

The Very Thought of You

Play for 2 actors

by

Gustavo Ott ©2007

Translated by

Heather L. McKay

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One contemplates that curious couple
and would like to know what former sexual territory it occupies
in this wretched society of sex and former partners
...Our sexuality is arranged for something unlivable.

Aside from the forces of exploitation and fear,
only indolence and disinterest seem to govern
relationships between people.

If the deep disinterest that people feel for one
another were taken away, their aggressiveness would
increase...

Botho Strauss/ Couples, Passersby

Characters:

ALFONSO – ROMULO

TERESA - MARIA

Scene:

Lobby of a movie theater. Marquee, counter, and ticket booth.

At the back a large clock that shows the date, which is stopped at 7:14 p.m.

To one side, a store window.

"Quiéreme Mucho" was first published in 1991 (*8 Piezas and Two Plays*, Ed. Congreso Nacional) and was premiered by the group Textoteatro on June 22, 1993, in the Main Theater of Teatro San Martín de Caracas. Later, it had a second season at the same theater beginning October 6, 1993. The cast was as follows:

VERONICA CORTEZ Maria/Teresa
ALEJANDRO CORONA Romulo/Alfonso

Set and Wardrobe design: José Domínguez Bueno
Music: Alfonso Ramírez
Artistic Producers: Orlando Canónico and José Domínguez
Director: Gustavo Ott

FIRST PART

1
May

*Hallway outside the ticket booth.
A poster for the film "TERMINATOR"
Maria, in line, reads a magazine.
Enter Romulo. He checks out Maria's ass.*

Romulo: Excuse me, gorgeous.
(Romulo checks out Maria's legs)
Is this the line for "The Evil that Men Do"?

Maria: Pardon?

Romulo: The Bronson movie, is this where it's playing?

Maria: Across the street.

Romulo: So what's here?

Maria: Terminator.

Romulo: I haven't seen that either.

Maria: (Goes back to reading) ...ah.

Romulo: So, what do you recommend?

Maria: What do you want?

Romulo: For you to recommend a movie.

Maria: Do what you want.

Romulo: I like Schwarzenegger more than Bronson.

Maria: A question of taste.

Romulo: Schwarzenegger's better 'cause... 'cause he's a director too.

Maria: He's a director?

Romulo: Yeah. He's made lots of movies.

- Maria: Like what?
- Romulo: Uh... "The Closed Window".
- Maria: "The Closed Window". Never heard of it.
- Romulo: It's old.
(Romulo checks out Maria's breasts)
I could see both.
- Maria: Both what?
- Romulo: Movies, of course.
- Maria: Of course.
- Romulo: They're almost the same.
(Maria annoyed, turns her back on him)
- Romulo: Could you buy my ticket?
- Maria: I don't know. The line is long.
- Romulo: That's why I'm asking.
- Maria: ...they'll get mad.
- Romulo: Please...
- Maria: Ok. But on one condition.
- Romulo: You name it.
- Maria: You don't talk to me any more.
- Romulo: *(Laughs)* Ok.
(Romulo hands her money)
- Romulo: Hey, don't think I'm some kind of vulture going from theater to theater trying to pick up women... I just want you to do me a favor. I got here and I saw all these people and I said to myself: "I've got to find someone beautiful, someone nice, with a good heart, not just a materialist who only thinks about money..."
- Maria: And you saw me
- Romulo: How old are you?
- Maria: Twenty.

Romulo: What's your name?

Maria: Maria.

Romulo: I'm Romulo. You go to the movies much?

Maria: Yeah.

Romulo: Alone?

Maria: I'm waiting for a friend.

Romulo: Oh! A boyfriend?

Maria: I'll buy your ticket, but I don't want to talk to you. I'm not looking for conversation. Ok?

Romulo: Ok.

(Pause, walks)

Romulo: No conversation. I won't talk to you.
I just thought I could get to know you while I waited for my friend. A college buddy. I'm studying art... film... What you reading? Love stories? They're my favorites too. I'm very romantic. I've seen "Ghost" seven times and...

(Maria hands him his money and walks off)

Hey... wait. All right. I'm sorry. I won't bother you again for the rest of the night. I won't say a word to you. I swear.

(Maria leaves)

Romulo: *(Loud)* But... Don't go...!
I'll buy... I'll pay... You didn't have to walk off...
(Normal)
Fuck, must be a nun or a born again Christian.
(Loud) I won't say another word to you.
Never. Ever.
I swear.
Yes? All right? *(Normal)*
Here she comes... She fell for it. What an airhead!

2

Movie theater lobby, that day.

***On stage, Teresa, sweeping.
She hums a song, suddenly stops.
She finds a wallet.***

- Teresa: Another one!
(Opens it. Just then Alfonso arrives)
- Alfonso: What's that?
- Teresa: Nothing.
- Alfonso: Another wallet.
- Teresa: *(Teresa hands it to him)* But I didn't open it.
- Alfonso: Of course not. It's still got money in it.
- Teresa: How much?
- Alfonso: Twenty.
- Teresa: And you're going to return it?
- Alfonso: Of course, woman.
- Teresa: I don't understand you, Alfonso. I don't... Everyone's finders keepers. But you, you're so stupid you return anything you find. It's not like it's stealing...
- Alfonso: That's all I need!
- Teresa: No one turns in a wallet, much less the cash.
- Alfonso: I came to this country to earn a living, to work. Not to find money thrown on the ground.
- Teresa: But we've been here 30 years now.
- Alfonso: And you're complaining, of course.
- Teresa: Well, when you live as long as I have and you're still pushing a broom the same way you did when you were a girl, you tell me if I don't deserve to complain!

Alfonso: We're better off than back home, I've told you time and time again.

Teresa: ...yeah, right, finding wallets stuffed with cash and returning them like the Sisters of the Sacred Heart. You who hate priests!

Alfonso: Come on... if the owner catches you taking money from those wallets he'll toss you out like that. And I'll be next, since I'm your husband.

Teresa: I'm not scared of the street.

Alfonso: Well, I am, I am. I'd rather not spend eternity with... with the dogs in the pet cemetery.

Teresa: What are you talking about?

Alfonso: Remember that poor guy who lived across the street, the one with the three huge dogs this big?

Teresa: Smelly guy, beer belly?

Alfonso: Did you know he never had a job his whole life?

Teresa: No way!

Alfonso: I swear!

Teresa: But how'd he live?

Alfonso: He watched TV.

Teresa: But, how'd he eat?

Alfonso: With his mouth, like everyone else.

Teresa: I mean, how'd he buy food?

Alfonso: Well, the animal ate dog food, that jellied stuff. I heard he ate it cold.

Teresa: Poor man.

Alfonso: And the dogs would whine when they saw him eating that crap.

Teresa: Of course, they'd tasted it...

Alfonso: Don't laugh, it gives me goose bumps. It's awful, really disgusting.

Teresa: So what happened to the dogs?

Alfonso: They died too.

Teresa: Of sadness, I bet.

Alfonso: Sadness, schmadness. Of hunger.

Teresa: Poor dogs. God is cruel, I've always said so.

Alfonso: God and man, they buried them all together: man and dogs.

Teresa: How sweet!

Alfonso: There's nothing sweet about it. They buried them in the pet cemetery (sadistically)...with plastic roses and all that. You see where unemployment gets you? So we return the money in the wallets and keep our jobs...

Teresa: Where do you think they'll bury me?

Alfonso: Nowhere, because you're ascending straight to heaven.

Teresa: To find you.

Alfonso: And who says I'm going to die first?

Teresa: You're older.

Alfonso: But I'm stronger.

Teresa: Men die first, Alfonso, it's a scientific fact. Even the universities here say so.

Alfonso: They're talking about Gringos. Not us.

Teresa: They'll bury us together and even worse, alone.

Alfonso: No, not alone. We'll be among the dearly departed.

Teresa: But they won't be good company.

Alfonso: Why not?

Teresa: Because they'll be dead.

Alfonso: But... of course! What are you saying? We'll all be...

Teresa: I mean they'll be dead people we don't know. No one who knows us. I wouldn't want to die in this country.

Alfonso: Oh, here she comes!

Teresa: From the same place.

Alfonso: How long do we have to keep going over this?

Teresa: As long as I live.

- Alfonso: But stop talking about the deceased, death gives me the creeps.
- Teresa: I want to die in my own country, Alfonso.
- Alfonso: Enough!
- Teresa: In our country...
- Alfonso: It's always the same, the same, the same...
- Teresa: In the countryside, by the river.
- Alfonso: Teresa, I'm not going back... I'm staying here, in this country and in the movies, what I like best.
- Teresa: No, you don't like this. No. You liked making movies, not selling tickets in a theater... You came here to make money and make movies, and you haven't done either. And don't deny it, cause I've known you since you ate so much butter you even got pimples on your...
- Alfonso: Teresa!
- Teresa: Well, there, down there...
- Alfonso: I won't go back after all these years. I won't go back to be a laughingstock. Do you know how much my younger brother's made? How big my cousins' business has gotten? What would I take back? I remember their faces when I packed up to come here. They envied me, because it all sounded like music!
- Teresa: But now it doesn't sound like anything.
- Alfonso: Life isn't what we expect it to be.
- Teresa: Maybe death is.
- Alfonso: *(Loud)* I told you not to talk about the dead! Hyah! Get moving. Time to sell tickets. There's a line out there. I'll leave the wallet here. I'll tell the owner I just found it. *(Before leaving)* And don't take the money. *(Looks at her)* Go on, move... get to work. *(Exits)*
- Images from the movie "Moonraker" with Roger Moore.*
- Narrator: *"Lewis Gilbert presents the latest greatest adventure of special agent 007, James Bond, as he takes on the death rocket...Moonraker. Coming soon to a theater near you..."*

3 June

*Hallway by the ticket booth.
A poster for "MOONRAKER" starring Roger Moore.*

Romulo onstage, antsy. He stops moving to check out a woman's ass. Maria arrives, surprising him.

- Maria: Have you been waiting long?
- Romulo: Fifteen minutes.
- Maria: What were you doing?
- Romulo: *(Eyeing the ass ahead of him)* Nothing.
- Maria: You must've been doing something.
- Romulo: What happened to you?
- Maria: I had trouble with my new car.
- Romulo: You bought it!
- Maria: A jeep. It's green. And super expensive.
- Romulo: So how are you going to pay for it?
- Maria: With the money my dad left me and my job at the office.
- Romulo: What about college?
- Maria: Everything's possible if you know how to budget.
- Romulo: What's your major again?
- Maria: Animal husbandry.
- Romulo: Yeah. That's it.
- Maria: You always forget.
- Romulo: It's a weird name.
- Maria: You have no idea what it is.

Romulo: And you do?

Maria: Not really. I'm just getting started. First, second semester.

Romulo: First or second?

Maria: Classes from both.

Romulo: Like a dictionary. About everything and nothing.

Maria: Studying's hard.

Romulo: You like Animal biology.

Maria: Animal husbandry.

Romulo: Right.

Maria: I don't know yet.

Romulo: Then why are you studying it?

Maria: Because... ah... Because... I don't know. I think I picked it because it's weird.

Romulo: Brilliant reason.

Maria: A friend of mine. Lucia. She said she liked animal husbandry and I figured I would too. I had two options, history or marine biology.

Romulo: And you ended up in zoology.

Maria: Animal husbandry.

Romulo: It's those guidance counselors. I said I wanted to be a *cinéaste* and they said I should study science. Then I wanted to make movies and ended up taking a class in a bank and...

Maria: You said you were studying art.

Romulo: I did? Oh... Um... That was before. A year ago. Now I'm in a banking class. A banker.

Maria: But you want to make movies.

Romulo: Actually I'm thinking of quitting all this.

Maria: Quitting?

Romulo: College, ok, community college, is worthless, mediocre. It's a waste of time and the professors don't have a clue.

- Maria: Where would you go?
- Romulo: New York, maybe take classes there, do an internship. Then, Hollywood. You want to come with?
- Maria: I'd love it. But aren't you scared?
- Romulo: I'm not scared. Not of being alone or of time or anything because I'm sure of myself, really sure. I know my own worth. I've got confidence.
- Maria: And if one day you find out you've got nothing?
- Romulo: What are you talking about?
- Maria: Nothing, sorry... I've got to go.
- Romulo: I don't know why your mom won't let you spend more than an hour with me.
- Maria: Because she says she doesn't like you.
- Romulo: But she's never seen me!
- Maria: She's got it into her head...
- Romulo: It's humiliating...
- Maria: Be patient...
- Romulo: Two minutes without you seems like two days.
- Maria: Don't be silly, Romulo. We've only known each other for a month and a half.
- Romulo: You're so beautiful.
- Maria: Silly... I'm not so... *(Romulo kisses her)*
- It's been a so long since something like this happened to me.
- Romulo: Me too.
(Romulo continues kissing her on the neck)
- Where should we go?
- Maria: What do you mean where?
- Romulo: We could go to my house...
- Maria: *(Pulling away)* You move fast... too...
We could go to my house...
- Romulo: Your house?

Maria: Yeah, so you can meet my mom.

Romulo: Ok. But on two conditions.

Maria: Yeah?

Romulo: One: Tomorrow's the day.

Maria: The day?

Romulo: The day you come to my place and we... we... we go all the way.

Maria: I don't know if...

Romulo: And two: you let me drive the jeep. Deal?

Maria: Ok...

(Suddenly, Romulo embraces her and kisses her passionately)

Maria: ...but... but. Not like that!

Romulo: You're so beautiful.

(Kisses her again)

Maria: Not in public!

Romulo: I think I'm going to love you forever. I want to live my whole life with you. Take care of you when you're old. Tell you my dreams. I want you to complete my life... because I've got nothing, I've never had anything more exciting in my life than you...

(He kisses her again, a bit roughly. She pulls away, but he hauls her back again.

Music. Black)

4 That day

***Movie theater lobby.
Alfonso checks the garbage cans nervously.***

- Alfonso (FURIOUS) ...That's what I said, what we need is a bit of justice by firing squad.
A wall, a few bodies...
(Finds a wallet. He checks it. No money)
When in my...? No...! If I got my hands on them when I was in the army, we'd shoot them without even checking their ID...

(Enter Teresa, nervous)
- Teresa: Is it true what they're saying?
- Alfonso: That depends on what they're saying.
- Teresa: That the owner tossed you out.
- Alfonso: Then they're telling the truth.
- Teresa: But, why?
- Alfonso: Layoffs. He fired me. (AS THE BOSS) "You know we appreciate your work, but the company just can't afford it, my friend, it can't afford it any more, etc., etc."
(BLOWS UP)
And he's got the nerve to tell me not to worry because you've still got a job!
- Teresa: Oh! Good.
- Alfonso: What? You'd stay? But... They fired me and you'd stay?
- Teresa: Well, of course I would.
- Alfonso: How could you?
- Teresa: Who's going to support us? You?
- Alfonso: How could you keep working for that leech knowing what he's done to

me?

Teresa: Till you find another job.

Alfonso: But OF COURSE! I'll find another job.

Teresa: What will you do?

Alfonso: Well, I could drive a taxi.

Teresa: Fine. And meanwhile, I'll stay here... Who'll sell the tickets?

Alfonso: You'll have to do it.

Teresa: Says who?

Alfonso: The owner told me to tell you.

Teresa: To tell me or to order me?

Alfonso: Both, woman.

Teresa: Well! Finally, a promotion! All these years and they never... so who'll sweep?

Alfonso: You too.

Teresa: *(Loud)* Oh no! One or the other! *(Picks up the tickets)* Are they all here? I'm not doing two jobs.

Alfonso: And why do you think they fired me?

Teresa: I'll ask for a raise.

Alfonso: But, Teresa, why should you stay? I know you have money in the bank. We both do. We could spend three or even four months doing nothing, resting. We could take a vacation somewhere and then, with the taxi...

Teresa: And what about me?

Alfonso: The taxi and our savings are enough for both of us.

Teresa: We can't touch our savings.

Alfonso: But why not?

Teresa: Because that's for going home.

Alfonso: I thought we already went over this.

Teresa: We did, but still... I still think... I'll go.

Alfonso: I'll die before I go back!

Teresa: You want me to wait until your dead?

Alfonso: Teresa!

Teresa: I don't know if I'm that patient.

Alfonso: Are you saying you'd go even if I stay?

Teresa: *(After a pause)* Yes.

Alfonso: You'd leave me alone?

Teresa: If you insist on staying.

Alfonso: Have you made up your mind? *(Teresa nods)*

What a day! I lose my job, then my wife says she's leaving me... What else can go wrong? We'll lose Sunday's soccer match?

Teresa: Probably.

Alfonso: True, they stink this year...

Teresa: You understand... I'm leaving.

Alfonso: No, I don't understand! When?

Teresa: September.

Alfonso: Of what year?

Teresa: This year.

Alfonso: But it's already July!

Teresa: In two months.

Alfonso: So where will you go?

Teresa: My sister's house.

Alfonso: Just like that, that's it?

Teresa: She already knows.

Alfonso: They're expecting you?

Teresa: Yes.

Alfonso: You didn't say anything to me.

- Teresa: No, you're too proud. I didn't want to hurt you.
- Alfonso: And you told her all about our life here?
- Teresa: No, not in detail.
- Alfonso: But some things.
- Teresa: Of course. I had to say something in the letter, didn't I?
- Alfonso: How long have we been together?
- Teresa: Thirty years.
- Alfonso: And you still insist on doing what you want?
- Teresa: I... I need to go to... To die in...
- Alfonso: I always knew you'd betray me one day. You should have worked for the secret police!
- Teresa: I'm not betraying you.
- Alfonso: This isn't betrayal. Then what is it? TLC?
- Teresa: I just want to go home.
- Alfonso: This is your home, traitor.
- Teresa: No, it's not. And it's not yours either. *(Loud)* And don't you ever say that I betrayed you or that this is my country again. It's not. I'm tired of wiping their asses here. I'm sick of them calling me Hispanic, sticking me in their little box like I come from no place... I'm sick of their music and I can't stand the way they talk any longer. *(Softer)* They're not bad. But they're not me. They're not my people. *(Normal)* I want to go because I'm old now and neither one of us has many years left. I want to go and I'm going. *(Opens the window. Begins selling tickets)* Is that clear?
- Alfonso: I'm staying.
- Teresa: *(Selling)* Fine.
- Alfonso: Fine. I... I might as well leave.
- Teresa: Go home. *(To customer)* Don't you have anything smaller? I don't think I've got change... let me see. Here it is. Ok. *(Pause. Looks at Alfonso, who hasn't moved)*
- Alfonso: It's just, after all these years... I'm not going to see it anymore.
- Teresa: You should be glad.

Alfonso: Yeah... (Sits) I hate this place...
Teresa (*Touches his stomach*)
I just realized I hate it...
And knowing that you're leaving and I won't be here

Teresa: Is something wrong?

Alfonso: After all these years they give me the boot...

Teresa: (*Selling*) Two tickets...

Alfonso: And you threaten me...

Teresa: (*Selling*) Three tickets...

Alfonso: You treat me bad.

Teresa: (*Selling*) Do you have anything smaller?

Alfonso: And I've got this pain...

Teresa: (*Selling*) I don't have change...
(To Alfonso) What's the matter?

Alfonso: I don't know if it's leaving all this behind or because I'm...

Teresa: What is it?

Alfonso: I don't know. It hurts.

Teresa: You want some water? (Gets some) Good Lord, I hope you don't have to go to the hospital...

Alfonso: No, I don't need a hospital...

Teresa: (*With the water*) Here.

Alfonso: I don't need it anymore.

Teresa: It passed?

Alfonso: (*Hides his hands between his legs*) ...Tere...

Teresa: What's wrong? You're all red.

Alfonso: I...

Teresa: What?

Alfonso: I shit my pants.

Teresa: What?

Alfonso: I couldn't help it. It was like an attack. All of a sudden. I don't know what happened to me. I'm covered in shit, Teresa, look... *(Teresa looks. Lets out a yell)* ...the chair, my pants, everything.

Teresa: My God! Even your hands are full of...

Alfonso: And now how do I get out of here...?

Teresa: *(Loud)* You shit yourself! How could you...? Come on, get up... Ugh, you smell like... And now I have to clean it all up before the customers come in...

(Alfonso stands and walks, literally with his tail between his legs)

Teresa: *(Loud, between pity and rage)* What a mess!

Narrator: *"All he wants is respect as a black man... "Ragtime," the movie...*

5 September

*Hallway outside the movie theater.
A poster for "Ragtime."
On stage, Romulo with a bouquet of flowers.
To one side, Teresa walks by with a suitcase.
She is well dressed.*

Romulo: Excuse me, ma'am, could you tell me what time you start selling tickets?

Teresa: Hang on, I just got here.

Romulo: It's late.

Teresa: The tickets won't run out...

(Just then, Teresa's suitcase pops open)

Teresa: Good heavens!

Romulo: Don't worry...

(Romulo helps her collect her things)

Teresa: Thank you...

Romulo: Hold the flowers...

Teresa: Are they for your girlfriend?

Romulo: Yes... she's my...

Teresa: She's very pretty. And so young.

Romulo: Do you know her?

Teresa: That was my only pastime in this place: people watching.

Romulo: I didn't notice you.

Teresa: No, of course not.

(Hands her the suitcase)

Romulo: Good as new.

- Teresa: How long have you known each other?
- Romulo: Four months.
- Teresa: You're just getting started...
- Romulo: We're going to get married.
- Teresa: *(Shouts)* Ah! You're getting married! How wonderful! And so young. I like that. You have to take the plunge when you're young, when you've got the strength to do things. Getting married is good. A long engagement's a bad thing.
- Romulo: My mother-in-law doesn't think so.
- Teresa: Because she's afraid you'll take her away. She's jealous. That's how mothers are...
- Romulo: Do you have kids?
- Teresa: *(Short pause, like before something she's said all her life)* ...I have nieces and nephews, as the saying goes, though I suppose they don't count since I haven't seen them for thirty years.
(Picking up the suitcase)
Don't pay attention to that woman...
Long engagements make people strange...
- Romulo: *Strange how?*
- Teresa: Strange. It always goes wrong. Especially if they've tried, you know what I mean... *(Makes an obscene gesture)* You know...
- Romulo: Right, that...
- Teresa: Right, honey, that's what it's all about... or isn't it? When a couple tries before getting married, well they have a harder time getting to the altar. Everything loses its charm. You haven't...?
- Romulo: Me!
- Teresa: With her...
- Romulo: These things are...
- Teresa: After all, it's the only reason men get married...
- Romulo: It's not the only reason...
- Teresa: ...Of course you say that, it's a secret. But it's easy enough to find out. Like... Are you getting married in church or just City Hall?

Romulo: Just City Hall.

Teresa: Then you tried already. It's a shame. That's what leads to all these divorces. Everyone's getting divorced. Everyone thinks they have the right to split up...

Romulo: We'll never get divorced.

Teresa: ...they even legalized divorce back home...
Where will it all end? Divorce! See what democracy brings

Romulo: You mean in your day there was no...

Teresa: How could you even think it? They'd burn you alive!

Romulo: So what'd they do when they no longer...?

Teresa: Stuck with it... or split up, more or less... or they'd go out for cigarettes and never come back, like my father did. But divorce, like that on paper, never! Better to go all in black!

Romulo: All in black?

Teresa: A widow, son, a widow, like my sister the saint. When she saw her husband was cheating on her and seeing another woman, she cooked him up a special tortilla and bam!, that was his last night.

Romulo: She killed him!

Teresa: Killed him, now, kill... there are degrees, like the theater owner says. It's all about degrees... If she let him go, she'd be the dead one, because a used woman, back then. You tell me. But killing... No. Let's just say she considered it self defense.
What do you two do? Do you work?

Romulo: We work.

Teresa: You're not in college?

Romulo: Sort of.

Teresa: I would have loved to go to college...

Romulo: Why didn't you?

Teresa: In my day you didn't.

Romulo: Oh!

Teresa: And I married young.

Romulo: First off, we're going to travel, see the world, go places. Then we'll buy an apartment.

- Teresa: Aren't you nervous?
- Romulo: Well, a little. Leaving home... knowing no one else will support me. Having a family... that's scary.
- Teresa: It's normal. When I left home to go with my husband, I was scared to death too. And you see. Nothing happened to me... Well, I mean, nothing bad happened to me. Life goes on. It won't kill you. Death is the only thing you can't change.
- Romulo: I'm not thinking about death.
- Teresa: Of course not... honey. Well, what can I tell you! Stick together during the bad times. And, just in case, don't drop clues if you're going to get divorced. Be patient... Well I... *(Sad)* ...I don't know why I'm telling you all this... who am I to say, what do I know...?
- Romulo: What's the matter?
- Teresa: Nothing, honey. Loving is hard.
And living life is a nightmare.
And sharing it with someone is impossible.
And still we do it...
I don't know how or why.
But we do it.
(Wipes a tear)
Good luck.
- Romulo: What's your name?
- Teresa: Teresa.
- Romulo: Teresa, tell me something...
- Teresa: Yes?
- Romulo: What time are you going to start selling tickets?
- Teresa: *(Disappointed)* Tickets... At seven.
You shouldn't see this movie, it's too sad...
- Romulo: It doesn't matter. Sadness doesn't bother me.
- Teresa: Well that's a shame.

(Teresa exits)
- Romulo: *(Annoyed)* ...people like that are the reason things are the way they are. They stand around blabbing and nothing starts on time. And I'm worse, talking to a know-nothing old woman. She's nuts. Certifiable.

(Tosses the flowers, then regrets it and picks them up again)

6 That day

Teresa: *(Looking at her watch)* Good heavens, you get to talking... and time just flies! I wish I could just open the door and let them all in and end this nightmare already...

(Suddenly remembering something important)

My plane ticket!

(Teresa opens her suitcase, desperate.

Finds the ticket)

Ticket, passport. All there.

(Enter Alfonso)

Teresa: I told you to meet me at the airport.

Alfonso: I know, but I thought if you had to take a taxi there, I might as well drive you.

Teresa: I was going to take the bus, anyway.

Alfonso: So what! I take strangers, why not you too?

Teresa: And the trip you had planned with those Spanish tourists?

Alfonso: I stood them up. They'll figure it out. Anyway, they're loaded...

Teresa: Well, at least you can help me with my suitcase.

Alfonso: How many are you taking?

Teresa: One.

Alfonso: One?

Teresa: One.

Alfonso: Good God woman!
How can you do these things?

Teresa: What?

Alfonso: Go home with a single suitcase.
What will they say? You spent thirty years in another country and all you've got is a single suitcase?

Teresa: It's easier. And it's the truth.

Alfonso: The truth, the truth. It's always the truth with you. One day you're going to drop dead from all that truth. What time does your plane leave?

Teresa: At eleven.

Alfonso: We've got time.

Teresa: The owner gave me permission to leave at nine, after they go in for the last show...

Alfonso: I'll bet you're glad you won't be sweeping this place anymore.

Teresa: The owner wants to talk to you. It looks like he's going to ask you to come back to work here.

Alfonso: Me!

Teresa: Ahah.

Alfonso: But... What nerve. What did he say?

Teresa: First he asked how you were doing with the taxi.

Alfonso: And you, what'd you tell him?

Teresa: ...well the truth, not so good.

Alfonso: Again with the truth! You're going to kill me with all this truth, Teresa. It's not possible. You have to lie sometime in your life.

Teresa: You can't look down your nose at anything in life. If he wants to give you the job and you need to come back, then that's that. Do it.

Alfonso: I'll bet he laughed at me.

Teresa: Not at all, he said he wanted to see you as soon as possible.

Alfonso: He'll ask me to clean...

Teresa: And sell tickets.

Alfonso: He's an animal. I'd never sweep a dump like this.

Teresa: I did and it didn't bother you.

Alfonso: That's different.

Teresa: Different, different. How?

Alfonso: Because you're a woman, damnit.

Teresa: That's got nothing to do with it. Sweeping's got nothing to do with

genitals. You don't hold the broom down there. And it won't make you a criminal. People've been doing it for ages.

Alfonso: Well I'm not people.

Teresa: No? Then what are you?

Alfonso: *(Furious)* I... I'm... *(Loud)* I'm me!

Teresa: Of course.

Alfonso: Of course.

Teresa: So that's how it is

Alfonso: That's how it is

Teresa: Amen

Alfonso: And God bless

Teresa: That's that

Alfonso: Period

(They stare at each other a moment, challengingly)

Teresa: What time is it?

Alfonso: It's not even seven yet, woman.

Teresa: Still?

Alfonso: No.

Teresa: But we've been talking for half an hour!

Alfonso: Hah, I just got here...

Teresa: It's just I'm nervous, Alfonso. I wish you'd come with me.

Alfonso: Let's not go there.

Teresa: What do you think a plane's like?

Alfonso: A plane? Well, a plane is... it's like a bus. Only it has wings and it moves less.

Teresa: I don't know. The last time I traveled I was on a boat and I was eighteen.

Alfonso: You were more frightened than my mother replacing a light bulb.

- Teresa: With good reason. Alone, on a boat that big. My girlfriends and sisters all envied me back then. What will they say when they see me now!
- Alfonso: Nothing. Most of them are dead.
- Teresa: Yeah, thank heavens.
- Alfonso: You've got a coat, you know it's getting cold there now.
- Teresa: I've got a coat.
- (Pause. They hug)*
- Alfonso: It'll be hard for me being alone. You know, if you're not happy there, you can come back.
- Teresa: I know, and if you want to come...
- Alfonso: Enough!
- Teresa: I'm sor...
- Alfonso: All right, all right...
- Teresa: Ok.
- Alfonso: Of course
- Teresa: Of course
- Alfonso: That's how it is
- Teresa: Amen
- Alfonso: Fine. *(Pause)*
So.
Remember to write me and tell me how things are. Last time I was there, between the military, the politicians and the priests they had everything squeezed so tight you couldn't even pee in peace. And send me a bottle of red wine, that watery California stuff they drink here...
- Teresa: Sure, whatever you want.
- Alfonso: And you... you... What do you want me to send?
- Teresa: From here...? Nothing. Just write me. What time is it?
- Alfonso: *(Looks at his watch, is startled)* Now it is time to open. I... I'll wait for you in the garage.
- Teresa: You're going to wait for me all that time?
- Alfonso: Yeah... I've got to get used to it.

Teresa: Don't say that.

Alfonso: When the show's over, come down and we'll go.
Maybe... well maybe I could...
...I could convince you...

(His eyes water. Takes off his glasses)

Well, convince you not to go.

(Pause)

Teresa: Alfonso, I wish...

Alfonso: Right, right, right, I know your mind's made up. I know you've got one foot on the plane and...

(Looks at her) but... still.

Teresa: Alfonso... I *(Bravely)*
Nothing in the world would make me stay.

Alfonso: Right... *(Dries his tears)* Nothing... Courage boys! I'll wait for you downstairs.

*(Alfonso disappears.
Teresa looks coldly at the spot where he exited.
She can't hold back a tear)*

Teresa: And here I'd never seen him cry.

*(Pause. Moves to the ticket booth
Opens the little window)*

Romulo (off): Finally. You're half an hour late. ...I'll take two tickets.

Teresa: *(To the voice)* And the poor man couldn't even fry an egg!

Romulo (off): What did you say?

Teresa: That my husband doesn't even know how to make coffee!

Romulo (off): So what do I care!

Teresa: *(Throws the tickets in the air)*
Right, you don't care about anything!

SAD MUSIC.

***Blackout.
End of the first act.***

SECOND ACT

1

May

Movie theater lobby. The theater has gone downhill. There is no longer a clock or counter. A tacky poster for the movie of the day:

***“Santo and the Border of Terror”
Alfonso mans the ticket booth.***

Alfonso: *(Speaking to someone we can't see)*...Here's one of her letters. I left it here last year, when you could leave things in this theater and they showed beautiful movies like that one about the black people burning everything...

Voice 1: Ragtime...

Alfonso: That's it, Ragtime... Weird name! What's it mean again? Anyway, the letter's from her, even though she doesn't write them. She doesn't know how. Someone else does. My aunt or my sister. I don't know. I haven't heard a word from them since I came to this country thirty one years ago.

Voice 1: Thirty one?

Alfonso: Yeah. Thirty one lousy years.

Voice 1: So what's she doing now?

Alfonso: Nothing. She lives there. Takes care of other people's kids. When people go to the beach or shopping, they leave their kids for her to take care of. She remembers everything. Her memory's good.

She doesn't just take care of kids, she reminds everyone of all the important dates, birthdays, anniversaries.

(Enter Teresa, broom in hand)

Mom's a saint. She must be ninety something. Look... here she's telling me not to forget my birthday. I told you!

Teresa: Don't tell me your mother reminds you about your own birthday?

Alfonso: Yeah.

Teresa: You should be ashamed.

Alfonso: You're right.

Teresa: So what else does your mother say?

Alfonso: *(Coming out of the booth)* Well, the same old thing. I should come home. She wants me to go back to see the soccer finals.

Teresa: Soccer... soccer. Can you tell me what soccer has ever done for you that it's all you ever talk about? You don't even know how to play...

Alfonso: No? No?... I was one of the best goalies of my generation... Here Mom says so. She always reminds me: "...I'll never forget how you played soccer..." See?

Teresa: Poor deluded woman if she thinks you're going back. If I didn't, with ticket in hand and my suitcase packed.

Alfonso: She thinks she going to see me before she dies.

Teresa: Now that she can do.

Alfonso: What are you talking about, woman?

Teresa: She could come to say goodbye.

Alfonso: At her age? On a plane? Are you crazy?

Teresa: Of course not... I mean she could come in spirit.

Alfonso: Now don't start with your stories about the dead and ghosts, it makes my blood run cold, Teresa...

Teresa: But it's the truth.

Alfonso: Again with the truth! Now the truth has to do with spirits!

Teresa: My mother did it.

Alfonso: Pure imagination on your part.

Teresa: No sir. It was last year, when I decided to stay. Mom came in the morning. She was standing beside the bed looking at me and just like that she woke me up, she touched my shoulder and in her scolding voice, said: *(In a spectral voice)* And where is...?

Alfonso: No, Teresa, please. Not the voice. You're going to make me cry, woman.

Teresa: *(Friendlier tone)* "And where is your husband?"

Alfonso: Me?

- Teresa: You're the only husband I've got.
- Alfonso: And why did she ask about me, if she never met me?
- Teresa: Of course she met you. She knew who you were. In the beginning, when I said I was leaving to marry you, she said: "Yes, my dear, go, take care of him, that man needs mothering..."
- Alfonso: I needed...!
- Teresa: You see how she knew you?
- Alfonso: Jesus! What else did she say about me?
- Teresa: ...the day Mom came to the house, after she died,
- Alfonso: AY, Good God...!
- Teresa: ...she said you weren't handsome, but you were hardworking. That you were a bit rough around the edges, but you loved me. Then she complained about the weather here.
- Alfonso: So now spirits can feel the weather?
- Teresa: I don't know. But she said it was better back home...
- Alfonso: You don't have to be dead to know that.
- Teresa: Then she blessed me, took my face in her hands and kissed me.
- Alfonso: *(Terrified)* The spirit kissed you!
- (Teresa nods)*
- Ay... It gives me goose bumps!
- Teresa: Over nothing. It's natural.
- Alfonso: If my mother's spirit comes to me some day and kisses me, I'll have a heart attack, and a stroke, my lungs will collapse and my nails will all fall out.
(Shaking off the terror)
I don't understand how you can like talking about the dead!
- Teresa: Can I sell the tickets?
- Alfonso: *(Reading)* ...Listen to Mom.
She's asking if I can still make you happy.
- Teresa: Make me happy how?
- Alfonso: You know... doing stuff...

- Teresa: *(Makes a dirty gesture) Doing...?*
- Alfonso: Yes.
- Teresa: Well! So what are you going to tell her?
- Alfonso: Your favorite. The truth.
- Teresa: It might make her sad.
- Alfonso: What do you...? *(Teresa laughs)* Tease... *(Alfonso takes her and runs his hand up her skirt)*
- Teresa: Where'd you see that?
- Alfonso: The midnight movie, rated quadruple Z.
(Alfonso chases her all around. She runs, happily)
- Teresa: Let go, there are people out there! *(Going out)* My God, what a man...
- Alfonso: ...Man... Movies can be stimulating. *(Looking at the letter)* The truth is I'd go back just for the soccer.
- Teresa: Buy yourself a big TV and you can see it all at home... *(Alfonso just looks at her)* Including your rated X, Y, and Z movies.
- Alfonso: What do I need them for, you've still got the ass of a teenager!
(Teresa laughs in the distance, happily)

2 That day

***Hallway outside the movie theater.
Onstage, Maria, trying not to make eye contact with anyone.
Tugs down on her skirt.***

Man's voice: Hey baby! You here alone?

Another man: So sweetheart, you looking for action?

(Maria, nervous, lowers her head. Romulo arrives)

Maria: *(Furious)* Always late!

Romulo: What time is it?

Maria: It's seven already.

Romulo: So what time did we say?

Maria: Six thirty.

Romulo: There was traffic, Maria. It's Monday... there's traffic all over. *(Looking at the movie theater)* I love Santo's movies.

Maria: There was no traffic coming this way. Where'd you leave my jeep?

Romulo: Out front.

Maria: I told you to park in the garage.

Romulo: Nothing's gonna happen to it.

Maria: You never listen... Did you at least lock it up?

Romulo: Yes

Maria: I don't like you using it, I don't like it... I don't like that you make me walk when I have a jeep that I bought with my money.
I don't like you using it.

Romulo: Ok. Fine. I won't use it any more.

Maria: Why do I have to walk and you use the jeep?

Romulo: I have important stuff to do.

Maria: And I don't?

Romulo: It's not the same. I'm doing business.

Maria: You're not doing anything. You just drive around, picking up women.

Romulo: You jealous?

Maria: I don't care if you're with bimbos. What pisses me off is you pick them up in my jeep.

Romulo: Enough Maria. I don't pick up anyone. You haven't even finished paying it off yet.

Maria: It's not about... How could you be so...? It's about respect. You don't respect anything anymore.

Romulo: If you didn't want me to use it you shouldn't have given it to me the first time.

Maria: The first time it was new and you asked me to marry you.

Romulo: Go on, say I married you for that stupid jeep.

Maria: No. Maybe not.

Romulo: What do you mean "maybe"?

Maria: It could have influenced you.

Romulo: What?

Maria: I mean in a figurative sense.

Romulo: Figurative? What the hell is that?

Maria: A symbol.

Romulo: That hunk-of-junk without even a decent spark plug is a symbol?

Maria: I don't want you using it any more.

Romulo: Take the keys.

(Romulo throws the keys down. Maria looks around them)

Maria: People are watching us.

Romulo: So?

Maria: Don't ask for the keys again.

- Romulo: I don't need them. I don't need to ask you for the key to use that piece of shit.
- Maria: Yeah, I know you can...
- Romulo: And it's a damn good thing you know it cause I'm gonna use it whenever I feel like it. Got it?
- Maria: Goodbye...
- (Maria turns to leave. Romulo stops her)*
- Romulo: Wait, wait, wait... Ok, fine. I'm sorry. I'm not... I'm nervous. You know things between us aren't... aren't...
- Maria: It's not my fault.
- Romulo: Yesterday you said you didn't love me.
- Maria: You said it last week.
- Romulo: Because it'd been... it's been so many days since we... since we slept together.
- Maria: Not days. Months.
- Romulo: I wanted to say I'm sorry for that.
- Maria: Why? It's not your fault. It's me.
- Romulo: What do you...?
- Maria: I'm not attracted to you anymore.
- (Maria tries to go)*
- Romulo: *(Stops her)* Wait... wait. Don't go... *(Pause)* I haven't been feeling good and it's... because... Because I'm nervous. When we have... We're just getting started and we don't have any money... We spent it on... And... all the money... money's the answer. When you've got money, you can fix anything. All our problems...
- Maria: Sex isn't a money problem... I'm not an idiot.
- Romulo: Of course not, of course not, but it affects things... My nerves, yours... I quit college...
- Maria: So did I.
- Romulo: It's not the same. I wanted to do cinema and...
- Maria: And I was studying animal husbandry.

Romulo: Yeah, but that's crap.

Maria: Right, my stuff's always less important.

Romulo: No, not all your stuff.

Maria: Right, not my jeep.

Romulo: Not our jeep.

Maria: Right now I could kill you. I'm leaving.

Romulo: Wait... wait... Ok. Look, we've got problems but... If you... I don't know. With a new place. Another jeep, one like yours, one for each of us. You see?

Then, we could travel, go on vacation, get out of the city and hire someone to clean and iron and cook and then you wouldn't have to work and you'd be happier.

Maria: And the money?

Romulo: You can ask your mom for it.

Maria: Mom wouldn't even give you the time of day.

Romulo: We could have a baby.

Maria: A baby...

Romulo: That will soften her up if you worked a bit more...

Maria: I do everything I can in that fucking teller window you buried me in.

Romulo: Maybe we can get a loan from the bank.

Maria: Why would they give you a loan? You're just a teller.

Romulo: Against my pension and my IRA. Yours and mine.

Maria: And then?

Romulo: Then what?

Maria: When it's all gone?

Romulo: Well... then we'll have things.

Maria: Yes, but, then what do we do?

Romulo: I don't know. I'll have a better job at the bank. I'm not gonna be a teller all my life. I'm going places. In two months, maybe three, I'll get a promotion and then, I keep at it, moving up, and in two years, some

responsibility, some power.

Maria: I wanted to go to college.

Romulo: It's a waste of time...

Maria: Study abroad...

Romulo: It's not worth it... All those people who study abroad are a bunch of idiots.

Maria: ...I wish I had stuck with Animal Husbandry.

Romulo: So why didn't you?

Maria: True!

Romulo: *(Looking at the movies)* You have enough for the tickets? I'm wiped out...

Maria: I'd be doing things I can't even imagine now.

Romulo: "Santo vs. the Empire of Terror"
I love Santo... look the movie's... let's drop this...

Maria: I'd be finished now.

Romulo: Yeah, and unemployed.

Maria: At least I'd have some pride.

Romulo: Pride in a shitty degree?

Maria: No, because I respected myself.

Romulo: Well, then respect yourself and that's that.

Maria: It's hard.

Romulo: What?

Maria: To respect yourself when all you do is cash checks and wait on a bunch of rude people. The truth is I don't have a very high opinion of myself. Or you either.

Romulo: Don't be like that, don't... we have to have a baby... Ok? A kid.

Maria: A kid...

Romulo: Come on, let's try. A kid, your mom'll help us. We'll ask for a loan and... and we'll make money. Forget school. Just... just progress. That's it. Progress. That's my word.

(Romulo tries to kiss her. She avoids him. Then he kisses her roughly. She lets him. All very cold)

Romulo: Give me the keys. *(She hands them to him)* I love Mexican movies...

Narrator: *(Background music)"...For Paul Newman, the Bronx is a nightmare with no exceptions and no escape where the police commit the most brutal crimes. Daniel Pietrie directs: "Fort Apache, The Bronx": sex and violence in a living hell. Distributed by..."*

3 July

Movie theater lobby. Poster for the film "Fort Apache, the Bronx"

Alfonso stands still, listening to his wife from halfway up a ladder. His hand hovers holding a letter. Teresa holds more marquee letters.

- Teresa: ...then, a man, in a military uniform...
- Alfonso: In a military uniform...
- Teresa: This madman, took out a machine gun and when the kids got out of school he waited for them all to reach the patio and...
- Alfonso: And...?
- Teresa: *(In a fury)* Ratatataratarataratatattttatata!
- Alfonso: Fuck! *(Pause. He looks at her. She waits for him to speak)* He shot them?
- Teresa: Without warning. Thirty children dead.
- Alfonso: The bastard...
- Teresa: Then, the nutjob took a pistol...
- Alfonso: A machine gun and a pistol! What war was he trying to start...?
- Teresa: *(Continuing her thought)* And blew his brains out.
- Alfonso: Well, it's the least he could do...
- Teresa: That what I say.
- Alfonso: People are crazy.
- Teresa: All of them. They think they're warriors. Where will it all lead...
- (Alfonso finishes climbing the ladder. Teresa steadies him)*
- Alfonso: It's obvious they've never been in a war. They don't realize... The don't know what it means.

Teresa: Now you're going to tell me that you do...

Alfonso: Well the... sure... a war... When I was ten.

Teresa: Ooooh! Let's not talk about ancient history...

Alfonso: You're wrong... You remember Lucia, fat Antonia's daughter?

Teresa: Lucia...

Alfonso: Exactly.

Teresa: With red hair?

Alfonso: That's the one.

Teresa: Sure, she was a friend of mine. I think she got married. It's been over thirty one years since I saw her.

Alfonso: Well here's the thing, when I was old enough to go to war, my dream was to marry her, not you.

Teresa: Marry her!

Alfonso: I even proposed.

Teresa: *(Shakes the ladder)* You never told me that.

Alfonso: Woman... I'm going to fall...!

Teresa: *(Steadies him again)* You kept it to yourself, you animal...

Alfonso: I just forgot about it. But today, all of a sudden, with this talk about people killing on a whim, it was like something was going to happen and it popped into my head that I have to tell you a story, one you don't know.

Teresa: What's going to happen?

Alfonso: Nothing, woman, nothing. It's in my head. I said "it was like something was going to happen"...the thing is once I asked her to marry me.

Teresa: Oh! So fine... and what did she say?

Alfonso: She said yes just like that. She said she wanted to have my children and that we should get started on it right away.

Teresa: *(Shakes the ladder)* But she was a child!!

Alfonso: *(Comes down the ladder)* Teresa, she was a teenager.

- Teresa: And she already wanted babies!
- Alfonso: Well yeah.
- Teresa: Well now, wasn't Lucia mature for her age. *(Changes her attitude)* Alfonso don't come to me now with the story that you've got a kid somewhere!
- Alfonso: *(Goes up again)* No, woman, I've got nothing. It was a memory. She wanted to and so did I, but nothing happened.
- Teresa: Nothing...?
- Alfonso: Nothing... Hand me a B
- Teresa: A "B" or a "V"?
- Alfonso: Take your pick.
- Teresa: Well here's a V...
- Alfonso: Don't be stupid, woman... Can't you see I'm writing "Bronx" and it's spelled with a B over there?
- Teresa: What do I know. Bronx with a "B" or a "V", what's it matter? It doesn't mean anything anyway.
- Alfonso: Of course it means something...
- Teresa: What?
- Alfonso: *(After a pause)* I don't know. It's some Indian word... *(Teresa hands him a letter for the marquee)*
- Teresa: Well I think it's a good thing nothing happened between you and Lucia, she was too young.
- Alfonso: You know why nothing happened?
- Teresa: She got scared, like they all do.
- Alfonso: No. I got scared.
- Teresa: You?
- Alfonso: Ahah.
- Teresa: *(Laughs)* You were a boy... *(She laughs)* But you tried!
- Alfonso: Of course, I'm a man. We were in the stable and...
- Teresa: What were you doing in a stable with that woman?

Alfonso: We were running away from this crazy nanny goat that came after us.

Teresa: ...and so, of course, you took her into the stable. Very nice.

Alfonso: Hand me the "R"

Teresa: *(Does)* So...?

Alfonso: What?

Teresa: *(Shakes the ladder)* You took her to the stable!

Alfonso: All right, all right, but calm down, you're going to knock me over. The two of us were alone, well, the three of us, cause that crazy goat was waiting for us outside. Then she said she wanted my baby.

Teresa: The goat?

Alfonso: Forget the goat! Lucia!

Teresa: The bitch!

Alfonso: Not a bitch, a goat. A bitch and a goat are different animals, Teresa.

Teresa: Whatever. What happened with the goat, the bitch and Lucia.

Alfonso: Then I... of course, I took off her clothes and... and...

Teresa: *(Shakes the ladder hard)* You took off her clothes!

Alfonso: You're knocking me down. *(Pause)* Finished? *(Pause)* Hand me an "X".

Teresa: Forget the X. What happened?!

Alfonso: Just what I said. Nothing. I couldn't, I just stood there like a dope, I couldn't do anything... I need the "X"

Teresa: You didn't do anything. Good. So... an "X"?

Alfonso: It says "Bronx", doesn't it?

Teresa: Yes.

Alfonso: It's missing an "X"

Teresa: Why don't you just leave it like that?

Alfonso: Because it's spelled wrong.

Teresa: Didn't you say it was Indian?

Alfonso: Yeah, but...

- Teresa: So no one's going to notice.
- Alfonso: Why not?
- Teresa: Because no one here speaks Indian. They can barely get out their English and that's with an accent.
- Alfonso: Teresa, please, the "X"
- Teresa: So, leave it that way, period, there's no X's, no Z's, no goats, no nothing. We're going to have to talk to the owner. We're missing letters. And then they change the movies whenever they feel like it. Today they advertise one thing in the paper and here we're showing something else. And the movies just get worse and worse. I'm telling you this theater's going downhill.
- Alfonso: *(Gets off the ladder)* Down a cliff, sweetheart...
- Teresa: ...The worst in the city.
- Alfonso: Look what we've come to.
- Teresa: We haven't had a premiere since last year.
- Alfonso: That Santo movie from two months ago, they showed it last night on TV.
- Teresa: No one's going to want to come here.
- Alfonso: I think this place is going to fold. There's no more customers.
- Teresa: Just old men and those women.
- Alfonso: ...And that's on Monday, Teresa, half-price day, cause who's going to pay full price to watch a movie they can see on TV any time?
- Teresa: Well if this goes bust, we're out on the street. And that's just fine because... because we shouldn't be working anymore. We should leave this dump and go away...
- Alfonso: *(Suspicious)* Where?
- Teresa: What do I know... the country.
- Alfonso: Back home?
- Teresa: Of course not. Home's not real anymore, home's a dream. I mean here, take our money out of the bank and go. The two of us... to the country.
- Alfonso: And what would we do there?
- Teresa: Nothing.

Alfonso: Nothing?

Teresa: Exactly.

Alfonso: Nothing at all?

Teresa: Of course.

Alfonso: Of course.

Teresa: That's how it is

Alfonso: That's how it is

Teresa: Amen

Alfonso: Nothing and then, nothing.

Teresa: That's that

Alfonso: Period

Teresa: "Nothing" is better than this.

Alfonso: No more tickets, no more broom, no more half-price Mondays. Leave. Just like that. DAMN!
I'm so bad at making decisions.

Teresa: *(Seriously)* Alfonso: if I don't feel like I'm twenty again, I'll probably die.

Alfonso: But Teresa: you've got the ass of a teenager.

Teresa: Still. I'm dying of sadness in this place.

Alfonso: When you get started on the dead there's no stopping you.
(Exiting) I'm going to look for the "X".
(Before leaving, feeling Teresa's eyes on his back, he turns)
Teresa...

I wanted to tell you that the story about the goat and Lucia...

Teresa: I don't care, Alfonso.

Alfonso: No, I wanted to tell you, anyway... The very thought of you... I mean, I want you to know that now with the chills I get at night, even in the morning, and this hand that's been shaky ever since I turned sixty and this pain here *(his chest)*, I want to tell you that I thank God it wasn't her...
That it wasn't Lucia.
That nothing happened with her.
Because if there's anyone I want to be with here, it's you.

(Pause)

I mean I've been so lucky to have you by my side. And that you never left me.

(They look at each other. She is about to speak, but he cuts her off)

I'm going to get the "X"

Teresa: The "X"... *(Pause)* And here there never were any goats in that area. Alfonso, he never did learn how to lie.

(Happy)

It's a good thing I didn't go back home.

Poor Alfonso would have died on the spot.

4 That day

***Hallway outside the movie theater.
Romulo holds a newspaper and reads with interest.
Maria looks all around.***

- Romulo: Stupid college students. Always protesting. *(Laughs)* They should put them to work.
- Maria: Romulo, I think it's time we stopped coming here.
- Romulo: They're canceling classes. See? It's a good thing you're not there.
- Maria: The people here have gotten so strange...
- Romulo: Ten students expelled in under 48 hours. They're terrorists, nothing inside. They're pig-headed, criminals. You'll see, instead of giving them what they want, they'll kick them all out.
- Maria: ...they all look like animals...
- Romulo: ...Good, then there'll be no more doctors.
- Maria: You only take me to sleazy theaters.
- Romulo: They're cheaper.
- Maria: But we come on Mondays.
- Romulo: Of course, half price.
- Maria: Right. It's half price and we could go to some other theater, a better one, where the movies aren't so violent and cheesy.
- Romulo: You said you liked it before.
- Maria: A year ago it was different. But not anymore. I wish you'd take me to see something romantic, with normal people...
- Romulo: There are normal people here.
- Maria: They're all men.
- Romulo: That's a woman over there.
- Maria: She's a prostitute.

Romulo: How can you tell?

Maria: She is.

Romulo: You're obsessed.

Maria: Besides, every time I come here those men stare at me and say things... They must think I'm a sicko like them.

Romulo: Ignore them.

Maria: That guy over there, he came right up next to me once. He even tried to touch my leg.

Romulo: So what'd you do?

Maria: I gave him a dirty look.

Romulo: You didn't like it?

Maria: Of course I didn't like it, you idiot!

Romulo: Ok, so what'd he say?

Maria: Something crude. Then he left.

Romulo: To look for another woman.

Maria: I suppose so.

Romulo: That's normal.

Maria: Normal? You do that?

Romulo: Sometimes... of course, not that way, not so crude.

Maria: A year ago you couldn't have said that to me.

Romulo: But I still did it.

Maria: ...last year you would have fought for me.

Romulo: Because some guy looked at you?

Maria: It's not the look, it's the attitude.

Romulo: You're overreacting. And you're upset because... You've been like this... You've been in this mood for weeks now...

Maria: I don't feel good

Romulo: What's wrong?

Maria: I ran into someone.

Romulo: And that made you feel bad?

Maria: It's just when I saw her I was envious. And being envious makes me feel bad.

Romulo: Who was it?

Maria: Lucia. My friend. She's graduating in Animal Husbandry.

Romulo: She won't be able to.

Maria: No?

Romulo: They're going to close the University.

Maria: ...She has good grades and she's working as a consultant at a farm.

Romulo: And you admire that?

Maria: That and...

Romulo: And...?

Maria: Well, she's still on her own.

Romulo: On her own?

Maria: Not married.

Romulo: But you have things she doesn't...

Maria: Like what?

Romulo: Well, the baby you're going to have. Did you tell her?

Maria: Of course not. I was ashamed.

Romulo: Don't be stupid. Everyone knows you're...

Maria: She pretended not to know.

Romulo: So how do you know she knows?

Maria: ...Because she had pity in her eyes. She looks younger even though she's older than me. She hasn't changed a bit, and I... She said I looked like a married woman...

Romulo: You are a married woman.

Maria: I'm barely twenty four.

Romulo: But you're married.
(Maria takes out a compact and primps)

Maria: No one warned me about this. No one.

Romulo: You're a broken record. Always saying the same things.
(Pause. He looks at her)
Maria, your mother talked to me yesterday.

Maria: I've had almost no friends for a year now. I never go out at night, or have fun, or do anything with my life but think about other people.

Romulo: ...and she said you... you...

Maria: ...and sure, who cares if they're friends with me or not?

Romulo: ...you want to get separated.
(Pause. Maria snaps the compact shut furiously)

Maria: The marquee is missing an "X". The people at this theater are irresponsible. They're lazy. They do a half-assed job of everything. I bet they didn't know...

Romulo: And you know perfectly well you've got no real reason to get separated.

Maria: I read an article that said these imported lipsticks can be contaminated with AIDS. Or some kind of VD. What do you think of that?

Romulo: If you want to leave me it's because there's someone else. Is there?

Maria: Is there what?

Romulo: Another man.

Maria: *(Changes attitude)* Don't be an idiot, don't be stupid, don't be an ass, damn you, damn you, say that again and I'll scratch your eyes out, I'll poison you or kill you however I can...!!

Romulo: Then why?

Maria: Why? Why do you think? Because of the color of your hair? Cause I don't like how you cut your nails? That must be it, you lousy son-of-a-bitch.

Romulo: No. Tell me. Why?

Maria: Romulo: there's nothing between us anymore.

Romulo: You mean love and all that.

Maria: Love... love is destruction.

Romulo: I thought you were romantic.

Maria: Well, that's what I think now.

Romulo: Whatever. It's all fine by me. You're young and I, you already know, I see other women. We'll do what people do. Get ourselves a lawyer and then divide up our stuff. This for you, that for me, and we both get on with our lives. Fifty-fifty. Apartment, money, jeep...

Maria: The jeep is mine...

Romulo: ...Divorce means fifty-fifty...

Maria: It's mine...

Romulo: Fifty-fifty. That's how things are. Cause if you want to leave it's so you can bleed me with the kid and that I won't do, no way... I won't support anyone who doesn't want to work. Not for a kid or anything else.
Unless you don't want the baby.
(Pause)
That would change everything.

(Maria tries to slap him. Romulo stops her)

Maria: You want me not to have the baby

Romulo: I don't want responsibilities

Maria: Why am I the only one who has to give up something...?

Romulo: Well, the baby's your problem, not mine.

Maria : I get nothing. A deal's a deal. If I do it, what are you going to do?

Romulo: Ok. If you get rid of the kid... I... I'll give you the jeep.

Maria: The jeep was already mine.

Romulo: Yeah, but I could fight for it.

Maria: And?

Romulo: I could get half.

Maria: No you can't.

Romulo: It's the law.

Maria: Fucking laws.

Romulo: Think about it.

Maria: I already thought about it. Go. But leave me the jeep. All right?

Romulo: Ok.

Maria: You better keep your half of the bargain.

Romulo: And you keep yours.

Narrator: They're young, and these small town girls are ready for anything because they want experience. "Teens in Heat". Now in theaters near you.

5 June

Lights up on both scenes. A poster for the movie "Rambo" with Sylvester Stallone. In the hallway outside the theater, Maria wearing a blonde wig and high heels.

Alfonso: *(From within)* ...Teresa, I saw this program on divorce and unemployment in this country... millions of people are out of work.

(Enter Alfonso, who finds a purse)
There's a direct line between divorce and unemployment. And here's an interesting fact: they all go to the movies.

(Maria walks awkwardly, removes her heels. She rubs her feet)

Maria: These hurt...

(Alfonso looks through the purse and puts some cash in his pocket. Maria puts her shoes back on. Tries walking. It's painful but she continues. A man tries to get her attention, wolf whistles)

I hate coming here.
(To Alfonso) Excuse me...
Who sells the tickets here?

Alfonso: I do... sorry... just a second...

Maria: This theater gets worse by the day...

Alfonso: What would you like?

Maria: Lifesavers.

Alfonso: ...Where are the Life...? There was a box here yesterday and *(Checking all the boxes)* I'm sure there was...

Maria: A chocolate bar then.

Alfonso: But we've got Lifesavers... I even had one this...

Maria: I don't like waiting with nothing to eat.

Alfonso: Well, don't get in a huff about it anyway. There might not be a show.

Maria: How come?

- Alfonso: Well, hardly anyone's here. Just you, me and my wife...
- Maria: So if no one comes there's no movie?
- Alfonso: No. There's a minimum.
- Maria: How many more need to come?
- Alfonso: At least ten.
- Maria: They'll come...
- Alfonso: Are you expecting that many? I hope not. It's not that I don't want to work. I've never turned my back on a job. It's just if a lot of people come they're going to get a surprise.
- Maria: What surprise?
- Alfonso: They switched the movie.
- Maria: What?
- Alfonso: The paper says we've got some smut called "Teens in Heat", but we're really showing "Rambo" until Friday. *(Points to the poster)* See?
- Maria: Well, it's all the same...
- Alfonso: You waiting for your husband?
- Maria: Yeah. How'd you know?
- Alfonso: You're regulars.
- Maria: Why'd they change the movie?
- Alfonso: Well, this theater's on its last legs.
- Maria: Business is bad?
- Alfonso: They're selling it, sweetheart. It's going to be a club now. A bar, a restaurant, a pick-up place. You won't be coming here anymore.
- Maria: You never know.
- Alfonso: ...and if they're selling it, well, fine.
I think it's a good idea. Because all this shutting people up in the dark with a bunch of pictures of sex and violence can't be the best thing in the world. This theater's got no life left.
- Maria: That's strange. I always see people here.
- Alfonso: But it doesn't make money. Movies don't. Tickets are cheap and good movies are expensive. And for a while now, it's always the same faces.

You, your husband, those men. Women in "the profession" are regulars. People who are really poor on the inside, you know? If it was me, I would have sold it a long time ago.

Maria: So what happens to you? You lose your job?

Alfonso: No, no... Me... I've been planning to retire in the country.

Maria: You'll go back home?

Alfonso: ...I... Maybe... you know, that's it. Go back, it sounds good.

Maria: You must be really glad you're going back. At least you can go back. You've got the option. Not like me. I can't go back anywhere because I never left.

Alfonso: What do you do?

Maria: Me?

Alfonso: You look like you do something Important. A lawyer, at least.

Maria: *(Laughs)* No, no... I'm. I'm in Animal Husbandry.

Alfonso: Animal what?

Maria: Animal husbandry.

Alfonso: *(Understanding nothing)* Oh! How nice! Yes, animals. They're very important. Farming is the future.

Maria: Has it been a long time since you saw your country? What's it like?

Alfonso: Well! What's there to tell? What can I say?
Who knows?
Who can remember? Sometimes I try to think, but I can't remember.
Thinking and remembering, they're not the same.
All I remember about my hometown is that there was a river.

Maria: There's no river here.

Alfonso: Sure there is, it runs through the city...

Maria: That's no river. It's a sewer. Full of shit, fetuses and mud.

Alfonso: When you put it like that...

(Back to business)

So Lifesavers... What kind do you want?

Maria: I don't know... One mixed and one cherry...

Alfonso: Mixed and cherry... *(Starts to exit)*

Maria: And...

Alfonso: Yeah?

Maria: Nothing. Give me the whole box...

Alfonso: You eat all those Lifesavers and it'll kill you. Look, honestly. A piece of advice: don't eat them all and don't come back here. It's not worth it. Move on. Go your way. You have... you have to know how to quit.

Maria: Quit?

Alfonso: Quit things before they eat you up. Like me. Today I'm quitting all of it. Thanks a lot.

Maria: Thanks for what?

Alfonso: *(Happily)* For nothing!

(Maria watches him go. Opens a roll of Lifesavers. Puts one in her mouth, but spits it right out again)

Maria: These taste like roach shit.

6 That day

Hallway outside the movie theater. A "Rambo" poster. Onstage, Maria.

Enter Romulo. He hugs her. She shakes him off.

- Maria: Let go of me!
- Romulo: I just wanted to...
- Maria: Look what you did to my flower.
- Romulo: I didn't see it. Sorry. You never wear flowers... What did you do to your hair?
- Maria: I don't like you being so touchy-feely with me. How do I look?
- Romulo: You look...
- Maria: Do I look like a single woman?
- Romulo: More like a whore.
- Maria: Great *(Shows him her hand)* I'm not using my ring anymore...
- Romulo: *(Tries to touch her hair)* But your hair... *(Maria fends him off)* Ok. I won't do anything. But you're no silk purse, sow.
- Maria: Let me remind you, between us, you're the pig.
- Romulo: Why the dress... the hair... all this...?
- Maria: Leave me alone. Romulo, I called you because I want to talk about the divorce. I talked to the lawyer.
- Romulo : ...But we agreed not to...
- Maria: I'm not stupid. I want to know where I stand with the apartment, the furniture and everything else.
- Romulo: Then he already told you that half is mine...
- Maria: Yeah, but he also said we could squeeze you till you bleed.
- Romulo: I know how lawyers are. They want to make me out to be a rat.

- Maria: Because you ARE a rat.
- Romulo: What are you? The Virgin Mary?
- Maria: My lawyer thinks so.
- Romulo: I'll defend myself, Maria.
- Maria: The laws protect women.
- Romulo: To hell with the law. If you piss me off, you bitch, I'll burn everything you've got! *(Grabs her harshly. Rips off her wig)*
You're not getting everything... I'll kill you, you bitch, God I hate you, I detest you...!!
- (Romulo lets go of her. Uncomfortable pause)*
- Maria: Please, give it to me...
- (Romulo returns her wig)*
- Romulo: I...
- Maria: Yes?
- Romulo: I'm not going to let...
- Maria: Let me talk.
(Pause. Wearing the wig again)
I said the lawyer said we could take everything, but I didn't say I agreed with him. There are things that belong to both of us and we should split them. But I wanted to remind you that between us, just the two of us, we made a deal. Right?
- Romulo: A deal... right...
- Maria: I got rid of the baby. *(Pause)* I did my part. I ended it, like you wanted.
- Romulo: Good
- Maria: So now it's your turn to do your part.
- Romulo: And that is?
- Maria: Forget the jeep
- Romulo: The baby for the jeep
- Maria: That was the deal
- Romulo: It sounds reasonable

Maria: That's what I thought.

Romulo: Ok. *(Takes out keys)* Here.
But I have one more condition.

Maria: That's cheating.

Romulo: I want us to be honest, sincere and all that bullshit.

Maria: All right.

Romulo: Good

Maria: Ok.

Romulo: Ahah.

Maria: What?

Romulo: I don't want to see you anymore. We never meet again. We don't come back here, you don't call me on the phone and if we run into each other somewhere, we act like we don't know each other. You never speak to me again. I don't want to hear about you. No one talks to me about you and no one talks to you about me. Nothing. Not a word about you. Erase it all and start over. The very thought of you... A clean sweep. A totally clean sweep. Got it?

Maria: If it makes you happy...

Romulo: It doesn't make me happy.

Maria: Then?

Romulo: It's just now, when I saw you, I felt the urge to kill.

Maria: I hope you die first. In fact, I think you're dead already. You always were and always will be. I'll go on living. Moving forward. Like the students, fighting...

Romulo: The students gave in yesterday. They're going back to their fucking classes.

Maria: Yeah, but with pride.
(Romulo holds out his hand, but Maria doesn't shake it)
Why did you want to live with me?

Romulo: What?

Maria: Why did you want to live with someone, when you know you hate other people?

Romulo: I don't know.

- Maria: You must have some idea.
- Romulo: I think...
- Maria: Yeah?
- Romulo: Out of fear.
- Maria: Huh?
- Romulo: ...The day I proposed to you, after the movie, I remember I was terrified, scared to death.
- Maria: Of what?
- Romulo: The movie. "Terminator". They were showing "Terminator". And for some reason I was afraid.
- Maria: Afraid of Schwarzenegger?
- Romulo: Yeah. Of always being alone.
- Maria: So you decided to propose to me?
- Romulo: *(Getting ready to leave)* Yeah, to be safe.
- Maria: I knew it was some stupid reason.
- Romulo: You can't understand.
- Maria: No. I'd rather understand "Rambo".
- (Romulo to one side. Maria stands alone on the far side of the stage. Both unmoving, for a few seconds)*
- Romulo: *(Reading the sign)* "Rambo". Just because I hate reruns.
(Looking at Alfonso) Hey, old timer.
 When are you gonna change the movies here?
 When are you gonna change the sound system and the screen, when are you gonna put in new seats?
- (The actor makes the transition directly, before the audience, perhaps using only a prop)*
- Alfonso: You talking to me?
- Romulo: No, to myself.
- Alfonso: Then you can answer yourself too.
- Romulo: Of course I was talking to you. I asked when you're gonna change this shitty theater. When are you gonna run it right? When are you gonna to put up the whole name of the movie? When are you gonna make

me believe in what I'm paying for?

I'm sick of this theater.

I'm sick of looking at your face, playing the innocent.

It's your fault, you old bastard.

I want you to know that you're responsible for all this.

(Lights up on TERESA-MARIA)

Maria: So now...? What time is it...?

Why do I give a fuck what time it is?

Tonight I'm coming home late and I don't have to call to say where I am!

(Loud) Because I'm on my own!

(Quickly)

A drink.

Where can I get a drink around here?

Wait, ma'am, wait you... you...

What's your name?

What are you doing now?

(The actor makes the transition directly, before the audience, perhaps using only a prop)

Teresa: I'm Teresa and I'm getting ready to go...

Maria: I... me too. No, my name's not Teresa. I'm Maria, but I'm leaving now too.

Do you know where you can get a drink around here?

It's just I... when I was a teenager I filled my notebooks with poems about love. Drawings and flowers, so much longing for a kiss. Even if it was just to see what it was like.

You fall in love with possibility too...

For the first time the choice is in your hands.

I mean, you can make an important decision. For the first time, twenty some years and suddenly, an important decision. Like studying Animal Husbandry or whatever.

Teresa: ...And you make that decision hoping to be like everyone else. You take life in your hands and then, nothing. After sharing our lives for so long, I wonder if one day he'll look at me for more than thirty seconds without saying a word. Just silent. But they can't do it.

They're always looking for words.

No wonder when you meet a stranger, like you, you realize you've got about three hundred pages worth to say in your throat.

The truth is a stiff drink wouldn't hurt us. What did you say your name

was?

(Lights up on ROMULO-ALFONSO)

Alfonso: Listen, you snot nosed brat. I've got nothing to say to you. I'm guilty of nothing and you know what? As of right now I don't work here anymore.

(Takes off his uniform vest. Tosses it on the ground. The actress María-Teresa sees him)

I'm leaving. I'm going on a trip. I'm going back home. I may have only one suitcase, but I'm going back. With one suitcase, but happy.

I loved, I worked and I watched movies.

I've loved and I've been loved.

And that's no small thing.

I'm going to be with my Teresa, that's the most important thing in the world.

Death's not sneaking up on us when we're feeling sad.

If it's going to come, then it can take the two of us together and happy.

And if it comes for one of us, then it can take me first.

Because I never want to feel like I've lost her again.

Or that she's sad, or crying, or that I've hurt her somehow.

And you... You want a piece of advice?

You do the same. Forget Santo, Terminator, Rambo. They're movies.

They're not real, not true.

Yeah, the truth, that's what she likes.

Because it's the truth.

And come to think about it, the truth's not all that bad.

The truth's the only decent thing I know.

The truth is your girlfriend, who's right there.

Go get her. Because she's getting away from you. And she's all you've got in life. That's the truth.

Romulo: She doesn't exist for me anymore.

Alfonso: *(Looking at María)* Doesn't exist. *(Laughs)* But I see her right there. And now you say it, I can see she's radiant. She's lovelier, more beautiful than ever! It's true!

(Exiting)

(Shouts) FREE ADMISSION! Go right in if you want!

There's no ticket taker. You want to get lost, go ahead. I don't care anymore. *(Exits)*

(María-Teresa is left alone)

María: Ma'am, my name's María.

Teresa: Maria, I'm Teresa. And till today I wasted my life in this place. But I still have him.
And we're going home.
Home.

Loving is hard.
And living life is a nightmare.
And sharing it with someone is impossible.
And still we do it..
I don't know how or why.
But we do it.

(Pause)

Good luck.

***We hear "The Very Thought of You".
Blackout.***

The End.