINA *(threatening him with the gun)*. Don't touch him.

GERARDO. What the hell is going on here, what kind of madness is –

PAULINA. It's him.

GERARDO. Par . . . put that gun down.

PAULINA. It's him.

GERARDO. Who?

PAULINA. It's the man.

GERARDO. What man?

PAULINA. The doctor.

GERARDO. What doctor?

PAULINA. The doctor who played Schubert.

GERARDO. The doctor who played Schubert.

PAULINA. That doctor.

GERARDO. How do you know?

PAULINA. His voice.

GERARDO. You told me – what you told me was all through those weeks, you said –

PAULINA. I was blindfolded, yes. But I could hear.

GERARDO. You're ill.

PAULINA. I'm not ill.

GERARDO. You're ill.

PAULINA. All right then, I am. But I can be ill and recognise a voice. Besides, when we lose one of our faculties, the others compensate, they get sharper. Right, Dr Miranda?

GERARDO. A vague memory of someone's voice is not proof of anything.

PAULINA. It's his voice. I recognised it as soon as he came in here last night. The way he laughed. Certain phrases he used.

GERARDO. But that's not . . .

PAULINA. It may be a teensy weensy thing, but it's enough for me. During all these years not an hour has passed that I haven't heard it, that same voice, next to me, next to my ear, that voice mixed with saliva, you think I'd forget a voice like his?

Imitating the voice of ROBERTO, then of a man.

'Give her a bit more. This bitch can take a bit more. Give it to her.'

'You sure, Doctor? What if the cunt dies on us?'
'She's not even near fainting. Give it to her, up another notch.'

GERARDO. Paulina. I'm asking you to give me that gun.

PAULINA. No.

GERARDO. We can't talk with that pointing at me.

PAULINA. On the contrary, we can only talk with this pointing at you. If I put it down you'll use your superior strength to win the argument.

GERARDO. Paulina, I want you to know that what you are doing is going to have serious consequences.

PAULINA. Serious, huh? Beyond redemption?

GERARDO. Yes, it could be. Beyond redemption. Dr Miranda, I have to ask your forgiveness for –

PAULINA. Don't you dare ask that from that piece of shit.

GERARDO. Unite him, Paulina.

PAULINA. No.

GERARDO. Then I will.

He moves towards ROBERTO. Suddenly, a shot from PAULINA's gun rings out. It's clear that she does not know how to fire the weapon, because she is as surprised as both men are, recoiling from the shot. GERARDO takes a step backward and ROBERTO looks desperate.

PAULINA. Oh my God!

GERARDO. Don't fire that thing again, Pau. Give me that gun. *(Silence.)* You can't do this.

PAULINA. When are you going to stop telling me what I can and can't do. 'You can't do this, you can do this, you can't do this.' I did it.

GERARDO. You did this to this man, whose only fault that we know of – the only thing you can accuse him of in front of a court of justice –

PAULINA *laughs derisively.*

– yes, a court, of justice, yes, however corrupt, venal, cowardly – the only thing you could accuse him of is of stopping on a motorway to help someone who was in trouble, and bring me home and then offer to –

PAULINA. I almost forgot. The garage man will be here any minute.

GERARDO. What?

PAULINA. When I went to hide your Good

Samarian's car early this morning, I stopped at a call box and rang the garage. So you better get dressed, he'll be here soon.

GERARDO. Please, Paulina, could we try something else? Could we start being reasonable.

PAULLINA. You be reasonable. They never did anything to you.

GERARDO. Of course they did things – but we're not competing for some horror prize here, damn it. Even if this man was the doctor of those terrible events – he isn't, there's no reason why he should be, but let's say he was – even in that case, you have no right in law or otherwise to do what you have done. Paulina, think of the consequences, try to –

The motor of a truck is heard outside. PAULLINA runs to the door, half opens it and shouts out.

PAULLINA. He's coming, he's coming.

She shuts the door, locks it, closes the curtains and looks at GERARDO.

Here he is. Get dressed, quick. Go with the garage man. He'll take you to the car and fix it. The spare tyre's outside. I also took his jack.

GERARDO. You're stealing his jack?

PAULLINA. That way Mother can keep ours.

Brief pause.

GERARDO. Have you thought I could go to the police?

PAULLINA. I doubt you'd do that. You believe too much in your own powers of persuasion. Besides you know that if the police do show their noses here I'll put a bullet straight through this man's head, you know that, don't you? And then I'll put the gun into my mouth and pull the trigger.

GERARDO. Oh my baby, my baby. You're – unrecognisable. How can you possibly be like this, talk like this?

PAULLINA. Explain to my husband, Dr Miranda, what you did to me so I would be this – crazy.

GERARDO. So – what exactly do you plan to do?

PAULLINA. Not me. You and me. We're going to put him on trial, Gerardo, this doctor. Right here. Today. Or is your famous Investigating Commission going to do it?

Lights go down.

ACT TWO

Scene One

Midday.

ROBERTO is still in the same position, PAULLINA with her back to him, looking outwards to the window and the sea, rocking herself gently as she speaks to him.

PAULLINA. And when they let me go – d'you know where I went? I couldn't go home to my parents – they were so pro-military, I'd see Mother only once in a long while. – Isn't this bizarre, that I should be telling you all this as if you were my confessor, when there are things I've never told Gerardo, or my sister, certainly not my mother. She'd die if she knew what I've really got in my head. Whereas I can tell you exactly what I feel, what I felt when they let me go. That night . . . well, you don't need me to describe what state I was in, you gave me a quite thorough inspection before I was released, didn't you. We're rather cosy here, aren't we, like this? Like two old pensioners sitting on a bench in the sun.

ROBERTO makes a gesture, as if he wanted to speak of *unlike himself*.

Hungry? Things aren't that bad. You'll just have to be patient until Gerardo comes.

(Imitating a man's voice.) 'You hungry? You wanna eat? I'll give you something to eat, sweet cunt, I'll give you something really filling so you can forget you're hungry.'

(Her own voice.) None of you knew about Gerardo, did you? – I never breathed his name. Your – your colleagues, they'd ask me, of course. 'With that wat, little lady, don't tell me you haven't got someone to fuck you, huh? Come on, just tell us who's been fucking you, little lady.' But I never gave them Gerardo's name. Strange how things turn out. If I

had mentioned Gerardo, he wouldn't have been named to any Commission, but would have been one of the names that some other lawyer was investigating. And I would be in front of that Commission to tell them how I met Gerardo – in fact I met him just after the military coup, helping people seek asylum in embassies – saving lives with Gerardo, smuggling people out of the country so they wouldn't be killed. I was wild and fearless, willing to do anything. I can't believe that I hadn't got an ounce of fear in my whole body at that time. But where was I? Oh yes – that night they let me go, well, I went to Gerardo's house, I knocked on the door, long quiet knocks, over and over, just like you did last night, and when Gerardo finally answered, he looked agitated, his hair was dishevelled –

The sound of a car outside. Then a car door opening and closing. PAULLINA goes to the table and takes the gun in her hand. GERARDO enters.

How did it go? Fix the tyre?

GERARDO. Paulina, you are going to listen to me.

PAULLINA. Of course I'm going to listen to you. Don't I always?

GERARDO. I want you to sit down and I want you to really listen to me.

PAULLINA sits down.

You know that I have spent a good part of my life defending the law. If there was one thing that revolted me in the past regime –

PAULLINA. You can call them fascists . . .

GERARDO. Don't interrupt. If something revolted me about them it was that they accused so many men and women, that they forged evidence and ignored evidence and did not give the accused any chance of defending themselves, so even if this man committed genocide on a daily basis, he has the right to defend himself.

PAULLINA. But I have no intention of denying him that right, Gerardo. I'll give you all the time you

need to speak to your client, in private. I was just waiting for you to come back, that's all, so we could begin this in an orderly fashion.

She gestures to GERARDO, who takes the gag off ROBERTO. Then she indicates the cassette-recorder.

You should know, Doctor, that everything you say will be recorded here.

GERARDO. My God, Paulina, shut up! Let him say what he . . .

Brief pause. PAULINA switches on the recorder.

ROBERTO (*coughs, then in a rough, hoarse voice*). Water.

GERARDO. What?

PAULINA. He wants water, Gerardo.

GERARDO *rushes to fill a glass with water and brings it to ROBERTO, giving it to him to drink. ROBERTO drinks it down noisily.*

PAULINA. Nothing like good fresh water, eh, Doctor? Beats drinking your own piss.

ROBERTO. Escobar. This is inexcusable. I will never forgive you as long as I live.

PAULINA. Hold on, hold on. Stop right there, Doctor. Let's see if this thing is working.

She presses some buttons and then we hear ROBERTO's voice.

ROBERTO'S VOICE FROM THE CASSETTE.

Escobar. This is inexcusable. I will never forgive you as long as I live.

PAULINA'S VOICE FROM THE CASSETTE. Hold on, hold on. Stop right there, Doctor, Let's see —

PAULINA *stops the recorder.*

PAULINA. Ready. It's recording everything marvelously. We already have a statement about forgiveness. It is Dr Miranda's opinion that it is inexcusable — that he could never forgive as long as he lives — lying someone up for a few hours, holding

that person without the right to speak for a few hours. Agreed. More?

She presses another button.

ROBERTO. I do not know you, madame. I have never seen you in my life before. But I can tell you this:

you are extremely ill, almost prototypically schizoid. But you, Escobar, your case is different. You're a lawyer, a defender of human rights, a man who has been persecuted by the former military government, as I was myself, and you are responsible for what you do and what you must do is untie me immediately. I want you to know that every minute that passes makes you more of an accomplice to this abuse and that you will therefore have to pay the consequences of —

PAULINA (*puts the gun to his temple*). Are you threatening?

ROBERTO. I wasn't —

PAULINA. Threatening, yes you are, but not in here. Let's get this clear, Doctor. Out there you bastards may still give the orders, you can veto our lives, but in here, I'm in command. Are we clear?

ROBERTO. I'm in pain.

PAULINA. I know.

ROBERTO. I must go to the bathroom.

PAULINA. Piss or shit?

GERARDO. My God, Paulina! Dr Miranda, she has never spoken like this in her life.

PAULINA. Come on, Doctor. Back or front?

ROBERTO. Standing up.

PAULINA. Untie his legs, Gerardo. I'll take him.

GERARDO. Of course you won't.

PAULINA. I'll do it. Don't look at me like that. It's not as if it's the first time he's taken his thing out in front of me, Gerardo. Come on, Doctor. Stand up. I don't want you peeing all over my floor.

GERARDO writes the legs. Slowly, painfully, ROBERTO limps towards the bathroom, with PAULINA sticking the gun in his back. GERARDO takes off the cassette-recorder. PAULINA goes out with ROBERTO. After a few instants, we can hear the sounds of urination and then flushing. Meanwhile GERARDO has been pacing nervously, PAULINA returns with ROBERTO.

PAULINA. Tie him up again.

GERARDO begins to tie up ROBERTO's legs.

Tighter, Gerardo!

GERARDO. Paulina, this is intolerable. I must talk with you.

PAULINA. And who's stopping you?

GERARDO. Alone.

PAULINA. Why? The Doctor discussed everything in my presence, they -

GERARDO. I beg you darling, please, don't be so difficult. I want to talk to you where he can't hear us.

GERARDO and PAULINA go out onto the terrace. During their conversation, ROBERTO slowly manages to loosen his leg bonds.

What are you trying to do?

PAULINA. I already told you - put him on trial.

GERARDO. Put him on trial, what does that mean, put him on trial? We can't use their methods. We're different. To seek vengeance in this fashion is not -

PAULINA. This is not vengeance. I'm giving him all the guarantees he never gave me. Not one, him and his - colleagues.

GERARDO. And his - colleagues - are you going to kidnap them and bring them here and tie them up and . . .

PAULINA. I'd have to know their names for that, wouldn't I?

GERARDO. - and then you're going to . . .

PAULINA. Kill them? Kill him? As he didn't kill me, I think it wouldn't be fair to -

GERARDO. That's good to know. Paulina, because I'm warning you, you'd have to kill me first. I swear it.

PAULINA. Would you mind calming down? I haven't the slightest intention of killing him. And certainly not you . . . But as usual, you don't believe me.

GERARDO. But then, what are you going to do to him? You're going to - what? - and all this because fifteen years ago someone . . .

PAULINA. Someone what? . . . what did they do to me, Gerardo. Say it.

Brief pause.

You never wanted to say it. Say it now. They . . .

GERARDO. If you didn't say it, how was I going to?

PAULINA. Say it now.

GERARDO. I only know what you told me that first night, when . . .

PAULINA. They . . .

GERARDO. They . . .

PAULINA. Tell me, tell me.

GERARDO. They - tortured you. Now you say it.

PAULINA. They tortured me.

And what else? What else did they do to me, Gerardo?

GERARDO goes to her, takes her in his arms.

GERARDO (*whispering to her*). They raped you.

PAULINA. How many times?

GERARDO. More than once.

PAULINA. How many times?

GERARDO. You never said. You said you didn't count.

PAULINA. It's not true.

GERARDO. What's not true?

PAULINA. That I didn't count. I always kept count. I know how many times.

Brief pause.

And that night, Gerardo, when I came to you, when I started to tell you, you swore, I remember you said: 'Some day, my love, we're going to put these bastards on trial. Your eyes will be able to rove – I remember the exact phrase, because it seemed, poetic – your eyes will be able to rove over each one of their faces while they listen to your story. We'll do it, you'll see that we will.' So now, darling, tell me who do I go to now?

GERARDO. That was fifteen years ago.

PAULINA. Gerardo, do I go to your Commission now?

GERARDO. Mine? I don't think it will be mine much longer after today. I shall have to resign.

PAULINA. Always so melodramatic. And then your forehead gets all wrinkled up which makes you look ten years older. And then people will see your photograph in the newspaper and won't believe that you're the youngest member of the Commission.

GERARDO. Are you deaf? I just told you I'm going to have to resign.

PAULINA. I don't see why.

GERARDO. You don't see why, but all the rest of the country will see why, especially those who don't want any kind of investigation at all. A member of the President's Commission, who should be showing exemplary signs of moderation and equanimity –

PAULINA. We're going to suffocate from so much equanimity!

GERARDO. – and objectivity, that this very person has allowed an innocent human being to be bound and tormented in his house, without a shred of evidence against him admissible in a court of law.

PAULINA. What court of law?

GERARDO. Paulina, do you know how the newspapers that served the dictatorship, do you know how they'll

use this episode to undermine and even wreck the Commission?

Brief pause.

Do you want these people back in power? Every minute that passes, every second, that you've got this poor man tied up, makes it harder for us. Free the man, Paulina. Apologise for the mistake and free him. I've spoken to him, politically he seems to be a man we can trust or so it –

PAULINA. Oh, my little man, you do fall for every trick in the book, don't you? But let's not waste . . . If you could just listen to me for a change, my love, I'm not trying to harm your career and I most certainly don't want to jeopardise the Commission. But you see the Commission only deals with the dead, with those who can't speak. And I can speak – it's been so long since I as much as whispered a word, even a breath of what I'm thinking, years living in terror of my own . . . but I'm not dead, I thought I was but I'm not and I can speak, – so for God's sake let me have my say and you go ahead with your Commission and believe me when I tell you that none of this will be made public.

GERARDO. The only way that will happen is if the man out there benevolently decides not to make the matter public. And anyway, I have to resign no matter what. The sooner, the better.

PAULINA. You'd have to resign even if no one knew about this?

GERARDO. Yes.

PAULINA. Because of your mad wife, who was mad because she stayed silent and is now mad because she suddenly began to speak?

GERARDO. Among other reasons, yes, that's so, if the truth still matters to you.

PAULINA. Oh it does, the real real truth.

Brief pause.

Hang on a sec.

She goes into the other room and discovers ROBERTO about to free himself. When he sees her, he stops immediately. PAULINA ties him up again, while her voice assumes male tones.

'Hey, don't you like our hospitality? Want to leave so soon, bitch? You're not going to have such a good time outside as you're having with me, sweetie. Tell me you'll miss me. At least tell me that.'

PAULINA begins to pass her hands slowly up and down ROBERTO's body, almost as if she were caressing it. Then she goes back to the bedroom.

PAULINA. It's not only the voice I recognise, Gerardo. I also recognise the skin. And the smell. Gerardo. I recognise his skin.

Brief pause.

Suppose I was able to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that this doctor of yours is guilty? Would you want me to set him free then?

GERARDO. Yes.

If he's guilty, more reason to let him go. Don't look at me like that. You want to scare these people and provoke them, Paulina, till they come back, make them so insecure that they come back to make sure we don't harm them — you want them back? Because that's what you're going to get. Imagine what would happen if everyone acted like you did. You satisfy your own personal passion, you punish on your own, while the other people in this country with scores of other problems who finally have a chance to solve some of them, those people can go screw themselves — the whole transition to democracy can go screw itself —

PAULINA. Nothing's going to happen to democracy! Nobody's even going to know!

GERARDO. The only way to be absolutely sure about that is to kill him and then we're both finished. Let him go, Paulina. For the good of the country, for our own good.

PAULINA. What about my good? What about me? Look at me.

GERARDO. Yes, look at you, love. You're still a prisoner, locked up with them, in that basement. For fifteen years you've done nothing with your life. Not a thing. Look at you, just when we've got the chance to start all over again . . . Isn't it time we — ?

PAULINA. — forgot? You're asking me to forget.

GERARDO. Free yourself from them, Paulina, that's what I'm asking.

PAULINA. And let him loose so he can come back in a few years' time?

GERARDO. So he won't come back ever again.

PAULINA. And we see him at the Tavelli and we smile at him, he introduces his lovely wife to us and we smile and we all shake hands and we comment on how warm it is this time of the year?

GERARDO. Basically yes, and start to live.

Brief pause.

PAULINA. Look, Gerardo, I suggest we reach a compromise.

GERARDO. I don't follow you.

PAULINA. You concede something, I concede something. Isn't that what this transition is all about? Compromise, negotiation. They let us have democracy, but they keep control of the economy and of the Armed Forces? The Commission can investigate the crimes but nobody is punished for them? There's freedom to say anything you want as long as you don't say everything you want?

Brief pause.

I propose that we reach an agreement. You want this man freed and I want — would you like to know what I want?

GERARDO. I'd love to know what you want.

PAULINA. When I heard his voice last night, the first thought that rushed through my head, what I've been thinking all these years, when you would catch me with a look that you said was — abstract, fleeing,

right? – you know what I was thinking of? Doing to them, systematically, minute by minute, instrument by instrument, what they did to me. Specifically to him, to the doctor . . . Because the others were so vulgar, so – but he would play Schubert, he would talk about science, he even quoted Nietzsche to me once.

GERARDO. Nietzsche.

PAULINA. I was horrified at myself. That I should have such hatred in me, that I should want to do something like that to a defenceless human being, no matter how vile – but it was the only way to fall asleep at night, the only way of going out with you to cocktail parties in spite of the fact that I couldn't help asking myself if one of those present wasn't – perhaps not the exact same man, but one of those present might be . . . and so as not to go completely off my rocker and be able to deliver that Tavelli smile you say I'm going to have to continue to deliver – well, I would imagine pushing their head into a bucket of slime, or electricity, or when we would be making love and I could feel the possibility of an orgasm building, the very idea of currents going through my body would remind me and then – and then I had to simulate it, simulate it so you wouldn't know what I was thinking, so you wouldn't feel that it was your failure – oh Gerardo.

GERARDO. Oh, my love, my love.

PAULINA. So when I heard his voice, I thought the only thing I want is to have him raped, have someone fuck him, so that he should know just once what it is to . . . And as I can't – I thought that it was a sentence that you would have to carry out.

GERARDO. Don't go on, Paulina.

PAULINA. But then I told myself it could be difficult, after all you do need to have a certain degree of enthusiasm to –

GERARDO. Stop, Paulina.

PAULINA. So I asked myself if we couldn't use a broom handle. Yes, Gerardo, you know, a broom.

But I began to realise that wasn't what I really wanted. And you know what conclusion I came to, the only thing I really want?

Brief pause.

I want him to confess. I want him to sit in front of that cassette-recorder and tell me what he did – not just to me, everything, to everybody – and then have him write it out in his own handwriting and sign it and I would keep a copy forever – with all the information, the names and data, all the details. That's what I want.

GERARDO. He confesses and you let him go.

PAULINA. I let him go.

GERARDO. And you need nothing more from him?

PAULINA. Not a thing.

Brief pause.

Don't you see it's a way of protecting you, my love. With Miranda's confession in my hand you'd be safe on the Commission and he wouldn't dare send his thugs to harm us because he'd know that the confession would be all over the newspapers the next day. Don't you see?

GERARDO. And you expect me to believe you that you're going to let him go after he's confessed? Do you expect him to believe that?

PAULINA. I don't see that either of you have an alternative. Look, Gerardo, you need to make this sort of scam afraid. Tell him I hid the car because I'm getting ready to kill him. That the only way to dissuade me is for him to confess. Tell him that nobody knows he came last night, that nobody would ever find him. For his sake, I hope you can convince him.

GERARDO. Are you saying I have to convince him?

PAULINA. I'm saying it's a lot more pleasant than having to fuck him.

GERARDO. There's a problem, Paulina. What do I do if he has nothing to confess?

PAULINA. Tell him if he doesn't confess, I'll kill him.

GERARDO. But what if he's not guilty.

PAULINA. I'm in no hurry. Tell him I can wait months for him to confess.

GERARDO. Paulina, you're not listening to me. What can he confess if he's innocent?

PAULINA. If he's innocent? Then we're – then he's really screwed.

Lights go down.

Scene Two

Lunch. GERARDO and ROBERTO sit at a table.

ROBERTO *still tied, but this time with his hands in front.*
GERARDO *has just finished serving plates of soup.*

PAULINA *watches from the terrace. She can see but not hear them. ROBERTO and GERARDO remain for several silent instants looking at the food.*

GERARDO. You're not hungry, Dr Miranda?

ROBERTO. Roberto. My name is Roberto. Please treat me with the same familiarity as before. Maybe it will make me feel better.

GERARDO. I'd rather speak to you as if you were a client, Dr Miranda. That will help me out. I do think you should eat something.

ROBERTO. I'm not hungry.

GERARDO. Let me . . .

He fills a spoon with soup and feeds ROBERTO as if he were a baby. During the conversation which follows, he is continually feeding ROBERTO and feeding himself.

ROBERTO. She's mad. You'll have to excuse me for saying this, Gerardo, but your wife is mad, you know.

GERARDO. Bread?

ROBERTO. No, thanks.

Brief pause.

She should be receiving some sort of psychiatric treatment for –

GERARDO. You are her therapy, Doctor.

He cleans ROBERTO's mouth with a napkin.

ROBERTO. She's going to kill me.

GERARDO. Unless you confess.

ROBERTO. But what can I confess? What can I?

PAULINA. You may be aware, Doctor, that the secret police used some doctors as – consultants in torture sessions . . .

ROBERTO. The Medical Council gradually learned of these situations, and looked into them wherever possible.

GERARDO. She is convinced that you are one of those doctors. So unless you have a way of denying it . . .

ROBERTO. How could I deny it? I'd have to change my voice, prove that this is not my voice. There's no other evidence, nothing that –

GERARDO. She mentioned your skin.

ROBERTO. My skin?

GERARDO. And your smell.

ROBERTO. The fantasies of a diseased mind. She could have latched onto any man coming through that door . . .

GERARDO. Unfortunately, you came through that door.

ROBERTO. Look, Gerardo, I'm a quiet man. Anyone can see that I'm incapable of violence – violence of any sort sickens me. I come to my beach house, I wander on the beach, I watch the waves, I hunt for pebbles, I listen to my music –

GERARDO. Schubert?

ROBERTO. Schubert. Also Vivaldi and Mozart and Telemann. And for some reason yesterday I brought the Schubert with me in the car. And for some even more stupid reason I stopped on the motorway for

some lunatic waving his arms like a windmill. Look, it's up to you to get me out of here.

GERARDO. I know.

ROBERTO. Everything hurts, my ankles, my hands, my back. Couldn't you unite me a little, so –

GERARDO. Roberto, I want to be honest with you. There is only one way to save your life . . .

Brief pause.

I think we have to – indulge her.

ROBERTO. Indulge her?

GERARDO. Make her feel that we – that you, are willing to cooperate . . .

ROBERTO. I don't see how I can cooperate, given my rather peculiar position . . .

GERARDO. Indulge her, make her believe that you . . .

ROBERTO. Make her believe that I . . .

GERARDO. She promised me that if you – confessed she would be ready to –

ROBERTO. I haven't got anything to confess!

GERARDO. I think you're going to have to invent something then, because the only way she'll pardon you is if –

ROBERTO (*raises his voice, indignant*). She's got nothing to pardon me for. I did nothing and there's nothing to confess. Do you understand?

Upon hearing ROBERTO's voice, PAULINA gets up from her seat on the terrace and starts to move towards them.

Instead of proposing dishonourable solutions to me, you should be out there convincing that madwoman of yours to cease this criminal behaviour before she ruins your brilliant career and ends up in gaol or in an asylum. Tell her that. Or can't you impose a little order in your own house?

GERARDO. Roberto, I –

PAULINA enters from the terrace.

PAULINA. Spot of trouble, darling?

GERARDO. None.

PAULINA. I thought you looked a little . . . agitated.

Brief pause.

Well, I see you've both finished your soup. No one can say I'm not a good cook, can they? That I'm not an ideal housewife? Little cup of coffee, Doctor? Teeny weensy one? Doctor, I am talking to you. Didn't your mother ever teach you that . . .

ROBERTO. Leave my mother out of this. I forbid you to mention my mother.

Brief pause.

PAULINA. I'm sorry, you're absolutely right. Your mother is not responsible for what you do. I don't know why men always insist on attacking mothers instead of –

GERARDO. Paulina, would you please do me the favour of leaving so we can continue our conversation?

PAULINA. Okay. I'll leave you boys to fix the world.

She leaves and turns.

Oh, and if he wants to piss, darling, just snap your fingers and I'll come running.

She returns to the same spot on the terrace, watching.

ROBERTO. She's absolutely insane.

GERARDO. When crazy people have power, you've got to indulge them. In her case, a confession –

ROBERTO. But what could a confession – ?

GERARDO. I think I understand Paulina's need. It coincides with a need of the whole country. The need to put into words what happened to us.

ROBERTO. You believe her, don't you?

GERARDO. If I thought you were guilty, would I be trying so desperately to save your –

ROBERTO. From the beginning you've been conspiring with her. She plays the bad guy. You play the good.

GERARDO. What do you mean by good -

ROBERTO. Playing roles, she's bad, you're good, to see if you can get me to confess that way. And once you've got me to confess, not her, she's not going to do it, you will kill me. It's what any man would do, any real man, if they'd raped his wife, it's what I would do if somebody had raped my wife. Cut your balls off.

Pause. GERARDO stands up.

Where are you going?

GERARDO. I'm going to get the gun and blow your fucking brains out. That's what a real man does, doesn't he. Real macho men blow people's brains out and fuck women when they're tied up on cots. Not like me. I'm a stupid faggot because I defend the son of a bitch who screwed my wife and destroyed her entire life. How many times did you screw her? How many times, you bastard?

ROBERTO. Gerardo, I . . . -

GERARDO. Gerardo, the faggot, is gone. I'm here. Me. But thinking it over, why should I dirty my hands with scum like you - when there's somebody who'll take much more pleasure in your pain and your death? Why take that one pleasure away from her? I'll call her right away so she can blow your fucking brains out herself.

ROBERTO. Don't go. Don't call her.

GERARDO. I'm tired of being in the middle of this. You reach an understanding with her, you convince her.

ROBERTO. Gerardo, I'm scared.

Brief pause. GERARDO turns around, changes his tone.

GERARDO. So am I.

ROBERTO. Don't let her kill me.

Brief pause.

What are you going to say to her?

GERARDO. The truth. That you won't cooperate.

ROBERTO. I need to know what it is I did, you've got to understand that I don't know what I have to confess. If I were that man, I'd know every - detail, but I don't know anything. If I make a mistake, she'll think I'm - I'll need your help.

GERARDO. You're asking me to deceive my wife?

ROBERTO. I'm asking you to save the life of an innocent man, Escobar. You do believe that I'm innocent, don't you?

GERARDO. You care that much what I believe?

ROBERTO. Of course I do. She isn't the voice of civilisation, you are. She isn't a member of the President's Commission, you are.

GERARDO (*bitter, sad*). No, she isn't . . . Who gives a fuck what she thinks. She's just . . .

He starts to leave.

ROBERTO. Wait. Where are you going? What are you going to say to her?

GERARDO. I'm going to tell her that you need to piss.

Lights go down.

ACT THREE

Scene One

Just before evening. PAULLINA and GERARDO are outside, on the terrace facing the sea. ROBERTO inside, still tied up. GERARDO has the cassette-recorder on his lap.

PAULLINA. I don't understand why.

GERARDO. I have to know.

PAULLINA. Why?

Brief pause.

GERARDO. Paulina, I love you. I need to hear it from your lips. It's not fair that after so many years the person to tell me, should be him. It would be - intolerable.

PAULLINA. Whereas if I tell you it would be - tolerable.

GERARDO. More tolerable than if he tells me first.

PAULLINA. I told you some of it already, Gerardo. Wasn't that enough?

GERARDO. Fifteen years ago you started to tell me and then . . .

PAULLINA. Did you expect me to keep on talking to you with that bitch there? That bitch came out of your bedroom half naked asking why you were taking so long, and you expected me to -

GERARDO. She wasn't a bitch.

PAULLINA. Did she know where I was? Of course she did. A bitch.

GERARDO. We're not going to start all this again, Paulina.

PAULLINA. You're the one who started.

GERARDO. How many times do I have to . . . ? - I'd

spent two months trying to find you. Then she came by, she said she could help. We had a couple of drinks. My God, I'm also human.

PAULLINA. While I defended your life, while your name stayed inside me and never left my mouth, - ask him, ask Miranda if I ever so much as whispered your name, while you . . .

GERARDO. You already forgave me, you forgave me, how many times will we have to go over this? We'll die from so much past, we'll suffocate. Let's finish this. Let's close this book once and for all and never speak about it, ever again.

PAULLINA. Forgive and forget, eh?

GERARDO. Forgive yes, forget no. But forgive so we can start again. There's so much to live for, my . . .

PAULLINA. What did you want me to do, to talk in front of her? To tell you, what they did to me, in front of her, that I should - ? How many times?

GERARDO. How many times what?

PAULLINA. How many times did you fuck her?

GERARDO. Paulina . . .

PAULLINA. How many?

GERARDO. Baby . . .

PAULLINA. How many times did you do it? How many, how many? I tell you, you tell me.

GERARDO (*desperate, shaking her and then taking her in his arms*). Paulina, Paulina. You want to destroy me? Is that what you want?

PAULLINA. No.

GERARDO. Well, you're going to. You're going to end up in a world where I don't exist, where I won't be here. Is that what you want?

PAULLINA. I want to know how many times you fucked that bitch.

GERARDO. Don't do this to me, Paulina.

PAULINA. That wasn't the first night, was it, Gerardo? You'd seen her before, right? The truth, Gerardo.

GERARDO. Even if it destroys us?

PAULINA. How many times, Gerardo. You tell me, I tell you.

GERARDO. Twice.

PAULINA. That night. What about before that night?

GERARDO (*very low*). Three times.

PAULINA. What?

GERARDO. Three times.

PAULINA. She was that good? You liked her that much? And she liked it too. She must have really enjoyed it if she came back for —

GERARDO. Do you understand what you're doing to me?

PAULINA. Beyond redemption, huh?

GERARDO (*desperate*). What more do you want from me? We survived the dictatorship, we survived, and now we're going to do to each other what those bastards out there weren't able to do to us. You want that?

PAULINA (*quietly*). No.

GERARDO. You want me to leave? Is that what you want? You want me to go out that door and never see you again? God in Heaven, is that what you want?

PAULINA. No.

GERARDO. That's what you're going to get. People can also die from an excessive dose of the truth, you know.

Brief pause.

I'm in your hands like a baby. I have no defences now. You want to treat me like you treat the man who —

PAULINA. No.

GERARDO. You want me to . . . ?

PAULINA (*murmuring*). I want you. You. I want you inside me, alive. I want you making love to me without ghosts in bed and I want you on the Commission defending the truth and I want you in the air I breathe and I want you in my Schubert that I can start listening to again and I want you adopting a child together

GERARDO. Yes, Paulina, yes, yes.

PAULINA. — and I want to care for you minute by minute like you took care of me after that night —

GERARDO. Never mention that bitch of a night again. If you go on and on about that night, you'll — kill me. Is that what you want?

PAULINA. No.

GERARDO. Are you going to tell me then?

PAULINA. Yes.

GERARDO. Everything?

PAULINA. Everything.

GERARDO. That's the way, that's how we'll get out of this mess, — without hiding a thing from each other, together.

PAULINA. That's the way.

GERARDO. I'm going to switch on the recorder. You don't mind, love, if I switch it on?

PAULINA. Switch it on.

GERARDO *switches it on*.

GERARDO. Just as if you were sitting in front of the Commission.

PAULINA. I don't know how to begin.

GERARDO. Begin with your name.

PAULINA. My maiden name is Paulina Salas. Now I am married to Gerardo Escobar, the lawyer, but at that time —

GERARDO. Date . . .

PAULINA. April 6th, 1975, I was single. I was walking along San Antonio Street -

GERARDO. Be as precise as you can.

PAULINA. - at about two fifteen in the afternoon, and when I reached the corner at Huerfanos street I heard a noise behind me - three men got out of a car, one of them stuck a gun in my back, 'One word and we'll blow your face off, Miss.' He spat the words into my ear - he had garlic on his breath. I was surprised that I should focus on such an insignificant detail, the lunch he had eaten, began to think about how he was digesting that food with all the organs that I had been studying in anatomy. Later on I'd reproach myself, why didn't I call out, I knew that if that happened you're supposed to scream, so people can know who is - call out your name, I'm Paulina Salas, they're taking me, if you don't scream out that first moment you're already defeated, and I submitted too easily, obeyed them right away without even a gesture of defiance. All my life, I've always been much too obedient.

The lights begin to go down.

I met Dr Miranda for the first time three days later when . . . That's when I met Dr Miranda.

The lights go down further and PAULINA'S voice continues in the darkness, only the cassette-recorder lit by the light of the moon.

At first, I thought he would save me. He was so soft, so - nice, after what the others had done to me. And then, all of a sudden, I heard the Schubert. There is no way of describing what it means to hear that wonderful music in the darkness, when you haven't eaten for three days, when your body is falling apart, when . . .

In the darkness, we hear ROBERTO'S voice.

ROBERTO'S VOICE. I would put on the music because it helped me in my role, the role of good guy, as they call it, I would put on Schubert because it was a way of gaining the prisoners' trust. But I also

knew it was a way of alleviating their suffering. You've got to believe it was a way of alleviating the prisoners' suffering. Not only the music, but

everything else I did. That's how they approached me, at first. The prisoners were dying on them, they told me, they needed someone to help care for them, someone they could trust. I've got a brother, who was a member of the secret services. You can pay the communists back for what they did to Dad, he told me one night - my father had a heart attack the day the peasants took over his land at Las Toltecas. The stroke paralysed him - he lost his capacity for speech, would spend hours simply looking at me; his eyes said, 'Do something'. But that's not why I accepted.

The real real truth, it was for humanitarian reasons. We're at war, I thought, they want to kill me and my family, they want to install a totalitarian dictatorship, but even so, they still have the right to some form of medical attention. It was slowly, almost without realising how, that I became involved in more delicate operations, they let me sit in on sessions where my role was to determine if the prisoners could take that much torture, that much electric current. At first I told myself that it was a way of saving people's lives, and I did, because many times I told them - without it being true, simply to help the person who was being tortured - I ordered them to stop or the prisoner would die. But afterwards I began to - bit by bit, the virtue I was feeling turned into excitement - the mask of virtue fell off it and it, the excitement, it hid, it hid, it hid from me what I was doing, the swamp of what - . By the time Paulina Salas was brought in it was already too late. Too late.

The lights go up as if the moon were coming out. It is night-time. ROBERTO is in front of the cassette-recorder, confessing.

ROBERTO. . . . too late. A kind of - brutalisation took over my life, I began to really truly like what I was doing. It became a game. My curiosity was partly morbid, partly scientific. How much can this woman take? More than the other one? Does her sex dry up when you put the current through her? Can she have an orgasm under those circumstances? She is entirely

in your power, you can carry out all your fantasies, you can do what you want with her.

The moonlight begins to fade and only remains on the cassette-recorder, while ROBERTO's voice speaks on in the darkness.

Everything they have forbidden you since ever, whatever your mother ever urgently whispered you were never to do. Come on, Doctor, they would say to me, you're not going to refuse free meat, are you, one of them would sort of taunt me. His name was - let's see - they called him Bud, no, it was Stud - a nickname, because I never found out his real name. They like it, Doctor, Stud would say to me - all these bitches like it and if you put on that sweet little music of yours, they'll get even cosier. He would say this in front of the women, in front of Paulina Salas he would say it, and finally I, finally I - but not one ever died on me, not one of the women, not one of the men.

The lights go up and it is now dawn. ROBERTO, untied, writes on a sheet of paper his own words from the cassette-recorder. In front of him, many sheets of handwritten pages. PAULINA and GERARDO watch him.

ROBERTO'S VOICE (*from the recorder*). To the best of my memory, I took part in the - interrogation of 94 prisoners, including Paulina Salas. It is all I can say. I ask forgiveness.

GERARDO switches off the cassette-recorder while

ROBERTO writes.

ROBERTO. - forgiveness.

GERARDO switches the cassette-recorder back on.

ROBERTO'S VOICE. And I hope that this confession proves that I feel real repentance and that just as the country is reaching reconciliation and peace . . .

GERARDO switches off the cassette-recorder.

GERARDO. Did you write that? Just as the country is reaching reconciliation and peace?

He switches it on again.

ROBERTO'S VOICE. - so too should I be allowed to live the rest of my days with my terrible secret. There can be no worse punishment than that which is imposed upon me by the voice of my conscience.

ROBERTO (*while he writes*) - punishment . . . my conscience.

GERARDO switches off the cassette-recorder. A moment's silence.

And now what? You want me to sign?

PAULINA. First write there that this is all done of your own free will, without any sort of pressure whatsoever.

ROBERTO. That's not true.

PAULINA. You want pressure, Doctor?

ROBERTO writes down a couple of phrases, shows them to GERARDO, who moves his head affirmatively.

PAULINA. Now you can sign.

ROBERTO signs. PAULINA looks at the signature, collects the paper, takes the cassette out of the recorder.

Have you noticed how splendid the dawns are here when the sea is stormy?

GERARDO. Paulina.

PAULINA. Do you know how I feel right now,

Gerardo? I feel free. Not like the sun, because the sun, poor thing, has to come out every day in the same place, almost at the same time, always the same route across the sky. I feel like that seagull, like that wave, like the air. Everything is really still ahead of me, it's not a lie when we say that all of our life is still ahead of us.

GERARDO. Paulina. It's over. It's over. Don't you think it's about time we . . .

PAULINA. Right. We had an agreement. I'm glad to see that you're still a man of principles. I thought I'd have to convince you now, now that you know he really is guilty. I thought I'd have to convince you not to kill him.

GERARDO. I would not stain my soul with someone like him.

PAULINA. (*Throws him the keys to the car.*) He's free. You just have to go and get his car.

GERARDO begins to untie ROBERTO's ankles.

I don't think you understood me, Gerardo. When I said you, I didn't mean both of you.

GERARDO. What are you talking about?

PAULINA. I'm not letting him go alone with you.

GERARDO. Paulina, we agreed that . . . ?

PAULINA. Didn't you hear what this man just confessed? He's violent and dangerous.

GERARDO. He's a poor defeated bastard. When somebody confesses like that, degrades himself in that way – he can't hurt you anymore, Paulina.

PAULINA. You're the one he can hurt.

ROBERTO. How could I possibly harm the man who –

PAULINA. You can overpower him, you can run him over – come back here and take these papers and the cassette and – I know you, Doctor. There is no way I am going to leave him alone with you, Gerardo.

GERARDO. All right, all right, I'll go get the car.

He stands up and goes towards the door.

PAULINA. Oh, Gerardo. Don't forget to give his jack back.

GERARDO. (*Trying to smile.*) And don't you forget to return his Schubert cassette. You have your own.

Brief pause.

Take care of yourself.

He exits. PAULINA goes to the window, watches him leave.

ROBERTO. If you wouldn't mind, I would like to go to the bathroom. I suppose there is no reason why you should continue to accompany me?

PAULINA. Don't move, Doctor. There's still a little matter pending. (*Brief pause.*) It's going to be an incredibly beautiful day. You know the only thing that's missing now, Doctor, the one thing I need to make this day really truly perfect? (*Brief pause.*) To kill you. So I can listen to my Schubert without thinking that you'll also be listening to it, soiling my day and my seagull and my Schubert and my country and my husband. That's what I need . . .

ROBERTO. Madame, your husband left here trusting that you – . . . You gave your word . . .

PAULINA. But when I gave my word – I still had a doubt – a teeny weensy doubt – that you really were that man. Because Gerardo was right, in his way. Proof, hard proof – well, I could have been mistaken. But I knew that if you confessed, – and when I heard you, my last doubts vanished and now I want you dead. Now that I know, now, that you are that man, I could not live in peace with myself and let you live.

She points the gun at him.

You have a minute to pray and really repent, Doctor.

Roberto slowly stands.

ROBERTO. Don't do it. I'm innocent.

PAULINA. You've confessed, Doctor.

ROBERTO. It's false, ma'am.

PAULINA. What do you mean?

ROBERTO. I made it up. We made it up.

PAULINA. It seems very true to me, Doctor, painfully familiar as far as I'm concerned . . .

ROBERTO. Your husband told me what to write, I invented some of it, some of it was invented by me, but most of it was what he got from you, from what he knew had happened to you, ma'am, so you'd let me go, he convinced me that it was the only way that you wouldn't kill me and I had to – you must know how, under pressure, we say anything, but I'm innocent, ma'am, God in Heaven knows that –

PAULINA. Stud, Doctor.

ROBERTO. What?

PAULINA. Several times in your confession you mention Stud. He must have been a large man, muscular, he bit his fingernails, right, he bit his goddam fingernails. Stud.

ROBERTO. The name was given to me by your husband. Everything I said comes from what your husband helped me to invent. Ask him when he comes back.

PAULINA. I don't need to ask him. I knew that he'd do that, I knew he'd use my words for your confession. That's the sort of person he is. He always thinks that he's more intelligent than everybody else, he always thinks that he's got to save somebody. But I don't blame him, Doctor. He loves me. We deceived each other for our own good, because we love each other. But I'm the one who came out on top in this game. I gave him the wrong name, Doctor, to see if you would correct it. And you did. You corrected the name Bud and you substituted the name Stud and if you were innocent -

ROBERTO. It's a mere coincidence, it's natural that I should think it was Stud rather than Bud, because it would be a natural for that sort of person to -

PAULINA. It's not the only correction that you made, Doctor. There were other . . . lies.

ROBERTO. What lies, what lies?

PAULINA. Tiny lies, little variations that I inserted in my story to Gerardo, and often - not always, but often enough - as in the case of Stud, you corrected them. It turned out just as I planned. You were so scared that if you didn't get it right . . . But I'm not going to kill you because you're guilty, Doctor, but because you haven't repented at all. I can only forgive someone who really repents, who stands up amongst those he has wronged and says, I did this, I did it, and I'll never do it again.

ROBERTO. What more do you want? You've got more than all the victims in this country will ever get. A man who's confessed, at your feet, humiliated,

He gets down on his knees.

begging for his life. What more do you want?

PAULINA. The truth, Doctor. The truth and I'll let you go. Then you'll be free as Cain after he killed his brother. Nobody dared touch Cain after he repented - that's why God marked him. The truth. Confess and I'll let you go. You have ten seconds. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. Time is running out, Doctor. Confess!

ROBERTO *stands up*.

ROBERTO. No. I won't. Because even if I confess, you'll never be satisfied. You're going to kill me anyway. So go ahead and kill me. I'm not going to let any sick woman treat me like this. If you want to kill me, do it. But you're killing an innocent man.

PAULINA. Nine.

ROBERTO. So we go on and on with violence, always more violence. Yesterday they did terrible things to you and now you do terrible things to me and tomorrow the same cycle will begin all over again. Isn't it time we stopped?

PAULINA. Why is it always people like me who have to sacrifice, who have to concede when concessions are needed, biting my tongue, why? Well, not this time. If only to do justice in one case, just one. What do we lose? What do we lose by killing one of you? What do we lose?

They freeze in their position as the lights begin to go down slowly. We begin to hear music from the last movement of Mozart's Dissonant Quartet. PAULINA and ROBERTO are covered from view by a giant mirror which descends, forcing the audience to look at themselves. For a few minutes, the Mozart quartet is heard, while the spectators watch themselves in the mirror.

Scene Two

A concert hall. An evening some months later. GERARDO and PAULINA appear, elegantly dressed. They sit down facing the mirror, their backs to the spectators, perhaps in two chairs or in two of the seats in the audience itself. Under the music we can hear typical sounds of an audience during a concert: throats clearing, an occasional cough, the ruffling of programme notes, even some heavy breathing. When the music ends, GERARDO begins to applaud and we can hear the applause growing from what is an invisible public.

PAULINA does not applaud. The applause begins to die down and then we hear the habitual sounds that come from a concert hall when the first part of a programme is over: more throats clearing, murmurs, bodies shuffling toward the foyer. They both begin to go out, greeting people, stopping to chat for an instant. They slowly distance themselves from their seats and advance along an imaginary foyer which is apparently full of spectators. We hear mutterings, etc. GERARDO begins to talk to members of the audience, as if they were at the concert. His words can be heard above the murmurs of the public.

GERARDO (*intimately, talking to diverse spectators*). Why, thank you, thank you so much. Yes, we feel that the Final Report of the Commission is quite extraordinary . . . Yes, I do think that the whole country is going to benefit from it, yes, reconciliation is really served by —

PAULINA slowly leaves him, going to one side where a small bar has been installed. GERARDO continues speaking with his audience until she returns.

People are acting with enormous generosity, without the hint of seeking a personal vendetta. Ah, that experience, the one I mentioned in the interview? You'd have been moved too if you'd seen her. The woman was timid. She began to speak standing up. 'Please sit down,' the President of the Commission said and stood up to hold her chair for her. She sat down and began to sob. Then she looked at us and said: 'This is the first time, sir,' she said to us — her husband had disappeared fourteen years ago, and she had spent thousands of hours, thousands of hours petitioning, thousands of hours waiting — This

is the first time,' she said to us, 'in all these years, sir, that somebody asks me to sit down.'

Meanwhile, PAULINA has bought some candy — and as she says, ROBERTO enters, under a light which has a faint phantasmagoric moonlight quality. He could be real or he could be an illusion in PAULINA's head. PAULINA does not see him yet. She returns to GERARDO's side who, by this time, should be finishing his monologue.

ROBERTO stays behind, watching PAULINA and GERARDO from a distance.

The officials who should have been helping her had spent all these years calling her a madwoman and a liar, and all of a sudden, there she is, able to recount her pain to a Commission officially named by the President of the Republic. The dignity she had always privately possessed was now conferred upon her publicly, her words were really worth something. Now that's priceless. She and her family have been vindicated, publicly reintegrated into the community.

A bell goes off to indicate that the concert is about to recommence.

As for the murderers, even if we do not know or cannot reveal their names — Ah, Paulineta, just in time. This is about to start. You certainly took your time. Well, I'll see you later, old man. Yes, I agree. This country has been sick for far too long. I can only hope that our work will help in the slow, patient process of healing.

All right, old man, later for sure. Now I've finally got some free time. Maybe we could have a couple of drinks at home. Pau mixes a cocktail that'll put your hair on end.

GERARDO and PAULINA sit in their seats.

ROBERTO goes to another seat, always looking at PAULINA. Applause is heard when the imaginary musicians come on. The instruments are tested and tuned.

Then 'Death and the Maiden' begins. GERARDO looks at PAULINA who looks forward. He takes her hand and then also begins to look forward. After a few instants, she turns slowly and looks at ROBERTO. Their eyes interlock for a moment. Then she turns her head and faces the stage and

the mirror. The lights go down while the music plays and plays and plays.

Afterword

Eight or nine years ago, when General Augusto Pinochet was still the dictator of Chile and I was still in exile, I began tentatively exploring in my mind a dramatic situation that was someday to become the core of *Death and the Maiden*. A man whose car breaks down on the motorway is given a lift home by a friendly stranger. The man's wife, believing she recognises in the stranger the voice of the torturer who raped her some years before, kidnaps him and decides to put him on trial. On several occasions I sat down to scribble what I then imagined would be a novel. A few hours and a couple of unsatisfactory pages later, I would give up in frustration. Something essential was missing. I could not figure out, for instance, who the woman's husband was, how he would react to her violence, if he would believe her. Nor were the historical circumstances under which the story developed clear to me, the symbolic and secret connections to the larger life of the country itself, the world beyond the narrow claustrophobic boundaries of that woman's home. The use of a forceps may be necessary to ensure the birth of a child that needs help getting out of the womb, but I had by then blessedly learned that when characters do not want to be born forceps may hurt them permanently and irreparably twist their lives. My trio would, unfortunately, have to wait.

They were forced to wait a long time. It was not until Chile returned to democracy in 1990 and I myself therefore returned to reside there with my family after seventeen years of exile, that I finally understood how the story had to be told.

My country was at the time (and still is now as I write this) living an uneasy transition to democracy, with Pinochet no longer the President but still in command of the Armed Forces, still able to threaten another coup if people became unruly or, more specifically, if attempts were made to punish the human rights' violations of the outgoing regime. And in order to avoid chaos and constant confrontation, the new government had to find a way of not alienating Pinochet supporters who continued occupying significant areas of power in the Judiciary, the Senate,

ARIEL DORFMAN

Ariel Dorfman, born in Argentina in 1942, is a Chilean citizen who was forced into exile after the 1973 coup that overthrew Salvador Allende. His numerous books have been translated into over twenty languages. Those available in English are, non-fiction: *How to Read Donald Duck* (with Armand Mattelart), 1971, *The Empire's Old Clothes*, 1983, and *Some Write to the Future*, 1991; the novels *Widows*, 1983, *The Last Song of Manuel Sendero*, 1986, *Mascara* 1988, *Hard Rain*, 1990; a collection of short stories, *My House is On Fire*, 1990; *Last Waltz in Santiago* and *Other Poems of Exile and Disappearance*, 1988; and the plays, *Widows*, *Reader and Death* and *the Maiden*. Research Professor of Literature and Latin American Studies at Duke University, Dorfman is a regular contributor to *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Nation*, *The Village Voice* and many other papers worldwide. He lives with his wife and two sons in Durham, North Carolina, and in Santiago, Chile. He is presently working on a new novel and a book of essays, *Missing Continent*.

Some opinions on his work:

'One of the most important voices coming out of Latin America.' (Salman Rushdie).

'Dorfman has assumed the mantle from the late poet Pablo Neruda as Chile's leading literary voice.' (*Los Angeles Times*).

'Of all the Latin American writers to come out of that explosion of creativity familiarly known as 'el boom', Ariel Dorfman is the one whose work I love best . . . He pushed the outer limit of the fictional envelope as daringly and imaginatively as Julio Cortázar and Gabriel García Márquez, but what . . . makes Dorfman's books especially appealing is the humanism of his vision.' (Wendy Smith, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*).

Characters

PAULINA SALAS, around forty years old.

GERARDO ESCOBAR, her husband, a lawyer, around forty-five.

ROBERTO MIRANDA, a doctor, around fifty.

The time is the present and the place, a country that is probably Chile, but could be any country that has given itself a democratic government just after a long period of dictatorship.

The author would like to thank Linda Brandon and the ICA for bringing the play to the attention of the British public.

This text went to press before the opening night on the Main Stage of the Royal Court Theatre and may therefore differ slightly from the play as performed.

ACT ONE

Scene One

Sound of the sea. After midnight.

The ESCOBAR's beach house. A terrace and an ample living/dining-room where dinner is laid out on a table with two chairs. On a sideboard is a cassette-recorder and a lamp. Window walls between the terrace and the front room, with curtains blowing in the wind. A door from the terrace leading to a bedroom. PAULLINA SALAS is seated in a chair on the terrace, as if she were drinking in the light of the moon. The sound of a faraway car can be heard. She hurriedly stands up, goes to the other room, looks out the window, crouches, and as the headlights of the car sweep the living-room, she can be seen rolled into a foetus-like position. The car brakes, its motor still running, the lights blasting her. She goes to the sideboard, takes out a gun, stops when the motor is taken off and she hears GERARDO's voice.

GERARDO (*voice off*). You sure you won't come in?
(*Muffled reply*.) . . . But we must get together before I leave. I'm leaving . . . Monday. Let's make it Sunday?
(*Muffled reply*.) . . . My wife makes a margarita that will make your hair stand on end . . . I really want you to know how much I appreciate . . . (*Muffled reply*.) See you on Sunday then. (*He laughs*.)

PAULLINA *hides the gun away. She stands behind the curtains. The car drives off, the lights sweeping the room again. GERARDO enters.*

GERARDO. Paulina? Love? God, it's dark.

He sees PAULLINA hidden behind the curtains. He switches on a light. She slowly comes out from the curtains.

Are you . . . ? What're you doing there like that?
Sorry I took this long to . . . I . . .

PAULLINA (*agitated*). Who was it?

GERARDO. It's just that I . . .

PAULINA. Who brought you?

GERARDO. . . . had an — no, don't worry, it wasn't anything serious. It's just that the car — luckily a man stopped — just a flat tyre. Paulina, I can't see a thing without . . .

He puts on another lamp and sees the table set.

Oh, love, look — it must've got cold, and you must have —

PAULINA (*very calm, till the end of the scene*). We can heat it up. As long as we've got something to celebrate, that is.

Brief pause.

You do have something to celebrate, Gerardo, don't you?

GERARDO. That depends on you.

Pause. He takes an enormous nail out of his jacket pocket.

You know what this is? This is the son of a bitch that gave me a flat. And do you know what any normal man does when he gets a flat? He goes to the boot and he gets out the spare. If the spare isn't flat too, that is. If his wife happened to remember to fix the spare, right?

PAULINA. His wife. Always got to be the wife who has to fix everything. You were supposed to fix the spare.

GERARDO. I'm really not in the mood for arguing, but we had agreed that . . .

PAULINA. You were supposed to fix the spare. I take care of the house and you take care of —

GERARDO. You don't want help but afterwards you . . .

PAULINA. — the car at least.

GERARDO. . . . afterwards you complain.

PAULINA. I never complain.

GERARDO. This is an absurd discussion. What're we fighting about? I've already forgotten what we . . .

PAULINA. We're not fighting, darling. You accused me of not fixing your spare . . .

GERARDO. My spare?

PAULINA. — and I told you quite sweetly that I —

GERARDO. Hold it right there. That you didn't fix the spare, *our* spare, that's open to discussion, but there is another little matter. The jack.

PAULINA. What jack?

GERARDO. Precisely. What jack? Where did you put the car jack? You know, to jack the —

PAULINA. You need a jack to hold up the car? And what are your strong arms for, my dear?

GERARDO (*embracing her*). For this.

Brief pause as they hug.

Do you know why you can afford to be so exasperating?

PAULINA. I can guess, but I'd rather you told me.

GERARDO. Because you know that the more you exasperate me, the more I love you. But what the hell did you do with the jack?

PAULINA. I gave it to Mother.

GERARDO (*letting go of her*). To your mother? You gave it to your mother?

PAULINA. Well, lent it to her, yes.

GERARDO. And may I know why?

PAULINA. You may. Because she needed it.

GERARDO. Whereas I, of course, we don't. You just can't — darling, you simply cannot do this sort of thing.

PAULINA. Mother was driving down south and really needed it. You can always . . .

GERARDO. Get lost.

PAULINA. No.

GERARDO. Yes. I get a telegram. The President wants to see me. I have to leave for the city immediately for the most important meeting of my whole life and on my way back this son of a bitch of a nail is lying in wait for me – and there I was on the road, in urgent need of what any normal man would find in the boot of his car – a spare and a jack. Paulina, I don't know if you can get it into your pretty little head that . . .

PAULINA. My pretty little head knew that you'd find someone to help you out. Who was it? Was she also pretty?

GERARDO. I already said it was a man.

PAULINA. You said nothing of the sort.

GERARDO. Why do you always have to suppose there's a woman . . .

PAULINA. Why indeed? I just can't imagine why.

Brief pause.

The man who . . . ? Was he nice?

GERARDO. Terrific guy. Mind you, if it had been Count Dracula in person, I'd still have been grateful.

PAULINA. Well, there you are, you see. You always manage to fix things up so that everything turns out all right for you. But with Mother. If she had a flat tyre you can be sure it really would be Count Dracula who'd stop, you know how she attracts the weird ones, she's like a magnet . . .

GERARDO. You can't imagine how ecstatic it makes me to think of your mother exploring the south with my jack, free of all worries, whilst I'm stuck on the motorway for hours –

PAULINA. No exaggerating now . . .

GERARDO. Forty-five minutes. Forty-five. Road full of weekend people racing for the coast. The cars passed by as if I didn't exist. You know what I began to do? I began to move my arms around like a windmill to see if – but not a soul. What happened to ordinary

solidarity in this country? Lucky for me, this man – Roberto Miranda – I invited him over for a –

PAULINA. I heard you.

GERARDO. How's Sunday?

PAULINA. Sunday's fine.

Brief pause.

GERARDO. As we're going back Monday. At least I am. And I thought you might want to come with me, shorten these holidays . . .

PAULINA. So the President named you?

Brief pause.

GERARDO. He did.

PAULINA. The peak of your career.

GERARDO. I wouldn't call it the peak. I am, after all, the youngest of those he named, right?

PAULINA. Right. When you're Minister of Justice in a few years' time, that'll be the peak, huh?

GERARDO. That certainly doesn't depend on me.

PAULINA. Did you tell him that?

GERARDO. Who?

PAULINA. Your Good Samaritan.

GERARDO. You mean Roberto Miranda? I hardly know the man. Besides, I haven't decided yet if I should . . .

PAULINA. You've decided.

GERARDO. I said I'd need a day or so, that I felt extremely honoured but that I needed . . .

PAULINA. You said that to the President?

GERARDO. To the President. That I needed time to think it over.

PAULINA. I don't see what you have to think over. You've made your decision, Gerardo, you know you have. It's what you've been working for all these years, why pretend that . . .

GERARDO. Because first – first you have to say yes.

PAULINA. Well then: yes.

GERARDO. That's not the yes I need.

PAULINA. It's the only yes I've got.

GERARDO. I've heard others.

Brief pause.

If I were to accept, I must know I can count on you, that you don't feel . . . If you were to have a relapse, it could leave me . . .

PAULINA. Vulnerable, yes, it could leave you vulnerable. Stripped. You'd have to take care of me all over again.

GERARDO. That's unfair.

Brief pause.

Are you criticising me because I take care of you?

PAULINA. And that's what you told the President, that your wife might have problems with . . .

Pause.

GERARDO. He doesn't know. Nobody knows. Not even your mother knows.

PAULINA. There are people who know.

GERARDO. I'm not talking about those sort of people. Nobody in the new government knows. I'm talking about the fact that we never made it public, as you never – as we never denounced the things that they – what they . . .

PAULINA. Only if the result was death?

GERARDO. Paulina, I'm sorry, what do you – ?

PAULINA. This Commission you're named to. Doesn't it only investigate cases that ended in death?

GERARDO. It's appointed to investigate human rights' violations that ended in death or the presumption of death, yes.

PAULINA. Only the most serious cases?

GERARDO. The idea is that if we can cast light on the worst crimes, other abuses will come to light.

PAULINA. Only the most serious?

GERARDO. Those beyond redemption.

PAULINA. Only those beyond redemption, huh?

GERARDO. I don't like to talk about this, Paulina.

PAULINA. I don't like to talk about it either.

GERARDO. But we'll have to talk about it, won't we, you and I? If I'm going to spend the next few months listening to relatives and eyewitnesses and survivors – and each time I come back home I – and you wouldn't want me to keep all that to myself. And what if you . . . If you . . .

He takes her in his arms.

If you knew how much I love you. If you knew how it still hurts me.

Brief pause.

PAULINA (*forcibly holding on to him*). Yes. Yes. Yes. Is that the yes that you wanted?

GERARDO. That's the yes that I wanted.

PAULINA. Find out what happened. Find out everything. Promise me that that you'll find everything that . . .

GERARDO. Everything. Everything we can. We'll go as far as we . . . (*Pause*) As we're . . .

PAULINA. Allowed.

GERARDO. Limited, let's say we're limited. But within those limits there is so much we can do . . . We'll publish our conclusions. There will be an official report. What happened will be established objectively, so no one will ever be able to deny it, so that our country will never again live through those excesses . . .

PAULINA. And then?

GERARDO. I don't understand.

PAULINA. You hear the relatives of the victims, you denounce the crimes, what happens to the criminals?

GERARDO. That depends on the Justices. The courts receive a copy of the evidence and the Justices proceed from there to —

PAULINA. The Justices? The same Justices who never intervened to save one life in seventeen years of dictatorship? Who never accepted a single *kabeas corpus* ever? The Justices who said that nobody had been kidnapped, that if some poor woman's husband was missing it was because he was tired of her and had found another woman? What did you call them? Justices? Justices? Justices?

As she speaks, PAULINA begins to laugh softly but with increasing hysteria.

GERARDO. Paulina. That's enough. Paulina.

He takes her in his arms. She slowly calms down.

Silly. Silly girl, my silly little kitten. I'm so sorry. This is all my fault. I shouldn't have made so much of the tyre and that stupid car jack. It just struck me, suppose it was you out there, caught on the road, the lights screaming by you, nobody stopping, suppose you'd have been alone in the —

PAULINA. Someone would have stopped. Probably that same — Miranda?

GERARDO. Probably. Seems to be his mission in life.

To rescue idiots and damnsels in distress.

PAULINA. Sounds familiar.

GERARDO. Yes, we're kindred spirits.

PAULINA. Must be nice then.

GERARDO. Couldn't be nicer. If it weren't for him . . . I invited him to come for a drink on Sunday. Was that all right?

PAULINA. Sunday's fine. I was frightened. I heard a car. When I looked it wasn't yours.

GERARDO. But there was no danger.

PAULINA. No.

Brief pause.

Gerardo. You already said yes to the President, didn't you? The truth, Gerardo. Or are you going to start your work in the Commission with a lie?

GERARDO. I didn't want to hurt you.

PAULINA. You told the President you accepted, didn't you? Before you asked me? Didn't you? I need the truth, Gerardo.

GERARDO. Yes. I told him I'd do it. Yes. Before asking you.

Lights go down.

Scene Two

One hour later. Nobody on stage. Only the moonlight, weaker than before, coming in through the windows. Dinner has been cleared away. Sounded of the sea beyond. The sound of a car approaching. Then the headlights light up the living-room, are switched off, a car door is opened and closed. Someone knocks on the door, first timidly, then stronger. We hear the voices of PAULINA and GERARDO from their bedroom.

PAULINA (voice off, whispering, terrified). Don't go.

GERARDO. Don't be silly. Nothing's going to happen, love.

A lamp is switched on from offstage and is immediately switched off.

PAULINA. They're coming for me, they're coming for me because I told you, because I didn't —

GERARDO. Easy, love.

The knocking on the door gets more insistent.

No one is coming to get you. No one knows —

PAULINA. Be careful. Promise me.

GERARDO. Nothing is going to — all right, all right, love, I'll be careful.

GERARDO *comes into the living-room in his pyjamas from the bedroom. He switches on the lamp.*

I'm coming, I'm coming.

He goes to the door and opens it. ROBERTO MIRANDA is outside.

Oh, it's you. Lord, you scared the life out of me.

ROBERTO. I'm really so sorry for this intrusion. I thought you'd still be up.

GERARDO. You must excuse me – do come in.

ROBERTO *enters the house.*

It's just that we are still not accustomed.

ROBERTO. Accustomed?

GERARDO. To democracy. Someone knocks on your door at midnight and is it a friend or one of –

PAULINA *edges out onto the terrace from where she will be able to hear the men but not see or be seen by them.*

ROBERTO. One of these sons of bitches?

GERARDO. And my wife has... she's been a bit nervous and... So you'll understand that – you'll have to forgive her if she doesn't... And if we lower our voices a little...

ROBERTO. Say no more, no more, it's my fault, I just thought...

GERARDO. Please sit down, please do...

ROBERTO... that I'd stop by for a short visit to... Okay, but just a minute, no more than – but you must be asking yourself why this sudden visit... Well, you know when I drove on to our own beach-house, I don't know if you remember that I had the radio on, you may remember that...

GERARDO. Excuse me, would you like a drink? Sunday you can have one of my wife's famous margaritas, but I do possess a Cognac from the duty free that I –

PAULINA *edges nearer and listens.*

ROBERTO. No, thanks, I... Well, a teeny weensy bit.

So I had the radio on and... all of a sudden, it hit me. I heard your name on the news, the list of names the President's chosen for his Investigating Commission, and they say Gerardo Escobar, and I said to myself that sounds familiar, but where, who, and it kept going round in my head, and when I reached our house I realised who it was. And I also remembered we'd put your spare tyre in the boot of my car and that tomorrow you'd need it patched up and also... the real truth is, you want to know the truth? –

GERARDO. Nothing but.

ROBERTO. I thought to myself – this man is doing something really essential, crucial for the honour of the nation – so the country can come together again, can have some reconciliation, shut the door on the divisions and hatreds of the past and I've got his spare tyre. I thought here's the last weekend that he's going to be free of worries for – for who knows how many more months, right, because you're going to have to go up and down this land of ours listening to thousands of people... Don't tell me that this won't be the last weekend that you're going to...

GERARDO. That's certainly true, but I wouldn't go so far as to –

ROBERTO. So I thought the least I can do is drive over. Or find a garage for him. I mean, who has a phone out here. So he won't lose his time, I thought to myself, valuable time which could –

GERARDO. You're making me feel like a saint.

ROBERTO. No. This is straight from the heart. This Commission will help us close a very painful chapter in our history, and here I am, alone this weekend. So I said to myself, Dr Miranda to the rescue, this is a job for you, we've all got to help out – it may be a teeny weensy gesture but –

GERARDO. Tomorrow would have been fine.

ROBERTO. And you get up early. No car outside. You get to your car – no spare. Then you have to set out

and find me. No, my good man, – and then I thought what if I also take him to the garage tomorrow and I find him a jack. Which reminds me – what happened to your jack, did you find out what –

GERARDO. My wife lent it to her mother.

ROBERTO. To her mother?

GERARDO. You know how women are . . .

ROBERTO (*laughing*). I know all too well. It's the female soul. Utterly unpredictable. You know what Nietzsche once wrote? The female soul is never entirely ours, we can never entirely possess it. Or maybe he didn't write that. Though you can be sure that old Nietzsche would have if he'd been caught in the roar of the weekend traffic without a jack.

GERARDO. And without a spare.

ROBERTO. And without a spare. Which clinches it – I really must accompany you and we'll clean up the whole operation in one morning . . .

GERARDO. I do feel that I am imposing upon you – like helping people, – I'm a doctor, I think I told you, didn't I? – But don't imagine I only help important people.

GERARDO. If you had known what you were getting into you'd have pushed your foot down on the accelerator full blast, huh?

ROBERTO (*laughing*). Full blast. No, seriously, it's no trouble at all. In fact, it's an honour. In fact that's why I came here tonight, really. To congratulate you. You are exactly what this country needs, to be able to know the truth once and for all . . .

GERARDO. What the country needs is justice, but if we can establish at least part of the truth . . .

ROBERTO. Just what I was about to say. Even if we can't put these people on trial, even if they're covered by this amnesia they gave themselves – at least we'll see their names in print.

GERARDO. Those names are to be kept secret. The Commission is not supposed to identify the authors of crimes or –

ROBERTO. In this country everything finally comes out into the open. Their children, their grandchildren, is it true that you did this, you did what they're accusing you of, and they'll have to be. They'll say it's slander, it's a communist conspiracy, some such nonsense, but the truth will be written all over them, and their children, their very own children, will feel sorrow for them, disgust and sorrow. It's not like putting them in gaol, but . . .

GERARDO. Maybe some day . . .

ROBERTO. Maybe if the citizens of this country get angry enough we may even be able to revoke the amnesty.

GERARDO. You know that's not possible.

ROBERTO. I'm for killing the whole bunch of them, but I can see that . . .

GERARDO. I'm afraid I have to disagree with you, Roberto, because in my opinion the death penalty has never solved –

ROBERTO. Then we're going to have to disagree, my friend. There are some people who simply don't deserve to be alive, but what I was really getting at was that you're going to have quite a problem . . .

GERARDO. More than one. For starters, the Army is going to fight the Commission all the way. They've told the President it would be dangerous, yes, dangerous, because it will open old wounds. Thank God, the President didn't get cold feet, but we all know these people are ready to jump on us at the slightest mistake we make . . .

ROBERTO. Well, that was exactly my point, when you said that the names wouldn't be known, published, when you – that got me to thinking that maybe you're right, maybe we'll finally never know who these people really were, don't you see that they form a sort of . . .

Esteban, would you? She had quite a mind. A marvellous retentive memory, we used to call her our little encyclopedia. I have no idea what became of her. She probably finished her medical studies, became a doctor, just like you.

I didn't get my diploma . . . I didn't get too far with my studies, Doctor Miranda. Let's see if you can guess why I didn't get my diploma. I'm pretty sure that it won't take a colossal effort of the imagination on your part to guess why.

Luckily there was Gerardo. He was – well, I wouldn't exactly say he was waiting for me – but let's say that he still loved me, so I never had to go back to the university. Lucky for me, because I felt a – well, phobia wouldn't be the right word, a certain apprehension – about medicine. I wasn't so sure about my chosen profession. But life is never over till it's over, as they say. That's why I'm wondering whether it might not be a good idea to sign up again – you know, ask that I be readmitted. I read the other day, now that the military aren't in charge anymore, that the university has begun to allow the students who were kicked out to apply for readmittance.

But here I am chatting away when I'm supposed to make breakfast, aren't I, a nice breakfast? Now you like – let's see, ham sandwiches, wasn't it? Ham sandwiches with mayonnaise. We haven't got mayonnaise, but we do have ham. Gerardo also likes ham. I'll get to know your other tastes. Sorry about the mayonnaise. I hope you don't mind that this must remain, for the moment, a monologue. You'll have your say, Doctor, you can be sure of that. I just don't want to remove this – gag, you call it, don't you? – at least not till Gerardo wakes up. But I should be getting him up. Did I tell you I phoned the garage from the pay phone? They'll be here soon.

She goes to the bedroom door, unlocks it, opens it.

The real real truth is that you look slightly bored.

Takes a cassette out of her pocket.

I took this out of your car – I took the liberty – what if we listen to some Schubert while I make breakfast, a nice breakfast,

Doctor? *Death and the Maiden?*

She puts it into the cassette player. We begin to hear Schubert's quartet Death and the Maiden.

D'you know how long it's been since I last listened to this quartet? If it's on the radio, I turn it off. I even try not to go out much, though Gerardo has all these social events he's got to attend and if they ever name him minister we're going to live running around shaking hands and smiling at perfect strangers, but I always pray they won't put on Schubert. One night we

were dining with – they were extremely important people, and our hostess happened to put Schubert on, a piano sonata, and I thought, do I switch it off or do I leave, but my body decided for me, I felt extremely ill right then and there and Gerardo had to take me home, so we left them there listening to Schubert and nobody knew what had made me ill, so I pray they won't play that anywhere I go, any Schubert at all, strange isn't it, when he used to be, and I would say, yes I really would say, he's still my favourite composer, such a sad, noble sense of life. But I always promised myself a time would come to recover him, bring him back from the grave so to speak, and just sitting here listening to him with you I know that I was right, that I'm – so many things that are going to change from now on, right? To think I was on the verge of throwing my whole Schubert collection out, crazy!

(Raising her voice, to GERARDO.) Isn't this quarter marvellous, my love?

(To ROBERTO.) And now I'll be able to listen to my Schubert again, even go to a concert like we used to. Did you know that Schubert was homosexual? But of course you do, you're the one who kept repeating it over and over again while you played *Death and the Maiden*. Is this the very cassette, Doctor, or do you buy a new one every year to keep the sound pure?

GERARDO *enters from the bedroom, still sleepy.*

Good morning, my darling. Sorry breakfast isn't ready yet. *Upon seeing GERARDO, ROBERTO makes desperate efforts to urtic himself. GERARDO watches the scene with total astonishment.*

GERARDO. Paulina! What is this? What in the name of . . . Roberto . . . Doctor Miranda.

He moves toward ROBERTO.

PAULINA. Don't touch him.

GERARDO. What?

PAULINA *(threatening him with the gun)*. Don't touch him.

GERARDO. What the hell is going on here, what kind of madness is –

PAULINA. It's him.

GERARDO. Put . . . put that gun down.

PAULINA. It's him.

GERARDO. Who?

frightened. Tomorrow you can make us a nice breakfast . . .
Only the sound of the sea in the semi-darkness.

Scene Three

A short time later. A cloud passes over the moon. The sound of the sea grows, then recedes. Silence.

PAULLINA (voice off, whispering). Gerardo? Gerardo?

There is no answer. PAULLINA comes into the living-room. By the light of the moon she can be seen going to the drawer and taking out the gun. And some vague articles of clothing which appear to be stockings. She stops. She thinks she hears CERARDO move in the bedroom. She is dressed.

Love . . . ? Love?

She crosses the living-dining-room to the entrance to ROBERTO's bedroom. She waits for an instant, listening. She goes into the bedroom. A few moments pass. We hear a confusing, muffled sound, followed by a sort of cry. Then silence.

In the half-light we see her come out of the room. She goes back to her own bedroom door. She opens it, takes a key from the inside of the door, locks it. She returns to the spare bedroom. We see her dragging something which resembles a body but we can't be sure. She moves a chair and hoists the body onto it, ties it to the chair. She goes into the spare room, returns with what seems to be ROBERTO's jacket, takes a set of car keys from it. She starts to leave the house. Stops. Turns back to look at the body which is now clearly that of ROBERTO. She takes off her panties, stuffs them into ROBERTO's mouth.

PAULLINA leaves the house. We hear the sound of ROBERTO's car. When the car's headlights are turned on, they sweep the scene and that stark brutal shot of light clearly reveals ROBERTO MIRANDA tied with ropes to one of the chairs, totally unconscious, and with his mouth gagged. The car leaves. Darkness.

Scene Four

Before dawn.

ROBERTO opens his eyes. He tries to get up and realises that he is tied. He begins to roll over and desperately try to free himself. PAULLINA is sitting in front of him with her gun. ROBERTO looks at her with a terrorised expression in his eyes.

PAULLINA (very calm). Good morning, Dr . . . Miranda, isn't it? Dr Miranda.

She shows him the gun and points it playfully in his direction.

I had a chum from the University, name of Miranda, Maria Elena Miranda, you wouldn't be related to the Mirandas of San Esteban, would you? She had quite a mind. A marvellous retentive memory, we used to call her our little encyclopaedia. I have no idea what became of her. She probably finished her medical studies, became a doctor, just like you.

I didn't get my diploma . . . I didn't get too far with my studies, Dr Miranda. Let's see if you can guess why I didn't get my diploma, I'm pretty sure that it won't take a colossal effort of the imagination on your part to guess why.

Luckily there was Gerardo. He was – well, I wouldn't exactly say he was waiting for me – but let's say that he still loved me, so I never had to go back to the University. Lucky for me, because I felt – well, phobia wouldn't be the right word, a certain apprehension – about medicine. I wasn't so sure about my chosen profession. But life is never over till it's over, as they say. That's why I'm wondering whether it might not be a good idea to sign up again – you know, ask that I be readmitted. I read the other day, now that the military aren't in charge anymore, that the University has begun to allow the students who were kicked out to apply for readmittance.

But here I am chatting away when I'm supposed to make breakfast, aren't I, a nice breakfast? Now you like – let's see, ham with mayonnaise, wasn't that it? Ham with mayonnaise sandwiches. We haven't got mayonnaise, but we do have ham. Gerardo also likes

ham. I'll get to know your other tastes. Sorry about the mayonnaise. I hope you don't mind that this must remain, for the moment, a monologue. You'll have your say, Doctor, you can be sure of that. I just don't want to remove this – gag, you call it, don't you? – at least not till Gerardo wakes up. But I should be getting him up. Did I tell you I phoned the garage from the call box? They'll be here soon.

She goes to the bedroom door, unlocks it, opens it.

The real real truth is that you look slightly bored.

Takes a cassette out of her pocket.

I took this out of your car – I took the liberty – what if we listen to some Schubert while I make breakfast, a nice breakfast, Doctor? Death and the Maiden?

She puts it into the cassette-player. We begin to hear Schubert's quartet 'Death and the Maiden'.

D'you know how long it's been since I last listened to this quartet? If it's on the radio, I switch it off, I even try not to go out much, though Gerardo has all these social events he's got to attend and if they ever name him Minister we're going to live running around shaking hands and smiling at perfect strangers, but I always pray they won't put on Schubert. One night we were dining with – they were extremely important people, and our hostess happened to put Schubert on, a piano sonata, and I thought, do I switch it off or do I leave, but my body decided for me, I felt extremely ill right then and there and Gerardo had to take me home, so we left them there listening to Schubert and nobody knew what had made me ill, so I pray they won't play that anywhere I go, any Schubert at all, strange isn't it, when he used to be, and I would say, yes I really would say, he's still my favourite composer, such a sad, noble sense of life. But I always promised myself a time would come to recover him, bring him back from the grave so to speak, and just sitting here listening to him with you I know that I was right, that I'm – so many things that are going to change from now on, right? To think I was on the verge of throwing my whole Schubert collection out, crazy!

(Raising her voice, to GERARDO.) Isn't this quartet marvellous, my love.

(To ROBERTO.) And now I'll be able to listen to my Schubert again, even go to a concert like we used to. Did you know that Schubert was homosexual? But of course you do, you're the one who kept repeating it over and over in my ear over and over again while you played 'Death and the Maiden'. Is this the very cassette, Doctor, or do you buy a new one every year to keep the sound pure?

GERARDO *enters from the bedroom, still sleepy.*

Good morning, my darling. Sorry breakfast isn't ready yet.

Upon seeing GERARDO, ROBERTO makes desperate efforts to vanquish himself. GERARDO watches the scene with total astonishment.

GERARDO. Paulina! What is this? What in the name of . . . Roberto . . . Dr Miranda.

He moves towards ROBERTO.

PAULINA. Don't touch him.

GERARDO. What?

PAULINA *(threatening him with the gun)*. Don't touch him.

GERARDO. What the hell is going on here, what kind of madness is –

PAULINA. It's him.

GERARDO. Put . . . put that gun down.

PAULINA. It's him.

GERARDO. Who?

PAULINA. It's the man.

GERARDO. What man?

PAULINA. The doctor.

GERARDO. What doctor?

PAULINA. The doctor who played Schubert.

GERARDO. The doctor who played Schubert.

PAULINA. That doctor.

GERARDO. How do you know?

PAULINA. His voice.

GERARDO. You told me – what you told me was all through those weeks, you said –

PAULINA. I was blindfolded, yes. But I could hear.

GERARDO. You're ill.

PAULINA. I'm not ill.

GERARDO. You're ill.

PAULINA. All right then, I am. But I can be ill and recognise a voice. Besides, when we lose one of our faculties, the others compensate, they get sharper. Right, Dr Miranda?

GERARDO. A vague memory of someone's voice is not proof of anything.

PAULINA. It's his voice. I recognised it as soon as he came in here last night. The way he laughed. Certain phrases he used.

GERARDO. But that's not . . .

PAULINA. It may be a teensy weensy thing, but it's enough for me. During all these years not an hour has passed that I haven't heard it, that same voice, next to me, next to my ear, that voice mixed with saliva, you think I'd forget a voice like his?

Imitating the voice of ROBERTO, then of a man.

'Give her a bit more. This bitch can take a bit more. Give it to her.'

'You sure, Doctor? What if the cunt dies on us?'

'She's not even near fainting. Give it to her, up another notch.'

GERARDO. Paulina. I'm asking you to give me that gun.

PAULINA. No.

GERARDO. We can't talk with that pointing at me.

PAULINA. On the contrary, we can only talk with this pointing at you. If I put it down you'll use your superior strength to win the argument.

GERARDO. Paulina, I want you to know that what you are doing is going to have serious consequences.

PAULINA. Serious, huh? Beyond redemption?

GERARDO. Yes, it could be. Beyond redemption. Dr Miranda, I have to ask your forgiveness for –

PAULINA. Don't you dare ask that from that piece of shit.

GERARDO. Urnie him, Paulina.

PAULINA. No.

GERARDO. Then I will.

He moves towards ROBERTO. Suddenly, a shot from PAULINA's gun rings out. It's clear that she does not know how to fire the weapon, because she is as surprised as both men are, recoiling from the shot. GERARDO takes a step backward and ROBERTO looks desperate.

PAULINA. Oh my God!

GERARDO. Don't fire that thing again, Pau. Give me that gun. *(Silence.)* You can't do this.

PAULINA. When are you going to stop telling me what I can and can't do. 'You can't do this, you can do this, you can't do this.' I did it.

GERARDO. You did this to this man, whose only fault that we know of – the only thing you can accuse him of in front of a court of justice –

PAULINA *laughs derisively.*

– yes, a court, of justice, yes, however corrupt, venal, cowardly – the only thing you could accuse him of is of stopping on a motorway to help someone who was in trouble, and bring me home and then offer to –

PAULINA. I almost forgot. The garage man will be here any minute.

GERARDO. What?

PAULINA. When I went to hide your Good

Samaritan's car early this morning, I stopped at a call box and rang the garage. So you better get dressed, he'll be here soon.

GERARDO. Please, Paulina, could we try something else? Could we start being reasonable.

PAULINA. You be reasonable. They never did anything to you.

GERARDO. Of course they did things – but we're not competing for some horror prize here, damn it. Even if this man was the doctor of those terrible events – he isn't, there's no reason why he should be, but let's say he was – even in that case, you have no right in law or otherwise to do what you have done, Paulina, think of the consequences, try to –

The motor of a truck is heard outside. PAULINA runs to the door, half opens it and shouts out.

PAULINA. He's coming, he's coming.

She shuts the door, locks it, closes the curtains and looks at GERARDO.

Here he is. Get dressed, quick. Go with the garage man. He'll take you to the car and fix it. The spare tyre's outside. I also took his jack.

GERARDO. You're stealing his jack?

PAULINA. That way Mother can keep ours.

Brief pause.

GERARDO. Have you thought I could go to the police?

PAULINA. I doubt you'd do that. You believe too much in your own powers of persuasion. Besides you know that if the police do show their noses here I'll put a bullet straight through this man's head, you know that, don't you? And then I'll put the gun into my mouth and pull the trigger.

GERARDO. Oh my baby, my baby. You're – unrecognisable. How can you possibly be like this, talk like this?

PAULINA. Explain to my husband, Dr Miranda, what you did to me so I would be this – crazy.

GERARDO. So – what exactly do you plan to do?

PAULINA. Not me. You and me. We're going to put him on trial, Gerardo, this doctor. Right here. Today. Or is your famous Investigating Commission going to do it?

Lights go down.

ACT TWO

Scene One

Midday.

ROBERTO is still in the same position, PAULINA with her back to him, looking outwards to the window and the sea, rocking herself gently as she speaks to him.

PAULINA. And when they let me go – d'you know where I went? I couldn't go home to my parents – they were so pro-military, I'd see Mother only once in a long while. – Isn't this bizarre, that I should be telling you all this as if you were my confessor, when there are things I've never told Gerardo, or my sister, certainly not my mother. She'd die if she knew what I've really got in my head. Whereas I can tell you exactly what I feel, what I felt when they let me go. That night . . . well, you don't need me to describe what state I was in, you gave me a quite thorough inspection before I was released, didn't you. We're rather cosy here, aren't we, like this? Like two old pensioners sitting on a bench in the sun.

ROBERTO makes a gesture, as if he wanted to speak of unto himself.

Hungry? Things aren't that bad. You'll just have to be patient until Gerardo comes.

(Mimicking a man's voice.) 'You hungry? You wanna eat? I'll give you something to eat, sweet cunt, I'll give you something really filling so you can forget you're hungry.'

(Her own voice.) None of you knew about Gerardo, did you? – I never breathed his name. Your – your colleagues, they'd ask me, of course. 'With that treat, little lady, don't tell me you haven't got someone to fuck you, huh? Come on, just tell us who's been fucking you, little lady.' But I never gave them Gerardo's name. Strange how things turn out. If I

had mentioned Gerardo, he wouldn't have been named to any Commission, but would have been one of the names that some other lawyer was investigating. And I would be in front of that Commission to tell them how I met Gerardo – in fact I met him just after the military coup, helping people seek asylum in embassies – saving lives with Gerardo, smuggling people out of the country so they wouldn't be killed. I was wild and fearless, willing to do anything. I can't believe that I hadn't got an ounce of fear in my whole body at that time. But where was I? Oh yes – that night they let me go, well, I went to Gerardo's house, I knocked on the door, long quiet knocks, over and over, just like you did last night, and when Gerardo finally answered, he looked agitated, his hair was dishevelled –

The sound of a car outside. Then a car door opening and closing. PAULINA goes to the table and takes the gun in her hand. GERARDO enters.

How did it go? Fix the tyre?

GERARDO. Paulina, you are going to listen to me.

PAULINA. Of course I'm going to listen to you. Don't I always?

GERARDO. I want you to sit down and I want you to really listen to me.

PAULINA sits down.

You know that I have spent a good part of my life defending the law. If there was one thing that revolted me in the past regime –

PAULINA. You can call them fascists . . .

GERARDO. Don't interrupt. If something revolted me about them it was that they accused so many men and women, that they forged evidence and ignored evidence and did not give the accused any chance of defending themselves, so even if this man committed genocide on a daily basis, he has the right to defend himself.

PAULINA. But I have no intention of denying him that right, Gerardo. I'll give you all the time you

need to speak to your client, in private. I was just waiting for you to come back, that's all, so we could begin this in an orderly fashion.

She gestures to GERARDO, who takes the gag off ROBERTO. Then she indicates the cassette-recorder.

You should know, Doctor, that everything you say will be recorded here.

GERARDO. My God, Paulina, shut up! Let him say what he . . .

Brief pause. PAULINA switches on the recorder.

ROBERTO (*coughs, then in a rough, hoarse voice*). Water.

GERARDO. What?

PAULINA. He wants water, Gerardo.

GERARDO *rushes to fill a glass with water and brings it to ROBERTO, glaring it to him to drink. ROBERTO drinks it down noisily.*

PAULINA. Nothing like good fresh water, eh, Doctor? Beats drinking your own piss.

ROBERTO. Escobar. This is inexcusable. I will never forgive you as long as I live.

PAULINA. Hold on, hold on. Stop right there, Doctor. Let's see if this thing is working.

She presses some buttons and then we hear ROBERTO'S voice.

ROBERTO'S VOICE FROM THE CASSETTE.

Escobar. This is inexcusable. I will never forgive you as long as I live.

PAULINA'S VOICE FROM THE CASSETTE. Hold on, hold on. Stop right there, Doctor, Let's see —

PAULINA *stops the recorder.*

PAULINA. Ready. It's recording everything marvelously. We already have a statement about forgiveness. It is Dr Miranda's opinion that it is inexcusable — that he could never forgive as long as he lives — tying someone up for a few hours, holding

that person without the right to speak for a few hours. Agreed. More?

She presses another button.

ROBERTO. I do not know you, madame. I have never seen you in my life before. But I can tell you this:

you are extremely ill, almost prototypically schizoid. But you, Escobar, your case is different. You're a lawyer, a defender of human rights, a man who has been persecuted by the former military government, as I was myself, and you are responsible for what you do and what you must do is untie me immediately. I want you to know that every minute that passes makes you more of an accomplice to this abuse and that you will therefore have to pay the consequences of —

PAULINA (*puts the gun to his temple*). Are you threatening?

ROBERTO. I wasn't —

PAULINA. Threatening, yes you are, but not in here. Let's get this clear, Doctor. Out there you bastards may still give the orders, you can veto our lives, but in here, I'm in command. Are we clear?

ROBERTO. I'm in pain.

PAULINA. I know.

ROBERTO. I must go to the bathroom.

PAULINA. Piss or shit?

GERARDO. My God, Paulina! Dr Miranda, she has never spoken like this in her life.

PAULINA. Come on, Doctor. Back or front?

ROBERTO. Standing up.

PAULINA. Untie his legs, Gerardo. I'll take him.

GERARDO. Of course you won't.

PAULINA. I'll do it. Don't look at me like that. It's not as if it's the first time he's taken this thing out in front of me, Gerardo. Come on, Doctor. Stand up. I don't want you pissing all over my floor.

GERARDO *writes the legs. Slowly, painfully*, ROBERTO *limps towards the bathroom, with PAULINA sticking the gun in his back. GERARDO takes off the cassette-recorder.*

PAULINA *goes out with ROBERTO. After a few instants, we can hear the sounds of urination and then flushing. Meanwhile, GERARDO has been pacing nervously. PAULINA returns with ROBERTO.*

PAULINA. Tie him up again.

GERARDO *begins to tie up ROBERTO's legs.*

Tighter, Gerardo!

GERARDO. Paulina, this is intolerable. I must talk with you.

PAULINA. And who's stopping you?

GERARDO. Alone.

PAULINA. Why? The Doctor discussed everything in my presence, they –

GERARDO. I beg you darling, please, don't be so difficult. I want to talk to you where he can't hear us.

GERARDO *and PAULINA go out onto the terrace. During their conversation, ROBERTO slowly manages to loosen his leg bonds.*

What are you trying to do?

PAULINA. I already told you – put him on trial.

GERARDO. Put him on trial, what does that mean, put him on trial? We can't use their methods. We're different. To seek vengeance in this fashion is not –

PAULINA. This is not vengeance. I'm giving him all the guarantees he never gave me. Not one, him and his – colleagues.

GERARDO. And his – colleagues – are you going to kidnap them and bring them here and tie them up and . . .

PAULINA. I'd have to know their names for that, wouldn't I?

GERARDO. – and then you're going to . . .

PAULINA. Kill them? Kill him? As he didn't kill me, I think it wouldn't be fair to –

GERARDO. That's good to know. Paulina, because I'm warning you, you'd have to kill me first. I swear it.

PAULINA. Would you mind calming down? I haven't the slightest intention of killing him. And certainly not you . . . But as usual, you don't believe me.

GERARDO. But then, what are you going to do to him? You're going to – what? – and all this because fifteen years ago someone . . .

PAULINA. Someone what? . . . what did they do to me, Gerardo. Say it.

Brief pause.

You never wanted to say it. Say it now. They . . .

GERARDO. If you didn't say it, how was I going to?

PAULINA. Say it now.

GERARDO. I only know what you told me that first night, when . . .

PAULINA. They . . .

GERARDO. They . . .

PAULINA. Tell me, tell me.

GERARDO. They – tortured you. Now you say it.

PAULINA. They tortured me.

And what else? What else did they do to me, Gerardo?

GERARDO *goes to her, takes her in his arms.*

GERARDO *(whispering to her)*. They raped you.

PAULINA. How many times?

GERARDO. More than once.

PAULINA. How many times?

GERARDO. You never said. You said you didn't count.

PAULINA. It's not true.

GERARDO. What's not true?

PAULINA. That I didn't count. I always kept count. I know how many times.

Brief pause.

And that night, Gerardo, when I came to you, when I started to tell you, you swore, I remember you said: 'Some day, my love, we're going to put these bastards on trial. Your eyes will be able to rove - I remember the exact phrase, because it seemed, poetic - your eyes will be able to rove over each one of their faces while they listen to your story. We'll do it, you'll see that we will.' So now, darling, tell me who do I go to now?

GERARDO. That was fifteen years ago.

PAULINA. Gerardo, do I go to your Commission now?

GERARDO. Mine? I don't think it will be mine much longer after today. I shall have to resign.

PAULINA. Always so melodramatic. And then your forehead gets all wrinkled up which makes you look ten years older. And then people will see your photograph in the newspaper and won't believe that you're the youngest member of the Commission.

GERARDO. Are you deaf? I just told you I'm going to have to resign.

PAULINA. I don't see why.

GERARDO. You don't see why, but all the rest of the country will see why, especially those who don't want any kind of investigation at all. A member of the President's Commission, who should be showing exemplary signs of moderation and equanimity -

PAULINA. We're going to suffocate from so much equanimity!

GERARDO. - and objectivity, that this very person has allowed an innocent human being to be bound and tormented in his house, without a shred of evidence against him admissible in a court of law.

PAULINA. What court of law?

GERARDO. Paulina, do you know how the newspapers that served the dictatorship, do you know how they'll

use this episode to undermine and even wreck the Commission?

Brief pause.

Do you want these people back in power? Every minute that passes, every second, that you've got this poor man tied up, makes it harder for us. Free the man, Paulina. Apologise for the mistake and free him. I've spoken to him, politically he seems to be a man we can trust or so it -

PAULINA. Oh, my little man, you do fall for every trick in the book, don't you? But let's not waste . . . If you could just listen to me for a change, my love, I'm not trying to harm your career and I most certainly don't want to jeopardise the Commission. But you see the Commission only deals with the dead, with those who can't speak. And I can speak - it's been so long since I as much as whispered a word, even a breath of what I'm thinking, years living in terror of my own . . . but I'm not dead, I thought I was but I'm not and I can speak, - so for God's sake let me have my say and you go ahead with your Commission and believe me when I tell you that none of this will be made public.

GERARDO. The only way that will happen is if the man out there benevolently decides not to make the matter public. And anyway, I have to resign no matter what. The sooner, the better.

PAULINA. You'd have to resign even if no one knew about this?

GERARDO. Yes.

PAULINA. Because of your mad wife, who was mad because she stayed silent and is now mad because she suddenly began to speak?

GERARDO. Among other reasons, yes, that's so, if the truth still matters to you.

PAULINA. Oh it does, the real real truth.

Brief pause.

Hang on a sec.

She goes into the other room and discovers ROBERTO about to free himself. When he sees her, he stops immediately. PAULINA ties him up again, while her voice assumes male tones.

'Hey, don't you like our hospitality? Want to leave so soon, bitch? You're not going to have such a good time outside as you're having with me, sweetie. Tell me you'll miss me. At least tell me that.'

PAULINA begins to pass her hands slowly up and down ROBERTO's body, almost as if she were caressing it. Then she goes back to the bedroom.

PAULINA. It's not only the voice I recognise, Gerardo. I also recognise the skin. And the smell. Gerardo. I recognise his skin.

Brief pause.

Suppose I was able to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that this doctor of yours is guilty? Would you want me to set him free then?

GERARDO. Yes.

If he's guilty, more reason to let him go. Don't look at me like that. You want to scare these people and provoke them, Paulina, till they come back, make them so insecure that they come back to make sure we don't harm them – you want them back? Because that's what you're going to get. Imagine what would happen if everyone acted like you did. You satisfy your own personal passion, you punish on your own, while the other people in this country with scores of other problems who finally have a chance to solve some of them, those people can go screw themselves – the whole transition to democracy can go screw itself –

PAULINA. Nothing's going to happen to democracy! Nobody's even going to know!

GERARDO. The only way to be absolutely sure about that is to kill him and then we're both finished. Let him go, Paulina. For the good of the country, for our own good.

PAULINA. What about my good? What about me? Look at me.

GERARDO. Yes, look at you, love. You're still a prisoner, locked up with them, in that basement. For fifteen years you've done nothing with your life. Not a thing. Look at you, just when we've got the chance to start all over again... Isn't it time we – ?

PAULINA. – forgot? You're asking me to forget.

GERARDO. Free yourself from them, Paulina, that's what I'm asking.

PAULINA. And let him loose so he can come back in a few years' time?

GERARDO. So he won't come back ever again.

PAULINA. And we see him at the Tavelli and we smile at him, he introduces his lovely wife to us and we smile and we all shake hands and we comment on how warm it is this time of the year?

GERARDO. Basically yes, and start to live.

Brief pause.

PAULINA. Look, Gerardo, I suggest we reach a compromise.

GERARDO. I don't follow you.

PAULINA. You concede something. I concede something. Isn't that what this transition is all about? Compromise, negotiation. They let us have democracy, but they keep control of the economy and of the Armed Forces? The Commission can investigate the crimes but nobody is punished for them? There's freedom to say anything you want as long as you don't say everything you want?

Brief pause.

I propose that we reach an agreement. You want this man freed and I want – would you like to know what I want?

GERARDO. I'd love to know what you want.

PAULINA. When I heard his voice last night, the first thought that rushed through my head, what I've been thinking all these years, when you would catch me with a look that you said was – abstract, fleeting,

right? – you know what I was thinking of? Doing to them, systematically, minute by minute, instrument by instrument, what they did to me. Specifically to him, to the doctor . . . Because the others were so vulgar, so – but he would play Schubert, he would talk about science, he even quoted Nietzsche to me once.

GERARDO. Nietzsche.

PAULINA. I was horrified at myself. That I should have such hatred in me, that I should want to do something like that to a defenceless human being: no matter how vile – but it was the only way to fall asleep at night, the only way of going out with you to cocktail parties in spite of the fact that I couldn't help asking myself if one of those present wasn't – perhaps not the exact same man, but one of those present might be . . . and so as not to go completely off my rocker and be able to deliver that Tavelli smile you say I'm going to have to continue to deliver – well, I would imagine pushing their head into a bucket of slime, or electricity, or when we would be making love and I could feel the possibility of an orgasm building, the very idea of currents going through my body would remind me and then – and then I had to simulate it, simulate it so you wouldn't know what I was thinking, so you wouldn't feel that it was your failure – oh Gerardo.

GERARDO. Oh, my love, my love.

PAULINA. So when I heard his voice, I thought the only thing I want is to have him raped, have someone fuck him, so that he should know just once what it is to . . . And as I can't – I thought that it was a sentence that you would have to carry out.

GERARDO. Don't go on, Paulina.

PAULINA. But then I told myself it could be difficult, after all you do need to have a certain degree of enthusiasm to –

GERARDO. Stop, Paulina.

PAULINA. So I asked myself if we couldn't use a broom handle. Yes, Gerardo, you know, a broom.

But I began to realise that wasn't what I really wanted. And you know what conclusion I came to, the only thing I really want?

Brief pause.

I want him to confess. I want him to sit in front of that cassette-recorder and tell me what he did – not just to me, everything, to everybody – and then have him write it out in his own handwriting and sign it and I would keep a copy forever – with all the information, the names and data, all the details. That's what I want.

GERARDO. He confesses and you let him go.

PAULINA. I let him go.

GERARDO. And you need nothing more from him?

PAULINA. Not a thing.

Brief pause.

Don't you see it's a way of protecting you, my love. With Miranda's confession in my hand you'd be safe on the Commission and he wouldn't dare send his thugs to harm us because he'd know that the confession would be all over the newspapers the next day. Don't you see?

GERARDO. And you expect me to believe you that you're going to let him go after he's confessed? Do you expect him to believe that?

PAULINA. I don't see that either of you have an alternative. Look, Gerardo, you need to make this sort of scam afraid. Tell him I hid the car because I'm getting ready to kill him. That the only way to dissuade me is for him to confess. Tell him that nobody knows he came last night, that nobody would ever find him. For his sake, I hope you can convince him.

GERARDO. Are you saying I have to convince him?

PAULINA. I'm saying it's a lot more pleasant than having to fuck him.

GERARDO. There's a problem, Paulina. What do I do if he has nothing to confess?

PAULINA. Tell him if he doesn't confess, I'll kill him.

GERARDO. But what if he's not guilty?

PAULINA. I'm in no hurry. Tell him I can wait months for him to confess.

GERARDO. Paulina, you're not listening to me. What can he confess if he's innocent?

PAULINA. If he's innocent? Then we're – then he's really screwed.

Lights go down.

Scene Two

Lunch. GERARDO and ROBERTO sit at a table.

ROBERTO *still tied, but this time with his hands in front.*

GERARDO *has just finished serving plates of soup.*

PAULINA *watches from the terrace. She can see but not hear them. ROBERTO and GERARDO remain for several silent instants looking at the food.*

GERARDO. You're not hungry, Dr Miranda?

ROBERTO. Roberto. My name is Roberto. Please treat me with the same familiarity as before. Maybe it will make me feel better.

GERARDO. I'd rather speak to you as if you were a client, Dr Miranda. That will help me out. I do think you should eat something.

ROBERTO. I'm not hungry.

GERARDO. Let me . . .

He fills a spoon with soup and feeds ROBERTO as if he were a baby. During the conversation which follows, he is continually feeding ROBERTO and feeding himself.

ROBERTO. She's mad. You'll have to excuse me for saying this, Gerardo, but your wife is mad, you know.

GERARDO. Bread?

ROBERTO. No, thanks.

Brief pause.

She should be receiving some sort of psychiatric treatment for –

GERARDO. You are her therapy, Doctor.

He cleans ROBERTO's mouth with a napkin.

ROBERTO. She's going to kill me.

GERARDO. Unless you confess.

ROBERTO. But what can I confess? What can I?

PAULINA. You may be aware, Doctor, that the secret police used some doctors as – consultants in torture sessions . . .

ROBERTO. The Medical Council gradually learned of these situations, and looked into them wherever possible.

GERARDO. She is convinced that you are one of those doctors. So unless you have a way of denying it . . .

ROBERTO. How could I deny it? I'd have to change my voice, prove that this is not my voice. There's no other evidence, nothing that –

GERARDO. She mentioned your skin.

ROBERTO. My skin?

GERARDO. And your smell.

ROBERTO. The fantasies of a diseased mind. She could have latched onto any man coming through that door . . .

GERARDO. Unfortunately, you came through that door.

ROBERTO. Look, Gerardo, I'm a quiet man. Anyone can see that I'm incapable of violence – violence of any sort sickens me. I come to my beach house, I wander on the beach, I watch the waves, I hunt for pebbles, I listen to my music –

GERARDO. Schubert?

ROBERTO. Schubert. Also Vivaldi and Mozart and Telemann. And for some reason yesterday I brought the Schubert with me in the car. And for some even more stupid reason I stopped on the motorway for

some lunatic waving his arms like a windmill. Look, it's up to you to get me out of here.

GERARDO. I know.

ROBERTO. Everything hurts, my ankles, my hands, my back. Couldn't you untie me a little, so —

GERARDO. Roberto, I want to be honest with you. There is only one way to save your life . . .

Brief pause.

I think we have to — indulge her.

ROBERTO. Indulge her?

GERARDO. Make her feel that we — that you, are willing to cooperate . . .

ROBERTO. I don't see how I can cooperate, given my rather peculiar position . . .

GERARDO. Indulge her, make her believe that you . . .

ROBERTO. Make her believe that I . . .

GERARDO. She promised me that if you — confessed she would be ready to —

ROBERTO. I haven't got anything to confess!

GERARDO. I think you're going to have to invent something then, because the only way she'll pardon you is if —

ROBERTO (*raises his voice, indignantly*). She's got nothing to pardon me for. I did nothing and there's nothing to confess. Do you understand?

Upon hearing ROBERTO'S voice, PAULINA gets up from her seat on the terrace and starts to move towards them.

Instead of proposing dishonourable solutions to me, you should be out there convincing that madwoman of yours to cease this criminal behaviour before she ruins your brilliant career and ends up in gaol or in an asylum. Tell her that. Or can't you impose a little order in your own house?

GERARDO. Roberto, I —

PAULINA *enters from the terrace.*

PAULINA. Spot of trouble, darling?

GERARDO. None.

PAULINA. I thought you looked a little . . . agitated.

Brief pause.

Well, I see you've both finished your soup. No one can say I'm not a good cook, can they? That I'm not an ideal housewife? Little cup of coffee, Doctor? Teensy weensy one? Doctor, I am talking to you. Didn't your mother ever teach you that . . .

ROBERTO. Leave my mother out of this. I forbid you to mention my mother.

Brief pause.

PAULINA. I'm sorry, you're absolutely right. Your mother is not responsible for what you do. I don't know why men always insist on attacking mothers instead of —

GERARDO. Paulina, would you please do me the favour of leaving so we can continue our conversation?

PAULINA. Okay. I'll leave you boys to fix the world.

She leaves and turns.

Oh, and if he wants to piss, darling, just snap your fingers and I'll come running.

She returns to the same spot on the terrace, watching.

ROBERTO. She's absolutely insane.

GERARDO. When crazy people have power, you've got to indulge them. In her case, a confession —

ROBERTO. But what could a confession — ?

GERARDO. I think I understand Paulina's need. It coincides with a need of the whole country. The need to put into words what happened to us.

ROBERTO. You believe her, don't you?

GERARDO. If I thought you were guilty, would I be trying so desperately to save you —

ROBERTO. From the beginning you've been conspiring with her. She plays the bad guy. You play the good.

GERARDO. What do you mean by good -

ROBERTO. Playing roles, she's bad, you're good, to see if you can get me to confess that way. And once you've got me to confess, not her, she's not going to do it, you will kill me. It's what any man would do, any real man, if they'd raped his wife, it's what I would do if somebody had raped my wife. Cut your balls off.

Pause. GERARDO stands up.

Where are you going?

GERARDO. I'm going to get the gun and blow your fucking brains out. That's what a real man does, doesn't he. Real macho men blow people's brains out and fuck women when they're tied up on cois. Not like me. I'm a stupid faggot because I defend the son of a bitch who screwed my wife and destroyed her entire life. How many times did you screw her? How many times, you bastard?

ROBERTO. Gerardo, I . . . -

GERARDO. Gerardo, the faggot, is gone. I'm here. Me. But thinking it over, why should I dirty my hands with scum like you - when there's somebody who'll take much more pleasure in your pain and your death? Why take that one pleasure away from her? I'll call her right away so she can blow your fucking brains out herself.

ROBERTO. Don't go. Don't call her.

GERARDO. I'm tired of being in the middle of this. You reach an understanding with her, you convince her.

ROBERTO. Gerardo, I'm scared.

Brief pause. GERARDO turns around, changes his tone.

GERARDO. So am I.

ROBERTO. Don't let her kill me.

Brief pause.

What are you going to say to her?

GERARDO. The truth. That you won't cooperate.

ROBERTO. I need to know what it is I did, you've got to understand that I don't know what I have to confess. If I were that man, I'd know every - detail, but I don't know anything. If I make a mistake, she'll think I'm - I'll need your help.

GERARDO. You're asking me to deceive my wife?

ROBERTO. I'm asking you to save the life of an innocent man, Escobar. You do believe that I'm innocent, don't you?

GERARDO. You care that much what I believe?

ROBERTO. Of course I do. She isn't the voice of civilisation, you are. She isn't a member of the President's Commission, you are.

GERARDO (*bitter, sad*). No, she isn't . . . Who gives a fuck what she thinks. She's just . . .

He starts to leave.

ROBERTO. Wait. Where are you going? What are you going to say to her?

GERARDO. I'm going to tell her that you need to piss.

Lights go down.

ACT THREE

Scene One

Just before evening. PAULINA and GERARDO are outside, on the terrace facing the sea. ROBERTO inside, still tied up, GERARDO has the cassette-recorder on his lap.

PAULINA. I don't understand why.

GERARDO. I have to know.

PAULINA. Why?

Brief pause.

GERARDO. Paulina, I love you. I need to hear it from your lips. It's not fair that after so many years the person to tell me, should be him. It would be - intolerable.

PAULINA. Whereas if I tell you it would be - tolerable.

GERARDO. More tolerable than if he tells me first.

PAULINA. I told you some of it already, Gerardo. Wasn't that enough?

GERARDO. Fifteen years ago you started to tell me and then . . .

PAULINA. Did you expect me to keep on talking to you with that bitch there? That bitch came out of your bedroom half naked asking why you were taking so long, and you expected me to -

GERARDO. She wasn't a bitch.

PAULINA. Did she know where I was? Of course she did. A bitch.

GERARDO. We're not going to start all this again,

Paulina.

PAULINA. You're the one who started.

GERARDO. How many times do I have to . . . ? - I'd

spent two months trying to find you. Then she came by, she said she could help. We had a couple of drinks. My God, I'm also human.

PAULINA. While I defended your life, while your name stayed inside me and never left my mouth, - ask him, ask Miranda if I ever so much as whispered your name, while you . . .

GERARDO. You already forgave me, you forgave me, how many times will we have to go over this? We'll die from so much past, we'll suffocate. Let's finish this. Let's close this book once and for all and never speak about it, ever again.

PAULINA. Forgive and forget, eh?

GERARDO. Forgive yes, forget no. But forgive so we can start again. There's so much to live for, my . . .

PAULINA. What did you want me to do, to talk in front of her? To tell you, what they did to me, in front of her, that I should - ? How many times?

GERARDO. How many times what?

PAULINA. How many times did you fuck her?

GERARDO. Paulina . . .

PAULINA. How many?

GERARDO. Baby . . .

PAULINA. How many times did you do it? How many, how many? I tell you, you tell me.

GERARDO (*desperate, shaking her and then taking her in his arms*). Paulina, Paulina. You want to destroy me? Is that what you want?

PAULINA. No.

GERARDO. Well, you're going to. You're going to end up in a world where I don't exist, where I won't be here. Is that what you want?

PAULINA. I want to know how many times you fucked that bitch.

GERARDO. Don't do this to me, Paulina.

PAULINA. That wasn't the first night, was it, Gerardo? You'd seen her before, right? The truth, Gerardo.

GERARDO. Even if it destroys us?

PAULINA. How many times, Gerardo. You tell me, I tell you.

GERARDO. Twice.

PAULINA. That night. What about before that night?

GERARDO (*very low*). Three times.

PAULINA. What?

GERARDO. Three times.

PAULINA. She was that good? You liked her that much? And she liked it too. She must have really enjoyed it if she came back for —

GERARDO. Do you understand what you're doing to me?

PAULINA. Beyond redemption, huh?

GERARDO (*desperate*). What more do you want from me? We survived the dictatorship, we survived, and now we're going to do to each other what those bastards out there weren't able to do to us. You want that?

PAULINA (*quietly*). No.

GERARDO. You want me to leave? Is that what you want? You want me to go out that door and never see you again? God in Heaven, is that what you want?

PAULINA. No.

GERARDO. That's what you're going to get. People can also die from an excessive dose of the truth, you know.

Brief pause.

I'm in your hands like a baby. I have no defences now. You want to treat me like you treat the man who —

PAULINA. No.

GERARDO. You want me to . . . ?

PAULINA (*murmuring*). I want you. You. I want you inside me, alive. I want you making love to me without ghosts in bed and I want you on the Commission defending the truth and I want you in the air I breathe and I want you in my Schubert that I can start listening to again and I want you adopting a child together

GERARDO. Yes, Paulina, yes, yes.

PAULINA. — and I want to care for you minute by minute like you look care of me after that night —

GERARDO. Never mention that bitch of a night again. If you go on and on about that night, you'll — kill me. Is that what you want?

PAULINA. No.

GERARDO. Are you going to tell me then?

PAULINA. Yes.

GERARDO. Everything?

PAULINA. Everything.

GERARDO. That's the way, that's how we'll get out of this mess, — without hiding a thing from each other, together.

PAULINA. That's the way.

GERARDO. I'm going to switch on the recorder. You don't mind, love, if I switch it on?

PAULINA. Switch it on.

GERARDO *switches it on*.

GERARDO. Just as if you were sitting in front of the Commission.

PAULINA. I don't know how to begin.

GERARDO. Begin with your name.

PAULINA. My maiden name is Paulina Salas. Now I am married to Gerardo Escobar, the lawyer, but at that time —

GERARDO. Date . . .

PAULLINA. April 6th, 1975, I was single. I was walking along San Antonio Street -

GERARDO. Be as precise as you can.

PAULLINA. - at about two fifteen in the afternoon, and when I reached the corner at Huerfanos street I heard a noise behind me - three men got out of a car, one of them stuck a gun in my back, 'One word and we'll blow your face off, Miss.' He spat the words into my ear - he had garlic on his breath. I was surprised that I should focus on such an insignificant detail, the lunch he had eaten, began to think about how he was digesting that food with all the organs that I had been studying in anatomy. Later on I'd reproach myself, why didn't I call out, I knew that if that happened you're supposed to scream, so people can know who is - call out your name, I'm Paulina Salas, they're taking me, if you don't scream out that first moment you're already defeated, and I submitted too easily, obeyed them right away without even a gesture of defiance. All my life, I've always been much too obedient.

The lights begin to go down.

I met Dr Miranda for the first time three days later when . . . That's when I met Dr Miranda.

The lights go down further and PAULLINA'S voice continues in the darkness, only the cassette-recorder lit by the light of the moon.

At first, I thought he would save me. He was so soft, so - nice, after what the others had done to me. And then, all of a sudden, I heard the Schubert. There is no way of describing what it means to hear that wonderful music in the darkness, when you haven't eaten for three days, when your body is falling apart, when . . .

In the darkness, we hear ROBERTO'S voice.

ROBERTO'S VOICE. I would put on the music because it helped me in my role, the role of good guy, as they call it, I would put on Schubert because it was a way of gaining the prisoners' trust. But I also

knew it was a way of alleviating their suffering. You've got to believe it was a way of alleviating the prisoners' suffering. Not only the music, but everything else I did. That's how they approached me, at first. The prisoners were dying on them, they told me, they needed someone to help care for them, someone they could trust. I've got a brother, who was a member of the secret services. You can pay the communists back for what they did to Dad, he told me one night - my father had a heart attack the day

the peasants took over his land at Las Toltecas. The stroke paralysed him - he lost his capacity for speech, would spend hours simply looking at me; his eyes said, 'Do something'. But that's not why I accepted. The real truth, it was for humanitarian reasons. We're at war, I thought, they want to kill me and my family, they want to install a totalitarian dictatorship, but even so, they still have the right to some form of medical attention. It was slowly, almost without realising how, that I became involved in more delicate operations, they let me sit in on sessions where my role was to determine if the prisoners could take that much torture, that much electric current. At first I told myself that it was a way of saving people's lives, and I did, because many times I told them - without it being true, simply to help the person who was being tortured - I ordered them to stop or the prisoner would die. But afterwards I began to - but by bit, the virtue I was feeling turned into excitement - the mask of virtue fell off it and it, the excitement, it hid, it hid, it hid from me what I was doing, the swamp of what -. By the time Paulina Salas was brought in it was already too late. Too late.

The lights go up as if the moon were coming out. It is night-time. ROBERTO is in front of the cassette-recorder, confessing.

ROBERTO. . . too late. A kind of - brutalisation took over my life, I began to really truly like what I was doing. It became a game. My curiosity was partly morbid, partly scientific. How much can this woman take? More than the other one? Does her sex dry up when you put the current through her? Can she have an orgasm under those circumstances? She is entirely

in your power, you can carry out all your fantasies, you can do what you want with her.

The moonlight begins to fade and only remains on the cassette-recorder, while ROBERTO'S voice speaks on in the darkness.

Everything they have forbidden you since ever, whatever your mother ever urgently whispered you were never to do. Come on, Doctor, they would say to me, you're not going to refuse free meat, are you, one of them would sort of taunt me. His name was - let's see - they called him Bud, no, it was Stud - a nickname, because I never found out his real name.

They like it, Doctor, Stud would say to me - all these bitches like it and if you put on that sweet little music of yours, they'll get even coster. He would say this in front of the women, in front of Paulina Salas he would say it, and finally I, finally I - but not one ever died on me, not one of the women, not one of the men.

The lights go up and it is now dawnning. ROBERTO, undid, writes on a sheet of paper his own words from the cassette-recorder. In front of him, many sheets of handwritten pages. PAULINA and GERARDO watch him.

ROBERTO'S VOICE (*from the recorder*). To the best of my memory, I took part in the - interrogation of 94 prisoners, including Paulina Salas. It is all I can say. I ask forgiveness.

GERARDO switches off the cassette-recorder while ROBERTO writes.

ROBERTO. - forgiveness.

GERARDO switches the cassette-recorder back on.

ROBERTO'S VOICE. And I hope that this confession proves that I feel real repentance and that just as the country is reaching reconciliation and peace...

GERARDO switches off the cassette-recorder.

GERARDO. Did you write that? Just as the country is reaching reconciliation and peace?

He switches it on again.

ROBERTO'S VOICE. - so too should I be allowed to live the rest of my days with my terrible secret. There can be no worse punishment than that which is imposed upon me by the voice of my conscience.

ROBERTO (*while he writes*) - punishment... my conscience.

GERARDO switches off the cassette-recorder. A moment's silence.

And now what? You want me to sign?

PAULINA. First write there that this is all done of your own free will, without any sort of pressure whatsoever.

ROBERTO. That's not true.

PAULINA. You want pressure, Doctor?

ROBERTO writes down a couple of phrases, shows them to GERARDO, who moves his head affirmatively.

PAULINA. Now you can sign.

ROBERTO signs. PAULINA looks at the signature, collects the paper, takes the cassette out of the recorder.

Have you noticed how splendid the dawns are here when the sea is stormy?

GERARDO. Paulina.

PAULINA. Do you know how I feel right now,

Gerardo? I feel free. Not like the sun, because the sun, poor thing, has to come out every day in the same place, almost at the same time, always the same route across the sky. I feel like that seagull, like that wave, like the air. Everything is really still ahead of me, it's not a lie when we say that all of our life is still ahead of us.

GERARDO. Paulina. It's over. It is over. Don't you think it's about time we...

PAULINA. Right. We had an agreement. I'm glad to see that you're still a man of principles. I thought I'd have to convince you now, now that you know he really is guilty. I thought I'd have to convince you not to kill him.

GERARDO. I would not stain my soul with someone like him.

PAULLINA (*throws him the keys to the car*). He's free. You just have to go and get his car.

GERARDO *begins to write ROBERTO's ankles*.

I don't think you understood me, Gerardo. When I said you, I didn't mean both of you.

GERARDO. What are you talking about?

PAULLINA. I'm not letting him go alone with you.

GERARDO. Paulina, we agreed that . . . ?

PAULLINA. Didn't you hear what this man just confessed? He's violent and dangerous.

GERARDO. He's a poor defeated bastard. When somebody confesses like that, degrades himself in that way – he can't hurt you anymore, Paulina.

PAULLINA. You're the one he can hurt.

ROBERTO. How could I possibly harm the man who –

PAULLINA. You can overpower him, you can run him over – come back here and take these papers and the cassette and – I know you, Doctor. There is no way I am going to leave him alone with you, Gerardo.

GERARDO. All right, all right, I'll go get the car.

He stands up and goes towards the door.

PAULLINA. Oh, Gerardo. Don't forget to give his jack back.

GERARDO (*trying to smile*). And don't you forget to return his Schubert cassette. You have your own.

Brief pause.

Take care of yourself.

He exits. PAULLINA goes to the window, watches him leave.

ROBERTO. If you wouldn't mind, I would like to go to the bathroom. I suppose there is no reason why you should continue to accompany me?

PAULLINA. Don't move, Doctor. There's still a little matter pending. (*Brief pause*.) It's going to be an incredibly beautiful day. You know the only thing that's missing now, Doctor, the one thing I need to make this day really truly perfect? (*Brief pause*.) To kill you. So I can listen to my Schubert without thinking that you'll also be listening to it, soiling my day and my seagull and my Schubert and my country and my husband. That's what I need . . .

ROBERTO. Madame, your husband left here trusting that you – . . . You gave your word . . .

PAULLINA. But when I gave my word – I still had a doubt – a teeny weensy doubt – that you really were that man. Because Gerardo was right, in his way. Proof, hard proof – well, I could have been mistaken. But I knew that if you confessed, – and when I heard you, my last doubts vanished and now I want you dead. Now that I know, now, that you are that man, I could not live in peace with myself and let you live.

She points the gun at him.

You have a minute to pray and really repent, Doctor.

Roberto slowly stands.

ROBERTO. Don't do it. I'm innocent.

PAULLINA. You've confessed, Doctor.

ROBERTO. It's false, ma'am.

PAULLINA. What do you mean?

ROBERTO. I made it up. We made it up.

PAULLINA. It seems very true to me, Doctor, painfully familiar as far as I'm concerned . . .

ROBERTO. Your husband told me what to write, I invented some of it, some of it was invented by me, but most of it was what he got from you, from what he knew had happened to you, ma'am, so you'd let me go, he convinced me that it was the only way that you wouldn't kill me and I had to – you must know how, under pressure, we say anything, but I'm innocent, ma'am, God in Heaven knows that –

PAULINA. Stud, Doctor.

ROBERTO. What?

PAULINA. Several times in your confession you mention Stud. He must have been a large man, muscular, he bit his fingernails, right, he bit his goddam fingernails. Stud.

ROBERTO. The name was given to me by your husband. Everything I said comes from what your husband helped me to invent. Ask him when he comes back.

PAULINA. I don't need to ask him. I knew that he'd do that, I knew he'd use my words for your confession. That's the sort of person he is. He always thinks that he's more intelligent than everybody else, he always thinks that he's got to save somebody. But I don't blame him, Doctor. He loves me. We deceived each other for our own good, because we love each other. But I'm the one who came out on top in this game. I gave him the wrong name, Doctor, to see if you would correct it. And you did. You corrected the name Bud and you substituted the name Stud and if you were innocent -

ROBERTO. It's a mere coincidence, it's natural that I should think it was Stud rather than Bud, because it would be a natural for that sort of person to -

PAULINA. It's not the only correction that you made, Doctor. There were other . . . lies.

ROBERTO. What lies, what lies?

PAULINA. Tiny lies, little variations that I inserted in my story to Gerardo, and often - not always, but often enough - as in the case of Stud, you corrected them. It turned out just as I planned. You were so scared that if you didn't get it right . . . But I'm not going to kill you because you're guilty, Doctor, but because you haven't repented at all. I can only forgive someone who really repents, who stands up amongst those he has wronged and says, I did this, I did it, and I'll never do it again.

ROBERTO. What more do you want? You've got more than all the victims in this country will ever get. A man who's confessed, at your feet, humiliated,

He gets down on his knees.

begging for his life. What more do you want?

PAULINA. The truth, Doctor. The truth and I'll let you go. Then you'll be free as Cain after he killed his brother. Nobody dared touch Cain after he repented - that's why God marked him. The truth. Confess and I'll let you go. You have ten seconds. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. Time is running out, Doctor. Confess!

ROBERTO *stands up*.

ROBERTO. No. I won't. Because even if I confess, you'll never be satisfied. You're going to kill me anyway. So go ahead and kill me. I'm not going to let any sick woman treat me like this. If you want to kill me, do it. But you're killing an innocent man.

PAULINA. Nine.

ROBERTO. So we go on and on with violence, always more violence. Yesterday they did terrible things to you and now you do terrible things to me and tomorrow the same cycle will begin all over again. Isn't it time we stopped?

PAULINA. Why is it always people like me who have to sacrifice, who have to concede when concessions are needed, biting my tongue, why? Well, not this time. If only to do justice in one case, just one. What do we lose? What do we lose by killing one of you? What do we lose?

They freeze in their position as the lights begin to go down slowly. We begin to hear music from the last movement of Mozart's Dissonant Quartet. PAULINA and ROBERTO are covered from view by a giant mirror which descends, forcing the audience to look at themselves. For a few minutes, the Mozart quartet is heard, while the spectators watch themselves in the mirror.

Scene Two

A concert hall. An evening some months later. GERARDO and PAULINA appear, elegantly dressed. They sit down facing the mirror, their backs to the spectators, perhaps in two chairs or in two of the seats in the audience itself. Under the music we can hear typical sounds of an audience during a concert: throats clearing, an occasional cough, the ruffling of programme notes, even some heavy breathing. When the music ends, GERARDO begins to applaud and we can hear the applause growing from what is an invisible public.

PAULINA does not applaud. The applause begins to die down and then we hear the habitual sounds that come from a concert hall when the first part of a programme is over: more throat clearing, murmurs, bodies shuffling toward the foyer. They both begin to go out, greeting people, stopping to chat for an instant. They slowly distance themselves from their seats and advance along an imaginary foyer which is apparently full of spectators. We hear mutterings, etc. GERARDO begins to talk to members of the audience, as if they were at the concert. His words can be heard above the murmurs of the public.

GERARDO (*intimately, talking to diverse spectators*). Why, thank you, thank you so much. Yes, we feel that the Final Report of the Commission is quite extraordinary. . . . Yes, I do think that the whole country is going to benefit from it, yes, reconciliation is really served by —

PAULINA slowly leaves him, going to one side where a small bar has been installed. GERARDO continues speaking with his audience until she returns.

People are acting with enormous generosity, without the hint of seeking a personal vendetta. Ah, that experience, the one I mentioned in the interview? You'd have been moved too if you'd seen her. The woman was timid. She began to speak standing up. 'Please sit down,' the President of the Commission said and stood up to hold her chair for her. She sat down and began to sob. Then she looked at us and said: 'This is the first time, sir,' she said to us — her husband had disappeared fourteen years ago, and she had spent thousands of hours, thousands of hours petitioning, thousands of hours waiting — 'This

is the first time,' she said to us, 'in all these years, sir, that somebody asks me to sit down.'

Meanwhile, PAULINA has bought some candy — and as she peeps, ROBERTO enters, under a light which has a faint phantasmagoric moonlight quality. He could be real or he could be an illusion in PAULINA's head. PAULINA does not see him yet. She returns to GERARDO's side who, by this time, should be finishing his monologue.

ROBERTO stays behind, watching PAULINA and GERARDO from a distance.

The officials who should have been helping her had spent all these years calling her a madwoman and a liar, and all of a sudden, there she is, able to recount her pain to a Commission officially named by the President of the Republic. The dignity she had always privately possessed was now conferred upon her publicly, her words were really worth something. Now that's priceless. She and her family have been vindicated, publicly reintegrated into the community.

A bell goes off to indicate that the concert is about to recommence.

As for the murderers, even if we do not know or cannot reveal their names — Ah, Paulinetta, just in time. This is about to start. You certainly took your time. Well, I'll see you later, old man. Yes, I agree.

This country has been sick for far too long. I can only hope that our work will help in the slow, patient process of healing.

All right, old man, later for sure. Now I've finally got some free time. Maybe we could have a couple of drinks at home. Pau mixes a cocktail that'll put your hair on end.

GERARDO and PAULINA sit in their seats.

ROBERTO goes to another seat, always looking at PAULINA. Applause is heard when the imaginary musicians come on. The instruments are tested and tuned.

Then 'Death and the Maiden' begins. GERARDO looks at PAULINA who looks forward. He takes her hand and then also begins to look forward. After a few instants, she turns slowly and looks at ROBERTO. Their eyes interlock for a moment. Then she turns her head and faces the stage and

the mirror. The lights go down while the music plays and plays and plays.

Afterword

Eight or nine years ago, when General Augusto Pinochet was still the dictator of Chile and I was still in exile, I began tentatively exploring in my mind a dramatic situation that was someday to become the core of *Death and the Maiden*. A man whose car breaks down on the motorway is given a lift home by a friendly stranger. The man's wife, believing she recognises in the stranger the voice of the torturer who raped her some years before, kidnaps him and decides to put him on trial. On several occasions I sat down to scribble what I then imagined would be a novel. A few hours and a couple of unsatisfactory pages later, I would give up in frustration. Something essential was missing. I could not figure out, for instance, who the woman's husband was, how he would react to her violence, if he would believe her. Nor were the historical circumstances under which the story developed clear to me, the symbolic and secret connections to the larger life of the country itself, the world beyond the narrow claustrophobic boundaries of that woman's home. The use of a forceps may be necessary to ensure the birth of a child that needs help getting out of the womb, but I had by then blessedly learned that when characters do not want to be born forceps may hurt them permanently and irreparably twist their lives. My trio, would, unfortunately, have to wait.

They were forced to wait a long time. It was not until Chile returned to democracy in 1990 and I myself therefore returned to resettle there with my family after seventeen years of exile, that I finally understood how the story had to be told.

My country was at the time (and still is now as I write this) living an uneasy transition to democracy, with Pinochet no longer the President but still in command of the Armed Forces, still able to threaten another coup if people became unruly or, more specifically, if attempts were made to punish the human rights violations of the outgoing regime. And in order to avoid chaos and constant confrontation, the new government had to find a way of not alienating Pinochet supporters who continued occupying significant areas of power in the Judiciary, the Senate,