

A Dream of Canaries

by Diana E. Sáenz

Diana Sáenz
19C Oakridge Drive
Londonderry, NH 03053
(603) 889-0650

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CHARACTERS

4 Females, 8 Males
Double casting, 4F, 5M;

Jesus Utimo

Early 20's. Ex-gigolo, Soldier.

Nita Durme

18 years old. Call girl.

Paola Bunelos / Desaparecido

31 years old, scientist, client of Nita's, and daughter of the former head of the Secret Service.

Lalo Finoliña

Early 20's Soldier in the Special Service, bunk mate and best friend to Jesus.

Colonel Sinsezos

Early 40's, a military man in the Special Service

Chapa/Desaparecido

Call girl, involved in underground activities

Señora Francesca DeMas (Paca, Paquita)

40-ish. Daughter of a general, a powerful and dangerous woman, closely linked with state matters.

The Robot

Male. Paola's invention.

Sergeant

30 to 50 years of age.

Old man prisoner/Desaparecido #1

Young man prisoner/Desaparecido #2

Waiter/Desaparecido #3

The Poet

Scene breakdown:

1. A Café w/ 3 tables and chairs, for Scene 21, it must look like a different café
2. Barracks with two bunks
3. Paola's Loft, desk, keyboard, two chairs
4. A Vanity table with no mirror
5. The Colonel's den, two chairs.
6. Nita's Room, bed, desk, chair
7. Hotel Suite, Sofa, chair and drinks table
8. Hotel Room, Bed, drinks table
9. Colonel's Office, desk w/chair, guest chair
10. DeMas' Parlor, Sofa, and drinks table
11. Camp (no set necessary)

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A Dream of Canaries takes place in that famous Unknown Latin American Republic where the names of the innocent and guilty may substitute for people we have known or read about. Simultaneously, a mythical republic places us at a bearable distance from the immediacy of events.

The set can be as elaborate as desired, or contain no more than the furniture and props required for each scene. The colors may be neutral, with the exception of the dream sequence. The cast is better represented if it is drawn from as many races as possible to give the sense that people from any walk of life, any race, and any country may find themselves the perpetrator or join the ranks of the Desaparecidos.

This are a few Spanish phrases or words. Their translation is footnoted. If this is a problem for the actors or the expected audience, English may be substituted.

Humor runs throughout this play for its medicinal qualities. Violence is implied, and for the most part remains offstage. As the play progresses, the Desaparecidos surround the

characters. As the action accelerates, the Desaparecidos more emphatically impose themselves upon the others, until finally, they remove their masks and speak—no longer passive, and impossible to ignore.¹

ACT I

SCENE 1 The Poet - Café Scene - The Poet, Paola, Waiter, Sinsezos, DeMas

The Poet sits at one table with a cup of coffee, deeply immersed in writing a poem. Paola enters, sits at another table, and looks at the menu. The Poet slips a note under the candle holder. The waiter enters.

PAOLA: Coffee with cream please.

WAITER: Will that be with cream and sugar?

PAOLA: No thank you.

¹

A Dream of Canaries has undergone extensive revision since it was published in Denise Chavez' anthology of Latina Playwrights, *Shattering the Myth*. I would like to thank Cherrie Moraga, who recommended me to Denise Chavez, Denise Chavez, for including me in her anthology, and Roberta Uno, whose production at World Stage and Master's Thesis provided me with a thorough and scholarly analysis of *A Dream of Canaries*. From her thesis, I was able to take

*Enter two soldiers. They seize the Poet
and take him away, as Paola watches.*

THE POET: What is the meaning of this? Do you
know who I am?!

*The waiter enters with a cup of coffee.
He is visibly shaking.*

WAITER: That was Miguel Patín they just took.

PAOLA: You mean the poet?

WAITER: He's very well known. What could he
have done?

PAOLA: There must be a good reason. In fact, do
you mind if I take his table—there's too
much sun here.

WAITER: Whatever Madam prefers.

PAOLA: Thank you. *Moves to The Poet's table.*

*Enter Col. Sinsezos. His back is turned to
Paola and the waiter as Sinsezos watches
the truck drive away. Sits at the table
downstage. The Waiter and Paola see
Sinsezos.*

an "unfinished play," that is a play published before having the benefit of workshop or production,
and revise it as if I had been present throughout rehearsals.

WAITER: It must have been something bad enough to warrant such an arrest. I've always said, if you're a good citizen and obey the laws, then nothing need worry you. Excuse me. *He crosses to Sinsezos.*

Good afternoon, Sir, may I take your order, please?

Paola opens a book and sips her coffee.

SINSEZOS: It is a fine day, isn't it? What was that excellent wine you served me the last time I was here?

WAITER: You had the Pinot Noir.

SINSEZOS: Yes. I'll have some of that.

WAITER: Will there be anything else?

SINSEZOS: Not for the moment.

Waiter exits. The Colonel looks around as to take in his surroundings and sees Paola, who continues to read. He studies her for a moment, then rises to speak to her.

SINSEZOS: Paola how are you?

PAOLA: Colonel Sinsezos! How are you?

SINSEZOS: Never better. How does your work at the lab progress?

PAOLA: The work goes very well. I wasn't aware that you knew about our research, but then it's foolish to think you wouldn't, isn't it?

SINSEZOS: Smiles modestly. I try to keep up, but don't always succeed, Señorita².

PAOLA: Please join me, Colonel.

SINSEZOS: I would love to, but I'm expecting someone right now. I haven't seen you since the funeral. Has it been a year already? I was a great admirer of your father.

PAOLA: Thank you. It's so kind of you to remember him.

SINSEZOS: I heard that you sold the family residence?

PAOLA: Yes. I was a little hasty, but my father was the only family I had, and the house

felt so huge and empty without his presence, or the people who once filled it. I couldn't bear to live there after his death.

SINSEZOS: Of course, Señorita, we all miss him terribly. But take heart, time heals.

PAOLA: I hope you're right, Colonel.

SINSEZOS: You must come to one of my dinners.

PAOLA: I am ready to socialize again. Please feel free to call my office at the university, or leave a message with my secretary.

SINSEZOS: Until then, Señorita.

PAOLA: I look forward to it.

SINSEZOS: Ah there she is now, will you please excuse me?

PAOLA: Of course.

Enter Sra. DeMas, a handsome woman of 40, dressed in haute couture and fox furs of which she has the habit of stroking the

² sp.Miss

delicate fox paws which rest on her bosom. She is fond of heavy jewelry, unusual pieces reflecting the tastes of a woman of dark reflections. She is a mysterious agent, at least to those where her power and influence are felt. These include El Presidente, the military, the police, the Secret Service, and the captains of industry. She enjoys this amorphous identity because it allows her to cross through the many facets of government and society. That this has made her certainly the most powerful woman in the country would hardly impress her, but to say she is more powerful than most of the powerful men in the country would please her immensely.

DeMAS: Colonel, darling, I hope I haven't kept you waiting?

The Colonel pulls out the chair for her at his table.

SINSEZOS: Not at all. What would you like?

DeMAS: A cigarette before anything. One of yours

for a change, Darling.

He gives her one and lights it.

DeMAS: What are you having?

SINSEZOS: You'll like it—Muchacho, otro vino de lo mismo³.

DeMAS: Voice lowered. Did you get him?

SINSEZOS: Of course.

DeMAS: This'll probably cause an international scandal. I only hope it's worth the trouble.

SINSEZOS: I assure you, Paquita, it was necessary. The proof will be in his confession.

DeMAS: I hope so, Colonel.

Paola glances at her watch as if remembering an appointment. While DeMas and Sinsezos are tête-à-tête, Paola discretely takes the Poet's note from under the candle holder. Paola exits, as the waiter enters with two glasses of red

³ sp. Boy, another glass of the same wine.

wine.

SINSEZOS: There she goes. That was Paola Bunelos.

DeMAS: You mean Ramon's girl?

SINSEZOS: The very one.

DeMAS: Really? I wish I'd gotten a better look.

Why I haven't seen her for ages. She always was a bit on the quiet side. But then who wouldn't be, living in the shadow of a great man like Ramon Bunelos. I don't recall him ever having an unkind word to say about anyone—yet single-handedly, he took the Special Services and turned it around. And his devotion to my father. . .

It seems that with his passing, as well as my father's, conditions have deteriorated so that I fear for our future. What about the border, any new developments?

SINSEZOS: I'm expecting a full report this afternoon. If it's what I fear it is, we'll need to double the troops there. Something we can hardly afford.

DeMAS: We'll find the resources, Colonel, even if we have to turn Juan Sigueros up side down and shake him. Between the corruption and the malcontents, we're being squeezed to death.

SINSEZOS: Sigueros lines his pocket with gold now that El Presidente has virtually handed everything to him, and signs whatever new tax initiative Sigueros sticks under his face.

DeMAS: El Presidente served our country well, but that he's put so much trust in a man such as Sigueros, means the old man deserves a pension and villa in the south.

Mi Amigo⁴, do you think we're lost? Is my father's dream dead, and was Ramon's martyrdom simply a parting gesture? Overcome by emotion. Forgive me! I am only a woman—*wipes her tears and looks meaningfully at her companion.*—Colonel, it's time for change.

SINSEZOS: The sun's too strong. Would you care to

continue our conversation in a cooler environment? I have an excellent Beaujolais I've been saving for a special occasion.

DeMAS: It would be my pleasure. You're the only one who lifts my spirits when I'm like this.

They both take a draught and suck greedily from their cigarettes, blowing a copious cloud of smoke as lights go down.

SCENE 2 A Class One Operation - Barracks 9 p.m.

Lalo, Jesus, Sergeant, Col. Sinsezos.

Sparsely furnished with two bunks, each with a locker under it. A bare wooden floor, a small window on the back wall. Lalo Finoliña sits at his bunk shining his boots and reading from military text at the same time.

Enter Jesus Utimo, fresh out of boot camp.

⁴ sp. My friend

He is carrying a duffel bag and his rifle.

JESUS: Is this K-13?

LALO: What does it say on the side of the building?

JESUS: Nothing.

LALO: What do you mean nothing?

JESUS: It's blacked out.

LALO: What? *Getting up to look outside.*

Jesus glances at Lalo's book.

Those jerks in K-7 again better not have—!
Dammit to hell! *Enters.* They did it again!
Notices Jesus is still carrying his gear.

LALO: You can bunk down there.

JESUS: Thanks. You got some kind of feud going or what?

LALO: Not me! But some of these guys think that's the way you keep a gung-ho attitude. I'll have to repaint it in the morning.

JESUS: This happen often?

LALO: A couple times. They should get tired of it sooner or later.

JESUS: You mean you let them paint it anytime they want, and you just fix it?

LALO: Yeah, yeah. I'll get around to it. Right now I got more on my mind than dumb-ass shit like that.

JESUS: Pvt. Utimo. Jesus Utimo.

LALO: Lalo Finoliña. Pvt. First Class.

JESUS: Línea?⁵

LALO: I-Ñ-A. As in "linea" Its a fine line. The line that connects is the line that separates.

JESUS: Shouldn't let them get away with it.
Starts unpacking.

LALO: Stoop to their level?

JESUS: Lower. Paint it pink.

LALO: Pink?

JESUS: Yeah, the outside. It's the only way you can save face after waiting this long-

LALO: Who says I need to save—!

JESUS: It's the only way you'll get through to punks.

LALO: Laughs. Pink. I like that.

JESUS: I'll join you.

LALO: Yeah?

JESUS: Shrugs. Why not?

LALO: I'll think about it.

JESUS: looking around. Lotta space for just two bunks.

LALO: Sure. Where were you transferred from?

JESUS: Just got out of boot camp.

LALO: Come on.

JESUS: Why?

LALO: I'm looking into you and I can see you were raised on the street.

JESUS: Takes one to know one.

LALO: You sure you ain't got some fat-ass old man pulling strings for you?

⁵ sp. Line

JESUS: Nobody, hombre. I was drafted. Weren't you?

LALO: Nobody here was drafted.

JESUS: I was.

LALO: You only get assigned here if you're on your way up.

JESUS: So you're on your way up?

LALO: Not that I got anyone up there either. I've worked my ass off. Nine months of extra duty—book work, survival training. You name it, I've volunteered.

JESUS: Maybe I'm just lucky.

LALO: Ain't no such thing as luck around here. The last guy I had in here was a pain in the ass. His father was Col. Guzman.

JESUS: Who's that?

LALO: Only Second in command of the Home Militia. But his wife fooled around, because you'd never know this kid's old man was Guzman. More like the kid came from a jelly fish—I could see the veins on

his forehead.

JESUS: Not your type, eh?

LALO: It's too bad for the kid, but you can't get sentimental when your life depends on him. Last thing I want is to end up face down in a puddle of blood. I made sure he didn't last. This is how I work—first class all the way.

JESUS: Good. We should get along.

LALO: I didn't invent this place, I just work here. It requires one-hundred per cent of a guy, but you get week-end passes, the chow's good, three furloughs a year, and, better pay.

Enter Sergeant.

SERGEANT: Atten-hut!

Lalo and Jesus come to attention. Enter Colonel Sinsezos.

SINSEZOS: Get ready, men. You're going on a mission tonight. *Referring to Jesus.* Sergeant, see that this man gets a

permit. *To Lalo, Requisition a truck van.*
You know the way, so do the driving.

LALO: Yes Sir. *Salutes and exits.* The Colonel
returns the salute.

Sergeant and Lalo exit.

SINSEZOS: Pvt. Utimo, next time, you'll do the
driving.

JESUS: Yes Sir.

SINSEZOS: So you're the new man, eh?

JESUS: Yes Sir.

SINSEZOS: At ease, Private. I'm Colonel Sinsezos,
your commanding officer. I run an A-One
outfit here. I expect the best from my
men and I get the best from them. I
believe communication is the best
preventative. Any problems, you'll find
my office is always open. The Sergeant
will fill you in on your duties and other
details, and you'll find First Class Pvt.
Finoliña a first class example of proper
and soldierly conduct. Any questions?

JESUS: No Sir.

SINSEZOS: *Inspecting Jesus.* Not bad. You could
put a bit more shine on those shoes,
Private. No detail is too small.

JESUS: Yes Sir.

SINSEZOS: You did very well on the exams. Where
did you study?

JESUS: Sir, I taught myself to read. Sir.

SINSEZOS: (*Raises an eyebrow or both*) Keep up
your hygiene. Impeccable is the word.
You know what that means?

JESUS: Impeccable Sir? Perfect, without fault,
Sir.

SINSEZOS: Very good. Yes. There's plenty of room
in the Special Services for good people.
You do well here, you'll find someday you
have a career. Get what I'm saying,
Private?

JESUS: Yes sir.

SINSEZOS: Good. *Salutes*

Jesus comes to attention again and

salutes. The Colonel returns the salute and saunters out. As soon as the Colonel exits, Jesus takes out a dog-eared dictionary from his duffel bag.

JESUS: Hygiene...H-i.. *Cannot find it.* H-y..g-e-g-i-e...Hygiene...The science of health...system of principles for the preservation of health and prevention of disease.

Enter Lalo.

LALO: What the Hell are you doing? Didn't you hear what the Colonel said? *Grabs his rifle and exits.* Idiot fool.
Jesus scrambles for his gear.

Lights down.

SCENE 3 The Robot - Paola's Loft, Paola, Robot, Nita

The room is sparsely furnished, to suggest the home of a scientist. There is a computer, a microscope, telescope, a shelf of books, most notably a heavy red anatomy text, a container of pens and pencils, notebooks and, against the wall, a robot, complete with microphone and microchip which is kept wrapped in a blue cloth in a box.

Nita knocks.

PAOLA: *Answers door. Right on time!*

NITA: *I'm always on time.*

PAOLA: *I only wish I could be as punctual, but today it's too hot to make such life decisions.*

NITA: *Sees anatomy book, crosses to it and opens it. There's something I've been wanting to look up.*

PAOLA: *What?*

NITA: Cojones. How do you say cojones⁶ in *Pronouncing the following two words proudly*, Medical Terminology? Don't tell me. I need to look it up for myself.

PAOLA: *Working on Robot*. You wish to expand the vocabulary of your trade?

NITA: Testicles. Oh very funny, as if my clients were interested in my vocabulary—except for you. I've decided to use less slang.

PAOLA: The word Cojones has gone beyond slang. It's in the vernacular.

NITA: Do I have to look up vernacular now?

PAOLA: It wouldn't hurt, but it means part of the everyday language. Informal.

NITA: So testicles is a formal word?

PAOLA: I suppose it's as formal as you can get, but not recommended for use in an embossed invitation.

NITA: How do I know if it's in the vernacular?

⁶ *sp.* Testicles

PAOLA: The dictionary will say so. If it's not there, then it's probably considered slang.

NITA: I don't find it in here.

PAOLA: Don't bother with that dictionary, it's older than both of us put together.

NITA: Can I tell the Robot some information?

PAOLA: What do you want to enter?

NITA: I wrote it down. Reading from her notebook. "It is curious that powerful men, such as politicians, policemen and judges—especially judges, want to be punished like a naughty little boy who has soiled his clothes or broken a window. They are a puzzling bunch, and it makes one wonder if obliging them makes one like them after a while." Notice I used "one" instead of "me" this time.

PAOLA: *Has stopped her work to stare at Nita.*
Not bad at all. You could substitute bunch for group. *Returns to the Robot.*
It sounds like you're writing "Nita's

Treatise on the Race of Men"

NITA: *Takes out a pencil and notebook and writes.* "Nita's Treatise of the Race of Men" How do you spell Treatise?

PAOLA: Look it up in the dictionary.

NITA: You know, I'm still mad at you. Very mad.

PAOLA: About what?

NITA: About the last time.

PAOLA: What about the last time?

NITA: I don't have to tell you because you know what I'm talking about.

PAOLA: I don't have a clue about what you are talking about.

NITA: Yes you do.

PAOLA: So what's wrong with talking to one of the students. I'm a professor, and it's perfectly natural.

NITA: You weren't on campus.

PAOLA: There's nothing unusual about talking to a student sitting next to me in a

restaurant.

NITA: You know what I mean.

PAOLA: Nita, Nitaita, how many times can I say
I'm sorry? How much was that dress?

NITA: Not much.

PAOLA: Liar.

NITA: It wasn't.

PAOLA: Take it off. The heat in here is close to
strangling us.

*Nita consents to Paola taking her dress
off. Both women are in their slips. Paola
kisses her on the neck. Nita allows her
to. While Paola hangs up their dresses,
Nita begins playing with the robot.*

NITA: Where's your fan?

PAOLA: It died.

NITA: Buy another one.

PAOLA: I keep forgetting.

NITA: You're my strangest client, you know.

PAOLA: flatterer.

NITA: No, since I don't make a practice of sleeping with women.

PAOLA: Admit it's greed, and we'll all be happy.

NITA: I meant that perhaps we should just be friends.

PAOLA: With a glint of amusement in her eye. Are you repulsed?

NITA: No.

PAOLA: Do you have fun?

NITA: Sort of. Yeah. But I like men, sometimes, when they're not being men.

NITA: That is one of the things I like about this arrangement. *Pause.* Mira Cara⁷, we each have something the other needs.

NITA: I feel bad about taking your money.

PAOLA: Stop. I want you to have the money.

NITA: Okay Paola. If it's okay with you—Oh no!
Holds a piece of the robot in her hand.

PAOLA: What happened—?

NITA: It just came off. I hardly touched it—De
veras—

PAOLA: The cover plate again, get me the tool box
over there in the corner. I need a
soldering iron. It's always coming off.

Nita does so then watches her work.

PAOLA: Hold this.

NITA: Like this?

PAOLA: There. You can let go now.

*She continues working on the robot as Nita
watches.*

NITA: Paola?

PAOLA: What?

NITA: You say that we're born with only two
emotions, love and fear.

PAOLA: Um-hum.

NITA: And that jealousy is a mixture of love and
fear.

PAOLA: And?

⁷ sp. See dear,

NITA: Well, did your father love your mother and was he afraid she did not love him?

PAOLA: Yes, but his love was pathological-sick.

NITA: Oh. . .And where does hate come from?

PAOLA: Fear.

NITA: Fear...Are you afraid of the Special Services?

PAOLA: Aren't you?

NITA: Well who isn't? But I don't hate them, and you do.

PAOLA: How can you not hate them?

NITA: They're nothing to me. We don't exist for each other. We each go our own way and mind our own business. That's how I see it; you'll never get me to change my mind. It's called self-preservation.

PAOLA: I see you've learned a few more words.

NITA: So when you talk to someone like that trouble-maker student who I'm sure has never taken a fancy science class like the kind you teach in his life, and what you

talk about has nothing do with the
university—dangerous talk—this is when I
put my foot down.

PAOLA: *Crossing to Nita. A thousand pardons, ma
cheri⁸. I beg your forgiveness on bent
knee. Starts to kneel, but Nita stops her.*

NITA: Get up! Okay. I forgive you completely
if you promise never to do that again.

*Paola kisses her. Nita kisses her back,
and slightly longer.*

Promise.

PAOLA: I promise never to inconvenience you
again.

Lights down

SCENE 4 Women - Barracks, Jesus, Lalo, 3

Desaparecidos.

*Three hours later. Enter Lalo and Jesus.
Jesus sits exhausted on his bunk. He lies
down, his hands cupped behind his head and*

stares at the ceiling.

LALO: Tired?

Proceeds to strip to his skivvies.

JESUS: Yeah, but I'm wide awake.

Pause.

LALO: It's a long drive.

JESUS: Yeah. What was it?

LALO: Forty miles each way. I'm exhausted.

These missions always take the hell out of me.

Jesus looks over at Lalo who then turns to look at Jesus. Jesus, like a man caught staring looks away.

You mind if I turn off the light?

JESUS: *Getting in bed. Go 'head.*

Lalo does so. A blue light shines in from the moon. Lalo returns to his bed.

LALO: You like women?

JESUS: Women?

⁸ fr. my dear

LALO: You know what they are don't you?

JESUS: Refresh my memory.

LALO: Short, freckles. Laugh over nothing, so what. Maybe she's got a friend. One whose mother never told her not to take money from strangers. I don't know about you, but I prefer the company of whores. Call girls. You pay more but it's worth it. Saturday. What're you doing Saturday?

JESUS: *Falling asleep.* Freckles, eh?

LALO: That one's mine.

JESUS: Why not?

LALO: When we get back we'll paint K-7 baby butt pink. Sunday I won't mind waking up with a hangover.

A cloud passes across the moon darkening the room. Enter the Desaparecidos. Three people with black hoods over their heads, bare footed and their hands tied behind their backs. They cross downstage, left to right and exit.

LALO: *Sits up in bed.* Who goes?!

JESUS: Already half asleep, suddenly wakes. Wha's happened?

LALO: Nothing, It's nothing. Go back to sleep.

Lights down.

SCENE 5 The Code Number - Paola's Loft, Paola, Robot, Nita.

Paola is writing in her lab book. Knock at the door. Paola opens the door and finds Nita there, holding a small fan.

PAOLA: Nita, we didn't have an appointment did we?

NITA: No, I just wanted to drop this fan off. I found it at the flea market.

PAOLA: How thoughtful!

NITA: It was only a few pesos.

PAOLA: Let me repay you.

NITA: Don't be silly. Are you busy? I can visit a little while, if you're not busy.

PAOLA: I need a break. Stay awhile.

NITA: I was wondering. . . You being a big time scientist and all. I mean, why do you bother with me?

PAOLA: Now what are you talking about?

NITA: Don't you want someone to love you?

PAOLA: Don't you love me?

NITA: As in live together and go to parties together. You never go any where.

PAOLA: As a matter of fact, I have a dinner invitation for tonight.

NITA: You do? With a friend?

PAOLA: Not exactly. Some people I know, friends of my father, really.

NITA: I thought they were all a bunch of bores?

PAOLA: Well, they are, but I can't exactly refuse.

NITA: They're making you go?

PAOLA: No, Nita, they're not forcing me. It's more like a social obligation.

NITA: This is the first time I've ever heard you worry about a social obligation.

PAOLA: Are you through explaining me to myself?

NITA: *Shrugs.* How old are you?

PAOLA: Thirty-one, why?

NITA: Someday I'll be Thirty-one.

PAOLA: And it'll serve you right. It'll seem like a snap of the fingers one of these days when you're this old.

NITA: And you'll be older. Referring to the robot. Let's tell him something.

PAOLA: Enter—And I'm not so sure it's a he.

NITA: He is. It's not his fault if you forgot his macho machine.

PAOLA: Hmm, and there are numerous models, we could go shop for one. Are you ready to enter your information?

NITA: Yes.

PAOLA: You can have Xavier Valentine here, when I've got the bugs out of him.

NITA: Really? No—I couldn't. After all, he's your first man.

PAOLA: A girl should never settle for the first man who comes into her life. I'll will him to you.

NITA: Don't be silly.

PAOLA: Okay, type the following code into him.
X-X-X for third millennium.

Nita types x-x-x .

1929

NITA: For when you were born.

PAOLA: Z-Y-P for zip up your lip.

Nita enters zyp.

ROBOT: *Opens his eyes.* Turns his head slightly towards Nita. Opens his mouth. Uh-duh, da-du, uhhhhhhh. Paola and Nita look at each other and giggle.

NITA: Thank you but I already know enough people who talk like that.

PAOLA: He'll work eventually, and you'll be amazed. Now—paper, a piece of paper and a

pen.

Writing.

I, Paola Elena Carmen Salinas Bunelos,
being of sound mind—

NITA: Hah!

PAOLA: Bequeath my first mechanical man—Xavier
Valentine—to Nita Durme, my dear friend.
Oh yes, and also my red leather bound
anatomy book, so that she may further her
education in the safety of her own bed.

Begins writing.

NITA: I would make him perfect. A gentlemen,
generous, crazy about me. And I wouldn't
settle for an idiot just because he was
rich.

PAOLA: But what would you do when those hungry,
humid nights descend upon you?

NITA: If he were smart enough to be rich, he'd
know all he had to do was start licking me
all over.

PAOLA: A robot with a tongue. Hmmm. Latex would

work...and a saliva solution for
lubricant..

NITA: The rest, I'd teach him myself.

PAOLA: Program him—Dated this somber and august
day of September—

NITA: Don't sign it—

PAOLA: It's the only way to make it legal—

NITA: You signed it. Its bad luck!

She snatches it up and tears it to pieces.

We have to burn it!

PAOLA: Nita!

NITA: It's bad luck—I can feel it in my bones!

PAOLA: I can't believe that you're so
superstitious.

NITA: Where are some matches?

PAOLA: I don't know—

*Nita is almost hysterical by now. Paola
takes her in her arms and comforts her.*

PAOLA: You're having an attack of unscientific

thinking.

NITA: *Shaking.* We have to burn the will.

PAOLA: I will, as soon as I get some matches.

NITA: You promise?

PAOLA: I'm always promising you something.

NITA: Calmed down. I worry about you. You should be grateful.

Lights.

SCENE 6 Baby Jesus Lost - Hotel Suite, Lalo, Jesus, Chapa, Nita

Lalo and Jesus are in a hotel room. They are dressed in civilian clothes. Lalo is pacing the room. Jesus is reading the newspaper. On the dresser is a brown paper bag containing a fifth of tequila, some limes and salt and some plastic glasses.

JESUS: Say, have you ever seen the Nativity scene in St. Adolpho's Church?

LALO: I heard about it. The sheep are as big as real sheep—and Joseph is six feet tall.

JESUS: Yeah, listen to this. "Late last night the life-sized plaster Baby Jesus was stolen from St. Adolpho's Church. This morning, Father Ramon received a ransom note. The note, composed from letters cut out from newspapers and magazines said, 'The Baby Jesus will be returned, unharmed, if the good father leaves a case of German beer, wrapped in a brown paper bag in one of the trash cans in Rico Plaza.'" "

LALO: What's wrong with our beer?

JESUS: Maybe the kidnappers were German.

LALO: More likely students, they like to think they know something. It's a damn stupid thing to do.

JESUS: Kids no doubt.

LALO: You think that matters?

JESUS: I wouldn't exactly call it hygiene.

LALO: What?

JESUS: Hygiene—I wouldn't call it that. Means the preservation of one's health.

LALO: You got that. Holding the Baby Jesus for ransom is not hygiene. What's keeping them?

JESUS: It's early.

LALO: It's five to seven!

JESUS: It's five to seven. Relax read the funnies.

LALO: The best beer in the whole damn world they brew not seventy miles from here. Tecix. seventy-five centavos a liter. The best. I should've brought some. A shot of tequila and a bottle of Tecix. You're shit-faced in no time. Your balls get so swollen with semen she never forgets the spanking they gave her when you're on top of her. If you want a family right away, you can fertilize both sides of her. Fraternal twins. Hombre, I don't need to read the funnies. A whore should at least

be able to tell time.

JESUS: A watched pot never boils.

Knock at the door.

LALO: Bubble, bubble!

Crosses to door and opens it. Enter Chapa and Nita. Chapa is 17. She appears sweet and amicable. Chapa has been at her profession for only a few weeks. Nita's eyes are world weary and speculative. The women are dressed in white summer dresses with sandals. For a moment, they seem like proper young ladies out for a stroll. They wear white flowers in their hair.

LALO: Well what kept you two?

CHAPA: Are we late?

JESUS: No, not at all. I'm Jesus.

CHAPA: I'm Chapa and this is my friend, Nita.

NITA: Jesus?

JESUS: Yeah—I guess you already know Lalo.

LALO: You girls look great. *On the side to Jesus.* Chapa is my date. *To the women.*

You girls want a drink?

NITA: Thanks.

CHAPA: Make mine not too strong.

*Lalo gets the tequila and fills each cup.
He cuts the lime into wedges with a pocket
knife.*

CHAPA: So, you're in the army too?

JESUS: Yeah.

CHAPA: My brother is in the army.

JESUS: Oh yeah? Where is he stationed?

CHAPA: I don't know.

LALO: You don't know where your own brother is
stationed?

CHAPA: He never writes. But then again, I'm
always moving.

LALO: A deadbeat on your rent, eh?

CHAPA: *Slightly offended but doesn't want to show
it.* It's not that.

NITA: There's a room in my building for rent.
They won't bother you there.

LALO: What, the landlord wants a tip. Is he too fat?

NITA: *To Jesus.* Is your friend always so charming?

JESUS: He's a little high strung tonight.
Lalo brings the cut limes and drinks to the coffee table.

CHAPA: Oh thank you.
She takes a sip and bites off the entire meat of the lime. She winces and shivers.

LALO: Drink some more—you can't feel that.

CHAPA: I'd better start slowly. Last time, oh brother.

LALO: Your turn.
Hands Nita her cut. She drinks, bites and licks the salt. She watches Jesus as she does this. The men take their turns.

CHAPA: Oh, it doesn't take much for me to start feeling it.

Lalo drinks several swallows. Puts the whole lime slice in his mouth and gives

them a "rind" smile. He then takes Chapa by the waist and guides her into one of the bedrooms. Singing unintelligible words behind the lime in his mouth.

CHAPA: If I'm not out by ten o'clock, don't come looking for me. Get her to tell you one of her stories.

The door closes behind them.

NITA: Maybe the best method after all is just doing it.

They both pick up their cups and sip from them, eyeing each other. Paola enters, lingers a moment then exits.

You remind me of someone I used to know.

JESUS: But he's dead now.

NITA: Actually, yes, he choked to death on a glass eye. His glass eye. He was trying to shock this woman we called The Debutante. But she saw him drop it in, and switched their drinks when he wasn't looking.

JESUS: *Toasting her.* Here's looking at you.

NITA: *She chokes on the drink she was just about to swallow.* If your right eye offendeth you—

JESUS: Bottoms up!

NITA: So, what did you do before you were drafted?

JESUS: I was a gigolo.

NITA: A gigolo? Why would you choose to go from being a lover to a—a soldier—I mean one is so extreme from the other—I mean— Oh what do I mean?—

JESUS: *Putting her at ease.* I've always hated the middle road.

NITA: Oh yes, so have I.

JESUS: Boring.

NITA: I hate being bored.

JESUS: And yet you must often be bored.

NITA: You won't find me hanging around too long if he's a bore.

JESUS: I suppose not. Yes. It's not that you're so beautiful—you're not bad looking, not at all.

NITA: You want to check my teeth?

JESUS: Another drink?

NITA: Sure.

JESUS: So, what kind of stories do you tell?

NITA: Fairy tales.

JESUS: You mean as in witches and princesses?

NITA: Yes, but they're genuine fairy tales, as scary as real life.

JESUS: We wouldn't want a phony fairy tale.

NITA: Exactly.

JESUS: Tell me one of your fairy tales.

NITA: No.

JESUS: Why not?

NITA: Because you're not the type to tell them to.

JESUS: You know me that well already?

NITA: Enough to know you'll only want to argue
and disagree with me.

JESUS: And we wouldn't want that.

NITA: A fairy tale is what it is. I didn't make
it up.

JESUS: What about your other customers do you
tell them these pretty lies?

NITA: They come to tell themselves lies. But
you know all that.

JESUS: The women I knew were always willing to
listen to my compliments.

She looks at him a moment then laughs.

NITA: You see, no matter what I say, you're
going to argue and disagree.

JESUS: It makes me more interesting, doesn't it?

She doesn't answer.

JESUS: I like you. I think you like me too?

NITA: Why ask me, you have all the answers,.

JESUS: I do have a tendency to please myself.

NITA: And that's the point.

JESUS: Except you're not exactly building up my ego, but then again, you are pleasing me...

He looks at her, puzzled for a moment.

His guard let down for that moment begins to unnerve her.

JESUS: Maybe we can make an arrangement.

NITA: What kind of arrangement?

JESUS: How do you feel about once a week. This hotel. You get not an overly expensive bottle of champagne. How about one thousand pesos a month? Every Saturday starting at seven until two in the morning. I have to be back at the base by three. Is it a deal?

NITA: You're so full of shit.

JESUS: I'll pay you at the start of each evening 250 pesos at a time. On the months where you get five Saturdays, we skip the last one. Vacation.

NITA: I'll believe it when I see it.

JESUS: Hmm. Maybe I spoke too soon—Before anything—The Bed!

NITA: After this, you'll double the price.
They exit through other bedroom door.

Lights down.

SCENE 7 Pink - The Camp 3 A.M, Lalo, Jesus

Lalo enters with a gallon can of pink paint in one hand and a bottle of tequila in the other. He gestures for Jesus who enters with two rolling brushes in hand. They have just returned from the hotel. They are, of course, very drunk.

SCENE 8 The Dressing Down - Barracks, 7 am, Jesus, Lalo, Sinsezos, Sergeant

The sun streams in harsh almost blinding light. Jesus and Lalo stand at attention, still in their skivvies. Colonel Sinsezos stands a few yards to the side while the

sergeant delivers his speech.

SERGEANT: I'm not interested in who did what, who started where and who did why. I am only informing you "men" that I am ending it now. Apparently you scum have failed to realize that you are the elite of this army and such activity as painting each other's barracks any color except regulation Gray #7 is conducive to neither the maintenance, the morale nor the operations of this camp. If I so much as find that anything even remotely similar to this type of activity occurs one more time, I will personally conduct an investigation if I have to beat it out of everyone of you. And when I find out the parties involved, each and every one, including the so-called victim or victims, will never forget the consequences.

Is that understood?

LALO & JESUS: Yes Sir!

SERGEANT: I can't hear you!

LALO & JESUS: YES SIR!

SERGEANT: Now get dressed. Pvt. Finoliña, you'll

have latrine duty for the next month.

Pvt. Utimo, follow me.

JESUS: Like this, Sir?

SERGEANT: Do you know how to follow an order,

Private?

JESUS: Yes Sir!

Exit sergeant. Jesus hurries after him.

SINSEZOS: Finoliña—

LALO: Yes Sir?

SINSEZOS: At ease. Pvt. Finoliña, I will speak

frankly with you.

LALO: Yes Sir.

SINSEZOS: It was an apropos action you took in

lieu of K-7's repeated antics.

LALO: You knew about them?

SINSEZOS: Smiles sweetly. It's my business to

know.

LALO: Yes Sir.

SINSEZOS: Strictly between you and me, Private, I have nothing against a few harmless pranks, as long as they don't interfere with duty. You men need to cut loose once in a while, and it was about time you did something about K-7. You demonstrated patience and bold action.

LALO: Sir, thank you, Sir.

SINSEZOS: I have another matter more important to discuss. Be aware that I'm setting this question to you because we consider you one of our most promising recruits. I realize you've set some admirable standards for yourself and therefore, I know that you'll give me a professional and objective assessment of Pvt. Utimo.

LALO: My opinion of Pvt. Utimo, without reservation, is that he is the finest soldier I have quartered with since I've been here, Sir.

SINSEZOS: *Salutes.* Lalo comes to attention and salutes.

The Colonel Exits and Lalo, smiling to himself, gets dressed.

Lights down.

SCENE 9 Conspiracy, the Colonel's den, Sra. DeMas, Col. Sinsezos, Paola Bunelos

Sra. DeMas and Colonel Sinsezos enter, brandy glasses in hand to discuss their plan. They have taken time from the Colonel's dinner party for this tête-à-tête.

SINSEZOS: I would say my little gathering is going quite well. The pianist looked a trifle nervous.

DeMAS: I didn't notice. Paola Bunelos is still as reserved as when her father was alive.

SINSEZOS: A bit less, I'd say. She laughed at that old fool's stale jokes which is a definite asset. Besides, scientists often

don't communicate well with us mere mortals. Beauty is all a woman really needs.

DeMAS: That's a bit old fashioned, don't you think?

SINSEZOS: Forgive me! I admit to having a streak of male chauvinism. Despite your beauty and your brilliance, Paquita, sometimes I forget you're a woman, and speak as frankly to you as if you were a man.

DeMAS: You're digging yourself in deeper, Colonel. Well, no matter, friends should speak honestly, and not expect to agree upon everything.

SINSEZOS: Too much agreement would be a bore.

DeMAS: Exactly. So should we get to the business at hand?

SINSEZOS: Yes, before my guests wonder where we are.

DeMAS: So, are you sure that your top officers will follow you?

SINSEZOS: There's no question. They're as sick of Sigueros' corrupt regime as we are.

Besides, I have, at great discretion, hand-picked the men who serve me.

DeMAS: I have the Admiral and Marquez in my pocket.

SINSEZOS: Marquez would follow you to Hell.

DeMAS: Are you jealous, my Dear Colonel?

SINSEZOS: Perhaps I am.

DeMAS: I'm afraid you wouldn't find him very receptive. *An uncomfortable silence threatens them. Changing the subject.* I think it'll speak well for our country when the world sees that a woman is president.

SINSEZOS: But how do you think your own country, in particular the men who would be your chief advisors, accept a woman in command?

DeMAS: They'll come to heel once they realize how capable I am.

SINSEZOS: You could be the power behind the man.

I mean, you're so valuable, and too much exposure can be dangerous.

DeMAS: And who do you think that man might be?

SINSEZOS: Someone you trust completely.

DeMAS: I don't know if I trust anyone completely.

SINSEZOS: Not even Marquez? Not even your old friend Sinsezos?

DeMAS: Of course I trust you—both of you—but I don't see Marquez as having any such ambitions. And why would you give up your post as head of the Special Services? This is a critical responsibility.

SINSEZOS: I thought at least I could hope for the position of the Minister of National Security.

DeMAS: Do you think it would be wise of us to take Lorenzo's job? We should avoid as much as possible to turn allies into enemies.

SINSEZOS: A point well taken.

DeMAS: Besides with more resources flowing into

the Special Services, there's no telling what you'll be doing a year from now.

SINSEZOS: You're right again, Paquita. Right again. Shall we discuss dates and time then?

DeMAS: I was thinking the Veteran's Ceremony would be ideal. It gives us time to get everything in place. We have an important deal going through with the Norteños⁹ prior to that, and Marquez will be in negotiation with them, but he'll be back by then. It's the only suitable time. . . .

Lights Dim as she speaks.

SCENE 10 The Arrest - Paola's Loft, Paola, Robot, Soldier 1, Soldier 2

Paola enters in a robe with a cup of coffee in one hand and a book in the other. She turns on her CD player. Vivaldi's four seasons begins playing.

⁹ sp. Northerners

Paola sits at her desk and starts reading from her laboratory notes. Offstage the sound of a car pulling up is heard. A clatter of heavy feet is heard, followed by a pounding on her door. The door swings open, and the Sergeant and two armed soldiers enter.

SGT: Paola Bunelos?

PAOLA: What do you want?

SGT: You are to come with us immediately. *They move in on each side of Paola. Knocking over a chair.*

PAOLA: What for?—can't I at least put on some street clothes?

SGT: We'll deliver them to you. *They escort her out. Vivaldi's Four Seasons continues playing.*

Lights Down.

**SCENE 11 The Museum - Café - 7 P.M. Jesus, Lalo, Nita
and Chapa**

Jesus and Lalo are drinking Tecix. Two empty chairs await the arrival of Nita and Chapa.

LALO: I'm telling you, it's no mistake that you landed in this outfit. Nothing happens by accident, not you in this camp, anyway. Now, why does Lalo say that, you think?

JESUS: Why has Pvt. 1st Class Ferrari Testoroni said what he just said?

LALO: Because you and I are different than most of the guys you see in there.

JESUS: So why we are we scrubbing toilets?

LALO: Hey, that's what they call character building. But you can bet, everything we do is noticed, reported and written down in triplicate. If we excel, they know it—and usually we do twice as good as any one of those dumb shits in K-7 but on the

other hand, every time we fuck up—heads
turn.

JESUS: And ours roll.

LALO: Maybe. But it's better to have guys like
us on their side. They need us to stay
alive. Guys with street sense.

JESUS: Shrugging it off. Well...they got us.

Enter Nita and Chapa.

LALO: Ho there—who are these beauties—These
flowers!

CHAPA: Are we late?

NITA: Hello.

JESUS: How are you?

NITA: Fine.

LALO: You're always late and you always ask.

CHAPA: Excuse us, we have to fix our faces.

LALO: I'll fix them for you—time is money.

The women exit to the ladies room.

That little bitch—there's something about
her I can't get out of my system. She's

got the whammy on me, I swear it, from the first time I saw her, it stood at attention.

JESUS: You wouldn't know it by the way you talk to her.

LALO: Talk to her? How?

JESUS: You know, you're...well, an asshole.

LALO: Asshole? Fuck you! How else do you talk to a whore—that's what they expect.

JESUS: Maybe if you'd forget that, she might slip a little free stuff to you on the side.

LALO: Hombre, a whore is a whore—hey is that what Nita is doing?

JESUS: Nah—What we have works just fine. It's different.

LALO: How different? You've been seeing her regularly.

JESUS: Who told you that shit?

LALO: Chapa told me that shit. Let me tell you something, whores are the best thing for us. It keeps it on the up-and-up. You

get involved with a chick, and right away she wants to know everything about you. Guys like us don't need the extra hassle.

JESUS: Guys like what?

LALO: Look at the Sergeant, he's not married.

JESUS: So?

LALO: Only two of the officers there are married. The rest maybe were married, but not anymore. We got too much on our mind to be distracted.

JESUS: Sinsezos certainly isn't married.

LALO: I know who he'd like to marry at least for one night.

JESUS: Who?

LALO: *Looks at Jesus with a knowing smile.*

JESUS: Get outta here. More like sheep. You think that picture he has on his wall of Greece with the ruins and the shepherd and the sheep came from a travel poster?

LALO: What picture?

JESUS: Most guys might have a Polaroid of their

girlfriend in the buff—but the Colonel has a picture of an orgy.

LALO: I've never noticed this picture.

JESUS: You idiot. You talk to damn much, you know that?

Lights dim on the men.

LALO: Bésame el culo¹⁰.

JESUS: Tu bésame el culo.

LALO: No, tu.

Downstage left Nita and Chapa sit facing downstage. Chapa applying make up and Nita gazing at her image, supposedly looking into the mirror. They are teasing and intimate with each other.

NITA: I think Lalo is a little bit in love with you.

CHAPA: Are you crazy? Everything about him—he doesn't know if he should hate me because I'm a whore or enjoy it because he's getting laid. Who cares anyway, I have as

¹⁰ sp. Kiss my ass. You kiss my ass. No, you.

much contempt for him as he has for me.

In love. You see the way he is—it's the same in bed, an oaf all around. Period.

NITA: I still think he likes you.

CHAPA: Nita, you're too full of those fairy tales—ugly as they are—with Cinderella's sisters getting torn to pieces by wild bores and still end happily ever after. What about Jesus?

NITA: Hah.

CHAPA: Hah, you better believe it. You cut them both and the same stuff would ooze out.

NITA: Lalo, you're right is crude and vulgar. I can't see how you stomach him. Jesus...

CHAPA: Jesus is just a little smoother.

NITA: Maybe. Maybe not.

CHAPA: You'd better believe it.

NITA: The way of the world is ugly but it doesn't have to end badly.

CHAPA: Like your fairy tales. Can't you see? Paying for it—

NITA: Where would you be without them?

CHAPA: I spit on them. And paying for it, that's just one thing.

NITA: Name another.

CHAPA: They're soldiers. *She studies Nita for a moment, as if considering something.* I'd like to know just exactly...

NITA: ...What?

CHAPA: How does my hair look in the back?

NITA: It's flat.

CHAPA: Again? Fix it, Nita, you know how to do it right.

NITA: What do you do on Tuesdays?

CHAPA: *A subtle wariness comes over her Tuesdays?*
Nothing.

NITA: Who do you see?

CHAPA: Ouch—It's attached to my scalp, you know.

NITA: Sorry. Twice at the same time, I've seen you walking up Cordero Street and you're never at Rosie's on Tuesdays.

CHAPA: Well if you have to know, I can only tell you he's a very discrete old man. Very distinguished.

NITA: Famous?

CHAPA: Very famous. Like Jack-The-Ripper. He made me swear on thirteen unblessed Bibles never to tell anyone his name.

NITA: Except me.

CHAPA: He said, especially don't say a word to Nita La Grita¹¹—Ow!

NITA: Sorry. Is he a politician?

CHAPA: He likes me to get undressed but to leave my shoes on. You've noticed my shoes?

NITA: He must be filthy rich.

CHAPA: As filthy as they get. Did you notice my shoes?

NITA: No.

CHAPA: Next time you see me, look at them. He sent me to a shoemaker and had them made to order. I also have to leave my

stockings on. They're navy blue and come
just over the knee.

NITA: Like a catholic school girl. A virgin,
but who always has a lot to confess.

Lights begin to dim.

CHAPA: And wears mirror sunglasses.

NITA: That she traded for a few kisses.

CHAPA: And soon she'll stop confessing.

Light goes out as they speak.

LALO: What's keeping them?

JESUS: They're talking about us.

LALO: How do you know?

JESUS: What else would they talk about?

LALO: So, what are they saying?

JESUS: They're comparing.

LALO: I wouldn't doubt it.

Nita and Chapa enter.

LALO: It's about time. *Takes Chapa by the hand.*

¹¹ *sp.* The screamer. However *La Grita* is also the name a Spanish language newspaper may call itself, just as English newspapers are frequently named The Reporter.

Come on.

CHAPA: Already? We just got here—Bye Jesus—

JESUS: You need track shoes around Lalo.

CHAPA: *To Nita.* I'll see you at Rosie's.

They exit. Nita and Jesus look at each other. Jesus feels compelled to explain.

JESUS: She makes him nervous.

NITA: I know.

JESUS: What can I get you?

NITA: A glass of wine would be fine.

JESUS: Muchacho, una copa¹².

A Desaparecido, wearing the ever present black hood, enters with a wine glass on a tray and sets it on the table. Exits.

JESUS: Would you like me if I were Lalo?

NITA: There must be something about your work that's at least as bad as Lalo.

JESUS: You can say that.

NITA: Well, you don't have much of a choice, do

you?

JESUS: I don't, but I know you turn down the occasional fellow.

NITA: It's always a professional decision. Don't you?

JESUS: The military doesn't tell you to do something and not mean it.

NITA: Well, Lalo falls into that category of unpleasant, but not impossible.

JESUS: Would you still see me on Saturdays, if I were Lalo?

NITA: I would very much be looking forward to next Saturday.

JESUS: Next Saturday?

NITA: It's the fifth Saturday of the month.

JESUS: Oh yes, your day off. Are you looking forward to it?

NITA: It's what we agreed to, that's all.

JESUS: Standing. Let's go.

NITA: Already?

JESUS: I thought we might go to the museum for
awhile.

NITA: The museum?!

JESUS: Have you ever been there?

NITA: (*Surprised but pleased.*) Which one, the
art or the natural museum?

JESUS: Let me think. Do I want to see nude women
or naked Neanderthals?

NITA: The Neanderthals aren't so bad looking.

Nita and Jesus exit. Lights Down.

SCENE 12 The Empty Loft - Paola's loft, Nita, Robot

*Nita is knocking on Paola's door. She
tries the door and finds that it is open.
She enters.*

NITA: Paola?

*She notices the overturned chair. Paola?
Are you here? She touches the cup of
coffee. Ice Cold. She turns off the CD*

which is still playing Vivaldi's Four Seasons, and picks up the chair. She looks around and sees Paola's purse.

Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god, I knew something was going to happen. I warned you so many times!

She sits down, at a loss of what to do. The anatomy book is next to her on the table. She places her hand on it, and looks at the keyboard and the Robot, which still has the expression of shock on its face. She stuffs the book and the keyboard in the large bag she carries with her, and crosses to the door, turning to the Robot before she leaves.

I'll come back for you later. I promise.

Lights down.

ACT II**SCENE 13 Charm School - Hotel Room 7PM, Nita, Jesus**

Two Saturdays later. Hotel room. Enter Nita. She has an air of sadness about her. She has a dozen white roses which she proceeds to arrange in a vase she also brought. Down stage right a dressing table so when she looks into the mirror she faces the audience. She picks up the phone.

NITA: Room service. Please send up a bottle of champagne to room 217. Thank you.

*She hangs up the phone, stands back to admire the flowers, smiles, and from her large bag, pulls out a small radio, and turns it to a salsa station. She crosses to the mirror and decides *she has on too much make up and begins to wipe some of it off when Jesus knocks and enters. She turns to greet him almost as if she is meeting her sweetheart, instead of a regular john. Jesus also has the air of**

expectancy about him. However, as soon as they see each other, they adjust to an attitude of studied nonchalance.

NITA: Hello.

JESUS: Hi. It smells like roses.

NITA: Do you like them?

JESUS: Mmm. Extravagant don't you think?

NITA: Not if you know where to get them.

JESUS: You look very nice. Beautiful.

NITA: It's a new dress.

To their relief there is a knock at the door.

NITA: Room service.

Jesus answers the door. A Desaparecido in a bellhop's jacket hands him champagne in an ice bucket. Jesus gives him a tip and closes the door.

JESUS: So how was your Saturday off? Did you spend it profitably?

NITA: I dedicated the whole evening to myself.

JESUS: You gave yourself a birthday party?

NITA: I just stayed at home and read.

JESUS: Read what?

NITA: Well, did you know, when a gas line springs a leak in the desert, they mix a chemical with the gas that smells like putrid meat, then all they have to do is look for a bunch—group of vultures hanging around the smell.

JESUS: Don't the vultures pass out smelling the gas?

NITA: They didn't mention that.

JESUS Does the gas company at least bring them some road kill to pay the birds for finding the leak?

NITA: I doubt it.

JESUS: The vultures need to make a living. It must be pretty disappointing for them. Where did you read this?

NITA: I have a subscription to a science digest. It takes the articles from science

magazines, leaves out the words you don't need and gets to the main point.

JESUS: For people on the run.

NITA: For them too.

JESUS: So you read your science digest and slouched around eating chocolates.

NITA: I'm allergic to chocolate.

JESUS: One less desire.

She drops three ice cubes into her champagne

NITA: One bone...two bone...three bone....*Suddenly thinking of Paola.* No one can ever know anyone.

JESUS: You know me pretty well.

NITA: I don't know anything about you, really.

JESUS: I mean, you know me, my personality. Maybe you don't know where I am every minute of the day, but I feel like I know you, and you me.

NITA: You can't know a person unless you know something about his daily life. Even that

might not be enough.

JESUS: A person isn't necessarily the work they do. Is a waiter a waiter or an aspiring musician?

NITA: What I'm saying has nothing to do with musicians. I mean people have their secret lives. Don't you have any secrets? I do. Everybody has secrets, some bigger than others. Much bigger.

JESUS: *Disconcerted.* What's your secret?

NITA: You tell me one of yours and I'll tell you one of mine.

JESUS: So what's one of yours?

NITA: *Takes a breath as if to reveal a secret, then laughs.* That's none of your business.

JESUS: Come here.

She does so. He gives himself away in the gentleness of his touch. He kisses her. They begin to make love. Suddenly he stands up. He reaches in his pocket and pulls out the 250 pesos and hands it to

her. He watches her put the money away.

JESUS: What do you plan to do with all this money
you're making?

NITA: I'm saving it.

JESUS: That much I know.

NITA: When I have enough, I plan to go on a long
vacation, maybe Barcelona. To have enough
so that I can live like a lady and forget
about sweaty hands and beer-breath.

JESUS: For what purpose?

NITA: Isn't that enough?

JESUS: You're saving all this money to go on a
vacation?

NITA: What's wrong with that?

JESUS: Not for you, you wouldn't waste your time
and money on a silly vacation.

NITA: What's silly? Everybody needs a vacation,
I more than others.

JESUS: You know what I think? I think you think
you're going to cast a spell over some
rich handsome prince.

NITA: Do you expect to find me twenty years from now pulling men into an alleyway? You think you're the only one who wants to improve your life?

JESUS: You'll always think like a whore no matter where you go.

NITA: And you'll always think like a man no matter how up-to-the-minute you pretend to be. Besides, I'm not talking about becoming some idiot's mistress, I'm talking about marriage—

JESUS: A prostitute only sells her body, a wife sells her soul.

NITA: What would you know about the soul?

JESUS: We're just a bunch of cavemen staring at the fire.

NITA: At least you include yourself.

JESUS: Your plan will never work.

NITA: And why not?

JESUS: As soon as you drop a chunk of ice into your champagne.

NITA: For your information, I saw the
President's daughter do it-

Jesus looks at her in amused disbelief.

NITA: On the television-

JESUS: They'll see you coming from the furthest
end of the poop deck-

NITA: I know how to dress-

JESUS: You think a couple of expensive dresses
will make a lady out of you?

NITA: I know I'm no rich fancy ass bitch-

JESUS: It's everything about you, Nita, the way
you stick out your hip-

NITA: I've already thought of that, Mr. Know-it-
all. I'm taking classes where they teach
you everything. The problem with you is
you just shoot off your mouth before
knowing all the details, those unimportant
details like charm school, where you can
learn how to say thank you, or how to
raise one eyebrow, and, since you
mentioned it, how to tilt your ass at the

right angle so even experts like you
can't-

JESUS: Nita, Nitaita, face it. This sounds cruel
only because I want you to face the truth-

NITA: What do you know about the truth?

JESUS: That you're nothing but una rascuachi¹³.

NITA: Rascuachi?!

JESUS: To the bone, to the core-

NITA: Rascuachi?!

JESUS: From the way you breath in to your worn
down heels-

NITA: Look at my heels—are they worn down? Well
are they?

JESUS: You'll be competing with women who think
the pavement is a carpet between the
doorman and a limousine-

Gathering her things to leave.

NITA: Your thinking is as free as twenty pesos
an hour. I've known profesores¹⁴,
scientists - and you know what? They were

smart enough to know when I had something to say about something, and to give it some consideration. They respected me, because they respected themselves. But with you there's something inside you, something ugly and alive and it fills you up with contempt so that you think you're safe. But one of these days what's inside will eat you up, so you're inside and the little monster's outside and then everyone will see it, not just me. She gathers her things about to leave.

JESUS: You can't leave—

NITA: Fuck you, I can't leave—

JESUS: Gently. One thousand pesos, one thousand home runs, Nita, chipita. One thousand.

NITA: You make me sick. Hurry up then, I want to get this over with.

JESUS: Four hours left to go, Chipitita. You can start with the paint on your face. But first...I want you to say, thank you. The

¹³ *sp.* A ragamuffin

¹⁴ *sp.* professors

way they've taught you in charm school.

NITA: Sometimes you forget that you're only a
trick.

*She takes out the lotion she was about to
use to remove her make up before he came
in and proceeds to clean her face.*

Lights down.

SCENE 14 The Message - Nita's Room, Nita, Robot

*Paola's robot sits serenely in one corner,
a microphone along side the robot and some
of her books, in particular, Paola's red
anatomy reference text. Nita enters, back
from her ordeal with Jesus.*

NITA: Nita's Treatise on the Race of Men.
Observation number 37.

Men tend to confuse the flattery and
attention that their money brings them
with genuine friendship, or love. A case
in point is Jesus Utima. In a business
agreement, the only thing that he should

expect is that his business partner meets the conditions of the arrangement.

Because he has overstepped the agreement, he is angry and confused, which then makes him abuse the business relationship. He sets himself up for disappointment each time he realizes that his so-called relationship has no effect on his business partner's emotions or personal plans.

Puts down the microphone.

In short, your cojones have muddled your thinking. Jesus Utima. *Looks down at the microphone.* Opps, I wonder if that recorded? *Turns the microphone off.*

Types on the keyboard, as she says, XXX-1929-ZYP. Watches unexpectedly for it to react.

ROBOT: Good evening, Nita.

NITA: *Jumping back.* Ay, mami¹⁵!

ROBOT: The Last time that you spoke to me was . . .
. Records show there has been no previous time.

NITA: You can talk!

ROBOT: Please state your business.

NITA: What Business?

ROBOT: Business Categories: Record information,
make notes, read previous information,
have a conversation with me.

NITA: Can you Walk?

ROBOT: One moment please, I am scanning hardware.
Kinetic hardware is incomplete. I cannot
walk.

NITA: Did you get what I just put into the
microphone?

ROBOT: Yes. I can repeat it to you. Except for
one word "cojones." Please define.

NITA: Wow!

ROBOT: Neither is "Wow" a word in my vocabulary.
Please define.

NITA: Oh, what was the word for cojones again?
*Reaches for the anatomy book and opens it
to the section on reproductive organs.*

¹⁵ sp. Oh mother!

NITA: Oh yeah, how could I forget—Testicles. .
.What's this?

ROBOT: What is what, Nita?

NITA: It looks like another code Paola wrote
down here. I'll try it. *She types in as
she speaks.* XXX-3001-JJW

ROBOT: Good evening, Paola. Please state your
business.

NITA: Oh my God.

ROBOT: That is not a business. Do you want to
add a business?

NITA: No, uh, give me Last business entered.

ROBOT: July Eleventh, Wednesday. The year of the
Ox.

NITA: Year of the Ox? Very funny, Paola.

ROBOT: Are you funny, Paola?

NITA: Not me, you.

ROBOT: You are Illogical. Is this a joke?

NITA: Laughs. Yes, or something like that. My
God, how I miss Paola! *(sighs)* Now can

you please give me the last business?

ROBOT: "Tonight at Sinsezos dinner I overheard the details of a coup between DeMas and Sinsezos. Apparently, there is great discord within the corrupt Martinez Regime. The Special Services, the Admiral, and Colonel Mendez plan to take over El Presidente's office, "neutralize" Sigueros—I can imagine what that means. This may be the very opportunity we've been waiting for. With a coup in progress and amid the confusion, the militia will have their hands full and scarcely be expecting an attack from us. The Poet was able to give me an address where they meet. The tailor's shop on Avenida Lomas. I must meet with them again, as soon as possible to let them know that the coup is scheduled to go off at the Celebration of Veterans, just at the moment when the Archbishop completes the Prayer of Gratitude. And to think I considered Sinsezos incapable of humor.

End of Entry.

*Nita stares ahead of her, as the
significance of this information sinks in.*

**SCENE 15 Baby Jesus Found - Barracks, Jesus, Lalo,
Sergeant**

*Jesus lies in his bunk reading the manual.
Enter Lalo.*

JESUS: ...capture upon shot immediately be will
soldier offending Any .inexcusable and
cowardly is enemy the of face the in
particularly Desertion.

LALO: Section 1.4, Paragraph 24. Backwards.

JESUS: Very good. I thought you had a date with
Chapa?

LALO: The bitch stood me up.

JESUS: Stood you up?

LALO: Stood me up, stood me up—what are we,
parrots?

JESUS: Well, it's not like her. I thought she

was in love with you.

LALO: What does a whore know about love.

JESUS: So why didn't you find another one—what
the hell?

LALO: I got into a card game waiting for her to
show up.

JESUS: So now you're broke.

LALO: So what, it's only dirty money.

JESUS: Dirty—why do you say that?

LALO: *Agitated.* No reason—money is dirty—
haven't you ever noticed how your hands
get when you handle it all day long?

JESUS: Since when do you handle money all day
long?

LALO: Aw never mind, it's best if you don't talk
to me for awhile.

JESUS: Well, it might cheer you up to know that
the Baby Jesus has finally been recovered.

LALO: So what.

JESUS: Careful, blasphemy is very unattractive.

Picking up the newspaper.

"The Baby Jesus was discovered in Rico Plaza by a Doña Juanita Carmona who has been feeding the pigeons for over twenty-five years in the same spot at the same time. She noticed a flesh colored something, which turned out to be the heel of the Baby Jesus, sticking out of a brown paper bag in one of the trash baskets."

LALO: She knew something was afoot—

JESUS: "The kidnappers had taped over the eyes and mouth of the plaster Baby Jesus', otherwise the little idol was unharmed. Father Ramon plans to install an electronic eye and alarm system to prevent further vandalism."

LALO: Science in the service of God—

JESUS: I think it shouldn't be just any alarm but one that sets off a special effects of thunder and lightning—

LALO: I repent—I repent!

JESUS: Here, I beg you, take my money—

LALO: All of it—

JESUS: Do you suppose it was a plot cooked up by
the priest and the pigeon lady?

LALO: The celibate Father Ramon and the virgin
Doña Juanita!

JESUS AND LALO: Oh-ho-ho!

Enter sergeant.

SERGEANT: Atten-hut! The van is being prepared
for another mission. Be ready to move out
in ten minutes. *Exits.*

Jesus and Lalo stare after the sergeant.

*Lalo makes the first move and Jesus
follows. Neither one can look the other
in the face.*

Lights down.

**SCENE 16 The Unmade Bed - Hotel Room, Nita, Jesus,
Desaparecidos 1, 2 and 3**

*Nita and Jesus are in bed. She seems
preoccupied. Three Los Desaparecidos all*

sit at farthest parts of the stage.

JESUS: What's the matter?

NITA: I don't know...I guess, I'm
worried...About Chapa.

JESUS: Chapa? What about her?

NITA: Well, she hasn't been home for several
days now that I know of. She hasn't been
to Rosie's since Wednesday, but since she
never goes on Tuesdays, I don't know if
she's been gone since Tuesday or
Wednesday. But then I wasn't there on
Monday—

JESUS: What're are you talking about?

NITA: Well, it's just that people disappear—

JESUS: Disappear, how do you know?

NITA: How do I know? Everybody knows. People
disappear. We live in that kind of world.
That old man, maybe he did something to
her.

JESUS: What old man?

NITA: Some kook she saw every Tuesday.

JESUS: Somewhat relieved. Oh, some degenerate, I thought you meant something else.

NITA: ...She's not political.

JESUS: What do you know about politics?

NITA: The unmade bed. A girl I knew, but Chapa never talks about anything more political than—*Hesitates, remembering her last conversation with Chapa.*

JESUS: Than what?

NITA: Than the wisdom of fairy tales. But this one—she was, I don't know, careless. I warned her. I went to see her...the bed in Chapa's room was like an echo.

Los Desaparecidos speak so that #1 and #3 overlap as #2 is speaking.

#2: You are that sickness. Tell her everything. She can help you.

#1: Dígale¹⁶.

#3: Tell her everything.

#1: Curame¹⁷

¹⁶ sp. Tell her

JESUS: What would you do if I said I was one of those men?

NITA: What?

JESUS: Nitaita.

NITA: What men are you talking about?

JESUS: Nitaita, remember we have a deal—

NITA: What men?

JESUS: You would at least owe me this. Owe me the rest of the night. He pulls her to him. Kissing, biting her ear. Nitaita, Nitaita, I live for you. I am alive because of you. I have all my money invested in you. All I ask from you is a cheap bottle of champagne and your soft wet kitty-cat.

NITA: I think you've lost your mind.

JESUS: Mind—yes! and now I've just spilled my guts to you. Affectionately. And on top of that, I live for a whore—

NITA: *Pushing him away. He has a way of*

¹⁷ sp. Cure me

ruining the moment. The next line comes not from actual suspicion, but from an intent to injure. So what are you, some kind of executioner?

JESUS: Not so loud!

NITA: Then it's true?

JESUS: No, it's not true, but you don't have to shout it to the world.

NITA: Then why did you say it?

JESUS: I don't know, it was a bad joke.

NITA: More than a bad joke.

JESUS: I'm sorry.

NITA: I shouldn't have agreed to this—

JESUS: But you did.

NITA: I can always back out.

JESUS: You still owe me the night and by the time I'm finished with you, you'll be addicted to Felicidad here. Have I ever told you about Felicidad?

NITA: Felicidad who?

JESUS: The wisdom of Felicidad tells us all women are lesbians at heart because they are greedy and vain when it comes to sex. But see, they can't help it, it's not their fault.

NITA: Of course not—most men only think of their own happiness.

JESUS: Exactly. If you catch a women on a very honest day, she will often as not admit that her old man is generally. . .a stumble bum in the sack.

NITA: Except you.

JESUS: Well of course,

NITA: Of course, Dear.

JESUS: Unless you've been faking it too.

NITA: Of course I have.

JESUS: How can you say that?

NITA: You asked.

JESUS: I'm devastated. You always look so convincing. On the other hand, I never thought you had such talent—you belong in

the movies. Especially when you start doing this part. *Starts gasping and crying out like a woman having an orgasm.*

NITA: You should see how stupid you look. Shut up!

Tickling him to make him stop. Jesus responds to the tickling by becoming more frantic until he screams for her to stop,.

NITA: Shut up—I do not!

JESUS: Aye, Dios mio¹⁸! Dios mio! Dios mio—
Okay—Stop! Stop! I give up! You win!

NITA: *She stops tickling Jesus.* You should see yourself, you make a face like a gila monster.

Jesus begins walking his two fingers simulating a tiny man, walking closer and closer to Nita.

JESUS: To think, you've always faked it, I mean every single time.

NITA: These are the facts of life.

JESUS: Mentirosa¹⁹.

NITA: I'm not lying.

JESUS: Mentirooosa.

NITA: Why would I take the trouble to lie to
you?

JESUS: What? You don't respect me enough to
even lie about it?! *He begins tickling
her.*

NITA: Jesus! No-stop!

JESUS: Tell the truth, you didn't fake them-tell
the truth!

NITA: Okay, okay, I didn't fake. . . all of
them!

He stops tickling her.

JESUS: You bet you didn't.

NITA: One time.

He moves to resume tickling her.

NITA: Just kidding!. . .Twice.

Jesus stops, laughs and kisses her.

¹⁸ sp. My God

JESUS: And so, with my friend here, I hold him up like a mirror, part mirror, part chameleon, I even give him a woman's name, Felicidad. He will make friends with her, chat a while—like one of the girls—it will be like playing with herself. She'll smile. She'll laugh. She'll tickle herself. She'll know exactly what to do. A very good time for all.

NITA: You know what Paola would say about you?

JESUS: Paola who?

NITA: Paola the Scientist. She'd say. .
.Here's one robot who doesn't need any lubricant.

JESUS: I would like to meet this Paola.

NITA: That's not possible.

So what about men? Tell me something I don't know about them.

JESUS: We're innocent.

NITA: Innocent—?

JESUS: Even as we commit our crimes...Innocence that leaves a bad taste in my mouth. A metallic sort of taste like from the smell of blood—

NITA: You're full of ugly thoughts, tonight more than usual. Maybe I should go.

JESUS: *Holding her down.* You've already said that.

NITA: You can have your money back—

JESUS: I've glued you to the bed. You can't move. *He kisses her.* Where is your make-believe tonight?

NITA: Safe. I have it in a safe place.
 He begins kissing her until she responds.

Lights down.

SCENE 17 The Nightmare - The Barracks, DeMas, Lalo, Jesus, Desaparecidos 1, 2 & 3.

Jesus is asleep in his bunk. The most noticeable aspect of this scene is the

presence of color. The actors wear an incongruity of colors to give a sense of a demented Mardi Gras, of torment and disharmony. The music speeds up and slows down before giving way to other sounds. The sound of a party, faint at first. The crystalline sound of ice in mixed drinks, the splash of a diver as he hits the water and shrieks of a gaiety. In the antiquated accent of an old talkies, as if speaking through a megaphone is heard, 'get on your mark, get set...' the thunderous sound of a starter gun makes Jesus sit up in his dream. Enter Sra. DeMas in riding gear and Lalo wearing regulation boxer shorts and socks, a colorful bandanna around his neck. Jesus is the invisible entity circling the player in his own dream.

DeMAS: Jesus?

LALO: What?

DeMAS: Tan sucio²⁰...You're the only man I know

²⁰ sp. So filthy

who refuses to walk around naked. You never open you eyes when we make love.

LALO: You never close them.

DeMAS: What would make you lose the shame of Adam?

LALO: His pureness of heart

DeMAS: Before he did Eve's bidding?

LALO: The moment I met her, my Felicidad-Attenhut!

DeMAS: It's so difficult to find good help these days.

LALO: When I piss I always hit my mark.

DeMAS: Clever boy.

Her words are muffled as they kiss in a particularly disgusting parody of passion. A melodious doorbell rings. The chimes slowing and speeding up as if the technician is also in conflict with his mixer.

DeMAS: Answer the door.

With the back of their hands, they

*simultaneously wipe the dregs of their
kiss from their lips.*

LALO: Answer the door.

*He staggers to his feet and veers toward
an imaginary door where a Desaparecido
stands holding an oversized telegram.*

DeMAS: What is it, Darling?

LALO: A matter of life and death.

DeMAS: Come to me, Jesus.

*She opens her arms. Lalo opens his
likewise, dropping the telegram and falls
into her arms as they begin the struggle
of lovemaking. Suddenly from the upstage
side of the bed, Chapa sits up. She is
wearing a colorful though ragged dress.
Her hair is in plaits. She is a girl of
twelve.*

CHAPA: Jesus! Jesus!

LALO: What?

CHAPA: Hurry!

LALO: Hurry?

CHAPA: There's no time. Time is running. We've got to catch up. Hurry!

LALO: *Suddenly sober.* I can't be seen like this.

CHAPA: Here.

She hands him a black hood with a red streak across it. He puts it on. They exit. DeMas stands up and follows them as far as center stage, then stops. As they exit, the Desaparecidos pass them. Salsa music, playing a bit too slow begins. Los Desaparecidos encircle DeMas. One gets on all fours like a seat for her while the others begin removing her clothing. She remains motionless, staring after Lalo and Chapa. Jesus crosses to retrieve the fallen telegram.

DeMAS: A matter of life and death.

Jesus returns to his bunk and with his back to the others begins to open the telegram. Los Desaparecidos leave DeMas as she turns to watch them. They

surround Jesus, pushing him to lie supine on the bed and begins pulling at his T-shirt in an effort to undress him. He resists them, turning their efforts into a struggle.

JESUS: No—get away from me—auhhh—!

LALO: Jesus—Jesus! Wake up!

JESUS: What—?

LALO: You're having a nightmare.

Lalo returns to his bunk. Sra. DeMas backs out as Jesus watches her.

JESUS: It was a bad sign.

LALO: Must've been a good one.

JESUS: You were in it. And someone I once knew. We had a thing going.

LALO: If she was good-looking, it's too bad it wasn't my dream.

JESUS: *Pause.* Lalo.

LALO: Yeah?

JESUS: Where do you think they come from?

LALO: Who?

JESUS: Those guys.

LALO: What guys?

JESUS: You know what guys.

LALO: Who knows.

JESUS: I know.

LALO: Then why are you asking me?

JESUS: Some of them are from—

LALO: Just shut-up and get some shut-eye.

JESUS: —the same place—

LALO: Don't you get it? So like I said, shut up. *Silence.*

Lalo at last feels forced to speak. It's all very practical. You ever thought of that? You can't see them, they can't see us. They're gagged too, can you tell? In a shooting range too. All you ever hear in a shooting range are shots.

JESUS: Sometimes I imagine abuelitas²¹, little

²¹ sp. Grannies

grey-haired abuelitas in their rebozos²²,
sewing on pedal machines, black hoods for
25 centavos²³ a piece. They stop for
lunch, take out their minute amount of
black beans and cold tortilla and eat
slowly, chewing with their two good
teeth. Then they go back to sewing
black hoods.

LALO: You sure like to torture yourself.

JESUS: And who makes these gags? Who makes the
cloth? Who dyes it? And I start
thinking about the sandal makers—

LALO: Sandal makers?

JESUS: One of them wore sandals. One of the
guys we shot last time. Somebody made
those sandals. And he never thought, I
am making these sandals for a dead man.
And when the dead man put them on in the
morning, he didn't think, this is the
last time I'll be putting on my sandals.

LALO: Don't be an idiot. You'll drive yourself

²² sp. Head scarves

²³ sp. Cents

crazy. They know what they're doing,
more than you or me.

JESUS: And I see a lot of people, hood-makers,
sandal-makers, hat weavers, gag dyers,
standing around a shooting range,
staring, like dumb animals at their work,
soaking up the fresh blood. You and me
next to them. Nobody says a word—not a
peep.

LALO: Canaries.

JESUS: What?

LALO: My aunt had a yellow canary and the cat
ate it and it didn't make a peep. That's
what they are. Consider that you already
know more than you should about them.
Are you hearing me, Jesus?

JESUS: It's already too late. Three the first
time. Two tonight.

*Los Desaparecidos dance in the periphery
of their view. Making them both jumpy.*

Five canaries. How many for you?

LALO: I haven't counted them.

JESUS: Yeah, I guess it's better to not know.

LALO: You're damn right, Hombre. It's either the dirt under your boots or the dirt in your mouth. It's a fine line, one that I don't care to challenge. I didn't ask for this duty, but I'm here now and I'm not about to make a stink. Que te pasa, Hombre²⁴? Go back to sleep and think about Nita...when she's lying in bed, looking at you through sleepy eyes. If you don't mind, I'll think about her too. Since that other one stood me up, I'm going to think about not thinking about her.

He turns his back to Jesus. The music begins. The Desaparecidos dance across the stage in their tumbling, weightless kind of dance.

²⁴ sp. What 's going on, Man?

**SCENE 18 The Plot Thickens - Sinsezos's Office,
DeMas, Sinsezos, Jesus**

Col. Sinsezos is gazing at his reflection on the glass in the president's portrait. Sra. DeMas is sitting behind colonel Sinsezos' desk.

DeMAS: I keep forgetting to ask you, Colonel, I heard that you arrested Paola Bunelos?

SINSEZOS: Ah yes, I've been meaning to mention it, but with all this business, and there was little to report. We believe she was a spy.

DeMAS: What proof did you have?

SINSEZOS: One of my servants saw her eavesdropping on our conversation at the dinner I gave.

DeMAS: My God! Could she have relayed any of it to others? Did she confess?

SINSEZOS: No. I had my driver take her home, which didn't please her. We watched her place that night, and decided to arrest her the following morning. But she was as hard as nails, we were unable to get anything

solid from her.

DeMAS: Perhaps she was just being nosy?

SINSEZOS: We couldn't take that chance could we?

DeMAS: Of course not, Colonel. I find no fault whatsoever in the way you run your organization.

SINSEZOS: You're so kind, Paquita.

DeMAS: So, what'll happen to El Presidente?

SINSEZOS: As you suggested a villa in the south.

DeMAS: I'm so glad. He's a dear old fool, and served his country well. Furthermore, it would reflect poorly on us if anything were to happen to him.

SINSEZOS: By the way, we moved the day to the 17th. *Switches on his intercom.*
Lieutenant, have Private Utimo report to my office.

DeMAS: What? You can't do that! Marquez won't be back by then.

SINSEZOS: Call him back.

DeMAS: You know that's impossible, his business with the Norteños is top secret and being held in one of their a Safe Houses. He's incommunicado, and won't return until the 21st. I have complete trust in Marquez—I depend on his expertise and his loyalty. We can't proceed without him.

SINSEZOS: Lopez is perfectly capable.

DeMAS: What has he ever done, but follow orders? Marquez is the strategist. Besides, I've often sensed in Lopez a certain resentment.

SINSEZOS: What kind of resentment?

DeMAS: I can't really put my finger on it. It's just a feeling

SINSEZOS: Cara, we can't pass up this opportunity. We agreed that it would be on the Veteran's Ceremony, and can we help it if they moved the event back a few days to coincide with El Presidente's birthday party? We couldn't ask for more. They will have drinking since breakfast.

Everything's set, everyone's ready.

DeMAS: *Facing front, away from the Colonel, begins to realize his intent. A look of fear, then fury crosses her face, then an idea and a new plan. Of course, Darling, you're right. I-just didn't want Marquez to miss this momentous occasion. It was silly. Lopez has learned well from Marquez. There is no better second-in-command.*

INTERCOM: Pvt. Utimo is here, Sir.

The Colonel and Sra. DeMas realize the preposterousness of their respective positions. She hurries to the chair in front of his desk and the colonel sits in the chair she has just vacated.

SINSEZOS: Have him come in.

A moment later Jesus enters. DeMas' back is to him.

SINSEZOS: Pvt. Utimo, prepare to chauffeur Sra.

DeMas-

DeMAS: Hello Jesus.

JESUS: *Surprised.* Sra. DeMas!

SINSEZOS: What a coincidence, isn't it? I had no idea until a few minutes ago that you two were acquainted.

DeMAS: Jesus is the son of the gardener who worked on my father's estate for years. Well, I must be going, Colonel. It's been a lovely visit. Do take care, Colonel.

SINSEZOS: I believe I'll see you at the Sigueros' dinner on Saturday.

DeMAS: I wouldn't miss it for the world.

Jesus and DeMas exit. Lights down.

SCENE 19 The Mirror - The home of Sra. DeMas, DeMas, Jesus

The room has a suggestion of Mexican artifacts. The mirror is over the bar, so anyone looking into it is facing downstage. Various liquors, mixes, elegant glasses. In a corner, almost unnoticeable, a Desaparecido sits. He

wears a sombrero and sits like a sleeping Mexican statue, his head resting on his knees. Jesus looks into the mirror as DeMas watches.

DeMAS: Julian redecorated it. Remember Julian?

JESUS: You mean the one in see-through socks?

DeMAS: The very one. This room amuses me. I had to buy a new wardrobe just to sit in here. *Pause.* What is it about you? You seem different.

JESUS: Something about this mirror...

DeMAS: The man I bought it from told me if you look into it long enough, it'll trap your soul.

JESUS: Without a soul we'd never jump from a cliff wearing canvas wings. *He turns away from the mirror.* Would you believe, I had a dream about you last night?

DeMAS: I hope it was a good one.

JESUS: You were half undressed.

DeMAS: Was I?

JESUS: You're a very lucky woman; you're exactly where you want to be.

DeMAS: If that were true, I'd have nothing to strive for.

JESUS: To the champion of Rhetoric. *Drinks.*

DeMAS: You are different.

JESUS: I'd be a lost cause if six months in the military didn't change me in some way.

DeMAS: That's not what I mean.

JESUS: When you're small, you notice behind the sofa is a brighter color, a butter knife is like a finger, a steak knife is like a mouth. The way your mother kisses you before she goes dancing. Then whack, a whole new world, right between the eyes and you begin to notice those secondary details...

DeMAS: Such as?

JESUS: Your taste in jewelry. Your connections. And that you are the puppeteer, pulling the strings that landed me in the

military. When I saw you in the
Colonel's office, who else, but you?

DeMAS: I hope you're not angry with me.

JESUS: *Shrugs.* I wasn't particularly happy
with my life. The day after I got my
draft notice, I went to Calibari to give
myself room to think and...in case I
wanted to skip out. If I came back, it
would be because it was my choice.

*El Desaparecido stands. He has the
curiosity of one who has never seen
luxurious surroundings. He stands at the
periphery of the stage.*

JESUS: So there I was, having this Tahitian-
fantasy of a drink when who do I run into
but, good, old Carlos.

DeMAS: Carlos who?

JESUS: An old acquaintance. At one time we were
almost inseparable. He taught me the
ropes. Well preserved, Carlos...except
for these two lines at his mouth. Deep
lines, as if he'd been disappointed. Do

you know what I mean?

DeMAS: Disappointed in what way?

JESUS: He'd become the aging, desperate, lonely version of the women he'd used. He wanted to know—Not that he said a word— But I knew he was dying to ask me if he'd changed much. His looks. Very important. Slipping away. And that's what had been bothering me. I also had grown old in the role of a gigolo, except the difference between Carlos and me was that it didn't show—yet. *Makes himself another drink.* Do you want another?

DeMAS: Later.

JESUS: No matter if I lived to be eighty, romancing invalid women, if I died humping, prick on duty, the successful gigolo, I would still be sick of myself. So opportunity knocked and I said why not?

DESAP.: Right up your alley.

Desaparecido blows on Jesus' neck.

JESUS: To land in the Special Services, in a camp for future officers, like a cat on all fours. Everyone there is there because they know someone. It's the way of the world. Right?

DeMAS: A world you've just been born into, one of leadership and power...

JESUS: To a new life.

DeMAS: I am thrilled, Jesus. You have pleased me immensely. I have a mission for you. If you succeed, your new life will open up before you like a flower.

JESUS: And how do I get this flower?

DeMAS: It's a delicate matter. It requires cunning, courage, and daring. It's of vital importance to the security of your country. *Pauses to study Jesus.* I've received a report from a very reliable source, and it appears that our Col. Sinsezos is a traitor.

JESUS: Traitor?! What has he done?

DeMAS: It a very complex situation, and I can't

explain it to you just yet, but believe me, I have, to name a few, Antonio Marques, Admiral Degas, and El Presidente behind me.

JESUS: What do you want from me?

DeMAS: Sinsezos must be eliminated. It must happen on the evening of the 16th of this month. I'll have further instructions for you before then. Can I count on you?

JESUS: *Thinking hard.* Of course. if the Colonel is a traitor, and if those others are backing you, then who am I to disagree?

DeMAS: *Toasting.* To a whole new life. Come, my Darling.

Jesus picks up the bottle and crosses to her. He falls into her arms in an ecstasy of self-loathing.

Lights Down

SCENE 20 The Confession - Nita's Room, Nita, Jesus,

Robot

Lively south American music comes from the radio. Nita enters with a plate of fruit. She set it next to the robot. She is cleaning the robot with a small brush and solution. She is wearing old slippers, and an ancient robe. She wears glasses. Loud knock at the door.

NITA: Who is it?

JESUS: Nita?

NITA: *Opens the door.* Jesus! How did you find me?

JESUS: I've been all over trying to track you down—are you alone?

NITA: Yes—What's the matter?

JESUS: You've been saving the money I've been giving you?

NITA: Now wait a minute—

JESUS: Listen to me. Your vacation, it's time.
Listen—listen, you take the money and buy
a round trip ticket to Calibari. I can't
explain right now—the round trip ticket
is to confuse them—

NITA: Who—?

JESUS: They might even know about us and they
can't know you're leaving the country—

NITA: But why—?

JESUS: Let me finish, dammit. It's Thursday, by
Saturday, if I don't send you a box of
candy by two o'clock you go. You
understand me? Pack vacation clothes—
nothing else. I'll meet you. There's a
cafe on the main boulevard—

NITA: Which—?

JESUS: There's only one main boulevard—just ask.
Miguelitos, you got that?

NITA: Miguelitos—

JESUS: Tonight, I don't know when except very
soon—I got the deep in here gut feeling.

Nita meet me, you will?

NITA: Jesus, what's happened?

JESUS: I know what you're going to think, but I can't argue now, damn you, don't you see, you'd shoot my argument to shit...one minute, one moment.

He crosses to the table with water pitcher and basin and unzips his trousers.

NITA: What are you doing?

JESUS: *Washing himself.* What does it look like I'm doing?

NITA: Why?

JESUS: Los Desaparecidos. There's nowhere to hide from them. I know where they go, what happens to them. Me—I'm what happens to them—but I didn't know, Nita, I swear—it was that shark. What a fool I was to think for the spilling of a few lousy sperm—You can't beat them at their own game, remember that, Nita. And to think I laughed at you all this time she

had me sized up.

NITA: You never wash up after we finish.

JESUS: Because when—when we make love—when I'm laying there, the smell of you, of us on my skin in the sheets, it's the only time I feel like an honest man...

NITA: But then who were you with?

JESUS: La puta Muerte²⁵, what does it matter? You can tell when they're from the city, the gutter, like you and me, or the country, the mud—dried mud on the cuffs of their pants.

NITA: Who?

JESUS: Los Desaparecidos!—The hoods don't matter, their eyes are still open. Or gagging them? They still grunt when they fall, gasp when they're shot—like a fish screams when you hit it, you hear it in the palm of your hand. I don't know what I know, I mean, I'm not sure about what I know, but that I need you with me—They

²⁵ *sp.* Fucking Death

should eat shit! God, am I one of them?
Nah—just their dog—Ex-dog, got that?
Nita, say it's not too late...I can't
believe—I mean yes! There comes a time
when it's too late but this is not one of
those times. Nita, forgive me, Nita,
Nitaita, you be my god, you be my god and
bless me! *He kisses her and staggers
out. He re-enters.*

JESUS: Is that a robot?

NITA: Yes.

JESUS: One of your secrets?

NITA: Yes.

JESUS: Oh. *Exits.*

NITA: Paola gave it to me before she... *Nita
crosses to her desk and picks up the
microphone.* I could've made her
understand.

*El Desaparecido removes the black hood.
It is Paola.*

I should've stolen you away like Xavier

Valentine here.

PAOLA: I would've laughed at you.

NITA: Not scientific at all.

PAOLA: Only 95% is science. The rest is poetry.

NITA: I'm no poet.

PAOLA: We're all poets.

NITA: What happened to you? Where did you go?

PAOLA: I was taken by the evil wishes of others,
I was sacrificed for you.

NITA: *Covers her ears.* Don't say that!

PAOLA: Covering your ears, Nita, won't stop the
thoughts in your head.

NITA: *Pause.* I'm not going to the tailor's
shop. I'm not going to deliver your
stupid message.

PAOLA: *Picks up the microphone and blows into
it.* Lesson No. 38: A man begins to
understand women when he learns to weep
for those outside of him...

She hands the mike to Nita and slowly

exits leaving the hood behind.

NITA: And a woman...begins to understand men when she learns to speak for those outside of her. Until then we are all cavemen staring at the fire.

Lights down.

SCENE 21 The Shooting Range, A Field, Jesus, Lalo, Chapa, Old Man, Young Man

Lalo and Jesus enter, carrying their rifles.

JESUS: Lalo—let's get the Hell out of here.

LALO: Soon, soon.

JESUS: I mean now. We can't go on killing these people every few weeks—

LALO: What? Have you lost your mind? We have our orders.

JESUS: They said, jodate²⁶ to some order, now it's up to us to do the same.

²⁶ sp. Fuck you

LALO: We're soldiers and we follow orders.

JESUS: I know a safe route to the border, we could get there by dawn—

LALO: Don't you see, they're just testing us, it's not what we're going to be doing a year from now—

JESUS: Right. Next year we'll be signing the order to kill or maybe even interrogating them.

LALO: We've been through this before and now is not the time for second thoughts. We disobey orders and they'll hunt us down and stick our head on a pole as examples of bad hygiene. I have no intention of risking my life for a few filthy prisoners. So what'll it be?

Jesus realizes that not only can he not convince Lalo to come with him. Not only will Lalo not be moved, but he will stop Jesus from saving the prisoners at any cost.

JESUS: Y-you're right. It's very bad hygiene.

But you see what I mean, it can turn you
against your own best friend.

LALO: I—

JESUS: No—there's no need to explain. You're
absolutely right. There's nothing we can
do about it except ruin our lives.

LALO: Worse.

JESUS: Worse. It must've been just as hard for
you in the beginning.

LALO: It's still hard. All we can do is do our
duty. The better we do, the sooner they
give it to someone else. Okay?

JESUS: Yeah. This it just between you and me,
right?

LALO: Compañeros²⁷.

JESUS: I'll get them.

*Lalo watches him exit. Off stage, van
doors opening, three prisoners enter,
Jesus behind them. Lalo and Jesus line
them up and take aim. In the last moment*

²⁷ sp. Friends

Jesus swings his aim at Lalo and in a burst of fire, Jesus shoots Lalo. Lalo falls and lies dying. Jesus kneels beside him.

JESUS: Why—why wouldn't you come with me? You hate them as much as I do.

LALO: I hate them all right, you bastard. I told them you were a great guy.

Lalo dies, staring at Jesus. Jesus closes Lalo's eyes. Jesus crosses to the prisoners and unties their hands. As their hands are free they remove the black hoods and gags. Chapa is one of them. Chapa and Jesus stare at one another.

OLD MAN: You know him?

CHAPA: Not like I thought I did.

JESUS: *To the young man.* Change clothes with him, including the hood.

CHAPA: I'll take his gun. Do you have more bullets?

JESUS: In the truck and two more guns.

CHAPA: You must take us to Dos Palomas²⁸.

JESUS: I don't have time. I have to meet Nita.

OLD MAN: Who's Nita?

CHAPA: The prostitute I told you about. She's
not political.

YOUNG MAN: It's critical that you get us to Dos
Palomas.

*Chapa and the young man move
threateningly towards Jesus*

JESUS: I saved your lives, but it doesn't mean I
want to join you. If you take me to the
Docks, you can have the truck.

YOUNG MAN: We already have the truck.

OLD MAN: *To Young Man and Chapa.* The soldier's
right. We can take him to the docks.
Apúrense²⁹—We're wasting time!

Lights down.

²⁸ sp. Two Doves

²⁹ sp. Hurry

SCENE 22 The Tailor's Shop - Door leading out to the street, Nita, Tailor

Spot light on tailor's door and sign.

Nita carrying a suitcase and is wearing a sun hat. She nervously looks over her shoulder as she approaches the shop. She hesitates, turns to leave, then changes her mind again. She knocks on the Tailor's door. The few moments it takes the tailor to answer seem like a lifetime to Nita. As she turns to leave again, the door opens. (Optional: to add to Nita's paranoia, and to give Jesus enough time to change his shirt, a laughing couple can walk past her and turn to look at Nita before they exit.)

NITA: I have a message from Paola. I was a friend of hers.

TAILOR: Please come in.

NITA: I-I can't. I'm in a hurry.

TAILOR: Yes, of course, only a minute. It's not wise to stand out here.

Lights down.

SCENE 23 On Vacation - Café Table, Jesus

Jesus is wears a summer shirt and sits in the bright sun at Miguelito's Café in Calibari. We hear the sound of the sea and seagulls. Jesus looks forlorn and deep in thought as he stares, facing downstage, toward the sea.

Salsa Music starts softly then gets louder.

Curtain.